

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

January - February, 2022, Volume LII, Issue I



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	Diana Churchill
Programs	Leslie Weichsel

Communications Workgroup

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

Historian

Leslie Weichsel

New Board Members

Brittany Dodge
Katie Higgins
Erine-Fay McNaught
Melanie Sparrow

Public Meeting at the First Presbyterian Church in Savannah

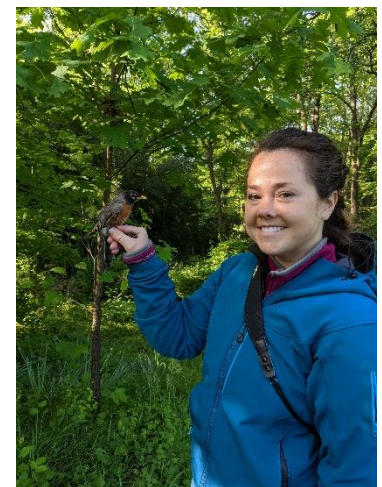
February 15, 2022 at 7 pm

**More than just a backyard bird: unlocking the mysteries of
American Robin migration**

Speaker: Emily Williams
First Presbyterian Church
520 Washington Ave, Savannah

The American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) may be the early bird that catches the worm, the archetypal backyard bird, and all that jazz - but it turns out there's still a *lot* to learn from this common bird. Beyond the facts that robins seem to be doing perfectly fine (they are increasing across much of their range), may be one of the most widely distributed songbirds on the North American continent, *and* they seem to be expanding their range, both northward and southward - robins are also an enigma when it comes to their migratory behavior. In turns out this "resident" or "short-distance migrant" is misunderstood and underestimated. To learn more about their migration and what robins can teach us, Georgetown University PhD student Emily Williams is embarking upon a multi-year, multi-state project to set the record straight about this overlooked bird.

Emily is a Florida native and grew up enjoying having Cape Canaveral "Playalinda" National Seashore and Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge as her backyard. After receiving degrees at the University of Florida and Kansas State University, Emily decided she had enough of the heat and moved to Alaska, where she worked at Denali National Park and Preserve for four and a half years. She then transitioned from the smallest town she's ever lived to the biggest, settling in the nation's capitol to pursue her doctorate. While she doesn't miss the temperatures or bugs, Emily still holds dear the birds and BBQ of the southeast, which have no match anywhere else.



Attendees must be fully vaccinated and remain masked for the duration of the meeting.



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Annual Public Meeting

The Annual meeting of Ogeechee Audubon Society will be Tuesday, April 19, 2022 at 7 pm at the First Presbyterian Church - 520 Washington Ave.

The Board has appointed a Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will present to the membership a slate of officers for election. If you have any suggestions for officers or wish to run please contact one of the committee members no later than 10 days prior to the Annual meeting. There is always an opportunity to nominate someone from the floor during the annual meeting.

The Nominating Committee members are: Sue DeRosa, Rose Talbert and Marty Fox.

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”.

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
- 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!

Sunday, January 30: Ft. Stewart - This one is for the Early Birds! Meet at 6:15 am at Love’s Truck Stop at 8436 Ford Avenue in Richmond Hill. Difficulty Moderate. Target species are American Woodcock, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Henslow’s Sparrow and more. Limit 15 people. Leader Larry Carlile. l.carlile259@comcast.net.

Sunday, February 6. Hutchinson Island - Meet at the Community Center within the Reserve on Hutchinson at 8:00 am. Difficulty Easy. Target species Loggerhead Shrike, Eastern Meadowlark, American Kestrel, sparrows, and possibly Western Kingbird. Leader Chris Brown christopher.r.brown@okstate.edu

Sunday, Feb. 27: Tybee Hot Spots including the Burton 4-H Center. Audubon has created a partnership with the Center so we have a unique opportunity to visit the 4H Center as it is not open to the public. Meet at Jaycee Park at 8:30 am. Difficulty: moderate. We will check the rock jetties for Ruddy Turnstones, and possibly a purple sandpiper, scan the ocean for loons and the skies for northern gannets, and visit the Center at low tide to look for feeding shorebirds, herons and egrets and other wintering songbirds. Leaders Diana Churchill & Erine-Fay McNaught. dichurchbirds@gmail.com ccefmcnaught@gmail.com

Citizen Science and Volunteer Opportunities!

Rusty Blackbird Surveys at Savannah Christian Preparatory School. Every other Sunday beginning November 14th (3:00 pm - 5:00 pm). 1599 Chatham Parkway, Savannah, GA 31408.

Leader Stan Gray. Ogeechee Audubon will continue to monitor use of this site as a pre-roost staging area for Rusty Blackbirds. This restricted access site is most likely the most reliable location in the area for observing Rusty Blackbirds which have undergone massive population declines over the past half century. If you would like to join the survey team please meet a team member at the front gate of the school at 3:00pm sharp. Survey dates for January and February are 1/9, 1/23, 2/6 and 2/20.

Sunday, January 16 - Savannah Christian Preparatory School - Full Property Survey. 1599 Chatham Parkway, Savannah, GA 31408. 8:30 am - 1:00 pm. Leader Stan Gray. 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.

Friday, Feb. 18 - Monday Feb. 21st: Great Backyard Bird Count. Count the birds in your yard neighborhood or favorite spot and submit your checklist to ebird. For more info, go to <https://www.birdcount.org/>. If you have not used eBird or participated in a count, now is the time to start!!

UGA Marine Extension Center and Aquarium on Skidaway Island. Help! We need volunteers to fill and maintain the feeders at the site. You may remember that recently Ogeechee Audubon received generous donations in memory of OAS members Joyce Fowler and Bob Paddison (Diana Churchill's dad). The board decided to put these funds towards adding to the bird feeders that were located at the UGA Marine Extension Center (MAREX) and Aquarium. The board thought this would be an ideal way to recognize Joyce and Bob and share their a passion for birds with the visitors to the aquarium. The memorial feeders are attracting lots of birds and are needing to be refilled regularly. So, if you live near the aquarium or just want an excuse to take a lovely drive to the aquarium occasionally, please let us know at ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com and we'll add you to the list and show you the ropes.

***All participants will be required to adhere to all COVID-19 mandates and protocols in effect at the time of the event.**

Classified

Vortex Razor Angled 20-60/85mm Scope with case and Vortex Pro GT tripod is in need of a new home. Barely Used! Willing to sell for 1/2 normal price. If interested please contact Kristen Motley at kristuune@yahoo.com.

Field Notes

Harris Neck Christmas Bird Count - by Sue De Rosa

The 122nd Audubon Christmas Bird Count for Harris Neck was held on December 17th, a slightly gray day in the morning which became sunny in the afternoon with pleasant temperatures. Harris Neck CBC became part of the CBC in 1971. Unfortunately this year was another one that was hampered by COVID so the birders didn't gather for lunch to share their experiences of being out in the field. Twenty-eight people participated this year, slightly up from last year's twenty-six. One hundred twenty eight species were spotted which was amazing since only 20 areas were covered compared with 27 in 2020, which had 135 species. Harris Neck did gain some great birders due to the cancellation of St. Catherine's CBC. Many thanks to the early birders catching some owls and not just worms plus the groups that ventured out on the waters counting the shorebirds, bald eagles, tree swallows, and more. Being out in the marsh, river, and woods is a great way to "welcome" winter, but seeing the birds and birders is delightful.

Savannah Christmas Bird Count - by Diana Churchill

Well the 2022 Savannah Area Christmas Bird Count was not without drama. For the week leading up to the count, the weather was predicted to be rainy with 20-30 mph winds. I kept praying...we just needed a slight adjustment in timing. Thankfully, our prayers were answered and January 2nd may have set a record for warmth with temps reaching the low 80's. There was wind but not as strong as predicted, and the cold front and rain did not come in until the early hours of January 3rd.

We had some 70 participants in the field this year, including at least 10 people that were new to this count. Our youngest participant was Connor Stilles, age 11, who is a keen young birder. He and his mother Ashley accompanied Deb Barreiro to count Area 11C in West Savannah, Bonaventure Cemetery, and the mud flats on the Wilmington River. Deb was impressed that he was able to maintain his focus during a long day of birding.



Sherry Stuart & Charra Sweeney-Reeves scan the river. Photo by Mary Sweeney-Reeves

Kathy Schaefer reported that she and count compiler Larry Carlile started the morning with an American Woodcock behind the Pegasus Stables in east Savannah.



Western Kingbird. Photo by Chris Brown

Our boat team, headed by Mary and Charra Sweeney-Reeves and Debbie Bennett reported that they found good numbers of seaside sparrows as well as a couple of saltmarsh sparrows, but no Nelson's sparrows.

Steve Wagner and John Williamson reported 72 species for the day at Fife Plantation, while Matt Tozer and Pam Smith had 71 species in West Savannah including a prairie warbler.

Chris Brown and Mark Woodruff counted on Hutchinson Island and were particularly excited to find 2 western kingbirds. Thanks for the photo Chris.

At Turnbridge Plantation in SC Diana's team was excited to see and photograph a sora, as well as a merlin.

I did not get a report for count day at the Corps of Engineers Disposal Area but Steve Calver had an impressive count week list which included common goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, gull-billed tern, Wilson's plover, stilt sandpiper, Wilson's phalarope, common loon, and sandhill cranes.

A special thank you to all those who counted in places like the parking lot at Sam's, a variety of mid and downtown parks, weedy fields, and the less glamorous or birdy areas. Those house sparrows, pigeons and starlings all help paint a complete picture of the bird life in our area.

One disappointment was that the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge Wildlife Drive is still closed so we have not been able to count in one of our favorite and most productive areas. Fingers crossed for 2023!

Sadly, due to CoVid 19 concerns, we did not have a Countdown Dinner so I cannot report on species numbers. Our count compiler Larry Carlile will provide that data for the next issue of the Marshlander.

A resounding THANK YOU to all who participated.



Sora. Photo by Diana Churchill

***Please join us in welcoming the newest members of
Ogeechee Audubon's Board!***

Katie Higgins, Marine Educator and Volunteer Coordinator UGA Marine Education Center

Katie grew up in Ohio, playing in the woods surrounding her house, climbing trees, and catching frogs. She has lived on the Georgia coast since 2012 and is now a marine educator and the volunteer coordinator for Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant working out of the Marine Education Center and Aquarium on Skidaway Island.

She is an avid birder and reader, loves to garden, bake, and tend her small flock of chickens. She is the mother of two bright and eager daughters who she loves to expose to all things outdoors. She graduated from Portland State University in Oregon with a Bachelor of Science in biology and has a Master of Art in zoology from Miami University of Ohio.

Katie's first experience with birding was while living in Oregon where she participated in Christmas Bird Counts on the coast and as part of a fund-raising opportunity called the "Gonzo Birdathon." Since that time, she has had the opportunity to live, study and bird in several worldwide locations including Costa Rica, Spain, Australia, and Thailand. She is pleased to have the opportunity to work more closely with Ogeechee Audubon to share her love of all things feathered.

Brittany Dodge, Naturalist Ford Field and River Club

Brittany Dodge was one of those kids always covered in mud, following the trail of an unsuspecting animal to learn more about it. She graduated with a BS in Biology from Mercer University and a MS in Wildlife Biology from Clemson University while working as a veterinary technician and wildlife rehabilitator. She worked with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources as a Wildlife Biologist doing sea turtle and alligator research on an isolated island off the coast of Georgetown, SC. It was there that Brittany began her birding career, searching for spoonbills and identifying shorebirds. After joining the Outdoor Pursuits team at The Ford Field & River Club as the Naturalist, Brittany obtained her Captain's license. She is a member of the American Society of Naturalists and on the board for Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary.

Melanie Sparrow, Ogeechee Riverkeeper Education & Outreach Coordinator

Mel is an Athens and North Atlanta local but now calls Statesboro, GA home. She spent much of her childhood doing outdoor activities such as gardening, small-scale farming, fishing, spending time in the North Georgia rivers and lakes, hiking and more--a past time that has carried into her adult life and career.

She received her BA from UGA in Anthropology/Archaeology and went on to do field work in Belize. She was based out of the West Coast and traveled internationally and nationally. She found her way back to Georgia to work as an Environmental Educator at Rock Eagle 4-H Center, where her love of Birding came from. She moved to Statesboro, GA where she earned her MA in Social Sciences with a focus in Environmental Anthropology. Her time in the Coastal Plain of GA has been intertwined with environmental education, events management, sustainability and of course, Birding!

Erine-Fay McNaught, Environmental Education Program Coordinator at Burton 4-H Center

Erine-Fay McNaught is originally from Buchanan, Georgia and has lived on Tybee Island since 2016 working at the Burton 4-H Center on Tybee Island (UGA Cooptative Extension Services and Georgia 4-H) as the Environmental Education (EE) Program Coordinator. Erine-Fay has a B.S. in Early Childhood Education and is currently pursuing a Master of Education in Learning, Leadership and Organizational Development with UGA to connect her passion for youth development through science, nature and environmental & outdoor education. Erine-Fay's interest with birds started with red-winged black birds as a child growing up in rural Georgia but her love wasn't fully embraced till moving to coastal Georgia full-time.

Transitions

John Williamson – Please join me in thanking John Williamson who served on our Ogeechee Audubon Board for the past year. John's work and travel schedule is such that he feels he cannot give OAS his full attention to the Board responsibilities. However, he will remain involved in OAS activities and surveys as his time permits. Thank you John!

Membership Reminder!

Hi! I am Mary Lambright, Vice-president of OAS and the person who keeps track of membership. Happy New Year! Did you know? Ogeechee Audubon Society membership is for one-year, starting January 1. Some of you have already renewed for 2022 (yay for you!). If you aren't sure what your current membership status is, you can send an email to ogeecheeaudubon.help@gmail.com and I will be happy to let you know. If you are getting this newsletter via MailChimp, you at least have paid through 2021. Please use the membership form below so you can choose which membership level is best for you, fill out the form and send it in with your dues. Our treasurer, Pam Smith, will take care of your money and I will make sure that you continue to receive our newsletter, The Marshlander, and other important info via MailChimp. 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 which will also remove you from our MailChimp list and you will no longer receive newsletters and other announcements.

Disclaimer: Membership to Ogeechee Audubon Society does NOT include membership to National Audubon Society with its subscription to the magazine, Audubon but you are encouraged to join both organizations. For more information about National Audubon Society go to <https://www.audubon.org/>

Thanks,
Mary

Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2022

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