



The Chattanooga Chat

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A Newsletter of the Chattanooga Chapter
Tennessee Ornithological Society

Meeting

There is no July meeting and no field trips are planned at this time. See you in August.

Thanks

Thanks to Luke Thompson for presenting the program at our June 13 meeting. As far as we know Luke was the youngest person to ever do a program for any of our club meetings. Luke is in his middle teens.



Great Blue Heron below Chickamauga Dam. Photo by Ray Zimmerman

New Officers

President - David Aborn
Vice President for Programs
- Dawn Greenway
dawn@mountainpathfinder.com
Vice President for Field Trips - Ann
Arquitt with help from Jim Greenway

Treasurer – Gary Lanham with help
from Lizzie Diener
Secretary and Social Media Coordinator
- Jim Greenway
jim@mountainpathfinder.com

Editor's Corner

This profile of Edward O. Wilson first appeared in Volume 8, Issue 3 of The Hellbender Press (Knoxville) May/June 2006

“...As the only natural scientist I chose a radically different subject, and a broader time scale: species are going extinct in growing numbers, I wrote; the biosphere is imperiled; humanity is depleting the ancient storehouses of biological diversity. I was thinking like an evolutionary biologist, in evolutionary time. ‘The worst thing that can happen, will happen,’ I said ‘is not energy depletion, economic collapse, limited nuclear war, or conquest by a totalitarian government. As terrible as these catastrophes would be for us, they can be repaired within a few generations. The one process ongoing in the 1980’s that will take millions of years to correct is the loss of genetic and species diversity by the destruction of natural habitats. This is the folly our descendants are least likely to forgive us.’”

Edward O. Wilson introduced “Biodiversity, Biophilia” the final chapter of his book *Naturalist* with these words. They were originally formulated as his answer to a questionnaire submitted to seven faculty members of Harvard University by *Harvard* magazine. The questionnaire asked those professors to identify what they considered the most important problem facing the world in the coming decade.

The book **Naturalist** traces his journey to the point of that 1980 statement and beyond. In that tracing Wilson is eloquent and readable. He begins his description with early childhood days exploring the beaches and backwaters of the Gulf Coast of Alabama and north Florida. His time in a military school, his baptism in a Southern Baptist church, and days as a Boy Scout are among his early influences described in the book. From there Wilson continues the story with an attempt to enlist in the Army, rejected due to near blindness in one eye, and his training as a Biologist at the University of Alabama.

After completing his Bachelors and Masters degrees at Alabama, he began doctoral studies at the University of Tennessee, but soon transferred to Harvard. At Harvard he received the Ph.D. degree at age twenty-five and joined the faculty as an associate professor at age 26. He has remained at Harvard as a student, professor, and professor emeritus for over fifty years.

Although I found the story of his early influences interesting, the real depth of the book, *Naturalist*, is in his descriptions of days at Harvard, where he knew some of the world’s great

biologists as colleagues. He is equally candid in describing both collaborators and competitors. Among the collaborators is Robert MacArthur, the brilliant mathematical ecologist who collaborated with him on *The Theory of Island Biogeography*. Tragically, MacArthur’s life was cut short by cancer soon after that publication.

Among the competitors was Jim Watson; self styled “Honest Jim,” and co-discoverer of the structure of DNA. In a chapter titled, “The Molecular Wars,” Wilson describes how Watson and a host of molecular biologists seriously attempted to transform biology into a solely molecular endeavor. The conflict was only resolved when the molecular biologists split off and formed a separate department.

The chapter entitled simply “Ants” is central to understanding Wilson’s efforts and development as a scientist. He has specialized in the study of that group of social insects throughout his career. He and colleague Bert Holldobler collaborated on research on these creatures, publishing several papers and eventually their book, **The Ants**, which won the 1991 Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction.

Wilson’s studies of the social insects lead to broader investigations of social organization in all animals, drawing heavily on published reports of several scientists and social scientists. The publication of *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* was the outgrowth of that effort. Although Wilson is a highly competent researcher, his greatest contribution to the sciences may well be his ability to synthesize research findings and present the larger picture.

Sociobiology, the New Synthesis revealed that aspect of his abilities, but also briefly embroiled Wilson in controversy. The primary motivator of that controversy was the final chapter which described a genetic basis of some human behaviors.

Given today's political climate, one might think that his detractors came from within the religious community, but this was not the case. His attackers were Marxists and other activists, including noted evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould, a member of the "Peoples Sociobiology Study Group." The controversy on sociobiology is now largely forgotten, even though Wilson has since published a full book on the biological basis of human behavior. *On Human Nature* won him a second Pulitzer Prize.

The final chapter of *Naturalist*, "Biodiversity, Biophilia," barely scratches the surface of Wilson's current research interests. These are perhaps better understood by a look at *The Future of Life* (Knopf, 2002) and *The Diversity of Life* (Harvard University Press, 1992). These two books reveal his efforts as a population biologist to address the rapid disappearance of plant and animal species worldwide. In furthering that effort, Wilson edited the book *Biodiversity*, an outgrowth of the National Forum on Biodiversity sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Academy of Sciences. His commitment to the issue prompted him to abandon his generally nonpolitical nature and join the board of directors of the World Wildlife Fund – US. Wilson is said to be planning yet another book on this topic, tentatively titled *The Creation*, to be released in 2006.

An addendum: Edward O. Wilson indeed published *The Creation* and has since published several additional works. Born in 1929, he continues as an Emeritus Research professor at Harvard and maintains an active speaking schedule.



Tree Swallows at Chickamauga Dam.
Photograph by Ray Zimmerman

What Have You Seen?

June 26

Three different Chuck-will's-widows were calling this evening east and south of Birchwood (Hamilton County).
Charles Murray

June 13

Remember that back in May I banded a Painted Bunting at Greenway Farms. Well, I just received word from the Bird Banding Lab that it was the first Painted Bunting ever banded in Tennessee! Since I have been banding out there, I have had 3 other state banding records; I have set late banding records for Hooded Warbler (October 30th), Worm-eating Warbler (October 24th), and Yellow-throated Warbler (October 12th). I will see how I can outdo myself when fall migration rolls around!
David Aborn

June 6

I found one Least Sandpiper feeding on the mud flats with Killdeers at the Brainerd Levee today.
The Birds of Tennessee: A New Annotated Checklist list two late Spring dates.

June 4th, 1986, Memphis and June 11th, 2003, Dyer County.
Bruce Dralle

June 7 -Brainerd Levee
I found a Spotted Sandpiper feeding on the mud flats with about twenty Killdeers.
The Birds of Tennessee New Annotated Checklist list the Late Spring date of June 4th, 1989, Ensley.
Bruce Dralle

June 2
There was one White-rumped Sandpiper seen at the Brainerd Levee this afternoon. Also, seen were Semipalmated Plovers, Semipalmated Sandpipers and a Spotted Sandpiper.
Bruce Dralle

Hamilton County Migration Count

Fifteen observers counted 134 species on the Hamilton County Migration Count held on Saturday May 4, 2019. That total is a little below average. Highlights included:
Upland Sandpiper – Very uncommon in SE TN

American Bittern

Least Bittern

Virginia Rail

Cattle Egret

Northern Bobwhite – Getting harder and harder to find in SE TN

Black-throated Blue Warbler – Getting more common as a spring migrant in SE TN, but still uncommon.

I want to thank everyone who helped with this count!!

Kevin Calhoon

May 27
Two calling “goatsuckers” – specifically Chuck-will’s-widows – were heard about 9:20 PM tonight in Birchwood
Charles Murray

May 28
This morning’s birding observations at home in Birchwood (Hamilton County) and

at the Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge and a few other sites in Meigs County produced 35 species and 2 additional possible sightings that I couldn’t confirm. From the viewing gazebo at HWR, I walked northeast on the refuge road until its first turn to the right (east). I walked that fork until I ran out of shade and then returned by the same route. I was in the shade over 90 % of the time in that relatively short walk. Highlights for the morning were:

Cattle Egrets (4) flying over HWR - a first-of-the-year species which I never saw last year.

Northern Bobwhites at HWR – a least two calling males near the gazebo

Orchard Oriole male(s) – HWR

Yellow-billed Cuckoos – HWR

Wood Thrush – singing near the Cherokee Removal Park entrance

Eastern Wood-Pewee – heard at my home

Possible Blue Grosbeaks at HWR but too briefly viewed to be sure

Possible immature Bald Eagle at HWR, but too briefly viewed to be sure.

Charles Murray

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\$15- student \$40- sustaining

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21 Cool Springs Road

Signal Mountain, TN 37377

chattanooga@outlook.com

If you are a new member, please include your address, phone number, and an email address for Chat delivery and bird walk information.

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