



## Georgia Important Bird Area Coordinator's Report

*September, 2009*

### **General:**

I spent 2 hours of September 3 on a conference call with the NAS IBA working group. Because Georgia does not have a national office, and does not have a fully-supported (i.e. multiple regularly-budgeted staff) it is difficult to give NAS much support in their large, "big-picture" projects, but it is valuable to learn what is going on at that level, and to give them support when we can. Alison's recent work in updating the NAS website, and my work of editing a lot of their information on Georgia, plus sending them the GIS files that Steve Holzman created were all appreciated by this group.

I was away from home much of this month. In addition to 6 days of banding at my 2 stations, I volunteered 3 days at Whigg Meadow, off the Cherohala Skyway. Dave Vogt has run a fall migration station there for 8 years, and a new job has reduced his availability. 3 of us helped as visiting banders. It was a great time. I also attended the annual meeting of the Georgia Chapter of The Wilderness Society at UGA on September 10 and 11, where I was able to speak with some students and professors about our Volunteer Conservation Day projects. On the 12<sup>th</sup> I led the VCD project at Brunswick (details below) on the 14<sup>th</sup> I visited LSSI and on the 15<sup>th</sup> I spoke to Ogeechee Audubon, finally coming home on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

I've been bad about reporting my appearances in the media. But I was quoted in Macon's newspaper regarding the new US Fish and Wildlife Service climate change policy: <http://tinyurl.com/yev8ugs> and the Jones County newspaper sent a reporter to cover our VCD event at Piedmont.

### **Monitoring:**

During my trip to the coast I conducted some casual surveys of Harris Neck NWR, south end of Jekyll Island and Altamaha WMA. Scott Coleman and I talked at length about ways to improve monitoring on LSSI and along the coast.

Sadly, we could not fit a new Altamaha Christmas Bird Count between the Sapelo Island and Glynn County CBCs. Much of the Georgia coastline, including important areas, is uncovered by CBCs, because of Georgia's unique "island-centric" CBC coverage. As an example, the Sapelo count does not count ANY land or water other than the island. Yet that count is centered well south of the center of the island. The impact is that that count circle encompasses, but leaves uncovered, some important areas, particularly Wolf Island. Had that count been centered

further northeast, we could have added a count to encompass LSSI and Altamaha. We have run out of time for this year (deadline is Sept 15), but will investigate the possibility of placing a new CBC further west, to encompass portions of Paulk's Pasture, Sansavilla and Altamaha WMAs.

## **Habitat Management:**

We finished spraying Bermuda Grass, Johnson Grass and Lespediza bicolor for the year at Joe Kurz. On Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> we had an exciting couple of hours banding there. After 3 net rounds with a total of 1 bird, we were nearly done with another round with just one more bird. At the last net of the round we found – 33 Indigo Buntings, 2 Blue Grosbeaks and a Northern Cardinal! We ended up with 53 birds for the day.

There is still a lot of Coffee Weed, and we hope that it will not be too bad next year. The area from which we removed a lot of old wisteria, as well as both native and exotic shrubs is coming along nicely. Rather than re-treat it this year, we decided to see what comes up and put our heads together in the spring for a long-term plan, once we see what is volunteering. I am not yet sure where grass seed we collect this month will be used, but am assured that some of it will go to an IBA.

## **Fundraising & Donations:**

Oconee Rivers Audubon (ORAS) is soliciting proposals for a \$300 equipment grant for anyone working on any of the 5 IBAs and proposed IBAs in their area. I've been asked to help review applications. <http://www.oconeeriversaudubon.org/grant.html>

ORAS also decided to honor some of its volunteers by making a contribution to the IBA in their name.

This is 2 months late, but thanks to Liza O'Neal, who donated to the IBA program when she and her son visited the Panola banding station.

Several people have recently asked me how to donate to IBA. All one needs to do is send a check to my address, made out to "AAS" with "IBA" in the subject line.

Please encourage friends and family to use [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) and [www.goodshop.com](http://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:**

To my knowledge, two nominations are in the works. One is for Sandy Creek Nature Center, Sandy Creek Park and the trail connecting them, all in Clarke County. The other is for Oconee WMA and Rock Hawk in Hancock and Green Counties. If you would like more information on either of these, I would be happy to put you in touch with the people doing the work.

## **Programs:**

I was asked to speak at the annual meeting of the Georgia Wilderness Society <http://www.georgiawildernesssociety.org/>. Unfortunately I am unable, due to a prior engagement. I hope to be able to speak to them next year.

The Macon Museum of Arts and Science had a special bird event for kids on Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup>. I was unable to go because of the conflict with the VCD at Piedmont. Jim Gilreath, Ty Ivey and several others from Ocmulgee (Macon) Audubon helped a lot, and also set up some IBA materials, including the newly refurbished poster and brochures. They sold a bit of coffee and educated people on the value of buying shade-grown.

My program at Ogeechee Audubon (Savannah) Society on September 15 went very well. I spoke about citizen science, with a focus on eBird. There were many questions and a lot of interest in using eBird. I've continued to receive questions and comments since I came home.

Upcoming plans include:

- due to a wedding in the family, I cannot be at the CCBNF, but have some volunteers willing to run the IBA booth. I'm still seeking help for this.
- help with Atlanta Audubon's Master Birder classes. I will lead 3 components, plus a field day in October.
- conduct an educational banding demonstration at Callaway Gardens on Saturday, November 14.
- speak again to Southern Wings in October or March.
- run a 2-day sparrow workshop. This will consist of an evening in the classroom on December 5<sup>th</sup> and a day in the field on December 12<sup>th</sup>.
- teach a "bird watching" component of the Master Naturalist class at Chattahoochee Nature Center on February 4.

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 programs including bird banding, dragonflies, citizen science, burrowing owls, and sparrow id. 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**

Fort Benning – You will recall that the proposed "Maneuver Center of Excellence" to be added to the fort would have caused the removal of dozens of RCW clusters on hundreds of acres. US Fish and wildlife issued a "Jeopardy" verdict. The Record of Decision was on August 4, but it took me until today (October 5) to obtain a copy. It can be found at [https://www.benning.army.mil/EMD/program/legal/Ft%20Benning%20ROD\\_8\\_5\\_2009\\_11\\_56\\_3\\_3.pdf](https://www.benning.army.mil/EMD/program/legal/Ft%20Benning%20ROD_8_5_2009_11_56_3_3.pdf)

Brawley Mountain: the appeal period ended September 11. There were no appeals! Work will begin this winter.

## **Volunteer Conservation Days**

We finally conducted the VCD at "Bird Island" off the coast of Brunswick! Because a string of bad luck caused such a long delay, there was an awful lot of plant coverage, but 12 of us made a dent. We cut every Dog Fennel before any had a chance to flower. The majority of woody shrubs were dug up, and we made a number of piles of herbaceous plants. Brad and Tim will come up with a long-term plan there, which will involve our VCD help in the spring.

Marking and painting Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavity trees at Piedmont NWR: On the 26<sup>th</sup> 22 adults and 6 kids spent the day scraping and painting cavity trees and raking around them. This event, held on National Public Lands Day, was one of hundreds sponsored by TogetherGreen (an IBA sponsor). We had a lot of fun, got a lot done for the Refuge, and mostly avoided the rain. About 1/3 of the participants got to see an RCW.

October 24, Grass seed collection at Sprewell Bluff State Park (Upson County). Meet at the picnic area by the river at 10:00 am.

October 24, Grass seed collection at Fall Line Sandhills Natural Area (led by Nathan Klaus).

October 31, Grass seed collection at Panola Mountain State Park, starting at pm (after bird banding).

Phil Delestrez will lead a group of volunteer seed collectors at Pickett's Mill Battlefield Park near Atlanta. On Saturday, November 7, meeting at 10:00 am.

### **IBA COMMITTEE:**

Giff Beaton	Myra Hundley	Bob Sargent
Ken Blankenship	Chuck Hunter	Georgann Schmalz
Mike Chapman	Nathan Klaus	Lois Stacey
Bob Cooper	Vanessa Lane	Steve Wagner
Jim Flynn	Priscilla Marshall	Jim Wentworth
Jim Gilreath	Charlie Muise	Jim Wilson
Noel Holcomb	Debbie Sue Mumford	Brad Winn