



## IBA Coordinator's Report

*September, 2008*

**General:** We are making good progress on a lot of organizational fronts – finding information on potential funding sources, going through paper and computer files and planning volunteer conservation work days. I'm currently gearing up for another series of public or group presentations.

Our IBA Graduate Assistant Jonathan Gray is designing a portable presentation board for the IBA, with help from Sarah Kohl.

**Website:** Jim Flynn continues to make aesthetic and informational changes to the web site. The biggest improvement was the addition of an interactive map, which features a hot-linked point for each IBA. Each hot link goes to an informational page for the IBA and also links each one to the EBird database. This will enable visitors to more easily find information on each IBA, and will hopefully encourage them to report their own sightings to EBird. Thanks for designing and updating this map go to Jared Fisher. We have now incorporated nearly every recommendation made on last month's survey.

Several people at UGA, organized by Tripp Lowe, are helping us to put together some GIS work for the IBAs. This is likely to be a two year-long project, as much of the work will be done by students and overseen by their professors. This will eventually be stored on the IBA web page. Once we have an idea of how much space this important information will take, we may eventually need to move the IBA website to a UGA server, which Tripp says may be available to us. I will look into the feasibility of purchasing an easy-to-remember domain name, such as Georgia.IBA.org.

### **Fundraising & Donations**

**Together Green:** Unfortunately I did not receive a TogetherGreen Environmental Leadership Award. I will apply again next year. Due to timing (it was due before I officially started) this application was a little rushed, and I believe next year I will produce a better application.

**Audubon Cooperative Funding:** The Georgia Audubon Council has voted to give the IBA program a majority of the money they receive from NAS.

**Sapelo Island Foundation:** Last week I contacted the grant manager, who said they have not started to organize site visits.

Southern Electric EMC: No word yet on this grant.

Donation box: I recently put out a donation box when I spoke to Oconee Rivers Audubon. The number of people who donated indicates strong support from this group.

## **Programs**

Programs at Oconee Audubon (9/4/08) and Southern Wings Bird Club (9/8/08) went very well. The projector donated by Birding Adventures was fantastic! Southern Wings later mailed us a donation.

Due to a scheduling glitch on their part, I was not able to make a full presentation at the fall meeting of the Georgia Chapter of The Wilderness Society. They did invite me to stand and give a short update on the IBA program. Since Mary spoke to them last year, I felt this was still productive. Several people came up and talked with me after, and I personally knew about 7-9 people in the room. I was able to gather some information on radio telemetry devices from a man who presented, and I gave this information to Jonathan, our IBA Graduate Assistant.

I have presentations planned at: Ocmulgee Audubon (likely October); Oxbow Meadows (Nov 14-15), Coastal Audubon (November 18) the Redbone Community Club in Lamar County (likely in November), GOS winter meeting (Jan 16); and Friends of High Falls Lake (likely January 30).

## **Conservation Issues**

Brawley Mountain habitat management: I sent a letter supporting the habitat management plan devised by USFS and DNR non-game personnel. I also posted announcements to GABO asking folks to look into it, and made a number of personal phone calls asking birders and conservationists to comment in favor of option 2. Although only 2 "pro-management" letters had been received 24 hours prior to the deadline, they ended up with a total of 23 letters for, and only 4 letters against. While this is not a democratic process, we hope that the good response in favor of conservation measures will be strongly considered by the Forest Service.

Possible changes to Cumberland Island access: I have emailed CUIS personnel to learn more about the possible change to the long standing policy forbidding motorized vehicles on Georgia's largest barrier island. While this is brought up as a way to help people who are not able to hike great distances, it has the potential to be very detrimental to nesting sea turtles, birds and sensitive plants. I plan to investigate this fully, and comment on it.

Jekyll Island: I was unable to attend a public meeting held September 29. I am reading up in preparation of drafting a letter. This is probably the biggest conservation issue currently on tap for an individual IBA, and probably one of the biggest conservation issues in the state. I encourage all who read this report to learn more and speak up.

## Volunteer events

Ossabaw Island: I spoke with Elizabeth at the Ossabaw Foundation, who was helpful in clarifying constraints. If we hold a volunteer program there, we would need to find our own transportation. She recommended one particular service, which costs \$1,000 for a round trip for 20-30 people. The foundation charges \$50 per person to stay in the lodge. No camping is allowed outside. They do not supply any food or drink. So to do this with 20 people would cost \$2,000 plus food. The options are to take this from the IBA budget, we ask participants to pay their own way, or we find a sponsor. I do not believe that the IBA program can afford this at this time. However I have not ruled out the other two options. I also think that after we have run a few other volunteer events we can revisit this idea, and perhaps at that point consider taking on the cost, if we are then convinced it will be effective.

Red Knot/American Oystercatcher (AMOY) When I visit the coast during the Colonial Coast Bird and Nature Festival (CCBNF) I will meet with Brad Winn to further plan our work on the dredge spoil island off Brunswick. I already have a number of willing participants to erect signs and remove invasive woody vegetation to benefit shorebirds. I hope to attend the AMOY working group meeting.

Native Warm Season Grass (NWSG): seed collection: We have dates planned and letters distributed! We'll be at Panola Mountain State Park on Saturday, November 8 and at Sprewell Bluff State Park on Sunday, November 9. Each day will start with a program for participants before we put them to work. The seeds will be given to Nathan Klaus, to be planted in the spring at Joe Kurz WMA and Crockford-Pigeon Mountain WMA, which are both IBAs. The full announcement was posted in: the recent issue of Wingbars, on GABO, on the website and newsletter of the Georgia Botanical Society, and the Georgia Non-Game Newsletter.

Privet removal at Joe Kurz: WMA manager Fred Granitz has expressed a lot of interest in removing several privet islands from a 20 field where I band birds. While eradication is highly unlikely, and treatment of the entire WMA is also well beyond our capabilities, removing it from an area this size is possible and could be a project we can relate to others with pride. I am working with Nathan Klaus to determine best time of year to do this and what herbicides we will need.

## Visits

AAS member Eddie Hatchett was kind enough to give me a good tour of Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center, pointing out places where species of interest were generally found. He has offered to help out with grant writing and other aspects of the program.

Vanessa Lane, president of Oconee Rivers Audubon (ORAS) and new IBA Committee member, gave me a tour of the State Botanical Gardens and Whitehall Forest. While we were there we discussed her role on the committee, long- and short-term goals of the IBA and how the two groups can work together.

I met with Alison Huff prior to the ORAS meeting so we could discuss where we stand regarding data entry, the use of eBird, the possibility of nominating some GA IBAs for Global status, etc.

While visiting with out of state friends at Altamaha WMA, I checked on the IBA kiosk. I'm happy to report all is well. I did kill several nests of wasps on the kiosk and the nearby observation platform. We found many species of birds at this fantastic location, including hundreds of Bobolinks and at least 6 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks.

I will meet with Ken Blankenship and Assistant Superintendant Nancy Walther at Cochran Shoals on October 18. Ken will give us a tour and update us on the progress of nominating Cochran Shoals as an IBA. Preliminary data suggest it may qualify and Ken has already staked out potential locations for 2 kiosks.

### **IBA Graduate Assistantship:**

I met with Professor Bob Cooper and MS Candidate Jonathan Gray to go over the plan for the next two years and make sure all 3 of us are on the same page regarding Jonathan's work and obligations as recipient of the IBA Graduate Assistantship. We are still working out the details for his thesis project. He has collected a lot of data on the shorebird project and has met with some experts. He has forwarded me several important papers.

Jonathan is currently considering conducting both stable radioisotope analysis and radio telemetry to get a better idea of what is going on with shrike populations and movements. Shrikes utilize cotton fields a lot, and some people have expressed concern that this high pesticide-use habitat may be detrimental to them. So we are likely to try to determine the differences in habitat use between cotton fields and managed grasslands. Fortunately we recently found 2 shrikes at such a field at Joe Kurz. So we will try to band them and study them.

**Volunteers** I would like to welcome Ed Dericho and Donna Wensink as new IBA volunteers! Ed will help us with database entry and is interested in both the bird banding and habitat restoration efforts we are conducting. Donna has put in a lot of hours searching for information on foundations and other sources of grants, and has put this information into a spreadsheet containing information pertinent to the IBA program, in a very usable format.

**IBA Committee:** We now have a member from 7 of Georgia's 8 Audubon societies. With the committee 20 members strong, I consider it to be complete, with the exception of a representative of the Columbus Chapter.

### **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