

Living and Birding with COVID-19

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Where can we go birding, where should we go birding or should we go birding at all during these days of Corona virus related “lockdown”? Our city , state and federal parks are closed or have significant restrictions, the biggest one being “Social Distancing” of 6-10 feet.

Well, certainly it is difficult in city parks unless you go very early and are done by 9-10AM. Think about some of the more remote birding areas and hotspots where we usually see or meet very few people (except other birders). During Spring Migration these areas are even better as the migrating birds seem to be knowledgeable of and attracted to these places.

Close in to the OKC area there are several that come to mind. Rose Lake is one. In late March there were a pair of Whooping cranes first spotted there. Another is Jenkins Road in Norman , south of Hwy 9. Stinchcomb East and West are beautiful walks (when there is no mud that keeps your eyes on the ground all the time). Often the more unusual warblers may be seen and heard there.

The Arcadia Lake Conservation and Education Area at the south end of the lake , accessed from Memorial at Midwest City Blvd. is another bird haven at migration time. Finally, Lake Hefner at the inflow canal and south of the marina and Lake Overholser at the coffer dam on the north end and below the big dam on the south end are usually devoid of other people. The areas provide great birding, lots of exercise and perfect places to do “ social distancing” quite easily. At times you may be the only person there except for ME!

Hope to see you out at these great spots, but at least 6-10 feet distance.
Hal A. Yocum, MD

Due to health concerns, the April 20 and May 18, 2020 meetings have been cancelled as well as field trips, previously published or mentioned at the Feb. meeting.

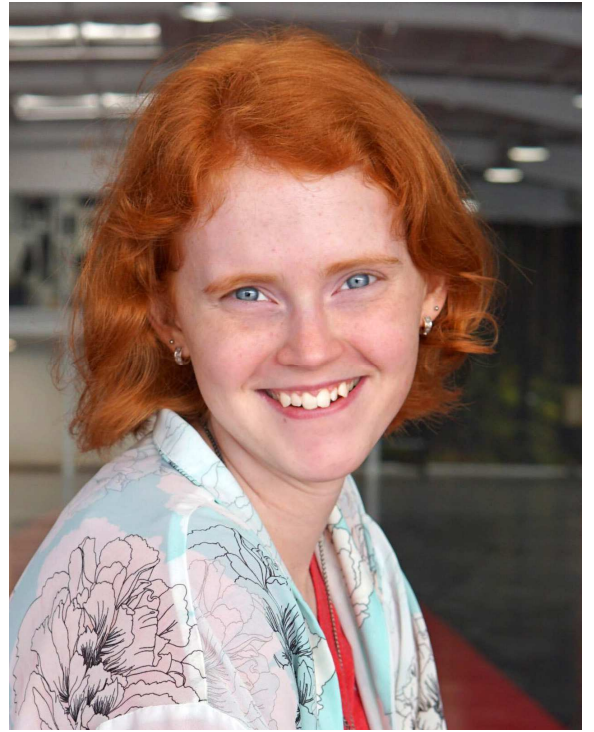
Bird of the Month

By Grace Huffman

It's springtime, and one of the sounds I most associate with spring is being out at Lake Hefner or some other marshy area and hearing the song of a male **Red-winged Blackbird**. They are seemingly everywhere that has a little bit of water and some reeds or branches for them to perch on.

Red-winged Blackbirds are extremely common, and can be found year-round across most of the contiguous 48 states, and down into Central America. Their summer range extends into Canada and Alaska, and they winter in extreme southern Arizona and certain parts of Mexico. While I most commonly see them in the countryside or at the lake, on rare occasions I will get one to come to my feeders, always in the springtime mixed in with grackles. If you live closer to a pond or other water source they are much more likely to visit your backyard. This time of year they are often in huge flocks with other blackbirds, but the males are distinguishable by their red and yellow wing patches (epaulets). Females are

dark brown and streaky all over, and can be mistaken for a sparrow.



© Grace Huffman

Male Red-winged Blackbirds will carve out a territory in spring and defend it against other males, however all ladies are welcome. Most males have more than one female nesting in their territory, with some having as many as 15 females. But at the same time, not all females are faithful, with more than a few nestlings having a different father. The male will help the female choose the nesting site, but it's up to the female to build the nest, usually low in reeds or other dense vegetation. She will incubate the eggs for almost 2 weeks, and then it's another 2 weeks before the young are ready to fledge.

Scientists have studied the variances in different populations, and have even conducted an experiment by moving young from one group into another. What they found is that the young grew up to resemble their foster parents (and therefore better suited to their current environment), instead of looking like their biological parents.

One unique population is a subspecies known as "Bicolored Blackbird." Bicolored Blackbirds have solid red epaulets, with no yellow on them whatsoever. They live in California, where they share their range with the Tricolored Blackbird. Tricolored Blackbirds look a lot like Red-wings, but the male's epaulets are dark red and white, with no yellow whatsoever.

Red-winged Blackbirds lost about 30% of their population from 1966-2014, but they are still considered to be Least Concern.

No matter how loud they get, I still enjoy seeing them!

References: allaboutbirds.org and *The Sibley Guide to Birds, Second Edition*.

Welcome to OKC Audubon

Marla Haddock, Edmond
W Rolla Weber, Norman
Landon Gilbert, Edmond

Great Horned Owl Nest Cam

The Great Horned Owl pair that nested in a plastic whiskey barrel along Terri Underhill's driveway are now busy taking care of two very active owlets.

The nest is monitored 24x7 and video streams live on Terri's Okie Bird Cam website (<http://okiebirdcam.com>). There is also the option to view a day's activity at high speed so you can catch glimpses of both parents coming in with food.



Bird-Window Collisions Update

By Nathan Kuhnert, April 15, 2020

I am keeping a low-profile this spring and only conducting photo documentation when I get out to monitor. Zero specimen collection this spring as apparently strains of coronaviruses can be viable for up to two years in the freezer.

Presentation and group discussion available below:

<https://www.facebook.com/NationalAudubonSociety/videos/568941410404296/?t=18>

On the national front, an encouraging piece of good news that we hope to eventually apply to OKC City Council; Brooklyn, NY CC recently passed a bill mandating developers/rehabbers use glass that American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has deemed bird-friendly:

<https://www.crainsnewyork.com/politics/council-votes-mandate-bird-safe-glass-new-construction?fbclid=IwAR0fnPc-EIhDR17Ty45jXJvRrbv7Uc4JR1eRVrv9t7BYPelm-izMNFcfB3k>

It's looking up at the new Minnesota Vikings football stadium where activists for several years have been working hard to make the stadium safer culminating in a study led by Oklahoma State University Professor, Scott Loss, where a thorough and yet reasonable plan of bird-safe retrofits are being strongly considered:

<https://www.startribune.com/activists-say-retrofitting-of-u-s-bank-stadium-glass-to-protect-birds-is-long-overdue/564779422/>

And lastly, always looking to draw attention to the premier one-stop-shop on bird-window collisions ranging from the science to the solutions including the home - ABC:

<https://abcbirds.org/program/glass-collisions/>



We did participate last year in the Global Bird Rescue 2019 by registering bird collisions (30 collisions documented Sep 30-Oct 6, 2019) and intend to do it again this fall. <https://birdsafe.ca/gbr/>

Kudos to Dave Woodson and Mary Jackson of TAS for alerting me on April 13 of an informative Facebook live video on bird-window collisions between several leading institutions collaborating to protect birds from low-rise and suburban building collisions.

Recorder's Report

March 2020

As spring arrives local birds are setting up nest sites and seasonal birds are beginning to move. On the 1st in Logan County Braden Farris counted Yellow-bellied Sapsucker near Kingfisher and Ross's Goose near Cashion; and in OKC Dora Webb noticed a Carolina Wren carrying nesting material. At Lake Hefner Jacob Crissup observed Surf Scoter and Yellow-billed Loon, Bill Diffin a White-winged Scoter and Eared Grebe and Brent Barnes a Red-necked Grebe. These winter birds were sighted several times during the month. On the 2nd Daron Patterson reported

Sandhill Crane near Okeene in Kingfisher County; and Steve Davis discovered **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at the Mustang Road Playas. On the 3rd Curtis Stewart found at least 12 Great Blue Herons with nest sites in one large snag near Skeleton Creek along OK-51



just west of OK-74 in Kingfisher County. On the 5th Elizabeth & Tim Pratt had Greater Roadrunner at Wes Watkins Lake in Pottawatomie County; and Joe Grzybowski identified Lesser Black-backed Gull at 63rd & Kilpatrick Turnpike in Canadian County.

On the 7th Zach Poland encountered **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Stinchcomb WR West in Canadian County. On the 8th Bruce Neville heard Hermit Thrush at the I-35 Northbound Rest Area in Garvin County; and Braden Farris spotted **Long-billed Dowitcher** at Stinchcomb



WR West. On the 10th Tim O'Connell heard **Fish Crow** at OSU. On the 11th Bruce Neville located Lesser Scaup at Rush Springs Sewage Lagoons in Grady County; and Marisue Hilli-

ard saw Vesper Sparrow at Mitch Park in Edmond. On the 13th Braden Farris verified Fish Crow at Lake Stanley Draper. On the 14th Scott Loss photographed **Neotropical Cormorant** at Boomer Lake Park; and Brian Marra detected Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at the SNU Football Complex in OKC. On the 15th Cody Delano noticed **Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow** and **Cliff Swallow** at Kevin Gottshall Memorial Park in Cleveland County. On the 17th Dan Cowell recognized House Wren and Spotted Towhee in Paul's Valley; Nick Kiehl recorded Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs at Meridian Technology Center Pond in Stillwater; and Aaron Mechem saw White-winged Dove in Warr Acres.

On the 18th Jack Olson added **Inca Dove** in Stillwater; and Dick Gunn got Sandhill Cranes along South Jenkins



in Norman. On the 19th Cody Delano came across **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Ten Mile Flats in Cleveland County; and Zach DuFran described **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** sitting on a well-established

nest in a sycamore tree in Norman. On the 20th Caleb McKinney tallied Brewer's Blackbird at the Ninnekah Softball Fields in Grady County; and Brian Marra documented **Gray Catbird** at Stinchcomb WR East in Oklahoma County. On the 21st Jacob Crissup turned up Eastern Meadowlark and Eastern Phoebe near Paul's Valley; Brian Marra confirmed **Baird's Sandpiper** and Pectoral Sandpiper at the Morgan Road Playa; and Braden Farris viewed Lesser Yellowlegs at Ten Mile Flat and **Black-and-white Warbler** at Lake Thunderbird.

On the 22nd Northern Rough-winged Swallows and **Tree Swallows** were reported by Brian Marra at Lake Konawa in Seminole County, and Mary & Lou Truex at Lindsay in Garvin County; while Steve Davis last saw the Lesser Goldfinch at his feeder in OKC. On the 23rd Jo-Ann Doyle had Savanna Sparrow and Song Sparrow at McCloud Road in Pottawatomie County; D&D Norris found Hairy Woodpecker at Kairworks Garden in Logan County; and Rachel Wrenn discovered **Louisiana Waterthrush** in Norman.

On the 24th Shane Clark had Northern Shoveler near Chandler in Lincoln County; Joe Grzybowski identified **American Golden-Plover** at Ten Mile Flat; and Dick Gunn came across **Yellow-throated Warbler** along South Jenkins. **Scissor-tailed Flycatchers** were observed by Larry Mays in Newcastle and Corban Hemphill in Stillwater.



On the 25th Jacob Crissup encountered Yellow-headed Blackbird along Hwy #33 in Kingfisher County; Joe Grzybowski identified **Upland Sandpiper**, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Lesser Yellowlegs at Ten Mile Flat; and Tim O'Connell detected

Louisiana Waterthrush in Stillwater. On the 26th Chris Butler saw White-eyed Vireo and Cinnamon Teal at Maud Wetlands in Seminole County; a **Northern Parula** was photographed along Alameda Drive in Norman; Scott Loss located **Swainson's Hawk**, and **Lark Sparrow** at Whittenberg Park in Stillwater; Braden Farris spotted **Snowy Egret** and White-eyed Vireo at south Lake Hefner; and Jimmy Woodard verified Black-and-white Warbler at Lake Stanley Draper. On the 27th Larry Mays recognized **Sprague's Pipit** and Horned Lark and Brian Marra noticed Vesper Sparrow at Garrett Farmstead near the Newcastle Public Library in McClain County; and Jerry Vanbebber recorded **Cattle Egret** at Ten Mile Flat and Yellow-throated Warbler along Mohawk Road in Norman.

On the 28th Larry Mays confirmed American Pipit, **Chestnut-collared Longspur** and photographed Sprague's Pipit at Garrett Farmstead; Rusty Derringer got **Eastern Kingbird** and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher near Wellston in Lincoln County; Braden Farris came across **Little Blue Heron**, Snowy Egret and **Black-necked Stilt** at Rose Lake in Canadian County; Deanne McKinney added Swainson's Hawk at NW 63rd & Kilpatrick Turnpike; Pat Velte photographed **Whooping Crane** at Rose Lake; and Esther Key described **Clay-colored Sparrow** in Moore. Landon



Neumann had Northern Parula at Couch Park in Stillwater; Scott Loss documented **Solitary Sandpiper** flying over his yard in Stillwater; Braden Farris viewed **Peregrine Falcon** at Lake Hefner; Dave Woodson photographed Yellow-headed Blackbird in Edmond; Bill Diffin turned up **Osprey** at Lake Hefner – Prairie Dog Point; and Hal Yocum watched **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** in Edmond.



On the 29th Zach DuFran photographed the Whooping Cranes as they left Rose Lake; Logan Carter spotted Barred Owl, and White-throated Sparrow at Maud in the Pottawatomie County side of town; Jason Shaw found Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Austin Hall in Chickasha in Grady County; Alex Harman counted Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in McCloud in Lincoln County. Bill Diffin identified Peregrine Falcon, Cinnamon Teal, American Golden-Plover, Black-necked Stilt, Long-billed Dowitcher, and Lesser Yellowlegs at Rose Lake. Joe Grzybowski reported Sprague's Pipit at Ten Mile Flats; and Corban Hemphill had Osprey at Boomer Lake Park in Stillwater.

On the 30th Cassidy Massey confirmed Yellow-headed Blackbird north of Edmond in Logan County; Bridger Arrington located Eastern Bluebird in South Mullah in Logan County. Scott Loss identified Pine Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler and Yellow-throated Warbler at Lake Carl Blackwell; and Joe Grzybowski documented **American Avocets** flying over Lake Thunderbird – South Dam looking for a place to land. While eating lunch in the rain Elizabeth & Tim Pratt noticed Cliff Swallows flying over Lake El Reno. On the 31st Chris Butler encountered **Grasshopper Sparrow** and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Garrett Farmstead; and Nathan Ukens photographed Ruby-throated Hummingbird at Stinchcomb WR East.

In the Central Oklahoma area during March 2020, **180** species were reported with **38** new species bringing the total for 2020 to **195**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds. Information is accessed at: [ebird](http://www.ebird.org/). 2020 eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Available: <http://www.ebird.org/subnational1/US-OK/region>. (Accessed: March 31, 2020). And occasionally from Facebook and the OKBIRDS List. I can be contacted by e-mail at emkok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

Volunteers needed for second Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas!



Oklahoma's first Breeding Bird Atlas was completed from 1997 to 2001, and was published in 2004 (available from oupublish.com). Breeding bird atlases are intensive surveys of birds across a region during the nesting season. They are designed to provide current information about bird distribution in a state (or other region), as well as to provide a baseline for comparisons in the future to see how bird distributions change over time.

A typical interval between atlas projects within a region is 20-25 years, so it is time for Oklahoma birders to go forth and scour the state once again, birding with a purpose! The Sutton Avian Research Center is once again leading the effort for Oklahoma's second breeding bird atlas.

If you are new to atlasing, the process is simple. Visit the project web page at suttoncenter.org/atlas and sign up for one or more survey blocks near you. There are 583 survey blocks statewide, each about 3x3 miles in size, and each will need to be surveyed for one season within the next five years.

Once signed up, you will receive a packet of instructions, maps and data forms. Visit your block at least twice during the spring and summer for a total of at least 10 hours, and record the bird species you find, how many of each you find, and record any indications of nesting behavior that you observe for each species. All of this is explained in more detail in the instructions, but the process is mostly birdwatching, with a modest amount of record keeping going along with it.

The blocks to be surveyed were randomly selected, which helps get observers to go birding in many places they may not otherwise visit (not just parks and refuges), painting a more detailed and informative picture of where each species occurs in Oklahoma. Your help completing these surveys gives you an opportunity to contribute to ongoing, long-term monitoring of Oklahoma's nesting birds, and will help document any changes to bird populations here that have occurred over the past two decades.

Visit suttoncenter.org/atlas or contact Dan Reinking at dan@suttoncenter.org or 918-336-7778 for more information.

ABA Code of Ethics during COVID-19

1. Birding is a GREAT thing to do right now, whether you're a lifelong birder or someone who has just started noticing birds out your window. Keeping a connection with birds and nature is a valuable way to improve mood, lower stress, and gain perspective on our current troubles. As such, birding should be strongly supported and encouraged.

2. Some types of birding and birding locales are specifically to be avoided now, particularly any situation or location that would encourage or require people to violate physical distancing guidelines or travel away from one's local area. These should be scrupulously avoided.

3. There is no "one size fits all" prescription for how to accomplish this. People are in many different types of living situations, from high-density urban dwellings to very lightly populated, rural landscapes. Exactly what is appropriate will vary significantly from place to place.

4. Please remember that every time you hike into the wilds or get on the road to drive to go birding, you have the potential to require emergency services. This could put pressure on an already strained group of emergency personnel at this challenging time. As such, work to stay as close to home as possible.

5. People's judgement of what is safe will vary. There is little to be gained from birders attacking each other on social media and elsewhere about perceived lapses in physical distancing. However, thoughtful discussion, promotion, and modeling of one's own "quarantine" birding practices are welcome and appropriate.

In short, bird as much as you are able, close to home, and without exposing yourself or anyone else to risk. We look forward to seeing you in person in the field once these difficult times have passed!