

## All the “B” Birds and More!

**Our March 16 meeting speaker will be Doug Wood. This presentation will include photos, videos, and discussion about Dr. Wood’s recent visit to Malaysia and Borneo.**

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

For up-to-date Oklahoma City Audubon news visit:  
**OKC-Audubon.org**

Dr. Doug Wood is a Professor of Biological Science in the Department of Biological Sciences at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. He is in his 19th year at Southeastern. Doug earned his BA in Biology from Boston University, MS in Zoology from Eastern Illinois University, and Ph.D. in Forestry and Wildlife Ecology from Mississippi State University. He teaches courses in Ornithology, Zoology, Mammalogy, Fisheries and Wildlife Management, Conservation of Natural Resources, and Bioethics among others. He has conducted research on a wide a variety of ornithological subjects such as brood parasitism, endangered species, migration ecology, and the impacts of habitat management on bird communities. He has authored or co-authored 43 peer-reviewed journal articles on ornithological and wildlife management research. Doug has birded in 37 countries/geographic entities.



The emphasis of his presentation will be on birds, mammals, and conservation aspects.

Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month (with the exception of January, when the meeting is held on the fourth Monday). 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

Hal A. Yocum

All OK birders,

Spring has sprung! The flowers are blooming everywhere. Last evening, as I write on Sunday, we all turned our clocks AHEAD 1 hour( well most of us did- did you remember? ). The Spring Migration is under way and it is time for many field trips. We have plans for a trip to S. Jenkins Road in Norman with Dick Gunn as the leader on March 28. The last two times I walked down there I was pleased to see a pair of pileated woodpeckers.

There will be other field trips scheduled soon and some will be during the weekdays. Also remember to watch the birds changing in your backyard. There will be new visitors, and some leaving. I enjoy keeping a count of the slow decrease in the number of juncos. My Junco observations last 2 months resulted in me seeing 2 pink-sided, 1 Oregon and 1 leucistic junco. The latter bird had a white necklace and 2 small spots over each eye! I have had both yellow-rumped and orange-crowned warblers at my suet.

This past weekend I birded in Tulsa , Sand Springs and at Keystone Dam Park. Sightings included a pair of barred owls, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, other woodpeckers and a couple PINE WARBLERS that responded to my calling almost immediately.

We are working with a 35-acre property in Yukon, the Molly-Spencer Farm, and will be have several scheduled walks there just for our members and also have a Saturday especially for young birders that we will be there for.

So, READY, SET, GO for Spring Migration!

## Oklahoma City Audubon Welcomes:

### New Members:

Kathy York, Edmond, OK

Drew Gilbert, Edmond, OK

Craig Abbott, OKC

## Refreshments

### Snacks:

Mary Lane & Steve Davis, Brian Marra and Jimmy Woodard

### Ice / Drinks:

Grace Huffman



## Upcoming Events and Festivals:

Join the Tulsa Audubon Society and the Oklahoma Audubon Council For An Amazing Prairie Experience! See and hear the quickly vanishing Lesser Prairie-Chicken displaying on its gobbling grounds. Come share and experience the natural heritage of the high plains of northwestern Oklahoma. Festival headquarters is in Woodward, Oklahoma. The **Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival** will be held April 15-22, 2020 and will feature keynote speaker Nate Swick. See <http://www.lektreks.org>

The **Red Slough Birding Convention** (non-profit) will be on May 2-5 this year. The keynote speaker will be Nathan Pieplow, author of the "Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds (Eastern & Western volumes)". This is your best opportunity to add hard to get in the state species for your life and state lists such as Purple Gallinule, King Rail, Least Bittern, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and Swainson's Warbler. You will also get a chance to learn about prairie wildflowers, dragonflies, and butterflies. Experienced guides will tour you around Red Slough WMA, Little River NWR, McCurtain County Wilderness Area, and other places. For more information and to register go to: <http://www.redsloughconvention.com/>

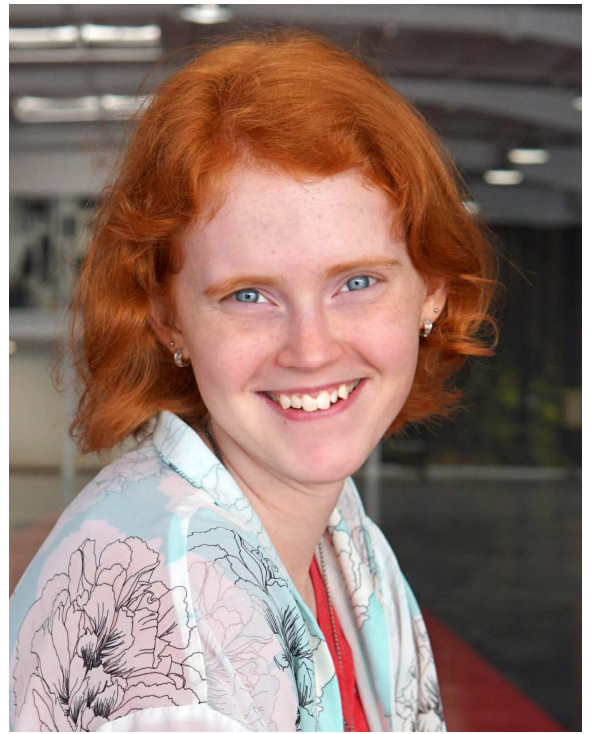
# Bird of the Month

By Grace Huffman

You might not find a **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** in your backyard, but take a drive out to the southwest part of the state and you'll find them. They're small, plain little birds who love rocky hillsides.

In February I went with a group of birders led by Kurt Meisenzahl down to the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. It was a wonderful trip with 2 lifers for me, and while I'd seen a Rufous-crowned Sparrow before, this trip was the first time I was able to photograph one! We saw this bird at Quannah Parker Dam, near some Field Sparrows. It was running and hopping all over the ground and shrubbery below the dam. It worked its way up close to us and I was able to take this photo. We ended up finding a second one there as well, before we moved on.

Rufous-crowned Sparrows can be found largely in the Southwest, but you can find them as far east as Arkansas. Like I mentioned before, they prefer dry, rocky areas and don't really venture far from where they like



© Grace Huffman

to live. They're non-migratory, and they don't even like to fly that much. In fact, the longest flight ever recorded for a Rufous-crowned Sparrow was 540 feet!

These sparrows feed mostly on the ground, eating insects like grasshoppers, crickets, and ants. They also will eat wild seeds and plants, so they're not a typical feeder bird, but one might stop by!

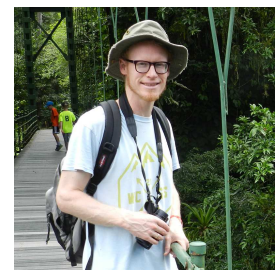
The female sparrow will build the nest and incubates the eggs for just under two weeks. Like many birds, if a predator gets too close the adult will feign injury by acting like they have a broken wing, leading the danger away from the nest. They will also chase other birds away as well, not just other Rufous-crowned Sparrows. Juveniles will leave the nest at 9 days, even though they can't fly yet.

The ICUN lists the Rufous-crowned Sparrow as Least Concern, but their numbers dropped 45% between 1966 and 2014. Their biggest threat is habitat fragmentation and degradation.

Resources: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org) and Wikipedia

## Coming: April 20, 2020 guest speaker David Hoekman

Director of the Environmental Studies Program at Southern Nazarene University since August 2014, David Hoekman, Ph.D., studies arthropod food webs in aquatic and terrestrial systems and teaches a range of field-based classes at SNU including Marine Ecology, Insect Ecology, Ornithology, General Ecology. He is also the principle professor of QERC's Tropical Field Research course. Dr. Hoekman leads insect ecology research being conducted at QERC.



# Fort Davis Hummingbird Festival

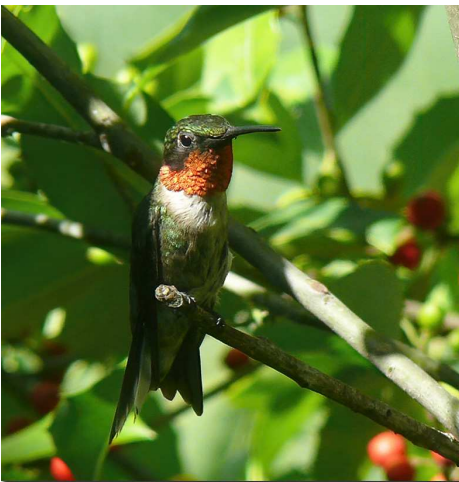
August 23, 2019

By Patti Muzny (With a little editing by Steve and Mary.)

For those who have been reading this newsletter since last fall, with my tales of Big Bend with Steve Davis and Mary Lane, Nancy Vicars and Nancy Reed, you probably wondered why I began at the end and toward the middle, but didn't share the festival that was the catalyst responsible for all of our memorable adventures in West Texas. Well...no particular reason...maybe that's just how my mind functions these days. In this next chapter, I will share the hummingbird banding portion of our festival experiences.

Fort Davis lies nestled in the heart of the Texas Chihuahuan Desert Sky Islands, in the Davis Mountains. It's a quaint little town with friendly folks and the surrounding area attracts lots and lots of hummingbirds during migration, which is in full swing in August. Now I'm going to say once again that it can get pretty HOT, even in the Davis Mountains, but Big Bend NP is hands down the winner of the HOTNESS trophy. And I still say I love Big Bend! We experienced HOT, light rain and a cooling down-pour in Fort Davis.

We all stayed in Fort Davis, where the festival activities were centered. Most participants stayed at the Hotel Limpia, which is one of the sponsors of the festival. There were field trips to various hotspots and one of our trips was to the Nature Conservancy Preserve site in the mountains where the hummingbird banding occurred. Kelly Bryan and his assistants have been banding here for many years, and he willingly shared his extensive knowledge of hummingbirds and other Davis Mountain birds.



So how does one capture and band something with such a diminutive tarsus? Many years ago, I had the privilege of assisting in the banding hummingbirds with Marguerite Baumgartner when she was banding Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in the NE Oklahoma community of Jay, OK, so I knew what to expect,

but it certainly brought back some fond memories. Kelly uses some interesting "tools" in the banding and processing of hummingbirds. Would you believe he had his grandmother's darning needle, a jeweler's loop, calipers, a drinking straw, special split-ring banding pliers and a women's nylon stocking? Hummingbirds are w-a-y too cagey to fly into a mist net, so how would you capture one? Several hummingbird feeders were placed near the Nature Conservancy facility and after the birds got comfortable feeding at them one

feeder would be surrounded by a wire mesh cage with a trap door that was controlled by one of the volunteers. When a hummingbird or two or three went inside to feed, the volunteer electronically lowered the open door and the hummingbird (s) were trapped inside. They were then removed and placed in little cloth bags to await the banding process.

Kelly would carefully remove one of these tiny little jewels and measure it, note the age and gender, the wear and tear on the feathers and the percentage of fat. We noticed he would gently hold the hummer on its back and blow through a straw onto the breast. This process was to determine the percentage of fat on each bird. They feed constantly and their purpose is to accumulate as much fat as possible before they continue their migration.

After all of the data was gathered the hummingbird was placed head first into the stocking, which allowed the tiny feet to be exposed for a band. The infinitesimal band was placed on its leg and secured with the special pliers and the process was complete. Then, Kelly would place the banded bird into the open hand of anyone who wanted to hold a hummingbird.

Holding a living hummingbird in your hand is an experience you won't forget!! Their tiny hearts beat so fast and the colors of their feathers are breathtaking. When placed gently in your hand, the hummingbird seems to think it's still captive and just quietly lies there until you wave your hand a little. THEN...the race is on and it zooms up, up and away! I'd like to think these beautiful birds took a tiny bit of our hearts with them as they flew away, wearing their new silver ankle bracelets.

Several species were banded, but the most exciting was a rare-to-this-area White-eared hummingbird! Among those at the feeders were: Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, and Lucifer Hummingbird.

The Conservancy property held other birds as well, including a Say's Phoebe that hung around the banding station while we were there.

Steve Davis and Mary Lane took some fantastic photos and I for one will nag them unmercifully to share them in a program for OKC Audubon. Words are so inadequate to describe what it was like to be up close and very personal to a hummingbird.

For those who would like to experience the Ft. Davis Hummingbird Festival, the following link will give you some information: <https://davismountainshummingbirdcelebration.com/index.php/>

# African Dream (Part four)

By Nancy Vicars & Warren Harden

As awe-inspiring as the Serengeti was, we left for the Ngorongoro Crater, famed for its easily seen wildlife. The crater is actually a caldera formed about 2 ½ million years ago by a huge eruption and the subsequent collapse of an enormous volcano about the size of nearby present-day Mount Kilimanjaro (highest African mountain). Actually being a hole in the sky the bottom of which covers about 100 square miles, the caldera is a popular feeding area for many of the large animals that migrate in and out over the forested slopes and rim.

Upon descending to the bottom, we came across resting lions and grazing cape buffalo. Further on were elephants, wildebeest, Grant gazelles, elands, spotted hyenas, a golden jackal and wart hogs (designed by a committee). On the floor of the caldera was a large, but mostly dry, salt lake that fills during the rains. A small area still contained water and attracted a number of birds: sacred ibis, Egyptian goose, blacksmith plovers, northern pintails, red-billed teal, pied avocets, black-winged stilts, lesser flamingos, pink-backed pelicans and grey herons. Later, at the famed hippopotamus water hole we saw many cattle egrets, a sacred ibis, red-knobbed coots and a great white pelican. However, the main water attraction was a living platform constructed of tightly packed backs and heads of about 150 lolling hippos with black crakes and purple swamphens walking on them. Nearby, we watched young zebras rolling in the dust of a dry playa.

During lunch at a small lake we enjoyed a black-kite stealing food out of the hands of picnickers, groups of black-lored babblers mooching leftover sandwich bits, and a little grebe diving in the lake. Other birds seen were grand secretary birds, even grander crowned cranes, ostriches, marabou storks, hadada ibis, glossy ibis, white-bellied bustards, bee-eaters and pied wagtails. From the steep caldera side, we watched at least five rhinoceroses feeding separately below before making our departure over the rim and back to "civilization."

All through our African jaunt we heard about governmental conservation methods and actions to thwart poaching and other threats on wildlife and habitats, but I heard no mention of the effects of climate change. I had been thinking that guides had been instructed to not mention it. So privately, I asked our most experienced and knowledgeable guide a direct question. He said that the migration times and routes had been changing, and he and others were worried that the new routes and destinations might take the large animals off the conservation areas which would put them in peril. The weather, yearly featuring two rainy seasons each followed by hot, dry periods, is becoming more variable. The amount of animals and habitat covered by present conservation areas is tiny compared to what Africa and our entire earth held not long ago. The Rift Valley and associated conservation areas exemplify how extraordinary and beautiful life is, but also how fragile. What a privilege it was that we could experience the grandeur of giraffes and all else in Africa's "Giraffic Park," exemplary height of the struggle for life on this planet. We hope and pray it will not disappear. Long live the king of beasts!

## Minutes: February 17, 2020

Meeting was called to order by club president Harold Yocum.

Treasurer's report by Nancy Vicars reports \$6571.65 in the account after membership dues received and expenses.

Guests were introduced. Kathy York of Edmond, Craig Abbott and Bob Clark, our speaker.

Interesting bird sightings include cinnamon teal at Stinchcomb WLR, pine grosbeak, peregrine falcon, various longspurs. The pair of bald eagles has returned to their roost on NE 63<sup>rd</sup> St east of Midwest Blvd north of the bridge. They did not nest there last year due to some nearby woodland destruction.

Upcoming events include a planned trip to Molly Spencer Farms near Yukon in April or May, and a trip this spring to Wewoka Woods. Further information will be posted on the website [okc-audubon.org](http://okc-audubon.org).

April 15-23 are inclusive dates for the Woodward Lesser Prairie Chicken Festival with extension to Black Mesa and to Wichita Wildlife Refuge.

April 19<sup>th</sup> will have a street party from 2-5 pm in Edmond. We have been asked to staff it for birding information.

The Will Rogers Park garden festival will be held on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

There was no other business and meeting was adjourned for a snack break and fellowship.

After the break we were entertained by Bob Clark, a large-scale commercial breeder of snakes, with special interest in reticulated pythons with genetic color anomalies. He brought in some of his friends and answered all our questions. He also showed us some of the unusual color characteristics of the descendants of the initial albino male imported from Thailand over thirty years ago. There were lots of smiles all around.

The next meeting will be the third Monday of March, which is March 16<sup>th</sup>, at the same location from 7-9 pm.

—Club Secretary Sharon Henthorn

# Recorder's Report

## February 2020

February was an interesting month with an extra day this year. As the cold winter winds blew through central Oklahoma, birders began to ask questions. Which new and/or interesting winter species be reported? How many counties would have reports during The Great Backyard Bird Count? Would any summer residents arrive?



On the 1<sup>st</sup> Brian Marra counted **Franklin's Gull** at Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge West in Canadian County; and Bill Diffin observed Red-breasted Merganser at Lake Overholser. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Greg Wilbert recognized **Purple Finch** in Discovery Cove at Lake Thunderbird. On the 4<sup>th</sup> Daron Patterson discovered

Horned Lark at Okeene in Kingfisher County. On the 6<sup>th</sup> Bill Diffin identified **Iceland Gull** along the Lighthouse area of Lake Hefner. On the 8<sup>th</sup> Braden Farris reported **Ferruginous Hawk** along Fort Reno Road near Calumet in Canadian County. On the 10<sup>th</sup> Aaron Mechem photographed a Loggerhead Shrike at Fort Reno Cemetery. On the 11<sup>th</sup> Brian Marra had Purple Finch along the Bluff Creek Trails in Oklahoma City. On the 13<sup>th</sup> in Logan County just north of Waterloo Road and west of I-35 Debbie Lang photographed **Pine Grosbeak** in her yard. What an excellent surprise !!



© Debbie Lang

### THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

On the 14<sup>th</sup> Tracie Verkler found House Finch at the Kingfisher Library. On the 15<sup>th</sup> Marion Homier photographed a Pine Warbler at her home in Oklahoma County; Hope McGaha noticed Greater Roadrunner and Pine Siskin in Macomb in Pottawatomie County; in Logan County near Guthrie Melinda West saw Purple Finch and near Crescent Martha Newman spotted **Northern Bobwhite**. On the 16<sup>th</sup> William Rad-



ke got Pied-billed Grebe and Pileated Woodpecker at Guthrie Lake; Patti Muzny encountered American Woodcock, Barred Owl, and Purple Finch at Byars in McClain County; Joe Grzybowski detected Barred Owl along South Jenkins in Norman; and Connie Barta located Purple Finch at the South Fairgrounds Road in Payne County. On the 17<sup>th</sup> Jerry Vanbebber recorded Northern Harrier and Brown Thrasher at Paul's Valley Lake in Garvin County; Brian Marra added **Blue-wing Teal** and photographed **Cinnamon Teal** at Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge West; Robert Karges came across Greater Yellowlegs, Brewer's Blackbirds and Least Sandpiper at Triple Heart West



© Brian Marra

Ranch in Cleveland County; and Jason Shaw confirmed Belted Kingfisher at the USAO Habitat Area in Grady County. Ten out of the twelve Central Oklahoma Counties participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count this year.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> Cody Delano photographed **Spotted Sandpiper** at Lake Thunderbird. On the 19<sup>th</sup> Larry Mays counted Blue-winged Teal in Tuttle in Grady County. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> Eduardo Bergen recognized Pine Warbler and Hairy Woodpecker in Prague in Lincoln County. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> Paulette Nicholas discovered White-crowned Sparrow northwest of Chickasaw; and Brandon Farris observed Surf Scoter and White-winged Scoter at Lake Hefner. On the 24<sup>th</sup> Corban Hemphill reported **Barn Owl** at home in Stillwater. On the 27<sup>th</sup> Jacob Crissup with Jerry Vanbebber, Jimmy Woodard and Larry Mays identified Wild Turkey in Tuttle; and Eva Matthews Lark had **Rusty Blackbirds** in Oklahoma City.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> Jason Shaw described **Ring-necked Pheasant** at the USAO Habitat Area; Braden Farris found Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Fox Sparrow at Meeker Lake in Lincoln County; Esther Key heard **Sandhill Crane** in Moore; Bill Carrell photographed Red-necked Grebe and **Yellow-billed Loon** at



© Bill Carrell

Lake Hefner; and Braden Farris spotted Field Sparrow at Bell Cow Lake in Logan County. On the 29<sup>th</sup> in Stillwater r



Landon Neumann tallied **Red Crossbill** at Couch Park; and thanks to the extra day this month Scott Loss confirmed **Purple Martin** in his yard in February. Which means it's time to ready the Purple Martin houses and the rest of us will have to wait until next month

to report this iconic summer resident.

In the Central Oklahoma area during February 2020, **145** species were reported with **17** new species bringing the total for 2020 to **157**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds. Information is accessed at: [ebird](http://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: February 29, 2020). And occasionally from Facebook and the OKBIRDS List. I can be contacted by e-mail at [emkok@earthlink.net](mailto:emkok@earthlink.net). Esther M. Key, Editor.

## Wichita Mountains

Twelve birders met on Saturday the 15th of February at 9:00 to bird the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

Birds seen include: Canada Geese, Northern Shovelers, Gadwalls, American Wigeons, Canvasback, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, Goldeneyes, Pied-billed Grebes, Mourning Doves, 40 Sandhill Cranes, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gulls, Double-crested Cormorants, White Pelicans, Great Blue Heron, 1 immature Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flickers, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jays, Crows, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, Canyon Wren, Carolina Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Bluebirds, Townsend's Solitaire (heard by a majority of the group), Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwings, 120 Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Field Sparrows, Juncos, Vesper Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Savannah Sparrows, Song Sparrows, Lincoln Sparrow, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Spotted Towhees, Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern/Western Meadowlarks, Redwing Blackbird, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Northern Cardinals.

Other birds seen by only a few birders: Golden-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creeper, and a single Mountain Bluebird seen 1½ miles west of the west entrance to the Refuge a day or two later.

Kurt Meisenzahl  
Lawton, OK



## Great Horned Owl Nest Cam

Our own Terri Underhill is hosting a pair of Great Horned Owls again this winter. The nesting owls have taken up residence in the plastic whiskey barrel she installed several years ago in an old oak tree along her driveway. This is the third year owls have used the barrel. In 2018 it was home to a pair of Barred Owls who successfully fledged two young ones. Last year the Great Horned Owls made it their home and fledged one youngster.

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 Mr. Owl coming in with food.

As we go to press, Mrs. Owl appears to be sitting on eggs or chicks. She hasn't given us a peak yet. Updates to come!

## DUES NOTICE

It's time once again to renew your annual membership for 2020. 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.

## Oklahoma City Audubon Society

c/o Patricia Velte  
1421 NW 102nd Street  
Oklahoma City, OK 73114

## *Upcoming Field Trips*

### **Saturday, March 28, 2020 South Jenkins, Norman, OK.**

Meeting time is 8:00 AM at Rudy's BBQ at the SW corner of Highway 9 (east) and Chautauqua Ave. Hope to see a few early spring migrants as well as resident birds. Leader: Richard Gunn Please contact Nancy Vicars, [nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nancy.vicars@sbcglobal.net) if you plan to attend this outing.

### **Saturday, April 25, 2020. Little Sit, Choctaw, OK**

John Cleal and Marion Homier will be hosting their annual Little Sit (an informal "sit" with no rules of any sort) in Choctaw at our home at 3626 Santa Fe Drive on **Saturday, April 25th** from 9:00 a.m. until dusk. They'll provide modest snacks plus sodas. Attendees should feel free to bring their favorite snacks to share, and definitely bring folding/camp chairs if you have them.

The **rain date will be May 2nd**, but in case of inclement weather on April 25th, call and check with us regarding status as we may go ahead that day and bird from indoors through the windows as we did a couple of years ago when the weather brought in a male Baltimore Oriole for great views and a total of 26 species. Notification of attendance is always appreciated: phone (405) 390-2001 or email at [mhomier@yahoo.com](mailto:mhomier@yahoo.com) Come-and-go or come-and-stay, we hope you'll join us.