

Tennessee Ornithological Society Memphis Chapter



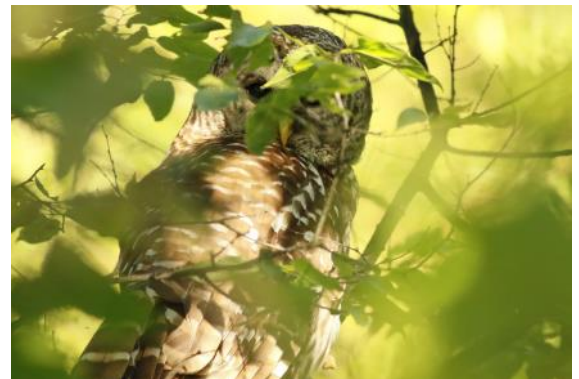
<http://birdmemphis.org>

March 2025

COUNTY BIRDING

I love Shelby County. Even with all of its quirks and opportunities for improvement, it is home. That being said, I made it a goal to bird outside of Shelby County more this year. In the past, I have only birded outside of the county on vacation trips or if someone invited me along or for specific projects. But so far this year, I have not made good on that goal.

In January, someone (Ryan) suggested that filling in bar charts on eBird would be a worthy goal. If you go to a hotspot on eBird and click on the bar charts sidebar, you can see what weeks of the year that hotspot has been birded. It will not surprise most people to know that places like the Marsh on Gardner Road, Overton Park, and Ensley have full coverage on the calendar. However, there are many places that do not. So I made charts of all the places that I have frequented over the years and I am working on filling them in.



In February, a lady from Minnesota contacted me about birding in this area. She had 3 days and wanted to get good lists in TN, AR, and MS. After setting up an itinerary for her, she asked me if we “366” birds here. I confessed that I did not know what that was. Basically, you attempt to see a bird species every day of the calendar year, including February 29th. This is not usually done in 1 year. In fact, it can take 5, 10, 20 years or longer to accomplish this. The birders in Minnesota love their lists. They keep track of this particular list for birds that people have “366ed” in the state.

But I wondered about doing this for our county. I downloaded my eBird data and parsed it out to see if I had “366ed” any birds. It turns out that I have 4 species: Mallard, Mourning Dove, Northern Mockingbird, and Northern Cardinal. We have roughly 55 species that are here year round. And now I have another side quest.

So I do not know if I will get out of Shelby County much this year. That is all right with me because all of this listing helps the scientific community to understand bird populations and trends. Why not be as thorough as we can in our own county before venturing elsewhere? If you are looking for ways to infuse your birding with more goals, maybe one of these will help you. If you are not a “lister” or this seems too intense, just go out and have fun. If you think of any other ways to list this year, please do not tell me until next year; but I already have another one brewing: “366ing” a hotspot.

Happy Birding!
Cliff VanNostrand

Rodney Barber Park Field Trip Report

On Sunday February 9, 2025 we had a field trip to Rodney Baber Park to see the American Woodcocks and whatever other birds we could find. We met at 4:30pm which gave us about an hour to bird the park before the woodcocks would be calling and displaying. It was about 37°F with a couple brief periods of light rain.

We walked from the parking lot to the east lake, around the lake, and then back towards the parking area and then we waited (During our walk we observed 20 species). About 10 minutes after sunset we heard the first “peent” call. After a few more minutes there were a couple more calling. Soon after that they were starting to display. At one point there were three airborne at the same time while there were a couple more on the ground calling.

As the woodcocks were starting to display, Michael Collins noticed a Great Horned Owl nearby, but it moved before he was able to alert the rest of the group. After a little while we all decided it was time to leave. As I was returning to my truck I heard a couple more woodcocks calling in a different area than where we had been, bringing our total to 7 for the evening. There were 10 people in attendance.

Click here to see our checklist from the field trip,

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S212697142>



Birding: A Mother-Daughter Experience

When I get asked about how I got into birding, sometimes I say, "Oh, I've just always enjoyed the outdoors," or I'll briefly tell them about the professor who got me into birding and bird conservation. But if I have time to talk, I'll sit down and tell them the whole truth. Birding for me didn't start with birds. Birding was about my mom.

My mom and I are a dynamic duo, a birding pair, partners in mischief. Most of our eBird lists are together; our life lists mirror each other. When one goes out our local birder friends ask where the other is. Anytime we go birding without each other, there is a mandatory debriefing afterward: what you saw, who you met, stories you heard, and favorite moments. Truth be told, I wouldn't still be birding if we didn't have this shared interest. Her passion and enthusiasm fuel mine; it's hard to not get excited about something she's excited about.

We went on our first birding field trip in 2019. It was Delta Wind Birds' winter trip out to Panola County, out near Pride Road. We knew next to nothing. It was such a blast. That trip unlocked a whole side of the natural world I had never even considered. Sure, I had noticed a bird here and there and knew my basic common birds from just being outside a lot. But learning what a Song and a Savannah Sparrow were and that people could tell them apart by barely seeing them?? A crazy idea at the time. I had to know more. I had to satisfy my curiosity.

I really got into birding around the time COVID hit during my freshman year of high school. My family ended up doing an extra year of school online due to health reasons. During those two years, I felt so completely isolated from my peers. Like many others my age, I struggled with my mental health and finding something to fill my day. For me, it was birding. Most days, I'd be done with classwork by noon, allowing me time to adventure. While my mom finished up her (also remote) work, I'd pack water and binoculars so we could leave as soon as she was done. We'd gleefully flee to the woods or the lakeside. We'd chase rare birds, go kayaking to look at osprey nests and sneak up on fun warblers. Anywhere we went was exciting because she made it exciting. It was a wonderful escape.

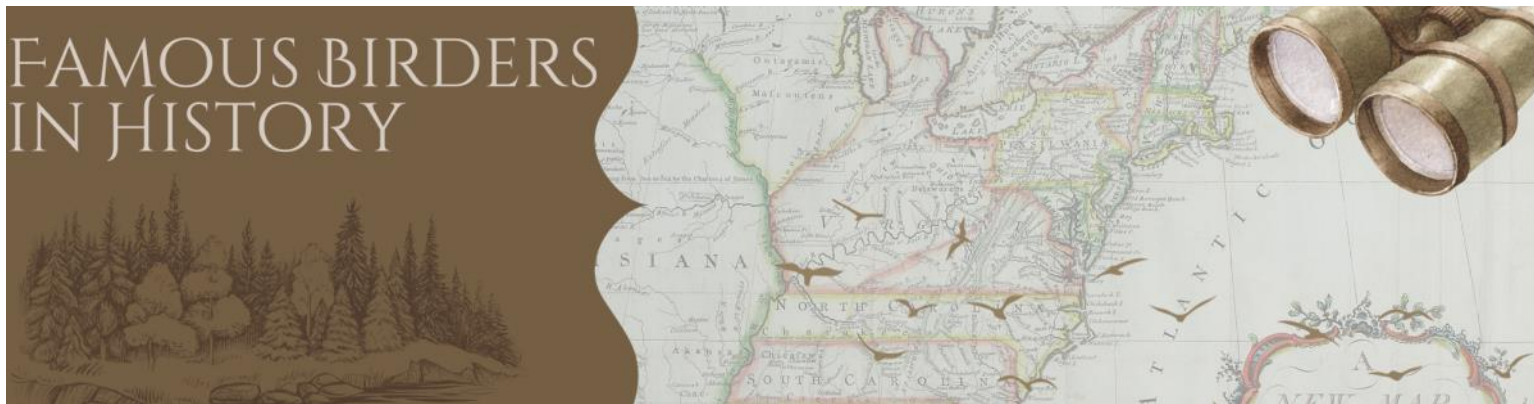
But we eventually had to return to real life. School transitioned to being in person again, now my senior year. I was applying to colleges and thinking about the possibility of moving far away. A simultaneously wonderful and scary thought. I started birding alone more often. I made some new birding friends. I began getting more involved with conservation work. My mom began a new job and had less time to get out in the field. Birding was no longer something I did just with her.

We still bird together when we can. Now that I'm in school and busy with classes and labs and doing my field-work, I spend less time birding for fun. But when I do, she hears about it. We still have those high-energy debriefings, just now it's about my shorebird surveys and her weekend trips with fellow birders.

When I see a gull, I think about her and our time spent at the Sardis Lake spillway. When I see a White-eyed Vireo, I have to smile because we always call it DJ WEV. When I see an Indigo Bunting, it makes me think about all the hours we spent strolling the roads of Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge together. I could go on and on. So many birds and birding spots make me think of her and all the fun we've had.

In many ways, she shaped who I am. But in terms of my future and my interest in wildlife and conservation, I wouldn't be the naturalist and bird enthusiast that I am today without her.

FAMOUS BIRDERS IN HISTORY



—————John Abbot—The Forgotten Naturalist—————

If you were to ask a birder about their favorite historical ornithologist, you might hear names like John Audubon or Alexander Wilson; you might even hear one or two votes for Mark Catesby. John Abbot isn't the most famous name in the list of historical ornithologists who made a difference, but his work as an entomologist and biologist gave him invaluable insights into the world of ornithology.

John Abbot was born either on March 31 or June 1, 1751 (jury's still out on the exact date) in London, England. Unlike most of the other birders covered in this series, Abbot grew up in a financially stable home; his father was a law attorney, and encouraged Abbot to follow his passions, giving him volumes such as Catesby's *Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands*. Abbot also received private tutoring, showing an interest in drawing at a very young age. He was taught art by Jacob Bonneau, a famous English painter known for working in watercolor, and created his first entomological paintings in 1766.

In 1773, Abbot was commissioned by collectors and scientists to create drawings and collect specimens of plants and insects in Virginia. He sold all of his belongings in order to fund his trip and set out on the six-week journey. Along the way, he befriended a young couple who were headed to Hanover County, about 100 miles from the mouth of the James River. Abbot settled in that region, and during his stay, he drew over 570 species of insects, butterflies, and moths. Not only was he an expert in his scientific exploration, but he developed the perfect shipping method by stuffing the specimens with cotton to make them look lifelike, and shipping them in a wooden box with a false bottom, where he stored his illustrations. This shipping method kept the collections out of customs and taxes; however, while he sent three collections to London, only one arrived safely.



In 1776, Abbot migrated to Georgia due to the rising tension in Virginia during the Revolutionary War. He settled in what is now Burke County (at the time, it was known as St. George Parish), about thirty miles from Augusta. There, he married Penelope Warren and had one child, John Abbot Jr. in 1779. Abbot published *The Natural History of the Rarer Lepidopterous Insects of Georgia... Collected from the Observations of Mr. John Abbot* in 1797. The collection was edited by a well-known contemporary, Sir James Edward Smith, who was the president of Linnaean Society of London). Smith recognized Abbot's talents and eagerly helped Abbot publish his watercolor collections. *Natural History* became the first print devoted to American entomology. The book also had many illustrations of birds, which were featured in books like *Histoire generale et*



iconographie des lepidopteres et des chenilles de l'Amerique Septentrionale by Jean Baptiste Boisduval and John Eaton Leconte, as well as Alexander Wilson's *American Ornithology*. Abbot's drawings were used to help classify species within Carl Linnaean's taxonomic system. Abbot's drawings also acted as a study guide for Darwin, who used Abbot's drawings as background research before visiting the New World.

Abbot continued to send drawings and specimens to London and Europe until the late 1830s, when his health began to take a downward turn. We don't know the exact date of his death; census records say he was alive in 1840, and he probably died shortly afterwards. Today, we see his legacy in the five sets of collections that he left behind. Two of the sets are in America, and can be viewed at the Boston Society of Natural History and at the University of Georgia. You'll have to take a trip across the pond to view the other three sets, which can be found at the British Museum, the Manchester Library, and the Zoological Museum at Tring, which is in Hertfordshire. Abbot may not have been a birder in his career, but his drawings had a profound influence on birders such as Wilson and Audubon.

-Cate VanNostrand

References

- Fishman, G. (2017). *Journeys Through Paradise: Pioneering Naturalists in the Southeast*. University Press of Florida.
- John Abbot - New Georgia encyclopedia. (n.d.-a). <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/john-abbot-1751-ca-1840/>
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- Smithsonian Institution Archives. (n.d.). Sia Ru007116, Abbot, John 1751-1840, John Abbot Collection, undated. https://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_arc_217274
- Www.bibliopolis.com. (n.d.). Black cheak by John Abbot on Audubon Galleries. Audubon Galleries. <https://www.audubongalleries.com/pages/books/27051/john-abbot/black-cheak>



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.

March Meeting and Potluck

We need a rough head count for the March potluck dinner meeting. If you did not sign-up at the January meeting and plan to attend, please RSVP to Dick Preston. dickpreston48@gmail.com

March meeting and potluck dinner: The chapter will provide BBQ, beans, buns, and non-alcoholic beverages. Attendees are requested to bring a side dish suitable for sharing (suggested at least 6 to 8 portions). This might be salads, veggies, dessert, or an item of your choice. Cost is \$5 per adult, children under 18 no charge. Alcoholic beverages are allowed if you wish to bring your favorite wine or beer. Reservations are a must, so we can be sure to order sufficient BBQ, beans, and beverages. If you did not sign up at the January meeting, please email or call Dick Preston (dickpreston48@gmail.com or 901-837-3360) to RSVP. Volunteers are needed to help with set up (tables, chairs, table decorations). Set up crew must arrive by 5 PM. Please bring food starting at 5:30. We hope to start serving at 6 PM. The program will start between 6:45 and 7:00, featuring Migrant Editor Bob Ford. Bob will present a program on the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

Please direct any questions to Dick Preston.

-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!

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.



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 mτοςnewsletter@gmail.com

A LA CARTE

- **Birding Is a Booming Hobby—and a Big Business**
<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/birding-booming-hobby-and-big-business>
- **When to Put Out Finch Feeders (and How to Attract Them to Your Yard)**
<https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/beginners/birding-faq/when-to-put-out-finch-feeders-and-how-to-attract-them-to-your-yard/>
- **Register for the Delta Wind Birds Spring Weekend at Sky Lake!**
<https://www.deltawindbirds.org/events/spring-weekend-at-sky-lake-2024>
- **Where Do Hummingbirds Go in the Winter?**
<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/where-do-hummingbirds-go-winter>
- **These eBird Checklists Document Some of the Last Sightings of Extinct U.S. Species**
<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/these-ebird-checklists-document-some-last-sightings-extinct-us-species>
- **Do Birds Have Ears? Learn All About How Birds Hear**
<https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/beginners/birding-faq/do-birds-have-ears/>



Upcoming Events

March / April 2025

Wednesday, March 19, 6:00 pm

Spring Banquet and Potluck
St. George's Episcopal Church
2425 South Germantown Rd.
Germantown, TN

Wednesday, April 16, 7:00 pm

Chapter Meeting
St. George's Episcopal Church
2425 South Germantown Rd.
Germantown, TN

Saturday, March 22, 7:30 am

Shelby Farms Park
Meet at Disk Golf Parking Lot -
Pine Lake Drive
Field Trip Leader: Martha Waldron
martha.waldron@gmail.com

Saturday, April 19, 7:30 am

Wall Doxey State Park
Field Trip Leader: Hal Mitchell
halmitchell@gmail.com

Saturday, April 5, 7:30 am

Herb Parsons Lake, Fayette County
Field Trip Leader: Allen Sparks
asparks306@bellsouth.net

Saturday-Sunday, April 5-6

Delta Wind Birds Spring Weekend at Sky Lake
For more information, [click here](#).

Wednesday, April 9, 7:30 am

Meeman-Shelby Forest SP
Field Trip Leader: Van Harris/Dick Preston
Dick: dickpreston48@gmail.com
Van: shelbyforester1223@gmail.com



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

March 19, 2025. 7:00pm

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

Program

Bob Ford, *The Migrant*
Ivory-billed Woodpecker

Hospitality

Spring banquet and potluck—view potluck announcement, pgs. 6,7.

Upcoming Field Trip Information

March 22—Shelby Farms Park
April 5—Herb Parsons Lake
April 9—Meeman-Shelby Forest SP
April 19—Wall Doxey State Park

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

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

Please send your submissions to mtosnewsletter@gmail.com.

New Members

Mark Herr, memphismherr@comcast.net

Cindy and John Martin,

CindymartinNEAMN@gmail.com /

JohnRMartin@hotmail.com

Donis Maxwell, donismaxwell@me.com

Evan Williams, epwilliams23@gmail.com

Jacob Wood, jacobawood741@gmail.com

Treasurer's Report

As of February 21, 2025 the balance in the Treasury is \$16,336.36. The chapter received a generous donation from the Goetze Art Gallery in honor of MTOS speaker Caroline Schratz. The gift note reads - "She was wonderful!"

PHOTOS BY:
ALLEN SPARKS



Black Skimmer



Osprey



Reddish Egret



Snowy Egret

PHOTOS BY:
VAN HARRIS



Brown Inca
Ecuador, 1-7-2005



Arctic Tern
Potter Marsh, Anchorage, AK, 6-11-2018



Planalto Hermit
Iguazu, Misiones Province, Argentina, 10-11-2015

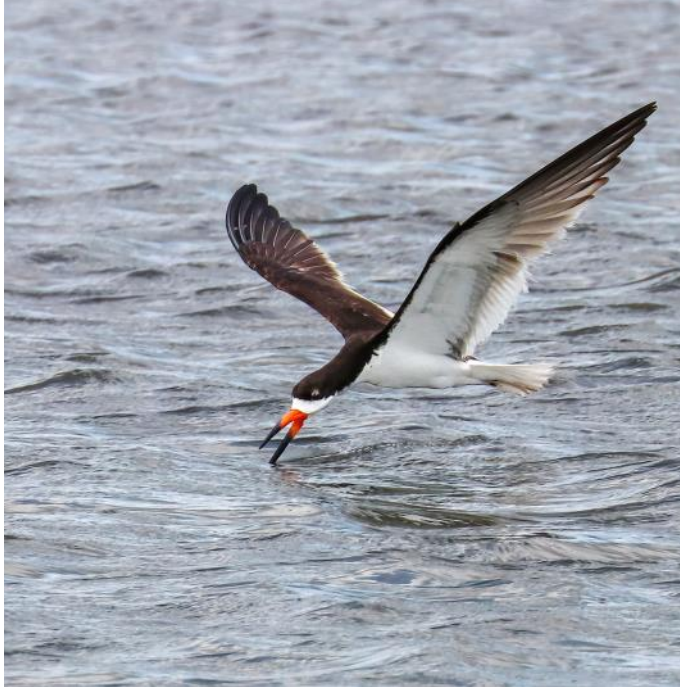


Broad-billed Hummingbird
Patagonia, AZ, 7-24-2024

PHOTOS BY:
DEBRA KIENZLE



American Bittern



Black Skimmer



Broad-billed Hummingbird



Bonaparte's Gull

from the camera of:



Canvasback



Bufflehead



Cooper's Hawk



Red-winged Blackbird



Great Blue Heron



Northern Shoveler





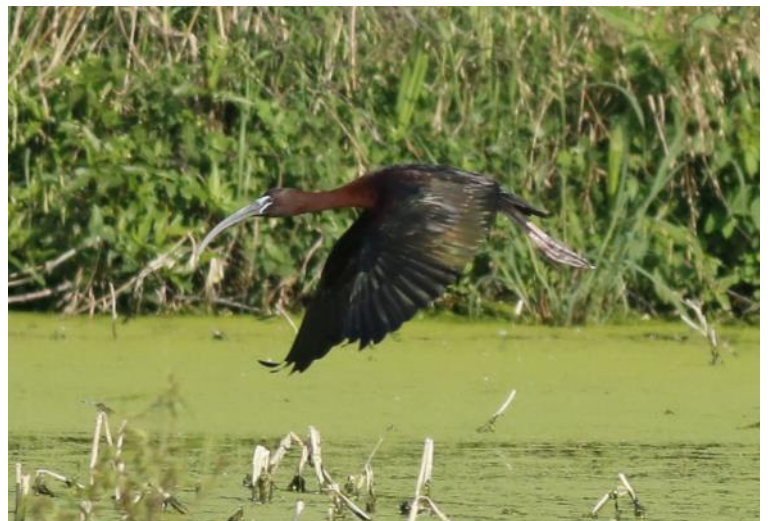
Pileated Woodpecker



Western Cattle-Egret with Short-billed Dowitcher and Canada Goose



Forster's Tern



Glossy Ibis



Brown Pelican



Black Tern

PHOTOS BY:

CLIFF VANNOSTRAND