



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

January 2016

Tropical rainforest ants and their followers

Join us February 15 when the meeting will feature Jelena Bujan, an “anthusiast.”

Ants are one of the most ecologically important insect groups. Compared to most solitary insects, ant colonies are long-lived and relatively sessile. This is why they are a perfect taxon for exploring the effect of long term environmental changes on consumers. Jelena studies ants at one of their biodiversity hotspots – the tropical rainforest of Panama. In particular, she is interested in how different nutrients affect this diverse ant community. The strong influence of soil nutrients on these ubiquitous insects is not only important for ant communities but also for the effect it might have on entire food webs. “I believe ants can serve as a marker to identify how anthropogenic disturbance impacts nutrient cycling and other arthropods,” says Jelena.

Also, she will address the effect of fertilization on the activity of nomadic tropical ants – the army ants, with implications for your favorite ant following taxon – the ant birds.



Jelena Bujan is a PhD candidate at the University of Oklahoma where she is finishing her dissertation under the mentorship of Dr. Michael Kaspari. Most of Jelena's PhD work was done in Panama, at Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute's research station on Barro Colorado Island. Jelena is originally from Rijeka, Croatia. After graduating from the University of Zagreb with an MSc degree in biology and chemistry, and spending a year teaching in a Croatian middle school, she joined the Kaspari lab. She was one of the founders of the Croatian Myrmecological Society, an NGO which studies ants and educates the general public about their importance, which still continues to gather young “anthusiasts” in Croatia.

Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month (with the exception of January, when the meeting is held on the fourth Monday). They begin at 7 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 and NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.

Welcome!

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes new members:

Larry Erickson, Edmond, OK
John Gilbert, Okla. City, OK
Jerry & Peggie Mitchell, Duncan, OK
Joe Shepard, Norman, OK

DUES NOTICE

It's time once again to renew your annual membership for 2016. 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.

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



One process for identifying a bird in the field can be summarized by the following steps: (1) see the bird and observe it long enough to (2) propose an ID for it given the overall impression, location, habitat and vocalizations, then (3) retrieve from memory the attributes of the proposed species, i.e. the field marks, behavior, habitat and vocalizations, (4)

compare observations to the known attributes and (5) sum up the results of the comparison and draw a conclusion about whether the bird passes the check. If the check fails then it is back to step 1 or 2 for another loop through the process. If you took a science class somewhere along the line, you may recognize the steps just outlined as closely paralleling the Scientific Method, which may be outlined as follows: (1) observe nature, (2) formulate a hypothesis, a guess, concerning the facts of nature, (3) devise a test of the hypothesis, (4) conduct the test, gathering data on the results, (5) analyze the data and decide if the hypothesis is proved. If the hypothesis is a failure, it may point toward a revised hypothesis which will be the basis of another loop through the steps. Occasionally a birder unexpectedly sees a new bird which doesn't fit the attributes of any bird in memory. The only recourse is to memorize as many attributes of the new bird as possible and then run through the ID process when Field Guides and other sources are available for reference.

A good memory is helpful in another group of cases, those being when there are two or more species which have many similar attributes. In these cases it is usually best to run through as long a list of diagnostic differences as possible. With any activity requiring specific skills it is sometimes of benefit to spend a little time thinking and learning about the best way to execute the key behaviors. In golf it is the swing; in tennis the forehand, backhand, serve and volley; in baseball it is pitching, hitting and fielding; in football blocking, tackling, rushing, passing and receiving. Thinking critically about the ID process one uses in birding can be time well spent.

OK, let's get back to our review of the passerine superfamilies. The last installment was in the November issue where we started an investigation into the capability of non-passeroid passerines to make the same kind of burry vocalizations that we had found in some passeroids. We found that some certhioid birds do make burry notes, and we vowed to resume with an examination of the Muscicapoidea superfamily at the next

opportunity. The families in the Muscicapoidea include the thrush family, Turdidae, the Old World flycatcher family, Muscicapidae, the mockingbird and thrasher family, Mimidae, the starling and myna family, Sturnidae, the oxpecker family, Buphagidae, and the dipper family, Cinclidae. Let's start with the Himalayan Forest Thrush in the thrush family, <https://goo.gl/HmOgqx>. The burry notes in its song can be heard here, <http://goo.gl/qhkkds>. An example in the Old World flycatcher family is the **European Pied Flycatcher**, <http://goo.gl/TZEFNZ>, whose harsh, burry song can be heard here, <http://goo.gl/m7QPRI>. For burry calls in the starling and myna family, we need look no farther than the European Starling, <http://goo.gl/piCyhm>. The foregoing calls have a wide frequency distribution approaching a noisy hiss, but there is enough tonality to qualify as a burry note, the evidence in the sonogram being the black portions within the gray bands. The White-throated Dipper of Europe, <http://goo.gl/1NGX2M>, in the dipper family has a burry song, <http://goo.gl/iRo9Gq>.



We can also find burry notes in recordings of birds in the Sylvioidea superfamily. The loud, burry singer in the following recording from the Asian Brown Flycatcher archive, <http://goo.gl/qzd2VE>, is actually an Eastern Crowned Warbler in the Old World warbler family, Sylviidae, <http://goo.gl/UqYK3s>. The ID of the foreground singer is stated in the "Remarks from the Recordist" section and can be verified by comparison of this recording to recordings in the Eastern Crowned Warbler archive. The Sichuan Bush Warbler, <https://goo.gl/IL4mWc>, in the family Locustellidae has a burry, insect-like song, <http://goo.gl/qt3BK5>, like many of its relatives. The Whiskered Yuhina, <https://goo.gl/Oq4OFc>, in the family Zosteropidae can make short, burry call notes, <http://goo.gl/gY7Xta>. The Northern Rough-winged Swallow in family Hirundinidae makes a burry call note when in flight, <http://goo.gl/Ghp80u>. The Carolina Chickadee in family Paridae has a burry call that is one of the voices in the following exchange between two of the birds, <http://goo.gl/grw4Rr>.

At this point it is clear that burry notes are not a capability which is restricted to birds in Passeroidea. Birds in Certhioidea, Muscicapoidea and Sylvioidea also make burry notes. If you have not been exhausted by all the links, here is one more which plays the bizarre, electric song of the Cliff Swallow, <http://goo.gl/YGMdP>.

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



In checking on the taxonomy of the **Winter Wren** (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), I found that it is the same species as the Eurasian Wren: both are *T. troglodytes*. Here we have two widely used common names for the same bird. This is the kind of ambiguity that Linnaeus was trying to avoid with his Latin genus and species naming system. Interestingly, this

fact—that Winter/Eurasian Wren are the same bird—does not pop out readily in the online (nor probably the written) literature. It took me a while to find a map that showed its worldwide distribution. This wren no doubt has one of the largest worldwide ranges of any bird species, found at some time of year in much of North America and Eurasia and also a little in northern Africa.

Interestingly, there is only one species of wren in all of Eurasia—the Eurasian Wren—while there are many species of wren in the Americas. The bridge in the range between Eurasia and North America populations of Winter/Eurasian Wren was probably from Alaska to Russia, as this is a relatively short hop in comparison to the journey across the Atlantic Ocean. Because there is only this one wren for all of Eurasia and there are dozens of wren species in the Americas, wrens species probably originated in the Americas and the Winter Wren spread from Alaska into Russia and beyond.

The Winter Wren is one of our smallest species, excepting hummingbirds. Bent (1964, *Life histories of North American nuthatches, wrens, thrashers, and their allies*), in his opening comments about this species, has a wonderful description: "...it is a furtive little mite, the smallest of its tribe, creeping mouselike about our wood piles or brush heaps, under the overhanging roots of trees along some woodland stream, or under the banks of marshland ditches."



The Winter Wren is decidedly rare in Oklahoma and only found in winter. If my party sees one on our Christmas Bird Count, it is usually near the North Canadian River, south of N.W. 10th Street (below the Overholser Dam a little way). We frequently run into one in some of the thickets not far from the river. This last CBC Terri Underhill found one north of N.W. 10th; we got into a great spot with lots of birds. I got a brief glimpse of the wren, but I was furiously writing down all the species of birds Terri was seeing and hearing; Terri has phenomenally good eyes and ears. Birding with her is a revelation!

One of my favorite CBC stories of a Winter Wren was a find by Warren Harden many years ago. We were working a wooded area in the northeastern part of the count circle, and it was so late in the evening you could hardly see. Warren said, hey, I think I just saw a Winter Wren go into that brush pile! It was so dark, I was a little bit skeptical, but of course the wren popped out soon to prove me wrong. (After many years of knowing Warren, I

have learned that if we disagree on any subject, I better reexamine my own position first—this is no joke!) I think Warren's wren was the only Winter Wren for the count that year.

As a nesting bird in North America, the Winter Wren nests in a band across Canada and south into the U.S. a little way, mainly in the mountains of eastern North America. It usually selects locations near the ground as nesting sites, locations like the upturned roots of blown-over trees, around old stumps, or under the roots of trees.

Usually such sites are well covered with moss and the nests are hard to find because they so closely match the surrounding vegetation. It builds a rather bulky nest for such a small bird and lays 4-7 (usually 5 or 6) white eggs that have some brown spotting. Also, they will build dummy nests that are not used for nesting, at least that year.

As confirmation of just how small this little wren is, I ran into an interesting observation of Winter Wrens going to roost in Washington State, where the wrens, in winter, are apparently much more common than here in Oklahoma. An observer was watching a 6-inch cube bird box and carefully counted 31 Winter Wrens going to roost in it. Wow!

Minutes of the Meeting

January 25, Minutes

Meeting called to order by President Bill Diffin.

Welcome to newcomers: Amy Atkinson of Edmond, Peggie and Jerry Mitchell of Duncan, Kathy Houk of Newalla. Also Joe Shepherd, who reportedly has lots of Alaska birding experience.

Minutes of the December meeting were approved without changes. Yours truly thanks Nancy Vicars for stepping in for me.

Committee reports:

Mark DelGrosso reports upcoming field trips. One is planned for Hackberry Flat. Please be watching for details on the e-mail list. Add your address if you want to receive field trip updates.

Treasurer Nancy Vicars reports annual dues are from January to January and are \$15 per household. She is accepting payments now. Current assets are \$5,583.62.

No reports from conservation committee.

New business:

Terri Underhill has bumper stickers for \$5.00 apiece.

John Bates suggested we sponsor a booth at the Red Earth Festival this summer, as nature conservation is such a prominent part of American Indian culture.

February 6 will be the winter bird survey for a new nature preserve in SE Oklahoma. Contact Jimmy Woodard if interested. Jimmy Woodard reported a good attendance and winter bird count for Pontotoc Ridge Preserve in January.

A large group was in attendance for an ever-educational, ever-humorous presentation by Dr. Tim O'Connell of Oklahoma State University. Tim shared his experience and expertise in mimicking bird calls for fun and science. The room sounded like an owl convention when the attendees practiced their calls. Great fun for all!

Next meeting will be at 7pm February 15, 2016 at the same location.

Sharon Henthorn, club secretary

Oklahoma Biodiversity Network Forum

The Oklahoma Biodiversity Network, OBN, is holding the first annual Oklahoma Biodiversity Forum at the University of Oklahoma on **Saturday March 5, 2016**. Registration is free and open to anyone working on biodiversity and conservation issues in Oklahoma. Network members will consider, develop, and plan collaborative projects during this day-long gathering of Oklahoma biologists.

Don't expect to sit back and listen to presentations all day. The Forum will be a dynamic dialog engaging all participants.

Snacks and lunch will be provided to fuel us through a day of discussion and deliberation. A reception at the end of the day will provide an opportunity for informal conversation with other biologists.

Registration is free, but required for us to plan a productive day of discussion and can be done online. If you cannot attend the Forum, we will summarize the discussion and outcomes on the OBN website. We will also record the "Biology Bites" and have digital copies of the posters available on our website. To learn more about OBN visit the website: okbiodiversity.org.

Great Backyard Bird Count

The 19th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2016. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information and be sure to check out the latest educational and promotional resources.

REFRESHMENTS

Refreshments for the February meeting will be provided by Marion Homier, and Mary Lane & Steve Davis for both snacks and drinks.

Recorders Report Discovery Year



A new year, a new beginning; and another adventurer, Arjan Dwarshuis, will attempt to break the world record by observing more than 6,000 bird species in a single year. Follow along at <http://arjandwarshuis.com/> Meanwhile at home, the challenge could be: how many species will be seen in all counties this year? In 2015 out of 287 species reported, only 65 species were seen in all 12 central Oklahoma counties, Let's discover more places to

bird.

On the 1st, how many counties had New Year reports? In Cleveland County along South Jenkins Joe Grzybowski discovered Greater Yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe, Common Yellowthroat, and Swamp Sparrow. In Payne County Tim O'Connell spotted a Great Horned Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, and White-throated Sparrow. In Logan County Zach Poland identified an American Tree Sparrow. In Grady County Linda and Bill Adams located Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, and Wild Turkey at Taylor Lake. In Oklahoma County in Choctaw Dr. Chris Butler saw Brown Thrasher and Field Sparrow. But, Bob Ellis checked out several locations and found at Bethany Pond a Wood Duck; at Lake Hefner Common Loon, **Eared Grebes, Franklin's Gull**; at Martin Park Nature Center a Brown Creeper; near Deer Creek School Northern Bobwhite, Horned Lark, Brewer's Blackbird; and in Canadian County at Lake Overholser's Route 66 Park a **Virginia Rail**. WOW, what a great start!!



On the 2nd at Lake Thunderbird Little River State Park T K located an Eared Grebe and John Tharp had an Eastern Towhee, Pine Warbler and Purple Finch. Joe checked out the Norman North Base and identified **Smith's Longspur** and **Chestnut-collared**

Longspur and at the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History **Le Conte's Sparrow**. Jeff Robers also found Smith's Longspur in the Purina Fields north of the Kilpatrick Turnpike. At Boomer Lake Park Deb Hirt saw a Hermit Thrush, Chipping Sparrow and Bewick's Wren. Steve Davis and Mary Lane were looking for Bald Eagle nests and discovered the Arcadia Conservation Education Area north of Memorial Road on Midwest Boulevard. In Wellston in Lincoln County Heidi Hellstern spotted a Northern Flicker, on the 3rd a Great Horned Owl and on the 4th a Chipping Sparrow.

On the 3rd in Stillwater Caitlin Laughlin identified Smith's Longspurs and a Merlin. At Sanborn Lake, John Polo saw an American Tree sparrow and Hairy Woodpecker. At the OCK Zoo Lake Park Heather Shaffery located Canvasback Ducks and Black-crowned Night-Heron. At the same time, Cleveland County had their Christmas Bird Count where Zack Poland discovered a Horned Lark at Norman North Base and in east Norman Joe Grzybowski found a **Grasshopper Sparrow**. But **six** species were reported on the CBC that were not reported in eBird for the month of January in Cleveland County. How much other important information is missing?

On the 4th in McClain County Larry Mays spotted **Rusty Blackbird**, Brewer's Blackbirds and a Pine Siskin at his home. In Grady County Mary and Lou Truex birded Rush Springs Sewage Lagoons and reported Northern Shoveler, while in Chickasha Jason Shaw saw Crackling Goose and White-winged Dove. On the 6th at the OSU Cross Country Course Corey Riding recognized a Vesper Sparrow; at Lake Hefner Cameron Carver identified a **Thayer's Gull**; Joe passed by Lake Hefner and noted 3 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, almost 100 Horned Grebes and about that many Pied-billed Grebes, and 13 Eared Grebes. On the 7th in Logan County, Christie Stoops had a Downy Woodpecker and Carolina Wren at Cottonwood Creek. On the 9th Larry Mays discovered a **Glaucous**

Gull at Lake Overholser in Canadian County.



On the 10th in Kingfisher County Zach Poland documented an Eastern Bluebird. In Garvin County Esther Key encountered Harris's Sparrow and Northern Cardinal. Zach had a **Ross's Goose** at Lake Hefner and Cameron

Carver saw a Lincoln's Sparrow at the Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge. On the 11th Calvin Rees found a Snow

Continued on page 6

Recorder's Report (cont.)

Warbler along South Jenkins. Jimmy Woodard counted an interesting mix of birds around his yard including a Bald Eagle, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, and White-throated Sparrow. On the 12th Zach reported an Orange-crowned Warbler at the Myriad Botanical Gardens. On the 16th Bob Ellis discovered a Forster's Tern at Lake El Reno. On the 17th John Raeside and Anais Starr-Raeside got really good looks at a **Townsend's Solitaire** in Cherry Creek Park in Norman.



On the 18th while Corey Riding was traveling in Pottawatomie County he detected Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel and Loggerhead Shrike; at Meeker Lake in Lincoln County a Tufted Titmouse and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Megan Haughey identified a **Pine Warbler** at the OSU Arboretum. On the 20th Lisa Wiesbauer came across a **Black-billed Magpie** just east of Lake Thunderbird on SH9. On the 21st in McClain County, Paul Cook had a Merlin and Ferruginous Hawk at the Goldsby Sod Farm. On the 22nd Aaron Reynold noticed a Red-headed Woodpecker in Kingfisher County.

On the 23rd Deanne McKinney located a Wood Duck and American Wigeon at Rose Lake. Deb Hirt had Least Sandpiper at Boomer Lake Park. Zach Poland documented a **Townsend's Solitaire** at Martin Park Nature Center.

On the 24th in Logan County on I-35 Machenzie Goldthwait reported a Northern Harrier and at Lake Hefner a **Fish Crow**. Scott Loss saw a Northern Bobwhite at Lake Carl Blackwell; a Prairie Falcon along the Paine County Airport Road; a Le Conte's Sparrow at the OSU



Cross Country Course; a Rusty Blackbird at Whittenberg Park and Brewer's Blackbirds at the OSU Beef Farm. In McClain County Brian Muzny located four displaying male

American Woodcocks along the creek bottom at Byars.

On the 27th Donald Winslow noticed Cedar Waxwings at Catalpa Cottage in Pottawatomie County. Cameron



Carver spotted a **Black Vulture** and Turkey Vulture along I-35 in McClain County. On the 28th along Lake Overholser's west side John Bates identified a Great Horned Owl, Hairy Woodpecker and American Pipit. At Lake Thunderbird Little River Marina Area T K verified **American Woodcock**. At Martin Park Nature Center Brian Stufflebeam encountered a **Red-breasted Nuthatch**. On

the 29th at Elmore City Lake in Garvin County Esther Key photographed Canvasback Ducks. On the 30th Zach Poland detected Gadwall and Western Meadowlark at Lake Elmer in Kingfisher County. On the 31st Larry Mays discovered a Greater Yellowlegs and Wilson's Snipe at the intersection of I-35 and SH9.

Next is The Great Backyard Bird Count February 12-15. Will all counties have reports? To start the New Year in the Central Oklahoma area **142** bird species were reported in January. 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.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2016

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Vice President	John Shackford	340-5057
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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

Some of the Proposed Changes to the AOU Checklist

Adopt “Whitestart” as the English surname of species of the genus *Myioborus*



The genus *Myioborus* consists of a number of species of wood-warbler, only one of which, **Painted Redstart**, regularly occurs in the ABA Area. The birds are called red-

starts despite the fact that the flashes in their tails (the “starts” from the Old English for tail) are white. More, redstarts generally refer to a group of unrelated Old World flycatchers in the family *Muscicapidae*. The proposal seeks to clarify taxonomic relationships (or lack thereof), more accurately describe the birds themselves, and bring the AOU name of the birds in line with a number of other authorities which already use whitestart in reference to *Myioborus*.

Lump Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea* and Hoary Redpoll *A. hornemanni* into a single species



There have been rumblings about a redpoll lump for several years. We published a more detailed look at the science here at The

ABA Blog in 2013 (worth reviewing in light of this proposal), but the short version is that the differences between Hoary and Common Redpoll are more continuous rather than discrete. That means they occupy a continuum line from big pale Hoary all the way to small streaky Common with most birds falling between. This is in line with what field birders who have regular experience with the two have been saying for years. More, reports of Hoary and Common Redpolls sorting

themselves by type where their breeding ranges overlap appears to be not well backed up. The proposal is remarkably thorough so we all may as well resign ourselves to the lump that seems to be coming. The only question is whether we retain Common Redpoll as the species name for the whole lot, or go full Euro and simply call them all “Redpoll”.

Revise generic assignments of woodpeckers in the genus *Picoides*

The new arrangement retains *Picoides* only for Black-backed and Three-toed Woodpeckers, and resurrects the poetic *Dryobates* and *Leuconotopicus*. The former would contain the small Downy, Nuttall’s and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, and the latter the larger Red-cockaded, White-headed, Hairy, and Arizona.



Merge Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea* into American Coot *F. americana*



Caribbean Coot used to be on the ABA Checklist, but was removed in 1991 due to doubts raised about the validity of records and the taxonomic status of Caribbean Coot. That thinking

is behind this proposal to formally lump Caribbean Coot and American Coot, as the single inconsistent morphological difference (the white shield) is not enough to justify their status as separate species. This is particularly true as apparent American Coots with white shields are regularly seen across the range of the species.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society
c/o Patricia Velte
1421 NW 102nd Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73114

OKC AUDUBON SOCIETY Financial Report for 2015

CASH ON HAND 12/31/2014 \$5,848.70

INCOME:

Membership dues	1,301.50	
Checking Acct. interest	8.89	
Car stickers	46.42	
Contributions	<u>10.00</u>	
	1,366.81	<u>+1,366.81</u>
		7,215.51

EXPENSES:

Meeting room rent	180.00	
Newsletter (copies & postage)	667.84	
Club Promotion	21.17	
Memb. dues (Garden Council)	15.00	
Summer Social & Xmas count	283.98	
Speaker Honorarium	408.03	
Check printing	<u>18.50</u>	
	1,594.52	<u>-1,594.52</u>

CASH ON HAND 12/31/2015 \$5,620.99
