

Jekyll Island

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Bird Education Network to Hold National Gathering on Jekyll Island

Jekyll Island chosen because of its reputation as an excellent birding location.

Jekyll Island, GA – January 27, 2009 – Beginning February 22, over 100 bird educators and enthusiasts from bird clubs, nature centers, school system, refuges and parks will be flocking to Jekyll Island for the 2009 Bird Education Network National Gathering. The Bird Education Network (BEN) Committee, along with the Council for Environmental Education and Flying WILD, chose Jekyll Island because of its exceptional birding and nature-based tourism opportunities.

Open to anyone with an interest in bird education and conservation efforts, the five day event encourages attendees to explore not only Jekyll Island but other nearby wildlife viewing areas as well. Guided field sessions include bird rambles on Jekyll Island, kayak trips in the intercoastal waterways, canoe trips through the Okefenokee Swamp and other outdoor adventures. Indoors, at the Jekyll Island Club Hotel, the gathering's host hotel, speakers and exhibitors share their knowledge and experience on subjects such as urban-based bird education, climate change, and connecting families to nature.

"We are thrilled to be selected as the host hotel for Bird Education Network's 2009 National Gathering," said Patty Henning, Director of Sales at the Jekyll Island Club Hotel. "Jekyll Island has numerous opportunities for our guests to explore nature and it is gratifying to see these recognized in the birding community."

As part of the Colonial Coast Birding and Nature Trail, Jekyll Island is home to over 250 bird species including Bald Eagles, Roseate Spoonbill, Painted Bunting, and Woodstorks. These species have attracted the attention of birders for years and are the reason for such annual events as Georgia's Colonial Coast Birding and Nature Festival. The annual festival is held the second week of October each year. Jekyll Island was designated an Important Birding Area by the Audubon Society in 2001.

"We were drawn to Jekyll Island because of its reputation in the birding community," said Geoffrey Castro, Manager of Operations and Marketing for the Council for Environmental Education and member of the Gathering's planning committee. "Jekyll Island offers one of the best opportunities for our conference attendees to come within viewing range of so many magnificent species."

Registration for the 2009 National Gathering is still open. Daily registrations are also available. For registration and a full conference agenda visit www.birdeducation.org/jekyllisland.

"With no less than 65% of the island protected as a natural sanctuary, Jekyll Island is the perfect setting for this bird education conference," stated Jones Hooks, Executive Director of the Jekyll Island Authority.

Jekyll Island currently has seven hotels open and operating, including the nationally recognized Jekyll Island Club Hotel, the host hotel for the conference. Other hotels include the Beachview Club, Oceanside Inn & Suites, Quality Inn, Jekyll Oceanfront Clarion Resort, Villas By The Sea and the Days Inn & Suites. Rental cottages are also available through two local real estate firms. Trip planning information can be found at jekyllisland.com

About Jekyll Island

Jekyll Island is a barrier island on Georgia's coast – midway between Jacksonville, Fla. And Savannah, Ga. Accessible by car just minutes from I-95, Jekyll Island offers a variety of amenities, including 10 miles of beach, four golf courses, a 250-acre Historic Landmark District, water park, tennis center, an array of lodging options including hotels, cottages and campgrounds. Owned by the State of Georgia, and managed by the Jekyll Island State Park Authority, Jekyll Island has had development limited to just 35 percent of its available land area. This unique aspect of Jekyll Island serves to preserve the critical barrier island ecosystem, and provide guests with a unique escape from the crowds and complications of other beach resort destinations. The Jekyll Island Foundation is a public 501 (c) 3 organization which operates exclusively for charitable and educational purposes to support the work of the Jekyll Island Authority by assisting in the preservation, conservation and appreciation of Jekyll Island. Please visit www.jekyllisland.com for more information or call 1-877-4JEKYLL.

About Bird Education Network

BEN (Bird Education Network) is the newest initiative of the Council for Environmental Education and it seeks to connect and support the community of bird education professionals. BEN's *National Gathering* has quickly established itself as the largest and most diverse gathering of bird education providers in recent history. Through the BEN supported Bird Education Listserv, over 500 individuals representing 300 organizations, are connected to advance bird education.

About Council for Environmental Education

CEE is a nationally recognized leader in environmental education. As a non-profit organization for more than 35 years, CEE has provided environmental education programs and services that promote stewardship of the environment and further the capacity of learners to make informed decisions. Each year CEE's benchmark programs provide materials and training workshops to more than 50,000 educators who reach millions of young people with essential information about conservation and the environment.