

# TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Charles P. Nicholson, President  
P. O. Box 402  
Norris, Tennessee 37828

April 22, 2003

Governor Phil Bredesen  
Tennessee State Capital  
Nashville, TN 37243-0001

Dear Governor Bredesen,

On behalf of the Tennessee Ornithological Society's 950 members across the state, I am writing to urge you not to permanently re-direct the dedicated Funds provided by the Real Estate Transfer Tax (Code 67, Chapter 4), commonly referred to as the Wetlands and State Parks Acquisition Funds, to the General Fund.

We appreciate that Tennessee is facing significant budget challenges and that State agencies have been asked to trim 9% from their budgets in an attempt to balance the State budget. Thus, we are not opposed to a one-year, 9% cut in these dedicated acquisition funds. We are, however, very strongly opposed to the permanent abolishment of the dedicated acquisition funds, as proposed in SB1991/HB2073.

The Wetlands and State Park Acquisition Funds are highly leveraged funds and have been used to bring in millions of dollars in matching private and federal monies to purchase over 200,000 acres of some of the most biologically diverse land in Tennessee. Among the important conservation acquisitions since the inception of these funds in 1986 are the Royal Blue Wildlife Management Area (50,063 acres), the Bridgestone/Firestone WMA (9,231 acres), the Sundquist WMA (74,700 acres) and the John Tully WMA (11,500 acres).

The Tennessee Ornithological Society was founded in 1915 to promote the enjoyment, scientific study, and conservation of our state's rich birdlife. We are the oldest state conservation organization. Several of our founders were instrumental in helping establish our impressive State Parks system. More recently, we have partnered in many other bird habitat conservation efforts with other organizations and local, state, and federal agencies. The Wetlands and State Parks Acquisition Funds are a critically important mechanism in continuing this legacy of conserving our state's rapidly disappearing natural resources.

Please make every effort to protect this fund and prevent the permanent re-directing of the monies from the Real Estate Transfer Tax to the General Fund.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me at (865) 494-8688, or contact me by email at [cpnichol@bellsouth.net](mailto:cpnichol@bellsouth.net).

Sincerely,

<<signed>>

Charles P. Nicholson  
President, Tennessee Ornithological Society