



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

MARCH 2009

Wichita Mountains

with Dick Clapp

The program for the March 16 meeting will be "Wichita Mountains, Islands in a Prairie Sea" by Dick Clapp of Norman. Mr. Clapp grew up in Lawton, Oklahoma, and has been exploring the Wichita Mountains as long as he can remember. He and his wife Barbara Tarbutton live in the Crosstimbers east of Norman. Many of their weekends and most of their vacations are spent in the Wichitas. They are both nature photographers. They have been volunteers and tour leaders at the Wildlife Refuge as members of the Friends of the Wichitas since 1993. They belong to numerous Oklahoma nature and conservation groups, including Cleveland County Audubon. Several members of Oklahoma City Audubon visited their back porch in 1996 when they had the first documented Oklahoma sighting of the Green Violet-Ear Hummingbird.



Dick's presentation will include a slide show of the mountains, and his talk will address the uniqueness of the Wichita Mountains Ecosystem, birds including the endangered Black-capped Vireo, Refuge history, local Native American history, other wildlife, native plants and wildflowers. From personal experience he will give hints on how to survive being charged by a bull buffalo as well as other buffalo tales with props.

Bring your curiosity and a friend and have a wonderful time at our next meeting. Join us for an informative and interesting program. Our meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 and NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.

Dues, Seriously!

Treasurer Nancy Vicars reports that far too many people are procrastinating this year and haven't paid their 2009 dues. She asks that dues be paid by the March 16th membership meeting. Send dues to:

Nancy Vicars
820 Arthur Drive
Midwest City, OK 73110

COOKIES:

Refreshments for the March meeting will be provided by: Nancy & Jim Vicars, Feodora Steward, and Cheryl Allen.

2009 Rosters

members can request a copy of the 2009 roster by e-mailing Nancy at nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net.



Bird of the Month

By John Shackford

There is a wild sound we sometimes hear in the spring in central Oklahoma that says so much about wildness. It is the high eerie call of the Sandhill Crane.

Almost always the calls of a flock of cranes reach my ears well before I see the birds. It is always a pleasure to look for the flock to see where the calls are coming from. For me the calls are a reminder that there are still wild things that remain in our battered landscape.

Once, many years ago, in late winter or early spring, I was in the vicinity of Mustang, in the southwestern part of the metro area, when I heard and saw a large number of flocks of Sandhill Cranes heading south, instead of north. This, I believe was because a winter storm to the north was freezing water there, maybe at the Platte River, a major “staging” area for the cranes in Nebraska. Flock after flock of cranes were coming back south, and I was seldom out of hearing range of at least one flock for several hours.

I wondered if perhaps there was a crane “communication train” that passed the “word” flock to flock (via calls or sight) of bad conditions, perhaps frozen water, to the north. Each individual flock could be alerted down the line to turn around and seek open water to the south. Such a communication train could save a lot of extra calories for most of the crane flocks. And such a communication train could pass the word very swiftly all the way down the line—perhaps hundreds of miles.

On another occasion Warren Harden, Jack Tyler and I were in the Black Mesa area of Cimarron County, Oklahoma—in October I believe it was—and nearly all day long we were rarely out of hearing of at least one flock of cranes headed south. Many flocks landed at a pond about a mile and a half northwest of the Santa Fe Trail crossing sign along the main road to Kenton. They were apparently landing there to feed and spend the night. We saw birds feeding on the adjacent prairie,

but could not tell what they were eating. By the time we drove by the area the next day, every crane was gone.



Photo courtesy Terri Underhill

Warren Harden related to me information on Sandhill Crane pairing. Through radio-telemetry it has been found that the monogamous Sandhill Cranes have several patterns relating to their mates. Some Sandhill pairs stay together all the way from the breeding ground to the wintering grounds and back to the breeding grounds. Other separate along the way, perhaps at Platte River, spend the

winter separated, return to the Platte River, there to find their mates—among 100,000 or so other cranes—and return to the breeding grounds. And some pairs separate shortly after leaving the breeding grounds, and only reunite shortly before reaching the breeding ground the following spring.

Listen for the cranes, and watch for “trains” of cranes—many migratory flocks following one another.

Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

February 8th dawned with the promise of a type of day that I live for. The sky was that bright “Colorado blue,” that serves as a backdrop for beautiful. And it was a Sunday and my hubby and I did not have to go to work. Well...I mean we didn’t have to work inside our various workplaces. We spent the day cleaning, digging, planting, weeding, watering, etc.



The neighbor’s plum tree was blooming and our newly-planted Japanese Maple was proudly ensconced in its new home in the flowerbed and showing off those beautiful pink blooms. Just underneath were a cluster of brilliant yellow daffodils.

Background music to some of Ma Nature’s finest spring colors was provided by a very happy Bewick’s Wren, a Mockingbird, a Cardinal, House Finches, Eurasian Collared Doves and Mourning Doves, a Titmouse, a Chickadee, and of course the chirping of House Sparrows, Starlings and Grackles.

While we were digging in the flowerbeds, Sam tossed out a fat grub. Before the grub quit wriggling, the alert Mockingbird swooped down in a swift fly-by and snatched up the hapless grub. Yeah...one less pesky pest for the soil and a great treat for the Mocker.

While taking a break on the porch glider, I got to see our Downy drop in and land on the suet feeder at the end of our patio. My presence all of 6 feet away did not seem to deter the pursuit of a snack.

Sam had to clean out one of the wren houses that

a House Sparrow had already stuffed about 1/3 full of grass and feathers. They had also begun stuffing the martin house. No Purple Martins so far, but the House Finches have begun to land on the patio ceiling fans and searching for the fern I have yet to hang out there for them. I believe Brian mentioned something about possible “flurries” by Wednesday! Fern stays inside! I didn’t pamper that thing all winter just to hang it out too early and have it nipped by Jack Frost!

A recent visit to our Byars backyard with Sydney was another treat. While the wind was a little chilly, it was sunny and she really wanted her Granny to climb up the shaky ladder into her “tree house” in front of the cabin. It’s a platform about 12 feet up in some oaks. Time with granddaughters in a tree house has no price, so I got an old floor pillow and blanket and climbed up. Granny was a little tired and had been thinking about how nice a nap in the cabin would be, but opted for the tree house instead. We chatted and looked out over the pasture and the pond, and she played with her newly acquired treasures — tokens from an owl pellet, a fox skull, an armadillo tail and some newly gathered rocks.

It was chilly up in those trees, so I collapsed on the pillow and covered up with the blanket. Sydney snuggled beside me and soon I felt her little body twitch, which is the signal that she’s going to sleep. Soon it was very quiet in that tree house and both of us went to sleep. About an hour later I woke and remembered that Mrs. Smith and I had a little pie in the oven. Oops! I climbed down to find a very crispy little pie, but nothing was on fire yet. Later Sam would say, “I think this started out as apple something!” He ate the middle out and the rest was tossed. But Sydney and I made some wonderful memories. She told her parents and everybody at school about how neat it was to take a nap with Granny in the tree house. I made the right choice!

As for Byars birds — Brian, Sydney and I heard three Timberdoodles doing their thing right after sunset. It was a wonderful Sunday afternoon and evening.

Into the Blue

By Jimmy Woodard

Nealand Hill and I spent a three-day weekend in February birding in Arizona and New Mexico.

We decided to look for the Blue Mockingbird, a Mexican rarity, that had strayed over the border near Douglas, Arizona.

After spending Friday night in Lordsburg, New Mexico, Saturday morning dawned cool and clear and with no wind! The mocker had been appearing at the Slaughter Ranch which didn't open until 10 a.m. so we decided to stop at Portal in the Chiricauhuas to kill some birding time.

There was no one else around so the quiet was filled with only bird songs. We enjoyed seeing and hearing Verdin, Curve-billed Thrashers, Cactus Wren, White-winged Dove, Acorn Woodpeckers, Green-tailed Towhee, Pine Siskin, and Lesser Goldfinch.

After an hour, we started toward Douglas. Along the drive we noticed Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Gambel's Quail and Phainopepla.

We made it to the Slaughter Ranch around 10 a.m., paid our \$8 entry fee and went inside. The ranch is a spring-fed green oasis surrounded by desert, next to the Mexican border.



It wasn't long before the mocker put on a show to the delight of us and about 20 other happy birders. It came out in the open several times and gave everyone good looks. We even had it in the scope for a good look.

There was word of an Aplomado Falcon in New Mexico so after an hour at the ranch, we hurried on our way. *(continued next column)*

It was late in the afternoon when we made it to the area near Columbus, New Mexico where the falcon was supposed to be. We followed the directions and found the falcon calmly perched on a corral right where it was supposed to be. We enjoyed this handsome bird along with two birders from New York. I had seen Aplomado Falcon in Belize but never in the US. This bird was North American lifer #711 for me and #699 for Nealand. It was a surprise to finish off a whirlwind weekend.

OKC AUDUBON SOCIETY Financial Report for 2008

CASH ON HAND 12/31/2007	\$5,658.92
INCOME:	
Membership dues	1,020.00
Checking Acct. Interest	99.28
Calendar Sales	597.50
Contributions	30.00
Luggage Tags/Book Marks	<u>81.00</u>
	1,827.78
	<u>+1,827.78</u>
	\$7,486.70
EXPENSES:	
Meeting Room Rent	215.00
Newsletters (copies & postage)	1,164.61
100 - 2009 Promotion Calendars	250.00
2007 Xmas Count	175.00
Speaker Honorarium	25.00
Bank Charge/Ck. Printing	<u>15.75</u>
	1,845.36
	<u>-1,845.36</u>
CASH ON HAND 12/31/2008	\$5,641.34

Wild Care's Baby Shower!

Wild Care Foundation's annual Baby Shower will be held April 25th from 2 - 5 p.m. The event is open to the public and is an excellent opportunity to see the many species of orphaned and injured birds that Wild Care treats. For more information visit wildcareoklahoma.org.

Recorders Report – February 2009

A Tornado and the Start of Migration

February started warm and dry with high fire danger warnings in several of the central Oklahoma counties. Then on the 9th a quiet, gentle rain fell, followed by violent tornados on the 10th. Jimmy Woodard noted a lot of movements by birds during the stormy, tornadic weather. Many flocks of blackbirds, grackles, starlings collared and rock doves, and geese were moving fast away from the approaching storms. Mostly they were flying east but some groups moved northeast or southeast, too. No movement was seen to the west, which was the direction the storms were coming from. He observed single or small numbers of blue jays, crows, morning doves, American Goldfinches, House Finch, Red-tail Hawks and a few unidentified birds also flying very fast ahead of the storms.

On the 2nd Brian Davis made a quick trip to South Jenkins and found a **Sora Rail** in the marshy area along the creek below the mudflat along with a **muskrat**, as well as, a chattering group of three Brown Creepers along the road. At Lake Hefner on the 3rd Matt Jung found the Yellow-billed Loon and all three Merganser species. On the 5th Gayle Snider reports that the OU Ornithology Class birded South Jenkins and found a **Sedge Wren**, White-crowned, White-throated and Harris's sparrows, Northern Pintail, Wood Duck, and a **Cackling Goose**.

On the 11th at the Coffey Dam Matt Jung heard a Common Yellowthroat, on the 14th he had a White-winged Dove at his Oklahoma City feeder. On the 15th at the Norman feeder he had a Sharp-shinned Hawk cruising by, a Yellow-rumped Warbler taking a bath in the fishpond, and an Orange-crowned Warbler checking the sunflower seeds.

On the 18th Matt walked Stinchcomb Wildlife Management Area and found an Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush, Spotted and Eastern Towhee, Fox and Lincoln's Sparrow. On the 19th at Lake Hefner he noted the head feathers of the Common Loons are turning black. On the 20th Brian Davis and Dick Gunn checked South Jenkins in Norman. Dick's

dog, Libby, flushed an **American Bittern**, and Brian caught a glimpse of a possible pair of Lark Sparrows.

On the weekend of the 21st a coworker of Cynthia Van Den Broeke photographed a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at his bird feeder in Norman. On the 23rd Matt Jung visited Rose Lake and found American White Pelicans, a Great Egret, heard a **Greater Yellowlegs**, and on the 25th he found two Inca Doves in his daughter's yard in Norman.

On the 21st Patti Muzny had at least three separate male **American Woodcocks** doing their mating antics in McClain County near Byars. In Payne County on the 25th Paul van Els flushed them on three occasions while doing fieldwork near the Cross Timbers Experimental Range, and that evening Dwayne Elmore had at least 6 males penting within a 20 acre area and had 4 flyovers.

On the 26th Jimmy Woodward and Chris Clack from South Carolina flushed 2 Short-eared Owls at the Purina Field. At Lake Hefner they found about 75 Horned Grebes, and Matt Jung found an **Eared Grebe**. Meanwhile Dick Gunn reports the OU ornithology class spotted the first **Blue-winged Teal**.

On the 27th Jim Arterburn birded Sooner Lake and found 900 Greater Scaup and 500 Common Goldeneyes along with two **White-winged Scoters**, one a beautiful adult male and the other a first winter male, two **Black Scoters**, two immature **Trumpeter Swans** and 16 Short-eared owls. At Fort Reno Jimmy, Max Fuller and Chris found Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks, and heard a flock of **Sandhill Cranes** flying over the fort in the late evening.

In February 107 bird species were reported making the total reported to date for the Central Oklahoma area at **136 species**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds by turning in their reports of bird species 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.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society Minutes of February 16, 2009

President Eric Enwall called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. He welcomed 28 members to the first official meeting of 2009 following the cancellation in January due to the ice storm. He thanked Pat Velte and Gene & Cheryl Allen for their efforts getting notification out to our members through both e-mail and via television media.

Members were reminded to get their e-mail addresses to Pat Velte in order to receive all club notifications such as updates or changes to scheduled events.

The December minutes were approved as published in the January newsletter. There were no minutes for January.

The Treasurer's reports for January & February were approved.

Jimmy Woodard reminded us of the upcoming fieldtrips to OKC area lakes on Sat., Feb. 21 and to the Selman Ranch, March 27-29 (details in the Feb. newsletter). There are several upcoming birding festivals around the state this spring. The complete list and details can be found on the Tulsa Audubon website at www.tulsaaudubon.org.

The program for March will be presented by Dick Clapp on the Wichita Mountains as previously scheduled in January.

John Shackford thanked everyone that participated in the 2008 Christmas count for their outstanding effort in order to set a new record of 125 species on count day.

Announcements:

The lake Overholser boat facility is being refurbished and Kayak lessons will be available promoting "get close to nature". For details contact: mwoodson@chesapeakeboathouse.org

Dr. Jack Tyler will be teaching a class on "Prairie Ecology" at the Wichita Mtns. Wildlife Refuge, June

13-14, 2009. For complete details contact danna_mallow@fws.gov or 580-429-2193.

New Business:

The executive committee is to consider the possibility of dues payment online via our website. At this time there seem to be no great hurdles in the way of this process, but the membership is asked to convey to the officers, particularly to Eric Enwall at elecom@sbcglobal.net, any comments they might have about the use of online payment.

Patti Muzny has requested to be relieved of her duties as newsletter editor. Efforts to find a new editor or co-editors will be made prior to the next meeting.

Due to the abundance of (26) 2009 calendars not sold, Jim Vicars proposes to buy the remainder at cost as a donation to the club. This is the worst sales year to date and perhaps the final year for this fund raiser.

Eric announced a plan to write a letter of thanks on behalf of the club to the Byrds of Norman who so graciously allowed birders to use their lane to get a look at the White Winged Crossbill this past winter.

Program:

Warren Harden presented an outstanding program this evening that included an excellent photographic record and wonderful, heart-warming stories of our club and members since its inception.

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Vicars, Acting Secretary

Prairie Dog Point Annual Spring Clean Up

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society will join Oklahoma City Beautiful in the annual spring Litter Blitz program and conduct a clean up of Prairie Dog Point. Plan to meet on Saturday, April 18th at Noon. Trash bags and gloves will be provided.

Minnesota Winter Birding

By Jimmy Woodard

Max Fuller, Nealand Hill, Jerry Vanbebber and I left Oklahoma City early on Friday, January 30th headed toward Minnesota on a birding excursion.

We made a brief detour to Sooner Lake to look for Surf and Black Scoters. We found 5 Surfs (1 male, 4 female) but not Black. We ran into Larry Mays who was looking for the birds, too.

We made our way north on I-35 through Kansas, Missouri and into Iowa where we started seeing snow cover. We spent the night in Cedar Rapids where we had plans to meet some local birding contacts. On Saturday morning we met several local birders including Tony Schilke and Tom "Saw Whet" Stone at George Wyeth State Park in Cedar Rapids. They quickly found us a staked out Saw Whet Owl roosting in an evergreen tree. The tree was very open and we had great views of the sleeping owl.

We headed 20 miles south of Waterloo to Hickory Hills park where the locals showed us a roosting Long-eared Owl, a lifer for Jerry. (The Saw Whet was a lifer for Jerry, Max and Nealand.) Other birds we found before leaving Iowa and heading north were Black-capped Chickadee, Red-shouldered and Rough-legged Hawks, Bald Eagle, Pheasant, and White-breasted Nuthatch.

We entered Minnesota about 1 p.m. and continued on into Duluth. As dusk was falling, we went to a house where a Boreal Owl had recently been

reported. We didn't find it but the owners took our phone number and told us they would call if they found it again.

Sunday, February 1st, began very cold (-4°) and very windy. We checked the Boreal Owl house again, with no luck. We ventured northwest to the infamous Sax-Zim bog area about an hour's drive from Duluth. We drove the county roads, slowly, looking for birds. We found some feeders and saw several Black-capped Chickadees and many Common Redpolls.



Our day warmed, mentally, when we found a nice adult Northern Shrike and then the first of several Northern Hawk Owls that perched nicely for photos and seem unconcerned with our presence. We saw Hairy Woodpecker and Sharp-tailed Grouse nearby.

In the boreal forest, several feeders and a deer carcass had been hung up. We enjoyed up-close views of Pine Grosbeak, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee plus Common and Hoary Redpolls.

We drove many miles into the forest and found several birds including a flock of about a dozen Snow Buntings, one Lapland Longspur, Magpie and a beautiful male Black-backed Woodpecker. Our biggest miss of the trip was Great Gray Owl. Try as we might, we couldn't locate one anywhere. We topped off the day enjoying a pizza and watching the Super Bowl.



Monday, our final day in Minnesota, began very cold (-6°) with a -20 wind chill. We checked the harbor but didn't find much. We drove up the north shore to Two Harbors then into the interior and more forest areas. It began to snow lightly and we found a few White-winged Crossbills and a Barred Owl that I had hoped was a Great Gray. We searched for several hours but couldn't find a Great Gray or any other new birds. We turned south and headed for home around noon.

Despite cold and blustery weather, we had a fun trip. We had 63 species and the boys all had lifers. Duluth is one of my favorite cities and northern Minnesota is a very scenic area.

Field Trips

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.

April 18, 2009—Prairie Dog Point Clean Up.

Meet at Noon to participate in the annual Oklahoma City Litter Blitz clean up day (well, really it just takes an hour or so). Trash bags and gloves will be provided. Contact Pat Velte for more information: pvelte@cox.net

Oklahoma City Audubon Society
% Patricia Velte
1421 NW 102nd Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73114-4925
