



STAFF PHOTOS BY C.B. SCHMELTER

Tennessee River Gorge Trust avian and research technician Holland Youngman holds a Louisiana waterthrush after taking blood samples along the Bee Branch tributary Thursday on Signal Mountain.

# BIRD HUNTERS

Chattanooga's River Gorge Trust researching population trends for indicator birds

BY MARK PACE  
 STAFF WRITER

A Louisiana waterthrush sang and danced above the Bee Branch tributary along the Middle Creek watershed. The 6-inch bird worked tirelessly to intimidate a mechanical replica sitting on a rock in the middle of the water. The faux intruder aggravated the waterthrush with its mere presence and a song of its own trumpeting from two nearby speakers. The male bird charged toward the replica, unknowingly flying under a net before

retreating to take another pass. The real bird was trying unsuccessfully to shoo away the intruder. It quickly backed away, flying again under the net and settling on a nearby rock before charging a second time. It repeated the sequence once more. Two researchers and an intern huddled nearby signaled the call from the speakers again, instigating the bird to charge a third time. This time they had it. The bird flew into the net spanning the tributary and



Youngman bands a Louisiana waterthrush.

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**GEORGIA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

## Agency reports progress in rape kit backlog

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — The Georgia Bureau of Investigation's crime lab is making progress in a yearslong effort to test thousands of backlogged sexual assault evidence packages, authorities said. The agency's goal is to clear out the old rape kits by the first of next year, allowing it then to concentrate on new criminal cases coming in for analysis. "We see a light at the end of the tunnel," Georgia Bureau of Investigation Director Vernon Keenan said. The push to test a backlog of almost 10,000 sexual assault kits began after 1,351 untested rape kits were discovered in storage in 2015 at Grady Memorial Hospital, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. The 2016 Georgia Legislature responded by passing a law requiring all Georgia law enforcement agencies to send stored rape kits to the GBI headquarters in Decatur for testing. Eventually those numbered 2,476, which was in addition to the old evidence packages from Grady.

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**BRADLEY COUNTY**

## Early voter turnout tops 2014 primary

BY PAUL LEACH  
 CORRESPONDENT

CLEVELAND, Tenn. — Early voters in the Bradley County primary are well on their way to outdoing their turnout from four years ago. While the absence of long lines at the county's three early voting locations during Thursday's lunch hour might indicate otherwise, the steady streams of voters tell a different story. As of Wednesday, the midpoint of the 14-day early voting period for the May 1 election, voters had cast 5,140 early and absentee ballots, according to the Bradley County Commission Election Office. That averages 734 voters per day over the first seven days of early voting. In comparison, the 2014 primary had tallied only 4,152 ballots by the seventh day of early voting, said election administrator Fran Green. That's an average of about 593 voters per day. Early voting ends Thursday. "We have actually surpassed the 4,943 early votes cast by the ninth day in 2014," Green said, adding the 2014 early voting period was only 13 days long because of

See **VOTING** › B3

## Corker stands by praise of Bredeesen

BY ANDY SHER  
 NASHVILLE BUREAU



Bob Corker



Phil Bredeesen

NASHVILLE — Republican U.S. Sen. Bob Corker on Sunday defended his praise of Democrat Phil Bredeesen but reiterated he still plans to support expected GOP nominee U.S. Rep. Marsha Blackburn in the race to succeed him. A former Chattanooga mayor and one-time state finance commissioner, Corker has been catching heat for days from top Republicans over his favorable remarks about Bredeesen, a former governor and Nashville mayor. On Sunday, Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, made back-to-back appearances on CNN's "State of the Union" and ABC's "This Week." "He is my friend," Corker said

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## Air full of art



Seth Bowman, left, of Jack Pine Studio in Columbus, Ohio, shows Jennifer Casillas a selection of blown-glass hummingbird feeders Sunday afternoon at the 4 Bridges Arts Festival inside the First Tennessee Pavilion.

STAFF PHOTO BY TIM BARBER

# Georgia teen uses success on track to prepare for military

BY GABRIEL STOVALL  
THE COVINGTON NEWS

COVINGTON, Ga. — Kijana Knights would probably like to find whoever was responsible for determining he wasn't good enough to make the basketball team and thank them.

What may have felt like failure and rejection for Knights, a sophomore on the Newton track and field and cross country teams, actually paved the way for greater success and accolades.

Knights recently was named the Positive Athletes Boys Track and Field Athlete of the Year for South Metro Atlanta. The award, given by Positive Athletes Georgia, takes into account both academic and athletic prowess.

Knights submitted his resume, which highlights a 3.83 grade point average and an aspiration to attend Army West Point to run track and prepare for a career in military service, and it apparently caught the selection committee's attention.

"They must've seen that I was good both on the track and in the classroom to give me the award," Knights said. "It felt good. I feel like it's validation of the work I've put in the past two years that I've been in high school."

Knights launched his track career after a failed basketball tryout — something he now says was a positive in retrospect.

"At first I didn't make the basketball team, but I was still running just to get fit," Knights said. "I was doing two miles every day during the time of tryouts. But when I didn't make it, I was thinking that I'm already running a lot, so I should be able to do track."

For the Rams' track team, Knights runs the 3200, 1600 and 800 meters. So far, his personal bests include a time of 5:20 in the mile and 12:15 in the 3200. And to be sure, he's not planning to make a comeback attempt at

trying out for the hoops squad.

He's found a home on the track that he believes will prepare him for even more.

"I'm planning to do track for all four years I'm in high school," he said. "And hopefully I'll be able to attend Army West Point to run track there as well."

But it's not just about athletics for him. Knights said he wants to major in civil engineering and be an armor officer in the Army. He has a passion to serve his country that's been passed on from his parents, Herlene and Ronald Knights.

"My mom and dad came to this country as immigrants from Guyana, South America around 1986," Knights said. "And just to see how this country has helped them, it inspires me to want to give back to this country in that way. From what they told me, it was hard back in that time for them to get into this country. And a lot of things had to happen between then and now for me to be where I'm at."

And Knights isn't about to take any of it for granted.

"My parents had to work hard," he said. "And to see what they've accomplished makes me grateful to live in this country. Here, you have the freedom to do what you want. The freedoms we have in this country, a lot of other countries don't have. You can choose what you want to do and where you want to go in life."

For Knights, that destination includes him being the best student-athlete he possibly can, which leaves time for little else.

"Besides school and track, I like to play video games sometimes," he said. "But mostly running takes up all my time. I'm running like four 10-mile runs and 12-mile runs every week. And then cross country starts as soon as school starts, so it's a year-round thing. But I love what I do."

# Overseer faults VW's reform efforts since emissions scandal

BY JACK EWING  
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

FRANKFURT, Germany — Volkswagen's attempt to remake its company culture and become more law abiding has received poor grades from the former U.S. prosecutor enforcing the carmaker's compliance with a deal that settled emissions cheating charges.

The German carmaker acknowledged Sunday that a progress report found it had failed to hold executives accountable for wrongdoing that led to the huge emissions fraud, and it was not making a serious enough attempt to remake its culture. The report was prepared by Larry Thompson, a former U.S. attorney who later spent several years as deputy attorney general during President George W. Bush's administration.

The conclusions of Thompson's confidential report, first reported by the Bild am Sonntag newspaper and confirmed by a Volkswagen spokesman, are the latest sign a ballyhooed campaign by Volkswagen to

become an exemplary corporate citizen has been floundering.

Last week, nearly 200 German police officers and prosecutors raided offices of Porsche in Stuttgart and other locations, seizing documents as part of an investigation into what role the sports carmaker, a division of Volkswagen, may have played in a conspiracy to conceal excess diesel emissions from regulators.

The raid threatened one of Volkswagen's biggest moneymaking divisions and showed that German prosecutors are intensifying an investigation they have said targets more than 50 suspects, including a member of Porsche's top management.

But there also were tentative indications Thompson's report, which he is required by court order to keep secret, could prompt a change of behavior at Volkswagen under a newly appointed chief executive.



STAFF PHOTOS BY C.B. SCHMELTZER

Tennessee River Gorge Trust avian and research technicians Eliot Berz, left, and Holland Youngman set up a net over the Bee Branch tributary Thursday.

## Birds

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was trapped. The workers shuffled over and quickly gathered the bird for some quick testing before releasing it back into its habitat.

"The goal of this is to investigate the population trends by tracking their migration," said Eliot Berz, Tennessee River Gorge Trust avian and research technician.

The trust began studying the birds two years ago. The first years were spent determining whether Louisiana waterthrush could safely carry a geolocator. Once researchers found they could, the trust turned its focus to studying migratory patterns in larger quantities.

The Louisiana waterthrush is an indicator species that can help researchers determine the health of a stream. They feed on macroinvertebrates — small organisms that live underwater — that are sensitive to water quality changes and are found in small streams with rapids and high water quality. The local group — Berz, fellow avian and research technician Holland Youngman and intern Juan Sandoval — are part of a larger study in four states tracking Louisiana waterthrush and worm-eating warblers, which are often found in the same habitat as the waterthrush.

In the four research sites — Tennessee, Arkansas, Ohio and Pennsylvania — populations are changing. In Tennessee and Arkansas, the waterthrush population is increasing while the warbler population is declining. In Ohio and Pennsylvania, it's the opposite.

"There's no noticeable habitat changes, so that leads us to believe the limiting factors are likely somewhere other than their breeding grounds in Tennessee," Berz said.

The group has marked 10 waterthrush with geolocators this migratory season and plans to mark five more. When captured, the group bands and measures the birds and takes blood samples.

"That can tell us a lot of different things," Youngman said. "It can tell if the bird is stressed and gives us an overall health picture."

Youngman and Berz also are banding other waterthrush without geolocators to continue monitoring their health to ensure the devices do not cause harm.

The crew will return



Berz, left, and Youngman attach a geolocator to a Louisiana waterthrush.

next year to collect the birds, retrieve the data and find where the birds are traveling in Central America. That information will allow them to study where they're traveling and determine what could be causing a population shift.

Contact staff writer Mark Pace at mpace@timesfreepress.com or 423-757-6659. Follow him on Twitter @themarkpace and on Facebook at ChattanoogaOutdoorsTFP.

See more photos of the researchers in action online at timesfreepress.com.

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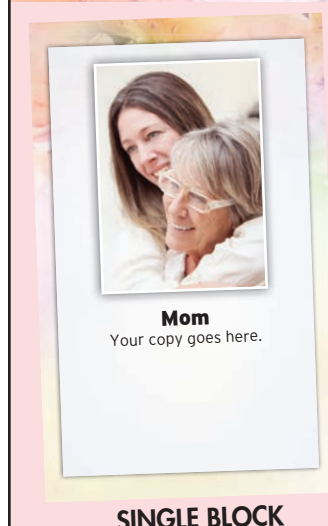
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