



Georgia Ornithological Society Terrell Conservation Grant 2023 Progress Report

Thanks to the Georgia Ornithological Society, we at Birds Georgia have been able to expand upon our work on Jekyll Island, restoring habitat that will benefit the islands birds and other wildlife. However, delays outside of our control have slowed our progress. Below is a detailed description of what has been completed thus far, the causes of our delays, and an amended timeline. We greatly appreciate the understanding and flexibility of GOS and look forward to completing our work. We will send a final report as soon as the project is complete, likely in late 2024.

Birds Georgia began planning work for the “Bird-friendly Maritime Grassland Dune Restoration Project” before the support provided by the Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant through the Georgia Ornithological Society made the project possible. The project builds upon a multi-acre restoration project completed in the winter of 22-23 funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation along with ongoing work funded by the Schumann Foundation. Working in tandem with these funding sources, this project is allowing for over 10 acres of continuous maritime grassland to be restored providing valuable habitat for many species on Jekyll.

Muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia sericea*) seeds were collected in the fall of 2022 for propagation and a targeted planting of winter 23-24. Seeds were sown in the late winter of 22-23 by Birds Georgia’s private grower. During the summer, Birds Georgia was notified that the germination success of this batch of seed was lower than expected. The Habitat Team at Georgia Audubon began brainstorming ideas for more propagation to keep in time with the proposed project timeframe. It was determined that plants would not be grown to a suitable size for a winter planting and adjustments would be needed. Birds Georgia opted to collaborate with a new primary grower closer to the project site where additional seed could more easily be collected and plant transport logistics would be easier. Additionally, the team is exploring the idea of an additional grower in case any issues arise with the new primary grower.

Once funding was granted by the Georgia Ornithological Society, Birds Georgia began to move forward with project coordination with partners including Jekyll Island Authority and our private plant grower. Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) began working on permitting for the project prior to being awarded the grant and ran into many delays while working with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) Coastal Resources Division. Birds Georgia followed up with JIA more than four times in 2023, from February to July, seeking an accepted permit to allow work to begin on the project and to keep with the project timeline. Permitting is required for this project as a large portion of the project area falls within the Shore Protection Act jurisdiction. Jekyll Island received an official Letter of Permission (LOP) for maritime grassland restoration within the Shore Protection Act jurisdiction and in the vicinity of Oceanview Beach Park north to Beachview Club, Jekyll Island, Glynn County, Georgia granted by GA DNR Coastal Resources

Division in late August allowing work to begin September 4th. Unfortunately, this delayed the timeline for the planned primary herbicide application from Summer 2023 to Fall 2023.

During this period, Birds Georgia worked with Jekyll Island Authority to plan the primary herbicide application to prepare the project site for follow up applications and eventual planting. Upon receiving notification of the LOP Birds Georgia's Habitat Team began monitoring the weather for optimal herbicide application conditions. Optimal conditions arrived in early November and the Habitat Team traveled to Jekyll Island to carry out the primary site prep herbicide application. In addition to a successful herbicide application the Habitat Team collected additional seed for propagation to ensure ample plant material for a planting next winter.

With the delays in permitting and poor germination of original seed material the project timeline has required adjustments to keep with the goals of restoring a healthy maritime grassland. The adjusted timeline includes the following:

- February 2024 - Sowing of newly collected *M. sericea* seed
- April-June 2024 - Secondary herbicide application
- September-November 2024 - final herbicide application/spot treatments if needed
- December 2024 - planting of *M. sericea* plugs

*timeframe may include minor adjustments based on the weather conditions

Please let us know if you have any questions or need any more details at this time.