



The Yellowthroat

*Voice of the
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society*

December 2008

Vol. 19 No. 10

Next Meeting
Thursday, December 4, 7:00 p.m.
Sandy Creek Nature Center

January Meeting
Date Change
Thursday, January 8, 7:00 p.m.

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society will host a **Christmas Bird Count Panel Discussion and Question/Answer Session** at its December meeting, featuring Steve Holzman, Eugenia Thompson, and Vanessa Lane.

Vanessa, current ORAS president, will present the perspective of a new participant since last year was her first time on a Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Eugenia, former ORAS president and longtime CBC organizer, will share some of the history of the local CBC "count circle." In addition to bringing some wonderfully detailed maps of each section of the Athens-area circle, Steve—list manager for Georgia Birding Online and member of Georgia Ornithological Society's executive committee—will also talk about the origins of the CBC and its evolution into an important international Citizen Science tradition. All three hope that experienced counters will come eager to share their own memories and that those who have yet to count will come with questions.

If you would like to participate in the local December 20th CBC count, come to our December meeting or contact Mary Case (mecase@uga.edu) or Eugenia Thompson (ERoberthom@bellsouth.net).

Please put the date change for the January ORAS meeting onto your calendar. We will meet on January 8 rather than on January 1.

Sightings Reported at November Meeting

- **Pileated Woodpeckers**, Eugenia Thompson, Millstone Circle
- **Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher**, Sarah Cliett, her home near Danielsville
- **Tree Swallows** (more than 1,000), **Reddish Egret, Piping Plover**, Jonathan Gray, Jekyll Island
- **Cooper's Hawk**, on backyard feeder, Lorene Winters, Watkinsville
- **Ruffed Grouse**, Alison Huff, Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- **Green Jay, Roadrunner, Vermilion Flycatcher**, Vanessa Lane, Kingsville, TX
- **Plain Chachalaca**, Carole Ludwige, McAllen, TX

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.

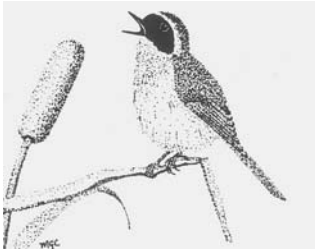
Think small

from <http://www.csmonitor.com/>

Are you a "Bigfoot" when it comes to planet Earth? Check out the Ecological Footprint Calculator at www.earthday.net/ecofootprint, where you "build" a 3-D avatar and construct a virtual neighborhood based on your food, energy, and transportation habits, etc. The calculator then tallies up how many planets it would take to sustain human life if everyone lived as you do. The good news: You'll find out ways you can make a not-so-big "impression" on the world.

Conservation Corner Sounds Out on Gameday Recycling

by Andrew Durso,
UGA Ecology Student



A rare bird made an appearance on UGA campus during each of the last three home football games. Over 75 people sported the bright green “plumage” described as “blinding, but strangely attractive” by tailgaters. Undergraduate students, community members, UGA staff, faculty and their family members wearing neon green shirts with black recycle logos and chasing arrows have collected over 7,900 pounds of glass and plastic bottles and aluminum cans on home game Saturdays this fall. Proceeds from the aluminum cans have accrued almost \$800 for Habitat for Humanity, while the bottles recycled at the ACC Materials Recycling Facility generate revenue for the county. (The public-private facility made over \$300,000 in 2008, the most profitable recycling program in Georgia. For more info visit www.acc-recycle.org).

The impetus for the program came from the Odum School of Ecology’s undergraduate Ecology Club, where junior Mark Milby of Marietta has catalyzed this effort to reform the nature of tailgating. Says Milby, “Our ultimate goal is to get the university to pick up what we’re doing and make it mandatory. It’s just a matter of the athletic association doing something.” Ecology club members and the Athletic Association are in negotiations to alter the AA’s contract with its sanitation service, F4 of Arnoldsville, who currently run a token recycling effort for cardboard inside Sanford Stadium and for glass and aluminum on the North Campus quad, representing less than 1% of campus. Ecology Club’s efforts brought bins to 18% of campus, between the streets of Carlton, Lumpkin, Baldwin and East Campus Road, and they plan to expand. In addition, collection from fans entering the stadium at gates 2 and 9 diverted thousands of cans and bottles from becoming landfilled. In a decade when our landfill may soon be filled, every little bit of diversion helps.

Although recycling is something people can get behind, it is the least valuable of the three R’s – reduction and reuse are both more efficient in terms of energy and materials recovery. However, the state of Georgia has greater processing capacity at in-markets (facilities that process recycled material for incorporation into downcycled products like carpet) than any other state but California, and we import

recycled goods from much of the rest of the US. It stands to reason that our state’s flagship university should be supporting this local industry by recycling on gamedays. At least that’s what volunteers at the gameday recycling program believe.

Keep an eye out for this sustainable bird, or become one yourself by signing up at www.ecology.uga.edu/recycling.

The ORAS Conservation Corner is an open forum where we can share tips and ideas on providing for, protecting, and preserving our rivers, forests, and wildlife. If you have a submission for Conservation Corner, email conservation@oconeeriversaudubon.org, or send mail to

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society
P.O. Box 81082
Athens, GA. 30608

Natural Christmas Trees I Have Seen

by Eugenia Thompson

- A huge cedar tree full of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings
- A young pine with a Red-tailed Hawk angel on top
- A leafless dogwood containing an American Robin, an Eastern Bluebird, and a Northern Cardinal
- A Willow Oak full of Eastern Meadowlarks facing the late afternoon sun

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

summarized by Maggie Nettles

Suki Janssen, the Waste Reduction Administrator for Athens-Clarke County (ACC) showed up at the November ORAS meeting wearing a jacket and skirt sewn from birdseed bags and gave a wonderfully positive talk on trash as “Recycling = Resources” at the November meeting.

Suki covered new national trends in waste reduction and what that already means for our area. The average Georgian, she said, generates seven to eight pounds of trash a day, more than the national average. However, people in the Athens-Clarke County area generated (in fiscal year 2008) 14,780.06 tons of recycled material that resulted in a revenue of \$36,648.94. Georgia, said Suki, has more end markets for recycling than any other state except California. The goal, she said, is zero waste.

Suki closed by challenging each of us to action via

1. Making personal choices
2. Talking to our political leaders

Golden-winged Warbler, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted and More: A Colorful Wave of Fall Migrants Passing Through

by Sigrid Sanders

When I first stepped outside late on a warm, sunny afternoon in early October, the trees around our house seemed quiet, with no hint of what was to come. The sky had recently cleared after a cloudy, gray morning and two days of rain. A Hairy Woodpecker announced its arrival among a stand of dead and dying pines, and set to work. A Pine Warbler sang – and then I heard the call of a Summer Tanager somewhere nearby, but out of sight. Its soft, repeated *pik-a-tuk* was the first sign of what would turn out to be one of the most amazing hours of birding I've ever experienced.

Some movement in the branches of an oak turned out to be a Tennessee Warbler, giving occasional faint *tssit* calls. A small, quick-moving bird with a smooth, almost velvety olive back and wings, a white breast and belly, and a delicate, pale streak above its eye, it stayed in constant motion, mostly hidden among the foliage as it gleaned insects and spiders from under the leaves, often turning upside down, and occasionally emerging long enough for me to see it well – before it disappeared into the depths of a large dogwood tree.

As I turned away and looked around, a much larger, slender bird with a long tail flew to a branch in the oak beside the deck where I was standing – a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. It perched in full view, giving me an unusually close-up view of its sleek shape and haughty profile, with the large, curved yellow bill, creamy white throat and breast, and the dramatic underside of its long tail, black with big white spots.

Another small, compact bird in the foliage turned out to be a Chestnut-sided Warbler. With a greenish head and back, two yellowish wing bars, and a white eye ring, it stayed relatively low in the branches and often came into full view as it darted from spot to spot. From that point on, the trees suddenly seemed to be filled with warblers and vireos, and for the next hour and a half or so, I couldn't move fast enough to see them all: Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, and Bay-breasted, Yellow-throated, Magnolia, and Black-throated Green Warblers – and last, but most exciting for me, a vivid, close-up view of a Golden-winged Warbler.

The Yellow-throated Warblers were perhaps the showiest of the group, frequently hawking insects from the ends of high branches in the oaks. Their heads were constantly turned up, showing off long necks, long thin bills, and flaming yellow throats, set

off by ink-black markings around the face and eyes and down the sides. The Bay-breasted Warblers, in contrast, looked sturdy and rather stolid, moving much more deliberately through the branches to catch caterpillars, and sitting quietly to eat each one. The ones I saw were males in handsome fall plumage, with greenish head and back, white wingbars, a yellowish face and subtle dark streak through the eye, a faint but distinctive pattern of streaks on the back, and a wash of reddish-brown on the flanks.

A Black-throated Green Warbler perched in the top of an oak as if posing, with its yellow face glowing in sunlight, and the black of its throat and upper breast bleeding down its sides in thick streaks. For the Yellow-throated Vireo and Blue-headed Vireo, caterpillars seemed to be the main attraction, but also some flying insects. Magnolia Warblers fluttered like butterflies, flashing yellow rumps and throats, and white tail-bands.

Just when I thought surely it couldn't get any better, I saw a very brightly patterned bird curled around the leaves at the end of a low branch in a water oak – with a gray back, yellow-gold crown, white face, black mask and throat, and thick, gleaming gold bar on the wing – it was a Golden-winged Warbler, a life bird for me, and a songbird whose populations are in serious decline. It looked small and round and neat, like a little ball of intense patterns of color, moving in an almost chickadee-like way as it probed and gleaned insects from the leaves.

Then suddenly, it was over. When the Golden-winged Warbler flew, I looked around and watched two Yellow-throated Warblers still hawking insects. But once they disappeared, I could find no more. One minute they were there – the next, they were gone.

Editor's Note: Do you recall the four inches of rain that Athens received early in October? When the sun broke through the clouds afterwards, I had a magical experience similar to Sigrid's. When I saw her posting on the ORAS QuickTopic board, I asked her if she would write up her experience for the newsletter.

If you want to keep track of the birds that people see in our area, remember to check the postings at <http://www.quicktopic.com/29/H/6JbdZFsuhUc6>.

Other highlights there during the past month or so include Joel McNeal's regular postings about the Georgia Botanical Garden and James Neeve's descriptions of his birding experiences.

On October 28, for example, James wrote, "It was a chilly but enjoyable morning at Sandy Creek Nature Center. Other than a little traffic on the greenway, the center was free of other people. Sparrows and kinglets were numerous, as were the Winter Wrens. (Counts listed in the *eBird* report are very conservative). A

Red-tailed Hawk crashed down through the trees and landed with a spectacular thud and flapping of wings about 50 yards away from me in the middle of the trail around the clay pit, but as he took off, the Gray Squirrel he'd picked out for lunch ran away. The winter residents have definitely arrived, but there was still a single Black-throated Green Warbler feeding with a flock of kinglets, Blue-headed Vireos, and a FOTS Brown Creeper. Traipsing through the weeds in the power line cut yielded a large number of sparrows that were very cooperative, but the uncommon/rare migrant I was hoping for (Lincoln's, Henslow's, Vesper, Savannah, etc.) never materialized."

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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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