

Life as a young birder and activistt

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The Oklahoma City Audubon society is neither a chapter of nor affiliated with National Audubon.

Welcome

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes:

Abby Lopez, OKC

Mia Meche, Edmond

The speaker for our September 15 Audubon Society meeting will be Wren Hobbs.

Wren is a senior at Norman North High school in Norman. An aspiring ornithologist and avian conservationist, Wren plans to study ornithology at the University of Oklahoma and perhaps Cornell. Bird watching is a common activity. Wren's parents are stout supporters and purchased a camera for documenting sightings. Being an artist, Wren was an award winner at this year's Sutton Art Contest. At Norman North Wren founded and leads a school bird club. "We talk about birds, go on birding trips, learn how to identify birds by their songs and feathers, and talk about conservation projects." Speaking engagements have included the Oklahoma Ornithological Society.



Wren's love of birds goes beyond bird watching. She noticed a problem with Norman North's architectural design. Nearly half of the outside of the building consists of windows, causing frequent bird collisions. To help the safety of birds, Wren and the club started a project to place UV ray film from UV Bird Divert on the windows. Courageously, Wren and the club got over 900 signatures on a petition and convinced the school and community leaders to put the project into action. Donations are welcome and financial support has been offered by the Oklahoma Ornithological Society and others. Wren says, success has brought "peace and quiet to classrooms" and will help save countless bird lives. An inspiring new young activist is now among us.

Wren will speak about life as a bird lover, about goals, about starting and leading the Norman North High School bird club, and describe the lengthy and successful fight to convince the people in the political structure of Norman to actively help save the lives of birds.

This will be an interesting meeting. Join in the camaraderie and bring others. Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month with the exception of January. 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

Hello, Birders!

So glad to be back and into migration season. Even summer can reveal highlights in birding.

My husband Randy and I had the opportunity to visit New Orleans to view the National WW II Museum (a must-see!) in the first week of September.

There are wetlands everywhere which can be seen by foot, car or tour. We visited Audubon Park with its Bird Island, a free city park with walking and bike paths, and a lazy waterway with White Ibis, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Green Heron, Little Blue Heron, Wood Ducks, Mallards, Fish Crows, Kingfishers and we saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk and large turtles in the 40 minutes we were there.

Near OKC we have seen a good variety of birds at Zoo Lake, Yukon Parkway play area and Midwest Blvd North Canadian bridge. Others have reported great birding at Edmond City Park and the Myriad Botanical Gardens.

And birding season is just starting. Get out there!

Your club's president Sharon Henthorn



Upcoming Field Trip:

Sunday, September 28, 2025

Mitch Park - Edmond

Location: Mathis Skate Park. Between Santa Fe and Kelly on Covell in Edmond. Enter from Covell or Kelly. Note small sign For Mathis Skate Park at Covell entrance. The skate park is to the north of Cheyenne Middle School on the NW corner of Covell and Kelly in Edmond.

Time: 8AM to 10 AM

Leader: Call or text Hal Yocum to check in for attendance. 405-819-4852

To learn more about Mitch Park, visit the [OKC Audubon Birding Hot Spot](#).



Bird of the Month: Piping Plover

By Grace Huffman

While we are waiting on the leaves to change, and for cooler temps to settle in for the long haul, birds are already moving south with fall migration. Since July, shorebirds have been on their long journey towards their wintering grounds. One such species is the adorable Piping Plover.

Piping plovers are small shorebirds that look a lot like toasted marshmallows on orange legs. In the spring and summer, they have black collar that is often broken in the front of the bird, a black mark near the eye on the front of the head, and an orange bill with a black tip. In the fall, they lose all the black feathers, and the collar becomes much paler, similar to the color of the back

and wings. The bill also becomes all black. The orange legs help rule out Snowy Plover, and the paler plumage helps to set it apart from Semipalmated Plover. Both of these birds are much more common here in Oklahoma, but sometimes you'll find the odd one and it ends up being a Piping!

Piping Plovers have a very scattered breeding range. They breed on the Atlantic coast, Great Lakes, and a large area across the north-central part of the US and into Canada. Males will create several scrapes in the ground in their territory, which is just above the high water line, and then the female will choose one and they will line it with materials like pebbles or stones. Once the young hatch, they are able to start walking around soon after hatching, but will run back to the adults for safety when danger threatens. This often results with one of the adults looking a bit like a spider with all of the little legs sticking out as they are tucked under their parent!

Piping Plovers don't have a well defined migration route, and here in Oklahoma they are a rare migrant. They have shown up in various places across the state in spring and fall, but here in the metro I've seen them at Lake Hefner, Lake Arcadia, and Lake Thunderbird. I photographed this bird in July after Trina Arnold found it the day before, but the Oklahoma date guide says they could be found through the end of the month!

Sadly, these birds are listed as Near Threatened, with the largest threats being shoreline development, and humans or pets disturbing the nests sites. You'll often find nesting areas roped off, to help keep humans away from the birds and reduce disturbances. Hopefully soon you will be able to see one of these adorable birds!

Reference: allaboutbirds.org



Piping Plover © Grace Huffman

'Sex reversal' is surprisingly common in birds

Excerpt of Science.org article, 12 August 2025. Phie Jacobs, author

When it comes to telling males and females apart, many bird species reject subtlety altogether. Roosters stand out thanks to their big, bright comb and ear-splitting “cock-a-doodle-doo.” Bachelor birds-of-paradise flaunt their vibrant plumage to attract more subdued females. And the male peacock’s feathered train is so ostentatious it famously threw even Charles Darwin for a loop.

But that’s not the case for all bird species. When males and females look pretty much the same, scientists must try harder—often using DNA testing—to separate the sexes. According to a new study of wild Australian birds, these methods may be leading to misidentification in cases where an individual’s gonads and outward appearance don’t align with the genetic sex determined by its chromosomes. As scientists report today in *Biology Letters*, this phenomenon—known as sex reversal—[may be more common than anyone expected](#).

The discovery is likely to “raise some eyebrows” (or is it ruffle some feathers?), says Blanche Capel, a biologist at Duke University who wasn’t involved in the new work. Although sex determination is often viewed as a straightforward process, she explains, the reality is much more complicated. “We think of sex chromosomes as being sex determining,” says Mank, who also wasn’t involved in the new research. “That’s not true.”

Environmental factors can also complicate sex determination. Turtle eggs that incubate at cooler temperatures, for example, produce male hatchlings, whereas turning up the heat churns out females. Although rare in birds, this phenomenon has been seen in brush turkeys, which incubate their eggs in enormous mounds.

As a result, scientists “have known for a long time that there are other external factors that go into the development of sex characteristics in birds,” says study senior author Dominique Potvin, an animal ecologist at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Even so, it was unclear how often birds have the physical features of one sex but the genetic makeup of the other.

To find out, Potvin’s team dissected and examined the bodies of nearly 500 birds belonging to five common Australian species: the Australian magpie, laughing kookaburra, crested pigeon, rainbow lorikeet, and the scaly breasted lorikeet. All the animals had died after being admitted to wildlife hospitals in Queensland because of unrelated illness or injury. In addition to identifying the birds’ reproductive organs, researchers also tested their DNA to reveal their genetic sex.

The team was surprised to find sex-reversed individuals in all five species, at rates of 3% to 6%. Nearly all these discordant birds were genetically female but had male reproductive organs. However, the researchers also found a few genetic males with ovaries—including a genetically male kookaburra with a distended oviduct, indicating it had recently laid an egg.

Capel, for her part, isn’t sure the rates of sex reversal found in the new study would be high enough to hamper a bird population’s ability to survive and reproduce. Even so, the findings suggest researchers’ DNA-based methods of identifying bird sex in the wild are less accurate than once thought. In addition, knowing wild birds’ baseline rates of sex reversal could help scientists gauge when rates are unnaturally high, possibly because of endocrine-disrupting chemicals in the environment.



Scientists have found instances of sex reversal in five different Australian bird species including the laughing kookaburra.

Minutes of the OKC Audubon Society Meeting June 17, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by President Sharon Henthorn.

Attendance: 25, including 1 new member Jamie

Treasurer's Report: Nancy Vicars presented the report, which was approved as read. Cash on hand: \$9,213.76.

May minutes were read and approved.

Nancy is working on new membership rosters. Contact her for more info.

USGS needs volunteers for their breeding surveys.

WildBrew will be held August 23 in Tulsa. It features local breweries, food, auctions, and live birds to help spread bird conservation and fundraise for the Sutton Center.

No upcoming field trips.

The speaker was Emma Kuster, University Assistant Director and Adult Education Specialist for the South Central Climate Adaptation Science Center in Norman, who gave a great presentation on climate change and spurred lively discussion.

We will be on hiatus for July and August, so our next meeting will be Monday, September 15, 2025, where high-schooler Wren Hobbs will give a talk on founding and leading the Norman North High School Bird Club and their ongoing projects.

-Cole Penning, Secretary

Refreshments

Refreshment volunteers for the October 15, 2025 meeting:

Patti High, Steve Davis, Curtis Eckart, Josh Hartly and Randy Henthorn (for drinks)

Field Trip Recap: Mitch Park September 7, 8 am—10 am



Temp low 60's - Hi 70's

Participants: 16 birders (including 5 pre-school children and 11 adults) 23 Species

Mallard
Canada Goose
Green Heron
Turkey Vulture
Cooper's Hawk
Mississippi Kite
Mourning Dove
Rock Pigeon
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Downy Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Bells Vireo
American Crow
Fish Crow
Blue Jay
Carolina Chickadee
Carolina Wren
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
House Sparrow
Field Sparrow
House Finch

Leaders : Hal Yocum & Nancy Vicars