

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February/March 2020, Volume L, Issue I

50th Anniversary Edition of the Marshlander



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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 – February 18th at 7:00pm

Speaker: Heather Merbs, Director of Oatland Island Wildlife Center

Oatland Island Wildlife Center was established in 1974 as a unit of the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System to provide environmental education and outdoor learning for local school children. The 175 acre facility includes a two mile nature trail that leads visitors through forest, salt marsh, and pond habitats where they can observe animals native to Georgia such as wolves, bobcats, birds of prey, foxes, alligators and cougars. Oatland provides over 30 grade specific programs based on the Georgia Standards of Excellence for science and social studies to students from the county and surrounding region. In 2019, almost 30,000 students participated in one of Oatland's programs. Many of these students reside in Chatham County but others come from the neighboring counties, the southern coast of South Carolina and even the Atlanta region. Over the past 45 years, the center has become an important community resource and has expanded its mission to include providing the general public with experiences to help them make connections with the natural world. Open seven days a week to the public, Oatland now sees in excess of 75,000 general visitors each year from all over the world.

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

****During any OAS event, (including trips in the field) images/photographs of attendees may be captured for advertising and promotional purposes. By attending the event you are granting permission for your image to be used.***

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:

**Please be sure to check OAS website or our Facebook page prior to each field trip to be sure there are no changes to the scheduled field trip.*

***Please note – OAS field trips will go on as scheduled in a drizzle but will cancel with a downpour or thunder and lightning at the start of the field trip.*

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

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, FEB 13: Second Thursday of the Month Bird Walk 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM. L Scott Stell Park** (195 Scott Stell Park, Savannah, GA 31419). This park includes 109 acres of forested land, open fields, and a lake with a paved 1-mile path. It offers a variety of birding habitat and is known to some as another Savannah secret. **Trip rigor:** Easy, surface with paved some dirt trail.

****THU, MAR 12: Second Thursday of the Month Bird Walk 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM. McQueens Trail.** This walking trail was once the old Savannah & Atlantic Railroad line. The trail and associated salt marsh lined with shrubs and trees provide habitat for numerous species of birds and wildlife. We will meet at the Fort Pulaski entrance and begin from that point. **Trip rigor:** Easy, trail surface is gravel.

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.

SUN, FEB 16: Bear Island and Donnelley WMAs – see below for specifics on this special field trip – must register!

SAT, FEB 29: Lake Mayer Community Park 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM We will be looking for ducks, wading birds, shrikes, wintering songbirds and many others – you never know what we will see at this small lake in the middle of Savannah! Meet at the right side of the main parking lot at 8am. Leader: Pam Smith, for more information email: pavercel@comcast.net. **Trip Rigor:** Easy with paved paths.

MON, MAR 9: Fort Pulaski National Monument 8:45 AM to 10:45 AM We will be taking advantage of the morning high tide to look for marsh sparrows along the dikes and shorebirds on the beach. We might find an early spring migrating Northern Parula or singing yellow-throated warbler. Meet at Ft. Pulaski entrance and gate. Leader: Diana Churchill, for more information email dichurchbirds@gmail.com. **Trip Rigor:** Easy, with gravel, sand on beach and varied terrain.

SAT, MAR 28: Oatland Island Wildlife Center 8:00 AM to 10:30 AM. After hearing about Oatland Island from the presentation on February 18th we will have the opportunity to explore Oatland Island with one of the staff. We will explore this maritime forest in search of migratory warblers, vireos, tanagers, buntings, flycatchers and other spring migrants. Meet at the front gate at 8:00 AM. Leader: Eric Swanson at eric.swanson@sccpss.com. **Trip rigor:** Easy, with varied terrain surfaces.

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, MAR 8: Meet at gate at 8:30am sharp. Restricted area. 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, FEB 16: Meet at the gate at 8:30am sharp. Restricted area. Join the survey team to collect data regarding the bird population on the property and ***be part of the Great Backyard Bird Count on this day!***

SUN, MAR 22: Meet at the gate at 8:30am sharp. Restricted area. 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, FEB 2, 9, 23 & MAR 1, 8, 15, 29: Meet at the gate at 3:00pm sharp. Restricted area. Join the team to count 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

23rd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count will be held Friday, February 14th through Monday February 17th, 2020.



Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information.

“The GBBC is a free, fun and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real time snapshot of bird population. Anyone can take part. Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share.” (National Audubon)

As a member of OAS you may either join the survey at Savannah Christian Preparatory School or join the Special Field Trip to Bear Island and Donnelley WMS on Sunday February 16th for the GBBC!

Special Field Trip – Bear Island and Donnelley WMAs

Sun, February 16, 2020, 7:00am – 4:00pm

On Sunday, February 16 Mary Lou Dickson, along with guest co-leader Andy Harrison, an active member of Charleston Audubon, will lead us on 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. Charleston Audubon usually tries to visit these WMAs soon after Bear Island reopens to the public, but Mary Lou has arranged a separate trip just for Ogeechee Audubon with Andy's help. There are never any guarantees, but it's always possible we could encounter one of the rarities seen at Bear or Donnelley, such as a Ruff, Eurasian Wigeon, or the wayward and mysterious Great Kiskadee, which made Bear Island its home for two years in the recent past!

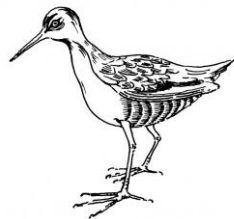
This will be an all-day trip, so **bring water, snacks and a lunch** in addition to your birding gear, including a scope if you have one. Restrooms and picnic areas are limited. Most of the birding will be done from the roadside so there will be a minimal amount of walking.

We will meet at 6:45 AM in the Pilot Travel Center parking lot at the intersection of US Hwy 17 North and I-95 in Hardeeville, SC and carpool from there to meet up with Andy. **Please register with Mary Lou prior to February 16 at marylou@dicksonimages.com or by phone at 919-559-6898.**

Trip rigor: Easy, most birding done from the roadside with minimal amount of walking

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

Hello all you bird lovers and supporters,

Can you believe we are in 2020! Our new membership year has begun. Many of you have sent in your membership dues or brought them to our fun-filled December meeting. We will be running our renewal campaign until the end of March, 2020. Look for reminders and little nudges between now and then. If you miss the March 31st deadline, your membership ends and you will no longer receive meeting and event notices and newsletter. You can rejoin at anytime if you inadvertently let your membership lapse. Thank you to each of you for your continued support of Ogeechee Audubon.

-Debbie Bennett

NOTES:

50 Years of Ogeechee Audubon! Wow!

2020 marks the 50th anniversary of the Ogeechee Audubon Society! The members of the Board of Ogeechee Audubon will be planning celebratory events over this next year marking these fifty years of fulfilling our mission to educate adults and children about birds, wildlife, and the environment.

Throughout 2020 Ogeechee Audubon will take a look back at our history here in Savannah and the surrounding low country. We will be sharing our 50 year history by sharing our archived documents and notes. We will conclude the year with a special banquet celebrating our Golden Anniversary with all who have supported us and our mission over the past 5 decades. As such we would like to ask each of you if you have a story to share about Ogeechee Audubon from your first hand experiences? If you remember a particular field trip, a person or a time when you spotted a sought-after life bird. Or if you have pictures of OAS members in action, particularly from our early days. Ogeechee Audubon has a long history in our community and any anecdotes shared by folks like you will help weave a beautiful picture of the story of Ogeechee Audubon Society over these 50 years. Please send these to ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com.

◆ **Thank You to Mary Lou Dickson for designing our very special Golden Anniversary logo!**

A LOOK BACK AT OAS HISTORY – 1970

The first Ogeechee Audubon Society Field Trip was held on Saturday, November 7, 1970 at Harris Neck Wildlife Refuge.

At 7:30 a.m. 35 people met at the Savannah Science Museum, and with the able direction of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Young, who posted bird signs at strategic points, all arrived at the appointed place inside Harris Neck by 9:30 a.m. Instruction sheets and maps were available, and the party set off in four groups, mostly on foot to explore different areas. The refuge is bounded on its northern side by the South Newport River, which makes a picturesque background for the recreation area. The runways and hard surfaced roads of a former airfield provide easy access to the interior, but some members preferred to seek untrodden ways despite an outrageous quantity of burrs! Between 12 and 12:30 p.m. all groups met for lunch at the recreation area, where picnic tables were among the facilities provided. Here small children in the party played among the magnificent oaks. Members exchanged news of birds and wildlife seen including exhibits like a black racer snake, an antique medicine bottle, and what appeared to be pieces of Indian pottery found in the woods. A total of 77 species of birds was seen including a large flock of Canada Geese...it was an impressive sight when some two dozen of these birds took flight and landed on a nearby pond. After a very pleasant day in fine weather, the last members of the party left Harris Neck Refuge at 4:00 pm.

RARE BIRDS SIGHTED

Blue Geese (2)

Hudsonian Curlew

Sand Hill Crane (2)

SIGHTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Dung-Beetle or Tumblebug

Thread Waisted Wasp

Ogeechee Audubon's Annual Meeting is scheduled for April 21, 2020. At this meeting we will elect Officers for the Board. If you have any nominations for President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer please contact the Nominating Committee (Diana Churchill, Mary Lou Dickson, Marty Foxx) at ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com by April 10th.

Thank You.

Camp TALON

Young Birders and Their Parents:

The registration form for this year's Camp TALON (Teen Adventures Learning Ornithology and Nature) is now available at <http://www.georgiawildlife.com/CampTALON>. The camp is a six-day (June 6-11) event for young people ages 14-19 (older teens may be eligible) who are interested in birds and nature. Sponsored by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, TERN, the Georgia Ornithological Society, and the Atlanta Audubon Society, the camp is based at Epworth by the Sea on St. Simons Island. We'll be birding many of Georgia's coastal "greatest hits" including Altamaha WMA, Harris Neck NWR, Little St. Simons Island, Ft. Stewart, Cannon's Point Preserve, Sapelo Island, Cumberland Island National Seashore, and St. Simons Island. Teachers for the camp all have 20+ years of experience as professional biologists, ornithologists, and

teachers working for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, GOS, The Nature Conservancy, Ft. Stewart, and Little St. Simons Island.

Besides becoming a better birder, camp participants will learn about bird migration, conservation, census techniques, habitat needs, flight, journaling, song identification, and more. Students do not need to be experienced birders; they just need to be serious about birds and the outdoors. If you live inland and are wondering how you'll be able to bring your son or daughter to the coast for the camp - don't worry. A bus will pick up inland camp participants in Macon, will take them to the camp, and will return them to Macon in the late afternoon on the last day of each camp.

The camp will only cost \$400 for early registration (until April 3rd), which includes meals, lodging, and transportation from Macon. Late registration (April 4 - May 4) will cost \$450.

If you have questions, please contact Julie Duncan at Jdwildlife15@gmail.com or Bob Sargent at bob.sargent@dnr.ga.gov

Field Notes of Interest:

- ◆ Special Thanks to Mary Lambright, Diana Churchill, Stan Gray and Larry Carlile for all the hard work done in organizing the Harris Neck and Savannah Christmas Bird Counts.
- ◆ Thanks to Stan Gray and Larry Carlile – the Superior Landfill property is now designated as a hot spot (restricted access) on eBird!

Citizen Scientist Wonder

By Mary Lou Dickson

Identifying shorebirds is hard. Identifying winter shorebirds is harder. Identifying winter shorebirds in dense fog seemed



impossible, but that was the challenge my team faced during the last Mid-winter Shorebird Survey. I had the opportunity to help survey Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge and for the first hour, finding any shorebirds at all was a real effort. Finally, we found, what turned out to be a mixed flock of about 3,500 birds. But what were they? With much effort and quite a bit of patience in the changing fog conditions, we sorted out the various species including one species of great interest – Piping Plovers!

Piping Plovers are a small, endangered shorebird, that uses the Georgia coast during the winter. We considered ourselves very lucky to find these birds at all. But it was “science’s” lucky day too, as one of the birds was banded and we were able to connect our sighting with the bird’s scientific information. Per Melissa Chaplin, an Endangered Species Biologist, our banded plover is “a female hatched in 2013 along Platte Bay in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, MI. In 2014, she returned to near the same location to breed and was re-banded at that time. In 2016, she moved to North Manitou Island, MI and has been nesting there since.”

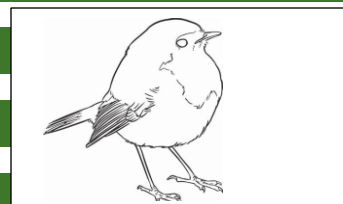
So, our little outing in the fog added to “her” file by confirming that she likes to spend her winters on the Georgia coast! As citizen scientists, we may often wonder if what we do makes any real difference. The answer is yes. And occasionally, you get a chance to learn first-hand that a little shorebird scurrying up the beach is actually a visiting bird from Michigan who has made the 932 mile one-way trip twice a year for the last seven years. Pretty cool!

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

_____ 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.