



# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

September 2010

## Bugs for Birds

Elaine Gregory will be the featured presenter at the September 20 meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society. Her presentation, Bugs for Birds, will showcase some of her photography as well as her vast and interesting knowledge of the insect world.

Elaine grew up in an Air Force family and traveled to the Philippines, Paraguay and several states. Elaine is now retired but she work for 14 years for the Air Force fixing aircraft radios and then spent 15 years with the FAA repairing air traffic control radios and radar. Although her interest in nature isn't new, she says cataract surgery that improved her vision, a Rynoskin suit, and digital cameras have all had a role in increasing her interest in insects, birds, animals, and plants.

As a Nicoma Park resident, Elaine is fortunate to live next to a small creek so she can concentrate on dragonflies and damselflies. She's raised butterflies and moths from caterpillars and contributed some of her photos to Oklahoma State University and Oral Roberts University. Her photos can also be found on BugGuide.net.



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.



### 2011 Calendars For Sale

Our beautiful  
new calendars

are available. They are \$5 each. You can order online ( [www.okc-audubon.org](http://www.okc-audubon.org) ) or pick one up at any meeting.

### Cookie Patrol

Refreshments for the September meeting will be provided by: Matt Jung, Jimmy Woodard & Nealand Hill.

### In Sympathy

We send our heartfelt sympathies to Nadine Varner and her family on the death of Nadine's father Donald Varner. Don was a well-known, highly respected naturalist and birder.

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## President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin

At our last meeting, we voted to increase the annual dues to \$15. The vote tally was 11 in favor to 7 opposed, for a total of 18 votes. This vote did not meet the requirements set out in the OCAS constitution for a



dues change. Because the dues amount is specified in the constitution, increasing the dues requires approval by a 2/3 majority of a quorum defined as 20% of the membership. We have around 105 memberships, therefore the minimum vote required for passage was at least 14 to 7 in favor.

A rough sketch of our OCAS finances is as follows. The cost of printing and mailing newsletters is \$1 per copy. The meeting room rental is \$200 per year, and the Christmas Bird Count expense has averaged \$300 per year for the past two years. On a per member basis, these expenses translate to \$10 for newsletters, \$2 for the meeting room and \$3 for the CBC or a total of \$15 per year. For at least the past several years, we have been using the profits from calendar sales to offset the \$5 deficit between dues and expenses. However, there is a very reasonable objection to this practice. It is that members who do not buy a calendar are effectively, and I'm sure unintentionally, ducking part of their annual membership expenses. As a non-purchaser of this year's calendar, I am one such freeloader, and a sorry one at that because as President, I have discovered that I need a separate calendar just for keeping track of birding events. The folks who initiated the calendar and bumper sticker sales programs intended for the profits to be used for special projects to benefit birds or birding, and that is what we should be trying to do. The ordinary and predictable expenses of our society should be allocated equally to us, the members, in the form of dues.

There is a further change to the constitution which should be made to reflect current practices regarding check signature authority. The paragraph delimiting the operations of the Treasury gives the sole authority to disperse funds to the Treasurer.

However, it has been the practice for some years to arrange check signature authority for not only the Treasurer but also the President and Secretary. This is so that if the Treasurer should become incapacitated, one of the other officers can step in to fulfill OCAS payment obligations. In the ordinary course of events, the President and Secretary do not have OCAS checkbooks or sign checks, only the Treasurer.

Another constitutional change which has been suggested would be elimination of the separate Historian function and incorporation of the very minimal Historian's duties into the Secretary position.

A needed change in the wording throughout the document is elimination of the personal pronoun, "he", in reference to officers and chairpersons. Instead "he or she" should be substituted or the person's title should be reiterated.

The constitution requires that changes must be submitted to the membership at least a month before a vote. My current plan is to publish revisions to the constitution in the October newsletter in preparation for a vote in the November meeting.

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## Oklahoma City Audubon Society

### Officers 2010

President	Bill Diffin	722-3778
Vice President	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Nancy Reed	799-1116
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	732-9885
Parliament	Sam Moore	936-9440
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	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**

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# Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



A.C. Bent, in *Life Histories of North American Flycatchers, Larks, Swallows, and their Allies* (reprint edition, 1963), speaking of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*), said that “[i]ts delicate and pleasing color contrasts, white, black, soft gray, salmon-pink, and bright scarlet, its trim and graceful form, and its

spectacular behavior as an aerial acrobat, all combine to make the scissor-tailed flycatcher one of the most attractive of North American birds.”

In my opinion, the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is the best of all State Birds—I’m pretty sure this was my opinion even before moving to Oklahoma as a teenager. According to the Baumgartners (Oklahoma

Bird Life, 1992), the Bobwhite was the state bird until it was changed to the Scissortail in 1951 (didn’t know that!).

The Scissortail is particularly common in central Oklahoma, but becomes less so in more forested habitats to the east and drops out completely in the wide-open spaces of the western half of the Oklahoma Panhandle. It prefers a good mix of trees and open spaces, just what we have here in central Oklahoma. It usually nests about 7 to 30 feet above the ground, normally lays 4-5 eggs, and can be double-brooded. Dan Reinking (Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas, 2004) says they are “[r]arely parasitized” by the Brown-headed Cowbird; he also says that on Breeding Bird Survey routes from 1966-2000, there has been no discernable decline in Scissortail numbers across its entire range, but

there has been a 2.4% per year decline in Oklahoma.

We usually have a contest in our local bird club to see who can find the first Scissortail in the spring. In fall, before heading southward for the winter, the Scissortail can congregate in roosts of up to several hundred birds or more. Many years ago there was a large roost in the middle of Norman, OK, near Warren Harden’s home. One evening, he and I went to the roost to count the Scissortails coming in to roost in the pecan and cottonwood trees there. We counted over a thousand birds coming in, sometimes in groups of 50 or more. It was quite a sight.

For a number of years I managed the Oklahoma Ornithological Society’s Bird Slide Set that had pho-

tos of about 125 Oklahoma species. For \$1.00 and for any reasonable use, a duplicate of any slide in the set could be bought. The Scissortail was the most frequently ordered slide of the entire set—hardly anyone passed it by. So for any of you photographers who want to sell your photographs, be sure

to get good ones of the Scissortail! Another tip for photographers: the Scissortail is unusual in that it has its most complete molt in the fall, so now is the best time to photograph—or watch—the species if you want to see the freshest, most beautiful plumage.

A good story relating to the Scissortail happened in the winter of 2007 to Jimmy Woodard and Nealand Hill. On 3 December that year they were birding on the east end of Long Island, NY, near Montauk Point, when they saw a Scissortail. They pointed this out to some local birders who got so excited they began calling other locals to relate the news. At one point one of the locals was heard to say into his phone, “Of course, they know what a Scissortail looks like. They are from Oklahoma!” I even think Jimmy was wearing his Scissortail hat that day.



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# SE Arizona in May

Nadine and I wanted to take a birding trip in early May. Since she had never been birding in Arizona, we decided to visit southeast Arizona.

We left Oklahoma City on Wednesday, May 5th, and drove thru Amarillo and down to Clovis into New Mexico. We stopped at the Melrose migrant trap which is one of the best birding spots in the state. We saw lots of thrushes, flycatchers and orioles. Nadine got three life birds: Plumbeous Vireo, Dusky Flycatcher and Green-tailed Towhee.

We drove south to Bottomless Lakes State Park just east of Roswell to camp for the night. Right out of the car we heard a purring noise coming from a salt cedar next to a pond and our campsite. Eventually we flushed a Lesser Nighthawk. We played the iPod and found out indeed the Lesser Nighthawk makes a purring noise.

On Thursday morning we went through nearby Bitter Lakes NWR. A hike produced Say's and Black Phoebe, Blue Grosbeak, Painted Bunting, and McGillivray's Warbler (another Nadine lifer).

Our route went through Ruidoso, Alamo-gordo and Las Cruces. We made it into Arizona about 4 p.m. and had great looks at a flyover Zone-tailed Hawk just before we got there.

Portal is a beautiful and birdy place. We barely started up the South Fork Trail in Cave Creek before we saw an Elegant Trogon fairly close. We also found Acorn Woodpecker, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Painted Redstart, Band-tailed Pigeon, and Gambel's Quail; all were lifers for Nadine on the first day in Arizona!

We were up at 5 a.m. and out early to head up into the Chiricahua Mountains. Along the way we found Mexican Jay, Western Wood-Pewee, Grace's Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, and Painted Redstart.

At Onion Saddle, we found Yellow-eyed Junco and Mexican Chickadee. A Short-tailed Hawk made a brief flyover.

Atop the mountain, we found the road into Barefoot Park closed by snow so we went into Rustler Park. We hiked a trail up to the look over Barefoot Peak. Birds observed included Virginia, Townsend's and Olive Warblers, Broad-tailed Hummingbird and White-throated Swift. A Greater Pewee sang its "Jose Maria" song as we

headed down the mountain.

Back in Portal, we took a break to sit in the shade and do some feeder watching. We sat next to a thistle feeder and siskins and goldfinch came down to feed just a few feet away! Nadine found five lifers: Hooded Oriole, Bridled Titmouse and Blue-throated, Broad-billed and Magnificent Hummingbirds while she relaxed in her chair.

After dinner we drove around the flats near Rodeo and found Bendire's Thrasher. At dark, we heard and saw a very persistent Whiskered Screech-Owl. We also heard the Mexican race of Whip-poor-will (which was recently split into a new species).

Saturday, we got out early and went to the Big Thicket and Willow Tank to find desert species. We did see Crissal Thrasher, Bendire's Thrasher, Inca Dove and Lucy's Warbler. We visited the George Walker House on Paradise Road where the feeders were quite active. New birds included Lazuli Bunting, Cassin's Finch, Scott's Oriole, as well as many hummingbirds.

We drove over Onion Saddle and found Hutton's Vireo in Pinery Campground and Arizona Woodpecker at the Chiricahua National Monument. After coming back to Portal for dinner we went up to Rustler park just before dark. We eventually heard about a half dozen Flammulated Owls but never got a look at one.

Our time in Portal ended on Sunday as we left at 7 am. On the road south of Rodeo we saw a gorgeous Phainopepla. By 9 am we were at the San Pedro House along the river just east of Sierra Vista where Nadine got two new birds: Abert's Towhee and Gila Woodpecker.

It began to get hot so we opted for the cool shade of Beattie's Guest Ranch in Miller Canyon. We hiked a half mile up a trail and found one of the Spotted Owls that had been reported. Next, we sat awhile in the bleachers to watch the frenzy of hummingbirds at the dozen feeders, almost at arm's length. Nadine got a White-eared Hummingbird as a lifer.

In the hot afternoon, we drove up a mountain road to Carr Canyon. The wind was blowing hard and the birds were few. This trip wasn't worth the effort because the road was extremely rough and the going was slow.

We were tired and hot so we went into Sierra Vista to get a motel and call it an early day.

***Next month: Arizona, Part II - Patagonia to Tucson***



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## Minutes of June 21, 2010

President Bill Diffin called the meeting to order and asked if there were visitors. Visitor Steve Hamilton advised he was a backyard birder who was interested in birds.

President Diffin asked for any corrections or changes to the minutes as published in the May newsletter. Minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report - presented by Nancy Vicars

Cash on Hand	\$5,647.26
Deposits	101.45
Disbursements	384.20
Cash on Hand	\$5,364.51

President Bill Diffin asked for any questions or corrections to the report as read. The report was approved.

### Field Trips

Jimmy Woodard advised he has a copy of the Washington Ornithological report for anyone who would like to look at it.

The next field trip will be to Cheyenne Bottoms & Quivira NWR on Labor Day weekend. Cheyenne Bottoms is similar to Hackberry Flats because it attracts shore birds. Jimmy is working on the final plans. The group will be staying at Traveler's Budget Inn, located in Great Bend, Kansas, with approx. cost of \$50 a night. He advised there are maps online for Cheyenne Bottoms.

Warren Harden stated he grew up in central Kansas. He banded many birds in Kansas, one of which showed up in Venezuela.

Jimmy stated he is taking suggestions for field trips for next year.

### Old Business:

Bill Diffin asked if anyone attended the OOS spring meeting. Jimmy stated that it was a good meeting with 40 people in attendance.

Jimmy has made contact with a knowledgeable birder from Missoula, Montana. Contact Jimmy if you will be traveling to Montana for sightings of Grouse or Ptarmigan. He will share the guides name and information.

President Diffin asked if anyone attended the Bio Survey and Night Hike at Martin Nature Park? Nadine

Varner advised she netted birds for the Survey, but did not band them. The night hike was a nice walk, but not very productive for birding.

Several members advised they observed the Atlantis on the night of the last meeting. Thank you, Warren for informing the group of the sighting.

### New Business:

Nancy Vicars stated the club has sold calendars as a fund raiser for years. The calendars have not sold well in recent years. She wondered about the economics of this project and did the club want to continue this fund raiser? She proposed to raise dues by \$5 instead of selling calendars. A lengthy discussion followed.

Susan Schmidt made a motion to increase dues from \$10 to \$15 in place of selling calendars for 2011 and make the dues ongoing. John Shackford seconded the motion. President Diffin asked for any objections to raising the dues. There were no objections. Motion passed.

A discussion followed concerning the purchase of calendars. John Shackford requested a vote to see who wanted to buy a calendar. Eleven members favored & seven were opposed. A motion was made & approved to purchase 100 – 2011 calendars.

The business meeting was adjourned for snacks.

### Future Speaker:

Warren Harden announced that Sutton Center has a new project of tracking baby Eagles by Satellite Sightings. He also presented an article from the New York Times on tracking migratory sea birds.

There will be no meeting during the months of July and August. Meetings will reconvene in September. Bugs for Birds will be the September topic.

Erica Judd was introduced as the speaker for the evening. She gave an outstanding presentation on Oklahoma Hummingbirds.

*Nancy Reed, Recording Secretary*

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## New Members

We may have been on hiatus since July but our member list has continued to grow. We welcome these new members: Steve & Pamela Hamilton, Susan Prescott and John Cleal.

# Weekly Birders



Weekly Birders trip leader,  
Bill Diffin

**June 2: Overholser Cofferdam.** Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night-Herons, Bell's Vireo; **Rose Lake** - Cattle Egret; **N Canadian River near Calumet** - Swainson's and Red-tailed Hawk, Dickcissel, Lark Sparrow; 26 species. Participants: J Schoff, D Eide, C Douglas, BD.

**June 9: Mitch Park.** Bewick's Wren, Field Sp, Lark Sp, Dickcissel, Blue Grosbeak, Louisiana Waterthrush, 40 species. Participants: T Underhill, C Douglas, BD.

**June 16: Eldon Lyon Park.** Red-headed WP, Western Kingbird; 10th & Council - Black-crowned NH, 3 Egrets and Little Blue H in nests; **Overholser Soccer Field** - Baltimore Oriole; **Yukon City Park** - Yellow-crowned NH in nests, Great Crested Flycatcher; 36 species, Participants: A Bay, D Eide, C Douglas, BD.

**June 23: S Lake Hefner.** E Kingbird, Warbling V, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, White-winged Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, Osprey, Baltimore Oriole, Orchard Oriole; 41 species. Participants: C Douglas, BD.

**June 26: Wichita Mountains.** Painted Bunting, Summer Tanager, Canyon Wren, Rock Wren, Broad-winged Hawk, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Black Vulture; 16 species. Participants: M Barton, D Eide, C Douglas, BD.



**July 17: Salt Plains NWR** - American White Pelican, White-faced Ibis, Snowy Plover, Greater Yellowlegs, Upland Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Northern Bobwhite, Grasshopper Sparrow; 43 species. Participants: M Barton, D Eide, C Douglas, BD.

**July 24: Roman Nose Canyon multi-use trail.** Rufous-crowned Sparrow; 13 species. Participants: C Douglas, BD.

**July 31: Wichita Mountains.** Red-eyed Vireo, Black-capped Vireo, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Painted Bun-

ting, Green Heron; **Hackberry Flats**- Common Moorhen, Dark Ibis, Long-bill Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Willet, Solitary Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper; **OK 5 east of Frederick** - Burrowing Owl; 31 species. Participants: M Barton, D Eide, C Douglas, BD.

**August 7: Lake Arcadia.** Blue Grosbeak; **Canadian Valley Sod Farm** - Lark Sparrow; **Lake Hefner**- Common Loon, Yellow Warbler, Spotted Sandpiper; **Overholser Cofferdam** - Forster's Tern; **Foreman Rd from Yukon to El Reno** - Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper, Pied-billed Grebe, Swainson's Hawk; **Mustang Rd north of Wagner Rd** - Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Long-billed Dowitcher; 38 species. Participants: M Barton, C Douglas, E Vamraak, BD.

**August 14: South Jenkins.** White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, American Goldfinch, Eastern & Western Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher; 17 species. Participants: M Barton, W Harden, B Holbrook, C Douglas, B Diffin



**August 21: Lake Arcadia.** Brown Pelican, Green Heron, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Black Tern, Blue Grosbeak, Broad-winged Hawk dark morph; 25 species. Participants: M Lane, S Davis, C Douglas, E Vamraak, BD.

**August 28: GM Sutton Urban Wilderness.** Mississippi Kite, White-winged Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, Least Flycatcher, Wilson's Warbler, Yellow Warbler; **South Jenkins** - Cooper's Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk; **Lake Thunderbird west dam to Clear Bay Trail** - Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Least Flycatcher, Summer Tanager; **Lake Stanley Draper** - Swainson's Hawk, Indigo Bunting; 33 species. Participants: M Lane & S Davis (Sutton & Jenkins), C Douglas, BD.



Bill Diffin



## Recorders Report: Summer 2010

From a 500 year flood to moderate drought conditions the birds experienced a great change in the weather this summer while nurturing the next generation of youngsters. On June 2<sup>nd</sup> Matt Jung found a Pileated Woodpecker at Rose Lake. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Matt and a birder from South Carolina found a Hooded Merganser hen with 6-8 ducklings in the Coffey Dam area. The next day he found a drake Northern Shoveler west of the Coffey Dam and 2 Prothonotary Warbler on the Coffey Dam. Jim Bates and his son birded Lake Draper and located a Kentucky Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. On June 14<sup>th</sup> a storm set its bull's eye on central Oklahoma and continued to rain a 500 year flood. In 24 hours the official rainfall recorded at Will Rogers Airport with 7.6 inches while in Edmond it was 12.1 but Kingfisher received only 0.92 inch. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> Bill Diffin and Charles Douglas found an Osprey carrying a fish across Lake Hefner and heard a Gray Catbird singing.

On July 3<sup>rd</sup> another storm left almost 2 inches of rain, and then it turned hot and dry. On July 5<sup>th</sup> Jim Bates birded around Yukon and found 2 **Long-billed Curlews** and 2 Marbled Godwits in a field north of Wagner Road



just east of the Yukon Water Treatment Plant, and at Lake Overholser there were fledglings in Prothonotary box #4 and Wood Ducks. On July 14<sup>th</sup> Joe Grzybowski stopped at Alex Marsh in Grady County and found an immature **White Ibis** among a few White-faced Ibises. On the 16<sup>th</sup> Matt had a Common Loon on Lake

Hefner. On the 27<sup>th</sup> at Lake Carl Blackwell Timothy O'Connell had Forester's Terns, Red-eyed Vireo, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Fish Crow, and Summer Tanager. On the 28<sup>th</sup> along Mustang Road Matt found 2 Greater Yellowlegs.

On August 2<sup>nd</sup> Jim Bates birded Foreman Road and found Upland Sandpipers, Buff-breasted Sandpipers, and Baird's Sandpipers. On the 4<sup>th</sup> Bill Diffin located a flock of about 75 Buff-breasted Sandpipers north and east of the Foreman/Gregory intersection. On the 7<sup>th</sup> Matt found an **Eastern Screech Owl** at Eldon Lyon Park. Kim Wiar had a Swainson's Hawk cruising over the field opposite the Healthplex on Tecumseh Road. The OCAS weekly birders led by Bill Diffin found a Spotted Sandpiper and Yellow Warbler at Lake Hefner, at

Sod by Sherry a Pied-billed Grebe and Least Sandpiper; and at the North Mustang Road Playa a Long-billed Dowitcher.



Just after the May 10 multiple tornado storms a Swallow-tailed Kite was reported near Stillwater. Now on July 9<sup>th</sup> Dick Gunn, Luke McGinley and Cecil Johnson checked out South Jenkins and found a **Swallow-tailed Kite**. On the 10<sup>th</sup> Joe Grzybowski took some excel-

lent photos of the bird and the assembled group located a second one. It was seen on the 11<sup>th</sup> by Terri Underhill and Pat Velte, on the 12<sup>th</sup> by Carolyn and Lindell Dillon, on the 13<sup>th</sup> by Terri and Pat and on the 26<sup>th</sup> near the Sutton Wilderness Area by Lindell and Carolyn Dillon.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> Jim Bates found American Avocets and an Osprey at Lake Hefner. On the 16<sup>th</sup> Lindell and Carolyn Dillon found an immature eagle on Red Hill in Purcell. On the 20<sup>th</sup> the Weekly Birders led by Bill Diffin found two **Brown Pelicans**, Black Terns, Forester's Terns, Broad-winged Hawk and Peregrine Falcon at Lake Arcadia. On the 25<sup>th</sup> Terri Underhill in Edmond found American Redstarts, Yellow Warblers, **Wilson's Warblers**, Orange Crowned Warbler and an unknown Empidonax. On the 26<sup>th</sup> Bill Diffin and OCAS Weekly Birders refound the Brown Pelican, along with Blue-winged Teal.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> Jimmy Woodard, Nadine Varner and Colleen Crank from St. Lewis found a Black Vulture at South Jenkins. On the 29<sup>th</sup> Matt Jung found a Caspian Tern on the northeast side of Lake Overholser. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Bill Diffin and Eivind Vamraak found both the Brown Pelican and the Caspian Tern. By the end of August it was hot and dry throughout the United States. NOAA recorded it at the 4<sup>th</sup> warmest summer on record. For OKC it was the 15<sup>th</sup> warmest on record and the 32<sup>nd</sup> driest.

During the summer a total of **125** bird species were reported with **5** new additions making the Central Oklahoma area to date total at **253** 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).

Esther M. Key, Editor.

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# Chirping

September 2010

By Patti Muzny

Our summer was hot and dry after the spring floods, but the birds in our yard managed to carry on and raise a brood or two, as if to defy Ma Nature's wrath and heat. The pair of Eastern Bluebirds that appeared in our very urban yard fledged one young after being attacked by what I suspect was English Sparrows. A few weeks later they nested again and something predated their nest and they gave up. By the time they tried the second time, it was very hot and they probably would have sautéed in that wooden box. At the end of August, they were flitting around in our neighbor's back yard, so they have stayed in the area.

Around our neighborhood, Brian and I have both heard Monk Parakeets once or twice during the summer. The discovery was so brief we couldn't see where they went. Those birds fly as if on a serious mission when they are airborne. Hummers are visiting our backyard feeder and the sage and morning glory. We have had many Mississippi Kites all summer and I've loved watching them glide across our yard. Brian saw one with a Starling in its talons. I suspect they are mostly after the conventions of dragonflies that have been so prominent everywhere I look.

Throughout the summer, we didn't spend much time at our cabin. Vegetation grew well and our trees and pasture are still green and lush. Welcome rain had fallen in our corner of McClain County and provided our granddaughter's horse, Sadie, with some nice prairie hay. That is, if Sam and I decide to rake the pasture after it had been brush hogged. "Real" ranchers have mowers, rakes and bailers – the Muznys have a lawn rake and some empty sweet feed and bird seed sacks! It works for us and is much appreciated by our always-hungry horse.

While raking the pond dam, I heard a Barred Owl shouting match, an upset Pileated Woodpecker. Soon the Great-horned Owl joined in and we had a chorus. On Labor Day the birding had to be curtailed a little when the grandkids, a friend and Sadie the horse came to visit. This trip no turkey hen jumped out of the weeds and caused Sadie to toss her rider and Sydney made her first actual gallop across the pasture – with no hands on the saddle horn! I think most of the birds just stayed out of the way.

Driving on Hwy. 59 toward Byars, in the area between Wayne and Rosedale, we saw a flock of well over 100 Cattle Egrets surrounding the grazing Angus cattle in the pasture. In the past we've seen a few, but this was a major gathering.

On September 12th, Sadie and Sydney arrived for another riding session. I think Sadie likes these visits even more because she gets to graze on fresh grass. Almost before her hindquarters hit the grass when she exits the trailer, her head goes down and she's a happy horse. In between

horse rides, Sydney made a few rounds on the 4-wheeler. As she rode down the drive from the barn, I heard her make a gravel-throwing quick stop and Granny was summoned.

I walked over to see what she'd found and saw a small, very pretty snake that I had never seen before. Brian was summoned and I went to get my glasses. We had a 'lifer' snake! It was a Western Pygmy Rattlesnake!! (Nealand can stop reading here!) The coloration in one of our old snake I.D. books does not do justice to the beautiful colors. In over 35 years on this property, not once have we found a poisonous snake. After photos and admiring it from a couple of feet away, we encouraged it to go back into the woods before the other two males in my family decided we didn't need a rattlesnake in our "yard."



An afternoon rainstorm brought a Phoebe up to the cabin, and a warbler-chip I didn't get to identify. The Pileated Woodpecker landed in the dead oak behind the pond dam and our Red-shouldered Hawk spent about 30 minutes earlier in the morning at the dead oak and it screamed and screamed, before gliding out across the pond and over the timber. I love to hear them.

A brief camping trip to southern Colorado at the end of July with Tim, Amy and the granddaughters allowed me a few high country birds. We put out birdseed at our campsite north of Chama, NM, and attracted Juncos and Pine Siskins and a Pine Grosbeak. The little Siskins were so tame, we were careful not to step on them! The hummer feeder attracted the ubiquitous Broad-tailed Hummingbirds. The Steller's Jays (always fun to watch) found our stash of seed and came in for their share.

West of Cimarron, NM, we spotted a large herd of female Elk. Several years ago we had seen a herd of cows and their bulls, but this was in September. It was our granddaughters' first Elk sighting. Our extremely civilized campground in Cimarron Canyon was visited by a bear, but not our campsite. It seems the campers next to us failed to put their ice chest with their steaks inside their vehicle. Some folks just don't think the rules apply to them. Put your food inside!!

Our trip was cut short due to truck transmission issues, but we made it to our front door before the weary device totally gave up and died. I'm still pouting a little because we had planned to spend several days in the cool of the mountains, but at least we didn't have to walk home!



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# Montana Birding & Beyond

*By Jimmy Woodard*

Nealand Hill and I left early on Saturday, May 29 for a bird trip to Montana and the interior basin. We drove through the Panhandle and eastern Colorado, bypassed Denver and ended up in Cheyenne, Wyoming for the first night.

Our Sunday drive through grasslands, rolling hills and mesas put us into Montana by 10 a.m. We stopped at the Little Big Horn battle site and saw Say's Phoebe, Grasshopper Sparrow and Bullock's Oriole.

We made Billings (Montana's largest city) and headed west on I-90. We birded in the rain by car and had Bald and Golden Eagle, Sandhill Crane, Magpie and Violet-green Swallow.

We made contact with birding friends Ray and Barbara Johnson after arriving in Helena. With their advice we visited Helena Reservoir and located pelicans, several Western Grebes, Red-necked Grebe, Least Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, and Vesper Sparrow.

On Monday, the 31st, Ray led us to Freezeout Lake, about an hour north of Helena. This is one of the Montana hot-spots and we quickly found out why. Clouds, cold and rain didn't slow the birding -- there were birds everywhere.

We found Marsh Wrens, Sora, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds all over. The marshes and fields were choked full of birds. As we walked a dike into the lake, four American Bitterns flew by in a perfect line and then dropped into some reeds and disappeared. We also had Willet, Black-bellied Plover, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Forster's Tern and lots of waterfowl.

We enjoyed brat sandwiches for lunch as we watched Chestnut-collared and McCown's Longspurs display at close range in the grasslands. A Prairie Falcon flew through to interrupt the proceedings.

Later in the day we drove into the mountains west of Helena and hiked up into the forest where we located a male Ruffed Grouse and a female Three-toed Woodpecker in between raindrops. We enjoyed talking birds over dinner at Ray's house that evening. Ray is a taxidermist and has a fantastic collection of stuff grouse and game birds from all over the world.

On Tuesday morning, Nealand and I went to Canyon Ferry Lake near Helena. The woods held lots of migrants including Least and Dusky Flycatchers, House Wren, Western Tanager, and Black-headed Grosbeak. I saw a Clay-colored Sparrow building a grassy nest in a clump of weeds and we found Western Grebe and Wood Duck on an oxbow.

Ray met us late in the morning and we drove up into the forest at Grassy Meadow Mountain. Nealand spotted a male Dusky Grouse in the open, next to the road. This was lifer #723 for Nealand. We celebrated with sandwiches near the snow-covered mountaintop.

We birded the Hahn Creek Canyon on the way back to down; we didn't see a lot but did find MacGillivray's Warbler, Evening Grosbeak and Lewis's Woodpecker. We looked for partridge in some agriculture fields but a rainstorm washed out the rest of the day's birding. We had strawberry pie to celebrate Nealand's lifer.

On Wednesday, Nealand and I left for the three-hour journey north to Glacier National Park. The birding was mundane en route except for a pair of Gray Partridge next to the road near Chouteau. We ventured into Canada and visited Paterson Provincial Park in Alberta. Winds and rain limited birding but the scenery was awesome.

Back in the U.S., after a thorough search by Customs, we headed into the east side of Glacier National Park. Birds were few but we saw more fantastic views. Snow and avalanches and closed the Road-to-the Sun through the park so we were forced to take a longer route along the south edge to get to the west side.

We met up with Ann (Amy) Wilbur and Dan Farrell, former Okies, in Columbia Falls. We rode with them into the park and birded several areas. We looked for a juvenile Saw-whet Owl reported in a woodpecker hole but had no luck. At Oxbow Lake we saw a pair of Barrow's Goldeneye. Vaux's Swifts flew over the water and both Golden and Bald Eagles flew overhead.

Dan and I hiked about two miles on the Howe Lake Trail to look for a reported Hawk Owl nest but we got nothing but sweaty for the effort. Before we left the park we saw a tourist out of his car taking pictures of a black bear only 20 yards or so off the road.

On Friday the 4th, we left the park and headed south toward Missoula. We made a quick stop at a park in Kalispell where we found Pygmy Nuthatch, Red-naped Sapsucker and Northern Waterthrush in the rain.

We birded Ninepipes National Wildlife Refuge and got wet as we searched shelter belts for owls. We saw a Long-eared Owl (lifer for Amy) and Great Horned Owl. There were lots of Western and Clark's Grebes and one Red-necked Grebe on the lake.

After lunch, when the rain stopped, we took a drive on the tour loop through the National Bison Range. The scenic road wound through rolling hills and up into the forest where we saw a Black Bear on a hillside.

***Next month: Part II - Missoula Bird Festival & Beyond***

Oklahoma City Audubon Society  
c/o Patricia Velte  
1421 NW 102nd Street  
Oklahoma City, OK 73114

## Field Trip Schedule: [ *watch for updates on the website and in future newsletters* ]

- Sept 25: **Yukon City Park.** meet at west parking lot at 7:30 AM. leader: Jimmy Woodard (405-365-5685).  
Oct 2: **American Horse Lake/Kayaking** and birding. 9AM-6PM. RSVP to casey.lind@okc.gov or call Martin Nature Park 405-755-0676 for more details.  
Oct 9: **Prairie Dog Point Clean Up.** Meet at 10 AM at the PDPT parking lot at PDPT. Pat Velte pvelte@cox.net.  
Oct 15-17: **OOS Fall Meeting** in Stillwater. contact Rebecca Renfro for details at relore7@aol.com.  
Oct 30: **Lake Overholser.** Meet at 7:30AM at Route 66 Park. leader: Matt Jung.  
Nov 6: **Salt Plains NWR** (joint trip w/ Tulsa Audubon). Leader is Jerry Vanbebbber. Meet at 7:30 for departure at IHOP at I-40 and Mustang Road in Yukon.  
Nov 13: **Arcadia Lake.** Meet at 8AM at Braum's in Edmond at I-35 and 15th St. Leader: Bill Diffin.  
Dec 4: **CBC Scouting.** John Shackford will lead us to scout areas to prepare for the Christmas Bird Count.  
Dec 18: **OKC Audubon Christmas Bird Count.**  
Jan 8: **Crystal Lake/Bridgestone.** Leader is Jim Bates. Meet at McDonald's at I-40 and Council at 8AM  
Jan 15: **Longspur search / Norman area.** Angie and Ben Holt will lead us to search for longspurs at Embassy Suites and the 10 Mile Flats area. Details TBA.  
Jan 13-16: **TOS Winter** meeting in Ft Worth. Texas Ornithological Society meeting. Lyn Barber at dalybar@aol.com.  
Jan 22: **Canton Lake.** details TBA.  
Feb 5: **Sooner Lake** (joint trip w/ Tulsa Audubon). details TBA.  
Feb 12: **Foss Lake.** Leader: Larry Mays. details TBA.  
Feb 26: **Woodcock Watch at Byars.** Patti Muzny will host us to observe woodcocks at her cabin just east of Byars.  
Mar 5: **Tenkiller Lake** (joint trip w/ Tulsa Audubon). details TBA.  
Mar 19: **Stinchcomb WMA.** Leader is Jim Bates. meet at Jim's Restaurant and NW 39th and Council at 8AM.  
Mar 26: **South Jenkins St/Norman.** Leader: Dick Gunn. details TBA.  
Apr ??: **OKC Zoo Behind the scenes birding.** tour the zoo and bird the grounds. Leader: Nadine Varner.  
Apr 15-17: **LPC Festival at Woodward.** Contact John Kennington for more details at johnkennington@gmail.com.  
Apr 29: **Salt Plains Bird Festival.**  
May/June: **Club picnic and Nightjar walk at Lake Draper.** details TBA.
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