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GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
www.gos.org

President's Message

By Larry Carlile

Fall temperatures seem to have settled in (finally) as we hit mid-November, the time of this writing. The passerine migration has slowed to a trickle, and winter yard birds have been availing themselves of the sunflower, millet, cracked corn, and suet in my feeders and are helping themselves to what food remains on fruiting trees and shrubs. The dominant Northern Mockingbird in my yard has been energetic about defending the American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) from his mockingbird brethren and any other creature that threatens his substantial larder. Conditions must have been just right for beautyberries this year, because mine are straining against the weight of all the fruit (see photo next page). These long-lasting berries will make this mockingbird's life a little easier this winter and will help him enter the next breeding season as a fit individual.

Temperatures were much warmer a little more than a month ago when we gathered on Jekyll Island for the fall meeting. They were approaching 90°F and, of course, the humidity was very high, too. I was fortunate to have



Keynote speaker Denver Holt at the fall meeting.
Photo by Ed Maioriello.

attended the field trip to Altama Plantation Wildlife Management Area, one of the newer acquisitions of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR). We all were delighted to have very good looks at an incredibly cooperative Black-billed Cuckoo. The photographers among us were able to document the rarity as it consumed a few caterpillars before we lost track of it. For many on the trip, including me, it was our first Black-billed Cuckoo. I heard great reports from other field trips conducted during the long weekend. Many thanks to the field trip leaders: Adam

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Georgia Ornithological Society

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

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



Sandwich Tern. Photo by Ed Maioriello.

Mark Your Calendars Now! GOS WINTER MEETING January 18-21, 2019 Hotel Tybee on Tybee Island

Come join the GOS family for the winter 2019 meeting at our traditional location on Tybee Island. Along with a diverse list of field trip offerings over the four-day week-end, the agenda features two special presentations. The Friday evening program will be presented by Georgia's own Malcolm Hodges, ecologist and land manager with The Nature Conservancy. Malcolm will speak about recent GOS-funded Nature Conservancy projects. The Saturday keynote presentation will be "Taking the Pulse of Avian Aerial Passage in North America," presented by Dr. Kyle Horton, Rose Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Kyle will discuss how he uses weather surveillance radar to quantify and forecast migratory movements across the United States



Kyle Horton (left) and Malcolm Hodges (right).

Meeting Hotel Details

Hotel Tybee (formerly Ocean Plaza Beach Resort)
1412 Butler Ave.
Tybee Island, GA 31328

Call 912.786.7777 or visit <http://www.hoteltybee.com/>

Use the code "GOS2019" to receive discounted rates.

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

Betuel, Diana Churchill, Nathan Farnau, Malcolm Hodges, Gene Keferl, Tim Keyes, Bill Lotz, Evan Pittman, Bob Sattelmeyer, John Mark Simmons, Andrew Theus, Lydia Thompson, Dan Vickers, and Gene Wilkinson. Thanks also to First Vice President Ellen Miller for coordinating the field trips and recruiting speakers and to Second Vice President Ed Maioriello for securing our venue and coordinating our "Flockings" and banquet.

The Friday night presentation was delivered by Tim Keyes (GA DNR), Abby Sterling (Manomet Observatory), and Brad Winn (Manomet Observatory and formerly GA DNR). Their talk centered on the criticality of conserving Georgia coastal habitats as breeding grounds, wintering grounds, and migration stopover habitat for large numbers of shorebirds. The uniqueness of the Georgia coast is highlighted by the fact that the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) recently designated our coast as a "Landscape of Hemispheric Importance."

Georgia's coast was the 100th site recognized for its importance to shorebird migration, but it is only the third to have been designated at the "landscape" scale. The trio also discussed the importance of the entire Georgia Bight, which includes coastal South Carolina, Georgia, and northeastern Florida, and their involvement with the Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative. Thanks to Tim, Abby, and Brad for their informative talk and their dedication to the conservation of Georgia's shorebirds.



American Beautyberry in fruit. Photo by Larry Carlile.

Our keynote speaker was Denver Holt, founder of the Owl Research Institute (ORI). Denver's talk was animated, humorous, and informative. If you were at the meeting, you also know that he is quite an accomplished mimic of many owl species. The first part of Denver's talk was a who's who (pun intended) of North American owl species, their evolution and relationships, and their great ability to hide themselves via their cryptic plumage. Denver also spoke about ORI's long-term Snowy Owl/lemming research in Alaska, about to enter its 27th year of study. We have long known that Snowy Owl populations wax and wane depending on the cyclical nature of lemming abundance, but Snowy Owl populations have declined 64% since 1970, a trend that is not fully explained by the availability of prey items. Denver believes that warming climates may be partially responsible and has documented thinner ice, deeper permafrost, and less snow accumulation during the course of his study. He hopes that his continuing research will help identify the main causes of Snowy Owl declines and, hopefully, provide a path forward to implement remedies to conserve this wonderful species.

Our next meeting will be held January 18-21, 2019, at Hotel Tybee. Details and registration instructions can be found on page two of this newsletter and on the GOS website. Please make plans to attend.

Our Future Birders

By Liza O'Neal

More than thirty years ago, I read the book *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint Exupery. One sentence from that book has stayed with me all of these many years and, without consciously thinking of it, has influenced my teaching. "You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed," said the fox.

My interest in birds began as a very young child in England, when my older brother (who now writes for the magazine *Bird Watching*) became passionately interested in bird watching, and I followed along. When I grew up and became a kindergarten teacher, I remembered how powerfully my early immersion in nature and the outdoors had influenced my views about the world in general, and birds in particular.

I spent 20 years teaching kindergarten at a local school here in Georgia. It was a Title I school with children from low-income backgrounds, many of them immigrants with limited English. Very few of the children had any experience of nature or the outdoors, and even fewer children could actually name any local birds or wildlife.

The science objectives at that time were to teach observation skills, study the life cycle of an animal, and to learn what living things need. The children learned all of these skills by actively participating in their own learning. As my teaching skills blossomed, I found I could teach reading, writing, and science through an exploration of the natural world. Children have to be taught how to be observers of the world around them, a skill that will develop good scientists in the future. Fortunately, my classroom had a tree and several bushes outside the window, and this area quickly became the place for bird feeders and a water dish. The children rapidly became enchanted with the beautiful birds that lined the tree branches waiting for a turn at the feeders. They watched with delight as the birds arrived on a regular basis, and they gradually could identify and name the most frequent ones. As they developed writing skills, they recorded the names of the birds on a daily basis, drew pictures in some detail, and kept journals of their sightings. Some of the children would rush into the classroom in the mornings to describe a bird they had seen from the school bus window.

We took nature walks on the school grounds, and gradually the children began to see that it was essential to protect the birds' habitat in order to protect the birds and the environment in which they lived. They began to care passionately about the environment surrounding our school, and they scolded anyone who would drop trash or damage any living thing.

I brought to the classroom many bird books from the library and my own collection, and I discovered that most beginning bird books were aimed at much older children, written with words too difficult for a five-year-old to read. I also discovered that many of the books were written by ornithologists knowledgeable in their field, but not in the way children learn. I was shocked to see the word "plumage" on the first page in one book, not a word little ones would understand or read! The bird pictures tended to be small and therefore not as attractive to little ones. Most books described a bird as "of medium size," which didn't mean much to the children. I decided that when I retired, I would write a bird book for children introducing them to the ten first birds they would be likely to see in a park or back yard (eastern USA) with easy-to-read, predictable pattern text (a style used in beginning reading books) and large photos, taken by Dr.

Our Future Birders *(continued from page 4)*

Chris O'Neal. I compared the size of the bird to something they were familiar with, like a cell phone or a water bottle. The book is available on Amazon and is titled *My First Ten Birds*.

In the end, I discovered that the fox in the story had been wrong. As I observed the children, I realized that they had become responsible for what they had **named**. When children can name and describe birds and trees and other fascinating inhabitants of the natural world, they begin to care passionately about what happens to them, and the environment in which they live. And that is our hope for the future.

My First Ten Birds - Eastern USA

Liza O'Neal

Photographs by
Christopher O'Neal

GOS member Liza O'Neal's first book. Let us hope, for the sake of Georgia's youth and their "nature knowledge," that other books will soon follow.

Editor's note: The following review was posted on Amazon by Dr. Stephen Kress, author, Project Puffin coordinator and the keynote speaker at GOS's winter meeting on Tybee Island in February 2016.

"My First Ten Birds-Eastern USA is the perfect introduction to some of the most common backyard birds of Eastern U.S. I received a gift of the book and was very pleased to see that it contained concise accounts of ten birds that children are likely to find at bird feeders and the lawns around their homes. Each account contains just the right amount of information about bird behavior, favorite foods and family life. An excellent resource for encouraging children to look and learn about their bird neighbors. And each of the ten photos by Christopher O' Neal were perfect portraits illustrating just the right poses."

Where Are They Now?

By Ethan Hatchett

(Editor's note: I contacted several past recipients of GOS's Youth Birder's Scholarships asking them to write articles describing what they have done with their careers since their camp experience. This is the first installment of what I hope will be many such stories.)

In 2013, I had the honor of being one of the five people selected to receive the Young Birder's Scholarship. At the age of 15, I was whisked away to the "foreign" and distant land of Hog Island, Maine. At the time, I was unaware of the changes that would occur from this journey, and I was just excited to see Puffins.

Hog Island was a simple, yet lively place that I often think back to as the ideal place to live. People and nature coexisted, respecting one another. An overwhelming feeling of curiosity permeated the camp, and even the oldest camper was made to feel as open as a child. Every bird was as special as the next, and participation was highly encouraged.

After leaving the camp, I felt inspired. Biology had been my chosen career path, but I decided to alter my course. I started to learn filmmaking instead. While this may sound like an odd choice, I felt it was something that was desperately needed. Isolated in cities, people simply don't know about their wild neighbors. It is unlikely, I believe, that the public at large wishes to harm living things with wanton abandon. It is more likely that they are too far removed and dissociated from these creatures to care.



A recent photo of Ethan Hatchett, recipient of GOS's Youth Birder's Scholarship and a participant in multiple Camp TALONS and Youth Birding Competitions.

In 2017, I created a short documentary on the Jekyll Island Banding Station (JIBS). The heroic sacrifices of the volunteers captured my interest and hopefully will interest others, as well. While not a blockbuster, it did reach many people who were totally unaware of bird banding or the plight of songbirds. I hope to show it around even more to promote the amazing work that JIBS does!

I was exposed to wildlife filmmaking at Hog Island. One of the speakers was David O. Brown, a filmmaker who specializes in capturing aquatic life. I remember his words having a profound impression on me. He made the field of wildlife filmmaking accessible to me and made it seem like a real possibility. Without this fateful encounter, I highly doubt that I would be where I am at today.

Thank you for choosing me all those years ago. Never doubt that the work you do matters. The Georgia Ornithological Society is invaluable both for birds and for people.

GOS Membership Survey

By Larry Carlile

In the October 2018 issue of *GOShawk*, we presented preliminary results of a survey that was sent to the membership in February 2018. Thank you to all who provided responses. At our most recent (August) executive committee (EXCOM) meeting, we analyzed the survey results and then made some decisions that will incorporate the wishes of the membership into our planning and processes. The questions, your responses, and resulting EXCOM decisions follow.

Question 1: How many meetings would you prefer to attend every year?

Membership response: One meeting (37.40%), 2 meetings (47.33%), 3 meetings (15.27%).

EXCOM decision: Because a plurality of respondents preferred 2 meetings per year, we decided to offer only 2 per year starting in 2019.

Question 2: If GOS only organized 2 meetings per year, would you prefer rotating winter and spring meetings every other year?

Membership response: Yes (71%), No (29%).

EXCOM decision: Because a majority of respondents preferred to alternate meetings between winter and spring if only 2 were offered per year, we decided to alternate winter and spring meetings beginning in 2019. Our next spring meeting will occur in 2020.

Question 3: Rank the meetings you prefer to attend, from most preferred (1) to least (3).

Membership response: Most members' first choice was the fall meeting (48.85%). Their second most-preferred choice was the winter meeting (43.51%). Nearly half (47.33%) of the members least preferred (i.e., score of 3) the spring meetings.

EXCOM decision: Fall meetings were the most popular choice, so we will continue to organize them annually. As stated above, we will alternate between spring and winter meetings from year to year.

Questions 4-6: We asked members to rank favorite locations for winter, spring, and fall meetings.

Membership response: A majority (53.44%) preferred Tybee Island for winter meetings. A plurality (43.51%) preferred Hiawassee as a spring destination, and a majority (61.07%) preferred Jekyll Island for fall meetings.

EXCOM decision: The limiting factor for selecting a meeting location in all seasons is finding meeting venues that can accommodate the number of rooms we require, the ability to supply a banquet hall and meeting rooms, and some audio-visual assets, all provided at a



Dr. Abby Sterling speaks at the recent fall meeting on Jekyll Island. Photo by Ed Maioriello.

GOS Membership Survey (continued from page 7)

reasonable price. Additionally, venues need to be relatively near quality birding destinations. Our traditional meeting venues of Tybee Island, Hiawassee, and Jekyll Island are able to satisfy these requirements. We will continue to search for other venues that can satisfy our requirements at a reasonable cost for members in order to provide some variety.

Question 7: Do you have any other suggestions regarding GOS meetings, such as bird-related topics, speakers, field trips, or meeting format?

Membership response: Many wonderful and varied ideas were suggested.

EXCOM decision: We intend to accommodate as many suggestions as possible, including exploration of new meeting venues, keeping registration and venue costs affordable, recruiting quality speakers at a reasonable cost, and providing quality field trips.

Question 8: Do you prefer to receive *The Oriole* in paper form only?

Membership response: Fifty percent of members preferred an electronic version, 30.77% preferred a hard copy, and 19.23% had no preference.

EXCOM decision: Since a substantial percentage of respondents prefer to receive a hard copy, we'll continue to print the journal for the next few years. However, printing costs are skyrocketing, and at some point we will likely need to phase out production of hard copies.

Question 9: Do you prefer that GOS make it a priority to be more prominent on the web and on social media regarding our stance on feral cats?

Membership response: A majority (66.92%) of respondents thought it should be a top priority, but not the most important, 15.38% thought it was not very important, 13.85% thought it should be the most important priority, and 3.85% thought it was not important at all.

EXCOM decision: Because so many members thought this issue should be a top priority, but not the most important, we will make our position statement on feral and free-roaming cats more prominent on our web page.

Question 10: Do you have any other comments or questions regarding GOS?

Membership response: Many great suggestions for improvement were provided.

EXCOM decision: We spent a great deal of time discussing these suggestions, and we plan to accommodate as many of them as we can, where logistically and financially practical, so long as they fall within the context of the society's mission.

The EXCOM is always looking for your ideas about the future of the GOS. This is *your* society. Please contact us any time with your concerns and suggestions for improvement.

Species Tally, GOS Fall Meeting, Jekyll Island, Georgia, October 5-8, 2018*Compiled by Ellen Miller**153 species*

Black-bellied Whistling Duck	Piping Plover
Canada Goose	Killdeer
Wood Duck	American Oystercatcher
Mallard	American Avocet
Mottled Duck	Spotted Sandpiper
Blue-winged Teal	Greater Yellowlegs
Northern Shoveler	Willet
Pied-billed Grebe	Lesser Yellowlegs
American White Pelican	Long-billed Curlew
Brown Pelican	Marbled Godwit
Double-crested Cormorant	Ruddy Turnstone
Anhinga	Red Knot
Great Blue Heron	Sanderling
Great Egret	Semipalmated Sandpiper
Snowy Egret	Western Sandpiper
Little Blue Heron	Least Sandpiper
Tricolored Heron	White-rumped Sandpiper
Reddish Egret	Pectoral Sandpiper
Cattle Egret	Dunlin
Green Heron	Stilt Sandpiper
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Short-billed Dowitcher
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Long-billed Dowitcher
White Ibis	Laughing Gull
Glossy Ibis	Ring-billed Gull
Roseate Spoonbill	Herring Gull
Wood Stork	Great Black-backed Gull
Black Vulture	Caspian Tern
Turkey Vulture	Forster's Tern
Osprey	Royal Tern
Bald Eagle	Sandwich Tern
Northern Harrier	Black Skimmer
Cooper's Hawk	Rock Pigeon
Red-shouldered Hawk	Eurasian Collared-dove
Red-tailed Hawk	Mourning Dove
American Kestrel	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Merlin	Black-billed Cuckoo
Peregrine Falcon	Eastern Screech-owl
Clapper Rail	Great Horned Owl
King Rail	Chimney Swift
Sora	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Common Gallinule	Belted Kingfisher
American Coot	Red-headed Woodpecker
Black-bellied Plover	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Wilson's Plover	Downy Woodpecker
Semipalmated Plover	Red-cockaded Woodpecker

GOS Fall Meeting Species Tally *(continued from page 9)*

Northern Flicker
 Pileated Woodpecker
 Eastern Wood-pewee
 Eastern Phoebe
 Great Crested Flycatcher
 Loggerhead Shrike
 White-eyed Vireo
 Yellow-throated Vireo
 Red-eyed Vireo
 Blue Jay
 American Crow
 Fish Crow
 Tree Swallow
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow
 Barn Swallow
 Carolina Chickadee
 Tufted Titmouse
 White-breasted Nuthatch
 Carolina Wren
 House Wren
 Marsh Wren
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
 Eastern Bluebird
 Swainson's Thrush
 Gray Catbird
 Northern Mockingbird
 Brown Thrasher
 European Starling
 Tennessee Warbler
 Nashville Warbler
 Northern Parula
 Yellow Warbler
 Chestnut-sided Warbler
 Magnolia Warbler
 Black-throated Blue Warbler
 Blackburnian Warbler
 Yellow-throated Warbler
 Pine Warbler
 Prairie Warbler
 Palm Warbler
 Black-and-white Warbler
 American Redstart
 Prothonotary Warbler
 Worm-eating Warbler
 Northern Waterthrush
 Common Yellowthroat

Eastern Towhee
 Savannah Sparrow
 Seaside Sparrow
 Summer Tanager
 Scarlet Tanager
 Northern Cardinal
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak
 Blue Grosbeak
 Indigo Bunting
 Painted Bunting
 Bobolink
 Common Grackle
 Boat-tailed Grackle
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 Baltimore Oriole
 House Finch
 House Sparrow



Black-billed Cuckoo observed at Altama Wildlife Management Area.
 Photo by Ed Maioriello.

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, Fort Stewart, Altamaha WMA, St. Simons Island, Andrews Island, Cumberland 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** 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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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