



# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

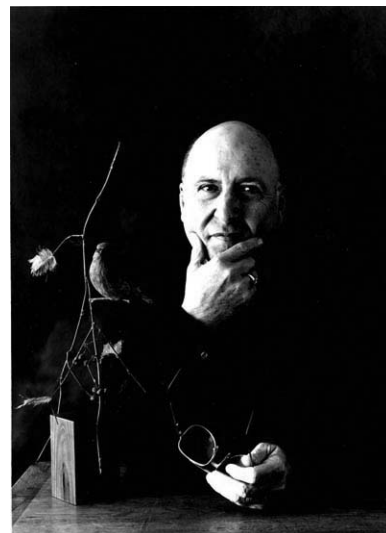
OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

June 2009

## Jack Curran's World of Birds

Jack Curran, photographer, painter, carver and sculptor from Arkansas, will be our speaker for our June 15 OKC Audubon Society meeting. Jack will be presenting beautiful and exciting photographs of Sandhill Cranes from a recent trip to the cranes' staging area on Nebraska's Platte River.

Jack studied fine art at the University of Nebraska, worked for 20 years for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, was art director for Nebraska Land Magazine, and has accomplished projects for radio, television, film and multimedia. One of his monumental bronze sculptures is a buffalo standing in the Omaha zoo. He is a true bird watcher and bird artist as evidenced in his book "Jack Curran's World of Birds" (Tawny Oaks Press, 2008). Jack currently resides in rural Arkansas where he owns several houses that can be rented by people wanting an outdoor experience with nature.



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. Following the June meeting, the newsletter and meetings will be on hiatus until September.



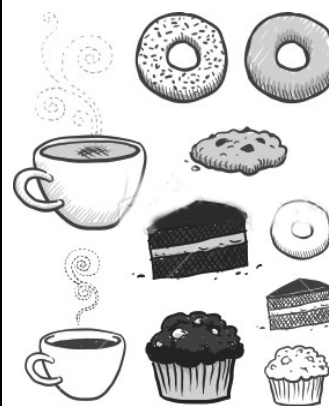
## President's Perspective

*By Eric Enwall*

### Why there are no junk birds

Well, the title is deliberately provocative. It is also obviously an opinion piece. I am more than capable of voicing opinions, especially in such an anonymous medium. What has puzzled me enough to think more or less carefully about the topic is the idea that people who have so much interest in birds and wildlife in general can dismiss a large fraction of the birds they see every day/week as either inconsequential or even undesirable. Part of that is stated in the sentence. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, but we devalue the common, the ordinary.

I suppose I could invoke an evolutionary argument that we learn to discount the ordinary in our surroundings so that we can more efficiently protect ourselves from or take advantage of the uncommon. But it can't just be the extra effort required to record the sighting of Canada (geese) or Grackles that causes one of my cohorts reply "minus 10" at every mention when we are listing on a road trip. Although I realize that it is sexist, here I blame the remnants of teenage boy vandal anti-socialism. One always has to react to the



## Cookie Patrol

Refreshments for the June meeting will be provided by: Jim and Nancy Vicars, Bob Judd and Jana Mott.

## President's Perspective (continued)

normal with derision or the hormone overload will do one in. Maybe that explains (to me) the fact that the "junk birders" seem more often to be men. There may also be an element of the "show off" in this as well. If I regard a Lincoln's Sparrow (to continue a theme) as just an every day sight in the woods around Hefner, then I must be a more accomplished birder than the guy who says "where, where." Maybe there is a bit of "great white hunter" as well, but I can't really fit it in securely.

There is an efficiency that we all use in this which I think is understandable. When Carol and I meet Dick "the minister" Gunn on south Jenkins and ask "see anything?" he is very prone to not report on every species he has seen, but those he knows we might not have recently seen or that he feels are "remarkable" in the vicinity. I am really enamored of that word, "remarkable." I like it better than "good birds" in that I think none are "bad." A remarkable bird should be mentioned. Dick is also prone to tell us more about birds he has seen and visually identified but he will note specially a remarkable bird that he has only heard. I really appreciate that. I don't question the listing of "heard birds" by experienced birders but for most of us novice birders, "heard only" remains a mystery bird.

There is a danger in ignoring the "junk bird" as well. I am still kicking myself about the cardinal I saw out of the corner of my eye when we were traveling the "ten mile flats" looking mostly for shore birds and waders. The dismissive tendency that most of us have (JW excepted) when the common appears while we look for the unusual (remarkable) birds took over. An all (mostly) red bird sighted out of the corner of my eye registered 100 yards later as "not quite the right red." Was it possibly a scarlet tanager? I won't ever know and it was easy to stop and look. Only one word comes to mind and this is a family publication.

Then there is the junk bird issue which affects the "non-birding" community. The proliferation of some species (Starlings for example) into such numbers that their presence can be annoying or the illusion that other birds, by common exposure or derogatory comment, are unattractive. A good friend was astonished that I consider the male House Sparrow, in its fresh breeding plumage, one of the very attractive birds. We have had a specific individual in the yard this year with unusually white feathers and he is handsome indeed. Consider how far some birders come to see those Mockingbirds that wake you in the night. Looking closely can clear lots of birds off the

junk list. Feeding Grackles and Blackbirds in the winter can indeed get expensive if you don't get creative about it--so get creative.

Sometimes we let our human "morality" intervene, but Cowbirds and Cuckoos are following their genetic programming just as we do. We sometimes find it necessary (probably so anyway) to intervene if our human activity changes habitat so that one bird species begins to destroy another but we should not try to be moralistic about it. We just all value diversity and beauty and their preservation is reason enough.

Squirrels I am not so sure about.

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## Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival Field Trip Woodward to Black Mesa

*by Jimmy Woodard*

John Kennington and I led 17 other festival birders on a field trip to Black Mesa from Woodward during the April 2009 Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival. We left in a nine-car caravan on Tuesday morning, April 21. We were in a hurry to get to the mesa country so we made few stops.

We did visit Optima Lake. There was actually quite a bit of water, which in turn had attracted waterfowl. There were hundreds of Shovelers, Green-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup and Ruddy Ducks. We also saw one Horned Grebe, a few Wilson's Phalarope, and an Ash-throated Flycatcher.

Another stopping point was the Keyes sewage ponds. There wasn't much there but we did see Avocet, Wilson's Snipe, Bufflehead, and American Pipit. Boise City sewage ponds contained Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Franklin's Gulls, and Long-billed Dowitchers. We stopped in town for gas and food before heading toward Kenton.



*Continued on page 3*

## Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival (continued)

We stopped at the Three State monument before visiting the dinosaur tracks near Black Mesa. While viewing the tracks, a pair of Golden Eagles flew over.

In Kenton, we quickly found Curve-billed Thrasher, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, White-winged Dove, Say's Phoebe, Lesser Goldfinch, and Cassin's Kingbird. We then enjoyed a fine lunch prepared by Jane Apple at the Hitching Post.

With our bellies full, we birded in Black Mesa State Park. A view of the lake from an overlook produced teal, Northern Shoveler, Avocet and one adult Bald Eagle. We hiked for a bit along the creek but didn't find much new other than Canyon Towhee, Bewick's Wren, Bullock's Oriole, and Western Kingbird. One person climbed atop the ridge and saw a Juniper Titmouse.

We ended the evening birding the Hoot Owl Ranch. We tried to coax a Western Screech-Owl out but had no luck. A Wilson's Warbler was soon spotted. Some of us stayed to enjoy a great meal in the ranch's dining room.

We began a cool, crisp Wednesday morning walking around, birding in Kenton. We enjoyed the ravens croaking and a group of fifteen or so Western Kingbirds having a major tussle.

The group ventured back to Hoot Owl and took a long walk down to and along the Cimarron River. We didn't find much and the river was dry but the hike was invigorating. Lunch consisted of burgers at the Kenton Merc store. Afterward, we visited Autograph Rock near Boise City and marveled at all the signatures carved into the rock from the 1800s by passing travelers. We flushed a pair of Barn Owls from the rock crevices. I presume they are a nesting pair of birds.

Our remaining crew spent the rest of the day birding our way across the Panhandle to Guymon where we visited an art gallery and then had a late dinner. We ended up back in Woodward around 11:30 p.m.

The first-ever Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival was a great success and produced some lasting memories. Let's hope they do it again next year.

## Chirpings

*By Patti Muzny*

Various and assorted circumstances have kept me from doing much birding, but as long as I can see and hear what goes on in and around our back yard, I can do a little "chirping."

Eurasian Collared-Doves are now plentiful in SW Oklahoma City, and I enjoy their calls and squawks. The first time I heard their fussy in-flight call, it startled me and I had to track it down. Then I frequently heard them several times during the day. Our Bewick's Wrens have raised one little family from one of our wren houses and it was entertaining to have the adults and young hopping around the deck and my plantings.

We are still spoiling the Mockingbirds and Wrens with cracked pecans and are thoroughly scolded when the supply of nuts and raisins dwindles away. Recently we have fallen under the spell of a pair of mallards.

For several weeks, the pair has been coming to our back yard, waddling around, then resting an hour or so before suddenly flying over the row of pecans at the end of our back yard. They usually come twice a day, but always in the evening. They appear together and walk toward the spot in the lawn where I put out a millet mix of seed. I head for the garage to get the seed, they waddle sideways a few feet and wait expectantly for me to dump their treat.

Before I get to the garage door, they are gobbling away. They eat, wander out away from the house and rest a while, wander back and eat a little more, do a little more resting, then fly away. For three days last week, only Ma Duck visited. We were crushed! I just knew Pa Duck had met an untimely end. Three days later, both came and life was once again good!

These very tame visitors are part of our wild family and we hope they thrive in good health for a very long time.



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# Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



Some birds have a little extra something that leads most of us to agree that this is a species with charisma. The Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) is one such bird. Two things are of particular interest to me: its flight pattern and its feeding behavior. As for its

feeding behavior, this is a bird of prey (raptor), and it is also a perching bird (passerine). This shrike is the smallest passerine raptor in North America.

As for the flight pattern, it is of interest because the bird usually flies only a few feet above the ground, flapping swiftly; upon launching from its perch, it (usually) drops downward and then (usually) rises up again at the other end of its flight. To see this pattern of flight is to quickly have a good clue as to what species you are watching.

As a passerine raptor, the shrike's diet includes lizards, mice, small snakes, small birds, grasshoppers and other insects, etc. One of its habits is to hang prey on the barbs of barbed wire fences, tree thorns and the like. The reason for hanging the prey thusly is speculated to be that the bird has insufficient strength in its feet (no talons) to easily hold its prey. This is the generally accepted theory for this behavior, but whether this is the whole story remains, I believe, speculation. (Perhaps they are advertising for mates or otherwise marking territories with the skewered prey, for one sometimes sees skewered prey that appears weeks or months old—far past edible.)

Loggerhead Shrikes are found in Oklahoma throughout the year but winter and summer residents for a particular area are probably different individual birds. It is found in relatively open country. It nests early in the spring, and often chooses Bois D'arc trees, which have plenty of thorns that, in addition to providing places to hang prey, may discourage at least some predators from raiding the nest. They lay 4 to 6 eggs

early in the nesting season, often before leaves are out on the nesting trees they select.

The Loggerhead Shrike and the American Kestrel have similar diets and utilize similar habitats. But while kestrel populations seem to be recovering (probably from DDT "poisoning" of its eggs in past decades), shrike populations do not appear to have been so lucky in recent years.

In trying to formulate ideas for why the shrike is doing poorly compared to the kestrel, one possibility that



comes to mind is that the shrikes build "open-air" nests, while the kestrel nests in cavities—old woodpecker holes, bridge pipes, and other enclosed places. This difference in nest site selection may result in heavier nest predation for shrikes than for kestrels. Dr. Jack D. Tyler, of Lawton, Oklahoma, did an outstanding study of shrikes that was published in the Wilson's Bulletin. In talking informally with Jack, it is his considered opinion that Common Grackle predations of shrike young and eggs from the shrike's

(open-air) nests may be a major reason for declining shrike populations.

If anyone finds a shrike this summer within 15 miles of downtown Oklahoma City, I'd be interested to hear about it. We appear to be losing this species as a nesting bird in the metro area. I hope I am incorrect, but the increased density of predators that usually survive in urban areas (think grackles, cats and raccoons) may raise nest predation to intolerable levels to sustain our local shrike populations.

## Dues payments go cyber

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society has just added online payment capability to the website ([OKC-Audubon.org](http://OKC-Audubon.org)). Payments are handled through PayPal, a respected and very secure way to use your credit card to renew your membership. We think you'll find it a convenient way to keep your membership active; we also hope you'll encourage your birding friends to join OCAS by signing up online or by attending a meeting.

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# Red Slough Festival

By Jimmy Woodard

Max Fuller and I left OKC on Thursday, May 7, headed for the Red Slough Bird Festival in Idabel.

After heading south on I-35 and venturing down a muddy road to Byars Lake, we quickly found Indigo and Painted Buntings, Great-crested Flycatcher, Green Heron, Barred Owl, Black & White Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, Baltimore Oriole, Prothonotary Warbler and Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

We continued east to McGee Creek WMA near Stringtown. This newly discovered place is a hotspot for southeast specialties like Bachman's Sparrow, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler and Brown-headed Nuthatch. We found all these and more including Broad-winged and Red-shouldered Hawks, Pileated Woodpecker and Eastern Wood-Pewee.



On Friday we ventured to Little River NWR under the expert guidance of Berlin Heck and Mia Revels. The large group of birders wound through the newly clearcut pine forest and into the refuge. We saw and heard many of the normal woodland birds. We got Hooded, Kentucky, Yellow-throated, Black & White, Parula Warblers and Yellow-breasted Chat. Also noted were White-eyed Vireo, Fish Crow, Summer Tanager, Acadian Flycatcher, Anhinga, White Ibis, and Wood Duck. Mia enthralled us by quickly locating, capturing and banding a Swainson's Warbler.

In the afternoon, we visited a prairie field near town to look for wildflowers. A different group went to Red Slough for dragonflies. Our bunch was led by Matt White from Texas. He was expert at finding and identifying all sorts of flowers and plants. The weather was cloudy with a cool breeze making it a perfect day to be out.

The evening meeting consisted of programs on butterflies by John Fisher and dragonflies by Dr. Dennis Paulson. They were both interesting and enjoyable.

A large caravan of birders headed to Red Slough on Saturday morning under the guidance of Berlin & Mia. We stopped along the wet and muddy dikes. Along the way toward Bittern Lake we saw King Rail, Tricolored Heron and Green Heron. We saw several Purple Gallinules in flight but they never landed in the open.

We hiked around Bittern Lake and found the usual suspects like American and Least Bittern, Common Moorhen, Sora, Sedge and Marsh Wrens. A few surprises were Black and Least Terns, Bobolink and American Redstart.



Dr. Paulson pointed out several dragonflies and damselflies. He showed us a few exuvia or discarded skeletons leftover from when the insects shed their shell when it goes from larva to adulthood. We also saw two dragonflies being dragged into a Tiger Beetle's hole.

We broke for lunch and a group of us went to Roma's Italian in Idabel and had a great lunch. It began raining hard and the weather ended up raining out the afternoon field trip.

The Saturday evening meeting consisted of dinner and then Dr. Paulson giving a highly informative and entertaining program on shorebirds.

On Sunday morning, some of us hearty birders braved the rain to meet Dave Arbour at the museum at 6 AM. As we waited for the rain to stop we heard a Wood Thrush calling from the woods nearby.

During an interlude in the rain, we ventured down and into Red Slough. Between breaks in the rain we found Neotropic Cormorant, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Pectoral Sandpiper and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron.

A total downpour ended all possibility of birding anymore. Max and I headed back to OKC with 145 species and lots of good memories.



## Computer club donates funds for equipment

By Susan Schmidt

The Vision Statement for the Computer Club of Oklahoma City (CCOKC) reads "We seek to be a community resource for the digital age, by helping others to use and understand computers in a friendly and social environment." In that light, the CCOKC occasionally donates computer equipment, especially to schools.



The purpose of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society (OCAS) is to engage in educational, environmental, and conservation pursuits which support the study and welfare of birds and natural resources particularly in the Oklahoma City area. As you know, in support of those pursuits, the OCAS conducts meetings which are open to all ages and comprise the full range of birders from backyard birders to professional ornithologists. To improve our ability to correctly identify birds, speakers at our educational meetings usually rely on a PowerPoint, slide show, or video presentation. When Nealand Hill announced he was getting ready to sell his projector, we needed to either buy Nealand's used projector or buy a new projector. I prepared a written request and made a plea to the computer club board of directors to purchase either Nealand's used or a new projector for our club.

The CCOKC voted to donate \$1,000 to the OCAS for use in purchasing a new Dell model 1209S Projector and accessories. Club members and officers are as thrilled as I with that news. It was announced at the May 18 meeting that Program Chair Warren Harden will work with Treasurer Nancy Vicars to purchase the equipment.

I bet you want to know more about computers and the generous computer club. The CCOKC meets at the 3000 United Founders Blvd, Suite 201 in OKC (west of May Ave and North of the NW Expressway). That is directly north of the Sonic and on the east side of a two-story building. The general meetings are held the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. Speakers present lessons on computer-related subjects. The club also gives away great door prizes to members and guests! Study groups on various computer related topics meet at other times. Bill and I almost always attend the weekly study group for seniors each Thursday from 10 a.m. to noon. You may have seen the articles by the club president Doris Collins in the "Seasoned Reader" where she gives Tips and Tricks on taming your computer. That is the kind of information shared by members at the weekly and monthly meetings. Check out the web site at [www.ccokc.org](http://www.ccokc.org) and then give the computer club a try.

## Oklahoma City Audubon Society

### Officers 2009

President	Eric Enwall	364-5029
Vice President	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Cheryl Allen	478-0339
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	732-9885
Parliament	Sam Moor	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 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**

# OOS Spring Meeting

By Jimmy Woodard

Valerie Bradshaw and I left OKC on Friday morning, May 15, headed to the Oklahoma Ornithological Society Spring meeting in Idabel.

We made a run through 10 Mile Flats on the way out of town. There were several shorebirds including both Yellowlegs, Wilson's Phalarope, White-rumped, Pectoral and Least Sandpiper and a Dunlin. Other birds were Bobolinks, Baltimore Oriole and Dickcissel.

We continued on to McGee Creek WMA to bird the burn area. Again we found many Bachman's Sparrows, Prairie Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo and Painted Buntings. We came across a flock of woodland birds including Tufted Titmouse, White-eyed Vireo, Pine Warbler, White-breasted Nuthatch, among others. While scanning the flock a flame-throated male Blackburnian Warbler came into view. We soaked in the beautiful bird.

As we cruised down the highways toward Idabel we noticed several turtles trying to cross the road. Val insisted on making sure they all got across safely. She ended up saving a dozen on the trip.

We arrived at the SOSU in Idabel and checked in for the meeting then went to dinner at Papa Pablanos.

Saturday morning began with a calling Barred Owl and Wood Thrush at our camp in Beaver's Bend State Park. An Anhinga flew over on our way to meet for the field trip.

We joined a dozen or so OOS birders under the leadership of Mia and Berlin and we went into Little River NWR. Some of us birded about a mile into the Yellow Creek section of the refuge. There, we watched as Mia netted and banded a Swainson's Warbler. After she released him, the little guy immediately began to sing.

On the way back to the cars, we spotted an Olive-sided Flycatcher sallying for insects from atop its

perch on a dead tree.

We broke for lunch, Val and I went to Roma's in Idabel. They have very good food. Give it a try.

We reformed a caravan and followed Berlin to Red Slough. We had a Whimbrel fly over and land on the dike ahead of us long enough to be viewed in the scope.

We took a walk around Bittern Lake and enjoyed decent views of Purple Gallinule, Least and American Bittern, Tree and Bank Swallow, Least and Black Tern. We also visited the north end dike but didn't see anything new.

By now, it was late afternoon and time for dinner. A group of us enjoyed another fine meal and good conversation at Papa Pablanos.

The evening program was back at the college. Berlin gave a fine talk on Red Slough birds. Afterwards, we watched about an hour video on all the breeding warblers of the US.

Val and I had a walk on the trail at the McCurtain County Wilderness area and found a female Red-cockaded Woodpecker at a nest tree. We also found a male Scarlet Tanager, Louisiana Water-thrush and Hooded Warbler. Our species list totaled 125 birds. Val had a great visit on her first trip to the slough.



# Minutes of the May meeting

*Submitted by Nancy Vicars, Acting Recording Secretary*

President Eric Enwall called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. There were 40 members in attendance. The April minutes were approved and accepted as printed in the May newsletter.

The Treasurer's report was approved and accepted as read showing an ending balance of \$5,690.65. Esther Key was thanked for her comprehensive recorder's report in this month's newsletter. Jimmy Woodard reported on the great successes of the Lesser Prairie Chicken and Red Slough birding festivals which he attended. He announced plans for a fieldtrip on Sept. 12, 2009 to the Keystone Ancient Preserve.

Susan Schmidt gave a report regarding the proposed club pins and patches. She concluded that the pins were not a good option at this time. The proposed patches cost \$5.48 each based on a minimum order of 50. A motion was made, seconded and approved for the expenditure of \$274.00 plus tax to purchase 50 patches.

At the April meeting, Nealand Hill offered to sell his used PC projector to the club for \$350.00. Susan Schmidt volunteered to request monies from the OKC

Computer Club regarding funding for this much needed equipment. She made an outstanding announcement that **The Computer Club of Oklahoma City has approved and granted a donation of \$1,000.00 toward the purchase of a new projector plus accessories.**

A discussion regarding the purchase of a laptop computer that is needed in addition to a projector was lead by program chairman, Warren Harden. Based on the current internet price the cost of these two items would run \$1,038.00, tax not included.

A motion was made, seconded and approved for the expenditure of an additional \$300.00 from our club treasury in order to purchase a new Dell laptop computer and a new Dell projector with needed accessories.

A brief story and a large decorated cake was presented to Nealand Hill by Linda & Garey Harritt to celebrate Nealand's major accomplishment to list his 700<sup>th</sup> ABA bird on their recent trip to south Florida.

Judy Jordan gave a very interesting and informative presentation on the importance of preserving our cultures, history and the environment.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society  
c/o Matt Jung  
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Oklahoma City, OK 73127