



THE MARSHLANDER

NEWSLETTER OF THE OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA
VOL XLVIII, ISSUE 6, DECEMBER, 2018
WWW.OGEECHEEAUDUBON.ORG

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.

Please Join Ogeechee Audubon Society

Tuesday, December 11th at 7:00 PM

Holiday Party Year of the Bird Celebration!



Ogeechee Audubon Society will be celebrating the culmination of the Year of the Bird with our Holiday Party. Members are encouraged to bring a friend who may be interested in joining Ogeechee Audubon and learning more about what we do. *Our celebration will feature a presentation by Diana Churchill on Winter Birds as a warm-up for our upcoming Christmas Bird Counts.* We will then put our skills to the test in a friendly competition! In addition, we will conclude our raffle benefiting the Orphaned Bird Care Program. We hope you will join us for fun and refreshments. Everyone will receive a special gift in honor of the Year of the Bird!

We meet at the First Presbyterian Church,
520 E. Washington Ave, Savannah.

Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board

Administrative Responsibilities

President	Leslie Weichsel
Vice President	Mary Lambright
Secretary	Marty Foxx
Treasurer	Pam Smith

Membership Workgroup

Member Enrollment	Debbie Bennett
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Education Workgroup

Education Outreach	Diana Churchill, Sue DeRosa
Field Trips	Mary Sweeney-Reeves
Programs	Lynn Wrenn

Communications Workgroup

Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Leslie Weichsel
Publicity	Sandy Beasley

Conservation Workgroup

Entire Board

Field Trips



BRING BINOCULARS,
HAT, SUNSCREEN, BUG
SPRAY, WATER AND
SNACKS OR LUNCH FOR
ALL FIELD TRIPS

SAT, DEC 1: Pinckney Island Wildlife Refuge Trip 9 am to 12 noon: OAS members are invited to join Savannah National Wildlife Refuge for a wagon ride for a “behind-the-scenes” tour and birding at Pinckney Island Wildlife Refuge and more importantly to hang one of the Barn Owl Boxes that were constructed on November 3rd. This tour is open to Ogeechee Audubon members only and is limited to 20 individuals. Please make your reservation at ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com. Sign up early to reserve your place! **Trip Vigor:** Easy with some walking and stepping up and down in a wagon.

FRI, DEC 14: Harris Neck Christmas Bird Count: Since the Christmas Bird Count began over a century ago, it has relied on the dedication and commitment of volunteers like you. These counts occur annually at specific sites all over the United States. The data provides information on bird population trends over time. Birders of all levels are welcome to participate. For more information and to sign up send an email to ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com. **Trip Rigor:** varies according to birding site, but mostly moderate, with some walking.

SAT, JAN 5: Savannah Area Christmas Bird Count. We need volunteers (advanced and beginner) to participate in one of the oldest bird population surveys in the United States. The Christmas bird counts occur annually at specific sites all over the United States. The data provides information on bird population trends over time. For more information and to sign up send an email to

ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com. **Trip Rigor:** varies according to birding site, but mostly moderate, with some walking.

FRI, JAN 18 – MON JAN 21: Georgia Ornithological Society Winter Meeting on Tybee Island is an opportunity for all to learn how to identify many local bird species in the area. There are numerous field trips to various habitats. The public and birders of all levels are welcome to attend. See www.gos.org for more information and to sign up.

SAT, JAN 26 Hutchinson Island 8:00 am to 1130 am: Tired of being cooped up inside? Why not get outside and enjoy one of our local birding hotspots. Habitats such as forest, grassland, and shoreline make Hutchinson Island an attractive area for species diversity. We have seen several rare birds show up at this location in almost every season over the years. This will be a practice session for the Great Backyard Bird Count (February 16-19). Meet at the main white building in the undeveloped Reserve Subdivision. Leader: Dr. Mark Welford, mwelford@georgiasouthern.edu **Trip Rigor:** moderate with a lot of walking.

All field trips are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted!

***Please be sure to check OAS website or our Facebook page prior to each field trip to be sure there are no changes to the scheduled field trip.**

Message from Membership!



It is OAS Membership renewal time, again. Can you believe it!

The December OAS meeting is coming up December 11th. This is a great meeting of fun, information, and meeting with old friends and making new ones (all of whom have a common interest and love for birds). This meeting is the official kick-off of the new year (even though it is in December!!) and thus a great time to pay your dues for 2019. As a reminder our membership dues cover the calendar year from January through December. So, come and take advantage of a wonderful time to pay your dues to re-new or join as a new member. Then you can forget about dues for a whole year and turn your attention to the skies, the trees, the ground, the shores, the water ways, and enjoy our special friends, the birds. And don't forget about all the

informative meetings and other events throughout the year. Ogeechee Audubon was able to donate \$500 to help restore Oatland Island Wildlife Center after the tornado thanks to your membership dues and contributions!

Please remember your membership assures that you are sent our Newsletter as well as other notifications of events and activities (some of which are for members only). We run our membership drive through March of 2019 and if you have not renewed by then, your name is removed from the list to receive these notices and newsletters until we receive your renewal dues. I do want to say thank you for being a member and supporting this great organization. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to call me (912-667-7256). Hope to see you in December.

Debbie Bennett, Membership Chair

2018 Year of the Bird Celebrations Come to a Close!

- 🦉 Ogeechee Audubon Society will have its final raffle to celebrate the Year of the Bird by offering bird related items to be raffled in support of Orphaned Bird Care.
- 🦉 We will also continue to sell OAS pins for \$5 each at each meeting.
- 🦉 Please join us for our year-end Holiday Party!

For the love of Birds please join us!!!!

Please Welcome our Newest Ogeechee Audubon Members!!!

- 🦉 Tommy Taylor
- 🦉 Brian Byrne



Photo by Leslie Weichsel – Fort Pulaski Field Trip



You can add to a century of citizen science data by signing up for a count near you!

Since the Christmas Bird Count began over a century ago, it has relied on the dedication and commitment of volunteers like you. Ogeechee Audubon Society manages the following CBC circles:

Harris Neck – Friday December 14, 2018
Savannah – Saturday January 5, 2019

Join the fun by signing up today!

Send an email to ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com and let us know which circle you wish to join.



Check out our website and like us on Facebook

www.ogeecheeaudubon.org



Brief Summary From Last Season of Project Feeder Watch – Southeast

Significant trends noted:

The most striking increase was Pine Siskins were reported at 28% of feeders compared to only 11% the prior year.

The most drastic decline in the Southeast was the Purple Finch, they were reported at only 19% of the sites compared to 30% last season.

Species on the rise in the Southeast included Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Orange-crowned Warblers. Chipping Sparrows and Eastern Bluebirds also remain on the rise.
(Winter Bird Highlights From Project Feeder Watch – The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Volume 14)

Field Notes

Message From Field Trip Leader Stan Gray to the Birders who attended the OAS October Field Trip to the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens

Fellow birders,

I just wanted to express my sincere appreciation for your having taking time last Saturday to spend a few hours visiting and birding at the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens (CGBG). Twenty-three (23) attendees certainly set a record for the number of birders assembled at one time on the grounds of the CGBG searching for birds. A total of 47 different species were seen by at least one or more birders during the morning walk. **And in fact, four (4) new birds were added to the eBird list of species seen at this Hotspot:** Common Ground-Dove, Black-throated Green Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Philadelphia Vireo. As a result, we have now sighted 139 species on the grounds. We have Larry Carlile to thank for having prepared the accurate and comprehensive basic eBird report for the day's activities.

I hope everyone who asked for a shared copy of the final eBird report received it digitally. If not, please let me know. For the rest of you, even if you do not have an eBird account, you can still view Saturday's results and more by visiting www.eBird.org, clicking on Explore Hotspots, and then typing in Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens.

Garden Director Tim Davis is very pleased that Ogeechee Audubon has once again selected the CGBG as a site for a birding outing, and encourages you to come back again often as we witness the changing seasons for both "birds and bloom". If you enjoy the experience of wandering the grounds, I encourage you to consider becoming a member of the Gardens. Membership applications can be picked up at the Gift Shop or online at www.coastalbg.uga.edu.

Happy birding, and see you at the Gardens.

Stan Gray

October Birding at Fort Pulaski

...by Lynn Wrenn (Photos by Leslie Weichsel)



On October 27th at Fort Pulaski, 18 Birders were treated not only to a beautiful chilly morning (at last) but at least 35 species of birds. On the bridge leading into the Fort we

were welcomed by 22 Forster's Terns and an Osprey. Led by Diana Churchill, we were fortunate to witness the sight of 48 American Oystercatchers on the shore, several of them banded. Dog walkers chased away the flock of



Oystercatchers but while we were busy with plenty of other birds to watch, they returned. We stood on the banks of the

Savannah River with cargo ships passing as they left, leaving a wake that caught some visitors unaware as they washed up on the shore. Hunkered down from the wind on shore were 21 Semipalmated Plovers with 1 Dunlin in their midst. There were Ruddy Turnstones, 26 Brown Pelicans, a Least Sandpiper, many Willets and of course, the energetic little Sanderlings running around. We saw Caspian Terns, Double-crested Cormorants flying overhead, Great and Snowy Egrets, 43 Boat-tailed Grackles and 70 White Ibis. After moving towards the campgrounds in search of Sparrows and Wrens, we saw 4 Brown-headed Nuthatches, 2 Eastern Bluebirds, 3 Savannah Sparrows, 2 Marsh Wrens, Cardinals, Gray Catbirds and several other species. We had 2 junior birders with the group and I know that one young redhead in particular had a great time and learned a lot! It appears she caught the birding fever as well. I'd call it a very successful and enjoyable way to spend a Saturday morning.



Chatham County Wetlands Preserve Winter Visitors November 10th Fieldtrip

... by Miriam Litchfield (Photo by Pam Smith)



Eight of us met on Chief of Love Rd. (great road name) on a cool and unexpectedly breezy Saturday morning for the outing. We initially walked down a cypress swamp road

outside the preserve getting out of the wind and hearing our first winter visitors in the chatter of House Wrens and sounds of Swamp Sparrows in grassy wetlands alongside the swamp. As we made our way down the road Yellow-bellied Sapsucker visitors were spotted along with the year-round resident Red-bellied and Flicker Woodpeckers. We could hear Pileated Woodpeckers in the distance. The ubiquitous Yellow-rumped Warblers had arrived for their winter stay with their constant "chep" calls.

As we entered the preserve the sun started to warm up the birds, as well as the birders. We walked in a wooded area with Yellow-rumps zinging right and left. Our skilled leader, Steve Wagner, kept trying to hear any other warbler calls that might be among the "cheps" of the Yellow-rumps. He spotted a Black and White Warbler moving on a tree in its "nuthatch" fashion, and then was rewarded with the sharp chip call of an Orange-crowned Warbler. Pam Smith was able to catch a photo of the bird with a caterpillar in its beak! We were delighted to see both of these winter residents to our area. Tiny Ruby-crowned Kinglets had also arrived with their "jdidit" calls and distinct white eye rings.

The preserve has a diversity of ecosystems; one being a fresh water marsh. As we walked along the marsh, Steve wanted to see if he could call up a Sedge Wren that had arrived not long ago. He started playing the sound of the bird and the secretive little one would pop up out of the needle grass, fly and pop down again. We felt lucky to see the black streaked back and head of such a shy visitor.

Throughout the trip we saw other winter visitors such as Goldfinch in their plain yellow brown attire eating alder catkins, flocks of Tree Swallows and Robins flying overhead and a Phoebe perched on a fence post. Resident Pine Warblers, White-eyed Vireos, Catbirds, Towhees and an immature Bald Eagle added to our wonderful morning.

Building Owl Houses at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge

...by Mary Lou Dickson (Photos by Mary Lou Dickson)

In celebration of the "Year of the Bird," fifteen hardy souls converged on the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge wood shop to construct four Barn Owl Boxes for the Savannah Refuge complex. The day started out with a brief overview of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, followed by one on Barn Owls, which included details about the box design.

After the presentations, the group was handed over to refuge volunteer, Bruce Dickson, who had pre-cut out the four boxes and had labeled all the parts for easy assembly. The group was divided into four teams and quickly everyone set about assembling their box. It was wonderful to watch the team members helping each other and everyone played nice with the toys at hand. Everyone on the team got a turn using the power drill, including our youngest members, under close adult supervision, of course.



Although, this was not really a competition, everyone worked as though it was and all four boxes were completed within 10 minutes of each other. It was clear, that everyone was having fun and I think a bit disappointed when the boxes were finished, as they didn't want the fun to end.



A follow-up field trip is planned at Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge on December 1st, where one of these fine boxes will be hung for the Barn Owls.



A great big THANK YOU is extended to Savannah National Wildlife Refuge for partnering with us on this project as well as Mary Lou and Bruce Dickson for setting up and organizing the construction project. Everything was awesome!

Shorebird Alliance Meeting Summary

Two members of the Ogeechee Audubon Board, Pam Smith and Mary Lou Dickson, attended the Shorebird Alliance Meeting in Brunswick on October 22nd. *The Georgia Shorebird Alliance is a partnership between government, academic, non-government organizations and private citizens committed to advancing shorebird and seabird conservation in Georgia through collaborative work that identifies and addresses important needs with regard to research, monitoring, management, and education.*

One of the projects discussed at the meeting was the Georgia Shorebird Initiative launched in May of this year. The purpose of the project is *to address specific threats to the shorebirds dependent on the southeastern region of the Atlantic Coast. By increasing the involvement of the public, as well as state and federal agencies, we strive to build a local, holistic culture of shorebird conservation to ensure the region continues to provide the resources necessary to sustain shorebirds throughout the year.*

One specific goal for this initiative is to monitor shorebirds. Ogeechee Audubon hopes to become involved by participating in monitoring American Oystercatchers at Fort Pulaski.

Abbey Sterling who coordinates the Georgia Shorebird initiative will be speaking at our Ogeechee Audubon meeting in April.

Featured Traveler: American Oystercatcher 'HC'

...by Pam Smith (Photo by Pam Smith)



On recent birding trips to Ft. Pulaski and Tybee's North Beach, several OAS members (Diana Churchill, Mary Sweeney-Reeves, Mary Lou Dickson and I) collected banding data on 17 banded American Oystercatchers. After submitting the data to

the American Oystercatcher Working Group website (amoywg.org), we received the resight history for each bird. It's fascinating to learn where these birds have traveled and their favorite places to hang out!

In the map below, I've featured the travel highlights for the American Oystercatcher who proudly displays a red band with the code 'HC' (the red band color means it was banded in GA). This bird, which was banded at Pelican Spit in Glynn County, GA on 7/16/11, clearly enjoys spending time on the beaches in Georgia and on the Gulf Coast of Florida! The map shows the total number of resights per county over a 7-year period. Interestingly, since September 2014 all HC's resight data has been collected from Chatham County beaches.

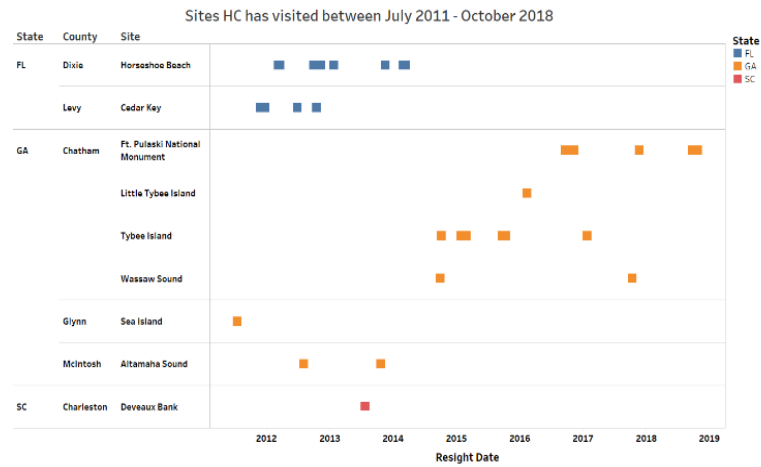


Photo by Leslie Weichsel – Pam Smith making notes of American Oyster Catchers' Bands at Fort Pulaski

Year-end Thank You!

- ...to the Ogeechee Audubon Board Members
- ...to the Field Trip Leaders
- ...to our Presenters
- ...to all those who fill the feeders at Oatland Island
- ...and to each of you

For all you do for our Audubon Chapter and our Birds!

Your contributions are appreciated!

Counties 'HC' has been resighted in between July 2011 - October 2018

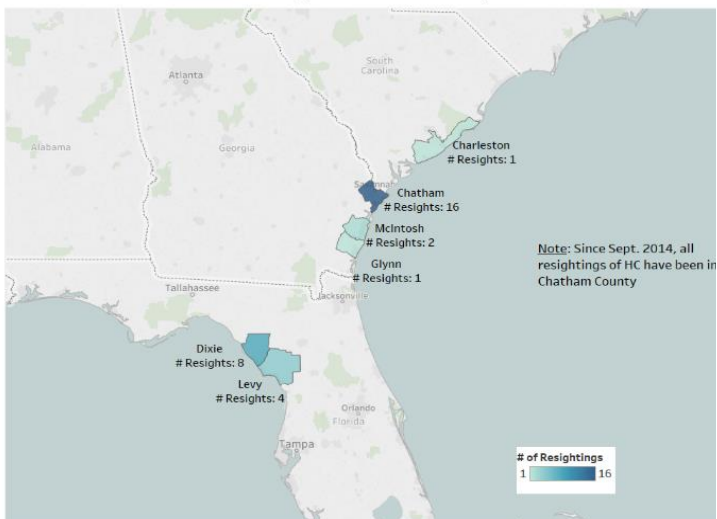


Photo by Leslie Weichsel – Ogeechee Audubon members conducting one of the bird surveys at the Superior Landfill

Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2019

New membership _____ Renewal _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (h) _____ (c) _____

e-mail* _____

*** Our newsletter is delivered by e-mail**

As a member, you will be notified by e-mail about upcoming meetings, events and important conservation issues.

Please mail this form with your check to:

**Ogeechee Audubon, Attn Membership, PO Box 13424,
Savannah, GA 31416**

Contributions are tax deductible.

Ogeechee Audubon-\$20.00/household _____

Includes the *Marshlander*

Senior (over 62) or Student - \$15/household _____

Includes the *Marshlander*

Special Contribution _____

Total: _____

Ogeechee Audubon membership is based on the calendar year – January to December.

Send your *National Audubon membership dues* directly to National.

OAS Chapter renewals are accepted until March 31st.

***Please help us save the trees. If you receive the Newsletter by printed mail and can receive it electronically via e-mail let Debbie Bennett (mburdsal@comcast.net) know so we no longer print it, mail it and use paper unnecessarily. Audubon cares about the environment and also about you. Therefore, if you do not have access to email we will be happy to send you a printed copy.**