



# GULF CROSSINGS

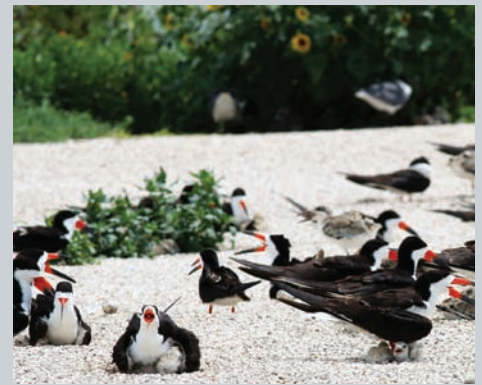
## CONNECTING COASTLINES - BLACK SKIMMER RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS ALONG THE TEXAS GULF COAST

By Quinn Hendrick, CBBEP's Communications Manager

23 years ago, the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program hatched the Coastal Bird Program into the Texas conservation scene and set out to reverse the decline of bird populations along the Texas Coast through research, management, and education. Many species of interest, such as Black Skimmers, Red Knots, Long Billed Curlews, and a variety of plovers, are highly migratory birds, spanning across the Americas and into the Arctic and facing a plethora of threats along the way. By closely monitoring populations through surveys, bandings, and GPS tracking methods, the Coastal Bird Program has been able to more deeply understand how these populations are using the habitat around them to nest and forage and the impacts that humans are having on their behavior. The Program then focuses on putting this understanding into action through the implementation of management and conservation strategies that address the biggest issues facing coastal bird populations. The Coastal Bird Program primarily works in the Texas Coastal Bend region but has been able to expand their working territory from the Texas Rio Grande Valley to the Chandeleur Islands in Louisiana and even into Canadian wilderness with the help of partners throughout the Midcontinent Flyway.

The Black Skimmer is one of the most iconic birds of the Texas coast, a treat to watch as it flies along shorelines dragging its knife-like lower bill in shallow water hoping to encounter an unlucky fish. It is also one of the most severely declining waterbird species, having lost over 70% of its population in the past 40 years. The Coastal Bird Program has identified low nesting success as one of the problems most likely contributing to that decline. Over the past two breeding seasons, the Program has been looking closely at factors that may be causing nesting failures, such as tidal flooding, predation, and disturbance from human intruders on their nesting sites. They have also been tracking Black Skimmer adults using GPS tags that are helping identify primary foraging areas so that they can be better protected and identify the distances they will travel from the nest site to inform the prioritization of island nest site restoration and management. This effort has been expanded into the Texas Mid-Coast region with the help of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, conducting monitoring in West Galveston and East Matagorda Bay, as well as a 60-year-old nesting site nestled inside Dow Chemical Plant in Freeport, Texas.

Coastal Bird Program Staff are in the process of synthesizing multiple types of data – from tracking devices, water level loggers, game cameras on nest sites, and weekly productivity checks – to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the environment the birds utilize and the factors that are causing decline so that they can be addressed in the future. This project is unique in that it will also integrate a Human Dimensions study being conducted by Texas State University to understand the knowledge and opinions held by bay users so that outreach efforts to raise awareness and reduce the frequency of human disturbance can be targeted more effectively. We are looking forward to sharing the results of this study in late 2024. For more information about the CBBEP's Coastal Bird Program contact David Newstead at [dnewstead@cbbep.org](mailto:dnewstead@cbbep.org).



*Masthead photo:*

*GCBO's headquarters are located on 34 acres of Brazoria Columbia Bottomlands forest. An often-wet landscape, housing the Brazoria Palm, and endemic to this county alone.*

# DIRECTOR'S VIEW

MARTIN HAGNE

Conservation work can be grueling! It can also be heartbreaking to see what's happening in nature all around us. Sometimes while doing this work, you see the worst in humanity, and what that results in for the environment. But there are so many wonderful moments of success. Hard work and long efforts that leads to great conservation for birds, habitats, and other wildlife, which also results in a healthier world for us all! So many great partnerships with organizations, agencies, corporations, universities, individuals, and others, that bring wonderful conservation results and sometimes much needed change, new thoughts, and ways of doing things. As GCBO navigates today's avian issues we are grateful for all the work being done by so many, and with that, please check out another great GCBO partner on page 1!

We have welcomed many new faces to GCBO in the first few months of the year. Please take a moment to find out more about them on page 3, and if you see them around, welcome them, and thank them for their role in saving birds and habitat. And thank you for all you do to make it all work!



ENROLL YOUR CHILD TODAY!

## Summer Bird Camp At Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

June 10-14, 2024

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Rebecca Bracken  
*Conservation Research Director*

Celeste Silling  
*Education & Outreach Director*

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non-profit organization – Tax ID #76-0553113.

Newsletter Editors: Martin Hagne, Denise Stephens  
Graphic Artist: Susan Chester

## FAREWELLS

**Andy Dietrich – Board Member**

Andy has served 6 years on the GCBO board, serving as Treasurer for multiple year, and several committees. Andy also served the board while the then new Headquarters build was being built about 10 years ago. He volunteered at many GCBO events, and now will serve on our Advisory Board. Thank you, Andy!

**Joellen Snow**

Joellen also served for 6 years on the GCBO Board, part of which she served as Vice President, and as the chair of the Development Committee. She volunteered at events, donated her home for the Experience Auction, and helped further GCBO on the board. She will now serve on the Advisory Board. Thank you Joellen!

**Ron Weeks**

Ron also served his full 6 years on the Board, and as the Board Secretary for most of that time. He led bird ID zoom and field classes to teach about ducks, and volunteered at different GCBO events, counted on our Christmas Bird Count, and much more. Ron will also serve on the Advisory Board. Thank you, Ron!

**Joni Flores – Development Director**

Joni served GCBO for about one and half years as our grant writer and took on our corporate and foundation fundraising work. We appreciate all her work for GCBO!

**Brittany Coe – Office Assistant**

Britany was only with us for a short time but did an awesome job before she was offered a scholarship for teaching which she couldn't turn down! We wish her well, thank you Brittany!

**Alex Coenen – Avian Biology Intern**

Alex worked with our shorebird programs, surveying beach birds, and other avian research work such as our Oystercatcher program. She also helped with events, education, and office work. We wish her a bright future!

## GCBO MIGRATIONS—STAFF &amp; BOARD UPDATES

## WELCOME

**Mike Williams – Board Member**

Mike Williams has served on the GCBO Board previously, including as Secretary, VP, and President, as well as extensively volunteered for GCBO for many years. An avid birdwatcher in the UK since 11, he birded throughout Europe. He was a member of national organizations for bird conservation and supported introduction of birding and birds to city youths.

Work brought Mike to the US where his interest in birds broadened into photography. His work has been featured media and publications. Mike typically spends 3 weeks at Quintana NBS every spring, an always out taking bird pictures. After 31 years he retired in 2018 from Schlumberger after being head of sales and commercial for the drilling group.

**David Goff – Board Member**

David Goff was born and raised in Houston, TX and now lives in Fort Bend County. Graduating in Mathematics from the University of Denver, he spent his career in Information Technology with Texaco and Plains All American Pipeline. More importantly, he's been blessed to have shared over 45 years with his wife, Sissie and son, Eric. Since retiring in 2017, he's spent a year volunteering in Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts and has been certified as a Texas Master Naturalist. David first discovered GCBO in 2018 during his TMN training and a subsequent Saturday morning bird banding session. Since then, he's spent many hours at the Neotropical Bird Sanctuary on Quintana as well as the Hawk Watch tower at Smith Point. He appreciates the opportunity to assist the GCBO missions on the Board and events.

**Gary Graham – Board Member**

Gary Graham is a Marine Fisheries Specialist and Extension Professor retired from Texas A&M Sea Grant Program and Texas AgriLife/Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. His career focused on a sustainable fishing industry, sea turtle conservation and reducing bycatch in shrimping. His birds interest ignited while aboard offshore shrimp vessels and observing migrating and sea birds seeking refuge on boats. A favorite effort was service on the Smart Gear Committee with World Wildlife Fund where innovations in bycatch were sought from fishermen globally. He has served on two National Academy Science committees for sea turtle conservation. Since retirement, he continues to operate two shrimp vessels, cooperated with Ducks Unlimited in the management of 80 acres of wetlands, and manages his 12-acre homesite for wildlife. He continues his hobbies of birding, hiking, fishing and hunting.

*Continues on page 9*

## SAVE A TREE AND SOME \$!

**W**e 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

# THE ONE WITH THE LOGGERHEAD SHRIKES

BY REBECCA BRACKEN

If you've been following along with GCBO's latest research escapades, you might remember that Sue Heath began a study monitoring Loggerhead Shrikes back in 2019. With Jennifer Wilson (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), GCBO proposed to monitor shrikes during the winter months at multiple sites along the upper Texas coast. While the Loggerhead Shrike has an extensive range across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, the species has exhibited a drastic, and persistent, declines in population size likely due to changes in land-use practices, pesticide use, and competition with other species that are more tolerant of human-induced changes. The species is listed as endangered, threatened, or of concern across much of its range.

To support conservation efforts for this species, we captured 34 shrikes during the winter from late 2019 through late 2022. The shrikes were color banded, making them easier to identify with binoculars, and each received a Cellular Tracking Technologies transmitter that allowed for manual tracking as well as tracking through the Motus towers that GCBO already operated along the coast. We also collected a blood and feather sample to determine if the captured bird was a migrant (here only during the winter) or a resident (residing along the Texas coast permanently). With the help of many volunteers, we were able to track each shrike from when they were captured through early 2023 using a receiver to determine where each bird was moving during the winter months. In total, volunteers spent over 2,400 hours monitoring these shrikes!

Now that the project is coming to an end, we have some preliminary results to share. We started this project with two juxtaposed hypotheses: either resident shrikes outcompete migrants for high quality habitat due to the competitive advantage of prior occupancy, site tenacity, and familiarity of the area, or there are differing requirements between migrant and resident shrikes and this facilitates habitat segregation which alleviates competition. So, which is it? Unfortunately, we still don't know! That part of this work is still under analysis.

If we cannot answer those questions yet, what do we know? First, we were able to map all of the locations where each shrike was detected, creating a winter territory polygon for each bird. Through this, we were able to see that the shrikes had an average winter home range size of 21.6 acres. This means that each bird moved around quite a bit, covering a territory similar in size to 26 US football fields! As we expected, some birds did more around more, with the largest winter home range estimated at 103 acres, while the smallest amount of land covered was only 2.77 acres. Second, we are in the process of receiving the results from the blood and feather samples. These samples were sent to a lab in Colorado where technicians sequenced the DNA in the samples to determine if the captured shrikes were residents or migrants. This information is really crucial to answering our original question, whether or not residents outcompete migrants for high quality winter habitat. Look for the final answer in a future Gulf Crossings!

We wish to send an enormous thank you to everyone who contributed to this project, whether it be through hours helping capture and track the shrikes or through the hours spent maintaining the Motus towers. This project could not have been completed without the help provided by so many people, and we are grateful for your continued interest and support in this work! Funding for this project was provided by the Texas Ornithological Society, the Arthur A. Seeligson Jr. Conservation Fund, and by ConocoPhillips and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



*Susan Heath and Jennifer Wilson with the last Loggerhead Shrike of the 2021-2022 winter season.*

*Photo credit Susan Heath/Jennifer Wilson*



*Map of the volunteer village at Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge showing the detections and home range polygon of transmittered Loggerhead Shrike #160.*

*Map created by Susan Heath*



*A Loggerhead Shrike with an antenna on its back after being captured for this project*

*Photo by Jackie Hicks*



## GCBO BIRDING TRIPS

BY MARTIN HAGNE

We 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



**Summer Maine Birding**  
June 16-22, 2024 – **SOLD OUT!**

**Chiapas, Mexico & TFFF Site Birding**  
May 10-23, 2025 – **Not Yet Posted**

**Birding Yucatan, Mexico**  
November 15-23, 2024 – **SOLD OUT!**

**Northern New Mexico Summer Birding**  
June 14-22, 2025 – **Openings**

**Winter Birds of Central New Mexico**  
February 12-18, 2025 – **Openings**

**Northwest Mexico – Durango and More!**  
October 20-29, 2025 – **Not Yet Posted**



## WHAT WAS WITH ALL THE DEAD FISH THIS FALL?

By TAYLOR BENNETT

During our most recent non-breeding shorebird season, a very peculiar, but natural phenomenon occurred. Early in the fall, we observed a red tide event. Red tide events occur when temperature, salinity, and nutrient levels reach a certain level, allowing increases, or blooms, of microscopic algae called *Karenia brevis*. The main drivers of red tide are thought to be high water temperatures and lack of wind and rainfall. *Karenia brevis* exists naturally in the waters surrounding the Texas gulf coast, but individual algal cells cannot be seen by the naked eye; however, when blooms occur, the gulf waters turn a blood red color. Common signs of a red tide include fish kills, respiratory issues in humans, and discoloration of the water. This fall's red tide event started on September 3, 2023, when elevated amounts of *Karenia brevis* were detected in Freeport, Texas.

These particular algae are a type of marine dinoflagellate that are capable of producing harmful neurotoxins called brevetoxins. Brevetoxins can affect many organisms including shellfish, fish, birds, and humans, and cautionary actions are advised when a bloom occurs. When fish consume brevetoxins, their central nervous system becomes paralyzed, which halts their breathing and results in the death of many individuals, creating a fish kill along the shorelines. Fish species that were affected in the most recent red tide include red drum, mullet, trout, and channel catfish, among others. Bird species such as gulls, pelicans, and terns can become poisoned from eating the dead fish, leading to neurological effects, impaired flight and swimming, and sometimes death. Shellfish absorb the toxins and can cause illness and poisoning in humans and birds when they are consumed. Once the red tide reaches the shore, the brevetoxins can be released through the air, causing respiratory issues in humans. Symptoms include coughing, sore throat, shortness of breath, nausea, burning eyes, and skin rashes.

The most recent red tide event on the Texas coast first caused a menhaden fish kill in Freeport. As days went by, the bloom increased, and more fish kills were reported along with water discoloration all along the upper Texas Coast. When the red tide became more concentrated and reached the shoreline, respiratory problems were reported by park staff, beach goers, and fishermen. The Freeport area was affected for 26 days and Matagorda County beaches were affected for 6 days. In total, this past fall's event lasted 28 days and affected various portions of the Texas coast including all our non-breeding shorebird sites located within Brazoria and Matagorda Counties.

During Texas red tide events, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department keeps track of the location and magnitude of the fish kills and the amount of *Karenia brevis* detected through consistent water sampling until red tide is no longer detected. Red tides can last from one to three weeks on average, and longer in severe cases. Red tide occurs in patches; only certain portions of the local beaches were affected allowing many to remain open to the public. Our research team was able to conduct surveys as normal and took precautionary measures when we observed dead fish. We documented a slight decrease in the number of plovers using beaches where fish kills and red tide were observed, but numbers quickly rebound as the event subsided.



*Close up of the dead fish observed during the red tide event on Matagorda Beach.*



*Large fish kill along with red tide observed towards the Eastern end of Matagorda Peninsula, Matagorda, TX.*

*Both photos by Taylor Bennett*

## EDUCATION UPDATE: NIGHT OWL CAMPOUT AND DARK SKIES

BY CELESTE SILLING



*Getting ready for a nocturnal animal lesson at the GCBO pavilion.*

Many of us have fond memories of camping as kids. I personally camped with school groups and Girl Scout groups several times when I was growing up in New Mexico, and those are some of my favorite memories. Being out in nature at night was a bit scary, but I loved it. I got to listen for crickets, owls and wolves, search for constellations, and, my favorite part, learn about the nocturnal world around me. The night was always darker than I anticipated, and if we were away from the city, there were far more stars than I was used to. I would come away from these experiences feeling more connected and aware of the world around me and more confident about my ability to adapt and survive a slightly scary situation.

Birds are similarly benefitted by dark skies and natural landscapes. According to Lights Out Texas, a program of Audubon Texas, nearly two billion birds migrate through Texas each year, navigating with the night sky. The mechanisms of migration navigation are still largely a mystery, but we do know that many bird species use the stars, the setting sun, and other nighttime visual clues to find their way. They can become disoriented by bright artificial lights and skyglow, often leading them to deviate from their path, become exhausted, or collide with windows. Thus, dark skies are a crucial aspect of bird conservation.

With our Night Owl Campout program, we benefit both humans and birds. Night Owl Campout is an affordable education program for scout troops, classes, and any other group interested in learning about nature at night. Campers come to our Lake Jackson headquarters in the afternoon and set up their camp site. Our grounds offer a wonderful medium between backyard camping and wilderness camping: we've got a forest with trails and critters, but we're fenced in and only five minutes away from a hospital. This is a great starter location for families who want to try camping, but don't necessarily want to venture out into the wild quite yet.

During the campout, our education staff teach campers about nocturnal animals, migration, the importance of dark skies, and how they can help. We play games, do a simple science lab, and test our night-time senses. Then we take a night hike in the woods to see if we can find some owls. Campers get to spend the rest of the night and morning with their families or friends, sleeping in tents, preparing breakfast, and talking about what they've learned. In my opinion, camping is one of the most fun, educational, and emotionally beneficial experiences a child can have. Night Owl Campout offers that opportunity in a controlled environment, with fun curriculum. And, as always with our education programs, we aim to encourage the next generation of nature stewards to conserve birds. If your group is interested in the Night Owl Campout program, just email me (Celeste) at [csilling@gcbo.org](mailto:csilling@gcbo.org). It'll be a hoot!



*Readying the tents.*

*Playing games to learn about our senses.*

*Photos by Celeste Silling*



# HEADQUARTER UPGRADES!

MARTIN HAGNE

## Parking Lot

Last year we received a Texas Parks & Wildlife Recreational Trails Grant to help expand the headquarter's caliche parking lot. As our events grow, we need more parking. Being a conservation organization, covering up ground is not normally good, but it was open lawn area, and it's still somewhat permeable.

The grant also allows us to install a new kiosk, birding site map, and a bunch of interpretive signs soon, that Celeste has designed, for the Quintana Neotropical Bird Preserve. We are very thankful for this grant from TPWD!

We are also very thankful for Phil Huxford, star GCBO volunteer, who brought his tractor and did all the parking lot work. Also, to Phil's buddy Tim Marion, who brought his Bobcat to help! And we appreciate Brian Kolthammer for doing all the planning!



## Wooded Pond Board Walk

Our board walk that goes around the forested pond, a great representation of the Brazoria-Columbia Bottomlands habitat here, was just replaced by an all-star team of GCBO volunteers! The old board walk had lived its useful life and was becoming a danger to walk. It was removed down to the dirt (well... mud!). As you can see in the pictures, the guys worked hard, battling the cold, rain, and some very sticky mud. The result is a beautiful and solid board walk that will last a long time. Come take a walk!

Sincere thank yous go to the super team of Oron, Brian, Tom, George, David, and Mike!! And a few work appearances by our ED, Martin.

The majority of funds were provided by a Great Texas Birding Classic grant, chosen by the Sandhill Craniacs team. Thank you all so very much!





## FLIGHT FOREVER LEGACY CIRCLE

LEAVE A LEGACY...FOR THE BIRDS!

**G**ulf 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



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You Can Support GCBO!**

**G**CBO 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.

## GCBO MIGRATIONS—STAFF & BOARD UPDATES

*Continued from page 3*

### WELCOME



#### **Julie Mintzer – Development Officer**

With her mission to change the world, Julie has over sixteen years of leadership experience in Houston’s public sector. Most recently, Julie held executive positions at the City of Houston in the Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department, Houston Public Library system, and for an elected City Council Member. Before that, Julie worked at regional and national not-for-profit organizations. Julie earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Environmental Studies from Washington University in St. Louis and a Master’s Degree in Public Administration from the Southern Illinois University system. In 2009, Julie began work at Galveston Bay Foundation, connecting volunteers and supporters to different conservation events and community initiatives across the Houston region. Then working for Student Conservation Association, teaching the next generation of leaders about conservation, leadership development, and civic responsibility. To support the underserved population in Houston, Julie moved to Rebuilding Together Houston, and in time became the Chief of Staff and Operation—repairing homes and building a stronger Houston! Julie enjoys hiking, biking, doing yoga, chasing birds with her camera, volunteering, or fitness with friends. She also enjoys cooking for family, educational podcasts, and learning the science behind health and personal development.

#### **Tess Traylor – Office Assistant**

A sixth generation Texan, Tess was born in Mt. Pleasant, Texas and spent her childhood all over Texas, wherever her father’s job in the oil industry took her family. She studied Political Science and Philosophy at Texas State University, returning in 2018 to pursue a BFA in Painting. As a certified paralegal, she has worked for non-profit organizations, law firms and corporate legal departments in the real estate and computer technology industries until her most important role as Mom to four children. Her love of nature is grounded in her love of painting, experiencing the magic of color and light afforded when painting outdoors. With a passion for learning and a strong belief in conservation, she combines creativity with analysis to facilitate the success of GCBO in her role as Office Administrator.



#### **Christine Schnurbusch – Avian Biology Intern**



Chris is from St. Louis, Missouri. She graduated from the University of Central Missouri with a Wildlife and Natural Resource Conservation degree and Creative Writing minor. Though she had a soft spot for birds, it wasn’t until the latter half of her undergraduate degree that she decided to work with them in her career. Chris enjoys reading and writing novels, exercising, and backpacking. Chris was a Naturalist at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth, Minnesota this fall for raptor migration, where she handled raptors for demonstrations, educated visitors about migration and raptor identification, and helped and learned about owl extraction and banding. She’s eager to begin the Biology Internship and learn about shorebird behavior, monitoring, and data collection!

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

# 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, 2023 and January 31, 2024.*

*Thank you for your vital support.*

Leigh Estes & Laylee Angelone • Timothy & Gail Babcock • Claire & Cheryl Barnard • Doug Hiser & Layla Blinka  
Lily Banerjee & Probir Bondyopadnya • Fred Demelo & Kirsten Borchardt • Theresa & Randall Bowman  
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*We are privileged to acknowledge generous support received between August 1, 2023 and January 31, 2024.*

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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, 2023 to January 31, 2024, volunteers contributed an amazing 4853 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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## GCBO's RV VOLUNTEERS, ALWAYS HELPING!

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 back this October through December 2023. We so very much appreciated their return!

Mike Moser and Phyllis Swenson spent January and February 2024 with us. Thank you for all your wonderful work!

Harold & Sheryl Travis are back and will be spending a long stint with us from March through August 2024! And, of course, we look forward to seeing Lily again!



Tom & Karyn Schmitz



Mike Moser &  
Phyllis Swenson



Harold & Sheryl Travis with Lily

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

(continued from page 10)

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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](http://www.gcbo.org)

### Spring Fling at Quintana

Saturday, April 6th is the start of GCBO's Spring Fling at Quintana Sanctuaries, Quintana, TX. From April 6th to May 5th, you can birdwatch as thousands of migratory songbirds arrive at stopover habitat along the coast. GCBO volunteers and staff will man the host station on site from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm daily and provide local birding information, bird checklists, sell snacks and drink as well as t-shirts, bird field guides, and much more! They will also post the daily bird list and help identify birds! More info at: [www.gcbo.org](http://www.gcbo.org)

### 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 week of June 10-14, 2024. Email Celeste at [csilling@gcbo.org](mailto:csilling@gcbo.org) to sign up now and reserve your spot!

### Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza

Taking place September 14th and 21st, from 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.



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



### 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 5th, we will be celebrating the Smith Point Hawk Watch with food, fun and a whole lot of raptors!

### Smith Point Hawk Watch Celebration

Come out and celebrate the Smith Point Hawk Watch with us! On October 5th, we will be hosting our Smith Point Hawk Watch Celebration at the hawk watch. There will be food, drinks, a raptor presentation, and some live raptors on display. And, as always plenty of raptors soaring through the sky! Our staff and volunteers will be manning the tower, monitoring the birds and pointing them out to guests. Visitors will be able to look through scopes and binoculars and see the migration up close. Come celebrate 28 years of research and conservation with us this fall!

### Bird Banding

On the third Saturday of every month, from 8 AM to 12 PM, Robert and Kay Lookingbill and a team of staff/ volunteers, band birds at GCBO headquarters. Bird banding allows us to monitor local and migratory populations. This event is open to the public, so we invite you to join us! Come see the birds up close and personal and learn all about the banding process from Robert and Kay. It's a great way to spend a Saturday, but come early to see more birds!

### You Can Reach Us By Email:

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