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ATLANTA AUDUBON TO HOST EXHIBITAT UNVEILING AND CHALK ART FESTIVAL IN PIEDMONT PARK

(Atlanta, Ga.) September 4, 2018 — Atlanta Audubon Society will officially unveil the new “Exhibitat” in Piedmont Park on Tuesday, September 25. A cooperative effort between Atlanta Audubon and the Piedmont Park Conservancy, the “Exhibitat” is located in the Piedmont Commons along the northeast quadrant of Piedmont Park. As part of the celebration, Atlanta Audubon will host a Chalk Art Festival on the day of the unveiling. Artists and others are invited to purchase a square to decorate, and the public is invited to drop by and admire the work. The “Exhibitat” Unveiling and Chalk Art Festival are two of several events taking place during the month of September, which has been declared **Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month** by Governor Nathan Deal.

Tickets to the “Exhibitat” Unveiling are \$10 for Atlanta Audubon members and \$12 for non-members and may be purchased at www.atlantaaudubon.org/piedmont-park-exhibitat. Tickets include light hors d’oeuvres, drink tickets for two beers at Orpheus Brewery (21 and up only), and a native plant for guests to take home. Orpheus is brewing a special beer to commemorate the event. Groups of up to four individuals may also purchase chalk art squares for \$50/square. Chalking will take place from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, prior to the unveiling event. For more information, please visit www.atlantaaudubon.org/chalkart.

An urban haven for wildlife, Piedmont Park hosts more than 160 species of birds throughout the year. The Bird-Friendly Habitat Educational Exhibit, or “Exhibitat”, 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 “Exhibitat” 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.

The Chimney Swift tower was designed by John Monnat, a Seattle-based designer with extensive experience in parks and recreation, and Pierre Coiron, with Decatur-based Stability Engineering. The tower was constructed by Ron Salzer of Bridges to the Other Side. Local artists Lisa Tantillo and Zack Callaghan of Calou Calay will be painting the tower in the coming month. Atlanta Audubon will be collaborating 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 stands 24 feet tall and is 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 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. All proceeds will support the long-term maintenance of the Exhibit at Piedmont Park.

For more information on additional Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month events or to read the Proclamation, please visit our website at www.atlantaudubon.org/georgia-grows-native-for-birds-month.

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 building places where birds and people thrive. We create bird-friendly communities through conservation, education, and advocacy.

Media Note: Photos to accompany this article and a MS Word version of this press release are available for download at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y3l9s32oktcs94e/AADL4n1VHbxzzwGhN455VJ-fa?dl=0>.

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