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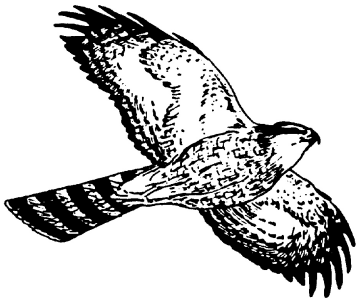
GOShawk



Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society

Georgia Rare Bird Alert: 770-493-8862 **GOS on the web: www.gos.org**

President's Message: Giving Something Back

By Bob Sargent

As I write this, I'm getting presentations, handouts, prizes, and other essentials together in preparation for what I hope will be the first of many successful Camp TALONs. Eleven teenaged birders will leave Macon by bus on June 14th for a week-long ornithology field class on the coast. Those of you who are parents will understand when I say that those of us who have put this thing together have elected to implement the "divide and conquer" strategy with respect to chaperoning all this teen energy. Six of us will assist the class as chaperones and teachers, rotating in and out of the class in shifts throughout the week, and we'll be meeting great teachers in the field all week long – Peter Range, Dot Bambach, Mary Moffat, Brooks Good, Larry Carlile, Stacia Hendricks, and Brad Winn. We're very pleased with how kids and parents have responded to this camp concept, and we can't adequately express our gratitude to all the professionals who will be volunteering their time to teach the kids. Besides taking them birding to Harris Neck, Altamaha WMA, Fort Stewart, Little St. Simons Island, Gould's Inlet, Savannah-Ogeechee Canal, and Jekyll Island, they'll also spend the week mist-netting Painted Buntings and Swainson's Warblers, learning about Wood Stork nesting ecology, looking into the cavities of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers with camera poles, observing management practices for waterfowl and shorebirds, and sampling aquatic invertebrates. Makes me wish I was one of the students!

On a different note, I attended a stakeholders' meeting at the Georgia DNR Rum Creek Office on May 21st concerning a government proposal to allow falconers to capture up to five hatch year Peregrine Falcons along the Georgia coast each fall. As you know, this proposal generated some passionate discussion on GABO, but, oddly enough, I was the only person representing an ornithological, birding, or environmental society at the meeting. In any case, the meeting was intended to solicit initial input from representatives of organizations in the "birding community" concerning the proposal, and it appears a formal proposal will be offered to the public for review and comment sometime next month, and I'll write a letter to DNR concerning the proposal on behalf of GOS, with your input, of course. DNR will also arrange public meetings to give people a chance to ask questions and express their views before a formal decision is reached, probably in the August-September timeframe.

As for the meeting on May 21, I listened to the DNR biologists as they explained the proposal, the state of falcon research, and how the public

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GOShawk is published quarterly
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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!

Red-cockaded Woodpecker Members

Anne Armstrong	Macon, GA
Sandra Crane	Stockbridge, GA
E. Kenneth May	Oxford, GA
Karen McGinty	Hilton Head, SC

Bachman's Sparrow Members

Susan Daniel	Rome, GA
Yvette Lederberg	Decatur, GA

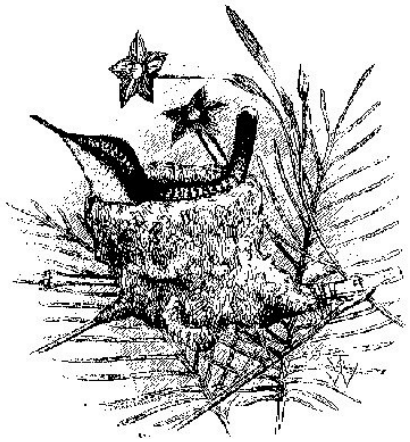
Fledgling Members

Bryan L. Nuse	Athens, 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!

Colonial Coast Birding and Nature Festival
October 8-12, 2009, Jekyll Island, Georgia



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

review process would unfold. Two falconry representatives were present, and we had a long question-and-answer session concerning their desire to capture juvenile falcons, how they will care for the birds, the training they must undergo to achieve master status, and how they are overseen and inspected by the state. I won't go into the pros and cons of the proposal here, as you can get a comprehensive understanding of the issue by reading the falcon articles in this newsletter, and especially by reading the environmental assessment (EA) that was performed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/EAs/Final%20EA%203%20December%202008.pdf Please take the time to read the EA if you are interested in this proposal. There's been a lot of erroneous information bandied about concerning it, and some people have expressed their opinions to me based on what they believe are facts. Let's be passionate, because birds and nature matter to us, but let's also strive to make sure we understand the whole picture and do our best to reach an objective opinion. After all, that's what science teaches us to do, and GOS is a scientific society.

Speaking of science, I was pleased to see postings on GABO in the past week or so concerning the results of Breeding Bird Surveys (BBS) performed by some of our members. I completed two of my routes last weekend, in Macon and near Ft. Valley, and as usual had great experiences. I can't recall hearing so many Yellow-billed Cuckoos on my routes; by the same token, I can't recall seeing so many Brown-headed Cowbirds (ugh). On Sunday morning, June 7th, I came around a bend in a country road and found myself face to face with a bobcat. How cool is that! Most of you probably know this, but the BBS was established by Dr. Chandler Robbins in 1966, and because it is much more scientifically rigorous in its design than most surveys (e.g., Christmas Bird Counts), it has become especially valuable in terms of allowing scientists to make fairly conclusive statements regarding the decline or increase in bird species over these 40+ years. I'm sure you've seen data cited from the BBS in magazines or on websites. So where am I going with this? There are more than 90 established 25-mile-long BBS routes in Georgia, and yet we struggle every year to get just half to two-thirds of them surveyed. When I ask good birders why they don't do BBS routes, many of them tell me that they figure they aren't knowledgeable enough to do them. The fact is, if you know how to identify the songs of many of the birds in your part of the state (I'm sure you can identify them by appearance), then you can easily get your skills up to speed to do a BBS route. No kidding. Make a list of birds you could expect to find in an area where an unsurveyed BBS route is located. If you don't know where the routes are located, contact Todd Schneider at the Rum Creek DNR Office (478-994-1438).

Once you've found a route that appeals to you, see if there's any data concerning species detected on that route in past surveys. Put together a list of species you'd expect to find in late May or early June on that route, and highlight those whose songs you don't know. Then download their songs on a CD or iPod and do what I did when I was learning bird songs – play them in your car every time you go for a drive. Turn off the radio station and stop text messaging while driving! Once you've figured out the stops (50) along your route, it takes just one morning each year to survey it, but the data you collect will be used by scientists and birders for years to come. Seriously folks, in this era of declining budgets, dramatically expanding cities and subsequent habitat loss, state and federal agencies desperately need the help of citizen scientists to understand what's happening to bird and other wildlife populations. Many of us spend a great deal of time birding on weekends, if not more often, filling out checklists, building our county lists and life lists. Why not go birding for a greater purpose? Why not give something back to help conserve the birds and their habitats? The Camp TALON kids I mentioned at the beginning of this column will one day thank you for your dedication.

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

Remembering Rome

By Bob Sargent

It wasn't a big group that gathered at the Ramada Skytop in Rome during the first weekend in May, but human nature and Mother Nature combined forces to ensure that the 50 members in attendance would not soon forget that meeting. I know I won't. The meeting started earlier than usual for me, as I was invited to participate in a radio talk show about birds and GOS on the outskirts of Rome first thing Friday morning. Most birders I know thrive on pre-dawn departures from home, but I'm the anomaly to the rule because I've never enjoyed ("detest" is more like it) staggering out of bed at 4:30 a.m., and it's downright excruciating for me when the task that drives me from between the covers doesn't involve birding. So I cussed the bedside clock, gulped coffee like I was still in college writing term papers hours before they were due, and struggled to keep my truck between the lines on the way to Rome in the wee hours of the morning. And you know, I miraculously found the radio station, the caffeine took control, the deejays were kind and funny, and I had a ball. Funny thing – they had also invited GOS member and Berry College professor Renee Carleton to talk about bluebirds just in case I didn't show up or froze up in front of the microphone. I can hear those of you who know me thinking, "They were worried that he wouldn't talk? Ridiculous. They should have been worried about the opposite problem."

The rain started just seconds after I stepped out of the radio station door, so my plan to scout one of Saturday's field trip destinations was busted. Instead, I spent an hour talking about birds over breakfast with one of the deejays. After breakfast I saw that the rain was falling hard enough to impress Noah, so I used up the rest of the morning indulging another favorite hobby – yup, I found a bookstore 100 yards from the restaurant. I had no idea the soggy weather was a foreshadowing of the outrageous storm to come later that evening – both outside and inside the hotel.

Friday's program began with the presentation of the Earle Greene Award to GOS member and DNR biologist Tim Keyes (see the article in this newsletter). It's fair to say that Tim didn't see it coming. Then he had to live up to the award by co-presenting (with Oglethorpe University's Roarke Donnelly) a study concerning privet control in the Atlanta area, and how bird species diversity responds to the removal of that obnoxious exotic. This program was the first of a double-header, as University of Georgia graduate student Michael Parrish followed Tim and Roarke with a program about using remote sensing technology and computer models to predict bird species diversity and density in habitat fragments in the Athens area. Both programs, by the way, were partially sponsored by grant money from GOS. At some point in the evening the audience became aware that there was also a show in progress outside the hotel. It seems that at least one tornado raged through Rome that evening, unbeknownst to us, but what we couldn't help but notice were the impressive sound effects coming from outside the building.

The crazy weather calmed down before the programs ended, we retreated to our rooms, and then the craziness erupted inside the hotel. Do you remember Friday and Saturday night – late at night – at the hotel where we met in Bainbridge in January 2008? Yes, just like the Bainbridge hotel, this hotel had a club, and apparently it's the place to be for Rome's younger set on a weekend night. To put it mildly, parts of the hotel trembled from the club's sound system, as well as from the joy of people spilling out of the club and into the hallways; the hallways right outside some of our rooms. The most memorable part of the evening occurred when two "ladies" engaged in a fist fight against the door leading to the room where Myra and Phil Hardy were sleeping. And then the police arrived. New rule: no more GOS meetings in hotels featuring clubs.

The next morning we discovered that Friday night's unclaimed name tags (i.e., some GOS members didn't arrive until Saturday) had been "borrowed" from the registration table, most likely by the club's patrons. I had visions of intoxicated strangers sporting our name tags making memorable impressions on area business owners and police. Speaking of memorable impressions, the birding was great, and the field trip leaders really did an outstanding job. I enjoyed my first visits to John's Mountain, Arrowhead Wildlife Management Area, and Berry College. The hill country around Rome was bubbling over with mountain warblers, and if you've never been to Berry College then you really need to get up there and experience that treat. The campus is enormous, the buildings are majestic, the habitat is green and diverse, and the deer . . . well, visualize houseflies on an unattended raw hamburger. No kidding – deer by the dozen stood by the side of public roads everywhere we went, glaring at us as though they were annoyed by our presence.

Saturday night featured one of Georgia's ornithological treasures – Georgann Schmalz – speaking about "The top 10 ways to share the wonder of birds." Georgann used her superb teaching gifts, funny slides, and memorable analo-

gies to explain to the audience how we could teach others why birds matter and why they are amazing. Of course, we know birds are fascinating; just think about how much money and time we spend in pursuit of them each year. But have you ever struggled to find the words to explain to someone – someone who is laughing at you for being a birder – why he or she should care enough to do something to conserve birds? If so, then you should have been in the audience that night. My favorite line from Georgann's talk was about how she compared a complete ecosystem with all the right bird species to a hamburger with all its condiments. She noted that when you're explaining this analogy to kids you had better say "condiments" slowly.

Thank you again to the speakers, the trip leaders, the hosts, and the GOS gang who made the Rome meeting such a fun weekend. And if one of the non-registrants who "borrowed" a name tag from the check-in table happens to read this, we'll be meeting again on Jekyll Island in October. Come join us. We'll have new tags.

Tim Keyes: Recipient of the 2009 Earle R. Greene Memorial Award

By Bob Sargent

On Friday, May 1, at the Rome meeting, I presented our society's highest honor to Tim Keyes of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division. What follows are my remarks:

Bob Sargent (R) presents GOS' Earle Greene Award to Tim Keyes (L) on May 1, 2009. *Photo by Darlene Moore.*

It's my privilege tonight to announce the recipient of the 2009 GOS Earle R. Greene Memorial Award, which is the society's annual recognition of excellence on behalf of bird conservation. Earle Greene was one of the founding members of the society in 1936, served as the second president in 1938-'39, and also founded the Louisiana Ornithological Society. Among his many publications, he wrote the *Birds of Atlanta, Georgia* in 1933 and served as a co-editor for GOS' first "Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds." Earle passed away in 1975, and the society established this award in his name shortly thereafter. Among the recipients since that time are Ron Pulliam, Chandler Robbins, Roger Tory Peterson, Giff Beaton, and Brad Winn – a list of extraordinary achievers in the worlds of ornithology and birding.

There are three categories under which a person's accomplishments may be evaluated for recognition via this award – achievement in ornithology, service to GOS, and achievement in promoting birding. The career of this year's recipient has certainly encompassed all three categories, but he has especially championed the promotion of birding. In my *GOShawk* articles and behind podiums like this one, I have frequently bemoaned the lack of interest exhibited by today's kids toward birds and toward nature in general. To paraphrase a famous quote, we won't get them to love and conserve birds if we don't first strive to get them to notice and understand birds. This award recipient has a gift for getting kids in the woods, binoculars in hand. You know him as the creator, heart, and soul behind Georgia DNR's marvelously successful Youth Birding Competition, but he has also led international field trips, assisted with large-scale shorebird surveys and songbird banding projects, and conducted gypsy moth research and research on the effects of forest fragmentation on Neotropical migrants. He has also authored many of the chapters in the soon-to-be-published Georgia Breeding Bird Atlas.

At every step along the path that is his career, his gift for teaching others, especially kids, has shined as a beacon of conservation hope. Nearly 150 enthusiastic kids participated in this year's YBC, thanks, in large part, to Tim's vision and energy. Tim, thank you for your commitment to the next generation of birders, conservationists, and ornithologists. I can't think of a more deserving recipient of the 2009 Earle Greene Award. Ladies and gentlemen, please congratulate Tim Keyes.

Dogfight at the Brickyard

By Phil Hardy

Indianapolis, Indiana, may have the more famous Brickyard, but here in Americus/Sumter County, Georgia, we have our own brickyard. No, I'm not speaking of a race track; our brickyard is a twenty-seven hole golf course known as The Brickyard Plantation Golf Club. I don't know if Mr. Billy Clark, the owner, named his creation The Brickyard because in places it takes a brick to drive a golf tee into the earth, or because gold, white and red bricks denote championship tees from men's and women's tees. The three courses are appropriately named The Waters, The Ditches, and The Mounds, for obvious reasons.

The day was a Sunday on November 20, 2005. After church and lunch, I met three friends at The Brickyard for golf. Like the pros on the PGA tour, our foursome preferred to walk the course as opposed to renting an electric golf cart. But believe me, walking was the only thing we had in common with PGA tour professionals. Like the PGA advertisement says, "These guys are good." Suffice it to say we were lucky we didn't get arrested for impersonating a golfer. But the idea was to have a good time while getting a little exercise on that sunny and warm fall day.

Being a bird watcher, I have found it possible to look for birds and birdies while playing 18 holes. Unfortunately, my score card reflected no birdies, which is one stroke under par for you non-golfers. But many birds showed themselves along the golf course that day, one of which was a very special treat. Let me explain.

If you are even a casual observer of the avian realm, you probably know that some birds come together during the fall and winter months to form large groups. At times, some of these flocks can number well into the tens of thousands. Locally, species like Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle and even European Starling will form flocks that feed and roost together in massive numbers. And that day was no exception.

After hitting our tee shots on hole #2 of The Mounds, we walked towards our respective golf balls. One of the men in our group, knowing that I am a birder, pointed and asked, "What kind of birds are those?"

Looking up, we saw one of those enormous flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds with perhaps other species mixed in. The flock numbered in the many thousands and was close enough for us to hear the sound of the wind as their powered flight grew and came directly overhead. The red on the blackbirds' epaulets gave a distinct splash of color to the otherwise black mass. Suddenly the group came together into a gigantic whirling crowd of wings and feathers. It was reminiscent of watching the program *Nature* on PBS, where small fish come together to form large bait balls and hopefully escape hungry tuna or other predatory fish. After all, it's a fish-eat-fish world under water. And so it is with certain raptorial species in the class Aves; some birds eat other birds.

As we watched the blackbirds come together into a tighter ball, they began to swoop, dive and turn as though they were performing a well choreographed ballroom dance. All the birds led, yet all the birds followed. It appeared that the flock knew exactly when to turn left or right, when to ascend or descend and when to loop. Was there some secret voice, inaudible to mankind, whispering directions to the birds? What gave this flock of birds such unity and purpose as though they were of a single mind?

Quickly I pointed out to my golfing buddies a different bird. It was a bird with a greater wingspan, noticeably pointed wings and larger than the Red-winged Blackbirds it was pursuing. As a child I called it a Sparrow Hawk, but now know it as the American Kestrel. By now the kestrel, which is our smallest member of the falcon family, had managed to separate one lone blackbird. And although the blackbird was literally flying for his life, he was no match for the faster accelerating and maneuvering kestrel. Wing-beat for wing-beat and turn-for-turn, the kestrel closed on its prey. Upon impact, the kestrel struck the blackbird

with a force that literally caused feathers to explode in mid-air.

It was over almost as soon as it began. The entire drama lasted only a few seconds while four earth-bound golfers looked with awe into the skies above with mouths agape. My golf buddies had never before seen such an event. The privilege to observe a bird of prey take another bird occurred only a few other times in my own life.

Reflecting back, I am reminded that timing and being in the right place at the right time played a big part in my being a witness to this all-natural event. Although it is rare the number of times that I have observed raptors take songbirds (fewer than maybe ten times in my life), the event itself is not rare. It happens many times a day across our state, nation and the world. If raptors didn't take birds, reptiles, mammals and fish, they would vanish. It is all part of the process of our natural world. And although it is painful to see a Sharp-shinned or Cooper's Hawk take birds such as Northern Cardinal and Purple Martin from my backyard, I must remember this is how accipiters and falcons make a living. Certainly I can't begrudge another for wanting to eat regularly and, in fact, I highly recommend it to sustain life.

That day at The Brickyard Plantation Golf Club in Sumter County, Georgia, was special. Jim McKay used to say, as he introduced ABC's *Wide World of Sports*, "The thrill of victory….and the agony of defeat." The defeat of the Red-winged Blackbird fed the American Kestrel. And although I don't know if the kestrel experienced the thrill of victory, he was certainly the victor and lived to fly another day. There may be safety in numbers, but not for that one unlucky Red-winged Blackbird on November 20, 2005.

In Memoriam: Harold R. Elphingstone

By John Swiderski

Harold R. Elphingstone, 90, of East Point, Georgia, died May 7, 2009. He was interested in birds virtually all of his life, perhaps from the time he was an Eagle Scout. He was a member of GOS for 25 years.

Mr. Elphingstone joined the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II and became a ferry pilot, delivering various planes to war zones. When he left the service in 1947, he wanted to continue to fly and signed on with Delta Air Lines, where he enjoyed a 31-year career. In addition to birds, Harold was an avid golfer, and as late as 1994 he was still able to score under his age (76) regularly.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Helen, four children, eight grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

In Memoriam: Kathryn Howell

By John Swiderski

Kathryn (Jonny) Howell, 85, died on April 12, 2009, in Athens, Georgia. Her parents were Lutheran missionaries, and she was born in Seoul, Korea, and also lived in Japan during her childhood years.

She was a member of GOS for more than 40 years, joining shortly after she and her late husband, Almonte C. Howell, Jr., moved to Athens in 1967. He was a music professor at the University of Georgia. Jonny was a regular participant at GOS meetings over the years and was also active with Oconee Rivers Audubon and the Sandy Creek Nature Center.

In addition to birds and birding, Jonny had a wide range of interests. She loved music and sang in the choir at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Athens and established their bell choir. She had numerous craft interests, including paper-making and book-making, and was highly skilled in the art of origami. Jonny was an avid gardener and played bridge regularly. She is survived by her children, Doug and Libby, and two grandsons.

Errata: VanEseltine *In Memoriam*

A memorial to William P. VanEseltine appeared in the March, 2009, *GOShawk*. There was an error of fact concerning his survivors. The correct information follows: In addition to his wife, Marian, Bill is survived by their children, Kenneth and Karen, and four grandchildren. Karen's husband, Richard Rabek, is a veterinarian and a graduate of the University of Georgia.

In Support of the Peregrine Falcon Harvest for Falconry

By Brandon Best

Peregrine Falcons have held a lofty position among humans since time immemorial. Their agility, strength, and staggering speed have given them great value in the hearts and minds of both falconers and those who simply enjoy seeing such perfection. In North America, their saga of being listed and then climbing their way off the endangered species list only adds to their mystique.

In December 2008, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service allowed for the harvest of 36 Peregrine Falcons in the eastern U.S. for falconry purposes. Currently, Georgia would be allowed five of the 36 falcons. Some states have already agreed to the harvest, while others have opted out. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) is deciding the issue following discussion with stakeholders and allowing for a public comment period. DNR should make a ruling in early August. The purpose of this article will be to explain why such a move by USFWS is acceptable.

Both *tundrius* and *anatum* subspecies of Peregrine Falcon (Arctic and Anatum, respectively) are found in the eastern U.S. Both subspecies were listed as endangered in 1969. It was later determined *tundrius* was never critically endangered. In 1994 they were removed from the endangered species list. *Anatum* Peregrines underwent human management and made significant gains in population growth. In 1999 they also were delisted. Human management fell into three categories: banning of DDT, providing nesting strata in urban areas, and supplementing the population with captive-reared birds. More on this third technique later.

USFWS is allowing specifically for the take of un-banded *tundrius* Peregrines. Should a bird be trapped that was banded and/or be an *anatum* Peregrine, it would have to be released. Additionally, following traditional falconry practices, only passage (hatch-year) birds may be trapped. This is an important point. It is generally agreed that approximately 90% of raptors do not live to their first birthday. They die due to starvation, disease, injury, hypothermia, etc. Under normal circumstances 32 of 36 birds would never return to the breeding population. Thus, taking these birds from the wild population would have no significant impact.

Falconry is the most highly regulated sport in the U.S., requiring federal and state permits as well as a hunting license. Simply becoming a falconer calls for serious commitment, and possessing a bird calls for even more. The 36 Peregrines allowed for capture can only be possessed by falconers with substantial knowledge and years of experience. Falconers taking Peregrines are operating within their legal rights as defined by falconry regulations, the same as any sportsman.

The financial and time costs of practicing falconry put it beyond the realm of normal hobbies. One must approach it with a certain level of respect and awe for the animals you work with. As Peregrine populations crashed following World War II, concerned falconers banded together to form The Peregrine Fund. It was falconers and The Peregrine Fund that utilized captive Peregrine Falcons to breed and produce birds that were released in the eastern U.S. to boost populations. There is no doubt that without falconers caring about wild populations, that populations of *anatum* Peregrines would not be where they are today. And like its namesake's populations, The Peregrine Fund has continued to grow and is now a worldwide authority on raptor populations. Using the knowledge gained from Peregrines, the Fund has gone on to work on California Condors in the Southwest and Aplomado Falcons in Texas, among many other species worldwide.

Peregrine Falcons have undergone population monitoring for many decades and are one of the most intensively studied animals in North America. The most recent data that I could locate showed that in 2002 there were approximately 3,000 nesting pairs in Mexico, the U.S. and Canada. Given the population trends of *anatum* Peregrines in the Lower 48, this number is surely even higher today in 2009. Taking 36 falcons is a tiny percentage of the population. Even after delisting, Peregrine populations continue to be carefully monitored today. I feel confident that should any negative population trends develop, our government agencies would react swiftly to ensure these falcons maintain stable populations and never again become endangered.

In conclusion, the taking of wild Peregrines is a sound scientific decision. Humans have practiced falconry for more than 4,000 years. It has been exhaustively proven that falconry does not negatively impact raptor populations, and there would be no negative impact in this case. Falconers were profoundly instrumental in the recovery of Peregrines in the 20th century, and to this day they remain committed to wild populations of raptors.

The Case Against Harvesting Peregrines for Falconry

By Jim Ferrari

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is currently accepting comments from the public on a proposal to allow a harvest of Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) by falconers. The harvest would be up to 36 birds in the eastern U.S. (east of 100º W longitude; additional birds could be caught in the West), with a take of five birds in Georgia. Hatch-year falcons would be captured during fall migration along the coast, and would most likely belong to the Arctic sub-species, *F.p. tundrius*, as opposed to the eastern sub-species, *F.p. anatum*, which is less migratory. There are a number of reasons to question the wisdom of a Peregrine Falcon harvest.

First, let me state that I do not oppose falconry in general. I am sure that falconers treasure their birds just as a duck hunter would value a well-trained Labrador retriever. For me, the issue does not center on falconry as a sport or the ethics of hunting; rather, my primary concern is to ensure the continued survival of wild populations of Peregrine Falcons.

While the peregrine was removed from the endangered species list ("delisted") in 1994 (*F.p. tundrius*) and 1999 (*F.p. anatum*), delisting alone should not be a criterion for proceeding with a harvest for falconers. Consider two examples of formerly endangered species. The American alligator was delisted in 1987 and now numbers about 200,000 in Georgia alone (go ahead and eat that gator burger, guilt-free, Bulldogs fans). In 2007, the Bald Eagle was similarly delisted, and has a North American population of more than 100,000 birds. These are robust populations. The population of Peregrine Falcons (all sub-species), in contrast, is estimated at only 4,543-10,368 pairs for the entire continent (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service data). In addition, while both American alligators and eagles have geographic ranges almost entirely within the U.S. and Canada, and are thus well protected, *F.p. tundrius* falcons range over the entire hemisphere, from the high Arctic to South America. In the Arctic, where they breed, their numbers are not easy to monitor (population estimates vary by a factor of three), and in Argentina and Chile they may be exposed to organochlorine pesticides, the reason for the precipitous decline of falcons from the 1940s to the 1970s.

Some argue that because first-year mortality of falcons is very high, a harvest of hatch-year birds is justified. The logic goes like this: since the falcon would soon be dead anyways, why not have it alive in captivity? First-year mortality is indeed high, with only 54% of fledglings surviving their first year. But try turning this logic on its head: if survival rates are so low, then each hatch-year bird is that much more precious for future population growth. Imagine an *F.p. tundrius* falcon migrating from Greenland to South America in autumn. This bird has already survived from early July to October and has flown 2,500 miles to the coast of Georgia – and now we're going to capture it and remove it from the gene pool? This bird has the right stuff, genetically, and by October its odds of returning to breed next summer would be about 63%.

Much is made of the contributions that falconers have made in developing techniques for breeding falcons and hacking captive-reared chicks into the wild, thus hastening the recovery of peregrine populations in the 1980s and 1990s. Falconers have contributed time, expertise, and money to restoring peregrine populations. While this is laudable, it should not constitute a blank check for falconers to harvest from today's peregrine populations. Conservationists, though grateful to falconers for their past and current contributions, should not feel obligated to endorse the proposed falcon harvest if evidence indicates that it would harm wild populations of peregrines. Bear in mind that falconers have access to captive-bred falcons, so their sport is not endangered.

The story of the Peregrine Falcon recovery is a refreshing piece of good news on the environmental front, and all bird-lovers should be heartened at how this species has rebounded in the past three decades. The analogy that comes to mind is of a once-crumbling national monument that has been painstakingly rebuilt, brick by brick, with the help of tens of millions of dollars and the hard work of many donors, architects, and laborers. Now that the monument is retaining its former glory, a small number of those donors want to take some bricks from the façade itself as personal souvenirs, even though similar versions are available in the gift shop.

Let's think twice before proceeding with the planned peregrine harvest.

ABA Corpus Christi 2009 Convention: A Life-changing Experience

By Kelly Overduijn

When I applied for the Richard Parks Scholarship I did so with confidence, but also with a looming understanding that because I am both 26 years old and fairly new to birding, I probably didn't stand a chance. And I was okay with that. I saw this as an incredible opportunity to pursue the improbable and perhaps have my life changed because of the outcome. And change it has. One can only imagine the excitement that overcame me when I found out that I was on my way to Texas!

Flipping through my field guide on the plane to Corpus Christi, I felt as though I was cramming for a final exam. I knew that this would be a week full of discovery in the "birdiest city in America." As soon as we touched down and were taxiing to our gate, I watched as my own personal welcoming party, the Laughing Gulls, soared through the air over the main building. Their maniacal cackling along with the electrifying call of Great-tailed Grackles sent excitement shooting through my veins. I was here. I made it. Now let's get ready to bird!

Field trips did not begin until Tuesday, but as other convention goers arrived, talks of Magnificent Frigatebird sightings along the causeway had everybody eagerly awaiting the coming week. On Monday night, after getting oriented with the hotel layout and the convention schedule, my fabulous roommate Nora and I went down to dinner. After dinner, guest speakers Ruth Miller and Alan Davies began a presentation of their travels around the world for the sole purpose of viewing more species than had ever been viewed before during one calendar year. Traveling back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean and hitting all the birding hot spots at the right times of year, the pair succeeded in attaining their goal, with 4,341 species viewed in 2008. The riveting tale they told spun my mind into overdrive and undoubtedly knocked on the hearts of every person in the room, asking the ages-old question, "Are you living the life you were meant to live without fear of consequence?" I had a lot to think about, but I also needed to sleep in order to prepare for the next day's field trips, so my philosophical soliloquy would have to wait.

We were up and out the door at 5:30 am Tuesday morning, with Port Aransas as our destination. Once we arrived in the Port Aransas area, our first stop was at Indian Point Park. Black-bellied Whistling Ducks flew in almost immediately and landed on the boardwalk railing, offering fantastic views. Least, Forster's, and Royal terns rode the strong winds while Roseate Spoonbills soared over the highway. A Reddish Egret foraged alongside American Oystercatchers. All the birds seemed to be looking for a meal and having great success. We then jetted over to the Port Aransas Birding Center, where we were entranced by Blackpoll Warblers, a Tricolored Heron, American Coots, Common Moorhen, Northern Pintails, Blue-winged Teals, Double-crested Cormorants, Wilson's Phalaropes, Pied-billed Grebes, Eared Grebes, Spotted Sandpipers, a Sora, and a Least Bittern that wandered out of the reeds just long enough to be spotted and then have its legs watched by everyone hanging over the boardwalk hoping to catch another glimpse. We took a quick break for lunch and then headed to Paradise Pond, which lived up to its name. Here we saw Dickcissel, Yellow, Tennessee, and Northern Parula Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Swainson's Thrushes, Indigo and Painted Buntings, Gray Kingbirds, and Baltimore and Orchard Orioles feeding on oranges that had been left hanging on trees for them.

Wednesday was our first workshop day. I attended a fabulous presentation entitled "Bird Like the Experts" hosted by Chris Wood and Jessie Barry of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. They showed us tips on how to become a more effective birder and also introduced us to new and old ways by which birding can be enjoyed, cataloged, studied, and passed on to future generations. The new technique that they told us about -- one which I had never heard of before -- was eBird. eBird allows users to record observations that they make and combine them with those of other birders worldwide. This exciting tool allows us to be a part of a global bird database and to join forces with scientists, conservation managers, and other enthusiasts to catalog the biodiversity of animals in a way that has never been attempted before. The old technique they demonstrated was drawing. Jessie wowed us with her sketching skills and shared tips with the group that at least helped us to become better at sketching birds. At the end, many wanted to take Jessie with them everywhere so that she could coach them on their sketching. That evening we went out to the docks and tested our shorebird identification skills as Ruddy Turnstones, Willets, and assorted peeps ran around clamoring for food. Most enjoyable were the Brown Pelicans and Snowy Egrets, which were fishing quite successfully among the boats and waves.

Thursday we went to Corpus Christi East. This included a stroll through the residential section of Packery Channel Park, where we were in the company of stunning Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, Inca Doves, Painted Buntings, Eared Grebes, and Black-bellied Plovers. We also came across the largest hermit crab I have ever seen in my life, which was an exciting addition to the birds at that site. After that we went to Padre Balli Park for lunch in the pres-

ence of hundreds of Laughing Gulls, including one that was missing a leg. It kept up with the rest of them, though, and didn't seem to have any problems as it hopped through the waves while hobbling along the shoreline. Once lunch was complete, we were off to Hans and Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge. Here we got gorgeous views of a White-eyed Vireo, more male Painted Buntings, Crested Caracara, Purple Gallinule, Neotropical Cormorants, Ruddy Ducks, Gadwalls, a Sora, and Sanderlings, and we watched as a Black Skimmer showed off its feeding skills to us all and skimmed the entire Oso Bay. If that wasn't enough, on the bus ride back to the hotel I got a really good look at the elusive Magnificent Frigatebird as it rode the coastal breeze.

Friday was our second workshop day. I attended the shore birding mechanics class that was presented by Steve Carbol. I left with a ton of information, and hopefully one day I will be able to tell all of those small, gray shorebirds apart. That afternoon, I went with a group of friends from the convention to Hazel Bazemore County Park to practice our newly acquired skills. We wandered down to the pond that is below the golf courses and found a plethora of birds enjoying the HOT May afternoon. Among these we viewed were American Avocets, Wilson's Phalarope, Green-winged Teal, Stilt Sandpipers, Northern Shovelers, Spotted Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers, Black-necked Stilts, and a most gorgeous view of a Fulvous Whistling-Duck through a scope. However, we weren't finished yet with the west side of Corpus Christi. We then jetted over to a sod farm off of County Road 48/69. There I added two more species to my life list: Glossy Ibis and Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

My final day at the Corpus Christi Convention started at 4:15 am. After breakfast we all loaded onto the bus for a trip to La Copita Ranch and Baffin Bay. I drowsily sauntered off the bus once we arrived at La Copita, and was quickly brought back to life as people began shouting out species sightings. We quickly loaded onto a trailer and were hauled off to go exploring inside the ranch. Before I could blink, I saw Crested Caracaras roosting in mesquite trees and Broad-winged Hawks soaring overhead. Binoculars and scopes were pointing in every direction, capturing spectacular views of Green Jays, Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, Vermillion Flycatchers, Brown-crested Flycatchers, Ash-throated Flycatchers, Couch's Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Great Kiskadees, a Long-billed Thrasher, Audubon's Oriole, Pyrrhuloxia, Blue Grosbeaks, and Bronzed Cowbirds.

Next stop, Kaiser's Ranch near Baffin Bay. Here I spotted one of our targets, a Hooded Oriole, and shouted it out to everyone. They ran over with binoculars ready to go. The oriole held its perch as it swayed back and forth in the strong wind. Absolutely gorgeous! Then as soon as the oriole left, a Buff-breasted Hummingbird was spotted. In the same tree! We jumped a pasture fence and journeyed onward to find a Botteri's Sparrow. We kept hearing them call and finally found the location of one hidden within cacti and tufts of grass. Chris Wood used call playbacks to lure the sparrow out of hiding. At first it didn't seem to be working, but then out popped the sparrow! In the open, for all to see! We had lunch at Baffin Bay and saw a Black-crested Titmouse peeking out of a hole in a mesquite tree. Right across the street from Baffin Bay, at the Seawind RV Park, we watched Semipalmated Sandpipers get chased by Willets. We also had the opportunity to compare and contrast Greater and Lesser Scaups, which were sitting side by side on the shore among several Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. We ended the day with Snowy Plovers in the scope, and I must say that at the end of this whirlwind I was tired, inspired, and thoroughly birded OUT. In the best way possible.

All in all, I learned so much at this convention. As the youngest attendee, by about 20 years, I was intimidated when I first walked in. What were these seasoned birders going to think about me? Me with my 12x25 Bushnell compact binoculars? I was pleasantly surprised that age made no difference at all at the convention. I was welcomed with open arms and made many friends that I know I will keep in touch with for a lifetime. The same people who saw more than 4,000 birds in one calendar year shared in my joy as I gloated about seeing 111 LIFE BIRDS on this trip. We were birders. Young, old, experienced, and inexperienced. We were one, and this contributed to the joy and success of this convention. As Kenn Kaufman stressed in his keynote speech, we must be proud about being birders because future generations depend on our knowledge and enthusiasm for guidance.

As I write to you from Alaska, readying myself for a summer of studying loons in the Arctic Circle, I do not think that I am able to properly thank the Georgia Ornithological Society for this truly life-changing experience, but I will try. I will try with my words but also with my actions. Thank you, thank you, thank you for being a contributing factor in shaping the life path of a young and inexperienced birder. I will continue to thank you all by passing on the enthusiasm I have for birds to others. The biodiversity that we are able to see in birds, the infinite discovery that they provide, their beauty, and the subsequent stronghold that they have on our hearts should be shared with everyone.

Again, my sincerest thank you. And I hope to see you in the field soon!

Hope for Cerulean Warblers?

By Nathan Klaus, Jim Wentworth, Tim Keyes, and Charlie Muise

For years foresters and biologists in the southern Appalachians have observed a curious phenomenon. Areas to be logged would be surveyed for Cerulean Warblers (CERW). When none were found, the cuts were implemented. A few years later, adjacent stands would be up for harvest and CERW would be found, usually along the edge of the stand harvested earlier. What did this mean? Biologists speculated that certain types of logging created habitat for CERW. In particular, CERW seemed to prefer shelterwood cuts and group selection cuts, both harvest types which left much of the canopy intact but created gaps in the forest similar to the old growth forests in which CERW evolved.

In 2001 the Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources Nongame Conservation Section, the Chattahoochee National Forest and the Georgia Important Bird Area program set out to answer this question. All records of CERW on the Chattahoochee National Forest were examined and site characteristics noted. Thirty similar sites were identified in two treatment areas, Ivylog/Gumlog and Coopers Creek. Ivylog has long been a haven for CERW, with records dating back to the 1920s. Coopers Creek had no records of CERW but similar site conditions. While we felt that any good habitat we created on Ivylog would quickly be occupied, the Coopers Creek treatments were intended to test another question, which we termed the "If you build it, they will come?" hypothesis We monitored our study sites for three years prior to cutting, and sites where CERW were detected were dropped from the study. In the winter of 2005-2006 these sites were randomly assigned treatments: ten shelterwood harvests, ten group selections harvests, and ten untreated controls. Each study site was 10 acres in size, with roughly 20-30% of the trees harvested. The largest trees, often preferred by CERW for singing perches, were carefully identified and left.

Bird surveys continued, and for the first few years CERW sporadically occupied only one or two of the ten Ivylog sites. While this was promising, it wasn't the slam-dunk we were looking for. Fortunately there were many colorful distractions as other bird species responded to the treatments. Within a couple of years, harvest sites harbored more Chestnut-sided Warblers, Worm-eating Warblers, American Redstarts, Hooded Warblers, Kentucky Warblers and others birds than untreated controls. The sheer number of singing birds on these sites often entirely filled our datasheets, and more than once we had to resort to recording additional species on the back! Combined volunteer and partner surveys in 2009 detected CERW on five of the ten Ivylog treatments. None of these sites had hosted CERW prior to treatment. No CERW were found in the untreated controls, strongly supporting our hypothesis that canopy structure following these logging treatments creates Cerulean Warbler habitat.

We have much more to do and learn. First, will CERW ever find the Coopers Creek treatments? If not, it suggests that conservation work for this species may be limited to areas immediately surrounding occupied sites. Second, what was it about these treatments that attracted them? Vegetation data collected prior to treatments as well as in 2008 should be examined for possible answers.

In spite of this glimmer of good news, CERW are far from secure. Only two populations are known in Georgia, perhaps numbering a few hundred pairs, and CERW remains on the state endangered list. Throughout its range, CERW are the fastest declining warbler species. In an ironic twist of fate, well-meaning changes to clean air regulations have brought about serious threats to CERW in the heart of their range. Additional scrubbers and other technologies installed in coal-burning power plants, required to reduce emissions, will allow these plants to burn coal with higher amounts of sulfur, such as that found throughout the Cumberland Mountains of Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Mountaintop removal in this region is expected to greatly increase in coming decades, and with it habitat destruction in the core of CERW range.

What you can do:

- Support our efforts on Ivylog and Coopers Creek by reporting the location of Cerulean Warblers.
- Support the Nongame Endangered Wildlife Section and Georgia's Important Bird Area program, both of which depend largely on donations.
- Oppose efforts to increase mountaintop removal throughout the eastern United States.
- Conserving energy = conservation of CERW habitat.

Support efforts by the United States Forest Service and the Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources to manage their lands for nongame wildlife.

Finding the *Pintor*

By Raymond T. Damian, Ph.D.

Detail of Seven-colored tanager from Brazilian postage stamp.

I wasn't even properly checked into my hotel in Recife, Brazil, before two British friends, colleagues, and fellow attendees at the International Conference on Schistosomiasis had found me, saying, "We were afraid you weren't coming. We had so hoped that you'd be able to organize a post-conference side trip out of the city to show us the local birds!" They knew that I had already been several times to Recife in order to collaborate with Brazilian researchers on *Esquistosomose* (known as Schistosomiasis in the USA or Bilharziasis in much of the rest of the world), a water-borne parasitic disease of major public health importance to Brazil and many other tropical countries. They also knew that I was an avid birder who had gained some knowledge of neotropical birds.

"Ah", said I, "não problema! Want to see the *Pintor*?" "What's that?" they said. "Well, it's just the most beautiful, most range-restricted, most endangered tanager in the whole of South America." I figured that would get their attention. So through a Brazilian research collaborator, I was able to enlist the aid of a technician, actually a museum bird skin preparer, from the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco in Recife, where I had been working, to go along and be our guide.

Pintor, meaning "painter" is the local name for the Seven-colored Tanager (*Tangara fastuosa*). With my rudimentary Portuguese, I tried to make "painted," like in our Painted Bunting, out of it; but the dictionary insists that the proper translation is indeed "painter." So picture an enthusiastic artist wearing an old frock coat with bold blobs of color dashed all over it, and you can begin to get an idea of the bird. The *Tangara* genus of tanagers stands out in a generally very colorful group of emberizine birds as the brightest of the bright; and I can never forget my first look at one of these birds in nature. The blue of the Blue-necked Tanager (*Tangara cyanicollis*) that I had seen four years earlier on a golf course in Medellin, Colombia, still burns in my memory, but the *Pintor* is even more spectacular. I suppose that the Green-headed Tanager (*Tangara seledon*) or the Opal-rumped Tanager (*Tangara velia*) have their advocates for the title of gaudiest tanager, but having seen all three of them myself, my vote goes to *fastuosa*. And there is still the matter of distribution. The Seven-colored Tanager is restricted to a very small region in Pernambuco and Alagoas states in northeastern Brazil, no doubt a victim of the conversion of the once-widespread Atlantic coast rain forest to sugarcane cultivation. Another pressure on the bird has come from the illegal trapping and sale of the *Pintor* as a cage bird to the local population. The very first live *Pintor* that I had ever seen was in an open market in Recife.

My first wild *Pintors* were encountered on the outskirts of Recife ("Reef") near the town of Dois Irmões ("Two Brothers"). I think that I must have been very lucky to see this pair in this place; and I wanted to give my Brit buddies a better shot at it. Two years earlier, a naturalist-type Brazilian microbiologist offered to drive me to a spot called Brejo dos Cavallos ("Forest of the Horses"), where the *Pintor* and other avian treasures could still be found. I missed out on the prize on that trip, but saw lots of "good stuff" there, so I knew that the trip would be fun.

We left very early in the morning in a rented car for the nearly four-hour drive to the forest, which was straight west of Recife and near the town of Caruarú. Luckily for us, the weather held fine and we had a great day of birding, seeing not only the *Pintor* but many other interesting species. Among them were the Rufous-winged Antshrike, the Rufous-capped Spinetail, the Suiriri Flycatcher, the Masked Water-tyrant, the Tawny-crowned Greenlet, the Rufous-bellied Thrush, the Violaceous Euphonia, the Red-necked Tanager, and the Lesser Seed-Finch. I also was excited to find a fantastic Harlequin Beetle for the University of Georgia's insect collection.

We returned to Recife late that night, tired but happy, only to face the long flights back to our respective homes the next day. But sleep and rest are easily traded for a good day of birding. You guys know exactly what I mean!

Dr. Raymond T. Damian is Franklin Professor Emeritus of Zoology and Cellular Biology, Department of Cellular Biology, University of Georgia.

Georgia Ornithological Society Position Statement: Feral and Free-ranging Domestic Cats

By Nico Dauphine

Birds in the United States contend with an estimated 117 to 157 million exotic predators in the form of free-ranging domestic cats (*Felis catus*). Exotic predators have been recognized as one of the most important causes of species extinction worldwide. Cats have been documented as contributing to declines and extinctions of birds worldwide, and may be the single biggest cause of global bird extinctions after habitat destruction. Outdoor pet and feral cats are conservatively estimated to kill at least one billion birds every year in the United States, making them one of the most important national threats to bird conservation.

Scientific studies have shown that cats pose threats to many bird species, including priority species for conservation, through the predation of adult, juvenile, and nestling birds. Cats also harm bird populations by competing with native predators such as raptors, thereby diminishing food resources for those species, and through the harboring and transmission of potentially fatal diseases to birds and other wildlife. In addition to direct mortality, cats may cause reductions in birds' productivity due to birds' stress responses to predation risk, further contributing to population declines.

Cat predation of birds is unlike that by any native predator, perhaps most importantly because outdoor cats are maintained in numbers far above natural carrying capacity. A number of additional distinctions between cats and native predators, including the following, may also compound their negative effects on bird and other wildlife populations:

- Unlike similarly-sized native predators, domestic cats are opportunistic predators and typically kill prey regardless of whether or not they will consume it. Well-fed cats are no less likely to kill, and outfitting cats with collar bells or declawing them does not prevent them from killing birds.
- While similarly-sized native predators may take eggs or nestlings of birds, no native mammalian predator routinely stalks and kills adult birds, as cats do.
- Cats may be active during the day as well as at night, so small wildlife species are exposed to cat predation at all times.
- Domestic cats are less motivated than wild predators to hide from people, so they commonly hunt in human-dominated environments.
- Cat densities may be so high in urban areas that they reduce avian productivity to the extent that low predation rates simply reflect low numbers of remaining birds.
- While vaccinations may protect them from several diseases, domestic cats serve as reservoirs and vectors for many diseases and parasites that jeopardize wildlife, including federally endangered and threatened birds and mammals. Of course, feral cats generally are not vaccinated, so disease occurrence in these animals can be rampant.

The presence of free-ranging cats is clearly not humane to the billions of wild animals that are annually attacked, killed, injured, and orphaned by cats, or to the unknown number of cats who die of trauma outdoors. Data from many wildlife rehabilitation centers show that cat predation, including injured and orphaned animals, is the single largest reason for animal admission. Most cat attack victims do not survive, and animals attacked but not immediately killed by cats may be subjected to intense, prolonged suffering before death.

Cat feeding and sterilization programs, often branded as "trap-neuter-release" (TNR), are currently promoted by some advocacy groups as a means of controlling feral cat populations. Unfortunately, a growing body of evidence suggests that TNR is not effective in controlling numbers of cats under prevailing conditions. In practice, TNR generally fails to reduce cat populations in a reasonable period of time and almost never results in the elimination of feral cat "colonies." Due to the significant trapping effort and financial input required, TNR programs typically feature many unsterilized cats. Increased abandonment of cats in areas where TNR is underway has also been documented, apparently because people know that the animals will have easy access to food. If fewer than 75% of cats in an area are not sterilized at any given time, the cat population will likely continue to grow. Due to frequent immigration by more cats and cats' high reproductive rates, TNR programs therefore typically subsidize large numbers of cats indefinitely.

TNR is therefore generally counterproductive as a means of cat population control, and it does not control the occurrence or spread of many diseases in feral cat colonies, putting public health at risk. Furthermore, the large numbers of free-ranging cats subsidized by TNR programs can alter basic ecological processes, disrupt the balance of food chains, cause declines in biodiversity, and threaten the survival of endangered, sensitive, and protected native spe-

cies. Traditional animal control methods, including removing unclaimed, stray, and feral animals from the environment, currently remain the most effective way to control populations of free-ranging domestic cats.

Therefore, the Georgia Ornithological Society:

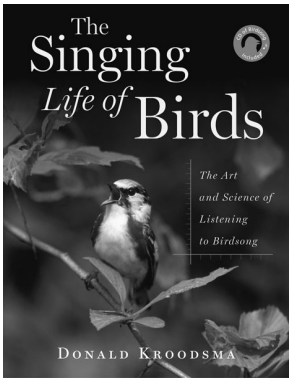
1. Encourages pet owners to keep cats indoors, in outdoor enclosures, on a leash, or otherwise away from wildlife;
2. Supports the passage and enforcement of local and state ordinances prohibiting the public feeding of feral cats, especially on public lands, and the release of unwanted pet or feral cats into the wild;
3. Supports and encourages the humane elimination of feral and free-ranging cat "colonies" and opposes legislation that would permit or encourage such colonies to exist;
4. Pledges to work with local and state government agencies, organizations, and citizens to promote a substantial increase in public education about the conservation and welfare problems caused and faced by outdoor cats and the benefits to both cats and wildlife of responsible pet ownership;

Supports the passage and enforcement of local and state ordinances requiring mandatory spaying and neutering of pets as a proactive means of reducing domestic animal overpopulation.

Editor's Note: *GOS members interested in commenting on this draft statement may provide their feedback to Nico Dauphine (dauphine@uga.edu) and Carol Lambert (CLambert@ccwa1.com). Nico Dauphine is a graduate student at the University of Georgia, and Carol Lambert, GOS Conservation Chair, is Senior Conservationist at the Newman Wetlands Center, Clayton County Water Authority.*

"The Singing Life of Birds" Comes to the Coastal Birding Festival

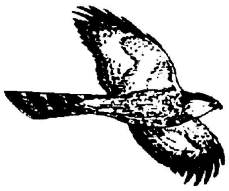
By Bob Sargent



If you haven't started making plans to attend the Seventh Colonial Coast Birding and Nature Festival, what are you waiting for? Along with the usual array of seminars and fabulous field trips (St. Catherines Island, Blackbeard Island NWR, Wassaw Island, Sapelo Island, etc.), this year's festival banquet will feature a speaker who is a pioneer in the world of bird song research. Most of us have learned to identify at least a few bird species via their distinctive songs and calls, and long-time birders may know the songs of a hundred or more species. Everyone knows that a Tufted Titmouse sings, "Peter, Peter, Peter," but what does a titmouse's song sound like to other titmice, and to other species? Why does the tempo and character of an individual titmouse's song change with time of day or time of year? What information is the bird trying to convey with its songs and calls? Sure, most birders know that a bird sings to attract a mate and to defend a territory, but did you know that their songs can communicate very specific information, much like a spoken human sentence? So what are birds really saying? Come listen to birds as you've never listened before, using what they have to say as a window into their minds, using what they have to say not just to identify them, but to identify with them. Hear a song sparrow work through his repertoire, or listen to conversations among crows and jays. See and hear the exquisite beauty in songs of thrushes and how each male uses his songs to best effect. Listen to a babbling baby wren and baby human, and realize how much we have in common with these songbirds. Come and learn to truly listen to our most common birds in ways you never imagined possible. Join us on banquet night as Dr. Don Kroodsma, ornithology's dean of bird song, teaches you how to hear birds like it's the first time, because in a way it will be. And if this isn't enough to whet your appetite, Don will be leading a field trip to record bird songs on Jekyll Island and then will demonstrate how he uses computer software to slow down and analyze songs. This is the teacher and the class you always wished you experienced, so don't miss it!

The *GOShawk*, the quarterly newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society, welcomes submissions of original writing (750 words or less) that would be of interest to our membership. Possible subjects for articles could include stories of how you got interested in birding, bird-related travel adventures, birding memories, and book reviews. The deadline for receipt of materials is August 1 for the September issue or November 1 for the December issue. Submission of materials by e-mail is preferred (to jferrari@wesleyancollege.edu), but will also be accepted via U.S. mail (Jim Ferrari, 444 Ashley Place, Macon GA 31204).

GOShawk



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