

## SUSTAINABILITY DEPARTMENT

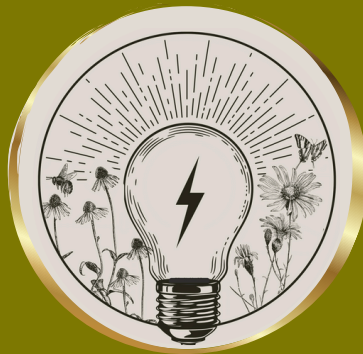


WELCOME TO OUR

# Monthly Newsletter

We are thrilled be able to share what we are doing at the Athens-Clarke County Sustainability Department with you. Join us each month as we explore all things sustainability and how you can get involved!

*Putting Energy into  
Greener Spaces*



**In this newsletter you will find:**

Latest projects, free resources, and upcoming events!

BLUEBIRD  
PHOTO CREDIT:  
CHRISTIAN SNEAD



# CHECKING IN ON OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

CHRISTIAN SNEAD & S.GREEN

The Eastern Bluebirds and Northern House Wrens were busy this spring and summer along the North Oconee River Greenway and in Dudley Park. All eight nest boxes monitored by the Sustainability Department were used at least once during the nesting season (March-July), with several seeing multiple rounds of activity.

## **Greenway Nesting Activity**

The nest boxes along the Greenway adjacent to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway were used by both Eastern Bluebirds and Northern House Wrens. A total of 13 Eastern Bluebird eggs and five Northern House Wren eggs were laid through five separate nesting attempts, but only three Northern House Wren chicks successfully survived and fledged. We aren't sure what caused all of the nest failures. In two cases, the Bluebird eggs simply didn't hatch even though they were incubated dutifully by the mom. The remaining Bluebird nest attempt was ended through predation- most likely by a House Wren. Northern House Wrens are known to destroy nests and puncture eggs of other bird species. That might seem harsh, but competition for limited resource, including prime nesting habitat, is part of nature.



PHOTO CREDIT:  
CHRISTIAN SNEAD

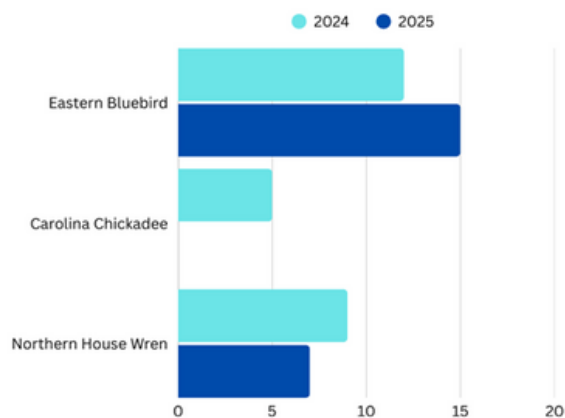


## Dudley Park

Over at Dudley Park, both species saw a lot more success. In total, 33 eggs were laid—19 of which belonged to Eastern Bluebirds, and the remaining 14 were laid by Northern House Wrens. A total of 15 Bluebirds grew up big and strong and left their nests, and 4 Northern House Wrens followed suit. That's a success rate of over 70% for the Bluebirds!

On a recent Saturday morning, more than 10 Eastern Bluebirds were observed feeding on insects along the edge of the woods and perching on power lines in Dudley Park. It's a safe assumption that several started their life in one of the nest boxes below them. Meanwhile, the bubbly song of Northern House Wrens was absent - they've likely begun their journey south for the winter. We wish them safe travels and look forward to welcoming them back next spring. The nest boxes will be clean, ready and waiting.

### Successful Fledglings



NESTBOX AT DUDLEY PARK  
PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTIAN  
SNEAD



A VERY FULL NESTBOX AT  
DUDLEY PARK  
PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTIAN  
SNEAD



HATCHLINGS AT  
DUDLEY PARK  
PHOTO CREDIT:  
CHRISTIAN  
SNEAD

# TIPS FOR A GREENER LIFESTYLE!

*How can we live sustainably?*

IN THIS SERIES WE EXPLORE HOW WE CAN BE SUSTAINABLE TOGETHER,  
RIGHT HERE IN ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY!



THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

## HALLOWEEN COSTUMES

RILEY JAMES

Halloween is a time for creativity, chaos, and questionable amounts of candy. But behind the glitter and fake cobwebs lies a less festive truth: the holiday generates a staggering amount of waste, and costumes are a big part of the problem.



Americans spend over \$3 billion on Halloween costumes every year. That's billion with a "B." According to *Fast Company*, most of those costumes are made from non-recyclable plastic-based materials like polyester, which means they're destined for the landfill after just one wear. And let's be honest: how many times are you really going to wear that inflatable T-Rex suit?

A 2019 report by the *Fairyland Trust* found that 83% of costume materials are oil-based plastics. That's the equivalent of 2,000 tons of plastic waste - just from Halloween costumes in the UK alone. Now imagine that in the USA where the population is 5 times that of the UK. Now imagine that on a global scale... Yikes.

So yeah, your costume might be cute, but the planet is quietly sobbing in the background.





The good news is that you don't have to give up Halloween to be a little more eco-conscious. There are plenty of ways to keep things spooky and sustainable:

### THRIFT OR TREAT

Your local thrift store is a goldmine of costume potential. Think: vintage prom dresses, oversized blazers, weird hats. With a little imagination, you can turn secondhand finds into something truly iconic.

### SWAP 'TIL YOU DROP

Costume swaps are a great way to keep things fresh without buying new. Check local community boards, Facebook groups, or even organize one with your friends. One person's old witch hat is another person's treasure.



### RENT THE LOOK

If you're going for something elaborate, consider renting a costume instead of buying. It's cheaper, less wasteful, and you won't have to store it in your closet for the next decade.



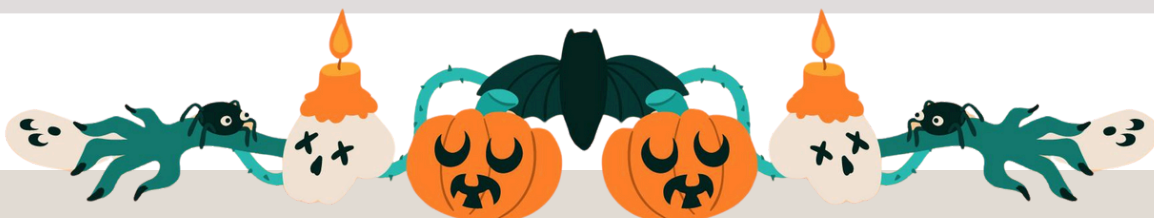
### DIY OR DIE (METAPHORICALLY)

Got some fabric scraps, cardboard, or old clothes lying around? Perfect. Channel your inner craft goblin and make your own costume. Bonus points for using natural materials or paper instead of plastic.



Look, no one's saying you have to hand-stitch a biodegradable costume out of ethically-sourced moss (although, that would be really cool and we'd love to see it!). Small choices - like reusing, repurposing, or renting - can add up to a big difference. And honestly, the most memorable costumes are the ones that come with a little creativity and a good story.

So this Halloween, get creative. Get weird. And maybe, just maybe, make a costume that doesn't haunt the planet.





On September 6th, we joined the fun at the 2025 Athens Water Festival!

This year's theme? Mario Kart.

Our booth? A full-on solar-powered race track, complete with tiny cars and big energy (literally). Our Habitat Management Technicians went all out, building a mini Mario Kart style course that had kids racing solar cars like pros.

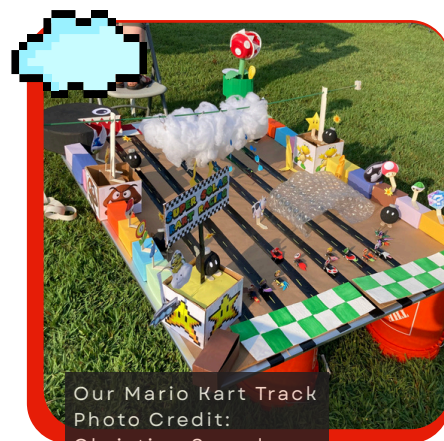
The twist? These cars didn't have batteries. They ran purely on direct sunlight, which made for a great hands-on lesson in renewable energy... and also meant that when the clouds rolled in, our racers took a bit of a nap. (No shade to the sun, we still love you.)



Photo Credit:  
Riley James



Photo Credit: Water  
Conservation



Our Mario Kart Track  
Photo Credit:  
Christian Sneed

But here's the thing: real solar systems come with batteries, so you're not left stranded when the weather gets moody. So don't let our tiny cars dissuade you from solar! They were just a fun, low-tech demo that sparked some great conversations about how solar energy works in the real world (and why most systems come with a backup plan).

All in all, it was a fantastic day filled with water education, community fun, and just the right amount of kart-themed chaos. Huge thanks to everyone who stopped by our booth - and to the sun, for showing up most of the time.

# SUSTAINABILITY



# MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

## GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONER ELECTION FOR DISTRICTS 2 & 3

SPECIAL ELECTION:  
NOVEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup> 2025

SPECIAL ELECTION RUNOFF: DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup> 2025

\*IF NEEDED\*

All Georgia residents vote  
for every district,  
regardless of where you live  
in Georgia!



### REGISTER TO VOTE

Are you registered to vote? If this will be your first time voting you will have to register to vote. You only have to register to vote once, however if you have moved, you may have to update your voter registration. To do so or to register to vote [here!](#)

**LAST DAY TO REGISTER TO VOTE IN SPECIAL ELECTION: MONDAY OCTOBER 6<sup>TH</sup> '25**

### ADVANCE VOTING

**Tuesday October 14<sup>th</sup> - Friday October 31<sup>st</sup>**

Advance voting for the GA Public Service Commission Election will take place Tuesday, October 14<sup>th</sup> through Friday, October 31<sup>st</sup> at three different locations:

#### Elections Office

155 E Washington St, Athens 30601

**October 14 - 17:** 8:00AM - 5:00PM

**October 18:** 9:00AM - 4:00PM

**October 20 - 24:** 8:00AM - 5:00PM

**October 25:** 9:00AM - 4:00PM

**October 27 - 31:** 8:00AM - 5:00PM

#### Athens Regional Library

2025 Baxter St, Athens 30606

**October 25:** 9:00AM - 4:00PM

**October 27 - 31:** 8:00AM - 5:00PM

#### Athens-Clarke County Tennis Center

4460 Lexington Rd, Athens 30605

**October 25:** 9:00AM - 4:00PM

**October 27 - 31:** 8:00AM - 5:00PM

All persons registered to vote in Athens-Clarke County may use any location for advance voting, but must vote in their own precinct on Election Day Voting. For Advance Voting, you will need to bring a valid photo ID or a voter identification card.

Don't live in Athens? No problem! To find information on Advance Voting locations near you, you can search based on the county you live in.

**Find Advance Voting information in every county, click here!**

### ABSENTEE VOTING

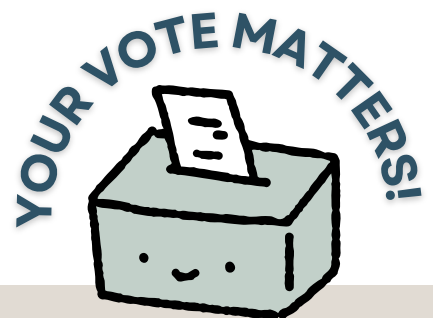
To request an absentee ballot for the Special Election, you'll need to complete an Absentee Ballot Application. Your application must be received by October 24<sup>th</sup> to the registrar's office of the county you are registered to vote in.

[Click here for the Georgia Official Absentee Ballot Application!](#)

### ELECTION DAY VOTING

You will need a valid photo ID or a voter identification card to vote in person. Polling places are open from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm on Election Day. If you are in line by 7:00 pm, you are allowed to cast your ballot.

[Find more information here!](#)



# UPCOMING EVENTS:

## ATHENS WATERWAY CLEANUP



**HELP US  
CLEAN ATHENS'  
LOCAL RIVERS  
AND CREEKS**

**REGISTRATION  
OPEN!**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11**  
**KICK OFF AT 8:45 / CLEAN UP AT 9:30**

**[ACCGOV.COM/RIVERSALIVE](https://accgov.com/riversalive)**  
**[ATHENSRIVERSALIVE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ATHENSRIVERSALIVE@GMAIL.COM)**



# UPCOMING EVENTS:



PUTTING ENERGY INTO GREENER SPACES  
Athens-Clarke County Sustainability Department

[www.accgov.com/green](http://www.accgov.com/green)

706-613-3838