



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

April, 2014

A Taste of Sichuan Birding



Doug Wood will talk to us about the 3-week avitourism trip he took to China in May 2013. The presentation will include photos of birds observed on the trip including pheasants, sunbirds, and owls among others. He will also discuss different aspects of avitourism and conservation.

Doug Wood is a Professor of Biological Sciences at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. He is in his 12th year of teaching at SOSU. He is an ornithologist by specialty, but also teaches a wide variety of classes in zoology, conservation, wildlife management, and biology. His hobbies include

birding, photography, travel, and books. Doug is currently completing his term as Past-President of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society.



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



Refreshments

Refreshments for the April meeting will be provided by Jim & Tony Solorio, Rich Taylor, and Laura Pollard.

Welcome!

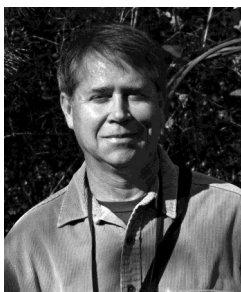
The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes new members:
Jim & Kim Jorgensen, Midwest City, OK

Dues Notice

It's time once again to renew your annual membership for 2014. OCAS dues are \$15 per household and may be paid at the monthly meetings, online at our website <http://www.okc-audubon.org> or mailed to Nancy Vicars, Treasurer, 24 SE 57th St., OKC 73129.

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



In Memory of Jim Bates

Long time OKC Audubon member, Jim Bates, died suddenly February 27. I have been a member of Jim's CBC team for the past five years, and for at least that long we have been chasing each other's sightings in the Hefner-Overholser-Stinchcomb-Rose Lake arc of birding locations.

Those of you who have followed the rites of Jim's passing, the obituary and the funeral, now know what none of us knew precisely before, that Jim was highly educated and accomplished in his work. He had earned a B.S. degree in Zoology and dual M.S. degrees in Oceanography and Biostatistics and had worked for 34 years as a scientist at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center doing research on genetic diseases and nephrology. He sang bass in the choir at his church and was known for his very deep singing voice.

Jim was the kind of club member that a President appreciates, and I admit I gave him an extra measure of attention for it. Several times during my term he volunteered for the Election Committee when no one else would do it.

For many years he set out a string of pole-mounted Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes each spring in the swamp north of the Overholser cofferdam. Jim regularly visited the boxes to monitor nesting activity and reported his observations on OKbirds. From what I remember of the reports, and what I observed myself, the birds often visited the boxes and sang around them, but it was rare for any to actually nest in them. Prothonotary Warblers do nest in the area when there is water in the swamp, they just place their nests in the low tree holes which are typical for the species. As compensation for tending the boxes, Jim would occasionally get a bonus bird sighting. One spring he found a singing Palm Warbler followed about a week later by a Chestnut-sided Warbler.

Jim regularly shared his birding exploits in our meetings, posted his sightings on OKbirds and led a CBC team every year. He attended every meeting, was a great birder, and made the kinds of contributions to birding that give the club a good name -- an exemplary, high-morale member. The first year I birded on Jim's CBC team was 2009. On the 2008 CBC, Jim's team had found a Pileated Woodpecker on the east side of Stinchcomb WR near the power line crossing, probably the first sighting of the species at the refuge. Some time during the summer

following the CBC, I had walked into the far west end of Stinchcomb and had seen and reported a Pileated WP there. That prompted Jim to recruit me for his CBC team. The place where I saw the Pileated WP is south of Wilshire Blvd and east of Sara Rd, west of the Bob Scott Nursery. The habitat is a swampy forest of green ash, boxelder and cottonwood, and there is also a marsh with button bush, willows, smartweed and cocklebur. Water is seasonal during the spring and summer, but by the time we bird in December, it is usually dry enough to walk most of it without sinking. Parts of the forest floor are strewn with fallen trees which adds to the difficulty of walking, but provides good habitat for Winter Wren. Once you are out of sight of the road, it is easy to feel disoriented and lost, which for a birder like Jim who liked to be off the beaten track, just adds to the allure of birding there. Jim was always accompanied by his son John and usually by one or both of his sons-in-law, Brian and Justin. Although Brian and Justin are not regular birders, they are good spotters and learn quickly. We have managed Pileated WP sightings about 50% of the time, most near the river about a half mile south of Wilshire.



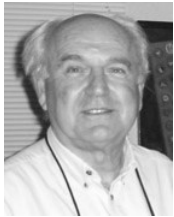
The woods are good for Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Red-shouldered Hawk and the typical woodland birds. The marsh produces American Goldfinch, White-throated Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Song Sparrow and Spotted Towhee. Most years we find Hermit Thrush, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Brown Creeper in the woods and Common Yellowthroat in the marsh. After the walk in the woods, Jim liked to break for lunch and give everyone a chance to rebuild blood sugar. The McDonald's at Council and NW Expressway was routine. Jim liked to

keep the conversation on the birding -- a review of what we had seen during the morning and a discussion of where we would go after lunch. The centerpiece of the afternoon birding has been a prairie field beside a pond north of Memorial between Council and County Line. In past years we have found LeConte's and Tree Sparrows in the grass and trees, but it was a disappointment this winter. Whether the cause was the encroaching housing development or the wind, cold and drought of this winter's CBC will have to wait for future CBC's to determine.

I don't know whether Jim was a perpetually cheerful guy or just always happy when he was around something related to birding. The lasting impressions will be the little smile below the sandy mustache, the willing contributions, the quiet strength and understated personality and the tender, conscientious and loving leadership of his family.

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



The **Long-billed Curlew** (*Numenius americanus*), the largest of our shorebirds at 23 inches, was once a breeding bird over much of the prairies, and I am confident this would have included central Oklahoma; Bent (1964, *Life Histories of North American Shore Birds*, p. 98, Dover

Publications, Inc., New York) said that this species “formerly bred over a large portion of central North America, including all of the prairie region, at least as far east as Michigan and Illinois, and probably Ohio.” In Oklahoma it is now restricted—as a breeding bird—to the western half of the Oklahoma Panhandle. I have been lucky enough to study the species extensively there, and would like to share some of the things I have observed about it.



Female Long-billed Curlew

In central Oklahoma, we see this curlew as a rare migrant during spring and fall; April and September are prime times to observe it here and Lake Hefner seems to provide the most records for our area. The female is slightly larger than the male, and I think I have found another clue to the sex identification of the bird that I have not seen reported in books elsewhere. The female has a long, symmetrically-curved bill, while the male has a slightly shorter bill that is mostly symmetrical but toward the end curves a little extra for the last couple inches or so, giving the bill a slightly “drooped-bill” appearance. This trait is not easily observed in isolation, but when you see 2 birds that really are a pair, the smaller bird with the “drooped bill-look” is probably the male. (Somebody correct me if you have evidence to the contrary.)

For those of you who travel to other parts of the state, you may find this curlew as a nesting bird in the western half of the Oklahoma Panhandle, and particularly in the eastern 3/4ths of Cimarron County. They seem to nest in small, loosely defined colonies and if you rile up one of the curlews in these small colonies, you are likely to rile up half a dozen or more.

I have found nests on quite bare cultivated fields.

Something I suspect, but have never been able to prove, is that they often nest in growing wheat fields: I have seen adults go down there, but have not yet been able to find a nest in the growing wheat—the tall wheat is very difficult to survey. After the wheat is cut, I have frequently seen small young and adults in areas heavily dominated by wheat, again suggesting nesting there.

One of the most interesting things to me is how their behavior changes so drastically during the nesting season, depending on whether they are incubating eggs or protecting the precocial young that are out of the nest. While the adults are very quiet and “unassuming” before the eggs hatch, they change into vociferous flying protectors of the young after the eggs hatch. I don’t know the precise moment at which this change in behavior occurs—during egg pipping or after the young are out of the nest—but the change is very dramatic. One exception to this rule of being quiet on the nest may be when a raven flies by. I have seen a curlew shoot up from the ground—coming off a nest, I suspected—and give swift and determined chase to the raven.

These large brown birds are so confident of their cryptic coloration, that they will sometimes allow a person to touch them as they incubate their eggs, if one approaches very carefully and slowly. Steve Sherrod, of the Sutton Avian Research Center, and I both touched the back of a sitting bird on a nest in the western half of Cimarron County in 1986, Steve on one side and I on the other; the bird never flew.

Will the bird ever nest in central Oklahoma again? I heard a glimmer of hope, perhaps relevant to this—I think it was last year—when a possible nesting pair was reported on Ft. Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma. Strange things still happen in the bird world. According to G. M. Sutton’s “summaries of Oklahoma species [1982]” there were curlew nesting records, formerly, for about half a dozen counties in the western half of the main body of the state; the latest definite nesting record was for Ellis County, westcentral Oklahoma, in 1906.



Male Long-billed Curlew

Minutes of the Meeting

March 17, 2014

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Diffin.

Treasurer's report by Nancy Vicars: Treasury contains \$6,276.

Field trip committee: In the absence of Chairman Mark Delgrosso, we were reminded of the upcoming Yukon City Park field trip on April 19, 2014.

Conservation news: Sharon Henthorn reported the upcoming Saturday, March 22 Prairie Dog Point cleanup will begin at 8:00 am. Attendees should wear gloves and clothing appropriate for un-level and potentially muddy ground. Trash grabbers and waste bags will be provided.

Old business: Bill Diffin discussed the recent environmental impact study regarding the proposed expansion of Tinker AFB for upgrading the military transport aircraft. Many members have been active in the task force to evaluate and comment on the project and Bill thanked the many members who contributed time and expertise. The comments have now been submitted to the project management. Consensus of the task force is that the environmental impact for wildlife is negligible, and no alternative plan will be necessary.

Several family members of Jim Bates were in attendance. Jim passed away on February 27, 2014 after a sudden illness.

Warren Harden introduced our speaker, June Ketcham, who entertained us with photos and stories of her 2012 Alaska birding tour adventures.

Sharon Henthorn, Secretary

Prairie Dog Point Cleanup

March 22, 2014 cleanup at Lake Hefner Prairie Dog Point. Jim and Tony Solorio, Hal Yocum, and Sharon Henthorn harvested large amounts of trash and recyclables on a cool windy morning. Most of the visible and accessible areas have now been cleared this spring, and we hope to maintain the area on twice - monthly intervals throughout the growing year. Individual efforts are always welcome. I can be contacted regarding litter pickup equipment at any time between meetings.

Sharon Henthorn, litter patrol leader

City Care Outdoor Expo 2014

Call for Volunteers!

Location: Crystal Lake, 6625 SW 15th, OKC

When: Saturday June 7th, 10am-6pm and on Sunday June 7th, 12pm-5pm

Set up: Friday, June 13 between the hours of 12:00pm and 6:00pm

This outreach program will provide an opportunity to promote Birding to OKC youth and their families.

More information to be announced at our April meeting.

Volunteer and don't miss this opportunity to bird around Crystal lake

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2014

President	Bill Diffin	722-3778
Vice President	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Sharon Henthorn	521-9958
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	831-1945
Parliament	Ted Golden	354-3619
Programs	Warren Harden	364-3491
Recorder	Esther M. Key	735-1021
Conservation	Dave Woodson	601-622-3467
Field Trips	Mark Delgrosso	445-2300
Newsletter Editors:		

	Pat Velte	751-5263
	Carla Brueggen	495-3259
Publicity	Doug Eide	495-8192
Historian	Vacant	
Refreshments	Sue Woodson	601-622-3467
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

Minnesota Winter Birding

By Jimmy Woodard

Larry Mays, Doug Wood, Nadine Varner and myself left OKC early on Saturday March 15th for a birding trip to northern Minnesota. We spent most of the first day driving 12 hours to Minneapolis.

Sunday morning, we met up with Bob and Carli Traverso from California. They had birded with Doug several times on foreign trips and had recently went to south Texas in late December with Doug and I.

We headed north straight to the infamous Sax-Zim bog. We drove several roads thru the snow covered



fields and woods. The wintry scenes were a fitting backdrop for some of the Minnesota specialty birds like Northern Hawk Owl, Boreal Chickadee and Ruffed Grouse. We spent most of the day enjoying these new birds and a few other species such as Northern Shrike, Bald

Eagle, Common Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Hairy Woodpecker and Black-capped Chickadee.

We arrived at Duluth, our destination for the next several days, about 4PM then enjoyed a nice dinner at Luce's Pizza Place downtown.

Monday morning, we got out early to arrive at Sax-Zim to look for Great Gray Owl which is a diurnal species. No luck this morning but a few hours of birding netted another Hawk Owl and Ruffed Grouse again. we did get a short look at a Sharp-tailed Grouse before it flew off.

We headed north to Ely. With the wind blowing, the windchill was a bit nippy with an air temp of about 25 degrees. Our quarry was a reported flock of Bohemian Waxwings in town. Thanks to Doug's sharp ears, we quickly found a couple of groups right where our intel told us the birds should be located. We enjoyed looks at about 70+ waxwings calling and flying around at close range. Even Bob taking a hard fall didn't dampen the spirits of this most wanted lifer for the group (except for me. No lifers for me on this trip). We celebrated with DQ for lunch.

In the afternoon, we looped south to Two Harbors on the Lake Superior shore. We hoped for Spruce Grouse on the road but did not see any. The harbor was frozen

over, but .we still went to look anyway.

Back in Duluth, we checked out a reported spot for Great Gray Owl. The location looked promising but no bird. We decided to make the hour long trip back to Sax Zim to hope for a Great Gray to come out at dusk. It turned out to be a good idea.

At about 7PM, we noticed a car parked down the road from us. There was a large bird perched in a tree next to the road. We scoped it and saw it was a Great Gray Owl. Lifer dance for Nadine and company! As we headed closer, the person got out of the car to take a photograph and the owl flew further away from the road. We were able to relocate it and get scope and binoc views albeit from a moderate distance. It wasn't the close roadside view hoped for, but all the same, it was great to see the owl. We watched it fly around a bit making several hunting dives to the ground. We didn't see it catch anything but that's okay too. just seeing it was magical.

Tuesday the 18th was a down day for me as I had come down with a sore throat. Not wishing to brave the cold air, I stayed at the motel. The others made a couple of forays out to the Duluth Harbor, Minnesota Point and over into Wisconsin to the Superior Harbor. They didn't see much as most of the water was frozen. The snow squalls and wind didn't help birding conditions either.

Wednesday the 19th, we headed out before dark to be north of Two Harbors on Hwy 2 and make it to a known grouse spot by daybreak. We spent an hour and a half driving the 2-3 miles between the spots the grouse had recently been seen. Bob did spot a single Ruffed Grouse that our front car missed. Still no Spruce Grouse, our holy grail.



We finally decided to give up and turned back south toward Two Harbors. Within a half mile, we soon found a single hen Spruce Grouse right in the middle of the road. Slowly we moved toward it until we were almost directly beside it. It finally flew up into a conifer next to the road and became invisible. Everyone was

elated with their lifer! A little further down the road we found a large flock of Purple Finch, Goldfinch and Pine Siskins coming down to the road.

Back in Duluth, we packed up, checked out and headed south toward Minneapolis. Near Minnie, Larry

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Minnesota Winter Birding *continued from page 5*

used his I-phone to pinpoint a location using E-bird for us to search for Snow Bunting which is Doug's nemesis bird. We got to the spot and found tons of horned larks on the road and in the ag fields. A little down the road, several white flashes gave away the roving flock of Snow Buntings. We enjoyed almost a 100 of these gorgeous mostly white birds moving around on all sides of us. They sound very much like longspurs, too. Doug was very excited!



In southern Minnesota, we checked a couple other locations for recently reported Gray Partridge and Snowy Owls. We dipped on the partridge but were successful



on the owl. We located two almost pure white adults within a half mile of each other. Also, we found another small flock of Snow Buntings and several Lapland Longspurs. It was a very sweet end to a busy birding day. We overnighted in nearby Owatonna, MN.

The rest of our trip was a bit anticlimactic as we spent most of Thursday the 20th making our way back to Oklahoma. Unexpected was a brief sighting of a presumed Greater Prairie Chicken along I-35 in northern Iowa.

Our trip ended with only 52 species but the quality of birds that were seen was excellent. Doug had the most lifers at 7. Larry had 6 and Nadine got four (Great Gray Owl, Hawk Owl, Bohemian Waxwing and Spruce Grouse). It was another dandy birding trip. You can't go wrong with MN for winter specialties. We lucked out with the weather. Low temps were only down to the high teens. Highs were about 25 to 36. Wind was light and we missed a heavy snowstorm. Duluth was supposed to get a foot of snow on Tuesday and they only received a couple of inches.



Recorders Report—March 2014

Early arrivals

From ice to fire multiple changes kept weather, plant and bird watchers on their toes this month. The month started with cold, snow and ice, but by the middle of the month the warm windy weather created multiple wild fires and as flowers began to bloom, the first of spring migrant reports begin trickling in.

On the 1st John Polo went to Babcock Park to look for Rusty Blackbirds and was blitzed by at least 100 of them. On the 3rd Dick Gunn birded along South Jenkins in 5°F temperature with the ground covered in styrofoam snow/ice and located Swamp and American Tree Sparrows. On the 4th Scott Loss found Boomer Lake frozen again and the return of the Trumpeter Swan and Ross's Goose. Sharon Henthorn found a Bald Eagle in a nest in Midwest City. On the 5th in Garvin County John Sterling saw a Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and a nesting Bald Eagle, and on the 6th at Lake Overholser John Bates saw Cedar Waxwings, his Dad's favorite bird.

On the 9th Torre Hovick discovered a Hermit Thrush at the north fairgrounds in Stillwater. On the 10th Matt Jung walked South Jenkins and found Marsh Wren and Greater Yellowlegs. On the 12th Deanne McKinney saw a large number of American Pipits feeding in the muddy area at the corner of 63rd and Sara Road. On the 13th Mark Cromwell had his **Purple Martin** scout show up in Perkins. On the 14th Joe Grzybowski found **Baird's Sandpiper** and an estimated 10,501 Red-head Ducks, and Bill Adams discovered a **Tundra Swan** north of Hennepin in Garvin County.

On the 15th Steve Davis reported 6 Great Egrets at Lake Hefner. On the 17th Donna Mackiewicz had a Pine Siskin at her home in Logan County, and Phillip Leonard found an American Woodcock near Hennepin. On the 18th Alex James had a **Townsend's Solitaire** at Lake Carl Blackwell and **Barn Swallows** on the OSU campus. On the 19th Anthony Solorio saw a Great-horned Owl nest at the corner of Britton Road and Piedmont Road and Dala Grissom reported a nest on the east side of the upper



Shawnee Twin Lakes and another one nesting at Tecumseh Lake.

On the 20th Bill Diffin walked to the playa pond on the west side of Stinchcomb WMA and located Sandhill Cranes, shorebirds and a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow**, while John Hurd birded Lexington WMA and located a Black Vulture. On the 21st Nathan Kuhnert spotted a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** near McKinley Elementary in Norman; Tamara Srader saw a Green-winged Teal and Rough-legged Hawk near Prague in Lincoln County and Jerry Taylor had a Brewer's Blackbird visit his home in Oklahoma City.

On the 22nd Bill Adams discovered Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, **Lark Sparrow**, Barn Swallow and Purple Martins at Taylor Lake. Joe Grzybowski had a Chipping Sparrow in his backyard in Norman. At Lake Carl Blackwell Tim



O'Connell found a Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Eric Duell had a Pine Warbler. On the 23rd Jennifer Kidney spotted a **House Wren** along South Jenkins; Nathan Boren photographed a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at Tranquility Lake off East Alameda; and Rick Roberts found a **Cinnamon Teal** on Massey's Lake in northeast Oklahoma City.

On the 25th Joe Grzybowski made a quick pass by Prairie Dog Point and counted **Pectoral Sandpipers** and a lone **Tree Swallow**. Along South Jenkins, Dick Gunn had a **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** on the beaver pond. On the 26th Hal Yocum saw the first **Louisiana Waterthrush** at Mitch Park in Edmond.

On the 27th a friend of Jimmy Woodward identified a **Palm Warbler** at her water feature in Yukon; Steve Davis and Mary spotted a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** on the north side of Lake Overholser; David Latham spotted Sandhill Cranes north of Stillwater; at Lake Hefner Jack



Hurd saw an **American Avocet**; Larry Mays found a **Cliff Swallow** in Mustang; and Evan Tanner had a Purple Finch at Couch Park in Stillwater.

On the 28th Jennifer Kidney had a pair of pretty little **Inca Doves** sitting on her bird bath in her Norman backyard, and sighted **Clay-colored Sparrow** along South Jenkins.

At Lake Hefner Chad Ellis and Larry Mays reported **Snowy Plovers** and an **American Golden-Plover**. At Rose Lake John Hurd located **Snowy Egrets** and a **Cattle Egret**. On the 29th Jimmy and Nadine found a few spring migrants at Lake Stanley Draper which included **White-eyed Vireo** and **Black-and-white Warbler**. At Lake Thunderbird's Alameda bridges T K found Cliff Swallows. Scott and Sara Loss walked around Lake Hefner and discovered a **Forster's Tern**, Short-eared Owl, Red-throated and Pacific Loon.



On the 30th at Taylor Lake Tony Solorio discovered an **Indigo Bunting** and **Eastern Kingbird**; at Stinchcomb WMA west Larry Mays had a **Lesser Yellowlegs** and at Lake Thunderbird an **Osprey**. In Lincoln County at Meeker Lake Jimmy identified a White-throated Sparrow; John Polo found a **Sedge Wren** along the River Road near Ripley and Jennifer heard a **Warbling Vireo** along South Jenkins. On the 31st John Hurd checked the Dolese Sand Pit in Logan county and discovered Fish Crow, Osprey, Tree Swallow, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. With spring in full flower who will arrive next?

In the Central Oklahoma area **170** bird species were reported in March with **34** new species which brings the total for the year to **189**. In eBird Payne and Oklahoma Counties have each reported over 140 species and Cleveland County is over 130. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds and can be contacted by e-mail at emkok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

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

Field Trip Schedule 2014

Check with Mark Delgrosso or the website/ newsletter for updates and final scheduling

APRIL 19: Yukon City Park : join Jimmy Woodard on a birding tour of his (former) stomping grounds. If interested, meet for breakfast at the IHOP (I-40 and Mustang Rd.) at around 7am - otherwise meet at the Park around 8am. *Leader:* Jimmy Woodard [j.woodard@cox.net; 405 365 5685]

early MAY: Tulsa birding hotspots: *Leader:* Jimmy Woodard [j.woodard@cox.net]

MAY 2-4: McGee Creek WMA/McCurtain County Wilderness: two productive, birdy areas with many specialties, the most notable of which is OK's sole population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. Also on the menu are Prairie Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and abundant Chuck-wills-widows. Because of the distance from OKC this trip will be planned for a [2 or 3 day] weekend. *Leader:* Mark Delgrosso (405 445 2300 or email at: markdelg94@gmail.com)

MAY [Memorial Day weekend]: Quivira Nat'l Wildlife Refuge: on to Kansas and Quivira for possible breeding Black Rails- possible side-trip to Cheyenne Bottoms. *Leader:* Mark Delgrosso (405 445 2300/ markdelg94@gmail.com)

June: Club Picnic
