



# The Yellowthroat

Voice of the

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

August/September 2013

Vol. 24, No. 7

## Next Meeting:

**Thursday, September 5, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Annual Kickoff Presentation at Ecology**

In September, Oconee Rivers Audubon Society (ORAS) will meet on our usual first Thursday of each month. Our September 5 meeting location, however, will be the Odum School of Ecology for a talk by Robert Ramsay, Georgia Conservancy Vice President for Development.

The Georgia Conservancy is Georgia's oldest state-wide membership conservation group. It was founded in 1967. The Georgia Conservancy has a rich history of working with private citizens, business and government to preserve and protect the state's natural resources.

Refreshments will be available in the lobby prior to the talk. Also, ORAS bumper stickers, tee-shirts, and sweatshirts will be on sale before the meeting. Please plan to arrive at 6:30 p.m. for time to socialize.

For the 7:00 p.m. presentation (after a 6:30 p.m. reception):

## Georgia: Protecting an Ecological Gem

(Watch for ORAS announcements for details about this talk).

## Directions to the University of Georgia's School of Ecology from Loop 10 Bypass:

- Exit 7 on College Station Road and turn west toward campus.
- Turn right onto East Campus Road
- Continue north on East Campus Road
- Turn left at second red light onto W. Green Street
- Turn right into S-07 parking lot (open after 6 p.m.)
- The School of Ecology building is on the north side of the parking lot behind trees (look for a sidewalk which goes by the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources building and leads to the School of Ecology).

## Fall Bird Walks

Bird walks are from **8 a.m.-11a.m. or noon**. However, attendees may leave early. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes. Hats are often a good idea. Bring water and snacks as needed. (Please check ORAS announcements for any changes to this schedule and be aware that some new bird walks may be added later). Also, please note that Sandy Creek Nature Center is abbreviated as SCNC.

- Sept. 07: **SCNC**
- Sept. 14: **State Botanical Garden (Day Chapel)**
- Sept. 21: **SCNC (Cook's Trail)\***
- Oct. 05: **State Botanical Garden (Day Chapel)**
- Oct. 06: **Whitehall (S. Milledge & Whitehall)\*\***
- Oct. 12: **Sandy Creek Park (Campsite Dr.)**

\* The SCNC Cook's Trail walk is also our Cook's Trail Cleanup trip. Bring a trash bag.

\*\*Attendees for the Whitehall walk must be on time. We meet outside the gate and caravan down to Flinchum's Phoenix. (Attendees may leave at any time because the gate opens automatically from the inside).

## Fall Field Trip

Sept. 28: **6:00 a.m. Cochran Shoals** (More information on where to meet will be available in September—stay tuned).

## ORAS Picnic and Meeting in June

*summary by Alison Huff*

Nearly two dozen individuals braved wet weather to attend the annual potluck picnic and meeting on Thursday, June 6.

Alison Huff called to order the meeting of the Oconee Rivers Audubon Society to elect next year's officers: Clark Jones for president, Richard Hall for vice president, and returning officers Eugenia Thompson and Mary Case as treasurer and secretary, respectively. All were thanked for their willingness to serve our local Audubon Chapter.

## 2013 Clarke and Oconee County eBird Sightings Summary *by Clark Jones*

Clarke and Oconee County eBird Summary June/July 90 species were reported in Clarke County during June 2013, compared with 89 in 2012 and 84 in 2011.

The number of eBird checklists was much higher in June 2013 than a year prior; 97 compared to 76. June's cool weather may have encouraged people to get out and bird, or perhaps the population of Clarke County birders is growing.

A lingering Pine Siskin at the Bill and Karla O'Grady residence set the record for the latest sighting of a Pine Siskin in Clarke County reported to eBird. Several Eastern Screech Owls, a species that can be tough to encounter in Clarke County if you don't know where to look, were reported along Cook's Trail by Richard Hall, Mirko Basen, and James Neeves.

July can be a slow month for birding in the Southeast, but several notable sightings were reported to eBird during the month of July.

87 species were recorded for Clarke County in July 2013, which coincidentally is the same number of species recorded during 2012 and more than the 81 reported in 2011. July saw an even greater increase in the number of checklists – 68 checklists were submitted in July 2012 compared to a whopping 159 in July 2013. This is partly due to Clarke County's strong showing on Georgia eBird day, which took place on July 27<sup>th</sup>. Clarke County came in second place with 21 checklists, behind the winner Cobb County which submitted 45.

The highlights of the month include a Swallow-tailed Kite on the north side of Athens that was observed several times, and in one instance was seen preying on what appeared to be the fledgling Fish (I think) Crow.

In Oconee County, a pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers (first sighted by Mitchell Jarrett on June 9 and the first record for Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Oconee County reported to eBird) was able to fledge multiple young from a nest along Highway 53. Also, another male Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was documented near the nesting pair by Richard Hall.

Jim Hanna reported a Pied-billed Grebe at Lake Herrick on July 19, which is an uncommon sighting during the summer in Georgia. Two additional sightings of Pied-billed Grebes were reported in Oconee County on July 17. Barn Owls were feeding young at the Athens-Clarke County landfill, but whether or not they fledged any successfully is unknown. Two individuals died from a Trichomoniasis infection that was discovered after being examined by the UGA Vet School. Trichomoniasis is prevalent in doves and pigeons, and is often passed to birds of prey if they feed on infected individuals of these species. Richard Hall reported a Little Blue Heron at the UGA fields on S. Milledge Ave. for several days beginning on July 24. Mark Freeman also reported a Little Blue Heron just south of Watkinsville.

## A Swift Night Out! *by Paul and Georgean Kyle*

As summer draws to a close and the swifts have finished raising their young, these fascinating aerial acrobats begin to congregate in communal roosts prior to their migration in the fall. Some roosts may consist of an extended family group of a half a dozen birds or so, but the larger sites can host hundreds or even thousands of swifts! We encourage you to involve your local Audubon chapters, bird clubs, scout groups and neighbors in this exhilarating spectacle.

Here is how it works: Keep your eyes to the skies at dusk and watch for areas where swifts are feeding. Look for a tall shaft, chimney or similar structure to locate where Chimney Swifts (central to east coast) or Vaux's Swift (Pacific coast) go to roost in your area.

On one night over the weekend of **August 9th, 10th and 11th** observe the roost starting about 30 minutes before sunset and estimate the number of swifts that enter. When you have your number, contact us with your results by responding to this email. That's all there is to it! Your reports will be posted on [www.ChimneySwifts.org](http://www.ChimneySwifts.org)

(The September **Swift Night Out!** will be **September 6th, 7th and 8th**)

Please pass this message along to any listserv or other groups that you think might be interested.

We look forward to hearing from you!  
Paul and Georgean Kyle

Driftwood Wildlife Association

## ORAS Small Grants - Call for Proposals

*by Clark Jones – President of Oconee Rivers Audubon Society*

ORAS will support a student, teacher, individual, or group conducting research, designing outreach or educational activities, or undertaking habitat improvement that helps benefit birds and other native wildlife in the Athens area.

Awards are typically in the region of \$300, but awards of up to \$500 will be considered. Successful applicants are expected to write a short report for our monthly newsletter and/or to give an oral presentation of about 30 minutes to 1 hour at one of our monthly speaker meetings.

The proposal should be 2-3 pages in length (single or 1.5 spaced), and should describe how the project will benefit birds, wildlife, and the Athens community. It should also contain an itemized list of supplies that will be purchased with the grant money. Please email applications to Clark Jones: [president@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto:president@oconeeriversaudubon.org).

Deadline for receipt of these proposals is October 1, 2013.

## **Audubon's Influence** *by Clark Jones*

When I was in the third grade, the parents of a classmate of mine took me on a Saturday morning bird walk with the local Audubon Society in Tyler, Texas. I remember seeing Red-headed Woodpeckers and learning how to identify the song of a Carolina Wren, and I remember how much I enjoyed that experience. My classmate's family spent a lot of time outdoors, and there was always a pair of binoculars on their kitchen table which overlooked their vegetable garden and Purple Martin houses. At the age of 10, their son was the first person to obtain photographic documentation of a House Finch in the county. He managed to snap a decent photograph by sneaking up on the perched individual using a Polaroid camera, and he presented the photograph for show-and-tell. I was very jealous and soon learned how to identify a House Finch in flight.

A few years later we both changed schools and I rarely saw my classmate or his family, but my casual interest in birds was maintained. I always paid attention to birds and took my binoculars with me when I trespassed on the woodlot near my house. My dad and I would occasionally take a special trip during the winter out to the lake to look for Bald Eagles, American White Pelicans, and Osprey, but I never considered myself a birder, and I didn't go to another Audubon Society meeting for many years.

In the fall of my junior year of college at the University of Texas in Austin, while riding the elevator to the neurobiology lab where I worked as an undergraduate research assistant, there was a flyer for an ornithology class offered in the spring, and I decided to enroll. Our first field trip was to the water treatment plant in Austin, and we saw 48 species. Our second field trip was to McAllen, Texas where Green Jays, Altamira Orioles, and Plain Chachalacas firmly cemented my interest in birds. I changed my major the next semester from neurobiology to ecology, and decided that I would go to graduate school and study birds.

When I look back at how my interest in birds started, and where I am now, I see many parallels. Oconee Rivers Audubon is a very active society that leads over a dozen bird walks annually, and the University of Georgia has a number of academics that spend much of their time studying birds. Additionally, the local area is an excellent place to be a birder.

I feel very privileged to have been elected the president of ORAS, and I am looking forward to serving the society in any capacity that I can. At our annual retreat last month we voted to create a low-cost student membership (\$5) in order to encourage students of the UGA community to join ORAS.

As a society, I hope we can use this to generate further interest in Oconee Rivers Audubon Society to foster the next generation of birders and conservationists.

## **Rivers Alive! Helping Birds & Wildlife!**

*by Cecile Riker and Stacey Farrell*

Rivers Alive is an annual, statewide cleanup program devoted to keeping Georgia's waterways clean. Targeting rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands, this event focuses on the removal of litter and debris from our waterways to ensure fresh drinking water and safe habitats for plants and animals.

In Athens, clean-up efforts focus on the Oconee River and major tributaries. A collaborative group of environmental groups, including Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful (KACCB), organizes 20-30 sites to accommodate the 300 or more volunteers who participate in this family friendly service project.

The importance of clean water for us and the aesthetics of a litter-free environment are not the only reasons to participate. As mentioned, participants also work to protect the homes of many plant and animal species.

Polluted water makes it harder for fish to breathe when chemical nutrients build up in the water and deplete oxygen levels.

Old fishing lines sometimes create death traps for wildlife, especially for birds that can become ensnared. Large items of trash, such as tires and appliances, create problems for water flow and habitat access.

Not all volunteers get in the river during this annual event. As the local administrator for the Adopt-A-Highway program, KACCB also selects specific roads as clean-up sites for Rivers Alive to educate volunteers on how litter flows from roadside to river.

For example, consider the ways in which hard rainfalls move debris rapidly. Small items may clog stormdrains or get carried directly into the water source. Large items can cause stormdrain flooding.

Please help out! Come to Rivers Alive on Saturday, October 5 at 8:00 a.m. at Dudley Park near downtown Athens. Bring friends and family and wear clothes and shoes that can get dirty.

Visit [keepathensbeautiful.org](http://keepathensbeautiful.org) for more information. Or, please sign-up online at [handsonNEGA.org](http://handsonNEGA.org).

Local organizing committee members include; Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful, ACC Water Conservation, ACC Leisure Services, ACC Stormwater Division, Upper Oconee Watershed Network, Big Dogs on the River, and Hands On Northeast Georgia.

**Oconee Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 81082**  
**Athens, Georgia 30608-1082**

Return Service Requested

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## **Sad Farewell to ORAS Board Member**

*excerpts from Athens Banner-Herald 6/13/2013 obituary*

“Bradley Brown Hogue Jr., age 88, of Athens, died at home on Thursday, June 6, 2013 . . . . He founded the Beaumont, Texas, chapter of the Sierra Club; served on the Board of the Audubon Society; was a member of the American Birding Association; and led numerous backpacking trips, from the Grand Canyon to Iceland to the Swiss Alps.

He was an opera buff, an avid birdwatcher, a Shakespeare enthusiast and loved doing live snake presentations. His last birding trip was to the Dry Tortugas, at the age of 82, and he had more than 500 species on his Life List . . . .”

## **Oconee Rivers Audubon Society**

**President** Clark Jones  
President@oconeeriversaudubon.org  
**Vice-President** Richard Hall  
vp@oconeeriversaudubon.org  
**Treasurer** Eugenia Thompson  
treasurer@oconeeriversaudubon.org  
**Secretary** Mary Case  
secretary@oconeeriversaudubon.org

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Submit information to address above or e-mail *The Yellowthroat* editor Liz Conroy: [yellowthroat@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto:yellowthroat@oconeeriversaudubon.org)  
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