



Georgia Important Bird Area Coordinator's Report

April, 2009

Cochran Shoals: You have voted to accept the Cochran Shoals Unit of Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area as a Georgia IBA. Congratulations to Ken for his hard work. He is now working to obtain funds and designing to erect a kiosk with posters. I will support him in this work as I am able. He is already in communication with NPS staff regarding location and content.

General:

Don't forget that I have shade grown coffee for sale! Learn more about Vienna Coffee at <http://www.viennacoffeecompany.net/>

GIS: This month I provided copies of the IBA shape files to a student at Gainesville College, the Army Corps of Engineers and a national environmental group based in California. (I'm sorry I don't recall the name). Previously, I did not keep track of who I fulfilled such requests for, but since I've done so for at least 8 or 9 organizations in the last 3 months, I now wish I'd kept track. Thanks so much to Steve Holzman for putting this together for us.

Monitoring:

I assisted Nathan Klaus and Jim Wentworth on Cerulean Warbler (CERW) surveys in Chattahoochee NF on April 29 and 30. These were on Ivylog Gap and Duncan Ridges, where DNR and USFS are managing for CERW. We conducted surveys in both treatment sites and control sites. We were encouraged to find 4 CERW using 3 treatment sites.

I hope to help again with Golden-winged Warbler surveys in Chattahoochee NF this month, and also find a volunteer or two to assist.

Each year researchers and managers along the entire Atlantic coast coordinate a 1-day census of Red Knots via airplane. That flight is scheduled for May 21 this year. Brad Winn and I are trying to coordinate a simultaneous ground survey with the purpose of comparing results, so we can have a clearer image of what the aerial surveys mean. I need a number of volunteers for this, as well as boat transportation to some islands.

Website: Don't forget our new, simpler URL: <http://www.atlantaudubon.org/iba/>

Global IBAs: We need recent counts of Bachman's Sparrow at Swamp of Toa, and Piping Plover at Little Tybee. I would like to find one or more volunteers willing to help with that this summer. Unfortunately, NAS has laid off IBA Coordinator Ian Hartzler, who has given us a great deal of support, and who managed the nominations of global IBAs. I will now be a bit more work for us to nominate a site for global prioritization.

Fundraising & Donations:

I am awaiting word on grant proposals from GOS and Together Green.

Please use www.goodsearch.com and www.goodshop.com. When you sign up, choose Audubon Society – Atlanta. For each use they will make a donation to the IBA program. I could not sign up as “Georgia IBA” because the name had to match the 501(c)(3) number.

Burns: On April 20 I assisted with 2 burns totaling 1500 acres at Piedmont NWR.

Nominations:

A nomination is in the works for the area of Clarke County between Sandy Creek Park and Sandy Creek Nature Center, including the trail system that connects them. Managers from Oconee WMA have also contacted me about their interest in the nomination process. There are rumbles and rumors of potential nominations for a plant science area near Albany and the managed areas around and including Sprewell Bluff SP in Upson and Talbot Counties

Programs:

On April 15 I attended a meeting/workshop sponsored jointly by NFWF and The Southern Company in Gulfport, MS. This meeting was for partners who have been funded by the Power of Flight or Loblolly grants. I gave a 5 minute (yikes!) presentation on the IBA program and set up 2 posters. I met a number of people from conservation and funding and power backgrounds and have some leads on information regarding conservation and potential funding. After George Constantino, the manager of Okefenokee NWR spoke, I congratulated him in front of everyone for the swamp's recent prioritization as a global IBA. He and I later talked about potential Conservation Volunteer Day activities.

I gave my “Sparrow identification” presentation to a very receptive group at Oconee Rivers Audubon on Thursday, April 2. Several members there are working towards nominating Sandy Creek Park, Cook Trail and Sandy Creek Nature Center as a potential IBA, and they gave me a tour of the area. Due to recent storm damage and heavy rains on that day, we were only able to tour part of the area, but I received maps of the entire area, and was able to get a feel for it. Tim Keyes of Ga DNR reports that Swainson's Warblers nest along the trail, but does not know in what numbers. I let folks at ORAS know that getting some counts this spring will be beneficial to their effort.

I provided the Georgia Audubon Council with an update on the IBA program during their annual retreat on April 26. They voted to give provide the IBA program with the state's entire \$3350 budget in 2010. Several of us then assisted with the Youth Birding Competition.

I will attend the GOS meeting in Rome on May 1 – 3. I will set up both the IBA and “Grassland Bird Banding” posters there.

I will give an IBA update to Ocmulgee Audubon on Monday, May 11.

I am interested in speaking with any group that is interested in birds. Feel free to send me contacts, or give my information to groups that may want me to present to them. I have several “canned” programs including bird banding, dragonflies, citizen science, burrowing owls, and sparrow id. I could also give a program specifically about the IBA program, but most groups would likely prefer a different program, with a 10-minute intro to the IBA program at the end. I do not charge a fee, but happily accept donations to the IBA program, and also request permission to put out a donation box.

Conservation Issues

Phinizy Swamp vegetation removal: I met with Lois Stacey for a tour of Phinizy Swamp on Sunday, April 5 to learn more about the new management plan there. In an effort to prevent aircraft/bird collisions, managers used airboats to blow down all of the standing, dead vegetation from emergent plants. Results from the recent Christmas Bird Count indicate this may have been very detrimental to the rails that winter in the area, but not for the waterfowl or waders.

Volunteer events

Privet eradication at Joe Kurz: 13 people removed a LOT of privet on April 18! Methods we used included digging, pulling some, spraying, injecting, and cut-and-painting. In particular we removed about 8 plants which were over 10” dbh. Half were cut-and-painted while the other half was injected. I will watch these for the next year to determine if one method is more successful than the other. While removing hundreds of small plants was important, we also wanted to make sure we got rid of some of the big “parent” plants which produced so many berries.

Prior to our volunteer day, Manager Fred Granitz was inspired to go out and removed several “privet islands” with his bulldozer. Continued burning and at least one round of herbicide will keep those sections down.

Cane Restoration at Joe Kurz: I am working with Tim Keyes for a potential project to plant some cane which will be salvaged from future construction efforts elsewhere.

Marking and painting RCW cavity trees at Piedmont NWR: Carolyn Johnson tells me that this is a project with which the NWR could use some help. She is discussing possible logistics with her staff and will get back to me.

IBA Graduate Assistantship:

Jonathan has attached “dummy” transmitters to 3 shrikes, and is monitoring those birds. So far the custom harnesses he made are holding up and the birds are healthy and behaving normally. He has monitored one for more than a week. The real transmitters go on soon, and he has recruited several volunteers to help him monitor.

IBA COMMITTEE:

Giff Beaton
Ken Blankenship
Mike Chapman
Bob Cooper, University of Georgia
Jim Flynn, Atlanta Audubon Society and GOS
Jim Gilreath, Ocmulgee (Macon) Audubon Society
Noel Holcomb, Former DNR Commissioner
Myra Hundley, Albany Audubon Society
Chuck Hunter, US Fish and Wildlife Service, NABCI
Nathan Klaus, Georgia DNR Senior Biologist
Vanessa Lane, Oconee River (Athens) Audubon Society
Priscilla Marshall, Columbus Audubon Society
Charlie Muise, Georgia IBA Coordinator
Debbie Sue Mumford, Coastal Georgia Audubon
Bob Sargent, GOS President
Georgann Schmalz, Birding Adventures
Lois Stacey, Augusta-Aiken Audubon
Steve Wagner, Ogeechee Audubon
Jim Wentworth, US Forestry Service
Jim Wilson
Brad Winn, Georgia DNR