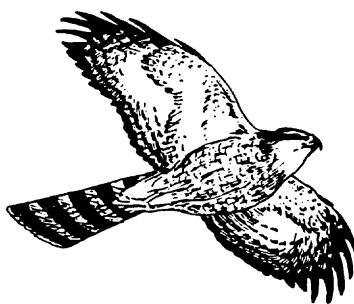


GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society



Georgia Rare Bird Alert: 770-493-8862

GOS on the web: www.gos.org

GOS Plans a Fall Coastal Meeting for 2010

By Bob Sargent

Many of you have probably heard that the future of the coastal festival is unclear. The fact that the event continues to attract hundreds of birders in its seventh year speaks both to the remarkable success of this experiment and to the thousands of hours of mostly volunteer effort expended by a handful of dedicated people to pull this rabbit out of a hat each year. But the reality is that these volunteers are exhausted, financial and administrative problems with the festival persist, and logistical problems associated with holding the event on Jekyll Island could get worse in the near future. Successful, long-time festivals in other parts of the country are often owned and managed by business entities such as cham-

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

GOS Winter Meeting

January 15-18, 2010, Tybee Island

GOS Spring Meeting

April 16-18, 2010, Athens

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bers of commerce, and perhaps that strategy might be the key to any future the Georgia festival might have, if it has one. GOS, as many of you know, had a decades-long tradition of holding fall meetings on the coast through October 2002, but we elected to shelve that tradition in order to partner with other organizations in making the coastal festivals happen starting in 2003. I have heard indirectly that some of our members were not pleased with that decision, but the festival was going to happen whether we got on board or not, it was obviously a great way of introducing large numbers of birders to the natural riches of Georgia's Golden Isles, and continuing to hold fall meetings on the coast would have placed us in direct competition with the festival, with negative consequences for GOS and that event. We can and should be proud of what all of us – the festival team and Georgia birders – accomplished over the past seven years. It has been a fun-filled ride and an intense learning experience.

(continued on page 3)

**Georgia
Ornithological
Society**

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

Welcome, New Members!

Northern Bobwhite Members

Susan Whiting and Phillips Harrington West Tisbury, MA

Red-cockaded Woodpecker Members

Larry Preston Bonaire, GA

Bachman's Sparrow Members

Krista Gridley and Sally Speed Athens, GA
Alice and Woody Hickcox Decatur, GA
Joel McNeal Winterville, 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 (Cathy Ricketts) for an e-mail copy or to GOS, 108 W. 8th St., Louisville, GA 30434 for a paper copy. Available to members only.



*Song Sparrow. From *Bird Day: How to Prepare for It*, 1901,
by Charles A. Babcock (Silver, Burdett and Co, NY).*

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*)

As for next year, the members of the Festival Committee have agreed that there will be no coastal festival, and GOS has been encouraged to fill the void by organizing a fall meeting in keeping with our former tradition, although this meeting is likely to be a bit larger in scope than those society meetings of the past. You'll see many of the same "festival faces" at this meeting, as folks with Coastal Georgia Audubon, Ogeechee Audubon, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources have all graciously offered their amazing skills to help with this effort. We're currently working on the meeting's logistics, as well as compiling a list of field trips and potential speakers. Rest assured that we will strive to offer an array of great field trips to many of the barrier islands, just as we did when GOS organized the field trips for the festivals each year. We'll also invite a top-notch guest speaker for a Saturday night banquet. However, there will of course be some obvious differences between a GOS fall meeting and a festival. For instance, there will be much less emphasis placed on organizing seminars and in operating "The Rookery," as we cannot finance those big-expense activities. If you would like to help with organizing this meeting, please don't hesitate to contact me. We'll post information about the event on our website (www.gos.org) this winter, and, as usual, I'll be looking forward to seeing you next October on the coast!



American Bittern. From *A Dictionary of Birds*, 1896, by Alfred Newton (Adam and Charles Black, Publishers, London).

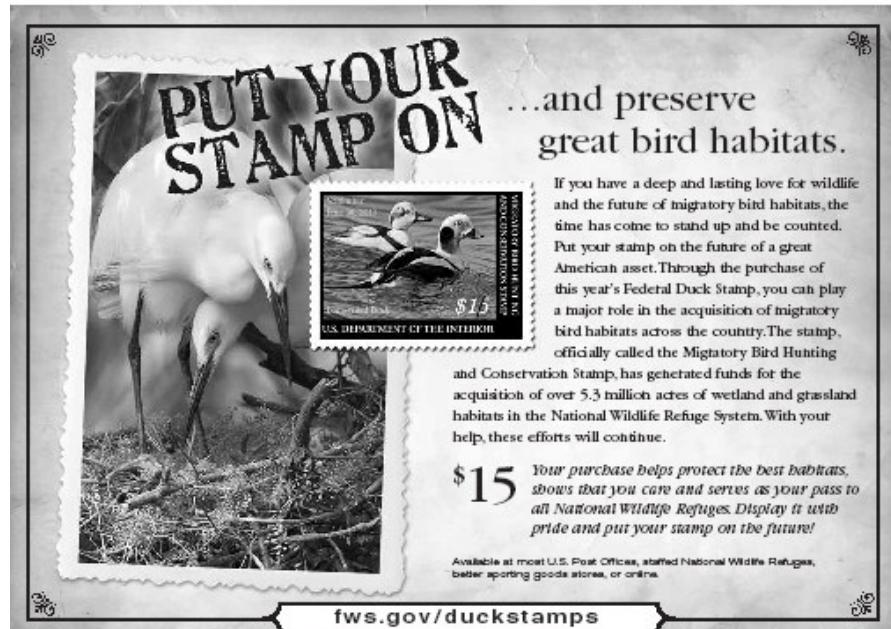
Buy a 2009-2010 Duck Stamp from GOS

By Steve Holzman

If you do nothing else for conservation this year, buy a duck stamp. We'll even throw in a keychain for you. See <http://www.gos.org/duckstamp/duckstamp.htm> for more information or send a check for \$17 (to cover the keychain & postage) to

GOS - Duck Stamp
P.O. Box 181
North High Shoals, GA 30645

Display of your duck stamp gets you free admission to any of the National Wildlife Refuges that charge admission.



The Simmering Seventh Festival

By Bob Sargent

Nearly 300 people gathered on Jekyll Island in mid October for another great weekend filled with birding, programs, and bonding. Festival weekend on the Georgia coast is almost as synonymous with stormy weather as it is with great birding and inspiring guest speakers, so imagine the shock participants of this year's event felt when we realized we had gotten through the five-day "weekend" without a drop of rain or a gust of wind. The birding was great – 200 species were recorded – but the ninety-plus-degree temperatures were enough to wither the soul.

I made my first sojourn to Raccoon Key and was thrilled to find clouds of spoonbills, storks and herons, falcons rocketing down the beach, and Least Bitterns darting in and out of the marsh grasses. We flushed a Black Tern off the dock as the boat came to a gliding stop, and didn't get twenty feet down the dock trail before we had found Nelson's Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, and Clapper Rail. What a gem of an island! By mid afternoon the group I was leading still exhibited fleeting vestiges of the thrill of discovery, but some of them were also exhibiting the dazed expression commonly seen in the eyes of broiled fish. That beautiful island consists of a marshes and ponds enclosed by dikes, and the few trees to be found occur in small patches. Have you ever seen twenty people trying to escape the ravages of the sun by huddling together, almost like penguins in a blizzard, in the shade of one tree? Yup, we did it, but the heat couldn't keep us pinned down for long. I don't think I've ever seen so many Tricolored Herons in one place. The marshes were brimming over with them, and clouds of White Ibis constantly flowed by, thankfully obscuring the sun for brief intervals. The best discovery was a Clay-colored Sparrow feeding in a shrub along the stream that divides the island's two beaches, but the Bald Eagle soaring over the west marsh wasn't too shabby. If you've never been to Raccoon Key, and most birders haven't, put it at the top of your wish list for future adventures.



Black Tern on Raccoon Key. Photo by Mark Valentine.



Georgann Schmalz receiving a raffle prize from Steve Holzman. Photo by Carol Sargent.

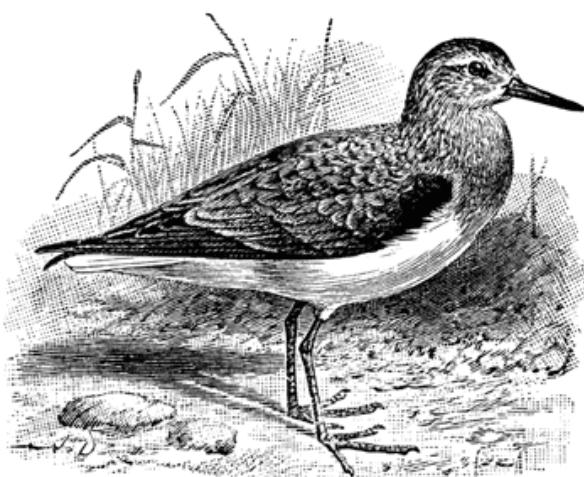
The second full day of the festival found me leading a group of birders on Cumberland Island, another coastal Georgia treasure. We found several warbler species scattered throughout the oak forest as we made our way to Dungeness, highlighted by great views of Black-throated Blue Warblers and American Redstarts. All three mimic thrushes put in appearances, and horses closely shadowed by Cattle Egrets were waiting for us when we arrived at the first clearing. We were treated to the spectacular sight of a Peregrine Falcon jetting over the ruins of the mansion, were amused by the aggressive posture of a clearly upset Ovenbird in the thick understory near the cemetery, and were dazzled by the sight of a lone Yellow Warbler popping in and out of the wax myrtles at the

eastern end of the marsh boardwalk. Mid afternoon found us in the middle of Cumberland's massive beach, no trees in sight, and the clouds seemed to be on vacation. For some birders the walk became more a matter of survival than bird watching, eyes fixed on the distant marker that announced the short path leading from the beach to the sanctuary of the live oak hammock beyond the dunes. I lagged at the back of the group, doing my best to find new bird species. Everyone got a good look at the flocks of Semipalmated Plovers, and dozens of Sanderlings and a few Western Sandpipers constantly scurried across our path, fleeing the incoming surf. The two Wilson's Plovers and the small flock of Piping Plovers escaped the peripheral vision of some of the heat-weary birders, and I was not a big hit with the group when, once we had reached the embrace of shade, I told them about the species they had missed. Everyone quickly regained their birding enthusiasm as we made our way through the forest, and once again the redstarts and Black-throated Blue Warblers appeared. As always, the Royal Terns were putting on a great fishing show as we reached the dock, and small flocks of shorebirds zipped along the marsh grasses on the far side of the river, including Black-bellied Plovers. For a complete list of birds seen on each of the many field trips that weekend, be sure to visit www.coastalgeorgiabirding.org/



Bob Sargent, Don Kroodsma, and Bill Lotz at the festival banquet.
Photo by Carol Sargent.

For me, the biggest delight of the weekend was getting to meet and know Don Kroodsma, the featured speaker and workshop leader. Don is known in professional ornithological circles as the "dean of birdsong," and anyone who attended his presentation on banquet night saw why he deserves that title. He taught the audience how young birds learn songs by stringing together jumbled half-notes and practicing and practicing until the melody appears. He used recordings and Raven software to demonstrate how the process unfolded in a juvenile Carolina Wren, and then he cleverly compared the process to how humans learn to speak sentences, playing a recording of his daughter's first attempts at forming words. It struck me that one probably had to be very careful about uttering any sounds at all in the Kroodsma household, as there were bound to be recording devices located in each room.



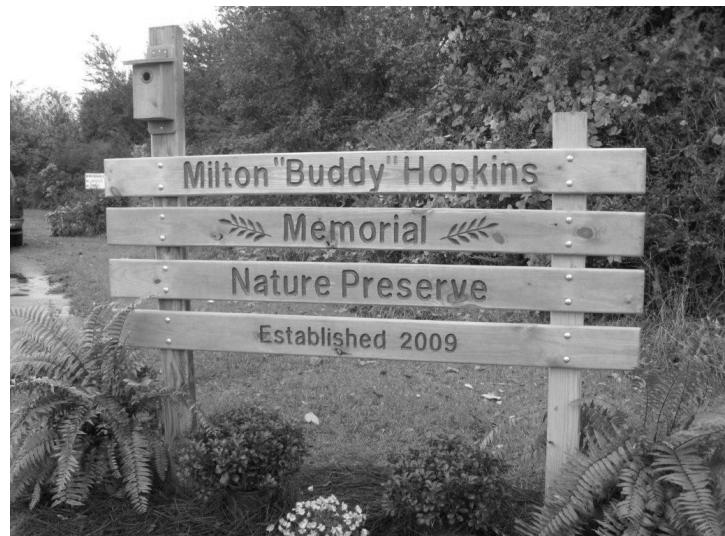
Sanderling. From *The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language*, 1911, by William Dwight Whitney (New York: The Century Co.).

Thanks again to the festival committee, the registration staff, field trip leaders, and the seminar and workshop leaders for another fabulous weekend. You folks make Georgia birders proud!

HOPKINS PRESERVE DEDICATION

By John Swiderski

With vestiges of Tropical Storm Ida lingering in the area, it was a cool, breezy, and damp Veterans Day afternoon in Fitzgerald, Georgia. The weather did not dampen the spirits of more than 125 people who gathered at the senior center, which overlooks Dorminy Marsh, to celebrate the life and memory of Milton N. "Buddy" Hopkins Jr. and to share in the dedication of his nature preserve. The crowd included members of the Hopkins family, including son, Milton "Bubba" Hopkins, and daughter, Carol Hopkins Weeks, and many friends and neighbors from the Ben Hill County area and beyond.



Gerald H. Thompson, the mayor of Fitzgerald, acted as master of ceremonies and presented a city proclamation that featured highlights of Buddy's life and established a new name for the adjacent ponds and wetlands, the Milton "Buddy" Hopkins Memorial Nature Preserve. Mr. Thompson called on GOS President Dr. Bob Sargent to make remarks about Buddy, and others spoke briefly before walking down to unveil the sign at the entrance to the preserve.

A large display board featuring water and wading species has been placed inside the preserve near the edge of the first pond. (A second will be added soon for passerine species.) The inscription on this sign reads:

"This Preserve is dedicated to the memory of Milton 'Buddy' Hopkins (1926-2007). Buddy was a native of Ben Hill County, lover of nature, noted ornithologist, gifted author, award winning tree farmer, wonderful family man and faithful friend. The purpose of the Preserve is to protect vital habitat for native plants and animals, and to provide the general public a natural area for nature observation and study. The Preserve is made possible through the cooperative partnership of the Fitzgerald Utilities, City of Fitzgerald and Boy Scout Troop 875."



Left to Right: Donnie Hopkins, Katy Hopkins, Rhonda Hopkins, Mercer Hopkins, Milton "Bubba" Hopkins, Carol Hopkins Weeks, Darrell Weeks, Mandy Weeks Munford. Photo by John Swiderski.

The Hopkins Preserve is located on the south side of Fitzgerald just north of State Route 107 on Appomattox Road.

GOS President Dr. Bob Sargent was invited to speak at the dedication of the Milton "Buddy" Hopkins Memorial Nature Preserve in Fitzgerald on November 11th. Milton was a member of the society almost from its inception, and his never-flagging devotion to GOS, to avian research, and to countless friends is sorely missed. What follows are the remarks Bob gave at the ceremony.

Remembering Milton (Buddy) Hopkins Jr.

By Bob Sargent

I met Buddy Hopkins in the 1990s through my involvement with the Georgia Ornithological Society, a group better known as GOS. GOS was founded at a December 1936 gathering of ornithologists and Audubon members at a restaurant called Peacock Alley on Peachtree Street in Atlanta. Buddy was just 10 years old at the time, but he was already fascinated by birds, and by his mid teens he would become a fixture at GOS meetings. In fact, you could accurately say that

GOS and Buddy grew up together. Birding and ornithological study were much different in those days compared to this era. There was a greater percentage of professional scientists in the society, bird watchers often wore what we would consider to be semi-formal attire on field trips, species listing was not yet all the rage, some members still identified birds with the aid of a shotgun, and common birds such as towhees still commanded respect because little was known about their basic natural history. One thing that struck me about the written accounts of society meetings in those days was the properness of the language. The use of "Mr." and "Mrs." was the standard when one referred to fellow meeting attendees. As for 1930s equipment, the optics used by bird watchers were poor by modern standards, and field guides were almost non-existent. In fact, Buddy learned how to identify his first bird species with the aid of small cards painted by the famous artist Louis Agassiz Fuertes. Individual cards came in boxes of baking soda, and in his book *In One Place*, Buddy recalled how he used to remove the cards and then dump the soda on the ground behind a barn, reasoning that this would lead his mother or grandmother to buy new boxes, thereby helping him to increase his collection of bird cards.



Barn Swallow. From *The Second Book of Birds*, 1901, by Louis Agassiz Fuertes.

I didn't know Buddy well enough to realize that the man had a double identity. What I mean is that I knew him as Milton, as did many of the Georgia ornithologists and birders of my generation. I remember feeling a certain degree of embarrassment when, after he passed away, I received some emails from long-time friends of his asking me what GOS planned to do to honor "Buddy's" memory. I say this because at first I didn't know who these people were talking about. When I related these feelings recently to Milton's long-time friend Les Davenport, he chuckled and told me about his first visit to the Osierfield farm. He related how he tried on various occasions to schedule a date and time with Milton to meet him on the farm. Apparently, Milton found appointments to be too formal where birding was concerned, as he gently insisted that Les should just drop by Fitzgerald when he had a notion to do so. Les told me how uncomfortable he was with the idea of dropping by unannounced, which reminded me of the dignified formality and emphasis on manners that I've often witnessed and admired in people of Les' and Milton's generation. Well, Les overcame his uneasiness and made the drive to Fitzgerald only to find, much to his consternation, that the town's residents didn't know a "Milton" Hopkins. Les explained to me that all of them certainly knew Hopkins, but to each he was just "Buddy."

I saw Milton at several GOS meetings over the years, of course, as his fascination with birds and his

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Remembering Milton Hopkins (continued from page 7)

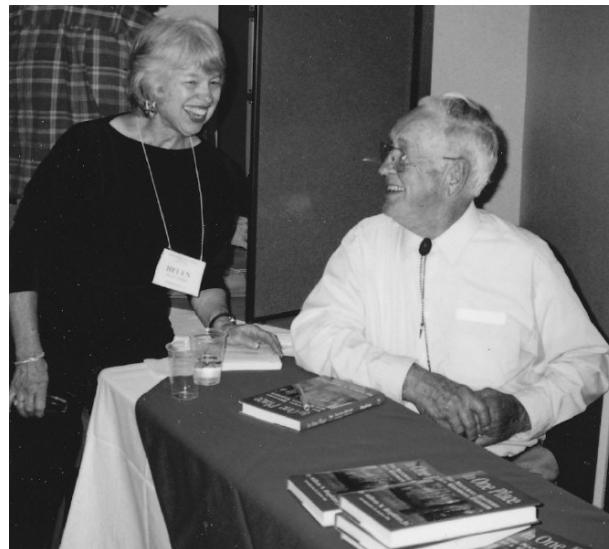
devotion to the society never waned. His last role in GOS involved serving on the committee that selected the Earle Greene Award winner each year, an award which has been bestowed on those who have made extraordinary contributions to ornithology in Georgia and to GOS. The list of recipients includes Roger Tory Peterson, Chandler Robbins, and Eugene Odum. The list, by the way, also includes Milton Hopkins. The fact that he enjoyed serving on that committee came as no surprise to me, because it was in keeping with two of the qualities I often witnessed in Milton: he enjoyed making people feel good about themselves, and he had a strong respect for the great contributors to ornithology and to bird conservation.

Milton's own ornithological prowess was partly the product of tutelage under legendary scientists. Eugene Odum taught him ornithology at the University of Georgia in 1940, and he was also privileged to know and be taught by the best field ornithologists of his day or any day – men like Herbert Stoddard and Robert Norris. It was Norris who taught him to take detailed field notes, and Milton attributed much of his prolific written work to the influence of that ornithologist. One of my favorite passages in Milton's book describes his first encounter with Norris, when on a spring bird watching stroll in 1938, BB gun in hand, Milton found himself puzzled by bear-like sounds coming from a thicket. As he drew close to investigate, a growling Robert Norris came charging out of the bushes frightening Milton and chasing him for quite some distance. Milton didn't know it at the time, but he had found the great teacher we all hunger for in our lives.

Robert Norris introduced Milton to GOS, and the two of them actually hitchhiked from Fitzgerald to attend a society meeting in Milledgeville in 1942. That same year 16-year-old Milton saw his first published bird observations appear in the society's December issue of *The Oriole*, including a description of a Little Blue

Heron rookery he had found. Heron rookeries would prove to be a particular fascination for him throughout his life, as is evinced by the devotion of many pages to that subject in his monograph about the birdlife of Ben Hill County. That long-ago note about herons seen near Fitzgerald was the start of a flood of records from Milton that would appear in the pages of *The Oriole* for decades to come.

In the fall of 1959, Milton took on the role of editor of *The Oriole*, a job he would do for the next six years. During his tenure, the "From the Field" section of the journal expanded in scope, and Milton's voracious appetite for reading was apparent through the astonishing number of book reviews he wrote in the "Recent Literature" section of the journal. In very rare instances, Milton included an editor's note at the end of a journal issue, and when I read those comments I was reminded of the old adage that some things never really change. Milton often pleaded with the membership to submit their observations to the journal, reminding them of the importance of placing the advancement of science ahead of personal species lists. In one memorable passage from 1961 he wrote, "We are all guilty of taking our jobs and our leisure too seriously. Take a few hours now and then and devote them to ornithology."



Milton Hopkins chats with Helen Ogren at his book signing table at the 2002 Spring GOS Meeting in Valdosta. Photo by Ken Clark.



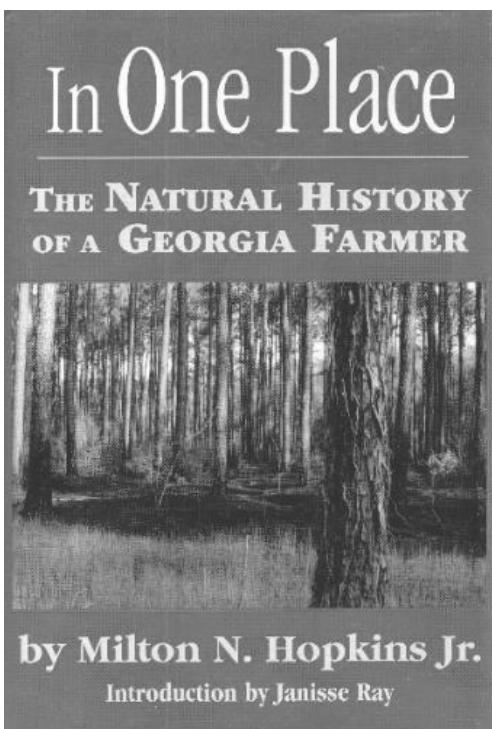
My favorite commentary by Milton pertained to his perception that young people were no longer engaged in birding and other nature interests, and how it important it was for the older generation to take it upon themselves to mentor them. When I read this I couldn't help but smile, because today's GOS members have listened to me harp on this message for eight years. Here are excerpts from Milton's editorial in September 1960:

"Are we members of the Georgia Ornithological Society taking any steps to assure a continued interest and study of Georgia birds? The clichés "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" and "experience is the best teacher" are old but still appropriate. We are not making enough effort in the line of instilling interest in birds in our younger generation.

We need to encourage our younger members to take an active interest in our doings and to participate in our meetings. ... I personally have never known of a youngster truly interested in the out-of-doors who became a delinquent. A love of nature and an intelligent study of its inhabitants seem to impart a quality and understanding that is absent from many person's character."

Sounds like the words of a teacher and naturalist-philosopher, doesn't it? That's in keeping with the way Milton has often been described to me – a man who loved to teach others about his passions. He was as genuine as anyone you'd ever meet, always seemed to have a grin on his face and loved a good joke, was the essence of humility, could cook up a terrific plate of home-made grits, and truly never met a stranger. In graduate school I knew Milton's friend the English professor and writer Jim Kilgo. Jim, like Les Davenport, casually met Milton on one of the Sapelo Island Christmas Bird Counts, and the two men shared a wealth of adventures together. Jim immortalized Milton as the farmer Calvin Hardy in his book *Deep Enough for Ivorybills*, describing their visit to the slimy miasmic chaos of a heron rookery, and their near-collision with a pair of copulating hawks as the two men orbited over a rookery in Milton's plane. As the interlocked hawks hurtled towards the airplane's propeller, only separating at the last instant to dodge the machine, Jim noted that if he had been standing, his knees would have buckled. With the roar of the airplane's engine in his ears and his knees still quivering, Jim yelled to Milton, "What was that?" I still laugh about Milton's seemingly casual reply to the near mid-air collision, as reported by Jim, "Red-tails, weren't they?"

Jim's stories about Milton struck a special chord with me because, you see, just as Robert Norris introduced Milton to the scientific study of birds and Milton introduced Jim Kilgo to the study of bird behavior, Jim, in turn, was my guide for my first Christmas Bird Count a long time ago. This is what comes to my mind when I consider the scientific legacy of Milton and the other ornithologists of his generation. Isaac Newton famously said, "If we can see further than others, it is because we are standing on the shoulders of giants." The state of ornithology and the conservation of birds in Georgia is where it is today because of the dedication and the leadership of men like Milton. If the current generation has had any success at all in this field, it is because we have had great teachers. The truly remarkable thing about Milton's teaching example is that, in an age when so many of us feel that the secrets to life and the keys to the mysteries of ornithology can only be found somewhere over the horizon and that nothing very interesting happens in our backyards, Milton influenced so many people and made invaluable contributions to ornithology by never really leaving home. In the concluding words to his book he wrote, "I have seen all these species and more by just sitting in one place long enough and letting the birds come to me. God, what a revelation and classroom this life has been for a farm boy."



The image shows the front cover of a book. At the top, the title "In One Place" is written in a large, serif font. Below the title, a subtitle reads "THE NATURAL HISTORY OF A GEORGIA FARMER". A black and white photograph of a swampy or wooded area is centered on the cover. At the bottom, the author's name "by Milton N. Hopkins Jr." is printed, followed by "Introduction by Janisse Ray".

Camp TALON

(Teen Adventures Learning Ornithology and Nature)

What?

- A week-long camp for teens interested in birds and nature
- Sponsors: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Ornithological Society, and Atlanta Audubon Society

When? Tentatively June 5-11, 2010

Where? The camp will kick off with a Saturday night get-together at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center, before spending the week based on St. Simons Island. We'll be birding at Harris Neck NWR, Altamaha WMA, Little St. Simons Island, Ft. Stewart, Sapelo Island, and Jekyll Island.

Who? Will host 20 students, age 13-17



How much? About \$500 per student, which includes meals, lodging, and transportation. Some scholarships will be available. A chartered bus will pick up students at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center on the morning of the 5th, and will return them on the 11th for a last-night celebration.

For info, call Julie Duncan (770) 784-3059, or Bob Sargent (478) 397-7962.

GOS WINTER 2010 MEETING

Tybee Island, Georgia
January 15-18, 2010

The Winter 2010 Meeting of the Georgia Ornithological Society will be held on Tybee Island, Georgia, from Friday, January 15, through Monday, January 18, 2010. Please note that this is the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Weekend. Our headquarters hotel is the Ocean Plaza Beach Resort. The registration desk will open in the lobby of that hotel at 5:00 PM on Friday, January 15, 2010.

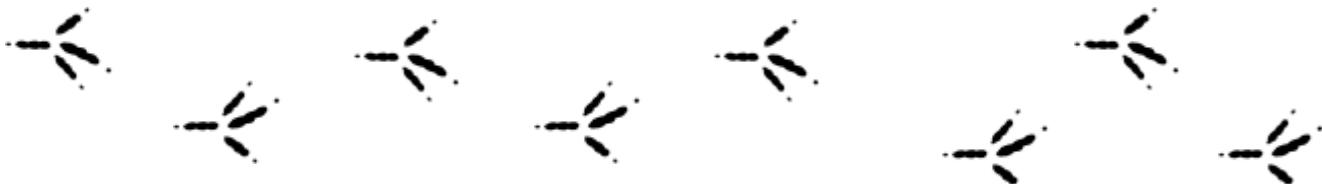
Dinner on Friday is on your own. The Friday night program will begin at 7:30 PM and will be presented by Mr. Jim Cox, of Tall Timbers Research Station. Jim will present a program based on his research entitled "Lightning-Season Burning: Friend or Foe of Breeding Birds?" Following Jim's presentation there will be a description of all the field trips, as well as an opportunity to sign up for any field trips that are not already full.

Field trip destinations on Saturday, Sunday and Monday will include Tybee Island North Beach, Fort Pulaski National Monument, Savannah NWR, "near-shore" pelagic trips, Little Tybee Island, Savannah "Hotspots," Glennville Water Treatment Facility, and Harris Neck NWR. There is a reservation form included with the registration packet, and field trips should be reserved in advance. You will need to send in your field trip request (and check, if applicable) with your meeting registration. The field trips will be filled in the order that reservations are received. If your first, second or third choices of field trips are not available, you will be contacted prior to the meeting. (You may still sign up for those field trips that are not full and do not require advance reservations and payment after the program on Friday evening, January 15.)

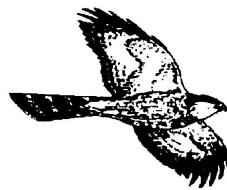
A Poster Session will be held at the Ocean Plaza Beach Resort from 5:00 to 7:00 on Saturday afternoon. The Social Hour will begin on Saturday at 6:00 PM, and the banquet will start at 7:00 PM. Our featured speaker will be Dr. Sidney Gauthreaux from Clemson University. Dr. Gauthreaux is recognized as the first person to apply the use of radar in understanding avian migration. His presentation will focus on recent advancements in thermal imagery and radar technology and how this has greatly benefited the study of bird migration.

After the field trips on Sunday there will be a "Flocking" at the Ocean Plaza Beach Resort from 5:00 until 6:30 PM. (What is a "Flocking"? We borrowed this idea from the Florida Ornithological Society. It is an informal gathering where our members present slides of their birding trips from around the world.) Light refreshments will be available. There will be A/V equipment provided; just bring your memory stick or CD of photos. Please contact Bill Lotz or Dan Vickers (contact information is listed below) if you plan to present at the Flocking. Sunday dinner is on your own.

For additional information regarding programs or field trips, contact Bill Lotz (404) 261-1906, or e-mail blotz@mindspring.com. For more information concerning registration or lodging, contact Dan Vickers at (770) 235-7301, or e-mail dvickers@mindspring.com.



GOShawk



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Annual membership rates for individuals and families:

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| <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.