

# THE MARSHLANDER

## OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

July - August, 2022, Volume LII, Issue IV



### Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board

#### Administrative Responsibilities

President	Sue De Rosa
Vice President	Rose Talbert
Secretary	Patti Seanor
Treasurer	Pam Smith

#### 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	Matt Tozer and Erine-Fay McNaught

#### 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.

## World Migratory Bird Day Celebration

*Sue De Rosa*

This spring, Ogeechee Audubon was invited to participate in the World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) Celebration held at UGA Marine Education Center and Aquarium on Skidaway Island. Katie Higgins, an OAS Board Member, organized the fabulous event. Various groups, such as Ogeechee Riverkeeper and Georgia



Audubon, were involved and had fun activities at each table which

were spread along the marsh. OAS's activity was **Fill the Bill** that had the participants simulate food gathering by birds using various types of "beaks" and then determine which beak type was adapted for a specific food source. All age groups took part in figuring out if the pelican, cardinal, swallow, or several other birds had bills that were useful in picking up fish, seeds, etc. Being able to engage with the visitors, allowed the OAS members to talk more in-depth about the birds, the importance of our Georgia coast, and how each person can help these birds survive. Many thanks to Melanie Sparrow (another OAS Board member) who wore two hats. She represented both OAS and Ogeechee Riverkeeper, so shifted between two tables so as to give me a break.



Since the opportunities for these "tabling" events are opening up again, OAS can participate more fully in our education outreach plus encourage the public to become part of our group. Throughout the upcoming year, OAS will slowly begin to join in these opportunities such as Earth Day, Fire Festival, and others. If you would like to volunteer an hour or two, let us know via the Contact Us email on the webpage, [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com). You don't have to be an expert, just have an interest in telling others about our fine feathered friends.

 <p>Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop</p>	<p><i>Fresh Seed NO Fillers!</i></p>	<p><b>Bird Feeders Birdbaths Pole Systems And The Freshest Seed in Town!</b></p>	<p>8108 Abercorn Street Mon-Sat 10-6 Sunday 12-5 Next to Home Goods (912) 961-3455</p>	
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## *Field Trips and Surveys – Get out into Nature!*

### *Field Trips!*

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.

**\*\*Saturday, July 9: Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge 8:00 am to 11:00 am.** We'll be targeting nesting ibises, herons, and egrets, painted buntings, summering songbirds and more. Meet in the parking area of Pinckney NWR at 8 am. Rigor - Moderate with a lot of walking. You may also bring a bicycle if you prefer. Leader: Matt Tozer ([mctozer@yahoo.com](mailto:mctozer@yahoo.com)) **Bluffton, South Carolina off of Rte 278; 32.23374, -80.779313**

**\*\*Monday, August 8: Tybee Island North Beach 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm.** We'll comb the beach for gulls, terns and returning shorebirds. Meet at Jaycee Park at 5 pm. Be prepared to pay for parking. Difficulty - Moderate with 1-2 miles of walking in sand. Leader: Diana Churchill ([dichurchbirds@gmail.com](mailto:dichurchbirds@gmail.com)) **30 Van Horne Ave., Tybee Island, GA 31328**

**\*\*Saturdy, August 20: Skidaway Island: Jay Wolf Nature Trail and Priest's Landing 8:00 am to 11:00 am.** We'll be searching for early fall migrants and summer residents. Meet in the UGA Aquarium parking lot. Participants are welcome to continue birding and exploring the grounds past the stated end-time. Leader: Katie Higgins ([kt.higgins@uga.edu](mailto:kt.higgins@uga.edu)) **30 Ocean Science Circle, Savannah, GA 31411**

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## Field Notes

### Tybee Island North Beach, May 13, 2022

Steven Miller

On May 13<sup>th</sup>, the extremely knowledgeable Diana Churchill lead our group of eight OAS members around the northern tip of Tybee Island, and it did not disappoint. As soon as our feet landed in the sand, we were greeted by a large flock of birds. There was an immediate buzz among the group. I truly had no idea what the excitement was about, but everyone was talking about a *storm pickle*.

I wondered if that was one of those nicknames, like chimney swifts being “flying cigars”. My Google search for “pickle bird” resulted in pictures of the cartoon Viasic stork mascot. After a moment of laughing at myself for not just *asking* someone what we were looking at, I learned that it was a Wilson’s Storm-Petrel.



Photo Credit Diana Churchill



Photo Credit Steven Miller

If you're new to ocean birds like me, Wilson's Storm-Petrels are a black and white bird with dangling legs that remind me of a pontooned sea plane. These amazing migrants travel to northern waters from the Antarctic each summer, but rarely come to shore. Now I understood why everyone was so excited.

We continued our journey to an inland pond packed with coastal birds, including an assortment of egrets, a rainbow of herons, a suite of sandpipers. Out on the beach, we spotted plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, Red Knots, Sanderlings, and even more sandpipers grazing in the surf for dinner. Up in the dunes were nesting terns, Black Skimmers, and gulls.

Aside from the *storm pickle*, another highlight of the evening was the gorgeous sunset that bathed the surf and shore with golden orange light. By the end of the evening, our group identified 39 species and counted over 1,000 shore birds!

Overall, it was a beautiful and memorable evening at the beach. I'm a novice birder, and I decided to join Ogeechee Audubon to connect with new people, explore the natural landscape of our region, and of course to make friends with some new birds. Just two trips in, and I've already been able to do all of that. Everyone has been so welcoming and happy to teach and share. If you haven't been on a field trip, or it's been a while, I hope you get the chance to soon.

See you out on the trail.



Photo Credit Steven Miller

## Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, June 4, 2022

Mary Lou Dickson

As the day started, a small group of OAS members were greeted by a singing Painted Bunting at the main entrance to Harris Neck. The group also heard a Yellow-throated Warbler, White-eyed Vireo and the ever-present Carolina Wren. But the forest was doing a good job of hiding our prey, although their music provided a nice atmosphere as the group explored the two fishing docks. Tide was rising, but had not yet reached a height to force clapper rails out into the open. So again, we had to settle on just hearing a clapper rail.



*Photo Credit Mary Lou Dickson*

As we moved to the Visitor Contact Station, we hit the jackpot at the feeders. Three male Painted Buntings were fighting over the feeders, later joined by at least two females. Everyone got great looks! Then, quite to everyone's surprise, we had a brief visit by a beautiful Red-headed Woodpecker. Although I've seen these wonderful birds at Harris Neck before, this is the first time I've seen one at the feeders.

The group moved on and stopped at Woody Pond, where the rookery is in full swing. The sound of the begging Wood Stork chicks dominated the air. But they were not the only chicks we saw, as Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Tricolor Herons and

Anhinga chicks could be found in the bushes in the pond. All manner of wading birds filled the air, but sharp eyes detected the occasional Yellow-crowned Night-heron and at least one Roseate Spoonbill flying by.

A brief stop at Snipe Pond snagged the group a Green Heron, but the walk out to Goose Pond picked up the most unusual bird of the day, a Northern Bobwhite calling. One of the easiest bird calls to learn, since the bird actually says its name, I'm certain we heard at least two in the area. I have heard them at this location before, but they are never guaranteed. As we stood and listened, someone noted something in the tall grass. As we watched, a single female turkey emerged into the road and just stood there for a moment. Then from the grass emerged her small troop of chicks, nine in all, which she watched over as they made their way across the trail.

Our final fruitful stop of the day was at Teal Pond, which was covered with birds. The most dominate bird here was the White Ibis, but on close inspection we found at least four Glossy Ibis. There were egrets and herons, but hiding in the back were at least eight the Roseate Spoonbills.

The group continued around the wildlife drive, but the heat of the day was settling in and the bird activity really slowed down. At the end of the day, our little group had snagged 44 species.



*Photo Credit Mary Lou Dickson*

## Sterling Creek Park, June 25, 2022

Steven Miller

On Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, I joined Pam Smith and five others on a birding field trip to Sterling Creek Park in Richmond Hill.

One thing I've learned attending Ogeechee Audubon field trips is to expect the unexpected. You never know exactly what nature will have in store for you on any given day. Before our walk even began, we spotted a family of Eastern Bluebirds flitting around on the search for breakfast. I once read bluebirds were symbolic of happiness and good news, so perhaps we had some good vibes ahead.



*Photo Credit Steven Miller*

Cuckoo, White-eyed Vireo, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, a Summer Tanager, and a Common Yellowthroat. At a marsh at the end of the trail, we spotted a single Common Gallinule feeding among the lilies. We also caught sight of a diligently perched Eastern Kingbird, protecting its territory from foraging Red-winged Blackbirds.

As we returned toward the start of the trail, we were all treated to the most incredible display of feeding Swallow-tailed Kites and Mississippi Kites. The large, beautiful white raptors swooped and swept circles in the sky above us, putting on quite the show. Of course, I know they were hard at work finding food, but I like to think they knew they were entertaining us. Pam remarked on how unusual it was to see such a large group of Swallow-tailed Kites feeding together at this point in the season, and eBird flagged the number as a high count. Our best count identified at least 7 Swallow-Tailed and 8 Mississippi Kites soaring over the area. As it turned out, those Eastern Bluebirds were portending some good news for us that morning. Or possibly Pam's Swallow-tailed Kite earrings were the lucky charm.



*Photo Credit Steven Miller*

In all, we identified 37 species during our visit to the park. On a personal note, this field trip pushed my life list over 100, which was an exciting accomplishment for me as a novice birder. Sterling Creek Park was certainly full of surprises, and I look forward to going to explore there again soon.

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## Georgia Audubon Offers Master Birder Class in the Fall!

Georgia Audubon has invited members of Ogeechee Audubon and Hilton Head Audubon to participate in a Master Birder Class beginning in October.

The class will consist of 8 classroom sessions offered via Zoom as well as 4 field trips and a follow-up picnic lunch.

Group size: Limited to 16 participants so that the field trip experience is positive.

Cost: Cost of the course is \$450 (includes materials, instruction, field trips, name tag, lunch, ongoing discounts/perks). Georgia Audubon membership is required, but Georgia Audubon will offer complimentary one-year memberships to any Ogeechee Audubon members who register. Georgia Audubon will also offer a \$100 honorarium per participant to our chapter which can be passed in part or full along to our members.

See the current proposed class schedule below. If you would be interested in participating in this class, please send a message ASAP to [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com).

### **MASTER BIRDER – FALL 2022**

Orientation and class sessions will be held virtually via Zoom webinars. Invitations will be sent to the email address you provided at registration. Field trips will meet on Saturday mornings at 8 AM (unless otherwise noted) at various locations around the Savannah/Hilton Head area and should conclude by 11 AM.

Attendance in all classes and field trips is necessary to gain enough knowledge and experience to become a Master Birder. Anticipated conflicts can be discussed with individuals. After graduation, all Master Birders are available to each other and the Georgia Audubon staff via a Master Birder listserv which keeps everyone informed of volunteer opportunities and programs and events especially for Master Birders. Master Birders are also invited to join the Master Birder Facebook page to stay in touch with fellow Master Birders.

#### **AGENDA**

<b>Tuesday, Oct. 11--7-8:30 PM</b>	<b>Orientation</b>
<b>Thursday, Oct. 13—7-8:30 PM</b>	<b>Bird Identification and eBird</b> (Melanie Furr)
<b>Saturday, Oct. 15—8 AM</b>	<b>Field Trip</b>
<b>Monday, Oct. 17--7-8:30 PM</b>	<b>Birding Techniques and Apps</b> (Theresa Hartz)
<b>Thursday, Oct. 20--7-8:30 PM</b>	<b>Bird Songs &amp; Calls</b> (Georgann Schmalz)
<b>Saturday, Oct. 22—8 AM</b>	<b>Field Trip</b>
<b>Tuesday Oct. 25—7-8:30 PM</b>	<b>Bird Song &amp; Calls</b> (Georgann Schmalz)
<b>Thursday, Oct. 27--7-8:30 PM</b>	<b>Bird Behavior</b> (Theresa Hartz)
<b>Saturday, Oct. 29—8 AM</b>	<b>Field Trip</b>
<b>Tuesday, Nov. 1 —7-8:30 PM</b>	<b>Bird Anatomy and Physiology</b> (Charlie Muise)
<b>Thursday, Nov. 3—7-8:30 PM</b>	<b>Flight and Migration</b> (Charlie Muise)
<b>Saturday, Nov. 5—8 AM</b>	<b>Field Trip</b>
<b>Tuesday, Nov. 8—7-8:30 PM</b>	<b>Bird Ecology</b> (Adam Betuel)
<b>Thursday, Nov. 10—7-8:30 PM</b>	<b>Bird Conservation</b> (Adam Betuel)
<b>Saturday, Nov. 19—11:30 AM-1 PM</b>	<b>Graduation lunch</b>

**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 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