

GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society



Georgia Rare Bird Alert: (770) 493-8862

GOS on the web: www.gos.org

Georgia's Colonial Coast Birding & Nature Festival: Second Time's the Charm?

By Bob Sargent

The rain mostly stayed away and the birds and birders certainly showed up. Georgia's second coastal birding festival was held during October 7-10, and like fine wine this event just keeps getting better with time. If you attended last year's festival and came away convinced that nothing more could have been crammed into that wonderfully hyperactive weekend, this year's effort may have left you and the other 340 attendees breathless. First of all, the party started a day early with the festival's first Coastal Birding Challenge, organized by Russ Wigh. The team of Bob Zaremba, Deb Zaremba, and Chuck Saleeby bested four other teams with a one-day count of 124 species, and was rewarded with a beautiful trophy courtesy of Russ and Lydia Thompson.

Friday through Sunday featured 31 field trips to most of the barrier islands and several of the inland hot spots. The trips yielded 183 species along with sightings of diamondback rattlesnakes on Little St. Simons Island and an alligator carrying a feral hog in its mouth in the Altamaha River. Birding highlights included Eared Grebe, American White Pelican, Snowy Egret, Reddish Egret, Glossy Ibis, Northern Pintail, Peregrine Falcon,

GOS Winter Meeting

January 28-30, 2005
Guntersville, Alabama

See page 3 for details

Piping Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Wilson's Phalarope, Chuck-will's-widow, Traill's Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Clay-colored Sparrow, Painted Bunting, and Baltimore Oriole.

Birders weren't just flocking to the islands on that weekend; back at the Convention Center there were birds and birders flocking to every nook and cranny. Friday afternoon kicked off with "Toasting and Boasting on the Coast," a captivating speech by former Lt. Governor Pierre Howard about the many virtues of Georgia's spectacular coastal environs. On Friday and Saturday the center was home to 15 seminars covering aspects of birds ranging from hummers to pelagics, and from bird photography to identifying fall warblers. The center's Rookery was the roost for 43 vendors throughout the weekend, as they hawked binoculars, art, field vests, and anything else the complete birder desired. The Rookery exhibits also included an ornithological poster session detailing research on grassland birds, Painted Buntings, American Oystercatchers, Piping Plovers and Mottled Ducks.

Saturday night's banquet started with a taste of the South: a low country boil. Lydia Thompson led off the program, praising the many folks who made the festival so successful, particularly Amy Ochoa, Diane Churchill, Pat Metz, Russ Wigh, Sheila Willis and Steve Holzman. Of course, Lydia is so humble she wouldn't get close to mentioning all the work she had done on behalf of the festival, so I thanked her when it was my turn at the podium. The audience, in turn, thanked her with a

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Georgia Ornithological Society

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*Deadline for article submission is the 1st
of the month prior to publication.
Text by e-mail is appreciated.*

Welcome, New Members!

Bob and Carol Churi	Owings, MD
Kendall W. Cochran	Dallas, GA
Don and Alice Norfolk	Cumming, GA
Dorothy Clark	Stone Mountain, GA
Carl Tyler	Atlanta, GA
Leonard Borg, Jr.	Atlanta, GA
Tamie Moran	Greensboro, GA
Russell and Whit Perrin Wright	Jasper, GA

*GOS Membership lists are available upon request to
Angela McMellen, PO Box 181, High Shoals, GA 30645 or
mcmellen@uga.edu*

In Memoriam, Joe Bittaker

Joe R. Bittaker, 70, of Douglas, Georgia, passed away on September 8, 2004 after a long struggle with cancer. He and his wife Annette joined GOS in 1987 and were active participants in many GOS meetings.

The Bittakers returned to Georgia in 1984 from California to care for parents, not really intending to resettle here at first. Joe had retired from the Air Force (Lt. Colonel) earlier. He flew numerous missions in Vietnam as a navigator and later graduated from the Air Force Institute of Technology, becoming a research engineer working on advancements in aviation technology during the rest of his career. Following their move to Georgia, Joe embarked on an enjoyable second career, teaching electronics in state technical colleges.

Birds and birding were a major interest and passion for Joe, and even in the last few weeks of his life he continued to observe the numerous hummingbirds from the picture window overlooking the yard which he and Annette had developed to be bird friendly.



Address Changes

If your address changes, please notify us directly by mail (P.O. Box 181, High Shoals, GA 30645) or by e-mail (angela_mcmellen@yahoo.com). As a non-profit organization, we are able to mail items to you at a bulk (i.e., discounted) rate. This is a great cost savings for us, but it means that our items WILL NOT be forwarded to you if you move. We do not want you to miss out on any of our newsletters, meeting announcements, or journals!

GOS WINTER 2005 MEETING

By Bill Lotz

For the first time since February of 2000, and only the second time ever, GOS will hold a Winter Meeting. It will be a joint meeting with the Alabama Ornithological Society (something we last did in April of 1994), and will take place at Guntersville, Alabama, on January 28–30, 2005. Guntersville is one of the premier winter birding spots in the U.S., famous for its concentration of wintering Bald Eagles, waterfowl, gulls and seabirds. Last winter a Red-necked Grebe spent a couple of months in the area and Golden Eagle and Prairie Falcon have been found in previous winters.

Our featured speaker on Saturday night will be Joan Garland, Education Outreach Director of the International Crane Foundation (ICF). She will give us a behind-the-scenes look at Operation Migration, Inc., the ongoing effort to teach young Whooping Cranes to migrate with the aid of ultra-light aircraft, which has the ultimate goal of returning the eastern population of Whooping Cranes to sustainable levels.

Building on the success of three previous migrations led by Operation Migration, the fourth generation of 14 juvenile cranes began their fall migration on October 10, 2004, guided by three ultra-light aircraft. Their 1,228-mile journey will take them from the historical summer breeding area of the eastern population of Whooping Cranes, the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin, to their wintering habitat at the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge along Florida's Gulf Coast. There they will join with the 35 surviving adult Whooping Cranes that were led on the same route in the previous three years and now migrate on their own.

Our meeting headquarters will be the Hampton Inn in Guntersville. You should already have received a mailing with the details about booking your room and registering for the meeting. Please plan to join us in Guntersville for what should be a fascinating meeting.

Membership Renewal

The end of the year is quickly approaching. That can only mean one thing . . . it is GOS Membership Renewal Season! We have really appreciated your support over the last year and hope that you will continue to support the Georgia Ornithological Society by renewing your membership. Renewal is easy. You can use the membership form on the back of this newsletter or the form online (<http://www.gos.org/membership-app.html>). In either case, you just need to fill out the form and send it to us along with your check or money order. We look forward to another great year together!

Colonial Coast Festival (continued from page 1)

standing ovation. Then I passed the microphone to John Swiderski, who presented GOS' Earle Greene Award (see the full story, page 4) to Giff Beaton, an obvious choice for this prestigious award because of the many, many contributions he has made to ornithology in Georgia.

Next on Saturday night's agenda was the featured event: Dr. Rocky Gutierrez' program "The Spotted Owl: Conservation Icon or Cool Critter?" My many communications with Rocky (I had never met him before) up until that night had given me an inkling that he was both a very sharp guy and a hoot (no pun intended). He confirmed my initial impression five minutes into his talk. Rocky gave a talk about a western species that kept us easterners glued to our seats. He was in turn a teacher, birder and stand-up comic. The high point for many in the audience was when Rocky cut loose with booming renditions of calls of male and female spotted owls. Diane Churchill concluded a full evening by leading the countdown.

Most events of this sort often conclude on Sunday with a few field trips, usually wrapping up by noon. Not this festival. The full slate of field trips on Sunday was followed by talks on sea turtles and snakes, and an evening birding trip to Laura S. Walker State Park led by Sheila Willis. Quite a weekend! Thank you to everyone who made this festival possible and successful. With your continued support and the magnet that is Georgia's coastal ecosystem, this event will become one of the premiere festivals in the South. See you again on Jekyll Island next October.

Third Annual Pinewoods Bird Festival

By John Swiderski

The third annual Pinewoods Bird Festival will be held on Saturday, April 9, 2005, at Pebble Hill Plantation, Thomasville, Georgia. There will be activities and tours throughout the day. Of special interest to birders will be the opportunity to get good looks at Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Bachman's Sparrows. Early registration is recommended for these field trips.

Complete festival information can be found in the brochure mailed with this issue or by visiting the festival Web site, www.pinewoodsbirdfestival.com.

Earle R. Greene Memorial Award, 2004

By John Swiderski

Giff Beaton is the recipient of the Earle R. Greene Memorial Award for 2004. Giff was recognized for his achievements in ornithology and for his outstanding service to GOS. The award was presented to him by GOS President Bob Sargent on October 9, 2004, during the evening banquet and program of the Colonial Coast Birding and Nature Festival at Jekyll Island. Giff is the 29th recipient of the award since its inception in 1975.

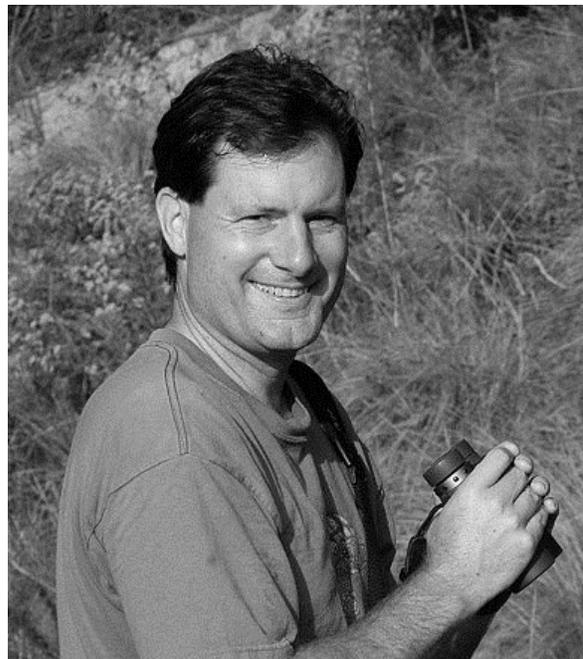
Giff was raised in Towson, Maryland, near Baltimore. As a youth he developed a serious interest in fishing and became aware of other aspects of nature and the environment. Birds ultimately captured his interest and enthusiasm, and he attended meetings and field trips of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) in his teen years. He still remembers vividly an encounter with the venerable Chan Robbins during a MOS outing at Pocomoke Swamp. Chan asked if anyone wanted to go with him into the wet and mucky areas, and Giff was the only volunteer to accompany Chan!

Giff was nominated to the U.S. Naval Academy and graduated in 1981. He became a pilot several years later, primarily flying the P-3 Orion. Before leaving the Navy he also served as an instructor pilot. He joined Delta Airlines in 1988, which set the stage for his move to Atlanta in 1991.

He arrived in Georgia with an intense interest in birdlife, and it was only natural that he would quickly become active in our state. He joined GOS that year and later became a Life Member. Giff has served for nearly a decade on the Checklist and Records Committee and was a major contributor to the committee's effort to thoroughly research and update the documentation of Georgia birdlife. The goal of this effort was to publish a new *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds*, and Giff took the lead in bringing the manuscript to publication in 2003.

Giff also found time to develop the first Georgia bar graphs for *A Birder's Guide to Georgia* (1996); he subsequently updated the bar graphs for his book *Birding Georgia* (2000). Almost from the beginning of his time in Georgia, Giff became aware of the importance of Kennesaw Mountain during bird migration. He and many others have made countless trips and surveys on the mountain over the past decade, and Giff has distilled that experience and data into his recently published *Birds of Kennesaw Mountain* (see page 7).

Giff's curiosity, energy, enthusiasm, and persistent quest for knowledge of birdlife are evident to many. He



Giff Beaton, Recipient of the 2004 Earle R. Greene Award

would tell you as he did in his most recent book, "It's been a lot of fun!" That may explain why he enjoys regular participation in the rigors of "Big Day" competition in Georgia and elsewhere so much. Giff is the latest in a long line of talented GOS "amateurs" who have made major contributions to the knowledge of Georgia birdlife, and he obviously enjoys sharing that knowledge with all of us through his books, articles, and numerous programs presented around the state.

He and his wife Becky have been married for twelve years and live in Marietta, fortunately not far from Kennesaw Mountain. Becky is a psychologist and has an active professional life running her sizeable Anxiety and Stress Management Institute in Marietta, as well as teaching at Georgia State University.

Howe Graduate Research Grants

The deadline for H. Branch Howe, Jr., Graduate Student Research Grants is January 31, 2005. Graduate students researching ornithological topics may submit grant proposals requesting up to \$2000. See the GOS Web site (www.gos.org) for guidance about developing and submitting a proposal.

Encourage Them Here, Discourage Them There: Wildlife Management on an Air Force Base By Bob Sargent

When people hear that the U.S. Air Force employs wildlife biologists, invariably most of them are surprised, and some of them ask me if the work is anything like the antics they see performed by biologists on Animal Planet programs. The perception is that biologists spend most of their time capturing alligators or growing deer like corn for the benefit of hunters. In reality, most of the work is far from flashy, but all of it is challenging and rewarding.

The Air Force is committed to promoting biodiversity on its bases. This means encouraging the establishment of a healthy, diverse community of wildlife by managing for habitat diversity both on a small scale such as an individual woodlot, as well as on a large scale such as an entire base. The Air Force is also committed to ensuring that mission needs are met for each of its bases. So a wildlife biologist working on a base must simultaneously promote wildlife diversity and ensure that the mission of his or her particular base is being supported. The balance involved can be challenging to achieve.

Many bases have sufficient resources to support hunting and fishing programs. At Robins Air Force Base here in Georgia, three lakes and one creek are available where people can fish, and there are more than 2,500 acres where people can hunt. We periodically conduct fish management projects including the fertilization of lakes, as well as anchoring old Christmas trees along lake bottoms to serve as fish attractors. We also conduct forest management projects to benefit game and non-game species of wildlife. For example, earlier this year we conducted a prescribed burn in our longleaf pine forest to reduce hardwood competition. Later this year we'll reduce the density of trees in 80 acres of planted loblolly pine forests, thereby allowing greater sunlight penetration into these "stands." This will increase the diversity and density of hardwood species in these stands, thereby enhancing their value for wildlife.

In some situations our goal is to make habitats unattractive to wildlife. For instance, Robins has a sizeable airfield and a very active flying mission. Over the years the habitats on this airfield have attracted a variety of bird species including Canada Geese, huge flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Snipe. Deer, feral hogs, coyotes, and alligators have also been observed on the airfield. Needless to say, the last thing a pilot wants to see as his plane nears takeoff is a deer standing on the runway, so habitat management in this environment means eliminating features that attract wildlife, for example, open drainage ditches, trees and fruiting shrubs, open culverts (ideal dens for coyotes), and species of grass that produce large seed crops.

It also means building a fence around the airfield and installing cattle guards and gates at airfield road access points, because wildlife will use paved roads to get onto airfields.

Wildlife management on base isn't confined to the remote areas and airfield. In the suburban areas we plant native species of trees and shrubs to provide food and cover for wildlife. We also erect nesting boxes for birds, roosting boxes for bats, and basking platforms for aquatic turtles located in ponds near base housing. Unfortunately, a few wildlife species sometimes show up in the worst places for an extended visit, much like that relative of yours who came over for dinner and never went home. Colonies of bats have taken up residence in office buildings, alligators have moved into ditches near busy parking lots, and "herds" of raccoons have claimed dumpsters as their own. Last year a black bear found a temporary home in a tree overlooking the base parade field, just a block from the commander's house.

The solution to nuisance wildlife problems varies depending on the species involved and the circumstances. In some cases the solution is as simple as latching down dumpster lids to keep raccoons out, or sticking putty plugs in aircraft engine crevices to exclude nesting birds. Sometimes nature provides a solution to the problem. For example, a Cooper's Hawk recently discovered that aircraft hangars are a favorite hangout for pigeons. Imagine how thrilled (truly) the workers in those hangars were to look up from their work and see a hawk streaking across the rafters in pursuit of some hapless pigeon. Who needs television?

The work is rarely Animal Planet material, but it is always challenging and often entertaining. Biologists strive every day to promote the health and diversity of wildlife populations on military bases around the world. At the same time, biologists work to support the military mission, and to ensure the safety of the people and property at these bases. Sometimes wild animals are encouraged to take up residence and flourish; sometimes they have to be discouraged.

GOS Has a New Secretary

GOS secretary Nancy Gobris has decided to make a permanent home in Colorado. Nancy's talents have benefited GOS (thank you!) in many ways over the years, and she will be sorely missed. Lori Freeman, a newcomer to the birding world from Warner Robins, has graciously agreed to accept the role of GOS secretary, and her nomination to fill that role has been approved by the executive committee. Lori, welcome to the team!

Christmas Bird Counts, 2004-2005

The 105th annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season begins on December 14, 2004 and ends January 5, 2005. Audubon organizers hope to reach the milestone of 2,000 CBC counts across the continent this year! If you wish to participate in any of the counts listed below, please sign up with the appropriate compiler in advance so that you can be assigned an area. For the latest information about the CBC in Georgia, as well as results from last year, see the GOS website: www.gos.org. The National Audubon Society CBC homepage is www.audubon.org/bird/cbc. List compiled by Carol Lambert.

Date	Count	Compiler(s) and Contact Information
Dec 14 (Tues)	Harris Neck NWR	Steve Calver, 912-351-0841, James.S.Calver@sas02.usace.army.mil (Harris Neck Contacts: Diana Churchill, 912-786-5703, or Dot Bambach, 912-598-2764)
Dec 15 (Wed)	Eufaula NWR, AL/GA	Sam Pate, 706-327-2574, spate@brookstoneschool.org
Dec 16 (Thur)	Columbus	Sam Pate, 706-327-2574, spate@brookstoneschool.org
Dec 18 (Sat)	Athens Augusta Cumberland Island Dalton Macon Peachtree City St. Catherines Island	Mary Case, 706-548-3848, and Eugenia Thompson, 706-549-7318 mecase@arches.uga.edu , erthomps@negia.net Anne Waters, 706-793-2788, birdannelady@earthlink.net Sheila Willis: <i>by invitation</i> Phil Riner, 706-226-0956, phil_riner@mohawkind.com Marie Amerson, 478-746-5697, jamerson@cox.net Brock Hutchins, 770-461-5042, brockhutchins@msn.com Emil Urban: <i>by invitation</i>
Dec 19 (Sun)	Atlanta (Marietta) Chattahoochee N.F. Song-bird Mgmt. Area	Bob and Deb Zaremba, 770-422-5830, bozbarem@PRODIGY.NET Johnny Parks, 706-937-7163, ringgold_birdchaser@juno.com
Dec 20 (Mon)	Piedmont NWR-Rum Creek WMA	Terry Johnson, 478-994-1438, Terry_Johnson@mail.dnr.state.ga.us
Dec 21 (Tues)	Carter's Lake <i>FIRST YEAR - TRIAL RUN</i>	Josh Spence, 706-629-4325, cojosh@yahoo.com
Dec 27 (Mon)	Amicalola Falls Okfenokee NWR	Jim Greenway, 770-630-3854, mtnpathfinder@msn.com Sheila Willis, 912-285-0419, swillis@wayxcable.com
Jan 1 (Sat)	Glynn County West Point Lake	Mike Chapman, 912-262-6370, mchapman@darientel.net Paul Miliotis, 334-705-4381, hemlockwarbler@yahoo.com
Jan 2 (Sun)	Callaway Gardens Floyd County Savannah	Cory Croft, 706-663-6745, and LuAnn Craighton, 706-663-5192 ccroft@callawayonline.org , lkraig@callawaygardens.com Owen Kinney, 706-234-6248, okinney@darlingtonschool.org Steve Calver, 912-351-0841, James.S.Calver@sas02.usace.army.mil (Savannah Contacts: Diana Churchill, 912-786-5703, or Dot Bambach, 912-598-2764)
Dates to be Announced	Albany Bainbridge/Lake Seminole Lake Blackshear	Alan Ashley, 229-439-8232, pa521aa117@prodigy.net Oscar Dewberry, 229-246-1890, boscar@planttel.net Terry Johnson, 478-994-1438, Terry_Johnson@mail.dnr.state.ga.us

Georgia Christmas Bird Counts (Continued from p. 4)

Count dates, arranged in alphabetical order by location:

Albany	TBA	Chattahoochee N.F.	12/19	Lake Blackshear	TBA
Amicalola Falls	12/27	Columbus	12/16	Macon	12/18
Athens	12/18	Cumberland Is.	12/18	Okefenokee NWR	12/27
Atlanta (Marietta)	12/19	Dalton	12/18	Peachtree City	12/18
Augusta	12/18	Eufaula NWR	12/15	Piedmont/Rum Creek	12/20
Bainbridge/ L. Seminole	TBA	Floyd County	1/2	Savannah	1/2
Callaway Gardens	1/2	Glynn County	1/1	St. Catherines Island	12/18
Carter's Lake	12/21	Harris Neck NWR	12/14	West Point Lake	1/1

SPRING 2005 GOS MEETING

By Bill Lotz

On April 22-24, 2005, GOS will have our Spring Meeting in Columbus, Georgia. We have not met in Columbus since the Fall 1978 Meeting, although we have had several meetings in Eufaula since then. Our speaker Friday night will be our own Dr. Bill Birkhead of Columbus State University, who will give a presentation about bird research projects at CSU.

On Saturday and Sunday we will offer field trips to such great birding areas as Oxbow Meadows, the Bradley Unit of the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Ft. Benning, West Point Lake and Callaway Gardens.

Following the banquet on Saturday night, our featured speaker will be Dr. Peter Frederick, a noted ornithologist who teaches at the University of Florida. Dr. Frederick's area of expertise and research is wading birds and the wetlands that are so important to their survival.

Please mark your 2005 calendars and plan to attend our Spring Meeting.

2004 Georgia List Information

For those GOS members who keep life and year lists of bird species seen in Georgia, the *GOShawk* will publish these state list totals in the March 2005 issue. Totals should reflect numbers as of December 31, 2004.

Data must be received by January 15, 2005, and must include your name, home city, state, telephone and e-mail. Send the number of Georgia species seen in your lifetime and the number of Georgia species seen in 2004 (optional).

Send information to: Carol Lambert, 4608 Westhampton Drive, Tucker, GA 30084 or e-mail: lambertsewell@mindspring.com.

New Books for Birders

By Steve Holzman

GOS published 3 manuscripts in 2004: *Birds of Laurens County*, *Birds of Kennesaw Mountain: An Annotated Checklist*, and *Breeding Birds of Haralson County*. *Birds of Laurens County* was written by Thomas Patterson and can be purchased for \$14 (all prices quoted in this article include shipping charges). Tommy has birded in Dublin/Laurens County twice a week for almost 30 years. This book is a fantastic resource for those interested in birdlife in middle Georgia. *Birds of Kennesaw Mountain* was written by Giff Beaton and can be purchased for \$20. This valuable work covers 12 years of almost daily migration birding at this highly important stopover site for migrants in Georgia. The *Breeding Birds of Haralson County* was written by Michael Bell and can be purchased for \$12. Michael's intensive surveys on behalf of Georgia's Breeding Bird Atlas project in 1999 led to the writing of this fine book, which details breeding or probable breeding records for 94 species.

These and other publications, as well as T-shirts, checklists, and patches, can be purchased from GOS by visiting the website: <http://www.gos.org/publications.html>. GOS publications and merchandise will also be available at our upcoming winter and spring meetings.

GOS E-MAIL LIST

In order to more efficiently communicate with our members, GOS is establishing an e-mail list. The e-mail list will be used to communicate with you about bird conservation issues, membership renewals, birding events in Georgia, and occasional items that may be of interest to GOS members. If you wish to add your e-mail address to the GOS database, please contact Angela McMellen, GOS Membership Chair, at [ange-la_mcmellen@yahoo.com](mailto:angela_mcmellen@yahoo.com).

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

TO: Georgia Ornithological Society
P.O. Box 181
High Shoals, GA 30645

Please enroll the undersigned as a member of the Georgia Ornithological Society for the calendar year.
Dues are enclosed as follows:

_____ Regular \$20.00 _____ Sustaining \$30.00

_____ Patron \$50.00 _____ Student \$10.00

(The above are annual rates for individuals or families.)

_____ Life Membership \$300.00

_____ Please send me a list of publications available from the GOS.

NAME(S):

MAILING ADDRESS:

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

PLEASE SEND ADDRESS, PHONE OR E-MAIL CHANGES TO:
Angela McMellen, GOS, P.O. Box 181, High Shoals, GA 30645

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