



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

November 2012



Grey Snow Eagle House

Live birds of prey will be featured at our November OKC Audubon meeting. Headlining the show will be Woody an immature Bald Eagle and a native of Oklahoma, RB a Golden Eagle, Leah a Mississippi Kite, and Lady a Harlen's Hawk, all residents of the Grey Snow Eagle House near Perkins, Oklahoma. Accompanying the stars will be Vic Roubidoux, director of the Eagle House, along with assistant Harley Coleman and others of the Grey Snow Eagle staff.

The Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma developed their eagle rehabilitation program under the guidance of Mr. Roubidoux to protect injured eagles and increase community awareness of wildlife and Native American culture. The Bah Kho-je Xla Chi (Grey Snow Eagle House) was completed in January 2006 through funds provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) and the Iowa Tribe. The Grey Snow Eagle House operates under two USFWS permits. The Religious-Use Permit allows the Tribe to house eagles that are non-releasable due to the nature or severity of the injuries. This permit also allows the tribe to gather naturally molted feathers and distribute them to tribal members for use in cultural ceremonies. The second permit allows the Tribe to rehabilitate eagles for their eventual release. The Iowa Tribe is the first tribe in the country to be permitted through the USFWS as Eagle Rehabilitators. The Grey Snow Eagle House houses over 35 non-releasable eagles (7 Golden Eagles and 28 Bald Eagles) and other raptors which are cared for by an Aviary Manager, 6 staff members and volunteers who also give outreach programs to the public. The Eagle House welcomes visitors.

Come out and see the exciting birds and bring some friends. They will love it. Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month. They begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 and NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.

New Members

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes new member Jeanne Jenkins, Edmond.

Cookie Patrol

Refreshments for the November 19th meeting will be provided by: Mark Delgrosso, Rich Taylor and Sue Woodson.

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin

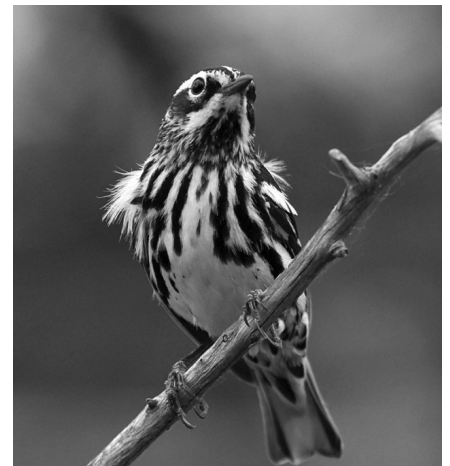


The Election Committee, consisting of Jimmy Woodard, Jim Bates, Sharon Henthorn and Doug Eide, has successfully completed its task, selecting a slate of officers and committee chairpersons for 2013. As most of you know by now, Mark Delgrosso has agreed to take on the leadership of the Field Trip Committee from Jimmy Woodard.

Mark has been active in proposing and planning field trips. Be sure to watch the Field Trip schedule to take advantage of his exciting ideas. Sharon Henthorn has agreed to be our new Secretary, replacing Nancy Reed, our beloved former Secretary who reluctantly stepped down due to family obligations. I encourage everyone to thank Sharon and Mark for taking on these new leadership responsibilities. Let's congratulate the Election Committee members for doing a great job.

In last month's Perspective article, the subject of convergence among different lineages of birds was introduced for the first time in this series which is focused on the relationships among the passerine birds worldwide. As an example of convergence, we observed the similarity of three distantly related passerine groups, the woodcreepers (South American suboscines), Australian treecreepers (oscines in the Basal Songbird Australasian Grade) and *Certhia* treecreepers (oscines in Passerida, a major passerine branch we haven't covered yet). Last month's article continued on to the honeyeaters, the Meliphagidae, a BSAG family somewhat convergent with hummingbirds. Other BSAG groups mentioned were the Pardalotidae (pardalotes), convergent with New World wood warblers; the Maluridae (grasswrens, emu-wrens and fairywrens); and the Acanthizidae (scrubwrens, gerygones, thornbills and others), sometimes called as a group the Australasian warblers. The convergence of these different BSAG families with more familiar but unrelated birds wasn't pointed out at the time, but you might have noticed it. All these birds just mentioned starting with the honeyeaters are members of a single superfamily, Meliphagoidea, within BSAG. These different families all derived from one genetic lineage illustrate the concept of divergence. In biology the word "divergence" describes the tendency for a single genetic lineage to have a diversity of species fitted to different lifestyle or geographic niches. Wood warblers, sparrows, vireos, wrens and thrushes are examples of families where divergence has produced multiple species. The wood warblers, family Parulidae, are a particularly good example because they are diverse enough to make

one wonder if they really should all be in the same family. The tree creeping habits of the Black-and-white Warbler are unique in the family while the water thrushes are much like plovers or peeps in their feeding style. The Ovenbird and Kentucky Warbler pick along the forest floor like spotted thrushes, and the



American Redstart behaves much like a gnatcatcher as it actively moves through the trees and shrubs catching insects it startles into flight. Pine Warblers eat a lot of pine nuts, and Yellow-rumped Warblers eat a lot of cedar berries during the winter, reverting to summer flycatching habits when cool season midges swarm on mild days. Divergence is the mirror image of convergence, i.e. it is the possession of dissimilar traits by related species which are fitted to different lifestyle niches. (cont. page 5)

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2012

President	Bill Diffin	722-3778
Vice President	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Nancy Reed	799-1116
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	732-9885
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Recorder	Esther M. Key	381-9170
Conservation	Dave Woodson	601-622-3467
Field Trips	Mark Delgrosso	470-4533
Newsletter Editors:		
	Pat Velte	751-5263
	Carla Brueggen	495-3259
Publicity	Doug Eide	495-8192
Historian	Nealand Hill	388-6759
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

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



The **Eastern Screech-Owl** (*Megascops asio*) can be a nemesis bird on our Christmas Bird Counts. I suspect that there are at least several dozen of them within our count circle each year, but often we have a hard time finding just one. They are nocturnal and the best chances to find them are to hear their calls at night or watch for them at a roost hole at dusk.

For many years, Vic Vacin, a member who is no longer living, had one in a birdhouse he had made. On count day someone would go out to Vic's birdhouse about dusk and the bird would always appear at the entrance to the box. In recent years members Jim and John Bates usually have been able to locate an Eastern Screech-Owl by hearing it call, usually in response to a taped call they play. I think Jim and John tallied the first bird on count day last year by going out about 5 minutes after midnight and getting one to answer a tape. Nice work, guys!

Perhaps 20 years ago another birder and I were either scouting or actually on the bird count on what is now the east side of Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge. I had heard somewhere that once in a while a screech-owl would appear at a woodpecker hole if you rapped on the bottom of a tree that had such a hole in it. We came upon a dead tree with a hole near the top, maybe 18-20 feet high. I rapped on the tree, and much to my surprise, the whole tree fell down! There was a pause for a second or two, then out flapped a screech-owl! I don't think he was hurt, but he probably did have a bit of a headache.

Warren Harden once took over Dr. George Sutton's banding permit: Doc gave it up because he became so frustrated trying to do exactly what the Bird Band-

ing Laboratory expected of him. Warren, in true Warren fashion, extended the scope of Doc's original license to include up to 10 sub-permittees! Warren kept up with the tremendous amount of paperwork involved and also kept good rapport with the Bird Banding Lab, which was not always that easy. Amazing! Once, when several people including Warren, were banding birds just north of the coffer dam at Lake Overholser, we left nets up all night. The next morning we had a number of birds in the nets, including a screech-owl. But the owl appeared done for—it was severely tangled in the net and was not moving. So we decided to untangle and band the other birds first. Finally, we took the screech-owl out of the nets, and to everyone's surprise, the owl opened an eye or two to look at us: it was still alive, with no apparent damage when we let it fly away!



Dr. Sam Moore once picked up a screech-owl as a road kill on a Nichols Hills street. He took it home and put it in his refrigerator freezer to save it for someone to salvage as a study skin. At least 2 days later Sam's housekeeper opened the freezer door, and to her amazement, there sat the screech-owl, looking back at her with 1 eye open, apparently alive and well. These owls can play possum better than possums.

This Bird of the Month is brought to you because I forgot, until most of this column had been written, that I had written about this species before, three years ago, in November 2009. But

most of the material here is fresh, so please indulge me anyway.

This does bring up a good point—I am getting shorter and shorter on birds about which I have much personal information to relate. If anyone has a good story or two to relate about a particular bird, or a particular bird you would like to cover, please feel free to contribute a Bird of the Month column; if need be, I would be delighted to help you pull such a column together and flesh it out. (Article length usually runs a little more than one page, single line spacing; my email address is: johnsshack@aol.com.) Think about some of your favorite birds and stories, and let us know about them!

More AOU Checklist Changes

by Michael Retter, ABA BLOG 10-4-12

I know what you're thinking. "More checklist changes-- what have they done now?!" On the species level, there have been no more changes affecting the ABA Area than were covered in the September 2012 issue (pp. 30–33) of *Birding*. But there were a number of higher-level taxonomic changes and scientific name changes that were not covered or only briefly mentioned.

Perhaps the most boring of these is the change in scientific name of Purple Gallinule from *Porphyrio martinica* to *Porphyrio martinicus*. This has to do with whether the specific epithet, martinic(us/a), is considered to be an adjective or a noun, because the former must agree in gender with the genus, while the latter need not. See, I told you it was pretty boring. I promise it gets more interesting.

Our three "red finches" (i.e., House Finch, Purple Finch, and Cassin's Finch) were transferred out of the genus *Carpodacus* and into a new genus all their own:

Haemorhous. Genetic data have shown that these three species are not that closely related to *Carpodacus*, which is represented in the ABA Area by the vagrant Common Rosefinch. In fact, the *Carpodacus* rosefinches seem to be more closely related to the incredibly diverse Hawaiian Honeycreepers than they are to other members of the finch family!

How exactly does one pronounce *Haemorhous*? Well, there's no 100% correct way, of course, but the word's origin can give us some clues. Haemo- comes from the same Greek word (meaning "blood") as hemophilia and hemoglobin. So "HEE-moh" is probably a good bet. As for -rhous, I've seen two different explanations. One is that orrhos (meaning "rump") is the root. Indeed, "blood rump" seems a good description of these birds. The adult males of all species have reddish rumps. The other explanation is that rhous means "sumac," a plant which has reddish berries. In that case, the meaning would be "red (like) sumac".

So, I'm not sure if "HEE-moh-roos" or "HEE-mohr-os" is the better call. But in the end, you can really pronounce it however you want!

Sage Sparrow also got a genus change, from *Amphispiza* to *Artemesiospiza*. Genetic data show it to be quite distinct from all the other sparrows. *Artemesia* is the plant genus that includes sagebrush (and wormwood, whence absinthe is made). Spiza means finch. So the new genus means "sagebrush finch"--very appropriate! The most likely pronunciation is "ahr-tuh-MEEZ-ee-uh-SPY-zuh". This is a monotypic genus, meaning that it only has one member. At least, until (and if) Sage Sparrow is split.

Some *Selasphorus* hummingbirds seem to me more closely related to Calliope Hummingbird than they are to other *Selasphorus*. That makes *Selasphorus* what is called a paraphyletic taxon-- something that taxonomists don't really like. In order to correct this, Calliope Hummingbird was moved into *Selasphorus*, making the species' former (and monotypic) genus, *Stellula*, now defunct.

Carolina Wren was once thought to be related to a large and diverse group of tropical wrens, and they were placed in the genus *Thryothorus* along with it. But genetic data show that's not likely the case. In fact, none of the other wrens seems to be closely related to it, so all those other species classified in the same genus had to be moved. In the end, they moved into three different genera, one of which, *Thryophilus*, is the new home of the Sinaloa Wren.

Our goatsuckers were long placed in the genus *Caprimulgus* because of their similarity to the "original" European Nightjar. Once again, genetic data show that similarity to be only skin deep: our American nightjars are only distantly related. In fact, our nighthawks seem to be more closely related to European Nightjar than they are to our American nightjars. The result is that Chuck-will's-widow, Buff-collared Nightjar, and both whip-poor-wills all move to the genus *Antrostomus*. Antrum means "cave", and stoma means "mouth". They do indeed have gaping, cave-like mouths!



2012 Christmas Bird Count and Tally Party

It's that time again. The Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count (CBC), as is tradition, will be on the first Saturday in the CBC survey period. This year that makes it Saturday, 15 December 2012. I am hoping that most of you will be able to again concentrate your efforts in the same areas you surveyed last year. If there were problems, etc., with your individual areas, let me know and we will see what we can come up with for substitutions/changes. As compiler, it is always a meaningful moment as I touch base with many of you about the count, often a moment to get reacquainted, catch up on things, and also to get to know new participants. If you have never participated but would like to, please get in touch with me and I will try to assign an appropriate group and/or area for you. There is no longer a \$5 fee for participants.

Diane Newell has graciously invited us to the Newell home for our Count Tally Party, beginning at 5 pm on Count day (Dec. 15); the bird list will be read by Nathan Kuhnert at about 6:30 pm. It is always a time of fun recounting the day's stories. Cheryl Allen will bring her famous chili and I will bring a cheddar corn chowder and soft drinks. We will have some additional meal items to accompany the chili and chowder, but I am encouraging participants to bring a dessert, since this is easier than trying to deliver hot foods, etc. on count day, when we are already preoccupied with the count. We will pass the hat at our November meeting to help defray the cost of chili meat, maybe a few additional snackums, paper plates and cups, etc., so if you have a dollar or two to spare bring it to the meeting.

Directions to Diane Newell's home are as follows: Go on N. MacArthur to NW 82nd Street (this is just a few blocks north of the Northwest Expressway and N. MacArthur). Turn east (right, if coming north from the NW Expressway) onto NW 82nd Street. In about 1/4th mile on NW 82nd St. there is a stop sign. Continue past this stop sign on NW 82nd St. for about another 1/4th mile, until you come to a bend (toward the north/left) in the road and the Newell's home is just at this bend, on the east side. The address is 8304 Lakeaire Drive (road changes names at the bend). Look for the cars there. Hope you can make it!

John Shackford
Phone: (405) 340-5057
Email: johnsshack@aol.com
429 E. Oak Cliff Dr. Edmond, OK 73034-8626

President's Perspective (cont.)

The Corvoidea are the next supergroup we will examine. To see where the Corvoidea fit in the Tree of Life, go to <http://www.tolweb.org/Oscines/29222>. Then click on the Corvoidea link to see the entire corvoid assemblage. Given the prominence of crows and jays in our local bird fauna, it is startling to realize that the New World is relatively underpopulated by corvoid species. The corvoids are much more diverse in the Old World as should be suspected by the many unfamiliar names on the corvoid tree. Then too, it will probably come as a surprise that the vireo family, Vireonidae, is corvoid. The shrikes, Laniidae, are a corvoid family with 33 species, only two of which inhabit the New World. The Old World orioles, family Oriolidae, gave their name to the similar but unrelated New World orioles like the Baltimore Oriole in the blackbird family, Icteridae, [http://](http://creagrus.home.montereybay.com/OWorioles.html)



creagrus.home.montereybay.com/OWorioles.html. The birds-of-paradise of the forests of New Guinea are a corvoid family somewhat convergent with the suboscine manakins of the forests of tropical America. The woodswallows in the family Artamidae are Australasian corvoids that feed on swarms of aerial insects much like the distantly related true swallows in the family Hirundinidae, <http://creagrus.home.montereybay.com/woodswallows.html> and <http://carolinabirds.org/HTML/Artamidae.htm>. More on the Corvoidea next month.

What does it cost to put a volleyball court on Kirtland's Warbler habitat?

A 51-year-old Chesaning, MI man was ordered to pay \$34,000 after ignoring requests from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove encroachments on federal land meant to provide breeding habitat for endangered Kirtland's warblers.

In 2011 William Robert Colston hired contractors to install the volleyball court, which involved having sand hauled in and dumped on the refuge (next to his recreational property) along with installing an outdoor shower, electric service and a sound system.

Colston was convicted of a federal misdemeanor and ordered to pay \$26,000 to the Seney Natural History Association for use in restoring and preserving habitat for Kirtland's warblers. He was also ordered to pay \$7,000 to the Fish and Wildlife Service for the cost of removing the encroachments.

Recorders Report – October 2012

After 62 years

Surprises this month include an early frost and an exciting bird visitor discovered by someone who waited 62 years to see it. On the 8th the earliest first frost date for central Oklahoma was recorded with minimal damage to plants since it was a scattered light frost. Two more scattered light frosts occurred on the 27th and 28th. Still many of the Maximilian Sunflowers continue to bloom and most of the trees remain green. Several rain showers in different locations have changed the drought monitor in central Oklahoma from the worst category of exceptional to extreme on the western side and severe on the eastern side. Several summer birds still remain, some of the winter birds have arrived, and a few extremely rare birds showed up in October.

On September 29th Dala Grissom noticed a Red-breasted Nuthatch in Pottawatomie County. On October 1st James Hubbell located a Tennessee Warbler and Blue-gray



Gnatcatcher at Lake Hefner. On the 2nd Tim O'Connell reported the first fall Northern Junco in Stillwater, and Stacy Covington spied a Bald Eagle on the west side of Lake Overholser. On the 4th Dick Gunn observed an Osprey along South Jenkins as well as Green-winged Teal, Greater Yellowlegs and a couple of Least Sandpipers. On the 6th in Mustang, Jimmy Woodward had a brief visit from a late female Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

On the 7th Jimmy saw a Barn Swallow flying down his street; Brian Davis discovered a Red-breasted Nuthatch in his Norman backyard; T K noticed a Caspian Tern at Lake Thunderbird's Indian Point; John Polo found a Brown Creeper and Blue-headed Vireo in Stillwater; and Sharon Henthorn was thrilled to see a beautiful Spotted Towhee strutting out in the open for several minutes in her Oklahoma City yard. On the 9th along South Jenkins T K spotted a lingering Common Nighthawk and heard a Fish Crow while Victor Fazio III witnessed a Northern Rough-winged Swallow. On the 10th Matt Jung walked the west side trail at the Stinchcomb WMA and sighted a Great Horned Owl, and at Tinker Air Force

Base John Polo caught sight of a Golden-crowned Kinglet.

On the 11th in Harrah Chris Butler heard a non-adult male **Red Crossbill** as it flew low across his backyard, circled around, and then headed north. He suggests this may be a good year to check out the pine stands for more individuals of this species. On the 12th Dave McNeely had an Indigo Bunting strike his window during a thunderstorm. On the 13th while doing a Big Sit at Lake Thunderbird near the twin bridges on Alameda, Dick Gunn and Brian Davis spotted a late Snowy Plover.

On the 14th in his south Oklahoma yard Jim Bates discovered a Yellow-rumped Warbler, Nashville Warbler and then he was surprised with a very rare **Townsend Warbler**, possible the first for central Oklahoma. He was able to study it for 10 – 15 minutes to confirm this bird of the Pacific Northwest which migrates to Mexico and Central America and would have been well east of its migration path.

On the 14th Matt Jung pished up a red Fox Sparrow along the east side of the Stinchcomb WMA. On the 15th Dick Gunn saw some new arrivals on South Jenkins including several Vesper Sparrows, a Savanna Sparrow, and a **Black-throated Green Warbler**. This warbler breeds in the northeast and across Canada and is on its western migration edge traveling to Mexico, Central American and other southern locations.

On the 16th shortly after high noon Matt Jung was scanning Lake Overholser and was astonished to see, what appeared to be an adult **Whooping Crane**. He hurried back to his car, drove north on the berme road about 1/2 mile and set up the



spotting scope. It was a single adult Whooping Crane for sure. See his story on page 7 about how he waited 62 years for this event. On the 17th a lady reported that while she, a "wildlife guy," and several others were watching, the Whooping Crane flew up with a group of American Pelicans, circled, and flew southeast away from the lake at a high altitude.

On the 18th Jimmy found a White-throated Sparrow near his yard. On the 20th Carolyn and Lindell Dillon observed over 100 **Sandhill Cranes** off North Sentinel Point at Lake Thunderbird.
(continued page 8)

Minutes of the Oct. 15, 2012 Meeting

President Bill Diffin opened the meeting at 7:07 PM. Guests were: Jim Wilson, Hollis Price and Richard Smith. OKCAS founder, Dr. Sam Moore, attended the meeting.

Publication of the September minutes were approved as published in the newsletter.

Treasurer's Report was read by Patti Muzny for Nancy Vicars. Report approved.

Mark Delgrosso summarized upcoming field trips.

Nadine Varner reminded members that the fall OOS meeting will be held at the Oklahoma City Zoo on October 19, 20, and 21, 2012. No conservation report.

Volunteers to serve as the nominating committee were recruited. They are: Sharon Henthorne, Jim Bates, Jimmy Woodard and Doug Eide.

New Business

John Shackford reported that the Oklahoma City Audubon Society will conduct the 2012 Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 15th. This year, there will be no \$5 per person fee to participate. The magazine with count information will not be published this year. Diane Newell has graciously volunteered to host the after-count gathering and meal at the Newell home. Donations of food will be appreciated. Volunteers located 120 species in 2011.

Bob Holbrook mentioned that his wife has a supply of handmade neck warmers for sale again this year.

Old Business

Bill Diffin reported that cleanup of Prairie Dog Point was originally set for two times per month. Due to lack of participation, the project has been on hold for several months. Members indicated willingness to continue and Pat Velte will organize a day to do so. Discussion was held as to what part of Prairie Dog Point was included.

Unusual birds seen in the past few days were: a possible jaeger species on Lake Overholser by Jimmy Woodard and a Townsend's Warbler by Jim Bates.

Respectfully submitted,

Patti Muzny

Matt Jung's personal story about the Whooping Crane

When I was a boy of 12, I had the good fortune to pass the entrance examination to the "Hochschule mit Humanistischem Gymnasium" (the secondary school system, i.e. high school) in the town of Nördlingen, then located in West Germany. As a privilege for passing this exam, I could subscribe to a magazine entitled "Der Tierfreund" or The Animal Friend for 5 Pfennig (about a penny back then) per copy.

In the first copy I received was an article about those huge white cranes in North America, at that time nearly extinct and how the governments to the USA and Canada were finally cooperating in an attempt to save this species. The breeding ground of the few birds still living was not known at that time but was suspected to be 'somewhere' in the northern part of the continent. If memory serves me correctly, there were less than 25 birds accounted for along the Texas coast.

My fervent wish was then, as it still is today, to see at least one of these magnificent cranes before they bid us good by forever. I immigrated to the US and came to live in OKC on December 28, 1956.

Life took its course and I went to work, got married and raised a family here in Oklahoma but my interest in birds never waned. When I was fortunate to retire in 2004, I resumed my boyhood interest in birds and found out that Whooping Cranes do make stops in Oklahoma, mostly at the Salt Plains NWR. In 2006 I was lucky to see 5 adults with 3 juvenile birds from the tower located at the crystal digging area at Salt Plains but the distance was great, even with the spotting scope.

When I scanned NE mud flats this Tuesday and saw the typical 'Gestalt' of this great white crane, the German name is 'Der Wanderkranich' (wandering crane) that boyhood dream of seeing this magnificent bird up close was realized - 62 years later. Das is alles! **Matt Jung, OKC**



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

Field Trip Schedule

November 17: Longspur run at Embassy Suites / Jenkins (Norman, OK)

December 1: Christmas Bird Count scouting trip
Leader: John Shackford

December 15: Christmas Bird Count
Compiler: John Shackford

2013

January 2013 (TBA): Sam Noble Museum with a possible side trip to look for longspurs (Norman, OK)

January or February (TBA): Rio Grand Valley
3 – 5 day excursion

February (TBA): Grey Snow Eagle House
We will visit the Iowa tribe's eagle rehabilitation facility near Perkins.

Recorder's Report (cont.)

On the 22nd Jack Olson spotted a Turkey Vulture near I-40 in Seminole County. On the 28th In Stillwater Tim discovered a **Pine Siskin** at Lake Carl Blackwell; Brian found an Inca Dove at his feeder in Norman; and while Dick was walking along South Jenkins, his dog, Libby, kicked up an American Bittern and a bunch of Wilson's Snipe.

On the 29th at Cottonwood Creek Reservoir in Logan County (just west of I-35 on North Broadway between Waterloo Road and Simmons Road), Christie Stoops set eyes on a Pied-billed Grebe, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler and Canvas-back Ducks. While hiking Stinchcomb east Matt was surprised to hear and observe a single Gray Catbird, plus a Barred Owl and Red-breasted Nuthatch, and on the 31st on the west side he located the first fall Harris's Sparrows. As the weather continues to cool down, the flowers turn to seeds, and the leaves turn to gold, what other avian surprises will arrive?

During the October **141** bird species were reported with **5** new species which increased the year's total to **273** species in the Central Oklahoma area. 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.
