



GULF CROSSINGS

GUANAHACABIBES PENINSULA, CUBA AUTUMN MIGRATION 2015-2019

By Alina Pérez Hernández
Alejandro Llanes Sosa
Hiram Gonzáles Alonso

Martin's Note: The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory has been assisting avian research projects in Cuba for some years now. We continue to do so with important migratory studies. Please enjoy this article from our partners there.

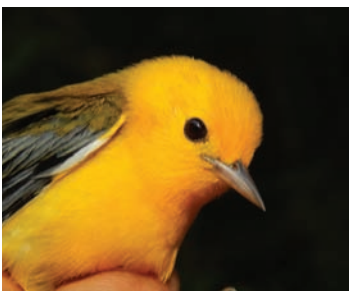
The Guanahacabibes Peninsula is one of the main migratory corridors of Cuba and thus is a protected area of international recognition with significant conservation efforts. Between 2015 and 2019, we conducted a banding study during autumn migration to determine the structure and composition of migrants using the corridor to contribute to improved management of this protected area.

We set up 12 sampling nets and had a sampling effort of 14,249.4 hours. We captured 104 bird species and classified 72 as migratory or partial migratory. The total number of migratory individuals captured was 6,904. 79.2% of the migratory individuals were juveniles. The species captured came from 10 Orders and 25 Families, which represents 41.7 and 34.2% of the total species recorded in Cuba. Eleven of the captured species are endemic to Cuba and they represent 39.2% of the ornithological endemism of the Cuban archipelago.

We also had several notable species observed in the area that were not captured. These include Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*) (second record in Cuba and the insular Caribbean), Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) (first record in Cuba) and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*) (new record for Guanahacabibes peninsula).

Other new species for Cuba included Wilson's Warbler (*Cardellina pusilla*) and Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*). As a result of this study we were able to update the ornithological list for the area with 11 new records.

Nine species are under some category of threat. The Blue-headed Quail-Dove (*Starnoenas cyanocephala*) and the Giant Kingbird (*Tyrannus cubensis*) are endangered. The Cerulean Warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*) is considered vulnerable. The White-crowned Pigeon (*Patagioenas leucocephala*), Bee Hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*), and Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) are vulnerable and close to threatened. The Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) and Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) are close to threatened and although it is of less concern, the Cuban Bullfinch is also close to threatened.



Four of the species caught are considered very rare in Cuba. These included Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*), Mourning Warbler (*Geothlypis Philadelphia*), and Wilson's Warbler (*Cardellina pusilla*).

Continued on page 5



Banders applying a band to a Black-and-White Warbler



Banding station at Guanahacabibes Peninsula, Cuba

Far Left: Prothonotary Warbler in migration in Cuba

Masthead photo:
Hooded Warbler taken during migratory study in Cuba.

Photos by Alina Pérez Hernández

DIRECTOR'S VIEW

MARTIN HAGNE

What a crazy and sad time we are in! I hope you are safe and well. With the Brazoria County's Stay Safe at Home order in place till April 30 (at this time) and our wish to look out for one another, our headquarters office has been closed for a while now. Only a few of our field projects are still taking place, and we are all working from home. All GCBO events have been cancelled or postponed. Brew on the Bayou was moved to Nov 7th (please come join us then!), and we cancelled Spring Fling at Quintana, the Birds in Art exhibit, the monthly bird banding for now, and spring native plant sale. All our presentations, meetings, and travels are suspended, and we have put Summer Bird Camp on hold.

For now the Quintana sanctuaries will remain open to visitors, although the city hall and restroom is closed. If you visit you must practice social distancing of 6 feet apart from any other person. The Town of Quintana is monitoring this, and will close it down if not adhered to! Please park in the marked parking area, and please eBird your sightings so we can track what's being seen! If access changes we will post the new information.

With so many events cancelled we need your help more than ever! Here's a few ways you can help our conservation work continue:

- We have opened an online store for you to still get those awesome GCBO Quintana t-shirts, our brand new patches, our cool hats, and more. Go to www.gcbo.org and scroll down the front page for the online store link!
- Please donate bird seed and oranges for Quintana! Birds are still hungry. You can swing by our headquarters in Lake Jackson, TX, and leave by the gate, or by the door at our Quintana Host Station.
- Our Host Station normally takes in many generous donations during Spring Fling, so instead could you go online to www.gcbo.org (or mail a check) and make a donation? Thank you!

Stay safe, get out and walk in nature (staying away from others!)
and let us know how you're doing!

GCBO ONLINE NATURE STORE

Those who have visited our headquarters in Lake Jackson might already know this, but we have a Nature Store! This little store helps us earn funds to keep our conservation work going and also helps us get our name out there (on the front of T-shirts). But now the Nature Store is even better because it's online. Now you can get your GCBO hats, shirts, patches and more at <https://www.gcbo.org/connect/support-us/nature-store/>.

Check it out!



Show your love for birds and support for GCBO by wearing one of our baseball caps, now available on our online store.

Photo by Celeste Silling



GCBO's Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary shirt is a bestselling souvenir for Spring Fling.

Photo by Celeste Silling

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Golden-cheeked Warbler in the Texas Hill Country

Photos by Mike Williams, GCBO Board President



ON THE TRAIL OF THE TEXAS HOLY GRAIL BIRD

BY MIKE WILLIAMS

Every year thousands of Texas birders anxiously await the arrival of the iconic Golden-cheeked Warbler. With a breeding range wholly limited to Texas they arrive in late March nesting in South and Central Texas on the Edwards plateau. Their distribution is limited to Oak-Juniper woodlands and they prefer rocky slopes.

Here at GCBO we are no exception! Each April we have a trip West as part of the Experiences Auction to see these elusive birds. They can often be a challenge to find – that is until they sing!

Fiercely territorial, the males sing loud, long and often. Their buzzy song is very distinctive zeedl zeedl zeedl zeedl zweeee tisp. On first arrival they set up their territory and sing their pre-nuptial song desperately trying to attract a mate. Once they have been successful their song changes to the post-nuptial song. Golden-cheeks are monogamous and typically lay 4 eggs which hatch in about 12 days.

It's hard to explain the excitement of seeing your first Golden-cheeked Warbler. Their siren song calls you to search high and low – then a flash of gold. There he is singing from a treetop. Fiercely territorial he is telling you to leave, this is his territory. Take a good look and a few photographs and back away, safe in the knowledge you have been privileged to see one of the world's rarest birds! Note, outside of their breeding grounds in Texas, these warblers are almost impossible to see, unless you travel to Mexico or Northern Central America where they migrate for the winter.

The Golden-cheeked Warbler is globally threatened – loss of breeding grounds and habitat driving the number down to about 2,000 birds globally in the 1990s. Today it is estimated this number has grown to 21,000 thanks to aggressive habitat protection, but this needs to continue. The goal is to add 41,000 acres of habitat over the next few years. Despite much effort its breeding grounds continue to shrink (down by a third in the last 20 years) due to urban development, livestock grazing and brood parasite behavior from cowbirds. Without continued and increased protection, the Golden-cheeked Warbler may soon be gone.

The recent increase in numbers means the endangered status of this species may soon be removed. On the surface this sounds like a win for the Golden-cheeked Warbler, but as a result there are concerns that habitat loss will increase significantly, and we will see the numbers drop again. With the continued support of habitat preservation, we will all be able to enjoy this elusive little bird for generations to come.

Please check out GCBO's online Experience Auction in November at www.gcbo.org. You could be the lucky winner of this trip, or one of 40 other wonderful experiences!

Now When You Shop At Kroger, You Can Support GCBO!

GCBO is a registered charity through Kroger's Community Rewards Program. This means that you can register your Kroger Plus Card online and select GCBO as the organization of your choice. Every time you use your Kroger Plus Card, Kroger will donate a portion back to GCBO! This is an easy way to support GCBO while you shop – your donations help us continue to protect birds and birding habitat around the Gulf Coast and beyond. To register your Plus Card go to:

<https://www.kroger.com/account/enrollCommunityRewardsNow>

Our charity number is DN782.



NONBREEDING SHOREBIRD SURVEY: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

By TAYLOR BENNETT

We just made it through another non-breeding shorebird season, and we had decided to switch things up a bit. As always, the non-breeding shorebird surveys are being done to help monitor populations of threatened, endangered, and species of concern that use the Texas Coast during the winter and to rest and fuel up before they head out to their breeding grounds. The project keeps track of Piping Plovers, Snowy Plovers, Red Knots, American Oystercatchers, and perhaps a few Wilson's Plovers.

For Matagorda Beach, nothing has changed. We are still surveying our usual thirty-six transects and two areas on the 22 mile long peninsula. The only thing that has changed is our mode of transportation. We were able to obtain a UTV through a very generous bequest from a long time GCBO supporter. Thank you to Irene Moore, and her state.

This past year we noticed a significant amount of erosion at Bryan Beach due to strong storms and unusually high tides. Thank you climate change! As a result, we had to eliminate the last three transects and three areas because they were inaccessible no matter the level of tide and we were consistently not observing birds in these particular areas. Very few species were observed at our area sites due to floods, and the pipeline construction nearby.

To make up for the lost three transects, we were able to add three new transects of Quintana Beach to the mix. The last transect of Quintana is inaccessible to vehicles which makes it a good comparison to the rest of our surveys which allow vehicles. Adding Quintana proved to be successful, and we started to see Black Skimmers, a few Wilson's Plovers and American Oystercatchers. Woo hoo! However, we started to see less species during the winter, which isn't surprising but still interesting.

Another area that we added to the mix this season was Follet's Island. It is located on the northeast side of Surfside Beach. Follet's Island turned out to be the Holy Grail when it came to variety of species. It appears to be a great roosting spot for wintering, migrating shorebirds. We observed most of our target species at this site including our first banded Red Knot of the season. We were able to add a dozen new yellow flagged, two light blue flagged, three green flagged, and our first red flagged Piping Plover, two new banded Snowy Plovers, and eight of Sue's banded American Oystercatchers to our resight list. We will be continuing to survey this area weekly.



Along with species, we also monitor disturbances and threats such as vehicles, people, unleashed dogs, and leashed dogs. Last spring, we included a new threat, balloons. Balloons are highly dangerous and deadly to wildlife especially to sea turtles and birds. Sea turtles die because they mistake them for food. The strings

entangle birds' legs and necks causing them to starve because they are unable to hunt for prey and many die due to strangling. We have collected over 600 balloons this season! Yes, you read that correctly. The culprit, of course, are holidays, especially Valentine's Day. We need to stop giving and releasing balloons as gifts, gestures, and celebrations. We need to realize that they don't float away; instead they end up in our oceans and parks threatening everything around them. We need to find a more eco-friendly alternative to balloons. For the birds!



Pipeline construction observed near resting shorebird areas at Bryan Beach Freeport, TX.

Photo by Taylor Bennett



Deadly comparison of a balloon (top) to a Portuguese Man of War (bottom). This shows how close a common form of food can look to a deadly deflated balloon!

Top photo by Celeste Silling. Bottom photo by Taylor Bennett.

Left: The first Banded Red Knot (GF 002) of the season spotted at our new survey spot Follet's Island near Surfside Beach, TX

Photo by Taylor Bennett.

GCBO BIRDING TRIPS

BY MARTIN HAGNE



Photos By Arturo Kirkconnell Jr.



Come birding with GCBO, and our Executive Director Martin Hagne! We are having a great time birding, exploring, enjoying some extraordinary scenery, dining on local cuisine, and of course getting great birds! We always hook up with at least one local guide for the best experience. Here are our upcoming destinations, but hurry, our trips are selling out fast!! You can get more information at www.gcbo.org or or send Martin an email at mhagne@gcbo.org

Cuba in October 2020 Only ONE opening left!

The GCBO has been working with partners in Cuba since 2005 on various avian research projects such as a hawk watch and a neotropic migratory bird research station. Travel with GCBO staff and our Cuban ornithological partners to visit research sites, and bird the fabulous Cuban avian diversity. This trip is designed to be able to get as many endemics as possible. **October 15 - 26, 2020** \$5340.00 Double • \$5705.00 Single

Duluth, MN in January 2021 Only a few openings left!

We will repeat this popular trip again, BUT we have added one full day! We will enjoy exploring the snow-covered Sax Zim Bog, lake shores, and northern forests of the Duluth area again this year, for breathtaking views of Great Gray Owl, Snowy Owl, Northern Hawk-Owl, Bohemian Waxwing, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Boreal Chickadee, Evening Grosbeak, and all the other boreal species one expects to see!

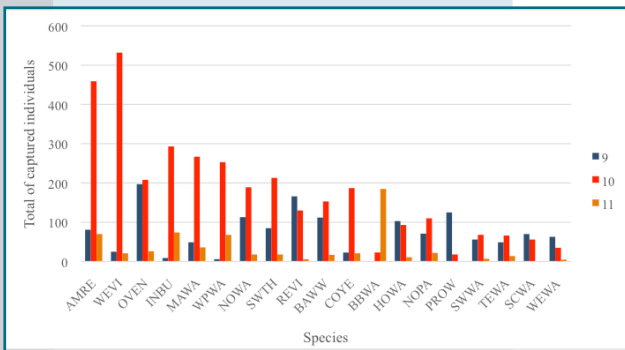
February 3 - 8, 2021 \$1025.00 Double • \$ 1225.00 Single

Other Upcoming 2021 Trips Will Include:

Oaxaca, Mexico - TBA • The Northwest, USA - TBA

CUBA AUTUMN MIGRATION 2015-2019

(continued from page 1)



Another 19 are classified as rare, although our results suggest a change of status for the following: Western Wood-pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*), Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*), Wood Thrush, Kentucky Warbler (*Geothlypis Formosa*), Cerulean Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler (*Setophaga castanea*) and Blackburnian Warbler (*Setophaga fusca*). Wood Thrush can be considered common during autumn migration and the rest have moderate to low frequency at the same time of year. In addition, Hooded Warbler (*Setophaga citrina*) is considered uncommon but in our area they were among the species with the most captures.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following organizations for assistance with making this study possible: Center of Research and Environmental Services ECOVIDA, Ecology and Systematic Institute, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign (especially Antonio Celis, Jill Deppe and Mike Ward), Optic for the Tropics, Natural History Museum, University of Havana, and the many volunteers that helped with this study.

Species Captured

- AMRE *Setophaga ruticilla* (American Redstart)
- WEVI *Vireo griseus* (White Eyed Vireo)
- OVEN *Seiurus aurocapilla* (Ovenbird)
- INBU *Passerina cyanea* (Indigo Bunting)
- MAWA *Setophaga magnolia* (Magnolia Warbler)
- WPWA *Setophaga palmarum* (Palm Warbler)
- NOWA *Parkesia noveboracensis* (Northern Waterthrush)

- SWTH *Catharus ustulatus* (Swainson Thrush)
- REVI *Vireo olivaceus* (Red Eyed Vireo)
- BAWW *Mniotilta varia* (Black and White Warbler)
- COYE *Geothlypis trichas* (Common Yellowthroat)
- BBWA *Setophaga castanea* (Bay-breasted Warbler)
- HOWA *Setophaga citrina* (Hooded Warbler)
- NOPA *Setophaga americana* (Northern Parula)

- PROW *Protonotaria citrea* (Prothonotary Warbler)
 - SWWA *Limnithlypis swainsonii* (Swainson's Warbler)
 - TEWA *Leiothlypis peregrina* (Tennessee Warbler)
 - SCWA *Setophaga pensylvanica* (Chestnut sided Warbler)
 - WEWA *Helmitheros vermivorum* (Worm eating Warbler)
- 9, 10, 11 – Month (September, October and November)

GCBO COLLABORATES WITH THE TEXAS MID-COAST NWR TO STUDY WINTERING LOGGERHEAD SHRIKES

BY SUSAN HEATH, PHD

This past winter, GCBO and the Texas Mid-coast NWR embarked on a Loggerhead Shrike study with help from the Cradle of Texas Master Naturalists. The purpose of this project is to gain information on how migrant and resident Loggerhead Shrikes partition habitat during the winter. Although Loggerhead Shrikes are still common in Texas, the species is listed as endangered, threatened, or as a species of concern across a large portion of its range, especially in the eastern U.S. Some studies have indicated that constraints associated with winter habitat are limiting the migratory populations of this species, thus a better understanding of the dynamics between migrant and resident Loggerhead Shrikes is needed. This winter was a pilot season in which we banded nine shrikes and put nanotag transmitters on six of them at Brazoria NWR and the Sargent unit of San Bernard NWR. We are utilizing our Motus network to track the shrikes but Master Naturalist volunteers are also tracking them manually from November through February. We will use this data to map their territories and determine if there are habitat differences between migrants and residents. This pilot project was in support of our larger project which will begin next winter through a \$92,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and ConocoPhillips through the SPIRIT of Migratory Bird Conservation Program. We will put nanotag transmitters on 10 birds each winter for three winters and map their territories utilizing the tracking data.



One of our shrikes with color bands and a nanotag transmitter at Brazoria NWR.

Photo by Kyle Purvis



Mickey Dufilho and Sandy Henderson try to locate a shrike with a nanotag using a handheld VHF receiver.

Photo by Susan Heath

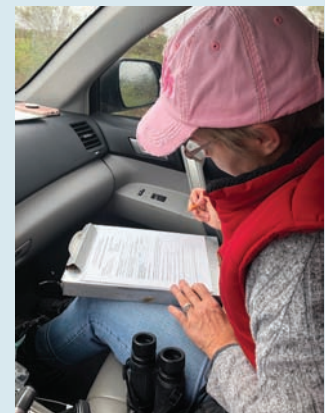
WESTERN GULF MOTUS NETWORK UPDATES

BY SUSAN HEATH, PHD

It's been four years since GCBO and the Texas Mid-Coast NWR complex began deploying Motus towers along the Texas coast and I thought I'd give an update. If you aren't familiar with this project you can read up about it online at www.motus.org. It is a collaborative research network that uses coordinated automated radio telemetry arrays to study the movements of small animals including, of course, birds. We deployed 15 towers from Texas City south to Rockport and they've been humming along ever since. They collect data for researchers in North, Central, and South America as the birds migrate across the Texas coast in the fall and spring. We had detections of a number of species including Barn Swallow, Brown-headed Cowbird, Cliff Swallow, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Gray Catbird, Least Tern, Ovenbird, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Many of these birds were banded on the wintering ground in South America!

We've also utilized the towers to support some of our own research, most recently our Loggerhead Shrike project. From November through March of this past winter, our towers made 122 Loggerhead Shrike detections that included five of the six shrikes on which we deployed nanotags (the radio tags picked up by the Motus network). This data will be invaluable in determining how the birds are utilizing Gulf Coast habitat during the winter.

Believe it or not, after only four years, the technology deployed in our towers is obsolete and the refuge is working with partners to acquire funds to update all our towers to newer technology. With these updates, we'll be able to support research that detects birds at a finer scale than we can currently and we'll certainly be using it for our own needs as well!



Luanne Salinas takes data after locating a banded shrike.

Photo by Jimmy Salinas



Visitors enjoy the show at Smith Point.
Photo by Joe Kennedy

SMITH POINT FALL 2019: A SEASON WITH LOW NUMBERS

BY SUSAN HEATH, PHD

In 2019, we decided to change the dates of the count at Smith Point in response to changes in migration patterns of the birds. We had originally set the start date on August 1 to capture Swallow-tailed Kite migration because that species migrates early, but we weren't really getting much bang for our buck there. Conversely, we noticed that when we arrived in mid-November to pick up the RV and move it back to GCBO, birds were still migrating overhead. So in 2019, we moved the start of the count to August 15th and the end of the count from November 15th to November 30th. This was with approval of Bob Baez's mother who granted him permission to miss Thanksgiving back home in Pennsylvania!

The change to November 30th turned out to be a good move because we tallied an additional 2,157 birds from November 16th to November 30th, recorded a new high for Turkey Vultures and tied the high for Bald Eagles and Merlins. In a season that was slow in every other way, this was a bonus. Overall we tallied our lowest number of Broad-winged Hawks ever with only 13,843. Other low numbers included only 206 Swainson's Hawks (high 1,036), 969 Cooper's Hawks (high 2,066) and 1,989 Sharp-shinned Hawks (high 7,271). American Kestrels were low too with only 399 recorded (high 2449). There is evidence from other parts of the country that kestrels are in trouble and these numbers certainly seem to back that up.

We've decided to continue with the August 15 to November 30 schedule in 2020 and here's hoping for a better year!

GCBO SURVEYS BIRDS USING INTERTIDAL REEF

BY SUSAN HEATH, PHD

In summer 2018, GCBO began monitoring bird use of intertidal reef for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program. Intertidal reef is that reef which is exposed at low tide. We all know oystercatchers use this habitat but do other birds use it as well? If they do, how important is this habitat that is threatened by sea level rise? We surveyed three sets of reef in West Galveston Bay and three sets in Drum and Bastrop Bays twice a month for 18 months and collected a lot of data! We were hampered a bit when I broke my arm in October 2018 and I have to say thank you to the volunteers that helped keep the project going while I was out of commission. They are Scott Buckel, Alan Wilde, Keith Wise, and John Wright. Thanks guys!



We recorded fifty species of birds using this habitat over the course of the study and data analysis is ongoing. Many species like Willets and Ruddy Turnstones use this habitat to feed but there were also a lot of pelicans, gulls, and terns using the reefs for self-maintenance behaviors like resting, preening, and bathing. Most interesting to me was that while oystercatchers use this habitat to feed, they used it a greater percentage of the time just as the pelicans, gulls and terns were. They rested, preened, and bathed in this habitat that is safe from predators. Who knew reefs were so important to so many different species of birds?!



A beautiful Red-tailed Hawk gave a good show.
Photo by Joe Kennedy



Above: Shorebirds roosting on a reef in West Galveston Bay.

Right: Long-billed Curlews often forage in reef habitat.

Photos by Alan Wilde

GCBO'S ONLINE BIRD SCHOOL

BY CELESTE SILLING

In nature, birds have to adjust to their surroundings and now we at GCBO have to adjust to ours. As COVID 19 sweeps across our nation and people are forced to stay home, we have to move our education programs online.

GCBO's new Online Bird School is a free online resource for parents and kids of all ages. As with our normal education programs, we are aiming to introduce students to birds, birding, and conservation through fun and informative activities. Some of our first classes are Intro to Birding, Intermediate Birding, Advanced Birding, Research with Dr. Sue, and Winnie the Wilson's Plover.

For younger students, Winnie the Wilson's plover is perfect for teaching reading comprehension, life science, and conservation. For older students, classes like Research with Dr. Sue will teach them what it means to be a researcher and how to design an experiment. For kids of all ages and even adults new to birding, the Birding courses are a fun and easy way to learn how to identify birds in the wild.

We will be adding even more courses to the curriculum as time goes on, so check back in frequently! This is a great opportunity for kids to become scientists and wildlife advocates from their living rooms!

Visit the website here: <https://gcbo-school.thinkific.com/>

WINNIE THE WILSON'S PLOVER

BY CELESTE SILLING

Winnie the Wilson's Plover is a children's book that shows parents and children the obstacles that a Wilson's Plover faces during nesting season. This story not only makes readers sympathize with the birds, but it also teaches kids how to help them. Many of the problems that these birds face are human-made and can easily be human-stopped.

A great example of this is when Winnie is faced with a young child running into the nesting territory. Normally, a child might not think that this is a problem, so long as they don't smash the eggs or hurt the bird. But from Winnie's eyes, we see that the mere presence of a human is stressful and therefore harmful to the bird and eggs. This shows children that they can help the birds by giving them space and not disturbing them.



by Celeste Silling
for Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

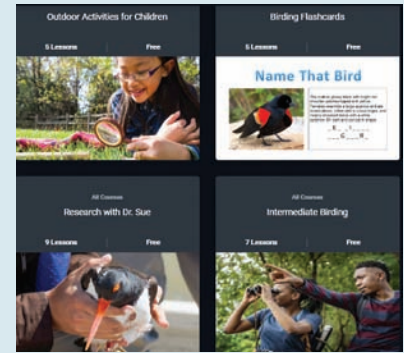
Frequently, humans can be a detriment to nature and we don't even know it. I've found that often people are perfectly willing to change their ways if you only show them why and how. Children are especially eager to help their animal friends, it's only a matter of telling them how to do it.

*Winnie the Wilson's Plover book cover.
Find us at the beach!*

Illustrated by Celeste Silling

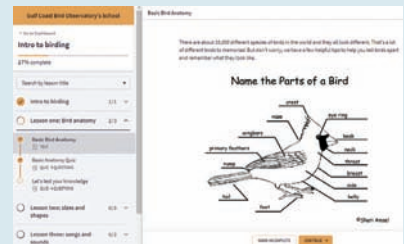


Phillips 66 furnished a grant that made this possible, thank you!



GCBO's Online Bird School Features a variety of free courses.

Photo / web design by Celeste Silling



Courses involve both teaching and interactive quizzes, cementing what the students just learned.

Photo by Celeste Silling



Beach-nesting birds face a range of obstacles. Here, Winnie gets tangled in trash and can't incubate the eggs.

Illustrated by Celeste Silling

FAREWELL

Allan Berger – Board Member

We want to thank Alan for his service and term on the GCBO Board. Allan brought with him a deep environmental commitment and helped GCBO become a more green organization. Alan, and his wife Brigid, also play a big part in our American Oystercatcher monitoring by volunteer their time and boat, and we are thankful they continue this important work, and support of GCBO. Thank you Alan!

Jan Cato - Board Member

Jan has been a big part of GCBO for many years in various capacities, and she remains a supporter by now sitting on our Advisory Board. Her last term on the board has helped GCBO expand our reach and vision, and new funding opportunities. She remains one of our biggest ambassadors spreading the good word about GCBO. Thank you for all you do Jan!

Tom Morris – Board Member

Tom recently completed his board term, but has been an active supporter and volunteer with GCBO for many years. He served as Board Treasurer and played a big part on our Investment Committee. Tom also spent many months helping us with our financial documents and procedures during staff change over a few years ago. Thank you Tom!

Heather Hill – Biology Intern

From September through November, Heather joined us as Biology Intern to help with research projects. Heather is a recent graduate from Florida State University with degrees in Biology and Studio Art, and has a great interest in the bird world. Heather helped with monitoring shorebirds and Black Skimmers, our intertidal reefs study, the American Oystercatcher project, the Loggerhead Shrike project, and XHX. She also created and painted two wonderful photo booths! She has been a wonderful asset and friend here at GCBO, and we wish her well in her future biology work.

GCBO MIGRATIONS—STAFF & BOARD UPDATES

WELCOME

Celeste Sillings – Education & Outreach Manager

Celeste was born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico, attending Lawrence University, WI, receiving her Bachelor's in Biology in 2016. Focused on her passions of conservation and education, she has worked in botany research, a husbandry project, as a shorebird crew leader and sage-grouse research technician, and Environmental Education. Working with birds and doing public education and outreach were always her favorite parts. Now pursuing her talents and interests as the Education and Outreach Manager here at the GCBO, she loves teaching people about the environment, enjoys nature, and birding in her free time!

Russell Pope – Board Member

Russell grew up on the Gulf Coast in Brazoria County, spending summer breaks enjoying the beaches, rivers, and wildlife. He earned his Associates Degree from Brazosport College, then a Bachelor's of Science in Environmental Management from the University of Houston – Clear Lake. Russell is a Senior Environmental Specialist for CenterPoint Energy Houston Electric. His primary role is managing the Electric Division's oil spill response program, ensuring habitats are protected, and supports the avian protection and waste management programs. He trains employees to be responsible environmental stewards, and serves as an active volunteer with Galveston Bay area conservation events like Marsh Mania and Bay Day. When not working, Russell spends most of his time outdoors, enjoying the early morning sitting on the patio with his wife drinking coffee and watching and listening for birds, and tending to land and livestock. Russell and his wife love to admire wildlife and their habitats.

**Morgan Barnes – Biology Intern**

Morgan grew up in Chicago, and majored in Ecology, Behavior and Evolution at UCLA, with a minor in Conservation Biology. She has worked as an Invasive Species Technician for USFW removing invasive Burmese Pythons, and other invasives such as feral cats and iguanas, followed by an Avian Monitoring Internship in Kodiak, AK, monitoring Aleutian tern nests and living on a boat for 6 weeks counting marine birds. She is now assisting with the shorebird programs at GCBO till mid-summer. Morgan ultimately plans to attend graduate school, focus TBD, and then enjoy a long career in wildlife conservation.



Our Vision is a healthy ecosystem with abundant space for birds to survive and thrive around the Gulf of Mexico.

OUR DEEPEST THANKS TO OUR INDIVIDUAL DONORS, CONTRIBUTORS, AS WELL AS NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

We would like to give special recognition to the following individuals who donated to our programs or gave towards memberships between August 1, 2019 and January 31, 2020.

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GCBO VOLUNTEERS: Your Help and Support are Invaluable!

Our volunteers continue to amaze and impress us with their dedication to GCBO and our shared mission. Whatever our needs, there always seem to be someone willing and able to step up and make it happen. From July 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020, volunteers contributed an amazing 4662 hours to the conservation of birds and habitat and to increasing public awareness of the value and need for conservation.

Thank you for all you do for birds on behalf of GCBO!

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A POND BY VOLUNTEERS

BY MARTIN HAGNE

It was completed last September, made by volunteers from start to finish, led by Phil Huxford who even brought his tractor to make it all possible! The old water feature was damaged by Hurricane Harvey and collapsed.

Thanks to our wonderful volunteers, that feature is now replaced with a beautiful new pond and water feature. These dedicated volunteers worked diligently in the heat! Plants were dug up from around the old feature and potted to be replanted, the old feature was dismantled, and the huge rocks moved and used in the new structure.

Sam Dufilho, Vic Wade, Tom Taroni, and Oron Atkins hand dug the finer features of the pond, amongst other work, while Phil operated his tractor to first dig the hole. The watering system around the pond was also re-plumbed thanks to board member Michael Heather. Brian Kolthammer, Jennifer Sanchez, Gary Weeks and Harold Travis also contributed their knowhow and sweat to the cause. Tad Finnell lead the electrical work for the pump installation.

Thank you to everyone who pitched in! This is such a wonderful feature, and visible from the rocking chairs on the new front deck! Come enjoy!



FLIGHT FOREVER LEGACY CIRCLE

LEAVE A LEGACY...FOR THE BIRDS!

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory formed the "Flight Forever Legacy Circle" to ensure the long-term conservation of our migratory birds and their habitats. Perpetuate your love of birds and the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory beyond your lifetime. By making a planned gift – through your will or estate plan, a bequest, a trust, a retirement plan, or an insurance policy – you can create a personal legacy that will have a strong and lasting impact for birds and conservation into the future.

If you have already included Gulf Coast Bird Observatory in your estate plans, we hope you will let us know so that we may honor you in our Legacy Circle membership. Your willingness to be listed as a member encourages others.

However, if you wish to remain anonymous please let us know of your plans on a confidential basis.

Legacy Circle members receive exclusive invitations to special events and trips. If you are considering a Legacy gift, please email or call Martin at GCBO to discuss your plans. 979-480-0999 • mhagne@gcbo.org



GCBO RV Volunteers Are Awesome!

Steven and Mara Saltsman recently finished a three-month stint as our RV volunteers helping with maintenance projects. Thank you guys!

Sheryl and Harold Travis will be back again to cover the RV slot after summer, along with Lilly the dog!



Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Inc.

299 West Highway 332
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(979) 480-0999

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



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UPCOMING GCBO EVENTS

Save the date for these upcoming GCBO events and check our website and social media for details and changes. www.gcbo.org

Bird Banding at GCBO:

Held at our headquarters on the 3rd Saturday of every month from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon, our Bird Banding event allows the public to watch as Robert and Kay Lookingbill band birds on site. This long term research project allows us to collect data about local and migratory birds, and it's an excellent opportunity to see birds up close. Children and adults learn about birds, why we study them, and why they matter. This is a great experience for the whole family.

Upcoming dates: May 16th, June 20th, July 18th, August 15th, September 19th, October 17th.

Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza:

Taking place September 19th and 26th, from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon, XHX is our yearly event celebrating the peak of Ruby-throated Hummingbird migration in the fall. It features symbolic hummingbird adoptions and live hummingbird banding where you get the opportunity to see these amazing birds up close and in the hand! Informative and entertaining talks will be held both days, plus a special raffle, activities for the kids, live animals at nature booths, a hummingbird & butterfly plant sale, our nature gift shop is open, and snacks and drink will be available for purchase.



Sheryl, Harold, and Lily with Archie



Funding for this newsletter has been generously provided by Phillips 66.



Our Mission

Protect birds and their habitats
around the Gulf of Mexico and beyond.

Smith Point Hawk Watch:

The Hawk Watch at Smith Point will begin on August 15th at the Candby Abshier Wildlife Management Area in Smith Point, Texas and continue through November 30th. 20+ species of raptors will be coming through the area and this is your chance to learn about their southward migrations. This is an amazing sight to see and you can be a part of it by helping us count birds! This is a free event and volunteers are on site daily from 8 am to 4 pm. to count birds and answer questions.



Brew on the Bayou:

Previously scheduled for March 21, 2020, Brew has been moved to November 7. Visitors will sample specialty brews from local breweries as well as wines. This event features live music, food from local food trucks, a live raptor show, pontoon boat rides, and a silent auction. Our beautiful wooded grounds will be lit by torchlight making it a perfect spot to enjoy the brews, the food and the music! \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door.

YOU CAN REACH US BY EMAIL:

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