

# *The Chattanooga Chat*

CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER OF THE TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY



House Finch

Photo Credit: David Goldsmith

**NO AUGUST PROGRAM  
REGULAR MEETINGS WILL RESUME IN SEPTEMBER**

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By OJ Morgan

First, I want to thank everyone who came out for our potluck picnic at Greenway Farms Conference Center on July 7. We had a great turnout and loads of good food. Fortunately, we had the spacious, air-conditioned room and kitchen of the conference center at our disposal, so the summer heat was no problem. It all made for a good time to visit, meet new members, and talk about birds!

Second, I want to bring to your attention a couple of projects we've been pursuing this summer. Thanks to an invitation from Scott Martin, Administrator for Chattanooga's Department of Parks and Outdoors, we've begun working with the city on educational signage for the Brainerd levee. As you know, it's one of the rare places in the city to observe shore birds, especially during migratory periods. Our goal is to help the public identify birds they may observe on the levee as well as explain a few facts about bird migration. We're grateful for this opportunity for a couple of reasons: it helps us further our mission to educate the public about the avian world around us, and it's an excellent way for us to make our presence known in the city, all of which leads to keeping our club sustainable into the future.

Also, we will be working with Dr. David Aborn to install a Motus Wildlife Tracking System close to where Dr. Aborn does his important bird-banding work at Greenway Farms. As you may know, Motus is an international research network that allows scientists like Dr. Aborn and others to track birds and other small flying animals with great precision, furthering their research and education on the health and well-being of migratory birds. Again, we see this as another way for us to fulfill our mission to promote the study and protection of birds.

As you'll see in this newsletter, we have much happening with our fieldtrips and upcoming monthly meetings beginning in September. I look forward to seeing everyone again, and I'm excited about the future of our club and the impact we will have as we work together.



Tawny-capped Euphonia

Photo Credit: OJ Morgan

# AUGUST FIELD TRIPS

## **Black Belt Birding Festival in Alabama**

Date: August 2-4

Time: 6:00am on 8/2 to 9:00am 8/4

Leader: David Stone / Alabama Audubon

Description: The fourth annual BLACK BELT BIRDING FESTIVAL in Greensboro, Alabama will take place on August 2-4, 2024. Highlighting the birds, history, and heritage of Alabama's Black Belt region, the festival offers rare opportunity to catch a glimpse of many species of birds in a natural environment. Visit the following website to fill out a waiver and sign up for the trip <https://alaudubon.org/event/blackbeltfestival2024>

## **Brainerd Levee Bird Walk**

Date: August 11th

Time: 8:00am - 11:00

Leader: Will Otis

# of Participants : Unlimited - RSVP to [wotis1114@gmail.com](mailto:wotis1114@gmail.com)

Description: Come prepared with a spotting scope (if you have one) and good walking shoes to find sandpipers and other waterfowl. Organizer will have a spare scope you can use to spot birds in the marsh area. Song birds and other species will be great to view along the trail as well. Meet at the parking lot off Shallowford road near the Circle K gas station. Text or call Will at 423-902-8858 if you need assistance.

## **University of the South Egg Collection**

Date: August 14

Time: 6:00pm, Central Time Zone

Please RSVP to Will Otis at [wotis1114@gmail.com](mailto:wotis1114@gmail.com). We will meet together and carpool to Sewanee to view the extensive egg collection at the University of the South.

David Stone is also willing to drive and can take 3 people ([rockyturf@epbfi.com](mailto:rockyturf@epbfi.com))



Green Heron

Photo Credit: David Goldsmith

## MEET BARBARA JOHNSON

I grew up in the Flint Hills region of eastern Kansas. I began watching birds in college, and began birding more seriously after my kids fledged.

I have a Bachelor's degree in biology from The University of Kansas. During and after college I worked as a keeper in three zoos in Kansas and Maryland. I worked in Kansas with reptiles and amphibians, and then moved my zoo career to Baltimore. There I cared for four African elephants for several years before leaving that work for the more mundane (if not less wild) world of raising two children. During those years I worked as an ecological tour guide on the Chesapeake Bay, a gardener, and an education consultant.

I was active in the Maryland Ornithological Society and for six years served on its executive council, two years as president. I also held the positions of program chair and president for the Annapolis chapter of MOS, in which I maintain my membership. In 2019, my husband Barry and I moved from Annapolis to Chattanooga at the encouragement of our daughter and son-in-law, who were expecting our first grandchild (we now have four, between Tennessee and California).

I love birding in Tennessee, solo and with many fantastic birders, and am so grateful to have found a welcoming "birding home" at CTOS. In addition to counting several Chimney Swift roosts in Hamilton county and organizing Chimney Swift watch parties, I am honored to serve as program chair for CTOS, a position so wonderfully carried out for years by the incomparable David Stone. If you have ideas or requests for a program, PLEASE let me know!



# JULY FIELD TRIP REPORT

**Standifer Marsh Birding on July 28, led by Tim Lenz and Luke Thompson**

**10 participants met to bird 2 hours, 14 minutes over 2.02 miles; 42 species observed. A special thanks to our club members who nurtured the young birder (6 years old?) on this trip!**

50 Canada Goose

15 Wood Duck

4 Mallard

1 Rock Pigeon

20 Mourning Dove

16 Chimney Swift

1 Ruby-throated Hummingbird

1 Killdeer

1 Least Bittern

9 Green Heron

1 Great Egret (American)

1 Great Blue Heron (Great Blue)

1 Osprey (carolinensis)

1 Red-shouldered Hawk (lineatus Group)

3 Red-bellied Woodpecker

1 Downy Woodpecker (Eastern)

1 Hairy Woodpecker (Eastern): Breeding and Behavior Code: FL Recently Fledged Young

7 Eastern Phoebe

1 Great Crested Flycatcher

4 Eastern Kingbird

2 Blue Jay

2 American Crow

2 Fish Crow

2 Carolina Chickadee

2 Tree Swallow

1 Purple Martin

12 Barn Swallow (American)

3 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (caerulea)

3 Carolina Wren: Breeding and Behavior Code: S Singing Bird

1 Yellow Warbler

5 Northern Cardinal

2 Blue Grosbeak: Breeding and Behavior Code: S Singing Bird

## VAGRANT VERMILION FLYCATCHERS BY PATRICK HIGGINS

As some of you may have recently heard on the Back to Birding Podcast, Luke Thompson and I experienced quite an absurdity in our world of birding. Late last April, I was granted an incredible opportunity to join some of Tennessee's finest ornithologists, Lizzie and John Diener, as they conducted increasingly valuable field research on the declining Pinyon Jay of the western U.S. I promptly flew out of Nashville and arrived in Salt Lake City on the 26th of April, ready for a plethora of lifers.

We ventured towards Price, Utah, two hours outside of SLC, where the Utah Department of Natural Resources' station is located; it would be home base for the upcoming week. With a busy schedule ahead of the crew, there was little time to fit in recreational birding, so the morning of the 27th I eagerly rose with the sun and birded around the DNR station to see if I could pull out any lifers before the day's plans began.

To my great surprise, a stunning male Vermilion Flycatcher was calling and displaying at eye level no further than ten yards away. I quickly texted Lizzie Diener to inform her of the vagrant hanging out just behind the station, to which she replied with the beautiful words: "That's a first county record!". Of course, my excitement grew, and I attempted to capture better photos of the hyperactive fireball.

Naturally, I rubbed the first county record Vermilion Flycatcher in Luke's face over text, as he had been to the area and helped the Diener's with similar research in the past. However, I could only boast for roughly 24 hours, as I received a humbling call which I can confidently say I was not expecting.

The morning of the 28th, Luke excitedly informed me (with colorful language) that he had just found Hamilton County's first record of... you guessed it... Vermilion Flycatcher. I sat baffled for quite a while before finding the humility to congratulate him on the find. My bragging rights lived peacefully for one whole day. Not only had he found a first county record, but it also happened to be a Vermilion! Luckily, a great deal of Tennessee birders got to add the bird to their state and life lists, as there has not been a chaseable Tennessee Vermilion in about twenty years. Congrats Luke and all who saw it!

Respectively, the Tennessee Vermilion Flycatcher is a "better" bird, but you won't catch me admitting that to Luke anytime soon. Check out the Back to Birding Podcast for both perspectives of this ridiculous happenstance.



Vermilion Flycatcher photo credit: Shutterstock



Cedar Waxwings Photo credit: David Goldsmith