



The Yellowthroat

*Voice of the
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society*

May 2008

Vol. 19 No. 5

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 1, 7:00 p.m. Sandy Creek Nature Center

Maureen O'Brien, horticulturist at the UGA College of Environment and Design and key member of the Athens-Clarke County Tree Council, will talk about **deer-resistant and drought-resistant native plants** that attract birds and other wildlife. Following her presentation, we will have an informal plant swap. Bring a plant that you would like to share with someone else, and participate in the **first ORAS pass-along plant swap!**

ORAS volunteers will star during our annual volunteer appreciation event, also scheduled for the May meeting. Current president Edwige Damron will be recognizing and thanking each and every volunteer. This is one of the many activities that she began and for which we need to recognize her as she steps down from the presidency.

Election of Officers for the upcoming year will also take place during the May meeting since several nominees will be out of town in June. Following is the list of nominees:

- Vanessa Lane, President
- Edwige Damron, Vice-president
- Mary Case, Secretary
- Jim McMinn, Treasurer

Big City Bread will provide scrumptious refreshments for our busy evening. Thank you, Big City Bread!

May 2008 Field Trips

ORAS has two field trips scheduled for May. Call Ed Maioriello at 208-8504 for details.

- May 10 Cochran Shoals
- May 24 Ivy Log Gap Road & Sosebee Cove

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.

Important Note: the **June 5th Potluck Picnic** will take place at Sandy Creek Park at 6:00 p.m. To reach Sandy Creek Park, go north on Highway 441 beyond the nature center. Turn right on Bob Holman Road.

Annual June Potluck Picnic

The June 5th Potluck Picnic will take place at Sandy Creek Park Barbecue Shelter (near the fishing pier) beginning at 6:00 p.m. Please note the time change and the location change. To reach Sandy Creek Park, go north on Highway 441 beyond the nature center. Turn right on Bob Holman Road.

Bring a dish of your favorite recipe, and join us for an evening of socializing in the outdoors!

May Spring Bird Walk

Join Oconee Rivers Audubon members on the May 3 Sandy Creek Nature Center bird walk and Cook's Trail Cleanup, beginning at 8:00 a.m., at the Allen House. Call Ed Maioriello at 208-8504 for details.

The 2008 Youth Birding Competition: the Thunderbirders & the Flyboys

The Youth Birding Competition is a 24-hour birding competition in which teams (representing a school, Scout troop, 4-H club, science club, etc.) compete with other teams their age to count as many species of birds as they can in Georgia. They start Friday evening (May 2) finding owls and other nocturnal species, bird throughout Saturday (May 3), and finish for an awards banquet and live animal show at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center at 5:00 p.m.

The Thunderbirders and Flyboys Youth Birding Teams of Watkinsville, after having competed for several years, are participating in the fund-raising aspect of this year's Youth Birding Competition. They will donate all proceeds raised to the Jekyll Island Banding Station. If you want to support both the youth birders and the banding station, you can pledge either a per species amount or a fixed amount by contacting Team Captain Luke Simmons at 706-769-1939 or Thunderbirder@bellsouth.net.

Last year they counted 123 species. The Thunderbirders include John Mark Simmons (11), Beth Simmons (13), Ashleigh Dial (8), and Sam Brunson (12). The Flyboys include Luke Simmons (15), Dawson Allen (15), Aaron Dial (13), and Chris Dial (15). Several of the team members attended the April meeting to explain their goals and show photos from the past several competitions.

The "Right" of the Right Whale

summarized by Maggie Nettles

Hans Neuhauser, of the Georgia Environmental Policy Institute, talked to over 40 people attending the March ORAS meeting about the history, biology, and future of the fewer than 400 remaining North Atlantic right whales.

These highly evolved mammals did indeed get their common name because they were the right whales to kill—they provided oil for lamps and baleen for items now made from plastic, and they were easy to kill because they inhabited the coasts and floated when dead. Those that remain summer near the Bay of Fundy, feeding in tight concentrations on copepods about the size of a pinhead. During the winter, they had for years mysteriously disappeared from human sight. Several decades ago, researchers learned that right whales migrate during the winter to calving grounds within 15 miles of the Georgia coast.

Both locations left the whales vulnerable to shipping traffic, and the whales remained oblivious to

the danger since any whale that was hit by a ship died. Humans must, said Neuhauser, "learn to share the ocean. We don't need to so dominate the ocean that we destroy everything else in it." He then explained how Canadians, by simply passing a law that moved a shipping lane over a mile, had virtually eliminated summer collisions between right whales and ships. The Southeast, he pointed out, has a similar opportunity that so far is voluntary rather than legally binding—having the Jacksonville Port shipping traffic follow one lane out for 15 miles rather than speeding through the ocean on many lanes.

So we know how to share the ocean and avoid whale kills, he said. Now we need the political will to do so. And he provided three answers to the question of what individuals can do to help protect the whales:

1. Vote for candidates who support the Endangered Species Act;
2. Contact representatives and urge them to fund the Act;
3. Continue to learn—re-read *Moby Dick* for the whale story, and read the newly published book on the history of whaling, *Leviathan*.

By the way, researchers have photographed and identified each individual adult right whale. Don't they have the right to survive?

Right Whale Listening Network

from <http://www.listenforwhales.org/> featured on the main web page for Cornell Lab of Ornithology

If you want to learn more about right whales, explore the information at <http://www.listenforwhales.org>

This site provides videos on such topics as *A Right Whale's Life*, with the basics of where the whales live, what they eat, why they're endangered, and why there's still hope. You can even listen to whales!

A map at the web site lets a viewer track the locations of right whales. New smart buoys listen for whale calls all day, every day. Frequent alerts let ship captains know where and when to slow down—and save a whale.

The right whale listening network employs 13 "auto-detection buoys" that listen for whales day and night. The buoys record underwater sounds and analyze them as the sounds come in. When the onboard software detects a right whale call, the buoy makes a cell or satellite phone call to an analyst at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, who verifies the information so it can be included in warnings sent to ships in the area.

Right whales are large, slow-moving whales that can weigh up to 70 tons. Fewer than 400 remain, and a leading cause of death is collisions with ships.

Annual All Women's Birding Bust

from <http://www.birdingadventuresinc.com/AWBB2007.html>

Get out your binoculars, ladies, and join your female birding buddies in Georgia's Big Day Count for women only. For one day, May 3, 2008, we will count birds in Georgia. You can participate for as many hours as you like and count birds anywhere in the state that you want. You can bird as hard or little as you desire. Do it by yourself or form a team with some of your favorite women birders. Even as you read this, teams are forming all over the state.

Our primary goal is to get women out into the field and participate in an all-female Big Day Count. However, if any men care to conduct a Big Day at the same time, we will accept the challenge.

To register for the All Women's Birding Bust, simply fill out the information below and e-mail it to georganschmalz@alltel.net along with a donation of \$15.00 to cover your t-shirt plus postage.

You may call in the information at 404-245-7273 or snail-mail it to Georgann Schmalz, 152 Willow Oak Lane, Dawsonville, GA 30534.

Wildflower Celebration V: Keep Barnett Shoals Road Beautiful

The fifth annual Keep Barnett Shoals Road Beautiful Wildflower Celebration will take place on Saturday, May 10, from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Activities are planned at both Barnett Shoals Elementary School and Athens Montessori School but also along Barnett Shoals Road from Whitehall Road to the Bob Godfrey/Barnett Shoals Road intersection (Creek Side Country Club).

Planners invite the public to participate in the fifth year of celebrating the beauty of this unique, scenic area of Athens-Clarke County. View wildflowers and enjoy many fun activities (native gardens, art, music, Rock & Shoals Outcrop trek, garden sculpture, raffle, artists painting outdoors and more).

For additional information, see <http://home.bellsouth.net/p/PWP-wfc07>

2008 Alec Little Environmental Award

Elizabeth Little, former ORAS president, received the 2008 Alec Little Environmental Award for her decade-long advocacy for improving water quality and monitoring land use and growth in Athens. Congratulations, Elizabeth, for your hard work and dedication to conservation.

Sightings Reported at April Meeting

- **Black-and-white Warbler & Louisiana Waterthrush**, both singing, Page Luttrell, Madison County, 3/30/08
- **Black-and-white Warbler & Louisiana Waterthrush**, Carole Ludwig, Oconee County, 4/1/08
- **Canada Geese** pair w/ 6 goslings, Lorene Winter, Highway 15, Oconee County, 4/2/08
- **Louisiana Waterthrushes, Osprey, Common Yellowthroat**, Allison Huff, Sandy Creek Nature Center, 3/30/08
- **Piliated Woodpeckers**, pair, Madison County, Michele Abrams
- **Osprey**, Jason Jones, Lake Sinclair, 3/15/08
- **Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, nesting Red-shouldered Hawks**, Eugenia Thompson, near Morton Rd., 4/3/08, 3/31/08
- **Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, Wood Thrush**, Peter Hawman, Botanical Garden, 3/27/08
- **Horned Grebe, 10 Common Loons**, Vanessa Lane, James Neves, Joel McNeal, Bear Creek Reservoir, 4/3/08

What is The Birdhouse Network (TBN)?

from <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse/>

The Birdhouse Network is . . .

* A citizen-science project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in which people place birdhouses, or nest boxes, in their yard or neighborhood and then monitor the birds that nest inside. Participants gather information such as the number of eggs and young in the nest, then submit their data over the Internet to scientists at the Lab of Ornithology.

* A continent wide database! The data become part of a national database—larger than any one researcher could collect in a lifetime—which will help answer large-scale ecological questions about bird populations. Best of all, members receive feedback about their data from Lab scientists, and view results over the Internet as they become available.

* Real scientific research aimed at helping birds! TBN is an exciting way to participate in "hands-on" scientific research. Not only will you enjoy contributing to science, you'll also be helping cavity-nesting birds by providing nesting sites in your area.

Two Great Events, One Location

May 17, 2008, at the State Botanical Garden
by Alison Huff

The State Botanical Garden of Georgia will host two exciting nature events on Saturday, May 17. Starting at 9:30 a.m. is Forest Festival!—a morning of hands-on discovery in the great outdoors. Children and their parents explore the temperate forests of Georgia and the tropical forests of South America, the migratory birds that share the forests of these regions, and the native cultures associated with them. Admission is \$10 per family (maximum), \$3 per person. 9:30 am–12:30 pm at the Visitor Center.

At 1:30 p.m. at the Calloway Building, you are cordially invited to a free Dedication Ceremony as the Audubon Society recognizes the State Botanical Garden as an official **Important Birding Area**. This ceremony commemorates recognition of exceptional bird and wildlife habitat that is vital to the health and sustainability of bird populations worldwide. The Botanical Garden is the 49th site in Georgia to achieve this recognition. Light refreshments will follow the ceremony, as well as an informal bird walk through the gardens.

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Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

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