



Georgia Important Bird Area Coordinator's Report

May, 2009

General:

Don't forget that I have shade grown coffee for sale! Learn more about Vienna Coffee at <http://www.viennacoffeecompany.net/> This is an effort to educate, not make money. I charge just enough to cover costs, with just a couple dollars per month going to IBA. You may prefer to order directly from Vienna. They have a large selection.

Monitoring:

After my request for help, 4 volunteers went to Brawley Mountain to survey for Golden-winged Warblers, while 6 volunteer surveyed Ivylog Gap Road for Cerulean Warblers. Each group was asked to do more than simply report positive or negative results; I asked each to keep track of effort (start and end times as well as distance travelled) and also to keep track of other species. I'm happy to say that all kindly did so.

The aerial census of Red Knots did not occur on May 21. I have not yet heard when or if it will be rescheduled.

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 the latter this summer and the former this winter.

Preliminary data indicate a major decrease in Wood Stork nests, after last year's record season.

Georgia is in desperate need of people to cover BBS routes. We have just over 50% of our routes covered. This is low enough that we were "Called out" by BBS in the national newsletter.

Based on complete reports submitted to EBird, Georgia spent most of May in the top 20 of states and provinces! As of this writing (Friday, May 29) we seem firmly ensconced as # 23. This is great progress over 6 months ago! In fact, the first 5 months of 2009 represent 5 of the 6 highest Monthly report totals for Georgia.

Banding at Joe Kurz is going well. On the 24th we caught a female Scarlett Tanager with a brood patch, which indicates she is nesting. This is, as far as I can tell, unusual for this region of the state. We have caught most of the usual species for that area: Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-breasted Chat, Chipping Sparrow, Indigo Bunting. We have not yet caught a Prairie Warbler, but have been hearing them. I think that the recent vegetation work has caused them to move a bit further from the one net where we usually caught them. I predict they will be back next year. Each of the bluebird boxes we put up (donated by super-volunteer Ashley Harrington) has had at least 1 brood of Eastern Bluebirds. The Barn Owl box we put up has no tenants, yet. So far we see a LOT less Johnson Grass than we did prior to the spraying and burning we did this winter. The big island from which we removed Chinese Privet is looking better than it did before our effort. We still have a long way to go.

Fundraising & Donations:

The IBA program has been awarded a "Volunteer Days" grant by Together Green. This will help us to plan and conduct several Volunteer Conservation Day projects across the state. Several land managers have expressed an interest in having events at their facilities.

GOS decided that the Opportunity Grant for which I applied is not a good fit for the IBA program, though they did encourage us to apply for another, larger grant at the end of 2009. Members of the board have been giving me guidance and advice. GOS did fund a separate grant application that I submitted individually to help cover my bird banding expenses. Though this is not IBA money, it will help the banding efforts at Joe Kurz, and so will indirectly help IBA efforts.

Catharine Kuchar of AAS and I are working on a joint grant application from Sprint. The IBA portion would be a match to the NFWF grant.

Please encourage friends and family to 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.

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

On Monday, May 18 I met with a number of Georgia Southern and DNR representatives at the Georgia Southern Land Management office near Eatonton. I was asked to attend this meeting to inform them of the meaning of an IBA designation, what benefits and drawbacks it may bring to a land owner/manager, and how the nomination process works. After the meeting several of us toured portions of the WMA surrounding Rock Hawk in Putnam County. This is one of the sites they are considering nominating.

Programs:

I attended the GOS meeting in Rome on May 1 – 3. I set up both the IBA and “Grassland Bird Banding” posters, and talked with many people about the program.

I gave 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

I am anxiously awaiting a Fish and Wildlife Service ruling on proposed changes at Fort Benning. If these changes go through, it will affect dozens of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers.

Volunteer events

Privet eradication at Joe Kurz: I’ve returned to the scene several times, and can happily report that the plants which we injected or sprayed all appear dead. They have no green foliage at all. It is too early to tell how well the digging worked, but as of now it appears to have been successful as well.

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.

Woody plant removal: We will work on “Bird Island” off the coast of Brunswick on August 22, with a backup day of the 23rd.

IBA Graduate Assistantship:

After successfully monitoring the birds to which dummy transmitters were attached, Jonathan has now attached transmitters to 9 shrikes, and is monitoring those birds. The custom harnesses are holding up well, as are the birds. Jonathan has put together a good volunteer observation crew, and is splitting his time between the Athens area and Tall Timbers.

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