



# The Yellowthroat

*Voice of the  
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society*

October 2008

Vol. 19 No. 8

## **Next Meeting with Social: Thursday, October 2, 6:00 p.m. Sandy Creek Nature Center**

### **6:00 p.m. Social & Recipe Swap**

The ORAS Social and Recipe Swap begins at 6:00 p.m. Come one, come all! Share your recipes and dishes at our annual potluck of favorite appetizers and join us for an evening of socializing in the outdoors! Come snack early at 6:00 and then enjoy a presentation afterwards at our monthly meeting.

### **7:00 p.m. Program on Project Puffin**

**Vanessa Lane**, our new President, will be discussing her experiences working with Project Puffin in the Gulf of Maine. The National Audubon Society started Project Puffin in 1973 in an effort to learn how to restore puffins to historic nesting islands in the Gulf of Maine. Project Puffin now manages several islands for puffins and other birds such as Razorbills, Common Murres, Arctic Terns, Common Terns, and the endangered Roseate Tern.

Vanessa Lane received her B.S. at Cornell University and her M.S. at Montana State University. Her thesis focused on nesting and brooding habitat for Greater Sage-grouse in Montana. She is now a PhD student at the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia. Vanessa has participated in many projects, including Project Puffin, a Cerulean Warbler feeding and nesting study in West Virginia, and raptor rehabilitation at Ravensbeard Wildlife Center in upstate New York.

**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.

## **Fall Bird Walks**

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society and the Sandy Creek Nature Center co-sponsor these bird walks. We hope that both beginning and experienced birders will join us. The pace is generally slow, but participants should dress for occasionally muddy paths.

- September 27: 8:00 a.m. **State Botanical Garden** upper parking lot (Day Chapel)
- October 4: 8:00 a.m. **Whitehall Forest** South Milledge Ave & Whitehall Rd
- October 11: 8:00 a.m. **Sandy Creek Park** last lot on Campsite Dr. across dam

## **Sightings Reported at September Meeting**

*(apologies for incorrect names; you guys should print!)*

- **Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, 24 Mississippi Kites, 2 Swallowtail Kites**, Vanessa Lane, Charlie Muise, Mark McShane, Bostwick Sod Farm, 9/3/2008
- **Great Horned Owl**, Sarah Cliett, her home near Danielsville, 9/1/08
- **4 Mississippi Kites, 3 Swallowtail Kites**, Lola Bird, Hwy 77, Maxeys, 8/27/08
- **Barred Owl**, Raymond Burdsal, North Greenway, 7/25/08
- **Sandhill Cranes, Roseate Spoonbill**, Jason Jones & Scott Brandis, Okefenokee Swamp, 7/2/08
- **Wood Stork, Mississippi Kites**, Mark Freeman, Old Farmington Road, 9/1/08
- **Common Nighthawks**, Lorene Winter, Watkinsville, 9/3/08
- **Osprey, Wood Stork**, Page Luttrell & Tim Homan, canoeing Sandy Creek Park Lake, 9/4/08
- **Evening Grosbeak**, Jim McMinn, Cedar Creek subdivision, 8/18/08
- **Bald Eagle, 4 Least Sandpipers**, Jonathan Gray & Rebecca Taylor, Bostwick Sod Farm, 9/1/08
- **Red-necked Phalarope**, Allison Huff & Lorene Winter, Astondale Road pond, 8/27/08
- **Nashville, Orange-crowned, Wilson's, & MacGillivray's Warblers, Olive-sided Flycatcher**, James Neves, Idaho Bird Observatory, 9/3/08
- **Western Tanager**, O. C. & Manita Dean, Colorado in Box Canyon, 8/20/08

## 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!



Help the environment by carrying a bag made from trashed soda bottles that would otherwise end up in a landfill.

## Bird Banding: What, Why, How?

Charlie Muise, Georgia Important Bird Area (IBA) Coordinator and experienced bird bander, talked about bird banding to a full house at the September meeting.

He has been banding birds since 1991 and became a master bander in 2006. He talked about the MAPS protocol—mapping avian productivity and survivorship—and how it complements migratory banding stations like the Jekyll Island Banding Station. MAPS banding is timed primarily to catch local birds and has a standardized collection aimed at producing statistically sound data about such subjects as population trends, age ratios, and sex ratios.

One aim is to link population trends with breeding habitat and range. Yes, he admitted, banding can stress the few birds that are netted, but the intent is to gain knowledge to protect an entire population.

Charlie is looking for volunteers to help with a number of projects at locations around Georgia, some involving banding and some involving improving Important Bird Areas (IBAs) by such techniques as hand-collecting native grass seeds so that they can be sown at IBAs to replace invasive plants

For added information, check out the opportunities at <http://www.atlantaaudubon.org/aaswww/iba/iba.htm>

## Big Sit 2008!

by Kate Mowbray

**P**ull out your folding chairs, grab your binoculars and get ready to sit! Big Sit 2008 is scheduled for October 12, 2008. We had a very successful year last year, and we hope to have an even bigger year in 2008. The Big Sit, hosted by the Bird Watchers' Digest and the New Haven Bird Club, is a world-wide birding event in which birders compete to count the most birds. Teams compete at the state, national and world level. To participate, groups sit together in a circle and count as many birds as they can see or hear. You can only count birds seen or heard while in the circle.

Not all details for the local Big Sit are finalized, so mark your calendars now for October 12. An announcement will be made at our October meeting as well as information posted on the website. For more information, contact Kate Mowbray Education Chair, at (706) 613-3615 X 231 or by email [KateMowbray@co.clarke.ga.us](mailto:KateMowbray@co.clarke.ga.us).

## Our Shared Forests

by Jeannette Coplin, Director of Horticulture & Grounds, State Botanical Garden of Georgia

**I**n May, the Botanical Garden of Georgia received notification from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources that a grant of \$5,000 had been awarded by the Wildlife Resources Division for a Watchable Wildlife project at the State Botanical Garden. These funds will allow us to begin installing interpretive signage, feeding stations, and nesting boxes in the Shade & Native Flora Gardens—bringing *Our Shared Forests* out of the classroom and into the Garden. The feeders, nesting boxes and signage will anchor an exciting new student field trip in this area of the Garden.

*Our Shared Forests* is an environmental education partnership that connects local education to global conservation. The curriculum teaches students that bird conservation and forest sustainability are interconnected and of global concern. Activities address key concepts that are related to forest and wildlife value, management options and scientific inquiry. Within this framework, topics such as the life cycle of birds, forest composition, biodiversity, migration, food webs and carrying capacity are addressed. The dependence of birds and humans on healthy forests is a recurring theme.

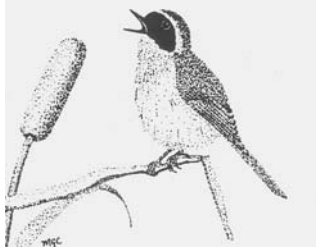
This project will enable us to share critical information about both neo-tropical migratory and native bird species with the general public, field trip students, and summer campers. Children and adults can observe targeted species on the Georgia Watch List and, hopefully, neo-tropical migrants. Neo-tropical migratory species breed in Canada and the United States during the summer and overwinter in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. The feed primarily on insects, but by increasing plant species that provide cover and nesting opportunities, we hope to provide breeding sites for tanagers, warblers, flycatchers, and woodpeckers.

The State Botanical Garden was designated an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the National Audubon Society in 2007. IBA designation is a global effort to identify areas that are important for maintaining bird populations and to focus conservation efforts at protecting these sites. With a mile of river frontage, the Garden is a perfect place for many migratory species to stop for feeding, nesting and breeding. We are currently promoting “adoption” of plots along the Middle Oconee River as privet free zones. While nature will reforest the riverbanks, we also plan to do some reforestation with switch cane and other appropriate vegetation. Nesting boxes and feeders will eventually be placed along the riverbanks.

Our goal is to have service organizations such as the Boy Scouts, 4-H Clubs, high school and UGA service clubs assist with monitoring feeders and bird boxes, as well as adopting “privet control” plots along the Middle Oconee River. If you or your organization is interested in this project, please contact me [jwcoplin@uga.edu](mailto:jwcoplin@uga.edu), or our volunteer coordinator Andrea Fischer, [sbgvol@uga.edu](mailto:sbgvol@uga.edu). *This article appeared in the Fall 2008 edition of Garden News, and is reprinted with permission by the author.*

## Conservation Corner

by Verna Johnson,  
Conservation Chair



Welcome to the ORAS

Conservation Corner—an open forum where we can share tips and ideas on providing for, protecting, and preserving our rivers, forests, and wildlife. This month's Conservation Corner will highlight a few of the many uses for unwanted plastic containers.

- Convert an empty cat litter bucket, pool shock bucket, or any other type of large plastic bin into a planter or plant pot in three simple steps. Drill drainage holes in the bottom of the bucket, paint or decorate, and fill with dirt and plants.
- Laundry detergent bottles can quickly become a watering can by rinsing thoroughly and drilling small holes in the cap.
- Get kids involved in conservation by having them make their own piggy bank. Cut a slit in the top of a soda or water bottle, and have them decorate as they wish.

Don't forget; we need your comments, ideas, and suggestions. You can email us at [conservation@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto:conservation@oconeeriversaudubon.org), or mail us at  
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 81082

Athens, GA. 30608

### “The Future is Plastics.”

#### The Future is WALL-E World?

“The future is plastics,” advised the successful tycoon in *The Graduate*. He did not, however, envision the world as portrayed in *WALL-E*.

Here are some plastic bag facts as cited by the *Christian Science Monitor* from [reusablebags.com](http://reusablebags.com):

- The U.S. uses 100 billion plastic shopping bags annually, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.
- An estimated 12 million barrels of oil is required to make that many bags.
- Four of five grocery bags in the U.S. are now plastic.
- Plastic bags are among the 12 items of debris most often found in coastal cleanups, according to the Center for Marine Conservation.
- Plastic bags take up to 1,000 years to degrade in a landfill.

### ABA Birders' Exchange & Belize

Carole Ludwig and Alison Huff have arranged to have binoculars donated by American Birding Association's Birders' Exchange to Ruben Arevalo of Indian Church, Belize. Carole and Alison met Ruben on a birding trip to Belize and continue to collect books and birding equipment to support his work to improve education in his village.

## Billy Dunbar

by Eugenia R. Thompson

Local birder Billy Dunbar died a few weeks ago. Although the name may sound unfamiliar to those of you new to ORAS, the birding community in the Athens area is richer because of Billy. You won't remember him much from meetings unless you participated in the Christmas Bird Counts. He didn't like to go to meetings – he liked to bird!

In the early days of Oconee Audubon Society (as it was known originally), I asked Billy to sit on the Board. After the first meeting, he said, “Now what did you all do with me here that you couldn't have done without me?”

He and Jim Richardson led bird walks for Sandy Creek Nature Center in the early 80s. This, of course, was long before the days of OAS. They trained more of us to lead walks for the Nature Center, and then when OAS formed in the early 90s, we were ready to lead OAS walks.

Besides being a fine birder, he had a great sense of humor. When my children were little, we watched a nature program hosted by Marty Stouffer. Somehow Billy knew this and whenever he called our house and my daughter answered, he would say it was Marty Stouffer. It was a running joke for years.

Page Luttrell remembers a bird walk where a number of birders were watching a Louisiana Waterthrush bobbing along a creek. Someone wondered why they always walk that way. Billy deadpanned, “Because mosquitoes are always biting their ass.”

Billy died much too soon, and we and the birds will miss him terribly.

## Map Note

Georgia DNR has updated its web presence. The new Wildlife Resources Division website now has Wildlife Management Area maps (line, topo, and color infrared) for all WMA's and natural areas by region. This is a huge step forward over the old line maps available on the Georgia Outdoors website. Remember to explore this site: [http://www.georgiawildlife.com/huntingmaps\\_maps.aspx](http://www.georgiawildlife.com/huntingmaps_maps.aspx)

## Upcoming Birding Festival

Georgia's Colonial Coast Birding & Nature Festival on Jekyll Island will take place October 10-13. The featured speaker is Pete Dunne.

To register and sign up for field trips, see <http://www.coastalgeorgiabirding.org/>

## Jekyll Island Banding Station

Jekyll Island Banding Station (JIBS) will hold its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary banding this fall, September 28 - October 19. Chris and Jan Pitman invite you to participate as a volunteer. “The guests of honor,” says *JIBSHEET*, # 38, “are the birds. The best part is that you are invited to welcome them. Each bird is a natural wonder, something you can learn from, marvel at, and study.”

For details, call 770-339-0916 or email [ovenbird@earthlink.net](mailto:ovenbird@earthlink.net).

## SCNC Bird Seed Sale Needs Volunteers

Bird lovers should take advantage of this chance to purchase great quality bird seed at great prices by participating in Sandy Creek Nature Center's 23rd Annual Bird Seed Sale. Place orders by October 23.

Distribution will be October 31 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and November 1 from 9:00 a.m. to noon. SCNC loads it into your car for you. Seniors and people with orders over \$50 can have home delivery.

The bird seed sale is also a chance for Audubon members to volunteer because the nature center needs our help loading the bags during the pick-up hours. In addition, drivers are needed for deliveries on November 1.

For more information, call 706-613-3615 x 235 or email Edith Hollander at [edithhollander@co.clarke.ga.us](mailto:edithhollander@co.clarke.ga.us).

## 2008 River Cleanup

The Rivers Alive 2008 river cleanup here in Athens will take place on Saturday, October 4 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Join participants at the kick-off at Dudley Park.

Join locally to help with this statewide river clean-up to help protect Athens' most valuable water resource: the North Oconee River and its tributaries.

Come get those plastic bottles and bags out of the river!

**Oconee Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 81082**  
**Athens, Georgia 30608-1082**

## Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

**President** Vanessa Lane  
[President@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto:President@oconeeriversaudubon.org)

**Vice-President** Edwige Damron  
[vp@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto:vp@oconeeriversaudubon.org)

**Treasurer** Jim McMinn  
[treasurer@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto:treasurer@oconeeriversaudubon.org)

**Secretary** Mary Case  
[secretary@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto:secretary@oconeeriversaudubon.org)

### *The Yellowthroat*

Published monthly by the  
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society  
PO Box 81082  
Athens, GA 30608

Submit information to the address above or by e-mail to [yellowthroat@oconeeriversaudubon.org](mailto: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.

Visit our website at <http://www.oconeeriversaudubon.org/>

**Non Profit Org.**  
**U.S. Postage Paid**  
**Athens, GA**  
**Permit No. 41**

