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

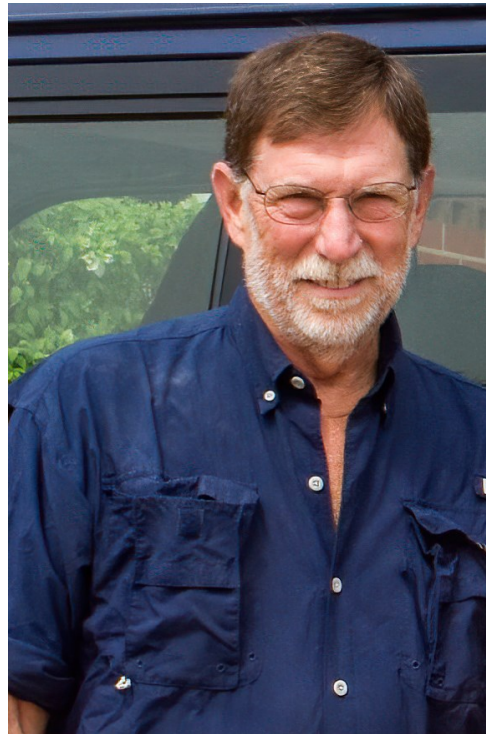
The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes:

Keenan Lamirand, OKC
Chindarat Charoenewongse, Edmond
Carolyn Comingdeer, Edmond
Rhonda Kache, Tulsa
Patrick Mignano, OKC
Marie Bohlier, Bethany
Bob Tindel, Edmond

Welcome back:

Madeline Benham

Birds, Beasts and Bastions!



The speaker for our February 21 meeting will be Jay Pruett of Tulsa presenting a program entitled "Birds, Beasts and Bastions - Northern India!"

The wildlife of India is amazing and that certainly applies to its bird diversity; there are outstanding historical/cultural features as well. These will be revealed from an excursion through two cities and three world-renown national parks in the northern part of the country, as COVID-19 was beginning to spread worldwide.

Jay Pruett was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and grew up in Oklahoma City. He graduated from Rice University in Houston, with a major in Biology. He initially worked in pollution control for a government agency, but then began a long career as head of

environmental affairs for an electric utility company. He attended executive schools at LSU, Michigan, Yale and Stanford. He retired from American Electric Power in 2003 and joined The Nature Conservancy as the Director of Conservation for the Oklahoma Chapter until his retirement in 2018. He was responsible for development and implementation of conservation initiatives for the state and oversaw the management of TNC preserves there. He acted as TNC's representative to federal, state and local conservation agencies and organizations. He was also involved with wind energy and electric transmission siting issues with regard to wildlife and its habitats at state, national and international levels.

Jay lives in Tulsa and serves on a number of boards for conservation organizations, including the Sutton Avian Research Center, Tulsa Audubon Society and Oklahoma Invasive Plant Council. He enjoys international travel, hiking, birding, nature photography, and collecting natural history books, antique natural history lithographs (especially of birds), wildlife art and tribal masks. He also participates as a walker in half marathons.

Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month. 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. The Oklahoma City Audubon Society is neither a chapter of, nor affiliated with, the National Audubon Society.

President's Perspective

Perhaps you noted last month that I got started birding (real birding) thanks to a summer school teacher who got me hooked. Think a moment about what got you started.

Some of us were really fortunate (or unfortunate according to some) to have gotten into birding while quite young. Others of us missed out many years but eventually something triggered and now are likewise hooked. My Mother would fall into that later category. Even though I was around for many years, it wasn't till she was approaching retirement that she became interested.

And here's what could have been a negative incident (but fortunately it wasn't). Both of us happened to be attending a conference out in Southern California and I invited her to skip out with me one morning and run out to the estuaries along the coast, it was early winter time and the sloughs, ponds, and marshes were full of birds. We both had a pair of binoculars along but no scope so when we came to the first set of ponds, I happened to see a couple along one of the dikes using one. I approached them and asked of it might be possible for my Mother to look through it since she was thinking of purchasing one. The husband said, "Sure, here have a look." The wife immediately and sharply stated, "Oh no! I bought this for you, not for anybody else to be looking through!" I smiled, said, "Sorry." And we went on our way.



Bob Holbrook on the Essequibo River, Guyana

We enjoyed seeing the 4 species of Loons "up close and in person" which was really special, but there was a bit of a sour taste in our mouths for sure. (She did eventually get a nice scope which I inherited after she passed away.) Another incident... in Illinois... I was out for a quiet day of birding on my own, using it as a way of clearing my head after some very stressful days and happened onto a car parked on a gravel road with 4 birders standing out along the wire fence staring at something with their binocs. I stopped, got my binocs out and asked them, "What are you looking at?" They (all 4) paid little attention except for one who curtly answered, "birds." The only word spoken--silence. I decided maybe I should move on. Now I know we are not at all like either of these 2 illustrations. We are all very friendly, outgoing, helpful, enthusiastic birders--at least with our friends but have we at times not been quite that way when it involves a stranger who just might be needing one small push/ kind word/ helpful hint to get hooked on the greatest pastime, hobby, passion, obsession, terminal disease around? (Yes, I said terminal disease--that's the level I'm at so have I turned someone off due to my thoughtlessness somewhere along the way?). Just a thought.

—Bob Holbrook, *alias Inca Tern*

**MASKS ARE
REQUIRED
AT THE
OCAS
MEETING!**



Save the Date!

The 25th annual Great Backyard Bird Count will be held **Friday, February 18, through Monday, February 21, 2022**. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information and be sure to check out the latest [educational and promotional resources](#).



Bird of the Month - Barred Owl

By Grace Huffman

If you know me, you know some of my favorite birds are owls. I'm not sure why, but seeing or hearing one always brightens up my day! One of the owls I come across most often while out birding is the Barred Owl. They can be found over much of the state except the far west. Nationwide they are common over the eastern United States, north into Canada, and down along the west coast.

Barred Owls are large, silent flyers. They are a bit smaller than Great Horned Owls and a warmer brown overall, but still have an impressive silhouette when you can find them. You are more likely to hear their "who cooks for you" calls, though. While you are most likely to hear them at dawn and dusk, I've heard them mid-morning or even late afternoon! If you want to go look for them, they prefer mature forests, which makes them even harder to find since there are plenty of spots for them to hide in.

While they may occasionally nest using an old crow or hawk nest, they usually nest in tree cavities, or large specifically-built nest boxes. They do very little to add any comfort to the nest site, but will occasionally perform a little housekeeping to make it work for them. They lay up to 5 eggs, which are incubated for about a month. It takes another month before the babies are ready to leave the nest. The babies stay with their parents for a while after fledging.

Barred Owls are considered Least Concern, and their population is increasing. Despite being very sedentary, they are expanding their range where out west they are displacing their smaller cousin, the Spotted Owl. Barred Owls are sensitive to logging, and are used to determine the health of old forests. Great Horned Owls are known predators of Barred Owls, typically taking eggs and young, but occasionally taking adults as well.

If you go out looking for owls, please don't overly disturb them. If you flush one from its roosting place, don't continue to chase the owl making it move repeatedly, especially in the daytime. Their roosting location is chosen so they can avoid being harassed by songbirds like jays and chickadees, which causes additional stress to the owl. Also, if you are out at night, don't use flash to take photos. It affects their eyes just like ours, and for smaller species like screech owls, this puts them at risk of being hunted by predators like other owls since they temporarily can't see. It's best to just be out at dusk to look and listen!



Barred Owl. © Grace Huffman

Nesting Great Horned Owls in Edmond

By Terri Underhill

I am happy to announce my resident great horned owls laid their first egg of the season Thursday, February 3! This season I added a new IR camera above the nest in addition to replacing my roof cam. I am excited to be able to see what is going on inside the nest without second guessing as I've had to do in past years. I have live-stream on my website of each cam and also a deer cam.



All cameras have audio which you will really enjoy. I will try to add a YouTube video every few days with the highlighted moments worth watching. You can subscribe to my channel to be alerted when new videos are added.

On YouTube, you can go to the "About" page and read the nitty gritty on my cameras and barrel installation.

I am a true owl nut and honored they use the barrel I put up for them. My barrel is safer and warmer than any nest they could find in the wild. I hope you will enjoy my owls, I give a hoot!

Please be mindful that I don't have control over Mother Nature or what prey my owls may bring in. Here's a YouTube link to my video from Feb 2nd and another popular one: <https://youtu.be/zebsbEFvK80> this video has the most views: <https://youtu.be/ZZX0z1KYGSo>

And here's my web address: www.okiebirdcam.com

Impromptu Field Trip

By Nancy Vicars

On the afternoon of Thursday, February 10th, Warren Harden and I decided to visit the Dover Marsh. It was a warm sunny day and just too beautiful to stay indoors! He had been there once many years ago and remembered all the waterfowl seen by OKC Audubon members on their return trip from Salt Plains last fall.

Since we were passing through Okarche, I wanted to show him the large prairie dog town Patti and I had discovered last spring while working on Breeding Bird Atlas plots in the area. It was so disappointing! The entire dog town had been plowed and wheat planted. But wait, this story has a very happy ending. Just a few miles down the road, there was another dog town full of active mounds and lots of healthy-looking dogs. Scanned for Burrowing Owls but none were spotted. There were three Red-tailed Hawks circling over the dog town and one more hawk was observed on the ground. When this last one flew, much to our delight, it was an absolutely stunning Ferruginous Hawk. We watched it spiral up over the field giving us perfect views.

Our waterfowl list at the marsh included Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Northern Shoveler, Bufflehead, Gadwall, Mallard, Lesser Scaup and American Coot plus a beautiful dark phase Red-tailed hawk.

Our next stop was the Dolese Sand Plant ponds south of the town of Dover. Would you believe, eighty-four Common Mergansers, two Common Goldeneyes, one Belted Kingfisher, thirty American White Pelicans, twenty Ring-billed Gulls, six Great-Blue Herons and one Killdeer. Also in the area were four Bald Eagles, two mature and two immatures. On the west side of Hwy. 81 we found 12 Green-winged Teal.

A quick stop at Lake Elmer located north of Kingfisher added American Robin and a Rufous-sided Towhee.

Later we were treated to a beautiful sunset and celebrated our afternoon findings with the "Last Bird" of the day, dinner at Eischen's Bar in Okarche, OK.

Recorder's Report: January 2022

The new year of 2022 began with birders checking out many of their favorite locations. How many bird species were found in all 12 counties? What unusual species were located in the fields, on the lakes and at backyard feeders?

On the 1st Caleb McKinney found Fox Sparrow and Harris's Sparrow at Ninnekah in Grady County; D&D Norris had Red-breasted Nuthatch and White-throated Sparrow at Kairworks Garden in Logan County; Joe Grzybowski detected Pine Siskin and Lincoln's Sparrow along Ten Mile Flat in Norman; Rod Lusey tallied Pied-billed Grebe and Bald Eagle at Arcadia Lake; Steve Stone had Song Sparrow and Spotted Towhee at Crystal Lake; Rachael & Dean Winstead added Hairy Woodpecker in Midwest City; Michael McCoy verified American Tree Sparrow in Edmond; Jacob Kirkland came across Northern Shoveler and Ruddy Duck at the Zoo Lake Park; and Tim O'Connell spotted Harris's Sparrow and White-throated Sparrow in Stillwater.

On the 2nd Caleb McKinney recognized Hooded Merganser and Bonaparte's Gull at Taylor Lake and LeConte's Sparrow and Loggerhead Shrike at Grady County WMA in Grady County; Trina Arnold counted Eared Grebe, Common Goldeneye and Savannah Sparrow at Lake Overholser; in Norman Zach DuFran got Northern Shoveler and Ring-necked Duck at Summit Lake and Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Golden-crowned Kinglet at John H. Saxon Park; Steve Stone identified Common Goldeneye at Kids Lake Park at Lake Hefner; Landon Neumann located Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Couch Park and Smith's Longspur in Stillwater.



Red-breasted Nuthatch

On the 3rd Emily Grossman observed American Robin at Stroud in Lincoln County; and Joe Grzybowski recorded Rock Wren at Lake Thunderbird Dam. On the 4th Azir Serinus saw Eurasian Collared-Dove at Paul's Valley in Garvin County; Dustin Lynch observed Gadwall at Liberty Lake and Great Blue Heron at Guthrie Lake in Logan County; Brian Marra had Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, and Winter Wren at Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge East; and Scott Loss viewed Northern Harrier at Airport Road in Stillwater. On the 5th Megan Migue confirmed Northern Pintail at Bell Cow Lake in Lincoln County;

Brian Marra discovered Eastern Phoebe and Brown Creeper at Martin Park Nature Center; Don Maas encountered Wilson's Snipe at 10 Acre Park in Choctaw; and Jim Tomasek noticed Hermit Thrush at Stinchcomb WR East.

On the 6th Cody Delano reported Pine Warbler in Norman; Scott Loss photographed Lesser Black-backed Gull at Lake Carl Blackwell; and Bill Diffin described California Gull at Lake Hefner.

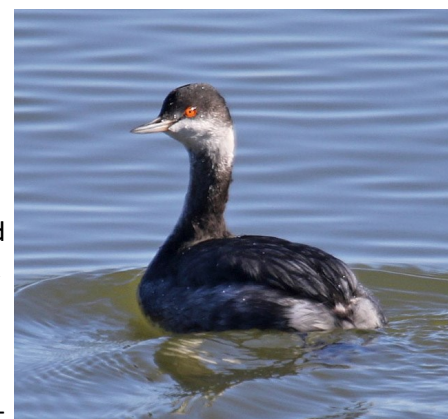


Chestnut-collared Longspur

On the 7th Christie Stoops witnessed Red-shouldered Hawk at Cottonwood Creek in Logan County; B Turner came across Orange-crowned Warbler in Yukon; Mike Yough detected Chestnut-collared Longspur at Orlando in Payne County; Scott Loss watched Iceland Gull at Meridian Technology Center Pond in Stillwater; and

documented Rough-legged Hawk and Northern Shrike at McElroy and Logan Road in Payne County. On the 8th Braden Farris found LeConte's Sparrow, Spotted Towhee and Pileated Woodpecker at Prairie Prime Ranch in Logan County; in Payne County at Lake Carl Blackwell Kevin Wilson photographed Black Scoter and Clay Billman photographed Pine Warbler and Orange-crowned Warbler.

On the 9th Michael Nicodemus tallied a Red-tailed Hawk along I-40 near Seminole; Jacob Crissup spotted Lapland Longspur at Deer Creek in Oklahoma County; Mike Yough verified Wilson's Snipe at Cushing WTP in Payne County; Brian Marra added Marsh Wren at Lake



Eared Grebe © Joe Grzybowski

Overholser- Coffer Dam; Joe Grzybowski recognized Iceland Gull and Glaucous Gull at Lake Hefner; and Eared Grebe, Common Merganser, and Lesser Black-

backed Gull at Lake Overholser. On the 10th Joe Grzybowski observed Long-tailed Duck at Lake Overholser. On the 12th Jerry Vanbebber recorded Eared Grebe at Lake Hefner; Brian McLaughlin located White-breasted Nuthatch and American Pipit at Bluff Creek Trails; and Aaron Mechem saw a Bald Eagle fly over Grove Avenue in Warr Acres. On the 14th Scott Dirks identified Smith's Longspur at Orlando in Logan County; and Grace Huffman counted Barred Owl and Hairy Woodpecker at Stinchcomb WR West. On the 15th Bala Chennupati counted American Tree Sparrow at Lake Overholser West.

On the 16th Braden Farris got Savannah Sparrow and Spotted Towhee at Wes Watkins Lake in Pottawatomie County, and Bald Eagle and Common Merganser at Meeker Lake in Lincoln County; Nancy Reed viewed Orange-crowned Warbler near Norman; Abdul Dominguez had Spotted Towhee and

Cedar Waxwing at Pebblebrook Park in Cleveland County; and Jerry Vanbebber located Long-tailed Duck at Lake Overholser-Dam. On the 19th Michelle Townsley saw Ring-necked Duck at McCloud in Lincoln County. On the 20th Gretl Landes confirmed Orange-crowned Warbler and



Pine Warbler

Pine Warbler at her peanut feeder in Norman. On the 21st Jason McCurdy discovered Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, and Hooded Merganser at Purcell Lake in McClain County; and Scott

Loss photographed Ice-

land Gull at Meridian Technology Center Pond. On the 22nd Ory Schultheis encountered Great Egret at Martin Park Nature Center; and Mike Yough noticed Common Yellowthroat at Cushing WTP. On the 23rd Cody Delano reported Hooded Merganser, Red-

breasted Merganser and

Bonaparte's Gull at Lake Stanley Draper in Cleveland County; and Patti Muzny turned up a male Purple Finch at Byars in McClain county. On the 24th Larry Mays witnessed



Purple Finch

Hairy Woodpecker and Greater Roadrunner while riding his bike around Newcastle in McClain County. On the 25th Scott Loss

found Lapland Longspur at Lake Carl Blackwell-Dam. On the 27th Brian Marra photographed California Gull at Lake Hefner-Prairie Dog Point. On the 28th Larry Mays spotted Prairie Falcon at Newcastle Park in McClain County; and Grace Huffman tallied Wood Duck at Lake Hefner-Stars and Stripes Park.



California Gull © Brian Marra

On the 29th Chad Ellis verified Black Vulture along I-40 west of Okemah in Seminole County; Jason Shaw detected Brewer's Blackbird at USAO Habitat Area in Grady County; Brian Marra had Vesper Sparrow along Logan Road north of Hwy 51; Adrianh Martinez Orozco came across Great Horned Owl along the Northwest Expressway in Piedmont; and Jenna Howery added Yellow-rumped Warbler at John H. Saxon Park. On the 30th Priscilla Crawford counted Brown Creeper along the Nature Center Trail at Lake Thunderbird; and Grace Huffman identified Hermit Thrush at The Botanic Garden at OSU. On the 31st Mattie Phillips located Eastern Phoebe and White-winged Dove at Purcell in McClain County.

Only three counties reported more than 100 species with Payne County at 122. Seminole County only reported 2 species and Garvin County only had 7 species reported so there were no reports of any species seen in all 12 counties. However; Red-tailed Hawk, American Crow and European Starling were seen in 11 counties; while Canada Goose, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, House Sparrow and Harris's Sparrow were seen in 10 counties.

In the Central Oklahoma area during January **140** species were reported. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds. Information is accessed at: [ebird](http://ebird.org). 2022 eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Available: <https://ebird.org/region/US-OK?yr=all>. (Accessed January 30 & 31, 2022); and occasionally from Facebook, and the OKBIRDS List. I can be contacted at emkok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

Minutes of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society Meeting

January 18, 2022

By Patti Muzny, Secretary

The meeting was opened at 7:00 PM at the Will Rogers Garden Center by President, Bob Holbrook. Treasurer Nancy Vicars presented a treasurer's report and distributed copies. Cash on hand as of January 18, 2022, was \$8,364.96. The minutes of the December 20, 2021, meeting were approved as published in the January newsletter.

The next meeting will be held at the Will Rogers Garden Center on Monday, February 21, 2022, at 7:00 PM.

New Members and visitors were introduced.

Hal Yocum reported that he still does not have a copy of the contract that enables OKCAS to hold meetings at the garden center.

Patti High asked for volunteers to provide refreshments for upcoming meetings.

Hal Yocum reported that the recent field trip to Mitch Park did not include sightings of Purple Finches or Nuthatches. The Eastern Towhee was also not found. There are no scheduled field trips at this time.

Patti High reported that on her recent trip to the Rio Grande Valley, she was able to see the rare Bat Falcon at Santa Ana NWR. Bob Holbrook has recently seen a Pileated Woodpecker and a Bald Eagle in his yard near Wewoka.

Northern Shrikes are still being found at Drummond Flats and Crystal Lake. A Snowy Owl was found in Jackson County and Hal Yocum reported seeing a partial leucistic Junco.

Another outstanding program was presented by Dr. Doug Wood. His topic was his "2021 Bryan County Big Year."

Respectfully submitted,

Patti Muzny
Secretary

OKC AUDUBON SOCIETY Financial Report for 2021

CASH ON HAND 12/31/2020 \$6,971.44

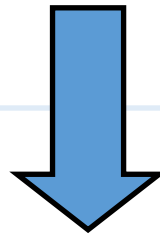
INCOME:

Membership dues	1,580.75	
Checking Acct. interest	3.98	
Donations	10.00	
Car decals	32.25	
	1,626.98	
		<u>+1,626.98</u>
		8,598.42

EXPENSES:

Club picnic supplies	131.04	
Membership roster printing	18.34	
Membership dues	25.00	
	174.38	
		<u>-174.38</u>

CASH ON HAND 12/31/2021 \$8,424.04



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, 24 SE 57th St., OKC 73129.

REFRESHMENTS

The following folks will be providing refreshments for the Monday, February 21st meeting:

SNACKS: Nancy Vicars, Nancy Reed, Doug Eide and John Eagleston & Kathy Chernauek

ICE/DRINKS: Mary Lane & Steve Davis

Whooping Cranes killed in Oklahoma

by Ann Sherman

Some of the worst news I have come across in years was that 4 Whooping Cranes had been killed in Oklahoma. I read a lot of news and this upset me more than the garden variety of scandals and political fools that usually enrage me.



The latest report I could find said that the birds were shot around Nov. 5th. Wildlife Conservation was not notified until Dec. 6th when a hunter came across a wounded bird in an agricultural field. That wounded bird died on the way to the vet. A search of the area in the next few days turned up the bodies of 3 more birds. Could a wounded bird have lived a month and then expired in the truck on the way to the vet? That makes no sense to me. All birds died from gunshots.

It isn't possible to mistake a Whooping Crane for a Sandhill. Sandhills are gray and stand 3 to 4 feet tall. Their wingspans are 5 to 6 feet. Whooping Cranes stand 5 to 6 feet tall and are white with black tips of their 7 to 8 feet wingspans.

If it can't be mistaken then one has to assume the shooting was deliberate. To kill 4 birds probably took 2 shooters. It seems like the birds would flee before one shooter could reload...thus....2 shooters. At the time of the last report they were waiting for search warrants. Of what or whom the report didn't say.

One year in prison and \$100,000 in fines are on the books for the killing under the Endangered Species Act. \$15,000 in fines and 6 months in jail under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. That's all well and good....except when a killing occurred in Louisiana in 2018 the man who said he was merely trying to scare the bird away was given no jail time, no fines, and didn't even have to give up his gun. He lost his hunting and fishing licenses while on probation. Big Whoop....excuse the pun. It will come as no surprise that Louisiana has had the most shooting deaths of Whooping Cranes. 11 killed since 2011.

Wisconsin opponents of a Sandhill hunting season point to the Oklahoma killings as a reason not to have a Sandhill hunting season. I hope something good comes out of this outrage.

Whooping Cranes were charter members of the Endangered Species Act when it was signed in 1973. Loss of habitat and unregulated hunting in the early 1900s drove their numbers to less than 25 in 1941. Perhaps as few as 15. By 2000 there were 180 birds. 4 years ago the numbers wintering in Texas were more than 500 for the first time since the late 1800s. Each pair of cranes have only two eggs a year. Cranes mate for life, by the way. On average one chick will survive. They can live to be 20 to 25 years but don't mate until they are 7.

The 4 deaths in Oklahoma are the most ever killed at one time in a poaching incident.

A 2018 report by the ICF (International Crane Foundation) found that 72 percent of shootings since 1990 were not by hunters. Most are illegal poachers who consider the cranes a nuisance, a threat to crops, or merely a convenient target.

I did go down the rabbit hole of Whoopsie while doing research. Whoopsie was the product of an illicit affair between a Sandhill and a Whooper. Whoopsie's father was a Whooping Crane raised by Sandhills. When he got to the hormonal stage of his development he looked around and fell in love with a very attractive Sandhill. Thus, Whoopsie. They pulled Whoopsie into a wildlife center so he wouldn't breed. Then they pulled in his father also since he showed an inclination to mate with Sandhills. I'm sorry I don't know how this all worked out. Whoopsie had a Facebook page but it went quiet in 2015.

I have made calls to the Wildlife Department to see if they had any updates for me but they have not returned my calls.

I have made many trips up to the Great Salt Plains to see the Sandhill migration and hope to get a look at a wild Whooping Crane. Once I saw little white dots among the gray Sandhills. I assume they were Whoopers but they were a long way off. I have chased them in other places around the state but You Should Have Been Here Yesterday was the usual retort to Have You Seen the Whoopers? Someday I hope to get lucky.



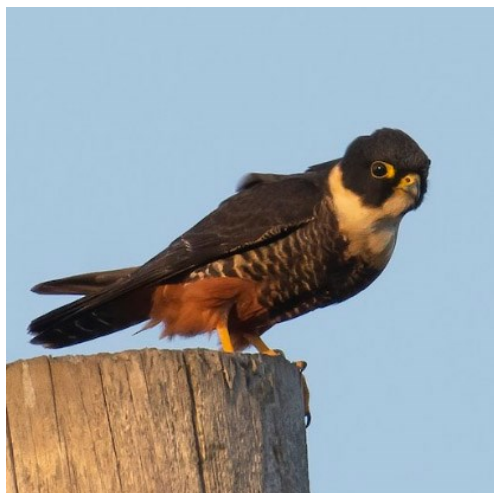
Oklahoma Game Warden Jeremy Brothers approaches the injured whooping crane that later died due to its injuries.

The Little U-Turn

By Jimmy Woodard

I left for the Lower Rio Grande Valley at 6:30AM on Tuesday, January 11, 2022. This would be a late birthday present to myself. My targets were three birds that would be lifers: Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Social Flycatcher, and Bat Falcon (1st US record). I made good time despite some congestion in Ft Worth. I arrived at Granger Lake near Austin about 11:45AM. The FT Flycatcher had been seen here for a few weeks. Conditions were cloudy and cool. This kept the bug activity down so the flycatcher was not active although it had been seen earlier in the day. One guy did see the bird briefly up the road but the rest of us missed it. About 2PM, it began sleeting then turned into a cold rain. I gave up the search about 2:30 and headed south. The temp was 39 degrees. I ventured thru Bastrop and LaGrange before deciding to spend the night in Victoria. I left early Wednesday the 12th to continue on down to Brownsville. It was cloudy, cool, misty and a little foggy. Despite the conditions, I made good time and saw quite a few birds on the drive. I saw White-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, and TV's. Black Vultures and Kestrels were abundant.

I made it to the UT-RGV campus near the border in Brownsville about 10:30AM. This is where the Social Flycatcher had been seen for a few weeks. It's one of only a handful of records for it in the US. There is a large resaca where the bird had been hanging out in the company of Great Kiskadees. I met several birders who had seen the bird a few times earlier in the morning. We searched the Land Bridge trail thru the riparian habitat for about 30 minutes before the bird was located. It perched up nicely for about five minutes before disappearing back into the thick trees and brush. **This was lifer #741 for me.**



Bat Falcon © Marky Mutchler

During the day, it hangs out somewhere in the refuge but stays mostly hidden. The best chance to see it is to climb the observation tower and hope to see it perched or flying. I tried this but the rain and fog moved it precluding any

I ventured on over to Santa Ana NWR to search for the Bat Falcon. This was the first time this falcon had ever been recorded in the US! It was seen early in the morning and late in the evening coming to its favorite pole to perch at the entrance before heading into the refuge to roost.

attempt to search for it. I got a room nearby in Alamo so I could come back near dusk to attempt to catch it on the pole before roosting. I killed time with menial tasks before returning to the refuge a little after 5PM. There were already about 25 birders there in wait for it. We watched until dark but the bird never showed. We did briefly see some shape flit across the road and disappear but we couldn't be sure if the shape was the falcon or not. I now knew I would have to return in the morning to try again.

At 7:05AM Thursday, I pulled onto the entrance road to the refuge. The Bat Falcon was already perched on the pole in the dim light. I quickly parked and hustled back up the road on foot. I stopped a block away to view the bird in my scope just in case the bird flew before I could get into a closer position. This was a good decision on my part. Just as I set up my scope and bent down to look, the bird flew off. I watched it climb then head south well over the refuge. I had got a decent look at the falcon, **lifer #742**, so I decided to leave and head north about 7:30AM to try for the FT Flycatcher near Granger Lake.

I travelled north on Hwy 281 to Seguin and made it there around noon. I continued north on the 130 Toll Loop to bypass Austin. The speed on the road is 85 mph so I made good time and got to Granger Lake about 1:30PM.

This time the weather was warm and sunny. Insects were active and within 30 minutes the Fork-tailed Flycatcher made its appearance on a electrical wire behind the ranch house about a 100 yards away. Over the next 30 minutes, the bird made numerous flights and slowly moved closer to our position on the entrance road to Friendship Park. When I left around 2:30PM, the bird had approached to within 50 yards to the delight of the observers. **This was lifer #743 for me.**

I hit I-35 at Temple to head north and toward home. I avoided most of the rush hour traffic in Ft Worth by using the Toll/HOV lanes to bypass the traffic. Oklahoma has an agreement with surrounding states so our Pikepass works on all their toll roads. Nice! I was able to make it into Oklahoma by dark and arrived back home shortly after 8PM Thursday. It was a whirlwind three-day trip and a lot of driving but it was worth it as I saw all three of my target birds. I write this article as a bit of an homage to three birding friends who took a similar trip to the RGV in the mid 80s. It was their first trip to the "valley." Terry Mitchell, Don Woodfin, and Scott Dingman were birders who encouraged and mentored me when I became a birder in 1986.

Being poor blue collar guys with little vacation time, they left after work on a Friday in May. They slept for a few hours in the Austin City Park before getting run out by the cops. They birded most of the main hotspots in the lower RGV and even managed a brief stop at Laguna Atascosa NWR on the coast before returning back to Tulsa late on Monday of Memorial Day weekend. They had to return to work on Tuesday. They euphemistically called their trip "The Big U-Turn"! I didn't set out to duplicate their trip but I did feel like I was reliving parts of it to a degree. I drove a lot of miles but even so I really enjoyed it especially since I saw all three of my target lifer birds: Social Flycatcher, Bat Falcon and Fork-tailed Flycatcher.