

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September - October, 2023, Volume LIV, Issue V



Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board

Administrative Responsibilities

President	Sue De Rosa
Vice President	Rose Talbert
Secretary	Patti Seanor
Treasurer	Judy Johnson

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	Brittany Dodge

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.

Public Meeting(s)!

**Please join us for the Public Meetings at the First
Presbyterian Church, 520 Washington Avenue,
Savannah, GA at 7PM!**

Creating Bird-Friendly Backyards

Richard Hall – via Zoom

September 19

Watching birds in our backyards brings us cheer and a sense of connection to nature, and as the human footprint on the landscape increases, our backyards may become vital habitats for declining species. This talk will provide lessons learned from a decade of converting a small heavily-invaded, in-town yard into a pocket nature reserve, highlight native plants and other landscape features that attract wildlife, and showcase the surprising diversity of birds that have shown up since. Born in England, Hall developed a lifelong fascination with birds from a young age. His enthusiasm for the natural world led him to pursue a career in Ecology. He has been on the faculty of the Odum School of Ecology and the Dept. of Infectious Diseases at UGA since 2009, where his research focuses on changing patterns of animal movement and wildlife diseases. He also serves on the board of Oconee Rivers Audubon Society.

Ecology and Conservation of Bald Eagles in Georgia

Bob Sargent

October 17

Bob Sargent badgered his major professor into letting him take an ornithology class while doing his master's research (a deer study). That class changed his life, as he has been consumed by a passion for learning about and conserving feathered creatures ever since. He studied the ecology of migratory songbirds for his Ph.D. (UGA), and then worked 20 years as the natural resources manager of Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins, Georgia. Bob was an adjunct teacher at three universities and served as president of the Georgia Ornithological Society. In 2015, he was hired by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as program manager of the Wildlife Conservation Section office in Forsyth. He

leads a team of biologists and technicians, participates in songbird and shorebird surveys, teaches an ornithology camp for teenagers, and is the agency's lead for the conservation of raptors, especially bald eagles and peregrine falcons. Bob will speak about the ecology and conservation of bald eagles in the U.S. and specifically in Georgia. He will talk about how and why the species came perilously close to extinction in the Lower 48, how that crisis was reversed, the recent avian influenza outbreak, and the status of eagles in Georgia today.



Wild Birds Unlimited
Nature Shop

***Fresh Seed
NO Fillers!***

**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

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.

Monday, September 11: Tybee North Beach – International Shorebird Survey, 6pm to 8pm. Searching for gulls, terns and returning shorebirds. Meet at Polk Street at 6 pm. Rigor - Moderate with 2 miles walking on sandy beach. Leader Diana Churchill dichurchbirds@gmail.com. 912-604-7539.

Sunday, September 24: Oatland Island Wildlife Center 9:00am to 11:30am. We'll be searching for wading birds and fall migrants. Meet at the entrance gate at 9:00 am. Rigor – Moderate with 1-2 miles walking. 711 Sandtown Road, Savannah, GA 31400. Leader Eric Swanson, Eric.Swanson@sccpss.com 309-721-4357.

Saturday, September 16: Birds and Bins at Chatham County Wetlands, 9:00am to 11:00am. Come join Ogeechee River Keepers, Ogeechee Audubon & The Ford for a birding walk and litter cleanup!

This beautiful site offers a mix of habitats, featuring wetlands and river setting. Ogeechee Audubon co-leaders & 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 more! Please bring binoculars if you have them. Litter collection supplies will be provided. A limited amount of loaner binoculars will be available.

Meet at the cul-de-sac at 9am (the Al Bungard Conservation Area) Chief Of Love Road, Chatham County Wetlands Preserve, Chief Of Love Rd, Savannah, GA 31419. 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. Please register at <https://www.ogeecheeriverkeeper.org/events/birds-and-bins-9-16-23/>

Friday-Sunday, October 6-9: Georgia Ornithological Society Fall Meeting on Jekyll Island. For information and to register please visit: <https://gos.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/gos/event.jsp?event=37&>

Saturday October 14: Fort McAllister State Park, 8:00am to 12:00am. Targeting migrating warblers and other passerines, waterfowl, and other marsh birds. Bring plenty of water and bug spray. Entrance fee into Ft. McAllister State Park is required. 3894 Fort McAllister Rd, Richmond Hill, GA 31324. Leader Steve Fox.

Sunday October 1: Tybee North Beach – International Shorebird Survey, 9:00am to 11:00am. Searching for gulls, terns and returning shorebirds. Meet at Polk Street at 6. Rigor - Moderate with 2 miles walking on sandy beach. Leader Diana Churchill dichurchbirds@gmail.com. 912-604-7539.

Earth-Conscious Expo! **Saturday, October 21, 2023 (1pm to 5pm)**

Life would be impossible without the planet we live on. Come to Skidaway Island State Park for a day focused on ways we can protect our environment, whether it be as individuals or groups working together. Tables will be set up by organizations dedicated to environmental protection and vendors offering eco-conscious products. All ages are welcome for a fun and educational day focused on a truly worthwhile endeavor.

Parking fee: \$5

Event Phone: 912-598-2300

Location

Skidaway Island State Park

52 Diamond Causeway

Savannah, GA 31411

[\(MapQuest\)](#) [\(Google Maps\)](#)

Ogeechee Audubon will have a table set up at this event. If you would be interested volunteering for an hour or two to share your enthusiasm for birds, contact us at OgeecheeAudubon.help@gmail.com.

Calling Birding Photographers!

OAS now has a place where you can post those photos of our avian friends. Here is the link to the new Instagram page:

Ogeechee Audubon Society
(@ogeecheeaudubon) • Instagram
photos and videos
[instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com)

Members can submit photos for the page by either tagging OAS (@ogeecheeaudubon) or emailing your photos to OAS at OASbirderphotos@gmail.com.

Field Notes

Summer Kite Extravaganza, Glennville, GA, August 6, 2023

June Parina

I'm a relatively new birder, so every guided outing I've taken with the Ogeechee Audubon Society has taught me so much and sent my soul soaring. This trip to see Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites was no exception. I did not know what to expect after our small group of six met at an unceremonious Love's truck stop / McDonald's in Richmond Hill. We piled into a couple of cars and carpooled for an hour to Glennville, giving me lots of time to ask questions about what we were going to see. We rolled up to an open empty field on Joe Kennedy Road where there was not much initial action, but, as my fellow veteran birders knew, the show would start gradually – usually mid-morning – and come in waves. In fact, earlier in the week our fearless leaders, Diana Churchill and Mark Woodruff, had done some reconnaissance and surveyed eBird sightings which saw increasing kite numbers. The annual observation window is tight (normally just a couple of weeks in late July and early August), which made this trip even more special.

Within minutes, like clockwork, at 10:06 am the show started. This performance happens (typically) over the same agricultural fields year after year. The wing show these raptors executed was nothing short of breathtaking. For the first time, I saw firsthand how these graceful birds foraged in mixed flocks (10 - 30+ birds of each species) skillfully gliding, swooping, and rolling over the open field in pursuit of cicadas, grasshoppers, beetles, dragonflies, and the like.

What were they doing and why here, my novice birdbrain mind was screaming. Of course (!), they were fattening up on insects in preparation for fall migration to winter in Central and South America. These particular agricultural fields, I learned later, do not use pesticides, and therefore have a lot of enticing bug life fueling the feeding fest. We witnessed these birds deftly catching and eating their catch on the wing. We spotted at least six fledglings tucked high up in trees squawking loudly. We laughed at two in a tree together, one of them conveniently positioned so his parents could swoop in more easily to deposit the food in its mouth while the other watched hungrily.

This being my first time seeing these mid-sized raptors, the Swallow-tailed Kites were easier to identify. The larger of the two species, with distinct black and snow-white plumage and a long, black, deeply-forked tail, they have a wingspan of up to four feet.

The smaller, slender Mississippi Kites with their long, squared tails and pointed gray falcon-like wings, had paler heads and dark eye patches. These daredevil show-offs could be seen barrel-rolling high in the air and then skimming low to catch prey on or near the ground.

There would be periods of high activity in one field, then they'd meander off to hunt other fields and come back. In the first of three fields we saw more Swallow-Tailed Kites stealing the show (38 Swallow-Tailed to 30 Mississippi), in the next two fields at Skeens farm and then off Revis Blocker Road, Mississippi kites outnumbered at 30 birds versus 17 and 10 Swallow-tailed, respectively.



Mississippi Kite
Photo Credit Diana Churchill

As I read up later on the [Georgia DNR website](#) these kites typically show up in these fields in late July to early August to fatten up as they prepare to migrate back to South America. Swallow-tailed Kites are frequently seen foraging in groups of 3-30 birds or more, often with Mississippi Kites. These foraging flocks occur reliably in late July over the same pastures



Swallow-tailed Kites
Photo Credit Diana Churchill

year after year, notably near Glennville. Most Swallow-tailed Kites depart the U.S. for the wintering grounds by late August with a few stragglers remaining until mid-September.

After a couple of hours in the hot sun, the flock numbers seemed to dwindle and it seemed like the show was over, for now. While my neck was a bit sore from all the craning, my back drenched in sweat, and my skin sticky with bug-repellent, it was all worth it. Until next year, winged friends, we can't wait to see you killing it over these open fields again. Have a safe flight South!

Other honorable bird mentions were the 100+ cattle egrets, a murder of 100+ crows that flew overhead at Skeens farm, a couple of Yellow-billed Cuckoos, a handful of Eastern Kingbirds, and a couple of Loggerhead Shrikes. (Thanks to Diana Churchill for sharing her meticulously detailed ebird checklists for the three locations [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).)

Change in the Treasurer

Pam Vercellone-Smith has resigned as OAS Treasurer due to her relocation and increased time commitments. Judy Johnson, who has extensive career experience in accounting, was nominated to fill the position as interim Treasurer until the entire membership can vote at the Annual Meeting in April. The Board approved Judy's nomination at the July Board meeting. We are very appreciative of Pam's work as Treasurer over these past years. She guided us through the Pandemic, being a good steward of OAS's monies. Pam is hoping to continue her involvement in the various surveys OAS supports and, of course, keeping her eye on the birds. Big thanks to Judy for stepping in. The transition has been seamless.

Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2023

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.