

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September - October, 2022, Volume LIII, Issue IV



Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board

Administrative Responsibilities

President	Sue De Rosa
Vice President	Rose Talbert
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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

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Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Diana Churchill and Matt Tozer
Publicity	Matt Tozer and Erine-Fay McNaught

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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.

**Please join us for the September and October
Public Meetings at the First Presbyterian Church,
520 Washington Avenue, Savannah,**

September 20th 7:00pm

Dr. Paul Bartell will be examining the physiological and neurobiological changes that allow for nocturnal migration to occur in songbirds. Dr. Bartell is an Associate Professor in the Department of Animal Science at The Pennsylvania State University. Research in his lab focuses on the ways in which biological clocks in birds are regulated and how they, in turn,



organize the behaviors and life history strategies we have all come to know and love. Dr. Bartell will be joining us via Zoom.

October 18th 7:00pm

Amy Schuler of Coastal Wildscapes will be talking about the importance of native gardens for pollinators and birds. Amy loves spending time in nature, photographing, hiking, biking, and exploring with her two beautiful daughters and husband.



She is particularly fascinated with the flora and fauna of our coastal environment and our human impact on it. Amy moved to Georgia from Ohio ten years ago with her husband and two girls and has been enjoying it ever since! She currently teaches Biology, Environmental Science, Physical Science, and Anatomy & Physiology courses as a full-time faculty member for Point University. Amy also works part-time as the Education & Outreach Coordinator for Coastal WildScapes, a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to actively preserving and restoring the highly significant biodiversity of Southeastern coastal ecosystems, one native plant at a time!



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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.

****Sunday, Sept. 11, 2022: Tybee North Beach Shorebird Survey, 8:00am to 11:30am.** We'll study and enumerate the shorebirds, gulls, and terns. Meet at Jaycee Park at 8 am. From there we will carpool over to Polk Street to start the survey. Trip rigor: moderate with 1 1/2 miles walking on soft sand. **30 Van Horne Ave., Tybee Island, GA 31328** Leader: Diana Churchill (dichurchbirds@gmail.com) 912-604-7539.

****Saturday, Sept. 17, 2022: Kingfisher Pond section of Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, 8:00am to 11:30am.** Target birds will be fall migrants. Meet in the parking lot of Kingfisher Pond at 8 am. Trip Rigor: Moderate with 1-2 miles of walking on uneven terrain. Bring bug spray and water. **Rte. 17 Hardeeville, SC 29927 (Just South of Shannon Road)** Leader: Pam Smith (pavercel@gmail.com) 717-201-9756.

****Saturday, Oct. 1, 2022: Ft. McAllister State Park, 8:00am to 11:30am** Targeting fall migrants and year round residents. Meet at the entrance to Ft. McAllister at 8 am. \$5 per car parking fee. Trip Rigor: moderate with extensive walking. Bring bug spray, hat and water. **3894 Fort McAllister Road, Richmond Hill, GA 31324** Leader: Steve Fox (sfox01@hotmail.com) 912-596-4685.

Georgia Ornithological Society Fall Meeting: Friday, Oct 7 - Monday, Oct. 10. Visit www.gos.org for details.

****Friday, Oct. 14, 2022: Tybee North Beach Shorebird Survey, 8:00am to 11:30am.** We'll study and enumerate the shorebirds, gulls, and terns. Meet at Jaycee Park at 8 am. From there we will carpool over to Polk Street to start the survey. Trip rigor: moderate with 1 1/2 miles walking on soft sand. **30 Van Horne Ave., Tybee Island, GA 31328** Leader: Diana Churchill (dichurchbirds@gmail.com) 912-604-7539.

****Saturday, Oct. 15, 2022: Birds & Bins, 9:00am to 12:00pm.** Join Ogeechee Riverkeeper, Ogeechee Audubon, and Georgia Southern University Alternative Break for a birding walk and litter cleanup on the S & S Greenway Trail in Statesboro. Site offers a mix of habitats, featuring wetlands and a tributary of Little Lotts Creek. We will search for wading birds, raptors, woodpeckers and other fall resident birds while also picking up trash. Loaner binoculars and litter collection supplies will be available. Trip rigor: Easy, with paved path. Estimated walking distance 2 miles. ADA accessible; public restrooms at the trailhead. Pre-registration is required at <https://www.ogeecheeriverkeeper.org> and each person in your party must register separately. **00 Gentilly Rd., Statesboro, GA 30458.** Co-leaders: Melanie Sparrow (melanie@ogeecheeriverkeeper.org) and Chad Posick (cposick@georgiasouthern.edu)

Sunday, Oct. 23, 2022. Webb Wildlife Management Area 8:00am to 12:00pm. We'll be searching for late migrants and early returning winter birds. Meet at the entrance to Webb WMA at 8 am. Trip rigor: easy to moderate with driving, birding and driving to next spot. **2680 August Stage Coach Road, Garnet, SC 29922** Leader: Steve Wagner (sjwagner@hotmail.com) 912-655-0797

Saturday, Nov. 5, 2022. Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge 9:00am to 12:00pm. Meet at the Folkston Entrance to the NWR at 9 am for a walk on the boardwalk, the old homestead, and possibly the upland trail. Trip rigor easy to moderate. Cost \$5 per person plus bring \$\$ for the concession stand for lunch. Limit 10 people with pre-registration required. **4155 Suwanee Canal Rd., Folkston, GA 31537** Contact leader Brittany Dodge (brittmarie24@gmail.com) to register. 912-800-5361.

On your own option: After the OAS field trip, Brittany Dodge, a naturalist who formerly worked at Okefenokee NWR, is willing to guide a 1 1/2 to 2 hour paddle after lunch. This trip is not sponsored by Ogeechee Audubon. Limit 10 people with pre-registration required. Please contact Brittany Dodge (brittmarie24@gmail.com) 912-800-5361 if interested.

Field Notes

Skidaway Island: Jay Wolf Nature Trail and Priest's Landing, August 20, 2022

Katie Higgins

Jay Wolf Nature Trail and Priests Landing field trip on Skidaway Island took place during beautiful weather on Saturday, August 20, 2022. The morning began with sightings of a small group of Chimney Swifts circling above the parking lot at the UGA Aquarium while walk participants arrived. 13 people joined field trip leader, Katie Higgins to walk along the long trail (approximately .7 miles) winding through maritime forest, along the tidal marsh and out over board walk to view the Skidaway River. Low tide allowed a brief glimpse of a Clapper rail and distant views of Great egret and Tricolored herons at the west end of the trail overlooking the marsh. A juvenile Yellow-crowned night heron and adult Green heron graced us at the board walk.

As we left the aquarium headed to Priests Landing for a chance to see more freshwater waders, we stopped to admire a large flock of Barn swallows flying low over the fields foraging for insects.



Barn Swallows

Photo Credit Steven Miller



Black-crowned Night Heron

Photo Credit Steven Miller

Priests landing was worth the time spent providing good viewing of adult and immature Black-crowned Night Herons, an adult Yellow-crowned Night Heron, a couple of Wood Storks and brief glimpses of Roseate Spoonbills in flight. One participant even spotted a very distant Red-headed Woodpecker identifiable by its undeniable demarcation of black and white on the back. Higgins' confirmed the presence of this species on UGA campus the following week while walking the service road between McWhorter and the Jay Wolf Nature Trail. In total, the group submitted two eBird lists: Jay Wolf Nature Trail list boasted 30 species while the Priests Landing site had 11, adding six novel species to the day's count.

One Good "Tern" Deserves Another

Diana Churchill

On Low Country beaches, I often refer to August & September as Tern Time. Yes, we conduct shorebird surveys to tally the sanderlings, ruddy turnstones, whimbrels, plovers, and more that are returning from their breeding sojourns in the Arctic. However, the vast majority of birds you will see lounging on the beach are terns and their less streamlined cousins, the gulls.

On a really "good tern" day, you may be able to identify as many as seven species of terns on Tybee North Beach. Starting small, we begin with the 9-inch Least Tern. Adults sport a black cap but white forehead, yellow bill and yellow legs. They migrate into our area to breed for the summer, either on sandy beaches or gravel rooftops.



Black Terns, breeding plumage and moulting

Next in size at 9.75 inches is the distinctive Black Tern. This species nests in the northern U.S. and southern Canada and is most often seen passing through in late July, August and early September as it migrates to wintering grounds in South America. On August 5th, I saw more than 100 Black Terns roosting on Tybee North Beach – by far the most I have ever seen at one time. Breeding plumage birds are almost solid black, while juvenile and winter birds show much more white in their plumage.

Common & Forster's terns are the larger small terns at 12 and 13 inches respectively. In breeding plumage they can be very difficult to tell apart as both have black caps, red-orange bills and red-orange legs. Forster's Terns winter in our area while Common Terns just migrate through spring and fall. Common Terns have shorter legs than Forster's Terns such that when they walk they seem to



Common Tern, non-breeding with dark carpal bar

waddle. Forster's Terns have a slightly heavier orange bill, often with a dark tip, and their primary feathers are a paler gray. Winter plumage birds are much easier to tell apart as Forster's Terns sport what I call a "pirate eye patch" while common terns have a white forehead and black nape neck feathers. Winter plumage and juvenile Common Terns also have a dark carpal bar.

Anchoring the medium-sized tern category is the Sandwich Tern. Although it was named for the Earl of Sandwich, I like to think that this tern with a black bill tipped in yellow was required to dip its beak in the mustard in order to make its



"sandwich." Sandwich Terns return to our area every spring to breed and can look almost pink when in high breeding plumage. They'll be leaving our area soon to winter along the Gulf Coast, as well as in Central and South America.

Lastly, we come to the two large terns. Royal Terns remain in our area all year long and breed here. They have black caps and orange bills in breeding season. In the winter, the cap recedes and they have white foreheads with a black-feathered fringe at the nape of the neck.

Forster's, Sandwich, and Royal Terns

Caspian Terns breed in parts of the northern U.S. and the middle of Canada, as well as in some areas of the western U.S. They pass through our area in the spring but linger longer in the fall. The world's largest tern, the Caspian has a redder beak, bulkier body, and a distinctive croaking call. The Caspian Tern never loses its black cap in the winter, though it may have a salt-and-pepper look to it. If you can convince a Caspian Tern to pose next to a royal tern, it makes the identification much easier.

And then there is that unique tern cousin – the Black Skimmer. With its black back and enormous black-and-orange beak, the skimmer stands out, particularly when it is skimming right above the water using its longer lower mandible to cut through the water in search of fish, shrimp and other aquatic prey.

So head for the beach with your binocs at the ready. One good "tern" deserves another.



Royal and Caspian Terns
All Photos Credit Diana Churchill

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