

The Chattanooga Chat

CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER OF THE TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Pine Warbler

Photo Credit: David Goldsmith

NOVEMBER 14, 2024 PROGRAM

Ascension Lutheran Church
720 Germantown Rd
Chattanooga

“AN EVENING WITH EXPERTS”

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to devote decades of your life to birding as much as you can? There have been many such members of our society over the years, but this month’s meeting is an opportunity to hear first-hand from some of the most accomplished birders in our region today. Tommie Rogers, Clyde Blum, Kevin Calhoun and Tim Lenz have agreed to answer questions about their adventures, expertise, favorite birding spots, and observations on birding and birding. They’ll be interviewed by the CTOS board members, and YOU-- the audience. Come with your questions for Tommie, Clyde, Kevin and Tim-- you may come away with some unexpected birding tips!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By OJ Morgan

While most everyone is pre-occupied with the upcoming election, for better or worse, I hope you have continued to find some comfort in your soul by staying connected to the birds around us in this beautiful fall season.

I see more and more books these days regarding birding and its positive effects on one's health and sanity. One that I'm presently reading is Neil Hayward's, *Lost Among Birds: Accidentally Finding Myself in One Very Big Year*. Basically, Hayward sets off on a years-long birding adventure not only to find birds but also to find himself. Struggling with a multitude of challenges in his life, Hayward says, "[The year] would allow me to see life more clearly—like when you look away from the stars to see them better. Incredibly, I'd find a way to work on both lists—the birding one and the real-life one—at the same time." (xiv) "I'd always known about the magic of the birds, but until my Big Year I'd never guessed at the full power of their healing."(344)

For me, birding helps to center my life, reminding me of the world's basic, simple beauty. I remember what's most important in my life while seeking those sometimes most common birds around me. It also calms my soul, especially during times like these when the world around us seems a bit uncertain.

I'm thankful for the birds and for those who join in appreciating their beauty, their vigor for living, and the ways they bring some solace to us all.



Orange-crowned Warbler Photo Credit:Shutterstock

“WHAT’S IN A NAME?”

For the October 10 meeting of CTOS, **Dr. David Aborn** took on a challenging topic: “What’s in a Name? Background and Discussion on the Proposed Changes to North American Bird Names.”

David gave us his highly entertaining and informative visual presentation, which generated a lively discussion afterward. He detailed the American Ornithological Society’s decision to change the names of all North American birds whose names are eponyms (named after people, e.g., Merriweather Lewis and Alexander Wilson), amounting to 70-80 birds in the initial phase of the project. In the wake of 2020’s unrest which elevated societal awareness of racism and other injustices, the AOS announced a goal to revise the new names based on characteristics such as appearance, behavior or habitat. Scientific names will remain as they are.

David displayed examples of birds whose names will be changed, along with details on some of the more unsavory namesakes. Audubon himself was not only a slaveholder, but he actually painted fictitious birds and named them after his patrons, apparently for profit. Other namesakes, like Wilson, led seemingly exemplary lives, but their names, too, will disappear in the sweep.

David thoroughly outlined issues supporting and opposed to this controversial change (emphasizing that he is not a member of the AOS name-change committee!) What about the field biologists who described these birds? Only a small handful of birds are named after those folks, and many names were bestowed simply to honor someone. Some of our audience members objected to having to remember all the new names, others that their field guides would be obsolete. David noted that while this is large-scale change, bird names change all the time. For example, the name “Oldsquaw”, considered a pejorative, is now “long-tailed-duck.” Name changes also arise from genetic research showing that birds are now “split” or “lumped” into different species.

The AOS intends to spool out just a few new names in a pilot project, before changing all the eponyms. To read about AOS’s process of selecting new names (with public input) see this [AOS link](#).



David Aborn shows examples of Audubon’s non-existent birds

HONOR'S COURSE FIELD TRIP REPORT

David Stone led 3 birding excursions at the Honors Course, 3 Mondays consecutively. We had a good afternoon of birding last Monday, October 14. A total of 50 bird species were seen and/or heard by at least some. Below are some of the species seen.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Wood Duck | 7 American Robin |
| 22 Mourning Dove | 27 House Finch |
| 2 Turkey Vulture | 13 Chipping Sparrow |
| 1 Cooper's Hawk | 1 Field Sparrow |
| 3 Red-tailed Hawk | 5 Song Sparrow |
| 1 Belted Kingfisher | 1 Eastern Towhee |
| 2 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 8 Common Grackle |
| 2 Red-headed Woodpecker | 8 Tennessee Warbler |
| 5 Red-bellied Woodpecker | 1 Orange-crowned Warbler |
| 3 Downy Woodpecker | 1 Nashville Warbler |
| 7 Northern Flicker | 3 Magnolia Warbler |
| 1 American Kestrel | 1 Bay-breasted Warbler |
| 3 Eastern Wood-Pewee | 3 Palm Warbler |
| 5 Eastern Phoebe | 4 Pine Warbler |
| 1 Yellow-throated Vireo | 2 Yellow-rumped Warbler |
| 12 Blue Jay | 2 Black-throated Green Warbler |
| 7 Carolina Chickadee | 1 Prairie Warbler |
| 8 Tufted Titmouse | 1 Yellow-throated Warbler |
| 4 Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 1 Scarlet Tanager |
| 2 Golden-crowned Kinglet | 8 Northern Cardinal |
| 5 White-breasted Nuthatch | 2 Rose-breasted Grosbeak |
| 3 Brown-headed Nuthatch | |
| 3 Carolina Wren | |
| 7 European Starlings | |
| 2 Gray Catbird | |
| 2 Brown Thrasher | |
| 10 Northern Mockingbird | |
| 33 Eastern Bluebird | |



Black-throated Green Warbler Photo Credit: Shutterstock



Wild Turkey

Photo Credit: David Goldsmith