



through the *biKNOXulars*

December 2011 — January 2012



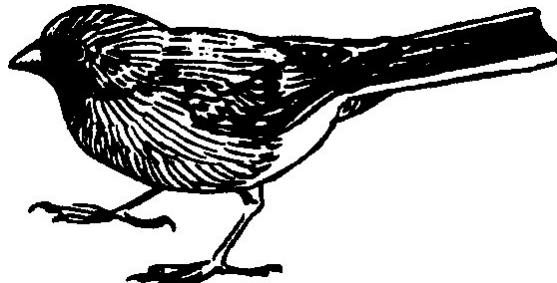
KNOXVILLE CHAPTER OF THE TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

December & January Programs

Join us on Wednesday, December 7, at 6:45 p.m. to hear Mark Armstrong, bird curator of the Knoxville Zoo and past president of KTOS, talk about the success of the local MAPS project. MAPS, which stands for Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship, is a continent-wide bird banding program that seeks to collect and analyze data about North American landbird populations. Mark has been organizing the MAPS banding station at Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge for the last five years. At the meeting, Mark will share fascinating stories and close-up photos of birds being processed and released at the banding station, including everything from hummingbirds to cuckoos. He'll also discuss some of the other banding efforts being undertaken at Seven Islands, including banding of Northern Saw-whet Owls.

After the holidays, be sure to join us on Wednesday, January 4, at 6:45 p.m. for our annual photo share program. This program provides the perfect opportunity to show off your photography skills, and it's also a great time to socialize with everyone at the beginning of the new year. All photographers and birders, novice or seasoned, are encouraged to bring a short selection of their bird and nature-related photos to share with the group. A laptop and overhead projector will be provided, so please bring your images on a flash drive or CD. Also, please try to keep your presentation to 10 minutes or fewer so everyone has the chance to share with our appreciative audience. If you're interested in participating, please let our vice president, Patty Ford, know so she can add you to the line-up. (See contact info on page 4.)

Both meetings will be held in Room 117 of the UT College of Veterinary Medicine. For directions, visit the Meetings page on our website at www.tnbirds.org/KTOS.html.



Winter Hummingbirds

It is becoming a banner year for wintering hummingbirds. As of mid-November, I have already banded three Rufous hummingbirds and one Ruby-throated hummer. I have also encountered a return Rufous that was banded last year. I know of several more, but I'm waiting on some cold weather to try to catch them. These hummers are feeding on pineapple sage and other flowers and pretty much thumb their noses at a feeder inside a trap.

Since most wintering hummers don't get reported until after Thanksgiving, this is really early in the season for so many birds. The best part is that record numbers of birds have also been documented in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, and Louisiana. As the weather turns colder, some of those birds may head our way.

If you are interested in attracting these birds to your home, I would encourage you to put up a feeder, especially if you still have some blooming plants. Although they are rare birds and the odds of getting one are slim, you almost always have to have a feeder out to get a hummer.

If one does show up, I would like permission to catch and band your bird. The banding process is pretty simple. I put a feeder into a wire trap and close the door when the bird goes inside. I quickly measure the wings, tail, and beak, and I take a series of pictures to document the identification of the bird. Since I have interrupted the bird's feeding, I usually offer it a meal of sugar water before release.

About six different hummingbird species have been documented in Tennessee, so I never know what I might find when I go out to band a winter bird. If one does show up, please call me (Mark Armstrong) at (865) 748-2224. Thank you!

Mark Armstrong



Presidential Perch

I was working at Wild Birds Unlimited before Thanksgiving when a woman came in and asked where she could find a turkey that wasn't shot up with growth hormones and antibiotics. It got me thinking about turkeys. In our neighborhood, we have a flock that we often see. One day they walked across our lawn, and it was a sight to see: toms, hens, jakes, and jennies. Toms gobble and hens click.

The average American eats 18 pounds of turkey every year. (I guess that means I'm not average because I don't eat turkey or other meats.) More turkeys are consumed on Thanksgiving than Christmas and Easter combined. The Wild Turkey ranges from five to twenty pounds in weight, while the domestic turkey is bred to be heavier; therefore, the domestic turkey you eat can't fly. The Wild Turkey can fly short distances at up to 55 mph and can run up to 25 mph. The average lifespan is three to five years with the oldest known bird to have lived to 13 years. Back in 1930, the Wild Turkey was nearing extinction; today, however, there are more than seven million wild birds.

Because the Wild Turkey is native with a proud demeanor and protective instincts, Ben Franklin wanted it to be our national bird. The Wild Turkey's head can change color in seconds due to excitement, stress, or emotions. It can be red, white or blue – maybe another reason Franklin wanted the Wild Turkey as our national bird!

One more interesting turkey fact: just-hatched turkeys are precocial, which means they are born with feathers and open eyes and they can fend for themselves quickly. They leave the nest within 24 hours to forage for food with their mother. It takes about two weeks for them to start flying, so mom and her poult huddle together at night.

A good place to see lots of Wild Turkeys locally is at Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge, and I'm sure there are other good areas close by. You are now ready for the holidays with a little bird trivia on Wild Turkeys!

I wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season. Hope to see you all at the December and January meetings.

Billie Cantwell

Get Out and Get Birding! Winter Field Trips

Great Smoky Mountains National Park — Alum Cave Bluffs and Newfound Gap Sunday, December 4, 2011 @ 8:00 a.m. Leader: Mike Nelson, madbirder@surf birder.com

From the Sugarlands Visitor Center, the group will head up into the mountains, stopping at any areas where birds are present. The group plans to stop at Alum Cave Bluffs to have a look around and then head for Newfound Gap. Possible species include Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Peregrine Falcon, and Red Crossbill. Bring water and a snack.

Meet in the parking lot at the Sugarlands Visitor Center in Great Smoky Mountains National Park at 8:00 a.m. For site info and directions, visit www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/visitorcenters.htm.

Christmas Bird Counts December 17, 2011 — January 1, 2012

No KTOS field trips will be scheduled during this time in order to encourage our members to go out and get counting! See the article on page 3 for more info.

Fort Loudoun Lake Loop Saturday, January 21 @ 8:30 a.m. Leader: Marcia Davis, (865) 558-1458

Looking for some great cold weather birds? If so, join this morning and afternoon jaunt out to local bodies of water. The group will likely visit Louisville Point Park, Pollard Creek, Phelps Dairy Pond, Scenic Point, Tellico Boat Launch, Fort Loudoun Dam and Marina, Lenoir City, and Concord Park. We'll search for waterfowl, gulls, and all things avian. The trip will likely last until 2:00 p.m., so bring water and a snack. The group will also lunch at Calhoun's at Fort Loudoun Dam, or you can bring your own lunch.

To carpool, meet at 8:30 a.m. at the west end of the Kroger parking lot just east of the intersection of Northshore Drive and Pellissippi Parkway (9501 Northshore Drive SW, Knoxville, 37922).



. Tim Ross, Wikimedia Commons.

One Junco, Two Junco... Bird Count Time!

This year's **Christmas Bird Counts (CBC)** are right around the corner! Held each year, Christmas Bird Counts provide an opportunity for birdwatchers to use their identification skills to help with bird research and conservation. The tallies of different bird species gained from CBCs are routinely used by scientists as a way to monitor winter bird populations.

With four different counts in our area on four different dates, everyone should be able to find at least one count that works with their holiday schedule! All interested people are encouraged to participate. This includes non-members, newcomers, and feeder watchers, as well as seasoned birders. You can go out birding in a group or alone, or you can even sit at home just watching your own feeders.

A nominal fee of \$5.00 is required to participate in each count; the money goes to the National Audubon Society that organizes the counts on the national level. Feeder watchers do not need to pay the fee, and all observers 18 and under may count for free. These fees fund the program and help to cover the costs of generating materials for compilers, producing an annual CBC summary magazine, and maintaining the CBC website and database.

To organize the count, interested participants are encouraged to attend our upcoming meeting on Wednesday, December 7. Compilers for three of the four counts (Norris, GSMNP, and Cades Cove) will be present to answer questions, hand out forms, and assign territories to cover. Those interested in the Knoxville count should contact Dean Edwards outside of the meeting. If you wish to participate but are unable to attend the meeting, you may also contact the respective compilers for the counts in which you are interested. Count dates and compiler information appear below.

Norris CBC

Saturday, December 17, 2011

Compiler: Chuck Nicholson, (865) 405-7948,
cnpnichol@bellsouth.net

Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) CBC

Sunday, December 18, 2011

Compiler: Mike Nelson, madbirder@surfbirder.com

Knoxville CBC

Saturday, December 31, 2011

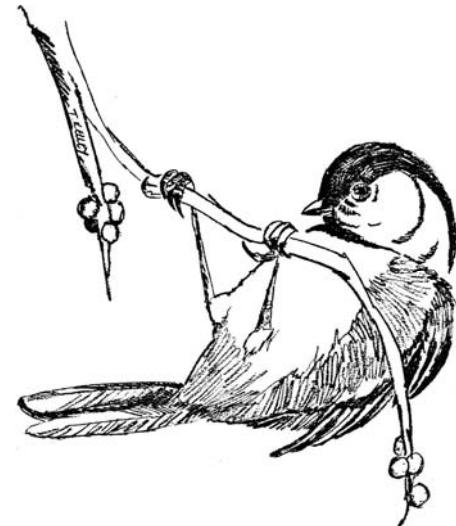
Compiler: Dean Edwards, (865) 560-9701, kde@utk.edu

Cades Cove CBC

Sunday, January 1, 2012

Compiler: Susan Hoyle, (865) 909-0792, hoyleshrike@gmail.com

--some content adapted from the Audubon CBC web site



Birding Briefs

On the morning of November 8, **Carole Gobert** checked out a few locations in Blount County while looking for waterfowl. At Louisville Point Park, she found only a smattering of birds, but the trip down Lowes Ferry Road was more productive. At a small pond between Phelps Dairy Pond and Hitch Pond, she found **2 Northern Shoveler hens, 1 male American Wigeon, 15 Gadwall, 18 Mallard, and 1 American Coot.**

On November 13, **Dean Edwards** counted an impressive **200 – 300 Turkey Vultures** migrating south along Beaver Ridge in Knox County. The long line of vultures started in Karns and then moved along Beaver Ridge, following that for a mile or so, before crossing across Ball Camp to Black Oak Ridge.

Email your cool birds (species, number, date, location) to Angela Hoffman at ahoffman07@bellsouth.net or leave a message at (865) 670-8822.

Final Call for Dues

It's the final call for your 2012 dues! KTOS membership dues are now due for the coming year and may be paid at the welcome table at the next meeting. Dues levels are as follows: \$26/individual, \$30/family, \$38/sustaining, \$13/student, or TOS life membership for \$450 with \$8 annual fee to the local Chapter.

If you have any questions, contact Carole Gobert at (865) 254-8841 or via email at cpgobert@hotmail.com. Dues may also be sent to her via mail (info on page 4).

KTOS membership: Join or renew by mailing your annual dues to Carole Gobert, 1304 Barcelona Drive, Knoxville, TN 37923. Dues levels: \$26/individual, \$30/family, \$38/sustaining, \$13/student, or TOS life membership for \$450 with \$8 annual fee to Chapter.



www.tnbirds.org/KTOS.html

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Winter Wildlife & Birding Events

Check out one of these upcoming events to get your winter wildlife fix! Full details about each event can be found at the listed websites.

Ijams Nature Center Walkabouts

Winter Birds - Will Skelton Greenway East
Saturday, December 10, 2011 @ 2 p.m.

Winter Birds - Will Skelton Greenway West
Friday, December 23, 2011 @ 2 p.m.

Free for Ijams member, \$5 for non-members. Call (865) 577-4717, ext. 110, to register. www.ijams.org

22nd Annual Wilderness Wildlife Week
January 7 – 14, 2012
Pigeon Forge, TN
[www.mypigeonforge.com/
events_winterfest_wilderness.aspx](http://www.mypigeonforge.com/events_winterfest_wilderness.aspx)

Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival
January 14 – 15, 2012
Birchwood, TN
www.tncranefestival.org

