



IBA Coordinator's Report

November, 2008

General: I have received a lot of reports of the "species to watch du Jour". Please keep your ears and eyes open for Rusty Blackbirds!

I am helping National Audubon to nominate several Georgia IBAs for Global status: Altamaha WMA, Okefenokee, Fort Stewart, Phinizy Swamp, and Piedmont NWR. I am aware of active nomination activity for three sites as Georgia IBAs. As soon as I receive complete forms I will forward them to the committee for perusal.

The recession is looming large as funding is difficult to obtain. Despite what appeared to be positive interest, I have received two rejection letters this month. I helped to edit the Jekyll Island bird checklist and birders brochure.

Fall banding at Joe Kurz WMA is going well. This was instituted in response to a deal with NFWF to increase monitoring in exchange for moving around some of the funding they are granting us. After banding one day I had an informative meeting with Manager Fred Granitz and it seems we are making good progress. More information is below.

I spent three days on St. Catherine's Island at the annual meeting of the American Oystercatcher Working Group. I met many of the primary researchers from New England through Florida and got some good ideas

Website: We have received Shape and GoogleEarth files of all the IBAs from Steve Holzman, and I'm investigating how best to make them accessible to all via the website.

Fundraising & Donations:

Tellabs Foundation: We are still waiting for the results of their January board meeting decision to see if they will invite us to submit a full proposal.

Sapelo Island Foundation: Has declined to fund us. They are focusing on projects with a more direct impact on water quality.

Southern Rivers EMC: Although I received many positive comments and good questions when I presented to their board, they have declined to fund us. This is not surprising as their past funding has all been towards charities. This year they invited 4 applicants to present to their board and we were the only environmental organization. Others were the Boy Scouts, a "coats for kids" group and a group whose focus is organizing and supporting other charities. As they are trying sell themselves as a greener organization, I will apply again next year.

www.goodsearch.com and www.goodshot.com: We are signed up and at least a handful of people are using this search engine. They send out checks annually to groups who have

“earned” at least \$10. Since we receive approximately \$0.01 per search, we likely did not meet that this year. I hope that folks will remember this while Christmas shopping.

Programs:

Volunteer Ashley Harrington and I Visited Oxbow Meadows November 14 and 15. I was given a tour by Walt Chambers, and then gave an IBA presentation at Columbus State University. Saturday morning I conducted a bird banding demo at the nature center.

While at the American Oystercatcher Working Group meeting, I “snuck off” island to speak to Coastal Audubon. Extremely cold weather in the area reduced turnout, but participants showed a great deal of interest and had many questions and positive comments.

I have presentations planned at: Albany Audubon (January 8), and GOS winter meeting (Jan 16).

Tentatively planned presentations include: Ocmulgee Audubon (likely February), the Redbone Community Club in Lamar County (likely in January), and Friends of High Falls Lake (likely January 30).

Conservation Issues

Watergauge Road Management: I wrote a letter of support to Ranger Jensen for planned thinning, rotational burning, soil control and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid control in a 1000 acre tract of Rabun County.

West Point Park: I was one of 4 people invited by the manager, Mike Crook, to visit this park and provide information for a habitat management plan he is working on. I visited along with representatives of DNR, the Army Corps of Engineers and Georgia Forestry. Mr. Crook was very thankful for our input.

Sprewell Bluff State Park: I have written several letters to the editor as well as sending a message to GABO about the potential closing of this park. Sprewell Bluff is important because it has one of the largest tracts of old growth Long Leaf Pine in the state, hosted Red-cockaded Woodpeckers until relatively recently, and has many rare plants. Additionally, closing this park may be one step towards a dam on the Flint River.

Flint River Dam: This could be a devastating idea. So far there is little news on this resurrection of this idea. All I know is that a Congressman from northeast Georgia has tried to spur on a new investigation of the viability of a dam, which would possibly be placed at the current site of Sprewell Bluff SP. I would appreciate hearing any more news from any of you.

Joe Kurz WMA Update: The 26-acre field which is the focus of the NFWF grant was sprayed in August and I will help burn it in January or February. It will then be sprayed again and planted in May or June. Meanwhile we are banding there approximately every 3 weeks, so that we will be able to document changes in avian use of the area as treatment and regeneration of native grasses and forbs commences. Some of the grass seed used in this restoration comes from the volunteer collection events described below.

We also recently installed a Barn Owl box and have plans to install 2 others with recommendations from Mr. Granitz.

Volunteer events

Bird Island: We have tentatively planned Saturday March 14 as the day to remove invasive woody plants from this new shorebird nesting/roosting area in the river off Brunswick. I have received a great deal of interest in this project.

Native Warm Season Grass More than 50 people helped collect approximately 26 pounds of seed from Panola Mountain and Sprewell Bluff State Parks. Articles were written in several newspapers, including the Atlanta Journal Constitution. While we primarily collected Indian Grass at Sprewell Bluff, the diverse pine savannah at Sprewell Bluff allowed for more diverse collections, including:

- Little bluestem
- Elliott bluestem
- Three-awn (Aristida spp.)
- Lop-sided Indian grass
- Splitbeard blue stem
- Brown sedge
- Silver plume grass
- Purple top (Tridens)
- Chasmanthium

Forbs and wildflowers (not inclusive)

- Blazing star (Liatris)
- Sweet goldenrod (Solidago odora)

IBA Graduate Assistantship: Jonathan recently spent some time at Tall Timbers Reserve on Florida's side of the Red Hills. He color-banded a handful of Loggerhead Shrikes (LOSH) there under the permit of one of the reserve's scientists. Those birds will be monitored by people not associated with Jonathan or me, so that we can have an unbiased view of the ability of an observer to detect correct color patterns of the bands. This was done because Jonathan and I would like to gauge the efficacy of plastic color bands on LOSH. While there Jonathan also got some additional training. It is important for all new banders to receive training from multiple experienced banders.

As his first semester draws to a close, Jonathan is also almost finished with his project of researching the available shorebird conservation literature, with a focus on Red Knots and American Oystercatchers. This will help to better inform the plans that I am assisting Brad Winn on regarding shorebird habitat and "Bird Island" off the coast of Brunswick.

IBA COMMITTEE:

Giff Beaton
Ken Blankenship
Mike Chapman
Bob Cooper
Jim Flynn
Jim Gilreath
Jim Wilson
Brad Winn

Noel Holcomb
Myra Hundley
Chuck Hunter
Nathan Klaus
Vanessa Lane
Priscilla Marshall

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Debbie Sue Mumford
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