



MEMPHIS CHAPTER NEWS

TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

<http://birdmemphis.org>

November 2020

SPARROW HIGHWAY

When the warbler migration begins to wane in the fall, it is time to look for sparrows. These birds can be challenging to identify at times but are always fun to watch. This year has been a treat so far. Bob Foehring reported a Clay-colored on October 8th and a Nelson's on October 14th. These were both seen on the gravel road just south of Gardner Road. If you have never been there during the fall, it is a veritable smorgasbord of sparrows. Also seen this fall have been the Dark-eyed Junco, Eastern Towhee, Field, Grasshopper, LeConte's, Lincoln's, Savannah, Song, Swamp, and White-throated Sparrows. Others are expected to be back soon including the Fox, Vesper, and White-crowned Sparrows. Last fall, Bob also found a Henslow's Sparrow in the Gardens. Special thanks to Bob for submitting these pictures for us to enjoy.



Clay-colored Sparrow
Photo by: Bob Foehring



Nelson's Sparrow
Photo by: Bob Foehring



LeConte's Sparrow
Photo by: Bob Foehring

..... Field Trip Reports

SEPTEMBER 30: SHELBY FOREST

7 observers, 37 species.

Philadelphia Vireo (3) and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (13).

-Dick Preston

OCTOBER 3: SHELBY FOREST

12 observers, 47 species

FOS Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (3), Olive-sided Flycatcher (1),

Cedar Waxwing (2)

Small migrants - Nashville Warbler (1) Black-throated Green Warbler (1)

Raptor species - Barred Owl (1) Cooper's Hawk (1) Red-shouldered Hawk (1) Broad-winged Hawk (1) Red-tailed Hawk (1)

High count - Pileated Woodpecker (15)

-Van Harris

OCTOBER 7: SHELBY FOREST

14 observers, 46 species.

Blue Jay (63); Bay-breasted Warbler (6) and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (19).

OCTOBER 17: OCTOBER BIG DAY

Shelby County: 10 MTOS Members, 108 species

Tennessee:

United States:

World Wide: 31,000 birders, 7036 species

OCTOBER 18: WAPANOCCA NWR

Early rain showers greeted 14 chapter members at Wapanocca NWR, Turrell, AR, on Sunday morning, October 18. The rain continued off and on until about 10 am and gave way to bright sunshine by noon. The intrepid birders located 60 species.

FOS - Northern Harrier (4), Hooded Merganser (3), White-throated Sparrow (4), Song Sparrow (1), Golden-crowned Kinglet (3), Brown Creeper (2), Forster's Tern (1). Notable - Bald Eagle (4; 3 adult, 1 immature), Ruddy Duck (220), Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (7; This appears to be the first record of this species for Wapanocca NWR)

-Van Harris



October 3: Jim Varner explains the fine points of identifying the Black-throated Green Warbler to Gregg Elliott, Betty & David Blaylock and Sue Cosmini.



Broad-winged Hawk
Photo: Chad Brown



October 3: The group strolls back towards the Visitors Center: David Blaylock, John Whirley, Van Harris (leader), David Young, Gregg Elliott, Sue Cosmini and Lisa Jorgenson.
Photo: Chad Brown

RARE BIRD ALERT

The "Rare Bird Alert" is a email/telephone chain to notify interested members of unusual sightings. To report unusual sightings or to add your name & any "Wish List" birds to the list, call or e-mail Virginia Reynolds (vbreyolds@att.net).

"MEAN" BEHAVIOR IN A RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER FAMILY



The Reprimand

sibling fight that birds (and people) often engage in, there were also frantic chases between adult and juvenile, with the adult aggressively shooing his young off every surface it landed on. A fledgling would be chased from tree to tree until it was at some distance from our yard.

As summer wore on, the "bullying" got worse. A fledgling would approach the adult with fluttering wings and begging calls, but the adult would suddenly wheel around and chase the fledgling down the branch with mouth open, sometimes even pinching the fledgling's beak or feathers. Faced with this aggressive behavior, the fledgling would emit a shrill whimper, like a dog's whine.

It seemed that the fledglings' behavior became unusual as well. Instead of immediately springing towards their father to beg, each kept its distance and tentatively inched toward him. When the adult hopped towards them to deliver food, they often retreated fearfully, unsure of whether he would deliver a reward or reprimand. An overly-eager fledgling would be chastised immediately. I once observed a juvenile (not sure

This spring, I noticed a male red-bellied woodpecker that often visited our feeders. One day, he came along with a juvenile and started to feed it suet. From that day forward, the woodpecker would come almost every day, with at least one of his two fledglings at his heels, begging for food with a scratchy, shrill call.

As I observed them, I started to notice bouts of "mean" behavior that the adult was exhibiting towards his young. While there was the occasional



Pinching wing



Pinching beak



Adult chased fledgling to the edge until it fell off (left to right)

if it was one of the 2 fledglings) approach an adult female, presumably its mother, only to see the female rush at the juvenile, attempting to peck or pinch its feathers.

Although I have observed other

bird species rearing their young, I have never seen such kind of aggressive behavior. Was it caused by some built-in natural mechanism that people cannot understand, or was it simply some sort of avian child abuse? I usually sympathized with the fledglings, but sometimes thought that they were, perhaps, being reprimanded for stealing food from the adult's caches or interrupting his work. Or maybe it was the incessant begging call that "annoyed" the adult. The fledglings were, after all, constantly following him like satellites around a planet. If the adult intended to urge the fledglings to their independence, the fledglings did not seem to understand and continued to follow the adult for several months.

One day, an interesting event occurred at the feeders that intensified my interest. One fledgling was having a snack at a platform feeder when a juvenile jay landed opposite the woodpecker. The jay did not seem to mind the company, but the woodpecker was extremely disturbed by the jay's presence. It opened its mouth wide in a silent but hostile gesture and stuck its head towards the unperturbed jay, who only stared



Fledgling aggression platform feeder

innocently at the fledgling. I was struck by the likeness of the fledgling woodpecker with his father. Perhaps the jay came from a "peaceful family" in which its parents were not aggressive or mean towards it, and the woodpecker simply picked up its father's habits. In any case, I was very intrigued with all this unusual behavior, and decided to do some research. I immediately found an article summarizing a study in which female Nazca boobies attacked unrelated young.¹ These abused young, sadly, grew up to be bullies themselves. Another article mentioned feather plucking behavior in cockatiels (a parent plucks its chick's feathers at a dangerously young age), and as with the boobies, the abused cockatiel chicks grow up to become feather-pluckers.² I was amazed to find how much these behaviors resembles bullying and child abuse in people.

A month or two ago, the fledglings (there may have been more than two, for it appears that the adult raised a second brood) molted into their male and female plumages. It has been a while since I last saw them. Their visits to the feeders became less and less frequent until even the adult male disappeared. I hope they will not treat their future young as their father has treated them.

-Lynn M. Hui

Editor's Note:

Special thanks to MTOS member Lynn Hui for contributing this article. If you would like to submit an article about your experience watching birds, please send it to mtosnewsletter@gmail.com.

Hummingbird Banding

On September 12, 2020, Cyndi Routledge captured, banded and released 70 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds on Judy Dorsey's home deck. This was accomplished over a three hour period in between rain showers. Cyndi is a Federal Licensed Master bird bander and CEO of the nonprofit Southeastern Avian Research (SEAR) <https://southeasternavianresearch.org/> in Clarksville, TN. MTOS president and hummingbird banding trainee Michael Collins was also on hand and banded eight of the hummers. Mitz Bailey and Cyndi's husband Steve helped set up cage traps around some of the feeders and remove birds for banding. LoraAnn Bailey recorded each bird's data for Federal Bird Banding Laboratory <https://www.usgs.gov/centers/pwrc/science/bird-banding-laboratory> records.

Bird banding data are useful in both scientific research and management and conservation projects. Individual identification of birds makes possible studies of dispersal and migration, behavior and social structure, life-span and survival rate, reproductive success and population growth.

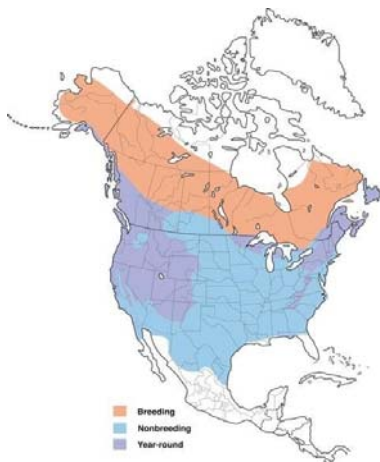
Each bird had a tiny band with a unique ID carefully placed on its leg. 39 females and 31 males were banded. 32 were after hatch year (adult) birds and 38 were hatch year (juvenile) birds. The "fattest" hummer, a juvenile female, weighed a whopping 5.19 grams.

-Judy Dorsey



Species Spotlight: Dark-eyed Junco

To many birdwatchers living in the US, the return of the Dark-eyed Juncos is a cheery event. These plump little birds seem oblivious of frigid winter temperatures and chilling snow, hopping about under bird feeders when even the most cold-hardy humans are wrapped up inside several layers of clothing. In fact, juncos like the cold- they cannot stand the high temperatures of the Mid-South, choosing instead to spend their summers up in Canada. You can expect juncos to return to your feeders in late-October or November.



Range: Juncos migrate to Canada and Alaska in spring to breed, returning to the US in late fall. However, some juncos living in the Appalachian Or Rocky Mountains stay year-round.

Habitat: Juncos prefer to breed in woodlands and forests in Canada, but during winter, they do not have much habitat preference.

Diet/feeding: Being a species of sparrow, juncos eat grass and weed seeds. They are mostly vegetarian throughout the year but will eat insects in the summer. Their favorite feeder food is millet but they will take sunflower seeds as well.



Courtship and breeding: Males arrive on their breeding grounds before females to secure territories. After establishing his territory, he will aggressively chase off any intruders. The male courts a female by picking up pieces of nesting material while flicking open his wings and tail. Females seem to prefer males with larger white tail stripes. To build a nest, the female locates a depression in the ground (she may also choose to nest in a tree or on a man-made structure) and weaves together leaves, twigs, and pine needles to form the foundation of her nest before lining the cup with finer material such as moss and hair. Then, she lays 3-6 white or gray speckled eggs. The young are fed by both parents and fledge in 10-13 days. As fledglings, they are fed for several weeks.

When, where, and how to see: In the Mid-South, look for juncos in late fall and winter. They come readily to feeders and backyards, often foraging on the ground or on platform feeders (they may also use tube feeders). Junco plumage patterns vary widely, as there are six distinct forms. However, all forms have the trademark black

and white striped tail and small pink bill. As with their appearance, each form of Junco possesses a slightly different call and song, but they generally sing a sweet trill, (more musical than that of a Chipping Sparrow) and give short *chip calls*.

The slate-colored form is the most widespread and well-known of the 5 forms, the only junco that winters east of the Mississippi River. Males sport a dark gray, slate colored upper body and wings, and a clean white underbelly and lower chest. Females look like a brownish male.

- The white-winged form looks like a slate-colored with two faint white lines on the wing. These Juncos have a small range including parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Some slate-colored juncos may also have white wing bars.
- Found across the Western US and along the Pacific coast, the Oregon form is more colorful than the slate-colored. Males have jet black heads, peachy flanks and wings, and white bellies. Females have dark gray heads.
- Pink sided Juncos are similar to Oregon Juncos, but lack the black heads of their counterparts. They are found in the Southwest and in the Rockies.
- Red-backed and gray-headed forms differ only in bill color; red-backed juncos have a gray upper mandible. Both possess a light gray body with a rust-colored back, and are found in the Southwest US.

Conservation: Although the Junco is in no need of intense conservation efforts, their populations have, from 1966 to 2015, declined by 50%.

Fun facts:

- Research suggests that juncos and other sparrows flash their tails to deter predators. However, birds that flash their tails are also at risk of attracting attention to themselves.
- Wintering juncos gather into flocks, with the earliest members occupying the highest social rank.

-Lynn M. Hui

Bibliography:

- Most info in this article from the Dark-eyed Junco page on Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds guide:
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Dark-eyed_Junco/

Other sources:

- <https://www.whatbirdsareinmybackyard.com/2020/02/where-do-dark-eyed-juncos-like-to-nest.html>
- Tail flashing in juncos: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00265-019-2678-8?shared-article-renderer>
- Photo under title taken by Lynn Hui
- Range map from: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Dark-eyed_Junco/id

Warming up a Hot Spot

Nonconnah Greenbelt Park – Shelby County, TN

By Thomas Blevins



Nonconnah Trailhead
35 Acres

4291 S. Forest-Hill Irene Rd,
Memphis TN 38127

Since March, for Andie and me, like most, the Covid-19 pandemic has put a halt to our opportunities to get out of town for birding and photographing anything furry, fuzzy or feathered. So, that meant finding opportunities closer to home. I wanted to find a spot I could consistently bird and not have to be too concerned about social distancing. The Nonconnah Greenbelt Park fit the bill, as it has a variety of habitats, plenty of areas to bird and very few people visiting. It seemed like the more I visited, the more there was to explore.

One of the unusual bird species I found there this spring was the Prairie Warbler. I had recently run into Cliff VanNostrand while birding the Wolf River Environmental Restoration Greenway Trail, another great hotspot, and he helped me get familiar with this species'

song. That helped a bunch when I started to visit the Nonconnah Greenbelt Park more regularly and soon found multiple Prairie Warblers there. They could be found in the same shrubby, tangled bramble habitat as the Yellow-breasted Chat, Common Yellowthroat, Indigo Bunting, Orchard Oriole, etc. Apparently, Prairie Warblers are rare for Shelby County as they prefer areas further away from the Mississippi River.



The Nonconnah Greenbelt Park now has over 110 species sighted and 80 species photographed. My goal is to help to get photos for more than 100 species there. Hopefully, that will be possible as the winter residents arrive. I'll keep you posted!

-Thomas Blevins

Nonconnah Greenbelt Park Hotspot
<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L6257240>

Wolf River Environmental Restoration Greenway Trail System

Editor's Note:

Special thanks to Thomas Blevins for contributing this article and idea. If you would like to submit an article about your favorite hotspot or patch, please send it to mtosnewsletter@gmail.com.

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 mtosnewsletter@gmail.com

Articles of Interest

- Birding Patch Club Monthly
<https://www.birdcollective.com/collections/subscriptions/products/monthly-patch-club-subscription>
- Standardized 4- and 6-letter Bird Species ("Alpha") Codes
<https://www.birdpop.org/pages/birdSpeciesCodes.php>
- Quiz: What kind of owl are you?
<https://action.audubon.org/quiz/what-kind-owl>
- Researchers In Westmoreland County Catch Rare Part-Female, Part-Male Bird
<https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2020/09/28/half-female-half-male-bird-rector-pennsylvania/>
- Birding in the 901 Facebook group
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3257247114362538>
- Christmas Birding Wish List <https://amzn.to/2Hh2Q3v>

..... Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, November 21, 8:00 am

Shelby Farms Park/Agricenter International

<https://goo.gl/maps/s3YkaKEbPf2EKsja8>

Field Trip Leader: *Sue Cosmini*

susanewag@gmail.com / 901-326-6798

Meeting location – Old Amphitheater. Use the parking lot between picnic shelter 6 and 7. Directions: Farm Rd to entrance to park, go to first stop sign and turn left. Continue north to four way stop. Parking lot located at that intersection.

Sunday, November 29, 8:00 am

T.O. Fuller State Park, Visitor Center

<https://goo.gl/maps/JF9xp5K7RvZV9ZfF6>

Field Trip Leader: *Virginia Reynolds*

vbreynolds@att.net / 901-767-3547

Sunday, December 20

Memphis CBC

Field Trip Leader: *Margaret Jefferson*

mjefferson100@hotmail.com / 901-274-1045

Sunday, December 27

Wapanocca National NWR, CBC

<https://goo.gl/maps/8mFp46AdEXxbn19p8>

Field Trip Leader: *Van Harris & Dick Preston*

Van: shelbyforester1223@gmail.com / 901-876-3337

Dick: dickpreston48@gmail.com / 901-837-3360

Sunday, December 29

Arkabutla CBC

Field Trip Leader: *Van Harris*

shelbyforester1223@gmail.com / 901-876-3337

TBA, December

Fayette County, CBC

Field Trip Leader: *Kate Gooch*

goochpb@att.net / 901-458-9874

TBA, December

Sardis, CBC

Field Trip Leader: *J Hoeksema & Dick Preston*

dickpreston48@gmail.com / 901-837-3360

TOS Membership Information

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	\$23
Other Student	\$ 5
Lifetime	\$450 one time +\$18 yearly

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 Cliff 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

- *February 28 for the April Newsletter
- *June 30 for the August Newsletter
- *October 31 for the December Newsletter

Forward contributions to:

Theresa Graham, Editor
P.O. Box 366 Oakland, TN 38060
(901) 465-4263
Email: 2graham@bellsouth.net

Chapter Meeting

Chapter Meetings are cancelled until further notice.

Upcoming Field Trip Information

Saturday, November 21,
Shelby Farms Park/Agricenter International

Sunday, November 29
T.O. Fuller State Park

Sunday, December 20
Memphis CBC

Sunday, December 27
Wapanocca National NWR, CBC

New Member

Charlotte Hayes, Germantown
charlottehayes@aol.com



HUMMINGBIRD SIGHTING BETWEEN November 1 and March 15

If you do get a hummingbird, Please contact
Cyndi Routledge - routledges@bellsouth.net

Please consider leaving
out your feeder out year-
round. Keep it clean,
maintained and
easily viewed

Since November 1990,
300 hummingbirds of 7 different
species have been captured, banded
and released here in Tennessee as
part of a winter banding
research program.

Photos by Van Harris



Summer Tanager



Red-headed Woodpecker
*Ensley Bottoms



Pectoral Sandpiper



Pileated Woodpecker



Northern Bobwhite quail
*Ensley Bottoms



Barn Swallow