



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

December, 2012

TALL TALES

Our annual year's end "Tall Tails" program will be featured at the December 17 meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society along with a report on the previous Saturday's annual Christmas Count. We should hear some of the exciting experiences of the Count, as well as some tall tales of wild happenings during the year. So, polish your stories and share them with the rest of us. And bring friends. I bet each one has an interesting bird story.

Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month. They begin at 7 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 & NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.



REFRESHMENTS

Everyone, please bring something savory or sweet to share at our annual Christmas meeting. Drinks will be provided.

WELCOME

New Member: Gavin Small, Midwest City, OK

DUES NOTICE

It's time once again to renew your annual membership for 2013. 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.

MEETING CHANGE

Mark your calendar now!!! The January meeting will be held on the 4th Monday, January 28, 2013 due to the Garden Center closure for MLK holiday.

WINTER BIRD SURVEY

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation conducts a Winter Bird Survey each year. This year, the survey is January 3-6, 2013. Log on to www.okwinterbirds.com and download the survey form. As you take the survey, you'll have a chance to get up-close views of a number of bird species.

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



Last month we began looking at the Corvoidea superfamily, <http://www.tolweb.org/corvoidea>. The North American corvoids all come from just three families in the corvoid tree, the Corvidae (crows, ravens, jays, magpies and nutcrackers), the Laniidae (shrikes) and the Vireonidae (vireos). Let's see if we can extend what we know about our local corvoids to the identification of corvoids worldwide. Listen to the vocalization of a Loggerhead Shrike here http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Loggerhead_Shrike/sounds, and compare it to the first recording of the Blue Jay here, http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Blue_Jay/sounds.

There is a recognizable similarity. Both birds have a harsh sounding call exemplified by the "jeer" of the jay, and both birds have a musical call exemplified by the "toolili" of the jay. How far can this similarity in vocalizations be generalized? Listen to the Fork-tailed Drongo sound clip at the bottom of this page, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/fork-tailed-drongo-dicrurus-adsimilis>.

Did you notice any similarity to the jay and shrike? The Corvoidea contains some groups of small insectivorous birds in the Old World. Among these are the fantail family, the Rhipiduridae, with 43 species in southern Asia and Australasia, and the monarch flycatcher family, the Monarchidae, with around 100 species in Africa, southern Asia and Australasia. Listen to the Grey Fantail singing here, the first sound clip at the bottom of the page, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/grey-fantail-rhipidura-albiscapa>. Do you think there is a similarity between this song and the others we have heard? The call of the Grey Fantail is not as obviously jay-like as you can judge by listening to some of the other recordings. On the other hand, one of the calls of the Rufous Fantail does resemble a jay as you can judge from the first of the recordings in the Sounds section here, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/rufous-fantail-rhipidura-rufifrons>. The singing of the White-capped Monarch in the first Sounds recording here, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/white-capped-monarch-monarcha-richardsii>, has the same ringing whistle quality that the Blue Jay's "toolili" has. The alarm calls in the



fourth recording are harsh but short and repeated to make a sequence approaching a chatter. The alarm calls of the Spectacled Monarch are more jay-like at the first recording in the Sounds section here, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/spectacled-monarch-monarcha-trivirgatus>. The song of the Spectacled Monarch however is just a simple whistle.

So far we have only been looking and listening to birds in the clade at the bottom of the ToL Corvoidea graphic. Before we decide that all corvoids sound somewhat alike, we should check out some of the other groups equivalent in rank to the group we have been exploring. The clade just above the bottom clade is the other major clade in the Corvoidea. The Australian Magpie is a member of this clade which you can hear and watch in the first video here, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/australian-magpie-cracticus-tibicen>. In the bush-shrike subfamily, Malacoptininae, an example is the Tropical Boubou which can be seen and heard making a harsh call here, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/tropical-boubou-laniarius-aethiopicus>.

The vireo family, Vireonidae, is corvoid. In central Oklahoma we have four vireo species that breed locally, Bell's, Warbling, White-eyed and Red-eyed. All four of these vireo species have a harsh call which could be considered the equivalent of the "jeer" call of the Blue Jay or the "caw" of a crow. Listen for the calls mixed in with the song phrases in the last recording here, http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-eyed_Vireo/sounds. Whether each of the song phrases should be considered equivalent to the "toolili" of a jay is a question I leave up to the reader. We know that the corvoid orioles of the Old World gave their name to the non-corvoid orioles of the New World.

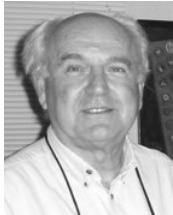
Listen to the male and female Indian Golden Orioles at the second Sounds recording here, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/indian-golden-oriole-oriolus-kundoo>.

There is a recognizable kinship to the Blue Jay's call and song in these vocalizations. However, there is also a resemblance to the vocalizations of our New World orioles like the Baltimore Oriole -- for example the next to last sound recording here, http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Baltimore_Oriole/sounds.



Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



This year's bird for a "Holiday Season Greeting Card" is the **Wood Duck** (*Aix sponsa*). Few duck species in the world rival the beauty of a male Wood Duck, and from birders to sportsmen, few ducks rival its popularity. The Wood Duck breeds over most of eastern North America, in a band across the top tier of U.S. states, and finally down the west coast. It only goes into Canada in a relatively few areas, almost as if it were shunning Canada for the U.S. It winters over most of the lower third of the U.S. and into much of Mexico.

The Wood Duck nests in holes in trees about 3-50 feet up, and the number of eggs it lays is usually between 10-15. Often it does not nest over water, and sometimes quite a distance from stream or pond. A considerable amount has been written about how recently-hatched Wood Duck chicks get to the ground from high nests without injuring themselves, especially because many nests are not over water, where a soft landing could be expected. A. C. Bent (1987, *Life Histories of North American Fowl*) had people report to him that they had seen the female Wood Duck (1) seize a chick by wing or neck and carry it down to water, repeating this for each chick; (2) carry 1 young at a time on her back down to water and then begin to hover vertically over water, tilting her back in such a way that the young slides off into the water; and (3) land on the ground below a nest and call for the young to launch into the air and fall to the ground below the nest. One person said that the fluffy and light ball that is a baby Wood Duck actually lands pretty softly. Moss or leaf litter often help cushion the fall as well.

Breeding Bird Survey data shows that the Wood Duck is expanding its range and populations. At a Ducks Unlimited web site, http://southern.ducks.org/wood_duck.php I gleaned the following info on this species general population status: "After near extirpation in the late 1800s to early 1900s, wood duck populations are considered to be increasing or remaining stable throughout much of their range. From 1959 to 1986, wood duck populations seemed to grow in the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways and elsewhere...[e]stimated

numbers of breeding wood ducks in the Pacific (60,000) and Central flyways (76,000) are much less [than the Atlantic or Mississippi flyways], but populations appear to be increasing there, primarily because of nest box programs...[t]he wood duck's favorite habitats are bottomland hardwood forests and other densely vegetated areas..."

In addition to nest box programs, fire suppression has led to much "new" timber along rivers and streams on the plains. This timber apparently was not there when the prairies regularly burned due to lightning strikes and Native Americans' burn-offs. As a result, the Wood Duck, in recent decades, seems to have moved into this new forest habitat along streams.

One of my favorite Christmas Bird Count (CBC) stories, in an unusual sort of way, involved John Newell. Before Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge was created, and before Wood Ducks were as common for us as now, John was on a CBC and working the east side of the to-be Stinchcomb area. Two hunters came out of a swampy area there and showed John 2 Wood Ducks they had shot that morning, so because the birds had been seen and were alive on CBC day, the species went down on John's list for the day. We prefer that the birds we count on the CBC list remain alive, but exceptions do occur.



I want to give a shout-out to Pat Velte for the wonderful bird pictures she provides for this column every month. They have been so good, I really thought she had an unlimited source of great internet photos. I just found out that most of them are Pat's own photos (sometimes Terry Underhill's too). I was awed by this and also somewhat embarrassed about it too, because I had not been giving Pat much lead time to come up with photos for the articles. She and Terri both deserve sincere thanks!

Also, I have received some excellent suggestion for future Bird of the Months. One I plan to use next month. I encourage other suggestions from our membership about possible birds, or bird related stories and questions, that I can write about. Many thanks! Happy Holidays!

Minutes of the OKC Audubon Society

November 19, 2012

The meeting was called to order by President Bill Diffin. The minutes of the October 15th meeting were approved without changes or additions.

Treasurer's report was presented by Nancy Vicars, and approved. Cash on hand is \$5,698.29.

Field trip chairman Mark Delgrosso summarized the upcoming field trips, including the Christmas Bird Count. It was announced that the Lesser Prairie Chicken Festival in April will have as a special guest Greg Miller, about whom the movie and book was written--*The Big Year*.

Old Business

The date of this year's Christmas Bird Count is December 15th, Saturday, with John Shackford leading the count. The count will be followed by a tally party at the home of Diane Newell at 5 pm and the bird list to be read at 6:30 pm. Address is 8304 Lakeaire Drive, same as the last few years. Map and directions are included in the newsletter. A scouting trip will be led by John Shackford on December 1st at Lake Overholser.

New Business

The nominating committee has selected Sharon Henthorn as the new secretary, as Nancy Reed has stepped down from that position.

An overflow crowd was in attendance, witness to the presentation of avian visitors from Grey Snow Eagle House. Guests attending: Representatives from the Girl Scout troop #169, who are planning to acquire a bronze medal for birding. Duff Bassett, who lives near Lake Overholser. Will Foster, a graduate student from OU in Norman.

Notes of the meeting submitted by Sharon Henthorn

2013 Officer Nominees

The slate of nominees selected by the Election Committee for service in 2013 is:

Ted Goulden for Parliamentarian
Sharon Henthorn for Secretary
Nancy Vicars for Treasurer
John Shackford for Vice President
Bill Diffin for President

Election of officers will be held at the December meeting. Thank you to Election Committee members Jimmy Woodard, Jim Bates, Sharon Henthorn, and Doug Eide for successful completion of this important task.

Nealand Hill Contact Information

For those wanting to visit or contact Nealand Hill, addresses and telephone numbers are given below. Correspondence and visits are welcome.

Physical address for visitation:
VA Center
Sec 2, Room D202B
1776 E. Robinson St.
Norman, OK 73071

For deliveries, substitute Nealand's name for the section and room number above. Please leave off the section and room number for privacy protection.

Mail can be sent to his old address where it will be forwarded to his daughter and then brought to him:

Nealand Hill
2509 Ashton Place, Apt 22A
El Reno, OK 73036

Or mail directly to him:

Nealand Hill
VA Center
P.O. Box 1668
Norman, OK 73070

Nealand's cell phone is (405) 388-6759

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2012

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| President | Bill Diffin | 722-3778 |
| Vice President | John Shackford | 340-5057 |
| Secretary | Sharon Henthorn | 521-9958 |
| Treasurer | Nancy Vicars | 831-1945 |
| Parliament | Ted Golden | 354-3619 |
| Programs | Warren Harden | 364-3491 |
| Recorder | Esther M. Key | 735-1021 |
| Conservation | Dave Woodson | 601-622-3467 |
| Field Trips | Mark Delgrosso | 470-4533 |

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Newsletter Editors: | | |
| | Pat Velte | 751-5263 |
| | Carla Brueggen | 495-3259 |
| Publicity | Doug Eide | 495-8192 |
| Historian | Nealand Hill | 388-6759 |
| Refreshments | Sue Woodson | 601-622-3467 |
| 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

Recorders Report – November 2012

A mystery bird again

Birds and birders were greeted in November with blue skies, colder frosts, and leaves turning to gold. Although blue skies are beautiful, it meant the month only had one day of rain of around one inch which increased the area of central Oklahoma in the extreme drought category. Even though plants aren't using as much water as during the summer, they still need more moisture than nature is providing. Meanwhile, along the creeks that meander through the prairies and fields the trees took turns changing to a brilliant yellow punctuated with occasionally patches of bright red. As the wind blew the leaves to the ground to form mulch, insects moved into the decaying leaves and winter birds arrived in time for the feast. The prairie landscape turned into multiple colors as the various species of grass completed creating their seeds and changed into their fall dress-up colors in time for the newly arriving prairie grassland birds. Did the drought further north and west send a different variety of birds to Oklahoma? Only time and observant birders will tell.

Matt Jung started November by walking east Stinchcomb WMA on the 1st and locating both Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, Hairy Woodpeckers, White-crowned, Song and Lincoln Sparrows. On the 3rd Tim O'Connell observed a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Stillwater. On November 5th Christie Stoops reported a **Rufous Hummingbird** at Cottonwood Creek in Logan County. Betty Clark of Shawnee sent in a late report of a Rufous Hummingbird at her feeder for five days the last week of September. She could sit on the porch and watch it for long periods of time and it would even fly toward her to a tree by the porch.

On the 6th American Goldfinch and Pine Siskin showed up at Hollis Price's feeders in Jones. In Norman on the 9th Joe Grzybowski spotted Le Conte's Sparrows at OU Max Westheimer Airport, and Nancy Reed's had a 15tha Purple Finch, and on the 18tha Lark Bunting at her feeder.

In Norman on the 20th while Lee Hoy was visiting family for Thanksgiving he made a run over to the Embassy Suites' Longspur Field. He witnessed multiple flyovers of Smith's Longspurs, several flights of Pipits, an American Kestrel, and later on his brother's pond off of 84th Street south of Highway 9 he saw Hooded Mergansers and a Cackling Goose. On the 21st along South Jenkins T K noticed a Common Yellowthroat, and Nancy Reed spied a Rufous Hummingbird at her feeder. At Waco and Stevens Road in Pottawatomie County Dala Grissom found Brewer's Blackbirds.

On the 21st at Lake Hefner, Sharon Henthorn sited Common Loon, Red-breasted Mergansers, and behind a

flock of American Coots a mystery bird. Later while she was scanning the lake's southwest area, she discovered 2 *Whooping Cranes*. She was soon joined by other birders to enjoy this unique migration sighting, and on the 22nd at sunset the Cranes were again reported by John Shackford. Then a cold front moved in that night, and they were gone. Meanwhile, Bill Carrell of Tulsa tentatively identified Sharon's photo of a brown mystery gull as a possible Pomarine Jaeger but is uncertain without a better look. Twice this year a mystery bird has been suspected as being a Jaeger but couldn't be positively identified. Keep your eyes open, it's not too late for a certain identification and addition to this year's list.

On the 22nd Grace Huffman caught sight of a Rough-legged Hawk near North Air Depot Blvd and East Wilshire Blvd. On the 23rd Nathan Hillis located a Bufflehead on Lake Overholser. On the 24th Mary and Steve Davis witnessed an adult Bald Eagle sitting on the shore on Lake Hefner in the Prairie Dog Point area, and T K saw a possible **Dunlin**.

On the 25th John Polo birded Couch Park and spied Cedar Waxwings, a White-throated Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Brown Thrasher and Barred Owl. Jimmy Woodward drove the back roads southwest of Mustang toward Union City and caught sight of a gorgeous female **Ferruginous Hawk** near SW 104th and Alfadale Road. In other locations he spotted Greater Roadrunners, Loggerhead Shrikes, Lapland Longspurs, and at El Reno sewage ponds among the numerous waterfowl, Rudy Ducks and one female Common

Goldeneye. In Jim Bates' Oklahoma City back yard he had 3 Brown Creepers; along South Jenkins in Norman T K discovered a Hermit Thrush; and in Norman Joe Grzybowski noticed an Orange-crowned Warbler. On the 26th Brian Davis

mentioned an Inca Dove is in his Norman backyard. His mother-in-law tells him it has been showing up periodically over the past few weeks. On the 30th Matt checked Lake Hefner and noted the water level is as low as he has ever seen it.



Now is the time to start scouting for the Christmas Bird Count. During November **125** bird species were reported with **3** new species which increased the year's total to **276** species in the Central Oklahoma area. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds and can be contacted by e-mail at emkok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

TOP 25 : Emperor Goose (*Chen canagica*)

By Mark Delgrosso

FAMILY: Anatidae

RANGE: west Alaska coast and far eastern Siberia

HABITAT: coastal shores

STATUS: vulnerable

I like to consider myself an optimistic birder. I have an ambition to see, in the wild, all birds that breed in North America as a life birding goal. I believe this is can be done but, I know, some of these species will require much effort and cost and, yes, hardship, to encounter. They are for arm-chair dreamers or the truly adventurous. Some I despair of ever seeing – McKay's Bunting, the Yellow and Black Rails, Steller's Eider and – the Emperor Goose.

All you need do is open a field guide and check its range map to see what I mean: Alaska and Siberia - only. It is not one of these cooperative Arctic breeders that spend the winter near where most North American birders actually live – no. It spends the Alaskan winter *in Alaska!* And then mostly in the Aleutians – it must love the cold!

Maybe it is the old scenario that “forbidden (or far-flung) fruit is always sweetest” – the un-lielihood of ever seeing an Emperor Goose makes it all the more desirable to see. But that's half the reason, for take look at one in your field guide: Emperors are amongst the most beautiful of geese. That clean white head (though this is often stained from dissolved iron in the water) set against a body of delicate blue-gray with its beautiful scaling; the pure white tail and bus-yellow legs make the Emperor a masterpiece to look at - just pack warm things!



Whooping Cranes at Lake Hefner

By Dave Woodson

After reading notices on Birding news that Whooping cranes were at Lake Hefner, Sue and I rushed out to the Lake and got there about 4pm and stayed until dusk. We joined a group of people who were enjoying watching the birds; shortly after setting up our scope John Shackford and Pat Velté arrived. Pat had her camera with a long lens and was able to get some nice pictures.

The two Whoopers were with a small flock of Canada Geese walking along the shore about 300 yards away but viewing was somewhat inhibited due to the tall grasses and the slope of the shore. We set our spotting scope in the back of the car, climbed up for better viewing to see these whooper's heads as they would stretch above the grasses. From that distance we could see red on their heads but it seemed more dark than red. As we watched, the Whoopers moved slowly along the shore giving us great views. We saw a couple walking two large dogs in the direction of these birds and feared they would spook the birds. A young lady and her daughter from our group ran out to inform the dog walkers about these endangered Whooping Cranes and they were nice enough to change their directions so we continued watching the Whoopers walk the shoreline now only about 150 yards away.



They finally stretched their wings, flew a short distance and landed in shallow water. As we continued to watch, these birds began dipping down in the water, splashing and fluttering, preening and spreading out their wings to dry. As light diminished we loaded into our car leaving these magnificent birds to enjoy their evening and us to enjoy our memories.

2012 – 2013 FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Many of the trips/ dates are tentative for 2013; check with Mark Delgrosso or the website/ newsletter for updates and final scheduling as we approach the new year.

Jan 12: Sam Noble museum (with a possible run for longspurs): take a behind-the scenes tour of the Museum's bird collection with the current curator of birds. An option afterwards (depending on weather) is to look for longspurs. In any case meet at 10am at the Museum's front entrance.
Leader/Coordinator: Warren Harden (WHarden@odmhsas.org) .

Feb.16: Grey Snow Eagle House: visit the Iowa tribe's eagle rehabilitation facility near Perkins. Tour of the facility will begin at 10am. Lunch and birding opportunities after. Contact *Leader:* Warren Harden (WHarden@odmhsas.org) for further details.

early March: Woodcock Courtship at Draper: *Leader:* Jimmy Woodard (405 365 5685)
mid –March(13 -23): Tufted Jay Preserve, Mazatlan, MEXICO: see some of Mexico's beautiful endemic birdlife, including the gorgeous Tufted Jay, at the eponymous reserve outside Mazatlan. This is a chance for some exotic lifers plus possible beach R&R in historic Mazatlan. *Coordinator/Leader:* Mark Delgrosso (405 470 4533/ medelgrossos@gmail.com)

late March: SW Oklahoma/ Altus:

April 11-14: Lesser Prairie Chicken Festival/ Woodward: this festival gives birders a chance to see the Lessers on their leks with possible trips to view Greaters as well – both Prairie Chickens in one weekend – not a bad deal! For more info. go to: www.lekstrek.org

April 20: Hackberry Flat Day/Frederick: a variety of activities are on offer, from birding tours to crawdad fishing to wetland hay rides. Contact the Hackberry Flat Center (405 990 4977) for more information.

late April: Red Slough:

May 5-8: 4th Annual Red Slough Birding Convention/ Red Slough: tours of Red Slough, Little River NWR, and the McCurtain Co. Wilderness are on tap during this wildlife extravaganza. A registration fee is required – go to: www.redsloughconvention.com for further details.

mid-May: OOS Spring Meeting:

late May [Memorial Day weekend]: Salt Plains and Quivira Nat'l Wildlife Refuges: explore the goings-on at Salt Plains and then onto Kansas and Quivira for possible breeding Black Rails.
Leader: Mark Delgrosso (405 470 4533/ medelgrossos@gmail.com)

June: Club Picnic at Draper

Oklahoma City Audubon Society
c/o Carla Brueggen
8010 NW 32
Bethany, OK 73008

