

# NEWSHAWK Bulletin



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September - October 2009

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

SATURDAY - SEPTEMBER 19, 2009  
FALL FLOCK

Come join us for our annual Fall Flock, where we meet to bird, share our summer adventures, and have a picnic. We'll meet on Saturday, September 19 at 7:00 A.M. at the Shelby Park Community Center parking lot at 401 S 20th St. We will bird Mission Hill followed by a portion of the Bottoms until about 11:00, after which we'll regroup for a picnic lunch at Lakeview Shelter #1 in Shelby Park. SEE PAGE 2 FOR DIRECTIONS.

PLEASE REMEMBER:

THERE WILL BE NO REGULAR THURSDAY NIGHT MEETING IN SEPTEMBER

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2009  
ED SCHNEIDER

*"BIRDS AND THEIR ASSOCIATED DIVERSE HABITATS AT BELLS BEND"*

Bell's Bend Park offers diverse, mixed habitat, unlike most birding hotspots in Middle Tennessee. Specialties such as Dickcissel, Blue Grosbeak, Northern Bobwhite, and Willow Flycatcher can be seen regularly, as well the threatened Henslow's Sparrow. As a Seasonal Naturalist, Ed Schneider had a chance to document these and other species this summer- join us for a slide show of his images.

### RADNOR WALKS

The Fall Migration Radnor Walks will begin on Wednesday, September 16 at 7:30 A.M. in the Visitor's Center Parking Lot. They will continue each Wednesday through October 21. Kevin Bowden will be leading them this year.

## CALENDAR

### PROGRAMS

Radnor Lake Visitors Center  
@7:15 p.m.

SEPT 19

FALL FLOCK  
SHELBY PARK &  
BOTTOMS

OCT 15

BELL'S BEND

### FIELDTRIPS

### RADNOR WALKS

Sept 16 - Oct 21  
@ 7:30 A.M.

SEPT 19

FALL FLOCK  
SHELBY PARK &  
BOTTOMS

OCT 17

HILL TRACT

# UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

September 19 - Fall Flock, Shelby Park and Bottoms

See first page for description

This date coincides with the North American Migration Count, so we will use the opportunity to submit our group observations for the count. To get to the Community Center, take the Shelby Ave. exit from I-24 (east side of downtown). Turn east, away from the city. Continue on Shelby Ave. and turn left onto S 20th St. The parking lot is at the northern end of the Center. Remember to bring your lunch as well as plenty to drink.

Saturday, October 17th - Hill Tract addition to Warner Parks

Ed Gleaves will lead a birding expedition into what was, until recently, the well kept secret of an old growth forest in the heart of the 324-acre Hill Tract - a "miracle in an urban setting". The property was recently purchased by the Friends of Warner Park and this trip will be the first trip of its kind into the area. We expect to see birds typical of an old growth forest while marveling at the pristine beauty of the forest itself--including the largest sugar maple tree in the state of Tennessee. Wear sturdy footwear. We will meet at 9:00 a.m. at the gate on Highway 70, on your left before the Lakes of Bellevue on your right, and plan to make the loop hike by noon.

# RECENT FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, July 4 - Gossett Tract and Hidden Lake of Harpeth River State Park

The temperature and humidity stayed low for this July morning as NTOS members enjoyed a very pleasant field trip. Most of the birds were found at the Gossett Tract as we were there in the early hours and spent most of our time there. We started and ended our morning with great views of male Blue Grosbeaks, plus a female and one fledgling. Other highlights included a Wild Turkey that exploded out of the brush with attending young, nice looks at Acadian Flycatchers, several White-eyed Vireos, a couple singing Wood Thrushes, 4 Brown Thrashers foraging in the path together at Hidden Lake, six species of warblers (Blue-winged, Northern Parula, Prairie, Prothonotary, Common Yellowthroat, and a Yellow-breasted Chat carrying food), several Indigo Buntings, and many Orchard Orioles (at least 6 in one spot at the Gossett Tract which included 2 adult males, 2 females, and 2 young males). Thanks to Richard Connors for leading us. – Jan Shaw

## Welcome New Members!

CERVANTES, Gabriel & Dahlia Porter  
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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## North American Migration Count - September 19

The North American Migration Count is on September 19. We will be participating this year as part of our regular Fall Flock, but if you are unable to join us, you are encouraged to participate on your own and send in your data to Ron Hoff at 282 Hackworth Ln. Clinton, TN 37716 or [aves7000@bellsouth.net](mailto:aves7000@bellsouth.net). In addition to the actual species tallied by county, every count needs to have what's called the effort data. This includes hours and miles by car, foot, owling, and any other method. Feeder watchers and hours at feeders are also needed, but are considered a separate category and need to be kept separate from the field data. The other information needed is the weather data, times of the count (as 0600-1900), and the names of all the participants.

## Nashville Fall Bird Count - October 3

The Nashville Fall Count will be held on October 3, and we need as many birders as possible, beginner and expert alike, to cover all of the routes. This is your opportunity to contribute bird records while having fun counting all the birds you see and hear. And it's a beautiful time of year to be out birding with your friends. Routes to be covered include Radnor Lake, Harpeth West, Harpeth East, Warner Parks, Shelby Park and Bottoms, Owls Hill, Percy Priest Lake, Gallatin Steam Plant, Old Hickory Lake, Beaman and Bells Bend parks, and Cheatham County. You can stay out for just part of the day or for the whole day. Please call Jan Shaw (331-2231) to sign up for a route. The compilation will take place that night at 7:30 at Jan Shaw's house at 5019 Timberhill Dr. 37211.

## "A SWIFT NIGHT OUT"

SEPTEMBER 11, 12, 13

As summer draws to a close and the swifts have finished raising their young, these fascinating aerial acrobats begin to congregate in communal roosts prior to their migration in the fall. Some roosts may consist of an extended family group of a half a dozen birds or so, but the larger sites can host hundreds or even thousands of swifts! "A Swift Night Out" is a continent-wide effort to raise awareness about and encourage interest in Chimney Swifts and Vaux's Swifts.

Here is how it works: Keep your eyes to the skies at dusk and watch for areas where swifts are feeding. Look for a tall shaft, chimney or similar structure to locate where Chimney Swifts (central to east coast) or Vaux's Swift (Pacific coast) go to roost in your area. On one night over the weekend of September 11, 12, 13 observe the roost starting about 30 minutes before dusk and estimate the number of swifts that enter. When you have your number, email us at [DWA@austin.rr.com](mailto:DWA@austin.rr.com). That's all there is to it! Please include the following information:

- \* Number of swifts counted
- \* Time
- \* Date
- \* Location
- \* Broad description of the site, e.g. school, warehouse, residence, Chimney Swift Tower, etc.
- \* Weather conditions may also be reported.

## Why Females Sing (Or Don't Sing)

A new study may help explain why birdsong is more of a guy thing in temperate regions but plenty of females join the chorus in the tropics. Jordan Price of St. Mary's College of Maryland in St. Mary's City and his colleagues used New World blackbirds to study the evolution of female song. The group includes both tropical and temperate species, some with female singers and some without.

Looking at the pattern of female singing on a family tree of 65 blackbird species, the researchers concluded that the original blackbirds founding the lineage had female singers. As the lineage diversified into modern species, the capacity for female song disappeared at least 11 times. Among blackbirds, then, the question isn't why some females sing but why some don't. Dividing the blackbird species into tropical and temperate dwellers yields only a rough correlation with the occurrence of female song. Instead he found a tighter correlation by looking at lifestyle.

Among most of the blackbird species that stay in one region year round and breed in monogamous, territorial pairs, females still sing. But in birds that have left behind that way of life, such as migratory orioles and colonially breeding grackles, females typically have lost their songs.

## Traffic Noise Tough on Low-voiced Birds

Traffic noise may be driving birds with low-pitched calls away from forests. Of eight species surveyed in a new study by Sarah Goodwin of the University of Delaware in Newark, the two with the calls most likely to get lost in the din of traffic were unexpectedly rare in woodlands near highways.

Traffic typically rumbles at 3 kilohertz or below, Goodwin said. Several earlier studies had found that urban populations of certain birds such as Great Tits have higher-pitched calls compared with rural cousins. Goodwin looked for a more drastic reaction: just avoiding noisy places.

She got the idea, she said, while selecting sites for an earlier bird survey in the sprawl around Washington, D.C. So many of the possible spots had so much traffic noise that she had to reject them because she couldn't hear birds well.

To see if birds also shun habitat based on noise, she looked for eight species in 30 places in wooded national parks. Half the study sites hummed with readily audible traffic noise and half had more peace and quiet. To reduce confounding factors such as unhealthy effects of roadside exhaust, she chose study plots at least 100 meters from a road edge. She checked each plot weekly during the spring and summer for woodland birds with diverse calls and lifestyles, including Carolina Wrens, Wood Thrushes and Scarlet Tanagers.

When she analyzed the presence of birds and the plot characteristics, she found that noise was the strongest factor explaining the loud spots' rarity of two species: Yellow-billed Cuckoo and White-breasted Nuthatch. Those birds vocalized mostly in the traffic-din range.



# Chip Notes



6/14 - John Henderson of Chattanooga reported a *GREAT WHITE HERON* below Chickamauga Dam in the vicinity of the railroad bridge, a first for Hamilton County.

6/16 - David Kirschke found at least 2 *DICKCISSELS* on Swinging Bridge Rd near Old Hickory Dam, but no Bobolinks. He then took his daughter to listen for Chuck-will's-widows at Long Hunter State Park (Barnett Rd). They first heard only *WHIP-POOR-WILL* (1 or 2), but soon several *CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOWS* began calling (3-4). They also heard and saw a couple *NIGHTHAWKS*, making for a nice sweep of [expected] goatsuckers.

6/20 - Jeannie and Dale Swant of Manchester reported a *SNOWY EGRET* setting on a nest at Little Elder Island on Woods Reservoir. There are also many *CATTLE EGRETS*, *GREAT EGRETS*, *GREAT AND LITTLE BLUE HERONS*, *GREEN HERONS*, and *BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS* in all stages of maturity.

6/25 - Jeff Wilson reported 12 *BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCKS* at TVA Lake at the Pits

6/30 - David Kirschke spent some time birding in Shelby County. He found 7 *BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCKS* along with 3 Least Terns at TVA Lake; *BLACK-NECKED STILTS* and *DICKCISSELS* at the Pits; his life male Painted Bunting at Ensley Bottoms; plenty of *MISSISSIPPI KITES* at President's Island along with a single *WESTERN KINGBIRD* and several *COMMON NIGHTHAWKS* and *EURASIAN COLLARED DOVES*; and several *FISH CROWS* at Shelby Farms.

7/4 - Frank Fekel birded along the Harpeth River Greenway this morning. Highlight of the walk was a first summer male *BLUE GROSBEAK*, which had a blue head but brown body. There were plenty of *CLIFF SWALLOWS* about and two *PURPLE MARTINS* as well as single *WHITE-EYED VIREO*, *COMMON YELLOWTHROAT*, and *GREEN HERON*.

7/6 - Dean Edwards of the Knoxville Chapter passed along a report from Harold Sharp of the Riverwalk Bird Club in Chattanooga of a *ROSEATE SPOONBILL* from the same area below Chickamauga Dam where one of the Great White Herons has been being seen.

7/7 - Jeff Wilson reported he found found a single *SOLITARY SANDPIPER*, 10 *LEAST SANDPIPERS* and a molting

*WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER* at the "Pits". He noted, "More Wind Birds from now on, let the games began!"

7/8 - Linda Kelly in Williamson Co. at the Harpeth River canoe area, just off Highway 100, and saw two *YELLOW-BREASTED CHATS* gathering food. As she crossed into Davidson Co., just over the river, a *NORTHERN HARRIER* flew over her car.

7/10 - Jeannie Swant and David Haskell conducted a wading bird survey at Little Elder Island on Woods Reservoir in Franklin County and were able to confirm *SNOWY EGRETS* nesting with the discovery of a pair of adults tending two chicks in the nest. Other juveniles seen included: *BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS*, *CATTLE EGRETS*, *LITTLE BLUE HERONS*, *GREAT EGRETS* and *GREAT BLUE HERONS*. They found no juvenile Green Herons.

7/14 - Jeff Wilson reported that he watched as a soaring *RED-TAILED HAWK* was set upon by a *COOPER'S HAWK*, while the latter was being dogged by an *EASTERN KINGBIRD* and a *CHIMNEY SWIFT* circled above the swirling group egging then on.

7/20 - State Ornithologist, Scott Somershoe, reported that he went with Jeannie and Dale Swant to observe the rookery at Little Elder Island in Woods Reservoir. After observing the sight, he concluded that it was one of the most important rookeries in Middle Tennessee with all but two of the species of waders that nest in Tennessee, nesting at this site. While there, he observed a *BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON* swallowing what appeared to be a *CATTLE EGRET* nestling.

7/23 - Kevin Bowden reported that he went for a hike with a non-birding friend at Beaman Park. He was surprised to hear a *LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH* still singing along the Henry Creek not far from the parking area and trailhead. There was no sign of Worm-eating Warblers, however.

7/28 - David Kirschke and his daughter went to Duck River in the rain to look for the *BROWN PELICAN* that had been previously reported. Not only were they successful in their search for the pelican, but Gwen also added *SPOTTED SANDPIPER* and *DICKCISSEL* to her life list.

7/29 - while out for his evening exercise near his home

next to the Harpeth River, Frank Fekel began to see *PURPLE MARTINS* streaming across the sky. Reaching the huge power lines he found hundreds of the birds sitting together. He stayed to watch for perhaps 10 minutes and attempted a count, which reached 434 before he left to resume his interrupted exercise.

8/12 - Phillip Casteel made a quick walk through Shelby Bottoms, the highlight of which was his earliest ever *MAGNOLIA WARBLER*.

8/13 - Scott Somershoe reported watching hordes of martins gather near LP Field after participating in a bike race. He estimated at least 15,000 martins circling overhead. He wrote: "There were ~5k over the stadium and race course and huge swarms of them to the north, some groups were distant. Not quite Tree Swallow "tornadoes," but pretty close. I didn't get after them to see where they roost. I wouldn't be surprised if there are 30,000 birds there every evening."

## NEW FIELD TRIP LEADERS

Linda Kelly and Kevin Bowden have graciously agreed to be co-leaders for field trips for the 2009-2011 term. If you have any ideas or suggestions for field trips, please contact them.

*NEWSHAWK BULLETIN*  
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*FIRST CLASS*