

Wingbars

A Quarterly Publication of Georgia Audubon

FEBRUARY 2023



**GEORGIA
AUDUBON**

Georgia Audubon Will Launch Morgens Environmental Education Gateway in 2023

By Dottie Head, Director of Communications

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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.

White-throated Sparrow. Photo by Dawn Phillips, Audubon Photography Awards.

Georgia Audubon is poised to launch a new virtual education platform in 2023 to revolutionize and streamline the way the organization delivers content to members and program participants. The platform will be called the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway, in honor of the founding grant from Jim and Sally Morgens with the Morgens West Foundation. The Gateway is currently undergoing beta testing with plans to roll out the platform to Georgia Audubon members and program participants in early 2023.

The Morgens Environmental Education Gateway will create a digital space that fosters engaged learning with current educational resources, future program offerings, and other resources to support a thriving birder community and connect people across Georgia,” says Jared Teutsch, Georgia Audubon executive director. “The spark behind the creation of this Gateway was to enable Georgia Audubon to reach our education program participants virtually, while maintaining the ability to offer place-based programs in some locations, as needed.”

As a statewide organization, Georgia Audubon is working to offer educational content for members across the state. During the pandemic, the need for an online platform to deliver this content was brought into vivid focus as traditional in-person classes were neither safe nor practical. Georgia Audubon was a leader in Georgia and the nation in rolling out virtual content during the pandemic, including webinars, workshops, virtual field trips, and other programs, using Zoom to reach our constituents who were isolated at home. Georgia Audubon’s online content was wildly successful, and it sparked this thought process about building a more robust platform where people could view, on-demand and ad-free, a variety of bird-related educational programs from the comfort of their own homes.

“Jim and Sally Morgens have been generous supporters of Georgia Audubon’s education programs, providing seed funding for our in-person Connecting Students with STEM through Birds program and other education programs, so we were excited to present this Gateway proposal to them as way to foster interest and education in birds and their habitats, especially in the next generation,” says Teutsch.

“We found in Georgia Audubon’s Gateway proposal an ideal way to reach children and teens by assisting science teachers and creating material for school projects relating to birds and birding. Expanding the availability of Master Birder, which serves already-committed birders, is just icing on the cake,” Jim explained.

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STAFF

Jared Teutsch

Executive Director

jared.teutsch@georgiaaudubon.org

Sheridan Alford

Director of Community Engagement
sheridan.alford@georgiaaudubon.org

Adam Betuel

Director of Conservation
adam.betuel@georgiaaudubon.org

Melanie Furr

Director of Education
melanie.furr@georgiaaudubon.org

Michelle Hamner

Director of Development
michelle.hamner@georgiaaudubon.org

Dottie Head

Director of Communications
Wingbars Editor
dottie.head@georgiaaudubon.org

Gabe Andrie

Habitat Conservation Program Manager
gabe.andrie@georgiaaudubon.org

Catie E. Iber

Finance and Administration Manager
catie.iber@georgiaaudubon.org

Jason Taylor

Development Manager
jason.taylor@georgiaaudubon.org

Beverly Fooks

Membership and Development Associate
beverly.fooks@georgiaaudubon.org

Alex LoCastro

Conservation Program Coordinator
alex.locastro@georgiaaudubon.org

Ryan Myers

Habitat Restoration Specialist
ryan.myers@georgiaaudubon.org

Melissa Paduani

Education Program Coordinator
melissa.paduani@georgiaaudubon.org

Lauren Bowman Clontz

Coastal Conservation Coordinator
lauren.clontz@georgiaaudubon.org

Mim Eisenberg

Wingbars Proofreader
mim@wordcraftservices.com

From the Executive Director

Building a Gateway to Places Where Birds and People Thrive

Nearly all small organizations start with education. It's the best way to work local and think global at the same time. It often meets the needs of members and constituents and achieves something tangible. But as organizations grow, education often gets left behind. Why? Well, it's hard to scale on a bigger level and have tangible success.

Georgia Audubon, once Atlanta Audubon Society, started the same way. Education was the lifeblood of the organization, working to connect birds and nature with educators and students throughout metro Atlanta. We created unique programs like Taking Wing, Connecting Students to STEM through Birds, and Georgia Urban Ecologist that do amazing things for schools, teachers and students. Led by Melanie Furr, these programs have flourished and grown, and shows why it's so important to create a diverse group of environmental stewards and professional educators in Georgia.

But as a statewide organization, it has grown increasingly difficult to scale these locally designed programs. How would we reach other areas of Georgia? Instead of moving on from education like most growing organizations, we took a different approach. Ironically, COVID helped provide the answer. During lockdown, we reimaged virtual content, including educational resources and realized that a hybrid place-based program with virtual connections could not only survive, but thrive. The idea for a new education gateway was hatched.

Fast forward to 2023, and we are very excited to be officially rolling out the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway, reimaging what a connected community of environmental stewards looks like throughout Georgia. Now teachers, educators, students, parents, and adults will have opportunities throughout the state in a new platform designed to meet the growing demands of a dynamic and diverse community of places where birds and people thrive.

We welcome your feedback and hope you find the new Gateway inspiring and engaging.

Cheers,
Jared



Jared Teutsch

GEORGIA AUDUBON Courses Community Morgens Environmental Education Gateway

Become a Better Birder with These Courses

On-demand learning from Georgia Audubon's experienced staff and instructors

My Courses

Adam Betuel

Beginning eBird

CONTINUOUS

Do you keep track of the birds you see? Did you know this information can be used by scientists to inform conservation decisions that benefit birds...

Available Courses

Adam Betuel

Migration 101

CONTINUOUS

Migration forecasts and Lights Out alerts are conservation tools that you may have heard of over the past few years. They can also be great tools fo...

Adam Betuel

Advanced eBird

CONTINUOUS

Join Adam Betuel, Georgia Audubon's director of conservation, for a workshop guiding you through the various uses of eBird. This webinar is geared...

Introducing the Chuck-will's-widow: Georgia Audubon's New Species of Concern

A bird that is heard far more often than seen, the Chuck-will's-widow has a distinctive call that may be heard singing its name at dusk across the Georgia landscape on spring and summer evenings. Very little is known about this elusive, nocturnal species, in part, because they are notoriously difficult to locate. Their beautiful, mottled brown plumage provides perfect camouflage as they roost during daylight hours among dried leaves and tree branches. Georgia Audubon hopes to help fill in some of the data gaps for this near-threatened species and create more suitable habitat to help these birds, and, as such, we have selected the Chuck-will's-widow as our next species of concern.

Georgia's birds face a number of challenges, ranging from habitat loss and degradation, increased use of pesticides, climate change, and more. Through our Species of Concern program, every two years we select a new focal species to draw attention to these issues and to educate the public about simple steps we can all take to protect Georgia's birds. Beginning in 2023, Georgia Audubon will direct our resources and expertise to the Chuck-will's-widow – restoring native habitat, assisting with species-specific research, and engaging the public to help us better understand statewide population numbers and migratory behavior.

Chuck-will's-widows, or "Chucks," are one of three species of nightjars found in Georgia. Nightjars are medium-sized nocturnal birds characterized by long wings, short legs, and very short bills. Common Nighthawks and Eastern Whip-poor-wills are the two other nightjar species found in Georgia. Chucks spend the breeding season in Georgia and then migrate to the lowland forests of the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America during winter.

Active at dawn, dusk, and on bright nights, Chucks fly low over the ground in search of insects, like moths and beetles, which they catch in their enormous, oversized mouths. Unlike owls which have acute hearing, Chucks hunt by sight in the dark. Their oversized eyes help them see insects in low light, and their gigantic mouths provide some margin for error. A specialized anatomical feature, called rictal bristles, serves as a sensory mechanism allowing them to scoop up insects in the dark. Their mouths are so large, in fact, that on occasion these birds have been known to gulp down larger prey, like songbirds or bats.

Sadly, since insects make up such a large portion of their diet, Chucks are also extremely susceptible to

pesticides. They also fall prey to building collisions during their nighttime hunting runs and can even be victims of run-ins with vehicles since Chucks and other nightjar species often sit on the bare, open ground.

"There is a lot of folklore and legend surrounding the Chuck-will's-widows because they are bizarre looking birds and so little is known about them," says Adam Betuel, director of conservation. Chucks belong to a family of birds with the folk name "goatsuckers" The family name, Caprimulgidae, literally means "milker of goats," and, since these birds were often found near livestock, many folks believed these birds milked goats with their giant mouths each night. The reality is that

livestock attract insects, which are the Chucks' preferred food source; however, if you ever have a chance to see one of these birds up close, you can understand where this myth originated.

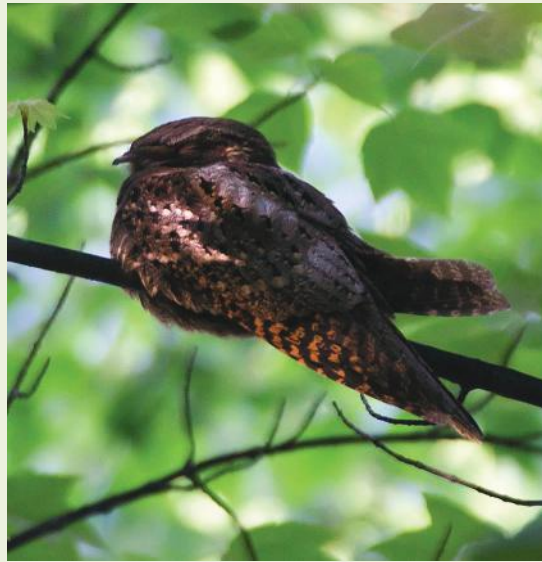
Chuck-will's-widows may be found in a number of different habitats in Georgia, from grassy areas to forests to timber stands. Despite their widespread nature across the state, little is known about what attracts them to various habitats. Learning what these birds are keying in on in their habitats is a big key to figuring out how to make Georgia more hospitable for them. Over the next few years, Georgia Audubon, in collaboration with multiple partners, hopes to help fill in some of the

gaps about this species.

Last summer, in partnership with Clark Rushing, assistant professor in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia, and his lab students, Georgia Audubon began assisting with radio tracking and GPS tagging Chuck-will's-widows to learn more about the breeding habits of this species, their habitat preferences, as well as where these birds go in the winter months. This work will continue next year when these birds return to Georgia for the breeding season.

"While there is still much to learn about this species and the threats they face, we know that they rely on healthy insect populations. Our habitat restoration work and native plant initiatives, in addition to our growing efforts with private landowners, will undoubtedly benefit this species since these programs increase healthy habitats, native plants, and the insect life they support," says Betuel. "Programs like our Habitat Stewardship Program and partnership programs with groups like the Georgia Forestry Foundation, National Resource Conservation Service, Chattahoochee RiverLands, and others permit us

(Continued on Page 5)



Chuck-will's-widow, by Dan Vickers.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

On Kiana Leveritte

By Steve Phenicie

(This is the 56th in a series on Georgia Audubon volunteers, board members, and staff.)

Not many Georgia birders would say that the Dickcissel, sometimes referred to as a “miniature Meadowlark,” is their spark bird. Kiana Leveritte, Georgia Audubon’s community engagement coordinator, is an exception. So how does one get excited about a bird that is seldom seen in Georgia? Kiana admits that she has never seen one in the Peach State herself.

First of all, like many of us, she’s not a native Georgian, hailing from Streamwood, Ill., a suburb of Chicago. She went to college at Tuskegee University in Alabama because she thought

she might want to become a veterinarian, and Tuskegee is known for that. She also has relatives in the Florida Panhandle and Atlanta, so she was relatively close to them. (Yes, we’re still not at the Dickcissel, but hang on.) While at Tuskegee, she took a four-month detour of sorts to Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kan., where she was part of a group that studied grassland birds and produced a paper that appeared in a scholarly journal, *Ornithological Applications*, the official organ of the American Ornithological Society.

She had her choice of three birds to study: Grasshopper Sparrows, Bobwhite Quail, or – you guessed it – the Dickcissel. She based her choice on the fact that it was the easiest bird to see and its nest was the easiest to find in the area of perhaps 50 acres where the study was conducted. What she learned in a nutshell about the Dickcissel:

As you might expect, if there’s little diversity in the environment, it’s bad for the birds. But conversely, if there’s a great deal of diversity, that isn’t good either, because it encourages predators such as snakes, badgers, and coyotes.

So the birds thrive best when in a “Goldilocks” environment.

Actually, she says she is also partial to crows because looking at them outside the window when she was a child encouraged her general interest in birds.

Kiana graduated from college in 2018, did an internship with Audubon

focused on the Wildlife Sanctuary Program, worked for the U.S. Forest Service for a year, and then became education coordinator for Audubon. Among the things she did in this position was help Melanie Furr, Audubon’s director of education, implement Atlanta Urban Ecologists, a program for students in grades 8 to 12 to expose them to environmental concepts and encourage careers in the field. Kiana later switched to her present position, in which she is responsible for coordinating Audubon’s activities with other organizations, working with volunteers, arranging field trips and doing outreach. She works under Sheridan Alford, the director of community engagement.

Kiana lives in Doraville with her German Shepherd, Majesty. As for the Dickcissel, it generally sticks to the central portion of the country and winters mainly in the tropics.



Kiana Leveritte is the community engagement coordinator for Georgia Audubon. Photo by Dottie Head.

THANK YOU!

A Million Thanks...

... to Project Safe Flight volunteers **Nancy Kennell, Kelly Bryan, Mary Kimberly, Gavin MacDonald, Maureen Carroll, Cheryl Hensley, Paul Miller, Adrienne Miller, Jay Davis, Brian Campbell, and Jae Lieberman** ... to Panola Mountain State Park restoration work volunteers **Barbara Powell-Schager, Nancy A. Downs, John E. Mayes, Teresa Mayes, Lisbet Ann Phillips, Esther Stokes, Steve Rushing, Judy Killeen, Lelia Ginn, Tinsley Ginn, Donna Shapiro, Kelly Garner, Courtney Korpak, Kelley Hanada, Christopher Calia, Jay Doolittle, Hilda Estrella de Lev, Lucia Lev, Ana Lev, Leo Lev, Gavin Allvine, and Lorie Bonham** ... to Island Ford Pollinator Garden volunteers **Robert Gisness, Adam George, Gayle F. McAllister, Al Tousek, Lynne Merrick, and Larry Klink** ... to **Little St. Simons Island** for their generous donation of a two-night stay for two for our holiday raffle ... to **Manuel’s Tavern** for hosting the Georgia Audubon holiday party ... to **Clark Meyer** and **Kevin O’Toole** for their help with Master Birder field trips at the Panola Mountain Banding Station ... to **Stephen Ramsden** and the **Charlie Bates Solar Astronomy Project** for supporting the Georgia Urban Ecologists program ... to the **Avian Advocates** for their continued support for the Wildlife Sanctuary Program ... to the numerous volunteers who participated in the area Christmas Bird Counts.

Save the Date: Georgia Bird Fest returns April 22 to May 21, 2023

Registration opens on March 8 for Georgia Audubon members.



Georgia Bird Fest will return this spring with more than 40 events between April 22 and May 21. Join fellow nature and bird enthusiasts for exciting field trips, workshops, and other events to celebrate and enjoy Georgia's exciting spring migration period.

Joining us for our closing weekend will be David Lindo, known as the Urban Birder. David inspires people to reexamine their urban environments, where more than 20 percent of the globe's bird species have been recorded, sometimes without us noticing. David's keynote address will challenge us to appreciate and conserve the birds that share our city lives.

David is the author of *How To Be An Urban Birder*, and *The Extraordinary World of Birds*. David was recently named as the seventh most influential person in wildlife by *BBC Wildlife* magazine. David will present the Georgia Bird Fest 2023 Closing Keynote at Round Trip Brewing on Sunday, May 21.

Other event highlights for Georgia Bird Fest 2023 include past favorites such as a behind-the-scenes tour of Zoo Atlanta's bird collection, an overnight stay at the Len Foote Hike Inn, the ever-popular Shorebird Weekend on the Georgia Coast, nature photography workshops, kayak and canoe excursions, and much more.



David Lindo will be the speaker for the closing weekend of Georgia Bird Fest 2023

NEW 2023 ARTWORK and SHIRT PRE-SALE! This year's Georgia Bird Fest T-shirt features the Chuck-will's-widow, selected by members as the 2023-2024 Georgia Audubon Species of Concern. This year's artwork was designed by bird artist and graphic designer Alex Tomlinson. A limited number of Georgia Bird Fest T-shirts featuring this year's artwork will be for sale in our online store, with proceeds supporting Georgia Audubon's conservation, education, and community engagement efforts. Shirts must be pre-ordered by March 10.

Registration for Georgia Bird Fest events will open to Georgia Audubon members on Wednesday, March 8, and to the public on March 13. Please visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfest for more information, to purchase T-shirts, and to preview the full schedule of events.

The Chuck-will's-widow: Georgia Audubon's New Species of Concern

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to build high-quality bird habitat that will benefit not only Chucks, but also many other avian and wildlife species."

Georgia Audubon will encourage public involvement with a community science program called the Nightjar Survey Network run by the Center for Conservation Biology. Currently, there is not a lot of data being reported in Georgia, but through outreach and education Georgia Audubon hopes to increase the number of birds being reported in the state.

"Chuck-will's-widows are what's known as a data

deficient species because very little is known about major aspects of their biology," says Betuel. "As a scientist, it's hard to make conservation decisions about how best to help this declining species when there is so little data. Through a concerted effort with partners, other scientists, and the public, we hope to be able to fill in some of the missing information so that we can make better management decisions and ensure that our children and grandchildren will still hear the call of Chucks and other nightjars across Georgia."

Georgia Audubon's Engaging New Students in New Places

By Melissa Paduani, Education Coordinator

As we continue to spread our wings state wide to build places where birds and people thrive, let's reflect on all the ways our education department has engaged students in new places.

Previously known as Atlanta Urban Ecologists and newly renamed Georgia Urban Ecologists, this monthly program invites teenagers to participate in hands-on learning in the outdoors while gaining valuable career insight. From October to May, we meet with conservation- and environmentally-minded organizations to highlight their valuable work. This past year, we're excited to have launched a brand-new cohort in the classic city of Athens. This brings our total number of cohorts to three, including our two metro Atlanta-based cohorts. We thank our partners who make this new cohort possible, including the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Oconee Rivers Audubon Society, Lilly Branch Audubon Society, Athens-Clarke County Unified Government, and the State Botanical Garden of Georgia.

Our monthly home school series has gone fully virtual and continues to evolve as we look ahead to the upcoming launch of the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway. There are 159 counties in Georgia, and we hope to reach as many as possible.

The Master Birder program, with two divisions routinely offered in Atlanta, has now successfully partnered with other Audubon chapters in the Savannah area, co-hosted



Georgia Urban Ecologists at Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve. Photo by Melissa Paduani.

by Hilton Head Audubon and Ogeechee Audubon Society. The upcoming winter 2023 program will welcome Oconee Rivers Audubon Society and bring Master Birder to the Athens area for the first time.

The Morgens Environmental Education Gateway will play an integral role in transforming the way our programs reach the public, and we can't wait to see how it comes to life later this year.

Birding and Mental Health

By Sheridan Alford, Director of Community Engagement

From outdoor recreation to food necessities and health remedies, nature is the source of life from top to bottom. But what about internally? Spending time outside can positively impact your physical and, more importantly, mental health. Research shows that just 20 minutes of outdoor walking and birdwatching can reduce tension and improve overall mood in both males and females (Cobar et al., 2017). Birdwatching is an accessible outdoor recreational activity and a great gateway to awareness and understanding one's mental state. While out on your next birding excursion, take a moment, in the beginning, to stand still and breathe. In and out. If you're in a safe location, you may be able to close your eyes and just listen. Do a mental inventory of your surroundings, your body, and how you are feeling at that moment. Using tunnel vision on a task is a great way to take your mind off of subconscious worries. As you embark on your birding trips, remember that this is a fun activity. I know it can get competitive, which may be fun for some, but make sure you're keeping joy at the forefront of your

endeavor. If more in-depth time is needed outdoors to battle more significant mental issues, it may be better to remove the competitive aspect (whether with yourself or friends) every once in a while. Go out by yourself or with your dog or a close friend and watch the birds with all of your senses ready to receive. Use this time to think clearly through your dilemmas, or take the time to escape and let the sounds of nature fill the space.



Spending time in nature is good for your mental health. Photo by Sheridan Alford.

Species Profile: The American Coot

By Steve Phenicie

If you've ever watched the old TV program *M*A*S*H*, you probably remember that Corporal Max Klinger's favorite baseball team was the Toledo Mud Hens. Mud Hen is another name for the American Coot, but calling your team the Toledo American Coots wouldn't sound very catchy, would it?

These plentiful birds are found throughout much of North America, including the marshes along Lake Erie near Toledo, Ohio, and sportswriters are thought to have assigned the nickname to the baseball team. In much of the Southeast, they are present only in the winter.

To the casual observer, they might appear to be ducks, but their chicken-like bills are not like those of ducks, and their feet are not webbed, having lobes at the ends of the toes. These plump, dark gray water birds have round black heads, very short tails, and a sloping bill.

They're found in ponds, lakes, and marshes; in winter, they also show up in fields and salt bays. For breeding season they require fairly shallow fresh water with much marsh vegetation. At other seasons they may be in almost any aquatic habitat. Migrants sometimes are seen out at sea some distance from land. Coots sometimes gather in winter flocks of several thousand and mix with other waterfowl.

They eat mainly plant material as well as algae, insects, tadpoles, fish, worms, snails, crayfish, prawns, and eggs of

other birds. Sometimes they steal food from other birds, including ducks.

Their nest site is among tall marsh vegetation in shallow water. The nest, built by both sexes, is a floating platform of dead cattails, bulrushes, and sedges, lined with finer material and anchored to standing plants. Several similar platforms may be built, with only one or two used for nesting. Coots very aggressively defend their nesting territory, and the female typically lays from six to 11 eggs. Incubation of 21 to 25 days is by both sexes. The young can swim well soon after hatching; at night, they are brooded on a nest-like platform built by the male. The young are able to fly when about seven to eight weeks old.

Some places in Georgia you might see them are Harris Neck and Savannah national wildlife refuges, both near Savannah; Phinizy Swamp in Augusta; E.L. Huie in Clayton County; Lake Seminole WMA near Bainbridge; Altamaha WMA in Darien (Butler Island specifically); Paradise Public Fishing Area east of Tifton; Reed Bingham State Park at Adel in Cook County; and West Point Lake Dam.

Some cool facts about the American Coot:

- They are the only birds found in Georgia that have white bills.
- The young often ride on the back of a parent and can stay attached even when the adult dives underwater.
- Coots aren't hunted nearly as much as ducks since many hunters consider them inedible.
- Like a 747, they require a lot of space for a takeoff. They patter across the water, flapping their wings furiously, before becoming airborne.



American Coot by K.T. Allen, Great Backyard Bird Count.



American Coot, by Linda Dyer Kennedy.

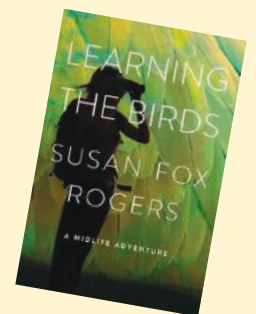
Early Birds Book Club Resumes for 2023

The Early Birds Book Club meets in person at Manuel's Tavern, from 2:00 to 3:30 PM, on months when Georgia Audubon is also meeting there. The group meets virtually on Zoom for months when there is not an in-person meeting at Manuel's. Please check the website at www.georgiaaudubon.org/early-birds-book-club for updates on meeting locations.

Sunday, February 26, at 2:00 PM: *Learning the Birds*, by Susan Fox Rogers

Sunday, March, 26 at 2:00 PM: *The Condor's Feather: Traveling Wild in South America*, by Michael Webster

Sunday, April 23, at 2:00 PM: *Halcyon Journey: In Search of the Belted Kingfisher*, by Marina Richie and Ram Papish



Introducing the Georgia Beloved Naturalist Program

The Georgia Beloved Naturalist Program (GBN) is a nine-month program that facilitates a unique and exciting nature-based learning experience for people representing diverse ages, cultures, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Formerly called the DeKalb Beloved Naturalist Program, the group approached Georgia Audubon about serving as fiscal sponsor and helping administer the program going forward, and we were delighted to accept. Other partners include the Amphibian Foundation, Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, Awali Agricultural Center, Chattahoochee Nature Center, DeKalb County Recreation, Parks & Cultural Affairs, South Fork Conservancy, West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, and public and private universities.

The Georgia Beloved Naturalist program is committed to nurturing deep connections between naturalists and ecological systems within Georgia while exploring issues regarding environmental justice. GBN introduces sound scientific information in a hands-on, fun,



Photo by Clare McCurdy.

and interactive manner that increases awareness of the disproportionate environmental risks faced by diverse segments of society.

GBN engages a diverse team of educators and encourages participants of all abilities to learn strategies and resources for effective natural resources advocacy and stewardship. They also provide resources that support the dreams of those who seek lifetime opportunities as naturalists.

GBN runs from February to October of each calendar year, and registration is now open for 2023. The program cost is \$500. A limited number of scholarships are available.

For more information on how to support or participate in this program, please visit our website at www.georgiaaudubon.org/beloved-naturalist.



Photo by Tixie Fowler.

Georgia Audubon Will Launch Morgens Environmental Education Gateway in 2023

(Continued from Page 1)

One of the first programs that will be offered via the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway will be the popular Georgia Audubon Master Birder Program. The eight-week program will feature course content that is taught virtually via the Gateway and will be reinforced with in-person weekend field trips in different geographic areas of the state to allow program participants to get hands-on experience with the bird ID and ecology lessons being presented via the virtual sessions. In addition, the coursework will be offered on demand so that participants can watch each week's session on their own schedule. Weekly "office hours" with instructors will give participants an opportunity to ask questions about the weekly presentation, and the weekend field trips will provide field and social fellowship experiences for participants.

The Gateway will also feature programming that is available to Georgia Audubon members as a membership benefit. Webinars like Birding 101, Basics of eBird, Advanced eBird, Gardening for Birds, and others will be available on demand for members to view free of charge to help them learn more about identifying and reporting birds they see at home or afield. New programming will be added regularly, and Georgia Audubon will be seeking input from constituents about the types of programming they would enjoy.

As an added bonus, the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway will integrate with Georgia Audubon's existing membership and registration portal. Upon registering for a course, like Master Birder or Homeschool, program participants will be automatically uploaded to the Gateway and will receive email confirmations of course participation, links to join the course, and reminders about upcoming coursework and deadlines for completion.

In addition, courses like Sparrow ID, Birding by Ear, Raptor ID, and other youth and adult courses (including Georgia Bird Fest virtual events) will be offered via the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway. Registered participants will be able to watch programming live and then revisit the program later to review the information presented without the annoying advertisements that are included on recordings that have previously been stored in YouTube.

Georgia Audubon is currently beta testing the platform with a select group of users. A "how to use the platform" series will also be available at program launch so that members and guests can learn how to access the Gateway.

"We're excited to launch the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway as a new tool for delivering educational content to people from across Georgia," says Teutsch. "We are so appreciative of this transformational grant from the Morgens West Foundation that is enabling us to make this Gateway available to members and program participants."

UPCOMING EVENTS

Webinar: Becoming a Better Birder, with Georgann Schmalz **Thursday, February 9** **7:00 to 8:30 PM via Zoom webinar**

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

Webinar: Raptor ID, with Georgann Schmalz **Thursday, February 16** **7:00 to 8:30 PM via Zoom webinar**

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



*Grasshopper sparrow, by
Melanie Furr.*



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



*Indigo Bunting,
by Dan Vickers.*

Birding by Ear Workshop and Optional Field Trip **Workshop via Zoom Webinar: Thursday, March 30, from 7:00 to 8:30 PM** **Field Trip: Saturday, April 1, from 8:00 to 11:00 AM at a location TBD** (only 16 spaces are available on the field trip)

This program with ornithologist Georgann Schmalz is for anyone who is interested in learning to identify birds by songs and call notes. Participants will learn the characteristics of bird songs and techniques of birding by ear. Information will include examples of components of bird songs such as tempo, rhythm, pitch, and quality. Handouts will include a list of mnemonics and phonetics for use in the field. We will not play dozens of songs and show dozens of bird photos. Instead, the course emphasizes how to listen and what to listen for so that even new songs from birds you have not encountered before can be learned and memorized.

On Saturday, April 1, those who register will join Georgann for a field trip to a location TBD to put into practice the skills and techniques learned during the webinar. Register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/upcoming-events.

Georgia Audubon Master Birder Program

February 28 through April 8, 2023 (see full schedule on website)
Cost: \$450 for Georgia Audubon members / \$500 for non-members

Registration is now open for our popular Master Birder Program. The winter session will run from February 28 through April 8, with virtual sessions on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and field trips on Saturday or Sunday each week.

Course content includes classification and identification of birds, birding equipment, bird songs and calls, attracting birds and backyard wildlife habitat, anatomy and physiology, bird ecology, bird behavior, flight and migration, and bird conservation. Upon graduation, Master Birders are encouraged to complete annual volunteer service for Georgia Audubon or their local Audubon chapter to receive added membership benefits such as early registration opportunities and discounted event fees.

The course will fill quickly, so please register soon. To learn more or register, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/master-birder-program.



Spring 2022 Master Birder Graduates. Photo by Melanie Furr.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Field Trip: Piedmont Park | Leader: Rob McDonough

Saturday, February 4, at 8:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve | Leader: Stephen Ramsden

Saturday, February 4, at 9:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum

Wednesday, February 8, at 8:00 AM

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

Georgia Audubon Virtual Homeschool Program: Songs and Calls

Friday, February 10, times vary

To learn more or sign up, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/homeschool.

Field Trip: George Smith Park | Leader: Terry Miller

Sunday, February 12, at 8:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Chattahoochee Nature Center | Leader: Dottie Head and Abby Cox

Sunday, February 12, at 8:00 AM

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

Volunteer Workday: Pollinator Garden at Island Ford Unit of CRNRA

Friday, February 17, at 9:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/volunteer.

Field Trip: Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve | Leader: Stephen Ramsden

Saturday, February 18, at 9:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Decatur Cemetery | Leader: Jay Davis

Sunday, February 19, at 8:00 AM

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

Sparrow ID Workshop and Field Trip

Workshop via Zoom Webinar: Thursday, February 23, from 7:00 to 8:30 PM

Field Trip: Saturday, February 25, from 8:00 to 11:00 AM at a location TBD

Cost for Workshop and Field Trip:

Georgia Audubon members: \$50

Non-members: \$60

Master Birder in good volunteer standing: \$45

For those who are unable to attend the field trip, you may also register to attend the workshop portion of this course only.

Cost for Workshop ONLY:

Georgia Audubon Members - \$25

Non-members: \$30

Master Birders in good volunteer standing - \$20

Ready to sharpen your skills identifying those “little brown jobs”? Often skulking, elusive, and confusingly similar, sparrows can make fall warblers seem easy. Adam Betuel, Georgia Audubon’s director of conservation, will help participants learn more about the many sparrow species that winter in Georgia. A virtual class session will be held via Zoom to teach participants about distinguishing field marks, foraging behaviors, flight characteristics, and vocalizations that are useful to identification and appreciation of Georgia’s sparrows. Participants will then have the chance to practice their identification skills in the field with a guided trip to find and observe sparrows at a metro Atlanta location to be determined.

Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/in-person-events.



Join Adam Betuel for the Sparrow ID Workshop and Field Trip. White-crowned Sparrow, by Ryan Rubi.



Eastern Bluebird, by Steve Rushing.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY *(Continued from Page 10)*

Field Trip: Cochran Shoals CRNRA (Interstate North Entrance) | Leader: Adam George
Friday, December 2, at 8:00 AM

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

MARCH

Field Trip: Piedmont Park | Leader: Becca Dill
Saturday, March 4, at 8:30 AM

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

Field Trip: Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve | Leader: Stephen Ramsden
Saturday, March 4 at 9:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Chattahoochee Nature Center | Leader: Dottie Head and Abby Cox
Sunday, March 5, at 8:00 AM

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

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

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

Georgia Audubon Virtual Homeschool Program: Baby Birds and Nesting Season
Friday, March 10, times vary

To learn more or sign up, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/homeschool.

Field Trip: George Smith Park | Leader: Terry Miller
Sunday, March 12, at 8:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve | Leader: Stephen Ramsden
Saturday, March 18 at 9:00 AM

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

APRIL

Field Trip: Piedmont Park | Leader: Rob McDonough
Saturday, April 4, at 8:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve | Leader: Stephen Ramsden
Saturday, April 4 at 9:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum
Wednesday, April 12, at 8:00 AM

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

Georgia Audubon Virtual Homeschool Program: Mysteries of Migration
Friday, April 14, times vary

To learn more or sign up, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/homeschool.

Field Trip: Morgan Falls Overlook Park | Leader: Roseanne Guerra
Saturday, April 15, at 8:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Tribble Mill Park | Leader: Jack Bruce
Saturday, April 28, at 8:00 AM

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



Red-headed Woodpecker, by David Boltz.



Winter Wren, by Dan Vickers.

Wingbars

GEORGIA AUDUBON

4055 Roswell Road, NE · Atlanta, GA 30342

678.973.2437

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Georgia Native Plant Society and Georgia Audubon to Co-host Virtual Symposium

Theme: *Planting with Purpose*

Webinar: Saturday, February 18 and Sunday, February 19

(Register for one or both days)

Georgia Audubon is thrilled to once again partner with the Georgia Native Plant Society (GNPS) to co-host the 2023 Symposium. This year's event will be a virtual event featuring a terrific lineup of speakers.

Saturday, February 18, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

1. Kathryn Kolb – **What's in your Yard?** – Reveal and restore the natural landscape on your property
2. Gabe Andrie – **Understanding Habitat to Support Birds and other Wildlife with Native Plants**
3. Trecia Neal – **Native Plant Gardening Myths – Why We Need Native Plants!**

Sunday, February 19, from 2:00 to 4:30 PM

1. Benjamin Vogt – **Fundamentals of Garden Layers**
2. GNPS Chapter Highlights – **What Worked Well and Where We're Going**

To register, go to www.georgiaaudubon.org/upcoming-events

