



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

MARCH 2008

Iowa Tribe Eagle Rehabilitation Project

Victor Roubidoux, wildlife manager for the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma will be the featured speaker at the March 17 meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society. His presentation will focus on his work with the tribe's aviary near Perkins and its eagle rehabilitation program. In a recent *Tulsa World* interview, Victor explained that part of the Iowa's beliefs is that eagles were one of the first to see the face of the Creator. This is why it is important to the tribe to take care of them, he said.

Join us for an informative and interesting program about this majestic bird. Our meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 and NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.

Bald Eagle photo courtesy Terri Underhill



Tuesday Morning Birders

February 19, 2008

The Tuesday Morning group had a very good outing to Lake Overholser this morning. Not only was it great to get back together after our two month hiatus but we were rewarded with the sighting of a very rare bird! My hope was to relocate the Glaucous Gull that Jimmy Woodard had reported last week and so we did. It was a Life bird for almost the entire group. We were amused to watch as a Ring-billed Gull snatched a fish from a Cormorant only to have the prize stolen by the Glaucous and then a White Pelican got into the fray. The Glaucous was victorious and flew off to enjoy his bounty!!

There were large rafts of waterfowl including Redheads, Common & Red-breasted Mergansers and Common Goldeneyes plus a few Greater Scaup, Ruddy Ducks, American White Pelicans, Ring-billed, Herring and Bonaparte's Gulls on the lake. In the flooded fields along NW 23rd west of the lake, we found hundreds of Northern Pintails, Northern Shovelers, American Wigeon, Gadwalls and Green-winged Teal.

COOKIES:

Refreshments for the March meeting will be provided by: Terri Underhill, Matt Jung, Jana Mott.

FRIENDLY REMINDER:

It's time to renew your annual membership! Please pay \$10.00 at the March meeting or mail to Nancy Vicars, 820 Arthur Drive, Midwest City, OK 73110.

Continued on page 2

Tuesday Birders, cont.

Hidden in the cattails along the coffer dam, we found American Tree, Swamp & Song Sparrows, Spotted Towhee, Carolina Wren and Northern Cardinals. As we walked along the coffer dam we added a Belted Kingfisher, Great Blue Heron, Eastern Phoebe, Downy Woodpecker and Killdeer.

My birding buddies today were Terri Underhill, Feodora Steward, Jeanette Schoof, Sue Smith, Karen Barker, Carla Brueggen, Lyn Pearce, Pat Garrison, Larry Mays and brand new birder, Jina Schrader.

February 27, 2008

Our regular Tuesday morning outing got moved to Wednesday this week due to the BLUE-NORTHERN with a wind chill factor down in the teens!! It was not fit for man nor beast nor birds at Lake Hefner. However, Wednesday dawned clear and calm, just about your perfect February birding weather for Oklahoma.

We found American Robins, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Cedar Waxwings, Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals, Northern Flickers, Downy Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Song Sparrows, Red-Winged Blackbirds, Dark-eyed Junco, House Finch, Great Blue Heron, Horned Grebe and a Belted Kingfisher as we walked along the trails in Stars & Stripes park.

Along the shoreline near the inlet canal we added Killdeer, Least Sandpipers and one Greater Yellowlegs. Prairie Dog Point held quite a nice assortment of waterfowl along with a few gulls including Herring and Ring-billed Gulls plus one Thayer's Gull (many THANKS to Larry Mays) and American White Pelicans. Duck species included Gadwall, Mallard, Ruddy, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Greater Scaup, Bufflehead and Common & Red-breasted Mergansers. Spring is definitely in the air! We were thoroughly entertained by the mating antics of the Red-breasted Mergansers. Way across the lake we spotted three Common Loons and a small flotilla of Pied-billed Grebes.

My birding buddies today were Terri Underhill, Lyn Pearce, Larry Mays, Pat & Carmelita Garrison and first time birder, Ernie Barrett. Welcome Ernie and we look forward to getting you "hooked" on birding.

March 5, 2008

Once again, the Tuesday morning outing to Yukon City park was moved to Wednesday due to the weather forecast!!

Although the birds were not plentiful, we did manage to find a few very special ones such as 2-Winter Wrens, 2-Brown Creepers and 1 Red-breasted Nuthatch. A few colorful additions included Cedar Waxwings, American Goldfinch, American Robin, Blue Jay, House Finch, Orange-crowned Warbler, Carolina Wren, Northern Cardinal and Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

We also made a brief visit to the Dayton Tire nature trail. I was curious to see the extent of damage following the December ice storm. Much to my delight, the trail had been cleared and we were able to add quite a few species that we missed earlier. Fox, Song, Harris's, White-crowned & White-throated sparrows and Spotted Towhee along the trail plus Gadwall, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Green-winged & Blue-winged Teal and a Belted Kingfisher on the small pond.

My birding companions today were Terri Underhill and Ernie Barrett.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

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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 our outstanding website and keep up with the latest happenings.

OKC-Audubon.org

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford

Eastern Phoebe

The promise of spring comes in a number of ways—the first dandelion bloom; a scratch of henbit; an unusually warm, balmy day, perhaps with the threat of a tornado; a bluebird checking out a nesting box; a flock of Sandhill Cranes overhead giving their wonderfully eerie call on the way northward; a blooming breath-of-spring bush with its sweet aroma and a honey bee or two. All of these hints of spring arrive before the first tree leaves come out.

One of the most pleasant signs of spring is the arrival of the Eastern Phoebe. Somewhere in our individual worlds, we begin hearing its call—phoe-be, phoe-be—and see the bird, perhaps around the eaves of our house or at a nearby culvert along a stream. Then we think: Oh yeah, spring really is on the way.

Adult phoebes are about 7 inches long and drab of plumage, off white below and grayish above, the head being a darker gray. There are no wing bars or eye rings. It is quite similar in plumage to many other flycatchers, but it has an identifying behavior—it wagging its tail up and down regularly. A. C. Bent, in his life histories of North American birds series, says “[f]ledgling phoebes are...prettier when they leave the nest than they will ever be in their lives again. They are not dingy like their parents; their backs are pale olive, and their wings are crossed by two distinct buffy bars.”

Phoebe populations have done well as a result of man spreading across the landscape. We have created many nesting places for it. Bridges, culverts, barns and out buildings, eaves around houses, and so on. Bent has the following to say about the phoebe and man. “The phoebe has lived so long and so familiarly in our farmyards that we have come to look on it, not as a wild bird, but as a member of the happy community that makes up rural life—the pigs in their sty, the hens in their coops, the horses and cows in the barn and the phoebe in the back shed. Busy all day catching insects, unobtrusive, never noisy, it is popular with the farmers. They all know the phoebe as, over and over, it calls out its name.”



The phoebe lays 3-7, rarely 8, white eggs in its nest, a nest that usually includes mosses in the outer layer. Only females incubate the eggs, but both parents tend the nestlings. The nests are frequently parasitized by the Brown-headed Cowbird.

Bent reports that the phoebe was the first bird to ever be “banded,” and this by no less a person than Audubon himself. Audubon spent a lot of time studying a nesting pair in Pennsylvania. When the young were about to leave the nest, “I fixed a light silver thread to the leg of each, loose enough not to hurt the part, but so fastened that no exertions of theirs could remove it.” The following year, in studying the phoebes nesting along the same creek and its surrounding meadows, “I had the pleasure of finding that two of them had the little ring on the leg.”

The heartiest phoebes winter not far south of Oklahoma, and we usually even have one or two on our Christmas Bird Counts. But these are not the phoebes we think of as “our” phoebes. Several days ago I saw a small bird flit across the road near a culvert in our area. I thought of phoebe. Maybe it was, maybe it wasn’t. But two days later the phoebe that nests about our house was calling in the yard. The phoebe is back, so here comes spring!

In Other Words

By Larry Mays

George Miksch Sutton and Roger Tory Peterson may not necessarily be household names, but if you're a birder, or even remotely interested in birds, I'll wager you've heard of them both.

Both men were literally all about birds. Both were expert birders in the field, both were excellent taxonomists, both were superb bird artists and both were excellent teachers. And it is fitting, not to mention delightful, that two books have been recently published which commemorate these two wonderful men.



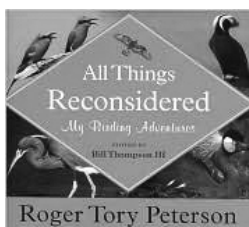
lister, ticker, twitcher--or what?" Peterson then goes on to describe some of these alternative names, and claims to favor the term *bird watcher* because it is the most inclusive.

"Introduced Species" discusses the several species of alien birds that have gained a foothold in North America. In this essay, Peterson says, "I *admire* House Sparrows--and also Rock Pigeons and Starlings." He defends his feelings by arguing that most of *us* are of foreign origin. I like that.

"The Cattle Egret" discusses the the invasion of the Western Hemisphere by a bird that was (probably) *not* introduced. The fate of the "first" Cattle Egret to be "discovered" in North America is remarkable. It certainly shows how times have changed.

Several of the articles deal with bird photography. In this day of digital imaging and digiscoping we have it made. Peterson speaks often of the chore of lugging around photographic equipment, as well as the cost of occasionally losing it (High Seas in a Rowboat).

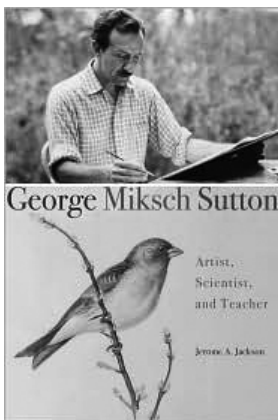
So, get yourself a copy of "All Things Reconsidered" and enjoy a look back at what *bird watching* was as Roger Tory Peterson recounts all these excellent adventures. Perhaps one will inspire you to an adventure of your own, or remind you of some of the ones you've already enjoyed.



The first book, "**All Things Reconsidered**," is edited by Bill Thompson III who is also editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and husband of Julie Zickefoose, whom I praised in an earlier essay. The book is a selection of 42 of the articles which Peterson wrote for the magazine during the last twelve years of his life. As one might expect from such a

selection, there is an interesting mix of subjects. One essay, "Orgy on Delaware Bay" tells of the breeding cycle of horseshoe crabs and the attendant hordes of shorebirds and laughing gulls that feast on the eggs--timely today what with the ravaging of the crab population by fishermen and crabbers looking to use them for bait, and the subsequent precipitous decline of numbers of Red Knots.

The second essay of the series, "What Are You Really?" asks the question relative to how each of relates to birds: "Are you a bird watcher, an ornithologist, an ornithophile, an aviphile, a bird lover, bird fancier, bird bander, birder, bird spotter,



"**George Miksch Sutton; Artist, Scientist, and Teacher**," a biography by Jerome A. Jackson, is a lovely work of praise for a man many of us Okie birders knew personally. Like most biographies it opens with a brief history of the Sutton family. George's father, Harry Trumbull Sutton, must have been an interesting fellow--a pastor and a teacher. His mother, Lola Anna Mix (shortened from Miksch, the Morovian family name) was rather a gifted musician,

playing the piano and guitar and leading singing on the the Chautauqua circuit she and Harry followed during the summers. Harry held positions at several schools around the country--thus giving George a taste of the bird life from Oregon to Texas to West Virginia. We should all be so lucky.

Mr Jackson then proceeds from those early years to college days at Bethany College in West Virginia, where George attained some notoriety, briefly, as a protester of the mandatory ROTC program, and was expelled, but was later allowed to return, and eventually graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree.

And there was a lady. That chapter, titled "Eloise," is brief, but certainly left me wondering about that time in George's life. There is a touching little poem at the end.

Another interesting chapter, "World War II" tells us of George's time in the Army. One funny tale is of Major Sutton and Sergeant Peterson (yes, Roger Tory), managing to make it to a dinner party off base at the end of the war with Japan.

The book takes us through his years at the University of Michigan, and finally to 1952, the year he began his association with the University of Oklahoma. "Doc", as he was known to students and friends, got right down to work. With the aid of the many friends and acquaintances he made here he began a careful documentation of the bird life of our state, a task he continued until the end of his life.

Every one of us who knew him have our own stories to tell, of course, and there are several in this book. The dust jacket calls him "A Victorian gentleman, adventurer and raconteur." Well, he was certainly those things, but the book itself portrays him as the dedicated artist, bird student, teacher, and friend to so many of us that he truly was.

I think you will enjoy "George Miksch Sutton." I know I did. If you didn't have the good fortune to know him, this book will give you a good picture of his life. If you knew him, it will open the doors of your memory and fill your heart with gladness at the

fact you were fortunate enough to have done so.

Now, for dessert, I want to recommend a couple of websites you may or may not be familiar with.

The first website is <http://www.ted.com>. You will need a high speed internet connection for this one. Basically it is an archive of talks given at an annual meeting in Monterrey, California. TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, Design, and the speakers are outstanding representatives of their fields of interest. Not too much on birds specifically here, but finding something of interest shouldn't be too difficult. Warning: it is addictive, and you will almost certainly spend too much time there.

<http://natureblognetwork.com> is, as the web address suggests, a place to go to read some of the best "blogs" about nature on the internet. The arrangement is based on how many times each blog page has been visited. If you have a little time, or are an inveterate web prowler like myself, this is a good place to find out where the good stuff is to be found in nature writing on the internet. Lots of birding blogs here, too, and at least a couple I've previously mentioned.

So, enjoy!

Friends of Lake Hefner to meet

The Friends of Lake Hefner will hold its first Annual Members meeting at the Oklahoma City Boat Club (east side of Lake Hefner) on Sunday, March 30, 2:00 p.m. Anyone interested in learning more about the organization is encouraged to attend. Over the past two and a half years The Friends of Lake Hefner have helped the city rewrite the Recreation Plan for the lake and that rewrite has been adopted into the Oklahoma City Master Plan. The plans are not binding on the city in any way and to address the deviations from the Plan that they anticipate will be proposed by developers and others in the future the group is positioning the Friends of Lake Hefner to assist interested lake users in understanding decisions made by city government concerning the lake and communicating our concerns and desires to our city officials.

Recorders Report – February 2008

The first Purple Martin arrived on February 24th at Shelly Harris' site in Norman, and a Short-eared Owl was flushed at Sooner Lake. The Lesser Black-backed Gull(s) were at Lake Hefner most of the month, a Glaucous Gull showed up at Lake Overholser for a few days, and an American Woodcock put on a display in the Lake Arcadia area. Total bird species reported to date for the Central Oklahoma area in 2008 are 118.

Cleveland County

On the 13th near Norman, Debby Kaspari's Pine Warbler, which has been visiting her suet dough since mid-December, was waiting his turn when he threw back his head and warbled a set of rattling notes that shook his whole body. What a show! On various visits at South Jenkins where it almost meets the river, Matt Jung found among other species Purple Finches, Harris's Sparrows, Brown Thrasher, a chatty Pileated Woodpecker and heard a singing Western Meadowlark, while on the 14th a Ruby-crowned Kinglet arrived at his daughter's backyard feeder. On the 22nd Joe Grzybowski had a dark Merlin in the small park at Boyd and Wylie streets. On the 24th Shelly Harris had the **first Purple Martin** return to their colony site. She is planning on flipping crickets and mealworms to them if another sustained winter blast arrives before warm temperatures are here to stay.

Grady County

On the 14th a light morph Ferruginous Hawk flew over Hwy 4 between the Canadian River and Hwy 37 in Tuttle.

Payne County

On the 9th Jimmy Woodard and Jerry Vanbebber went to Stillwater searching for interesting birds. At Lake Carl Blackwell they found at least 3 Red Crossbills, Chipping Sparrows, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskins, and the Western Grebe. At a pond between Perkins and Cushing about half a mile north of Hwy #33 and east of Brethren Road

they found two adult Trumpeter Swans. Sooner Lake was full of waterfowl including all three species of Mergansers, several Bald Eagles, a field full of Smith's Longspurs, and Jerry flushed a Short-eared Owl. At Sooner Lake on the 19th Jim Arterburn found around 1,000 ducks including Northern Pintails, 400 Greater Scaup, a female Surf Scoter, 4 Long-tailed Ducks, and a male Barrow's Goldeneye.



Lake Hefner

On the 7th Berlin Heck arrived from the frontier to visit Lake Hefner and reported a Lesser Black-backed Gull, 24 Least Sandpipers, 2 Great Egrets, 2 Canvasbacks, a flock of Greater Scaup, and loads of Common and Red-breasted Mergansers. On the 14th Chris Butler and his ornithology class also found the Lesser Black-backed Gull, Green-winged Teal, American White Pelican, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. On the 23rd Joe found 2 Lesser-backed Gulls, 30 Least Sandpipers, and 1 Greater Yellowlegs. A Wilson's Snipe was found on the 26th by Matt Jung.

Lake Overholser

A Glaucous Gull was seen harassing several Ring-bill and Herring Gulls until it stole a morsel of food on the 15th by Jimmy. It was seen again on the 17th by Jimmy, Jerry and Max Fuller, and on the 19th by Nancy Vicars and the Tuesday Morning

Birders.

Oklahoma Metro Area

On the 11th in his yard Matt Jung reported seeing an Orange-crowned Warbler, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, and hearing an Eastern Screech Owl, and on the 27th at Eldon

Lyon Park he found two Brown

Creepers. On the 29th Matt went to Lake Stanley Draper and found

White-breasted Nuthatch, Lincoln's Sparrow,

Swamp Sparrow, Eastern Phoebe, White-crowned Sparrow, and Song Sparrow. John Shackford reports in previous years he has found American Woodcocks in the blackberry patch around this lake.



Alice Riddle and her husband were visiting their land near Route 66 and Hiwassee in the Lake Arcadia area around dusk when she remembered the discussions about woodcocks. The "peent"-ing drew them in, and they only had to wait a short while before a male shot into the sky, his wings twittering. They watched his large circular flight, heard his chirpy song at the height of the flight, and then watched as he plummeted back to the ground. They got to see the routine several times before it was too dark to see him. They were impressed, and it was a life bird to boot!

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.

Birding Hot Spot Eldon Lyon Park

by Feodora Steward

Eldon Lyon Park is a well maintained 60-acre walking park with paved paths throughout, located two blocks west of Rockwell Avenue on 36th Street. Primarily mature oak trees, some sycamore elm, pine and a grove of honey locusts. The park is surrounded by mature trees on three sides with large open spaces centrally located. There is ample parking and restrooms are located in the pavilions.

The park offers opportunities for year-round sightings of Red-headed, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers; Blue Jay, Mockingbird, Robin, Starling, Cardinal, Northern Flicker, Common and Great-tailed Grackles, Canada Goose, Mourning Dove, Rock Pigeon, American Crow, Red-tailed Hawk, House Finch, Mallard, Carolina Chickadee, and Tufted Titmouse.

Red-headed Woodpecker, Western Kingbird, Mississippi Kite, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Blue Jay, Robin

have been observed nesting in the park area. And Eastern Kingbird, Oriole, Eurasian

Collared-Dove, Little Blue Heron, Eastern Bluebird, Chimney Swift, Brown Thrasher, Field and Chipping Sparrows, Snowy Egret, American Pipit are occasional migrant visitors.

In the winter, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Dark-eyed Junco, Harris's, Song and White-throated Sparrows; Carolina Wren, Brown Creeper, and Red-breasted Nuthatch are great birds to watch for.



Field Trips

April 5, 2008—Prairie Dog Point Litter Blitz

In conjunction with the City of Oklahoma City's April Litter Blitz, we will be conducting our semi-annual litter pickup and birding event at Prairie Dog Point on Lake Hefner. Litter management on the Point is our commitment through the Adopt-A-Park program and the spring clean up is also a great time to look for shorebirds and other migrants. Trash bags and gloves will be provided. Wear waterproof boots, if possible. Meeting time 10 a.m. Leader: Pat Velte (pvelte@cox.net)

April 18—April 20, 2008—Red Slough

The group led by Jimmy Woodard will be leaving OKC at 8 a.m. on Friday. we will be staying at the Broken Bow Inn in Broken Bow both Friday and Saturday nights. They will meet in the parking lot of the motel at 7:30 a.m. to leave for birding on Saturday morning with Berlin Heck as the possible guide. On Sunday morning, the group will meet David Arbour at the middle parking lot at Red Slough at 7 a.m. (this is the parking area next to Push Creek). Leader: Jimmy Woodard (324-1462)



Tuesday Morning Birders Tuesdays (weather permitting)

Birders of all levels are encouraged to participate in these informal weekly field trips led by Nancy Vicars. ALWAYS Contact Nancy for meeting place and destination at: nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net, 732-9885 or (cell) 831-1945 prior to each Tuesday morning event. You may also check our website at **OKC-Audubon.org**.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

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