



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

October, 2012

Bird Identification: A Layman's Perspective

Our own Jimmy Woodard will be presenting the October program. He was introduced to birding by several friends in April of 1986. He counts naturalist Bob Jennings of Tulsa, who started the Oxley Nature Center, as his mentor. In his 26 years of birding, he has ventured to 49 of 50 states (except Hawaii), Canada, Belize, and Costa Rica. He has had the fortune and pleasure to identify 725 species of birds in the United States.

This program will be a rudimentary discussion on the process of bird identification, its successes, perils, and pitfalls. We will discuss how to find birds and the ways birders go about attempting to identify a bird.

Come out and bring a friend for a good evening of camaraderie, birds, and great refreshments. Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month. They begin at 7 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 & NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.



Oklahoma City Audubon Society Minutes

September 17, 2012

The meeting was opened at 7:00 PM by President Bill Diffin. The minutes of the June meeting were approved as published. Treasurer Nancy Vicars reported that the treasurer's report was inadvertently left at her home and was not available to present.

Mark Delgrosso, our Field Trip Chairperson, gave an overview of future field trips. He encouraged members to peruse our website for more information. He also asked that members consider volunteering as leaders for some of the field trips.

Dave Woodson reported that he and Jim Bates will be working on a bird list for Crystal Lake. The lake is now a site for inner city children to experience a bit of nature. There will be trails and message boards to aid in bird identification.

Sue Woodson asked for refreshment volunteers for the October 15, 2012, meeting.

New Business

Nadine Varner reminded members that the fall OOS meeting will be held October 19, 20 and 22, 2012, at the Oklahoma City Zoo. Participants may register online or contact Nadine.

Bill Diffin reported that Martin Nature Park is facing issues concerning wheel chair accessibility to ALL of the park's trails. If a proposal moves forward, the park will undergo major changes. A benefactor is willing to raise a large amount of money to move his proposal forward.

A question was raised as to how many times per year OKCAS is required to clean up Prairie Dog Point. Currently it is cleaned up twice per year. Bill Diffin will check with Pat Velte.

There was no Old Business.

Continued on page 2

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



Hi members. It is the political season for OKC Audubon. At the upcoming meeting you will be offered the opportunity to be a member of the Election Committee. This committee of at least three members will compile a slate of candidates for the leadership of our society during 2013 and will announce the slate at the November meeting. The

election will be at the December meeting where members will vote for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Parliamentarian. Chairpersons of the permanent committees, Program, Field Trip, Records, Conservation, Newsletter, Historical, Refreshments, Website and Publicity are approved by the newly-elected President with the advice of the other officers and chairpersons. As a member you have two ways to get involved beyond voting at the election. You may either step forward as a candidate or you may serve as a member of the Election Committee. Please consider contributing to the leadership of OKC Audubon by becoming an officer, committee chairperson or a member of the Election Committee. If you would like to discuss service with any of the current office-holders feel free to call us at the phone numbers listed in the newsletter. Participation of all members including new ones is enthusiastically encouraged.

As of last month our ongoing exploration of the passerines had progressed to the lyrebirds. In addition to the lyrebirds, the BSAG groups arranged along the trunk of the Oscine, i.e. Songbird, tree at <http://tolweb.org/Oscines/29222> are a foreign and diverse-looking assemblage. Two groups will be examined here, the Australian treecreepers and the Meliphagoidea superfamily, the honeyeaters and relatives. The Australian treecreepers forage for insects on and under tree bark like the *Certhia* treecreepers of which the Brown Treecreeper is a local example and like the suboscine woodcreepers in the Furnariidae. The Australian treecreepers behave much like the other two groups, but unlike them the Australian treecreepers don't have long, stiff tail feathers to use as a prop when clinging to a trunk (<http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/white-throated-treecreeper-cormobates-leucophaea/bird-foraging-tree-trunk>). Here is an example of three distantly related groups which due to their similarity of habits and appearance might be mistaken for close relatives. However their similarity is not due to closeness of relationship but is a consequence of being fitted to the same lifestyle. Biologists use the term, "convergent", to describe similar traits in distantly related species with similar lifestyles. Taxonomists have settled on the idea that taxonomic names should reflect genetic relationships rather than similarity in form and behavior. However in

earlier times when the widespread existence of convergence was not understood, names like wren, swallow, thrush, robin, shrike and flycatcher were applied to distantly related groups in different parts of the world. As birders we are free to make use of whatever names or classifications help us to remember the characteristics needed to make correct identifications.

The superfamily, Meliphagoidea, is named for its largest family, Meliphagidae, the honeyeaters. The 182 species are specialized for feeding on nectar (<http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/blue-faced-honeyeater-entomyzon-cyanotis/bird-feeding-nectar-tree>). "These birds are one of only a few groups that can fly backwards. They do not have extensive adaptations for hovering flight, though smaller members do sometimes hover (<http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/eastern-spinebill-acanthorhynchus-tenuirostris/bird-feeding-nectar-first-flying-then-perched>). In general, they prefer to flit quickly from perch to perch. Many genera have a brush-tipped tongue" (ref Wikipedia). Different honeyeater species eat varying amounts of fruit. They all forage on insects to help satisfy the extra nutritional demands of breeding, egg-laying and the rapid growth of nestlings. In the superfamily with the honeyeaters are three related families, Maluridae (27 species of fairywrens, emu-wrens and grasswrens, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/superb-fairy-wren-malurus-cyaneus/adult-male-singing-vigorously>), Pardalotidae (4 species of pardalotes, <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/spotted-pardalote-pardalotus-punctatus/male-preening-foraging>) and Acanthizidae (66 species of Australasian warblers, i.e. bristlebirds, gerygones, thornbills, scrubwrens, etc.) These are mostly small insectivorous birds although some also take fruit or seeds. A number favor sap-sucking insects and their secretions.

September minutes continued

Bill Diffin presented a brief and entertaining questionnaire about material published in the newsletter.

Jim Bates reported discovering a warbler fallout at Crystal Lake on September 14, 2012. He saw American Redstart, Wilson's Warbler, and Hooded Warbler.

The program was presented by Torre Hovick who gave a talk titled "Restoring Ecological Processes to Improve Grassland Bird Habitat". Torre's comprehensive research has given in depth looks at the monumental struggles our prairie birds face in today's fragmented and diminishing environment.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM by President Bill Diffin.

Respectfully submitted,
Patti Muzny
Acting Recording Secretary
for Nancy Reed

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



Oklahoma is in the middle of the flight path that Whooping Cranes (*Grus americana*) take every fall and spring as they come and go from their breeding grounds far to the north of us, at Wood Buffalo National Park, in northeastern Alberta and southern Northwest Territories, Canada, and their wintering grounds at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas coast near Corpus Christi. I believe there has been at least 1 record of at least 1 bird seen flying near Lake Hefner a number of years ago now, but I do not recall details of the report. One of the Whooping Cranes most frequent stopping points on their migration between their breeding and wintering grounds is the Great Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in northwestern Oklahoma, about 90 miles to our NNW; late October and early November are some of the best times to see them there in the fall.

Many of you no doubt are familiar with the broad outline of conservation efforts on behalf of this endangered species, but here I want to take a bit closer look. The Whooping Crane has come a long way from its all time low number of 15 birds in the 1940s. The total wild population as of May 2011 was 414 birds, with 103 breeding pairs; the total captive population for the same time period was 157, with 34 pairs, held at 12 locations, several of them zoos. This is a total population of 571 birds as of May 2011.

Most of the Whoopers in the primary wild population spend the winter at Aransas NWR in Texas, but a number of birds from this “flock” are now being found at other locations in 8 Texas counties. This is a good sign, I believe, because this wild population apparently is

starting to spread out beyond the bounds of its “last ditch” wintering habitat of the past at Aransas NWR.

In addition to the primary wild flock, 3 secondary wild flocks have been established, 2 in Florida and 1 in Louisiana. One of the Florida flocks, in central Florida is non-migratory, the 2nd flock migrates between Florida and Wisconsin; 2 chicks were hatched in the wild in Wisconsin in 2010—great news. The wild flock in Louisiana is non-migratory and is located at White Lake, in Vermilion County, southwestern Louisiana: here 10 young Whoopers were released into the wild in February 2011. One additional attempt to establish another wild migratory flock failed: Whooping Crane eggs were placed in Sandhill Crane nests at Gray’s Lake National Wildlife Refuge, in southeastern Idaho. The young from these eggs migrated to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico, but these Whoopers would select only Sandhill Crane for mates and also had high mortality rates, so the effort was discontinued.



J. W. Preston (1893, *Some Prairie Birds*, as cited in Bent, 1963, *Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds*) said the nests of the Whooping Crane “...were formed of soft grass gathered together in a firm heap about 1 1/2 feet high, and placed on firm sod, out of water, but very near it.” Whooping Cranes usually lays 2 eggs, but rarely 1 or 3. A number of photographs on the wintering grounds show a single Whooping Crane family made up of 2 adults and 1 young of the year, suggesting that only 1 of the 2 chicks that normally hatch in a nest survives until winter. It takes 4-5 years before the young reach breeding maturity. Whooping Cranes establish quite large territories on both breeding and wintering grounds, average

territory size being about 1.6 sq miles.

The flight path of the Whooping Crane is similar to many other birds that fly through Oklahoma along the central flyway—sandpipers, ducks, geese, gulls, terns, in addition to the Whooping Cranes. We in Oklahoma have a lot to be thankful for.

Welcome

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes new member, Georgianna Eiland, Shawnee, OK

Cookie Patrol

Refreshments for the October meeting will be provided by Matt Jung, Troy & Franc Fullerton, Jana & Gene Mott. Marion Homier will be hosting drinks.

Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

September through mid-October 2012

Nothing makes this chirping birder much more pleased than to see the brutal Oklahoma summer heat get chased away! Yee-haw!

The Muzny crew beat a hasty retreat to our Byars cabin as soon as we got a little rain and I totally enjoyed delightful birding and hiking and just plain existing so much more. The birds were excited as well. One of the first residents to awaken me at daybreak was the Pileated Woodpecker. Following that serenade was the Red-shouldered Hawk and it made certain it was not overlooked. Soon the Porch Phoebe chimed in and with it a Cardinal or two and the Carolina Wrens. Life is good on the screen porch.

During the evenings the Barred Owls began to chant from along the creek. If they position themselves exactly right, their calls create an echo that amplifies their conversations toward the cabin. After growling all summer about the heat, I must admit to being a little chilly, so I was curled up in my favorite lounge chair with a blanket. Traffic along the highway was very light and even the crickets were quiet. No tractors, chain saws, target practice, or 4-wheelers to intrude upon my peaceful solitude. Life is good with quiet.

Early in the morning the stage was commandeered by the Great Horned Owls who like to call from near our pond. Their conversations lasted for a little over 30 minutes. Their soft hoots to each other waft through the early morning air and settle so gently over our souls. Should I stay wrapped up in the blanket with my tea or grab the hiking boots? The hiking boots won and I grabbed my binoculars. Lifting my face to the light mist, I breathed in the country air and began my journey for the day. Life is good with hiking boots.

That morning I was hiking about three hours all along our property. The grass was wet, although the ground still held enormous cracks and the pond is so low I don't think our fish have survived. The wildlife still comes to drink because other ponds are either dry or in the same condition. I discovered the "possum grapes" were ripe and ready to be harvested, so I solicited our younger son, Tim, to help me reach up higher than I could reach with the aid of the tractor bucket and later we presented Ms. Vicars with a suitable collection of these tasty morsels. She makes the best jelly ever from these grapes. Life is good in the grape patch.

White-eyed Vireos were still calling along the creek and I heard a Summer Tanager. Brian also found a Catbird and he heard Bobwhite. The Solitary Sandpipers seem

to have moved on, but a Great Egret was seen at the pond. Brian also found a pair of Eurasian Collared Doves, which are not spotted often on our property, although they can be found in the town, which is 1.5 miles away. Downy Woodpeckers do not seem to be as common, although I've found Hairy Woodpeckers and one Red-headed Woodpecker. The Gnatcatchers were still around and we also located a few Scissortails. We did notice that the Scissortails were gathering on the utility wires and fences along the highway from I-35 east to our property. Life is good when the Scissortails gather.

In early October, I was scurrying into the SE entrance to the Capitol when I was distracted by a major altercation between a Red-tailed Hawk and a Eurasian Collared Dove. The hawk was perched on one of the decorative columns near the top of the building and the dove was dive-bombing it and squawking the entire time. I was a few minutes late getting to my office because that show was totally the best one around at the time. After enduring the assault from the dove for about two minutes, the hawk took off with the dove in hot pursuit. Never have seen doves bugging a hawk, but it was neat! Life was good for me – maybe not for the hawk.

I am already missing the nesting migrants, but am enjoying the resident birds and looking forward to the fall migrants that I know will soon be among us. Life is good during fall migration.

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
Parliament	Ted Golden	354-3619
Programs	Warren Harden	364-3491
Recorder	Esther M. Key	381-9170
Conservation	Dave Woodson	601-622-3467
Field Trips	Jimmy Woodard	365-5685
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

Recorders Report – September 2012

Already an unusual winter migrant

As the blossoms of the Maximilliam sunflowers open to greet the arrival of fall, migrating birds are arriving and leaving the drought stricken central Oklahoma area. By the 12th the News reports that to date Oklahoma has had 150,000 acres and 600 homes burn. Some sections of Central Oklahoma are in the exceptional drought category while most of the area is in the severe category. Will the drought in the central United States from the Dakotas to Texas bring in different winter birds?

On the 5th at Yukon City Park James Hubbel located Least Flycatcher, Wilson's Warbler, and Prothonotary Warbler. On the 6th Matt Jung walked Stinchcomb WMA West and on the 8th and 9th he explored Lake Overholser and heard a **Sedge Wren**, plus he identified American Avocets, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Bell's Vireo, Gray Catbird, and Yellow Warbler. On the 7th James Hubbell discovered a **Barn Owl** near SE 29th Street and South Bryant Avenue. On the 8th Jimmy Woodward found an Inca Dove at the Chisholm Park in Yukon. On the 10th Butch Enterline photographed a Nashville Warbler in Norman and located an Olive-sided Flycatcher at Lake Stanley Draper.

On the 14th Brian Muzny spotted a lone Black Vulture perched on a pole along SW 149th between South Western and Pennsylvania. Jim Bates stopped at Crystal Lake in the evening and located a male American Redstart, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and saw a bright yellow and green bird fly across in front of him. It landed in a nearby bush and was identified as a **Hooded Warbler**. On the 15th John Polo discovered two Caspian Terns at Boomer Lake. Joe Grzybowski passed by Lake Hefner and the most unusual bird was a mostly winter-plumaged Hudsonian Godwit, plus **Black-bellied Plover**, Northern Shoveler, Eared Grebe, Herring Gull, Caspian and Black Terns, and a group of Buff-breasted Sandpipers which was disturbed by a Merlin. Later in Norman he saw a Broad-winged Hawk soaring. A **Sora Rail** was photographed in the end zone at OSU's T Boone Pickens Stadium on National TV.



On the 16th along the Stinchcomb WMA north Matt found a first year Loggerhead Shrike, American Kestrel, Tennessee and Orange-crowned Warbler. In Stillwater Tim O'Connell saw a House Wren and Common Yellowthroat, and at Couch Park John Polo located a

Summer Tanager and two Swainson's Thrushes. Later during the night he heard Upland Sandpipers migrating through. On the 17th at Lake Stanley Draper Butch Enterline caught sight of a female Northern Harrier.

On the 18th at Lake Hefner Matt found four of the first fall Osprey; on the 19th along Stinchcomb WMA west Pied-billed Grebes, Swainson's Hawk, Clay-colored Sparrows; and on the 20th a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Jennifer Kidney heard a Spotted Towhee wheezing on South Jenkins in Norman. On the 21st Hollis Price had an American Redstart at her fountain in Jones. On the 21st Jack Olson located a Marsh Wren on the west side of the offices at 3705 W Memorial Road, and Jim Bates checked Crystal Lake and discovered a Black-and-white Warbler and **Blue-headed Vireo**.



At Lake Hefner's Lakeshore Park Marybeth Murphy spotted an **American Bittern**. On the 22nd Joe had a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** go through his yard in Norman. Sharon Henthorn saw two Lincoln's Sparrows along the east Stinchcomb WMA, and on the 24th at Lake Hefner she located Northern Pintails.

On the 27th Alex James hiked 8 miles at Lake Carl Blackwell and located a Willow Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, and Pine Warbler. On the 28th Kent Andersson and Jason Heinen had two **Palm Warblers** and two White-crowned Sparrows at Drummond Flats WMA. On the 29th after the rain Jimmy Woodward and Nadine walked the coffer dam at Lake Overholser and located Chipping Sparrows. Then they noticed a disturbance on the lake caused by an unfamiliar dark bird which Jimmy thinks may have been a jaeger, but didn't get a good enough look for a positive identification. On the 30th at Yukon City Park Jimmy observed a flock of Barn and Cliff Swallows and watched an immature Broad-winged Hawk being harassed by a Cooper's Hawk. In Edmond, Dave McNeely had a Winter Wren in his yard. The month ended with a cold and rainy spell. A few winter residents have arrived but when will the swimmers, sparrows, juncos and other winter residents arrive? Already an unusual arrival of Red-breasted Nuthatches has been reported. Will there be others?

During September **162** bird species were reported with **9** new species which increased the year's total to **268** 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.

Calif. Honeymoon Birding: Part 2

By Jimmy Woodard

We left Petaluma early Saturday morning on May 26. We drove over to Pt Reyes Nat'l Seashore and viewed the exhibits at the headquarters. We birded our way down the peninsula to the Pt Reyes Bird Banding Observatory. Nadine was ecstatic as this place is where all the MAPS bird banding data is sent to from all over the country. Nadine does MAPS banding thru the summer at Sequoyah NWR. We were able to go around with the resident banders to check the nets. They place nets one on top of the other to create a very tall banding lane. The top net is taken down by pulley system to retrieve the birds caught. Unfortunately, they did not catch anything while we were there but Nadine enjoyed checking out the facility anyway.

We next went to the lighthouse out near the point. Because it was very windy, the long series of steps down to it were closed. We did see a bunch of Common Murres on a nesting rock just below the hill. We also went to a beach near Chimney Rock and to Drake's beach where Nadine waded into the cold ocean. We saw many basking Sea Lions, several loons, and a male Surf Scoter.

We headed up the coast on Hwy 1 which is a very winding two lane road filled with traffic. It was slow going but the scenery was spectacular. We stopped at Bodega Bay for a short walk to stretch our legs. We found Pelagic Cormorant, Sanderlings, Osprey and a lifer Brant for Nadine. The wind was blowing hard creating a cool breeze off the ocean. We made the slow, scenic drive up to our motel in Ft Bragg arriving around 7:30.

Sunday morning we went down to the harbor at sunrise. We watched the boats head out in the rough seas and enjoyed a few Pigeon Guillemots, Western Gulls and some loons. Farther north, we drove the Avenue of the Giants. We drove thru a giant Sequoia tree at Phillipsville. We made it to Eureka, our home for the next two nights, at about 3PM. We visited the nearby Sequoia Park Zoo. It is a very small zoo so it didn't take long to walk around it and see all the exhibits. We met up with local birder, Chet Ogan, who took us to a couple of birding sites up at Arcata. We had some Short-billed Dowitchers, Dunlin and a Peregrine Falcon. Nadine also got her first look at Vaux's Swift.

Monday morning dawned cloudy, foggy and cool. We met up with Chet and drove a couple of hours up the coast to Crescent City to bird. We went to a cliff overlooking huge Castle Rock which was covered with thousands of gulls, cormorants, and murres nesting on it. After some searching, we were able to find two Tufted Puffins amongst the mass of birds.

After a quick picnic lunch just over the border in

Brookings, Oregon, we started back down the coast stopping at several spots along the way to bird and enjoy the breathtaking scenery. We visited the Trees of Mystery tourist park which had large mockups of Paul Bunyan and Babe the blue ox. We hiked the trails enthralled by the massive redwood trees and strange tree trunk exhibits. We did hear and see a Pacific Wren. We also rode a tram up to the top of the mountain for a great overview of the area. Chet spotted an Osprey nest off in the distance. Back down below in the parking as we prepared to leave, I heard and spotted several Red Crossbills atop some pine trees across the road. We set up the scope to give Nadine a better look at another lifer.

Tuesday morning, I dropped Nadine off at the zoo where she was to get a behind the scenes tour with one of the keepers. I then met up with Chet and we headed inland into the mountains to do some birding. We ended up at Horse Mtn about 30 miles inland from Arcata. We hiked around thru the woods. We started hearing a couple of Sooty Grouse, a nemesis lifer possibility for me. After several minutes, I finally located a male Sooty about 40 feet up in a tree. His calls were very difficult to pinpoint as to location and height above the ground. He allowed us to observe him for several minutes until he got a bit nervous and we departed.

We continued to hike around the mountaintop and found Mtn Chickadee, Pac Slope Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Pileated WP, and Mountain Quail. We got back to the zoo and I picked up Nadine. We parted with Chet and headed east and inland along Hwy 299. Just west of Redding, we drove up into the dry, brushy foothills. Along a ridgetop, we tried to find Sage Sparrow. We got a very brief glimpse of one coming into a possible nest shrub on a slope below us. Try as we might, we never did see it again. Nadine didn't count it as a lifer because she didn't see it very well.

Wednesday morning, we slept in before heading back to Highline Ridge near French Gulch to try again for the Sage Sparrow. Again, only I got a brief look at one bird. Nadine did not see it. We did see and hear many Spotted Towhees and Wrentits. We also had Scrub Jays, Acorn WP, Anna's Hummer and a Red Shouldered Hawk along a creek in French Glen.

The day warmed quickly as we drove south on I-5 to the headquarters of the Sacramento NWR. We got some info about locations of Tricolored Blackbirds from refuge staff and then set out driving the auto tour loop. We didn't see much but it was now 90 degrees so that put a damper on bird activity as well as us humans. We did manage to locate Black Phoebe, Marsh Wren, Brewer's Blackbird, Pheasant and Lesser Goldfinch.

We went down to nearby Delevan NWR and staked out a road where the biologists said the Tricolored

Blackbirds were hanging out. After some searching we

did see and hear a few fly over. Just down the road, an orchard held a large flock of Tricoloreds. The biologists told us that any large flock of blackbirds this time of year would be Tricoloreds and they were right. Redwings had already paired off and were breeding but the Tricoloreds had just recently arrived in groups and had not set up breeding territories. Further down the road at Colusa NWR, the auto tour road produced a few birds. We had Cinnamon Teal, Pintail, Gadwall, Common Gallinule, Wood Duck, Western Kingbird, and Bullock's Oriole. We ended the day at a motel in Woodland, just west of Sacramento and the airport.

We arose early to make our 6:30 flight back to OKC. We turned in the rental car and shuttled to the airport. Panic set in for me when I realized I had left my backpack containing my binoculars in the rental car. I had to rush back over to Hertz and frantically search for the car. The employees finally found it and I retrieved the backpack and made it back to the terminal in time to board the flight.

We made it back home to OKC about 3PM. We enjoyed the ten day birding trip with 185 species. Nadine had 19 lifers on the trip. Oh yeah, the honeymoon was great, too!

Christmas Bird Count

This year's Oklahoma City Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be on Saturday, 15 December 2012. I hope those of you who usually participate will again survey your specific areas of the count circle. There is good news and bad news this year about the count. The bad news is that Audubon will no longer be publishing the CBC Annual Summary as in the past, but will go to online summary reports instead. The good news is that no one will have to pay the (former) \$5 participation fee!

Diane Newell has once again graciously agreed to be our host for the annual CBC Tally Party; we will meet at her home at 8304 Lakeaire, OKC, (phone 405-721-4953). The party will start any time after 5 pm and we will aim toward reading the list at 6:30 pm. We appreciate people donating food for the party, but we hope you will come regardless, even if you cannot make the count itself. The more the merrier at the party! (For the CBC tally party the last couple years I have not been totally effective at getting quite enough variety of food donated and am hoping for someone to help pull this part of count day together a little better and/or a few more volunteers donating food.) Please contact me if you plan to bring a food item or need suggestions. As a start on the menu I hope we can talk Cheryl Allen into making her famous chili once again and I will fix my corn/potato chowder; soft drinks and paper plates, etc. will be provided for at the party. The Tally Party is always a fun time to share with everyone.

If you have any questions about participating on the count, count party, etc., my contact information is given below.

John Shackford, Compiler Email: johnsshack@aol.com
Phone: (405) 340-5057 or cell: (405) 996-6050

TOP 25 : the Asities

By Mark Delgrosso

FAMILY: *Philepittidae*

RANGE: *the island of Madagascar only*

HABITAT: *forest at varying altitudes*

STATUS: *Virtually all native organisms on Madagascar can be considered threatened due to extensive human impacts, especially deforestation.*

Your first question may be *what's an asity?* [asities is plural]. *Is this a bird? Sounds more like a flower.* The asities comprise a very small family of passerine birds – 4 species in all. Secondly, *how do you pronounce 'asity'?* – one dictionary consulted (and it's hard to find this word in most dictionaries) gives it as 'ASS uh tee'. And from whence the name derives seems lost in the mists of the Madagascan rain forest. I include them together for to see any one would be a treat. And I have included them on my must-see listing for 2 reasons: they are beautiful and intriguing and, secondly, to see them in the wild you must go to Madagascar – that ark of unique life forms and the only place in the world they live. Not a bad deal.

There has been much discussion as to which other family of birds the asities are most closely related. Since they have been isolated on the island they have actually evolved to resemble birds to which they have no close relation. Two of the species remind me, in overall shape, of some of the Hawaiian honeycreepers. Indeed, they were once deemed the 'False Sunbirds' because of their resemblance to said birds (which are Old World equivalents of hummingbirds). Not surprisingly the males outshine the females in color and adornment. One species, the Common Sunbird-Asity, is especially pretty with subdued sky-blue uppers complemented by lemon-yellow underparts. All the males have bright wattles around the eyes for an added touch of color.

And as if these birds weren't reason enough to head to the 'Lost World' of Madagascar adding to the lure are entire *families* of birds found nowhere else (the Asities included): Vanga Shrikes, Cuckoo-Rollers, the enigmatic Mesites, and the Ground-Rollers. And let's not leave out those intriguing *mammals* that call Madagascar home – those half-dog, half-monkey stars of the forest – the lemurs.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society
c/o Carla Brueggen
8010 NW 32
Bethany, OK 73008

Field Trip Schedule

October 19—21: OOS Fall Meeting at the OKC Zoo, <http://www.okbirds.org/2012-oos-fall-meeting.pdf>.

November 3: Salt Plains NWR & Drummond Flats WMA We will be looking for migrating shorebirds and possible Whooping Cranes.

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

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.

March (TBA): Woodcock Courtship at Lake Stanley Draper Leader: Jimmy Woodard

March 13—23: Tufted Jay Preserve, Mazatlan, Mexico We'll have the opportunity to see some of Mexico's beautiful endemic birdlife, including the gorgeous Tufted Jay, at the eponymous reserve outside Mazatlan. This is a chance for some exotic lifers plus possible beach R & R in historic Mazatlan. Coordinator/Leader: Mark Delgrosso (470-4533 or medelgrosso@gmail.com).
