



# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

January 2016

## An Interactive Workshop on Calling Birds

Join us January 25 when the Oklahoma City Audubon Society presents an interactive, audience participation workshop led by Dr. Tim O'Connell from OSU's Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management.

*If you've never called in an owl before, you will . . .*

Tim O'Connell is an associate professor in the department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management at Oklahoma State University. Growing up on a farm in central New York, he developed a passion for nature – especially birds – in his youth, and went on to pursue ornithology for a career. Tim earned his bachelor's degree in Natural Resources at Cornell University and a master's in Biology at the College of William and Mary where he studied nesting competition between terns and gulls. He spent three additional years in Virginia working with The Nature Conservancy's Natural Heritage Program before pursuing a PhD in Ecology at Penn State.



Tim studied landscape influences on breeding songbird communities at Penn State, and developed the Bird Community Index as a tool for ecological assessment. He also led the design team for Pennsylvania's 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas. Since settling in Stillwater in 2003, he has taught 9 different classes at OSU, and studied everything from Mountain Plovers in the west to Cerulean Warblers in the east. Tim has long stepped up to serve ornithological societies at all levels, including the Oklahoma Ornithological Society (for which he is a past president) and the Wilson Ornithological Society. He is (again) the current president of the Payne County Audubon Society.

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:

Melissa Cunningham, OKC  
Jay Ramer, Harrah  
Jan Miller, Choctaw  
Amy Aldridge, Edmond

## 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.

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# President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



Welcome to 2016. Another year begins. Competitive birders are already racing to bulk up their year lists with winter residents before the birds begin to depart with the first hints of spring. Devoted yard birders are watching feeding stations from the comfort of heated rooms and cozy armchairs, steaming coffee cups in hand.

Outside the frosty windows hungry birds mass on the ground and platforms or perch on suet cages, busily packing in life-sustaining calories to stoke the furnaces in their tiny bodies. Everyone is watching the reports from the lakes, hoping for the appearance of a scarce gull, grebe, loon or waterfowl. During the lulls we have time to process the events of the past year, inventory lists and goals and sketch plans for 2016.

For OKC Audubon the mission has always been very simple, to make the fun of birding available in a friendly and supportive group setting. Exchanging stories, photos and sightings, going on walks and field trips together, appreciating the beauty and wonder of nature in meeting presentations, these have always been the core of our activities. Behind the facade of this enjoyment lies a serious conservation strategy. By making nature more accessible, more widely experienced and more popular we intend to impress on the public mind a greater sense of the value of natural areas and the need for protection of diversity. As an organization we demand no work, twist no arms, make no political noise. That is left up to the will of the individual. And we are strictly egalitarian. No one is an officially recognized expert. All ID discussions are peer to peer.

Yet we can improve. More walks and field trips, more support for new members, a higher public profile, even more information on our website, all these things lie within our grasp and would ultimately be to the benefit of birds. We can think about how to cast a wider net, to build on the momentum of our many years of success. The leadership of the club stands ready to hear your ideas.

How was your CBC season? The OKC CBC led by John Shackford was once again a fun and productive event. Diane Newell had a bit of a health setback late in 2015 which was going to make it a stretch for her to host the after party as she has so beautifully done for so many years. So up stepped the Muzny family to make their beautiful home available for the festivities. Everyone outdid themselves on the dinner contributions and

produced a truly delightful evening. Thanks Patti, Sam and Brian.

I attended one other CBC, the Arnett count, as has been my habit lately. The really good news in Arnett this year was the rebound in the Bobwhite population. The spring rains were just enough to encourage lots of tender green vegetation and young insects without soaking or starving the chicks. For the past three years I have been riding with a rancher, Brandon Knowles, while he makes his rounds, feeding cattle and helping enormously to find and count birds. In prior years we have had to work hard to find even one covey of Bobwhites. This year we saw ten coveys totaling 195 birds without having to make any special effort. The milo fields were lush this year resulting in a lot of waste grain on the ground after harvest. Sandhill Cranes were unusually plentiful. We saw 2171, almost all in flyover flocks on their way to the milo fields north of town. Two good birds this year were a Scaled Quail and a Lark Bunting. The Lark Bunting was not a first for the count but the Scaled Quail was. Blue Quail, as it is called locally, wasn't entirely unexpected. I have chased reports from locals a couple of times in previous years, and Brandon had cell phone pictures of a pair he saw in June 2014. Another good bird for the count this year was a Western Grebe seen on the lake southwest of town by Eddie Stegall's team. I like the Arnett CBC because it is far enough west to give birders a chance at species like the three just mentioned as well as Mountain Bluebird, Northern Shrike, Rough-legged Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Lesser Prairie-chicken, and others.

During the first week of January, we received a report from Ernie Wilson that the Bald Eagle nest tree near NW 63rd and Douglas Blvd was being threatened by a bulldozer. This was a repeat of a similar threat in 2015 to which Neil Garrison successfully responded. Neil is the right person to call with eagle nest questions and concerns as he monitors Bald Eagle nests in the OKC area for the Sutton Center. Neil was contacted last week and made an investigation. Through a scope he was able to determine that a new road was being dozed along the river and about 150 yards from the tree. A sand company in the area is apparently preparing to start dredging operations. Neil stresses that it is very important not to trespass or commit any other offense against the landowner. Protection of the nest will be much easier with the landowner's cooperation. The law stipulates a radius of protection from disturbance of 200 yards during the nesting season and 100 yards otherwise. Protection for idle nests lasts for five years.

Next month we should return to the global review of the passerines, time and space permitting.

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# Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



I think the **American Kestrel** (*Falco sparverius*) has an interesting glitch about its name. We used to call it the Sparrow Hawk. When I started writing this article I assumed bird authorities had ruled that the kestrel in North America was a subpopulation of the European Kestrel, rather than a full species. But this is incorrect: the Eurasian Kestrel's Latin name

is *Falco tinnunculus*, and therefore the 2 populations are each full species. In recognition of the American Kestrel being relatively closely related to the Eurasian Kestrel, ornithologists apparently decided to call it the American Kestrel, but if I understand everything correctly, it did not dictate that the American bird had to have the common name American Kestrel. This is only a suggested name that ornithologists have apparently adopted, which is to say, if you want to call American Kestrels Sparrow Hawks, you are not violating any longstanding protocols of Linnaean nomenclature (which dictate that older names have precedence over newer names in subpopulations) although you might offend a few ornithologists by not conforming to their opinion of what to call it! Sparrow Hawk! Ah, the freedom! I would love to hear from someone who knows more about this particular case than I -- I realize I may well be out to lunch on this!

There are several things that make the American Kestrel a remarkable hawk species. For example, and unlike most hawks, there are very noticeable color differences between the sexes: the female has a reddish-brown dorsal (back) surface with barring down the back and throughout the tail, while the male does not have such barring, only a strong single, black terminal bar on the tail. The male also has bluish-gray wings, unlike the female, with its reddish-brown wings.

I have read that the male kestrel, like most male hawks, is smaller than the female, but the difference is small enough that I personally do not normally notice this in the field. It is speculated that such size differences, common between male (smaller) and female (larger) hawk species, may result in less overlap of prey size and possibly even prey base.

According to *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests* (1975, Hal H. Harrison) the kestrel builds its nests in "natural tree cavities, old flicker and pileated woodpecker holes, man-made nest boxes, nooks, crannies in eaves of buildings, rarely in the open in old nests of other birds." It usually lays 4-5 eggs, but varies from 3-7. Kestrels apparently bring in little, if any, nesting material to the nest.



When I think of the American Kestrel I almost automatically think of the Loggerhead Shrike too. Both species essentially utilize the same prey items— insects, small snakes and lizards, and small birds, and one sees them in very similar habitats. Populations of both species have had a downward trend in central Oklahoma since 1966. In the Oklahoma City Christmas Count area, the kestrel still continues to show up—at least 18 were seen on this year's count--while the shrike seems to have basically disappeared—none seen. To continue to speak of the Loggerhead Shrike, one of the very best studies on the species was done by Dr. Jack D. Tyler, professor emeritus at Cameron University in Lawton and his paper was published in the *Wilson Bulletin*, the premier ornithological publication in the country. In comparing kestrel nesting to shrike nesting, the

shrike builds an open nest in trees, rather than nesting in holes like the kestrel. Although Jack Tyler had no direct evidence in his shrike study, one hypothesis he has related to me is that the shrike eggs and young in the nest might be vulnerable to frequently being preyed upon by Common Grackles; kestrels would not be preyed upon so readily, being hole nesters. Also, being a hawk, the kestrel might be a better defender of its nest from being preyed upon by other birds than the shrike is.

I found one interesting old reference to a kestrel/shrike interaction, from a long time ago. (continued on page 7)



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# Minutes of the Meeting

December 21, 2015 Meeting Minutes

President Bill Diffin called the meeting to order at 7:10PM. There were 30 members present.

The minutes for the November meeting were approved as published in the Dec. newsletter.

Treasurer report was approved as read showing a balance of \$5,460.34.

The slate of officers for 2016 presented at the November meeting were Bill Diffin, Pres.; John Shackford, Vice Pres.; Sharon Henthorn, Recording Secretary; Nancy Vicars, Treasurer; and Ted Goulden, Parliamentarian. A motion was made to vote by a single voice vote for the entire slate. The slate was approved unanimously by the members present.

John Shackford, Christmas count compiler, thanked Cheryl Allen, Patti, Sam and Brian Muzny for all their contributions to again make our annual Christmas count party another HUGE success. The total of 115 species represented another outstanding count. It is also possible that additional birds can be added when all the count party lists are submitted.

Jimmy Woodard announced the following upcoming Christmas counts that could use more volunteers; Elkhart, KS on Sat. Jan. 2; Kenton/Black Mesa on Sun. Jan. 3; and Arnett, OK on Mon., Jan. 4, 2016. Jimmy also reminded us that the spring OOS meeting will be held in Woodard, OK April 15-17, 2016 in conjunction with the annual Prairie Chicken Festival.

Valerie Bradshaw asked for volunteers to help at Martin Nature Park with their Winter Bird count on Sun. Jan. 17, 2016.

Warren Harden reminded us the January meeting will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday, Jan. 25, 2016. Dr. Timothy O'Connell from Stillwater will give a program on bird calling.

The business meeting was adjourned for the evening so all present could partake of the delicious, vast array of goodies provided.

The annual December meeting program, "TallTales" proved again to be a highlight of the year. This casual affair where all present share their various birding experiences was enjoyed by all participants.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Nancy Vicars, Acting Recording Secretary*

## Conservation Report: Recycle Styrofoam

*by Dave Woodson*

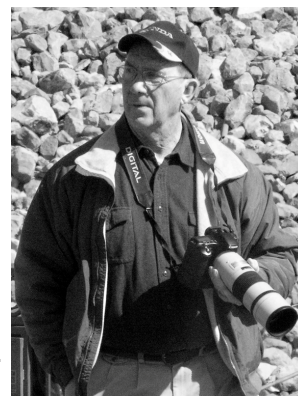
We all know the importance of recycling, yet not all items can go into curb side recycle containers -- Styrofoam is one such item is non-biodegradable. One Scientific solution uses plastic-eating worms. Since the invention of polystyrene foam in 1941 thousands of tons have polluted our environment.

In a recent Stanford News release they wrote:

"Consider the plastic foam cup. Every year, Americans throw away 2.5 billion of them. And yet, that waste is just a fraction of the 33 million tons of plastic Americans discard every year. Less than 10 percent of that total gets recycled, and the remainder presents challenges ranging from water contamination to animal poisoning."

What can we do?  
Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma accepts all CLEAN Styrofoam donations. Next time you finish with a Styrofoam container or packing material don't throw it in the trash. CLEAN, save your Styrofoam items, rinse them and drop them off at your nearest Goodwill center.

Remember, discarded polystyrene does not biodegrade for hundreds of years. So Recycle.



## REFRESHMENTS

Marion Homier will be hosting (Coffee) this month. John Bates and Nadine Varner will provide refreshments and Laura Pollard is in charge of drinks and ice.

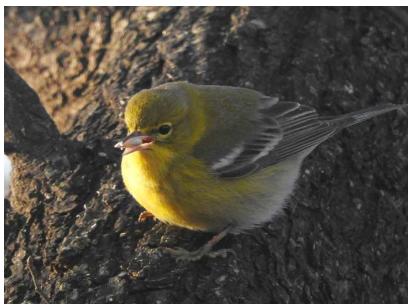
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## Christmas Bird Count 2015

Our tentative total number of species for our 2015 Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count is 116. Anything over 110 is outstanding so we did great.

This year, we had two particularly remarkable bird records on our count—the Pine Warbler and the Osprey. The Pine Warbler was found, and beautifully photographed, by Brian Marra, in Martin Nature Park, a moderate-sized preserve in the north-central part of our CBC circle. The Osprey was seen by Steve Davis and Mary Lane on the Fountains at Canterbury property, also in the north-central part of our count circle.

The Pine Warbler is an especially rewarding find: they have been seen on the Norman and Lake Arcadia Counts in the past, but we have never had a definite record on the Oklahoma City Count, although I know of 2 instances where we might have had them, but neither time it was counted because of some problems.



The Osprey was seen at a medium-sized pond near NW 122nd St. We would normally see them at our big lakes, but Steve and Mary found this one well north of our 2 large reservoirs.

What strikes me as a most interesting point about these 2 records is that neither one was seen at Lake Overholser or Lake Hefner, where we have come to expect our rarities. This shows that hard looking in areas where we do not usually expect rarities does sometimes pay off with a rarity. There is also something of a correlation between the many hours spent looking and the number of unusual birds. So to all you people who may feel that your areas are a little “ho-hum” for rarities, take heart—you never know where and when to expect the unexpected. Thanks for the hard work by everyone!

## Birds and Bugs

### An event not to be missed

Why would birders be concerned about a decline in Monarch Butterflies, bees and other pollinators since birds don't usually eat them? The connection is found in the plant process of creating seeds that birds eat. These seeds are quite often created as the flowers of the plants are pollinated by these creatures while they move from flower to flower sipping nectar. So how can birders help the pollinators that feed the birds?

The 2016 annual Oklahoma Native Plant Society Indoor/Outing is shaping up to be an event you won't want to miss. This year's timely topic will be **Monarch, Pollinators and Natives**. The keynote speaker will be Chip Taylor, who is the internationally recognized and respected founder of Monarch Watch. He is also the leading voice for Monarch Butterfly conservation in the country. Joining him will be speakers from OSU, the National Wildlife Federation, a multi-tribal restoration coordinator and local native landscapers.



This event will be held on Saturday, **February 6th, 2016** from 9:00am to 3:30 pm at the OSU-OKC campus on 900 N Portland in Oklahoma City, OK 73107-6195. Online registration is available.

Or further information about the Oklahoma Native Plant Society and this event check :  
<http://www.oknativeplants.org>

This year's speakers are dynamic; the program should be very enjoyable and insightful. Please mark your calendars, bring a friend and join them!

## Recorders Report

### Planning for next summer

As birds are busy snacking on seeds in our winter feeders, it is time to plan our yards and gardens to create a natural environment for the next food crop for birds both in our yards and beyond. A day-long symposium about Monarch Butterflies, pollinators, and native plants is being hosted by the Oklahoma Native Plant Society on Saturday, February 6, 2016 at the OSU -OKC campus. For further information see <https://oknativeplants.wordpress.com/>

On the 1<sup>st</sup> Larry Mays was rolling south with the homeward bound rush hour traffic on I-44 when he looked up and saw a single goose flying south alongside the interstate between SW 104<sup>th</sup> and SW 119<sup>th</sup>. "How strange" he thought, "to see a lone goose". But as he came alongside it, he was really surprised to discover it was a SWAN! His rough guess was a Trumpeter, but it was never seen again to confirm the identity.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Rachel Wren spotted an Eastern Towhee at the Little River State Park which was seen several times during the month. On the 4<sup>th</sup> Janet Landry noticed a Chipping Sparrow near Newcastle, while Larry Mays reported an American Tree Sparrow and a flock of Smith's Longspur at Lake Stanley Draper. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Brian Muzny's bike riding companions spotted an adult Bald Eagle in a tree in the vicinity of I-40 and Agnew in Oklahoma City.



On the 6<sup>th</sup> Bill Talbert had a Ferruginous Hawk east of I-35 in Purcell. Sharon Henthorn birded several places around Oklahoma City and at Lake Hefner she found a variety of ducks, Pied-billed Grebes, dozens of Red-breasted Mergansers, Horned Grebes and Common Loons. Matt Jung also birded the area and found Hooded Mergansers, Franklin's Gull, and Song Sparrow while in Norman Jennifer Kidney had a male Purple Finch at her ground feeder.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> Dylan Hopkins spotted a Ferruginous Hawk near Calumet. On the 9<sup>th</sup> Joe Grzybowski noticed Greater White-fronted Goose and Cackling Goose on some flats east of Chickasha in Grady County. Jennifer located a Merlin perched on a utility pole on Wylie Road across from Rotary Park in Norman. Later she surprised a Brown Thrasher picking around in the leaves in the corner of her yard. On the 12<sup>th</sup> in Payne County Scott

Loss identified a Rusty Blackbird at Whittenberg Park, and Caitlin Laughlin discovered Short-eared Owl west of Walmart.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> Deb Hirt had a Purple Finch at Boomer Lake Park in Stillwater. On the 15<sup>th</sup> Joe Grzybowski saw a Red-breasted Nuthatch in Norman. On the 16<sup>th</sup> Larry Mays birded Kingfisher County and located 13 new species for that county's year list including Hooded Merganser, Horned Grebe, Sandhill Crane, and House Wren, plus another sighting of Lapland Longspur. Jason Shaw found a Northern Pintail at Alex Marsh in Grady County. On the 18<sup>th</sup> Zach Poland spotted an American Tree Sparrow in Logan County, and Deanne McKinney discovered a Common Loon at Lake Overholser in Canadian County.



On the 19<sup>th</sup> during the Stillwater CBC at Lake Carl Blackwell Tim O'Connell located American Tree Sparrow, L Conte's Sparrow, and Lincoln's Sparrow. He also picked up Great Horned Owls, Barred Owls, and Eastern Screech-owls. Interestingly, on the Oklahoma City CBC there were five species reported that were not reported in all of central Oklahoma during the month in eBird: Greater Scaup, Great Egret, Osprey, Marsh Wren, and Orange-crowned Warbler. How many other species are missing from each of the 12 counties report each month?

On the 20<sup>th</sup> Eric Duel located Smith's Longspur and Rusty Blackbird in Kingfisher County southeast of Hennessey, Esther Key had a flock of Hooded Mergansers at Elmore City Lake; and Bob Ellis discovered a Greater White-fronted Goose at Rose Lake. On the 21<sup>st</sup> Susan Thompson added Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Pine Warbler just west of the Shawnee Reservoir to the Pottawatomie County list. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> Chad Ellis identified a Virginia Rail at Lake Overholser's Route 66 Park. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> Jason Shaw saw a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the USAO Habitat Area Upper Pond, and on the 24<sup>th</sup> T K spotted a Black Vulture at Lake Thunderbird.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> Deanne McKinney saw an Eared Grebe at Lake Overholser in Canadian County. On the 28<sup>th</sup> Larry Mays spotted an American Tree Sparrow in his yard in McClain County, and Martin Fee had Brewer's Blackbird near the Yukon Water Treatment Pond. On the 29<sup>th</sup> T K identified a Lesser Black-backed Gull at Lake Hefner. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Zach located a Greater Yellowlegs at Liberty

*Continued on page 7*



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## Recorder's Report (cont.)

Lake in Logan County. TK found an American Tree Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, and Swamp Sparrow at the Natural History Museum field in Norman. Corey Riding saw a Prairie Flacon, Le Conte's Sparrow, and American Tree Sparrow at Lake Carl Blackwell. On the 31<sup>st</sup> Eric Duell identified a Snow Goose, Brewer's Blackbird and Hermit Thrush in Crosley in Kingfisher County.

From Antarctica to Australia over all 7 continents Noah Strycker ended his birding adventure for 2015 by photographing a rare owl in India. His total number of bird species for 2015 was **6,042**. What birding adventures await us in 2016 as we journey with our feathered friends?



## Count Your Birds for the GBBC



In the Central Oklahoma area **134** bird species were reported in December leaving the year's total at **287**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds and can be contacted by e-mail at [emkok@earthlink.net](mailto:emkok@earthlink.net). Esther M. Key, Editor.

## Bird of the Month (cont.)

In the Sutton *Summaries of Oklahoma Species* [1982], Sutton writes: "November 7, 1883, one [kestrel] observed chasing a shrike near Caddo (Cooke, 1914: 450)". (The name of W. W. Cooke's article is "Some winter birds of Oklahoma." Auk, 31:473-93; Caddo is a town in Bryan County, Oklahoma, north of Durant). From this one anecdotal incident the suggestion is that the kestrel may dominate the shrike in any direct confrontations, and this might even extend to kestrels not tolerating shrikes well in their territories. The spacing between these 2 species in a particular area, as well as different spacing during different times of year, would be an interesting point for future observation/research.

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 140,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

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

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

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

	Dec	Nov	Oct	Sept	Aug	June	May	April	March	Feb	Jan
12 Seminole	125	125	118	118	118	116	116	116	064	055	048
11 Lincoln	127	127	127	125	126	101	100	095	064	057	005
10 Grady	130	125	122	121	121	104	098	091	068	049	019
09 Garvin	130	130	130	130	130	128	123	091	075	019	000
08 McClain	134	133	127	126	125	118	111	085	068	059	045
07 Kingfisher	136	119	119	119	119	107	099	072	072	041	041
06 Pottawatomie	136	134	131	131	130	129	129	105	076	044	035
05 Logan	168	166	163	155	148	147	140	118	101	087	053
04 Canadian	203	199	196	194	193	187	184	162	105	083	067
03 Payne	243	242	241	239	237	237	236	207	134	114	098
02 Cleveland	245	243	240	240	239	241	239	201	145	119	111
01 Oklahoma	248	243	242	241	237	233	228	199	143	128	115