

# THE MARSHLANDER

## OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

August, 2020, Volume L, Issue VI

### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of the Marshlander



<b>Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board</b>	
<b>Administrative Responsibilities</b>	
President	Leslie Weichsel
Vice President	Mary Lambright
Secretary	Marty Foxx
Treasurer	Pam Smith
<b>Education Workgroup</b>	
Education Outreach	Diana Churchill, Sue DeRosa, Rose Talbert
Field Trips	John Williamson
Programs	Lynn Wrenn
<b>Communications Workgroup</b>	
Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Leslie Weichsel
Publicity	Matt Tozar
<b>Historian</b>	
Sandy Beasley	
<b>Conservation Workgroup</b>	
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 continues in Flockdown!*

Ogeechee Audubon is continuing in Flockdown mode at least through the summer months. With both the temperature and coronavirus cases heating up in Georgia, it is not a good time to venture out for bird walks or field trips together.



This all could make us angry birds but we will mask up and go out when we can alone or with a few friends (socially distanced) and watch our feathered friends. Soon enough we will be able to flock together with our Ogeechee Audubon Birdwatching friends.

As you are aware, we did not have our public meeting in June and at this time, we have decided to have a Zoom Program for our membership for the September “public” meeting. This way we can gather virtually to safely enjoy a PowerPoint Program on birds in Kenya presented by Leslie. You all will be hearing more about how you can join the program as the time draws closer to the meeting date in September.

We miss you all and look forward to seeing you all at least virtually in September.

Our April meeting was the time designated in the By Laws for our Annual Meeting and the election of officers. We postponed the Annual Meeting until the next meeting of the membership which will 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 and resume our activities, we will have the Annual meeting and hold the elections. In the meantime, the present officers have agreed to continue to serve.

-OAS Board of Directors

	<p><b>Fresh Seed NO Fillers!</b></p>	<p><b>Bird Feeders Birdbaths Pole Systems And The Freshest Seed in Town!</b></p>	<p>8108 Abercorn Street Mon-Sat 10-6 Sunday 12-5 Next to Home Goods (912) 961-3455</p>	
--	--	--	--	--

\*\*\*\*\*  
**This publication of the Marshlander is the fifth “Flockdown” edition! We will be presenting articles, stories and photographs to keep you connected with birds and with Ogeechee Audubon Society during the time of the pandemic.**  
**I hope you enjoy it!**  
\*\*\*\*\*

.....  
Ogeechee Audubon’s Annual Meeting will be scheduled for the next in-person 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](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com). Thank You.

\*\*\*\*\*



## Membership

A gentle reminder to all who have yet to renew your 2020 dues to 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! Please use the renewal form on the last page of this newsletter. If you are unsure of your membership status, please email us at [OgeecheeAudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:OgeecheeAudubon.help@gmail.com) to check.

Thank You!

\*\*\*\*\*

## 50 Years of Ogeechee Audubon

**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 if not in this calendar year it will be in 2021.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Busting on Bustards or Inglorious Bustards**

...by Leslie Weichsel

Ever since I visited South Africa several years ago and saw my first Bustard, I developed a strange attraction to these large,

Kori Bustard



thick-bodied, peculiarly shaped terrestrial birds. Bustards have a heavy neck and long thick legs and feet. The configuration of Bustards’ toes is tridactyl (three toes) with no hallux (hind toe). They are cursorial birds of arid country and dry grasslands. Bustards can fly but do so reluctantly. They are one of the heaviest birds that can fly. In order to achieve flight, the Bustard needs a lot of room to run to gain enough momentum for takeoff. They have a great wingspan (between 9 and 10 feet) and fly with extended necks similar to cranes.

Bustards have a unique way to drink water, they suck it up. This is unlike other birds who typically drink by scooping up the water in their beaks and tilting their heads back to allow the water to trickle down their throats. Bustards dip their beak in the water and use a pumping motion in their throats to suck up the water. The advantage of this is in the semi-arid environments where they live, they can access and drink small amounts of available water more efficiently.

Bustards consist of 22 different species of the Otidae family. They are found in Africa, central and southern Europe and Asia, Southeast Asia, and Australia. Most species are African.

The oldest fossil records of Bustards are from France and date back to the late Eocene and early Oligocene period – about 38 million years ago. I think the Bustards look like little dinosaurs.

Bustards are not colorful birds typically sporting black and whites with muted shades of browns and grays. A large Bustard's weight can be up to forty-eight pounds and they can reach almost six feet in height. However, there are small species of Bustards as well, weighing only one and a half pounds and standing sixteen inches tall.

The sexes are dimorphic with the males being more "colorful" and brighter and usually significantly larger than the females.

Bustards are omnivores with a diet consisting of insects, plants, seeds, small rodents, snakes, lizards and nestling birds.

Bustards are usually very silent but can make a barking like sound or a growl when alarmed. When their chicks are threatened, they growl.

Male Bustards emit low roars while performing courtship rituals. Their courtship rituals include visual displays such as throat inflation from their air sacs, tail fanning as well as erecting their neck feathers. During these impressive rituals, the birds demonstrate magnificent white coverts under their tails, which can be seen from a distance of up to one half mile. Bustards will mate with multiple partners.



The Great Bustard embraces the phrase "beauty is poison." Research has discovered that males of this Bustard species elect to consume small doses of the highly toxic compound, cantharidin, found in blister beetles, to rid themselves of internal parasites and ultimately look more impressive for females. Researchers believe they are doing this to clear their systems of disease before mating season.

Bustards build their nest on the ground which is essentially a small depression in the dirt, and lay one to five eggs. The female incubates the eggs and cares for the young birds. Bustard chicks are precocial which means they are able to walk and are well feathered with down when they hatch. This gives the chicks a high degree of independence. I was fortunate to have seen three different species of Bustards on my travels to South Africa and Kenya.

Bustards with their heads held high cut quite a tall stately but weird looking figure as they confidently strut through the grasslands.

- from a Spanish Naturalist Group:



**INGLORIOUS BUSTARDS**

## eBird and The Adventure of Birding

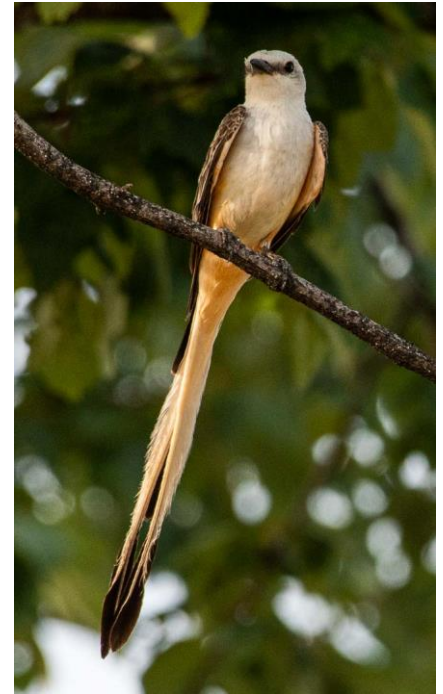
...by John Williamson

Recently I was planning to attend a family gathering in Rock Hill, SC. I had the thought “Wonder if I can get out and see some birds?” Birds are everywhere, but where to start? I would only have one day and wanted to make the most of my time. There were a few options including contacting the local Audubon Society for help, but the one that allowed for the most immediate results was to consult eBird.

I think most birders know that eBird is a powerful tool used worldwide for listing and providing important information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This helps scientists gather valuable data related to bird population trends and migration. However, a lesser known benefit is that eBird can be very useful in providing help to the end user. This includes what birds have been seen in a specific area. With a small amount of effort, you can actually narrow the search to what birds have been seen recently, as well as how many and their location.

Opening eBird on my phone, and clicking on the *Menu* in the top right corner, I went to the *Explore* option from the list. Since I knew the general location I was headed, I entered that county (York) in the *Explore Regions* area, and then selected the correct option from the dropdown list that appeared. This prompted a long list of birds that had been seen in that area arranged by the most recent sightings appearing at the top of the list. Other lists on the same screen included Recent Visits, Top eBirders, and Top Hotspots.

I was interested in whatever opportunities there were so the Top Hotspots list gave me some specific areas to check out. Getting directions to the location can be the next challenge, but that was easily solved. When I clicked on a specific Hotspot,



I noticed at the top of the page, just under the name of the Hotspot, a link that said *Get Directions*. By clicking on the link, I was able to get step by step driving directions. This was too easy!!

However, in the main list of birds for York County, I had spotted a bird I had never seen. It was also rare for this part of the country. It was a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, more common in Texas or Oklahoma. I clicked on the date beside the bird name and it gave me added details about the sighting, including where and how to get there. I was set, and ready for my great adventure.

Off I went, camera and binoculars in tow, in search of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Ah sweet success! They were there, just as reported. Thanks to eBird, good weather, and some kind birders I met that day, I added a life bird, which is a bird I had never seen before, to my life list. What a joy when I realized that not only were there Scissor-tailed Flycatchers there, but that they were a nesting pair busy feeding three nestlings. The nest was luckily positioned where I could not only see it, but also get some decent photographs. It was one of those days where, with a little bit of homework and luck on my side, I had quite the adventure. Some of the things I love most about birding happened on this trip. There is always more to challenge my brain, never knowing what I'll find, and the birders I meet along the way. My part is to just get out there, open my eyes, and listen.



## Special Sighting at the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge

...by Mary Lou Dickson

Birding at the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge has been difficult of late. Between COVID-19 restrictions and the Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive being closed for repairs, and the July heat it's been hard for most to get out. The refuge has been lucky to be able to open the wildlife drive most weekends, but that generally means bigger crowds and more traffic when the drive is open. But for those with patience, there can be some interesting rewards.

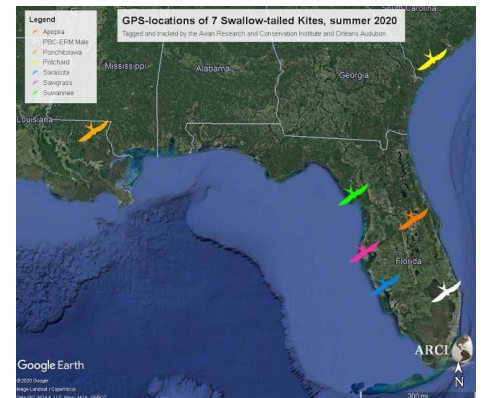
It's the time of year when the kites start using the refuge to fuel up for their annual migration. Both Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites can be seen flying over the open marshes catching dragon-flies. It's quite a spectacle and always fun to watch. And if you're a photographer, it can be a real challenge. And this year, for some lucky people, something really special was seen – a GPS tagged Swallow-tailed kite. It was seen and photographed on both July 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> along the wildlife drive.



Tracking of birds with GPS can give researchers valuable information about migration patterns and summer and wintering grounds that are used by the bird. But the tracker doesn't give any information about what the bird is doing at any given location or who it's with or its general health. That's where those photographs come in handy.

If you were out and also saw and/or photographed this kite, the Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) wants to hear from you. ARCI is collecting information about any tagged kites and has an online reporting portal for observers to report their sightings. The link to this portal is <http://arcinst.org/report-sightings>

Remember that reporting of tagged birds (colored or radio tagged) is always really valuable to researchers. For most tagged birds, our reporting is the only additional information the researcher ever gets about the bird they tagged. And if you're lucky enough to get a photograph be sure to share it, even if you don't think it's great. It's valuable to the researcher. And if you don't know of a specific agency where you can report your sighting, you can report banded birds here: <http://www.reportband.gov/>.



## Test your Knowledge!

### Take the John James Audubon Bird Description Quiz

1.) "The song of the \_\_\_\_\_, although composed of but few notes, is so powerful, distinct, clear, and mellow, that it is impossible for any person to hear it without being struck by the effect which it produces on the mind. I do not know to what instrumental sounds I can compare these notes, for I really know none so melodious and harmonical. They gradually rise in strength, and then fall in gentle cadences, becoming at length so low as to be scarcely audible; like the emotions of the lover, who at one moment exults in the hope of possessing the object of his affections, and the next pauses in suspense, doubtful of the result of all his efforts to please."

2.) "It is usually seen on the largest trees of our woods. It has a few notes, consisting of a series of rapidly enunciated tweets, the last greatly prolonged. It climbs and creeps along the trunks, the branches, and even the twigs of the trees, without intermission, and so seldom perches, that I do not remember ever having seen it in such a position. It lives principally

on small ants and their larvae, which it secures as it ascends or descends in a spiral direction, sidewise, with the head either uppermost or beneath. It keeps its feet close together, and moves by successive short hops with a rapidity equalling even that of the Brown Creeper."

3.) "Their crest is now erected, their wings are seen constantly moving, and so eagerly do they grasp at the berries that they suffer many of them to fall. Every flock passing within hearing is invited to join in the feast, and in a few hours the tree is entirely stripped of its fruit. In this manner they search the whole of the forests, and towards winter are even satisfied with the berries of the dog-wood. As the cherries and mulberries ripen in the Middle Districts, the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ pays them frequent visits, and when these are out of season, the blackberries and huckleberries have their turn."

4.) "After many wide circlings, the flock has risen high in the thin air, and an hour or more is spent in teaching the young the order in which they are to move. But now, the host has been marshalled, and off it starts, shewing, as it proceeds, at one time an extended front, at another a single lengthened file, and now arraying itself in an angular form. The old males advance in front, the females follow, the young come in succession according to their strength, the weakest forming the rear. Should one feel fatigued, his position is changed in the ranks, and he assumes a place in the wake of another, who cleaves the air before him; perhaps the parent bird flies for awhile by his side to encourage him."

5.) "It does not confine itself to these kinds of food, but greedily devours young pigs, lambs, fawns, poultry, and the putrid flesh of carcasses of every description, driving off the Vultures and Carrion Crows, or the dogs, and keeping a whole party at defiance until it is satiated. It frequently gives chase to the Vultures, and forces them to disgorge the contents of their stomachs, when it alights and devours the filthy mass."

6.) "Louisiana seems in fact better suited to its habits than any other state, on account of its numerous lakes, creeks and lagoons, over-shadowed by large trees, which are favourite places of resort for this species. It is fond of flying over the waters of these creeks and lagoons, and is seldom seen in the interior of the woods. Its flight is rapid, and more steady than is usual in birds of its genus; and as it moves along, the brightness of its colours attracts the eye. On alighting, it moves rapidly along the twigs, partly sidewise, frequently turning about and extending its neck to look under the leaves, from which it picks various kinds of insects. It often perches upon the rank grasses and water plants, in quest of minute molluscous animals which creep upon them, and which, together with small land snails, I have found in its stomach."

7.) "At this season, its curious spiral gyrations, while ascending or descending along a space of fifty or more yards of height, in the manner described in the article on the Snipe, when it utters a note different from the cry of that bird, and somewhat resembling the word kwauk, are performed every evening and morning for nearly a fortnight. While on the ground, at this season as well as in autumn, the male not unfrequently repeats this sound, as if he were calling to others in his neighbourhood, and on hearing it answered, immediately flies to meet the other bird, which in the same manner advances toward him."

8.) "While watching the movements of the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ as it was searching for food, sometimes a full hour before it was dark, I have seen it pass its lower mandible at an angle of about 45 degrees into the water, whilst its moveable upper mandible was elevated a little above the surface. In this manner, with wings raised and extended, it ploughed as it were, the element in which its quarry lay to the extent of several yards at a time, rising and falling alternately, and that as frequently as it thought it necessary for securing its food when in sight of it; for I am certain that these birds never immerse their lower mandible until they have observed the object of their pursuit, for which reason their eyes are constantly directed downwards like those of Terns and Gannets."

9.) "Their ordinary manner of proceeding, either when single or in flocks, is by easy flappings and sailings alternating at distances of from twenty to thirty yards, when they glide along with great speed. They move in an undulated line, passing at one time high, at another low, over the water or land, for they do not deviate from their course on coming upon a key or a point of land. When the waves run high, you may see them 'troughing,' as the sailors say, or directing their course along the hollows. While on wing they draw in their head between their shoulders, stretch out their broad webbed feet to their whole extent, and proceed in perfect silence."

10.) "They are extremely fond of crickets and grasshoppers, as well as other kinds of insects, and they feed on the flesh of birds whenever they can procure it. The individuals which I have kept in cages, appeared well pleased with pieces of fresh beef, but they generally remained dull and sullen until they died. As it was only during winter that I had them in confinement, when no coleopterous insects could be procured, I had no opportunity of observing if, like Hawks, they have the power of throwing up hard particles of the food which they swallow, although I should suppose this to be the case. Their propensity

to impale insects and small birds on the sharp points of twigs and on thorns, which they so frequently do at all seasons of the year, is quite a mystery to me, as I cannot conceive what its object may be."

11.) "It is at all times a shy bird, so that one can seldom approach it, unless under cover of a tree, or when he happens accidentally to surprise it while engaged in its daily avocations. When seen in a large field newly brought into tillage, and yet covered with girdled trees, it removes from one to another, cackling out its laughter-like notes, as if it found delight in leading you a wild-goose chase in pursuit of it. When followed it always alights on the tallest branches or trunks of trees, removes to the side farthest off, from which it every moment peeps, as it watches your progress in silence; and so well does it seem to know the distance at which a shot can reach it, that it seldom permits so near an approach."

12.) "The \_\_\_\_\_ is one of those birds that are found capable of subsisting in cold as well as in warm climates. It occurs as far north as the Canadas, where it makes occasional attacks upon the corn cribs of the farmers, and it is found in the most southern portions of the United States, where it abounds during the winter. Every where it manifests the same mischievous disposition. It imitates the cry of the Sparrow Hawk so perfectly, that the little birds in the neighbourhood hurry into the thick coverts, to avoid what they believe to be the attack of that marauder."

13.) "The prairies, the fields, the orchards and gardens, nay, the deepest shades of the forests, are all visited in their turn, and everywhere the little bird meets with pleasure and with food. Its gorgeous throat in beauty and brilliancy baffles all competition. Now it glows with a fiery hue, and again it is changed to the deepest velvety black. The upper parts of its delicate body are of resplendent changing green; and it throws itself through the air with a swiftness and vivacity hardly conceivable. It moves from one flower to another like a gleam of light, upwards, downwards, to the right, and to the left. In this manner, it searches the extreme northern portions of our country, following with great precaution the advances of the season, and retreats with equal care at the approach of autumn."

14.) "Although a lively bird, its actions are less animated, and it exhibits less petulance and restlessness than the other species. It moves alertly, however, when searching for food, climbing or retrograding downwards or sidewise, with cheerfulness and a degree of liveliness, which distinguish it at once from other birds. Now and then it has a quaint look, if I may so speak, while watching the observer, clinging to the bark head downward, and perhaps only a few feet distant from him whom it well knows to be its enemy, or at least not its friend, for many farmers, not distinguishing between it and the Sap-sucker, (*Picus pubescens*,) shoot at it, as if assured that they are doing a commendable action."

15.) "They are not the soft sounds of the flute or of the hautboy that I hear, but the sweeter notes of Nature's own music. The mellowness of the song, the varied modulations and gradations, the extent of its compass, the great brilliancy of execution, are unrivalled. There is probably no bird in the world that possesses all the musical qualifications of this king of song, who has derived all from Nature's self. Yes, reader, all!"

BONUS:

"The plumage of the young birds of this species, when they leave the nest, resembles that of the female parent, although rather less decided in point of colouring, and both males and females retain this colour until the approach of the following spring, when the former exhibit a portion of black on the chin, the females never altering. In birds kept in cages, this portion of black remains without farther augmentation for two years; but in those which are at liberty, a curious mixture of dull orange or deep chestnut peeps out through a considerable increase of black-coloured feathers over the body and wings, intermixed with the yellowish-green hue which the bird had when it left the nest. The third spring brings him nearer towards perfection, as at that time the deep chestnut colour has taken possession of the lower parts, the black has deepened on the upper parts, and over the whole head, as well as on the whigs and tail-feathers. Yet the garb with which it is ultimately to be covered requires another return of spring before it is completed, after which it remains as exhibited in the adult male, represented in the plate."

Reference: National Audubon

**Check out how well you did – the answers are found on the Ogeechee Audubon Website:  
[www.ogeecheeaudubon.org](http://www.ogeecheeaudubon.org)**



Contact:	
Facebook: Ogeechee Audubon	
Email: <a href="mailto:Ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com">Ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com</a>	
Website: <a href="http://www.ogeecheeaudubon.org">www.ogeecheeaudubon.org</a>	

***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 31<sup>st</sup>.

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.*