



**Georgia Ornithological Society
Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant 2023
Final Progress Report**

“Bird Friendly Maritime Grassland Dune Restoration Project”

The project has come to completion after follow-up site prep and planting were completed in late 2024 (after our last progress report in September 2024). This project has been a collaborative effort to restore critical maritime grassland habitats, benefiting avian species and promoting ecological resilience along Georgia’s coast. The extension granted by GOS was needed due to unforeseen plant propagation and permitting issues and ultimately led to the development of deeper strategic partnerships with GA DNR’s Altama Plantation WMA Team, the Coastal Plain GNPS Chapter, and JIA on top of added community engagement, site prep, and ultimately a healthier and more native habitat. The Birds Georgia Habitat Team was able to restore over 4 acres of habitat, which is more than the 3 acres originally proposed, adding to the available habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Birds Georgia began planning work for the “Bird-friendly Maritime Grassland Dune Restoration Project” before the support provided by the Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant through the Georgia Ornithological Society. Multi-acre restoration projects completed in recent years funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation along with the Schumann Foundation ignited the effort to complete a corridor of maritime grassland habitat. Working in tandem with these funding sources, this project has allowed for over 10 acres of continuous maritime grassland to be restored providing valuable habitat connectivity for many species on Jekyll.

Completed project activities since the September 2024 Project Report:

- **October 2024:**
 - Conducted targeted herbicide treatments across the restoration area to complete the final site prep before planting.
 - Day 1: After an assessment of unit plant species composition and progress, Birds Georgia Habitat Team treated the south end of the restoration site, working northward. Focused on target species, including nutsedge (*Cyperus spp.*), bahia grass (*Paspalum notatum*), Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), centipede grass (*Eremochloa ophiuroides*), and sand spurs (*Cenchrus spp.*).

- Day 2: Continued herbicide applications at previously treated areas, targeting the same target species. Special attention was given to Bermuda grass patches and the site perimeter.
 - Muhly production and transport logistical planning meetings.
 - Volunteer workday coordination, advertising, and final details.
- **November 2024:**
 - Site assessment - Herbicide treatments effectively suppressed target species across the restoration site, ensuring favorable conditions for native plant establishment.
 - Birds Georgia Habitat Team worked with Coastal Plain GNPS and GA DNR to transport and unload plants and supplies for upcoming volunteer workdays.
 - Birds Georgia Habitat Team planted thousands of plugs on the site optimizing planting methods, spacing, and logistics.
 - Two volunteer planting days were completed engaging more than 60 community members to assist with the installation of more than 15,000 native muhly (*Muhlenbergia sericea*) plugs.
 - JIA facilitated a prescribed site prep burn with Birds Georgia support on day 1 of volunteer planting to optimize conditions for planting and to educate volunteers on the benefits of prescribed fire as a tool for restoration and ecological land management.



Photo 1: Example of nutsedge (*Cyperus spp.*) treated with herbicide during invasive species management efforts during planting site preparation.



Photo 2: Effective herbicide treatment of target non-native invasive and undesirable plant species allowed for ideal planting conditions.



Photo 3: Birds Georgia Habitat Team and nursery partners (GA DNR & Coastal Plain GNPS) unloading muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia sericea*) plugs for planting



Photo 4: Prescribed fire conducted by the Habitat Team and Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) as part of site preparation.



Photo 5: Volunteers gather for a bird walk led by Birds Georgia Coastal Coordinator, Sarah Manning, before planting activities begin.



Photo 6: Recently planted muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia sericea*) plug, showcasing progress in restoration efforts.