



# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

November 2011

## An Eagle's Eye View of The Klondike Gold Rush

Joe Shepard will be the guest presenter at the November 21st meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society.

Joe has always had a keen observer's interest in nature and the outdoors. His life's work, however, was in the data processing area until 1988 when he quit his job and operated a military surplus store until 2006. In 2004 he vacationed in Alaska for a month and his soul was captured by Skagway. While visiting Skagway he asked how to get a job as a tour guide in his retirement and was told to call when he was ready. He called in 2006, was hired, and according to Joe, has been "paying annual ransom for my captured soul by working as a tour guide there for 6 years. My servitude there will fortunately last forever!"

His presentation will include discussion and slide show of the stunning beauty of Alaska's Inside Passage, its historic importance to the Klondike Gold Rush, and its amazing wildlife including bald eagles.

Come out and bring a friend for a good evening of camaraderie and birds and great refreshments. 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.



*Photo © Terri Underhill*

### Upcoming Field Trips:

#### **November 19: Fort Reno in El Reno.**

Jim Bates will be leading the Fort Reno trip on Nov 19. We will meet at 8AM at the McDonald's in El Reno. The McD's is at Country Club Road and I-40.

#### **December 3: Scouting for Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count.**

Leader John Shackford (johnsshack@aol.com). Meet at the east side of the dam at Lake Overholser at 7:30 am.

#### **December 17: OKC Christmas Bird Count (CBC).**

See page 7 for more details.

## President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin

How long has it been since you heard: "Sing a song of sixpence, a pocketful of rye. Four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie..."? Ever wonder what species of blackbird the rhyme refers to? The origin is English, so an icterid blackbird like the ones we see here in Oklahoma can't be the answer. The family, Icteridae, is confined to the New World.



Matt Jung recently showed me a photo he had taken in Europe of a Common Blackbird. This is almost certainly the blackbird species of the rhyme. It is a thrush, scientific name *Turdus merula*, all black in the male except for an orange bill and yellow eye ring. The female is dark brown with a duller bill and no eye ring. There is a Wikipedia article on the Common Blackbird which can be summarized by saying that the bird is quite similar in its habits and size to the American Robin, *Turdus migratorius*. The *Turdus* genus, the "true thrushes," has representatives on every continent except Antarctica (see Wikipedia, True thrush). Quoting from Wikipedia, "There are about 65 species of medium to large thrushes in the genus *Turdus*, characterized by rounded heads, longish pointed wings and melodious songs." So it turns out that if we know about the American Robin, we know something about a good-sized group of passerines, the 65 species of true thrushes, one of which we could encounter almost anywhere in the world. Extending this line of enquiry to the next higher taxonomic level, we note that the genus, *Turdus*, is in the family, Turdidae, the "thrushes." The thrush family incorporates 21 genera and includes species like the Swainson's Thrush in genus, *Catharus*, the Eastern Bluebird in genus, *Sialia*, and the Townsend's Solitaire in the genus, *Myadestes*. Paraphrasing from the Wikipedia article, Thrush (bird):

{Thrushes are plump, soft-plumaged, small to medium-sized birds, inhabiting wooded areas and often feeding on the ground. They are insectivorous, but most species also eat worms, land snails, and fruit. Many species are permanently resident in warm climates, while others migrate to higher latitudes during summer, often over considerable distances. Thrushes build cup-shaped nests, sometimes lining them with mud. They lay two to five speckled eggs, sometimes laying two or more clutches per year. Both parents

help in raising the young. The songs of some species including members of *Turdus*, *Myadestes*, and *Catharus*, are among the most beautiful in the avian world.}

The foregoing description is no surprise to anyone who has spent some time observing the habits of robins or bluebirds, but as it turns out, the entire family, Turdidae, 175 species strong, fits the same description. Of course, there is some variation. For example, in comparison to American Robins, bluebirds nest in holes and tend to feed more like flycatchers, especially in the summer, swooping down from low perches to capture insects on or near the ground.

If we look at a list of the families of passerine birds such as can be found in "Bird, The Definitive Visual Guide" (Audubon, DK Publishing), we are likely to feel overwhelmed. The 94 passerine families contain over 5,000 species, many with names which are utterly unfamiliar, Broadbills, Asities, Pittas, Manakins, Tapaculos, Pardalotes, Berrypeckers, Wattle-eyes, Batises, and so on. Is there some way to penetrate the cloud of passerine diversity and get an organized understanding of the families? Perhaps the example just given of the American Robin lights the way. We can match up the groups which science provides with one or more representative birds which we already know something about.

(continued on page 5)

## Oklahoma City Audubon Society

### Officers 2011

President	Bill Diffin	722-3778
Vice President	John Shackford	340-5057
Secretary	Nancy Reed	799-1116
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars	732-9885
Parliament	Ted Goulden	354-3619
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Refreshments	Jim Vicars	732-9885
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**

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# Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



There is one bird on our lakes that really stands out this time of year—the **American White Pelican** (*Pelicanus erythrorhynchos*). If you have someone who is getting interested in birds, you could do a lot worse than to take them to Lake Overholser and look at the pelicans there. Huge, striking, simultaneously beautiful and

ugly, interesting, and easily-identified birds. The wingspan of a white pelican is 9 feet, one of the largest of any North American bird. They are massive and beautiful in flight. The primary and outer secondary wing feathers are black and breeding birds have a pale yellow crest, but otherwise the bird is white. Examination of the face shows a certain ugliness or humor for its weirdness—a huge orange bill with a huge orange pouch forming the bottom of the bill; in breeding season, adults have a large hump on the top portion of the bill.

Unlike the Brown Pelican the American White Pelican does not fish by diving into the water; they scoop up water in the large pouch while floating on the surface. The birds then strain the water out of the pouch hoping they have caught a meal of fish. Often, while fishing, these pelicans form a line on the water and move forward together, which no doubt increases the odds of an individual pelican catching supper. One question is raised by Bent (1964, *Life Histories of North American Petrels and Pelicans and their Allies*): do the pelicans catch large fish? Bent mentions that there are only reports of small fish seen being caught, but large fish heads sometimes appear around a nest. Perhaps this question has been answered in the years since Bent published his life history of the Pelican.

Although a few white pelicans have nested on the Gulf Coast, most of them nest at selected freshwater lakes from eastern Colorado west to northern California, and northward almost to the northern border of Alberta and Saskatchewan in Canada. They usually nest on an island, which helps protect them from land predators. Normally, they lay 2

eggs, but sometimes 1 or 3, on mounds fashioned into a nest from debris. For finer material, according to Bent (1964), it will scrape up debris only from as far away as its bill will reach while a bird is sitting on the nest.

Bent (1964) also discusses the European White Pelican, now called the Great White Pelican (*P. onocrotalus*), I believe. The Great White is found in Europe, Asia and Africa (where there are some nonmigratory populations). It is believed that the American and Great White Pelican were once one population that inhabited the shores of the Arctic Ocean when climates were much warmer; but since then the populations have become isolated and now are separated by some 8,000 miles. If climate change continues, perhaps one

day these two populations will once again be reunited in the Arctic (I'm not saying this will be a good thing, at least for humans).

In recent years the white pelicans are much more common in winter in our vicinity than only a few years ago, now showing up almost every year on our Christmas Bird Count. It is becoming evident through such things as Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys that many popu-



lations of birds are shifting northward, apparently due to warming temperatures.

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## Cookie Patrol

Refreshments for the November meeting will be provided by: Jeanette Schoof, Betz Hacker & Sue Woodson.

## New Rosters

Member rosters are now available. Hard copies may be picked up at the meeting or an e-mail copy will be sent upon request. Drop a note to: [nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net)

# Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

September 2011

The past few weeks of fall weather have been so enjoyable for me. After a long summer of staying in Oklahoma City because it was too hot to enjoy being outside, we've been reconstituted and have returned to spending much more time outside in the woods. Trips to our Byars property have proved to be remarkable.

Migratory birds have not been that much in evidence, but other events have been rather fascinating. After over 30 years of "No Hunting" on our property, our son, Tim, and our granddaughter, Sydney, changed the tradition and dad and daughter became armed and potentially dangerous (for deer) on the first day of youth rifle season. They spent a long weekend hiking the woods and sitting in blinds. The deer population was exceptionally safe that weekend! An active 13 year-old girl who finds it next to impossible to stay still and quiet proved to be no threat.

On Sunday morning when they were walking back across the pond dam to prepare to come back to Oklahoma City, they noticed splashing and rippling in our pond,

which had become little more than a small over-sized puddle during the summer drought. They stopped to watch and realized they were watching a family of four River Otters having the time of their lives catching 2-3 pound catfish out of the diminished pond!

These feisty and so very cute pests were not to be deterred by the humans. They continued to splash and dive and chase each other as they captured the large fish and drug them out and voraciously tore them to pieces while Tim and Sydney watched from about 100 feet away. I might have accused them of trying to pull



a fast one on me, but Tim had his camera and they took many excellent close-up photos.

When Sam and Brian and arrived the following Saturday, there was no sign of the otters, other than tracks. I really wanted to SEE them! I was torn between being thrilled to have the possibility of actually seeing otters on our property and knowing that our catfish would not survive the onslaught of these proficient predators. Several weeks have gone by and we've been out looking, but they have apparently moved on.

When I contacted Mark Howery at the ODWC to ask about the range of otters in Oklahoma, I was shocked to learn they were relatively well established in the Norman area and have even been spotted in SW Oklahoma City. Apparently when the South Canadian dried up, the otters traveled overland until they found ponds that still had water and fish. Our property is less than a mile from the river. The image of a family of River Otters possibly loping down the highway made me smile.

So, our otters moved on and the pond has been partially replenished with recent rains, but other predators have moved in that are anything but cute! About 3 weeks ago we found evidence of feral pigs! We had seen tracks once or twice in the past 5 years, but never had damage. Now we have rooted-up ground in the woods and in the wildlife plantings. We have critter cams out and while they've obviously walked past one of them, the camera did not capture their image. But our neighbor east of us captured two on

his critter cam. I am so not lenient of sharing my space with PIGS! Now the hunting family members will be on alert and in pursuit of pork and venison.

A late evening stint in one of the critter blinds on Sunday, November 13, 2011, was an amazing way to wind up a beautiful fall day in the woods. As I sat watching for whatever came along, I saw a pair of Armadillos come out to forage; two flocks of blackbirds that made no noise as they flew into the setting sun; Cardinals and Towhees settling in for the night and the setting sun turning the clouds beautiful shades of pink and lavender.

As I walked back across the pond dam, a Snipe and a Great Blue Heron flew away from the edge of the water. Two does had come out just east of the cabin and were calmly grazing. (They must have known I was armed only with binoculars.) Just before we left, a Barred Owl screamed out its presence. It was indeed a good day!



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## Minutes of the October 17, 2011 Meeting

President Bill Diffin called the meeting to order. A motion was made to accept the minutes as published in the October newsletter. It was seconded and approved.

Treasurer, Nancy Vicars, presented the October 2011 report.

Cash on Hand 09/19/11	\$6,032.81
Deposits	45.99
Disbursements	-291.56
Cash on Hand 10/17/11	\$5,787.24

### Committee Reports:

Jimmy Woodard presented field trip activity and reported that the first Back Yard Birding event was successful socially and with bird sightings. Jimmy also asked for anyone seeing a banded Smith's Longspur to please report the sighting.

### New Business:

President Diffin announced it is time to nominate a slate of officers for 2012. Sue Woodson, Terri Underhill and Jim Bates volunteered for this year's Nominating Committee.

Sandra Krug received notice from Mark Howery that he is presenting four, 5-minute segments about birds on the Oklahoma Gardening program, airing between Oct. 22 and Nov. 19 on OETA.

New sightings of birds include Lark Buntings reported by Nancy Reed and Jim Bates. A Peregrine Falcon was sighted at Lake Overholser.

John Shackford announced that Diane Newell is graciously hosting the annual dinner for the Christmas Bird Count party. Cheryl Allen is cooking her famous chili. Please bring a desert or side dish. He also reminded everyone that there is a \$5.00 fee for participating in the count. Please turn in your fee to John Shackford or Nancy Vicars.

### Old Business:

Terri Underhill has bumper stickers for sale and Nealand Hill has caps for sale.

Warren Harden announced our November speaker is Joe Shepard. Joe will be talking about Alaska's Inside Passage and it's wildlife, including bald eagles.

Tonight's speaker is Jim Lish. His topic is Oklahoma's Fantastic Red-tailed Hawks. Jim's talk was very educational and his pictures were outstanding.

*Nancy Reed, Recording Secretary*

## President's Perspective (continued)

If we don't already know a representative species, we can learn about one that lives in our area or in some place we hope to visit.

Some of the surprising power of the approach just outlined to inform us on the passerines will be explored in next month's article. For now, let's look at a couple of exotic thrushes which can be viewed in Wikipedia. The largest thrush is the Blue Whistling-thrush, *Myophonus caeruleus*, dark blue with yellow bill, native to south Asia. Another large thrush is the Great Thrush, *Turdus fuscater*, dark grey on top with a lighter gray breast and bright orange bill and legs, native to NW South America and often found around urban areas.

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## CBC Schedule: Around the State

Arnett CBC – Monday January 2

Broken Bow CBC – Friday December 23

Fort Gibson CBC – Saturday December 17

Hulah Reservoir CBC – Saturday December 17

Kenton CBC – Sunday January 1

Norman CBC – Sunday January 1

Oklahoma City CBC – Saturday December 17

Salt Plains NWR – Friday December 30th.

Sequoia CBC – Wednesday December 21

Sooner Lake CBC – Tuesday December 27

Stephens County CBC – Friday December 30

Stillwater CBC – Saturday December 17

Tallgrass Prairie Preserve CBC – Mon. January 2

Tishomingo CBC – Sunday December 18

Tulsa CBC – Saturday December 17

Washita NWR CBC – Friday December 30

Contact information for each CBC area is available on the OCAS website [okc-audubon.org](http://okc-audubon.org).

# Recorders Report: October 2011

## Changing of the Seasons

Suddenly, the change from a hot, dry summer into shorter, cooler days also began a major change in plants and birds. So do the insect eating birds leave because of a decline in insects caused by the weather changes, or do the additional demands by juvenile birds cause a food shortage, or is there another reason for the exodus? Further north even colder weather forces many shore-birds, swimmers, and seed eating birds to move south. It is exciting to see the last of the summer birds while watching for the first winter birds and hoping for a good fall crop of seeds to feed them.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Joyce Konigmacher in Stillwater had the first White-crowned Sparrow among the juvenile Northern Cardinals. On the 7<sup>th</sup> Larry Hancock and Bill Diffin walked over ½ mile on the dried sand of Lake Overholser where they found a white Little Blue Heron, Northern Pintails, American Golden Plovers, American Avocets, American Pipits, Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcons. Over the weekend about four inches of rain fell in some central Oklahoma locations. While greatly helping to perk up plants, it was not enough to end the drought.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> Canton Lake began releasing 30,000 acre-feet of water for Lakes Overholser and Hefner during the next two weeks. Jennifer Kidney had a big gathering of Chimney Swifts over her yard in Norman, and on the 12<sup>th</sup> Sue Lutze discovered a Pied-billed Grebe in Tuttle. On the 13<sup>th</sup> Ken and Carol Williams reported a **Crested Caracara** in Choctaw County, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> Jan Dolph noticed one near the Kilpatrick Turnpike close to the Wilshire Boulevard exit. Both birders have seen them in Texas.



On the 14<sup>th</sup> in Norman Joe Grzybowski discovered the first Dark-eyed Junco, and at Lake Hefner Lisa Wiesbauer found a dozen Red-breasted Mergansers. Along South Jenkins, Jennifer Kidney saw a Yellow-rumped Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Savanna Sparrow, and Spotted Towhee, and on the 15<sup>th</sup> a flock of Harris's Sparrows. Jimmy Woodard noticed a flock of Canada Geese with a white one, most likely a Snow Goose. Jim Bates reports an unusual sighting of a Lark Bunting along the Kilpatrick Turnpike on the west side of the 50<sup>th</sup> street overpass. Bill Diffin, Marion Homier, and John Cleal went to Prairie Dog Point

at Lake Hefner and located a Northern Shoveler, Redhead, Osprey, Swainson's Hawks, Black-bellied Plover, Franklin's Gulls, American Pipits and a **Short-eared Owl**.



On the 16<sup>th</sup> Steve Davis and Mary Lane reported American White Pelicans and Yellowlegs on El Reno Lake, and Nathan Kunhert encountered a flock of Cedar Waxwings near McKinley Elementary School in Norman. On the 17<sup>th</sup> along South Jenkins Dick Gunn and Cecil Johnson located a Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Sora Rail and Hairy Woodpecker.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> the first freeze of the season hit the low lying areas in the northern part of central Oklahoma. Meanwhile, at Lake Hefner James Hubbel spotted a couple of Herring Gulls, Nashville Warbler, Lark Sparrow and reported water had begun to arrive. Jim Dandenbaker stopped shortly at Lake El Reno and found 125 Stilt Sandpipers and an American Golden Plover. Along South Jenkins Cecil and Dick saw Fox and Clay-colored Sparrows. On the 21<sup>st</sup> in Norman, Nancy Reed had a White-throated Sparrow and Spotted Towhee. At Lake Arcadia Sue and David Woodson discovered a Belted Kingfisher, Tufted Titmouse, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Chris Butler reports the OOS field trips yielded 84 species including a Cackling Goose, Ring-necked duck, Ruddy Duck, Horned Grebe, White-faced Ibis, **Dunlin**, Barn Swallow, Lark Bunting, **Chestnut-collared Longspur**, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Bewick's, Sedge, and Marsh Wren, American and Sprague's Pipit, Field, Grasshopper, Swamp, and Leconte's Sparrows. Matt Jung checked the berm on Lake Overholser for ten days and discovered Semi-palmated Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, and a female Indigo Bunting,

By the 26<sup>th</sup> patches of Maximilian Sunflowers and small areas of forest are turning into a brilliant sunburst yellow to light up the landscape in contrast with punctuation points of bright red foliage from sumac patches and winding Virginia creeper vines. Mark Howey heard an **Eastern Screech Owl** in Norman, and during the weekend Dick saw a late male Orchard Oriole which was later confirmed by a couple of OU ornithology grad students.

*(continued on page 7)*



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## Christmas Bird Count & 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, 17 December 2011. 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 are a new participant, please get in touch with me and I will try to assign an appropriate group and/or area for you. There is a \$5 fee for all participants, except those under 18 years old or feeder watchers only. This can be paid to me at the November or December meeting, at the Tally Party, to your group leader, by check to me or online using the PayPal form on our website at [okc-audubon.org](http://okc-audubon.org). (*Please note: to cover the credit card fee, online payment will be \$5.50.*) The \$5 is used by National Audubon to compile results and publish the yearly summary magazine; data from all bird counts is very useful in determining population trends for individual species.

Diane Newell has graciously invited us to the Newell home for our Count Tally Party, beginning at 5 pm on count day (Dec. 17); 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 corn chowder and soft drinks. We need several more volunteers for food for this pot luck supper. We don't want this to be a hardship for anyone—especially if someone has to bow out at the last minute because of unforeseen circumstances. We will pass the hat at our November meeting to help defray the cost of chili meat, 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](mailto:johnsshack@aol.com)  
429 E. Oak Cliff Dr.  
Edmond, OK 73034-8626

## Recorder's Report (continued)

On the 31<sup>st</sup> Gary Harritt photographed an **Eastern Towhee** in northeast Logan County, and it looks like Brian Davis located a few Smith's Longspurs among the Chestnut-collared Longspurs and Sprague's Pipits near the Embassy Suites in Norman. Meanwhile, at the Great Salt Plains Patrick and Tami Elder were rewarded with a sighting of four Whooping Cranes among the Sandhill Cranes. So keep your eyes open to see if they are found again in central Oklahoma as they have been in years past. Also, mark your calendar. The date for the Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count has been announced for Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup> and Cleveland County CBC on Sunday, January 1<sup>st</sup>.

During October a total of **135** bird species were reported including **6 new** species which increased the 2011 Central Oklahoma area total to **264** species. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds by turning in reports. I can be contacted by e-mail at [emkok@earthlink.net](mailto:emkok@earthlink.net).

*Esther M. Key, Editor.*

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## Treasurer's Report: OCTOBER 2011

CASH ON HAND 09/19/11	\$6,032.81
DEPOSITS:	
Membership dues	45.00
Sept. Interest	<u>.99</u>
	45.99
	<u>+ 45.99</u>
	\$6,078.80
DISBURSEMENTS:	
City of OKC/ 2012 meeting rent	200.00
Staples/ Oct. newsletter postage & sealers	43.86
Quintella Printing / Oct. newsletter copies	<u>47.70</u>
	291.56
	<u>-291.56</u>
CASH ON HAND 10/17/11	\$ 5,787.24
Respectfully submitted,	
<i>Nancy C. Vicars, Treasurer</i>	

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

## Top 25 Birds: Red Warbler

by Mark Delgrosso

*Red Warbler: (Ergaticus ruber)*

*FAMILY: Parulidae*

*RANGE: Mexico only*

*HABITAT: mountain forests with extensive pine cover, often mixed with oak, sometimes firs/junipers*

*STATUS: not uncommon*

I think everyone likes wood warblers. I am in love with the entire family. I have been since my early days of birding. In the New World they are arguably second only to the tanagers for the thrill of their color and to the hummingbirds for their liveliness. They are wonderful to see for the first time, and for the 200th. Even the plain-colored ones are a joy – I recently had the excitement of encountering my first Swainson’s Warbler in South Carolina. But I believe we really do appreciate the lightning flashes of yellow, orange, blue, black, white and more these jewels flaunt as they flutter in the foliage. They are among the prettiest birds we have.

When I first acquired the Peterson Mexican bird guide I naturally went first to the plates. The colors of the birds leaped out from the pages.



All yellow grosbeaks, blue and turquoise honeycreepers, the emerald toucanet. And there were the warblers. Suiting their tropical homes were wood warblers of sumptuous, tropical colors: and the one stand-out, for me, was the Red Warbler. A warbler with not just a touch of red about the face or flashes of red in the tail, or even red on the breast but an entirely red warbler - red from stem to stern save for an elegant cheek patch of white or gray. It is, arguably, the most beautiful member of a family of gorgeous little birds – take a look at one either in a Mexican bird guide or, better still, online photos.

Of course, it is a denizen of Mexico – one of that country’s many endemics. Though distributed, somewhat disjointedly, over a healthy swath of that country’s mountain ranges it is restricted to pine and oak associations at fairly high elevations. It is not particularly uncommon in these habitat types. I have not seen this bird in the wild, yet, but I have made inquiries as to exact locations where it might be found – one such place is the Tufted Jay Reserve between Mazatlan and Durango. Up in the Sierra Madre Occidental this area is also home to another of my ‘must sees’, the eponymous Tufted Jay. Might I suggest a future field trip to..... Mexico?