



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

December, 2013

TALL TALES

It is once again time for everyone to practice a tale about the wild experiences everyone has about our fun pastime birding.

Our annual year's end program of TALL TALES will end our club's meetings for 2013. So, be prepared to share your wild birding experience from the Christmas Count or one of your field trips or your backyard feeder, or your trip to Timbuktu. Make it exciting for everyone to help relive your memory. Bring friends and let them share in the excitement and the holiday refreshments.

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



REFRESHMENTS

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

WELCOME

New Member: Calvin Rees, Oklahoma City

DUES NOTICE

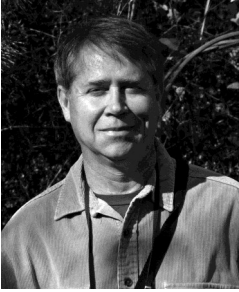
It's time once again to renew your annual membership for 2014. OCAS dues are \$15 per household and may be paid at the monthly meetings, online at our website <http://www.okc-audubon.org> or mailed to Nancy Vicars, Treasurer, 24 SE 57th St., OKC 73129 .

MEETING CHANGE

Mark your calendar now!!! The January meeting will be held on the 4th Monday, January 27, 2014 due to the Garden Center closure for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



Hi, Members.

Let's resume the examination of the worldwide Certhioidea begun last month. We have already noted the convergence of two of the certhioid families, the nuthatches and the treecreepers, with the non-certhioid Neotropical woodcreepers, Australasian treecreepers and sitellas. We have also noted the

similarity of nuthatches and treecreepers to small woodpeckers, piculets and wood hoopoes.

The other two certhioid families, the gnatcatchers and the wrens, are almost entirely New World denizens, the one exception being the Eurasian Wren which is very closely related to our Winter Wren. The combined range of the Eurasian and Winter Wrens is at <http://goo.gl/515aqw>.



Wrens are small, drab, surface-gleaning insectivores. They usually inhabit cluttered ground, woodland understory, shrubbery, exposed rock or marsh habitats. A few wrens of the Neotropics inhabit the forest canopy.

North American birders traveling to the Old World will want to be aware of the birds that are convergent with wrens outside of the Eurasian Wren's range, that is in Africa, Australasia and southern Asia. Some wren analogs native to southern Asia are the birds known as wren-babblers in two different sylvioid families. These are the four species in family Pnoepygidae, e.g. Scaly-breasted Wren-babbler, <http://goo.gl/ByKe3B>, and the nine species in genus Spelaeornis of the babbler family Timaliidae, e.g. Rufous-throated Wren-babbler, <http://goo.gl/uwsZEz>. Some other wren-like birds of southern Asia are in a third sylvioid family, Cisticolidae, e.g. Common Tailorbird, <http://goo.gl/CdD7sm>, and Ashy Prinia (prinias are often called wren-warblers), <http://goo.gl/f53R40>. The wren-like birds of Africa are mainly cisticolids, e.g. Levillant's Cisticola, <http://goo.gl/0yLkLt>, Karoo Prinia, <http://goo.gl/YjDqTX> and White-chinned Prinia, <http://goo.gl/1oSC4b>. In Australasia the wren-like birds are the fairywrens, emu-wrens, grasswrens and scrubwrens in families Maluridae and Acanthizidae, relatives of the honeyeater family, Meliphagidae. These

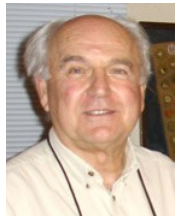
three families are in the superfamily Meliphagoidea in the basal songbird Australasian grade (BSAG supergroup in this series) which consists of all ten of the terminal clades below Passerida and Corvoidea in the ToL Oscines cladogram, <http://goo.gl/eANSPE>. Male fairywrens have jewel-like coloring, e.g. Splendid Fairywren, <http://goo.gl/FL8Hww>, Red-backed Fairywren, <http://goo.gl/WflvFH> and Variegated Fairywren, <http://goo.gl/23DDUT>. On the other hand the grasswrens and scrubwrens are drab and camouflaged, e.g. Dusky Grasswren, <http://goo.gl/iC0QzF> and White-browed Scrubwren, <http://goo.gl/aP4LW0>. One of the scrubwrens looks like our Common Yellowthroat and has a similar name, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, <http://goo.gl/OiTxZ5>.

There are a number of North American birds which have form and coloration almost identical to not very closely related birds in far-off parts of the world, apparent examples of extreme convergence. Some of the birds linked above, for example the fairywrens, might as well be compared to gnatcatchers as wrens. Quoting from the Gnatcatcher article in Wikipedia, "These dainty birds are intermediate between Old World warblers and wrens in their structure and habits, moving restlessly through foliage seeking insects." (ref. del Hoyo et. al., Handbook of Birds of the World (2006)). The gnatcatcher family is the closest relative of the wren family as can be seen on the ToL cladogram for the Certhioidea, <http://goo.gl/8V81Xs>. The 12 or so gnatcatchers resemble the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, e.g. White-lored Gnatcatcher, <http://goo.gl/Cwti0j>. The three gnatwrens look more like wrens, e.g. Long-billed Gnatwren, <http://goo.gl/DmPwzE>.

Next month we will use audio sonograms to aid understanding of certhioid vocalizations. Briefly an audio sonogram is a three-dimensional plot of sound frequency and sound energy vs. time. The two dimensions of time and frequency (pitch) are the two axes of a Cartesian plot, and the third dimension, loudness or more technically the sound energy per unit of frequency bandwidth, is indicated by the darkness of the markings on the plot. This may seem very technical, but the result is close to sheet music. A full elementary explanation is given in the article, "Understanding Audio Sonograms", at surfbirds.com -- read down to the start of the detail on thrasher songs, <http://goo.gl/bHmbwL>. Bird recordings site, xeno-canto.org, presents sonograms for a recording in two places. The more detailed sonogram is at the [sono] link in the Remarks column of the recordings list. For example clicking on "[sono]" in the first line of the Canyon Wren recordings list, <http://goo.gl/OFHwKO>, brings up a plot showing a series of 14 down-slurred notes. Below that plot is a plot of sound energy totaled up for all frequencies (loudness or decibels, dB) vs. time. The less detailed sonogram is on the page for the individual recording at the XC140134 link in the last column, <http://goo.gl/mQbCNY>.

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



Recently there was an inquiry by a gentleman on OKBIRDS@LISTS.OU.EDU about where to look for Northern Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) in Oklahoma. There are only a very few saw-whet records for the state, so finding one is a tough mission. Below is information and guidance that I hope may have some value for the mission, as well as be informative.

Thirty-four years ago I saw my first Saw-whet Owl in Oklahoma—or anywhere. This was also the last saw-whet I have ever seen. Some days you just get lucky and this was one of my luckiest.

I used to play a simple game that had to do with the Christmas Bird Count: I would try, personally, to find 100 species of birds in the month of December in our count area. Usually, by count day, I had about 95 species on my list and I might add 3 or so more on count day. This would put me just shy of the 100 species I was trying to reach. But by the time of the CBC I already had a really good idea of what birds were in our count area that particular year and what ones probably weren't—the real purpose of the game in the first place. So I seldom if ever sought out the final few species that would have made my list 100.

The Saw-whet Owl day occurred on 25 November 1979. I was doing a little pre-count scouting before starting my pre-count game (are you getting confused yet?). That day I was working an area about ½ mile north of the Lake Hefner dam and east of Meridian. There was a moderate ravine with quite a number of cedar trees in it. As I approached one tree I clapped my hands and a small owl flew out that I did not think was an Eastern Screech-Owl. It landed in another nearby cedar about 3 feet high where I approached it closely and could see that it was a Saw-whet Owl.

Over the next 2 days this bird was seen by about 10 of us and photographed by about 4 of us; we did not see the bird thereafter

The bird returned to its original roosting spot later that first day, where I noticed whitewash on the ground below. This indicated to me that the bird may have been there for a few days, but probably not many. The bird roosted about 3-4 inches from the main trunk of the cedar and about 6 feet high as I remember: thus it roosted low in the tree—one of the few things that can be relatively easy about finding this species. Almost everything else about finding it is difficult to overcome: small, nocturnal; dense evergreen habitat; and likely low density in Oklahoma, although there almost surely are more around than the handful of records for the state would lead one to believe.

In reading Bent (1961, Life histories of North American birds of prey, part 2, p.239) I found the following sentence, quoting an earlier publication by Bendire (1892) that may be helpful in searching for the saw-whet: “They seem to be especially fond of dense evergreen thickets in swampy places or near water courses.” One other thing from Bent (1961) seemed particularly good to pass along: “Except by some chance encounter [like mine!]...even the keenest human eyes are not likely to discover this diminutive owl, perched silent and motionless in dense foliage, unless its presence is



indicated by the excited activity and noisy protests of its small bird enemies, such as sparrows, warblers, chickadees, and kinglets, that always show their hatred and fear of all owls.” So check out those groups of fussing little birds when you see them—and keep saw-whet in mind.

One other probable saw-whet was seen years ago in Oklahoma City. John Newell, as all who knew him will attest, was a very careful reporter of what he saw and heard from others. John once related to me that someone he knew had seen a small owl in an evergreen bush in that person's yard; John quizzed him about what it looked like, and John was convinced that it was most likely a Saw-whet Owl. Of course John never reported it officially, but I trust that John, using the great care he always exhibited, made the correct call.

Minutes of the Meeting

November 18, 2013

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Diffin

Minutes of the October meeting were approved as written in the newsletter. A quorum of 34 attendees was present.

Committee reports:

Treasurer: Nancy Vicars reports \$5690 in the account

Field trip chairman Mark DelGrosso reported that Terri Underhill will lead a trip around Wichita Wildlife Preserve on November 23rd, this Saturday, weather permitting. Please let her know if you wish to attend.

John Shackford announced a CBC preview trip beginning at 8am west of Lake Overholser dam on Saturday, December 7th, with Christmas Bird Count to be conducted on December 14th. Dinner at Dianne Newell's home will follow CBC. John requested funds from OCAS be used to pay for \$100 worth of food for the December 14th dinner. Motion was approved.

Election nominating committee: Jimmy Woodard reported that all the elected officers have agreed to serve again this year. Next meeting of the OCAS will select/elect the officers.

Old business: none

New business: President Bill Diffin announced that in future meetings, a part of the agenda will include member discussion, since there has been no time set aside on the current format.

Guests: Emily Palmerson, graduate student in ornithology at OU Norman.

Bret Roberts, OU biochemistry student

Calvin Reese, birder from OKC

Member discussion of birding adventures

Richard Taylor spoke highly of the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, held November 7th -10th at Harlingen, TX. The attendees of the field trips were witness to an Amazon kingfisher as an unexpected bonus.

Dave Woodson reported a recent prairie walk near NW 122nd/Kelley Avenue, at which he witnessed a Greater Roadrunner flashing its crest and showing off.

Bob Holbrook has returned from two months in Brazil as a resident naturalist at the Cristalina Jungle Lodge, where he incidentally found new "lifers", though he was generally too busy with other duties to bird on his own.

No other business was addressed and meeting was adjourned.

Sharon Henthorn, Secretary

Woodard for OOS President

OCAS member and former Field Trip Committee Chairman Jimmy Woodard has been nominated for President Elect of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society. Jimmy has been a well-known and well-liked member of the Oklahoma birding community for many years and a favorite leader on local field trips. At the Annual Lesser Prairie Chicken Festival in Woodward Jimmy regularly leads field trips which are attended by birders from all over the country. A great birder, Jimmy is one of only about a handful of people who have seen more than 400 species in Oklahoma.

In his new role Jimmy will lead the organization which verifies, maintains and publishes Oklahoma bird records and which is the front runner in promoting ornithology education and bird conservation in Oklahoma. We wish Jimmy good luck and success as President of OOS.



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2013

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
	Doug Eide	495-8192
Publicity		
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

Lesser Prairie Chicken Controversy

Dave Woodson, Conservation chairperson



In Oklahoma, the Lesser Prairie Chicken is considered a game bird,, but there has been no open season since 1997.

The controversy (see ref. a) over the Lesser Prairie Chicken (LPC)

continues, stimulated by the recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) agreement to the Range-Wide Conservation plan (see ref. b) developed by an Interstate Working Group. Who should have control the States or Federal Government? How will this impact the future of the LPC? The LPC is in danger due to several factors primarily loss of habit over its range, (Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas). In the most recent survey (see ref. c), the 5-State population of the LPC has declined almost 50%. “*estimated* total of 34,440 individual lesser prairie-chickens in 2012 (17,616 in 2013).”

It has been almost two decades (1995) since the FWS was petitioned to list the LPC as threatened under provisions of the Endangered Species Act. In 1996, Lesser Prairie Chicken Interstate Working Group (LPCIWG) was formally established as one of the technical groups associated with the Western association of Fish & wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Grassland Initiative. In September 2013, this Interstate Working Group, in partnership within federal agencies and others, published a Range-Wide Conservation Plan (see ref. b) modeled after the success in Kansas where an increase in the population of the LPC has occurred over the past decade. In October, the FWS signed its approval of this plan (see ref d) and is scheduled to make a decision regarding listing the Lesser Prairie Chicken on the Endangered List in March 2014. Even if the LPC is listed as endangered the Conservation Plan will still be in effect.

In telephone conversations with employees from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, they stated this voluntary plan would work best without the LPC being listed as Endangered by the FWS. They also stated that “most land owners would rather work with the State than the Federal Government” but, it is voluntary and difficult getting various organizations to sign up since the State had “no big stick.” They also said they would be willing to make a presentation to our Society.

For those interested you may want to read the following web sites:

Ref. a: Lesser Prairie Chicken Conservation Plan

Inadequate to Save Charismatic Grassland Birds in Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas -- October 23, 2013. http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2013/lesser-prairie-chicken-10-23-2013.html

Ref. b: The Lesser Prairie-Chicken Range-wide Conservation Plan – September 2013

<http://wafwa.org/documents/2013LPCCompleteRWPsmall.pdf>

Ref. c: RANGE-WIDE POPULATION SIZE OF THE LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN: 2012 AND 2013

http://www.wafwa.org/documents/Final_08.13.2013_LPC_Popestimation.pdf

Ref. d: FWS Endorses Conservation Plan for Lesser Prairie Chicken – Ref: October 29, 2013

<http://news.wildlife.org/featured/fws-endorses-conservation-plan-for-lesser-prairie-chicken/>

Election Committee Nominates OCAS Officer Candidates

Three gracious and service-minded members volunteered to be on the 2014 Election Committee at the October meeting. They were Terri Underhill, Warren Harden and Jimmy Woodard (OOS President Elect nominee, see separate article). The committee completed its work without a hitch in time for the November meeting by getting agreement from all current officers and chairpersons to continue in their positions for another year.

All three members of the Election Committee are themselves major contributors to OOS. On her own initiative Terri made up name tag pins for members to wear for the benefit of guests and prospective members at the meetings, and she has otherwise been a leader in greeting and encouraging first-time attendees. She is also a regular volunteer to man the OCAS booth at public events like the Earthfest at Martin Park and the ODWC Wildlife Expo in Guthrie.

Warren has been our Program Committee Chairman for many years and has excelled at finding interesting experts to give beautiful, fascinating and educational presentations at our meetings.

We thank all three Election Committee members for their vital and cheerful contributions to OCAS.

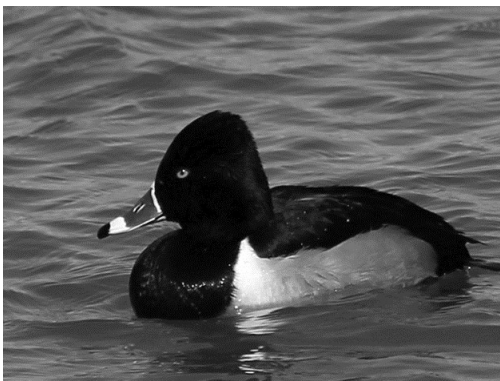
Recorders Report November 2013

A new birder

As the weather changed from mild to freezing rain, the winter birds arrived looking for shelter and food.

The first central Oklahoma hard freeze was on the 13th. Then two storms hit on the 22nd and 24th with arctic temperatures, rain, sleet, and snow. Along with the colder weather swimmers, birds of prey and sparrows are arriving. The only new bird for the year list was found in an urban area instead of its usual prairie habitat, and a four legged birder found another interesting bird hiding in the undergrowth.

On the 1st Deanne McKinney checked out Taylor Lake and located the Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Harriers, and at the Rush Springs Sewage Lagoons Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, and Pied-billed Grebe. On the 3rd Sharon Henthorn visited Rose Lake and noticed Northern Shovelers and Great Egret while at Lake Overholser Deanne saw a Bald Eagle fly over.



On the 7th Lindell Dillon reported that WildCare had received a second Golden Eagle which was found in the Newcastle Area with a

broken wing. Robert Green discovered Greater White-fronted Goose, and American White

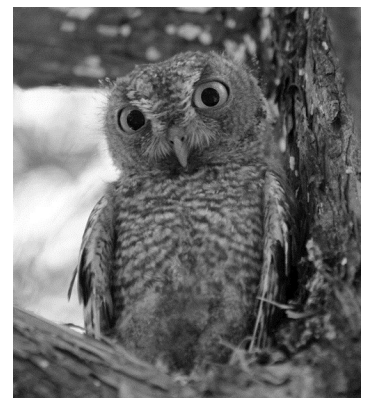
Pelicans at Mansion Lake in Grady County. On the 8th John Hurd checked the Dolese Sand Pit and located Snow Goose, Bonaparte's Gull, Greater Yellowlegs, and Horned Grebe. On the 9th Joe Grzybowski located American Pipits at Norman North Base.



On the 10th In Stillwater at Sanborn Lake a large bird erupted about 5 feet in front of Alex James. He was surprised to identify it as a **Greater Prairie Chicken** so close to the city. At Lake Hefner Bill Diffin saw Western Grebe, Common

Loon and, amidst a flock of blackbirds, a single Rusty Blackbird. Along South Jenkins in Norman Joe Grzybowski saw a Merlin; at the Taylor Lake area Bill Adams found American Pelicans, Eastern Phoebe, and Cackling Goose. Bob Ellis checked Wildhorse Creek Site 107 Reservoir in Elmore City and located Savannah Sparrow, Black Vulture, and Carolina Wren.

On the 11th John Hurd saw a Sedge Wren along the west side of Lake Hefner; on the 12th Jim Bates enticed an Eastern Screech Owl to visit his backyard; and on the 13th Torre Hovick had a Western Grebe and Dunlin at Lake Carl Blackwell. On the 16th Bill Diffin ran into Torre, two of his friends and Jack Hurd at Lake Hefner where they spotted a Dunlin, Lesser Black-backed Gull; and Joe Grzybowski saw Greater Scaup and California Gull. Meanwhile, at Lake Thunderbird's Little River Marina, T K discovered a Pine Warbler, and in Stillwater Tim O'Connell had a Rough-legged Hawk at Birding and Burgers. On the 17th Bill located a Brewer's Blackbird at Lake Hefner, while Jeff Tibbits noticed American Pipits.



On the 22nd Steve Davis and Mary report the cold weather brought in some new seasonal birds at their feeders which included Harris's Sparrow, Song Sparrows more White-crowned Sparrows, White-winged Doves and American Goldfinches. They all left quickly when a Red-tailed Hawk flew into a bare treetop above them. On the 23rd in Norman at Ten Mile Flats Joe Grzybowski saw a Prairie Falcon; John Shackford had a Carolina Wren at his home in Edmond; and Chad Ellis had a single Brewer's

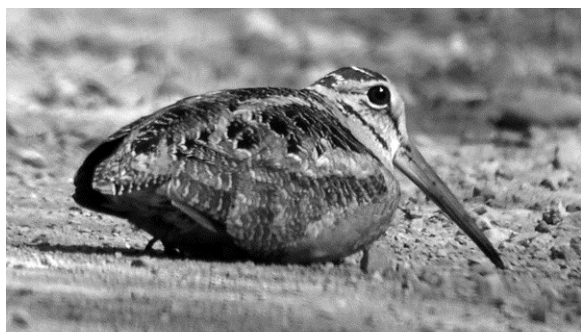


Blackbird under his feeders in Oklahoma City. On the 24th Nancy Reed had a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker working the holes in her apple tree and Fox Sparrow in her yard.

On the 27th along South Jenkins in Norman, Blossom flushed a bird which was identified as an American Woodcock by Dick Gunn. And now it is the final month of the year with Christmas Bird Counts all over the state. What new species will be added to the list? How can you help?

For November as of the 25th **133** bird species were reported with **one** new species which brought the 2013 year's total to **278** species in the Central Oklahoma area. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds and can be contacted by e-mail at emkok@earthlink.net.

Esther M. Key, Editor.



TOP 25: Many-colored Rush Tyrant (*Tachuris rubrigastra*)

By Mark Delgrosso

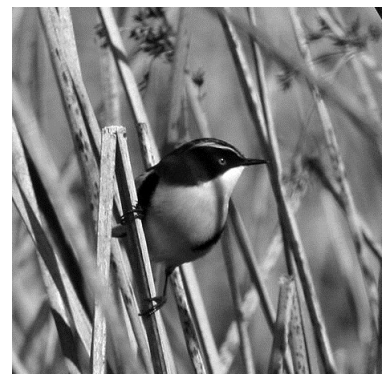
FAMILY: Tyrannidae

RANGE: South America

HABITAT: wetlands with extensive reed cover

STATUS: common (a species of LEAST concern [IUCN])

Here is a bright little jewel from a family not particularly well-known for brightness. It is a Tyrannid - a tyrant flycatcher. This is the family of the Phoebes, the Wood-Pewees, the



Empidonax flycatchers - troublesome to identify in their ho-hum plumages. And it gets worse as you head south. Open a field guide to Mexico or Central America and turn to the tyrannid plates - page after page of drabness. And South America! - plate after plate after plate after plate of confounding sameness - a universe of Empidonaxes [Empidonaces?!]

But of course, as with anything in nature, there are exceptions. There is the Vermilion Flycatcher, the Kiskadee and similar flycatchers (Boat-billed, Social) and our own Scissor-tailed. And this little denizen of South American marshes.

You cannot make out the flashiness of this bird's plumage from the black-and-white image so allow a brief description: red crown bordered by yellow crown stripes; cobalt-blue face; white throat and yellow underparts; pink-red crissum; black semi-collar at breast sides; green back; large white wing patches and whitetail sides. It is a Crayon bird, a rainbow flash, a Marsh Wren by Matisse!

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

Field Trip Schedule 2014

Check with Mark Delgrosso or the website/ newsletter for updates and final scheduling

FEB.8: Sooner Lake: plenty of wintering waterfowl and possible eagles on this trip. Meet at 8am at the McDonald's at 15th exit off I-35. Since this trip will take place in a 'limited access' area participants must, on their own, email Cyndie Browning so that they can be put on the official visitation list. Her email is: vermilion__flycatcher@yahoo.com. *Leader:* Jim Bates [Jim-Bates@ouhsc.edu]

APRIL: Yukon City Park : join Jimmy Woodard on a birding tour of his (former) stomping grounds. *Leader:* Jimmy Woodard [j.woodard@cox.net]

early MAY: Tulsa birding hotspots: *Leader:* Jimmy Woodard [j.woodard@cox.net]

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

Spring (APRIL or MAY): McGee Creek WMA/McCurtain County Wilderness: two productive, birdy areas with many specialties, the most notable of which is OK's sole population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. Also on the menu are Prairie Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and abundant Chuck-wills-widows. Because of the distance from OKC this trip will be planned for a [2 or 3 day] weekend. *Leader:* Mark Delgrosso (405 445 2300 or email at: markdelg94@gmail.com) - *details and dates TBA*

June: Club Picnic
