



The Yellowthroat

Voice of the

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

March 2019

Vol. 30, No.3

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

For the 7:00 p.m. presentation:

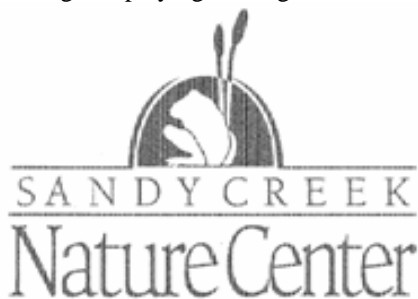
The Wild Turkeys of Georgia

Ashley Lohr, Master of Science at the Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources, will discuss her research on how differences in the behavior of individual turkeys can influence reproductive success.

Turkeys are an important game species, yet their populations are declining throughout the Southeastern U.S. These declines are thought to be linked to reduced reproductive success. Lohr's research focuses on how differences in decisions made by individual turkeys may influence their reproductive success and the size of turkey populations.

Before coming to UGA, Lohr earned a Bachelor of Science degree from VA Tech. She has worked on a wide variety of projects from studying peregrine falcons in Shenandoah National Park to jaguars in Belize.

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.

Spring Bird Walks – Think Spring!

Bird walks are from **8 a.m.-11a.m. or noon**. However, attendees may leave early. Please dress for the weather, wear practical shoes, hats and bring insect repellent, snacks and water as desired. Also, please check ORAS announcements and website for any last minute changes to this schedule: <http://www.oconeeriversaudubon.org/events>

If you have other questions please contact Ed Maioriello at: fieldtrip@oconeeriversaudubon.org

- Mar. 23: **Sandy Creek Park**
- Mar. 30: **State Botanical Garden**
- Apr. 07: **Sandy Creek Nature Center (SCNC)**
- Apr. 13: **Lake Herrick/Oconee Forest Park**
- Apr. 14: **Whitehall Forest***
- Apr. 27: **SCNC-Cook's Trail (clean-up)**
- Apr. 28: **State Botanical Garden**
- May 05: **A-CC Landfill**

*(Attendees for the Whitehall walk must be on time).

Spring Field Trips (out of town) *

- Apr. 06 6:00 a.m. Piedmont NWR
- Apr. 20 6:00 a.m. Kennesaw Mountain
- May 04 7:00 a.m. Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center
- May 11 6:00 a.m. Ivy Log Gap Road/Sosebee Cove

* Please check ORAS announcements for any late changes.

The Amazing World of Bats

summary of February meeting by Liz Conroy

Thanks to Kristen Lear for her talk about bats. She shared interesting facts and described experiences with bat conservation projects in other countries.

Lear noted that bat myths abound. Myths to be busted include: bats are **not** blind; all bats can see and some use echolocation while others don't need it. For example, flying foxes (not in the U.S.) have large eyes because they are fruit eaters and don't need echolocation to find fruit. Bats are **not** rodents. They are more closely related to whales and primates. Their order is Chiroptera or "hand wing." They are the **only** mammals that are adapted for true flight. (Some other mammals can glide.) Only three bats species eat blood while 70% of bats eat insects. And, 100% of the bats in Georgia are insect-eaters!

There are various labels for bats related to their diet: Frugivores eat fruit and are important for dispersing seeds and helping tropical forests regenerate. Nectarivores eat nectar and help with pollination. Carnivores eat other animals such as frogs, birds, other bats, and rodents. But sometimes, there is turn around, and a large bird will eat a small bat. Piscivores eat fish by flying over water and snatching them from the surface.

Other bat facts: the Brandt's myotis (a Siberian bat) has been recorded living as long as 41 years; that is the longest lifespan for a mammal of its size. The DNA of some bat species resists degradation and allows them a long lifespan. The world's largest bat is a flying fox whose wingspan is six feet and weight is two pounds. (Bat bones are **not** hollow like bird bones.) Bumblebee bats weigh less than a penny!

Athens area residents can look for Big brown bats (flies under street lights), Eastern red bats (roosts among tree leaves), Indiana bats (harder to find because it's endangered and susceptible to White Nose Syndrome—a deadly fungus), and Mexican free-tailed bats (around Sanford Stadium).

Bat houses in Athens can be seen on the UGA campus by Lake Herrick (thanks to the Office of Sustainability), along Firefly Trail (thanks to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources), and residents put them up by their homes. Some bats migrate before the winter sets in and return in March.

Lear asked: "Why do we want bats?" She said 16 Georgia species are insectivores and can eat enough insects to match their body weight in one night! In other words, one bat can consume 4,000 insects per night. Estimates show that the U.S. agricultural industry saves three billion dollars each year due to bats. And, a third of bat species eat nectar or fruit which helps to pollinate plants and/or disperse seeds.

Although they help humans, bats are under threat from loss of habitat, disturbance by people (including entering caves and vandalism), hunting (for bush meat), and pesticides on the insects they eat (this means fewer moths to eat and potential decreased sperm count in males).

One of the greatest dangers to bats in North America is White Nose Syndrome (WNS). This fast-spreading fungus grows on their skin membranes as they hibernate in caves in the winter. The irritation wakes them, and they go outside in the cold to seek food. Then they may freeze or starve to death. Today, even the once common Little brown bat is in trouble. (Recently, PA listed it as an endangered species.)

There are ways to help bats. If more people kept their cats indoors, it would help a lot. "One cat can wipe out an entire small bat colony," she noted. Putting up bat houses is a good idea. Visit the Bat Conservation International (BCI) website: (www.batcon.org) for bat house info. Plant a bat friendly garden with night blooming flowers that attract moths (white blossoms are best) and add a water feature such as a small pond where bats can drink. Donate to BCI and/or Bat World Sanctuary (www.batworld.org).

Lear then discussed her research which focuses on the conservation of an endangered pollinating bat through "bat-friendly" agave management in Mexico. She noted that the Mexican long-nosed bat and Mexican long-tongued are threatened and endangered species. Mexican long-nosed bats migrate 700 miles each year from central Mexico to go to their maternity caves in northeast Mexico and in Big Bend, TX. These bats eat agave nectar and pollen. (Agaves are used for tequila, syrup, and candy, living fences and erosion control.) But the challenge is that the plant is castrated when harvested, and this removes the bats' food source. If farmers to leave some agave plants intact, there's more food for bats. Education is so important! Some Mexican agave harvesters used to say, "There are no bats that feed on agaves, only hummingbirds." Now they are learning about the importance of bats to agave growing and how helpful it is to leave some agaves to flower for the bats. If interested in "bat-friendly" agave programs visit: www.batcon.org/agave18. Donations to BCI will help them plant one million agaves for migrating bats through the U.S. Southwest and Mexico. One dollar equals one agave planted!

After her talk, she demonstrated the use of the special equipment used to study bats, including night vision binoculars, infrared cameras, and acoustic detectors.



Mexican long-tongued bat (left) and Mexican long-nosed bat by Kristen Lear, Laguna de Sanchez, Nuevo Leon, Mexico—July 15, 2017

International Shorebird Survey

Put your birding skills to use and participate in the [International Shorebird Survey \(ISS\)](#) during a two-day coastal stewards workshop: March 22, 5:30 pm - March 23, 2:00 pm Cost: \$54

On the first day of the workshop, participants will gather for an evening presentation by Abby Sterling, shorebird biologist for [Manomet Inc.](#), covering ISS protocols and the history of the survey. Following the presentation there will be a brief refresher on shorebird ID.

The following day, participants will travel by boat through Wassaw Sound to conduct the ISS during the spring shorebird migration. This survey provides important information on population trends used in shorebird conservation planning.

This workshop is designed for intermediate or advanced birders with strong shorebird identification skills or those who are willing to study on their own prior to the workshop.

Dates

March 22, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

March 23, 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Registration is required by March 15. Contact Kayla Clark at kayla270@uga.edu or [912-598-3345](tel:912-598-3345) to register. *The two backup dates for this workshop in the event of inclement weather are:

April 5, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m. – April 6, 7 a.m. – 1 p.m.

April 21, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m. – April 22, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.
(If all three workshops are canceled, your payment will be refunded.)

The **Coastal Stewards program** is a series of environmental education workshops targeted to adults living on or visiting the Georgia coast.

The goal of the program is to engage adults in activities designed to improve their knowledge of coastal ecosystems, enhance understanding of current issues impacting coastal communities, and inspire stewardship of natural resources.

Each workshop contains a mixture of lecture, lab and field activities using scientific and recreational equipment.

Hurry to Apply for Spring Grants- 2019

Spring is time for grant applications. Now it's time to hurry! We began accepting grants on February 1. The final deadline is March 13. We anticipate four to six grants will be awarded. Please visit: www.oconeeriversaudubon.org/grant



Piping Plover by John Whigham, Tybee Island, Chatham County—November 22, 2016



Sanderling by John Whigham, Tybee Island, Chatham County—December 27, 2014



Willet with crab by John Whigham, Tybee Island, Chatham County—December 27, 2014

Message to the President—Thanks!

by Liz Conroy

Our hearty thanks to outgoing Oconee Rivers Audubon Society President Catie Welch. She is leaving Athens for a new job in Florida where she will be working with the endangered subspecies of Grasshopper Sparrow.

As our recent president, she offered much enthusiasm, time, and energy to this local Audubon chapter. She also organized and participated in important public outreach activities such as the Great Backyard Bird Count and the recent Green Life Expo at the Athens Library.

Her birding expertise and research experience meant she was able to provide excellent presentations to audiences at ORAS meetings as well as articles and photos for our monthly newsletter *The Yellowthroat*.

We will miss her guidance and wish her luck and success in her work in Florida.



Slender-billed Weaver by Catie Welch, Kenya—
April 2018

Eco-Haiku by Nancy Hunter

Bright colors abound,
slow dancing sea fans and fish.
Barracudas hang

Clear, cold coral reef,
floating in another world.
I love my wetsuit!

Sandy Creek Nature Center: GIS Day and Women in Science Open House

On Saturday, March 23 at 3:00--6:00 p.m. SCNC hosts a GIS event for local college students to allow them to present projects to local GIS users for real-life feedback. Free.

On Saturday, March 30 at 1:00--4:00 p.m. SCNC offers the opportunity to hear about women working in different areas of science in the community with the help of a variety of organizations from around Clarke County. Free for all ages.

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

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