



The Yellowthroat

*Voice of the
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society*

September 2011

Vol. 23 No. 7

Next Meeting

Thursday, September 1, 7:00 p.m.
Sandy Creek Nature Center

Our Potluck Picnic which took place at Memorial Park in June, included the election of ORAS officers for the upcoming year 2011-2012:

- Richard Hall, President
- Vanessa Lane, Vice-President
- Mary Case, Secretary
- Eugenia Thompson, Treasurer

Fall Bird Walks

Bird walks are from **8 a.m.-11a.m. or noon**. But attendees may leave early. Dress for the weather and wear practical shoes and a hat. Also, bring bug spray, sun screen, snacks and water as desired/needed.

- Sept. 3: **Sandy Creek Nature Center** * (Allen House)
- Sept. 10: **State Botanical Garden** (Day Chapel)
- Oct. 1: **State Botanical Garden** (Day Chapel)
- Oct. 8: **Whitehall Forest** ** (S. Milledge Ave. & Whitehall Rd.) Note: GOS Fall Meeting is also on this weekend: www.gos.org
- Oct. 15: **Sandy Creek Park** (Campsite Dr. last lot)

* The SCNC Cook's Trail walk is also our Cook's Trail Cleanup trip. Bring a trash bag. We will bird on the walk in, then bird and pick up trash on the way out.

**Attendees for the Whitehall walk must be on time. We meet outside the gate and caravan down to Flinchum's Phoenix. Once the caravan is inside the gate there is no way for anyone without a key card to enter. (Attendees may leave anytime they want because the gate opens automatically from the inside).

Fall Field Trip

Sept. 24: **6:00 a.m. Kennesaw Mountain** (Meet at Shops of South Athens Lot, South Milledge Ave. and the Bypass).

If You Cut It Will They Come?

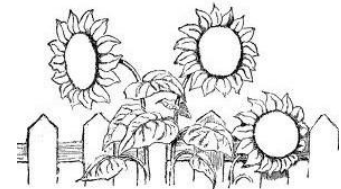
Plant and Animal Community Response to Chinese Privet Removal – Sept. 1 Presentation

Jim Hanula
Research Entomologist
USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station
Athens, GA

You can spray the foliage, use basal bark sprays, mulch it, cut it with a chainsaw or machete, pull it, and even graze it with goats and sheep. Some methods may work better than others, but they all have the same goal—getting rid of Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*). However, once all of that is done what do you end up with? Everyone agrees that a privet choked forest is not a pleasant place. Yet what does the new forest look like once the privet is removed, and how long does it take to look like it should?

Those are some of the questions we have been trying to answer over the last few years

while looking at plant, insect and small mammal responses in a large-scale experiment testing two methods of removing Chinese privet from streamside forests in or near Athens.



Jim Hanula has a B.S. degree in Forest Management, and an M.S. and Ph.D. in Forest Entomology. He has been with the U. S. Forest Service for the past 20 years where his research has included investigating the diet of an endangered woodpecker and how forest management affects prey availability for it, the effects of fire on insect populations, and the biology of invasive species and their impact on forest ecosystems.

Heron World

By Bob Ambrose

Late afternoon envelops stillness
in patches of shade, and sunlight, and sky
that radiate moist heat
with intensity that fails to evaporate
salty wetness from glistening skin.

So the river valley glows
a shimmering green vision
that surrounds a solitary
heron
perched in tall dignity
gray-white sleekness suspended
between supple curves of neck
and stick thin legs
inhabiting a heaven
of sparkling brown mud
and slow rich waters
that mingle in quiet eternity.

What visions haunt the river bird soul
taking rest at day's end?
In peaceful interlude
does focus remain true
to ripple and darting shadow
to splash and sustenance below?

Or does awareness expand
beyond shoals and shallows
through dappled forest borders
to the wondering spirit bound
in body and mind above?

The heron unfolds
into neck and wing
flashing slow blue-silver rhythm
in ponderous flight.
Its harsh cry highlights
primordial grace
disappearing into downstream shadow
as eternity dissolves
and light breezes hint
soft darkness to come.

Attracting Backyard Hummingbirds

by Robin Woodroof

We are intrigued by those tiny, beautiful, iridescent birds that have extremely high metabolisms, can hover in mid-air, fly backwards, flap their wings in figure eights, have a heart rate of over 1000 beats per minute and migrate over many miles. Hummers require flower nectar, sugar water and protein to sustain them.

You can create a hummingbird garden in your yard that will provide natural high energy food sources. Hummers feed by sight and have almost no sense of smell. Although they are attracted to the color red, flowers and nectar do not have to be this color to be used. Make sure pesticides are not used around hummer plants because they can kill the insects these birds need for protein. Hummers are naturally inquisitive and will look for a variety of food sources. They tend to be very aggressive and will defend their food and territory.

Suggested Plant List for Hummingbird Gardens:

- Trees/Shrubs-Azalea, Quince, Buckeye, Weigela, Tulip Poplar, Lantana
- Vines-Coral Honeysuckle, Morning Glory, Trumpet Creeper
- Flowers-Bee Balm, Columbine, Coral Bells, Four O'clock, Foxglove, Hosta, Lupine, Yucca, Coral-Bells, Hollyhocks, Fuchsia, Impatiens, Petunia, Salvia, Delphinium

Hummers prefer natural food sources, but will come to feeders for extra boosts of energy. It may take a while for them to find your new feeder and figure out how to get to the nectar, but once they do, they should return often. Clean feeders regularly with hot tap water and a brush. Change the nectar often, usually every 4 days to 2 weeks depending on weather conditions, because it can easily sour.

How to Make Your Own Nectar:

- Use only natural sugar. Never use honey, artificial sweeteners, or food coloring.
- Use one part ordinary white cane sugar to four parts water.
- Store unused nectar in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

Hummers know when they need to migrate and leaving up feeders will not prevent this migration. Feeders can actually help provide the extra energy they need to make the trip. And if you leave your feeder up in the winter, you might be fortunate enough to see a migratory hummer!

The Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary

by Robin Woodroof

Congratulations to New Certified ORAS Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Homeowners:

Lorene Winter
Deb Weiler and Loren Hunt
Judy and Richard Newton
Chuck Murphy

For more information: www.oconeeriversaudubon.org or,
email: conservation@oconeeriversaudubon.org

May - July 2011 Clarke eBird Summary

by Richard Hall

122 species were reported to eBird from Clarke Co. in May (up one from the 2010 total). Shorebird passage continued at Lake Herrick with a new eBird high count of 7 Least Sandpipers there on 13th. A freshly-dead American Woodcock was a most unusual find along East Campus Road on 31st.

Highlight of the period for many was a confiding Black-billed Cuckoo found by Joel McNeal and Jim Hanna in the State Botanical Garden on 2nd, which showed on and off for the whole day. Gray-cheeked Thrushes put in a good showing here and at Lake Herrick during the month. Warblers at the botanical garden included a rare spring sighting of Tennessee on 9th, a new county high count of 12 Black-throated Blue Warblers on 3rd, and 2 Swainson's Warblers heard (and occasionally seen) all month.

A Connecticut Warbler found in the powerline cut on 10th was typically hard to pin down, but was nonetheless successfully chased by birders from the GA coast! Amazingly, a second bird was found at the beaverpond the next day, with 2 there on 12th, followed by singles at Lake Herrick on 14th, 18th and 20th, making this the best ever spring for the species in the county.

A late Swamp Sparrow was present at the botanical garden beaverpond from 17th-19th, and the UGA fields east of Milledge Avenue hosted a White-crowned Sparrow on 4th, a singing Dickcissel on 6th, and a singing Grasshopper Sparrow on 19th. The last of the winter's Pine Siskins was reported from the O'Grady's backyard on 12th.

85 species in were reported to eBird in June (up from 76) and 84 species in July (up from 80). Noteworthy June sightings included an adult Little Blue Heron flying along Simonton Bridge Road on 21st, several reports of summering Broad-winged Hawks, a pair of Worm-eating Warblers seen multiple times in the botanical garden (providing the first evidence for local breeding), an exceptionally late White-throated Sparrow in the O'Grady's backyard on 6th, and at least two male Scarlet Tanagers holding territory in Whitehall Forest. By the end of July, the first signs of fall migration were apparent, with a Cerulean Warbler in the O'Grady's backyard on 22nd and 2 Spotted Sandpipers at Lake Herrick on 25th.

Birds Entwined

by Suzanne A. Lindsay

If a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and an expert birdwatcher can charm the birds from the trees, what about birds in vines?

These twining plants offer food, shelter, and nesting sites for many birds, which then help to spread their seeds far and wide. Two detailed studies identify some of the most

important: James H. Miller and Karl V. Miller, *Forest Plants of the Southeast and Their Wildlife Uses* (Southern Weed Science Society, 1999), and James H. Miller, *Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests: A Field Guide for Identification and Control* (Gen. Tec. Rep. SRS-62, Asheville N.C., U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Research Station, 2003).

Consider Yellow Jessamine (*Gelesemium sempervirens* St.-Hil.). Ruby-throated Hummingbirds sip nectar from its brilliant yellow, tubular flowers in February through May, when few other sources are available. These tiny birds also seek out the showy orange-and-yellow trumpets of Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata* L.) from June through September. A look-alike, Trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans* L.), is an important food source during the same period. Hummingbirds also sip nectar from the invasive Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica* Thunb.) and the native Trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens* L.).

Many vines offer birds food through the seasons. Trailing dewberries (*Rubus* spp.) supply soft fruits throughout summer. While not strictly vines, the arching canes of other *Rubus* species provide both food and shelter to many birds and are particularly important as refuges from predators (ask B'er Rabbit!). The Millers consider the various species of *Rubus*: "arguably...the most important group of plants to wildlife in the Southeast".

Songbirds ranging from chickadees, mockingbirds, and robins to woodpeckers and thrushes feed on the deep blue berries of Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia* L.) from October through February. Berries of the various species of Greenbriers (*Smilax* spp.) attract Ruffed Grouse and Wild Turkeys, as well as more than forty songbirds. Numerous birds consume wild grapes (*Vitis cinerea*, *Vitis rotundifolia* Michx., and other southeastern species).

Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans* L, Kuntze) is another important winter food. The efficiency with which songbirds spread its seeds is apparent to anyone who has found young plants springing up far from any wild vines. James Miller reports that the Northern Cardinal and American Goldfinch incorporate the thin, hair-like roots of poison ivy into their nests.

The seeds of Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*) are another winter food. During the colder months and even into spring, ground-feeding birds, including Wild Turkeys, Ruffed Grouse, and Northern Bobwhites, consume the bright red berries of Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens* L.), a trailing vine. Although they are considered shrubs, native (*Rosa Carolina* L, *Rosa laevigata* Michx.) and cultivated roses may climb into trees or form thickets close to the ground; their scarlet hips last through the winter and feed many birds when other seeds are sparse.

Although birds help to distribute the seeds of English Ivy and Japanese Honeysuckle, do not blame them for spreading some of the worst non-native, invasive vines. The thick seedpods of Wisteria do not attract birds, nor do those of Kudzu, although these vines may offer temporary cover or even the occasional nesting site. The wide variety and distribution of vines in the southeast make them a boon to birds—and to the birdwatchers who train their binoculars on these beautiful tangles.

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Did You Know? (in memory of Maggie)

The late Maggie Nettles enjoyed interesting facts about nature and different ways to observe wildlife. She and Gary Crider taught my daughters how to see spiders' eyes at night: Hold a flashlight alongside your temple and peer into vegetation. Tiny pairs of arachnid eyes will shine brightly back at you. Email: yellowthroat@oconeeriversaudubon.org if you have an item to share for "Did You Know?" (Ed.)

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

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

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