

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

December, 2019/January, 2020, Volume XLIX, Issue VI



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.

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, Debbie Bennett	
Field Trips	Mary Sweeney-
Reeves	
Programs	Lynn Wrenn

Communications Workgroup

Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Leslie Weichsel
Publicity	Sandy Beasley

Conservation Workgroup

Entire Board

Please Join Ogeechee Audubon Society

Tuesday – December 10th at 6:30 pm for the Ogeechee Audubon Society Annual Holiday Party!



Light refreshments will be provided.

Diana Churchill will lead us in a warm-up for the Christmas Bird Count and a friendly competition to test our birding skills will follow!

A special surprise is planned as well!

Bring a guest who wants to become an OAS member!

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

Thank You to Wild Birds Unlimited for sponsoring *The Marshlander*

	<i>Fresh Seed NO Fillers!</i>	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	
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Bird Walks, Field Trips, Surveys, Counts

Ogeechee Audubon Society offers four kinds of opportunities for members to participate in birding in the field:

Bird Walks

Bird Walks will be held monthly at various locations to provide an opportunity for birders of all levels to come together. This **self-directed** activity has no defined leader. Everyone is expected to help each other out as one hones one's birding skills and identifies birds in the area. Sometimes when you have to figure it out for yourself – you learn more. Also, it is a chance to help others learn and to share your joy of birding! Bird Walks are open to public and birders of all skill levels and ages are welcome. Length of time about an hour to an hour and a half.

****THU, DEC 12: Second Thursday of the Month Bird Walk 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM. Joseph J. Tribble Park** – 12517 Largo Drive, Savannah. This park is known as a secret park in Savannah and a good site for birding. Fox and deer are occasionally seen here. There is a small lake with an island in the middle. This 51 acre park is surrounded by a nice wooded area as a buffer to nearby roads. We will walk around a trail surrounding the lake. Meet at the parking area. **Trip Rigor:** Easy with paved path.

****THU, JAN 9: Second Thursday of the Month Bird Walk 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM. Whitmarsh Island Preserve** – Johnny Mercer Blvd and Bryan Woods Rd. Meet at parking area off Johnny Mercer Blvd. This site contains some of the last remaining old growth maritime forest on the islands. Tidal creeks and fresh water creeks meander through the area. Explore the upper canopy to find winter residents. You may also spot a deer or other wildlife on this early morning walk. **Trip Rigor:** Easy, terrain is gravel, grass, and/or dirt.

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.

****SAT, DEC 14: Harris Neck Wildlife Refuge, Christmas Bird Count Warm-up: 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM.** (5000 Wildlife Drive NE, Townsend, Georgia 31331). This location is a treat for birders which holds ducks, herons, sparrows, warblers plus more. This protected area includes extensive salt marsh, open fields, forested wetlands, and mixed hardwood/pine forest providing habitats for varied bird species. We will spend this time honing our skills for the Harris Neck Christmas Bird Count. Come join us even if you are not going to participate in the CBC! Meet in the parking lot at the front gate of Harris Neck NWR. Leader: Mary Lou Dickson, Marylou@Dicksonimages.com. **Trip rigor:** Easy, birding from the car with some walking on flat easy path.

****SAT, JAN 18: AI Bungard Conservation Area/Chatham County Wetlands Preserve: 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM.** (6811 Basin Rd, Savannah GA 31401). This is a beautiful site featuring wetlands and river setting. We will search for wading birds, raptors, woodpeckers, and various sparrows. Leader: Larry Carlile, 912- 224-1796, or l.carlile259@comcast.net

Surveys

Surveys are conducted to gather data regarding bird populations at a defined time, in a defined area for a defined purpose. Surveys are more rigorous than bird walks or field trips. Surveys are conducted with a **specific purpose in mind and the data that is collected will be submitted by the survey leader only and shared with the participants**. These surveys are led by a core survey team. Ogeechee Audubon members are invited to participate in survey activity as citizen scientists

and expected to stay for the length of the survey. Surveys are **only open to Ogeechee Audubon Members**. Length of time will vary but typically as long as 4 hours.

Waste Management - 3001 Little Neck Road - Superior Landfill Survey

SUN, JAN 12. Meet at gate at 8:30am sharp. Restricted area. Must be there by 8:30am. Join the survey team members to assist in data collection of the bird population. ***Ogeechee Audubon Society Members only***.

Savannah Christian Preparatory School – 1599 Chatham Parkway – Property Survey

SUN, DEC 29; JAN 26. Meet at gate at 8:30am sharp. Restricted area. Must be there by 8:30am. Join the survey team to collect data regarding the bird population on the property. ***Ogeechee Audubon Society Members only***.

Savannah Christian Preparatory School – 1599 Chatham Parkway – Rusty Blackbird Count

SUN, DEC 1; DEC 8; DEC 15; DEC 22; JAN 5; JAN 12; JAN 19. Meet at the gate at 3:00pm sharp. Restricted area. Join the team to count of the Rusty Blackbirds as they come in to feed at the School grounds. ***Ogeechee Audubon Society Members only***.

International Shorebird Survey

TBD - Currently Ogeechee Audubon contributes data to these surveys by conducting 3 surveys in the spring and three in the late summer and early fall on the north beach of Tybee Island, each during a specified 3-week window. These surveys have been completed for 2019. We will provide information on the 2020 survey dates in our spring newsletter. The ability to walk about a mile in soft, uneven sand is required. These surveys when they resume can accommodate 12 people and beginners are welcome. ***Ogeechee Audubon Society Members only***. Stay tuned for opportunities to participate.

Counts

Please Join Us! -- Sign up now! -- All are welcome! -- CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS!!!

Basic bird counts are a good way to estimate population size, detect changes in population size or species diversity. The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is **a census of birds in the Western Hemisphere**, performed annually in the early Northern-hemisphere winter by volunteer birdwatchers and administered by the National Audubon Society. The purpose is to provide population data for use in science, especially conservation biology, though many people participate for recreation.

Ogeechee Audubon participates each year in the National Audubon Christmas Bird Count. The two CBC areas that OAS is responsible for are Harris Neck and Savannah. Harris Neck survey occurs in late December while the Savannah survey is at the beginning of January. The public, no matter what birding skill level, is welcome to participate in both surveys.

Harris Neck Christmas Bird Count

FRI DEC 20 – All are welcome to join us in this bird count. Please email us at ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com or lambrightm@gmail.com with your name and contact information. We will assign you an area and time.



Savannah Christmas Bird Count

SAT JAN 4 - All are welcome to join us in this bird count. Please email us at ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com or dichurchbirds@gmail.com with your name and contact information. We will assign you an area and time.

Savannah Countdown Get-Together – Jan 4th @ 5:30pm – upstairs at the Savannah Coffee Roasters, 215 W. Liberty St. Purchase your own food and beverages and head upstairs – the food will be brought up to you. We'll share the events of the day and do the tally. This is a great relaxed space to unwind after a long day of birding!

Save-the-Date



On Sun, February 16, 2020, join Ogeechee Audubon Board Member, Mary Lou Dickson along with guest co-leader from Charleston Audubon who will lead a birding tour of Bear Island and Donnelley WMAs. Managed by the SC Department of Natural Resources, these two properties in the ACE Basin have a combined area of some 20,000 acres and include a wide range of habitats, including mixed pine-hardwoods forest, tidal creeks, freshwater impoundments, salt marsh and agricultural fields. During the winter season these WMAs host a large number of waterfowl and wading birds, in addition to various raptors and many wintering songbird species.

There are never any guarantees, but it's always possible we could encounter one of the varieties seen at Bear or Donnelley, such as the Ruff, the Eurasian Wigeon, or the wayward and mysterious Great Kiskadee!

Project Feeder Watch – Saturday November 9, 2019 to Friday April 3, 2020

Join Project FeederWatch! Anyone in the U.S. with an interest in birds and a feeder to watch is welcome to join. Help scientists monitor winter bird populations while you learn more about the birds in your neighborhood. To join, contact the FeederWatch office. United States Cornell Lab of Ornithology 159 Sapsucker Woods Road Ithaca, NY 14850 1-800-843-BIRD (2473) <https://feederwatch.org>



Membership

Hi All,

Our membership drive continues. We got off to a great start at the October meeting. You have another chance to pay 2020 dues before the new year begins at our December meeting or by mailing in your renewal form found at the end of this newsletter. Please share about OAS with your friends and invite them to meetings and field trips/events and maybe they will join too. Also please remember we now have a Fledgling membership for those 12 and under for \$5. These memberships for your younger family/friends could make a good holiday gift and offer an introduction for these 'fledglings' to birding!! Hope to see you in December!!!

Debbie Bennett

NOTE:

Founding Member of Ogeechee Audubon Society, Arthur Thompson died on November 25th. Arthur was 95 years old. He served as the Membership Chair for many years. He loved canoeing and birding. If you have any fond memories of Arthur please share to email: arthurmemoies19@gmail.com There will a Celebration of Life in February or March.

FIELD NOTES

Field Trip - Savannah Christian Preparatory School



On September 29th, Ogeechee Audubon paired up with Savannah Christian Preparatory School to explore the Ecological Diversity for Educational Networking (E.D.E.N) Outdoor Education Center on their campus. EDEN, the property that is located at the back portion of the school, is comprised of several ponds, wetlands, sites with historical significance, and trails that wind their way through the hardwood/pine forest. The purpose of the trip was to acquaint the school family and OAS with the richness of the area. Additionally, OAS will be doing surveys for Rusty Blackbirds during the fall and winter. This spot is one of the few locations in the United States that provide ideal winter habitat for these birds which are in steep decline, having lost 85-90% of their population from 1970-2010.

The event had an excellent response to OAS's invitation to guide a field trip there so ahead of time several groups were created. The group of 18-20 adult birders, led by Pam Smith and Stan Gray, walked around one of the lakes, taking time to locate and identify the birds plus discuss other aspects of the area. Mary Lambright and Lynn Wrenn headed up another group, made up of 10-12 Girl Scouts with parents. They helped the girls with their observation skills, what to look for when a bird is spotted, plus pointed out other non-bird organisms along the way. Finally, Rose Talbert and Sue DeRosa tried to keep the group of 10-12 Cub Scouts with parents corralled and on the trail. First, the binoculars were distributed and instructions given as to how to use them. Mainly, though, the Scouts were interested in exploring the world around them, noticing what different animals were doing, and seeing the variety of plants and trees they were walking through. These items helped them meet the qualifications for one of their badges.

Overall, the participants had a wonderful time and learned a lot about what inhabited that area. The younger ones heard and saw some of the more distinctive birds—Pileated and Red-Bellied Woodpeckers, Chickadees, Crows and of course the bright red Northern Cardinals. The older groups actually saw or heard over 46 species of birds. The highlights included the migratory warblers as well as a large number of Wood Ducks. Additionally, the adult group noticed a widespread presence of White-eyed Vireos throughout the property (20 total). Anyone birding SCPS for the first time seem to be struck by the diversity associated with the varied habitats plus the extensiveness of the freshwater wetlands nearby the school grounds. Having a "living lab" within such close reach of the student population creates an amazing educational potential. Additionally, by monitoring the birds and the ecology of the area, students can further understand human impact on organisms which may foster a desire to protect this fragile area.

- by Sue DeRosa

Ogeechee Audubon Society will be conducting surveys on the Savannah Christian School for Rusty Blackbirds in the Fall and Winter and also surveying the entire property periodically over the year. These surveys are for Ogeechee Audubon members only but if you would like to participate in these surveys us please join OAS! We would love to have you!

Bird Walk – Forsyth Park

Eight folks showed up for our leisurely bird walk around Forsyth Park on Thursday November 14th. The air was a bit nippy since a cold front had moved in earlier in the week. Well, I believe all the birds and I mean all the birds were hunkered down from this bit of cold. We caught a few glimpses of a few birds flitting here and there but I have never gone out and not really seen any birds. We tried. We watched, We walked. But there was nary a bird in sight. After an hour of walking we decided to head home. As everyone was departing their separate ways two of us spotted a Northern Mockingbird on the bench by the fountain – mocking us! Sometimes you just can't make the birds cooperate with your plans! We did enjoy one another's company though!

Survey – Savannah Christian Preparatory School



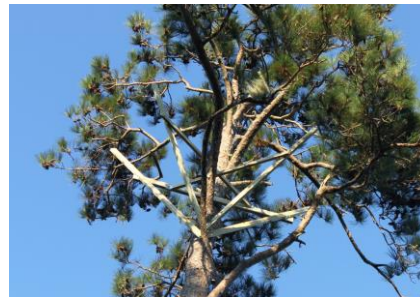
Ogeechee Audubon conducted two bird surveys at Savannah Christian Preparatory School, one on October 27th and one on November 24th. On both occasions a small team of OAS members joined the survey team to collect the data on the bird population on the property. Both surveys were very successful. A total of 60 bird species were collected on the October survey while the November survey yielded 53 species. The November survey had several highlights: A pair of adult Bald Eagles by the Eagle nest, a pair of Great Horned Owls, three Gadwall and the beginning of the Rusty Blackbirds returning. These surveys are part of a cooperative agreement between Ogeechee Audubon and the Savannah Christian Preparatory School to study the dynamics of the landscape as it relates to the flora and fauna, with an emphasis on the birds.

Report by Stan Gray

Rebuilding the Landings Eagle/Owl/Osprey Nest



Ogeechee Audubon Vice President, Mary Lambright took to the skies to join the team to help rebuild the Landings Bird Cam Nest. The old nest was in a dead tree that was decaying and needed to be taken down since it was no longer safe. As part of the team Mary went up in the lift several times to build the new nest. The cameras have been set up at the new site for all to observe the next occupants of the new nest! What a cool project!!! Thanks Mary for all you do for the Landings Bird Cam!



Savannah Christian Preparatory School Designated as eBird Hot Spot!

“**Hotspots** are public birding locations created by **eBird** users. Using **Hotspots**, multiple **birders** can enter data into the same shared location, creating aggregated results available through "View and Explore Data".”

SCPS is one of the best wintering locations for Rusty Blackbirds along the southeast coastal plain, somewhat rivaling the more inland Lake Conestee Nature Park site in South Carolina. Earlier this year, the school administration at Savannah Christian Preparatory School decided to upgrade their security perimeter (as all schools are), and installed a gate at the school entrance. Local birders almost lost the opportunity to have continued access to the school to monitor Rusties and other bird populations. (The school grounds encompass more than 250 acres, with high quality freshwater wetlands and mature forest. It has yielded excellent species diversity.) However Ogeechee Audubon Society successfully partnered with Savannah Christian Preparatory School to access the property for surveys on a restricted basis. OAS will on occasion and with SCPS permission conduct Birding Field trips open to the public as well. The data collected here will be invaluable as to the populations of the Rusty Blackbirds as well as surveying the bird populations of the 250 acres of property.

If you would like to attend these bird surveys on the Savannah Christian School property simply join OAS! We'd love to have you!

To access the data on this Hot Spot go to <https://ebird.org> – go to explore hotspots and type in Savannah Christian Preparatory School. You will see that approximately 122 species have been seen here thus far.

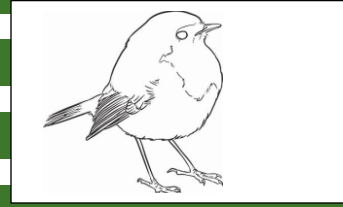
Special thanks to Stan Gray for all his hard work to make this happen.

Contact:

Facebook: Ogeechee Audubon

Email: Ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com

Website: www.ogeecheeaudubon.org



New Opportunity for Young Birders: Fledgling Birder age 12 years and younger. \$5 membership fee. All benefits of Adult Membership. Each Fledge will receive a special sticker.

Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2020

New membership _____ Renewal _____

Membership – please check level of membership

_____ 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.