



Newsletter of the Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

Presidential Perch

by Chris Welsh

I hope everyone had a great summer. Mine was busier than I had planned, but I managed to get in a little birding here and there. Rumor has it that fall migration may be a little earlier than usual, perhaps related to how dry it has been the last few months, perhaps not given that many of our migrants are coming from way up north. Migrant warblers have been turning up in a few places and more should be on their way. A wood thrush was calling from my backwoods the other day, and humming-birds are hitting the feeders heavily, tanking up for the journey ahead. Now is the time to head out to your favorite wet place and look for shorebirds as they move through. Water levels at Rankin Bottoms in Cocke County will hit ideal levels the last weekend in August, but the birding could remain pretty good into the first week of September.

Our first meeting of the year will be the usual potluck dinner, a chance to socialize, share summer birding stories, and plan ahead. Dan Mooney is preparing a fine slate of field trips for the fall, so there will be plenty of opportunities to meet other members and search out neat birds in interesting locations. Discussing bird sightings is a basic part of what we do, so bird sightings and field trip reports will be a staple at the beginning of meetings. Last year we did a lot of brainstorming on ways to attract new and retain old members. A big initiative for us this year will be to put some of those ideas to work, increasing the visibility of KTOS in the community. We also want to expand our conservation agenda. This includes identifying important bird areas, contributing where we can to protect habitats, improving our bird records, and encouraging bird-related studies in our area. Expanding our

activities is bound to require more funds, so fund-raising will be another focus for us this year. We will be organizing an auction sometime in the first half of the year, maybe in conjunction with the December meeting. Our sales of window decals, patches, History of KTOS, etc. won't add up to big bucks, but we don't necessarily need big bucks to make progress.

As always, input from any and all members is appreciated. We need to know what we can do to make KTOS all that it can be, all that you want it to be. What can we do to make meetings more interesting, more informative? Where do you want to go for field trips? What issues do you think we should tackle? What causes should we support? How can we raise money to support protecting and managing land for the benefit of birds? If you've got any ideas or opinions, call or e-mail me or one of the other club officers or catch us at a meeting or on a field trip.

September Meeting: Wednesday, September 6th at 7:00 pm.

Brice Gilmer is once again host for the first meeting of the fall season, our traditional covered-dish picnic. Bring your favorite dish and your summer sightings!

Directions: From Kingston Pike, into Sequoyah Hills, turn onto Scenic Drive and go about 1/2 mile. Turn left on to Bluff View and go to the first driveway on the right.

Beverages, plates, etc will be provided.

**** Volunteers are needed to come early to help with parking cars.**

Field Trip Schedule

Hawk Watch at Foothills Parkway

Sun., Sept. 17, 7:00 a.m.

Leader: David Trently (531-1473)

Leave from the Stokely Building parking lot (320 N. Cedar Bluff Rd). Alternatively, meet at the start of the Foothills Parkway off US 321 between Maryville and Townsend, at 8:00.

We will spend up to two hours at the start of this road, looking for migrant songbirds, before heading up the Parkway. Unless migration timing is really different this year, we should see a number of warblers and vireos, with a good chance at Philadelphia Vireo.

Once we start the hawk watch part of the trip (around 10:00) we plan to see mostly Broad-winged Hawks. Since there is often a lot of waiting between hawk sightings, bring chairs, lunch, drinks, etc. Sit and wait for the birds to come to us - in past years, we have had Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Caspian Tern, Common Raven, Red-headed Woodpecker and more vireos, warblers, thrushes, tanagers.

Field Trip to Cherohala Skyway

Sat., Sept. 23, 7:00 a.m.

Leader: David Trently (531-1473)

Leave from the Stokely Building parking lot (320 N. Cedar Bluff Rd).

We should arrive at the Hardee's in Tellico Plains around 8:00. We will stop at several places along the Skyway, going into North Carolina. There are restrooms along the road. Bring lunch, as we will probably not return until late afternoon. Migrating songbirds should be abundant along the route. One year there were dozens of Tennessee Warblers, plus numerous others, and Philadelphia Vireo is a good possibility. We will try to find the mostly white Dark-eyed Junco's at Huckleberry Knob. We should see ravens, and some migrating hawks.

Other upcoming field trips include:

10/14 to TVA land on Melton Hill Lake

10/22 Trip to Kingston Steam Plant

1/13/01 Trip to Kyker Bottoms

If anyone would like to lead a trip please contact me so we can get it scheduled. I hope to have the field trip schedule completed through November by the September meeting.

Thanks Dan Mooney

Smokies Field Trip Report

On Sunday, July 9, eight people attended the KTOS field trip to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, mostly birding in the higher elevations. Since we hold a trip to this area every year about this time, we know what to expect, but this trip seemed different from the usual. Perhaps it had to do with the warm early spring that had a lot of birds nesting early.

In past years, even though fewer birds are singing at the lower elevations, a lot of song is heard up higher, and we often see parent warblers feeding young. This year we heard much less singing than usual. BLACK-THROATED GREEN, CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLERS and NORTHERN PARULAS were about the only warblers singing. VEERIES provided much of the chorus along Clingman's Dome Road. The only obviously young birds we saw were several DARK-EYED JUNCOS with streaks on their breasts, some fed by parents. I also saw one fall-plumaged Chestnut-sided Warbler - or could it have been an immature? All the other Chestnut-sideds still had their breeding plumages.

The target for most of the birders was RED CROSSBILL, often seen in this area of the Smokies. Though we spent a few hours looking for them, only two made appearances - one flyover, heard but never seen...the other seen by a few birders as it flew past. The Chattanooga Chapter of TOS also held a field trip to the Smokies, so we had two groups looking for crossbills. A couple from that group joined the Knoxville group, for their other target, COMMON RAVEN. Some of us heard one call while we walked the Appalachian Trail, but it wasn't until after they left that we saw three soaring in the distance near Newfound Gap, though they never got close enough to hear.

-David Trently

Obituary

Dr. E. E. Overton, 93, husband of Holly Overton, died August 3, 2000. E. O. and Holly had been married for 67 years. E. O. was a staunch supporter of Holly's numerous birding activities and travels. He was a retired and honored professor of law at the University of Tennessee School of Law. Although he taught various courses from 1946-1977, he was best known for his classes on Constitutional Law. Until he became ill in January 2000, E. O. taught a class during the Sunday School hour on theology. He is survived by Holly, a son and a daughter, seven grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren, and outstanding legacy of law students across Tennessee.

Conservation News

Horseshoe Crab Announcement is Good News for Shorebird Conservation

On Tuesday August 8, U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Norman Y. Mineta announced that an 1,800-square-mile Horseshoe Crab sanctuary would be established in an arc 30 miles out from the mouth of the Delaware Bay.

This area will be closed to all take of Horseshoe Crabs. The Secretary also announced that unless Virginia acts to implement the reduction ordered by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and cut take and landings to 152,000 crabs, he will close all Virginia's harvest and landings of Horseshoe Crabs. Virginia's open defiance of the ASMFC plan for conservation of the horseshoe crab has been undermining the conservation efforts of NJ, MD and DE.

VA alone opposed the sanctuary which was supported by 14 other states on the ASMFC. The sanctuary will allow a good number of juvenile and adult Horseshoe Crabs to return to the ocean waters after spawning and be free from the trawlers and dredgers pursuing them.

Horseshoe Crab eggs form a vital service for migrating shorebirds; these birds travel through the mid-Atlantic states and feast on the eggs to re-fuel at essential stop-off sites on their long journey between South American wintering areas and nesting ground in the Arctic. (For example, Ruddy Turnstones, Red Knots, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Sanderlings, and many other species gobble up tons of eggs each spring in the Delaware Bay region alone.)

The problem inherent in over-harvesting is not only affecting crabs and birds. A recent study by Fermata, Inc. showed that the ecotourism industry based around shorebird/Horseshoe Crab interactions along the New Jersey coast of Delaware Bay alone, was worth more to local businesses than the entire east coast horseshoe crab fishery. Both the U.S. Government's proposal for the sanctuary and the VA closure are expected to take effect in October.

Paul J. Baicich
Editor, BIRDING

Neotropical Migratory Bird Bill Becomes Law

On July 20, President Clinton signed into law the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. This legislation establishes a fund to support partnership programs that will conserve and enhance habitat of neotropical migratory birds. At least 75% of the money is designed to go to projects in the Caribbean and Latin America, where these birds spend the winter. It authorizes \$5 million per year for five years, and it funds a maximum of 25% of the money for each project. (The remainder is to be raised or contributed by partners such as businesses, non-governmental organizations and foreign nations.) Senator Abraham (R-MI), championed this legislation through the Senate, along with Senator Daschle (D-SD). The late Senator Chafee (R-RI) was one of the original co-sponsors and leaders in this effort.

CARA Working It's Way Through Senate

After having passed the House in mid-May by a vote of 315 to 102, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) is working its way through the Senate. On 14 July, Senator F. Murkowski (R-AK), chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and Senator J. Bingaman (D-NM) the committee's ranking minority member, announced a compromise approach to CARA. The bill is designed to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and to provide permanent funding of \$350 million per year to state wildlife agencies to address statewide wildlife concerns. The wildlife funding is to be prioritized for those species with the greatest conservation need — which for many observers means a number of those bird species on the Partners In Flight "WatchList." Resistance from western, private-property oriented, Republicans has been exhibited during the committee proceedings. The Energy and Natural Resources Committee will have to finish its mark-up of CARA before it is sent for a vote on the Senate floor.

Fall Count Information

Fall North American Migration Count,

Saturday September 16. This year Tennessee has decided to join other Partners in Flight states in a fall NAMC. The rules are exactly the same as the spring count. Each county is a count area. Please record the weather conditions and temperature, the time of your count (in military time), miles by car and foot, the hours by car and foot, hours spent owling, and hours spent feeder watching. Please include the names of all the participants. Send your results to: Ron Hoff, 282 Hackworth Ln., Clinton, Tn. 37716. You may also email the results to me (dollyron95@aol.com). Thanks and have fun! Ron Hoff

Knox County Fall Count

Sunday, 24 September. All are invited to participate by counting the birds you see in Knox County that day, either in your own backyard or at any of the great birding locations in the county. Unlike the Christmas Counts, there is no fee for participating in this count. Please report the number of individuals of each species that you see as well as the names of all the observers in your party, the location(s) you birded, the time of day that you were there, the number of hours and miles that you birded by foot, hours and miles by car, hours and miles owling, and hours spent watching feeders. All of this information is needed and important.

If you have any questions, please contact the compiler, Dean Edwards, at 570-9701. If you traditionally work this count but will not be able to cover your usual territory, please let Dean know so that he can get someone to cover that area. Please send your count results and information to Dean (kde@utk.edu or 8537 Carl Valentine Circle, Knoxville TN 37931) or bring them to the October meeting.

Bulletin Board

A Note From Melissa Halpern:

(Who just moved to Tucson, AZ this summer)

Great birding out here! I have had 40 lifers so far (without trying too hard) and 5 species of hummingbirds at the feeder at our house. Hope everything is great with you guys. Also, my email is: melhalp@aol.com in case anyone is coming out this way, I would love to see (and bird with) them.

- Mel

Recent Literature of Interest: Anyone who has been wondering how to tell the difference between gray-cheeked and Bicknell's thrushes will want to check out an article in the August issue of *Birding* magazine: Identification of *Hylocichla/Catharus* thrushes, Part III: gray-cheeked and Bicknell's thrushes. *Birding* 32(4):318-332.

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology is publishing the fourth edition of Wisconsin's Favorite Bird Haunts, the complete bird-finding guide to Wisconsin. The new book, due out this fall, features 135 haunts detailing over 1000 specific areas, and it covers all 72 Wisconsin counties.

The WSO would like to announce the availability of the book to people in areas outside of the state who might want to bird in Wisconsin. If you would be interested, please contact us. We're offering a special pre-publication price of \$25 plus \$3 postage until November 1.

After that date, the book will cost \$30 plus \$3.

Don and Christine Reel
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dcreel@execpc.com

Membership Information

Life - \$200; Sustaining \$28; Individual - \$18; 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.

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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.