



*Wednesday, October 7th, Virtual Program:*

## **Birds of Australia By Ron Hoff**

We are pleased to announce that KTOS will resume our monthly meetings starting in October. However, the next three meetings will be virtual Zoom meetings. A few days before our scheduled meeting we will send out an email that will contain a link to the meeting. If you are using a laptop or desktop computer, all you will need to do is click on the link. On Tuesday night, October 6th, we will hold a mock meeting so people who have not used Zoom can log in and make sure they are comfortable with how the meeting will work.

Our meeting in October will be presented by one of our long time favorite speakers, Ron Hoff. Ron and Dollyann continued their assault on finding as many world birds as they could, right up until Covid hit. I'm sure they will hit the trail again once it is contained. Ron's October talk will be about their most recent Australia trip they took in 2018.



Laughing Kookaburra



Mistletoebird

# Up For A Challenge

Last year the report came out that North America has seen a decline of 3 billion birds over the last 50 years. As birdwatchers and folks who are interested in the plight of our feathered friends, we more than any other type of group in the country should be taking the lead in doing things to reverse this trend. Here is one small way.

Between now and November 15, we're challenging you as KTOS members to plant **\*native\*** trees, shrubs and perennials that will help produce insects that will help feed birds in our yards. After you plant something, please take a photo and email it to [knoxbirds@gmail.com](mailto:knoxbirds@gmail.com).

Our goal is to reach 500 points as a club. The schedule on how we will accumulate points is as follows:

- 1 point for each native perennial
- 5 points for each native shrub
- 10 points for each native tree
- 20 points for each native oak tree (because they do more for wildlife than any other species)

More details coming up on the Better Backyards blog. If you want advice on what to plant, please get in touch!

White oak (*Quercus alba*, shown) hosts more insect species than any other native tree.



Tennessee Naturescapes, a nursery in Clinton which deals in native plants, is offering a discount to KTOS members thru November 1. We will put the discount code in the High Flyer email.

# Milestones



Western Kingbird

Over the summer, two KTOS esteemed members reached their 300th Tennessee life bird. In July, Bill Keeler, Bob Collier, Beth Schilling and Morton Massey took a trip to try to find some West Tennessee specialty birds. The first stop was to see a Lark Sparrow, which was ultimately found in Mark Greene's backyard in Gibson County. Next up was Dyersburg and the Mississippi River in search of Bell's Vireos. While none were clearly seen, the group had one or two singing birds back in the thickets in an area where 5 or 6 were seen a couple of days before.

A short drive north to Bogota Wildlife Refuge rewarded the group with good looks at two Anhinga flying overhead. There were several documented nests this year at the refuge. Anhinga are seen annually in Tennessee but this was the first year several birds nested in a very accessible location.

After running up to Lake County to see a White Ibis, the group headed down to Memphis and President's Island. Just as the group headed over the causeway, a quick stop led to raised binoculars and Bob Collier's 300th Tennessee bird, a Western Kingbird. These birds nest in fairly large numbers each year on President's Island but are rarely seen elsewhere.

After that, a stop at the Pitts in Memphis produced a Painted Bunting before the group headed home.



Bill Keeler and Bob Collier looking at Western Kingbirds on a powerline on President's Island.



# Milestones...continued

In mid September another very rare bird showed up in Fayette County near Memphis. This time Bill Keeler, Morton Massey and Beth Schilling headed west in the hopes of another state bird and another milestone was at hand. The 5 and a half hour trip ended when Bill and Morton reached the home of Joanie Webb.

Joanie's husband had built an elaborate feeder support system out of bamboo poles and hanging from those poles were 20+ hummingbird feeders and several seed and oriole feeders. Swarming around were well over 30 hummers and it was estimated there were between 50 and 75 Ruby-throats in the area. An assortment of other birds including Baltimore Orioles were also coming in to feed.



Black-headed Grosbeak

But hummingbirds and common birds were not why they were there. Joanie welcomed them into her backyard, showed them where to sit and even offered them a drink. Two other birders for Clarksville were there. About 20 minutes after they arrived a beautiful Black-headed Grosbeak appeared on one of her seed feeders. With that, Bill Keeler reached his 300th Tennessee state bird.



Black-headed Grosbeaks are western birds nesting from Oklahoma to California. They are often confused with female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks but they lack any streaking on the breast which is present on Rose-breasted. This male bird came into the feeder regularly throughout the day and delighted dozens of birders from around the state for more than a week.

Bill Keeler looking at his 300th state bird  
a Black-headed Grosbeak

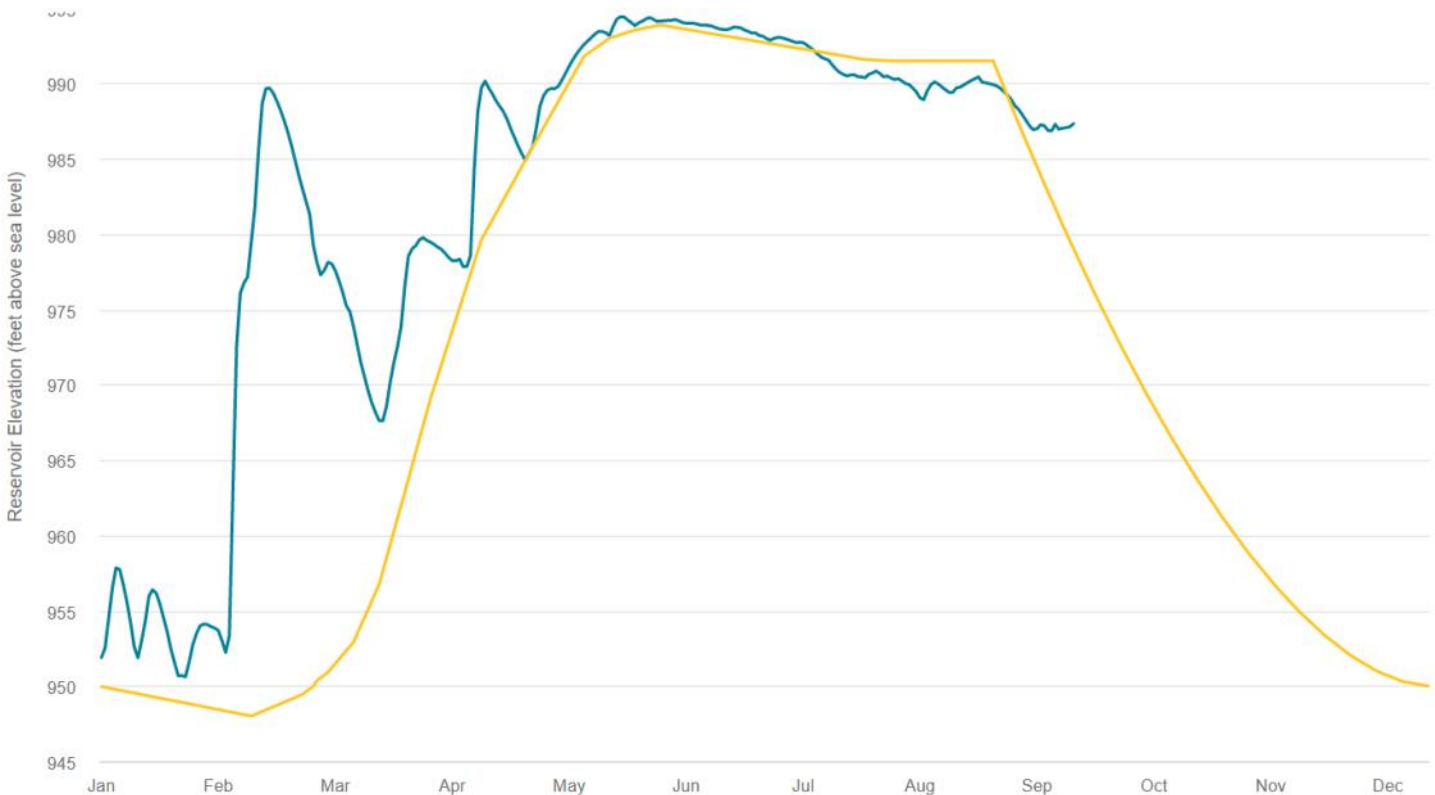
# Hurricanes and Rankin Bottoms

Tropical storms and hurricanes affect the east coast and gulf states each year. But 2020 has definitely been different with several storms hitting the Texas and Louisiana coasts with very few days in between. The gulf states have had an enormous amount of rain fall and flooding has been widespread. So, how has that affected Rankin Bottoms?

Every fall, TVA begins to lower Douglas Lake around the first of September. The headwaters of Douglas is an area where the French Broad and Nolichucky Rivers meet. The area is very shallow and the land in this area is below water in the summer and exposed during winter. When the water recedes, mudflats appear and migrating shorebirds show up in large numbers to feed in the most mud before it dries out.

Below is a model of what should be happening on Douglas Lake in typical years. The yellow line shows where TVA would like the lake level to be on any given day. For September 25th, they hope to have Douglas down to 979 feet, 11 feet below its typical late summer level of 990 feet. The blue line shows where the lake level is actually at. On September 25th, the lake level was at 987 feet, which is pretty much where it had been for the last 12 days.

Even though East Tennessee did not receive anywhere close to the rainfall many of the gulf coast states had, the need to restrict water flow down the Mississippi led TVA to keep Douglas and several other lakes near full capacity until the Mississippi River receded. The end result has been there is no significant fall shorebird migration at Rankin Bottoms this year.



# ***Rare Bird Sightings***



Even though Covid has been affecting us all, it has not seemed to bother the birds any. Those who have ventured out since August first have often been rewarded with good sightings.

- ◆ On August 13th, Denny McMahon found an **Upland Sandpiper** at Corryton Pond after a very hard rainstorm.
- ◆ In August, 3 rare birds showed up at Rankin Bottoms. First, a **Tri-colored Heron** was spotted feeding in the pond on the left as you get out to the main viewing area. The bird stayed around for several weeks.
- ◆ Next, a birder from Texas had stopped at Rankin to bird and noticed a **Neotropic Cormorant** sitting on a snag in the pond. This is the first confirmed report of this species of cormorant in Tennessee east of Nashville. It stayed several weeks.
- ◆ A few days later, 5 **Egyptian Geese** appeared and stayed several weeks. These geese are not ABA approved yet in places other than very southern Florida. While very tame, they still seemed to be wild and eventually left for parts unknown.
- ◆ On August 26th, Morton Massey and Bill Keeler found a **Ross's Goose** at Seven Islands State Birding Park during the monthly KTOS walk.
- ◆ On August 30th, Randy Winstead found 4 **American Avocets** at Ish Creek Bay in Blount County.
- ◆ On September 9th, Morton Massey found a **Ruddy Turnstone** at Douglas Dam.
- ◆ On September 10th, Keith Watson found a **Sanderling** at Douglas Dam.
- ◆ On September 10th, Roger Kroodsma found an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Lakeshore Park in Roane County.
- ◆ On September 13th, Roger Kroodsma found a **Western Kingbird** at Gupton Wetlands in Roane County.



Upland Sandpipers are considered a shorebird but they are rarely seen anywhere near an ocean beach. They nest on grasslands across the northern part of the US and Southern Canada. For winter they fly all the way to southern South America. While Upland Sandpipers migrate thru Tennessee each year, getting to see one is a real treat. The bird seen at Corryton Pond was likely migrating thru when a severe thunderstorm forced it down for a few hours before continuing its migration south. Note its beady black eye, small head and long neck.





Please go to: [www.knoxvillebirding.org](http://www.knoxvillebirding.org) for all KTOS information.

- Calendar (Fieldtrip Info)
- Newsletters
- Membership Information
- Contact Us
- FaceBook
- Photo Share
- Resources



Being part of a like minded community is important. Please remember to check the status of your membership. Morton Massey will be happy to answer any questions. You can email him at [knoxtnbirds@gmail.com](mailto:knoxtnbirds@gmail.com). Please remember to put "Membership" in the subject line.



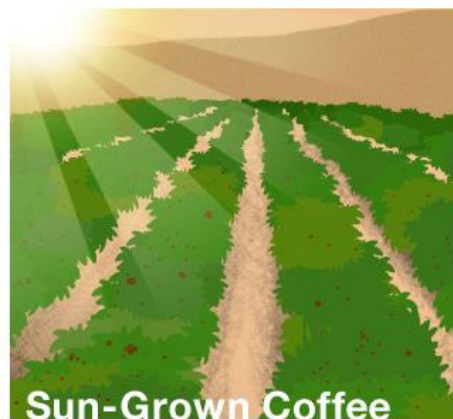
Field trips and social gatherings are a great way of getting to know one another. Fields trips can be lead by any of our members regardless of skill level. We all can learn from one another. If you have an idea or would like to lead a trip, please contact Melinda Fawver at [knoxtnbirds@gmail.com](mailto:knoxtnbirds@gmail.com). Please remember to put "Field Trip" in the subject line.

Always check the Calendar at [www.knoxvillebirding.org](http://www.knoxvillebirding.org) to view upcoming Field Trips, Festivals, Bird Counts and Social Gatherings.

*Shade grown coffee is a great product and environmental friendly for our beloved feathered friends.*

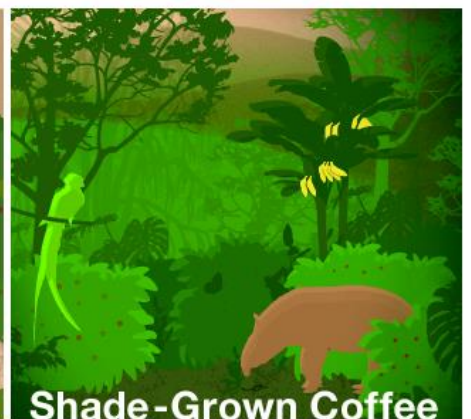
*To order shade-grown coffee, email David Johnson and Jean Alexander at [jjadmj@yahoo.com](mailto:jjadmj@yahoo.com). Your order must be turn in Thursday night before for meeting each month. David and Jean bring orders to the monthly meetings.*

*Thank you, David and Jean!*



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- ✓ Allows farmers economic diversification
- ✓ Tastes better



**2020 Membership Renewals:**

Annual dues can be turned in at KTOS meetings or mailed to KTOS, 1553 Dutch Valley Rd, Clinton TN 37716. Dues levels: \$26/individual, \$30/family, \$38/sustaining, \$13 student (high school or younger), or TOS life membership for \$450 with \$8 annual fee to Chapter.



2019 - 2020

**Chapter Officers / Staff**

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Morton Massey

*Vice President*

Bill Keeler

*Treasurer*

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Tom Howe

*Field Trip Coordinator*

*State Directors*

Ron Hoff

Chris Welch

Tom Howe

For more information :

knoxbirds@gmail.com

## Letter from the President

When I sat down to write this article I was bound and determined not to mention Covid, so I won't. We are excited to restart KTOS activities this fall and to host our first virtual club meeting in October. The September hurricanes that came up out of the gulf brought a few good rarities to West Tennessee. East Tennessee has had plenty of rare bird sightings in the last several weeks.

From what I have seen, heard and experienced, many birders are getting out and fall migration has been really good. The Blount County fall count was on Saturday, September 19 and it had an excellent turn out. Knox County's count was September 27. On the Knox County count, an Olive-sided Flycatcher was seen and photographed near the boat ramp. This was eBird bird number 213 for the park and the 6th new bird added to the park this year.

As a birder who was really looking forward to the fall shorebird migration at Rankin Bottoms, it has sure been a major disappointment on how it turned out. With three major hurricanes and tropical depressions that came up out of the gulf over the last month, TVA had no choice but to hold a number of the upper East Tennessee lakes near full capacity in order to relieve pressure on the Mississippi River. It looks like Douglas is going to go into October only 3 feet below full when it should be down 12 feet or more.

If you haven't heard, the Rufous Hummingbird has come back to the same Clinton residence for the 4th year. Barry Spruce went out and photographed the bird soon after it showed up in August. It is still wearing the same leg band that Mark Armstrong attached in 2017.

Morton Massey

### Upcoming Events

- Oct 7 - Monthly Virtual Meeting
- Oct 8 - Heritage Center
- Oct ? - Kyker Bottoms (TBD)
- Oct 28 - Seven Islands Birding with Friends Walk



November's program is still To Be Determined.