



# The Yellowthroat

*Voice of the  
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society*

February 2002

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## Upcoming Meetings

**February 7<sup>th</sup>: 7:00 p.m.,  
Sandy Creek Nature Center ENSAT building**

**February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2002:** Dr. David Stallknecht from the Department of Medical Microbiology and Parasitology at the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Georgia will speak on "West Nile Virus in Georgia-Public Health, Domestic Animal, and Wildlife Impacts". This work is part of the Southeast Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study.

**Meetings are held...** first Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. To get to the Nature Center, take the Highway 441 exit off the north side of the perimeter, go north on 441 approximately 1 mile, and turn left at the Sandy Creek Nature Center sign. Go left at the end of this short road and the new ENSAT building will be a short way down the road on your right.

**Next Meeting... March 7<sup>th</sup>:** Brad Winn, Wildlife Biologist with the DNR, will present a talk entitled, "Red Knots and American Oystercatchers, Georgia's role in the lives of migrant and resident shorebirds." Brad Winn grew up in New England and graduated from the University of Vermont. He has worked in the field of conservation on the Georgia coast for 14 years. His previous position was as the coordinator of the Sea Turtle Project. This talk was postponed from January because of the snowstorm.

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Articles, artwork, notices, and sighting reports welcomed. The deadline for submissions is the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. All articles and artwork or 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.

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**Oconee Rivers Audubon Society**

**Field Trip February 9<sup>th</sup>:** We will go to the home of Gary Crider's parents on Lake Hartwell for our annual "loon trip." We will meet in the Athens Tech parking lot at 7:30 a.m. to car pool to Hartwell. Bring a lunch. Maps will also be available at the February meeting if you need one. Maggie Nettles reported at the December meeting that loons have already been sighted on Lake Hartwell.

**Monthly Meeting Raffle:** In February we will raffle one of the 2002 Audubon Calendars. The winner can choose the calendar, including the new Sibley Calendar. For the March raffle, Shan Cammack has donated a T-Shirt from the Altamaha Bioserve. The shirt has artwork by Lydia Thompson with an Oystercatcher in full color.

**Sightings:** 12/21/01 Glyn Hatchell reported seeing an **Evening Grosbeak** at the feeders at his home off Old Lexington Road. Since 12/25/01 Carole Ludwig has frequently seen 16-18 **Killdeer** staying in a hayfield on Old Farmington Rd. David Galewski and Templeton Hill saw a **Brown Creeper** at Lake Chapman after Christmas. 1/1/02 Gary Crider reported a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** on their back deck in University Heights. Mark Freeman: 1/2/02, **Fox Sparrow** off Whit Davis near Jockey Club; 1/3/02, a **Northern Harrier** cruising low, hunting over a field at the new East Athens Park. Bill and Karla O'Grady, neighborhood and backyard sightings: 1 **Fox Sparrow**, 2 **Blue-headed Vireos**, 1 **Coopers Hawk**, many **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers**, 3 **Pine Siskins**, 50-60 **Cedar Waxwings**, many **Ruby** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, 9 **Killdeer**, a pair of **Brown-headed Nuthatches** drilling a potential nesting hole, and lots of **White-throated** and **Chipping Sparrows**. They also reported **Red-Shouldered Hawks** rebuilding a nest blown out by a big storm last March, now seriously working on the nest. They have also seen a **Red-shouldered Hawk** eat a small opossum and another eat a **Mockingbird**. In mid-December Carole Ludwig and a friend took a trip to New Mexico and saw 40 to 60 **Sandhill Cranes** on s ranch by the Gila River. The cranes made a lot of noise as they came in then stayed on the ground. She also saw a **Bald Eagle**, **Gamble's Quail** (hundreds), and **Cactus Wren**.

**Mary Case— Yucatan Birding, Nov. 6-16th, 2001:** The Yucatan Peninsula has a wide variety of habitats from mangrove swamps, dry areas, marshlands to more tropical rain forest to low moist mountains. The Peninsula is rich with around 537 birds; however 225 of these are northern migrants seen during the winter months. On her list of 118 birds observed 48 of them are seen in the US. One highlight of the trip was visiting the marshy areas— old rice fields— with thousands of birds including many of our water birds— all kinds of herons and egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, Jacanas and Wood Storks to name a few. There was a flock of maybe 3,000 Blue-winged Teal wintering. In the mangrove swamps along the gulf coast the group saw perhaps 10,000 of the 40,000 Pink Flamingos that winter there from another area of the Yucatan Peninsula.

**Possible Field Trip Site:** On January 6th David Galewski, Gary Crider, and Maggie Nettles visited the 1200-acre Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve near Gainesville as a place for a future field trip for the ORAS. They were especially interested because the National Audubon Society recently designated Chicopee Woods as an Important Birding Area (IBA). The Elachee Nature Science Center at the preserve, maintains over 12 miles of hiking trails. Peter Gordon, the Center's Director of Education, suggested that the trails near the Chicopee Woods Lake provide a prime birding area. From the observation blind beside the lake, the team watched a Soro Rail dodge in and out among the reeds for about half an hour. In addition there were American Black Ducks, Gadwalls, and Mallards. The trails promise rich birding for woodpeckers, sparrows (from the bluffs overlooking a swampy area) and, in the spring, warblers.

*Directions to center...* to the lake at the south end of Preserve (also called the Aquatic Center). Take Hwy. 53 North from Braselton, pick up Hwy 13 toward Gainesville, at the first stoplight turn right onto Poplar Springs Rd. Then left onto Poplar Springs Church Rd. Turn left onto Calvary Church Rd. The center will be on the left at the bottom of the hill. Watch for the white fence. For detailed directions see <http://www.elachee.org/Directions/DIRECTIO.HTM>. For information about birding see <http://www.elachee.org/News/IBA/IBA.htm>.

**Great Backyard Bird Count:** Feb 15-18, 2002. Help the scientists track the birds in your community. What do you do? Count the birds in your back yard, at your feeder, or local park on any of the four days. Watch your feeders or take a short walk in your neighborhood recording the highest number of individuals that you see at any one time. Be careful that you don't count repeat visitors at your feeders. Count for at least 15 minutes. Then enter your count on line at the Great Backyard Bird Count site (<http://www.birdsource.org>) and use the State/Province Checklist to submit your highest counts for that day. After you record your results, visit the Map-room to view the results from across the continent. The 10 most common Species in the GBBC 2001 were as follows: Mourning Dove, Northern Cardinal, Dark-eyed Junco, American Crow, Blue Jay, House Finch, Downy Woodpecker, American Goldfinch, Black-capped Chickadee, and Tufted Titmouse. Last year volunteers from every state and Province submitted more than 53,000 checklists. This information helps to understand the dynamics of the North American bird populations. Every contribution is important, even if you see only 5 species at your feeder or 75 from a more extensive day's outing. Don't hesitate to participate in this year's count. The National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology host the count.

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**Audubon update:** Help stop the poisoning of 2 million blackbirds by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, beginning spring of 2002. The poisoning threatens to kill a number of other species including grassland songbirds, whose populations are already in steep decline. The USDA is conducting this poisoning in an effort to reduce sunflower crop damage in the Northern plains. Audubon opposes the blackbird-poisoning program because it cannot be justified on economic or scientific grounds. Please contact Secretary of Agriculture Anne Veneman and urge her to end the poisoning of Red-winged Blackbirds in North and South Dakota. Register your protest at the site below and for more information. Send your fax or e-mail today.  
<http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/contact/default.asp?subject=41>.

**Results of 2001 Congress Conservation Measures:**

**Migratory Bird Protection:** The 106th Congress passed the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act-a 5 year measure focused on conserving and enhancing wintering habitats. The 107th Congress authorized \$3 million to fund the Act for the fiscal year 2002. Congress increased funding for its overall Migratory Bird Management Program.

**Bird Management Program:** Audubon's Land and Water Conservation Priorities. This year's Interior Appropriations Bill included \$28.3 million for Audubon's Land and Water Conservation Fund to be used for habitat priorities in 10 states.

**Increased Funding for National Wildlife Refuges:** The National Wildlife Refuge System received a \$19 million increase over FY 2001 for the Operation and Maintenance budget for refuges. The 520 National Wildlife Reserves are critical for protecting our country's diverse bird and wildlife populations but most are battling insufficient budgets. This increase is a great step forward.

**Funding for Endangered Species:** Congress did not give the program sufficient funding to continue listing birds, wildlife, plant and other species.

**Roadless Rule:** On Dec. 14th the Forest Service issued interim directives on roads in forest, stating that they will be in effect for 18 months. These directives eliminate the protection of many pristine roadless areas in national forests. Over 500,000 Americans called the Bush Administration to uphold the Roadless Area Conservation Rule but implementation has been held in limbo for nearly a year.

Watch the 2002 Congress for action on funding of these programs, and for decisions on ANWAR protection from oil drilling (February), Everglades restoration, and strengthening of the Fisheries Recovery Act.

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