

STEWARDS OF THE GEORGIA COAST
COASTAL CONSERVATION PROJECT LIST

MAY

2023



STEWARDS
OF THE GEORGIA COAST



PHOTO BY PHILLIP MURDACO



STEWARDS OF THE GEORGIA COAST

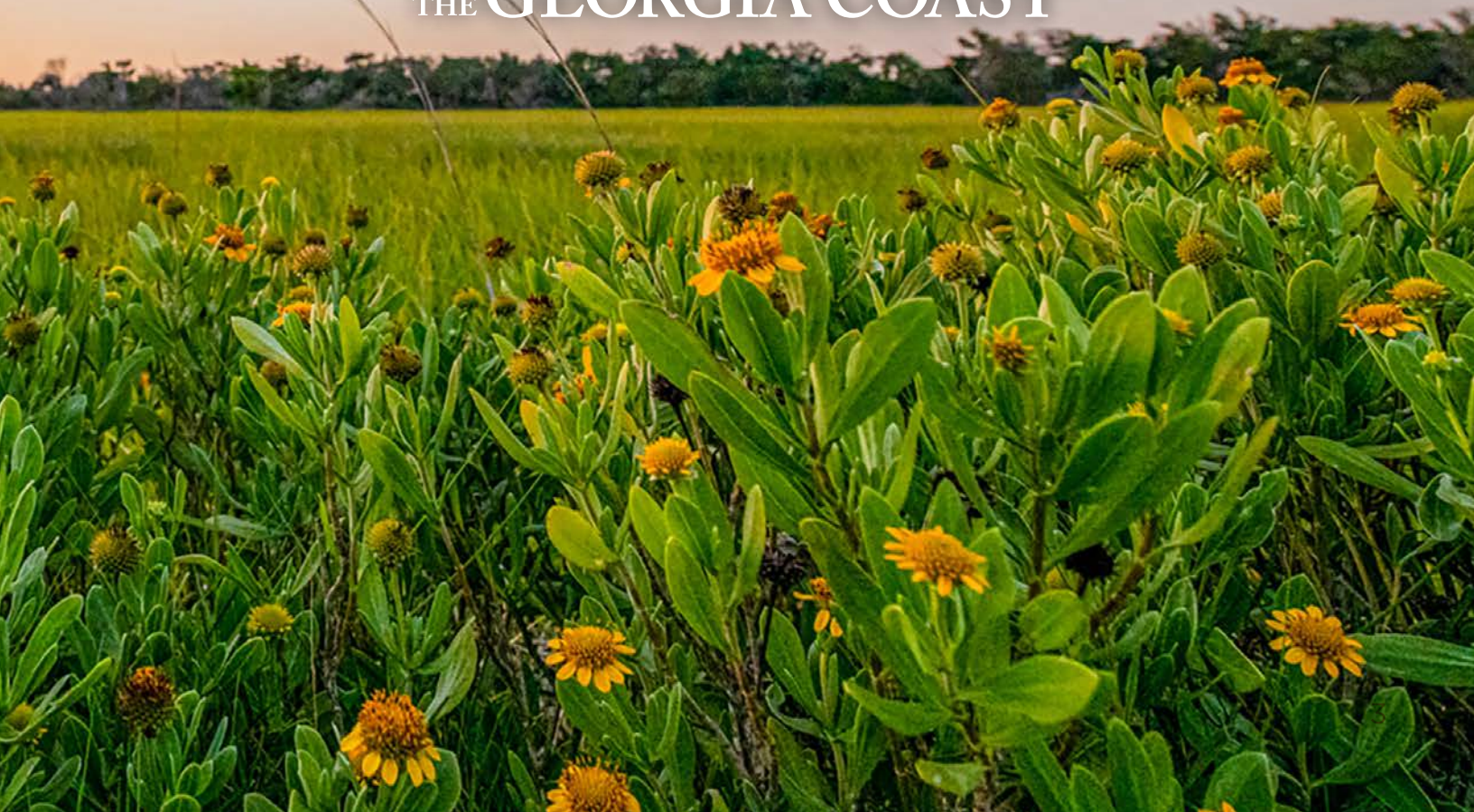


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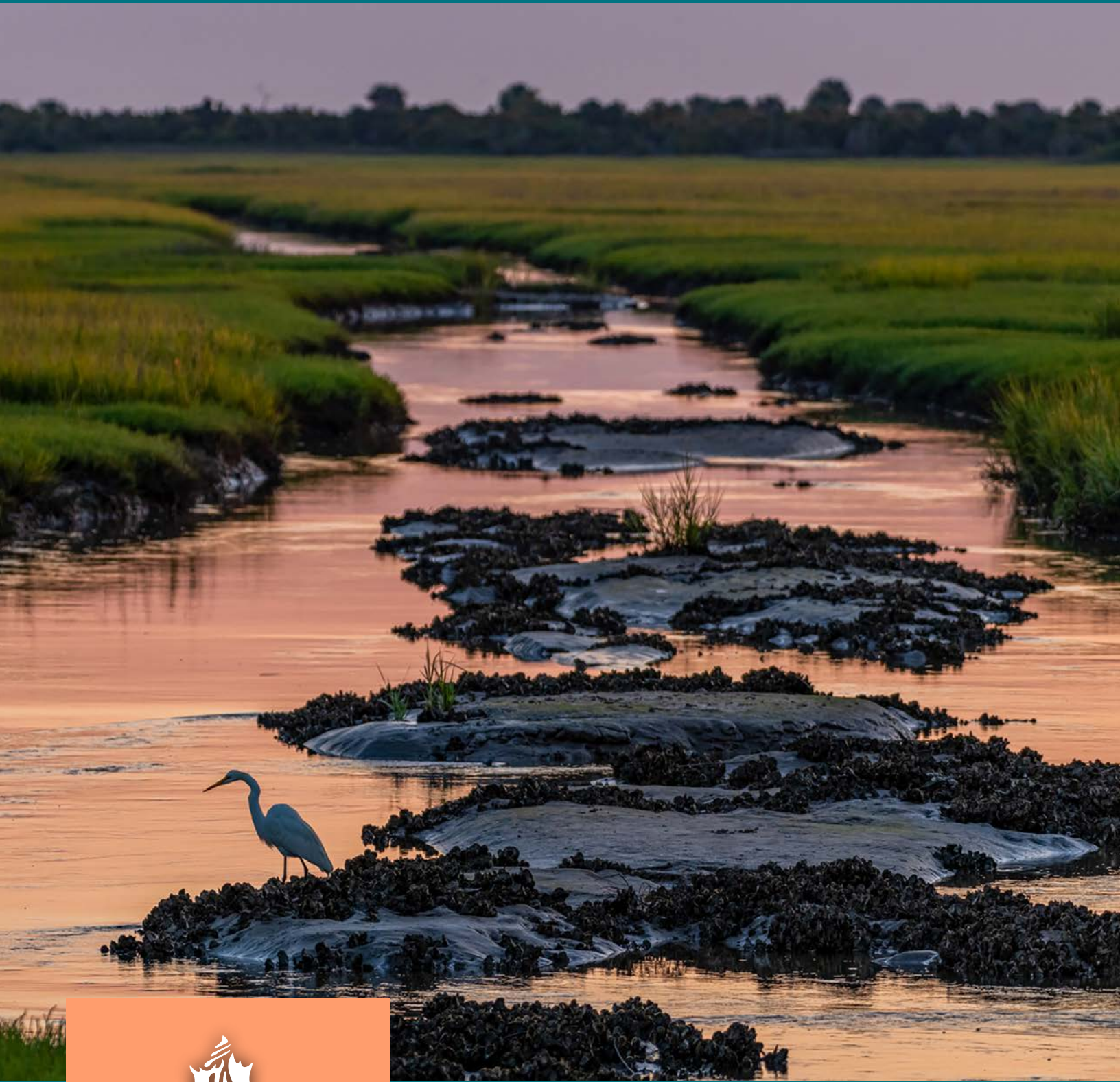
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STEWARDS
OF THE GEORGIA COAST

Stewards of the Georgia Coast Coastal Conservation Project List

V.6 PUBLISHED MAY 2023



Stewards of the Georgia Coast is an informal network of 250+ donors committed to advancing philanthropy for coastal conservation. Our core objective is to increase private donors' investment of time, influence, and resources for stewarding Georgia's coast. We seek to build relationships, share experiences, cultivate learning, communicate philanthropic needs, and facilitate giving for impact.

In addition to supporting the general operations of conservation non-profits serving the Georgia coast, we hope you will consider investing in these high priority projects submitted by trusted conservation professionals. Projects were selected based on Stewards' working knowledge of coastal conservation priorities and confidence in the leadership and organizations involved. Nevertheless, donors are encouraged to engage in their own due diligence when making contributions.

While most of these projects are highly collaborative, a single point of contact has been provided for each project, should you seek more information or wish to make a gift. If you support a project from the list, please let the Stewards' leadership know, as it will help us to assess the value and impact of this effort.

In addition to this annual selection of conservation projects, members of the Stewards community have expressed interest in having the option of making undesignated gifts for coastal conservation. Stewards has worked with its longtime partner, The Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation, to establish a Stewards of the Georgia Coast donor advised fund for this purpose.

Serving as fund advisors, Burch Barger and Scott Coleman will work with the Stewards Advisory Committee to steer undesignated funds to worthy conservation projects. Information about the fund's status and distributions will be shared annually. Undesignated gifts can be directed as follows:

Stewards of the Georgia Coast Donor Advised Fund

Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation

1316 Newcastle Street, Suite 201

Brunswick, Georgia 31520

Should you have questions or need assistance with any aspect of the 2023 Project List or Stewards of the Georgia Coast, please contact Burch Barger (stewardsofgacoast@gmail.com or 205-643-8121), Scott Coleman (scott@littlessi.com or 229-724- 9202), or David Weitnauer (dweitnauer@rhdobbs.net or 404-574-2970).

Your input and suggestions are welcomed and appreciated. Thank you for your interest in and support for coastal conservation in Georgia.

www.stewardsofgacoast.org



ADVOCACY

Youth Environmental Leadership Program • \$2500 - \$15,000:

Now recruiting for its fifth full school year, the Youth Environmental Leadership Program (YELP) is an intensive environmental education program for high school students who live in coastal Georgia. The goal of YELP is to develop the next generation of leaders by deepening their environmental knowledge and cultivating their leadership skills. During the nine month program, students participate in leadership workshops, field trips, action projects, and serve as conservation ambassadors within their communities. Since 2019, we have engaged a diverse group of 62 students from across Georgia's coast. To ensure that YELP is accessible to all deserving students, we are intentional about selecting an economically and racially diverse cohort and offering the program at no cost to participants.

Additionally, in 2023 we will offer new full-time, paid summer internships for YELP alumni. Interns will work on one of two immersive projects: 1) conducting outreach and education for SSI sea turtle project, 2) organizing the youth track of OHM's upcoming Choosing to Lead conference on Jekyll Island. For more information or to make a donation, contact Kate Grinalds at 404-395-7423 or kate@onehundredmiles.org. Kate serves as VP of Philanthropy for One Hundred Miles.

2023-24 school year: \$15,000

Two summer internships: \$5000

One summer internship: \$2500

Okefenokee Protection Alliance • \$1,000 to \$5,000:

Nearly 50 local, regional, and national conservation organizations are working collectively with small businesses to protect the Okefenokee Swamp from an immediate threat: an Alabama mining company's proposal to construct a surface mine on the doorstep of the Swamp. The Okefenokee is one of the largest remaining intact freshwater ecosystems in the world and is on track to being selected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The mine would not only threaten the biodiversity of the Swamp but also the communities around the Swamp. Tourists make over 600,000 visits to the Swamp each year which support over 750 jobs and provide \$17.2 million in annual employment income, \$5.4 million in annual tax revenue, and \$64.7 million in annual economic output. Your donation would be used immediately to purchase newspaper and digital ads to raise awareness. To learn more, watch the award-winning film, *Sacred Waters: the Okefenokee in Peril*, available on YouTube or contact Bill Sapp, chair of the Okefenokee Protection Alliance, at bsapp@selcga.org.





PHOTO BY JIM BARGER

Warehouse Overdevelopment • \$3000 - \$15,000:

Warehouse development in coastal Georgia is booming. While the expansion of the Port of Savannah brings economic growth, it is also bringing haphazard development that is transforming our rural coastal neighborhoods into industrial zones. Chatham County alone has 65 million square feet of warehouse space, including 75 new warehouses that have been permitted and built since 2019. Several communities across the region, like Bloomingdale in Chatham County, have instituted a moratorium on development so they can address how rapid industrialization is impacting their municipal infrastructure and residential life. Zoning is the tool that our communities can use to manage the proliferation of warehouses and to achieve balance between the positive and negative aspects of growth.

To address these complex development issues, One Hundred Miles is leading a grassroots campaign to assist coastal residents who are opposing the warehouse takeover and promoting development that preserves our natural and historic assets. We will also lead a regional assessment that will help local governments to adopt ordinances that require impact assessment and mitigation planning for each new large-scale development.

To advance this work, we need a series of maps that demonstrate how much our coastal region has changed with so many new warehouses. We will hire a GIS analyst to map warehouse development across Georgia's 100-mile coast. We will also purchase a drone that can be used to demonstrate how the landscape/neighborhoods are affected by big developments.

These new tools and the associated data analyses will be used to advocate for growth in an environmentally sustainable way that makes the local economy stronger and preserves residents' quality of life. For more information or to make a donation, contact Kate Grinalds at 404-395-7423 or kate@onehundredmiles.org. Kate serves as VP of Philanthropy for One Hundred Miles.

Drone purchase, training and licensing: \$3000

GIS Analysis: \$12,000

Total: \$15,000



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Cay Creek Wetlands Restoration and Local Educator Workshop • \$10,000:

Often referred to as a hidden gem in Liberty County, Cay Creek Wetlands Interpretive Center in Midway is a community park with a boardwalk that winds through freshwater swamps and saltwater creeks. Coastal WildScapes is an organization dedicated to educating the community about native habitats and fostering an appreciation for nature. We are seeking funds to restore the pollinator and wetland demonstration gardens and to host a wetland workshop for local educators at Cay Creek Wetlands.

The pollinator and wetland demonstration garden restoration will include replacing worn out or damaged educational interpretive signage along the boardwalk and purchasing plants and mulch to maintain these valuable educational resources. The workshop will engage local educators in creating useful lesson plans and materials related to wetland habitats for their students. It will include an indoor session with lectures on topics related to natural communities associated with coastal ecosystems and an outdoor session with an ecosystem trail walk.

The timeline for this project is 2 years and the cost is estimated to be \$10,000. A total of 75 educators are expected to attend to the workshop. A total of 8,000 visitors per year are expected to be reached with the educational interpretive signs at Cay Creek Wetlands.

For more information, to arrange a tour of Cay Creek Wetlands, or to make a donation, contact Amy Schuler, Education and Outreach Coordinator at admin@coastalwildscapes.org or (912) 289-7736.

Workshop: \$1,000 (office supplies, printing, advertising, and programs)

Staff: \$1,000 (hours & mileage)

Educational Interpretive Signage: \$6,000 (replacement of signs)

Demonstration Garden: \$2,000 (plants & mulch)

Total Project Cost: \$10,000

Education and Community Outreach • \$5,000 per year for 3-5 years:

Coastal WildScapes is an organization dedicated to connecting residents to the habitats of coastal Georgia and empowering them to be stewards of their natural environment. To accomplish our mission, we are seeking funds for education and outreach assistance for the development and delivery of education initiatives to increase knowledge about the importance of Georgia's coastal ecosystems. This project will help to support a wide variety of environmental education programs across the coast and will help to increase our presence at community outreach events. This project will provide funds for staff time and gas mileage associated with community outreach events such as the Savannah River Fire Festival, Skidaway Marine Science Day, and Earth Day events. For more information or to make a donation, contact Amy Schuler, Education and Outreach Coordinator, at admin@coastalwildscapes.org or (912) 289-7736.

The timeline for this project is 3-5 years and the cost is estimated to be \$5,000 per year. A total of 5,000 people per year are expected to be reached at the community outreach events.

Shorebird Ambassador Training and Volunteer Recruiting • \$25,000:

For migrating shorebirds, like Red Knots or Ruddy Turnstones, having safe places to rest and refuel can mean the difference between a successful nesting season in the Arctic and failure. Our local nesting species, like American Oystercatchers and Wilson's Plovers, also need protected habitat to find food and to raise their chicks. Education and outreach through signage and posting is often insufficient. Recent research has highlighted that one of the best ways to protect habitat is through a well-trained volunteer program of stewards or ambassadors.

Shorebird Ambassadors can create positive experiences for beach goers as they recognize the value of their favorite recreational location as important habitat for shorebirds, which can often result in behavior shifts to protect habitat. This spring, Manomet is expanding our training program for volunteers using online learning platforms, creating new materials for them to use in the field, and increasing coverage to at least one new beach site, and four marinas and boat ramps, in addition to our on-going sites.

Your contribution of \$25,000 (for staff time and materials) to our education and outreach campaign will help us connect with more people, build our volunteer network, and build pride for protecting coastal wildlife. For more information or to make a donation, you can reach out to Brad Winn at (508) 524-8276 or bwinn@manomet.org or Abby Sterling at (585) 339-8885 or asterling@manomet.org.



PHOTO BY PHILLIP MURDACO

Sea Turtle Education Program • \$5,000 - \$20,000:

The St. Simons Island (SSI) Sea Turtle Project is dedicated to protecting Georgia's sea turtles and monitoring SSI's beach for nests, hatchlings, and strandings. In addition, the project has a strong volunteer corps that leads community outreach and education to educate beachgoers and coastal residents about the steps they can take to protect threatened sea turtles, as well as other coastal wildlife such as shorebirds, diamondback terrapins, and right whales. We will continue that ongoing work throughout 2023.

Additionally, to expand our reach across the entire 100-mile coast, SSI Sea Turtle Project and One Hundred Miles will work together to produce educational radio and video public service announcements (PSAs). These PSAs will complement the informational print materials we provide to community partners to distribute to their guests and will educate beachgoers about how they can protect sea turtles and shorebirds. The PSAs would run in 2023 and in subsequent seasons on local stations up and down the coast, in the lobbies of hotels and rental businesses, and via our own social media channels and websites.

We will share them with our partners for even greater use. From St. Marys to Tybee Island, both residents and tourists will learn about our coastal wildlife and deepen their sense of responsibility to protect them. For more information or to make a donation, contact Catherine Ridley at 912-222-3140 or catherine@onehundredmiles.org. Catherine serves as VP of Education and Communications for One Hundred Miles and as project leader for the St. Simons Island Sea Turtle Project.

2023 nesting & hatching season: \$5,000

Video and radio PSA production: \$20,000

LAND CONSERVATION, STEWARDSHIP AND RESTORATION

Effects of Long-term Longleaf Pine Management on a Protected Gopher Tortoise Population • \$12,000:

Over the last ten years there has been a movement of significant management designed to restore Longleaf Pine forests and promote natural communities. This includes planting Longleaf Pine seedlings, applying prescribed fire on a regular rotation (especially during the growing season), and planting native groundcover. These activities have focused on promoting high quality habitat for wildlife, including rare and declining species of reptiles and amphibians, such as the Gopher Tortoise. The Orianne Society is working to assess the long-term effects of Longleaf Pine management, especially groundcover restoration,





GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

on properties that currently hold protected populations of Gopher Tortoise. These will be baseline surveys to which we can compare future survey numbers. Orienne is seeking funding in the amount of **\$12,000** to complete one baseline Gopher Tortoise survey. For more information or to make a donation, contact Chris Jenkins at 208-241-9124 or cljenkins@oriannesociety.org.

Moving South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI) Georgia Forward • \$10,000:

Leverage your donation to conserve and protect salt marsh habitat in coastal Georgia! This donation will be matched by \$10,000 from an interested coastal donor. SASMI is developing a Conservation Plan to conserve 1 million acres of salt marsh in GA, NC, SC and FL through a partnership of federal, state, and military leaders, conservation groups, scientists, the Gullah/Geechee Nation, and other front-line communities.

Georgia Conservancy, through funding provided by the Pew Charitable Trusts, has been leading conversations with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, local governments, scientific institutions, and coastal communities to identify real opportunities to protect and restore existing and future coastal marshland with local, historical, cultural, and/or spiritual significance. This initial work, which is currently scheduled to conclude in March 2023, has led to the identification of several exciting, near term conservation and living shoreline opportunities and resulted in a process to identify and prioritize future projects as they are identified by Georgia partners.

Georgia Conservancy is asking for funding to ensure the continuation of this important work through additional community engagement, ongoing coordination with the SASMI Coalition, and additional geospatial analysis and field work to identify more conservation and living shoreline projects. Most importantly, Georgia Conservancy proposes to improve our statewide capacity for salt marsh coastal habitat protection by working directly with stakeholders to identify funding opportunities and match those opportunities to specific funding sources. The funding provided here will allow our coastal staff to hold at least 5 additional stakeholder meetings, perform field visits for 10 potential projects, and to provide direct assistance with up to 3 grant applications for the highest priority projects identified through our work. Georgia Conservancy's pledged match of \$10,000 allows you to leverage your donation, and will ultimately result in the influx of hundreds of thousands of dollars to protect current and future coastal marshland here in Georgia. To learn more or to make a donation, contact Courtney Reich, Coastal Director, at (912) 656-1316 or creich@georgiaconservancy.org.

Restoring Globally Imperiled Muhly Grass Meadows on Jekyll Island • \$15,000 - \$60,000:

The Jekyll Island Conservation Department in partnership with Georgia Audubon's Habitat Restoration Team is seeking funds necessary to restore native Muhly Grass Meadows in natural dune habitats on the island. Muhly Grass Meadows are a rare and declining habitat type that is threatened by habitat destruction, coastal flooding, and human-caused interruptions in the coastal sand-sharing system. They grow in dunes on the youngest land deposited by the movement of sand on the Georgia coast; however, dammed rivers, dredging, and the removal of sand typically deposited on barrier islands have caused less sand to be deposited, resulting in smaller patches of Muhly Grass Meadows. Natural Muhly Grass Meadows on Jekyll Island total about 0.97 acres in two locations frequently inundated by marsh flooding. We have identified an area next to Camp Jekyll 4H center's boardwalk that has some key features that make habitat rescue appealing, including higher ground and its accretional nature, which would protect the habitat from inundation and establish to follow the island's growth as the southern portion of the island continues to accrete, offering sustainability.

This opportunity allows for signage and environmental education programs, with its proximity to Camp Jekyll, that further our mission of education about imperiled habitats and wildlife. Wildlife species that could be supported include grassland-dependent bird species, predatory species of birds, snakes, and extremely high densities of native small mammals. Successfully bringing forgotten Georgia barrier island landscapes back to life while creating newly diverse habitats that support rare, threatened, or keystone species has tremendous potential to be a high-profile conservation success story. The total area that has restoration potential is four acres, but we would be grateful for financial support for one-acre increments. For more information or to donate contact Yank Moore, JIA Director of Conservation, at ymore@jekyllisland.com or 912-635-9384.

Cost per acre (Seed starting, head-starting, maintenance for one year, and out-planting): \$15,000

Total project (Four acres): \$60,000





PHOTO BY RICHARD T. BRYANT

CONSERVATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Longleaf Stewardship Center • \$150,000:

As part of The Orianne Society's conservation efforts over the last decade, we have acquired the 2,500-acre Orianne Indigo Snake Preserve. To date, the Preserve has served as a base for our land management team and is a landscape where we have conducted extensive restoration efforts and rare species inventory, monitoring, and research. We are transitioning the Preserve into the Longleaf Stewardship Center, which will be a nexus that brings together Orianne staff, volunteers, and partners to learn about and implement Gopher Tortoise and habitat conservation. This will allow us to expand our restoration efforts. We plan to enhance our conservation footprint by continuing a strong focus on prescribed fire while expanding our native groundcover restoration, Longleaf Pine planting, and Gopher Tortoise stewardship and monitoring efforts through training and volunteers. To implement the Longleaf Stewardship Center, we are currently raising funds in the amount of **\$150,000** to build lodging facilities on the Center to house volunteers and partners. Donors interested in funding this infrastructure are eligible for naming opportunities to show recognition for their dedication to conservation. For more information or to make a donation, contact Chris Jenkins at 208-241-9124 or cljenkins@oriannesociety.org.

Providing Public Access to 40-Acre Middle Oatland-Hasell Property • \$25,000:

In 2020, the St. Simons Land Trust (SSLT) acquired a 40.7-acre mostly wooded and undeveloped tract of land on the north end of St. Simons Island. This was a strategically important purchase because of the property's proximity to Cannon's Point Preserve and because it was the "linchpin" middle property situated between two properties of similar size to the south and north that had been purchased by SSLT in 2018. The addition of the Middle Oatland-Hasell property provided a contiguous stretch of nearly 750 protected acres of land (from the northernmost tip of the Cannon's Point peninsula to the southern boundary of Oatland-Hasell South).

A plant/garden nursery had formerly been situated on Middle Oatland-Hasell, along with abandoned sheds, an outhouse, wire fencing, and discarded tools and other items that had been used by the nursery. One of the important goals of the Middle Oatland-Hasell Ecological Management Plan is to provide public access to the

property. Before this goal can be accomplished, however, the St. Simons Land Trust has to ensure that the land is free of any possible toxic sites and cleared of all former structures, fences, gates, and other items. Existing dirt roads and trails also need to be trimmed, cleared, and made ready for walking, hiking, and bike riding.

Estimated total costs of removing all structures, evaluating the safety of the property, reclaiming a trail system, and providing interpretive signage is **\$25,000**. To make a contribution, please contact Emily Ellison, Executive Director of the St. Simons Land Trust, at (912) 638-9109 or emellison@ssl.org.

Land Stewardship Pickup Truck • \$30,000 to \$45,000:

Staff members of the St. Simons Land Trust (SSLT) are out on one or more of the 30 properties in our trust nearly every day of the week. Currently our employees either use their personal vehicles to monitor and maintain nearly 1,200 acres, or they drive a 2010 Chevrolet Silverado pickup truck that was purchased used in 2013. Over the past decade, that truck has served us well. But the ongoing repair costs of a much-used truck that is now 13 years old, continue to rise. Additionally, the truck does not have four-wheel drive, a feature that is extremely helpful when out on trails and circumnavigating downed limbs and trees in all kinds of weather. Lastly, local mechanics have advised SSLT staff not to take the Silverado off the island. Therefore, a **new or used four-door, four-wheel drive truck** that is safe and dependable is greatly needed and would cost between **\$30,000 and \$45,000**. To make a contribution, please contact Emily Ellison, Executive Director of the St. Simons Land Trust, at (912) 638-9109 or emellison@ssl.org.



PHOTO BY RICHARD T. BRYANT

ESTUARY CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION

Living Shoreline at Martha Randolph Stevens Park • \$5000 - \$140,000:

More than 50 years ago, John Porter Stevens provided a deed gift conveying 11.91 acres of upland and salt marsh to African-American trustees of Liberty County, GA. The Martha Randolph Stevens Park was named after his sister and became a place of refuge and reconnection for African-Americans in the area who were relocated from Colonel's Island and no longer had access to waterways due to segregation and disenfranchisement. People from all over gathered on these grounds for swimming, crabbing, cooking, weddings, family reunions, and more. It became affectionately known as "The Public Landing" to African Americans in the area.

Over the years, the building was vandalized by people outside of the local community, and it was abandoned due to the expense of repeated repairs. Led by the younger generation of the Seabrook Community, volunteers joined together in 2017 to revive the Public Landing as a place for recreational, cultural, charitable, religious, and educational purposes. The Seabrook Village Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to research, education, and the authentic portrayal of the Reconstruction culture and environment of its rural African American community in coastal Georgia, now maintains administrative oversight of the park as it provides African Americans access to the tidal marshes critical to the community's unique coastal culture. The Seabrook Village Foundation had plans to reopen the site in 2023 making it accessible to the public and restoring the Martha Randolph Stevens Park as a gathering place for the community. However, shortly after the completion of renovations at the Community Center, severe erosion of the shoreline became apparent. The erosion is so fast moving that, if unabated, the integrity of the building will likely be threatened in the near future.

This site has always been intended to provide water access for the African American community at Seabrook, however, both the concrete boat ramp and the wooden dock that previously provided this access have been completely destroyed due to erosion and a lack of resources to adequately maintain them.

The Seabrook Village Foundation, in partnership with the Georgia Conservancy, proposes to install a 275 linear foot living shoreline along this bank using oyster shell bags and stabilization techniques. The living shoreline would also include plantings of native vegetation. We are proposing this type of nature-based solution (as opposed to a bulkhead or other type of hard armoring) because it will be more resilient to future storms and erosive currents, less likely to fail and need expensive repairs, and it will help support a healthy ecosystem ensuring cleaner water and more fish for the people using this site. In order to restore boating and fishing access at this site, the boat ramp will be reinstalled on the upland area directly adjacent to where the previous dock was to avoid wetland impacts. In addition, a fishing platform would be constructed in approximately the same location as the old dock. This project must rely on grants and donations to fund the effort. Volunteer labor by the community during the design and construction of the living shoreline will ensure that any donations go as far as possible. This project was identified through the community outreach events associated with the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI) and will be one of the first conservation projects implemented under this program. As such, Georgia Conservancy will develop communications regarding process and lessons learned to aid the success of future SASMI living shoreline projects. To learn more or to make a donation, contact Courtney Reich, Coastal Director, at (912) 656-1316 or creich@georgiaconservancy.org.

Topographic Survey: \$5,000

Engineering Design & Permitting: \$45,000

Living Shoreline Construction: \$140,000

Community Boat Ramp: \$75,000

Community Fishing Platform: \$25,000



Living Shorelines at Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge and Ossabaw Island \$5000 - \$30,000:

Living shorelines are alternatives to conventional armoring that utilize native plants and oyster cultch materials to create natural features that decrease erosion and create or enhance habitat. Georgia has had many weather events in the past few years that caused millions of dollars of damage to coastal communities. Many bulkhead and rip rap revetments were damaged, but the pilot living shorelines remained resilient and sustained little to no damage due to storms.

Living shorelines allow natural migration of shorelines in the face of sea level rise and create more resilient coastal communities. The living shoreline approach is being developed and tested in Georgia and has achieved documented success in the eight strategic pilot locations along the Georgia coast. The Nature Conservancy is pleased to collaborate with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and partners to develop and test methodologies to protect portions of the developed shorelines prone to erosion, and to share lessons learned and to accelerate replication and adoption.

Locations for the case study living shorelines were selected based on shoreline type, proximity and access along the Georgia coast and threat abatement. Current collaborative site priorities include the Harris Neck Wildlife Refuge's public recreation and community commercial docks and boat ramps and Ossabaw Island's Hunt Camp Dock on Newell Creek.

The proposed living shorelines will allow for natural shoreline migration in the face of sea level rise, while providing essential habitat to fisheries and wildlife. This novel approach to adaptation will be beneficial to land managers, fishers, hunters, recreationists, Harris Neck and Pin Point communities, and coastal residents. These demonstration sites will provide educational experiences to those who visit the sites.

The environmental outcomes will be an improved fisheries habitat and sustainable water quality with measures of success based on pre- and post-construction monitoring data of oyster reefs, vegetation, and bank stability. The management and policy outcomes will be a new applied knowledge of shoreline management along high energy environments and better decision-making tools for shoreline management permitting. Outreach events held throughout the projects, workshops for practitioners, and archaeological

survey for cultural resources will serve as societal outcomes through community engagement, education, and outreach. For additional information, please contact Christi Lambert at clambert@tnc.org or 912-617-0143.

Harris Neck Living Shoreline Final Engineering Plan: \$30,000

Harris Neck Community and Stakeholder Engagement Workshops and Meetings: \$5,000

Ossabaw Island Living Shoreline Outreach Events: \$5,000

Integrated Oyster Management: Supporting Oyster Restoration and Aquaculture \$4000 - \$5000:

Working with partners, we can use an integrated, holistic approach to oysters that recognizes the needs for habitat restoration and the oyster fishery, and the desire for an aquaculture industry. Overall priorities include growing oysters and the oyster industry, restoring oysters and shorelines, developing an oyster management work plan and reconnecting oysters to coast and people to oysters. Events to share information will be hosted in Athens, on the coast, and potentially other areas. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is seeking funds to support the following:

Working with local oyster farmers and McIntosh County Academy High School to advance oyster aquaculture and restoration through a high school Oyster Management program. Students will engage in growing and restoring oysters and shorelines with local oyster farmers and resource managers. Funding to support project needs include oyster cages and supplies for aquaculture and restoration demonstration, field travels, classroom and event educational materials, TNC staff support. **\$5,000** is requested to help match a \$20,000 grant provided by TNC to support oyster farmers and the high school.

Shell to Shore Event at Seabear Oyster Bar in Athens to develop and implement an oyster shell recycling program that connects inland Georgia with the coast to support oyster restoration and farming. Oyster shells will be cleaned and cured and returned to Georgia estuaries to grow oysters in restoration, shoreline and aquaculture projects. Events will be held on the Georgia coast, Athens, and Atlanta to increase the awareness of oysters and their many benefits. Funding to support project needs includes event educational materials and supplies, food, and educational signage to promote local oysters and fishers. **\$4,000** is requested.

For additional information, please contact Christi Lambert, clambert@tnc.org or 912-617-0143.



WATERSHED PROTECTION



Protect The Vernon • \$20,000 per year for 3-5 years:

Ogeechee Riverkeeper (ORK)'s mission is to "Protect, Preserve, and Improve the Water Quality of the Ogeechee River Basin, and one of these waterways is the Vernon River in Chatham County. The Vernon River drains approximately 40% of the City of Savannah, via urban and suburban runoff that flows primarily through Wilshire Canal, Harmon Canal, Casey Canal, and Hayners Creek, before reaching the Atlantic Ocean.

The Protect the Vernon project aims to reduce environmental hazard impacts (pathogens and litter), and plan for long-term sustainability in the Vernon River, its tributaries, and the

connected salt marsh. This valuable area provides habitat for endangered sturgeon, diamondback terrapins, and sea turtles, as well as important commercial and recreational fishing opportunities.

The ultimate goal of this project is to gain a larger group of more engaged stakeholders who will have a scientifically robust plan to implement high-probability measures that will move the Vernon River toward greater ecological health, and enable this restoration project to serve as a model for regional restoration activities.

This project is underway and has successfully engaged a diverse group of stakeholders, volunteers, and citizen scientists. ORK has led efforts to track and eliminate sources of bacterial contamination, and reduce litter and plastic pollution using cleanups, data, education, and litter traps.

The project continues with updating of an official watershed management plan, increasing local engagement, and consistent cleanups.

For more information or to make a donation, contact Damon Mullis at damon@ogeecheeriverkeeper.org or 866-942-6222.



Satilla Riverkeeper Vehicle • \$20,000:

Satilla Riverkeeper serves as the “eyes and ears” of the Satilla River watershed, keeping an eye out for threats to the water quality and ecological function of the river, its tributaries and estuary. The 4,000-square mile Satilla River watershed touches 14 counties in rural southeast Georgia. Many of the river access roads are unpaved and prone to flooding. Satilla Riverkeeper staff drive about 14,000 miles a year to monitor water quality, lead paddle trips, river cleanups, and investigate pollution issues. We need a reliable 4-wheel drive or all-wheel drive SUV to tow our patrol boat, kayak trailer, and facilitate water quality monitoring and site visits. Contact the Satilla Riverkeeper and Executive Director at riverkeeper@satillariverkeeper.org or (912) 421-8972.

Satilla Riverkeeper Water Quality Monitoring • \$5,000:

The Satilla Riverkeeper needs help to fund its water quality testing on the river. Last year we conducted 235 tests. This year we are aiming to increase our testing. Water quality testing allows us to see which areas of the river are safe for swimming and healthy for wildlife. If our testing indicates water quality issues, the Satilla Riverkeeper works with partners to improve the health of that river segment. This project will pay for testing supplies, staff time, and gas mileage for testers. Contact the Satilla Riverkeeper and Executive Director at riverkeeper@satillariverkeeper.org or (912) 421-8972.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



Loggerhead Sea Turtle Protection and Management • \$8000 - \$10,672:

The loggerhead turtle population in Georgia is showing signs of recovery due to 30 years of intensive management. Approximately ten years of additional surveys and management are necessary for loggerheads to reach recovery goals in the southeast. This project involves annual surveys on 13 barrier island beaches which include nest surveys, nest protection activities (nest relocation and screening and predator control), assessments of reproductive success and the monitoring of threats (strandings). We need to buy equipment (ATVs, bikes), hire seasonal personnel, and buy supplies (screens, stakes) to collect the data we need for management. This project provides the opportunity for donors to ride along with the researchers for the day on Sapelo Island to see how the money is spent.

- **Sapelo Island** is a nesting beach monitored by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Conservation Section. Daily surveys are conducted from May through September on Nanny Goat and Cabretta beaches and Little Blackbeard, a 1.5 km section of beach that split from Blackbeard proper during Hurricane Irma. The Sapelo intern will be required to survey and paddle a kayak across the inlet to Little Blackbeard each day and patrol the beach by bike. We are in need of \$10,672 to support a single intern for the summer and a bike.
- **Ossabaw Island** is one of Georgia's three main nesting beaches monitored by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Conservation Section. Monitoring sea turtle nesting and strandings on Ossabaw is difficult due to the remoteness of the island and rough terrain. We are in need of funds to support a single intern for the summer (\$10,472) and a Kawasaki Mule UTV for beach surveys (\$8,000).

To learn more or to make a donation, contact Mark Dodd with Georgia DNR at Mark.Dodd@dnr.ga.gov.



PHOTO BY BRYAN WATTS

Marsh Sparrow Conservation on the Georgia Coast \$92,980 - \$121,722:

The suite of bird species utilizing tidal saltmarsh habitat in coastal Georgia in winter is of high conservation concern. Included in this suite are the Saltmarsh Sparrow (*Ammodrammus caudacutus*), Nelson's Sparrow (*A. nelsoni*), and Seaside Sparrow (*A. maritimus* and *magillivraii*). Each of these species fall into several high priority bird

conservation lists, including the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Salt Marsh Bird Conservation Plan and the Georgia State Wildlife Action Plan. In addition, the Saltmarsh Sparrow has experienced an 80% population decline in just the last 15 years and is being considered for protection under the Endangered Species Act. The goal of this survey is to 1) estimate the populations of the secretive marsh sparrow guild, and 2) to understand which saltmarsh attributes are important to predicting wintering bird density and then prioritize marshes for conservation and management efforts.

We propose to survey saltmarshes throughout coastal Georgia using a double-pass rope drag technique (Watts et al 2023) to estimate bird densities throughout Georgia's saltmarshes. We currently have no estimate for the total numbers of these marsh sparrows overwintering in Georgia. During the rope drag segment of this study, we will be able to determine the total population estimates of Seaside Sparrow (readily identifiable on the surveys) and "Sharp-tailed Sparrows", as Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sparrows are not identifiable during these transects and require subsequent captures to determine proportion of each species on the landscape. With higher survey effort, we will also capture birds at high tide roost locations within a subset of survey locations to determine the proportion of each species using Georgia's saltmarshes.

This project would be a collaborative effort between Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) and long-standing academic partners at the Center for Conservation Biology at The College of William & Mary. GA DNR is seeking **\$92,980** to include surveys of the entire Georgia coast to estimate winter population of Seaside Sparrows, of "Sharp-tailed Sparrows", and to quantify importance of marsh patches for marsh sparrow conservation. GA DNR is seeking **\$121,722** for a larger scale effort to include the previous goals, but also to include intensive trapping at study sites to determine proportion of each of Saltmarsh/ Nelson's on the landscape.

For additional information or to make a donation, please contact Fletcher Smith, Wildlife Biologist, GA DNR, at fletcher.smith@dnr.ga.gov or Tim Keyes, Wildlife Biologist, GA DNR, at tim.keyes@dnr.ga.gov.



PHOTO BY PHILLIP MURCADO



PHOTO BY GEORGIA DNR

Tracking Red Knots to their Breeding Grounds \$25,000 - \$50,000:

The Georgia coast provides significant and critical habitat for non-breeding Red Knots, a federally threatened long-distance migratory shorebird. During the spring migration season, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) and partners propose to deploy five to ten 2.5-gram satellite transmitters on Red Knots to determine the connectivity to the breeding grounds for the Southeastern population

of Red Knots. Through long-term working partnerships, we currently understand the stopover population, diet, local movement ecology, and migration timing and flight paths. 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 they breed. This is an important information gap in the conservation of knots, and we are confident that along with our partners we can deploy up to 10 satellite transmitters and determine the connection. GA DNR is seeking funding to deploy 5 satellite transmitters (priced at **\$25,000**) or 10 units (priced at **\$50,000**) to determine breeding grounds connectivity to the spring stopover population. Each transmitter is priced at **\$4,250** for cost of the unit plus **\$750** dollars of data costs.

For additional information or to make a donation, please contact Fletcher Smith, Wildlife Biologist, GA DNR, at fletcher.smith@dnr.ga.gov or Tim Keyes, Wildlife Biologist, GA DNR, at tim.keyes@dnr.ga.gov.

Coastal Conservation Coordinator • \$50,000:

Georgia Audubon is the largest conservation organization in the state focused primarily on conserving and protecting our state's birds. As part of our commitment to expanding conservation and community engagement capacity along the Georgia coast, we seek an annual commitment of \$50,000 (or multiple commitments of smaller amounts) that will support our Coastal Conservation Coordinator staff position.

Georgia Audubon's Coastal Conservation Coordinator is based out of Brunswick, GA, and provides support for Georgia Audubon's work along the entire Georgia coast. This key staff member will help expand Georgia Audubon's existing programs, such as habitat restoration and community science programming, in coastal counties. They will also develop our bird-window collision monitoring program on the coast and identify other opportunities where we can combine scientific knowledge and skill with the power of our membership and network. Additionally, the coordinator will assist and provide expertise to partner organizations on projects that involve management of wading bird colonies, conducting nightjar species surveys, as well as educating and engaging with the public.

For additional information, please contact Adam Betuel, Director of Conservation, at adam.betuel@georgiaaudubon.org.

Project Safe Flight Georgia Coastal Expansion • \$50,000:

Avian migration is one of the most amazing feats in the natural world. An estimated 900 million birds migrate over Georgia each spring and fall, with a large amount of this migration occurring over the Georgia coast due to its unique geography and relatively intact habitat. The journey is long and difficult, and a relatively new threat has emerged that may be the most dangerous of all: buildings.

Since 2015 Georgia Audubon has been studying the issue of bird-building collisions throughout metro Atlanta, as well as retrofitting problematic buildings with window films and encouraging other preventative measures to reduce the likelihood of collisions. With an estimated 365 million to 1 billion birds dying each year in the U.S. due to building collisions, along with Georgia's pivotal placement along the Atlantic Flyway, we have a chance to lead in finding solutions that not only protect birds passing through Georgia, but that can also be replicated across the country.

Funding will support expansion of Project Safe Flight Georgia to the Georgia coast. Our goals are to understand how migratory songbirds use coastal hotspots, which locations are most vital and why they are attractive, how to lessen the threats birds face, influence local development and lighting ordinances, and educate and engage the local communities in bird conservation.

Georgia Audubon seeks **\$50,000** in support of this program expansion. For more information, including project components, please contact Adam Betuel, Director of Conservation, at adam.betuel@georgiaaudubon.org.





Saving Nesting Diamondback Terrapins from Roadway Mortality • \$31,800:

The Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC) and its collaborators have been working since 2007 to understand the conservation needs and population dynamics of diamondback terrapin in the marshes around Jekyll Island. The Downing-Musgrove Causeway, which provides an important linkage between mainland Georgia and Jekyll Island, serves as suitable nesting habitat for diamondback terrapin females each summer. However, turtles that attempt to cross the road quickly face the dangers of automobile strikes while drivers are forced to make quick decisions when faced with a hazard in the road. While the efforts of the GSTC staff and collaborators to actively save and collect data on road-crossing turtles have been monumental and informative, we are moving towards adopting more sustainable, long-term, management and conservation regimes based around habitat management and alteration.

In 2022, we installed 1000 linear feet of fencing in an area that annually sees high rates of terrapin encounters. During the 2022 nesting season it successfully excluded 90%+ of terrapins that emerged from the marsh in search of a nesting site. In addition, the GSTC has used nesting boxes in other areas of the causeway with remarkable success in reducing terrapin road-crossing and predation. This project can positively influence the recruitment and longevity of terrapins along spatially distinct segments of road, ensuring conservation success while allowing for gene flow and mixing between populations. For example, nearly 40% (out of over 2,000+) of our GPS-marked terrapin encounters along the causeway occur along just 12% of the causeway linking Jekyll to Brunswick. We seek funding to help with the area's beautification and procurement and installation of more permanent, aesthetic fencing. For more information, or to donate, please contact: Michelle Kaylor at mkaylor@jekyllisland.com or 912-635-4090.

Vegetation: \$800

Nesting boxes: \$1,000

Fencing and installation materials: \$30,000

Total project: \$31,800



PHOTO BY PHILLIP MURDACO

Diamondback Terrapin Conservation • \$6488:

The diamondback terrapin is an estuarine turtle that spends its entire life in the saltmarsh. Terrapins are listed as a species of concern due to mortality in the commercial crab pot fishery. The Georgia DNR is hoping to establish two long-term monitoring projects to assess trends in abundance of terrapins (Plantation Creek and Gould's Inlet). We are in need of seasonal help to complete surveys. An intern will travel to randomly selected creeks in Georgia and conduct abundance surveys. Total cost is \$6488, which includes a laser range finder for \$300. To support this project, contact Mark Dodd with Georgia DNR at Mark.Dodd@dnr.ga.gov.

Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative: Addressing Threats and Protecting Habitat • \$30,000:

Shorebirds, particularly the species that make the longest migrations, like Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, and Lesser Yellowlegs, are undergoing some of the most significant and long-term declines of any bird group in the Americas. The southeastern coast of the United States is vitally important to nineteen species of shorebirds of the Atlantic and Central Continental Flyways. The Georgia and South Carolina barrier coasts are, in many ways, the hub of shorebird abundance on the U.S. Atlantic Coast, supporting breeding, migrating, and wintering populations of these birds. We call this the area the Georgia Bight. A highly collaborative group of federal agencies, state agencies, and non-profits believe the best way to maintain and restore shorebird populations is to ensure the effective management of key sites they depend upon. Manomet is bringing its best habitat management and conservation strategies to the Georgia Bight by developing coalitions of partners to work toward real gains at the ground level. We are working to alleviate disturbance of sensitive areas, working with state partners to restore habitat, and understanding what threats to shorebirds and shorebird habitats are impacting populations of the birds with directed research. A contribution of **\$30,000** (to offset operating costs) to Manomet's Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative will help us continue to grow our beneficial conservation impacts. For more information or to make a donation, you can reach out to Brad Winn at (508) 524-8276 or bwinn@manomet.org or Abby Sterling at (585) 339-8885 or asterling@manomet.org.

Addressing Threats to Shorebirds and Horseshoe Crabs • \$25,000:

The Georgia Bight supports more than 400,000 shorebirds every year, some of them traveling from South America on their way to the Arctic. For these long-distance migrants, ensuring that their stop-over habitat is healthy and protected is critical for addressing population declines. One of the most concerning threats to food resources is the harvest of horseshoe crabs. While there is currently no harvest of crabs in Georgia, South Carolina has an active harvest of crabs for the biomedical industry.

We are working with our partners at Georgia DNR, South Carolina DNR, and One Hundred Miles to raise awareness, plan for robust and secure data collection, and explore innovative research opportunities to fill information gaps that will help us collaboratively protect this incredible, ancient species. For millennia, spawning horseshoe crabs have fueled shorebird migration along the Atlantic Coast. With your support of **\$25,000** (for staff time and materials) we can increase our focus to ensure that this important relationship remains intact. For more information or to make a donation, you can reach out to Brad Winn at (508) 524-8276 or bwinn@manomet.org or Abby Sterling at (585) 339-8885 or asterling@manomet.org.



PHOTO BY PHILLIP MURDACO



PHOTO BY PHILLIP MURDACO



STEWARDS
OF
THE GEORGIA COAST