



July 2024
Vol. 51, No. 2

GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
www.gos.org

Camp TALON 2024

By Bob Sargent

Linda May (GA DNR) and I had the privilege of teaching the 14th edition of Camp TALON (Teen Adventures Learning about Ornithology and Nature) on the coast June 1-6. Twenty-one teenagers from five states participated, including one boy who traveled from Seattle to learn about Georgia's birds. We picked up most of the campers in Macon and transported them via rental bus to Epworth-by-the-Sea on St. Simons Island, which was our base camp for six days. Campers who live on the coast were brought to Epworth by their parents.

Every morning started early with road and boat trips to some of the best birding sites the coast has to offer: Little St. Simons Island, Jekyll Island State Park, Andrews Island, St. Simons Island, Crooked River State Park, the famous rookery on Gilman Pond (private property), Sapelo Island, and Ft. Stewart. Other teachers joined us at nearly every stop to share with the campers their knowledge and enthusiasm about birds, plants, ecology, and related topics. Sometimes the lessons were unplanned and spontaneous, such as when we spotted a Gopher Tortoise at Crooked River State Park, and this led to a roadside lesson about early successional



Painted Bunting, Andrews Island. Photo by Bob Sargent.

habitats and keystone species. The teen birders learned about habitats and management practices, bird species identification, avian anatomy and physiology, how birds fly and how and why they sing, migration, island history and ecology, life history of beach invertebrates, conservation issues, career opportunities, why birds are ecologically important and how the campers can contribute to their conservation, and how to keep a journal. Most importantly, the campers had several opportunities to speak with graduate students, naturalists, and retired professors about research and careers.

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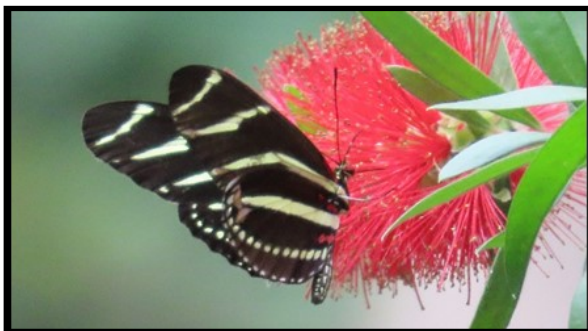
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GOShawk is published quarterly (March, June, September, December)

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Zebra Longwing, Jekyll Island Campground. Photo by Bob Sargent.

Mark Your Calendars!

GOS FALL MEETING: October 11-14, 2024

Don't miss this year's Fall GOS meeting, which will be held on Jekyll Island. In addition to the usual four days of fabulous birding led by some of Georgia's very best birders, we will have accomplished speakers on the agenda for Friday evening and the Saturday keynote address following the banquet. Meeting hotel details: Villas by the Sea Resort, 1175 N. Beachview Drive. Call 912-635-2521, 800-841-6262, or visit www.villasbythesearesort.com. The cut-off date for the GOS room rate is September 11, 2024, and "GOS" is the group code. For more information visit www.gos.org.

The Oriole Welcomes Submissions

The Oriole, the scientific journal of GOS, invites authors to submit general notes or research articles about Georgia bird life. We also publish book reviews. You can see examples in previous issues, which are available at the GOS website under Publications/Periodicals. Contact Jim Ferrari at jferrari@wesleyancollege.edu if you would like to discuss your ideas about a potential manuscript.



Orchard Oriole. Photo by Dan Vickers.

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Camp TALON 14 (continued from page 1)

At Andrews Island, the campers saw avocets, stilts, peeps, and white pelicans. At Little St. Simons, they saw four American Flamingos, witnessed a mist-netting operation, and learned about shorebird studies. At Gilman Pond, they saw one of the most incredible rookeries in the state and learned about wading bird surveys and Wood Stork biology. At Sapelo Island, they got a fleeting glimpse of a Plain Chachalaca, learned about island plant zones and the importance of the saltmarsh, saw several Painted Buntings, and climbed the lighthouse. At Ft. Stewart, they learned about Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (RCW), prescribed fire, and timber management, and they used a peeper camera to see RCW and bluebird nestlings in tree cavities. Along their journey they also were treated to



The campers watching birds at Andrews Island. Photo by Bob Sargent.

presentations about Georgia DNR’s Wildlife Resources Division and its mission, the history of bird conservation and wildlife laws in the U.S., and how to use birding apps, and they participated in an activity designed to teach them about the triumphs and perils birds face when migrating.



Linda May gives a Gopher Tortoise ecology lesson at Crooked River State Park. Photo by Bob Sargent.

At the end of six days, the teenagers had recorded 130 species of birds along with several species of reptiles, frogs, mammals, butterflies, a long list of plant species, and various beach invertebrates. They snapped hundreds of photos and met and established lifelong connections with other bird-obsessed teens. Several made a point of collecting names, phone numbers, and addresses of potential career mentors. All the campers took prizes home, such as binoculars, natural history books, DVDs and CDs, caps, posters, and binocular harnesses. Oh, and they didn’t have to endure non-stop lectures. The camp took timeouts so the teens could visit the pool at Epworth and

toss a football. There were ice cream, pizza, and Waffle House stops on the itinerary. And who could forget the visit to St. Simons Island’s East Beach, where the campers decided to do their best imitation of sanderlings—first chasing and then fleeing from the waves—for 30 minutes.

Linda and I thank the many people and entities who made this adventure possible, starting with essential financial support from TERN, the Georgia Ornithological Society,

Two of the campers working hard to get a perfect photo of a Snowy Egret at St. Simons Island. Photo by Bob Sargent.



Camp TALON 14 (continued from page 3)

and Birds Georgia. Much appreciation also goes to the other teachers and coordinators: retired professors Bob Sattelmeyer and Bob Cooper; WRD's Tim Keyes, Chris Depkin, Fred Hay, Justin Alexander, Blaine Tyler, and Adam Mackinnon; the LSSI all-star team: Stacia, Aurora, Eva, Hailey, Adam, Diane, Beck (the latter two are UGA students working on LSSI), and especially Hank and Wendy Paulson for supporting our LSSI adventure every year; retired TNC ecologist Malcolm Hodges; and Ft. Stewart's wildlife chief Larry Carlile.



Stacia Hendricks poses with some of the campers at Little St. Simons Island. Photo by Bob Sargent.



Larry Carlile demonstrates the use of a peeper camera at Ft. Stewart. Photo by Bob Sargent.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker nestlings as seen through a peeper cam, Ft. Stewart. Photo by Bob Sargent.



Two of four American Flamingos seen at Little St. Simons Island during Camp TALON, June 3, 2024. Photo by Bob Sargent.

Attention, teen birders (ages 14-19): Are you interested in attending Camp TALON? The 2025 camp is scheduled for May 31 to June 5. For information, visit georgiawildlife.com/camptalon

Georgia's 18th Youth Birding Competition

By Georgia DNR

The 18th annual Georgia Youth Birding Competition (YBC) drew more than 100 young birders to Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center in Mansfield, Georgia, on Saturday, April 20th. Georgia DNR's Tim Keyes, founder and coordinator of the YBC, praised the results, noting that, "We had new rookie teams in every age division. We had a team raise over \$1,000 for conservation. We had a lot of volunteers throughout. And with the winners finding 159 species, we have another hardcore birding team!" The Wood Thrushes, from DeKalb County, won the high school division and overall competition, seeing or hearing 159 species in a 24-hour search that ranged from coastal Georgia to Kennesaw Mountain. The count topped last year's high of 144. Ten teams listed 70 or more species, and six had over 100.

The Youth Birding Competition is aimed at inspiring an awareness and appreciation of Georgia birds and the outdoors. This year's event ran from April 12 till 5 p.m. on the 20th. During that almost nine-day span, kindergarteners through high-schoolers picked a 24-hour period and competed by age group to find the most bird species. Teams sporting names such as Counting Crows and Pileated Sisters hailed from Brunswick to Alto.

For the second straight year, the Pi-billed Grebes of Atlanta led in fundraising for conservation. The Atlanta high schoolers will donate the \$1,057 to Trees Atlanta. The fundraising total for the competition, in which financially supporting wildlife work is voluntary, exceeded \$1,500.



Thirteen-year-old Aleena Huang's Barred Owl drawing was the overall winner of the YBC's T-shirt art contest.

Tom Painting received the Mentor Award. The educator at Paideia School in Atlanta spent more than 30 hours prepping and mentoring the Pi-billed Grebes, in addition to encouraging youth through bird walks and a birds photo-sharing account. Before presenting the award, Tim Keyes read a two-page letter from a teen detailing Tom's efforts.

The Saturday evening awards banquet featured the winners and more than 150 entries in a T-shirt art contest, with a slideshow of images playing on large screens. Birding participants received shirts with a Barred Owl drawn by Aleena Huang, an eighth-grader and student at SKA Academy of Art and Design in Duluth. As the art contest grand-prize winner, Huang took home a \$100 Amazon gift card. While DNR named most T-shirt division winners earlier this year, art contest coordinator Linda May announced at the banquet the top entry from a youth who participated in the birding competition. That honor went to Ella Seifert for her drawing of a Hermit Thrush. The ninth-grader from Kell High School in Kennesaw birded with the Awesome Anhingas team, which tied for third in the high school division.

The 2025 YBC awards banquet will be held on April 12. Registration opens online this winter. The competition and art contest – which have inspired similar events in some other states, including Birmingham Zoo's recent Alabama Bird Search Youth Challenge – are sponsored

Youth Birding Competition (continued from page 5)

by DNR's Wildlife Conservation Section, The Environmental Resources Network Inc. (TERN), the Georgia Ornithological Society, and Birds Georgia. Visit <https://georgiawildlife.com/ybc> for details.



Clockwise from upper left: 1) Primary Division winner Valor Johnson's (age 7) Eastern Bluebird; 2) Elementary Division winner Mira Ma's (age 10) Calliope Hummingbird; 3) High School Division winner Abigail Moeller's (age 17) Northern Flicker; and 4) Winner of the best art submitted by a YBC competitor Ella Seifert's (age 15) Hermit Thrush.



Charlie Anderson Receives GOS's 2024 Young Birder Optics Award

By Bob Sargent

Sixteen-year-old Charlotte “Charlie” Anderson is the third recipient of GOS’s Young Birder Optics Award. GOS is a strong proponent of educating young people about birds and encouraging them to get involved in birding, ornithology, and conservation. Many serious young birders do not have opportunities to acquire quality optics to help them identify birds, grow their passion for feathered creatures, and contribute to bird study. In 2021, GOS established this award, through which it provides up to two optics (binoculars or a spotting scope and tripod) each year, one to a birder aged 15-19 and one to a birder aged 20-25. Charlie has been birding since she was eight years old and has more than 400 species on her life list. She is a member of GOS and Birds Georgia, has participated in the Urban Ecologist’s program and CBCs, and has attended Camp TALON twice. Recently, she attended ABA’s Camp Colorado, courtesy of a scholarship from GOS. She is a gifted artist. In her scholarship application she wrote, “For my career, I would absolutely like to go into wildlife biology, ecology, and/or ornithology. Combining my talent for art, love of film, and interest in the natural world will lead me down paths that may involve museum curation, field work for a university or organization, scientific illustration or the film industry, and much more. I could teach so many companions and people about birds and open their eyes to the natural world.”



Charlie Anderson poses with her new spotting scope and tripod at Panola Mountain on May 5, 2024. Photo by Bob Sargent..

Thanks for the Privilege of Allowing Me to Serve

By Bob Sargent

This is my last issue as editor of the *GOShawk*. In fact, I have also decided to resign from my other roles with GOS. I had hoped that this would be a lengthier issue that included articles from several other contributors. But sometimes the pickings are slim, as they say. I thought about updating and including in this issue the history of GOS I wrote for the society’s 75th anniversary meeting in 2011 (see gos.org/history), but the thought of doing so clearly reminded me that - with respect to most things GOS - I have been immersed in this organization a very long time. Probably too long. It’s time for someone else with more energy, better technology skills (that won’t be hard to find), and new ideas to take the reins. In fact, it would be great if all GOS members paused and asked themselves, “How can I contribute so that this nearly 90-year-old society remains healthy and relevant?” Much has changed within GOS in recent years. What’s particularly evident is a worrisome decline in meeting participation. GOS needs your input, your volunteerism, and your active membership. And now GOS needs a newsletter editor, so please contact Ed Maioriello if interested. It has been my great privilege to serve this society in a variety of ways since I was elected to the Executive Committee at the Skidaway Island meeting in 2001. On that night Gail Russell was elected president, as she received the gavel from President John Swiderski, and my mentor and eloquent friend Ken Clark (former president) received the Earle R. Greene Award and left the audience laughing in the aisles. Great memories.

GOShawk



Nonprofit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Athens, Georgia
Permit No. 11

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
PO Box 5472
Macon, GA 31208



Printed on Recycled Paper

Annual Rates for GOS Membership

Brown Thrasher (Individual/Family Membership)	\$35
Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Patron)	\$50
Fledgling (Students only)	\$20

Please visit <http://www.gos.org/join-us>



Camp TALON's class of 2024, including Malcolm Hodges and Bob Sargent, returns to the mainland on the ferry after a day of birding at Sapelo Island.