



**Tennessee  
Ornithological Society  
Memphis Chapter**

<http://birdmemphis.org>

September 2024

**SUMMER AT THE MARSH**

Summertime at the Marsh this year has been interesting. In case you are unfamiliar with the place that I am talking about, let me introduce you. The Marsh is a small wetland area on Gardner Road near the sharp turn. This little birding “hotspot” has yielded an astonishing number of birds – 243 species according to eBird. That makes it the #4 hotspot in Shelby County. It also has been birded more often than any other hotspot in Shelby County except for Ensley. There have been an incredible 3,074 checklists submitted for the Marsh at the time of the writing of this article. Although this area has been birded for decades, the oldest checklist tied to this hotspot in eBird is from December 21, 2018. That means that the above stats have been compiled in less than 6 years.

I have personally spent many hours at the Marsh during these years. It has been a refuge for me in times of uncertainty. Often, it has been a place of solace as I watch the seasons pass day after day as they have since time immemorial. It has also been a place of inspiration for me when I feel “stuck”. Many others have made it a regular stop in their week. Perhaps you are one of them.

There have been many changes to the Marsh during this time. The beavers have taken down most of the trees that bordered the pond. Although they did not pave paradise, the powers that be did put up a parking lot. This summer, it has been so dry that the pond is shrinking significantly. This is concerning because of the biodiversity that this area has attracted, and water is the governing factor for this cornucopia of life. One silver lining of this phenomenon is that by exposing mud flats, the receding pond is now attracting a diversity of shorebirds. Just this month (August), the Marsh has hosted 16 species of shorebirds. By comparison, Ensley has hosted 20 species of shorebirds during this same time period.

One of these will become the 244th species seen at the Marsh once it is approved by the eBird reviewer. This bird was first seen by Ryan Pudwell on his lunch break on August 26. It nests in the high tundra of Canada. But most of us who have seen this bird have encountered it on beaches running behind retreating waves and then ahead of advancing waves. This back and forth foraging technique is fun to watch. The bird, of course, is the Sanderling.

This surprising visitor has been present for 6 days at the time of the writing of this article. This just emphasizes the exciting reality of birding: you never know what you will find when you venture out to your favorite “patch”.



Sanderling Photo Credit: Cliff VanNostrand

The other 15 species of shorebirds that have been seen at the Marsh in August in order of first seen are:

Lesser Yellowlegs - 8/1

Solitary Sandpiper - 8/1

Spotted Sandpiper - 8/1

Killdeer - 8/1

Pectoral Sandpiper - 8/1

Least Sandpiper - 8/1

Buff-breasted Sandpiper - 8/1

Greater Yellowlegs - 8/1

Semipalmated Sandpiper - 8/2

Upland Sandpiper - 8/2

Stilt Sandpiper - 8/14

Western Sandpiper - 8/15

Semipalmated Plover - 8/17

American Avocet - 8/29

Wilson's Snipe - 8/31

If you have not visited the Marsh lately, you should drop by sometime. Keep your mind and your eyes open. You might just see something you do not expect.

Stay curious! - Cliff VanNostrand

Reference: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L16565422>



# A July Solo “Birding” Trip?

Birding trips don't always turn out as you envision, especially when those activities are combined with several others over a 6 or 7 day itinerary. My original plan was three-fold: Drive to Cincinnati to attend a high school class of 1957 mini-reunion; continue on to Columbus, Ohio, to visit my brother and his wife who I hadn't seen in several years; then take a side trip to Hocking County Ohio to see the old farmhouse my parents owned back in the 1940s-early 70s. Since I was encouraged to stay the full week I thought it would be a good time to work in a few birding hikes along the way while I was at it. Then I thought, why not stop at Mammoth Cave National Park for a cave tour since I'll go right by on the way. I have a history with the Mammoth Cave area from my high school days as a member of the National Speleological Society where we did much work exploring Floyd Collins Crystal Cave, which connects to Mammoth and is now within the National Park.

I did some research on places to bird at or near each of the places I would be staying. My choices for birding included Mammoth Cave's walking trail from the Visitors Center to the "Old Guide's Cemetery." A ridgetop trail along a narrow ravine puts you high in the treetops where the birds were active. Of course, being in the middle of summer in a forest of deciduous trees in full bloom made it a bit difficult to track the birds that were active that morning. I did get good looks at some flycatchers and woodpeckers, but the smaller birds wouldn't hold still for me. There was plenty of bird song wafting through the air, if only I could recognize them. Not my strong suit. I had to cut this hike short as my cave tour started at 10:00. The two-hour tour left from the VC with a two-mile bus ride to the remote entrance, then involved climbing up and down a total of 600 stair steps during the trip through the cave. A good test for my new hip. Three good sized school buses full of visitors on this trip. I walked at the rear of the pack the whole way talking with the Ranger that follows the crowd turning all the lights off and making sure no one gets left behind. I told her of some of my experiences in Crystal Cave. They enjoyed the stories about the "old days" and gave me a Junior Ranger Badge as thanks. They don't get to explore much so they enjoyed hearing about Floyd's cave.

My second Bird walk was in Cincinnati before the reunion. I chose Caldwell Nature Preserve, an island of wooded hills, located well within the city. The morning was very warm as I started out on the trails. I walked for over an hour looking and listening but to no avail. Well, I admit I did see a couple Robins and a Cardinal, but that was it. Nice exercise though. Hot! While in the city I drove by the house we lived in during the 1950s.

The day after the reunion I traveled to Grove City near Columbus for the visit with my brother and his wife. We had a nice visit and I had planned a two day visit but he had doctors' visits the next day so I altered my

schedule and went to Hocking County the next day. I had selected a bike/walking trail out of Nelsonville as my birding destination. The trail is paved and goes from Nelsonville 20 some miles to the town of Athens, Ohio. I walked about 4 miles total, in the rain. Saw a few swallows and Bluebirds but not much else.

As I mentioned previously, my main reason for going to the area was to visit the farmhouse and grounds that my parents had owned during the late 1940s-early 70s. The farm had not been worked for years when Dad bought it and was mostly tree-covered hills. It is where I first had audible encounters with the Wood Thrush and the Eastern Whip-poor-will. Their calls I remember hearing so often, the thrush during the day and the other in the evening and night. When I got to Big Cola Road, a previously single-track gravel road, I found it to be a single-track paved road, but the house, the cabin and all the outbuildings were gone, and the forest had reclaimed the entire site. I couldn't tell that it had ever existed. It was there 18 years ago. On my way out of Hocking County I stopped at a park on Clear Creek where all of us locals used to go swimming in the cool waters on a summer day. The swimming hole is not used anymore but there are several walking trails. I walked the trail that ran along the creek looking for birds. There were a few but my big score was a Veery. The book said it was not generally in this area but the park literature said that it was not uncommon to see the Veery here.

The next day Back in Grove City I had time to visit another home we had lived in during WWII in Westerville, Ohio. I had information that near Grove City there is a Birding Hotspot and I would pass it on my way. It is Greenlawn Cemetery, so on my way I took a short side trip to the cemetery. I arrived at the entrance and began driving around the various sections of the facility which dates back to the 1800s. I was encouraged when I came upon 4 Northern Flickers all feeding on the ground together. From then on all I saw were Grackles and Starlings, plenty of them, mind you, but not the array of bird life I was hoping for. Too late in the morning, I guess. I will have to add one more thing about Greenlawn. It is one of the largest cemeteries I have been in. I was so intent on looking for birds that I got lost and couldn't find the entrance again. I finally had to stop and ask one of the workers how to get out. He said not to feel bad it happens about four times a day. I finished the day with another visit with my brother.

Well, that is the extent of my birding during my trip, but there is one more thing I have to comment on. During the long 600 mile drive back to Memphis there came a time when I needed to stop for gas, food and etc. About that time I saw a sign for Buc-ees Travel Center a few miles down the road. I had heard from a friend that they had good sandwiches there, so I'll give it a try. I was not prepared for what I encountered. There had to have been 40-50 gas pumps and all but a couple were in use. I scored one, filled the tank then went inside. The place is huge and was jammed with people, all in a hurry. I was too tired to scope out the whole place so grabbed a pre-made sandwich and returned to my car. My friend was right, it was a great sandwich.

That's all .....

Chad Brown

## Remembering Chapter Member

# **William Robert (Rob) Peeples**

Rob Peeples of Monticello, Arkansas, died on May 10, 2024 at the age of 60. An avid birdwatcher early in life, Rob joined the Memphis Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society in 1978 and served as Chapter President from 2003-2005. For those who had the privilege of birding with him, Rob's bird identification skills, especially by ear, were astounding. Rob was the data compiler and author of the 1987 publication, "Birds of Northwest Mississippi - DeSoto, Tate and Tunica Counties Since 1977". This was a Special Project that Rob undertook while a student at Memphis State University. In this publication Rob wrote:

"I would like to express special thanks to the following: my father, William P. Peeples, who began taking me birding to Woodland Lake when I was 13 years old; Ben Coffey and Gilbert Beaver who made available their records for the area; and to Martha Waldron who edited and had published "Seasonal Occurrences of Shelby County, Tennessee Birds" on which this publication was modeled. It is hoped that this publication will meet its intention of promoting awareness of the area's birdlife and encourage ongoing study."

Rob Peeples worked to increase knowledge about birds and encouraged others to follow that path. We are fortunate to have had Rob as a member of the Tennessee Ornithological Society. Well done, Rob.

-Barbara Pyles

# 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](mailto:mtosnewsletter@gmail.com)

## A La Car te

- This Mid-South man and former Marine has seen 6.8K bird species. And he's not done yet  
<https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/local/2024/08/12/memphis-man-amateur-bird-watcher-dick-preston/73738859007/>
- These Birds Are All Winners in the Migration Games  
<https://www.audubon.org/news/these-5-birds-are-all-winners-migration-games>
- How Audubon on Campus Faculty Advisors Support Student Leaders  
<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-audubon-campus-faculty-advisors-support-student-leaders>
- Do Ducks' Quacks Echo? And Other Birds Myths  
<https://omithology.com/do-ducks-quacks-echo/>
- How to keep Nest Boxes From Turning Lethal in Extreme Heat  
<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/how-keep-nest-boxes-turning-lethal-extreme-heat>

# MISSISSIPPI WILDLIFE REFUGE (MWR)

## *Backyard Wildlife Habitat Workshop*



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. Cost is \$25.

The workshop is held at The ARK Trails, 7001 W Commerce Street, Hernando, MS (a short 40–45 minute drive!).

To register, visit <https://www.mswildliferehab.org/events/backyard-wildlife-habitat-workshop/>

**SHELBY COUNTY  
FALL COUNT**

**September 14,  
2024**



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## September 2024

**Wednesday, September 11, 7:30am**

Ensley Bottoms

Meet near the entrance on Buoy Street.

(For GPS use 3095 Buoy Street.) Park on Buoy Street.

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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

**Saturday, September 14, 7:30am**

Shelby County Fall Count

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park Visitors Center

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

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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

**Wednesday, September 18, 7:00 pm** Chapter Meeting

St. George's Episcopal Church

2425 South Germantown Rd. Germantown, TN

**Sunday, September 22, 7:30am**

Fort Pillow SP/Lower Hatchie NWR

Meet at the Alex Haley rest area on Hwy 51.

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

*Field Trip Leader: Dick Preston*

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

**Friday-Sunday, September 27-29**

Fall Meeting—Memphis

Register here: <https://tnbirds.org/event/register/>





# from the camera of:



Dickcissel



Eastern Kingbird



Bobolink



Spotted Sandpiper



Snowy Egret



Least Tern



# PHOTOS BY ZEESHAN ALI



Cooper's Hawk



Pileated Woodpecker



Red-bellied Woodpecker



Brown-headed Cowbird



American Goldfinch



Indigo Bunting



Red-bellied Woodpecker



Rose-breasted Grosbeak

# Photos by Todd Winn



Bald Eagle



Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Osprey



Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Bald Eagle



Eastern Bluebird

# PHOTOS BY SKYLAR LOWERY



Warbling Vireo



Black-billed Magpie



Broad-tailed Hummingbird



Lark Bunting



Ring-necked Pheasant



Black-capped Chickadee

## 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  
Email: [2graham@bellsouth.net](mailto:2graham@bellsouth.net)

## Chapter Meeting

**September 18, 2024. 7:00pm**

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

## Program

**Cliff VanNostrand, MTOS**  
*Tools for Better Birding*

## Hospitality

Refreshments will be provided by Sarita Joshi and Anita Vincent.

## Upcoming Field Trip Information

**September 11:** Ensley Bottoms

**September 14:** Shelby County Fall Count

**September 22:** Fort Pillow SP & Lower Hatchie NWR

**September 27-29:** TOS State Meeting –Memphis

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

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

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

## New Members

Chalise Bondurant, [chalbond@mailbox.org](mailto:chalbond@mailbox.org)  
Larry Chitwood, [lmchitwood@gmail.com](mailto:lmchitwood@gmail.com)  
Martha Mitchell, [lorikessler@yahoo.com](mailto:lorikessler@yahoo.com)  
David Walker and Rosemary Otubo  
[davidbwalker@bellsouth.net](mailto:davidbwalker@bellsouth.net) [otubo@yahoo.com](mailto:otubo@yahoo.com)

## Treasurer's Report

As of August 20, 2024 the balance in the Treasury is \$15,200.56.

## New Business

A donation of \$500 to the BirdSafe Memphis project was approved at the May 2024 chapter meeting and has been paid. Bird Safe Memphis is a University of Memphis-based project that aims to reduce bird-window collisions. Over the summer MTOS received memorial donations for Rob Peeples and Randy Parker (former Wild Birds Unlimited employee). MTOS also received honoraria in appreciation of guidance and assistance provided by Martha Waldron, Jim Varner, and Cameron Rutt.