



The Yellowthroat

Voice of the

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

February 2013

Vol. 24, No. 2

Next Meeting:
Thursday, February 7, 7:00 p.m.
Sandy Creek Nature Center

For the 7:00 p.m. presentation:

The Effects of Cats on Urban Wildlife: As Revealed by the Use of KittyCams

Dr. Sonia Hernandez, Assistant Professor of Wildlife Disease, University of Georgia, in a joint position between the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources and the College of Veterinary Medicine (SCWDS) will discuss recent research on how cats affect urban wildlife:

“We applied point of view cameras to a statistically representative number of free-roaming, owned, pet cats in Athens Clarke-County to meet two objectives: 1) the frequency with which cats preyed on wildlife and the type of wildlife they preyed on, 2) the risks that cats faced when roaming outdoors.

This work was conducted to begin to understand how cats affect urban wildlife and to provide video that would allow the general public to make informed decisions about the management of their cats.”

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.

Spring Bird Walks – Think Spring!

Bird walks are from **8 a.m.-11a.m. or noon**. However, attendees may leave early. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes. Also, bring bug spray, sun screen, snacks and water as desired/needed. (Please be sure to check ORAS announcements for any changes to this schedule).

- Mar. 23: **State Botanical Garden** (Day Chapel)
- Mar. 30: **Sandy Creek Park**
- Apr. 06: **Sandy Creek Nature Center**
- Apr. 13: **Whitehall (S. Milledge & Whitehall Rd.)**

(Attendees for the Whitehall walk must be on time. We meet outside the gate and caravan down to Flinchum's Phoenix. Attendees may leave at any time because the gate opens automatically from the inside).

Sightings Reported at January Meeting

Red-headed Woodpeckers (2), Madison County, 12/?, Page Luttrell, Tim Homan
Ruddy Ducks (40), Sandy Creek Park, 12/30, Page Luttrell, Tim Homan)
Red-headed Woodpecker, East Athens, 1/1, Gary Crider
Rufous Hummingbird, Five Points, 12/16, Sue Wilde
Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-winged Blackbirds (hundreds), East Athens, 12/? Denise Zevos
Wood Stork, Ruddy Turnstones (2), Willet, Jekyll Island, 12/26 Liz Conroy

Eco-Haiku by Robert Wyatt

Undulating flight—
a Red-headed Woodpecker
returns to his hole.

Brown-headed Nuthatches
huddle together for warmth
on my window ledge.

December 2012 Clarke County eBird Sightings Summary and Review of the Year *by Richard Hall*

99 species were reported to eBird from Clarke Co. in December 2012, compared with 97 in 2011 and 105 in 2010. Lake Chapman was responsible for most of the interesting waterbird sightings, with 2 Horned Grebes and 72 Ruddy Ducks on 1st (RH, JN), 5 Red-breasted Merganser on 6th (JH, MJ, JN), 26 Redhead on 7th (MB, MJ), single Lesser Scaup on 9th and 16th (RH), 4 Green-winged Teal on 21st (MB), a Canvasback and 2 Bufflehead on 26th (MB), and 2 Gadwall and 6 Bonaparte's Gulls on 28th (MB). Lake Herrick's first record of American Black Duck, and a drake Ring-necked Duck, were found on 26th (MB) and remained until year end.

A Northern Harrier was seen at the S. Milledge fields on 3rd (JH), and 2 were at the ACC landfill on 18th (RH, MJ, JM). Low water levels at the Oxbow Lake attracted Wilson's Snipe, with a maximum of 4 recorded on 6th (JN). The largest flock of 5 Ring-billed Gulls flew over MB's house on 24th. An exceptional three Rufous Hummingbirds were reported from backyards in the county (KG, BKOG, SW). Single American Kestrels were found along Spring Valley Road on 12th (RH) and at the ACC landfill on 13th (MB, RH), and Loggerhead Shrikes recorded from two separate locations on Morton Road on 1st and 17th (RH, JN). Red-breasted Nuthatches continued to be reported widely, with an impressive 4 in BKOG's backyard.

Only one House Wren was recorded from the ACC landfill on 18th (RH, MJ, JM). Common Yellowthroats were reported from Cook's Trail on 16th (JM, BKOG) and the ACC landfill on 31st (RH, MJ). A maximum of 8 White-crowned Sparrows were observed at the S. Milledge fields on 1st (RH, JN) and up to 5 frequented the ACC landfill throughout.

Notable sightings from the Christmas Bird Count on 15th included 6 American Woodcock, 2 Great Horned Owls and a new county high count of 74 Purple Finches in the State Botanical Garden (JH, JM, CS), a fine Merlin at Lake Herrick (RH), a Loggerhead Shrike and 25 American Pipits at the S. Milledge fields (JH, JM, CS), 126 Savannah Sparrows and a yellow Eastern race Palm Warbler on College Station Road (JH, JM), a Rufous Hummingbird and 22 Rusty Blackbirds on Cobb Street (RH), and 24 Pine Siskins at Sandy Creek Park (EM, JMS).

Just outside of the county in Watkinsville, MB and JN counted an amazing 750 Rusty Blackbirds in Harris Shoals Park (MB, JN).

In total, an exceptional 219 species were recorded in Clarke Co. in 2012, the fourth highest 2012 total for any county in the state (the others being the much larger, coastal counties of Glynn, McIntosh and Chatham), and eclipsing the previous Clarke annual total of 201 species recorded in 2010 and 2011. This number included the first Clarke Co. eBird

records of 14 species: Herring Gull, Painted Bunting, Anhinga, Greater White-fronted Goose, Upland Sandpiper, Semipalmated Plover, Laughing Gull, Black Tern, Stilt Sandpiper, Clay-colored Sparrow, Willow Flycatcher, Nelson's Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow and Surf Scoter.

What will 2013 bring?

Observers: Mirko Basen, Krista Gridley, Richard Hall, Jim Hanna, Mitchell Jarrett, Ed Maioriello, Joel McNeal, James Neves, Bill and Karla O'Grady, Chris Skelton, John Mark Simmons, Sue Wilde



Photo of Rufous Hummingbird by Richard Hall

Hummingbird Legends *by Anonymous*

Legends say the hummingbirds float free of time, carrying our hopes for love, joy and celebration. The hummingbird's delicate grace reminds us that life is rich, beauty is everywhere, and every personal connection has meaning.

Join the Dark Side of Life: The Fabulous Diversity of Local Moths

summary of January meeting by Liz Conroy

Thanks to Dr. John Pickering for presenting the January program, **Join the Dark Side of Life: The Fabulous Diversity of Local Moths**. Pickering noted there is still much to learn about moths, and that each species has an interesting natural history. For example, the beautiful Io moth attempts to hide from a predator by closing its wings to blend in with the natural surroundings. But its startle response—the sudden opening of its wings—reveals a pair of big, bright “eyes” that may help to scare off the predator.

Pickering added: “Moths are God's way of turning plants into birds.” Adult moths and their caterpillars are sources of protein and fat for birds, especially for young birds. To learn more about moths, simply switch on your porch light at night and observe what comes to you. Also, always turn off the lights before dawn to allow moths the chance to escape. For more information, check out: www.discoverlife.org

President's Message: Great Backyard Bird Count

by Richard Hall

The Great Backyard Bird Count takes place Friday, February 15 through Monday, February 18, 2013. All you have to do is go out and count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of this weekend. It is fun and easy! For more details and to register for this long-standing citizen science project, please visit: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>



Photo of Red-breasted Nuthatch by Richard Hall

Runner-Up Logo in ORAS Competition

by John Whigham



The Athens Christmas Bird Count

December 2012 by Eugenia Thompson

The annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in Athens was held on Saturday, December 15, 2012. This is a nationwide count of birds during the dates of December 14, 2012 to January 6, 2013.

87 species (28,119 individual birds) were counted and another eight were counted during "count week" (the three days on either side of the actual count day).

Highlights included an astounding 39 Red-headed Woodpeckers and twenty White-breasted Nuthatches; both of these species have been hard to find in our CBC area in recent years. Four Loggerhead Shrikes (none banded) and 53 Eastern Meadowlarks (all but two were in Oconee County) were good numbers. Also, Richard Hall sighted and photographed a Merlin at Lake Herrick.

More than 1100 Rusty Blackbirds were counted (with most being in Oconee County), and more than 11,000 late-day unidentifiable blackbirds were seen. Irruptive species included Purple Finch (86, almost all at Botanical Garden), Pine Siskin (57), and Red-breasted Nuthatch (8).

One Rufous Hummingbird was counted with another seen during count week as 'back-up'. Count week birds included Sandhill Crane, Ring-necked Duck, Wilson's Snipe, Double-crested Cormorant, Ring-billed Gull, Lesser Scaup, Northern Harrier (that's right – not a one was seen on count day), and House Wren.

For a complete report of this and other counts, check out: birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count Also, please mark your calendars now: CBC in 2013 will take place December 14, 2013 through January 5, 2014. Hope to see you there!

(Editor's note: Check out: www.npr.org/sections/animals/ for recent NPR stories about the Christmas Bird Count).

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

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Green Life Expo: Saturday, February 9 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. The Classic Center

The Classic Center, in association with the ACC Recycling Division, hosts Green Life Expo in The Classic Center's Grand Hall and will feature exhibits, educational activities and recycling opportunities: www.GreenLifeAthens.com

Residential Collection (Only) Includes:

Batteries: alkaline and rechargeable (no car batteries) **Bulbs:** compact and regular fluorescent tubes (no incandescent) **Electronics:** (including TVs) **Styrofoam:** (#6 plastic) blocks and other coolers (no cups, trays or peanuts) **Old Holiday Cards:** for reuse **Used Cooking Grease, Broken Christmas Tree Lights, Old Media:** CD's, VHS, DVD's, and more, **Car Fluids:** Used motor oil and anti-freeze (NO gasoline), **Bike Tires and tubes.**

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