



The Yellowthroat

Voice of the

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

December 2014

Vol. 25, No. 10

**Next Meeting:
Thursday, December 4, 7:00 p.m.
Sandy Creek Nature Center in Athens**

For the 7:00 p.m. presentation:

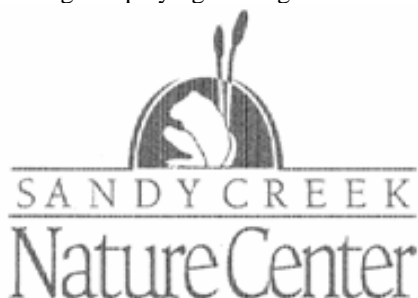
Disease-Driven Global Amphibian Declines and Conservation Efforts

Scott Connelly, an assistant professor with UGA's Odum School of Ecology, will speak on "Disease-Driven Global Amphibian Declines and Conservation Efforts." Connelly will focus specifically on Central America, where he has done much of his teaching and research.

Connelly's research interests include amphibian population decline, stream water quality issues in Costa Rica, and captive amphibian husbandry. He received the School of Ecology's Outstanding Doctoral Presentation Award before earning his Ph.D. in 2009.

Connelly has served as field technician and supervisor with Zoo Atlanta's Amphibian Recovery and Conservation Coalition, worked as a naturalist field guide at Sandy Creek Nature Center and coordinated the EcoReach environmental education outreach program in the CCSD and in Atlanta.

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 Education & Visitor Center building is a short way down the road on your right.

Sightings Reported at November Meeting

Yellow-rumped Warbler, Riverbend Road, Athens, Marianne Happek, 11/5/14

White-crowned Sparrow, Old Edwards Rd, Leila Dasher, 10/?/14

No Whip-poor-wills seen for last two years in Sanford community, Madison County, David G. Edwards

Pair of Great Horned Owls, Old Farmington Rd., Watkinsville, Carole Ludwig and Mark Freeman, 11/1/14

A late Black-throated Green Warbler, Five Points, Athens, Richard Hall, 11/5/14 and 11/8/14

Blue-headed Vireo plunge-bathing, North High Shoals, Steve Holzman, 11/5/14



Photo of Richard Hall's Field Ornithology Class at Palo Verde, Costa Rica—Fall 2014

Consumerism Gives Way to Charitable Giving *by Laura Early*

About this time each year, we begin to be bombarded with ads in every direction for every gismo and gadget imaginable. Rarely are these gismos, gadgets, gourmets, or garments anything that we truly need.

Not only does all this extra stuff fill up our landfills, but the production and transport of consumer goods uses more and more energy and resources, only putting additional pressures on the wildlife, birds, and plants with which we share this planet.

Our culture of mass consumption has its roots in the economic recovery following World War II. To be a good, patriotic citizen meant buying more goods to boost the economy. American consumerism has been growing ever since!

This consumerism takes a big leap each year around the holidays. According to the 2009 US Census Bureau, retail sales (including jewelry, book, clothing, electronic, sporting good, and department stores) jumped 40-135% from November to December.

However, things may be shifting. In a recent national poll, 70% of Americans said they would welcome less emphasis on holiday spending. In the past few years, a trend is emerging that replaces our overzealous gift-giving with charitable donations. Some extended family gatherings and office festivities are forgoing the sometimes stressful and awkward gift exchange, and pooling money they would have spent to make a donation instead.

A recent American Red Cross poll also revealed that 8 in 10 Americans would prefer a donation in their name to a cause they care about rather than a gift they didn't want.

Even the retail industry is jumping on board by supporting "Giving Tuesday," a campaign started in 2012 by a New York based nonprofit, 92nd Street Y, to encourage giving back amidst the crazy spending of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. This year thousands of partners (including retailers) worldwide are participating in Giving Tuesday on December 2, 2014. With 26% of Americans expected to spend \$1,000 or more on holiday gifts, there is a significant amount of funds with the potential to be redirected to programs in need.

Habitat loss and degradation are the largest threats to biodiversity worldwide, and many of the organizations working hard to protect them operate on donations. Some examples of groups right here in our community that use donations to further conservation include: the State Botanical Garden of Georgia, Athens Land Trust, Oconee River Land Trust, Georgia Conservancy, Georgia Natural Resources Foundation, and of course, the Oconee Rivers Audubon Society among many others!



Photo of Gartered Trogon by Richard Hall in Manzanillo, Costa Rica—October 15, 2014

Message from the President *by Richard Hall*

I'm lucky enough to be touring Costa Rica with a group of UGA ornithology students. Almost as much fun as watching the dazzling array of hummingbirds, toucans, and trogons, is seeing that first spark of enthusiasm as the students begin to appreciate the beauty and diversity of birds around them.

I am also struck by seeing so many familiar faces that pass through Athens each fall: Swainson's Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Tennessee Warbler and Scarlet Tanager have all been arriving here in numbers. It boggles my mind to think about the long journeys these tiny, fragile-looking creatures have undergone to get here and reinforces how important it is that we maintain good quality stopover habitat in Athens to help them fatten up for their next migratory jump. Consider planting some native berry-bearing plants such as beautyberry shrubs and dogwood trees, and you may be lucky enough to witness one or more of these champion long-distance migrants in your own backyard!

Back in Athens, where the bulk of the Neotropical migrants have already passed through, the waterfowl migration continues all the way through early December. It's a great time to check out your local duck pond for less regular visitors such as Bufflehead and American Wigeon. Last winter we saw hardly any Purple Finches or Pine Siskins due to bumper seed crops to the north. But forecasts for this winter suggest that a few more should be heading our way. Stay tuned for details of the 2014 Christmas Bird Count.

The Managed Forest Project at Sandy Creek Nature Center *summary of November meeting by Page Luttrell*

Thanks to Mike Wharton, Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Department Administrator for Operations for presenting a talk at the November meeting on “The Managed Forest Project at Sandy Creek Nature Center (SCNC).” Approved by the Athens-Clarke County Mayor and Board of Commissioners in October, 2014, this program will use forest management techniques to re-establish and maintain high quality woodland and wildlife habitat in five selected areas at SCNC. Other goals include educational opportunities and certification.

Five 5-acre plots north of the Education & Visitor Center building were selected for different management strategies. The first three plots will use thinning, prescribed burning, invasive species removal, and re-planting with loblolly pines at successive 15-year intervals (first plot treated, second plot treated 15 years later, etc). The fourth plot will also be managed for loblolly pine but with a shelterwood cut leaving mature trees that allow the plot to naturally re-seed. The last plot will re-establish a healthy Piedmont oak forest using similar techniques. These plots will comprise about 11% of the Nature Center’s 225 acres.

The second goal is to provide learning opportunities for various age groups via an Outdoor Teaching Area that demonstrates the changing forest ecosystem. This outdoor classroom is intended to support the indoor Woodland Interactive Learning Center in the Education & Visitor Center. The third objective is to gain certification with the Forest Steward Program of the GA Forestry Commission and the national American Tree Farm Program. Certification will demonstrate the community’s commitment to land stewardship and resource protection.

SCNC Inc. will provide volunteer and financial support for the first three years, and plans have been made to incorporate other groups and sources of funding such as GA Forestry Commission, Warnell School of Forest Resources at UGA, Audubon Society, and others.

Details of this project can be found at:
<http://athensclarkecounty.com/6134/Managed-Forest-Proposal>

Christmas Bird Count: December 20 *by Mary Case*

The 126th Christmas Bird Count for the Athens area is Saturday, December 20, 2014. If you would like to join one of our groups, please email Mary Case: mecase@uga.edu or Eugenia Thompson: erobertthom@bellsouth.net.

Also, please know that you do not need to be an experienced birder in order to join this annual event. All are welcome!

A Murder of *Crows* by Robert Wyatt

A *murder* of crows, a *gaggle* of geese—
who conjures up names for groups like these?
Wombats form *wisdoms* and walruses, *pods*.
But a *leap* of leopards—what are the odds?

Plovers and gators form *congregations*,
but I’ll go elsewhere for my meditations.
King of the beasts, lions establish *prides*,
and chase *zeals* of zebras for more than their hides.

Beware of kangaroos, which make up *mobs*,
and *beviess* of swans, especially cobs.
Could a *parliament* of owls enact laws
that bar *casts* of crabs from possessing claws?

Bands of coyotes don’t gather to jam—
they’d much rather track down *flocks* of young lambs.
The very thought gives one a shiver,
but a group of cobras is a *quiver*.

No *covey* of grouse, nor even of quail,
shall ever encounter a *gam* of whales.
A *wake* of buzzards circles overhead,
praying that *gang* of elk soon will drop dead.

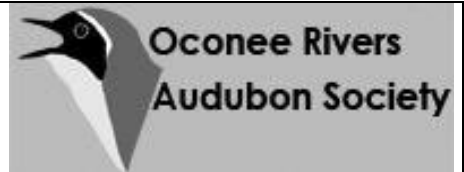
So many animals simply form *herds*:
bison and caribou, but rarely birds.
If birds of a feather flock together,
can’t an *erie* of eagles fly wherever?

Barracuda *batteries* swim the sea
after *fevers* of stingrays—a delicacy!
Troops of gorillas and monkeys and apes
don’t march into battle or get into scrapes.

A *warren* of rabbits is never safe
from a *kettle* of hawks ready to strafe.
An *intrusion* of roaches—how apt is that?
No one will rest ‘til they’ve all gone splat!

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Photo of Eastern Phoebe by John Whigham at the
State Botanical Garden—October 18, 2014

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