



The Yellowthroat

Voice of the

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

August/September 2015

Vol. 26, No. 7

Next Meeting:

Thursday, September 3, 6:00 p.m.
UGA's Odum School of Ecology

In September, Oconee Rivers Audubon Society (ORAS) will meet on our usual first Thursday of each month. Our September 3 meeting location, however, will be in UGA's Odum School of Ecology auditorium for a presentation by Dr. Richard Hall, a population ecologist with the Odum School of Ecology.

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

The Wonderful World of Warblers

Hall will explore the fascinating lives of more than thirty warbler species that breed in Georgia or migrate through the state. A lifelong bird-lover, Hall will provide useful pointers about identifying warblers by sight, sound and habitat, offer tips for attracting warblers to your back yard and point out some nearby places to view migrating and nesting warblers.

An assistant research scientist at UGA, Hall holds degrees from Cambridge and Oxford Universities in the United Kingdom. His research focuses on understanding animal migration.

The event will begin at 6 p.m. with a reception featuring hors d'oeuvres and refreshments provided by members of Oconee Rivers Audubon Society. Hall's presentation will begin at 7 p.m. in the Odum School of Ecology's auditorium.

Directions to School of Ecology from Loop 10 By-pass:

- 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 Ecology building is on the north side of the parking lot behind trees (a sidewalk is nearby).

Fall Bird Walks (in town)

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

- Sept. 12: **SCNC**
- Sept. 19: **State Botanical Garden (Day Chapel)**
- Sept. 26: **SCNC (Cook's Trail)***
- Oct. 11: **Whitehall (be on time for this walk)**
- Oct. 18: **Tallassee Forest (tentative)**
- Oct. 17: **State Botanical Garden (Day Chapel)**
- Oct. 24: **Vulture Awareness Day (Landfill)**
- Oct. 31: **Sandy Creek Park (Campsite Dr.)**

* The SCNC Cook's Trail walk is also our Cook's Trail Cleanup trip. Please bring along a trash bag.

Fall Field Trip/GOS Meeting

Oct. 02 -04: Georgia Ornithological Society Fall Meeting
The GOS fall meeting takes place on Jekyll Island, and it's for birders of all abilities. Also, it's a great way for new birders to meet up with other birders. Visit: www.gos.org

Oct. 10: 6:00 a.m. Cochran Shoals (More information on where to meet will be available in October).

The Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary

Become a Certified Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Homeowner by providing habitat for birds, wildlife, and native plants in our community!

For more information: www.oconeeriversaudubon.org or email conservation@oconeeriversaudubon.org

The Inaugural Adventures of the Clark(e)'s Nutcrackers *by Katy Manley*

We left Winterville on Friday morning, May 1st. to head to Jekyll Island for the 2015 All Women's Birding Bust. "Male Painted bunting. Sitting still. In the sunlight." That was the mantra of the car ride. Katy calls it the power of positive thinking, others might call it crazy, but when we arrived at Harris Neck's visitor center that was the first bird we saw.

After a mobile lunch and about 4 hours of pre-birding, it promised to be an excellent weekend for the AWBB! Woodstorks, Ibises, adorable Great Egret babies, one brave Black-Necked Stilt, and an Anhinga dinner drama like no other—what else could possibly get us more fired up for the next day? White-winged Scoters, that's what! Midnight starts the count! Eastern Screech-Owl and Chuck's-a-chucking on the Jekyll Island Campground. Sleep a little, then up at 5 to pack camp and be birding by 6a.m.

A walk on the beach led us to Black Skimmers, nesting Wilson's Plovers, Willets, terns, gulls, pelicans one amazing sunrise. A quick stop by the Visitor Center earned us a Swamp Sparrow, sandpipers, Whimbrels, and dowitchers. Onto Altamaha! The adorably squeaky Common Gallinules, Glossy Ibises, Bobolinks, Mottled Ducks, non-Oconee Black-Bellied Whistling Ducks and one "hark! A bird" that turned out to be a Least Bittern sitting quietly, five feet off the trail—we had to force ourselves to load up so we could make time.

We added a good number of species from the road, riding through one Lowe's parking lot, and conveniently enough, stopping on accident to get PUMAs, EUCOs, and HOFIs. It took us a full 12 hours of birding to get a Phoebe or an American Crow, but we did it! Laughing all the way.

Finally, thanks to the gentle "misguidance" from our GPS we arrived at Black Rock Mountain with some good light left. Cue the Ovenbirds, Wood Thrushes, Black-and-Whites, Black-Throated Green and...the Ruffed Grouse! We learned very quickly that you don't *hear* a Ruffed Grouse—you feel it in your soul. We watched the sun come up over the Atlantic Ocean and set in the Blue Ridge Mountains with 115 species for the day.

We make camp, sleep through the chill, and wake up in the morning to the melodies of Wood Thrushes, warblers, tanagers, and one very curious Towhee (he must have watched us drink our tea before bed). Alison prepared the most delicious camp breakfast, we took our time, and just when we decided to head home: a single, silent Common Raven! Perfect end to a great trip and we're already planning for next year.

Cheers to good birding, lots of laughs, and even better friends!

The Clark(e)'s Nutcrackers (Stephanie Cleveland, Leila Dasher, Alison Huff, and Katy Manley)

UUFA Wildlife Sanctuary 2015 *by Bill Pierson*

At the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens (UUFA), on Timothy Road, we implemented a plan to make our landscape more sustainable and more wildlife friendly. The UUFA is the first religious organization in Athens to be designated a Wildlife Sanctuary by the Oconee Rivers Audubon Society (ORAS).

We began working on our plan after Kate Mowbray from ORAS evaluated our property and offered suggestions. We found some native plants already at the site, but we also had many exotic plants. The main invasive culprits include privet, nandina, chinaberry and elaeagnus. We now have a campaign to remove these pest plants, but it is a never-ending chore that must be addressed on a continual basis.

We are trying to provide the essential wildlife elements in our Wildlife Sanctuary as outlined by Audubon: Shelter - active nesting areas or shelters that attract and protect birds and other wildlife. Food - feeders and plantings that offer seeds, flowers, and berries to wildlife. Water - birdbaths, water gardens, or natural features with flowing water. Nesting Sites - bird boxes, natural cavities, or wood piles and vine tangles.

For shelter and nesting sites: we have added Mason Bee homes in the form of straws placed in PVC pipes. This project involved children making signs and decorating the homes. Mason bees are solitary bees and helpful pollinators. (Good examples of these hives are at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia). We also stacked privet and nandina branches to make woodpile shelters for wildlife.

For food: we installed bird feeders and planted native plants including blueberry bushes, spicebush and milkweed for monarch butterflies. Incorporating plants native to Georgia is also a good idea in terms of water conservation and plant maintenance since the plants are genetically adapted to this area. We then weeded around some of the Georgia native trees already there such as: red buds, black cherry, smooth sumac and winged elm.

For water: we put in a small birdbath and there is also a creek in the back of the property.

Creating wildlife habitat is an ongoing activity that requires periodic attention. But we have made a good start and have already seen more birds and more Georgia native plants coming back to the landscape.

We also want our landscape to be a learning opportunity. One of our future goals is to incorporate some signage. We have made some signs showing where our Mason Bee hives are located. We also made some signs for the native plants we have recently planted. Yet, there is still a long way to go!



Photo of Mary Case (left) and Alison Huff by Chuck Murphy at Memorial Park in Athens—June 4, 2015

State Botanical Garden of Georgia Hosts Photo Show August 22 – October 4, 2015

The State Botanical Garden of Georgia is hosting a show of ORAS member Chuck Murphy's photos and other works in the Visitor's Center August 22 through October 4. Opening reception: Sunday, August 23, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

Many ORAS members know Chuck Murphy for his bird photography, but as befitting a show at the Garden, this show is more about blooms than birds and bugs.

The exhibition features a wide variety of his photos and works, mostly new and created specifically for this show. He promises that the works to be displayed are "wide and tall, large and small, round and square, printed on paper, wood, canvas, metal, glass, and a mirror. Most are static, but one or two are animated. It's a smorgasbord." If you like nature, you will find something to like in this show!

ORAS Annual Picnic & Announcements

summary of June meeting by Richard Hall

At our Annual Picnic on June 4 in Memorial Park, I was pleased to announce that Brian Cooke will continue as VP, Mary Case as Secretary, and Alison Huff as Treasurer. Due to unforeseen circumstances, we are still looking for a new president, hopefully to be announced at the ORAS speaker meeting on September 3.

We also celebrated Mary Case's birthday 6 months early and acknowledged her decades of service to ORAS with a cake decorated with our logo and by declaring her the first recipient of our Care And Service to the Environment (CASE) award. Thanks for everything you have done for us, Mary!

Thanks also to the generous contributions of our ORAS members, we were able to award 4 small grants this spring; Shannon Curry of UGA, and Cema Wallace and Suki Janssen of ACC recycling were awarded grants to provide materials for nature education and outreach, Lee Hartle received funds to improve habitat in Winterville's Pittard Park, and UGA's Ricki Olden will use her funds to research Ring-necked Duck health at the Savannah River Site.

It has been a pleasure serving as your president over the last year, and I look forward to seeing you all this fall when our program of speaker meetings and field trips resumes after the summer break. Good birding all!

Get Your New Duck Stamp! *by Steve Holzman*

The Georgia Ornithological Society (GOS) has the new 2015-2016 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (aka Duck Stamp) available for sale now. This year's image is a pair of Ruddy Ducks painted by Jennifer Miller, only the third woman to win during the contest's 66-year-old history!

The price has increased to \$25. This increase in cost has been long overdue. It reflects significant increases in land values since the last price increase in 1991. Remember that 98% of the new \$25 cost goes directly for the purchase of land or conservation easements for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Refuges in Georgia that have been funded in part by Federal Duck Stamps are Okefenokee, Piedmont, Savannah, and Wolf Island. Since 1934, more than \$671 million has been raised nationwide for habitat conservation.

GOS sells the Duck Stamp either in a handy keychain for you to display proudly, or on its card for collectible purposes. For prices and details, visit the merchandise page at www.gos.org. If you only want the stamp itself, send a self-addressed stamped envelope and a check to GOS for \$25 to: Georgia Ornithological Society, P.O. Box 122, Culloden, GA 31016. (Also, Steve Holzman will have some for sale at our ORAS meeting on September 3).

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Oconee Rivers Audubon Society



Photo of Black Racer swallowing Eastern Garter Snake by Laura Conroy, near Tallassee Rd, Athens-- June 12, 2015 (Identified by Dr. John C. Maerz)

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