



# Tennessee Ornithological Society Memphis Chapter

<http://birdmemphis.org>

September 2023

Well I hope you all have enjoyed the summer break! It has been an incredible year for birders! We have seen a record year for [Limpkins](#) everywhere, [Roseate Spoonbills](#) in Wisconsin, [Swallow-tailed Kite](#) in Canada, and even a [Red-footed Booby](#) in the UK! This just goes to show that there is never a “bad” time to bird. One of the things that keeps me hooked is that I never know what I will see every time I go out. It may be a new species or it may be a new behavior but if you keep your eyes and ears open, you will learn something.



*Photo by Cliff VanNostrand*

Fall Migration is in full swing so be on the lookout for Shorebirds, Warblers, Waders, Hawks, and all the others. Last night, during the Super Blue Moon, over 1.4 million birds crossed through Shelby County! Those numbers will continue to ramp up over the next few weeks, so keep your binoculars in your car and stop at your favorite patch daily.

I am looking forward to meeting again, and we have a great lineup of programs this year. I hope to see you all at our first meeting on September 20th at St. George's at 7pm as David Hill and Dick Preston present *Eastern Bluebirds: Biology and Conservation*.

-Cliff VanNostrand, Vice President, MTOS

## References

- BBC News. (2023, August 29). *First recorded spotting of two booby species at same time in UK*. BBC. Retrieved August 31, 2023, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c88y102qgveo>
- Carr, S. (2023, May 19). *The Limpkin explosion: Like an invasive species in a changed world*. The Cottonwood Post. Retrieved August 31, 2023, from <https://thecottonwoodpost.net/2023/05/19/the-limpkin-an-invasive-species-in-a-changed-world/>
- CBC News. (2023, August 29). *Birders in Essex County are flocking to catch a glimpse of a bird that rarely seen in Canada*. CBC. Retrieved August 31, 2023, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/swallow-tailed-kite-spotted-1.6949956>
- The Smithsonian Institute. (2023, August 1). *Rare Pink Bird Spotted in Wisconsin for the First Time in 178 Years*. Smithsonian Magazine. Retrieved August 31, 2023, from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/rare-pink-bird-spotted-in-wisconsin-for-the-first-time-in-178-years-180982636/>

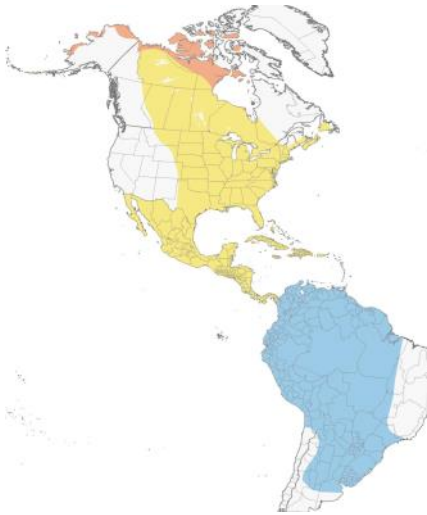


# Pectoral Sandpiper

This sandpiper's size sets it apart from the crowd, making it easier to identify than most of its relatives. When seen through a camera or binoculars, they look like giants in a flock of other peeps, though they are as drab as their neighbors.

**Scientific name:** *Calidris melanotos*

**Habitat and Range:** During the summer, pectoral sandpipers nest in the coastal tundra, a flat landscape carved with rivers.



Sedges and grass create a verdant carpet that harbors insects for growing young. Migrants stop over at grassy wetlands and other similar environments, such as farm fields, wastewater plants, and flooded fields. These marathon fliers reach their destination in the Southern Hemisphere, wintering near rivers, wetlands, and beaches.

**Diet/feeding:** These sandpipers forage near plant cover for aquatic invertebrates. Insect larvae are a favorite during the plentiful breeding season, and a typical diet consists of these larvae as well as algae and seeds.

Other prey includes small crustaceans shaped like shrimp, flying insects, and small fish and crabs.

**Behavior:** Each year, the males arrive first on the tundra to stake out their territories. They intimidate their rivals with slow wingbeats and low calls made by filling their air sacs. The females arrive later in small flocks and witness the males' unique courtship display. While flying over the female, the displaying male inflates his chest and hoots like an owl, and after landing, he struts with wings moving and neck stretched. The males are polygynous and take no part in the nesting process, leaving the females to rear their young.





In fact, many nests are built outside of the male's territory. Females and their young gather on the coast before joining the migrating males.

**When, where, and how to see:** Pectoral sandpipers appear largely similar in color and pattern to the other peeps that swarm over marshes, but they stand considerably taller than most. Their necks are long when stretched out, and patterned with distinct streaks. In juveniles, these streaks end abruptly in a white belly. The breeding plumage of adults features bold scalloping on the wings, darker markings, and hints of gold reminiscent of a golden plover's feathers. Adults become paler

outside of the breeding season, taking on a drab dun color. The yellowish legs and bill of a pectoral sandpiper distinguish it from other peeps with black legs and bills. These sandpipers exhibit an incredible array of calls and songs, from the usual high-pitched chatter to hoarse squawking and low hooting.

**Conservation:** These sandpipers have faced a decline in population since the 1980s. The disappearance of marshes may be to blame because pectoral sandpipers gravitate towards freshwater wetlands during the non-breeding season. They also stand to lose portions of their breeding range due to global warming.



#### Fun facts:

- In the sun-filled arctic summer, males of this species hold the world record for enduring the longest interval without sleep: two weeks! The males who sleep less find more mates, gaining an advantage over sleepier competitors.
- "Pectoral" refers to the male's habit of inflating his chest during displays.
- Males are around 50% heavier than females.

-Lynn Hui

#### Bibliography:

- The range map and most information in this article come from:
- the Pectoral Sandpiper pages on Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds guide
- the Pectoral Sandpiper pages from Audubon's Guide to North American Birds website

Other sources:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arctic\\_coastal\\_tundra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arctic_coastal_tundra)
- <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn22153-sandpipers-achieve-world-record-for-sleeplessness/>
- <https://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/misc/amphipods.htm>
- all photos taken by Lynn Hui

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





# BIRDING WEST TEXAS

The Chisos Mountains, an ancient seabed risen from the watery depths  
Displaying the incomprehensibly slow pace of geological time  
Creating an austere, stark landscape, inhospitable in appearance  
At the same time, magnificent on the grandest scale.

The volcanic rust red of flat-topped mesas  
Seared by the West Texas heat and wind  
Palisades banded by ocean sedimentary layers  
Survivors of briny seas, now decorating the desert landscape.

Somewhat startling is the number of birds  
Happy to call this home.  
Among them, a rare and thus sought-after species  
The Colima warbler.

A tiny smidge of a bird, dull green with a dusting of red on its head  
A simple, short warbling trill for a song and an almost inaudible chip for a call note  
Elusive and very discerning in its nesting habits  
In all of America, they choose only one small sliver of a 7,000 foot Chisos mountain top on which to build their nests.

The quest for the Colima requires an "up-at-4am-to-get-to-the- eight-mile-hiking-trail-in-the-pre-dawn-darkness" effort in mid-May  
Lots of water bottles, flashlights, binoculars, hiking boots suitable for rock scrambling  
And importantly, a firm but difficult to explain, Zen-like commitment.  
Best to avoid stopping in the middle of the trek and asking yourself, "Now, why am I doing this?"

Few people see a Colima,  
One of the most challenging of all 700+ nesting species in this country to add to your life list.  
Our group of 4 family members recently paid homage to this special little warbler,  
Trekking over its desert breeding ground without sight or sound of the bird, In spite of heroic efforts from an accompanying birding-savant guide.

Yet it is the quest itself that is most satisfying to the soul, not the conquest.  
While Colima is not Moby Dick or snow leopard,  
It holds its special place, not caring one whit whether I ever glimpse its small form.  
It challenges us by its very existence - and that is quite enough to celebrate.

DIANNA AMMONS JOHNSON  
2021



# POEMS BY DIANNA JOHNSON



ATLANTIC PUFFIN

A FOOTBALL WITH WINGS A BIT TOO SMALL  
AN ELONGATED CLOWN'S NOSE IN RIOTOUS ORANGE  
THROWS ITSELF OFF A LEDGE - CHEST-FIRST  
FLAPPING FURIOUSLY TO LAUNCH ITS CIRCUS ACT



ARTIC TERN

GRACEFUL GLIDES, ELEGANT WHITE ARCS APPEAR AGAINST BLUE SKY  
ABRUPTLY TRANSFORMING INTO AERIAL BULLY  
DIVE-BOMBING ANY PERCEIVED THREAT ON ITS NESTING GROUNDS  
IN SLY DECEPTION, SLOWLY LIFTING SKYWARD AGAIN



COMMON LOON

TWO OF THE ANCIENT LINEAGE  
PROTECTING THEIR CHICK, ALWAYS WITHIN A FEATHER'S TOUCH  
FEEDING IN TANDEM, ONE WATCHFUL WHILE THE OTHER SEEKS PREY  
HAUNTING THE LAKE WITH EERIE DUETS SUNG A MIDNIGHT



LEAST SANDPIPER

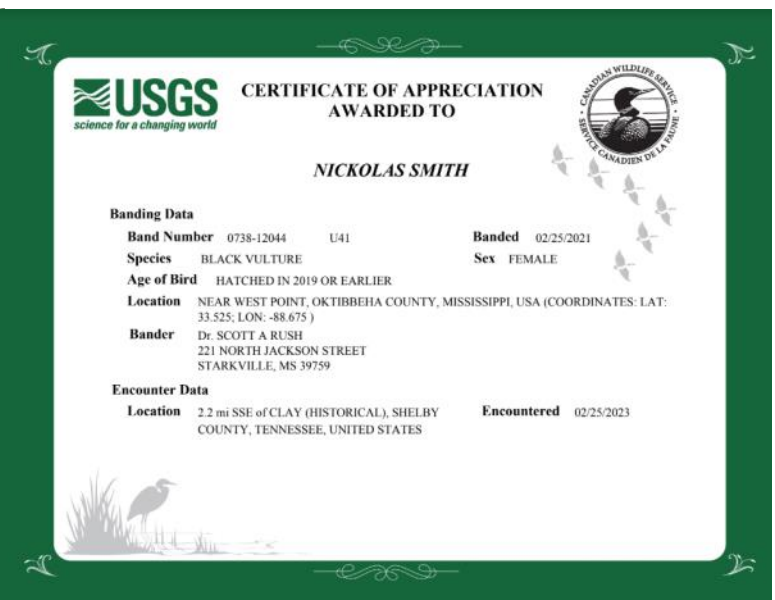
FIDGETING SHORELINGS; MULTITUDINOUS TO SAY THE LEAST  
EACH TINY JEWEL PERCHED ON EXQUISITE YELLOW-GREEN LEGS  
SLENDER BILL STITCHING THROUGH THE SAND  
FOLDED WINGS DAPPLED IN SOFT TAUPE AND TAN

# Wing-tagged Vulture



I observed this wing-tagged Black Vulture back on 2/25/2023. It was marked 2 years earlier in Mississippi as an after hatch year bird. It was on the power line towers by the Southeast Parking lot of Shelby Farms.

-Nick Smith



**Photos by  
David Young**



## **Big Bend NP Apr 28 - May 1, 2023**



Left Top-Bottom: Mexican Jay, aka grey-breasted jay, Scott's Oriole, Greater Roadrunner, Vermillion Flycatcher

Right Top-Bottom: Canyon Towhee, White-winged Dove

# SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

Submissions of any of the  
following are desired:

- Birding Events
- Stories about birds or birders
- Birding Tips
- Poetry, articles, quotes, sketches, or photos
- Photo of birds or people at events or field trips.

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



### A La Carte

- Birds of a feather: How a wayward duck changed a Kansas City homeless man's life  
<https://www.kcur.org/arts-life/2023-04-30/birds-of-a-feather-how-a-wayward-duck-changed-a-kansas-city-homeless-mans-life>
- The return of migration tools: Fall 2023!  
<https://birdcast.info/news/the-return-of-migration-tools-fall-2023/>
- Why Baseball and Birding Go Together Like Peanuts and Cracker Jacks | Audubon  
<https://www.audubon.org/es/node/147695>
- The Best Birding Spot in Memphis Stinks  
<https://www.wknofm.org/2023-08-09/the-best-birding-spot-in-memphis-stinks>

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## September / October 2023

### **Wednesday, September 6, 7:30 am**

Shelby Farms, Meet at Disc Golf/Amphitheater Parking Lot

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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

### **Saturday, September 9**

Shelby County Fall Count

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park Visitors Center

<https://goo.gl/maps/AZuNGqXhbg43k7gQ9>

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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

Or, bird anywhere within Shelby County,  
and forward your observations to Dick Preston.

### **Sunday, September 17, 7:30 am**

Fort Pillow SP/Lower Hatchie NWR

Meet at the Alex Haley rest area

<https://goo.gl/maps/5BnZmfzohtKuZwcY9>

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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

### **Wednesday, September 20, 7:00 pm**

Chapter Meeting

St. George's Episcopal Church

2425 South Germantown Rd.

Germantown, TN

### **Wednesday, September 27, 7:30 am**

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park, Visitors Center

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston / Van Harris*

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

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

### **Wednesday, October 4, 7:30 am**

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park, Visitors Center

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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

### **Saturday, October 7, 7:30 am**

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park, Visitors Center

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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



Ensley Bottoms, May 20

Photo by Jim Varner

### 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	\$10
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

**September 20, 2023. 7:00pm**

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

### Program

**David Hill / Dick Preston, MTOS**  
*Eastern Bluebirds: Biology & Conservation*

### Hospitality

Refreshments will be provided by Anita Vincent and Sarita Joshi.

### Upcoming Field Trip Information

**September 6:** Shelby Farms Warbler Walk  
**September 9:** Shelby County Fall Count  
**September 17:** Fort Pillow SP/Lower Hatchie NWR  
**September 27:** Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park

Thank you to all who contributed to this month's newsletter.  
*For our next issue, we would like to feature some photos of waders.*  
Please send your submissions to  
[mtosnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:mtosnewsletter@gmail.com).

### New Members

Lisa Bough, Southaven [lisa.bough@gmail.com](mailto:lisa.bough@gmail.com)  
Terri Pope, Milan, TN [pope\\_terri@yahoo.com](mailto:pope_terri@yahoo.com)  
Connor Robinson, Bartlett [cojaro@gmail.com](mailto:cojaro@gmail.com)  
Ed and Betty Joe Salyers, Cordova  
[esalyers@att.net](mailto:esalyers@att.net) [bsalyers@att.net](mailto:bsalyers@att.net)

### Treasurer's Report

The balance in the Treasury as of August 18, 2023 is \$14,277.82. This compares with a balance of \$14,140.21 as of April 17, 2023.

### Directory

I expect the updated MTOS Directory for the 2023-2024 year will be ready for distribution to members at the September 20 meeting. It will also be available at the October monthly meeting. Field trip leaders also help with distribution, which helps hold down chapter mailing costs.

### Electronic Directory Option

We also e-send an electronic Directory to members. If you find that form sufficient for your needs, you can pay forward "your" print copy for a new member that joins during the year. MTOS added 28 new members last year, after the Directory went to print. Your generosity is appreciated. -Barbara Pyles