

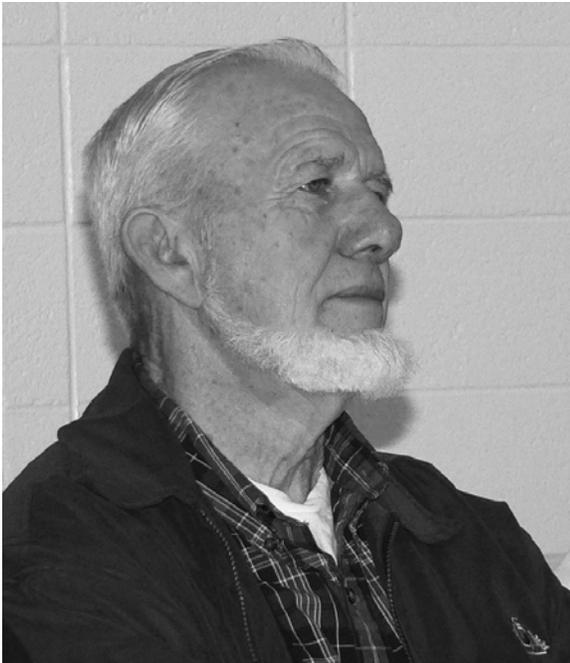


Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

January 2010

A Brief Look at Bird Banding



The speaker for our January 25 meeting will be our own Ted Goulden who will share his experience and expertise in "A Brief Look At Bird Banding." Ted will have nets, traps and bands and banding equipment to show how nets and traps are used. A demonstration of how to remove a captured bird from a net should be quite interesting. Ted will also explain why the banding of birds is important and what information is gained through banding. Slides of banding operations, bird identification, and the respectful handling and release of wild birds will illustrate his presentation. A brief history of banding conducted by OKC Audubon members will be reviewed.

Ted Goulden has had a lifetime interest in birds, reptiles and plants which has led him to keep several decades of descriptive field notes. One of his early entries details the capture of a "specked blackbird" which turned out to be a European starling caught under an apple box supported by a small box tripped with a long string. Dr. Ralph Edeburn, a former roommate of Dr. George Sutton, was Ted's ornithol-

ogy professor in graduate school at Marshall University where they spent many hours looking for Sutton's Warbler in the woods of West Virginia. The best birding summer of Ted's life was during a year at Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay in northern Manitoba, Canada, while serving in the U.S. Army. Birding in Central and South America as well as 44 of our states has also graced his life.

Come out for a night of birds and bird banding and the camaraderie with other wonderful people at bird club. And bring a friend.

Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month (the fourth Monday in January). They begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 and NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.

2010 Calendars on Sale!

The beautiful 2010 fund raising calendars are on sale. You can purchase one at the January meeting for **\$2.50** or you may order online or by mail. Yes, you can now purchase your calendar(s) from your home computer — visit the Oklahoma City Audubon site at <http://www.okc-audubon.org>. The mailing cost will be \$2.50 plus \$1.50 per calendar. This is the only source of revenue other than our membership dues.



President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin

On the third Monday evening of every month, the best entertainment in Oklahoma City is going on live at Will Rogers Park at the Oklahoma City Audubon meeting. Bright, engaging and friendly people chat about birds and wildlife. The program is always at least as interesting as a Nature episode. What if the word got out and suddenly more people started coming to the meetings?

They might talk to some of our backyard birders and catch the bug, buy feeders and start to cultivate native forage and cover plants in their backyards. Neighbors might look into these yards, and being amazed at the beauty there, decide to landscape their own backyards in the same way. Before you know it, most of the backyards in the community might be just the kind of place that a native bird would like. Then homeowner's associations might decide to redesign their greenbelts and commons areas to foster native species. City ordinances and subdivision covenants might be written to encourage front yards decorated with artful, low-maintenance wild-scapes instead of Bermuda lawns trimmed with hybrid hollies and privets.

Why aren't there more birders? There are many people who are interested in the outdoors and wildlife who seem like good candidates to be birders but aren't. A major reason there aren't more birders, I think, is that birding is difficult. The thick field manuals, optics, life lists, the supernatural hearing and seeing abilities of the most talented, the ID challenges and stigma people feel when they're wrong or not in agreement, the vast experience of the best birders and the respect they are accorded by the birding community, all these things can be intimidating factors for a new birder. What is more, the intense socio-economic competition in American culture has led to a general preference for simple pleasures, easy and quick entertainments and hobbies.

I've noticed on outings and on the OKbirds listserv that there is a subset of new birders who like a lot of ID help. It's an interesting phenomenon really, because there are at least an equal number of people who are sure they are almost never wrong and don't need any help except from a field manual.

The birders in our club are respected and admired all over the state. There is an opportunity there, already partially exploited I realize, to draw in more people to birding. And more birders could be extremely benefi-

cial for the birds. More birders would mean more people interested in preserving and restoring habitat, more support for local wild areas threatened by poorly planned development, more protection for endangered species, more backyard feeders, more native plantings, more votes at election time.

To produce more birders, I don't think it's necessary to engage in specific recruiting campaigns. And I'm not sure the key to more birders is being more friendly. The existing community is already friendly. The key might be to make birding itself seem a little more friendly, to create a welcoming space for people who aren't so expert or talented or well-equipped, for those who aren't endowed with a lot of time or who'd rather see birds in their backyard than hunt them down in the field, and for those who need help with IDs that manuals don't seem to provide them.

Jim Bates and I recently met some folks with the Sierra Club on a field trip to the Wichita Mountains. We helped find and ID a group of six Bald Eagles for them. Several of them expressed an interest in our club and birding, and I invited them to our January meeting. If they come and see what an interesting and friendly group we are, we might get some new members.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2010

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------|----------|
| President | Bill Diffin | 722-3778 |
| Vice President | John Shackford | 340-5057 |
| Secretary | Nancy Reed | 799-1116 |
| Treasurer | Nancy Vicars | 732-9885 |
| Parliament | Sam Moore | 752-9549 |
| Programs | Warren Harden | 364-3491 |
| Recorder | Esther M. Key | 381-9170 |
| Conservation | Larry Mays | 392-2131 |
| Field Trips | Jimmy Woodard | 365-5685 |
| Newsletter Editors: | | |
| | Pat Velte | 751-5263 |
| | Carla Brueggen | 495-3259 |
| | Matt Jung | 946-8764 |
| Publicity | Cheryl Allen | 478-0339 |
| Historian | Nealand Hill | 388-6759 |
| Refreshments | Jim Vicars | 732-9885 |
| Webmaster | Pat Velte | 751-5263 |

The Oklahoma City Audubon society is neither a chapter of nor affiliated with National Audubon.

For Oklahoma City Audubon news between newsletters and meetings, be sure to log onto:

OKC-Audubon.org

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



The **Ring-billed Gull** (*Larus delawarensis*) is one of our most common winter birds, at least by Christmas Bird Count standards. At a total of 10,936 birds, Ring-bills were the most common species recorded on our 2009 Christmas Count, with Starlings, at 4,896, in second place.

Counting gulls is relatively easy, given their relatively large size, flocking behavior and a usual tie to water or dump.

In his “Life Histories of North American Gulls and Terns,” A. C. Bent reported that Audubon (1840) referred to this species as “The Common American Gull.” Formerly, this gull—nesting broadly across Canada and some northern interior states—often extended its breeding range to northeastern

states and Canadian provinces along the Atlantic coast. But Bent stated that the species is “now mainly restricted to the interior, in the lakes of the prairies and plains of the Northern States and Canada, where...it is still *the common gull*”.

It is easy to “discount” gull species a bit. (I am embarrassed to admit that when I went to my Bent life history book, the book looked like it had never been opened.) Part of the discounting of gulls may relate to frequent interbreeding among certain gull species: there are 19 gull species of the genus *Larus*. “Lumpers” (those who tend to minimize the number of bird species, especially when interbreeding is common) might argue that the number of gull species should be reduced significantly, so extensive is the interbreeding of many gull species. At a minimum, it causes many observers (including

me) to take plumage “aberrations” with a grain of salt, rather than trying to assign a name to every individual gull seen.

Part of the “discounting” of gulls may also relate to the lack of coloration in the plumage. You can draw almost any adult gull plumage with just a white piece of paper, a big black pencil and an ever so tiny brown pencil, because almost all adult plumages have only black, white and shades of gray, with only a bit of brownish sometimes worked in. Subadult gulls do often have dark brown in the plumage. Two rare exceptions to this white/black/gray “rule” of adult plumage are the pinkish “bloom” that occurs on the breasts of some Franklin’s and Ross’s Gulls in spring.



Colors of bills, feet and eyes—usually composed of some combination of yellow, red or black—are often helpful in identifying gull species. I wonder if the relatively small amounts of these colors may also be important to the gulls in identifying others of the same or a different species. The adult Ringbill has a yellow bill, circled by a black “ring” near its tip (as the name indicates).

In Oklahoma we know the Ring-billed Gull primarily in wintertime. On the breeding grounds they nest in colonies. Nests are constructed on the ground along beaches and shores. According to one report in Bent, Ringbill nests were composed of “dried grasses and weeds, sometimes small sticks...lined with finer grasses and were often decorated with feathers.” Ringbills lay 2-4 eggs, but usually 3, that hatch in about 21 days.

This gull can often be found scavenging garbage dumps, including refuse in shopping mall parking lots. Perhaps the lack of aesthetic appeal of dumps is another reason we tend to “discount” gulls. Other—more traditional—fare of this gull includes fish in winter and, according to Bent, “worms, grubs, grasshoppers, and other insects” in the nesting season.

2009 Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count

This year's Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count was completed with the help of 55 intrepid counters in 18 parties. The unofficial species tally was 113 species on count day, one additional race (Kridler's Redtail), one additional species during count week (Eastern Screech-Owl), and two tame species (Mute Swan and African Collared-Dove). A total of 41,237 individual birds were counted. This was an excellent showing, especially given the limitations discussed below.

As compiler, it is interesting to see how patterns emerge as the group tallies come in. Most everyone agreed, for instance, that the number of small birds seemed to be down, compared to other recent years. Another thing that the data tended to support was that some of our less hearty species apparently got pushed to the south and out of our count area, or at least below the threshold where we were likely to detect them. This may have been due to the several days of cold weather before count day; we missed House Wren, Brown Thrasher, Orange-crowned Warbler and Common Yellowthroat, for instance. Count day itself was only moderately cold, although it was fairly windy. Another condition that likely affected species numbers was that our large lakes were full of water, resulting in few shorebirds. We did extremely well working under these limitations.

On the positive side we did get some "ringers." John Sterling found a Black Scoter at Lake Overholser, a first for our count; Terri Underhill took some beautiful photos when the bird swam to within about 30 feet. Alton Higgins saw a flock of 9 Sandhill Cranes flying over Twin Lakes about noon, a great find and, I'm almost positive, also a first for our count. Another excellent find were the 3 Western Grebes found by Jimmy Woodard and crew at Lake Hefner.

Many thanks are in order. I especially thank Diane Newell, her sister Donna, and friend Sally, who hosted our after-count party at the Newell home. As always it was a wonderful time to visit, eat and tally birds. Thanks to those who brought food, especially Cheryl Allen for her delicious chili. Many thanks go to Pat Velte for the labor-intensive task of data entry. Thanks again to Esther Key for the outstanding checklist she has created for us. Finally, I would like to thank our exceptional participants—everyone—who make the job of compiling so problem free.

*John Shackford, compiler
2009 Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count*



Sutton Center Eagle Cam is Live Again in 2010

<http://www.suttoncenter.org/eaglecam.html>

From the Sutton Center site:

The Sutton Center Bald Eagle nest cam provides an intimate view of a wild Oklahoma Bald Eagle nest. Children and adults from Oklahoma and around the world can observe life in an eagle nest, and scientists can make observations that will help us better understand the life history of our national symbol.

This nest is on OG&E property at Sooner Lake north of Stillwater, Oklahoma. The original dead nest tree used by this pair of eagles fell down. OG&E, with technical assistance from the Sutton Center and financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, erected an artificial tower which these eagles have adopted successfully.

The Sutton Avian Research Center is dedicated to finding cooperative conservation solutions for birds and the natural world through science and education, and is a part of the Oklahoma Biological Survey at the University of Oklahoma.

Pay Your Dues Online

If you haven't visited the OCAS website lately, be sure to drop by: <http://www.okc-audubon.org>. We've added several new features including online membership, which means **you can renew your membership online!** No excuse for not getting your renewal taken care of!

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Minutes of December 21, 2009

President Eric Enwall presided over the meeting after calling it to order. Eric commented on the delicious and abundant refreshments. He welcomed everyone to the December meeting, or in Warren's words, the "Liar's meeting." Eric asked if there were any new members. Nancy Vicars introduced Sandra Krug as a previous member who had moved away and has now returned. Sandra has paid her dues and is a member again.

Eric asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published in the December newsletter. Motion was made and approved.

Nancy Vicars presented the Treasurer's Report:

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Cash on hand as of 11/16/2009 | \$5,416.40 |
| Deposits | \$ 192.46 |
| Disbursements | \$ 126.34 |
| Cash on hand as of 12/21/2009 | \$5,492.52 |

Nancy explained that membership dues paid by PayPal cost \$.51. Therefore the dues of \$10 would have .51 deducted for charges. Motion was made to accept as read and approved.

Committee Reports:

Field Trips: Jimmy Woodard stated the next field trip was scheduled for January 9 to Arcadia. Nealand Hill will lead the group. Nealand commented that Saturday, January 9 is half-price. The cost will be \$3 per car. If there is heavy snow and ice the trip will be cancelled.

Eric will lead a field trip on February 20 in the Norman Area. Matt Jung commented on sightings of an eagle in Norman.

Jimmy stated that there would be a CBC on January 2nd at the Ketchum Ranch (June Ketchum's ranch). The Ketchum's have a bunkhouse for anyone who would like to stay at the ranch while participating in the CBC. Nancy Vicars reported that a Long-eared Owl had been observed and heard during the previous year's CBC at the Ketchum Ranch.

Old Business:

Nancy Vicars announced a year-end clearance sale on calendars. The cost is now \$5.

New Business:

Eric asked Jimmy to present the nominations for 2010 officers. The nominating committee consisted of Nealand Hill, Terri Underhill and Jimmy Woodard. The slate of officers presented:

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| President | Bill Diffin |
| Vice-President | John Shackford |
| Secretary | Nancy Reed |
| Treasurer | Nancy Vicars |

All other nominations remain the same.

Eric asked if there was an objection to approval by acclamation and the slate was approved by acclamation. Eric presented Bill Diffin with a gavel.

Nealand commented that Eric did a great job and Nancy Vicars requested that Eric continue to write his outstanding articles.

Warren Harden stated that the next month's meeting would be an exciting time. Ted Goulden will present Bird Banding. Ted is very successful at banding birds. He will demonstrate banding, including netting a bird. Warren encouraged everyone to come and watch Ted net and band a bird at the January meeting. It will be a valuable demonstration. Members were reminded that the January meeting will be moved to the fourth Monday of January.

Warren started the round of Tall Tales Bird stories. He gave a background of his involvement with the Sutton Avian Research Center and the history of developing the Bald Eagle population in Oklahoma. The Sutton Center's Eagle Cam can be viewed at suttoncenter.org. John Shackford credited Warren with the success of the Sutton Center, giving it the insights and direction that were needed for it to develop and grow.

John Shackford reported that there were 112 species on the Christmas Bird Count for this year.

Many delightful stories were shared, providing an evening full of laughs and enjoyment.

Nancy Reed, Recording Secretary

Recorders Report November 2009

The beautiful, warm fall weather persisted through the month of November. A **Rufous Hummingbird** continued to visit Terri **Underhill's** feeder in Edmond throughout the month. On November 7 Brian Davis found a **Western Grebe** on Lake Hefner. On the 8 Angie Holt, Dick Gunn, Jennifer Kidney, Brian Davis, and Ben Holt found a Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Wood Duck, **Golden-crowned Kinglet** and Common Yellowthroat along South Jenkins in Norman.

On the 20th Max Fuller and Nealand Hill found 5 **Mountain Bluebirds** four miles west of **Calumet**. On the 21st at the Purina field in Edmond, Warren Harden, Lynn Pearce, John Shackford, Doug Eide, Jimmy Woodard and Nadine Varner found a first-of-the-year **Smith's Longspur**, as well as LeConte's Sparrows and Short-eared Owls.

On the 22nd Dora Webb had an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at her peanut butter suet cake feeder. On the 27th on South Jenkins Dick Gunn and Cecil Johnson had the first of the season Bald Eagles and an **American Woodcock**. On the 29th in Stillwater Timothy O'Connell reported a Bonaparte's Gull. On the 30th Gayl Wells reports an Egyptian Goose on Lake Stanley Draper which isn't as of yet a countable bird species.

During November, 114 bird species were reported making the Central Oklahoma area total to date at **285** species. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds by turning in reports.

December 2009 Winter Challenges

In central Oklahoma the balmy fall weather continued for a very short time. During the morning of December 7th a 3.5 magnitude earthquake occurred just east of Jones and that evening through the following morning the first small ice storm arrived. It was only a sample of what the weather would become during this winter challenging both birds and humans.

On the 5th seven birders on an OCAS field trip to Lakes Overholser and Hefner found **Lapland Longspurs**, Franklin Gulls, Horned Larks, and American Pipits in a grassy field about half a mile north of Route 66 Park. At Lake Hefner they found several Black-crowned Night Herons, a Common Loon, 20 Horned Grebes, and Bonaparte's Gulls. Over the weekend along South Jenkins Matthew Jung with occasional assistance from Dick Gunn and Libby found 49 species including about 30 Wilson's Snipe, Brown Creeper, Winter and Marsh Wrens and a Swamp Sparrow.

On the 8th John Shackford had a male and female Purple Finch at his north Edmond home. At Stinchcomb Bill Diffin had a Great Horned Owl, Northern Pintail, and Brown Thrasher, while in Stillwater Tim O'Connell had a **Rusty Blackbird** at his feeder.

On the 12th Matt and Cecil Johnson saw a **Rough-legged Hawk** along South Jenkins. On the 13th a single **Sandhill Crane** was found by Ben and Angie Holt in a field on the west side of the Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge, and at Lake Stanley Draper Gayl Wells found several Greater Roadrunners. On the 22nd Terri Underhill and Chris Butler trapped and banded the female Rufous Hummingbird that has been wintering at your yard.

On the 19th during the OCAS's Christmas Bird Count John Sterling found one female **Black Scoter** on the west side of Lake Overholser near the fishing dock. There were 3 **Western Grebes** on Lake Hefner. Bob Holbrook's crew found Smith's Longspurs along the Oklahoma River near downtown. While Patti and Brian Muzny found Smith's Longspurs, **Lapland Longspurs** and Purple Finches on the outskirts of the city.

Meanwhile Ben and Angie Holt observed a Prairie Falcon attack a mixed flock of birds at the intersection of North Piedmont and Wagoner just west of Rose Lake.

On the 23rd weather forecasters were predicting snow up to 4 -8 inches in some areas and a small possibility of a white Christmas. Kim Wiar found a purple finch at her feeder in Norman, and on Lake Overholser Jim Bates found the Black Scoter again just south of the fishing pier.

On the 24th the winter blizzard arrived. Matt and Jenny Foster had their first Fox Sparrow. Patti reported that at the height of the blizzard, the little birds were seeking shelter on her ceiling fans, lawn furniture, windowsills, all along the underside of the patio and deck and near the back door onto the patio. The snowfall finally stopped around 7:00 pm and Will Rogers Airport reported a total of 14 inches of snow.

On the 27th Mary Lane reported 19 Great Blue Herons, a **Great Egret** and an American White Pelican at Lake Overholser. On the 31st Ben and Angie Holt found a **Lesser Black Backed Gull** near the dam at Lake Hefner.

During December 119 bird species were reported making the Central Oklahoma area total for 2009 at **286** species. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds by turning in reports. I can be contacted by email at emkok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

Tuesday Morning Birders



Tuesday Morning Birders trip leader, Bill Diffin

December 1 -- Terri Underhill, Doug Eide, Charles Douglas and Bill Diffin birded the public roads and access points around Sooner Lake. The high density of Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Harriers was unusual. There were some interesting dark morph Red-tailed Hawks along 412 near I-35. A Harlan's Hawk was near Watchorn. We saw Bald Eagles south and northeast of the

lake. Common Loons, Canvasbacks and Tree Sparrows were first-of-season for most of us. A little flock of Brewer's Blackbirds was around a cattle pen east of the lake, and a male Common Grackle was nearby.

We saw multiple Loggerhead Shrikes and both Red-shafted and Yellow-shafted Flickers. Interesting woodland birds were White-breasted Nuthatch and Hairy Woodpecker.

Two dozen Horned Larks were in a bare field along 177. A Short-eared Owl flew over the top of the car on 412 as we left. We had 55 species and two morphs for the day.

December 8 -- Bill Diffin birded the Stinchcomb WR West. The day started out with freezing drizzle, but the temperature rose early, and the drizzle decreased. A Great Horned Owl flushed north of the power line crossing. Walking into the marsh produced a Fox Sparrow and a Brown Creeper. A Yellow-rumped Warbler was eating poison ivy fruits near the power line crossing.

A Red-shouldered Hawk was perched just NE of the intersection of County Line Rd and 39th St. The species count for the day was 26.

December 15 -- Bill Diffin birded Fort Cobb Lake and the area around Eakly, Oklahoma. It was a crystal clear day but with a cold north wind 15-20 mph.

On OK-152 between Mustang and Binger, a mature Cooper's Hawk perched in a tree. A flock of Brewer's Blackbirds was feeding on the ground around a cattle feeder, and a flock of Horned Larks flew across the highway.

South of Binger, Cedar Lake access road had a nice flock of Harris's and White-crowned Sparrows. Miss Jo's Lake had hundreds of roosting Ring-billed Gulls.

Near the town of Albert was a big flock of Cackling Geese, a small flock of Greater White-fronted Geese and a few Snow Geese feeding in a stubble corn field.

At Fort Cobb Lake, a dark brown Western Red-tailed Hawk soared east. Typical woodland birds were found on a couple of short walks.

A huge flock of Snow Geese took flight from the middle of the lake. The sheltered inlets in the southeast part of the lake were lined with Cackling Geese, Mallards and small numbers of Snow Geese and Shovelers, two dark morph Snow Geese, one Ross's Goose and a few flocks of Greater White-fronted Geese.

A Ferruginous Hawk hover-hunted southeast of Eakly. The species count for the day was 36.

December 29 -- Bill Diffin birded Lake Overholser, Rose Lake and Lake Hefner. Lake Overholser was entirely frozen. Standing on the ice were flocks of Ring-billed Gulls, an American White Pelican and two Great Blue Herons. Another White Pelican was below the dam. Southwest of the cofferdam, the parking loop had Spotted Towhee, Dark-eyed Junco, Song, Lincoln's, Savannah, Harris's and White-crowned Sparrows, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, Carolina Chickadee, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Northern Flicker.

On Sara Rd between 23rd and 36th Streets, the pond had 41 Gadwall, two Wigeon, two Redhead, one Ring-necked Duck and one Pied-billed Grebe.

On Britton west of OK-81 were large flocks of Red-winged and Brewer's blackbirds and a few Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels.

On Lake Hefner north of Prairie Dog Point were many Lesser Scaup, several pairs of Red-breasted Mergansers and an Eared Grebe. Bufflehead were plentiful at the point and in the canal inlet cove. Four Ruddy Ducks dove in the cove. Along the road at Prairie Dog Point were Song Sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Gadwall were scattered in small groups all around the lake. Other species were Pied-billed Grebe, Mallard, Common Goldeneye, Northern Shoveler and American Coot. The species count for the day was 50.

Chirpings

January 2010

By Patti Muzny

What a difference winter temperatures can make in feeder activity! Before the infamous Christmas Eve blizzard, our south Oklahoma City feeders had light to moderate activity. On Christmas Eve afternoon, when the north wind howled and drove sleet and snow in a menacing horizontal attack on our corner of the world, the birds began to seek food and shelter with reckless abandonment.



The little brush pile was becoming buried in snow, so we put out seed under the roof of our patio, although the patio deck was quickly being covered with drifting snow. We cracked pecans, put out grapes, raisins, wild bird millet mix and black Russian sunflower seed. The Bewick's Wren huddled in the corner right next to the back door and would venture out quickly to hunt grab a morsel of pecan or search underneath the patio roof for any stray insect it might find. The House Finches, Cardinals, Juncos, Mockingbirds, House Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows and Harris's Sparrows even landed on the picnic table and the House Finches roosted on the ceiling fans, the windowsills and protected sides of the patio cover. When the snow drifted onto the deck and under the patio, we had to put seed just under our low windowsills, the birds came in close to feed. Their need of protection and food overcame their natural fear of humans.

During the next few extremely cold days, we had as many as 24 Cardinals, over 30 House Finches, several flocks of White-crowned and Harris's Sparrows, a pair of Chickadees and a flock of Juncos. It was great to see so many Cardinals, after having so few on our Washita NWR and Oklahoma City CBCs.

The neighborhood Cooper's Hawk also came to try to find a meal. She would perch on the birdbath and raise first one foot, then the other, while searching high and low for the carelessness of something lower down the food chain. Every few minutes she would shake the snow from her feathers, while trying to keep her balance

on the edge of a concrete bird bath.

On January 2nd, we returned from the Cleveland County CBC to find the Cooper's in the yard. My husband said he had seen her catch something. Of course, I had to run out to the back portion of our yard to see what she'd had for early dinner. I was not going to be very pleased if I found a red "feather puddle!" To my great relief, all that remained were black feathers and a bloody yellow beak. Sometimes the "good" birds do escape the talons of a hungry predator.

While the snow was on the ground, the Cooper's spent many hours waiting and watching. When the temperatures moderated, the hawk was not seen very often. Also the feeder birds dwindled in numbers, although we still go through quite an impressive amount of seed. This might be due in part to our neighbor's chickens, which seem to have decided what we offer is better than the chicken scratch they get across the street!

We always know when the roosters are coming around to the back, because they've decided the brick planter in the front, under our bedroom window, makes an awesome perch from which to begin crowing! The first morning this practice began, I nearly jumped out of bed! Usually I hear them from across the street, not eight feet from my dozing face!

Other birds in the yard have included Eurasian Collared Doves, Mourning Doves, Robins, fly-overs of Canadian Geese, Starlings, Cowbirds and Red-winged Blackbirds.

A trip to our property at Byars, OK, let me add a good year bird to my list – a busy Brown Thrasher. It was in a tangle of vines and tossing leaves and woods litter in every direction. After each toss, it would peer at me. We also added a Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk and the first of the year Turkey Vulture. The pond was frozen and a pitiful looking Great Blue was strolling glumly around the edge, trying to find something to eat.



Cookie Patrol

Refreshments for the January meeting will be provided by: Doug Eide, Jim Bates & Nancy & Jim Vicars.

Looking for the Bare-throated Tiger Heron

By Matt Jung

On the first Sunday of January, 2010, Lonnie Gambel and I headed south to the Lower Rio Grande Valley for these target birds: Northern Jacana (yes), Bare-throated Tiger Heron (yes), Allen's Hummingbird (yes), Rose-throated Becard (yes) and Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet (no). We ended the trip with 136 species.

Day 1. We departed from Yukon at 4:30 AM, January 03 (Sunday), with a planned first stop at Choke Canyon's 75-acre lake in the Calliham Unit for the Northern Jacana; arriving at 1:30 PM. We scanned the lake for 90 minutes with no success and decided to stop again on the way home. A Harris's Hawk made a half-hearted attempt to harass a Merlin but it never paid any attention to the hawk and consumed an unlucky Eastern Phoebe.

Day 2. Monday was planned for Bentsen State Park with the first US record of a Bare-throated Tiger Heron at the top of our menu. We arrived right at 8 AM but the park-staff seems to be on 'Texas Time' so we walked out to the levee where birders (and expensive optics) were gathered. The bird walked out into the open within a very short time and we enjoyed fine looks for several minutes before it started to hunt in the tall vegetation. This bird behaves very much like a Bittern, stalking stealth-like with frequent stops. Lonnie made several fine pictures using the new 200mm lens and 2x extender.



By now the staff had arrived, we paid our admission fee and joined the Monday morning birding tour. Allen's Hummingbird showed up within minutes. At this point Lonnie and I left the tour and walked into the wooded area in search of the RT Becard.

While taking a break right around 11 AM at the Ebony Groove, the Becard, a sub-adult male, landed on a dead twig no more than 40 yards from me. The rosy throat patch really lit up my binoculars. The bird then flew up into the crown of the tree and we worked hard and were able to relocate it. I had scored three life birds in less

than four hours.

We went looking for the Tyrannulet but never located one, the folks who stayed with the tour did. We heard and then saw two Gray Hawks flying over and took it as a consolation price. Now we went back to look for the BT Tiger Heron one more time and found that it (and the birders) had moved nearly ½ mile and was among a stand of dried sunflowers.

Day 3. Tuesday was spent at Santa Ana with hopes for Hook-billed Kite (no) and the reported Ani (no). We did enjoy Ringed Kingfishers, Altamira Orioles, Roseate Spoonbills, American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts and many other birds including Blue-headed and White-eyed Vireo. Thirty-two more species were added to our list of 66 species.

Day 4. Boca Chica Beach was our destination for Wednesday with American Oystercatcher and Black Skimmer on our 'to-do' list but we had no luck. It was exciting to see two Brown Pelicans cruising the shore line.

We spent the PM at Estero Llano Grande and found two Green Kingfisher and our first Couch's Kingbird. We looked for and found one Pauraque hidden in the same area where we had seen three last year.

Day 5. The hunting season was on at Laguna Atascosa, we were not allowed to go anywhere except on the tour road. The reported Yellow-throated Warbler could not be found by the gazebo's water feature but we were treated to two Long-billed Thrashers in full song. Nice!

Along the tour road was a single White-tailed Hawk. We had several flights of Willets pass us going in the opposite direction and here, too, the Ospreys were catching fish. The predicted cold front found us about midway around the tour road; it started to rain and the temperature dropped (from 70 F to 46 F in 45 minutes) so we decided to drive back to our hotel in San Benito and call it "good enough" for that day. Lady Fortuna smiled on us – right after turning west on General Grant Road we had 2 Aplomado Falcons – a fitting near-end to a fine birding trip!

Day 6. On the way home we stopped one more time at the 75-acre lake and this time we located the Northern Jacana within 15 minutes. It was on the west end of the lake walking in patches of floating, grassy vegetation. We were cold, it was 29 F and windy, the bird also looked cold. The Jacana stayed far out on the lake and never came in close as it flew from patch to patch foraging. It was the icing on the cake for our trip.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society
c/o Patricia Velte
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Oklahoma City, OK 73114

Field Trips

February 19 - 21: Black Mesa

Jimmy Woodard is planning a trip to Black Mesa. Interested participants can contact Jimmy by email: j.woodard@cox.net or cell (405-365-5685).

February 20 - Norman (Time: 8:15 am)

Meeting place: Southeast corner of the Lloyd Noble Arena parking lot. This is easily reached from State Highway 9 which passes along the south edge of Norman. From east or west, come to Jenkins avenue and turn north (toward the city of Norman.) Then go on about two "blocks" north until you reach a real street where you can turn west. You will see the parking lot easily at this intersection. Turn to the west for about 100 yards to enter the parking lot and come to the southeast corner. If birders want to carpool, this is a safe place to leave vehicles. For breakfast hounds there is a Rudy's BBQ place which makes a mean breakfast burrito on highway 9 about a mile west of the Jenkins intersection (on Chautauqua.) Also a MacDonal'd's is within reach on highway 77 about a mile east of the intersection.

Birding locations: We will adjust these on the basis of local reports in the weeks before the trip, but we would at present expect to spend an hour or two on "South Jenkins" including along the river if it is accessible and then travel out to Lake Thunderbird and work along the east side of the Lake at two or three spots.
