



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

December 2009

Tall Bird Tales



Fun and funny things happen while out birding, whether it be on pelagic trips or in Alaska or Costa Rica or eastern Europe or the Black Mesa or Lake Hefner or in your own backyard. And all of us birders, interestingly enough, do fun and funny things.

Our December program will be our annual Tall Bird Tales when everyone will have the opportunity to share with the entire group those fun and funny things along with their birding highlights of the year.

Jim Vicars always has a great variety of holiday treats, calendars will be for sale, John Shackford will have a post-Christmas Count report, the Honorable President Eric Enwall will end his tenure with the election of next year's officers, and a merry time will be had by all.

If you have any special presentation requests, please contact Warren Harden at 405-596-2759. So, polish your stories and come out for a pretty good night with the Oklahoma City Audubon Society and bring a friend.



January Date Change

Our January meeting date is changed to the 4th Monday, January 25, 2010. Our meetings are held September through June normally on the third Monday of each month. They begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 and NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome



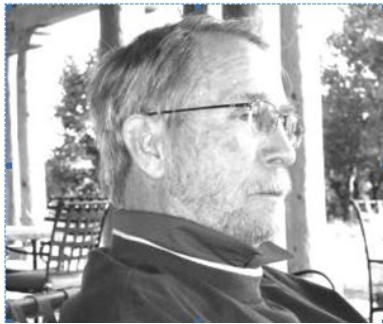
Cookie Patrol

Refreshments for the December meeting will be provided by all. Bring something sweet or savory to share at our annual Christmas party.

President's Perspective

By Eric Enwall

Antepenultimate Word



This will be my last contribution as president of this learned society. I have enjoyed my term greatly and wish only the best for the new officers. Sometimes officers feel that

the word for the tenure as an officer deserves well the same word (at least in English) as that for the sentence for an offense. Not so in this case. It's been swell and "thanks for all the fish." Well, birds in this case.

The word is, trumpets, Thunderbird, and the price, forty nine twice. You can tell immediately that this contribution will be even more off the wall than my previous efforts. What can you expect for a guy who

titled his op-ed pieces "Panza's Lance" when he edited a newsletter a lifetime ago. I have always loved the word "antepenultimate." It's so long and so generally useless and so "Limelinters" if you are of my

age. Of course it's also incorrect in this context where "ultimate" would have been more suitable, but that also has connotations of infallibility which I surely don't want to convey. Not that I don't know the answer to the ultimate question. I do. It's 42. The problem is that we don't know what the question is and are embarked on the quest to find that result now. Birding seems as likely as any other pastime to find that answer. In fact birding will lead you to lot's of answers. Also Questions.

Birding can find you a soul mate. We have testimonials to that effect. Birding can get you blisters. And chiggers and ticks and beautiful sunrises and sunsets. Sometimes all on the same day! For most of us the beautiful parts far outweigh the inconvenient ones. Just one redtailed hawk turning in the morning sun above a stand of trees can warm you up almost as well as a cup of coffee. And friends. The friends we

all have from birding are among our most treasured possessions. I am prompted by some recent conversations with folks to ask you to remember that opportunity to make friends and would caution you that sometimes we can ruin the opportunity horribly by simple careless talk. It seems harmless enough to chuckle at the naivete of new birders, especially those who have not (yet) been bitten hard by the bug when they are so excited to see backyard birds we sophisticated (that's what they all say) birders feel are common. Those words can leak out and cause real damage. Loose lips sink ships.

In order that my garrulousness does not ruin my otherwise unblemished reputation as a essayist, I have set myself a word limit and I am dangerously close to exceeding it. I know it's all piffle, but at least fictional people have been admired for their ability to place one word after another and I can only aspire to be found in Lord Peter's class. May you find the bird of your dreams at the end of your next rainbow. Just remember that it's very hard to see rainbows from inside the house. Get out and tramp around.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2009

President	Eric Enwall	364-5029
Vice President	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Cheryl Allen	478-0339
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	732-9885
Parliament	Sam Moore	752-9549
Programs	Warren Harden	364-3491
Recorder	Esther M. Key	381-9170
Conservation	Larry Mays	392-2131
Field Trips	Jimmy Woodard	365-5685
Newsletter Editors:		
	Pat Velte	751-5263
	Carla Brueggan	495-3259
	Matt Jung	946-8764
Publicity	Cheryl Allen	478-0339
Historian	Nealand Hill	388-6759
Refreshments	Jim Vicars	732-9885
Webmaster	Pat Velte	751-5263

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

For Oklahoma City Audubon news between newsletters and meetings, be sure to log onto:

OKC-Audubon.org

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



Roadrunner

I'll bet you are already smiling—remembering Wile E. Coyote and Road Runner cartoons. The Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*), is actually a

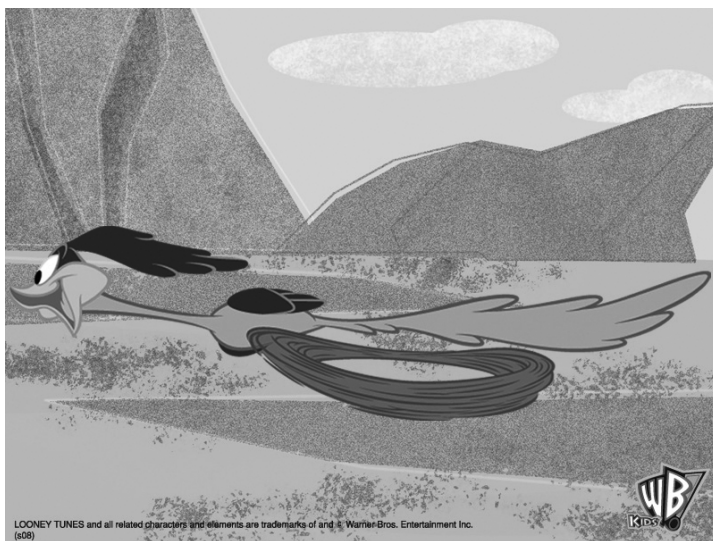
member of the cuckoo family and prefers running to flight. According to --Oklahoma Birds, by G. M. Sutton (1967), the roadrunner is found across the entire state, being more common west than east, and is strictly non-migratory. They tend to nest 3-15 feet high in trees or vegetation and normally lay 3-6 eggs that are white.

The diet of the roadrunner includes lizards, skinks, grasshoppers and other insects, and sometimes dog food, left outside for pets. Dr. Sutton, who had raised a roadrunner when he was 15 years old, used to wonder what the birds ate in winter, something he never got answered to his satisfaction.

Winter diet is important because the Greater Roadrunner appears to be especially susceptible to icy weather. During winters 1978-9 and 1979-80, we had severe icy weather for several days at a stretch. Afterward the roadrunner population decreased to almost zero in central Oklahoma. It was about a dozen years before the roadrunner recovered relatively well. It continues to be a rare treat to see a roadrunner in central Oklahoma, especially in winter, and it is a particularly rare event for one to grace our Christmas Bird Count.

The other day it struck me as an interesting thought that the roadrunner has several reptilian-like features. I was further encouraged in this thought when I read the

roadrunner account, written by Dr. Sutton, in *A.C. Bent's Life Histories of North American Cuckoos, Goatsuckers, Hummingbirds, and Their Allies* (reprint 1989). At one point Doc said that the roadrunner strikes one as "...half bird, half reptile..." As paleontologists find more and more similarities between dinosaurs and birds, I raise one further question not wholly in jest. If birds are descended from dinosaurs, should not roadrunners appear earlier in the phylogenetic order than loons and grebes, two groups of birds that appear to have fewer reptilian characteristics than the roadrunner? Another possibility is that the reptilian features of the roadrunner were secondarily acquired long after birds evolved (and therefore the roadrunner is appropriately placed in its present phylogenetic order). If anyone can shed further light on this point I would be interested in hearing it. My email address is johnsshack@aol.com.



Membership Renewal

It's time for all to renew their memberships for 2010. Membership dues of \$10 per household may be paid at monthly meetings, through PayPal or mailed to: Nancy Vicars, Treasurer, 820 Arthur Drive, Midwest City, OK 73110.

Birding Oregon – Part I I

By Jimmy Woodard



We left Longview, WA, on Monday morning and birded our way towards the coast. We did try to bird at Mt. St. Helen's first, but it was so windy we abandoned the attempt.

We drove narrow, winding back roads through forests and scenic valleys. There was little traffic and we spotted

Evening Grosbeak and Townsend's Solitaire on the way.

We drove up Saddle Mountain (elevation 3,283'). The scenery and view were beautiful. We hiked some steep trails through rainforest, but did not get to the top. We found two Varied Thrush, Swainson's and Hermit Thrush on the trails.

We decided to stay in Seaside, OR, on the coast. We enjoyed a great calzone at a local eatery and then a gorgeous sunset on the beach that was covered with thousands of gulls.

On Tuesday we started the day with breathtaking views at Ecola State Park..

The birds were few, but we didn't mind because of our surroundings. We walked on Cannon to see the massive Haystack Rock. On the beach, I enjoyed a humorous scene of a Glaucous-winged Gull and a Crow trying to steal a muffin out of a sleeping man's chair. They couldn't reach it from the armrest and they couldn't step into the chair to get it. The sleeping man was oblivious.

After lunch in Tillamook, we birded the bay and went to Cape Meare's State Park where we saw the

lighthouse and were treated to more crashing waves and incredible Oregon Coastscenery.. We found more birds than earlier, including Wrentit, Marbled Godwit, Great Egret, Western Bluebird and Black-capped Chickadee.

Numerous stops at rest points and turnouts produced more stunning coastal views, but few birds. The view from atop the hill in Nestucca NWR was amazing. We spent the night in Lincoln City.

Wednesday began our last day of birding before heading home. Thick fog made it tough and a little bit surreal. It was cool and damp as we walked around at Yaquina Head Lighthouse. There were hundreds of seabirds in the ocean among the massive rocks along the coastline. We enjoyed Black Oystercatcher, Common Loon, Red-throated Loon, Pacific Loon, Surf Scoter and Black Turnstone.

We passed over the Yaquina River and birded along the South Jetty. We saw Sea Lions hauled out on the rocks in addition to several birds. We watched Pigeon

Guillemot, Wandering Tattler, Horned and Red-necked Grebe, all at close range. We saw many Sooty Shearwaters out over the waves.

We headed inland and decided to drive up to the summit of Mary's Peak (elevation 4,097'). We hiked several trails through a grassy meadow and into the pine forests.

We found Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Golden-crowned Sparrow and many American Pipits. The summit view here was perhaps the most impressive on our trip.

We headed on into Portland where we saw the Vaux's Swift spectacle described in Patti's previous article. We ended the trip with 138 species, several new friends and many great memories.



Field Trip Report

On the foggy, misty morning of November 21 John Shackford acted as the adept lead field tripper for five others consisting of Lyn Pearce who garnered a lifer, Nadine Varner who added botanical expertise, Doug Eide who provided humorous commentary, Jimmy Woodard who added ID with his elephant ears and eagle eyes, and Warren Harden who held on for the ride, and who together tromped through several fields looking for longspurs and anything else willing to move.

To John's credit and by Jimmy's expertise one Smith's Longspur was flushed from the Purina field and a brief look and listen was had by all. No other longspurs were found.

The highlight of the morning coming along with the Smith's was the flushing of at least two Short-eared Owls that gracefully coursed over the field for some time before settling back down for a long day's sleep. Another open area provided looks at an exaltation of Horned Larks that became an ascension of larks when they eventually flew to another part of the field. The largest concentration of birds was found in and around fruiting cedar trees at the wooded edge of that field. Robins, waxwings, finches and numerous sparrows were busily feasting together until interrupted in their crawl stuffing by a bunch of binocular toting voyeurs. A good time was had by all throughout a pretty good morning of ornithological camaraderie.



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Minutes of November 16, 2009

President, Eric Enwall presided over the meeting after calling it to order. No visitors were present.

It was announced that John Linnell, a member of OCAS had passed away and his funeral will be on Friday, at Bethany's Mercer Adams Funeral Home. Eric requested that all members be especially careful driving home this evening due to the wet weather.

Eric asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published in the November newsletter. Motion was made and carried. Eric also expressed his thanks to Dora Webb for her especially fine secretarial work of taking notes at last month's meeting.

Treasurer's Report was reported by Nancy Vicars:

Cash on hand 10/19/09	\$5,298.88
Deposits:	\$ 226.55
Disbursements:	\$ 109.03
Cash on hand 11/16/09	\$5,416.40

Motion was made to accept as read and carried.

Committee Reports:

Field Trips:

Warren Harden will lead a group on November 24th to check the Purina fields in Edmond for Longspurs and Short-eared Owls. Meet at 8:00 AM at Memorial and Sante Fe roads intersection. Wear long socks and shoes!

John Shackford will lead a pre-Christmas Bird Count trip on December 5th starting on the eastside of Lake Overholser dam.

The January Eagle Watch at Lake Arcadia has one free weekend-unknown date at this writing. Except for the free weekend in January, the price of admission is \$6.00 per car. Best eagle watching is at dam/office.

Tuesday AM birders are now being led by Bill Diffin. Please talk with him about where to meet and when, if interested.

Whooping cranes have been seen at Salt Plains.

Old Business:

2010 Calendars are still available.

New Business:

The Nominating Committee of Nealand Hill, Jimmy Woodard, and Terri Underhill have arrived at a slate of officers for 2010:

President	Bill Diffin
Vice-president	John Shackford
Secretary	Nancy Reed
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars

John Shackford announced that the annual OKC Christmas Bird Count will be held Saturday, December 19th and that all groups would have the same territories unless otherwise requested. Diane Newell has again offered to host the after-count chili party. Anyone not sure of her address should call John Shackford for directions.

Cheryl Allen, Recording Secretary

Tuesday Morning Birders



Tuesday Morning Birders trip leader, Bill Diffen

November 3 Jeanette Schoff, Doug Eide, Charles Douglas and Bill Diffen birded Lake Overholser, South Jenkins and the north side of Lake Thunderbird. In the morning at Overholser, thousands of Franklin's gulls roosted on the lake. At Route 66 Park 50 Ring-billed Gulls and a few Franklin's Gulls rested ashore while 12 Canada Geese, a

few Mallards and DC Cormorants searched the pond for breakfast. A Belted Kingfisher flew from perch to perch low over the water, repeatedly hitting the surface. Song Sparrows jumped around in the cattails. East of 23rd St and Sarah Rd, a flock of White-crowned Sparrows perched and sang in tall weeds.

At South Jenkins, we met the Enwalls and observed Yellow-rumped Warblers while searching for a Winter Wren. Dick Gunn and Matt Jung directed us to the Song Sparrows in the marsh beyond the Green Gate. Several came into view at short range while songs came from the marsh. On the walk back, several Harris's Sparrows perched on a sapling.

At Lake Thunderbird, we birded Sailboat and then a trail from Indian Point to Zoom Beach. The best birds were two White-breasted Nuthatches. 38 species were tallied for the day.

November 10 Charles Douglas, Lyn Pearce, Timothy Ryan, Sue Smith, Terri Underhill and Bill Diffen birded Lake Hefner on a cool and foggy day. A Common Loon yodeled in the mist near Britton Rd. Horned Grebes and Pied-billed Grebes swam along the dam, a raft of Redheads disappeared in the fog, and a mature Herring Gull floated in the NW corner.

Prairie Dog Point had Harris's, White-crowned, Savannah and Song Sparrows, Slate-colored Juncos, Yellow-rumped Warblers, House Finches, American Goldfinches and Cedar Waxwings. Great Blue Herons and American Coots foraged along the shoreline. The canal inlet had Mallards and a single female Blue-winged Teal, the Mute Swan and white Graylag companion. Double-crested Cor-

morants roosted in trees above Great Egrets, and American White Pelicans swam out in the lake. An American Kestrel hovered west of Lakeshore Dr.

The treatment ponds had rafts of Hooded Mergansers and Red-breasted Mergansers, a few Bufflehead and half a dozen Scaup. Several Forster's Terns hovered and dove. At the NE parking area, a dark Merlin buzzed resting gulls. Northern Shovelers dabbled in a pond.

At Stars and Stripes Park, a Song Sparrow foraged in front of the cattails. Different year plumages of Ring-billed and Franklin's Gulls posed for closeups. An Osprey perched on a dead tree. The road to Hobie Point had American Gold Finches. A juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk flew and perched near the car. At the model airplane field, Canada Geese and a Brewer's Blackbird foraged in the field, and a White-winged Dove hid in the scrub. Near the Fishing Pier, a Belted Kingfisher sat on a dead branch for photos. A Black-crowned Night Heron roosted in the willows north of the south marina. 59 species were tallied for the day.

November 17 Lyn Pearce, Terri Underhill, Charles Douglas, Doug Eide and Bill Diffen, birded South Jenkins, the field at Boyd and Wylie, and the south side of Lake Thunderbird. Pat Garrison also birded South Jenkins, and Dick Gunn served as guide. The day was cool and overcast. On the lease road west of Jenkins, White-throated, White-crowned and Song Sparrows were in the grass and cattails. Am. Goldfinches and Yellow-rumped Warblers perched overhead and a Belted Kingfisher rattled. A Winter Wren gleaned a patch of weeds, and a Red-shouldered Hawk perched north. In the dry fen east, Harris's and White-throated Sparrows foraged at a brush pile. A Barred Owl flapped deeper into the woods.

Along the treatment plant's outfall slough, Wilson's Snipe flushed from the grass. Yellow-rumped Warblers and Eastern Bluebirds nearly swarmed in the trees. A Solitary Sandpiper picked along the shore, and three Greater Yellowlegs were in the distant pond. A Marsh Wren appeared in plain view. At the intersection of Boyd and Wylie in Norman, a dark Merlin perched, flew and posed many minutes for photos.

At Clear Bay on Lake Thunderbird, a Pileated Woodpecker was hammering on a trunk next to the road while two others moved and called in the woods. Three White-breasted Nuthatches added to the show. At the entrance to Little Axe North, we saw Carolina Chickadees and Yellow-rumped Warblers

first, then a Brown Creeper, a brilliant Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and a robust Hairy Woodpecker. A Red-bellied Woodpecker and a Yellow-shafted Flicker entered the scene. Tufted Titmice, Am. Goldfinches, Dark-eyed Juncos and a Blue Jay completed the set of species for the last stop. 47 species were tallied for the day.

November 24 Charles Douglas, Doug Eide, Lyn Pearce and Bill Diffin birded the Great Salt Plains NWR. The weather was clear with a 15-20 mph wind. At Thrall Cemetery, a flock of Sandhill Cranes passed low and called loudly. A young Bald Eagle circled over the road into the refuge HQ. Sandhill Cranes, Canada Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese and Snow Geese flew and honked over the HQ.

At north Sand Creek Bay, Northern Shovelers and American Avocets searched the water. Mallards rested on the shore and Greater Yellowlegs probed the shallows. Ring-billed and Herring Gulls flew in a procession, and Forster's Terns hunted. The three geese species flew overhead, and a Bald Eagle soared to the west. At the south end of Sand Creek Bay a dense mass of Sandhill Cranes, 7,000 per the FWS bird counter, formed a wide backdrop for rafts of waterfowl.

The wooded trail to the Casey Marsh Overlook had Slate-colored Juncos, Yellow-rumped Warblers, American Goldfinches, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. In the wooded marsh, a troupe of a dozen or so Rusty Blackbirds looked into the water or flipped dead leaves along the ground. On the auto tour, Northern Pintails floated in the ponds with the Mallards and Shovelers. Small groups of Greater White-fronted Geese were with the Canada Geese cropping the grass.

At the Sandpiper Trail, Greater Yellowlegs were dispersed south. West on OK-11, a stop at a stream to observe Hooded Mergansers also produced a Great Blue Heron, an American Kestrel and a Northern Harrier. A check under the bridge roused a Great Horned Owl.

A very pale, almost white, Red-tailed hawk was along the county road east of Cherokee. Near the road to the Crystal Digs, a Rough-legged Hawk hover hunted across a field. A flock of around 1,000 Sandhill Cranes soared over the lake calling loudly. Longspurs and a Horned Lark were observed from behind a weed row. South of the lake, a Harlan's Redtail took off from a tree, and a Loggerhead Shrike hunted from atop a brush pile. 50 species were tallied.

Chasing vs. listing

Garey Harritt

The difference between chasing and listing is a matter of opinion. A fellow birder and I discussed this issue in California. He was at 699. I'm 11 behind that. The trip was a pelagic out of Ft. Bragg, CA and the targets were rare petrels and albatrosses. We found none. Was this a chase or a listing trip? Both really. You can chase a rare bird but you get to list it also.

Listing is traveling to where the birds of the ABA area are located. So a trip to Arizona to see the birds that are there as residents but don't live in other states is a listing trip. If a Mexican vagrant comes over the border such as the Blue Mockingbird then going to see it is a chase. Can you chase a bird that is a resident to the U.S.? If you want to call it that, yes. When Linda and I went to Idaho for the Great Grey Owls, the trip was like a chase but it was merely listing. Confusing? Well, there are no rules to this game.

Linda and I also went out to Santa Cruz Island in California for the Island Scrub Jay. It is endemic to that island. We saw the jay. That and the birds seen from the boat were birds that are usually there and thus it was just a listing trip.

Whether it is planned or spontaneous, the thrill of seeing a new bird is there and the sense of accomplishment is satisfied. Our next trip is Nov 1 to MA to see Linda's family and maybe see a Barnacle Goose in NJ and Pink-footed Goose in Maine. We have seen them before but I would like to photograph them. If a rare bird shows up it will be a plus but I don't consider it a chase. Still confused. Don't be. Just go get the birds!

Chasing vs. Listing, part II

In my article on chasing and listing I said there was a difference. Lately I have been on the road so much I don't know which I am doing. This short article will just introduce you to the trips Linda and I have made and some we will make in the near future.

For the month of November we drove over 7,000 miles through 24 states. We flew two days and about 2,000 plus miles. The number of birds seen for me are 4 species and Linda 3. In 2 days we plan to take a 3,500 plus miles trip for one species. When you get closer to 700 the birds you need seem to be farther away.

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

Field Trips & Opportunities

January 9, 2010—Eagle Watch

Nealand Hill will lead the group to Lake Arcadia. Meet at 8 a.m. at Braum's in Edmond, I-35 & 15th St. Contact Nealand at nealandw@aol.com or 405.388.6759.

ODWC Winter Bird Survey, Jan. 7-10, 2010.

Visit their website for full details: <http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/okwinterbirds/index.html>

Lake Thunderbird Eagle Watches

Discovery Cove Nature Center 9AM-Noon on Saturday Dec 26, Sat Jan 16, and Sat Jan 30.

Purchase your 2010 Calendars Now!

The beautiful 2010 fund raising calendars are here. They will be available at the monthly meetings for \$7.50 or you may order online or by mail. Yes, you can now purchase your calendar(s) from your home computer — visit the Oklahoma City Audubon site at <http://www.okc-audubon.org> and click on the “Order Online” link on the front page. The mailing cost will be \$7.50 plus \$1.50 per calendar. This is the only source of revenue other than our membership dues. If every member bought just one calendar, we would be able to net \$500.00

