



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

October, 2011

Oklahoma's Fantastic Red-tailed Hawks

Jim Lish will be our guest speaker at the October 17, 2011 meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society. His presentation will focus on "Oklahoma's Fantastic Red-tailed Hawks."

Jim was born in Miami, Oklahoma in 1947. At an early age he became very interested in birds of prey, a passion that led to a career as a professional wildlife biologist. He has three degrees in wildlife ecology including a Ph.D. Jim currently serves on the faculty at the Center for Veterinary Health Sciences at OSU as a tenured Associate Professor where he conducts active research on raptors.



Dr. Lish conducted most of the pioneering work on the winter ecology of bald eagles in Oklahoma during the early 1970's. One of his mentors was Dr. George Sutton who funded part of his research. He has also studied the Winter Ecology of Red-tailed Hawks for over 40 years and has published several scientific papers on that topic. For over 25 years he has been a member of the Raptor Research Foundation; an international organization whose main goal is raptor conservation through scientific research. Jim has studied birds of prey in every western state, Mexico, Mongolia and in 2012 he will be doing field work in India and Nepal for two months. He is also an artist with a passion for black and white engravings of birds of prey and is currently writing and illustrating a book on Golden Eagles. His art has appeared in numerous state and national magazines, brochures, scientific publications and art shows. Jim has a website entitled "**Oklahoma's Fantastic Red-tailed Hawks**" hosted by Oklahoma State University.



© Jim Lish

Come out and bring a friend for a good evening of camaraderie and birds and great refreshments. Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month. They begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 and NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.

Welcome

We welcome new members Jeannine & Alicia Teasley and Laney & Keylan Ketring.

Cookie Patrol

Refreshments for the October meeting will be provided by Carol Enwall, Jana Mott & Jim & Nancy Vicars

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



We all wear badges. Oklahoman or Texan is a badge. Retiree, employee or business owner is a badge. Sooner or Aggie is a badge. Motorcyclist, crocheter, marathoner, hunter, birder are all badges. What kind of badge is it to be a member of OKC Audubon? If we put it on a resume or mention it casually at a dinner party, what do people think?

"Member of OKC Audubon" ought to be an easy badge to wear. The club has had a tradition of avoiding public positions on political issues. A member describing the scope of our activities can rightly claim that "we are only about the birds". The club has been maintained that way for many years including the two years of my presidency. I believe there is wisdom in our indirect approach to the conservation of nature -- if we make many naturalists, nature will thrive. I believe our large membership and the long-term strength of the club derive in part from the low cost of membership including the low political cost.

There are unquestionably several, if not many, worthy conservation issues that deserve attention at any given time. For members to become involved in the solution of conservation problems is something we admire and encourage. However it has been a guiding principle of the club that members are free to decide the issues they wish to support or not support based on their individual opinions, abilities and situations.

We want more folks to join the club, so we make it as easy as possible. What would it mean for birds and their habitat if instead of having a hundred OKC Audubon memberships, we had a thousand or ten thousand? Would there be greater interest and concern for birds around the city? More parks and homes landscaped with native plants? More bird feeders and bird blinds? A little less mowing and a few more nature trails?

One of the great changes in the natural sciences during the last fifty years has been the trend to constantly view nature as an interconnected whole. Describing and monitoring the ecological units of nature such as ecozones, biomes, and habitats has become just as important as describing and monitoring individual species. Where an individual species is the focus, it is often because it is thought to be an "indicator species" whose health correlates with the health of an entire ecosystem.

It is plain that most natural ecosystems either have been or will be decimated by human activity. The futures of virtually all species are inexorably changed. One approach to conservation has been to preserve the remaining scraps of undisturbed land and to restore some areas that have not been overwhelmed. There is a

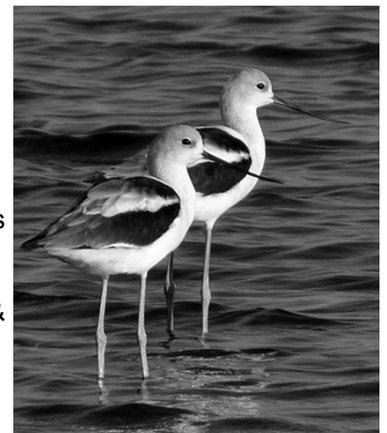
growing awareness that this approach can never be sufficient in the face of continuous human development. Something must be done to make the ever expanding area dominated by human use more hospitable to the animals and plants which originally occupied the land. Nature works to find a way, and if the elements of habitat which are critical to survival can be provided, many species may be expected to adapt to most of the aspects of human occupation. The foundation of this approach is a simple awareness of the various elements of natural ecosystems. Our monthly meeting programs have increasingly had this focus in that they have covered a broad array of nature topics. I think this is due in equal parts to the genius of our program chairman and to a kind of osmosis, the slow seepage of the modern, ecological view of nature into the birding community.

By broadening the focus of OKC Audubon to include all the elements of ecosystems, we may broaden our appeal and attract more members. An increase in the size and strength of our organization should correlate with a general increase in concern for the urban environment. The security and diversity of local bird populations would inevitably be improved.

Lake Overholser Field Trip

By Mark Delgrosso

On a beautiful day meant for relaxed birding we set out from the Route 66 Park on our circuit of the lake. The first stop gave us a full view of Overholser; remarkable, but not too surprising, was how much of the lake had dried up in the draught. This concentrated the birds. We had nice views of avocets, Stilt Sandpipers, the usual egrets (Great and Snowy), and some Great Blues. We were hoping to spot the Neotropic Cormorant that Jimmy had seen not long before but the cormorants were a ways out – we had to get closer to be sure. Our next stop yielded a Buff-breasted Sandpiper combing the shoreline; a Black Tern was out and about as well. We did finally get close enough to a grouping of American White Pelicans and cormorants to finally determine that the Neotropic was *not* amongst them. Our final stop took us to the coffer dam but the action was slow there – we then decided to adjourn for lunch at a local diner where tales of birding adventures capped off the day. Participants: Mark Delgrosso, Jimmy Woodard & Nadine, Carla Brueggen, Marcia Reddy, Janeen and Alysha Teasley.



Minutes of the September 19, 2011 Meeting

President Bill Diffin called the first fall meeting to order. First time guests were introduced. Minutes of the June meeting were approved as published in the September newsletter.

Treasurer's Report as presented by Nancy Vicars was approved:

Cash on Hand 06/20/11	\$6,284.25
Deposits	18.66
Disbursements	<u>-270.10</u>
Cash on Hand 09/19/11	\$6,032.81

Field Trips:

Jimmy Woodard announced the field trip committee's "Back Yard Birding" field trip initiative. Members are invited to sign-up to host a field trip in their yard or neighborhood. Trips will be announced on our web site.

Jimmy announced there would be a field trip this Saturday, September 24, meeting at 8:00 AM at Lake Overholser. Field trip to Yukon City Park was announced for Oct. 8. Other future field trips were announced as well.

New Business:

Bill Diffin stated Mark Howery, President of Cleveland County Birding Club, needs volunteers for the Wildlife Expo this Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the Lazy E arena. Contact Bill if you can assist.

The Nominating Committee will choose a slate of officers during the month of October. Officers for 2012 will be elected during the December meeting.

President Diffin acknowledged Terri Underhill for her presentation on Hummingbirds to the Edmond Senior Citizens. Warren Harden commented this is an outstanding work and would like to see the Hummingbird presentation expanded to other senior citizen groups.

A discussion followed with members giving accounts of unusual birds and mammals seen in Oklahoma this summer.

Following the snack break, Warren Harden announced the speaker for October will Jim Lish. Jim's topic will be "Oklahoma's Fantastic Red-tailed Hawks."

Warren introduced tonight's guest speaker, June Ketchum. June gave an exciting presentation on her trip to South Africa.

Nancy Reed, Recording Secretary

Field Trips

October 15, Backyard Birding, Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot of the Mortuary at Westlake Blvd. and MacArthur - just south of the Kilpatrick Tpk, Weather permitting, the area is ideal for a picnic, or a nearby restaurant may be chosen for group lunch. Leader: Mark Delgrosso

October 20-21, Oklahoma Ornithological Society fall meeting at UCO in Edmond. OOS President, Chris Butler, cbutler11@uco.edu

October 30, Salt Plains Meet at 7 a.m. in Homeland parking lot at I-40 & Mustang Rd. McDonalds & IHOP are next door if you wish to meet for breakfast beforehand. Leader: Matt Jung

November 19, Ft. Reno Meet at 8 a.m. McDonalds on Country Club Rd. & I-40 in El Reno Leader: Jim Bates

December 3, Scouting trips for the December 17 Christmas Bird Count. Leader: John Shackford

December 17 OKC Christmas Bird Count Contact John Shackford, johnsshack@aol.com

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2011

President	Bill Diffin	722-3778
Vice President	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Nancy Reed	799-1116
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	732-9885
Parliament	Ted Golden	354-3619
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
Publicity	Doug Eide	495-8192
Historian	Nealand Hill	388-6759
Refreshments	Jim Vicars	732-9885
Webmaster	Pat Velte	751-5263

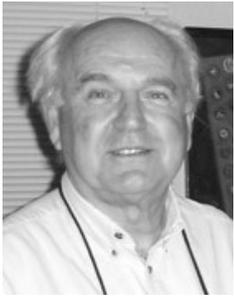
The Oklahoma City Audubon society is neither a chapter of nor affiliated with National Audubon.

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

OKC-Audubon.org

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



Do you ever wonder what some of our migrant birds do during the breeding season, before they head out for Oklahoma and points south? I do, but usually I do not take the time to look it up. The Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*) is one such bird. It is one of our most common warbler migrants, and yet I know almost nothing about it during the breeding season.

The nesting range of the Orange-crowned Warbler is a broad band across most of Alaska and Canada, then along the Rocky Mountains almost as far south as Mexico. It usually nests on the ground, but one nest reported in Bent (Life Histories of North American Wood Warblers, 1953) was “in a bush 18 inches from the ground.” Nests usually have 5 eggs but sometimes 4 or 6. The eggs are white and speckled, most heavily around the larger circumference end of the egg.



The nests are fairly substantial for a warbler, perhaps at least partly to effectively hold heat in the nest during incubation in cold northern latitudes.

According to Bent (1953) “(t)he main migration route is through the Mississippi Valley, northwestward in the spring and southeastward in fall. It is very rare in spring in the northern Atlantic States...but there are many fall records for this region.” So during migration, this is primarily a warbler of the central flyway, our flyway; most warblers migrate in largest numbers through the eastern U.S.

I have heard it postulated that during the last ice age, some 10,000 years ago, migratory birds that originated long ago in the tropics of central and South America spread their breeding range northward in North America as the ice retreated into Canada. It is hard to know the exact pattern of how and when a bird expands northward, but for whatever reason the Orange-crowned Warbler has a strong connection to the central U.S., including Oklahoma.

The Orange-crowned Warbler is hardy enough to sometimes show up on our Christmas Bird Counts. According to Bent (1953), “it probably eats a fair proportion of berries and other fruits, especially when it spends the winter somewhat farther north than insects are to be found in abundance.” Bent also says it will come to feeders to eat suet, peanut butter, and

doughnuts. So save your stale doughnuts!

Identification of the Orange-crowned Warbler, with its fairly drab grayish-greens and –yellows, is a little tricky, but putting several small points together, it can be done. According to the National Geographic Society’s Field Guide to the Birds of North it has “yellow undertail coverts and faint, blurred streaks on sides of breast [which] separate it from the similar Tennessee Warbler.” The Migratory Bird Center, on the web, says the feature that gives the Orange-crowned Warbler its “name—the orange crown—is barely perceptible unless one sees a male puffing up his crown in an aggressive display, or blows on the crown feathers while banding a male.”

Correction for last months Bird of the Month, the Piping Plover. I at least gave the impression, and was thinking, that the butterfly courtship flights of the Piping Plover are mostly vertical, but then I remembered, after posting the article, that some flights at least were horizontal to the ground. A.C. Bent (Life Histories of North American Shorebirds, 1927) says that the butterfly flights are “large circles or figure 8” that are low over the beach, thus horizontal to the ground. I guess I had seen too many Mountain Plover butterfly flights, which ARE mostly vertical. Please don’t anyone hesitate to correct me when I stray!

Birds to See Before You Die

By Mark Delgrosso

As birders we make lists. Lists of birds seen in our lifetime, of birds seen in our country, state, county, backyard. Birds provide us not only with a subject to satisfy an almost genetic need to collect, but perhaps the most accessible, majestic, interesting and charismatic subject. Truly, there are few forms of animal life that one can guarantee encountering on a *daily* basis as one encounters wild birds. Think of the last time you saw a wild mammal or reptile – and then take a step outside – you will see a wild bird within ten minutes.

This has led many of us to produce lists of birds not *necessarily* seen, but would like to see – some day – before we die. A birder’s bucket list – a dream list. I am not exempt from this mania. I have sat down, at a less hectic and more contemplative moment, and come up with my *Birds to See Before I Die* listing. I chose, from the 9000 or so species of birds recognized, 100 that were must-sees – for me. And from those 100 I will, over the upcoming months, cull out 25 to feature in short articles.

Unlike many similar listings my bucket list isn’t exclusively one of exceptional rarities or island endemics or extremely elusive species, though there certainly are some

present on my list. Of course I wish to see a Shoebill, a Wall Creeper, a Kagu – standard fare on many a birder's dream list. But I also have on my top 100 the Painted Bunting, the



Hoopoe, the Ostrich, and our state bird, the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (what birder anywhere in the world would *not* wish to see, before he/she dies, such an elegant and lovely bird?) I chose what for me are the beautiful, the interesting(-

looking), the charismatically ugly (e.g., the Shoebill), the unusual, the exceptional. And I will present them to you in no particular order or from no particular geographic area – just see if you don't agree that these are birds worth seeing.....



Black Mesa / Colorado Birding

By Jimmy Woodard

After arriving at Black Mesa late Friday evening and spending the night in the back of the jeep, I woke Saturday morning and found Cassin's Kingbird, Lesser Goldfinch, Blue Grosbeak, and Black-chinned Hummer. Dan Robinson of Boise City met me and we birded some private ranches south of the park. We found several Redhead Woodpeckers and lots of Western Pewees and empid flycatchers. We saw several wrens and a Black-headed Grosbeak. Half a dozen Virginia Rails called spontaneously from a marshy area along a creek. Nearby, we found a MacGillivray's Warbler.

On Sunday, I went around the park in the morning. New finds were Say's Phoebe, female American Redstart, Eastern Kingbird, Black-crowned Night Heron and one very lost juvenile Evening Grosbeak which was squawking it's head off.

I went to Kenton and found White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Tanager, and Philadelphia Vireo. Perhaps a dozen hummers swarmed the feeder at Asa Jones' house. At Fred Tucker's house near Colorado, I called up a Western Screech Owl.

On Monday, I found several Poorwills calling just north of the park at about 6:45AM. In the weeds at the lake bottom, I saw a couple of Lazuli Buntings plus a large flock of sparrows which included Clay-colored and Brewer's Sparrows. About 9AM I headed north into Colorado on the backroads. I drove a ten mile loop

thru Cottonwood Canyon which is very scenic. I enjoyed a Golden Eagle, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Bushtit, Burrowing Owl, Lesser Goldfinch and Lark Bunting. At Carrizo Creek Picnic Area I walked a short trail along a creek and had lunch.

I headed up to John Martin Reservoir west of Lamar to camp for a couple of days. There were many gulls, pelicans, ibis, and shorebirds flying in to roost on the lake as night fell. During the night, I heard two Great Horned Owls and one seemingly out of range Eastern Screech Owl.

Tuesday the 6th, I birded several hotspots around the lake. At Gatesby Crossing, a marshy area produced two Virginia Rails and a Sora all in view at close range at the same time. Nearby Van's Grove and Old Bent's Fort held House Wren, Common Yellowthroat, Green-tailed Towhee, Wood Duck and Magpie.

In the afternoon, I birded areas northwest of La Junta. Lake Cheraw was covered with eclipsed plumage ducks of several species. Western and Clark's and Eared Grebes were plentiful. I found a way into the back side of the shallow lake where I scoped Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, and more waterfowl. Shorebird habitat was great but there were few shorebirds in evidence. Walking out I flushed a covey of about 25 Scaled Quail which was good to see.

Further west in Crowley County, I stopped at Lake Meredith. There was plentiful habitat and more birds but the access to this large lake was limited. I did pick out Ringers and California Gulls. More pelicans and grebes floated out on the lake and a few small shorebirds walked the shoreline.

Back at John Martin, I went cross country to access a large area of shallow water and mudflats on the far west end of the lake. I estimated about 5-10,000 birds in this area of many varieties. Good finds were Black-bellied and Piping Plovers and a few Red-necked Phalaropes. In camp, a dark Peregrine Falcon flew in and perched in a tree above me. It then flew several circuits around the campground terrorizing the numerous Turkey Vultures.

Wednesday the 7th dawned overcast, cool and misty. In a grove of trees, I watched a Cooper's Hawk chase a pewee which made the mistake of popping up to take a look at me. The last I saw the accipiter was hot on the pewee's tail but I don't think he caught it. In the nearby vast marshes, the Virginia Rails were again very vocal.

In Lamar, I birded a well known migrant trap behind the community college. It's numerous trails made access easy and it was well signed for birders. Several Wilson's and Yellow Warblers and one female Redstart moved in a loose flock. There were lots of empid flycatchers of unknown species.

Continued on page 8

Recorders Report – September 2011

Shorebirds, Warblers and Monarch Butterflies

A brief group of showers perked up plants and started a round of brilliant sunflower blooms along the roadsides, but the drought continues creating a super excellent habitat for shorebird migration while warblers are being seen in the wooded areas. Even with the brief moisture the drought continues and this September is the driest since 1994. Two unconfirmed rare bird sightings were reported and the photograph and documentation is being studied by the OOS Rare Bird Committee.

On the 3rd at Meridian Lake on Hwy 51 Dwayne Elmore had a large number of shorebirds including Buff-breasted Sandpiper, a Black Tern and White-faced Ibis. On the 4th Timothy O'Connell, Jason Heinen and Kent Andersson checked the Meridian Tech Center Pond and located Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, American Golden Plover, and at the OSU Botanical Garden Least Flycatcher, White-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Northern Parula and Yellow Warbler. In Norman Joe Grzybowski had to use binoculars to spot Chimney



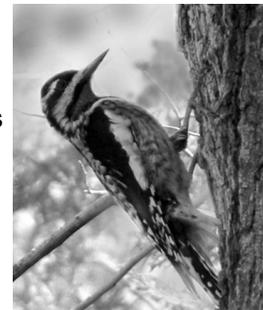
Swifts at speck-like altitudes and noted Mississippi Kites catching dragonflies high above. On the 5th he passed by Lake Overholser and had 14 species of shorebirds including a Red-necked Phalarope and over 100 Stilt Sandpipers, while on the 9th he located 4 Neotropical Cormorants.

On the 11th Dick Gunn saw a mature Bald Eagle patrolling just off South Jenkins in Norman. Patti and Brian Muzny spotted a Swainson's Hawk east of Byars while last week she watched a Prairie Falcon hunting over their recently burned pasture. On the 12th Jim Bates reports during the past week he has seen Black-and-white Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler but best of all as he was getting into his car to leave for work, he noticed some movement at the base of a holly bush which turned out to be a nice male **Mourning Warbler** in all his grand black, green and yellow regalia. Jim has also noted seeing dragonflies and Monarch butterflies.

On the 15th Sue Lutze in Tuttle noticed a female and later a male Yellow Warbler. On the 16th in Norman Brian Davis found a male Black-chinned Hummingbird at his feeder. On the 17th Nadine and Jimmy Woodard spotted a **Roseate Spoonbill** paralleling I-40 just east

of exit 217 where Highway 48 crosses it in Okfuskee County. Garey Harritt reports at least 100 Great Egrets at the sand plant in Guthrie (north of Hwy 33 on Pine) and Common Nighthawks circling a tree before quickly moving off. Dave and Sue Woodson sighted a Belted Kingfisher catching a fish at Arcadia Lake.

On the 18th Jimmy birded around Lake Overholser and found American White Pelicans, Wilson's Phalarope, American Avocets, and a Bald Eagle being harassed by American Crows. In his central Oklahoma City yard Jim Bates had an American Redstart, Swainson's Thrush, and in Yukon Park a Blue-headed Vireo. On the 19th Feodora Steward saw an early Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Eldon Lyon Park. On the 21st Nancy Reed had a female or immature **Lark**



Bunting arrive in her yard. As the Monarch butterflies start their annual migration through Oklahoma Linda Schemmer of Kingfisher request assistance in reporting sighting of large roosts, nectaring or dedicated S-SW flights. Reports can be made at <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/Gallery.html> .

On the 22nd Dick Gunn reports for the seventh straight year, Norma, the resident white Red-tailed Hawk has returned. Also, Blossom, his youngest Springer, tends to collect things on their walk, and this morning's collection included a dead **Sora Rail**. Meanwhile, Jim Bates' son, John, saw a Sora Rail being attacked by their two cats. He rescued the bird and took it to Wildcare. On the 26th west of Central Oklahoma at the turnoff to the Roman Nose State Park Mark Cromwell found about 50 hawks sitting in short cattle pasture field. Then he noticed another group of large birds rising out of a field behind a farm house which were mainly Swainson's Hawk with a few Broad-winged Hawks.

On the 24th a US Fish and Wildlife Biologist from Houston, Texas, Kelsey Gocke, was visiting Martin Park Nature Center and sighted a male **Golden-winged Warbler**. On the 27th at the Central State Park in Edmond Dave Woodson had a Hairy Woodpecker, Swainson's Hawk and Northern Flicker. On the 30th Bill Diffin walked out on the dry, sandy, lake bed on the east side of Lake Overholser and discovered Ruddy Duck, Prairie Falcon, 150 American Avocet, 75 American Golden Plover, a Black-bellied Plover, Long-billed Dowitcher, and a big group of Double-crested Cormorants on an island in the middle of the former lake.

During September a total of **107** bird species were reported including **5 new** species which increased the 2011 Central Oklahoma area total to **258** species. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds by turning in reports. I can be contacted by e-mail at emkok@earthlink.net.

Patti's Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

I was trying to think of some interesting events that unfolded in the month of September, when what's left of my mind began to wander back to birding events of the past that were amusing. So I think I will resurrect a few thoughts.

Many years ago, during a summer OCAS birding field trip to our Byars property, some of the participants were able to witness the untimely demise of a fully-feathered fledgling Pileated Woodpecker. The parent birds had chosen a cottonwood tree in which to make their nest. The nest was nearly 20 feet from the ground and looked like a safe spot. It was indeed until a snake climbed around 30 feet up and coiled itself around the trunk. The fledgling Pileated Woodpecker chose this most inopportune time to embark on its first journey out of the nest.

A Nuthatch would have been OK, since they tend to creep downward on a tree trunk. The woodpecker began to inch upward while several birders stood helplessly below. When the woodpecker got within striking distance, the snake lunged for its head and this story nears its conclusion. Who would have thought that a snake could disengage its jaws enough to completely swallow a bird as large as a crow while coiled around the trunk of a large tree?! We had photos!

A large family of Chickadees chose a nest box on a pole near our cabin porch, in between the cabin and the area where we park our vehicle. At the time, the nest hole faced the rear of the truck, which we always back in. I was loafing on the screen porch and watching the parent birds trying to keep that box full of ravenous fledglings fed. Suddenly the entire box of at least six decided to fly out – one right after the other.

The only hitch to their plan was that the rear hatch of the suburban was open and about 6 feet from the box. Oops... about half of the clutch landed in the back portion of the truck. It took a few minutes, but I managed to round them up and deposit them into some bushes and wish them well. Fledgling Chickadees are some kind of feisty cute, too! We turned the house around after that!

We once had an old car that my husband altered for me to check birdhouses. This old Datsun had been in a crash once, so it wasn't real pretty, but it was quiet and it ran well. The hood of a Datsun is not sturdy enough to stand on to peek into the bird houses. So, he made a hood of plywood. I could open the door, swing up between the top of the window frame and the top of the car and get onto the hood without even getting into the weeds. Pretty cool arrangement for me. Granted, it wasn't pretty, but perfect for my causes.

I went out to monitor all of my bird boxes early one morning. All was well until I hastily opened one that was not the

abode of some little cavity nesters of the feathered kind! I quickly and without much thought, removed the nail released the front of the box down so I could peek into it and record who and what used each box. My nose was practically in the nest hole, which turned out not to be the most desirable arrangement. Coiled into the box was a black rat snake that resented being disturbed. The snake struck out toward my face and I must have set a record for leaping off of that hood platform and into the air and into those pesky weeds I'd been trying to avoid! No harm done – I was about 25 years younger and still thought I could fly! Moral to this story: ALWAYS open boxes slowly and gently peek into them from the SIDE.

Other boxes have held flying squirrels, field mice and my most dreaded – paper wasps! I usually have a "live and let live" policy with most of Mother Nature's pesky creatures, especially snakes, but the element of surprise can sometimes cause humans to hurt themselves! Fortunately our pasture is sandy and I didn't have that far to reach the ground. It would have made one funny video, tho!

During my banding years, I had my mist nets set up down along our creek. It had been a slow day of fall migration and I had not processed many migrants. Our Sunday afternoon was fading into the sunset and I zipped down to the creek to take my nets down. I had checked them about 30 minutes earlier.

To my delight and dismay, I found my nets held 27 green-colored Painted Buntings. It takes one person several minutes to meticulously extract each delicate set of claws from a mist net. Then each bird has to be measured, sexed (I asked each to check the "m"/"f" box!) and weighed. Needless to say, we returned to OKC a little late that evening. But...27 Painted Buntings were an amazing sight!

I could go on and on, but I'll save the rest of my stories. Anytime we are out in the field in pursuit, we have the opportunity to witness the myriad of marvels in our natural world. Mostly we are just lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. What a pleasure!

Classified Ad

"A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Bali" by John Mackinnon (Oxford U. Press): out-of-print: used in the field so shows some page soiling but still tight and in good overall condition: \$35

"Birds of Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, and the Antarctic Peninsula" by E. Couve: newly published photographic guide to birds of the region; used lightly and in fairly pristine condition: \$42

Mark Delgrosso: medelgrosso@gmail.com, 405.470.4533

Oklahoma City Audubon Society
c/o Carla Brueggen
8010 NW 32
Bethany, OK 73008

Black Mesa/Colorado continued from page 5

Next I stopped at Two Buttes SWA north of Springfield in Prowers County. This is a must see place if you are in the area. The best area is a large area of trees with some ponds down below the dam. On this day it was quite birdy, perhaps the best stop of the whole trip. There were migrant passerines everywhere. I saw multiple Chats, Catbirds, Brown Thrashers and empids. Also seen were Louisiana Waterthrush, Amer Redstart, Warbling Vireo, Spotted Towhee and Great-crested Flycatcher. I spent a couple of hours chasing stuff thru the woods and undergrowth. On the way out, I saw around 170 TV's attending a cow carcass. I also saw a very mangy looking coyote with no hair and a sleeping porcupine in a tree.

Back in Oklahoma, I took the backroad thru the Clark Ranch, Benton's and on to the state park. along the way were several Redhead WP's and Lark Buntings as well as one Merlin and one Magpie. At Lake Etling, there were two Osprey and some Bank Swallows. I ran into John Sterling and we headed into Boise to eat. Just west of town, we had a Ferruginous Hawk and a Prairie Falcon.

As the sun faded, I checked the Boise City Sewage Ponds which is always a must stop when in Cimarron County. I've found many a good bird here and on this evening it didn't disappoint. A molting LESSER NIGHTHAWK was mixed in with the dozen Commons that were feeding over the fragrant ponds. This was a new bird in the state for me which is always one of the enticing factors of the mesa area.

Thursday morning, John and I joined Dan to bird an area along the Beaver River south of Boise. Dan had located a Black-throated Gray Warbler here the day before. We weren't fortunate enough to relocate it but we had many other birds. We flushed a roosting Barn Owl from some cottonwoods. A long line of salt cedars held several birds but we had to make several passes spread out on both sides of the trees to find them. Located were Blue-headed Vireo, American Redstart, Black & White Warbler, House Wren, Bullock's Oriole, Blue Grosbeak, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and several quiet empids.

I ended the almost week long trip to two states with 160 species and many more memorable mesa moments.
