

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

January, 2021, Volume LI, Issue I

Celebrating Over 50 Years of Birding in Savannah



2021 New Year's Edition

Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board	
<u>Administrative Responsibilities</u>	
President	Leslie Weichsel
Vice President	Mary Lambright
Secretary	Marty Foxx
Treasurer	Pam Smith
<u>Education Workgroup</u>	
Education Outreach	Diana Churchill,
Sue DeRosa, Rose Talbert	
Field Trips	John Williamson
Programs	Lynn Wrenn
<u>Communications Workgroup</u>	
Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Leslie Weichsel
Publicity	Matt Tozar
<u>Historian</u>	
Sandy Beasley	
<u>Conservation Workgroup</u>	
Entire Board	

The last nine months of 2020 have been very challenging for Ogeechee Audubon (and everyone) in the midst of this historic pandemic. We are grateful for your feedback and excellent ideas provided on the survey from November. We have used this information as we planned to find ways to stay in touch, conduct socially distanced bird walks and surveys, publish additional Newsletters and host several virtual Zoom meetings. We wish to thank each of you for persevering during these trying times. Indeed, we are all in this together! As you will find in this Newsletter, Ogeechee Audubon is slowly ramping up activities and are confident that by the end of 2021 we should be back in full swing. So, continue to hang in with us and we will be back to normal birding together again!

Please stay tuned and join in our activities for the New Year!

Our 51st year of Ogeechee Audubon Society birding!

**The Board of Ogeechee Audubon wishes each of you a very
Happy New Year!**

-OAS Board of Directors

	<i>Fresh Seed NO Fillers!</i>	Bird Feeders Birdbaths Pole Systems And The Freshest Seed in Town!	8108 Abercorn Street Mon-Sat 10-6 Sunday 12-5 Next to Home Goods (912) 961-3455	
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In honor of Ogeechee Audubon's Fifty-Year Anniversary, the Board is giving each of you a special token of remembrance. You may pick up your small gift at Wild Birds Unlimited until January 10, 2021. If you are unable to pick it up at that time, we will mail it to you.

Thank You!

Field Trips – in a Pandemic World



Ogeechee Audubon is conducting field trips again.

There will be strict guidelines to keep us safe. We are all in this together as we adapt to the new "normal". These field trips and surveys are for OAS Members only.

Please read the following guidelines. Everyone is expected to agree to follow these requirements in order to participate in the Field Trips.

Guidelines to participate in Field Trips by Ogeechee Audubon:

- Birding groups are limited to 6 members each plus a leader.
- **If you show up without a reservation you will not be allowed to join the group** – we will not have more than a total of 7 in each group.
- You MUST wear a face mask at all times and practice social distancing while on the field trip to protect yourself and others in the group.
- Do not share binoculars, scopes or other equipment.
- Car pooling with participants outside your household is strongly discouraged.
- By signing up for the field trip sponsored by Ogeechee Audubon Society, you acknowledge that these activities can be hazardous to you and your health. You agree voluntarily to participate.

January 16, 2021 – Lake Mayer – We will walk around the Lake. There will be two separate groups starting at staggered times in order to provide appropriate social distancing. When you sign up please indicate the time you wish to start.

Two groups of 6 birders each:

- **Group 1 will meet at 8am in the parking lot** – Diana Churchill will be the leader with 6 birders
- **Group 2 will meet at 8:30am in the parking lot** – Larry Carlile will be the leader with 6 birders

You must sign up for the walk and indicate which group you wish to be in – ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com

Program length about 2 hours or more. Terrain: Easy surface with asphalt around the lake. May be some walking on grassy areas.

February 20, 2021 – Sterling Creek Park – We will meet at the park at 8:00am to bird this area. There will be two groups of six birders for a total of 12 plus the leaders. Pam Smith will lead one group; and John Williamson & Matt Tozer will co-lead the other.

In order to participate you must sign up at ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com – space is limited to a total of 12 birders divided into 2 groups of 6 each.

Program length about 2 hours or more. Terrain: Cleared hiking trails.

Savannah Christian Preparatory School Surveys

Ogeechee Audubon will be continuing surveys of the school property on Sundays, January 10th, February 7th and March 7th at 8:30 am.

Meet at the front of the school gate at 8:30 am sharp if you wish to participate. Participants are limited to six individuals.

In order to participate you must sign up at ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com. You must also follow the guidelines for field trips as outlined above.

Rusty Black Bird Survey Opportunity



photo by Pam Smith

Each Sunday through March 28th meet at the Savannah Christian Preparatory School – 1599 Chatham Parkway.

- Meet at the gate at 3 pm.
- Please adhere to the Guidelines above. Bring a Scope for your own use.
- Typically, the survey team is there until 5 pm.
- No need to sign up since there is plenty of room to social distance.

Ogeechee Audubon has been conducting the survey of the Rusty Blackbirds for years on the property of Savannah Christian Preparatory School. The data gathered is very helpful in tracking migration and number of the Rusties. Here is our eBird survey report from December 13, 2020:

"Continuing. The size of the Rusty Blackbird flock has grown exponentially at this site over the past several weeks, undoubtedly reflecting the arrival of many additional migrants to the SE coast. Rusty Blackbirds had already begun gathering in the pecan trees in the schoolyard at 2:59 PM when the survey started. For the next 2.5 hours, blackbird activity on various sections of the school grounds was voluminous and continuous. The presence of a Cooper's Hawk halfway through this period caused a temporary displacement of the heaviest activity. While Common Grackle numbers were negligible, the foraging flocks of blackbirds included many (mostly) female Red-Continuing. The size of the Rusty Blackbird flock at this site has grown exponentially at this site over the past several weeks, undoubtedly reflecting the arrival of many additional migrants to the SE coast. Rusty Blackbirds had already begun gathering in the pecan trees in the schoolyard at 2:59 PM when the survey started. For the next 2.5 hours, blackbird activity on various sections of the school grounds was voluminous and continuous. The presence of a Cooper's Hawk halfway through this period caused a temporary displacement of the heaviest activity. While Common Grackle numbers were negligible, the foraging flocks of blackbirds included many (mostly) female Red-winged Blackbirds, along with a handful of male RWBL, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and European Starlings, along with RUBL. Extensive photos were taken during the final foraging segment among the pecan litter, and % of RUBL to other species was ascertained. A total of 764 blackbird species were digitally counted from these photos. Using a RUBL to other species % of 80, we arrived at a count of 611 RUBL, a very conservative figure. When this massive blackbird flock began to depart the area for the nighttime roost, each small sub-flock, a total of 37 separate groups or waves, was counted and recorded. That number totaled 658 birds. In all probability, most if not all of these birds were RUBL. The count of 611 thus reflects the more conservative, yet minimum # of RUBL on site this day."

On December 13th we counted the highest number of RUBL yet at this site! Please come out and join the survey team to see these beautiful birds. Rusty blackbirds have under gone a drastic decline since 1966 for a cumulative decline of 89%. Savannah Christian Preparatory School is an area where they congregate to feed on the crushed pecans.

February 12th to 15th, 2021 is the Great Backyard Bird Count

Check out www.BirdCount.org for more information and how to participate

Good News!

Ogeechee Audubon Member, Isaiah Scott applied for and was awarded the prestigious Academy of Natural Sciences’ Don and Virginia Eckelberry Fellowship in wildlife art. The funds provided will assist with travel and other expenses for ornithological field research as delineated in Isaiah’s proposed project.

What an honor!

Ogeechee Audubon acted as the supporting organization for Isaiah’s application and will be assisting with the administration of this award. At 17 years old, Isaiah is the youngest individual to receive the Fellowship. Please join me in Congratulating Isaiah!

Don Eckelberry was an avid birder, artist and guide illustrator. Virginia Eckelberry also was an illustrator of nature particularly in the field of botany. Both Don and Virginia dedicated themselves to fusing nature with art.

The Academy of Natural Sciences was founded in 1812 and is part of Drexel University in Philadelphia. The Academy is dedicated to the understanding of the natural world.

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Year End Thank Yous!

- **Thank You to Wild Birds Unlimited for sponsoring our Newsletter!**
- **Thank You to the Members of the Ogeechee Audubon Board for all their hard work during this extraordinary year!**
- **Thank You to each Member of the Ogeechee Audubon Society for caring about birds and hanging in with us!**

A Winter Tradition – Christmas Bird Count –Thank Yous!

Ogeechee Audubon participated in Audubon’s 121st Christmas Bird Count for 2020-2021



Thank You so much to Mary Lambright and Stay Gray for organizing and reporting for the Harris Neck Count Circle; and Thank You so much to Diana Churchill and Larry Carlile for organizing and reporting for the Savannah Count Circle; and a Big Thank You to all of you who came out to count! Looking forward to next year when we can have the Chili Lunch and the Countdown Dinner in person!

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Save-the-date

Please join us for the next Ogeechee Audubon Public Meeting on February 16, 2021 at 7 pm via Zoom. More information and Zoom link to follow.

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**Do not forget to renew your membership.**  
**Join us for 2021! It will be a better birding year!**

Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2021

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 31<sup>st</sup>.

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.*

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in leading Field Trips

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in volunteering to help with OAS booth at events

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in serving on the Board

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in helping wherever needed