

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

July - August, 2021, Volume LI, Issue IV



The Long Road Back Edition

Ogeechee Audubon Holds First Indoor In-Person Public Meeting in Over a Year

As we continue to adjust to the new normal following the emergence of COVID-19 it may be helpful to take stock of the significant milestones. On June 8th we were once again able to gather in Ogeechee Audubon's traditional meeting location at the First Presbyterian Church in Savannah. Meeting attendees were treated to a lecture on the geological and anthropological processes affecting Georgia's magnificent barrier islands given by Stephanie Chewning of One Hundred Miles.



Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board

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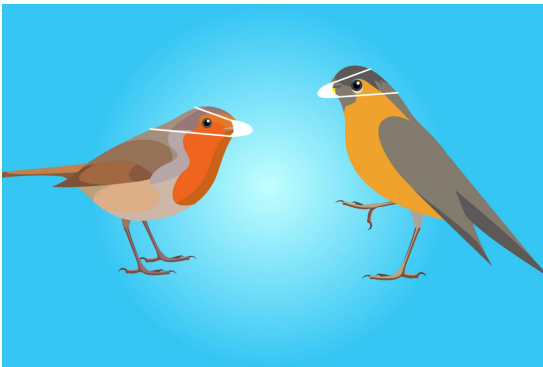
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In honor of Ogeechee Audubon's Fifty-Year Anniversary, the Board is giving each of you a special token of remembrance. Pins will be distributed at meetings and field trips etc...

Thank You!

Field Trips – in a Pandemic World – Let's go Birding!



Ogeechee Audubon is conducting field trips with guidelines in place to keep us safe. We are all in this together as we adapt to the new "normal".

As infection levels continue to go down and as vaccination levels continue to go up we are amending our field trip guidelines.

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:

- Field trips will no longer require advanced registration
- Participants who are fully vaccinated will not be required to wear a face mask
- Participants who are not fully vaccinated will be required to wear a face mask for the duration of the field trip
- All participants should follow general social distancing practices
- Please do not share binoculars, scopes or other equipment
- Carpooling with participants outside your household is discouraged
- By attending field trips sponsored by Ogeechee Audubon Society, you acknowledge that these activities may be hazardous to you and your health and agree voluntarily to participate.

Field Trips – The great outdoors beckons!

Saturday, July 10th – 8:00 am – Skidaway Island – Meet at Skidaway Island Methodist Church

Trip may include Skidaway State Park, Priest Landing and/or The Landings for painted buntings, nesting wading birds and more. Bring water and bug spray. State Park entrance fee \$5 per car. **Leader: Stan Gray** 912-659-5020 or graysirsgarden@comcast.net

Saturday, August 7th – 8:00 am – Sterling Creek Park – Meet at the park entrance in Richmond Hill

Expected birds include painted and indigo buntings, summer tanagers, kites, raptors, rails and more. Bring water and a hat. **Leader: Pam A. Smith** 717-201-9756 or pavercel@comcast.net

Friday, August 20th – 6:00 pm – Tybee North Beach. Meet at Jaycee Park Lot at 6 pm. We will be looking for gulls, terns, returning shorebirds, and more. Be prepared to pay for parking. Download the "Park TYB" app for ease and convenience. **Leader: Diana Churchill** 912-604-7539 or dichurchbirds@gmail.com

Field Notes

Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge May 29 - by Rose Talbert

The day started with cool temps and breezes galore. No bugs and no sweat!!! What a terrific way to start the birding day! The group of birders met at the entrance and spent about 30 minutes wandering from dock to dock. The baby titmice were serenading us with their high-pitched chirping as the group convened. As we walked towards the first dock an elusive clapper rail ran for cover into the nearby marsh vegetation. That was a rare sighting and a great omen of the day ahead.

Once on the dock a great egret was wading in the low tide hunting for food. A barn swallow buzzed by as a tricolored heron was spotted fishing for breakfast. What caught the eye was a splish-splashing of a smaller bird. Upon closer inspection it was identified as a clapper rail taking its Saturday bath. Another sign of a great day to bird!

As the group meandered towards the second pier a painted bunting flew by headed to the nearest bush. Anhingas, wood storks, snowy egrets, and vultures were observed as well. The group then decided to gather at the visitor center and the bird feeders. More painted buntings were seen, and a lone bluebird was on a nearby electric line. Many more regular birds were heard rather than seen because of the dense spring foliage. Red bellied woodpeckers, blue-gray gnatcatchers, brown-headed nuthatches, and white-eyed vireos tested the birder's ability to identify bird calls by ear. What a fun day!

Woody Pond was the next birding stop. The rookery was in full swing with all the baby bird sounds of the wood storks, snowy egrets, black-crowned night herons, anhingas, and white ibis. The anhinga with the fish stuck on its beak stole the show. That bird worked tirelessly for at least 20 minutes to free the fish all while perched on a cypress stump. In the end the anhinga lost its catch as the fish came off the beak and fell back into the water. Wow! That was an impressive feat to watch!



Snipe Pond was without water, but we were rewarded with catching sight of an orchard oriole. The bright orange color stood out against the green bushes and grasses which were abundant. It was an unanticipated find in that area further supporting the notion of a notable day birding!

The group identified around 50 species that morning. Larry Carlile was the trip leader who, with his expertise and acute hearing, ensured an impressive and memorable day of birding.



Oatland Island Wildlife Center June 5 - by Don McInnis



GUT REACTION: This is going to be good.... It was!

When I first read about the field trip to Oatland Island Wildlife Center in our newsletter, my gut reaction was to quickly reserve a spot for both Vidal and myself. We always enjoy Oatland Island. Neither of us had ever done any birding there. Of course, the prospect of being in the company of other birders made it even more appealing. No hesitation.

When Saturday arrived we were up and ready. The outing was a perfect combination of nature and humans. When we got there Saturday morning I realized that all of the attendees, including the guide, did not seem familiar. Often the company of “strangers” can enrich an experience with their knowledge and perspective. Did I say strangers?

Remember, this is Savannah. We soon discovered that one of the “strangers” actually lives a few blocks from us. SAVANNAH!

Imposter? After a few minutes, I noticed a guy with a birding book in hand. I did not recognize him as the listed guide (Eric). He was tall, bearded and had a gentle presence about him. I finally approached him and jokingly asked if he was an imposter guide. We both laughed and he explained that he was a substitute for Eric Swanson, who was originally listed. Eric had to be out of town to attend a funeral.

What an ideal environment for birding. An added bonus was seeing the wildlife as we walked – wolves, bison, deer, etc. The canopy of trees added to the comfort level. A highlight for me was capturing my first photo of a Northern Parula! I have an enlarged photo of one hanging in my living room taken by Diana Churchill, yet I have wanted my own photo. Now I have one! As we meandered, a variety of birds presented themselves, including Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Parula, House Finches, Eastern Bluebirds, Northern Cardinals, and more.

It is often said, “follow your gut reaction.” We did, and I am glad we did.

Special thanks to Kerry Nelson for taking the time to be the substitute guide. Our luck for sure.



***In Search of the Bristle-Thighed Curlew
or Crossing Over into the World of the Crazy Birder
- Susan De Rosa***

Finally, after having looked forward to this trip since 2019, we were off to Alaska to travel around Anchorage and Nome hunting for whatever birds we could see or hear. Our crew included Leslie Weichsel, Mary Lou Dixon, Mary Lambright, myself, and four others who hailed from North Carolina and Florida. Flying in on a Friday, I was amazed at the stunning views of the mountains and surrounding area. I had my first lifer in the hotel parking lot—a Black-billed Magpie which is as common there as the Blue Jays are around here, obnoxious but still a pretty bird.



The next morning, we headed out looking for waterfowl around a lake where the float planes actually land and have a parking space, similar to boats in the South. Since Alaska is so big and rugged, the cities are equivalent to islands having no connecting roads so planes, dogsleds, and whatever are the main modes of transportation between them. In the Anchorage area, we saw the usual Canada Goose, Gadwall, American Widgeon, Mallard, and Green-Winged Teal that reside on the East Coast but also the Harlequin Duck, many Red-throated Loons, Red-necked Grebes, Red-necked Phalarope, Hudsonian Godwit, Arctic Tern, and Glaucous-winged Gulls. Glaucous means “a dull grayish blue or green” which is the color of the underside of the wings of the gull although the Glaucous Gull is lacking the black tips on its wings. They can be just as confusing as the gulls found on Tybee.

The next several days found us travelling north of Anchorage to catch a glimpse of Denali and then south towards Seward, checking out many of the parks and places along the rivers and lakes. We went up the road at JBER (Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson), saw a bear lolling around next to the road eating the plentiful dandelions plus saw both the Golden-crowned Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrow at the ski resort; stopped at Potter Marsh catching sight of Bald Eagles, a view of the Tree and Violet Green Swallows, and more water fowl; and Quartz Creek to see the American Dippers feeding their young. At one of the spots, the elusive Three-toed Woodpecker was seen with a yellow patch on its head.



In Seward, we took an 8 ½ hour pelagic trip out to the Northwestern Glacier (named for the university where the scientists' who studied it came from). Humpback and Finned whales, Orcas, Dall's Porpoises, Stellar Sea Lions, Harbor Seals, and Sea Otters swam by plus we spotted numerous pelagic birds. Horned and Tufted Puffins, Common Murres, Black-legged Kittiwakes roosting on a rocky island, three Black Oystercatchers making a fly-by, Pigeon Guillemots, Parakeet and Rhinoceros Auklets, Ancient Murrelets were all lifers for me. Again, the views were stunning and the cold breeze invigorating, especially knowing the weather in Savannah was in the 90s.

On Thursday, we boarded a flight up to Nome. This town has no traffic lights, its three main two-lane roads turn into gravel washboards less than a mile out of town, the only fast food is Subway, reindeer sausage appears on the menu, all three restaurants serve Asian, Italian, and burgers no matter what their name is, and the sun sets at 1:30am, rises at 4:30am at the beginning of summer (reverse the sunlight for winter). Nome's claim to fame (for birders) is the place to stay if you are looking for the Bristle-thighed Curlew, which we were and which we did on Saturday. First step to crazy: leave the hotel at 6am, eating whatever we brought in the van. Mary had an advantage since she bypasses that meal.



Second step: ride for two and a half hours on previously mentioned washboard gravel road. Graciously the leader stopped for a brief rest stop at Salmon Lake Campground, only identified bathroom available. Then, a bit beyond mile 72, we all piled out where boots marked the trail. Leslie and I were delayed since we had the forethought to bring overboots which we donned before the trek up the path. I say path loosely. Others before us had created a foot-wide trail which had become a muddy, water covered track that easily engulfed your foot. Leslie experienced this when her foot sank so much that the water went over the top of her boot. So much for boots. Alternatively, one could choose to walk on the sides of the trail, on the tufts of grass which was equivalent to walking on bowling balls, not an easy feat. I tend to move at a slow but

steady pace so watched as my compatriots climbed ahead of me. After a bit, I heard some bird noises, looked up to see two birds with curved bills. In my dulled state, I realized that these may be the target bird, so inquired, "Are those the curlews?". They politely had flown over the crest of the hill, one briefly perched on a rock long enough for me to take one picture (Mary Lou took the one above) as evidence that I saw the darn avian, and then it disappeared. How they can hide in such low growing vegetation is beyond me but they have been doing that successfully for years. What also amazed me is how anyone even knew where to find them since the landscape is so desolate and spreads for miles without much change. Certainly, the birds must reside somewhere closer to town but this spot is purported to be a certainty for seeing them. Thank goodness for that. The hill did not need to be summited so Leslie and I paused for a moment to enjoy the view before turning around. The other CBs (crazy birders) had already passed us, heading back down just after the birds put in their appearance. We all ended up back at the van, piled in, and began our trek back to town. Of course, we stopped at all the places we had rushed past earlier but there was plenty of time since it was only 9am. From now on, I will not be amazed at hearing about someone doing something seemingly crazy, looking for that one bird.



Multi-Media Corner

In keeping with longstanding tradition, Ogeechee Audubon will not hold a public meeting during the travel-heavy months of July and August. This of course, may leave many members craving nature-related multi-media presentations. But please do not be alarmed, we have got you covered!

Discovery at Deveaux

In 2019 personnel from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Manomet discovered and documented an incredible roosting congregation of Whimbrels on a South Carolina island. The island may at times host as much as half of the East Coast population of this charismatic, but rapidly declining shorebird, making it a globally significant location for the species. Filmmakers from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology made a breathtaking documentary about the island and on June 22 a screening and panel discussion was held featuring several of the scientists who made the discovery. The film and discussion can be viewed here: <https://discoveryatdeveaux.squarespace.com/>

Bird Lady

Filmmaker Nicholas Mullins has recently completed a brief documentary about Ogeechee Audubon's own Diana Churchill! The film is really quite good and can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/560247086>

Citizen Science Opportunities



GREAT GEORGIA **Pollinator Census**

August 21 and 22

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension will be conducting its annual Pollinator Census on August 21 and 22. In brief, participants will be asked to watch a particular flowering plant and count insects that land on it during a 15 minute period. One does not need to be an entomologist to take part as identification down to the species level is not required. Participants will only need to break insects down into 8 categories (butterflies/moths, honeybees, bumblebees, etc.). Please go to <https://ggapc.org/> for more information.

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 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.

_____ 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