



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

NOVEMBER 2017

November: Trinidad and Tobago: A Tale of Two (or Three) Islands

Join us November 20 when Mary Lane and Steve Davis will be will be our guest speakers.

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is the southern-most nation in the Caribbean Ocean. It is only 6.8 miles from Venezuela and shares more of its biodiversity with South America than with other Caribbean islands. The country boasts several ecosystems that support nearly 500 species of birds.

Mary and Steve are both retired; Mary from the OU Health Sciences Center Department of Surgery, and Steve from the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Their interest in birding began to crystallize when Steve's uncle gave them a Nikon DSLR camera a few years ago. At that time, they began to take pictures of birds on their outings, joined OKC Audubon and began attending a few birding festivals. In December 2014, they went on their first international birding trip, to Panama.



They had the opportunity to visit Trinidad and Tobago in the Spring of 2016, along with Larry Mays, Mike Mather, and a group of birders from Arkansas. Mary & Steve stayed in three locations on the two islands, including the Asa Wright Nature Center, a former coffee plantation that is now a wildlife sanctuary. They traveled to a variety of habitats on the two islands and visited a third island, Little Tobago, taking many photos along the way. They will talk about the birds they observed.

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.

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



At the last meeting three dedicated and generous members, Jimmy Woodard, Nancy Vicars and Marion Homier, volunteered to be on this year's Election Committee. For the last several weeks they have been putting together a slate of candidates for the club's five officer positions: president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and parliamentarian. They will announce the slate at

the upcoming meeting.

They have done a great job and deserve your thanks and congratulations. At the outset I told the committee that I would not be able to serve as president again in 2018. For a couple of reasons the best path forward for the club is for me to give someone else a chance to lead OKC Audubon. I have been president since January 1, 2010, an eight year term. It has been one of the great joys and privileges of my life, more rewarding and fulfilling than I ever imagined it could be. However it is best for any organization if there is a change of leadership at the top every so often, and eight years is a generally accepted sufficiency for a president.

In January 2017 I became President-Elect of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society. The time required for me to fulfill my duties to OOS has proven to be greater than anticipated and will only stay the same or increase in the coming year. Also there is an inflexibility and a focus to the president's role that makes it difficult to perform for more than one organization at the same time.

As president of OCAS I have presided over all 78 meetings so far during my term, have researched and written 79 consecutive Perspective articles, have organized and cooked at seven annual picnics (the series started in 2011), have attended every Earthfest but one over the past eight years and have given talks at schools and/or have organized birding expos one to several times per year. It would be difficult to provide that kind of consistent input to two volunteer organizations at once. Any organization really needs the most complete possible attention and focus of its leadership if it is to thrive.

The candidate who has accepted the invitation of the Election Committee is an excellent choice with proven leadership capability within the context of a birding club. Her willingness to serve as your president bodes very well for the future of OKC Audubon. But I won't spoil the Election Committee's news by telling you who that candidate is here. It will be more dramatic and fun if it is a surprise at the upcoming meeting. As usual the annual election will be held in the December meeting.

Maybe you are aware there was a recent flurry of scoter sightings at Lake Hefner. Two Surf Scoters and eventually five Black Scoters were reported during November 1-3. One of the Black Scoters remains to the day of this writing, November 9. Over the past several days it has been reported regularly at Prairie Dog Point. Both scoter species can be seen in the photos Dr. Chris Butler included with his eBird checklist, <https://goo.gl/qVg7EC>.

The Black Scoters in these photos are not much of an identification problem. Their black crowns, clean white cheeks and otherwise all dark plumage clearly mark them as either juvenile-1st winter (Aug-Mar) Black Scoters or adult female Black Scoters. In flight they all showed dark bellies indicating adult female age rather than juvenile-1st winter age which has a white area on the belly.



© Chris Butler

The juvenile-1st winter (Aug-Mar) Surf Scoters are a little more of an identification challenge because their head markings closely resemble the head markings on juvenile-1st winter (Aug-Mar) White-winged Scoters. The fifth and sixth photos on the following linked page show side by side comparisons of 1st winter, November and December, Surf Scoters and White-winged Scoters, <https://goo.gl/5V8SRr>. The fourth photo on the following linked page (image below) shows another 1st winter, November, side by side comparison, <https://goo.gl/tNC1xg>.



White-winged Scoter on the left and Surf Scoter on the right
© Brian Currie

We can note the following points of difference between the two species: (1) only the White-winged Scoter shows
(continued on page 7)

Bird of the Month



By John Shackford

The **Blue-winged Teal** (*Anas discors*) is one of the dabbling ducks—ducks that feed by swimming on the surface of ponds with their bills open, the bottom part of their bill being underwater; occasionally they feed a little deeper by tipping downward, with their rumps in the air.

But generally speaking they are not diving ducks.

Identification of the adult male Blue-wing in breeding plumage is not too tricky. They are one of the smaller ducks and show a strong white crescent between bill and eye on a gray face. In flight, they show a blue wing patch; this blue patch is usually hidden when the bird is at rest on the water. But males during other part of the year, females and young are trickier to identify. In addition to being small and showing the blue wing patch, they show a little lightness of plumage between the bill and eye that goes downward toward the throat. But this is not a lot to go on—and it is good to consult your field guide. Where there is the possibility of a Cinnamon Teal female or young, they are nearly indistinguishable from female and young Blue-wings, although the male Cinnamon, with his overall cinnamon color, is unmistakable.



As an Oklahoma bird species, Dr. Sutton (1967. *Oklahoma birds*) says that the Blue-wing is a “transient seen chiefly from mid-August to mid-November and from early March to late May; nests occasionally” but “winter records (December 18 to February 26)” do occur. Thus, the Blue-winged is primarily a migrant in the state. Several authors point out that this duck is less hearty than most of our other duck species.

The rarity of Blue-wings in winter brings up a point about any rare bird reports on a Christmas Bird Count (CBC). An occasional erroneous report of a rare bird does not greatly damage the total report of species for that CBC. This is because the most important data from a CBC for researchers involves fluctuating numbers of expected species on a count. A rare bird is always quite fun to find,

and may be an important harbinger of things to come. But also a rare bird may just be handicapped in some way—perhaps injured from flying into a window, having a broken or injured wing, having a disease, or just being an old, weak bird.

Another possibility for some of the wayward birds we find during the year might be related to some research I saw several years ago. The research was done on small migratory birds, but I do not know why it would not apply to larger migratory birds like the Blue-wing as well. It was data from a surprisingly simple experiment. Small migratory birds were put in a cage that had an ink pad on the bottom, and sloped light-colored paper partway up the sides of the cage. Then these birds were shown correct images of the nighttime sky. Most of the birds of a species would jump repeatedly in one particular direction, thus revealing, apparently, the “normal” migratory response for that species. But on rare occasions, a particular bird would most often jump in the opposite direction (call it a rare “exceptional” bird, instead of a common “normal” bird), as revealed by the repeated ink scratch marks it made on the sloped paper. A possible example of this in the real world and using warblers rather than

ducks for the moment, is the eastern warbler records that seem every year to show up at Point Reyes on the west coast of California. Some of these rarities may be the “exceptional” warblers that turned in the “wrong” migratory direction, ending up on the west coast, rather than in the eastern U. S, where they “belonged”.

Getting back, specifically, to Blue-winged, the only nesting record I have any personal recall of for the state occurred in northwestern Oklahoma, in Harper County. Laurence Dunn, who was a long-time member of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society, showed me the spot where a Blue-wing had flown off a nest in a wheat field that he had harvested. I was very surprised to see how far the nest site was from the nearest water, a pond at least 200 yds. away; if the eggs had hatched before the wheat was harvested, the adult birds would have had quite a walk to lead young through the tall wheat to the pond. I had always assumed that virtually all duck nests were fairly close to water, an erroneous assumption, apparently, on my part. The number of eggs laid in a Blue-wing nest are usually between 8-12, but sometimes 6-16; incubation is usually 24-25 days and is done by the female alone.

Christmas Bird Count

By Nathan Kuhnert

This year the count will be held on **Saturday, 16 December 2017**. John Shackford has agreed to help me make the transition to the changeover. It is not possible to come close to filling John's shoes but I do want try hard and help to continue the tradition! Most of you, I hope, will repeat counting in the same areas you did last year. Call me or try to attend the November meeting if you do not recall what that was and we will try to work it out as we make the transition. For other questions, please contact me through the contact information given at the bottom. Last year we had 44 participants in 22 parties and counted 111 species. With a cold temperature of 9 degrees for that 24-hour period we could have wimped out big-time and recorded far fewer than 111 species.



We certainly hope for better weather this year! We really appreciate everyone's hard work. It is amazing what we can accomplish as a group! And the fun we can have!

As we lose habitat diversity—especially most extensively in the northwest part of our count area—it presents an increasing challenge for us to maintain a very high species count. Nonetheless, we appreciate everyone's efforts and always look forward, especially, to the unusual species we seem to come up with every year. And it should be remembered that although the rarities are the icing on the counting day cake, most of the usefulness of Christmas Bird Counts relates to what is happening with expected species. For example, CBC numbers of duck species help wildlife manager's set bag limits, aimed at protecting individual waterfowl populations that are declining.

This year we plan to have our after-count party at Johnnies Restaurant, 6629 NW Expressway, in northwest Oklahoma City. We have a private room there from 5-8 pm. I will plan to read the list about 6:30 pm. Pat Velte again will be at our tally and has agreed to help me with the data compilation aspects! We do encourage members to bring a dessert—always some great ones—and what we do not eat at Johnnies, we can bring to our regular bird club meeting the following Monday night.

Again, call with any questions about the count you may have.

Happy Counting!

Nathan & John's contact info: see page 5

Why birds are nesting earlier

(excerpt from Psy.org, California birds nesting a week earlier than they did a century ago)

A new study suggests that many of the California's birds are adapting to rising temperatures by breeding earlier than they did a century ago.

A comparison of nesting data recorded in the early 1900s with similar data today for more than 200 species of California birds shows that overall they are breeding five to 12 days earlier than they did 75 to 100 years ago.

"The shift to earlier breeding that we detected allows birds to nest at similar temperatures as they did a century ago, and helps explain why half the bird species in the mountainous areas of California did not need to shift upward in elevation in response to climate warming over the past century," said co-author Steven Beissinger.

Early spring arrivals have long been noted by the public and reported by scientists, but the assumption has been that the birds are tracking resources, primarily food: with warming temperatures, plants produce leaves and seeds earlier, and insects emerge earlier.

The new study spotlights another major reason: By nesting a week earlier, birds produce eggs and young at a temperature about 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) lower than if they nested at the normal time in the same place. This exactly counterbalances the approximately 1 degree Celsius increase in global temperatures over the past century.

"The good news is that there may be more flexibility for species to respond to climate change than we thought, and not all species may need to move farther north or to higher elevations," he added. "But we don't know yet whether staying in place and shifting schedules earlier is a permanent solution, or only provides temporary relief from the 2 degree Celsius (3.5 degree Fahrenheit) rise in temperatures forecast to occur."

Birds may find, for example, that the window of good temperatures for breeding becomes shorter, which may limit the opportunity to re-nest if they fail the first time. Larger species that have a longer nesting period might not have a enough time to complete their nests before it starts to become too warm, he said.

Audubon Society Minutes Oct. 16, 2017

Meeting was called to order by club president Bill Diffin.

Minutes from September meeting were approved without dissent. Guests were Matt Fullerton of Oklahoma City and Frank and Evelyn Houck of Grove.

Treasurer Nancy Vicars reports that our account contains \$5612.81 after monthly transactions.

Hal Yocum will lead Tuesday morning bird walks during the next three weeks:

October 17: Stars and Stripes Park
October 24 at Myriad Gardens
October 31 at Will Rogers Park

Sue Woodson requested volunteers sign up for refreshment duties through the season and list was distributed and completed.

Jimmy Woodard and Nadine Varner will host Wednesday October 18th a Big Sit at their home in Midwest City from 9 am to dark.

Future plans were reported by Field Trip Chairman Mark DelGrosso. Though final arrangements are not available, please keep posted on the website or by adding yourself to the field trip e-mail list. Planned trips are visits to Hagerman Wildlife Refuge in Texas, Tishomingo WLR, and the spring OOS meeting near Vian in April.

Old Business: John Shackford reminds us the date for the Christmas Bird Count is Saturday December 16th with after-party at Johnnie's Restaurant on NW Expressway from 5-9pm.

New Business: There is a change in the planned contract between our club and the Garden Exposition Building. Fourteen month contract renewals will be required in order to reserve monthly space for meetings.

Sharon Henthorn reports the upcoming Cornell Lab of Ornithology will conduct Project FeederWatch from November 11th through the early spring. This citizen science project is available to everyone.

Nominating committee was formed for determining choices for next year's officers. Volunteer members are Jimmy Woodard, Nancy Vicars, and Marion Homier.

After the meeting adjourned and a brief snack, our speaker gave her presentation. Megan Roselli, a Graduate Research Assistant at OSU, spoke of the life-cycle of the local tick population and a count of ticks on captured birds.

Submitted by club secretary Sharon Henthorn

Welcome New Members

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes

Matthew Patrick, Warr Acres, OK

Refreshments

Refreshments for the November meeting will be provided by:

Snacks: Marilyn Taylor and Doug Eide

Ice and Drinks: Diane Newell

CBC Contact Info:

Nathan Kuhnert, compiler
nrkuhnert@sbcglobal.net
(405) 549-4285
1723 Caddell Lane
Norman, OK 73069

John Shackford, assistant
johnshackford@gmail.com
(405) 996-6050
429 E. Oak Cliff Dr.
Oklahoma City, OK 73034

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2017

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	596-2759
Recorder	Esther M. Key	735-1021
Conservation	Dave Woodson	601-622-3467
Field Trips	Mark Delgrosso	403-5655
Field Trips	Betz Hacker	638-6210
Newsletter Editor	Pat Velte	751-5263
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.

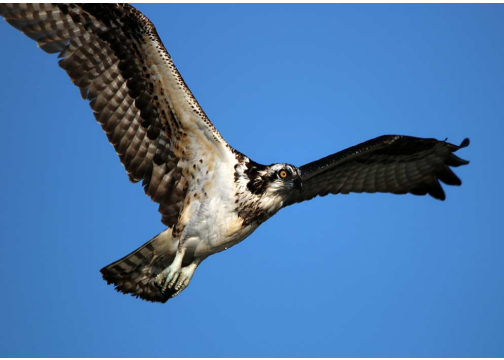
*For up-to-date Oklahoma City Audubon news visit: **OKC-Audubon.org***

Recorders Report October 2017

Flyover Surprises

During migration, sometimes the best discoveries are those that briefly flyover as they move from summer to winter locations. But some flyovers find their paths blocked by unseen obstacles. All the same birding involves looking and listening from ground level to sky high and the question is: Will these flyovers stop somewhere nearby for a while?

On October the 28th Deanne McKinney observed Wood Duck at Paul's Valley Lake in Garvin County. On the 30th Caleb McKinney found Blue-headed Vireo at Ninnekah in Grady County. On the 1st Laura Madden watched Yellow-



rumped Warbler and Dark-eyed Junco at Blanchard in McClain County; and Caleb McKinney counted Nashville Warbler, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Mourning

Warbler, and Common Yellowthroat near Ninnekah. On the 2nd Caleb Frome reported Osprey, White-eyed Vireo, and Northern Rough-winged Swallow at Purcell Lake in McClain County; and Deanne McKinney spotted Wilson's Snipe near Rose Lake in Canadian County. On the 3rd John Bates had Marsh Wren at Jim's Sparrow Rest in south OKC; and Bill Diffin witnessed a Summer Tanager at Mitch Park in Edmond.

On the 5th Zach Poland documented Black-and-white Warbler, Mourning Warbler and Wilson's Warbler at the Myriad Botanical Garden in downtown Oklahoma City. On the 6th Karl Mechem viewed Chimney Swift and Common Yellowthroat at Rose Lake; and John Tharp detected Dickcissel and Black-throated Green Warbler at Lake Thunderbird North Sentinel. On the 7th Caleb McKinney turned up Brown Thrasher in Grady County; Emily Hjalmarson found Great Egret, Osprey, and Common Yellowthroat in Pottawatomie County; Bill Diffin verified American Redstart at the Myriad Botanical Gardens; and Scott Loss spotted Upland Sandpiper and Common Nighthawk at Whittenberg Park in Stillwater.

On the 8th in Logan County Bridger Arrington saw Cattle Egret near South Mulhall, in Kingfisher County Zach Poland turned up Swainson's Hawk and Greater Roadrunner; in Garvin County Caleb McKinney added

Orange-crowned Warbler. Meanwhile, Emily Hjalmarson got Common Yellowthroat at William Morgan Park in Norman; Charles Lyon identified Eared Grebe and Peregrine Falcon at Lake Hefner; and Joe Grzybowski heard Fish Crow at UCO. On the 9th in Garvin County Swainson's Hawk was spotted between Maysville and Lindsay, in McClain County at Purcell Lake Spotted Sandpiper was recorded; at Wiley Post Memorial Lake Lincoln and Clay-colored Sparrows were seen and Larry Mays discovered a Pine Siskin at his home. On the 10th in Stillwater Scott Loss detected Broad-winged Hawk at Whittenberg Park, and Deb Hirt recognized American Avocet at Boomer Lake Park. On the 11th Corban Hemphill documented Clay-colored Sparrow in Stillwater. On the 13th Augustus Warne noticed House Wren, White-breasted Nuthatch and White-crowned Sparrow at Bell Cow Lake in Lincoln County.



On the 14th Nathan Kuhnert encountered a window kill **Cassin's Sparrow** at the Myriad Botanical Garden, and Dakota Byus tallied Wood Duck and Blue-winged Teal at Bell Cow Lake. On the 15th Cameron Carver verified Common Nighthawk near Wynnewood in Garvin County, and on the 16th he reported a Turkey Vulture and Pileated Woodpecker along I-40 in Seminole County. On the 18th there were eight participants in the Big Sit in Jimmy Woodward and Nadine Varner's yard and they found a total of 41 species including Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Towhee, Pine Siskin, and after everybody left Wild Turkey. On the 20th Zachary Hemans counted Northern Harrier and White-crowned Sparrow at his home in Logan County; and John Tharp observed Red-breasted Nuthatch in Norman. On the 21st Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen at Lake Thunderbird Calypso Cove.



On the 22nd Joe Grzybowski recognized Swamp Sparrow along South Jenkins; Ben Sandstrom counted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Blue-headed Vireo in Yukon City Park; Brian Stufflebeam found Black-throated Green Warbler at Martin Park Nature Center; Esther Key saw a Northern Harrier and Savannah Sparrow at Foster in Garvin County; at Washington in McClain County Wilson's Snipe, American Pipit, Cedar .

Waxwing and Vesper Sparrow were seen. On the 26th John Hurd watched American Avocet at Stinchcomb WMA west; and Scott Loss tallied American Wigeon, Lincoln's Sparrow and Orange-crowned Warbler at Sanborn Lake. On the 27th Sylvias Serpentine got Fox Sparrow at Couch Park. On the 28th Caleb McKinney noticed a Bald Eagle and Sharp-shinned Hawk north of Ninnekah; Zach Poland discovered a Hermit Thrush at his home in Logan County; and Thomas Jones located Redhead Ducks at Meridian Technology Center Pond.

On the 28th as they were flying over Stillwater heading south Scott Loss heard and identified **Red Crossbill** at Whittenberg Park and a bit later Corey Riding observed them at Babcock Park. On the 29th Jason Shaw added a Cackling Goose at Shannon Springs Park in Grady County; Zach Poland recorded Greater Yellowlegs at his

home in Logan County; Thomas Jones had Belted Kingfisher and Song Sparrow at Purcell Lake; Nathan Kuhnert identified Red-breasted Nuthatch and Ovenbird at Myriad Botanical Gardens; and Cody Barnes viewed Northern Harrier at Teal Ridge Wetland. On the 31st Larry Mays witnessed Harris's Sparrow at his home in New-



castle; and Caleb Frome encountered Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Fox Sparrow, Spotted Towhee and Brewer's Blackbird at Stinchcomb WMA west. Now the Christmas Bird Counts are approaching. Which one will you participate in: at home as a backyard reporter or in the field?

In Central Oklahoma only Seminole county remains under 100 species seen this year while three counties are reporting over 235 species seen for the year. What a difference it makes when many people bird and report for a county. During October of 2017 in the Central Oklahoma area **161** species were reported with **2** new species which increased the year's total to **268**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds by making reports at <http://ebird.org> and can also be contacted by e-mail at emkok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

Perspective (cont.)

a white mark on the folded wing, (2) the White-winged Scoter is substantially larger, (3) the Surf Scoter shows a sharper contrast between the dark rear crown and nape and the lighter side of the neck and head, (4) the White-winged Scoter has a larger white patch in front of the eye that extends far out onto the bill, and (5) the White-winged Scoter has a more extended head and bill profile. Sibley illustrates the 1st spring female (Mar-Jul) White-winged Scoter with more of the contrast described in (3) so that it appears comparable to a juvenile-1st winter (Aug-Mar) Surf Scoter.

We know that the contrast on the White-winged Scoter will not appear instantly on the 1st of March but will develop over time. So we might ask what is the earliest month that this contrast could develop on a 1st year female White-winged Scoter to possibly cause ID confusion with the Surf Scoter. The fact is I could not find an internet photo of a White-winged Scoter that shows the sharp contrast Sibley illustrates. Following are links to photos of 1st year, January and February, birds that don't show much contrast, i.e the only kind I could find, and note that for completeness I included photos of both males and females, <https://goo.gl/HvYKNb>, <https://goo.gl/iL5izZ> and <https://goo.gl/NRqHNM>.

The White-winged Scoter is an exceptionally hefty duck. Sibley gives the weight of the male as 3.7 lbs. For comparison here are Sibley's weights for birds the White-winged Scoter might be seen in the company of, ranked in order of weight: Common Merganser - 3.4 lb, Western Grebe - 3.3 lb, Canvasback - 2.7 lb, Ross's Goose - 2.7 lb, Greater Scaup - 2.3 lb, Redhead - 2.3 lb, Red-breasted Merganser - 2.3 lb, Black Scoter - 2.1 lb, Surf Scoter - 2.1 lb, Lesser Scaup - 1.8 lb, Ring-necked Duck - 1.5 lb, American Coot - 1.4 lb. In a typical raft of diving ducks or coots, a White-winged Scoter will stand out as noticeably large and bulky.

Field Trips:

January 20 (rain date Jan.27): Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge: The refuge is located on the upper one half of the Robert S. Kerr Reservoir near Vian (eastern Oklahoma) and features river bottom farmland and wooded swamps, all managed for wildlife. Leader: Marion Homier (mhomier@yahoo.com)

January 20: Tallgrass Prairie Preserve [in conjunction w. Tulsa Audubon]: Meet at the Preserve Headquarters at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Jim Deming, birdbrain.jim@gmail.com, 918-864-4707.

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

