

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

March – April, 2024, Volume LV, Issue II



Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board Administrative Responsibilities

President	Sue De Rosa
Vice President	Rose Talbert
Secretary	Patti Seanor
Treasurer	Judy Johnson

Education Workgroup

Education Outreach	Diana Churchill, Sue De Rosa, and Rose Talbert
Field Trips	Diana Churchill, Brittany Dodge, and Katie Higgins
Programs	Melanie Sparrow, and Rose Talbert

Communications Workgroup

Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Diana Churchill and Matt Tozer
Publicity	Brittany Dodge

Historian

Leslie Weichsel

Ogeechee Audubon Mission: Ogeechee Audubon educates adults and children about birds, wildlife, and the environment. We provide opportunities to enjoy the world around us, and advocate for responsible public policy and legislation for the conservation of our natural resources.

Public Meeting!

Please join us for the Public Meeting on Tuesday, April 16, 7PM at the First Presbyterian Church, 20 Washington Avenue, Savannah, GA!

North on the Wing Bruce Beehler

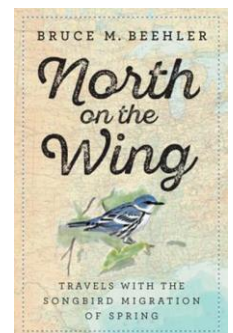
The OAS April 16 meeting will be an exciting opportunity for bird enthusiasts and nature lovers. Bruce Beehler who has extensive environmental experience, including his work at the National Museum

of Natural History and his travels to diverse locations like New Guinea, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, promises a captivating presentation. He will be sharing about the subject of one of his 17 books, *North on the Wing: Traveling with the Songbirds of Spring*.

The purpose of this field expedition was to obtain first-hand knowledge on the state of spring in the year 2015. Although Beehler is a professional ornithologist and conservationist, this journey was not a scientific exercise. Instead, Beehler acted as a naturalist and reporter, focusing on songbirds, nature, environmental history, and American culture. The objective was to tell a unique story of little-known natural environments, dedicated local naturalists, their innovative projects, and their strategically placed field stations. These critical components make up the front line in the ongoing campaign to study and conserve migratory birds, their critical habitats, and the phenomenon of neotropical migration in a world undergoing rapid change. Beehler's presentation includes a selection of the more than 5,000 digital images he took featuring



birds and nature.



Please consider spreading the word to those outside our organization who might share an interest in ornithology and the wonders of bird migration. The meeting is open to members and non-OAS members alike.

OAS Annual Meeting before the April Public Meeting

Before Dr. Beehler's talk, we will hold our Annual Meeting which will be about 5-10 minutes. A state of OAS will be presented, briefly highlighting our activities and the financial status of the group. Also a vote will be held re-electing three of our officers, Sue De Rosa-President, Rose Talbert-Vice President, and Patti Seanor-Secretary. A vote to officially instate Judy Johnson as Treasurer will also be done. Please be sure to attend.



Field Trips – Get out into Nature!

Field trips are planned **leader-directed** birding opportunities. A knowledgeable and experienced leader will assist in spotting and identifying birds in a precise habitat selected for that particular field trip. The habitat and target birds for the particular area will be outlined in the field trip description. Field trips provide not only a birding opportunity but present learning opportunities for all, especially beginning birders. Field trips are open to the public and birders of all skill levels and ages. Length of time 2 to 3 hours.

If you plan to attend a field trip, please email the leader, though for all of these trips, walk-ins are welcome unless otherwise noted.

Sunday, March 10: Sterling Creek Park (Elbow Swamp Road, Richmond Hill, GA, 31324) 8:00 am -

12:00. Sterling Creek Park has a wide diversity of habitats including forests, wetlands, ponds, and grasslands. We will be looking for ducks, rails, wintering warblers, sparrows, wrens (including Sedge Wren), raptors and maybe some early migrants. Using Google maps, navigate to 'Sterling Creek Park', Richmond Hill. Meet in the parking lot at the end of the gravel driveway leading into the park (near the white restroom building) at 8:00 AM.

Trip rigor: Moderate with quite a bit of walking. Leader: Pam Smith pavercel@gmail.com

Monday, March 25: Tybee North Beach. 9:00 am - 11:00 am. This will be a shorebird survey to collect data for the International Shorebird Survey Spring 2024 season. Meet at the Polk Street Parking Area at 9:00 am. Download the Tybee Parking app to pay for parking. Trip rigor moderate with 2 miles of walking on sand. Leader: Diana Churchill dichurchbirds@gmail.com. In Conjunction with the Southeast Shorebird Festival.

Saturday, March 30: Skidaway State Park 8:00 am - 12:00 pm. We will be looking for early Spring migrants and the beginning of courtship for some resident songbirds. Trip rigor: easy to moderate with quite a bit of walking. Meet in the parking lot of Skidaway Island Methodist Church (54 Diamond Causeway, Savannah, GA 31411). Trip leader: Katie Higgins kt.higgins1999@gmail.com

912-677-2967.

Spring Migration Walks in Forsyth Park. Tuesday mornings April 8, 15, 22, 29 & May 6 8:00 am – 9:30am. Meet at the Forsyth Park Fountain at 8 am. We will wander the North End of Forsyth Park for 1-1/2 hours looking for migrating songbirds, nesting hawks and owls and resident songbirds as well. Trip rigor: Easy. Leader Diana Churchill dichurchbirds@gmail.com 912-604-7539.

Sunday, April 7: Tybee North Beach. 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm. This will be a shorebird survey to collect data for the International Shorebird Survey Spring 2024 season. Meet at the Polk Street Parking Area at 6:30 pm.. Download the Tybee Parking app to pay for parking. Trip rigor moderate with 2 miles of walking on sand. Leader: Diana Churchill dichurchbirds@gmail.com.

Sunday, April 21: Webb Wildlife Management Area 8:00am to 12:00pm. We'll look for site specialties such as Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Bachman's Sparrows, spring migrants, and more. Meet at the entrance to Webb at 8 am. Trip rigor: Moderate. Bring snacks and or lunch. 2680 Augusta Stage Coach Rd. Garnett, SC 29922. Leader Steve Wagner sjwgnr@hotmail.com 912-655-0797

Rusty Blackbird Surveys at the Savannah Christian Preparatory School 4:00pm to 6:00pm on specified Sundays (see below)

Ogeechee Audubon will continue to monitor use of this site as a pre-roost staging area for Rusty Blackbirds. This restricted access site is most likely the most reliable location in the area for observing Rusty Blackbirds which have undergone massive population declines over the past half century. If you would like to join the survey team please meet a team member at the front gate of the school at 3:00pm sharp. 1599 Chatham Parkway, Savannah, GA 31408. Leaders Stan Gray (graysirsgarden@comcast.net) & Pam Smith (pavercel@comcast.net)

Surveys will be conducted on Sunday Mar. 10, Mar. 24, and Apr. 7.

Other Events

Natural Resource Discovery Day - March 9, 2024 10:00am – 3:00pm

Special Refuge Update Presentations at 11am and 1pm

Savannah National Wildlife Refuge – 694 Beech Hill Ln, Hardeeville, SC 29927

For more information, call 843-784-2468

2nd Annual Southeast Shorebird Festival - March 25-30, 2024

Visit the website - <http://southeastshorebirdfestival.com/> for info about events happening during the week.

2024 City Nature Challenge – April 26-29

Spring is officially here, one of the best times to get outside and bird watch. While many of us will be focusing on the migrant flyovers and nest-building parents, there are opportunities to explore the other fauna and flora that call Coastal Georgia their home. An international competition is occurring the weekend after Earth Day called the City Nature Challenge (CNC). The CNC started years ago as a challenge between two California cities to see who can document the most wildlife. In 2024 the coastline of Georgia will be one of four hundred participating locations for the third year in a row. John Cassell will be the point of contact for our location this year.

“One thing that makes the CNC unique is that anyone, anywhere in Coastal Georgia can upload photos or audio files from their neighborhood and within hours people will help ID the organism. This is through a free website and phone app called iNaturalist”. Anyone who goes birding knows that eBird has their unique rules and requirements for uploading bird data. While iNaturalist does not need you to specify how many individuals you observed, it does require you to upload a photo

or audio file to prove the organism exists. Any birder who wants to do the CNC this year will now be challenged to grab their camera and really test their photography skills. In addition, unlike eBird which doesn't care for egg, feather, or dead bird information, iNaturalist is more than happy to help people identify these.

Overall, whether you wish to photograph the shorebirds at Tybee, the mushrooms on a log, an armadillo in the woods, or flowers in bloom, consider joining in the fun photography nature for the 2024 CNC. This event will be from April 26th through 29th. **To help boost the number of species discovered in our area Mr. Cassell is hosting a nature walk at Sterling Creek in Richmond Hill Saturday the 27th at 8am.** "Bring your camera and enthusiasm to see birds like sparrows and kites, bees, and other cool organisms, Sterling Creek has good forest and wetland habitats"

Official CNC Project Link:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2024-savannah-low-country-and-coast-al-georgia>

Meeting Location:

Sterling Creek Entrance (31.9112, -81.3184)

Field Notes

Ford and Field & River Club Roost Count, January 27, 2024

Judy Johnson

On January 27th a small group of us had a lovely evening at The Ford Field & River Club courtesy of Shannon Matzke, the naturalist there. We walked along pristine cart paths to the back of the property in anticipation of seeing legions of birds coming in to roost for the night (that was the scene during the Christmas Bird Count when we saw hundreds of Ibis and assorted Herons and Egrets). Alas this was not the case as primarily Double-crested Cormorants (150) and a few Anhingas were the main participants to select this little roost of trees joining a couple of alligators. We did have flybys of small flocks of Ibis, Herons & Egrets as they headed to their newest secret place. Lots of Red-winged Blackbirds (220) and Tree Swallows (145) were coloring the skies as well.

It was probably the most relaxing evening of birding I've ever had! We saw a total of 28 species as the sun began to sink along with a cool sundog in the sky. Highlights were a Wilson's Snipe flying overhead, 4 Northern Harriers and 3 Bald Eagles including a pair performing synchronized flying as dusk settled into dark. Other treats on the trek back to our cars were deer, frogs chorusing and bats swooping by in pursuit of gnats and mosquitos. All in all, a really cool experience!



Photo Credit Judy Johnson

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Bear Island WMA, February 11, 2024

Bianca DeNapoli

Sunday, February 11th was a good day to walk about 2 miles at Bear Island WMA in Green Pond SC with Leader Lynn Hodgson. At 8am the gathering area at Mary's House Pond was filled with three birding groups. The Charleston Audubon group, a group led by Zack Steinhauser the documentarian of Purple Martin's and Ogeechee Audubon a group of 11.

We managed to see 70+ different birds. This was my first time watching American Avocets, very pretty flying, swimming and feeding. There were also lots of American White Pelicans, which we watched flying in to the Pond. In the scope we could see a lone snow goose feeding along with the Tundra swans.

This WMA area has many Owl boxes mounted, but all appeared empty at this time. Hopefully, next trip to Bear Island we will see some Owls.



Tundra Swan and Snow Goose
Photo Credit Lynn Hodgson



American White Pelicans
Photo Credit Lynn Hodgson

Christmas Bird Count Round Up

Harris Neck

Sue De Rosa

Luckily this year's Harris Neck Christmas Bird Count dawned with clear skies and a brisk but not frigid 41°F. The boaters did have to brave the 8-15 mph winds out on the water, though. Thirty two birders, made up 12 parties, spent a total of 65 hours in the field, and covered 119 miles by foot, car, plus boat. In all, the participants located 123 species, 11491 individual birds which was similar to previous years' numbers even though there were five fewer birders.

Three rare bird reports were submitted: one for the Hairy Woodpecker by Pam Vercellone-Smith, one for the Northern Parula by Steve Calver, and one for the Ovenbird by Diana Churchill. The Georgia compiler Giff Beaton was appreciative that pictures and recordings were submitted in addition to detailed descriptions. The Northern Parula species had only been reported in 3 counts (last time in CBC 115) but the habitat was one where this bird would be expected to be found. Not many birds get past Steve's sharp eyes!

In addition to the above birds, there were low numbers this year for: the Loggerhead Shrike, American Robin, Common Yellowthroat, Song Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark. High counts for this CBC were for: Orange-crowned warbler, Anhinga, and Osprey. These birds had been reported in at least 36 other CBCs.

A big shout out to all the tenacious birders who participated. One group started at 7am and persisted until 5pm. Plus some folks stayed around or returned for the roost count which lasted from 4:30 to almost 6. Please consider becoming involved in this tradition which marks one of the longest standing citizen science projects on record—124 years. Next year's Harris Neck CBC will be on December 20. All interested birders are welcome to join in the fun whether you have been birding for years or are just beginning. For more information about the CBC plus to see all the locations of the CBCs in the US and worldwide, explore this link: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>

Richmond Hill

Stan Gray

Only in its 4th year, the Richmond Hill CBC is gaining in popularity and level of participation among local and regional birders. Working closely with the Ford Field & River Club (FF&RC), this Ogeechee Audubon-organized CBC has seen a growth of 12 participants over the past two years and a 63% increase in terms of party-hour effort. Equally as important has been the expansion of areas covered. In this year's count on Wednesday, December 20, a number of large landholdings (or "green spaces"), both private and public were added, and this has enriched both the quality and quantity of bird activity reported.

The count area is anchored by 13 eBird hotspots and a large swath of protected land and buffer areas within the eastern third of Fort Stewart. A roost site at the FF&RC greatly increased the reported numbers of wading species, and once again the report from the Superior Landfill site reflected tremendous numbers of scavenger species.

In all, 49 eBird reports were generated on count day, with a total of 115 species recorded. Out-of-season, unusual, or rare sightings included Snow Goose, Sandhill Crane, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Henslow's Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, and Northern Waterthrush. Extraordinary #'s of Laughing Gull (22,000+) and Tree Swallow (11,000+) were reported primarily from the Superior Landfill site. Thanks in great part to the developing roost site at Ford, 449 White Ibis were seen.

In the year ahead prior to the next GARH CBC on **Wednesday, December 18**, a concerted, systematic search is planned in order to enlist other landholdings in the count, and to recruit additional birders to ensure that informed coverage of these increased land areas can occur. Portions of the area within the count circle are undergoing explosive residential, commercial, and industrial growth. As a result, lands need to be identified that are destined to remain as green spaces in the years ahead, so that as much consistency as possible can be obtained in future data collection efforts.

Ogeechee Audubon Board

Several of our Board members will be either rolling off the board after having served 6 or more years or have had to leave the Board due to increased time commitments in their outside, non-birding life. So, if you have an interest in becoming more involved in OAS please let us know. Specifically, openings include managing:

- Speakers
- Webpage management
- Membership
- Newsletter
- Publicity
- Social media engagement

If you would like to volunteer or want to get additional information, please contact us at ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com Thanks for your support.

Hi! I am Mary Lambright and I am the person who keeps track of membership. Did you know? Ogeechee Audubon Society membership is for one-year, starting January 1. Most of you have renewed for 2024 (yay for you!). If you aren't sure what your current membership status is, you can send an email to ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com and I will be happy to let you know. If you are getting this newsletter via MailChimp, you at least have paid through 2023. If you need to renew, please use the membership form below so you can choose which membership level is best for you, just fill out the form and send it in with your dues. Our treasurer, Judy Johnson, will take care of your money and I will make sure that you continue to receive our newsletter, The Marshlander, and other important info via MailChimp. **If we do not receive your dues by 3/31/24, we will assume you are not interested in renewing and will remove you from our membership which will also remove you from our MailChimp list and you will no longer receive newsletters and other announcements.**

Disclaimer: Membership to Ogeechee Audubon Society does NOT include membership to National Audubon Society. For more information about National Audubon Society go to <https://www.audubon.org/>

Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2024

New membership _____ Renewal _____

Membership – please check level of membership

_____ Individual Adult older than 18 years - \$20

_____ Household/Family - \$20

_____ Senior – individual (62 and older) - \$15

_____ Student – individual (13 years old to 18 years old) - \$15

_____ Fledgling Birder – individual (12 years old and younger) - \$5

Additional contribution: \$ _____

Name: _____

If household or family, additional names: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: (home) _____ (mobile) _____

Email: _____

Ogeechee Audubon membership is for a calendar year – January to December. OAS Chapter renewals are accepted until March 31st.

All meeting information, events and important conservation issues will be communicated by email.

Ogeechee Audubon Newsletter – The *Marshlander* is sent by email to individual or household/family.

Please mail this form with your check to:

Ogeechee Audubon, Attn Membership

PO Box 13424,

Savannah, GA 31416

Contributions are tax deductible.