



Tennessee Ornithological Society Memphis Chapter

December 2024

<http://birdmemphis.org>

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Chapter member David Hill presented *Spring Birding in New Zealand*. David has been birding for over 70 years and is passionate about conservation. New Zealand is an important destination for nature lovers because of the large number of unusual endemic birds combined with coastal areas for the observation of sea birds and mammals.

New Zealand is the fifty-first country that David has birded. He and his wife Elizabeth recently returned from New Zealand where they drove 1900 miles. They were impressed by the friendliness of the people and the orderliness of the country. David was frustrated by the lack of shoulders on the roads as he found it impossible to pull off for photography when interesting birds were seen. New Zealand has two main islands (north and south) and several smaller islands. It was isolated for 80 million years and originally had 208 endemic species. There were no terrestrial mammals until Polynesian voyagers arrived around 1280 bringing a domestic dog and Polynesian rat to the islands. Following Captain Cook's 1769 visit to the islands Europeans introduced an additional 3 species of mice and rat, weasel, stoat and ferret, domestic cat, rabbit, hedgehog, and Australian bushtail possum. With no mammalian predators on the islands many bird species such as the kiwi, kakapo, takahe, and the extinct moa were flightless. New Zealand has lost 40-50% of its land bird species. The 9 species of moa and an eagle that preyed on them were extinct before the arrival of Europeans. These extinctions are the result of predation by humans and introduced mammals and the loss of habitat and food. David explained that before human settlement most of New Zealand was covered in climax temperate rain forest. He was sad to see that so much of this forest has been lost. He showed the now typical landscape of green hills used as pasture for sheep, cattle, and European red deer. He noted the image of tree fern leaves is a symbol of New Zealand. Tree ferns are a major component of the native rain forest understory.





Conservation efforts to save bird species from further extinction are ongoing. Two major efforts are used: 1) eradication of predators on smaller islands followed by translocation of bird species to predator-free islands, and 2) creating predator-free sanctuaries on the main islands by first enclosing an area in fencing that excludes predators and grazing animals followed by removal of unwanted animals within the enclosure. These sanctuaries protect forest habitat and allow threatened birds, insects, and reptiles to thrive. David and

Elizabeth visited one such sanctuary. David showed pictures of the forested park enclosed in high heavy duty fencing and double entrance gates. They also visited the Willowbank Wildlife Reserve that has a captive breeding program for the takahe, a large iridescent blue rail.

David showed many pictures of the birds he saw in three categories, land birds, water birds, and human-introduced species. Kiwis are nocturnal making them difficult to photograph. They went on a guided night search for kiwi using a red light to see. David regreted not spending more time watching a kiwi rather than attempting to get a photograph. The New Zealand kakapo is a large flightless, nocturnal ground-burrowing parrot. David brought a special book on the kakapo. He showed pictures of several bird species that are the only bird of a family such as the honey-eater-like Stitchbird.

David showed many lovely photos of pelagic birds that were photographed from moving boats. These included the Australian Gannet and several species of albatross, petrel, and tern. David said his favorite bird of the trip was the Paradise Shelduck. These beautiful ducks have striking sexual dimorphism with the white-headed female being more colorful. My favorite picture was of the Red-billed Gull.

-Margaret Jefferson

..... Meeting Highlights

Chapter President Liz Hall announced that the Memphis Botanic Garden would like to have someone present a bird program in conjunction with the Botanic Garden's Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) activities. The 2025 GBBC will be Feb. 14-17. Please let Liz Hall (elizabeth.l.alford@gmail.com) know if you are interested. She is also checking to see if they need help leading birding walks for the GBBC.

Conservation

The US house of representatives recently introduced legislation called The Migratory Bird Protection Act. It would set up a permitting system to ensure that industries that interact with protected bird species adopt best practices to reduce the killing or capture of birds. You can learn more at: <https://act.abcbirds.org/a/migratory-bird-protections>

TOS member Chuck Nicholson posted to TN-Bird an invitation to join a webinar entitled "Birdman of the Senate: George P. McLean and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act" presented as part of Conversations in Forest History, December 3, 2024, at 12 noon central time. For more information or to register see: <https://foresthstory.org/education/fhs-webinar-series/conversations-series/>

Field Trip Reports

Shelby Farms Park, Nov. 9: Fifteen observers split into 2 groups that recorded a total of 60 bird species. The highlight was two adult Bald Eagles perched in a tree near Chickasaw Lake. A day or two later a Bald Eagle was seen in the area carrying nesting material.

Notable Sightings

Prairie Warbler (1) Nov. 1, Shelby View Lake, Bartlett, TN

Common Loon (2) Nov. 9, Shelby Farms Park, Hyde Lake

Black Scoter (1) Nov. 17, Maynard Styles North Waste Treatment Plant

-Margaret Jefferson

November 14, Shelby Farms / Agricenter

On Thursday morning 11/14/24 four members of MTOS, who missed the Saturday field trip at Shelby Farms, joined me for a partial rerun at the park. With Betty Blaylock, Sue Ferguson, Margaret Jefferson and Ed Thomas, we started at the little parking lot at the top of the hill following the paved path towards Chickasaw Lake. We stepped off the paved portion taking the wooded gravel paths around the two lakes which almost always give good results. The weather was windier and chillier than it was when we left home, but we were pretty well prepared. The birds were sticking to the wooded areas out of the wind so presented a challenge to get good looks as they hopped and flew from limb to limb. By my count we identified 24 species although we didn't call the card at the end as we split up before that.



Some of the surprises included: Canada Geese in the little pond by the crosswalk at the start, (54); Mallard Ducks in various ponds, (36); along with Great Egrets (2), and a swooping Osprey that interrupted their fishing; a couple Eastern Phoebe; a mob of Tufted Titmouse moving around the park, (8 or more); Ring-necked Ducks in Chickasaw Lake, (8); one of the two Bald Eagles sighted Saturday was soaring over near Chickasaw Lake, and we did see an Eastern Towhee over near the marsh on Gardener Road. We all enjoyed the midweek outing.

-Chad Brown

Christmas Bird Counts- A great way to get involved!

The Christmas Bird Count was one of the earliest combinations of bird conservation and citizen science. A tradition existed prior to the 20th century for people to go out and shoot as many birds as possible on Christmas day. The team that had the most birds won. Frank Chapman, who was an ornithologist and an early field guide author, came up with the idea in 1900 to take a Christmas Bird Census instead. This established a new holiday tradition and saved the lives of an untold number of birds.

This year we celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Christmas Bird Count! To put that in perspective, our nation will celebrate its 250th anniversary in 2026. That means for more than half of our country's existence as a nation, people have participated in this great tradition.

These counts are an important way to measure the bird populations in the count areas. This data has been compiled year after year and it has helped scientists see population trends over time. In our area, we have counts that have been going on for 96 years all the way down to a brand new one this year! The time frame for these counts spans 4 weekends.

Our area has several (7) opportunities for you to participate in this time-honored tradition. The dates and leaders of these counts will be listed below. If you want to experience the thrill of this important citizen-science project, please contact that leader.

Saturday, December 14th- 49th Annual Sardis Lake Mississippi CBC

Jason Hoeksema jason.hoeksema@gmail.com

Sunday, December 15th- 96th Annual Memphis CBC

It's the most wonderful time of the year - the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count!

The 2024 Memphis Christmas Bird Count is Sunday, December 15. We would love to have your participation! Birding parties will count birds in different areas of the county. The Raleigh, Shelby Farms Park, TO Fuller SP/Ensley Bottoms, and Overton Park bird count areas welcome all birders to help with the count. If you have any questions or want to join a group, you can reach out directly to the area group leader, or me.

Thank you,

Anita Vincent

Memphis CBC compiler

avin1129@gmail.com

Memphis CBC group leaders:

Raleigh – Ryan Pudwell rpudwell@gmail.com

Shelby Farms – George Payne gpayne@fisherarnold.com

T.O. Fuller SP/Ensley Bottoms – Jim Varner jamescvarner@gmail.com

Overton Park – Margaret Jefferson mjefferson100@hotmail.com

Saturday, December 21st- 27th Annual Fayette County CBC

Cliff VanNostrand birdinginthe901@gmail.com

Sunday, December 22nd- 43rd Annual Arkabutla Mississippi CBC

Hal Mitchell halmitchell@gmail.com

Saturday, December 28th- 25th Annual Wapanocca/Meeman-Shelby Forest CBC

Wapanocca – Dick Preston dickpreston48@gmail.com

Meeman-Shelby Forest – Cliff VanNostrand birdinginthe901@gmail.com

Saturday, January 4th- 7th Annual Holly Springs (Strawberry Plains) Mississippi CBC

Hal Mitchell halmitchell@gmail.com

Saturday, January 4th- 1st Annual Collierville CBC

Cliff VanNostrand birdinginthe901@gmail.com

We realize that this is a busy time for families. You can do as much or as little as your time allows. Everyone is encouraged to participate. All skill levels are welcome. We hope to see you there!

-Cliff VanNostrand



A NEW HOME FOR CHICKADEES

My wife's brother, John Gayley, has been supplying us out of his Bowdoinham, Maine, workshop with bird feeders and nest boxes for several years. Consequently we have had nesting Bluebirds and Chickadees every year,until two years ago. We installed one of the two new Chickadee boxes that John had built and sent to us. We noticed the Bluebirds were very interested in the new box, even though there were two perfectly good



Bluebird boxes a little further from the birdfeeders. We were not concerned as we were sure they couldn't get through the entrance to the box. WRONG!!! They actually were just able to squeeze through. So, for the next two years it was a Bluebird box since they laid claim to it that spring. They fledged three times each year successfully until this year the last time, the heat of the late summer was eventually fatal to the fledglings. The box was too small. We decided to take it down. The Bluebirds were a bit upset when they found a bare pole where their house used to be.

The pole remained bare for almost three months and the birds got used to it and just went on with their usual routine. Last week my wife laid out the other new Chickadee box and had me install a metal "mask" she had bought at Wild Birds Unlimited that was guaranteed to be Chickadee size. I installed the mask and put the box up on the pole. Put my tools and ladder away, peeked around the corner of the carport to see if it looked OK. Guess what! There was a pair of Bluebirds and the male was trying to squeeze into the box, but it was no go. That was two minutes after I finished attaching the box to the pole! I watched him try three times unsuccessfully. Haven't seen them since. I'm curious to see if they show up in the spring to defend the box from the Chickadees. We will just have to wait till then to see how it goes.

-Chad Brown

Birding Rodney Baber Park

Anyone who uses eBird in the Memphis area has likely seen some of my checklists. In 2024 during the course of each month I have visited between 30 and 40 different hotspots around Shelby County. While I enjoy birding places like Shelby Farms and Ensley Bottoms, I also like to visit eBird hotspots that are not visited as often. I especially gravitate to those in parts of town that aren't birded frequently. For the last couple of years Rodney Baber Park has been on my radar as a spot to go birding, but until recently it was largely difficult to access on account of the state of the park.

Following some flooding of the Wolf River that badly damaged the infrastructure of the park, it sat unused for a few years. Over the last couple years, the park has been reworked to elevate the playground area and sports fields to make them less susceptible to future flooding while also allowing other parts of the park to return closer to their natural state. There were also two lakes added during construction, one on the east end of the park and another on the west end. There are four ditches that intersect the park running north to south from James Rd to the Wolf River.

While much of the park is open there are a few patches of mature trees primarily following the ditches as well as a section of early succession woods with younger trees. About 25% of the new growth consists of pine trees with the rest being a mix of deciduous hardwood tree species. There is a paved trail that goes around the lake at the east end of the park and an overflow at the southwest end of the that lake which has formed a small wetland between the lake and the closest creek. Some of the old infrastructure from the park's previous design allows for easy travel of the southeast portion of the park which has a utility easement with overhead power lines.

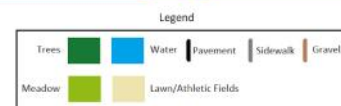
Since July, I have spent a bit of time birding at this park. As I write this, there have been 60 species of birds observed at this hotspot and that number will certainly grow as more checklists are submitted. Click the link to see eBird bar charts for this hotspot. <https://ebird.org/barchart?r=L34297304>

It has been a productive location for sparrows so far this fall with 9 species observed in the last month. This will also be one of the stops on the Bartlett/Raleigh/Fraser part of the Christmas Bird Count (Memphis Circle) this year on December 15th. Rodney Baber Park is located at 2215 James Rd, between Hollywood St. and

McLean Blvd. It is also directly across the road from the not yet open new Frayer Branch of the Memphis Library. The park is open daily from 6am till sunset.



Rodney Baber Park



SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

Submissions of any of the following are desired:

- Birding Events
- Stories about birds or birders
- Birding Tips
- Poetry, quotes, sketches, or photos
- Photo of birds or people at events or field trips.

Deadline is the 22nd of each month,
Email submissions to mτοςnewsletter@gmail.com

A LA CARTE

- **Collaborative Burning for Birds project launches website**
<https://talltimbers.org/articles/collaborative-burning-for-birds-project-launches-website/>
- **Audubon Invites Volunteers to Celebrate 125 years of the Christmas Bird Count**
<https://www.audubon.org/es/node/152831>
- **American Birding Podcast: Hybrid Chickadee Challenges with Amber Rice and Scott Taylor**
<https://www.aba.org/08-45-hybrid-chickadee-challenges-with-amber-rice-and-scott-taylor/>
- **Bird wings inspire new approach to flight safety**
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2024/10/241028164339.htm>
- **A Drake Mallard migrated from West Tennessee to the Northwest Territories**
<https://www.facebook.com/cohenwildlab/posts/pfbid0Xs6Pat5kVaDTwd2fLeyhBvhp4J1DG48X59nNDiyVQpuimqXVms5TtmWEWzMkGrLsI>
- **Birding in the 901 Merch**
<https://amzn.to/3ZIEOck> (affiliate link)
- **Birding Gifts for the Family**
<https://amzn.to/3ZIEOck> (affiliate link)



UPCOMING EVENTS

December 2024 / January 2025

Saturday, December 14

Sardis CBC

Field Trip Leader: Jason Hoeksema

jason.hoeksema@gmail.com

Sunday, December 15

Memphis CBC

Compiler: Anita Vincent

avin1129@gmail.com

Wednesday, December 18, 7:00pm

Chapter Meeting

St. George's Episcopal Church

2425 South Germantown Rd. Germantown, TN

Saturday, December 21

Fayette CBC

Field Trip Leader: Cliff VanNostrand

birdinginthe901@gmail.com

Sunday, December 22

Arkabutla CBC

Field Trip Leader: Hal Mitchell

halmitchell@gmail.com

Saturday, December 28

Wapanooca/Shelby Forest CBC

Field Trip Leaders: Dick Preston / Cliff VanNostrand

Dick: dickpreston48@gmail.com

Cliff: birdinginthe901@gmail.com

Saturday, January 4

Holly Springs Mississippi CBC

Field Trip Leader: Hal Mitchell

halmitchell@gmail.com

Saturday, January 4

Collierville CBC

Field Trip Leader: Cliff VanNostrand

birdinginthe901@gmail.com

Saturday, January 11

Tunica/Northern Mississippi

Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston

dickpreston48@gmail.com

Wednesday, January 15, 7:00pm

Chapter Meeting

St. George's Episcopal Church

2425 South Germantown Rd. Germantown, TN

*CBC = Christmas Bird Count

<https://tnbirds.org/events/>



Winter Hummingbirds

- Do you have hummingbirds at your feeder **after** November 1st or **before** March 15th?
- Do you see hummingbirds that are **not** ruby-throated during either migration season?



What do you do?

1. Try and get a picture!
2. Contact us at:
routledges@bellsouth.net



- If you are willing, we'll travel to your place and attempt to band the hummingbird.
- It will then become part of our ongoing winter hummingbird research.



If you have any questions OR need general information please feel free to reach out to us.



TOS Membership Information

Members may join online at www.birdmemphis.org or by mail.

Benefits include monthly programs, field trips, quarterly journals, and state and chapter newsletters.

Categories and dues are:

Individual	\$36
Family	\$40
Sustaining	\$55
College Student	\$15
Other Student	\$10
Lifetime	\$450 one time +\$18 yearly

Dues payable by PayPal at www.birdmemphis.org or by check, made out to MTOS.

Please send dues to: Barbara Pyles
8488 East Askersund Cove
Cordova, TN 38018
(901) 570-1009
E-mail brbpyles@gmail.com

Newsletter Delivery Options

To reduce printing and mailing costs, a digital version, which is usually expanded with photos and occasional articles, is provided. Notify Margaret Jefferson, mjefferson100@hotmail.com. If you have no internet access, a printed version can be mailed.

Chapter Newsletter Submissions

Email submissions to Deon VanNostrand mtosnewsletter@gmail.com

Deadline for submissions to the Newsletter is the 22nd of the month.

Field Cards

Please mail or e-mail your field cards and notable sightings to Dick Preston. dickpreston48@gmail.com

Tennessee Warbler Deadlines

- *March 15 for the April Newsletter
- *July 15 for the August Newsletter
- *November 15 for the December Newsletter

Forward contributions to:
Theresa Graham, Editor
Email: 2graham@bellsouth.net

Chapter Meeting

December 18, 2024. 7:00pm

St. George's Episcopal Church,
2425 South Germantown Rd. Germantown, TN
Phone 901-754-7282

Program

Rin Pell, Bowers Lab, University of Memphis
The Good, The Bad, The Cowbird

Hospitality

Refreshments will be provided by
Knox Martin and Kate Friedman.

Upcoming Field Trip Information

- December 14:** Sardis CBC
- December 15:** Memphis CBC
- December 21:** Fayette CBC
- December 22:** Arkabutla CBC
- December 28:** Wapanocca/Shelby Forest CBC

Thank you to all who contributed to this month's newsletter.

For our next issue, we would like to feature some photos of ducks.

Please send your submissions to mtosnewsletter@gmail.com.

Treasurer's Report

As of November 22, 2024 the balance in the Treasury is \$14,600.13. Proceeds from the November 20 Silent Auction and Sale were \$158.00. Member participation in this event was excellent. Many high quality books and other items found new homes for their future use and enjoyment.

Old Business

At the November meeting the chapter approved an increase in the spending limit from \$500 to \$750. This change allows for expenses \$750 and below to be processed without prior publication and formal chapter vote.

PHOTOS BY
ALLEN SPARKS



Red-breasted Nuthatch



Yellow-rumped Warbler



Brown Creeper

Photos by:
Cliff VanNostrand



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker



Great Horned Owl



Cedar Waxwing



Rusty Blackbird



Eastern Phoebe



Short-eared Owl