



# The Yellowthroat

*Voice of the  
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society*

December 2011

Vol. 22 No. 10

**Next Meeting:  
Thursday, December 1, 7:00 p.m.  
Sandy Creek Nature Center**

For the 7:00 p.m. presentation:

**Advanced eBirding: How to turn a backyard  
bird list into valuable conservation data**

Dr. Joel McNeal will discuss eBird—a project launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The project's purpose was to create a nationwide database of bird sightings to serve as personal listing software for birders and as a research tool for scientists studying trends in bird abundance and distribution. Today, the number of users has grown exponentially; eBird now serves as a fully global database of bird sightings. Millions of lists from many observers each year provide more data than any researcher alone could generate. Anyone from beginners to field guide authors may submit their sightings. Differences in effort and skill level from list to list and birder to birder pose challenges to data analysis. This talk will focus on the eBird vetting process used to preserve high data quality, some of the new features of eBird with which even regular users might not be familiar, the history of eBird use in this area, and interesting trends from local eBird data. <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/joel-mcneal-ebirder-of-the-month>

**Meetings are held...** the first Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. To get to the Nature Center, take Highway 441, exit # 12, off the north side of the perimeter, go north on 441 approximately one mile, and turn left at the Sandy Creek Nature Center sign displaying this logo:



Go left at the end of this short road. The ENSAT building is a short way down the road on your right.

**Christmas Bird Count:  
Saturday, December 17**

*by Mary Case*

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society will participate in the nationwide Christmas Bird Count on Sat. December 17.

You don't have to be an experienced birder to join one of 14 groups counting birds in the Clarke Count Area—a 15 mile radius from the point where Milledge Ave. and S. Lumpkin intersect. It's a fun event! After a day of birding, we end with a Count Down Potluck Dinner at 7:00 p.m. at Sandy Creek Nature Center. We learn the numbers and different species of birds that each group identified. If interested in participating, please email Mary Case: [mecase@uga.edu](mailto:mecase@uga.edu) or Eugenia Thompson: [erobertom@bellsouth.net](mailto:erobertom@bellsouth.net)

**The Georgia Museum of Natural History**

*summary of November meeting by Page Luttrell*

Dr. Bud Freeman, director of the Georgia Museum of Natural History, gave an overview of the Museum collections and facilities and discussed how the Museum has changed over the years. Started in 1978, it was declared the official state museum by the Georgia General Assembly in 1999. The main focus of the Museum is teaching, research, public service, and the management of extensive collections housed in the Departments of Anthropology, Botany, Entomology, Geography, Geology, and Plant Sciences on the UGA campus. In addition to the campus Museum building, a large annex on the Atlanta highway also houses much of the collections. Their ornithological collection includes preserved skins of all Georgia native species. In a recent exhibition they displayed some of the rarer birds, such as the Ivory-billed Woodpecker and the Carolina Parakeet.

If you are interested in supporting and learning more about the museum, you can join the "Friends of the Natural History Museum," a non-profit group that was created to help advance the missions of the Museum through community education, fundraising, and supporting service and outreach programs. For more information call: 706-542-0464 or visit their website: <http://museum.nhm.uga.edu/index.php>.

## Clarke County Sightings - October 2011

by Richard Hall

**128** species were reported to eBird in October 2011, compared to 136 in 2010 and 123 in 2009. New county high counts of **Hooded** (17) and **Golden-Winged** (4) **Warblers** and **Gray Catbird** (20) were set on Cook's Trail on 2<sup>nd</sup> (NF, JM).

Also, new county late dates were set for **Nashville Warbler** on Milledge Avenue on 23<sup>rd</sup> (MB), **Cape May Warbler** at Five Points, and **Yellow Warbler** at Lake Herrick on 25<sup>th</sup> (RH) and **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at the S. Milledge fields on 26<sup>th</sup> (MB, RH, MZ).

Returning **Blue-winged Teal**, **Ring-necked Ducks** and **American Coots** were seen at Lake Chapman on 15<sup>th</sup> (ORAS). A **Bald Eagle** flew over the O'Grady's house on 16<sup>th</sup> (BKO); the first returning **Northern Harrier** was noted at the S. Milledge fields on 12<sup>th</sup> (RH) and an **American Kestrel** from Whitehall Forest on 8<sup>th</sup> (ORAS).

The only non-**Killdeer** shorebirds seen were **Wilson's Snipes** at Lake Herrick (2 birds) and the S. Milledge fields (RH, MB). A **Least Flycatcher** was seen at Lake Herrick on October 1<sup>st</sup> (MB, RH, and MZ). A good crop of at least 6 **Philadelphia Vireos** and at least 7 **Nashville Warblers** were recorded from various sites. **Cape May Warblers** also showed up in exceptional numbers, with a minimum of 4 different birds present at Lake Herrick on 4<sup>th</sup> (RH), where **Wilson's Warblers** were noted on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> (MB, JN).

The S. Milledge fields again proved an excellent spot to bird from the middle of the month, with a confiding **Sedge Wren** from 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> (MB, RH, NM), a **Vesper Sparrow** first seen on 30<sup>th</sup> (MB), a **Grasshopper Sparrow** on 28<sup>th</sup> (MB, MZ), **Lincoln's Sparrows** on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> (MB, RH) and the first of several **White-crowned Sparrows** on 12<sup>th</sup> (RH).

**Observers:** Mirko Basen (MB), Nathan Farnau (NF), Richard Hall (RH), Joel McNeal (JM), Nicholas Moore (NM), James Neves (JN), Bill and Karla O'Grady (BKO), Oconee Audubon bird walk participants (ORAS), Marcus Zokan (MZ)

## Eco-Haiku

by Robert Wyatt

An errant egret,  
forlorn in cotton stubble,  
dreams of cattle fields.

Atop the church steeple,  
a mockingbird dances and sings—  
a lyrical ballet.

Chilled dew on brown grass.  
Turkeys resplendent in the  
slanting autumn rays.

Ground sparrows scatter—  
behold the passing shadow  
of a sharp-shinned hawk.

Cattails bend near shore,  
lightly rippling the surface.  
Great blue heron strikes.

Chips fly. Beetles die.  
Pileated woodpecker--  
attacking a stump.

## Holiday Message from the President

by Richard Hall

The season of goodwill is here, and it's time to publicly thank members of the ORAS committee for the many unpaid hours they volunteer to keep our local chapter running:

Thanks to Vanessa Lane for all her years of service as president, for keeping our website looking snazzy, and for the guidance and support she offers me as vice-president; to Ed Maioriello for organizing another great set of fall bird walks; to Gary Crider for coming up with a diverse and interesting set of speakers for our meetings, to Lorene Winter for making sure there are always delicious snacks on hand; to Liz Conroy for doing a terrific job as our new newsletter editor along with Page Luttrell as our main proofreader; to Kate Mowbray for organizing our education and outreach activities; to Robin Woodroof for her conservation initiatives including the popular and successful Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary; to Brad Hogue for managing membership; to our dedicated, hardworking secretary Mary Case; and to our organized, energetic treasurer Eugenia Thompson. It is a pleasure and a privilege to work with each and every one of you!

The holiday season is also a time for visitors to our homes, both human and avian. Consider giving an Audubon subscription, a field guide, and/or a bird feeder to friends and relatives to introduce them to the joy of birds and birding.

For the sparrows, finches, juncos, kinglets and myrtle warblers that are arriving in droves to spend the winter with us, be sure to extend some Southern hospitality by giving them access to fresh water, cover and food in your yards. And of course, please keep all of your feeders and birdbaths clean so that all may have a happy, healthy holiday season!

**Special Invitation to All Birders:  
Friday, December 2, 7:00 p.m.  
Georgia Museum of Natural History**

The Georgia Museum of Natural History has kindly agreed to open its doors to birders on the night of Friday, Dec 2, 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Various specimens will be on display, including the famous West Point Dam Ivory Gull, wonderfully restored to its former glory.

As an added bonus, these will be displayed against the delightful backdrop of local artist Philip Juras' paintings of Georgia landscapes as they would have appeared in Bartram's times. Drinks and light snacks will be provided. We hope you can join us!

**Where:** The Georgia Museum of Natural History, Cedar Street, on the University of Georgia campus in Athens.

**For a map to the museum:**

<http://museum.nhm.uga.edu/index.php?page=content/museuminfo/location>

**Native Plant Symposium:  
Wednesday, January 18, 8:45 a.m.  
The State Botanical Garden of Georgia**

Native plants are uniquely adapted to local conditions, having co-evolved with other plants, animals, pollinators, and soil biota. Therefore, they require little maintenance and withstand temperature and moisture extremes. Most importantly, native plants provide diverse sources of food and shelter for a wide variety of insects and birds, reptiles mammals and more in the complex web of life. Join us for a day-long program to learn about gardening with native flowers, shrubs and trees and related conservation issues. Also, learn how to incorporate your appreciation of these plants into your own home landscape plan.

This event is 8:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. in the Terrace Room. The cost is \$55.00 for Friends of the Garden members and \$62.00 for non-members. (Lunch is included).

**To register:** [www.uga.edu/botgarden/eduregister.html](http://www.uga.edu/botgarden/eduregister.html) or email Cora Keber, State Botanical Garden Education Department: [ckeber@uga.edu](mailto:ckeber@uga.edu)

**Winter Pinecone Surprise Recipe**

*by Robin Woodroof*

Several large pine cones

1 can of peanut butter (chunky or plain)

1 bag of mixed birdseed

1 large box of raisins

1 roll of ribbon

Tie a length of ribbon around the pinecone. Mix 1 cup of birdseed with ½ cup of raisins in a small bowl. Spread peanut butter on a pinecone with a knife. Roll the covered pine cone around in the bowl of mixed birdseed and raisins until the mixture sticks well. Hang the pine cone from a tree and share the love of the wonderful holiday season with the birds in your yard. Enjoy!

**The Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary**

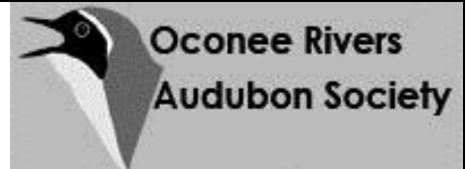
*by Robin Woodroof*

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](http://www.oconeeriversaudubon.org) or email [conservation@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto:conservation@oconeeriversaudubon.org)

**Give the Gift of Audubon!**

For an introductory National Audubon Society membership



(which includes *Audubon* magazine, local membership, and a subscription to *The Yellowthroat*), mail this form with a \$20.00 check payable to NAS to

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society  
PO Box 81082  
Athens, GA 30608

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### **Georgia Department of Natural Resources Creates New Outdoor Pass**

A new access pass, called the Georgia Outdoor Recreation Pass (GORP), will be required for visitors to some wildlife areas beginning Jan. 1, 2012. The new system was devised to generate extra funding for the management and maintenance of certain wildlife management areas (WMA) and some natural areas in Georgia. A GORP for an individual costs \$3.50 (three days) and \$19 (annual) for individuals. For groups of eight or fewer people, a GORP is \$10 (three days) and \$35 (annual). The pass is required for visitors ages 16-64. Some favorite birding areas are on this list such as Altamaha WMA, McIntosh County; Grand Bay WMA, Lowndes County; and Dawson Forest WMA, Dawson County.

For more information see:  
[www.georgiawildlife.com/Georgia-Outdoor-Recreational-Pass](http://www.georgiawildlife.com/Georgia-Outdoor-Recreational-Pass)

### **Oconee Rivers Audubon Society**

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Published monthly by the  
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society  
PO Box 81082  
Athens, GA 30608

Submit information to the address above or by e-mail to [yellowthroat@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto:yellowthroat@oconeeriversaudubon.org). Articles, artwork, notices, and sighting reports welcomed. The deadline for submissions is the first Thursday 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.

