



# THE TENNESSEE WARBLER

Newsletter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

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December, 2011

Editor, Theresa Graham

## *PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE*

Thanks to Clyde Blum and the Chattanooga Chapter for the fine job they did in hosting our Fall Meeting. Particularly enjoyable was the river cruise and dinner organized by David Stone. The weather was great and provided some excellent birding, with field trip leaders Kevin Calhoon, David Patterson, Tommie Rogers, Kyle Waggener, and Harold Birch leading the way. Again, special thanks to David Stone for getting us access to The Honors Course, a truly beautiful facility. We were also fortunate to have an excellent lineup of presentations at the Saturday afternoon paper session. Dr. David Buehler's grad students from UT-K impressed us all. Our future is in good hands.

At the Saturday afternoon Board of Directors (BOD) Meeting, the Board unanimously approved spending \$700 to purchase new software for the production of *The Warbler*. The Board also unanimously approved an expenditure of \$750 to fund initial printing of a children's activity book. This will be an educational and conservation tool featuring the birds of Tennessee. To be sold at cost, we expect to "break even" with this project, headed by Cyndi Routledge (Nashville). Most important of all, Ron Hoff (Knoxville) graciously accepted nomination as our President-elect, and the Board wisely voted to confirm him, by unanimous vote. Ron will stand for election at the 2013 Annual Meeting, in Knoxville. We're darn lucky to have someone of Ron's capabilities step up and take on this responsibility. Thanks, Ron.

Wallace Coffey and the Bristol Bird Club have been working hard to wrap up the final details for our joint Annual Meeting with The Virginia Society of Ornithology in Johnson City, May 18 to 20, 2012. This one is shaping up to be the best Annual Meeting we have ever held. If you have never attended an Annual Meeting, this is the one you shouldn't miss. Please see the announcement on the inside page for details. And for those of you who like to plan well in advance, our Fall Meeting for 2012 will be held in Nashville, while the 2014 Annual Meeting will be in Chattanooga. 2015 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of TOS, and Nashville, the city where it all began, will appropriately be our hosts for that year's Annual Meeting.

Secretary Cyndi Routledge has already finished the draft minutes of the Fall BOD Meeting. Please take a moment and visit our website ([www.tnbirds.org](http://www.tnbirds.org)) and review them. Any errors or omissions should be brought directly to Cyndi's attention ([routledges@bellsouth.net](mailto:routledges@bellsouth.net)).

Finally, between December 14 and January 5, more than 2,200 Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) will be conducted. Thirty will be held in Tennessee. I guarantee that every compiler (organizer) would gladly welcome new participants. No matter your skill level, there is room for everyone. Contact any chapter officer for details and contact information for the CBC closest to you. If you've never taken part in the CBC before, make this season your first of many!

Please send comments or suggestions to Dick Preston: [dickpreston@bigriver.net](mailto:dickpreston@bigriver.net).

2012 ANNUAL SPRING MEETING  
JOINT MEETING  
TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY  
JOHNSON CITY, TN  
MAY 18-20, 2012

The Bristol Bird Club, a chapter of TOS and VSO, invites state members and all other interested birders to the Joint TOS/VSO Spring Meeting May 18-20, 2012. The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Johnson City, TN, just a few miles south of the Tennessee-Virginia state line.

We offer, on all three days, opportunities for birding field trips in the high mountain woodland and wild cranberry bog environments, lake, river, and stream habitat. You will enjoy the beautiful Southern Blue Ridge and hiking walking and birding along the Appalachian Trail in the Cherokee National Forest. In this cloudland birding will reach peaks near elevations of 6,286 feet.

Additional meeting features include paper presentations and a poster session and featured speakers on Friday and Saturday evenings. Several vendors have indicated their intention to provide displays. Among them will be Buteo Books & ABA Sales, the largest ornithological book dealer in the nation. Finally, all will have the opportunity to meet, socialize and bird with new friends from Virginia and Tennessee. You will bird with folks from a great area extending nearly a thousand miles from our Nation's Capitol and the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Smoky Mountains and the mighty Mississippi River. Some Tennessee birders will travel 10 hours to reach the meeting site.

### **Banquet and Program**

Saturday, May 19 Banquet buffet and program (admission \$25.00)

Program: **Trekking with the Birder**

Speaker: Dr. Fred Alsop III, world-renowned birder, ornithologist for over 45 years, and Professor of Biology at East Tennessee State University. Dr. Alsop has published over 100 articles and notes on birds in scientific journals and authored more than fifteen bird books and field guides, including the Smithsonian Handbook: *Birds of North America*.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips will leave from the Holiday Inn parking lot at 7:00 a.m. to several sites including high-altitude birding spots: Roan Mountain, Shady Valley, and Unaka Mountain. Field trip conditions will range from hiking along the Appalachian Trail in areas of warbler breeding habitat to walking along bog trails in Shady Valley to driving to successive spots and getting out of the car to bird each spot, requiring minimal walking.

### **Directions and Lodging**

Traveling either north or south on I-81, exit to I-26 east just a few short miles south of Bristol. The Holiday Inn in Johnson City is at 101 West Springbrook Drive, just off N. Roan St. Come in on Interstate 26, take exit 20. Go north on N. Roan S., and turn left at the stoplight at N. Roan and Springbrook. Rooms at the Holiday Inn are \$85 + occupancy tax (same price for 1 to 4 occupants). Reserve by calling the Inn at 423-282-4611 and mention that you are attending the state-wide birding convention. The block of rooms reserved for the meeting will be held until three weeks before the meeting. The Holiday Inn has a full restaurant and begins serving breakfast at 6:30 a.m. each morning. Breakfast is not included in the price of the room.

**Schedule:**

**Friday, May 18**

All day field trips (for field trip information, contact Rick Knight at 423-483-4204, email: [rick@bristolbirdclub.org](mailto:rick@bristolbirdclub.org))

1:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Registration at Holiday Inn

5:30 to 6:00 p.m. VSO business Meeting

6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Social Mixer

7:00 to 7:30 p.m. Field Trip Announcements, Descriptions and Sign-ups

7:30 to 8:30 p.m. Program

***Who Keeps Changing My Field Guide?***

Dr. Andrew Jones, Director of Science

William A. and Nancy R. Klamm Endowed Chair of Ornithology  
and Head of the Department of Ornithology

Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland, OH

**Saturday, May 19**

Breakfast on your own

7:00 a.m. to noon, Field trips assemble/depart from Holiday Inn Lot

10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Registration continues

12 noon to 1:30 p.m. Lunch on your own.

12 noon to 1:30 p.m. VSO Local Presidents' Luncheon by invitation only.

1:30 to 4:00 p.m. Paper Presentation Session

4:00 to 5:30 p.m. TOS Board of Directors meeting

5:30 to 6:00 p.m. Poster Session

6:00 to 6:30 p.m. Social mixer

6:30 p.m.—Dinner and Program

***Trekking with the Birder***

Dr. Fred Alsop III

East Tennessee State University

**Sunday, May 20:**

Breakfast on your own

7:00 a.m. to noon, Field trips assemble and depart from the Holiday Inn Parking Lot

No field trip compilation meeting. A master list will be posted to TOS and VSO birding lists.

**Additional Information at:**

Bristol Bird Club Website: <http://www.bristolbirdclub.org>

**Other contact information:**

For registration: Janice Martin, Club Treasurer 423-573-1829

Email: [janice@bristolbirdclub.org](mailto:janice@bristolbirdclub.org)

Other information: Dave Worley 276-971-7244 email: [dave@bristolbirdclub.org](mailto:dave@bristolbirdclub.org)

Wallace Coffey 423-360-2532 email: [wallace@bristolbirdclub.org](mailto:wallace@bristolbirdclub.org)

**Other nearby motels:**

Ramada Inn, 2606 N Roan St., Phone: 423-282-4011

Best Western of Johnson City, 2406 N Roan St., Phone: 423-282-2161

Doubletree Hotel, 211 Mockingbird Lane, Phone: 423-929-2000

Red Roof Inns, 210 Broyles Drive, Phone: 423-282-6841

Super 8 Motel, 108 Wesley St., Phone: 423-282-8818

### Field Trip Specifics

Field trips will feature high altitude locations—Roan Mountain, Unaka Mountain and Shady Valley—with great opportunities to view warblers and other birds that breed in these locales. Field trips on Saturday and Sunday will assemble and leave from the Holiday Inn at 7 a.m. and terminate around noon. There are no extra fees to participate in the field trips. Eat breakfast ahead of time and bring snacks and water.

Opportunities for trips to Roan Mountain include driving up State 143 (paved road) with stops along the way with spectacular views and opportunities to see Canada and other Warblers, Veery, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Least Flycatcher. At Carver's Gap (elevation 5512 ft.) one may find Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper, Pine Siskin, and, with luck, Red Crossbills, by walking around the parking lots and nearby areas. The Northern Saw-whet Owl nests at the gap. Additional birding is available with more hiking effort by following the Appalachian Trail from Carver's Gap to higher altitudes. Vesper Sparrows and Common Ravens include birds that may be seen. A pit toilet facility is available at the parking lot at Carver's Gap. In other Roan Mountain locales, warblers such as Golden-winged, and Yellow-breasted Chat, Black-billed Cuckoo and other higher altitude breeders may be seen by hiking.

A forest service road goes along the Wilderness Area on Unaka Mountain for about 12 miles. Local birders traverse this route using various vehicles including passenger cars with reasonable clearance. Ruffed Grouse, Warblers, including Magnolia, tanagers, buntings and towhees breed in this area and Red Crossbills are a possibility. This area is birded by driving to selected turnouts, stopping and viewing. Some hiking down side trails may be included. Toilet facilities are available only at convenience stores at the beginning and end of the route.

The Shady Valley area offers birding in unique higher altitude bogs and in woodland habitat. Some walking is done along trails in the bogs, where Virginia Rails, Soras, sparrows and Marsh Wrens, may be seen. Swainson's Warbler will be on territories in the gorge. A toilet facility is available at Orchard Bog. By driving and stopping along State Hwy 133, warblers and flycatchers may be found nesting in the woods along the picturesque Beaverdam Creek. For serious hikers, from Shady Valley, contact may be made with the Appalachian Trail. Hiking the Trail brings one into habitat of breeding warblers, including Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Canada and numerous others. There are no toilet facilities along the Appalachian Trail, but facilities are available at the two restaurants/convenience stores at the crossroads in Shady Valley.

**Registration:** *Registration information and form found on Page 15*

### WINTER MEETING

Back by popular demand, a Winter Meeting will be held January 27 through 29, 2012, at Paris Landing State Park. There is no formal agenda, just the chance for some excellent winter birding and socializing. We'll search for uncommon or rare loons, grebes, ducks, gulls and sparrows. Specific locations will depend on recent sightings, but will probably include Pace Point, Lick Creek and other areas in the Big Sandy Unit of the Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge; Britton Ford, the coves and inlets around Big Eagle and Paris Landing itself should combine to produce an interesting species list.

The resort at the State Park (reservations and info: 1-800-250-8614) will serve as our headquarters. The resort currently lists a double room for \$73 plus tax. I have it on good authority that a winter "special" will be announced soon, with a room rate of \$49.95. Watch the website (just enter Tennessee State Parks and click on Paris Landing) for the announcement of the lower rate. A continental breakfast is served, but the dining room is closed for lunch and dinner. As in the past, we can select a local restaurant for dinner on Friday and Saturday nights.

For more information contact Dick Preston ([dickpreston@bigriver.net](mailto:dickpreston@bigriver.net)).

## **TOS – CONSERVATION POLICY COMMITTEE**

Current CPC Members: Melinda Welton and Gregg Elliott, Co-chairs  
Bill Franks, Dick Preston, Chuck Nicholson, Cyndi Routledge and Chris Sloan Esq.

May

### **TVA Draft Natural Resources Plan**

Gregg Elliot wrote TOS' comments on the Tennessee Valley Authority Draft Natural Resources Plan. We supported TVA's efforts while noting deficiencies in the document and recommended that TVA embrace its "flagship," or highest level of resource management considered.

### **Bird Conservation Alliance sign-on letter**

TOS signed on to an American Bird Conservancy letter to the USDA Forest Service asking that forest plans under the proposed new National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule conform to best available science in all its management, particularly with respect to habitat and endangered species management.

June

### **Bird Conservation Alliance sign-on letter**

TOS supported full Funding for Natural Resource Conservation legislation.

July

### **Letter Thanking the TWRC**

TOS drafted the letter that was co-signed by the Sierra Club, Tennessee Conservation Voters and the Cumberland-Harpeth and Warioto Audubon Chapters, thanking the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission for their reasoned and conservative approach to the Sandhill Crane hunting proposal in Tennessee. This was sent after KY made the decision to have a limited hunt starting in the winter 2010-2011.

August

### **Kentucky Sandhill Crane Hunt**

TOS submitted comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service opposing a Sandhill Crane hunt in Kentucky. USF&WS must review the Kentucky decision noted above.

### **Draft Wind Energy Guidelines**

TOS submitted comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the draft proposal for Wind Energy Guidelines. TOS supports mandatory, rather than voluntary, guidelines.

### **Watchable Wildlife Workshop**

TOS was a sponsor, along with TWRA and TWF, of a Watchable Wildlife Workshop in Nashville with presenter Jim Mallman of Watchable Wildlife Inc. "to demonstrate the real power potential of Wildlife/Nature Tourism."

Topics covered included:

The Economics Behind Wildlife Tourism / Providing a Positive Wildlife Viewing Experience / Building Community Support. The workshop was attended by TWRA staff, TN Department of Tourism, Army Corp of Engineers, TOS members and others.

September

### **Final Proposed Wind Energy Guidelines**

TOS submitted comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service noting we support the development of wind energy as a green energy resource, but only if projects are properly sited, monitored and mitigated to meet mandatory federal wildlife protection standards and provided they comply with wildlife protection laws.

TOS – Conservation Policy Committee - *Continued from page 5*

**Letter of support for land acquisition for Edgar Evins State Park**

TOS sent a letter of support to TDEC Commissioner Bob Martineau for the acquisition of a 168-acre tract on Moss Ridge immediately adjacent to Edgar Evins State Park. It not only protects the view-shed of the park but also includes Cerulean Warbler breeding habitat. This property ultimately received the highest priority for acquisition but funding will be an issue. TN Parks and Greenways Foundation is supporting the effort to get the land purchased.

October

**TN Sandhill Crane Festival, January 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>**

Co-hosted by TWRA and TOS

Co-chairs Dan Hicks and Melinda Welton

The website ([www.TNcranefestival.org](http://www.TNcranefestival.org)) is still under construction but has basic information already.

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**MASSIVE BIRD KILL AT WEST VIRGINIA WIND FARM HIGHLIGHTS NATIONAL ISSUE**

With the deaths of nearly 500 birds (including 310 Blackpoll Warblers, 24 Connecticut Warblers, Ovenbirds, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Sora and Virginia Rails) in a single night at the Laurel Mountain wind facility in early October, three of the four wind farms operating in West Virginia have now experienced large bird fatality events, according to American Bird Conservancy (ABC), the nation's leading bird conservation organization.

"Wind energy has the potential to be a green energy source, but the industry still needs to embrace simple, bird-smart principles that would dramatically reduce incidents across the country, such as those that have occurred in West Virginia," said Kelly Fuller, ABC's Wind Campaign Coordinator.

There were three critical circumstances that tragically aligned in each of the three West Virginia events to kill birds. Each occurred during bird migration season, during low visibility weather conditions, and with the addition of a deadly triggering element – an artificial light source. Steady-burning lights have been shown to attract and disorient birds, particularly night-migrating songbirds that navigate by starlight, and especially during nights where visibility is low such as in fog or inclement weather. Circling birds collide with structures (turbines or substations) or each other, or drop to the ground from exhaustion.

TOS is a member of the American Bird Conservancy. Our Conservation Policy Committee drafted two letters which I was pleased to sign and send to The United States Fish and Wildlife Service calling for mandatory federal guidelines for the bird-smart operation of wind farms.

Dick Preston

**NEW BOOK AVAILABLE**

Dr. T. David Pitts (Memphis Chapter) has self-published a wonderful book based on his 25 years of research and personal observations of Eastern Bluebirds in NW Tennessee. "Studying Eastern Bluebirds" (A Biologist's Report and Reflections) is chock full of stories and facts about one of our most beloved songbirds. I guarantee that no matter how much you know or think you know about Eastern Bluebirds, you will learn something new by reading this book. I particularly enjoyed the chapters about the life histories of some of the nearly 4,000 individual bluebirds David banded over the 25 years of studies described in the book. And if you've ever wondered about the bluebird which appears on the Tennessee Watchable Wildlife license plate, his tale, although a sad one, is told here. Available directly from the author: ([dmpitts@citilink.net](mailto:dmpitts@citilink.net)).

Dick Preston

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..... **FALL BIRD COUNT DATA DUE NOW** .....

Fall bird count data are now due. If you have not already done so, please send your data to your local count compiler. If you do not have a local compiler, please send the data to my address below. All Tennessee bird counts should have the following data included with the bird statistics:

1 – total miles and hours by foot, car, and other modes (canoe, horse, etc.).

2 – total miles and hours for nightbirding (owling) are kept separately.

3 – Feederwatching hours are also kept separately; include names of feederwatchers.

4 – All count day weather data: temps; wind; precipitation; clouds, storms/fronts.

5 – Please include the starting and ending times of the count.

6 – Please include the number of observers, number of field parties, and names of all observers. For example, one person in a car is one observer in one party; 4 people in another car are 4 observers in one party; this example results in 5 observers in 2 parties.

7 – Any information that is specific to your count is always appreciated and makes for a more interesting and informative report. Things like the total number of species ever found in the history of your particular count, major weather events (such as “heavy thunderstorms last night”, etc.), the most observers we’ve ever had, etc.

8 – Putting count data in correct taxonomic order really helps the compilers to speed up the process. You can easily find the latest correct taxonomic order at the website for the American Ornithological Union (AOU). This order is updated every year.

9 – Please be aware of weather conditions for count day and plan accordingly. If there has been heavy rainfall, some roads in low-lying areas may be flooded. Foggy and icy conditions also warrant extra caution. Please be cautious.

10 – Please send the data to Ron Hoff, 282 Hackworth Lane, Clinton, TN 37716. E-mail is acceptable at [aves7000@bellsouth.net](mailto:aves7000@bellsouth.net). I would like to have the data sometime in the first month after the count. This allows timely reporting to *The Migrant* editor.

As always, thanks in advance for your help gathering data for Tennessee's birds.

Ron Hoff

Tennessee Bird Count Compiler. Tennessee Ornithological Society

282 Hackworth Lane, Clinton, TN 37716, 865-435-4547

[aves7000@bellsouth.net](mailto:aves7000@bellsouth.net)

## TENNESSEE SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL

January 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Birchwood, Tennessee

The Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival is a celebration of the thousands of Sandhill Cranes that migrate through or spend the winter at the confluence of the Hiwassee and Tennessee Rivers near Birchwood, Tennessee.

While the cranes are present from November through February each year and viewing is always open to the public at the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Hiwassee Refuge, the Festival offers activities for the entire family. There will be speakers, films and children's activities centered on the cranes, Tennessee's other wildlife, and the rich Native American history of the area.

The special guest at this year's festival will be the great artist John James Audubon, as depicted by Brian "Fox" Ellis. Brian is an engaging and entertaining storyteller.

Festival activities will be held at the Birchwood Elementary School, the Hiwassee Refuge, the Cherokee Removal Memorial Park, and the Rhea County Welcome Center. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency and the Tennessee Ornithological Society are co-hosts of this event.

"Our objective is to share the spectacle of these majestic birds and provide a potentially life-changing wildlife experience for visitors. We also want to build awareness for the need to provide adequate habitat and management for the thousands of Sandhill Cranes that winter and migrate through Tennessee, as well as for the Endangered Whooping Cranes that regularly accompany them." Melinda Welton, Festival Co-Chair.

For more information please visit: ([www.tncranefestival.org](http://www.tncranefestival.org)).

### Festival Contacts:

#### Co-Chairs

Melinda Welton – Tennessee Ornithological Society ([weltonmj@earthlink.net](mailto:weltonmj@earthlink.net)).

Dan Hicks – Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency ([Dan.Hicks@tn.gov](mailto:Dan.Hicks@tn.gov)).

#### Volunteer Coordinator:

Cyndi Routledge – Tennessee Ornithological Society ([routledges@bellsouth.net](mailto:routledges@bellsouth.net)).



## OPERATION MIGRATION 2011

To say that this has been a difficult year for Operation Migration (OM) would be an understatement. The fact that they have persevered is a testament to their determination to save Whooping Cranes.



The first indication of being torn from a warm fuzzy feeling occurred after those in the wildlife business met to demand, that in the best interests of Whooping Crane breeding that OM's base of operations be moved. After untold man-hours of searching, OM was relocated to White River Marsh State Wildlife Area (WRMSWA) in Green Co. WI. about fifty miles west of Necedah, WI. It was hoped WRMSWA would be devoid of black flies during nesting season. These flies caused nest abandonment by Whooping Cranes at Necedah.

The move was accomplished after untold man-hours of toil and mostly during a rainy spell. Every structure built at Necedah had to be demolished and/or moved to the fresh site at WRMSWA. At WRMSWA, OM's employees had to erect wet pen, dry pen, build an access road and a runway for the ultra light aircraft, plus drill for a reliable source of water to supply water to the wet pen. All this was successfully accomplished before the arrival of the Whooping Crane chicks for the migration.

On June 29, 2011, ten Whooping Crane chicks arrived at WRMSWA in boxes, in a van, from the nearby airport. They had been flown from Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, MD, where they were incubated and hand-raised. Once at WRMSWA they were released to the pens to start a new life with OM..

Then on July 16, 2011 OM's office in Port Perry, ON, flooded due to excessive rains. Once again upheaval as office contents were shuffled, stored and reshuffled. Two months later suitable office accommodations were found nearby and the move consummated. . Patience resulted in a better and bigger office space!

Returning to discuss Whooping Crane chicks, why, you ask, only 10 chicks in this migration class? Good question! There is a finite pool from which crane eggs are forthcoming. These are hatched, and the surviving chicks hand raised in MD. At an age when they can go for further training they are checked by a veterinarian before being released. This year OM received 12 chicks of which two were unsuitable. The Direct Autumn Release (DAR) Program handled by International Crane Foundation in Horicon, WI, received 8 chicks. Then for the second year, Louisiana received 10 chicks. (Note: of 10 chicks last year only 5 remain alive. The rest either were predated or died of unusual causes. Two were shot by youth earlier in Oct. (The youth were caught). The egg pool has more demands on it than before 2010. Therefore OM's share is only 10 chicks.

The 8 DAR cranes were released at the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge in Dodge Co. WI. on 10-21-11 to find their own way to migrate south.

On 10-25-11 there were 96 whooping cranes in the Eastern Migratory Population (EMP) with 7 cranes long term missing. In June there were 105 whooping cranes in the EMP.

This year the 2011 migration from WRMSWA got under way on 10-8-11. So far, as of 10-30-11, 120 miles out of 1285 miles have been covered. In 22 days the migration has reached the fourth stop on the way to the 27 stops to FL. The weather has allowed flying only on 4 days. Things are improving with practice. From Green Co., WI, to Winnebago Co., IN., all nine chicks flew the 34-mile leg with three ultra lights escorting.

For the first time in eleven years OM has lost a chick en route. #2-11 went down on 10-11-11 and despite huge energy expenditure to locate the bird it has not been found. Hopefully it will show up later.

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*Operation Migration 2011 - Continued from page 9*

The chicks are escorted by a sixteen member team, three ultra light aircraft, trucks to pull campers, motor homes and equipment. This army spends up to 100 days on the road . The whole not-for- profit organization spends huge amounts of money for the cause of Whooping Crane survival . Last year, to arrive at a cost per mile, the OM team divided what was spent by 1,285 miles, arriving at \$182 per mile. If one multiplies 1,285 miles by \$182 per mile the cost is a staggering \$234,000! Because of this, OM's team set up the Mile Maker Campaign as a means of funding their endeavor. This year Mile Makers are requested to donate and sponsor \$182 per mile or part thereof. One may choose their mile (if not already taken), choose to honor a cause and choose a state, one of seven on the migration route. Subscribe by contacting <http://www.operationmigration.org/milemakers.html> or by calling 1-800-675-2618.

I urge each TOS club to become a Mile Maker. Last year TOS and KTOS sponsored 2 miles each, while the Lee & Lois Herdon Chapter sponsored mile #588 and the Highland Rim Chapter sponsored mile #622. To date 655 out of 1285 miles have been sponsored while 59 out of 109 miles in TN have been sponsored.

Those of you living in or near Carrol and Hardin Counties are near to stopover sites on the migration route between KY and AL. You have the opportunity to get a visual of the adventure in November. Follow their progress on <http://operationmigration.org/FieldJournal.html>.

Finally, ask yourself what organization is responsible for returning Whooping Cranes to TN? How many of you have a lifer in Whooping Crane spotted in TN? How many of you visit Hiwassee with the hope of seeing a beautiful Whooping Crane? Show your appreciation by personally, or as a group, supporting Operation Migration. By all means become a Craniac! You will find it uplifting!

Tony King ([Tonytheking1027@aol.com](mailto:Tonytheking1027@aol.com)), KTOS - Certified Craniac  
865-988-6172 - Lenoir City

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## Call For Volunteers For The Sandhill Crane Festival

Plans for a bigger and better Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival are underway! The event will take place January 14th and 15th 2012 and will again center on the Birchwood Elementary School and the Hiwassee Refuge, Meigs County, TN. Thousands of Sandhill Cranes now migrate through and winter in Tennessee at the confluence of the Tennessee and Hiwassee Rivers. With the cooperation of Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the objective of the festival is to share the spectacle of these majestic birds and provide a potentially life-changing wildlife experience for visitors, while building awareness for the need to provide adequate habitat, and management for Sandhill Cranes, and the Endangered Whooping Cranes that regularly accompany them.

To make this a quality event, we need your help. Committees are forming now to help organize the various workshops, speakers, kids activities, education displays, a special dinner Saturday night (with special guest John James Audubon!), etc.

Please get involved. Birding festivals have been sprouting up all over the country and we have something special here to share ([www.aba.org/festivals/manual.html](http://www.aba.org/festivals/manual.html)). This will be fun, and our opportunity to demonstrate how beloved these cranes are to folks throughout the Southeast. If you have talents and/or time to lend, please contact Cyndi Routledge at [routledges@bellsouth.net](mailto:routledges@bellsouth.net) or 931-648-0911. We need folks now and on the days of the festival in January. (Much of the committee work will be done regionally or over the internet, so there won't be much driving required to participate).

Thank you!  
Cyndi Routledge

## CHAPTER NEWS

GREENEVILLE CHAPTER – Fall migration in Greene County appeared somewhat subdued in comparison with corresponding activity observed over the past few years. Despite lower numbers of shorebirds and waterfowl than are typical for the season, the overall profile offered several significant records, though, including a few highly unusual observations.

Highlights included the following: White Ibis (juvenile on 5 Sep.); Virginia Rail (2 on 22 Oct.); Sora (on 17 Sep., 22 Oct., and 30 Oct.); Dunlin (7 on 30 Oct.); Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (calling on 2 Oct.); Loggerhead Shrike (on 22 Oct.); Philadelphia Vireo (on 17 Sep. and 4 Oct.); Marsh Wren (1-4 on 1, 22, and 30 Oct.); Gray-cheeked Thrush (on 15 Sep. and 8-9 Oct.); Swainson's Thrush (a high count of 121 heard nocturnally on 15 Sep.); Blackpoll Warbler (on 24 Sep.); Dickcissel (a very late bird on 1 Oct.); and Bobolink (2-6 on 17 Sep. and 1 Oct.).

The chapter's Christmas count is scheduled for Saturday, December 17.

For additional details, please contact Don Miller (423-639-4100; [pandion@embarqmail.com](mailto:pandion@embarqmail.com)).

Don Miller

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Members of the **LEE AND LOIS HERNDON CHAPTER** of Tennessee Ornithological Society conducted their annual Fall Bird Count on Saturday, Sept. 24. A total of 27 observers in six parties covered Carter County and parts of the adjacent counties of Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington in northeast Tennessee. Generally mild temperatures made for pleasant and comfortable birding. Cloudy skies prevailed most of the day, with frequent fog and mist in the mountains.

"As you can see from the tallies below, it was a good birding day," remarked Rick Knight, the chapter's long-time compiler for the count. A total of 130 species were found, above the 30-year average of 123. The all-time high count was 137 species in 1993. "Data for this count extends back to 1970, whereas the chapter's spring and Christmas counts go back to the early 1940s," Knight said.

As with any count, a few birds could not be found. For instance, no Sharp-shinned Hawks were reported, which marked the first time this species has not appeared on the Fall Count since 1983. For only a third time in the history of the Fall Count, no White-eyed Vireos were found. Northern Bobwhite and Loggerhead Shrike didn't make any appearance, but these birds have only rarely been found on the Fall Count. The Northern Bobwhite has been found on only six of the last 23 years of this annual count. Loggerhead Shrike has only been reported on five of the last 18 years of the Fall Count. Other missed species that might reasonably have been expected on a Fall Count included Least Sandpiper, Winter Wren, Nashville Warbler and Blue Grosbeak.

This year's Fall Count also set some abundance records. Some warblers showed up in record numbers. The highest totals in the history of the count were recorded for Tennessee Warbler (225), American Redstart (74) and Northern Waterthrush (8). Thirty Chestnut-sided Warblers marked the highest number since 1992 and the 160 Palm Warbler represented the highest total since 1976. Other high counts were recorded for Wild Turkey (104) and Barn Swallow (161). The 49 Field Sparrows found was the most since 1977. The European Starling ranked as the most abundant bird, with 1,157 individuals found. Other abundant birds on the count included Canada Goose (822), Chimney Swift (578), Rock Pigeon (519), Common Grackle (400) and Blue Jay (399).

Some exceptional finds included a single Cerulean Warbler, which made only its fourth appearance on a Fall Count, and Horned Lark, which returned to the count for the first time since 1990. Two American Bitterns found in Shady Valley represented only the sixth appearance of this species on a fall count. Among the Great Blue Herons on this year's Fall Count was the Great White Heron that has been lingering since late summer on the Nolichucky River near Erwin. Despite its different appearance, the Great White Heron is considered the same species as the Great Blue Heron.

Two falcons — Merlin and Peregrine — were counted this year. The Merlin has been found on eight of the last 13 Fall Counts while the Peregrine Falcon has been reported on 11 of the last 15 Fall Counts.

## CHAPTER NEWS

Lee and Lois Herndon - *Continued from page 11*

The chapter is once again producing a calendar featuring photos from its membership. The 2012 calendar will be sold for \$15 as a fund-raising effort. The group enjoyed success last year with a similar effort.

The chapter's members also helped conduct weekly bird hikes each Saturday in October at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park in Elizabethton. These fall walks have been an ongoing tradition for many years.

Bryan Stevens

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**KNOXVILLE CHAPTER** - The new KTOS website is up and can be viewed at <http://www.tnbirds.org/KTOS.html>.

At the September meeting and potluck dinner at Ijams Nature Center, David Trently was recognized for his many years of leading field trips along with other contributions to the club. He recently moved back to Pennsylvania.

David Johnson presented a \$300 J. B. Owen Memorial Endowment to Evan Searfoss for his Eagle Scout project involving the construction of an observation tower at Kyker bottoms. The J. B. Owen award is awarded annually to individuals or groups whose work promotes the welfare and conservation of birds in Tennessee.

Duck Stamps were sold at the meeting and were a big hit with only a few remaining at the end of the night. Federal Duck Stamps are a vital tool for wetland conservation. Ninety-eight cents out of every dollar generated by the sales of Federal Duck Stamps goes directly to purchase or lease wetland habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

At the October meeting speaker Than Boves gave an in-depth talk titled Cerulean Warbler Response to Experimental Forest Disturbance in the Appalachian Mountains. Male Ceruleans were caught, banded and examined and nests were counted and observed for

success in the rearing of young in various experimental plots. David Johnson presented Than with the J. B. Owen Award to help continue his research.

There were field trips the Foothills Parkway, Turkey Creek Wetlands, Kyker Bottoms, Victor Ashe Park, and Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge.

Melinda Fawver

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Thanks to contributions from groups including the **MEMPHIS CHAPTER** of TOS and several individual chapter members, the Mid-South Raptor Center was able to raise almost \$15,000 to fund construction of a new bank of six cages at the center to house non-releaseable birds of prey to be used to help educate the public on the life histories of raptors of the Mid-South. Visitors will now be able to view several different species of local birds of prey and learn about their habits.

Beginning in January 2012, the Memphis chapter of TOS will meet on the 3rd Wednesday night of each month at St. George's Episcopal Church, 2425 South Germantown Road, Germantown, TN 38138.

David Blaylock

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**NASHVILLE CHAPTER** - Nashville area birders were treated to several nice field trips to help ward off the summer doldrums. Bowie Nature Park in Fairview and Bledsoe Creek State Park near Gallatin are lesser known treasures well worth investigating. Shelby Park and Bottoms provided habitat for diverse species of birds during our Fall Flock in September and we rounded out our early fall walks with a visit to the Ellington Agricultural Center in Nashville. Our Wednesday Radnor walks, which take place for 6 straight weeks starting in mid-September and again in April, were a hit as always. Nearly all species of likely warblers were found as well as many of the other neo-tropical migrants. It's always an enjoyable way to start the day and in my case, "play hookie" for a day. Also, many NTOS members stayed in Nashville during the TOS fall meeting weekend to help

## CHAPTER NEWS

Nashville Chapter - *Continued from page 12*

lead Mayor Karl Dean and others on his weekly public walk. The Metro Greenway system has provided several excellent areas nestled within the city limits to relax and enjoy what nature has to offer. The walk was a great success.

A new slate of officers and directors were elected for 2011-2012: Steve Routledge – President, Richard Connors – 1<sup>st</sup> VP/Programs, Frank Fekel – 2<sup>nd</sup> VP/Field Trips, Amy Potter-Secretary, Susan Hollyday – Treasurer /Curator, Class of 2012 State Directors – Tony Lance, Ed Schneider, and Barbara Harris, and the Class of 2013 – Scott Block and Amy Potter.

We would also like to invite all interested TOS members and friends to join us in volunteering at the Sandhill Crane Festival at the Hiwassee Refuge in Meigs County January 14-15, 2012. Whether greeting visitors, helping with educational displays, sharing views through your spotting scope or binoculars, or even dressing up in the Sandy the Crane costume, come on down! For further updates and current info regarding the festival simply go to [www.tncranefestival.org](http://www.tncranefestival.org).

Steve Routledge

### FEBRUARY 28<sup>TH</sup> DEADLINE

The deadline date for the April issue of *The Tennessee Warbler* is February 28th. Please submit all articles, announcements, reports and items of interest by this deadline date.

#### Submit Material To:

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## KIRTLAND'S WARBLER RESULTS

Kirtland's Warbler is an endangered species which has a very narrow breeding range, primarily centered in a dozen counties of central Michigan. A summary of this year's census of Kirtland's Warblers revealed:

A total of 1,770 singing males in central Michigan, while in Michigan's Upper Peninsula there were an additional 35 birds (an all-time high for the UP). The first nests found outside of Michigan were found in 2007. This year in Wisconsin, there were 21 singing birds, and in Ontario, Canada, there were two.

The total of 1,828 singing males is a record high, just eclipsing the previous high of 1,826 in 2009. This is a far cry from the first formal census of singing males started in 1971. At that time, the species was at the edge of extinction, with only 201 singing males counted, all of them in central Michigan.

## NEW DAKOTA GRASSLAND CONSERVATION AREA ESTABLISHED

On September 6, 2011, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe signed the Dakota Grassland Conservation Area Environmental Assessment and Land Protection Plan. Through this effort, the Service would seek to acquire easements from willing sellers on approximately 240,000 acres of wetlands and 1,700,000 acres of grasslands native prairie habitat to benefit birds and wildlife while at the same time supporting traditional economic activities, specifically livestock production.

These conservation easements will allow lands to remain in private ownership, in production, and on local tax rolls. Future funding for the easements will be the crucial issue. Funding would be expected to come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (our duck stamp dollars at work) and not from general taxpayer dollars.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission opened the door to this newest initiative for the National Wildlife Refuge System on September 14, 2011. It approved funding for 2,794 acres of initial grassland easements in South Dakota, the first commitment under this new Dakota Grassland Conservation Area.

Articles Courtesy of *The Birding Community E-Bulletin*

## THE BIG YEAR, a review by Van Harris

Anticipation in the birding community has been high this summer over the October release of "The Big Year", the first ever major motion picture about birding. (Don't call it "birdwatching") The film is based on the book "The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature and Fowl Obsession", by Mark Obamskik, chronicling the efforts of three men who attempted to break the "Big Year" record in 1998. The Big Year is a competition among birders sanctioned by the American Birding Association to observe the highest number of bird species in the continental US and Canada in a single calendar year. The competition is entirely on the honor system, with participant's word that what they report is, indeed, what they saw.

The anticipation has been tempered by no little trepidation regarding how the film would portray birders; respectfully, as lovers of and advocates for Nature or, as has been customary in the past, as nerdy, clueless twits. (Miss Jane Hathaway in "The Beverly Hillbillies" set birding back fifty years.)

Three excellent actors; Jack Black (Brad Harris), Steve Martin (Stu Priessler) and Owen Wilson (Kenny Bostick), share the lead roles. Each, unbeknownst to the others, sets out to break the record of 721 species held by the legendary Sandy Komito (the model for the "Kenny Bostick" character). Bostick is obsessed with being "the best birder in the world", at the likely expense of his marriage. Priessler is consumed by breaking the record even as he confronts retirement from the multi-million dollar business he built from scratch and protecting it from a hostile takeover. Harris must pursue the record while holding a full-time job, financing travel to such far away locales as the Everglades and Attu Island in the Bering Sea and maintaining relationships with his parents and a pretty birder he meets along the way.

About twenty birders from the Memphis Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithology Society attended a showing of the film together. Their post-screening comments were instructive.

David Blaylock said, "I was pleasantly surprised. I thought that it was going to make fun of birders, and it didn't".

Pam Key reported, "I was most impressed by the relationship of the Jack Black character and Brian Denehy (playing his disapproving father). The way birding finally brought them together was very sweet".

Other comments were decidedly mixed. Barbara Wilson "...liked it a lot". Susan Riley thought it was "...a little slow." Georges McNeil believes that "It could have been better, but was probably the best they could do and not make a documentary that would only appeal to birders", while Sue Ferguson called it, "...depressing. It made me not want to go birding at all."

Not surprisingly, just about everyone remarked, "I wished that they had shown more of the birds".

I am personally not a great fan of any of the triumvirate of stars, but thought that all, especially Black and Martin, admirably restrained themselves from over-the-top performances that would have ruined the film. The cinematography, shot mostly in western Canada, was especially second rate. The places that anyone attempting a Big Year would have to go, such as Alaska, southeast Arizona and the Texas coast, are breath-takingly scenic. Yet the film seemed flat and dull. Worse yet, the "rare birds", such as Great Gray Owl, Pink-footed Goose and Xantus' Hummingbird, were obviously CGI and poorly done CGI at that. An exception was a magnificent shot of a courting pair of Bald Eagles clasping talons in mid-air and wheeling earthward in freefall.

"The Big Year" is a gentle, funny, not overly ambitious film that respects birders and what birding, even competitive birding is really about; friendship, sportsmanship and honor. It's Stu picking up Brad's dinner checks and offering to share the helicopter he charts to pursue the Himalayan Snowcocks that Brad could never otherwise have found. It's about Kenny refusing to cheat, even though he could easily get away with it, and about Stu respecting his word that he isn't.

Big Year - Continued from page 14

In the end, "The Big Year" is not so much about birding as about obsession to be the best and its attendant costs. Stu Priessler comes in third in the competition, but finds fulfillment in retirement and his new grandson. Brad Harris becomes "the second-best birder in the world", and for a dedicated birder, that is quite enough. Kenny Bostick breaks the record with an incredible 755 species. (Sandy Komito actually did break his own record, but with 745 species.) In the process, Kenny loses his wife and chance of fatherhood. Unbelievably, he runs out on the opportunity to impregnate his wife (played by the gorgeous Rosamund Pike) just for the chance to see a Snowy Owl. Of course, had it been an Arctic Gyrfalcon, anyone could have understood.

Van Harris is a former president of the Memphis Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithology Society, a member of the Mississippi Ornithology Society and a member of the Mississippi Chapter of the National Audubon Society. Refer questions to [shelbyforester1223@bigriver.net](mailto:shelbyforester1223@bigriver.net)

An edited version of this article appeared in the Memphis "Commercial Appeal" Home & Garden section on 28 October, 2011. To see the original of this article, go to [www.commercialappeal.com](http://www.commercialappeal.com) and search for "The Big Year".

**Registration:**

Registration fee	\$25.00
Banquet Buffet and Saturday Evening Program	\$25.00

To be assured of a banquet/program reservation, have the envelope with your check and registration in the mail and postmarked BY Friday, May 11, 2012.

JOINT MEETING REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Local

Chapter(s) \_\_\_\_\_

VSO \_\_\_\_\_ TOS \_\_\_\_\_ (If neither, leave blanks.)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ Registrations @ \$25 each

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ Dinner and Program Registrations @ \$25 each

Total enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Mail registration form and check to Bristol Bird Club Treasurer

Bristol Bird Club  
 c/o Janice Martin, Treas.  
 111 Dairy Circle  
 Bristol, TN 37620



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*Merry  
Christmas!*



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