



The Yellowthroat

*Voice of the
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society*

February 2009

Vol. 20 No. 2

Next Meeting Thursday, February 5, 7:00 p.m. Sandy Creek Nature Center

“The Issues Surrounding Free-ranging Cats, with Emphasis on Possible Solutions for Clarke County” will be the subject of a panel discussion at the February 5 ORAS meeting. The panel will include

- **J Michael Meyers**, Research Wildlife Biologist at the U.S. Dept. of Interior, Certified Wildlife Biologist, and adjunct UGA Graduate Faculty;
- **William Mangham**, DVM, Athens Regional Spay & Neuter Center's veterinarian;
- **Kelly Bettinger**, Certified Wildlife Biologist, Donovan Lab, UGA Plant Biology Department;
- **Steve Holzman**, member of Georgia Ornithological Society's executive committee and list manager for Georgia Birding Online.

The panel will cover such controversial topics as feral cat colonies, Trap-Neuter-Release programs, cats' effects on wildlife, disease transmission, euthanasia, and humane treatment of cats and wildlife.

Spring 2009 Bird Walks

For information about specific walks, come to the monthly meetings or send an email to fieldtrip@oconeeriversaudubon.org

- March 21 8:00 a.m., **State Botanical Garden** upper parking lot (Day Chapel)
- March 28 8:00 a.m., **Sandy Creek Park** last lot on Campsite Dr. across dam
- April 4 8:00 a.m., **Whitehall Forest** South Milledge Ave. & Whitehall Rd
- April 11 8:00 a.m., **Sandy Creek Nature Center** SCNC Allen House
- April 18 8:00 a.m., **State Botanical Garden** upper parking lot (Day Chapel)
- May 2 8:00 a.m., **Sandy Creek Nature Center** (Cooks Trail Cleanup) SCNC Allen House

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:



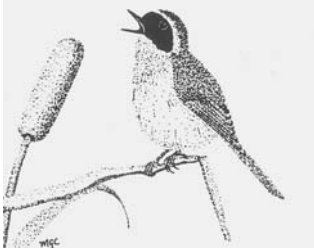
Go left at the end of this short road. The ENSAT building will be a short way down the road on your right.

Sightings Reported at January Meeting

- **Red-shouldered Hawks** (2), Alison Huff, backyard, 1/6/09
- **Orange-crowned Warbler**, Lorene Winter, backyard, 12/08 & 1/09
- **Ravens** (2) Walt Cook, Arkaquah Trail, off Brasstown Bald, 11/16/08
- **House finches** (2), Brad Hogue, yard
- **Great Horned Owl**, Elizabeth Little, Homewood Hills, 1/2/09
- **Sandhill Cranes, Northern Rough-winged Swallow**, Allison Forkner, Okeefenokee, 11/22/09
- **Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher** “fishin,” Diane Burkhard, South Jackson County, 1/8/09
- **Belted Kingfisher**, Raymond Burdsal, North Oconee River Greenway
- **Hermit Thrush**, Ann Mahoney & Fred Rossini, backyard
- **Scaup, Ring-necks, Buffleheads**, Ann Mahoney and Fred Rossini, Bear Creek Reservoir
- **Bald Eagles** (2), Jason Jones and Scott Brandis, Petersburg, VA, 1/2/09
- **Sandhill Cranes** (thousands) and **Whooping Cranes** (2), Maggie Nettles, Paynes Prairie, FL, Christmas week

Conservation Corner Sounds Out on Nearby State Parks

by Verna Johnson,
Conservation Chair



With the miles of holiday travels over, maybe your next trip can be a little closer to home. Whether you're into birding, fishing, walking, or just enjoying the outdoors, Georgia offers some of the best state parks, providing us with all and more of these opportunities. At least eight state parks—all less than an hour's drive from Athens—are available for us to explore.

Ft. Yargo State Park, located in Winder, offers 18 miles of mountain bike trails, a 260 acre lake for fishing, canoeing or birding, and a new disc golf course. Photos can be submitted of the park for their annual photo contest. Contact the park office or web site for details.

Watson Mill Bridge State Park, located in Comer, provides important wetland habitat, trails that follow along the South Fork River, and five-acre Mill Pond.

Victoria Bryant State Park in the rolling hills of Georgia's upper piedmont caters to nature lovers with viewing of wildlife food plots and eight miles of trails that wind through hardwoods and across creeks.

Bobby Brown State Park on 70,000 acre Clarks Hill Lake teaches beginners how to use a compass with a self-guided Land Navigation Course. The short compass trail could take up to an hour and a half and the long trail from three to five hours. Hiking at the park could give you a glimpse of a pair of Bald Eagles that frequent the area.

Mistletoe State Park, also located on Clarks Hill Lake, offers a wildlife observation area, 12 miles of backpacking trails and for the birders, a three-page checklist of the birds of Mistletoe. The checklist was compiled by Anne Waters, a volunteer with the park as well as the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program.

Those are just a few of Georgia State Parks and what they have to offer. Park entrance fees start as little as \$3 a day. Annual passes can be purchased for \$30. An article by Allison Huff in last month's *Yellowthroat* regarding Important Bird Areas, makes me wonder if working to establish IBAs in our state parks could be a win-win situation for everyone. We need to help protect and preserve our parks that provide habitat for wildlife so future generations can enjoy them.

To submit an article for Conservation Corner, email us at conservation@oconeeriversaudubon.org

Flint River: Its History and Its Future

summaried by Maggie Nettles

At the January ORAS meeting, April Ingle, Executive Director of Georgia River Network, showed photos of the Flint River, many taken on Paddle Georgia 2008, and talked about the determination to protect a river that such an event can generate. She also reviewed the history of the river, its close call with being dammed in the 1970s, and the reprieve provided by President Jimmy Carter. She also described the support Carter provided this past summer at Paddle Georgia and his success at inspiring so many paddlers to become active river protectors.

Then she discussed dangers that the Flint River currently faces. High on the list is Metro Atlanta's thirst for water, which has resulted in renewed demands for damming the Flint River. Other threats include new development, erosion and sedimentation problems, loss of floodplain, and withdrawals for water supplies and for irrigation.

Paddle Georgia 2009 will take place June 20-26 on the Coosawattee / Oostanaula Rivers in Northwest Georgia. For additional information, check out http://www.garivers.org/paddle_georgia/pghome.html.

The Great Backyard Bird Count: Count for Fun, Count for the Future

from <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org.

Going Green is for the Birds!

ORAS now has shopping bags for sale for eight dollars! Each bag is made of five recycled two-liter bottles, is machine washable, and could prevent hundreds of plastic shopping bags from filling landfills!



Bird Conservation and Mortality Information from David Sibley

from <http://www.sibleyguides.com/mortality.htm>

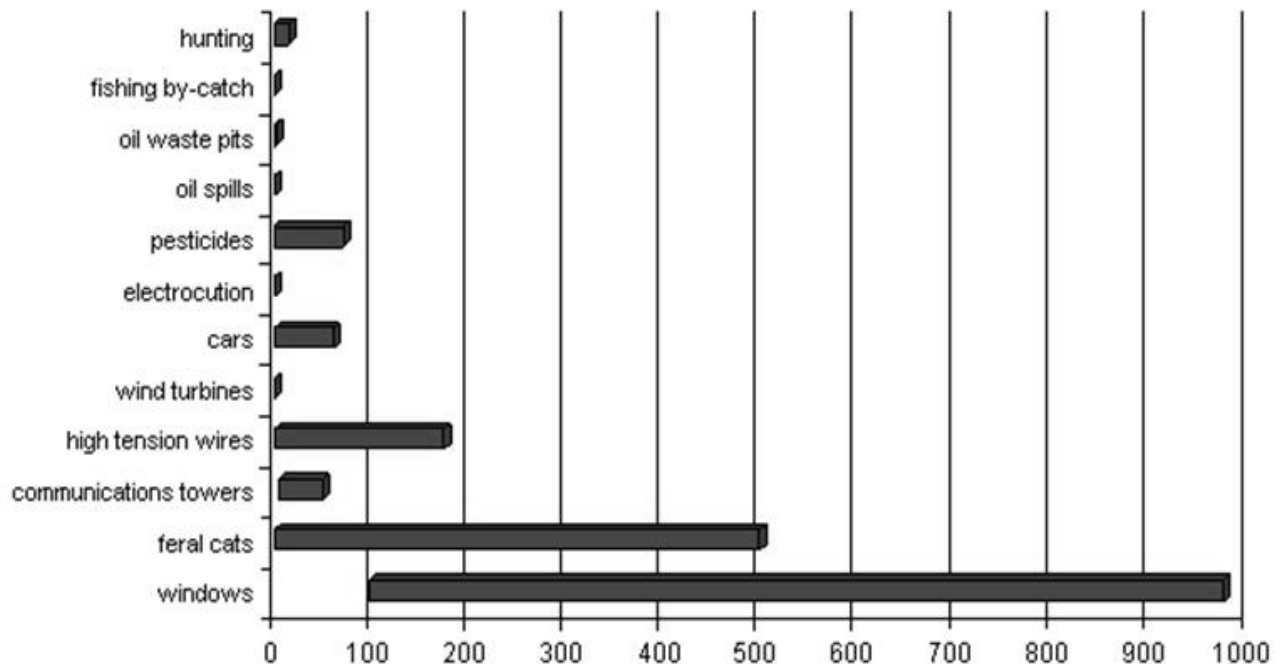
First, it should be stated that the single most significant threat to bird populations is habitat destruction, in all of its forms and with all of its causes. The various causes of mortality outlined below kill individual birds directly, and can certainly have an adverse effect on population size, but can actually have a beneficial effect in some cases. Studies of hunting have documented that in certain cases killing

small numbers of birds can improve the health and survival of the remaining birds. As long as the habitat is intact, the population has the potential to replace the lost birds.

In simplest terms, habitat destruction reduces the population by reducing the available resources, denying birds the chance to reproduce, and effectively putting a cap on the population size.

The problems outlined below are serious threats and are implicated in the declines of many species. They should be addressed.

Estimated Annual Mortality (in millions of birds)



Editor's Note: David Sibley provides excellent additional information with links at

<http://www.sibleyguides.com/mortality.htm>

On windows, Sibley provides the following:

Window strikes - estimated to kill 97 to 976 million birds/year - Millions of houses and buildings, with their billions of windows, pose a significant threat to birds. Birds see the natural habitat mirrored in the glass and fly directly into the window, causing injury and, in 50% or more of the cases, death. Simple steps can be taken to reduce the number of birds striking windows. Decals that stick to the glass are not very effective, but strips of tape on the outside of the glass, or strings or feathers hanging outside the window, each no more than 10 inches apart, are fairly effective. Decorative features like stained glass designs or window dividers can achieve the same result. Outside screens are very effective both to

reduce the reflection and to cushion the impact. In short, anything that reduces or breaks up the window's reflection will reduce bird strikes. Lots of excellent info at FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program) ; follow the link to collision prevention and be sure to check out the "CollidEscape" film.

On cats, Sibley provides the following:

Domestic and Feral Cats - may kill 500 million birds per year or more. More information can be found at The American Bird Conservancy. Predators, of course, account for the vast majority of bird deaths each year, and most of this predation is natural. Domestic cats are not natural predators, but kill many birds. It is worth noting that house cats have been blamed for the extinction of two species of small mammals in the southeastern United States, and feral cats continue to be a huge problem where they have been introduced on many oceanic islands.

Bought a Duck Stamp This Year?

information adapted from <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps/>

With habitat destruction “the single most significant threat to bird populations” (see the information from David Sibley on preceding page), all of us need to act to save habitat. One easy way is to buy a duck stamp each year.

Traditionally bought as a hunting license, the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly known as a “Duck Stamp,” is a vital tool for wetland conservation. Ninety-eight cents out of every dollar generated by the sales of Federal Duck Stamps goes directly to purchase or lease wetland habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Besides serving as a hunting license and a conservation tool, a current year’s Federal Duck Stamp also serves as an entrance pass for National Wildlife Refuges.

You can buy a duck stamp at a post office or from Steve Holzman at an ORAS meeting.

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Submit information to the address above or by e-mail to yellowthroat@oconeeriversaudubon.org. Articles, artwork, notices, and sighting reports welcomed. The deadline for submissions is the first Thursday of each month. All articles and artwork are 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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