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through the **biKNOXulars**

Newsletter of the Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

Rankin Bottoms Project detailed at next meeting: October 1, 7 PM

October's presenters, Michael Sledjeski and Leslie Gibbens, will be discussing the Rankin Bottoms Project. (If this topic sounds familiar to you, you aren't mistaken. Last year they tried to give this presentation but flooding kept them away.) Michael and Leslie first visited Rankin Bottoms in their canoe in 1999. Since then they have explored much of the backwaters of Rankin Bottoms and have even created a canoe trail.

Rankin Bottoms lies where the French Broad and Nolichucky River come together to form Douglas Lake in Cocke County. It is a unique natural area with significant seasonal changes: a winter field, springtime wetland and green meadow in the fall. It is known among birders as fall hotspot for migratory shorebirds during the TVA dam drawdown.

Part of Rankin Bottoms is a wildlife management area, but much of the surrounding area is privately owned, leaving its future up in the air. The Rankin

Bottoms Project seeks support for protection and enhancement of the wildlife habitat in the area.

The trail Michael and Leslie created is a general course to follow with side trails. They have put up a few signs along the trail and they distribute a paddler's guide with the trail map. This summer they led small groups in canoes through the backwater pools.

Please invite your family and friends to join us to hear more about the efforts to protect Rankin Bottoms, as well as the canoe trail. Michael's and Leslie's slideshow includes aerial photographs, birds found at Rankin Bottoms, as well as pictures taken from a canoe. We will meet, as usual, in Room 117 (across the hall from Pendergrass Library), UT Vet School on Center Drive off Neyland Drive. The meeting is Wednesday, October 1 at 7 p.m. See you there!

- Tracey Muise, program coordinator

 MARK YOUR CALENDAR

October birding events. Let's get together!

Friday-Sunday, October 3-5

Fall State Meeting, Nashville. See page 4.

Saturday, October 18, 4 PM

Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge. See page 1.

Saturday, October 25, 8 AM

*Kyker Bottoms Wildlife Management Area.
See page 2.*

Saturday, October 18, 4 PM

Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge, East Knox County

Leader: David Trently (dtrently@utk.edu; 974-8664 w; 531-1473 h)

Leave at 4:00 p.m. from the Comcast parking lot (formerly the K-Mart parking lot) on US Highway 11E, or meet at Seven Islands at approximately 4:20 p.m. Take the first exit from I-40 east of the junction of I-40 and I-640, turn left on US 11E and

(Continued on page 2)

*"Blackbird singing in the dead of night, Take these sunken eyes and learn to see, All your life,
You were only waiting for this moment to be free."*

- "Blackbird," The Beatles, Lennon & McCartney, *The White Album*, 1968

Field Trips *(Continued from page 1)*

the lot is on the right at the top of the hill just before the construction for the Holston River bridge.

Seven Islands has excellent open field and riparian habitat, plus some wooded areas. We may see any normal resident bird, including raptors, sparrows and possible waterfowl along the river. We could also see some late migrants. By going in the evening we hope to hear and possibly see some owls. We'll spend about 3 hours birding here, mostly along a paved road, but also covering some open fields and the wooded area on the hill tops. Bring something to drink.

Saturday, October 25, 8 AM

Kyker Bottoms Wildlife Management Area

Leader: Frank Bills (531-8096)

Leave at 8:00 a.m. from the Stokley Building parking lot, 320 N. Cedar Bluff, Knoxville, or meet at approximately 8:45 a. m. at Kyker Bottoms. The target for this trip will be migrating waterfowl and sparrows. We

could have some relatively rare sparrows since we have excellent sparrow habitat. Last year at about this time we had a Henslow's Sparrow. We should finish at Kyker Bottoms around noon. At that time, if there is interest, we will make a lunch stop in Vonore then go on to the Chota wildlife refuge.

No outing is currently scheduled for the weekend of October 11 through October 12, 2003. Any change will be announced at the club meeting.

Good birding to all, *Harold Howell, field trip coordinator*

Bird Club Supports Girl Scout Program

At its September meeting, the Bird Club voted to provide financial support for the Feathers & Nests patch program of the Girl Scouts of Tanasi. This project—to help girls learn more about birds that live in our area—has exceptional potential to promote the welfare and conservation of birds in Tennessee.

By the end of the patch program, girls will be able to identify ways to feed birds, including the use of native plants; will build and place bird houses appropriate to our area; and will be able to identify 10 birds that live in our area. The \$500 award is provided from funds of the Bird Club treasury, including a significant contribution in memory of Louise Fuller, a past president of the Bird Club.

KTOS Financial Report • October 2003

Compiled by Marie Oakes, Financial Committee

	September	June-Aug	YTD
Income:			
. Dues	\$0.00	\$130.00	\$1,632.00
. Mugs	\$0.00	\$65.00	\$163.50
. Interest	\$0.00	\$42.22	\$83.85
. Misc Donation	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7.50
. Spring Meeting	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,909.00
. Owen Memorial	\$0.00	\$38.70	\$1,209.70
. Fuller Memorial	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$350.00</u>	<u>\$420.00</u>
Total Income	\$0.00	\$625.92	\$6,425.55
Expenses:			
. Newsletter	\$235.00	\$90.00	\$887.10
. Supplies	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$87.31
. Member Dues to TOS	\$0.00	\$104.00	\$1,344.00
. Spring Meeting Expense	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$2,313.46</u>
Total Expenses	\$235.00	\$194.00	\$4,631.87
Other:			
. Foothills Conservancy	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$250.00
. Friends of UT Gardens	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$60.00
. Fuller Memorial	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$120.00
. Girl Scouts of Tanasi Council	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
. Memorial Books	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$90.00</u>
Total Other	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$1,020.00
Account Balances			
. KTOS Checking & Savings	\$4,372.64	\$5,107.64	
. J.B. Owen Memorial	\$5,587.36	\$5,587.36	
Memberships			
	164	164	

J.B. Owen Award for Kestrel Research

The Bird Club has selected Jennifer Powers, a graduate student at East Tennessee State University, to receive a J.B. Owen Award of \$500 to support research on the reproductive success and natal dispersal of American Kestrels.

The backbone for Jennifer's project is the trail of twenty-five American Kestrel nestboxes along Interstate 181 in Sullivan, Washington and Unicoi Counties. The trail has been active for six nesting seasons but never fully evaluated for nesting and fledgling success. Jennifer will determine how successful the trail is and how it compares with kestrel nestbox trails in other regions.

In its review of Jennifer's proposal, the J.B. Owen Endowment Committee concluded that Jennifer's project provides an outstanding opportunity for use of J.B. Owen Funds to promote the welfare and conservation of birds in Tennessee.

'Not worthy' on Roane Mountain - by Janet McKnight

My best possible dream day would be a day in Africa with Jane Goodall. My second best, going to Chicago to meet Oprah Winfrey. My third, I had it recently. Here's how it all happened.

I read on *birdingonthe.net* that Kenn Kaufman was leading a hike at Roane Mountain on Sunday, September 7. So I called my friend Kim Henry and said "I had a spur-of-the-moment idea and I thought of you!" True to my thinking, Kim was up to the adventure of hitting the road at 4:30 a.m. for a chance to see Kenn Kaufman. But of course! It was Kenn Kaufman, the Roger Tory Peterson of my generation, and I'm a huge fan.

I met him briefly at the Crane Festival last February. I got great pictures of him and my son as Kenn helped with an educational children's program, which is featured in an article in October's *Birder's World*. After having met him and seeing him as a speaker, I wrote him a fan letter as soon as I got home. In the letter, I wrote that the first time he met his hero Peterson he must have felt awed, inspired, humbled and honored, which is the same way I felt when I met one of my heroes, Kenn Kaufman. I thanked him for being such a huge champion of wildlife. I told him that he is a hilarious speaker. And finally, I enclosed a picture of him sitting with my son Devon. I wrote that if Devon is the birder I hope he will be someday, the picture will be priceless to him. It was my first fan letter. I was that inspired.

So driving to Roane Mountain was a "must do" for me, and thankfully, for Kim as well. I said to Kim along the way that there should be such a huge crowd, we probably would not get a chance to talk to him. But that's OK, we'll settle for looking at the hunk. We were the first to arrive at the meeting place, followed by about 30 others, and then, Kenn Kaufman. The other trip leader, Larry McDaniel, happened to mention that he and Kenn had room in their car for two, and my car happened to be on empty. I jumped on that one so quickly, no one else had a chance. I broke the world record for hand raising. Suddenly, to our disbelief, Kim and I were getting in a car with Kenn Kaufman. Kim and I settled into the back seat with Kenn in the front passenger seat. He turned around to us and said, "So, what are your names?" I said, "I'm Janet McKnight and you?" No, we said, "We are not worthy! We are worms!" No, that's what we wanted to say. But we, as calmly as possible, said our names and began a surreal conversation with Kenn Kaufman. I was amazed at what a nice person he is, so easy to talk to, so easy with laughter and so down to earth. I showed him the picture of him with my son in *Birder's World* and the photo I keep of him and Devon in my field guide. He said, "You sent me that

picture and a letter." "Yes, I did," I responded.

The car ride to Carver's Gap was awesome! But next came my favorite part. When we got to the gap, there were about 50 birders gathered, including some fellow club members. And who gets out of the car with Kenn Kaufman but little ol' me! I was "high-five"ing Charlie and Tracey, saying, "Way to run out of gas and ride with Kenn Kaufman!" Charlie said, "Yeah sure Janet, that worked with some guy in high school, you thought you'd try it again!" I truly was almost out of gas; we would have been ditched on that mountain for sure.

Carver's Gap is breathtaking. I had never been there before. I got my first Common Raven right away and my first Red Crossbills soon thereafter. The weather was perfect. Rick Knight was banding birds, which is something I had never seen before. The birding was spectacular, a constant stream of migration activity. The group was a fun mix of people; and then there was Kenn, all of us hanging on every word, all of us honored to be birding with this legend.

At one point two juvenile male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks landed at the top of a conifer and poised for good looks. The vision in my binoculars was beauty perfected. I said, "Oh that's my O.O." Silence. Kenn was standing next to me and I said, "Kenn, do you know what an O.O. is?" He didn't. One guy asked if it was a Hawaiian bird. Well, first I had to explain the origin of the acronym, how it came from legendary Knoxville birders James Tanner and J. B. Owen, and how I had learned it from Betty Reid Campbell, and then I told them what it meant. Just imagine the laughter. I taught Kenn Kaufman what an O.O. is! Betty Reid will be so proud! (Anyone, who doesn't know what an O.O. is, please ask Betty Reid or Jim Campbell.)

The morning of ineffable birding was over and Larry McDaniel asked Kim and I if we'd like to join a group having lunch with Kenn. Let's see...lunch with Kenn Kaufman...Hmmm...sure, why not? Fourteen of us, including Charlie, got to have lunch with Kenn. How does it get any better than that? For me, it did. When Kim and I were ready to leave. I went to thank Kenn. He said, "Are you doing the afternoon programs?" I said no, I had to get back to my boys. And he said, "That letter you sent me had a big impact on me. It was so nice; it made my week. Thank you." What? I made his week? Well, what I learned about Kenn Kaufman that day was that he is the preeminent birder of our time, yet he takes the time to make people feel special and accepted. Days later, I am still reeling and he makes people feel happy everywhere he goes, I'm sure. I'll have to ask Betty Reid if a whole day can be an O.O.



Presidential Perch

- By Charlie Muise

Hi folks, I'd like to start by thanking Brice Gilmer for hosting the annual fall picnic—for the 18th time in 20 years, I am told. The 19 people who braved the rain had a great time. Fortunately, we had enough people to comprise a quorum and the motion to fund the Tanasi Girl Scout program was passed unanimously. For details on this project, which will teach girls about birds, please see page two.

It is again time to go count birds! By the time you receive this, the International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) count will have been conducted. Hopefully next month we'll have a report here. Speaking of counting, it's not too late to sign up for Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). As David Trently kindly told everyone on TN-Bird listserv, there is a new method for signing up for CBCs, which looks like a big improvement. You can pre-register for as many counts as you plan to help in. And there is a maximum "donation" this year. In past years, we have had to donate \$5 to help defray the costs of compiling and publishing data. This year, if you are one of those intrepid souls who count a LOT, you don't need to pay more than \$20.

For more info check out the CBC home page at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html>

Now is an exciting time of year to bird. Rare birds found in Tennessee include two sightings of Sabines Gulls. One in northeast Tennessee, at South Holston Lake, and two birds on the Mississippi River. A new hawk watch at Purchase Knob on the NC side of Great Smoky Mountains National Park reported two Mississippi Kites and a Golden Eagle last weekend.

So please get out there and find those birds whose migratory routes are not found in books. Great places to look in our area include Kyker Bottoms (most of which closes to the public in a month or so for hunting season), Kingston Steam Plant, Norris Dam, Clinton Fish Hatchery, Rankin Bottoms and anywhere along the Tennessee River. Directions to these sites can be found on the TOS web page (which is managed by our own Chuck Nicholson). Go to www.tnbirds.org. And PLEASE report them to everyone!

- Good birding, Charlie

 MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Fall Meeting in Nashville • Oct. 3-5

The Nashville Chapter of TOS and Warner Parks is pleased to be hosting the Fall Meeting, October 3-5, 2003, with field trips to favorite locals such as Radnor Lake and Shelby Park and Bottoms.

For info go to: www.tnbirds.org/Fall03-mtg.htm



KTOS Membership

Renew your membership with KTOS by mailing your annual dues to: Jerry Hadder, 18 Rockingham Lane, Oak Ridge, TN 37830. Membership fees are \$18 for an individual and \$20 for a family. Sustaining memberships are \$28 and a Life membership with TOS is \$200 with an annual fee of \$8 to the local chapter.

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DEADLINE for the November issue is October 25

For a color version of this or past issues go to "local chapters/Knoxville" at **TOS HOME PAGE: [HTTP://WWW.TNBIRDS.ORG](http://WWW.TNBIRDS.ORG)**

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