



# THE MARSHLANDER

NEWSLETTER OF THE OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY  
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA  
VOL XLVII, ISSUE 5, OCTOBER, 2017  
WWW.OGEECHEEAUDUBON.ORG

### 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 Ogeechee Audubon Society

Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM

**Speaker: Russ Wigh**

**Title: Wintering Hummingbirds on the Coast**



Russ had been a birder since 1979; and after retirement in 1999, and a subsequent move to The Landings in 2001, birds became all consuming. But it was trips to Costa Rica and annual get-away visits to remote Arizona that cemented his interest in hummingbirds. Consistent winter visitors to his feeders, and regular reports of hummingbirds at The Landings triggered an effort in 2016 to learn just how widespread wintering hummingbirds are in Chatham County and the coast. Russ' current interests include high-speed bird photography with multiple flash units, particularly for hummingbirds, of course.

We meet at the First Presbyterian Church,  
520 E. Washington Ave, Savannah.

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### **Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board**

#### Administrative Responsibilities

President	Leslie Weichsel
Vice President	Mary Lambright
Secretary	Marty Foxx
Treasurer	Sandy Beasley

#### Membership Workgroup

Member Enrollment	Debbie Bennett
Holiday Gathering	Regi Sonen

#### Education Workgroup

Education Outreach	Diana Churchill, Sue DeRosa
Field Trips	Mary Sweeney-Reeves
Programs	James Fleullan

#### Communications Workgroup

Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Leslie Weichsel
Publicity	Regi Sonnen

#### Conservation Workgroup

Entire Board

Email: [info@ogeecheeaudubon.org](mailto:info@ogeecheeaudubon.org)



## Field Trips

**BRING BINOCULARS, HAT, SUNSCREEN, BUG SPRAY, WATER AND SNACKS OR LUNCH FOR ALL FIELD TRIPS**

**SAT, OCT 14: Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens.** We will stroll through the park-like setting of the beautiful 51-acre gardens looking for migrating birds, early arriving winter residents, and even some interesting butterflies, all drawn by the diversity of the floral plantings. As the Gardens grow and develop, variations in habitats are attracting a wide assemblage of species. Recently designated an eBird Hotspot, 128 species have been reported on the grounds to date. Help us add to that list. Meet inside the Canebrake Road entrance in the Andrews Visitor and Education Center parking lot at 8:00 am. Leader: Stan Gray, [graysirisdgarden@comcast.net](mailto:graysirisdgarden@comcast.net) or [912-659-5020](tel:912-659-5020).

**SAT, OCT 14: Skidaway Marine Science Day.** After the field trip at the UGA Coastal Botanical Gardens take the opportunity to visit the Marine Science Campus on Skidaway Island. Visitors can view labs, learn about the animals at touch tanks, learn about reptiles, and view behind the scenes at the UGA MAREX Aquarium. The Skidaway Institute of Oceanography will have labs open for viewing, ask scientists questions about research, and tour the RV Savannah. NOAA Grays Reef will demonstrate the Remotely Operated Underwater Vehicle and other research at the Reef system located off the coast of Georgia. Event starts at 12 noon to 4:00 pm Location: Skidaway Island.

***Field Trips continued on next page...***

## FIELD TRIPS CONTINUED...



**SUN, NOV 5: Hutchinson Island.** By this date, fall migration is in its last weeks and many winter residents have already settled in. This location provides an interesting mix of birds due to a diverse habitat that includes grasslands, wooded areas, and wetlands. Several rare species have shown up here this year and last. All beginners and families with children are welcome. Meet at the white building (community center) at 8 am. Leader: Diana Churchill, [912-604-7539](tel:912-604-7539) or [dichurchbirds@gmail.com](mailto:dichurchbirds@gmail.com).

**WED, NOV 15: Onslow Island SNWR.** This part of the refuge system is a recent addition to Savannah and has been a valuable stop-over for shorebirds. We have also spotted rare species here, so you never know what you will see especially due to environmental changes to the area because of hurricane Irma in September. We welcome beginners, families and children. You will see birds up close at this unique site. Meet at the entrance at 7:30 am. Be prepared for a lot of walking. Wear sturdy shoes and definitely bring bug spray! Leader: Mary Lou Dickson  
[marylou@dicksonimages.com](mailto:marylou@dicksonimages.com)

All field trips are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted!

**OCT 6 - OCT 9: Georgia Ornithological Society.** Fall meeting with field trips and other birding opportunities, check out registration at [www.gos.org](http://www.gos.org).



We are in need of more volunteers to help fill the bird feeders at Oatland Island Wildlife Center. We will train you. AS a volunteer you would go to Oatland once every 6 to 8 weeks to fill our six feeders at three stations. This is one of the conservation/education projects that Ogeechee Audubon does in partnership with Oatland Island. Ogeechee Audubon purchases the seed and provides volunteers to fill the feeders twice a week. The feeders serve as a point of education about birds and the local birds benefit!

If interested send an email to:  
[info@ogeecheeaudubon.org](mailto:info@ogeecheeaudubon.org)

- **The Shrinking Sanctuary**

Documentary filmmaker, Mark Albertin, is coming to Savannah to screen his film which tells the story of **Cumberland Island National Seashore** and its potential development. Come and find out why this is happening and what you can do about it.

**Saturday, October 7 at 3 PM - 4 PM**

Live Oak Public Libraries  
2002 Bull St, Savannah

- **Ogeechee Audubon Holiday Party**

**Dec. 12 @ 7pm**

- **Christmas Bird Count**



**Harris Neck – December 15**

**Savannah – December 30**

**If interested in participating please send an email to:**

[info@ogeecheeaudubon.org](mailto:info@ogeecheeaudubon.org)

**Please include your name, contact information and where you wish to participate.**

### **Report from our Membership Workgroup**

The focus of our Holiday Meeting in December will be for **Recognition** of our volunteers and for **Recruitment** for new members. R&R Holiday Party! We are encouraging every member to attend, bring a guest and invite someone who would like to join Ogeechee Audubon Society. Anyone you know who may be interested in or wish to join Ogeechee Audubon please encourage them to attend this meeting! More details to follow for our social gathering.

We will begin reminding members to renew their memberships at our October meeting, however you may begin sending in renewals for 2018 to: Ogeechee Audubon, P.O. Box 13424, Savannah, GA 31416 now. Please come to the December meeting prepared to renew! We will have a renewal table set up. The time period to renew your membership for 2018 will close on March 30, 2018 after which time any person not having renewed their membership will be removed from our membership rolls. We will send reminders so everyone has ample opportunity to renew in a timely fashion.

**I would ask everyone to please take a moment to log onto our website – [ogeecheeaudubon.org](http://ogeecheeaudubon.org) – to review all the wonderful reasons to join Ogeechee Audubon. We have a great organization because of our fantastic members!**

### *Birding Beauties*

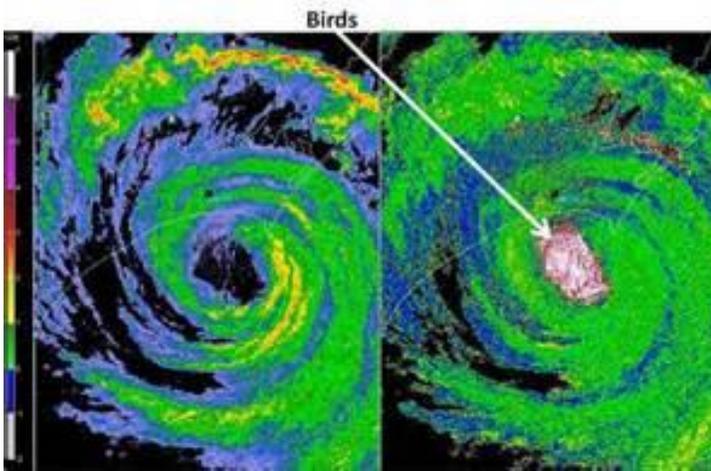
...by Venetia Butler

I have spent most of my life on Tybee Island, with an incredible marsh and tidal creek as my back yard, enhanced by a western view presenting the most beautiful sunsets. Marsh side birding from my deck is a daily experience. I am a naturalist and an educator. I have observed birds for many years and in many incredible habitats beyond Tybee. In fact, I even mentioned to my dear friend, Miriam Litchfield, that I sometimes feel a bit jaded when it comes to birding around here because I have seen so many of them so often. I have a friend who says, "I just don't know why everyone gets so excited about a Red-winged Blackbird".

On Saturday, July 22, I decided to participate in an Ogeechee Audubon bird walk, or ride, as it turns out. A morning ride through the refuge with seasoned birders seemed like a great way to spend a morning. A group of eager folks gathered at the beginning of the Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive in the Savannah Wildlife Refuge. I was delighted to see so many familiar faces as we divided the group up into as few cars as possible so we could travel the four miles of a meandering drive through old rice fields. My friend Miriam and I jumped at the opportunity to ride with Diana Churchill, birder extraordinaire. Diana is a wealth of knowledge and interesting anecdotes and gave somewhat of a running commentary during the entire morning. In spite of "feeling a bit jaded" as I mentioned earlier, I learned a lot from Diana, the walking encyclopedia of local birds. It was my lucky day.

Sure enough, we were welcomed fairly quickly by the usual Red-winged Black birds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), Northern Cardinals (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) and Marsh Wrens (*Cistothorus palustris*). In addition there was the occasional Great Egret (*Ardea alba*), majestic Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*), and more.

This day happened to also be Diana's birthday. Soon into the drive, she received a really nice birthday present from the bird gods, which she eagerly shared with the rest of us. She spotted a beautiful summer visitor, a Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*). This is a bird species that I have never seen before, or at least did not know what I was seeing. Wow! What a treat. The angle of the sun at



### What do Birds do During a Hurricane?

#### 🐦 They Leave...

- Birds can hear infrasound and are sensitive to changes in barometric pressure – so they know a storm is coming and they leave

#### 🐦 They (migratory birds) fly ahead of, into or through a storm...

- Birds use this dangerous tactic to assist in their migration
- Sometimes migrating birds will be blown far off course

#### 🐦 They hang on for dear life...

- Birds seek shelter in thick bushes, and the leeward side of trees
- Or they will seek shelter wherever they can find it

#### 🐦 They die (sadly)

- Hurricanes have serious impacts on sedentary birds especially those that live on islands by not only outright killing birds but through destruction of habitat

🐦 Even though it is exciting to see an unusual bird that was blown off course after a hurricane – they may not get back on course nor survive

the time cast a light that made the Bittern appear golden. It was so well camouflaged in the tall reeds that it would take a while to spot it again if one lost sight of it. We all had the pleasure of watching it straddling the reeds while feeding on small fish and insects. I learned that the Bittern nest is built on a platform of marsh vegetation with a canopy made of tall marsh plants pulled over and crimped to keep it in place. There are two Bittern species that are found in the SWR, The Least Bittern and the American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*). The American Bittern is a winter visitor while the Least Bittern chooses the summer climate.



Photo by Leslie Weichsel

While observing the elusive Bittern, we were also treated to a sighting of both Common Gallinules and Purple Gallinules. One of the adults was swimming along with a small brood of fuzzy little chicks. I had seen many Gallinules over the years both in this refuge and on a freshwater pond on Sapelo Island that I visit several times a year. However, I had not really learned how to distinguish the two species or learned much about their natural history. In fact, I don't think I ever really noticed the white patches. I learned that the Common Gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*), also known as the Common Moorhen, has white stripes on its flanks and sides of its undertail while the Purple Gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*) with its beautiful purple and green colors has a solid white patch on its rump, also known as a "target arse."

As we went further around the drive and into a wooded hammock, the excitement of birding continued as we began hearing the calls of buntings. With Diana's help, I finally learned to distinguish between the call of the beautiful multi-colored Painted Buntings (*Passerina ciris*) and the richly blue Indigo Buntings (*Passerina cyanea*). The little "cover bird" of birding guides, the Painted Bunting makes a high pitched, roller coaster kind of melody while the Indigo Bunting makes more of a "what! what! where? where? see it! see it!"

We continued on around the drive seeing alligators, many more birds, and interesting plants, but time was running out for this morning's bird drive. I always enjoy the beauty and peacefulness of such places and sharing with folks of like minds, but this morning I learned to open my eyes and ears again and not take things for granted. My take away from this experience was that we are "never too old to learn."

What we saw:

- Common Gallinules (Gallinula galeata) also known as the Common Moorhen*
- Purple Gallinule (Porphyrio martinicus)*
- Marsh Wren (Cistothorus palustris)*
- Least Bittern (Ixobrychus exilis)*
- American Bittern (Botaurus lentiginosus)*
- Anhinga (Anhinga anhinga)*
- Northern Cardinal (Cardinalis cardinalis)*
- Painted Buntings (Passerina ciris)*
- Indigo Buntings (Passerina cyanea)*
- Least Bittern (Ixobrychus exilis)*
- Great Egret (Ardea alba)*
- Great Blue Heron (Ardea Herodias)*

### Who Am I?

<p>Can you guess who I am? Be the first to send an email to <a href="mailto:info@ogeecheeaudubon.org">info@ogeechee audubon.org</a> with the correct answer and win a prize!</p>		<p>Answer will be posted on our Facebook page on November 1<sup>st</sup>.</p>
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## Tomkins Island

We often get questions when we do field trips on the North end of Tybee Island about Tomkins Island.

Tomkins Island is a small island that was created by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2005 as part of mitigation requirements for the continued maintenance dredging of the Savannah Harbor. It is approximately 7 acres and sits between Hilton Head and Tybee Islands. It is in South Carolina.

Tomkins Island was created for nesting sites for the brown pelican, royal tern, black skimmer, gull-billed tern, sandwich tern, laughing gull, and American oystercatcher. Horseshoe crabs also spawn on the beach. Tomkins Island is an Audubon Important Bird Area for South Carolina.

Construction of the island was complete before nesting season in 2005. That year 1,832 pairs of seabirds nested. In 2006, 5,145 pairs nested, and in 2007 7,132 pairs nested.

The Island is named after Ivan Rexford Tomkins. Ivan Tomkins worked for Corps of Engineers during the years of 1922 to 1956 and over these many years, he became an expert on the Savannah River delta. Tomkins was recognized as a specialist in the detailed knowledge of the wildlife, and especially birds of the Savannah River

delta. In addition, Tomkins was an expert photographer. He was a charter member of the Georgia Ornithological Society.

Tomkins Island is closed to the public. It is maintained by the Corps of Engineers. Clearance of vegetation and fire ants continue to be a challenge.



Information taken from *The Oriole* and Seabird Sanctuaries – Tomkins Island

### Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2018

New membership \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Includes the *Marshlander*

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Includes the *Marshlander*

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (c) \_\_\_\_\_

**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail\* \_\_\_\_\_

\* Our newsletter is delivered by e-mail

As a member, you will be notified by e-mail about upcoming meetings, events and important conservation issues.

Please mail this form with your check to:

**Ogeechee Audubon, att Membership, PO Box 13424,  
Savannah, GA 31416**

*Contributions are tax deductible.*

Ogeechee Audubon-\$20.00/household \_\_\_\_\_

Senior (over 62) or Student - \$15/household \_\_\_\_\_

Special Contribution \_\_\_\_\_

Ogeechee Audubon membership is based on the calendar year – January to December.  
Send your *National Audubon membership dues* directly to National.

**OAS Chapter renewals are accepted until March 31<sup>st</sup>.**

**\*Please help us save the trees. If you receive the Newsletter by printed mail and can receive it electronically via e-mail let Debbie Bennett (mburdal@comcast.net) know so we no longer print it, mail it and use paper unnecessarily. Audubon cares about the environment and also about you. Therefore, if you do not have access to email we will be happy to send you a printed copy.**