

GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society



Georgia Rare Bird Alert: 770-493-8862

GOS on the web: www.gos.org

Report to the Membership

By Bob Sargent

As I write this we're buffing the polish on the planning for the society's fall meeting in October, we're well into propping up the scaffold for the 75th anniversary meeting in January, and we've put the ink on the hotel contract for the spring meeting in Hiawassee next May. When you consider our three annual meetings in the context of all the meetings, festivals, and field trips organized and offered by the state's Audubon chapters and other entities, you might be tempted to conclude that there must be a saturation point beyond which, "If you offer it, they won't come." Apparently, this isn't the case. I say this because I'm sure you've heard that the folks in Albany are planning a birding event this month, and perhaps you've heard that there's been serious talk about arranging a festival on Tybee Island and another one in the mountains. I'm also getting calls just lately from city tourism

offices asking what it will take to bring a GOS meeting to their communities. All of this, of course, is a testament to the wonderful appeal of birds and birding to society. It's great news to the communities that so desperately need the tourism dollars birders bring with them, and it might suggest that, in a time of economic anguish, more people look for nature-oriented excursions, especially events that are close to home, on which to spend their scarce dollars. From my perspective, this bird meeting bonanza also represents more opportunities by which organizations like GOS can spread the conservation gospel, recruiting ecological converts and educating voters.

Despite appearances, GOS is working on more than just meeting plans. The 2009 volume of *The Oriole* will soon travel to the printer, which means...drum roll please...for the first time in several years the journal will actually be up-to-date! This volume will be the last one for co-editor Sara Schweitzer, as she has moved to North Carolina to take a waterfowl biology job with that state's fish and wildlife agency. This is a tough loss for the journal and a sad one for me. Sara has been a dear friend and mentor for more than 15 years, going back to when she served on my graduate advisory committee at the University of Georgia. It has been my pleasure to review and edit manuscripts with her, even though each of us had to routinely taunt the other to "Quit griping about over-commitments and get the issue done already!" On the other hand, I distinctly recall how she agreed to serve as editor of *The Oriole* only if I agreed to co-edit it with her, so shouldn't I feel conned? Seriously, thank you, Sara, and thank you, Renee Carleton, for signing on as the new co-editor. I won't leave the state on you...



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Georgia Ornithological Society

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

Welcome, New Members!

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Eddie Hatchett

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Red-cockaded Woodpecker Members

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The 2010 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.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

GOS FALL MEETING

October 8-10, 2010, Jekyll Island

GOS 75th Anniversary Meeting

January 14-17, 2011, Tybee Island

GOS SPRING MEETING

May 13-15, 2011, Hiawassee



ERRATUM

The June 2010 GOShawk was misnumbered as "Vol 37, No. 12." The correct number is "Vol 37, No. 2."

Report to the Membership *(continued from page 1)*

In other news, isn't it great to see all the articles in this newsletter (pages 6-11) from young folks who were sent to birding camps with the aid of GOS scholarships? For other young birders who might be reading this, there will be more scholarship opportunities next year. Keep checking the GOS website. I've noticed that a few young birders who applied for scholarships last year or the year before didn't do so again in subsequent years. Read the stories from the scholarship winners in this newsletter and remember: Don't give up if you don't succeed the first time. You can't win a free trip if you don't apply. Speaking of applying, I encourage graduate students and biologists to write down the application deadlines for the Terrell and Howe grants, all of which are listed in this newsletter (page 14) and on the website. I'm pleased to report that the ceiling has been raised for both graduate student pots of money to \$15,000 per year each. Take a moment to visit our website and you'll find that GOS has now helped to sponsor the research of 46 graduate students since these two grants were conceived.

Regarding this newsletter, earlier this year I asked you to let me know if you want to continue to receive the *GOShawk* in hard copy form or if you would prefer to receive it in electronic form. This is more a matter of saving trees than it is a cost savings issue, though the savings could certainly help pay for another young birder's camp scholarship. I heard from about 130 members, and of those who responded, only 15 preferred to keep receiving a hard copy. Some of those who expressed a willingness to receive electronic newsletters did so with a certain degree of reluctance, explaining that they feared losing touch with the society, might overlook meeting or scholarship announcements, or might not respond in a timely way to requests for letters on behalf of conservation issues. Rest assured, we're not going to force electronic newsletters on members who want to hold the paper in their hands. Unfortunately, one of the things my survey discovered is that we don't have a current e-mail address for perhaps 15-20% of our members. I'll send a follow-up message to those who said okay to getting electronic newsletters, verifying your preference, and Cathy and Patti will include a request for current contact information to all of our members at the end of the year. Please take the time to fill out and return that request.

I'll close with another economics-related issue – a dues increase. GOS hasn't increased its dues in nearly 10 years, and I'm afraid the time has come. The cost of our publications and especially our meetings has inched upward over the past few years. We'll be making some adjustments starting in 2011 to reduce meeting costs, and will be reducing the number of newsletters we send via snail mail, but a slight increase in annual dues is necessary to help us cover operating expenses. You might not know this, but 36% of the society's membership, myself included, are life members. This fact speaks to the dedication so many people have to this organization, but in a bottom-line way, it is also a reminder that incoming dues revenue has declined considerably as a percentage of GOS' operating capital. The new, simpler dues structure is listed on the back page of this newsletter. I hope you'll understand and will continue to support the society and its programs, and if you would be inclined to make an additional donation (you can specify how it's to be used), we would be especially grateful. Thank you for supporting GOS, and I look forward to seeing you on Jekyll and Tybee Islands.



Editor's Note: As the *GOShawk* went to press, we learned of the death of Robert Allen Norris on September 6, 2010. A memorial article about Dr. Norris and his many contributions to Georgia ornithology will be published in a 2011 issue of *The Oriole*, and a special article will be dedicated to him in the next newsletter.

Support the Georgia Ornithological Society through Earth Share of Georgia

By Mark Beebe

One easy way to support the work of the Georgia Ornithological Society (GOS) can be through your donation in a workplace giving campaign sponsored by your employer. Many local employers partner with Earth Share of Georgia to make workplace giving to an environmental organization such as GOS a simple choice.

Earth Share of Georgia plays a vital role in promoting environmental education, volunteerism and charitable giving by partnering with businesses across Georgia. Since its founding in 1992, employees across the state have generously pledged their financial support and time to the important work of Earth Share's member organizations, including GOS. These contributions are growing as more and more businesses move to place the environment alongside United Way and other approved charities as a key recipient of annual employee payroll pledges. Earth Share now participates in more than seventy corporate and government campaigns such as those sponsored by American Express, Kaiser Permanente, McKenna, Long & Aldridge, Microsoft Corp, REI, the State of Georgia, and many local governments and schools.

Employees should check with their payroll offices or with Earth Share of Georgia to determine if they have the option to contribute to Earth Share of Georgia. If your workplace already has a partnership with Earth Share, it's as simple as filling out a pledge card and designating how much money should be taken out of each paycheck. Earth Share allows employee donors the unique option of designating a pledge to one or more organizations of their choice or making one gift to be shared among all member groups.



If your workplace isn't a current Earth Share partner, ask your human resources department to consider this option; check out www.earthsharega.org for more information.

In Memoriam: Clara K. Brown

By Glenda Merrill

Clara Brown (8 September 1923 - 24 August 2010), a leader in the health care community in Columbus and an advocate for the elderly, loved life and lived it to the fullest. When her husband retired, she asked him what he was going to do. He answered, "Take up birdwatching." Her response was, "That's the silliest thing I ever heard of." But when she retired, she also took it up, and birding soon became one of her many loves. Clara had always loved nature and being outdoors. Having just purchased a new pair of binoculars, she was looking forward to attending the upcoming GOS meeting on Jekyll Island. In fact, she had already registered for the meeting when she lost her life in a car accident on August 24. She often said our group from Columbus just let her tag along on our outings, but she kept us laughing with her jokes and stories. We will miss her and those jokes and stories very much.



Clara Brown. *Photo courtesy of Christine Gibson.*

Have You Gotten Sick from a Tick? Tips on Dealing with Ticks and their Bites

By Darlene J. Moore, RN, MN, NNP-BC

It's happened to all of us at some point. You're out in the field, having a great day of birding, and then you notice the tick. What do you do? Unproven methods like using petroleum jelly or hot matches do not help in removing ticks. In fact, they can make matters worse by causing the tick to release saliva and/or its gut contents, which contain the bacteria that cause illnesses known as tick-borne rickettsial diseases (TBRD).

It was late June, and I was doing a little photography at Big Lazar WMA. Hiking back to the car, I noticed a tick on my arm. Reacting without thinking, I pulled it off with my bare hands and threw it on the ground, breaking every rule of proper tick removal. It wasn't until July 4th that I knew something was wrong. I developed fever, chills, headache, night sweats, and the worst muscle and joint pain that I had ever experienced. Medical professionals are always the last to seek treatment, and I shrugged off the whole incident as a virus. However, I couldn't seem to shake the horrible muscle and joint pains, along with a weird temporary inability to use certain fingers. I never did develop a rash. It was only after much insistence from my husband that I finally made a doctor's appointment, who confirmed that I had been infected with a TBRD.

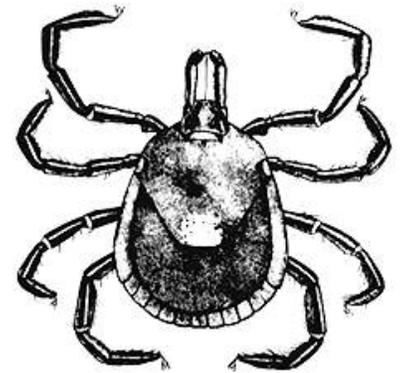
Ehrlichiosis, Anaplasmosis, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Lyme Disease, and Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI) are the TBRDs reported in the Southeast. Signs and symptoms of the TBRDs are similar. Onset of symptoms ranges from five days to three weeks after the tick bite. Symptoms include fever, chills, severe headache, fatigue, and muscle aches. Less reported symptoms are nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite and diarrhea. Most are familiar with the rashes associated with tick-borne diseases; however, 40 to 70 percent of people infected will **never** have a rash.

Prevention is key. Simple things like wearing light-colored clothing, tucking pants in one's socks, and doing a body check after leaving tick-infested areas are helpful. Bug sprays containing DEET may be applied, but need to be used cautiously with children and need to be reapplied after a few hours.

If a tick has attached, prompt removal with fine-tipped tweezers is best. Grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pull upward with steady, even pressure, not twisting or jerking the tick. Do not touch the tick; instead use a tissue or paper towel to handle it. Be sure all of the tick has been removed (including the mouthparts) without crushing the tick, since expelling its fluids can cause infection. If the fluid of the tick gets on you, clean the area thoroughly. It is a good idea to save the tick for future testing should you become ill.

Diagnosis of the specific TBRD can be challenging to healthcare providers and frustrating to patients. Typically, patients are referred to and are followed by specialists in infectious diseases, who interpret test results and monitor progress on antibiotics. If a TBRD is suspected, prompt treatment with doxycycline is indicated (unless you are pregnant), even if the disease has yet to be confirmed. Length of treatment with this antibiotic varies from three days to one month, depending on the diagnosis and severity of symptoms.

Other than some temporary side effects from a month's treatment with doxycycline, I have completely recovered. In sharing my experience, I found I was not alone. However, the majority of birders out there are not well informed about the risks associated with tick bites. It is my hope to have shed some light on and dispelled some myths about the subject. Prevention, early recognition, and treatment of tick-borne rickettsial diseases are essential in preventing serious long-term health problems.



Lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*). Image courtesy USDA.

Editor's Note: GOS sponsored five young birders to attend ornithological camps in summer 2010. Jordan Budnik and Andrew Theus attended Audubon's Hog Island Camp in Maine, while Luke Theodorou and Hunter Hebenstreit attended the American Birding Association (ABA) camp in Colorado. Atlanta Audubon Society (AAS) and GOS co-sponsored Katie Moore's attendance at the Hog Island Camp. GOS was able to support these activities via the Richard Parks Birding Camp Scholarships, unspent Camp TALON funds, and (for Luke), a \$500 donation from Jackee Major, commemorating her late husband, Dr. James C. Major. The campers' accounts of their summer experiences appear in the following pages, except for Katie's; the summary of her adventure will be published in the AAS newsletter.

Winter Wren Revelations:

How a Small, Unassuming Bird Showed Me the Birder I Could Be

By Jordan Budnik

Frustrated, I plopped myself solidly down on a moss-covered rock and glared at my coniferous adversary. Somewhere perched in those concealing white pine branches was the one bird that I had sworn to find—the one bird that had managed to elude me the entire week. Everything had fallen into a silence, and I waited with my binoculars frozen at the ready, somehow believing that even the twitch of a finger would chase away this final chance. The boat for the mainland would leave soon. Almost everyone else had already gone. Yet I remained, waiting for the bubbling song to give it away.

Silence.

At first I had thought the distant call an illusion. Then again, nothing about Hog Island, Maine, feels quite real. From shaking hands with Dr. Kress, the man responsible for bringing the puffin—a wonderful bird that is practically a caricature of itself—back to Maine, to being awakened at midnight by the haunting phantom cry of Common Loons...everything experienced on my trip felt surreal. But now I was sure that it was all real. I was sure the second I heard that song that I had to find that bird. I think perhaps it is a madness that only birders are subject to. Yet the foundation of that madness is an earth-shaking desire to glimpse a part of nature so profound that I would rather seem nutty than go without it.



Jordan Budnik at Hog Island Camp.
Photo courtesy of Jordan Budnik.

And though there was nothing particularly flashy about the Winter Wren, I knew the moment I mistook its song for a sparrow and passed it by without looking that I had to redeem myself and find it. So for that entire week, I huffed and puffed after any chance that I would get to spot my life bird. It had only been on a whim that I had decided to do a final walk around Hog Island before disembarking for the mainland. Now, glaring up at a tree like the crazy bird girl I am proud to be, I knew I had to make this walk worth it.

One hour passed.

I flicked at the mammoth mosquitoes that could put the ones in my home state of Georgia to shame and grimaced. The bird had stopped making any noise, which I assumed meant I had spooked it. I had pished myself silly at first, but it did no good. Wherever my bird was, it was quite content staying there just out of my view. I grumbled and looked at my watch. I was cutting it close. My things were already at the dock, but if I left them there without loading them on the boat myself, it did little good.

An eruption of song started up from behind me. I jumped to my feet and took the couple of paces to the location of the taunting, fast-paced ensemble of high and low notes. A goofy grin spread across my face as a tiny brown body of feathers hopped up on a tangle of fallen branches, singing his little heart out. My world seemed to converge into a moment of staring at the creature I had so avidly searched for. It was certainly no puffin, and it was nowhere as grand as the nesting Osprey that I had been observing all week, but it represented so much more to me personally. The puffins were not my accomplishment. I had not brought them back. And though I could admire them and the Osprey, they were easy to spot. But this bird, this miniscule gentleman boldly serenading everything around him, was evidence of my own perseverance. And to me he was the most beautiful bird I have ever seen.



White pine (*Pinus strobus*), from *An Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions Vol 1*, by Nathaniel Lord Britton and Addison Brown (1913, Charles Scribner's Sons).

Because in that one moment of stubborn will, I realized that I had put everything people had been telling me all week to the test. And I had put myself to the test. It is not a lesson anyone could have taught me. I had to teach myself. If I had not met Kenn Kaufman or Steve Kress or Scott Weidensaul, perhaps I would have lacked the faith to convince myself that I could achieve that moment of victory. And though I struggled to visualize a time when Kaufman struggled to identify a bird or when Weidensaul drew a blank on a bird's call, I knew those moments must have happened. I had to push, I had to come to an understanding that my trip to Hog Island was not really a mere "trip" but a journey. I was not the same person that I had been the first time I stepped on the island, and if I have learned anything, it was that pursuing one bird that meant so much to me could change my entire view on birding.

People think of birding as a passive activity, and, though I would never admit it, I entered the trip thinking similarly. I felt that any opportunity would fall into my lap. A little pishing and the birds would surely always come. I was so terribly wrong, and I have never been happier. So now I know and I sincerely hope that anyone reading this article will take my experience and learn from it. Never just sit back and wait for your defining moments to happen...because what sticks with you the most are the times when you went and chased the moment down yourself. And even if it comes in the guise of one enigmatic Winter Wren, you will know without a doubt that it was worth it.

ABA Camp Colorado 2010

By Luke Theodorou

On the morning of June 26th, I left the airport in Atlanta for ABA's Camp Colorado for a week of birding with 16 other fantastic young birders. After three hours on the plane, the pilot announced our descent. As the clouds cleared away, Pike's Peak and its surrounding snow-capped mountains came into view. I was finally in Colorado!

I met a handful of other young birders, as well as two of our tour leaders (Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis) at the Colorado Springs airport, and then we were off. After a while in the van, I saw my first western birds of the trip, a few Western Kingbirds and a Swainson's Hawk perched low on a telephone pole. We finally arrived at what would be our campsite for the next week, the Catamount Institute's mountain campus. At a little less than 10,000 feet, the camp was surrounded by mixed conifers and aspens, as well as willow bogs and ponds. Needless to say, it made for some great birding. As we waited for other young birders to arrive, we took a walk around the ponds to see what was hanging around the campsite. Birds included a pair of Gray Jays, Broad-tailed Hummingbirds guarding their territories, singing Warbling Vireos and Gray-headed Juncos, Mountain Chickadees and a flyby Band-tailed Pigeon. On our way back to the building, we found a low Williamson's Sapsucker nest in an aspen right next to the trail, with both the male and female bringing food to the chicks. Finally, everyone had arrived at camp, and we all prepared for a full day of birding the next day.

We woke up early and headed out to our first birding site of the trip, the 50,000-acre Hayman Burn area. Right before the site, we stopped at a marsh to pick up some wetland birds. As soon as we piled out of the vans, the first bird of the day landed on the ground right in front of us, a male Evening Grosbeak. It was a good year for the species, as it seemed that we saw them at every site we visited. At the actual burn site, we learned about fire and how it was needed to maintain certain habitats, and picked up some new species for the trip, such as Western Tanager, Mountain Bluebird, Black-headed Grosbeak, Townsend's Solitaire and Plumbeous Vireo. As we drove farther into the burn site, we entered the Breeding Bird Atlas territory of one of our leaders, Chip Clouse. We split into groups and practiced our own breeding bird survey. Our group was able to confirm Mountain Chickadee, Song Sparrow, House Wren and Broad-tailed Hummingbird. When we returned to camp, we had some good looks at some flyby Clark's Nutcrackers and a nest-building Cordilleran Flycatcher. Finally, Michael gave a birding by ear workshop before dinner. It seems I always learn something new from him.

We were up early again the next morning, loaded in the vans and left for Phantom Canyon. With tons of birds, butterflies, and huge rocks and cliffs, it was one of my favorite sites we birded. Driving down the canyon, we picked up birds such as Cassin's Finch, Green-tailed Towhee, Red-naped Sapsucker and Virginia's Warbler. Next, we drove to the Pueblo Raptor Center and learned about the rehabilitation work they do. They set out some birds of prey for us to sketch and photograph, and then we birded the area around the center, seeing species like Canyon Towhee and Bullock's Oriole. As we were leaving, we lucked out and found a pair of Scaled Quail under a feeder. At the end of the day, we visited a local park to search for Mississippi Kite. There were a few low kites soaring, and other birds included a single White-winged Dove and a flock of Bushtits.

The first stop the next morning was Lathrop State Park. We ate breakfast while scoping some close Western Grebes and listening to Lark Sparrows singing nearby. With Ted Floyd (editor of *Birding* magazine) now with us, we headed to the Great Sand Dunes National Park. Here, we had some quick glimpses of a MacGillivray's Warbler and heard birds like Spotted Towhee and Dusky Flycatcher. Next, Ted took us to a location where he had staked out Sage Sparrow and Sage Thrasher, and we quickly got scope views of both. Before dinner, we hit Russell Lakes for some marsh birds and waterfowl. Every now and then, American Bitterns and Yellow-headed Blackbirds flew overhead. Marsh Wrens sang all around, sounding much different than the eastern birds that I was used to. Dozens of different waterfowl filled the ponds, including Canvasback, Redhead, American Wigeon and Ruddy Duck. After dinner later that evening, we stopped at a bridge in a busy town, a seemingly unlikely spot for an American Dipper, I thought. Sure enough, though, a Dipper was quickly spotted right below us, allowing for hundreds of photos and a few sketches. It even sang a few times! Not a bad way to end the day.

The next morning, we slept in before heading to Garden of the Gods Park. Once we all arrived, the first things we noticed were the huge cliffs and the hundreds of White-throated Swifts that nested on them. A few Prairie Falcons patrolled the cliff faces, and we even spotted one that had caught a swift. Our first Western Scrub Jays of the trip foraged close by for some nice photo opportunities, as well as a family of Canyon Wrens that hung out nearby. After birding the park itself, we stopped by the visitors' center to watch the hummingbird feeders there before heading back to camp. Everyone had great close-up views of a few Broad-tailed Hummingbirds and even a black-chinned or two. The next day, we would wake up early for a chance to see a major target bird for many of the campers, Mountain Plover.

On route to Davis Ranch, we stopped in Fountain, Colorado, to eat breakfast and search for Chimney Swifts. As we were leaving, one of our camp leaders spotted a pair of Mississippi Kites perched on a dead tree, again allowing everyone to take many photographs and sketches. As we passed through Frost Ranch, we saw some short-grass prairie birds, including Lark Bunting, Burrowing Owl, Curve-billed Thrasher and Cassin's Sparrows. The next stop was Chico Basin Ranch, which was a mixture of more short-grass prairie, woodlands and some wetlands. Highlights included Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Wilson's Phalarope and Chihuahuan Raven. Finally, at Davis Ranch, we stopped for lunch and to learn about the work and research being done there for breeding Mountain Plovers. The landowner, Russell Davis, talked to us about how years earlier he would never have allowed researchers or anyone on his land, but after working with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, he came to love the plovers and birds in general. Then it was time to actually search for some birds. With thousands of acres of property and just a few dozen pairs of plovers breeding there, it took some time to find one, but we eventually found a single bird close to the road. Definitely one of the moments I remember most from the trip.

On our last full day of birding, the location I was looking forward to most was Pike's Peak. Driving all the way to the top of the summit, we once again piled out of the vans in the 39-degree weather, hoping for Brown-capped Rosy-finch and possibly White-tailed Ptarmigan. After a bit of searching, the group located a few distant Rosy Finches on a snowfield, but no ptarmigan that day. Other interesting birds above the tree line were American Pipits, Red Crossbills, Common Ravens and a Prairie Falcon. New mammals for me included pika, marmot and bighorn sheep. I was happy to find my lifer grizzled skipper butterfly, as well. For such a barren-looking place, Pike's Peak was full of life. Later that evening, we had the rare chance of observing a wild Flammulated Owl up close. We met with a research team studying the owl and her chicks, and they took us to her nesting cavity deep in an old-growth forest, one untouched since the 1800s. As the researchers approached the tree to capture the owl to weigh her and her chicks, she came up and perched at the top of the cavity. After everyone had gotten great views and photos, one of the researchers caught the female, and the chicks were pulled out soon after. What amazed everybody was how calm the adult was in the hand, almost like none of us was there. The chicks were just white fuzz-balls, barely old enough to open their eyes. After all the owls were weighed, returned to the nest and the adult released, it was time to return to camp to pack for the flight home. On the way out, we had one more surprise, another American Dipper. This time it was a juvenile and allowed for even better photos than the previous one, an awesome way to end Camp Colorado.

I totaled 42 life birds, several species of butterflies and mammals, and got to bird with great field trip leaders and some of the best young birders in the United States. I want to thank GOS and also Ms. Jackee Major for sponsoring my scholarship and allowing me to have such an incredible opportunity. If you would like to see some of my photos from Camp Colorado, please visit my Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lukethrush>.



Luke Theodorou. *Photo courtesy of Luke Theodorou.*

Hog Island Audubon Camp: A Life-changing Experience

By Andrew Theus

This summer, through the generous Richard Parks Young Birder's scholarship given to me by GOS, I was fortunate to be given the incredible opportunity to be a part of Hog Island's Audubon Camp for teens. The camp, on the coast of Maine, is run by Project Puffin. Fourteen other teens and I, along with several adult campers, spent five days enjoying the beautiful Maine coast while birding, studying and learning fascinating information from some of the top ornithologists and conservationists in the country, including Steve Kress, Kenn Kaufman and Scott Weidensaul. The camp was run very well, and all of the camp staff was kind and helpful. I met many great people, who taught me much about birding and were great to just get to know. It was really a blast.

One awesome experience I had was a privilege that is given only to teens at the Hog Island Camp. One morning, all of the people attending the camp were taken out by boat into the Gulf of Maine to a small island called Eastern Egg Rock, where Project Puffin, led by Steve Kress, has worked very hard over the course of several years to bring back Atlantic Puffins to nest on the island. The project has been a success, leading to more than 100 pairs of puffins now nesting on the island, along with many pairs of Arctic and Common Terns as well as endangered Roseate Terns. During breeding season, a few researchers stay on the island to study and monitor the birds there.

After circling the island a few times in the boat with the adults, the teen campers got into a smaller boat and landed on the island, where we spent all day with the few researchers who were studying there. While there, we were allowed to go into blinds set up around the island—just feet away from the burrows of nesting puffins and Black Guillemots as well as nests of Leach's Storm-Petrels and Roseate, Common and Arctic Terns. Seeing the birds that close and observing their nesting behavior was incredible. It was truly amazing how beautiful the island was and all the birds that resided on it. I learned so much fascinating information from the researchers there. They are truly dedicated to preserving these beautiful birds, and this really inspired me.



Campers at Hog Island Audubon Camp, Maine.
Photo courtesy of Andrew Theus.

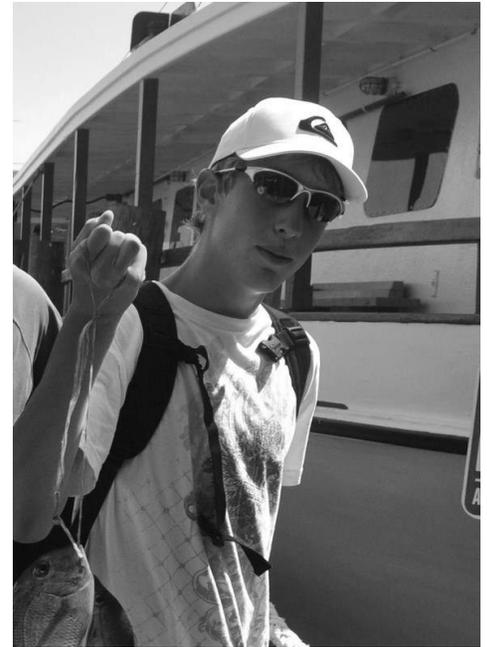
Having the chance to be a part of this camp was life changing and unforgettable. I have been birding for seven years, but over the course of the past year or two, I feel that my birding enthusiasm hadn't been as high as it once was. However, spending those days at the Audubon camp definitely changed that and has really inspired me to be the best birder that I can be. I realize being a part of this camp and especially getting to go to Eastern Egg Rock is something that very few people in this world get to do, and I am very grateful that I was one of them. I would like to again thank Dr. Sargent and all with GOS who made it possible for me to attend.

Camp Colorado

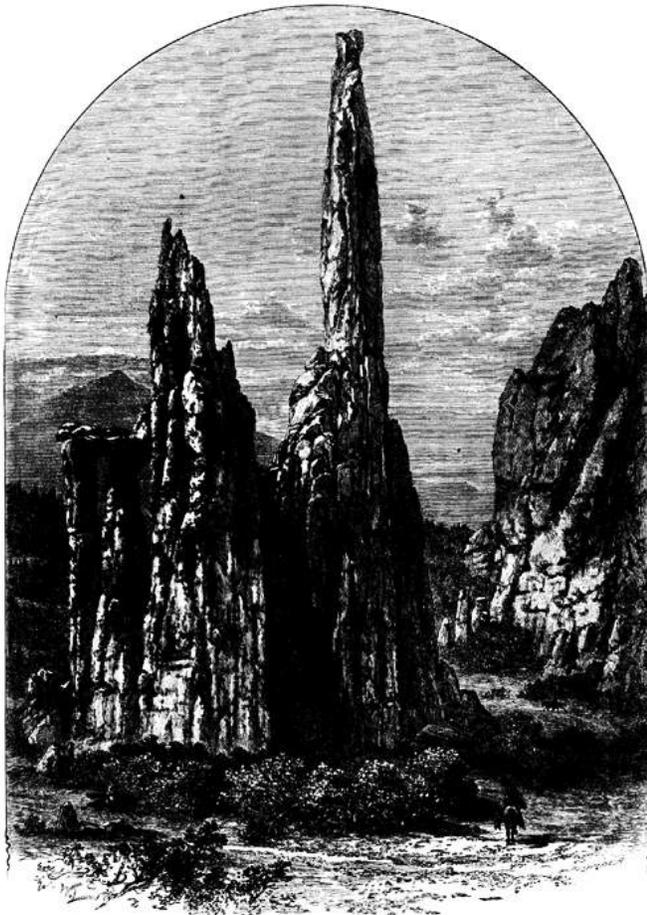
By Hunter Hebenstreit

The air was freezing as my fellow campers and I stood at the summit of Pike's Peak. Our eyes were glued to a small brown bird, hopping about in a snowdrift. We had come to the top of one of the highest mountains in Colorado, searching for this very bird, a Brown-Capped Rosy Finch.

If you had told me a year earlier that I would be there, seeing that incredible bird, I wouldn't have believed it. But thanks to the GOS and the ABA, there I was, at Camp Colorado, along with eighteen other teen birders, having a great time and seeing some incredible birds—such as Williamson's Sapsucker at a nest near the camp, Mountain Plovers at a cattle ranch, Canyon Wrens at Garden of the Gods, and Flammulated Owls at a research station. We were up before dawn every



Hunter Hebenstreit. *Photo courtesy of Hunter Hebenstreit.*



Cathedral spires in Garden of the Gods, Colorado. From H.A. Cuppy, *Beauties and Wonders of Land and Sea* (Springfield: Mast, Crowell & Kirkpatrick, 1895).

morning, and out birding most of the day. I think I enjoyed the second day the most, when we birded Phantom Canyon and went to the Pueblo raptor and nature center. Not only did we find some awesome birds, including Canyon Towhee and Scaled Quail, but the butterflies were excellent as well.

Mike O'Brien, Louise Zemaitis, and Chip Clouse were great leaders, and I learned a lot from them. Mike did a great workshop on birdcalls one afternoon, which I found to be very helpful, especially since I don't know too many western birds by sound.

On the last full day of camp, we were able to visit an active Flammulated Owl nest! We watched in awe as researchers captured the mother and took the nestlings out to be weighed. It was one of my favorite experiences at the camp.

I am very grateful to the GOS, which made this amazing trip possible. It has brought me one step closer to my dream job as an ornithological field researcher.

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

Birds in the United States contend with more than 100 million non-native predators in the form of feral and free-ranging cats (*Felis catus*), the domestic descendents of wild cats (*Felis sylvestris*) from the Middle East. Predation by non-native species has been recognized as one of the most important causes of species extinction worldwide, and cats in particular have been identified as one of the leading drivers of global bird extinctions. Long-term monitoring data indicate that a majority of bird species in the United States have declined during the past several decades. Cat predation is one of the most important anthropogenic causes of bird mortality in the United States, exponentially exceeding mortality caused by cell phone towers, wind farms, human hunters, and many other factors.

Cat predation of birds is unlike that by any native predator in the United States, perhaps most importantly because cats are maintained in numbers far above natural carrying capacity. Unlike similarly-sized native predators, cats 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 and other wildlife. While similarly-sized native predators may take eggs or nestlings of birds, no native mammalian predator routinely hunts adult birds, as cats do. Cats may be active during the day as well as at night, so wildlife is exposed to cat predation at all times. Cats are less motivated than wild predators to hide from people, so they commonly hunt in human-dominated environments, where persisting wildlife already contends with multiple anthropogenic threats. Cat densities may be so high in urban areas that they reduce avian productivity to the extent that low predation rates may simply reflect low numbers of remaining birds. Recently fledged birds are especially vulnerable to predation by cats, as they are often incapable of flight for at least two to three weeks.

Georgia bird species at risk of predation by cats include songbirds whose populations are declining substantially, such as Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*), Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*), and Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*), as well as the federally threatened Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*). Species that forage on the ground or in the understory, such as Georgia's state bird -- Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) -- are particularly vulnerable to cat predation. Data from many wildlife rehabilitation centers in the United States show that cat predation is the single largest reason for wildlife admission. Most cat attack victims do not survive, and animals attacked but not immediately killed may be subjected to intense, prolonged suffering before death. Cats may also harm wildlife populations by competing with native predators such as raptors, thereby diminishing food resources for those species, and by stimulating reductions in bird productivity caused by birds' stress responses to predation risk.

While vaccinations may protect them from several diseases, domestic cats act as reservoirs and vectors for many diseases and parasites that jeopardize wildlife. Examples include the infection of the American mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) with feline leukemia and the infection of the federally endangered Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*) with feline panleukopenia, or feline parvovirus, an immunodeficiency disease. Cats play an integral role in the life cycle of the parasite *Toxoplasmosis gondii*, which has caused fatal infections of the federally endangered Hawaiian Crow (*Corvus hawaiiensis*) (now likely extinct in the wild) and federally threatened Southern sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*). *T. gondii* is known to have infected more than 50 bird species worldwide and at least a dozen bird species in the United States, including American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Great-horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), and Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*). A parasite spread through cat feces, *T. gondii* also infects humans, exhibiting a variety of symptoms, including confusion, poor coordination, seizures, and eye infections that can lead to blindness, and infection by the parasite can cause brain damage and death.

The pet cat population of the United States has tripled during the past 40 years, and the number of abandoned and feral (unsocialized) cats likewise appears to have increased substantially. The need to control

cat population growth is widely recognized by scientists, veterinarians, animal shelters and animal welfare groups. Traditional population control involves humanely trapping and removing unclaimed, stray, and feral animals from the environment. However, many special interest groups and several animal welfare groups now oppose these control methods, and instead promote feeding and sterilization programs often branded as “trap-neuter-release” or “trap-neuter-return” (TNR). In TNR programs, free-ranging cats are fed regularly at fixed locations and are the subjects of attempts, usually by volunteers, to trap, sterilize, and re-release them. TNR advocates typically claim that trap and removal methods are ineffective, and promote TNR as “the only humane, proven, and effective method” for reducing cat populations. While the idea may sound appealing, in reality TNR programs sanction the abandonment and neglect of cats. Increased abandonment of cats in areas where TNR is underway has been documented, apparently because people know that the animals will have easy access to food. Many veterinarians, animal rights advocates, and scientists object to TNR as inhumane, because it exposes both cats and wildlife to abuse, disease, and death by trauma.



“Wilde Kat (*Felis catus*)” by A.E. Brehm, (from *Het Leven der Dieren*, 1927).

TNR programs typically perpetuate an abundance of unsterilized cats. TNR is always accompanied by the unrestricted feeding of both sterilized and unsterilized cats; this unrestricted feeding increases the survival and breeding potential of cat colonies, negating any potential population control from sterilization. Mathematical models suggest that cat population growth can be controlled through the annual removal of at least 50% of the population or sterilization of more than 75% of the population. Empirical evidence to date suggests that TNR generally does not reduce free-ranging cat populations, almost never results in the elimination of feral cat colonies, and may even result in increasing cat populations. 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 species. Furthermore, TNR has not been shown to reduce the occurrence or spread of many zoonotic diseases, such as rabies, that may be hosted and spread by free-ranging cats, putting wildlife, pets, and public health at risk. Traditional animal control methods (e.g., trap and removal) currently remain the most effective means for protecting wildlife, pets, and public health. Therefore, the Georgia Ornithological Society:

- 1) Encourages pet owners to keep cats indoors, in outdoor enclosures, or otherwise away from wildlife.
- 2) Supports the passage and enforcement of local and state ordinances prohibiting the public feeding of free-ranging cats, especially on public lands, and prohibiting the release of 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 public education and research about the conservation and welfare problems caused or faced by outdoor cats, as well as the benefits of responsible pet ownership.

Spring 2011 GOS Meeting Heads for the Hills

By Dan Vickers

Bolstered by this year's wildly successful meeting in Athens, GOS is taking the 2011 spring conference a little higher, to the mountains of north Georgia. The Ridges Resort and Club, located on Lake Chatuge in Hiawassee, Georgia, will host our spring gathering on May 13-15, 2011.

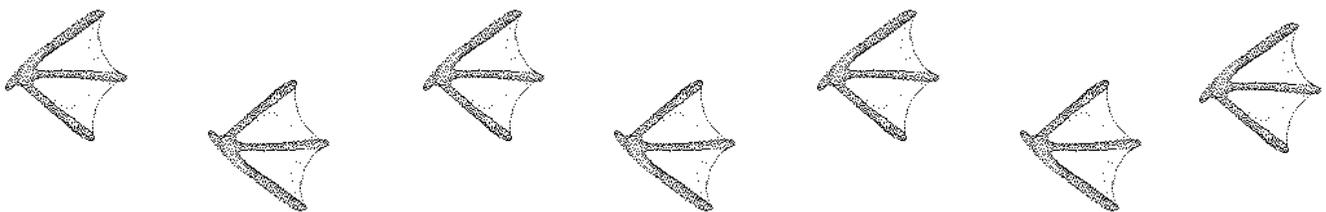
The meeting space looks great, and the rooms are high quality. Check out their website: www.TheRidgesResort.com. The room rate was negotiated down to \$99 a night for a standard room in the lodge. They also have two- and three- bedroom villas for \$260 and \$360. Wireless internet and parking are complimentary, and there are no "additional" resort fees. Free amenities include the pool, volleyball and tennis courts, fishing pier and horseshoe pits. The resort also has a full-service marina, golf course, skeet range and fly-fishing in case the mountain birding gets boring for someone.

The menus look great, and costs are in line with the previous meetings. A continental breakfast, included in the room rate, will be available at 6 AM for our early field trip departures.

Oh, and I guess I should mention that they are an Audubon-listed Wildlife Sanctuary.

Field trips will include the ever-popular locations of Ivy Log Gap Road, Brasstown and Rabun Balds, Sosebee Cove, Hale and Duncan Ridge Roads and anywhere else we can think of to find north Georgia's breeding passerines. We will target such species as Least and Willow Flycatchers, Canada, Blackburnian, Cerulean and Worm-eating Warblers, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creeper, Veery, Ruffed Grouse and maybe we can even nail down a breeding record for Black-billed Cuckoo.

So mark your calendars for May 13-15, 2011, and we'll see you in the mountains.



GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINES

Bill Terrell Graduate Student Grants: December 1, 2010

Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants: December 1, 2010

H. Branch Howe, Jr., Graduate Student Grants: December 31, 2010

For more information about GOS, visit www.gos.org. For information about the society's grants, visit <http://www.gos.org/grants/grant.html>

GOS 75th Anniversary Meeting: The Essentials

The 75th anniversary meeting of GOS promises to be a gala affair. Be sure to set aside the weekend of January 14-17, 2011, to attend the meeting on Tybee Island. The meeting highlights will include:

Great field trips led by expert birders

Coastal Big Day competition on Friday the 14th

Two Friday evening speakers: Giff Beaton on the history of birding in Georgia, and Todd Schneider on the status and future of bird conservation in Georgia

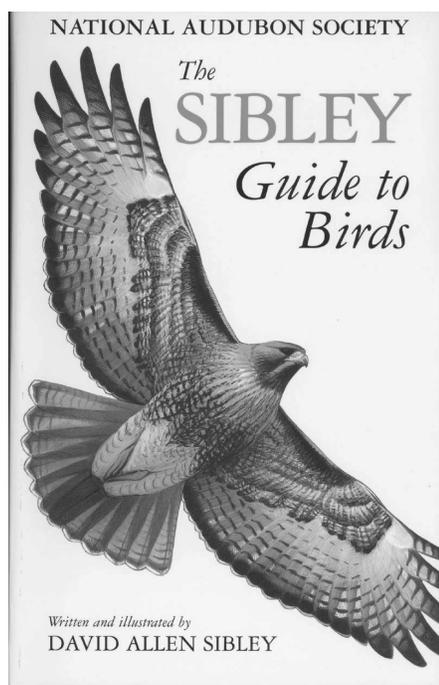
Scientific poster session on Saturday

Saturday evening banquet with guest speaker David Sibley, the acclaimed artist and author

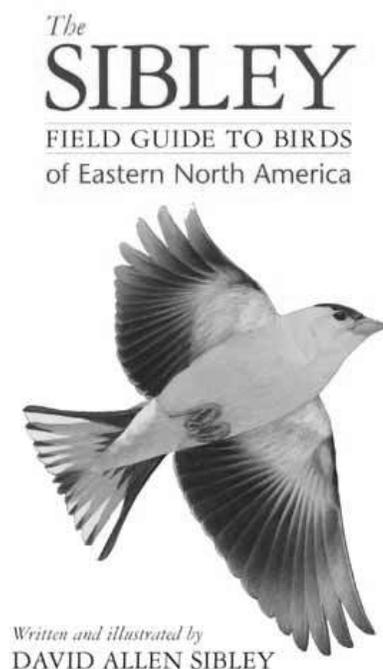
Sunday evening: “open mike” night for poetry or essay readings, bird call imitations, or other ornithology-inspired performances

Exhibits of art, photos, and the history of GOS

Recognition of past winners of the Earle Greene Award and past GOS presidents (Meeting registration and banquet fees will be waived for these distinguished guests.)



David Allen Sibley. Photo by *Erinn Hartman.*



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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please complete the form and mail with your payment to: Georgia Ornithological Society Membership, 108 W. 8th St., Louisville, GA 30434

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Annual membership rates for individuals and families:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bachman's Sparrow (Individual Membership) | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Quail Covey (Family Membership) | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Patron) | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Fledgling (Students only) | \$15 |

Life Membership Rates for individuals:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Northern Goshawk | \$450 |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------|

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