

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September - October, 2021, Volume LI, Issue V



The Summer of Interesting Developments Edition

The surge in cases of Covid-19 in the last month or so, especially in the Southeast, has been, to say the least, quite disconcerting. Ogeechee Audubon will be pushing forward with programming into the months of September and October, albeit with some sensible precautions in place. We are requiring that attendees to the public meetings be fully vaccinated and follow CDC guidelines of remaining masked while indoors in public settings. Additionally please be sure to review the guidelines for attending field trips, which can be found on p.2, as well as at: <https://www.ogeecheeaudubon.org/guidelines>.

Public Meetings at the First Presbyterian Church of Savannah
Attendees must be fully vaccinated and remain masked for the duration of the meeting.

Tuesday, September 21, 2021 at 7 pm:
Management of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and other Rare Species on Fort Stewart
Speaker Larry Carlile

Larry has been a Wildlife Biologist for the Department of Defense at Fort Stewart / Hunter Army Airfield for the past 27 years. Larry is Chief of the Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield Fish and Wildlife Branch and supervises a staff of 25 wildlife biologists, technicians, and contractors. He's responsible for the

management and monitoring of state and federally protected rare, threatened, and endangered species including; the smooth coneflower, bald eagle, wood stork, eastern indigo snake, frosted flatwoods salamander, and red-cockaded woodpeckers, as well as game species and sport fish within an active and dynamic military landscape. Larry's presentation will discuss the recovery of the Fort Stewart red-cockaded woodpecker population and management activities that support other rare species on the Installation.

Tuesday, October 19, 2021 at 7 pm:
Conservation of the Henslow's Sparrow in Georgia
Speaker Todd Schneider

A native of Wisconsin, Todd worked for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources from 1985-1993 as a Fisheries Technician and Fisheries Biologist. Since 1993, he has been a Wildlife Biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division, Wildlife Conservation Section where he specializes in bird conservation issues. Todd will be talking about Henslow's sparrow conservation in Georgia, particularly efforts by the Wildlife Resources Division over the past dozen years. These efforts include surveys on Wildlife Management Areas to find and track populations, research to define habitat structure and needs, movement patterns and other life history features, diet analysis, and attempts to develop automated habitat searching and predictive models using remote sensing via satellite data and other high tech mechanisms.

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, and Rose Talbert
Field Trips	John Williamson
Programs	Lynn Wrenn

Communications Workgroup

Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Diana Churchill, Matt Tozer
Publicity	Matt Tozer

Historian

Sandy Beasley

Conservation Workgroup

Entire Board

 <p>Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop</p>	<p>Fresh Seed NO Fillers!</p>	<p>Bird Feeders Birdbaths Pole Systems And The Freshest Seed in Town!</p>	<p>8108 Abercorn Street Mon-Sat 10-6 Sunday 12-5 Next to Home Goods (912) 961-3455</p>	
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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 have rapidly increased in our area we are amending our field trip guidelines and reserving the right to make adjustments as circumstances and CDC recommendations change.

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:

- 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
- Please do not carpool with participants outside your household
- Most field trips will not have limits on attendance, but please RSVP to OgeecheeAudubon.help@gmail.com to help us gauge participation levels
- 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, Sept. 11 - Mohawk Park. 1132 Mohawk St., Savannah, GA 31419 . 8 am - 10 am. Check out this new city park located behind Target near the Savannah Mall. Wheelchair accessible with a .7 mile paved trail around part of the lake with a good diversity of habitats. Leader Pam Smith. Trip Rigor: Easy.

Saturday, Sept. 25 - Moody Forest WMA. 3533 E. River Road, Baxley GA 31513 (31.906717,-82.312408). 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Old growth forest with excellent examples of long leaf pine-wiregrass and tupelo-cypress ecosystems. Leader Matt Tozer. Trip Rigor: Moderate to difficult; Be prepared to walk about 3 miles with some uneven ground.

Friday, Oct. 8 - Monday Oct. 11: Georgia Ornithological Society Fall Meeting. For details and to register, visit gos.org.

If GOS meeting is cancelled:

Saturday, October 9 - Solomon Tract. End of EMD Blvd. Port Wentworth. 8 am - 11 am.

Bottomland hardwood forest, oak woodlands, dike and impoundment. We will be searching for fall migrants. Leader Chris Brown. Trip Rigor: Moderate to difficult; Approximately 2 mile walk with some uneven ground.

Sunday, Oct. 24 - Delta Plantation. 2230 Bellinger Hill Road Hardeeville SC. 8:30 am - 11:30 am. This is a rare opportunity to visit this private property owned by the Cay family. It has a diversity of habitats including grassy fields, ponds, old rice trunks, pine forest and oak woodlands. Leader Diana Churchill. High clearance vehicles best with a limit of 5 vehicles. Masks required if carpooling unless members of same household. **Please contact Diana at dichurchbirds@gmail.com or 912-604-7539 for directions and further details. Pre-registration required.** Trip Rigor: Moderate.

Citizen Science Opportunities!

International Shorebird Surveys

Friday, Sept. 17 - Tybee North Beach - Meet at the parking area on Polk Street near the River's End Campground at 6 pm. Be prepared to feed the meters or use the App - ParkTybee - 6 pm - 8 pm. Leader Diana Churchill. Be prepared to walk 3 miles on the beach. We will be counting shorebirds but enjoying the diversity of gulls, terns, pelicans and other birds that hang out on the beach.

Sunday Oct. 3 - Tybee North Beach - Meet at the parking area on Polk Street near the River's End Campground at 5:30 pm. Be prepared to feed the meters or use the App - ParkTybee - 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm. Leader Diana Churchill. Be prepared to walk 3 miles on the beach. We will be counting shorebirds but enjoying the diversity of gulls, terns, pelicans and other birds that hang out on the beach.

Other Surveys

Sunday, September 19 - Savannah Christian Preparatory School. 1599 Chatham Parkway, Savannah, GA 31408. 8:30 am - 1:00 pm. Leader Stan Gray. 8:30 AM -- 1:00 PM. Meet at the front gate on Chatham Parkway by 8:30 AM sharp, where they will be led onto the campus by survey team leader. Ogeechee Audubon is beginning its 3rd year of conducting comprehensive bird surveys of the 250 acre campus in support of school initiatives to understand and upgrade the habitats supporting local fauna and flora. Trip Rigor: Easy to Moderate The terrain is flat and easily traversed, along improved grass and dirt paths. The total survey route is approx.. 2.5 miles.

Field Notes

Landings on Skidaway Island Field Trip July 10 - by Lynn Wrenn

A beautiful day for a very memorable field trip with 50 species identified. Led by Stan Gray, we made our first stop at a pathway off of Peregrine Crossing. We were immediately greeted by 5 Painted Buntings. Following the path to the end at the marsh we saw a Seaside Sparrow, Marsh Wrens, Anhingas, Green Herons, Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons, Wood Storks, Red winged Blackbirds, all types of egrets and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers.

Our next stop was at the lagoon off of Wiley Bottom where we ran into Fitz and a friend camped out with cameras observing a couple of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. What a find, although somewhat sad. Fitz had been observing for several days and had pictures of the couple swimming with their 16 offspring but the babies were all gone by Saturday, most likely eaten by large fish in the lagoon. They were a rare and lucky find! Also there were observations of a Mississippi Kite, 3 immature Green Herons, loads of Anhingas, Double-crested Cormorants, herons of all kinds and Egrets of all kinds. A very busy lagoon that day.

Climbing to the top of the Marsh Tower provided some spectacular views of an Orchard Oriole, Fish Crows, Eastern Kingbirds, Boat-tailed Grackle, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and very high up in the sky, Anhingas and Wood Storks. Also seen on our trip was a Yellow-throated Warbler being fed by a parent. One of the best birding field trips ever. Thanks to Stan for sharing some of his knowledge of bird habits and behaviors to help identify different species.

Sterling Creek Park August 7 - by Christopher Brown

Ahhh early August, what could be better than the official beginning of fall migration?! The anticipation is palpable, as you just never know what might show up!

Despite the overcast and typical high humidity, our trip to Sterling Creek Park was fabulous! As we started our walk along the forest edge, we heard the rising trill of a Northern Parula, followed by the hard, nasally call of a White-eyed Vireo.

These birds were kind enough to make an appearance for everyone to observe. As we continued down the trail, we heard a Yellow-billed Cuckoo sing a series of “ku-ku-ku-ku” notes from high in the pines. After a few minutes, another cuckoo began to sing. Unfortunately, the elusive cuckoos were shy and didn’t want to show themselves.

Shortly after our cuckoo encounter, a Pileated Woodpecker appeared hammering away at pine bark in search of insects. The woodpecker appeared to be a juvenile, based on the size and molting pattern. While we were all observing, the woodpecker provided us with a nice welcoming call consisting of a rapid, “keekeekkeekkeek”. One could compare this call to “bird laughter”.



As we made our way into the forest, we were greeted by a singing Pine Warbler and an American Redstart (fall migrant!). An Indigo Bunting was heard singing along the forest edge. After a few minutes of persistence, Mr. Indigo Bunting finally showed himself and we were all able to view his beautiful dark blue plumage.

As we strolled along the marsh trail, we observed a variety of birds, but one section appeared to host at least 3 species of yellow-colored passerines perched in a few clusters of trees. A female/immature Orchard Oriole was first seen. This was then followed by the highlight bird of the trip, a Yellow-breasted Chat, which Pam happened to snap a photo of! On the way back, a Prairie Warbler was also spotted in this area.

Our walk led us further down the marsh trail, in which mature and immature Little Blue Heron were seen in addition to Common Gallinule and Anhinga.

On the return trip, a Painted Bunting was observed to be stalking and harassing a Brown Thrasher for a good 5 minutes!

All in all, 38 species were observed. A very successful early fall migration walk!"

Tybee Island North Beach August 20 - by Christopher-Cameron McNaught

Having met at 6pm at Tybee Island's Jaycee Park to discuss the plan for the evening, we quickly re-routed to nearby Polk Street beach access to start our trip. A bright-skied, humid, mid-80F August evening was blessing the island as it often does, with the beach still hosting a variety of beach-goers.



As we ventured past the small groups, a small cut in the dunes revealed a boardwalk that led us to Captain's View Pond. We were greeted with an array of Snowy Egret's accompanied by juvenile Little Blue Heron's. While discussions were underway on identification, Diana and the group helped educate on identification tips for both juvenile species. As the evening was progressing during our time at the pond, it was with no surprise to see diving Barn Swallows entering our view.

Moving onwards from the pond and back down the boardwalk, the ocean front entered the background once more, with low-flying Brown Pelican's soaring the wave tops and the loud cackles of the Laughing Gulls increased. Around the bend, a large grouping came into frame and whilst we were hoping for Caspian

Terns, we were busy counting the sheer number of Royal Terns. Dotted between each look through the binoculars, Ruddy Turnstones appeared with the occasional Lesser Black-backed Gull. Sanderlings, Sandwich Terns, a singular Willet and Ring-billed Gull were all claims to our count.

Yet, it was the joy at seeing two Piping Plover's that made the day. One was banded, which turned out to have been hatched at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, MI near Sleeping Bear Point.

To conclude the trip as we headed back along the beach, we were greeted with a stunning sunset and moonrise.



Update for the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge

By Mary Lou Dickson

I know the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge is a favorite location for our club to go birding and the closure of the Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive has affected many of us. But I take comfort in the fact that the closure is to help repair, protect, and improve the wildlife habitat there. Since I still volunteer there, I get to see some of the progress, although not up close. The refuge released an update in July that estimates the reopening to be winter/spring 2023.

The closure has forced some of us to explore other areas of the refuge that are still open. Unfortunately, I have just learned another area is closing for repairs. The Onslow Island section of the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge is now closed for major maintenance.

There will be no entry into the impoundment area, although the parking area appears unaffected. The closing is estimated to be for one year.

The Onslow Island section is joint managed by the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers as it serves as a Savannah River spoil site, accepting river spoil into the impoundments there. The work will involve repairing the dikes there. It is unclear whether this will lead to making additional spoil deposits there or not. The addition of spoil is how the water gets into the impoundments. And it's the water and its nutrients that bring the birds. It is my understanding the Corp is also going to be doing some invasive species control during this work and planting native grasses on the dikes when finished.



This leaves three areas of the refuge with trails open. The Visitor Center area which has 3 short loop trails in the woods around the center. If you walked all 3 trails it would be about a mile. The Visitor Center is still closed due to COVID restrictions, but there is a port-a-potty in the parking area. The Kingfisher Pond area is open and does allow some access to the hardwood bottomland forest there (the Tupelo connector trail), but that's a walk in and out the same trail as the Tupelo trail is closed. The trail around the pond is well marked and a little over a mile to walk. All trails are mostly in the woods, but the mosquitoes can be bad, particularly if you walk the Tupelo Connector. And finally, the Solomon Tract is open. This part of the refuge is not heavy visited, but there is now a parking area just outside the main gate there. Mosquitos, fire ants, and ticks can all be problems here, so come prepared.

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