



# THANK YOU

*Thank you for all the support you have shown GCBO. It is because of you that we have been able to continue positively affecting multiple issues facing the avifauna of the Americas.*

*An Eastern Willet during the banding process.*

*Photo by Jennifer Wilson*

This year has flown by and our staff, seasonal biologists, contractors and volunteers have had many successes. It is because of your generosity that we continue to make progress on behalf of the species we are working to help protect. When we take a step back and look at where we were at this time last year - little money in the checking account, an uncertain future, tenuous circumstances at best - we are excited about where we are going and what we have to look forward to. What a difference one year can make! We see more partnerships and cooperative programs on the horizon protecting birds & their habitats, we see new ideas on fundraising coming to fruition and we see exciting changes in the works to build a stronger organization in 2017.

Rather than provide an accounting of what we have accomplished this year in this appeal, we plan to publish an Annual Report early next year. Please be assured however that we had many successes including completing conservation projects with new grant awards for additional projects, conducting research and monitoring projects from the upper coast down through the mid coast, completing the 20th season of the Smith Point Hawk Watch, escaping significant damage from the historic Brazos River Flood in June, securing a large grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to install a network of MOTUS antenna arrays, paying off our building debt, and holding our annual Spring Fling and Hummingbird Xtravaganza.

*A group of Summer Bird Campers after finishing construction of Bluebird nest boxes during camp week.*

*Photo by Carol Jones*



*To allow us to further our efforts in 2017 and increase our capacity, please consider making a year-end gift toward one or more of the following projects.*

### Non-breeding Shorebird Program

GCBO has partnered with American Bird Conservancy to monitor wintering Piping Plovers, Red Knots, and Snowy Plovers in Brazoria County. This project focuses on identifying and protecting sensitive areas that provide foraging and resting habitat for these birds during the non-breeding season as a counter project to our Beach Nesting Birds project. We are posting symbolic fencing to prevent vehicular and human disturbance that may influence these species survival during the winter and are collecting information on survival, movement patterns, and site fidelity by re-sighting color bands. We are also performing public outreach and education to inform the public about wintering shorebirds in Texas. The goal of the program is to work with local land managers to develop shorebird management plans that maintain and/or grow these species populations by protecting their wintering habitat.

### Eastern Willet Migration Project

For the past two springs, GCBO has partnered with the Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex to monitor breeding Eastern Willets and fit them with small tracking devices called geolocators. These devices work by measuring the amount of light and the direction of the sun to determine latitude and longitude and require retrapping the bird the following spring to retrieve the geocator and analyze the data. In 2015 we deployed 10 geolocators at the Sargent Unit of the San Bernard NWR and in 2016 we retrieved one of these devices. Flooding rains made nesting difficult for this species and prevented us from retrieving the other devices. Previous research on the Atlantic Coast population of Eastern Willets indicates that those birds spend the winter in South America. Much to our surprise our Texas Eastern Willet spent the winter in Panama. He left in mid-July and made the 1800 mile flight in less than 3 days flying nearly straight through! This ground-breaking information will help us determine the best conservation actions for this species which has been declining and is threatened by sea level rise. In 2016, we deployed an additional three geolocators and hope to retrieve as many of the original ones plus the three additional as possible in 2017.



*Dock Crew: Most of the crew, minus Oron Atkins, while reconstructing the stairway and low dock on Buffalo Camp Bayou at our headquarters sanctuary in Lake Jackson, TX.*

*Photo by Sue Heath*

### American Oystercatcher

We are gearing up for another season monitoring American Oystercatchers on the Upper Texas Coast. The season will begin in February when we expect to find 5 to 10 nests before month's end. The oystercatchers start early! This year we will be outfitting 10 adults and 5 chicks with nanotags that will transmit data to the Motus tower arrays we are establishing along the coast. This will give us much better information about how the adults move around during the non-breeding season and where the chicks go once they leave parental care. We are very excited about this new phase of our project! We are also working on some innovative ideas to establish new nesting habitat for this species whose primary nesting locations on islands are facing severe erosion from high tides and sea level rise.

### Summer Bird Camp

When we talk about fun and excitement at GCBO, our weeklong day camp focused on all things avian comes to mind quickly. The campers are always eager and easily engaged with our packed schedule of activities, games and outings. Your support here will help cultivate the next generation of conservationists and ornithologists. Having scholarship funds available allows us to offer the camp at a reduced rate to kids that could not otherwise attend.

### Unrestricted

Your unrestricted gift allows us to apply your donation wherever there is the greatest need at GCBO. Whether it's supplementing the beach nesting birds program, furthering our conservation work, or keeping the lights on for another month, you can be confident your gift will go where it can do the most good to protect birds and their habitats around the Gulf of Mexico.

*Sue Carol Debra Amanda*

*Eastern Willet migration map obtained from a geocator that was retrieved in Spring 2016. Map by Susan Heath & Joe Smith*

*Please count me in to help GCBO and bird protection programs!*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

☐ American Oystercatcher Stewardship

☐ Non-breeding Shorebird Program

☐ Eastern Willet Migration Project

☐ Summer Bird Camp

☐ Unrestricted

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

☐ \$50   ☐ \$100   ☐ \$250   ☐ \$500   ☐ \$1000

☐ Other Amount \_\_\_\_\_

☐ My check is enclosed

☐ Please charge my credit card (We accept Visa, MasterCard & Discover)

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory is a 501c(3) organization, and contributions to it are tax deductible to the extent allowed by federal law. This acknowledgment is confirmation that the organization provided either no goods or services, or only token items of insubstantial value, in return for your contribution.



At our Hummingbird Xtravaganza in September, not only can you have close-up encounters with Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, but also critters like this hognose snake.

Photo by Pete Romfh



Mail to: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory  
299 Hwy 332 West  
Lake Jackson, TX 77566

Or donate online at: [www.gcbo.org](http://www.gcbo.org).  
Click on the **DONATE** button in the lower right corner.

For more information, contact us at [www.gcbo.org](http://www.gcbo.org) • 979-480-0999



During our annual Hummingbird Xtravaganza a banded Ruby-throated Hummingbird is ready to take off.

Photo by Pete Romfh



A pair of unbanding Oystercatchers in Bastrop Bay photographed during a routine monitoring expedition to the area.

Photo by Susan Heath

## Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

299 Hwy 332 West • Lake Jackson, TX 77566

979-480-0999 • [gcbo.org](http://gcbo.org)

Office & Sanctuary hours: 8:30 am to 4:40 pm Monday–Friday

Open third Saturday of every month for bird banding



*Both the Beach Nesting Birds and the Non-breeding Shorebird Programs have demonstrated successful use of signage to protect the habitat for undisturbed use by multiple species. Photo by Amanda Anderson*



*A group of visitors at the Smith Point  
Hawk watch during September.  
Photo by Joe Kennedy*



Visit our web site at <http://www.gcbo.org>

(979) 480-0999

Lake Jackson, Texas 77566

299 West Highway 332

**Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Inc.**

NON PROFIT  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
HOUSTON TX  
PERMIT NO. 542