



MEMPHIS CHAPTER NEWS

TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

<http://birdmemphis.org>

October 2022

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM



The September program was presented by Dr. Kelly Miller, who recently obtained her Ph.D. while working with Dr. Keith Bowers at the University of Memphis. Dr. Miller is now the Program Director for the Edward J. Meeman Biological Station (MBS) and a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Memphis. She presented her doctoral research in a program "Experimental alteration of male parental care reveals benefits of pairing with good fathers in a wild bird population." Dr. Miller thanked TOS for a grant that she received to help fund her research. The work was carried out at the Meeman Biological Station where 625

Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes have been placed. Her study built on earlier work that found that female Prothonotary Warblers showed preference for mates with longer wings. In her study, mated male Prothonotary Warblers were captured at the nest boxes, and randomly assigned to groups in which the wing length of males was altered by clipping a tiny but significant portion of the tips of the last two primary feathers. Both parents and young were banded and measured and blood samples were collected and used to measure the sex of the offspring. An external nest box camera was used to collect data for 1 hour on brood day four, when feeding activity was greatest. The changes in wing length (2 or 4 mm) were not great enough to affect bird or nestling survival but altered the flight cost for the male birds compared to the unclipped controls. The study looked at changes in nestling provisioning with food by the male and female parents. Birds with 4 mm clipped from the wingtips had a greater flight cost and seemed to compensate by foraging closer to the nest. The females showed a preference for mating with these birds for a second brood.

In her role as Program Director for the MBS, Dr. Miller asked for program suggestions for the research station. Below are links to websites for the MBS research station and for the nest box studies being pursued by members of the Dr. Bowers lab at the University of Memphis.

<https://www.memphis.edu/meeman/mission/index.php>

<https://www.ekbowers.com/mbs>

-Margaret Jefferson

Meeting Notes:

A visitor Shirley McKenzie, spoke to the Chapter about the newly formed Shelby County TN Bluebird Club, a local chapter of the Tennessee Bluebird Society. The club plans to have their first meeting in January and has a Facebook website.

Field trips & unusual bird sightings:

Sept 7 Ensley Bottoms, 9 observers and 38 species. Dick Preston noted that there were lots of the most common sandpipers but overall shorebird species diversity and numbers were low.

Sept 10 County-wide fall count, 118 species.

Sept 17 Fort Pillow State Park, 13 observers and 47 species including 10 species of warbler. See eBird checklist <https://ebird.org/checklist/S118914496>

Dick Preston noted an unusual trend of decreased numbers of migrating song birds in the Memphis area in recent seasons. Species diversity has been good but the total number of reported birds has been low in the greater Memphis metropolitan area. He said that birds seem to be flying to the east or west around the region while migrating bird numbers are normal in middle Tennessee.

Unusual local bird sightings included an Anhinga that stayed for 5 days at Shelby Farms Park, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Lark Sparrow, and 5 breeding pairs of Bell's Vireo.



Red-necked Phalarope
Photos by: Cliff VanNostrand



Lark Sparrow



Anhinga

Conservation:

Recovering America's Wildlife Act will come to a vote in the Senate soon. If passed, RAWA will provide a major funding increase for state, territory, and tribal conservation programs – a huge win for birds and other declining wildlife. Tennessee Senator Bill Hagerty is a bill sponsor. Thank him for his support and remind him to vote, ask Senator Marsha Blackburn to vote yes on the RAWA. See the TOS web site <https://tnbirds.org/thing-you-can-do-to-conserve-birds/> for a link to Senator contact information.

The background of the entire page is a dense layer of autumn leaves in various shades of yellow, orange, and brown, with some green leaves still visible. The leaves are scattered and overlapping, creating a textured, natural look.

CHAPTER MEETING

St. George's Episcopal
Church

**2425 South Germantown Rd.
Germantown, TN**

**Wednesday,
October 19, 2022**

7:00 pm

**Meetings are held in the
Parish Hall**

Species Spotlight

Common Raven

When nights become chilly and pumpkins appear on doorsteps, everyone knows the spookiest month of the year is here! But bats and cats aren't the only ones in the limelight: don't forget the Common Raven, the most Halloween-themed bird around (except perhaps the owl).

Scientific name: *Corvus corax*

Range: These birds are common throughout North America from southern Greenland to parts of Central America. However, they avoid the Central and Eastern US, in part due to the intense logging suffered by some areas in the past two centuries.



Habitat: Ravens can thrive in a wide range of habitats, from deciduous forests and sandy beaches to the Southwestern desert and the Alaskan tundra. They have adapted to the presence of people as well, although crows seem to occupy larger cities more frequently. People have even expanded the raven's habitat by creating oases in the middle of deserts and allowing Eastern forests to recover from deforestation.

Diet/feeding: Their diet is dizzyingly (and nauseatingly) diverse. Meals may consist of anything from carrion, insects, and seeds, to pigeons and heron nestlings, and they don't shy away from trash or feces. Ravens are also notorious egg robbers, making multiple trips to a waterfowl or seabird nest until all eggs are spirited away. With their

sharp minds, these winged thieves can be a headache to chicken farmers.

Behavior: Ravens are incredibly intelligent and have often been compared to chimpanzees. They travel alone or in pairs, unlike crows, and may soar high in the air like vultures. These birds often engage in playful behavior, performing acrobatics in the air and even teasing wolf pups. This intelligence provides more than fun, though, as ravens at a carcass may call loudly to draw the attention to larger predators, which pick apart the carrion. They begin breeding



at two to four years of age, and pairs court each other by preening and warbling softly to each other. Females construct a stick nest on a ledge or tree, where they lay 3-7 eggs. Raven nestlings are gangly and pale-eyed, although they lose their blue irises after reaching adulthood.

When, where, and how to see: These corvids are ubiquitous in parts of the West, especially where nature prevails against human interference. Shiny, jet-black feathers adorn their bodies, including the trademark shaggy neck that distinguishes them from crows. Ravens also soar effortlessly at high altitudes, forming long-tailed silhouettes different from those of vultures and hawks. Though they are known for gravelly croaks, ravens produce a variety of calls, including warbles and bill-snaps.

Conservation: Ravens are thriving, thanks to both reforestation and the trash produced by people. They deserted the East when forests were destroyed, but now populations in the Northeast are rising, and ravens have even reappeared in New York City. However, not everyone appreciates these birds' presence, and farmers protecting crops or livestock sometimes target them. In addition, their aggressive feeding habits threaten some endangered species, to the dismay of conservationists.

Fun facts:

- Ravens are related to jays, though their plumage differs wildly.
- These bulky birds are, unsurprisingly, the largest songbirds in the world.
- Ravens can recognize different faces and even hold grudges against certain people! Scientists trained nine ravens to exchange bread for cheese with researchers. However, some researchers acted "unfairly", accepting the bread but eating the cheese. After being cheated, the birds refused to trade with their betrayers.



-Lynn M. Hui

Bibliography:

- Range map taken from Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds guide
- Common Raven pages on Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds guide
- Other sources:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngJmXBSDqcM>
 - <http://windward.org/2.0/notes/2016/2016yosef03.htm>
 - <https://blog.wcs.org/photo/2018/08/06/the-egg-thief-raven-arctic-alaska/>
 - <https://www.yellowstone.org/naturalist-notes-wolves-and-ravens/>
 - <https://www.audubon.org/news/listen-sweet-soft-warble-common-ravens-sing-their-partners#:~:text=Throughout%20the%20year%2C%20a%20pair,have%20made%20these%20warbling%20sounds>
 - <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/450360031458904486/>
 - <https://www.timeout.com/newyork/blog/thats-so-raven-ravens-return-to-new-york-city>
 - <https://www.birdnote.org/listen/shows/songbirds-large-and-small-it#:~:text=A%20gruff%20voice%20announces%20the,have%20an%20understated%20size%20advantage>

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**

A LA CARTE

- Check out National Audubon's new Bird Migration Explorer.
<http://www.birdmigrationexplorer.org>
- The Tennessee Conservationist Magazine
<https://tnstateparks.com/conservationist>
- New Tracking Tower Reveals 2,000-mile Shorebird Connection
<https://nc.audubon.org/node/11575>
- Swallow-tailed Kite sightings
<https://stki.thecenterforbirdsofprey.org/>
- Reuben & Victor Stoll are documenting their Big Year on Youtube
https://youtube.com/channel/UCbJ9gCMQR3yHGpw_hLG0wmA
- Meeman-Shelby Forest Upcoming Events
<https://tnstateparks.com/parks/events/meeman-shelby/#/?park=meeman-shelby>
- Wolf River Conservancy Upcoming Events
<https://wolfriver.org/calendar>

UPCOMING EVENTS

October & November 2022

Saturday, October 1, 7:30am

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park

Field Trip Leader: Van Harris/Cliff VanNostrand

Van: shelbyforester1223@gmail.com

Saturday, October 22, 7:30am

W.C. Johnson Park

Field Trip Leader: Chad Brown

cwb496@bellsouth.net / 901-754-3385

Wednesday, October 5, 7:30am

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park

Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston / Van Harris

Dick: dickpreston48@gmail.com

Van: shelbyforester1223@gmail.com

Wednesday, November 16, 7:00pm

Chapter Meeting

St. George's Episcopal Church

2425 South Germantown Rd. Germantown, TN

Saturday, October 8

October Big Day

<https://ebird.org/news/october-big-day-2022>

Saturday, November 19, 8:00am

Shelby Farms / Agricenter Field Trip

Field Trip Leader: Cliff VanNostrand

theirishdutchman@gmail.com

Saturday, October 8

World Migratory Bird Day

<https://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/>

Saturday, November 26, 8:00am

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

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

Field Trip Leader: Jim Varner

jamescvarner@gmail.com

Sunday, October 9, 7:30am

Wapanocca NWR

Field Trip Leader: Van Harris

shelbyforester1223@gmail.com

Wednesday, October 19, 7:00pm

Chapter Meeting

St. George's Episcopal Church

2425 South Germantown Rd. Germantown, TN

Friday-Sunday, October 21-23

Reelfoot Lake Pelican Festival

<https://tnstateparks.com/parks/events/reelfoot-lake/>



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

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	\$ 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 all 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
- *December 15 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

October 19, 2019. 7:00pm

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

Program

Allen Sparks, MTOS
Sanibel Island

Hospitality

Refreshments will be provided by Sheila Bentley & Jewell Simpson

Upcoming Field Trip Information

October 1: Meeman-Shelby Forest SP

October 5: Meeman-Shelby Forest SP

October 9: Wapanocca NWR

October 22: W.C. Johnson Park

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

For our next issue, we would like to feature some photos of
bird feeding (eating).

Please send all submissions to mtosnewsletter@gmail.com.

New Members

Keith Bowers
emerson.bowers@gmail.com

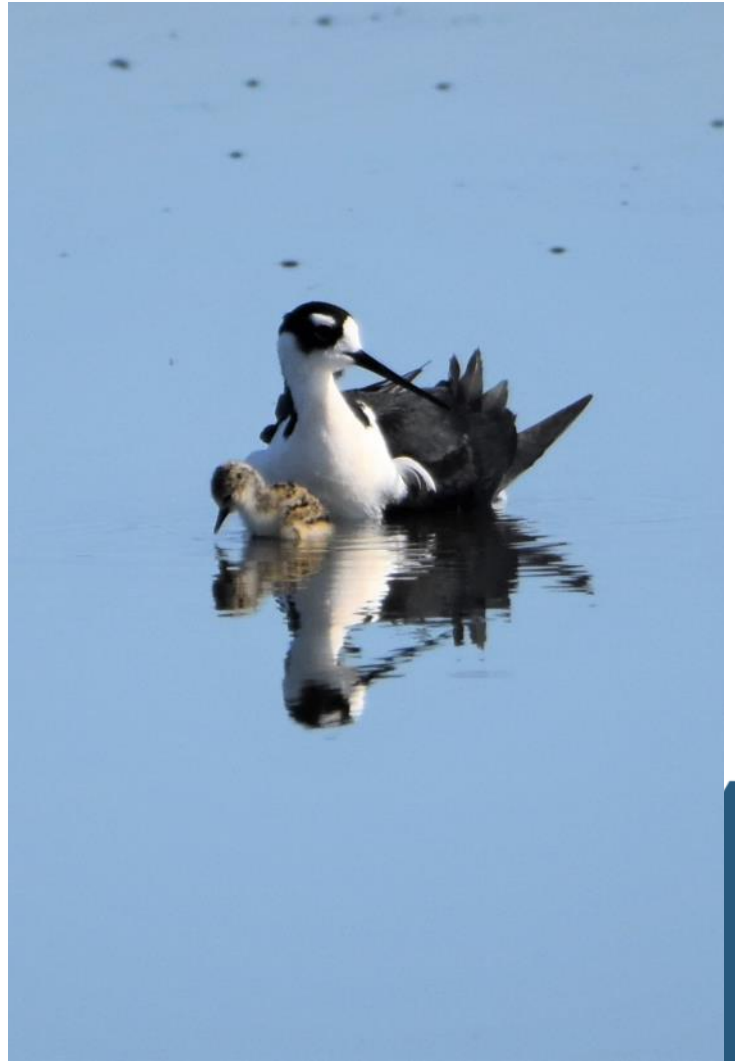
Treasurer's Report

The balance in the treasury as of September 22, 2022 is \$15,815.81. MTOS will soon renew memberships in Shelby Farms Park Conservancy, Wolf River Conservancy, and Agricenter International, for a total of \$180.00 (\$60.00 each).

At the September meeting the chapter voted to donate \$500.00 each to the Mid-South Raptor Center and to Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation. Knox Martin noted that the cost of mice and rats is at an all-time high; our support is appreciated.



Photos by
Tricia Vesely



Black-necked Stilt



Barn Swallow



Northern Cardinal



Cedar Waxwing

Photos by:
Debra Kienzle

PHOTOS BY TOM KIENZLE



Gadwall



Northern Shoveler



Bufflehead
