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The Yellowthroat

*Voice of the
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society*

March 2008

Vol. 19 No. 3

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 6, 7:00 p.m. Sandy Creek Nature Center

Mark Dalusky, Research Coordinator in Forest Entomology at the University of Georgia, will talk about "**Hemlock Woolly Adelgid in the Southern Appalachians: Who flocked all the hemlocks? (an exotic invasive insect that really sucks!)**"

Eastern and Carolina hemlock is under attack from Georgia to Maine by an exotic, invasive insect—the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). The adelgid inserts its mouthparts at the base of needles, preferably on new growth, and feeds off of storage cell contents. Infestation density develops rapidly in the South, and trees decline precipitously within three or four years.

Hemlock mortality in the Chattooga river drainage West to Helen is numerous with the zone of infestation extending to the Coopers Creek and Blue Ridge Wildlife Management Areas.

Insecticidal control options are available, but the best bet lies in the introduction and establishment of biocontrol agents from the pests' native range. The forest entomology project at UGA is participating in the lab-rearing and field release of three such agents, all of which are predatory beetles specific to the HWA.

Mark Dalusky is the long-time research coordinator for this project, and will discuss HWA biology and phenology in Georgia, impacts on the hemlock resource and where we stand on establishing biocontrol. The format will be Question and Answer with an informal PowerPoint presentation.

March Raffle: Sandy Creek Nature Center has donated a bird feeder for the March raffle. Thank you SCNC!

SCNC Super Science Day

Saturday, March 29, 2008, 1:00 p.m.—4:00 p.m.
This day offers one of the best possible volunteer opportunities of the year. Call 706-613-3615.

Upcoming Spring Bird Walks

Have you heard the birds starting to sing? Time to get outdoors and join the spring bird walks, which ORAS sponsors jointly with Sandy Creek Nature Center. Whether you are an experienced birder or a beginner, come join us as we witness the miracle of the northward migration. Walks begin at 8:00 a.m. Call Ed Maioriello at 208-8504 for details.

- March 22 State Botanical Garden
- March 29 Sandy Creek Park
- April 5 Whitehall Forest
- April 12 Sandy Creek Nature Center
- April 19 State Botanical Garden
- May 3 Sandy Creek Nature

Spring 2008 Field Trips

- April 26 Kennesaw Mountain
 - May 10 Cochran Shoals
 - May 24 Ivy Log Gap Road & Sosebee Cove
- Call Ed Maioriello at 208-8504 for details.

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.

Spring Wildflowers Field Trip

submitted by Page Luttrell

See spring wildflowers with the Georgia Botanical Society at the Broad River Natural Area in Madison County on Saturday, March 15, at 10:00 a.m.

The Broad River Natural Area, a 440 acre forested tract managed by Georgia's Department of Natural Resources, lies along the Broad River in Madison County. The river begins in the Tugaloo Mosaic to the north, and some of the unexpected juxtapositions of Blue Ridge and Piedmont species are still seen as the river flows south into Madison County. Expect to see nice springtime Piedmont vegetation, but we'll also look for some Broad River specialties: running cedar, a low-lying form of *Juniperus communis* var. *depressa*, velvet sedge (*Carex dasycarpa*) a coastal plain disjunct, and *Magnolia acuminata* var. *subcordata*, the bright yellow-flowering cucumber tree.

Walking at the Natural Area is easy to moderate on one to two miles of trails and roadbed. We may bushwhack over steep ground in areas near river. Bring a lunch to eat along the river. There are no facilities in the BRNA.

Meet trip leaders Jim Renner & Steve Bowling at first parking area at the BRNA on GA 281 (just across the Broad River) at 10:00 AM.

Questions? Call Jean Smith at 706.783.2308

Roger Tory Peterson

summarized by Maggie Nettles

Doug Carlson, author of recently published *Roger Tory Peterson: A Biography*, talked about "The Legacy of Roger Tory Peterson" at our February meeting. Peterson—painter, photographer, writer, and, most of all, teacher—initiated the use of field marks in guides, and his guides led the shift from shotgun ornithology to field ornithology.

Carlson pointed out that, although we now have a wide variety of field guides to choose from, Peterson's guides have a distinctive voice, especially his earlier editions, with language that makes his unique. And, he noted, Peterson combines in his work a passion for his subject with a keen knowledge based on close observation that led to his articulating a reverence for the life he studied.

Field ornithology: "We see a bird. With an instinctive movement we center it in our glass. All the thousands of fragments we know about birds—locality, season, habitat, voice, actions, field marks, and likeliness of occurrence—flash across the mirrors of the mind and fall into place—and we have the name of our bird."

GA-DNR Asks for Birding Volunteers

from <http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us/>

As Georgia's population increases, there has been a significant effort to preserve greenspaces within rapidly urbanizing landscapes. These greenspaces are justified for a number of reasons, ranging from improving water and air quality, to providing recreational opportunities, and protecting wildlife habitat. While small forested patches within an urban landscape probably do not provide quality nesting habitat for many bird species, they may offer valuable wintering habitat and stopover sites for birds to rest and refuel during spring and fall migration.

The Nongame-Endangered Wildlife Program of the Georgia Department of Fish and Wildlife is hoping to recruit birders to visit local greenspaces and record what they find. This survey is designed to quantify the birding that you are already doing in a way that generates useful data about how birds use green spaces throughout the year. For the purposes of this study, greenspaces are discrete natural areas, generally set aside as parks, riverside greenways, or forests that are surrounded by developed land. With an increased emphasis on protecting green space, it is important to understand how wildlife actually use these spaces.

There are two data sheets the survey requires you to fill out. These forms plus additional information can be found at <http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us/>. Please return all forms to Tim Keyes, DNR-WRD, Nongame-Endangered Wildlife Program, 116 Rum Creek Drive, Forsyth, GA 31029. For further information and questions, contact:

Tim_Keyes@dnr.state.ga.us (478) 994-1438

Bigbying: Carbon-neutral Birding

from <http://www.sparrowworks.ca/bigby.html>

The Big Green Big Year is a low-key, friendly bit of birding rivalry that is not especially original but which seems appropriate in these days of carbon emissions and climate change. If you have ever felt even a tiny bit guilty about driving or flying to see a good bird (or several) why not join us in a year of carbon-neutral birding?

The Big Green Big Year has the acronym BGBY and is therefore pronounced Bigby* ... and it is simply a Big Year in which you only count those species seen within walking or cycling distance of your home or principle place of work. As simple as that, no dashing off to the far corners of the planet burning fossil fuels as you go.

Unanswered Questions about Jekyll

excerpted from <http://www.savejekyllisland.org/> by David Kyler, Executive Director, Center for a Sustainable Coast

From news coverage of the redevelopment plan for Jekyll Island, you might get the uneasy impression that the major makeover project is nearly ready for the surveyors and construction crews to start working. As impressive as these plans may appear, far more analysis is needed if the public hopes to retain Jekyll's unique purpose—and environmental qualities—as a state park.

Evidently it has been unwisely assumed that building high-quality, well-designed structures and facilities alone will guarantee that the island's redevelopment is a success. But we need to take a serious look at how success for a state park is defined, which is presumably much different than it would be for that same kind of coastal real estate in the hands of the private sector.

Unfortunately, those in charge of the island's redevelopment seem to be driven by the unfounded assumption that the private sector should determine the best use of all resources, including a state park. By treating this environmentally sensitive barrier island state park the same as any private coastal real estate, the Jekyll Island Authority will be doing a major disservice to the people of Georgia and the leaders who established the area for recreational use by all citizens almost 60 years ago.

Some may assert that the adopted limit on the proportion of the island that can be developed will prevent undesired consequences. But important though that constraint may be, honoring the 35% limit of the island that can be developed does not ensure the public will be best served.

There are many aspects to questions raised by making the distinction between a state park and the private development of private land as a luxury resort. Is it really appropriate and in the public interest for a state park to feature deluxe hotels, restaurants, and condos? This question is even more provocative given the historically relaxed, slow-paced atmosphere of Jekyll, which remains the essence of its appeal to most visitors.

While it is true that Jekyll Island, unlike most Georgia state parks, must generate the revenues needed to support the island's infrastructure, administration, and natural environment, it does not follow that the private sector should be given free reign, nor that luxury facilities are desirable. In fact, even if the purpose of the redevelopment proposal was to maximize revenues, without any market plan or well-researched business analysis, there is no basis for

predicting that such a goal could be met.

There are fundamental disagreements between the Jekyll Island Authority board—not to mention the considerable political forces behind it—and the general public, whom the park is meant to serve and for whom it was created. There are also important unanswered questions about unnecessary disturbance of critical wildlife habitat that would be caused by implementing the proposed development scheme. This includes nesting grounds for the seriously threatened loggerhead sea turtle.

Until public officials, both elected and appointed, recognize their obligations to the citizens of Georgia, we face the risk of losing a state treasure to the totally inappropriate motives of private development. More thoughtful analysis needs to be done to prevent unwise development in the guise of 'redevelopment' causing a calamity that Georgians would regret for generations.

Editor's note: See the following websites to learn more about the situation:

- Center for a Sustainable Coast at <http://www.sustainablecoast.org/jekyll1207.html>
- Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island at <http://www.savejekyllisland.org/>
- Linger Longer at <http://www.rediscoverjekyll.com/>
- Georgia Senator Jeff Chapman at <http://www.jeffchapman.us/>

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For an introductory National Audubon Society membership (which includes *Audubon* magazine, local membership, and a subscription to *The Yellowthroat*), mail this form with a \$20.00 check payable to NAS to

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society
PO Box 81082
Athens, GA 30608

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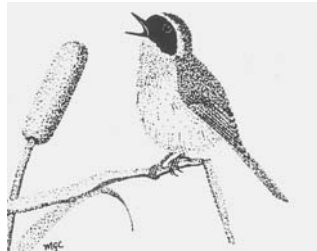
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Save-the-Date: Saturday, May 17, 2008

submitted by Allison Huff

You are cordially invited to attend the dedication ceremony of the State Botanical Garden of Georgia as an official Important Birding Area.



This ceremony commemorates recognition by the National Audubon Society of exceptional bird and wildlife habitat that is vital to the health and sustainability of bird populations worldwide. Guest speakers will include Mary Elfner, Georgia's IBA Coordinator, Jeff Lewis, Director of the Botanical Garden, and others.

May 17, 2008
State Botanical Garden of Georgia
Athens, Georgia
1:00 p.m., Calloway building auditorium
Optional bird walks will be available both before and after the ceremony. This event is supported by the Oconee Rivers Audubon Society.

Oconee Audubon Society
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Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

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Submit information by e-mail to maggie_netles@charter.net or mail to PO Box 81082 Athens, GA 30608. 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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