



April Program: Golden Eagles in Tennessee!

The Eastern Golden Eagle Working Group (www.egewg.org) started in the winter of 2011-12 documenting eastern Golden Eagles wintering in the Appalachian Mountains. The information collected since then about the winter range of Golden Eagles is shedding new light on population size, habitat use, and movements, all of which have many important conservation implications. Scott Somershoe, an ornithologist with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency in Nashville since 2006, will bring us up to date on the Golden Eagle research project from the regional and state level perspective with current information on six Golden Eagles that the Group has been tracking.

The meeting will be held in Room 118 of the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine. For directions, please visit the meetings page on KTOS' website at www.tnbirds.org/chapters/knoxvill/KTOS_Meetings.html.

J.B. Owen Memorial Award

The purpose of the J.B. Owen Memorial Fund is to honor the memory of J.B. Owen, longtime TOS member known to thousands in east Tennessee through his columns in Knoxville newspapers. He received the TOS Distinguished Service Award in 1990. An annual award is made by the Fund in the expected amount of \$250-500 to promote the study of birds in Tennessee through research, conservation, and environmental education.

The J.B. Owen Award is open to anyone with a project that promotes the welfare and conservation of birds in Tennessee. Applicants are encouraged to submit: (1) cover letter with short project description and applicant contact information; (2) resume, and 3) brief project proposal, of one to three pages, showing topic of the project, problem to be addressed, objectives, expected results and significance, deliverables (for example, written report, journal article, presentation), project location and project schedule. Each year applications are due by May 1 and should be sent, preferably by e-mail (tcpgobert@hotmail.com) or mailed to Carole Gobert, 1304 Barcelona Drive, Knoxville, TN 37923. The J.B. Owen Committee of KTOS will evaluate applications and will typically announce the Award winner or winners the following September.



Scott Somershoe and a Golden Eagle



Rusty Blackbird observed during KTOS 22 March 2014 Fieldtrip at Cades Cove lead by Warren Bielenburg and Tom Howe, Source: W. Bielenburg.

Common Yellowthroat.
Source: Wikimedia Commons



Presidential Perch

Spring is upon us, I hope! At least the birds think so. On March 17 the E. Bluebirds had a nest over half completed in my yard. I love working in the yard and hearing them sing—it makes the work so much more enjoyable! We have another horizontal bluebird box that the Carolina Wrens were busy filling with leaves. Then a pair of White-Breasted Nuthatches decided they wanted the box. The female worked hard bringing out leaves that the Wrens had taken in. Then she started chipping bark off of a dead tree and taking that into her new home. This will be our first Nuthatch nest that we will be able to observe and I am excited about it! The Screech Owls are still around checking out the different boxes.

We have been busy with the Discover Birds program with two programs coming up April 4 and May 9. Volunteers are needed for each event. The April 4 program will be in Knoxville and May 9 program will be in Sevierville. We will need lots of volunteers for the Sevierville program as there are 260 students! We have added a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/KTOSWONDEOFHUMMERS) for the Hummingbird Festival where we will have a schedule of events for all the activities that will be happening. Please visit and “like us” at this page.

Be sure to let Michael Plaster (KTOS.Editor@gmail.com) know what birds you are seeing as they migrate through. Also you can share your sightings at our Yahoo! Group (groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/KnoxvilleTOS), Facebook page (www.facebook.com/KnoxvilleTOS), and the TN Bird list serve (www.freelists.org/archive/tn-bird/)! Have fun and go out and bird!

Billie Cantwell



White-Breasted Nuthatch in new home, Source: Billie Cantwell

Get Out and Get Birding! April Field Trips

Sharp's Ridge Clean-up
Saturday, April 5, 2014 @ 9:00 a.m.
(Rain date: Sunday, April 6, 2013 @ 9:00 a.m.)
Leader: Tony King, (865) 988-6172

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the J. B. Owen overlook. For site information and directions, visit www.cityofknoxville.org/parks/sharpsridge.asp. You are welcome to come early and get in some extra birding time before the clean-up begins!

Bring your gloves and come help clean-up up one of our favorite birding spots. If you want to remove some of the invasive exotic plants, bring appropriate tools.

Weekday Bird Walks along Sharp's Ridge
Thursdays: April 10, 17, 24, and May 1 @ 8:00 a.m.
Leader: Tony Headrick, (865) 621-9836 and/or Tony King (865) 988-6172

Meet at the ranger's house at 8:00 a.m. For site information and directions, visit www.cityofknoxville.org/parks/sharpsridge.asp.

These weekday bird walks will be held along the road in Sharp's Ridge Memorial Park. Spring migrants will be the focus, with orioles, grosbeaks, warblers, and others expected. If you are new to birding or to KTOS field trips, this is a great way to get started. It is also a great way to brush up on your spring warbler songs if you are more experienced.

Maryville Greenway
Saturday, April 22, 2014 @ 8:00 a.m.
Leader: Tony King, (865) 988-6172 and Tom Howe (865) 748-9610.

We will meet at the Blount County Library (508 N. Cusick St., Maryville, Tenn.) and explore the waterways and trails for spring arrivals.



Worm-eating Warbler a common April migrant in our area. Source: Wikimedia Commons

The Snowy Owl Road Trip

Barry Spruce, Wildlife and Nature Photographer, Great Smoky Mountains

A phone call between fellow photographers quickly became a road trip in the making. The topic of conversation was the Snowy Owls from the Arctic. Three days later we were on the road headed North to New England (N.E.). The reason we chose to pursue them in N.E. was that I was born in New Hampshire (N.H.) and know the area well and to also keep the costs of the trip at a minimum by staying with family. The anticipation grew with every mile and before we knew it, we were on the Atlantic coast of Massachusetts (Mass.). Research indicated that the beaches and marshes of Mass., N.H., and Maine were getting a record number of sightings of this beautiful creature. Our first destination was Parker River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Before we crossed over the drawbridge to Plum Island NWR we had our first sighting. We actually spotted a small crowd of people with cars and knew there must be an owl nearby. It was a female that was nestled down in a man made structure of sticks and wood. It was about 4:00 p.m. and she was facing the setting sun with her eyes closed. Our game plan was to scout as much of the area as we could with the remaining daylight and return the next morning. After getting some photographs we crossed over to Plum Island, through the toll gate, and into the refuge. We spent about 30 minutes scouting the area. We then drove back through Newburyport, Mass. where we continued on Route 1A over the Merrimack River. A few minutes later we turned into Salisbury Beach State Park (Mass.) our next destination. This was reported to be another hot spot for Snowy Owls. Another 30 minutes scouting and we were back on Route 1A headed North along the coast of N.H. The sunset on the ocean and the day one had come to a close with us getting a wealth of information on the area and one Snowy Owl on the books.



Snowy Owl on man made structure from Day 1, Source: Barry Spruce



Snowy Owl, Source: Barry Spruce

Day two started at 4:30 a.m. and by 5:30 a.m. we were on the road driving through a moderate snow. An hour later we were at the Mass. coast, and by 6:40 a.m. we were at the Plum Island MWR gate. The gate was opened but not manned and the sunrise was only minutes away. We drove back to Hellcat Tower parking lot, which is the end of the maintained road in winter. We grabbed our gear and after a five minute walk we were on the Plum Island Sound. With binoculars we spotted a bird in a nest atop a 20 foot pole probably 0.5 mile away. We could not approach it because the berm was posted at 200 yards in each direction. We were just about to leave when we spotted a Snowy Owl perched on a fence rail beside the posting sign in the West direction. We used a slow approach method and after an hour we were within 25 yards of the owl. The sky began spitting snow again, and 15 minutes later we left her as we had found her, hunting from the fence rail. It was a great start to the day, and we photographed two more Snowy Owls before we left Plum Island. One on the beach, down the boardwalk from Parking Lot 3, and another on the Plum Island Sound, near the toll gate. After going over the drawbridge, we pulled over and probably saw the same owl from the day before, sitting in the manmade structure. Next we drove to Salisbury Beach State Park but we did not locate any owls there. Five minutes North, in Seabrook, N.H., we spotted what may have been our only male Snowy during this trip. This bird was not pure white but had more white than any other we saw. Just before sunset we spotted another female on a rooftop near Rye Harbor Point, N.H. The second day ended with us sighting six more Snowy Owls. We returned back to Seabrook Beach, N.H. where we stayed the night.

The Snowy Owl Road Trip (cont.)



Snowy Owl on Beach Boardwalk Owl from Day 2, Source: Barry Spruce



Male Snowy Owl Seabrook NH male Day 2, Source: Barry Spruce

Day 3 was reserved for photographing mountain peaks and covered bridges in the White Mountains of N.H. That being said, we had to travel North along the coast on Route 1A to get there. As we came to Rye Harbor Point, we spotted photographers with telephoto lenses only yards from the ocean. We were treated to an hour-long photo session with the Snowy Owl we had likely photographed the night before on the rooftop. She was on a kill that appeared to be some kind of duck. There were four local wildlife photographers who told us that this was the most photographed Snowy in the area. She had been there since December 2013. We spent the rest of the day in the White Mountains of N.H. Only one Snowy spotted for the day.



Snowy Owl Fence rail from Day 2, Source: Barry Spruce



Snowy Owl Rye Harbor Point N.H. Day 3, Source: Barry Spruce

Day 4 we travelled North to Biddeford Pool, Maine. We were having no luck and made a decision to travel South back to the spots from two days before. At Seabrook, N.H. we spotted the owl we believed to be the male from before but it was on a tower so we pushed on. Five minutes later, in Salisbury Beach, Mass., we found several cars watching a female. When we got out we discovered another one across the road. Two new ones we had not seen before. We stayed for a while waiting for one of them to fly and it came to rest on a birdhouse. The same owl flew up to within 15 feet of me trying to catch a mouse. The dismal light turned to sleet and we left for dinner at an area restaurant. After dinner we pointed the car South toward our beloved Smoky Mountains and the 1,000 mile journey home. The trip was filled with talk of the beautiful Snowy Owl visitor from the frozen tundra of the Arctic. After several hours the conversation slowly turned toward a return trip to the area in order to photograph Common Loon babies riding on their momma's backs and the Puffins of Down East, M.E. Here we go again!

2014 TOS Annual State Meeting Chattanooga, May 2-4, 2014

The TOS Annual Meeting will be held in Chattanooga on May 2-4, 2014. Registration will be Friday, May 2, from 6 to 9 PM EDT, at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 3710 Modern Industries Parkway, Chattanooga, TN 37409 (Exit #174 on I-24, near the foot of Lookout Mountain). Registration fees are \$15.00 per person.

A discounted rate of \$89.95 plus tax for a King or Double Queen accommodation will be offered until April 1, 2014, as long as the rooms are available. The hotel provides a free 6 AM hot breakfast buffet. We know this is a busy weekend in Chattanooga, so book early. Call the hotel at (423) 424-0125 and ask for the "TOS Chattanooga Chapter" rate.

Saturday evening will feature a two-hour cruise on the Tennessee Aquarium's River Gorge Explorer, a water-jet propelled, hydrofoil-assisted vessel which will transit at high speed to reach a viewing area and then cruise at lower speed for birding and observation. The cruise will be interpreted by John Dever, Lead Interpreter, and Kevin Calhoun, the Tennessee Aquarium's Assistant Curator of Forests. Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served during the low-speed observation time. The cost is \$39.00 per person.

The Saturday and Sunday morning field trips will leave from the Holiday Inn Express. We'll go to some of our favorite birding sites: The Chattanooga Nature Center and Arboretum, The Craven's House on Lookout Mountain, Standifer Gap Marsh, and others. The Saturday afternoon business meeting and general meeting will be held at the Country Inns & Suites located across from the Holiday Inn Express.

For more information, email Gary Lanham, CTOS Treasurer, at GLANHAM@epbf.com.

Send registration and cruise payments to CTOS:

2014 TOS Annual Meeting Registration Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____ Cell Phone #: _____

TOS Chapter: _____ Office held? _____

\$ _____ for _____ Registrations at \$15.00 each.

\$ _____ for _____ Cruise reservations at \$39.00 each.

\$ _____ Total enclosed. Make check payable to CTOS.

Mail registration form and check to:

Gary Lanham CTOS
21 Cool Springs Road
Signal Mountain, TN 37377

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 (high school or younger), or TOS life membership for \$450 with \$8 annual fee to Chapter.



www.tnbirds.org/KTOS.html

**2013 — 2014
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Knox County Spring Count

The Knox County Spring Count will be held this year on Sunday, 27 April 2014. Please contact the compiler (Dean Edwards, 1615 Meadow Chase Ln., Knoxville TN 37931; kde@utk.edu) if you are interested in participating this year. If you normally participate but will not be able to do so this year, please let the compiler know in advance so he can try to assign someone else to cover your territory. If have any questions, please contact the compiler.

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate by either joining a field party or counting birds in your own neighborhood (if you live in Knox County) similar to Project Feederwatch or the Great Backyard Bird Count.

Submit your results to the compiler as soon as possible after the count. Results should include:

- checklist with number of individuals for each species observed,
- location covered,
- time of day you started and stopped counting,
- separate tallies of miles and hours travelled by foot, car, etc.,
- tally of miles and hours spent owling,
- tally of hours spent feederwatching, and
- names of all participants with contact information for at least one person in the party.

You may also be asked to provide documentation for any rare or unusual species.