



*Wednesday, March 3rd, Virtual Program:*

On Wednesday, March 3, join us for a presentation by two renowned East Tennessee bird photographers, Barry Spruce and Roger Ashley. These gentlemen will be sharing photos they have taken of interesting Tennessee birds and telling the story behind how they got the picture. If you not a member of the East Tennessee Facebook group we suggest you join. Roger and Barry frequently post some of their wonderful photos there.

**NOTE:** The meeting will start at 6:45 for social time. At 7:00 we will start the business meeting and at 7:15 we will start the program.

**Logging In To Meeting** - We continue to have some folks not able to log into the meeting. You can always go to our website, [knoxbirds.org](http://knoxbirds.org) and click on the link there. If that link does not work then you can go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.com) and “Join a Meeting”. The meeting number and password is also on our website on the home page.



Wood Duck by Roger Ashley



Short-eared Owl by Barry Spruce

# Evening Grosbeaks 2021

When you talk to some of the old timers who have been birding for 50 years or so, it seems the year 1988 comes up the most as to when the last irruption of Evening Grosbeaks took place in Tennessee. That's a long time. The reason for the mass movement of birds southward this winter has been due to a failure in the seed crop of pines, spruces, hemlocks and other conifer trees in Canada and northern United States. This happens every few years, but 2020 was the worse seed crop failure in recent history. So many of the birds that rely on seeds in winter moved south looking for food.



Grosbeaks at feeder in Polk County



Photo by Lori McAlister  
Morgan County

Each winter here in East Tennessee we get some Pine Siskins, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Purple Finches. All these birds rely on seeds. But late last year we started seeing tremendous increases of all of these birds. Then speculation grew as to whether we would start seeing Evening Grosbeaks. In early December our hopes became reality.

By early January it was obvious Evening Grosbeaks were coming south in large numbers as well. First we started getting sightings of single birds or small groups but it was often a one day occurrence. By mid January it became clear that groups of birds were establishing winter territories and were frequently coming to the same feeders each day. One example was a home on Powderhorn Drive in

Townsend. The flock had almost 50 birds and they continued at this location throughout January and March.

In February with the start of Great Backyard Bird Count week, several new eBirders reported information about Evening Grosbeaks coming to their feeders. Many stated the birds had been coming to their feeders since early January. Monroe County had by far the largest number of reports, especially in and around Tellico Village. The big question now is when will they leave. No one knows for sure but it will likely be when there is adequate food for them farther north this spring.



Photo by Steve Stout  
Anderson County

# Grosbeaks continued..

Several KTOS members have been able to visit a good number of the East Tennessee sites that have had the Evening Grosbeaks this year. We have tried to gather what information we can on the number of birds, feeding habits, how long the flock has been visiting and when they first showed up. While each story is a little different, we have been able to piece together some interesting information.

As stated previously, these birds started coming down to Tennessee in late December and early January. They initially were roaming around but eventually started establishing winter territories. All the flocks we know of seem to be attached to one or more homes with feeders. While the birds make good use of the feeders, they still spend much of their day looking for and eating natural seeds in trees.

Most of the overwintering sites we are aware of seem to be close to the mountains or at least near heavily forested areas. This would make sense since as their natural food source comes seeds from conifer trees.

Here is a list of locations we know of that have been hosting Evening Grosbeaks;

- Sevier County
  - One site off Rex Lane near Pittman Center. 85 birds coming in since early Jan
  - One site in Pigeon Forge. Not much known about this group
- Blount County
  - Powderhorn Dr in Townsend. 50 birds, coming in regularly since early Jan
- Loudon County
  - Single bird coming into the home of Geoffrey White
- Anderson County
  - Group of about 8 birds coming to home near Norris Dam since early January
- Morgan County
  - Group of around 8 coming to the home of Lori McAlister since early January
- Monroe County
  - One location off Rule Vale Rd. 40 birds coming in regularly since early January
  - One location near downtown Tellico Village. Small flock
  - Several other locations reported but not visited
- Polk County
  - Large flock of 50+ birds at home off J Wilson Rd coming in since early January
- Bledsoe County
  - Over 100 birds at times at the home of Roi and Debbie Shannon.

# Seven Islands Bird Banding 2020

by Clare Dattilo

The pandemic really changed the way we banded birds at Seven Islands in 2020. With the park shutdown in spring, we missed the migration season completely. Even as things started to open back up, we were unsure how to operate banding sessions safely with our usual large group of volunteers. In the end, we decided to hold weekly sessions with Mark Armstrong, Stephanie Mueller, and myself. To do this safely without the extra hands to help extract birds, we only set up 3 to 4 nets during each session to reduce the number of birds that were caught at once.

While we missed the fun of hanging out with all of the volunteers during our usual bi-weekly sessions, this year provided a valuable opportunity for Stephanie and me to learn from Mark. We are now both getting very comfortable with the process of aging and sexing birds based on molt limits and other factors.

2020 was full of challenges for everyone and it was no different for us at the park. We started banding three months later than usual, missed spring migration, and caught fewer birds on average per session. In spite of that, we ended up banding 622 birds. That's over 200 more than in 2019! We held 21 sessions, banded 47 different species, recaptured 97 previously banded birds, and banded 68 young birds in nest boxes.



Northern Saw-whet Owl

There were a lot of highlights from the banding season, but we had a few favorites. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, we caught a least flycatcher, which turned to be a new species for the park – and a fun challenge to identify since it wasn't singing for us while captured! We also banded two northern saw-whet owls. This was a life bird for me and the first ones documented in the park for many years. In addition to these uncommon species for Seven Islands, we recaptured our fair share of old timers including an indigo bunting and a yellow-breasted chat that were originally banded in 2014. This shows us that they have survived the dangers of migration and returned to the park for 6-7+ years. We also caught five field sparrows banded in 2015. If that seems pretty old for a field sparrow it is; 5-6 years is right at the maximum age for that species.

# Seven Islands Bird Banding 2020

Species	Totals	Species	Totals	Species	Totals
Northern Saw-whet Owl	2	Gray Catbird	2	Yellow-breasted Chat	18-9
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	7	No. Mockingbird	34-4	Eastern Towhee	8-1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	3	Brown Thrasher	6	Field Sparrow	124-45
Trail's Flycatcher	6	Orange-crowned Warbler	2	Savannah Sparrow	5
Least Flycatcher	1	Prothonotary Warbler	1	Song Sparrow	47-5
White-eyed Vireo	1	W. Palm Warbler	22	Lincoln's Sparrow	5
Barn Swallow	1	Y. Palm Warbler	2	Swamp Sparrow	25-1
Carolina Chickadee	5	Cape May Warbler	1	White-throated Sparrow	4
Eastern Tufted Titmouse	7-1	Black-throated Green Warbler	1	White-crowned Sparrow	7-2
Carolina Wren	11-9	Yellow-rumped Warbler	5	No. Cardinal	20-3
House Wren	2	Prairie Warbler	4	Blue Grosbeak	4-2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4	American Redstart	1	Indigo Bunting	66-8
Blue Jay	5	Northern Waterthrush	1	House Finch	1
American Robin	7	Ovenbird	1	Orchard Oriole	12
Hermit Thrush	1	Common Yellowthroat	46-7	American Goldfinch	16
<b>Young birds banded in nest boxes</b>				<b>Totals</b>	
Carolina Chickadee	5			Birds Banded	622
Prothonotary Warbler	1			Recaptures	97
Tree Swallow	44			Number of Species	47
Eastern Bluebirds	8				
<b>Total</b>	68				

under totals represents recaptured birds that were banded previously.



Yellow-breasted Chat



Clare Datillo



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

- Calendar (Fieldtrip Info)
- Newsletters
- Membership Information
- Contact Us
- FaceBook
- Blog
- 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 [knoxtbirds@gmail.com](mailto:knoxtbirds@gmail.com). Please remember to put "Membership" in the subject line.

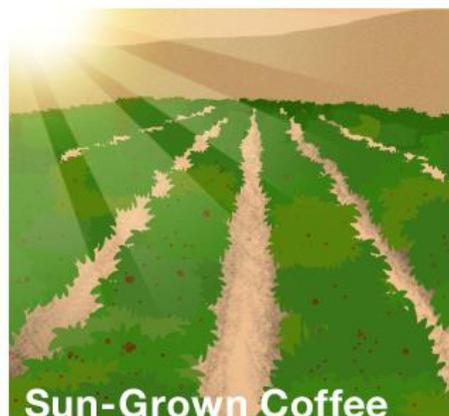


Field trips and social gatherings are a great way of getting to know one another. Fields trips can be lead by any of our members regardless of skill level. We all can learn from one another. If you have an idea or would like to lead a trip, please contact Tom Howe at [knoxbirds@gmail.com](mailto:knoxbirds@gmail.com). 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.*

Due to the Covid situation, we are not taking orders for coffee. However, you can find a number of the Vienna Coffee House blends at Whole Foods, Fresh Market and Butler and Bailey in Rocky Hill.



### Sun-Grown Coffee

- ✗ Grows faster
- ✗ Requires more water, fertilizer and pesticides
- ✗ Supports less biodiversity
- ✗ Degrades ecosystems



### Shade-Grown Coffee

- ✓ Grows slower
- ✓ Requires less water, fertilizer and pesticides
- ✓ Supports greater biodiversity
- ✓ Sustains healthy ecosystems
- ✓ Allows farmers economic diversification
- ✓ Tastes better



**2021 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.



2020 - 2021

**Chapter Officers / Staff**

*President*

Morton Massey

*Vice President*

Bill Keeler

*Treasurer*

Tony Headrick

*Secretary*

Laura Tappan

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Position Open

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Tom Howe

*Field Trip Coordinator*

*State Directors*

Ron Hoff

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Tom Howe

For more information :

knoxbirds@gmail.com

## Letter from the President

Birding is exploding! At least that is what I've been witnessing the last few weeks. I am one of the administrators of East Tennessee Birding. We have recently gone from maybe 5 new member requests per week to now per day. There has also been a big increase in new people doing the Seven Islands walk or one of the other KTOS walks. There is a large increase in interest about our club and requests to get involved.

Another new development in birding has been the use of phone apps to connect county birders. Blount County set one up using WhatsApp to notify birders about ongoing bird sightings. It is going like gangbusters and it even comes with a regular 6am wake up call (just funning with you Kat). Knox County has started a WhatsApp group to let folks know about possible First of Year sightings or other unusual birds in the county. I don't think we have ever had as many people working on their Knox County year list as we do this year.

We will be making the motion at next week's meeting to change the everyday name of KTOS to Knoxville Birding. If this is implemented, we will still be the Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society but we will tend to use the shorter and less confusing name of Knoxville Birding.

I was with Beth Schilling last weekend in Polk County when Beth got her 12,000th Tennessee tick, an Evening Grosbeak. As far as I know, Beth is the third person to reach this lofty plateau in Tennessee; the other two being Ron and DollyAnn. Next up for Beth is getting 100 birds in all 95 counties, something she should complete in April.

Morton Massey

### Upcoming Events

Mar 3 - Monthly Virtual Meeting

Mar 7 - Kyker Bottoms Bird Walk

Mar 24 - Seven Islands Birding with Friends

April's meeting is TBD.

