

Protecting the Waters: Clayton County's Innovative Wastewater Management Program

January 8, 7:30 PM

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta

How many of us have traveled to the Clayton County water treatment facility in the fall and winter to see waterfowl ~~o? Or~~ walked the boardwalks of the Newman Wetlands Center in search of woodpeckers and other species?

If you've ever wondered about these facilities, [come listen to](#) our speaker for January, ~~will be~~ Lonnie Philpot, land management supervisor for the Clayton County Water Authority. The ponds at the water treatment facility are not only a great site for spotting flocks of waterfowl; they also are an important recycling laboratory. Lonnie will share with us the innovative programs Clayton County has implemented to handle wastewater ~~whenafter~~ it leaves your home ~~afterwhen~~ you turn off the tap or flush the toilet.

For the past 20 years the county has produced and sold pellets from the sludge or "biosolid" that remains after treating wastewater. Purchasers around the ~~south~~ South use the material as fertilizer for crops, golf courses, sod farms, and highway right-of-way planting projects. This recycling puts the beneficial materials to use rather than allowing them to stagnate in landfills. In addition to pellet production, the county employs local land application systems, wetlands, and composting sites to clean and reuse wastewater. Eventually some of the highly treated water even returns to the tap. These conservation efforts protect the environment, generate income, and maintain free-flowing and safe water for us, the birds, and the ecosystems we depend on.

Don't miss this informative program, ~~which that~~ will focus both on conservation and watershed protection ~~as a d, well as hopefully,~~ on bird sightings and tips ~~regardingfor~~ the birding areas ~~as well.~~

President's Perch

by Virginia G. Dunbar

In with the new and out with the old. ~~T,~~ the new year has begun! Georgann Schmalz did a wonderful job in her term as president, and she has left huge expectations that will be difficult if not impossible for me to fulfill. She will continue on the board as director in charge of communications, primarily overseeing the newsletter, and also will continue to lend her expertise to the education programs. The Master Birder program, which she designed, similar to the Master Gardener program, has been a huge success.

Several other volunteers have cycled off the board. Their efforts during the past term are sincerely appreciated.

- Dan May (former Vice President) will be continuing with the Shade-Grown Coffee Committee.
- Jane Brann (formerly Communications) will continue as webmaster and with the Shade-Grown Coffee Committee.
- Lynn Hennelly (formerly Conservation) will continue to work with area green spaces.
- Carol Lambert (formerly Field ~~T~~trips) will continue to lead trips during migration seasons.
- Leslie Curran (formerly Volunteers) will continue with the Wildlife Sanctuary Certification Committee.

There will be a couple of new faces at the meetings of the board. Welcome to these fresh recruits!

- Dave Decker, who stepped into a vacancy mid-2003, will continue as Publicity Director. His efforts have already begun to appear in area newspapers and on radio and TV.
- Terry Forbes comes in as Volunteer Director. He has some ideas for volunteer recognition and tallying hours donated.
- Gordon McWilliams will be Conservation Director and will continue our efforts to identify and protect key environments.

The positions of President-elect and Special Events Director both remain open, and we are searching for candidates. If you have suggestions, please contact a member of the board. The remaining directors and officers have already served at least one term and will be continuing with their respective responsibilities. I look forward to a successful year and appreciate everyone's enthusiasm and energy.

Upcoming AAS Events

Wildlife Sanctuary Certification Class

Dunwoody Nature Center

Saturday, January 24, 1 PM

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer consultant for the AAS Wildlife Sanctuary program, join us for a workshop on Saturday, January 24, at 1 PM at the Dunwoody Nature Center. We will cover the basics of attracting wildlife to backyards and enable you to conduct visits as a Certified Wildlife Sanctuary consultant for Atlanta Audubon. There is no charge for this program. Just come to the session prepared for ~~fer~~ note-taking. Questions? Contact Georgann Schmalz at 404.633.1527 or jbgs@mindspring.com. [\[About how long will it last?\]](#)

Oh, Oh Rats!

by Bobbi Sedam

You may have heard from your neighbors or your pest control technician: Rats are proliferating in the metro Atlanta area. Pest control experts say that the biggest reasons for increases in rat population are improperly stored pet food, backyard birdfeeders that are open to squirrels, and seed scattered on the ground. Composting food scraps in your backyard compost bin can attract rats also.

Two kinds of rats live in the Southeast: Norway rats that eat protein and grain and Roof rats that prefer vegetation and grain. Roof rats like fruit, vegetables, and seed. They live in trees, prey on birds, and like to live in your attic. Rats can enter houses through a [half-](#)inch hole. They come for warmth, food, and water. Both species of rats can climb and burrow underground. If you have a birdfeeder that is not squirrel-proof, it is not rat-proof either.

Solution: A birdfeeder with a baffle, placed away from trees and filled only with oil sunflower seeds is **some** protection from rats. The birds will not toss out the seeds, and only a few will be left on the ground. A feeder with thistle seed for finches also produces little waste.

Never throw bread, seed or other food on the ground for birds. Rats feed at night, so [every evening](#) it is important to clean up all seeds and shells that may have fallen on the ground [every evening during the day](#).

If you suspect rats or have seen rat droppings, you should stop feeding birds for at least six weeks. [It is better](#) to stop completely.

Both Atlanta Audubon Society and Georgia Wildlife Association have information on creating backyards that are habitat-friendly for birds. These feature cover and nesting areas, berry bushes and wildflowers for food sources and a water feature. Birds don't need us to feed them. Good habitat is the best gift we can give them...and rats are bad for birds.

Coming next month: Composting without attracting rats.

Bird Conservation on Andrews Island

by Jim Wilson, Georgia IBA Coordinator

The Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program met recently with stakeholders regarding the current and future status of Andrews Island, a 750-acre dredged material site located next to the city of Brunswick and owned by the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT). Many species of shorebirds nest on this IBA site during the summer, particularly a large number of Least Terns. Also, many passerines nest along the [dikes](#), and large duck populations use it during the winter when standing water is present.

The Army Corps of Engineers is forming a new bird island just southeast of the Brunswick Department of Natural Resources (DNR) station, using dredged material. This construction of this island is one of the first on the dredging schedule that will start around December, 2004. This island is designed to attract most of

the shorebirds away from Andrews Island. It will be 10 acres of sandy, unvegetated soil that should be particularly attractive to Least Terns. It will be owned by the state of Georgia, but its management is not yet clear. Georgia DNR will protect its bird populations. The Least Terns have the largest numbers and are of the most concern among the shorebirds, and the new bird island should address several problems, including preventing land predators from reaching their eggs.

Waterfowl will undoubtedly continue to use Andrews Island as a feeding site, and that probably will not change except that new dredging activities will probably last [more than ever](#) a year and may or may not affect the numbers of waterfowl that come to the island.

Painted [Blue](#) Buntings, Seaside Sparrows, Sharp-tailed Sparrows and Peregrine Falcons will also continue to use Andrews Island as nesting and feeding site because the low, shrubby vegetation will remain substantially unchanged. With more than 25,000 feet around the [dikes](#), this is great habitat for these species!

Continued monitoring of the bird populations at Andrews Island before and after the completion of the new bird island will be needed to determine what changes occur in bird populations. [It is hoped that Hopefully,](#) at least one member of the Coastal Audubon Society, [along with Brad Winn of Georgia DNR,](#) will be allowed access to the facility for monitoring and birding purposes ~~along with Brad Winn of Georgia DNR.~~

AAS Scholarship Winner Has Time of Her Life in Maine

Katie Gregory was the Atlanta Audubon Society's youth scholarship winner for 2003. Katie, a ninth grader from Marietta, attended a summer youth camp for a week on Hog Island in Muscongus Bay, Maine. She shared a letter to her family with us. A portion of the letter follows.

Summer, 2003 Muscongus Bay, Maine

Dear Mom, Dad, and Erin,

I love camp! It's so pretty here! Did you know there are raspberry bushes around the cabin? When we come out we sometimes eat a few and are always trying to make sure none of the other campers finds them. On walks there are wild blueberries (which are always in the fruit salad!) plus some small strawberries.

So far we've explored the pond. I've caught five or six frogs, including the biggest (so what else is new?). We used the Audubon boat to explore around the island. Dad, we saw lots of Osprey nests and a Bald Eagle chick sitting outside its nest. This was the first time anyone had seen it out of the nest!

We just came back from the mud flats. *It was the coolest thing!* Everyone got into a giant mud fight! Some of us even made mud angels! (That's a new one!) When we were done, you couldn't see any of my skin, not even my face, it was really weird. It was so much fun!

At night sometimes we can lay [\[Do we want to correct this to "lie"?\)](#) on the dock and put our hands in the water. When you move it around, it sets off a reaction with some plankton and the water GLITTERS! It's really cool. I've also seen my first Night Heron. He fishes off the dock each evening.

It means a lot to be with a bunch of kids that have the same interests as me. They think it's fun to make mud angels and explore under rocks. I can connect with almost everyone here! There are no girls obsessed with makeup and even if they are younger than me, I am really glad to be here.

This has to be one of the best things that's ever happened to me! Maine is just wonderful and so different. I plan to keep in touch with lots of my new friends. This is the kind of place that can change you, make a difference in your life.

There's still a lot to be said, but it's now 10:25, and I'm using a flashlight to write you. There isn't a lot of time to write, what with more forest to explore and volleyball games to conquer.

Love, Katie

P.S. It may be a while before I get all the mud out of my hair.

Apply Now for AAS Scholarships

AAS offers two scholarships each year:—one for youth and one for a teacher or environmental educator. These scholarships further our mission to support conservation education for both adults and youngsters.

Show Your Support for Wildlife: Buy a Wildlife Tag

Give yourself a Georgia wildlife tag for a birthday present this year. For an extra \$20 one-time special tag fee, you can support the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Non-Game Wildlife Program. [\[JANE; I believe that there are two wildlife tags available now. I think the one with the bobwhite quail and deer supports game HUNTING. The other supports the non-game wildlife program. Please verify/clarify so that we don't recommend the wrong one!\]](#)

The tag is one of the primary sources of funding for non-game wildlife conservation in Georgia. All proceeds are used exclusively for conservation, education, and recreation projects, focusing on Georgia's endangered and non-game wildlife and plants. Since the wildlife license plate program began in 1998, Georgians have purchased more than 900,000 tags, raising more than \$13.5 million for non-game wildlife.

Projects funded through tag sales include Bald Eagle surveys, the Swallowtail Kite initiative, the Georgia Herp Atlas, songbird habitat management, Manatee tracking, Sea Turtle nest protection, Right Whale protection, Peregrine Falcon nest monitoring, the Georgia Breeding Bird Atlas, longleaf/wiregrass habitat restoration and many others. The Department of Natural Resources has purchased environmentally sensitive lands such as caves harboring endangered bats, rookeries for Wood Storks and other birds, Carolina bays and pitcher plant bogs.