



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

April 2009

Spring Warblers



Photo by Pat Velte

Prothonotary warbler

The speaker for our April 20 meeting will be Dr. Chris Butler who, as an assistant professor, teaches ornithology at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond. His illustrated presentation will be "Spring Warblers".

Dr. Chris Butler first became interested in birds when he was five years old and saw his first American Goldfinches. His interest in birds stayed with him as he grew and he decided to attend Cornell to study

ornithology as an undergraduate. He

received his B.S. in Natural Resources from Cornell University in 2000 and then traveled to the University of Oxford for a PhD in zoology. After receiving his PhD in 2004 for his research on Rose-ringed Parakeets, he taught for a couple years at Sewanee: University of the South (a small, private, liberal-arts college in Tennessee) before moving to the University of Central Oklahoma. He currently teaches classes in Animal Biology, Ornithology and GIS & Ecology.



Photo by Pat Velte

black and white warbler

Sutton Center Bald Eagle Nest Camera Spring 2009

Watch the growth of a bald eagle chick via live video camera courtesy of the Sutton Center. See it at www.suttoncenter.org. Click on the Live Eagle Cam and read all about this year's nest history and the development of the chick. The baby eagle was hatched on March 21st and it is absolutely fascinating to be able to watch the care given by both parents.

April Meeting

The April meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society will be held at 7 p.m., Monday, April 20, at the Will Rogers Garden Exhibition Center. Refreshments for April will be provided by John Shackford, Carla Brueggen & Max Fuller.

Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

One day it's spring; one day it's winter and one day the state is on fire. I'm always concerned for the birds, especially those nesting. Each day that I listen to the Chickadees and Bewick's Wrens that are nesting in boxes in our yard, it is with a grateful heart.

In our OKC back yard, the Purple Martins have boisterously claimed their house, making working in the gardens and yard such a delight. As of April 12th, the Juncos, Harris's and White-crowned Sparrows were still visiting the feeder, along with the House Finches, Lincoln's Sparrows, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eurasian Collared and Mourning Doves, Cardinals, Mockingbirds, Titmice, Red-winged Blackbirds and more than enough Great-tailed Grackles and House Sparrows. The recent rains have made the yard a productive feeding arena. We have even seen a Phoebe and the Cooper's Hawk seems to be back in the neighborhood.

A few weeks ago a pair of Mallards was seen several times at the feeder in the back yard. We have no pond nearby. Pa Mallard was dutifully following Ma Mallard across the yard, stopping when she did; munching when she did; drinking when she did. They were relatively tame, but definitely not pets. During one visit Ma Mallard went to the ground feeder and began to scoop up the sunflower seed/white millet mix. Pa came in when she was done and he didn't even bother to stand up - he stretched out on his belly and scooped up seeds. I had never seen Mallards come in to a feeder like that. We enjoyed their daily visits for several days.

Another squatter in the back yard is a very small Cottontail. We all think it's sooooo cute, but my husband comments that I won't

think it's quite so cute when it begins to graze in my vegetable garden. One day while we were letting our Flemish Giant pet rabbit run about the yard, the tiny cottontail came out from under the shed. After one hop from "Ears," the tiny cottontail raised puffs of loose dirt as it became a brown streak to seek shelter under the shed. It wanted no part of a 14-pound cousin!

Also on April 12th, our first "city" Turkey Vulture soared over our house. On the 13th, one was floating over I-44 near the Broadway Extension around noon. The State Capitol's House Finches are still singing their bubbly song to greet all who enter the building. Their exuberance always makes me smile each morning. Too bad my 4th floor windows don't open!

The clear and beautiful Sunday after we had our late spring snow, Brian, my granddaughters and I made a visit to Martin Nature Park. We hiked across the park to the area where it's easy to get to the water in the creek. Now we DID have SNOW 24 hours earlier, but on Sunday it was near 70 degrees and the girls shed their shoes, rolled up their pants and were wading in the water. This granny stayed high and dry, but so enjoyed the sun and the nature hike. Birds were singing and girls were chirping, making for a perfect day.

2009 Dues

OKC Audubon Society dues are \$10.00 per calendar year. In order to receive our newsletters & meeting notices, please remit to:

Nancy Vicars
820 Arthur Drive
Midwest City, OK 73110
or pay at any meeting.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

2009 Officers

President	Eric Enwall	364-5029
Vice Pres.	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Cheryl Allen	478-0339
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	732-9885
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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

Oklahoma City Audubon Society Minutes of March 16, 2009

The OKC Audubon March meeting was convened by John Shackford at 7:00 p.m., Monday, March 16th, 2009 at Will Rogers Garden Center. Guests and newcomers were welcomed to the meeting and the club: Terri Underhill's granddaughter, Shayla from Stillwater; Christi Hendrix, a new member; Joe Messenbaum from the OKC Zoo and friend of Carl and Dora Webb; Dave and Jannie Kuker; Dick Clapp; Barbara Tarbutton; James Beaucamp; Stephanie and Robert Beaucamp; were all welcomed heartily. Minutes from the last meeting and the treasurer's report were read and passed.

Susan Schmidt offered up designs for a club logo of a perched cardinal and also made mention of the cost per unit for embroidery vs. embroidered patches of the logo onto shirts, jackets, etc. A pin with the logo was

requested as well. A lively discussion then ensued about the choice of the cardinal over the scissortail which, sadly, had already been chosen for the other Audubon club's logo. Never-the-less, a vote of the members decided on the scissortail for our logo bird. A second vote of putting the logo on a pin vs. patch was taken and each won 21 votes. Several members and guests abstained. (Much thanks to Susan's efforts and time for her research and art work!)

Treasurer Nancy Vicars requested a vote to reimburse John Shackford for the \$5.00 per CBC participant for this past December's CBC. The \$345.00 owed was approved and Nancy will write a check for that amount.

John Shackford then mentioned that we had 20+ more members to participate in the count this past year than in years before, a total of 69 participants spent a cold Saturday just before Christmas counting everything with feathers in the OKC area.

The program of Dick Clapp's Wichita Mountains, was presented to one of the largest cookie-fed groups of nature-loving enthusiasts we have ever hosted. Thanks Mr. Clapp!!!

NOTE: Newsletters are being compiled by a team of 3 co-editors who graciously agreed to pick up the baton from Patti Muzny. Patti has for many years done our club a terrific service and enhanced our meetings with extra knowledge which she has handily passed on to her readers. Thank you Patti!!

*Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Allen,
Secretary*

In Sympathy

Our deepest condolences go to Nealand Hill and his family on the loss of his father.

Road Trip to New Mexico

By Eric Enwall

Presidential Pardon.

Well I seem to be a pretty absentee president for OCAS. The first meeting we get to cancel due to ice, and the third meeting I am absent due to a road trip. Long scheduled before the OCAS election, Nancy promised me that I could go anyway. At least, you were well cared for from the reports of the meeting.

We were focused on Albuquerque as our end point and birding with an old friend and local birder there. On the way we planned to bird at Buffalo Lake NWR, Bitter Lake NWR, and of course the Bosque del Apache which is among the most popular NWR sites in the US. We had hoped for a quick trip to Palo Duro Canyon, but four inches of snow in Amarillo that evening cured us of the idea.

Buffalo Lake is a smallish NWR and pretty dry these days. We did have a bunch of mountain blue birds--they were more common than juncos there and seemed to fill the same roadside niche. We also had plenty of sparrows to try to ID, with limited success since it was really windy and, shall we say brisk. Hawks were plentiful but the only falcon a very colorful Kestrel.

We cranked into Roswell in good time--no alien problems--and made a quick trip to the NWR. Great day in the morning! Lot's of the usual stuff, but lots of birds we haven't seen in middle Oklahoma and even a lifer or two for us neophytes. The auto route at Bitter Lake is a very good tour (be sure to allow for the sun direction if you can) and covers a good variety of different habitats, but not many woods. That can be alleviated by a walk up to the headquarters where we



Pyrrhuloxia photo by Eric Enwall

really did well filling out our "lists." Bird of the day was an unexpected Pyrrhuloxia.

We tooled into the Bosque about four p.m. after assorted minor adventures, but no Golden Eagles for

which we had hopes. A few hours on the auto tour expanded lists and horizons, but the only bird of real note was a Common Black Hawk. If you have not been to the Bosque del Apache, go! Dinner at the Pub in Socorro and early morning going south. Going south we were sucked in by the scam on the N. Mex. birding site with a G.H. Owl sighted at .6 miles past a particular mile marker. Very nice plastic bird decked out in green paint no less. No scam at Percha Dam and Caballo Lake State Parks. The target Phainopepla showed up almost as we arrived.

Back to Albuquerque with hopes for a good morning on Tuesday. Canyon wren for Paul and for all of us Crissal Thrasher in the Pteroglyph. After lunch, the web claimed that the Rosy Finches were still to be seen on Sandia Peak and away we went. We believe that we had all four of the finches, but photo evidence only insures three. Of course the missing one is the rarest.

So endeth the birders' road trip. The golfing part I won't bore you with.



Rosy Finch photo by Eric Enwall

Bird of the Month

By John S. Shackford



Photo by Pat Velte

Most of us who have grown up in the eastern U.S. learned that the arrival

of the American Robin and the Eastern Bluebird were signs of spring. Problem is that for most people in the eastern U. S.—and certainly us Okies—both of these birds are here year round. The Purple Martins (*Progne subis*), on the other hand, do winter south of us and its arrival is a true indication of spring. Today (6 April 2009) I just watched about 10 martins swooping over a pond in our neighborhood. Most were blue-black males but at least one had the grayish under parts of a female. I know of no martin houses nearby, so I suspect these were migrants. According to "A Check-list of Oklahoma Birds" (G.M. Sutton, ca. 1974), earliest arrival dates for Purple Martins in Oklahoma begin in February. Male usually show up a week or so earlier than females. Some of the early arrivals risk starvation, should several days of cold weather shut down their food supply, primarily of (true) insects and spiders.

Initially, before humans got involved, Purple Martins nested in natural crevices in rocks and cavities in trees, such as those drilled by woodpeckers. Often multiple holes in a tree are drilled by woodpeckers and this would have been advantageous to the (usually) colonial nesting martins. The tradition of draw-

ing in Purple Martins with birdhouses goes back at least to Native Americans, who hung several "birdhouse" gourds on poles to attract the martins. But now all, or almost all, martins nest in birdhouses supplied by man; multiple compartment birdhouses can draw in whole colonies of martins. As to placement of nest boxes, open lawns, with nest boxes placed in an area with few trees nearby, usually will attract the martins. Water nearby is probably also a plus because of the increased supply of insects associated with the water. Martins only rear one brood, although they will relay eggs if the first batch is lost; they lay up to 8 eggs, but 4 or 5 are the usual number.

One reason to attract the birds near human habitations is to decrease mosquito populations around the nest colony: the martins are fun to watch while they lower a yards mosquito population. Someone once noticed Purple Martins trying to pull bits of oyster shells from a stucco wall, and when that person scattered egg shells near martin nesting boxes the birds began picking them up almost immediately. The calcium in the egg shell is probably the ingredient desired, possibly because there is a lack of calcium in the martins' diet of insects (this is a guess only).

Very soon after nesting—July-August—the martins begin gathering in huge flocks to roost, and they leave for points south—some to Brazil—not long thereafter. If I am remembering correctly, these roosts, and the birds coming to or leaving them, are so thick with martins that large roosts show up beautifully on weather radar, creating impressive bird "storms" in morning and evening. This is one way to locate huge premigratory flocks of martins in August. Most martins are gone by September, the stay of many of them in Oklahoma being only about 6 months or so.

Recorders Report – March 2009 Spring Surprises

March is such a interesting month with changes in the weather, the beginning of bird migration and the awakening of cool season plants from their winter dormancy. March announced the arrival of members of the Swallow; Egret and Heron; shorebird; and warbler families and ended with the fanfare arrival of our favorite state bird. Nature greeted these arrivals with fire danger warnings, an earthquake, and snowstorms.

On February 21st Bill Diffin, Terri Underhill and Chris Clack found a **Long-billed Dowitcher** east of Rose Lake, a **Turkey Vulture** in a field along Mustang Road, a dozen **Greater Yellowlegs** and a few **Long-billed Dowitchers** at the east end of Foreman Road.

On March 1st Bill Diffin visited Fort Reno and found about 200 Sandhill Cranes in the shallow draw several hundred yards east of the entrance road, as well as, 3 **Wilson's Snipe** in the pond east of the entrance, and at Stinchcomb a **Vesper Sparrow**. Terri Underhill found **Snow Geese** on Mustang Road. On March 4th Jason Heinen found a single **American Golden Plover** at Sooner Lake, and on the 5th Matthew Vandenbroeke had his first **Fish Crow** on South Jenkins in Norman.

On the 6th Jimmy Woodard and Chris Clack found a couple of Wood Ducks and heard a few grunts from a **Virginia Rail** at the Coffey Dam. They heard two Winter Wrens on the east side of Stinchcomb, and Bill Diffin heard a **Black-crowned Night Heron**. Larry Mays took a morning run and noticed the resident flock of **Wild Turkey** gobblers is starting to strut their stuff. At the end of Jenkins in Norman Brian Davis saw a **Tree Swallow**, which was also seen on the 7th by

Dick Gunn, John Raeside, Ben Holt and his wife.

On the 7th at Stinchcomb Dave and Sue Woodson found a pair of **Cinnamon Teal**. Max Fuller, Jerry Vanbebber and Jimmy Woodward visited Sooner Lake and found one male White-winged Scoter, two immature Trumpeter Swans, 4 or 5 immature eagles, and thousands of ducks. On the 8th Joe Grzybowski took a spin around Lake Hefner and found a Red-throated Loon, over 100 Horned Grebes, and a first-winter California Gull.

On the 8th at 0806 an **earthquake** shook central Oklahoma that measured 3.4 on the Richter scale with its epicenter 3.1 miles below ground near SE 15th and South Bryant Avenue. Other earthquakes this year include 3.4 and 3.2 on the Richer scale on January 28th and February 22nd in Grady County, and a 2.4-magnitude quake January 29th in Lincoln County.

On the 12th a **snowstorm** greeted the previous day's newly arrived flock of over 30 Great Egrets at the Lake Hefner canal area. In Norman Brian Davis found a flock of Cedar Waxwings in the small persimmon tree outside the museum staff entrance. On the 13th at Lake Overholser Larry Mays found 2 **Common Yellowthroats**, an **Orange-crowned Warbler**, 2 Swamp Sparrows and 2 singing Marsh Wrens; at Rose Lake a **Lesser Yellowlegs**; and at Lake Hefner 1 **Franklin's Gull** and 2 **Purple Martins**.

On the 14th Esther Key had about 20 **American Pipits** in her yard in Tuttle. On the 15th Patti Muzny had a **Black and White Warbler** at Byars, OK. On the 16th at Sooner Lake Bill Diffin found a flock of Brewer's Blackbirds, and Mary and Lou Truex found 3 White-winged Scoters, 2 Surf Scoters, 3 Black Scoters, and 3 Long-tailed Ducks.

On the 21st Patti Muzny had their first Purple Martins near I-240 and South Western. On the 22nd Matt and Cynthia Van Den Broeke found a **Northern Rough-winged** and a **Barn Swallow** on the south side of Norman. Jennifer Kidney, Dick Gunn and Anais Starr found the first **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** near the river on South Jenkins in Norman, and Kim Wiar had one in her backyard.

Ben Holt and his wife found a Black and White Warbler at Lake Stanley Draper and the first **Snowy Egret** at Canal Road at Lake Hefner. Tim O'Connell found a **Louisiana Waterthrush** at Heinrich's Park in Stillwater. on the 22nd Bill Diffin found a single Glaucous Gull at the Lake Hefner dam.

On the 23rd a storm with hail in various locations left 1.35 inches of rain. On the 24th Joe Grzybowski had a **Swainson's Hawk** flying over Norman. On the 25th Jennifer Kidney had a **Clay-colored Sparrow** in her Norman yard, and Diane Landoll reported a **Pectoral Sandpiper** and beautiful Merlin of the prairie race was found in the Wellington Lake Housing Edition in Norman by the OU ornithology class.

On the 27th a blizzard hit the panhandle and snow fell in central OK covering the blooming redbud trees in a soft, white blanket. On the 29th Bill Diffin found a **White-eyed Vireo** at Yukon City Park fluttering along the tops of the honeysuckle thickets bordering the Cope-land trail. In the early morning on the 30th Larry Mays heard a couple of American Golden Plovers calling as they flew overhead in Newcastle. Jimmy Woodard and Max Fuller birded Fort Reno and found a **Stilt Sandpiper**, **Wilson's Phalarope**, **American Avocet**, and **Baird's Sandpipers**.

Scissor-tailed flycatchers were reported on the 30th by Dick Gunn and Brian Davis in Norman, Jim Bates at the Will Rogers Airport, Jason Heinen in Stillwater, Dora Webb at

Lake Hefner, and on the 31st Esther Key in Mustang. On the 31st Dick Gunn found a **Cattle Egret** on the Beaver Pond on South Jenkins in Norman.

In **March 144 bird species** were reported making the total reported to date for the Central Oklahoma area at **173 species**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds by turning in their reports of bird species seen at home and in the field. I can be contacted by email at emkok@earthlink.net, leave a message at 405-381-9170 or mail to 4603 Pikey's Trail, Tuttle, OK 73089. Esther M. Key, Editor.

Prairie Dog Point Clean-Up

Our annual spring Clean Up at Lake Hefner will be held Saturday, April 18, at Prairie Dog Point. This is part of our litter management commitment for our Adopt-A-Park project with Oklahoma City Beautiful and is held in conjunction with Oklahoma City Litter Blitz campaign; we conduct another litter day in October. Meet Saturday at Noon in the paved parking area at the north entrance to the Point. Trash bags and gloves will be provided. Bring boots or all-weather shoes since we canvas the shoreline and some of the flooded areas. The clean up lasts for only an hour or so and you are invited to stop by even if you have only a few minutes to fill a sack. It's also a great opportunity to look for spring migrants!

Membership Rosters

Members may request a copy of the 2009 roster by e-mail: nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net

Tuesday Morning Birders

I will not be able to continue leading Tuesday morning outings at the current time. If anyone would like to volunteer to lead these weekly trips, please contact me at 831-1945 or nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net

2009 Oklahoma Birding Festivals

Lek Treks & More: The Woodward Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival, April 17-22, 2009

www.okaudubon.org

Cherokee Birding and Heritage Festival (Salt Plains NWR), April 24-26, 2009

www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/saltplains/festival.html

Arbuckle-Simpson Nature Festival (Tishomingo NWR) - May 1-3, 2009

asnfw.org

Red Slough Birding Convention - May 7-10, 2009

www.redsloughconvention.com

A wise old owl sat in an oak,
the more he saw the less he spoke,
the less he spoke the more he heard,
why can't we all be more like that wise old bird...

Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society
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