



# The Yellowthroat

Voice of the

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

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## **Next Meeting: Thursday, September 10, 7:00 p.m. A Virtual Fall Kick-off – ORAS Members' Bird Presentations**

The Oconee Rivers Audubon Society (ORAS) meeting will take place September 10 (**not** our typical first Thursday of the month). Due to COVID-19 concerns, the meeting will **not** be held in-person. Instead, it will be a virtual meeting.

ORAS members will present photos and short talks about their summer birding experiences. We need presenters! If you are interested in sharing your photographs, art, or a bird-related story, please sign-up through the URL below.

At 7:00 p.m., speakers will begin their talks on ZOOM.

### **Summer of 2020 Birding Talks by ORAS Members:**

**Presenters:** Please sign up soon (first come basis) at <http://tinyurl.com/orassep20> if interested in sharing a talk for this event. Each talk must be 5-10 minutes and include high quality photos. There will be five presentations.

**Viewers:** Please check upcoming announcements and social media for information on the presentations and on how to connect to ZOOM for our first ever virtual Fall Kick-off!



**Wilson's Plover by Patrick Maurice, Little St. Simon's Island, Georgia—July 11, 2020**

## **Fall Bird Walks, Field Trips – Cancelled**

Please check ORAS announcements and website regarding these and other cancellations. Visit: <http://www.oconeeriversaudubon.org/events>

If you have other questions please contact Ed Maioriello at: [fieldtrip@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrip@oconeeriversaudubon.org)

## **GOS Fall Meeting – Cancelled**

The GOS Executive Committee has cancelled the fall meeting for this October based on recent trends associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee will reconvene in October to make a decision about whether to host a winter meeting on Tybee Island in January 2021.

## **Big News for Birds & Birders in Georgia**

On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, Atlanta Audubon became Georgia Audubon. Along with the new name comes a new statewide focus and partnerships with other Audubon chapters across Georgia to amplify the good work already being done, engage more people and diverse communities, and enhance conservation efforts for birds across Georgia and the Atlantic Flyway.

This fall, Georgia Audubon will partner with Oconee Rivers Audubon Society (ORAS) to streamline both organizations' Wildlife Sanctuary Programs into a unified program and to offer a fall native plant sale (info below). ORAS is excited to collaborate with Georgia Audubon on these projects.

As a current member of ORAS, you have the opportunity to also join Georgia Audubon as a member at a discounted membership rate so that you may take advantage of early-bird and reduced registration fees for statewide events, trips, and programs. To join Georgia Audubon, you may use the following discount code for a one-year membership:

- o Individual Membership: \$15 (regular price \$35) – Use Discount Code: OCONEE15
- o Family Membership: \$25 (regular price \$50) – Use Discount Code: OCONEE25

## ***Dancing with Bees***

by Brigit Strawbridge Howard and reviewed by Liz Conroy

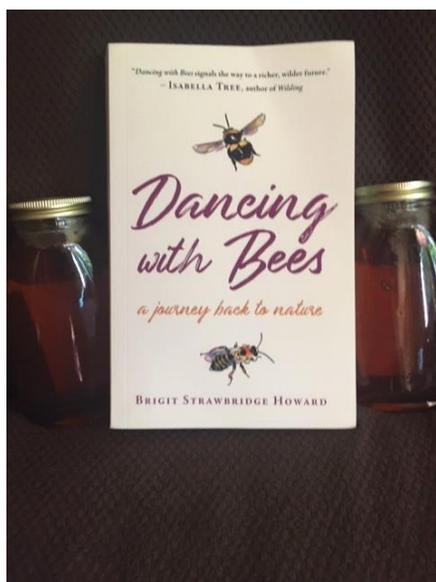
British author Brigit Strawbridge Howard offers an intriguing selection of scientific facts about bee behavior, physiology, evolution, and more. She writes about their different ways of courting, flying, hunting, and nesting. She relied upon thorough research for *Dancing with Bees*. (A selected bibliography is included near the end of the book.)

While not an authority on bees, she is a nature writer who passionately shares her wonder about bees and their life cycles with readers of all backgrounds. She notes, “My aim is to introduce you to some of the native species I have come to know and love best . . . .”

She reminds the reader early on, “Birds and bats pollinate flowers, as do rodents, marsupials, and lizards. But the majority of pollinating animals are insects: wasps, hoverflies and other flies, butterflies, moths, ants, flower beetles, and, of course, bees.” Brigit Strawbridge Howard emphasizes the importance of native bees. “Bumblebees are vital for the cross-pollination of tomatoes. A group of North American solitary bees, the so-called squash bees, can take the lion’s share of credit for the production of most commercially grown squashes and pumpkins.”

Her book brings to mind the words of Henry David Thoreau: “Nature will bear the closest inspection. She invites us to lay our eye level with her smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain.”

*Dancing with Bees: a journey back to nature* by Brigit Strawbridge Howard  
White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2019.



**Brigit Strawbridge Howard’s recent book, *Dancing with Bees* by Liz Conroy—July 1, 2020**

## **Native Plants for Birds Available at Fall Native Plant Sale – Order Early!**

A Fall Native Plant Sale is coming soon! In celebration of “Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month,” Georgia Audubon and ORAS will partner with Beech Hollow Wildlife Farms to offer a large selection of bird-friendly, native plants for sale. Plants can be ordered online and pickup locations will be available in both Atlanta and Athens.

The online plant sale runs from September 1 to 18 at [www.georgiaaudubon.org/plant-sales](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/plant-sales). Please indicate whether you will pick up your plants in Atlanta or Athens.

Pickup dates and locations are as follows:

- **Saturday, September 26, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**  
Athens area plant pickup at Beech Hollow Wildflower Farms, 1575 Elberton Road, Lexington, GA 30648.
- **Friday and Saturday, September 25 and 26, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**  
Atlanta pickup at the Georgia Audubon Office at the Blue Heron Nature Preserve, 4055 Roswell Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30342.

All plants must be purchased and paid for online. No extra plants are available for sale at the Atlanta pickup location. Those picking up in Athens are welcome to browse the selection of plants at Beech Hollow. To ensure the safety of our staff, volunteers, and patrons, social distancing measures will be in place during pickup.

## **Beginning Birding – Online Classes**

Join SCNC and ORAS for a free virtual class series on birding basics. Each month covers a different lesson to help beginners develop the basic skills needed to identify birds.

Pre-registration is required. The deadline is Sept. 10, and this series is designed for anyone age 13 years or older.  
<https://www.accgov.com/leisure>

(Participants will be emailed a link to join each class.)

**Saturday, September 12 at 3p.m.**  
Birding Basics.

**Saturday, October 10 at 3p.m.**  
Birding by Sight

**Saturday, November 7 at 3p.m.**  
Birding by Ear

Questions? Call Kate at Sandy Creek Nature Center (SCNC) 706-613-3615 or email her: [Kate.Mowbray@accgov.com](mailto:Kate.Mowbray@accgov.com).

## A Break in the Doldrums

by Josiah Lavender

Every year in July and August, thousands of wading birds populate the swamps, rivers, and lakes of the Georgia Piedmont. The vast majority are juvenile birds who hatched just weeks earlier from rookeries in Florida, South Georgia, and along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. For birders, these dispersing birds provide a welcome relief from the “summer doldrums,” a time when bird activity and the potential of seeing unusual species is low. The resident Great Blue Herons are joined by hundreds of Great Egrets, Little Blue Herons, and White Ibis, as well as some Snowy Egrets and Wood Storks. Occasionally, these are accompanied by more unusual species, such as Roseate Spoonbills, Tricolored Herons, and Glossy Ibis. The phenomenon of birds scattering after nesting is termed post-breeding dispersal.



**Great Egret by Josiah Lavender, Green County, Georgia—July 29, 2018**

The U.S. Forest Service’s Dyar Pasture Recreation Area, located on the Oconee River just north of Lake Oconee, is a magnet for dispersing wading birds that flock to its sixty acre wetland. I have visited multiple times during late summer in the past several years and seen a variety of wading birds. One of the most prevalent waders is the Great Egret. While this species can be seen throughout the year in the Athens area, it occurs far less frequently during winter. Great Egrets start showing up at Dyar Pasture as early as April but increase in numbers as peak post-breeding dispersal approaches.



**Yellow-crowned Night Heron by Josiah Lavender, Green County, Georgia—July 29, 2018**

Yellow-crowned Night-Herons are perhaps the most difficult to see of the wading birds that disperse during late summer. They are most active at night, as their name suggests. However, at Dyar Pasture they can sometimes be seen during daylight hours, stalking prey in the wetland’s emergent vegetation. The juveniles’ streaky pattern makes them even harder to locate. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons seem to disperse to the Piedmont in much greater numbers than their close relative, the Black-crowned Night-Heron.



**Roseate Spoonbills by Josiah Lavender, Green County, Georgia—July 29, 2018**

Roseate Spoonbills are a great example of how exciting post-breeding dispersal can be sometimes. The most I have seen at one time at Dyar Pasture is five. The birds were foraging among several Great Egrets and Little Blue Herons at the back of the marsh. These were the first birds recorded in eBird in the Athens area and possibly the first ever documented. Data suggest these birds are pushing farther north in their post-breeding dispersal in recent years. This could be partly due to their ongoing recovery from the brink of extinction during the illegal feather trade and/or climate change.



**Swallow-tailed Kite by Josiah Lavender, Oconee County, Georgia—August 6, 2020**

Wading birds are not the only group of birds that exhibits post-breeding dispersal behavior. Some raptors do as well, such as the Swallow-tailed Kite. Since mid-July, a flock of Swallow-tailed Kites has gathered along Colham Ferry Road in Oconee County. Many birders, including me, have visited the site to watch the graceful birds hawking insects over the pastures.

## Linda Chafin Says Goodbye to SBG

by Liz Conroy

Years ago, wildflower expert Linda Chafin gave well-attended ORAS presentations. She appreciated how many birders and botanists enjoy learning from each other. Recently, she described a cartoon for botanists showing a passerine surrounded by several signs stating "BIRD." She observed, "It seems that in this last century, we've all become so specialized."

Chafin grew up appreciating the outdoors. Later, as a young UGA student, she and her roommate (who hoped to become a marine biologist) were discouraged from pursuing math and science. Fortunately, her work after graduation at Schuykill Nature Center in Philadelphia reignited her love of nature and especially plants.

In 1978, she moved back to Athens and worked at Sandy Creek Nature Center for two years as a trail maintainer and guide. Her new goal was to pursue science, especially when she realized that it's not necessary to be a chemistry whiz to become a botanist. With new-found determination and some basic science courses, Chafin began work at UGA on a graduate degree.

"It was a steep learning curve to go from amateur nature hobbyist to working toward a master's degree in botany," she recalls. "But Sam Jones was my major professor and totally passionate about plants." He encouraged her as a female botanist and served as a positive role model for teaching others. Chafin noted, "I was inspired to prevent anyone from feeling excluded by technical terms and insider knowledge. Anyone can learn about plants, too."

After receiving her degree, Chafin found work at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia (SBG). She began learning more about the valuable role of insects in the plant world, especially pollinators. "Then Doug Tallamy's book, *Bringing Nature Home*, really opened my eyes to the importance of insects not only for plants, but for birds, and other wildlife, too!"

Chafin recalls her previous reaction to a plant with holes in its leaves. "I'd look at the plant and shake my head and think how terrible it was. Now I realize that a lot of birds and their babies and other animals need those insects and caterpillars for food." Today, her teaching includes descriptions of plants that birds need. "After all, birds depend on plants to survive and reproduce," she says.

She lists important native trees to consider planting to help birds and other wildlife: white oak, black cherry, red mulberry, American holly. Vines include: passionflower, trumpet creeper, native honeysuckle, and even poison ivy, although most people do not want to plant that vine!

Congratulations from all of us at ORAS to Linda Chafin on her retirement from SBG this past summer. She'll be missed!

## Annual Potluck Picnic Cancelled – Online Voting for ORAS Officers

Since our Annual Picnic was cancelled this past spring, ORAS members voted online for the slate of nominees: Lauren Gingerella--President, Sam Merker--Vice President, Eugenia Thompson--Secretary, and Alison Huff--Treasurer. Thanks to our officers for their willingness to serve in so many ways, especially during a pandemic.

## Announcement of Fall Grants for 2020

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](http://www.oconeeriversaudubon.org/grant)

## SCNC Birdseed Sale Starts in September

Sandy Creek Nature Center, Inc. will be holding their annual birdseed sale this fall. Proceeds from this sale support numerous projects and important programs at SCNC. Orders are accepted from September 1 through October 3. Delivery/pick-up takes place on October 23 and 24. (All volunteers/staff will wear masks.) This year, in addition to traditional seeds, special items from Wild Birds Unlimited will be offered, too. Please order your birdseed and other items online at: [www.sandycreeknaturecenterinc.org](http://www.sandycreeknaturecenterinc.org)

## Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

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