



The Yellowthroat

*Voice of the
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society*

April 2002

Vol. 12 No. 4

Upcoming Meetings

**April 4th: 7:00 p.m.,
Sandy Creek Nature Center ENSAT building**

Dr. Darrel Morrison, Professor of Landscape Architecture at UGA, will speak on "Landscaping with Native Plants. Dr. Morrison came to Georgia from the University of Wisconsin in 1993 to be Dean of the School of Environmental Design. At Wisconsin he taught Landscape Architecture, with emphasis on native plant communities. In 1992 Dr. Morrison became a Professor in the School of Landscape Architecture and has continued to focus on native plant communities in the designed-and-managed landscape. He teaches design and a field course each spring on native plant communities. He was a senior landscape architect for the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, TX. Currently he is working on a new native Utah Botanical Center for Utah State University and has done work on native California vegetation for the Santa Barbara Botanical Garden.

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.

Monthly Meeting Raffle

For April, local renowned artist Susan Daniel Cooper has donated a generous package of her note cards featuring her exquisite rendering of bird feathers. For May a signed copy of Tim Homan's new book "Hiking Trails of the Southern Nantahala..." will be the prize.

Spring Bird Walks

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society and the Sandy Creek Nature Center co-sponsor these bird walks. Spring

migration will be in full flight shortly. Join us as these birds head north to their nesting sites. Bird walks are open to everyone. People at all levels of birding experience are encouraged to attend. The walks are generally at an easy pace although waterproof footwear and rain gear are advisable. For more information, contact David Galewski at 543-1988.

April 20: State Botanical Gardens. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Callaway Building Parking Lot.

April 27: Sandy Creek Nature Center. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Allen House.

May 4: State Botanical Gardens. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Callaway Building Parking lot.

May 18: State Botanical Gardens. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Callaway Building Parking lot.

Zoo Day is May 18 at Memorial Park from 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Field Trip April 28 to the Elachee Nature Center, Gainesville. Assemble at 6:45 a.m. in the parking lot in front of the Allen House, Sandy Creek Nature Center.

Camping Trip

May 3rd and 4th to the Nantahala National Forest, with the Kimsey Creek Group Campground reserved for both nights. The weekend should provide peak wildflower viewing along with birds migrating through the mountains and chances to visit some majestic trees. All who plan to go must pay a \$10:00 camping fee by the April meeting.

River Rendezvous 2002

A day in the Life of a Watershed. This year's River Rendezvous sponsored by the Upper Oconee Watershed Network (UOWN) will be held on Saturday, April 27th. More information will be coming, but mark your calendars for a day of fun, service, and education in the Oconee Watershed. Check their web site <http://www.uown.org>.

...Sightings...

Bill and Karla O'Grady, March 7th, two nesting **Red-shouldered Hawks**, 50-60 **Pine Siskins** at their feeder. Carole Ludwig **Red-tailed Hawks** nesting on Colham Ferry Road, south of Waktinsville. Lee Minersmann, two **White-throated Sparrows**, first **Bluebirds** of the year, last week of February, River Edge Condo Grounds. Sigrid Sanders, February 10th saw **Brown Creeper** in her back yard in pines, Oconee County. Eugenia Thompson, the **Kestrel** is still hanging out on Morton Road. (It was seen during the Christmas Bird count). Charles Ratliff, **Sandhill Cranes** flying over the Sandy Creek Nature Center in mid-February. Mark Freeman Feb. 4th **American Woodcock** aerial displaying off Whit Davis Rd. Jane Wright and Elizabeth Bishop-Martin, a pair of **Sand Hill Cranes** off Hwy 15 across from the Iron Horse, March 13th.

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Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

March 7th Meeting

Many thanks to Brad Winn for his excellent talk, primarily on the migration route of Red Knots throughout the year. We began at the tip of South America, Tierra del Fuego, where the Red Knots winter on the tidal flats along with other shore birds such as Hudsonian Godwits. There they eat clams and mussels before they begin their long flight in the spring arriving along the Georgia coast the second week of May, then on northward to the Delaware Bay where they feast on horseshoe crab eggs. At that time they double their body weight from 110 grams to 220 grams before leaving for their nesting grounds in James Bay at the south end of the Hudson Bay in Canada. There the female lays four eggs on small hummocks on the higher rocky shores. After the female lays the eggs, she heads south leaving the male to hatch the eggs and care for the chicks for about three weeks. After three weeks the males head south to Georgia, leaving the chicks to fend for themselves on a diet of insects. The chicks seem to "know" when to head south to follow their parents to the Georgia coast. A very few Red Knots winter on the Altamaha River flats and the Sapelo sound eating a species of small clam that is there in abundance. The Red Knots eat the whole clam— shell and all— while the Oystercatchers open the clams and eat the meat. Around the end of September, the Red Knots return to their wintering grounds on Tierra del Fuego.

Arctic waders: "capital breeders" or "income breeders"?

As mentioned above, in his March talk to ORAS, Brad Winn described the fattening of Red Knots in Chesapeake Bay and alluded to the generally held assumption that the extra energy stored in the fat is used for breeding (i.e., are "capital breeders"). In a recent issue of *Nature* (25 October, 2001 vol. 413, p.794) Dutch ornithologists describe results of measuring nutrient source of eggs and down of hatchlings for ten species of arctic breeding waders, including the Red Knot. Invertebrates of the tundra and streams of the arctic have a distinctly different stable-isotope ratio from those of the estuaries where the birds winter. The waders' eggs and the down of their hatchlings showed the isotope ratio characteristic of the invertebrates of the tundra and streams, not that of the estuaries. The conclusion was that arctic waders are "income breeders," not "capital breeders" as previously thought.

Search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker (update):

Researches say rare woodpecker was possibly heard. On Jan 27th at 3:30 p.m. 4 of the 6 researchers heard a series of double raps characteristic of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker at an undisclosed spot in the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area near Slidell, LA. Two days later, members of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology again heard and recorded the last of the double-rap of the sequence and some subsequent rapping in the same area. Other evidence in the same area included bark scraped off trees as well as large nest cavities. They could not rule out the possibility that the raps and the nest building activity were that of Pileated Woodpeckers. Subsequent searches will take place in this area, and Dr. Luneau of the group said that in his opinion the Ivory-billed Woodpecker was not extinct (*NY Times* 2/21/02)

Where Do Migratory Birds Winter?

In order to determine how tropical deforestation affects migratory bird species, Rubenstein *et al.* (*Science* vol. 295, page 1062, 2002) studied the migration pattern of Black-throated Blue Warblers by following the stable isotope signature in the feathers. These studies showed that birds from the northern part of the breeding range—New York state north into Canada and west to Michigan—generally wintered in Cuba and Jamaica while those from the southern parts of the breeding range—West Virginia, south to Georgia along the Appalachians—wintered in Hispaniola and Puerto Rico. There is some mixing between the two populations in their wintering grounds. Habitat loss in the wintering grounds will greatly affect the survival of the different populations of these warblers.

Memories of the Sapelo Island trip

ORAS sponsored a camping/birding trip to Sapelo Island March 8-10. The 23 birders spotted 108 species over the weekend, as they birded on the trails around the visitor center on the mainland, from the ferry, on the beach at the Cabretta Island campground, and on Sapelo Island itself. Here are some memories from participants:

Tim Homan— Cabretta Beach dawn (Saturday, 6:10 a.m.): A mountain-range cloudscape — long, linear, just offshore — rises in a solid gray mass from sea to jagged sky; fifteen minutes later, the earthspin sunrise fires the

cordillera lurid red, lighting the cycles and circles of a new day.

Page Lutrell— Two warm, halcyon days of great company, easy laughter, a beach to ourselves without other people, dogs, radios---but with flashing flocks of knots and dunlin, marbled godwits flying fierce maneuvers in the crashing waves, and a long-billed curlew stalking worms in the mudflats.

Mark Freeman— The unspoiled beach and dunes with no buildings, signs, roads, or people other than our group; two very active, feeding Long-billed Curlews and, later, five Bald Eagles in one location, picking at a carcass way out on the open mudflats near the surf, seemingly out of place.

Elizabeth Little— Two favorite firsts for me: The Long-billed Curlew (seen in three places including South Beach on Sunday) and nesting Great Blue Herons. Two best things I learned: How to see spider eyes and David's explanation of how to identify the constellations.

Linda Russell— Sunrise, spider eyes, stars galore, convenience store, frogs croaking, bonfire smoking, bird the shore, who could ask for more?

Gary Crider— Enchantment began the first night with golden spider eyes reflected in a headlamp beam. A walk on the dark beach with no flashlight, no city lights, and no moon revealed stars underfoot in the wet sand. David pointed out the seven brightest stars and spoke their names. The following day, a Long-billed Curlew appeared, and my feelings of enchantment mixed with astonishment.

Chris Skelton— The map says we should take a left here. [re: Giff Beaton's map, the dump, and the Chachalaca]

Mark D.— Lean against the boat, not the rail, and DON'T MOVE! (from DNR ferry worker)

Paul Smith— A delightful start for 2002 birding—adding 6 life shorebirds while in a bug-free paradise with some very fine folks.

Albie Smith— The trip to Sapelo was my first attempt at identifying shore birds in winter plumage. Saturday morning's adventure to the north beach with David Galewski helped me break the ice in this foreboding facet of birding. Many thanks to David, his wonderful spotting scope, and enthusiasm for anything with two legs and feathers, for making this a fun and rewarding journey. I now love the Wilson's plover and his curious little chortle.

Spotting the red knot with a band on each leg, especially after just having our Thursday meeting on this topic, was a distinct highlight of the day.

Mike Conroy— Gannets whirling and diving behind dolphins in the surf.

Laura Conroy— Dainty deer and dolphins.

Mary Conroy— Palm trees and dolphins in a cool night breeze. Birds in a canopy of moss-covered trees.

Liz Conroy— I've heard there are "Women Who Run with the Wolves," and now I know there are "Girls Who Run with the Dolphins."

Maggie Nettles— Frog tracks in the sand = hieroglyphs at dawn; spider eyes = hundreds of emeralds glittering in the dark; standing in stars = night-time low tide reflections.

Minnie Crider— The tranquility of the campsite with its wonderful live oaks full of Spanish moss.

Carole Ludwig— Spider eyes, moons of Jupiter, Long-billed Curlew—This was the magic of Sapelo for me.

Shan Cammack— Have you seen my tripod?! or hot dog, you can see Jupiter's moons! or did you see the bill on that curlew!! or you see, camping for me is staying in a hotel with no room service!

Templeton Hill— One of the best trips I have been on!!!



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