



January Meeting Program:

“What Digital Photography Can Teach Us About Bird Biology” by MTOS member, David O. Hill

David, a birder and photographer for many years, took this opportunity to show us how the advent of digital photography has allowed the average person to discover things about birds that would usually go unnoticed. That is not to say that the old film cameras could not “see” these things, but many factors made it more difficult for the average birder/photographer to achieve acceptable results.

There are many differences in digital photography that help the photographer. These include but are not limited to the following:

1. **Wider range of ASA/ISO settings:** This refers to “film” speed or the sensitivity to light of the receptor. With film cameras the sensitivity was restricted by the film you chose to use. The higher the number (eg; 10, 400, 800, 1600) the more sensitive the film, so the lower light you could shoot in and the faster the shutter speeds you could use. The drawback was that resolution could suffer as the light diminished and shutter speed increased. Digital cameras do not eliminate this, but the range of ISO settings (up to 15,000 depending on the camera) give you far more flexibility in this area.
2. **Image manipulation:** Once you have taken the picture you can download it to your computer and, with even modest photo enhancing software, can alter or improve the results to achieve what you desire. With a high resolution photo you can easily zoom in on details that better tell your story.
3. **Portability:** Instead of having to carry around an album of photos in book form or having to “snail mail” numbers of 4x6 inch cards, you can email them in .jpg format or download them to a thumb drive and put 1000 pictures or more in your pocket.
4. **Cost:** There is a cost too this, but after the initial outlay for equipment, and you can go as frugal or as expensive as you wish, there is no film cost or development cost other than the price of the memory card. Printing the finished product will cost but far below what it did before because you print only the ones you want. The rest are deleted or saved on the computer.
5. **High frame rate, 10-15/second:** This allows the photographer to shoot a sequence of exposures at such a high rate that he/she can capture events that otherwise would have been missed.

To support the statements above, David went on to show us many of the pictures he has taken through the years during his travels far and wide. With **“stop-action” shutter speeds** we were able to see the “alula” on the wings of various birds and how flight feathers lift when the airflow over the wing approaches a stall condition (when a wing loses lift). We saw the eyes of birds with the nictitating membrane closing to protect the eye in different situations, and gannet striking the water in a dive for food.

He showed us **enlargements** that enhanced the details such as eye rings, feather condition and structure in dynamic situations, eyelash feathers on a tree swallow, missing feathers on a harrier in molt and more.

Other photos documented methods of foraging and food collection. Red Crossbills extracting pine seeds from a cone, a Common Loon eating a crab, a Common Merganser trolling with babies as they fed, a Kestrel eating a vole, and a Wilson’s Snipe with a worm.

Methods of locomotion captured frozen in time as a Yellow-rumped Warbler pushes off a branch to launch into flight, Northern Gannets and American White Pelicans running to get up to speed to take off.

Disease and mortality recorded a tumor on an American Goldfinch, a wire strike resulting in death for a bird, and weather-related death due to starvation of several nesting swallows.

Another benefit of digital photography is in taking a picture during a bird count if accuracy is paramount. Take a picture then count at leisure in a no-stress environment.

At the conclusion of the presentation David added some tips to bird photography in answer to questions raised by the members.

1. Be patient. Don't be afraid to slowly approach a subject. Crawling is sometimes necessary.
2. Get close, 10-15 feet if possible.
3. If getting close is not possible, a 600mm telephoto lens will help.
4. Sometimes that is not enough. A long lens on the camera mounted on a tripod with a remote control shutter release can solve the problem.
5. Use a blind or a hide and sit and wait.
6. Be ethical in your interaction with nature. Try not to disturb the action you are recording. David says he tries to leave the birds doing the same thing as when he finds them.

(C. Brown) Editor's note: for those who may be interested, I recommend **'Park Ranger's Guide to Nature & Wildlife Photography'** by Douglass Owen, retired Park Ranger, Naturalist, Educator, and Photographer, available on Amazon.com.



The pictures below are by David O. Hill, but were not used in his presentation.

<< Leucistic American Robin

Short-eared Owl>>>



Study of flight feathers on a Red-tailed Hawk



Meeting Notes January 16, 2019:

Field trip reports:

Arkabutla CBC - December 28, 2019: Scheduled for the 27th, it was rained out and rescheduled for the 28th. Eight observers counted 93 species including a first for the area, a Grasshopper Sparrow.

Wapanocca/Shelby Forest CBC - December 29, 2018: Led by **Dick Preston** and **Van Harris**. We had 16 observers, reporting 91 species. Our twenty year average has been 87, with a low of 79, and a high of 98 (three times). 45 species were reported in Tennessee, and 82 in Arkansas, with 56 found on the refuge, and 64 off-refuge. Some big and inexplicable misses were: Brown Thrasher (first time missed); American Goldfinch (first time missed); Ring-billed Gull (18); Wilson's Snipe (11); American Pipit (12) and Chipping Sparrow (12). Numbers in parenthesis are the years previously recorded out of 20.

New highs were set for: Ross's Goose (350); Green-winged Teal (4010); Canvasback (275); Great Egret (3) and American Coot (2350). Lows were set or tied for: Barred Owl (3), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (8), Loggerhead Shrike (1), Eastern Towhee (1) and Field Sparrow (1).

One note: Waterfowl numbers on the refuge increase in late afternoon, as birds return to spend the night. Two traveling birders from Pennsylvania were at the refuge late, as were Keith and I. Ian Gardner contacted me to offer his checklist, which of course, I gladly accepted. He and his girlfriend are listed as participants. Thanks to all who participated. (Dick Preston)

Strawberry Plains CBC - January 5, 2019:

First, I want to thank y'all again for taking the time and participating in the new CBC at SPAC. The



attendance (35) was truly humbling and will definitely be one of the highest in the state. I have attached a summary of our count. We ended the day with 5,167 individual birds among 86 species. We had a lot of good birds including Blue-headed Vireo, all three nuthatches, LeConte's Sparrow, and American Woodcock. Please let me know if you would like a copy of your group's respective tally sheet. If anyone would like to enter their group's data into eBird, the guidelines for doing so can be found there.

I am also very grateful to all those who brought food (I haven't eaten that well in a long time) and who helped prepare things at the Visitors Center. Additionally, many thanks to SPAC for allowing us to utilize their facilities and lending their staff's expertise to help get the ball rolling. Over my years of conducting CBCs, I have come to measure the success of a count not only by the number of species or individual birds that are observed but also by the fellowship and good times with friends. By those criteria, we could not have been a more successful count. I look forward to seeing y'all at next year's SPAC-CBC.

(Hal Mitchell - compiler for SPAC-CBC) email halmitchell@gmail.com

Unusual sightings:

The **blackbirds** are back at the bamboo fields near Shelby Farms "Catch 'em Lake." If you want to see thousands of birds come to roost for the night get there by 4:45PM and park at Catch 'em Lake. Do not go beyond the gate with your car on the road as it closes shortly thereafter.

Dick Preston had a Cooper's Hawk, who regularly visits his bird buffet, chase a Northern Cardinal inside his garage through an open garage door. Both the Cardinal and hawk exited no worse for wear.

A Male Indigo Bunting was seen on the Wolf River Restoration area. A Black Swan was seen in Cameron Brown Park.

Two Eastern Screech Owls were seen on the Strawberry Plains CBC.

A visitor reported a Cooper's Hawk sitting on a stump near their house from time to time and as he was telling a friend about it, the hawk showed up and perched for a while.

The female Summer Tanager came to our bird bath for a drink again this week. 1-17-2019. C. Brown.



Old Business:

Vote Passed: The membership present voted to donate \$500 to co-sponsor with the Mississippi Ornithological Society the David Allen Sibley art exhibit and presentation at the University of Mississippi campus in Oxford, at a date in 2019.

New Business:

It is time to sign up for the March Potluck. A sign-up list will be passed around at the meeting or email Martha Waldron at martha.waldron@gmail.com. Indicate the dish you will bring and if you intend to participate in the set-up and/or clean-up before and after the event.

5PM - set-up crew arrives

5:30 - open for members and guests to enter bringing delicious food items. Wine, snacks and social intercourse follow.

5:30 to 6:30 - set up food lines.

6:30 - President welcomes all and opens serving lines. (Speaker goes first)

NLT 7:15 - Introduce speaker; program begins.

(Dick Preston)

Conservation:

Farm Bill Passes and Signed into Law: Many of the items birders and naturalists were against were eliminated from the bill. Increased funding was passed for some conservation-oriented departments.

FYI:

Wolf River Conservancy Spring Birding Paddle on the Ghost Section of the Wolf River:

The Conservancy has asked to inform our members of this event and is extending an invitation to those who would like to participate. This event will be held in April. Birding from a canoe can be a little tricky so some canoeing experience is recommended. More information will be available in the March and April newsletters. (submitted by Dick Preston)

TOS Membership Information

Benefits include monthly programs, field trips, quarterly journals, and state and chapter newsletters.

Categories and dues are:

Individual	\$36
Family	\$40
Sustaining	\$55
College Student	\$23
Other Student	\$ 5
Lifetime	\$450 one time +\$18 yearly

Please send dues to:

Barbara Pyles

518 Forest Hill-Irene Rd. South

Cordova, TN 38018-4832

(901)570-1009 E-mail

brbpyles@gmail.com

Newsletter Delivery Options

To reduce printing and mailing costs, a digital version, which is usually expanded with photos and occasional articles, is provided. Notify Margaret Jefferson at mjefferson100@hotmail.com. If you have no internet access, a printed version can be mailed.

Chapter Newsletter Submissions

E-mail or call Chad Brown

cwb496@bellsouth.net or (901) 754-3385

Deadline for submissions to the Newsletter is the 22nd of the month.

Field Cards

Please mail or e-mail your field cards and notable sightings to Dick Preston.

E-mail: dickpreston@rittermail.com

Tennessee Warbler Deadlines

*February 28 for the April Newsletter

*June 30 for the August Newsletter

*October 31 for the December Newsletter

Forward contributions to:

Theresa Graham, Editor

P.O. Box 366 Oakland, TN 38060

(901) 465-4263 or e-mail:

2graham@bellsouth.net

Chapter Meeting

February 20, 2019 at 7:00 PM

**St. George's Episcopal Church, 2425 South Germantown Rd.
Germantown, TN Phone 901-754-7282**

Program at 7:00 PM

"Loggerhead Shrike" presented by **Michael Collins** and his **Associates** from Rhodes College.

Hospitality

Refreshments will be provided by **Thomas & Andrea Blevins** with **Sheila Bentley**.

Field Trip Information

February 10, 2019 - TVA and Robco Lakes. Dick Preston will lead. Contact Dick at dickpreston@rittermail.com or phone (901) 837-3360. Meet at the TVA ash ponds by Allen Steam Plant at 7:30AM. Take Riverport Rd./Paul R. Lowry Rd., turn right at the 4- way intersection where you see the new natural gas-powered generating plant on your left, then turn at your first right at the top of the levee.

New Members

Gloria Robinson-Simpson, Memphis, gloriagr1@aol.com

Special Events

February 15-18, 2019 - Great Backyard Bird Count sponsored by the Cornell Lab, Audubon Society, and Bird Studies Canada and powered by eBird. Just bird any day, anywhere at any time and report your list on eBird. For more information and instructions go to <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>

February 1-3, 2019 - Reelfoot Lake Eagle Fest: Held at Reelfoot Lake State Park, near Tiptonville, TN. See the following website for details.

www.reelfoottourism.com/reelfootlake/attractions/eagles-waterfowl-tours/

David O. Hill contributed these photos for the newsletter. These were taken in north Mississippi in late December, 2018.



Picture to the left is a blue phase Snow Goose.

Below is a picture of late arrivals to the crowd.

Snow Geese typically arrive in huge numbers in the Mid-South in winter, mainly in Arkansas and northern Mississippi.



White-fronted and blue-phase Snow Geese taking off.

The sky fills with Snow Geese as they take to the air in response to something alarming them.



The pictures on this page were taken in south Florida over Christmas at Arthur R. Marshall NWR and at a small lake in Parkland, FL, by Chad Brown.



The picture to the left is of a **Snail Kite**. Not an endangered species but somewhat uncommon in the US. The birds feed on snails that are readily available in south Florida. There were four of these birds at the refuge this day. I initially mis-identified this bird as a Northern Harrier as it glided low over the vegetation in the field showing a white patch at the base of its tail as it flew by at a distance. The white patch was wider than normal for a Harrier and the face had a different look. A gentleman birder from Florida set me straight after I took this picture.



Mottled Ducks, and a **Green Heron** in lake at Parkland, and a **Snowy Egret** in NWR.



The Moon as seen from Parkland, FL, December 22, 2018.





Hermit Thrush - Johnson Park, Collierville, TN
December, 2018 (Debra Kienzle)

Eastern
Meadowlark >>>
O'Neal Lake
Hatchie NWR
December, 2018
(Debra Kienzle)



Brown Thrasher - Johnson Park, Collierville, TN
December, 2018. (Debra Kienzle)

Eastern Phoebe >
O'Neal Lake,
Hatchie NWR
December, 2018
(Tom Kienzle)



<< Ring-necked
Ducks
Halle Lake, Collierville
December, 2018
(Tom Kienzle)

Song Sparrow >>>>
Johnson Park
Collierville, TN
December, 2018
(Tom Kienzle)

