



## MEMPHIS CHAPTER NEWS

**TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

<http://birdmemphis.org>

**November 2021**

### **OCTOBER PROGRAM**

There was a good turnout of members for the October meeting that was held at the Mid-South Raptor Center. We were lucky to have a mild evening as we sat outdoors in two semicircles facing the main building that was used as a projection screen. MTOS member Hal Mitchell presented an Introduction to Night Flight Calls (NFC) and discussed ongoing efforts of NFC research in the Mid-South and gave an update on the local Motus tower project. Hal is a private sector wildlife biologist working primarily in renewable energy. He has participated in avian research and conservation projects throughout Mississippi, while also leading workshops and field trips for Delta Wind Birds, the Mississippi Ornithological Society, and Mississippi Audubon.

Most bird species migrate at night, and monitoring night flight calls is a valuable tool for monitoring migrating birds. Hal showed the sensitive microphone that is used, played some recordings and discussed interesting findings of NFC monitoring in our area. The microphone is mounted high in the air to facilitate recording flight calls. The identification of night calls is automated via computer using Vesper sound analysis software. Hal noted that warbler species have short high-pitched calls that are species-specific and showed Cornell Labs' Rosetta Stone poster of warbler night flight call spectrograms. Flight call data is useful for monitoring hard-to-find species such as rails. He noted that migrating Back-billed Cuckoo is seldom recorded during local bird counts but was frequently identified from night flight calls. He played a first-ever recording of a long-form night flight call of the Kentucky Warbler. Night flight calls of



shorebirds can be identified as to group but not to species.

Hal built and set up the first Mid-South Motus receiver tower for monitoring the passage of radio-tagged birds. That Motus receiver is located at Meeman Biological Station. Hal is working with Delta Wind Birds on plans to radio-tag shorebirds visiting Delta Wind Birds habitat sites and use Motus receiver towers and their wildlife monitoring system to evaluate the success of their program that aims to increase and improve habitat for migrating shorebirds. Delta Wind Birds pays and guides

delta farmers to flood their fields to provide stopover habitat for migrating shorebirds. They hope to answer basic questions about the local movements of these shorebirds--How long do they stay? Does the answer vary seasonally? How does it vary among species? How much do the birds move among different sites within our region? Answers to all of these questions will help to better estimate total bird usage of their wetland habitat sites, and will advance basic understanding of the migration biology of these birds. You can assist in the monitoring project by donating \$200 for placement of a Motus tag on a shorebird. To sponsor a radio-tagged shorebird, make a donation on the Delta Wind Birds website and indicate you wish to sponsor a radio-tagged shorebird. The Motus Wildlife Tracking network has towers in North, Central, and South America. Tags placed locally may also provide information on the wintering and breeding locations for the shorebirds that migrate through the delta. Knox Martin expressed an interest in radio-tagging some of the Mississippi Kites that he raises and releases each year. He would like to know if kites released by the Mid-South Raptor Center are able to migrate to their wintering grounds in South America.

-Margaret Jefferson



With partners at the USGS, and led on our side by DWB board members Kristina & Hal Mitchell, Delta Wind Birds is planning a project to radio-tag shorebirds visiting our habitat sites in the Mississippi Delta. The main objective is to answer basic questions about the local movements of these birds--How long do they stay? Does the answer vary seasonally (e.g., between fall and winter)? How does it vary among species? How much do the birds move among different sites within our region? Answers to all of these questions will help us better estimate total bird usage of our wet-

land habitat sites, and will advance basic understanding of the migration biology of these birds. As a bonus, if we are lucky, some of our radio tag signals may also be picked up by receiving towers after our tagged birds leave the region, giving us information on wintering and/or breeding locations.

The project will focus initially on 6 "wind bird" species (but the list may expand going forward): Dunlin, Stilt Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Lesser Yellowlegs, and Greater Yellowlegs. Here's a fabulous recent close-up photo by Larry Pace of Lesser Yellowlegs visiting one of our farm sites in Sunflower County, MS: <https://www.facebook.com/delta.wind.birds/posts/4636102876451594>

Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs can winter anywhere between here and the southern tip of South America. For the birds that use our sites in the Delta, are they just stopping by on their way to Argentina, or do they spend the winter in Yazoo County??

**How can you help?** We don't have dedicated outside funding (yet?) for this project, so we are seeking donors willing to sponsor one or more tagged birds. Each radio tag costs about \$200, so we are asking for donations now in multiples of \$200. For every \$200, you will be sponsoring one tagged shorebird! We will keep careful track of your sponsorships, and will let you know when "your" bird has been tagged, and what happens to it. Your birds will be tagged in the order donations are received. FYI, the radio tags will remain active on the birds for anywhere from 1-5 months, after which they fall off and are lost. We hope to begin at a small scale this winter, and then ramp up the scale beginning next fall. Once the project ramps up, there may be opportunities to observe shorebird capture and tagging.

**To sponsor one or more radio-tagged shorebirds**, please make a donation in some multiple of \$200 on our website (and check the checkbox indicating you wish to sponsor radio-tagged shorebirds): <https://www.deltawindbirds.org/take-action>

# ..... Field Trip Reports .....

## **October 2, Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park**

Rain. 1.45 hours, 3 observers, 11 species

## **October 6, Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park**

Six observers, 37 species. Highlights: it didn't rain, plus one very cooperative Red-shouldered Hawk, nicely photographed by Tricia Vesely.

## **October 9, Ebird Big Day**

Nearly 33,000 eBirders from 195 countries united to celebrate birds.  
<https://ebird.org/news/october-big-day-2021-a-world-united-by-bird>

## **October 10, Wapanocca NWR**

Perfect weather. 4 hours, 11 observers, 52 species

Bald Eagle flyover at very low level, 5 Cooper's Hawks.

## **October 23, W.C. Johnson Park**

The bird watch at W.C. Johnson Park in Collierville, TN. this morning started at a very chilly 7:30AM. The sun was just trying to shine above the horizon but was stymied by a bank of clouds that kept us in the shade at about 50 degrees most of the way along the boardwalk. By the time we reached the Wolf River Overlook the sun had broken through but hadn't started warming us up yet. I think the birds took this as a hint because they were few and far between, Twenty-seven species were reported but the numbers were mostly 1s and 2s. Some of the more interesting ones are:

Kinglets, Golden crowned (3), Ruby-crowned (3); Hawks, Cooper's (1), Red-shouldered (2), Red-tailed (1); Belted Kingfisher (2); Woodpeckers, Red-bellied (5), Downy (3), Northern Flicker (3), Pileated (1).

Fifteen members and guests attended and enjoyed the very quiet walk through the woods.



W.C. Johnson Park  
Photo by Chad Brown



Red-shouldered Hawk  
by Tricia Vesely (Meeman-Shelby Forest)



Bald Eagle  
by Tricia Vesely (Wapanocca NWR)



Great Egret  
by Tricia Vesely (Wapanocca NWR)



# UPCOMING EVENTS

November 2021

**Wednesday, November 17, 6:30pm**

Chapter Meeting: Fields Falcone

Plans and Projects of Overton Park Conservancy

*Host: Knox Martin, Mid-South Raptor Center*

<https://goo.gl/maps/VFnaEXacAziRoGLA7>  
[knoxmartin2@aol.com](mailto:knoxmartin2@aol.com) / 901-574-2130

**Saturday, November 20, 7:30am**

Shelby Farms / Agricenter Field Trip

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

*Field Trip Leader: Cliff VanNostrand*

[birdinginthe901@gmail.com](mailto:birdinginthe901@gmail.com) / 901-233-6371

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.

**Saturday, November 27, 7:30am**

T.O. Fuller State Park Field Trip (Visitors Center)

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

*Field Trip Leader: Jim Varner*

[jamescvarner@gmail.com](mailto:jamescvarner@gmail.com) / 901-488-4627

**Wednesday, December 15, 6:30pm**

Chapter Meeting

*Host: Jason's Deli, 3473 Poplar Ave, Memphis, TN 38111*

<https://goo.gl/maps/9tztJY8TWv2Bgsvu7>



## **ACTION ALERT OCTOBER 11, 2021**

"A bill to amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to make supplemental funds available for management of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need as determined by state fish and wildlife agencies, and for other purposes" has been introduced in both the U. S. House of Representatives (HR - 2773) and the U.S. Senate (S.2372). The bill is known by its short title "Recovering America's Wildlife Act of 2021." The Senate version currently has 28 co-sponsors (14 Republicans, 13 Democrats and 1 Independent), while the House version currently has 128 co-sponsors (96 Democrats and 29 Republicans).

The Act would provide 1.3 billion dollars annually to state fish and wildlife agencies and an additional 97.5 million dollars annually to Indian tribal fish and wildlife agencies. Under the Act, The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency will receive substantial funding.

Representatives Jim Cooper (D-TN-5), David Kustoff (R-TN-8) and Steve Cohen (D-TN-9) are co-sponsors. If not already a co-sponsor, please consider contacting your representative and urge him or her to sign on as a co-sponsor. Representatives Cooper, Kustoff and Cohen deserve our thanks.

Please consider contacting our two Senators, Marsha Blackburn and Bill Hagerty, and urge them to sign on as co-sponsors.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2773>

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2372>

### **ARTICLES OF INTEREST**

- Delta Wind Birds: Donate  
<https://www.deltawindbirds.org/take-action>
- How to change the location of a checklist in eBird  
<https://birding-in-ohio.com/change-location-of-a-checklist/>
- Birdability  
<https://www.birdability.org/contribute-to-the-birdability-map>
- Flooding Fields in the Mississippi Delta Helps Crop Yields—and Shorebirds  
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/flooding-fields-in-the-mississippi-delta-helps-crop-yields-and-shorebirds/>
- Where feather colors come from: Why cardinals are red and grackles are shiny  
<https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/news/birdwatching/where-feather-colors-come-from-why-cardinals-are-red-and-grackles-are-shiny/>
- Christmas Birding Wish List  
<https://amzn.to/2Hh2Q3v>

# Species Spotlight:

## Northern Flicker

The Northern Flicker is the odd bird of the woodpecker family. Its spotted, clownish plumage forms a striking contrast with the trim black-and-white outfit worn by most of its relatives. More strangely, this woodpecker spends more time foraging on the ground than pecking wood.

**Scientific name:** *Colaptes auratus*

**Range:** Northern Flickers stay year-round in most of the US, but some migrate between Canada and the Southwestern US. However, as the climate warms, their range is expected to shift north.



**Habitat:** Northern Flickers live in almost any habitat with enough trees, including live and burned forests, swamps, fields, suburbs, and parks. They prefer woodlands with open areas for foraging and tend to avoid dense forests.



**Diet/feeding:** Northern Flickers eat mostly insects, and favorite foods include ants and beetles. In the winter, they may also take berries and seeds such as those of ivy, poison oak, dogwood, wild cherry, grape, sunflower, and thistle. These large woodpeckers occasionally visit bird feeders, taking suet, nuts, sunflower, and nyger.

**Behavior:** The Northern Flicker's foraging habits distinguish it from other woodpeckers. Instead of probing trees in search of insects, these flickers peck the ground, unearthing nutritious ant larvae. Flickers may also probe cow dung for insects or catch bats, as was reported once in Wyoming. In spring, males court females with a "wicka display", in which they sway their heads from side to side while making an enthusiastic "wicka wicka" call. Each pair defends a large territory, but they may share a tree with other cavity nesting species. The male or female may fend off intruders with a "fencing duel" in which the opponents poke at each other with their bills. Both birds drum on wood when choosing a nest site. Unlike bluebirds and other secondary nesters, most flickers drill their own nest cavities in dead or rotting trees. The cavity widens to a hollow with a



floor of wood chips, where females lay 6-8 eggs. The young fledge in 24-27 days. As summer comes to an end, individuals in migrating populations may form flocks.

**When, where, and how to see:** Northern Flickers are most common in the Mid-South during the colder months. They can be found in many suburban habitats, including parks and neighborhoods, as well as in open forests and fields bordering woods. At a distance, they resemble large, brownish red-bellied woodpeckers. All flickers have tan bellies with unique round spots, black bib-shaped areas below their necks, and barred, grayish-brown backs. In flight, they sport flashy red or yellow flight feathers and snow-white rumps. However, eastern and western populations show great regional variation. Eastern birds have black “whisker” patches near their beaks, a red V-shaped patch on the back of the neck, and yellow flight feathers, while western birds sport red whiskers and red flight feathers, lacking the whisker patch altogether. Females in any region lack the male’s whiskers. The Northern Flicker’s calls are varied, ranging from a piercing peah whistle, a drawn-out rattle, and wicka-wicka courtship calls. They also drum on wood or metal, hitting the surface 25 times per second.



**Conservation:** Sadly, flickers are declining, due in part to the aggressive nature of starlings. Although Northern Flickers defend their cavities fiercely, starlings usually win any conflicts that arise between the two species. Other factors contributing to their decline include the loss of natural cavities and dead trees and the use of pesticides.

#### Fun facts:

- Ever wondered why they’re called flickers? When they are flushed, these woodpeckers’ colorful wings flicker like fire.
- Northern Flickers drum to defend their territories or communicate. To make their message clear, they may beat out a rhythm on metal surfaces.
- What causes different populations to develop red or yellow wings? This phenomenon has traditionally been attributed to genetics, as orange shafted birds have been found where the red and yellow flickers’ ranges overlap. However, these intermediate forms were also discovered on the East Coast, deep within the yellow-shafted flickers’ range. A study published in 2016 discovered that two invasive types of honeysuckle were producing berries that turned the birds’ feathers red. In fact, some found yellow and orange feathers on the same bird!
- Northern Flickers were popular game birds in the 1900’s. During the fall migration season, hunters would erect poles in trees to attract the birds. After several flickers accumulated on a perch, the hunters would shoot and collect them. Oftentimes, they collected knee-high piles of dead birds.
- You can erect nest boxes to help flickers breed and reduce their competition with starlings.

#### Bibliography:

Most info in this article and range map from:

- the Northern Flicker pages on Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s All About Birds guide
- the Northern Flicker pages on Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Birds of the World website

#### Other sources:

- Ebird Bar Charts
- <https://animals.mom.com/difference-between-woodpecker-flicker-7810.html>
- <https://www.iucnredlist.org/fr/search?query=Northern%20Flicker&searchType=species>
- <https://philipschwarzphotography.wordpress.com/2019/03/21/northern-flicker-and-red-bellied-woodpecker-fight/>
- <https://blog.duncraft.com/2016/02/16/attract-flickers-yard/>
- <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/birds/northern-flicker/>
- <https://www.newsweek.com/invasive-berry-turning-birds-feathers-red-509005>
- <https://www.audubon.org/news/mystery-solved-invasive-berries-blame-turning-flickers-feathers-pink>
- All photos taken by Lynn Hui

*Editor’s Note: Special thanks to MTOS member Lynn Hui for contributing this article.*



## HUMMINGBIRD SIGHTING BETWEEN November 1 and March 15

If you do get a hummingbird, Please contact  
Cyndi Routledge - [routledges@bellsouth.net](mailto: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.

# 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](mailto:mtosnewsletter@gmail.com)**

### 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

Dues payable 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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) 489-0795  
Email: [2graham@bellsouth.net](mailto:2graham@bellsouth.net)

### Chapter Meeting

**November 17, 2021. 6:30pm**

Mid-South Raptor Center

Smythe Farm Rd, Memphis, TN 38120, USA

<https://goo.gl/maps/VFnaEXacAziRoGLA7>

Host: Knox Martin 901-574-2130 (cell)

Be sure to enter at the east entrance to the Agricenter as the gate at the west end of Smythe-Farm Road will be closed.

### Program

**Fields Falcone, MTOS**

*Plans and Projects of Overton Park Conservancy*

### Upcoming Field Trip Information

**November 20:** Shelby Farms

**November 27:** TO Fuller SP

For our next issue, we would like to feature some photos of birds that remind you of the holidays.

Please send your submissions to  
**[mtosnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:mtosnewsletter@gmail.com).**

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

### Treasurer's Report

The balance in the Treasury as of October 20 is \$17,367.25. Per the TOS webmaster, MTOS remains on track to have an online dues-pay option in place by January 1. The Treasurer is happy to still receive dues by check after online-pay is operational. Check-pay will stay in place.

### Approved Expenditures

At the October 20 meeting MTOS voted to join Shelby Farms Park Conservancy, Wolf River Conservancy, and the Agricenter, at an annual support rate of \$60/per year for each group. MTOS enjoys birdwatching on property managed by these nonprofit groups.

### Shorebird Tags, Motus project

At the October 20 meeting MTOS voted to purchase (2) radio tag sensors at \$200 each, in support of the Motus tracking project that MTOS member and biologist Hal Mitchell will manage. The project starts in Winter 2021 and is being coordinated with Delta Windbirds. The sensors will be glued to the backs of the shorebirds. They do not impede flight or harm the birds. A tagged bird can be detected flying by a Motus tower up to a distance of (15) miles. There are Motus tower stations across the U.S. and coverage in South America. The project expects to collect useful data to support and efficiently target bird conservation efforts. [www.motus.org](http://www.motus.org)

### Membership Report

New Members—none to report

Note: Starting November 1, the 2021-2022 Directory will be mailed to members who have not had a chance to pick one up. Longer mail delivery times may mean a late November 2021 actual arrival time.



Tricolored Heron



Roseate Spoonbill



Reddish Egret



Great Egret

Photos by  
Dianna Johnson



Reddish Egret



White Ibis



Snowy Egret



White-faced Ibis

PHOTOS BY:  
**TOM AND DEBRA KIENZLE**

PHOTOS BY  
**CLIFF VANNOSTRAND**



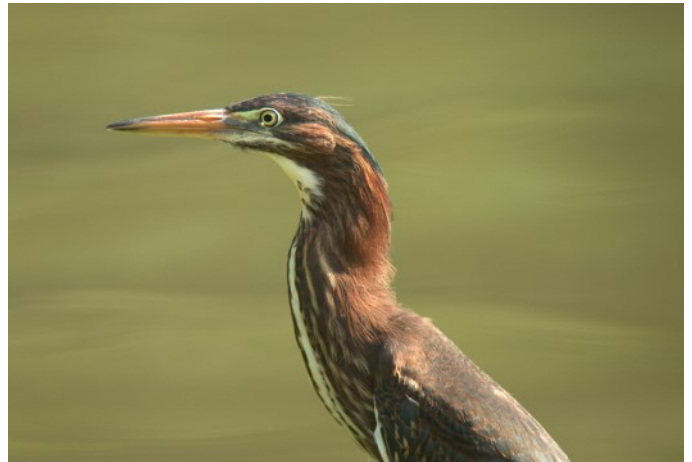
Glossy Ibis  
Ensley Bottoms



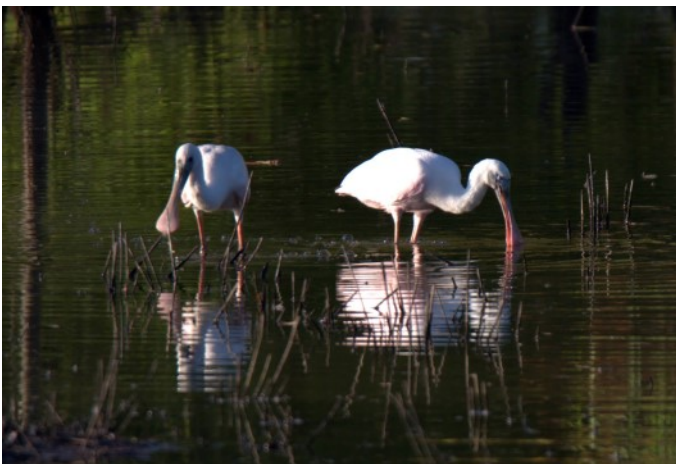
Cattle Egret  
Gardner Road



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron  
Riverport Road



Green Heron  
Memphis Botanic Garden



Roseate Spoonbill  
Gardner Road



Great Blue Heron  
Shelby Farms

## Outings in Delaware

For ten days in September my wife and I visited relatives near Millsboro, Delaware. During that time I was able to go on 3 birding outings, two of them solo and one with a group.

The day after we arrived I met at 8:00AM with a group led by the State Park Naturalist, Richard (last name omitted because it was not given), at Cape Henlopen State Park. The park is a beach-side recreation area where Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean. The park preserves many pine woodlands among the dunes as well as salt marshes and beachfront. It also preserves many WWII artillery emplacements, fortified pill boxes, and other buildings guarding the entrance to the bay.

Richard, who is an excellent birder, prides himself that he can remember everyone's name in the group. In 5 minutes he had memorized the names of the 15 people in our group. The walk he led us on started through a sandy pine forest with occasional deciduous trees interspersed. On this part of the walk we saw Brown Thrasher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Gray Catbird, Eastern Wood-Pee-wee, Great Crested Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, and Yellow, Pine, Yellow-throated and Prairie Warblers. This led us out to the beach by the long fishing pier. Here we were able to study Laughing, Ring-billed, Black-backed and Herring Gulls as well as Least, Common, Forster's and Royal Terns. The Sanderling was the only shorebird of the day as Richard said most shorebirds had left on migration already. We turned back off the beach right after catching sight of a Merlin



Distant group of egrets at Prime Hook NWR



Bald Eagle at Prime Hook NWR



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterfly on thistle



Resting gulls, terns and two Ibis at Cape Henlopen



Yellowlegs at Henlopen



Snowy Egret at Henlopen



Osprey at Henlopen

A photograph of a hawk watch tally board. The board is a white sheet of paper with a grid of columns and rows. The rows list various bird species, and the columns contain numerical counts. The board is mounted on a wooden post.

BALD EAGLE	8	82		
NORTHERN HARRIER		22		
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	1	9		
COOPER'S HAWK		13		
NORTHERN GOSHAWK				
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK				
BROAD-WINGED HAWK		3		
RED-TAILED HAWK		5		
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK				
GOLDEN EAGLE				
AMERICAN KESTREL	2	148	79	149
MERLIN	9	139	90	9-19
PEREGRINE FALCON	1	55	23	9-19
MISSISSIPPI KITE				
SWALLOW-TAIL KITE				

Hawk watch tally board at Henlopen

and some Brown Pelicans passing by. Walking back through the pines we spotted a few Carolina Chickadees and a couple Eastern Bluebirds to finish. 39 species, not bad for a two hour walk.

My next outing was a solo trip up the bay to Prime Hook NWR on the shores of Delaware Bay. While the weather was perfect, the boreal birds were not in evidence. In the marshes and shallows, however, were a good number of gulls, terns, and long legged waders, with an occasional Osprey and Bald Eagle.

My third outing was a long marsh trail in Cape Henlopen State Park, also solo. Most of the birds seen here were a good distance away but big enough to identify. Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Great and Snowy Egrets, Glossy Ibis, Double-crested Cormorants, and a few others I had seen on my other outings. It was here a week later that I ran into Richard leading another group of 15 birders and he was able to call me by name, giving himself a pat on the back.

One more interesting thing about Cape Henlopen State Park is that it is directly across the bay from Cape May which you may know is on the migration flyway of many raptors. Because of this, the park has an elevated platform near the beach where the local birding folks keep a Hawk Watch during migration times. Their tally for the previous day, and the current year is listed on a board below the platform. The last picture shows the current totals.

-Chad Brown