

Georgia Coastal Birding | Species List

April 27 – May 4, 2023 | with Naturalist Journeys



With guide, Jon Atwood, and six participants: Pauline and Bill, Suzanna and Paul, Dori and Carol.

Compiled by Jon Atwood

HO = Distinctive enough to be counted as heard only

(I) = Introduced

(#) = number of days tallied for the 8-day tour

NWR = National Wildlife Refuge

SP = State Park

ONP = Olympic National Park

** = new species for this tour route

Summary: It's hard to pick specific high points among all the great birds and experiences on this trip. Close looks at nesting Wood Storks; egrets in full breeding plumage feeding ravenous young; Roseate Spoonbills dressed in shocking pink; flocks of terns, skimmers and shorebirds; locally breeding warblers and migrants heading for Maine and Canada; and Painted Buntings showing off their impossible-to-believe combination of gaudy colors. Not to mention alligators bellowing to declare their territories and common bottlenose dolphin leaping from the water! In addition to seeing gorgeous and interesting birds, experiencing beautiful and varied habitats and eating scrumptious meals, one of the best parts of the trip was the friendships that developed during our days together. All of us hope that our paths will cross again in the days to come!

BIRDS 117 species recorded:

DUCKS, GEESE, AND SWANS: Anatidae (6)

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* — Seen on grassy lawns near Savannah Airport.

Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors*—Common in this area during the winter, we saw a few as we scanned marshy areas on Little St. Simons Island (LSSI).

Mottled Duck *Anas fulvigula*— Although perhaps not the most strikingly-plumaged duck, for some in our group this species was a life bird. Primarily a bird of the Florida peninsula, Mottled Ducks have been successfully introduced in South Carolina and Georgia.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* - While certainly abundant and familiar to everyone in our group, the local guides on Little St. Simons Island were quite excited when Paul and Jon identified a distant pair at one of our marsh overlooks.

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* – A male and female seen on the Dolphin boat cruise.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis* - Two of these large, boldly patterned ducks gave us good looks at a LSSI marsh along with Black-necked Stilts and Roseate Spoonbills. What a dazzling combination of colors in such close proximity!

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae (5)

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* — Savannah vicinity.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* — Savannah vicinity, near the Hyatt, and near the lighthouse on St. Simon Island. Originally found in India and China, this introduced species has spread widely in the northern hemisphere, especially during the last 100 years.

Common Ground-Dove *Columbian passerina*— Just one seen on the path near the primary feeding station at LSSI.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*— Common.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* - A surprise bird on this tour, White-winged Dove is more typical of the southwestern deserts, Mexico and the Caribbean. We all had good looks at one at Cannons Point Reserve on Saint Simons Island.

SWIFTS: Apodidae (1)

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*— Small numbers seen in downtown Savannah and overhead at Tom Triplett Park. We didn't pay much attention to the number of swifts present at Tom Triplett Park since we were all distracted by the attention-grabbing Swallow-tailed Kites that first drew our eyes to the skies.

HUMMINGBIRDS: Trochilidae (1)

Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris* — Good numbers, both males and females, at feeders on LSSI.

RAILS, COOTS, AND ALLIES: Rallidae (2)

Clapper Rail *Rallus crepitans* — Seen and heard regularly at several sites including Gould's Inlet and marshy areas on LSSI. Although seeing rails is always challenging, on this trip we had good looks and photographs of many!

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata*— LSSI. Some in family groups with juveniles.

OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae (1)

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*—Just two, or possibly four, birds seen on the main beach on LSSI.

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae (4)

Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* — Seen at Gould's Inlet and on LSSI. About half were still in non-breeding plumage, so it was great to see some birds that were in their showy breeding plumage. This species breeds from western Alaska, the Yukon Delta and the Alaskan Peninsula north to Barrow and the Northwest Territories, so the birds we saw in coastal Georgia definitely had plans for a lot of flying in the next month.

Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia* — Several seen at Gould's Inlet and on the main beach at LSSI.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* — Small numbers at Gould's Inlet, on the main beach at LSSI, and on mudflats within the marshes we visited by boat from LSSI. With its breeding range extending as far west as northern Alaska and northern Yukon Territory, the birds we saw certainly reminded us of the amazing linkages between coastal Georgia and The Arctic.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferous* – One seen by guide at the small airport during a rest stop.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (13)

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* — Gould's Inlet, Cannons Point Reserve (Saint Simons Island), mudflats visible from the Dolphin Boat Tour and at LSSI. Sightings ranged from single birds to medium-sized flocks of 30+.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa* – One seen at Myrtle Pond on LSSI.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* – Small numbers present at Gould's Inlet and along the riverbank visible on the Dolphin Cruise.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* — Small groups, mostly in non-breeding plumage, seen on the beaches at Gould's Inlet and LSSI.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*— One, seen (distantly) on a mudflat visited on LSSI, was in breeding plumage.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*— The second-most common peep (behind Semipalmated Sandpiper) seen at Gould's Inlet and LSSI. Probably 20+ total.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* —The most common peep (100+) on Gould's Inlet and on LSSI.

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* —Approximately 50 at LSSI, smaller numbers at Gould's Inlet. Most were in breeding plumage.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*— Regularly seen along muddy channels at Gould's Inlet, Cannons Point Reserve, Dolphin Boat cruise and LSSI. All were in their spotted breeding plumage - a treat for those of us used to seeing this species in non-breeding plumage.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* – Two birds seen along the road to Norm’s Pond on LSSI.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* – single individuals seen at multiple locations on LSSI.

Willet *Tringa semipalmata* – Seen at various locations on LSSI.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* – The most common species of yellowlegs seen on LSSI, especially near the Main Beach.

GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae (10)

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla* – Commonly seen at multiple locations.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* – Small numbers at Gould’s Inlet and on LSSI.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* – Several immatures seen at Gould’s Inlet and on the Main Beach on LSSI.

Least Tern *Sternula antillarum* – Small numbers seen regularly foraging in saltmarsh channels, and about five pairs in early stages of courtship behavior (flight) at the designated nesting area at Gould’s Inlet.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* – About five birds associated with the large Royal Tern flock on the Main Beach at LSSI.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* – Two perched on pilings seen on the Dolphin boat cruise.

Forster’s Tern *Sterna forsteri* – Common, most were first-year birds.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* – Common, 100s seen at Gould’s Inlet and on the beach at LSSI.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* – About five were seen on the beach at LSSI, mixed in with the large Royal Tern flock.

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger* – Common at Gould’s Inlet and LSSI. A flock of perhaps 200 birds on the beach during our Dolphin boat cruise.

STORKS: Ciconiidae (1)

Wood Stork *Mycteria Americana* – Common, great looks of nesting birds at LSSI, also at Harris Neck NWR.

ANHINGAS: Anhingidae (1)

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* – Good looks at Harris Neck NWR, also from numerous blinds at LSSI.

CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae (1)

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* – Regularly seen at (or flying over) virtually all locations.

PELICANS: Pelecanidae (1)

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* – Regularly seen from the Main Beach at LSSI, and from near the lighthouse hotel on St Simons Island.

HERONS AND EGRETS: Ardeidae (9)

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis* – Two seen from the Myrtle Pond southeast tower on LSSI.

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* – Seen at Harris Neck NWR, Jekyl Island marina and on the Dolphin boat tour, LSSI.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* – Seen regularly at foraging and nesting sites on LSSI.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* – Seen regularly at Harris Neck NWR and various sites on LSSI.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* – Seen at Cannons Point Reserve and on the LSSI boat tour.

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor* – Seen often, usually single birds.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* – Seen along the road to Norm’s Pond on LSSI, also from freeways in fields near Savannah.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens* – 15+ seen at LSSI and Harris Neck NWR.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* – Good looks at adults and immatures at Harris Neck NWR, also along the road to Norm’s Pond on LSSI.

IBIS AND SPOONBILLS: Threskiornithidae (3)

White Ibis *Eudocimus albus* — Seen in small numbers, often in flight, at Tom Triplett Park, Harris Neck NWR and LSSI.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* — Tom Triplett Park, Harris Neck NWR and LSSI.

Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja* — Common, and spectacular, on Jekyll Island and various sites on LSSI.

NEW WORLD VULTURES: Cathartidae (2)

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* — Abundant, may have outnumbered Turkey Vultures, but both were constantly present.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* -- Abundant.

OSPREY: Pandionidae (1)

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*— Several seen near our hotel on St. Simons Island, Jekyll Island and on the boat exploration of saltmarsh on LSSI.

HAWKS, KITES, AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (6)

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus* – A group of five soaring over Tom Triplett Park. Fabulously graceful birds!

Mississippi Kite *Ictinia mississippiensis* – Three seen at Tom Triplett Park.

Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus* – One seen on road to Norm’s Pond on LSSI.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* – The last “new” bird we saw on our tour, an adult soaring near the LSSI dock on the mainland on our final day of birding.

Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus* – Two seen by the guide at Tom Triplett Park on the morning prior to the start of our tour.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis* – Uncommon, we found singles at Cannons Point Reserve and on LSSI.

KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae (1)

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*— Single birds seen on Jekyll Island and at several places on LSSI.

WOODPECKERS: Picidae (4)

Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* – Staked out bird at LSSI, where this species is rare.

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus* – Regularly seen in all forested habitats.

Downy Woodpecker *Dryobates pubescens* – Small numbers in forested areas on LSSI and St. Simons Island.

Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus* – Heard more often than seen, but several were present at Tom Triplett Park, at Harris Neck NWR and at Cannons Point Reserve.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS Tyrannidae (2)

Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus* – Regularly heard in all wooded areas; a very cooperative individual seen and photographed was at Tom Triplett Park at the start of the tour.

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus* – Several birds were seen on LSSI near Myrtle Pond.

VIREOS: Vireonidae (3)

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus* – Common in all wooded areas, its distinctive song a common background sound throughout the tour.

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons* – Heard (courtesy of the Cornell Lab’s Merlin app) at Tom Triplett Park and at Harris Neck NWR; we never managed to see one high in the dense canopy.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* – Forested area in Harris Neck NWR; heard only.

CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (3)

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata* – More common in residential areas including Harris Neck NWR, the lighthouse at St. Simons Island and Jekyll Island Amphitheater Pond.

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos* – Less common, or at least less commonly identified, than Fish Crows.

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus* – LSSI.

TITS AND CHICKADEES: Paridae (2)

Carolina Chickadee *Poecile carolinensis* – Harris Neck NWR, Jekyll Island Amphitheater Pond and Cannons Point Reserve.

Tufted Titmouse *Baeolophus bicolor* – Tom Triplett Park, Harris Neck NWR and St. Simons Island.

SWALLOWS AND MARTINS: Hirundinidae (2)

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* – Tom Triplett Park.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – Widely seen, including nesting birds, at Harris Neck NWR, Jekyll Island wharf and the LSSI departure location from mainland.

NUTHATCHES: Sittidae (1)

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla* – Several good looks on St. Simons Island and LSSI. A life bird for several in our group.

GNATCATCHERS: Sittidae (1)

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila caerulea* – Good numbers at all wooded areas, most appeared to be paired and likely nesting.

WRENS: Troglodytidae (2)

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris* - Fairly common in saltmarsh areas on LSSI, although not particularly responsive to playback or pishing.

Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus* – Common, seen (or heard) everywhere we birded in woody vegetation.

STARLINGS AND MYNAS: Sturnidae (1)

European Starling (1) *Sturnus vulgaris*— Savannah vicinity, Tom Triplett Park.

THRUSHES: Turdidae (2)

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis* Harris Neck NWR, Lighthouse at St. Simon Island and Jekyll Island Amphitheater.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* – Several seen near the LSSI office buildings.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS: Passeridae (1)

House Sparrow (1) *Passer domesticus*— Savannah vicinity and near Gould’s Inlet.

FINCHES AND EUPHONIAS: Fringillidae (1)

House Finch *Haemorhous mexicanus*— Residential areas near Gould’s Inlet.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS: Passerellidae (2)

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* One seen near Main Beach on LSSI. Surprising that more were not seen.

Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* – Scrubby areas on LSSI.

NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS: Icteridae (7)

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* – LSSI at Myrtle Pond.

Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius* – Several seen in large trees near LSSI Lodge and Harris Neck NWR.

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* – LSSI.

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus* – Common in all marshy areas.

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* – Harris Neck NWR and abundant at LSSI feeders.

Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula* – Less common than Boat-tailed Grackles.

Boat-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus major* — Abundant in all wetland/marshy areas.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: Parulidae (10)

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* – Jekyll Island Amphitheater.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* – Tom Triplett Park, LSSI. Not particularly common.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* – One at Cannons Point Reserve.

Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina* – A bright male on LSSI at the Myrtle Pond Tower was a migrant destined for the boreal forests where this species nests.

Northern Parula *Setophaga americana* – By far the most abundant warbler, with dozens heard/seen almost every day. Some are local breeders, others probably heading further north.

Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia* – Heard (guide only) at one location on LSSI.

Black-throated Blue Warbler *Setophaga caerulescens* – One at Jekyll Island Amphitheater.

Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum* One seen by guide only at St. Simons Island lighthouse.

Pine Warbler *Setophaga pinus* – Several seen and heard at Tom Triplett Park.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Setophaga dominica* – Commonly heard and seen at Harris Neck NWR and LSSI.

CARDINALS, GROSBILLS, AND ALLIES: Cardinalidae (4)

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra* – Harris Neck NWR, Jekyll Island Amphitheater and LSSI.

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis* – Abundant at all locations.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* – A few seen along the road to Main Beach on LSSI.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* – Harris Neck NWR, Cannons Point Reserve and LSSI. Great looks at both sexes!

MAMMALS (8 species recorded):

Nine-banded Armadillo *Dasypus novemcinctus* – Several seen on LSSI

Eastern Cottontail *Sylvilagus floridanus*

Marsh Rabbit *Sylvilagus palustris*

Eastern Gray Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*

Eastern Fox Squirrel *Sciurus niger*

Common Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* – Good looks at about 15 individuals from Dolphin Cruise boat.

Bat sp. (small, on LSSI)

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (7 species recorded):

American alligator *Alligator mississippiensis*

Pond Slider *Tachemys scripta*

Green Anole *Anolis carolinensis*

Broad-headed Skink *Plestiodon laticeps*

Five-lined Skink *Plestiodon fasciatus*

Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake *Crotalus adamanteus*

Squirrel Tree Frog *Hyla squirella*