

GULF CROSSINGS

GALVESTON BAY FOUNDATION RESTORATION EFFORTS TO DEVELOP VITAL NESTING HABITAT IN GALVESTON BAY

By Haille Leija & Philip Smith

Houston-Galveston based, conservation organization, Galveston Bay Foundation has spent the last 34 years restoring and protecting native habitat in and around the Galveston Bay estuary. The organization works to preserve and enhance Galveston Bay for generations to come and leads efforts to rebuild saltmarsh, recycle oyster shells for use in reef restoration, protect eroding shorelines, preserve ecologically valuable land, and restore nesting habitat for migratory and native bird populations. To date, Galveston Bay Foundation's habitat restoration and conservation efforts have resulted in the following:

- 20+ miles of shoreline protected
- 600+ acres of marsh restored
- 230+ acres of freshwater wetlands restored
- 150+ acres of seagrass restored
- 3+ acres of island habitat restored
- 530+ tons of oyster shell returned to the bay as new oyster habitat
- 8,300+ acres of land protected via fee simple acquisitions and conservation easements

While marsh and oyster reef restoration have been the Foundation's primary focus in the past, recent efforts have focused on nesting island restoration.

Dickinson Bay

Nesting island restoration efforts in Dickinson Bay began in the early 2000s. Historically, this small bay was home to three islands, constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These islands supported nesting bird species, including Least Tern, Gull-billed Tern, Royal Tern, Black Skimmer, American Oystercatcher, and Caspian Tern, as well as intertidal marsh habitat. Subsidence and long-term erosion, exacerbated by a series of tropical storms in the 1990s, resulted in the loss of all three islands.



In 2006, Galveston Bay Foundation and partners completed the construction of Dickinson Bay Island 1. Based on annual waterbird surveys, the island now supports numerous species of colonial waterbirds including White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Snowy Egret, Great Blue Heron, Cattle Egret, Great Egret, Tricolored Heron, Forster's Terns, Cormorant, and Laughing Gull. The island also hosts a pair of American Oystercatchers. The restoration of a second Dickinson Bay Island will provide an additional four-acre island for nesting and roosting in Dickinson Bay.

Construction of Dickinson Bay Island 2 is expected to begin after the 2021 nesting season with funding provided by Deepwater Horizon NRDA trustees.



2016 aerial view of Bay Harbor Island during nesting season in West Galveston Bay.



Royal Terns and their chicks on Bay Harbor Island in West Galveston Bay.

Left: 2005 aerial view of the newly constructed Dickinson Bay Island 1.

Masthead photo: Galveston Island beach sunrise.

Photo by Martin Hagne

Continues on page 2

DIRECTOR'S VIEW

MARTIN HAGNE

Hope and thoughts forward abound here at GCBO as spring nears, leaving behind a winter freeze that devastated much of Texas and elsewhere. Hopefully thoughts of a soon to be Covid free time are also carrying us forward this year. Can we soon travel to bird Oregon and Arizona as are our plans with our GCBO Birding Trips this summer, and Cuba this fall...? It looks promising, as do the many green buds on trees and shrubs that survived the winter storm of all winter storms.

We know we lost many birds to the prolonged freezing temperatures. Many just went to sleep that night and never woke up. Some survived only to lose the fight due to scarce food supplies as insects perished and flowers froze. Some sea birds starved as the fish they eat died in the cold waters. The woods are quieter with less bird song. The beaches have scattered feathers all over them from birds perished at sea. But a new spring will bring rebuilding of that lost. Nature is resilient if we only allow it to heal.

I hope you are fairing well and can look forward to a better year without as much stress and worry. Get outside and let nature heal and rejuvenate you... there is nothing better!

GALVESTON BAY FOUNDATION RESTORATION EFFORTS

(continued from page 1)

Bay Harbor

In addition to the Dickinson Bay Island projects, Galveston Bay Foundation partnered with the Bay Harbor community on West Galveston Island and USFWS to utilize dredge material from the Bay Harbor canal to restore marsh and create suitable nesting habitat for colonial waterbirds. This project now provides habitat for upwards of 8,000 colonial waterbirds including Black Skimmer, Royal Tern, Sandwich Tern, Laughing Gull, Cattle Egret, Tricolored Heron, and White Ibis. Seagrasses have also been documented growing on the leeward side of the restored island. Galveston Bay Foundation is currently raising funds to provide additional protection for the island and increase the available nesting habitat.

Jones Bay

Last but not least, Galveston Bay Foundation recently initiated a project in Jones Bay, adjacent to the Village of Tiki Island, to restore both nesting and foraging habitat for the American Oystercatcher. As documented by Dr. Sue Heath's (GCBO) 10+ years of research in Galveston Bay, the local American Oystercatcher population is experiencing severe declines in reproduction success, largely due to a lack of viable nesting habitat. Many of the once nestable islands in the Bay, and Jones Bay in particular, are now submerged. High tide events have also forced nesting American Oystercatcher to venture further for food as intertidal oyster reefs are often submerged and inaccessible to foraging birds.

In order to reverse these declines, Galveston Bay Foundation is working with a diverse project team, including Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, to restore up to four remnant islands in Jones Bay. In addition to creating higher elevations to provide more resilient nesting habitat, the organization plans to restore up to one acre of oyster reef adjacent to each nesting island, thus providing foraging habitat for nesting American Oystercatchers and their young. Pending available funding and permit approval, Galveston Bay Foundation hopes to begin construction on this project within the next two years.

Galveston Bay Foundation's work would not be possible without the contributions and expertise of local, state, and federal partners. In particular, the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, TX Parks and Wildlife Department, Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Restore America's Estuaries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Ducks Unlimited, and US Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program have helped guide these nesting island restoration efforts throughout the Bay.

Learn more about Galveston Bay Foundation's habitat restoration efforts at galvbay.org/restoration.

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LOGGERHEAD SHRIKES TRAVEL FROM AFAR

BY SUSAN HEATH



Shrike 160 was a resident at the Volunteer Village at Brazoria NWR.



Shrike 164 was a short-distance migrant or disperser that wintered along the intracoastal waterway in Sargent and may have remained to breed.



Master Naturalist Sandy Henderson tracking a shrike. Photo by Vicky Adams

We completed the first official season of our Loggerhead Shrike monitoring project at the end of February with the help of a dedicated crew of Master Naturalists. This year the field sites were at Quintana/Surfside and the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. There were two birds at Quintana and three birds near Surfside. The shrikes on San Bernard NWR were most uncooperative so we put our transmitters on five birds along FM 2918 that borders the refuge on the eastern edge. Eight teams of Master Naturalists took a morning or afternoon shift during the week to monitor the birds and Allen Timmer, a local student in the Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences program at Oregon State University, volunteered to monitor them on Saturday mornings. It was great to have all this help!

This project aims to determine if there are any differences in territory quality for resident shrikes versus migrant shrikes. Along the Texas coast in winter, we have both residents and migrants but we can't tell the difference between them just by looking at them. We have to take feather and blood samples and send them off for analysis to get that data. Once we know who is who, we can look at our tracking data and compare their territories.

We are still waiting for the results of the resident versus migrant analysis for the birds we did this past winter and we are just getting started mapping the territories but we have the data from the pilot season birds from the winter before (2019-2020). We banded nine birds and put transmitters on six of them that winter so the volunteers could track them. Three of these territories are shown in the photos.

Of the nine birds we banded, the genetic analysis revealed that one was a local resident, two were short-distance migrants or dispersers from a region roughly encompassing northern Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma and Kansas and five were long-distance migrants from the prairie pothole region of the northern U.S. and Canada. Wow! Who knew our shrikes were so well traveled. We believe that one of the birds classified as a short-distance migrant remained in our area to breed in 2020 so that is why there is that qualification of migrant or disperser on that category. The short-distance birds could be dispersing to our area and staying or they could be returning. We just don't know!

Regardless, this is quite exciting news and shows just how much we don't know about where shrikes that spend the winter in Texas come from. We can't draw any conclusions from just the three territories shown in the photos but they represent all three flavors of shrikes. Shrike 160 was a resident, shrike 164 was a short-distance migrant or disperser and shrike 165 was a long-distance migrant. Further analysis will give us more answers!



Shrike 165 was a long-distance migrant that wintered in a neighborhood at Sargent.

MOTUS PROJECT GETS AN UPGRADE

BY SUSAN HEATH

It's hard to believe we've already had our Motus network running for four years. Seems like just yesterday I was crawling all over roofs and learning how to put connectors on coaxial cable. Time flies and so does technology. Our network is already outdated! We received a \$32,000 grant from the ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation program, administered through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, to upgrade our network with Cellular Tracking Technology (CTT) SensorStations. SensorStations are a complete swap out of our current sensor/gnome boxes and provide many new features. We will now be able to download our data much easier and can check the status of a tower online so we'll know when there is a problem. SensorStations support traditional Motus technology so we will still get detections from nanotags but now our towers will also be able to detect CTT LifeTags and PowerTags. These tags are much lighter than traditional nanotags so they can go on smaller species and they use a solar panel instead of a battery so they last the life of the bird rather than the life of the battery. That alone will triple or quadruple the amount of data we get from each tagged individual. In addition, SensorStations will allow for the use of detection nodes that can be deployed in a grid and provide precise location data (an actual lat/long) for any tagged individual within the grid. This will expand our research capabilities immensely! We expect to have this upgrade completed by the end of 2021.



TEXAS EASTERN WILLET WINTERING LOCATIONS IDENTIFIED

BY SUSAN HEATH

It's been a while since I wrote about our eastern Willet project, but Jennifer Wilson (Texas Mid-coast NWR) and I finished our analysis so it's time to spill the beans on where our breeding Willets go to spend the winter. Although all Willets are considered one species right now they are likely to be split into eastern and western Willets. This is because their life history is completely different. Western Willets breed in fresh water in the western U.S. and winter along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts in North America and the Pacific coast in Central and South America. Eastern Willets breed in salt water marshes along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts and are largely absent from North America during the nonbreeding season. So, for the most part, in Texas we have eastern Willets during the breeding season and western Willets during the nonbreeding season. Prior research has shown that Atlantic coast eastern Willets go to the Atlantic coast of South America for the winter, but we didn't know where Gulf coast eastern Willets go in the winter.

We put geolocators (small tracking devices) on 21 Willets at the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge over a period of four years and were able to retrieve 10 of them. One incurred saltwater intrusion and had no data but the other nine turned out to be a gold mine! All birds departed the breeding grounds between July 5th and July 22nd and made a 2 - 5 day nonstop flight to their destination. Geolocators are not as accurate as a device which provides a GPS location but we were able to determine that five of them went to Ecuador or northern Peru, two of them went to Nicaragua or Costa Rica and two of them went to Panama or northern Colombia! With the exception of the Panama birds all of them were definitely on the Pacific coast. The Panama birds may have also been on the Pacific coast but because Panama is so skinny we can't be sure the birds weren't on the Caribbean side. So, our Gulf coast eastern Willets don't spend the winter where Atlantic eastern Willets do. Rather they are mixed in with western Willets along the Pacific coast of Central and South America. Previously all Willets on the Pacific coast were considered to be western Willets so this is big news.



Jennifer Wilson and Susan Heath with Willet A6A



A Willet chick awaiting the hatching of its siblings.

A Willet incubating its nest.

Photos by Susan Heath





GCBO BIRDING TRIPS

BY MARTIN HAGNE

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

Oregon Birding

June 19-26, 2021 – **Only 1 spot left!**

Southeast Arizona Birding

August 16-23, 2021 – **SOLD OUT!**

Cuba Birding Exploration

October 14-25, 2021 – **SOLD OUT!**

Boreal Winter Birding

February 2-7, 2022 – **SOLD OUT!**

Guatemala Exploration

March 5-13, 2022 with Tikal Extension March 13-16, 2022

Oaxaca, Mexico

2022 – Trip info to be published soon



GUATEMALA EXPLORATION

Come bird Guatemala in areas not offered by other bird tour companies, guided by Guatemala's top birder, John Cahill. You will have the chance to visit GCBO's Tropical Forest Forever Fund's (TFFF) newest project, a reforestation program at Community Cloud Forest Conservation, near Cobán in central Guatemala. You will stay at the CCFC Center, a totally off-the-grid facility and a marvel in engineering. In addition to fabulous birds, including the near mythical Resplendent Quetzal, Guatemala offers you an amazing cultural history and conservation success stories. We are offering a 3-night extension to Tikal, perhaps the greatest of the Mayan cities, filled with ancient ruins and great birds. As you walk among the pyramids, you should look for Keel-billed Toucan, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Ocellated Turkey, Tody Motmot, several species of parrots, and the Orange-breasted Falcon... and you may see mammals like Coatis, Agoutis, and Spider and Black Howler Monkeys.





VIRTUAL BIRD BASH

- Bird banding
- Raffle
- Webinars
- Merch Sale

View schedule at GCBO.org

To Watch this event, go to [Gulf Coast Bird Observatory's Facebook page](#) ←
on May 15 & 16 8:00-4:30



UPCOMING EVENTS

BY CELESTE SILLING

We at the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory love hosting events that bring people together to celebrate birds. Despite uncertain times, we are still planning on hosting our annual events, hoping that we will all be able to flock together soon! If, when the time comes, we can't hold the events in person, they will be held online over live video.

From July 12th through the 16th, we will be hosting our annual **Summer Bird Camp** for kids at our headquarters in Lake Jackson. This day camp allows children ages 8-11 to be ecologists, biologists, and environmental stewards for a week. Each day will feature new lessons on birds, ecosystems, and conservation. Call 979-480-0999 to sign up now and reserve your child's spot!

On September 18th & 25th, during the height of the fall Ruby-throated Hummingbird migration, we'll be throwing our annual **Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza!** This event includes live hummingbird banding and guests will have the opportunity to see the birds up close and symbolically adopt them. There will be educational booths, speakers, food, and plenty of fun activities for the whole family!

Brew on the Bayou was originally scheduled for March of 2020, but is now scheduled for November 6, 2021. This is one of our most popular events, featuring beer and wine tastings, pontoon boats rides, a raptor show, music, food trucks and so much more!

Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. Tickets that were purchased for 2020 will be honored in 2021.

GCBO Monitors T&E Species on the Job Site

By Martin Hagne

GCBO was recently awarded the contract to monitor for Piping Plovers and Red Knots along the beach and dune lines while the Galveston Island State Park (TPWD) is being rebuilt, after the park received severe hurricane damage. Contractors are building three walkways that go over the dunes onto the beach for visitors to use and keep the dunes undisturbed. It's a great way for GCBO to help the project while earning needed income, and we hope to expand our roll with contracted monitoring work.

ONLINE PROGRAMMING

BY CELESTE SILLING

This past year, we haven't been able to do our in-person educational programming, but that hasn't stopped us from sharing our love and knowledge of nature! We've gone virtual with our Online Bird School, YouTube videos, and educational Facebook Livestream events.

GCBO's 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. New classes include Marine Debris, Galveston Bay Ecology and Night Owls-Nocturnal Animals. You can visit the website here: <https://gcbo-school.thinkific.com/> and begin learning for free now!

For shorter lessons on bird biology, research, conservation, and more, you can watch our educational videos on GCBO's Youtube channel. With these videos, you can see what it's like to be a bird monitor, learn our special bird seed recipe, or just sit back and watch some birds. We are always uploading new videos, so stay tuned and subscribe to the channel.

Some of our most fun and engaging educational programming takes place during our live virtual events on Facebook. We livestream our bird banding every few months and host larger educational events like Virtual Bird Bash as well. These events allow viewers to see birds up close as they learn all about different species and their ecology. Virtual Bird Bash will feature workshops, presentations, and a raffle too! To watch our online events, check our Facebook events page for scheduling and viewing information.

ONLINE STORE AND NURSERY

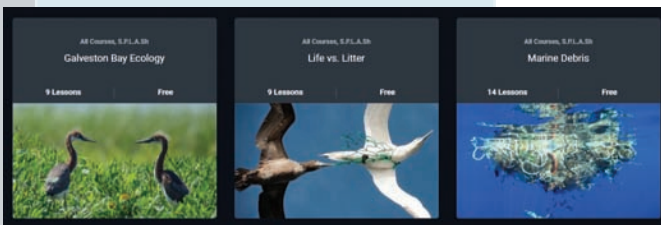
BY CELESTE SILLING

GCBO's Nature Store is now online on our website, www.gcbo.org! Here, you can buy GCBO merchandise like T-shirts, patches, and stickers as well as hummingbird feeders, books, field guides and more. We are always adding items, especially new and amazing books, so check back often. Buying here helps support our conservation work, so you can always feel good about your purchases!

A relatively new addition to the online store is our Plant Nursery section. The GCBO Native Plant Nursery was started because native birds depend on native plants for food, shelter, insects, and nesting supplies. Imported, nonnative plants might look pleasing to the eye, but when it comes to providing for the local wildlife, nothing can beat native plants! From grasses, to perennials to shrubs and trees, we've got plants for every ecological need.

We recently started putting some of the most popular species of native plants in our online store. To purchase these, add them to your cart and pay online or over the phone. Then contact Celeste (csilling@gcbo.org) to schedule your contactless pick up. Unfortunately, we can't ship the plants, but this is a great excuse to come to our beautiful property!

We frequently update the store and have sales on both plants and merchandise, so follow us on social media and subscribe to our Enews to keep up to date on what we're selling. Nature store items make great gifts for your human friends, and native plants are great presents for avian ones!



LANDS SAVED FOR THE BIRDS

BY MARTIN HAGNE

GCBO's Land Acquisition Fund (LAF) and Tropical Forests Forever Fund (TFFF) have worked with various partners domestically and internationally to purchase and conserve critical avian habitat over the past many years.

Both funds work the same, and allow GCBO, and you, to save conservation land while not having to own it. Any funds donated towards LAF or TFFF are placed in an endowment that is invested and continually earns income. The corpus (your donations) is never touched, and keeps building more funds. The income is granted by GCBO to other conservation organizations that are buying land to set aside and conserve. LAF works in all the Gulf states in the USA, and the TFFF works in all Latin American countries.

The TFFF, established in 2007, has raised over \$1,600,000 working with 28 partners in 10 countries to fund the acquisition of 20,199 acres, including the habitats of such endangered species as the Blue-fronted Macaw in Bolivia, the Araripe Manakin, a bird only discovered in 1996, in Brazil, the Lilacine Amazon in Ecuador, as well as our many migrating species we see here in the U.S.

The LAF, established in 2011, has raised over \$653,000 and has assisted conservation organizations such as The Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy in protecting 7,252 critical habitat acres located in Texas, Alabama, and Louisiana, all now protecting so many species who call these places home.

Our latest TFFF grant (2020) funded \$15,200 to the Alta Verapaz Habitat Restoration project by the Community Cloud Forest Conservation group in central Guatemala to conserve crucial habitat for the over-wintering Golden-Cheeked Warbler, a Texas endemic breeder, as well as many other neotropic species.

The last LAF grant (2021) was for \$30,000 to Artist Boat on Galveston Island, to help expand their Coastal Heritage Preserve. The Anchor Bay expansion will add 75 acres of beautiful coastal marsh and bay habitats that are so rapidly disappearing along our Texas coast.

You can help conserve much needed habitats for birds and all other wildlife by giving a donation to one or both of these funds. You can learn more on our website at www.gcbo.org, or by calling Martin at GCBO.



Now you can support GCBO through your Amazon shopping and it doesn't cost you a thing. All you have to do is sign up GCBO as your Amazon Smile recipient. Just go to www.smile.amazon.com and enter Gulf Coast Bird Observatory in the charity box. On the next screen click Select next to our name and you're all set.

AmazonSmile offers the same shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate part of the purchase price to GCBO. You can use your existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile if you have one, or create a new account if you don't.



Reserva Las Galarias, Ecuador



Brazos Woods Preserve



Armand Bayou Nature Center

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

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

SAVE A TREE AND SOME \$!

We are trying to go as paperless as we can to save some trees and quite a bit on printing and mailing costs. We would love if you would let us email you instead of slow mailing a hard copy! That includes your future copies of the Gulf Crossings.

Please email or call Tricia to say: "Hey, GCBO, please start emailing me things! Here is my email..."
Thanks! tpatton@gcbo.org

GCBO MIGRATIONS—STAFF & BOARD UPDATES

FAREWELLS

We are fortunate in that both our "Farewells" are also "Welcomes" as both Mike and Jackie exit their roll on the GCBO board, but have chosen to remain an active part of GCBO's management and have been welcomed to serve on the GCBO Advisory Board, as well as serving on several Board Committees.

Mike Williams

Mike served two, three-year terms on the GCBO Board of Directors and recently rolled off due to our Bylaw's term-limits. He served very capably as the Board President for his second term. He also chaired the Board Nominating Committee, and served on the By-Laws and Policy Committee. Some of Mike's many wonderful contributions included his very generous donations of his stunning bird photos for GCBO auctions and sales, and his time guiding birders and photographers on our Experience Auction trips, which he still continues to do. He created and printed a guide to our programs and projects, used to entice others to join the GCBO cause, donated funds as well as a gorgeous hummingbird calendar for sale in our gift shop. Mike took over our popular Bird of the Month article, and still continues writing it. His passion for GCBO has shown in so many ways! And we would be remiss if we do not thank his wife Tracey who has spent countless hours baking delicious pastries for sale, and crafted so many fun items for our events, all donated! Thankfully Mike has agreed to move on to our Advisory Board, and on to the Development Committee. Thank you, Mike, for all the countless ways you have helped GCBO succeed!

Jackie Hicks

Jackie has served the GCBO superbly for two, three-year terms on the GCBO Board of Directors. She rolled off in January due to our term limit policy. We are very fortunate in that she has agreed to move on to the GCBO Advisory Board to continue helping us move forward, as well as join the Board Development Committee, and stay on the Outreach & Marketing Committee which she led the last several years. Jackie has been intricately involved in so many programs and projects at GCBO, including helping start the in-school Project SOAR, managed the auctions and raffles at Brew on the Bayou and other events, numerous GCBO sales, and nature store projects. She's worked tirelessly with the hummer adoptions at our Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza among others, and has represented GCBO at our community booth. Jackie have been a major part of our annual Kids Summer Bird Camp, and as a yearly volunteer at the Quintana Spring Fling. Before retiring from DOW, Jackie was a company escort for our biologists while they monitored the Black Skimmer colony located there, and she continues as one of our dedicated Loggerhead Shrike monitoring team members. Thank you so very much Jackie, and for staying involved in so many ways.



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.

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, 2020 and January 31, 2021.

Thank you for your vital support.

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WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE CORPORATE, FOUNDATION & GOVERNMENT GRANTS

We are privileged to acknowledge generous support received between August 1, 2020 and January 31, 2021.

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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 August 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021, volunteers contributed an amazing 3434.25 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!

Baiyinah Abdullah • Vicky Adams
Bill Ahlstrom • Ann Anderson
Oron Atkins • Bob Baez • Sarah Belles
Brigid & Allan Berger • Monica Berry
Carmen Blumberg • Marcy Brown
Scott Buckel • Winifred Burkett • Davis Clay
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Linda Hoffman • Cynthia Hughes
Diane Humes & Allan Treiman • Phil Huxford
Nigel James with Boy Scout Troop 324
Carol Jones • Denise Kaplan
Joe Kennedy • Larry & Vicky Kirby
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Brooklyn Short • Joellen Snow
Denise Stephens • Stann Stirling • Brenda Stitt
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Nina Sitra & Mark Swanson
Thomas Taroni • Allen Timmer
Sheryl & Harold Travis • Cindy Vincent
Beverly Walton • Ronald Weeks
John & Jana Whittle • Maureen & Alan Wilde
Mike & Tracey Williams • John & Lynn Wright
Barbara Yoder

A TRIBUTE TO DENNIS SHEPLER

It is with great sorrow and regret that the time has come to write a tribute to GCBO's long-time friend Dennis Shepler. Dennis passed away on February 18th at his home in Houston. He had suffered a long bout with pulmonary fibrosis and passed away peacefully in his sleep early in the morning. Dennis supported GCBO in too many ways to count, but the two primary ways were through our Site Partner Network and his artwork. While Dennis was teaching at The Kinkaid School in Houston, he set up a fantastic "school backyard" along Buffalo Bayou for student research projects, this was one of our Site Partner Network sites. I met him for the first time there, in the fall of 2007, just after I started working at GCBO. Later, after he retired, he supported the GCBO endlessly by providing artwork for t-shirts and silent auctions. Our current Quintana t-shirt, with the moon and three warblers taking off (appropriately called lift off), was painted by Dennis. In the last few years when I ran into him birding, I asked how he was doing. His response was the same every time: "Well, I'm supposed to be dead, so I'm doing pretty well!" His enthusiasm for life was infectious, and he never met a stranger. He birded until he could bird no longer, and I felt so sad when I saw his Facebook post saying he'd bid goodbye to the west Texas mountains. I know they were a favorite birding spot of his.

When I think of Dennis the following Hunter S. Thompson quote comes to mind: "Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming "Wow! What a Ride!" That was Dennis all the way. Although we mourn his loss, I am sure he wouldn't want us sitting around crying over him. He would want us all outside, searching for the next great bird, and enjoying the camaraderie of our fellow birders. Bird on, Dennis. You will be missed.

Sue and the GCBO staff



A TRIBUTE TO BARBARA BURKHART

We lost our friend Barbara Burkhardt in January. Barbara was a volunteer at GCBO for over 20 years and a great friend to our community. She was a lover of nature, and was particularly knowledgeable about songbird and hummingbird friendly plants and gardens.

She worked hard for the birds and their habitats over the years, generously giving her time to many volunteer projects like XHX, the nursery, and grounds maintenance. A wonderful person, Barbara will be heartily missed. Our prayers go out to all of her friends and family.

By Jackie Hicks, GCBO Advisory Board



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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

Virtual Bird Bash:

Virtual Bird Bash is an online event that connects people all over the world to GCBO and the birds we protect. This educational and fun event will take place on May 15th & 16th on GCBO's website and Facebook page. Virtual visitors can attend workshops, watch as we band birds, learn about conservation, enter our raffle, and more! The event is free for all to attend. You can view the event schedule and details on our website. To attend this event, go to GCBO's Facebook page on May 15 & 16 8:00-4:30!

Summer Kid's Bird Camp:

Bird Camp is a nature day camp where children explore outdoors and learn about the birds that call the Gulf Coast home. Each day, kids learn about the science behind birds and their ecosystems through interactive and fun-filled activities. Camp is geared for kids ages 8-11 and will run from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm for the full week of July 12-16, 2021. Camp may be held virtually, depending on the public health situation.

Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza:

Taking place September 18th and 25th, 8:00 am-noon, XHX is our yearly event celebrating the peak of Ruby-throated Hummingbird migration. It features symbolic hummingbird adoptions and live hummingbird banding where you can see these amazing birds up close and in the hand! Informative and entertaining talks will be held both days, plus a raffle, fun activities, a hummingbird & butterfly plant sale, our nature gift shop, and snacks and drinks.

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 go from August 15th to November 30th at the Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area in Smith Point. 20+ species of raptors will be coming through the area and this is your chance to learn about them. This is a free event and volunteers are on site daily from 8 am to 4 pm to count birds and answer questions. On October 2nd, we will be celebrating the Hawk Watch's 25th year anniversary! Join us at Smith Point for food, fun and a whole lot of raptors!



Brew on the Bayou:

At Brew on November 6th, 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!

Bird Banding: On the third Saturday of every month, Robert and Kay Lookingbill, and their group of volunteers, band birds at GCBO. Bird banding allows us to monitor local and migratory populations. This event is normally open to the public, but we don't know when we will invite folks back. However, some bird banding sessions will be livestreamed, so check our Facebook events page to see when we're going live!

You Can Reach Us By Email:

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