



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

FEBRUARY 2008

Churchill with the Vicars'

On Monday, February 18, 2008, the Dynamic Duo of Jim and Nancy Vicars will share their "trip-of-a-lifetime" journey to Churchill, Canada, via a collection of beautiful slides and entertaining narratives that you will not want to miss.

Nancy became a birder in November 1986 on her first fieldtrip to the Washita Wildlife Refuge. Always a "nature nut" by her definition, one who enjoys the great outdoors and all of the creatures contained therein. Since retirement in 1995, in addition to birding, she has devoted much of her time to enjoying grandchildren, traveling and genealogy research.

Jim doesn't consider himself a "birder," but is an excellent photographer. So as a team, if Nancy can "spot it" Jim has the ability and skills to capture it on film.

Nancy and Jim became members of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society in 1987 and Nancy has served as the club treasurer since 1989 and Jim serves as our refreshment chairman" or as we like to call him "The Cookie Monster".

Our meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 and NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.

(The toddler on the back of the horse is

Nancy Vicars just a few short years ago!)



Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

What an interesting winter of roller coaster temperatures and extremes we have had so far in Oklahoma! As a birder, I actually enjoy the extremes, especially if I have the opportunity to be at home when the nasty weather hits.

The winter birds seem to know when another front sweeps down from the north. Feeder activity increases and I can barely keep the feeders stocked. At our newer home, we are blessed with a lot more birds and I'm thrilled. I think we spend as much on bird seed as we do on groceries! Ouch! But, I tell my hubby it's cheaper than therapy.

COOKIES:

Refreshments for the February meeting will be provided by: Nealand Hill, Max Fuller & Russell Linholm.

FRIENDLY REMINDER:

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

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Chirpings... continued

One morning I had stepped out onto the back patio to chase the neighbor's cat out of our brush pile. I was standing there in my fuzzy robe with my fuzzy hair standing on end, loudly clapping my hands and shrieking at the cat. The doves all left in a panicked "whoosh" of wings. I stopped the hullabaloo to see how far the cat would trot and looked down at my end of the brush pile. To my amazement, I saw some movement and heard soft conversational tunes coming from about 3 feet away from where I was standing.

Our resident Red-breasted Nuthatch was inching along in the brush pile toward the feeder that was beside me. Totally without fear, it hopped onto the feeder and picked up a seed before flying off toward the back of our yard to eat it! All of the noise and shrieking failed to deter this diminutive winter visitor from its mission.



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Oklahoma City Audubon Society dues are \$10 per person/family. You may pay Nancy Vicars at any meeting or mail to:

Nancy Vicars
820 Arthur Drive
Midwest City, OK 73110

So I stood out there in the cold without a coat...just smiling! My husband is rarely surprised by these antics and I'm extremely grateful for the privacy fencing.

A few days later Brian was refilling feeders and the nuthatch flew from behind our gas grill and nearly into Brian's face. This one is unbelievably tame and our rowdy activities apparently do not affect it's quest for nourishment. We've had another neat incident with another life bird for

Newsletter Changes

At the January 28th OKC Audubon Meeting, my friend, Pat Velte and I discussed the possibility of sharing the responsibilities of the publication of our newsletter. Both of us are still among the workforce and sometimes we are a little overwhelmed with newsletter deadlines. Sharing will give both of us a little more time for our other responsibilities. So, sometimes the newsletter will be done by Patti Muzny, other times by Pat Velte.

And while I'm thinking about it, we both would very much appreciate more feedback and articles by our talented members. Even a small article would be welcome.

Thank you in advance!

Pat and Patti

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2008

President	Nealand Hill	388-6759
Vice Pres.	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	June Ketchum	387-3620
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	Patricia Velte	751-5263
Publicity	Cheryl Allen	478-0339
Historian	Nealand Hill	388-6759
Refreshments	Jim Vicars	732-9885
Webmaster	Patricia 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 our outstanding website and keep up with the latest happenings.

OKC-Audubon.org

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Bird of the Month

By John Shackford

Mourning Dove

With Valentine's Day just past, it seems fitting to discuss doves. The "dove and olive branch" is one of the most recognized symbols of peace. The origins of this symbol go back to the story of Noah and the Ark, when rain flooded the earth. After the rains stopped, Noah sent out various birds to see if they would bring back any sign of land. It was a dove that finally returned with an olive branch.

After World War II, the artist Picasso was responsible for the now wide use of the dove as a symbol of peace: the popularity of this symbol arose from a design of a dove he made for the International Peace Congress in Paris in 1949. Subsequently, many artists have drawn their own version of the dove as a symbol of peace.

Our most prominent dove in Oklahoma is the Mourning Dove. Its name arises from its mournful cooing call. Usually this species nests fairly low in trees. Much about the Mourning Dove is peaceful—that is until you walk near an incubating bird and flush it from its nest. Then there is a heart stopping moment of loud wings and flutterings as the adult leaves the nest, not quite as "thrilling" as jumping a covey of quail, but a moment to remember nonetheless.

When I moved to Oklahoma as a teenager in 1958, I heard that some Mourning Doves in Oklahoma nested on the ground. I didn't know for sure if this was true, or my leg was being pulled, because any self-respecting Mourning Doves in North Carolina—where I moved from—wouldn't think of such a thing. But birding in the Oklahoma Panhandle proved the truth of ground-nesting doves, and I now find it very neat that out in the Panhandle where trees are not too plentiful, the doves have adapted by sometimes nesting on the ground.

Mourning Doves can nest several times during a breeding season, so even though the female usually lays only two eggs per clutch, a pair of doves might raise six or so young per year. Fortunately for the Mourning Doves they do not nest in colonies, so numbers of the species remain relatively high—even though they are fairly heavily hunted during the autumn. A close relative of the Mourning Dove, the Passenger Pigeon, was not so lucky. These pigeons, being colonial nesters—like most



the herons—were very vulnerable to colony decimation as man "hunted" them for food. Such "hunting" was probably the main reason for the demise of the Passenger Pigeon.

Feathers on a Mourning Dove are not attached too strongly, so trying to prepare a museum specimen is not an easy job (second-hand information). After that big ice storm we had in central Oklahoma before Christmas, several people wrote on the birdnet of seeing Mourning Doves without tail feathers. I suspect



that the dove's long tail feathers had frozen to their perching spots over night, and when the doves flew away in the morning, they left their tail feathers behind. But these tailless birds seem to be able to fly just fine, and the feathers do grow back rather quickly.

of

Canton Lake Fieldtrip Report

Saturday, February 2, 2008

By: Nancy Vicars

What a difference just TWO days can make! From 50 MPH north winds, rain, sleet and snow on Thursday to Clear, Calm, Warm and very sunny today. You would have to agree, it was a "Perfect Birding" day!

Since we don't have Groundhogs in Oklahoma, our resident spring indicator rodents (Prairie Dogs) had indeed seen their shadows this morning. Another indication of their much anticipated spring, breeding season were the songs of Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmice, Carolina Chickadee and Carolina Wren. Eastern Bluebirds, Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers were busy checking out possible nest cavities.

A walk along the nature trail below the dam produced Purple Finch, Red-shouldered Hawk, Fox, Song and Field Sparrows, Dark-eyed Junco, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Bewick's Wren, Blue Jay, American Crow and Yellow-shafted Flicker.

Our visit to the Indian Cemetery where I had found Red Crossbills a couple of years ago, gave us a good look at a Great Horned Owl, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and two pair of beautiful Purple Finch.

We found one magnificent mature adult and one immature Bald Eagle sitting in the trees in the first campground along the west side of the lake. This was definitely a KODAK moment! Fortunately for me, Duane Angles had visited this area last Saturday and sent a couple of his outstanding professional photos of these beautiful birds. A total of 10

eagles today, was a far cry from the 100+ we found last year at this same time.



A quiet cove held quite a nice collection of waterfowl including Hooded & Common Merganser, Gadwall, Common Goldeneye, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon and a small flock of Great Blue Herons.

Red-breasted Nuthatch, Barred Owl and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker along with a large flock of American Goldfinch were discovered in the campground at the far west end of the lake. From this vantage point, we scoped the lake surface and found thousands of Common & Red-breasted Mergansers and Common Goldeneye.

Unfortunately due to the great distance across the lake an accurate ID and count was not possible. A small group of American White Pelicans were also found in this mass of waterfowl.

Only an American Coot was added as we crossed the dam, no Long-tailed Duck for us today. Our drive along Thunder Road was very quiet. Must have been nap time for the birds but we did have good luck visiting the group camp at the far northeast end. A White-breasted Nuthatch, Harris's Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Belted Kingfisher and a Mockingbird brought our Canton Lake tally to 52 species.

American Kestrel, Northern Harrier, several dark phase Red-tailed Hawks and one dark phase Harlan's Hawk were found along the byways on our return trip. A large



playa east of Watonga added Northern Pintails to our trip list.

We made a stop outside of Kingfisher on private land along the Cimarron river near where Carla's husband farms. White-crowned and Savannah Sparrows, a pair of Hairy Woodpeckers, Mourning Dove, Northern Bobwhite Quail and a Winter Wren topped off our complete day list at 70 species.

Participants were: Nancy Vicars, Karen Barker & Carla Brueggen.

Citizen Science:

Projects for all birders

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 15 - 18, 2008

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site. <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or anywhere in the United States and Canada. They can also see how this year's numbers compare with those from previous years. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see. A selection of images is posted in the online photo gallery.

In 2007, participants reported a record-breaking 11 million birds of 616 species. They submitted more than 80,000 checklists, an all-time record for the ten years of the count.

NestWatch

NestWatch is a nest-monitoring project developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in collaboration with the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, and funded by the National Science Foundation.

Cornell Lab invites people of all ages who are interested in the natural world to help monitor the success of nesting birds and better understand the threats they face. Your valuable nest observations will be permanently stored as legacy data along with hundreds of thousands of other nesting records. When combined, these data will provide a wealth of information about breeding birds and the factors that influence their success across different landscapes.

Minutes of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society

January 28, 2008

The meeting was called to order by Pres. Hill. There were 48 members and guests in attendance.

Four guests attended: Nancy Reed and Suzanne Mears, James Walden and Shane Woolbright, who also became new members.

The November and December minutes were approved as published in the January newsletter.

The treasurer, Nancy Vicars, reports the club is solvent with a current balance of \$5,564.53.

Jimmy Woodard, fieldtrip chairman, gave an update on future fieldtrips, which are published in our newsletter. Future field trip suggestions were: Guthrie and Liberty Lakes and Arcadia. Please let him know if you have requests for destinations or would be willing to lead a fieldtrip.

Pat Velte asked that if members would like to be contacted by e-mail when field trips change, etc., please e-mail your address to her at: pvelte@cox.net.

Nancy reported that 2008 calendars are now a great buy at \$ 3.50. 2008 dues are now payable.

President Hill reminded members that WildBird store prints and distributes our OKC Audubon brochure and also may sell calendars at their store.

Old Business: Pat Velte reported that OKC Audubon's Adopt A Park commitment renewal is up. A motion was made and seconded to renew our commitment to clean up Prairie Dog Point. Motion carried. We will be cleaning up this area again in 2008.

New Business: Susan Schmidt brought some of Oklahoma Tourism's new events guide and magazines for distribution.

The program this evening was presented by our own Jimmy Woodard. Jimmy gave an outstanding program about his birding experiences that have led him to every state but Hawaii and beyond our borders.

Respectfully submitted,

Patti Muzny, Acting Secretary in the absence of June Ketchum

Birding from the Bed

By Patti Muzny

For five weeks we had stayed in Oklahoma City every weekend. The weekend of February 9, we decided to leave the undone chores undone and just escape to our cabin at Byars. Saturday had been an awesome day with



warm temperatures and no wind.

We arrived at the cabin just as the sun set and breathed in the sights and smells of a quiet winter night. There are no outside lights to detract from star gazing and it was so quiet there were

no owls or coyotes calling. A “toenail” moon added a beautiful touch to the scene.

Although the forecast was for low 30's overnight, I had a warm down comforter and chose to make a bed on the screen porch. Such a quiet night needed to be absorbed up close and personal.

The coyotes awakened me sometime in the night and when their serenade was over, I heard the faint trill of a Screech Owl. The “large feather puddle” Nancy and I had found several weeks ago didn't cause the demise of all of our Screech Owl population. It trilled for about 45 minutes. The Barred and Great Horned Owls also were heard in the distance.

I didn't even think about crawling out from under that down comforter until the sun was shining in my face. I was back to my favorite activity — birding from the bed. I saw and heard our Phoebe chip and hawk insects from the screen and found two Mallards on the pond; heard the Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches and Eastern Bluebirds and Juncos were feeding in front of the cabin with a flock of Chipping Sparrows. Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers and several Flickers were calling,

along with Titmice and Chickadees and Cardinals. I also heard Eurasian Collard Doves across the highway.

Later when I was inside watching the feeder, I found two Red-breasted Nuthatches at the feeder, along with one White-breasted Nuthatch and a female Purple Finch.

On our hikes around the property, Brian and I found Winter, Carolina and Bewick's Wrens, Towhees, Mockingbird, White-throated, Song, Lincoln and Fox Sparrows.

It was great just to be out in the woods again, although it was much colder on Sunday.

Chirpings, continued

our back yard.

A few weeks ago, Sam looked out the window and asked me to check out the larger bird perched on the fence. I quickly went over to the window to find a beautiful Merlin staking out the yard.



At that point it had not caught anything, but it was in the right place. I watched in fascination as it drew first one foot then another up closer to its body. It was very cold and windy that morning. It was so interesting and entertaining, as well, to watch its head swivel nearly all the way around as it watched birds overhead. After about 10 minutes, it jumped into the air and headed over the house. Quite the treat.

Another recent morning I walked past the windows just as a Sharp-shinned Hawk made a frantic dive into the brushpile in pursuit of a meal. No meal was procured and it perched a few seconds before zooming up and over the house.

Birders usually don't have to travel afar to experience the drama of our natural world.

In Other Words

By Larry Mays

How Birds Die

Couple days ago I stepped out onto the deck to recharge the bird feeders. Looking down I found a Dark-eyed Junco. Its tiny body was cold and stiff--dead for some time. A few feathers still stuck to the patio door told me how it had met its fate. All too frequently I will hear the thump as one bird or another mistakes the reflection of sky in the glass for a safe route only to be stopped abruptly by the reality of the glass itself.

Smack! Surprise!

That's one way to go. An estimated one billion birds die that death every year.

Oh, there are lots and lots of other ways for birds to die. I'll wager just about everyone can recall a few unique ones. Interesting ones, maybe, though perhaps a little (or maybe more than a little) gruesome. Take just collisions for starters. Birds are pretty well set up to have bad collisions right from the start. The physics and physiology of a goodly mass of muscle, blood and bone moving at a pretty good clip just almost demand a dead bird after impact, don't they? For several years, my friend, James Norman and his wife, Marion, of Muskogee collected birds that had collided with a TV tower near Coweta. Jim published several notes in the Bulletin of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society documenting the species killed at the tower. The list is amazing. Some of the birds noted are Pied-billed Grebe, Yellow Rail, Black-billed Cuckoo, Philadelphia Vireo and Blackburnian Warbler. Jim listed over 75 different species in five years. Smack, indeed!

The combination of a fast moving car and pretty fast moving bird has resulted in many bird fatalities, and probably not just a few human ones as well. I spent the summer of 1967 in Georgia, and one day my neighbor at the time came in with his windshield shattered and bloody. He recounted how a Turkey Vulture had flown up just a little too slowly from feeding on some roadkill and squarely into his windshield. At the speed that guy drove it's a sure wonder he didn't wind up in paradise at the same time as the vulture.

Or how about the time, not too long back, when a couple of cars zipping along the road from Boise City to

Kenton connected with a Burrowing Owl. The folks in the front car got on the radio to tell the folks in the trailing car that they had hit the owl just as the folks in the second car drove through the miniature snowstorm of softly drifting owl feathers.

How birds do die.

Birds can find thousands of natural ways to die. They're very good at it, actually. How about bad weather? How about hailstorms? There is recorded in Volume XIII, No. 4 of the OOS Bulletin a single incident where over three thousand birds were killed at Washita National Wildlife Refuge in a major hailstorm. That's just the ones they found. When the May 3, 1999 tornado came through, I found the remains of an American Crow nest with two young still in it. They were covered with mud and thoroughly dead. That was the last time, incidentally, that Loggerhead Shrikes nested on my property. The tree they had built their nest in that year was gone, and with it the birds.

Or snakes. Birds seem to have a special affinity for being eaten by snakes. Almost everyone who has maintained nest boxes for birds will be able to tell tales of birds feeding themselves to snakes. Nothing in the world more refreshing than opening a nest box and finding it full of snake full of bird.

Or other birds. There is probably nothing in the natural world more beautiful than a teal offering itself, albeit reluctantly, to a Peregrine falcon. And how many Rock Pigeons sacrificed themselves so that Pale Male, the Red-tailed Hawk of Central Park in New York City could feed his young? How many of us who feed birds in our backyards have seen the antics of birds trying not to become food for accipiters, and, of course, the antics of the accipiters as they strive to help the birds become dinner?

Of all the ways birds find to die naturally, the one that gets me the most, that makes me get that creepy cringy feeling is the way hummingbirds find to feed bugs, specifically praying mantises and Argiope spiders. It just doesn't seem right somehow for a bug to eat a bird--it is supposed to be the other way around, but no, hummers have to go and get themselves caught and eaten, for crying out loud, by these arthropods.

Other than the normal ways that birds die, and have died for ages, we humans have developed a vast array

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In Other Words, cont.

of interesting things that cause birds to die in special ways. Take oil for instance. Birds mistake oil pits at oil well sites for water holes and die by the thousands for their error. Most states have laws now that require the pits to be covered, but birds still manage to find ways to plunk themselves down into the mire. Of course, the big oil spills along the coasts have made headlines over the years, and birds have succumbed in incredible numbers. The most recent I suppose was the one last November in San Francisco Bay that killed dozens of birds and threatened thousands more. Come to think of it, though, hydrocarbons and birds have a long history fatal mixing--there are, after all, condor skeletons in the LaBrea tar pits.

Birds and fishing don't mix well either. I remember a first



winter Herring Gull at Lake Hefner a couple years ago that had a bright chartreuse jig in its mouth. The bird was in distress, but not dead--at least at that time, but I knew its fate was pretty much sealed. Or the Double-breasted Cormorant Nathan Kuhnert and I found dangling from a limb south of Lake Overholser, hanged by the mouth, the fishing line and sinker wrapped

around the limb. Or the Lesser Scaup thrashing more and more slowly out on the lake, tangled in monofilament.

Those are small numbers. Let's go wholesale for a moment. An estimated 100,000 albatrosses of various species are killed each year as victims of long-line fishing where a fishing line with a series of baited hooks is unrolled behind a commercial fishing vessel. The birds are attracted to the bait, become hooked and are pulled under and drowned. Several species of ocean birds are at very high risk due to this practice. Enjoy your tuna.

OK, couple more and I'm done.

One of the more interesting things I found while searching the internet for fuel for this fire was a website entitled "What Kills Birds?" Obviously this was very attractive to me and so I stopped by for a visit. At first glance I thought it to be put together just to show our impact on birds generally. Until I read the heading: "Curry and Kerlinger, Consultants to the windpower industry on birds and other wildlife issues" and it quickly became clear that this was of that tired ruse, "see how bad everything else is". I won't go into the issue here. If you've been following the discussion on the OKBIRDS listserv, you are well aware of the ongoing debate on the effects of wind generation on birds in general and Lesser Prairie Chickens in particular, but the list of what kills birds is, nonetheless, impressive. Just a quick run of several not already mentioned: cats--100 million; cars--50-100 million; electrical transmission line collisions--up to 174 million; agricultural practices--67 million; hunting--100 million, and so on.

It just ain't easy being a bird.

Ah, but wait, what about the bird most likely to die at our hands--the chicken? Are you sitting down? Each year in the United States alone, 10 billion chickens give up their lives that we may enjoy our KFC, our Wal-Mart chicken strips and our "buffalo wings" (turkeys have it a lot better in a relative sense--"only" about 500 million take the long walk each year).

So, a moment of silence, please, for all the birds that die.

But every now and then we are lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time to aid a bird in averting the ultimate tragedy. In a recent bulletin article Berlin Heck tells of freeing a Common Yellowthroat that had become entangled in a spider web, and once, not too many years back, as Jimmy Woodard and I were just beginning to bird the campgrounds at Black Mesa State Park in the Oklahoma panhandle, I spotted an Ash-throated Flycatcher that had managed to catch one wing in a loop of string it had probably tried to pick up for nesting material. The other end of the string had wrapped around the branch of a tree, and the bird was dangling by its wing and struggling pitifully to get free. I ran over, grabbed the bird, freed its wing and released it, unhurt, to fly free...

Until next time

Arizona Bird Stalking

By Jimmy Woodard

Nealand Hill and I decided to head for Arizona in pursuit of a few potential lifers. Well, we got the Jacana and the Crescent-chested Warbler. We missed on the Ruff and Aztec Thrush. The Jacana was easy. We had to wait almost an hour for the warbler to show but we got great looks at it. We learned that the Aztec Thrush hadn't been reported in about two weeks, so we were not questioning our birding skills.

Nealand and I drove to Phoenix on Tuesday. On Wednesday, we went to the thrasher spot near Buckeye and found 4-6 LeConte's Thrashers and several Sage Sparrows and Verdins. The Ruff spot was maybe 5 miles away. There

were several fields that had been flooded, but when we were there, the fields were mostly dry. We did see plenty of Long-billed Curlews, White-faced Ibis, and very few shorebirds. We had a couple of Chestnut-collared Longspurs as well, and a Ferruginous Hawk.



After the Ruff spot, we drove about an hour and a half to Casa Grande. It was windy, but the Jacana made an appearance and we got very close. It didn't seem to be bothered by people at all. We drove through Tucson and were going to stop for the Black-throated Blue Warbler, but I-10 construction had most

of the exits closed through town so we didn't try to find an

alternate route to it.

We stayed in Green Valley at an overpriced Best Western in order to get to Madera around 8AM. I made it up to the warbler spot on Old Baldy Trail around 10:30. Nealand finally made it up about 30 minutes later. The warbler eventually showed around 11:15 and stayed till about 11:30. Other birders came up the trail after noon and saw it again.



One young (20-ish) guy came running when the bird was found and tripped and fell over the side of the hill, landing face down onto a rock and broke his nose. He was bleeding badly and his face was black and blue. Several folks cleaned him up and one guy from Arkansas walked him back down the mountain. Nealand witnessed the whole thing and said the kid's first words after rolling down the hill were "Where's the bird?" He did actually get to see the bird before he left!

We started back about 2PM Thursday and stayed overnight in Deming, NM. We visited Bosque del Apache NWR on Friday morning before driving back to OKC. We got back to Yukon about 10:15PM.

This trip was interesting, rewarding and fun and we had about 104 species for the trip. The Jacana made bird #705 in the US for me.

Central Oklahoma Recorders Report – January 2008

by Esther Key

How to count a million American Robins

The total bird species reported for the month of January 2008 was 102; however, there were over 10 common prairie and nighttime birds that were not reported. Some of the rare or more unusual species reported in Payne County were Red Crossbills, Rusty Blackbirds, Western Grebe and a Long-tailed Duck while Cleveland County reported Pine Warblers. In the Oklahoma City Metro area Lake Overholser had a Long-tailed Duck, Glaucous, Lesser Black-backed and Thayer's Gulls, and Lake Hefner had Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Black-backed, California and Mew Gulls. A large American Robin roost of possibly over a million individual birds was discovered.

Payne County

The hunt for **Red Crossbills** spread to several locations and brought other discoveries. Paul van Els reported



them on January 5th in Couch Park north of 12th Street in pine and pecan trees and bathing in a small stream. As he left the park, he discovered a large flock of about 50 Rusty Blackbirds in the tall trees surrounding the main waterway of the park. After

finding the Red Crossbills on the 8th, Matt Jung saw Smith's Longspurs on the south side of Sooner Lake and a female Long-tailed Duck where US-77 passes the lake.

John Couch found the Red Crossbills on the 9th along Boomer Creek. Later in the day, after several hours of hiking, Jo Loyd, Jana Singletary and Josie Driskill found

them at the 12th tee. On the 13th Paul located them in a conspicuous patch of pine trees at the OSU Forestry Department Red Cedar Plantation just south of



Highway 51N a few miles west of Stillwater. Bill Carrell sited them on the 19th at Couch Park. Other species seen in Payne County include House, and Purple Finches, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, a Red-shouldered Hawk, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Orange-crowned

Warbler, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. On the 25th at Boomer Lake Melinda, Nancy and Mark Peterson discovered a Lesser Black-backed Gull.

On February 2nd Tim O'Connell reported about 8 Red Crossbills in the pine trees at Lake Carl Blackwell and a Western Grebe on the lake. Matt Jung saw the Western Grebe on the 4th, as well as, Hairy Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmouse, Song Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Northern Bobwhite, Pied-billed Grebe and Orange-crowned Warbler. On February 7th Paul discovered more Rusty Blackbirds at the OSU Plantation and on the 8th at Lake Carl Blackwell. On the 4th in Cushing Etha Tinnie had a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on her seed feeder.

At the end of January Everett Short viewed an American Robin roost on Country Road 3310 (Sangre) between County roads 740 and 750 southwest of Perkins. The flights to the roost began over his house at about 5:30 pm and were pretty much finished by 6:00 pm. How to count?? Suppose there are a thousand birds in a slice of visual field 200 yards long and extending as far as he can see left and right, say $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. Robins fly at 20 to 30 mph, and they go by for 30 minutes, then $1,000 \times 8 \times 6 =$ about 50,000 birds passed over him within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. However, they are swarming into the site from all directions so he is probably only seeing $\frac{1}{25}$ th of the total birds. Thus, by rough calculation there are about 1,250,000 birds flying into the roost. Anyway you count; there are a lot of

American Robins spending the night in that area.

Cleveland County

Meanwhile, **Pine Warblers** are spending the winter in Cleveland County. Debby Kaspari reported one at her suet and suet dough feeder from December 21 to January 13th. At Lake Thunderbird on the 26th Cynthia Whittier and Matthew Van Den Brocke found a female Pine Warbler with some Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Later they located 2 males and 1 female in a mixed group of species including Eastern Bluebirds, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadees, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue Jay and others. Some of the other species seen were Purple Finch, Bald Eagle, Belted Kingfisher, Bewick's Wren, Hermit Thrush and Greater Roadrunner.

Nancy Reed had 100-150 American Goldfinches at her feeders. Kim Wiar reported Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Eurasian Collared Dove and after the snow stopped on the 31st, 8 male and 5 female Northern Cardinals. In his daughter's Norman backyard, some of the species Matt Jung reported on the 11th was an Inca Dove and Brown Thrasher while on the 21st there was a Red-breasted Nuthatch and Orange-crowned Warbler.

Lake Hefner

Even though the road around the dam at Lake Hefner is closed for several months, Jim Poor, a visitor from Virginia, found 2 Common Loons on the 4th. On the 5th Cynthia and Matthew



found an out of season Great Egret, a very large group of Horned Grebes and an even larger group of Red-breasted Mergansers, Lesser Black-backed, Bonaparte's, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, Lesser Sandpipers, Northern Shoveler, Bufflehead, Gadwall, Mourning Doves, a Brown-headed Cowbird, and House Finch. On the 15th Matt Jung discovered a first winter California Gull feeding on a dead catfish north of the inlet canal, Pied-billed and

Horned Grebes, American White Pelican, Greater Yellowlegs, and Green-winged Teal. On the 26th at Prairie Dog Point Joe Grzybowski located an adult Mew Gull.

Lake Overholser

On the 5th Cynthia and Matthew reported a Long-tailed Duck among the Scaup at Lake Overholser. She was diving and fishing and finally caught a nice-looking fish which was stolen from her by a lurking Ring-billed Gull. Other species at the lake included Canvasback, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted and Common Merganser. On the 6th Jimmy Woodard and Valerie



Bradshaw found two Glaucous Gulls in the Route 66 Park Pond. On the 20th some of the species Matt Jung located included White-crowned and Lincoln's Sparrow, American Kestrel, Northern Flicker and Hooded Merganser. On the 27th Jimmy and Max Fuller saw an adult Lesser

Black-backed and Thayer's Gull sitting on the ice on the south side of the lake.

Oklahoma Metro Area

On January 24th some of the species Matt Jung reported at Lake Stanley Draper included American Tree and Field Sparrows, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-shouldered Hawk, Killdeer, and Spotted Towhee. Tim Ryan had Pine Siskins at his feeder on January 31st. Chris Butler took his ornithology class to Mitch Park in Edmond on January 17th. Some of the species they found are Eastern Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Harris's Sparrow, Eastern and Western Meadowlark. The greenbelt near Dora Webb's house in Edmond abounded with Cedar Waxwings, American Robins and American Goldfinch.

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.

Field Trips

February 16, 2008 – Oklahoma City Lakes

Tour the metro lakes for wintering birds and perhaps early migrants. Leader: Jimmy Woodard (324-1462). Meet at Route 66 Park at NW 23rd & Overholser Drive at 7:30 a.m.

March 8, 2008 – Stillwater Area

Explore Lakes McMurry and Carl Blackwell and other spots. Meet 7:00 a.m. at the Braum's at 15th Street & I-35 in Edmond. Leader: TBA

April 5, 2008—Prairie Dog Point Litter Blitz

More information to come and be sure to check our website for additional information.

April 18—April 20, 2008—Red Slough

More information to follow in next newsletter. Leader: Jimmy Woodard (324-1462)



Tuesday Morning Birders

Tuesdays, beginning February 19 (weather permitting)

Nancy Vicars will resume the Tuesday Morning field trips on February 19th. Birders of all levels are encouraged to participate. ALWAYS Contact Nancy for meeting place and destination at: nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net or 732-9885 prior to each Tuesday morning event. You may also check our website at **OKC-Audubon.org**.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

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