



# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

NOVEMBER 2019

## Wintering Longspurs

**John Muller will be the guest presenter at the November 18 meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society.**

The title of John's presentation: "Movement, Habitat Associations, and Distribution of Oklahoma's Wintering Longspurs and Co-Occurring Species."

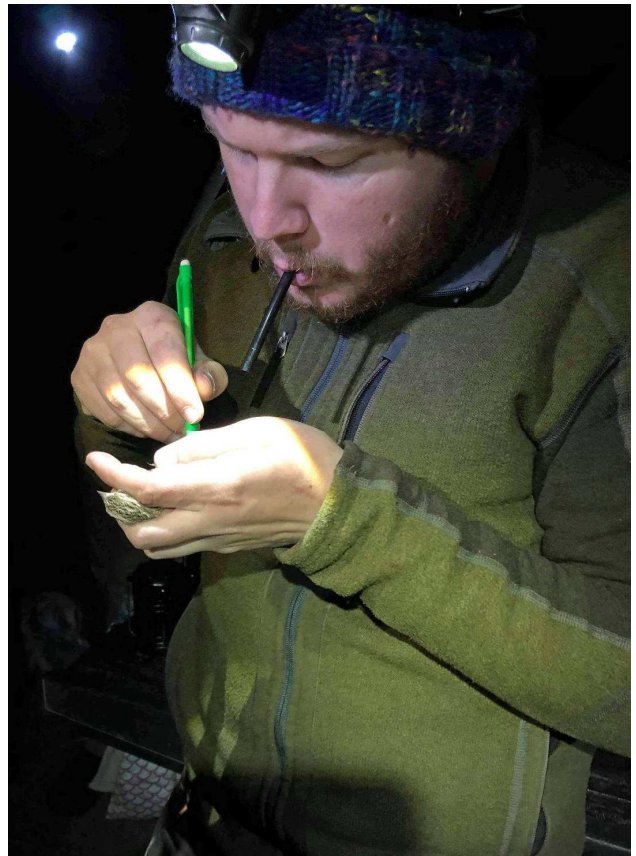
For his Master's Thesis John studied the wintering ecology of Sprague's Pipits along the Texas Coastal Prairie. John is currently in the third year of his Ph.D. at the University of Oklahoma where he is studying the wintering ecology of migratory grassland birds, specifically focusing on the four species of Longspur. John is collecting local and landscape-level habitat measurements where Longspurs are found to build hierarchical habitat models to help focus conservation actions. He is also attaching radio-transmitters to Chestnut-collared Longspurs (*Calcarius ornatus*) at the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge to determine daily and seasonal movement, wintering home range, social structure and within-season factors that are affecting mortality to this imperiled species.

John was born and raised in Austin, TX and has always been an avid naturalist with primary interests shifting between plants, birds, herps, butterflies, and fish. He completed his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Wildlife Ecology from Texas State University. In between degrees he worked for multiple agencies, institutions and NGOs including Tishomingo NWR, Buenos Aires NWR, Fort Hood and Fort Sill Military bases, The National Park Service, and Tucson 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). 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.



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# President's Perspective



By *Betz Hacker*

I often wonder what attracts people to birding. Whether a backyard birder, a casual observer, citizen scientist, or a competitive birder, what is it about these winged vertebrates that draws us to them?

All birders are often asked the question, "what is their favorite bird." While I admit

to being partial to 3 species of bluebirds, for me, it's truly a question that has no answer.

Every place I go, I see birds and they are all different. Some birds run, while others jump, hide, swim, and dive. Birds are found worldwide and in all habitats. The largest is the nine-foot-tall ostrich. The smallest is the two-inch-long bee hummingbird. Some, like penguins, that have lost the ability to fly but retained their wings and are adept swimmers, defy my imagination. Dedicated birders actually enjoy venturing out in frigid weather with hurricane force winds to find a rare species, like the black scoter on Lake Hefner.

The anatomy of a bird is the reason it can fly. For example, birds wings are shaped to create lift. The leading edge is thicker than the back edge and are covered in feathers of various sizes that narrow to a point. Each species' feathers are different and suited to its flight. Most birds use tail feathers for directional steering. We are fortunate that Warren Harden, often brings feathers to our meetings and asks members to identify the bird. We all try to guess before he explains what it is and its purpose.

The bones and muscles of a birds wing are also highly specialized. The main bone, the humerus, which is similar to the upper arm of a mammal, is hollow instead of solid. It also connects to the bird's air sac system, which, in turn, connects to its lungs. The powerful flight muscles of the shoulder attach to the keel, a special ridge of bone that runs down the center of the wide breastbone.

Birds have a unique digestive system that allows them to eat when they can, often on the fly, and digest it later. Their beaks serve many purposes including grab an insect, crack a nut, To remove feathers and tear flesh, feed chicks, build a nest, drill a cavity and much more.

Even the way birds reproduce is related to flight. Instead of carrying the extra weight of developing young inside their bodies, they lay eggs and incubate them in a nest. There is so much to learn about each bird and probably even more importantly, they are just plain fun to watch!

## Tall Tales

December is the month we have a potluck and share bird stories. It's always a lot of fun, so come prepared!

## Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 14. Nathan Kuhnert will be calling volunteers. We will meet at a Johnny's Restaurant (location to be announced) at the end of the day to tally the results.

## Volunteers

A big thank you to all the OCAS volunteers!



## Oklahoma City Audubon Society

### Officers 2019

President	Elizabeth Hacker	638-6210
Vice President	Grace Huffman	388-7369
Secretary	Sharon Henthorn	521-9958
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Refreshments	Terri Underhill	844-1244
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**

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## West Texas in August Miller Ranch Segment

By Patti Muzny

In my last segment of West Texas 2019, I started more or less in the middle rather than at the beginning. It's the author's prerogative, isn't it? For this article, I'm zeroing in on one of the Davis Mountain Hummingbird Festival's field trips to the Miller Ranch, which is just a few miles from the Mexican border and west of the town of Fort Davis.

We had to be up early, grab a quick breakfast and get in line to carpool out to the ranch. It was Steve's turn to drive his relatively clean Honda CRV and the five of us folded ourselves into it before it was truly daylight and headed out of town. Some of the long drive was paved, but a good portion of it was West Texas ranch roads. And we had had rain the night before. West Texas ranch roads in the desert could not be classified as smooth on a good day. Add a good downpour that left impressive mud puddles in the impressive potholes and it makes for an interesting ride. (An Army-issued Hummer would have been more suited for this trip!) Sometimes we could dodge the deepest holes, but sometimes the side of the road appeared to be a poorer choice than the middle of the road and the pothole waiting to swallow us up. Oh well...it's only mud, Steve!

By the time we arrived at the ranch headquarters, it was hard to determine the color of Steve's vehicle. BUT...we arrived in time to see a beautiful sunrise! At the ranch headquarters we spent some time birding in the tall cottonwoods and pecan groves that surrounded the ranch house. There was also a prolific fig tree which attracted a variety of birds and insects. The ranch headquarters was an oasis in the desert and was a great place to bird. A few of the species that caught our attention there were: Cave, Barn and Cliff Swallows, Gambel's Quail, Crissal Thrasher, Western Tanager,



Cactus Wren, Willow Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Painted Bunting, and Yellow Warbler. We also had a few hummingbirds.

After birding around the house, we proceeded up another ranch road, where we parked near a tank where spring water was contained and provided a small seep where various birds would come to bathe and drink. We took a relatively lengthy hike on a path that led to the remains of an old military outpost. Along that trail we were entertained by a feisty little Canyon Wren that popped up on a rock at the edge of a ravine and entertained us quite nicely.



Some of the other species we found on our hike were: Blue Grosbeak, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Turkey Vulture, Rock Wren, Scott's Oriole, Mockingbird, Say's Phoebe, Pyrruloxia, Lark Sparrow, Vermillion Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Townsend's Warbler and Western Kingbird. I guess the sighting of a dung beetle doing its job can still be counted as a species! Hadn't seen one of those since I was a farm girl in Payne County. In the years prior to electronics, we entertained ourselves with whatever was readily available. We also spotted a Javelina skulking along the side of a hill.

After a long, hot and circuitous hike in the desert, we bushwhacked down the side of a ravine into a dry wash and returned to our vehicles and drained a few water bottles. It was not cool in the desert, but it was such an interesting place. While we were grabbing snacks and water, a Varied Bunting landed in the water below the tank and proceeded to grab a drink and a quick shower. We thought the bunting was pretty special, but we also spotted a Golden Eagle soaring over the parched terrain. What a neat treat that was!

We headed back to the ranch and from there traveled the ranch road back to the paved road. By afternoon most of the mud had morphed back into dirt and it was not quite as much of a challenge for Steve. And, we spotted Chihuahuan Ravens and a Roadrunner. The desert in late August might be more than a little HOT, but the birding was quite interesting. Steve Davis took many wonderful photos and we hope to convince him to present a program for one of our meetings. *Photos were taken by Steve Davis and Mary Lane*



## Bird of the Month

By Grace Huffman

Earlier this month I was birding with our president, Betsy Hacker, as well as members Brian Mara and Hal Yocum at Lake Hefner. It was a great day, as despite the cold we had over 50 species and had a couple of other birders join us for a bit during our walk. Unfortunately, my camera battery was low and it died about 2/3 of the way through, but not before I was able to capture some beautiful shots of an **Osprey**.

Osprey are gorgeous raptors, largely brown on top and white on bottom, giving them a striking appearance. The yellow eyes and dark eye stripe makes them look truly fierce. Juveniles look a little bit different, as their dark feathers have buffy tips, making them look scaled. Another unique feature is their reversible outer toes, which help them grab onto those slippery fish!



© Grace Huffman

Here in Oklahoma you can find them during both spring and fall migration at lakes and other bodies of water statewide. Most of the birds breed to our north, with some breeding to the east and the west as well. Ospreys build massive platform nests out of sticks, and they will return to the same one for years, building it up each time. The female Osprey will lay anywhere from 1-4 eggs and incubate them for up to 42 days. The young spend over a month and a half in the nest before fledging.

Ospreys are here until the end of the month, so you still have time to go looking for them. My favorite sighting of an Osprey was several years ago at Lake Hefner. The bird was in the shallow water bathing! It seemed to be enjoying itself and was splashing water everywhere. It's also thrilling to watch them dive into the water. Normally I only see them catch a fish at the surface, but they can dive up to 3 feet under! Once they catch a fish, they orientate the head is in the front, so it's more aerodynamic for the flight back to the perch, where it is eaten. Sometimes though, an Osprey's eyes are too big for its stomach, as Ospreys have been known to catch fish that are too big to carry off. If the bird has too tight of a grip on the fish, it won't be able to let go and the bird will drown.

While listed on some state conservation lists, the ICUN as a whole does not consider the Osprey to be endangered. While they were in decline many years ago,

their population has rebounded since the banning of DDT. Today, the biggest cause of Osprey deaths happens at the nest, where baling twine and fishing lines are incorporated into nests by adults, and young ones get tangled in it and become unable to leave the nest.

References include [aboutbirds.org](http://aboutbirds.org) and *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds, 2nd edition*.

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## Refreshments

Refreshments for our November 18 meeting will be provided by:

Snacks: Marion Homier and Doug Eide

Drinks: Laura Pollard

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## OKC Audubon Society minutes of October 21, 2019

Meeting was called to order by President Betz Hacker. Minutes of September's meeting were approved without changes.

Several visitors and new members were introduced. Jacob Crissup of OKC, John Watschke on assignment with the FAA, Kevin and Cindy Crane, Nancy Friot, Pete and Deretta Austin, Lonnie Schander from Lincoln, NE. Matt Fullerton accompanied the speaker.

Nancy Vicars and Warren Harden are on safari in Africa, and Nancy did not leave us a treasurer's report.

Jimmy Woodard spoke of the upcoming OOS fall meeting, being held in Norman on October 25-27. Most of the meeting will be presentations from graduate students, but there will be a field trip led by Nathan Kuhnert on Sunday morning to area hot spots.

No other business was discussed, so we took a long snack break prior to our speaker's presentation.

Jared Elmore is a Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management at Oklahoma State University. His research focus is large scale avian conservation issues in the Great Plains. He discussed the rare Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and their conservation. The birds require specific mature trees in order to succeed, and efforts to encourage new nesting areas are being studied.

The next meeting will be November 18 at the usual time and place; 7pm-9pm at the Will Rogers Park Garden Exposition Building.

Sharon Henthorn, Club Secretary

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## Winter Finch Forecast 2019-20

GENERAL FORECAST: This is not an irruption (flight) year for winter finches in the East.

**Hoary Redpolls** are not expected in the south this winter because it is not a redpoll irruption year.

Boreal populations of the **Red-breasted Nuthatch** will not migrate south this fall.

Most **Evening Grosbeaks** should winter in the north because conifer and deciduous seed crops such as black ash are generally excellent to bumper.

(prediction by Ron Pittaway)

## Conservation News

By Ann Sherman

*The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The next best time is now.*

— Chinese Proverb.



My favorite item in how to personally make a difference in conservation is plant a tree. I have lived in my current home for 9 years. I have planted a dozen trees. Mainly I went with trees that attract and feed birds and insects. I did plant some Parasol trees because I like the way they look.

I have a copy of *Putting Down Roots*. It was published by the City of OKC to help people pick and plant trees. Noted experts contributed. It has chapters like "Know your site" and "Choose your tree." It's nice to know this information is available. One of the most valuable things about the book is the Oklahoma Proven symbol. It is from Oklahoma State University's program to highlight trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals that are best suited to Oklahoma.

Here are some Proven recommendations.

Deciduous Trees. Hardwoods. They shed their leaves in the fall.

Kentucky Coffeetree. *Gymnocladus dioica*. Beautiful, rugged, with a delicate appearance. Not for use near livestock. A bit poisonous.

Chinese Pistache. *Pistacia chinensis*. Noted for its seasonal color. I can attest to that. It's beautiful. It feeds the birds.

Burr Oak. *Quercus macrocarpa*. It mentions the need for proper maintenance, care, and pruning throughout the life of the tree.

Shumard Oak. *Quercus shumardii*. It's a pin oak.

Baldcypress. *Taxodium distichum*. Its appearance is unique. It's tolerant of our weather even though it prefers swamps.

Caddo Maple. *Acer saccharum*. This is a subspecies of the sugar maple. It's named for Caddo County. Excellent color and does not like to be fussed over.

Shantung Maple. *Acer truncatum*. It's colorful and resistant to drought, heat and leaf scorch.

# Recorders Report October 2019

Three interesting bird species whose ID can be confused with nearby species were reported this month. A mystery bird appeared on Lake Hefner and thanks to some close observation of photographs included in eBird lists, it was correctly identified. While sailing on the lake a birder noticed a swimmer with a different bill and added a new species for the fall. And while driving across the bridge, an uncomfortable quick ID caused a birder to turn around and discover an exciting species for the county and our area. Interestingly two out of the three unusual species observations were not made while someone was out birding. So, keep your eyes open for winter often brings interesting birds and unexpected lifers.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> Joe Grzybowski counted Black Tern at Lake Thunderbird. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Deb Hirt identified Wilson's



Warbler and Spotted Sandpiper at Boomer Lake Park in Payne County. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Lindell Dillon reported White-eyed Vireo at Lake Thunderbird; Joe Grzybowski observed Pectoral Sandpiper at NW63rd and Kilpatrick Turnpike; and D&D Norris photographed a Nashville Warbler bathing at Kairworks

Garden in Logan County. Also, Anna Nesterovich detected Osprey, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren, and Yellow Warbler at OSU Cross Country Course in Stillwater.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> Larry Mays found Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Northern Bobwhite near Newcastle in McClain County. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Deanne McKinney discovered Stilt Sandpiper at NW63rd and Kilpatrick Turnpike and White-faced Ibis at Rose Lake; and Angel Carter spotted Eastern Phoebe in Blanchard in McClain County. On the 6<sup>th</sup> John Tharp came across Broad-winged Hawk in Norman; and Landon Neumann recorded Northern Parula and Orange-crowned Warbler at Couch Park in Stillwater. On the 7<sup>th</sup> Linda Farrell tallied Great Egret and Belted Kingfisher at Chandler Lake in Lincoln County.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> Caleb McKinney saw Black-throated Green Warbler and Summer Tanager at Couch Park in Payne

County. On the 12<sup>th</sup> Landon Neumann had Pine Warbler and American Avocet at Lake Carl Blackwell. On the 13<sup>th</sup> Sora Rail was reported near William Morgan Park in Norman. On the 16<sup>th</sup> John Muller verified Black-throated Green Warbler along South Jenkins in Cleveland County; and Mary Anne Fluke noticed Turkey Vulture and Rock Pigeon along I-40 in Seminole County.

In the development of migration changes, on the 16<sup>th</sup> Steve Davis photographed and correctly identified White-winged Scoter at Lake Hefner. On October 19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> White-winged Scoter was observed and described in detail by Bill Diffin and on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> birders photographed it. Meanwhile on the 26<sup>th</sup> Braden Farris photographed a similar looking



© Brian Marra

**Surf Scoter.** He photographed it again on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and again along with another birder on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. At the same time on the 3<sup>rd</sup> three birders identified White-winged Scoter on the water treatment ponds. Scoters are not usual visitors to Oklahoma County, and both bird species look very much alike. Was there only one of each species or are there more than one? it will be interesting to see how long each species stays in Oklahoma City and returns in subsequent years.



On the 17<sup>th</sup> Roy McGraw located Carolina Wren and Bald Eagle at Liberty Lake in Logan County. On the 18<sup>th</sup> John Tharp got Broad-winged Hawk in Norman. On the 19<sup>th</sup> Richard Specht encountered Black-necked Stilt and Yellow-headed Blackbird at NW63rd and Kilpatrick Turnpike; John Williams

recognized Great-tailed Grackle at the I-44 Rest Area Lagoons in Grady County and Red-shouldered Hawk at Oak Glen RV Park in Lincoln County, while Brian Marra

confirmed House Wren, White-crowned Sparrow, Song Sparrow and Common Yellowthroat at Lake Elmer in Kingfisher County and Linda Jones added House Wren at Lazy J in Lincoln County.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> Luis Cueto observed Inca Dove in Norman; and Landon Neumann detected Sora Rail and Wilson's Snipe at Teal Ridge Wetland. On the 21<sup>st</sup> Rod Murray had American Avocet at Lake El Reno. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> Braden Farris counted Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Lark Sparrow in Washington in McClain County. On the 26<sup>th</sup> Caleb McKinney reported Spotted Towhee, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow and Field Sparrow on a Hunting Lease in Grady County; and Scott Loss documented California Gull and Common Loon at Lake Carl Blackwell.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> Nathan Kuhnert led 17 participants on the OOS Fall Meeting Field Trip to a wet grassland near the Max Westheimer Airport where they came across Horned Lark, American Pipit, Sprague's Pipit, Sedge Wren, Swamp Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, and Lincoln's Sparrow. At Lake Carl Blackwell Landon Neumann found Horned Grebe and Eared Grebe; and while sailing on Lake Hefner, Russell Goodin noticed a different swimmer and photographed Yellow-billed Loon.



© Russell Goodin

On the 28<sup>th</sup> Graden Farris reported Sandhill Crane at the Tinker Walking Trail; Danny Tipton had Ring-billed Gull on I-35 near Wynnewood in Garvin County; Jason Shaw spotted Pied-billed Grebe at the USAO Habitat Area in Grady County; and Dustin Lynch had Northern Flicker, White-throated Sparrow and American Goldfinch at Meeker Lake in Lincoln County. On the 29<sup>th</sup> Bill Diffin documented Greater Scaup at Lake Hefner; and Jeff Mills tallied Yellow-rumped Warbler and Northern Harrier at Shawnee Regional Airport in Pottawatomie County. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Jeff Mills discovered Pied-billed Grebe, Pine Siskin, Lincoln's Sparrow and Harris's Sparrow in Shawnee.



© Deena Parsons

On November 1<sup>st</sup> Deena Parsons was driving over the Alameda Twin Bridges and on an island in the river she spotted large white birds with black wing tips like American White Pelicans. She turned around and photographed 10 **Whooping Cranes** at Lake Thunderbird. Nancy Reed went out before sunrise on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and saw 3 of them but they were gone by about 0715. A full report has been turned in to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife. November is starting out with interesting birds. What will be seen during the rest of the month?

In the Central Oklahoma area during October 2019, **185** species were reported with **2** new species bringing the total for the year to **277**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds. Information is accessed at: [ebird](http://www.ebird.org/subnational1/US-OK/region). 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: October 31, 2019). And occasionally from Facebook, the OKBIRDS List, and personal correspondence. I can be contacted by e-mail at [emkok@earthlink.net](mailto:emkok@earthlink.net). Esther M. Key, Editor.

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## Are Your Eyes Too Large?

*Ostrich eyes are the largest of any animal that lives on land (though they can't rival some of the massive creatures that inhabit the depths of the sea). Approximately the size of a billiard ball, their eyes are actually bigger than their brains.*

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

## 2019-20 OKC Christmas Bird Count

This year the count will be held on **Saturday, 14 December 2019**. John Shackford worked hard to secure us a meeting room for our important compilation dinner and fortunately John was able to book us a room from 5 pm - 9 pm at **Johnnie's Charcoal Broiler, 33 E 33rd St, Edmond**, OK 73013. I plan to start reading our list at 6:30 p.m. For those not familiar with the Edmond location, it's located just off the Broadway extension (~ 2 miles north of the turnpike). Bringing desserts is welcome at our dinner and what we can't finish at Johnnie's can be eaten at the following Monday regular bird club meeting.

I will personally be contacting every single participant from the last few years to ask for your participation again and to go over logistics. I will be sending out standardized checklists to the count leaders as I must improve efficiencies for compiling results. Leaders will have the choice of emailing me back the checklist or using snail-mail. I will also be more persistent this year at asking for documentation on birds that are not expected for the Oklahoma City area in mid-December which will also satisfy Audubon's regional CBC leader.

Loons and scoters have already been making their presence at Lake Hefner this fall. Last year even with too fair of weather in my opinion, 45 volunteers (19 count teams) still managed to count 111 species and a total of 154,983 birds! Even if you can not make it out in the field, I will be encouraging you to count birds at your backyard feeders.

Please check out our newly remodeled website (big kudos to Pat Velte!) to see results from the 2018 CBC as well as any new logistical information that may need to be posted.

<https://okc-audubon.org>

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