



Georgia Important Bird Area Coordinator's Report

June, 2009

General:

These reports will soon be on the internet. I am going to place all IBA reports on the IBA web page this month. I will occasionally remove items which are deemed personal to one or more people, or which are confidential to the program. I will also not include your contact information on each one. However, I would like to leave the list of IBA Committee Member names on the website. I would like your comments on this by July 30, please.

I wish more of you had been able to participate in the May meeting at Charlie Elliott. I encourage your comments on a better way to get more of us together. Would conference calls (~ 30 minutes long) work?

I will sadly miss the Colonial Coast Bird and Nature Festival this October. I will be at a wedding. Some family members simply won't plan such events around bird activities. I could use some help manning the IBA booth, especially as I have been working on a fundraiser.

Monitoring:

We continued to receive help with monitoring of both Cerulean and Golden-winged Warblers. Articles on this work have been submitted to the newsletters of Atlanta Audubon and GOS. They will soon be submitted to other organizations as well. Biologists at DNR and FS are very grateful for the help.

Concerns have been raised about whether listing such sightings on EBird would result in too much disturbance: specifically "listers" going there and playing audio lures to see the birds. This practice seems to be quite a problem in Georgia, and should perhaps be addressed by the various organizations such as GOS and the 8 Audubons. The resource manager at Piedmont NWR has asked a GOS and Audubon member to send an email to GABO reminding birders that it is illegal to use playback at any NWR without a permit.

Thanks to a group of Atlanta- and Albany-area birders who conducted a quality survey of Bachmans Sparrows (BACS) at Swamp of Toa. They drove a pre-determined route, kept GPS coordinates of all sites where they searched, and gave me a great report. They were no able to get out very early in the season, but still found 20 birds. It would be wonderful if they, or others, could conduct a similar survey next year.

This winter we need a survey of Piping Plovers at Little Tybee. I would like to find one or more volunteers willing to help with the later this summer and the former this winter.

Unfortunately, Georgia ranks extremely low compared to other states in the percentage of BBS routes conducted annually. In the 2009 BBS memo Georgia was identified as one of the few states with less than 50% coverage. I've begun communicating the importance of BBS routes with birders - in person, via email and the GABO listserv. I know of one birder who adopted a route this year, and at least 3 others seemed interested. Hopefully Georgia will be better covered in 2010. I ran my usual 2 routes this year, and adopted a new route. I scouted my new BBS route in Echols/Clinch Counties on June 1. Unfortunately, I was rained out from conducting the route on June 4-5 and wasn't able to conduct it until rather late, on June 20.

Georgia EBird participation has increased dramatically! The last 5 months have been the 5 best for this state. May saw us finish as the 22nd most prolific listing region. The regions include the states, Canada's provinces and Puerto Rico. We didn't do nearly as well in June; it seems that Georgia birders are very migration-centric. But June was still better than previous months.

Habitat Management:

I assisted with burns at Seminole State Park on June 2, The Nature Conservancy's Fifteenmile Creek Easement on June 3 and Broxton Rocks on June 18. Two other burns were rained out.

Several more shrub islands were removed at Joe Kurz, and the field was plowed in preparation of seeds. Unfortunately, the volunteer running the seed drill at Joe Kurz appears to have had the drill set incorrectly, and ran out of grass seed before getting to the IBA study field. Several members of DNR are scrambling to find some seed to plant. Each time we band there we now bring a small amount of glyphosate and pruners, so that we can do a bit of privet eradication during and after the session. The Barn Owl box is still not occupied. At least 3 broods of bluebirds have apparently fledged from the 2 boxes we erected.

Fundraising & Donations:

On June 16 I participated in a conference call with the Together Green Volunteer Day folks (from whom we received a grant to help cover Volunteer Conservation Days). They went over some of the grant requirements. We need to conduct 6 events in which we use their name, hang their banner, have good press releases, etc. There are reports to be written after each event and a summary after the 6th event. They gave me talking tips regarding Toyota, which is the primary sponsor. Toyota is an affiliate, not a partner, which means there is no legal connection, and Toyota has no influence on policies or political stances of NAS, any Audubon chapter, or the Georgia IBA program. Two of the activities must take place during a pair of 3-week periods, during which Together Green will conduct heavy national advertising. These 2 periods are centered on National Public Lands Day (September 27) and Earth Day (April 22). We have received a large banner to hang at events, and will soon be receiving a number of hats, t-shirts and other "incentives" to give to volunteers. There are also occasional conference calls in which they will try to give us marketing tips. While I applied for this program for the money, it seems they are trying to give us many other tools to help.

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

A photographer I know in Tennessee has donated 4 mounted bird prints for our use in a fund raiser. They are all nice shots, and he allowed me to choose from several hundred that are on his website. <http://rogergivensphotography.com/> A roll of raffle tickets has been donated to us, and I hope to raffle these at the CCBNF. Roger has also donated images for a few other small projects such as reports.

Speaking of images, thanks to Rachel Cass, Darlene Moore, Jim Flynn, Dan Vickers, Nathan Klaus, Bob Churi and others who have donated images to the IBA program!

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. So far we have had very low participation in this free fundraiser, and have earned just \$6.19 as of June 12.

Nominations:

I have been asked by several people about the possibility of extending the area included by Pine Mountain Ridge IBA. Opinions include everything from including the entire ridge, to including Sprewell Bluff SP and the Natural area across the Flint River, to nominating the latter as an independent IBA. The town of Manchester is between the current IBA and Sprewell Bluff SP. The IBA currently includes Callaway Gardens and FDR State Park. I would like your comments on this.

Cypress Lake - Is it still an IBA?

Spurred on by a query from Sheila Willis, I have been trying to learn more about Cypress Lake Plantation in Dodge County. I have called each of the numbers on the original nomination form, talked to a few folks, and done an internet search. I cannot find a contact for anyone there. I'm told that the property manager was released several years ago, and the number for him has been disconnected. I found at least 3 different realtor listings for the area on the internet. I also found a website for the area, which apparently has not been maintained in several years, since all 3 of the numbers listed there were defunct.

If you know anything of this place, or can get me a contact, I'd sure appreciate it. Otherwise I'll have to resort to driving down there and trying to gain access on site, which seems unlikely to me.

Programs:

I will conduct 2 educational banding demonstrations in upcoming months; Saturday, November 14 at Callaway Gardens, and another on an as-yet undetermined date in Chattahoochee National Forest.

I will speak to Ogeechee Audubon (Savannah) Society on September 15.

I will speak to an environmental science class at the Ellijay Campus of Dalton State College in early July.

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 have been unable to learn anything new about the proposed development at Fort Benning. Folks at the fort answer all communications by referencing the web page, which has nothing new. Fish and Wildlife tells us this is not a "public input" issue. So we simply wait for news.

Volunteer events

Privet eradication at Joe Kurz: During the last 2 banding dates, volunteers and I have sprayed small amounts of glyphosate on the privet and other invasive exotics located immediately around the banding station.

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 September 12, with a backup day of the 13th.

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.

With field season almost over, Jonathan will soon be conducting final edits on the state management plans for Red Knot and American Oystercatcher, which I will then need each of you (and other experts) to review. Jonathan wrote these in the fall, and I returned mark-ups to him just prior to his field season.

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