

*Seasonal Occurrences of
Shelby County, Tennessee
Birds*



Memphis Chapter

*Tennessee Ornithological Society
Memphis, Tennessee*

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Notes

Acknowledgments

The original publication and subsequent printings were made possible by the hard work of dedicated volunteers who share the joy and enthusiastic pursuit of birding. The original publication printed in 1982 was supported by the tireless efforts and encouragement of the late Ben B. Coffey, Jr. whose records provided invaluable data about the occurrences of birds in Shelby County. Other helpful friends including Mrs. Carolyn Bullock, Mrs. Noreen Smith, and Mr. Jim Ferguson provided technical assistance and gave long, tireless hours of devoted transcriptional services. The second printing was an update of the original printing as the volume of additional information provided substantial changes in early and late dates and yielded additional species of birds sighted in Shelby County. This new continued information would not have been available had it not been for the continued cooperation and support of the Memphis Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society.

The current printing extends the ongoing attempt to maintain a reasonably accurate and timely record of the seasonal occurrences of birds in Shelby County. This printing represents a revision of the original monograph thanks to Ms. Leah McDonald, a graduate of Rhodes College. Initially, Ms. McDonald undertook this project to fulfill a course requirement, but she voluntarily continued her work after receiving her degree. Leah's developing interest in birding and avian conservation has been inspirational to the Memphis Chapter. Her long hours and attention to detail are much appreciated. Special thanks is also extended to Charles Alexander for his original cover design. It is fitting that this printing is dedicated to the combined efforts of many people spanning a continuum from novice to seasoned veteran.

First Printing,	June, 1982
Second Printing,	May, 1987
Third Printing,	April, 1998

This publication is a compilation of several thousand field cards and notes collected since 1929. These records provide a reasonable estimate of arrival and departure dates of transients, seasonal residents and visitors, in addition to a historical record of occasional and accidental sightings. The population density graphing of each species also provides the reader with the degree of expectation of sighting a species in any given season of the year.

Only the records for Shelby County, Tennessee are used. Although much of Shelby County's forests and farmlands have yielded to urban growth and industrialization, there still remains a broad biological diversity in river bottoms, wetlands, open ponds, mature forests, meadows, and farmlands. In Shelby County there are several large parks including Meeman Shelby Forest State Park, T.O. Fuller State Park, Overton Park, Martin Luther King Jr. Park, Shelby Farms, and a state-owned tract, Eagle Lake Wildlife Management Area. In addition, there are numerous small city parks and recreational areas.

The Seasonal Occurrences of Shelby County.

Tennessee Birds is not intended to indicate trends in other counties. Variance in species and population densities among West Tennessee counties occurs as a consequence of each county's location and offering habitat in the Mississippi Flyway. For example, one county may be primarily farmland, another with mixed grassland and forest, yet another county may contain a wildlife refuge. In addition, possible sightings in rural or isolated areas are contingent on the number of experienced observers and the frequency and consistency of their observations made during periods of migration and breeding.

Population densities of birds regularly sighted in Shelby County are divided into three categories: **common**, **fairly common**, and **uncommon**. Unusual sightings are divided into three categories: **occasional**, **rare**, and **accidental**.

Common refers to species usually occurring in concentrations of ten or more in their expected ranges. Generally, large numbers of common species will be seen depending on the season and habitat. Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal and American Robin are examples of common species.

Species rated as **fairly common** are likely to be seen with some degree of regularity in their proper habitat and season. The concentrations will typically be less than those recorded as common, however, observers should not have much difficulty locating species classified as fairly common. For example, species such as the Great Blue Heron, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Parula Warbler, and Savannah Sparrow are seen with regularity, but they are not seen in great numbers during their anticipated season.

Populations rated as **uncommon** are unpredictable in number, and individuals are seen rather infrequently from year to year. Species that occur naturally in sparse numbers, like the Red-shouldered Hawk or populations similar to Pine Siskin that are historically erratic, fall into this category.

Occasional sightings are outside seasonal occurrences such as extremely early or very late departure dates for transients or seasonal residents.







Rare sightings occur only once a year, or possibly once every two or three years for species still within their expected range. Examples of rare sightings are the Bald Eagle, Cape May Warbler, and Western Meadowlark.

Accidental refers to sightings of species occurring outside their expected ranges. In the following tables, accidental sightings are denoted by open circles with a notation of the actual month and day they were recorded. These notations indicate only the occurrence of a species sometime within the sixty-nine year period. Multiple accidental sightings may have occurred for some species such as the Eared Grebe, Glossy Ibis, Northern Goshawk, Saw-whet Owl, and the Snow Bunting. Again, these sightings may have occurred in different years, but the reader will have a record of the time of year the sightings were made.







It is possible for a population density to shift from one designation to another during the year. This variation should facilitate a better understanding of the fluctuations of bird populations during the year and among the species sighted in Shelby County since 1928.

No attempt was made to indicate possible declines or increases in populations over the period of coverage as year to year fluctuations in numbers were not recorded. Information obtained from breeding bird surveys indicate that bird populations can change from one year to another.

Frequency of Occurrence

	Common	Seen every day in proper habitat. Numbers may vary from 10 to 100 or more when in flocks during certain seasons.
	Fairly Common	Seen almost every day in proper habitat. Numbers of individuals will usually be less than 10.
	Uncommon	Seen infrequently and may be in unpredictable numbers.
	Rare	Seen once a year or once every few years.
	Occasional	Sightings outside seasonal occurrence or single sighting.
	Accidental	Sighting outside normal range.
Date Seen		This column is provided to record the date of a sighting or to serve as a field check list.

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Common Loon				8	15					5		
	Pied-billed Grebe						•	•	•	•			
	Horned Grebe				12						22		
	Eared Grebe			25						10	13	19	
	American White Pelican			16	5			11			29		
	Brown Pelican				12	17							
	Double-crested Cormorant		•	•	5	6		8		2		16	11
	Anhinga				17						29	10	
	American Bittern		•		7	22			11	20			24
	Least Bittern				30		•	•	•	9	10		
	Great Blue Heron												
	Great Egret			6							29	13	7
	Snowy Egret				17							1	
	Little Blue Heron			23							14		26
	Tricolored Heron					15		18		7			
	Cattle Egret			6							21		
	Green Heron			21							29	24	18
	Black-crowned Night-Heron			6	10	•	1		11		12	•	•
	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron			7						29		17	17
	White Ibis							14					
	Glossy Ibis				13	11			24				
	White-faced Ibis				19								
	Wood Stork							14			20		

 Common
 Fairly Common
 Uncommon
 Rare
 Occasional
 Accidental

2

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Black-bellied Whistling - Duck											24	18
	Tundra Swan	14	19										
	Greater White-fronted Goose			12	20						5		
	Snow Goose					10					2		
	Brant					28							
	Canada Goose				26					24			
	Wood Duck												
	Green-winged Teal				28			17	17	15			
	American Black Duck											9	
	Mallard												
	Northern Pintail				3					4			
	Blue-winged Teal												
	Northern Shoveler					8	5	11		20			
	Gadwall			21	21	3				27			
	American Wigeon									10			
	Canvasback					1						1	
	Redhead										26		
	Ring-necked Duck					29					13		
	Greater Scaup	23										6	23
	Lesser Scaup												
	Oldsquaw			28			25		15		3		
	White-winged Scoter		16									15	
	Common Goldeneye												

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Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Bufflehead												
	Hooded Merganser					21							
	Common Merganser												
	Red-breasted Merganser												
	Ruddy Duck					17	25	3	4	•	•	•	•
	Black Vulture												
	Turkey Vulture												
	Osprey			3	•					16	4	3	•
	American Swallow-tailed Kite			10	○					19			
	Mississippi Kite		30	8	•						1		
	Bald Eagle		25		15	•		16					
	Northern Harrier				13			16					
	Sharp-shinned Hawk		27					5	20				
	Cooper's Hawk												
	Northern Goshawk	○	○	○							30	30	18
	Red-shouldered Hawk												
	Broad-winged Hawk			23							22	10	18
	Red-tailed Hawk												
	Rough-legged Hawk		20					29	6	13			
	American Kestrel												
	Merlin	8	5							15	•	•	•
	Peregrine Falcon			22	14		20	12		22	•	•	11
	Prairie Falcon										12	○	○

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Wild Turkey												
	Northern Bobwhite												
	Yellow Rail								22	○			
	King Rail			24					1				18
	Virginia Rail				10	3	6		31	○	5	10	
	Sora			23	•	3		21				28	18
	Purple Gallinule			19		29							
	Common Moorhen			19	○	29	31			17	5		
	American Coot												
	Sandhill Crane	16	22		24					21	15	20	26
	Black-bellied Plover				9	15	24		8		25	12	
	American Golden-Plover			4		9	20		3	9		28	9
	Wilson's Plover				17	○							
	Semipalmated Plover				11	27		17				16	
	Piping Plover					5			11	4			
	Killdeer												
	Black-necked Stilt			19	○	•			19	5			
	American Avocet								11	○	○	21	
	Greater Yellowlegs			2		18		13	3			23	
	Lesser Yellowlegs			16	2		27	15	•			21	9
	Solitary Sandpiper			28	•	27		5			25	22	•
	Willet				13	5		11	23	16			
	Spotted Sandpiper	9	26	•		26	24	7		26	27	29	•

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Upland Sandpiper			12	2	21	10	27				13	
	Whimbrel						8	11	7				
	Hudsonian Godwit			17									
	Marbled Godwit							13					
	Ruddy Turnstone				23		5	21	13				
	Red Knot						6	11					
	Sanderling						21	11	29			9	
	Semipalmated Sandpiper			13	29	23	23					18	
	Western Sandpiper	1	26	16			23				23	16	
	Least Sandpiper	1			27		4	6				22	
	White-rumped Sandpiper			14	25	5	20	18		26	1		
	Baird's Sandpiper			1			14	24	17	3	15		
	Pectoral Sandpiper		25	9	22	16	7				23	4	
	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper								19				
	Purple Sandpiper											30	
	Dunlin	1	24	27	29		23	23	26	21	18		
	Stilt Sandpiper		10	26	24		4	3	26	29	15		
	Buff-breasted Sandpiper			26	14			1	6	17			
	Ruff				14			21	7	5	25		
	Short-billed Dowitcher			6	18		4	17		25			
	Long-billed Dowitcher			12	19		19	11	3	16			
	Common Snipe				8			13	11				
	American Woodcock												

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Wilson's Phalarope			24	16	12		24	13	9	24		
	Red-necked Phalarope								17				
	Jaeger Species								24				
	Laughing Gull					7				25			
	Franklin's Gull		9	5	19	2			15	8	10	3	
	Bonaparte's Gull	8	4	5							11	21	2
	Ring-billed Gull					15				11			
	Herring Gull				3					23			
	Caspian Tern				24			18			22		
	Common Tern				7	24			12	18	1		
	Forster's Tern			11	22			4	22	28		18	25
	Least Tern				25	2				16			
	Black Tern				13	5	12	12			14		
	Rock Dove												
	Mourning Dove												
	Common Ground Dove	13				2		9	22	23			
	Black-billed Cuckoo				24	18	20	14		27			
	Yellow-billed Cuckoo				11							2	23
	Barn Owl												
	Eastern Screech-Owl												
	Great Horned Owl												
	Barred Owl												
	Long-eared Owl					9						27	

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
	Short-eared Owl					17					12			
	Northern Saw-whet Owl			○ ○								○ ○	○ ○	
	Common Nighthawk			11 ●	19						1 ●	18 ● ●		
	Chuck-will's-widow			2 ●	9					28				
	Whip-poor-will			23	1				23			25 ●		
	Chimney Swift			17	—————							17 ●	1 ● ●	
	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	21 ●		25 ●	1	—————					27	1 ●		
	Rufous Hummingbird		17										8 ○	
	Belted Kingfisher													
	Red-headed Woodpecker													
	Red-bellied Woodpecker	—————												
	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	—————				7				25 ●		—————		
	Downy Woodpecker	—————												
	Hairy Woodpecker													
	Northern Flicker "Yellow-shafted"	—————												
	Northern Flicker "Red-shafted"	1 ○											27 ○	
	Pileated Woodpecker													
	Olive-sided Flycatcher				25 ●	24 ● ●			8 ●		1			
	Eastern Wood-Pewee			27 ●	3	—————					28			
	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher				20	23			19		4			
	Acadian Flycatcher				19						16			
	Alder Flycatcher					14 ●								
	Willow Flycatcher					13 ●								

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
	Least Flycatcher				24	28				7				
	Eastern Phoebe													
	Vermilion Flycatcher										17 ○		1 ○	
	Great Crested Flycatcher				27	—————				24	1 ●			
	Eastern Kingbird			27 ○	1					27				
	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher				8		5 ●			30 ●				
	Horned Lark	—————												
	Purple Martin		23	—————							23			
	Tree Swallow			16		19	18 ●		11	—————			20	
	Northern Rough-winged Swallow			12								2		
	Bank Swallow				8					26				
	Cliff Swallow				16	24	29 ●	14 ●	1		1			
	Barn Swallow			11	—————						28	19 ●		
	Blue Jay	—————												
	American Crow	—————												
	Fish Crow													
	Carolina Chickadee	—————												
	Tufted Titmouse	—————												
	Red-breasted Nuthatch							11			9			
	White-breasted Nuthatch													
	Brown Creeper					30					8			
	Rock Wren												23 ○	
	Carolina Wren													

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Bewick's Wren	[Hatched pattern]											
	House Wren			7	9	9	22	17	27	[Hatched pattern]			
	Winter Wren	[Hatched pattern]				27				2	[Hatched pattern]		
	Sedge Wren	4		14	9			8		1	17		
	Marsh Wren	1			22	13				8		19	
	Golden-crowned Kinglet	[Solid black]				21				25	[Solid black]		
	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	[Hatched pattern]					12			17	[Hatched pattern]		
	Blue-grey Gnatcatcher		17	[Solid black]						29			18
	Eastern Bluebird	[Hatched pattern]											
	Veery				20	21	1			4			
	Grey-cheeked Thrush				12	31			9	31	[Hatched pattern]		
	Swainson's Thrush				6	25			6		2		
	Hermit Thrush	[Hatched pattern]				30			10	[Hatched pattern]			
	Wood Thrush	1			2	[Solid black]						10	1
	American Robin	[Solid black]											
	Grey Catbird		12	11	[Hatched pattern]						29		
	Northern Mockingbird	[Solid black]											
	Brown Thrasher	[Solid black]											
	American Pipit	[Hatched pattern]					1				10	[Hatched pattern]	
	Sprague's Pipit	[Hatched pattern]				23				12	[Hatched pattern]		
	Cedar Waxwing	[Solid black]					8		27	[Solid black]			
	Loggerhead Shrike	[Hatched pattern]											
	European Starling	[Solid black]											

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	White-eyed Vireo	8		21	[Solid black]								25
	Bell's Vireo				19	27	25						
	Solitary Vireo	20	28		1	18				9		30	19
	Yellow-throated Vireo			19	[Hatched pattern]							23	
	Warbling Vireo			1	[Hatched pattern]							13	
	Philadelphia Vireo			31	20	24			25	18	13		
	Red-eyed Vireo			24	5	[Solid black]						3	
	Blue-winged Warbler			27	8				7		25		
	Golden-winged Warbler				12	20			20	29	1		
	"Brewster's" Warbler				19				30	18			
	Tennessee Warbler				4	25			25	[Solid black]			
	Orange-crowned Warbler	24	10	28		12				11	4	8	27
	Nashville Warbler				4	15			21	[Hatched pattern]			
	Northern Parula Warbler			1	[Hatched pattern]							25	
	Yellow Warbler				9	[Hatched pattern]						27	
	Chestnut-sided Warbler				16	27			13	1	27		
	Magnolia Warbler				10	4			14	[Hatched pattern]			
	Cape May Warbler	3			22	19			20	24		2	
	Black-throated Blue Warbler										27		
	Yellow-rumped Warbler	[Solid black]				17				27	[Solid black]		
	Black-throated Green Warbler			19	25			21	7			24	
	Blackburnian Warbler				3	28				28	8	28	
	Yellow-throated Warbler			19	[Hatched pattern]							24	

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Pine Warbler					23				27			
	Prairie Warbler				9	3		21					
	Palm Warbler		14	28	1	12				13	19	16	26
	Bay-breasted Warbler				25	24				12		7	
	Blackpoll Warbler				14	22							
	Cerulean Warbler				3					23			
	Black-and-white Warbler			21			24	17			11	1	20
	American Redstart				10						15		
	Prothonotary Warbler			31	4				26	19			
	Worm-eating Warbler			27		23			11		25		
	Swainson's Warbler				11				31	24			
	Ovenbird			31	3	4		17	6	18			
	Northern Waterthrush				17	21		29		6			
	Louisiana Waterthrush			16					13				
	Kentucky Warbler			25	1					30			
	Connecticut Warbler				23	16			9	15			
	Mourning Warbler				15	31		19		27	2		
	Common Yellowthroat			27						21		19	
	Hooded Warbler			22						6			
	Wilson's Warbler				22	26		19			2		
	Canada Warbler				22	30		11		28			
	Yellow-breasted Chat	26			14				29	13			12
	Summer Tanager		11							17		5	

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Western Tanager					6							
	Scarlet Tanager				9					6	28		
	Northern Cardinal												
	Rose-breasted Grosbeak				15	22			30		2	17	
	Black-headed Grosbeak	13		1									
	Blue Grosbeak			24	13					20	12		
	Indigo Bunting		22	10	3							2	
	Painted Bunting				18			18	6		15		
	Dickcissel	27	16	10	14				29		5	3	
	Green-tailed Towhee												25
	Eastern Towhee												
	Bachman's Sparrow				6			26					
	American Tree Sparrow				23								17
	Chipping Sparrow	28		17									
	Field Sparrow												
	Vesper Sparrow	27		1	28						17		
	Lark Sparrow				12			8		9		21	
	Savannah Sparrow					21				9			
	Grasshopper Sparrow			26				17			3		
	Henslow's Sparrow			27									26
	LeConte's Sparrow			13	1						22	8	
	Sharp-tailed Sparrow									22	25		
	Fox Sparrow				27						18		

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Song Sparrow					13					8		
	Lincoln's Sparrow	31	14		2	28				27		1	24
	Swamp Sparrow					16					2		
	White-throated Sparrow					4	2			27			
	White-crowned Sparrow					17					7		
	Harris' Sparrow				28						30		
	Junco "Slate Colored"				2	10				21	1		
	Junco "Oregon"			31							31		
	Lapland Longspur			19							1		
	Smith's Longspur			27	16							13	
	Snow Bunting		11									27	
	Bobolink				17	29				15			
	Red-winged Blackbird												
	Eastern Meadowlark												
	Western Meadowlark						24				15		
	Yellow-headed Blackbird			3		10					24		
	Rusty Blackbird										22		
	Brewer's Blackbird				15						27		
	Common Grackle												
	Shiny Cowbird							6					
	Brown-headed Cowbird												
	Orchard Oriole				4		26				26		
	Baltimore Oriole	1	28	18	9						13	4	30

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Purple Finch					7					12		
	House Finch												
	Red Crossbill					30		20					
	White-winged Crossbill												26
	Pine Siskin				22		6				10		
	American Goldfinch												
	Evening Grosbeak				9						17		
	House Sparrow												

Addendum

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Garganey				16								
	Surf Scoter	21											
	Golden Eagle											12	
	Red Phalarope								14				26
	Western Kingbird											1	

New Birds

Date Seen	Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec