



# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

November 2015

## Program

Our November 16th OKC Audubon Society program will be an encore by Dr. Doug Wood covering his summer 2015 trip to South Africa. His presentation 'South Africa – From Savannah to Sea' will emphasize photos and a discussion of the birds, mammals, and conservation in South Africa. Locations visited include Kruger National Park, Wakkerstroom, the Drakensberg Mountains, the East Cape, and Cape Town and its surroundings.

Dr. Wood is a Professor of Biological Sciences at Southeastern Oklahoma State University and is in his 13<sup>th</sup> year of teaching at SOSU. He is primarily an ornithologist, but also teaches a wide variety of classes in zoology, conservation, wildlife management, and biology. His hobbies include birding, photography, travel, and books.

Doug is the Past-President of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society and is respected and admired by his students, cohorts and fellow birders and a favorite among the outstanding speakers at OKC Audubon meetings.

Come out to enjoy Doug's trip to South Africa, share in the camaraderie and bring a friend for another good evening with fellow bird enthusiasts.



## Refreshments

Refreshments for the November meeting provided by:

Marion Homier

Kevin Groeneweg

Sharon Henthorn



*“Sometimes I think that the point of birdwatching is not the actual seeing of the birds, but the cultivation of patience. Of course, each time we set out, there's a certain amount of expectation we'll see something, maybe even a species we've never seen before, and that it will fill us with light. But even if we don't see anything remarkable - and sometimes that happens - we come home filled with light anyway.”*

— Lynn Thomson, *Birding with Yeats: A Memoir*

## 2015 - 16 Field Trip Schedule

As of this writing many of the trips/ dates are tentative for 2015-16. For information about any trip w/o a date assigned, please check with Mark Delgrosso at: [markdelg94@gmail.com](mailto:markdelg94@gmail.com) or the website/ newsletter for updates and final scheduling/ cancellations.

**Dec.19: Christmas Bird Count:** *Coordinator:* John Shackford ([Johnsshack@aol.com](mailto:Johnsshack@aol.com))

**June: Club Picnic**

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## President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



Three cheers for Marion Homier, Nancy Vicars and Jimmy Woodard, the three courageous members who volunteered at our last meeting to be this year's Election Committee. It is in their hands to nominate candidates for each of the five officer positions, Parliamentarian, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President and President. They will announce the slate of candidates at the November meeting, and the election vote will be conducted at the December meeting. So the future of OKC Audubon is in the hands of these three movers and shakers. They hold the levers of power. They are the ones behind the curtain, the masters of the game.

Since this is Thanksgiving month, it is a good time to thank all you members who contribute snacks and beverages at our meetings. Every meeting features a delicious array of home-cooked treats or carefully selected bakery items. The generous quantities and high quality say a lot about the pride and caring of our membership. Give yourselves a pat on the back members. You deserve it.

The season for neotropical migrants is pretty much over, but our winter residents are still moving into the state from up north. Juncos, sparrows, towhees, longspurs, kinglets, yellow-rumps, gulls, loons, waterfowl, pelicans, cormorants and hawks will all be appearing in increasing numbers from now until Christmas. Hopefully our members will spot some exciting birds at their feeders like they did last winter. Who will be the first to ring the rare bird alert bell?

Last month our investigation into the global characters of the passerine superfamilies left off with the intention to extend our survey for burry notes beyond the Passeroidea to the other oscine superfamilies, Certhioidea, Muscipoidea, Sylvioidea and Corvoidea. We should eventually take a look at the basal oscine grade as well, the honeyeaters, etc., even though we already found that the most basally diverging member, the Superb Lyrebird, has burry call notes. Let's start with the Certhioidea, the superfamily containing the wrens, nuthatches, gnatcatchers and creepers. If you have been following this series and have some familiarity with the vocalizations of these birds, you are likely to draw at least one immediate negative conclusion related to the nuthatches. Their whining, doll-like sounds are instantly recognizable as the stacked-harmonics type of harsh vocalization which is different than the burry notes we seek. A good example is the Red-breasted

Nuthatch recording and sonogram, XC279657, currently fourth in the list on [xeno-canto.org](http://www.xeno-canto.org).

I need to interject here that there has been a change to the way the xeno-canto full length sonograms appear in my browser and probably yours. Before when I would hit the "Download Full-length sonogram" link, the full length sonogram would appear in a window. Now I get the Windows download window and must actually download the file before opening it. The file opens in the Window Photo Gallery viewer where it is easy to zoom and drag, so the change has its good side.

The wrens, we suspect, are a different matter than the nuthatches. Surely in all that chattering, trilling, rattling and buzzing there must be some notes that show up with the burry signature on the sonogram, a wide, painted line. The following Sedge Wren song has some burry notes,

<http://www.xeno-canto.org/273467>. The following Marsh Wren recording starts with trills which end with a short burry note, and then eventually it goes on to a long series of burry call notes, <http://www.xeno-canto.org/256524>. The burry notes are mixed in liberally with the trills in the following Marsh Wren recording which has the added interest of the burry song of a Red-winged Blackbird (Passeroidea superfamily) in the background,

<http://www.xeno-canto.org/256293>. The Rock Wren it turns out is an exceptionally buzzy singer, (this is a four-minute recording -- don't feel compelled to listen to all of it) <http://www.xeno-canto.org/218673>. One of the benefits of doing our own research is that often when looking for one thing, we find something else we never noticed before. For example, notice that the simple repeated elements of the song of the Rock Wren are much like those of the Carolina Wren, e.g. the Rock Wren here:

<http://www.xeno-canto.org/205765>.

The Blue-grey Gnatcatcher is an interesting case. Note in the sonogram for the following recording,

<http://www.xeno-canto.org/263484>, that the fourth element, i.e. the second (final) element in the second group, is both burry and whining whereas the first element is more of a pure whine. This combination, the longer whine, followed by the shorter, burry whine, is repeated several more times in the recording. The following Brown Creeper starts its song with a note that shows the burry signature on the sonogram, <http://www.xeno-canto.org/267982>. If your ears are like mine, the burry character may not be all that apparent without the help of the sonogram.

Our sample is small, but it is enough to show that the burry note capability seems to be retained in most of the certhioid families. Next month we should examine the sister group of the Certhioidea, the Muscipoidea.

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## Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



Thanksgiving is coming and one of the things we have to be thankful for is abundant food. Turkey is the Thanksgiving tradition but the Domestic Chicken (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) is a less daunting choice. The Domestic Chicken is the most abundant bird species on earth. The

number, worldwide, was estimated to be over 24 billion in 2003 and world population at that time was about 6.4 billion. So in 2003 there were about 3.75 chickens for every person on earth. We do not usually stop and think about how Domestic Chickens came to be and this I would like to explore a bit here.

Genetically, chickens are believed to be derived primarily from (wild) Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*) (see photo), a species that Domestic Chickens strongly resemble and from which most of the traits of Domestic Chickens are no doubt derived. Wild Red Junglefowl still range from southern India eastward across southern China. There are 3 other wild junglefowl: the Grey Junglefowl, found on peninsular India and northward toward the northern boundary; Sri Lankan Junglefowl, found on the island of Sri Lanka, off the coast of India; and the Green Junglefowl, found on the Island of Java and several smaller islands in the area, in Indonesia. All may have contributed to the genetics of Domestic Chickens. The Grey Junglefowl is believed to have contributed the trait of yellow pigment in the feet and legs of Domestic Chickens.

The Red Junglefowl is quite a shy species, unlike its domestic cousins. And what do you think the call of the Red Junglefowl is—yes, Cock-a-doodle-doo. Such a loud call in the jungle suggests a very difficult-to-see/shy bird, because showy birds do not require loud calls to attract a mate.

The earliest known domestication of the chicken is estimated to be in Northern China about 8,000 BCE (Before Common Era), an estimated date determined by

archaeological discovery of chicken bones in ancient ruins, according to one source. Another reference to earliest domestication is before 7,400 BCE. In any case, it was a long time ago. As a comparison, the Egyptian pyramids in some estimates were built about 4,600 BCE, based on carbon dating, pottery shards and the like. So domestication of the Red Junglefowl apparently predates the building of the pyramids.

I wonder how the Red Junglefowl, a shy species, was “tamed” by ancient people. I put quite a bit of thought into this and finally hit upon something I believe would have been both effective and simple: I think junglefowl chicks, or pipping eggs were found and taken home, where these chicks, after hatching, became imprinted on humans. Then the growing chicks would likely hang around their human “parents” and their “parents” villages. In any case our Domestic Chicken is quite a different bird, behavior wise, than the junglefowl from which they arose. Now all 4 junglefowl are raised in captivity.

And what about Domestic Chickens laying eggs year around? Up until modern times chickens laid eggs mainly in the springtime, when there was the proper amount of sunlight and moderate temperatures. Springtime laying of eggs is a good part of where the tradition of Easter eggs comes from. In modern times, chickens have been induced to lay eggs year round by keeping them indoors and controlling the light and temperature. But apparently this is not all there is to this story because now many chickens that are not kept indoors still lay eggs all year round.



Once when I was about 12 years old, I had a bantam hen and my younger brother Hilliard had one too. We were moving about a hundred miles to a new home, and the bantams were both closed up in the same box in the car. When we arrived at our destination and opened the box, along with the two hens there was an egg that one of them had laid. My brother and I began quibbling over whose chicken laid the egg. My brother claimed that it was his egg because his chicken always crowed when it laid an egg, though I am not even sure his chicken had ever made such a noise. We still argue over whose egg that was!

*Photo: Open source Red Jungle Fowl photo*

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## Deciphering Dowitchers, Advanced ID Techniques: continued

### Part II

By Zach Poland

In basic plumage, LBs flanks and sides are heavily barred and darker than SBs (Wilds, 1990 and Sibley, 2000). SBs in basic plumage have sides and flanks that are only sparsely spotted/mottled with gray, so at a distance they look lighter on the sides and flanks than on the breast (Cin-Ty Lee pers. comm.). Lee and Birch (2006, Fig. 23) demonstrate the difference in the pattern of scapulars and coverts of dowitchers in breeding plumage, specifically the shape and extent of white feather edges in fresh adults. Coverts and scapulars of SBs have a V-shaped appearance because the pale feather edges extend from the tip up the sides before fading into buff. The white edges of scapulars and coverts of LBs are restricted to the tips and have flat tops (Lee and Birch 2006, Fig. 23). Lee and Birch (2006) point out the difference in covert and scapular pattern also applies to worn adults, due to the likelihood that even the most worn individuals probably have a few relatively unworn feathers. Below is a photo of the SB the author observed at Lake Overholser on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Note the lightly barred/spotted flanks make the bird appear lighter on the sides than on the chest and neck. Also note the “V-shaped” white covert edges that extent some distance up the sides of the feathers, and the speckling on the neck ends high on the upper breast, all are features consistent with SBs. The contrast between the clean pale edged coverts with the well-worn basic feather edges (solid brown) indicate these feathers are fresh alternate plumage. There are some unique features of the fresh coverts of the Overholser SB. Notice the coverts lined in pale have mostly black centers, and the black centers are surrounded by large areas of gray-brown. No apparent red barring exists on the fresh coverts. Red barring would be expected on coverts of an adult dowitcher of either species transitioning to alternate plumage. The lack of red barring and presence of gray-brown surrounding the black feather centers indicate these alternate coverts are not fully formed, and thus cannot be used as a field mark in this instance (Cin-Ty Lee pers. comm.). Paulson (1993) suggested that SBs take a full year to mature, and that during their first spring they may molt directly into adult basic plumage. Lee and Birch (2006) suggest that many first year SBs reach only partial alternate plumage. The presence of

dark centered coverts surrounded by gray-brown with V-shaped white edging without red barring may mean the individual below is a *hendersoni* subadult SB that may not attain full adult alternate plumage this spring (Bill Diffin pers. comm.). SBs with similar coverts have been documented <http://goo.gl/ZdlVJO> and

<http://goo.gl/3uwJDW>.

One notable mark between adult dowitcher species year-round is the lesser underwing coverts (LUnwC). This mark is not explicitly stated in the text of most field guides; however, close scrutiny of the plates show it (Sibley, 2000).



Sifting through some of the abundant birding resources on the internet, one can see numerous photos of dowitcher LUnwC (for example, see the LUnwC of

<http://goo.gl/Hbtc3t> and <http://goo.gl/V96jqh> for LBs; also see <http://goo.gl/Oq7ckX> and <http://goo.gl/UtUKol> for SBs. The author was not able to thoroughly observe or photograph the LUnwC of the Overholser SB.

Molt timing may be helpful in separating dowitchers given the time of year. Dunn and Alderfer (2011) state that adult LBs go to favored locations in late summer to molt (their remiges), while SBs molt them on their winter grounds. Sibley (2000) explains that SBs molt remiges only on wintering grounds, while LBs often molt remiges during migration. During fall migration, if one encounters a dowitcher in Oklahoma molting its remiges, it's very likely a LB. A dowitcher which is not molting remiges during fall migration could be either species.

### Structure

Despite their names, bill length is not definitive except in extreme cases. However, bill shape may be useful.

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*Continued from page 4*

## Deciphering Dowitchers, Advanced ID Techniques: continued

Pekka Sarvela (2005) performed a study on photographs of dowitchers from across the Northern Hemisphere, and found that the profile along the bill base of each species shows contrasts. Sarvela showed that SBs tend to have a higher bill base (near nostril) than LBs. Lee and Birch (2006) indicate that SBs have a slight droop toward the tip of the bill, whereas LBs have straighter bills. Below is a photo of the dowitcher observed by the author at Lake Overholser in April. Even though the bird is facing away from the viewer, the droop towards the end of the bill is apparent. In his study, Sarvela (2005) also published a statistical analysis on the ratio of bill length to head length, and showed that this ratio may be useful in about half of the individuals from each species. However, at bill/head ratios between about 1.7-1.8, there is significant overlap between dowitcher species. Bill/head ratio and bill shape is commonly used to differentiate other species of shorebirds (e.g. yellowlegs), and maybe beneficial in dowitchers too.

Dowitchers have subtle differences in body shape and structure which may be particularly apparent when the birds are foraging. LBs tend to be more indented on the lower back than SBs (Lee and Birch 2006, Fig. 7). Since SBs are more uniformly tapered towards the tail, they appear somewhat



“flat backed” when foraging. LBs on the other hand, can look quite “humpbacked” when foraging due to their back profile. The bird observed at Lake Overholser has a back profile more similar to a SB than a LB (Cin-Ty Lee pers. comm.). Another difference in the shape of

dowitcher species is the primary projection. As a rule, SBs have a longer primary projection and relative wing length than LBs (Pitelka, 1950). LBs wing tips don't usually extend to the tip of the tail, whereas, SBs often do. Close inspection of field guide plates reflects the contrast in wing length (see Sibley, 2000). In the

photos above, the primaries of the Overholser SB project to the tail.

Lee and Birch (2006) explain a bird's loral angle as the angle between an imaginary extension of the gape of the bill towards the back of the head and a line connecting the gape with the center of the bird's iris. They showed that LBs have a smaller (more acute) loral angle than SBs do; however, there is overlap between the two species. Loral angle is scale independent, but care must be taken to not change a photo's aspect ratio when enlarging it for this analysis. Error in measurement of loral angle are introduced when a bird is observed at angles that deviate significantly from perpendicular to the observer, or when the head is tilted out of the plane of the body. The forehead of LBs are generally more gently sloped than those of SBs. The degree of slope in the forehead is accentuated by a supercilium in both species (see photo by Peter Pyle at

<http://goo.gl/dX0OkD> for reference). This difference in head and supercilium shape is probably related to loral angle. Below is an illustration of loral angle of the SB observed by the author at Lake Overholser. Note the high loral angle, steep forehead, obviously arched supercilium, pale chin patch and lightly speckled neck and upper breast. All these features are consistent with a SB. It should be noted that the exact loral angle of this individual is difficult to determine due to the angle of the photos (Cin-Ty Lee pers. comm.).

### Conclusions

Authorities agree that the most definitive way to ID a perplexing dowitcher is by voice. Because of the variability within each species (e.g. between sexes or subspecies) and the overlap between species, there are is no single conclusive field mark. For this reason, extreme care must be taken to take a systematic approach and synthesize **all** available clues when attempting to ID dowitchers. It shouldn't be expected to ID all puzzling birds, but it's worth the effort. This is not an exhaustive list of field marks, but is intended to serve as a starting point. The author would like to thank Bill Diffin and Cin-Ty Lee for their discussion of the photos of the SB observed in OKC in April that greatly improved this article.

## Deciphering Dowitchers, Advanced ID Techniques: continued

### Citations

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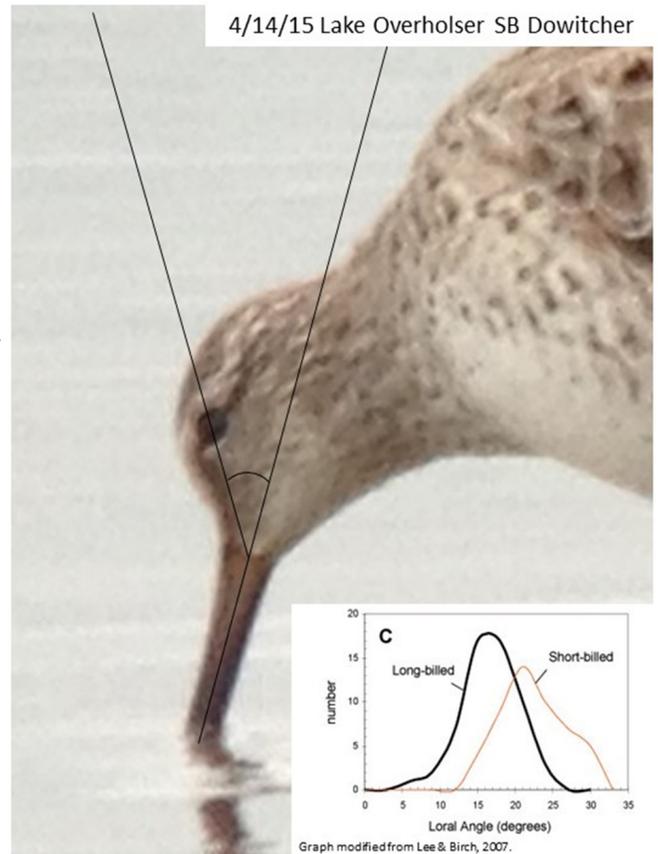
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## Oklahoma City Audubon Society

### Officers 2015

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The Oklahoma City Audubon society is neither a chapter of nor affiliated with National Audubon.

For up-to-date Oklahoma City Audubon news log onto:

**OKC-Audubon.org**

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## Minutes of the Meeting

Audubon Society minutes of October 19, 2015

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Diffin.

Minutes of June and September meetings were approved without changes. Patti Muzny was thanked for taking over the newsletter duties while Patricia Velte recovers from illness.

Treasurer Nancy Vicars reported stable account balance of \$5771.

**Guest:** in attendance was Deborah Langley, who recently moved to OKC from Seattle, WA.

Field trips leader Mark DelGrosso was not in attendance, but there are plans to travel to Salt Plains when the Sandhill Cranes arrive sometime in November, and possibly Whooping Cranes as well. Dates to be determined.

**Conservation reports:** Dave Woodson has no news to report.

**New Business:** Bill Diffin states it is time to begin the nominating procedure for new officers. Volunteers for the committee are Marion Homier, Nancy Vicars, and Jimmy Woodard. Nominations will be reported at the next meeting.

**Recent bird sightings:** Greater roadrunner near the OKC Zoo; American White Pelicans have returned to Lake Overholser and a Bald Eagle was seen crossing the lake. A group of five wild turkey hens has been seen in near-NE OKC. There have been reported sightings of Gray Catbird around the city. A recent visit to Santa Fe area revealed an American Dipper with its intriguing waterway behaviors.

Jimmy Woodard and Nadine Varner hosted a **Big Sit** at their home in Midwest City October 17<sup>th</sup>. Those in attendance viewed a remarkable variety and number of birds flying overhead and in the trees and thickets.

The fall OOS meeting was held in Durant, OK. Travel to Oklahoma's Tishomingo and Texas's Hagerman

wildlife areas were the highlights of the meeting. Dave Woodson reported reading a recent study of the red spots on Ring-billed Gulls as related to feeding behavior of dependent young.

**Future plans:** include **January 3<sup>rd</sup> Christmas Bird Count at Black Mesa** in the panhandle. Jimmy Woodard asks others to join him for the CBC in this distant but fascinating birding region.

**Spring OOS meeting** will be April 15-17 at Woodward, OK in association with the Lesser Prairie Chicken Festival. Viewing areas can be reserved in advance through the OOS and a discount will be applied for food and transportation to the leks.

Business meeting was adjourned; next meeting will be at the same location, 7 pm November 16<sup>th</sup>.

A fascinating presentation was given by Dr. Steve Sherrod, Executive Director Emeritus of the Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville. He spoke of the known and potential meanings of false eye spots among many animals, but particularly in birds. New photo evidence exists showing the flaring of the rear-facing eye spots in the American kestrel are displayed during distress, and can be seen during mobbing behavior by other birds.

Sharon Henthorn

Secretary of the OCAS



Photo: Deanne McKinney



*When nature made the blue-bird she wished to propitiate both the sky and the earth, so she gave him the color of the one on his back and the hue of the other on his breast. ~John Burroughs*

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## Recorders Report

By Esther M. Key

On day 267 Noah commented: "If I hit 5,000 this year that means I'll still miss half the birds in the world. And if we saw everything all the time, it wouldn't be fun anymore!" But even if we can't travel, migration can bring international bird travelers to us. Check out the link about fall migration Jerry W. Davis provided:

[https://tpwd.texas.gov/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd\\_bk\\_w7000\\_0511.pdf](https://tpwd.texas.gov/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_bk_w7000_0511.pdf). As these migrants arrive notice how Towhees and Sparrows search for food by scratching in the leaf litter. So do we send our leaves to the landfill or do we use our leaves as mulch or compost to create bird friendly areas in our yards?

### SEPTEMBER

On the 5<sup>th</sup> T K located a White-winged Dove and Horned Lark at the Goldsby Sod Farm in McClain County, and Emily Hjalmarson had an Eastern Wood-Pewee at Lake Stanley Draper's Marina. Along South Jenkins Jennifer Kidney saw a male Lesser Goldfinch among the American Goldfinches on September 8, 13, and 23. On the 7<sup>th</sup> Joe Grzybowski spotted a Prothonotary Warbler along South Jenkins, and on the 8<sup>th</sup> Hal Yocum identified Black-necked Stilts at the John Marshall High School Pond.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> Scott Loss reports migration is really heating up as he observed a flight of 31 Common Nighthawks, 4 Semipalmated Sandpipers and a big fallout of 48 Baltimore Orioles at Boomer Lake. Meanwhile in Oklahoma County at Devon Energy Zach Poland found a Sora Rail. On the 10<sup>th</sup> Deb Hirt had a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Boomer Lake Park; and Scott had a Swainson's Thrush at Whittenberg Park.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> at Boomer Lake Deb Hirt saw a Northern Waterthrush; in Garvin County Jeff McIntyre noticed a Turkey Vulture; at South Lakes Park Larry Mays had a Gray Catbird; and at the Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge Emily Hjalmarson had a Black-throated Green Warbler. On the 13<sup>th</sup> Dala Grissom spotted an Eastern Screech-Owl in Pottawatomie County. On the 15<sup>th</sup> Kyle Horton had a Black-and-white Warbler along South Jenkins. On the 17<sup>th</sup> David Dowell had an American Redstart at Lake Thunderbird and Nancy Vicars found a beautiful male Wilson's Warbler feasting on ants in her okra patch. On the 18<sup>th</sup> Anthony Solorio saw a juvenile Peregrine Falcon at the intersection of 11<sup>th</sup> and Foreman Road in Yukon.

In Norman on September 19, Mark Howery had a mini fallout in his yard, including a life bird—a Mourning Warbler, while Joe Grzybowski captured 11 Nashville Warblers and a Blue-headed Vireo. At Teal Ridge Wetland Jessica Mitcham spotted a Sedge Wren, at Lake Hefner Roy McGraw discovered Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and at Little River State Park Rachel Wrenn had a Lesser Black-backed Gull.

### OCTOBER

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anthony Laquidara saw a **Common Poorwill** in the Myriad Botanical Gardens. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> at the USAO Habitat Area, Jason Shaw spotted a Northern Harrier, and along South Jenkins Jeff Roberts had a Mourning Warbler. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Dave and Sue Woodson watched a Common Yellow-throat Warbler fly to a butterfly bush where it caught and ate a small skipper butterfly. On the 10<sup>th</sup> Jennifer Kidney heard a chip note similar to a Northern Cardinal from a warbler like bird. She could see bluish wings with faint wing bars and a very yellow breast. After much patience and a little pishing, the bird popped up, and she saw that little comma of black eyeliner--a **Blue-winged Warbler!**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> Chad and Bob Ellis found a Magnolia Warbler at the Myriad Gardens. On the 14<sup>th</sup> John Bates spotted a Sedge Wren near the Will Roger's Airport. On the 15<sup>th</sup> Rachael Wren and John Tharp noticed a Bobolink along South Jenkins. On the 17<sup>th</sup> Jimmy Woodard and Nadine had a Big Sit in their Midwest City yard and recorded Hairy Woodpecker, Merlin, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow and Dickcissel. Caitlin Laughlin saw a Pine Warbler at Sanborn Lake; Brian Marra saw a Semipalmated Plover at the Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge; and Zach had an Eastern Towhee arrive in his yard.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> Larry Mays identified a Horned Lark and Lark Sparrow at the Newcastle Library in McClain County. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> Corey Riding had a Marsh Wren at the Teal Ridge Wetland, and T K reported a Winter Wren at Lake Thunderbird Alameda Bridges. The next day at the bridges he saw a Dunlin, Brown Creeper and Golden-crowned Kinglet. Joe Grzybowski netted Grasshopper Sparrow and Le Conte's Sparrow at the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, and along South Jenkins he spotted a Swamp Sparrow. At Lake Stanley Draper, Dr. Chris Butler found a White-throated Sparrow. Jessica Mitcham discovered a Le Conte's Sparrow at the Teal Ridge Wetland, and Christine Snitkin spotted a Long-billed Dowitcher at the John Marshall High School Pond

On the 25<sup>th</sup> Deanne McKinney discovered White-faced Ibises and a Swamp Sparrow at Rose Lake. Joe Grzybowski caught a Hermit Thrush in his Norman backyard, and Brian Marra identified one at Martin Park Nature Center. Chad Ellis saw a Harris's Sparrow at the Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge. On October 26 Noah identified his 5,000<sup>th</sup> bird species this year in the Philippine Islands and continues on. Can he reach 6,000 before the end of the year?

In the Central Oklahoma area the number of bird species reported were **168** in September and **163** in October with **2** new species bringing the year's total to **286**. In eBird so far this year three counties have reported 240 species. 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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## Patti's Chirpings

*By Patti Muzny*

Mockingbirds are one of my favorite species. They have fascinating personalities and are just entertaining to observe. They are spunky and typically fierce defenders of their territories. Rarely have I ever seen what one might loosely refer to as a “flock” of Mockingbirds. They like their personal space, but I’ve found they do break down and take a meal together when it suits them and there is an abundance of food to be found.

Our backyard and flower beds start the growing season looking relatively civilized, then gradually the time and attention I devote to trimming, weeding diminishes significantly as the summer heat sets in. A couple of years ago I dug up some pokeweed from our Byars property and planted it at the far end of our acre here in Oklahoma City. I am a big fan of “poke sallet,” properly prepared, mind you! I harvest all I want and then some from Byars, but thought it would be nice to just walk out into the back yard and gather some when I wanted to. Besides, I knew Mockingbirds and Robins love the stuff.

So now the pokeweed has popped up near the patio in the flower beds. I just let most of the plants grow where they sprouted, and this spring it really grew. Now I have several large plants that were loaded with berries. I had been seeing our resident pair of Mockingbirds grabbing berries, but usually it was only two and sometimes their fledglings.

At the end of September, I was looking out the windows and noticed several Mockingbirds attacking the pokeweed plants. They were in some sort of a feeding frenzy, and rather than the maximum number of 2-4, I saw as many as nine feeding at the same time. They would perch on the fence and flutter into the plants, nab a berry then return to the perch to finish them off. There was much “discussion” among the hungry hoard during this curious meal, but the normal hostility I’ve associated with Mockingbirds was conspicuously absent.

Yes, there was such a thing as a “flock” of Mockingbirds in my backyard. That’s my story and I’m sticking to it!

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### Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count Information

It’s that time again—time to gear up for the Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count! This year the count will be held on Saturday, 19 December 2015. I hope most of you will repeat counting in the same areas that you did last year;. Call me if you do not recall what that was and we will try to work it out. For that, or other questions you may have, please contact me at my contact info below. Last year we had 45 counters in 18 parties and we recorded 116 species! I really appreciate everyone’s hard work. It is amazing what we can accomplish as a group!

We plan to have our after-count party at Diane Newell’s home again, at 8304 Lakeaire Drive, Northwest Oklahoma City. Diane has been our party “angel” (as one person has called her) for many years, and she always creates a warm, inviting atmosphere for everyone at the party. Food provided at the party will be chili (Cheryl Allen’s is always delicious), salad (Bill Diffin’s, for vegetarians or not) and corn cheddar chowder (Shackfords’). Other main dish foods will be bought with the \$100 we hope will be contributed by the club. We need to vote on this. By providing the main dishes, this helps keep the bird counters remain focused on counting birds without worrying about food responsibilities. We do encourage members to bring a dessert—always some great ones—as these are easier to handle for bird counters than main dishes. The party will begin at 5 pm for early arrivers and Nathan Kuhnert will plan to read the list about 6:30 pm.

Happy Counting!

John Shackford, compiler  
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Ph. (405) 340-5057

Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count

429 E. Oak Cliff Dr.

Oklahoma City, OK 73034-8626



*Photo by Deanne McKinney*

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**Oklahoma City Audubon Society**

c/o Deanne McKinney

8432 NW 91st St.

Oklahoma City, OK 73132

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**Number of bird species reported in 2015 according to eBird. [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)**

	Oct	Sept	Aug	June	May	April	March	Feb	Jan
12 Seminole	118	118	118	116	116	116	064	055	048
11 Kingfisher	119	119	119	107	099	072	072	041	041
10 Grady	122	121	121	104	098	091	068	049	019
09 McClain	127	126	125	118	111	085	068	059	045
08 Lincoln	127	125	126	101	100	095	064	057	005
07 Garvin	130	130	130	128	123	091	075	019	000
06 Pottawatomie	131	131	130	129	129	105	076	044	035
05 Logan	163	155	148	147	140	118	101	087	053
04 Canadian	196	194	193	187	184	162	105	083	067
02 Payne	241	239	237	237	236	207	134	114	098
01 Cleveland	240	240	239	241	239	201	145	119	111
03 Oklahoma	242	241	237	233	228	199	143	128	115

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