



# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

January 2012

## It's Lifer Time in Brazil

June Ketchum will be our presenter at the January 23 meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society. The topic of her presentation will be "It's Lifer Time in Brazil" and will include a short history of the country and will talk about plants and animals, including birds, and habitat based on her recent travels to Brazil.

Brazil has over 1700 species of birds with over 200 endemics, many of which occur in the south-east region. Join June as she recounts her August 2011 visit to SE Brazil for an ornithological



extravaganza -

Hyacinth Macaws, Curassows, Jaibarus, Sunbitterns, Jacamars, Tanagers, and more.

June is a long time member of Oklahoma City Audubon. She was our club secretary for several years prior to moving to Duncan and is a world traveler and avid birder. She has been a registered Clinical Laboratory Scientist for the past 27 years, currently working at Duncan Regional Hospital; she taught high school Biology and Chemistry before that. June's husband Leonard manages the ranch and cattle operations at Ketchum Ranch, founded by Leonard's grandfather.

Come out and bring a friend for a good evening of camaraderie and birds and great refreshments. 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.

## DUES NOTICE

It's time once again to renew your annual membership for 2012. OCAS dues are \$15 per household and may be paid at the monthly meetings, online at our website <http://www.okc-audubon.org> or mailed to Nancy Vicars, Treasurer, 820 Arthur Drive, Midwest City, OK 73110.

## COOKIE PATROL

Cookies will be provided by Marcia Reddy, Bill Diffin & Nancy Vicars

## WELCOME

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes our newest member, Troy Fullerton, from Pauls Valley.



## President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin

In the last two Perspectives, we saw that knowledge of the American Robin, spotted thrushes and Eastern Bluebird implied a more general understanding of the entire thrush family, the Turdidae. This gave us hope that we could use our understanding of the local passerine bird families as a framework for understanding the passerine birds worldwide. However, after noting that there are 94 or so passerine families, we decided to try and use higher level taxonomic groups as the framework for our basic understanding. We began by taking a cursory look at the entire Muscicapoidea superfamily which includes in addition to the thrushes, the Old World flycatchers, chats, mockingbirds, thrashers, starlings, mynas and dippers. Two plumage color patterns were found to be common within the Muscicapoidea, the black-white-gray theme and the blue-gray upperside with rufous-red underside theme.



A consistency in the name endings for taxonomic groups may have been noticed -- superfamily names end with "oidea" as in Muscicapoidea, family names end with "idae" as in Muscicapidae, and subfamily names end with "ini" as in Muscipapini. Membership in one of these groups is designated by related adjectives, i.e. muscapoid, muscipid and muscipine respectively.

Last month we did a pretty good job of finding some common plumage coloration themes within the Muscicapoidea. Let's see if we can do something similar with songs. One of the most common muscapoid songs in Oklahoma is that of the Northern Mockingbird. This bird is a great mimic which typically repeats a copied song fragment or call four to six times, then changes to another theme and repeats it a similar number of times and so on. A male mockingbird knows many different themes and rarely if ever repeats the same theme so soon



that we notice it. Now use the following link to the Internet Bird Collection page for the Thrush Nightingale, scroll down the page to the Sounds section, and click on the little arrow in the circle, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/thrush-nightingale-luscinia-luscinia>, then do the same for the first two song arrows for the Common Myna, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/common-myna-acridotheres-tristis>, and then listen to the first song on the Song Thrush page, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/song-thrush-turdus-philomelos>. The three birds we just listened to belong to three different families within the Muscicapoidea. The Thrush Nightingale is in the Muscicapidae, the Common Myna is in the Sturnidae, and the Song Thrush is in the Turdidae. These three birds together with the Northern Mockingbird in the Mimidae represent the four most populous families in the Muscicapoidea. Along with singing according to a similar pattern of repetition, these birds all have very similar sounding voices.

Next compare the Eastern Bluebird's (Turdidae) song, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/eastern-bluebird-sialia-sialis>, to the song of the Orange-flanked Bush-robin (Muscicapidae), <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/orange-flanked-bush-robin-tarsiger-cyanurus>, and the song of the Bearded Scrub-robin (Muscicapidae), [ibc.lynxeds.com/species/bearded-scrub-robin-erythropygia-quadrivirgata](http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/bearded-scrub-robin-erythropygia-quadrivirgata).

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## Oklahoma City Audubon Society

### Officers 2012

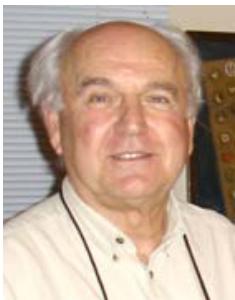
President	Bill Diffin	722-3778
Vice President	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Nancy Reed	799-1116
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	732-9885
Parliament	Ted Goulden	354-3619
Programs	Warren Harden	364-3491
Recorder	Esther M. Key	735-1021
Field Trips	Jimmy Woodard	365-5685
Newsletter Editors:		
	Pat Velte	751-5263
	Carla Brueggen	495-3259
Publicity	Doug Eide	495-8192
Historian	Nealand Hill	388-6759
Refreshments	Dave & Sue Woodson (temp.)	
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



This month I would like to start with a bit of scientific sleuthing. As a refresher (for me at least), a “type specimen” (at the species level and in scientific terms) is usually a physical specimen of a species that is kept in a museum or herbarium research collection, but, failing that, at least an image (including drawings) of an individual of that species. Under the formal rules for naming species, each species must have a type specimen; accompanying the type specimen is the “type description” that describes the type specimen and the similarities to, and differences from, closely related species. The “type location” is where that type specimen was collected/found.

The Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*), I suspected, would be interesting to research from this perspective. Having grown up in North Carolina I was curious to know if the type specimen was from North or South Carolina (one of which I fully expected it to be) and, if so, near what town the type specimen was found. Well, the search bloomed into a much broader story than I had expected, and a more interesting one. I found much of the information I was seeking in Dictionary of Birds of the United States, by J. E. Holloway (2003), and use it liberally here, as well as some information from websites on the subject. The species part of the name, *ludovicianus*, means of the Louisiana Territory (exactly how you get the Latin *ludovicianus* from Louisiana I don’t know, but let’s move on anyway). The collector of the type specimen for Carolina Wren was John Latham, an English naturalist and physician, the year collected 1790, and the type location was almost certainly in or near New Orleans, although Louisiana Territory covered a huge area at the time, including all of what is now Oklahoma.

As something of an afterthought the common name Carolina Wren, was applied much later merely to indicate that the bird was found in the southeastern

U.S. in general. So my original assumption about the type location being in one of the Carolinas was quite wrong. But then, who would have guessed “Louisiana Territory” from “Carolina Wren.”

The Carolina Wren is a permanent resident of most of Oklahoma—they get scarce to non-existent as you go west in the Oklahoma Panhandle. They sing all year long, a semblance of their song being “teakettle-teakettle-teakettle.” They build somewhat bulky nests

that are entered from the side, and normally lay 4-6 eggs, but most often 5. They use a wide variety of places to nest, often around human habitations, places such as tin cans, pockets of old clothing hanging in sheds, mail boxes and bird boxes; one report was of a nest in a tractor that was frequently used



on a farm—this nest successfully fledged young (Bent, A. C., Life histories of North American Nuthatches, Wrens, Thrashers and their allies, 1964).

At our house we have had a pair of these wrens nest for several years in a hanging plant on our porch, under an overhanging part of the house which would keep the nest and birds dry in a rainstorm. One year the birds built their nest very quickly after we first hung the plant out long after the beginning of the nesting season. I have heard of similar hanging plant experiences from others.

The Carolina Wren has been expanding northward for many years, but they are not an exceptionally cold-hardy species. Especially toward the fringes of its range, when deep snow or heavy ice covers the landscape for an extended period of time, most Carolina Wrens do not survive. In central Oklahoma there were severe ice storms for 2 consecutive winters in the late 1970s, and it wiped out virtually all of the Carolina Wrens. It took 10 years for Carolina Wrens to once again become a common species here.

# Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

January 2012

December has always been a favorite month for birding. December means Christmas Bird Counts. Brian and I participate in CBC's for Oklahoma City Audubon, Washita National Wildlife Refuge and Cleveland County. With a full time job, it is sometimes a challenge to find the time, but anything in December that gives me an excuse to watch birds instead of shop has to be great.



We began the first of our trio of count adventures with a beautiful Saturday in the far NW quadrant of the OKC count circle. It began slightly chilly, but a sunny day light winds became our companion for the day and being outside was quite pleasant. Birds were to be found, but very scattered and in smaller numbers. Maybe the weather was too good?

An area where a friend lives that previously had lots of brambles, fallen timber and a small creek, had been "improved" with a new sewer line at the back of the acreage, so our only suitable habitat to find Brown Creepers, Kinglets and maybe a Winter Wren was gone, and consequently we found none of the above. We also had a hard time finding Crows and Cormorants.

Winter sparrows were almost non-existent, although we finally found a White-crown or two and a Fox Sparrow. We had a good variety of ducks. Nearly every neighborhood pond in newly developing areas had ducks on it. We found Greater and Lesser Scaup, American Wigeons, Ring-necked Ducks, Green-winged Teal, a few Mallards, lots of Gadwall, a few Buffleheads, Canvasbacks and Redheads.

A flock of Horned Larks is always a treat and we found those in a yet-to-be scraped off weedy field of a future housing addition. I grumble a lot about the monumental loss of habit in our area due to development, but until these additions are completed, there is access into the neighborhoods and the few birds that find anything to eat are easily found.

Birds of prey were extremely scarce, but the weeds

were either gone or had no seeds, so the critters that require weeds and seeds and provide food for the hawks were not there, and few were left. An interesting surprise was a flock of 75-80 Mourning Doves lined up on a utility line. Some years we really have to search to find one or two.

On December 29<sup>th</sup>, we were on the Washita NWR and our area was south of refuge headquarters along the Washita River which drains into Foss Reservoir. Territory included the north and east sides of the refuge, mostly on refuge land which was closed to the public. This is our favorite count – no traffic; no other people; peace and quiet reign!

We enjoyed another clear, unseasonably warm day with no wind for a change. We wouldn't dare complain! Sunrise appeared over the trees with hundreds of geese skimming the trees and heading off of the lake to feed in the fields. Ahhhh.

When we arrived at Owl Cove on the eastern side of the lake, we found a few unusual species. The lake was extremely low, leaving a large expanse of mud-flats. This was good for the Yellowlegs, Least Sandpipers and a small flock or larger shorebirds that were 'Mudjabbing.' But...with the water so far away from cover for us, we couldn't get close enough to positively identify the larger shorebirds we spotted! Our camera lens was not quite strong enough and our scope just couldn't quite get there! Frustrating!

The Yellowlegs were easy as they were calling. The Least Sandpipers were easy, but of course those larger shorebirds were the farthest from us and we just couldn't be positive. Guesses include Dunlin or Semi-palmated Sandpipers. From this area we heard Wild Turkey, but never could see them. Again the smaller birds were difficult to find.

Mountain Bluebirds were found in several places and Brian was able to get several nice photos. They were quite tame. We also had several mixed flocks of Eastern and Mountain Bluebirds. These beautiful visitors from the north really do wear the sky on their backs.



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# Minutes of the December 19, 2011 Meeting

President Bill Diffin called the December meeting to order.

Bill Diffin asked for any corrections or additions to the minutes as published in the December newsletter. Motion was made to accept the minutes and seconded. Motion was approved.

A vote for 2012 officers was conducted. There were 25 current members present. Eighteen Yes votes and zero No votes were cast. All 2011 officers will serve the 2012 term with the exception of Conservation Chairman.

## Committee Reports:

Jimmy Woodard stated there has been an invasion of Snowy Owls in the United States this year. One Snowy Owl has been sighted at Marland, Oklahoma.

Jimmy presented the upcoming Field Trips.

## New Business:

President Diffin asked for members to be sensitive to non smokers while smoking at the entrance to the building.

President Diffin asked if anyone would volunteer for the position of Conservation Chairman. Warren Harden suggested the Conservation Chairman present a conservation question in the monthly newsletter. The answer would be presented at the monthly meeting. Warren suggested the first question could be, "Why Red-tailed Hawks are Getting Electrocuted."

John Shackford stated the CBC resulted in 116 species with three additional species during count week.

Sue Woodson stated she and Dave would volunteer to take on the duties of Refreshment Chairman until Jim Vicars returns. A motion was made to take donations for the drinks (coke, coffee, etc.) to be served at each meeting. The motion was seconded and approved. The club will continue to have a sign up list for the snacks.

January's speaker will be June Ketchum speaking on her travel to Brazil.

Warren Harden opened the Tall Tales event. Many wonderful tales and pictures were shared by club members.

*Nancy Reed, Recording Secretary*

## TOP 25: Bearded Reedling (*Panurus biarmicus*) by Mark Delgrosso

**FAMILY:** Panuridae

**RANGE:** patchily throughout western Europe and across all of central Asia to China

**HABITAT:** wetlands with dense vegetation cover (e.g., reeds)

**STATUS:** common

Here's another quite pretty and unusual bird. It was previously known as the Bearded Tit and it looks somewhat like a chickadee crossed with a ... thrasher



maybe. It is one of those chimaeras of the bird world that looks like it may have been cobbled from a number of disparate species. The head, a pure light gray with (in the male) pendulous black "beards" hanging down from the eyes, looks definitely tit-ish; but the body morphs into that of a mini-brown thrasher. So unusual is this species that unanimity regarding its classification has been elusive. It was first categorized as a member of the true tit, or chickadee, family Paridae – but it isn't quite a chickadee. Then it was in the long-tailed tit family, Aegithelidae, but didn't seem quite at home there either. It then jumped into the babbler family, Timaliidae, but it really isn't a babbler. One last ditch effort to put this taxonomic square peg into a round hole found it in the family Paradoxornithidae, the parrotbills of east Asia, but this too proved unsatisfactory. The species is now in its own family – Panuridae and this is perhaps just – any animal so unusual that it doesn't fit in anywhere almost by definition deserves a unique family.

And it is also a very beautiful bird – and that may be the *only* reason one needs to seek it out among the reeds of Eurasian wetlands.

# Recorders Report: December 2011

## A Snowy Present

Very welcome rain in December helped ease the drought, but birders are reporting lower number of individual birds. Central Oklahoma ended the year under moderate drought conditions so is the continued drought causing a lower number of birds or is the mild weather encouraging birds to stop migrating as far south? However, for Oklahoma birders an unexpected migrant arrived as an early December present and stayed late.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Joe Grzybowski and David Durica had Sharp-shined Hawks at their feeders in Norman even though they live a fair bit apart. On the 4<sup>th</sup> Matt Jung had a leucistic Blue Jay at Eldon Lyon Park. Nadine Varner reported an out of season *Scissor-tailed Flycatcher* at the zoo and after a feather count none are missing from the exhibits. On the 6<sup>th</sup> Bill Diffin stopped by the gull roost at the east end of Lake Hefner dam and located the Lesser Black-backed Gull and on the 7<sup>th</sup> an immature Bald Eagle. On the 9<sup>th</sup> along South Jenkins Cecil Johnson and Dick Gunn saw a Common Yellow-throat, Winter Wren, American Tree Sparrows, and Greater Yellowlegs. Lindell Dillon had a female Greater Scaup on his pond in Norman. On the 10<sup>th</sup> Steve and Mary Davis located an out of season *Snowy Egret* at Lake Hefner.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> during some dark and gloomy weather John Couch was taking the back road through Marland and as the day was almost dark, he saw a large bird of prey on top of a power pole with some white on its face and a rounded head. He turned around for a second look and when a pickup passed the bird flew so he could now see it was a beautiful, all-white bird. He followed and identified it as a mature **Snowy Owl**. Later in the month when John and a friend stopped a local resident told them the bird usually arrives about 3-4 weeks before Christmas



Photo © Terry Wollitz

and stays around for 3 or 4 weeks afterward and another local confirmed this is the fourth year the owl has wintered here. The owl was continuously reported up to the 31<sup>st</sup>.

From the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> Ed Boyd from Maryland stopped at the Embassy Suites field in Norman and located Chestnut-collared, Lapland, Smith's and a couple of McCown's Longspurs, plus LeConte's Sparrows, Sprague's Pipits, Lark Buntings, and Eastern Meadowlarks.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> Nancy Reed reported a Pine Siskin eating with a group of American Goldfinches at her window feeder.



On the 17<sup>th</sup> John Sterling saw a juvenile Thayer's Gull at Lake Overholser and Bill had one at Crystal Lake at the same time in the afternoon. On the 24<sup>th</sup> Bill again reported a Thayer's Gull at Prairie Dog Point on Lake Hefner. On the 25<sup>th</sup> Rebecca

John saw 2 male and 1 female **Ring-necked Pheasants** when they were searching for the Snowy Owl near Marland. On the 27<sup>th</sup> Patti Muzny discovered a pair of Purple Finches at her sister's house southeast of Stillwater. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Bill Diffin checked Prairie Dog Point and located Western Grebe, Horned Grebe, Northern Pintail, Red-breasted Merganser,



Cackling Goose, Common Loons, and Hooded Mergansers. Steve Davis and Mary discovered a White-winged Dove at their feeder in north Oklahoma City. At Lake Hefner on the 30<sup>th</sup> Bill confirmed the *Snowy Egret* and on the 31<sup>st</sup> relocated the Lesser Black-backed Gull at Crystal Lake. Matt Jung checked South Jenkins in Norman and found Wilson's Snipe, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe and Savannah Sparrow.

Thanks to data from the Christmas Bird Count during December **130** bird species were reported including **2 new** species which increased the 2011 Central Oklahoma area total to **268** species. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds by turning in reports. I can be contacted by e-mail at [emkok@earthlink.net](mailto:emkok@earthlink.net). Esther M. Key, Editor.

## Chirpings (cont.)

Our big surprise came in the form of an unlikely bird in an even more unlikely place. There is a small settlement of homes on the north side of Foss Reservoir and as we drove the streets in this area, I spotted a wren bobbing up and down on the rail of a deck that was built on the front of a home. We were very close and even without binoculars; I knew we had a Rock Wren! Brian raised his camera and about 2 seconds before he could shoot, it flitted away to the other side of the home and wouldn't come close enough for a photo. We even made a second trip later in the afternoon, and heard it calling, but never saw it again. Oh, well. Had to "write it up."

We began 2012 with Esther Key and her granddaughter, Mehgan, at Lake Thunderbird, where we count birds on the north side of Alameda and the Hog Creek Arm of the lake. Another beautiful day was ours for the taking and we had fun. Birds were still very difficult to find, although we had more roadside birds here than we did anywhere else, but our area is more wooded. We failed to find any Bald Eagles for the first time in several years, but we found a Roadrunner.

We also found a pair of Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Brian found our first Brown Creeper and got photos. We had several Fox Sparrows and a few White-throated Sparrows and many Juncos. We also failed to find any Cedar Waxwings. Lake Thunderbird is also very low, leaving exposed shoreline and more mudflats. We hiked into our favorite Snipe habitat and found only two. In the muddy area north of Twin Bridges we found American White Pelicans and a flock of Greater Yellowlegs that came in together just as the sun was setting. We had found a few here and there, but never more than one at a time. The larger flock was interesting. They flew in fast with much chattering and began to feed. There were also several Great Blue Herons. We found very few ducks in our area.

Although we didn't find as many birds as we have found in past CBCs, it was a great day to be out and we even found an enjoyable activity for Mehgan. There are two areas where Rose Rocks can be found when the lake is down and Mehgan had a great time looking for them. She had inquired as to why some of the sandstone in the area did not produce the Rose Rock formations. I told her to look it up online and let me know, because I had no clue, either. A good assignment for an eleven year-old budding scientist.



## President's Perspective (cont.)

Finally, compare the fluty ethereal notes of the Wood Thrush (Turdidae) in this video/sound clip, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/wood-thrush-hylocichla-mustelina/male-wood-thrush-singing-sumac-tree-maine-%C2%A92011-garth-mcelroy>, to the second phrase of the recording of a White-tailed Blue Robin (Muscicapidae), <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/white-tailed-blue-robin-myiomela-leucura>, and to the song of the Superb Starling (Sturnidae) in the following video/sound clip, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/superb-starling-lamprotornis-superbus/adult-broken-branch-singing>.

At this point I think we should have convinced ourselves that at least one passerine superfamily, the Muscipapoidea, has some coherence as a distinct group of passerine birds based on some characteristic themes which occur throughout the group. Next month we will investigate the use of the superfamily concept to organize all 94 families of passerines into a manageable number of distinctly recognizable groups.

Here are a couple of more video clips of muscipapid birds to enjoy, <http://www.arkive.org/white-capped-water-redstart/chaimarrornis-leucocephalus/video-00.html> and <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/white-bellied-blue-robin-myiomela-albiventris/bird-lower-part-bush-singing>.



## Sutton Center Eagle Cams

The Eagle Cams at Sooner Lake and Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge are currently showcasing the early nesting of Bald Eagles, including Fred & Ethel. Join the discussion and learn more about these majestic birds at <http://suttoncenter.org>

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

## **Upcoming Field Trips:**

### **February 11th**

Backyard Birding at Jeannine Teasley's farm. Meet at the Shell Station on the NW corner of Hwy 74 and NW 178th at 8AM. We will carpool to her farm near Guthrie. We should be there a few hours. We might do some back road birding after our visit with a stop at Liberty or Guthrie Lake. Contact Jimmy Woodard (365-5685) or Jeannine Teasley at [tville@wildblue.net](mailto:tville@wildblue.net) for more info.

### **March 3rd**

Sia Comanche Eagle Facility near Cyril which is under the direction of Bill Voelker and the Comanche Nation. Meet at Lowe's in Mustang at Hwy 4 and 152 at 8:30AM for carpool to Sia in Cyril. Lunch will be provided by Sia; we suggest participants make a donation to Sia as a thank you for the tour and lunch.

### **March 16-18th (date subject to change)**

Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. We will spend a weekend at this Nature Conservancy Preserve near Pawhuska. A special focus will be on finding Greater Prairie Chickens. Leader: Mark Delgrosso ([medelgrossos@gmail.com](mailto:medelgrossos@gmail.com)). Details TBA.

### **April 5 - 8th (date subject to change)**

High Island, Texas. This will be a multiday visit to the famous migration hotspot along the Gulf Coast. We may visit other birding spots nearby like Anahuac NWR, Bolivar Flats, and Galveston Island. Details TBD.

### **April 26 - May 2nd**

Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival, Woodward. This will be the 4th year for this popular bird festival run by TAS and the Oklahoma Audubon Council. Several satellite trips to Hackberry, Wichita Mtns and Black Mesa are run in conjunction with the festival. Contact John Kennington at [johnkennington@gmail.com](mailto:johnkennington@gmail.com) or visit the festival website at [www.lektreks.org](http://www.lektreks.org).

### **May 11-13th**

OOS Spring Meeting Details are still being worked out but the probable site will be in eastern Oklahoma. Details TBA. Visit [www.okbirds.com](http://www.okbirds.com) for more info.