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GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
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President's Message

By Ed Maioriello

Dear Birders,

You may already be aware of it, but something interesting happened in Athens last month: Richard Hall found a Bell's Vireo in his back yard. Assuming it will be accepted by the Checklist and Records Committee, this will be only the fifth recorded Bell's Vireo for Georgia. I was able to get the bird on my fourth visit to Richard's yard. Happily, Richard lives only five blocks from me, so chasing this rarity wasn't particularly difficult for me.

Similarly, other Athens birders made an appearance at Richard's house, e.g., Jim Hanna, Christine Kozlosky, Mark Freeman, Katy Manley, Vince Howard, Josiah Lavender, and others. However, there were many birders from around the state who had to travel significantly farther. Augusta birders J.P. Moss and Mac McCall were quick to arrive. A slew of Atlanta birders made the pilgrimage as well. Birders such as Shannon Fair, Bob Zaremba, Bill Lotz, Dan Vickers, Pierre Howard, and the ever-present Mark McShane made the trip from the metro Atlanta area. Many others from all over the state made at least one visit to Richard's house,



Bell's Vireo in Athens, GA, in August 2022. Note: As this newsletter went to press, this sighting had not yet been verified by the GCRC. Photo by Richard Hall..

hoping to get a glance at this distinctive visitor to Georgia.

This brings me to my real topic for this message. One of my favorite things about being a birder is chasing rarities. Sure, the thrill of getting a life bird is seductive. Even adding a bird to a state or county list can be satisfying. But for me, the real thrill is traveling across the state (or maybe just a few blocks) and running into friends.

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Another newsletter issue butchered. Photo by Bob Sargent.

Welcome, New Members!

Brown Thrasher (Individual/Family)

Mary Lou Collins	Peachtree Corners, GA
Sam Murray	Augusta, GA
Marissa Patton	Columbus, GA
Eliot Van Otteren	Brunswick, GA

Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Patron)

Julia Fields	Woodstock, GA
Charles Haynes	Atlanta, GA
Bryan Shelby	Decatur, GA

The Oriole Welcomes Book Review Submissions

The Oriole, the scientific journal of GOS, invites authors to submit general notes or research articles about Georgia bird life. But we also publish book reviews, so this is a special invitation to all you avid readers out there to write up a review of a recent publication that would be of interest to our membership. You can see examples in previous issues of *The Oriole*, which are available at the GOS website under Publications/Periodicals. Contact Jim Ferrari at jferrari@wesleyancollege.edu if you would like to discuss your ideas about a potential manuscript.



Orchard Oriole. Photo by Dan Vickers.

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Want to save trees and reduce costs by receiving the *GOShawk* electronically? Contact Shannon Fair at gosmembership@gmail.com and tell her that you would like to receive it by e-mail.

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

Birders flock to Richard Hall's yard in Athens, GA, hoping to get a glimpse of a Bell's Vireo. Photo by Richard Hall.

I met former GOS 1st Vice President, Bill Lotz, while standing on the side of Astondale Road in Oconee County scoping a farm pond known to produce interesting shorebirds during migrations. This trip yielded only Killdeer, but I got to meet future friend Bill Lotz.

Quite a few years back, former Oconee County resident John Mark Simmons and I hopped in the car and found ourselves miles down a dirt road surrounded by farms and pastures south of Statesboro, hoping to catch a glimpse of a Northern Lapwing, a shorebird from Eurasia. As we arrived, we pulled over on the side of the road behind a surprising number of other vehicles, only to be greeted by birder Kathy Miller. Kathy rushed up to me and said, "Give me your scope. The bird is in mine right now. Get it before it moves!" We got the lapwing! Sometime later, Kathy's phone rang, and it was another friend, Patty McLean. Patty was calling to let us know that the Snowy Owl was still on Tybee Island, and the best way to see it was to go out on the pier and look at the roofs of the condominiums on the left. However, we'd better hurry, she said, because there was to be a Mardi Gras parade soon that would make parking a nightmare. We got the owl too!

Even last year, Evening Grosbeaks and Red Crossbills were found in the Cohutta Wilderness in northwest Georgia. Miles down the gravel road to the site where the birds had been found, I nearly ran Katy Manley off the road as she and I rounded a blind curve in opposite directions. While there, I ran into other birders from around the state, including, again, the ever-present Mark McShane. I got those birds too!

Not all attempts to find rarities have been as successful as those mentioned above, but almost all yielded encounters with current or new friends from the birding community. This phenomenon has been a delightful though unexpected bonus of becoming a birder. I hope that all of you have the opportunity to experience this for yourselves.

Finally, I'm looking forward to seeing many of these friends at our upcoming fall meeting on Jekyll Island. I hope to see you there too!

Good birding!

In conservation,
Ed Maioriello
President, GOS

Mark Your Calendars: GOS Fall Meeting Is Scheduled for October 7-10, 2022*By Steve Wagner*

Don't miss this year's fall GOS meeting, which will be held at our long-time roost on Jekyll Island. In addition to the usual four days of fabulous birding led by some of Georgia's very best, we will have two captivating and remarkably accomplished speakers on the agenda. See the details below. Meeting hotel details: Villas by the Sea Resort, 1175 N. Beachview Drive, Jekyll Island, GA 31527. Call 912-635-2521, 800-841-6262, or visit www.villasbythesearesort.com. For more information, visit www.gos.org.

On Saturday night, Kevin McGowan will present "The Uncommon Crow: The Hidden Life of a Familiar Bird." Kevin is a professional ornithologist and avid birder. He is currently Senior Course Developer and Instructor for the Bird Academy at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (<https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/>). He is the author and instructor for the courses "Ornithology: Comprehensive Bird Biology," "Investigating Behavior: Courtship and Rivalry in Birds," "Think Like a Bird: Understanding Bird Behavior," "Joy of Birdwatching," "The Wonderful World of Owls," "Anything But Common: The Hidden Life of the American Crow," and the Be a Better Birder series of courses on bird identification. Kevin was the co-editor and primary author for the book, *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State*, one of the creators of the Cornell Lab's *All About Birds* website, and the former curator of the bird and mammal collections at the Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates. Kevin received his Ph.D. in Biology from the University of South Florida, where he studied the social development of Florida Scrub-Jays. He has studied the behavior and biology of the American Crow in central New York for more than 30 years. He has followed the life stories of more than 3,000 individual crows, some for 19-plus years.



Kevin McGowan. Photo provided by Kevin.



On Friday night, Heather Gaya will present "Trailing-Edge Community Dynamics in the Southern Appalachian Mountains." Heather is a fourth year Ph.D. student in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia. She also completed her master's research at the University of Georgia, studying gopher tortoise sampling strategies. Heather has conducted field work on numerous species ranging from California Condors to small mammals and, most recently, migratory songbirds. She hopes to pursue a postdoc on animal movement and population dynamics after graduation, focusing on Motus towers and radio-tagged birds.

Heather Gaya. Photo provided by Heather.

Possibly Georgia's Best Pelagic Trip

By Bill Lotz

It is not easy to do a pelagic trip and still be in Georgia waters. If one travels straight out from Savannah, you can be in South Carolina waters very quickly, based on the closest point of land, which is what eBird uses. It can be from 65 to 75 miles from Tybee Island to the Gulf Stream, and the vessel must head southeast to stay in Georgia waters. In addition, the boat that is our usual choice to take us out is fairly small and must go at almost top speed to get to the stream and back in one day. If there is any chop at all, it can be quite bouncy and wet. Many Georgia pelagic trip birders are fortunate to see two or three species in an entire day at sea. The following is an account of one of the best Georgia pelagic trips ever.

Fourteen Georgia seabirders left Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia, aboard the *SCAT II* with Captain Steve Amick at 5:53 AM on Sunday, September 14, 2008, with clear skies, calm seas, winds 5-10 mph out of the southeast, and a full moon setting to the west. Our first identifiable bird was a Cory's Shearwater at 7:20 AM. Our second bird was an Audubon's Shearwater at 8:03 AM.

As we approached the U.S. Navy Communications Tower, designated R6, which is approximately 45 miles east of St. Catherines Island, bird activity increased noticeably. At 8:24 AM we had four more Cory's Shearwaters, another Audubon's Shearwater, and our first of four Great Shearwaters. Three Royal Terns and one Black Tern were noted as well.



Cory's Shearwaters. Photo by Pierre Howard.

At 8:31 AM, as the boat closed to within binocular range of R6, we were excited to see at least one large dark bird perched on the crossbeams of the tower. First one all-dark juvenile Brown Booby, then a second appeared to some very excited birders. As the boat circled the tower looking over the collection of 55 Royal Terns, 20 Sandwich Terns, and three Common Terns that were also perched on R6, a Brown Noddy was observed circling the boat, feeding with four Sooty Terns. Many photographs of this very rare Georgia bird were taken.



Brown Noddy. Photo by Pierre Howard.

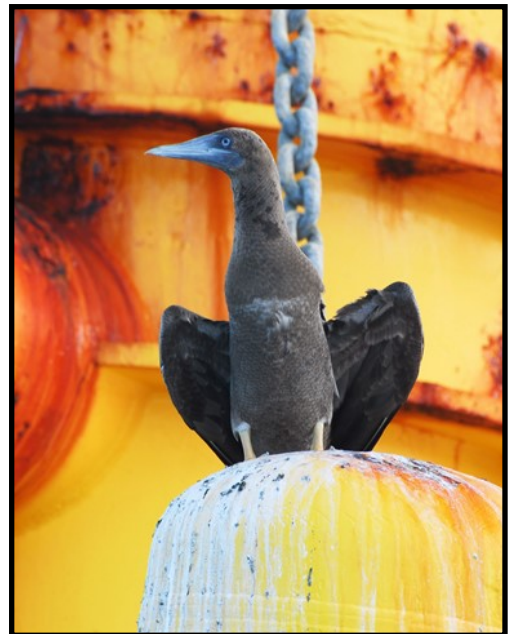
A few minutes later, we heard the call of a Long-tailed Jaeger, and most of us got at least a fleeting look at this bird. No sooner had it flown off than another jaeger, this time a Parasitic, appeared and stayed around long enough to be well documented. We reluctantly left R6 a little after 9:00 AM, heading for another U.S. Navy Tower, R3, which is about 68 miles east of Jekyll Island. Along the way, we encountered a Loggerhead Sea Turtle, eight Sooty Terns, one Common Tern, one Audubon's Shearwater and 71 more Cory's Shearwaters in groups of 10, 2, 6, 36, 16, and 1.

Possibly Georgia's Best Pelagic Trip *(continued from page 5)*

Parasitic Jaeger. Photo by Pierre Howard.

We arrived at R3 at 10:28 AM, where we were all amazed to find eight Brown Boobies, all juveniles, either perched or flying around the tower. Even more stunning, there were four Brown Noddies, and this time they were all perched on the tower! We circled the tower many times, and hundreds of excellent photographs were taken, some with multiple noddies in the same view. One of the boobies that was flying around the tower appeared to be a juvenile Masked Booby, and an adult Masked Booby made a brief flyover appearance as well.

We left R3 around 11:15 AM, bound for the edge of the Gulf Stream about eight to nine miles to our east (approximately 76 miles from shore). We found a nice weed line and ran north along it for about 10 miles and had about 25 Red-necked Phalaropes in small groups or singles scattered along the way. Other sightings included 20 Cory's and two Audubon's Shearwaters, three Great Blue Herons, one Green Sea Turtle, one Leatherback Sea Turtle, and one Black Tern.



Brown Booby. Photo by David Hollie.

Captain Amick suggested that we stop by R6 on our way back to port, so at about 1:30 PM the boat turned west for the first time since early morning. Shortly thereafter, we had our first Bridled Terns of the day, a total of six perched on various pieces of flotsam. Thirteen more Cory's Shearwaters were also noted on our way back to R6. At 3:15 PM we arrived back at R6 to find that there were now five Brown Boobies and two Brown Noddies, increases of three and one, respectively, over what we had seen here nearly seven hours earlier. As the boat circled R6, at least one observer noted an immature Roseate Tern perched with the numerous other terns on one of the crossbars of the tower. Alas, the boat was just rounding the corner out of view of the tern before anyone

could get a photograph, and by the time the captain was able to get the boat back around to that side of the tower, the bird had flown.



Masked Booby. Photo by David Hollie.

The *SCAT II* arrived back at Tybee Island at 5:30 PM with 14 very tired but very pleased seabirders aboard. Pelagic birding in Georgia is not an easy venture, but when it is good, it can be very rewarding!

It seems unlikely that any of the birds on R3 had left that tower and flown to R6 while we were making our way out to the Gulf Stream and back to R6, in which case there were at least 13 Brown Boobies and six Brown Noddies in Georgia waters on September 14, 2008. At a minimum,

Possibly Georgia's Best Pelagic Trip *(continued from page 6)*

there were eight and four, unprecedented numbers. Were these birds pushed north by Tropical Storm Hannah, which passed offshore in early September? Very few September pelagic trips have been attempted in Georgia, so it could be a case of we just don't know what is usual or unusual.

Species	Count
Red-necked Phalarope	25
Parasitic Jaeger	1
Long-tailed Jaeger	1
jaeger sp.	1
Brown Noddy	4 or 6
Sooty Tern	23
Bridled Tern	6
Black Tern	2
Roseate Tern	1
Common Tern	21
Royal Tern	76
Sandwich Tern	30
Cory's Shearwater	114
Great Shearwater	4
Audubon's Shearwater	6
Masked Booby	1 Adult, 1 subadult
Brown Booby	8 or 13; all juvenile
Great Blue Heron	3

Bird species tally for a pelagic trip off the Georgia coast on September 14, 2008.



Red-necked Phalarope. Photo by Darlene Moore.



Brown Noddy. Photo by David Hollie.



Great Shearwater (left) and Audubon's Shearwater (right). Photos by Darlene Moore.

In Appreciation of Dick Parks and His Artwork

By Art Hurt

Richard A. Parks died on December 14, 2013, at age 92. An example of his artistry hangs in our den. Dick was an artist of extraordinary talent who loved and specialized in the painting of birds. His bird paintings are not only accurate in depicting colors, markings, highlights, and shapes of the various birds, but they also show the very personality, expression, and mood created by each individual species. To accomplish this took – well, first of all, talent and a love of birds – but also years of observation and study of each individual species he wanted to paint. Many Georgia birders have prints of his work hanging in their homes. His paintings are well-known, as was he. He was a generous and a gentle man.

In the summer of 1998, my wife Lisa wanted to surprise me with a special sort of 20th wedding anniversary present, so she visited Dick at his studio for the purpose of buying a print of one of his paintings for framing, and he showed her around. She was having a hard time making a decision when her eyes fell on the Hooded Warbler – a favorite of ours. “That’s the one I want,” she said. However, the one she was looking at was the original – he had no prints. Dick was surprised to hear her say, “That’s okay, I’ll take the original.” Anyway, they made a deal, and she came home with a Richard A. Parks original. The anniversary gift left me speechless.

Dick called Lisa a few weeks later to express his appreciation for her interest in his artwork. He had a gift for her: a pre-painting colored pencil sketch. His process toward a finished painting was first to either photograph or sketch the subject. Next, he made a detailed colored pencil sketch of the bird and its surroundings as he wanted the painting to appear. He then created his final painting from this sketch. He called Lisa to tell her he wanted her to have his colored pencil sketch from which he painted his Golden Crowned Kinglet. This original sketch has been framed and hangs next to our Hooded Warbler painting.

Editor’s note: For more information about Dick Parks, his art, and his contributions to GOS, see the story about the dedication of his bird art collection at the University of Georgia libraries in the December 2008 GOShawk at <https://www.gos.org/newsletters/200812.pdf>. There is also a brief biography of him at <https://www.gos.org/parks-bio> and a memoriam about him in The Oriole at <https://sora.unm.edu/node/138808>. If you would like to own one of Dick’s bird prints, GOS still has a few prints and sells them at the Society’s meetings.



Dick Parks (left) birding with Virginia and Roger Tory Peterson at GOS’ 50th anniversary meeting in Macon, GA, in 1986.

Smith Gilbert Gardens 8th Annual Hummingbird Banding

By Phillip Prichard

Smith Gilbert Gardens held their 8th Annual Hummingbird Banding on August 27th. Two hundred and fifty visitors attended the event. Julia Elliott of Bird Watchers Supply Company in Kennesaw and Emma Rhodes of the Banding Coalition of the Americas performed the banding, with assistance from Kayla of Bird Watchers Supply Company.

Seven Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were banded. The birds were mostly juvenile males. The males weighed approximately 0.08 ounces, and females were 0.1 ounces. In comparison, a nickel is 0.2 ounces. The numbers were down from previous years, when about 20 birds were banded. The event is held annually in August or September. Visitors were able to witness the banding. In addition to watching the banding, families participated in scavenger hunts, garden games, and craft events and visited the Owl Station. The process of banding is not complicated:

- Hummingbirds are lured into traps containing nectar.
- The banders then remove each hummingbird to be studied.
- They hold the hummingbird while measuring its body, wings, and tail feathers.
- The bander then gently wraps the tiny hummingbird in mesh cloth to weigh it.
- Quickly, the hummingbird is removed from the cloth in order to be observed.
- A soft puff of air with a straw across the feathers enables the researcher or volunteers to determine other characteristics, such as chest size and body fat.

This banding only takes a few minutes. Afterwards, the hummingbird is fed some nectar and released. During hummingbird banding, a small, thin, uniquely numbered band is placed around the leg of a hummingbird. This is done by licensed researchers and volunteers for the purpose of the birds' conservation and to learn more about their habits, migration, size, weight, longevity, and threats to their survival.

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird, one of the smallest hummingbird species, only grows to a length of 3 to 3.5 inches. It is considered the only breeding hummingbird in eastern North America. It is also the most widespread among all hummingbird species.

A Ruby-throated Hummingbird has only about 940 feathers in average, which are all replaced every year. For this, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds hold the record for having the least number of feathers of any bird. The thin, asymmetrical, and slightly curved primary feather of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird allows it to achieve an optimal speed when flying. It can fly level at a speed of 25 miles per hour and to 40 miles per hour during courtship dives. Aside from being precision flyers, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds also have an average record wingbeat frequency of 53 times per second. However, during courtship, this frequency soars up to about 200 times per second. Males fly in perfect arcs, then dive up and down vertically in front on the prospective female mate.

A Ruby-throated Hummingbird's very short legs prevent it from other means of moving, such as walking or hopping. Indeed, it can only shuffle along a perch. It scratches its head and neck by raising its food up and over its wing. Despite its small size, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird can, in just one flight, go more than 1,800 miles from the eastern United States, crossing more than 600 miles of the Gulf of Mexico, to winter in Central America.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds prefer red or orange flowers because of their high sugar content. This does not mean, however, that the sugar water in hummingbird feeders should be colored.

Smith Gilbert Gardens *(continued from page 9)*

In fact, some authorities have stated that colored dye in sugar water might pose a health risk to hummingbirds. Like many other birds, hummingbirds also have a good color vision, which allows them to look into the ultraviolet spectrum that humans can't see.

Visitors to the banding event purchased timed tickets in advance. The 2022 Event Sponsors were Henssler Financial, Kaiser Permanente, Audi Marietta, Gentry Law Firm LLC, Bird Watchers Supply Company, Atlanta Fine Homes, Sotheby's International Realty, and the Cobb EMC Foundation.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Photo by Dan Vickers.

In addition to the staff of the Gardens, some of the Garden's approximately 300 dedicated volunteers helped coordinate the event. The Gardens are located at 2382 Pine Mountain Road, Kennesaw, GA 30152, 770-919-0248. Smith-Gilbert Gardens is a City of Kennesaw Botanical Garden. Visit their website at <https://smithgilbertgardens.com/>

Wallowing in the Mire

By Robert L. Crawford

In the mid-1970s, I went on a Jacksonville, Florida, Christmas Bird Count with a couple of birding friends. Our assigned area included parts of the vast St. Johns River tidal marsh, habitat for some furtive rails, wrens, and sparrows. Just about the only way to record these birds in winter is to walk through the thick needle grass and count them as they flush.

By mid-afternoon we had covered most of our area, but we had saved the marsh for this time of day that was usually dull in the woods. We decided that I should be dropped off at the edge of the marsh and then make my way across a portion, aiming to meet the others where a secondary road followed a point of land that jutted into the marsh about a half mile from where I started. They drove away, and I walked out into the marsh.

The needle grass grew higher the farther in I walked. It pricked at my face and jabbed under my arms; bunches of dead grass gathered around my feet, forming crescents that I dragged along with each step. I found myself in a uniform, two-dimensional world of grass which stretched almost as far as I could see in most directions, and with me the solitary human, just a head barely sticking above the spiked gray surface and making a halting path towards the peninsula of land that seemed much farther away to me now. The isolation was a bit unnerving.

Suddenly, I came upon the lip of a huge gap in the grass: it was the muddy gash of a tidal creek, void of water then in the extreme low tide. The creek bed was a shallow U, with glistening banks sloping down nearly eight feet; they were 15 feet or more apart. I could not possibly have jumped

Wallowing in the Mire *(continued from page 10)*

the creek bed; it was too wide and I did not have time to follow it upstream to where it would narrow. I had to continue to my rendezvous.

Determined, I backed up a few feet, then ran forward and sprung with all my strength out into the air from the top of the bank. I had planned to hit the mud running and scamper up the other bank but instead I landed a little over half-way across with a soft plop and was stuck there in the mud up to my calves. I tried to step forward but while I advanced only a few inches, I sank to my mid-thighs; one more try yielded me another inch advance and I sank past my crotch. I stopped to consider my situation. I was in serious trouble. The mud had the color and consistency of chocolate pudding and was like quicksand. Struggling to move forward would only sink me deeper and deeper. The top of the bank was 10 feet away and five feet above me; the high tide, soon to come in, would be well over my head. There was no human within miles to hear a call for help, and my friends would not realize I was missing until too late.

I knew how to get out of quicksand: fall on your back and swim with a backstroke. The human body is actually buoyant in the wet medium and will float if horizontal. I could not fall backwards; that would just take me down into the bottom of the trough. There was nothing to do but to go forward. I threw my binoculars up onto the bank, plopped over face first into the stinking goo, and began a breaststroke.

Sure enough, I felt my legs slowly rising up from the mud as I slithered up the bank. I kept my eyes closed and turned my face from side to side to breathe. Finally, my hands brushed some grass and I looked up to see a bunch growing from the top of the bank. I grabbed it and then as gently as I could, I pulled myself up onto the firm grass-covered ground. I rested for a moment on my hands and knees and then found my binoculars and continued my trek across the marsh.

Meanwhile, the other guys had decided to take a break while they waited for me, and I happened to navigate right upon their position. I came barging out of the palmetto almost onto their laps and I seemed to them an apparition for I was unrecognizable, covered from head to toe in smelly black mud and pouring out a jumbled account of my experience. For several moments they just stood there watching and listening to me while cutting glances at each other. They told me later they were really not sure who I was. I should have kept the muddied field card that recorded the sparrows, wrens, and rails I noted that day in the marsh. They were hard earned.

Black-crowned Night-heron. Photo by Ron Goldfarb.



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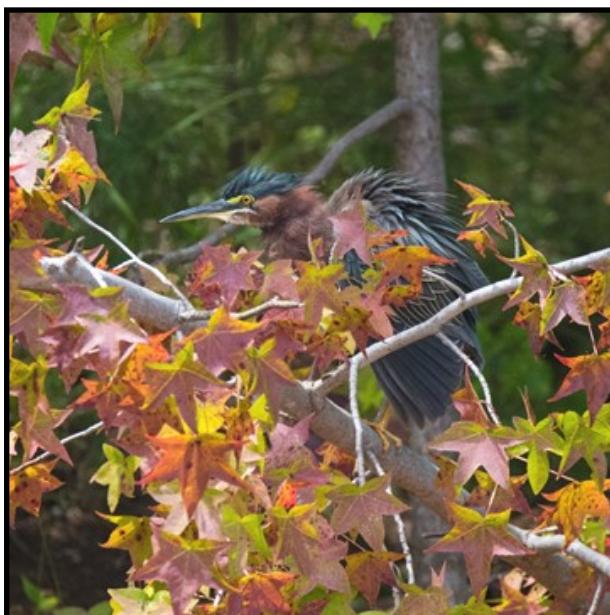


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Green Heron. Photo by Ron Goldfarb.