



# GULF CROSSINGS

## SUE HEATH, PhD, GCBO CONSERVATION ICON

By Martin Hagne

**O**n July 31, 2023, Dr. Susan A. Heath (AKA Sue, AKA AMOY Queen) passed on the Conservation Research Director's position and retired. Her long planned and deserved retirement was here. But, she's not quite finished with GCBO yet... read on!

Sue started with the GCBO 16 years ago, on June 18, 2007, as the Avian Conservation Biologist. She was no stranger to the Lake Jackson area as she was born in the Dow Hospital in Freeport, Texas, and lived here for her first few years. Her early years found her in several states, before finally returning to the Upper Texas Coast and Houston where she graduated high school.

She didn't venture far for her first university degree and graduated from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 1982 with a BS in Mathematics. Then, she joined the Navy! She was a naval officer for four years at the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command in Arlington, VA, and we know she laments that she didn't bird back then with all the travel. After her service, she continued traveling the world with a contractor installing software on intelligence collection systems, and later worked at several large governmental contractors.

She went back to school, and in 1997 graduated with a MS in Information Systems from George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. In 1999 she decided she wanted to be closer to nature and a change in her career, and in 2003 she earned an MS in Biology from the same university, studying wintering waterfowl. And she says she doesn't even like the cold! Since that wasn't enough, in 2008 she earned her PhD in Environmental Science and Policy, also from George Mason, with the dissertation topic: Effects of pesticides on birds that nest in agriculture lands.

Sue's first assignment here at GCBO was the Site Partner Network, and her first field work was preconstruction surveys for the Freeport LNG project on Quintana Island. Soon to be followed by her first major field project, "her" American Oystercatchers, which she worked on for 13 years. At that time nothing was really known about oystercatchers in Texas. Her AMOY work pioneered our present knowledge of their conservation status along the western gulf, breeding success, habitat needs, and so much more. The article would be 4-5 pages if we talked about all the projects and accomplishment's she's managed during her work here. But we would be remiss without at least mentioning these projects: Black Skimmers, Willets, Intertidal Reef surveys, Loggerhead Shrikes, MOTUS Towers, Beach Nesting Birds, Nonbreeding Shorebirds, Endangered Species Monitoring projects, and the Smith Point Hawk Watch! The amount of important, reliable, scientific data these projects have amassed is staggering.

*Continues on page 3*



*Masthead photo:  
Sue Heath looking for American  
Oystercatcher chicks on a West  
Galveston Island.*

*Photo by Alan Wilde*

## DIRECTOR'S VIEW

MARTIN HAGNE

As you have read on page 1, Sue has decided it's her turn to migrate. But so far, she's a short distance migrant, thankfully for GCBO, and the birds! Sue will remain with GCBO as a part time Research Associate, consulting for at least this fall and likely into next spring. And she has promised to stay involved, volunteer, and help out, which we are very grateful for! We are also very fortunate we found a wonderful biologist to step into Sue's role. They worked together for two months this summer before Sue's official last day as our Conservation Research Director.

Rebecca Bracken, PhD, has spent the summer getting acclimated to GCBO, our programs and projects, and her role as our new Conservation Research Director. You can learn more about Rebecca on page 9 in this issue.

I want to thank Sue, and there aren't enough words to do so, for all her dedication to GCBO, and the birds over her many years here! Thank you, Sue!! I personally am privileged to have worked with you, and I remain your friend!

I would like all of you to join me in welcoming Rebecca to our GCBO family of crazy bird nerds! We already know you fit right in! Welcome, and thanks for joining GCBO!

## JOHN ARVIN – A TEXAS ORNITHOLOGY

GIANT (SEPTEMBER 13, 1943 –MAY 5, 2023)

BY MARTIN HAGNE

The Great Tinamou, a name John earned many years ago, passed away peacefully in his sleep on May 5th of this year. That name was bestowed to him by Texas birding legend Edgar Kincaid, who gave all his close birding friends bird names. John was born in Harlingen, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley, which seems fitting for such a great birder to be.

He went on to earn a Bachelor of Art in English, and studied biology at Pan Am University, University of Houston, and UT Austin. Birds were his life passion, and for 30 years he led birding tours, performed avian research, and archived conservation efforts for his book projects. Birds were at the very heart of his career. John specialized in birds of the Western Hemisphere, especially those in Latin America. He loved the tropics, and particularly Ecuador, Peru, and Mexico. He authored the beautiful work, Hummingbirds: Volume 1, for the Gorgas Science Foundation.

He spent many years as an avian biologist working for Texas Parks & Wildlife, and here at GCBO for 7 years. He headed up all of GCBO's science projects, and even spent two spring seasons living on an abandoned oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico studying migration! He was heavily involved in using weather radar to track migration, among so many other research projects. He also headed up the Texas Ivory-billed Woodpecker search.

John willed all his research data, notes, equipment, and photos to GCBO for safekeeping, and we are honored to keep his work and collection here. A painting of a Great Tinamou has been commissioned from Cin-Ty Lee and will be hung here at GCBO to honor John's huge efforts to the avian conservation world. John, you are greatly missed!

(By Martin Hagne, with parts of this tribute taken, with permission, from a TOS publication by Jack Eitnrear)



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## SUE HEATH, PhD

(continued from page 1)



Cecilia Riley, GCBO's long term ED (retired) says: She was serious about avian research! Sue transformed the GCBO's (then) small team, and her long career here has greatly benefitted both the organization and coastal birds.

Our current Board President, Bob Friedrichs says: GCBO is so fortunate to have had Dr. Susan Heath on staff for the last 16 years, helping us to protect gulf coast birds and their habitats. Sue is a passionate, dedicated and extremely knowledgeable and talented avian biologist and has made many valuable contributions to GCBO, not the least of which is her incredible work on American Oystercatchers. She is a great birder, a fanatical 'lister' and a friend to so many. While we'll miss her around the HQ, we know that there will be plenty of opportunity to share birds and the outdoors in the years ahead.

Some of the words GCBO staff mentioned when asked about their work with Sue: deep knowledge, impressive, funny, smart, passionate, thorough, precise, mentor, friend, determined, humorous, fierce, humble, concise, competitive, just to mention some! Sue has fans all over, she's treasured, very well liked, and will be missed immensely.

The good part, short term anyhow, is that Sue will remain part time with GCBO as a consultant, for at least this year, and will finish up a few of her projects. And she has promised to volunteer for many years to come!

Thank you, Sue, from the bottom of my heart, and all of GCBO! You have truly made a massive difference in the avian conservation world! Be proud!

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## MARVIN MASTERS, HAWK WATCHER

### EXTRAORDINAIRE (AUGUST 25, 1947–FEBRUARY 19, 2023)

BY SUSAN HEATH

I am saddened to report we lost one of our most steadfast Smith Point hawk watch volunteers this past winter, Marvin Masters. He passed away in February after a short illness. Marvin spent time in the Air Force, and after completing his tour of duty was certified as a welder and spent his career working for Celanese Chemicals Company.

He retired in 2007 and spent all of his time fishing, bird watching, wood working, crocheting, and doting on his grandchildren. He lived in Hankamer, TX, which put him in close proximity to the GCBO Smith Point Hawk Watch. He was one of the most dedicated volunteers. In 2022 alone, he put in over 100 hours on the tower helping Bob spot and count birds. He was a great volunteer, counter, and will be very much missed.





## RESEARCH FOR RESTORATION

BY REBECCA BRACKEN

As most of our followers know, GCBO has been monitoring American Oystercatchers for over 10 years. Our team has spent countless hours out in the bays zooming around in our trusty boat looking for breeding pairs, nests, and chicks. While American Oystercatchers are a charismatic species, and fun to work with, we don't monitor their breeding success for only those reasons.

American Oystercatchers are strictly confined to marine environments across their range, which on the eastern side of the US covers the coastal stretch from Maine to northern Mexico. They are one of only a few species specializing on bivalve mollusks. Their foraging sites are restricted to intertidal sand and mud flats, oyster reefs, and rocky shorelines. Nests are typically placed on shell or sand beaches, dunes, and other rock surfaces with little to no cover. Mated pairs often exhibit high site fidelity, nesting in the same area year after year. Why is this information important? Across much of their range, erosion and habitat changes have occurred, greatly decreasing their already limited habitat. Range-wide population estimates have shown a decrease in the number of breeding oystercatchers in the US. Consequently, standardized monitoring has become crucial to understanding what can be done to reverse the decline and increase annual breeding success.

One issue that was recognized over the years was the decrease in size and elevation of many oyster shell islands. As seas levels rise, and storms repeatedly hit the coast, these islands, many of which have been nesting islands for oystercatchers for many years, are eroding. For example, there is a small island in Jones Bay that has been used for years by one of our monitored oystercatcher pairs. This pair, banded J6 and UF, have now moved away because their island is mostly eroded and is frequently over-washed.

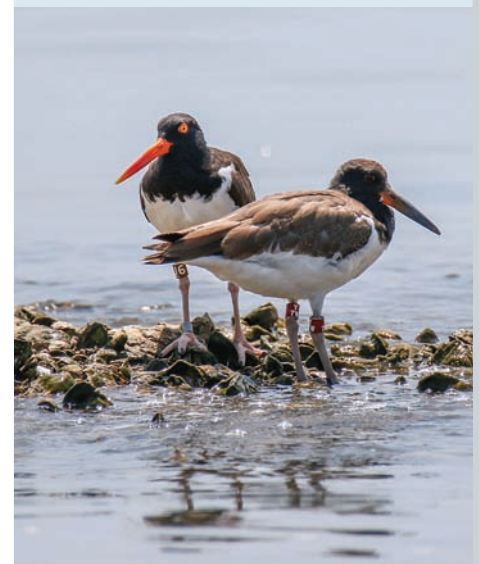
In East Matagorda Bay, there's a female, banded 25, that has been nesting in Old Gulf Cut since at least 2012. While her mate has changed over the years, she has stuck to nesting on one of two small islands, both of which are getting smaller and smaller each year. While we don't know how much longer she can nest on her islands, she fledged 2 chicks this year! There are many examples of this strong site fidelity, where oystercatcher pairs have been nesting in the same location year after year. But this can all change when there's severe erosion, over-wash, vegetation overgrowth, or frequent disruption by people and possible predators.

But there can be a resolution to these issues! The island in Jones Bay is one that our Partners are working to restore. However, it is essential that restoration and monitoring go hand in hand. Without knowledge of where these birds were before, and why they left, management actions are less likely to be successful. GCBO is committed to monitoring American Oystercatchers throughout the restoration events and post restoration. We can't wait to see the end results!



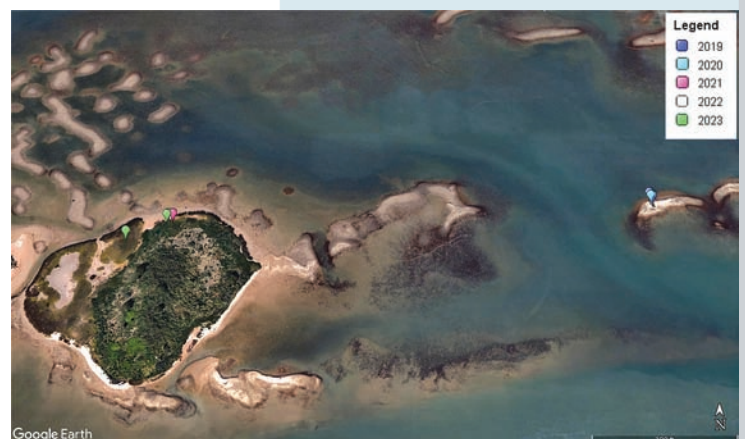
*J6 and UF's island over-washed during a high tide event.*

*Photo by Sue Heath*



*Banded American Oystercatchers J6 and chick Y7W hanging out on what's left of J6's original nesting island.*

*Photo by Alan Wilde*



*Nesting sites chosen by J6 and UF. The pair moved from their eroding island to Marker 52.*

*Image created by Rebecca Bracken*



## GCBO BIRDING TRIPS

BY MARTIN HAGNE

**W**e offer fabulous and fun experiences while birding with the GCBO! We have several exciting trips lined up each year, and we try to switch them up, and go to places not too many other tour companies go to. We also try to visit the sites of our partners where we have helped conserve land so you can see the work, and birds there. We focus on getting as many species we can on every trip, and we always hire local guides to help us do so. Come join us! A portion of the trip fees goes straight to avian conservation work by GCBO! For more information check our website, or contact Martin at [mhagne@gcbo.org](mailto:mhagne@gcbo.org)

### Cuba Birding Exploration

October 12-24, 2023 – **SOLD OUT!**

### Summer Maine Birding

June 16-22, 2024 – **SOLD OUT!**

### Boreal Winter Birding — Duluth, Minnesota

February 8-13, 2024 – **A Few Spots Left!**

### Birding Yucatan, Mexico

November 15-23, 2024 – **Spots Open!**

### Birding Baja Mexico

March 2024 – **SOLD OUT!**





## BIRD BANDING AT GCBO

By KAY LOOKINGBILL

A long-term bird banding project was established at the GCBO headquarters in 2006 to comply with a provision of a habitat restoration grant.

With proper permitting from the federal and state governments and established and rigorous protocol, we set an array of mist nets throughout the property one Saturday morning each month to safely capture wild birds. Each bird is fitted with a uniquely numbered aluminum leg band issued by the Bird Banding Laboratory, a few measurements are recorded then the bird is released unharmed within a few minutes.

This banding project is in its 17th year. Through July 2023, we have banded nearly 9000 birds of 95 species. In addition to these banded birds, we've recaptured 1740 birds ("recaps") that were previously banded, for a total of over 10,000 birds.

There are three general categories of birds banded: year-round residents, seasonal residents (either winter residents or summer breeders), and migratory birds just passing through during their northern or southern journeys.

There are two species that account for nearly 75% of the birds banded on the property. We focus our efforts on ruby-throated hummingbirds each year during the fall migration, from August through October, and have banded nearly 6000 of them. A few of these have been reported from elsewhere in their breeding range - from New York City to Montreal to Iowa and points between.

The next most common species is Northern Cardinal, a year-round resident. This property has a very successful and prolific breeding population, and we've banded nearly 1200 of them. Many of these have been encountered multiple times throughout their lives. One Northern Cardinal was at least 13 years old, along with several others that were at least 9 years old.

We also see a good number of seasonal recaps. These birds spend a portion of the year elsewhere – summer breeders go to Central or South America, and winter residents go as far north as Canada for their breeding season. But, after spending their time away from us, they return to this property every year. This is a concept known as "site fidelity".

We have also caught several birds that were out of their normal ranges, at least per the field guides. These interesting records include a Magnificent (Rivoli's) Hummingbird, Green Kingfisher, Lesser Goldfinch and a hybrid Indigo/Lazuli Bunting.

This may sound like a lot of data, but it is statistically insufficient to draw solid scientific conclusions. Early assessment is that the habitat restoration efforts have been successful in attracting more birds to the property. We can say anecdotally that we are seeing more birds in absolute numbers; more species of birds, especially during migration; and better diversity of the avian population utilizing the property. This type of data supports the need for conservation efforts to protect habitat for birds and other wildlife.

These banding sessions are free and open to the public on the 3rd Saturday of each month, from 8 a.m. until noon. All are welcome to come out and see birds up close and learn about our feathered friends.

Kay and Robert Lookingbill are permitted Master Banders that have volunteered their banding time here at GCBO for many years. We appreciate their many years of research work and support here at GCBO!



*Robert and Kay enjoying a lighter moment at a GCBO banding session.*



*Kay looking for molt patterns on a Carolina Chickadee.*



*Painted Bunting males are probably the most colorful of the regular birds banded at GCBO.*

## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH AT GULF COAST BIRD OBSERVATORY

BY CELESTE SILLING



*YMCA summer campers going on a nature walk through the marsh.*



*GCBO Education and Outreach Director Celeste Silling helping students during a field trip.*



*Above: Students helping sort trash during a SPLASH field trip to the beach.*

*Right: Students from Timberwood Middle school learning to bird.*

*Photos by GCBO Staff*

We have a lot going on here in the Education and Outreach department of GCBO! We do a little bit of everything, and each day is different from the last. Of course, most Gulf Crossings subscribers will already know about our large events like Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza, but we also host smaller scale events, presentations, field trips, and more.

Our biggest education project at the moment is SPLASH (Stopping Plastics and Litter Along Shorelines), which we do in partnership with American Bird Conservancy and Black Cat GIS. With SPLASH, we educate the public about marine debris, the affects it has on birds and other wildlife, and what we can all do to address this problem. We host field trips and beach cleanups, and present for schools and groups.

So far this year, we have reached over 3,700 individuals with our SPLASH educational programming. Some of our favorite SPLASH days are spent on the beach teaching children about birds and debris, then doing a big beach cleanup together. It's always rewarding to see kids gain an appreciation for beach ecology and understanding how to protect it! Plus, we benefit the birds by cleaning their habitat and creating new and knowledgeable stewards.

Another large part of our education work is presentations. We often partner with other organizations who ask us to present about birds, migration, or our conservation work. For example, we recently partnered with the Brazoria County Library System to do a presentation about raptors for their teen program. Our wonderful partners from the Houston SPCA's Wildlife Center of Texas joined us for the presentation and brought a live Crested Caracara, Screech Owl, American Kestrel, and Harris Hawk. We discussed our research at Smith Point Hawk Watch and then explained some of the amazing adaptations that make raptors so special. The teens (and the librarians) had a great time and so did we.

Field trips took a big hit during the pandemic, but they have slowly been making a comeback as well. We have been able to host field trips for over 300 students total so far this year (not including the SPLASH beach and bayou field trips). During the field trips we teach the children how to use binoculars then go on birding walks, explaining the ecology of the birds or other organisms that we see. We have 25 pairs of binoculars for the children to use, which usually means that everyone gets their own pair.

As far as GCBO education programming goes, we pride ourselves on being very flexible. We work with teachers and organization leaders to understand what they need most and try to make it happen! If you are a teacher, scout leader, student, or organization leader who is interested in our educational programming, feel free to reach out to us. Whether it's a field trip, volunteer day, class, or presentation, we would love to work with you!





## SUE'S BAY TRAVELS AND OTHER ADVENTURES

BY SUSAN HEATH

In honor of my retirement, Martin asked me to write an article about my adventures out in the bays. Whoa, where do I start?! Aside from the usual running up on reefs (and I've hit every one out there!), there's been a lot of adventures. Fortunately, no people or birds were harmed. I can't say the same for the boat though. It's pretty dinged up! I guess I'll start with the best and that is all the critters we saw out there that aren't birds. We often saw Diamondback Terrapins which are just the cutest turtle out there. They like to sit on old junk (mostly tires) that stick up above the water level and sun themselves. There's a tire by North Deer we dubbed the terrapin tire because we saw them sitting there so often. If you get to see one up close, their skin is the most gorgeous shade of turquoise. Fantastic creatures! We also saw a lot of dolphins and it was always fun when there was a baby. Any day is special when you get to see dolphins. Once we saw a Spotted Eagle Ray leap out of the water. I wouldn't have believed my eyes if everyone else hadn't seen it too. That was special!

Sadly, we found a lot of injured birds and I took a lot of them to the Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue. Once there was a hailstorm and Jennifer Wilson and I found a bunch of herons, gulls and pelicans with broken wings. That was a sad day. We caught an American White Pelican with a broken wing, and it repaid us by regurgitating everything in its stomach on the deck of the boat. Smelly! There were a lot of success stories too. A Bufflehead, a couple Tricolored Herons, a spoonbill once, and I'm sure many others that I'm forgetting. We found an injured Diamondback Terrapin once and Amanda Hackney took it to Dr. Joe at the Houston Zoo. He amputated one leg, and the turtle was able to be released a couple weeks later. Awesome success story! Thanks Dr. Joe!

We found all sorts of treasures out there; jackets, shoes, life preservers, once a pair of water wings (hope there wasn't a sad story behind that!) and always milk crates, buoys, and deck chairs. If I'd brought all that stuff back, we could have had a heck of an auction! We collected derelict crab traps during the annual crab trap round up in February. Those things are really stinky too! Once we found one with a bunch of terrapins stuck inside! We released the ones that were still alive but sadly several of them didn't make it.

One summer I cut my ankle so badly on a reef that Alan Wilde and I had to go back to his house (he lives on Jones Bay) so I could wash it off and treat it with hydrogen peroxide. I'm afraid I left a mess in their bathroom. We weren't done with the survey though, so I bandaged it up, put gorilla tape all over it to keep the bandage on and we kept going. Gotta finish the survey!

Once a boat pulled up to an island in the middle of a skimmer colony and TIED UP TO THE SIGN that says to stay off because it's a nesting island. They set up a photo shoot with a couple of bikini clad women, a surfboard, and a bunch of camera equipment. Sheesh. Talk about clueless. Even though I tried my best to avoid them, fishermen were always getting angry with us, and we got yelled at many times, flipped off several times, and once we even got mooned.

There are just too many stories to put them all here but it's safe to say, a lot happened out there that had nothing to do with birds!



*Western Diamondback Rattlesnake found while searching for nests.*

*Photo by Susan Heath*



*A photo shoot on Struve Island... one never knows what you will see!*

*Photo by Susan Heath*



*Sue holding some terrapins while doing bay surveys!*

*Photo by Alan Wilde*



# GCBO MIGRATIONS—STAFF & BOARD UPDATES

## FAREWELLS

### Taylor Snyder - Avian Biology Intern

Taylor assisted with all of our avian research field work, data entry, some outreach work, and so much more! She also helped us in the office, and all-around duties here at GCBO. Thank you for your hard, and dedicated, work while here at GCBO! We wish you a bright future helping birds!

### Adam Trujillo – Education Intern

Adam came back for another term as our Education Intern, working with Celeste and all things education and outreach. He also got to help out with some office duties, grounds work, and since he is interested in all things avian...field research!



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## WELCOME

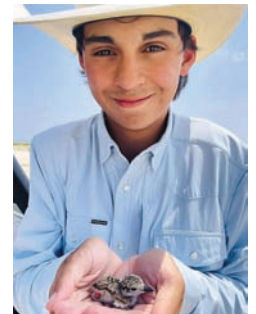


### Rebecca Bracken – Conservation Research Director

Rebecca was born and grew up in central Texas. She received a Master's in Biology from Texas State University and a Ph.D. in Forest Resources with a Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture concentration from Mississippi State University. Her dissertation focused on evaluating the influence of forest management activities on breeding and wintering avian communities and investigated how forest age and management affected nightjar abundance. Between her master's and Ph.D., she worked on several field projects ranging from songbirds in New Hampshire, Louisiana, and Australia to shorebirds and wading birds in Wyoming and Oklahoma. She's happy to be back in Texas and working on the Gulf Coast again!

### Ben Ryan Torres Jr. – Avian Biology Intern

Ben was born and raised in Angleton, TX, and spent a lot of time deer hunting and fishing with his grandpa, finding snakes and turtles, and learning about nature. At 10 his Mimi gave him North American Wildlife by Susan J. Wernert, which started his interest and understanding of wildlife and ecology. While traveling his love for the environment grew, and the Wildlife, Fisheries, and Ecology class at Angleton HS cemented his choice to be a wildlife biologist. His teacher, Mr. Lens, taught him how to identify grasses, forbs, etc., becoming a part of AHS' FFA wildlife team and receiving the certificate of achievement for AP Environmental Science. Ben internship ended in August but he enjoyed his 3-month at GCBO learning about birds, nesting habits, and preparing for his career.



### Ashley Van Wieren – Education Intern

Ashley was born and raised in Texas. She graduated from the University of Houston - Clear Lake with a Bachelor's in Biology. During her undergrad time, she worked on various research projects focusing on living shorelines and marine debris. She studied wildlife abundance and distribution in the Amazon rainforest, and she volunteers in wildlife rehabilitation. She is excited to be interning with GCBO's Education and Outreach department for 3 months!

### Alex Coenen – Avian Biology Intern

Alex grew up in New Paltz, NY where she first learned to love nature, particularly wildlife. She graduated from the University of Washington where she earned a B.S. in Environmental Science and Marine Biology. During undergrad, she gained a deep enthusiasm for avian ecology. She participated in nest monitoring of Pigeon Guillemots, where she assisted with measuring, weighing, and banding all ages of these incredible seabirds. She enjoys hiking, birding, and knitting. She hopes to pursue a career in avian conservation, and is excited to be a part of the GCBO team, assist with ongoing avian research projects.



## 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 February 1, 2023 and July 31, 2023.*

*Thank you for your vital support.*

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 Rachel Penland • Dina Perry • Peter & Jennifer Pham • Chad & Annette Phillips  
 Ash Phillips Russell & Amy Pope • Karen & Mike Potts • Kathy Prihoda • Kyle & Kathy Purvis  
 Mackenzie Quave • Shirley & Jeffrey Ralston • Richard Redmond • Amanda Reynolds  
 Liston & Peggy Rice • Statira Overstreet & Corey Rich • Cathy Roachell • Kerry & Jeff Robertson  
 Harriotte Robinson • Michelle Romedy • Allison Royalty • Lisa Ruthven & Joaquin Rubalcava  
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 Lauren Zajicek • Linda Zeller

## WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE CORPORATE, FOUNDATION & GOVERNMENT GRANTS

*We are privileged to acknowledge generous support received between February 1, 2023 and July 31, 2023.*

Amazon Smile Foundation  
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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 February 1, 2023 to July 31, 2023, volunteers contributed an amazing 4206.50 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!

Mary & Rex Anderson • Oron Atkins  
Donna Bailey • Steve & Sherri Baker • Ed Barrios  
Trey Barron • Pauline & Tom Benson  
Ben Bergeron • TJ Bergeron • Monica Berry  
Darrious (Alex) Betts • Michelle Bradford  
Mike Brakenfield • Patty Brinkmeyer • Susan Buell  
Kim Calhoun • Eva Chappell • Aeris Clarkson  
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Mickey & Sam Dufilho • Elena Duran  
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Amy & Lauren Faulk • Tad Finnell  
Cindy Freeman • Jackie Freeze  
Bob & Ruth Friedrichs • Cindy & Keith Goodrum  
Jean Greenhalgh • Angela Griffin  
Hattie & Josh Grimes  
Olin Volunteer Group - Joseph Hanna  
Lisa Hardcastle • Lynn Hay • Michael Heather  
Meredith & Kelly Heather • David & Linda Heinicke  
Sandy Henderson • Jackie & Jim Hicks  
Laurel Holland • Amanda Hughes-Horan  
Phil Huxford • Margo & Bill Johnson • Carol Jones  
Jennifer & Rich Kimball • Vicki & Larry Kirby  
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Zach Naatz • Debbie & Jim Nance • Brad Ober  
Levi Patton • Claudia & Melvin Pechacek  
Zoey Phillips • Russell Pope • Janet Price  
Phillips 66 Volunteer Group- Natalie Rees  
Kathleen & Ronald Reeves  
Epworth League Volunteer Group - Ken Rheingans  
Jimmy & Luanne Salinas • Tom & Karyn Schmitz  
Mary Schwartz • Allison Scott  
Sandy & Galen Shanks • Brooks Short  
Joellen Snow • Melynda Speers  
Denise Stephens • Thomas Taroni  
Allen (AJ) Timmer • Regina Tippet • Crystal Tobola  
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Sheryl & Harold Travis • Adam Trujillo  
Linda Ulmer • George Valadez • Natasha Valentine  
• Ashley Van Wieren • Abhishek & Swathi Verma  
Ron Weeks • Deborah Wendt • Pam & Don West  
Barbara Whaley • Maureen & Alan Wilde  
Mike & Tracey Williams • Justin & Elizabeth  
Willoughby • Jasmine Willoughby  
Jennifer Wilson • Robin & Keith Wise  
Janey Woodley • Woody Woodrow  
John & Lynn Wright • Barbara Yoder

## GCBO's RV VOLUNTEERS, AMAZING FOLKS

By MARTIN HAGNE

We are very grateful for the special group of folks that travel the country to volunteer along the way. There have been some great volunteers staying here at the GCBO in our RV spot, helping us with the grounds, maintenance, events, and so much more. If you're interested, contact Martin.

Tom and Karyn Schmitz were again here from January through mid-April 2023. They took a break this summer, but they are back this October through December 2023. We so very much appreciate their return!

John and Sherry Lesinski are new RV folks here at GCBO, and we really appreciate them putting in a month this September helping with the grounds and HHX!



Tom & Karyn Schmitz



John & Sherry Lesinski

## 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

## Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Inc.

299 West Highway 332  
Lake Jackson, Texas 77566  
(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](http://www.gcbo.org)

### Bird Banding at GCBO

Come join us on the 3rd Saturday of every month from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon at the GCBO headquarters in Lake Jackson to watch as we band birds on site. This is a long-term research project that collects data about local and migratory birds, and an excellent opportunity to see birds up close and learn about the birds of our community. This is a great experience for the whole family! There are no fees or registration required.

### Smith Point Hawk Watch

The Hawk Watch at Smith Point continues through November 30th at the Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area in Smith Point, Texas. Come see 20+ species of raptors swirling through the sky and learn about their southward migrations. This is one of the great spectacles of the natural world – come help us count some awesome birds! It's free to attend and volunteers are on site daily from 8 am to 4 pm.

### GCBO Experiences Auction

Our online auctions are a fun way to support our mission and programs, while you get to go on awesome nature experiences or enjoy some fine items! Bid early and often for the chance to shadow our researchers out in the bay, go on birding tours with experts, spend the weekend at a peaceful nature resort, and much more. Bidding begins at noon on November 17th and runs until 7PM on December 10th.

### Our Mission

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

### Brew on the Bayou

On March 23rd 2024, come sample and enjoy specialty brews and wines from local breweries and wineries. Listen to live music, grab a bite to eat from local food trucks and check out some one-of-a-kind items at our 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! Additional highlights include a birds of prey show with live raptors and pontoon rides on the bayou. Tickets are \$20 in advance on our website or \$25 at the door. We hope to see you there!

### NestFest

On March 12th 2024, we will be helping to host NestFest, a cleanup event to protect shorebird and sea turtle nesting habitat. We will be cleaning up twelve beaches across Bolivar, Galveston, and Follet's Island that have been identified as important nesting habitat for these vulnerable animals. Trash can be hazardous to nesting turtles and birds, as it entangles them and can be mistaken for food. Come on out and join us for a fun day on the beach protecting wildlife! To register, visit [www.splashtx.org](http://www.splashtx.org) and sign up for NestFest!

### You Can Reach Us By Email:

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