

PRESS RELEASE:
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October 11, 2008



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MEDIA ALERT –
BIG READ BIRDWALK SATURDAY AT GELTNER NATURE PRESERVE

“Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird.”

Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Chapter 10, spoken by Scout

Douglasville, Georgia – As part of **THE BIG READ** initiative, supported by the National Endowment of the Arts and the Institute of Museum and Library Services and presented in partnership with the Douglas County Libraries and Douglas County Schools, the Cultural Arts Council of Douglasville/Douglas County will offer a bird walk at the Geltner Nature Preserve on Saturday, October 11th, led by naturalist and world traveler Don Scarbrough, a ranger at the Sweetwater Creek State Park. Participants should meet at the Cultural Arts Center, 8652 Campbellton Street, at 9 a.m. on Saturday in order to carpool to the Geltner Nature Preserve, a 186-acre park owned by the Audubon Society and located off Anneewakee Road between Chapel Hill and Highway 92. One of Douglas County's hidden gems, Geltner Nature Preserve includes a large lake, creeks, marshes and woodlands. Participants are not guaranteed to see a mockingbird, they can be regularly found in this wilderness habitat.

For **THE BIG READ** in Douglasville and Douglas County in 2008, we selected Harper Lee's acclaimed 1960 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which takes place during the early 1930s in a small Alabama town. **THE BIG READ** was launched nationally in 2006 by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and Arts Midwest. The NEA's initiative encourages literary reading by asking communities to come together to read and discuss a single book. Modeled on successful "one book, one community" programs, **THE BIG READ** was created to address the national decline in literary reading. The NEA's 2004 landmark survey, "Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America" showed that less than half the American adult population now reads literature.

Our **THE BIG READ** includes book discussion groups, exhibits, special public events, lectures, teacher trainings, readings, and film screenings as well as the bird walk during September and October at locations throughout our community. For more details and a full schedule of the wide range of fun, stimulating, community-building activities scheduled for this year's program, please click here. For more information on the nation-wide programming, visit www.neabigread.org.

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts
in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest.

THE CULTURAL ARTS COUNCIL OF DOUGLASVILLE/DOUGLAS COUNTY

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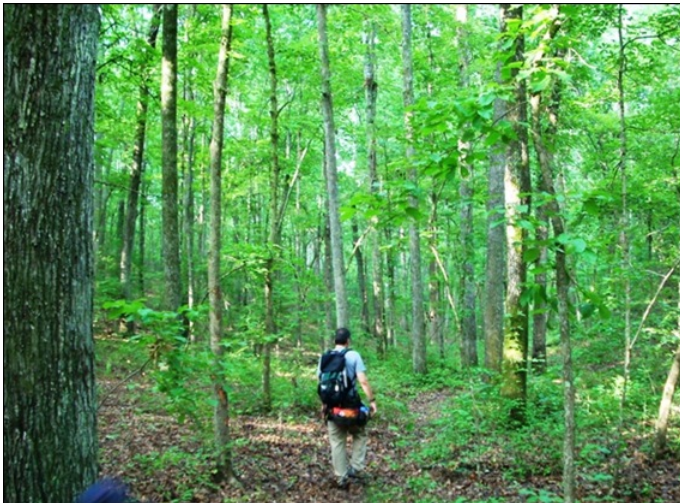
More About the Geltner Nature Preserve on Anneewakee (from FunFoodLife.com web site)



The Geltner Nature Preserve's rolling hills, forest of mature hardwoods, and its numerous waterways and wetlands provide an ideal sanctuary for deer, beavers, and a wide variety of birds.

Anneewakee Creek and Crooked Creek run through the property forming Lake Monroe. Beavers have created another lake by building an enormous dam that spans over 200 feet and is more than 50 years old. The beaver lake provides an undisturbed sanctuary for ducks, geese, blue heron and other wildlife.

The gently rolling hills are covered with mature hardwoods, wetlands, and creeks.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

The Geltner property was originally part of a 404-acre parcel that was purchased by Jan Scarbrough in 1945 from a sawmill operator who was harvesting the land for its timber. Jan renamed the lake from Lake Turnipseed to Lake Monroe in honor of his mother. The land had not been developed and had no amenities except for two old farm houses. Around 1947 the Rural Electric Administration brought in electricity, and in 1948, Jan sold half interest of the property to his sister Geraldine to fund renovation of one of the farm houses. After Jan and his brothers renovated the farm house, Jan and his extended family including his mother, brothers (and their families), and sister Geraldine moved to the property

from Buckhead. Over the next 35 years, the property was used by various family members as their primary residence and at times as a weekend retreat. In 1962 Jan made the property his permanent home and lived there until he died in 1980.

In 1960 Jan and Geraldine divided the property up between them. Geraldine loved the rural setting and hoped to make it her permanent home, but when she married Mr. Dan Geltner, she moved to Pittsburgh, PA. Geraldine returned regularly and dreamed of moving back permanently and building a cottage on a point that juts into the lake, opposite the Lake Monroe dam.

Geraldine never realized her dream, but because she wanted to make sure the land remained in its natural state, she did the next best thing. . . In 1997 Mrs. Geltner donated the land to the Atlanta Audubon Society, who in accordance with Mrs. Geltner's wishes, worked with the Chattowah Open Land Trust to place a perpetual conservation easement on the land that prohibits the development of the land and ensures that it will remain a nature habitat for Douglas County wildlife.

The Geltner Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary remains undisturbed in its pristine condition to this day. The Atlanta Audubon Society has recently begun evaluating the most appropriate way to open the property up to the public. The CAC's BIG READ Bird Walk is an important first step.



Lake Monroe (formerly known as Turnipseed Lake)

ABOUT THE ATLANTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

The Atlanta Audubon Society works to promote the enjoyment and understanding of birds and to conserve and restore the ecosystems that support them. The AAS is the metropolitan Atlanta affiliate of the national Audubon Society and has more than 4300 members in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

Thanks to Don Scarbrough Sr and Don Scarbrough Jr (Mrs. Geltner's brother and nephew) for contributing history and pictures for this article. The Scarbrough families currently reside in Douglas County just a few miles from the Geltner Nature Preserve.