



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

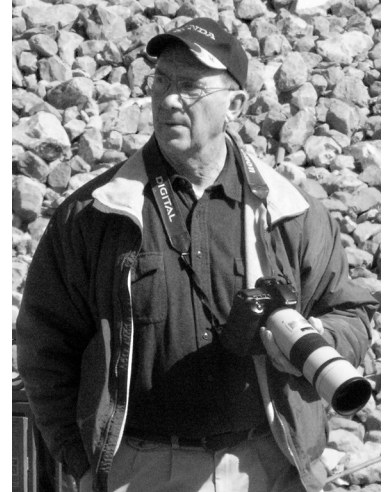
OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

June, 2014

Dave Woodson: Wildlife Photography

“One of the most enjoyable pastimes is being outdoors where one can view and enjoy nature.” says OCAS member Dave Woodson. Dave will be the featured presenter at the June 16 meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society.

Photography and Birding are two of his many hobbies. He considers himself an amateur birder and photographer attempting to hone his skills. He currently uses a Canon 7D with a 300 mm lens for wildlife photography and enjoys the challenge of capturing birds in their natural habit. Photos are useful in identifying unknown flora and fauna. These two hobbies provide both satisfaction and frustration. “Satisfaction is when the Bird stays long enough to be photographed, frustration occurs at various times such as when the camera settings are wrong or when someone says “It’s right there in that tree” and you locate it just as it flies!” Dave adds.



For 31 years Dave and Sue Woodson lived and worked in the Maryland / Washington D.C. area. In 1998 Sue and Dave retired, sold their home, stored some possessions and planned to travel and live in their RV for a year. “After that first year, we were still friends, had not divorced and truly enjoyed being ‘homeless.’” They continued to travel for 13 years before settling in OKC.

After retiring, Birding sounded like a good pastime activity since all one needs is a pair of binoculars and a bird book. Their first birding field trip was in Tucson, AZ where they meet a group at the San Pedro River. Their second bird outing was in Flagstaff, AZ with a local Audubon group at their man-made wetlands. They were novices and very happy the people there helped locate and identify those transient splendors.

They found that Birding is addictive! In their travels to various towns they sought out local birding groups and asked to join their outings. They find most birders are friendly, welcome new people and are willing to share their knowledge and expertise. The Tuesday morning outing, once led by Nancy Vicars, was a primary reason for joining the OKC Audubon Society.

Dave has been asked several times, “What is your favorite bird?”

“My answer is always, ‘The next one I see!’”

Join us Monday, June 16 at 7 p.m. for an enjoyable evening of birders. Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month. Meetings are held at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 & NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



For the last several years we have had a club picnic in June. It has been a popular event, and it's not hard to see why. Everyone brings a dish or dessert of some kind, and the delicious array truly makes a delightful meal. As for entertainment, you get to sip on a cool beverage while watching an eager volunteer

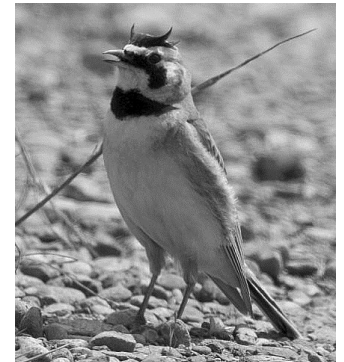
cook hamburgers and hot dogs on a charcoal grill in what is usually the first real heat of the summer. The conversation is great. What could be better? If you decide to come, consult the web site for signup instructions, or just give me or Pat Velte an email or phone call.

Last month we began an investigation of the 'nine-primaried oscines' in the superfamily, Passeroidea. Let's begin by reviewing the currently recognized major families: finches and typical grosbeaks (Fringillidae); longspurs and snow buntings (Calcariidae); wood warblers (Parulidae); sparrows and Old World buntings (Emberizidae); blackbirds, cowbirds, grackles, meadowlarks and orioles (Icteridae); cardinals, American buntings, cardinal-grosbeaks and North American tanagers (Cardinalidae); Neotropical tanagers, spindalises, seedeaters, "quits" for example Bananaquit and most Neotropical "finches" (Thraupidae).

The single character which is most typical of the 'nine-primaried oscines' is a stout, often conical bill used for eating seeds, nuts or fruit. Birders will quickly recall this as a feature of many locally common groups of NPO birds, e.g. finches, typical grosbeaks like the Evening Grosbeak, the Northern Cardinal, the cardinal grosbeaks like the Blue Grosbeak and the sparrows. Many members of the NPO which are not seed eaters nevertheless have large, strong-looking bills or sharply-pointed triangular bills with a recognizable similarity to the bills of the seed eaters, e.g. cowbirds like the Brown-headed



Cowbird <http://goo.gl/MwNPqv>, cardinal tanagers like the Summer Tanager <http://goo.gl/cu3vFT> and orioles like the Altamira Oriole <http://goo.gl/cdxp6F>. World wide most birds with conical bills that are not in NPO are in other branches of Passeroidea, the superfamily which ultimately concerns us in the current discussion per last month's article. Typical of these birds would be the sparrows in family Passeridae, for example the House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow <http://goo.gl/joHnwf> and White-winged Snowfinch <http://goo.gl/WFPSXw>; the estrildid finches and waxbills in family Estrildidae, for example the Gouldian Finch <http://goo.gl/VlfElv> and Zebra Waxbill <http://goo.gl/hyYCDM>; and the weavers in family Ploceidae, for example the Red-billed Quelea <http://goo.gl/IDfCCZ> and Orange Bishop <http://goo.gl/r4y5Ft>. Outside of the passeroids, there are a few groups of seed-eating passerines in the Sylvioidea which have stout bills. Most noteworthy are the parrotbills, a group of Old World warblers, for example the Spot-breasted Parrotbill <http://goo.gl/55BjQf>, Golden Parrotbill <http://goo.gl/J1OGvP>, and Brown Parrotbill <http://goo.gl/7PNsuj>. This last looks much like the Wrentit <http://goo.gl/ZTRRti> of the far western U.S. which is a close relative but with a more typical sylvioid warbler bill. The other group within Sylvioidea specialized on seed eating are the larks in family, Alaudidae, exemplified by a local bird, the Horned Lark (or Shore Lark in Europe) <http://goo.gl/Tflmr8>. Some members of the Alaudidae have developed strong, thick bills, for example the Calandra Lark <http://goo.gl/E0e1Sd> and most notably the Thick-billed Lark <http://goo.gl/5NWRmj>.



In September we will examine how extensive is the presence of the strong, conical bill in the passeroid birds including the Neotropical tanagers.

Reminder

Our June 16 meeting will be our last meeting before the summer break. Our next scheduled meeting will be Monday, September 15.

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



The **Cattle Egret** (*Bubulcus ibis*), is probably the most common heron in Oklahoma today. According to Cornell University's website on birds, the Cattle Egret was found, originally, only in Africa, then "somehow reached northeastern South America in 1877...

arriving in the United States in 1941...and nesting there [in U.S.] in 1953" Looking at Dr. George Sutton's Summaries of Oklahoma Birds [1982], the first report of the Cattle Egret in Oklahoma was about 1962.

I believe it is accurate to say that all egrets are herons, but not all herons are egrets. The difference between the two is somewhat inexact, so trying to pin the difference down is difficult: as a general rule, egrets are white or mostly white and most of them have large plumes somewhere on parts of the head, neck or back during the breeding season, but not all year long. There are enough exceptions to these rules that these are not very satisfying categories, so let's just move on.

Thinking that the Bethany heronry would support my belief that Cattle Egrets were the most common heron here in the Oklahoma City area, I went there on 24 May 2014: I wanted to give (a) the exact directions to the heronry, (b) that heronry's composition of birds, and (c) what was going on there. Exact directions to getting there are to go to NW 10th and N. Council Road, at this intersection go west on NW 10th for one-tenth of a mile, turn south (left) at the large Thousand Oaks sign on the south side of the road and go one-tenth mile south into the Thousand Oaks entrance, and park at the wide spot in the road there. You will be in the heart of the heronry, indicated by dead oaks in the immediate vicinity. I would point out that this destination makes for an easy, cheap (doesn't take much gas) and informative "field trip".

I arrived about 4:25 pm and stayed until 5:34 pm, when it started raining (YES!) Immediately, upon arriving, I saw a small white egret—either a Snowy or Cattle Egret—picking up a stick on the ground. Then I noticed other Snowy and Cattle Egrets on the ground. At 4:27 I saw a Great Egret flying by, then saw a Great

Egret rearranging sticks at its nest. I counted Great Egret nests readily evident and saw at least 38 nests; these nests were about 30-40 feet above ground and in dead trees. After 15 minutes or so of observing and one (and only) time stepping out of my car (like I say, this is an easy field trip), I estimated that there were \pm 100 Great Egret nests, where they had primarily staked out nests in dead oaks in the center of the heronry; most of these nests appeared to have young. Other species of herons observed in the middle of the heronry that day were 6-10 Snowy Egrets, 5-7 Black-crowned Night-Heron, and 2 Little Blue Herons, only a small sample, I believe, of all the herons nesting close by. These 4 species of herons had claimed the prime sites in the heart of the heronry. Some 30-40 Cattle Egrets I saw that day were on the ground toward the periphery—rather than the middle—of the heronry. In fact, and to my surprise, I never saw an actual Cattle Egret nest as I casually looked for them from my central vantage point within the heronry, although I did



see a number of Cattle Egrets searching for twigs on the ground. A couple of times I saw Cattle Egrets pick up small twigs that still had green leaves on them, but the egrets dropped them and did not fly off to build nests with them. The Cattle Egrets, I suspect, were nesting in oak trees that were still alive on the periphery of the heronry, where it would have been more difficult for me to see nests among the leaves. An additional problem was that parking in much of the area where Cattle Egrets seemed to be most active was not safe, based on the traffic in and out of Thousand Oaks homes area, so I did not risk parking there.

I found it interesting that the colony did not appear to be extremely top-heavy with Cattle Egrets. It was several years ago when I last visited this heronry, and at that time I remember thinking that some of the other heron species did not seem to be doing that poorly, relative to the Cattle Egret population.

As an afterthought while writing this column I looked up Patuxent Maryland Breeding Bird Survey data for Cattle Egret in Oklahoma and found the trend data (this is different from population data) was +7.8%/yr. from 1966-2010, and -4.5%/yr. a year from 2000-2010. These data appear to correlate well with my anecdotal observations and suggest that the Cattle Egret is presently experiencing a fairly steep decline in Oklahoma.

Minutes of the Meeting

May 19, 2014

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Diffin.

Warren Harding provided a teaching demonstration about the parts and functions of a feather.

Guests: Carol Pierce from South Carolina, C.B. Elder

Committee Reports:

Treasurer Nancy Vicars reported \$6323 in our bank account.

Professor Doug Wood received a stipend for last month's presentation to cover the cost of travel.

Field trip leader Marc DelGrosso again asks any who may be interested in the Kansas trip on May 24-26 to the Quivira NWR. He needs to know if any members will be meeting him there.

Conservation committee chairman Dave Woodson reports that the CityCare 2014 festival at Crystal Lake will take place June 7-8. Volunteers are welcomed.

New business: Variations of possible business cards design were voted on by the group. There were significantly more votes placed for the vertical option #5 than for any other options. This version will be used and map details will be modified before printing.

Annual OCAS picnic is scheduled June 14 and will take place at the home of Patti Muzny. Signup details are on the OCAS website.

Program presentation was given by Jim Solorio of Tony Solorio's amazing photography of Oklahoma wildlife. Tony does the photography and Jim's work allows them both to travel all over the state. Tony also was the photographer of the south polar skua last summer at Lake Overholser that was submitted to eBird and created such excitement for its rarity.

Next meeting will be Monday, June 16. There will be no meetings during the months of July and August.

Secretary Sharon Henthorn



Refreshments

Refreshments for the June meeting will be provided by Terri Underhill, Carol Enwall, and Marion Homier.

Welcome!

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes new members:

Debi Moore, Wetumka, OK

Stephen Parker, OKC, OK

Deanne McKinney, OKC, OK

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2014

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	Doug Eide	495-8192
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

McGee Creek and McCurtain County Wilderness Trip Report

By Mark Delgrosso

Here it is Spring again - a birder's favorite time of the year. When birders in Oklahoma aren't dodging golf-ball-sized hailstones, scurrying to shelter from storms and tornadoes, or listening to/watching the weather forecasts and Doppler radar imagery, we are out and about enjoying otherwise perfect weather and the awakening of life after winter. This is when I make my annual pilgrimage to the southeast of our state - to the McGee Creek Wildlife Management Area, near Atoka. I discovered this place and about a year after moving here and have been going ever since (though that's only about 3 years). I admired its out-of-the-wayness and its wild quality. There is a gravel road taking you into the heart of this primitive area and miles and miles of dirt and half-paved roads just to arrive at its entrance.

I have always had good birding luck here and this year (first weekend of May) was no exception. This is a great place for Prairie Warblers and their little up-slurred *dzee dzee dzee dzee dzee* songs sound all around from the scrubby pines and oaks. Another specialty of this place, though I've not had luck with it



myself, is the Bachman's Sparrow (though Mark Howery apparently encountered this species the week before). I have, in the past, seen troops of Brown-headed

Nuthatches as well. This year's big surprise was an adult Peregrine Falcon, apparently on its way elsewhere. And then there are McGee Creek's regulars: bluebirds, chats, Blue Grosbeaks, Indigos, Summer Tanagers, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Pine Warblers, Cardinals, gnatcatchers, and, at night, copious Chuck-wills-widows.



This year I planned on making the effort to go farther east to the McCurtain Co. Wilderness Area, a new locale for me. For this I was joined by the Pollards who made the long trek from Edmond. We met up with state wildlife technician Clay Barnes, who sacrificed a good portion of his Saturday to escort us through the area.

This underpaid yet enthusiastic wildlife staffer went above and beyond in taking us through the wilderness. Our first stop was a Red-cockaded Woodpecker nesting tree where a mating pair were busy going about their affairs. They had eggs in their cavity and were apparently gearing up for the onslaught of hungry young. And speaking of gearing up, Clay did just that and demonstrated what he spends most of his waking hours doing - climbing pine trees and tending to the woodpecker's nest-holes. Maintaining endangered species is work!

After the woodpeckers Clay motored us across a lake inlet and led us to the site of a Bald Eagle nest. Sure enough, the



adults spotted us and began circling over the forest canopy. They eventually settled side-by-side on a tree-top snag and afforded us fantastic, unrushed observations. At least 2 chicks were spotted in the nest itself. The day, getting on and getting hot, saw us eventually head back across the lake and out of the wilds.

Recorders Report – May 2014

The Most Birdy Report

It appears more birds were reported this month than any other month on record. Not that the birds haven't been here, but rather more people are sharing their sightings. It all started with Payne County's Big Day with over 100 species reported by different groups. Then more shorebirds, warblers, and flycatchers arrived to add to the list. Surprise sightings at Lake Thunderbird, Rose Lake and Lake Hefner led to other surprises and some incredible reports.

On April 27th Joe Grzybowski identified **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** at the Goldsby Sod Farm. On the 3rd Tamara Srader's parents had a **Lazuli Bunting** in their Lincoln County yard, while Tony Solorio and Jim saw a **Sora Rail** at Lake Stanley Draper. Jimmy Woodard and Nadine explored Joe B. Barnes Park in Midwest City and located Wood Duck, Black-crowned Night Heron, and White-eyed Vireo. Meanwhile on Big Bird Day, around Payne County Tim O'Connell had Yellow-headed Blackbird, **Acadian Flycatcher**, **Prairie Warbler**, and **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** while in Stillwater Brandy Polo found an **Eastern Wood-Pewee** when she, John and Natalia put in a good 20 miles birding on their bicycles.

On the 4th Jimmy spent the morning birding Logan County and noticed Eared Grebe, Horned Lark, Redhead, and Snowy Plover, while Hal Yocum discovered a Hairy Woodpecker at Rose Lake. On the 5th Jimmy had a first year male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** in his Midwest City Yard, and James Hubbell had a **Yellow-breasted Chat** at Stinchcomb WMA east gate. On the 6th Jason Shaw identified an American Kestrel in the USAO Habitat Area in Grady County.



On the 7th Ricky Jones saw a Peregrine Falcon at Rose Lake, and Chad Ellis had a **Common Nighthawk** near Lake Overholser. On the 8th Dick Gunn found a Wilson's Phalarope and **Wilson's**

Warbler along South Jenkins, and Jimmy momentarily had a male **Black-headed Grosbeak** in

his yard. Joe stopped by the Goldsby Sod Farms and ran into a group of about 30 **Bobolinks** singing up a simultaneous symphony.

On the 9th Larry Mays identified three **Whimbrels** at the north end of Lake Overholser, and Scott Loss spotted a Yellow-throated Vireo in Couch Park in Stillwater. On the 10th T K found an American Woodcock at Lake Thunderbird's Little River Marina, and at Lake Overholser Bob Ellis had a **Caspian Tern**. On the 11th Will Foster discovered a **Brown Pelican** on a boat dock near the Calypso Cove Café on the south side of Lake Thunderbird. The next day Joe also discovered 2 or 3 **Laughing Gulls**, Bank Swallows, **Black Terns** and a Forster's Tern. Steve Davis and Mary saw 11 White-faced Ibis at Rose Lake, and Calvin Rees photographed the Bald Eagles at the NE 63rd Street Bridge nesting area.

On the 13th John Polo heard a **Wood Thrush** singing on some OSU property in Payne County, later he heard an Ovenbird at Lake Carl Blackwell and after work he found an **American Redstart** and **Blackpoll Warbler** at Babcock Park. At Rose Lake Deanne McKinney identified a Black-necked Stilt and over 500 Wilson's Phalarope.

On the 14th Scott Loss checked out the Kameoka Trail on the north end of Boomer Lake which produced a few migrants including **Blackburnian Warbler**, American Redstart, Wilson's, Nashville, and Orange-crowned Warbler. At Babcock Park in Stillwater Evan Tanner spotted an **Alder Flycatcher** and Torre Hovick had a **Gray-cheeked Thrush**. At Lake Stanley Draper, Larry Mays had a **Northern Waterthrush**.

Meanwhile at Lake Hefner's Prairie Dog Point Sharon Henthorn noticed a **Red-necked Phalarope** among the other shorebirds and fishermen. While checking it out Bill Diffin saw **Least Tern** and Hudsonian Godwit, and the next day Kevin Groeneweg found Black-bellied Plover, Willet, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Sanderling**, and **White-rumped Sandpiper**.

On the 17th In Seminole County Mary and Lou Truex located an **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**, **Alder/Willow (Traill's Flycatcher)**, Black Vulture and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Evan Tanner had a **Philadelphia Vireo** at Boomer Lake Park in Stillwater; Tim O'Connell had a Kentucky Warbler and Prairie Warbler at Lake Carl Blackwell; and Jonah Padberg had a Lazuli Bunting in their Logan County yard. On the

18th Jimmy birded Garvin County and beyond. At Paul's Valley Lake he located Least Tern, Loggerhead Shrike, Prothonotary Warbler, Grasshopper Sparrow; at Lake R.C. Longmire he found Black Tern, Tree Swallow, Cattle Egret; and in Midwest City a **Tennessee Warbler**. At Lake Hefner Bill Diffin found a Dunlin and heard a Prothonotary Warbler.

On the 21st Larry Mays found a Yellow-throated Warbler in McClain County. On the 22nd, Chad Ellis had a **Canada Warbler** at Martin Park Nature Center. Deanne McKinney reported Eastern Screech Owls are probably nesting in the vicinity of her Oklahoma City neighborhood. On the 26th Dora Webb was sitting on her patio listening to a Swainson's Thrush when a fox ran through her yard. At Rose Lake on the 27th Matt Jung observed a Wood Duck with 5 ducklings and several Black Terns; the end of migration and the beginning of fledglings. How many nests will successfully fledge a new generation of birds this summer?

In the Central Oklahoma area **204** bird species were reported in May with **36** new species which brings the total for the year to **278**. In eBird; Oklahoma, Payne and Cleveland Counties are over 200 species but 4 central Oklahoma counties are still under 100. 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.

Chirpings

The Mockingbirds

By Patti Muzny

A world without Mockingbirds would be a dismal world indeed. I don't think I could handle their absence very well. We have been picked by a pair of impudent Mockingbirds that I can't imagine living without. Throughout the bitter cold days of winter they stationed themselves under the heat lamp we provided and waited for pecans and raisins. When the weather improved, we quit offering the messy pecans and only put out a few raisins in the morning, at noon and in the evenings. These birds had us trained.

Now if the raisins don't appear on the patio table by around 7:00 AM, they make their displeasure known by perching on the back of my lounge chair, flipping their tails and scolding while looking into

the den window at us. As the weeks flew by, we were operating on their schedule and one of us always had raisins out at least three times a day.

When my schedule permits my favorite place to be is on the back patio



watching morning approach while I sip my cup of coffee. One morning I was sitting in a chair with my feet on the patio table when one of the Mockingbirds landed on the edge of it and peaked around the potted geranium at me. It was only slightly startled and gingerly hopped down onto the patio to flip its tail and glare at me. I got up and went into the kitchen to get a few more raisins while it waited. I put out the raisins and before I could clear the kitchen door, it had swooped down and started gobbling. For days we followed this scenario and I enjoyed every minute of it.

Then one day the raisins weren't eaten and I noticed a male Cardinal eating them. I knew the mockers had fledged some young because I would hear the youngsters begging to be fed in the yard next to ours. Then I realized the exuberant singing had also ceased to echo through the neighborhood. For about a week our yard was strangely quiet and I was beginning to be concerned as to the well-being of my raisin-munching feathered friends. After all, there is the pair of Cooper's Hawks that nest across the street. And there is the fact that I saw the male Cooper's zip across our front yard with a bird clutched in its talons. I think it was one of our many doves. I willed it to be so, anyway!

A few days later, I suddenly heard a burst of "mocking" song from every available perch! The Mockingbird seemed to be everywhere. The Mockingbird is still singing, but does not come for raisins as often. All appears to be well in SW Oklahoma City.

Over the Memorial Day weekend, we escaped the

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

Chirpings

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city and headed for our McClain County property. It was cloudy and cool – perfect weather for being out in the country. Although we have not had runoff rain in our area and our pond is critically low, we have had nice slow rains, so the pasture is beautiful and green and the wildflowers are everywhere. Bees are buzzing and birds are singing. And speaking of birds...I managed to be in the right place at the right time to observe a pair of Painted Buntings performing the first step in raising a brood of another generation. I saw a flash of green and raised my binoculars just in time to see the second flash of green, red, blue and all of the hues in between that make the male Painted Bunting a spectacular specimen of color. I had located his mate and he had just flown in to mate with her. Pretty cool.

In front of the cabin there is a dead branch that seems to be the favorite of our Phoebe, Bluebirds and Painted Bunting. Each of these species takes turns and uses this perch to watch for an easy meal in the short grass below the branch. During this weekend, the Painted Buntings seemed to be the most vocal, although the White-breasted Nuthatches weren't exactly quiet. I spent several hours just watching the activity on and around that branch. If it ever falls, I wonder if we can glue it back up there?

I slept out on the screen porch so I could hear morning explode into song. I was not disappointed. The first burst of song before dawn each morning was that of the Cardinal, followed a few seconds later by the Chuck-will's Widow. They seemed to compete as to which one could sing the loudest. Before long the "Porch Phoebe" joined in and it was difficult to hear much of anything else. The Painted Buntings can hold their own with the Phoebe, tho. The Eastern Bluebirds are pretty quiet, probably due to the fact that the female is incubating a nest box full of eggs.

The butterfly weed (chigger weed) plants were blooming and a nice variety of flying insects and butterflies collected on each plant. The Indian Paintbrush and Coneflowers also attracted nectar feeding creatures. These spring events don't really last that long, but quite the natural show is available to those of us who enjoy getting away from our concrete jungles.
