



# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

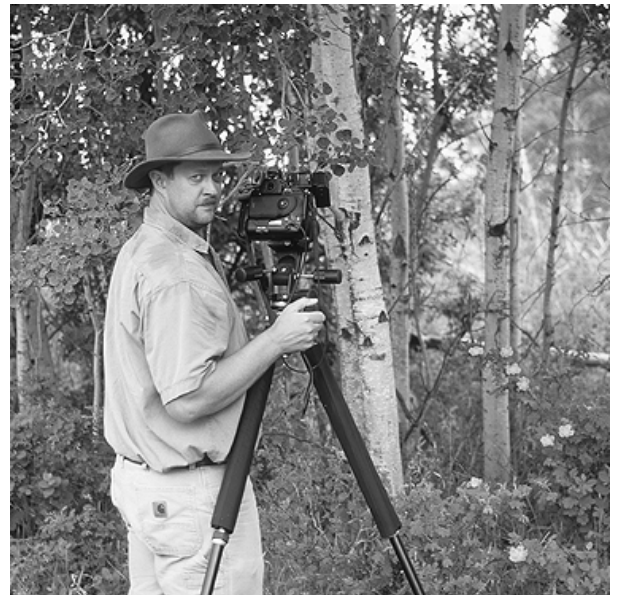
OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

June, 2011

## ***Butterflies...Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?***

Bryan Reynolds will be the featured speaker at the June 20 meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society. As a child, Bryan developed a passion for nature while on his family's farm in northwestern Wisconsin. Then after serving 20 years in the Air Force, he retired to pursue a career in nature and wildlife photography. Many of his images have been published in books, post cards, calendars and magazines such as *Outdoor Photographer*, *Nature Photographer*, *Mother Earth News*, *Discover*, *Highlights for Children*, *Birds and Blooms*, and with the National Geographic Society. He is also the Founder, President and Executive Director of the non-profit The Butterflies of the World Foundation ([www.botwf.org](http://www.botwf.org)) whose mission is to improve public awareness of the conservation of butterflies and butterfly habitat and enhance public enjoyment of butterflies through educational programs and presentations using world-class photography.

"Butterflies... Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?" is a multimedia treat filled with breathtaking images of butterflies in their natural habitats. It follows the personal journey Bryan experienced when he learned about the perils of butterflies and what can be done to protect these beautiful creatures. Most people don't have rainforest gorillas or polar bears living in their backyard, so it's hard to relate to something found halfway around the world. Butterflies, however, are found everywhere; your backyard, local parks, even rooftop gardens in the largest cities. And there are plenty of things that can be done in people's day to day activities to help these winged wonders. Topics covered include butterfly biology and behavior, where to find butterflies, how to observe butterflies, how to attract butterflies, butterfly conservation, and question and answer session.



Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month. Meetings begin at 7 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-4 and NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.

## **VACATION!**

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society suspends meetings, newsletters and fieldtrips during July and August. Meetings, newsletters and fieldtrips will resume in September.

## **Cookie Patrol**

Refreshments for the June meeting will be provided by Sharon Henthorn, Jim Bates & Nealand Hill

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## President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



In July the American Ornithologist's Union will make it official. All the proposals passed by the AOU Committee on Classification and Nomenclature (North and Middle America) in 2010 will be published in the Auk and become the new way for ornithologists and birders. You can see all the 2010 proposals at the following link [http://](http://www.aou.org/committees/nacc/proposals/pending.php)

[www.aou.org/committees/nacc/proposals/pending.php](http://www.aou.org/committees/nacc/proposals/pending.php) which shows the results of the voting on each proposal, either PASSED or FAILED. The proposals which were PASSED combine to make up an impressive list. Many of the changes involve species which are obscure to most Oklahoma birders. However Proposal B-10, which did pass, will effect major changes on the taxonomy of a familiar group, the wood warblers.

Following are described the changes relevant to North American birders. All species previously in the Dendroica genus, for example the Yellow-rumped Warbler, will be incorporated into the Setophaga genus with the American Redstart. A number of species from other genera are also to be incorporated into Setophaga including the Northern Parula, previously in Parula, and the Hooded Warbler, previously in Wilsonia. Most of the species in the Vermivora genus including the Orange-crowned, Tennessee and Nashville Warblers will be moved to a new genus, Oreothlypis. Vermivora is retained for the Blue-winged, Golden-winged and Bachman's Warbler. The three species in Seiurus will be split into two genera with the Ovenbird retaining the original generic name. The Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes will be placed in a new genus, Parkesia. Most of the species in the Oporornis genus including the Kentucky, Mourning and MacGillivray's Warblers will be moved into the Geothlypis genus with the Yellowthroats. The two Wilsonia Warblers other than Hooded, i.e. Wilson's and Canada, will be moved into Cardellina with the Red-faced Warbler.

The new taxonomy is based on evidence from phylogenetic studies. Sections of DNA from the cell nuclei and also RNA from the mitochondria were analyzed to obtain the nucleotide sequences. Then the sequences were analyzed to determine how similar or different they were in comparison to each other. Finally the sequences were arranged by computer in a tree diagram which purports to show the most likely evolutionary relationships. The Adobe file at the following link shows the complete details of the new genus scheme proposed for the wood warblers, [http://](http://www.aou.org/committees/nacc/proposals/2010-B.pdf)

[www.aou.org/committees/nacc/proposals/2010-B.pdf](http://www.aou.org/committees/nacc/proposals/2010-B.pdf) (page 24). The diagram utilizes an arrangement of branching lines to represent the evolutionary tree. The relations among the large group which contains all the current Dendroica species plus the American Redstart, Hooded Warbler and Northern Parula are shown with common names and photos on the poster at the following link, [http://content.ornith.cornell.edu/UEWebApp/data/bin/pub\\_integratedpp4-5spread.pdf](http://content.ornith.cornell.edu/UEWebApp/data/bin/pub_integratedpp4-5spread.pdf) which also contains some text by the leader of the research, Irby Lovette. The poster is hard to understand unless the two pages of the file are arranged side-by-side. You may need to use the toolbar at the top of the pdf file window to choose "side-by-side with continuous scrolling". If the appropriate button is not present on your toolbar, you will need to right-click on the toolbar and select **More Tools ...** and then check the boxes to display the needed button.

From a birding perspective, it would be an advance if the revised taxonomy turns out to be an improved guide to similarities among the species. For example, one could hope that the songs of the birds in a particular genus have a recognizable kinship. Therefore a birder might be able to make a lot of progress on warbler identification by learning to recognize a relatively small number of song types. The reason for renaming all the Dendroica species as Setophaga has to do with the rule of priority in taxonomic names. Apparently the American Redstart, *Setophaga ruticilla*, was discovered and named before any of the Dendroica warblers.

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## Picnic at Lake Stanley Draper

By Bill Diffin

On Saturday, June 4, OKC Audubon held a cook-out, picnic and nightjar hunt at Lake Stanley Draper. Thirty people signed up to attend including family and invited prospective members. It was a hot day, in the mid 90's, but the worst of the heat was over by the time members began to arrive to set up for the start at 6 pm. It wound up being a comfortable evening weather-wise, and there were plenty of drinks available to satisfy a person's thirst. John Cleal came early to set up his Dutch oven and cook some deliciously spiced chicken. He also brought flavorful homemade raspberry beer and mead. Each of the other attending families also brought a delicious contribution, beans, potato salad, cole slaw, deserts, watermelon, etc. The club provided hamburgers and hot dogs cooked on the grill, soft drinks and condiments. The pavilion reserved for us by Nancy Reed had four large picnic tables in the shade. The early arrivers pulled together to put on

table cloths and arrange all the dishes, drinks, and utensils. Most members brought folding chairs and sat in a large circle in an open area near the tables. After the convivial meal which finished near sunset, those who wished to do a little birding went on a nightjar expedition. Even during the cleanup at the end of the meal, Common Nighthawks were flying around the picnic area. Jimmy Woodard led the nightjar hunt around the northeast part of the lake. Even while driving to the northeast area, Chuck-Will's-Widows could be heard singing as we approached. We parked and walked along the road toward one of the singing birds. It flew across the road in front of us and landed close on the other side, loudly singing its classic three-part song, a big thrill for those who had never heard it. All the attendees were happy with the way the picnic turned out and expressed eager anticipation for a similar event next year.

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## Minutes of the May 16, 2011 Meeting

President Bill Diffin called the meeting to order. Sharon Henthorn introduced her husband, Randy, as a first time visitor. The April minutes were approved as published in the May newsletter. Treasurer Nancy Vicars, presented the May Treasurer's Report:

|                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Cash on Hand 04/18/2011 | \$6,186.67 |
| Deposits                | 233.32     |
| Disbursements           | -124.35    |
| Cash on Hand 05/16/2011 | \$6,295.64 |

### Committee Reports:

President Diffin announced the OKC Audubon picnic would be held at Draper Lake, June 4 starting at 6:00 PM. Sandra Krug will post on the web page the name of each person attending and the food item they will bring. The Club will provide hamburgers, hot dogs, buns, soft drinks, plates, napkins and utensils. After the picnic there will be a night walk to look for Nightjars.

### New Business:

Bob Holbrook announced he brought Painted Bunting T-shirts that can be purchased for \$15.00. Bob and Dana volunteer at a kid's camp promoting a new nature center. The sale of the shirts will support this event.

### Old Business:

Bill Diffin stated the OKC Audubon calendars are available for \$2.00.

Nancy Vicars has a request from the Curator of the OKC Zoo wanting pre-fledgling Oklahoma birds. If you have a bird nest and would like to contribute a pre-fledgling to the zoo, please call Nancy Vicars and she will give you the contact number of the zoo. The zoo does not want very small birds that can fly out of the net or Woodpeckers.

Nealand Hill passed around one snapshot including a Hairy and Downy Woodpecker. The snapshot revealed the size difference between the two birds.

Bill Diffin and the Saturday tour group had a great field trip to Tulsa.

A report on the Red Slough Festival stated there was a Red-cockaded Woodpecker nest observed.

After the snack break, Warren Harden announced the speaker for the month of June will be Dr. Bryan Reynolds. Dr. Reynolds will speak on The Butterflies of the World Foundation

Warren introduced tonight's guest speaker, Lynn Barber. Lynn gave an outstanding overview of her travels in search of her 'Big Year' of birding during 2008.

Nancy Reed, Recording Secretary

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## 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.*

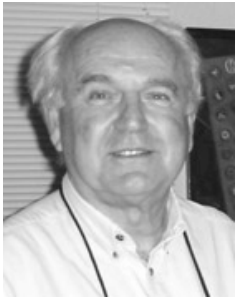
*For Oklahoma City Audubon news between newsletters and meetings, be sure to log onto:*

**OKC-Audubon.org**

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# Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



Draper Lake, where we recently had our fun club picnic, was for a number of years, the site of research on the Black-capped Vireo (*Vireo atricapilla*). This endangered species is small but strikingly beautiful, one of my personal favorites. And the species has an interesting history

in Oklahoma: the Norman (Oklahoma) Audubon Society, I believe, submitted the original endangered species petition that led to its listing. The species once nested north from old Mexico to south-central Kansas. It was gradually lost in Kansas and most of northern Oklahoma; nest parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird was believed to be the primary problem. Prime habitat for the Blackcap is a mix of grasslands and variable height tree vegetation, some of which extends close to the ground, where the vireo usually nests about waist high. Blackcaps usually nest in colonies of 2 or more pairs.

About 15-16 years ago, Kathy Reeves, a member of our club who moved out of state many years ago but has kept up her club membership all these years (HI KATHY!), found a male Blackcap singing on the east side of Lake Draper here in central Oklahoma, and reported it—with exquisite directions—to John Newell. At that time, my wife Melissa and I were working under both an endangered species permit for the Blackcap and a cowbird collection permit. We visited Kathy's area and almost immediately found 1 or 2 recently fledged vireos being fed by adults. Expanding the search area over the next several years, 5 locations on the east side of Lake Draper were found at 1 time or another, all with small to very small populations. Over these years, all under the necessary permits, researchers aided these small populations by finding nests and removing cowbird eggs and young. The most birds we ever found at 1 location were 7 males and 2 females; I always felt if



we could get about 7-8 breeding pairs in 1 spot it might justify asking for wildlife money to trap cowbirds, but the population always remained below this modest population threshold. The birds at Draper were found primarily in an area that had burned a number of years earlier and subsequently grown up in scrubby oaks intermixed with grasslands. But the oaks there finally appeared to get too large and thick to be good habitat for the vireos.

Recently I saw on <OKBIRDS@lists.ou.edu> that someone had heard a Blackcap at Draper, but I have been unable to find out where. New areas at Draper have been burned over in the last several years and perhaps the bird was heard on 1 of these areas.

For a number of years (and perhaps even now) a small population existed in Blaine County northwest of Oklahoma City. This population was researched extensively for a number of years in an effort to save it. Cowbird control, cowbird egg and young removable from vireo nests, and habitat modification were all used to try to recover the species there, but populations seemed to remain about 15 nesting pairs or fewer for most years. Finally these efforts were abandoned as non-productive on a long-term basis.

But there is a success story in Oklahoma. In the Wichita Mountains and adjacent Ft. Sill reservations, a few Blackcaps were found a number of years ago. Extensive cowbird trapping and cowbird egg and young removal from vireo nests has resulted, as of 2005, in over 1250 Black-capped Vireos in the Wichita Mountains and over 500 more on Fort Sill, and I think the numbers are still going up. My hope is that birds from this southwest Oklahoma population will spill over into new areas, including central Oklahoma: we have had large fires in central Oklahoma in recent years that may create vireo habitat. The turnaround for the species in the Wichita Mountains/Fort Sill area has been remarkable, a true endangered species success story. So if you want to see or photograph Blackcaps, head to the Wichitas. If you are looking for a bigger challenge, head to the east side of Lake Draper.

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## Spring OOS Meeting at Black Mesa

By Jimmy Woodard



On Thursday May 12<sup>th</sup>, Nadine and I left Mustang about 4PM and headed to Woodward for the night. Enroute we saw our FOS Scissortail. At Woodward, we met up with Doug Wood and John Schenk. On Friday, we searched for Lesser Prairie Chickens north of Woodward and found 12 on a lek. Doug and John went to Fort Supply Lake. We rendezvoused at Doby Springs Park later in the morning.

Birding was slow so we headed west making stops at Evans Chambers Lake, Optima, Guymon, Keyes and Boise City before heading to Black Mesa state park where the meeting was to take place. Along the way we found Western and Eared Grebes, Pheasant, Black Tern, Barn Owl, Redhead WP, Green-tailed Towhees, Lark Bunting, Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles. At the park, we quickly found Say's Phoebe and Western and Cassin's Kingbirds.



Saturday, about 45 attendees headed out on several field trips or just birded on their own. An official species list has been posted by Chris Butler on the listserv but collectively the group found most of the expected birds and a few surprises. I think the total list was around 168 for the weekend.

My field trip birded Camp Billy Joe, Kenton, the road to Colorado, and the Easter pageant area before returning to the park for lunch. We found goodies like Ash-throated Flycatcher, Rock and Canyon Wren, Black-chinned Hummer, Juniper Titmouse, Pine Siskin, Lazuli Bunting, and Black-throated Sparrow.

After lunch, a smaller group of birders visited Watson's Crossing, Benton's Ranch, and various sideroads. We found Eastern Bluebird, Blue Jay and Lazuli Bunting at the crossing and Benton's produced Ladder-backed WP, Cedar Waxwing, Brown Thrasher, Scrub Jay, Curve-billed Thrasher and Black & White Warbler.

Dinner was catered by the Hoot Owl Ranch folks at the group camp in the park. it was a great BBQ Brisket and fixin's spread. After filling up, the evening program was presented by Lynn Barber(past TOS

president). She gave a great show on her attempt at a Big Year in 2008. She has written a book titled *Extreme Birder: One Woman's Big Year*. I recommend it.

The group continued birding the mesa area on Sunday but Nadine and I were headed on to Colorado for the next week. We did see a couple of Scaled Quail and hordes of Lark Buntings before we got out of Cimarron County on the way into New Mexico.

Black Mesa is my favorite birding area in the state and even though migrants were few this time the birding and scenery was still wonderful. I hope you might consider attending the next state meeting this fall in Edmond or your local Audubon chapter meeting. We need to give birds more of a voice in this state especially during these trying times both politically and economically.



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## Earthfest at Martin Nature Park

By Bill Diffin

On April 16, three OKC Audubon members manned a booth at the annual spring Earthfest event at the Martin Park Nature Center in northwest Oklahoma City. Nealand Hill brought a bird identification challenge he had constructed. He had three poster boards with four bird photos on each. Next to each photo were three choices for the species name. Nealand donated one of the birding caps he had made up for our members, and Terri Underhill donated a piece of art showing two Burrowing Owls burned into a slab of polished wood in a style called pyrography as drawing prizes. Nealand had presented a computer slide show with some of his best bird photos in the main exhibit room. We distributed copies of a number of items supplied by the club including, a crossword, a word search and information pages on Oklahoma hummingbirds, bird-friendly landscaping and bird feeding. A popular item with youngsters was a singing bird book produced by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Children love to look at the bird illustrations while they play the bird songs.

The theme of the Earthfest event is anything related to the preservation of nature or green ways of doing things. Many of the attendees are families. OKC Audubon's presence at the event makes use of a great opportunity to spark an awareness of the fun and challenge of birding in the youngsters.

## Recorders Report – May 2011

### Wild and Windy

As more migrants arrived in May they were greeted with interesting weather. On May 3<sup>rd</sup> a frost warning was issued for central Oklahoma, and during May 17 days were designated as 'windy'. The drought was temporarily broken with rain on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. Along with the rain on the 24<sup>th</sup> tornados ripped through central OK including an EF2 near Stillwater, an EF3 at Canton Lake and two EF4s from Chickasha to Moore and Washington to Goldsby. The deadliest, an EF5, tracked 75 miles from El Reno to Guthrie destroying buildings and bird nests, killing 8 people and an unknown number of birds.

Dale Kane reported the first **Common Nighthawk** on April 29<sup>th</sup>. On the 1<sup>st</sup> at Rose Lake Matt Jung saw a **Dickcissel**, and Bill Diffin found a Black-necked Stilt. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jennifer Kidney in Norman had a Gray Catbird at her bird bath, and Matt and Jenny Foster in Blanchard had a brief visit by a Lazuli Bunting. Jimmy Woodard viewed a male **American Redstart** and a **Least Flycatcher** at the Yukon City Park but very few shorebirds at Lake Overholser. Bill found a **Bobolink** in breeding colors along Wagner Road and a singing Harris's Sparrow in the Yukon City Park.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> Pat Garrison, Cecil Johnson and Dick Gunn checked South Jenkins and located a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Wood Ducks, a few Blue-winged Teal, and while they were all loitering and then gallivanting off into the woods, Jennifer Kidney had a Tennessee Warbler. Meanwhile in Norman Angie Holt came home and found an adult male **Black-headed Grosbeak** in her mulberry tree. On the 5<sup>th</sup> in the OSU Botanical Gardens a member of the PCAS spotted a Great-horned Owl, at the Stinchcomb East WMA Matt Jung discovered an **Eastern Wood-Pee-wee**, and on South Jenkins the sharp eyes of the OU ornithology class picked out an **Ash-throated Flycatcher**.

In the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> along South Jenkins Brian Davis, Jennifer, Pat, and Dick confirmed the Yellow-throated Warbler was still singing in the area and had a quick look at a Peregrine Falcon flying overhead. In Yukon City Park Matt located an **Orchard Oriole**, while Charles Douglas called in a **Common Moorhen** on the south side of the Lake Overholser rollover dam. On the 7<sup>th</sup> Jennifer saw a perfect Rose-breasted Grosbeak in her yard in Norman. At Lake Overholser Bill sited a Sora Rail, Lesser Yellowlegs and Spotted Sandpipers. On the 8<sup>th</sup> Jimmy made a quick run around Lake Hefner

discovered a **Black-bellied Plover** at Prairie Dog Point.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> Bill went out before the rain arrived and on the end of Prairie Dog Point was a Caspian Tern, Snowy Plover and in the Yukon City Park a male Black-throated Green Warbler. On the 12<sup>th</sup> along South Jenkins Bill found a brilliant male White-throated Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, and Doug Eide reported a Whimbrel at Lake Overholser. On the 13<sup>th</sup> in Stillwater John Polo heard a **Yellow-breasted Chat**. At Lake Hefner Dave Woodson spotted a Black-necked Stilt, American White Pelicans and a pair of Cinnamon Teal. At Eldon Lyon Park on the 14<sup>th</sup> Feodora Steward discovered two recently fledged Northern Flickers. On the 14<sup>th</sup> Dick, his son and grandson got to see a pair of River Otters along South Jenkins.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> Bill saw a **Black Tern** roosting just west of Prairie Dog Point, and at Yukon City Park a **Blue-headed Vireo** and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. On the 18<sup>th</sup> while bicycling around northwest of Blanchard just south of Mustang Larry Mays heard **Cassin's Sparrows**. On the 19<sup>th</sup> 5 1/2" of very welcome rain arrived. On the 20<sup>th</sup> Matt observed a **Tri-colored Heron** at the first turn-out



after the Coffey Dam, Jim Bates observed an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** on the west side of Crystal Lake, and Jennifer saw an Eastern Wood Peewee along South Jenkins. On the 21<sup>th</sup> Joyce Konigsmacher in Stillwater still had a lone White-crowned Sparrow, but it was gone on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> Bill hiked the Flat Rock Equestrian Trail at Bell Cow Lake near Chandler in Lincoln County and found a field overflowed by **Tree Swallows**. In northeast Logan county Garey Harritt was surprised when a pair of Osprey landed in the disked field, and along South Jenkins Jennifer, John Raeside and Anais Starr saw a mature Bald Eagle and **Least Tern**. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> Tim O'Connell discovered a window-killed Cassin's Sparrow in Stillwater. On the 25<sup>th</sup> at Lake Overholser Bill located White-rumped Sandpipers. At Lake Stanley Draper on the 27<sup>th</sup> Jim Bates heard 2 **Kentucky Warblers**, Summer Tanager and Broad-winged Hawk. On the 28<sup>th</sup> near Chandler on their way to check out the Tree Swallows, Bill, Doug Eide, and Charles Douglas located a White-breasted Nuthatch.

During May a total of **157** bird species were reported including **20 new** species which increased the 2011 Central Oklahoma area total to **247** 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](mailto:emkok@earthlink.net).

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## Patti's Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

It was a hot Saturday morning and I was head-down/backside-up in the front flower bed hiding from the sun under our Bradford pear trees. I do love gardening and I sort of drift off into a semi-conscious state and am not always aware of sights and sounds around me. Suddenly I heard the clearly identifiable trill of an Eastern Bluebird. Head came up and eyes went toward our bluebird house at the side of the yard. I was ecstatic at the sight of a male Eastern Bluebird hanging onto the front of the house while the female peeked out from inside! A quick check on the evening June 10 found the female sitting on 4-5 eggs. Yeah! Maybe this year they will be successful.

The Mallard pair that we enjoyed for most of the spring disappeared, but not before the female learned to nibble birdseed from my hand a time or two. I miss our "Ducky-ducks." On June 9<sup>th</sup> I was reading a book on the back patio when a pair of House Finches zipped over my head and landed in the asparagus fern I have hanging there. After a bunch of chattering and exploring, they flew off. In the evenings, Common Nighthawks patrol above our yard and the lightning bugs twinkle just above the lawn.



One of the TV stations aired a delightful story of a bird, a motorcycle and a tornado this past week. It seems the Washington storms destroyed a home and moved the homeowner's motorcycle some thirty feet away. In the process of this devastation, a Lark Sparrow nest had been blown from a tree and wedged into the side of the cycle. The sparrow reclaimed the nest and is now incubating 4 eggs!

On my way to work I pass between the two boathouses along the river downtown. Several times I've seen night herons flying over the Byers Avenue Bridge. With traffic, I have not been able to tell where they landed, but I know they are in the area. Scissortails and Western Kingbirds still flit around near the traffic signals.

With the very warm weather upon us, I think I'm gearing up for fall migration.

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## Impromptu Field Trips

By Bill Diffin

### May 14, Tulsa, 31st & Riverside and Oxley North Woods

When we arrived at 31st and Riverside around 9:30, it was still cool and breezy. The island in the Arkansas River was surrounded by waders, 14 Great Blue Herons,

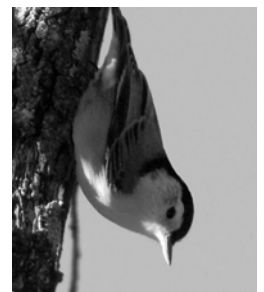
10 Great Egrets, 4 Snowy Egrets. The walk along the upper trail east from Riverside was uneventful except for a warbler we heard singing out of sight in the undergrowth at the base of the south slope. A little before reaching the intersection of the upper and lower trails, we ran into Terry Mitchell and Bill Carrell. They reported a Mourning Warbler in the location where we heard the unknown singer. They had also seen Blackburnian and Blackpoll Warblers on the lower trail, and Terry volunteered to take us to the spot. The warblers were in a huge, wide-spreading oak. Terry pointed out the female Blackpoll and the female Blackburnian to us. The female Blackburnian had a yellow face but otherwise looked much like the female Blackpoll.

It was a great day for American Redstarts on the lower trail, and we were able to admire several males. When we returned to the trailhead, we went back along the upper trail to the spot where the Mourning Warbler had been. A Northern Parula was excited by Matt's player and persisted in singing above the trail long after the player was silenced. A bird moving around and singing at the base of the slope finally allowed a partial view. The dark gray hood, absence of eye ring, dark olive back and yellow underparts all indicated a Mourning Warbler. Its song consisted of three identical ringing notes and then a short flourish.

At Mohawk Park, we walked west on the North Woods Trail and then took the north branch to the old right of way. Early in the walk, a male Orchard Oriole perched in the open on a tree branch. Prothonotary Warblers were singing in several spots, but we only saw one. The real excitement was the pair of Blackpoll Warblers we found, one a singing male. The other memorable thing about the day was seeing several singing Warbling Vireos. In all we had 70 species. Participants were Matt Jung, Charles Douglas and Bill Diffin.

### May 28, Bell Cow Lake, Area C, Flat Rock Trail and Area B

After paying fees at the honor box at Area C, parking the vehicles, and applying bug spray, we were immediately greeted by an Eastern Wood-Pewee singing on a fallen branch 15 feet away. When it flew, it went to a tree branch 10 feet off the ground. The neighboring tree had a White-breasted Nuthatch in it,



*Continued on page 8*

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

### **Impromptu Field Trips** *(continued from page 7)*

crawling up and down the trunk and calling. We walked over to the west side inlet to look for the Prothonotary Warbler singing there. It flew to a snag near the shore and sang energetically for several minutes while we watched in fascination.

Near the Flatrock Trail Head, a Lark Sparrow was singing on top of a cedar. The early part of the Flat Rock Trail had a generous endowment of Indigo Buntings, Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers, Carolina Chickadees, and Great Crested Flycatchers. A male Black-and-White Warbler working over a tree trunk was the biggest prize of the early going. At the creek crossing a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird sat on an exposed perch. A Painted Bunting singing on a utility pole crossbar support seemed unusual, but much later in the day we saw a Painted Bunting singing in exactly the same position on a utility pole miles away, beating the heat in the shade of the crossbar.

When we arrived at the swallow field, Tree Swallows were flying over the prairie, and a singing Blue Grosbeak was singing on a weed stalk. A Prothonotary Warbler flew right by Charles's light blue cap. We spent some time observing a Great Blue Heron Rookery in a collection of snags out in the lake. There were five adults and a couple of large chicks in the rookery. One chick was climbing around in the branches. Yellow-billed Cuckoos would occasionally call from out of sight in the trees, and at least one flew across the trail in front of us.

After finishing the hike, we drove around to Area B on the north side of the lake. Orchard and Baltimore Orioles were singing in the trees all over the camping and picnic ground. As we were driving back through Chandler, we stopped to watch a Greater Roadrunner walking across a lawn. We had 49 species for the day. Participants were Doug Eidle, Charles Douglas and Bill Diffin.

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