

Migrations across moons and hemispheres

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

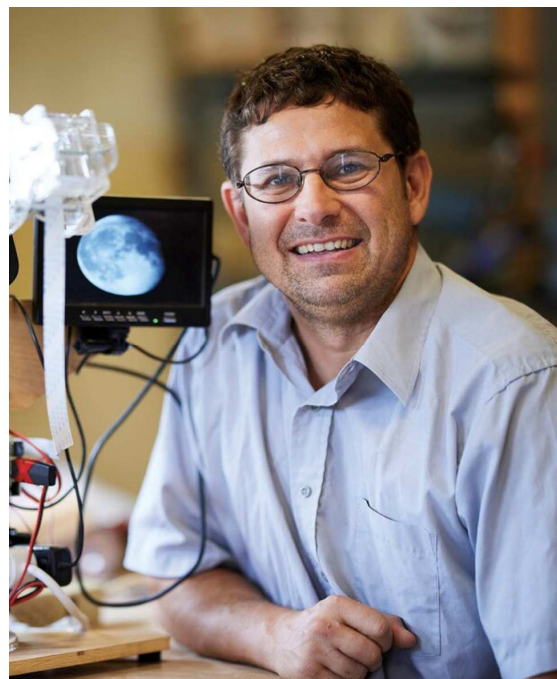
NOTICE: Due to scheduling conflicts at the Will Rogers Garden Center, the **January meeting**, will now be held on the **third TUESDAY (January 16) in 2024.**

NOTICE: If the winter weather is bad, we will let you know by email on Monday if the meeting is postponed.

Dr. Eli Bridge will be the guest speaker for our **TUESDAY, JANUARY 16 meeting.**

Eli grew up in a log cabin in the woods outside Chandler, Oklahoma. He went to college at Westminster in Fulton, Missouri, and then on to a PhD at the University of Minnesota. He returned to Oklahoma in 2009 and joined the the Oklahoma Biological Survey in 2012. Bridge has studied bird behavior and migration in a wide variety of habitats and on several continents. His specialty is merging field ornithology with electrical engineering to bring new approaches to old and persistent questions.

This talk will focus on two different approaches to studying bird migration ranging from geolocator tracking to a new take on moonwatching. First, he'll cover some adventures in Argentina that led to the first migration tracks of Cliff Swallows that breed in the southern hemisphere. A birdwatcher in the town of Villa Maria noticed that a small group of Cliff Swallows had started nesting on local bridges. This observation led to a multi-year effort to confirm that these birds had indeed switched from being boreal migrants to becoming austral migrants, which is to say, they have essentially reversed their life histories.



Dr. Eli Bridge, interim director of the Oklahoma Biological Survey

The second part of the talk will review some more recent work in the development of automated moonwatching, which puts a technological spin on an age-old bird observation method. Counting migratory birds as they fly in front of the moon is exciting at first, but gets pretty tedious as the night drags on. With a spotting scope and some cheap electronics, we have devised methods to record the moon at night and pluck out bird silhouettes from the footage. With these they have been able to quantify social behavior during migration, compare flight directions to body orientations to assess the effect of cross winds, and couple visual observations with bird detections on radar. The next step is the formation of a community of moonwatchers (any takers?)

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:

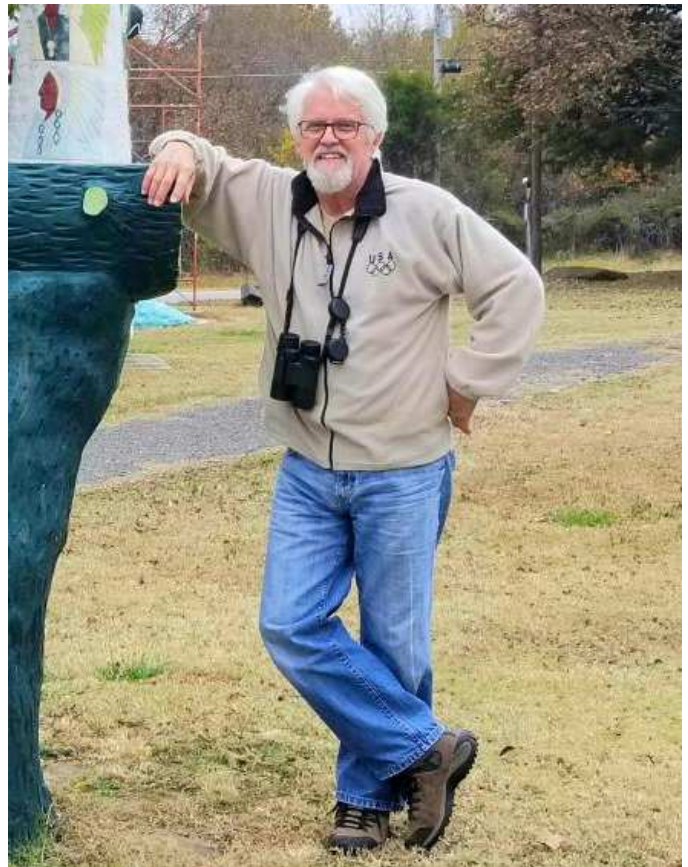
Our meetings are held at the Will Rogers Garden center, located at the intersection of NW 36th Street and I-44.

President's Perspective

My third January at this...Just returned from several days on Cape Cod, Massachusetts as I write this month's thoughts.

My daughter-in-law retired from the Coast Guard where she was the second ranked officer and with the rank of Commander. It was quite a shin-dig celebration for sure, but for us birders—son Hans and me—it was an opportunity for some intense birding. He was well into his year list and since I had not been in the State since I left way back around 1971, I wanted to pad my State list a bit.

Hans's January list placed him in 23rd on the Cape Cod listers for the year, my State list was at 166. (Back in the '60's-'70's I really wasn't doing State lists so there were some large holes that weren't filled simply because I had seen the bird previously in some other State.) But by the time we wrapped things up and I flew back home, his January list put him in second place and I was at 196 birds on my list. We missed a half dozen we chased which would have put him in first place and me over the 200 mark—Oh well...



One fun, unusual thing about it all was the number of stray birds that had shown up. Western Grebe, Western Kingbird, Western Tanager (2) along with Lark Sparrow (also a western bird) were there for the searching. Then there were those northern specialties that come down each winter but seldom more than 2-4 individuals: Black Guillemot, Razorbill, Common Murre, Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and those that should have long-since headed south like the Yellow-breasted Chat, and Yellow-throated Warbler.

Because Hans is out a lot and sees a good number of birds that fall into these categories, he carries a high-powered camera to back up his sightings/claims. And his photos at times are truly something to behold. Take this Common Eider for example. We had never noticed the white line of feathers that split the green facial patch is actually a ridge. We had never noticed the "fins" on its wings nor the pinkish hue on the breast. Something that amazed me were the turkeys that roamed the neighborhoods, in people's yards, crossing busy streets like they owned the place. (They reminded me of the Elk up in Estes Park, Colorado.)



January...cold, windy, rain and snow but a great way to start a new year is to get out in it and go birding!

*Bob Holbrook
President*



Bird of the Month: Long-tailed Duck

By Grace Huffman

There's been quite the stir at Lake Overholser lately, with one of my favorite ducks showing up and many birders going out to look at it. This particular Long-tailed Duck was extra special. While Hefner and/or Overholser often get one each winter, they are usually females. This particular bird is a striking nonbreeding male, probably my favorite plumage of this duck.

Long-tailed Ducks are arctic ducks, breeding across northern Eurasia, Greenland, Iceland, Alaska, and Canada. While they are breeding, both birds are very dark, with some white on the face. They nest up on peninsulas and islands up in arctic lakes, where the female lines a depression in the ground with twigs and leaves, then covers the first egg with materials like grass, and will further insulate the eggs with down feathers; after she has laid the second she'll lay up to 9 eggs total.

After breeding season, both sexes molt to a non breeding plumage that is much paler. Males especially are gorgeous, they molt into a white head with darker markings on the cheek and around the eye, and a white back making them look just stunning. Females also gain a much whiter head, and a dark cheek patch, but they maintain a dark back and never have the namesake long tail.

Long-tailed Ducks are considered to be Vulnerable, and All About Birds lists them as in steep decline. It's difficult to measure the population with how remote their breeding and typical wintering areas are, so reasons for decline are not well known. They're not widely hunted, but a very large number of them have been killed by fishing nets in the past. Current fatality rates with nets are another statistic not really well known. Other factors could include overfishing and climate change.



Long-tailed Duck © Grace Huffman

Next time you're out birding at the local lake, keep an eye out for these gorgeous birds!

References: allaboutbirds.org & Wikipedia.

Recorder's Report

December 2023

2023 had some birding surprises! American Birding Association called it the year of the Limpkin invasion or explosion as Limpkins were spotted in several uncommon spots including Ohio, Illinois, North Carolina, Tennessee, Oklahoma and others. An abundance of invasive apple snails has been suggested as part of the explanation for the surge in Limpkin dispersal! Another explanation could be a trend seen in many species, a poleward shift in range. ABA podcast, *This Month in Birding*, on December 21st, caught my attention when OSU professor Scott Loss was mentioned for his work developing new technology to understand bird migration. You can read about it on the [OSU AG Research page](#). 154 species were reported on eBird in the 12 counties of central Oklahoma in December 2023.



Guyla Mayo

December Sightings

Oklahoma County

Pacific Loon 12/1
Lake Hefner Dam
Hal Y

Black Scoter 12/2
Hefner Prairie Dog Point
Trina A, Braden F

Spotted Sandpiper 12/2
Overholser Dam
Grace H, Brian M

House Wren 12/2
Overholser Dam
Grace H, Brian M

Gray Catbird 12/2
Lake Hefner
Trina A



Black Scoter © Trina Arnold

Surf Scoter 12/2
Arcadia Lake
Braden F

White-faced Ibis 12/4
Lake Hefner
Jesse P, Trina A,

Red-throated Loon 12/5
Hefner Prairie Dog Point
Jesse P, Grace H

California Gull 12/5
East Oak Landfill
Randy S, Joe G, Jesse P

Eastern Towhee 12/5
Stinchcomb
Grace H

Surf Scoter 12/9
Lake Hefner
Jay R

Prairie Falcon 12/17
Stinchcomb
Grace H

Franklin's Gull 12/19
Crystal Lake
Esther K

Acadian Flycatcher
Lake Hefner Brian T

Payne County

Black Scoter 12/11
Lake Carl Blackwell
Scott L

Blue-winged Teal 12/16
Meridian Tech
Center Pond

Golden Eagle 12/16
Stillwater
Landon N, Mike Y



Red-throated Loon © Grace Huffman



Golden Eagle © Mike Yough

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 12/16
Meridian Tech Ctr Pond
Leslie M

House Wren 12/16
Lake Carl Blackwell
Riley L

Eastern Towhee 12/16
Stillwater
Landon N, Mike Y

Blue Grosbeak 12/16
Meridian Tech Ctr Pond
Leslie M

Indigo Bunting 12/16
Meridian Tech Ctr Pond
Leslie M

Yellow Warbler 12/18
OSU Botanic Garden
Scott L

Blue-headed Vireo 12/22
OSU Botanic Garden
Clay B

Prairie Falcon 12/27
Orlando
Chase M



Blue-headed Vireo © Clay Billman

Cleveland County

American Woodcock 12/6
Lexington
Aaron M

Lesser Yellowlegs 12/9
Twin Bridges Lake Thunderbird
Joe G

Red Crossbill 12/10
Yard
Cody D, Randy S

Snowy Owl 12/13
Ruby Grant Park
Caden M

Inca Dove 12/29
Yard
Cody D

Logan County

Short-eared Owl 12/16
Marshal
Kevin W

Pottawattamie County

Dunlin 12/18
Residence
SK T

The information for this report was collected on December 31st from eBird, OK List Serve and ABA Birding News. If you have any questions, suggestions or complaints, please direct them to me, Guyla Mayo, at guyla1mae@gmail.com. Happy Birding!

Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, January 20, 2024—9:30 am

Sharon Henthorn will be leading a field trip January 20th to Zoo Lake. Meet at 9:30 am at the parking area inside the gate. Enter the park east of the OKC Zoo, across the bridge, turn on Grand Blvd and immediately right again at the Camp Trivera sign. Contact Sharon at 405-778-9662 for questions.

Saturday, January 27, 2024—9:00 am

Jimmy Woodard and Doug Wood will be leading a joint OKC / Texoma Audubon field trip of Lakes Hefner and Overholser. Meet at Stars and Stripes Park, near NW 63rd and Portland. Contact Jimmy j.woodard@cox.net

If needed for weather the alternate date will be Saturday, February 3.

Minutes of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society Meeting

December 18, 2023

By Patti Muzny, Secretary

President Bob Holbrook opened the meeting at 7:00 PM at the Will Rogers Garden Center. Nancy Vicars' treasurer's report was presented by Nancy Vicars. Cash on hand as of December 18, 2023 was \$8,186.87. The minutes of the November 20, 2023 meeting were approved as presented. Twenty-nine attended the December "Tall Tales" and Christmas palate pleasers gathering and meeting.

Tales were told both tall and not-so-tall and an enjoyable end of the year celebration with birding friends was had by all.

The next meeting is scheduled to be held at the Will Rogers Garden Center on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 7:00 PM. Change of day from Monday to Tuesday is due to M. L. King Day.

The following candidates for 2024 officers: President: Bob Holbrook, Vice-President, Cathy Chernausek and John Eagleston, Treasurer, Nancy Vicars, and Secretary, Cole Penning were unanimously elected.

Bob Holbrook reported that Vermillion Flycatchers and Caracaras have been seen at Red Slough. The Limpkin that has been at Red Slough off and on was not found.

The January program will be presented by Dr. Eli Bridge. He will share his research on Cliff Swallows.

Nancy Vicars reminded members that dues of \$15 per year for a family for 2024 are due.

Respectfully submitted,
Patti Muzny
Secretary

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

OKC AUDUBON SOCIETY Financial Report for 2023

CASH ON HAND 12/31/2022 \$7,608.43

INCOME:

Membership dues	1,402.58
Checking Acct. interest	270.58
Donations	121.02
Car decals	<u>25.47</u>
	1,819.65
	<u>+1,819.65</u>
	9,428.08

EXPENSES:

Meeting room rent	280.00
Speaker honorarium	529.52
Club promotion	42.18
Club picnic supplies	167.98
Member roster printing	21.73
Membership dues	<u>25.00</u>
	1,066.41
	<u>-1,066.41</u>

CASH ON HAND 12/31/2023

\$8,361.67

Christmas Bird Count Update

As of January 12, Nathan is still waiting to receive a few CBC checklists. The tally from the CBC dinner and the lists he's received since is 113. The full report will be published in the February newsletter!

Refreshments

Refreshment Volunteers for Jan. 16, 2024:

Snacks: Steve Davis/Mary Lane, Nancy Vicars, Pilar Escobar and Jimmy Woodard.

Ice/drinks: Cole Penning.

FOUR BIRDS YOUR GREAT GRANDKIDS WON'T SEE



Yellow-breasted Bunting

image: © Stephen Menzie

This once abundant bird, has seen its population plummet 90% in the past 30 years and it has seen its classification go from "least concern" to "vulnerable" just in the last 15 years alone. On its current path, the Yellow-breasted Bunting will be extinct within 20 years. The rate of population decline is way more rapid than previously thought. It is subject to heavy hunting pressure in China, where the "rice bird" is being hunted on migration to near extinction because of Chinese eating habits.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper

image: © Peter Ericsson

This small wader with its incredible spoon-shaped beak breeds in northeast Russia and winters in Asia. It is rarely seen but birders have discovered a reliable site in Thailand in winter to see 1 or 2 birds. It was probably never abundant but now, it is exceedingly rare with only a few hundred adults left in the world and its numbers are still possibly on the decline.



European Turtle Dove

image: © Glyn Sellors

The iconic symbol of Christmas, known for its gentle purring on a summer's evening across northern Europe will be extinct in the next 30 years. It has suffered from significant habitat loss and according to a 2001 study cited by the European Commission, between 2-4 million birds are shot annually in Malta, Cyprus, France, Italy, Spain and Greece with no sign of it abating.



Atlantic Puffins

image: © Glyn Sellors

This colorful, small auk of the North Atlantic has suffered greatly from human over-fishing, warming seas and recreational hunting. If things continue on its current course, the Puffin will be gone within the next 50 years or less. Adult breeding numbers have decreased 50% and over the past decade, Puffins have had almost complete breeding failure in many of their colonies, including in the world's largest colony, in the Westman Islands.

Source: Surfbirds.com