

The Chattanooga Chat

CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER OF THE TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Juvenile Wood Duck

Photo Credit: David Goldsmith

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM

September 12, 2024, 7pm

Ascension Lutheran Church
720 South Germantown Rd.

**Please join us for our September program
"Chattanooga: A National Park City."**

Brian Smith and Anna Mathis of Chattanooga's Department of Parks and Outdoors will speak on this exciting community-driven goal for Chattanooga to become the first National Park City in the U.S. Brian will be presenting as Communications and Marketing Director for Parks and Outdoors, and Anna is the city's Natural Resources manager.

Get a preview of the National Park City drive [here](#).

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By OJ Morgan

I look forward to seeing everyone at our first meeting of the year on September 12. Our program will feature Brian Smith and Anna Mathis speaking to us about Chattanooga's involvement with the National Park City campaign as well as the great work creating more natural habitat throughout the city including meadows, wetlands, and interpretive programming. It promises to be very informative meeting.

Also, we'll be talking about our goals for the year and how members can get involved. As I've mentioned in earlier reports, CTOS is working with the city to design and install signs on the Brainerd Levee, informing the public about the importance of wetlands for migratory and wading birds as well as supporting other wildlife and controlling the quality of our water. CTOS will also be helping to install Motus devices to aid in the tracking of birds and other animals, like those banded by David Aborn over the years at Greenway Farms. Joining other interested groups in town to fashion a program like *Lights Out Louisville* to protect migratory birds traveling through the city at night will be another one of our goals for the year. Finally, we want to continue our focus on educating young students about the joys and adventures that birding can bring into their lives.

As you see, we'll have plenty of opportunities for our club members to get involved. Of course, we'll continue to offer a multitude of field trips led by some of the best birders in the area. If one is serious about expanding one's interest in birding as well as making Chattanooga a better place for birds, CTOS is the place to be!

See you on the 12!



Snowy and Great Egret

Photo Credit: David Goldsmith

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8am-11am, August 29-November 7

Where: Greenway Farms Park

UTC professor Dr. David Aborn will be banding birds during migration. Observers can learn about the uses of data collected during banding, watch the process, and get up-close looks at both resident and migrating birds. David's banding station will be by the big tan barn next to the gardens. Everyone is welcome, for any or all of the session. Contact David Aborn at david-aborn@utc.edu for more information.

When: September 8, 8am (Rain Date Sept 15th)

Where: Enterprise South

This trip will be led by Kent Pennington. Meet at the Ranger Station. Kent's phone: [\(423\) 443-8268](tel:(423)443-8268)

When: September 15, 8am

Where: Cravens House

This trip is led by Luke Thompson. Contact Luke at (423) 715-3648 for more information

When: September 29 at 8am

Where: MacDonald Farm

Kevin Calhoun is leading this trip. For more information, contact Kevin at kac@tnaqua.org

When: Monday, September 30, October 7, October 14 at 4pm

Where: Honors Golf Course

David Stone is offering birding field trips at The Honors Course in Ooltewah again this fall. We will travel to several spots around the golf course in golf carts looking for birds.

Expect to see many of our year round birds, plus birds that are migrating through heading south to spend the winter in Central and South America. We might also see some early arriving fall/winter birds that will spend the winter in our area. The dates are Monday, Sept. 30, Monday Oct. 7 and Monday, Oct. 14. All start at 4:00 PM. To reserve your spot email David at rockyturf@epbfi.com. These trips are limited to 18 participants.

When: October 6, 8:30am

Where: Cravens House

Trip Leaders: Otis brothers, Will and Bryan.

Contact Will Otis at [423-902-8858](tel:423-902-8858) for more information

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

CONTINUED

When: October 12 and 13

Where Lula Lake Land Trust

The Lula Lake Land Trust and Chattanooga Audubon Society are teaming up for a 2 -day Bird Blitz at Lula Lake. There are three properties that they hope to cover between those two days: Lula Lake's Core Preserve, Highpoint, and Buckner properties. They are looking for 2 more group leaders. Daniel Roberts, the Community Engagement Coordinator, would like to meet with the leaders before the BioBlitz to scout the bird habitats and answer any questions they might have. Birders are also needed to help spot and count birds. Anyone who wants to participate can contact Daniel Roberts directly at daniel@lulalake.org or 706-820-0520, extension 2

ATTENTION EXPERIENCED BIRDERS!

David Stone is looking for a couple of birders with good ears and bird ID skills to work with David on checking the Chattanooga city golf courses Brainerd and Brown Acres 3-4 times a year (fall, winter, spring and perhaps summer) to see how many species are found on these courses. We would then make some recommendations on anything that can be done to enhance the bird population. Contact David at 423-413-7033 or at rockyturf@epbfi.com. for more info.



Northern Harrier Photo Credit: David Goldsmith

BLACK BELT BIRDING FESTIVAL

by Barbara Johnson

In early August, several CTOS members attended the fourth annual Black Belt Birding Festival, hosted by Alabama Audubon. The Black Belt is a swath that stretches the south-central width of the state. Named for its rich black soil, it is the largest prairie ecosystem in the Southeast United States. Historically, the Black Belt's name took on another application when the region was dominated by cotton plantations, and enslaved African Americans made up most of the area's population.

The festival is part of Alabama Audubon's Black Belt Birding initiative, which works to bring eco-tourism to this economically and environmentally challenged area. It's an easy draw for birders; according to Alabama Audubon's Executive Director, Dr. Scot Duncan, "There is nowhere else you can find Wood Storks and Swallow-tailed Kites alongside Dickcissels and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers."

On Friday, August 2, Ann Glass and I made our way to our hotel in Demopolis, 25 minutes south of Greensboro, the festival's center.

We were delighted to see dozens of wood storks along with several egrets and white ibis at the edges of the plentiful catfish farming ponds. On Greensboro's Main Street that evening, we attended a lively "Kick-off Party" in downtown Greensboro, attended by many of the 100+ festival registrants. Ann and I ducked out to enjoy a delicious meal at Ruan Thai a few doors down.

The festival offered over 16 field trips on Saturday. (Registrants were charged for the festival per trip, each \$30-40.) Since Ann and I were in her car, we coordinated four trips in all.

At 6:30 AM the next morning, we met about 25 other birders at M. Barnett Lawley Forever Wild Field Trial Area, one of many properties in a state land trust. Starting with an auspicious glimpse of a barn owl fleeing our group, we caravanned around a good bit of the 3300 acres for 3 hours, stopping to look at dickcissels, summer tanagers, a Mississippi kite, and, at one of the many large ponds, anhingas, yellow-crowned night herons and wood storks. The recently-seen loggerhead shrikes and painted buntings eluded us. Our excellent guide was Colin Dobson, a fine birder and graduate student at Arkansas State University.

Then Ann and I hustled up to the Joe Farm near Newbern. The Joes are a Black family who, for four generations, have farmed on 200 acres of pasture and hardwood bottomland. We waited with others for our turn to ride behind a tractor on a hay wagon through fields to a (blessedly) shaded area. There, we set up our lawn chairs as one of the Joe family, on another tractor, began mowing hay for the farm's black Angus cattle. We met up with other Chattanoogaans-- David and Stacy Stone, Jenn and Scott Martin, and Kent Dubois. We watched as first one, then two, then more swallow-tailed kites moved in and began swooping and diving behind the tractor and above us, snatching insects kicked up by the mower. Mississippi kites joined in. Soon there were a dozen swallow-tailed kites and 6-7 Mississippi kites in view. (Continued)

BLACK BELT BIRDING FESTIVAL, CONT.

Along with the 40+ others, we oohed and ahed at the acrobatics of these splendid birds-- like a July 4th audience at silent fireworks. Then back to Greensboro and to the festival keynote presentation, given by Dr. Dwayne Estes, co-founder and Executive Director of the Southeastern Grasslands Institute and professor at Austin Peay State University. Dr. Estes detailed the value and rarity of the many grassland types in Alabama-- up to ten in all-- and SCI's efforts to find and preserve them.

At 4:30 we met Dr. Estes at Sumter Farm. Accompanying him were Alabama Audubon's Andrew Lydeard, our bird guide, and Frank Bell of Chattanooga, whose family owns the farm. The Bells have managed their 3000 acres by burning every one or two years, for over a century. Dr. Estes took us through what he called the rarest and most varied grassland habitat in the Southeast. He's not called "The Prairie Preacher" for nothing; his enthusiasm for the habitat and plants and SGI's partnership with the Bells was infectious --and worth every fire ant bite I got! (I forgot to look down.)

Ann and I ended the day with an owl prowl on Sumter Farm led by Andrew Lydeard. We were treated to a most cooperative Eastern screech owl (Ann's lifer!) and a breathtaking view of the Milky Way as we stood on a dark country road, hoping for a hunting barn owl.

There were so many other tempting trips we didn't take. To name some attractive ones: a tour of the Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center followed by a hike along biologically rich Cahaba River; a hunt for red-cockaded woodpeckers at a long-leafed pine forest (successful for our fellow CTOS members!); and a walk across and around the famed Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, guided by Terry Chestnut, a local icon and son of a lawyer who represented Dr. Martin Luther King and the Freedom Fighters.

I highly recommend this well-organized and diverse festival. If you go next year, prepare for heat, a good bit of driving, and grab your accommodations early!



Swallowtail Kite and Red-cockaded Woodpecker Photo Credit: Jenn Martin

UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH FIELD TRIP

by OJ Morgan

On Wednesday evening, August 14, David Stone and I, along with two UTC students, were kindly hosted by professors Jim Peters and Matt Shrader in a tour of Sewanee's bird skin and egg collection. With specimens dating back to the early 20th Century, all meticulously preserved and documented, we enjoyed taking a close look at various species of warblers, woodpeckers, finches and tanagers, to name a few. We also talked at length about the process of preparing birds for display as well as the interesting history of the collection. To top it all off, Professor Shrader gave us a slide presentation of his innovative bird photographic techniques for capturing birds in flight. Peters and Shrader went out of their way to make the evening quite enjoyable.



Bird Skin and Egg collection
at Sewanee College
Photo Credit: OJ Morgan

CHIMNEY SWIFT RELEASE

Sherry Teas, founder of Camp Wilderness, released Chimney Swift Chicks on August 1, which her team had rescued and raised. The chicks were first flight tested at Camp Wilderness to determine their readiness for release. Over a dozen people gathered to watch the event behind the Teacher's Place in St. Elmo. Sherry had the birds in a netted container so we were treated to close range viewing as they clung to the sides. Once dusk began to fall and other Chimney Swifts began arriving and circling the chimneys of the building, Sherry opened the container and the chicks began to emerge and fly. It is thrilling to watch a bird being released- a feeling of freedom and exhilaration in seeing something wild return to the skies.

All but one of the Chimney Swifts successfully flew and joined the circling flock. One chick flew out but landed on a viewer's sock, then flew a few feet away and clung to the side of a curb. Sherry picked it up to take back to Camp Wilderness for a little more growing until the next release.



Photo Credit: Wolf Jedamski



Ryan Davenport holding a Chimney Swift

AUGUST FIELD TRIP REPORT

Brainerd Levee Bird Walk, led by William Otis

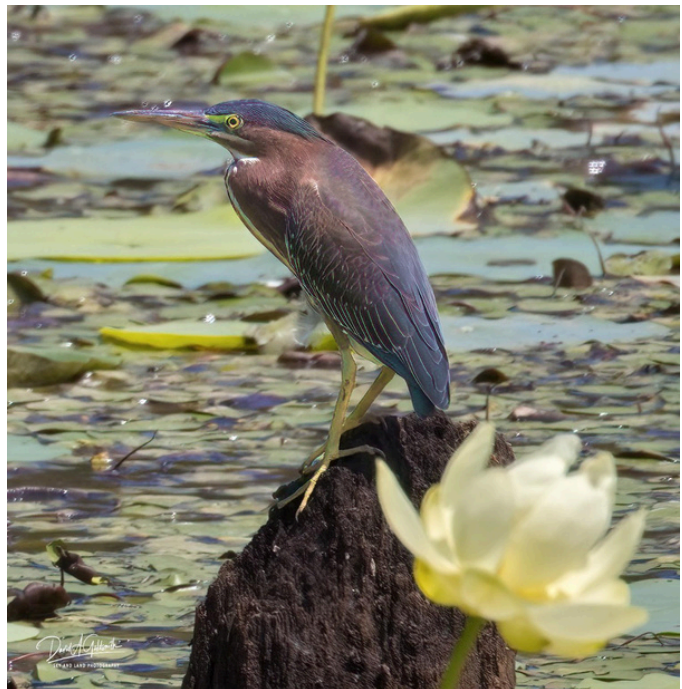
Date: August 11th; 9 participants; 2 hours and 1.6 miles

32 Species; 162 individuals

- 10 Canada Goose
- 2 Mallard
- 11 Wild Turkey
- 1 Mourning Dove
- 1 Chimney Swift
- 2 Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- 36 Killdeer
- 4 Least Sandpiper
- 15 Little Blue Heron
- 3 Snowy Egret
- 3 Green Heron
- 13 Great Egret
- 6 Great Blue Heron
- 5 White Ibis (juvenile)
- 1 Osprey
- 1 Cooper's Hawk
- 2 Eastern Kingbird
- 1 Blue Jay
- 6 American Crow
- 11 Fish Crow
- 4 Barn Swallow
- 4 Carolina Wren
- 1 Brown Thrasher
- 3 Northern Mockingbird
- 1 American Robin
- 1 Song Sparrow
- 3 Eastern Towhee
- 6 Red-winged Blackbirds
- 1 Yellow Warbler
- 1 Northern Cardinal
- 1 Blue Grosbeak
- 1 Indigo Bunting



Eastern Towhee Photo Credit:David Goldsmith



Green Heron Photo Credit: David Goldsmith