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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:

Amy Gregory, El Reno

Tara Golden, OKC

Beau Waldrop, Choctaw

Identifying Environmental Change through Palaeobotanical Analysis

The speaker for our April 20 OKC Audubon meeting will be Dr. Rachel Jones speaking on Extending the Ecological Perspective: Identifying Environmental Change through Palaeobotanical Analysis.

Her presentation will briefly cover the methods of fossil plant analysis used in palaeo-ecological research. she will discuss her work in paleoecology as it relates to no-analog communities found in North America during the Pleistocene-Holocene transition. No-analog communities are defined as community fossil assemblages in which no modern counterpart exists. These vegetation communities often represent a mix of species adapted to more glacial environments, as well as those found in more temperate. There is recognition by paleoecologists that these unique assemblages may have provided refuges for species to exist during extreme climate variability throughout the Pleistocene-Holocene transition.



Dr. Rachel Jones is Dean for the School of Science & Kinesiology at the University of Science & Arts of Oklahoma and Professor of Environmental Science & Biology, a paleoecologist. She joined USAO as an Assistant Professor of Biology in August 2014. She received her B.A. in Anthropology from Arizona State University and both her M.S. (Botany) and Ph.D. (Ecology) from the University of Wyoming.

Her research is focused in southern U.S. paleoecology. She utilizes paleoecological research techniques in conjunction with anthropological data to answer questions concerning the Native American role in the development of certain ecosystems. Dr. Jones has also conducted paleoecological research concerned with investigating vegetation change in the southern Ozarks of Missouri since the last glacial maximum. Additionally, she has been an environmental consultant for nearly a decade working in Wyoming with the energy industry to assess vegetation reclamation efforts.

Come out and enjoy the camaraderie and bring a friend. 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

Humans and birds go way back. We have lived together for thousands of years, and the relationship has taken some pretty wild forms along the way.

The most obvious is for food. Chickens descend from the red junglefowl of Southeast Asia, first domesticated around 8,000 years ago, and they've since become the most numerous bird on Earth by a massive margin. Their meat, eggs, and feathers have been crucial for countless civilizations.

Ducks, geese, and turkeys followed a similar path. Even ostriches and emus have been debatably domesticated, farmed for food, feathers, leather, and oil.

Then there are carrier pigeons, which were incredibly important for communication before faster travel methods, and eventually the internet. Caesar used them in Gaul. The Rothschild family learned of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo by pigeon before anyone else in London and made a killing on the stock market because of it.

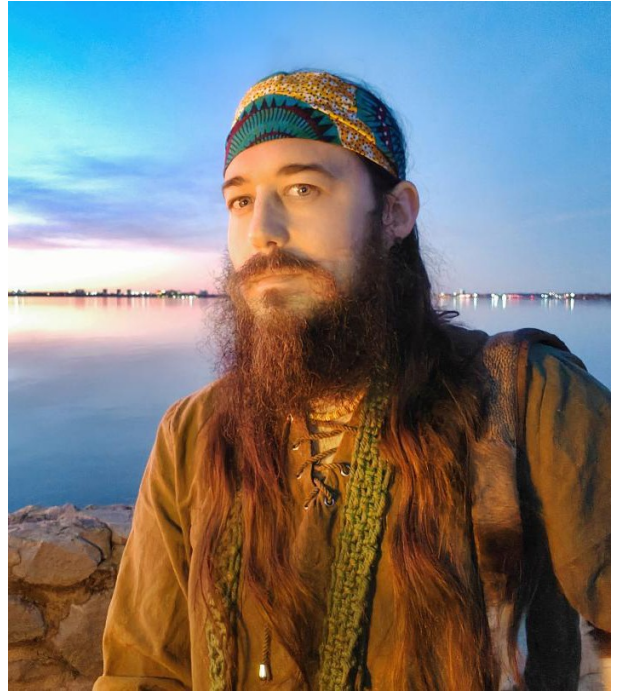
In World War I, a pigeon named Cher Ami delivered a message that saved nearly 200 trapped American soldiers after being shot through the chest (some of you might remember this story from our field trip to the Pigeon Museum in OKC!)

Falconry has a rich history too. Training raptors to hunt alongside humans is at least 4,000 years old, was the sport of royalty for most of that history, and is still practiced today across dozens of countries. UNESCO lists it as an intangible cultural heritage.

And of course there are the birds that people keep just for the love of it. Parrots have lived in human homes since antiquity. Alexander the Great brought them back from India. Today, parakeets, cockatiels, canaries, and finches are in millions of households worldwide, kept for their songs, their color, and their personalities.

When you step back and look at it, birds have fed us, carried our most urgent messages, hunted alongside us, and kept us company long before we ever recording history. I think it's fair to say that we as a human species owe them quite a lot.

Cole Penning
President, OKC Audubon



LAST CALL!

It's time to pay your 2026 Membership Dues!

[Click here to pay online](#)



Bird of the Month: Bushtit

By Grace Huffman

In late March I spent the weekend in the Oklahoma Panhandle. While birding in Black Mesa State Park I was finally able to get a good photo of one of my favorite birds to find up there: the Bushtit!

Bushtits are small, active birds that don't look like much, being entirely grayish. They live from extreme SW Canada down into Mexico. Here in the lower US they are a western species, with Cimarron County being the only part of Oklahoma you are likely to find them, although they have rarely been found elsewhere in extreme western Oklahoma. They are extremely social, with flocks constantly calling to each other, roosting together, and even nesting simultaneously!

When it's time to build the nest, the pair works together and may take a month to complete construction. Starting with spider webs, they continue with all kinds of soft plant and animal materials until the camouflaged nest sac is finished. Bushtits pairs also raise their families with assistance from helper birds (typically adult males), and all of them will sleep in the nest! It's built to last, as they will usually use the same nest for a second brood.

Bushtits prefer scrubby & open areas, from woodlands near streams all the way up to conifer forests over 11,000 feet. They are highly adaptable, and adjust well to suburban areas in their range. I've seen flocks of them foraging in trees in the middle of Disneyland or up the side of a mountain in New Mexico. Their adaptability is a large factor in why they are considered least concern, so next time you travel west I hope you get to see these little social birds!



Bushtit © Grace Huffman

Minutes of the OKC Audubon Society Meeting March 16, 2026

Meeting was called to order by President Cole Penning. Attendance was about 30, including two new members, Amy Gregory and Tara Golden.

Treasurer's report: Nancy Vicars presented the report which was approved as read. After deposits of \$199.64 and disbursements of \$195.00 The cash on hand was \$10.402.11.

February minutes were read and approved.

Good bird sightings were reported before the break. Terri mentioned okiebird.com for a view of the owls nesting in her yard.

Upcoming field trip to Zoo Lake on March 21 at zoo lake was announced.

Molly Spencer Farm bird hike was announced for Saturday, May 1 in Yukon.

Spring OOS meeting May 1-3 At Red Slough was announced. See okbirds.org for more information and to register.

Snack schedule was sent around by Cheryl Allen.

Cole noticed that the sign at Prairie Dog Point on Lake Hefner states that the OKC Audubon Society has adopted that park, but there is lots of work to be done. Our speaker suggested that Earth Day in April might be a time to get volunteers for that project.

Speaker Leah Snyder's presentation explained how environmental efforts of Fort Sill Chiricahua Warm Spring Apache tribe benefits all of us and how the other 38 Oklahoma tribes participate in Oklahoma environmental health.

Our next meeting will be Monday April 20, Speaker will be Dr. Rachel Jones, Dean of Biology and Kinesiology at the University of Arts and Sciences in Chickasha. Her presentation will be on Paleo Botany.

Cathy Chernausek, Substitute Secretary

My nesting Great Horned Owls

by Terri Underhill



This year Jack and his new mate, Joy, have two precious owlets I have decided to name Precious and Miracle. On April 14th Joy brought in a small snake that was still alive. It was interesting watching Precious decide whether or not she wanted to swallow it... but she finally did. On April 15, both owlets decided to practice their wing exercises at the same time on the edge of the barrel. Very nerve-racking to watch!! (LOL)

I'm sure by the time this newsletter comes out they will have already fledged. My owls were truly a blessing this year after Keith's passing. My username on YouTube is [Okiebirdnerd](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCk1b1b1b1b1b1b1b1b1b1b1) and I am [Terri Miller Underhill](https://www.facebook.com/TerriMillerUnderhill) on Facebook if you want to view some of the short videos I've created but haven't added to YouTube.

I always love having my owls every season and hope they will return next year. I give a hoot!



Executive Summary: Birding as a Mental Health Tool

Chat GPT summary of The Epoch Times article, recommended by Patrick McGaugh



The article highlights bird watching (birding) as a simple yet powerful activity that improves mental health, cognitive function, and overall well-being. Sparked by personal stories like Devon Pope's discovery of a Baltimore oriole, birding is presented as an accessible hobby with therapeutic effects.

A key benefit of birding is its ability to **focus attention**, pulling individuals away from stress and into the present moment. Research shows that even short, structured bird-watching sessions can reduce anxiety and depression more effectively than general nature walks or inactivity.

Multiple studies reinforce its benefits:

- **Mental health:** Seeing or hearing birds improves well-being and reduces loneliness, even with casual exposure.
- **Elder care:** Nursing home residents with access to bird feeders experienced increased mobility, social interaction, and emotional health.
- **Cognitive function:** Experienced birders demonstrate enhanced visual processing and brain adaptability (neuroplasticity).

Birding also provides a **dopamine-driven "euphoric effect"**, especially when identifying new species or interacting closely with birds. This reinforces engagement and emotional reward.

Additionally, the hobby is highly accessible and increasingly popular, shedding its outdated image as younger enthusiasts build communities online.

A World United by Birds is a Wonder Worth Celebrating

Wow! What a spectacular year for the **Great Backyard Bird Count**. People were out February 13-16, 2026 in every corner of the world watching, listening, photographing, recording, and enjoying birds.

Here is a quick snapshot of results:

8,257 species of birds identified
216 countries or eBird subregions
467,696 eBird checklists
1,239,329 Saved Merlin Bird IDs (step-by-step, sound, or photo)
246,225 photos, videos, and sounds added to Macaulay Library
1,146,284 estimated global participants

Refreshments

Refreshment volunteers for the April 20, 2026 meeting:

Snacks: Chris Pratt, Steve Davis & Mary Lane, Carla Bruggen and Hal Yocum.

Ice & Drinks: John Eagleston & Cathy Chernauek

DUES NOTICE

It's time once again to renew your annual membership. OCAS dues are \$15 per household and may be paid at the monthly meetings, online at our website <http://www.okc-audubon.org> or mailed to Nancy Vicars, Treasurer, 2341 NW 160th St., Edmond, OK 73013



Upcoming Field Trip

Saturday, May 2, 2026
8:00am to 10:00am

This field trip to Mollie Spencer Farm in Yukon, led by Nancy Vicars, will be a public outing.

Location: 1001 Garth Brooks Blvd. (NE corner of Garth Brooks and Vandament St. in Yukon). Parking is located at the school parking lot on the north side. Do NOT park in the meadow inside the farm.

Leader: Nancy Vicars, nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net

The farm is not open to the general public outside of regularly-scheduled events hosted at the farm.

2026 OOS Spring Meeting

Dates: May 1-3, 2026
Location: Red Slough WMA

Friday Schedule:

Friday night presentation by Dave Arbour
Friday night game night/social

Saturday Schedule:

Saturday field trips - led by OOS Board Members
Saturday dinner/speaker will be at the Museum of the Red River in Idabel
Saturday catered dinner
Saturday keynote speaker

Sunday Schedule:

JUST ADDED: Sunday morning field trip led by Dave Arbour

Earth Day 2026

Earth Day 2026 takes place on Wednesday, April 22, 2026, marking the 56th anniversary of the global movement. Under the theme "Our Power, Our Planet," the 2026 campaign focuses on climate action, clean energy, and protecting biodiversity. Over 1 billion people worldwide will participate in activities like cleanups, tree planting, and education initiatives.



Masters Bird Sounds Controversy

There is a long-running debate over whether the bird sounds heard during broadcasts of the Masters Tournament at Augusta National Golf Club are real or artificially added.

Real birds exist at Augusta: Experts confirm the chirps heard match species native to the region, meaning the sounds themselves are authentic.

Audio may be enhanced: Broadcasts likely use recorded bird sounds captured on-site and replay them to create a consistent, pleasant atmosphere.

Why viewers rarely see birds: Large crowds and tournament activity tend to scare birds away, making them harder to spot even though they are present.

History of suspicion: Past incidents in sports broadcasting (including golf) have involved added ambient sounds, fueling skepticism among fans.

Bottom Line: The "controversy" isn't about fake sounds, but about **production choices**. The Masters broadcast enhances real bird audio to maintain its calm, nature-filled atmosphere—reinforcing the tournament's carefully curated image.