



MEMPHIS CHAPTER NEWS

TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

<http://birdmemphis.org>

March 2022

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

A good-sized crowd of Chapter members attended the February meeting that was held at Jason's Deli. Chapter President Cliff VanNostrand gave an account of his motivation for and rewards of committing to over a thousand days of birding. He noted that as a child he enjoyed watching wildlife shows and spending time in the outdoors, enjoying reptiles and mammals as well as the many hummingbirds that came to his grandmother's feeders. As a teenager he had drifted away from nature. As with most birders, he later began enjoying bird-feeder birds in his own yard. He recounted that he saw his spark bird, an Eastern Phoebe, on Dec. 8, 2017, on his back fence. It excited him to know that the phoebe fed on bugs and was not coming just for his feeders. When he found himself struggling with depression he chose a goal of birding every day for a year as a way to get outdoors, reconnect with something meaningful, meet new people, and become a part of a community. Day one of his birding was December 12, 2018. Cliff has now actively birded and compiled a bird checklist for over a thousand days. Sometimes it might be for only 15 minutes, at home or nearby. He showed a short poem *Dust of Snow* by Robert Frost that hangs over his desk as inspiration. In that poem, Frost recounts an encounter with a crow that shook a dust of snow down on him and made him smile, "and saved some part of a day I had rued."



Cliff showed photos of most of the bird species that he has recorded during his 1000 days of

birding. He noted that he takes photos for identification. As I watched the images it was clear that another use of the photos is as a way to extend and share the experience of encounters with many beautiful birds. Cliff noted that many birding friends had helped by alerting him when rarities showed up locally. Cliff said that most of the bird photos shown were taken in Shelby Farms Park, and that he was pleased that an employee from the park was in attendance. He encourages us all to take time for birding, noting that bad weather is great for seeing birds and that Shelby County is a wonderful place to bird with great species diversity.

-Margaret Jefferson

Hi Cliff,

Couldn't stand another day in the house so took your advice and went birding on a bad weather day (Wednesday). Well, not actually birding, but I did take my binoculars just in case. Left home at 10:30 and drove to Shelby Forest Country Store. Got my cheeseburger and drink and drove down to the river. Saw two Flickers and two Cardinals on the way. No birds or river traffic at the boat ramp parking lot. After eating I left the boat ramp and stopped at the fishing spot to do my good deed for the day in the form of a litter pick up. Filled three garbage cans before I left. Still didn't get it all, of course.

While I was picking up trash, I walked up on a Woodcock about 20 feet off the path. I was concentrating on litter so was startled by the bird and by the time I realized what it was, it had scurried away. After dumping my last bag in the trash can I drove out the road through the woods. The rain had filled low spots and ditches. Two Wood Ducks flew up out of a ditch by the road. When I got to the big field there were about 25 crows, 100 Ring-billed Gulls, two or three Hooded Mergansers and a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers there, plus a couple of shorebirds. A small one I couldn't see very well and a larger one with a long bill. At first, I thought a Wilson's Snipe, but it had a white breast as near as I could tell and wasn't as streaky as the Snipe. Maybe a Dowitcher, but I just couldn't tell from that distance and in the poor light. Pretty good sightings for not going bird watching. Got home just as the rain started.

-Chad

Chapter business:

Dick Preston announced that he had performed the annual financial audit of the Chapter's funds and that all was in order and well-documented. He praised Barbara Pyles for her attention to detail in record keeping.

Dick also noted that the state TOS organization funds are approaching a limit that if exceeded would require a higher level of tax reporting. TOS officers have agreed that funds will be reduced through expenditures to keep them below the limit. Worthy uses for the funds are being explored.

Raptor Center News:

Martha Waldron reported that several older raptor mews were removed and that the wood has been recycled by building houses for Wood Ducks and other birds. The houses will be placed in appropriate habitats.

She reported on the rescue of an American White Pelican that was treated at Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation and released at Arkabutla Lake. She also noted that she had picked up an injured Merlin from a yard in midtown Memphis, a first for the Mid-South Raptor Center. The Merlin had been injured by a dog and later died.

Field trips:

Wolf River Wildlife Management Area (Jan. 22, 2022)

Fifteen birders met in Lagrange, TN, at 3:30 pm and visited several areas in the Wolf River WMA with leader Martha Waldron. We observed two Barn Owls standing in their respective boxes. Their snow white legs and a few colorful feathers were the only portions visible. A large number of owl pellets littered the ground. We walked the Mineral Slough Boardwalk enjoying the sight of the frozen swamp with the water tupelo trees highlighted by the setting sun. The various tree species along the trail and boardwalk are now labeled. At sundown we stood along the road and watched and listened as several American Woodcock (5) began calling and rose from the marshy fields for brief display flights. Several sparrow species, especially Song and Swamp, were seen or heard in the fields. A total of 21 bird species were recorded.

Bird Sightings:

Dick Preston mentioned that a fair number of Wilson's Snipe have been seen at Shelby Farms Park in the Gardener Road marsh and that Lapland Longspurs have been seen near Trap Lake at Shelby Farms Park. A Common Redpoll was seen on Feb. 3, at Lichterman Nature Center, and a Rufous

Hummingbird has been seen at a feeder in Memphis. Dick said that he and David Hill had spent the day cleaning out bird houses along a Bluebird trail. They found an interesting nest occupied by a White-footed mouse in one of the boxes.

March 16 Silent Auction - Bring your Shopping Bag

Treasurer Barbara Pyles cordially invites all to the MTOS Silent Auction. There will be many items for sale, with most priced under \$10. Browsing begins at 6PM in the meeting room at Jason's Deli. Following the close of the meeting, a short final-browse period will be held. Cash or checks payable to MTOS are welcome. MTOS' PayPal (donate online) is also an option.

Volunteers - April 22 and 23 TOS State Meeting

The Treasurer will have a sign-up sheet at the March 16 meeting for those who can help at the State Meeting (Plantation Inn, Millington). The two main times are Friday (4PM - 7PM meet and greet guests; provision of refreshment trays also needed) and at the Saturday eve banquet (table decor, setup/breakdown, etc.). You can also email brbpyles@gmail.com to register your interest.

Migrant Copies

Martha Waldron would like any extra copies of the Migrant that you may not be using. You can give them to her at the next meeting.

2022 DUES ARE DUE

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

Chapter meeting at Jason's Deli

3473 Poplar Ave - Phone: 901-324-3181



**Wednesday,
March 16**

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.

Species Spotlight

BARRED OWL

The Barred Owl, a secretive, stripy forest dweller, often stays tucked against a tree during the daytime. However, its boisterous call joins the song of the Whip-poor-will and the fiddling of crickets in a nighttime chorus that rings and echoes through Eastern forests.

Scientific name: *Strix varia*

Range: All Barred Owls stay year-round in a range that stretches from southern Canada to the Eastern US.



Habitat: Barred Owls are most common in unbroken stretches of mature forest, preferably near water. These forests are thought to host the widest variety of prey and the largest number of nest cavities. However, Barred Owls are adaptive, so they can be found in other types of wooded habitat.



Diet/feeding: This owl is not a picky eater! They eat the usual raptor fare, including chipmunks, voles, mice, squirrels, and birds. They also take amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, and even fish.

Behavior: Although they do some hunting in daylight, Barred Owls are generally secretive and sluggish during the day, spending their time holed up in a cavity or sleeping on a branch. At night, they become fearsome hunters, sitting on a perch while watching the ground for signs of prey. They also use their superb sense of hearing to detect prey. After pouncing on their target, a Barred Owl either swallows its prey whole or stores it in a tree branch or nest. They occasionally pick fish from shallow waters or wade in to catch crayfish. During the breeding season, which lasts from December to March, Barred Owls become very territorial. They form bonds for life, and both members of a pair hoot loudly to defend their territory. They may even attack intruders during the nesting season. The pair usually nests in a cavity, natural or manmade, but they also use nests left by crows or hawks. The female lays 1-5 white eggs, which hatch in 28-33 days. The owlets fledge in about a month.





When, where, and how to see: Barred Owls are the most commonly seen North American owls, being relatively large and adaptable. Overall, Barred Owls are heavily barred on all parts of the body. They have round, completely dark eyes, a round facial disk, and scarf-shaped neck patch. Their bellies and underparts sport vertical brown streaks, and their backs are a dappled brown. They are most easily located by their distinctive “who-cooks-for-you” hooting, given mostly at night. In flight, their wide, almost rectangular wings show heavy brown-and-white barring.

Conservation: Barred Owls currently face few conservation threats. They were originally restricted to the East, but a combination of fire suppression and tree planting allowed them to expand their range into the forests of Canada and the Pacific Northwest. In fact, they threaten the survival of their smaller relative, the Spotted Owl, by encroaching on their range and interbreeding with them. However, deforestation poses threats to almost any forest bird, and Barred Owls are no exception. They remain an important indicator of forest health.

Fun facts:

- Barred Owls are large enough to take down and eat other owls, sometimes of their own species!
- The Spotted Owl, a smaller relative, lives exclusively in a smattering of forest along the Pacific Coast, in the Southwest, and in Mexico. They seem like a compact, chunkier version of the Barred Owl, with darker feathers and two white eyebrows.



Bibliography:

Most info in this article and range map come from:

- the Barred Owl pages on Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s All About Birds guide

Other sources:

- Barred Owl pages on Cornell’s Birds of the World website
- Ebird bar chart for the Barred Owl in Shelby Farms Park
- https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Strix_varia/#ecosystem_roles
- <https://vtcostudies.org/blog/owl-eats-owl/>
- https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Spotted_Owl/id

All photos taken by Lynn Hui

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**

A LA CARTE

- Woman takes disabled raven under her wing (HT: Chad Brown)
<https://youtu.be/4xp988OfOSM>
- The Bald Eagle That Would Not Quit | Bald Eagle Rescue Short Film | Wildlife (HT: Chad Brown) Documentary
<https://youtu.be/iQTZxUgt4Z8>
- Loggerhead Shrike conservation in Tennessee
https://youtu.be/XpXtB_tyOZs
- Great Horned Owl nest cam near Savannah, Georgia
<https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/beginners/bird-cams/great-horned-owl-nest-cam-near-savannah-georgia/>
- Play the Migration Game
<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/play-migration-game>
- Breakdown: Why Meeman-Shelby Forest is more man-made than you might think
<https://www.actionnews5.com/2022/01/09/breakdown-why-meeman-shelby-forest-is-more-manmade-than-you-might-think/>
- 2022 Great Backyard Bird Count
<https://youtu.be/epzxFIVCoMo>
- Love the Hit Game Wordle? Try BRDL, a Bird-Inspired Spinoff
<https://www.audubon.org/news/love-hit-game-wordle-try-brdl-bird-inspired-spinoff>



UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

March / April
2022

Wednesday, March 16, 6:30pm

Chapter Meeting

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

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

Sunday, March 20, 7:30am

Shelby Farms Park/Agricenter International

Field Trip Leader: Cathy Justis

cjustis@gmail.com

Sunday, April 3, 7:30am

Wall Doxey State Park, Holly Springs, MS

Field Trip Leader: Hal Mitchell

halmitchell@gmail.com

Saturday, April 9, 7:30am

Herb Parsons Lake, Fayette County, TN

Field Trip Leader: Allen Sparks

asparks306@bellsouth.net

Wednesday, April 13, 7:30am

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park

Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston / Van Harris

Dick: dickpreston48@gmail.com

Van: shelbyforester1223@gmail.com

Wednesday, April 20, 6:30pm

Chapter Meeting

Friday-Sunday, April 22-24

Spring Meeting

<https://tnbirds.org/event/annual-tos-spring-meeting-april-22-24-2022/>

Friday-Sunday, April 22-24

Hatchie Birdfest

<https://www.hatchiebirdfest.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.

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	\$23
Other Student	\$ 5
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

*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

Chapter Meeting

March 16, 2022. 6:30pm

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

Program

David Hill, MTOS
Birding the Mexican Border

Upcoming Field Trip Information

March 20: Shelby Farms / Agricenter

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

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

Please send your submissions to
mtosnewsletter@gmail.com.

New Members

Diane Frank, Friendship, TN
pdfrank@earthlink.net

Mary Gurley, Germantown, TN
Mhgurley@gmail.com

Treasurer's Report

The balance in the Treasury as of February 22, 2022 is \$17,576.28.



PHOTO BY

David
Hill

Barn Owl

PHOTO BY

David
Young



Great Horned Owl

PHOTOS BY KNOX MARTIN



Barn Owl



Barn Owl



Barn Owl



Barn Owl



Barn Owl



Barn Owl



Barn Owl



Great Horned Owl



Eastern Screech-Owl

PHOTOS BY DIANNA JOHNSON



Elf Owl



Western Screech-Owl



Northern Saw-whet Owl

PHOTO BY

Judy
Dorsey

PHOTOS BY TRICIA VESELY



Great Horned Owl



Barred Owl



Short-eared Owl



Barn Owl

PHOTOS BY
MIKE THRELKELD



Great Horned Owl



Great Horned Owl



Barred Owl



Screech-Owl



Burrowing Owl



Burrowing Owl



Burrowing Owl