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GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
www.gos.org

President's Message

By Larry Carlile

Election day will be here before we know it, and the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Amendment will be on the ballot. The amendment reads: "Without increasing the current state sales tax rate, shall the Constitution of Georgia be amended so as to create the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund to conserve lands that protect drinking water sources and the water quality of rivers, lakes, and streams; to protect and conserve forests, fish, wildlife habitats, and state and local parks; and to provide opportunities for our children and families to play and enjoy the outdoors, by dedicating, subject to full public disclosure, up to 80 percent of the existing sales tax collected by sporting goods stores to such purposes without increasing the current state sales tax rate?" To learn more, visit <https://www.georgiaoutdoorstewardship.org/> and then vote YES for Amendment 1 on Election Day, November 6, 2018, to support land and water conservation in Georgia. Georgia's birds and the habitats they depend upon will benefit.



Northern Bobwhite. Photo by Dan Vickers.

Deadlines: Grants and Scholarships

Opportunity Grants (No Deadline)

Bill Terrell (December 1) and H. Branch Howe (December 31) Grad Student Research Grants

Terrell Avian Conservation Grants (December 31)

There will be two scholarships for teenagers to attend ABA's Camp Colorado and one for Audubon's Hog Island Camp.

See gos.org for more information.

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Georgia Ornithological Society

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For a list of grant, scholarship, and award committees (and their contact information) visit gos.org/executive-committee

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

Bob Sargent, Editor
478-397-7962
bobsargent.ncs@gmail.com

*Deadline for article submission is the first
of the month prior to publication.
Submission by e-mail is appreciated.*

Welcome, New Members!

Brown Thrasher (Individual/Family)

Brad Alexander	Cleveland, GA
Michelle Anderson	Jekyll Island, GA
Penelope England	Pine Mountain, GA
David Fletcher	Dublin, GA
Steve Friedman	Atlanta, GA
Rachel Green	Savannah, GA
Wes Hatch	Marietta, GA
Iris Levin/Toshi Tsunekage	Decatur, GA
Winifred Mund	Savannah, GA
Virginia Shell	Adairsville, GA
Melanie Vickers	Kennesaw, GA
Lynda Walker	Atlanta, GA
James White	Newnan, GA

Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Patron)

John McCleskey	St. Simons Is., GA
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Fledgling (Student)

Mackenzie Borum	Decatur, GA
Clara Drummond	Decatur, GA
Emily Smith	Decatur, GA
Jackie Umana	Decatur, GA

Mark Your Calendars Now!

GOS WINTER MEETING

January 18-21, 2019

Hotel Tybee on Tybee Island

The GOS family will gather at our usual winter meeting destination to relish a long weekend overflowing with great field trips and guest speakers. Come join us for birding, learning, and fellowship.

Look for meeting details on gos.org

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.

Hog Island Camp

By Anna Zheng

A small boat, crowded with 16 teenagers and twenty-some adults, approaches the small island of Eastern Egg Rock. Curiously, every teen is wearing a raincoat and a hat. Binoculars and cameras abound.

Teen 1: "Common."

Teen 2: "What about that one?"

Teen 1: "Arctic...wait, no, those are all Common, right?"

Teen 3: "Roseate! To the left, over there!"

Teen 4: "Where?"

Teen 5: "PUFFIN!"

Five minutes after landing on Eastern Egg Rock on a cloudless day, I discovered that wearing a raincoat had really been necessary when the first tern pooped on my head. Known primarily for its role as a breeding ground for Atlantic Puffins, Eastern Egg Rock is also host to breeding Leach's Storm-petrels and many, many terns. That Wednesday, all of us were pooped on, pecked, and screamed at by terns eager to drive us away from their eggs and chicks as we carefully clambered toward the center of the island single file. It was amazing. My favorite was a Common Tern the researchers had nicknamed Roof Tern, which was notorious for attacking anyone who dared to stand up while using the scopes on the roof of the small research cabin.

We were incredibly lucky to land on the island, because usually only researchers are allowed. However, the teen program was an exception because, as the program directors put it, they had experience seeing how life-changing it was for young people. Between sitting in blinds two feet away from nesting terns, smelling a Leach's Storm-petrel (distinctively dusty and not at all unpleasant) and taking part in small tasks, such as building puffin snares and weeding, to help the researchers, it was, if not noticeably life-changing yet, at the very least, unforgettable.

Really, the same thing can be said of most of the week I spent on Hog Island. My perception of what ornithology and birding consisted of dramatically changed. From recording a Northern Parula singing at 4:30 in the morning, to listening to various guest speakers each evening, every day was filled with a stunning variety of activities. Birding highlights included a pair of nesting Merlins, a Red Crossbill calling repeatedly overhead, Common Eider ducklings, an Alder Flycatcher, Black Scoters, and, of course, Atlantic Puffins. And it would be unforgiveable to leave out the ever-present Black Guillemot, which took center stage during our early celebration of International Guillemot Appreciation Day, with singalongs, costumes of duct-tape wing patches, and trivia.



Incoming Common Tern, Hog Island. Photo by Anna Zheng.

Hog Island Camp *(continued from page 3)*

Beyond long, exciting birding expeditions, we also had interactive classes in bird banding, recording bird calls, basic ornithology, and even methods of drawing birds for both general art and field notes. That week, I truly realized how many ways there are to express a love of birds. The activities also encouraged me to view birding within a larger context. During bird walks, we would also learn about the plant life and other aspects of the environment, including going tidepooling along the shore once or twice. Although I definitely prefer birdwatching, it was also incredible to learn more about different aspects of nature, especially since it led to a deeper understanding of birds and conservation.

If anything, the people I met at Hog Island were as important as the birds I saw. Part of the fun of voluntarily getting up at 4 a.m. to record bird calls, after all, is being around people who are crazy and bird-obsessed enough to do it too, despite going to bed at 11 the night before. We made a temporary, haphazard community, but a community nonetheless, united around a passion for birds. In a world of political extremes and intolerance, it was inspiring to see how a shared love could transcend so many differences in background and create genuine connection not just to birds, but to other people. With people from every corner of the U.S., having all sorts of day jobs, and of all ages and birding skill levels, I learned as much from talking to other attendees of the camp as I did from the instructors.

During meals, for example, we were instructed to move around as much as possible and to never sit with more than three teens at a table. As a result, I was able to ask adults about their experiences with different career paths in birding, or ways adults with unrelated day jobs supported conservation and went about birding as a hobby. Not only did I learn from adults, but other birders my age were often the ones responsible for pointing out a new lifer to me on birding trips. Needless to say, I grew extremely adept at asking, “Where?” and was well rewarded for doing so, with close to 20 lifers from that week and many more memorable moments.

I am incredibly grateful to the Georgia Ornithological Society for giving me this unforgettable opportunity. Thank you for this chance to see new birds, meet new people, and learn new things. And who knows, maybe it really will be life-changing.



Common Terns (L) and Black-throated Green Warbler (R), Hog Island, Maine. Photos by Anna Zheng.

Camp Colorado

By Knox Evert

There are few things more beautiful than being able to meet a bunch of complete strangers and, five days later, consider yourselves friends. Birding has more power than most people realize. I am a strong believer in shared experience, bringing even the most unlikely people together. That's what Camp Colorado was. We weren't just a bunch of kids going out and birding; we were a team, a community brought together by one common factor: our love for birds.

When I got off the plane from Atlanta and found myself in the middle of the Denver airport, I couldn't help wondering: What does the next week have in store for me? I was grateful to know one person attending Camp Colorado, Ewan Pritchard. The scholarships we both won from the GOS had brought us together earlier in the spring and ultimately led us to compete together on the 2018 championship-winning Georgia Youth Birding Competition team.



Tree Swallows actually in a tree. Photo by Knox Evert.

As soon as I met up with the Camp Colorado group and we began talking, I knew it would be a good week. Some of us managed to pick up a handful of life birds on the way to the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, including a Prairie Falcon and a Swainson's Hawk. Things were off to a great start!

The next morning we made our way to Wild Basin and the Calypso Cascades. The moist morning only added to the mysterious majesty of the place. On our waterfall hike we reveled in the beauty of Red-shafted Flickers flitting across the path, an American

Dipper foraging in the fast-flowing river, a juvenile Townsend's Solitaire lurking in the treetops, and a female Broad-tailed Hummingbird building her nest. As we ate lunch, a Northern Goshawk flew over us, swiftly and silently, like a gray phantom. We made our way back to the YMCA and spent the afternoon learning important ornithology skills, such as photography and field sketching. After dinner, we enjoyed an evening program.

On Monday, our third day at camp, we found ourselves at the Alluvial Fan, where we caught glimpses of both Wilson's and MacGillivray's Warblers darting around in the bushes. After an hour of field sketching, we made our way to an aspen grove, where we found a family of swallows resting in an old hollow. Lincoln's Sparrows called in the background as we talked about the aspen trees and the elk that are threatening their well-being.

The next morning we were up by 3:30 for a Big Day, determined to get in some good birding at the Pawnee Grasslands before the sun had fully risen. The drive passed by quickly when there was so much to talk about with our new friends. Along the way, we stopped at a local migrant trap, where we saw both Bullock's Orioles and a large number of nighthawks. When we finally arrived at the grasslands, we discovered a Mountain Plover and got some pretty amazing views of it. We took some time to enjoy this remarkable bird before making our way to a prairie dog town, where we hoped to see Burrowing Owls. As we crossed the wind-swept plains, we observed longspurs, Lark Buntings, meadowlarks, Horned Larks, and a lone Swainson's Hawk.

Camp Colorado *(continued from page 5)*

After we found the Burrowing Owls, we moved on to a Ferruginous Hawk nest, spotting birds left and right along the way, including a Yellow-headed Blackbird, Wilson's Phalarope, Brewer's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, and a spectacular Golden Eagle. We added the Western Grebe to our Big Day list on the way home. We had tallied 68 birds for the day!

Each day brought a new habitat to explore. On day five, we woke up and made our way to the alpine tundra. The scenic drive to the mountains afforded us the opportunity to see Clark's Nutcrackers chasing each other from treetop to treetop. When we reached the summit, we saw White-tailed Ptarmigan and American Pipit, along with some huge elk. After we spent the morning on the mountain, we made our way down to the sub-alpine habitat, where we saw a Three-toed Woodpecker. We returned triumphant to the YMCA after another amazing day. Instead of going to bed at the usual time, we went owling and shared a memorable moment. We waited breathlessly as staffer Raymond called in a Northern Saw-whet Owl. The owl, mistaking Raymond for a competitor, flew right into his head! We all got amazing views of it as it perched in a tree just a few yards away.

On our final day together, we had the opportunity to bird with Ted Floyd, editor of the ABA magazine, and his daughter. At our foothills birding spot, we saw a Brown Thrasher, which is quite rare in Colorado. Ewan and I have seen hundreds of them, but we couldn't help sharing in the contagious excitement of our friends as they added this rarity to their lists. We also spotted a Lazuli Bunting, a Bullock's Oriole, and a very cooperative Rock Wren that morning. Our second location gave awesome looks at a Western Tanager, a Black-chinned Hummingbird, and a Western Wood-Pewee nest. Our final night together was sorrowful, as our community was being fractured. Like a mountain flower, our team was beautiful but fragile, and we felt we were being broken apart before our time.



Lark Bunting and Colorado grassland. Photo by Knox Evert.

This was one of the best experiences of my life, and I wouldn't have been able to do it without the generosity of the GOS. To the GOS and the staff and campers of Camp Colorado, I offer the very heartfelt thanks of an profusely grateful camper.

Camp Colorado Reflections

By Ewan Pritchard

I awoke with a start and peered to my right, through the window of the airplane, and out over the vast expanse of flat, seemingly barren, farmland. Here and there, streams zigzagged lazily across the plains, with their banks dense with the only green in sight. I was surprised to hear the captain announce that we would soon be landing in Denver. I thought, *There must be mountains somewhere*, because I had heard of Denver as the “Mile High City” and always associated it with the Rocky Mountains, but there were no mountains in sight, just the vastness of the Great Plains, which were entirely new to me. I had never taken in so much flatness. The farthest west I had ever been was St. Louis, and even then there were hills in some places.

It wasn't until the van got on the exit ramp from the Denver airport that I realized where I was. Dead ahead, spanning the horizon all the way north to south, were the Rocky Mountains. At this point, even though the Appalachian Mountains of the East are awesome in their own right, I have to admit I thought, *Wow! Real mountains!*



Lark Sparrow belting out a tune. Photo by Ewan Pritchard.

I was headed to Camp Colorado, thanks to a generous scholarship for young birders from the Georgia Ornithological Society. While there, I would come to realize that my perception of America's wilderness and wildlife was still only a fraction of the reality. From the alpine tundra, with Ptarmigan and Brown-capped Rosy-Finches, to the shortgrass prairies, with longspurs and Burrowing Owls, each elevation change brought new species and habitats that for me had taken on a mythical status in my mind.

Each day there was a field trip and a workshop. The field locations we went to were the prairie, the foothills, Ponderosa pine parkland, montane forests, sub-alpine forests, and the alpine tundra and rockfields. One of the workshop that I attended was field sketching. In this session, the counselor was Rafael, a field guide illustrator who works primarily with watercolors. He explained many aspects of how birds can be presented more vividly and accurately on paper, while also discussing how to make quick sketches of a bird in the field capture the field marks and aid in identification. Rafael explained how the shape of birds' feathers affect both how we represent them on paper and how their field marks show up in the field. In a quick but quite accurate sketch of a Steller's Jay, he demonstrated the importance of knowing feather tracts, which are individual groups of feathers, on the bird's face and how even faint suggestions of these areas create much more life-like sketches. I was also amazed to find that in some cases they can prove useful and even vital in the identification process of new birds, and especially useful for cementing the field marks of more common ones.

Camp Colorado Reflections *(continued from page 7)*

The next day was the shortgrass prairie day, at the Pawnee National Grassland, and I was eager to practice the sketching skills I learned the day before. While the van was bumping down the road, at every stop I would add to the sketch I was doing of a Lark Bunting, and even though they were not from the same individual, each revision added some fieldmark previously unnoticed or some unfinished portion of the body. An unexpected benefit of having a mediocre camera was that after a certain point I gave up trying to squeeze out a better photo from the back seat of a moving van. Instead, I found myself picking up my pencil to sketch. Immediately after turning into a recently plowed field, we sighted a pair of Mountain Plovers. I made some rough sketches of the birds in two different positions. Normally I would dismiss these sketches as barely worth keeping, but looking back on them I realized they were not solely meant to capture the bird, but the moment. A sketch in the field is so valuable because it shows my interpretation of the bird's behavior and posture, which makes the sighting much more memorable.



Mountain Plovers. Photo by Ewan Pritchard.

The theme of East-West comparison recurred throughout camp. For example, when we saw a female Black-headed Grosbeak, I was able to explain the exact details of a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and the differences between the two, in order to determine it was the western species. I would never had thought that I knew much about the rose-breasted, because I do not see them very often, and it surprised me how much knowledge I must have absorbed about our eastern birds. However, throughout the week we had been seeing Pine Siskins around our lodging, and the first time I had a really good look at one I realized that this bird, which I have seen many times before, was basically foreign to me. I had always written off Pine Siskins as just another check on the list

whenever I saw them. I had not stopped to think about how little I actually knew about their field marks or vocalization.

This brought to the surface of my mind the problem of listing. I like to think of the birds on my life list as “my birds.” But the list treats birds that I know very well, like Rose-breasted Grosbeak, the same as birds I have never really identified for myself, just had them pointed out to me on bird walks. This revelation made me look through my eBird life list to see just how many birds I could actually remember seeing. Even though I could recall most of them, some of them had left my mind altogether, and I was actually befuddled as to why a few were on my list. From then on, I decided that for a bird to be counted on my personal life list I had to have identified it myself.

Camp Colorado Reflections *(continued from page 8)*

At camp, I learned about aspects of birding that were previously unknown to me. Every day as we visited some place new, I was sure that that day could not be topped, and each day the previous day was topped. As we traveled around, seeing the Rocky Mountains not just on the distant horizon but all around us, I realized why the West is such an alluring place. It is a land of extremes, with very different habitats at every elevation. Among the Ponderosa pines and by peaceful brooks, with towering, powerful peaks overhead, I felt that I was seeing America in a whole new light, and I realized that there was so much more to learn.

I can't thank the Georgia Ornithological Society enough for the scholarship that made it possible for me to attend this camp. I came to appreciate our nation's birds in a whole new way and learned skills that will help me as I try to introduce others to the excitement of birding.

EarthShare of Georgia Fall Fund Raising Campaign

By Mark Beebe

EarthShare of Georgia (ESGA) is a non-profit corporation that represents member organizations, like the GOS, in employee giving campaigns. ESGA is part of a network representing more than 400 environmental groups working locally, nationally and internationally. Employees participating in a fall workplace-giving program can either give to ESGA at-large or give to specific organizations like the GOS.

Give at the office:

If you already have the opportunity to support ESGA at your worksite, please consider pledging a payroll deduction gift. Contributions can be made generally to be shared among the members or designated to one or more specific organizations, such as the GOS. Pick up a pledge form from your company's campaign coordinator. If you are not sure whether your employer has an environmental option, check the ESGA's list of participating businesses. If you are a federal employee, find out more about the Combined Federal Campaign.

Set up a workplace giving program:

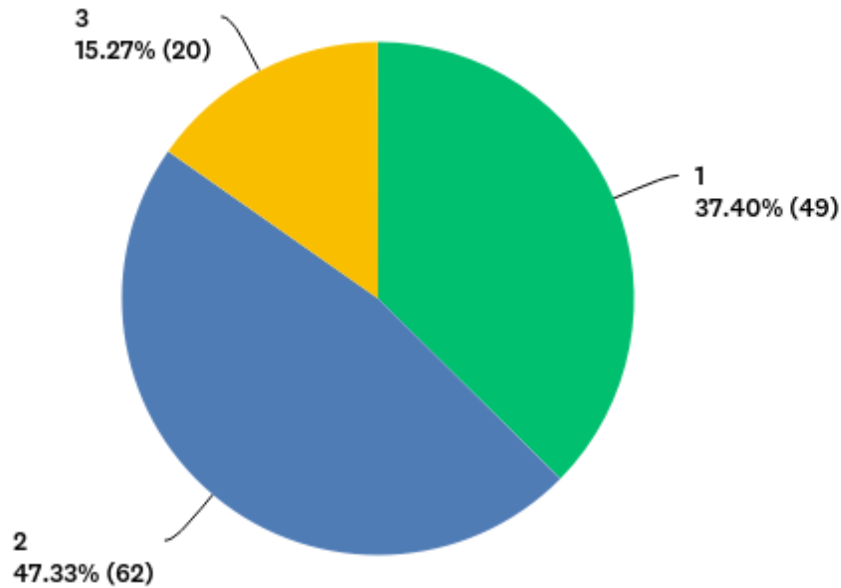
If your workplace is not a current ESGA partner, visit the EarthShare of Georgia website (earthsharega.org) to learn how to participate. Through our annual fall workplace-giving campaign events, we reach thousands of people who are not already involved with our organization.



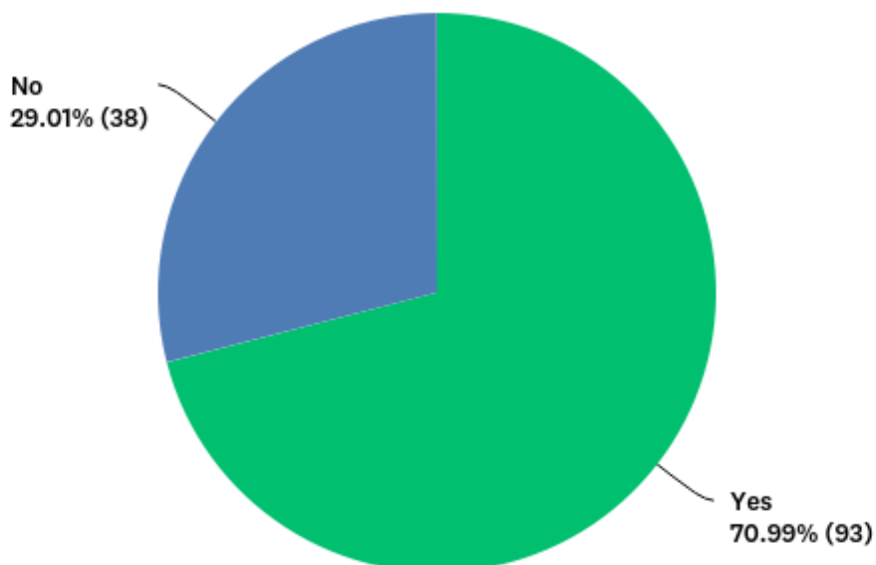
GOS Membership Survey Results

GOS conducted a membership survey this year in order to gauge meeting preferences and gather feedback on our organization. More than 130 members responded to the 10-question survey, and many provided detailed comments. Here are some high-level results:

How many meetings would you prefer to attend each year?

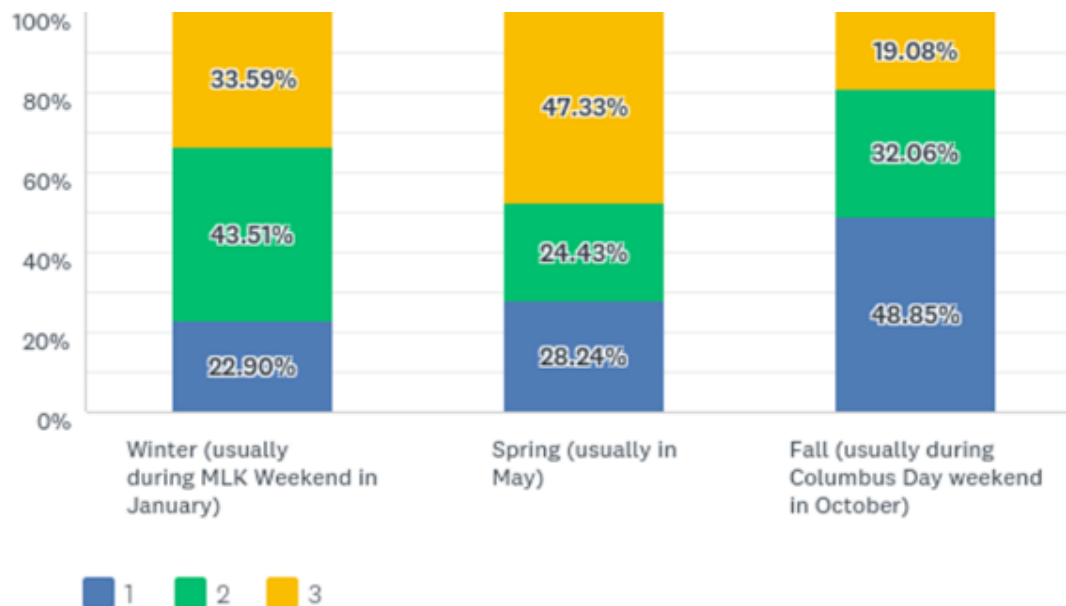


If GOS only organized two meetings per year, would you prefer rotating winter and spring meetings every other year?

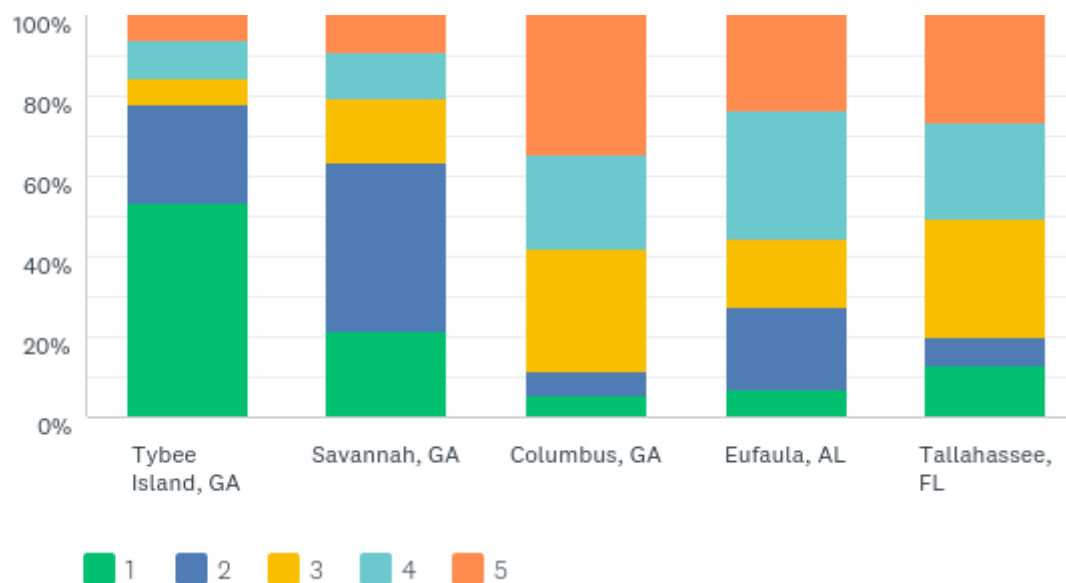


GOS Membership Survey Results *(continued from page 10)*

Please rank the meetings you prefer to attend, from most preferred (1) to least preferred (3).

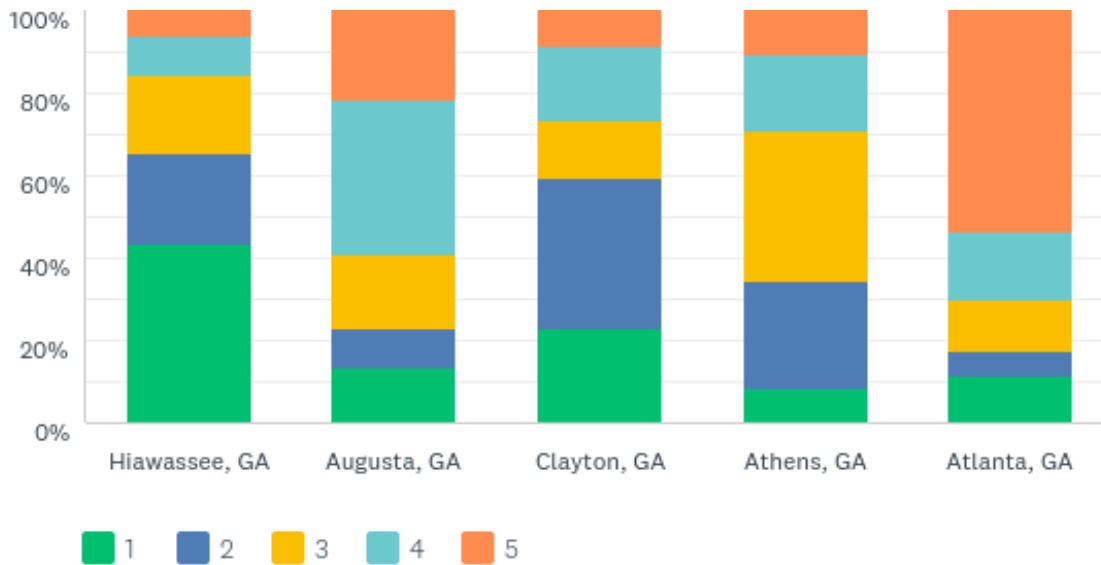


Please rank the locations you prefer to attend for winter meetings, from most preferred (1) to least preferred (5).

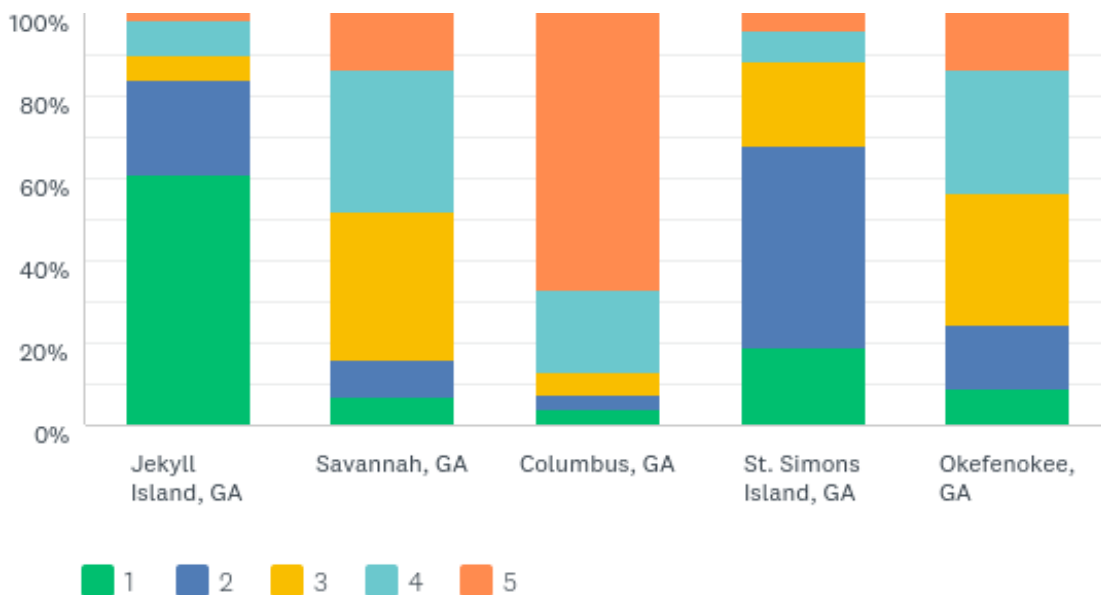


GOS Membership Survey Results *(continued from page 11)*

Please rank the locations you prefer to attend for a spring meeting, from most preferred (1) to least preferred (5).



Please rank the locations you prefer to attend for a fall meeting, from most preferred (1) to least preferred (5).



Youth Christmas Bird Count

Traditional Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) feature 8-hour days and lots of driving. This Youth CBC is specifically for kids. There is no driving and the count lasts just 2.5 hours. Teams of kids ages 8-16 will be led by experienced birders as they search the fields and forests of the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center for birds. After lunch, kids can present their findings and we will have a birds of prey presentation.

Kids do not have to be experienced birders to participate. This is an opportunity to learn how to identify birds, or to improve birding skills in preparation for the Youth Birding Competition in April. Binoculars and field guides will be provided to the kids, and parents are welcome to join the teams.



When: December 8, 2018
8:00am-3:00 pm

Where: Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center
Cost: Free for kids (including lunch).
Adults (17+) \$9 for lunch

Maximum 40 kids. Adults bring own binoculars



Call us at 770-784-3059 and register today.
If you have questions, please contact Bob Sargent at
bob.sargent@dnr.ga.gov or at 478-994-1438

Event sponsored by:





Reminiscing: Members of GOS (above) are ready for a field trip to Cockspur Island, 1946. Photo by Bill Griffin. Returning from a trip to Billy's Island (below), Okefenokee Swamp, 1938. Photo from GOS archives.



CAMP TALON

Teen Adventures Learning Ornithology and Nature

June 1-6, 2019 – St. Simons Island, Georgia

TALON is a one-of-a kind camp for teens with a strong interest in the outdoors, birding, and ecology. Each day the adventure begins as we travel by charter bus to barrier islands, state parks, wildlife management areas, and refuges along Georgia's coast. Evening classes challenge our campers with presentations and quizzes about bird identification, songs, behavior, flight, migration, and other "birdy" topics. At camp's end we come home with new and improved birding skills, a better understanding of coastal ecology, and great memories.



Availability: Space for 16 campers.

Serious students: For beginner to experienced birders who don't mind long, hot, sometimes "buggy" days on beaches and marshes.

Ages: Boys and girls ages 14-19. Older birders who have attended before may be eligible for internships.

3:1 student/teacher ratio. Trips, classes led by biologists, ornithologists, and environmental educators, each with 20+ years of experience.

- Sponsors: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, GOS, TERN, and Atlanta Audubon Society.

Birding Itineraries

- **Base camp:** Epworth by the Sea on St. Simons Island.
- **Travels:** Little St. Simons Island, Ft. Stewart, Altamaha WMA, St. Simons Island, Andrews Island, Sapelo Island, Harris Neck NWR, and Okefenokee NWR.

Registration

- Until April 5: \$400 (paid in full).
- April 6-May 3: \$450 (paid in full).
- Registration fee includes a \$100 non-refundable deposit.
- **Look for the registration form in November** at www.georgiawildlife.com/camptalon.

Contacts Julie Duncan jdwildlife15@gmail.com 770.313.5762
 Bob Sargent bob.sargent@dnr.ga.gov 404.291.8124

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please complete this form and mail with your payment to Georgia Ornithological Society Membership, P.O. Box 11926, Atlanta, GA 30355. You can now join online at <http://www.gos.org/join-us>

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Annual membership rates for individuals and families (circle your choice)

Brown Thrasher (Individual/Family Membership)	\$35
Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Patron)	\$50
Fledgling (Students only)	\$20

Life Membership Rates for individuals

Northern Goshawk	\$750
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Yes, I would like to make an additional contribution of \$_____ in support of GOS