

VOLUME 31 • NUMBER 7 **October 2007**

Through the

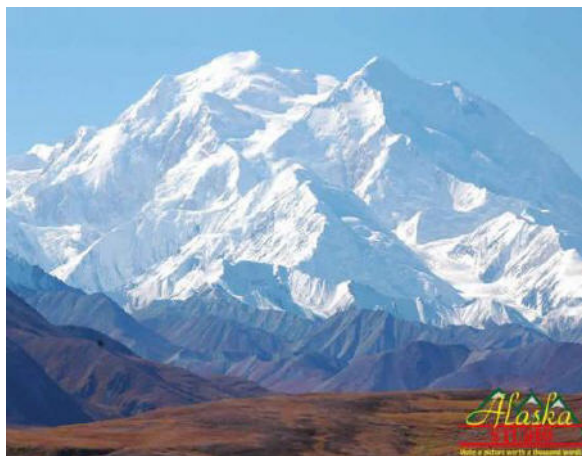
biKNOXulars

Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society



A working summer in pristine Alaska topic of October 3 program

Prescott Weldon is a senior in the UT Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries. This past summer Prescott worked with National Park Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service biologists conducting avian and mammalian research in Alaska's pristine Denali and Kenai wilderness areas. Prescott's presentation will include spectacular landscapes, photographs of Alaskan fauna and flora, and his personal experiences in one of Earth's special places. Don't miss this special presentation at 7 p.m. in room 117 of the UT Vet Building. See you on the 3rd!



Upcoming field trips

William Hastie Park/ Natural Area

Sunday, October 21

8:00 a.m.

This park is in South Knoxville. Meet at the UT Ag campus off Neyland Drive in front of Brehm Animal Science Building at 8 o'clock.

Leader: Mark Campen

Phone: #865-414-5593

mark@tnike.com

The Big Sit! Birding's Most Sedentary Event

Saturday, October 14, 2007

Team Captain: Janet Lee McKnight

The original Big Sit! location of Lenoir City Park has changed. A more suitable circle place was located at the Tellico Dam area. From 321 in Lenoir City take the 444 exit, go straight across the road and take the first right to the Tellico Dam Recreation Area; this is the local swimming hole but should not be crowded in October.

There is plenty of parking and you should find Janet in her circle.

jlmcknight@bellsouth.net

#865-271-8337 or #865-856-2229



Field trip to Kyker Bottoms Wildlife Area, Blount Co. **Sunday, October 28 8:30 a.m.**

Meet at the paved parking area at Kyker at 8:30. We'll start out birding from the blind, then wander the nearby fields looking mostly for sparrows. Eventually we'll make our way to the area near the barn where we'll look for more sparrows, plus waterfowl. Anyone who's interested may want to walk through the wet fields trying for snipe, rails, Sedge Wren... Rubber boots suggested. We'll be out there at least until noon so you may want to bring a snack and drink.

This is also a good time of year to see a few raptors, woodpeckers and some late warblers.

Leader: David Trently

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"There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before." ~Robert Lynd, The Blue Lion and Other Essays



Presidential Perch
- By Mark Campen

For our September general meeting we had a fun and productive picnic at the zoo. Those in attendance unanimously voted in proposed slate of officers. A big thank you goes out to Mark Armstrong and the Knoxville Zoo for hosting us again this year.

On October 20 we are tentatively planning to set up a display table at Mast General store in downtown Knoxville. Please join us and bring a friend that day as we reach out to potential new members and share with others information about our "bird club." I want to thank Janet McKnight and Patty Ford for volunteering to help that day. If you would also like to help set up or join us at the table, please let one of us know.

It's time to visit Sharp's Ridge again. No, not just to spot our favorite migrants; but to clean up the litter and remove non-native, invasive plants. A few years ago we adopted Sharp's Ridge as a litter free area. Join us anytime between 9 a.m. and noon on Saturday, October 13 and Sunday, October 14 to clean up one of our favorite birding spots. Some tools, trash bags, refreshments and pizza lunch will be provided. If you have some loppers and gloves, please bring them.

Please see all that is going on this month and get involved. Bird On!

FALL TOS STATE MEETING

Host chapter: "Highland Rim" Chapter
Manchester, TN
Friday November 2 - Sunday November 4
Get more information at the TOS website:
<http://www.tnbirds.org/warbler.htm>

ADOPT A MoSI STATION

Most birders have heard of the MAPS banding program (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) in recent years. This is what is happening out at our 7 Islands Wildlife Refuge and what David Vogt is involved with down in Chattanooga. The goal of banding and data collection is ultimately aimed at helping land managers to make effective decisions to counteract declines in migratory bird populations. Recent results from MAPS and other avian research programs suggest that conditions experienced by migratory land birds on their wintering grounds affect their survival, spring departure schedules, and subsequent productivity. Habitat loss and degradation on these species' tropical wintering grounds could be limiting populations, yet there is little information about habitat and geographic-related variation in the survival and late winter physical condition of these species on their wintering grounds.

MAPS is overseen by the Institute for Bird Populations (IBP) and there are roughly 500 banding stations in the U.S. Most of the Neotropical migratory birds being monitored by MAPS spend their winter in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean Islands. To help monitor these birds on their wintering grounds, IBP has started a sister program called MoSI (Monitoreo de Sobrevivencia Invernal), which is Spanish for Monitoring Overwintering Survival. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which oversees some of the funding for MoSI, notes that "data suggest that long-term population trends of forest-inhabiting migratory birds are primarily driven by their winter survival rates." David DeSante, executive director of IBP, puts it more bluntly saying "of all the funds spent to address declines in migratory species, the vast majority is spent on the birds' breeding grounds. Now, if the bottleneck is winter survival and you put all your efforts into increasing hatchlings, you are just increasing the number of birds that die each winter. Unlike MAPS, there are only 80 MoSI stations, and most of these are in areas that face severe poverty and escalating environmental degradation. Many people throughout the region remain extremely poor and employment is tenuous at best, even for trained biologists. Many of the field ornithologists have to supplement their lives by taking jobs outside their field. Each MoSI station was supported in 2005-2006 by a grant of \$640, which helps cover staffing, transportation, and equipment. It is estimated that the program would be more sustainable with around \$2000-\$3000 per station. Peter Pyle, who is the author of a handbook titled "Identification Guide to North American Birds", basically the bird bander's bible, says that these MoSI researchers understand that "the value of what they are doing is well worth the effort and personal sacrifice, which in this case is relatively small in comparison with what they deal with on a day-to-day basis.

To help fund these stations better, the researchers urgently need additional money. As a result, The Institute for Bird Populations offers an "Adopt a MoSI Station" program. When an individual or group sponsors a station with at least \$300, the sponsor receives photographs and updates from that station.

NEW SLATE OF OFFICERS

The following officers were elected at the September meeting:

President	Mark Campen
Vice-President	Mark Armstrong
Treasurer	Marie Oakes
Secretary	Kathy Bivens

Kevin Przewrocki is the new Field Trip Coordinator and Ginger Goolsby will edit the newsletter for the coming year.

Mammalian Inventory and Research at Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge

By Wayne H. Schacher

Author's note: This newsletter article continues a series on Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge in Knox County. The Knoxville Chapter of Tennessee Ornithological Society has actively supported the concept and development of SIWR, and its membership is providing invaluable information on avian fauna usage of the Refuge, and other technical assistance. The partnership with KTOS at SIWR is most gratefully appreciated.

As begun in the earlier newsletters, this article will discuss current vertebrate species inventory and survey methods ongoing at Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge for Class Mammalia, the mammals.

In last spring's discussion of the Amphibians, we opined that habitat requirements for this group were often very specific and critically-linked by life cycle stage to size, type and degree of permanence of a water body, or terrestrial and wetland habitat moisture at the microhabitat level. In the last article the more highly evolved Reptilian fauna showed greater independence from this moisture linkage and the ability to occupy a much broader range of habitat types. This trend continues with increased evolutionary diversity in mammals with warm-blooded species partitioning available habitat in terrestrial, wetland and aquatic environs and filling a diversity of niches and microhabitats, even aerial habitats.

Field observation of the animal or its 'sign' is again an important pillar of the mammalian inventory. Visual observation of whitetail deer, cottontail rabbit, gray squirrel, and groundhog are daily occurrences at SIWR, with the occasional coyote, eastern chipmunk or striped skunk encounter. Walking along the French Broad River corridor discloses recent or old cuttings by beaver, riverbank access 'runs' or scat piles ['latrines'] frequented by river otter, and mounded tunnels of eastern mole. In riverine, pond and impoundment areas, track impressions by mink and sightings of muskrats or their scat are prevalent. Walking fields and woods can reveal the bleached skulls of raccoon, striped skunk or Virginia opossum, or shed deer antlers.

Let's summarize other techniques used to date to inventory mammalian species at SIWR. As seen in previous discussions of amphibians and reptiles, a technique targeting one group can reveal the presence of another. The *cover-board stations* used to inventory amphibians and reptiles also reveal startled northern short-tailed shrews, white-footed and deer mice, pine voles and even eastern moles. *Drift-fence and pitfall arrays* built to sample frog populations in wetland and pond habitats collected southeastern shrews, a state-listed species, and mouse species. Wood duck *nest box inspections* have found seasonal usage by southern flying squirrel, raccoon, opossum and gray squirrel.

In a very unique inventory technique, the late Dr. Paul Parmalee of UT examined *common barn owl pellets* collected at SIWR, analyzed minute skeletal remains and identified ten small mammal species (and nine bird species) preyed upon by the owls. All the small mammals mentioned previously were identified, plus least shrew, eastern harvest mouse, house mouse and hispid cotton rat.

Drift fence and pitfall arrays and *small mammal trapping arrays* have been used to begin sampling small mammals in grassland and early successional habitats at SIWR. In the future these techniques will be used to sample rocky and open woodland habitats, along riparian zones, in wetlands and tree buffer habitats. Several specialized, small mammal species yet to be encountered, some state-listed, could be found to occupy these areas, and habitat preferences or restrictions for more common small mammal species will be fully disclosed.

Once again as seen with the amphibians, reptiles and birds, specific survey methods are required to identify the presence of the more secretive, fossorial, nocturnal or less abundant members of the mammalian vertebrate class. Nine *scent-post survey stations* have been established at SIWR. A 3-foot diameter of finely-sifted soil, baited with an olfactory lure, are placed along travel lanes, in riparian zones and habitat edges to attract visitation by mid-sized carnivores, or other species. In two sessions dominated by visits from raccoon and opossum, gray fox, striped skunk, mink, coyote, domestic dog and cat visitations have also been recorded. It is hoped that future surveys will identify bobcat, red fox, long-tailed weasel or other interesting or transient visitors. Coupled with the scent-post survey, incorporating an *infrared, electronic photography and recording apparatus* to document species usage is anticipated this fall.

All this effort has left one group of mammals largely uninvestigated. Order Chiroptera, the bats, pose special inventory challenges for obvious reasons. Up to a dozen species of bat, some federal or state-listed, might use riverine or terrestrial habitat components at SIWR. With identification during flight very tentative or impossible, capture and identification in hand is necessary. One *mist-netting survey* at the water-control structure impoundment proved uneventful. These surveys are very time, equipment and manpower-intensive, but it's hoped that additional surveys to sample suitable woodland, edge, riparian and pond habitats for bat species can be undertaken in the future.

Future inventory techniques and research efforts at SIWR will continue to give a more complete picture of the mammalian species inventory present at the refuge. With enhancement efforts ongoing or planned in a variety of habitats, both habitat quality and diversity will be expected to improve over time. If native species of mammals have not found, or have been eradicated from suitable habitat due to past land use decisions, reintroduction of those species would be contemplated.

KTOS MEMBERSHIP

Join or renew your membership in KTOS by mailing your annual dues to: Marie Oakes
18 Rockingham Lane
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
Membership dues are \$26 for an individual, \$30 for a family, and \$13 for a student. Sustaining memberships are \$38 and Life membership with TOS is \$450 with an annual fee of \$8 to the local Chapter.

**DEADLINE for November issue is Friday
October 26.**

**Due to cost and space restrictions,
please limit your article to 700 words.**
For a color version of this newsletter or for past issues, go to the TOS home page, <http://www.tnbirds.org> and click on "local chapters/Knoxville"



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HAVE YOU SEEN THE NEW IJAMS EXHIBIT?

Through the words of H.P. Ijams, the tragic story of the extinct Passenger Pigeon is told using interactive and thought-provoking exhibits. Included are Passenger Pigeon specimens which are on loan from the National Park Service and Frank H. McClung Museum. There are also touchable carvings by artist Midori Barstow and stunning visuals of extinct species from around the world by Australian artist, Peter Stunning Schouten.

Through the words of James T. Tanner, the life history of the recently re-discovered Ivory-billed Woodpecker is told through a series of unique exhibits which includes a Mechanical "Sonny Boy" - the only Ivory-bill ever banded by man. In the exhibit are touchable carvings by artist Midori Barstow, 16mm footage of Ivory-bills from 1935 and vintage photos by James T. Tanner. The banding kit used on "Sonny Boy" and a southern cypress swamp diorama complete the exhibit.

The Lost Species exhibit is accompanied by a full-color guide featuring a re-printing of H.P. Ijams' classic text, "The Passing of the Passenger Pigeon," first published in 1929. Available in the Ijams Museum Store.

(Information adapted from Ijams' web site.)

FAIR-TRADED SHADE GROWN COFFEE

Don't forget to pick up your order of shade grown coffee from David Johnson. When you get your new supply why not go ahead and place an order for next month? That way you will not run out.

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