

Wingbars

A Quarterly Publication of Georgia Audubon

MAY 2021



GEORGIA
AUDUBON

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Wingbars is the official newsletter of Georgia Audubon 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 Georgia Audubon.

Cover photo: Common Yellowthroat
by Sandrine Biziaux Scherson

Education During the Pandemic: How Georgia Audubon Expanded and Adapted During COVID-19

By Dottie Head and Melanie Furr

Education has been front and center in the news for the past year due to COVID-19. To return to the classroom, to learn from home, or to do a little of both—the debate has raged across the nation, the internet, and social media with no one-size-fits-all answer. One of the big lessons we have learned during the pandemic is that adaptability is the key to success. And thanks to adaptations during the past year, Georgia Audubon's education programs are not only alive and well, they are quite literally reaching more people across the state than ever before.

When COVID-19 barreled onto the world stage in early 2020, we were all a bit shell shocked. Like nearly everyone else, our staff began working from home and education programs were cancelled, along with field trips, events, and other in-person activities. It quickly became apparent that this was not going to be a short-term closure. We had to adapt, and adapt we did. Here's a look at some of Georgia Audubon's education programs and how they've survived and thrived despite the pandemic.

In spite of the pandemic, we were able not only to continue offering two cohorts of our popular **Atlanta Urban Ecologists** (AUE) program, both an entry-level cohort and an advanced cohort for previous AUE graduates, but we filled both cohorts! A program for students in grades 8 through 12, AUE is a school-year-long program that guides students in the discovery of the fascinating ecology of metro Atlanta and provides opportunities for fun, hands-on outdoor experiences in science and conservation. In the past, AUE has featured classroom sessions followed by hands-on work in the field with various partner organizations, including Trees Atlanta, The Amphibian Foundation, The Atlanta Coyote Project, and others. But this year, due to the pandemic, the classroom sessions took place via webinar during the week, with Saturday in-person events outside, with masks and maintaining social distancing. Students are excited about the opportunity to get together and explore outside with their peers, and the program has been a huge success!

The same goes for our ever-popular **Master Birder Program**. What once used to be full Saturdays of field trips followed by classroom sessions at our office has morphed into online sessions via webinar during the week followed up by in-person

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Sibley, Georgia Audubon's ambassador hummingbird, is always a crowd pleaser.
Photo by Melanie Furr.

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From the Executive Director

Migrating Forward

Another year, another spring migration right? Not so fast, as many of us were forced to rethink how we operate, recreate, and evaluate life, work, and play over the past year. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly changed a lot of things but at least the birds return every spring for a fresh start. And what a start it has been, with over 45 unique events, the Sixth Annual Georgia Bird Fest connected hundreds of us all back to birding and nature. Nature is a powerful healer and breathing in the beauty of spring blossoms, fresh air and breeding season plumage can wash away even the most morose feelings. The best part of Georgia Bird Fest is that we offer something for everyone. And if you didn't get a chance to participate yet, there's still time and some events available.

Each event offers an opportunity to move forward toward building more places where birds and people thrive. We do that best through our core pillars of conservation, education, and community engagement. You help us achieve that by becoming more engaged and educating others about the importance of birds. Education is the gateway toward better stewardship and inspiring the next generation. Thankfully, we have a number of key programs to help everyone become more inspired and informed about how we each play a role toward building a better tomorrow.

Adult workshops bring people together, even virtually, to understand what birding by ear can help you achieve. It may inspire you to become a Master Birder or a seasoned volunteer, helping solve challenges like bird collisions or improving habitat through Wildlife Sanctuaries. Teacher training programs, like Taking Wing, not only provide tools and professional development, but also have a lasting impact on our teachers—inspiring the next generation to pay it forward for conservation. Elementary students get hands-on science curriculum through Connecting Students with STEM through Birds, and, of course, adolescents and young adults

build lasting skills through our Atlanta Urban Ecologists (AUE) Program.

Let spring migration inspire you. Whether you pick up eBird for the first time, or finally see that lifer Cerulean Warbler that's been eluding you for years, remember that we are all paying it forward and building places where birds and people thrive. I'll see you outside.

Cheers,
Jared



Jared Teutsch



©Charlie Trapani 2014

Cerulean Warbler by Charlie Trapani.

Master Birder Teacher: Introducing the Next Generation to the Joy of Birds

By Kimberly Johnson

*Hutchinson Elementary was the site of Georgia Audubon's first garden installation in 2017. Kimberly Johnson was part of the **Taking Wing** teacher training in 2016, and a beautiful connection was made between Kimberly and Melanie Furr, Georgia Audubon's director of education. Since then, Kimberly has embraced every opportunity to gain knowledge and resources to connect her students to birds and nature, including taking the Georgia Audubon Master Birder course. Kimberly shares her experiences teaching children about birds in this article.*

I start my school day on hallway duty, playing bird calls from *The Backyard Birdsong Guide* by Donald Kroodsma. Children walk by and ask, "What bird is that, Mrs. Johnson?" I tell them the name of the bird, and to my surprise, they walk by the next day and can identify the bird by the sound. This is just one way I get kids interested in the birds in their community. Beginning with the simple question, "What is a Bird?" can open a child's mind to exploration and discovery of a whole new world. As a Master Birder and teacher at an inner-city school, I have learned that the more I share my knowledge about birds and nature, the better connected my students will be to their environment and community. Enhancing children's awareness, knowledge, and attitudes toward birds and wildlife is truly rewarding.

After being awarded a native plant garden from Atlanta Audubon Society (now Georgia Audubon), my students now have a hands-on approach to learning about native plants and birds and understanding how birds thrive. We have several types of bird feeders and nesting boxes. Some of the plants include beautyberry, aster, blueberry bushes, cherry laurel, and many different types of grasses. Students have set up a kiosk and created checklists with photos of the different birds and plants found in the garden for students, school staff, and visitors to use when they visit. Students also have access to field guides and binoculars provided by Georgia Audubon to help them identify birds found in the garden. Thanks to our ongoing partnership, Georgia Audubon staff comes out periodically to provide programming and take students



Hutchinson Elementary students help install a native plant garden at their school. Photo by Kimberly Johnson.

birding. Formal teaching comes from Georgia Audubon's Learning About Birds curriculum, as well as from Cornell Lab of Ornithology's K-12 Education resources. These lessons give a more in-depth look at birds, ranging from bird diversity, flight and migration, anatomy, and more. Georgia Audubon also provided a mini library of books for students to read and learn more about birds.

Next year, we plan to offer an after-school bird watching club, "Bird Buddies," where students will have the opportunity to experience nature walks, scavenger hunts, and off-campus field trips. It is truly a joy to help kids make connections to nature and improve their awareness, environmental knowledge, and attitudes toward local wildlife.

Community Engagement and Education: Connecting Students to Birds Across Georgia

By Corina Newsome

Education is one of the central pillars of Georgia Audubon's mission to build places where birds and people thrive, and for good reason. It is one of the most important vehicles by which we connect people across Georgia with the birds in our state, and walk out our commitment to equity. Education programs can provide exposure to the recreational and professional realms of nature engagement and bird conservation and can provide opportunities for the larger birding community to understand what they can do to make birding and outdoor exploration more accessible for everybody. We are excited to host several education programs this spring and summer that will make these opportunities a reality.

Spring: Georgia Audubon partnered with the Amphibian Foundation to offer a Spring Backyard Conservation Program geared toward middle and high school students. This virtual program used in-the-field demonstrations of the scientific method (including wildlife sampling techniques) to share the diversity of wildlife in our own urban backyards and highlight conservation happening right here in the state of Georgia. Scholarships were made available to cover the cost of participation for students in Title I schools through a National Audubon Society Collaborative Grant and the Georgia Audubon Scholarship Fund.

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT On Patrick Maurice

By Steve Phenicie

(This is the 49th in a series on Georgia Audubon volunteers, board members, and staff.)

Patrick Maurice is just 22 years old and a senior majoring in wildlife sciences at the University of Georgia, but he's one of the major leaguers of Georgia birding. As of a couple of months ago, he ranked No. 25 on the eBird list for most species observed in the state, with 364. (The leader has 412.) Because photography is another passion, he has photographed many of them.

Patrick has been at it a long time, with his first reported observation in 2004, when he saw a Yellow-billed Loon, a bird rare in Georgia, palling around with a Common Loon on Lake Horton in Fayette County. As young as he was, he had a bit of help, of course—

his mother, Kris Bisgard, is an avid birder. (Brother Erik Maurice and dad Emmanuel Maurice are not). Patrick has been submitting regular eBird checklists for more than 10 years and now has more than 1,500 from Georgia alone. They cover most counties of the state. His favorite spot is Henderson Park, a mere 10 minutes from his house in DeKalb County between Stone Mountain and Tucker. Overall, he has turned in more than 1,700 lists. So what hasn't Patrick seen yet in Georgia but hopes to? At the top of his wish list are the Common Merganser, the Common Eider, the Warbling Vireo, and the Harlequin Duck.

Patrick's lengthy résumé includes participating in the Youth Birding Competition 10 times, with his team

winning the contest during his last year with 160 species. He attended Tybee Island-based Camp TALON (Teen Adventures Learning Ornithology and Nature) six times. In 2014, he attended the Hog Island Audubon camp in Maine. In 2018 he spent two months in South Africa and for a few weeks volunteered



Patrick Maurice

at a vulture rehabilitation organization there. In the spring of 2019 he took a school trip to Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, and Fiji that wasn't supposed to be a bird adventure, but he turned it into one, racking up about 250 species. In the summer of 2019 he worked as a nest searcher on a UGA project that focused on warblers in the southern

Appalachians. Also in 2019, he was a guide at the Biggest Week in American Birding Festival in northwest Ohio. He is on the board of the UGA's Lilly Branch Audubon Society.

As for Georgia Audubon, Patrick has led a number of bird walks, with the latest being last month during Bird Fest at the Pole Bridge Wastewater Treatment Facility in South DeKalb, a site where rarities have a habit of showing up. More than 150 species have been observed there.

Patrick won't be around Georgia much longer, however, at least on a regular basis. He's set to graduate this month from UGA and has accepted a job at the University of Montana Bird Ecology Lab, where he expects to engage in searching for nests.

THANK YOU!

A Million Thanks...

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Travel with Georgia Audubon in 2022

Be on the lookout in early June for new small-group travel announcements through the Georgia Audubon Travel Program. Itineraries for two international tours and two domestic tours will be announced on June 1, and registration will be open beginning on June 1 to current Georgia Audubon members. Registration will open to the public on June 8 for any spots that remain. Ensure your membership is current for early registration access. More information and registration will be available at www.georgiaaudubon.org/travel.

Georgia Audubon Receives Grants for Conservation and Education Programs

By Michelle Hamner

Georgia Audubon is excited to announce that we have been awarded several recent grants to fund habitat restoration, native plant public awareness, and STEM-based outdoor exploration for youth.

The Georgia Ornithological Society (GOS) recently awarded Georgia Audubon two grants: A Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant to fund bird-friendly habitat restoration along the South River, as well as an Opportunity Grant that will fund a native plant demonstration garden along the Atlanta BeltLine.

The Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant was established by GOS to benefit the conservation of bird species, particularly those that reside in Georgia on a seasonal or annual basis, or those that visit stopover habitats in Georgia during migration. Georgia Audubon will use the grant funding to restore river cane along the South River at Panola Mountain State Park in Rockdale County. Roughly 15 acres will be targeted to remove invasive plant species such as Chinese privet and Japanese hop that currently overcrowd the riverbanks. Removal of these exotic plant species will allow for desirable and appropriate native plants, specifically giant cane, to

further its establishment. Five acres of our project site were previously treated in 2016 by the South River Watershed Alliance but are now in need of follow-up treatment. The remaining 10 acres have had limited to no restoration efforts and are heavily infested with invasive plant species.

The 15-acre project site is bordered by the Power of Flight grassland (work funded by GOS and managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources). This

specific site is well known for its avian diversity. The broader region is full of wildlife diversity and includes well-known spots like Arabia Mountain, Panola Mountain State Park, Lyons Farm, and the Pole Bridge Wastewater Facility.

Restoring a healthy river buffer habitat to the South River corridor, with a focus on river cane, will further establish critical bird and wildlife habitat. Further restoring the habitat along the South River will enhance the work that has already been done to support a range of species and guilds, including grassland specialists, migratory warblers, river-dependent species, and select focal species like the Swainson's Warbler. The Swainson's Warbler has experienced a rapid decline in Georgia's Piedmont region due to the elimination of native cane thickets in bottomlands and other changes to our native ecosystems caused by exotic plants. Invasive Chinese privet has significantly contributed to this problem. The return of river cane and a healthier riparian habitat along the South River

will provide the environment the Swainson's Warbler needs to recover, while also benefiting other declining species.

"The Georgia Ornithological Society (GOS) is proud to support the 2021 conservation efforts of Georgia Audubon with a Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant," says Jim Ferrari, GOS Board member who chairs the Conservation Grant Committee and a professor at Wesleyan College in Macon. "Georgia Audubon's proposal to remove invasive plant species along the South River floodplain and replace them with native river cane will improve habitat for resident and migratory birds and other wildlife. Not only that, but restoration of the canebrake ecosystem will have benefits for water quality as well, helping to filter runoff and control streamside erosion."

GOS has also awarded Georgia Audubon one of its annual Opportunity Grants, which will be used to install a bird-friendly native plant demonstration garden on the Atlanta BeltLine. The garden will be installed in partnership with Trees Atlanta at the site of a newly-constructed Chimney Swift tower (funded by a grant from Patagonia Atlanta) on the Eastside Trail section of the Atlanta BeltLine, an area near Ponce City Market, where more than 1.7 million residents and visitors utilize the corridor annually.

Approximately 650 native plants will be planted in a 1,500-square-foot area, ranging from native grass and perennial plugs to larger, three-gallon shrubs. The exact mix of plant species will be determined based on availability at the time of planting, but examples include Little bluestem, Wild bergamot, Blazing star, Black-eyed Susan, Purple coneflower, and Adam's needle.

Finally, KEEN Inc. recently awarded its KEEN Effect Kids Grants to Georgia Audubon, one of nine organizations selected from an applicant pool of more than 400. This grant will be used to fund Georgia Audubon's Atlanta Urban Ecologists, a program that guides teens through an eight-month exploration of the fascinating, rich ecology of metro Atlanta, providing opportunities for hands-on field experiences, conservation, and community science, while also establishing a network of environmental professionals who can assist with their academic and career development.



South River restoration area.
Photo by Gabe Andrie.



Power of Flight restoration area.
Photo by Gabe Andrie.



Atlanta Urban Ecologists explore one of the ephemeral pools on the top of Arabia Mountain. Photo by Melanie Furr.

Orphaned Bird Care Celebrates 20 years

By Diana Churchill, Ogeechee Audubon Society

I first met Pat Wolters in 2001 while working at Wild Birds Unlimited. A petite, energetic woman of 71 years came into the shop to buy food and feeders to support her passion for tending the wild birds in her new backyard on Skidaway Island. Pat and her husband, Art, had just relocated to Savannah from Delaware.

In 1989, while living in Maryland, Pat had taken her love of birds to a new level by becoming a volunteer at Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research in Newark, Delaware. Her first job was doing the laundry, but she quickly moved on to other tasks, serving as banding chairperson, release chairperson, and a member of the Oil Spill Core Team.

After she moved to Savannah, Pat looked for similar volunteer opportunities and found that Savannah had almost no resources for bird and wildlife rescue. While Pat worked part time at Wild Birds Unlimited, she was surprised by the number of people who walked into the shop with birds in a shoebox. She realized she needed to obtain the permits required to operate as a licensed rehabilitator.

Even though she intended to focus on birds, permitting from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service required that Pat study all the materials about mammals, too, and pass a 100 question /one-hour timed test. The other requirement to earn her permit was to accrue a certain number of hours as a volunteer at an existing facility. She and Nicole Janke, the manager of Wild Birds Unlimited, began making weekly trips to McIntosh County to work with Emmy Minor at Sanctuary on the Sapelo.

After Pat received her permits and started Orphaned Bird Care, Nicole became her assistant and chief volunteer. Working with both of them at Wild Birds Unlimited, I've had a chance to observe first hand all the joys, challenges, and heartache that go along with a commitment to helping birds.

For starters, helping birds takes more than knowledge and a permit. You need food to feed them, baskets and cages to house them, and medicines to treat them. All of this takes money. Pat is fortunate to receive grants from Ogeechee Audubon, Skidaway Audubon, The Landings Garden Club, the Landings Landlovers, and the Green Thumb Garden Club, as well as donations from individuals. If you find a bird and bring it to a rehabilitator, please consider making a donation, no matter how small.

Pat's permit requires that a veterinarian must see injured birds. There are only a handful of vets who have the necessary licenses and the willingness to treat wild animals, usually pro bono. Through the years, Pat and Nicole have been fortunate to have the help of a number of vets, including

Dr. Chris Gall, Dr. Leslie Mailler, and Dr. Stacy Wilkinson.

I went out to Pat's house in early April to get a tour of her "facilities." Nesting season had just gotten underway, so the basket on the desk in her half of the office she shares with Art was empty. It has a heat-pad on the bottom, covered with a towel, a small soft substitute "nest bowl," a mirror, a branch perch, and an elastic-edged fabric screen cover. More than likely, by the time this article appears in print, the basket will house a family of hungry babies, needing to be fed at least every hour. Thankfully, the birds do not have to be fed at night.

The "season" will begin with a phone call, a story, and then a handful of gaping mouths to be fed. Nicole will walk into the shop one day with her basket, announcing, "I have dependents." The resident wrens, chickadees, bluebirds, nuthatches, woodpeckers and doves will come first, followed later by the migratory warblers, Great Crested Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, Green Herons, and Chimney Swifts.

Early on, Pat and Nicole developed a kind of job-sharing for tending baby birds. Nicole takes on many of the tiny nestlings that can easily be confined in baskets. When they get too big and active to be happy in a basket, they move to a cage, often at Pat's nursery. During the height of the season, the two may be tending as many as 60 to 70 nestling and fledgling birds.

Indoors, in her bird room, Pat has two cages, baskets, and an incubator. In the garage she has three large cages on wheels that can be moved outside during the day. They are not predator proof so must be returned to the garage at night. She also has an outdoor aviary designed by her architect son and built with money from a Landlovers grant.

Both Pat and Nicole have a variety of feeders, birdhouses, and watering stations outside in their yards to take care of the local birds as well as the special birds they care for and release.

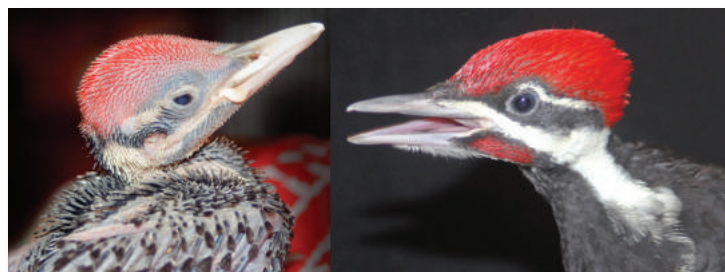
Orphaned Bird Care also focuses on education. Not all baby birds need to be rescued. Parent birds can be very quick about the task of bringing in the bugs, so unless you spend 30 minutes or more watching, you might mistakenly assume that the babies are not being fed.

Helpless nestlings do need to be fed and tended, and take well to being fed by humans. Fully feathered fledglings, on the other hand, are out of the nest naturally. Their parents care for them, and teach them what they need to know to survive as a bird in a perilous world. Fledglings, when "rescued," do not take well to being fed by humans and are deprived of that period of essential learning.

When I asked Pat to tell me about one of her favorite bird friends, she immediately mentioned a Pileated Woodpecker. I happened to be at the shop the day a man showed up with two young woodpeckers that came from the cavity of a tree



24- and 25-day-old Blue Jays treated by Pat.
Photo by Diana Churchill.



Pileated Woodpecker nestling (left) v. fledgling (right). Photo by Diana Churchill.

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Education During the Pandemic *(Continued from Page 1)*

field trips on the weekends. The new format has made it easier for people to join the class since the online sessions can be viewed from home or wherever there is an internet connection. Last fall, we offered two cohorts of this class, one in Atlanta and a second in Macon in partnership with Ocmulgee Audubon Society. This winter, because of the high demand, we offered two cohorts in the metro Atlanta area. We are eager to partner in the future with other Audubon chapters to make Master Birder a true statewide program.

Since 2016, Melanie Furr, director of education, has been working with patients at **Shepherd Spinal Center** to introduce them to birds and birdwatching. Birding is amazingly accessible for people with disabilities, and during the past several years Melanie has given programs and led field trips and retreats, working with Shepherd to bring the joy of birding to those impacted by spinal cord and brain injuries, stroke, multiple sclerosis, and other life-altering conditions. When COVID struck, in-person programs had to end, but Melanie has been able to resume education sessions via Zoom. This April, Melanie was excited to get to lead an in-person clinic for Shepherd patients again, birding the accessible trails at Brook Run Park in Dunwoody.

Launched in 2016, **Connecting Students with STEM through Birds** allows Georgia Audubon to work with up to two federally-designated Title I schools each academic year. The program is comprehensive, addressing the needs of students, teachers, the school, and the local neighborhood. As part of the year-long program, each school receives an installation of a bird-friendly outdoor learning space; field guides and environmental-themed children's books for the library; a class set of binoculars; complete sets of our Learning About Birds curriculum; youth programming, including a banding session with our director of conservation, Adam Betuel; and teacher training on how to utilize the outdoor learning space, curriculum, and other resources. Georgia Audubon staff, along with our partner, Convivial Gardens, work with students and teachers to install the outdoor learning space, which always brings a lot of excitement, as many students have never planted a garden or held binoculars before. Despite the pandemic, Georgia Audubon was able to continue this program, installing a native plant garden at Carrollton Elementary School in November 2020 with the help of more than 100 mask-wearing students and educators.

This spring, two additional gardens will be created at Crawford Long Middle School and South Atlanta High School.

Georgia Audubon is very much looking forward to recruiting new teachers and resuming our **Taking Wing** training in June of 2021.

Sadly, we were not able to offer this in 2020 because of the stay-at-home orders last summer, but this year Melanie is ramping up to offer the 50-hour continuing education opportunity to teachers from DeKalb and Gwinnett counties, as well as a group of teachers from west Georgia and our partner schools

with Atlanta Public Schools. Taking Wing includes field investigations led by professional ecologists and ornithologists, instruction on Georgia's birds and native plants, an introduction to community science projects aimed at birds, and hands-on outdoor learning experiences to take back to the classroom. Through the course of a full academic year, participants will implement the training by developing a bird-related unit or community science project with their students, which they will share with the group during the final one-day spring workshop. Since the program was launched in 2012, 130 educators have been trained through the program, with an estimated engagement of 4,500 youth to date. Program participants consistently report that Taking Wing is not only the best professional development they have attended, but that it is life changing as well.

Let's not forget **Sibley, Georgia Audubon's and the world's only education ambassador hummingbird**, who has had a full calendar of programs during the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, classrooms and groups from around the state have enjoyed webinar programs featuring Sibley and learning about hummingbirds, as well as the dangers that windows pose not only to hummingbirds but to many other species of birds. Sibley has also begun making some in-feather appearances, including an outdoor presentation at the Three Billion Exhibit at the Hudgens Center for Art and Learning that was co-hosted by Brickworks Gallery and Georgia Audubon, and he'll make several camp appearances this summer.

Even our workshops, like Birding by Ear and Raptor ID with ever-popular ornithologist Georgann Schmalz, Birding 101, Tricky Bird ID, and other educational programs have been transitioned to webinars with great success, allowing us to reach more people and more diverse populations from across Georgia.

So, while 2020 was not without its challenges and an unprecedented amount of stress, grief, and sorrow for so many affected by COVID-19, it has also had an unexpected reward in forcing us to take a close look at many of our programs and adapt them for larger, more diverse audiences. We cannot wait to get back to some in-person events, programs, and meetings and to begin interacting with people face to face, but we have also become adept at educating people remotely, allowing us to spread the joy of birds and birding further than we ever imagined would be possible.



*Three of our Atlanta Urban Ecologists pose on one of this year's outings.
Photo by Melanie Furr.*



*Atlanta Urban Ecologists made a visit to the Three Billion Exhibit at the Hudgens Center for Art and Learning in March.
Photo by Melanie Furr.*

Species Profile: The Mississippi Kite

By Steve Phenicie



Mississippi Kite, by Dan Vickers.

If Mississippi Kites were circus performers, they might be the Flying Wallendas. If they were military pilots, they might be the Blue Angels. The printed page cannot adequately describe the aerial maneuvers these birds can perform, but if you'd like to see for yourself, search "Mississippi Kite Barrel Roll" on YouTube for a demonstration.

When this bird isn't flying just for fun, it can catch large flying insects high in the air, often holding them with one foot and eating them while on the wing. It can also skim low to catch prey on or near the ground. Major items in the diet include cicadas, grasshoppers, katydids, beetles, and dragonflies; it also eats moths and bees, and lesser numbers of frogs, toads, snakes, bats, rodents, small birds, and turtles. It won't turn up its beak at road-kill either.

Despite the name, they aren't particularly associated with the state of Mississippi or the Mississippi River. During the breeding season they are most common in southern South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama and on the Great Plains of Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. In the winter they take off for the interior of South America. Except during migration, you're unlikely to see one in metro Atlanta.

The coloration of this bird is a mix of gray and black, becoming pale gray-white on the head and in the secondaries of the wings. The wingtips and tail are black. Juveniles are streaky, with brownish chests and underwings, and have

banded tails. In size, they're between a crow and a goose and have long, pointed wings. The tail is fairly long and square-tipped.

Nesting tends to be in loose colonies, with the site in a tree usually near the edge of woodlot 20 to 35 feet above ground, although it can be up to 140 feet. The nest, built by both sexes, is a rather flimsy platform of dead twigs, lined with green leaves. Adults add greenery throughout the season.

The female lays one to two white eggs, and incubation is by both parents for 29 to 31 days. Both parents care for the young. First they may feed the nestlings mostly insects, regurgitated into the nest, with larger prey coming later. The young may climb out of the nest onto nearby branches when about four weeks old and make their first flights at about five weeks. Adults feed them for at least eight weeks after hatching.

In Georgia, Mississippi Kites are more common in the coastal plain and on the coast rather than in the Piedmont. They like to nest along the edges of expansive bottomland forests of many of the larger Coastal Plain rivers, in large forest tracts near pastureland, and in some smaller forested areas near cities/towns, according to the Breeding Bird Atlas of Georgia.

In late summer, they team up with Swallow-tailed Kites to form foraging flocks. One reliable spot for these flocks is in the Glennville area (west of Savannah), specifically the Skeens Farm. Last year there was also a group near Watkinsville/Athens. During the breeding season, some of the locales you might see them are Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park in Macon, Oxbow Meadows near Columbus, Okapilco Floodplain and Pasture in Brooks County near Quitman, and Paulk's Pasture near Brunswick.

Orphaned Bird Care *(Continued from Page 6)*

that had been cut down at Hunter Army Airfield. One bird had sustained serious injuries in the fall and did not make it, but the other grew and thrived. Pat nicknamed him "Big Red" and eventually released him in her yard. He returned frequently that first year, coming to a particular tree to get his supplemental snacks, until he found a mate.

Nicole and Pat treat more than 340 native birds annually. Eighty percent of the birds they care for are released back into the wild. For more information, visit Pat's website at www.orphanedbirdcare.com.



Pat Wolters with her aviary.
Photo by Diana Churchill.

Protect Georgia's Birds with a Gift to the 2021 Annual Fund

Georgia Audubon's largest source of funding is **YOU!** Your contributions over the past year allowed us to maintain programmatic flexibility and resilience in the midst of a pandemic. Our spring Annual Fund complements your yearly membership dues, and both are integral to our success. This year, please consider a donation to support our many local education, conservation, and community engagement programs. Birds need our help more than ever right now, and every gift makes a difference. You may also make a gift online at www.georgiaaudubon.org/donate. All donors to the 2021 Annual Fund will be recognized by name in the next issue of *Wingbars*. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Special Thanks to Everyone Who Contributed to an Amazing 6th Annual Georgia Bird Fest!

Georgia Bird Fest Event Leaders Vinod Babu, Sarah Barlow, Giff Beaton, Adam Betuel, Kris Bisgard, Eric Bowles, Danielle Bunch, Ray Chandler, Jay Davis, Mary Lou Dickson, Andrew Dreelin, Kathryn Dudeck, Shannon Fair, Nathan Farnau, Jim Ferrari, Meg Ford, Melanie Furr, Barbara Gray, Stan Gray, Roseanne Guerra, Leigh Hallingby, Kristin Halloran, Theresa Hartz, Wes Hatch, Malcolm Hodges, Ellen Honeycutt, Gus Kaufman, Christy Knight, Bill Lotz, Patrick Maurice, Anne McCallum, Jonah McDonald, Rob McDonough, Katrina Morris, Daniel Parson, Stephen Ramsden, Georgann Schmalz, Iris Schumacher, Lois Stacey, Pam Vercellone-Smith, Dan Vickers, Jamie Vidich, and Christine Walkey.

Georgia Bird Fest Volunteer Ambassadors Gabe Andrlé, Lorie Bonham, Toni Bowen, Paul Campbell, Joy Carter, Rona Cook, Steve Cook, Zaria Dyer, Beverly Fooks, Melanie Furr, Dottie Head, Wendy Hoback, Josh Jackson, Angie Lewis, Kiana Leveritte, Susie Maclin, Robyn Newman, Phillip Prichard, Maggie Stephen, Susan Talburt, Connie Vogel-Brown, and Amanda Woomer.

Georgia Bird Fest Patron Supporters Anonymous (2), Laura Adams and Andrew Feiler, The Allvine Family, Marcia Bansley, Meredith Bell, Sally and Greg Bergquist, Kathleen Casses and John Little, Ann and Jim Curry, Jay Davis, Patricia Davis and Curtis Johnson, Linda DiSantis and Bob Kerr, Courtenay and George Dusenbury, Leslie Edwards and Jay Pakchar, Shannon Fair, Donna Bryans Gensler / Bryans Family Foundation, Don and Lenora Goodliffe, Marc and Brynne Goncher, Nancy Hamilton, Susan Jones, Annalise Kaylor, Mary Kimberly and Gavin MacDonald, Marcia Klenbort, Margaret Lamb, Melinda Langston, Cindy Lederman, Charles Lindamood III, Karen Lindauer, Charles and Susan Loeb, Bill and Condit Lotz, Susie Maclin, Paige Martin, Dennis and Jennifer Mathews, Ellen Miller, Tom Mills, Jim and Sally Morgens, Robyn and Steve Newman, Tom Painter and Carla Roncoli, Kim Payne, Steve Phenicie and Lisa Slotznick, Regina Quick, Judy Renault, Larry Stephens, Teresa Stickels, Esther and Jim Stokes, Tom Urban, and Susan Utley.

Finally, thank you to each of our Georgia Bird Fest Sponsors for your generosity.

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Community Engagement and Education

(Continued from Page 3)

Summer: In June and July, Georgia Audubon is partnering with Zoo Atlanta to introduce middle and high school students to careers in avian conservation. This program will give students an inside look into animal care, veterinary medicine, field research, and habitat management for the conservation of birds. Scholarships will be offered to students who attend Title I schools or to families for whom cost may be a burden.

Year Round: Starting last December, Georgia Audubon partnered with Birdability to host monthly virtual accessible field trips that will be continuing through the fall. These virtual trips highlight accessible trails, birders who experience accessibility challenges, and birds from around the country. Birdability is an organization dedicated to “removing barriers to access for birders with mobility challenges, blindness or low vision, intellectual or developmental disabilities (including autism), mental illness, being deaf or hard of hearing, chronic illnesses and other health concerns.” The virtual accessible field trips provide opportunities for people who experience accessibility challenges to share their experiences, insights and perspectives regarding what makes locations accessible, or inaccessible, for them,

and provides resources for the audience to take action to make outdoor exploration more accessible wherever they are. To learn more about Birdability's work, check out their website at Birdability.org.

If you would like to help us in our work to eliminate barriers to engagement in birding and outdoor exploration, please consider donating to the Georgia Audubon Scholarship Fund on our website. This fund allows us to cover the cost of participation in Georgia Audubon programs for people for whom cost is a burden, eliminating a significant barrier that disproportionately impacts marginalized communities. We look forward to our continued work in educational programming and partnerships to make the joy of birds accessible for all people across this great state.



Georgia Audubon has partnered with Birdability to lead monthly virtual field trips from different locations across the U.S. to help people with disabilities learn how/where they can go birding. Pictured here is Birdability Founder and President Virginia Rose. Photo by Mike Fernandez.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Please check our website or our *Bird Buzz* e-newsletter for additional events that may be scheduled after *Wingbars* goes to press.

MAY

Virtual Field Trips with Georgia Audubon

When: Twice each month on Friday mornings (check our Field Trip Calendar for upcoming events)

9:00 AM

Where: Georgia Audubon Facebook page and now available via Zoom Webinar too! (Visit the event listing on our Field Trip calendar to register for the Zoom event.)

Join us on the Georgia Audubon Facebook page twice each month on Fridays at 9:00 AM for a virtual field trip with Georgia Audubon staff and volunteer trip leaders as they explore various locations around Georgia and talk about what they're seeing.

Georgia Bird Fest: Ogeechee Audubon Field Trip to Savannah Christian Prep School

Sunday, May 2, 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM | Cost: \$30/person

Location: Savannah, GA (Chatham County)

Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfestevents.

Ogeechee Audubon Society (OAS) welcomes Georgia Audubon and the birding community to join us in exploring the extensive forests, open spaces, and wetlands complex of the 254-acre Savannah Christian Preparatory School (SCPS) campus in Savannah. Already gaining notice as one of the premier overwintering destinations in the Southeast for Rusty Blackbirds, the varied habitats of this campus offer a wide diversity of bird species throughout the year. Since it was designated as an eBird Hotspot just over one year ago, 127 species have been recorded on this normally restricted access site by survey teams from OAS. And although the Rusty Blackbirds will be long gone by early May, we anticipate many nesting species, as well as late spring migrants still flooding through the area.

Georgia Bird Fest Webinar: Audubon Bird Mural Project Virtual Tour

Tuesday, May 4, from 7:00 to 8:00 PM | Cost: \$10 for Georgia Audubon members / \$12 for non-members

Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfestevents.

The Audubon Bird Mural Project, sponsored in part by the National Audubon Society, is an impressive effort to create murals of more than 300 North American birds. Most of the murals are in the northern Manhattan neighborhoods of Hamilton Heights and Washington Heights, where John James Audubon lived the last ten years of his life. All of the birds painted are threatened by climate change. The Project is designed not only to display the birds' beauty, but also to make us aware of the challenges that they face. The artworks range from lovely panels that fill in a former window to spectacular murals covering the entire side of a building. We will see about 50 murals, plus Audubon's grave site, in a 50-minute slide presentation with live commentary from licensed New York City tour guide and retired librarian Leigh Hallingby.

Georgia Bird Fest Webinar: Beginning Birder 101 | Instructor: Melanie Furr

Thursday, May 6, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM | Cost: \$10 for Georgia Audubon members / \$12 for non-members

Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfestevents.

Birds are fascinating, familiar, and accessible. Their colors and songs add beauty to our everyday lives. If you'd like to get started with birding or improve your birding skills, join Melanie Furr, director of education, for a how-to class that will help you develop your skills and enhance your enjoyment of our feathered friends. In addition to learning key identification techniques, we'll share information on choosing the best optics, field guides, and smartphone apps to enhance your birding experience, as well as how to participate in community science projects like eBird and grow your life list.

Georgia Bird Fest Webinar and Facebook Live Event: Pollinator Conservation with the Oxford Organic Farm

Friday, May 7, from 9:00 to 10:00 AM

Instructor: Daniel Parson, Emory at Oxford | Cost: Free to attend

Join via Facebook Live on Georgia Audubon's Facebook page or register below to view via Zoom webinar

Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfestevents.

The Oxford Organic Farm is a living laboratory for Emory University students who want to learn about food systems, farming, and environmental stewardship. This exciting new program will have three parts: first learning about honey bees and 'virtually' opening the hives and seeing the colonies; next, exploring the biodiversity in the insect world; and then how beneficial insects are attracted to the farm for pest control. The same techniques relate to pollinator conservation and things people can do at home.

Georgia Bird Fest Webinar and Field Session: Introduction to Bird Photography | Instructor: Eric Bowles

Webinar: Wednesday, May 5, 7:00 to 9:00 PM (via Zoom) | Outdoor Field Session: Saturday, May 8, 8:00 to 11:00 AM

Cost: \$50/person

Location: Webinar via Zoom and Field Session at Blue Heron Nature Preserve (Fulton County)

Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfestevents.

In this workshop, you'll receive tips, suggestions, and answers to help you make better photos with your camera. We'll talk about equipment and its limitations, exposure settings, focus, and basics of bird composition.

MAY (Continued from Page 10)

Georgia Bird Fest Webinar: A Year in the Life of a Bird, with Georgann Schmalz **Tuesday, May 11, from 7:00 to 8:00 PM**

Cost: \$10 for Georgia Audubon members / \$12 for non-members

Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfestevents.

Ever wonder what birds are doing when you aren't chasing them, identifying them, and checking them off your list? This presentation is a journey into the not-so-private, but sometimes ignored, life of a typical bird during a typical year, including migration, territories, songs and calls, pair formation, fertilization, nests, eggs, incubation, care of young, and winter survival.

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum **Wednesday, May 12, from 8:00 to 11:00 AM**

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

Georgia Bird Fest Webinar and Field Session: Intermediate to Advanced Bird Photography Tips and Techniques **Webinar: Wednesday, May 12, 7:00 to 9:00 PM | Outdoor Field Session: Saturday, May 15, 8:00 to 11:00 AM**

Instructor: Eric Bowles | Cost: \$50/person

Location: Webinar via Zoom and Field Session at the Blue Heron Nature Preserve (Fulton County)

Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfestevents.

You've got a good camera but your bird photographs are not quite as good as you'd like. What makes a great bird photo? How do you take better bird photos? How do you make images of difficult subjects such as birds in flight or songbirds in a wooded area? How do the situations affect your choice of camera settings? Professional nature photographer Eric Bowles will guide participants in this two-part workshop to answer all these questions and provide tips and techniques to help you make better bird photographs.



*Great Blue Heron Rookery.
Photo by Eric Bowles.*

Webinar: Early Birds Book Club May Meeting

Sunday, May 23, at 2:00 PM | Cost: FREE

The Early Birds welcome all who enjoy reading about birds, birding, and birders. We are a "no commitment" book club—some folks come every time and others occasionally. For our May Meeting, we will read *When Birds Are Near: Dispatches from Contemporary Writers*. In this dazzling literary collection, fresh new voices and seasoned authors explore and celebrate their lives with and love for birds. To see our full schedule and book selections or to sign up for this free event, please visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/early-birds-book-club.

Georgia Audubon Bird Stories

Flute's Journey: The Life of a Wood Thrush, by Lynne Cherry

Friday, May 28, at 9:30 PM via Zoom | Cost: FREE

<https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/georgia-audubon-bird-stories.html>



JUNE

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve

Wed, June 9, from 8:00 to 11:00 AM | Leader: Anne McCallum

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

Georgia Audubon Monthly Meeting Webinar: Opposing Threats for a Salty Sparrow: Understanding Seaside Sparrow Nest Prediction in the Face of Climate Change

Sunday, June 27, at 3:30 PM | Corine Newsome

To learn more or sign up, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/monthly-meetings.

JULY

Field Trip: Morgan Falls Overlook Park

Saturday, July 10, from 8:00 to 11:00 AM | Leader: Roseanne Guerra

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

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve

Wed, July 14, from 8:00 to 11:00 AM | Leader: Anne McCallum

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

July Monthly Meeting Webinar - Albatross at Midway: Natural History and Status as it relates to Plastic Pollution | Wayne Sentman, The Oceanic Society

Sunday, July 25, at 3:30 PM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/monthly-meetings.



Photo by Phillip Pritchard.

Wingbars

GEORGIA AUDUBON

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Georgia Bird Fest Closing Celebration Featuring Carolyn Finney, Ph.D.

Sunday, May 16, from 3:00 to 5:00 PM

Webinar via Zoom

\$15 – Webinar Only (per device)

Georgia Audubon is also partnering with Eagle Eye Book Shop in Decatur, GA, for sales of Dr. Carolyn Finney's book, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*. Eagle Eye Book Shop will donate a percentage of each book sold to Georgia Audubon. Additional purchases of *Black Faces, White Spaces* without a webinar ticket can be made directly with Eagle Eye Book Shop at their online store.

Christian Cooper. George Floyd. Removal of Confederate Statues. Renaming of institutions. Reparations. Systemic Racism. John Muir? What does the environment have to do with it? How do we meet this moment? Drawing from her book, *Black Faces, White Spaces*, her relationships "in the field," her lived experience, and this moment of reckoning, Dr. Finney explores the complexities and contradictions of American history as it relates to green space, race, and the power to shape the places we live in our own image. By engaging in "green" conversations with diverse people around the country, she considers the power of resistance and resilience in the emergence of creative responses to environmental and social challenges in our cities and beyond. Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfestevents.



Carolyn Finney, by Michael Estrada.