



Wingbars

A Quarterly Publication of Birds Georgia

FEBRUARY 2024



**BIRDS
GEORGIA**

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Wingbars is the official newsletter of Birds Georgia and is published four times a year. We feature news, upcoming events, meetings, field trips, and projects. We hope you will join us. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect policies of Birds Georgia.

Wood Duck, photo by Teri Franzen.

Georgia Bird Fest Returns April 5 to May 4

Save the Date: Inaugural Georgia Bird Fest Summit Planned for April 20 in Athens

Birds, y'all! It's almost time for Georgia Bird Fest, Georgia's largest bird and nature festival. The 2024 event is scheduled for April 5 to May 4, and we're finalizing a great lineup of trips, events, and webinars to choose from. This year, we're excited to premiere a new addition to the Georgia Bird Fest lineup of event.

On Saturday, April 20, Bird Georgia will host our inaugural **Georgia Bird Fest Summit** from 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM at the Classic Center in Athens, GA. The Georgia Bird Fest Summit is designed to bring people from the state-wide birding community together to share knowledge and inspiration about what organizations are doing in Georgia's conservation, education, and community engagement programming. The Summit will consist of our keynote presentation and six breakout sessions from which attendees can choose. Refreshments and lunch will be provided. In addition, there will be activities in and around Athens on the day of the event.

(Continued on Page 8)



Georgia Audubon Is Now Birds Georgia

By Jared Teutsch, Executive Director

In November 2023, after a rigorous assessment process, the Georgia Audubon Board of Directors unanimously voted to officially change the name of Georgia Audubon to Birds Georgia to better represent the work that we do, to embody our organizational values, and to be welcoming and inclusive to all Georgians.

This decision comes in response to troublesome revelations about the organization's namesake – John James Audubon – which prompted the board to empanel a Name Task Force to explore what the “Audubon” name means in light of the organization's work, mission, and constituency and how it might impact their ability to attract younger, diverse audiences in the years to come.

(Continued on Page 8)

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[www.birdsgeorgia.org/
board-and-staff](http://www.birdsgeorgia.org/board-and-staff)

From the Executive Director

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

2024 is off to a great start, and Birds Georgia is kicking off the year with a number of new initiatives, including a new name, a new educational gateway, a host of new staff and board members, and an updated strategic plan to help us build upon our good work building places where birds and people thrive across Georgia. We're looking forward to a tremendous and productive year.

We're deep in the planning stages for 2024 Georgia Bird Fest and are excited to announce a new program to tie this month-long event together. We hope to see you at the inaugural Georgia Bird Fest Summit on Saturday, April 20, at The Classic Center, in Athens, Georgia. Dr. J. Drew Lanham will

be our keynote speaker, and we'll also be offering breakout sessions on a variety of bird-related topics, an exhibit area for vendors and partners, and a number of field trips in the Athens area. We'll also have our usual lineup of webinars, field trips, and events from April 5 to May 4, 2024. There will also be new opportunities for event sponsors and patrons, so keep your eyes on your email for ways to support this event and take advantage of some unique trips and opportunities as part of Georgia Bird Fest 2024.

We've received lots of great feedback on our new name, and we thank everyone who took time to share their thoughts with us around the rebranding. We're excited to announce that Bird Georgia surpassed 2,500

members for the first time ever at the end of 2023. The word is getting around about the work we're doing to build bird-friendly habitat across Georgia and to share the love and joy of birds with an ever-expanding and diverse group of Georgians. We're so glad to have you in the flock!

Sending you best wishes for a birdy new year, and I look forward to seeing many of you at the Georgia Bird Fest Summit in April.

Cheers,
Jared



Jared Teutsch



Grasshopper Sparrow. Photo by Melanie Furr.



Yellow-rumped Warbler. Photo by Ginger Richards.

Save the Date for Georgia Bird Fest Registration

Registration for 2024 Georgia Bird Fest will open on a staggered schedule to give everyone a chance to participate in this year's event. In addition to our regular lineup of events, we will have events that are open to Georgia Bird Fest Patrons only. We're trying this new format to maximize the number of events and openings that are available for both seasoned and new birders. This year's Georgia Bird Fest events will run from April 5 to May 4, with the Inaugural Georgia Bird Fest Summit on Saturday, April 20.

To learn more about becoming a Georgia Bird Fest Patron, visit <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/birdfest.html>

Event registration dates are as follows:

Early Registration for Patrons:

Opens: February 20 at 7:00 AM

Closes: February 27 at 11:55 PM

Member Registration

Opens: March 5 at 7:00 AM

Non-Member Registration:

Opens: March 12 at 7:00 AM



Our Georgia state bird, the Brown Thrasher.
Photo by Rick Dove.

Pre-order Your Georgia Bird Fest T-shirt

We're a little behind on our final 2024 Georgia Bird Fest T-shirts, but we can tell you that it will feature the Georgia state bird, a Brown Thrasher. Keep your eyes out for the final shirt design and sale in our *Bird Buzz* e-newsletter. Once we've finalized the design, we'll share it with the membership and open up pre-orders through our online store. Shirts will be mailed to arrive before the 2024 Georgia Bird Fest begins.

Surveying for American Oystercatcher

by Sarah Tolve, Coastal Conservation Coordinator

This article was published on our blog in December 2023. You can read the full article at www.birdsgeorgia.org/news-feed/surveying-for-american-oystercatchers

The sun has yet to rise, but staff from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and Birds Georgia are gearing up for the chance to shine a light on the wintering habits of one of Georgia's state-listed species of concern — the American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*).

Launching from Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, GA, DNR Biologists Tim Keyes and Chris Depkin were joined by Birds Georgia's Coastal Conservation Coordinator, Sarah Tolve, for a chilly day on the water. Tim hopes to survey the salt marsh and adjacent shell rakes (elevated oyster shell ridges along the marshside) for non-breeding American Oystercatchers and report banded birds back to their home states.

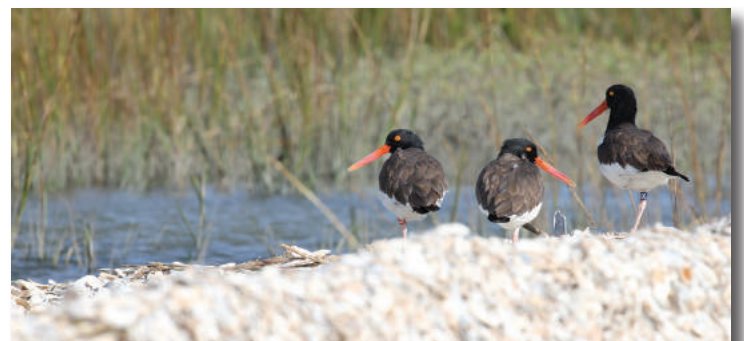
Over the course of the winter, Tim's team will survey Georgia's entire 100-mile coastline for Oystercatchers. Sounds easy? Not when you consider that Georgia holds approximately 368,000 acres of salt marsh in those one hundred miles. On the Atlantic seaboard, Georgia is surpassed in acres of salt marsh only by South Carolina.

Nestled between the Ogeechee and Altamaha Rivers, the salt marshes of Liberty and McIntosh Counties support countless numbers of birds, fishes, invertebrates, and marine mammals.

During the winter (non-breeding) season, as the tide approaches peak high tide, large groups of American Oyster-

catchers congregate on marsh islands, sandy beaches, and oyster rakes — making it slightly easier to observe large numbers of birds and survey for bands. As the tide recedes, birds begin to disperse to feed on intertidal mudflats and shellfish beds, and waterways become increasingly difficult to navigate (due to Georgia's six to eight-foot tidal fluctuation).

In a typical winter, Georgia's American Oystercatcher population numbers 900 to 1,100 individuals. During the breeding season, Georgia supports approximately 120 breeding pairs, mostly on undeveloped barrier islands and shell rakes.



Three adult American Oystercatchers stand on one leg atop a shell rake ridge. Two of the three birds are banded. The left reads red [AMC] and the right, dark blue [BX].
Photo by Sarah Tolve/Birds Georgia.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT On Nancy Downs

By Steve Phenicie

(This is the 60th in a series on Birds Georgia volunteers, board members, and staff.)

A queen bee has her workers. Santa has his reindeer. The habitat restoration team of Birds Georgia has volunteers who don't mind getting a little dirty for a good cause. In all three cases the top brass needs support personnel to fulfill its mission.

One of the many volunteers is Nancy Downs of Decatur. "Let her

know she rocks," says Gabe Andrie, habitat program manager. She's done grunt work on restoration projects at Panola Mountain, Island Ford, Olmstead Linear Park and Campbellton Park and highly recommends such endeavors for people who aren't necessarily whiz-bang birders but who still want to contribute to the organization. Nancy has also

helped with plant sales. "There are lots of Audubon [now Birds Georgia] members like me," she says.

Her volunteer work extends to her church, Decatur Presbyterian; to Clifton Sanctuary Ministries, a shelter for men; and to Woodland Gardens in Decatur. She's a gardener to boot.

Nancy never paid a lot of attention to birds until the pandemic, when she decided to put up a feeder and water features in her yard. She became a Master Birder in November 2021. "That made me pay attention for a 12-week period," she says. Prior to that she had never been on a bird outing. Since then she has birded in Montreal, Quebec City, and New York and also in Bulloch County, Ga., when she went to take care of her father, an owner of 200 acres

of land. She also has opportunities when the family goes to a vacation home in the Highlands Plateau area of North Carolina.

Now she talks up birding with other people and sometimes gives birdhouses and feeders as well as Birds Georgia coffee.

Nancy is a native of the Atlanta area, having been born at Piedmont



Nancy Downs frequently volunteers for habitat restoration workdays.

Hospital and living here all of her life except for a couple of short stints in Athens. She earned a marketing degree from the University of Georgia, then worked for Hasbro Inc. and C&S National Bank before teaching at Decatur Presbyterian Children's Community, a preschool and kindergarten, for 15 years. Nowadays she has her own

business as a home organizer (Need your space made more livable?). "I love a project," she says.

She and her husband, Bryan, who is the Decatur city attorney, have two sons in their 20s: Luke, who lives in New York City and works for the Madison Square Park Conservancy, and Walker, a forestry grad from Virginia Tech who lives in Florida. As you might guess by the sons' occupations, they have always been an outdoorsy family, with both boys becoming Eagle Scouts. She's still an avid hiker, and the family often went hiking when the boys were young.

If you'd like to know more about habitat restoration workdays, send an email to Sebastian Hagan, habitat program coordinator, at Sebastian.Hagan@birdsgeorgia.org.

THANK YOU!

A Million Thanks...

... to **Laura Adams** and **Kate Breakey** for curating and installing the fantastic "Flock" exhibit in the Boardroom at Birds Georgia's new home at the Trees Atlanta Kendeda TreeHouse ... to **Patrick Maurice** for presenting on his Big Year at the Birds Georgia Monthly Meeting at Manuel's Tavern ... to **Little St. Simons Island** for its generous donation of a two-night stay for use in our Birds Georgia Raffle ... to **Mim Eisenberg** and **Steve Phenicie** for writing and editing content for Birds Georgia newsletters ... to **Jeff Potocsnak** for helping to certify a Wildlife Sanctuary on the coast ... to **Melinda Langston** for being such a dedicated volunteer and spearheading the Wildlife Sanctuary program and helping Sarah Tolve learn the ropes ... to all the **Project Safe Flight Coastal volunteers, especially the faculty and students at the College of Coastal Georgia, Dr. David Stasek and Claire Hannah**, for organizing their routes and dutifully collecting birds and data to contribute to our collision collections ... to those who participated in the Community Engagement team for 2023: **Anne McCallum, Barbara Powell-Schager, Carolyn Brown, Ellen Miller, Esther Stokes, Gavin MacDonald, Gus Kaufman, Jennifer Johnson-McEwen, John Mayes, Josh Jackson, Joshua Gassman, Kathryn Bryd, Kim Kenley, Marc Goncher, Margaret Stephen, Marlena Reed, Mary Kimberly, Max Brown, Melinda Langston, Paige Martin, Jay Davis, Robert Cooper, Scott Porter, Steve Phenicie, Tasha Messer, Winkler Weinberg, Terry Miller, Susie Maclin, Steve Cook, Shannon Fair, Rona Cook, Paul Campbell, Phillip Prichard, Rachel Green, Richard Taylor, Robert McDonough, Michelle Wong, Mim Eisenberg, Nancy Downs, Melinda Hicks, Mary Anne Lanier, Larry Klink, LaTreese Sneed, Laura Breyfogle, Laurene Hamilton, Leenah Shah, Kelly Plasket, Joshua Andrews, Jon Philipsborne, James Stratton, Jack Barbas, Jack Bruce, Diane Hawkins-**

(Continued on Page 5)

A Million Thanks...

(Continued from Page 4)

Cox, Cathy McGraw, Bryan Shelby, Becca Dill, Anne Dries, Amanda Woomer, Amy Beth Sparks, and Angie Lewis ... to Steve Rushing for use of his incredible photography for our holiday card 2023 ... to Catharine Kuchar for her invaluable contributions as our grant writer and for playing a crucial role in our successful applications ... to Clark Meyer and Kevin Hayes for assisting with a Master Birder field trip ... to Wildlife Sanctuary Program volunteers Jennifer Ruscili, Esther Stokes, Lou Clymore, Paula Grad, Kelly Plasket, Barbara Powell-Schager, Sheryl Berg, Susan Van Houten, Jeff Potocsnak, and Melinda Langston ... to Project Safe Flight Georgia volunteers Nancy Kennell, Kelly Bryan, Larry Klink, Paul Miller, Adrienne Miller, Cheryl Hensley, Karen Osborne, Maureen Carroll, Ashley Boone, Mary Kimberly, Gavin MacDonald, Sage Pasquale, Mike Ayling, Claire Hannah, Jay Davis, Randy Tate, Jen Isaak Harrington, Lisa Rose, David Stasek, Eric Cormier, Emily Weigel, Bryan Fluech, Tim Keyes, Katie Higgins, Michelle Wong, Steve Place, Kaitlyn Tran, Shivani Potdar, Susan Canella, Chad Pozarycki, Brooke Vacovsky, Roberto Yrigollen, and Aditya Krishnaswamy ... habitat volunteers at Campbellton Park, Island Ford, RiverLands Park, and Panola Mountain: Laura Breyfogle, Sam Breyfogle, Diane Hawkins-Cox, John E. Mayes, Nancy A. Downs, Diana Tsoy, Ben McKeeby, Sarah Wiswall, Cathy Pugh, John A. Bullard, Jane St. Clair, Irina Alperovich, Cynthia Patterson, Ray Steed, Laila Berland, Jenny Vanier-Walter, Melody Jin, Michelle Huang, Qing Shao, Aaron Chen, Bryan Shelby, James Stratton, Leena Shah, Buddy Harrell, Barbara Powell-Schager, Carol A. Payne, Kelley Hanada, Lisbet Ann Phillips, Kelly Garner, Thomas McCoy-Bruce, Michael Tarnower, Denise Duplinski, Aparna Yaratha, Albert Tousek, Mary Walker, John Mayes, Esther Stokes, Carol Wong, Jack Barbas, John Bullard, Lisbet Ann Philips, Jeffrey Taylor, and Natalie Hannans.

Georgia Audubon Welcomes New Staff

Please join us in welcoming two new Birds Georgia staff members.

Sarah Tolve, Coastal Conservation Coordinator

Sarah earned a B.S. in Marine Biology from Florida Atlantic University's Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College in May 2019. Although her first conservation focus was sea turtles, it has shifted to Georgia's coastal ecology and the birds that use this amazing (and complex) 100-mile coastline.

Her shift from sea turtles to birds occurred while working and living on Jekyll Island as an educator at Camp Jekyll in 2019-2020. Seeing the conservation efforts first hand at the Jekyll Island Banding Station, walking alongside park rangers on Eagle Watches, and sharing the magic of the coast with children from all over the state helped turn Sarah into a bird nerd.

Sarah's favorite pastimes include resighting banded shorebirds, visiting nearby public lands, and spending time with her fiancé and their two Australian Shepherds. She's excited to explore Georgia's coast and work with partners and stakeholders on helping build a place where birds and people thrive.

Check out the blog post about Sarah's recent experience surveying for American Oystercatchers on our website at <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/news-feed/surveying-for-american-oystercatchers>.



Sarah Tolve is Birds Georgia's newest coastal conservation coordinator.

Heather Levy, Stewardship Coordinator

Please join us in welcoming Heather Levy as Birds Georgia's new Stewardship Coordinator. In this role, Heather will primarily be working with and engaging private landowners, developing partnerships, and exploring, monitoring, and researching additional private land partnerships. Her first priorities will be overseeing Birds Georgia's NRCS (National Research Conservation Science) pollinator habitat work and overseeing and developing the habitat stewardship program.

Heather is an avid birder, with a background in ornithology and a passion for land conservation and endemic species. She received her B.S. in Environmental Sciences from Florida State University and her M.S. in Wildlife Sciences from the University of Georgia.

Keenly interested in how land management can improve habitat, she researched several fire-endemic bird species, including the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Florida Scrub-Jay, and Black Rail.

Heather has been active in local Audubon chapters for more than a decade and has been involved with the Florida Ornithological Society for five years. Her goal is to bird in every state and to bird internationally at least once a year. On weekends you can usually find her naturalizing, horseback riding, kayaking, or relaxing at home with her cats and fiancé, Peter.

Heather will be based out of the Augusta, Georgia, area.



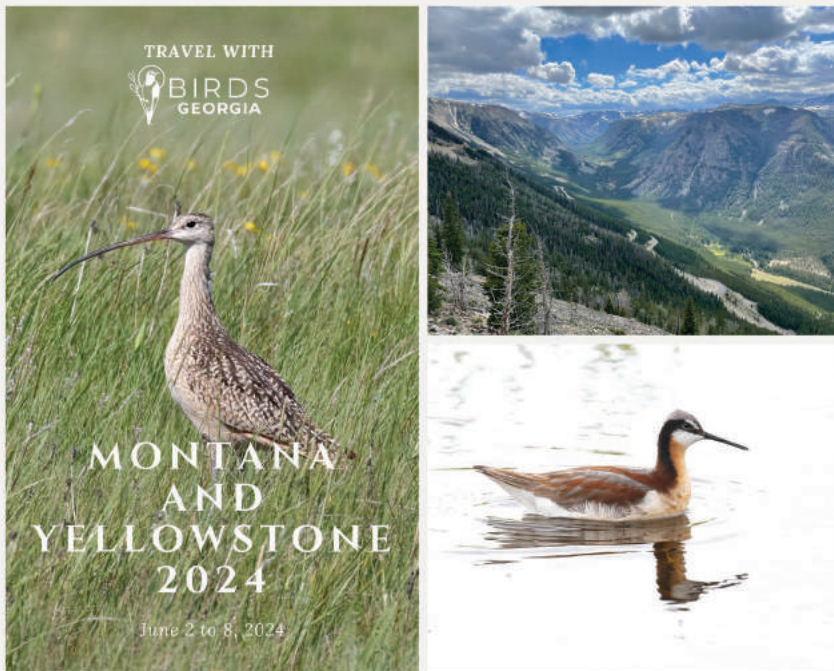
Heather Levy joins the Birds Georgia staff as our new stewardship coordinator.

Project Safe Flight By the Numbers

Each spring and fall, Birds Georgia volunteers patrol Project Safe Flight Georgia routes around the state, looking for birds that have been injured or killed by building collisions. This project aims to determine what species are colliding with buildings, how many birds are affected, what parts of town are problematic, and what can be done to make Georgia's cities more bird-friendly.

Since the program began in 2015, more than 2,200 birds, representing 115 different species, have been collected. This infographic shows numbers from our fall surveys.

If you'd like to learn more about Project Safe Flight Georgia or to become a volunteer, visit <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/project-safe-flight>.



Travel with Birds Georgia to Montana and Yellowstone in June 2024

June 2 to 8, 2024

(optional Cassia Crossbill extension June 8 to 10)

Travel with Birds Georgia to Montana in 2024. Where the Great Plains meet the magnificent peaks of the Rocky Mountains is a place known as Big Sky Country: a land where the vistas are surpassed only by the birds that inhabit them. In the expansive grasslands we will look for Baird's Sparrow, Sprague's Pipit, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Ferruginous Hawk, Lark Bunting, and McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs. These grasslands abut grand, snow-capped mountains, with a totally different but equally alluring set of birds, including Black Rosy-Finch, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Dusky Grouse, and Clark's Nutcracker. This short trip will find some of North America's most highly-sought species on their breeding grounds. Bozeman is a great jumping-off point if you would like to visit Yellowstone National Park or Grand Teton National Park before or after the birding trip. We also offer a two-night extension to look for the recently described Cassia Crossbill in neighboring Idaho. Learn more at <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/montana-2024>.

BIRDS GEORGIA PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT FALL 2023



507

Total Birds
Collected



FALL 2023 STATS

- 39 Birds Found Alive
- 35 Program Volunteers
- 30+ Incidental Reports

Survey Routes

Downtown Atlanta
Buckhead
Dunwoody
Georgia Tech
Alpharetta
Savannah
Brunswick
College of Coastal GA
GA State University

SPECIES COLLECTED

- 40 Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- 23 Swainson's Thrush
- 21 Ovenbird
- 21 Tennessee Warbler
- 16 Cedar Waxwing
- 11 American Robin

Other Species Reported

Brown Creeper
Red-tailed Hawk
Virginia Rail
Sora
Prothonotary Warbler



BIRDS
GEORGIA

Species Profile: The Common Raven

By Steve Phenicie

Your Aunt Geraldine might see a Common Raven at her place up in Young Harris, but Cousin Roscoe down in Waycross won't. That's because this bird nests in Georgia in only a few counties in the northeast corner of the state.

The non-migratory raven is anything but fussy about where it lives, however. It inhabits steamy Guatemala and frigid Greenland and is found from Idaho to Ireland to Israel to India and across much of China, Russia, and North Africa. A bird that lives in such a wide swath of the globe is, of course, not too particular about its diet either. Among the things it will eat are carrion; small animals from the size of mice and baby tortoises up to adult pigeons and nestling Great Blue Herons; eggs; grasshoppers, beetles, scorpions, and other arthropods; fish; wolf and sled-dog dung (hard to come by in Georgia, of course); grains, buds, and berries; pet food; and many types of human food, including unattended picnic items and garbage.

Ravens are entirely black, including their legs, eyes, and beak, and are known for being bold, playful, and clever. They're often seen alone or in pairs that stay together year round, although many may congregate at a carcass or landfill.

In courtship, the male soars, swoops, and tumbles in mid-air. The pair may soar high together; when perched, they touch bills and preen each other's feathers. The nest site is usually on a cliff, in a tall tree, or on structures such as power-line towers, telephone poles, billboards, and bridges. The nest, which both sexes help build, is a bulky affair of large sticks and twigs, and is lined with grass, bark strips, moss, and animal hair. They may use the same site year after year, adding new material on top of the old.

The female typically lays four to six greenish eggs blotched with olive or brown. Incubation of about 18 to 21 days is mostly

or entirely by the female, but the male feeds her during this time. Both parents bring food to the nestlings. The young leave the nest at five or six weeks.

Some cool facts about the Common Raven:

- A group of ravens is called a conspiracy, an unkindness, or a constable.
- Ravens can mimic animal calls and human voices. They have been observed calling wolves to the site of dead animals to open the carcass and make scraps more accessible for them.
- Ravens sometimes slide down snowy rooftops and can fly upside down, apparently just for fun.
- Their intelligence makes them dangerous predators. They sometimes work in pairs to raid seabird colonies, with one bird distracting an incubating adult and the other waiting to grab an egg or chick as soon as it's uncovered. They've been seen waiting in trees as ewes give birth, then attacking the newborn lambs.
- The oldest known wild Common Raven was at least 22 years, seven months old.

They are the largest of the perching birds, with a wingspan of more than four feet and an average weight of 3.5 pounds.



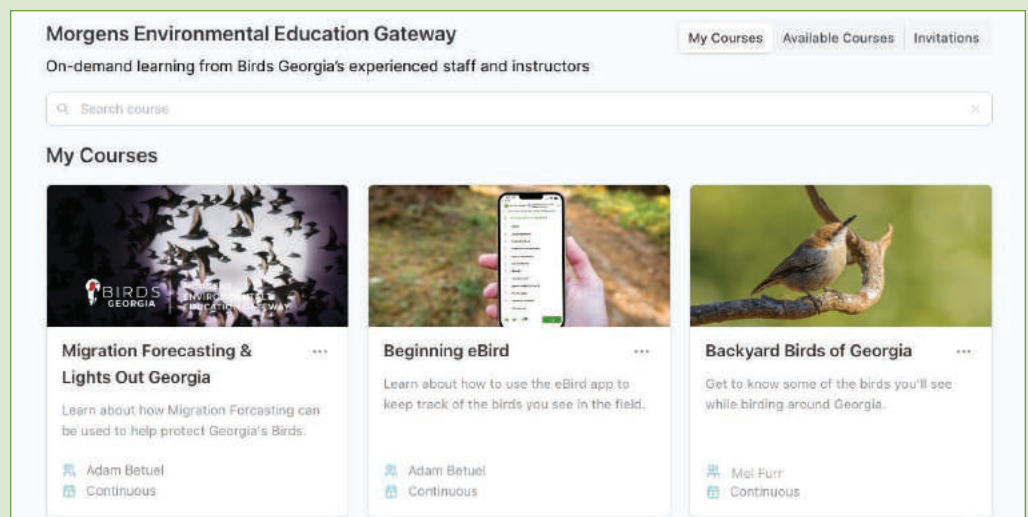
Common Raven. Photo by Wendy Davis, Audubon Photography Awards.

Morgens Environmental Education Gateway: New Content for 2024

Have you had an opportunity to check out the new Morgens Environmental Education Gateway? Birds Georgia members have access to our recently launched online learning platform, the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway. Here you can find a number of free educational resources to bolster your birding knowledge and skills. Check out the free member courses available, including Beginning eBird, Backyard Birds of Georgia, recordings of past webinars, and more.

Birds Georgia members can log in to the Gateway using the same login that they use when registering for Birds Georgia events and programs. Log in today to see our current offerings.

This platform will continue to offer new content as we enter 2024, so be sure to stay tuned. For more information, visit birdsgeorgia.org/learn.



The screenshot displays the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway interface. At the top, it says "Morgens Environmental Education Gateway" and "On-demand learning from Birds Georgia's experienced staff and instructors". There are buttons for "My Courses", "Available Courses", and "Invitations". A search bar is present with the text "Search course". Below this, the "My Courses" section is visible, featuring three course cards:

- Migration Forecasting & Lights Out Georgia**: Learn about how Migration Forecasting can be used to help protect Georgia's Birds. Instructors: Adam Betuel, Continuous.
- Beginning eBird**: Learn about how to use the eBird app to keep track of the birds you see in the field. Instructors: Adam Betuel, Continuous.
- Backyard Birds of Georgia**: Get to know some of the birds you'll see while birding around Georgia. Instructor: Mel Furr, Continuous.

Georgia Bird Fest Returns April 5 to May 4 *(Continued from Page 1)*

We're delighted to share that Dr. J. Drew Lanham will be giving our keynote address at the Georgia Bird Fest Summit.

Drew Lanham, Ph.D., is a certified wildlife biologist, an academic, writer, artist, and public intellectual, from Edgefield and Aiken, South Carolina. He is an Alumni Distinguished Professor, Provost's Professor and Master Teacher of Wildlife Ecology at Clemson University, where his most recent scholarly efforts address the confluences of race, place and nature. A 2022 MacArthur Fellow, Dr. Lanham was also named one of the 100 most influential Black Americans by *The Root* in 2022.

Creatively, Drew is the Poet Laureate of Edgefield County, South Carolina and the author of *Sparrow Envy: Poems*, *Sparrow Envy: A Field Guide to Birds and Lesser Beasts*, and *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with*

Nature. His memoir is a past winner of the Reed Environmental Writing Award (Southern Environmental Law Center), the Southern Book Prize, and a 2017 finalist for the Burroughs Medal. It was named a memoir and scholarly book of the decade by Lit Hub and The Chronicle of Higher Education.

His forthcoming works are *Joy Is the Justice We Give Ourselves*, *The Bird I Became*, and *Range Maps: Birds, Blackness and Loving Nature Between the Two*.

See Page 3 for information on becoming a patron supporter of 2024 Georgia Bird Fest and for registration opening dates. We're working to finalize the full itinerary for this month-long celebration and will share the agenda in our *Bird Buzz* e-newsletter and on our website at <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/birdfest>.

Georgia Audubon Is Now Birds Georgia *(Continued from Page 1)*

"Our work was not to sit in judgment of the man, but to understand how the Audubon name was either enabling or frustrating our ability to fulfill our mission of building places where birds and people thrive," says Marc Goncher, vice-chair of the Board of Directors and chair of the Name Task Force. "From the process, we learned that there are fellow bird conservationists and prospective bird lovers who feel unwelcome when we use the Audubon name. As our state continues to diversify and new generations join the birding community, we foresee a declining awareness of the Audubon brand and reduction in positive association with what it was intended to represent. We also heard clearly that our name needs to reflect what our organization is all about ... birds."

The task force spent six months researching, discussing, and seeking to understand all points of view before forming a recommendation to present to the board. In this time, Georgia Audubon hosted a webinar and discussion with Gregory Nobles — biographer of *John James Audubon: The Story of an American Woodsman* — to better understand the man and his life. The task force also sent a survey to more than 10,000 members, donors, partners, and constituents to gather input on the Audubon name and how it relates to Georgia Audubon's work, mission, and constituency. Additionally, the task force, leadership, and staff held numerous conversations with stakeholders to gather further feedback, including hosting two listening sessions, one in-person and a second virtually, for constituents to share their thoughts.

"At our very heart, we are an organization devoted to the conservation of birds across Georgia, says Teutsch. For that reason, the board selected Birds Georgia as our new name. It's clear, it's concise, and it leaves no room for doubt about what we do and where we work. It better reflects our values of inclusivity and openness to all people. There are many threats facing Georgia birds and their habitats, and it will take all of us working together to overcome these challenges. Birds Georgia looks forward to building upon the successes we achieved as Atlanta Audubon Society and, later, as Georgia Audubon, to achieve our vision of building a conservation-minded and fully-engaged Georgia where birds prosper, habitats flourish, and understanding grows. As we seek to engage the next generation of birders in the critical fight against conservation challenges, we must broaden and diversify the communities

we work with across the state. We will be better able to do that as Birds Georgia," says Executive Director Jared Teutsch.

Audubon has not always been part of the organization's name. Established in 1926 as the Atlanta Bird Club, the organization later voted to become an independent chapter of National Audubon Society and changed to the name Atlanta Audubon Society. In 2020, the organization became Georgia Audubon, reflecting a new statewide focus. The organization will celebrate its Centennial Anniversary in 2026.

"While we may be changing our name to Birds Georgia, we are not changing our mission or the critical work we do to protect birds across the state," says Paige Martin, past chair of the Board of Directors. "The Board of Directors listened to the feedback we received and felt that Birds Georgia more intuitively states who we are and what we do. The new name is also more welcoming to people from all backgrounds. At a time when birds need our help more than ever, we do not want our name to be a barrier for anyone who would like to join in our work building places where birds and people thrive."

Since the announcement was made on November 30, Birds Georgia has been getting great feedback on the name changes, according to Teutsch. "As expected, not everyone agreed with our decision to change the name, but we are so thankful for those who took time to share their feedback with us throughout the process. We've had some really meaningful conversations. People have shared their photos and memories from family members, reflected on both the good and the bad attributes of John James Audubon, and shared their feelings on how the Audubon name and brand has personally impacted their relationship with birds and birding. It's been an educational and eye-opening experience."

Birds Georgia is among several independent Audubon chapters changing its name in light of revelations about John James Audubon. Other chapters, including Seattle, Portland, Madison, Chicago, Golden Gate, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and others have either recently rebranded or announced their intent to move away from the Audubon name.

Birds Georgia will continue to be an independent chapter of National Audubon Society, leveraging the nationwide network of bird conservation organizations to conserve birds and their habitats in Georgia and beyond.



Birds Georgia Merchandise Now Available

We've added new Birds Georgia merchandise to our online store. Check out our new banding codes short-sleeved shirts and "Birds Y'all" long-sleeved T-shirts, ball caps, magnets, and more. Perfect for you or for the bird-lover on your shopping list. Order today at: <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/shop>.

Birds Georgia Spring Master Birder Program

March 5 to April 14 (see full schedule on website)

Cost: \$450

Registration is now open for our popular Master Birder Program. The winter session will run from **NEED DATES** with virtual sessions on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and field trips on Saturday or Sunday each week. Course content includes classification and identification of birds, birding equipment, bird songs and calls, attracting birds and backyard wildlife habitat, anatomy and physiology, bird ecology, bird behavior, flight and migration, and bird conservation. Upon graduation, Master Birders are encouraged to complete annual volunteer service for Birds Georgia or their local Audubon chapter to receive added membership benefits such as early registration opportunities and discounted event fees. The course will fill quickly, so please register soon. To learn more or register, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/master-birder-program.



The fall 2023 Master Birder Atlanta cohort proudly showing their certificates. Photo by Melanie Furr.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Sally Bethea in Conversation with Sally Sears about Conservation of the Chattahoochee

Offered in partnership with Eagle Eye Book Shop
Saturday, February 3, at 12:00 PM | Free to attend

Eagle Eye Book Shop · 2076 North Decatur Road · Decatur, GA 30033
Sally Bethea will be in conversation with South Fork Conservancy's very own Sally Sears. They will be talking about Sally's new book, *Keeping the Chattahoochee*. They will also be having an inspiring conversation about Sally Bethea's activism and what we can do to preserve one of Georgia's most precious jewels.

Field Trip: Legacy Park – Beginner-focused | Leader: Josh Jackson
Sunday, February 4, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Piedmont Park | Leader: Becca Dill
Saturday, February 10, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Ivy Creek Greenway at George Pierce Park | Leader: Terry Miller
Sunday, February 11, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum
Wednesday, February 14, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Murphey Candler Park | Leader: Kevin O'Toole
Saturday, February 17, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Decatur Cemetery | Leader: Jay Davis
Sunday, February 18, at 8:30 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Teens and Feathers Field Trip for Teens: Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve | Leader: TBD
Saturday, February 24, at 10:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

GNPS and Birds Georgia Symposium | DIY Native Habitats: Growing Your Stewardship Tool Kit
Saturday and Sunday, February 24 and 25

See back page of this newsletter for more information and registration

Field Trip: Blue Heron Nature Preserve | Leader: Rob McDonough
Sunday, February 25, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Climate Change Sets in Motion an "Escalator to Extinction" for Peruvian Birds, with Ben Freeman
Sunday, February 25, 2024, at 3:30 PM | Manuel's Tavern

Free to attend, but registration is requested at www.birdsgeorgia.org/upcoming-events

Ben Freeman is a new faculty member at Georgia Tech who studies how mountain birds are responding to climate change. His research has taken him across the globe; he is particularly fond of the staggering biodiversity found in the tropical Andes, where different species live within different elevational zones.

Ben finds it astonishing that one can see totally different species at different elevations in the Andes, even though the forest looks pretty similar throughout, at least to an ornithologist, and studies how this came to be and how it is changing as temperatures warm. Ben grew up in the Pacific Northwest and just moved with his family to Atlanta in summer 2023, where he is pleased to be seeing Brown Thrashers (state bird!) and hearing Barred Owls in his backyard. He will talk about his field studies in Peru and is also eager to expand his understanding of montane birds by learning about the nearby Southern Appalachians.

The Early Birds Club

Sunday, February 25 | Before the February Meeting at Manuel's

The group will read *Birding While Indian*, by Thomas Lemon. Learn more at birdsgeorgia.org/early-birds-book-club

Webinar: Raptor ID, with Georgann Schmalz

Monday, February 26 | 7:00 to 8:30 PM via Zoom webinar

From their hunting prowess to their majestic soaring, raptors captivate our attention with their gracefulness and power – be it from the trail or from the highway. More than a dozen species of raptors rule the skies over Georgia, but they can be difficult to distinguish at a distance. Learn the basics and the secrets to making raptor identification easy with ornithologist Georgann Schmalz. She will focus on behaviors, habitats, and enough general information that will make recognizing these birds in the field a “no-brainer.” Register at www.birdsgeorgia.org/upcoming-events.



Red-tailed Hawk. Photo by Wink Gaines, Audubon Photography Awards.



Ben Freeman will present at the February Meeting at Manuel's.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

Field Trip: Fort Yargo State Park | Leader: Jack Bruce

Saturday, March 2, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Legacy Park – Beginner-focused | Leader: Josh Jackson

Sunday, March 3, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Ivy Creek Greenway at George Pierce Park | Leader: Terry Miller

Sunday, March 10, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Webinar: Becoming a Better Birder, with Georgann Schmalz

Monday, March 11 | 7:00 to 8:30 PM via Zoom webinar

Join Georgann Schmalz for a webinar designed to improve your skills and increase your enjoyment of birding. This class is a must for any new birder who feels somewhat overwhelmed by the skills of more advanced birders. Time will be spent learning good techniques of birding in the field and choosing good optics, books, and sound devices. Not only will participants develop key identification skills under Georgann's expert guidance, they will also experience the satisfaction that better birding can yield. Georgann holds a master's degree in ornithology. She taught at Fernbank Science Center for 29 years, and is three-time past president of Birds Georgia. She is a wealth of information and entertainment. Register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/upcoming-events.

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum

Wednesday, March 13, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Piedmont Park | Leader: Becca Dill

Saturday, March 16, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Murphey Candler Park | Leader: Kevin O'Toole

Saturday, March 23, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Chattahoochee Nature Center | Leaders: Alicia Evans and Dottie Head

Sunday, March 24, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips Birding by Ear

Workshop and Optional Field Trip Workshop via Zoom Webinar:

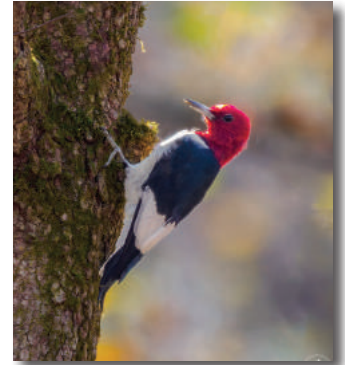
Monday, March 25, from 7:00 to 8:30 PMs

Field Trip: Saturday, March 31, from 8:00 to 11:00 AM at a location TBD

Rain date: Saturday, April 6

(only 16 spaces are available on the field trip)

This program with ornithologist Georgann Schmalz is for anyone who is interested in learning to identify birds by songs and call notes. Participants will learn the characteristics of bird songs and techniques of birding by ear. Information will include examples of components of bird songs such as tempo, rhythm, pitch, and quality. Handouts will include a list of mnemonics and phonetics for use in the field. We will not play dozens of songs and show dozens of bird photos. Instead, the course emphasizes how to listen and what to listen for so that even new songs from birds you have not encountered before can be learned and memorized. On Saturday, April 1, those who register will join Georgann for a field trip to a location TBD to put into practice the skills and techniques learned during the webinar. Register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/upcoming-events.



*Red-headed Woodpecker.
Photo by Steve Rushing.*



*Indigo Bunting.
Photo by Dan Vickers.*

APRIL

Field Trip: Legacy Park – Beginner-focused

Leader: Josh Jackson

Sunday, April 7, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve

Leader: Anne McCallum

Wednesday, April 10, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Chattahoochee Nature Center

Leaders: Alicia Evans and Dottie Head

Sunday, April 14, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Blue Heron Nature Preserve |

Leader: Rob McDonough

Sunday, April 21, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

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Atlanta, GA
Permit #917

Georgia Native Plant Society and Birds Georgia to Co-host Annual Symposium DIY Native Habitats: Growing Your Stewardship Toolkit Saturday, February 24, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Sunday, February 25, 1:00 to 4:00 PM Via ZOOM webinar

Cost:

2-day registration for GNPS and Birds Georgia Members - \$20

1-day registration for GNPS and Birds Georgia Members - \$12

2-day registration for non-members - \$25

1-day registration for non-members - \$15

Learn more or register at <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/upcoming-events>

Saturday, February 24

- **Alan Weakley** – Changes in Floras and Floras: New Floristic Tools for Information, Appreciation, and Conservation
- **Ellen Honeycutt** – How to Get the Right Plants)
- **Eamonn Leonard** – Native Restoration Considerations

Sunday, February 25

- **Leslie Edwards** – Gardening Guided by Natural Communities
- **GNPS Chapter Highlights** – What Worked Well and Where We're Going in 2024

