



# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

December 2014

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The December program will be our annual Tall Bird Tales. So, bring yourselves and your anecdotes and yarns to regale fellow members with your wonderful, beautiful, harrowing or death defying birding experiences.

Some truly great birds have shown up in Oklahoma the past year and some truly great birders have had truly great times with those and many other birds, not only in Oklahoma but in other parts of the world. So, come out and enjoy the end-of-the-year holiday spirit and camaraderie at our pre-count meeting.

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.



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## REFRESHMENTS

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

## DUES NOTICE

It's time once again to renew your annual membership for 2015. 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, 24 SE 57th St., OKC 73129 .

## MEETING CHANGE

**Mark your calendar now!!!** The January meeting will be held on the 4th Monday, January 26, 2015 due to the Garden Center closure for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

## MARTIN PARK NATURE CENTER HOURS EXPANDED

OKC Parks Director Doug Kupper has announced changes to the operating hours at Martin Park Nature Center. From October 1 through March 31, the Park will be open daily from 5:00 am - 6:00 pm. During these winter hours, the visitor center will open 7:30 am - 6:00 pm, Tuesday through Sunday. Effective April 1, the Park hours will be 5:00 am – 9:00 pm daily. The visitor center will be open 10:00 am – 9:00 pm Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays; 8:00 am - 9:00 pm on Fridays and Saturdays.

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# President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



Winter is a great time to bird. The leaves are gone from many of the trees, so the birds are easier to see and hear. It's not too hot or too buggy, and if the ground is frozen it won't be too muddy. UV levels are low. Many species of birds migrate into central Oklahoma for the winter including occasionally some scarce species treasured by listers, for example

Townsend's Solitaire, Snow Bunting, Lesser Goldfinch, Red Crossbill, Evening Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, Sage Thrasher, Snowy Owl and Long-eared Owl.

Feeders are a great way to get a look at the winter bird population. Even if you don't have feeders, it is a good idea to keep a bag of seed on hand. Some nice birds have come to seed which was thrown on the snow by our members including a Rusty Blackbird at the Bates residence.



For the last several months in this space we have been examining the nine-primaried oscine group of passerine birds. Most of the North American members of the Passeroidea superfamily belong to the nine-primaried oscines. The exceptions are the wagtails and pipits (Motacillidae) and the Olive Warbler, see ToL tree for Passeroidea, <http://goo.gl/Gfvs5f>. The nine-primaried oscines are also a dominant group in tropical America, but there that dominance is shared with the New World suboscines. Elsewhere in the world, the nine-primaried oscines are a relatively minor or nonexistent component, just the 42 species of Emberiza buntings, example <http://goo.gl/LXLwjG>, which are spread through Eurasia and Africa. Generalizations we observe pertaining to the nine-primaried oscines are therefore of minor use outside of the Americas unless they can be shown to apply to some of the non-nine-primaried oscine families of the Passeroidea, especially the pipits and wagtails (64 species of Motacillidae), the Old World sparrows, estrildid finches and allies (182 species of Passeridae), and the weaver finches and allies (109 species of Ploceidae). These three families are successive sister groups to the nine-primaried oscines as shown in the ToL tree. We will consider ourselves fortunate if any generalized NPO characters also apply to one or more of the fairy bluebirds, leafbirds and ioras (15 species of Irenidae, sometimes considered three separate families), the sunbirds (132 species of Nectariniidae), the

flowerpeckers (44 species of Dicaeidae) or the accentors and Olive Warbler (13 species of Prunellidae plus Peucedramus).

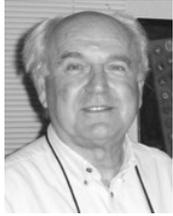
One character we have noticed in many nine-primaried oscines is a deep, pointed, conical bill. This character is absent in the pipits and wagtails but is present in the Old World sparrows, estrildid finches and allies, and the weaver finches and allies. The presence of the conical bill in these groups was noted in the June 2014 Perspective where links were provided to reference images. The flowerpeckers are generally described as having thick bills. Here are some reference photos, Wakatobi Flowerpecker and Grey-sided Flowerpecker, <http://goo.gl/r78Kgu>, Thick-billed Flowerpecker, <http://goo.gl/a3Ugcr>, Orange-bellied Flowerpecker, <http://goo.gl/xvKG1J>, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, <http://goo.gl/LVsV6n> and Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker, <http://goo.gl/7Bq8ON>. The greatest part of the diet of flowerpeckers is the fruit, flowers and nectar of mistletoe species. The bills of the two fairy bluebirds are similar to the bills of flowerpeckers, for example the Asian Fairy Bluebird, <http://goo.gl/Eb6lao>, which eats primarily figs. The bills of the leafbirds and ioras are perhaps a little thinner, e.g. Golden-fronted Leafbird, <http://goo.gl/F2fgy0>, Blue-winged Leafbird, <http://goo.gl/S7UG9h> and Common Iora, <http://goo.gl/X3OE3Y>. The leafbirds eat insects supplemented with fruit and nectar, and the ioras eat insects. The bills of the sunbirds are long and curved for taking nectar from flowers as can be seen in the expandable thumbnails at the bottom of the right column here, <http://goo.gl/Wzqolo>. None of the flowerpeckers, fairy bluebirds, leafbirds, ioras or sunbirds are seed eaters, so we shouldn't be too surprised if their bills don't have the deep conical shape associated with seed eating habits. The accentors and the Olive Warbler have small bills, e.g. the Dunnock, <http://goo.gl/TyQVOr> and the Olive Warbler, <http://goo.gl/XL31Vp>. The accentors eat insects in summer supplemented with seeds and fruits in winter. The information on the diet of the Olive Warbler is scanty, but it is known to forage for insects in its preferred habitat of coniferous trees.

We might as well take a quick look at the Hawaiian honeycreepers. Recent genetic studies have shown these birds to be derived from within the finch family, Fringillidae. They are either considered to constitute their own family, Drepanididae, or a subfamily, Drepanidinae. More than half of the original species are extinct. Some species are seedeaters with conical bills like the Palila, <http://goo.gl/4m33Hq> and the Laysan Finch, <http://goo.gl/KAV0yn>. Others feed on nectar and insects and have more slender bills, for example the Hawai'i Creeper, <http://goo.gl/crPcfB>. Finally there are some that feed entirely on nectar and have bills shaped to forage in specific blossoms like hummingbirds, for example the 'I'iwi, <http://goo.gl/qwJXgJ>, capable of hovering flight like a hummingbird.

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# Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



The Bonaparte's Gull (*Larus philadelphia*) was a bird species that snuck up on me. Many years ago, John Newell said something about seeing Bonaparte's Gulls at one of the city lakes, and my internal reaction was to say "Huh!?" Before that day I am not sure that this species had ever shown up on my

personal radar of birds. But the loss had been mine for missing this small gull that "looks delicate and buoyant in flight" (Ken Kaufman, Field Guide to Birds of North America); flight tends to look more tern-like than gull-like.

Here in Oklahoma it is a spring and fall-to-early-winter migrant, so we see them most every year on our Christmas Bird Count. A few have been found overwintering but we have no breeding grounds and not much for wintering grounds in the state. Like the Franklin's Gull, it is primarily a migrant here. After Bonaparte's Gulls leave us in winter, most head for the Gulf Coast. Interestingly, in winter it is found along virtually all of both coasts of the contiguous U.S. But it is worth getting to know; some of you will be glad to hear that it is one of the easiest gulls to identify.

The genus name is *Larus*, from a Greek word that means "a ravenous seabird;" the species name *philadelphia* is after the Pennsylvania town of Philadelphia, near where the type specimen was collected. The common name Bonaparte is named after a French zoologist who lived for a time in Philadelphia.

In his Field Guide to Birds of North America, Ken Kaufman gives some tips for gull identification: work first with adult plumaged gulls, then back yourself down into the immature plumages. To complicate identification, gulls, especially large gulls, sometimes interbreed. Some gulls take 4-5 years to arrive at full adult plumage, but fortunately the Bonaparte's Gull only requires a year to reach plumage maturity, and neither the adult or immature plumage is too hard to identify.

The Bonaparte's Gull, at 13 inches, is the smallest of the American Gulls; the Little Gull of the Old World, at 11 inches, is now nesting in small numbers in the Great Lakes region but the odds of seeing one here in Oklahoma are very slim. Plumage field marks for both adults and young Bonaparte's are relatively easy—the best field mark being a large white triangle on the leading edge of the upper wing. In young plumage there is also a black subterminal tail band, so with these 2 bits of information, you will be a long way towards identifying this gull species.



This species breeds across much of Canada and Alaska and arrives on the breeding grounds early in the season, while snow still covers much of the ground. It builds a nest that is 4-20 feet up in a fir or spruce tree, and out on a lateral limb a few feet; usually the nest is over or near water. It lays 2-4 eggs, but usually 3 and incubation is 24 days. Egg color is buffy to olive, and spotted or blotched with brown.

Food of the Bonaparte's Gull is largely insects or small fish, with very little, if any, vegetative component. This may differ from a number of other gull species that we have in winter. These other gull species can often be found at landfills. I have seen Ring-billed, Herring, Franklin's and Glaucous gulls at these sites, so doing a little "dumpster diving" can be a good way to get looks at a number of gull species—if you can get into the dump area and if you can tolerate the habitat. Landfills are probably a large reason why many gull species are enjoying a boom in population numbers. I have not worked it out but I do not recall seeing Bonaparte's Gulls in this situation—this possibility probably needs a little sleuthing to answer definitively. Another habitat change over the last 60-80 years is the number of large impoundments that have been built.

This almost surely has helped to increase a number of gull species, including the Bonaparte's Gulls.

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## Christmas Bird Count

**Saturday, 20 December 2014!**

Our Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, 20 December 2014! We hope you will devote at least a part of your day to helping with the count, be it as a feeder counter or brush beater. After the count, we have a Tally Party at Diane Newell's, 8304 Lakeaire Drive. The party begins at 5 pm. You do not have to count birds to come to the party—we will enjoy seeing everyone.

The Christmas Bird Count is always fun for the counters because of the possibility that we may see a real rarity on our individual count lists. But do not forget that the most important data we gather, from a scientific point of view, may be the non-specialty birds—those species common to rare that we expect to see. These are the birds that tell researchers what is happening to populations of typical birds for our area. This information is used, for example, to set bag limits for duck hunters, to avoid overhunting individual species. There are many other important scientific uses for the data.

If you would like to participate and have not been contacted yet, please contact me.

John Shackford, Compiler, johnsshack@aol.com  
cell (405) 996-6050, home (405) 340-5057

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# Minutes of the Meeting

November 17, 2014

Meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by Pres. Bill Diffin. Twenty four members were present. Minutes of October meeting were approved as written and published in the Nov. newsletter. Treasurers report was approved as read showing account balance of \$5,798.69. Nancy explained the additional expenditure of \$120 to the Garden Center in order to set up our meeting room 30 minutes prior to each meeting.

## Announcements:

Ted Goulden brought a group of free books to share.

Reminder: the January meeting will be held on the **4<sup>th</sup> Monday, Jan. 26, 2015.**

Jimmy Woodard, nominating comm. Chairman, presented the slate for officers for 2015 as follows: Bill Diffin, President; John Shackford, Vice-Pres.; Sharon Henthorn, Secretary; Nancy Vicars, Treas.; Ted Goulden, Parliamentarian. The election of officers will be held at our December meeting.

Warren Harden reported there are 150 nesting pairs of Bald Eagles in Oklahoma according to the Sutton Center census.

We have additional access to Martin Nature Park now. New hours are 6AM-11PM, 7 days a week.

John Shackford outlined details for the annual Christmas count to be held on Saturday, Dec. 20, 2014. The after count party will again be hosted by Diane Newell. Members and participates were asked to bring side dishes to supplement the dinner. Chili and chowder, drinks and utensils will be provided. A motion to provide \$100.00 allowance was approved by the members present.

## Fieldtrips:

Bill Diffin reported on the Salt Plains fieldtrip. No Whoopers were found but thousands of Sand Hill Cranes. BTW, one Whooper was found and photographed the following week by Larry Mays.

Jimmy Woodard reported on the Guthrie Sand Pits fieldtrip. Lots of waterfowl, a Bald Eagle and two very late spotted sandpipers. Nine participates found a total of 59 species during their outing.

Hal Yocum reported his trip to Red Slough's Yellow Rail Drag, was a complete success. Not only did they find one but it was very cooperative and set up in plain sight for a photo op!! 89 species were found over the weekend.

## Citizen Science Opportunities:

The 18th annual Great Back-yard Bird Count will be

held **Friday, February 13, through Monday, February 16, 2015.** Please visit the official website at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) for more information and some free apps at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/birding-apps/>

## New Business:

Jim Lish has contacted us asking for a contribution to help with expenses to publish his new book on Red-tailed Hawks. The members presented voted to grant his request. Our club will be listed in the book's acknowledgments.

## No Old Business

## Program:

Our speaker, Allan Janus gave a very detailed and enlightened overview on the status of the Lesser Prairie chickens. He explained all the political, industrial and financial work that's been done in order to hopefully preserve habitat and their well-being at the present as well as their future. He also encouraged us all to buy Duck Stamps as 100% of the money goes directly to habitat preservation. Meeting was adjourned and our next meeting will be held December 15, 2014.

Nancy Vicars, Acting Recording Secretary

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# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

## Officers 2014

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	445-2300
Newsletter Editors:		
	Pat Velte	751-5263
	Carla Brueggen	495-3259
Publicity	Doug Eide	495-8192
Historian	Vacant	
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 and meetings, be sure to log onto:*

**OKC-Audubon.org**

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# Camouflage

By John Bates

I should like each member of this birdwatching club to become a novice for a moment. Regardless of experience, we all have had difficulty with identification. Birds seldom are visible long enough for what I shall call a field-guide quality pose. A gun was the method of remanding a bird to this status. If the subject of our pursuit were not so wary, the goal would be achieved with little effort.

Once an inhabitant of the woods knows something is awry the whole forest knows. Mitigating observation is quintessential to proper identification of most creatures in their realm. This word is appropriate, because birdwatchers are the intruders. Prudence dictates this in the woods as it does on the streets or parks at night. To see birds one must not be seen by birds.

Shall we talk camouflage? The basic three-season variety might be purchased at any thiftshop. This is inexpensive and helps to recycle otherwise overproduced clothing. The most effective gear is known as gillie, Gaelic for servant. It mimics the actual leaves in the wind. And is worn over any clothing. Green is the standardized color for most of the year, while gillie for dead grass is the same as for the desert environs. The pockets of the pants provide ample space for items: fieldguide, mp3 player and speaker, telephone, maps, compass, collapsible tripod, and water. The gear is meant for disguise and not for warmth. Personally, a cardinal attempted to fly into me and a kite dived at my hair possibly thinking it to be prey.

In addition to ophthalmic hiding is the olfactory presence. Odorless oil is useful when birdwatching. Inexpensive and invaluable its use is fairly helpful to suppress scent. The clothing does the majority of the work, because I have used and not used it, during my investigation. Evidence supporting the conclusion was seen by the numerous encounters with vultures at close -range. Factly, it was the closest I had come to a flying buzzard. I could see the gonys without binoculars. Using gillie and oil, I was able to see ducks swimming toward me stopping at fifteen feet from the shore, not in the opposite direction as is wont. Duration of effectiveness of the oil is variable with temperature, but anything to help aspiring birdwatchers. Complete immersion is very effective when using camouflage.

Questions might be asked about safety. Hunters and birdwatcher are friends(remotely). The only difference is one group does not kill what they seek. Truthfully, hunters pay more for conservation than the average person in this club. I frequently share a cabin with a friend, a hunter, and have learned very much. After an hour in camouflage, the forest is an interesting place. Hunters are aiming up or down according to that which

they hunt. A shotgun is fired upwards for ducks and downwards for turkeys. A rifle is discharged only with a target in sight, or it would remain futile, expensive and ineffective. Lake Crystal is my preferred place, as no hunting is allowed. Hunting necessitates space and birdwatching does not. Always be cautious and alert.

The major part of avifauna can be seen or heard where hunting is prohibited. For safety one would be wise to stay on the trail whatever the hobby. There is no room for hyperbole and rhetoric, when safety or weather is the subject.

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## Bird Surveys

By Dave Woodson

At our October meeting, bird surveys were discussed – here is a list that members may wish to learn more about. I urge each member to participate in one or more of the following Citizen Science Surveys. These surveys are used by Biologist and Ornithologist providing critical data on population trends. They allow birders to get out doors, gather together, count different species and observe bird behavior. Also, if the weather is bad you may sit inside with a warm drink and count birds at your feeders. So select from the list below, mark your calendar, and help count those birds! Links provide for more details to answer questions on how to participate.

8 Nov 2014 to 3 Apr 2015 -- The FeederWatch season.

<http://feederwatch.org/about/how-to-participate/#important-dates>

14 Dec – 5 Jan 2015 -- The 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Bird Count throughout North America.

<http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>

20 Dec 2014 -- OCAS Christmas Bird Count — POC John Shackford, <http://okc-audubon.org/November2014.pdf>

13-16 Feb 2015 -- The 18th annual GBBC. <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

[Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation: Citizen Science Surveys](#)

(Januray) Winter Bird Feeder Survey -- <http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/okwinterbirds/index.html>

(Feb. 15-Nov. 30) Nestbox Survey - Online Survey -- [http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wildlifemgmt/diversity/NestboxSurvey\\_DataSheet.pdf](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wildlifemgmt/diversity/NestboxSurvey_DataSheet.pdf)

(April 1-Nov. 1) Hummingbird Survey - Online Survey -- [http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wildlifemgmt/diversity/HummingbirdFeederSurvey\\_DataSheet.pdf](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wildlifemgmt/diversity/HummingbirdFeederSurvey_DataSheet.pdf)

# Recorders Report

## November 2014

### *Terns and Owls*

As the cold fronts continue to push into central Oklahoma, they have brought some unique bird species but not all in our area. They also brought a surprise snow on the 16<sup>th</sup> followed by a high in the 70°F. How did this effect the distribution of unusual species? Will central Oklahoma have an avian snowy surprise this winter? Will all central Oklahoma counties have bird reports this month?

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brian Muzny saw a dark-phase Rough-legged Hawk near I-240 and Sooner Road. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> James Hubbell found Vesper Sparrow and Rusty Blackbird on North Morgan Road in Canadian County. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Sharon Henthorn drove around Lake Hefner and located Ruddy Ducks, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Loon and Greater Yellowlegs. On the 6<sup>th</sup> Larry Mays discovered a White-throated Sparrow near his home in McClain County.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> Dick Gunn reported a Sora Rail along South Jenkins in Norman. At Lake Hefner Kevin Groeneweg discovered Canvasback, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and American Avocets. At Lake Carl Blackwell Scott Loss identified a Le Conte's Sparrow; and Patti and Brian Muzny saw male Purple Finches near Byars in McClain County.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> flying over his home in Stillwater Scott Loss noted all five species of arctic geese including Snow, Ross's, Canada, Greater White-fronted and Cackling, and later at a 5-minute stop at Boomer Lake he added four Black Vultures. At the USAO Habitat Area in Grady County Jason Shaw noticed a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. On the 15<sup>th</sup> a Snowy Owl was found in eastern Oklahoma by Ryan VanZant. No, we can't count it for our area, but we need to be on alert so one can be found here and counted.



Jimmy Woodard led an Audubon field trip to the Dolese Sand Pit in Logan County and the group saw Least Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Horned Grebe, Northern Harrier, Bonaparte's Gull, Hairy Woodpecker,

Pileated Woodpecker and Spotted Towhee. Later Mary L and Steve Davis drove around Lake Hefner and located a lone male Wood Duck. After Mary took quite a

few photos, it flew away but then one by one, three immature Black-crowned Night Herons flew by.



On the 16<sup>th</sup> in Stillwater Scott Loss was working in his driveway as the sun came out after the snow when he was excited to hear the dry rattle calls of Smith's Longspurs overhead. On the 18<sup>th</sup> Scott stopped at Boomer Lake and spotted a Lark Sparrow, which is one of the latest records for this latitude in

eBird. Later in the day at Lake Carl Blackwell he located a Lewis's Woodpecker actively chasing all Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers away from a big dead tree near the store/office. This is one of the most eastern records for this species. On the 19<sup>th</sup> Lewis Pond saw it and a Prairie Falcon at Lake Carl Blackwell.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> Bill Diffin checked Lake Hefner and located a Lesser Black-backed Gull. In Miami in Ottawa County Ed Saunders reported his sighting of a Snowy Owl near his home. No we can't count this one either. Keep looking. **But** just as exciting and even more improbable at Lake Thunderbird Joe Grzybowski spotted a first-winter **Arctic Tern**. Thanks to his announcement several people have been able to locate and photograph this extremely rare bird.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> Ryan Shaw saw a Rough-legged Hawk near Ninnekah in Grady County. On the 25<sup>th</sup> Rachel Wrenn noticed a Hermit Thrush at Little River State Park. On the 26<sup>th</sup> Bill Diffin reported a flock of 40 Smith's Longspurs on the east side of Prairie Dog Point, and John Tharp spotted Rusty Blackbird at Lake Thunderbird's Alameda Drive Bridges.



On the 27<sup>th</sup> Dave and Sue Woodson spotted a probable **Brewer's Sparrow** on the north side of Lake Stanley Draper near the end of Point 6. T K saw Golden-crowned Kinglet at Lake Thunderbird Little River Marina. Scott Loss found a Short-eared Owl and American Tree Sparrow at West Richmond Road in Stillwater. On the 28<sup>th</sup> Tony Solorio saw a Western Grebe at Lake Overholser north of the fishing dock on the west side, and James Hubbell located **Lapland**

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**Longspur** on North Morgan Road. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Brandy and John Polo spotted a **Golden Eagle** at the west side of Lake McMurtry. And with these interesting species arriving, it is time for the Christmas Bird Counts. Will one have a Snowy Owl or Arctic Tern?

In the Central Oklahoma area **136** bird species were reported in November with **4** new species which brings the total for the year to **289**. No birds were reported in Kingfisher, Seminole and Lincoln counties during November. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds and can be contacted by e-mail at [emkok@earthlink.net](mailto:emkok@earthlink.net). Esther M. Key, Editor.

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## Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

December 2014

Just a few random bird experience thoughts and things I found memorable from the past:—

At the young age of 16, I managed to find myself helping my mother observe a Yellow-billed Cuckoo on its nest for a college refresher course at OSU. My first impression was not a good one – we sat for hours in weeds in the summer and we all know what lurks in weeds in Oklahoma in the summer – CHIGGERS! I experienced the absolute worst case ever because we didn't have insect repellent. Our country home had no air conditioning and no fans. Decided my mother had to be nuts for sure!

Accidentally catching a Roadrunner in my warbler mist net. I remember well the condition of the net after this huge bird landed in it and rode the net tier to the ground that was littered with greenbrier bits twigs and leaves. And the Roadrunner was not very cordial when I approached and began to get it out. And then there was the time I netted nearly 30 Baltimore Orioles at one time. If you've ever had the experience of removing blackbird families from those mist nets, you could guess how long it took me to process them! Quite a pretty sight!

Sitting on the bank of Cave Creek in Arizona and looking over at a small bush that held a Painted Redstart and a Red-faced Warbler. We didn't even have to take a mountain hike to find them. The real treat came when we came to a bend in the creek and nearly stepped on an Elegant Trogon that was bathing in a tiny puddle.

My first Albatross, many miles off the coast of Northern California, was another treat. Several of these beautiful birds landed behind our boat in pursuit of baitfish scraps that were being tossed into the ocean. Still wonder HOW these birds found that little bit of food in such a huge body of water. They literally

appeared out of nowhere. From a blind on Puffin Island off the coast of Maine, we listened in fascination as we heard the Atlantic Puffins walking on the top of the blind and hopping along the rocks where they were nesting.

My first look at a family of Whooping Cranes on the Texas Coast: Unafraid of the tour boat, these beautiful birds fed in the shallows and seemed not to mind the admiring humans. On this same tour, I got to see what happens when a Great-blue Heron tries to swallow a catfish head-first and the catfish deploys its fins in the lock position. When the boat resumed its journey, this scenario looked to be a standoff.

If a Bittern swallows a lively snake then assumes the bittern's typical "freeze" position while the snake is still in the process of being swallowed, the bittern is not very invisible because its neck is wriggling all over the place.

A chilly Broad-tailed Hummingbird female, trying to escape the rain and an amorous suitor, sought refuge between my feet while we were huddled under the camper's canopy. The male was not deterred – he continued to perform his aerial stunts just beyond the toes of my hiking boots. I could feel the air on my ankles. My first hand-held Calliope Hummingbird was one of those unbelievable, almost spiritual experiences I will never forget. Ever feel the heartbeat of a hummingbird? Incredible! I could go on for pages and pages, but I'll mark this to be continued...

Christmas Counts enable participants to experience many lifetime bird experiences and I urge everyone to give some serious thought to helping out this year – there are more than enough CBC's from which to choose and they all need help. How about an albino Cardinal; a Merlin swooping down in front of you to grab its lunch; a Bald Eagle soaring overhead with a Golden Eagle; a porcupine lumbering across a wheat field; a flock of Hooded Mergansers; a Little Blue Heron where it should not have been in winter; a flock of Mountain Bluebirds; nearly a hundred Great-blue Herons huddled around Horseshoe Lake on a very chilly winter count day; sneaking up on a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; finding a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in winter when it should have already gone south and the fellowship. Most of us have a "crew" that we count with and it's always fun to get together and see what we can find each year. A lot of our time is spent with remembering past CBC's in our territories and laughing about some of the great experiences and some of the crazy mishaps as well. Never a dull moment. Or if there is...it's your own fault. Get out and CBC 2014!

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

## 2014 - 15 FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Check with Mark Delgrosso at: [markdelg94@gmail.com](mailto:markdelg94@gmail.com) or the website/ newsletter for updates and final scheduling/ cancellations.

**DEC.20:** Christmas Bird Count: *Leader:* John Shackford (405 340 5057 or [johnsshack@aol.com](mailto:johnsshack@aol.com))

**JAN. 9—12** OK Winter Bird Survey: <http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/OKWinterBirds/winterbirdsurvey.htm>

**FEB 13—16** The 18th annual Great Back-yard Bird Count. Please visit the official website at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) for more information and some free apps at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/birding-apps/>

### WINTER:

- Overholser/Hefner lakes: *Leader(s):* Bill Diffin ([williamdiffin@aol.com](mailto:williamdiffin@aol.com))/ Jimmy Woodard ([jwoodard@cox.net](mailto:jwoodard@cox.net))
- Canton Lake: *Leader(s):* Bill Diffin Jimmy Woodard

**FEB.(TBA):** Woodcock mating: *Leader:* Jimmy Woodard ([j.woodard@cox.net](mailto:j.woodard@cox.net))

### SPRING:

- In/around OKC Zoo: *Leader:* Nadine Varner
- Mitch Park: *Leader:* John Shackford ([johnsshack@aol.com](mailto:johnsshack@aol.com))

**APRIL** (date TBA): Backyard birding: once again member Nancy Reed has invited interested birders to her property in Norman for spring migration. Her extensive property hosts a diversity of habitats that should make for a productive and exciting morning of birding. *Leader:* Mark Delgrosso ([markdelg94@gmail.com](mailto:markdelg94@gmail.com))

**MAY** [Memorial Day weekend]: Quivira Nat'l Wildlife Refuge: on to Kansas and Quivira for possible breeding Black Rails- possible side-trip to Cheyenne Bottoms. *Leader:* Mark Delgrosso (405 445 2300/ [markdelg94@gmail.com](mailto:markdelg94@gmail.com))

**JUNE:** Club Picnic

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