

Kentucky Ornithological Society

Spring Meeting, April 25-27, 2025

Carter Caves State Resort Park

The forecast for the weekend was drizzly and gray, but that didn't stop KOS members from gathering at Carter Caves SRP for KOS's spring meeting. (It turns out, the weather didn't cause any problems.)

For people who arrived early, there were a couple of field trips. At 11:00, participants birded at Minor Clark Fish Hatchery and at 3:00, there was a hike around the park's welcome center area and Natural Bridge Trail.

Friday Evening Meeting, 7:00

David Bailey, acting KOS President, welcomed everyone to the meeting in a conference room at the park. He asked for volunteers to consider some KOS Board roles which will soon need to be filled. He announced some new KOS initiatives, details below.

The first activity is a Breeding Bird Blitz, which will take place from June 13 through 16. The goal of the Blitz – record the breeding birds in every Kentucky county. Birders will be asked to sign up on the KOS website (birdky.org) and identify the counties where they plan to bird. We want to get eyes and ears on the least birded counties in the state, so we are offering an incentive for taking part. Birders will get a raffle ticket for every county they visit and will get 2 raffle tickets for the 12 least-birded counties. (for at least 1 hour per county and at least 15 minutes at each stop) The raffle prize is a \$200 gift certificate for use at a Kentucky State Park. Data will be collected from contributors' eBird lists. The BBBlitz is a chance for birders to get out there and have fun birding while generating some good data.

KOS will also hold a t-shirt design contest, with the winning design ready to wear at the annual meeting in September. The contest committee will provide details soon.

Next on the agenda was Steve Kistler's Bird Quiz. As usual, he stumped many, but he was unable to fool everyone. We always appreciate his final slide – "Let's go birding!"

The Keynote speaker was Mollee Brown, an experienced guide who founded Nighthawk Agency, a marketing and strategy business for birding, conservation, and ecotourism organizations. She has worked with many birding organizations throughout the world. She is also one of the founders and contributors of the Life List Birding Podcast.

Her presentation, "The Global Chorus," featured efforts in different parts of the world to promote conservation, while encouraging sustainable development and tourism. She discussed the cultural habits that affect bird populations, such as the caged bird trade, and how individuals and families are working to combat such problems. She showcased small scale efforts that are making a big difference in Thailand, Cuba, El Salvador, Uganda,

Columbia, and Alabama. People devoted to birds and conservation can affect change through sheer hard work and determination. The work has led to more local job opportunities and leadership roles for women. These stories were inspiring.

The field trips scheduled for Saturday:

- The Mulligan Trail at Carter Caves – morning, led by Carol Besse
- Tygarts State Forest /Collins Ridge Top Trail - morning led by Libby Megna
- Minor Clark and Cave Run Lake – full day trip, led by Ronan O’Carra and Nancy Braun
- Grayson Lake and Laurel Gorge WMA – morning, led by David Bailey
- Field Trip Leading Seminar – afternoon, led by Mollee Brown
- Carter Caves, trails in the park – afternoon, led by Libby Megna
- East Park Industrial Park – afternoon, David Bailey

Saturday Evening Program, 7:00

The Saturday evening program was held at the park’s amphitheater. David Bailey started the meeting by providing some details about the upcoming Breeding Bird Blitz and t-shirt contest. Trip leaders then provided highlights of their field trips:

- Carol’s trip to the Mulligan Trail (a repurposed golf course) yielded 11 warbler species and many Red-headed Woodpeckers.
- Libby’s trip to Tygarts SF and the Collins Ridge Top Trail had Blue-winged Warblers along with several others in the afternoon.
- Ronan reported orioles, swallows, Yellow Warblers, and some shore and wading birds, with a total of 60 species.
- Mollee’s trip highlight was an Osprey.
- David’s trip to Laurel Gorge featured gorgeous habitat, beautiful wildflowers, and a singing Swainson’s Warbler.
- His trip to the East Park Industrial Park featured grassland species, such as a Northern Harrier, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Bobolinks.

David conducted a checklist of the birds seen so far over the weekend, and we all celebrated the people who were able to identify lifers. We had a total of 120 species including 24 warblers. Not bad for a cool, gray weekend!

The featured speaker for the night was Michael Patton who is conducting research on Wood Thrushes. They are in serious decline, with a population loss of 60%. He and other researchers are trying to identify the cause of the decline so they can provide information to mitigate the damage. One big problem is habitat loss, as the birds need at least 2 acres of connected forest per nesting pair.

Michael is part of larger research effort throughout their range to put transmitters on Wood Thrushes. He works at Cave Run Lake and is using the Motus Wildlife Tracking System to track movements and behavior of tagged birds across vast distances and extended periods of time. (For more information, go to motus.org.) He trapped 26 birds last year and at least 25 survived on their breeding grounds. So far this spring, 6 have returned to the same territory. He said that anyone interested in promoting the research can become a member of Kentucky Wild. Go to <https://app.fw.ky.gov/kywild/> to learn more. Attendees asked many interesting questions.

The field trip for Sunday was announced – Tygarts State Forest and the research trail, to start at 8:00 AM. Birders could also choose to visit other spots in the area.

David announced the dates for the Annual Membership Meeting – September 19 – 21 at Kentucky Dam Village. Everyone enjoyed cookies after the meeting. All are looking forward to the next chance to get together and go birding!