

March 2012  
Vol. 39, No. 1

# GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society  
[www.gos.org](http://www.gos.org)

## President's Message

By Jim Ferrari

After attending a baker's dozen of GOS meetings, I've come to recognize and savor the familiar rhythm of a typical gathering. The day begins with the obscenely early breakfast, the war stories of "nemesi birds" missed and finally nailed, and the birders huddled in a pre-dawn parking lot, waiting to convoy to a field trip site; then it progresses to the familiar heft of the binoculars around one's neck, the involuntary quiet cheers from a row of birders when a reluctant sparrow tees up in a tuft of grass, the punning and in-jokes that would leave a non-birder scratching her head; and it ends with a banquet hall packed with pleasantly fatigued, wind-burned birders. On the other hand, every meeting has its own unique character: the weather helps establish the overall mood, field trip locations vary, and the speakers are never the same. And the birds never fail to surprise. So it was at the January meeting on Tybee Island, where 103 GOS members experienced a breezy, chilly weekend of superlative birding, informative and inspiring talks, and the wonderful combination of comfortable routine and the wholly unexpected.

We were treated to two excellent speakers during the weekend at Tybee. Malcolm Hodges, director of

stewardship for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Georgia, spoke on Friday evening about "Feathers and Flames: Why Fire Is Important for Georgia's Birds." Malcolm gave an overview of fire ecology in the southeastern pinelands, described the TNC's use of prescribed fire, and explained how many of Georgia's bird species "evolved in a pyric landscape." Using the examples of Bachman's Sparrow, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and Northern Bobwhite, Malcolm explained why frequent ground fires are beneficial for these species. While it is difficult to bear in mind, he also explained how "fire management deals with populations, not individuals." An interesting historic footnote is that Herbert Stoddard, one of the pioneers in promoting the use of fire for forest health and bird population management, was also the first president of GOS.

The keynote speaker at the Saturday evening banquet was Dr. George Archibald, co-founder of the International Crane Foundation (ICF), headquartered in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Dr. Archibald first gave an overview of crane diversity and basic ecology before moving on to the primary focus of his talk, reintroduction of Whooping Cranes to the wild. He described several efforts to create new flocks of Whooping Cranes that would be either non-migratory (in Florida and Louisiana) or migratory

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Ornithological  
Society**

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

**Welcome, New Members!**

**Fledgling**

Alison Mitch  
Andrea Ayala

Atlanta, GA  
Athens, GA

**Bachman's Sparrow**

Jane Bridges and Allen Lewis  
Cheryl Coble  
Lauren N. Billak  
Cindy Mayer  
Carol Pascal  
Julia Elliott

Tybee Island, GA  
Dunwoody, GA  
Alpharetta, GA  
Sandy Springs, GA  
Valona, GA  
Marietta, GA

**Quail Covey**

Laura and Dana Hardy  
SuSu Davis

Decatur, GA  
Hiawassee, GA

**Northern Goshawk**

Joel McNeal

Cartersville, GA

Correction to December 2011, Vol. 38. No. 4  
GOShawk

Page 10. The reference to a Northern Goshawk should  
have read Northern Harrier.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**GOS SPRING MEETING**

*April 20-22, 2012, Augusta*

**GOS FALL MEETING**

*October 11-14, 2012, Jekyll Island*

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

(Idaho to New Mexico and Wisconsin to Florida). In each case, efforts have been complicated by facets of the crane's biology that have revealed themselves over time. For example, early efforts to cross-foster Whooping Crane eggs by Sandhill Crane parents were foiled when the resulting whoopers behaved more like sandhills; most crucially, they failed to recognize other Whooping Cranes as potential mates. In another case, when molting Florida whoopers did not retreat at night to roost in the water, a learned behavior, they were decimated by predators. I came away impressed by the ecological and behavioral subtleties that complicate the reestablishment of Whooping Cranes. After Dr. Archibald's talk, GOS presented him with a \$2,000 check to support the work of the International Crane Foundation. The funds were raised through a combination of raffles, donations by individual GOS members, and by a gift from the society itself.

Aside from the evening programs, there were many excellent field trips to keep folks busy. The celebrity bird of the weekend may have been the lone Snow Bunting that delighted birders at Tybee's north beach by frisking about with an unlikely crew of Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones and gulls at the edge of the surf, picking at seeds in the wrack line and hunkering down in the dunes. But the bunting was only one of 179 species seen over the course of the weekend (see complete list in this issue), bringing to 218 the total number of species tallied over the past four winter meetings at Tybee. Birders scoured Harris Neck, Savannah NWR, Fort Stewart, and other hotspots, and some were even so bold as to venture out to sea.

Fifteen hardy souls ventured out on a pelagic trip early Sunday morning after having their trip postponed for a day by strong winds and heavy seas. I felt a particular sympathy for one tenderfoot, who stepped onto the vessel with the sort of hesitancy that told me to watch this one closely. At first—and maybe it was just the scopolamine buzz coursing through his veins—but at first he gloried in the wind in his face, the long lines of scoters flying past the sunrise, even the constant stream of water spilling onto his lap from the eaves of the vessel as it sped out to sea. But no one had warned him about the whitecaps, the churning turbulence, the treacherous rip tides. But to be fair, how could they have predicted the state of his gastric juices? Perhaps if he had studied more carefully the nautical forecast for a certain stomach, he would have stayed a landlubber. The Atlantic itself had three- to four-foot seas, enough to overthrow with ease his sense of equilibrium and then, cruelly, snuff out the digestive process while it was still in its infancy. Breakfast was unceremoniously buried at sea, pitched into the deep in an impromptu yet very solemn service. ("O, bowl of Cheerios! We hardly knew ye!") From then on, too deep in mourning to do much birding, he consoled himself with the forgiving company of the ship's railing and set his eyes on the horizon with a laser-like intensity, willing his eyes and his inner ear to get on the same page, neurologically speaking. There were the small acts of kindness from the others: the can of ginger ale, the pieces of ginger gum, the words of sympathy, and, most touching, the large plastic bucket. But his sense of loss was too deep, his mourning too heartfelt to enjoy much birding. Not so heartfelt, however, that he couldn't loosen his white-knuckle grip on the rail and stagger around to clinch a few life birds, including Razorbill, Red Phalarope, Black Scoter, and Manx Shearwater. And there were the loons and the graceful Bonaparte's Gulls, the gannets and mergansers. Even the Herring Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls were fascinating to watch as they plunge-dived behind the ship for pieces of popcorn and hunks of frozen fish. And the sky was beautiful. Even the slap of the wind on his cheek was welcome. He says he's pretty sure it was worth it.

Many people helped to make our Tybee winter meeting such a success. First of all, thank you to our speakers, Malcolm Hodges and George Archibald, for entertaining and informing us. Next, thanks to the GOS Executive Committee members and field trip leaders who did the heavy lifting of organizing the meeting and helping folks to see some great birds in the field. Steve Holzman was the mastermind behind the very successful raffles that raised so much money for the ICF. Thank you also to the graduate students who gave poster presentations of their research at the Saturday banquet; almost all of them received funding from GOS for their work. Finally, if you were able to attend the meeting, thanks for supporting GOS.

(continued on page 4)

## President's Message (continued from page 3)

Other than our recent meeting on Tybee, GOS has been busy on a number of other fronts. This winter, GOS awarded \$30,000 in grants to graduate students for their ornithological research. See elsewhere in this issue for the names and project titles of the recipients of our Bill Terrell Graduate Student Research Awards and H. Branch Howe, Jr. Graduate Student Research Awards. GOS also awarded \$40,600 in Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants for efforts to bolster populations of beach-nesting birds, use prescribed burns to improve habitat for Henslow's Sparrows and other species, and build a water control structure to benefit waterfowl, all in Georgia.

Looking to the future, be sure to put the following dates on your calendars, because it is going to be a busy spring and summer. The GOS spring meeting will be held in Augusta from April 20 to 22. As always, there will be great speakers and terrific field trips (look elsewhere in this issue for details). Georgia DNR's Youth Birding Competition will be held from April 27 to 28 at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center. GOS is helping to sponsor this event, which is now in its seventh year. The following weekend, from May 3 to 6, is the Georgia Mountain BirdFest at Unicoi State Park and Lodge, organized by the Georgia DNR. GOS is sponsoring the keynote speaker for that event. Camp TALON, a summer youth birding camp, will be held June 10 to 14. The early-bird deadline to register is May 1st. (See elsewhere in this issue for further details.) Finally, though the deadline will have passed by the time we go to press, GOS has advertised the Parks Scholarships for teens to attend summer birding camps in Colorado and at Maine Audubon Society's Hog Island camp. As you can see, there is a lot to look forward to, and that does not even include spring migration. I hope to see you at the Augusta meeting in April.

## 7th Annual Youth Birding Competition

### 7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL YOUTH BIRDING COMPETITION

CHARLIE ELLIOTT  
WILDLIFE CENTER  
APRIL 27-28, 2012



**GEORGIA**  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
WILDLIFE RESOURCES DIVISION

**What is it?** A 24-hour birding competition in which teams count as many species as possible.

**Who?** Anyone in K through 12th grade can form teams in four age divisions.

**Do you need to be an expert?** No. Call to find out about pre-camp mentors.

**Whom does it benefit?** Your team can raise money for your favorite DNR non-game project or any other conservation organization.

**What do you get for FREE?** T-shirt, live wildlife show, awards, breakfast and lunch, and a fun day outside.

**Prizes will be given** within each age division for most birds seen, most money raised, best rookie team, t-shirt art, and nature journals.

**Optional Extras include** \$15/person to stay onsite, \$15/person banquet tickets.

Please make checks payable to Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center and send registration to  
Tim Keyes  
One Conservation Way  
Brunswick, GA 31520

For lodging reservations and payment, call  
Lacy Mitchell  
770-784-3152

## The Urban Rusty Blackbirds

By Patti Newell

When the UGA Rusty Blackbird project was first getting started in the winter of 2009, the original goal was to capture and study Rusty Blackbirds in their natural wetland habitats. However, the birds were late migrating down to the south, and my technician and I were having a difficult time locating birds in the known hotspots. The sites where Rusties were actually confirmed were closed for hunting, and I was not permitted into many of the best sites until after mid-February. Since Rusties start migrating from the wintering grounds in mid-March, this would only allow one month to study the birds, quite a limited time for a full investigation of the wintering ecology of a bird species. My research advisors and I were starting to get frustrated and worried that we would not find any suitable sites.

Then in early February, after a month of trying and failing to confirm bird sightings, visiting previous Rusty Blackbird locations and turning up nothing, and being turned away from good sites with Rusties, Nathan Diaz put me in contact with Paul Serridge, who claimed to be studying a large flock of Rusty Blackbirds up on the Piedmont Plateau. My advisor (Dr. Russ Greenberg), my technician (Desiree Narango), and I raced up to Greenville, South Carolina, and met Paul early the next morning at the local Waffle House. After a poached egg and a mug of coffee, we all headed to Lake Conestee Nature Park. That cold morning, it didn't take long to count as few as 700 and perhaps even 1,000 Rusty Blackbirds as they flew from the wetland, over the BP gas station, to a small residential neighborhood with a small grove of pecan trees. We watched as Rusties descended to the road and picked up crushed pieces of pecan, sometimes the size of their heads. And then they would all burst to the tops of the trees, and in small sub-flocks of around 20 birds, fly back and forth between the wetlands and the residential area. Russ immediately recommended I shift my focus to urban Rusty Blackbirds. Reluctantly, over time, I let go of the idea of studying Rusties in their natural habitat and recognized that urban areas were the best option for this highly mobile, difficult-to-study bird.

Over the three years of studying the birds, we found they do a similar thing every winter: During cold weather and in the early parts of the morning, Rusties forage on pecans in abandoned pecan orchards or in neighborhoods where pecans fall from the trees and are crushed by vehicles. This tree mast seems to provide Rusties with the fat they need to endure extreme weather events. The birds, however, with their small bills evolved for invertebrate foraging, need other mechanisms like squirrels, deer, vehicles, or grackles and jays to break the tough acorn or pecan shell first. It is likely that because wetlands freeze at unpredictable frequencies, Rusty Blackbirds depend on an optimal mixture of invertebrates from wetlands and tree mast. Understanding the mixture of feeding requirements of these birds might provide insight into the characteristics that underlie winter "hot spots" in the species distribution.

Athens, Georgia, is another urban hotspot for Rusty Blackbirds. In 2011 and 2012, we studied a flock of birds in north Athens and found the flocks have similar habitat preferences to those in Conestee. They fly back and forth from wetlands in Sandy Creek Nature Center to a number of favorite pecan trees and groves in north Athens.

The Georgia Ornithological Society has generously donated funding to the ongoing Rusty Blackbird research project over the years. With this money, I bought transmitters to follow Rusty Blackbirds throughout the day. From 2009 to 2012 we captured 180 Rusty Blackbirds in Conestee and from 2011 to 2012, we captured 64 blackbirds in Athens, Georgia. A subset of 25 Rusties was fitted with radio-transmitters. We obtained 1,560 locations from December 31 to March 16 in six patch types: wetlands (832), residential lawns (339), pecan residential (333), forested upland (28), agriculture (10), and roosts (19). 2012 marks the last season of Rusty Blackbird research.

We have learned valuable information about Rusty Blackbirds. One of the major findings was that landscape use by Rusties in residential areas can be explained by the amount of precipitation in the last three days, the amount of precipitation at the time of observation, and time from sunrise. Rusty Blackbirds were 1.5 times more likely to forage in pecan residential and 1.4 times in residential areas over wetlands with each 1 mm increase in the amount of rainfall in the previous three days. They were also 1.9 and 2.8 times more likely to forage in pecan residential and residential areas, respectively, with each 1 mm increase in precipitation at the time of the observation. Rusty Blackbirds were also less likely to be detected in residential areas with time from sunrise. This could mean that during rainfall events, residential areas provide more resources than wetlands.

When I first began this project, I was nervous to study this bird in urban areas. I have since come to the viewpoint that this bird should be prioritized in terms of conservation since it appears like it could be quite easy to recover their populations. With increases in the human population, conversion of natural habitats to urban landscapes will only increase. Perhaps Rusty Blackbirds are the ideal species to encourage to live among us in our nature park wetlands and adjoining pecan groves.

## 2012 GOS Research Award Winners and Grant Recipients

Congratulations to this year's recipients:

### H. Branch Howe, Jr., Graduate Student Research Awards:

Camille Beasley, M.S. candidate, University of Georgia. "Suspended Development: Differential Effects of Land Clearing and Human Habitation on Birds."

Mason Cline, Ph.D. candidate, University of Georgia. "Conservation of a Declining Migratory Songbird: Understanding the Southern Appalachian Subpopulation of Black-throated Blue Warbler."

Emily Cornelius, M.S. candidate, University of Georgia. "Interplay Between Stress, Lipids, Parasites, and Immunity in Migrating Songbirds."

Christy Greene, Ph.D. candidate, Georgia State University. "To Sing or Not to Sing: The Hormonal Modulation of Song in Female Songbirds."

Brigette N. Haram, M.S. candidate, University of Georgia. "Survey of Avian Species Richness and Abundance in a Southeastern Reservoir Dominated by *Hydrilla verticillata* to Investigate Possible Impacts of Vacuolar Myelinopathy."

Clark Jones, Ph.D. candidate, University of Georgia. "Effects of Habitat Fragmentation on Movements of Adult and Juvenile Bachman's Sparrows (*Peucaea aestivalis*)."

Ryan A. Malloy, Ph.D. candidate, University of Georgia. "Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation in the Bellbird Biological Corridor in Costa Rica."

Gabrielle L. Robinson, M.S. candidate, University of Georgia. "Effects of Contaminants on Piscivorous Birds in a Coastal Estuary: Least Terns as Bioindicators."

### Bill Terrell Graduate Student Research Awards:

Paige Barlow, Ph.D. candidate, The University of Georgia. "Management of Exurban Development in the Southern Appalachian Mountains for Avian Community Conservation."

Joanna Hatt, M.S. candidate, The University of Georgia. "Consequences of Climate Change for Fledgling Survival of Black-throated Blue Warblers in the Southern Appalachians."

Myung-Bok Lee, Ph.D. candidate, The University of Georgia. "Avian Biodiversity in Pine Forests Along an Urban-Rural/Agricultural/Wildland Gradient."

Anna Joy Lehmicke, Ph.D. candidate, The University of Georgia. "Conservation Genetics and Extra-pair Paternity in Seaside Sparrows in Northern Gulf Coast Tidal Marsh."

Mer Mietzfeld and Sharna Tolfree, M.S. candidates, University of North Carolina at Wilmington. "Overwintering Habitat and Behavior of Golden-winged Warblers, Kentucky Warblers, and Tennessee Warblers in Reserva Silvestra Privada de Nebliselva El Jaguar, Nicaragua."

Bryan Nuse, Ph.D. Candidate, The University of Georgia. "Coastal Wetland Bird Surveys."

### Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants:

Georgia DNR, Nongame Conservation Section. "Predator Management for Georgia's Beach Nesting Birds."

Georgia DNR, Nongame Conservation Section. "Prescribed Burning to Maintain Henslow's Sparrow habitat."

Atlanta Audubon Society and Georgia Important Bird Areas Program. "Water Control Structure and Prescribed Burning for Habitat Restoration."

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

## Birds Tallied During the GOS Winter Meeting in Tybee Island, January 13-16, 2012

List Compiled by Dan Vickers

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Common Ground-Dove	Le Conte's Sparrow
Ross's Goose	Cooper's Hawk	Great Horned Owl	Nelson's Sparrow
Canada Goose	Red-shouldered Hawk	Belted Kingfisher	Saltmarsh Sparrow
Wood Duck	Red-tailed Hawk	Red-headed Woodpecker	Seaside Sparrow
Gadwall	American Kestrel	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Song Sparrow
American Wigeon	Merlin	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Swamp Sparrow
Mallard	Peregrine Falcon	Downy Woodpecker	White-throated Sparrow
Mottled Duck	Clapper Rail	Red-cockaded Woodpecker	White-crowned Sparrow
Blue-winged Teal	King Rail	Northern Flicker	Dark-eyed Junco
Northern Shoveler	Virginia Rail	Pileated Woodpecker	Northern Cardinal
Northern Pintail	Sora	Eastern Phoebe	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Green-winged Teal	Common Gallinule	Loggerhead Shrike	Dickcissel
Canvasback	American Coot	White-eyed Vireo	Red-winged Blackbird
Redhead	Black-bellied Plover	Blue-headed Vireo	Eastern Meadowlark
Ring-necked Duck	Wilson's Plover	Blue Jay	Rusty Blackbird
Greater Scaup	Semipalmated Plover	American Crow	Common Grackle
Lesser Scaup	Piping Plover	Fish Crow	Boat-tailed Grackle
Black Scoter	Killdeer	Tree Swallow	Brown-headed Cowbird
Bufflehead	American Oystercatcher	Carolina Chickadee	Baltimore Oriole
Common Goldeneye	Black-necked Stilt	Tufted Titmouse	House Finch
Hooded Merganser	American Avocet	White-breasted Nuthatch	American Goldfinch
Red-breasted Merganser	Spotted Sandpiper	Brown-headed Nuthatch	House Sparrow
Ruddy Duck	Greater Yellowlegs	Carolina Wren	
Red-throated Loon	Willet	House Wren	179 Species Total
Common Loon	Lesser Yellowlegs	Winter Wren	
Pied-billed Grebe	Marbled Godwit	Sedge Wren	
Horned Grebe	Ruddy Turnstone	Marsh Wren	
Red-necked Grebe	Red Knot	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	
Manx Shearwater	Sanderling	Golden-crowned Kinglet	
Wood Stork	Western Sandpiper	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	
Northern Gannet	Least Sandpiper	Eastern Bluebird	
Double-crested Cormorant	Purple Sandpiper	Hermit Thrush	
Anhinga	Dunlin	American Robin	
American White Pelican	Stilt Sandpiper	Gray Catbird	
Brown Pelican	Short-billed Dowitcher	Northern Mockingbird	
American Bittern	Long-billed Dowitcher	Brown Thrasher	
Great Blue Heron	Wilson's Snipe	European Starling	
Great Egret	Wilson's Phalarope	American Pipit	
Snowy Egret	Red Phalarope	Cedar Waxwing	
Little Blue Heron	Bonaparte's Gull	Snow Bunting	
Tricolored Heron	Laughing Gull	Northern Waterthrush	
Cattle Egret	Ring-billed Gull	Black-and-white Warbler	
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Herring Gull	Orange-crowned Warbler	
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Common Yellowthroat	
White Ibis	Great Black-backed Gull	American Redstart	
Glossy Ibis	Forster's Tern	Palm Warbler	
Black Vulture	Royal Tern	Pine Warbler	
Turkey Vulture	Black Skimmer	Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Osprey	Razorbill	Eastern Towhee	
Bald Eagle	Rock Pigeon	Chipping Sparrow	
Northern Harrier	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Vesper Sparrow	
	White-winged Dove	Savannah Sparrow	
	Mourning Dove	Henslow's Sparrow	



Wood Duck. Photo by Nathan Banfield.

## Interview with a Bird Researcher: Sarah Brown on Bachman's Sparrows

By Patti Newell

Sarah Brown is a graduate student at the University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. Robert Cooper in the Warnell School of Forestry. She is originally from Gilbertsville, Kentucky. She is currently working on finishing her thesis on fire management and Bachman's Sparrows. I had the opportunity to ask Sarah some questions about herself and her research over a few beers at the Royal Peasant in Athens, Georgia.



Sarah Brown with her study subject: a Bachman's Sparrow. Photo courtesy of Sarah Brown.

**Where in the world have you been and what birds have you worked with in the past?** I started working with birds as an intern in the Northeast on the MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas Survey that led to a presentation in Caen, France. Then I worked in Bridgeport, California, for the Great Basin Institute and afterwards with Northern Arizona University, where we conducted bird point count surveys in Grand Canyon National Park and Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado and the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona.

I've also worked with Yellow-billed Cuckoos in Lake Havasu and Yuma, Arizona, with the U.S. Geological Survey's Colorado Plateau Research Station as well as with Maroon-fronted Parrots in Mexico with Tecnológico de Monterrey. Then I took a job with Ecosphere Environmental Services on the Navajo Reservation in Farmington, New Mexico, and later worked for the University of Montana, nest searching for birds in Venezuela. Finally, I moved to Florida, where I did flush counts and point counts for resident and migratory birds for six different parks and national forests in Florida.

**What was your favorite experience working on a bird field crew and why?** Working in the Andean cloud forest of Venezuela with a large crew of 15 birders from around the world was probably my favorite field experience. My job was to wander around in a large forest plot each day and look for bird nests and occasionally help out with a banding crew. It blew my mind that I could get paid to hike around waterfalls on what felt like an adult version of an Easter egg hunt and laugh at the monkeys that liked to throw sticks at me.

**What brought you to Georgia?** I originally took a field technician job with Tall Timbers Research Station in Tallahassee, Florida, in 2009 and decided to stay with them to get a master's degree. Tall Timbers has helped fund a number of graduate students and has many great connections at the University of Georgia, including Dr. Robert Cooper, whom I had heard great things about and who was someone I knew I would enjoy working with.

**What do you plan to do when you graduate?** I'm still working on the answer to that question. I think I would like to eventually end up at a nonprofit research station like Tall Timbers, working with birds in connection with land management, but for now I plan on doing some more travelling before I continue my career.

**How did you get into working with birds?** My interest in birds came about pretty randomly. Although I've always been interested in wildlife and the outdoors, as an undergraduate I was unsure of my career interests and settled on English Literature as my major. In my sophomore year, I took a job doing simple data entry for the MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas Program, which was supervised by an avid birder and the Director of the Center for Environment and Society at Washington College, Dr. Wayne Bell. Dr. Bell soon offered me an internship working with the Breeding Bird Atlas. His passion for and knowledge of birds was infectious, and I've been sold on bird research ever since.

(continued on page 9)

## Interview with a Bird Researcher (continued from page 8)

### Do you consider yourself a birder?

No, I do not consider myself a “true birder,” meaning I do not keep a bird list or travel great distances to see a rare bird.

**What is the story with Bachman’s Sparrows?** The Bachman’s Sparrow is a fire-adapted species that inhabits pine forest ecosystems in the southeastern U.S. Life-history traits of Bachman’s Sparrows allow them to flourish within a fire-dependent ecosystem, including a lengthy breeding season, and to produce two or more broods per season. Likely due to fire suppression and a reduction of suitable habitat, Bachman’s Sparrows are declining at an alarming rate and have been classified as near threatened.

**How is your research going to help Bachman’s Sparrows?** My research is on the effect of fire regime, in particular scale of fire, given frequency and season on management of Bachman’s Sparrows. In theory, once the scale of management surpasses the behavioral adaptations and physiological ability of a species to respond to change, populations could be negatively impacted. Information on the effects of burn regime and scale on Bachman’s Sparrows will provide wildlife managers with information for tailoring fire management to meet the spatial needs of this declining species.

### Do you have any advice for young people wanting to pursue a career with birds?

Do lots of field work!

## Mark Your Calendars and Plan to Attend Georgia Ornithological Society’s

### Spring 2012 Meeting

April 20-22, 2012

Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center  
Augusta, Georgia

**Keynote Speaker: Nathan Klaus**, Senior Wildlife Biologist  
Georgia DNR, Nongame Endangered Wildlife Program

### ***Golden-winged Warblers and Cerulean Warblers: Two Species with More in Common Than You Would Think***

Golden-winged and Cerulean Warblers have both undergone long-term declines throughout most of their range, and both species have their southern breeding range limit in Georgia. Hanging on by a thread, small populations of both species have been the focus of considerable conservation efforts in Georgia. Nathan Klaus will discuss these species' life history needs and how management for them attempts to recreate habitat dynamics that are missing from the modern landscape.

**Graduate Student Research Presentation: Paige Barlow**, PhD student  
University of Georgia

### ***Residential Development and Avian Conservation in the Southern Appalachian Mountains***

### **Other Conference Highlights: Field Trips**

Led by top local birders to outstanding locales such as  
Phinizy Swamp, Merry Brothers Brickyards, Yuchi WMA, Lovers Lane and the Augusta Levee,  
Horse Creek Waste Water treatment Plant and The Audubon Silver Lake Sanctuary

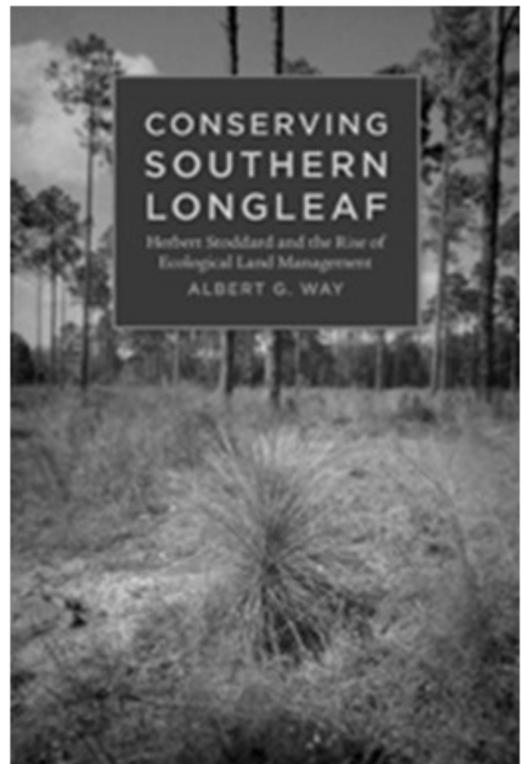
**Conserving Southern Longleaf: Herbert Stoddard and the Rise of Ecological Land Management**, by Albert G. Way (2011; University of Georgia Press, Athens; 300 pp)  
*Reviewed by Malcolm Hodges*

Did you know that a dead hippopotamus provided a career pivot-point for GOS' first president, Herbert Stoddard? This is only one of many small but fascinating details you'll learn if you read Way's fascinating and very readable new book. It chronicles the career of Herbert Stoddard, remembered by many in GOS as a founder of our society, but the book does much more than that. It delves into the social and ecological history of a fascinating corner of the state, the Red Hills. Centered at Thomasville, the Red Hills harbor many of the quail-hunting plantations that drew Stoddard to Georgia.

The book first tells the story of the origins of quail-plantation culture, born of the health-tourism trade of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a connection I found fascinating and which Way obviously enjoys recounting. It then tells how Stoddard came to be involved in the study of wildlife biology (remarkably, since he was a high-school dropout), and how he landed in the Red Hills, in charge of a ground-breaking study of Northern Bobwhite management.

A land manager myself, I think one of the most fascinating chapters deals with the history of wildland fire in this part of the state, and Herb Stoddard's open-minded approach to the benefits of fire in managing quail. This was at the same time that a huge paradigm shift occurred in land tenure throughout the United States, i.e., the Great Depression, and the practice of woods-burning was being demonized widely. Herb Stoddard was admirably steadfast in his defense of fire as a land-management tool, in the face of a storm of acrimony from those looking to end the practice entirely. How many of the Southeast's pinewoods- and fire-adapted plants and animals might already have gone extinct had he caved to this pressure?

The last four chapters deal with the science of wildlife management (for which Stoddard was a founding father), the integration of agriculture with forestlands, the evolution of southeastern forestry (especially Stoddard's unique ecological approach to the discipline), and the role Herb Stoddard played in early institutions such as the Tall Timbers Research Station. Albert Way is a gifted writer, whose clear, fluid prose is a joy to read. With this book, he has brought to light one of the most fascinating and important figures in the history of ecological land management. In learning more about one of our founding fathers, GOS members also have an opportunity to learn more about an important part of Georgia's natural history.



### Go Paperless!

Want to save trees and reduce printing costs by receiving the *GOShawk* electronically? Contact Cathy Ricketts, the GOS membership chairperson, at [gosmembership@gmail.com](mailto:gosmembership@gmail.com), and let her know that you would like to receive the *GOShawk* by e-mail. Cathy will make sure that you go electronic starting with the June 2012 issue.

## Florida's Second Breeding Bird Atlas Kickoff Help Needed!

### Rick West and the Florida Ornithological Society Invite Georgia Atlasers and Birders

to the Spring FOS meeting and atlas kickoff weekend, May 18-20, in pleasant rural Camp Weed near the intersection of I-95 and I-10, and near the meanderings of the Suwannee River and the wetlands of the Potash Corp flooded mining pits. This will give the GOS an opportunity to participate in a second atlas and see the vast changes that have come about in running an atlas. **The surcharge for non-FOS members is being waived.**

The tradition of helping neighboring states with atlas projects is well established; I made a lot of good friends while atlasing in Georgia, and now need your help getting our younger generation started. We will lend you your very own piece of Florida to survey for the weekend.

More details will be available at the FOS website (<http://www.fosbirds.org/>). Please contact me at Rick-LWest@aol.com, 800-707-4382, or 850-766-9041. If you contact me ahead of time, I can give you a map and atlas assignment along I-75 that you can visit coming and going from Georgia.

### Call for Camp Colorado Scholarship Applications

Calling all young birders ages 13-18. You are invited to apply for the Dr. James C. Major, Sr. scholarship to the American Birding Association's Camp Colorado, July 8-13, 2012. Explore and bird Colorado from grasslands to glaciers. From the shortgrass prairie of northeastern Colorado to the aspen groves and alpine tundra of Rocky Mountain National Park, 2012 Camp Colorado has it all.

The GOS will send one lucky teen to this exciting summer camp. This year's scholarship **includes all camp registration fees and up to \$500** reimbursement for travel expenses (parents of scholarship recipients are responsible for making travel arrangements).

For more information about the camp, visit: <http://aba.org/events/colorado2012/>  
For scholarship application information, visit: [www.gos.org/grants/grants.html/](http://www.gos.org/grants/grants.html/) Click on Young Birder's Scholarship. **Deadline for receipt of applications is April 30, 2012.**

Applicant must be a Georgia resident.



Woodcock. Photo by Nathan Banfield



Herring Gulls with a Black-legged Kittiwake. Photo courtesy of Nathan Banfield

## GOS Financial Highlights for 2011

By Jeannie Wright

GOS continued to provide funding for many great projects for bird research, conservation work, and education. Highlights include a Conservation Grant of \$50,000 to The Nature Conservancy to help continue their prescribed burns to improve bird habitat and \$30,000 for graduate student research grants. Scholarships were provided to send four teens/young adults to Audubon and ABA camps. Funding was provided for binoculars and books for the Youth Birding Competition as well as funding for Camp TALON, which hosted 10 participants. The Opportunity Fund Grants included a project regarding the impact of feral cats on bird populations and assistance with Atlanta Audubon's publication, *Georgia's Grassland Birds*.

The Finance Committee continued to monitor our investments, tweaking the portfolio as market conditions warranted. At the end of the year, we had an allocation of 9% in cash, 41% in bonds, and 50% in stocks. Because GOS is a private operating foundation, the society is required to spend 5% of its average monthly asset balance for items related to its mission and goals, and this requirement was met in 2011. Although our expenses exceeded our income for the year, this deficit was more than covered by the growth in our investment holdings.

### Financial Results - 2011

#### Revenue:

Dues and Contributions	15,093
Earth Share Georgia	4,928
Meeting and Sales (Net)	2,383
Investment Income	72,367
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$94,771</b>

#### Expenses:

Conservation Grants	50,000
Graduate Student Awards	30,000
Publications ( <i>GOShawk</i> , <i>The Oriole</i> )	8,830
Camp Scholarships, Education	9,196
Opportunity Fund	11,735
Contributions	3,863
RBA, Website	1,003
Administration	24,513
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$139,140</b>

**Net** **-\$44,369**

The above represents our income and expenses for 2011.

# Camp TALON

(Teen Adventures Learning Ornithology and Nature)

### What?

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

**When?** June 10-14, 2012

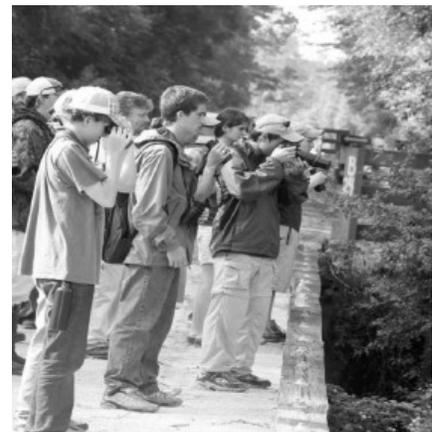
**Where?** The camp will be based at Epworth by the Sea on St. Simons Island. We'll be birding on Little St. Simons Island, Cumberland Island, Harris Neck NWR, Sapelo Island, and Jekyll Island.

**Who?** Will host 15 students, ages 12-15

**How much?** \$300 each, which includes meals, lodging, and bus transportation. Two scholarships will be available.

**How can I register?** Look for the registration form at [www.gos.org](http://www.gos.org).

For more info, contact Julie Duncan ([julie.duncan@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:julie.duncan@dnr.state.ga.us)) or at 770-784-3059



## Mark Your Calendars and Plan to Attend Georgia Ornithological Society's

### Fall 2012 Meeting

October 11-14, 2012

Villas by the Sea

Jekyll Island, Georgia

#### Keynote Speaker: Kevin Karlson

Kevin is an accomplished birder, professional tour leader and wildlife photographer who has published numerous articles on bird identification and natural history for an assortment of magazines, books, and journals. A former photo editor for *North American Birds*, he currently writes the "Birder's ID" column for *WildBird* magazine. Kevin is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide* and is currently completing a new book for the Roger Tory Peterson Reference series called *Birding by Impression*.

#### "Birds on the Wind: The Miracle of Migration"

Bird migration is truly one of the most amazing natural wonders in our world today. From the unbelievable 7,000-mile, nonstop journeys of Bar-tailed Godwits to spectacular raptor concentrations during migration, there are still many unanswered questions about the movements of migratory birds. The program begins with a review of different types of bird migration before highlighting various bird families and select species that perform amazing feats of physical endurance during their bi-annual journeys. Breathtaking photos and several musical interludes add to the interesting nature of this presentation. This light-hearted program appeals to birders and non-birders alike.

#### Other Conference Highlights:

##### Workshop: Shorebirds by Impression, by Kevin Karlson

This short indoor workshop presents an alternate approach to shorebird identification. It encourages an initial evaluation of physical impressions to form a surprisingly accurate foundation for your ID conclusion before analyzing feather details or plumage patterns. By concentrating on the size, body shape and structural features of each bird, a reliable set of non-changeable impressions is formed for each species, unaffected by the many plumage conditions found throughout the year for most shorebirds.

#### Field Trips

Led by some of Georgia's top birders to outstanding locales such as Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area, Glennville Water Treatment Facility, Harris Neck NWR, Raccoon Key, Fort Stewart, and Little St. Simons, Cumberland, Jekyll and Sapelo Islands.

## Try BirdTape to Reduce Bird Collisions

By Jim Ferrari

According to the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), hundreds of millions of birds die every year in the United States from collisions with window glass. Now ABC has introduced a product, "ABC BirdTape," that, when applied to the windows of your home, will reduce the number of bird collisions. See the ABC website ([www.abcbirdtape.org/faq.html](http://www.abcbirdtape.org/faq.html)) for further details and to order a roll or two for your home. ABC also has produced an informative flyer, "You Can Save Birds from Flying into Windows!" (available on the ABC website) which describes strategies for reducing bird collisions. Let's all make an effort to make our homes more bird-friendly in time for spring migration.

<http://abcbirdtape.org/index.html>

**Wait... And See***By Jennifer Wilcox*

The sky is gray  
 Some droplets fall  
 But fail to dampen our spirits  
 While every wintering bird  
 Comes to call  
 Yet in all this wet and gray  
 The RUBLs remain MIA  
 So, the Sapsuckers stick  
 To their chosen trunks, like paper clips  
 To a magnet  
 They scoot and tap their way  
 Up!  
 Until there is no bark left to inspect  
 And off they fly, away from my eye  
 For I can only see to the four corners  
 Of this small, car window  
 The Crows approach now  
 Closer, drawn by our yellow corn and egg bait  
 But they know something is awry  
 They want it so much, but  
 They keep their black-feathered distance  
 Shuffling, too smart for their own good  
 Curious and afraid  
 Eventually their fear takes them  
 Away!  
 Cackling and screeching, one to the other  
 The Blue Jays harass their nemesis birds  
 Brilliant and red  
 One moment perched and the next  
 Diving into the group of eight scarlet crests  
 Until the ball scatters among the mistletoe shrubs  
 The jay stands proudly in the center of the shadow  
 Of his own making  
 What do I feel for the shuffling doves  
 As they bob their small, smooth beige heads forward  
 Their blue spectacled eyes fall onto nothing  
 But only those things edible  
 With only one thing in mind,  
 The Mourning Doves do not flinch  
 At every sound  
 Or movement  
 Like the crows, blackbirds, and jays  
 Waddling fervently inside their flock they  
 Peck and pick and prattle and coo  
 And then, for no apparent reason at all  
 Up into the tall pecans  
 They wait  
 I hear the sinister “dee-dee-dee’s”  
 Of the tiny forest punks

Those small, feathered jobs  
 Remind me of a roving gang of mischievous children  
 And as their acronym suggests  
 They are off caching bits of our bait  
 To ensure  
 On warmer winter days  
 Full bellies on the cold, wet grays  
 Alas, the brown-headed squeaky toys have arrived  
 In the late morning light  
 They brighten the wait  
 Their upturned bills tip downward  
 Toward the earth  
 My gaze snaps up  
 Into the bare branches  
 As the wet “chup” of the Myrtle Warbler  
 Pierces the cool air of this old  
 Pecan grove

From seven on, I did wait  
 And at eleven ‘o’ eight, the Starlings bold  
 They see the bait  
 But no one told  
 The Rusty Blackbirds, no  
 They do not show  
 Where would they be now?  
 We simply don’t know



Jennifer is working on a research project in Athens, Georgia, studying movements of Rusty Blackbirds via capture, banding, and radio-telemetry. Photo courtesy of Patti Newell.



**GEORGIA**  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

UNICOI STATE PARK & LODGE

## Georgia Mountain BirdFest

May 3 - 6, 2012

Unicoi State Park and Lodge, Helen, Georgia

### Birders & Nature Enthusiasts

Join other birders from beginners to experts at the only birding conference of its kind in the area for guided walks, field trips, classes and hands-on activities.

Featuring over 30 of Georgia's birding experts leading over 60 seminars and field trips! Presenters include E.J. Williams the Migratory Bird Chief of the Southeast Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and avid birders Cameron Cox of Leica Sport Optics and Georgann Schmalz of Birding Adventures, Inc. Other topics include tree ID, bats, butterflies, frogs, wildflowers, Flying Wild workshops and more! Teachers can also earn 1-2 PLUs for attending the BirdFest.

**Featuring Keynote Speaker:** Joe Duff, C.E.O. Operation Migration Inc.

Unicoi's beautiful setting and close proximity to hot birding spots make it an ideal location. Stay overnight in the park's lodge rooms, cozy cottages or modern campsites. Enjoy your meals at Unicoi Restaurant.

Early Bird Registration is \$110 through March 15<sup>th</sup>; March 16<sup>th</sup> - April 23<sup>rd</sup> - \$135. Registration includes most sessions, continental breakfast and the Keynote dinner. Registrants can also take advantage of a special BirdFest rate of \$59/night at the Unicoi Lodge.

Book now as the early bird gets the worm!

For more information or to register:  
[www.gamtnbirdfest.com](http://www.gamtnbirdfest.com) or call 1-800-573-9659, ext. 305.



# GOShawk



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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.