



## Georgia Important Bird Area Coordinator's Report

*May 2010*

**General:** Thanks to Oconee River Audubon, the IBA program now has 300 copies of the newest "Cats Indoors!" brochure from American Bird Conservancy. Given some recent uninformed decisions regarding Trap, Neuter, Release programs in Oconee County and other locations, this information cannot be distributed widely enough. This ORAS donation may help prevent such detrimental actions in other areas.

On July 19-20 I will be at a US Forest Service "mini-fire academy" to move up to Firefighter 1 status for wildland fire suppression and prescribed fire. Georgia DNR is sponsoring me in this, as they have several other classes, in exchange for assisting them with prescribed fires.

### **Monitoring:**

Update on Loggerhead Shrike (LOSH) radio telemetry with: Faults with the transmitters have made this a frustrating season. We planned to apply 6 transmitters to breeding adults within a short time period, so we could follow them during the nesting cycle. We did succeed in applying all transmitters within 9 days, but all transmitters were dropped or disappeared within days. We did re-apply one transmitter, which was then lost again. Another transmitter ceased functioning within 48 hours (the bird is still wearing it – we can see the antenna through binoculars). Some loss is always expected – it is typical for a transmitter or two to be dropped, and birds die from unrelated causes (there was no mortality associated with telemetry). But to have all transmitters drop is bad. Nathan Klaus and Ashley Harrington are having similar trouble with American Kestrels, using transmitters made by the same company. We have notified the company, which promises to troubleshoot the problems, and then replace the transmitters. But we likely will need to wait for next April to start over.

On 13-14 May 13 I conducted 9 point counts on the experimental cane plots where we conducted vegetation surveys last year. We found 6 Swainson's Warblers, which is the focal bird species for this project. This is the final phase of an apparently successful habitat experiment Nathan Klaus and Tim Keyes began nearly a decade ago.

From 16 – 20 May I assisted with an attempt to capture Whimbrel, which is a very wily species. We finally did catch one bird. The bird was outfitted with a satellite tracking device, so that its migration can be followed and mapped out. As of June 6, the bird was spending time around Lake Huron. Such amazing technology!

On 18 May I helped to count shorebirds and read band codes on Red Knots at a small bar off the east end of Raccoon Key (there are 2 in Georgia; this is the one just north of Ossabaw). We were able to record approximately 40 complete and 5 incomplete band codes. Several of the Red Knots were originally banded in Chile and Argentina, according to their band numbers!

On 19 May I assisted with the Wilson's Plover/American Oystercatcher survey on North Beach, Ossabaw Island. We found 3 pair of oystercatchers, and 8 pair of plovers. We suspect that most of the plover pairs have nests.

On a 20 May census of Altamaha WMA, I counted 3,340 White Ibis flying east-to-west.

On 24 May I conducted a Breeding Bird Survey route in Echols and Clinch Counties. We need qualified observers to help with more BBS routes in Georgia. If you can bird by ear, please contact Todd Schneider with the Georgia Non-game program at:

[Todd.Schneider@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:Todd.Schneider@dnr.state.ga.us) More on BBS routes can be found at <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/>

### **Habitat Management:**

On 25 May I was crew boss for a burn of sandhills habitat at Black Creek Natural Area in Taylor County.

On 26 May I was crew boss for a burn of longleaf pine habitat at Seminole State Park. It was nice to finally get this thrice-postponed burn done. While there we also toured some units we burned earlier in 2008-1010. They are coming along nicely, with very little loss of long-leaf pine, and great top-kill of undesirable species. It was great to see 2 pair of Loggerhead Shrikes holding territory in different units.

The restoration field at Joe Kurz WMA is looking good. While there are some patches of Bermuda and Jonson Grass, both species are present in a much smaller portion of the field, and we will spray them again this summer. We have made some noticeable dents in the privet, and can already see grasses and forbs growing in these areas. Now that trees are fully leafed out, we can see the great effects of the last burn, which was much more successful than the previous one. Hickories and fire-tolerant oaks in the big tree island are doing well, while water oak, sweetgum and other woody plants are declining as planned. Another fire next year should completely clear out the understory of both the island and the field's perimeter. While there is still no sign of use in the owl box, each of the bluebird boxes bore 2 clutches this year. We have had more donated, and will install them soon. Some will go in the woods, in hopes that Great-crested Flycatchers will find them. So far, after 3 MAPS sessions, we are seeing good species diversity, numbers and community composition. We have had a lot of birds return from previous years, and fully half the birds caught in the last 6 weeks are recaptures.

### **Fundraising & Donations:**

We have been selected to receive another Together Green Volunteer Conservation Day Award!

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.

## **Programs:**

The Birding Bootcamp I was going to co-lead on 3-4 May was cancelled by weather.

I have been asked to speak to Ocmulgee (Macon) Audubon on June 14.

I have been asked to speak to a Master Naturalist class at Smithgall Woods State Park on July 12.

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**

### **Volunteer Conservation Days**

We are having a mini VCD at Panola Mountain State Park on Saturday, June 12. After bird banding, approximately 7 people are needed to help spread grass seed in an area which was recently prepped for restoration. This is the area immediately in front of (to the east) our banding station, so we will have a first-hand look of the progress over time. There are 3 net lanes in this location, so we will also be able to follow the results on paper.

## **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