



GULF CROSSINGS

PARTNERING FOR GRASSLAND BIRD CONSERVATION ON THE UPPER TEXAS COAST

By Jennifer Wilson, Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex

North American prairies have sharply declined. The United States once contained over 140 million acres of tallgrass prairie. Less than 5% remains. Prairies have also disappeared in coastal Texas. At one time, 6.5 million acres of tallgrass prairie are believed to have existed on the Texas Gulf Coast. Less than one percent of that remains.

Today, grasslands exist in varying conditions and not all are prairie or function exactly as prairies did. However, they may host a range of native plant and animal species and are vital to the grassland birds that use them.

The decline of North American grasslands continues. According to World Wildlife Federation, in 2021 alone, 1.6 million acres of grasslands in the United States and Canada were converted to other uses. Grasslands of the Texas Gulf Coast are still expected to be highly vulnerable to conversion for uses other than conservation.

On the upper Texas Coast, multiple efforts are underway to preserve, enhance or restore grasslands. Coastal Prairie Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, and the National Wildlife Refuge System are examples of partners that engage in these activities. At Texas Mid-coast Refuge Complex, we are working with the USFWS Coastal Program, Ducks Unlimited, and The Nature Conservancy to restore hydrology and increase native plant diversity on roughly 7,200 grassland acres at San Bernard and Brazoria refuges. Another example is the Coastal Grassland Restoration Incentive Program (C-GRIP) implemented by the Gulf Coast Joint Venture. This program offers incentive opportunities for private property owners interested in enhancing or improving their grasslands to support birds.

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Eastern Meadowlark in coastal Texas.

By Woody Woodrow, USFWS

Coastal Texas grassland in Fort Bend County, May 2024.

By Jennifer Wilson, USFWS

Masthead photo:

Ruby-throated Hummingbird's fall migration moves along the Gulf of Mexico coast towards their southern wintering homes.

Photo by Celeste Silling

DIRECTOR'S VIEW

MARTIN HAGNE

Another year around the sun for GCBO and our conservation work. Our historical start date is September 1997, so we are going on year 28 now! Over the past 27 years a lot of important biological data has been amassed. Many different bird species have been the focus of our avian research over the years, and often along with their habitats. Breeding success, or lack thereof, migration patterns and routes, wintering ground locations, population numbers, as well as habitat availability and health, are just some of the many important studies that have found answers through our research. We've collected years of data, developing trends that can be read and understood, painting pictures of what's happening in the avian world all around us. Within our research department, finding this information, good or bad, has always been our goal. We can't likely fix an issue that we have found, but we can pass it on to those that can. And we can help them use the data to the advantage of the species that needs help. In a nutshell, that is what we do and is a big part of our reason for being. We do this often with partners and always with your help and support! Thank you!

I hope this volume of Gulf Crossings gives you a good view of what we are up to now, at least in part! And please do go out and enjoy the birds, always enjoy the birds!



**Gulf Coast Bird Observatory's
Experience Auction
November 15 - December 8, 2024
Online only: www.GCBO.org**



Photo by Patty Brinkmeyer

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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

PARTNERING FOR GRASSLAND BIRD CONSERVATION

Continued from page 1

As grassland and prairie acres have decreased, so have grassland birds. According to a recent article in Science, 74% of all grassland bird species in North America declined between 1966 and 2013. This was accompanied by a loss of over 50% of overall grassland bird abundance.

Grassland stewards use management activities that approximate natural disturbance events to support grassland persistence and provide a range of post-disturbance conditions. Understanding the relationship between these management actions and the native plant and animal species they influence is important.

Recently our partners at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory invited us to join them on a pilot project designed to explore this, with a special focus on the Eastern Meadowlark. This species is so readily observed in coastal Texas that one might think it highly abundant. However, that is not so. Researcher Julianne Bozzo reports that this species declined by 75% between 1970 and 2017 in North America.

Although Eastern Meadowlarks are considered somewhat general in their use of various grassland conditions, little is known of their space use in our area. Questions remain about the quantity and composition of that space, especially during the non-breeding season. We are grateful for our long-term partnership with GCBO and the work they do to advance bird conservation. We are looking forward to working with them further on this and other projects that help conserve coastal birds!



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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 GCBO to say: "Hey, GCBO, please start emailing me things! Here is my email..." Thanks! info@gcbo.org

RIDING OUT THE STORM

BY REBECCA BRACKEN

As we wrap up the hurricane season here in Texas, we can't help but think about how Hurricanes Beryl and Francine, Tropical Storm Alberto, and the May derecho affected both breeding and migratory birds that spend time in the Houston area. Hurricane Beryl and the derecho both created winds up to or exceeding 100 miles per hour, striking the Houston area and the upper Texas coast. Transmission towers, power lines, and trees fell across an expansive area, knocking out power to thousands and drastically altering the appearance of many forest pockets and residential communities.

Human impacts aside, storms such as these can drastically affect wildlife in many ways. Hurricanes and other types of wild weather events are natural, meaning wildlife are certainly more adapted than we are to their effects. Current research suggests that storms generate low-frequency sound waves that can trigger the departure of many birds, while other studies suggest that birds notice the changing wind patterns and flee from unfavorable conditions. Just as coastal residents and visitors evacuate to avoid the dangers ferocious storms, many birds flee from large systems when they can.

And then there are the birds that accidentally or intentionally get caught in the storm itself. During migration, and for many seabirds, traversing around storms is expected and part of life. Frigatebirds will take massive detours to avoid cyclones, often ending up miles inland. Many seabirds will attempt to get ahead of the storm to avoid the worst weather, but others have a different, unexpected strategy. Researchers recently discovered that a shearwater species will fly near the eye of the storm for hours, where the winds are strongest, possibly to avoid being blown over land where flying debris can be abundant and the risk of crashing is high. Another species, the Desertas Petrel, will actually chase storms in the Atlantic. When hurricane force winds cause ocean mixing, where warm surface waters mix with the cooler waters below, possible prey species such as squid, small fish, and crustaceans rise to the surface. This Petrel species will follow hurricanes for hundreds of miles to take advantage of this opportunity, where food becomes abundant and easy to catch.

While birds are experts at altering their behaviors based on weather conditions, that doesn't mean they can avoid all possible impacts. The effect level varies drastically depending on time of year, strength of storm, location of storm, and avian species and condition. Entire breeding or roosting habitats can be destroyed by natural disasters. Hurricane Beryl and Tropical Storm Alberto both caused tidal surges that overwashed many if not most beaches along the upper Texas coastline. Our monitoring indicated that nesting plovers and other ground nesters such as Black Skimmers experienced massive nest loss due to wind and water. This type of storm damage to habitats can be especially damaging for non-migratory or isolated species. If multiple storms hit the same area time and time again, bird populations can be whittled down over and over again, until none remain. Similarly, migrating birds that unknowingly fly into the path of a hurricane may not survive, causing sharp decreases in the numbers of individuals returning to breed the following spring.

We are still working to assess the damage caused by this summer's storms, but full impacts may not be known until next year when our migrants return to breed again. We are currently wrapping up year one of a five-year grant collaborating with the American Bird Conservancy, Houston Audubon, Audubon Texas, and Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program, and are looking forward to learning what the long-term influence of summer storms is on our breeding shorebirds.



Magnificent Frigatebird soaring.



Beach flooding at Sargent East Beach after Hurricane Beryl.



Flooding in and around the protected bird nesting area at the Colorado River Mouth Flats.

Banded Wilson's Plover standing on washed up vegetation in the middle of a wet sand at Sargent East Beach.

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

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

Birding Yucatan, Mexico
November 15-23, 2024 – **One Spot Opened Up!**

Northern New Mexico Summer Birding
June 14-22, 2025 – **Only 2 spots left!**

Winter Birds of Central New Mexico
February 12-18, 2025 – **SOLD OUT!**

Northwest Mexico – Durango and More!
October 20-29, 2025 – **A few spots left!**

Chiapas, Mexico & TFFF Site Birding
May 10-23, 2025 – **A few spots left!**



HAWK WATCHES – THE GUARDIANS OF RAPTORS

By MARTIN HAGNE

Many birders or nature lovers have probably heard about hawk watches, or even been to one. There are close to 500 spread across North America, Central America and South America, although not all are still active. There are actually hawk watches all across the globe. Some are only in the spring or in the fall, while a few are both.

The GCBO operates the Smith Point Hawk Watch, in Smith Point, TX located on a peninsula jutting out into the east side of Galveston Bay, above Bolivar Peninsula and west of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. It is situated inside the Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area owned by Texas Parks & Wildlife, where the 32-foot tower overlooks the bay and peninsula behind it. This season is our 28th official season to be collecting migratory raptor data, but there were birders counting raptors there even before that.

So why count raptors? Apart from the joy of seeing the many species of hawks, falcons, kites, eagles and vultures flying overhead, wheeling in their kettles and then streaming away, the data collected is one of the few ways to see how each species of raptor is faring. One year of data doesn't show anything really, except that some birds happened to be there that year. But years of continued data from many sites creates trends that can show if a species is declining, holding its own or gaining in population. Yes, there may be variations from year to year, maybe created by weather, etc., but in general years of data will show what is happening.

Because raptors are difficult to census on their breeding grounds, hawk watches can detect decline in raptor species as it did when DDT was an issue for so many species in the 1960's and finally banned in 1972. They also detected the decline in Swainson's Hawks in the 1980's, which was later contributed to a grasshopper insecticide. These declines warn conservation organizations of an issue in nature, and can then act upon them.

Although we typically record 20 species of raptors annually at Smith Point, the largest percentage are Broad-winged Hawks whose migration peaks normally mid/late September into very early October. Ten thousand or more can pass by the tower in a single day when weather conditions are right. Most raptors use rising circular air currents caused by the sun heating the ground to move long distances with minimum energy. The birds ride up these thermals in "kettles" until they reach the point at which the cooling air is no longer rising, and then, sometimes several thousand feet off the ground, they glide off for miles in the direction they want to go, gradually dropping until they reach another air current. For this reason, their migratory flights can be monitored during the day at concentration points formed by the geography of the land.

The Smith Point Hawk Watch operates from August 15 to November 30 each year, and is open and free to visitors (although donations are always appreciated) from 8:00am to 4:00pm every day. Come out and enjoy the birds, chat with our Station Master Bob Baez--as long as he is not counting hundred of birds at that moment! Remember to bring your binoculars, because these birds can be high up in the sky!



Smith Point and Candy Abshier map.



The Smith Point Hawk Watch tower.



Broad-winged Hawks in a kettle while migrating.

Photos by GCBO

Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza (XHX)

By CELESTE SILLING



Banders Robert and Kay Lookingbill at XHX 2006.

Photo by GCBO

Every September, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory hosts our Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza (XHX), a celebration of the fall migration of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. This annual festival takes place on two consecutive Saturdays at our Lake Jackson headquarters. Visitors can enjoy live hummingbird banding, kids' activities, exhibitor booths, a native plant sale, and more at the event.

XHX has existed in some form for almost 30 years. It started as a hummingbird banding demonstration for the public, then, as more people became interested, it began to grow. By the year 2000, "Extreme Hummingbird Extravaganza" involved banding, exhibitor booths, and speaker sessions. By 2005, a hummingbird plant sale had been added to the schedule.

While the event had always been family friendly, we began consistently hosting kids' activities in 2018. When I began working here a few years ago, I decided to put even more emphasis on the kids' activities, hoping to educate visitors about the birds through games and crafts. This year, XHX featured activities like "Hummingbird Hopscotch," which teaches kids about the hummingbirds' great memory abilities and "Bug-Catcher," which highlights the importance of insects in the hummingbirds' diet.



Robert Lookingbill demonstrating hummingbird banding during XHX 2012.

Photo by GCBO

While it started small, it's clear that XHX has always been a popular event. In 2001, staff recorded 447 visitors. In 2012, after they began hosting it on two days in September instead of one, 868 people attended in total. That record lasted until 2019, when 995 people visited! In 2020, XHX was canceled due to the pandemic, and a more hands-off version was held in 2021.

Now, thanks to the hard work of our staff and volunteers, XHX has grown even more popular. This year, 1,286 guests attended the event! Including volunteers and exhibitors as well, about 1,400 people visited our property this year to celebrate the hummingbirds.

While we take pride in the number of people visiting, we are even happier about the unique outdoor experience we're able to give people. Outdoor, nature-centered events like XHX connect people with their community and the wonderful natural world around them. XHX attendees are able to see birds up close, learn about our research and conservation, walk our trails, and visit the educational exhibitor booths.



XHX 2024 attendees with Sir Archie.

Photo by Patty Brinkmeyer

This year, the exhibitors blew us away once again. There were too many to describe here, but I'll highlight a few: Linda Feltner, an award-winning nature artist and educator, taught children how to draw from still life and did a book signing of her recent release, "Drawing Nature." The Texas Master Naturalists Cradle of Texas Chapter and Friends of Brazoria Wildlife refuges brought live turtles and other reptiles for people to interact with. And Chris Kneupper, our very dedicated plant nursery volunteer, did a demonstration about planting root cuttings.

Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza is a special event in the hearts of our staff and volunteers. We are so pleased that it has continued to grow and thrive in recent years, as we always put an immense amount of work into it. It's great to see our community coming out in droves to support our event, and we're so happy to provide this fun, unique festival to them in turn!

EFFECTS OF DISTURBANCES ON GULF COAST BIRDS

BY CALEB CLARKSON

The Gulf Coast is home to a great diversity of birds. When watching the birds start their day, flying and singing freely, I often forget the reality these animals face. Each day, these birds are at risk of competition, predation, and all the other challenges that come with being an animal in the wild. While daunting, these risks come with existing in a functioning ecosystem. However, there are additional challenges that birds might face called disturbances: changes in an environment that disrupt the normal behavior of birds and other animals in an ecosystem due to additional stressors.

Disturbances can vary greatly in scale and impact. A drought might decrease available food sources across huge areas, while other disturbances like landslides can completely upend biological functions in a small area. Birds affected by disturbance face additional stressors that might decrease their survivability. A decrease in food sources might increase the foraging time and calories spent looking for food, while habitat destruction may increase competition for places to live. Bird populations may drop in number after large natural disturbances that disrupt the day-to-day functions of an ecosystem. Fortunately, birds have evolved to respond to these changes and bounce back in the following years. After forest fires, birds find new nesting opportunities in the brushy plants that grow back in the area, and during droughts, some birds change the foods they eat to supplement decreases in their primary food sources. After the disturbance ends, life resumes because the species that live in that area have evolved to cope with the temporary, natural disturbances that may occur. Disturbances can even be beneficial for the environment. Some biological systems even rely on disturbances like floods and fires to redistribute nutrients across the ecosystem for their continuation.

Humans can also cause disturbances that can stress and reduce birds' survivability. Pollution from cities and industry can make habitats less suitable for species' survival, and development projects can fragment and degrade valuable habitats. Some disturbances humans cause may be harder to notice. Light pollution from artificial light sources can confuse birds while migrating and disrupt birds' sleep-wake cycles, while sound pollution from cars can make it harder for birds to communicate and find mates. For beach-nesting birds, even people walking or driving can cause birds to abandon their nests due to the predatory pressure of humans and their pets. While birds can usually respond and adapt to the occasional, natural disturbance, human disturbances are constant and are events that birds have not evolved to cope with. In a temporary disturbance, the energetic costs of behavior changes are offset by surviving until the disturbance is over and normal life can continue, however, human-caused disturbances can last as long as humans are present, causing stressors that are persistent and reduce the survivability of birds in the area.

Continued conservation efforts are necessary to help alleviate the costs of human and natural disturbances on bird populations. Here on the Gulf Coast, GCBO scientists are learning more about how species cope in stressful situations and gain insightful information on how to protect vulnerable species. While large-scale conservation strategies are necessary, small, personal decisions you make can help reduce human-caused disturbances on birds. Disposing of litter and pollutants safely and responsibly, sticking to marked trails while hiking, turning off unnecessary lights at night, and keeping cats inside and dogs on leashes can help the birds near you!



East Sargent beach after Hurricane Beryl. Large amounts of sand and vegetation on the peninsula had been washed flat, revealing the Intercoastal Waterway on the other side.

Photo by Caleb Clarkson



Cars and beachgoers on Matagorda Peninsula for the Fourth of July. The number of birds seen while surveying tends to be lower on busy days like this.



Campers up against the bird nesting area signs at Matagorda Beach.

Photos by GCBO

GCBO MIGRATIONS—STAFF & BOARD UPDATES

FAREWELLS

Ashley Van Wieren - Education Intern

Ashely worked with all of our educational and outreach programs and events. Including SPLASH clean ups and education events. She created wonderful learning tools and fun conservation games. We know she will make an impact in conservation.

Christine Schnurbusch - Avian Biology Intern

Christine 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 much success in her career!

Lauren Ahlstrom - Avian Biology Intern

Lauren also worked with our shorebird programs, and other avian research including MOTUS and American Oystercatcher program. She was a huge part in our clean up after Beryl, being a certified chainsaw operator! We wish her a bright future with birds and nature!

WELCOME



Bill Balboa – Board Member

Born in Brownsville, TX and raised in Austin, Bill completed undergraduate studies in Invertebrate Zoology from SWTSU in San Marcos, with graduate studies at TAMU, and UHCL. He was a coastal fisheries biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Coastal Fisheries Division and directed fisheries data collection in Matagorda Bay, the Lower Laguna Madre, and Galveston Bay. In 2014 he returned to the Matagorda Bay area as the Texas Sea Grant/Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Coastal and Marine Resources Extension Agent for Matagorda County. In February 2019, Bill helped put the Matagorda Bay Foundation “on-the-ground” and now serves as the Executive Director for the organization.

Scott Buckel – Board Member

Scott was born in Houston, TX and is the Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences at College of Science and Engineering, University of Houston - Clear Lake. He spent lots of time exploring the “wild” areas and birds near his home, learning their behaviors, which led him to study biology in college, earning an undergraduate degree. He continued his studies at Purdue University, deciding to study biochemistry instead of animal behavior and defended his thesis. He moved to Pittsburgh and got involved with tropical fish, heading up a society. A combination of these interests led him to extensive travel observing and photographing nature, birds in particular. Scott returned to Texas and continued his passions for nature, and discovered Galveston Bay Master Naturalist program, working on many different conservation projects.



Chris Butler – Scientific Advisory Board

Dr. Butler has served as Instructional Associate Professor of Biology Dept at Texas A&M University since 2022. He was a Fulbright Scholar to Botswana in 2016-2017. He teaches freshman biology, Chordate Anatomy, General Ecology, Genes, Ecology and Evolution. His research explores the effects of climate change on the phenology and distribution of organisms and ways to mitigate the impact of those changes, including birds. His current research studies the effects of anthropogenic climate change and land-use management on secretive marshbirds as well as modeling the potential distribution of a variety of organisms. He enjoys birding, camping, jogging and playing with his pet macaw, Penny, and his dog, Bella.

Caleb Clarkson - Avian Biologist

Born in Houston, grew up in Waco, his grandparents and family grew his love of nature, teaching him about the outdoors. Caleb attended Texas State University, graduating with a degree in Wildlife Biology and minor in Geography. In school, Caleb joined a freshwater ecology lab assisting in mussel and aquatic macroinvertebrate surveys, and spent a year in Wisconsin as a conservation fellow at the International Crane Foundation before migrating back to Texas. Caleb hopes to help create healthier ecosystems for our native species' survival and our own communities' health and well-being.



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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, 2024 and July 31, 2024.

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 Sarah Weller • Bob & Glynn White • Maureen & Alan Wilde • Mike & Tracey Williams • Damon Williford
 Renee Winder • Robin & Keith Wise • Jared Wise • Janice Wobbenhorst • Janey Woodley
 John & Lynn Wright • Barbara Yoder • Tim Young • Fred & Kay Zagst • Deborah Zlotnik

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE CORPORATE, FOUNDATION & GOVERNMENT GRANTS

We are privileged to acknowledge generous support received between February 1, 2024 and July 31, 2024.

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 Thomas Reed, P.C.
 TPWD Recreational Trails
 Veson Nautical
 Watch Repair by George

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, 2024 to July 31, 2024, volunteers contributed an amazing 3821.50 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!

- Oron Atkins • Donna Bailey • Alexis Baldera
- Ed Barrios • Timothy Bartholome • Sarah Belles
- Pauline & Tom Benson • Ben & TJ Bergeron
- Brooke Bowman • Patty Brinkmeyer
- Susan Buell • Kim Calhoun • Jim Calvert
- Craig & Kellie Clarkson
- Brittany & Alayna Coe • Martha Cox
- Hailey Craft • Gisella De La Mora • Keri Deatrick
- Andrew Dietrich • Mickey & Sam Dufilho
- Elena Duran • Jane & Jerry Eppner
- Steve Erskine • Amy & Lauren Faulk
- Edith Fischer • Cindy Freeman
- Jackie Freeze • Bob Friedrichs
- Jean Greenhalgh & Glen Lindeman
- David Goff • Cindy & Keith Goodrum
- Gary & Candy Graham • Carolyn Graves
- Angela Griffin • Meredith Grimshaw
- Amanda Hackney • Stephanie Hall
- Andra Halnon • Lisa Hardcastle
- Michael Heather • David & Linda Heinicke
- Sandy Henderson • Jackie & Jim Hicks
- Phil Huxford • Ana & Vincente Jaramillo
- Margo & Bill Johnson • Carol Jones
- Julia Juarez • Serey Kheang
- Jennifer & Rich Kimball • Vicki & Larry Kirby
- Chris Kneupper • Jan & Kevin Kolk
- Brian Kolthammer • Heather Lewis • Leslie Lilly
- Robert & Kay Lookingbill
- Kirsten & Adam Malacina • Brenda Martin
- Juli Ann Martin • Sharon & Mel McKey
- Noelle Merritt
- Diane Silverstein & Michael Dettrey
- Dylan Miller • Dustin Miller
- Georgia Monnerat • Sandra Moore
- Shannon Morrison • Mike Moser
- Karen & Malcolm Mosis • Debbie & Jim Nance
- Elise Nishikawa • Levi & Skarlett Patton
- Claudia & Melvin Pechacek • Russell Pope
- Janet Price • Rebekah Rylander
- Emily Schlosser • Christine Schnurbusch
- Mary Schwartz • Brooks Short
- Sciobhan Short • Joellen Snow • Taylor Snyder
- Denise Stephens • Sue Heath & Tad Finnell
- Thomas Taroni • Regina Tippet
- Veda Hackell & Tomislav Gracanin
- Janet Townsend • Sheryl & Harold Travis
- Linda Ulmer • Ashley Van Wieren
- George Valdez & Vanessa McAllister
- Caleb Walker • Ron Weeks • Barbara Whaley
- Maureen & Alan Wilde • Mike & Tracey Williams
- Justin & Elizabeth Willoughby • Renee Winder
- Robin & Keith Wise • John & Lynn Wright • James Yi
- Barbara Yoder • Linda Zeller

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.

Harold & Sheryl Travis were back with us from March through July 2024. Always wonderful to have them here, along with Lily!

Tom and Karyn Schmitz will be back this October through December 2024. We so very much appreciated their return!



Harold & Sheryl Travis with Lily



Tom & Karyn Schmitz

GCBO MIGRATIONS—STAFF & BOARD UPDATES

(continued from page 9)

WELCOME



Kayla Pringle – Education Assistant

Kayla grew up in Rockwall, TX, and earned a B.A. and majored in Anthropology and minored in Environmental Science at University of Texas at San Antonio. Pursued a Master's Degree at the University of Michigan School of Environment and Sustainability, graduating with a M.S. in Ecosystem Science and Management. Her Master's project focused on migratory songbirds and food availability, and got immersed in the bird world. Kayla has a passion for education in non-formal learning environments, and has worked at museums. She loves working with the public to inform them about wildlife conservation and biodiversity.



XHX 2024 visitors playing the "Bug Catcher" game.

Photo by Patty Brinkmeyer

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

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 15th and runs until 7PM on December 8th.

Our Mission

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

Brew on the Bayou

On March 29th 2025, 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 11th 2025, 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 and sign up for NestFest!

You Can Reach Us By Email:

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

