



The Yellowthroat

Voice of the

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

August/September 2016

Vol. 27, No. 7

Next Meeting:

Thursday, September 1, 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 1 meeting location, however, will be in UGA's Odum School of Ecology auditorium for a presentation by research scientist Dr. Maria Whitehead.

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

Conservation of the Swallow-tailed Kite

Dr. Whitehead, Project Director for The Nature Conservancy, will discuss Swallow-tailed Kite conservation challenges such as climate change induced habitat degradation and how the life history of this species makes it particularly vulnerable to habitat alteration and loss.

She will also present the current and future strategies The Nature Conservancy and other organizations are implementing to better monitor and manage this species in the face of climate change and other pressing threats.

Whitehead holds degrees from UGA and Clemson University. Her work at The Nature Conservancy focuses on landscape-conservation projects within the Winyah Bay and Pee Dee River Basin in South Carolina, an important breeding area for Swallow-tailed Kites.

On-campus parking is free and open after 5 p.m. in the S-07 lot off West Green Street.

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).

- Sept. 10: **Sandy Creek Nature Center (SCNC)**
- Sept. 17: **State Botanical Garden (Day Chapel)**
- Sept. 24: **Sandy Creek Park (Cook's Trail)***
- Sept. 25: **Lake Herrick (UGA campus)**
- Oct. 15: **State Botanical Garden (Day Chapel)**
- Oct. 16: **Oconee Hills Cemetery**
- Oct. 22: **Vulture Awareness Day (Landfill)**
- Oct. 23: **Whitehall (be on time for this walk)**
- Oct. 29: **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. 07-09: 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. Check out: <http://www.gos.org/2016markedate>

Oct. 01: **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

A Sad Farewell to Krista Gridley

by Steve Holzman

It is with a heavy heart that I have to tell you all that Krista Gridley of Athens, GA, passed away on June 27. She had been diagnosed with cancer a couple of years ago and responded by telling cancer to take a hike; she was going birding.

She visited Africa, Antarctica, Bhutan, South America, and quite a few other places before the cancer got the best of her. Krista was my friend. You'd be hard pressed to find someone as decent, nice, and fun to be around as Krista.

Many of us first met her during her Georgia Big Year in 2010 (323 species). But for her, a big year was never about the number. It was about being outside and watching birds be birds.

When you talked to her, you could feel the joy that she got from birds. All birds. On a pelagic trip, when few birds were found, she was the one who said (and truly believed) that "any day on the water is a good day." I miss her already. We all loved you, Krista. Fly free.

John Abbott and Pearly Eye Butterflies of Athens-Clarke County

by Jim Porter

Date: Thursday, August 25

Time: 5:30 PM

Place: The Special Collections Library Auditorium

Reception: Following the lecture.

Park: Free parking available in the Hull St. Parking Deck

In this lecture, Dr. James W. Porter, Meigs Professor of Ecology, will announce a major new discovery of the presence of three lookalike species of Pearly Eye butterflies within the county's Tallassee Forest. The presence of three virtually indistinguishable, but genetically distinct, species at the same time and in the same place is almost unheard of outside the tropics.

Illustrations in Hargrett's copy of *The Rarer Lepidopterous Insects of Georgia* (1791) by Georgia naturalist John Abbott, show that more than 100 years before the scientific description of these species the artist was clearly aware of the slight variations that were later used to distinguish them. Mature and diverse forests and wetlands, like those at Tallassee, can provide niches for diverse species. Tallassee Forest can also be a refuge for species with ranges shifted by development, such as that in downtown Athens, and by changing climate. Dr. Porter will use these stunning examples of biodiversity to demonstrate the need for and success of, local conservation efforts.

He will also show how the holdings of both the Hargrett Rare Book Library and the Georgia Museum of Natural History can inform us, not just about our past, but also about our future.



Photo of Katy Manley (left) and Gary Crider, by Roger Nielsen, Memorial Park—June 2, 2016

Annual Potluck Picnic at Memorial Park

summary of June meeting by Liz Conroy

At our Annual Picnic on June 2 in Memorial Park, ORAS members voted for the slate of nominees: Brian Cooke will continue as President, Katy Manley at Vice President, Mary Case as Secretary, and Alison Huff as Treasurer.

We also acknowledged long-time ORAS member, Gary Crider, for his decades of service to ORAS by declaring him the second recipient of our Care And Service to the Environment (CASE) award. A good time was had by all!

Message from the President and Announcement of Fall Grants

by Brian Cooke

Summer in Athens is quiet. Oconee Rivers Audubon Society (ORAS) goes on hiatus. Even the birds seem subdued during the hot months. While the peacefulness of summer is special, I enjoy the start of the ORAS year.

Our monthly meetings resume in September (Thursday, September 1 at UGA's Odum School of Ecology). An exciting new calendar of fall bird walks begins and look for the annual Vulture Festival and Swift Night Out.

Fall is time for grant applications, too. We begin accepting grants on 9/1. The deadline is 10/15. Recipients can expect a decision by 11/1. Visit our website for more information. www.oconeeriversaudubon.org

The 19th Great Backyard Bird Count

by Mary Case

The 19th Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) took place on May 14 on International Migratory Bird Day. This is a joint project between Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society, and Bird Studies Canada. The 16,363 participants from 130 countries submitted check lists on eBird reporting 5,689 species—more than half the known species.

The most frequently reported species from the GBBC check lists were Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Goldfinch, House Finch, Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee and American Crow. These top 10 are North American birds, reflecting high participation from this region.

The top ten states submitting checklists were California, Pennsylvania, New York, Florida, Texas, Virginia, North Carolina, Michigan, Ohio, and Georgia with a total of 208 species and 4,295 checklists overall.

The top 10 countries submitting checklists were United States (665 species, 131,290 checklists), Canada (246 species, 13,651 checklists), India (784 species 7,796 checklists) Australia 529 species and 1,769 checklists), Mexico (702 species and 1,200 checklists), Costa Rica (616 species 423 checklists), Taiwan (254 species and 343 checklists), Columbia (758 species and 322 checklists), New Zealand (147 species and 317 checklists), Portugal (202 species and 302 checklists).

The U.S. and Canada led the list with participants, but birders were counting worldwide from a diverse group of countries. This information from thousands of volunteers helps keep track of the health of the bird populations on a global scale and how global warming is affecting the birds. In May 2017, please join the world wide birders who are counting birds and sending in eBird check lists.



Photo of Dark-eyed Junco by Chuck Murphy near home in Athens—January 29, 2014

New Life in the Woods by Suzanne A. Lindsay

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) abound in our neighborhood in northwest Clarke County. Protected from hunters, they tolerate the quiet approach of a walker or automobile. They browse our meadows, woods, and unfortunately, gardens. They appear most frequently in the early morning and then in late afternoon, as they begin their nocturnal grazing. They are so much a part of the landscape that we almost forget to admire their graceful walk, startled leaps with white tail flicking erect, and wide-eyed gaze as they pause to look back at an intruder.

In late May and early June, however, the fields suddenly empty. When the does do return, they are followed by tiny, white-spotted fawns that leap, gambol, and butt their mother's underbelly in search of a snack. Where the does give birth was a mystery, or at least until this spring.

Around noon on May 25, we spotted a doe standing oddly still where forest meets field. She didn't move away as we drove past; she clearly was heavily pregnant and perhaps not able to run.

At six that evening, through the kitchen window we saw a doe—the same one, we thought—approaching from the edge of the woods. She walked stiffly, deliberately, looking straight ahead. As she passed about 30 feet away, we saw that her tail was held stiffly upright. From her rear protruded what seemed to be two slender, pointed dark sticks, glinting beneath a membrane. She was giving birth!

The doe paced into a clump of trees and tall grass fifty feet from the house. There she turned around several times, then folded down onto her knees. Soon she was up, then briefly down on one side, then up again. Through binoculars, we saw that her tail never drooped. Soon we glimpsed not only the fawn's outstretched forelegs but also a dark, slightly pointed mass. The head was emerging.

The doe turned away from us and crouched again, and we couldn't see the moment of full birth. She bobbed her head and swept it from side to side. She may have been rupturing the amniotic sac and licking the fawn, because soon a small, wet head appeared briefly over her shoulder. She shifted to her side, and we guessed that the fawn was moving toward her belly.

The time from her appearance to the birth was perhaps an hour. As night approached, the doe and fawn rested under the trees. At six the next morning, the doe was gone. By seven she had returned and once more crouched on her knees. Almost certainly she had come back to feed her fawn. Later that morning she was gone again, but we carefully avoided that end of our yard. Without approaching too closely, we weren't even sure the fawn was still there. We knew that does often move their newborns quickly to avoid predators.

Later that afternoon, as my husband walked quietly down our driveway, he saw the doe and fawn standing together just inside the woods. The tiny fawn seemed unconcerned. Then its mother led it away into the trees. When we finally looked at its birthplace, there was little trace of the events that had occurred there.

With luck, the fawn will survive roaming dogs, coyotes, and passing cars. Perhaps we will even be able to watch it grow into a mature deer. Certainly we will never forget its birth.

Field Guide to the Wildflowers of Georgia and Surrounding States reviewed by Liz Conroy

ORAS members and friends may recall Linda Chafin from her enjoyable plant presentations at our general meetings. Everyone will find her new book, *Field Guide to the Wildflowers of Georgia and Surrounding States* just as informative and engaging as her talks. The well-organized 516 pages of this sturdy field guide make access to information and identification of wildflowers fun and easy.

Maps and recommendations about the best places and months to view wildflowers in Georgia are at the beginning of the book along with practical advice on how to use hand lens, pronounce plant names, read species descriptions, and conserve our native wildflowers.

About wildflower conservation, Chafin offered an additional note of encouragement in an email:

“Plants have this amazing, almost magical ability, to turn sunlight, water and air into living organisms. And, wildflowers are beautiful, too. Their leaves provide food for thousands of insect and other invertebrate species that are in turn eaten by birds and other animals. Their fruits and seeds feed birds, lizards, and small mammals. When they die, they replenish the soil to start the cycle all over again.

Learning to recognize and name wildflowers—as well as trees, shrubs, and ferns—is the first step to appreciating their role in the wider ecosystem. I hope the field guide will encourage people to know and love wildflowers and then to work to conserve them and their habitats.”

Field Guide to the Wildflowers of Georgia and Surrounding States by Linda Chafin was published in 2016 by the University of Georgia Press in cooperation with the State Botanical Garden of Georgia. (Hugh and Carol Nourse of Athens were the chief photographers of the field guide).



Photo of Prickly Pear Cactus by Liz Conroy, near Tallassee Rd., Athens—June 6, 2016



Photo of Crane-fly Orchid by David Lindsay, near Tallassee Rd., Athens—August, 2001

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