



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

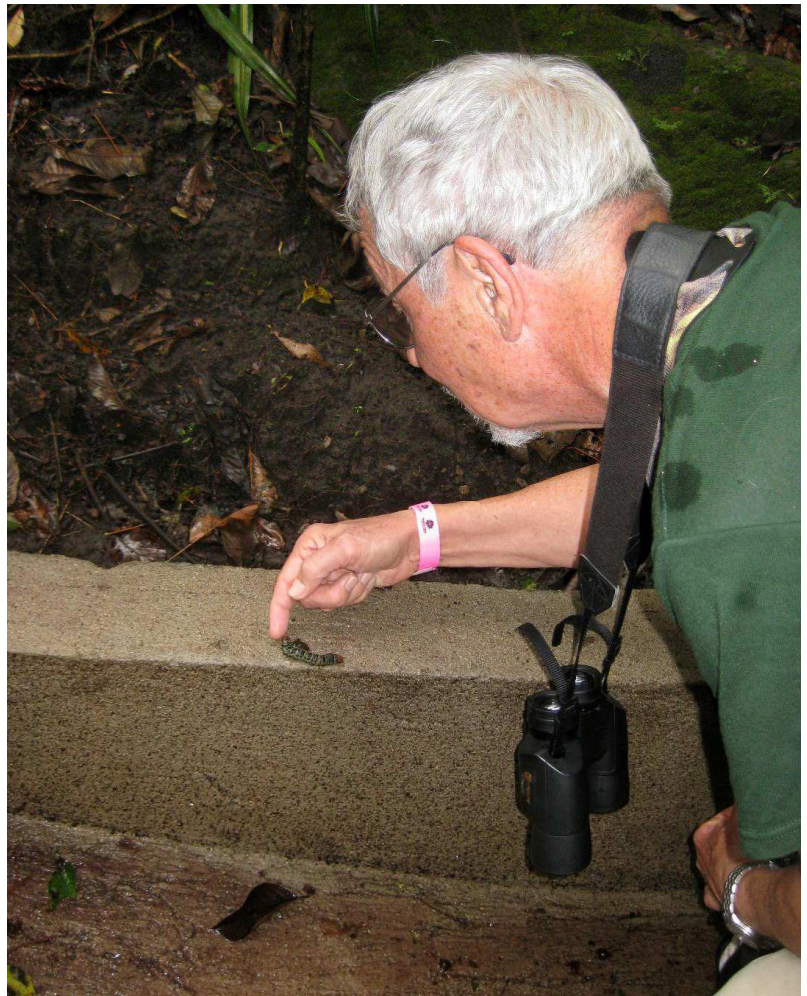
JUNE 2019

All the Creepy Crawly Things

Speaking at the June 17 OKC Audubon Society meeting will be our own Mike Mather

Mike Mather, a fellow member who is a past speaker for OKC Audubon, will be our June speaker on a topic that deals with the “Creepy Crawly Creatures” that abound in Oklahoma. The most talked about scary things are snakes and spiders, but there is a variety of critters around the state that also evoke the “eek” or “OMG” response. No live examples will be passed around, so come out and bring some friends.

Mike is Professor Emeritus from the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha. He has a Ph.D. in herpetology from Texas A & M University. His research has included studies of lizards in South Texas and Mexico and freshwater mussels and terrestrial snails in Oklahoma along with a passion for insects and fishing. He has been a birder, off and on since pre-school. Retirement has allowed further pursuit of birding and photography. Getting a good photo is a goal but not at the expense of disturbance of the bird or birders. If obtaining an image isn't convenient, the mental image suffices. His recent spring birding trips with his wife Jeanne include Costa Rica, Cuba and Ohio's Magee Marsh.



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). Meetings begin at 7 p.m. Visitors are always welcome.

Meeting Location:

Our meetings are held at the Will Rogers Garden center, located at the intersection of NW 36th Street and I-44.



President's Perspective

By Betz Hacker

It's hard for me to fathom this year's weather patterns. In my 9 years in Oklahoma City, I have never experienced a cool wet spring with torrential downpours and pounding

winds like we've had this year. I can only imagine how it has effected bird migration and nesting.

Weather is the number one driving factor for migration. Temperature may be the most important factor that affects premigratory preparations but exactly why and when a bird begins its migratory flight, is a field of study in and of itself.

While there isn't a definite answer, research and observation indicates that directional flowing wind is a major factor. Clear skies also help, but are less important. Birds will take flight on overcast days or nights, if the wind is good. Whenever possible, birds avoid storms and foggy weather. Every year, thousands of birds become disoriented and exhausted and die in severe storms. Strong winds force migrating birds out of the sky and/or carry them away from their traditional migratory routes. Often the best time to bird is just after a storm or cold front. This spring's field trips have been very productive and a big thanks goes out to those who led them.

Annual Summer Picnic

Date: Saturday, June 15.

Place: Terri and Keith Underhill's home located at 4401 Rock Canyon Rd, Edmond 73125

Time: 2pm to 7pm

OCAS will provide a picnic ham, buns, condiments, ice, and a vegetarian pasta dish. Guests can bring side dishes including lettuce, sliced tomatoes, sandwich fixings, salads, deserts, and something to drink.

Please RSVP by texting or emailing Betz Hacker (405-638-6210 or birdbetz@gmail.com).

It's fun to visit in a casual atmosphere and see the birds in Terri's yard because she always comes up with a few surprises.

Meeting Schedule

Following our June meeting, we will be on summer break until Monday, September 16, when we will resume our meetings at 7pm in the Will Roger's event center.



Western Kingbird tossing it's catch because it must swallow it head first.



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2019

President	Elizabeth Hacker	638-6210
Vice President	Grace Huffman	388-7369
Secretary	Sharon Henthorn	521-9958
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	831-1945
Parliament	Valerie Bradshaw	664-6956
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Recorder	Esther M. Key	735-1021
Conservation	Dave Woodson	601-622-3467
Field Trips	Nancy Vicars	831-1945
	Jimmy Woodard	365-5685
	Hal Yokum	819-4852
	Bob Holbrook	496-1731
Newsletter Editor	Patricia Velte	751-5263
Publicity	Doug Eide	495-8192
Historian	Vacant	
Refreshments	Sue Woodson	601-622-3467
Webmaster	Patricia Velte	751-5263

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

For up-to-date Oklahoma City Audubon news visit:
OKC-Audubon.org



Chirpings

May and June 2019

By Patti Muzny

May brought with it many challenges with our weather. So far we have escaped Mother Nature's tantrums and have managed to do our yard work in between downpours. And our OKC birds are settling in and attempting to

produce the next generations. I miss the wintering species, but now I get to watch the migrants that have returned.

Our Mississippi Kites patrol the airspace above our neighborhood and often perch in the large trees in our yard. I love it when they come back and I really miss them when they leave in late summer. We also have nesting Cooper's and Red-shouldered Hawks that seem to have a taste for dove – any variety will do – White-winged, Collared and Mourning. Brian actually saw a Red-shouldered Hawk snatch a Collared Dove and fly across the yard. Found another feather puddle at the feeder again this morning. We have House Wrens and Bewick's Wrens in our yard, along with Downy Woodpecker, Chimney Swifts, Nighthawks, Brown Thrasher, Mockingbird, Robins, Cardinals, Chickadees, Purple Martins and the ever-present House Sparrows, Starlings and a Cowbird or two.

Daily "flyovers" include Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night Herons, every species of egret and of course the geese!

In my last "Chirpings" I mentioned that we have a hen turkey in the neighborhood. At one time a neighbor saw two, but I've only been seeing one. The latest incidents were quite entertaining. This turkey is pretty tame. One Friday afternoon Ms. Turkey was standing at the edge of our back patio. I went out into the garage and tossed out a handful of sunflower seeds into the driveway. She trotted over to the seeds and ate her fill only about 6 feet from Brian and me.

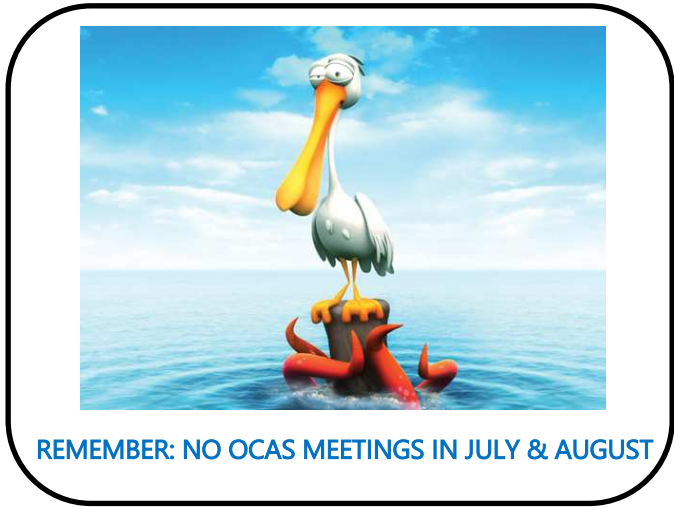
I had my phone with me, so I decided to play a quick turkey call. I played the call and her turkey neck telescoped higher than I thought possible and she began to cluck and chatter and after one quick look

over her wing at us, trotted down our long driveway clucking and running down South Olie Street like she was late for a date! I felt a little bad for whatever she thought I said.

A few days later I was out on the patio with my mug of morning coffee when I heard toenails clicking on our metal patio roof. Starlings have landed up there and I thought nothing of it. After I went into the house, I looked out to see the turkey standing at the edge of the patio again. I raised the garage door and tossed out more seed. She seemed to be waiting for her breakfast. She ate and ate, then strolled over to the bird bath and took a drink before ambling out to the end of the yard where I have a little blackberry patch. The rascal picked off a little fruit to round out her meal before ambling back for a few more sunflower seeds and a few bugs and grass seeds from the lawn.

When she walked toward the patio again, I walked out to the carport where I could see the patio roof. She stood in the lawn looking up at the roof for a few minutes before flying up to the patio roof to enjoy the sunshine and preen. She stayed there almost an hour before flying back down and trotting off down our driveway again. So do you think I accomplished much yard or house work that morning? Nope! This is what retirement is all about for a birder!!

I've learned she also visits our friends and neighbors who live three doors down from us. Cheryl and Rob recently acquired eight laying hens (as in eight hens a-laying). They've also had the turkey in their yard, but as soon as they got the chickens, Ms. Turkey comes to visit and it's likely they see her perched on their back yard gate or strolling along the outside of the henhouse pen. We know our close neighbors quite well and we all have enjoyed having turkeys in such an unlikely neighborhood. We are about ¾ of a mile south of I-240!! Where did they come from? Will they survive? Sure hope so!



REMEMBER: NO OCAS MEETINGS IN JULY & AUGUST



Bird of the Month

By Grace Huffman

Hello everyone! I'm so excited to begin writing the Bird of the Month column now that John Shackford has retired after many years of writing wonderful articles. I have some big shoes to fill, but I'll

do my best!

I thought I would start out by writing about one of my very favorite birds: the **Eastern Meadowlark** (*Sturnella magna*). Some of my earliest birdwatching memories involved drives out to wheat fields in early summer to hear the meadowlarks and Dickcissels as the evenings cooled down. Sadly those fields have since been replaced by a housing development, and the meadowlarks have been forced to live elsewhere.

Eastern Meadowlarks aren't true larks at all, but rather members of the blackbird family Icteridae. Found year-round across most of Oklahoma, they are about the size of a robin and their shape reminds me of European Starlings, especially when perched on power lines or in flight. Meadowlarks though are much more beautiful than starlings however, with intricate mottling all over the back and wings, a boldly striped face, streaked flanks, and a beautiful yellow throat and belly with a black breastband. Western Meadowlarks look very similar, but they have yellow malars, less white on the tail, and have a more spotted pattern to their flanks.

The most reliable way to tell meadowlark species apart is by sound. Eastern Meadowlarks have a flute-like song full of clear whistles (Sibley describes it as *seeeeooaa*

seeeeadoo), whereas the song of the Western Meadowlark is described more as a descending warble. Eastern Meadowlarks also have a buzzy call that you'll often hear as well.

Eastern Meadowlarks nest on the ground in tall grasses, with one male having 2-3 females on his territory. The females will take days to construct their nests, sometimes even building a tunnel entrance and a roof. Clutches consist of 2-7 eggs, and the incubation period is between 13-16 days. Once hatched, the young will leave the nest in about 10-12 days.

While not on the State of North America's Birds 2016 Watch List, AllAboutBirds.org lists the Eastern Meadowlark as a "common bird in steep decline," citing that the population declined 89% between 1966 and 2015, largely due to habitat being lost to urban sprawl, overgrazing, and changes to agricultural practices such as early mowing. Pesticides can also harm meadow-

larks. Since much of meadowlark habitat is private land, farmland conservation practices are key to saving the species.

If you are wondering where you can see an Eastern Meadowlark for yourself, keep an eye out for one perched on a barbed wire fence or power lines when you're driving out near pastures and farmland. I often hear them when birding the east side of the Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge, as there are some open fields

just on the other side. Another great place to find them is Mitch Park in Edmond. I was just there on June 1st with Betsy Hacker and we got great photographs of two birds, and heard at least two more.



Refreshments

Refreshments for the June 17 meeting will be provided by

Snacks: Marilyn Taylor and Mary Lane/Steve Davis

Ice/Drinks: Larry Mays

OKC Audubon Society minutes of April 15, 2019

Editor's Note: The April Minutes were not published in the May newsletter. For the record, they are printed here. The May meeting was cancelled due to severe weather; the minutes of the June meeting will be published in the September newsletter.

The meeting was called to order by President Betz Hacker. Guest Sheryl Christofferson of OKC was introduced.

Old business: The minutes of the March 2019 meeting were approved without changes. Treasurer Nancy Vicars reports the club bank account contains \$6327 after dues and expenses.

John Shackford has elected to retire from writing the Bird of the Month article for the society newsletter. Volunteers are welcome to take up the challenge of contributing to the newsletter in his/her own way.

News from the Will Rogers Park's Project Bluebird is encouraging, as one of the houses is now in use for nesting. Brian Muzny is providing a shorebird display for the garden center building this quarter.

Terri Underhill has installed a live bird-cam at her property for viewing the great horned owl nestlings.

Nathan Kuhnert is encouraging the downtown businesses to protect the migrating birds that fly into the glass windows each year. Businesses will be encouraged to turn off their inside lights during migration season in nighttime hours.

Upcoming birding events: John Cleal and Marion Homier will host an unofficial Little Sit at their rural home near Choctaw during the daylight hours of April 27 regardless of the weather.

The spring meeting of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society (OOS) will be held May 3-5 at the Lake Wister State Park in southeastern Oklahoma.

May 9th the Tulsa Audubon Society is hosting Bruce Beeler from the George Sutton Center in Bartlesville as he entertains the assembly with a presentation about Birds of Paradise.

The Annual Garden Festival at the Will Rogers Park will be held on Saturday May 18th from 8:00 to 4:00. Volunteers are asked to man the society's booth and to bring any articles to sell or to share.

June 15th Terri Underhill will again host the annual club picnic at her country home near Edmond.

The meeting was adjourned and a snack break preceded the evening's presentation. Professor Craig Davis of Oklahoma State University reported on the effects of droughts and deluges in the central plains states as it affects the ecology of shorebirds. — *Club Secretary, Sharon Henthorn*

IBA NEWS: SALT PLAINS WHSRN UPGRADE

Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), in north-central Oklahoma, is an Important Bird Area (IBA) of Global significance. The refuge has also been placed on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. And in February of 1994 it joined the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). Because of the site's salt flats and wetlands, both of which are vital to shorebirds during spring and fall migration, the WHSRN designation was originally considered to be of "Regional Importance."

Now, a quarter century later, the WHSRN status of Salt Plains has been upgraded to a "Site of International Importance." This upgrade was in part due to a better understanding of the Refuge's significance to the North American breeding population of Snowy Plovers.

While the refuge is important for a variety of shorebirds - numbers which peak during spring migration in late April and early May - and since the refuge is also important for waterfowl and cranes, special studies have also been conducted there for Snowy Plovers.

In 2012, Susan M. Thomas et al. published a breakthrough article in *Waterbirds*, and they identified Salt Plains NWR as one of the most important breeding areas for Snowy Plovers in North America, and estimated that the Refuge contained about 22% of the continental breeding population. From 2013 through 2017, spatial surveys were replicated at the salt flats, confirming numbers published in 2012. An average of more than 4,500 Snowy Plovers was consistently estimated at Salt Plains NWR during the breeding season, an abundance that represents 20.4% of the Interior/Gulf Coast population and 18.1% of the entire North American population.

For a summary of the work and the basis for the International Importance upgrade, see here: <https://whsrn.org/salt-plains-upgrades-whsrn-status-due-to-importance-for-breeding-snowy-plovers/>

For a general description of Salt Flats as an IBA see: <https://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/salt-plains-national-wildlife-refuge>

Recorders Report

May 2019

May was a very exciting month both in birders' backyards and in the field. According to preliminary data for the state of Oklahoma, May was the fourth wettest month on record and had almost 2/3 more tornados than normal, but birds continued their migration with the arrival of many new species for the year. As the last summer residents arrive and began nesting, some of the resident birds were feeding young while warblers and shorebirds continued their journey northward.

On the 1st Calvin Rees added **Hudsonian Godwit** at the 63rd/Kilpatrick Turnpike in Canadian County; Jonah Padberg verified **Blackburnian Warbler** along South Jenkins in Norman; Jimmy Woodward found **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** and **Black-throated Green Warbler** at Joe B. Barnes Park in



Midwest City and Brian Marra noticed **Wilson's Warbler** at Bluff Creek Trails in Oklahoma City. On the 2nd Thomas/Leah Bennett recorded **White-rumped Sandpiper** at Ten Mile Flats in Cleveland County. On the 3rd D&D Norris photographed **Lazuli Bunting** at Kairworks Garden in Logan County; Joe Grzybowski discovered **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** along South Jenkins; Scott Loss counted Wilson's Warbler and **Palm Warbler** at Lake Carl Blackwell; and Brian Marra recognized **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Lake Stanley Draper.

On the 4th Robert Harding spotted Snowy Egret and Dickcissel at Asher in Pottawatomie County; Caleb Frome confirmed Cattle Egret and Great Egret at Amber in Grady County; Zach Poland observed **Bobolink** along Airport Road and Hudsonian Godwit at Lake Elmer in Kingfisher County; Grace Huffman watched Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Grasshopper Sparrow at Stinchcomb WR; and Joel Cephus tallied American



Redstart at OSU Arboretum. On the 5th David Hoekman heard Chuck-will's-widow at St Crispin's Camp in Seminole County; Jason Shaw came across Summer Tanager in Chickasaw and Indigo Bunting at USAO Habitat area in Grady County; Calvin Rees identified **Semipalmated Plover** and **Dunlin** at the 63rd/Kilpatrick Turnpike; Jeremy Ross located **Northern Waterthrush** along South Jenkins; a Caspian Tern was seen at Lake Thunderbird; and in Payne County Scott Loss encountered Blackburnian Warbler at Boomer Lake Park and **Blue-headed Vireo** and Rose-breasted Grosbeak along Richmond Road.

On the 6th Joe Grzybowski had Hudsonian Godwit and Wilson's Phalarope along Hwy 9 near Riverwind in McClain County; and Scott Loss documented **Gray-cheeked Thrush** at Couch Park and **Veery** at Boomer Lake Park in Stillwater. On the 7th Calvin Rees had White-rumped Sandpiper at 63rd/Kilpatrick Turnpike; Scott Loss saw Yellow-throated Vireo at Babcock Park in Stillwater; Austin Jones detected Eastern Wood-Pewee at Martin Park Nature Center and Carl Poldrack turned up **Barn Owl** in Oklahoma City. On the 8th Scott Loss viewed **Black Tern** at Lake Carl Blackwell, **Short-billed Dowitcher** at Meridian Technology Center Pond and Black-bellied Plover at Boomer Lake Park. In Oklahoma County Jimmy Woodard added **Bay-breasted Warbler** at Dolese Youth Park; Chad Ellis verified **Alder Flycatcher** and Willet at Lake Hefner; Brian Marra noticed Blue-headed Vireo and **Willow Flycatcher** at Bluff Creek Trails, and Calvin Rees had White-rumped Sandpiper at 63rd/Kilpatrick Turnpike.

On the 9th Jonathan Navarro found Painted Bunting at Chandler in Lincoln County; Scott Loss recognized **Philadelphia Vireo** at Couch Park, and White-rumped Sandpiper at Meridian Technology Center Pond. On the 10th V L Kirby recorded Bobolink along South Jenkins; Scott Loss counted **Mourning Warbler** at Boomer Lake Park; and Bill Diffin had Yellow-breasted Chat at Dolese Youth Park. On the 11th Justin Roach encountered Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Black Tern at Lake Konawa; Esther Key photographed Lazuli Bunting in Cleveland County; Scott Loss spotted Black Tern at Lake Overholser; and Chad Ellis discovered **Black-headed Grosbeak** at Lake Hefner.

On the 12th Austin Jones came across Lark Sparrow at Wes Watkins Lake; Chris Butler identified Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Gray Catbird and Orchard Oriole at Meeker Lake; Zach Poland had Least Flycatcher in Logan County; Tim O'Connell tallied Alder Flycatcher in Stillwater; and Brian Marra watched Mourning Warbler at Lake Hefner.

On the 13th Scott Loss confirmed Black-throated Green Warbler at Couch Park and Willow Flycatcher at Boomer Lake Park; Larry Mays encountered Solitary Sandpiper at Midwest Blvd Sod Farms; and Braden Farris had **Least Tern** at Lake Hefner.



On the 14th Joe Grzybowski observed White-rumped Sandpiper along Hwy 9 near Riverwind and Calvin Rees reported Black Tern at Lake Overholser.

On the 15th Roy McGraw spotted Black Tern at Guthrie Lake and **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** at Mineral Wells Park; Larry Mays detected Yellow-breasted Chat in McClain County; Amanda Bowe located Barn Owl at Will Rogers Airport; and Scott Loss saw **Canada Warbler** at Couch Park. On the 16th Caleb McKinney had

Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Ninnekah in Grady County; Christie Stoops viewed Northern Flicker at Cottonwood Creek; and Brian Marra turned up Kentucky Warbler at Lake Stanley Draper. On the 17th Mike Brewer



documented **Rufous-crowned Sparrow**, Summer Tanager and Chuck-will's-widow at Paul's Valley and Bridger Arrington counted Common Nighthawk at South Muhall.

On the 19th Angel Carter added Great Crested Flycatcher at Blanchard and Roy McGraw discovered Least Flycatcher at Yukon City Park. On the 21st Jared Elmore noticed Least Tern at Meridian Technology Center Pond; Joe Grzybowski verified **Black-bellied Plover** and Black Terns at Ten Mile Flats and Deb

Hirt recognized **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Sanderling**, and Dunlin at Boomer Lake Park. On the 25th Roy McGraw recorded White-rumped Sandpiper at Midwest Blvd Sod Farm; and



Brian Marra found Semipalmated Sandpiper and Semipalmated Plover at John Marshall School Pond. On the 26th Grace Huffman encountered Olive-sided Flycatcher at Stinchcomb WR; and Phillip Ables saw about 25 Mississippi Kite flying overhead in Garvin

County. As nesting season continues, will any unusual birds visit our area this summer?

In the Central Oklahoma area during May of 2019, **216** species were reported with **33** new species bringing the total for the year to **265**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds. Information is accessed at: [ebird](http://www.ebird.org). 2019 eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Available: <http://www.ebird.org/subnational1/US-OK/region>. (Accessed: May 29 & 30, 2019). And occasionally from Facebook and the OKBIRDS List. I can be contacted by e-mail at emkok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

Welcome

Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes

Bonnie Dunaway, Lexington, OK
Nick Fossey, OKC
Blayne Housh, OKC
Amy Nemecek, Purcell, OK
Sue Wilson, OKC

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

