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Atlanta Audubon Begins Installation of Bird-friendly Habitat Educational Exhibit in Piedmont Park

(Atlanta, Ga.) May 1, 2018 – Ground has been broken for a Bird-friendly Habitat, complete with Georgia's first Chimney Swift tower, in the Piedmont Commons area of Piedmont Park as part of a cooperative effort between Atlanta Audubon Society and Piedmont Park Conservancy. Slated for completion in September, Atlanta Audubon is planning a dedication ceremony to coincide with the inaugural 'Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month.'

An urban haven for wildlife, Piedmont Park hosts more than 160 species of birds throughout the year. The Bird-Friendly Habitat Educational Exhibit will have two components — a native plant garden and a Chimney Swift tower. Both components will not only provide quality bird habitat in Piedmont Park, but also create new opportunities for interpretive education and wildlife observation while raising awareness about how urban greenspaces can benefit biodiversity.

Located along Clear Creek, the Native Plant Demonstration Garden in Piedmont Commons will provide high quality habitat for birds and wildlife and educate the public on the value of native plants. Consisting of an assortment of mainly native grasses and wildflowers, the garden will be a designed plant community that mimics the natural ecosystem and invites exploration by birds, people, and pollinators.

A common bird in urban areas, the Chimney Swift provides excellent — and free — pest control since their diet consists of flies, mosquitos, wasps, ants, and other insects caught in flight. A single Chimney Swift may consume up to 1,000 mosquito-sized insects per day. Chimney Swifts are migratory birds that breed in Georgia during spring and summer. In recent years, Chimney Swift populations have declined due to loss of tree cavities. Now, their alternative nesting habitats — chimneys— are frequently capped eliminating these nesting and roosting sites. Constructing Chimney Swift towers is a relatively new conservation tool to curb declining swift populations. Towers provide a nesting location for this species as well as a roosting site during migration. In late summer and early fall, Chimney Swifts gather in sizable

flocks and spend the night in communal roosts. As the swifts descend on a tower at dusk, a large swarm forms and they then pour into the chimney like smoke.

Atlanta Audubon is working on the tower design with John Monnat, a Seattle-based architect with extensive experience in parks and recreation, and Pierre Coiron, with Decatur-based Stability Engineering. After the tower is complete, Atlanta Audubon will collaborate with the Piedmont Park Conservancy to develop interpretive signage and educational programming, such as 'Swift Night Out' gatherings to observe the roosting birds. The Chimney Swift tower at the Piedmont Commons will stand 24 feet tall and be located in the center of the demonstration garden. The tower will provide crucial habitat for the swifts of Atlanta and a unique educational experience for park visitors.

"The Bird-friendly Habitat Educational Exhibit at Piedmont Park is an exciting demonstration of how Atlanta Audubon and parks groups can work in partnership to meet the needs of both people and wildlife," says Nikki Belmonte, Atlanta Audubon Society Executive Director. "The installation of a native plant garden and Chimney Swift tower will bring visitors to this serene area of the park, offer multiple educational opportunities, and provide relevant and necessary conservation actions for our birds."

The project is being fully funded by Atlanta Audubon Society thanks to a donation from a private individual and from a National Audubon Society Burke Conservation Grant.

The Piedmont Park Conservancy is a member and donor funded nonprofit working in partnership with the City of Atlanta to maintain and enhance historic Piedmont Park. Founded in 1989, the Conservancy raises over \$3 million each year to enhance and maintain the park. Learn more at piedmontpark.org.

Atlanta Audubon Society is committed to building places where birds and people thrive. We create birds - friendly communities through conservation, education, and advocacy.

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