

Whimbrel

Bird of the Month
by Grace Huffman



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I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy during these challenging times. I also hope that you have been able to go out and bird during this migration season. And what a migration season it has been! Temporarily working from home has allowed me to get out and see even more birds than I usually do, and I have added 15 species to my life list since the beginning of April! Most of my recent lifers have been shorebirds, so I thought I would write this month's article on one of the more unusual species: **Whimbrel**.

First off, I'd like to start with a disclaimer: Whimbrels are not usually found in Oklahoma. In the U.S. they live and migrate mostly along the East and West coasts, and breed in Alaska and Canada. They nest up in the tundra, and spend the rest of their time on large patches of flat open areas, such as mudflats or the shore at low tide.

Last month I was out birding at Rose Lake, having already been there once that week for the early Buff-breasted Sandpiper. I had heard about a Long-billed Curlew (a relative of the Whimbrel and another rarity here in central OK) sighted there the day before. I was there with a couple of other birders and we were working hard on identifying all of the sandpipers when something spooked them and they all went up into the air. Suddenly a much larger bird joined them, and it ended up being yet another rarity for Rose Lake, the Whimbrel! It was quite gorgeous, and when it had the water behind it, quite easy to see. After about an hour or so it managed to slip away completely as we lost track of it. One had previously been reported at Lake Overholser, so I can only assume this was the same bird.

They are large shorebirds, much larger than yellowlegs or Willets, both of which are common here during migration. They are brown, with some fine streaking on the wings and body, and dark stripes at the top of the head. The most fascinating thing about the bird though is the bill. It is very long and downcurved, unlike anything I had ever seen before. *(continued on page 2)*

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

Due to health concerns, the May 18, 2020 meeting has been cancelled as well as field trips previously published or mentioned at the Feb. meeting.

President's Perspective

I thought that this month, May, BIRD MIGRATION would be a great thing to remind all of us about. I refreshed my own knowledge on the subject by reading a good discussion of the subject in *The Birdwatcher's Companion* by Christopher W. Leahy, 2004.

I am sure that all of you have read various articles or books on the subject over the years. During the 2020 spring migration is a great time to review the subject. Most of us easily recall the several basic migration routes south to north and vice versa. We have learned some well studied facts about when each species comes through Oklahoma. Pat Velte reminds us each month of arrivals and departures. My brief review renewed all kinds of other questions. Where do the birds come from when going north? Where are they each going for their individual breeding seasons? How far do they travel? Is the north bound route the same as the south bound route in the fall? When do they fly- daytime /nighttime? How fast do they fly? Where do they get the energy to do that? Do they ever rest? Do males and females go together or separately? Do young inexperienced birds depend on older, experienced parents to show them the way? How do they know where to go?

Many, many questions like these have actually been studied and much has been learned especially over the past 50-75 years. The answers to these interesting questions are not as simple as we first may have thought. One interesting thing that I read in a biography of J.J. Audubon was his interest in the fact that the Eastern Phoebe left his property in eastern Pennsylvania (near the present day Valley Forge National Park) in the fall and then returned in the spring. He wondered if they were the very same birds that returned. His solution was to tie a colored string around the leg of one that he captured. To his amazement that bird returned to his property the next spring still wearing his string. Sounds like a "bird band" of sorts.

The most interesting questions have to do with WHY DO THEY DO IT AT ALL? Several theories exist, so even that question is not totally understood. While you are "quarantining at home" these days, use some of that time to Google BIRD MIGRATION and be prepared to learn some very interesting answers to these many questions regarding the subject.

—Hal A. Yocum



Whimbrel (cont.)

Whimbrels are long distance migrants, with some flying from Canada and New England all the way down to their wintering grounds in South America in one long non-stop 2,500 mile trip. The one I saw certainly looked like it was built for strong flight!

Being shorebirds, they are at risk of losing their habitat through rising sea levels, development, and other problems, and they are hunted in the Caribbean and South America. Currently though they are listed as Least Concern.

Stay safe everyone and enjoy the birds!

Information primarily from allaboutbirds.org and Sibley's Field Guide to the Birds of North America, 2nd Edition.

Welcome to OKC Audubon

Stephanie Hanscom, OKC

Rolla Weber, Norman, OK

Marla Haddock, Edmond, OK

Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

Those of us who are birders are probably one of the groups that have not been seriously impacted by sheltering in place and social distancing. Yes, it's a serious global disaster that's not to be taken lightly, but the birds don't watch TV and its business as usual for them. Believe it or not, am respecting the new rules and rarely go out of our yard. Suits me just fine. Our yard has been extremely entertaining.

We have a Robin pair feeding babies on our patio and it's been such fun watching the building of the nest, the incubation and hatching of at least 4 young. I haven't taken the time to simply sit and count the number of "stuffings" the parent birds make in



the course of a day, but they just don't stop! The adults make a soft greeting when they arrive at the nest with a beak full of tasty crawly things. The adult birds are also quite protective of their territory. I've watched them tackle Starlings, Crows, Jays and Grackles. At first I got the "stink eye" from the male, but now they both ignore me.

One little nest box at the edge of our patio hosts a Chickadee family and I think they are about to fledge. We also have one crazy female Cardinal who most certainly has addled her brain by slamming repeatedly against the windows in the front of the house. She just keeps it up, although she's slowed down a little. Maybe that gene pool should go away? An Eastern Bluebird male was seen on the fence in the back yard and I keep hoping they will use one of the boxes, but the House Sparrows appropriated the best one. On May 2nd I walked out into the back yard to find over a dozen Mississippi Kites soaring above the yard and calling. They seemed to be everywhere! I do enjoy watching these birds, but with a few mixed emotions. I know they will take Purple Martins and we have a record number of four pairs at our Martin house. And on May 6th, I watched a kite carrying sticks into the neighbor's tree right beside our house.

Perhaps the most bizarre spring thing occurred while I was standing on the patio talking to a friend. I saw a bird fly toward the windows and circle around and fly out toward the garden. In a few seconds the bird flew back under the patio and landed on the ceiling fan. It was a Catbird! A first for our Oklahoma City yard.



Now I might expect one to visit our yard, but why did it land on the ceiling fan? Our Great Crested Flycatcher has returned, as have our Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Our Brown Thrasher returned several weeks ago and has been singing non-stop. The nest is in one of the shrubs in the back yard. We have three species of doves – White-winged, Mourning and Eurasian Collared. Our messy dandelion patch that serves as the back yard is a smorgasbord for migrating Chipping Sparrows, Clay-colored Sparrows and House Finches. I do love to watch those little chippies jump up and ride the dandelion head down to the ground and munch on those pesky seeds. The bugs and worms provide feeding areas for Starlings, Sparrows and our Robins and Cardinals as well. Somewhere nearby there are Titmice nesting and we also heard fledgling Downy Woodpeckers calling from our lot next door. House Wrens are nesting somewhere in the yard. Something beheaded a female Brown-headed Cowbird in the back yard. Couldn't have happened to a more deserving species!

So I have to admit I've so thoroughly enjoyed having the best excuse ever to just STAY HOME and watch my birds and pamper my gardens. My house could receive a more thorough cleaning, but that's no fun. I've had to really talk myself into sitting in the house long enough to write this article. If I can't be found at home, I'm probably out birding somewhere. My sympathies go out to those who don't watch birds or grow things or read stuff! Stay happy and healthy!

Recorder's Report

April 2020

Shorebirds, warblers, and many other species were moving into, through and out of Oklahoma during April. It is a special month to be birding whether around the area or from the backyard. Where are these birds coming from? A special report is included showing how far one flew to arrive here. Another special report tells how one bird's migration ended here. While we may not be able to travel far distances, we can provide a safe resting place for the birds that do.



On March 31st John Hurd counted **American Bittern** at the north Lake Overholser wetland. On April 2nd Joe Grzybowski was going through the shorebirds at Rose Lake and discovered **Western Sandpiper**. On the 4th Dan Boyd found **Chimney Swift** at home in Cleveland County; Jason Shaw detected **Black-chinned Hummingbird** in Chickasha; and someone spotted **Broad-winged Hawk** along East Rock Creek Road in Norman. On the 5th Chris Butler viewed Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Harris's Sparrow at Bull Foot Park in Hennessey in Kingfisher County. On the 6th Lindell Dillon identified **Yellow-throated Vireo** at Lake Thunderbird along Alameda Drive. On the 7th at Rose Lake Jimmy Woodard recognized **Black-bellied Plover** and Brian Marra reported **White-faced Ibis**.

On the 8th Deb Hirt located **Warbling Vireo** at Heron Cove at Boomer Lake Park in Payne County; Jacob Crissup observed **Green Heron** at Lake Hefner; Chris Butler documented **Lewis's Woodpecker** at Lake Thunderbird; Braden Farris confirmed **Sora**,



Semipalmated Plover and Cinnamon Teal at Rose Lake; plus someone saw **Marbled Godwit** at Lake Thunderbird – East Sentinel. On the 9th Jacob Crissup recorded **Prothonotary Warbler, Wilson's Phalarope** and Eastern Kingbird at Lake Thunderbird; and on the 10th he counted Ruddy Duck, Eared Grebe and Yellow-throated Warbler at Lake Konawa in Seminole County.

Kyle Abbott provided this report concerning the Yellow-billed Loon. "We subsequently received phone calls to our center WildCare Foundation in Noble, OK regarding this loon. I went to rescue this bird as it had been on the shore for hours. I was able to bring the bird to our center where it passed away during stabilization. The bird had fishing line wrapped around its bill and a fishing hook in its gut, with resulting severe emaciation."

On the 11th John Tharp and Rachel Wrenn verified the return of the Black-chinned Hummingbird in Norman; Steve Davis photographed **Willet** and the Bald Eagle nest at the Mustang Road 'playas' in Canadian County; and Braden Farris added Broad-winged Hawk and Warbling Vireo at Mineral Wells Park in Logan County. On the 12th Paula Cimprich came across **Summer Tanager** along South Jenkins in Norman. On the 13th Scott Loss documented **Bank Swallow** at Boomer Lake Park; Cody Delano photographed **Swainson's Thrush** at Lake Thunderbird – Dave Blue Creek; and at Rose Lake Bill Diffin encountered **Hudsonian Godwit** and Tree Swallow; while Jerry Vanbebber photographed **Stilt Sandpiper** and Marbled Godwit.



On the 14th Mark A Brogie found Loggerhead Shrike and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher near Maysville in Garvin County. On the 15th **Western Kingbirds** were reported by Landon Neumann at Couch Park in Stillwater and Braden Farris at south Lake Hefner; while Jennifer Kidney watched a Gray Catbird fly onto her jelly feeder. On the 16th Landon Neuman discovered **Nashville Warbler** at Couch Park in Stillwater; Nathan Ukens recorded **Chuck-will's-widow** in Edmond; and James Hubbell located White-eyed Vireo, Grasshopper Sparrow and Bank Swallow at Meeker Lake in Lincoln County.

Tim O'Connell reports: "I know we all get that migratory birds travel great distances, but it's still pretty amazing when we get a chance to confirm that for an individual. Case in point, we had a little shorebird fallout here in Stillwater Thursday night 4/16/20 with a few interesting birds sticking around through Friday. Leslie Miller managed this photograph of a Hudsonian Godwit first reported by Landon Neumann on Friday morning. The bird was double-banded with a red tag reading "KNA" on the left leg. Today I made contact with the bander: Dr. Juan Navedo who directs an ornithological research lab at a university in Chile. He offered that this bird, a male, was one of 45 Hudsonian Godwits his team banded on October 7, 2019. The location was in the town of Castro (pop. 39,000) on the island of Chiloe: about 9000 km due south." (5,600 miles; close to the south end of South America)

On the 17th **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were reported by Deb Hirt at Boomer Lake Park and Chris Butler at Arcadia Lake – Edmond Park; and Chris also photographed **Piping Plovers**. Meanwhile, Timothy Cloninger detected **Great Crested Flycatcher** at Arcadia Conservation Education Area; Braden Farris noticed **Baltimore Oriole** at



© Chris Butler

south Lake Hefner; William Radke recognized **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at Morgan Road Playas; and Zachary Hemans counted Osprey and Bank Swallow at Liberty Lake in Logan County. On the 18th Mike Yough spotted **Red-eyed Vireo** at Cushing Water Treatment Plant in Payne County; Jimmy Woodard located **Bell's Vireo** along South Jenkins; and Joe Grzybowski scoped through the shorebirds four times at Rose Lake to locate **Dunlin**.

On the 19th Scott Loss identified **Painted Bunting** at Boomer Lake Park; and someone reported **Blue Grosbeak** along South Jenkins and at Lake Thunderbird **Lazuli Bunting**. On the 20th **Indigo Buntings** were recorded near Lake Stanley Draper by Nancy Reed and at Mitch Park on a shared checklist by Cassidy Massey, Bailey Kephart and Carlie Jennings. At Rose Lake Bill Diffin confirmed **Long-billed Curlew**, Marbled Godwit, Dunlin and Buff-breasted Sandpiper. On the 21st Scott Loss saw **Dickcissel** in Stillwater; John Tharp and Rachel Wrenn observed **Yellow Warbler** in Norman; and Jerry Vanbebber heard **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at Lake Thunderbird State Park. At Rose Lake Brian Marra photographed **White-rumped Sandpiper** then a **Whimbrel** showed up, roamed the field for 30

minutes and left. On the 21st Joe Grzybowski documented an adult **Little Gull** at Lake Overholser.

On the 22nd Jason Shaw added Green Heron at Shannon Springs Park in Chickasaw. On the 23rd Mike Yough encountered **Blue-headed Vireo** at Couch Park; Deb Hirt discovered **Hooded Warbler** at Boomer Lake Park; and Joe Grzybowski found **Mississippi Kite** at Lake Thunderbird. In McClain County Larry Mays identified Yellow-throated Warbler at Blanchard and Broad-winged Hawk at Washington. John Tharp detected **Northern Waterthrush** and **Palm Warbler** along South Jenkins and later learned that the Palm Warbler hasn't been reported there in eBird since 1979. On the 24th Jimmy Woodard noticed **Least Flycatcher** at Soldier Creek Industrial Park Recreational Trail in Midwest City; William Radke recognized **Magnolia Warbler** at Arcadia Lake; and Dala Grissom spotted Lazuli Bunting and Painted Bunting at Bethel Acres in Pottawatomie County.

On the 25th Scott Loss observed **Blackpoll Warbler** at Boomer Lake Park; Jason Shaw confirmed Chimney Swift flying above his yard in Chickasaw; and Aaron Mechem recorded Yellow-headed Blackbird at Rose Lake. On the 26th Corban Hemphill saw **Tennessee Warbler** at Carl Blackwell Lake; Zach DuFran had **Common Nighthawk** in Norman; Jimmy Woodward had **Snowy Plover** at Rose Lake; Landon Neumann documented **Rufous Hummingbird** in Stillwater; John Sterling located Nashville Warbler east of Paul's Valley Lake in Garvin County; and Rusty Derringer located Swainson's Thrush in Guthrie. On the 27th Landon Neumann came across **Eastern Wood-Pewee** at Couch Park; John Tharp heard **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** in Norman; and Scott Loss counted **Yellow-breasted Chat** and **Kentucky Warbler** in the wetlands south of Carl Blackwell Lake between OK-51 and OK-31.

On the 28th Landon Neumann encountered **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at Couch Park; Larry Mays heard Chuck-will's-widow in McClain County; and someone photographed a **Glossy Ibis** with White-faced Ibis along 10-mile Flat in Cleveland County. Meanwhile, Chris Butler spotted eleven new migrants including Swainson's Thrush, Prothonotary Warbler, Summer Tanager, and Indigo Bunting at the Maud Wetland in Seminole County, and at Little River Wetland in Pottawatomie County he had Great Crested Flycatcher and Baltimore Oriole. Nesting season is in full swing; what will we observe? Global Big Day is May 9th; what surprise bird species will be discovered then?

In the Central Oklahoma area during April 2020, **225** species were reported with **62** new species bringing the total for 2020 to **257**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds. Information is accessed at: [ebird](http://www.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/>

Eagle Stalking

By Patti Muzny

The George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville began an eagle reintroduction project between 1984 and 1992. Bald Eagle eggs were removed from nests in Florida and transported to their captive rearing facility in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. The Sutton Center raised and re-released Southern Bald Eagles along the Arkansas River, in the Sequoyah NWR. Thus began a successful and exciting journey for the Bald Eagle and Bald Eagle admirers in Oklahoma.

It doesn't take much arm twisting to entice the Nancy Vicars/Patti Muzny birding team to get out and watch birds, especially our beautiful Bald Eagles, so when Nancy learned that volunteers were needed to locate and monitor nesting Bald Eagles in Oklahoma, she signed us up and the fun began. We started this project back in mid-January when the trees had no leaves and locating mammoth Bald Eagle nests was relatively easy. We monitored 18 nests in the Checotah, Lake Eufaula area, mostly down river from the dam and around Kingfisher, Dover and SE of Enid.



We practiced proper social distancing (I really am very tired of that phrase!) and spoke with other humans very few times and that was always outside in the wind. A pandemic is not to be ignored, but at least it doesn't deter those of us who watch birds. Life goes on as usual for building nests, feeding young and singing.

We followed the guidelines set forth by the Sutton Center and spent at least 30 minutes watching each nest. Something that was quite educational in recognizing eagle behavior during the nesting season was the live cam near a nest in the Sarasota, Florida, area. After all, those eagles may very well be relatives of our own reintroduced Oklahoma eagles.

The known nests from Sutton were visited and we added a few on our own as well. Some of the nests that were monitored in 2019 were reused and some were not. Second guessing what might have prompted an eagle pair to build a new nest is not one of our skills. Due to the heavy rains

during the early part of spring, water was being released from Lake Eufaula and this action changed the dynamics of feeding in the river. Our first visit found water boiling out of the gates and many pelicans, cormorants and gulls taking advantage of this feeding opportunity. This was also the area where we found five Bald Eagle nests that were closer together than normal. Apparently food was abundant along this part of the river, so eagle social distancing rules were relaxed.

Flooded fields and roads also added to the challenges of getting close enough to the nests to set up a scope and see if there were any fledglings. 330 feet is roughly the proper distance to keep between the watchers and the eagles.

Many nests were much farther away. As to the presence of eggs, we relied on observing the behavior of the eagle pair at the nest site. For the most part, the female sits horizontally down in the nest while incubating and the male can sometimes be found perching nearby. When the female requires a break, she screams for him to come and relieve her. This behavior gets marked down as incubating eggs. The nests are large and deep, so it's not possible to see how many eggs are in the nest.

On our first visit to the Lake Eufaula area along the river, we witnessed quite the show of the brashness of youth and the new rules set forth around what may have been the young eagle's former home, where it was fed, nurtured and welcome at all times. The young eagle attempted to fly to the nest, where a female was on the nest and the male perched above. The youngster was attacked and chased up and down the river by the male, while the female sat on the nest and screeched. The young bird made several attempts to approach but the male was literally "on its tail" and pursued it up and down the river until the brash youngster figured out that his plate was indeed broken! Some lessons in life are a little harsher than others.

On our first visit to a nest SE of Enid, we watched and watched a huge nest that was beside a muddy county road, but did not see an eagle on the nest. We did see one flying in the area. On the next visit, we found nothing. But...in early May we observed one dark fledgling in the nest. We had to work hard for that! We saw nothing at

first, but finally we saw something move and realized the young eagle was lying flat in the nest. We learned that the nests really do need to be watched for at least 30 minutes. Much of the time two eggs are laid, but only one survives. The Florida pair raised two healthy, robust young, but when we could find a fledgling on our visits, it was usually only one.

Another nest was assigned to us on property that was the family farm of a gentleman who now lives in Perry. On our first visit the farmer met us there, unlocked the gate in the pasture and we drove out to where we could observe the nest without disturbing the eagles, who were accustomed to vehicles in the pasture with the cattle. We watched the pair and they were incubating and later we saw one white fuzzy head. On our last visit we watched the nest for 45 minutes and saw no eagles in the nest or in the vicinity. Hmmmm. But...a few days later, Nancy received an e-mail and a photo of a large, dark fledgling in the nest from the farmer. Must have been siesta time when we were there and obviously we were no threat to anything precious, so nap time went undisturbed.

Another nest was reported along the Cimarron River near Kingfisher on private property of a friend of Nancy's son, Greg. We had to be careful about getting too close to this one, rather than straining to see through a scope. There was at least one baby in that one and we had both adults perched nearby, with one "cussing at us" when we drove back across the pasture.

We learned that most eagle nests are relatively close to water, but that doesn't necessarily mean it must be near a large body of water. Sometimes a creek will do, and that many are near pastures and open areas. Some are in the top of a tree and built on dead limbs. Most are built with at least one view through a gap in the limbs. Cottonwoods are a favorite tree, but we also found a nest in a large pine tree in the Duchess Creek campground not far from Porum. The nest was very close to the public restroom/shower house on the campground and apparently the eagle was not disturbed by visitors. Of course, by our last visit in May, the campground was closed to vehicle traffic due to Covid19.

The few interactions with humans were fun. Meeting the locals in our territory added to the enjoyment of being out in the field watching birds. We met a delightful farming couple and their granddaughter near Hoyt, OK; we met a man who lived in the Whitefield area and told us a few tall tales; we met a woman who lived in the Porum area and was out driving and looking for eagles to photograph; we met a state trooper who said he would have ferried us along the river below the Eufaula Dam had the water not been roaring from below the dam. We also met a couple and their son near the Shawnee area who could see an eagle nest from their dining room window.

I'm sure we could have enjoyed stalking eagles prior to GPS coordinates, scopes, and a new distance measuring photo app called "Dioptra" and Google Earth, but these tools certainly made for a wonderful learning experience. Many times we wished we could get on a boat and float downriver to see around those inaccessible bends, or even to have the capability of flight!! Drones are definitely against all of the rules! Soar on, beautiful eagles! You will hopefully see us next year!

Newly Discovered Subspecies Named for Mark Howery

Wildlife Department biologist Mark Howery was recently honored by Oklahoma Biological Survey staff with their announcement of a newly recognized dragonfly subspecies, the Howery's clubtail. This isolated population of the Ozark clubtail was discovered in 2011 by Victor W. Fazio III along Salt Creek, a tributary of the Arkansas River, in western Osage County. It was later investigated by the [Oklahoma Biological Survey's](#) conservation biologists Michael A. Patten and Brenda D. Smith.

"We're pleased to name this new subspe-



© Victor W. Fazio III, Howery's clubtail

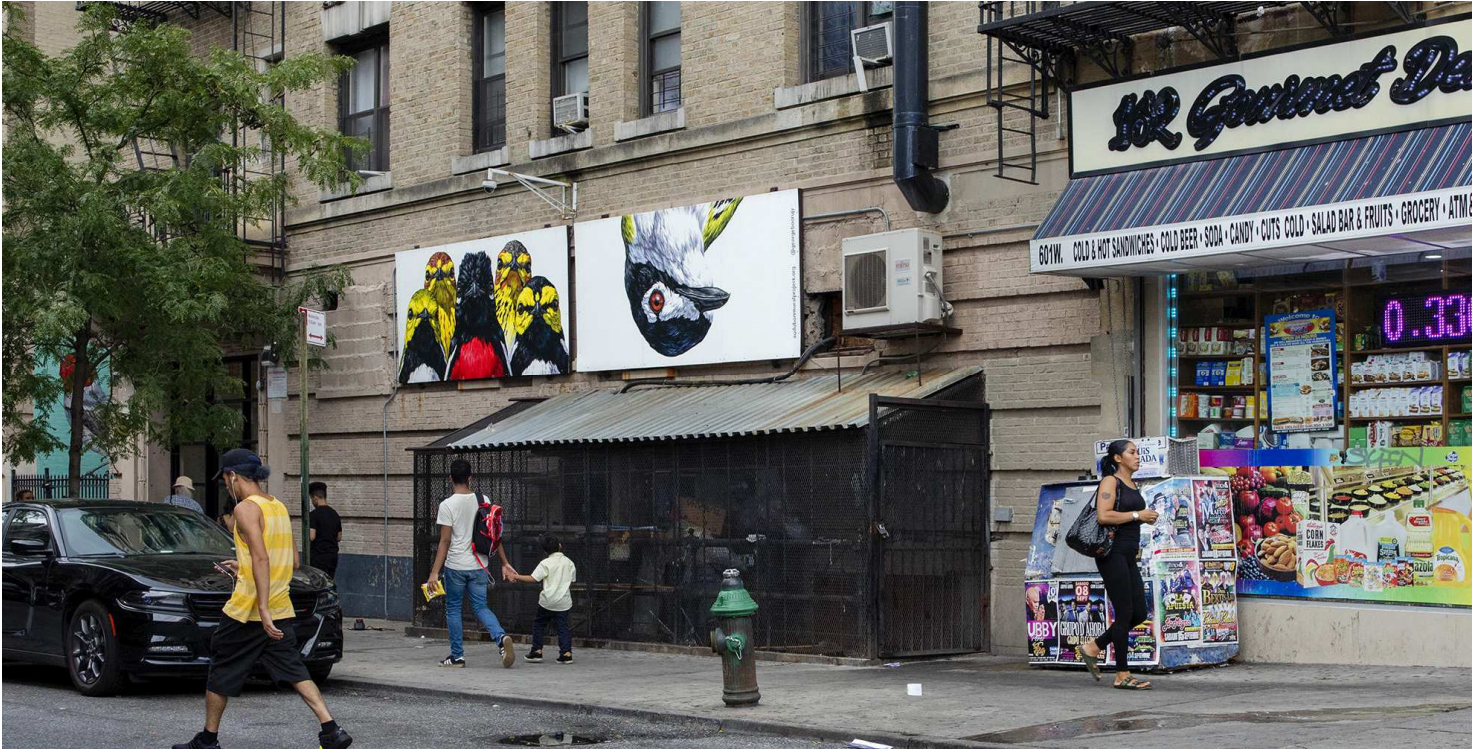
cies in honor of Mark Howery, for his decades of dedication and important contributions to conservation of nongame wildlife in the state of Oklahoma," said Smith.

Howery has been a part of the Wildlife Department's conservation efforts for the past 28 years, focusing on our state's rare, declining and endangered species along with common species that aren't hunted or fished.

"This is a tremendous honor for a biologist and I was shocked to be recognized this way," Howery said. "The Wildlife Department values the full breadth of the wildlife in our state and I am honored to be connected to a species that is unique to our region and that embodies the kind of proactive, collaborative conservation that we strive to achieve through the State Wildlife Grants program."

NYC Mural Project

By Paul J. Baich and Wayne R. Petersen



The Audubon Mural Project is a joint effort between the National Audubon Society and Gitler Gallery to create murals of climate-threatened birds within - and beyond - John James Audubon's old Harlem-based neighborhood in New York City. The project commissions artists to paint dramatic bird-murals to call attention to the climate-driven problems, and the effort has been widely covered in the media, including in *The New York Times*.

So far, almost 120 beautiful murals have been painted out of the proposed 314. They grace brick walls, schoolyard barriers, and metal storefront security-shutters alike. The project will, almost certainly, pick up later, but for now, you can enjoy the creativity of 83 of the existing murals visible online. <https://www.audubon.org/amp>

American Bird Conservancy requests MBPA support

People everywhere are looking to birds during this unprecedented time to find peace and connect with their natural surroundings. With spring migration picking up, the timing couldn't be better to stop, listen, and appreciate birds by sight and sound. In addition to watching birds from your home and neighborhood, you can also [take action to help restore vital protections for migratory birds right now](#).

During the journey to their breeding grounds, migratory birds face many dangers, including habitat loss and collisions with buildings and power lines. As these threats have grown, the landmark law designed to protect migrating birds, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), has been weakened by the Administration. As a result of these harmful policy changes, the 1,093 species covered by MBTA are no longer protected from unintended harm.

Congress is fighting back by advancing new legislation – the Migratory Bird Protection Act (H.R.5552) — which has tremendous potential to help birds by restoring vital, long-time protections afforded by the MBTA that protect migratory birds from incidental harm. The bill is headed for a vote in the House of Representatives, but to see it across the finish line your legislators need to hear from you today.

Ask your U.S. Senators and U.S. Representative to [please co-sponsor the Migratory Bird Protection Act](#) and oppose the Administration's efforts to undermine the MBTA.

Sincerely,

Steve Holmer
Vice President of Policy
American Bird Conservancy

Volunteers needed for second Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas!

Oklahoma's first Breeding Bird Atlas was completed from 1997 to 2001, and was published in 2004 (available from oupres.com). Breeding bird atlases are intensive surveys of birds across a region during the nesting season. They are designed to provide current information about bird distribution in a state (or other region), as well as to provide a baseline for comparisons in the future to see how bird distributions change over time. A typical interval between atlas projects within a region is 20-25 years, so it is time for Oklahoma birders to go forth and scour the state once again, birding with a purpose! The Sutton Avian Research Center is once again leading the effort for Oklahoma's second breeding bird atlas.

If you are new to atlasing, the process is simple. Visit the project web page at suttoncenter.org/atlas and sign up for one or more survey blocks near you. There are 583 survey blocks statewide, each about 3x3 miles in size, and each will need to be surveyed for one season within the next five years.

Once signed up, you will receive a packet of instructions, maps and data forms. Visit your block at least twice during the spring and summer for a total of at least 10 hours, and record the bird species you find, how many of each you find, and record any indications of nesting behavior that you observe for each species. All of this is explained in more detail in the instructions, but the process is mostly birdwatching, with a modest amount of record keeping going along with it.

The blocks to be surveyed were randomly selected, which helps get observers to go birding in many places they may not otherwise visit (not just parks and refuges), painting a more detailed and informative picture of where each species occurs in Oklahoma. Your help completing these surveys gives you an opportunity to contribute to ongoing, long-term monitoring of Oklahoma's nesting birds, and will help document any changes to bird populations here that have occurred over the past two decades. Visit suttoncenter.org/atlas or contact Dan Reinking at dan@suttoncenter.org or 918-336-7778 for more information.

Conservation News

by Ann Sherman

I hope this finds everyone well. Happy might be another matter entirely.

I have had lots of time to contemplate birds. I still have the white winged doves coming to my feeders. The Goldfinches were here a bit longer than usual.

I saw the brightest breeding plumage I have ever seen at the feeder. I was on the lookout for the Cedar Waxwings. They didn't appear. I have an ancient elm in my front yard and they find the early berries irresistible, until this year. I did not see a single one. And then I got an email from Susan and Bill Schmidt and they reported the berries in their yard that are ordinarily consumed by Cedar Waxwings were also untouched. Anyone else with something to report please let me know. annsphoto@cox.net

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oml_w6dwHaY

If you go to this link you will hear the sound of the Murai Batu, the white rumped shama. This bird is a favorite for song contests. The *NYTimes* did a report from Indonesia about the popularity of bird song contests. It starts with a single poacher putting glue on a branch and playing bird songs on an old phone. Soon he has captured 3 birds. He figures in his 15 years as a poacher he has captured 200,000 song birds. There are 1,000 song bird contest held each year. There are organized gangs of poachers who are decimating the bird population. One poacher employs 20 hunters and sends them into Sumatras largest national park. Birds for contests are supposed to be bred from captives...but catching wild birds is much cheaper and people look the other way at the forged documents. A single good singer can be worth as much as a house.

Attending a contest is described as going to a boxing match. Owners think the birds sing better under duress. It's not like hearing bird songs in the forest.

I thought the French eating Ortolan Buntings under napkins worn on their heads was a weird custom....and a shameful one...and now this. Some days I think it's a wonder nature doesn't strike back more often.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/18/world/asia/>

