

Tennessee Ornithological Society Memphis Chapter

<http://birdmemphis.org>

February 2025

JANUARY PROGRAM



Chapter member Nick Smith presented Memphis Area Raptor Banding Projects at the January meeting. Nick has a M.S. from Louisiana State University and is a geospatial manager at Ducks Unlimited. Nick noted that he was describing work that he assisted with but was mostly done by others including Knox Martin, Martha Waldron, Dr. Michael Collins, and Michael's students at Rhodes College. He noted that the Mid-South Raptor Center is working with several organizations to band raptors including the Memphis Zoo, Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation, and Rhodes College. The Mid-South Raptor Center, directed by

Knox Martin, rehabilitates injured and orphaned raptors. Prior to the release of rehabilitated raptors, blood samples and biometric data are collected, and the birds are banded.

Over two thousand banded raptors of 48 species have been released by the Center. Dr. Collins is studying DNA extracted from blood samples to detect disease. Nick's talk focused on an ongoing pilot nest box monitoring project for two raptor species, American Kestrel and American Barn Owl. He described the habitats and life histories of these secondary cavity nesting raptors and the data collected for the project. When possible, the nestlings and adults are banded, and biometric data is collected. These species use similar habitats and are well suited to open country and agricultural land. The average life span in the wild for these raptors is 1-5 years but in captivity they can live much longer. The male kestrel is easily distinguished from the female by its blue-gray wings. The sex of barn owls is more difficult to determine, but there are subtle differences in the coloration of the facial disc, and females are larger. Barn Owls nest year-round and can have 3 broods per year. The kestrel has one brood in early spring. Nick noted that banding followed by recapture of kestrels has led to a better understanding of age and sex-related variations in plumage.

The use of geotagging has resulted in a better understanding of the dispersal of young raptors. There has been a slow decline in kestrel numbers since around 1960. This is mainly due to loss of habitat, but some have suggested that the increase in Cooper's Hawk, which preys on kestrels, could be a factor. There is relatively little data available on Barn Owl populations. Using eBird data Nick showed the change in density of kestrels throughout the U.S. for each week of the year, showing their southward migration in the winter. He also showed their winter distribution based on Christmas Bird Count data and their breeding density based on breeding bird survey data. He encouraged us to report our raptor sightings to eBird.

-Margaret Jefferson

..... Meeting Highlights

Barbara Pyles noted that she found a Canada Goose carcass in her yard and noticed that it was banded. She found it easy to report the band find online. Dick Preston also recently found a banded Ross's Goose and observed it being killed by a Bald Eagle. He noted that these geese were likely victims of bird flu and that the birds and other animals that prey on these sick birds often also get infected.

Notable sightings

Say's Phoebe, Jan. 2-12 (continues from Dec.), Shelby Farms Park, Gardner Rd. Gardens

Common Merganser, Jan. 8-11 Powder Mill Road Lake, Shelby Co., TN

Purple Sandpiper, Jan. 13-21 Nashville, TN (second state record)

-Margaret Jefferson



SPEAKER REQUEST!

MTOS Speaker Request
For: Evergreen Garden Club
Date Options: Friday, April 11
or Friday May 9, 2025, 10am

The Evergreen Garden Club encourages interest in and seeks to increase knowledge about home gardening - including how to attract birds. Meetings are held in the home of a Garden Club member in midtown Memphis.

If you are interesting in speaking to and exchanging ideas with this friendly group, contact Barbara Pyles at brbpyles@gmail.com. Thank you!

2024 Memphis Birding in Review



Last year was an amazing year for birds in Shelby County! According to eBird, in 2024, there were 280 spp. recorded in our county. This is a new single year record. We had 6 people record over 250 spp.! Before this, only 1 person had ever broken the 250 mark in a single year in the county. We also had 17 people that saw over 200 spp. last year in the county.

Last year saw 2 firsts for the county: Black-chinned Hummingbird (Sarita Joshi) and Sage Thrasher (Rob Harbin). Some other highlights from last year were: Long-tailed Duck, American Black Duck, Neotropic Cormorant, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brown Pelican, Hudsonian Godwit, Glossy Ibis, Red-necked Phalarope, White-faced Ibis, Marbled Godwit, White Ibis, Wood Stork, Common Tern, Grasshopper Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Smith's Longspur, Common Merganser, Black Scoter, Western Meadowlark, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Surf Scoter, Say's Phoebe, and Vermillion Flycatcher.

I am excited to think about the possibilities this year! Get out and bird your favorite patch. Go out often and take a friend. Enjoy the beauty of the natural world and especially our feathered friends!

-Cliff VanNostrand



Christmas

BIRD COUNT



Memphis CBC 2024

The 96th Memphis Christmas Bird Count got underway on the morning of December 15, 2024. This year also marked the 125th CBC in the US - pretty remarkable. Foggy, overcast, and cloudy skies persisted through most of the day over the entire area, with a little light drizzle being reported from the Raleigh contingent. Low light and limited visibility on water was noted. Minimal to no wind was recorded. Perhaps the weather conditions contributed to our lower numbers. We counted 103 species this year, 9 less than last year, after 3 years of progressively higher counts - 112 species in 2023, 111 species in 2022, and 102 species in 2021 which was the highest at that time. The low in the past 10 years was 91 species in 2019. So we have returned to more typical numbers, at least this year. We had 45 observers participating in the count which is a new high.

We did not have any new species to record this year. We had 11 species with their highest numbers ever for the Memphis count - Canada Goose (1494), Green-winged Teal (39), American Bittern (2), Red-shouldered Hawk (38), Barn Owl (3), Eastern Phoebe (32), Tufted Titmouse (203), White-breasted Nuthatch (32), Sedge Wren (5), Cedar Waxwing (1181), Orange-crowned Warbler (6).

We didn't count any Blue-winged Teal, Northern Pintails, Redheads, Common Goldeneyes, Great Egrets, Greater Yellowlegs, or Least Sandpipers.

Very few Snow Geese were counted in Shelby County on December 15. At 16 individuals, they were just a fraction of the high count of 8243. Our blackbirds continue to be low - European Starling (at 3955 this is less than 8% of their recorded high but more than last year), Red-winged Blackbird (908 is less than 1% of their recorded high), Common Grackle (at 2781 this is about 3% of their recorded high), and Brown-headed Cowbird (at 383 this is less than 1% of their high in the past, but more than last year).

Once again, no Northern Bobwhites or Loggerhead Shrikes were seen. The last Memphis CBC recorded Bobwhite (according to CBC records) was in 2010, and the last Memphis CBC recorded Shrike was in 2015. We can hope for next year.

Since this is the 125th Audubon CBC, I thought it would be interesting to take a brief look at the very first Memphis CBC, which was held in 1928, as part of the 29th count. There was one participant who counted 45 species including 13 Northern Bobwhites, and 4 Loggerhead Shrikes.

Thanks to everyone for making space in their busy schedules to help make the Memphis CBC the ongoing success that it is. I appreciate the time commitment from the leaders who compile and organize their individual count numbers, and then share with me. Thanks to all for your help and patience in all things CBC. Here's to the next 125 years!

Happy Birding!

Anita Vincent



Fayette County CBC 2024

The 27th Fayette County CBC started clear but cold at 28 degrees and stayed clear with a high of 43 degrees. The wind was between 6 and 14 mph. Despite the chilly weather, we ended up tying last year's number of species at 74. That makes 3 years in a row! We did add a new species to the count this year: Fish Crow. We had high counts on 7 species: Hooded Merganser (44), Red-shouldered Hawk (24), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (28), Hairy Woodpecker (13), American Crow (570), Winter Wren (22), and Brown Creeper (14). We also had a record number of participants at 21. A personal highlight for me was finding an unbanded male Northern Bobwhite near the northern part of the circle.



Photo By: Cliff VanNostgrand

Thanks to all,
Cliff VanNostrand

Wapanocca/Meeman-Shelby Forest CBC 2024

Thanks to everyone for participating in the 26th running of this count. Here are a few highlights:

The total of 112 species set a new high for the count. The previous high was 100, achieved three times. The low count was 79. The average over the 26 counts is 93.5 species. Four species were new to the count: Black-crowned Night Heron (1, Arkansas); Virginia Rail: (2, one on each side); Sora (1, Arkansas) and Long-billed Dowitcher (7, Arkansas). Some other unusual species include: Great Egret (2), Red-breasted Merganser (4), Herring Gull (2), Gray Catbird (2), American Tree Sparrow (1), and LeConte's Sparrow (3).

High counts were recorded for Eastern Screech-Owl (5), Sedge Wren (7); Marsh Wren (4) and Northern Flicker (142). Lapland Longspurs were low (2). Significant misses were Lesser Scaup (seen on 20 previous counts) and Horned Grebe (seen on 11 previous counts).

Species count for the Tennessee group was 92, while the Arkansas group tallied 100.

The Tennessee group reported 12 species not seen in Arkansas (Wild Turkey, Black and Turkey Vultures, Eastern Screech-Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, House Finch, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow and Vesper Sparrow).

The Arkansas group reported 20 species not seen in Tennessee (American Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Redhead, Ruddy Duck, American White Pelican, Black-crowned Night Heron, Sora, Greater Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Belted Kingfisher, Loggerhead Shrike, Rock Pigeon, Lapland Longspur, Orange-crowned Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird and House Sparrow).

80 species were seen in both Arkansas and Tennessee.

Cheers,
Dick

Collierville CBC 2025

The 1st ever Collierville CBC started off with clear skies and 28 degrees with clouds moving in by the afternoon with the temperature reaching 48 degrees. The wind was 5-10 mph. We had 22 participants and we tallied 81 spp for a total of 4400 individual birds. This includes 13 spp. of waterfowl, 9 spp. of raptors, 2 spp. of owls, all 7 spp. of woodpeckers, and 9 spp. of Sparrows.

See you next year!
Cliff VanNostrand



March 19 at 6:00 pm

MARCH MEETING AND POTLUCK

at St. George's Episcopal Church.

Our March meeting will feature speaker and
The Migrant editor Bob Ford,
preceded by a potluck dinner.

Cost is \$5 per adult, children under 18 no charge.

Please bring food starting at 5:30. We hope to begin serving
at 6 PM. The program will start between 6:45-7:00PM.

RESERVATIONS ARE A MUST.

If you did not sign up at the January meeting, email or call Dick
Preston (dickpreston48@gmail.com or 901-837-3360) to RSVP.

We also need volunteers to help with set-up and clean-up. If
you're interested, contact Dick Preston.

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

A LA CARTE

- **Sign up for the Jr. Duck Stamp Camp at DU Headquarters!**
<https://www.ticketsignup.io/TicketEvent/DUjrduckstampworkshop>
- **'World's Oldest Bird' to Become a Mom Yet Again, Laying Egg at 74**
<https://www.sciencealert.com/worlds-oldest-bird-to-become-a-mom-yet-again-laying-egg-at-74>
- **President Carter was an enthusiastic birder and an early champion for climate action**
<https://www.audubon.org/news/president-carter-was-enthusiastic-birder-and-early-champion-climate-action>
- **How to Rate Photos in the Macaulay Library**
<https://ebird.freshdesk.com/en/support/solutions/articles/48001064392-rating-media#RatingPhotos>
- **North Delta Winter Birding**
<https://www.deltawindbirds.org/events/delta-winter-birding-2025>
- **How do birds know when you fill the bird feeder?**
<https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/beginners/birding-faq/birds-and-bird-feeders/>



Upcoming Events

February / March 2025

Friday-Sunday, January 31-Feb 2

Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival

<https://tnstateparks.com/parks/events/reelfoot-lake>

Wednesday, March 19, 6:00pm

Chapter Meeting & Potluck

St. George's Episcopal Church

2425 South Germantown Rd. Germantown, TN

Friday-Monday, February 14-17

Great Backyard Bird Count

<https://www.birdcount.org/>

Saturday, March 22, 7:30am

Shelby Farms Park

Field Trip Leader: Martha Waldron

martha.waldron@gmail.com

Wednesday, February 19, 7:00pm

Chapter Meeting

St. George's Episcopal Church

2425 South Germantown Rd. Germantown, TN

Saturday, February 22, 7:30am

Shelby Farms Park

Field Trip Leader: Cliff VanNostrand

birdinginthe901@gmail.com

Meet at Disk Golf Parking Lot - Pine Lake Drive



Winter Hummingbirds

- Do you have hummingbirds at your feeder **after** November 1st or **before** March 15th?
- Do you see hummingbirds that are **not** ruby-throated during either migration season?



What do you do?

1. Try and get a picture!
2. Contact us at:
routledges@bellsouth.net



- If you are willing, we'll travel to your place and attempt to band the hummingbird.
- It will then become part of our ongoing winter hummingbird research.



If you have any questions OR need general information please feel free to reach out to us.



TOS Membership Information

Members may join online at 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 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

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. If you have no internet access, a printed version can be mailed.

Chapter Newsletter Submissions

Email submissions to Deon VanNostrand 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

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

Chapter Meeting

February 19, 2025. 7:00pm

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

Program

Jason Hoeksema, Dept of Biology, University of Mississippi
Delta Wind Birds and Shorebird Conservation Science in the Mississippi Delta

Hospitality

Refreshments will be provided by George Payne and Dick Preston.

Upcoming Field Trip Information

February 14-17: Great Backyard Bird Count

February 22: Shelby Farms Park

March 22: Shelby Farms Park

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

For our next issue, we would like to feature some photos of **birds in flight**.

Please send your submissions to mtosnewsletter@gmail.com.

Treasurer's Report

The balance in the Treasury as of January 20, 2025 is \$15,564.32.

New Business

No new business was conducted at the January chapter meeting.

PHOTOS BY
DEBRA KIENZLE



American Goldfinch



Northern Cardinal



Green Jay



Eastern Bluebird

PHOTOS BY
**CLIFF
VANNOSTRAND**

Common Loon



from the camera of:



Willet
Biloxi, MS



Snowy Egret
Pascagoula, MS



Laughing Gull
Mobile Bay, AL



Tree Swallow
Perdido Key, FL



Ruddy Turnstone
Gulfport, MS



Black Scoter
Bay St Louis, MS



Photos by: Allen Sparks



Green Heron



Belted Kingfisher



Red-breasted Nuthatch



Carolina Wren



Prothonotary Warbler



Ruby-throated Hummingbird



**BLACKPOLL
WARBLER**

PHOTO BY

**Jim
Varner**

2025 DUES ARE DUE

Dues payable by PayPal at
www.birdmemphis.org or by check,
made out to MTOS.

Members who joined September 1, 2024 or
later do not owe 2025 dues. See the
newsletter for MTOS dues category amounts
and a mailing address.