

Nongame Wildlife Conservation

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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:

Jamie Leal, OKC

Brenda Ellis, Ardmore, OK

Ashlee Mikesell-McCarroll,
Forest Park, OK

Mildred Harrington, Tuttle

Mackenzie VanZee, OKC

Chris Pratt, OKC

The speaker for our May 19 OKC Audubon meeting will be Mark Howery with his presentation on "Nongame Wildlife Conservation in Oklahoma"

Mark is well known as the Senior Wildlife Diversity Biologist for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and has been with the agency for 32 years. He received his Bachelor of Science in Zoology from the University of Oklahoma in 1986, and his Master of Science in Zoology, with an emphasis in ornithology and behavioral ecology, from the University of South Florida in 1991.

In his role as a Wildlife Diversity Biologist, he works with a wide range of nongame fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and small mammals, and most of this is directed towards the conservation of about 80 species that are at-risk of endangerment or extirpation in Oklahoma. Among his responsibilities are coordination of the ODWC's State Wildlife Grants program, monitoring programs for breeding birds, and representing the state's nongame bird resources on the Central Flyway Council. He also is currently the chair of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Wildlife Diversity Committee – a partnership of the 15 states across the southeastern U.S.

Mark resides in Norman, with his wife of 35 years, Kathy, and their two daughters - Alyssa and Jenna. In his spare time, he is involved in volunteer work with the Cleveland County Audubon Society, the City of Norman Animal Shelter, and the Oklahoma Ornithological Society.

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.



President's Perspective

Hello, Birders!

Now in full migration and breeding modes, this is the perfect time to learn and enjoy our regional birds. With such a plethora of avian species, where to start?

One way I've found is to find or explore Hot Spots that may be less familiar or new to us. Different birds choose their ecosystems for a reason.

Wetland created by standing water in pastures and sod farms may be temporary, but can be a surprisingly good source for grassland and wading birds, as well as sandpipers and ducks.

Shorelines host phalaropes, turnstones, peeps, eagles and vultures and a variety of egrets and herons.

Livestock pens and pastures attract egrets, blackbirds, cowbirds, pigeons and doves. Hayfield draw kingbirds, scissortails and meadowlarks.

Roadside perches such as fences, bridges and telephone poles are frequented by raptor, shrikes, dickcissels, swallow and flycatchers.

Woodlands host warbler, oriole, vireos, buntings, flycatchers, waxwings and many of our common breeding birds. Bluebirds, phoebes, chickadees and wrens tend to stay close to the ground rather than in tree canopies.

While foliage can hide our usual views, we can become more familiar with patterns of behavior, movements and standing postures of the sighted birds in their chosen location.

Have fun out there! —*Sharon Henthorn*



Save the Date!

June 7, 2025

OCAS Summer Picnic

Watch your Inbox for time, directions and a link to the sign-up form.

OOS Spring Meeting at Lake Murray State Park

Approximately 50 birders came to the Spring OOS meeting held at Lake Murray State Park on April 11-13. The meeting was held at Group Camp #1 on the north end of the lake near Ardmore. The weekend ended with around 100 species. I hope everyone will consider joining us at the fall meeting sometime in October. Exact dates and location TBD.

How hunting harriers home in on their prey

Date: May 6, 2025 | *Source:* Flinders University

Owls, well adapted to hearing the exact location of prey, have something in common with an unrelated group of raptors -- harriers.

A new study led by Canadian and Australian researchers has found that harriers across the world are able to keep a much better ear out for their next meal than previously thought.

The international team of University of Lethbridge and Flinders University researchers made the discovery when they found unexpected owl-like traits in the ear and brain of several harrier species, such as the Australian spotted harrier.

"Until recently, it was assumed that all their hearing adaptations were unique to owls. However, our study shows that harriers have independently evolved several key adaptations for finding prey by sound," University of Lethbridge PhD student Sara Citron, who led the study, says.

Senior author and PhD supervisor Dr Andrew Iwaniuk, Associate Professor at the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience, says: "Hawks tend to hunt primarily by sight. But unlike other hawks, harriers fly low over tall grass with their beak pointed to the ground. "During this so-called 'quartering flight', they are not only looking for prey, they are also listening for it," he says.

"When you look at this species' face, you can see a distinctive disc-shaped face, which may improve their prey localisation just like owls." The discovery matches older behavioural studies showing that harriers can locate sounds with similar accuracy to owls, but how they did this has been a mystery.

Using specimens from wildlife rehabilitators and museums in Australia and Canada, the team examined the anatomy of the skull and brain of harriers and other closely related hawk species such as the wedge-tailed eagle. They found that, like owls, harriers have enlarged ear openings and two expanded brain regions that are essential for calculating where a sound is coming from.

The team is careful to point out that the auditory system of many owls is far more sophisticated than that of harriers. This explains the ability of some owl species, such as the barn owl, to hunt in complete darkness whereas hawks only hunt during the day.



S. Jenkins Fieldtrip Report

Thursday, May 8, 2025

This is one of my favorite places to bird in Oklahoma. Mother Nature provided a beautiful, DRY morning for our walk.

Yellow-throated and Prothonotary Warblers, Swainson's Thrush, Carolina Chickadee, Red-bellied and Pileated Woodpeckers, Red-eyed, Bell's and White-eyed Vireos, Indigo Bunting, Carolina Wren, Least Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Northern Cardinals got our morning walk off to a great start.

A huge Mulberry tree laden with berries proved to be very popular by attracting Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, a large flock of Cedar Waxwings, American Goldfinch and a Brown Thrasher.



Raptors included Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, Turkey Vultures and a rarely seen Black Vulture. Eastern and Western Kingbirds, Dickcissels, Chipping and Lark Sparrows, Scissortail Flycatchers, Painted Bunting, Eastern Bluebirds and a Yellow-breasted Chat is a hard act to follow!!

The woods were filled with bird songs, many of which I had not heard in a year. This area was flooded during the recent monsoon season and in addition to the beautiful birds, there were numerous MOSQUITOES for them to eat.

The two-hour walk produced 51 species.



Field Trip Report

Mollie Spencer Farm, Yukon, OK
Saturday, May 3rd.

We had another successful and fun outing to the farm this morning with 26 potential new birders. Mother Nature decided to let us dry out a bit so she sent a clear, blue sky and calm wind.

A few highlights included Red-eyed and White-eyed Vireos, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Chipping and Clay-colored Sparrows, Green Heron, Mississippi Kite, Cedar-waxwings, Orange-crowned and Nashville Warblers, Least Flycatcher, Painted Bunting, Cooper's Hawk, Great Crested Flycatcher, Fish Crow, Swainson's Thrush and White-winged Dove.

Our collective lists tallied 31 species for our morning walk.

Many thanks to Larry Mays and Cole Penning for their help with this large group.

Refreshments

Refreshment volunteers for the May 19 OCAS meeting:

Chris Eckart, Cole Penning, Steve Davis, Mary Lane, Cheryl Allen and Randy Henthorn

Minutes of the OKC Audubon Society Meeting April 21, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Vice President Cathy Chernausek.

Attendance: 25 members, including 8 guests

Treasurer's Report: Nancy Vicars presented the report, which was approved as read. Cash on hand: \$9,419.28.

March minutes were read and approved.

Field Trip Results:

The March 22nd field trip to Mitch Park was cancelled due to inclement weather. Hal Yokum announced that a Black-throated Hummingbird has been reported.

The April 16th to Hackberry Flats reported 60 species seen. Larry Mays reported the prize sighting was a Peregrine Falcon.

Upcoming Field Trips:

Wed, April 30 @ 8:30 AM - Nancy Vicars will lead at South Jenkins Road, Norman, OK.

Sat, May 3 @ 7:30 AM - Nancy Vicars needs volunteers to lead the public on our annual birding tour of Molly Spencer Farms in Yukon, OK.

Warren Harden passed around a large spikey plant fruit/cone which stumped everyone but Bob Holbrook who recognized it from travels in Chile as being from a Monkey Puzzle Tree.

Terry Underhill volunteered to again host the club picnic at her home. The assembly voted to hold it on Saturday, June 7th.

A replacement for Nadine Varner as refreshment chair was called for, and Cheryl Allen graciously volunteered.

Nancy Vicars gave a brief primer on the joys and responsibilities of participating in Bird Breeding Surveys.

Steve Kennard, Director of Environmental Permitting at Natural Renewable Solutions gave a most informative and enlightening lecture on the many activities of that organization to minimize any negative effects on wildlife.

Next meeting will be Monday, May 19, 2025.
—Cole Penning, Secretary

Citizen Science Report

by Sharon Henthorn

This month begins the USGS Breeding Bird Survey and many routes are still available through July 18. Learn the local birds that are expected on your route during your chosen week by sight and sound; then choose a route and enroll.

Your first few seasons may miss some species but as you become more familiar each year will become more productive and data more useful.

The main requirements are willingness to make a long-term commitment, having ID skills of both sight and sound, and avoidance of identifying birds incorrectly. Many routes have been neglected for years, so inadequate data is rather than no data.

I am returning to the Choctaw route after an absence of 12 years when no one has chosen to do this closest route to OKC. Some routes are becoming vacant due to surveyor attrition, so help keep this data gathering alive.



ONPS presents a tour of NW OKC Yards and vendors showcasing Oklahoma Native Plants. One of the Tour Yards will be hosted by Steve Davis and Mary Lane

Get inspired on how Oklahoma Native Plants can be incorporated into your landscape AND shop the vendors selling these hard to find species!

Each yard will have one or more native plant vendors on site.

Food Trucks, additional vendors and organizations will be setup at Rollingwood Park, 6304 N Harvard Ave.