



Newsletter of the Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

April Meeting: Wednesday, April 4th at 7:30 pm Room 117, UT Vet School

With springtime here, we'll soon be seeing lots of birds we haven't seen for a few months. Recently, Bob & Diane Steffy went to New Zealand and were able to see a lot of birds they had never seen before! Bob will share with us some slides of that trip, not all of birds, that should get our mouths watering not only for our returning songbirds, but also for birds of other lands.

April Field Trips

Sharp's Ridge

Thurs, April 12, 19, 26

Leader: Tony Headrick (687-9956)

Meet at the ranger's house. The walk will be along the road in Sharp's Ridge Memorial Park. Spring migrants are the object of this field trip. Orioles, grosbeaks, warblers, and other spring migrants are expected.

Clingmans Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Saturday, April 7 Field Trip for Northern Saw-whet Owls

Leader: David Trently (531-1473)

Leave from UT Agriculture Campus parking lot #66 at 4:30 p.m. We will stop for a few minutes at the Sugarlands Visitor Center around 5:30. Next stop will be Newfound Gap for some high elevation birding while it is still daylight. Then we will drive up to the parking area at Clingmans Dome to wait for darkness when we will be listening for the calls of these tiny owls. We probably won't see any, but hopefully we will hear a few. NOTE: If the weather is rainy or windy, we will probably cancel, as these owls are not often heard during bad weather. Call if you think it may be cancelled. Be prepared for cold temperatures at the high elevations! We probably will return to Knoxville after 11:00 p.m.

Ijams Nature Center

Sat. April 7, 7:30am.

Leaders: Dan and Laurie Mooney (525-5681)

This trip is scheduled in cooperation with Ijams Nature Center and is ideal for beginning birders. We expect to find local residents as well as early migrants. We hope to see most of the local species of woodpeckers, several species of sparrows and possibly a few species of warblers and raptors.

Freels Bend on the Oak Ridge Reservation

Sat. April 21, 7:30 am

Leader: Dev Joslin (482-7591)

Meet at Corner of Scarboro Rd and Bethel Valley Rd (1st traffic light past the Solway bridge coming from Pellissippi Parkway turn left and meet in the parking lot behind the building). The trip will include open field, woodland and riparian habitat. Target species include wild turkey, woodcock, nuthatches, sparrows, flycatchers, prairie warbler, grasshopper sparrow, neotropical migrants, osprey, bald eagle, and five species of swallows. Bring water and a snack.

A.L. Lotts Elementary School.

Sat. April 21, 8:00am

Leader: Susie Stout.

Trip for young/beginning birders. Walk will be around the school property and has yielded blue grosbeaks as well as other wooded edge/open field species. The major focus of this trip is to encourage school age children to develop an interest in birding. Adult guides are welcome.

PUBLIC FIELD TRIP to Sharp's Ridge

Sat. April 28, 8:00am

Leader David Trently (531-1473).

Meet at the Overlook. The walk will be along the road in Sharp's Ridge Memorial Park. Spring migrants are the object of this field trip. Orioles, grosbeaks, warblers, and other spring migrants are expected.



The Plight of the Gannet

By Chris Welsh

This being one of those years in which UT's spring break coincides with the week long break for the Knox County schools, I recently spent a week on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Most of the week we were there a strong wind hounded us from the northeast and mid-week delivered a solid storm. The day after the storm was the calmest of the trip, so I and the family headed to the beach to build sand castles. Hanging out on the beach were the usual ring-billed and laughing gulls and the occasional great black-backed gull, nothing for a birder to get too excited about. Then I noticed a large white bird with dark primaries and a honker of a beak sitting off by itself. It didn't take a second glance to decide it was a gannet, and seeing a gannet wasn't too much of a surprise given the numbers of them plunging into the Atlantic just offshore.

The surprise was that this one was sitting on the beach. I've never seen a gannet sitting on a beach before. I've often seen them at a distance, gliding over the ocean, but this was a rare opportunity to see one up close and personal south of Nova Scotia. But why was it sitting on the beach? Tired after riding out the storm? No, watching closely as it hopped to avoid an oncoming wave I could see that the tip of its left wing appeared to be broken.

This saddened me because its chances for survival were limited. Knowing there were 100's, maybe 1000's of gannets gliding up and down the Outer Banks at that very moment, I wasn't overly concerned that the loss of this one bird would have any effect on the gannet population in the Atlantic. My wildlifer instincts were to let the bird be. Maybe it would survive, maybe it wouldn't, either way, I didn't need to interfere with the natural course of life and death.

Yet watching the gannet as it floundered to avoid the streamers from the rising tide and the growing number of beach walkers, many of whom were oblivious to the large white bird until it clacked its bill angrily at them, I had to wonder. I hated to see the bird expending energy avoiding people. A more observant couple approached the gannet, obviously concerned, and I overheard them discussing the plight of the "big gull". The woman tossed it some bread, which it of course ignored. I went over and pointed out that it was an injured gannet, a large fish-eating bird that would soon be heading north to breed if it was healthy.

When I returned to helping my six-year old daughter with the sand castle, it was clear that she was also becoming quite concerned for the gannet's welfare. I considered trying to explain that death is a natural process and that in the grand scheme of things this one gannet wasn't a major player, but I doubted I could do so without appearing to be a callous unfeeling old grinch. Plus there was the look in her eyes that said "My daddy is president of the bird club; he can help the 'gander'". She liked the sound of gander better than gannet and kept referring to the poor bird as "the gander".

I finally agreed to take action, not because I thought much could be done for the bird, but because the growing number of people tuned into the gannet's fate included an emotional 6-yr old. I called Pat Moore, president of the Cape Hatteras Bird Club, whom I had met a few days earlier. She knew of a local veterinarian who took in sick or injured birds, so I called him. One of his first questions was "Are you sure it's not a loon?" "Yes, I'm a birder" seemed to satisfy him. Yes, his clinic took in birds, including gannets. He pointed out that the success rate for gannets was low unless they could be returned to the wild in a day or two, but they would do what they could at no charge. Just one thing though, they didn't have the staff to go out and get birds, so I would have to find a way to get it to them.

Hmmm. I had seen the size of that beak and had no desire to get punctured or slashed. But I had to try. I rounded up a large cardboard box from resort housekeeping, grabbed a beach towel, and headed back to the beach. By the time I returned, the gannet had moved 40-50 yards north with 10-15 people, including one very concerned 6-yr old, watching it from a respectful distance. One of the watchers had some experience handling raptors and volunteered to help me capture the gannet.

The plan was quite simple, really: walk slowly up to the gannet, ignore the clacking bill and warning vocalizations, then quickly toss the towel over its head and grab it firmly but gently. This reminded me of my older sister's plan years ago to catch a skunk by sneaking up behind it and dropping a box over its head, but that's another story. I didn't have a Plan B, so I had to go with it.

The plan worked quite well except that the person responsible for tossing the towel and controlling the beak, that being me, got a bit nervous when the gannet looked to be aiming for a spot between my eyes. The first attempt failed as the gannet flipped the towel off just as I reached for its head. I really didn't want to shed blood even for the noble cause of saving the gannet, and I pulled back. On the second attempt I was much quicker, tossing the towel over its head and grabbing its neck almost at the same time. The raptor guy held the wings and lifted the body while I kept the beak pointed in a safe direction. In no time the gannet was sitting quietly in the box, enduring its first ever car ride to the vet's.

I still don't know what was best for the gannet, but somehow we all felt like we'd done a good deed for the day. I didn't know if the vet was able to save the gannet or not as I left the Outer Banks the next day, but I preferred to tell my daughter that the vet would do all he could for it, leaving the question of its survival open for thought. She was pleased to have helped the bird and even switched from referring to it as "the gander" to "the gannet". A budding birder? Maybe, maybe not, but she identified with the bird, and that's a start toward appreciating the natural world. Almost as good, her faith in my dadliness, that nearly impossible to live up to dad-can-do-anything intangible, is safe for at least a little longer.

Participate in Citizen Science and Make a Difference!

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is gearing up for another season of our conservation project, Birds in Forested Landscapes. BFL could sure use the help of Tennessee birders and wildlife professionals. The project seeks to understand the relationship between birds and their habitat so that land managers can make informed decisions about forested landscapes and the birds depend upon. This year, we've expanded BFL to include some 50 species; in the past, we've focused only on thrushes and Cooper's and Sharp-shinned hawks. Results from a similar study, Project Tanager, resulted in a publication now available from the Lab, "Land Manager's Guide to Improving Habitat for Scarlet Tanagers and Other Forest-Interior Birds," available at <http://birds.cornell.edu/conservation/tanager/>

We also are in dire need of data about Golden-winged Warblers in Tennessee. If you can participate in the Golden-winged Warbler Atlas project, you would be making a big difference for this species of high conservation concern. GOWAP engages birders and professional biologists to survey and conduct point counts at known and potential breeding sites of Golden-winged Warblers.

Currently, 2 people in Tennessee are already involved in BFL, and 4 on board for GOWAP. If you are one of them, thank you! If you can get involved, email me privately for more info. You can also learn more about BFL at

<http://birds.cornell.edu/bfl> and GOWAP at <http://birds.cornell.edu/gowap>

All project material is sent free of charge. Both are a great way to gain field experience and can be easily worked into fieldwork you may already be conducting. Please share this with other birders, biologists, and anyone else you think may be interested in helping out with BFL and/or GOWAP.

Thank you for your support! Keep watching the Birds

Brian S. Mingle

Public Outreach Assistant

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Ten Favorite Humminbird Plants

By Martha Sargent

1. **Coral Honeysuckle** - Tough and very cold hardy. Loaded with nectar and the hummers love it. Trouble free.
- Shrimp Plant** - For the deep-south only, except in hanging baskets. In the north start next year's plants from cuttings rooted in water.
2. **Penstemon** - Extremely cold-hardy. Many varieties and colors. Sprawling evergreen in the south. Okay for pots. May do better in cooler climates.
3. **CardinalClimber** - Morning Glory family. Best for southern states. Bright red with tons of nectar. Reseeding annual. Share seeds with friends.
4. **Cardinal Flower** - Cold hardy. Great in pots, even submerged in water gardens. Produces little nectar but hummers attracted to dazzling red shafts of color and tiny insects at blossoms.
5. **Texas Sage** - reseeding annual that can be grown almost anywhere. Also great in pots, large or small. Cold hardy and dripping with nectar. This is a must for your garden *anywhere*.
6. **Petunia** - Great in hanging baskets, pots or gardens. Long-time favorite for attracting hummers to your yard. Not a lot of nectar, but the vibrant colors do the trick. Best in mid-US and southward.
7. **Impatiens** - Cold hardy annual – does well in shade. Super for pots and hanging baskets. Needs lots of water. Bright colors a huge bonus especially in the fall.
8. **Salvia Greggii** - Perennial woody shrub in the south. Great in poor, dry soils. Very hardy, several varieties and colors. Ours continues blooming in mid-November. Southern one-third of the US.
9. **Anise Scented Sage** - *Guaranticia!* Remember the name. Southern US it is perennial to at least the Alabama/Tennessee border. Big, tall luscious purple *nectar-factory!* Try it wherever you live, just in case you have a mild winter in the north.
10. **Bee Balm** - Annual. Wild varieties and cultivars are wonderful. Needs sun and lots of room to spread.

Wanted: Your Sightings

As many of you know, The Migrant, published by TOS, and North American Birds, published by ABA, rely on sightings submitted by birders for their seasonal sighting reports. These reports are invaluable aids for those researchers looking for trends in bird population dynamics. I encourage you all to submit your sightings for inclusion in these journals so that we can learn more about changes in distribution and population of bird species in our area and so that, through the conservationists who make use of this data, we can help the birds themselves.

The winter reporting season for The Migrant and North American Birds covers from 1 December through 28 February. Please send your sightings to Dean Edwards 8537 Carl Valentine Circle Knoxville, TN 37931. Include any bird sightings from our area that you feel are interesting, including unusual species, early or late arrivals and migrants, or high numbers of individuals. The information he needs is what species was seen and when, where and by whom it was seen.

Reminder: Knox County Spring Count Sunday, April 29th

As always, you are encouraged to get out enjoy the spring migration by counting birds anywhere in Knox County, including your own feeder.

New Books in the Works

The Alabama Ornithological Society has written and is selling "A Birder's Guide to Alabama." Its 368 pages, 75 illustrations, 50 maps and helpful bar charts will help you find birds everywhere from Dauphin Island to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. To get more information and to order, go to our web site, <http://www.bham.net/aos>

Larry Gardella
President, AOS
tanangerlfg@aol.com

"Birdwatching in Greene County [NY]"

FREE from: The Greene County Promotion Department
PO Box 527 Catskill, NY 12414

Brochure includes a checklist, site guide and directions to birding sites in this upstate New York county (~2 hrs. or 125 miles north of NYC). Area includes the freshwater tidal reaches of the Hudson River to the Catskill high peaks (Bicknell's Thrush). Also, some very fine photos by Warren Greene.

Richard Guthrie (author)
gaeltic@capital.net

Upcoming Field Trips

Thurs, May 3 Sharp's Ridge. Leader Tony Headrick (687-9956). Meet at the ranger's house. The walk will be along the road in Sharp's Ridge Memorial Park. Spring migrants are the object of this field trip. Orioles, grosbeaks, warblers, and other spring migrants are expected.

Sat. May 19. 7:00 am Cross Mountain . Leader Bob Collier (938-4050). Meet at Engles parking lot at I-75 and Emory at 7:00am. Target birds are Warblers, Tanagers, Orioles, Grosbeaks and others. Bring insect repellent, lunch and a drink. This is reputed to be one of the best field trips of the spring.

Sat June 23 Field Trip to Cades Cove for bird banding.

KTOS Silent Auction

Everyone loves an auction, and what could be better than an auction of bird books, feeders, and other bird-stuff? KTOS will be holding a silent auction to raise money for our chapter's education and conservation projects, and we need everyone to pitch in!! What we need are bird-related items that we can include in a silent auction: extra copies of field guides; bird feeders or houses; stationary; or anything else bird-related that you can donate to the club. We plan to hold the auction at the May club meeting, at which Dr. David Pitts will be our special guest speaker, so that we have a large audience of interested bidders (and birders!). So bring anything you want to donate to the next meeting, and we'll add to our collection of items to include in the auction. If you can think of a local business that might want to contribute some items, by all means ask--you never know what people are willing to donate.

Membership Information - Individual - \$18; Family - \$20; Sustaining \$28; Life - \$200 (state TOS only - local add'l \$8 per year); Student (High School and earlier) - \$8. Dues payment covers membership in both the State TOS organization and the Knoxville Chapter, with subscriptions to *through the biKnoxulars*, our chapter newsletter (nine times per year), *The Tennessee Warbler*, our state newsletter (four times per year), and *the Migrant*, our state quarterly journal. Please send payment to the Treasurer at the address below. Please notify Treasurer and Editor of changes of address.

TOS HOME PAGE: [HTTP://WWW.TNBIRDS.ORG](http://www.tnbirds.org)

PRESIDENT.....Chris Welsh
5337 Hickory Hollow Rd
Knoxville, TN 37919 766-0368
cwelsh@utk.edu

VICE-PRESIDENT.....David Trently
1029 Morrow Road
Knoxville, TN 37923 531-1473
tn_mockers@hotmail.com

TREASURER.....Bob Steffy
7619 Charlton Road
Knoxville, TN 37920 579-3674
robertsteffy@aol.com

SECRETARY.....Jean Alexander
3908 Riverview Dr
Maryville, TN 37804 977-0052
jjadmj@knoxnews.infi.net

EDITOR.....Christine Tankersley
2924 Jenkins Street
Knoxville, TN 37921 673-0931
cytanker@yahoo.com

through the biKNOXulars (USPS 697-010)
Published monthly, except January, July and August, by the Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society, 2924 Jenkins St, Knoxville, TN 37921-1905.
Subscription Price \$8.00. Periodical Postage paid at Knoxville, TN 37901. POST-MASTER: Send changes of address to *through the biKNOXulars*, 2924 Jenkins St, Knoxville, TN 37921-1905.