



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

November 2009

The Arbuckle Plains and Pontotoc Ridge



Jona Tucker will be our guest at the November 16 meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society. Her presentation will be, "The Arbuckle Plains and Pontotoc Ridge Preserve." Jona will be presenting information about The Nature Conservancy's work in the Arbuckle Plains of Oklahoma, including their work on the Blue River and at their preserve, Pontotoc Ridge.

Jona works for The Nature Conservancy as the Arbuckle Plains/Blue River Project Manager. She also manages

Boehler Seeps & Sandhills Preserve in Atoka County and works on other TNC conservation projects throughout the southeast part of the state. She has an associates degree in Timber Management from Eastern Oklahoma, a B.S. from Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Biological Sciences with an emphasis in Botany, and a Master's from Southeastern in Wildlife Conservation. Prior to working for TNC she was Wildlife Biologist at Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge.

The Arbuckle Plains are covered with springs and caves with unique fauna, including the Oklahoma cave amphipod, an invertebrate known from only four caves, all of which are located in the Arbuckle Plains. The Blue River, the major stream flowing from the Arbuckle-Simpson Aquifer, is the only river in Oklahoma that is still entirely free-flowing, meaning that it flows to the ocean without being impeded by man-made reservoirs.

You will find Jona's presentation filled with interesting information as well as updates on The Nature Conservancy's goals, including fire restoration, in this unique area.

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.

President's Perspective

By Eric Enwall



The Good Guys

This seems sort of like a sermon in that I want to talk about stewardship and the club. In some cases it is difficult to maintain the integrity of volun-

teer groups such as our club because of a paucity of members who are willing to perform the infrastructure tasks necessary to keep things going. That is certainly not so for our club. We have an outstanding group who fill the "officer corps." You will see in the new report from the nominating committee that we continue to have an excellent slate of candidates for the officers.

There is also a need for dedicated and at least somewhat activist members as well. The cookie monster always needs the contributions from us to make that break after the business meeting as enjoyable as it usually is. The program chairman is always soliciting ideas for speakers for meetings. You don't have to necessarily "give" a program, although if you have a good story to tell, talk with Warren about it. You may also know people who are professionals in birding or conservation or allied subjects who could give programs of interest to the membership. We need to have you help us with ideas in this regard. We also need birders for our field trips. No one (excepting the trip leaders of course) should feel obligated by club membership to go on any of the specific trips, but I wish that you would consider trying out some of them. If we are not going to the places you want to bird, tell us. We can't always make it to far away places, but suggestions are again always welcome. Do come out when you can--it is pretty dreary for a trip leader to spend the effort to prepare for a field trip to find that he/she gave a party and nobody came.

As I expect John will remind us as well, Christmas Count is not all that far away. This is, in my mind, a very important activity for all birders to support and

with John in charge the organization if first class. Even if you can't spend the whole day in the field you can contribute in other ways.

Then there are the calendars and other fund raising efforts. Contribute when you can. I think it a great tactic to get a couple of calendars now as gifts and get them in the mail before your givee gets other calendars. I don't know what the status of the pin/patch program is but I am looking forward to picking up mine. Idle of me not to know the status of these programs, but come to the next meeting and we should know more then.

It's also time to begin honing your stories for the December meeting. Remember that the program for this meeting is all member generated with stories about your year's best birding events. I have had a tendency in the past to refer to this meeting as "Liar's Club" but everyone assures me that the stories are all true. Truth is always best but you can always practice to make the story as entertaining as possible.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2009

President	Eric Enwall	364-5029
Vice President	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Cheryl Allen	478-0339
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	732-9885
Parliament	Sam Moore	752-9549
Programs	Warren Harden	364-3491
Recorder	Esther M. Key	381-9170
Conservation	Larry Mays	392-2131
Field Trips	Jimmy Woodard	324-1462
Newsletter Editors:		
	Pat Velte	751-5263
	Carla Brueggen	495-3259
	Matt Jung	946-8764
Publicity	Cheryl Allen	478-0339
Historian	Nealand Hill	388-6759
Refreshments	Jim Vicars	732-9885
Webmaster	Pat Velte	751-5263

The Oklahoma City Audubon society is neither a chapter of nor affiliated with National Audubon.

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

OKC-Audubon.org

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



Dr. George M. Sutton stated in his book *Birds Worth Watching* (1986) that the Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*) “is so common in towns that it is almost a dooryard bird.” Speculation is that this little owl receives some protection in smaller and more urban timber because the

Great Horned Owl is not common there: the larger owl sometimes feeds on the smaller owl where the two inhabit the same timber.

There are two color phases of Eastern Screech-Owls, red (actually a reddish brown) and gray. Mated pairs are often of mixed color phases. Why would the two color phases, from an evolutionary standpoint, survive so well was a question Dr. Sutton raised in the book mentioned above. He indicates that one study showed and another study strongly suggested that the red color phase does not survive as well in extremely cold weather as the gray phase. Could it be that the red phase loses heat faster in cold temperatures? Or does this color phase become prey more often than the gray phase? All questions Dr. Sutton considers in his book.

These non-migratory, very nocturnal owls lay 3 to 7 eggs—usually 4 or 5—in some tree cavity, such as an old woodpecker hole. More than once I have heard of adults and young frequenting a yard where they will feed on insects drawn to outside house lights. Their descending whinnying call is fairly easy to imitate and is a very effective way to draw a fuss from other small bird species in the area; sometimes such an imitation call will attract another screech-owl.

I remember with pleasure a pair I once saw during the day in the timber below the Lake Overholser dam. At least one owl was the gray phase, and maybe the second too—just can’t remember for sure. But they were together and “frozen,” quite a sight to see as they did their best impression of dead twigs. Many years ago Warren Harden and several of his sub-permittee banders caught a screech-owl in the banding nets we had placed (overnight if I remember correctly) near the coffer dam at Lake Overholser. The owl remained so frozen in the net we first thought it was dead—quite an

act for a bird that was just fine!



On our Christmas Bird Counts, we usually feel lucky to find one of these owls. Vic Vacin, an early member of our Society, used to have one in a nest box he had built and placed in his yard. Every year in the evening on our Christmas Bird Counts, Vic or someone else would perch near the box until the owl’s head could be seen at the box

entrance in the fading light. Old faithful—both Vic and the owl! In recent years someone usually locates a screech owl in a cavity and finds that bird on our Christmas Count, but we have not had an old faithful in recent years.

Brad Carlton, also an early member of our society, had a nest box in his back yard in which he saw a screech-owl every day. Brad and Warren Harden, who had a bird banding license at the time, became curious as to how many owls were actually frequenting the nest box—was it a family, a pair, or just a

Continued on page 4

Bird of the Month (cont.)

lone bird. Warren climbed to the nest, caught the present occupant in the birdbox, banded it and returned it to the box. Warren placed a rag in the opening with a string to the ground, thereby allowing Warren to keep the owl in the box a while, hoping it would calm down. Then Warren pulled the string to set the owl free. And they did find out how many owls were using the box—one. Brad never saw his owl again!

Once on a Christmas Count many years ago I was walking with another birder in what was to become the Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge. Somewhere I had heard—maybe from

the other birder—that knocking on trees with cavities in them sometimes elicits the face of a screech-owl at the cavity entrance. I was practicing this new technique when I came upon a dead tree about 15-20 feet high with a probable woodpecker hole near the top. I knocked on the tree and to my surprise the whole tree fell down! A second or two after it hit the ground, a screech-owl wobbled out of the entrance and flew off, no doubt with a bit of a headache.

Another wrinkle about Oklahoma screech-owls. In the 1980's the screech-owls found in the Black Mesa area in far western Oklahoma were split from the Eastern Screech-Owls: the Black Mesa birds are now considered a separate species, the Western Screech-Owl. There are lots of fun and good reasons to keep on the lookout for screech-owls in Oklahoma.



2009 Christmas Bird Count

It's that time again. The Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count (CBC), as is tradition, will be on the first Saturday in the CBC survey period. This year that makes it 19 December 2009. We had a great effort last year and found 125 species, a record, I believe, for any Oklahoma CBC. To me this was rather astounding, especially because weatherwise it was quite a raw count day.

I am hoping that most everyone will be able to again concentrate their efforts in the same areas they surveyed last year. If there were problems, etc., with your individual areas, let me know and we will see what we can come up with for substitutions/changes. If you are a new participant, please get in touch with me and I will try to assign an appropriate group and/or area for you.

John Shackford

Phone: (405) 340-5057 mail: johnsshack@aol.com

CBC Recap Party

At Diane Newell's Home—8304 Lakeaire*
Begins at 5 pm, Saturday, December 19, 2009

Diane Newell has very graciously agreed to once again host the Christmas Bird County Party, at the same time and place as in the past. Many thanks, Diane. Members of the society will be bringing food and drinks for the occasion, as in the past. Thanks to these volunteers as well.

This is always a time of good fun and fellowship among our bird counters and their families. If you have been unable to come in the past, we hope you can make it this year. We usually have about 40 people and its always fun to find out about the good birding stories that occur during the count. Other "lies" are not excluded!

Directions to the Newell home: go on N MacArthur to NW 82nd Street (this is just a few blocks north of the Northwest Expressway and N MacArthur). Turn east (right, if coming north from the NW Expressway) onto NW 82nd. In about 1/4 mile on NW 82nd there is a stop sign. Continue past this sign on NW 82nd for about another 1/4 mile, until you come to a bend (toward the north/left) in the road and the Newell's house is just at this bend, on the South Side. The address is 8304 Lakeaire Drive (road changes names at the bend). Look for the cars there. Hope you can make it!

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Minutes of October 18, 2009

Vice-president, John Shackford presided over the meeting as President Eric Enwall was unable to attend due to illness. He greeted first time visitor, Sandra Comb, who also became our newest member.

John asked for a motion to approve September's minutes as published in the Oct. newsletter. Motion made and approved.

Treasurers Report:

Cash on hand 9/21/09 \$ 5,502.97
Deposits Total: \$ 110.48
Disbursements Total: \$ 314.57
Cash on Hand 10/19/09 \$ 5,298.88

Motion made to accept as read and approved.

Committee Reports:

Field Trips:

During Jimmy Woodard's recent birding trip to Washington State he and his fellow birders attended the Washington State Ornithology meeting and had their literature to share.

The October 17, field trip to Ft. Reno found 74 species. Of interest was a late Swainson's Hawk and a Grasshopper Sparrow plus three resident Barns Owls and two newly arrived Short-eared Owls. Max Fuller has "connections" at Ft. Reno and was able to take the group into gated areas that are not normally open to the public.

The next field trip is scheduled for November 24 to check the Purina fields in Edmond for Long-spurs and Short-eared Owls. Warren Harden will lead the group.

December 5th will be a pre-Christmas Bird Count trip lead by John Shackford.

March field trip will possibly be led by Eric Enwall.

Nealand Hill mentioned the upcoming birding festival held at Bosque del Apache refuge, November 17-22. Go to their website for complete details. He said it is well worth attending to see the thousands of Sandhill Cranes and geese. He also mentioned you should make motel reservations now, if you want to attend.

Jimmy also discussed his thoughts on chartering a bus for a trip to High Island, Texas next spring and asked for

a show of hands from members that would be interested.

The **new policy** to gain access to the OG&E Sooner Power Plant and Horseshoe Power Plant is as follows; the gate guards will now use your driver's license to make you a permanent "Bird Watcher's" card that will admit you to the areas that are accessible to birders. That is, if you are already on their list of people who are registered as birders. To put your name on that list you need to contact **Cyndie Browning** at buteoswainsoni@yahoo.com.

Jimmy also thanked John Shackford for his write up and tribute to John and Dorothy Newell in the newsletter. John stated that Warren Harden had also contributed a fine paragraph in this tribute to the Newells.

OLD BUSINESS:

We have the 2010 Calendars for sale.

NEW BUSINESS:

Need a nomination committee for 2010 officers. Volunteers are Jimmy Woodard, Nealand Hill, & Terri Underhill. John asked for a motion to accept these three volunteers. Made and approved.

The annual Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Saturday, December 19, 2009.

The January meeting will be held on the 4th Monday, January 25, 2010 due to the Garden Center being closed for Martin Luther King day.

A new "Date Guide To The Occurrences Of Birds In Oklahoma" will soon be available from the OOS.

Break for refreshments and visitation

Warren introduced Dr. Dwayne Elmore who gave an excellent power point program on the "Doves of Oklahoma".

Dora Webb, Acting Recording Secretary



Cookie Patrol

Refreshments for the November meeting will be provided by: Max Fuller
John Shackford
Nancy Reed

Recorders Report

October 2009

Shorebirds to Sparrows

At the beginning of October, previous low rainfall left sufficient mud flats for the shorebird migration while sunflowers graced the prairies with their golden radiance followed by the formation of seeds to feed migrating and winter sparrows. Mid-month rainfall began filling lakes to the delight of arriving ducks. While frost is delayed, prairie grasses wave their colorful seed heads, and forest trees turn to dazzling yellows and fiery reds just before falling leaves mulch hiding insects waiting to be searched out by birds.

On the 1st Bill Diffin found Black-bellied and American Golden Plovers on the mud flats along Lake Overholser's Coffe Dam, and Pat Garrison and his wife saw an Osprey just south of Lake Hefner's Stars and Stripes Park. On the 3rd near Stillwater's Lake Carl Blackwell Vince Cavaleri found a juvenile **Sabine's Gull** and in the woods a Pine Warbler and Yellow-rumped Warblers, while at Sanborn Lake Timothy O'Connell found the last summer Dickcissel. At Lake Thunderbird Cynthia and Matthew Van Den Broeke found an Orange-crowned Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, and Summer Tanager.

On the 4th in Arcadia Alicia Riddle found the first **Dark-eyed Junco**. Cynthia saw a large group of Chimney Swifts flying high in Norman. At Lake Overholser Jimmy Woodward and Valerie Bradshaw found 200 American White Pelicans, American Avocet and a Merlin. On the 6th the Tuesday Morning Birders found 7 **Rusty Blackbirds** at Lake Hefner.

For The Big Sit at Lake Thunderbird on the 10th Angie Holt reports the Wing Nuts saw 47 species including a Fish Crow, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Swainson's Hawk, Wood Duck, Ruddy Duck, Green-winged Teal, and Wilson's Snipe. Polly O'Malley found the first fall **White-crowned Spar-**

row on the 12th in Lincoln County. Bill found Vesper Sparrows at Lake Hefner, and Lindell Dillon found a **Glaucous Gull** in Norman.

On the 13th Brian Davis added Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail and Gadwall to the list of arriving ducks. On the 14th at Rose Lake the Tuesday Morning Birders found Hairy Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Field Sparrow. On the 15th John Polo and Adrian Monroe found a Blue-headed Vireo at the OSU arboretum, and in Mustang Jimmy saw a flock of White-fronted Geese with a couple of Snow Geese. On the 16th Matt Jung found an American Pipit and Western Meadowlark, and on the 18th some goslings that looked suspiciously like Egyptian Geese in Eldon Lyon Park. Dick Gunn saw **Pine Siskins** at South Jenkins in Norman.



Rufous Hummingbird. Photo by Terri Underhill

On the 22nd in their Edmond yards Terri Underhill has a **Rufous Hummingbird** plus two Brown Creepers, and Dave McNeely has a Winter Wren. Meanwhile at Lake Hefner new arrivals were discovered on succeeding days. On the 23rd Matt found a Herring Gull; on the 24th Bill found Redhead ducks; on the 25th Matt found two Eared Grebes and at Lake Overholser a Marsh Wren.

On the 26th at South Jenkins Matt found a Song and **Harris's Sparrow**. On the 27th Dick reports the **white** Red-tailed Hawk has returned after five years and one month. He also found a Solitary Sandpiper, Swamp Sparrow, and **White-throated Sparrow**. On the 30th at the Coffe Dam Matt found a **Dunlin** and reports the mud flats at Lake Overholser are flooding over because of recent rains which brought the monthly total above normal average. At the El Reno sewage ponds Brian found newly arrived Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead and Ring-necked Ducks.

During October 149 bird species were reported making the Central Oklahoma area total to date at **284** species. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds by turning in reports. I can be contacted by email at emkok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

Tuesday Morning Birders



Tuesday Morning Birders trip leader, Bill Diffen

October 27 -- Charles Douglas and Bill Diffen birded Roman Nose Canyon. There were swarms of Yellow-rumped Warblers often accompanied by Ruby-crowned Kinglets throughout the woods and the cedar thickets. Carolina Chickadees and Dark-eyed Juncos were in the same areas. Chipping Sparrows occupied some of the grassy open-

ings. Two Fox Sparrows sat in a tree at the head of the canyon. One Golden-crowned Kinglet was spotted among the Ruby-crowns in the wooded bottom. Song Sparrows were busy in the switchgrass. A Brown Creeper scoured a tree trunk in the nearby woods. Great Blue Herons roosted on dead limbs out in the lake and along the shore. A Red-bellied Woodpecker pulled fruit off a chittamwood. Northern Flickers and Downy Woodpeckers appeared here and there throughout the day. As we were leaving for home, we observed many Chipping Sparrows, a Cooper's Hawk and a Loggerhead Shrike that was hunting from atop a pile of dead brush. Red-tailed Hawks sat on utility poles and fence posts all along our route. A Northern Harrier and an American Kestrel coursed along the road. Total for the day was 32 species.

October 20 -- Terri Underhill, Timothy Ryan, Charles Douglas and Bill Diffen birded the north and west access points around Lake Arcadia. Ospreys soared and hovered overhead, and some beautiful specimens perched on dead trees. Great Blue Herons roosted around the shore. Eastern Bluebirds grouped in several places. Least Sandpipers made for an interesting ID on the rocky shore fortifications. Some Yellow-rumped Warblers foraged and bathed at a little stream in the woods. Total for the day was 30 species.

October 13 -- Susan Prescott, Charles Douglas,

Doug Eide and Bill Diffen birded Lake Overholser NE mud flats, Rose Lake, Mustang Rd and Stinchcomb WR West. A big puddle in the plowed field near 50th St and Morgan Rd. held Greater White-fronted Geese, Dowitchers, Least Sandpipers, Killdeer, Franklin's Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls, Canada Geese, Mallards, and other ducks not recognizable in the drizzle and mist. A Northern Harrier coursed nearby. Rose Lake had American Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Pintail and Barn Swallow, and the pond at Mustang Rd had Northern. Shoveler. At Lake Overholser there were over 100 Dowitchers. They appeared to be mostly juvenile Long-billed, but there was one that had us convinced it was a Short-billed. On a sand bar were American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, Ring-billed Gulls, and Franklin's Gulls. Working the muddy shoreline were American Avocets, Spotted Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers, Stilt Sandpipers and Dowitchers. At Stinchcomb WR West were Spotted Towhee, White-crowned and Lincoln's Sparrows, Orange-crowned and Nashville Warblers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Hairy Woodpecker. Spotted Towhee calls were heard many times and in many places, and around a dozen were seen. The total for the day was 54 species.

October 6 -- Susan Prescott, Charles Douglas and Bill Diffen birded the south shore of Lake Hefner. Yellow-rumped, Orange-crowned and Nashville Warblers were in the thickets around the model airplane field and the sailboat yard. Also at the model airplane field were three Spotted Towhees, a House Wren before a Cooper's Hawk flew in and shut down the birding. Both Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night Herons were seen along the lake shore. Two Ospreys sat on bare branches, and more soared overhead throughout the morning. Thirty White-winged Doves and seven Rusty Blackbirds perched high in the woods near the south marina sailboat yard. Among the other species identified at Hefner: Barn Swallow, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Empidonax, Northern Flicker, Carolina Chickadee, Blue Jay, American Crow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, and European Starling. Charles and Bill took a look at the Lake Overholser mud flats on the way home. There were at least a dozen dowitchers, but none were close enough to allow an attempt at Long-billed vs. Short-billed. The species count for both lakes was 43.

Field Trips

November 21, 2009 - Purina Field (north OKC)

Warren Harden will lead the field trip through the fields south of NW 150th & Lincoln, near the Purina plant. The field has been a good spot for locating Smith's Longspurs and Short-eared Owls during recent years. The group will meet at the Oak Tree Food & Fuel, Memorial Road & Santa Fe, meeting time: 8:00 a.m.

December 5, 2009 - Oklahoma City Lakes Tour.

John Shackford will host a pre-Christmas Bird Count field trip on December 5, working primarily on water-birds. Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot on the east side of the Overholser dam. The group will survey [Lake Overholser](#), then visit the canal area north of Overholser, ending up at [Lake Hefner](#). Please try to RSVP to johnsshack@aol.com at least a week ahead, so John will know how many to expect.

Purchase your 2010 Calendars Now!

The beautiful 2010 fund raising calendars are here. They will be available at the monthly meetings for \$7.50 or you may order online or by mail. Yes, you can now purchase your calendar(s) from your home computer — visit the Oklahoma City Audubon site <http://www.okc-audubon.org> and click on the "Order Online" link on the front page. The mailing cost will be \$7.50 plus \$1.50 per calendar. This is the only source of revenue other than our membership dues. If every member bought just one calendar, we would be able to net \$500.00



at

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