



## MEMPHIS CHAPTER NEWS

**TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

<http://birdmemphis.org>

**December 2021**

### **NOVEMBER PROGRAM**

As Chapter members sat outdoors at the Mid-South Raptor Center, we were once again blessed with balmy weather for the November meeting. Chapter member Fields Falcone, who is Programs Manager for the Overton Park Conservancy, spoke on *Old Forest, New Insights --- Research in Overton Park State Natural Area*.

Although the non-profit Conservancy is responsible for day-to-day maintenance of 184 acres of parkland with over 1.5 million visitors per year, being good stewards for the Old Forest State Natural Area is among its priorities. Management of the Old Forest includes trail work, invasive species removal, creation of interpretive content, and research into long-term forest health. Fields noted that a permit is required for research within a state natural area and that several research projects are underway within the forest. The



Hairy Woodpecker at Overton Park  
Photo by: Cliff VanNostrand

Old Forest is described as a gumbo of trees. It has enough elevation change to support a variety of tree species including Tulip Poplar and 11 species of oak. Eric Bridges, Director of Operations & Capital Improvements for the Conservancy, previously served as an urban forester for the city of Lakeland and is pursuing a PhD in Forestry. Eric's research within the Old Forest will follow up on an assessment of forest health done in 1987 by Dr. James M. Guldin. The concern then and now is that mature oaks and poplar trees are not filling in the canopy gaps formed as the large 185 year old trees fall. The

research will provide information that can be used to better manage the Old Forest and better understand the lack of mature tree regeneration seen in many eastern forests. One concern is that exotic invasive plant species may be out-competing trees for light. Eric has been working with Bill Bullock and other volunteers to remove exotic species from the forest. Other factors may include forest fragmentation, urban air quality, water flow channelization, fire suppression, and human traffic.



Northern Flicker at Overton Park  
Photo by: Cliff VanNostrand

In addition to coordinating programs and event rentals for the Overton Park Conservancy, Fields has been collecting bird data for a research project *Birds as bio-indicators of forest quality*. The study will compare bird species diversity in 4 local forested parks (Old Forest State Natural Area, T. O. Fuller State Park, Lucius E. Burch Jr. Natural Area, and Nesbit Park). She is conducting point counts in similar defined areas in each park. A point count starts 30 minutes before sunrise with 10 stops along a trail. Birds seen or heard within a defined radius are recorded over a 6-minute period. So far, Fields has recorded about 29 bird species on the breeding bird point count in Overton Park. The most common bird recorded on all of the forest point counts is the Acadian Flycatcher. Other common species include the N. Cardinal, Carolina Wren, and N. Parula. She noted that the N. Parula is the only warbler recorded on all four park point counts. She expressed dismay at the dramatic reduction in the presence of Carolina Wrens detected this year in comparison to previous years due to the several days of extreme cold and ice during February 2021. Fields has used her data as a guide in selecting bird species to focus on when introducing children to the park's birds, and Carolina Wren is one that she likes to point out to children. She expects to collect bird data over many years within these parks.

Visit <https://overtonpark.org/> for more information on the park and the Conservancy and for more information on the natural area visit; <https://www.tn.gov/environment/program-areas/na-natural-areas/natural-areas-west-region/west-region/old-forest.html>

Thanks to Knox Martin for hosting the meeting and to Fields Falcone for taking time to speak to us about the research going on in one of our favorite birding sites.





# **Chapter meeting at Jason's Deli**

**3473 Poplar Ave - Phone: 901-324-3181**



**Wednesday,  
December 15**

**6:30 pm**

The menu at Jason's offers a lot of tasty options, so you can come early and eat prior to the meeting. All you can eat soft serve ice cream is included with any dinner.

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

## **November 20, Shelby Farms / Agricenter**

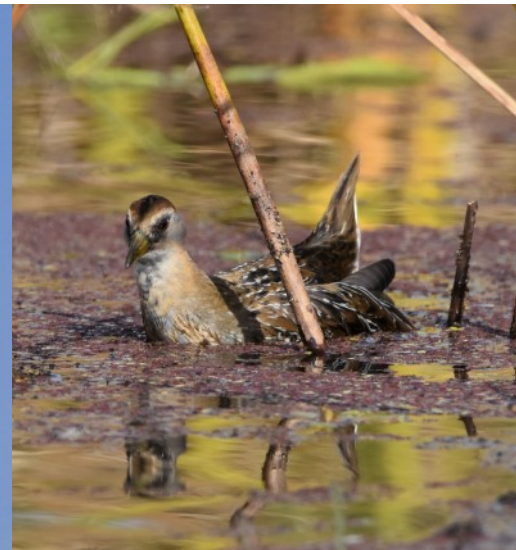
13 participants, 60 species seen, highlights: Sora, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Orange-crowned Warbler



Savannah Sparrow  
by Tricia Vesely (Shelby Farms Park)



Red-tailed Hawk (Harlan's)  
by Tricia Vesely (Shelby Farms Park)



Sora  
by Tricia Vesely (Shelby Farms Park)



American Robin  
by Cliff VanNostrand (Shelby Farms Park)



Red-bellied Woodpecker  
by Cliff VanNostrand (Shelby Farms Park)



Pied-billed Grebe  
by Cliff VanNostrand (Shelby Farms Park)

## **November 27, TO Fuller State Park**

11 participants, 47 Species, Highlights: Bald Eagle, Fox Sparrow, and Orange-crowned Warbler



# Species Spotlight

## CAROLINA CHICKADEE

While us humans are nestled in our insulated homes, the lively Carolina Chickadee doesn't seem to be bothered by the cold at all. As one of our quintessential winter birds, they survive the winter by planning ahead in fall, storing seeds in caches for the lean times.

**Scientific name:** *Poecile carolinensis*

**Range:** Carolina Chickadees stay year-round in the Southeast, leaving the northern boreal forests to their

relatives, the Black-capped Chickadees.

**Habitat:** Carolina

Chickadees are woodland birds.

They are common in any forested area, including woodlands, conifer or deciduous forests, and riparian areas. In addition, they have a high toleration for people, so they can be found in suburban neighborhoods and parks.

**Diet/feeding:** Carolina Chickadees have a voracious appetite in winter. They gain 10% of their body weight each day, only to lose the surplus at night. Despite their constant presence at sunflower feeders, only half of a chickadee's winter diet consists of plant material. In the breeding season,

they eat mostly insects and spiders.

**Behavior:** Carolina Chickadees forage quickly in the trees, bouncing restlessly from twig to twig in an unending search for food. Unlike finches, who have large bills equipped for cracking seeds, chickadees must fly to a safe perch, hold the seed between their feet, and hammer it with their bill. As a result, chickadees and titmice constantly fly back and forth between feeders and trees while finches sit contently at one feeder port for a long time. Carolina Chickadees socialize with members of their own species, forming flocks that brave the winter together. Other small birds, such as titmice and kinglets, also join the chickadees in these winter flocks. When chilly February gives way to March, the chickadees turn their attention to nest building. Only the dominant members of a flock have the privilege to nest in their winter territory, so the others must find other areas to nest.





Carolina Chickadees pair up in fall (forming bonds that often last for life), and these pairs either find a ready-made woodpecker cavity or hollow out their own in rotting wood. The female does most of the nest building, first using bark and moss for the base and then adding softer material, such as hair and plant fiber. The female lays 3-10 white eggs with rusty brown speckling and incubates them for 12-15 days. If threatened, she will perform a “snake display”, mimicking a snake’s hiss and swaying back and forth to deter the intruder. After the eggs hatch, the chicks stay for 16-19 days before fledging.

**When, where, and how to see:** Carolina Chickadees are common year-round throughout the Mid-South. Despite their small size, they are one of the boldest birds around and are often the first to explore new feeders. They can be distinguished from kinglets, warblers, and other small forest birds by their round body and long, thin tail. Even from a distance, their distinctive black and white head pattern distinguishes them from other birds. Carolina Chickadees give their signature “chicka-dee-dee-dee” call all year round, but during winter and spring, they sing a sharp, high-pitched “fee-bee-fee-bee” song.

**Conservation:** Carolina Chickadees are common, but their populations declined by 17% from 1966 to 2015. This may be due indirectly to the lack of native plants, which are vital to the Carolina Chickadees’ insect prey. According to a Smithsonian study, only yards with vegetation composed of 70% native plants could sustain a chickadee population.



### Fun facts:

- Feeders greatly increase a Carolina Chickadee’s odds of surviving the winter; those with access to feeders are twice as likely to survive as those that don’t.
- There’s more to the chickadee call than meets the ear. More “dee-dee” notes signal a greater danger.
- Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees are notoriously hard to distinguish from one another. In general, Carolina Chickadees are smaller and duller than their northern relatives, and the black capped chickadee’s song consists of two notes instead of four. However, sometimes the chickadees themselves can’t tell the difference, resulting in hybrids that may sing the song of either species.

-Lynn M. Hui

### Bibliography:

- Most info in this article and range map from:
  - the Carolina Chickadee pages on Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s All About Birds guide
  - the Carolina Chickadee pages on Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Birds of the World website
- Other sources:
  - Nestwatch: <https://nestwatch.org/learn/focal-species/carolina-chickadee/>
  - Wild Birds Unlimited: <https://santarosawbu.com/chickadee-fun-facts>
  - Audubon field guide: <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/carolina-chickadee>
  - <https://nature-mentor.com/chickadee-calls-explained/>
  - <https://www.audubon.org/news/identifying-black-capped-and-carolina-chickadees>
  - <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/news/new-smithsonian-study-links-declines-suburban-backyard-birds-presence-nonnative-plants>
  - <https://nativeseedling.wordpress.com/2018/11/10/the-decline-of-the-carolina-chickadee/>
- All photos taken by Lynn Hui

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

# 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)**

## A LA CARTE

- Overton Park: Give  
<https://overtonpark.org/give/>
- Delta Wind Birds: Donate  
<https://www.deltawindbirds.org/take-action>
- Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation: Donate  
<https://www.mswildliferehab.org/donate/>
- Christmas Birding Wish List  
<https://amzn.to/2Hh2Q3v>
- Wintering owls are back. Let's give them space and respect  
<https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/news/birdwatching/wintering-owls-are-back-lets-give-them-space-and-respect/>
- New guide about preventing bird collisions with windows available  
<https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/gear/preventing-bird-window-collisions/new-guide-about-preventing-bird-collisions-with-windows-available/>
- Action Alert - Migratory Bird Treaty Act  
<https://tnbirds.org/2021/11/12/15568/>





# Christmas

## BIRD COUNT



**Friday, December 17, 7:30am**

Fayette County CBC

*Field Trip Leaders: Kate Gooch, Fields Falcone, Cliff VanNostrand*

Kate: [goochpb@att.net](mailto:goochpb@att.net)

Fields: [josephine.falcone@gmail.com](mailto:josephine.falcone@gmail.com)

Cliff: [birdinginthe901@gmail.com](mailto:birdinginthe901@gmail.com)

**Saturday, December 18, 7:30am**

Sardis CBC

*Field Trip Leader: Jason Hoeksema & Dick Preston*

Dick: [dickpreston48@gmail.com](mailto:dickpreston48@gmail.com)

**Sunday, December 19, 7:30am**

Memphis CBC

*Field Trip Leader: Margaret Jefferson*

[mjefferson100@hotmail.com](mailto:mjefferson100@hotmail.com)

**Sunday, December 26, 7:30am**

Wapanocca NWR & Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park CBC

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston / Van Harris*

Dick: [dickpreston48@gmail.com](mailto:dickpreston48@gmail.com)

Van: [shelbyforester1223@gmail.com](mailto:shelbyforester1223@gmail.com)

**Wednesday, December 29, 7:30am**

Arkabutla CBC

*Field Trip Leader: Van Harris*

[shelbyforester1223@gmail.com](mailto:shelbyforester1223@gmail.com)







## 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.

### **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**

**December 15, 2021. 6:30pm**

Jason's Deli,  
3473 Poplar Ave, Memphis, TN 38111  
Phone 901-324-3181

### **Program**

**Van Harris, MTOS**  
*Africa Trip*

### **Upcoming Field Trip Information**

**December 17:** Fayette County, CBC

**December 18:** Sardis, CBC

**December 19:** Memphis, CBC

**December 26:** Wapanocca / Shelby Forest, CBC

**December 29:** Arkabutla, 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](mailto:mtosnewsletter@gmail.com).

### **New Members**

Shelby Hartman [shelbyhartman@att.net](mailto:shelbyhartman@att.net)

### **Treasurer's Report**

The balance in the Treasury as of November 9, 2021 is \$16,836.94. At the November 17 meeting the chapter approved a \$250.00 donation to Overton Park Conservancy.

### **Address Change**

Sue Ferguson  
177 N. Highland #4408  
Memphis 38111