



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

December 2008

Tall Tales and Beyond

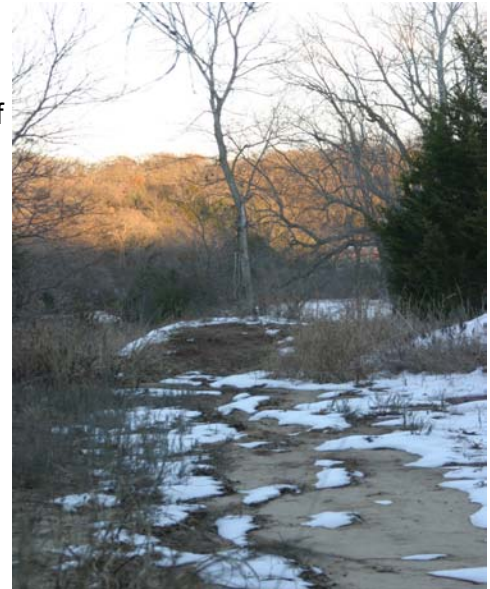
Oklahoma City Audubon Society's annual "Tall Tales" member-presented program and potluck snack sharing will be the highlight of our December meeting. Members will gather for an entertaining evening of sharing birding tales and favorite holiday munchies. Everyone is welcome.

These tales can be accompanied by slides or just simply verbal accounts of favorite birding experiences. Plan to celebrate December with fellow birders.

The date is **Monday, December 15, 2008**, OKC Audubon

You won't want to miss this program! Bring a friend. Bring a snack.

The celebration will begin at 7:00 PM, at the Will Rogers Garden Center, located at I-44 and NW 36th Street.



*Note: The January 2009 meeting will be held on the **4th Monday, January 26.***

January's program will be on the Wichita Mountains by Dick Clapp from Norman.

February's program will be on bird surveys by Nancy Vicars and Patti Muzny.

2009 Calendars

Our beautiful 2009 fund raising calendars are here. They will be available at the monthly meetings for \$7.50 or you may order by mail. The mailing cost will be \$7.50, plus \$1.50 per calendar.

This is our only source of revenue other than our membership dues. If every member bought just one calendar, we would be able to net \$500.

Refreshments:

Refreshments for the December meeting will be provided by **any volunteers. Please bring a snack to share.**

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Tuesday Morning Birders

November 18, 2008

By Nancy Vicars

The outing this morning to Fort Reno where bird guide extraordinaire, Max Fuller, took the group to areas that are otherwise "off limits" to visitors. The diverse habitat of this property includes lush grasslands, large tracts of old growth, mostly cottonwood trees and a river bottom.

We found an abundance of Red-tailed, including just about all color phases, and Marsh (Northern Harrier) Hawks in addition to Red-shouldered, Cooper's and American Kestrels.

Along the river bottom where a great many brush piles have been created by clearing many large trees we found Field, Fox, Savannah, Song, Lincoln's, Harris's and White-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Spotted Towhees and Carolina Wrens. Red-bellied & Downy Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flickers, Eastern Bluebirds, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Yellow-rumped Warblers, House & American Goldfinch were added here.

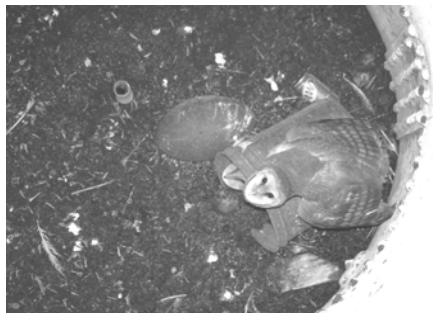
The highlight of the morning was finding not one but six BARN OWLS in an abandoned stable.

After lunch, Max took us to the El Reno sewage lagoon ponds where Jimmy Woodard had found a Surf Scoter last week and sure enough it was still there!! It was a LIFE bird for several folks.

There were also nine species of waterfowl including Gadwall, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Canvasback, Ring-necked, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead and Ruddy Ducks plus one Eared Grebe.

My birding buddies today, Max Fuller, (newly retired) Ernie Wilson, Dave Woodson, Carla Brueggen, Feodora Steward, Patti Muzny, Lyn Pearce & Esther Key, found a total of 57 species.

Addendum: This group is called Tuesday Morning Birders and we usually quit at noon; HOWEVER there was just so much to see that most of us stayed out all day without any sign of remorse!



Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

Our yard in south Oklahoma City attracts a few birds for me to watch, but I have not noticed any Sharpies or Cooper's Hawks. A bountiful buffet of English Sparrows awaits, but the luck of the English (not Irish), prevails for now.

In addition to the sparrows, a few Juncos and Goldfinches appear. We also have a Bewick's Wren that snoops into every crack and crevice on and around our back patio. I crack pecans in a plastic dishpan and the little pieces I don't use are left. It's quite entertaining to see the wren hop in and out of the pan, scavenging for the pecan pieces. The House Sparrows won't come onto the picnic table under the patio, so the wren only has to share with the Mockingbird and sometimes a Blue Jay.

The Mourning Doves have found the stash and I counted 29 during the first week of December. At least one pair of Collared Doves also visit once or twice a day. When the north wind howled, my House Finches returned!

Canada Geese a few ducks and even a Kingfisher have flown across the yard in the past few weeks. The geese and a duck or two are not unusual, as this part of OKC has several residential ponds and fields where the geese feed. The Kingfisher was a surprise, because we don't have a creek or pond very close to our house.

I happened to be in town when Nancy Vicars led a recent Tuesday Morning Birders field trip to the El Reno area, and I left my household duties and went AWOL for what I thought was a "Tuesday Morning" outing. Maybe that's what the message said, but then for some reason I found myself driving home just ahead of the evening rush hour!

What a fun day it was! The weather was just too enticing and the companionship and the birding just too high-quality to quit at noon. Well, we did quit a little after noon and headed directly to one of our favorite Mexican food restaurants – Don Serapio's – in El Reno. Then... maybe we should check out the El Reno sewage lagoons. It's a good think we went there AFTER lunch!

That fragrance was one we won't soon forget, but the heedless waterfowl made for some interesting birding. The Surf Scoter was easily found and several other species rounded out our list quite nicely.

The highlight was not the lagoons, but an old building on the Fort Reno property. We looked inside and inadvertently spooked six Barn Owls. We nearly had to duck owls as they exited from all directions! Quite a sight.

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Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2008

President	Nealand Hill	388-6759
Vice Pres.	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Cheryl Allen	478-0339
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	324-1462
Newsletter	Patricia Velte	751-5263
Publicity	Cheryl Allen	478-0339
Historian	Nealand Hill	388-6759
Refreshments	Jim Vicars	732-9885
Webmaster	Patricia 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 our outstanding website and keep up with the latest happenings.

OKC-Audubon.org

ODWC Winter Bird Feeder Survey 2009

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Winter Bird Feeder Survey will run from Thursday, January 8th through Sunday, January 11th.

We ask participants to watch their feeders for at least two hours on any two of those four days and to record the largest number of birds of each species seen during that period.

If anyone would like identification help they can log on to www.okwinterbirds.com, which is a site that has been set up to help novice birders. Participants can get to that website through ODWC's website: (www.wildlifedepartment.com) and can even enter their data electronically through ODWC's website.

Breath Against the Glass

By Patti Muzny

On a chilly November morning, while I was staying with my sister, Bobbi, in Fayetteville, Arkansas, I was watching her bird feeder, which was just outside the dining room windows. There were Titmice, Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, Goldfinch, Mourning Doves, Cardinals, Blue Jays, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers and a pair of Sapsuckers, all feeding on and near the feeder.

The gurgling, sighing coffee pot had completed its morning offering and I stepped away from the window to pour a cup. As I turned away I heard a "thump" against the glass. A Chickadee had landed on the ledge of the window and was not looking very alert. The term, "rung its bell," would apply here. I began to peer out and try to find the cause for the crash. Usually the culprit will be a woodland predator, but I didn't immediately see a hawk.

The Chickadee appeared to be frozen against the glass. The only evidence of a warm body was a tiny circle of condensed breath against the glass. Not a feather moved.

Suddenly a Cooper's Hawk appeared on a branch near the feeder and I could imagine how this saga was destined to end, but hoped that just maybe the hawk wouldn't fly directly toward the glass to pluck the Chickadee from the ledge.

While I stood very still at the edge of the table, the hawk flew up and out of my sight, not toward the window. In the blink of an eye, I saw a flash of yellow talons extend and snatch the still dazed Chickadee from the ledge. Instead of a frontal attack, this obviously experienced predator came in from the side for its breakfast.

As I drank my coffee, I watched as a flurry of feathers floated lazily to the ground beneath the large shag-bark hickory where the hawk was plucking its miniscule meal. The entire prototype of nature's more violent example of the food chain took about 35 minutes to complete.

Thank you, President Nealand Hill

After four illustrious years of service as Oklahoma City Audubon Society's president, Nealand Hill is stepping down. Nealand's unselfish dedication to his duties as president, outstanding leadership and his valued friendship has been very deeply appreciated by all.

This club has been fortunate to have enjoyed Nealand's quick wit, ready smile and camaraderie for the past four years and we just want to say, "Thank you, Nealand!"

Bridgestone/Crystal Lake Field Trip

By Jimmy Woodard

On November 15, 2008, three hardy birders, Nancy Vicars, Valerie Bradshaw and I began a cold, blustery Saturday at the Bridgestone Preserve in Oklahoma City.

We walked the wooded trail along the creek. Birds were not overly plentiful but we found four species of woodpecker: Downy, Hairy, Red-bellied and Flicker. Other birds seen or heard were Red-tailed Hawk, Titmouse, Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Robin, Cardinal, Spotted Towhee, Goldfinch and White-throated Sparrow.

We walked south into a field and checked a willow lined pond, where we flushed about 30 Hooded Mergansers. We continued through the grassy field, which has several small hackberry trees. Several Savannah and Song Sparrows popped up and one Tree Sparrow was among them.

Overhead we saw several groups of Canada and Snow Geese. Back in the woods we flushed a Great Horned Owl from its perch.

As we walked back toward the car along SW 15th, we observed an Osprey flying north over the Canadian River.

Next we went over to Crystal Lake, located a mile or so to the east. On the lake was a flock of Bufflehead. A Rough-legged Hawk flew over toward I-40. A flock of Horned Larks flew into a nearby cultivated field.

We finished the morning at Lake Overholser where we added a few gulls to end our species total at 52.

OKLAHOMA CITY AUDUBON SOCIETY LUGGAGE TAG FUND RAISER

We will have luggage tags available at our December 15 meeting for \$3.00 each, or two for \$5.00. One hundred percent of the profit from this sale will go to the Oklahoma City Audubon Society.

The tags have images of birds on one side and space for personal information (name, address, etc.) on the other. They are made of rugged plastic and have been "airline tested."

These tags can be used for book bags, golf and tennis bags and make excellent gifts for grand kids, teachers, work associates and extended family members.

Bring a few extra dollars to the meeting and help our society raise some money, and at the same time take care of those hard to buy-for persons on your Christmas list.

Please contact Larry Ferree at lferree10S@cox.net in order to view the entire selection of beautiful photos available for your tags. Also, be sure to mention OKC Audubon when placing your orders.

Stephens County CBC

From June Ketchum

Join us for the Stephens County (Oklahoma) Christmas Bird Count on **Saturday, January 3, 2009**

We will meet in **Duncan, Oklahoma**, at the **Daybreak Diner** (116 Highway 81 S) between **6:15 and 6:30 AM**.

We welcome bird watchers of any level to come help conduct this count. This is always a great count with many interesting birds, but we are always in need of participants.

Please contact June Ketchum at 405-919-2459 or June.Ketchum@duncanregional.com if you are able to participate or would like more information.

Washita NWR CBC

All CBC's across Oklahoma are in need of more volunteers, but the Washita National Wildlife Refuge CBC, near Foss State Park, just NW of Clinton, is one that Patti and Brian Muzny and Nancy Vicars have done for many years.

The habitat in Western Oklahoma is diverse and interesting and the staff at the refuge most definitely need help.

Count day is December 19, 2008. The Muzny/Vicars party will be leaving OKC on Thursday, December 18, in order to be at Refuge headquarters by 7:30 AM. Lodging is available in Clinton or Elk City.

Interested participants may contact Patti Muzny at patti.muzny@cox.net or nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Central Oklahoma's Recorders Report – November 2008

In November numerous reports indicate the winter sparrows, water birds, hawks, and finches have return. It was a warm, dry month with a hard freeze and temperatures ranging from 82°F to 23°F with less than an inch of rain. 114 species were reported including four new species for the year-to-date total of 259.

On November 6th in Edmond Nealand Hill had his first Northern Juncos, and Brian Davis found his first Sora Rail in the marshy area west of south Jenkins in Norman. At Lake Hefner Matt Jung found 14 Great Egrets, Spotted Towhee, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Bufflehead, and Vesper Sparrow. On the 8th Matt and a friend birded around Sooner Lake and located 2 Cattle Egrets, a Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk, Loggerhead Shrike, with Harris's, Field, American Tree, White-crowned, and Lincoln's Sparrow.

On the 8th Max Fuller found a nice looking, winter, male Surf Scoter at the El Reno Sewage Ponds. Jimmy Woodard, Jerry Vanbeber and Max found it on the 9th hanging out near the north edge of the largest sewage pond along with hundreds of ducks including Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Redhead, Northern Pintail, Hooded Mergansers, and Ruddy Ducks. In the fields were American Pipits and a brush pile yielded several Harris's, White-crowned and Savannah Sparrows. At the entrance to Fort Reno they found a Ferruginous Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Harlan's Hawk and Loggerhead Shrike. On the 18th Max and Nancy led the Tuesday Morning Birders (TMB) around Fort Reno where they also found a Krider's Red-tailed Hawk and a family of Barn Owls. After lunch they located the Surf Scoter plus an Eared Grebe at the El Reno sewage lagoon ponds.

On the 11th along South Jenkins in Norman Brian found a single Wilson's Phalarope on the mudflat adjacent to the marshy creek area that feeds into the Canadian River along with a Swamp Sparrow and Winter Wren. On the 13th Matthew Vandenbroeke added a Brown Creeper, and on the 14th Brian had a Hermit Thrush sitting in the top of a small tree and nearby was the leucistic Red-tailed Hawk. On

the 15th Matt Jung visited Rose Lake and found American White Pelican, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Fox Sparrow.

On the 14th in Yukon Jimmy had about 20 Lapland Longspurs with 2-3 McCown's Longspurs mixed into the group. On the 15th he, Nancy Vicars and Valerie Bradshaw found an Osprey and Rough-legged Hawk at the Bridgestone/Crystal Lake area. On the 16th along the west side of Lake Hefner he found 2 Western Grebes, a Common Loon, 50 Red-breasted Mergansers, and one lone Black-crowned Night Heron. He and Garey Harritt checked the Purina Field in Edmond and found 8 Smith's Longspurs and one LeConte's Sparrow.

On the 22nd Claire Curry and Diane Landoll birded South Jenkins and found Swamp Sparrows, Belted Kingfisher, Wilson's Snipe, Least Sandpiper, and White-throated Sparrows. Paul Van Els and Jason Heinen birded the Arboretum in Stillwater and found Cooper's Hawk, White-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, and Cedar Waxwings.

On the 23rd Joe Grzybowski found a Western Grebe, Horned and Pied-billed Grebes, 15-20 Common Loons, 150 Bonaparte's Gulls and 3 Forester's Terns. On the 24th four Bald Eagles were seen by Dick Gunn and on the 25th on South Jenkins, Norman he and Brian Davis found Winter Wren, Brown Creeper, Hairy Woodpecker and a River Otter.

I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds by turning in their reports of birds seen at home and in the field. I can be contacted by email at emkok@earthlink.net, leave a message at 405-381-9170 or mail to 4603 Pikey's Trail, Tuttle, OK 73089. Esther M. Key, Editor.

2009 Slate of Officers

A nominating committee meeting was held on Saturday, December 6, 2008, and the following slate of officers will be presented and voted on at the December 15, 2008 meeting.

President: Eric Enwall
Vice-Pres: John Shackford
Secretary: Cheryl Allen
Treasurer: Nancy Vicars
Parliamentarian: Dr. Sam Moore

Minutes of November Meeting of OKC Audubon Society

Nealand Hill called the meeting to order at 7:05 and welcomed Karen Dunn as our newest member. Minutes of the last meeting were approved by a majority vote.

Treasurer's report showed a balance of \$5,376.23.

Old Business: Still need volunteers for a nominating committee. John Shackford asked for donations for expenses of the Christmas Bird Count including reimbursement for the chili dinner that culminates Count Day, December 20th. The chili party will again be held at Diane Newell's house beginning at 5 p.m. Nealand asked would-be Christmas bird counters to meet with John Shackford after the meeting for CBC dynamics.

New Business: Jimmy Woodard mentioned that America's Lost Landscape: The Tall Grass Prairie would be shown Tuesday December 9th 6:30 to 8 p.m. and Thursday, January 15th, 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Zoo.

Two bird festivals were announced. One at Woodward, Oklahoma and one at Salt Plains/Red Slough April 17-22. See website for details.

Field Trips: January 10th Stinchcomb and canal area field trip to look for winter wrens. January 25th the Pontotoc Ridge winter count near Ada in the Nature Conservancy area. March 27-29th the 19,000 acre Selman Ranch to a lesser prairie chicken lek & more. Fees are \$75 per day for the B&B, \$30 a day for day birding, \$5 a night for camping but no campfires.

Tuesday morning birding. Nancy will take the group to Fort Reno tomorrow.

Nancy interjected that the \$15 federal duck stamp supports the purchase of wetlands and so please buy them.

Unexpected announcements: Nealand tendered his resignation as president effective January 1st.

The meeting was turned over to Warren Harden for a fascinating talk by Don Shepard on Oklahoma snakes which included a snake petting at the end. Meeting was ended at 8:40ish.

Submitted by Cheryl Allen
Secretary

Tuesday Morning Birders

December 2, 2008

The outing to Lake Stanly Draper this morning turned out to be a RECORD day for my four very hardy birding friends, Bob Holbrook, Jane Boren, Terri Underhill & Esther Key. We found a Red-throated and a Pacific Loon, both species are certainly unexpected, if not rare, in this part of the state.

Rough-legged Hawk, Bald Eagle, Hermit Thrush and Golden-crowned Kinglets would also have to be included on our special species list today. Waterfowl species included Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye & Red-breasted Merganser. Five species of woodpeckers included Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, Northern Flickers (both yellow & red shafted) and a Pileated.

At the conclusion of a very cold, extremely windy (not quite gale force but almost) morning, my hardy group managed to locate 46 species.

OKC Audubon Society CBC Updates

Saturday, 20 December 2008, is our Christmas Bird Count. We are hoping for better weather than the snowy/sleety/icy/rainy day we had last year! After the count we are having a party! Diane Newell has graciously invited us to again have our Bird Tally Party at the Newell's house.

Directions to the Newell's are to go on N. MacArthur to N.W. 82nd Street (this is just a few blocks north of the Northwest Expressway and N. MacArthur). Turn east (right, if coming north from the NW Expressway) onto N.W. 82nd. In about 1/4 mile on N.W. 82nd there is a stop sign. Continue past this sign on N.W. 82nd for about another 1/4, until you come to a bend (toward the north/left) in the road and the Newell's house is just at this bend, on the South Side. Their Address is 8304 Lakeaire Drive (road changes names at the bend). Look for the cars there. Hope you can make it!

We are still looking for a few more volunteer food items for the party. You can check with me as to rounding out the menu, if you would like to bring something. John Shackford, phone 340-5057.

2009 Dues

OKC Audubon Society membership dues are being collected for 2009. In order to receive this newsletter and meeting information, please remit dues of \$10 per household to:

**Nancy Vicars
820 Arthur Drive
Midwest City, OK 73110
or pay your \$10 at any meeting.**

Bird of the Month



Photo by Pat Velte

By John S. Shackford

The Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) is both secretive and beautiful: we do not get to study their plumage closely or often, but when we do, it is a beautiful sight. Their plumage has very soft colors, lots of white on the breast, then some beautiful dapples of light tan and gold on the back. Bent, in his *Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey, Part 2* (1961, p.140) calls one of its nicknames—Golden Owl—“a pretty and appropriate name”. Because of its heart shaped face that somewhat resembles a monkey, a more common nickname is Monkey Owl.

The Barn Owl usually hunts after dark, using its acute hearing to locate prey. They are widely acclaimed to be great “mousers.” No doubt this owl is much more common than most Oklahomans believe, because the owls are nocturnal and people are diurnal, and the owls see well in low light, while we do not.

According to the web site “The Barn Owl Trust,” the Barn Owl is the “most widely distributed land bird in the world.” Dr. George M. Sutton, in his book, *Oklahoma Birds*, (1967, p. 250), has a very interesting paragraph on this:

“There are several reasons for the widespread distribution. First, the species has been in existence for a long time: fossil remains of *Tyto alba* [the Barn Owl] have been reported from Pleistocene deposits in Florida and California. Second, it is not highly specialized in food habits: it eats small mammals, small birds, insects, frogs, crayfish, etc. Third, since it has a disproportionately great wingspread, high winds may well have transported it from island to island, even from continent to continent.”

We usually manage to find one or more Barn Owls on our Christmas Bird Counts. On two occasions we have had them nesting during the Christmas Count period, once on top of Mercy Hospital a number of years ago and once in the Bell Tower at Memorial Park Cemetery a couple of years ago. Sutton, in his book cited above, gives the early date for nesting in Oklahoma as March 4, and the latest date on October 1. In his book, *Birds of the Great Plains*, (1979, p. 195), Paul A. Johnsgard states that “In Texas, breeding occurs almost throughout the year, but most nesting is during winter, with eggs reported from November 13 to May 16. Perhaps our winter nestings are an indication of global weather changes coming our way. For the birds that nested in Memorial Cemetery, however, I wonder if it was not because a lot of Starlings that roosted in the cemetery on winter nights have provided abundant prey for the owls. Examining regurgitated owl pellets of nesting birds in wintertime might help answer this question.

According to the Bent book cited above, the Barn Owl usually lays 5-7 eggs, but sets of 9-11 are not uncommon. Incubation begins soon after the first egg is laid, so when the young hatch they form a “stair step” of sizes and ages. This is Mother Nature’s way of dealing with any food shortages for the young, should one occur: it gives the oldest and biggest young the best chance of surviving in good health.

Field Trips

December 20, 2008 — OKC Audubon Annual Christmas Count. Leader: John Shackford: johnsshack@aol.com., Ph. (405) 340-5057, 429 East Oak Cliff Dr., Edmond, OK 73034-8626. If you would like to participate, please contact John prior to December 20.



Tuesday Morning Birders Tuesdays (weather permitting)

Birders of all levels are encouraged to participate in these informal weekly field trips led by Nancy Vicars. ALWAYS Contact Nancy for meeting place and destination at: nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net, 732-9885 or (cell) 831-1945 prior to each Tuesday morning event. You may also check our website at **OKC-Audubon.org**.

January 10, 2009 — Stinchcomb Area. Meet at Jim's Restaurant at 7:30 a.m. for breakfast. Departure at 8:00 a.m., or shortly after. Leader: Jimmy Woodard (324-1462 or 365-5685—cell).

January 25, 2009 Pontotoc Ridge Winter Count. Contact Jona Tucker (580-777-2224) for information.

February 21, 2008—Oklahoma City Lakes Tour. Meet at Route 66 Park on the west side of Lake Overholser at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Jimmy Woodard — (324-1462 or 365-5685—cell).

March 27-29, 2009—Selman Ranch—Woodward County. Join us as we bird this 19,000 acre ranch for prairie chickens and more. For the rate of \$75, you get a bed, breakfast, a visit to the LPC lek, and unlimited birding access to the property. Accommodations at this B&B are limited, so book early. ****Note:** There is a fee for birding access if you stay offsite and wish to join us for day birding. Contact Sue Selman at 580-256-2006 or Jimmy Woodard at 324-1462 or 365-5685 (cell), for more information.

I HEARD A BIRD SING

I heard a bird sing
In the dark of December
A magical thing
And sweet to remember.
'We are nearer to Spring
Than we were in September,'
I heard a bird sing
In the dark of December.
- Oliver Herford

Oklahoma City Audubon Society
c/o Patti Muzny
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