

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April/May, 2020, Volume L, Issue II

50th Anniversary Edition of the Marshlander



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, Rose Talbert	
Field Trips	John Williamson
Programs	Lynn Wrenn
Communications Workgroup	
Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Leslie Weichsel
Publicity	Matt Tozar
Historian	
Sandy Beasley	
Conservation Workgroup	
Entire Board	

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 is in Flockdown!

As each of you are acutely aware, we as a country and the world as a whole are facing unprecedented times with the COVID -19 Pandemic. Ogeechee Audubon is responding to this crisis by putting the health and welfare of our members as the number one priority in making any decision about any activities of our organization. With that in mind the Board has decided to suspend all Ogeechee Audubon sponsored activities indefinitely. The minute we get an all clear and we feel it is safe to begin meeting again and going out together birdwatching we will be in touch!

Our April meeting is the time designated in the By Laws for our Annual Meeting and the election of officers. We are postponing the Annual Meeting until the next meeting of the membership which is to be determined based on the timeline dictated by the virus. Our By Laws do not specifically address a pandemic situation so we believe since our activities are suspended, at the first opportunity when we can safely reconvene we will have the Annual meeting and hold the elections. In the meantime, the present officers will continue to serve.

We miss each of you. Birds are everywhere so we can continue to birdwatch from our windows at home while we shelter in place. Please take care of yourselves and your loved ones. Be safe!

-OAS Board of Directors

****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.***

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Transitions

I am sad to announce that three of our Board Members, after serving Ogeechee Audubon for some time, have decided to “retire” this year: Debbie Bennett, our Membership Chair; Mary Sweeney-Reeves, our Field Trip Coordinator and Sandy Beasley, past Treasurer and Publicity Chair. Each of these individuals will be greatly missed. Their excellent talents and skills were invaluable to the success of Ogeechee Audubon. I personally was so grateful for their selfless dedication to Ogeechee Audubon. Whatever needed to be done they were more than willing to pitch in and help. All three held very key roles and will be sorely missed. It will be difficult to fill their shoes. Thank you so much for your service Debbie, Mary and Sandy!

I am pleased to announce that Sandy Beasley will continue to serve Ogeechee Audubon as our official Historian. This has been a position outlined in our By Laws but never filled. As you know this is the 50th year of Ogeechee Audubon Society. This golden anniversary year will go down as one of the most unique! Thank you, Sandy, for stepping up to fulfill this vital role.

In addition, I am pleased to announce the addition of three new Board Members: Matt Tozar, John Williamson and Rose Talbert. In the next Newsletter I will provide a brief biographical blurb for each one. I am confident that each of these individuals will bring their unique skills and talents to help lead Ogeechee Audubon. Congratulations to Matt, John and Rose. We are so glad to have you on the Board!

I am sorry I could not be thanking our past Board members and welcoming our new Board members in person at our Annual meeting. This will happen at our next public meeting.

Leslie Weichsel, President

This publication of the Marshlander will be a bit different. It is the “Flockdown” edition! We will be presenting various stories and reports as well as activities and links to keep you connected with birds. I hope you enjoy it!

Ogeechee Audubon’s Annual Meeting will be scheduled for the next public meeting. 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.

Project Feeder Watch has been extended! – Until Friday, April 30, 2020 – National Audubon

eBird Global Big Day! – Saturday, May 9, 2020 - eBird



Membership

A gentle reminder to all who have yet to renew your 2020 dues. Please do so at your earliest convenience. We will be back and you do not want to miss out on what we have in store once activities resume! We have kept everyone from the 2019 membership list on the mailing list for the time being for notices and the Newsletter. However, you will not receive any further information if you do not renew your membership by May 1st. Please use the form on the last page.

Thank You!

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 to mark fifty years of fulfilling our mission to educate adults and children about birds, wildlife, and the environment.

Throughout 2020 Ogeechee Audubon will look back on our history here in Savannah and the surrounding low country. Periodically we will be sharing our 50-year history by sharing from our archived documents and notes. We plan to 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 any photographs 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.

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

Reports from the Field and Stories of Interest



Extraordinary Barred Owl Encounter ~Pam Smith

Much to my surprise, a Barred Owl flew through the screen on my porch in the early morning hours on Saturday, Feb. 15th and fortunately was unharmed. Even though I propped the porch door wide open so he could leave, he was quite content perching on the porch furniture throughout the morning and later slept up in the rafters for the remainder of the day.

I really expected him to leave (through the open doorway) during the overnight hours. However, I was greatly surprised to find the Barred Owl still sleeping in my porch rafters at 5:00 AM on Sunday morning. By around 5:15 AM he started becoming active and seemed ready to leave but he really wanted to exit through the screens in the vaulted ceiling! At one point, he landed on the ceiling fan, which provided comic relief. At ~ 5:30 AM, I heard a second Barred Owl call from across the lagoon (maybe his mate) and he became much more anxious to leave (plus he hadn't eaten for ~20 hours!).

Despite my repeated efforts to show him the safe exit through the open porch door, it wasn't until I started clicking my fingers that he really started tracking my movements – it was quite fascinating. He was actually leaning over his perch to follow my movement out the doorway when hearing the clicking. After several 'exit training' sessions, I shut off all lights (they were off all night) and went back into the house & watched. After a few more tries hitting the screen in the vaulted ceiling to get out (which was still his preferred exit!), he finally exited through the doorway at 6:45 AM. I feel so fortunate to have had this extraordinary encounter with such a magnificent bird!



A Walk in the Park - Diana Churchill

If these were normal times, Ogeechee Audubon members would have gathered at 7:45 am on Friday morning, April 3rd at the Forsyth Park Fountain to wander the park in search of migratory birds. However, with a novel virus rearranging our world, gatherings are simply not the way to go.



The migratory birds continue to arrive, and this is a great time to look and listen for them in your own yard or neighborhood park, or even in Forsyth Park as long as you are sensible and maintain safe social distance, and refrain from sharing binoculars.

Here are a few of the birds you should be looking and listening for.

One of the first warblers to arrive is the tiny Northern Parula. Look for its bluish back, white belly, and yellow and orange sunrise on the chest. Its call is a buzzy, ascending trill. The Parulas will be courting and nesting in our area.

People are also reporting the arrival of one of our larger migrants - the Great Crested Flycatcher. I call it the "wheeper," as this bushy-crested flycatcher with the lemon-yellow belly is known for its sharp "wheep, wheep" call. These birds are cavity nesters and will be inspecting the holes in the oak trees. They have been known to use gourds and birdhouses, building untidy nests that often contain a signature piece of snake skin.



Don't forget to check the skies for the first returning chimney swifts. Particularly in downtown Savannah these tiny cigars with wings will soon fill the air with their high-pitched chirps and twitters. They'll be looking for chimneys in which to build their clever, crescent-shaped nests.

Keep your eyes and ears peeled for summer and scarlet tanagers, indigo buntings, blue grosbeaks, black-and-white and black-throated blue warblers, and many more. Good birding!

Ogeechee Audubon Field Trip to Lake Mayer - March 5, 2020 – Tommy Taylor

On March 5th Ogeechee Audubon's birding field trip to Lake Mayer proved to be a very productive, if chilly, birding day. It was an easy walk on the paved path around the lake; with approximately 20 birders in attendance, including 6 or 7 of children. Group leader, Pam Smith started pointing out birds immediately keeping the attention of my 3 of my grandsons



(10, 8 and 5 yrs. old). Pam identified various ducks and a couple of very large Pileated Woodpeckers right from the start. We added more birds as we came along eastern side of the lake, including good views of large birds like Bald Eagles, a Wood Stork and a Great Blue Heron, etc. However, the real bonanza came on the northern side of the lake! As the sun warmed our backs, it perfectly illuminated a wealth of birds in the nearby trees, including the most Warblers I have seen in one place. The group total count was 51 different bird types. It was quite a rewarding day, especially for a novice like me, who would not have seen or been able to identify most of the birds!

Bear Island and Donnelley February Field Trip - Miriam Litchfield

Bear Island and Donnelley WMAs (Wildlife Management Areas) in the ACE Basin of S.C. are magical birding spots in the winter when the bugs don't carry you off. On a cloudy morning we hit the right combination of cool temps., rain free weather (until the afternoon) and no insects in sight. Andy Harrison of Charleston Audubon and Mary Lou Dickson co-led the trip, and they couldn't have been better team leaders! I want to thank Mary Lou for organizing the trip shortly after her most informative and fun Duck ID class at the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge.



The trip started at Mary's House Pond at the entrance to Bear Island. The flats had low water so the birds were feeding in abundance. Before I arrived, the group saw Marbled Godwits which is always a thrill, but there was so much to see I couldn't be disappointed for long that I hadn't seen them. American White Pelicans could be seen in the distance and Dowitchers were in abundance with their rapid rhythmic sewing machine feeding motion. Dunlins, Avocets, Yellowlegs and other shorebirds were in the mix. I saw my first Bonaparte's Gull here with its very distinctive dark ear spot when in nonbreeding plumage. There were many of them. At one point, at the end of the pond, those with spotting scopes, like Andy, were trying to show many of us a Stilt Sandpiper who is often found feeding with Dowitchers. One had to observe carefully to pick the Stilt Sandpiper out with its similar feeding motion.

As we travelled the roads of Bear Island we saw a Kestrel perched on a wire, as well as a Merlin easily seen from a small tree in the wetlands. Wintering Tree Swallows twittered overhead as we stopped at ponds to observe Northern Shovelers, American Widgeons, a raft of over 700 Gadwalls with their "ink dipped bottoms", Mottled Ducks and others. At one point two Mottled Ducks bobbed heads in a courting ritual. At one site before lunch we were rewarded with an observation of Tundra Swans swimming in a pond. They winter every year at Bear Island; a beautiful small swan with a distinctive yellow spot on the lores.

Lunch was spent at Donnelley where a walk afterwards turned up lots of Bluebirds in the grasses. We were hoping to see Vesper Sparrows with their white outer tail feathers, but didn't spot any. I saw one on my way out of Donnelley later on. After lunch it started to rain as we pulled up to a Black-Crowned Night Heron Rookery in a beautiful swamp. We carried on to another wetland area to catch sight of Roseate Spoonbills. The rain turned some of us around to head home after a delightful day!



Trip to the Tupelo Trail – March 27th – Matt Tozar

On Friday, March 27th, I took a solo trip out to one of my favorite birding destinations in the immediate area, the Tupelo Trail on the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge. After a couple of hectic work-weeks that had been lengthened and intensified by Covid-19 I was eager to get out and look for new migrant arrivals.

The Tupelo Trail features a segment that traverses a cypress-tupelo swamp that is always spectacular, but is especially so from late March to early April, when the abundant Blue-flag Irises are in bloom. Nevertheless, I may, without unforgivable levels of exaggeration, have seen more otters out there than people. This is a not-insignificant bonus at times when social-distancing is so important.

I parked at Kingfisher Pond around 8:30AM and started the trip under overcast skies. There was no precipitation in the forecast, but the humidity was high and the sky seemed desperate to rain. Several times, I thought I heard rain drops in the trees, but I boldly persisted. The first mile or so of trail runs through hardwood forest with several more or less permanent areas of standing water. The birds seemed to be relatively quiet in the early going, but I was able to pick up Northern Parulas, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, White-eyed Vireos, and singing Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Shortly thereafter I heard my first-of-the-year (FOTY) Yellow-throated Vireos and, although the songs started off sounding a little hesitant, Red-throated Vireos.



Upon reaching the cypress-tupelo swamp segment I finally heard an up-until-then strangely absent Yellow-throated Warbler. During my transit of the swamp I was distracted by Iris blooms, clouds of Little Wood Satyrs, and ubiquitous fiddler crabs when I heard my FOTY Prothonotary Warbler somewhere distant in the swamp.



Eventually I broke out into the trees into the emergent marsh. I came across several singing Common Yellowthroats, a lingering Swamp Sparrow, and a flock of flying Glossy Ibis. While out in the open, the sun finally broke through the clouds and seemed to really wake up the birds. Bird song doubled or tripled. As I strolled back through the woods all the Yellow-throated Warblers that must have silently watched me pass the first time made themselves known. Also, on the way back, I heard a distant FOTY Green Heron, came across a Black-and-white Warbler, and had a couple of close encounters with some (finally visible) Prothonotary Warblers. In a particularly weedy section of woods right near

Kingfisher pond I found a few White-throated Sparrows and Hermit Thrushes which should begin pushing North in the next few weeks.

Overall, the trip was a much-needed reprieve from pandemic updates and job that had suddenly gotten a lot busier. However, as luck would have it, Covid-19 was about to make my job a lot less busy in the coming days. But who can really worry about work when the rest of the spring migrants are about to come through?

Drama on Lake Naivasha, Kenya – Leslie Weichsel

I had the opportunity to witness nature in all its glory and all its brutality while visiting Kenya this past February and March. One particular scene I want to share is one that stays with me and causes my heart to ache. We were in a small boat on Lake Naivasha in Kenya searching for hippos. Lake Naivasha is a beautiful fresh water lake in the Great Rift Valley not that far from Nairobi. It sits at 6,181 feet elevation. The lake has about 400 different bird species and a large population



of hippos. While we were cruising along we noted that a single Pink-backed Pelican was stalking/hunting Egyptian Geese goslings. I was intrigued that the pelican would want to eat one of the babies. We watched as the parents tried to scare off the pelican. As the drama unfolded several more Pink-backed Pelicans



joined in to take advantage of the situation. The male Egyptian goose was actively attacking the pelicans while the female was trying to flee with the goslings.



The pelicans were successful in separating one of the goslings. However the predatory pelicans were unsuccessful in eating it since the gosling continued to dive to evade them. The gosling eventually escaped but unfortunately mom and dad left with his brothers and sisters. Sadly now that it was separated the gosling would not survive. My heart went out to the baby. We were not in a position to retrieve the baby and return it to its family.



On the Lighter Side – For the Kids – Mary Lou Dickson

Q: What do you give a sick bird?

A: Tweetment!

Q: When does a teacher carry birdseed?

A: When there is a parrot-teacher conference!

Q: What is a polygon?

A: A dead parrot!

Q: What kind of bird works at a construction site?

A: The crane!

Q: Why does a flamingo lift up one leg?

A: Because if it lifted both legs it would fall over!

Q: Why do birds fly south in the winter?

A: Because it's too far to walk!

Q: Why do scientists think humming birds hum?

A: Because they can't remember the words!

Q: What bird is always depressed?

A: The blue jay

Q: Why do seagulls like to live by the sea?

A: Because if they lived by the bay they would be bagels!

Some internet sites to explore while you are home in flockdown:

Team eBird – ebird.org

Cornell Ornithology Lab - www.birds.cornell.edu

National Audubon Society – www.audubon.org

Live Bird Cams – www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/

Bird Academy at Cornell Lab - <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/>

Savannah Coastal Refuge Complex website - <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/savannah/>

Savannah National Wildlife Refuge Friends Group – <https://www.coastalrefuges.org/>

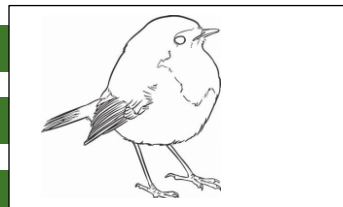
Audubon for Kids! – A National Audubon Society Program — check out www.audubon.org/get-outside/activities/audubon-for-kid

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.
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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

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