



Newsletter of the Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

Meeting: Wednesday, February 7th 7:30 pm at UT Vet School

For our February meeting, Don Collins, owner of the Wild Birds Unlimited store in the Gallery Shopping Center, and donor of several of our recent monthly door prizes, will bring in a variety of products for backyard bird enjoyment, such as feeders, watering devices, food, etc. Come and learn about some of the new items available.

February Field Trips

Saturday, February 3rd 8:00am

Hiwassee Wildlife Management Area

We will meet in the UT Ag campus parking lot (CFN1). The group will head down to Hiwassee WMA for Sandhill Crane Viewing Days sponsored by the Chattanooga Chapter of the TOS. Sandhill Cranes are the target bird but Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles are a good possibility. We should see a good number of ducks as well.

Sunday, February 25th 8:30 am

Forks of the River WMA

Leaders: Christine and Roger Tankersley

We will meet at the Ijams Nature center and caravan over to the WMA, where parking is limited. We will primarily be looking for sparrows, but you never know what else we might find!

Volunteer Needed for KTOS Bird Hotline

We desperately need someone to take control of the KTOS Wild Bird Hotline. This should be someone who subscribes to TN-Birds who is willing to scan the listserv bird reports and report noteworthy sightings to the phone hotline. The hotline can be a great resource for out-of-town birders and those without computer access. If we don't start using the hotline, we'll lose it, so please step right up! Hotline number is 865-577-4717 ext 80.

KTOS Needs You!

We will be electing new officers this spring. Please contact Chris Welsh (cwelsh@utk.edu or 766-0368) if you are interested in serving the club or would like to nominate someone else for President, Vice-president, Treasurer, or Secretary. Active participation is rewarding and gives you a chance to help shape and define KTOS.

The Great Backyard Bird Count February 16-19

The Great Backyard Bird Count will take place this year February 16 - 19. If you haven't heard, the GBBC asks families, individuals, classrooms, and community groups to count the numbers and kinds of birds that visit their feeders, local parks, schoolyards, and other areas during any or all of the four count days. Reports are made online at BirdSource www.birdsource.org. The count was developed and is managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. We invite you to check out results for your state from GBBC's past.

To participate, count the highest number of each bird species seen at one time (to ensure the birds are not counted more than once) during any or all of the count days (don't add the days together!) and keep track of the amount of time spent counting. Then log on to www.birdsource.org and click on the appropriate state or province for a checklist. Results are updated at the web site hourly in the form of animated maps and colorful graphs. The site includes bird-watching and bird-feeding tips, bird vocalizations, and you are invited to review results from GBBCs past.

Sandhill Crane Viewing Days February 3-4, 2001

The ninth annual Cherokee Indian Heritage and Sandhill Crane Viewing Days' event is set for February 3-4, 2001 at the TWRA's Hiwassee Refuge and the nearby Birchwood School.

The event, which is free to the public, will feature programs and displays all day on Saturday, February 3, at the Birchwood School and crane viewing on both days at the Hiwassee Refuge. This year committed speakers include Dr. Richard Urbanek, USFW authority on cranes, on the topic of the Proposed Introduction of a Migratory Population of Whooping Cranes to the Eastern Flyway and Dr. Theda Perdue, UNC Cherokee Indian Specialist, on The Evolution of Cherokee Indian Society.

In addition, programs to be presented include: Dr. Brett Riggs on the Unicoi Turnpike, Historic and Prehistoric; TWRA's Richard Kirk on Threats to the Area Mussels; Dr. Ralph Dimmick on The Bobwhite Quail, an Imperiled Species?; Dr. Hill Craddock on Returning the American Chestnut Tree; Randy Brown on The Smith Bend Campaign, and Ken Dubke on the nearby Cherokee Memorial. Of special interest will be a performance by the "Ani-Kuwih" or Mulberry Dancers under the guidance of Myrtle Driver, the Tribal Cultural Traditionalist of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians. The group will perform traditional dances and demonstrate blowguns.

For more information call write Meigs County Tourism (423) 334-5850. For specific program information call Ken Dubke, Event Coordinator at (423) 499-3584.

Presidential Perch

by Chris Welsh

February already? When I lived in New England, February always felt like the dead of winter. Here in Tennessee, in spite of occasional temperature dips down to the 20's, it feels like winter is losing it's grip. We may still get some winter weather, but the crocuses showing their heads in the yard are saying "Get ready, spring is just around the corner".

That was the focus of our January planning meeting: develop a game plan to tackle this spring. One of our first challenges is to nominate several Important Bird Areas (IBA) from our region. The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has developed a set of criteria used to evaluate IBA submissions from all across the country to identify and protect a network of sites to help maintain naturally occurring bird populations. For more information on the program, go to the ABC website IBA page (<http://www.abcbirds.org/aboutiba.htm>). We are currently pushing along three sites for IBA status: Sharp's Ridge, Great Smoky Mountain National Park, and Forks of the River Wildlife Management Area. If you'd like to help complete the IBA forms or provide bird data from any of these sites, let me know and I will put you in touch with the coordinator for the site. Our next planning meeting (21 Feb) will be devoted to polishing up the forms for each of these sites.

With spring coming, birders will be flocking to Sharp's Ridge. Anyone who has been there has surely noticed that trash detracts from the overall birding experience. Students Promoting Environmental Action in Knoxville (SPEAK), an organization at the Univ. of Tennessee, is planning a Sharp's Ridge clean up day in early March. This is an opportunity for us to show our commitment to beautifying an area many of us visit regularly, and hopefully this will rub off on the city and lead to better upkeep of the area. And it will make those April and May birding trips that much easier on the eyes.

Growth of KTOS continues to be a concern. Attendance at meetings is down. What can we do to interest members to come to meetings and to attract new members? Bob Steffy has volunteered to start the ball rolling on a 20 minute introduction to birding slide program that we can present to garden clubs and other interested parties. Birding is a popular activity, yet we haven't managed to connect with many local birders. We may eventually end up with several short programs: Introduction to birds, Where to go birding in Knoxville, How to attract birds to your home. Please contact me if you are interested in helping develop short programs or have ideas on what to include in the programs. If you have some really good bird slides you'd be willing to donate, stay tuned as we determine just which species we want to highlight.

Our efforts this spring will culminate in the May meeting. Some may remember the wonderful presentation Dr. David Pitts gave on bluebirds last year. He'll be back to talk chickadees this time. Most likely this will be the occasion at which we'll unveil our silent auction. Thanks to those who have already donated items for the auction. If you run across any bird- or nature-related items during spring cleaning, consider donating them for the KTOS auction. International Migratory Bird Day is also in early May, and we will be producing a fine display to introduce people to the wonders of migratory birds.

KTOS Supports Outdoor Classroom Project in Morgan County

The Knoxville chapter of the TOS has helped to fund an outdoor classroom project in Morgan County. Jo Hardin, a science teacher at Oakdale's K-12 school, and Nathan Klaus, a former KTOS member now working in the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Nongame Wildlife Program, have collaborated for several years to develop this project. The goal is simple: to foster a greater conservation ethic by educating students on the ecology and natural history of the Cumberland Mountains. By applying lessons learned in biology/ecology classes to their immediate surroundings we hope that students in the Morgan County school system will come to understand and more fully appreciate the spectacular natural history of east Tennessee.

Ongoing work includes an interpretive nature trail along the rim of the Emory River gorge which has educational signs about the history of Oakdale, the ecology of fire in the landscape, wildlife habitat, natural succession and other topics. Trails down to two ponds on school property facilitate access for lessons from TVA employees and volunteers on water quality and aquatic resources. The Tennessee Division of Forestry has burned a section next to the interpretive trail, giving students valuable lessons on fire ecology, natural succession and fire safety. A sand pit baited with old sardines gives students a chance to learn their animal tracks. Finally, a bird blind that holds up to 20 students has been built and lesson plans developed on bird behavior, bird song, and feeding guilds.

Funds from KTOS will be used in part to buy binoculars for students for use on the nature trail and in the bird blind. Anyone wishing to learn more about this project or volunteer their time can contact Nathan Klaus at 912-475-9561. Field guides are also needed, so if anyone has used field guides they would like to donate to the project, contact Nathan. Birding magazines are also welcomed.

- Chris Welsh

KYKER BOTTOMS FIELD TRIP REPORT

Seven adventuresome birders participated in the KTOS field trip to Kyker Bottoms WMA, January 20th, in less than ideal weather conditions. Despite the conditions, we had a good day with 51 species recorded. The group consisted of our leader Bill Smith, the refuge manager, Dollyann Myers, Ron Hoff, Anthony Whitted, Meredith Clebsch, Dan & Laurie Mooney. The recent rain has flooded the bottoms with more water than is ideal, but the ducks don't seem to mind. Bill's estimate was that we saw around 600 ducks. Anthony found the best bird of the day, a SEDGE WREN. The bird gave us some good looks along the edge of some broom sedge.

The list of ducks included: Green winged and blue winged teal, American black duck, northern pintail, northern shoveler, gadwall, American wigeon, Bufflehead, Ring-necked, hooded merganser, and mallard. The sparrow list was pretty decent too and included: Savanna, fox, swamp, song, white-crowned, white-throated and field. Other birds of note were shrike, red-shouldered and red-tailed hawk, American Kestrel, common snipe, American Pipits, and two coveys of quail. We did not manage to find red-headed woodpeckers or any northern harriers.

Thanks again to Bill for having the group out.

- Dan Mooney

Research Help Needed

John C. Robinson, an African-American birder from California, is researching minority participation in birding. Robinson has previously published "An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Tennessee" (1990), and he is the owner of LANIUS Software.

Robinson is exploring the fact that relatively few African-American birders exist in North America, and he is trying to offer inspiration and encouragement to all minorities to become more active in birding.

You can help in his research. Details on this project and access to John's short questionnaire on this important subject are found on the ABA website: <<http://www.americanbirding.org/newsbullet11.htm>>

Robinson needs the questionnaires returned by the end of February 2001.

Smith Bend Trip Report

On Saturday, January 27th, about 20 birders from both the Knoxville and Chattanooga TOS chapters showed up for the joint field trip to Smith Bend, the parcel of land newly acquired by Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. The 4,500 acre property is a wonderful mix of upland and bottomland habitat located along the Tennessee River, just north of the Hiwassee Wildlife Management Area. We toured the area with Randy Brown of the Foothills Land Conservancy and then spent the afternoon in smaller groups, birding different areas. We recorded a total of 51 species including 3 bald eagles, a good variety of sparrows, and about 65 wild turkeys. We also got a glimpse of a medium-sized falcon (merlin or peregrine). The full list of species is included below. This list represents probably the fewest species that will be recorded for this time of year on the area because there will be much more bird management in place next year, especially in the area of wetlands development and establishment of native warm season grasslands.

Species List:

Great Blue Heron (1); Chipping Sparrow; Mallard (one flock of about 15 on river); Field Sparrow; Black Vulture (~10); Fox Sparrow; Turkey Vulture (~10); Song Sparrow; Bald Eagle (3) Swamp Sparrow; Sharp-shinned Hawk (2); White-throated Sparrow; Cooper's Hawk (2); Dark-eyed Junco; Red-shouldered Hawk (2); Red-winged Blackbird; Red-tailed Hawk (~10); Purple Finch; Falco spp. (either Merlin or Peregrine); American Goldfinch; Wild Turkey (65 in one flock); Sandhill Crane (several flocks flying over area); Killdeer (1); Rock Dove; Mourning Dove; Belted Kingfisher (1); Red-bellied Woodpecker; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Downy Woodpecker; Hairy Woodpecker; Pileated Woodpecker; Eastern Phoebe; Blue Jay; American Crow; Carolina Chickadee; Eastern Tufted Titmouse; White-breasted Nuthatch; Brown Creeper; Carolina Wren; Winter Wren; Golden-crowned Kinglet; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Eastern Bluebird; Hermit Thrush; American Robin; Northern Mockingbird; Brown Thrasher; Pine Warbler; Yellow-rumped Warbler; Northern Cardinal; Eastern Towhee.

- Dr. David Buehler

Web News:

Here is a new website you might find interesting. It puts travelling birders in touch with each other all over the world and has just been improved to make it easier to use. In North America you can find contacts in 57 states and provinces. If you travel overseas, find contacts in all major countries in Europe, The Middle East, Asia and South America as well as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Bookmark the new improved <http://www.birdingpal.com> and meet a fellow birder next time you travel.

SHARPS RIDGE CLEAN UP

KTOS in co-operation with SPEAK (Students for Proactive Environmental Action in Knoxville) will be doing a trash clean up on Sharps Ridge in March. The tentative date is 3/10. We also hope to get the assistance of the Knoxville City Parks and Recreation department to paint the tables and pavilions to cover the graffiti. Let's help make Sharps Ridge a place where we will be pr

There's a Journal Out There That Needs You

Its title – North American Birds, formerly known as Field Notes and American Birds. Why does it need you? Subscription is lagging. Yes, it is up from the magazine's final days with the National Audubon Society (when it was known as Field Notes), but the circulation is not yet high enough to pay for the magazine's production costs.

Why should you care? Because North American Birds (and its previous incarnations) has been tracking bird status-and-distribution for decades, providing an unparalleled source of information on North American bird records. Many of the finding guides, state bird guides have relied heavily on this magazine for information. Indeed, some of these books would have been extraordinarily difficult to produce without North American Birds as a resource.

There have been a lot of changes recently, so please, let us update you:

The backbone of North American Birds is the Regional Reports. The United States and Canada (plus the West Indies) are broken into 26 regions, and for each region there is a seasonal report of unusual bird records. These Regional Reports are an excellent way to learn of North American status-and-distribution, plus they can be just downright fun. There are color photos of many of the more exotic vagrants and reading about extraordinary finds can be a hoot, even if the bird was found 2000 miles away. We try hard to put each sighting in context, so that you can really understand why each record is unusual, which will enhance your knowledge and appreciation of status-and-distribution in your region as well.

But there is more — For most of the time this magazine was Field Notes, it was essentially just the Regional Reports. Now, however, articles have been added back in. These articles have included such excellent topics as the Bristle-thighed Curlew landfall and the explosion of Eur. Collared-Doves across North America. With a new and excellent editor, Michael Patten, the quality and number of articles will steadily improve.

So, we urge you to consider subscribing to North American Birds if you are not already doing so. To subscribe, go to <http://208.56.18.90/nabform.htm> or call the ABA at 800-634-7736. The cost is \$28/year for ABA members, \$30/year for non-members. This magazine needs your support to continue its mission of studying and tracking the status-and-distribution of North American Birds. In return, your knowledge and appreciation of such will grow.

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

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CARA News

December 21, 2000

The Commerce, Justice and State (CJS) appropriations bill signed by President Clinton on December 21, 2000 includes a keystone measure that will provide \$50 million this year directly to state wildlife agencies for wildlife conservation. It is a down payment on the provisions of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) that Congress failed to pass.

The measure President Clinton signed is significant on two fronts. First, at \$50 million, it is the first time Congress has approved a substantial appropriation devoted exclusively to state wildlife management agencies. The struggle to secure funding that state agencies can use to manage all wildlife species started with the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act which has been on the books since 1980, but has never received any funding. Second, the measure creates a new account under existing state wildlife funding law expressly for "species of the greatest conservation concern," language that is intended to target funds to non-game wildlife, the great majority of species that are neither hunted or fished nor threatened or endangered. In addition, funds from the new account will flow directly to the states under an equitable formula basis, instead of having the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service apportion them as grants based on complicated guidelines.

"We've set a vital precedent in getting these funds approved," said Jodi Applegate, National Wildlife Federation Conservation Funding project coordinator. "The \$350 million for state agencies that CARA would have provided annually on a long-term basis remains our goal. We know there is strong bipartisan interest among members of the coming Congress to complete important elements of CARA that the last Congress left undone. With renewed support from the grassroots, we believe that completing that work can become a conservation priority for the 107th Congress."

While not as good as the full CARA, this and the prior signing of the Interior Appropriations Bill, provide what we call "CARA-Lite" funding for this fiscal year. Each legislation theoretically could provide Tennessee's wildlife, with focus on nongame, with roughly \$850,000 this fiscal year. The Interior funding is competitive among states, and then proposed projects would be subject to approval by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees before use. The CJS funds are therefore much more dependable for this 1-year appropriation and can be utilized by each individual state. TWRA and some of its colleagues, including the Tennessee Ornithological Society, are soon to begin planning sessions for developing priorities for "CARA-Lite" projects, as well as laying the groundwork for Full CARA funding in future years.

Bob Hatcher
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

January 22, 2001

Two senior Congressmen today sent a letter to President Bush seeking his Administration's early support for the Enactment of the bipartisan "Conservation and Reinvestment Act" (CARA) – landmark legislation which would provide almost \$45 billion for wildlife and land conservation, recreation and coastal restoration programs over the next 15 years.

In a letter to Bush, U.S. Reps. Don Young (R-Alaska) and John Dingell (D-MI) stated that "we firmly believe that your Administration, The Congress and the American people would be well served to have a common-sense environmental bill as a key component of your first agenda."

"CARA Would Be An Excellent bipartisan bill to pass during the first 100 days of the Bush administration," said Rep. Young. "Last year, we had the opportunity to pass CARA into law but the Clinton Administration settled for a one-year appropriation," said Young "This bipartisan legislation deserves to be signed into law."

"CARA enjoyed the support of 315 House Members, more than 60 Senators and all 50 Governors. The bill was supported by more than 6,000 organizations including the nations mayors and county officials. CARA would be an excellent opportunity to pass a significant bipartisan bill during the first 100 days of the new Bush Administration," said Young, who was the original sponsor of CARA in the 106th Congress.

Dingell looks forward to working with President Bush on CARA. "I trust that President Bush will see the merits in making this landmark legislation an early priority of his administration," said Dingell. "As a Governor, he supported enactment of a broad federal conservation measure. Now that he's President, I look forward to working with him to get the job done."

Young and Dingell intend to reintroduce CARA in the House within the next week.

Forwarded by Daniel Moss



ECUADOR
 Experience the Rainforest
 June 11-24, 2001



<http://www.ijams.org/Pages/ecuador.html>

Join Ijams Nature Center naturalist, Todd Witcher, on a journey to one of the world's most beautiful and diverse sites: Ecuador. Stay at Alinahui, an ecotourist lodge on the banks of the Napo river in the eastern Ecuadorian lowlands, one of the world's richest zones in biodiversity due to the confluence of 2 distinct ecosystems. Situated on the upper Napo River basin, Alinahui is ideal for both scientific investigation and a unique travel destination.

Highlights of this trip include:

Ecuador's rainforest - includes 10 % of the world's flora and fauna

Indigenous culture - live as the natives live with a 3-day stay in a Quicha village

Conservation - participate in rainforest and cultural conservation programs

Birders paradise - add many birds to your life list, including the Andean Condor, the world's largest flighted bird

Wildlife rehab center - see tapirs, capabarras, boas, tamarins, toucans and more

For more information or to register, call Todd P Witcher at 577-4717 x 16 or email twitcher@ijams.org

SEVENTH ANNUAL TOS MIDWINTER BIRDING WEEKEND

REELFOOT LAKE AREA OF TENNESSEE AND KENTUCKY FEBRUARY 9 - 11, 2001

Trip Coordinator: David Trently (dtrently@utk.edu; (865) 531-1473 home; (865) 974-8664 work)

This is the first time in history that the TOS Winter Birding Weekend will be based in Tennessee. This weekend will also take the place of the TOS Winter Meeting and we are inviting our neighbors to the north, the Kentucky Ornithological Society, to join us. The Reelfoot Lake area always offers excellent birding opportunities, but it has been a long time since TOS has visited there for an organized event in winter. We should see lots of ducks and Bald Eagles. Special efforts will be made to find the following species: Short-eared Owl, Lapland Longspur, American Tree Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Brewer's Blackbird, Western Meadowlark.

There will be birding in both Kentucky and Tennessee, and we may be able to look across the Mississippi River at some birds in Missouri.

Lodging: A few rooms have been reserved at the Airpark Inn. Call NOW to reserve yours! (800) 250-8617. 10% discount for senior citizens. Rates are: Doubles: \$72.80/night, including tax

Camping, with full hookups: \$17/night. Tent camping (shower facilities available): \$11/night

Other Lodging:

The new Reelfoot Lake Inn - Phone: (901) 253-6845, e-mail: keefes@reelfootlakeinn.com. \$59 + tax. This is up to 3 people. Additional \$5 + tax/person. Senior rate: \$53.10 + tax. All rooms have 2 queen and 1 twin bed. Continental breakfast served each day. Located on the south side of the lake a little over a mile from the 4-way stop in Tiptonville. You may visit their website at www.reelfootlakeinn.com.

Also, see <http://www.lakereelfoot.com/> for a lot more information about lodging, dining and much more.

Friday: Official start of birding will be 1:00 p.m. Central Time. Those who can, meet at the Airpark Inn boardwalk. I will try to post an anticipated sequence of sites we will visit, so those arriving later can find us. Birding will continue until after sunset as we listen for owls.

Saturday: No meetings are scheduled. You should bring a lunch, as there is no guarantee we will be near any places to buy food for lunch. Birding will continue throughout the daylight hours.

Sunday: Morning birding may be to search for any target species we have missed. At 10:00, there is the option of an organized eagle tour. This is \$4/person, reservations required (contact Airpark Inn). This runs 10:00 - noon. Birding will continue for those not taking this tour. We will probably meet at the Airpark Inn for a noon compilation.