



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

SEPTEMBER 2017

Birds of Prey

Join us September 18 when Yong Brenneman will be the guest speaker at the Oklahoma City Audubon Society meeting.

Yong Brenneman was a child in the Willamette Valley area of Oregon, when her passion for falconry and Birds of Prey began. She recalls writing a report in the seventh grade on Golden Eagles, and her experience and relationships with raptors immediately began from that point.

Yong has been a practicing falconer and volunteer spokesperson for Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since 2000. Her formal background begins with the University of Minnesota, where she studied care and management of captive raptors. Raptor rehabilitation has been her forte for 25 years.

She enjoys educating visitors that come into the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge, Boy Scouts and students, raising awareness about our countries native birds.

She will be bringing her Ferruginous Hawk and Barred Owl, giving us the opportunity to observe their behaviors and feel physical features of these beautiful birds.

Yong hopes that you will freely ask questions, as she is eager to share her life experiences that she has had with her cherished companions.

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



I hope you had a great summer of birding. It was for the most part a cool, wet July and August, unusual for central Oklahoma. The lakes were brim full and unattractive to shorebirds. However there were some mud flats exposed around the big playa at Stinchcomb West for a while in early August.

I made my first excursion of the summer to the big playa on August 2. There were peeps on the southeast mud flats in good numbers, but they were a little far from the trail to see well. Thinking about it later that day, I decided it would be worth trying to walk out on the non-submerged part of the playa margin that was then covered with young cocklebur plants. My experience is that cockleburs don't sprout in wet mud but rather on mud flats that have dried out on the surface. The next day, August 3, I tried walking out through the cockleburs. The plant-covered ground was a little soft but solid enough to walk on.

From August 3 until August 8 there were at various times Semipalmated Plovers, Least Sandpipers, Baird's Sandpipers, a few Semipalmated Sandpipers, Stilt Sandpipers, Spotted Sandpipers, Solitary Sandpipers, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs and one Buff-breasted Sandpiper. There were also as many as 300 Great Egrets, over 50 Snowy Egrets and lesser numbers of Great Blue Herons and Little Blue Herons that were attracted to the trapped fish in the shrinking pond. On August 5, 7 and 8 there were variable numbers of dark Ibis probing around the edge of the shoreline, the number peaking at 12. The interruption on August 6 was apparently due to an adult Bald Eagle that I saw flying low over the water -- there were very few herons and egrets that day either. On August 8 there was a Neotropic Cormorant sunning on northwestern shore. But then starting August 9 or so we had some more rainy weather which always makes the red clay surface of the main trail hard to navigate. I didn't try Stinchcomb West again until August 14, at which point the playa was water-covered out to the edge of the woods. There was even more rain in late August. As I write this on September 7, it may be time to take another look.

While I was surveying the waders and shorebirds during August 2-8, I also dutifully counted the birds in the button bushes and willows scattered around the edge of the playa. Along with the expected buntings, orioles and flycatchers there were a surprising number of Yellow Warblers. Were those Yellow Warblers early migrants, or could they have

been locally breeding birds? Range maps show Yellow Warblers as summer residents in much of central Oklahoma, and there are experienced birders who will tell you that they used to breed here regularly. Unfortunately I couldn't rule out the other possibility, that they were early migrants from farther north. The migrant hypothesis is supported by the following passage from the article on the Yellow Warbler in National Geographic Complete Birds of North America, "In East, one of the earliest departing warblers in fall, with birds leaving the Great Lakes in mid-July and rarely later than mid-Sept."

I have been watching shorebird migrations closely for years and have grown used to the idea that their fall migration starts very early in the summer, as early as the first of July. So the migrant shorebirds on the playa were no surprise. But the possibility that the first pulse of warbler migrants comes through as early as the first week of August was not something I was aware of until I read the Yellow Warbler article. After the playa filled up at Stinchcomb, I went back to birding around Prairie Dog Point and the canal inlet at Lake Hefner hoping for some additional August warblers. The diversity was not too spectacular. Along with Yellow Warblers, I found a few American Redstarts and one bird that might have been a female or juvenile Canada Warbler. Per Nat Geo CBONA the American Redstart is another early migrant, i.e. "Departs breeding grounds July, peaks Upper Midwest late Aug.--mid-Sept.", and the Canada Warbler is yet another early migrant, "Departs early Aug., peaks in mid-to late Aug., continues into mid-Sept."

My first Wilson's Warbler sighting at Prairie Dog Pt was on August 24, in agreement with Nat Geo CBONA, "In East, earliest fall migrants mid-Aug., peak late Aug.--mid-Sept.", and on August 27 Nathan Kuhnert and I observed on Ovenbird in the Myriad Gardens, also in agreement with CBONA, "Departs as early as late July, earliest arrivals in the South early Aug.; peaks in much of the East in mid-Sept." I have heard birders say that it is much more difficult to find migrating warblers in the fall than in the spring. Is it possible that part of the difficulty lies in not starting to look early enough, in the dog days of August when hardly anyone does much birding?

The above info on warbler migration illustrates a useful point about eBird data. For the purposes of eBird there is importance to reporting when a bird species is not present as well as when it is present. This is so the population modelers who use the eBird data can be sure when a bird species has left an area. The moral of the story is that a skinny checklist is just as useful as one that is 40 species long provided it represents an honest effort to find birds.

Bird of the Month



By John Shackford

Many birds grace our state only during migration; one of these is the **Baird's Sandpiper** (*Calidris bairdii*). The species is named "for Spenser Fullerton Baird (1823-1887), secretary of the Smithsonian Institute

and author of *Catalogue of North American Mammals* (1857) and *Catalogue of North American Birds* (1868)" (Holloway J. E. 2003. *Dictionary of Birds of the United States*, Timber Press, Portland, OR). The Baird's Sparrow is also named after S. F Baird.

The Baird's Sandpiper is one of my favorite "peeps" (short-hand name for the five smallest North American sandpipers) for a very simple reason—it usually can be reliably identified because of two field marks: at rest the wingtips are considerably longer than the tail, and it has a quite scaly-looking back pattern. Contrary to identifying Baird's, I do not feel nearly as confident calling several other peep species, especially in the fall, based on such things as a slightly longer bill, a little rusty on the back, and so on; I trust some very careful birders to identify these others correctly, but for me these sometimes seem more like educated guesses than facts.

Several authors mention that the Baird's prefers dryer spots for feeding than most other peeps. As they migrate in the central parts of the United States, they often associate with a mixed group of other peeps. The Baird's sandpipers tend to separate out to the dryer habitat near, but out of, water, while other associated peeps prefer feeding at water's edge or while wading in water. On the breeding ground in the far northern reaches of the North American continent, it chooses a spot in the dryer parts of the nesting area, rather than near water (it usually lays four eggs but sometimes only three). I could find no direct reference that on the wintering ground in South America, the species chooses the dryer habitats but the fact that they can be found in the interior of the southern half of South America, they likely choose at least some habitat dryer than most other shorebirds there too: one author mention that the bird has been found at elevations of over

10,000 feet there.

As mentioned earlier, the Baird's Sandpiper nests in the far northern reaches of North America, and most migrate through the central U.S., between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi River, being particularly well condensed through the middle of Oklahoma, then proceeds southward to winter from northern Peru, through much of Argentina, to the southern tip of Chile at the southern extremity of the continent. It is a very long distance traveler.

One thing that I find interesting about this is the fact that the northern latitudes of North America flair out substantially from the Oklahoma latitudes of the continent. The widening out to the far north means that such shorebirds as the Baird's (and other birds) are probably rarer per average square mile in most of the far north than

as they condense in their flyways during migration through the southern U.S. (almost too obvious to mention). So if you go out looking for Baird's Sandpipers for a day during their migration through central Oklahoma, you will probably see more of them than you would see on a day spent looking for them on their nesting grounds in the far north.



This also indicates that environmental damage that adversely affects Baird's Sandpipers (and many other birds) is more harmful—per unit of land—in Oklahoma than it is on the breeding

ground. To emphasize the point, the far north is generally north of drastic human intervention, unlike our habitat here in Oklahoma, which is heavily utilized by humans. Thus, good migratory habitat is very important to the species wellbeing in our area. And thus, we in Oklahoma have more of a "responsibility" for the species welfare than those in the far north on the breeding grounds. The states of Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas are especially crucial along the species migratory flyway.

In Oklahoma City, the Baird's Sandpiper finds migratory habitat at Lakes Hefner and Overholser. Broadening out, Hackberry Flats in southwestern Oklahoma, Red Slough in southeastern Oklahoma, and Cheyenne Bottoms in southwestern Kansas, provide very important migratory stopovers habitat for many species of birds, including Baird's Sandpipers. Hackberry Flats came into existence, as a stopover point for migratory birds, through the foresight of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, for which we should be thankful.

Submissions sought for Fall OOS Meeting

The Fall Meeting of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society will October 13-15 at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station on the north shore of Lake Texoma. You don't have to be a member of OOS to attend. This is a joint meeting with the Friends of the University of Oklahoma Biological Station. The main field trips will be to Hagerman NWR on Saturday morning and to Tishomingo NWR on Sunday morning. The Saturday evening banquet speaker will be Mike Horn, born and raised in northeast Oklahoma in Tahlequah and Stillwell, now currently a professor at California State University, Fullerton. Dr. Horn's talk is titled, "Sea birds signal ocean changes: Elegant Terns respond to prey, predators and heat in the eastern Pacific". Lodging and meals at the biological station are available for attendees at this meeting. A meeting announcement, schedule and registration form are available on the OOS web site at www.okbirds.org. The deadline for registration is September 30.

The Fall Meeting of OOS is the technical meeting. Researchers in ornithology, avian ecology and related fields are invited to submit abstracts for the technical session on the afternoon of October 14. For the purposes of this meeting, research is broadly construed. Along with traditional research is also included for example in-depth field observations by non-academics and international field experiences. Technical presentations will be 15 minutes long and will follow the usual format of a 12-minute talk and three minutes of question and answer. Researchers at all levels are encouraged to participate. The abstract submission period is from now until September 30. However it is possible to register for a presentation without an abstract and receive an extension for abstract submittal until October 7. Abstracts should follow the following format:

1. Title
2. Name(s) of investigator(s) and advisor(s) if any
3. Any sponsoring organization, university or college
4. An email address for followup contacts
5. The body of the abstract, 250 words or less

Submit the abstract as a Word file attachment in an email to WilliamDiffin@aol.com. A compilation of the abstracts will be available to attendees at the technical session.

A poster session will follow the presentation session. Register for the poster session the same as for the presentation session but include POSTER as the first word in the abstract.

The Oklahoma Ornithological Society
Bill Diffin, President Elect

AOS revisions

Every summer, birders anxiously await publication of the "Check-list Supplement" by the American Ornithological Society's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of North and Middle American Birds (a.k.a. the NACC). The supplement details revisions to the NACC's Check-list. Here is a brief rundown on a few of those changes.

Goodbye to Thayer's Gull

Thayer's Gull is now treated as a subspecies of Iceland Gull. The authors of the Supplement state that more research is needed to determine if *kumlieni* should still be maintained as a valid subspecies; many birders and scientists believe it is instead a hybrid swarm between *L. g. glaucoides* and *L. g. thayeri*. Whatever you believe, your ABA Area list just decreased by one if you've seen both.

Hello to the Cassia Crossbill

In the Albion Mountains and South Hills of Cassia County, Idaho, there are no tree squirrels. Scientists have convincingly argued that this novel situation has allowed for the evolution of the area's very own resident species of crossbill: *Loxia sinesciuris*, known as the Cassia Crossbill. Indeed, *sinesciuris* means "without squirrels". In Cassia County, the pines have been locked in an evolutionary arms race with but one main predator: the crossbill. Over thousands of years, the pine evolved bigger and harder cones to prevent the crossbill from accessing its seeds. And the crossbill evolved a bigger, deeper bill and stronger facial muscles in order to pull the seeds out of the cones. This situation is remarkable because it happened in the presence of other crossbills. Two "types" of Red Crossbill (2 and 4), from which Cassia Crossbill was split, still commonly visit the area. The Cassia Crossbill not only has a different bill structure compared to the Red Crossbills with which it shares its range—but it also has different vocalizations. It seems that the evolution of Cassia Crossbill is a rare example of sympatric speciation in birds.

LeConte's Is One Word

Historical evidence strongly suggests that 19th-century entomologist John Lawrence LeConte, after whom the sparrow and the thrasher are named, did not usually write his last name with a space in it.

Audubon Society Minutes June 19, 2017

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Diffin.

Treasurer's report: Nancy Vicars reports \$5776 in the account after expenses.

Visitors today are Janiece Gratch of OKC and Vonceil Harmon of Norman.

There are no upcoming meetings or field trips planned, and no club meetings until September.

The fall OOS meeting will be held at Lake Texoma at Buncombe Creek Inlet in October. Updates at next meeting.

Old news: The OCAS has been volunteering to do litter patrol at Lake Hefner at the SW side of the lake at Prairie Dog Point. However, there has been no regularly scheduled litter duty for several months and at last meeting I had asked for a volunteer to take on the leadership role. No one has come forth, so I was directed by our President to notify the program that we are withdrawing our commitment. The meeting was adjourned and refreshment break followed.

Tonight's presentation was by Abbey Ramirez, graduate student at Northeastern State University. She has been working with Arkansas researchers to develop an Oklahoma program for studying the Northern Saw-whet Owl, and has opened a banding program for gaining field data in our state.

Meeting minutes compiled by Secretary Sharon Henthorn

Refreshments

Refreshments for the September meeting will be provided by:

Snacks : Esther Key and John Shackford

Drinks and Ice: Jack Hurd

Welcome New Members

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes

Janiece Gratch, Oklahoma City

Jenny Elton, Oklahoma City

Gliders, sail planes, they're wonderful flying machines. It's the closest you can come to being a bird.

Neil Armstrong.

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

Officers 2017

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	596-2759
Recorder	Esther M. Key	735-1021
Conservation	Dave Woodson	601-622-3467
Field Trips	Mark Delgrosso	403-5655
Field Trips	Betz Hacker	638-6210
Newsletter Editor	Pat Velte	751-5263
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 up-to-date Oklahoma City Audubon news log onto: **OKC-Audubon.org***

Recorders Report Summer 2017

Summer Additions

You never know what you will find when you go out birding. Who would have thought on June 25th a Wood Stork would be discovered by Steve Booker near Lake



Ellsworth in Comanche County just 13 miles west of Grady County. And in August Roseate Spoonbills were reported in Kansas. Will they come through central Oklahoma when they head south? Will someone find them if they do? Meanwhile, during the summer in central Oklahoma more new species were seen in several counties

bringing their totals for the year above 100. Now only Seminole and Garvin County are below 100 and three other counties are above 200 species for the year.

MAY

On the 19th John Tharp identified a **Cave Swallow** at Lake Thunderbird Alameda Drive area in Cleveland County. On the 28th Eric Duell birded Lightle Farms pasture SE of Hennessey and added the following birds to the Kingfisher County list Cattle Egret, Black-necked Stilt, Black-bellied Plover, Baird's Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Black Tern, Forster's Tern, Blue Grosbeak, and Common Grackle.

JUNE

On the 1st Larry Mays detected a Yellow-billed Cuckoo at his home in McClain County. Marky M saw a Black Vulture along I-35 near Edmond. On the 2nd Kevin Dailey had a Northern Rough-winged Swallow on the Turner Turnpike in Lincoln County. In Logan County Zach Poland encountered a Blue Grosbeak at his home and Brian Marra noticed a Prothonotary Warbler at Liberty Lake. On the 3rd Brian Marra added a Great-tailed Grackle in Garvin



County at Lindsay; in Grady County at Lake Louis Burtschi he found Summer Tanager, Black-and-white Warbler, Warbling Vireo, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great Horned Owl, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, near Wyant Road a Loggerhead Shrike; and in McClain County at Purcell Lake Brian recorded Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Bell's Vireo, and Warbling Vireo.

On the 6th Steve Davis spotted a Yellow-crowned Night Heron in Yukon. On the 9th Joe Grzybowski verified a Broad-winged Hawk along I-35 near Paul's Valley. On the 12th Liz Brewer reported a Great-tailed Grackle in Chandler. On the 17th Joe Buck heard a Yellow-billed Cuckoo near Luther. On the 20th Joe Grzybowski identified a Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Yellow-throated



Vireo in Pottawatomie County. On the 24th in Seminole County birds seen were Warbling Vireo, Western Kingbird, Fish Crow and Summer Tanager, and Brian Marra located a Black-crowned Night Heron at the West Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge.

On the 25th Zack Poland counted Common Nighthawk near Hennessey in Kingfisher County; and on the 26th he saw a Yellow-throated Warbler at the Myriad Botanical Gardens. On the 28th Jason Shaw got a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at USAO Habitat Area in Grady County. On the 29th Caleb McKinney tallied a Greater Roadrunner at Ninnekah in Grady County. On the 30th Esther Key recognized a Western Kingbird at Bell Cow Lake in Lincoln County and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Foster in Garvin County.

JULY

On the 2nd Esther Key discovered a Purple Martin at Wes Watkins Lake Campground in Pottawatomie County. On the 4th Robert Biller came across a Summer Tanager at the NW 63rd and Kilpatrick Turnpike. On the 8th Jason Shaw turned up a Black-crowned Night-Heron at the USAO Habitat Area. On the 9th Belinda Bridwell documented an Indigo Bunting in Seminole County; Caleb McKinney uncovered a Northern Rough-winged Swallow at Ninnekah in Grady County; and Bill Diffin detected a Bell's Vireo at the NW 63rd and Kilpatrick Turnpike in Canadian County.

On the 27th Caleb McKinney verified a Black-chinned Hummingbird in Ninnekah. On the 30th Brian Marra reported a Painted Bunting and a Grasshopper Sparrow in Kingfisher County.

AUGUST

On the 1st Esther Key spotted a flock of Cattle Egrets that apparently settled down near a pond just before the storm arrived in Garvin County.

On the 2nd Larry Mays located an Inca Dove on County Line Road near Newcastle. On the 4th Elizabeth Pratt found a Western Kingbird at Lindsay in Garvin County. On the 6th a Solitary Sandpiper was seen near Goldsby. On the 8th Bill Diffin documented a Neotropic Cormorant and



an Alder/Willow Flycatcher (Traill's Flycatcher) at the West Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge. On the 13th a Little Blue Heron was noticed on Ladd Road near Goldsby. On the 16th Bill Diffin recorded a **Laughing Gull** at the John Marshall School Pond. He also reported Least Terns were nesting here during the summer. On the 18th John Tharp discovered a Caspian Tern at the Lake Thunderbird North Sentinel Campground. On the 20th Zach Poland added Stilt Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper and Lesser Yellowlegs near Marshall in Logan County. On the 22nd Bill Diffin encountered a Chuck's-will's-widow at the Bluff Creek Trails; and on the 23rd he saw an Alder Flycatcher at Prairie Dog Point. On the 27th Nathan Kuhnert found an **Ovenbird** at the Myriad Botanical Gardens. Many of our summer nesting birds are leaving for their wintering grounds. Soon the winter birds will be arriving.



During the Summer of 2017 in the Central Oklahoma area **160** species were reported with **3** new species which increased the year's total to **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.

September's Challenge

The eBird challenge for the month of September is to enter 15 or more checklists with at least one Flyover breeding code. However before using the Flyover code be sure to read up on its proper application. What eBird is trying to get at with this code is whether a bird is in habitat that it might use or if it is just in transit across an area. Most of the birds we see flying over us do not qualify for the Flyover code.

During summer Chimney Swifts, Barn Swallows, Purple Martins, flycatchers, kestrels, hawks and Mississippi Kites seen in flight overhead are almost certainly foragers looking for a meal, therefore they don't qualify for the Flyover code. The vast majority of passerines seen in flight during the summer are in or over habitat that they use or might use. However it is worth keeping in mind that there is also some passerine migration going on starting as early as August.

Look and listen for migrating passerines at dusk or dawn since most of them migrate at night. Herons, egrets and cormorants seen flying over our neighborhoods are usually in transit between a roost and a foraging area and therefore do qualify for the Flyover code, unless there is a nice marsh or pond in your subdivision. Roosting or loafing qualifies as use of habitat which is something worth keeping in mind during migration. Birds that are flushed up or that are noticed dispersing naturally from a night roost don't qualify for the Flyover code.

I think we consider too much the good luck of the early bird and not enough the bad luck of the early worm.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Oklahoma City Audubon Society
c/o Patricia Velte
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