

Keynote Speaker: Emma Rhodes



Ornithologist and South Alabama native, Emma Rhodes has been an avid birder from a young age and began participating in migration banding as a teen with Bob and Martha Sargent at the Fort Morgan State Historic Site in Gulf Shores, AL. In 2019, she became one of the youngest Master Banders in North America and has worked with and studied a variety of avian taxa, from hummingbirds to birds of prey. Emma has worked alongside various avian conservation organizations in Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, and the Bahamas monitoring coastal birds. She has also worked with both state and National Audubon chapters and is an instructor for the Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine where her purpose is to educate and inspire the next generation of birders. Emma received her BS in Biology, with a minor in Geographic Information Systems, at the University of South Alabama and is currently a PhD candidate at Auburn University where her thesis work is focused on studying the physiological underpinnings of bird migration. In 2022, her PhD work entitled “Mitochondria Power the Evolution of Bird Migration” received prestigious awards from both the National Science Foundation and the Society for the Study of Evolution. Apart from her graduate work, Emma is a co-founder of Banding Coalition of the Americas (BCA), a non-profit organization focused on better understanding migratory birds using banding and advanced tracking techniques. At its core, BCA believes in the importance of bird banding and research as a public outreach tool and has several on-going studies in the state of Alabama.