

The Chattanooga Chat

CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER OF THE TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Photo Credit: Ancient Murrelet by O.J. Morgan

DECEMBER PROGRAM

December 14, 2023, 7pm

Ascension Lutheran Church

729 S. Germantown Road

East Ridge, TN 37412

Our speaker for the December 14 meeting is Gary Brunvoll. His program is entitled "Atlantic Forest Birds of Brazil: The Habitat and What is Left of It." Gary is a local member and has traveled extensively while birding. We look forward to hearing about his experiences in the Brazilian Atlantic Forest.

FINDING THE ANCIENT MURRELET
The Nearest Bathroom Phenomenon (NBP)
by Tim L. Russell, Chattanooga, TN

I first heard about this phenomenon from Bruce Dralle, who identified a Townsend's Warbler after exiting the bathrooms at Point Park. It sounds weirdly familiar to the Patagonia Picnic Table Effect (PPTe) that I heard about from Daniel Jacobson. It says that more rare birds are likely to be seen from a site that a rare bird has been reported from because more birders flock to that location. I think that this special occasion was a combination of both.

My wife, Patti, and I had been birding along the South Chickamauga Greenway for a few hours on Friday, November 24 when we decided to go to the Chickamauga Dam to use their clean bathrooms. I had remembered John Diener's Eared Grebe from November 9 and hoped to see something interesting (PPTe). Just after exiting the bathroom, (NBP) we observed an immature Bald Eagle hunting something near the shore just to the left of the boat ramp. When we got there, the Eagle had left but Patti said, "I think I saw a sea gull dive underwater." I said, "Sea gulls don't dive underwater." At that moment, a small black and white bird popped up 40 feet away! Patti said, "What is it?" I knew it wasn't a local bird, so I said it may be an Auk or a Murre. I had only skimmed those pages of my field guides on the way to Terns or Doves. Patti Googled Auk and looked at the choices. She said it looked like an Ancient Murrelet!

Meanwhile, I had called Kevin Calhoun. After describing the bird, he said, "It might be an Ancient Murrelet or a Long-billed Murrelet and that he was only 10 minutes away. I made a few more calls and Kent Pennington showed up. By that time the bird had gone from fishing around the No Wake Sign and flown to the center of the lake. Patti put our spotting scope on it and Kent saw it briefly before the bird disappeared. Since it was moving left, we were scanning frantically towards the dam when Kevin arrived. As we searched, Patti shouted, "There it is!" It had flown a great distance underwater and appeared near the No Wake Sign again. Kevin went running over to that side and got a few pictures. Then he proudly proclaimed, "An Ancient Murrelet!"

I posted the bird on eBird and BirdingApp and Kevin posted on Telegram. The Jones sisters were calling folks individually and Dan and Kathy Jacobson were calling folks as well. After another half hour of watching the bird and ecstatic birders, we slipped away to get some lunch and celebrate. By now, hundreds of birders from as far away as Texas and New Jersey have flocked to see this bird. Four more rare birds have been seen from that location: Snow Goose, Long-tailed Duck, Pacific Loon, Red-throated Loon (PPTe). Just remember, when you're out birding and Nature calls, be sure to have your binoculars!

DECEMBER FIELD TRIPS

Ray Zimmerman will lead a trip to Hiwassee Refuge on December 27 to see the Sandhill Cranes. Meet Ray at 6615 Blythe Ferry Road at 9am.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

There are 3 upcoming Christmas Bird Counts:

December 16, in Chattanooga- Contact Kevin Calhoun at kac@tennis.org for more information.

January 1, in Hiwassee- Contact Kevin Calhoun at kac@tennis.org for more information.

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP BY JANUARY 1, 2024

<https://chattanoogatos.org/joining-or-renewing-as-a-member/>

OR send a check to CTOS Treasurer Jennifer Martin 1005 Meadow Lake Rd., Chattanooga, TN 37415 Checks payable to Tennessee Ornithological Society

Individual memberships \$30 Family memberships \$35 Student memberships \$15

If you have renewed or joined in the last 3 months, you are paid in full for 2024.

CHANGING BIRD NAMES

From the New York Times 10/13/2023

On November 1, the American Ornithological Society announced that all birds named for human beings will be renamed. The new names will reflect some trait associated with the bird (appearance or habitat) instead of the person who first identified it.



PHOTO CREDIT: SUNSET
BY RAY ZIMMERMAN

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIPS

On November 19, Dr. David Aborn led a group of 12 to bird Audubon Acres in collaboration with CTOS and Chattanooga Audubon.

Thirty five species identified included:

White-breasted Nuthatch	Barred Owl	Eastern Towhee
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Cooper's Hawk	American Goldfinch
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Black Vulture	House Finch
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Turkey Vulture	Northern Mockingbird
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Northern Flicker	Cedar Waxwing
Downy Woodpecker	Eastern Phoebe	Eastern Bluebird
Blue Jay	American Crow	American Robin
Carolina Chickadee	Tufted Titmouse	Brown-headed Nuthatch,
Winter Wren	Carolina Wren	Brown Thrasher
Chipping Sparrow	Song Sparrow	White-throated Sparrow
Northern Cardinal	Hairy Woodpecker	Pine Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Common Grackle	



Editor's note: I am excited to step into the role of editor of the Chattanooga Chat. An enormous thank you must go to Ray Zimmerman, the long time editor par excellence of the Chattanooga Chat. Ray is a naturalist, birder, *and writer*, leaving big shoes to fill. I welcome your ideas, suggestions, corrections, stories, and patience during this transition.

~Ann Glass chattbirders@gmail.com