

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November - December, 2021, Volume LI, Issue VI



Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board

Administrative Responsibilities

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

Education Workgroup

Education Outreach	Diana Churchill, Sue DeRosa, and Rose Talbert
Field Trips	John Williamson
Programs	Lynn Wren

Communications Workgroup

Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Diana Churchill, Matt Tozer
Publicity	Matt Tozer

Historian

Sandy Beasley

Conservation Workgroup

Entire Board

The "Is it too early to be excited for Christmas Bird Counts?" Edition

The very first Christmas Bird Counts were conducted on Christmas Day in 1900. Ornithologist Frank M. Chapman had proposed the count as more bird-friendly alternative to the popular traditional Christmas-time bird hunts. On that inaugural count day in 1900 there were 27 participants. Nowadays, Christmas bird counts draw 10s of thousands of participants and are one of the most looked-forward-to events on a birder's calendar.

The concerted efforts of so many birders in a count area very often generates the discovery of one or more rarities that can (at least vicariously) be enjoyed by other participants. Additionally, the efforts of organizers to achieve reasonable coverage of the count-circle often gets birders into interesting and overlooked locations.

The potential for CBCs as a scientific tool was soon recognized and led the National Audubon Society to standardize how counts are conducted. In brief, all official CBCs take place in predetermined circles with a 15 mile diameter, must take place between December 14 and January 5, and must have 10 or more participants.

Ogeechee Audubon will be participating in Audubon's 122nd Christmas Bird Count for 2021-2022.

This year Ogeechee Audubon will be participating in a new count circle in the Richmond Hill area. We will be coordinating this count with the Naturalist at the Ford Field and River Club. Everyone is excited about including this area in our CBC data!

The dates of the Counts for this year will be as follows:

- Richmond Hill Circle will be on **Wednesday, December 15, 2021**
- Harris Neck Circle will be on **Friday, December 17, 2021**
- Savannah Circle will be on **Monday, January 3, 2022**

Please sign up on either our website: www.ogeecheeaudubon.org or email us at ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com if you wish to participate in the Christmas Bird Count. Please indicate which count circles that you wish to join. Once you sign up the coordinator for that area will contact you regarding your assignment and the agenda of the day.

We are requiring those who participate to be fully vaccinated against COVID (in this way we will not mandate that masks be worn). We also ask that you not ride share with anyone outside your family/friend bubble. Please try to social-distance as much as possible during the day of birding.



Public Meeting at the First Presbyterian Church in Savannah

Attendees must be fully vaccinated and remain masked for the duration of the meeting.

Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at 7 pm

Ogeechee Audubon's Holiday Party! More Details to Come!

Field Trips – in a Pandemic World – Let’s go Birding!



Ogeechee Audubon is conducting field trips with guidelines in place to keep us safe. We are all in this together as we adapt to the new “normal”.

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:

- Participants who are fully vaccinated will not be required to wear a face mask
- Participants who are not fully vaccinated will be required to wear a face mask for the duration of the field trip
- All participants should follow general social distancing practices
- Please do not share binoculars, scopes or other equipment
- Please do not carpool with participants outside your household
- By attending field trips sponsored by Ogeechee Audubon Society, you acknowledge that these activities may be hazardous to you and your health and agree voluntarily to participate.

Field Trips – The great outdoors beckons!

Sunday, Nov. 7, 2021: Fort Pulaski National Monument. 8:45am - 11:30am An 8.8 foot high tide should create excellent conditions for searching for elusive marsh sparrows. We will also spend time looking for herons, egrets, wintering songbirds, shorebirds and more. Meet at the entrance to Ft. Pulaski at 8:45. There is an entrance fee of \$10 per person if you do not have a park pass. A \$35 annual pass will allow 4 adults in a vehicle to enter. We may carpool for short distances, masks required to move between sites within the park. Difficulty: Moderate; involves walking along dikes and road. Leader Diana Churchill dichurchbirds@gmail.com. (Please note - daylight savings time ends the night before the trip).

Saturday, Nov. 13, 2021. Solomon Tract of Savannah National Wildlife Refuge. 8:00am - ~12:00pm Meet at 8 am at the entrance to the Solomon Tract located at the end of EMD Blvd off O’Leary Road in Port Wentworth, GA. We will be looking for returning winter birds such as sapsuckers, kinglets, wrens, and more. Difficulty: strenuous; 2-3 miles walking on uneven ground. Leader Chris Brown christopher.r.brown@okstate.edu

Saturday, Dec. 4, 2021. Lake Mayer Community Park. 8:00am - ~12:00pm. Meet at 8 am at the right hand end of the main parking lot on Montgomery Cross Roads. We'll be looking for returning ducks, sparrows, sapsuckers, kinglets and more. Difficulty- Easy; walking on paved path. Leader Larry Carlile l.carlile259@comcast.net

Christmas Bird Counts - For details please refer to first page of this newsletter.

Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2021 - Richmond Hill

Friday, Dec. 17, 2021 - Harris Neck

Monday, Jan. 3, 2022 - Savannah area

Citizen Science and Volunteer Opportunities!

Rusty Blackbird Surveys at Savannah Christian Preparatory School. Every other Sunday beginning November 14th (3:00 pm - 5:00 pm). 1599 Chatham Parkway, Savannah, GA 31408.

Leader Stan Gray. 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. SCPS is one of the most reliable places in the area to observe this species in the area. 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. Survey dates for the remainder of this year are 11/14, 11/28, 12/12, and 12/26.

Sunday, November 7 - Savannah Christian Preparatory School - Full Property Survey. 1599 Chatham Parkway, Savannah, GA 31408. 8:30 am - 1:00 pm. Leader Stan Gray. Meet at the front gate on Chatham Parkway by 8:30 AM sharp, where they will be led onto the campus by survey team leader. Ogeechee Audubon is beginning its 3rd year of conducting comprehensive bird surveys of the 250 acre campus in support of school initiatives to understand and upgrade the habitats supporting local fauna and flora. Trip Rigor: Easy to Moderate The terrain is flat and easily traversed, along improved grass and dirt paths. The total survey route is approx. 2.5 miles.

Oatland Island Wildlife Center Bird Feeder Volunteers Wanted!

If you are interested in volunteering to help fill the bird feeders at Oatland Island, which OAS maintains, please send a message at ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com or through the "Contact Us" link on the OAS webpage. You'll receive a wonderful orientation as to the duties and then, one week every two or three months, you will be responsible for checking the six feeders which are centrally located. You get to schedule when you go during your week--anytime Thursday to Sunday. Free entrance into Oatland Island Wildlife Center is included."

Saturday November 13 - Birds and Bins; AI Bungard Convservation Area - 9:00 am - 11:30 am

ORK (Ogeechee Riverkeepers) & OAS (Ogeechee Audubon) are joining forces to provide a bird walk and litter cleanup and one of our favorite birding locations, Chatham County Wetlands! This beautiful site offers a mix of habitats, featuring wetlands and river setting. Ogeechee Audubon & Ogeechee Riverkeeper co-leaders will help locate and identify birds, educate us about the southern part of the Ogeechee watershed while we cleanup the waterways. We will search for wading birds, raptors, woodpeckers and other early winter resident birds. Loaner binoculars and litter collection supplies will be available.

Meet at the cul-de-sac of the AI Bungard Conservation Area at 9AM. Use driving directions from HWY 17. Trip Rigor: Easy, with paved path and varied terrain. Estimated walking distance 2 miles. ADA accessible; no public restrooms on site.

Registration is required (<https://www.ogeecheeriverkeeper.org/events/birds-and-bins>) and will be handled by Ogeechee Riverkeepers. Each person in your party must register separately. If you are interested, register here. Please direct questions to ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com.

***All participants will be required to adhere to all COVID-19 mandates and protocols in effect at the time of the event.**

Field Notes

Mohawk Lake Field Trip September 10 - by Patti Seanor

A fairly good size group showed up for our walk at Mohawk Lake on September 11th. Meandering around the little lake in just about two hours, we were rewarded with observing 44 species.

On the lake we counted 28 Canada Geese, Pied-billed Grebes, Laughing Gulls, and an Osprey looking for breakfast. Along the shore were Anhingas, a Great Blue Heron, Great Egrets and a Snowy Egret with a Green Heron standing by. In the trees we spotted three species of woodpeckers, a White-eyed Vireo and a Red-eyed Vireo. It was busy overhead as well with two species of swallows, a Red-shouldered Hawk, and a Merlin.

As we watched the Carolina Chickadees flitting around, our guide, Pam Smith, explained how they communicate with other birds to warn them of danger, and even the degree of danger. Information that almost changes the way one thinks about the common birds. It's part of what makes a Saturday morning bird walk so special.

North Beach of Tybee Island International Shorebird Survey October 3 - by Allie Hayser

Greetings from Tybee Island! A big thanks to Matt Tozer and Diana Churchill for the chance to write for the Marshlander. I've just started at Manomet this September as a Shorebird Technician working with Dr. Abby Sterling, the Director of the Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative. I'm based on the northern coast of the Georgia Bight and living on Tybee Island. I'll be focusing on projects that work to manage disturbance of migrating shorebirds, developing stewardship programs, expanding ongoing shorebird programs, and increasing communications to improve habitat management along the coast in the Georgia Bight.

Recently, I worked as a field technician for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, with Fletcher Smith and Tim Keyes, resighting red knots, and participating in monitoring programs with American Oystercatchers and Whimbrels. Before my shorebird experiences began, I worked with the Saint Catherine's Sea Turtle program, where I studied barrier island formation and horseshoe crab ecology, and taught conservation science education programs to schools in California and North Carolina. I'm looking forward to learning more about shorebirds and the importance of Georgia's coastline to our migrating and local species. I'm interested in any opportunities for learning from those of you that have been birding in Georgia and along the coast!

On Sunday, Oct. 3rd, I had the opportunity to participate in an International Shorebird Survey (ISS) led by Diana Churchill, joined by members of the Ogeechee Audubon and friends. This ISS survey starts at the entrance of the Polk Street beach access, onto the beach, and walking down to the North Jetty (the leftmost beach access in the North Beach parking lot). The ISS was started in 1974 by Manomet shorebird scientist, Brian



Harrington, and surveys are conducted by volunteers across the hemisphere. These important data are analyzed to understand larger population trends for many species of shorebirds, and help to prioritize management at an international scale.

As we walked along the beach, we saw many species including: American Oystercatchers, Ruddy Turnstones, Laughing Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Royal Terns, Sandwich Terns, Black Skimmers, one Common Tern, Forster's Terns, Sanderlings, Brown Pelicans, Caspian Terns, Herring Gulls, Great and Snowy Egrets, and a few more species you can check out on Diana's eBird list from October 3rd, 2021.

Our group also came across Piping Plovers! There were seven of them foraging and roosting on the beach... and one of them was banded. Diana received confirmation, from Alice VanZoeren, who works with the Great Lakes Piping Plover Conservation Team, that this is the same bird that she saw here last year. It's been well documented that wintering Piping Plovers are very site faithful, so Tybee's beach is likely an important part of this birds interesting life history. Diana wrote an article for the Savannah Morning News in October 2020 that details her first encounter with this Piping Plover.

From Alice, we learned that this plover was part of the captive-reared chicks that were hatched at the Detroit Zoo from a clutch of eggs from Silver Lake State Park, MI. According to Alice, this nest wouldn't have survived due to its location (in a Off-Road Vehicle area) and the re-opening of the park from COVID restrictions. This PIPL was incubated, hatched, and within a week it was transferred to the captive-rearing facility at the University of Michigan Biological Station, where a crew took care of them until they were stable, healthy, and ready to fly. It was released back at Silver Lake State Park on 7/24/20. According to Alice, this plover spent the summer of 2021 on Lake Ontario at Sandy Island Beach State Park where it nested and successfully fledged two chicks. Now, October 2021 and this PIPL has returned to the Georgia coast for the second year in a row!



I look forward to joining any future ISS surveys on or near Tybee Island and look forward to meeting you all along the way. If you would like to connect or reach out, please email me at ahayser@manomet.org. Thanks y'all!

Links:

International Shorebird Survey:

<https://www.manomet.org/project/international-shorebird-survey/>

News Link to PIPL by Diana Churchill:

<https://www.savannahnow.com/story/entertainment/columns/2020/10/12/shorebird-chick-reared-at-detroit-zoo-finds-way-to-tybee-north-beach/114787976/>

Georgia Ornithological Society's Fall Meeting October 8-11 - by Bob Beard

2 years ago I attended my first GOS fall meeting after being "tipped off" by Diana Churchill. Their Saturday morning "Big Sit" at the Jekyll Island campground bird sanctuary taught me the value & efficiency of learning the birds by sitting next to a knowledgeable & avid birder-in this case Lydia Thompson. The setting allowed us to sit for hours and have the birds come close enough that their distinguishing differences could be easily seen, when pointed out by Ms. Thompson.

Resolving to repeat my experience, I registered early for this year's fall GOS meeting and had another relaxing Saturday morning "class" at the campground bird sanctuary-this year taught by Larry Carlile. In addition, I was also able to join another group of intrepid birders for the Friday trip to Sapelo Island. Despite the sometimes-heavy rain, Malcolm Hodges and the other experienced birders made for another memorable day.

Finally Monday morning I joined Larry and, as luck would have it, our Saturday Keynote speaker, Tom Stephenson, for a birding drive around Harris Neck Wildlife Refuge. Despite having visited Harris Neck many times, on this morning Larry took our group to parts of the refuge I had never ventured to explore. You can be sure I look forward to the GOS annual meetings in the future!

A Two-Vermillion Weekend October 8-11 - by Diana Churchill



I was fortunate to be able to attend the Georgia Ornithological Society fall meeting on Jekyll Island Oct. 8-11, 2021. The excitement started on Friday evening when Lydia Thompson and I had just ordered spinach salads at Red Bug Motors Pizza when Lydia got a text informing her that a female vermilion flycatcher was being seen on the south end of the island. We explained our dilemma to the waitress who obligingly brought our meal in to go boxes.

When we arrived on St. Andrew's Drive, a group of birders were staring at a small bird perched on a wire. Sure enough it was the vermilion. She flew to a nearby bare branch and posed in the waning light. A great way to start the week-end.

Then, on Sunday morning, I was leading my Jekyll Hot Spots trip. My instinct took me to the 4H Center as in the past we have had good birds along the edges of the campus and on the path to the

beach. One of our group spotted several birds in the top of a bare oak tree, one of which gleamed red. We closed in on the grassy area between pavilion and buildings where we were able to find and identify a young male vermilion flycatcher. It was chasing dragonflies and hanging out in the bare branches of 4 small oak trees. As the sun came up, we were able to fully appreciate the glowing red of this rare Georgia visitor.



The bird was relocated later that day in the same area, but was not there the following morning. Good birding!

Memorial Feeders at UGA Marine Extension Center and Aquarium

Recently Ogeechee Audubon received generous donations in memory of Joyce Fowler and Bob Paddison, Diana Churchill's dad. The board decided to put these funds towards supplementing the bird feeders that were located at the UGA Marine Extension Center (MAREX) and Aquarium on Skidaway Island. Katie Higgins, from MAREX, had made a presentation to the board in September, describing a need to upgrade the feeders there. The board thought using these donations would be an ideal way to recognize Joyce and Bob who had such a passion for birds and were members of OAS.

After an assessment of the area, we determined another pole system plus three feeders were needed. Wild Birds Unlimited, a partner of OAS, graciously donated the feeders. Mary Lambright, Lynn Wrenn, Sue De Rosa, Katie Higgins, and UGA Aquarium volunteers installed the pole



system and filled the feeders on the first Friday in October. Also they placed anti-bird strike dots on the windows since workers inside noted that birds had been hitting those large windows. Lastly, they planted several types of flowering plants in the area behind the feeders next to the wall so as to attract pollinators. Somehow, birds and bees tend to go together.

Going forward, donations from visitors to the aquarium will cover the cost to replenish the seed. Future use of the funds from the memorial donations will be put towards dome covers, which are presently not available, and a suet feeder. Additionally, signage will be obtained that will designate the feeders as a memorial to birders. Even after just a week, birds were already enjoying the bounty!

Ever wanted to learn more about pelagic birding?

Check out this very interesting first-person article about pelagic birding off the coast of North Carolina on our website:

["Trip to photograph pelagic birds combines two loves," by Peggy Baker.](#)

This article was first published in Camera in the Wild, Summer 2021. Camera in the Wild is the official quarterly magazine for the Carolinas' Nature Photographers Association (CNPA). This article has been extracted from that official publication with the explicit permission of both CNPA and the author, Peggy Baker.

Ogeechee Audubon would like to thank both CNPA and Ms. Baker for granting this permission and allowing this content to be shared with our members. To learn more about CNPA please visit: <https://www.cnpa.org>. And to explore Ms. Baker's work, please visit: <https://www.madangelphotos.com/Birdsphotos>.

Congratulations!



At this year's Georgia Ornithological Society's Fall meeting, Ogeechee Audubon's own Larry Carlile was honored with the Earle R. Greene Memorial Award. Recipients of this award are so recognized for achievement in Ornithology, achievement in promoting birding, and/or Service to GOS.

Transitions

Lynn Wren – Lynn has been a Board member since 2018 and Chair for Programs. At this time Lynn has decided to resign. Rose Talbert will assume this role later in the Spring of 2022. Lynn left us with a good line up of speakers. Please join me in thanking Lynn for all her contributions to realize the Mission of Ogeechee Audubon especially in the line of educational programming. We wish you well Lynn!

Sandy Beasley – Sandy has been a Board member since the early 1970's serving in a variety of capacities: President, Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Chair and Education Chair! Most recently Sandy has served as the Historian of Ogeechee Audubon after serving for a number of years as Treasurer. At this time Sandy has decided to retire. We will miss Sandy and all the wonderful contributions she has made over the many years she served Ogeechee Audubon. Sandy, we wish you all the best!

Membership Reminder!

Hi! I am Mary Lambright, Vice-president of OAS and the person who keeps track of membership. Fall is in the air and it is time to think about renewing your membership in Ogeechee Audubon for 2022. Did you know? Ogeechee Audubon Society membership is for one-year, starting January 1. Some of you have already renewed for 2022 (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, your membership is current (you paid for 2021). At the end of this newsletter you will find a membership form so you can choose which membership level is best for you and then fill out the form and send it in with your dues. Our treasurer, Pam Smith, 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.

Disclaimer: Membership to Ogeechee Audubon Society does NOT include membership to National Audubon Society with its subscription to the magazine, Audubon but you are encouraged to join both organizations. For more information about National Audubon Society, visit audubon.org

Thank You!

Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2022

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.

_____ 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