



April 2023
Vol. 50, No. 1

GOShaw

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
www.gos.org

President's Message

By Ed Maioriello

Dear Birders,

Another spring is upon us, bringing with it many delights for the birding world: the return of the wildflowers, the return of leaves on the trees, and, most of all, the return of our neotropical migrants to Georgia. Spring is truly a time of rebirth and reawakening for us all.

This spring brings more than the usual gifts for us at the Georgia Ornithological Society. Due at least in part to the ongoing pandemic, grant applications and awards had waned significantly over the past few years. I am pleased to tell you that we have experienced a reawakening in this regard too. We awarded the Terrell Graduate Student Research Grant to three deserving graduate students. We awarded the Branch Howe Graduate Student Research Grant to three more deserving graduate students. There were four awards of the Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant awarded this year. I encourage you all to visit the GOS website and review the current and past recipients of these grants to appreciate what the recipients are doing on behalf of ornithology and conservation in Georgia and surrounding states.



Featured speaker Clark Rushing at the GOS winter meeting at Tybee Island. Photo by Bob Sargent.

Finally, but not least of all, we awarded the Parks Scholarship for Young Birders to two very deserving young birders from Georgia enabling them to attend the American Birding Association's (ABA) Camp Colorado. We had been forced to cancel awarding of the Parks Scholarship in 2020 due to the pandemic and had no applicants at all in 2021. It is no exaggeration to tell you that our executive committee was very concerned by the lack of applicants for this scholarship. We do not underestimate the value of sending young birders to camps like the ABA's Camp Colorado or Audubon's Hog Island. A quick glance at <https://www.gos.org/YoungBirderScholarship>

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

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Chipping Sparrow. Photo by Bob Sargent.

Welcome, New Members!

Fledgling (Students)

Doreen Chaussadas	Athens, GA
Myra Kincaid	Auburn, GA
Diane Klement	Evans, GA
Ashley McMahon	Milledgeville, GA
Heather Parsons	Athens, GA
Kimberly Perez	Athens, GA

Brown Thrasher (Individual/Family)

Marilyn Odell	Sandy Springs, GA
Steve Patterson	Anderson, SC
Eric Swanson	Savannah, GA
Brad Winn	Rochester, VT

Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Patron)

Ilze Henderson	Decatur, GA
Jeff Potocsnak	St. Marys, GA
Norman Race	Americus, GA

The Oriole Welcomes Submissions

The Oriole, the scientific journal of GOS, invites authors to submit general notes or research articles about Georgia bird life. We also publish book reviews. You can see examples in previous issues, 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.

Go Paperless!

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)*

will show the many worthy recipients of this scholarship, and many of their names will undoubtedly be familiar to anyone watching the next generation of ornithologists and naturalists starting (or continuing) their careers in the field. We were all delighted to see this reawakening of interest in the scholarship.

Please mark your calendars for our fall meeting on Jekyll Island October 6-9, 2023. We will provide more information about the fall meeting soon. While we are not having a spring meeting this year, I encourage everyone to get out into the field and take delight in the wonder that is the spring migration. Attend trips with your local Audubon societies or birding clubs, or just grab your binoculars and head outdoors!

Yours in conservation,
Ed Maioriello
President, GOS



A Loggerhead Shrike dines on a fleshy morsel at Fort Pulaski NM, January 13, 2023. Photo by Bob Sargent.

Little Blue Heron at Fort Pulaski NM, January 13, 2023. Photo by Bob Sargent.



Bald Eagles nesting on an Osprey platform at Fort Pulaski NM, January 13, 2023. Unfortunately, this nest failed the following month. Photo by Bob Sargent.

Acorn Woodpecker Encounter

By Liza O'Neal

My son, Chris O'Neal, visited California a few years ago, and he was excited to see and photograph an Acorn Woodpecker. I wasn't familiar with the bird and so did a little research on what turned out to be quite a fascinating bird! Their black, white, and red coloring and raucous, parrot-like calls make identification fairly simple. Their social structure is anything but simple, however, and most interesting. They live in large family groups, where each year only a few of the males and females breed, but with other members of their family. The eggs are laid in a communal nest cavity, and the females sometimes destroy the eggs laid by another female, lay their own, and incubate them. The young birds stay with the family group for some years and help raise the youngsters.



Acorn Woodpecker. Photo by Chris O'Neal.

Acorn Woodpeckers eat a variety of foods, including flying insects, fruit, and of course, acorns. They drill thousands of holes in trees and sometimes other structures made by humans, such as fence posts, buildings, and even car radiators, in which to stash their acorns. These granaries are well guarded by a group member. Sometimes they drill holes in structures where they cannot get them out. In Arizona, woodpeckers stored more than 485 pounds of acorns in a water tank.



Acorn Woodpecker cache tree. Photo by Todd Schneider.

A few days ago, I read an article where a couple in California had called their pest control company, as they had found meal worms in their bedroom. Finding no apparent cause for the worms, the man drilled a four-inch square hole in the wall, and acorns started pouring out. A larger hole was made, and eventually more than 700 pounds of acorns were discovered in the space between the walls! Later, a hole was discovered in the chimney wall, where the woodpeckers had pushed their nuts, and another hole in the attic where the birds had entered to feed on their stash. It took four pest control workers a whole day to extract all the nuts, making a pile twenty feet high. I've heard of having skeletons in the closet, but not acorns in the attic.

Looped by a Limpkin

By Daniel Adrien

While I have always enjoyed birds, I didn't become an "addictive" birder until a friend and avid birder took me out to look at birds in a Florida wildlife preserve. The very first bird we saw in a wetland area was a Limpkin. He said seeing that bird was beginner's luck, but when I returned home to Monroe County, a Limpkin was at our pond. I took a picture of the bird to show my birding friend/mentor that Limpkins were not as rare as he said. It turned out that picture was the most northern sighting of a Limpkin in Georgia. Its documentation was registered in the GOS! Since then, with considerable traveling, my birding life list has exceeded 1,100 species. I am always keeping an eye out for a chance to add to the list.

Tips for Bird Photography

By Phillip Prichard

Bird photography presents a variety of challenges, but a successful bird photographer can overcome most of these with preparation. Some of the key preparation items include knowledge of bird behavior, timing, the photographer (i.e., knowledge of her or his equipment and light), equipment (minimum of a 300mm lens), luck, patience, persistence, and practice, practice, practice.

Bird photographers need to determine how they are going to use their photographs: identification, research, and documentation of the birds that they have seen, or whether they just enjoy watching birds. The first essential element in bird photography and videography is a sincere respect for the birds and their environment. In any conflict of interest, the well-being of the birds and their habitats must come before the ambitions of the photographer or videographer. Review Audubon's *Guide to Ethical Bird Photography and Videography* at <https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/audubons-guide-ethical-bird-photography>

In Georgia, we have a diversity of areas to photograph birds: the coast, the Piedmont, and the mountains. We have 49 state parks, 112 state wildlife management areas, nine national wildlife refuges, plus many more other accessible areas. The Colonial Coast Birding Trail, developed in 1999 and Georgia's premier state wildlife trail, is the first trail updated under the new "Birding and Wildlife Trails" program. This trail includes 17 sites, stretching from Fort Pulaski National Monument and the beaches of Tybee Island south to Cumberland Island National Seashore and the swamps of the Okefenokee. Shorelines, salt marshes, old rice fields, woodlands, tidal rivers, and freshwater wetlands offer an array of habitats that showcase unique communities of birds and other wildlife. The trail features federal, state, and local sites that provide the opportunity to encounter wildlife, connect with nature, and visit historic places. The Colonial Coast Birding Trail has also been added to the free Go Outdoors GA app developed by Brandt Information Services. The Southern Rivers Birding Trail in southwest Georgia is being updated.



Eastern Bluebird in backyard. Photo by Phillip Prichard.

One of the easiest places to photograph birds can be in your own yard. Birds need a few essentials: food, water, cover, and places to raise their young. Bird feeders provide food, and native plants attract insects birds can eat. Shelter can be bushes or trees. A single oak tree can provide shelter and support more than 500 different species of insects, which in turn provide food for many other animals. A bird bath or water source provides water. The direction of the light and wind is crucial, especially for the beginning bird photographer; the light coming toward the bird is usually best, and the wind should be at your back. Morning light or afternoon light is usually ideal. Provide perches for the birds, either natural or manmade.

The secrets for stunning creative bird photography include 1) Get low for gorgeous backgrounds; 2) Get eye level with the bird; 3) Ensure the bird's eye is sharp; 4) Use a wide aperture to blur the background; 5) Open up the aperture for dark birds and close down the aperture for white birds; 6) Check the exposure and composition often; 7) Make sure you have adequate shutter

Tips for Bird Photography (continued from page 5)

speed for birds in flight; 8) Use aperture priority or manual mode; 9) Shoot in water for stunning reflections; 10) Capture action for compelling bird photos; 11) Shoot through vegetation for unique images; 12) Capture silhouettes for dramatic shots; 13) Tell a story; and 14) Remember that you can break the rules, but always show respect for birds and landowners.

Never stop learning. Learn from camera histograms, look at your camera settings, network with other photographers, watch YouTube videos, and read bird photography books. One book that I recommend is *Birder's Eye View II: The Low Country*, by Diana Churchill. I'm confident that if you give these tips a try, you will not only create some great photographs, but you will gain a greater appreciation for these incredible creatures: birds.



Male Northern Cardinal in backyard. Photo by Phillip Prichard.



Swallow-tailed Kite at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Phillip Prichard.

The Farm Bill: Why it Matters

By Lauren Gingerella

The farm bill, known in its current form as the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, is a multiyear law that governs a wide variety of agriculture and food programs. If you are wondering why an article about the farm bill is in the *GOShawk*, it is because the farm bill is so much more than a piece of legislation that supports agriculture commodities and rural development. Birds substantially benefit from farm bill legislation too.

Nearly two-thirds of land in the continental United States is privately owned. Private lands support rare and at-risk species and habitats, including numerous species listed on the Endangered Species Act. The farm bill is the nation's largest source of funding to help private landowners manage and protect natural resources on their land, which aids in the conservation and recovery of declining fish, wildlife, and plant populations. More than 100 bird species use habitat conserved by the farm bill incentive programs.

The farm bill provides assistance for conservation through multiple incentive programs that are administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). One program, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), protects, restores, and enhances wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches through conservation easements – an agreement that restricts land use to protect conservation values. Another is the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which provides financial and technical assistance to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits, such as improved water quality and restored wildlife habitat. Of significant importance is the Working Lands for Wildlife program (WLWF), which is supported by EQIP.

WLWF implements science-backed conservation practices that enhance agricultural and forest productivity while improving wildlife habitat. The program uses a landscape conservation approach and focuses on species whose conservation will benefit co-occurring species in the same habitat – otherwise known as umbrella species. The Golden-winged Warbler, Sage Grouse, Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, American Black Duck, and shorebirds of Louisiana wetlands have been selected as focal species for national and state initiatives. To date, WLWF has restored 16,000 acres of Golden-winged Warbler habitat and conserved more than a million acres of prairie-chicken habitat. These conservation successes were accomplished with sustainable grazing, prescribed burns, and timber harvests – management practices that benefit both people and birds.

Now there is some uncertainty facing the farm bill as the current bill is set to expire in December. The cycle of farm bill expiration and renewal regularly occurs nearly every five years. Before renewal, the bill is debated and negotiated by Congress with much stakeholder involvement from farm and horticulture groups, conservation advocacy groups, state organizations, and nutrition officials. There is little doubt the farm bill will be reauthorized, but what is in the farm bill changes with each iteration. Funds to various farm bill programs could be reallocated, and conservation programs may not have as much support as previous farm bills.

A robust farm bill for birds is crucial for the recovery of declining species and keeping common birds common. America's wildlife, fish, plants, and habitats depend on farm bill legislation that prioritizes conservation. Support the farm bill by contacting your congressperson and by sharing the importance of the bill's passage with those around you.

A Glynn County Big Year

By Eliot VanOtteren

The “biggest” county Big Year in Georgia began with a wintering Purple Sandpiper and a Long-billed Curlew on nearly back-to-back Christmas Bird Counts on Sea Island and Little St. Simons Island on the first and fourth days of the year, respectively. Field Sparrow, Yve Morrell’s Buff-bellied Hummingbird, the famous Heerman’s Gull, Hairy Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Mike Meadow’s American Black Duck, American Woodcock, and Western Kingbird are just a few of the 142 species that rounded out the first week of 2022 birding in Glynn County. A trip to Andrew’s Island Spoil Site with Gene Keferl on the 9th added an Eared Grebe as well as a White-crowned Sparrow. Seawatch from the beach on Sea Island produced Red-throated Loon and Parasitic Jaeger on the 13th. A Winter Wren was observed in Clayhole Swamp WMA on the 16th, and Mike’s pond hosted an American Wigeon the following day. I finished January with 170 species observed in Glynn County.

The first notable additions for the month of February were Grasshopper and Henslow’s Sparrows, both in Paulk’s Pasture WMA on the 4th. A February 11th near-shore trip with Captain Brooks Good and crew produced a Pomarine Jaeger. Other February notables included White-winged Scoter, Long-billed Dowitcher and Rusty Blackbird, for a running total of 179 species.

March opened with a highly-targeted, and long-awaited, Barn Owl at Two-Way Fish Camp on the second day of the month. A March 4th mini-pelagic with Brooks added two lifers at about 10 miles offshore: Razorbill, an irruption year for this species, and Manx Shearwater, my 300th species observed in Glynn County. On the 19th I photographed a Limpkin, now seemingly an annual species in the county, in Clayhole Swamp WMA. I recorded my first spring Eastern Whip-poor-will singing in Paulk’s Pasture WMA on the 25th. My lifer Upland Sandpiper, along with Stilt Sandpiper, were added at Andrew’s Island on the 27th with Gene, as well as Charlie and Allan Muise. Other March notables included Black-bellied Whistling Duck and Swainson’s Warbler. March concluded with 209 species for the year.

In part due to a rather dismal spring migration, April added a mere 23 species, including a pair of Gray Kingbirds that returned to their regular territory on Sea Island on April 11th. The first American Bittern of the year was heard and recorded flight-calling as it passed over my driveway in the predawn hours of the 13th. An April 30 Spring Glynn Big Day totaled 134 species, but failed to add to the county year. I had 232 species at the end of April.

Our May 5th pelagic covered 135 miles and added Black Tern, Red-necked Phalarope and my lifer Bridled Tern. The second week of May brought an inshore invasion of Wilson’s Storm-petrels observed from shore on both St. Simons and Jekyll Islands. Other notable May additions included Least Bittern, White-rumped Sandpiper, Bank Swallow, and my lifer Snowy Plover, found by Yve. May brought the count to 244.

Our June 1st Gulf Stream pelagic with Captain Ashley Parmilee, despite several full hours without any birds, produced Cory’s Shearwater and Brown Booby. The last week of the month brought unusually high numbers of Great Shearwater strandings up and down the east coast, including an individual found resting on the beach on St. Simon’s Island on the 25th, also seen



Upland Sandpiper photographed by Eliot VanOtteren.

A Glynn County Big Year (continued from page 8)

by the late Lydia Thompson, John Patten Moss, and Bob Sattelmeyer. In all, I noted reports of more than 20 of these wash-ups and strandings of this species along the Georgia Coast over the course of about a week. I closed out the first half of 2022 with 247 species.

Cliff Swallow, seen with Bob Zaremba on the north end of Sea Island, was the only species added during the month of July, to make the total 248 species.



Masked Booby photographed by Eliot VanOtteren.

On August 19th Andrew's Island held Pectoral Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope. While dodging storms on an August 27th full-day, off-shore trip with Captain Robert Marascalco, I picked up three lifers: Sooty Tern, Masked Booby (the second Georgia record in a decade), and Brown Noddy (first in the county since 2008). I had 253 species as of August 31st.

A Blue-winged Warbler was at the main entrance to Clayhole Swamp WMA on September 10th. While birding Sea Island Golf Club on the 12th, I picked up the first Lark Sparrow of the year.

Another trip to Clayhole on the 17th produced the first individual of what would become a seemingly banner year for Golden-winged Warblers throughout the rest of fall migration. While listening to nocturnal migrants in my driveway on the morning of the 22nd, I made an audio recording of a southbound Dickcissel. Later that same morning, I photographed a Black-throated Green Warbler high in the canopy along the dike beyond Sugar Mill Road at Altama WMA. An early Red-breasted Nuthatch was at Gascoigne Bluff Park on St. Simons Island on the 28th, just prior to the passing of Hurricane Ian. A Tennessee Warbler on the south end of Jekyll Island on September 30th was among the passerine fallout following the storm. I then totaled 265 species for the year.

An October 2nd Fall Big Day in the county netted 137 species, plus a bonus hybrid Brewster's Warbler, but nothing new for the year. Ian's fallout continued to pay off through the first week of October with my first Georgia Wilson's Warbler in the landscaping dump at Epworth by the Sea on St. Simons Island on the 4th. A first state record Hammond's Flycatcher appeared on the south end of Sea Island on the 6th, continued through the 8th, and was subsequently confirmed via genetic sequencing of a fecal sample collected by Sam Murray, Dan Vickers, and me. Thanks to Alec Hopping and Dr. Michael Yabsley for their aid in identifying this silent fall *Empidonax* flycatcher. A GOS Fall Weekend field trip to Andrews Island, also on the 8th, produced a Hudsonian Godwit among the roosting shorebirds and ducks. Both Blackburnian Warbler and Chestnut-sided Warbler were seen at Sea Island Golf Club on the 12th, as well as a Bay-breasted Warbler at Amphitheater Pond on Jekyll Island on the 14th. Among hundreds of nocturnally migrating Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrushes, I heard and recorded a series of Gray-cheeked Thrush calls (less than 4 kHz) while standing in my driveway on the 15th. A rather serendipitous Franklin's Gull was among the gull flock roosting on the bar at Gould's Inlet between St. Simons and Sea Islands on the 16th. Bob Sattelmeyer alerted me to a White-winged Dove visiting his feeders, which I successfully relocated in a nearby live oak on Halloween. October brought my count to 274 species for the year.

A Glynn County Big Year *(continued from page 9)*

A November 4th trip to Paulk's Pasture produced a Vesper Sparrow along Lomo Field Road. A pair of Ross's Geese observed by Adam Betuel at Andrew's Island in late October continued for Gene and me on November 12th. On the 14th, a first-of-the-season American Pipit flew over McKinnon Airport Community Garden's entrance gate upon the arrival of an early-season cold front following Tropical Storm Nicole. A single Lapland Longspur, a lifer, was photographed after flushing from the dunes on Jekyll Island South Beach on the 18th. On the 25th I relocated an annually returning Lincoln's Sparrow in the rain along the Sandcastle Road ditch adjacent to the airport, bringing the total to date to 279 species.



Golden-winged Warbler photographed by Eliot VanOtteren.

To kick off the last month of the year, a continuing pair of Purple Finches visiting a feeder in west Glynn County were heard calling on December 4th, and were subsequently photographed later in the month. That same morning Yve alerted me to a dark-morph Snow Goose with the Canada Geese on a small hotel pond at Golden Isles Parkway and I-95. On December 12th I photographed my lifer Nashville Warbler, found along the Sandcastle Road Ditch earlier in the week by Tibbet Speer (totaling 31 warbler species for the year). While searching for the Nashville, I found an Ash-throated Flycatcher along the edge of the path earlier that same day. A huge winter storm swept the country, pushing local early morning temperatures down into the low twenties, on Christmas Eve. I stopped at Bob Sattelmeyer's feeders for Dark-eyed Junco as I was wrapping up my morning birding on the 24th. A quick detour to the previously mentioned I-95 hotel ponds yielded two male Canvasbacks on my way to the Jacksonville Airport on Christmas Day, for a total of 284 species observed in Glynn County for 2022. The Sea Island section of the Glynn County Christmas Bird Count closed out a very foggy and wet New Year's Eve for me with no new birds, so my new Glynn County Big Year record stood at 284 species. My previous highest Glynn County Big Year total came to 277 in 2020. Prior to that, the highest Big Year total in eBird for any Georgia county was 250 species by Steve Calver in Chatham County in 2015.

Some of my biggest misses documented by others in the county in 2022 were by Gene Keferl: Magnificent Frigatebird, Broad-winged Hawk, Pine Siskin, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and Sandhill Crane. Little St. Simons Island had Purple Gallinule, Philadelphia Vireo, and a Connecticut Warbler (a painfully unsuccessful chase). There were several White-breasted Nuthatch reports, mostly centering around GOS Weekend. This is a surprisingly tough bird in the county. The heart-breaking St. Andrew's Townsend's Warbler eluded all but the few who discovered it. More than one hundred Red Phalaropes were observed by Sam Murray, Bob Zaremba, and others on a December 29th near-shore trip with Captain Brooks while I was away on vacation. Lastly, despite multiple checks, I missed the Bullock's Oriole visiting Cilla Fleshman's feeders on New Year's Eve, but picked it up the very next morning to kick off 2023.

I ended the year with 313 all-time species for Glynn County. I added 18 new county birds, 16 of which were lifers, during my 2022 Big Year.

Summary of the GOS Winter Meeting at Tybee Island, January 13-16, 2023

By Steve Wagner

Approximately 50 attendees participated in our Winter Meeting activities, which included interesting and informative presentations on Friday and Saturday, the banquet, and field trips. For the weekend, participants found 155 species (see list below) on field trips to the Corps of Engineers Disposal Site, Fort Pulaski, Fort Stewart, Harris Neck NWR, Hutchinson Island, Little Tybee Island, Richmond Hill Wastewater Treatment Facility, Savannah Christian Preparatory School, Skidaway Island, Solomon Tract, and Tybee Island. As always, thanks to our field trip leaders (Steve Calver, Larry Carlile, Diana Churchill, Stan Gray, Rene Heidt, Malcolm Hodges, Patrick Maurice, Mary Richards, Bob Sargent, Pam Smith, Russ Wigh, and Steve Wagner).



An Anhinga preps a catfish for swallowing at Harris Neck NWR, January 14, 2023. Photo by Bob Sargent.

Our Friday speaker was Dr. Bob Sargent, a wildlife biologist for the Georgia Department of Natural resources and long-time member of the GOS executive committee. In his presentation, "Not Your Average Flu Bug: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Virus' Toll on Wild Birds in Georgia and Across the U.S.," he discussed the history of avian flu and provided detailed information on recent impacts on birds in Georgia and elsewhere.

Dr. Clark Rushing, Assistant Professor in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia, gave the Saturday Keynote address. His presentation, "New Technological Tools Advance Age-old Question in Avian Ecology," focused on the various technologies available for tracking bird movements. Attaching tracking devices to birds allows researchers to gather information about local movements, dispersal, and migration. Dr. Rushing shared several examples of research that he and his graduate students are engaged in that use some of these different tracking technologies.



Birders are all smiles at the end of a field trip to Fort Pulaski NM, January 15, 2023. Photo by Bob Sargent.

Species Tally, GOS Winter Meeting, Tybee Island, Georgia, January 13-16, 2023*Compiled by Steve Wagner; 155 species*

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

Penguins, Seabirds, and Whales, Oh My! – Antarctica 2022

Ellen Miller

I like to travel, and I especially like to travel to see birds. For years I've had people tell me I HAD to go to Antarctica, that it is the trip of a lifetime. I wasn't so sure, as it is expensive, I have a tendency to get seasick, and it's not as though I was running out of places to go. But when the American Birding Association announced they were teaming up with Rockjumper Birding Tours to do a charter cruise to Antarctica, it seemed like the time to make the leap. After all, a ship full of 150 birders – what could be better?

The trip was supposed to go in 2020, which of course did not happen, and then in 2021 there remained uncertainty on travel requirements, etc., so it was postponed again. Finally, in November 2022, the trip was a go. The ship, Quark Expedition's *Ocean Diamond*, sailed out of Ushuaia, Argentina, in early November. November is early in the Antarctic season, with the timing supposedly giving us a better shot at seeing Emperor Penguins, though that was still something of a long shot.



Adelie Penguins. Photo by Mike Weaver.

Since this was a charter specifically for birders, there were a number of bird guides on board, along with the ship's ornithologist, who took turns on deck calling out the various albatrosses, petrels, storm petrels, prions, etc., during the time at sea. The first stop on the trip was the Falkland Islands, where we visited Carcass Island, West Point Island, and the town of Stanley, where we were reminded of the Falkland Island War in 1982, which has not been forgotten by either side. On Carcass Island we picked up a number of land birds, such as Blackish Cinclodes and Ruddy-headed Geese, along with Magellanic and Gentoo Penguins.

South Georgia Island was a must-see, completely awe inspiring and a bit humbling. We were lucky with good weather, which enabled us to make all our shore landings using the ship's Zodiac boats. There were tens of thousands of King Penguins at Salisbury Plain, Gold's Harbor, and St. Andrews Bay, as well as large numbers of Elephant Seals and Antarctic Fur Seals. From a Zodiac cruise at Elsehul we watched the antics of a colony of Macaroni Penguins and Grey-headed Albatross. We easily saw the endemic South Georgia Pipit, which is doing quite well since rodents were eradicated from the island. We also toured the fascinating museum and whaling station remains at Grytvikin, a sobering reminder of the horrific history of whaling and "penguining" in the South Atlantic. Sir Ernest Shackleton is buried at Grytvikin, and we got to participate in the tradition of raising a toast to "the Boss."



Sir Ernest Shackleton's grave, South Georgia Island. Photo by Mike Weaver.

Penguins, Seabirds, and Whales, Oh My! *(Continued from page 13)*

Then it was three days at sea toward the Antarctic peninsula, with pelagic birding along the way, a pass by Shag Rocks for the South Georgia Shag, and a pass by A76A, currently the largest floating iceberg in the world at 80 miles long by 16 miles wide. The iceberg is so large it took the ship five hours of cruising to pass it. We were able to get close enough and cruise alongside it to see that there were large numbers of albatrosses, petrels, and prions, as well as good numbers of whales in the vicinity of the iceberg. There was discussion that perhaps the fresh water coming off the iceberg as it melts attracted the birds and mammals.

On the afternoon of the third day, cruising south, we entered the Weddell Sea. The plan all along had been to cruise as far as possible south into the Weddell Sea, with the hope of seeing Emperor Penguins, since the most accessible Emperor Penguin colony exists on Snow Hill Island in the Weddell Sea. We slowly made our way south in beautiful surroundings of calm water, icesheets, and icebergs. We began seeing Chinstrap and Adelie Penguins on icebergs. Each piece of ice on which penguins were seen was diligently and somewhat anxiously scanned – for hours. Around 9 PM a call went up of Antarctic Petrels, a pair of which were flying, perhaps courting, 20 feet over the ship. The excitement of seeing these rare birds was exhilarating, partly as a release from the tension of scanning for Emperor Penguins. Not long after the petrels, one of the guides started yelling “Emperor Penguin, in the water off the back of the ship.” But as soon as the penguin was there, it was gone, and only the guide and one or two others who happened to be standing close saw the bird. As we continued to nudge our way south and actually began to see Snow Hill Island in the distance, someone called out that they believed they had Emperor Penguins in a scope. Everyone gathered around, and additional scopes were trained on two distant black blobs. The consensus was that they were indeed Emperor Penguins. We were happy and excited but at the same time were thinking it was not a satisfying view. Shortly

afterwards, more calls of “Emperor Penguin” went up, and finally somewhere after 10 PM, there were Emperor Penguins, easily visible and undeniable. Two were standing on an ice sheet on the port side of the ship and two more on ice ahead of the ship. The thrill of the birders, and the ship’s crew, was amazing. The ship’s captain used the thrusters to move the ship sideways and closer to the Emperors. There were people who had already gone to bed when the alert went up about the Emperors, and they came out on deck, in their slippers, with their binocular harness on over their bath robes! In all, about half a dozen Emperor Penguins were seen by most,



King Penguin colony. Photo by Mike Weaver.

and a few hard-core folks who stayed out on deck past midnight saw somewhere around twenty-five. To say this experience was a, or maybe the, highlight of the trip is to understate it.

Penguins, Seabirds, and Whales, Oh My! (Continued from page 14)

The next several days were spent cruising the Antarctic Peninsula and landing at various points with beautiful scenery, up-close and personal views of penguins, and numerous marine mammals (including whales), along with our constant companions of Cape and Snow Petrels, Snowy Sheathbills, and Antarctic Prions, to name a few.

All good things must come to an end, and our final two days necessitated crossing the Drake Passage. It was definitely the “Drake Shake” on our crossing, with 20- to 30-foot seas and gale force winds at times. Taking a shower and walking was interesting. But it could have been worse, and Scopolamine patches worked excellently for me.



Black-browed Albatross and Rockhopper Penguin colony. Photo by Mike Weaver.

In all, we had eight species of penguins, six species of albatrosses, and four species of prions (which I didn't know existed prior to the trip), with 83 bird species total, and 16 species of mammals. If you have thought about going to Antarctica, you should go. Make sure to add South Georgia Island. Truly a trip of a lifetime!

If you are interested in hearing more about this trip, be sure to listen to the “Life List” podcast Episodes 1, 2 and 3 of Season #2: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/life-list-a-birding-podcast/id1578168978>; scroll down and start at December 22, 2022. George Armistead and Alvaro Jaramillo captured the essence of this trip in their podcast, which was recorded while they were on board our ship.



View from South Georgia Island with the ship in the distance. Photo by Mike Weaver.

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Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
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Ruby-throated Hummingbird at Black and Blue Salvia. Photo by Phillip Prichard.