



The Yellowthroat

Voice of the

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

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Next Meeting: Thursday, September 5, 6:30 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 5 meeting location, however, will be in the University of Georgia's Odum School of Ecology auditorium for a talk by Dr. Joe Wunderle. At 6:30 p.m., there will be wine and cheese and a silent auction fundraiser. At 7:00 p.m., the featured speaker will begin his talk:

How Hurricanes Affect Caribbean Birds

Joe Wunderle, Emeritus Scientist with the USDA Forest Service in Puerto Rico, will discuss his research on the short-term effects of hurricanes on land birds in the Caribbean.

Wunderle and his colleagues developed baseline measurements of populations and available resources for the birds before various hurricanes arrived on different islands.

They were able to do resampling in the storms' aftermath for before and after comparisons. He will describe types of bird populations, habitats, and resources especially vulnerable to hurricane impacts and discuss post-hurricane behavioral responses of birds.

On-campus parking is free and open after 6 p.m. in S-07 lot (140 E. Green St.).

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 E. 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).

. <https://tps.uga.edu/sites/default/files/docs/timezones.pdf>

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. 07: **Sandy Creek Nature Center (SCNC)**
- Sept. 14: **State Botanical Garden (Day Chapel)**
- Sept. 21: **Whitehall (be on time for this walk)**
- Sept. 22: **Lake Herrick (UGA campus)**
- Sept. 28: **Vulture Festival (ACC Landfill)***
- Oct. 05: **ACC Greenway**
- Oct. 06: **State Botanical Garden (Day Chapel)**
- Oct. 26: **Sandy Creek Park (Campsite Dr.)**

**"ACC Vulture Festival" is Sat. Sept. 28, from 8:00 a.m. until noon at the ACC Landfill, 5700 Lexington Rd. This free event celebrates nature's clean-up crew (the vultures) with family-friendly activities: bird walk, kids' games, recycling opportunities, landfill tour, and a visit from a captive vulture. Info: www.accgov.com/recycling. Or please call: 706.613.3501, x316

Fall Field Trip and GOS Meeting

Oct. 11—14: **Georgia Ornithological Society Fall Meeting**

The GOS fall meeting takes place on Jekyll Island.

<https://www.gos.org/2019FallMeeting>

Oct. 19: 6:00 a.m., **Cochran Shoals** (More information on where to meet will be available in October).

North Georgia's Old-Growth Forests

summary of May meeting by Liz Conroy

Thanks to Jess Riddle, forest ecologist and Executive Director for Georgia ForestWatch and author of *Georgia's Mountain Treasure*, who discussed his work documenting old-growth forests in North Georgia.

By the early 20th century, agriculture and industrial timber operations had denuded North Georgia of nearly all its forests. But some remnants escaped. These old-growth forests often do not resemble the stereotypical cathedral groves of giant trees. Instead, easily overlooked stands of weather-beaten trees provide exceptional wildlife habitat, contain valuable scientific data, and offer management lessons. Riddle noted that despite the many definitions for old-growth forests, his focus is on “uncut” forests where trees had not been logged.

He discussed second-growth forests which had been logged years ago and then regrew over time. Limited size, variation, and lack of structural diversity are common in those areas. Tulip trees are commonly found growing in areas after large disturbances—such as logging, farming, destructive storms—have occurred.

Meanwhile, old-growth forests tend to be oak-dominated areas (with chestnut oaks and red cedar trees), with large rocks on the forest floor. Older trees exhibit much structural diversity. Greater bryophyte and lichen diversity also occurs since thick, ancient bark is better at retaining water.

Riddle emphasized the importance of gaps—the sunlit areas in the spaces between trees. Gap dynamics means that habitat for many organisms can exist. Look for those open (patchy) areas which don't contain all big trees. Gaps in a forest are formed by individual trees dying. Young trees, waiting underneath, then are able to grow much larger. Silverbells grow large when an opening occurs; most are small, but these trees can grow 60 feet tall in old-growth forests after a big tree dies. Yellow buckeyes are shade tolerant but will grow large if there's an opening.

Riddle noted that the cavities in the older trees provide “apartment complexes” for a large variety of wildlife from birds and bees to larger charismatic megafauna, such as black bears.

Standing dead trees (snags) with dead bark provide habitat for beetles, other insects, and spiders. These, in turn, become food for birds such as the Brown Creeper, which inhabits mature woods. Woodpeckers also find food on old wood.

“In old-growth forests snags are abundant,” he said. Coarse, woody debris is more abundant in these forests from the old trees after they fall. It's an important habitat because it's a moisture reservoir. Old logs on slopes accumulate leaf litter creating excellent salamander habitat. When a large tree falls over, it pulls up its roots and soil to create “hill and cradle” or “pit and mound.” Bears den in these locations.

Riddle also explained how some areas survived past intense logging (occurring in the 1880s through 1930s) when the majority of forests were cleared. “Where we have old-growth still remaining is typically where there was both difficult access and low timber value,” he noted.



Old-growth yellow buckeye in second-growth forest by Mike Conroy, Sosebee Cove, Lumpkin County, Georgia—May 18, 2019

Thus a ridge may have old-growth trees because there was no way to easily build a road up to it to log it. “But since ridgelines are dry with thin soils, the trees growing there couldn't grow too big.” To see Georgia's biggest buckeye--visit Sosebee Cove, he added. “But buckeyes are not good timber since they're made out of noodles [weak wood].”

He listed clues to use for anyone seeking old-growth forests: human disturbance means signs of past farming, old chimneys, same species, old logging roads, and cut chestnut stumps. (American chestnuts were highly desirable trees since they are rot resistant due to their tannins.)

Core sampling involves using a small drill to pull out a “pencil of wood” with rings to determine the age of the tree and to reconstruct drought histories. But too much coring isn't a good idea since it's an invasive wound in the tree. Another way to look for old-growth trees includes checking the bark. Riddle noted, “Age is reflected in the bark. Tulip trees are smooth when young, but when old (such as a 200-years-old tree) they develop chunky, deeply furrowed bark with lots of zig-zags.” Scars from occurrences, such as large fires, can also be used to date trees.

If interested in learning more about Georgia ForestWatch: www.gafw.org or email: info@gafw.org

Birding on the Islands of Hawaii (Part 1)

by Patrick Maurice

Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, and Fiji: four places that I've always wanted to visit. Thanks to UGA's Discover Abroad program, I was able to make that dream become a reality during my spring semester abroad. Unfortunately, this trip wasn't a birding trip; it was a school trip. But I wasn't going to travel to all of these amazing destinations and leave my camera and binoculars at home!

Our first stop was Hawaii:

I didn't know what to expect in Hawaii. I knew that that the island chain is known for its charismatic honeycreepers and nesting seabirds. I also knew that humans have altered the landscape and brought in many invasive species. Looking back, I'm still shocked by the prevalence of invasive species.

After landing at the airport in Kona, I began to look around while moving through the outdoor airport to baggage claim. I was greeted by a flock of House Sparrows, Spotted and Zebra Doves, and four Common Mynas—all exotics! This didn't surprise me because we were in an urban center, but I wondered how long it would take before I found a native species. After walking around our hotel, I added a few more exotic species to my Hawaii list, but I couldn't find a single native species. Even after scanning the open ocean multiple times, I spotted just a couple of Cattle Egrets (introduced in 1959 in an attempt to control the flies that were a nuisance to cattle).

Consider what it's like to wake up to the sounds of a singing Northern Cardinal and chirping House Sparrows while 2,500 miles from the U.S. mainland and more than 4,000 miles from home. Yet here I was on a tropical island listening to sounds that I would normally hear in Georgia.

Later that afternoon, I finally saw my first native species. A Short-eared Owl was hunting in broad daylight on the lava fields of Mauna Kea! What a pleasant surprise and enjoyable sighting to share with the rest of the group.

During our travels around the Big Island, I did find a few more native birds as well as exotics. While I missed my biggest targets of 'I'iwi (a bright red honeycreeper with a red decurved beak) and Nēnē (the Hawaiian goose and state bird of Hawaii), I saw many 'Apapanes in Volcanoes National Park. Saffron Finches and Yellow-billed Cardinals were also common on the Big Island.

After leaving Volcanoes National Park, we island-hopped to Honolulu on the island of Oahu. During our visit to Pearl Harbor, I noticed a Pacific Golden-Plover and a small flock of Common Waxbills in the grass that seemed relaxed in spite of all the people nearby. They were gracious enough to pose and let me take their pictures.

Just as we were leaving, a beautiful double rainbow arched across the sky. Perhaps a sign of things to come?



Pacific Golden-Plover at Pearl Harbor by Patrick Maurice, Honolulu County—January 29, 2019



Yellow-billed Cardinal at Kilauea Military Camp by Patrick Maurice, Hawaii County—January 26, 2019



Common Waxbill at Pearl Harbor by Patrick Maurice, Honolulu County—January 29, 2019

Message from ORAS President

by Lauren Gingerella

Greetings! I am excited to be the newly-elected President of the Oconee Rivers Audubon Society (ORAS). I have already met some members on bird walks and at monthly meetings, and I look forward to getting to know everyone better. Here is a little bit more about my background:

I am a native Rhode Islander and received a B.S. in Wildlife and Conservation Biology from the University of Rhode Island. My affection for birds began at a young age; I was always fascinated while watching Sanderlings cruise up and down the wrack line at my hometown beaches.

I became an avid birder during my first internship with the shorebird management department at Cape Cod National Seashore. I spent that summer educating visitors about the Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher, and Least Tern, while monitoring their nests and broods.

After working a variety of avian technician jobs, I eventually landed on Little St. Simons Island (LSSI), where I worked as a naturalist and ecological coordinator. On LSSI, I was spoiled with incredible bird abundance and diversity, flocks of thousands of shorebirds, warbler fall-outs on marsh hammocks, and of course, wintering Long-billed Curlews.

I was fortunate to use LSSI as a study site for my University of Georgia M.S. research as well. My thesis assessed the effects of predator exclosures on Wilson's Plover nest success and productivity.

Currently, I live in Athens and work as a Wildlife Biologist for North American Land Trust. When I'm not working, you can find me birding at the State Botanical Garden or Sandy Creek, likely staring at Killdeer to get my shorebird fix. I am honored to represent and lead ORAS. Through this local chapter, I hope to engage more community members to encourage bird and bird habitat conservation in our area and beyond. I'd like to hear from you, too. Please reach out to me if you have any suggestions or ideas for the chapter.



Handful of Wilson's Plover Chicks by Lauren Gingerella, Glynn County—June 6, 2016

Annual Potluck Picnic at Memorial Park

summary of June meeting by Liz Conroy

At our Annual Picnic on June 6 at Memorial Park, ORAS members voted for the slate of nominees: Lauren Gingerella is our new President, Sam Merker—Vice President, Eugenia Thompson—Secretary, and Alison Huff—Treasurer.

Announcement of Fall Grants for 2019

Fall is the time for grant applications! We begin accepting grants on September 5. The final deadline is October 15. Recipients can expect a decision by November 1. We anticipate that four to six grants will be awarded. For more information, visit: www.oconeeriversaudubon.org/grant

SCNC Birdseed Sale Starts in September

Buy quality bird seed through SCNC, Inc. (the non-profit organization that supports Sandy Creek Nature Center). Orders will be taken from Sept. 1 to Oct. 8. Delivery and pick up takes place on the weekend of Oct. 25—27. Seniors and anyone with special needs in the Athens area can have their birdseed delivered for free. <http://www.sandycreeknaturecenterinc.org/bird-seed-sale>

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

President Lauren Gingerella
President@oconeeriversaudubon.org

Vice-President Sam Merker
vp@oconeeriversaudubon.org

Treasurer Alison Huff
treasurer@oconeeriversaudubon.org

Secretary Eugenia Thompson
secretary@oconeeriversaudubon.org

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Oconee Rivers Audubon Society
PO Box 81082
Athens, GA 30608

Submit items to address above or e-mail *The Yellowthroat* editor Liz Conroy: yellowthroat@oconeeriversaudubon.org Articles, photos, notices, and sighting reports welcomed. The deadline for submissions is the first day of each month. All articles and artwork are copyrighted, and all rights are reserved by the authors. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of Oconee Rivers Audubon Society.