



IBA Coordinator's Report

July, 2008

General

I have been collecting the tools and information I need to be an effective coordinator. Although I officially started July 1, a previously planned out of state trip had me away for the first week of July. So I got started as soon as I accepted the position, and was able to do a good bit of work while away. I will also be out of pocket during the day from August 7-22, so I have been working quite a bit more than 20 hours per week in anticipation of this. During that time I will be working in the evenings and available daily via email.

I have visited several IBAs, travelled to Savannah to get the laptop, and to Athens to get the paper files. I spent significant time getting the laptop back into working order, and familiarizing myself with the papers. I have spent a good deal of time simply communicating with people related to the program: DNR personnel, the president of GOS, area managers, etc. I have also spent a good deal of time simply reading older correspondence, letters, and other files on the computer. During my trip to the coast I met with Mary Elfner to get some background information.

IBA Committee: I have been in contact with a number of individuals regarding the IBA Committee. Having received advice from Jim Wilson and Mary Elfner, I have asked most of the previous committee members to remain on board. I would also like to have a representative of each of Georgia's Audubon chapters represented and have begun asking the chapter presidents to nominate someone – several will likely be those who attended the May Georgia Audubon Council meeting. Representatives of DNR, GOS, USFWS and UGA are already on the committee. So far I have received only positive responses. These are from: Giff Beaton, Ken Blankenship, Mike Chapman, Jim Flynn, Jim Gilreath Noel Holcomb, Nathan Klaus, Vanessa Lane, Bob Sargent, Georgann Schmalz, Jim Wentworth, and Jim Wilson.

Fundraising

Together Green Prior to the June 27 deadline, I applied for a Together Green Fellowship, which is given by national Audubon in alliance with Toyota. From their website: "Each Fellow will receive professional development opportunities, a \$10,000 grant to help support an innovative Conservation Action Project, and an opportunity to network with a cadre of committed leaders." Those chosen will be notified by the end of August.

<http://www.togethergreen.org/People/Fellows.aspx>

Norfolk Southern Foundation: I spoke with Ms. Byrd who administers their large grants. We would be a very good match for their funding mission. Unfortunately, they require 3 years of auditing, so we cannot apply. This seems to be an issue with many of the big funding foundations. To increase the likelihood of future success, I respectfully request that the board consider putting in place a plan to have funds audited in the future. It would open up a lot more funding opportunities.

Merck Foundation: Prior to the August 1 deadline we sent a Letter Of Inquiry. Hopefully we will be invited to complete a formal application for the March, 2009 deadline.

Pew Charitable Trust I investigated grant opportunities through their website. Unfortunately we do not appear to meet their goals.

Sapelo Island Foundation I am working on this major grant, which has a deadline of September 1.

Southern Electric EMC: It is a long shot, as their past giving has been to organizations that help children, feed or clothe the hungry, etc. But in a short talk with a director I was told they would consider us. DNR's Jim Ozier will speak with a friend who is on the board.

DNR/GOS I communicated several times with Nathan Klaus, regarding a grant from GOS to DNR for work on grasslands. Nathan agreed that he could cover the entire line item from the NFWF grant regarding seed and herbicide. While this is not cash in hand, it does give us leverage to ask NFWF if we can move some of the money they are granting us to other areas, such as salary. It also means that we have met an additional portion of the required matching funds.

Programs

I have tentative presentations planned at: Oconee Audubon (Sept 4); Southern Wings Bird Club (Sept 8); GOS winter meeting (Jan 16); the Redbone Community Club in Lamar County (likely in October) and Friends of High Falls Lake (likely in November). I will attend, and possibly present at the September 4-5 meeting of The Wilderness Society in Athens. I am searching to borrow digital projectors for each of these presentations and have my fingers crossed that I will not end up in front of a group with a laptop and projector which refuse to get along. I would be delighted if someone could somehow come up with a projector for the IBA program!

I am investigating having a booth or at least poster at the Colonial Coast Bird and Nature Festival October 9 – 13. I could use some help designing and making display items!

Conservation and Special Events

I have not yet had an opportunity to conduct any events. However I have talked with several people regarding volunteer projects which can help conservation efforts at different IBAs.

Ossabaw Island: During my trip to the coast I met with DNR Regional Supervisor David Mixon. I discussed the possibility of a volunteer effort to remove Chinese Tallow. I am in talks with the Ossabaw Island Foundation regarding timing of this event (hopefully this fall) and the use of their lodge for volunteers.

Red Knot/American Oystercatcher (REKN/AMOY): conservation During my trip to the coast I talked with Brad Winn about the NFWF obligation to research conservation efforts benefitting these 2 species. He mentioned that there is a new dredge spoil island which has attracted the attention of a number of shorebirds, including mating pairs of these 2 species. While this site is not an IBA, he believes it could become an important site for REKN and AMOY. He informed me that keeping vegetation from gaining a foothold on the island will be critical to its long term use. He stated that a volunteer effort to both remove vegetation and erect signs designating it as off-limits to boat traffic will help. The island is already off-limits, but is not posted yet. The future of this site is pending an FAA study to ensure birds do not present a danger to aircraft approaching the local airport. Mr. Winn does not believe there will be a problem, based upon species likely to utilize the island and its location. If this all goes well, this site could eventually be nominated as a new IBA.

Native Warm Season Grass (NWSG): seed collection: Nathan Klaus and I are working on plans for a volunteer seed collection day at Panola Mountain State Park, sometime in September. This seed is of the rare native phenotype and is impossible to obtain commercially. It would be more appropriate to use for NWSG restoration than the seed currently available.

Visits I attended a meeting of the Ogeechee Audubon while I was on the coast. While there I chatted with Vic Carpenter about the IBA program.

I met with Carl Tyler, who was a wealth of information and ideas. He very kindly volunteered to help with several items which will help me to “get the word out” regarding the IBA program.

Graduate Student Assistantship: Jonathan Gray, a graduate of UGA, has been accepted by the Warnell School of Forestry at UGA and will receive funding from the IBA program in accordance with the NFWF grant. He will start classes in August. I have been training him to band Loggerhead Shrikes and he has attained the level of ability required to receive a USFWS subpermit under my master permit. He will use those credentials to work on an as yet undetermined grassland bird project. He and Dr. Cooper understand that we expect this to benefit grassland birds on IBAs, particularly Loggerhead Shrike and Northern Bobwhite. I will meet with them during my early September trip to Athens to finalize the agreement. Jonathan has expressed his appreciation to AAS and the IBA program numerous times and I think we will be happy with his project. The 3 of us have discussed ways that Jonathan can receive course credit for conducting paper research into ways we could best benefit AMOY and REKN without compromising his primary project on the grasslands. This will help to fulfill our obligation RE the NFWF grant, and will lay the foundation for a successful project in the future – hopefully we will be able to find funding to provide another assistantship when Jonathan is finished.

Other Updates

Jim Wilson has been very helpful as I navigate 8 years' worth of computer files written on several different programs. One project I'm undertaking is an effort to summarize much of this information. I'm collecting in one place the names of all who have been on the IBA committees, collecting information regarding all of the IBAs on one easy-to-read spreadsheet, and collecting information on every fundraising effort yet undertaken – successful or not – in one file. I anticipate that the many hours this is taking will be well worth it in the long run.

IBA COMMITTEE:

Giff Beaton
Ken Blankenship
Mike Chapman
Bob Cooper
Jim Flynn
Jim Gilreath
Noel Holcomb
Myra Hundley
Chuck Hunter
Nathan Klaus
Vanessa Lane
Priscilla Marshall
Charlie Muise
Debbie Sue Mumford
Bob Sargent
Georgann Schmalz
Lois Stacey
Steve Wagner
Jim Wilson
Brad Winn