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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:

Neka Schultz, OKC

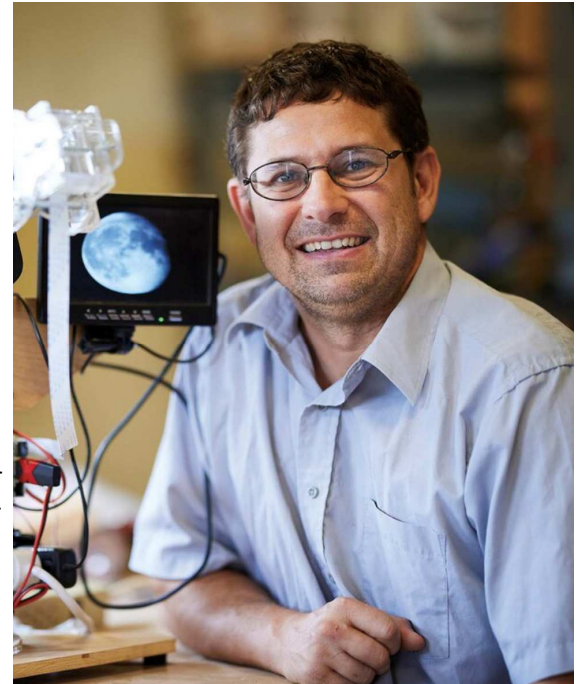
Paul Ferges, OKC

Christopher Sjoerdsma, OKC

## Migrations across moons and hemispheres

**Dr. Eli Bridge will be the guest speaker for our **TUESDAY, JUNE 18** 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.



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

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.

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

One of the more difficult (and enjoyable) aspects of being the OCAS President is the monthly task of coming up with a possible topic of interest and then writing about it for our newsletter. Ideas come from my own birding adventures, events in the world of birds, articles from the ABA or other birding/ornithological journals, or just my own biases and prejudices.

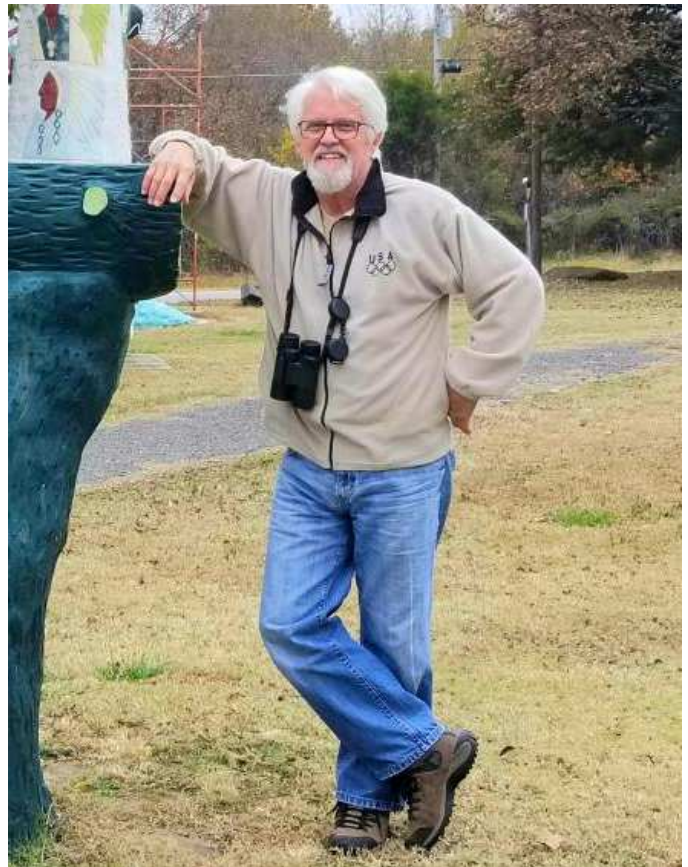
The most recent issue of *Birding* had a great article on the life of an acquaintance of mine—Peter Kaestner. For those of you who might not know or heard of Peter, he's the first person to pass the 10,000 mark in seen birds. I met him on a pelagic birding trip out of Monterey, California. Many years ago, I had spent several days with his brother Hank showing him around some great birding spots in Peru and we had developed a friendship, then one day many years later, I was signed up for a trip out of Monterey along with my Dad and cousin. As we prepared to board the ship, the trip leader read off our names, we started up the gangplank and I heard Hank and Peter

Kaestner's name called. Both Hank and I were surprised to hear each other's names and spent much of the trip reminiscing our days long ago in Peru. Peter added a couple life birds on the trip which included one I already had. So, I was tickled that I had seen one before he had. That however is all irrelevant to my bringing him up here. It's the 10,000 that matters. No matter how you want to measure it, it is an absolutely incredible achievement and the article in the magazine delves into how he went about getting there.

Peter points out that he prefers using the "IOC World Bird List" over the "Clements Checklist of Birds of the World" (used by eBird) because as he states: "it contains more species. At this writing, I have 162 more birds on the IOC list (10,012) than eBird (9,850)." It should be pointed out that there are other lesser known world lists as well out there, each with their own totals of what constitutes the number of species of birds in the world. There is an effort now by the IOU to harmonize the various lists and have one standard list—they expect to have it done sometime early next year (2025).

The reason I find this interesting is that as I mentioned in one of my notes sometime ago, lists are very personal. The rules we use in counting or not counting a bird on our list are in the end our own, not anyone else's. State listing committees often count or don't count what is recognized or not recognized by the AOU or the ABA. Personal lists count what one clearly believes to have seen or heard or .... You get the picture. Listing is fun, but it cannot establish a "pecking order" nor can it define a "good birder". All it tells us is that one has a passion for birding, or is that a terminal disease? :-)

*Bob Holbrook*  
*President*







## Bird of the Month: Gray Catbird

By Grace Huffman

In the summer months across much of the eastern 2/3rds of the US, you might hear this squeaky mimic singing from the bushes. Or hear their namesake mew calls. These all gray birds with a dark cap and rusty under-tail are related to mockingbirds and thrashers.

When they first arrive in the spring, I often find them in bushes and small trees that have berries coming into season. They enjoy fruit and can even be a garden pest, but they eat lots of insects too.

They love dense growth like vines and shrubbery, and build their nest deep in the middle. The nest is a messy cup built with materials like sticks, mud,

and even trash. It is lined with finer materials like grass on the inside. The eggs are turquoise, similar to a robin's, and they will raise more than one brood.

Catbirds can easily be identified by sound if they are calling, but since they mimic other birds while singing they can be harder to tell apart from mockingbirds and thrashers. In my personal experience, Northern Mockingbirds are the easiest. Their songs are loud, fast-paced, and a mockingbird will repeat the same thing several times before switching to something new. Brown Thrashers have a slower song, and seem to only repeat something twice before changing. Catbirds are also slow singers, and overall their song is full of squeakier sounds, with copied sounds from other birds mixed in.

Overall, Gray Catbird populations are stable. One potential threat is the development of the coastal areas where they winter, but for now they are doing well. Hopefully next time you step outside you'll see or hear one!



Gray Catbird ©Grace Huffman

Reference: al-  
laboutbirds.org

**NOTICE:** The June meeting will be held on **TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 2024** due to the Garden Center closing.

## The world's largest hummingbird has been flying under the radar—sort of.

At first glance, the two South American birds once lumped together as the Giant Hummingbird may appear nearly identical, but genetically they're entirely different species, according to new research that has shocked ornithologists. And as it turns out, one of these species is slightly bigger than the other, officially making it the world's hugest hummer. The findings and genetic analysis were recently published in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#).

For centuries, scientists have considered two distinct populations of Giant Hummingbird—a migratory southern population in Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia, and a non-migratory northern population in Chile, Ecuador, and Peru—to be the same species. But a mystery has long surrounded the southern birds: No one knew where they vanished to after each breeding season. In 1834, Charles Darwin himself speculated, with no evidence whatsoever, that they migrated to the Atacama Desert in northern Chile.

In 2016, Jessie Williamson, lead author of the new study and a National Science Foundation postdoctoral research fellow, assembled an international team of researchers to solve this puzzle. "Clearly they're migrating somewhere," Williamson says. "We started with this idea of trying to figure out where they go and could have never predicted all of the twists and turns."



Southern Giant Hummingbird with a geolocator backpack in Valparaíso Region, Chile. Photo: Chris Witt



A non-migratory Northern Giant Hummingbird—now the world's largest hummingbird—in central Peru. Photo: Jessie Williamson

To trace the elusive avians, Williamson engineered delicate geolocator "backpacks" weighing only 0.3 grams, ensuring they wouldn't hinder what she believed could be a journey spanning thousands of miles. But before the team could apply the geolocators, they first had to capture the birds

On average, a single hummingbird took 146 hours of netting to capture, and by the end, the team tagged 57 birds with geolocators and satellite transmitters. As if the creatures weren't difficult enough to catch the first time, Williamson repeated the process months later to recapture the devices and collect genomic data. But it wasn't until her second year of attempted recapture in coastal Chile that one of the birds returned, tracker intact.

First, its geolocator solved the enduring migration mystery: In the winter, the southern population of Giant Hummingbirds live among the non-migrant population in the Peruvian Andes, allowing the birds to blend in and essentially disappear. Second, this tracked bird had undoubtedly completed the longest recorded migration of any hummingbird—a 5,200-mile round trip between the Chilean coast and the Peruvian Andes.

The non-migratory hummers measured slightly bigger in all morphological traits, including bill length, wing length, and tail length. Thus making the norther Giant Hummingbird the largest hummingbird in the world.



# Minutes of the OKC Audubon Society Meeting May 20, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by President Bob Holbrook.

Attendance: 36 (including 1 visitor)  
Four new members joined since last meeting

Treasurer's report for May from Nancy Vicars was approved as read.

Multiple people recapped Joe Grzybowski's field trip to Sam Noble museum.

Terri Underhill is hosting the annual cookout on Saturday, June 8th. She will send out an email with details.

Mary Lane and Steve Davis gave the main presentation, sharing stories and bird pictures from their 2023 trip to Costa Rica.

The next OKC Audubon Society meeting will be held on **TUESDAY, June 18, 2024.**

This will be the last meeting until September.

—Cole Penning, Secretary

## Refreshments

Thanks to the June Refreshment  
Volunteers:

**SNACKS:** Steve Davis / Mary Lane, Nancy Scoggins and Patti High.

**ICE:** Randy Henthorn

**DRINKS:** Terri Underhill

## Birds of North America: A Photographic Atlas

The most up-to-date and gorgeous photographic collection of all 1,144 bird species in North America (including Hawaii!).

A Great Blue Heron, a Wood Duck, a Baltimore Oriole, an Eastern Bluebird, or a Belted Kingfisher—which North American bird species is your favorite? *In Birds of North America: A Photographic Atlas*, Bruce M. Beehler provides the information and images you need to identify and enjoy each of

the 1,144 amazing and diverse bird species recorded in the United States and Canada, including Hawaii and Alaska. Featuring more than 1,200 full-color photographs and illustrations and more than 700 range maps, this comprehensive reference provides both beginners and seasoned birders with important facts about each bird's ecology, behavior, seasonal movements, nesting biology, and conservation status.

*Birds of North America* gives bird-lovers everything they could ask for: The photographs and illustrations, selected and curated by Brian E. Small, one of America's most talented nature photographers, depict each species in its most beautiful plumage and natural habitat. The largest, most detailed, and most up-to-date range maps available anywhere provide invaluable insider information on the best birding hotspots. And the special sections rounding out the book offer helpful guidance on birding gear, field trip planning, critical resources, and conservation issues. This is the book for aspiring and veteran bird enthusiasts alike. Item Weight : 5.2 pounds

Dimensions : 9.25 x 1.5 x 11.25 inches

