



Michael Stearns

2025 - 2026

COASTAL CONSERVATION PROJECT LIST



STEWARDS
OF THE GEORGIA COAST



STEWARDS OF THE GEORGIA COAST





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BACK COVER PHOTO BY BENJAMIN GALLAND

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STEWARDS
OF
THE GEORGIA COAST



PHOTO BY CASSIE WRIGHT

Coastal Conservation Project List

2025 - 2026



Stewards of the Georgia Coast is an informal network of 300+ donors committed to advancing philanthropy for coastal conservation. Our core objective is to increase private donors' investment of time, influence, and financial resources in the conservation nonprofit organizations serving Georgia's coast. We seek to build relationships, share experiences, cultivate learning, communicate philanthropic needs, and facilitate giving for impact.

We are pleased to present the eighth edition of the Coastal Conservation Project List. Originally published in 2018 and updated annually, the list features high priority projects in need of private philanthropy and is curated with help from respected conservation leaders across the region. 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.

We hope you will review the list and share it with others. Look for projects that resonate with your particular interests, and join us as we invest in the long-term future of Georgia's coastal resources. 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.

If you would like to make a donation but the array of funding needs on this list feels overwhelming, do not despair! Stewards staff members, Burch Barger and Scott Coleman, are available to meet with you and to consult on the philanthropy needs that most closely align with your interests. Please reach out to us anytime. We can help you get connected directly with your chosen nonprofit organization, or we can process a general gift to conservation grantmaking via Stewards' donor advised fund at the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation.

Finally, as a complement to (and not as a replacement for) your support of conservation nonprofits, we also welcome Stewards Sustainer gifts to offset the costs of Stewards programming. With your help, we can increase our outreach, widen our circle of engaged donors, amplify our mission, and ensure the Stewards network's long-term sustainability. For more information or to make a donation online, follow the QR code below.

Should you have questions or need assistance with any aspect of the 2025 - 2026 Project List or Stewards of the Georgia Coast, please contact Burch Barger at stewardsofgacoast@gmail.com or 205-643-8121 or Scott Coleman at scottc@littlessi.com or 229-724- 9202. Thank you for your interest in and support for coastal conservation in Georgia.



STEWARDS
SUSTAINERS



STEWARDS
OF THE GEORGIA COAST

www.stewardsofgacoast.org

ADVOCACY

Legal Reserve Fund for Coastal Conservation • \$1,000-\$50,000 ONE HUNDRED MILES

As an advocacy leader on Georgia's coast, One Hundred Miles (OHM) utilizes various strategies to achieve conservation outcomes. Most of the time, we achieve results because elected leaders and decision makers hear the voices of our network and vote in favor of their constituents' values. Litigation is always a last resort. In these rare cases, we try to work with nonprofit partners like Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), which keeps our legal costs low. However, in some cases, our nonprofit partners are not available to take our cases, and we must find outside counsel. For this reason, OHM recently established a Legal Reserve Fund that can be used to deploy the necessary resources to respond to urgent threats.

OHM's litigation strategy relies on setting precedents with new interpretations or uses of existing legal tools. An example is the use of a Georgia constitutional provision that allows voters to repeal decisions made by their county government. This provision was first successfully used by OHM in 2022 to defeat Spaceport Camden and is currently being used to repeal harmful zoning on Sapelo Island. Because use of this constitutional provision is so rare, both petition attempts were appealed to the Georgia Supreme Court. The precedent-setting nature of these cases required deeper investments in a legal team. While these lawyers are expensive, we have achieved one major victory with the defeat of Spaceport Camden and hope to achieve a second when the Supreme Court considers our Sapelo zoning case.

These cases are costly and our Legal Reserve Fund ensures that OHM has the resources necessary to work with lawyers to use existing laws in innovative ways to protect our coast whenever necessary. Gifts in any amount to the Legal Reserve Fund are helpful. We project at least \$50,000 in legal fees for the Sapelo referendum in 2025. For more information or to donate, contact Kate Grinalds, VP of Philanthropy, at kate@onehundredmiles.org.

Technical Assistance for Superfund Site Remediation in Glynn County \$10,000-\$40,000 ONE HUNDRED MILES

Federally approved remediation intended to clean up abandoned heavy industrial areas, or Superfund sites, has not been as effective as promised in Brunswick and Glynn County. These sites continue to poison wildlife and local residents, decades after the plants were shuttered. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is collecting tissue samples from marine mammals, discovering polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) levels are extremely high in dolphins in the Brunswick estuary. Also, a recent study conducted by Emory University Rollins School of Public Health revealed preliminary aggregate results that suggest a substantial number of human participants have higher-than-normal blood levels of the same PCBs found in the dolphins, as well as high levels of a pesticide produced primarily in Brunswick until the 1990s.

One Hundred Miles (OHM) staff are working collaboratively with Emory University, other local NGOs, and research institutions such as the Healthy Coastal Neighborhoods Initiative. OHM seeks additional support to engage more technical experts and third-party investigators in the evaluation of government-led remediation projects, corrective actions, and natural resource damage assessments. How these known human poisons react in the coastal environment is complex. Additional technical scrutiny can help the local NGOs advocate for better protection from legacy contamination, verify that Glynn County's former industrial sites are adequately clean for reuse, and protect the health and safety of current and future Brunswick citizens.

A gift of \$10,000 would fund an initial review of technical documents. \$40,000 would fund a more comprehensive technical review of remediation and reuse plans for contaminated sites. For more information or to donate, contact Kate Grinalds, VP of Philanthropy, at kate@onehundredmiles.org.

Community Engagement and Statewide Advocacy for our St. Marys River

\$5,000-\$25,000 ST. MARYS RIVERKEEPER

St. Marys Riverkeeper is the chief advocate for protecting the St. Marys River now and for our future. As the trusted voice for the St. Marys River, we believe that clean water is essential and beneficial to all. We use science to advocate for all people and wildlife connected to the river, empower community-based action, and foster meaningful partnerships to engage in conservation efforts. By offering experiential learning and advocacy opportunities, we develop a deeper connection to the St. Marys River that nurtures communities, sustains biodiversity, and fosters sustainable economic development.

As the leading conservation advocacy organization for a border river, St. Marys Riverkeeper influences legislation across two states. We work within political boundaries to develop positive working relationships with elected officials and community leaders but take a watershed approach to waterway protection by engaging with our local community and regional conservation groups. By offering on-the-water experiences, we cultivate an emotional connection to the river while emphasizing real, actionable solutions to conservation challenges. Opportunities to bring the St. Marys River to both state capitols impacts the success of protective legislation and the failure of harmful legislation for all waterways in both Georgia and Florida.

It is our vision to ensure that communities along the Florida-Georgia border, from Oke to Ocean, are united in conserving our waterway today and for future generations, ensuring it remains a leading example of ecological integrity, shared stewardship, and enduring appreciation. A contribution to St. Marys Riverkeeper will ensure we are fulfilling our mission and expanding our outreach from our neighbors to the state capitols. Donor(s) will be invited to participate in one of our on-the-water experiences. For more information or to donate, please contact Emily Floore at emily@stmarysriverkeeper.org or 843-906-6548.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ST. MARYS RIVERKEEPER



PHOTO PROVIDED BY UGA MARINE EXTENSION

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

University of Georgia Aquarium Expansion • \$25,000 - \$50,000

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA MARINE EXTENSION AND GEORGIA SEA GRANT

The University of Georgia (UGA) Marine Education Center and Aquarium, which is part of UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant, is located on Skidaway Island. It opened in 1970 as a public facility for people to explore and learn about Georgia's unique 100-mile coastline. More than 25,000 people visit the facility annually and leave with memories lasting a lifetime.

Marine educators at the aquarium provide programs to the public, teachers, and school groups that are designed to inspire appreciation of Georgia's coastal ecosystems. The aquarium also serves as a learning environment for college students who participate in internships and fellowships that offer hands-on teaching experiences and research opportunities.

Aquarium visitation and education programs have grown dramatically in recent years, which is why an ambitious campaign is underway to add 2,100 square feet of new exhibit space to the facility. The expansion will enhance teaching spaces, make exhibits more accessible to diverse audiences, and allow the facility to accommodate more visitors.

The expansion will nearly double the aquarium's footprint, extending the building toward the Skidaway River with floor-to-ceiling windows connecting visitors to the world outside. Donations of \$25,000 or more will fund new, interactive exhibits, including a freshwater wetland exhibit, a multi-sensory 3D live oak tree, and a forest floor crawl. These exhibits will introduce students, families, and visitors to the maritime forest ecosystem and deepen their understanding of this complex coastal environment.

The \$2.8 million aquarium expansion project presents the first chance in the facility's 50-year history in which individuals will have the opportunity to transform this incredible learning space through private charitable support. To make a contribution, contact Anne Moser, Senior Director of Development, at 706.202.9928 or amoser@uga.edu.

Cay Creek Wetlands Revitalization and Local Educator Workshop • \$500 - \$6,500

COASTAL WILDSCAPES

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 for revitalization of the park and to host a wetland workshop for local educators at Cay Creek Wetlands.

The revitalization will include replacing worn out or damaged educational interpretive signage along the boardwalk to maintain these valuable educational resources for the community. 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 \$6,500. A total of 75 educators is expected to attend the workshop. A total of 8,000 visitors per year is 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 Outreach Coordinator at admin@coastalwildscapes.org or (912) 289-7736.

Workshop:	\$1,000 (office supplies, printing, advertising, and programs)
Staff:	\$500 (hours & mileage)
Educational Interpretive Signage:	\$5,000 (replacement of signs)
Total Project Cost:	\$6,500

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

COASTAL WILDSCAPES

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 help increase our presence at community outreach events. This project will provide \$3,000 for staff time and \$2,000 for gas mileage associated with community outreach events such as the Savannah River Fire Festival, Skidaway Marine Science Day, Picnic on the Farm, and Earth Day celebrations. For more information or to make a donation, contact Amy Schuler, Education 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.

Increasing Student Access to Coastal Research Methods Class • \$360 - \$6,480

COLLEGE OF COASTAL GEORGIA ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES PROGRAM

Enable college students to take Coastal Research Methods, a transformative summer course offered by the Environmental Sciences Program at the College of Coastal Georgia. Here, students conduct hands-on environmental research, mastering field, laboratory, and statistical methods with a specialized focus on coastal and barrier island environments. The course is more than a learning experience; it's a simulation of real-world research teams, complete with a one-week expedition to the UGA Marine Institute on Sapelo Island. Among many other practices, students test water quality in coastal marshes and conduct fish identification surveys on trawls, which provide them with a diverse skill set and prepare them for impactful careers in environmental stewardship and coastal conservation.

The success stories of our alumni speak volumes, with graduates now actively contributing to local environmental preservation and working for impactful organizations like the Jekyll Island Authority, DNR Coastal Resources Division, UGA Marine Extension, Army Corps of Engineers, and United States Geological Survey. Your support for this project can make a difference by eliminating the \$360 course fee, ensuring that every student, regardless of financial constraints, can partake in this invaluable training and contribute to the coastal conservation workforce in Georgia. For more information or to make a donation, contact James Deemy at jdeemyccga.edu or (912) 279-5934 or Robin McLachlan at rmclachlan@ccga.edu or (912) 280-7781.



PHOTO BY MADISON BARNARD

Total cost for entire class (18 students): \$6,480

Cost per student: \$360

Burning for Birds Conservation Collaborative • \$5,000 THE GEORGIA CONSERVANCY

The Georgia Conservancy is a proud partner of the Burning for Birds Conservation Collaborative, which works with private landowners across the Georgia Sentinel Landscape (GSL) to promote prescribed growing season fires (from February through August). This cost-effective land management practice helps maintain pine/savanna ecosystems and supports bird species that rely on these habitats, such as the Loggerhead Shrike, Brown-Headed Nuthatch, Bachman's Sparrow, and Northern Bobwhite.

In this project, we use Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) to monitor bird vocalizations before and after prescribed burns, gathering critical data on species occurrence. So far, we've deployed 10 ARUs on five pine forest properties across Georgia's Coastal Plain, with burn schedules designed to optimize habitat conditions.

To further engage communities, we're hosting three outreach events to involve citizen scientists in this effort. These events will demonstrate the benefits of prescribed fire and empower volunteers to collaborate with private landowners to collect meaningful data.

With your support of \$5000, we will purchase 15 pairs of binoculars for citizen scientists to use during field days and Georgia Conservancy stewardship trips and will enhance outreach and participation in the Burning for Birds Collaborative. For more information, contact Andrew Kerr at (404) 876-2900 or akerr@georgiaconservancy.org.

Green Team Saturdays • \$1,500 - \$18,000 **GEORGIA INTERFAITH POWER & LIGHT**

For 22 years, Georgia Interfaith Power and Light (GIPL) has worked to inspire and equip faith communities and nonprofits across the state of Georgia to fight environmental injustices and combat the effects of climate change. As an important aspect of this work, in 2018, we began an intentional expansion of our staff and program offerings to better support congregations and impacted communities along Georgia's 100-mile coast.

The Coastal Interfaith Green Team, a GIPL initiative in collaboration with faith-based groups and congregants along the coast, organizes monthly Green Team Saturdays. These excursions offer participants unique opportunities to visit environmental organizations and local businesses, learn firsthand about their work, and engage in meaningful, hands-on conservation activities. Green Team Saturdays foster collaboration, education, and action through the lens of diverse faith traditions. This work also supports GIPL's goal of equipping congregations with the tools, resources, and infrastructure needed to serve as resiliency hubs and centers for emergency response for their communities.

Green Team Saturdays help foster environmental stewardship by providing participants with hands-on opportunities to engage in activities such as beach clean-ups, tree plantings, pollinator counts, and visits to local facilities like recycling centers and regenerative farms. The funding will support staff time, mileage reimbursement for staff and volunteers, and supplies for excursions. By increasing accessibility and outreach, this program aims to engage faith communities in stewardship and conservation efforts along Georgia's coast, fostering collaboration and a shared commitment to caring for the natural world. This program is a catalyst for equipping green teams with the knowledge, tools, and inspiration to initiate projects in their own communities. At GIPL, community building is at the heart of what we do. These Saturdays bring together people from diverse faiths and backgrounds, offering the chance to collaborate, learn together, and nurture a collective sense of responsibility for the air, land, and water we all depend on. Participants leave each event equipped with the knowledge, tools, and inspiration to take meaningful action in their congregations and communities. For more information, contact Beth Rimmes at beth@gipl.org.

Estimated Cost: \$1,500 per month or \$18,000 annually

Staff and Support: \$9,000

Program Materials and Activities: \$6,000

Outreach and Program Evaluation: \$3,000

Embark on a Research Adventure Aboard NOAA's R/V Gannet in Gray's Reef • \$8,000

GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Discover the wonders of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary aboard the R/V Gannet, NOAA's state-of-the-art research vessel. Built in 2023, the R/V Gannet is a cutting-edge vessel designed to navigate inland waterways and offshore ocean routes, supporting groundbreaking scientific research, ecological monitoring, and diving operations throughout Gray's Reef and the broader South Atlantic Bight. Named after the graceful and resilient Northern Gannet seabird, the vessel embodies the spirit of exploration and our connection to the marine world.

This exclusive opportunity invites a group of up to 12 participants (ages 16 and older) to step into the shoes of NOAA researchers. During your immersive day at sea, you'll take part in long-term monitoring and research activities, such as deploying scientific equipment, observing marine life in its natural habitat, and exploring the advanced technologies that drive ocean conservation. Guided by the chief scientist and experienced R/V Gannet crew members, you'll gain unique insights into the sanctuary's underwater ecosystem and the vital work being done to protect them.

This experience is customizable to align with your philanthropic goals. Whether you choose to host a private expedition for your network or invite students, educators, or community members, your day at sea can inspire curiosity, foster environmental stewardship, and create lasting connections to the wonders of our ocean. A portion of the \$8,000 contribution will support educational programs at the Gray's Reef Ocean Discovery Center in historic downtown Savannah, extending the impact of your generosity.



PHOTO: NOAA: R/V GANNET (R5202) ON THE SKIDAWAY RIVER

Your participation not only promises an unforgettable adventure but also directly contributes to Gray's Reef's mission to protect, preserve, and celebrate our ocean treasures. Join us aboard the R/V Gannet and make waves of difference for marine conservation and education.

For more information, please contact Sarah Porter at sporter@marinesanctuary.org.

Enhancing Ocean Literacy Through Immersive Virtual Experiences

\$15,000 - \$25,000 GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Partner with the Gray's Reef Chapter of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary to bring immersive virtual learning experiences to life! These cutting-edge educational tools will be featured at the Gray's Reef Ocean Discovery Center in historic downtown Savannah, and in strategic locations across the Southeast, from Charleston to Atlanta to Jacksonville, Florida.

In collaboration with Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education, Gray's Reef is expanding its reach through Multimedia Gallery™ exhibit kiosks. These engaging installations will highlight key conservation and management topics, including North Atlantic Right Whales, sea turtles, and coastal resiliency. Your support will enable the creation of new content and the installation of additional kiosks in high-impact locations, and the creation of new content, including:

- Short videos, animated visualizations, and captioned image galleries that tell place-based stories and make the invisible visible.
- 360° videos and panoramic landscapes offering fresh perspectives and allowing users to explore remote and hard-to-reach marine environments.
- Interactive maps providing geographic context and connecting users with place-based content.
- Interactive games delivering fun, engaging experiences that emphasize natural processes and relationships.

By funding this initiative, you'll make a lasting impact on ocean literacy and environmental stewardship, furthering the mission of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary to protect, preserve, and celebrate our ocean treasures. Sponsors of this project will also be recognized in the Gray's Reef Ocean Discovery Center, showcasing your commitment to marine conservation. For more information, please contact Sarah Porter at sporter@marinesanctuary.org.

Spreading the Message of Good Fire: Savannah River Fire Festival • \$12,000 - \$20,000

THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE

Initiated four years ago, the Savannah River Fire Festival informs and celebrates the message that applying the use of prescribed fire is good for the forests, wildlife, and people of Georgia. Historically, fire was a natural process essential to the health of the state's longleaf pine-dominated forests to maintain the diverse flora and fauna of the longleaf forest. Today practitioners, including private landowners, use fire as a cost-effective practice to manage forests for the future.

The festival offers a variety of youth activities but also offers land management information and resources for community members and landowners. Festival participants can talk with resource professionals and receive additional information on financial assistance, technical assistance, prescribed fire management, and land management techniques.

Previously held in Guyton, Georgia at the UGA Warnell Forest Education Center and at the Honeyridge AgriCenter in Effingham County, the event attracts coastal and interior Georgia residents. Festival attendees enjoy a day of free indoor and outdoor activities including prescribed burn demonstrations conducted by natural resource professionals. Past festivals have attracted 200-600 visitors on average, and future festivals offer potential to grow.

Community partners participating in the event have included the Wildlife Resources Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Georgia Forestry Commission, Fort Stewart's Fish & Wildlife and Forestry Branches, Effingham County Fire Rescue, Effingham County UGA Cooperative Extension, UGA Warnell Mary Kahrs Forest Education Center, Honey Ridge Agri Center, Georgia Prescribed Burn Council, Savannah River Prescribed Burn Association, Georgia Tree Farm, Coastal WildScapes, Georgia-Alabama Land Trust, The Georgia Conservancy, Georgia Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Ogeechee Technical College, and the Savannah-Ogeechee Canal Museum and Nature Center. Burner Bob®, a popular Northern Bobwhite ambassador of the good fire message, is also a popular attendee.

Digital billboards, live TV appearances, and social media are used to promote the event. Festival organizers also distribute a post-event survey to gauge community feedback. With increasing wildland-urban interface and an increase of residents moving to coastal Georgia, the use of prescribed fire could be compromised by a lack of understanding and acceptance of this vital land management practice. The fire festival is an important connection to sharing information and promoting the use of prescribed burning as a social norm for fire-maintained longleaf forests in Georgia.

To support this community festival, a donation of \$12,000 - \$20,000 covers staff time and travel expenses, equipment rental, festival supplies (including giveaways for youth activities), sound equipment, entertainment, media promotion, and advertising. Partners generously donate their time and talents to the event.

For more information and/or to support this project, contact Wendy Ledbetter, Fort Stewart/Altamaha Partnership Coordinator, The Longleaf Alliance. Her email is wendy@longleafalliance.org and her phone number is 409-658-4300.



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

MANOMET'S GEORGIA BIGHT SHOREBIRD CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

For migrating shorebirds, like the Red Knot or Ruddy Turnstone, 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 the American Oystercatcher and Wilson's Plover, also need protected habitat to find food and to raise their chicks. Recreational disturbance is one of the most significant threats our shorebirds face throughout the year. Education and outreach through signage and posting alone 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 create positive experiences for beach goers as they recognize the value of their favorite recreational location as an important habitat for shorebirds, which results in behavior shifts to respect wildlife and protect habitat.

This year we have an opportunity to work with partners to support a fellow through a cost-share program with UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant. This program is a win-win. It provides a new graduate with working experience via a stipend and support and will increase capacity to expand our stewardship activities to two new sites on the Georgia Coast. The Sea Grant fellow will contribute to field work, events, and publication of research.

Your contribution of \$25,000 will be matching funds to enroll in this fellowship program, enhance our education and outreach campaign to 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 Abby Sterling at (585)339-8885 or asterling@manomet.org or Brad Winn at (508) 524-8276 or bwinn@manomet.org.

Sponsoring School Group Visits to the Longleaf Stewardship Center • \$4000

THE ORIANNE SOCIETY

The Orianne Society actively engages local communities in our conservation efforts by presenting to school groups, participating in local outreach events, working with private landowners, promoting volunteerism, and inviting community members to participate in our conservation efforts in the field. Our Longleaf Stewardship Center (LSC) is the nexus from which we work on public and private land within the Altamaha River Corridor to implement our conservation efforts. The populations we serve are the communities within this region, by restoring habitats, creating jobs, and offering on-the-ground training that can lead to careers in conservation and forestry. This region encompasses underserved communities, including Telfair and Wheeler counties, which rank near the bottom of U.S. counties in per capita income. It is our goal to increase our interactions with the local community by bringing in school groups to the LSC to join us in our conservation efforts. This is an opportunity to educate youth on the importance of gopher tortoise, longleaf pine, and the use of prescribed fire. In addition, encouraging the community to volunteer for ground cover restoration and prescribed fire crews and to work in the field on species surveys may provide opportunities for the next generation of conservation professionals to develop their skills. We are excited to make these types of opportunities more widely available and to work closely with the broader conservation community. If you are interested in sponsoring a group to the LSC in the amount of \$4,000, please contact Chris Jenkins at 208.241.9124 or cljenkins@oriannesociety.org.



Spotting Scopes for Bird Identification and Environmental Education • \$1600 - \$3300

ST. SIMONS LAND TRUST

Glynn County, Georgia, has the highest number of official sightings of different bird species of any county in the state, and most of Coastal Georgia is a flyover zone during the spring and fall migratory seasons. Additionally, the Land Trust's Cannon's Point Preserve and Guale Preserve are part of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's e-Bird Hot Spot program (one of the largest biodiversity-related science projects in the world) and both Preserves are designated as part of the Georgia Barrier Islands Landscape of Hemispheric Importance by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

These features attract casual backyard birdwatchers as well as avian researchers and scholars. Because of the vast range and large numbers of both native and migratory species, bird walks and bird counts have increased exponentially on Land Trust properties, and our partnerships with Georgia DNR, Coastal Georgia Audubon, Birds Georgia, Manomet, e-Bird, universities and colleges, and others have expanded and strengthened annually. Although SSLT purchased mid-priced binoculars for students utilizing the Coastal Ecology Lab at Cannon's Point Preserve a few years ago, far more accurate identification of birds can take place among a wider range of onsite visitors if our staff and volunteers were provided with spotting scopes.

Local ornithologists and other partners have recommended midrange scopes that provide quality components without breaking the bank. The most important features are assurance of high density (HD), extra-low dispersion (ED) glass, "which minimizes chromatic aberrations, or color fringing, and delivers bright images even at dawn and dusk," according to the National Audubon Society. Two smaller-sized, lightweight scopes that are priced right with exceptional features include the Kowa TSN-553 (\$1,800) and Vortex Razor HD (\$1,600), with both "delivering outstanding image quality in the midday sun and at dusk," according to Audubon communications.

The purchase of one (1) or two (2) of these midrange Spotting Scopes would greatly enhance the birding experiences on protected properties and assist the Land Trust in fulfilling its goal of using these properties as platforms for education and increasing "citizen science" projects. For more information, contact Emily Ellison at emellison@ssl.org.

1 Spotting Scope: \$1,600 to \$1,700

2 Spotting Scopes: \$3,300



PHOTO PROVIDED BY
ST. SIMONS LAND TRUST

LAND STEWARDSHIP AND RESTORATION

Restoring Globally Imperiled Muhly Grass Meadows on Jekyll Island • \$12,000 - \$48,000 JEKYLL ISLAND FOUNDATION

The Jekyll Island Conservation Department 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 approximately 0.97 acres in two locations frequently inundated by marsh flooding. We have identified an area next to Camp Jekyll 4-H 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 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 y.moore@jekyllisland.com or 912-635-9384.

Cost per acre (Seed starting, head-starting, maintenance for one year, and out-planting): \$12,000

Total project (Four acres): \$48,000



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JEKYLL ISLAND FOUNDATION

The Longleaf Academy Program • \$16,000

THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE

Longleaf pine forests once dominated the Southeastern United States, including the coastal plains of Georgia. Estimated at 90 million acres, longleaf forests were greatly reduced to an estimated 3.4 million acres. Today public and private partners have worked collaboratively to increase longleaf forests to 5.2 million acres. The Longleaf Alliance contributes to this conservation initiative by providing technical and financial assistance, and education and outreach to all. As part of The Longleaf Alliance's mission to ensure a sustainable future for the longleaf pine ecosystem, we offer the Longleaf Academy Program.

The Longleaf Academy Program is designed to prepare natural resource professionals and private landowners to manage, restore, and enhance longleaf pine ecosystems. Academies also serve community members interested in biodiversity, conservation, forest ecology, and sustainable forestry. Multi-day courses instruct students through a combination of classroom instruction and outdoor field trips, providing opportunities for networking and a meaningful shared experience.

The Longleaf Alliance is committed to providing timely, science-based information to inform and inspire class participants. The academy program offers a variety of program subjects and provides flexibility to meet the local needs and partner's interest. The eight subject areas currently offered include: Longleaf 101, Groundcover Restoration, Fire & Longleaf, Herbicides & Longleaf, Longleaf Foundations, Gopher Tortoise Academy, Understory Diversity, and Longleaf & the Landowner. The Longleaf Academy Program continues to grow and adapt as new concepts and challenges present themselves.

A contribution of \$16,000 will provide financial support for one Coastal Georgia Longleaf Academy, including support for staff instructors, facility fees, field tour transportation for attendees, course materials, and other direct expenses. We strive to offer moderate registration fees and, when able, to offset class participants' costs to maximize the inclusion of all interested individuals.

For more information and/or to support this project, contact Wendy Ledbetter, Fort Stewart/Altamaha Partnership Coordinator for The Longleaf Alliance. Wendy's email is wendy@longleafalliance.org and her phone number is 409-658-4300.



CONSERVATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Renovating the Sapelo Island Visitors Center Nature Trail and Observation Deck **\$10,000** FRIENDS OF SAPELO

Friends of Sapelo (FOS) is a 501(c)(3) all-volunteer nonprofit organization devoted to promoting environmental education, preserving historical landmarks, and conserving natural habitats on Sapelo Island. In collaboration with state agencies and the Hog Hammock community, we work to support the Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve (SINERR) in its mission to protect and celebrate the unique ecological and cultural heritage of Georgia's coast. Our volunteers help maintain the historic Sapelo lighthouse, preserve tabby ruins, maintain nature trails, facilitate citizen science projects, and cultivate native species gardens. Together, we've built a reputation for creating meaningful connections to Sapelo's past, present, and future.

The Sapelo Island Visitors Center in Darien, Georgia, serves as a gateway to the island's wonders. Adjacent to the Visitors Center lies a self-guided nature trail that winds through vibrant marshes, serene saltpans, and the majestic maritime forest, offering visitors a chance to explore Sapelo's coastal ecosystems without the need for a ferry.

This trail, along with its 25-year-old observation deck, needs critical updates to ensure accessibility, safety, and an engaging educational experience. We are launching an effort to revitalize the trail and observation deck, making it a seamless extension of the Visitors Center. With your support, we can renovate the observation deck and bench seating to improve safety and functionality for all visitors, install sections of boardwalk and a footbridge to enhance accessibility, and add interpretive signage to educate visitors on unique coastal ecosystems.

This project is about more than upgrades—it's about fostering a deeper connection to nature, inspiring stewardship, and investing in the future of Georgia's coastline. By creating a space for reflection, learning, and exploration, we aim to transform casual visitors into advocates for conservation. Your contribution will fund the essential materials for this renovation, while our dedicated Friends of Sapelo volunteers will provide the labor. Together, we can bring this vision to life.

For more information or to make a donation, contact John Stevenson at jxs2778@gmail.com or (912) 223-9236 or Phil Graitcer at pgraitc@me.com or (404) 245-9780.

Replacing the Vehicles Used for Species Monitoring and Habitat Management **\$30,000** THE ORIANNE SOCIETY

The Orianne Society has been protecting reptiles, amphibians, and their associated habitats since 2008. Much of our work is conducted on-the-ground, including inventory and monitoring of species and habitat management. Though we do well securing funding for these activities, funding for things such as equipment and infrastructure is not as accessible. Orianne purchased the majority of our vehicle fleet in 2010. The trucks that get us to survey areas, take us to meet with landowners, and help us conduct species translocations are deteriorating and occasionally leaving our staff in a bind. We are beginning the process of rebuilding this fleet with new(er) vehicles. Donors interested in funding, in full or partially, one field vehicle in the amount of \$30,000, can contact Chris Jenkins at 208.241.9124 or cljenkins@oriantnesociety.org. In addition, Orianne would be interested in the donation of newer, gently-used, 4WD or AWD vehicles.

Ossabaw Island North End Trail Wayfinding • \$1,000 - \$15,000

THE OSSABAW ISLAND FOUNDATION

Each year the Ossabaw Island Foundation (TOIF) hosts about 3,000 visits on Ossabaw Island, the third-largest barrier island on Georgia's coast. As the State of Georgia's oldest and largest Heritage Preserve, Ossabaw's unspoiled 26,000 acres of maritime forest, estuaries, salt marsh and beaches are set aside for natural, scientific or cultural education, research or study.

Approximately one-third of these visits (800-1100 annually) are for day trips to the North End of Ossabaw Island.

These all-day excursions to the island provide visitors with anywhere from three to five hours of independent time to study the ecosystem, create art, engage with the island's historic landscapes and buildings, or find other individual ways to relate to this unique protected place. These day trips to Ossabaw's North End are walking days. Although an Ossabaw Island host and interpretive guide is present all day, most of the day trip time is spent in a self-guided mode.



This year TOIF intends to create a professionally designed, coordinated map and signage wayfinding system that clearly and accurately shows safe and inspiring walking routes for visitors to Ossabaw Island's North End.

Over 20 years ago, TOIF collaborated with a local art college to create reusable wayfinding maps to assist day trip island users in their exploration of the North End, providing simple information on roads, walking trails, and key destinations. Some island signage was installed at that time. In the past two decades, the maps have become outdated and dog-eared, and the signage has faded or disappeared. Some formerly open areas are now off-limits, and some formerly off-limits areas are now open for exploration. The lack of clarity for self-guided island visits has increasingly become a point of frustration for island visitors who have had otherwise positive experiences. By developing a new wayfinding system, TOIF is confident that the island experience will be dramatically improved for these day users, many who are making their 'once in a lifetime' visit to Ossabaw Island.

- Map design and printing: \$5,000**
 - Signage design, construction and installation: \$10,000**
 - Total project cost: \$15,000**
- Sponsorships of any amount over \$1,000 will be acknowledged on the map.**

To make a contribution, please contact Elizabeth DuBose, Executive Director of the Ossabaw Island Foundation, at 912-344-3900 or elizabeth@ossabawisland.org. Visit ossabawisland.org for more information.

Frederica Greenway Project • \$1,000 - \$75,000 ST. SIMONS LAND TRUST

The St. Simons Land Trust has worked hard to not just “talk the talk” but to serve as exemplary leaders in using the conservation methods that we recommend. This includes adding solar panels to the roof at our offices and replacing the turf in our front yard with a pollinator garden. We have extended our “walk the walk” approach to some of our most visible properties along the busiest street on the island – Frederica Road.

In partnership with landscape architect Thomas Angell, ASLA, the owner of Verdant Enterprises, LLC, a sustainable landscape design firm, we are taking a comprehensive approach to landscaping the properties on the eastern side of this highly trafficked thoroughfare. Using Angell’s design and thoroughly researched native plant lists, and working in partnership with local nurseries, garden clubs, landscapers, volunteers, and other nonprofits, the project includes removing invasive species (such as thickets of non-native bamboo) and using only native plantings to create natural areas that can be enjoyed by the community. Goals include the creation of important habitats for mammals, birds, and insects; development of sustainable natural spaces that minimize maintenance and water requirements over time and help improve air quality; installation of native plants, interpretive signage, and other features that enhance the beauty of the island, connect greenspaces, and provide educational opportunities. The work is being executed in phases, across four separate properties: John Gilbert Nature Trail; frontage areas of Wildlife Preserve; Old Ironsides; and our office gardens at 1810 Frederica Road. By using a comprehensive approach and consistent use of native plants, we will be able to develop a unified look along the Frederica Greenway that can be replicated by homeowners and on commercial properties.

Project includes: landscape design; repairs to existing well and added irrigation on the frontage space of John Gilbert Nature Trail; labor required to grade properties, remove invasives, create walking paths, improve soil; purchase of native trees, foundation plants, understory plants and shrubs, seeds; research, design, fabrication, and installation of interpretive signage; seating; mulch; other landscape features. The project has begun, and site preparation and plantings will take place during the winter and spring of 2025, with enhancements added in the fall of this year.

Total Costs for the Frederica Greenway Project are estimated to be \$75,000. Gifts ranging between \$1,000 and \$25,000, restricted to this initiative, will assist in covering costs of labor, plants, irrigation, signage, and ongoing maintenance and enhancements to the landscaped areas. For more information, contact Emily Ellison at (912) 638-9109 or emellison@ssl.org.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ST. SIMONS LAND TRUST

Harris Neck Living Shoreline and Community Resilience – Engaging Stakeholders and Protecting Habitat and Community • \$500 - \$50,000 THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge in McIntosh County provides critical water access to the Barbour River, Sapelo Sound, and is a community hub. Existing infrastructure and use include a public parking lot, dock and boat ramp, “the Crabber’s Dock” which is designated as the local commercial fishing dock facility, the Refuge’s boat facility, the Harris Neck African Baptist Church’s cemetery dating back to the 1880’s, and a baptismal site, which is a traditional cultural property for the Harris Neck Community with continued use today. Over 15,000 vehicles per year use the boat ramp for commercial, recreational, and residential access purposes. Local commercial and recreational fishers, known as Barbour River Waterman’s Association, use the Crabber’s Dock and boat ramp to access the extensive waterways. The shoreline is eroding and threatening access and infrastructure.

The Nature Conservancy is working with the Refuge and partners to secure funding for design and construction of a living shoreline to stabilize the eroding area using a nature-based solution, to restore salt marsh and oyster reef, to enhance public and local fisher access and to protect cultural and community sites. The living shoreline will be designed and constructed to mimic a natural shoreline and will utilize native plants and oyster materials to create natural features that combat erosion and create and enhance habitat. Local stakeholders will be engaged in the project, salt marsh and oyster reef will be restored, and the shoreline important for community access will be stabilized. Stabilizing the bank with a living shoreline will serve the purposes of protecting the infrastructure upon which the local community, and the federal and state governments, all depend, providing public access, creating habitat and a resilient coastline, and sustaining a historic fishery that is currently trying to expand. This project will provide long lasting shoreline protection and management that improves over time and supports the health of coastal habitat and the local community.

The Harris Neck and Sapelo Sound geography is a priority living shoreline and community conservation area and will fill geographic, methodological, community and stakeholder gaps on the Georgia coast. The Harris Neck Living Shoreline will be the largest living shoreline on the mainland in Georgia and the only living shoreline on the mainland accessible to the public in McIntosh County. Located in the middle of the Georgia coast, it will provide convenient road access and serve as a learning demonstration. Lessons learned will be transferred on the Georgia coast and the southeast through workshops, tours, presentations, events, and publications. Stakeholder workshops, volunteer events for living shoreline creation, and meetings for targeted audiences to develop educational tools and materials will be held. Results of the project will be used to promote living shorelines and oysters and land protection for future conservation of salt marshes, and knowledge will be transferred to other sites and used to increase local work force expertise. The project depends on inclusive engagement of stakeholders in the Harris Neck, Barbour River, and Sapelo Sound watershed. Fishers, landowners and managers, residents, community members, local, state, and federal governments, local school, colleges and organizations will be engaged. College fellowships will provide support and leadership throughout the program. The time for collaborative action is now and partners are committed to this priority living shoreline and community-centered conservation resilience project.

College Fellowship - \$36,000 per fellow/year

Stakeholder Engagement Workshops - \$3,000/workshop for 35 people

Volunteer Events - \$500 per event for supplies

Stakeholder Work Group Facilitated Sessions - \$6,000/session

For more information, contact Christi Lambert at clambert@tnc.org.

WATERSHED PROTECTION

Protect The Vernon • \$2,000 - \$20,000 **OGEECHEE RIVERKEEPER**

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, before reaching the Atlantic Ocean. This treasured area provides habitat for endangered sturgeon, diamondback terrapins, and sea turtles, as well as important commercial and recreational fishing opportunities.

The Protect the Vernon project is reducing environmental hazard impacts (pathogens and litter), and planning for long-term sustainability in the Vernon River, its tributaries, and the connected salt marsh. ORK collects consistent data from 60+ monitoring sites to create a real-time picture of the health of the Vernon.

This project is underway and has successfully engaged a diverse group of stakeholders, volunteers, and citizen scientists. ORK also submitted an updated Watershed Management Plan to the State of Georgia outlining the necessary steps to further clean up the Vernon River.

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



PHOTO BY WANDA TANNER

Savannah Harbor Expansion Community Benefits Coalition • \$10,000 - \$25,000

SAVANNAH RIVERKEEPER

Since 2001 Savannah Riverkeeper (SRK) has worked on issues around the Savannah harbor, and the time for significant expansion of that work is upon us. Expansive harbor development continues to present significant challenges. The latest proposed projects in the Savannah Harbor are among the most ambitious yet, involving further harbor deepening and widening, the construction of a new shipping terminal along the river's northern edge, and plans for either reconstructing the Talmadge Bridge or building a tunnel beneath the river. That does not even take into account the water issues related to the Hyundai plant, the warehouse growth and the newly planned regional water authority. These initiatives and their accompanying studies, set to begin this year, are further complicated by incomplete mitigation from the harbor deepening that began in 1995.

To address these complex issues, Savannah Riverkeeper has established a local Working Group to foster collaboration and dialogue among a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from nonprofits, local governments, businesses, and the legal sector, with plans to expand as engagement grows. So far, it has held four virtual meetings and aims to host monthly sessions seeking to understand perspectives and to analyze the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed projects.

This initiative has quickly taken off, and is seeking feedback from all stakeholders that have a voice in shaping the lower Savannah River Basin's future. Savannah is at a crossroads, and SRK's long history of successful collaboration positions us to bring people together to navigate the challenges and come up with a meaningful outcome that protects the river and the citizens living in the communities surrounding the harbor.

SRK's longstanding history of successful collaboration uniquely positions us to unite stakeholders and to steer Savannah through its current challenges. The requested funding will cover organizing staff efforts, meeting expenses, expert testimony, and support the continuation of this vital collaborative effort between Savannah's local municipalities, tourism, policymakers, sportsmen, and environmental protection groups. Navigating huge federal projects is hard, and navigating many happening at the same time is harder. But, with your help, we can be ready for the challenge. For more information please contact: Tonya Bonitatibus at riverkeeper@savannahriverkeeper.org or (706)755-4839.

Expanding Veterans for Clean Water • \$5,000 - \$25,000 SAVANNAH RIVERKEEPER

For five years, Savannah Riverkeeper's Veterans for Clean Water (VFCW) program has served as the bridge that connects our veteran communities to meaningful protection and restoration efforts along the Savannah River basin. With an estimated 300,000 veterans living within the Savannah River basin, Veterans for Clean Water aims to foster community among veterans by engaging them in water stewardship and protection activities. Our program offers group trainings and excursions on the water via kayak or boat and provides educational opportunities for those wishing to engage in protecting water quality and helping with restoration efforts. During peak outdoor recreational seasons, our active duty, veteran, and veteran-affiliated volunteers collect weekly water samples at local fishing, swimming, and boating sites. The samples are tested for eight markers of water health, including E.coli levels. The collected data is then posted online via the Swim Guide website and app. The collected data is updated weekly and is accessible to anyone who wants to stay informed about their local water quality.

In 2025, Veterans for Clean Water is beginning its expansion into the Lower River Basin to connect with our veterans in Chatham, Effingham, Bryan, and Jasper counties. In addition to collecting recreational water samples, our VFCW staff will be collecting data on four cutoff bends north of Savannah in preparation for a massive restoration effort and maintaining eight trashtraps located throughout Savannah in conjunction with our litter reduction program.

(CONTINUED)

The requested funds will be used to sponsor additional recreational water sampling sites along the Lower Savannah River basin and provide staff support for volunteer water sampling training sessions, group kayaks, and outdoor activities for veterans and their loved ones. With the concentration of military installations in the Savannah area, Veterans for Clean Water hopes to build meaningful relationships with the active duty and veteran communities. The data collected from these water monitoring activities will be made available to the public at KnowYourRiver.com. For more information please contact: Tonya Bonitatibus at riverkeeper@savannahriverkeeper.org or (706)755-4839.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Autonomous Recording Unit Deployment for Bird Monitoring • \$10,000

BIRDS GEORGIA

Birds Georgia seeks support to expand our bird monitoring efforts along Georgia's coast using Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs). These advanced bioacoustic tools allow us to monitor focal bird populations with minimal disturbance and more efficiency, collecting vital data on species presence and habitat preferences over extended periods. This project will focus on key coastal sites where such monitoring informs habitat restoration and protection efforts. Funding will enable the purchase of ARUs, data analysis software, and associated fieldwork. Donors will have opportunities to visit monitoring locations and gain firsthand insight into



how this technology supports avian conservation along our coast. For additional information, please contact Adam Betuel, Senior Director of Programs, at adam.betuel@birdsgeorgia.org.

Project Safe Flight Georgia: Building Window Retrofit • \$10,000 - \$25,000

BIRDS GEORGIA

Up to 1 billion birds die annually in the U.S. from building collisions, with Georgia's geography and diverse habitats amplifying the risk. Birds Georgia seeks funding to expand Project Safe Flight Georgia to retrofit an additional coastal building with bird-friendly window film (\$4 per square foot). The range of funding determines the project's scope, with larger contributions enabling retrofits of multiple buildings, more extensive application of bird-friendly film, and the potential to address larger window areas. This project will reduce migratory bird collisions on site, study songbird activity in critical hotspots, and engage local communities in conservation solutions with potential for national impact. For additional information, please contact Adam Betuel, Senior Director of Programs, at adam.betuel@birdsgeorgia.org.

Sea Turtle Research, Conservation and Education on Wassaw Island, GA • \$1,800 - \$16,300

CARETTA RESEARCH PROJECT

Caretta Research Project (CRP) is a hands-on research, conservation and education project that has been studying and protecting nesting sea turtles on Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge since 1973. Two key aspects make the CRP both unique and highly valuable. First, as one of the longest-running loggerhead research organizations conducting saturation tagging, the CRP has accumulated 52 years of data. This extensive dataset has been instrumental in helping coastal managers develop essential conservation practices. Second, the CRP is deeply committed to education and community engagement, offering the public the opportunity to work side-by-side with biologists to protect these remarkable creatures. This hands-on experience inspires volunteers to return to their communities worldwide as informed advocates for the conservation of sea turtles.

To support any of the budget items below, please contact Kris Carroll, Executive Director of CRP at 912-704-9323 or WassawCRP@gmail.com. Donors will have the chance to visit CRP for a day trip and witness firsthand the impact of their contributions.

Tags and applicators (Inconel and PIT): \$1,800

Seasonal Intern Stipend: \$4,000

Kawasaki Mule 600 for beach patrols: \$10,500



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CARETTA RESEARCH PROJECT

Tracking Saltmarsh Sparrows from Georgia Marshes to their Breeding Grounds \$4000 - \$8000

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Saltmarsh Sparrow is a species currently under consideration for federal listing and is recognized as a species of high conservation concern in Georgia. This region provides crucial resources for the species' survival during the 6-7 month over-wintering period. To address conservation needs, a collaborative research project between the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) and the American Bird Conservancy is proposed.

We aim to deploy between 16-32 radio/MOTUS transmitters (\$250/each) on sparrows to track their habitat utilization within Georgia's tidal salt marshes. The use of MOTUS technology is a key aspect of this proposed project. MOTUS, an international collaborative research network, utilizes automated radio telemetry to facilitate both large-scale and fine-scale conservation research. Hand tracking using the transmitters will enable researchers to monitor sparrow movements across various tide stages, providing detailed insights into their fine-scale habitat use patterns. Tracking data obtained remotely through the MOTUS network will allow for the identification of connectivity patterns between wintering territories and breeding grounds.

The project's findings will have direct implications for conservation efforts. GA DNR plans to leverage the gathered information to prioritize and improve critical high tide roost habitats, crucial for over-winter survival. Comprehensive habitat use data, coupled with insights into breeding grounds connectivity, will contribute to a more informed and targeted approach to Saltmarsh Sparrow conservation regionally and throughout the entire species range. GA DNR is seeking between \$4,000 (16 transmitters, tracking in St Simons Sound only) and \$8,000 (32 transmitters, tracking in St Simons Sound and in Chatham County) to complete this project.

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 FLETCHER SMITH

Building Connections for Shorebird Protection • \$30,000

MANOMET'S GEORGIA BIGHT SHOREBIRD CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Shorebirds, particularly long-distance migrants like Whimbrel 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 home to at least 30 species of shorebirds -- as many as 300,000 birds. The Georgia and South Carolina barrier coasts are an important hub for shorebird abundance on the U.S. Atlantic Coast, supporting breeding, migrating, and wintering populations of these birds. This area, the epicenter of the Georgia Bight, provides unparalleled habitat. 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.

Manomet has established best habitat management and conservation strategies to the Georgia Bight by developing coalitions of partners to work toward improving conditions on the ground. To date, we have protected habitat by establishing Wildlife Beaches, engaged communities to raise awareness for shorebirds, and contributed to management and monitoring. We are alleviating disturbance at sensitive areas, working with state partners to restore habitat, and applying directed research to document threats that are impacting populations of shorebirds and their habitat.

A contribution of \$30,000 (staff support and field material) to Manomet's Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative will help us continue to protect our precious coasts for shorebirds year-round. For more information or to make a donation, you can reach out to Abby Sterling at (585)339-8885 or asterling@manomet.org or Brad Winn at (508) 524-8276 or bwinn@manomet.org.

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

MANOMET'S GEORGIA BIGHT SHOREBIRD CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

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 for the biomedical industry. New regulations have reduced harvest at certain beaches in South Carolina, but these regulations will be reviewed every five years which means documenting spawning activity in a coordinated fashion is an urgent need.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MANOMET

We are working with our partners at Georgia and South Carolina DNR and One Hundred Miles to conduct critical surveys to document horseshoe crab spawning and availability of eggs to fuel migration. This field work is also allowing us to explore innovative research opportunities using eDNA 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 ensure that this important relationship remains intact. For more information or to make a donation, you can reach out to Abby Sterling at (585)339-8885 or asterling@manomet.org or Brad Winn at (508) 524-8276 or bwinn@manomet.org.

Connecting Coastal Georgia Communities through Sturgeon Research and Conservation • \$40,000 ST. MARYS RIVERKEEPER AND UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

The St. Marys River is critical habitat for the southernmost population of Atlantic Sturgeon, a federally endangered fish. Sturgeon are living fossils that date back to the time of the dinosaurs; however, their populations have declined due to historic overfishing and habitat loss or alteration. Sturgeon were considered extirpated from the St. Marys River until University of Georgia (UGA) researchers caught a genetically distinct juvenile Atlantic Sturgeon in 2014. This provided evidence that Atlantic Sturgeon were still spawning in the St. Marys River. Despite substantial sampling efforts over the last 10 years by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and UGA, little is known about this local population. It is believed that the number of St. Marys River sturgeon is critically low. The negative impacts from residential and industrial developments, water withdrawal resulting in hydrologic changes to water flow, water quality issues, and saltwater intrusion from sea level rise all pose serious threats to this population of endangered fish.

In 2024, St. Marys Riverkeeper, in partnership with FWS and UGA, created a short documentary that provides a captivating look at sturgeon and their role in the St. Marys River watershed, sparking thoughtful conversations about the importance of river stewardship. Through expert interviews, stunning underwater cinematography, and personal stories from locals, we highlighted the sturgeon's critical role in the ecosystem across all four counties of the St. Marys River watershed.

A contribution of \$40,000 to St. Marys Riverkeeper and University of Georgia will help us install telemetry receivers in Georgia's coastal rivers (prioritizing the St. Marys River) to determine when sturgeon are using the river to feed and spawn. This data will help fill major gaps in our understanding of Atlantic Sturgeon in Georgia and are a first step towards developing conservation strategies locally and statewide to ensure the continuation of the St. Marys River Atlantic Sturgeon. Donor contributions will also help us engage with the community to offer several town hall-style film screenings along Georgia's coast of our 'Tail of Two Rivers' short documentary. Donor(s) will get the opportunity to participate in the 2025 sampling season (date, time, and river to be determined) and will be invited to attend a town hall viewing of 'Tail of Two Rivers'.

For more information or to donate, please contact Emily Floore at emily@stmarysriverkeeper.org or Dr. Adam Fox at agfox@uga.edu.



American Alligator Research in the Okefenokee Swamp • \$5,000 - \$10,000

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA (UGA) MARINE EXTENSION AND GEORGIA SEA GRANT

University of Georgia (UGA) Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant is advancing the conservation and management of alligator populations at the Okefenokee Swamp through research, providing a better understanding of the species and enhancing wildlife education. Becoming a sponsor for alligator research is an opportunity to play a crucial role in preserving a unique and precious ecosystem for future generations. Donations support genetic lab testing, provide essential equipment, and cover costs to purchase and deploy satellite tags. The Okefenokee Swamp, perched along the Florida-Georgia border, is the largest blackwater swamp in North America. At the heart of this remarkable ecosystem are the American alligators, iconic and resilient creatures that serve as a testament to the success of wildlife research and management. These alligators were the first species to be listed as federally endangered and then recover, showcasing the positive impact of dedicated conservation efforts.



By sponsoring alligator research, you are ensuring that the Okefenokee Swamp and its inhabitants remain a source of wonder and inspiration for generations to come. To make a contribution, contact Anne Moser, Director of Development, at 706.202.9928 or amoser@uga.edu.

Shark Research on Georgia's Barrier Islands • \$8000 - \$18,000

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Many shark populations worldwide are in decline, and the loss of these top predators can result in major changes to the ecosystems that they inhabit. Georgia's estuaries and salt marshes provide important habitat for many sharks, including nursery habitat for young juveniles. Nursery habitats are areas with abundant food and shelter that are used by juvenile sharks until they are large enough to safely inhabit coastal waters. Historically, the sharks in coastal Georgia have been under-studied. For instance, lemon sharks were previously thought to use nursery habitats only in the tropics, but scientists recently identified the first lemon shark nursery in Georgia on Little St. Simons Island. After that initial discovery, University of Georgia (UGA) researchers have since identified several lemon shark nurseries on other barrier islands. Since 2021, UGA PhD student Andrew Lyons and Dr. Adam Fox have been conducting research aimed at understanding juvenile sharks in Georgia. By using gill nets and longlines to sample various coastal habitats throughout the summer, we can gain a better understanding of the areas that are important for our coastal sharks. Once identified, these areas can be prioritized for conservation by managing agencies. To continue this work, we request funds for shark sampling (\$8,000 for sampling gear, shark tags, fuel and bait), and funds for a summer research technician to work with the team in 2026 (\$10,000). Donor(s) will have an opportunity to join our team on the research boat to help with this study.



For more information or to support this project, please contact Adam Fox, Assistant Professor at UGA, at 706-389-4066 or agfox@uga.edu.

CULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE

Direct Aid for Families Affected by the Marsh Landing Dock Collapse • \$50,000

SAPELO STRONG

On October 19, 2024, the Marsh Landing dock collapse devastated the Sapelo Island community, resulting in loss of life and injury. Sapelo Strong was formed as a coalition of Gullah Geechee organizations dedicated to providing immediate relief while ensuring long-term resilience for both the people and the land that sustains them. This initiative unites the Allen Bailey Foundation, Sapelo Island Cultural & Revitalization Society (SICARS), The Sapelo Project, Save Our Legacy Ourself (SOLO), and the Hog Hammock Community Foundation to ensure that families receive the aid they need to heal and recover. The coalition recognizes that proper recovery means supporting our families, first responders, and community members while protecting Sapelo's delicate ecological balance.

Donations will be used for:

- Financial Assistance for Families – Providing direct financial aid for burial costs, medical expenses, and essential needs.
- Emergency Relief Resources – Covering support for transportation, lodging, and necessities that affected families.
- Ecological Resilience and Stewardship – Supporting community-led conservation initiatives to protect Sapelo's marshlands and waterways, which provide critical resources and protection for the island.

Just as our Gullah Geechee ancestors sustained this land for generations, we must nurture and restore Sapelo's natural environment alongside our community's recovery. The health of our families and our land are intertwined—by investing in both, we strengthen Sapelo Island's future.

As a coalition working closely with the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, Sapelo Strong ensures that every donation is managed with complete transparency and directly benefits the affected. We welcome donors to visit Sapelo Island and experience firsthand the resilience and beauty of this historic place.

For more information or to support our efforts, please get in touch with Lauren Bailey at sapelostrong@gmail.com. Together, we are Sapelo Strong.

Resiliency Hub Planning and Disaster Preparedness • \$25,000

GEORGIA INTERFAITH POWER & LIGHT • THE GEORGIA CONSERVANCY

Georgia Interfaith Power & Light (GIPL) is committed to empowering faith communities to become hubs of community resilience in the face of disaster, and The Georgia Conservancy is committed to strengthening the resilience of communities throughout coastal Georgia, particularly in areas designated by FEMA as Community Disaster Resilience Zones. This collaborative project supports strategic planning and community engagement coordination in the development of congregational resiliency hubs, with the ultimate goal of equipping faith-based organizations with the resources and infrastructure needed to provide vital community support during natural disasters and beyond.

Working in partnership, GIPL and The Georgia Conservancy we will work with faith communities to enhance their existing disaster response capabilities. Coastal Georgia has seen firsthand the critical role houses of worship play during disasters like Hurricane Helene and Tropical Storm Debbie. By supporting these organizations, we can ensure they are prepared to provide vital services in the aftermath of future weather events.

Strategic planning will help GIPL and The Georgia Conservancy to engage houses of worship in assessing local assets and needs as well as the community's priorities regarding emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. Our ultimate goal is to provide a clear, accessible pathway and framework for congregations to transition from planning to fully operational resiliency hubs within 3-5 years. These hubs will serve as disaster relief centers and community support hubs during times of crisis.

Funding will support staff time, technical audits, and seed grants to help GIPL and The Georgia Conservancy work with congregations and impacted communities along Georgia's coast to begin strategic planning and project implementation. The total project cost is \$25,000 to support staff time to plan, consult, and assess resiliency hub feasibility with additional opportunities to make a meaningful impact on climate resilience and community well-being per site. For more information on resiliency hubs along the coast, contact Beth Remmes at Beth@gipl.org or Andrew Kerr at akerr@georgiaconservancy.org.

Long-Term Recovery and Sustainable Rebuilding for Sapelo Island • \$40,000

SAPELO STRONG

Sapelo Island is home to a historic Gullah Geechee community, and long-term recovery efforts must focus on preserving cultural heritage while fostering resilience. This initiative will distribute funds among the Sapelo Strong coalition organizations, supporting individual projects contributing to the island's sustainability, youth engagement, and economic empowerment.

Donations will be used for:

- Allen Bailey Foundation: Kids Week on Sapelo Island - Bringing youth back to Sapelo for a summer program focused on environmental education and sustainable skills such as casting nets, fishing techniques, and traditional island practices
- Sapelo Island Cultural & Revitalization Society (SICARS) - Supporting land retention and advocacy efforts to prevent further displacement of Gullah Geechee descendants
- Save Our Legacy Ourself (SOLO) - Providing educational resources and leadership programs to empower Sapelo's next generation (Voices of Sapelo)
- Hog Hammock Community Foundation - Funding water infrastructure improvements, including transportation access and community meeting spaces, to foster bringing healthcare support back to the island.

This project will provide critical funding to strengthen Sapelo Island's future while honoring its past. Donors are encouraged to visit and see firsthand the impact of their support on this historically significant community. For more information or to support our efforts, please get in touch with Lauren Bailey at sapelostrong@gmail.com. Together, we are Sapelo Strong.

The Gullah Geechee Best Practices Guide to Sustainable Farming and Fishing

\$23,500 GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

The mission of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor is to preserve, share and interpret the history, traditional cultural practices, heritage sites, and natural resources associated with the Gullah Geechee people of coastal North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Gullah Geechee people are direct descendants of Africans who were brought to the United States and enslaved for generations. Their diverse roots in particular parts of Africa, primarily the rice growing regions of West Africa, and the nature of their enslavement on isolated islands along the Southeast coast, created a unique culture that survives to the present day.

Many Gullah Geechee people still sustain themselves by farming, crabbing, shrimping, fishing, and harvesting oysters, and possess a wealth of traditional knowledge in sustainable farming and fishing practices. In fact, the Gullah Geechee people represent the only group of African Americans who maintained a significant amount of Africanisms including foodways, land use practices, subsistence fishing, and the spoken Gullah language. For centuries, Gullah Geechee communities sustained a way of life predicated on carefully nurturing the resources of the land and water.

Yet many of these innovative, proven practices have not been formally documented or shared with the conservation community to inform broader strategies to protect Georgia's natural resources. The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor will address this disparity by collecting best practices in sustainable fishing and farming from Gullah Geechee elders in Georgia. From sustainably harvesting sweet grass for basket making, weaving cast nets for shrimping, prioritizing crop diversity and rotation, and sustainable oyster harvesting, these practices need to be documented to preserve the culture as well as infuse traditional knowledge with conservation objectives across the Georgia coast.

The Gullah Geechee Best Practices Guide to Sustainable Fishing and Farming will be the first guide of its kind to capture this indigenous knowledge. Once completed, the guide will be widely disseminated across the region both within the larger Gullah Geechee community and with conservation practitioners across the state. Indigenous knowledge is important because it preserves a deep understanding of local ecosystems and sustainable practices developed by Gullah Geechee people over many generations, offering valuable insights into resource management, biodiversity protection, and adaptation strategies that can benefit the planet as a whole, especially when integrated with existing conservation science knowledge. The guide will provide a crucial perspective on living in harmony with nature that can inform effective conservation efforts.

If you would like to get more information or make a donation, please contact Brigitte Griswold, Research and Grants Manager, at brgriswold@gullahgeecheecorridor.org or 917-620-2006.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY GULAH GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR



STEWARDS
OF
THE GEORGIA COAST