

THE MARSHLANDER

OGEECHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

May – June, 2024, Volume LV, Issue III



Ogeechee Audubon Society Officers and Board Administrative Responsibilities

President	Sue De Rosa
Vice President	Rose Talbert
Secretary	Patti Seanor
Treasurer	Judy Johnson

Education Workgroup

Education Outreach	Diana Churchill, Sue De Rosa, and Rose Talbert
Field Trips	Diana Churchill, Brittany Dodge, and Katie Higgins
Programs	Rose Talbert

Communications Workgroup

Social Media	Mary Lambright
Webmaster	Mary Lou Dickson
Newsletter	Diana Churchill and Matt Tozer
Publicity	Brittany Dodge

Historian

Leslie Weichsel

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.

Public Meeting!

Please join us for the Public Meeting on Tuesday, June 18, 7PM at the First Presbyterian Church, 520 Washington Avenue, Savannah, GA!

Meet Your Neighbors: Shorebirds and Seabirds of the Georgia Coast

Join Allie Hayser, a shorebird biologist for Manomet's Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative, to learn why the Georgia coast is such an important place throughout the year for these amazing shorebirds and seabirds! We will talk about ongoing projects, partnerships, and what you can do to be the best host and neighbor for migrating, wintering, and nesting birds on our beaches. We will have info about our volunteer group, the Georgia Coastal Bird Ambassadors, and how you can get involved.

	Fresh Seed NO Fillers!	Bird Feeders Birdbaths Pole Systems And The Freshest Seed in Town!	8108 Abercorn Street Mon-Sat 10-6 Sunday 12-5 Next to Home Goods (912) 961-3455	
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Field Trips – Get out into Nature!

Field trips are planned **leader-directed** birding opportunities. A knowledgeable and experienced leader will assist in spotting and identifying birds in a precise habitat selected for that particular field trip. The habitat and target birds for the particular area will be outlined in the field trip description. Field trips provide not only a birding opportunity but present learning opportunities for all, especially beginning birders. Field trips are open to the public and birders of all skill levels and ages. Length of time 2 to 3 hours.

If you plan to attend a field trip, please email the leader, though for all of these trips, walk-ins are welcome unless otherwise noted.

Saturday, May 11: Kingfisher Pond section of Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, 8am to 11am. Meet at the entrance to Kingfisher Pond at 8 am. Trip rigor Moderate with some uneven walking. Bring water and bug spray. Leader Pam Smith pavercel@gmail.com 717.201.9756.

Wednesday, May 22: Onslow Island Section of Savannah NWR, 9am to 12pm. Meet at the parking lot of the Houlihan Bridge Boat Ramp at 9 am to first look for nesting Cliff & Barn Swallows and then carpool across the bridge to Onslow Island as parking there has been tight. Bring water, hats, sunscreen and bug spray and be prepared to walk 2 miles or so in tall grass. Scopes are needed. Boots or gaiters recommended. Trip rigor Difficult. Leaders Rachel Green degreen@comcast.net 912.660.8217 and Lucy White apacheo6a@hotmail.com 912.658.3264.

Sunday, June 2nd: Oatland Island Wildlife Center, 9am to 11am. Your leader Eric Swanson will meet the group at the front gate at 9 am. Oatland entrance fee will be waived for trip participants. Limit 15 people. Please email Eric to sign up. Trip rigor moderate with easy walking. Bring water, hat, sunscreen and bug spray. Leader Eric Swanson ericgreggswanson@gmail.com 309.721.4357.

Saturday, June 15: Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, 8am to 11am. We'll search for the summer nesters and enjoy the wading bird spectacle. Meet at the entrance to the Refuge at 8:00am. Bring water, hat, sunscreen and bug spray. Trip rigor: Moderate. Leader Katie Higgins kt.higgins@uga.edu 912.677.2967.

Sunday, June 30: Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, 8am to 11am. Meet at the Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive entrance to SNWR at 8 am. We'll be looking for summer resident Purple Gallinules, Least Bitterns, Indigo Buntings, Swallow-tailed & Mississippi Kites and more. Trip rigor: Easy. Bring water, hat, bug spray and sunscreen. Leader Matt Tozer mctozer@yahoo.com 845.596.4662.

International Shorebird Surveys:

We will be collecting data to contribute to these seasonal surveys.

Meet at the parking area on Polk Street opposite the River's End Campground. Be prepared to use the ParkTybee App to pay for parking. Bring hat, sunscreen, water and bug spray. We will be walking 1-2 miles on sand. Trip rigor: Moderate. Leader Diana Churchill dichurchbirds@gmail.com 912.604.7539

Sunday, May 5: 5:30-7:30 pm

Monday, June 3: 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Field Notes

Skidaway Island State Park, March 30, 2024

Jeanne and Tom Rowe

On Saturday, March 30th, a group of eight birders gathered for an early morning bird walk at Skidaway Island State Park. Our group leader for the walk was Katie Higgins.

As we arrived at the meeting spot, just outside the park entrance, our birding adventure began with the sighting of several large groups of Cedar Waxwings. They were flying between the tall trees above us and we spent a little time admiring them, before we headed into the park.

We carpoled to the Visitors Center and spent some time observing a variety of species at the feeders, including Northern Cardinals, Carolina Chickadees, White-breasted and Brown-headed nuthatches, and Eastern Bluebirds. Our walk continued along the Sandpiper trail, where we spotted an Osprey calling out from a large nest in the top of a tall tree snag. As the Osprey continued to call out, we saw another Osprey flying above and then land in the nest. Seeing the pair moving sticks around the nest, it looked like they were doing a little remodeling.

A pair of Bald Eagles was also spotted flying overhead in formation. Several other flybys included a group of Great Egrets with a Great Blue Heron in the back of the formation and a group of White Ibis.

On the way to the observation platform along the river, we spotted a Blue-headed Vireo and White-eyed Vireos along the road. We concluded our day back at the Visitors Center for once last survey of the feeders. For our trip, Diana Churchill recorded 48 species of birds.

It was a wonderful day of birding in one of Georgia's beautiful state parks.

Forsyth Park, April 9, 2024 (the first of five weekly walks)

June Parina

I'm celebrating my one year anniversary as a Savannahian and member of the Ogeechee Audubon Society. Over the year, I have walked through Forsyth Park nearly everyday, sometimes twice a day, but it's only once a year I get the treat of birding with my expert friends at OAS in my urban backyard. The annual bird walks in Forsyth Park led by Diana Churchill are a wonderful reminder that nature is truly always around us, even in packed, and often noisy, urban environments, if you just look up.

This was my second time joining these weekly spring bird walks through the park. Our group of 12 gathered at 8 a.m. around the iconic fountain on this cool morning when nary a bird seemed to



Photo Credit Rose Talbert

present. As the clouds broke around 9 a.m., we were treated with much more of a show (36 species observed of 96 individual birds, [eBird checklist](#)) than we saw on last year's first-of-the-season (FOTS) walks (19 species observed of 69 individuals, [eBird checklist](#)). Notably, it was Diana's FOTS sightings of the flying cigars (8) (a.k.a. Chimney Swifts). Then another fellow birder spotted a barred owl ([photo](#)) sitting quietly overhead. In comparison, last year our group saw a mother and two owlets. Other notable species spotted were the Tree Swallow (4), Hooded Warbler (2), Blue-headed Vireo (2) ([photo](#)), Ovenbird ([photo](#)), Hermit Thrush, and the Black-and-white Warbler ([photo](#)) which Diana described as creeping like a nuthatch with a squeaky brake song. One of the best sightings was the Red-tailed Hawk with a fresh catch of squirrel ([photo](#)) for breakfast. I know, you can't unsee the photo, but it sure made the walk all the more memorable.

Diana continues the weekly walks on Tuesdays through May 7. Come join us!

Webb Wildlife Management Area , April 21, 2024

Judy Johnson

What a wonderful day of birding! A small group of 5, including a couple visiting from Chicago, led by Steve Wagner spent 4 hours exploring Webb's varied habitats. Webb, known for its Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat, did not disappoint. We got great views of this striking endangered woodpecker with his bright white cheeks. They are our only woodpecker that nests in live pine trees. And there were Red-headed Woodpeckers galore (15) – it was awesome to see so many of these elegant birds!

Another treat was the male Orchard Oriole looking very dapper in his orange & black. The aptly named Summer Tanagers were out and about broadcasting for love and territory, but were very elusive to see. We finally spotted the yellowish female. Heard but not seen were several Yellow-billed Cuckoos – such a cool sound! But the bird of the day was the Blue Grosbeak! We saw loads along the dove field dining on a narrow strip of grasses and little emerging insects.

At the rookery, we enjoyed the brilliant Little Blue Herons and Western Cattle Egrets (yes, they have a new name) sporting their breeding plumage along with a lesser number of Anhingas nesting. Here too were 3 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks.

We made our way back to the swampy area at Bluff Lake with its gorgeous Cypress trees. We were rewarded with a beautiful Acadian flycatcher, who exuberantly flung his head back as he belted out a song! Too funny! Here we also heard a Barred Owl hooting and a Swainson's Warbler, but could not find him. We were treated to quick glimpses of a Prothonotary Warbler and a Northern Waterthrush as well.

Heading back with the windows open we heard a Bachman's Sparrow and pulled over. The little guy found a perch and started singing. As he was very cooperative, Steve got the scope on him and our Chicago friends got a life bird!

Other birds of note: Pileated Woodpecker, Swallow-tailed Kite, Painted Bunting, Indigo Bunting, Prairie Warbler, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee and Eastern Wood-Pewee. All total we had over 71 species. It was a great day of birding!

Sterling Creek , April 27, 2024

Lynn Hodgson



Photo Credit John Cassell

On Saturday, April 27, John Cassell led 5 intrepid Ogeechee members on a bird & wildlife walk at Sterling Park, Richmond Hill, GA as part of an international competition the weekend after Earth Day called the City NatureChallenge (CNC). Our job was to find and photograph as many species as we could – everything from insects to plants and mammals to birds. We meandered two trails for a total of nearly 5 miles. Unlike most bird walks, our eyes were as often on the ground as up in the air! We documented many plants, cute tiny Southern Cricket Frogs, a soul-eyed White-tailed Deer, an armadillo skull with carrion beetle larvae, etc., as well as whatever birds our photographers could get the cameras on. Our eBird counts totaled 45 species, but many were hiding or too quick for the cameras (as usual).

At the end of the trip I asked each person (including myself) what their trip high point was – and got 6 different answers! One was most enchanted with the tiny Common Gallinule chicks, while another was fascinated by the carnivorous sundews in bloom. Another thought the indigo buntings put on the best show, another said the Mississippi Kites, another the pair of summer tanagers. As an unabashed bird nerd, I hate to admit that my favorite was the nearly round little Eastern Mud Turtle crossing our path. (John identified her as female, and showed us the hinge on the plastron which allowed her to close up completely for protection... but she was peeking!) Everyone agreed, though, that it was hard to not choose the Blue-gray Gnatcatchers taking turns incubating at their lichen nest. We must have spent 15 minutes trying to get everyone to find the nest and the action among the swaying tree branches. Well worth the effort.



Photo Credit John Cassell
Eastern Mud Turtle

Ogeechee Audubon Chapter Membership Form – 2024

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.

Disclaimer: Membership to Ogeechee Audubon Society does NOT include membership to National Audubon Society. For more information about National Audubon Society go to <https://www.audubon.org/>