

A Dream Comes True

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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:

Radjalatchoumy Narasimhan,
Edmond, OK

Amy Estep,
Calumet, OK

Bob Holbrook will be the speaker at the **TUESDAY January 20 OKC Audubon meeting with a program entitled “Iceland, A Dream Come True.”**

Bob started collecting stamps when he was about 10 Years old. The hobby opened up a fascinating world of countries, history, customs, landscapes, languages, currencies and so much more. Geography became an integral part of his dreams. He loved to look at maps and globes and see all those corners of the earth that held out beckoning fingers --- “come see for yourself.”

Bob was especially drawn to those tiny countries scattered all over the place. Lichtenstein, Andorra, Iceland, Nepal, Goa, Brunei. He’s had the privilege of actually traveling to most of those and more. Thanks to his Scandinavian (Norwegian) heritage. Iceland was high on that list. Hence, his birding trip there was an awesome experience. “I’ll relive it in my mind forever,” he says.

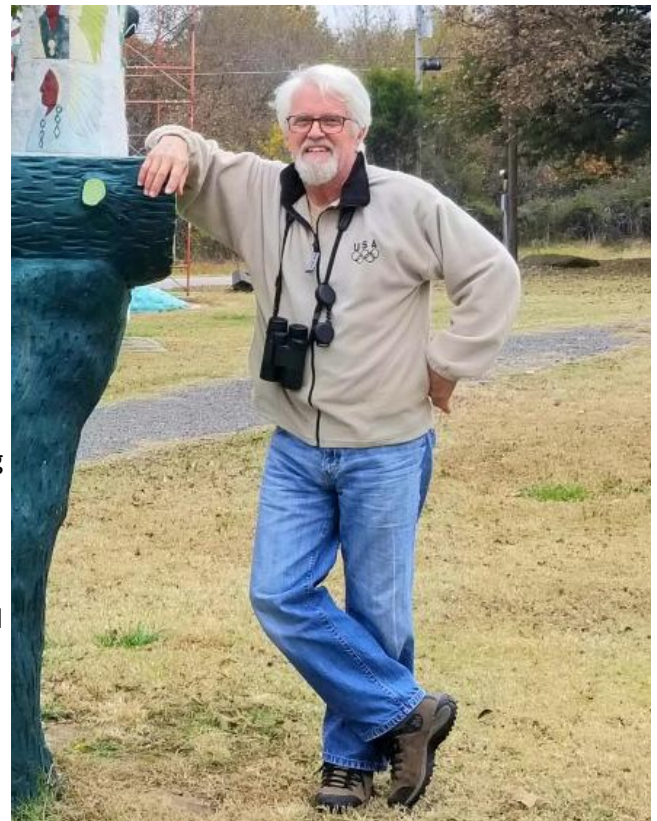
As he’ll point out Tuesday night, the complete list is well over 400, however, nearly all of them are listed as accidental, the “true list” is only about 70 and he had the privilege of seeing 69. He missed the Rock Dove only because he chose to not drive into Reykjavik City proper.

Bob’s talk will cover much of the fantastic areas of Iceland, and land of nothing but volcanic construction.

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.



REMINDER: The January meeting will be held on TUESDAY, January 20, 2026

President's Perspective

I've been birding in earnest for over 20 years now with our Audubon Society and am certainly no expert.

I would like to see leaders arising from our club who are willing to learn and teach those who have different strengths and experience levels than themselves.

Our club is experiencing attrition due to aging out of the Baby Boomer generation who have been leading for many years and are gradually less involved due to health concerns and changing priorities. The majority of our active members are now over 60. Differing interests and perspectives are needed to enliven our group and interest newcomers.



I charge our younger members to step up and volunteer for club duties and as leaders of field trips. Your perspective are valuable in teaching less experienced birders the joys and camaraderie of our pastime.

Share your interest and expertise in general and select areas: birding by sound, seasons, patterns of behavior. Or know your hot spots well, where your familiarity and regular visits may outshine your general birding knowledge.

Great birding everyone!

As no one has yet offered to be 2026 secretary, it is only fair that I return to that role since our current secretary, Cole Penning, is moving up to be club president.

— Sharon Henthorn

Can you fly or go to sleep while walking?

By Warren Harden

Can you go to sleep while walking? Can you fly? How about eating or mating in the air? Birds can and do. Birds have evolved many senses and other attributes absent in humans. One of those attributes is hemispheric sleep --- the ability of one part of the brain to sleep while the other carries on awake. Researchers have discovered many avian species that have and use hemispheric sleep during long periods of flight necessary for lengthy or difficult migration routes. Some simply fly continually for months to garner enough food only available in the air or the ocean surfaces to live and store enough energy to return home.

Examples of such species:

*A tagged 5-month-old **Bar-tailed Godwit** recently flew a record 8,435 miles continually in 11 days over the Pacific Ocean from Alaska to Tasmania, Australia. The **Bar-headed Goose** migrates over the Himalayas at altitudes up to 30,000 feet. **Arctic Terns** from the Netherlands flew 56,000 miles in 273 days before returning home. The **Amur Falcon** flies from North China to South Africa 8,000 miles including 2,500 miles over the Indian Ocean. **Blackpoll Warblers** fly 1,700 miles over the Atlantic Ocean for a sunny winter in Puerto Rico. Perhaps the most amazing is the **Common Swift** that breeds in Europe and Asia but migrates to southern Africa and stays in the air continually for up to 10 months eating, drinking, sleeping and mating in the air. Makes a person think we humans actually have very little to go on, so to speak.*



Bird of the Month: Virginia Rail

By Grace Huffman

In the wintertime here in Oklahoma, you might be rewarded when visiting a marshy area with the grunt or squeak calls of a Virginia Rail. Small and secretive, they definitely sound bigger than they actually are, and if you're

lucky you'll get to see the skinny little bird peeking out from the bottom of the reeds.

Their range extends from southern Canada all the way down into Mexico. Where they breed, the nests are built right around the waterline on floating vegetation mats. They will even build a canopy over the nest. The black, fuzzy young leave the nest just days after hatching, but stick with the parents for several weeks until they learn to fly.

Here in Oklahoma, you can find them in lots of marshy areas in the winter. This can vary from year to year, as when we are in drought places that held just enough water for the rails the previous year will then be too dry to hold rails the next. I often hear them more at dawn and dusk, but occasionally hear one in the middle of the day. Of all the times I've heard one, I can count on one hand the times I've actually spotted the noisemaker. They typically do not like to come out into the open. However, this particular bird decided to repeatedly come out into the open and squeak loudly. It was quite the treat!

Virginia Rails are one of the most abundant rail species, but because of how hard they are to find it is difficult to keep tabs on the population. Still, they are considered least concern, but loss of wetland habitat remains a constant threat.

When you go out birding this winter, I wish you the best of luck in finding one of these little guys!

Reference: allaboutbirds.org



Virginia Rail © Grace Huffman



Once extinct, blue macaws return to the wild

After nearly 20 years of being declared extinct in the wild, the brilliant blue macaws that inspired the animated film *Rio* are flying free in their natural habitat once.

Once believed to be lost forever, their return marks a historic victory for wildlife conservation and hope for endangered species worldwide.

Known as the Spix's macaw, the species vanished from the wild in the early 2000s due to habitat destruction and illegal wildlife trafficking. For years, the last remaining birds survived only in captivity, and the idea of seeing them return to nature felt almost impossible.

Through decades of dedication, scientists and conservation organizations carefully bred the macaws, restored their native habitat, and gradually reintroduced them into the wild. Each step was closely monitored to ensure the birds could adapt, survive, and thrive on their own.

Their return is more than a conservation success — it's a powerful reminder that when science, patience, and global cooperation come together, extinction doesn't always have to be the end. Sometimes, it can be the beginning of a second chance.

Juncos adapt to college life

About two decades ago, the dark-eyed junco, a forest-dwelling sparrow, began to colonize urban Los Angeles. The birds proved to be remarkably successful in the city, making themselves at home on the bustling campus of the University of California, Los Angeles.

They also rapidly diverged from their wildland counterparts, adopting different breeding behaviors and displaying different physical traits, including shorter wings. The urban juncos also developed shorter, stubbier beaks, a shift that may have been driven by a change in diet. Covid-19 restrictions sharply limited human activity on campus for most of 2020 and 2021. Dining halls and restaurants closed. In their natural forest habitats, dark-eyed juncos survive primarily on seeds and insects. But the birds that live on U.C.L.A.'s campus have diets closer to those of the average college student. "Things like cookies, bread," said Ellie Diamant, who is an ecologist and evolutionary biologist at Bard College and the other author of the study. "U.C.L.A. students seem to like pizza."

But when U.C.L.A.'s campus shut down during the pandemic, something remarkable happened: The beaks of juncos born on campus reverted to their wildland shape. Several years later, after the pandemic-related restrictions had been lifted, the distinctive urban beak shape returned, researchers reported in a new study published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the first to link the pandemic lockdowns to a change in the physical form of a wild animal population.

And then bird beaks began to change. There was a time lag to the phenomenon, the researchers found. The juncos born in the spring of 2020, shortly after the restrictions first went into effect, had the standard urban-style beaks. But those born in 2021 and 2022 had the longer, slimmer beaks more typical of the wildland juncos. The urban beak shape returned in junco chicks born in 2023 and 2024.

The researchers can't say for certain what drove the quick shift in beak shape, but they suspect that it was a case of rapid, adaptive evolution.

©NYTimes

Minutes of the OKC Audubon Society Meeting December 15, 2025

Meeting was called to order by club president Sharon Henthorn. Seventeen attendees were present. There were no visitors. Meeting minutes were not available from the November meeting.

No old business was discussed and election of officers for 2026 was tabled until January due to lack of quorum and incomplete slate of nominees.

President Sharon Henthorn is stepping down and Cole Penning is stepping up to serve as president. A call for nominees for club secretary was requested.

Recent bird sightings from December were discussed by attendees, and several comments were made that although species numbers continue stable, overall population numbers have gradually diminished over the years. These observations have been attributed to habitat loss through rural and suburban development. Changing species distribution will continue with the changes in weather patterns.

Christmas Bird Count was accomplished Sunday, December 14, 2025 and full results are not yet available. The weather was cold but not windy and skies were clear.

Meeting was concluded and Tall Tales commenced with entertaining stories and tasty snacks. A great ending to a great year.

Next meeting is TUESDAY, January 20, 2026, following the MLK holiday on Monday.

Sharon Henthorn, acting as secretary in the absence of club secretary Cole Penning.

Giving Directions

By David Sibley

This article from David Sibley's "ID Toolkit" column appeared in the November/December 2017 issue of Bird-Watching.



- **Start with the basics — really basic.** Is the bird flying, perched, swimming, or walking? Is it on the ground, on the water, or in a tree?
- **Keep giving directions** and describing what the bird is doing; bad directions can be frustrating, silence is more so. Even if all you can say is “sitting still about halfway up the tree in front of us,” that’s worth saying. If people aren’t finding the bird, start over with the big picture.
- **Find an obvious landmark** and use it to get everyone in the ballpark (e.g., “left of the flagpole” or “in the tree with the yellow leaves” or “along the fence line”). Then get more specific to zero in on the location: “See the flagpole, go left about 30 feet. There’s a cluster of yellow leaves halfway up the tree. The bird is just above that...”
- For a single bird in a flock, it’s helpful to **describe what it’s doing** — “just flapped,” or “preening its belly,” or “looking toward us” are all helpful hints.
- For a flying bird, **look along its path and pick out a landmark**, then say something like “going left, toward the blue house, it will be over the blue house...NOW, going left.”

Giving directions well allows everyone to see the birds quickly and easily and makes for a more pleasant and rewarding outing. Developing the skills for both giving and following directions can significantly improve your birding experience.

This article from David Sibley’s “ID Toolkit” column appeared in the November/December 2017 issue of BirdWatching. Originally Published May 2, 2018. David Sibley writes the column “ID Toolkit” in every issue of BirdWatching. He is the recipient of the American Birding Association’s Roger Tory Peterson Award for lifetime achievement in promoting the cause of birding and a recognition award from the National Wildlife Refuge System for his support of bird conservation.

In Loving Memory

Nancy Jane (Edwards) Reed, 79, of Norman passed away peacefully at home with her family near her side.



Nancy was born in Holdenville on January 17, 1946 to Jack and Lois (Stelter) Edwards. She was raised in California, Texas

and Oklahoma. Nancy graduated from Moore High School in 1963 and went on to attend the University of Oklahoma.

In 1970 Nancy began working for the City of Moore then the Moore Police Department and that is where she met the love of her life, Richard Reed. They married in Moore on April 23, 1971 and were blessed with two children, Lisa and Kent.

Nancy was an avid birder and long time member of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society. She was well respected by her peers in the bird watching community. Nancy enjoyed gardening and earned her Master Gardener certificate from the Cleveland County OSU Extension office. She planted her home garden to attract birds and people would travel to her house to see rare birds. Nancy was a long time member at Shartel Church of God and loved her church family dearly. She was involved with the Joy Aires women's group and the Barnabas Sunday School Class.



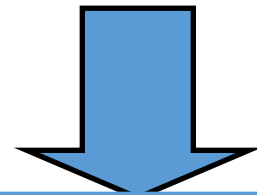
Wisdom, a Laysan albatross, is the world's oldest known wild bird and has laid an egg at about 74 years old, U.S. biologists confirmed. She was filmed at the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge caring for the egg with her partner.

Refreshments

Refreshment volunteers for the January 20, 2026 meeting:

Snacks: Pat McGaugh, Larry Mays, and Nancy Vicars

Ice & Drinks: John Eagleston/Cathy Chernausek



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

The OKC CBC was conducted on Sunday Dec 14th. We tallied 118 species with a total of 36,142 individual birds. Bird species with the highest count were Starling(12,286), Ring-billed Gull(9,357) Red-winged Blackbird(3,134) and Red-breasted Merganser(1,498). We had 5 Count Week (CW) birds: White-wing Scoter, Virginia Rail, Avocet, House Wren, and Lapland Longspur. We had 38 participants help out this year. Thanks to all who joined in on the count.

Species	#	Species	#	Species	#
Greater White-fronted Goose	10	Killdeer	74	Golden-crowned Kinglet	4
Ross's Goose	5	Spotted Sandpiper	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	39
Cackling Goose	68	Least Sandpiper	13	Eastern Bluebird	46
Canada Goose	842	Wilson's Snipe	12	Hermit Thrush	2
Wood Duck	11	Greater Yellowlegs	1	American Robin	1425
Northern Shoveler	180	American Avocet	CW	Grey Catbird	1
Gadwall	161	Bonaparte's Gull	230	Brown Thrasher	8
American Wigeon	18	Ring-billed Gull	9357	Northern Mockingbird	64
Mallard	499	Herring Gull	15	European Starling	12286
White-winged Scoter	CW	Lesser Black-backed Gull	4	American Pipit	32
Northern Pintail	1	Franklin's Gull	1	Cedar Waxwing	162
Green-winged Teal	5	Forster's Tern	7	Lapland Longspur	CW
Canvasback	37	Rock Pigeon	488	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1
Redhead	10	Eurasian Collared-Dove	35	Orange-crowned Warbler	12
Ring-necked Duck	60	White-wingd Dove	6	Common Yellowthroat	2
Greater Scaup	95	Mourning Dove	132	Yellow-rumped Warbler	156
Lesser Scaup	190	Greater Roadrunner	2	Chipping Sparrow	13
Bufflehead	72	Great Horned Owl	1	Field Sparrow	1
Common Goldeneye	59	Belted Kingfisher	12	Fox Sparrow	17
Hooded Merganser	130	Red-headed Woodpecker	2	Dark-eyed Junco	330
Common Merganser	2	Red-bellied Woodpecker	42	White-crowned Sparrow	19
Red-breasted Merganser	1498	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	4	Harris's Sparrow	208
Ruddy Duck	34	Downy Woodpecker	58	White-throated Sparrow	80
Mute Swan	4	Hairy Woodpecker	2	Savannah Sparrow	8
Common Loon	7	Northern Flicker	76	Song Sparrow	45
Pied-billed Grebe	71	American Kestrel	9	Lincoln's Sparrow	9
Horned Grebe	31	Merlin	1	Swamp Sparrow	10
Western Grebe	2	Eastern Phoebe	15	Spotted Towhee	70
American White Pelican	356	Blue Jay	119	Eastern Towhee	1
Double-crested Cormorant	888	American Crow	200	Northern Cardinal	205
Great Blue Heron	72	Horned Lark	23	Western Meadowlark	1
Great Egret	21	Carolina Chickadee	128	Eastern Meadowlark	14
Black-crowned Night Heron	1	Tufted Titmouse	20	Red-winged Blackbird	3134
Bald Eagle	4	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	Brown-headed Blackbird	10
Turkey Vulture	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	1	Brewer's Blackbird	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Brown Creeper	11	Common Grackle	158
Cooper's Hawk	8	House Wren	CW	Great-tailed Grackle	207
Red-shouldered Hawk	19	Winter Wren	8	House Finch	93
Red-tailed Hawk	31	Marsh Wren	1	Purple Finch	3
Virginia Rail	CW	Carolina Wren	57	American Goldfinch	47
American Coot	371			House Sparrow	171