

VOLUME XLIV, ISSUE 6, ATLANTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Atlanta Audubon Society Bird Seed Sale

Stock up on bird seed and support Atlanta Audubon at the same time!

It's time for the annual Atlanta Audubon Bird Seed Sale. Take advantage of our great prices and stock up for fall migration. We are proud to offer a variety of Cole's Wild Bird Feed products, a local supplier of high-quality bird feed. All proceeds benefit the conservation and education efforts of Atlanta Audubon Society.

Additionally this year, **orders of \$175 and over will receive a free Project FeederWatch kit** for the 2018-2019 season. Project FeederWatch is a citizen science project hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in which participants periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broad-scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. Participants receive an instructional kit that includes a bird ID poster, a calendar, a tally sheet, and instructional materials.

Order by Mail or Online:

You can order through our online store at www.atlantaudubon.org/bird-seed-sale. If you would prefer to mail in your order with a check, please download an order form from the bird seed sale website.

Three Pickup Options:

- 1) Pick up your seed on Saturday, August 25, between 9:00 AM and 12:00 PM at the Atlanta Audubon Society office located in the Blue Heron Nature Preserve at 4055 Roswell Road, Atlanta, GA 30342.
- 2) Pick up your seed on Sunday, August 26, at the Atlanta Audubon Society Monthly meeting at Manuel's Tavern.
- 3) Beginning August 27 you may pick up your seed at the Atlanta Audubon Society office (4055 Roswell Road) by appointment.

**All orders must be received by
Sunday, August 19.**



Goldfinch on coneflower stem, by Dan Vickers

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The Power of One: Audubon Ambassadors in Action

By Michelle Hamner



Grasshopper Sparrows are ground-nesting birds that build cup-shaped, well-concealed nests on the ground in open fields. You can help protect these birds by avoiding mowing open fields during the summer months.

Photo by Melanie Furr.

Late this past April, on what turned out to be one of the single "birdiest" days for me in Fayette County yet, my south-metro birding buddy Richard and I decided to hit up a few favorite local haunts to see what we might find during the peak of Atlanta spring migration. We began the morning at my favorite local patch, a 120-acre conservation easement called Nesmith Preserve, which is owned and managed by the Southern Conservation Trust. It's a lovely wetlands habitat that exists behind a local high school and in the middle of very-suburbanized Peachtree City.

As we were slowly making our way along the roughly half-mile trail at Nesmith ("What's that?! IS IT A ... oh, no, it's just a female Blackpoll Warbler."), Richard and I chatted about some of the yet-to-be-recorded-in-eBird-but-should-be-present species in Fayette and Coweta counties. Northern Bobwhite, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Bobolink were some that topped the Fayette County list, surprisingly.* We made our way back to

(Continued on Page 7)



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Wingbars is the official newsletter of Atlanta Audubon Society and is published 10 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 Atlanta Audubon Society.



Esther Stokes

Challenge from the Chair

By Esther Stokes

I am sitting at my desk today, pondering this question: How can Atlanta Audubon make the largest impact in our metro area and state, given the many environmental issues that challenge us? What are the greatest challenges? What are the greatest risks? How can we most effectively work with our partners to increase all of our reach and magnify the work that Atlanta Audubon does, not only in metro Atlanta but also in other areas of the state?

Recently fellow Board member, Jairo Garcia, and I represented Atlanta Audubon at Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge on the Georgia coast to celebrate the designation, by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), of the Georgia barrier islands as the 100th landscape of hemispheric importance. The Georgia coastal advocacy organization, 100 Miles, hosted the celebration. We spoke with folks from all over the country who had gathered to underscore the importance of conserving sites for shorebirds. Georgia is fortunate to have incredible, conserved sites along our coast where shorebirds that migrate thousands of miles each way, spring and fall, can stop and load up on food to build up fat reserves for the rest of the migration ahead of them. It felt great to celebrate this abundance!

There are threats, though. There is a new coastal threat to birds and wildlife that we are focusing on: the proposed spaceport in Camden County, Georgia's



Forest and Marsh at Cumberland Island. Photo by NPS.

southern-most coastal county, which includes Cumberland Island. This proposed spaceport would endanger birds and wildlife along that portion of the coast, particularly if there were rocket failures. It would threaten tourism revenues and provide challenges to the quality of life along the coast. Atlanta Audubon has officially spoken up on your behalf on this topic. You can read more about this issue on our website.

But there are new opportunities for significant progress on the ecology front. Exciting things are happening in the city of Atlanta. Atlanta has begun work on an Urban Ecology Framework to supplement the new Atlanta City Design from Commissioner Tim Keane's City Planning Department. Atlanta Audubon's Director of Conservation, Adam Betuel, is representing us in this effort, bringing his significant scientific and technical skills to help arrive at a framework that will benefit Atlanta's ecology for years to come. He will be working with numerous nonprofit partners under the leadership of the Charleston, S.C.-based contractor, Biohabitats. We will be watching this closely.

These are just a few examples of the broad range of work that goes on at Atlanta Audubon. It is truly gratifying to chair the Board, and I look forward to many more partnerships and productive advances for birds and people.

— Esther Stokes, Board Chair

Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month Sponsorship Opportunities Now Available

This September Atlanta Audubon will kick off the inaugural Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month with a series of events to highlight the importance of native plants for birds and other wildlife. Events throughout the month include our 2018 Sanctuary Tour and the public unveiling of the Piedmont Park native plant "Exhibitat" and Chimney Swift Tower. We need your help. If you or a business you know is interested in sponsoring Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month, visit our website at www.atlantaaudubon.org/georgia-grows-native-for-birds for more information. Sponsorships begin at \$250, and sponsors receive benefits that include complimentary Wildlife Sanctuary Tour tickets, their business name/logo on promotional materials, social media recognition, and more. Contact Michelle Hamner at michelle@atlantaaudubon.org with any questions.

Final Chance to Make an Impact with a Gift to the 2018 Annual Fund

Send a message that building places where both birds and people thrive is a priority in Atlanta with a gift to the 2018 Annual Fund. Our biggest source of funding at Atlanta Audubon is YOU, and our reach throughout Georgia on behalf of birds is magnified through your support. All donors to the 2018 Annual Fund who make their gift by July 31, 2018, will be acknowledged in the September issue of *Wingbars*.

SAVE THE DATE! September is filled with Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month Activities

This September, Atlanta Audubon's inaugural *Georgia Grows for Native for Birds Month* celebrates our native plants and raises awareness about the key role they play for birds and other wildlife. The biggest threat to birds in Georgia is habitat loss. As urbanization increases and natural habitats disappear, native plants can go a long way to restoring the habitat birds need. Fortunately, we can provide birds with high quality resources simply through thoughtful landscaping utilizing native plants.

Bird and Plant Walk

On Sunday, September 9, Atlanta Audubon and the Georgia Native Plant Society will explore the Land O Lakes section of Blue Heron Nature Preserve in Buckhead, where Atlanta Audubon has undertaken bird-friendly habitat restoration work. Attendees will observe our native birds and the native plants that sustain them.

2018 Wildlife Sanctuary Tour

On Saturday, September 15, join us for the annual Wildlife Sanctuary Tour from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. This year's tour will feature properties in the Decatur area. Each property has been certified by Atlanta Audubon as a Wildlife Sanctuary because it provides four essential criteria for attracting wildlife and birds: food sources, nesting sites, shelter, and water sources. Visitors will see a wide variety of native plants in a diversity of settings that attract a number of birds, butterflies, and other wildlife.

Piedmont Park "Exhibitat" Public Unveiling

On Tuesday, September 25, Atlanta Audubon will unveil the "Exhibitat" and celebrate the completion of Atlanta Audubon's native plant garden and Georgia's first Chimney Swift tower in the Piedmont Commons. During the day, participants in our Chalk Art Festival will complete 5' x 5' chalk art paintings in front of the "Exhibitat" in celebration of Georgia's native plants and animals. In the evening, we will officially unveil the project while enjoying food and drink.



The 2018 Wildlife Sanctuary Tour will feature homes in the Decatur area. Photo by Dottie Head.

Fall Plant Sale

On Friday and Saturday, September 28 and 29, Atlanta Audubon will again partner with Chattahoochee Nature Center and Beech Hollow Wildflower Farm to host native plant sales to expand habitat for native birds. Sales will highlight berry-producing plants that help birds like the Wood Thrush put on enough weight to migrate across the Gulf of Mexico to wintering grounds in Central America.

Look for more information on all of these events in future issues of *Wingbars* and *Bird Buzz*.



The Exhibitat at Piedmont Park will feature a native plant demonstration garden and a Chimney Swift Tower. Photo by Lillie Kline.



Plant installation has begun in the Exhibitat at Piedmont Park. Photo by Lillie Kline.

Audubon Will Work to Get GOSA Passed

By Steve Phenicie

Many years ago I worked with a guy whom I'll call Rantin' Robert. Nary a day would go by that he didn't go into a tirade about a certain local politician, Commissioner Bad Guy.

When primary election day rolled around, I asked Rantin' Robert whether he had voted yet. Voted? Oh, he couldn't vote. He wasn't registered! "Well," I said, "if Commissioner Bad Guy wins by one vote, it is going to be your fault." You can guess what happened—Commissioner Bad Guy did win, and it was by ONE vote! I never let Rantin' Robert forget that his let-George-do-it attitude swayed the outcome of the election.

Nowadays, Atlanta Audubon is no Rantin' Robert. Increasingly, we are flexing our muscles when it comes to bird advocacy. For example, Georgia voters will face a bird-friendly proposal on the November ballot, and Atlanta Audubon is throwing its weight behind this issue.

The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act, or GOSA, will dedicate up to 40 percent of the state sales and use tax to the protection of lands, waters, and wildlife without raising or creating any new taxes or fees. Funds generated could be used to protect lands critical to clean drinking water, to ensure access to wildlife management areas, and to expand and improve parks and trails. Of course, birds will be only one of the many beneficiaries of GOSA. As it stands now, funding depends on how much the legislature chooses to allocate each year.

Our executive director, Nikki Belmonte, says that Atlanta Audubon will be at the forefront of getting this proposal passed. She points to the "power of the Audubon network": we have eight chapters spread across the state that all have members who care about increasing good quality bird habitat. "Being geographically diverse means that we are 'local everywhere' and can talk with a variety of audiences that have differing social, cultural, and political perspectives. It makes a huge difference when someone you know from your community explains how a policy will have a positive effect as opposed to a stranger from 'the state capital' or a place that is completely different from where you live," she says.

Atlanta Audubon will reach out to our fellow chapters, which may not always be active in advocacy, and encourage them to run blurbs in their communications once it gets closer to November. And you can help by voting for the proposal and urging your family and friends to do so.

Our advocacy does not stop with the GOSA issue. Our chair, Esther Stokes, recently journeyed to Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge south of Savannah for the dedication of Georgia's barrier islands as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site. This organization works to conserve shorebirds and their habitats through a network of key sites across the Americas. "If the public can be educated about the extraordinary role Georgia plays, people may be more supportive when threats occur. And there will be a designation which hopefully can help discourage threats. We want to speak up from Atlanta to show there is support for the coast from all over the state," Esther says.

Expect Atlanta Audubon to keep singing for birds and squawking when something threatens them. As for Rantin' Robert, he learned his lesson. He got registered, voted in the general election and contributed to a massive defeat of Commissioner Bad Guy.

THANK YOU!

A Million Thanks...

... to our bird walk leaders for June: **Jason Ward, Bill Lotz, Anne McCallum, Joy Carter, Vinod Babu, Angie Jenkins, Gus Kaufman, and Roseanne Guerra** ... to Climate Watch volunteers **Wayne Powell, Nikki Belmonte, Melanie Furr, Jay Davis, Laura Hardy, Steve Dupont, Megan Wyatt, Sandy Murray, Cheryl Beshke, Toni Bowen, Vicki Williams, Victor Williams, Abby Back, Mary Nevil, Brian Campbell, Jim McMullian, Valerie McMullian, Susan Loeb, Charles Loeb, Lisbet Phillips, Deadra Moore, and Therese Murphy** ... to **Vinod Babu** and **Jean-Luc Betoulle** for help with our West Nile study with Auburn University ... to **Nannette Dooley, Sandy Miller, Susan Loeb, Mary Lou Collins, and Marcia Jenkins** for their help with June Peel & Stick ... to **Teresa Lyle, Judy Killeen, Megan Wyatt, Margaret Stephen, Jeff Kerlagon, and Paul Campbell** for their help with festival outreach.

ASK CHIPPY

Q: *The last couple of years, we've had Eastern Phoebes nesting just inside our garage door. In April, they had laid eggs. The nest is now empty. I assume they fledged, although we never saw them (we saw the fledglings last year). I thought that was it for this year, but the pair has returned and is carrying material to the nest, presumably getting ready for another brood. Is it unusual for Eastern Phoebes to lay another brood so soon?*



Eastern Phoebes often build nests in garages and under porches. Photo by Roy Cohutta.

A: Thanks for contacting Atlanta Audubon Society. It is not at all unusual for Eastern Phoebes to have a second brood. Eastern Phoebes like to build their nests in niches or under overhangs to protect their young from the elements and predators. It sounds like your pair have found an especially protected place if it is inside your garage. Not only will these birds often raise two broods, they will come back to the same site again and again, often building a new nest on top of the old one.

Depending on when those eggs were laid in April, it may be about the right time for them to lay the next clutch. The incubation period for Eastern Phoebe eggs is 15 to 16 days, and the nestling period is 16 to 20 days. The first brood may have fledged in early May. It is also possible that something happened to the first brood, causing this pair to more quickly produce another brood.

I hope you get to see this brood hatch, develop, and fledge.



—Chippy

EYES on EDUCATION

Still Life with Hummingbird

by Melanie Furr

When I started at Atlanta Audubon a little more than five years ago, having a live education bird was just a dream for the future. I had been working with the ambassador birds at AWARE Wildlife Center—hawks, owls, and crows—and had seen first-hand the impact that a live bird makes on people of all ages. Little did I imagine that I would one day become the custodian for the tiniest of wildlife ambassadors, a hummingbird. You met the latest addition to the Atlanta Audubon flock, our education bird Shep, in the June issue of *Wingbars*, but now that he has settled in to his new role, you may be interested to learn a little more about him.

Found beneath a window at a school last fall, presumably after striking the glass, Shep was taken to AWARE Wildlife Center for treatment for a broken wing. Unfortunately, broken bones are tricky to set and fuse quickly in birds, especially in a tiny bird like a hummingbird, and Shep's wing injury couldn't be repaired. Knowing my desire to have an ambassador bird for Atlanta Audubon and noting Shep's calm temperament, AWARE's Director of Animal Care suggested that I apply for the permits to take on his care. Keeping any bird protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (or any part of a bird, like a feather) requires a permit from the United State Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as a permit from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The application is lengthy and involved. In addition to detailing my experience caring for birds, I had to provide descriptions, photos, and/or diagrams of Shep's enclosure, perching, carriers, feeders, and diet, as well as lesson plans detailing how he would be included in education programs. Once my application was completed and mailed, I waited, checking on Shep each Tuesday during my regular volunteer shift at AWARE. Finally, in early April, my application was approved, and I officially became the caretaker of this tiny miracle.

Shep's care isn't complicated, but he does need to be checked on throughout the day. Hummingbirds, as you probably know, have such short legs that they are unable to walk, so Shep's mobility is limited, to say the least. He can sidestep along his perches, and he has figured out how to locomote by flapping and hopping at the same time, but he occasionally flutters a bit too far from his feeders and needs some help. He spends much

more time perching than a wild bird would, so he has perches of different widths and textures in his enclosure (an 18"x18"x12" terrarium) to minimize foot problems; his favorite perch is a silicone bracelet that says "Bird Buddy." Since



Shep on his favorite perch. Photo by Melanie Furr.

he isn't eating insects as he would in the wild, Shep drinks a nectar available to zoos and wildlife rehabilitators that is fortified with protein and vitamins. I've offered flightless fruit flies on a few occasions, but so far he looks at them with suspicion and disdain. At dusk, I swap out his fortified nectar (which might spoil overnight) with the boiled sugar water I feed my backyard hummers so that he will have breakfast ready when he wakes up. Just like a kid with a sweet tooth, Shep perks up when he sees the little feeder with the purple flower; he knows dessert is served! Bath time and enrichment are also a part of our daily routine. Shep loves bathing, which we accomplish with a mist bottle and a wet leaf which he shimmies all over, or sometimes I take him outside to wiggle in the dew. For enrichment, I take Shep on walks (carrying him on a small tray), provide fresh native flowers for him to taste, and try to change up the scenery as often as possible. He seems to like riding in the car and watching the world go by at flight speed.

In the short time that I've been Shep's custodian, I've been amazed by his intelligence and spunk. I shouldn't be surprised that a bird with the instinct to migrate hundreds of miles across an ocean would perk up in recognition when we approach my home or the Atlanta Audubon office, but I'm impressed nonetheless. Keenly observant, he notices everything, and he responds to my voice as well. He likes to explore colorful objects with his tongue and is curious, but sometimes cautious, about new things in his environment (like the fruit flies). Not being able to fly doesn't keep him from exercising his wings, and I suspect that as he molts and replaces some damaged wing and tail feathers, he'll continue to improve his mobility, though he will never fly again. That this tiny bird even survived his collision with a window is remarkable, however, and he faces the world each day with bright eyes, in spite of his disability. I'm learning from him every day, and I can't wait to see how he inspires and educates others. Stay tuned for opportunities to meet Shep soon!



Part of the family, Shep enjoys some porch time with Mark, Melanie's husband. Photo by Melanie Furr.

LIVE and LEARN

Upcoming Workshops

Advanced Shorebird Identification: Age, Molt, and Phenology, with Nathan Farnau Saturday, August 25, 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM Newman Wetlands Center and E.L. Huie Ponds

This specialized shorebird workshop will focus on age/class, timing and pattern of feather molt, and occurrence in Georgia. A morning lecture at Newman Wetlands Center in Clayton County will be followed by a field trip to E.L. Huie ponds, one of the best shorebird habitats in the Atlanta area. In the field, classroom concepts will be reinforced by observations of actively migrating birds of various ages and states of molt. This workshop is intended for intermediate and advanced birders wishing to supplement their working shorebird identification skills by outlining details often omitted from standard field guides. A scope is highly recommended to maximize your experience in this workshop. Space is limited, so register early at www.atlantaudubon.org/adult-workshops.

Instructor Nathan Farnau has served on the Georgia Checklist and Records Committee and as the Conservation Chair for the Georgia Ornithological Society. He has also taught workshops on shorebird identification and led field trips extensively for state and local birding societies in Georgia. He's currently the Associate Curator of Fishes and Invertebrates at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta.

Fee: Atlanta Audubon Members: \$50
Non-members: \$60
Master Birder in Good Volunteer Standing and Membership Standing: \$45



Join Nathan Farnau for the Advanced Shorebird Workshop in August. Photo by Melanie Furr.

Master Birder Fall 2018

Atlanta Audubon Society is pleased to offer our popular Master Birder course again this fall at our office at the Blue Heron Nature Preserve. An orientation and the first class will be held on Saturday, October 13, from 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM. Subsequent sessions will be held on three Saturdays, October 20, October 27, and November 3, and on one Sunday, November 11. These sessions will be preceded by a guided bird walk from 8:00 to 10:00 AM at a nearby hotspot and will include a break for lunch. A final exam and graduation luncheon will occur on Saturday, November 17, at the Atlanta Audubon office at 10:30 AM.

The Master Birder course is an introduction to ornithology, designed to provide participants with bird identification skills and general knowledge of birds, their life histories, and habitat requirements. Course content includes classification and identification of birds, birding equipment, bird songs and calls, bird behavior, anatomy and physiology, bird ecology, flight and migration, and bird conservation. Weekend class sessions are complemented with bird walks and a graduation celebration. Upon graduation, Master Birders are encouraged to complete annual volunteer service for Atlanta Audubon and receive added membership benefits such as exclusive workshops or field trips, as well as early bird or discounted registration for workshops.

A course fee of \$425 includes classes and guided walks, course materials, and the graduation luncheon. Online registration for the 2018 fall course opens on July 10 at 10:00 AM at www.atlantaudubon.org/master-birder-program. Spaces are expected to fill quickly, so don't delay! You must be a current Atlanta Audubon member to register for the Master Birder course. Please email Director of Education Melanie Furr at melanie@atlantaudubon.org if you have questions.



Master Birder Class of 2016. Photo by Melinda Langston.

Summer Birders Looking for Leaders

The summer doldrums are upon us, and we're short on field trip leaders because of vacation schedules and other conflicts. We've got birders looking for adventure and no one to lead them! If you would be interested in leading a summer bird walk or two, at an area of your choosing, on a time and date of your choosing, please e-mail our field trip coordinator, Teresa Lyle, at TeresaLyle0@gmail.com.

FIELD TRIPS

are open to the public and free (unless otherwise noted). We welcome everyone from beginners to advanced birders. No registration is necessary except where indicated below. The only fees that apply are parking fees at some venues such as state and national parks. Any applicable fees will be listed in the field trip description on the website.

Details about trips, including driving directions, can be found on our website: www.atlantaudubon.org/field-trips. As always, we encourage field trip participants to check the Atlanta Audubon Field Trips web page before any of these trips to check for updates, changes, typo corrections, etc., and for the most up-to-date information. Also, frequently trips are added after the newsletter deadline has passed.

Saturday, July 7, 2018 **Piedmont Park (Fulton County)** **8:00 AM**

Leader: Jason Ward
Cell contact morning of the walk: 404.759.7770
GPS: N 33 47.025, W 84 22.746

Wednesday, July 11, 2018 **Reynolds Nature Preserve (Clayton County)** **8:00 AM**

Leader: Anne McCallum
Cell contact morning of the walk: 678.642.7148
GPS: 33.601464, -84.346874

Saturday, July 21, 2018 **J.J. Biello Riverside Athletic Complex (Cherokee County)** **7:30 AM**

Leader: Roseanne Guerra
Cell contact morning of the walk: 678.358.4916
GPS: 34.114172, -84.493573

Saturday, August 4, 2018 **Piedmont Park (Fulton County)** **8:00 AM**

Leader: Jason Ward
Cell contact morning of the walk: 404.759.7770
GPS: N 33 47.025, W 84 22.746

Wednesday, August 8, 2018 **Reynolds Nature Preserve (Clayton County)** **8:00 AM**

Leader: Anne McCallum
Cell contact morning of the walk: 678.642.7148
GPS: 33.601464, -84.346874

Saturday, August 25, 2018 **Constitution Lakes (DeKalb County)** **8:00 AM**

Leaders: Joy Carter and Vin Gleespen
Cell contacts morning of the walk: 404.822.0030 (Joy)
GPS: 33.68306, -84.34740

If you would like to lead a field trip, contribute ideas for places to go, or give feedback about leaders, trips, or the field trip directions, please e-mail Teresa Lyle, field trip director at teresalyle0@gmail.com.

The Power of One: Audubon Ambassadors in Action *(Continued from Page 1)*

our cars shortly thereafter—after spending 30 minutes or so tracking a Cape May Warbler through the tree tops—and thought our addition of seven new species to the Nesmith property list that morning would be the highlight of the day.

A few minutes later, however, I received a text message from Richard stating that he had just heard Grasshopper Sparrows in the tall grasses surrounding the local Peachtree City airport—a county first!* I headed over, got the sparrows, took some photos, and headed back home, content with the day's findings.

A few days later, I stopped back at the airport, where the Grasshopper Sparrows were still singing. However, to my horror, the sound of a massive combine also filled the air, as the grounds maintenance crews were making their way across the fields surrounding the runway, cutting the tall grasses to the ground.

While Grasshopper Sparrows in Georgia are categorized by the 2016 State of the Birds Report as a common bird in steep decline, there are no laws that would prevent the maintenance crews from mowing simply due to the birds' presence. As do most sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrows depend upon long, undisturbed grassland habitat to avoid predators and to nest. After sending around a few messages to colleagues about what could be done to possibly stop the mowing, the consensus was that my only recourse would be to plead with the airport authorities to leave a patch of grass un-mowed through the summer.

As an Atlanta Audubon employee, I talk a lot to people about bird conservation and what we can do as a community to build bird-friendly communities that benefit birds and people alike. Faced with a problem (sparrow nesting habitat being mowed down just as nest building was potentially beginning or had already begun), I suddenly realized that the potential solution (convincing the airport authority to cease mowing... and soon!) seemed a bit overwhelming for just one person. There was no time to organize a coalition of other volunteers to speak up in person or to make calls—those mowers were steadily making their perfect lines across the fields and getting closer to the sparrows' "turf."

The next morning, after tracking down whom I needed to speak to at the airport and arranging an appointment, I arrived in my finest Atlanta Audubon

attire, including official staff nametag and bearing loaner binoculars in order to show off these lovely little sparrows. Unfortunately, the staff weren't interested in heading out to the field to see the birds. However, after showing them the area on a map where the birds were centered and explaining sparrow decline due to habitat loss, they agreed to leave the fields in the "sparrow corner" undisturbed through the summer.

As many of you may be, I've been discouraged by recent environmental protection setbacks and wondered if our fight to prove the importance of habitat preservation, bird conservation, and environmental education is in vain. If I, as an Atlanta Audubon employee, have doubts that I, as one single concerned citizen, can convince a city airport authority to care about two birds that may or may not be nesting, what do the rest of Atlanta Audubon's members think when they see ecologically harmful activities in their neighborhoods? How can we as staff help you as members speak up for birds and to safeguard their habitats?

Introduced formally earlier this year as part of our advocacy work, the Atlanta Audubon Ambassadors program aims to do just that. As an Audubon Ambassador, you strengthen the work of our organization by monitoring topics or areas of interest to you and by reporting back to us with any questions, requests for assistance, or updates. Together, as a united coalition fighting for local change, we can make a difference, even by just two sparrows at a time. You can learn more and sign up to become an Audubon Ambassador at www.atlantaudubon.org/advocacy.

*You just checked eBird to verify that claim, didn't you? Grasshopper Sparrow was indeed recorded in eBird for Fayette County for the first time in June 2016 by Bob Hargrave, but Richard and I didn't realize that at the time of our conversation.



The Grasshopper Sparrow is named for its buzzy, insect-like song. Photo by Melanie Furr.



ATLANTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

4055 Roswell Road ♦ Atlanta, GA 30342
678.973.2437

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July Monthly Meeting

Please note that there will not be a Monthly Meeting in July.
We will resume our Monthly Meetings on Sunday, August 26, from 3:30 to 5:30 PM.

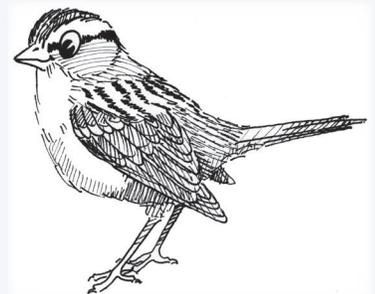
August Monthly Meeting Volunteer Recognition and 5th Annual Chippy Challenge

Sunday, August 26, 2018, 3:30 to 5:30 PM at Manuel's Tavern

Don't miss the August 26 monthly meeting and the 5th Annual Chippy Challenge. Nikki will try to stump the crowd with some updated bird- and birding-related trivia questions to test your knowledge and pit you against your fellow bird brains.

Play individually or with teams of no more than four people. Use of smart phones is not allowed. There will be a prize for the winner(s). In addition, we'll be recognizing and celebrating Atlanta Audubon volunteers who contributed more than 100 hours of service in 2017.

Please join us for this fun celebration.



Manuel's Tavern is located at 602 N. Highland Avenue, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30307. Our monthly meetings are free and open to the public. Free parking is readily available to the south of the building. Food and drink are available for purchase.