



# Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

October, 2014

## Birds at the Zoo

Nadine Varner will be the presenter at the October meeting of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society. She will be sharing behind the scenes photos from her 8 years at the Oklahoma City Zoo.

Nadine is a bird keeper at the Oklahoma City Zoo and is the treasurer of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society. She is the youngest child of birders Don and Joyce Varner from Tahlequah, OK. She has a Bachelor's degree in zoology from Northeastern State University. She has worked for Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville, the World Bird Sanctuary in Saint Louis, MO and the Saint Louis Zoo. She has banded birds in Alaska, Texas, Missouri, Illinois and Oklahoma.

Join us Monday, October 20 at 7 p.m. for an enjoyable evening of birders. Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month. Meetings are held at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44



## TOP 25: Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*)

**FAMILY:** Menuridae

**RANGE:** eastern Australia only

**HABITAT:** moist forest along Australia's east coast region; Found from sea level to mountain habitats

**STATUS:** common within its range

Here's a bird that can't help but impress (in the case of the male - as is standard in the world of birds). Firstly, it's Australian. Secondly, it is adorned with fantastical tail feathers that really need to be seen to be believed (and give the bird its name). And it is not only a *visual* delight but a performance artist without peer in the animal kingdom. I have only seen footage taken by others of the male's courtship rituals but they, too, must be experienced to be believed.

It looks like a pheasant but is far from it. In fact, the Lyrebird is, after certain corvids (crows, ravens), the largest of passerines – what we think of as the perching birds or songbirds. And sing it does. It is without peer as a mimic – capable of impeccably imitating not only other birds but just about anything! I have heard the bird imitate chainsaws and the shutter of cameras. This ability is due to highly developed muscles controlling its syrinx – the bird's 'voice box'. But this concert is meant only to lure a female to his stage – a mound in the forest that he himself has built and cleared of all debris. Then the dancing begins. This also cannot be easily described with words. If a female walks away unimpressed – well, I just don't know what to say – it rarely gets better than this in the bird world.

# President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



At the upcoming October meeting the Election Committee will be staffed by a call for volunteers. The Election Committee is a requirement set out in the Society's constitution and is composed of a minimum of three members. The purpose of the Election Committee is to nominate candidates for the five officer positions which are elected each year. These five officer

positions are Parliamentarian, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President and President. It is also traditional for the Election Committee to suggest candidates for the committee chairmanship positions. These consist of the Recorder, Field Trip Chair, Conservation Chair, Historian, Hospitality Chair, Newsletter Editors, Website Chair and Public Relations Chair. Usually the job of the Election Committee is easy because the incumbents agree to serve another year. The Election Committee announces the candidates at the November meeting, and the election is held in the December meeting. I hope you will consider serving on this committee or running for an office. Our election process is important to the fair and orderly selection of the leadership.

The ODWC Wildlife Expo was on the last weekend in September at the Lazy E Arena in Guthrie. Three OCAS members answered the call to volunteer at the birding tent managed by Mark



Howery. The volunteers were Terri Underhill, Donna Mackiewicz and me. Friday was devoted to school children. The day was spent adjusting scopes to the proper height, administering the bird ID quiz Mark created, explaining how to identify birds and showing how to use the audio feature of the book, Bird Songs, 250 North American Birds in Song. There were still large numbers of children on Saturday and Sunday, but there



were adults too. Adults often have questions about the birds they have seen, the how-tos of bird

feeders and nest boxes, and what equipment to buy. The Expo is by far our best opportunity of the year to expose non-birders to the entertainment and value of birding and to display the capabilities and knowledge of birding experts like our club members.

For the last couple of months in this space we have been exploring the Passeroidea superfamily. In June we listed the families and surveyed recent changes and proposed changes to the family-level taxonomy. We also noted the presence of deep, conical bills as a common character of many passeroid species. In September we saw how widespread the deep, conical bill is in the tanager family, Thraupidae, and how many tanagers with finch-like bills were originally thought to be members of the finch family, Fringillidae. There is a flip side to this revision in thinking about finch vs. tanager. Two genera of brilliantly colored Neotropical birds that were thought to be tanagers have turned out to be finches. These birds of the genera Euphonia and Chlorophonia were removed to the Fingillidae in 2009 by the South American Classification Committee of the American Ornithologists Union. The actual SACC written proposal contained some interesting background on the finch-like biology of the two genera, <http://goo.gl/VeO8j2>. Complex songs and vocal mimicry are pointed out in the proposal as finch-like characters possessed by some members of Euphonia and Chlorophonia. The proposal doesn't list the mimics among the more typical finch species to which the Euphonia and Chlorophonia finches are being compared. However the following passage comes from the bottom of the Pine Siskin/Lawrence's Goldfinch page of The Sibley Guide First Edition (2000), "All species in the genus Carduelis [sic] are known to incorporate imitations of other species' calls into their song. Lawrence's and Lesser Goldfinches use many imitations, Pine Siskin fewer, and American Goldfinch and redpolls the fewest." (Since 2000 AOU has segregated the American siskins and goldfinches in genus Spinus and the redpolls in genus Acanthis.) The brilliant colors which were the reason for original misclassification of Chlorophonia and Euphonia in Thraupidae can be seen in the following images. Links to sounds are also included.

male Blue-naped Chlorophonia, image: <http://goo.gl/cayYuj>

male Blue-naped Chlorophonia, sound: <http://www.xeno-canto.org/55471>

male Violaceous Euphonia, image: <http://goo.gl/KgC1SV>

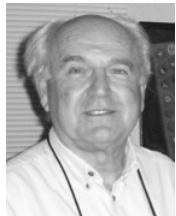
female Violaceous Euphonia, image: <http://goo.gl/qTdcM>

male Violaceous Euphonia, sound: <http://www.xeno-canto.org/84523>

The song of the Blue-naped Chlorophonia is a simple down-slurred note reminiscent of the down-slurred notes in the song of a House Finch, <http://www.xeno-canto.org/72282>. The variation in the song of the Violaceous Euphonia gives the impression of mimicry, and the Remarks section under the audio recording lists the birds which are being mimicked.

# Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



In the September 2014 club newsletter, Patti Muzny had a wonderful story about the American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*), a pair of which came to her thistle feeder all summer long—because she kept the thistle feeder going. Later in the summer a 3<sup>rd</sup> goldfinch showed

up that may well have been a young bird raised by Patti's original pair. I know of no other report of such a thing happening. (Others might have similar stories and thus it may be me who is out to lunch.) But at least to me Patti's observations are quite remarkable and I would like to discuss the goldfinch further, to help highlight what I see as fun and positive aspects of Patti's observations.

The American Goldfinch presents two "faces" to Oklahomans, depending on season. The male goldfinch is a thing of beauty in breeding plumage, with its hurt-your-eyes yellow. But we rarely see the bird over summertime because we are near the southern limit of the species' breeding range.

One of my recollections of seeing them in summer is of a pair of birds in bounding flight, maybe 50 yards away, and going further. This is not like winter, when we come to expect them only a few feet away at our feeders.

There are some interesting things about the nesting of this goldfinch. It builds a very tight nest with things like thistle down. The nest is so tightly woven that if there are young in the nest and a hard rain comes, the young can drown, apparently because water is so slow to drain through the nest; this was reported to A. C. Bent (1968, *Life Histories of North American Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Buntings, Towhees, Finches, Sparrows, and Allies*, part 3) by Arthur A. Allen. Another thing about the nest is that this goldfinch nests later than most species of birds—which can mean they are nesting during our really hot summertime days, July and August. During these times it is reasonable to believe that sometimes the young in the nest may succumb to our summer heat, because the tight nest probably also holds much heat. This may even be part of the reason the species does not nest too far south

of us—it may just be too hot for the young to survive in the nests during really hot summers. On the positive side, late nesting by the goldfinches means avoiding most cowbird parasitism, because cowbirds have usually stopped laying eggs by July. As to nesting, this goldfinch can lay 4-6 eggs, but usually 5.

One summer when several of us were doing some serious bird banding in a willow thicket at the north end of Lake Overholser—banding carried out under Warren Harden's permit and guidance—Warren and I found a young goldfinch which could just barely flutter short distances. We told Dr. George Sutton about it and he urged us to try to find the nest. He said it should be quite near where we originally found the

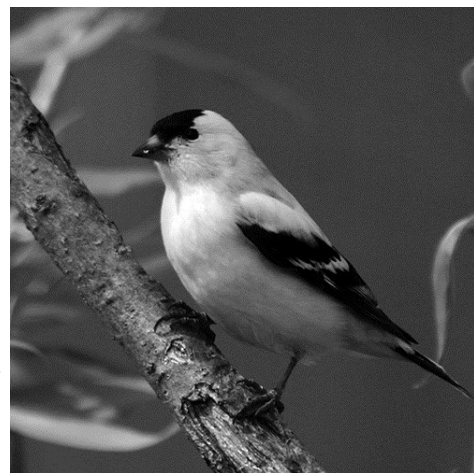
young goldfinch. We returned to the banding area and sure enough we found the nest about 10 feet high in a 12 foot high willow.

Fall is now here and soon we will see the other face of the American Goldfinch; they will filter down from the north and flocks of them will start to show up at our feeders, giving us great looks at them from only a few feet away. But these goldfinches—including male birds—now usually have a lot of drab olive-brown in their plumage. In Oklahoma, this finch is at or near the top of the list of the most frequent feeder birds. Thistle feeders are especially favored by the goldfinches; unfortunately

thistle seeds are expensive, so many feeder watchers do not put out thistle seeds in winter, much less in summer, like Patti did.

As mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, Patti found the goldfinches showing their 2 "faces"—both summer and winter—at the same time at her feeders, a great coup, in my opinion!

Such bits of possible changes in bird behavior give me hope that at least some bird species will be flexible enough to withstand the altered types of urban habitat we humans are creating.





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## Minutes of the Meeting

September 15, 2014

Meeting called to order by President Bill Diffin.

Treasurer's report: Nancy Vicars reported \$5,978 in the account after summer expenses, which included yearly memberships and rent for OKC Parks, and OKC Garden Club. Party supplies were reimbursed for the picnic in June.

Field trip committee: Mark Delgrosso requests trip leaders for favorite birding spots. He will enter new field trip information on the okc-audubon.org website as it comes available.

Bill Diffin reminds us to volunteer for a nominating committee for choosing candidates for next year's officers.

Doug Woodson reports several upcoming birding and conservation opportunities: The Wildlife Expo will be held again at the Lazy E Ranch on September 26-28, and volunteers to man the booth are encouraged to donate some time. The OKC Zoo will have a presentation on September 21 at the zoo's education center about Ecuadorian conservation efforts.

John Shackford asked us to volunteer to monitor some bird-boxes that are newly available for attracting prothonotary warblers.

Guests: Jennie Brooks of OKC, Vicky and Jim Rombly of OKC, Don Moss from Arizona.  
New members: Marilyn and Jerry Taylor

The evening's presentation was by Matt Jung, who reported his summer trip to Hungary, accompanied by Lonnie Gamble. Matt spoke about the birding, history, and his family's connections to this historic area.

The meeting was adjourned.

Sharon Henthorn, Secretary

## Welcome!

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes new members:

Zack Poland, Guthrie, OK  
Jennie Brooks, OKC  
Marilyn & Jerry Taylor, OKC  
Scott Jantz, OKC (welcome back)  
Pamela Withrow, Edmond, OK



## Refreshments

Refreshments for the October meeting will be provided by Kevin Groeneweg, Mark Delgrosso, and Calvin Rees

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## Oklahoma City Audubon Society

### Officers 2014

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	364-3491
Recorder	Esther M. Key	735-1021
Conservation	Dave Woodson	601-622-3467
Field Trips	Mark Delgrosso	445-2300
Newsletter Editors:		

	Pat Velte	751-5263
	Carla Brueggen	495-3259
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 Oklahoma City Audubon news between newsletters and meetings, be sure to log onto:*

**OKC-Audubon.org**

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## 2014 - 15 FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

As of this writing many of the trips/ dates are tentative for 2014-15; any trip w/o a date assigned is in this category. Check with Mark Delgrosso at: markdelg94@gmail.com or the website/ newsletter for updates and final scheduling/ cancellations.

NOV 15: Guthrie Sand Pits: *Leader:* Jimmy Woodard (j.woodard@cox.net):

NOV.: Whooping Crane trip to Great Salt Plain

DEC.6: Pre-CBC Scouting Trip: meet at 8am on W side of Lake Overholser dam near boat launch area (usual meeting spot for this trip). Contact *Leader* John Shackford (405 340 5057 or johnsshack@aol.com) for further details.

DEC.20: Christmas Bird Count: *Leader:* John Shackford (405 340 5057 or johnsshack@aol.com)

WINTER:

-Overholser/Hefner lakes: *Leader(s):* Bill Diffin (williamdiffin@aol.com)/ Jimmy Woodard (j.woodard@cox.net)

-Canton Lake: *Leader(s):* Bill Diffin Jimmy Woodard

DEC. (TBA): Pre-CBC Scouting trip: *Leader:* John Shackford (johnsshack@aol.com)

FEB.(TBA): Woodcock mating: *Leader:* Jimmy Woodard (j.woodard@cox.net)

SPRING:

-In/around OKC Zoo: *Leader:* Nadine Varner

-Mitch Park: *Leader:* John Shackford (johnsshack@aol.com)

APRIL (date TBA): Backyard birding: once again member Nancy Reed has invited interested birders to her property in Norman for spring migration. Her extensive property hosts a diversity of habitats that should make for a productive and exciting morning of birding. *Leader:* Mark Delgrosso (markdelg94@gmail.com)

MAY [Memorial Day weekend]: Quivira Nat'l Wildlife Refuge: on to Kansas and Quivira for possible breeding Black Rails- possible side-trip to Cheyenne Bottoms. *Leader:* Mark Delgrosso (405 445 2300/markdelg94@gmail.com)

JUNE: Club Picnic

# Recorders Report

## September 2014

### *Migration fallouts*

As September began a northern cold front pushed its way into central Oklahoma causing a migrant fallout, and reports for one day cover three paragraphs. Then Rose Lake became a birding hot spot for the month. Later a mystery gull appeared which was identified with the assistance of gull experts.



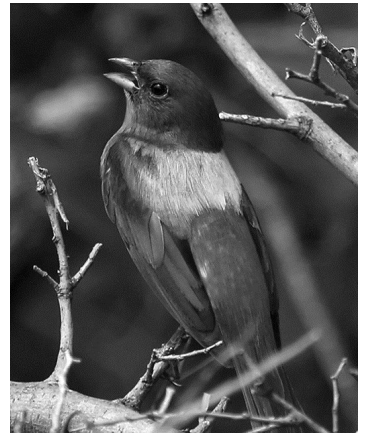
On the 1<sup>st</sup> Hal Yocum discovered 2 Neotropic Cormorant at Lake Hefner. On the 4<sup>th</sup> when the rain started in Stillwater, Tim O'Connell stepped outside and heard an Upland Sandpiper and flock of Dickcissels. Along Cottonwood Creek in Logan County

Christie Stoops noted an American Woodcock. On the 5<sup>th</sup> it was still raining and Tim saw Common Nighthawks zipping around his neighborhood and more Dickcissels. Later on campus he found a road-kill Sora Rail, Chimney Swifts, and at least two Mourning Warblers. Along South Jenkins Jennifer Kidney saw two American Minks scuttling along the dry creek bed plus a Green Heron and Olive-sided Flycatcher.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> Joe Grzybowski suspected the first real north wind in a while might bring in birds and went up to the Oklahoma City lakes to bird in the rain for 2.5 hours. Rose Lake had the most shorebirds with 10 different species including a Marbled Godwit, two adult Bald Eagles and 17 White-faced Ibises; at Lake Hefner there was a group of gulls and terns with one adult California Gull; and at Lake Overholser Pied-billed Grebes and Eared Grebes. Grace Huffman saw a Yellow-headed Blackbird at Lake Hefner.

When Scott Loss heard about the migrant fall outs, he went to the Kameoka Trail in Stillwater north of Boomer Lake to confirm a major fallout with dozens of warblers and other neotropical migrants. Identified species included Traill's

Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Northern Waterthrush, Mourning Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Painted Bunting and Orchard Oriole. Jonah Padberg verified the fallout was also occurring near Crescent where he had a lot of unidentified warblers, Great-crested Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Eastern Kingbird.



Meanwhile, Bill Adams and his Mom saw 2 dozen Swainson's Hawks in a field south of Ringling. Later they went to Taylor Lake in McClain County and saw Osprey and Black Terns. Along South Jenkins the group started off with Dick Gunn, John Tharp and Rachel Wrenn then they ran into Joe Grzybowski and later John Raeside, Anais Starr and Jennifer. While it wasn't exactly a fall out they did see a goodly number of birds including 6 species of warblers, (Black-and-white Warbler, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, and Parula), Least Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Red-headed and Hairy Woodpecker and Least and Bairds Sandpiper.



On the 7<sup>th</sup> at the east end of the Lake Hefner Dam a Ruddy Turnstone was spotted by Bill Diffin and Zack Poland. On the 8<sup>th</sup> James Hubbell had a Grasshopper Sparrow at Rose

Lake, and Larry Mays had a Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Lake Hefner. On the 9<sup>th</sup> at Rose Lake Bill Diffin and Sharon Henthorn reported Wilson's Phalarope; at Lake Thunderbird Peter Keyel saw an Eastern Screech Owl and David Dowell identified a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. On the 10<sup>th</sup> at Lake Hefner John Hurd and Hal Yocum saw a Laughing Gull, and Larry Mays and Chad Ellis reported a **Common Tern**.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> John Tharp noted a Northern Harrier

at Rose Lake, and Joe Grzybowski identified a Redhead Duck at Lake Hefner. On the 13<sup>th</sup> Bill Diffin checked Lake Overholser and noted two Black-bellied Plovers. At Taylor Lake Bill Adams located a Black Vulture,



Prothonotary Warbler, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. On the 14<sup>th</sup> Nancy Reed found her first Pine Siskin at her Norman backyard feeder. For the fourth day Matt Jung went to Rose Lake to find the Marbled Godwit and finally succeeded and also saw a few Northern Shovelers and a Cooper's Hawk.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> Brandon Thurston spotted a Red-breasted Nuthatch in Stillwater. On the 17<sup>th</sup> along South Jenkins Dick Gunn, John Tharp and Rachel Wrenn found a bunch of interesting stuff including a Warbling, Red-eyed, White-eyed and Bell's Vireo and an American Redstart. Jennifer added a Tennessee Warbler and Least Flycatcher. At Lake Hefner Bill Diffin observed a large mystery Larus Gull. Caleb Frome had an Inca Dove on the OU campus, and John Hurd had a Brewer's Blackbird at Rose Lake.

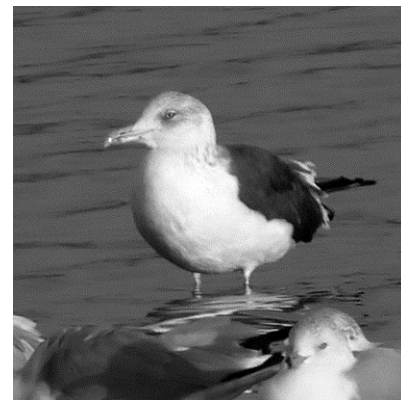
On the 18<sup>th</sup> John Tharp noted a Peregrine Falcon at Rose Lake. On the 19<sup>th</sup> in Grady County Robert B Green located a Sanderling at "Mansion" Lake or "Four-Mile" Lake.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> at Lake Arcadia Jimmy Woodard found a Chimney Swift, American Kestrel, Bewick's Wren, and Field Sparrow. Rachel Wrenn spotted a Great Crested Flycatcher at Little River State Park. In Edmond Terri Underhill has at least four White-breasted Nuthatches coming to her feeder, and she saw about 40 Common Nighthawks circling near Covell and Coltrane. In Logan County Corban Hemphill identified a Northern Bobwhite, Green Heron and Loggerhead Shrike on a Ranch.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> Scott Loss had a really good migration going over his yard in Stillwater as a cold front approached and passed. A couple of hours of sky-watching resulted in 49 species of birds, countless butterflies and dragonflies with bird highlights including Summer Tanager and Broad-winged Hawk. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> a Black Vulture was spotted at Lake Carl Blackwell by Scott Loss, and John Tharp discovered a Merlin and Peregrine Falcon at the

Little River State Park. On the 25<sup>th</sup> Dick had a House Wren on South Jenkins. On the 27<sup>th</sup> at Lake Hefner Larry Mays noticed a Sora Rail; in Pottawatomie County Dala Grissom discovered a Belted Kingfisher at Shawnee City Lake; John Tharp had a Blue-headed Vireo at Little River State Park; and at the Lazy E Arena Jeff Tibbits spotted a Red-shouldered Hawk, and Yellow Warbler.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> T K spotted an Eastern Wood-Pewee at Lake Thunderbird. Terri Underhill and Pat Velte found an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull with a mystery gull along the shoreline of Lake Overholser. Joe Grzybowski photographed the dark gull noted at Lake Overholser that has been called a first-winter Herring Gull and checked with some gull guru experts to confirm it is a juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gull.



He also noted some Herring Gulls at Lake Hefner. Jennifer Kidney had a Ruby-crowned Kinglet hovering around in her big hackberry tree in Norman and in the evening there were dozens of Common Nighthawks and Chimney Swifts swooping and chittering in the sky above her yard, but best of all the Monarch butterfly migration has begun in earnest.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> John Tharp had a Sedge Wren and American Pipit along South Jenkins, John Hurd had a Bobolink at Rose Lake, and James Hubbell had an American Golden-Plover at Lake Overholser. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Jason Shaw has a Wild Turkey at the USAO Habitat Area near Chickasha. As cooler weather arrives, when and where will the winter resident arrive?

In the Central Oklahoma area **180** bird species were reported in September with **1** new species which brings the total for the year to **283**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds and can be contacted by e-mail at [emkok@earthlink.net](mailto:emkok@earthlink.net). Esther M. Key, Editor.

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

