

Cedar Waxwing
Bombusilla cedrorum



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Range data by NatureServe

Spring Migration Count

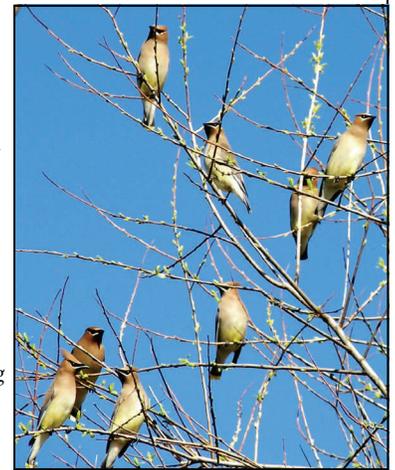
This year 10 of Georgia's finest birders arrived on SCI Friday April 27th to join in the 6th annual Spring migration count. Fully equipped with all the finest optics and honed skills that are essential for counting as many of the birds that can be counted over a 24 hour period they were eager and ready to go. The weariless weekend watchers counted 6725 individuals of 140 species.

While no individual was extraordinarily rare, we did see large numbers of Cedar Waxwings.

Cedar Waxwings are considered common but erratic winter residents over most the state (Giff Beaton), and we rarely see more than a couple of them in the Spring Migration Count. This year we counted 157 of these beautiful birds dispersed throughout the island.

A treat to find in your binocular viewfield, the Cedar Waxwing is a silky, shiny collection of brown, gray, and lemon-yellow, accented with a subdued crest, rakish black mask, and brilliant-red wax droplets on the wing feathers. In fall these birds gather by the hundreds to eat berries, filling the air with their high, thin, whistles. In summer you're as likely to find them flitting about over rivers in pursuit of flying insects, where they show off dazzling aeronautics for a forest bird.

Cedar Waxwings are social birds that you're likely to see in flocks whenever you see them. They sit in fruiting trees swallowing berries whole, or pluck them in mid-air with a brief fluttering hover. They also course over water for insects, flying like tubby, slightly clumsy swallows.



Special thanks to our Bird Counters
Top: Carol Lambert, Jeff Sewell, James Flynn Jr., Earl Horn, Steve Holzman, Rachel Cass, Meg & David Hedeem.
Bottom: Mark Freeman & Joel McNeal



Photo by Amanda Hurst

Peppermint Shrimp By CJ Best

CJ Best is a student at Augusta State University and has joined Dr. Bruce Saul's "fish crew" doing monthly sampling on multiple occasions.

Lysmata wurdemanni, the peppermint shrimp, is commonly known for its almost completely transparent body with vibrant red longitudinal stripes. The contrast between the red stripes and clear body give it an uncanny resemblance to that of a peppermint. Despite its small size and exotic look, the peppermint shrimp tends to be quite hardy allowing them to live in a wide variety of climates and habitats including the coast of St. Catherines Island.

This nocturnal creature stays safely hidden during the day in the nooks and crannies of the ocean floor and plant life. It is only at night, when its predators are asleep, that the peppermint shrimp comes out and does what the *Lysmata* family does best, cleans! These carnivorous scavengers, like all bottom feeders, play a role in keeping the ocean floor free from decaying matter and other debris. This specific shrimp is known for eating *Aiptasia* anemones, which can be heavily invasive, making it a popular tank mate in many marine aquariums.

The peppermint shrimp, though commonly seen, is always a treat to catch while trawling. This shrimp's unique coloration pattern and personality are great reminders of the beauty and diversity that lies beneath the surface of the sea.



Are the Cow Tracks exposed in Mud under South Beach really La Vaca Tracks? By Royce Hayes

The large forested dune ridge that separated Beach Pond from the sea is washing away, allowing high tides to enter the once freshwater pond. The mature live oaks that were growing on that dune ridge have washed onto the beach, exposing ancient marsh mud. In that mud are the tracks of cows.

During the 19th Century much of Georgia's Upper Coastal Plain and Piedmont Plateau were cleared for agriculture. The farming practices used in those areas caused most of the topsoil to wash into Georgia's rivers and eventually into the salt marshes and onto the islands. St. Catherines Island grew then, but it is not growing now. Erosion along the beaches and

rivers bordering St. Catherines Island increased during the last decades of the 20th century and seems to have accelerated even more during this century.

Cows were not on the island before the coming of the Spanish a little over 400 years ago. Therefore the tracks in the mud near Beach Pond can not be older than 400 years and the age of the trees that until recently were growing on the dunes that formed above those tracks were much older than the coming of Mr. Noble's Cattle. Did Spanish friars once herd the cows that made the South Beach tracks? Might those cows have belonged to Mary Musgrove Bosomworth? Did one of the cows that made the tracks provide Mr. Gwinnett with his last meal before his unfortunate meeting with General McIntosh at Abercorn Fields? Or were these tracks made by Mr. Walburg's cows? We don't know, but marsh mud preserves many things. Maybe one day the mud will tell us more – maybe one day it will tell our successors things about us.

