



# Tennessee Ornithological Society Memphis Chapter

<http://birdmemphis.org>

May 2024

## **APRIL PROGRAM**

Since 2013 Chapter member Van Harris has been arranging trips to Africa and other locations for birding and wildlife observations. At the April meeting Van took a novel approach for his presentation on South African wildlife. He gave a brief introduction during which he showed maps of Africa and South Africa and its eight biomes or plant communities. He spoke briefly of the history, people, and languages of South Africa. At that point he sat down and launched an automated slide show of photos taken during his many trips to South Africa (2003, 2014, 2017, 2023). The music of the South African choral group Ladysmith Black Mombazo played throughout the program. Van showed photos of an impressive collection of bird, mammal, and reptile species in the various biomes. Wildlife ranged from Right Whales, Cape Fur Seals and penguins along the rocky southern coast to giraffe, elephant, lion, rhino, cheetah, hippo, kudu, zebra, elan and ostrich and Tawny Eagle in the Zebra Hills Game Reserve. My favorite photo was of a small herd of African Elephants among dry grass and small trees of Zebra Hills, and my favorite bird photo was of a Blue Crane in the West Coast National Park. An image of a Cape Buffalo facing the camera and dappled with yellow sunlight was another favorite. We saw a few familiar faces among Van's fellow travelers including Chapter members Chad Brown (2014 trip) and Diana and Rusty Johnson (2017 trip). If you would like to see more of Van's photos, he has a Flickr site at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/149768393@N06/albums/with/72177720311227038>.



-Margaret Jefferson

# **MEETING NOTES**

## **Slate of Memphis Chapter 2024-2025 Officers Nominated**

The following slate of Chapter officers was proposed at our most recent meeting and will be voted on at the May Chapter meeting.

- **President:** Liz Hall
- **Vice President:** Caroline Schratz and Neil Lovett
- **State Directors:** Judy Dorsey and Anita Vincent (terms June 2024 to June 2026).  
(Joanie Webb, Dick Preston, and Sue Cosmini will continue to serve until June 2025.)
- **Treasurer:** Barbara Bullock Pyles
- **Recording Secretary:** Knox Martin
- **Local Directors:** Nick Smith and Martha Waldron

## **eBird Commendation**

Jim Varner reported that Martha Waldron received a commendation from eBird for her efforts to have the data from the many field cards turned in by members of the Memphis Chapter of TOS entered in eBird. Over 12,000 eBird checklists have been entered under MTOS-Shelby with the earliest dating to 1925.

## **City Nature Challenge**

Shelby Forest Ranger Jeff Hill spoke for a few minutes about the upcoming City Nature Challenge. He encouraged members to participate by uploading photos or recordings of birds or other wildlife (including plants, fungi, reptiles, and mammals) taken in Shelby County between April 26-29 to the iNaturalist App. You can also help by identifying species uploaded by others.

## **MEETING NOTES**

Dick Preston mentioned that the TE Maxon waste treatment facility has a new security company and that several birders were stopped by them. He said that he met with facility administrators and security and has confirmed that birders are still welcome there and can still use the restrooms inside the office.

### **Conservation**

Dick Preston encouraged members to contact their senators Bill Hagerty and Marsha Blackburn (Tennessee) and ask them to support bill S. 4022 - Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Enhancements Act of 2024. The bill has passed the House and needs sponsors and support in the Senate.

Knox Martin expressed concern about a U.S. Fish and Wildlife plan to kill large numbers (up to 500,000) Barred Owls in the Northwest coastal areas where they compete with the threatened Spotted Owl.

### **Notable sightings**

**Scissortail Flycatcher**—Apr. 16, 2024, Shelby Farms Park

**Wild Turkey**—Apr. 16, 2024, Overton Park

**Whippoorwill**—Apr. 15, 2024, Overton Park

**Anhinga**—Apr. 14, 2024, Poplar Tree Lake at Meeman Shelby Forest State Park

**Red-shouldered Hawk nest**—Shelby Farms Park Amphitheater

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest**—Shelby Farms Park

-Margaret Jefferson

### **Wall Doxey Field Trip Report**

Saturday April 20th. Eight observers, 65 species. Highlight was six Swainson's Warblers.

-Dick Preston

See the eBird checklist and Sarita Joshi's photos from the trip to Wall Doxey SP at:

<http://ebird.org/checklist/S169467537>

# Reflections on the Collierville High School Birdwatching Club



It's almost May, and everything is stirring. Oak catkins choke the air with pollen while spring migrants fresh from the tropics fill the morning with sweet birdsong. Lawns awake after their winter dormancy, screaming for a good mow, and cold-tolerant pansies have given way to marigolds and petunias. The bluebird brood in my nest box at home seems to be especially restless this year; they all fledged in one day! It's not just the birds, though, that are ready to fly the nest. With only eleven days left of school, the air buzzes with expectation at Collierville High School. Every conversation veers inevitably toward prom, graduation, or college. This atmosphere of restlessness led me to reflect on my high school experience, and most importantly, on my experience leading the CHS Birdwatching Club.

Halfway through my sophomore year, I decided to start a birdwatching club. Our school sits squarely in the junction between the countryside and the suburbs, surrounded by large swathes of meadow and screened off from neighborhoods by woody patches. Recent housing developments have chipped away at the pastoral scene, but Collierville High is still a rural school. What better place to start a bluebird trail, or perhaps a nature club?

I enlisted the help of my biology teacher,

Mrs. Hines, who became our club sponsor, and my friends Jeeval and Annie. Starting a club was fairly simple; all we needed were signatures from students who were interested in joining, as well as a club constitution and approval form. The signatures were hardest to obtain, and I was disappointed to find that few people were enthusiastic about birdwatching. Luckily, the school administration approved our club for the following year.

At each monthly meeting, I made a presentation highlighting facets of bird life or bird identification tricks. We made field trips to local hotspots, like the Robbins-Halle Nature Reserve, to stoke members' interest in birdwatching. Soon, though, I found it hard to organize monthly meetings and field trips with an increasing course load, and club membership began to dwindle. It was time to start a bigger project, one that would hopefully kindle excitement among our members.

In December, I started planning to set up a bird feeding station and a bluebird trail on campus. My biology teacher suggested that we conduct a scientific study,

so we brainstormed research questions to pose about the bluebird trail and eventually chose to investigate how nestbox orientation contributed to nesting success. After much-needed contributions from the school and MTOS, we gathered enough funds to buy supplies and set up the trail in April.

I was concerned that no bluebirds would nest in the first year. Week after week of monitoring empty nest boxes further dulled my hopes. Then, after I had left for Governor's School in June, Jeeval and my father (who was also helping to maintain the trail) reported finding a nest in one of the nest boxes. The bluebird pair in Box 4 produced a jaw-dropping seven eggs, only four of which hatched and fledged. Unfortunately, no other nestboxes were used that year, so we lacked sufficient data to analyze how nestbox orientation affected breeding success. Nevertheless, I was thrilled that our trail had finally hosted a bluebird family.

The second year of our club began with a promising start. Most of our members were underclassmen who showed a genuine interest in nature and birds. In December, we set up birdfeeders on campus, a project that had been postponed during the previous year. However, the issue again became making time for meetings and field trips, especially with the onslaught of college applications. I learned that National



**Left to right: Annie, Lynn, Emma.**



**Left to Right: Jeeval, Lynn**





**Top row: Box #4 2023 photos**  
**Bottom row: Box #4 2024 photos**

Geographic videos piqued members' interest more than dry bird identification tips, so I began to include exotic bird facts and clips of documentaries in meeting presentations to keep members engaged.

As spring arrived, it was time to consider choosing club leadership for the next year. Christopher, one of our new members, agreed to assume the role of president. He is the perfect candidate, eager to learn about nature and committed to expanding the club's membership. The nesting season was also getting started, and to our delight, one of the first checks of the season revealed a new nest in Box 4, probably constructed by the pair of bluebirds that had nested there last year. We also discovered a Cooper's Hawk nest in the trees near Boxes 1 and 2. Box 4 was located furthest from the hawk nest, which may explain why we found the unfinished beginning of a nest in Nestbox 1. Perhaps it was a pair of raptors that threw off our plans for a research study!

To conclude another year, I hosted a game of Wingspan, a bird-themed board game, during our last meeting. As we laughed over our bird cards and food tokens, I felt sad to be leaving the club, even though I knew that it would be in good hands. Hopefully, we will have fulfilled our goal of instilling an appreciation of nature in high schoolers while lending a helping hand to our feathered friends on campus. And at the very least, we'll have provided a home for a bluebird family in Box 4.

-Lynn Hui

### ***—Special Thanks to MTOS Members—***

Without your support, the CHS Birdwatching Club could not have been more than a vague idea for me. Since I began writing for the monthly newsletter, you have encouraged my enthusiasm for birdwatching and inspired me to share it with others. I will always be grateful that I met such a group of wonderful people!



**Left to right: Annie, Jeeval, Christopher, Lynn**

### ***—Thoughts from Current Members—***

"It has been truly incredible to not only help create more homes for bluebirds, but learn to properly care for and check up on a bluebird box. By completing the training for nest box checks, I have gained a deeper understanding of how to respectfully interact with wildlife and help animals in non-intrusive ways, and also learned of the importance of citizen science and getting community members involved with the protection of our Earth. I am so excited to have received the opportunity to care for these nestboxes, and greatly appreciate the Ornithological Society's support of our endeavors."

-Jeeval, Treasurer

"The CHS Birding Club has taught me so much about the world of birding. From setting up nest boxes around our school to monitoring the growth of the bluebird chicks nested inside, I have gained a sense of appreciation and curiosity for the lives of birds. Getting to learn more about bird identification and the intricacies behind this process has also amazed me, as it has been rewarding to be able to distinguish different species by their subtle differences. I loved learning more about the ways birds have adapted to their respective habitats and feel like I know so much more about them because of this club."

-Annie, Vice President

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

# SUMMER CAMP

MWR is hosting two summer camps for children ages 8 to 12.

## **Wildlife Camp (June 24-28)**

Each day focuses on a different group of wildlife - mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects!

## **Nature Camp (July 8-12)**

We will have guest artists working with different mediums.

For more information and to register your child or grandchild, visit our website at [www.mswildliferehab.org/events](http://www.mswildliferehab.org/events).

# MISSISSIPPI WILDLIFE REFUGE (MWR)

## Backyard Wildlife Habitat Workshops



Saturday, 10am-2pm

### ***Bird Baths***

This workshop will cover practical ways to add water to your landscape and you will make your own leaf mold bird bath!

Sept

14

2024

All supplies are included with registration. You can register for 1, 2, or all 3 workshops.

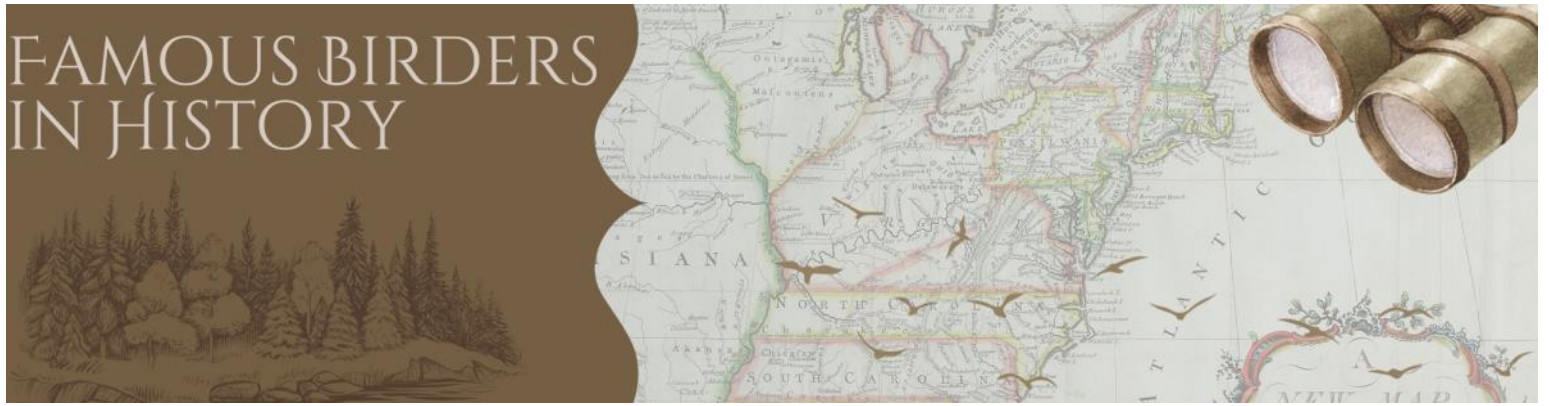
Cost is \$25 for one, \$45 for two and \$60 for all three.

Workshops are held at The ARK Trails, 7001 W Commerce Street, Hernando, MS (a short 40-45 minute drive!).

To register, visit <https://www.mswildliferehab.org/>



# FAMOUS BIRDERS IN HISTORY



## ————— William and John Bartram: Like Father, Like Son —————

The name “Bartram” may not be as commonly heard in birding circles now, but in the 1700s, the Bartram name was held by two leading pioneers of natural history, botany, ethnology, and ornithology. This dynamic duo, composed of John Bartram and his son William Bartram, made waves in the world of natural history, especially in ornithology and the illustration of birds.

John Bartram was born on March 23, 1699 to Quaker parents in Marple, Pennsylvania. John became interested in natural history at a very early age, having taught himself on the subject of botany when he was in his twenties. Allegedly, John was plowing the fields of his plantation one day when he saw a bright and beautiful daisy, sitting in the middle of the field. His curiosity about the flower and its origins is what supposedly led him to study botany. In 1728, John established Bartram’s Garden in Kingsessing, Pennsylvania; today, it is known as the “oldest extant botanical garden in the United States” (*John Bartram and Bartram's Garden* | Monticello, n.d.). From 1730 to 1765, John went on many botany-related expeditions to collect specimens for future study, making his way from New York to Florida’s coastline. John’s reputation for studying plants spread across the pond, and he traded seed specimens with Peter Collinson and Dr. John Fothergill, two British men who happened to be part of the Fellows of the Royal Society. He also kept in correspondence with Swedish natural historian Carl Linnaeus, who later regarded John Bartram as the “finest natural botanist in the world” (Burns, n.d.).



Back in America, John Bartram kept in close contact with Benjamin Franklin. In fact, the two men along with several other important Philadelphians were instrumental in the founding of the American Philosophical Society in 1743. In 1765, John Bartram was given the title of “King’s Botanist” (also called Royal Botanist) of North America by King George III; this title didn’t come without some pushback, however. Scottish physician and botanist Alexander Garden, a friend of Bartram’s from Charleston, disagreed with the title and called it “rather hyperbolic” (Burns, n.d.) that a self-taught botanist should be given such a prestigious title. But despite Garden’s outcry, Bartram continued to live life as a Royal Botanist. He settled in Charleston, South Carolina for some time with his family, where he wrote a book titled *The Diary of a Journey through the Carolinas*,

Georgia, and Florida: From July 1, 1765 to April 10, 1766. John Bartram died on September 12, 1777, of a short-lived illness in Kingsessing, PA.

William Bartram, born April 9, 1737 in Philadelphia, grew up in the shadow of his father's great successes in the world of science and nature. But William did not let this discourage him from pursuing a career in the natural sciences; in fact, he almost immediately followed in his father's footsteps in the world of botany and natural history, to the point where his father feared he would fall into poverty due to his passion for the outdoors. However, William proved to be an even better illustrator than his father, and accompanied John Bartram on many of his trips, including the 1765 trip to South Carolina that put the Bartram name on the map. After failing at various business startups, William set out in 1773 into the fields of the southeast US, sojourning for four years



through the Carolinas and documenting the wildlife that he saw. His subsequent book, *Travels*, became popular with many Romantic-era writers, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth. William's interests also expanded beyond botany; he documented the life history of animals, not just birds. He also wrote about English and Indian society, and was noted for being more sympathetic to Native Americans than his other Anglo-American counterparts. He also underwent a shift in his views on slavery, going from a secondhand

slave owner via his father's plantation to joining forces with his cousin and brothers to write an anti-slavery proposal in 1780, proclaiming "calamity" for the nation if slavery did not end.

William also became a close friend with future president Thomas Jefferson, the men having bonded over topics like paleontology, botany, geology, and of course, natural history. Their plant-based friendship continued years after Jefferson retired from the Oval Office, with Bartram sending Jefferson a retirement gift of Mimosa (also known as silk tree) seeds. Jefferson thanked William, telling the naturalist that he would "cherish with care at Monticello" (*William Bartram* | Monticello, n.d.). William Bartram fought off his declining health to mentor new American scientists and naturalists, including rising entomologist William Say and future-famous ornithologist Alexander Wilson. On July 22 1823, William Bartram collapsed while walking in the heat and died. He never married.

The Bartrams were a naturalist force to be reckoned with. Between John's trailblazing adventures through the Carolinas and his son William's extensive documentation and illustration of the wildlife, they described over 200 new species! We can accredit many of the bird species documented in Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas to these renowned natural historians. The Bartram father-son duo certainly made their mark in the world of American ornithology and botany.

-Cate VanNostrand

#### References

- Bartram History*. (n.d.). *Bartram's Garden*. Retrieved April 22, 2024, from <https://www.bartramsgarden.org/bartram-history/>
- Burns, W. E. (n.d.). *Bartram, John and William Bartram*. *South Carolina Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 22, 2024, from <https://www.sceencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/bartram-john-and-william-bartram/>
- Fishman, G. (2017). *Journeys Through Paradise: Pioneering Naturalists in the Southeast*. University Press of Florida.
- John Bartram and Bartram's Garden* | Monticello. (n.d.). *Thomas Jefferson's Monticello*. Retrieved April 22, 2024, from <https://www.monticello.org/research-education/thomas-jefferson-encyclopedia/john-bartram-and-bartrams-garden/>
- William Bartram* | Monticello. (n.d.). *Thomas Jefferson's Monticello*. Retrieved April 22, 2024, from <https://www.monticello.org/research-education/thomas-jefferson-encyclopedia/william-bartram/>



# LOOKING FOR ARTISTS

If you have artwork you'd like to submit for consideration for use on the cover of our next MTOS Directory, please send to Theresa Graham [2graham@bellsouth.net](mailto:2graham@bellsouth.net).

**Artwork can be black & white, or in color. Preferred orientation is Portrait.**

Deadline for artwork is August 31.

## A LA CARTE

- Scientists Are Puzzled By Increasingly Abundant Bird Species in Maine's North Woods  
<https://observer-me.com/2024/03/30/news/scientists-are-puzzled-by-increasingly-abundant-bird-species-in-maines-north-woods/>
- How the Common Loon's Eerie Call Took Over Pop Music  
<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/how-common-loons-erie-call-took-over-pop-music>
- Potted Plants That Attract Hummingbirds (20 Ideas)  
<https://birdfeederhub.com/potted-plants-that-attract-hummingbirds/>
- Rock Climbers Rise to the Occasion to Protect Cliff-Nesting Raptors  
<https://www.audubon.org/es/node/149220>
- Why Don't Woodpeckers Fall While Pecking?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-OdT-CMTBU>
- What Happened to Nathan Leopold's Bird Collection?  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6ePRo\\_3iqA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6ePRo_3iqA)
- Being in Nature Has a Profound Effect on How You Experience Time  
<https://www.sciencealert.com/being-in-nature-has-a-profound-effect-on-how-you-experience-time>



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## May 2024

### **Wednesday, May 1, 7:30am**

Overton Park

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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

Meet in the parking lot off East Parkway North.

### **Saturday, May 11, 7:30am**

Shelby County Spring Count/Shelby Forest SP & Overton Park

*Overton Park Field Leader: Margaret Jefferson* [mjefferson100@hotmail.com](mailto:mjefferson100@hotmail.com)

Meet at East Parkway parking lot

*Shelby Forest Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston* [dickpreston48@gmail.com](mailto:dickpreston48@gmail.com)

Meet at Visitors Center

Bird anywhere in Shelby County. Enter your checklists in eBird, and Dick will retrieve the data. Otherwise, send your results to Dick Preston or bring your checklist to the May 15th chapter meeting.

### **Wednesday, May 15, 7:00pm**

Chapter Meeting

St. George's Episcopal Church

2425 South Germantown Rd.

Germantown, TN

### **Saturday, May 18, 7:30am**

Shelby Farms Park

Meet at Disk Golf Parking lot - Pine Lake Drive

*Field Trip Leader: Cliff VanNostrand*

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

### **Wednesday, May 22, 7:30am**

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park Meet at Visitors Center

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston* [dickpreston48@gmail.com](mailto:dickpreston48@gmail.com)





### 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

**May 15, 2024. 7:00pm**

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

### Program

**Julie Weil**

University of Memphis & MTOS

"Lessons Learned from House Finches and Conjunctivitis"

### Hospitality

Refreshments will be provided by Barbara Armstrong and Pam Key.

### Upcoming Field Trip Information

**May 1:** Overton Park

**May 11:** Traditional Spring Count

**May 18:** Shelby Farms Park

**May 22:** Meeman-Shelby Forest SP

See <https://tnbirds.org/events> for details

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

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

### New Members

Katie and John Conrad  
Judy Cross, [jutesc@bellsouth.net](mailto:jutesc@bellsouth.net)

### Treasurer's Report

As of April 21, 2024 the balance in the Treasury is \$15,873.31. An Honorarium of \$600 to St. George's Episcopal Church for meeting space was approved by chapter vote at the April meeting and paid on April 20.

### New Business

The chapter is researching pricing and design options for a folding tabletop display panel for MTOS use, starting in September 2024.



# PHOTOS BY



Anhinga



Bald Eagle



Great Blue Heron



Great Egret

**DEBRA KIENZLE**



PHOTOS BY:  
**VAIBHAV GARDE**



Eastern Bluebird



Prothonotary Warbler



Red-bellied Woodpecker



Red-bellied Woodpecker



Red-bellied Woodpecker



Red-bellied Woodpecker



PHOTOS BY TODD WINN



Osprey



Bald Eagle



Glossy Ibis



Glossy Ibis



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

This is a selection of Todd Winn's photography.  
More Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/QDD15QvunHgURAZEA>



Photos by:  
**Allen Sparks**



Osprey



Great Egret



Western Cattle Egret



Great Egret





Great Gray Owl (Finland)



Great Blue Herons (Memphis, TN)



American Robin (Reelfoot Lake SP)



Great-crested Grebe (New Zealand)



Roseate Spoonbills (Texas)



Photos by:  
**Vijay Krishnamurthy**



Black Drongo (India)



Indian Roller (India)



Indian Peafowl (India)



Yellow-billed Babbler (India)



Common Myna (India)



Rose-ringed Parakeet (India)



Gray Francolin (India)