



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

OCTOBER 2017

October: Are Birds Carriers of Ticks in Oklahoma City Parks?

Join us October 16 when Megan Roselli will be will be our guest speaker.

Megan Roselli is a Graduate Research Assistant at Oklahoma State University. Her presentation will begin with a brief introduction of ticks and tick-borne pathogens found in Oklahoma. It will then focus on birds as carriers of ticks in Oklahoma City and cover methods useful for searching birds for ticks.

Megan is originally from the Poconos, Pennsylvania. She received her Bachelors of Science degree in biology from Wilkes University in 2015. Before starting graduate school, Megan worked for the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center in Washington, D.C. and the Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park in Maine. Megan started at Oklahoma State University in January 2017 where she is co-advised between Dr. Scott Loss in the Natural Resource Ecology and Management Department and Dr. Bruce Noden in the Entomology and Plant Pathology Department.



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



We have some difficult bird identification problems to deal with in Oklahoma. I once sat down and compiled all the difficult IDs I could think of into a list, a list which stretched to several pages. In a number of cases the source of the ID difficulty lies in distinguishing an eastern and a western form of two closely related species. Some

examples are Eastern vs. Western Wood-pewee, Black-chinned vs. Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Rose-breasted vs. Black-headed Grosbeak females/immatures, Tufted vs. Black-crested Titmouse and Least vs. Cordilleran Flycatcher.

One of the most difficult pairs to separate is the Blue-headed vs. Cassin's Vireo. In the not too distant past, the Cassin's Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo and Plumbeous Vireo were all considered to be a single species, known as Solitary Vireo. The Solitary Vireo complex was split into three species by the American Ornithologists Union in 1997. The eastern form is the Blue-headed Vireo which breeds from the Appalachians and southeastern Canada to the Alberta/British Columbia border. West of there the Cassin's Vireo takes over, breeding in forested regions from British Columbia south to northern Idaho, the Pacific Northwest and California. The Plumbeous Vireo breeds in the Rocky Mountains and the forested mountains of the Great Basin and Southwest. Along with the differences in coloration of the three species, there are differences in voice which are described in the Sibley Guide, one being that the western forms have rougher or burrier voices than the Blue-headed. All three species are migratory. Here in Oklahoma a birder's best chance to see a Solitary Vireo is to catch the Blue-headed Vireo during migration. Sightings of the Plumbeous and Cassin's Vireos occasionally occur out in the Panhandle but are considered rare.

Just recently a very able birder out in the Guymon area, Tony Leukering, found and photographed a Solitary Vireo for which he sought ID help from one of the most capable bird identifiers in North America, Peter Pyle. Pyle is the author of the highly regarded and frequently referenced, two volume "Identification Guide to North American Birds." The two volumes, used and in paperback form, can be had on Amazon for about \$100/each. Tony Leukering's eBird checklist with 8 photos of the bird and with Peter Pyle's analysis is linked here, <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S39461674>. (photo above, right).

Pyle ID's the bird as a male Cassin's Vireo. His analysis relies on several points, not all of which are illustrated in Sibley. One point is the sharpness of the boundary

between the gray auriculars (often called the cheek) and the white throat.

All sources including Sibley agree that the boundary is sharp in the Blue-headed and more blended in the Cassin's. And all sources agree that the Blue-headed is more brightly colored than the Cassin's. Some of



Cassin's Vireo © Tony Leuckering

the other points in Pyle's analysis are either not shown or not indicated explicitly in Sibley, i.e. the shape of the tips of the rectrices (tail feathers), the contrast of the primary coverts with the greater coverts, and the width of the white edges on the outer rectrices. Pyle's analysis got me hunting for a reference (I don't have his ID guide) that would show these missing points.

A search through internet sources reveals that most discussions of the Cassin's vs. Blue-headed Vireo ID refer to a 1996 article by Matt Heindel, "Field Identification of the Solitary Vireo Complex," *Birding* 28: 458-471. This article is not available free on the internet, but fortunately there is a sidebar written by Matt Heindel on Cassin's vs. Blue-headed ID in a book I have, *Nat Geo Complete Birds of North America*. Heindel uses four ID points: (1) the head color, blue on male Blue-headed, green on 1st winter female Cassin's and gray in all other cases, (2) the white part of the underparts which is clean on Blue-headed and dingier on Cassin's, (3) the sharpness of the contrast between the head and throat, sharper on Blue-headed as discussed above and (4) the amount of white on the outer rectrices (tail feathers).

Adult Blue-headed males have the outer web of the outer rectrix entirely white with "white wrapping around the tip" (continued on page 7)

Bird of the Month



By John Shackford

The **Least Sandpiper** (*Calidris minutilla*) is one of the large number of *Calidris* sandpipers found in the United States. The five smallest *Calidris* sandpipers in this country are colloquially known as “peeps”; these are the Least, Baird’s (discussed last month), Semi-

palmed, Western, and White-rumped sandpipers. In Europe there are other *Calidris* sandpipers; five of the smallest *Calidris* sandpiper species there are called Stints. In those cases, though, Stint is part of their official common name, unlike our informal designation of “peep.” The genus name *Calidris* has an interesting origin. Apparently, the first written designation of this genus was “used by Aristotle for a speckled waterbird” and written in Greek! (J.E. Holloway. 2005. *Dictionary of birds of the United States*, Timber Press, Portland, Oregon).

One of the nice identification points about Least Sandpipers is that they have light greenish-yellow legs that set them apart from the other four “peeps.” Least Sandpipers do not show as much variation between spring and fall plumage as the other four “peeps”—and their plumage is on the brownish side from that of other “peeps.” The Least also has the thinnest bill among the “peeps” and it has a slight droop at the end.

The Least Sandpiper migrates through Oklahoma, and a few winter here. Sutton (1967, *Oklahoma birds*) gives the birds presence in the state as most of the year: July 1 to May 29, so the only time we normally do not see any of them here is in the month of June. Dr. Sutton, also says in the same book that the “northern limits of wintering [is] probably determined by availability of mud and shallow water, but twenty birds seen in McClain County, October 27, 1957, were feeding in low-lying area throughout which mud was frozen on top, air temperature having been down to 20 degrees F during two preceding nights.” So even though these are small sandpipers, they are also hearty. My opinion is that their heartiness may relate, somewhat,

to the need for so little food to sustain them--because of their small size.

The Least Sandpiper winters further north than the other “peeps.” We have them most years on the Christmas Bird Count; we fall near the borderline between their migration area and the northern edge of their wintering ground; climate change may be moving the northern edge of the wintering ground further north. The last time we in Oklahoma City did not record Least Sandpipers on a CBC was 1989; the first time we broke 100 of them was in 1996. In the last 20 years, between 1996-2015, we have recorded over 100 Least Sandpipers on 12 of our CBC counts; and the high number we have recorded since 1966 was 735 in 2012 (Christmas Bird Count data 1966-2015, National Audubon Society).

For the CBC, especially if you are working around Lake Hefner or Lake Overholser, it is good to know well the field marks of the Least Sandpipers, partly to know if you see



something that is not a Least Sandpiper. For instance, the Western Sandpiper is shown by Sibley (D.A. 2000, *The Sibley guide to birds*, Knopf, Inc., New York) to winter, as of 2000, northward in Texas to about Dallas; with climate change we should be on the lookout for Western Sandpipers on our CBC, because it is not unreasonable to expect this species to be in Oklahoma during early winter.

We do have an occasional other sandpiper in early winter—I remember particularly a Dunlin I once saw on or close to count day. It was on the pond behind John Marshall High School, north of Lake Hefner. The Dunlin is not a “peep”; it is a 2-21/2 inches larger than the Least, but from a distance it would

have been relatively easy to think “Least Sandpiper” on this particular bird (there were no other birds nearby for size comparison) and move on. Although I was convinced fairly quickly that this was not a Least Sandpiper, it actually took me two or three visits to that pond to pin down this bird’s identification to my satisfaction.

The Least Sandpiper nests across most of northern Canada and most of Alaska. It nests “either in wet grassy or sphagnum bogs close to a pond or tidal water, or on dry uplands, often among low bushes” (A.C. Bent. 1962. *Life histories of North American shore birds*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York). It makes a shallow nest on or near the ground, which it usually lines with a few pieces of dried grass; normally four eggs are laid. The young, when they hatch, are about the size of a thimble.

#ABARARE: Masked Duck— Oklahoma

By Nate Swick (*aba.org*)

Though an ABA Code 3 bird, Masked Duck is novel enough to include in this spot as it has been fairly scarce in recent years. On September 17, Joe Grzybowski discovered a female at Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area in Tillman County, Oklahoma. In addition to being a good bird for the ABA Area, this is a 1st record for Oklahoma, pending acceptance.



Hackberry Flat WMA is located about an hour southwest of Lawton, Oklahoma, near the town of Hollister. The bird was seen in the Weir Unit, near the Visitor Center.

Masked Duck is a small, secretive, stiff-tailed duck, widespread throughout the Neotropics. Most records in the ABA Area come from Florida and Texas, where the species has bred in the past. They are sporadic and prone to irruptions, in which they can even be locally common. Outside of Texas and Florida, the species is very rare, with records from Georgia (1962), North Carolina (1982) and Pennsylvania (1984).

(The last sighting of the Masked Duck at Hackberry was September 26, 2017.)

Refreshments

Refreshments for the October meeting will be provided by:

Drinks and Ice - Jimmy Woodard

Refreshments - Hal Yocum and Steve Davis

Tuesday Morning Birders

By Hal Yocum

September 26, 2017: Joe B. Barnes Park

Today there were 3 of us (Jimmy Woodward, Nancy Reed and myself) who participated in the walk at Joe B. Barnes Park in Midwest City in spite of a very rainy morning. It actually occurred to me that because of the rain that we just might get a bunch of migrating birds coming in, rather down to the trees for protection, food and to wait out the storm.

We walked the main path from north to south and back, with a small woody loop at the south end. In spite of the rain we saw many birds, mostly common. However, on the way back north we had a lull in the rain and there were birds everywhere trying to feed for their long journey farther south.

The better usual sightings were: Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Eastern Bluebirds, American Robins, Eastern Phoebe, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Chimney Swifts, Killdeer, and Downy Woodpeckers.

Now on the way back north we really scored on the migrants and locals both: Great Blue Heron, Wood Duck, empidonax species, Great-crested Flycatcher, Baltimore Oriole, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Carolina and House Wren, Easter Wood-pewee, Tufted Titmouse, American Kestrel, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Thrasher, Northern Cardinal, Blue-headed Vireo, Indigo Bunting, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and Eastern Kingbird. We tallied six warbler species: Orange-crowned, Wilson's, Nashville, Common Yellow-throat, American Redstart and Yellow. We may have gotten a little (or a lot) web but we sure saw great birds. By my count 43 species!

October 3, 2017: Mitch Park

The birders today were Sharon Henthorn, Hollis Price, Kelly Raymer (new member), and Hal Yocum. We had a total of 28 species including several fly overs and heard only.

The better birds of the day were: Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel, Northern Bobwhite, Chimney Swifts, Northern Flicker, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, House Wren, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

Audubon Society Minutes Sept. 18, 2017

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Diffin.

Treasurer Nancy Vicars reports \$5,690 in the account.

Mark Delgrosso updated us on upcoming field trips which are still being organized. Further details will follow on the website and at future meetings. Options include Draper Lake, Wichita Wildlife Refuge. Also planned are joint field trips with the Tulsa Audubon Society to Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and to Pathfinder Parkway near Bartlesville.

Jimmy Woodard will host a "Big Sit" at his home in Midwest City this fall. Hal Yocum is leading Tuesday morning birding to various local sites. This week will be Yukon City Park, and in future Mitch Park and others to-be-determined.

Fall OOS Meeting will be held at Tishomingo Wildlife Refuge from October 13-15.

Guests were introduced and include from Edmond--Garrett Barnes, Janet Daugherty, Kayla Barnes and Jill Barnes, and Ronnie Kanoff. From Moore is Jennifer Brown. From Norman are Lauren Seidensticker and Abdul Dominguez. From OKC are Riley Hurd and Pat Kirk (both possibly misspelled).

Old Business: the contract with OKC Beautiful for litter patrol at Lake Hefner's Prairie Dog Point has ended due to lack of participation.

New Business: John Shackford announced that he will retire as compiler of the annual Christmas Bird Count after serving for fifty-five years. Nathan Kuhnert will assume John's current responsibilities. This year's count will be on December 16th, and after-party will be at Johnnie's on Northwest Expressway.

The meeting was adjourned and the presentation of the evening was heavily anticipated and well-attended. Yong Brenneman brought with her three of her family's raptors: barred owl, peregrine falcon, and Harris's hawk. The young owl was particularly attentive and patient as he/she was taken around the room and petted and examined by the attendees.

Meeting minutes compiled by Secretary Sharon Henthorn

Welcome New Members

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes

Jennifer Brown, Moore
Abdul Dominquez & Alina Joaca-Bine,
Norman

Tuesday Morning Birders Schedule

Tues., October 17: Lake Hefner. Meet at Stars and Stripes Park on the south side, at 8 AM. Bring your scope! We will bird there for gulls, egrets, ducks and shorebirds. Then we will go to the west side at the spillway and search for smaller migrants-warblers and kinglets.

Tues., October 24: Myriad Botanical Gardens (downtown) at 8 AM. Park along the south side and bring quarters for the meters. I do not think any FREE parking remains in that area. Gather along the south walk.

Tues., October 31: Will Rogers Park at 8 AM. Park in the lot across from the outdoor amphitheater, just south of the tennis courts.

*For information contact: Hal Yokum,
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Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2017

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Refreshments	Sue Woodson	601-622-3467
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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 September 2017

Endings and Beginnings

Birds were hard to find during September as many of the summer birds were leaving and the hot dry weather slowed the arrival of the winter residents. Still for those who ventured out birding, some amazing species were seen. Quite a few shorebirds and colorful warblers were found migrating through in various locations as well as the beginning of the duck migration/winter residents' arrivals.

On August 31st Chris Butler noticed a Pine Warbler at Choctaw in Oklahoma County. On the 1st Zach Poland uncovered an Orchard Oriole at his home in Logan County. On the 2nd a Caspian Tern was seen at Lake Thunderbird; Robert Harding came across Purple Martin at Lake Overholser; and along South Jenkins in Norman John Tharp detected Northern Waterthrush, Black-throated Green Warbler and Wilson's Warbler. On the 3rd a Kentucky Warbler was seen at Lake Thunderbird; Zach



Poland found a Blue Grosbeak at his home; Deanne McKinney encountered a Spotted Sandpiper at Mustang Road Playa; Brian Marra counted a Willow Flycatcher and Purple Martin at Arcadia Lake; Jenny Elton recognized a Black-and-white Warbler in north OKC; and Jack Olson located a House Wren east of Stillwater. On the 4th

Phil Ables reported an unconfirmed Rufous Hummingbird at his feeders in Garvin County. Janiece Gratch tallied an Eastern Screech Owl just west of Lake Hefner and Brian Marra discovered a Blue Grosbeak and Orchard Oriole along South Jenkins.

On the 5th Zach Poland added a Mourning Warbler at the Myriad Botanical Gardens. On the 6th at Martin Park Nature Center Bill Diffin identified a Swainson's Thrush; in McClain County Esther Key had White-faced Ibis and Bald Eagle at the Goldsby Sod Farm, and a Red-headed Woodpecker at Purcell Lake. On the 7th Bill Hohenstein verified an American Bittern, White-eyed Vireo and Painted Bunting at Historic Fort Reno in Canadian County; and Corey Riding documented a Grasshopper Sparrow west of Stillwater. On the 8th Laura Madden got a Barred Owl at Spring Haven in McClain County; Joe Buck realized a Great Crested Flycatcher in Edmond; and Deb Hirt spotted a Baird's Sandpiper at Boomer Lake Park.

On the 9th Scott Loss recorded a Pine Siskin and Traill's Flycatcher at Whittenberg Park; Deb Hirt identified a Bell's Vireo at Boomer Lake Park; and Brian Marra encountered Chimney Swift, Northern Rough-winged Swallow and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Prague Lake City Park in Lincoln County. Bill Diffin found Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo and Indigo Bunting at Stinchcomb WMA west while Deanne McKinney had Yellow-headed Blackbird at Morgan Road. On the 10th Zach Poland turned up a Wilson's Warbler at his home in Logan county; Jason Shaw added a



Common Nighthawk in Chickasha; Brian Marra saw a Bonaparte's Gull, Bell's Vireo and Yellow-breasted Chat at Arcadia Lake; and Katrina Hucks heard a Great Crested Flycatcher and Fish Crow at Lake Thunderbird, North Sentinel.

On the 11th Bill Diffin counted a Common Yellowthroat at Lake Hefner Prairie Dog Point; and on the 12th he verified a Black-throated Green Warbler at Stinchcomb WMA east. Michael Meadows discovered Blue-winged Teal at the Yukon 63rd Street area; and Scott Loss noticed a Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Eastern Wood-Pewee at Babcock Park in Stillwater. On the 13th Cameron Carver recorded an Olive-sided Flycatcher and Red-eyed Vireo at the Arcadia Conservation Education Area; and John Tharp spotted a Willet, Forster's Tern and Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Lake



Thunderbird North Sentinel plus a Marsh Wren and Yellow-throated Warbler along South Jenkins. On the 14th Bill Diffin uncovered a Summer Tanager, Indigo Bunting and Grosbeak at the Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge East side.

On the 16th Cameron Carver had Turkey Vulture and Pileated Woodpecker along I-40 near Wewoka in Seminole County; Jane Wiewora got a Great Egret in Kingfisher County; and Emily Hjalmarson detected a Greater Yellowlegs at Lake Stanley Draper in Cleveland County. On the 17th Bran Marra recognized a Chestnut-sided Warbler, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Northern Parula at Arcadia Lake.

At Boomer Lake Park Mike Yough turned up Black Tern and Forster's Tern, Deb Hirt tallied Warbling Vireo and Scott Loss reported Osprey and Semipalmated Plover. At Sanborn Lake John Polo documented Least Flycatcher and Gray Catbird; and along South Jenkins Rachel Wrenn located an Eastern Kingbird. On the 18th Jason Shaw realized an American Crow and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Chickasha in Grady County. Katrina Hucks came across a Franklin's Gull, Black Tern and Forster's Tern at Prairie Dog Point.



On the 19th Hal Yokum led the OCAS Tuesday morning birders at Yukon City Park where they found a Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, and Chimney Swifts. On the 20th Deanne McKinney discovered Northern Shoveler, White-faced Ibis and Wilson's Snipe at the Mustang Road Playa. Joe Buck identified a Broad-winged Hawk at the Edmond

Fink Park Trail; John Polo spotted a Summer Tanager in Stillwater; and Scott Loss detected a Dickcissel at Whittenberg Park. On the 21st Emily Hjalmarson noticed a Barred Owl at Wood Creek Park in Norman; on the 22nd she counted a Spotted Sandpiper at Deerfield Park in Norman while Lindell Dillon recognized a Pectoral Sandpiper at Lake Thunderbird Alameda.

On the 23rd at the Stinchcomb WMA Chad Ellis encountered Cedar Waxwing, Morning Warbler and Chris Butler verified a Merlin and Tree Swallow; while Esther Key added a Belted Kingfisher in Garvin County.



On the 24th Dala Grissom had an Osprey and Turkey Vulture near Shawnee in Pottawatomie County; Caleb Frome located a White-eyed Vireo at George M Sutton Wilderness Park; and Brian Marra reported Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Peregrine Falcon, Least Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Orange-crowned Warbler and American Redstart at Arcadia

Lake. On the 25th Roy McGraw saw Eastern Kingbird at Lake El Reno; and Nathan Kuhnert turned up a Chimney Swift in Norman. On the 27th Deanne McKinney recorded a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in her OKC yard and Jenny Elton documented a Nashville Warbler in north OKC. And then during the last week when the rain and cooler weather arrived, radar showed the birds were moving. What will be found in October?

During September of 2017 in the Central Oklahoma area **150** species were reported with the year's total at **266**. 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.)

and forming a broad edge on the inner web". All the other ages and sexes of Blue-headed have white in the tail, but usually not as extensive as the adult male. On an adult male Cassin's Vireo the white on the edge of the outer tail feather varies in extent but is always narrower than it is on an adult Blue-headed male. On the other age and sex classes of Cassin's Vireo, the "white is less evident." Taking the four points in order for Leukering's bird: (1) the head is gray eliminating male Blue-headed and 1st winter female Cassin's, (2) the white part of the underparts is only slightly dingier than the throat in most of the photos giving an ambiguous signal, (3) the auricular line is fairly sharp, but the contrast is diluted by a lightening of the cheek thus pointing about equally to male Cassin's or female Blue-headed, and (4) the amount of white on the outer edge of the outer tail feather is narrow on both sides of the tail in the photos where the right side is not whitened by transmitted light. It can be seen that there is a broad strip of gray between the feather shaft and the white outer edge. The white on the edge of the inner web is obvious but also quite narrow compared to all the internet photos of Blue-headed that I examined that weren't obvious juveniles by the shape of the tips of the tail feathers.

Thus the tail evidence seems to point away from Blue-headed and toward Cassin's. Solitary vireos have the fall molt on the breeding grounds, so their plumage is fresh and bright during fall migration. That may account in part for the sharpness of the auricular line. I think this bird is a really tough call using the Heindel points, but the balance of the evidence gives an edge to male Cassin's. Just below the Cassin's Vireo photos in the checklist, there are photos of a Philadelphia Vireo. This is also an uncommon bird in Oklahoma, particularly in the central and west. A bright Warbling Vireo can look much like a Philadelphia Vireo, so the two comprise another difficult ID pair. At the following link is a very nice loop of vireo photos that includes Warbling and Philadelphia Vireos as well as Blue-headed Vireos, <http://birdsofnewyork.com/vireos/>. There is a nice collection of Cassin's Vireo photos here, <https://goo.gl/JHuVZY>.

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