Newsletter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

August, 2025 Editor, Theresa Graham

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The role of TOS President is new to me, but I've been a member of this fine organization since the early 1990s. For those who don't know me, my interest in birds goes back at least to when I was a five-year old kid in California, but I claim to have started birding when I was about seven. Growing up, my dad, brother, and I participated in Christmas bird counts and were active in the local Audubon chapter. The idea of becoming an ornithologist developed somewhere along the way, so I went to Cornell University (and eventually the University of Vermont and the University of Massachusetts) to study natural resources and wildlife management, all with a focus on birds. I've dabbled in ornithology as a profession, but being a birder is still my passion. My wife and I moved to Knoxville in 1993, and we've been enjoying birding in Tennessee ever since. We joined KTOS, and I've served as a State Representative, Vice-President and President for the chapter. With TOS I've served as the State Compiler, editor of *The Migrant*, and VP for East Tennessee. I hope to see many of you out birding, at TOS meetings, or at local chapter meetings over the next two years. Please don't hesitate to let me know if there are things you think TOS could do to better serve birds and the birding community.

To me, birding and bird conservation go hand in hand. As president, I hope to keep TOS in tune with both. Being active with TOS is a wonderful way to connect with like-minded people from across the state, and we have a number of opportunities for people to become more active. I stepped down from my role as Vice-President for East Tennessee, so there is an opening there. Migrant Editor Bob Ford and Associate Editors Susan McWhirter and Martha Waldron have done a terrific job with *The Migrant* over the years, but they are ready for someone else to take the reins. Theresa Graham has been the driving force behind *The Warbler* for 30 years (THANK YOU, THERESA!!), but she believes it's now time to let someone else take over. I'm happy to report that we have a new State Compiler. Liz Rutemeyer has replaced Ron Hoff; many thanks to Ron for serving as State Compiler for I think 25 years. Please contact me if you are interested in becoming more involved with TOS. [Note: Agreeing to take a more active role in TOS does not mean you have to commit for 25+ years!]

Good birding all, Chris Welsh, TOS President

TOS FALL STATE MEETING SEPTEMBER 26 – 28, 2025

The Lee & Lois Herndon Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society invites you to the Fall State Meeting, which will be held September 26 - 28 in Johnson City, TN.

The meeting will begin on Friday evening at 6:00 PM (Eastern Daylight Time) with a bird walk and social at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park. This bird walk will be conducted on the walking trails that run along the Watauga River. Following the walk, a social will be held from 7:00 PM until 9:00 PM at the auditorium in the Sycamore Shoals Visitor's Center. The social will provide an opportunity to mingle with fellow birders, and register for field trips. Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be provided at the social. A registration table will also be available Saturday and Sunday morning at the hotel for anyone who is unable to attend the social Friday night.

The field trips scheduled for Saturday and Sunday mornings will focus on fall migration in the southern Appalachians, including field trips to Roan Mountain, Unaka Mountain, and Hampton Creek Cove. Field trips to the Big Bald Banding station are also planned. In addition to breathtaking views from Big Bald, this trip will offer a unique opportunity to see fall warblers up close in the hand. A hawk watch station and raptor banding station are also run at this site. Due to the requirements of the banding station, this trip is weather dependent and space is limited.

A symposium and a Board of Directors meeting will be held Saturday afternoon at the Langston Centre in Johnson City. Researchers interested in presenting a paper at the symposium should contact Kim Stroud (<u>kastroud@northeaststate.edu</u>) by September 14.

A block of 20 hotel rooms is being held at the Sleep Inn in Johnson City, TN, until September 9. A special rate of \$149.00 (plus taxes and fees) applies to this block of rooms until September 8; at that time rooms not booked return to general circulation. Call (423) 218–2373 to make reservations. Please specify the group block "Tennessee Ornithological Society" when making reservations. The group number for this block of rooms is UY6214. A registration form for the meeting is attached below.

TOS FALL MEETING 2025 REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s)	
Address	
Email	Cell phone
TOS Chapter	
Are you a member of the Board of Directors of	or a proxy for a director?
Number of Registrations @ \$10 per \$ Total amount enclosed.	person

Mail registration form and check to: Herndon TOS, PO Box 183, Elizabethton, TN 37644-0183

For questions contact: <u>ElizabethtonBirdClub@gmail.com</u>

TOS SPRING MEETING 2026

The Spring 2026 TOS meeting will be held in Kingsport, TN, May 1-3, 2026.

We are pleased to announce that our Saturday evening speaker will be Sheri L. Williamson, founder and director of the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory. She is currently revising her book, "A Field Guide to Hummingbirds of North America" to be published by Princeton University Press. A naturalist, ornithologist, conservationist, writer, hummingbird researcher, and all-around fun loving lady - she'll entertain you and educate you at the same time!

Watch for meeting registration details in the December issue! We hope to see you in Kingsport in May 2026!

Spring Count Data Available Soon Fall Counts Coming Soon!

Thank you to all who participated in the spring counts and to the local compilers for putting it all together. The final crunching is underway and will be available in *The Migrant* soon. Fall counts are around the corner! As you're working on your fall count data, please include the following effort data in addition to the count data:

- 1. Hours and miles by car, foot, and any night birding
- 2. Number of observers and parties
- 3. Any feeder watching hours and names
- 4. Start and end times for the count
- 5. Weather data for the count
- 6. Names of all the participants
- 7. Anything else of interest about the count (e.g., record high or low numbers, extraordinary weather, all-time species totals for your count, etc.)

If you do not have a local compiler, you can send the data directly to me at the info below.

TOS appreciates your efforts to record and monitor our bird populations and abundance. Thank you for your help in archiving these data for future generations and researchers.

Lastly, many thanks to Ron Hoff for his 25 years of service in the role of State Bird Count Compiler! Liz Rutemeyer is the new compiler and knows that Ron leaves big shoes to fill.

Liz Rutemeyer, TOS State Bird Count Compiler 2017 Willis Place, Knoxville, TN 37920 – 865-236-7646 zzalbers@gmail.com

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD: SPEAK FOR THE BIRDS

by Chris Welsh

While the enjoyment of birdwatching is the common thread that keeps most of us filling feeders and heading to the field to look for feathered wonders, we need to keep in mind the myriad challenges birds face and do our best to encourage activities and policies that are beneficial for birds. The American Bird Conservancy is a good resource for keeping abreast of proposed legislation that may impact birds and their habitats. Visit their website at https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/take-action/, and contact your federal, state and local representatives to let them know where you stand on the issues. The birds will thank you!

As of mid-July, there are at least two issues birders should weigh in on. One is support for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). For many years USGS research has provided the scientific foundation to advance conservation, manage resources, and protect the public. Two especially important programs within USGS are vital for bird conservation: the Bird Banding Laboratory and the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Proposed cuts to USGS funding could severely weaken or eliminate these programs. The second issue involves the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which has served as a cornerstone of bird conservation in the United States for over a century. The MBTA includes provisions to prevent the accidental killing, capture, or harassment of birds and has enjoyed strong bipartisan support over the years. However, proposed changes to the act would remove or limit important restrictions. Your elected representatives need to know how important protecting birds is to you. Visit their webpages, write them, call them, let your voice be heard.

PURPLE GALLINULE AT ENSLEY BOTTOMS

A Purple Gallinule was located at Ensley Bottoms (The Pits) by PJ Pulliam at 4:36 pm on April 21, 2025, and was subsequently seen by several MTOS birders.

The last report of a Purple Gallinule in Shelby County was June 7, 1987, by Jeff R. Wilson at the same location.



Photo credit: Larry Chitwood

GLOBAL BIG DAY MAY 10, 2025

This year's Global Big Day reaffirmed the profound connections between people, birds, and nature, while setting new benchmarks for global collaboration. On May 10, 2025, 1.8 million birders worldwide participated in this 24-hour collective birding event organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, contributing nearly 182,000 checklists from 204 countries and documenting an all-time high of 7,955 bird species (72% of the world's total number of species).

The total number of checklists submitted via eBird (<u>www.eBird.org</u>) during this 24 hour event was 181,330 (the number of eBirders: 71,995). The number of photographs submitted was 82,550. This year, 4,820 audio recordings were submitted. Birders in the United States submitted the greatest number of these checklists (86,503), followed by Canada (15,170), Columbia (13,107), Venezuela (5,287) and Peru (4,780). Birders in Columbia reported the most species (1,564), followed by Peru (1,404), Brazil (1,246), Ecuador (1,003) and Venezuela (889). Birders in the United States came in tenth, with 734 species.

In the United States, Texas reported the most species (422) followed by California (364), Arizona (309), New Mexico (302) and Oregon (289). The most checklists were submitted by birders in New York (6,063) followed by California (5,506), Ohio (5,030), Illinois (4,792), and Michigan (4,689).

Tennessee birders reported a total of 217 species (25th) on 1,125 checklists (32nd). Cliff VanNostrand led the species count, with (155), followed by Ruben Stoll (151), Sophia Dismukes (128), Sam Lawson (118) and Brett Lawson (117). Ruben Stoll submitted the most checklists (26), followed by Kristen Garrison (20), Roi and Debbie Shannon (17), Tivon Garrison (15) and Melinda Welton (15).

The most species reported by county: Shelby (173), Humphrey's (154), Hamilton (138), Knox (133) and Davidson (131). The most checklists submitted by county: Shelby (123), Davidson (116), Hamilton (112), Knox (94) and Williamson (70). Seventy-nine of the state's ninety-five counties submitted at least one complete checklist, and 80 counties reported at least one species.

The next Global Big Day will be held on Saturday, October 11, 2025.

Source: Cornell University Lab of Ornithology (<u>www.eBird.org</u>).

To see more details: https://ebird.org/news/global-big-day-2025-results

ACCESS TO ENSLEY BOTTOMS - MEMPHIS

Ensley Bottoms in Memphis (Shelby County), including the T. E. Maxson waste water treatment facility and dewatering lagoons (AKA the pits), has long been a mecca for birders. Data in eBird dating from 1932 (which includes historical records) documents 315 species for this hotspot, more than any other in Tennessee. This total is an amazing 89 percent of Shelby County's 355 species, and 72 percent of Tennessee's 427 species (per eBird). The area is restricted, and closed to public access. However, we are extremely fortunate that the city and facility management has granted birders the privilege to enter and bird around the lagoons.

Liability has always been an issue of concern, and we must be mindful that our privileges may be revoked if abused. Driving on unpaved surfaces immediately following heavy rain may cause damage to levee tops and increases the chances of getting stuck, or worse. Please use sound judgment in this situation.

Another note: due to theft and vandalism, fencing and electric gates have been installed throughout the area. The main entrance to the lagoons has generally been left open during the day, but you may find the gate closed at any time (no security guard here). The "backdoor" to the area is currently not gated. If you wish to access the new office and laboratory building (restrooms) you will need to tell the security guard there that you are a birder and want to sign the visitor's logbook and use the restroom. The guard will ask for the driver's name and ID, and record the vehicle license plate number. Currently, this is not required to bird the lagoons only.

Dick Preston dickpreston48@gmail.com

AN INTERNATIONAL IMPACT - LITERALLY

On the topic of collecting valuable data and making it available, the Acopian Center for Ornithology – located at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania – has an updated list of all known bird species to collide with glass.

Yes, these are country by country lists. In fact, the world list currently stands at 1,488 species, with more updates regularly arriving. Moreover, the center staff is always looking to add to these lists and would appreciate receiving additional species and locations.

You can find the complete collection of lists here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Rnd8Ws_oXuAkFuJGk9dBUmE5pMl_WAfc?usp=drive_link

And you can get more information on what the Acopian Center for Ornithology does on the overall issue of birds and windows, starting here:

https://www.muhlenberg.edu/birds-and-windows/

The Birding Community E-Bulletin

June 2025

You can access an archive of past E-bulletins on the website of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA): https://www.refugeassociation.org/birding-community-e-bulletin.

BIRD DECLINES IN AREAS OF FORMER ABUNDANCE

An article published in *Science* in early May has again highlighted continuing population declines in North American birds. This piece – "North American bird declines are greatest where species are most abundant" – provides a fresh look at where the declines are taking place. Using data collected via eBird the 16 authors track 14 years of population changes across the ranges of 495 North American species.

Although 75% of species appear in decline, almost all showed separate areas of increasing and decreasing population. Populations tended to decline most steeply in "stronghold areas" where species were most abundant, while populations did better where species were least abundant.

A helpful interaction web tool accompanied publication, using four key species as examples (Northern Pintail, Great Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, and Red-tailed Hawk) and covering the Lower-48 states and most of Canada.

You can find a detailed summery and link to the article here, from the Cornell Lab: https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2025/05/north-american-bird-populations-suffering-severe-decline

NEW WORLD LIST: 11,131 SPECIES

The major world checklists for birds of the world – the IOC, Clements/eBird, and Birdlife International/Handbook of Birds of the World – have merged into a single unified list announced in June. This means that, for the first time, there is one global checklist of all bird species found on planet Earth.

It is called AviList, and it contains 11,131 species, 19,879 subspecies, 2,376 genera, 252 families, and 46 orders.

Until now, ornithologists, conservationists, and birders have used a selection of global checklists, each with its own rationale over what constitutes a bird species. AviList, intended to harmonize the global checklists, has been developed by the Working Group on Avian Checklists, with representatives from Birdlife International, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the American Ornithological Society, the International Ornithologists Union, and Avibase.

The AviList team worked for four years to make this all possible. Of course, there will be a time of adjustment. For example, BirdLife International will gradually adopt the unified bird list, along with some systematic background checks that will need to be run concerning the conservation status of various species.

Once fully aligned, the benefits for sustainable taxonomic work, global consensus, and clarity over conservation priorities are immense.

The AviList checklist is free for anyone to use and provides available open access in several formats.

Read more on this significant development here, from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology: https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/news/avilist-a-unified-global-checklist-of-the-worlds-birds-is-now-available .

And here from the new AviList pages: https://www.avilist.org/.

The Birding Community E-Bulletin

July 2025

You can access an archive of past E-Bulletins on the website of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA): https://www.refugeassociation.org/birding-community-e-bulletin.

The **BIRDING KINGSPORT CHAPTER** participated in Warriors Path State Park's 46th Annual Spring Nature Festival on April 12. Bill Grigsby did a program, and we led a bird walk with 26 folks. On April 17, seven of us walked at Phipps Bend and counted 57 species. Eight members birded on the Greenbelt on a perfect-weather afternoon on April 21. We had great close-up looks at Yellow-crowned Night Herons and located their nests. Afterwards, three more people joined us for social time at Flanagan's. On April 30, ten folks walked on the Riverbend Trail. We had 40 species, including a Solitary Sandpiper and a couple of Spotted Sandpipers. Susan and Mike Hubley led a bird walk on the Greenbelt on May 8. They tallied 38 species. A morning highlight was watching a Bald Eagle chasing an Osprey, trying to steal a fish.

We had a field trip led by Susan and Mike Hubley followed by lunch at historic Amis Mill in Rogersville on April 10. Other field trips included Seven Islands State Birding Park on May 23 with eight participants. We observed 50 species, including Indigo Buntings and Yellow-breasted Chats, and enjoyed their songs throughout the morning. We also heard Northern Bobwhite calling. We traveled to Kodak, TN to visit the American Eagle Foundation on June 2. Eight of us enjoyed the educational morning browsing the Raptor Museum followed by a tour. They house Bald Eagles and over 40 other non-releasable birds of prey in the nation's largest aviaries. Ten members returned to Seven Islands State Birding Park on June 20 for a morning of bird banding, a treat for most attendees who had never experienced it. On June 26, seven of us visited the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture's Plant Sciences Unit. They monitor 135 bird boxes here, and we learned about Emmy James's TRES Heat Grant project for her Ph.D. We saw eggs and hatchlings from Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows and watched banding. We saw or heard 35 species walking just a small area of the property.

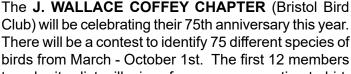
Six club members attended the Spring TOS Meeting in Chattanooga. A few BK members helped with a local Spring Bird Count on May 3.

Dr. David Kirschke presented "Birding in Zambia – Six Ways You Can Die Birding" for our March meeting. The April program was "Birds of Seven Islands State Birding Park" by Clare Dattilo. Dr. David Aborn's presentation

in May was "Migratory Connectivity of Louisiana Waterthrushes and Worm-eating Warblers". They were excellent.

We held our annual picnic in June (attended by 30 people) celebrating our tenth year. We've reached an all-time high in membership levels.

Leadership Team



to submit a list will win a free commemorative t-shirt. There will also be a photography contest. Prizes will be given at the annual banquet in October.

Anne and Ben Cowan hosted a mouse feeding observation for their two resident Screech Owls that have nested in their backyard for several years.

New BBC officers were elected in May as follows: President, Michele Galjour; Vice-President, Larry McDaniel; Secretary, Ben Cowan; Treasurer, Anne Cowan and Media Specialist, Rob Biller.

We had excellent field trips with great leaders. Starting off in March, Rick Knight led a trip to Western Washington Co. Other trips were to Holston Valley Mountains and lake, Steele Creek Park, Warriors Path State Park, Unaka Mt., Shady Valley and in June, White Top Mt. in Virginia.

Our programs started out in March with David Irick's "Majestic Bald Eagle". The program for April was given by Lisa Benish, director of the Discovery Center in Konnarock, VA. She gave a very detailed description of all the youth programs given there. John and Karen McFarland, who had volunteered in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, gave an excellent talk about birds found there. June's program was given by Ann and Ben Cowan on "Birds of New Zealand". They have cycled in many parts of the world, enabling them to see many birds.

Judy Moose

CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER speakers this spring included Renee Watson, whose program described the intricacies and challenges of her research on a long-running Piping Plover study by the USGS in the vast and beautiful prairie landscapes alongside the Missouri River and nearby lakes. We thoroughly enjoyed her stories, photos and self-deprecating humor. Photographer Donna Bourdon also presented to CTOS with images of birds from five continents. Some were common and others were rare birds, including a single Mosley's Penguin who found his way to the Falkland Islands. Other photos included the critically endangered, Red-crowned Cranes of Asia. Donna also shared tips for bird photography including how to improve bird portraits, birds in flight and how to use lighting to increase the dramatic effect. Jim Stewart, executive director of the Chattanooga Audubon Society, was another CTOS speaker. The Chattanooga Audubon Society is a 130 acre Nature Sanctuary bisected by the South Chickamauga Creek and contains a rich diversity of plant, animal, and bird life.

This fall we'll be introducing something new for our beginner birders: a workshop we'll call Birding 101 (unless we can come up with a catchier name!). It will introduce our newer members to birding basics, including observation skills, identification techniques, helpful tips in using binoculars, and the many digital resources for learning and recording what one sees and hears. The workshop will also include a handson field trip to put what they learn into action. One of the greatest resources our club can offer is excellent, experienced birders who have the patience and interest in teaching others.

Ann Glass, Editor

The **HIGHLAND RIM CHAPTER** program in May was a presentation from Lola Eslick, President of the Franklin County Garden Club, on the topic: *What Native Plants to Choose to Attract Birds and Build a Bird Habitat*. This was such an informative program, especially to us novice birders and gardeners.

At our April meeting our president, Monica Oosting, taught us to build birdhouses made from gourds. The gourds were provided, and we brought our own paint and craft supplies to decorate them. We also enjoyed grilled burgers and hot dogs as we crafted our gourd houses. A fun time was had by all! We announced our officers' nominations and discussed our upcoming Spring Bird Count field trip at Tims Ford State Park.



Jim McWhorter, of Winchester, passed away on May 13th, 2025. Jim has been a part of the Tennessee Ornithological Society since approximately 1944. When his Cub Scout Den Mother, a member of TOS, shared her interest in birding and nature with her Cub Scouts, Jim and his mother, Ruby McWhorter, joined the Memphis Chapter. His interest continued and he was asked to be the Nature Counselor for the Memphis (Chickasaw Council) summer camp from 1946-1952. When he moved to Winchester, he joined the Highland Rim Chapter. Jim loved nature, being near or in the water, travel and family visits. Jim was very appreciative, loving and giving as expressed by a common saying throughout his house: I Am Blessed Because You Are in My Life! Well, Jim, we were the "Blessed Ones" to have had you in our lives. You will be greatly missed! May Jim's memory continues to be a blessing to all who knew him.

Janie Denis, Secretary

It's been a busy year so far for the **LEE AND LOIS HERNDON CHAPTER** of TOS, also known as the Elizabethton Bird Club.

The club conducted its annual five-county spring bird count in Northeast Tennessee on Saturday, May 4, finding 148 species.

The chapter also held two summer counts. The 32nd annual Carter County Summer Bird Count took place on Saturday, June 7, finding 114 species. The 12th annual Unicoi County Summer Bird Count took place on Saturday, June 14, finding 107 species.

The chapter held its annual summer picnic on Saturday, July 13, at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park in Elizabethton.

The chapter is also making plans for fall, including hosting the state meeting for the Tennessee Ornithological Society and conducting its annual five-county Fall Bird Count.

Bryan Stevens, Editor



Photo by David Thometz

Members of the Lee & Lois Herndon Chapter of TOS gather for a group photograph after their recent summer picnic at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park in Elizabethton.

At the state meeting in Chattanooga, **KNOXVILLE CHAPTER** members shared insights from keynote speakers and recounted rare bird sightings seen during a field trip. One highlight from the speakers was from David Aborn and his talk on "What's in a name? Background and Discussion on the Proposed Changes to North American Bird Names." David discussed examples of nearly 70-80 birds whose names would be changed.

Presenters at the spring club meetings have included University of Tennessee PhD students: Zaharia Selman and Renata Beco talking about their recent research on call complexity and female communication in Antbirds. Tiffany Hamlin with Wild Birds Unlimited discussed the importance of bird watching and mental health.

Clare Dattilo from Seven Islands State Birding Park explaining upcoming field trips at the park and needing volunteers for bird banding on Sundays.

KTOS hosted two spring potlucks, one of which was open to the public at Seven Islands State Birding Park. Both events had a great turnout!

To foster stronger connections and include family members, members have begun gathering for dinner before monthly meetings! What a great way to share the bird community with others!

At the May meeting the election of officers was held with the following results:

President, Shiela Rygwelski; Vice President, Dean Curley; Treasurer, Zaharia Selman; Secretary, Kristen Smith.

Get outside! Kristen Smith, Secretary The **NASHVILLE CHAPTER** had a wonderful spring migration season here in and in the surrounding areas. Our Wednesday morning Radnor Lake walks continue to be an excellent source of outreach in the community. We had over 130 people attend the 4 spring walks! Our Fall walks will begin on September 17th and run each Wednesday through October 8th.

Field Trip Coordinator Mike Smith arranged a few new and exciting field trips for us this spring. In March we teamed up with the good folks at Henry Horton State Park, and a local birder who wanted to begin holding monthly walks at the park and needed a bit of 'know how' in moving forward. We were happy to accommodate and enjoyed our time with them learning about this lovely place in Chapel Hill on the shores of the Duck River. In April we visited the Fremont Farm in Smyrna, home of young birder Ari Fremont. This lovely, private property provided a wonderful morning of spring birding, and the delicious homemade cookies at the conclusion of our morning topped off this great day. In June we ventured to Larkspur Conservation area in Sumner County, one of the finest examples of hardwood forests in the area and home of many breeding tanagers, thrushes and Cerulean Warblers. We thank Mike for all the planning and coordination that goes into scheduling these wonderfully diverse field trips.

After a short summer hiatus, we will 'flock' back together for our annual Potluck dinner celebration during our monthly meeting on September 18th. A few weeks later we'll hold our annual Fall Count on October 4th.

As always, if you're in the area or venture this way specifically for an event, we welcome you to join us!!

Cyndi Routledge, NTOS President

NOVEMBER 15th DEADLINE

The deadline date for the December issue of *The Tennessee Warbler* is November 15th. Please submit all articles, announcements, reports and items of interest by this deadline date.

Submit Material To:

Theresa Graham, Editor (901) 489-0795

e-mail: 2graham@bellsouth.net