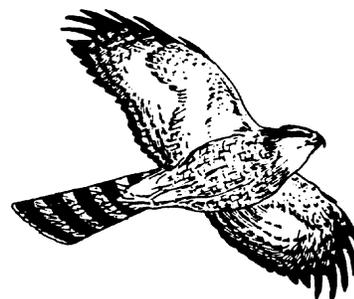


GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society



Georgia Rare Bird Alert: 770-493-8862

GOS on the web: www.gos.org

President's Message: Report to the Membership

By Bob Sargent

The grants review and approval period is winding down, and we're halfway between general meetings, so now's a good time to give you a report on the activities of the executive committee (ExCom). These days we're handling far more of the society's business via e-mail than when I first served as an ExCom member. Complex issues, especially those involving major financial decisions, are still discussed and voted on in face-to-face meetings, as was done during the ExCom meeting on Tybee Island in January. Much of that meeting was devoted to discussing how the economic crisis has impacted GOS's finances and determining what our budget will look like in 2009. Like most organizations (and families), the value of the society's investments has taken a dip over the past 12 months, but the good news is that we're diversified and will ride out the storm just fine. Our finan-

cial strategy is to not engage in deficit spending. With this strategy, we can continue to support graduate research, conservation projects, and education initiatives at meaningful levels for years to come.

In the short term, we've had to scale back the amount of money we can make available for certain types of grants, especially the Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants, but we have not and hopefully will not reduce the funds provided to graduate students or for scholarships for young people to attend birding camps. In fact, we provided \$20,000 to five graduate students in the past six weeks, we've arranged the registration to send one young birder to the American Birding Association's (ABA) annual meeting in Corpus Christi in April, we're partnering with Atlanta Audubon Society (AAS) to send a teenager to the ABA camp in San Diego in June, and we're co-sponsoring the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Youth Birding Competition (YBC) in April. I'm very excited to announce that we're also a partner, along with DNR and AAS, in creating Camp TALON, a week-long birding camp for teenagers, to be held on the coast in June. (See the announcement in this newsletter.) The ExCom's decisions continue to stress the importance of recruiting young people to birding and ornithology, and creating effective partnerships to accomplish conservation and education goals. In that vein, I hope that you will join us at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center next month (April 26th) to help Tim Keyes and the other DNR folks with the YBC. The next generation needs our encouragement!

In other news, the planning for the seventh fall birding festival is underway, which means that Dan, Bill, Darlene, and I will soon be tormenting

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Georgia Ornithological Society

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of the month prior to publication.
Text by e-mail is appreciated.*

Welcome, New Members!

Red-cockaded Woodpecker Members

Nathan A. Farnau	Atlanta, GA
Franca and Charlie Haynes	Atlanta, GA
John McNeil	Shirley, NY
Jim and Martha Sharpe	Atlanta, GA

Bachman's Sparrow Members

Clara Brown	Columbus, GA
Odie Durden	Nunez, GA
Gordon Knight	Cumming, GA
Fumikazu Masumoto	Macon, GA

Fledgling Members

Jordan Budnik	Decatur, GA
Ryan Malloy	Athens, GA
Kelly Samantha Overduijn	Atlanta, GA

The 2009 GOS membership list is available electronically via e-mail or as a hard copy. Please send your request to membership@gos.org (Allison Reid) for an e-mail copy or to GOS, 198 Ponce de Leon Ave NE, Unit 7C, Atlanta, GA 30308 for a paper copy. Available to members only.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

GOS Spring Meeting

May 1-3, 2009, Rome, Georgia

Colonial Coast Birding and Nature Festival

October 8-12, 2009, Jekyll Island, Georgia



GOShawk Now Available Online

Past and current issues of the GOShawk are now available online in .pdf format at the following URL:
<http://www.gos.org/newsletters/newsletter.pdf>

President's Message *(continued from page 1)*

you to lead field trips for that event. If you're interested, please let me know. This year's featured speaker for the festival is Dr. Don Kroodsma, author of the exceptional book *The Singing Life of Birds*. Dr. Kroodsma, a retired professor of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, has long been recognized as one of the country's experts on bird acoustics. Carol Lambert and I recently met with Lydia Thompson and Gene Keferl to discuss how this festival will look. The festival continues to be financially sound, though we are looking for ways to bring in more revenue, thereby making it possible to, among other things, house a volunteer intern who will handle the registration process – a huge chore. You can expect to see a few changes in the way this festival is organized when compared to the previous six. We will, of course, try to increase the number of field trips to the most popular island destinations. But we're planning to restructure the Rookery hours and the seminar schedule so that those activities don't take place for extended periods during which most people are out on field trips, and we'll probably host a social, sort of like GOS's "flocking," in the Rookery on Friday night. Finally, Lydia hopes to expand the "nature day" aspect of the festival in an attempt to recruit more non-birders (e.g., hikers, photographers, artists, etc.), thereby exposing them to birders and birding. I already feel bad for them. Please join us on Jekyll October 8-12, and help this festival continue to thrive.

It's time for me to walk away from this keyboard and look more closely at those creatures flitting in the treetops across the street. I hope to see you at one of our meetings soon, and, as always, contact me if you're itching to be more involved with GOS.

Spring 2009 GOS Meeting in Rome

By Bill Lotz

The Spring 2009 Meeting of the Georgia Ornithological Society will be held in Rome, Georgia, from Friday, May 1 through Sunday, May 3, 2009. Our headquarters hotel is the Ramada Skytop Center in Rome. The registration desk opens in the lobby of that hotel at 5:00 PM on Friday, May 1, 2009.

Dinner on Friday is on your own. The Friday night program begins at 7:00 PM with two presentations. One is by Michael C. Parrish, M.S. Candidate, Forest Resources, Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, University of Georgia, and a recent recipient of the Society's H. Branch Howe Research Grant. Michael will talk on "Changes in Breeding Bird Abundance and Diversity across Urban-Rural Gradients in Northeastern Georgia." Our other featured speaker is Roarke Donnelly, Professor of Biology at Oglethorpe University. The title of his program is "Impacts of Chinese Privet on Native Forest Birds and Plants." Following these presentations we will preview the planned field trips for the weekend.

Field trip destinations on Saturday and Sunday include such wonderful birding sites as Berry College and the Berry College WMA, Georgia Highlands

College, Northwest Georgia Experiment Station, Arrowhead Wildlife Education Center, Johns Mountain, Marshall Forest, Rome City River Park, Myrtle Hill Cemetery, and the Coosa Preserve.

The Social Hour begins Saturday night at 6:00 PM, with the banquet starting at 7:00 PM. Our featured speaker is our own Georgann Schmalz. Georgann has a master's degree in ornithology from Clemson University, taught for more than 28 years at Fernbank Science Center in DeKalb County, and is a three-time past president of the Atlanta Audubon Society. She has led birding tours to some of the best birding locations all over the world as the owner/operator of Birding Adventures, Inc. Her presentation is entitled "The Top Ten Ways to Share the Wonder of Birds." Georgann says "parts of it will be serious, but most of it will be fun!"

At the conclusion of Georgann's talk we will review the planned Sunday field trips and hold the count-down of birds encountered on the weekend to that point.

Please plan to join us in Rome for what should be an exciting weekend of birding and fellowship.



Return to Tybee Island: Round II

By Bob Sargent

I guess it's safe to say that the membership didn't mind the decision to adopt Tybee Island as our winter meeting home following the successful January 2007 meeting. I say this because, despite the rollercoaster economy and frigid weather, nearly 100 people made the trip to the coast again this past January. Note to self: Whenever I'm absolutely convinced the weather is going to torpedo one of our meetings, I need to do a reality check. After all, this is the group that skidded through the ice storm in January 2005 to meet with the Alabama Ornithological Society in Guntersville, and that sputtered through the remnants of a tropical storm on the coast during the October 2005 festival, setting a species count record for that meeting with 210. And who can forget the Arctic monsoon during last year's winter meeting in Bainbridge? Parts of my fingertips are still attached to the railing on the dam at Lake Walter F. George. Is it safe to say that we scoff at Mother Nature's abuse? Okay, the rooster who struts is the first one to become a fox sandwich, and maybe this isn't the best way to encourage you to attend next year's winter meeting!



Charlie Muise holds his son, Allan, up to a spotting scope for a better view. Photo by Phil Hardy.



GOS members in the salt marsh near the bridge to Fort Pulaski National Monument. Photo by Phil Hardy.

Our second winter meeting on Tybee Island was a windy weekend, especially for the folks who set sail on the pelagic trips (a.k.a., the green-gilled cruises), and warm weather didn't arrive until Monday, when everyone was leaving. Who cares?! We counted 179 species that weekend, including Snow Goose, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, all three scoter species, Common Goldeneye, Manx Shearwater, Roseate Spoonbill, Peregrine Falcon, Piping Plover, American Avocet, Parasitic Jaeger, Black-legged Kittiwake, Cave Swallow, 10 warbler species, Le Conte's Sparrow, both sharp-tailed sparrows, and Baltimore Oriole. The birding at the Savannah Spoils Site and Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (Savannah NWR) was ridiculously good, and whenever we meet in the Savannah area I always find myself wondering why more people don't sign up for the spoils site trips. I participated in the Saturday trip to Savannah NWR, and although the diversity of duck species wasn't exactly overwhelming, at one point we found ourselves looking at Black-bellied Whistling Duck and Snow Goose in the same scope image. A few minutes later we called in two Baltimore Orioles, and we had great looks at roadside Wilson's Snipe.

has accomplished thus far, and where it needs to go. Charlie is working hard to create partnership efforts on behalf of bird conservation in Georgia and has done a great job with organizing volunteer field projects, such as collecting grass seeds. And if you're impressed with Charlie's seemingly endless energy reserves, you should see his son wading into marsh grasses, toy truck in tow, on a freezing morning.

Kate Spear, graduate student at the University of Georgia, followed Charlie with a presentation about her research on the effects of human disturbance on bird diversity within a Bulgarian national park. Kate, as you may know, is a two-time recipient of GOS's H. Branch Howe, Jr. Graduate Student Grants, so it was particularly gratifying to see what one of "our" graduate students has been accomplishing. Many people commented on the similarities between Bulgarian and American bird species, and I suspect most of us didn't expect to learn that wolves, bears, and other large mammals inhabit European parks. Kate emphasized to the audience the importance of estab-

On Friday night, our program featured a double header (yes, I'm a baseball nut). Charlie Muise started the evening with a summary of the Georgia Important Bird Areas program, explaining the program's goals, what it



Field trip leader Mallory Pearce gestures during the GOS winter meeting on Tybee Island. Photo by Phil Hardy.

lishing partnerships between American university scientists and those in European countries where ornithology and birding, in some cases, might be just beginning to blossom, and how important ecotourism can be in promoting conservation in Bulgaria.

Saturday afternoon featured the most diverse poster session yet for a GOS meeting, from Long-tailed Manakins in Costa Rica to wintering Hermit Thrushes and vulture movements in Georgia, and from the management of birds such as Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Ft. Stewart to bird banding studies on IBAs. Saturday night's banquet featured a low country boil – one of the best banquet dinners we've had – and the usual comedy routine by Steve Holzman. I fear that one of these days he's going to start insisting on a performance salary. I followed Steve by torturing the banquet crowd with a reading of the proposed bylaws modifications. The membership approved the changes, probably because they were anxious to get me away from the microphone. And then Dr. John Kricher, truly a master teacher, captivated the crowd with a presentation on the ecology of migratory songbirds. Dr. Kricher's talk didn't just identify and explain the usual cast of suspects implicated in the decline of migrants; instead, he introduced us to familiar friends, such as the American Redstart, and led us on a journey as we followed this species from its breeding ground to its wintering ground, explaining the habitats used by the species in each hemisphere, and the obstacles to the species' survival. If you haven't read Dr. Kricher's book, *A Neotropical Companion*, I highly recommend it.



Black-legged Kittiwake seen on pelagic field trip. Photo by Dan Vickers.

This seems like enough to wear out 100 birders on a three-day weekend, doesn't it? Well, we figured it wasn't, so we made another try at organizing a "flocking" on Sunday night at the hotel. You may recall that we shamelessly snatched this idea from the Florida Ornithological Society, whom we met with in Brunswick a couple of years ago. Anyway, at the Bainbridge meeting last year we invited members to give presentations about their birding projects during our first attempted flocking and . . . well, no one showed up with a presentation. You might say that the flock scattered. Okay, so birds often look bad on that first flight from the nest. This time the flocking featured contributed photo shows from Dan Vickers and Darlene Moore, along with finger food and our secret weapon – a bar open for business. You guessed it: It was a hit.

Thank you very much, as always, to the professionals who make these meetings happen: Bill Lotz, Dan Vickers, Steve Holzman, Jeannie Wright, and Darlene Moore. Thank you, too, to the very talented field trip leaders for the miles you put on your vehicles, and especially for the ways in which you worked so hard to ensure not only that every member of your groups saw every bird, but also ensured that the members knew what to look for as they puzzled over the winged creatures in their scopes and binoculars. You are the best teachers I know. Finally, I'd like to thank the folks who presented the great posters at the meeting: Larry Carlisle, Soluzo Ekenta, Dr. Jim Ferrari, Ryan Malloy, Charlie Muise, and Dr. Mark Welford. I hope to see everyone soon in Rome, and start planning now to join us again next January on Tybee Island, where our featured speakers will include Dr. Sid Gauthreaux and Jim Cox.



Hardy participants on a pelagic trip, Tybee Island winter meeting. From left: Bill Lotz, Mal Hodges, Darlene Moore, Dan Vickers, Ken Blankenship, Patty McLean, Kathy Miller, Pierre Howard. Photo courtesy of Malcolm Hodges.



Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Photo by Darlene Moore.

GOS Winter Meeting Bird list

Tybee Island, Georgia, January 16-19, 2009

List compiled by Bob Sargent

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Bald Eagle	Common Ground-Dove	Chipping Sparrow
Snow Goose	Northern Harrier	Great Horned Owl	Vesper Sparrow
Canada Goose	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Belted Kingfisher	Savannah Sparrow
Wood Duck	Cooper's Hawk	Red-headed Woodpecker	LeConte's Sparrow
Gadwall	Red-shouldered Hawk	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
American Wigeon	Red-tailed Hawk	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow
American Black Duck	American Kestrel	Downy Woodpecker	Seaside Sparrow
Mallard	Merlin	Northern Flicker	Fox Sparrow
Mottled Duck	Peregrine Falcon	Pileated Woodpecker	Song Sparrow
Blue-winged Teal	Clapper Rail	Eastern Phoebe	Swamp Sparrow
Northern Shoveler	King Rail	Loggerhead Shrike	White-throated Sparrow
Northern Pintail	Virginia Rail	White-eyed Vireo	White-crowned Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	Sora	Blue-headed Vireo	Dark-eyed Junco
Canvasback	Common Moorhen	Blue Jay	Northern Cardinal
Ring-necked Duck	American Coot	American Crow	Red-winged Blackbird
Greater Scaup	Black-bellied Plover	Fish Crow	Eastern Meadowlark
Lesser Scaup	Semipalmated Plover	Tree Swallow	Rusty Blackbird
Surf Scoter	Piping Plover	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Common Grackle
White-winged Scoter	Killdeer	Cave Swallow	Boat-tailed Grackle
Black Scoter	American Oystercatcher	Barn Swallow	Brown-headed Cowbird
Long-tailed Duck	Black-necked Stilt	Carolina Chickadee	Baltimore Oriole
Bufflehead	American Avocet	Tufted Titmouse	House Finch
Common Goldeneye	Greater Yellowlegs	White-breasted Nuthatch	American Goldfinch
Hooded Merganser	Lesser Yellowlegs	Brown-headed Nuthatch	House Sparrow
Red-breasted Merganser	Willet	Carolina Wren	
Ruddy Duck	Spotted Sandpiper	House Wren	
Red-throated Loon	Marbled Godwit	Sedge Wren	
Common Loon	Ruddy Turnstone	Marsh Wren	
Pied-billed Grebe	Red Knot	Golden-crowned Kinglet	
Horned Grebe	Sanderling	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	
Eared Grebe	Western Sandpiper	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	
Manx Shearwater	Least Sandpiper	Eastern Bluebird	
Northern Gannet	Pectoral Sandpiper	Hermit Thrush	
American White Pelican	Purple Sandpiper	American Robin	
Brown Pelican	Dunlin	Gray Catbird	
Double-crested Cormorant	Short-billed Dowitcher	Northern Mockingbird	
Anhinga	Long-billed Dowitcher	Brown Thrasher	
Great Blue Heron	Wilson's Snipe	European Starling	
Great Egret	Parasitic Jaeger	American Pipit	
Snowy Egret	Laughing Gull	Cedar Waxwing	
Little Blue Heron	Bonaparte's Gull	Orange-crowned Warbler	
Tricolored Heron	Ring-billed Gull	Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Cattle Egret	Herring Gull	Yellow-throated Warbler	
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Pine Warbler	
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Great Black-backed Gull	Prairie Warbler	
White Ibis	Black-legged Kittiwake	Palm Warbler	
Glossy Ibis	Royal Tern	Black-and-white Warbler	
Roseate Spoonbill	Forster's Tern	Ovenbird	
Wood Stork	Black Skimmer	Northern Waterthrush	
Black Vulture	Rock Pigeon	Common Yellowthroat	
Turkey Vulture	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Eastern Towhee	
Osprey	Mourning Dove		

179 species



Purple Sandpiper on Tybee Island. Photo by Darlene Moore.

“Bird Conservation Through Education: A National Gathering” A Great Event on Jekyll Island, February 22-26, 2009

By Carol Lambert

The Bird Education Network (BEN) conference took place in late February, on our wonderful coastal birding hotspot, Jekyll Island. This was a very enthusiastic gathering of more than 100 bird education professionals, representing 30 U.S. states and four other countries. Many GOS members attended as participants, field trip leaders and local planning assistants. As a sponsor of the conference, the GOS Executive Committee was represented by Bob Sargent, Jim Ferrari, and Carol Lambert.

New faces were exchanging ideas with some of the most well-known names in the birding and education field. Bird educators from small nature centers to national organizations to federal agencies were united in focused discussions. Undoubtedly, future bird education and conservation cooperative efforts were hatched at Jekyll Island.

Beyond networking opportunities, the national gathering provided its audience with relevant and insightful programs. The general sessions with David Waller, Kenn and Kim Kaufman, Dwight Cooley, Audrey Peterman, Paul Baicich and Rick Bonney featured not only informative content but also inspirational messages. The diverse topics during each concurrent session held something for everyone, from scientific concepts and program evaluations to marketing tips and education strategies. All conference attendees were able to walk away with fresh ideas, intertwined with important common messages about the joys of birding, the critical role of education and our shared responsibility for conservation.”

~ Geoffrey Castro, CEE/BEN

Of course, no bird conference can occur without . . . birds. Birders from around the country were wowed by the flora and fauna that we all enjoy as part of our state. Field sessions took groups around Jekyll Island and the salt marsh, to the Okefenokee by canoe, into the marshlands by pontoon boat and kayak, around St. Simon by sea kayak, to the Altamaha WMA, Harris Neck NWR, Paulk’s Pasture WMA and others. More than 120 species were tallied.

The Bird Education Network was created in early 2007 as an initiative of the Council for Environmental Education (CEE) to create a network of bird education professionals. Bird educators must “present a case for birds” – stressing the importance of birds, bird connections to a broader natural world, and our roles, through birds, as stewards of our planet. Ultimately, BEN seeks to connect bird educators at all levels to be more effective.

Presentations from the BEN conference will soon be available online. They addressed a wide range of topics, including connecting children to nature, reaching out to diverse audiences, youth birding initiatives and more. The website is www.birdeducation.org. They also have a very good newsletter available online.

2009 GOS Grant Winners Announced

Congratulations to this year's recipients of GOS grants and scholarships:

1) H. Branch Howe, Jr., Graduate Student Grants:

Jonathan K. Gray, M.S. Candidate, University of Georgia
Brett M. Maley, M.S. Candidate, University of Georgia
Catherine E. Ricketts, M.S. Candidate, University of Georgia
Kirk W. Stodola, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Georgia

2) Bill Terrell Graduate Student Grants:

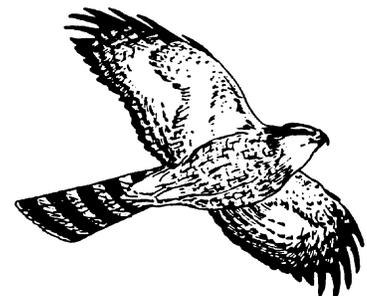
Neil Chartier, Ph.D. Candidate, North Carolina State University

3) Richard Parks Birding Conference Scholarship:

Kelly Overduijn, Cochran Mill Nature Center
Jordan Budnick, Druid Hills High School

4) Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants:

Jonathan Stober, J. W. Jones Ecological Research Center, Georgia DNR, Nongame Conservation Section



Please be sure to check the GOS website at <http://www.gos.org/grants/grant.html> for criteria and deadlines concerning the availability of grants.

Let's let the cat out of the bag!

By *DeeAnne Meliopoulos*

When it comes to cats, we just can't seem to make up our minds. For example, Egyptians are well-known for worshipping cats in ancient times. But by the Middle Ages, cats were being slaughtered by the thousands as alleged cohorts of the Devil. Recent polls have shown that cats have risen again and are now the most popular pets in North America. Now, just when we thought all the excitement had died down, the fur is flying again over the controversial relationship between feral cats and wildlife.

Many of us, including myself, own cats, so it can be difficult to view cats as predators with a penchant to kill that remains unaltered by domestication, rather than a pet that jumps into your lap when you come home from work (or just ignores you until you get out the Fancy Feast). But the truth is, regardless of how cats act around people, they have a completely different reaction toward wildlife. Cats have not lost the killing instinct. Many studies have proven that it is innate, and indeed, so embedded that it is independent of hunger.

There are at least 90 million pet cats in the U.S., with only 35% kept strictly indoors, according to a 1997 survey by the American Bird Conservancy. However, not all of these cats have responsible owners, and as a result, unneutered cats are allowed to wander freely outside the owner's property or, worse yet, simply abandoned to "the great outdoors" if the owner feels so inclined. Abandoned, unneutered cats breed and create populations of feral cats. The American Bird Conservancy estimated that between 60 and 100 million feral cats live in North America (based on the same 1997 survey). The effects of millions of non-native predators in our ecosystem is starting to show on our wildlife populations.

As an extreme example, cats are responsible for the extinction of at least 33 bird species, such as the Stephen Island Wren of New Zealand, the Socorro Island Dove of Mexico, and the Guadalupe Storm Petrel. Though most of these extreme cases occurred on isolated islands, studies have shown that islands are not the only places that certain bird species can be particularly affected by cats. For instance, in California, researchers studied two parks, one that contained a colony of feral cats and one that didn't. Though birds were present in both parks, there were twice as many in the catless park. However, California quail were completely absent from the cat-inhabited area, which suggests that birds can be vulnerable to extirpation, or local extinction, in such areas.

So how many birds do cats kill? A study in Michigan showed that each study cat killed at least 1 bird per week. With the number of cats in North America, this translates to 6.2 billion birds per year killed by 120 million domestic and feral cats – and this approximation is only the most conservative. With existing threats such as habitat loss and window mortalities, can we really afford to let birds take on another man-made hazard to their survival?

Birds do not only suffer as prey, but as predators too. Every wild animal that a feral cat takes is a missed opportunity for a native predator, such as a hawk, falcon, or owl. Feral cats can be more than 100 times more abundant than native predators, giving them a huge competitive edge.

What can be done about this growing problem? Many people have started advocating the use of TNR, or trap-neuter-release, as a solution. Most notably, groups in Athens-Clarke County, including Kitty Crusaders and Campus Cats, propose TNR as a way to manage the 20,000 feral cats living in Athens. TNR involves trapping the feral cats in an area, neutering or spaying them, administering vaccinations, and releasing them back into the wild. The goal of TNR is to reduce the population over time by reducing the number of breeding individuals in the population as much as possible. It sounds temptingly straightforward, but studies show that there are a few requirements in order for a TNR program to succeed. First, the number of feral cats cannot exceed 40. No new cats can join the colony, and every female cat in the population must be trapped and spayed. Finally, these efforts must be intense and continue over a pro-

longed period of time. With cat abandonment and the failure to spay and neuter still tolerated in our society, most TNR programs simply cannot overcome these requirements.

In order to both take the pressure off wildlife populations already in decline and to prevent the misery and hardships that feral cats themselves often endure, we need to find a resolution. Mandatory spay-and-neuter laws should be created and enforced. Companies now make enclosed sanctuaries where feral cat colonies can live outdoors and coexist peacefully with wildlife. Instead of being released after trapping, some feral cats can be socialized over time and put up for adoption, especially kittens. However, to be serious about making progress, euthanasia must also be accepted as a last resort.

To be part of the solution in Georgia, you can set live (Hav-a-Heart) traps on your property and bring feral cats in to your local animal shelter. You can also write to Clarke County officials, such as Mayor Heidi Davison (mayor@athensclarkecounty.com) about TNR in Athens. Last but not least, if you are a pet owner, be responsible.

Position Statement Concerning Free-ranging Cats (Domestic and Feral)

By Carol Lambert and Bob Sargent

There has been a great deal of recent discussion on the GABO listserv concerning cats and their negative impacts on the survival of bird species. This isn't a new conservation issue; in fact, scientists have been studying and writing about this problem for more than 20 years. Over the past few months, this issue has been debated intensely in public meetings and in the media in Athens, particularly with respect to the program known as trap, neuter, and release (TNR). We understand that this issue can stir strong emotions and that finding a solution will be particularly challenging and probably controversial. Nevertheless, our society exists to support bird conservation, and it's our belief that GOS should join the many other scientific societies that are working to teach the public how to eliminate the effects of domestic and feral cats on bird survival. The first step in this effort involves establishing a position statement that represents the views of a majority of the society. Our draft statement follows this paragraph. Please send your feedback to Carol Lambert, lambertsewell@att.net and Bob Sargent, kywarbler@cox.net.

"The Georgia Ornithological Society (GOS) exists to promote the conservation of birds and their habitats. Data from the Breeding Bird Survey and other surveys and studies have documented population declines, in some cases severe, in many bird species due to various causes. Deleterious impacts from the introduction of non-native

species such as domestic cats is frequently cited in the scientific literature as one of the leading causes of declines in wildlife species, especially birds, in the U.S. In fact, research has shown that cats, both feral and domestic, annually kill enormous numbers of birds and other wildlife. Cats hunt and kill, regardless of whether they are well fed. Therefore, GOS opposes actions that promote the establishment or maintenance of feral cat populations and supports initiatives such as Cats Indoors!, whereby pet owners are taught to not let cats roam free. It is not healthy, nor humane, for cats to face the countless risks of injury and disease when out of doors. Opposing the maintenance of feral cat populations or allowing domestic cats to roam in the outdoors does not make scientists and birders "anti-cat people." On the contrary, many of us own indoors cats. GOS will work with other organizations, locally, nationally, and internationally, to promote programs that remove feral cats from the wild and encourage pet owners to keep cats indoors."

What is *Earth Share*?

Earth Share of Georgia offers citizens one smart and simple way to care for our air, land and water. As Georgia's only environmental fund, Earth Share partners with businesses and employees to support 60 leading environmental groups through workplace campaigns and other activities.

For a complete list of partnering businesses and member charities, visit www.earthsharega.org

FAA Agrees to Study Lighting Requirements for Bird-Killing Towers

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has announced plans to conduct a study that will examine whether steady-burning sidelights on tall communications towers, which attract birds and cause them to collide with the towers during night migration, can be safely eliminated without endangering air traffic. Unlike many waterfowl and birds of prey, most songbirds migrate during the night, with up to several billion birds having to navigate a landscape littered with as many as 100,000 lighted towers each spring and fall. American Bird Conservancy and its conservation partners have been working together with the communications industry in seeking this important study, which will help determine whether the safety of pilots can be maintained while also reducing the impact of lights on migrating birds.

Currently, the Federal Communications Commission is engaged in a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that is examining "the extent of any effect of communications towers on migratory birds." The Notice seeks to examine a number of issues in connection with avian-tower impacts, including tower lighting.

FAA guidelines on towers more than 200 feet tall currently require towers utilizing red or dual-type lighting systems to use steady-burning sidelights mounted at various intermediate levels depending on the height of the tower. These requirements date back more than three decades and may no longer be applicable based on current lighting technology. It has also since been shown that blinking lights cause far fewer bird deaths. It is also noteworthy that traffic signals on major roads often have white strobes in addition to red lights to notify drivers, indicating that many motor vehicle departments consider strobe lights to be more obvious to people than steady lights.

The FAA will study the difference to pilots of steady-burning lights compared to blinking lights, and of red lights compared to white lights, and whether adequate safety is maintained if side marker lights are extinguished or operated at a reduced flash rate. This study will begin in early 2009, with a report and recommendations expected to be made public by the end of the year.

"Should the FAA determine the use of side-mounted steady red lights can be eliminated for communications towers without harm to air safety, American Bird Conservancy will push for the FAA to amend their guidelines to reduce avian fatalities while still preserving air safety," said Darin Schroeder, American Bird Conservancy's Vice President of Conservation Advocacy.

(From the American Bird Conservancy, a 501(c)(3), not-for profit organization whose mission is to conserve native wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. For more information, see www.abcbirds.org)



Cellphone towers. Photo courtesy American Bird Conservancy.

Conservation Calling Cards – Please use them!

A reminder that GOS provides a simple, effective way for members to spread our bird and habitat message throughout the state. Conservation Calling Cards are available, free of charge. We ask that you leave them wherever you travel for birding purposes in Georgia. Just keep a few in your wallet or bag. Leave them at restaurants, hotels, gas stations, visitor centers, etc. Let businesses know that you are in their community specifically to enjoy birds and their natural environments. These are difficult economic times, and the owner of that hardware store you stopped in to pick up a rain poncho just might also be a local decision-maker debating whether a local wetland, field or forest is worth hanging on to. If you travel to Jekyll Island, we have a special card for that fragile jewel.

These cards are available from GOS Business Manager, Steve Holzman (b-mgr@gos.org). Send a self-addressed stamped envelope (two first class stamps on a regular envelope) and request either general or Jekyll cards or both. You can also pick them up at the GOS Spring Meeting in Rome, May 1-3.

A bird watcher has visited your business.
 We spend money in your community and are here SPECIFICALLY to enjoy the birds and the natural environments they depend upon for their survival. Destruction of the natural habitats in this area will reduce our reasons for visiting your community.
 Please support nature conservation activities in this beautiful area! Thank you. - From a member of the Georgia Ornithological Society (www.gos.org)"

Photo: Giff Beaton

In Memoriam: William P. VanEseltine, Ph.D.*By John Swiderski*

Dr. William P. VanEseltine, 84, died February 6, 2009, in Louisville, Kentucky. He and his wife, Marian, had moved to Louisville about a year ago to be closer to family after living in Athens, Georgia, since 1952. He was a retired professor emeritus of microbiology at the University of Georgia. A native of Geneva, New York, he graduated from Oberlin College in Ohio, with a bachelor's degree. He received his master's and Ph.D. degrees from Cornell University. His first teaching post out of graduate school took newlyweds Bill and Marian to Clemson, South Carolina, in 1948, where he was an associate professor of bacteriology at Clemson Agricultural College (now Clemson University).

In 1952 he accepted a position as assistant professor of veterinary hygiene at the School (now College) of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Georgia, beginning an association that lasted some 35 years. In addition to teaching, he served as graduate coordinator from 1971 to 1987.

Almost as soon as they arrived in Georgia, the VanEseltines joined GOS, and their membership seniority is third on the list (after Dick Parks, 1936, and C. A. Belger, 1944.) Bill and Marian were supporters of Oconee Rivers Audubon, and he was a regular participant in the Athens Christmas Bird Count. GOS established a graduate student research grant program in 1991, and Bill served on the selection committee for 12 years, initially as a member. He agreed to assume the duties of the committee chairman following the death of Dr. H. Branch Howe, Jr., in 1998. He continued as chairman through 2006, until his health began to fail. During his time on the committee, some two dozen grants were awarded to assist graduate students with their ornithological research, a fact that gave him great satisfaction.

In addition to his wife, Marian, Bill is survived by their children, Kenneth and Barbara, and four grandchildren. Barbara's husband, Richard Rabek, is a veterinarian and a graduate of UGA. Memorial gifts may be made to the Arch Fund, c/o the University of Georgia, College of Veterinary Medicine, Athens, GA 30602.

A personal note: During my time in various positions on the GOS Executive Committee, I had the distinct pleasure of interacting with Bill often. We discovered, among other things, that we had a common interest in railroads and railroad history. He was a true gentleman and a gentle man, always easy-going and quick to laugh and share humor. (Marian VanEseltine and Eugenia Thompson contributed to this memorial.)



William P. VanEseltine.
Photo courtesy of Marian VanEseltine.

In Memoriam: Arthur L. Crowe, Jr.*By John Swiderski*

Arthur L. Crowe, Jr., 84, died January 13, 2009, in Marietta, Georgia. He was born at his family's Creewood Farms in Smyrna, Georgia, and lived virtually his entire life in Cobb County. His family operated a dairy farm and a well-known tourist restaurant, the Guernsey Jug, during the 1930s and 1940s. Described by his family as rugged, iconoclastic, and intentionally obstinate, Arthur was an attorney and developer. He enjoyed the outdoors immensely and enjoyed camping and fishing and even was an oologist for a time when he was young. He remained active throughout his life, including a skydiving trip on his 84th birthday.

Crowe was a member of GOS for 25 years and kept up with birds and participated in counts and field trips. He also made his Jekyll Island second home available from time to time for the use of Jekyll Island Banding Station volunteers.

Crowe was a World War II veteran who served in the U.S. Army in the European theater and participated in the Battle of the Bulge and the Normandy Invasion, among others. He is survived by his wife, Gloria, five children, nine grandchildren and one great-grand child.

Why do we band birds?

By *Charlie Muise and Terry Valentine*

This question is asked a lot – sometimes sincerely, other times rhetorically. While some people wonder what new information can be gleaned from bird banding, others feel it is not worth the stress endured by the birds. These are good questions and deserve some analysis.

While stress and, unfortunately, occasional injuries or mortalities are inevitable in bird-banding, banders are first and foremost bird lovers and go to great lengths to minimize harm. Handling time is curtailed as much as possible, and the banding of individual birds is prioritized according to circumstance or season, i.e., very young birds, species known to be more fragile (e.g., gnatcatchers), and brooding parents are usually banded first. Nets are checked regularly with local conditions in mind, so that in very hot or cold weather, net runs become more frequent or, in the case of precipitation or strong wind, the nets are closed altogether. Nets are suspended at a height such that trapped birds cannot reach the ground and possibly hurt themselves. In the very rare event that a predator discovers a netted bird, the bander makes the necessary adjustments to prevent recurrence. In 10 years of banding I have observed two net depredations – one by a box turtle and one by an owl. In the first instance the net was permanently raised above turtle height, and in the second the net was removed.

The notion that we have little left to learn from bird-banding likely comes from a common misperception of the purpose of banding – that the data centers on catching birds that were banded elsewhere, events termed “foreign recaptures” or “recoveries.” This public misconception might be generated by excitement among banders about extreme recovery events – recaptures from another continent or occurring many years later. But if the only important banding data were generated by these rare occurrences, bird banding would serve little purpose and likely would no longer be considered a conservation tool. Beyond the thrill of foreign recaptures, most of the information sought, such as population dynamics, class-and sex-composition, frequency of ectoparasite presence, frequency of deformities and overall health of a population, is impossible to obtain through other field techniques.

Each banding study is designed to answer a handful of primary questions (and a few secondary ones), focused on a specific population, such as a certain species, a nesting location, or all the birds that migrate through a certain point. Many birders are familiar with migration stations, such as Jekyll Island Banding Station (JIBS), which are usually set up in locations known for their concentrations of migrating birds. The main goal for stations like this is to determine overall capture numbers, which is considered a clue to the ebb and flow of population for a limited number of species. For example, these stations can give us a broad, though poorly detailed, picture of the nesting success of Tennessee Warblers and Swainson’s Thrushes in a given year. Even if none of the birds are recaptured elsewhere, these stations still make a significant contribution to our knowledge of bird populations. Foreign recaptures are interesting but merely a bonus.

Bird banding is a type of mark-and-recapture study, in which populations can be compared across locations or at the same location over time. This is done by recording the number of birds banded and the effort expended. Effort is recorded as “net hours” – the number of nets used multiplied by the number of hours they were open. A station that catches 450 birds in 800 net hours has a capture rate of 0.56 birds per net hour – better than a station that caught 925 birds in 2,120 net hours, for a capture rate of 0.44. Other factors being equal, one may assume that the first site has more birds.

To make these comparisons, the researcher needs to know how many of the captured birds are “new” and how many are recaptures. The “mark” of this type of mark-and-recapture is a thin metal band imprinted with a unique 9-digit number. While foreign recaptures are rare, local recaptures are quite common and provide banders with a lot of information, including site fidelity (winter, breeding, or resident), longevity, health and reproductive success. Only mark-and-recapture studies can provide this information. Indeed, one metric used to gauge habitat quality is the ratio of the number of recaptures to the estimated overall population size.

Banding also allows closer study of species with broad daily movement patterns or that frequent difficult-to-access locations. Experts from the eastern United States have formed the American Oystercatcher Work Group in order to more accurately determine the population trends of this declining species. Although the American Oystercatcher (AMOY) is a large and distinctive species, it can be hard to track because it tends to fly from one shoreline site to another several times a day, often over water. While an observer can drive along much of the coast and see a number of AMOY in a day, the number of AMOY present cannot be accurately determined because it is unknown which

AMOY have been seen and which are new to the count period. A ten-minute bird flight could equal a two-hour drive for a land-based observer, IF the second site is even accessible to the driver. This problem is alleviated with the use of tabbed, alpha-numeric coded color bands. The working group has designated certain colors for each state in which a bird might be banded; for example, an AMOY with a red tab was banded in Georgia. A birder who reads the alpha-numeric on the tab can identify the individual bird and report it. A single color-banded bird can even allow banders to make educated guesses about other associated birds. If an observer sees twelve AMOY, including one with a color tab, then later sees twelve AMOY including one with the same color tab, the two groups are very likely to be one and the same.

Banding can provide accountability for conservation efforts. Conservationists in Georgia and other states have devoted significant resources to grassland management, in response to population declines of grassland-nesting birds. Because observing and especially collecting age and gender data from these species is notoriously difficult, mark-and-recapture studies are necessary to gauge population dynamics. The expense of habitat restoration efforts (e.g., prescribed fire, invasive species removal, etc.) can be justified or redirected according to banding data that provide direct feedback on the efficacy of work done.

Another species that has garnered much attention due to declining numbers is the Loggerhead Shrike (LOSH). As some subspecies of shrikes are migratory and others are not, knowing which are present in Georgia is important to conservation efforts. But surprisingly, ornithologists are unsure of which subspecies inhabit the state. While certain locations may host LOSH year-round, whether the same bird is present all year, or a breeding individual has been replaced by a wintering bird cannot be determined by simple observation. If Georgia has only resident birds, then recovery efforts occurring within the state are likely to be effective, but if Georgia hosts some subspecies in winter and others in summer, then conservation efforts will have to cross state borders. The answer to this question between subspecies can also help us to determine why LOSH are declining.

At least one successful banding effort does rely in part on foreign recaptures. The Northern Saw-whet Owl (NSWO) is a tiny migratory owl that nests in conifers at high elevations and/or high latitudes. While NSWO are easy to find during the breeding season, they are quite secretive in winter, and as recently as a decade ago experts had little idea where they spent the winter. In recent years, a number of people have been trained to use audio lures to catch and band this species, and dozens of fall migration stations have been established. As a result, the breadth of the known NSWO wintering range has increased dramatically, as has our estimate of NSWO numbers. As more foreign recaptures are logged, banders are learning the cycle of NSWO southerly irruptions, as well as discerning migratory patterns. For example, females migrate farther south than males, which is information that can be used to help conserve the species.

If you would like to learn more about bird banding, have any specific questions, or would like to visit an active banding station, please feel free to contact the author at cmmbirds@yahoo.com

In Memoriam: John M. Outler III

By John Swiderski

John M. Outler III, 79, died December 13, 2008, in Gainesville, Georgia. Mr. Outler was born in Atlanta in 1929 and lived most of his life in the Atlanta area with the exception of service in the U.S. Army from 1951 to 1953. He graduated from Emory University and later served the university as director of human resource development for a time.

He was active in the Boy Scouts as a youth and achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. He continued to be involved with scouting in his adult life. Perhaps influenced by his scouting experience, he had a life-long interest in gardening, birdlife and woodworking. Upon retirement, he and his wife of 55 years, Helen, moved to Murrayville in Northeast Georgia. During his retirement years, he was certified as a master gardener and also continued his interest in birdlife. He was a member of GOS since 2001.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Outler is survived by two sons, two daughters and four grandchildren. Memorial gifts may be made to Smithgall Woodland Garden, 351 Lakehill Drive, Gainesville, GA 30501.

Camp TALON

(Teen Adventures Learning Ornithology and Nature)

What?

- A week-long camp for teens interested in birds and nature
- Sponsors: GA DNR, Georgia Ornithological Society, and Atlanta Audubon Society

When? June 14-19, 2009

Where? The camp will be based on St. Simons Island, but we'll be visiting many sites along the coast, including Harris Neck NWR, Altamaha WMA, Little St. Simons Island, Ft. Stewart, Savannah-Ogeechee Canal, and Jekyll Island.

Who? Will host 20 students, age 13-17



How much? \$500 per student, which includes meals, lodging, and transportation. Some scholarships will be available. A chartered bus will pick up inland students in Macon on the 14th, and will return them on the 19th.

For more info, visit www.gos.org, or call Julie Duncan (770) 784-3059, or Bob Sargent (478) 397-7962 .

Camp TALON Schedule, 2009

Sunday, June 14	Monday, June 15	Tuesday, June 16	Wednesday, June 17	Thursday, June 18	Friday, June 19
<p>Depart Macon at 1 pm</p> <p>Arrive at Epworth By The Sea, St. Simons Island, 5 pm</p> <p>Dinner at 6 pm</p>	<p>Morning: Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge</p> <p>--Painted Bunting banding, Wood Stork nesting observation</p> <p>--Chris Depkin, Pat Metz and other Fish and Wildlife Service staff</p>	<p>Morning: Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area</p> <p>--Build duck traps, radio telemetry Demonstration</p> <p>--GA DNR staff</p>	<p>Morning: Fort Stewart</p> <p>--Use camera poles, band Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, search for Bachman's Sparrows, prescribed fire discussion</p> <p>--Larry Carlile, U.S. Army</p>	<p>Morning and afternoon: Little St. Simons Island (LSSI)</p> <p>--Barrier island ecology, using nets to sample aquatic invertebrates, studying American Oystercatchers, Wilson's Plovers</p> <p>--LSSI staff; Brad Winn, GA DNR</p>	<p>Morning: Savannah/Ogeechee canal</p> <p>--Birds of swamp forests</p> <p>--Depart for Macon at noon</p>
<p>Evening:</p> <p>--Introductions</p> <p>--Camp overview</p> <p>--Journaling lesson</p> <p>--Bird ID challenge</p>	<p>Afternoon:</p> <p>--Presentations on habitat, endangered species, wetlands</p> <p>--Birding on St. Simons or Jekyll Island</p> <p>Evening:</p> <p>--Building nest boxes, bird census techniques</p> <p>--Bird ID challenge</p>	<p>Afternoon:</p> <p>--Presentations on waterfowl management, marsh bird ecology</p> <p>--Birding on St. Simons or Jekyll Island</p> <p>Evening:</p> <p>--Presentation on migration</p> <p>--Bird ID challenge</p>	<p>Afternoon:</p> <p>--Presentations on the biology of pine forest birds, conservation of pine flatwoods and savannas, grassland species,</p> <p>--Birding on St. Simons or Jekyll Island</p> <p>Evening:</p> <p>--Learning bird songs</p> <p>--Bird ID challenge</p>	<p>Afternoon (continued):</p> <p>--In the field discussion of the ecology of shorebirds and birds of salt marshes, and the Winter Waterbird Count, gull and tern identification</p> <p>Evening:</p> <p>--Student discussion</p> <p>--Bird ID challenge and winner</p>	<p>Afternoon:</p> <p>--Arrive in Macon at 4 pm</p>

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please complete the form and mail with your payment to: Georgia Ornithological Society, P.O. Box 181, High Shoals, GA 30645

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Annual membership rates for individuals and families:

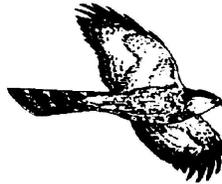
- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachman's Sparrow (Regular) | \$20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Sustaining) | \$30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Bobwhite (Patron) | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fledgling (Students only) | \$10 |

Life Membership Rates for individuals or couples:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Goshawk | \$400 |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|

Yes, I would like to make an additional contribution of \$_____ in support of GOS and its programs.

GOShaw



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