

# ***THE MARSHLANDER***

## **OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

March - April, 2021, Volume LI, Issue II

*Celebrating Over 50 Years of Birding in*



### ***Spring Re-Awakening Edition***

**Public Meeting via Zoom: Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 7 pm**

#### **Gardening for the Birds: How to Create a Bird-Friendly Landscape in Coastal Georgia**

Come and learn how to make your coastal landscape a sanctuary for birds. Guest speaker Keren Giovengo, UGA EcoScapes Program Manager, will speak on the importance of native plants in attracting birds, the basics of planning and creating bird-friendly habitats, and how to create these landscapes in coastal Georgia. By establishing native landscapes, you will provide a key tool in increasing bird diversity, abundance, and their resilience to adapt and survive amid a changing climate.

**Zoom link will be emailed prior to the meeting.**

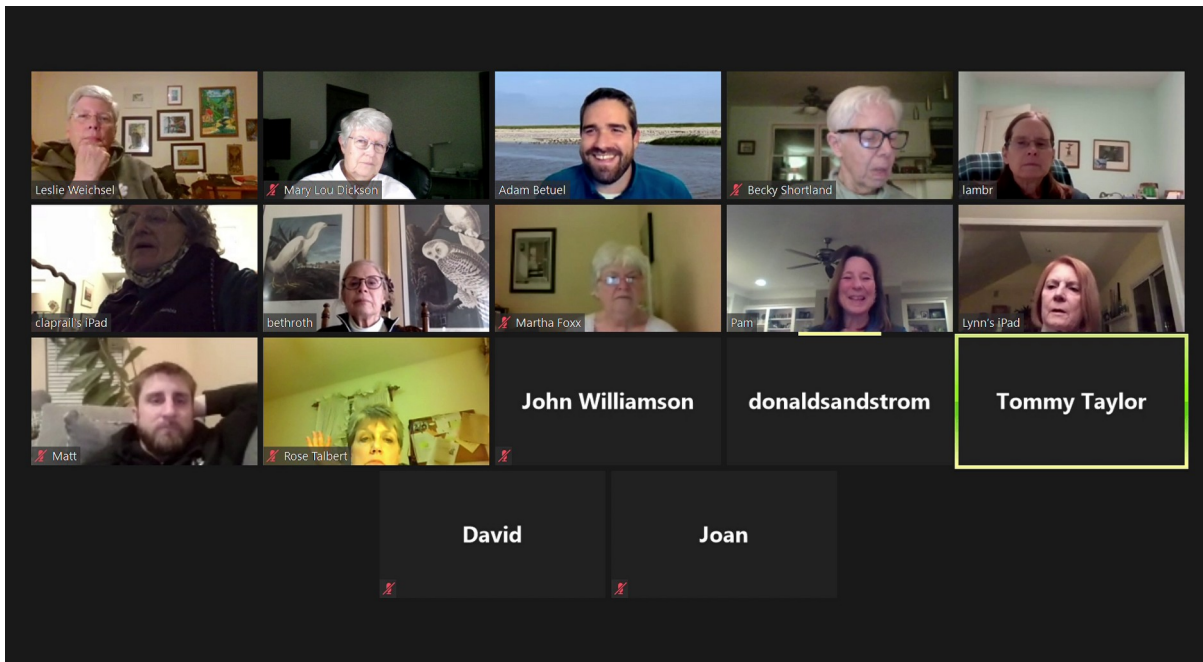
The Annual Meeting of Ogeechee Audubon Society will be held just prior to our program on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 7 pm via Zoom. No officers are due for election/re-election at this time since no one's term has expired. A brief overview of the past year will be presented as well as the finances for fiscal year 2020-2021.

In anticipation of the 2022 Officer elections, Leslie Weichsel has decided not to seek another term as President in 2022. The Board will be searching for a replacement. If you are interested or know someone who is, please let any Board member know.

| <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>                      |                  |

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|---|--|---|--|--|
| Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop logo featuring a house, a red cardinal, a blue jay, and a yellow bird. | <b><i>Fresh Seed<br/>NO Fillers!</i></b> | <b>Bird Feeders<br/>Birdbaths<br/>Pole Systems<br/>And<br/>The Freshest<br/>Seed in Town!</b> | <b>8108 Abercorn Street<br/>Mon-Sat 10-6<br/>Sunday 12-5<br/>Next to Home Goods<br/>(912) 961-3455</b> | Stacks of various bird seed bags, including 'Sup Blend' and 'Wild Bird Blend'. |
|---|--|---|--|--|

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Picture of our February Zoom Program with Adam Betuel from Georgia Audubon speaking about Birds and Buildings and the threats to birds. Please note to see who joined us from California – past Ogeechee Audubon Board Member Beth Roth!

In celebration of Ogeechee Audubon's Fifty-Year Anniversary, the Board is giving each member a special token of remembrance. You may pick up your small gift at the Ogeechee Audubon Center. We will also distribute the gift at field trips etc...  
**Thank You!**



**Membership 2021**

I want to thank those of you who have submitted your membership dues for 2021. For those of you who wanted to wait until it was officially 2021 and make it a New Year's resolution to get your membership in, it is time. Please use the membership form attached to the bottom of this newsletter to get your dues in ASAP. If you did not renew for 2020, but were a member in good standing in 2019, we did not follow our policy of removing you from our membership at the end of March 2020 because of the pandemic. However, as our nation gets back to normal, so shall we. **If we do not receive your dues by 3/31/21**, we will assume you are not interested in renewing and will remove you from our membership rolls which will also remove you from our MailChimp list and you will no longer receive newsletters and other announcements. You may rejoin at any time and we are always happy to welcome new members. If you are not sure if you have renewed your membership for 2021 simply send an email to [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com) and I will check for you.

Happy New Year and good birding!

– Mary Lambright, Vice President OAS

## ***Field Trips – in a Pandemic World – Let’s go Birding!***

Ogeechee Audubon is conducting field trips.

There are required strict guidelines to keep us safe. We are all in this together as we adapt to the new “normal”.

**Please read the following guidelines. Everyone is expected to agree to follow these requirements in order to participate in the Field Trips.**

### **Guidelines to participate in Field Trips by Ogeechee Audubon:**

- Birding groups will be limited in numbers allowed.
- **\*If you show up without a reservation you will not be allowed to join the group.\***
- You MUST wear a face mask at all times and practice social distancing while on the field trip to protect yourself and others in the group.
- Do not share binoculars, scopes or other equipment.
- Carpooling with participants outside your household is strongly discouraged.
- By signing up for the field trip sponsored by Ogeechee Audubon Society, you acknowledge that these activities may be hazardous to you and your health. By attending you agree voluntarily to participate.

## ***Field Trips – It’s time to get out and bird again!***

**Saturday, March 20<sup>th</sup> – 8:00 am - Chatham County Wetlands – Meet at Chief Of Love Road (technically Chief O F Love Road)– Leader: Pam Smith**

This is a beautiful site featuring wetlands and river setting. We will search for wading birds, raptors, woodpeckers, early migrants and various sparrows. – Reserve your spot by signing up at [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com). Limit 8.

**Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup> – 8:45 am - Fort Pulaski – Meet at the front gate at 8:45 am. Leaders: Diana Churchill and Eric Swanson.** We will search for Marsh Wrens, Seaside Sparrows, Nelson Sparrows, and shorebirds during a high tide. We will also search for early spring migrants. - Reserve your spot by signing up at [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com). Limit 8.

### **Fridays in April beginning on April 9<sup>th</sup> through April 30<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Spring Migration Bird Walks in Forsyth Park – Leader: Diana Churchill**

Ogeechee Audubon Society will join Earth Month Savannah by conducting in person bird walks in Forsyth Park on four **Fridays in April - April 9, 16, 23 and 30 at 7:45am**. We will wander the park in search of migratory warblers, vireos, tanagers, buntings, flycatchers and more. We will **meet at the fountain at the north end of the park at 7:45 am**. The group will be **limited to 8** individuals and sign up is required through Ogeechee Audubon at [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com). You will receive a confirmation of attendance. If you wish you may donate \$5 that will go directly to benefit Earth Day Savannah. Ogeechee Audubon is looking forward to celebrating Earth Month with you!

**Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup> – 8 am – Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens – Meet in the parking lot at 8 am – Leader: Stan Gray.** A perfect time of year to stroll through the park-like setting of the beautiful 51 acre gardens looking for migrating birds. The Gardens attract a wide assemblage of species. Designated as an eBird Hotspot, 146 species have been reported on the grounds. A special treat will be to see Stan Gray’s River of Iris! – Reserve your spot by signing up at [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com). Limit 8.

**Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup> – 8 am – James W. Webb Wildlife Center and Game Management Area, SC – Meet at the main gate at 8 am. Leader: Steve Wagner.** We will search for spring migrants, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Bachman’s Sparrow and more. – Reserve your spot by signing up at [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com). Limit 8.

# **Survey Opportunities – Please join us!**

## **Savannah Christian Preparatory School Surveys**

Ogeechee Audubon will be continuing surveys of the school property on:

**Sunday: March 7<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am and**

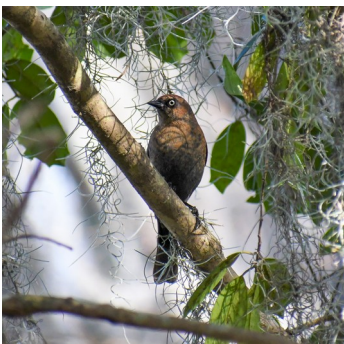
**Sunday: April 11<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am**

Leader: Stan Gray

Meet at the front of the school gate at 8:30 am sharp if you wish to participate. Participants are limited to 6 individuals.

**In order to participate you must sign up at [ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com](mailto:ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com).** You must also follow the guidelines for field trips as outlined above.

## **Rusty Black Bird Survey Opportunity at Savannah Christian Preparatory School**



**Each Sunday through March 28<sup>th</sup> meet at the Savannah Christian Preparatory School – 1599 Chatham Parkway.**

- We will meet at 3 pm until March 14<sup>th</sup> at which time we will meet at 4 pm due to DST
- Please adhere to the COVID Guidelines above. Bring a Scope for your own use.
- Typically, the survey team is there for 2 hours.
- No limit.

photo by Pam Smith

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## **A Winter Tradition – Christmas Bird Count – Summary Reports**

**Ogeechee Audubon participated in Audubon's 121<sup>st</sup> Christmas Bird Count for 2020-2021**



**Harris Neck Count Circle – December 18, 2020**

Christmas Bird Counts are all about the birds but they are also about getting together with other birders and sharing your love of birds. And at Harris Neck there is the lunch time tradition of gathering over a bowl of chili and swapping bird stories. So how could I organize a bird count that greatly reduced any interactions among birders? COVID restrictions set forth by Audubon decreed that social distancing and/or masking are required at all times in the field, carpooling may only occur within existing familiar or social "pod" groups, and activities must comply with all current state and municipal COVID-19 guidelines. This sure sounds like fun...not!

But I would try to get people to participate in the count and abide by the guidelines. I sent out an email to many of the birders who had participated in past years and kept my fingers crossed. I needn't have worried, these amazing people stepped up and enabled us to have another successful count. No pandemic can keep good birders out of the field! I would like to thank the volunteers who were willing, able and comfortable helping with the scaled down CBC with COVID restrictions at Harris Neck. I also appreciate and respect the people who took care of themselves and let me know that they could not help b/c of COVID concerns. I look forward to organizing a more "normal" CBC this December.

– by Mary Lambright

Stan Gray is the Christmas Bird Count Compiler for the Harris Neck Count Circle. The following is an excerpt from his report to the CBC team.

Stan studied the data for the Harris Neck Count circle to spot trends since the inception of the count on January 2, 1971. "Some dramatic changes in observed populations, up or down, become quickly apparent. I will highlight a few noteworthy events about this year's sightings, as it relates to longer term patterns."

- The 2 White-winged Scoters observed this year in HN15B were only the second occurrence of this species, the other being a single bird in 2013.
- The 20 Sandhill Cranes in HN1C mark only the 4<sup>th</sup> time, all recently that SACR have been observed on count day in our circle.
- The Wood Stork explosion continues with this year's count of 110.
- The American Avocet on Woody Pond, HN14B, was the first since 2006, that also being a single bird.
- The Stilt Sandpiper in HN8 was only the 3rd record for the circle (1 in 2013; 11 in 1997).
- The 1 Caspian Tern in HN8 is a species very infrequently seen. The last observation was of 3 in 2006.
- The 1 Prairie Warbler in HN3 is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> ever recorded on our count, the other being in 2017.
- The tremendous invasion of Purple Finch is unprecedented for our count. This year's count of up to 29 greatly exceeds the previous count of 11 in 1980. The last PUF1 observation was in 2005.

This is why these bird counts are so important and your participation is vital. Thank You!

### **Savannah Count Circle – January 2, 2021**

Given the poor weather we had for the 121st Savannah Christmas Bird Count (CBC), it will come as no surprise that our species count this year (155) was lower than the prior decade's average of 164.4 species, (range 154-171). Also, not surprising is that the number of participants was lower, given we were counting under COVID restrictions and the fact that the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge's Wildlife Drive was closed. Also, many participants, myself included, tired of birding in the rain and did not put in as many hours of effort as we normally would have.

Nevertheless, intrepid CBC birders managed to produce several high-count records;

- \*Tricolored Heron - 1,307 individuals were counted, which eclipsed last year's count of 865, which was also a high count
- \*Gadwall - 1,218 individuals surpassed the previous high count of 826 set in 2012
- \*Semipalmated Plover - a count of 1,394 SEPL bested the 2008 count of 1,305
- \*Laughing Gull - 659 was the most laughing gulls counted since the last high count of 582 in 2011
- \*White-eyed vireo - 14 individuals tied the high count set in 2013
- \*Northern Waterthrush - the previous high count was 5, set in 2017, which was exceeded this year by 1
- \*Prairie Warbler - 4 individuals bested the previous high of 3 set in 2006
- \*Rusty Blackbird - 168 RUBLs were tallied, which topped the previous high of 90 set in 2003

Notable "dips" this year included Red-breasted Merganser, American White Pelican, and Eastern Screech-owl.

This is the 2nd year running that we've dealt with rain during the Savannah CBC. Let's hope the next count is cold, crisp, and clear.

- by Larry Carlile



## **Lake Mayer Field Notes** - by Patti Seanor

The small group that was brave enough to face the 35-degree morning was rewarded early. Just as we got out of our cars at Lake Mayer, a juvenile Bald Eagle flew overhead. It was a good omen for a cold but successful bird walk, during which we counted 40 species.

Just a glance over the park had us quickly taking notes. The Ruddy Ducks bobbed in large groups, while four Northern Shovelers quietly slid by them. Seventeen Buffleheads and close to 100 American Coots also covered the lake. Herons, Egrets and a Wood Stork joined them, fishing for breakfast. As we walked along the path we came up to a flock of Double-crested Cormorants perched in the bushes at the shore. In all we counted roughly 180.



Things were busy in the trees as well. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe and Red-winged Blackbirds joined the chorus of birdsong. Coming around the turn, we encountered at least 250 Ring-billed gulls. But the finale came as we were watching a group of about 50 White Ibis when suddenly there was a skirmish near the shore. The winner flew up and away with a snake in his mouth. We watched in the cold for about 15 minutes while he struggled to eat his catch. The perfect ending to an exhilarating day of birding.

## **Bird Walk - Sterling Creek Park** -by Rose Talbert

Sunny and chilly. Check.

No Rain. Yippee!

Binocs. Check.

Off we go (to the parking lot, as all good bird walks start).

I see Lynn Wrenn and we chat about our first trip to Sterling when it was hot, buggy, and snaky. Oh my! The first thing we notice is the “fat & sassy” robins, yellow rumps flying from tree to tree, and hear the blue birds and red bellies calling.

As we start down the paved trail towards the pond, we get a glimpse of something white and it's an egret flying. As we get closer to the pond everybody stands in amazement. Egrets, wood storks, and cormorants line the edge of the pond like they are socially distancing. Ring neck ducks, buffleheads, and grebes are also mixed in with some great blues, and little blues as well.

The oohing subsides as the counting begins.

“I estimate 50 cormorants. “

“No, I counted 79.”



As the group makes our way around the pond, many palm and pine warblers are spotted in addition to a ruby crowned kinglet. In the distance a flicker and a pileated make their presence known with their raucous call outs. The search for

more diversity continues. The bald eagle grabbing a fish is a highlight as well as the yellow throated warbler, hermit thrush, yellow bellied sapsucker and the osprey snagging a fish and parading the catch proudly around the pond.

Nearing the trail back to the parking lot two juvenile bald eagles soar above the pond. They pass over us numerous times until we spot a nature bald eagle in a tree across the pond. What a majestic way to end a few hours of birding.

Best day birding! Check.

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## ***Ogeechee Audubon joins Red Rock Audubon in support of Boreal Nesters*** *- by Mary Lou Dickson*

According to National Audubon, "...between one and three billion birds of nearly 400 species are estimated to nest each year in the Boreal Forest region which stretches from Alaska, the Yukon and BC in the west to Newfoundland and Labrador in the east. Species like the Blackpoll Warbler, that sings its high-pitched squeaky-brake song from scrubby spruce trees across the Boreal from Alaska to Newfoundland and makes an immense journey to South America for the winter. Or the Canada Jay, a non-migratory year-round resident of the Boreal Forest a species with a long history of interacting with Indigenous people as it searched for food around campsites and animal kills.

"Rich boreal wetlands also attract migratory birds. The Bufflehead, for instance, is a tiny, boldly patterned black and white duck that nests in old woodpecker holes around the millions of lakes and ponds that dot the boreal forest and becomes one of the most familiar winter waterfowl of calm, coastal bays along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of North America. Palm Warblers, Swamp Sparrows, Common Yellowthroats, American Black Ducks and Solitary Sandpipers are just a few of the many other birds that nest in those boreal wetlands."

Many of these birds winter in the Savannah region. If we wish to continue seeing our favorite visitors we must do our part to ensure their survival.

Across the boreal forest region, Indigenous governments and communities steward and protect millions of acres of this essential bird habitat. [Indigenous Guardians programs](#) are being established as a part of that effort. Many of these new programs want to include bird monitoring in their work but are often hampered by lack of equipment, including binoculars. Audubon's Boreal Conservation program is partnering with [Nevada's Red Rock Audubon](#) to reach out to other chapters who may be interested in helping close that gap.



Upon hearing about this initiative and recognizing we could make a difference, Ogeechee Audubon's Board of Directors acted to donate one pair of Vortex binoculars under this program. We await follow-up information about our donation which will hopefully include a more personal connection with our gift. Stay tuned.

## ***Georgia Audubon Bird Fest***

**Birds, y'all!** As Georgia's largest bird and nature festival, Georgia Bird Fest features a full month of activities, including guided field trips to Georgia's best birding hotspots, nature-based workshops, and guest speakers. Events are tailored to all levels of bird, nature, and outdoor enthusiasts—there's something for everyone during Georgia Bird Fest!

Your participation in Georgia Bird Fest supports Georgia Audubon's conservation, education, and community engagement programming. Thank you for helping us build places where birds and people thrive!

**Registration for Georgia Bird Fest 2021 will open on March 2 at 10:00 AM to current Georgia Audubon members and on March 8 at 10:00 AM to non-members.**

**<https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/>**

**Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2021**

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.*

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in leading Field Trips

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in volunteering to help with OAS booth at events

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in serving on the Board

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in helping wherever needed