



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

May 2015

Eagles and Indians

George "Crickett" Shields will be the guest presenter at the May 18 meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society.



George will talk about the relationship (in generic terms) between the Native American people and the eagle. Native Americans use this bird and its feathers not just as decoration and dance regalia, but also for many different healing type ceremonies. One explanation that George will use will be quite complicated but will reveal an intelligent use in spiritual terms that most observers will hopefully be able to relate to.

George "Crickett" Shields, Pawnee, Otoe and Sioux, was raised by his parents and grandparents in a way that affords him knowledge of his Native American traditional practices. He has been a dancer, singer and member of many different groups that use "the old ways." Presently, George works as the Director of the Putnam City Schools Department of Indian Education.

Come out, bring a friend and enjoy the presentation and the usual camaraderie. We will begin at 7 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 & NW 36th Street.

Club Picnic

The date for our annual picnic this year is **June 6**, and the location is the back yard of the Muzny residence at 8516 S. Olie Avenue. As usual the club is supplying hamburgers and hot dogs, charcoal, buns, paper plates and cups, napkins, tablecloths, plastic ware, salt and pepper, soda and ice. Participants will make a meal contribution also. The size of the contribution should approximate the cost of a picnic meal for the attendees in your party. We'll add the online signup form to our website in early June. It will show what others plan to bring and how many people will be attending. The official start time for the picnic is 5 pm. That is when we will start cooking the hamburgers and hot dogs. As usual you may arrive at 4 pm to set up your chairs, lay out your dish, relax, socialize and watch the cooking crew get ready to charcoal the hamburgers.

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



If you know bird vocalizations well enough to identify the birds that breed in Oklahoma, you should consider signing up to do a Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) route. The contact and signup information were published on OKbirds. The BBS protocol consists of a repeated drive, stop, observe and listen sequence on a set route. This protocol is the best way

to track long term changes in breeding bird populations along the route. The key qualification for most of our members is an ability to hear in the high frequency range above 5 kHz (kilohertz). The aging process as well as exposure to industrial sounds tend to blunt high frequency hearing ability. Good hearing in the high frequency range is needed to hear the songs of the following birds well enough to do the survey: Grasshopper Sparrow, Cassin's Sparrow, Horned Lark, Black-and-white Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Kingbird, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and Northern Parula. Good high range hearing is also needed to detect many species by their high call notes, good examples being the species just listed as well as Carolina Chickadee, Northern Cardinal, Field Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Eastern Meadowlark and Brown-headed Cowbird. How good your hearing really has to be is an open question.

Some of the routes have not been surveyed in years, so presumably some kind of survey would be better than none. To help with the decision you could try listening to recordings of the aforementioned species on the xeno-canto.org website. If you have some minor hearing loss and are willing to survey one of the poorly attended routes, it might be worth asking the coordinators about participation. If the hearing of your youth is still intact, consider yourself a very hot property for this survey.

Did you read Nathan Kuhnert's thoughtful and informative article on birding ethics in last month's newsletter? I support his suggestion to publish a statement of the ethics that we should try and uphold. We ought to be able to agree on some minimum standards for avoiding unnecessary disturbance and stress to birds. There is nothing binding or inviolable about an ethics statement of this kind. However it would help members, especially new members, to know where majority opinion draws the boundary between necessity and excess in activities like flushing birds for identification or playing song recordings to draw breeding males in for photos.

After a one-month break for discussion of Lincoln's vs. Song Sparrow ID, we have space this month to return to exploration of how well an understanding of the local

passerine birds can be extended to the passerines worldwide.

From last June to December we looked at the widespread occurrence of a conical bill shape throughout the Passeroidea superfamily. In January and February we digressed to consider three examples of bill shape as an indicator of kinship within some large phylogenetic groupings, i.e. the parrots order; the three-order group containing the hornbills, kingfishers and woodpeckers; and the three-order group containing the cranes, herons and storks. In March we learned that a recently published study of avian phylogenetics (Jarvis et al., 2014) places the order containing the shorebirds and their allies as closest kin to the order containing the cranes, rails and their allies.

The review of each superfamily in this series has included an investigation of song and call types with an attempt to draw some generalizations that might be useful in identification of unknown birds observed in foreign lands. Let's start that study in the Passeroidea superfamily with the Zebra Finch, an Australian member of the estrildid finch family, Estrildidae (formerly a



subfamily of Passeridae). The Zebra Finch has been the subject of scientific research on the development of song in growing male birds. There is some illuminating detail in the section titled, "Song and other vocalizations", in the Wikipedia article at the following link, <http://goo.gl/uELGIR>. Here is a recording of the calls, <http://goo.gl/piwV2p>. Note the buzzy, kazoo-like quality. The only recordings of the song I could find are on youtube videos of caged birds. After listening to several, I am convinced the songs are authentic, passed on from adult to juvenile. Here are three videos, <https://goo.gl/ILJyQ8>, <https://goo.gl/KKiKbG>, <https://goo.gl/b6F3yh>. The songs include some buzzy call notes as well as some emphatic chips. You may recognize the buzzy quality as a feature of House Finch vocalizations as in these calls, <http://goo.gl/IPwbjn> and these songs, <http://goo.gl/wEuyOt>. The buzzy song quality is also found in the corvoid vireos and certhioid gnatcatchers, so it occurs outside the passeroids in the New World at least. However buzziness might still be helpful in recognizing a subset of the passeroids, particularly in the Old World. In the following recording of Pine Siskins at a feeder, the calls are both emphatic and buzzy, <http://goo.gl/vtSfpf>. On the sonogram (access the large version by clicking on the thumbnail), the buzziness is evidenced by the wide frequency band of each call. Here is the buzzy song, <http://goo.gl/EGvD44>. More next month.

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



The **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** (*Polioptila caerulea*) is a breeding bird in most of Oklahoma, although it is decidedly rare in the Panhandle, especially in the 2 easternmost counties, Beaver and Texas counties. At 4½ inches it is one of our smallest birds, excluding hummingbirds, even though much of this length is the result of a long tail, which it flips

about as it moves through the trees. It weighs only 0.2 oz. (6 grams); thus, you could mail 5 of them on one first-class stamp (if they were flat enough!). This is the only gnatcatcher that has been found in Oklahoma.

The best description of the bird I have heard was by one of our members, Laurie MacIvor-Gillum, who saw one, amazingly, on our Christmas Bird Count a number of years ago: "It looked like a miniature mockingbird" was her description to me. The bird is bluish-gray over most of the upper surface of the body with a white breast below. The upper surface of the tail is black, except for the outer 2 tail feather, which are mostly white. Looking from below, the undertail looks almost all white. This is an important identification point that separates the Blue-gray from the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, which is found in southwest Texas, southern New Mexico and on further west in the southwestern U.S. There is one other gnatcatcher in North America, the California Gnatcatcher, found in southern California and south into Baja California, the northern race of which is an endangered subspecies.

Not too many years ago while birding in my yard, I found a pair of Blue-grays building a nest; I believe it was in an oak tree. The thing that surprised me was that the birds paid no attention to me (so far as I could tell by observing them) even though I was only about 20-25 feet away. They went blithely about their business of building a nest—I just was not a part of their world to be worried about. It was a pleasure to think about this in terms of the gnatcatchers' world. They had everything they needed to carry on life and reproduction within a quite limited area it seemed to me; their needs could be met on a gnatcatcher's scale: It

would not take much space for them to easily feed on small flying insects, insects that at least one ornithologist had rightly noted as being too small for him to see. It would not have required much area to gather the lichens and other nesting material for its very small nest. And I suspect they are too small a bird for them commonly to be a prey item.

I have thought about these "miniature mockers" and their miniature "world." Blue-grays can winter as far south as Guatemala. The birds in my yard had migrated northward a long way to take up a little territory in a patch of woods north of Edmond, Oklahoma, perhaps not far from their breeding territory of the previous year. So we have a long migratory traveler with probably a very precise guidance system to return, I'm guessing, to a very precise nesting area. This seems to me to be a prescription for the development of divergent populations, as there would seem to be a high probability that populations would tend to isolate themselves from other populations over time.



Another thing which factored in to my thinking on this subject of isolated populations was the Blue-grays that occur in the Black Mesa area at the extreme western end of the Oklahoma Panhandle, in Cimarron County. It seems to me that the Mesa birds are not exactly like the Blue-grays in central Oklahoma—the Mesa birds seemed to have slightly more prominent black above the eye, for instance, but, again, maybe this is just my imagination. Dr. George M. Sutton (1967, *Oklahoma Birds*) said that, although he

was confident that the Cimarron County gnatcatchers were Blue-grays, he was not sure what subspecies nested in the Black Mesa area, although at least 1 specimen from the area appeared not to be of the eastern subspecies. He stated that more work needs to be done.

A final thought on all this is that I would not be surprised if some day North American gnatcatchers were divided into more than 3 species; there are considered to be about 9 subspecies among the 3 species at present. It is good to remember that species vs. subspecies are human constructs that nature does not adhere to—she has a sliding scale. Reclassifications are often the result of new genetics studies or of intense study of breeding success between 2 populations of birds. Sometimes we have to pity the experts who are tasked with making decisions on certain difficult species/subspecies questions, because there really may not be a clear answer.

Minutes of the Meeting

April 20, 2015

Meeting called to order by President Bill Diffin.

Guests were announced including volunteers from the OKC zoo. Phil Henderson from Pauls Valley, Ron Nichol from Ada, Micky Myers.

Minutes of the March 16 meeting were approved without dissent.

Treasurer Nancy Vicars reports \$6,270.76 in the account.

Field trip coordinator Mark DelGrosso was not in attendance. Birding updates:

Nancy Vicars will lead a field trip to Lake Overholser on Thursday April 23rd.

Nadine Varner reports that she will lead a field trip to the east of the zoo lake on April 25th; meet at the east end of the zoo parking lot at 7:00 am. If interested, Nadine will also lead a behind the scenes tour of the bird management buildings.

Nancy Reed will have an open house birding day on Saturday May 2nd at her home. Details available on the website.

Jimmy Woodard reports that the OOS and Arkansas OS will have a joint meeting and field trips at Ft. Smith May 1-3.

John Shackford will lead a field trip to Mitch Park in NW Edmond at 8 am May 16th.

General meeting news: Sue Woodson asks for volunteers for refreshments through the summer and fall.

Earthfest at Martin Park Nature Center was conducted recently and was well-attended by birders and potential birders of all ages.

Volunteers are requested to participate in birding education for seniors sponsored by OSU in June for three meetings, two hours apiece.

Nathan Kuhnert will lead a committee of Dave Woodson, Terri Underhill, Bill Diffin, and (? member) on the ethics of birding behaviors.

Tonight's program: Warren Harden and Phil Henderson presented a program on the similarities of ravens and wolves. Phil brought with him his friend Wiley the grey wolf, who kept us all in line with his growling and intimidating presence.

Next meeting will be Monday May 18th at 7pm. The final meeting of the spring will be June 15th before the summer break.

Submitted by Secretary Sharon Henthorn.

Field Trip Reports

by Nancy Vicars

Stanley Draper Lake, May 5, 2015

We met and birded around the marina and found a really nice selection of birds. Spotted Sandpiper, both Baltimore & Orchard Orioles, Scissor-tailed and Least Flycatchers, Eastern Phoebe, Red-headed & Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Chipping, Lark, Clay-colored and White-crowned Sparrows, Eastern Bluebird, Fish Crow, Barn & Cliff Swallows and Yellow Warbler.

The FOS (first of the season) Blue Grosbeak, Black & white Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, Mississippi Kites plus Mrs. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on her nest, were found in and around the Cross-Timbers camp ground. Painted & Indigo Buntings and Field Sparrows were added along the perimeter road. At our last stop, as if the day hadn't been such a success, a Barred Owl gave us a HOOT and a Broad-winged Hawk decided to fly-over!!

My birding friends today, were Jerry & Marilyn Taylor and Nancy Reed, tallied 49 species for the morning.

South Jenkins, April 15

We had a wonderful walk along S. Jenkins this morning with resident "birder extraordinaire" Richard (Dick) Gunn and his constant companion Blossom. We had truly great looks at six species of warblers: Yellow-throated, Yellow-rumped, Prothonotary, Northern Parula, Orange-crowned and Common Yellow-throats. Woodpecker species included Pileated, Red-bellied & Downy. Northern Cardinals, Blue Jays, Eastern Phoebe, Brown Thrasher, lots of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Harris, Savannah, Lincoln, Chipping and Field sparrows, American Crow, Fish Crow and Turkey Vultures filled in our list quite nicely.

With the good eyes and ears of my birding buddies this morning including Dick Gunn, Blossom, Dave Woodson, Shana Lancaster & friend, Allen, Hal Yocum, Sherm Barr, Elizabeth Hacker, Pilar Escobar and friend, we tallied 60 species.

Lake Overholser, April 23, 2015

The outing to Lake Overholser was a great success. We scoped the mudflats behind the police station and got great looks at 14 species of shorebirds. Semipalmated and Piping Plovers, Willets, Hudsonian Godwits, Semipalmated, Wilson's Phalaropes, Least, Baird's and Pectoral Sandpiper and White-faced Ibis were among the highlights. Our black & white list included Franklin's Gulls, Forster's Terns, American Avocets and an Osprey.

Along the coffer dam road, we added Baltimore Oriole, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Bell's Vireo, Spotted Towhee, House Wren, Brown Thrasher and heard a Hairy Woodpecker. A foraging flock of approx. 350 Yellow-headed Blackbirds in cattle pens at the Express Ranch on Mustang Road was absolutely spectacular!! A quick stop by Rose Lake added Lesser Yellowlegs. The day was even more fun birding with my friends, Dave & Sue Woodson, Bill Diffin, Sharon Henthorn, Steve Davis, Hal Yocum, Sherm Barr and Jeanette Schoof. Hal, our volunteer recorder, tallied a grand total of 68 species.

Earth Fest at Martin Park a success

The weather forecast for afternoon storms did not materialize and it was a beautiful day to attend Earth Fest at Martin Park Saturday April 18th. The Oklahoma City Audubon Society was well represented by four volunteers who cheerfully greeted more than a hundred people that came by our table.

Large numbers of families with children, youth groups and individuals had questions and stories about birds they had seen. They were challenged by two different Bird ID challenges and various handouts provided. There were so many youngsters that Terri Underhill ran out of the stickers for the kids. She asked the kids to take a Bird ID test so they would be eligible to enter a drawing for a stuffed animal "Wally the Woodpecker-a Mushabelly chatter." The kids also enjoyed the book Bill Diffin brought to the table; they could turn the pages to a different bird, push the button and listen to its song.



Bill Diffin, Delores Smith, Terri Underhill and Dave Woodson helped setup, answer people's questions about birds and invite them to our monthly meetings. We were greeted by the Friends of Martin Park and park employees provided us a place on the front porch with two tables and chairs. This location allowed us to meet people as they entered and exited the Nature Center where they could pick up the handouts, view Bird photos, books and take Bird ID challenges. Outreach programs such as these provide great opportunities to meet people, talk about the joys of birding and promote our Society.

Currently, we are the only birding organization in the OKC area, so it falls on us exclusively to represent the activity and its enthusiasts at the Earth Fest and the Crystal Lake Expo. We also help out in the birding tent at the ODWC Expo in Guthrie. Hopeful

these outreach programs will continue; Oklahoma City Audubon Society members are encouraged to participate the next time these events are scheduled.



Refreshments

Refreshments for the May meeting will be provided by Larry Mays, Sharon Henthorn, Mary Lane and Steve Davis

Welcome!

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes new member Kerri Bazzell, Mustang, OK

Recorders Report

Exploring the Birding World Recorders Report – April 2015 The Birds Are Coming !!!

So many birds; so many reports; and not enough room to record it all. Bird visitors are arriving daily. Some to stop in their travels to rest and refuel, while others are setting up housekeeping for the summer. Lively reports have been pouring in from all central Oklahoma counties except one.

On the 1st Larry Mays and others birded Lake Overholser and located a **Cinnamon Teal** and a hybrid Cinnamon/Blue-wing Teal. On the 11th Scott Loss found one at the Teal Ridge Wetland in Payne County and Larry found another one at Rose Lake on the 24th. Deanne McKinney spotted a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at Rose Lake and on the 5th Dala Grissom saw them at Lake Stanley Draper.

On the 3rd Mary and Lou Truex saw a Ferruginous Hawk in the Stinchcomb Farm Area and a **Peregrine Falcon** at Lake Overholser. Elizabeth Pratt found a Tree Swallow on a farm pond in Canadian County. On the 4th a **Little Blue Heron** was spotted by Deb Hirt at Boomer Lake and on the 9th by Dala Grissom in Pottawatomie County. **Northern Parula** was found by Dallas Barber in Babcock Park and on the 5th by John Tharp along South Jenkins. On the 5th T K identified an **Upland Sandpiper** at the North Base Airport area in Norman. On the 6th Joe Grzybowski had **Chimney Swift** flying overhead in Norman.

On the 7th Jason Shaw noticed a **Solitary Sandpiper** at the USAO Habitat Area in Grady County. Christie Stoops had a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** in Logan County which was then reported in 8 counties during the month. On the 8th at the Little River State Park Rachel Wrenn spotted the first **Eastern Kingbird** which was later seen in 9 counties. She also noticed a **Broad-winged Hawk** and Jason St. Sauver saw one at Arcadia Lake on the 11th.

On the 9th in Norman Phil Stepanian had a **Black-chinned Hummingbird** in his yard. They have also been reported in Logan County by Zach Poland and in Oklahoma County at Mitch Park. At Lake Thunderbird Rachel Wrenn noticed a **Prothonotary Warbler**, and on the 10th Phil Stepanian spotted a **Marbled Godwit**. Meanwhile at Boomer Lake Scott Loss heard a **Warbling Vireo**. On the 11th VA Ospovat had an **Inca Dove** in his Norman yard and at Lake Thunderbird State Park Joe Grzybowski discovered a **Yellow-throated Vireo** while T K located a **Spotted Sandpiper** and **Red-eyed Vireo**.

On the 12th Doug Wood birded Garvin County and located American Golden-Plover, Tree Swallow, Broad-winged Hawk, **Indigo Bunting** and **Clay-colored Sparrow**; in Grady County Linda Adams spotted a Prothonotary Warbler; at Ghost Hollow north of Perkins Evan Tanner located a Yellow-throated Warbler; and a **Yellow Warbler**

was seen by Rachel Wrenn at the Little River State Park. On the 13th James Hubbell discovered Long-billed Dowitcher and **Hudsonian Godwit** at Rose Lake, and on the 14th Dolores Smith saw a flock of Yellow-headed Blackbirds near Amber.

On the 15th at Lake Overholser Coffey Dam Zach Poland spotted **Semipalmated Plover** and Marbled Godwit. On the 16th Jane Sutherland found Cedar Waxwings in Chandler. In Yukon near 50th Street and Yukon Parkway Sharon Henthorn located **White-faced Ibis**. At Boomer Lake John Polo noticed a **Western Kingbird** and Rick Farrar saw one at Timber Lake Estates in Norman. At the Teal Ridge Wetland an American Bittern and **Green Heron** was found by Chris Williams, and In Cushing Scott Loss saw a **Gray Catbird**.

On the 17th Zach birded Lake Overholser Coffey Dam and spotted Hudsonian Godwit, **Willet**, **Long-billed Curlew**, and **Wilson's Phalarope**. Meanwhile at John Nichols Scout Ranch Chad Ellis heard a **Chuck-will's widow**. At Lake Thunderbird Rachel Wrenn found a **Piping Plover** and at Little River State Park a **Summer Tanager**, Indigo Bunting and **Great Crested Flycatcher**. On the 18th in McClain County Joe Grzybowski identified 100 Upland Sandpipers, American Pipit, Sprague's Pipit and **Chestnut-collared Longspur** while at Lake Thunderbird Phil Stepanian found a Willet and T K a **Western Sandpiper**. David Gersten identified a **Bank Swallow** at Will Rogers Airport.

On the 19th at Lake Overholser Zack spotted a Snowy Plover, and Heather Shaffery saw a Semipalmated Plover. In Lincoln County Valerie Bradshaw found Northern Parula, Summer Tanager, and **Orchard Oriole**. At Lake Thunderbird Caleb Frome found a **Caspian Tern**; and



Joe Grzybowski had a **Swainson's Thrush** and **Lazuli Bunting**. Along South Jenkins John Tharp saw a **Blue Grosbeak**. Katherine Schwartz noticed a **Bell's Vireo** in southeast Mustang. Chad Ellis spotted a **Nashville Warbler** at John Nichols Scout Ranch. While **Baltimore Oriole** were seen by Joe Grzybowski at Lake Thunderbird and Deb Hirt at Boomer Lake.

On the 20th at Taylor Lake in Grady County Bill Adams located Ruddy Duck, and Tree Swallow. At the Teal Ridge Wetland Scott Loss identified a **Virginia Rail** and at the Meridian Technology Center Pond a Willet. At Lake Overholser Jimmy Woodward saw a **Black-bellied Plover**. On the 21st at the Teal Ridge Wetland Eliana Ardila and Marc Kramer noticed a **Palm Warbler**. On the 22nd at Lake Overholser Mike McCloy spotted a Western Sandpiper, and

at Lake El Reno a Warbling Vireo. At the Meridian Technology Center Pond Scott Loss noticed White-faced Ibis, and Sage Powers found a **Tennessee Warbler** in the OSU North Fields

On the 23rd at Lake Overholser Steve Davis had a Piping Plover. At the Little River State Park John Tharp found a **Black-headed Grosbeak**. At Babcock Park Roy Cruz noticed a Swainson's Thrush. On the 24th Larry Mays spotted a **White-rumped Sandpiper** at Lake Overholser. Scott Loss noticed an Orchard Oriole at Boomer Lake.

On the 25th Joe Grzybowski had a **Glossy Ibis** at Rose Lake and Chad Ellis a **Say's Phoebe** at Stinchcomb WMA west. Eric Duell found a **Sora Rail**, White-rumped Sandpiper, **Kentucky Warbler**, Summer Tanager and Chuck-will's widow in Stillwater near Morningside Park. Scott Loss located a **Dickcissel** at Whittenberg Park. Deanne McKinney spotted a **Mississippi Kite** in Oklahoma City and the next day Evan Tanner saw one at the Teal Ridge Wetland. At Lake Hefner Scott Loss noticed a **Common Nighthawk**. Jimmy Woodard located a Nashville Warbler, Baltimore Oriole and Indigo Bunting at the Oklahoma City Zoo Lake Park. **Painted Buntings** were spotted by Rachel Wrenn at Little River State Park and Eric Duell in Stillwater.

On the 26th Larry Mays birded Seminole County and saw an American Bittern, **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, Kentucky Warbler, **Yellow-breasted Chat**, and in Pottawatomie County at the Little River Wetland a Warbling Vireo,



Common Yellowthroat, and Yellow Warbler. In Lincoln County Heidi Hellstern located a Bank Swallow near Wellston. At the Cushing Water Treatment Plant Scott Loss located a **Least Bittern**, and at the Riverside Road Woodlands a **Least Flycatcher**.

On the 27th James Hubbell drove around North Morgan Road and located Peregrine Falcon; at Lexington WMA Jeff Tibbits discovered a Bell's Vireo; and at the Teal Ridge Wetland Evan Tanner saw a **Sedge Wren**. On the 28th Susan Thompson identified a Summer Tanager and Indigo Bunting at Bush Creek in Pottawatomie County; Jason Shaw saw an Eastern Kingbird at the USAO Habitat Area in Grady County; and in Choctaw Dr. Chris Butler heard a Chuck-will's widow. What a busy month!!!

For April 2015, in the Central Oklahoma area **211** bird species were reported with **65** new species bringing the year's total to **243**. Meanwhile, in South America Noah ends April with a year-to-date total of 2,349. 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

by Patti Muzny

Late April, Early May 2015

Due to various circumstances beyond our control, the lawn in our front yard became sparse and pitiful, especially under the large oaks. So I purchased a blend of grass seed and began to slowly convince it to grow and cover the bare spots so our soil would not end up escaping down the drive, into the street and into Lightening Creek. I managed to get a few spots to grow last fall, but it still needed more seed, so this spring I sprinkled more seed all around.

Because of the sparse lawn, our front yard became a migrant trap for a large flock of mostly Chipping Sparrows. I looked out the window early one morning and saw them all over the yard and in the driveway. They are such cute, busy little birds. THEN I realized that the main attraction was the grass seed! I viewed the gift of Chipping Sparrows with mixed emotion. I think they ate most of that batch of pricey grass seed. (Maybe I should just "xeriscape" and plant river rock!)

I then sprinkled bird seed in the driveway. For almost three weeks I loved opening the blinds and watching a yard full of Chipping Sparrows, with a Clay-colored, Lincoln's and sometimes a House Wren. Then on May 3rd, I opened the blinds as usual and saw absolutely not one little sparrow! I guess time ran out and the flock passed the word around to get moving to their nesting grounds. It's rather sad!

In our back yard, the Brown Thrasher that was absent all winter, suddenly burst into song and they never seem to quit. Of course the resident Mockingbird, Cardinal, Blue Jay and Robin join in. The ever-present Cooper's Hawk still makes daily passes through the yard. Our Bewick's Wrens are nesting in one of the houses.

At Byars, on Sunday, May 3rd, I was treated to singing Painted and Indigo Buntings. A Pileated Woodpecker zipped across the pond in front of me and disappeared into the trees. The Dickcissels were also back and the Summer Tanagers were singing and chirping at several locations. Our "Porch Phoebe" is back on her nest on the light fixture. She just won't choose the "Phoebe shelf" that we put up for her. A screaming Red-shouldered Hawk is always on patrol. In late April the Chuck-wills-Widows were also singing. (*continued on page 8*)



Oklahoma City Audubon Society
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2015 FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Check with Mark Delgrosso at: markdelg94@gmail.com or the website/ newsletter for updates and final scheduling/ cancellations.

May 16 Mitch Park (Edmond): Meet at 8 am at the Old School Bagel Cafe at the intersection of N. Kelly St. and Covell St. in Edmond. The Old School Bagel Cafe is located 1/10th mile east of Kelly on the north side of Covell, and we will drive to the park from there. Leaders: John Shackford (johnsshack@aol.com), Hal Yokum (drhal2@cox.net).

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

JUNE 6: Club Picnic

Chirpings (cont.)

I have noticed that any fruiting tree or shrub on our property was covered in blossoms. There should be enough wild blackberries and plums for anything that dines on them this year.

I'm a fan of munching on all sorts of greens and this year the pokeweed has done well and provided me with all the "poke salit" I can eat. A good friend told me how to cook it to avoid any unpleasant repercussions to the digestive system, and if her rules are followed, it's extremely tasty. And there is plenty left for the birds who love to eat the purple fruit and leave purple calling cards on our driveways and vehicles!

Another tasty wild morsel is the tip of the greenbrier vines. While the vine itself is thorny and downright malicious, the tender tip of new growth tastes a lot like asparagus. Our property has more greenbrier per square foot than most, so there is plenty of that to go around as well. Looking forward to fall and "possum grapes."

