



**Tennessee  
Ornithological Society  
Memphis Chapter**

<http://birdmemphis.org>

May 2023

**APRIL PROGRAM**

MTOS member Scott Heppel presented a program “Birding in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.” Scott has been photographing nature since 1968 and was the 1976 recipient of the Sierra Club, Ansel Adams Award for Conservation Photography.

Scott and his wife Caroline are avid outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy hiking, cross country skiing, and fly fishing. They are from Memphis but also have a home in Big Sky, Montana. Scott worked at nexAir for 30 years, retiring as CFO in 2008. Scott is on the board of the Memphis Symphony, member of Sacajawea Audubon, the Yellowstone Park Foundation Board, Yellowstone Forever National Advisory Council and a Sierra Club Life Member. Caroline introduced Scott to Yellowstone Park during a backpacking trip in 1982. They have been returning to the area every winter since 1986.

Scott showed us some of his favorite birding spots and birds within the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. This ecosystem covers 12-20 million acres within and surrounding Yellowstone Park and includes the Grand Teton National Park, national forests, and wildlife refuges, private land, state parks, rivers and lakes. He introduced us to these areas with his exceptional landscape photography. We saw the varied habitats in all seasons, often with snow-capped mountains, spouting geysers, and red willows or golden aspens. His interest in bird photography is relatively recent and started with an opportunity to photograph a pair of Golden Eagles with an Osprey kill in the snow along the road in the Lamar Valley. One favorite birding spot is Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge was established in 1935 to protect Trumpeter Swans. His photos from Red Rock Lakes often featured the snow-capped Centennial range. The refuge is good for viewing Moose, Pronghorn, bears, Elk, many raptor species, Swans, Am. White Pelican, Ibis, and Sage Grouse. Possible songbirds include MacGillivray’s Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, Brewer’s, Vesper, Song and White-crowned Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee, Mountain Bluebird, Western

Tanager, Cliff, Tree, Violet-green and Barn Swallow, Marsh, Rock and Canyon Wren, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. He recommended Henry's Lake for shore and water birds such as Sandhill Crane, Long-billed Curlew, Am. Avocets, Willet, Phalarope, Black-crowned Night-Heron, White-faced Ibis, Franklin's Gull, Caspian Tern, and Redhead duck. He recommended a series of ponds near Yellowstone Lake for migrating waterfowl in the fall. For those wishing to see or photograph Harlequin Ducks he noted that the more colorful males would be present in the Yellowstone Park LeHardys Rapids only during the breeding season from about May 10 until June 10. American Dipper and Common Merganser are also seen in the rapids.

Scott showed images of the improved riparian habitat that has followed the introduction of Gray Wolves to Yellowstone Park. The wolves have reduced the over-browsing by Elk of vegetation along rivers, allowing Beaver, songbirds and other wildlife to return to those areas. He also noted efforts to improve habitat for Cutthroat Trout by removing invasive introduced Lake Trout from Yellowstone Lake.

Scott was unable to mention all his favorite spots but offered to give advice to anyone planning a trip to the area.

-Margaret Jefferson



## **Meeting notes**

Unusual sightings:

Anhinga (5) April 12 Meeman Shelby Forest SP

Limpkin (1) April 16 Island 40 Road, Meeman Shelby Forest SP

Hudsonian Godwit (2) April 18 Ensley Bottoms Earth Complex

Wilson's Phalarope (1) April 22 Ensley Bottoms Earth Complex

## **Conservation notes:**

Dick Preston reported that the highly contagious bird flu strain has been especially hard on raptors and waterfowl and that 8 California Condors have died of the disease.

Dick noted that the Big River Conservancy recently received a gift for the purchase 1,500 acres of land for a park on the west side of the Mississippi River at the end of the Big River Crossing on the Harahan Bridge.

## **Birds & Plants: Art Exhibit by MTOS member Jennalyn Speer**

May 1-31 Botanic Garden Visitors Center Gallery

This mixed media collage series highlights the interdependencies shared between birds and plants. There will be an opening reception on May 7 from 3-5 pm with an artist talk at 4 pm.

-Margaret Jefferson



# UPCOMING EVENTS

May 2023

**Wednesday, May 3, 7:30am**

Overton Park

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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

Meet at the East Parkway entrance parking area.

**Friday-Sunday, May 5-7**

Hatchie Birdfest

[www.hatchiebirdfest.com/register](http://www.hatchiebirdfest.com/register)

**Saturday, May 13, 7:30am \*\*date change\*\***

Spring Count / Global Big Day

*Field Trip Leader: Jim Varner*

*Field Trip Leader: Margaret Jefferson (Overton)*

Jim: [jamescvarner@gmail.com](mailto:jamescvarner@gmail.com)

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

Individuals are encouraged to bird anywhere in Shelby County that day and forward their observations to Dick Preston.  
[dickpreston48@gmail.com](mailto:dickpreston48@gmail.com)

For Shelby Forest, meet at the Visitors Center.  
For Overton Park, meet at the East Parkway entrance parking area.

**Wednesday, May 10, 7:30am**

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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

Meet at the Visitors Center at Shelby Forest.

<https://goo.gl/maps/LCyck4xQkuUUa2v89>

**Wednesday, May 17, 7:00pm**

Chapter Meeting

St. George's Episcopal Church

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

Ensley Bottoms

*Field Trip Leader: Cliff VanNostrand*

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

Meet in front of the T.E. Maxson Wastewater Treatment Plant office (2685 Plant Road).

<https://goo.gl/maps/2xWXeRDpvkQg7B1F9>

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

# Spring Count & Global Big Day

## May 13, 2023



The **Cornell** Lab 

# GLOBAL BIG DAY

## 13 MAY 2023

[ebird.org/globalbigday](http://ebird.org/globalbigday)

**Eurasian Golden Oriole**  
*Oriolus oriolus*

© Yeray Seminario  
Macaulay Library

- Discover new things about your favorite species with Birds of the World [birdsoftheworld.org/](http://birdsoftheworld.org/) — FREE ACCESS starting 8am ET May 12th through 11:59pm ET May 15th.
- Watch the sightings roll in > [ebird.org/globalbigday](http://ebird.org/globalbigday)
- Simply create an eBird Trip Report for 13 May 2023 [ebird.org/mytripreports](http://ebird.org/mytripreports)
- Share what you're seeing on social media with #globalbigday!
- Individuals are encouraged to bird anywhere in Shelby County and forward their observations to Dick Preston

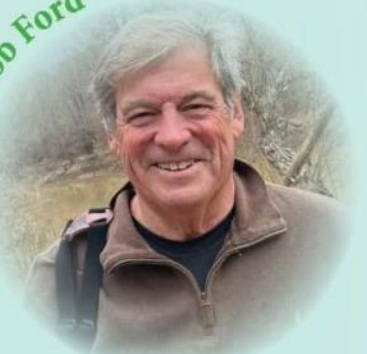
# Experience West Tennessee's Best Birding Event

# MAY 5-7, 2023

## 3 Days of Special Speakers, Seminars Demonstrations & Nature Walks

featuring Bob Ford • Dr. David Pitts • Carol Reese • Cyndi Routledge • Dick Preston • Brian Roberts  
Randy Hedgepath • Mark Greene • Watt Wallace • Tara Dowdy • David Haggard • & More

Birding with Bob Ford



Dr. David Pitts



Carol Reese



Cyndi Routledge



### Complete Details & Registration at [HatchieBirdFest.com](http://HatchieBirdFest.com)



Of Rivers  
and Birds  
LLC



## Bald Eagle Nesting in Memphis?

For birders growing up in the 1970s, a Bald Eagle sighting was a rare treat. After pesticides and illegal shooting nearly snuffed out the Bald Eagle population in the 60s and 70s, conservationists and bird enthusiasts worked together to help these magnificent birds survive. Today, Bald Eagles are once again widespread birds of prey, with their range extending all over the country. Shelby County has recently had an amazing view of this majestic species over the past few months, with the construction of an eagle nest near Shelby Farms.



Photo by David Bearman

While Bald Eagle sightings have been uncommon yet not unexpected, Memphis birders began to sense a change shortly before the turn of the year. In mid-December of 2022, eBird checklists began showing two eagles hanging out together. This became a regular occurrence, and rumors that the eagle couple would nest began to rise. The rumors were confirmed when David Bearman saw a Bald Eagle flying with a massive branch near Shelby Farms Park in January. (The bird soon dropped the limb when it proved too heavy for him to carry). John Erickson also observed what seemed to be a mating pair of Bald Eagles that same month. In his checklist comments, he said that they were “in the process of building a nest” (John Erickson eBird checklist S125452746). His pictures, which are available to view on iNaturalist, show one of the eagles actively working on a nest (John Erickson iNaturalist photos 145897297). Time will tell if this nesting pair is successful, as it is yet to be seen if the nest has yielded any viable



Photo by David Bearman

offspring. However, at the time of this writing, the Bald Eagles can be seen every morning near dawn fishing from Hyde Lake and heading north with their catch. The location of the nest is still unknown and should, for the safety of the eagles, remain a mystery.

The prospect of nesting Bald Eagles in Tennessee is definitely something to be celebrated. The Bald Eagle population crashed severely during the latter half of the century, largely due to DDT and its effects on Bald Eagle eggs. Despite the ban of the pesticide in 1972, the Bald Eagle population continued to decline because of poaching and the after-effects of DDT. To stop the Bald Eagle, and other vulnerable animals, from going extinct, the government set in motion the Endangered Species Act of



Photo by David Bearman



Photo by Elizabeth Hall

1973, a government law that conserves and protects both endangered animal species and the habitats they live in (TWRA, n.d.). The Bald Eagle, our nation's symbol, was the first animal to be placed on this list. With the help of raptor rehabilitation organizations, captive-breeding programs, and habitat protection agencies, Bald Eagles slowly began to make a comeback (Defenders of Wildlife, n.d.). While there were no successful nests between 1961 and 1983, conservationists and ornithologists were undeterred from their goal to bring back America's most

beloved national emblem.

After twenty years of waiting, Tennessee got its fifteen minutes of eagle fame when the first successful Bald Eagle nest was discovered in 1983 in Dover, TN, a stone's throw from the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area ("Bald Eagles in Tennessee"). With the efforts of federal and state organizations, the Bald Eagle was removed from the endangered list in 2007. Today, the Bald Eagle's population numbers have climbed to an estimated 316,000 individuals, with over 71,000 nesting pairs, according to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. As of 2012, 175 of those pairs were confirmed to be in Tennessee ("Bald Eagles in Tennessee"). And their numbers keep on rising.

Is the Bald Eagle nest near Shelby Farms an atypical occurrence? Not at all. There are other confirmed nests in north Shelby County. But it is yet another example of how the Bald Eagle beat all the odds and survived near extinction. One can hope that these magnificent raptors will continue to nest in our area.

-Cate VanNostrand



Photo by Cliff VanNostrand

#### Works Cited

- "Bald Eagles in Tennessee." Bald Eagle Information from the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, <https://www.tn.gov/twra/wildlife/birds/bald-eagle.html>. Accessed 11 April 2023.
- "Bald Eagle." Defenders of Wildlife, <https://defenders.org/wildlife/bald-eagle>.
- "Endangered Species Act: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service." FWS.gov, <https://www.fws.gov/law/endangered-species-act>. Accessed 11 April 2023.
- John Erickson's eBird Checklist, Jan 5, 2023. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S125452746> Accessed 11 April 2023.
- John Erickson's iNaturalist Photos, Jan 5, 2023. <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/145897297> Accessed 11 April 2023.



## A LA CARTE

- Hummingbird Central's Spring Migration Map  
<https://www.hummingbirdcentral.com>
- Time for Bird Bingo  
<https://bwdmagazine.com/blog/backyard-birding-time/time-for-bird-bingo>
- First Siberian Rubythroat at Google  
<https://www.birdingwire.com/releases/d7599700-60b8-4c52-9867-80ff78856634>
- 5 Cautionary Tips to Document Birds ID'd by Merlin App  
<https://wsobirds.org/about-wso/news/1851-5-cautionary-tips-to-document-birds-id-d-by-merlin-app>
- A Modest Proposal: Can eBird Help Choose Better State Birds? [Part 1] | All About Birds  
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/a-modest-proposal-can-ebird-help-choose-better-state-birds-part-1>
- Birds & Plants: Art Exhibit by Jennalyn Speer – Memphis Botanic Garden, May 1-31  
<https://membg.org/events/birds-plants-art-exhibit-by-jennalyn-speer/>
- Natural Highlights: Spring Bird Migration  
<https://www.wolfriver.org/news-press/natural-highlights-spring-bird-migration>
- Learn to ID warblers at a limited time price! Be a Better Birder: Warbler Identification  
<https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/product/be-a-better-birder-warbler-identification>
- 10 Interesting Facts About Starlings - Bird Feeder Hub  
<https://birdfeederhub.com/facts-about-starlings/>
- How to Use BirdCast to Enjoy Spring Migration and Keep Birds Safer  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3dPeAP6qgc>
- Nesting Bald Eagles in Tennessee 1965 - 1990  
[https://sora.unm.edu/sites/default/files/Migrant\\_1990\\_4.pdf](https://sora.unm.edu/sites/default/files/Migrant_1990_4.pdf)

### TOS Membership Information

Members may join online at [www.birdmemphis.org](http://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](http://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](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

- \*March 15 for the April Newsletter
- \*July 15 for the August Newsletter
- \*November 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](mailto:2graham@bellsouth.net)

### Chapter Meeting

**May 17, 2023. 7:00pm**

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

### Program

**Jim Varner, MTOS**  
*Audubon's Mystery Birds*

### Hospitality

Refreshments will be provided by Lisa Altizer & Margaret Jefferson.

### Upcoming Field Trip Information

- May 3:** Overton Park
- May 13:** Spring Count / Global Big Day
- May 10:** Meeman-Shelby Forest SP
- May 20:** Ensley Bottoms

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

### New Members

Madeleine and Adam Lightman [mm.lightman@gmail.com](mailto:mm.lightman@gmail.com)  
Weston Notestine [wnotestine@gmail.com](mailto:wnotestine@gmail.com)  
Alli Dillard [dillard.alli@gmail.com](mailto:dillard.alli@gmail.com)

### Treasurer's Report

As of April 17 the balance in the treasury is \$14,120.21. At the April 19 meeting the chapter approved an expenditure of \$500.00 for the purchase of Purple Martin houses, for set up at Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge. The MTOS conservation committee led the way on getting the houses properly set up.

MTOS thanks Eric Brady, MTOS member and owner (with wife Tammy) of the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Memphis, for providing a generous discount to MTOS toward the purchase of the martin houses.

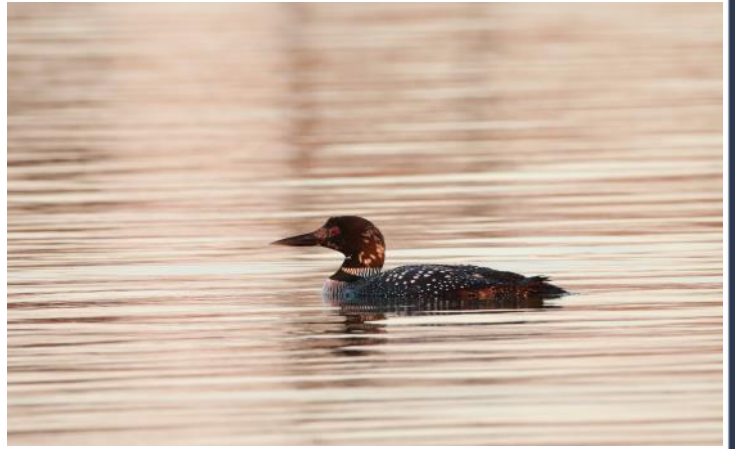
### Can You Help with Hospitality at a 2023-2024 Monthly Meeting?

A sign-up sheet will be available at the May 15 meeting for providing light refreshments at our monthly meetings in the Fall 2023-Spring 2024 year. Or, feel free to email Margaret Jefferson directly at [mjefferson100@hotmail.com](mailto:mjefferson100@hotmail.com) if you can help. All months except October and December are currently open! Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month. Thank you.

Photos by  
Michael and Susan  
Threlkeld

Atlantic Puffin





**Common Loon  
Shelby Farms, Hyde Lake  
by Cliff VanNostrand**



# PHOTOS BY ANDREA COWART



Downy Woodpecker



Downy Woodpecker



Northern Flicker



Northern Flicker



Red-bellied Woodpecker



Cooper's Hawk

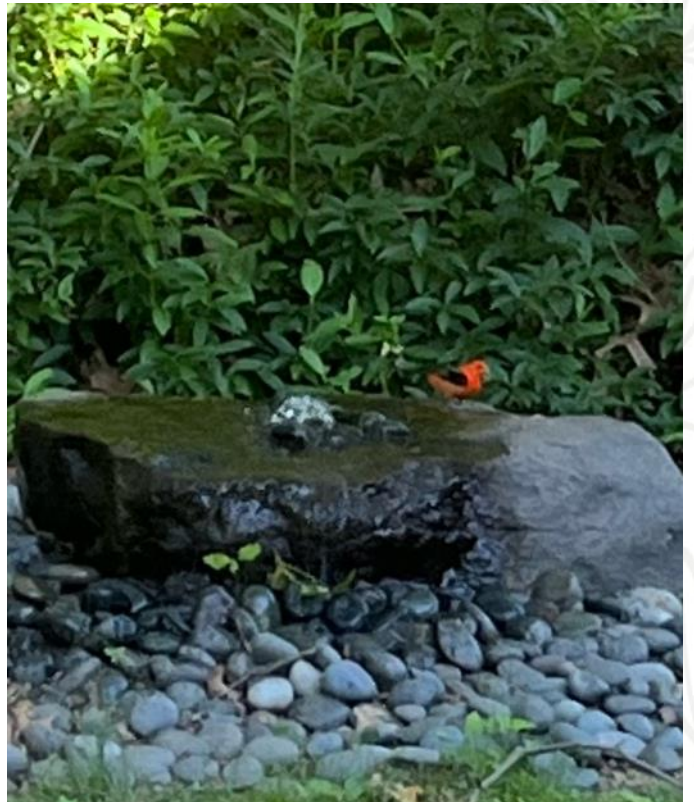


Cooper's Hawk

# Photos from **Our Members**



Red-Shouldered Hawk - photo Jon Densford



Scarlet Tanager by Ilene Markell