

TERN TRACKS

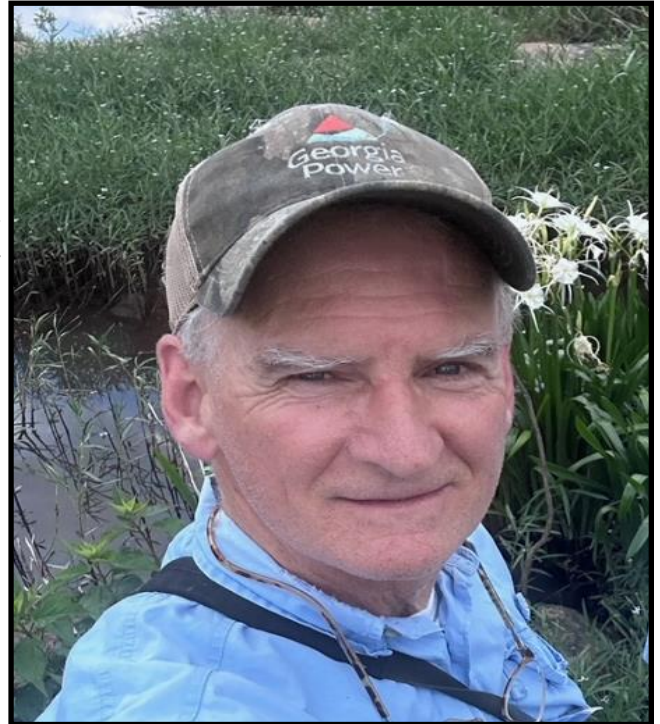
Newsletter of The Environmental Resources Network, Inc. (TERN) ~ www.tern.homestead.com

Summer 2024

TERN Funds 12 WCS Projects at the Annual Meeting

Bob Sargent, WCS program manager

The annual TERN membership and board meeting was held at the historic Indian Springs State Park in Flovilla, Georgia, on May 17, 2024. In its first order of business, the Board elected former Georgia DNR biologist and current Georgia Power Company biologist Jim Ozier to serve as TERN's president. Jim replaced outgoing President Jerry Donovan, who served in that role since 2022. Jerry: Thank for your leadership and dedicated service! Longtime Board member Patty Deveau was elected vice president. The Board voted to fund 12 Wildlife Conservation Section (WCS) projects totaling **\$50,884**. A brief summary of the 2024-2025 funded projects is provided in the following pages.



Red Knot Tracking – The Georgia Bight provides significant and critical habitat for non-breeding Red Knots, a federally threatened long-distance migratory shorebird. During the spring 2025 migration season, GA DNR and partners propose to deploy five to 10, 2.5 gram satellite transmitters on Red Knots to determine the connectivity to the breeding grounds for the Southeastern population.



Through long-term Southeast Red Knot Working Group

partnerships, we currently understand the stopover locations, diet, local movement ecology, and migration timing. We also know through radio tracking that up to 70 percent of knots along the Southeast coast fly directly to the breeding grounds, but we don't have a good understanding of where in the Arctic they breed. This is an important information gap in the conservation of knots. We are confident that, with help from partners such as the USFWS, we can deploy up to 10 satellite transmitters in 2025 and determine connections. Within a few short years, we will have a sample size of tracked Red Knots large enough to make broad inferences about where the birds that winter in the Southeast go during spring migration. Partners made a breakthrough in spring 2023 on transmitter attachment methods. Thanks to TERN's support, we will be able to purchase four LOTEK Pinpoint satellite transmitters. Contact Fletcher Smith at fletcher.smith@dnr.ga.gov.

Newly elected TERN President Jim Ozier. Photo by Jim. Apparently, he's into selfies.

Red Knot outfitted with a satellite transmitter. Photo by Fletcher Smith.

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Friends of Georgia's Nongame Conservation Section

The Environmental Resources Network, Inc. (TERN) is the official friends group of the Nongame Conservation Section of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Contributions made to TERN go directly to help fund important nongame plant and animal projects conducted in Georgia. To become a member or donate to TERN, visit:

www.tern.homestead.com

WCS Projects Funded by TERN

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Camp TALON (Teen Adventures Learning about Ornithology and Nature) – Linda May and I led the 14th edition of Camp TALON (Teen Adventures Learning about Ornithology and Nature) on the coast June 1-6. Twenty-one teenagers from five states participated, including one boy who traveled from Seattle to learn about Georgia's birds. Every morning started early with road and boat trips to some of the best birding sites the coast has to offer: Little St. Simons Island, Jekyll Island State Park, Andrews Island, St. Simons Island, Crooked River State Park, the famous rookery on Gilman Pond (private property), Sapelo Island, and Ft. Stewart. Other teachers joined us at nearly every stop to share with the campers their knowledge and enthusiasm about birds, plants, ecology, and related topics. Sometimes the lessons were unplanned and spontaneous, such as when we spotted a Gopher Tortoise at Crooked River State Park, and this led to a roadside lesson about early successional habitats and keystone species. The teen birders learned about habitats and management practices, bird species identification, avian anatomy and physiology, how birds fly and how and why they sing, migration, island history and ecology, life history of beach invertebrates, conservation issues, career opportunities, why birds are ecologically important and how the campers can contribute to their conservation, and how to keep a journal. Most importantly, the campers had several opportunities to speak with graduate students, naturalists, and retired professors about research and careers.



Camp TALON's class of 2024 returns to the mainland on the ferry after a day of birding at Sapelo Island. Photo by Linda May.

WCS Projects Funded by TERN

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Camp TALON 2024 (continued from page 2)

At Andrews Island, the campers saw avocets, stilts, peeps, and white pelicans. At Little St. Simons, they saw four American Flamingos, witnessed a mist-netting operation, and learned about shorebird studies. At Gilman Pond, they saw one of the most incredible rookeries in the state and learned about wading bird surveys and Wood Stork biology. At Sapelo Island, they got a fleeting glimpse of a Plain Chachalaca, learned about island plant zones and the importance of the saltmarsh, saw several Painted Buntings, and climbed the lighthouse. At Ft. Stewart, they learned about Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (RCW), prescribed fire, and timber management, and they used a peeper camera to see RCW and bluebird nestlings in tree cavities. Along their journey they also were treated to presentations about Georgia DNR's Wildlife Resources Division and its mission, the history of bird conservation and wildlife laws in the U.S., and how to use birding apps, and they participated in an activity designed to teach them about the triumphs and perils birds face when migrating.



Two of four American Flamingos seen at Little St. Simons Island during Camp TALON, June 3, 2024. Photo by Bob Sargent.



Larry Carlile demonstrates the use of a peeper camera at Ft. Stewart. Photo by Bob Sargent.

At the end of six days, the teenagers had recorded 130 species of birds along with several species of reptiles, frogs, mammals, butterflies, a long list of plant species, and various beach invertebrates. They snapped hundreds of photos and met and established lifelong connections with other bird-obsessed teens. Several made a point of collecting names, phone numbers, and addresses of potential career mentors. All the campers took prizes home, such as binoculars, natural history books, DVDs and CDs, caps, posters, and binocular harnesses. Oh, and they didn't have to endure non-stop lectures. The camp took timeouts so the teens could visit the pool at Epworth-by-the-Sea and toss a football. There were ice cream, pizza, and Waffle House stops on the itinerary. And who could forget the visit to St. Simons Island's East Beach, where the campers decided to do their best imitation of sanderlings—first chasing and then fleeing from the waves—for 30 minutes.

Camp TALON would not be possible without support from TERN, the Georgia Ornithological Society, and Birds Georgia. Much appreciation also goes to the other teachers and coordinators: retired professors Bob Sattelmeyer and Bob Cooper; WRD's Tim Keyes, Chris Depkin, Fred Hay, Justin Alexander, Blaine Tyler, and Adam Mackinnon; the LSSI all-star team: Stacia, Aurora, Eva, Hailey, Adam, Diane, Beck (the latter two are UGA students working on LSSI), and especially Hank and Wendy Paulson for supporting our LSSI adventure every year; retired TNC ecologist Malcolm Hodges; and Ft. Stewart's wildlife chief Larry Carlile. Thanks to TERN's generous support, the 15th edition of Camp TALON, scheduled for May 31 - June 5, 2025, already has much of the funding needed to make it happen. For more information, please contact bob.sargent@dnr.ga.gov or linda.may@dnr.ga.gov.

Wildlife Conservation Section Projects Funded by TERN

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A male Purple Martin perched on a nesting structure. Photo by Todd Schneider.

Spark Birds – Ornithologists report that Purple Martin (PUMA) numbers are declining nationwide. One of the reasons for this decline is loss of nesting structures. For several years the West Central Georgia Fire Crew has received TERN grants to erect 5-6 purple martin nesting structures annually. Erecting these structures is a great activity for days when the crew couldn't burn. Structures were erected at Sandhills Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Flat Creek Public Fishing Area (PFA) in March 2020 and both were swarming with martins within 2-3 days. A third structure was erected in March 2021 at Panola Mountain State Park and was occupied as of May 2022. Six more structures were erected at PFAs in spring 2022 with all six of these now occupied. Six more were erected in 2023 and several are now occupied. These martin nests give a good opportunity for people, young and old, to contribute to the conservation of this declining species and to have a 'spark bird' as they enjoy the swirling flights, complex vocalizations, and nesting activity of martins.

Thanks to TERN's 2024 grant, this crew will soon erect PUMA nesting structures on six new properties: Berry College WMA, J.L. Lester WMA, James H. "Sloppy" Floyd State Park, Mistletoe State Park, Richard Russell State Park, and Seminole State Park. For more information, contact nathan.klaus@dnr.ga.gov.

OWLS (Outdoor Wildlife Leadership School) – This TERN grant will facilitate reduced registration costs for educators to attend OWLS. In 2025, we will accept 16 participants. Educators will spend five days immersed in Georgia's wildlife education via hands-on such as canoeing in the Okefenokee Swamp, coastal birding, visiting the Georgia Sea Turtle Center, and exploring the maritime forests of Sapelo Island. Classes will be taught by staff and biologists from CEWC, Game Management, Fisheries Management, WCS, UGA, and other partners. Since OWLS is an Advanced Project WILD Workshop, participants will be provided with curriculum and resource materials that they can take back to their classroom. All educators will



Students of the 2024 Outdoor Wildlife Leadership School. Photo provided by Kim Morris-Zarneke.

be required to maintain a journal. They will enhance their ability to teach environmental education in their classrooms as well as in the outdoors. Not only will the educators benefit, but the students they teach will also benefit from the improved environmental education content. For questions or more information, contact kim.morris-zarneke@dnr.ga.gov.



OWLS 2024 students get a lesson in botany. Photo provided by Kim Morris-Zarneke.

Wildlife Conservation Section Project Updates

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Youth Birding Competition (YBC) – The 18th annual Georgia Youth Birding Competition (YBC) drew more than 100 young birders to Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center in Mansfield, Georgia, on Saturday, April 20th. Georgia DNR’s Tim Keyes, founder and coordinator of the YBC, praised the results, noting that, “We had new rookie teams in every age division. We had a team raise over \$1,000 for conservation. We had a lot of volunteers throughout. And with the winners finding 159 species, we have another hardcore birding team!” The Wood Thrushes, from DeKalb County, won the high school division and overall competition, seeing or hearing 159 species in a 24-hour search that ranged from coastal Georgia to Kennesaw Mountain. The count topped last year’s high of 144. Ten teams listed 70 or more species, and six had over 100.



Thirteen-year-old Aleena Huang’s Barred Owl drawing was the overall winner of the YBC’s T-shirt art contest.

The Youth Birding Competition is aimed at inspiring an awareness and appreciation of Georgia birds and the outdoors. This year’s event ran from April 12 till 5 p.m. on the 20th. During that almost nine-day span, kindergarteners through high-schoolers picked a 24-hour period and competed by age group to find the most bird species. Teams sporting names such as Counting Crows and Pileated Sisters hailed from Brunswick to Alto.

For the second straight year, the Pi-billed Grebes of Atlanta led in fundraising for conservation. The Atlanta high schoolers will donate the \$1,057 to Trees Atlanta. The fundraising total for the competition, in which financially supporting wildlife work is voluntary, exceeded \$1,500.

Tom Painting received the Mentor Award. The educator at Paideia School in Atlanta spent more than 30 hours prepping and mentoring the Pi-billed Grebes, in addition to encouraging youth through

bird walks and a birds photo-sharing account. Before presenting the award, Tim Keyes read a two-page letter from a teen detailing Tom’s efforts.

The Saturday evening awards banquet featured the winners and more than 150 entries in a T-shirt art contest, with a slideshow of images playing on large screens. Birding participants received shirts with a Barred Owl drawn by Aleena Huang, an eighth-grader and student at SKA Academy of Art and Design in Duluth. As the art contest grand-prize winner, Huang took home a \$100 Amazon gift card. While DNR named most T-shirt division winners earlier this year, art contest coordinator Linda May announced at the banquet the top entry from a youth who participated in the birding competition. That honor went to Ella Seifert for her drawing of a Hermit Thrush. The ninth-grader from Kell High School in Kennesaw birded with the Awesome Aningas team, which tied for third in the high school division.

The 2025 YBC awards banquet will be held on April 12. Registration opens online this winter. The competition and art contest – which have inspired similar events in some other states, including Birmingham Zoo’s recent Alabama Bird Search Youth Challenge – are sponsored by DNR’s Wildlife Conservation Section, TERN, the Georgia Ornithological Society, and Birds Georgia. Thanks to TERN’s past support and two recent donations from Georgia Power, this hugely popular event will once again attract youngsters from all over the state next April to seek out and celebrate Georgia’s birds. Visit <https://georgiawildlife.com/ybc> for details. For more information, contact tim.keyes@dnr.ga.gov.

Wildlife Conservation Section Project Updates

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TERN Outstanding Teacher Award – Oftentimes the budgets for elementary school programs are limited to supporting only those activities that occur in the classroom and use traditional supplies such as textbooks. The goal of this award is to reward teachers who employ especially creative approaches to meet state standards while focusing on nongame animals, plant species, and their habitats. There are many teachers who may need some financial assistance to start a special project that conveys knowledge using unconventional methods and outside activities. We hope that these types of projects will provide long-lasting benefits to students and perhaps instill in them an appreciation of nongame species. Perhaps this award will facilitate networking among these teachers and help others to learn from their approaches through presentations at the annual Environmental Educational Alliance (EEA) conference and this award recognition at the EEA banquet. The 2023-2024 Conservation Teacher of the Year grant winner is Jina Harris from The Learning Tree Academy – Outdoor Learning School in Toccoa. Her proposal rose to the top of the reviewing committee’s list due to its cross-curricular creativity, hands-on outdoor activities, peer-to-peer teaching, sustainability, and community engagement. Mrs. Harris received \$1000 from TERN to implement “Project Pollination: Buzzing and Humming!” Per her grant proposal, the school’s third and fourth graders will research plants native to Georgia’s Piedmont using resources such as the Georgia Native Plant Society, the State Botanical Garden’s “Connect to Protect” program, and the Georgia Pollinator Partnership. Students will then plan, install, and manage a garden to attract a variety of pollinators. Grant funds will be used to buy native plants, trellises, interpretive signs, hummingbird feeders and a shade canopy. Local businesses will donate mulch and worktables. The garden will serve as an outdoor classroom, where the third and fourth graders will teach younger students about the importance of native plants, pollinators and biodiversity. Summer campers will work in the garden when school is out of session, and proceeds from a farmer’s market next fall will fund future garden projects. For questions or more information, contact anna.yellin@dnr.ga.gov or linda.may@dnr.ga.gov.



Students at The Learning Tree Academy in Toccoa, Georgia, prepare the soil for their garden project. Photo provided by Jina Harris.

ACE (Adventures in Conservation Education) Camp – This TERN grant will help reduce registration costs for middle school students to attend an advanced wildlife conservation camp about nongame species of Georgia. In 2025, 16 students will spend five days immersed in Georgia’s natural history via hands-on activities such as canoeing in the Okefenokee Swamp, coastal birding, visiting the Georgia Sea Turtle Center and exploring the maritime forests of Sapelo Island. Classes will be taught by staff and biologists from CEWC, Game Management and Wildlife Conservation Sections, as well as biologists and educators from UGA and other agencies. They also will participate in activities based on Project WILD and Aquatic WILD curriculums that will enhance their understanding of Georgia ecological systems. Students will be required to maintain a journal of data collected and terms learned. They will have an introduction to field biology careers, develop practical skills for future biology courses in high school and college, and strongly enhance their understanding of wildlife conservation efforts in Georgia. ACE Camp is designed to further the participant’s education in wildlife conservation using field-based experiences. By utilizing this type of teaching method, we are able to target a wider variety of students and support “wise use” stewardship of our natural resources. For more information, contact kim.morris-zarneke@dnr.ga.gov.

Wildlife Conservation Section Project Updates

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Poster contest artwork from third graders at Frances Meeks Elementary School in Richmond Hill, Georgia. Photo by Linda May.

35th Give Wildlife a Chance Poster Contest (GWAC) –

The annual GWAC is a conservation art competition that is open to all kindergarten through 5th grade students in public schools, private schools, and homeschool groups in Georgia. The theme, which changes annually, is used to broadcast a core concept from the State Wildlife Action Plan. For example, the 2023-24 GWAC theme was “What’s That? Habitat!” which prompted students to learn the required components of habitats for various species to survive. In FY24, almost 3,500 students from 24 public, private, and home schools, as well as a county library system (a first!), participated. The number of students more than doubled this school year compared to participation in recent years, with a larger reach across the state. A theme for the 2024-25 school year is in the works. Given that TERN funding is received, details about the next contest will be announced on the DNR-WRD website and advertised to teachers in July/August. After students research the annual theme and make their own personal observations,

they create relevant drawings and paintings and enter their artwork at the local school level (September-February). The top first-place, local-level winning posters in each of four divisions (kindergarten, 1st/2nd grade, 3rd/4th grade, and 5th grade) then proceed to the state-level contest at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia in Athens (mid-March entry deadline, followed by judging and winners announced by mid-April). We will applaud the winners via a WRD press release with photos of the winning artwork, as well as social media posts. Each winner will receive a state-level award ribbon as well as “Connect to Protect” and “Exploring Georgia Wildlife” coloring books. A special “Wildlife Tales” bandana featuring the 12 winners’ artwork will be produced as this year’s gift for the winners and to help advertise the annual contest to teachers. Additionally, one parent and the sponsoring teacher of each winner will be offered a free wildlife tag, courtesy of TERN. For more information, contact linda.may@dnr.ga.gov.

Marshbird Research Camera – Many of WCS’ projects are dependent on taking high resolution photographs to document banded birds, get counts of colonial waterbirds, and document flocks of various species. All our aerial wading bird surveys depend on high resolution photographs. Last year, we snapped and reviewed approximately 800 images of close to 100 colonies to quantify nesting pairs of 13 different species. We also use cameras year-round to document banded American Oystercatcher, Red Knot, Wood Stork, and Piping Plover. We often photograph from a boat, helicopter, or fixed-wing plane in challenging conditions. The saltwater environment takes a harsh toll on our photography equipment. Thanks to TERN’s generous 2024 grant, we will be able to buy a new Canon mirrorless R5. This will greatly improve the quality of the imagery we need. This camera has more than 2X the resolution of the Canon D90’s we have been using for years. We first experimented with this camera for a sparrow survey, and it was the only camera capable of taking identifiable photos of sharp-tailed sparrows in flight. For more information, contact tim.keyes@dnr.ga.gov.

Aerial survey of a Royal Tern colony using a high-resolution camera. These cameras allow biologists to easily count birds and find rare individuals in a flock without disturbing the birds. Photo by Fletcher Smith.



Wildlife Conservation Section Project Updates

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Young Fires Video – Although fire is essential in maintaining important habitats for wildlife and plants in Georgia, many people fear the use of prescribed fire. In fact, this essential management tool is a practice still unfamiliar to many Americans. There can be genuine resistance to the use of prescribed fire. Suppressing fire in fire-dependent habitats can harm rare plants and animals (such as pitcherplants, Gopher Tortoise, Eastern Indigo Snake, Bachman’s Sparrow, and Gopher Frog) and runs contrary to desired conservation outcomes. One of the main objectives of this 20-minute documentary film, *Young Fires: The Diverse Future of Firelighting*, will be to “change hearts and minds” about prescribed fire by using storytelling and education to demystify this subject for a general audience. Sympathetic, engaging wildland firefighters will talk about their own journey in understanding and embracing the practice of prescribed fire. Viewers will learn that prescribed fire is a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem safety, and reduce wildfire risk. It is important for them to understand that it is the most critical tool in managing wildlife diversity, building resilient ecosystems, and promoting cleaner air.

Another issue of concern is the lack of representation of minorities and women in conservation professions, and specifically, in the area of wildland firelighting. It is important to have all segments of society value our state’s natural heritage so that they will feel they have a part to play in its conservation. Encouraging young people to consider conservation as a profession can bring a more diverse workforce into prescribed fire and land management. Recruiting diverse staff also helps spread awareness throughout society about what this work entails and how it benefits plants, animals, and the land. So another objective of this documentary is to raise awareness of the diverse young people who are entering the workforce of prescribed fire and conservation, and to encourage others to consider both prescribed fire and conservation as a potential career path.

This 20-minute, short documentary film will follow SEGA, a diverse group of young wildland firefighters based in Southeast Georgia, as they explore the world of conservation and look to forge a path for their futures. An unusually thoughtful group of twentysomethings, the women and men allow us to shadow them as they hone their skills in the demanding work of prescribed fire. Taking viewers from Georgia’s Coastal Plain, to Indigenous tribal lands in multiple states, to a nature preserve in North Carolina, the powerful narratives are interwoven with an exploration of firelighting, a practice still unfamiliar to many Americans. Viewers will learn that “more prescribed fires mean fewer extreme wildfires,” which is an urgent consideration for public safety, particularly with a changing climate. These young female and BIPOC firefighters (Black, Indigenous, people of color) come from the small-town South and urban California. They navigate a new profession in conservation, form friendships, and learn from inspiring mentors. Each individual contributes a unique, nuanced point of view, reflecting on the rewards of working in nature and sharing their aspirations to have a positive impact on the world. Finding a welcoming and inclusive training and work environment is making all the difference in the young people’s journey.

In *Young Fires*, we also hear from seasoned professionals, including pioneering women who have navigated obstacles and challenges to establish careers in conservation, specifically wildland firelighting. These interview subjects provide a perspective on what has – and has not -- changed in the field over the past decade. Through moving storytelling, this documentary will capture efforts to ensure that racial and ethnic minorities, as well as women and LGBTQ individuals, are recruited and accepted into firelighting crews. In addition to these diverse narratives, *Young Fires* takes viewers into stunning natural landscapes, such as Longleaf Pine forests, one of the world’s most biologically diverse ecosystems. We hear the young firefighters reflect on the differences in land management practices in the American South compared with approaches they’ve experienced in California and other parts of the West. They share their excitement as they discover the restorative and regenerative effects of applying prescribed fire to ecosystems, and how fire benefits rare plant and animal species. The stories in *Young Fires* provide a heartening counterpoint to frequently grim environmental news. Ultimately, the film portrays a young generation who can teach us important lessons about hope and why conservation matters now more than ever. For more information, contact shan.cammack@dnr.ga.gov.

Wildlife Conservation Section Project Updates

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Videography Equipment for Promoting Wildlife Conservation on Private Lands – Erin Cork, WCS' senior wildlife biologist for private lands, works to promote habitat management and conservation partnerships to protect rare and imperiled plants, animals, and natural communities on privately owned lands, including timber lands, family farms, and recreation and conservation lands. She often visits high-quality sites where she may encounter iconic, but rarely seen, species on beautiful, well-managed landscapes. She also works closely with passionate and knowledgeable private landowners on some of these sites - several of whom would have valuable perspectives, guidance, and insights that they could share about their role in managing their land to support wildlife and their habitats. Thanks to TERN's 2024 grant, Erin will be purchasing videography equipment to document and share high-quality, captivating footage of priority wildlife and habitats, as well as interviews with these landowners and other conservation partners in the promotion of conservation on private lands.



A cypress-tupelo wetland protected by a Georgia DNR easement in Jenkins County and monitored by Erin Cork. Photo by Erin.

In Georgia, ~93% of the landscape is in private ownership, and successful conservation cannot happen without engaged private landowners who are committed to being good stewards of their land. Erin wants to highlight and promote the voluntary achievements of these landowners by documenting and sharing footage of the biodiversity that they are supporting on their land. These videos can be used as standalone footage for sharing across social media or they can be incorporated into conservation films produced by DNR and partner organizations. By documenting and sharing footage through the lens of conservation on private lands, DNR will be able to publicly recognize the efforts of private landowners, promote appreciation for Georgia's rare species and natural communities, and educate and inspire the public about the role they too can play in conserving Georgia's biodiversity. For more information, contact erin.cork@dnr.ga.gov.

Raptor Nest Survey Camera Lens – The quality of the data collected during our surveys of the nests of Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Common Ravens, and other bird species would be improved with the purchase and use of a high-powered zoom lens. Eagle nests are viewed from the vantage point of a helicopter circling at a distance 300-400 feet from the nest trees. Falcon nests are located either on high cliff faces or the upper stories of skyscrapers in Atlanta. Common Raven nests occur on the cliffs at Tallulah Gorge and Brasstown Bald. The camera used during these surveys is excellent, but the 70-300 mm lens that came with that camera is not adequate. Consequently, we often borrow photos from online sources to use in our outreach education efforts about these bird species. The use of a much higher-powered lens would also help us with confirming our assessments of the ages of young in these nests, would be valuable with photographing bands on perched birds, and would be helpful with documenting other priority bird species such as Bachman's Sparrows, Loggerhead Shrikes, and Rusty Blackbirds. Thanks to TERN, we will be purchasing a Nikon AF-S Nikkor 200-500 mm f/5.6E ED VR lens to use in future surveys of these and various other high-priority birds. For information, contact bob.sargent@dnr.ga.gov.



A Bald Eagle nest on the Georgia coast photographed with a 300 mm zoom lens. Photo by Bob Sargent.

Wildlife Conservation Section Project Updates

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Habitat Signs to Benefit Wildlife – Bugs: even the name people use communicates a sense of annoyance. Yet the relationship between plants and invertebrates forms the foundation of our food chain. Despite this, HOAs, neighbor peer pressure, and social norms have created a sense that lawns should be perfectly manicured, plants should have no evidence of insect feeding, and landscaping should appear picture-perfect. These green spaces are not environments that support wildlife, but they often draw in insects that are killed by pesticides. SWAP 2025 is expected to address this significant threat to invertebrates and the natural ecosystem services they provide. Curb appeal and healthy habitats do not need to be at odds.

The GAPP (Georgia Pollinator Partnership) network includes many partners with different focuses who use inconsistent language to convey similar ideas about invertebrates. The overabundance of information can be confusing to the public. This collaboration aims to create a clear, concise, uniform directive for homeowners to follow when managing their yards. This information will be presented through homeowner yard signs and our website: <https://gapp.org/#>. This website is being relaunched with a sharper look and updated



An example yard sign.

material and is expected to be completed by September 2024. The QR codes on the signs will direct the public to the general website and a separate page explaining the benefits of less mowing, reductions in pesticide use, and the need for native nectar sources.



Some of the members of the GAPP network.

Thanks to TERN’s 2024 grant, we will be able to order 40 custom metallic outdoor signs and signposts. We will then post them in highly visible pollinator habitats throughout the state. The 40 signs will be 18 X 24 inches, slightly larger than the signs of the same design we plan to advertise and distribute to homeowners later. The goal is that these highly visible public signs will build momentum and interest by familiarizing the public with the GAPP name, logo, and website. We hope that as this project expands, we can show homeowners that yards with healthy wildlife habitats are valuable to conservation and a benefit to neighborhoods, and the presence of bugs is a good thing for the environment. For information: anna.yellin@dnr.ga.gov



Wildlife Conservation Section Project Updates

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A small sample of projects made possible thanks to TERN. Starting from the upper left corner and going clockwise: 1) A bat “condominium”; 2) Burner Bob outreach education about prescribed fire and the Longleaf Pine ecosystem; 3) One of the winning entries in the 2023-2024 Give Wildlife a Chance poster contest; 4) Students of The Learning Tree Academy celebrate their teacher and their project’s recognition via the 2024 Conservation Teacher of the Year award; 5) A budding young botanist among Golden Trumpets during the production of “Devouring Beauties,” a documentary about the ecology of pitcherplant communities; and 6) Stacia Hendricks poses with some of the campers from Camp TALON 2024 at Little St. Simons Island.



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Friends of Georgia's Nongame Conservation Section

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Weekend for Wildlife Update

Please join us for the 37th Weekend for Wildlife (WFW) January 31 - February 1, 2025, at The Cloister at Sea Island, Georgia. This will be TERN's only fundraiser in 2025 and we need your help to make it a success. Many of the WCS projects you have read about in this issue of TERN Tracks would not have happened without your contributions through the silent auction and raffle managed by TERN at WFW. Your participation in this event will also provide you with the opportunity to bid for your own "Be a Biologist for a Day" adventures, as well as many wonderful silent and verbal auction items. Weekend for Wildlife has raised more than 19 million dollars since 2001 in support of conserving Georgia's diverse nongame wildlife resources. The 2025 event will be filled with field trips led by experts, as well as live and silent auctions. To register, sign up as a sponsor, or if you would like to donate auction items, visit www.weekendforwildlife.com later this fall. If you have any questions, please contact TERN's Executive Secretary, Wanda Granitz, at 478-361-8144 or wandagranitz@gmail.com. Thank you for supporting the conservation of Georgia's wildlife resources. We hope to see you on the coast, binoculars in your hands, at the next WFW.



Students of the 2024 Adventures in Conservation (ACE) Camp hosted by GA DNR and supported by TERN. Photo provided by Amber Barrow.