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GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
www.gos.org

President's Message

By Steve Holzman

By the time this arrives I hope we can say spring is here, but it was downright cold a few days ago. I know that will change soon enough. This past January, GOS held its winter meeting on Tybee Island. Heather Abernathy spoke to us on Friday about her research looking at how breeding insectivorous songbirds, vegetation, and caterpillars have responded to climate change. There is a risk that the timing of migration and insect emergence may leave large tracts of forest under treat of defoliation by caterpillars. Our Saturday speaker, Dr. Keith Bildstein, talked to us about his work with Turkey Vultures and Hooded Vultures. Satellite tagging of these birds is giving us a fascinating look into the movements and site fidelity of these underappreciated birds.

This is my last GOShawk as your president. I've accepted a new position with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Rachel and I will be moving to Newport, Oregon, in early June. I'm finally getting to combine my

experience in mapping and data management and my passion for birds through this new job as the Pacific Seabird Project's Data Manager. I'm hoping that they'll let me get out of the office once in a while to help out with surveys of murre, puffins, and auklets, and maybe an albatross or two. Time will tell. We are both looking forward to a change of scenery, and a change of yard birds, but we'll miss both Georgia's birds and Georgia's birders.

What does the future hold for GOS? Our membership numbers have been pretty consistent over the last couple of decades (400-500). Perhaps we've hit a plateau? Our Facebook page has more than 1000 members, but of course it's free to join a Facebook page. There are definitely more than 500 people in the state interested in birds and bird conservation. What can we do to get them to become active members of GOS? One possible idea is to reach out to local Audubon Societies and try to recruit their members into GOS. If you attend your regional Audubon meeting, there is usually a

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Georgia Ornithological Society

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GOShawk is published quarterly
(March, June, September, December)

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Deadline for article submission is the first

Welcome, New Members!

Quail Covey (Family)

Betsey Weltner Norman Park, GA

Bachman's Sparrow (Individual)

Max Flanders Atlanta, GA
Sue Peters-Ferree Blairsville, GA
Mary Pfaffko Atlanta, GA

Are you coming to our Spring Meeting?

GOS will be accepting donations for the Birders' Exchange. The American Birding Association's Birders' Exchange program collects donated new and used equipment and distributes it to colleagues working to conserve birds and their habitats throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Here are the items they are looking for:

Binoculars – especially those that are rubber armored and/or waterproof.

Digital cameras – especially SLRs and telephoto lenses

Spotting scopes

Tripods

Field guides to Neotropical birds

Field guides to North American birds – newer editions

Ornithology texts

Laptop computers – not more than 3 years old

Backpacks – no broken zippers

iPods or .mp3 players

GOS SPRING MEETING

May 19-21, 2017, Unicoi State Park

GOS Grant Application Deadlines

Norene Boring, Undergraduate Student Research Grants, September 15, 2017

GOS Opportunity Grants, No Deadline

More information about these grants is available on the GOS website, gos.org.

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

point in the meeting for announcements. Stand up and tell people about GOS. Tell them about how we spend close to \$100,000 per year to fund graduate and undergraduate student research, support on-the-ground bird conservation projects, and support youth birding. Tell them about our meetings, our speakers, and great field trips. Tell them about our journal, providing a place for scientists and bird enthusiasts to document the fascinating world of Georgia birds. Ask them to visit GOS.org to learn more and join up.

I'm confident that GOS will continue to be a strong organization in the years to come. We have great people involved who will make sure the organization is able to fulfill its mission and remain a strong voice for Georgia's Birds.

I hope you can make it to our Spring Meeting at Unicoi and say goodbye. We'll miss you all. Good Birding! - Steve and Rachel



Barrow's Goldeneye, Newport, Oregon.
Photo by Rachel Holzman.



Otter Rock, Oregon. Photo by Rachel Holzman.



Steve and Rachel Holzman at Depoe Bay, Oregon. Photo by Rachel

The Georgia Ornithological Society's Spring Meeting

When: May 19-21, 2017

Where: Unicoi State Park and Lodge
1788 Highway 356
Helen, GA 30545

Who: Friday Speaker, Stephen Ferguson—University of Memphis

Saturday Keynote Speakers,
Jill Penn, Ph.D, Mia Malloy
Ph.D, and Maribel Fernandez,
M.S. Georgia Gwinnett College

What: Great field trips and camaraderie

How: gos.org/2017springmeeting



Ruffed Grouse at Brasstown Bald. Photo by Shannon Fair.

2017 H. Branch Howe, Jr. Graduate Student Research Grants

Andrea J. Ayala, *Epidemiological and Ecological Factors Influencing Viral Transmission from Backyard Poultry to Wild Resident Birds.*

College of Veterinary Medicine, The University of Georgia.

Cody M. Cox, *Identifying wintering habitat of Neotropical migratory birds in the upper Guacimal watershed, Costa Rica, to inform conservation planning.*

Graduate Assistant, Integrative Conservation and Forestry and Natural Resources, The University of Georgia.

Anjelika D. Kidd, *Movement Ecology of White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) along an Urbanization Gradient.*

M.S. Candidate, Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, The University of Georgia.

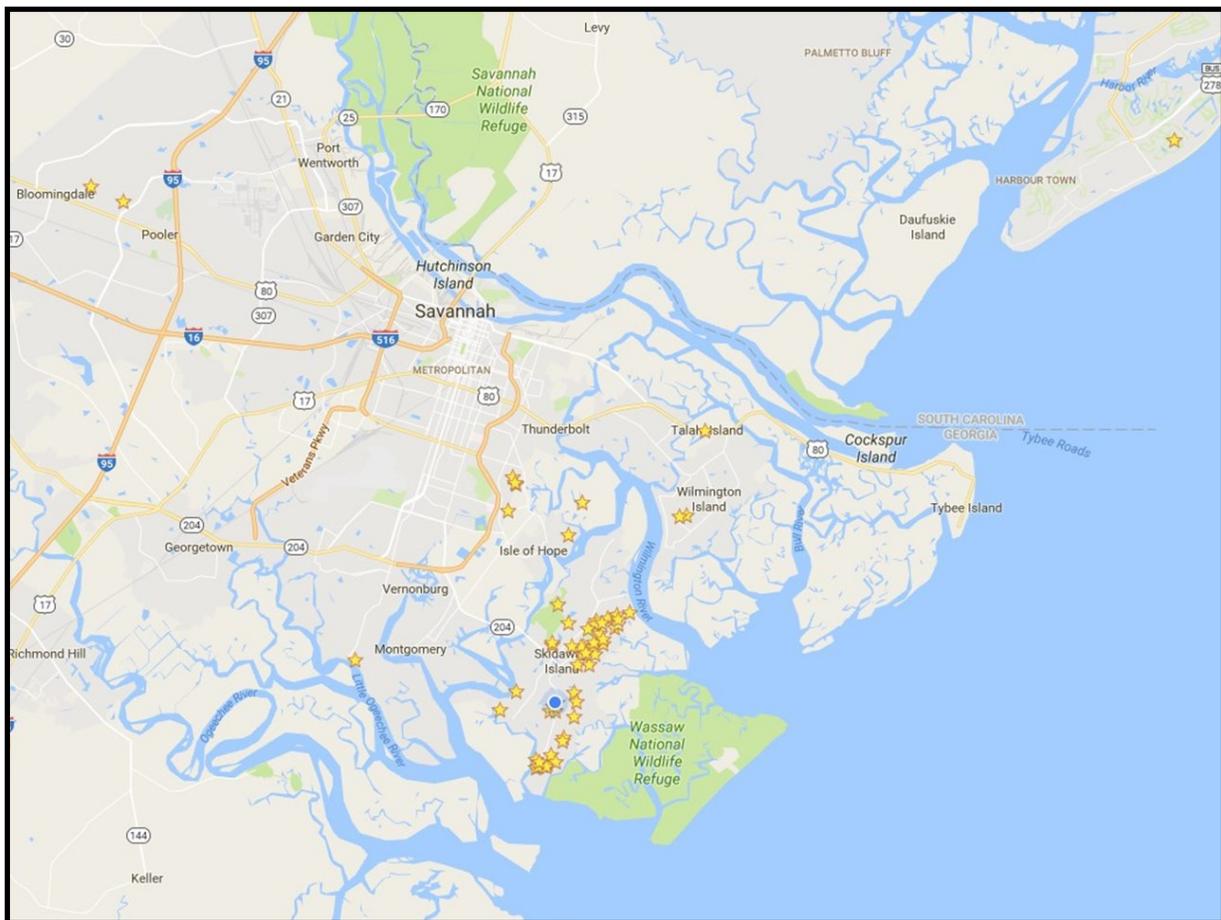
Go Paperless!

Want to save trees and reduce printing costs by receiving the *GOShawk* electronically? Contact Shannon Fair, the GOS membership chairperson, at gosmembership@gmail.com, and let her know that you would like to receive the *GOShawk* by e-mail. Shannon will make sure that you go

Hummingbirds on the Coast of Georgia

By Russ Wigh

Twenty-five years ago, those in the know claimed that wintering hummingbirds in Georgia were sick and weak and would not make it through the winter. That was then; this is now. On the coast this winter we had more than 75 homes reporting 125 hummingbirds of at least three species. The observations stretch from St. Simons to Hilton Head, but all but a few were at Chatham County feeders. There was a huge but diffuse cluster of homes in The Landings on Skidaway Island reporting birds (60), and while I am confident that some of those reports are of birds shared by more than one home, there is good reason to believe that most of the birds were individuals. Steve Calver and I compared shots of two Rufous hummingbirds less than a quarter of a mile apart. They were different birds! A neighbor of mine had an adult male Ruby-throated Hummingbird; I did not. She is 330 feet from me. Ruby-throats predominate, of course, but among those reported and confirmed were a few Black-chinned Hummingbirds. Several people



Winter hummingbird reports during 2016-2017 season. Courtesy of Google Maps.

also reported Rufous Hummingbirds.

Researchers have focused on four different “maps” birds use to find their way to both breeding and wintering grounds: geometry of the night sky, landmarks, very-low-frequency infrasound (ocean waves), and olfactory cues. All of this has been successfully suggested in experiments. Juvenile birds, however, must rely on some as yet undiscovered genetic code for spatial

orientation, or must follow adult birds to wintering grounds on their initial migration, building their maps along the way. Chance may also play a role in where a juvenile bird winters.

Hummingbirds have a lobe in their tiny brains that is huge in relation to the rest of the brain: the hippocampus. This portion of the brain is responsible for memory and learning, and hummingbirds excel at finding their way. This is a clue to why many people have reported having birds each winter for up to 10 years in a row. To add to the intrigue, Fred Bassett, the principal at <http://www.hummingbirdresearch.net/>, has had DNA analysis done on a few of the thousands he has banded and found that offspring of birds from previous years have shown up at the same wintering location. Fascinating. And by the way, more than 50% of the birds Fred has banded along the Gulf coast of Mississippi and Alabama are Rufous Hummingbirds. Go figure.

Fred's research, and that of his colleague, Doreen Cubie, is focused on where these birds breed, more than on how they find their way to us. The answers aren't in yet, since the percentage of



Rufous Hummingbird. Photo by Russ Wigh.



Black-chinned Hummingbird showing its gray crown and long, curved bill. Photo by Russ Wigh.

bands recovered in successive winters is very small. But there is a growing suspicion on the part of some people, supported by homeowners, that some Ruby-throated Hummingbirds may not migrate at all.

If you get hooked on these little guys, and need to have more information, in addition to Fred's website, I will suggest Sherie Williamson's *Hummingbirds of North America*, a Peterson Field

Another possibility which may be in our midst, Buff-bellied Hummingbird. Photo by Russ Wigh.



2017 Bill Terrell Graduate Student Research Grants

K. A. Button, *Testing Approaches for the analysis of beak ecomorphology in birds*.
Ph.D. candidate, North Carolina State University.

Ryan Chitwood, *Investigating climate-driven extinction events of warm-edge bird populations*.
M.S. candidate, The University of Georgia.

Lauren C. Gingerella, *Effects of predator exclosures on nest success of Wilson's Plovers*.
M.S. candidate, The University of Georgia.

Will Lewis, *Food and predation tradeoffs during the post-fledging period in Black-throated Blue Warblers*.
Ph.D. candidate, The University of Georgia.

Rebecca Windsor, *Consistency of structural color across molts: The effects of environmental conditions and stress on feather ultraviolet reflectance*.

2017 Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants

By Larry Carlile

The first grant was awarded to Manomet Center for Conservation Science (Brad Winn) and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) (Tim Keyes), who will use \$50,000 of GOS funds and \$92,500 of GA DNR funds to install rice trunks on Butler Island to manage water levels for migrating shorebirds and local waders. The grant also will provide for the control of undesirable plant species on Butler Island and will continue predator management on Raccoon Key and Little Egg Island. The Grant Committee agreed that the Butler Island project is long overdue and will provide benefits for birds AND birders.



The second grant was awarded to GA DNR (Joe Burnham), who will use \$16,000 of GOS funds and \$10,650 of GA DNR funds to conduct mechanical and chemical control of pine and hardwood midstory on the Jarrell Plantation Historic Site and to install artificial cavities for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW). The U.S. Forest Service and GA DNR Nongame Conservation Section will also provide prescribed burning resources. This state park borders both the Oconee National Forest (ONF) and the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge (PNRW). The project will improve foraging habitat for two existing RCW groups on the ONF and has potential to provide future RCW cluster sites that will provide connectivity between the ONF and the PNRW RCW populations.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker at Piedmont NWR. Photo by Roy Cohutta.

The Bird That Roared

By Nico Arcilla

After finishing my Ph.D. in wildlife ecology at the University of Georgia, I took a two-year position in Ghana, West Africa, running a research project on the impact of logging on wildlife. As part of one of our studies, I spent months mist-netting in forests, catching and releasing almost a thousand birds. Most of the birds we netted belonged to one of several dozen species, so I got to know them fairly well and could usually identify them on sight.

One day I was netting in a rare unlogged forest (most of Ghana's forests have already been logged) in a particularly beautiful spot near a stream. I was working with my friend Zebigou, whose name in his native language, Mamprusi, means "man does not know the future." He came back from checking a net with one of the white bags we used to transfer birds and handed it to me. I weighed it and opened the bag to take out the bird. Peering in, I expected to see a familiar face. Instead I was taken aback by the sight of what to me was a new species.

This bird didn't resemble any of our usual cast of characters. I wasn't even sure where to start looking in the bird guide. Barring on his chest made me wonder if he was a juvenile. Like bulbuls, he had a slightly hooked bill, but not their normal coloring. I was stumped.

Finally I found his portrait. He was a Fraser's Forest-flycatcher, an Old World flycatcher approximately the size of an American Robin. I did our usual measurements and took a couple of feather samples (sorry, Fraser!) for molecular data and disease screening. Leaving Zebigou at the nets, I took Fraser to a nearby clearing to get some photos. I needed documentation of each of the species we captured, and I also wanted to share their beauty with the public—the majority of whom will never see these birds up close—as a reminder of some of the many reasons these forests should continue to be protected.

We were lucky to have the clearing. It was typically so dark inside the closed rainforest that my camera needed a flash, and this didn't bring out the birds' colors as nicely as natural light. I kept Fraser in the bag, as I usually did when walking birds away from the net to release them. Then I placed his legs in a bander's grip to hold him safely in one hand while I used my other hand to ready the camera and gently pull the bag off of him. The bag wasn't fully off when Fraser fixed me in the eye and let me know his opinion on the whole operation. He let loose with what I can only describe as a roar—a deep, throaty, commanding, somewhat terrifying avian roar.

The roar alone took my breath away, but what the roar triggered was even more astonishing. Within seconds, a large, loud, cantankerous, and royally peeved group of Fraser's friends arrived at the scene, demonstrating in no uncertain terms that they shared Fraser's feelings about this unwarranted persecution of their kind. Suddenly, I found myself being dive-bombed by a motley assemblage of Feathered Fans of Fraser. Some took turns sitting in the trees right above me, shouting bird profanities, while others flew around my head, heckling me at close range with furious, kamikaze-style plunges toward my face, all the while glaring malevolently into my eyes. I was messing with the wrong bird – that much was clear!

Stunned, I put the bird bag back over Fraser for a moment, wondering whether I'd be able to go ahead with this army of newfound enemies all around me. From the trees above, they continuing to hurl down insults, gearing up for battle, sharpening their beaks. I took a deep breath and

realized I needed to get the whole thing over as quickly as possible, because obviously they were not going anywhere as long as Fraser was my captive. I took the bag off again, camera ready. On cue, Fraser roared again, and they all started shrieking and nose-diving toward me out of the trees. It was Avian Armageddon. I managed to take a few photos while looking over my shoulders, bombers circling around, and then I couldn't take it anymore. I opened my hand and released him. He immediately flew up to the Fraser Welcoming Committee and vanished into the trees above.

Fraser's pals hung around protectively for some minutes more, continuing to shout down invectives in case I tried to cause any more trouble. "Don't come around here no more!" they seemed to say, among other things. "Don't even think about it!"

They didn't need to worry. It was our last day of netting—our last hour, actually. So it was a happy ending for the birds, I think: Fraser got his freedom, and they got their friend back. For us, too, it had been an amazing day, with more birds and more species than usual, like jewels we kept uncovering from the dark. Now we packed up our things and left the forest to the birds and other forest animals—monkeys, antelopes, bush babies, civets, and tree hyrax, distant cousins of the elephants that once roamed there—and to the beautiful dappled sunlight coming through the trees. Until we meet again, I thought: "Happy days to you and hats off to The Bird That Roared!"

Postscript: Most of West Africa's forests have been destroyed to grow cash crops, especially cocoa, and Ghana has already lost more than 80% of its rainforests. In the forests that remain, we found that more than 50% of Ghana's forest birds had been wiped out due to rampant illegal logging in forests that were legally protected, like Fraser's home. The forest where we caught Fraser was unlogged at the time we were there, but was slated for logging. Our study, "Severe declines of understory forest birds follow illegal logging in Ghana, West Africa," was published in the journal *Biological Conservation*, and we have shared many photos from our work in various news articles and on our project's Facebook page. My hope is that these efforts raise awareness of how important it is to protect the magnificent but increasingly threatened rainforests and wildlife of West Africa, like Fraser and his friends.



Fraser's Forest Flycatcher roaring. Photo by Nico Arcilla.

Atlanta Bird Fest 2017

April 15 through May 14

Presented by Atlanta Audubon Society



April 15 to May 14, 2017

www.atlantaaudubon.org/atlanta-bird-fest

Exclusive field trips, workshops, and more...

- Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Piedmont NWR
- Wine & Warblers in the North Georgia Mountains
- Birding the private trails at Serenbe
- Meet & Greet with Chris Wood, Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- Nature Photography Workshop
- Nocturnal Birds at Pine Log WMA
- David Haskell, author of *The Forest Unseen* and *The Songs of Trees*

Presented by Atlanta Audubon Society

Atlanta Bird Fest is back! This year's event features a selection of field trips, educational workshops, and more for bird and nature enthusiasts of all skill levels.

Big Day Challenge 2017: Take our Big Day Challenge and compete to see how many birds you can find in a 24- or 6-hour period between April 15 and May 14. Prizes, recognition, and bragging rights for top birders! See www.atlantaaudubon.org/bigdaychallenge for more information.

More info, including the full schedule of events, may be found at www.atlantaaudubon.org/atlanta-bird-fest.

Species List from Winter 2017 Meeting on Tybee Island, Georgia

Compiled by Larry Carlile

169 Species

Birds observed during field trips to: Chatham County Wetlands Mitigation Site, Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens, Corps of Engineers Spoil Disposal Site (Jasper Co., SC), Fort Pulaski National Monument, Fort Stewart Military Installation, Harris Neck NWR, Little St. Simons Island, Pelagic Trips, Little Tybee Island, Richmond Hill Wastewater Treatment Facility, Savannah Hotspots, Sapelo Island, Savannah NWR (Jasper Co., SC), Savannah NWR (Solomon Tract), Skidaway Island Hotspots, Tybee Island, and Wassaw Island NWR.

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

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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 |
|---|-------|