

Birds of Lake Hefner and Silver Lake

Officers

| | |
|------------------|--|
| President | Cole Penning |
| Vice President | Cathy Chernausek & John Eagleston |
| Secretary | Sharon Henthorn |
| Treasurer | Nancy Vicars |
| Parliament | Vacant |
| Programs | Warren Harden |
| Field Trips | Nancy Vicars Sharon Henthorn Hal Yocum Bob Holbrook |
| Newsletter | Patricia Velte |
| Publicity | Doug Eide |
| Historian | Vacant |
| Refreshments | Cheryl Allen |
| Webmaster | Patricia Velte |
| Public Relations | Terri Underhill |

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

Welcome

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes:

Roady Hollingsworth, OKC

Shirley VanDyke, Freeport, PA

Joseph & Jean Rohrbach,
Nichols Hills

The speaker for our May 18 OKC Audubon meeting will be Kathleen Tucker talking about and showing her photographs of the “Birds of Lake Hefner and Silver Lake.” Kathleen will present a photographic collection of birds she has photographed within this limited area. The presentation will be both entertaining and educational. Photographs will include some comparisons between similar species, key identifiers for some, and humorous moments for others.

Kathleen is a native of Oklahoma prior to being a 30-year resident of San Diego, CA.

Her professional career includes non-profit executive, technology innovator and executive, social entrepreneur, law enforcement professional, and author. As an author, prior works include: consulting with Tom Carter (Reba, My Story) on first-hand details of the plane crash that killed members of Reba McEntire’s band; writing Chapter 5 of the national bestseller Footsteps of the Fearless as an inspirational and motivational account of when Kathleen was kidnapped in Africa while on a humanitarian mission; authoring two memoirs that are in the United States Library of Congress (one is the memoir of Mary Ellen Withrow, the 40th Treasurer of the United States).



© Kathleen Tucker

In her law enforcement career, she is the first woman to receive the American Legion Medal for Heroism and is the recipient of a Congressional Certificate of Achievement bestowed on her by the United States House of Representatives in honor of her valor and outstanding dedication to her community.

Kathleen travels throughout the world and enjoys photographing diverse wildlife. Two of her photographs were published in the Dec 15, 2019, Sunday Oklahoman article: Christmas comes early for Oklahoma City birders.

Come out and enjoy the camaraderie and bring a friend. 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.

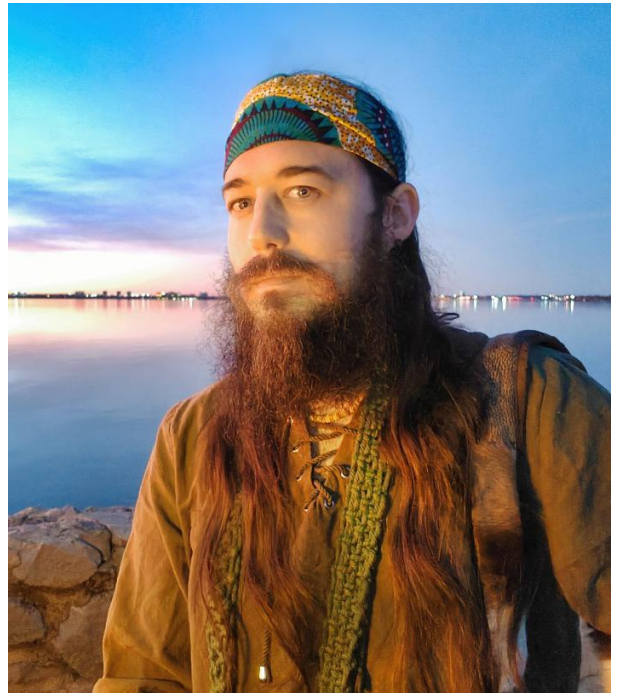
Meeting Location:

Our meetings are held at the Will Rogers Garden center, located at the intersection of NW 36th Street and I-44.

President's Perspective

A week ago, a friend gifted me a video game called *Flock Up* on the Steam store. She is not a birder herself, but she knows that I am and thought it might be something I would enjoy. We have now played together quite a few times, and it has been an absolute blast. She has loved seeking out each species and putting up with my random facts or stories about the birds we found. Since she is from Europe, many of the species in the game are completely new to her as well, which has made exploring them together even more fun.

The game is fairly simple in concept, but it is essentially a multiplayer birding simulator featuring around 100 common North American bird species spread across a variety of habitats and biomes. Players photograph birds to earn money, which can then be used to unlock better binoculars, camera upgrades, and various tools like bird seed and calls to help attract birds for closer views and better photographs. As players earn stars by capturing better pictures of each bird in various poses, they can unlock additional biomes and the birds that belong there. The gameplay captures a lot of the excitement and collectability that makes real-world birding so engaging.



Despite its minimalistic art style, I was consistently able to identify the species visually, and many of the behaviors felt surprisingly authentic. What impressed me most were the bird vocalizations throughout the game. My friend first mentioned the unusual way they were created, and I later watched a video by the game developers demonstrating the process. Since most bird recordings found online are copyrighted, they slowed down real bird calls, imitated the slowed versions with their own voices, and then sped the recordings back up again. Remarkably, the final results sound very close to the real birds and are surprisingly accurate.

If you are a gamer, or know someone in your life who enjoys video games, I would definitely recommend giving *Flock Up* a try. It combines the fun of exploration and collecting with many of the same thrills that make birding so rewarding in the real world.

Cole Penning
President, OKC Audubon

Field Trip Report: Mollie Spencer Farm, Yukon, OK on Saturday, May 2.

We had another successful and fun outing to the farm this morning with 34 potential new birders.

Mother Nature gave us a clear, blue sky and calm wind. A few highlights included Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Chipping Sparrows, Mississippi Kites (mating), Least and Great-crested Flycatchers, Swainson's Thrush, Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers, Brown Thrasher, Northern Cardinal, Eastern Phoebe. The biggest surprise was a Black-bellied Whistling Duck!!

Our collective lists tallied 31 species for the morning walk.

Many thanks to Hal Yocum, John Eagleston and Cathy Chernauck for their help with this large group.



Bird of the Month: Bay-breasted Warbler

By Grace Huffman

May is peak craziness when it comes to migration. The last of the shorebirds are moving through and the peak of songbirds arrives. You never know what is going to show up! Early May is often the best time for warblers, and it proved to be true this year when I photographed this Bay-breasted Warbler at Red Slough in McCurtain County earlier this month. This species typically migrates to our east, so any sighting of this bird in Oklahoma is special.

Breeding males are striking in the spring, with the namesake coloring on the chest, down the flanks, and on the head. A black mask and pale sides to the neck complete the look. The rest of the bird is grayish with 2 white

wing bars. Females and nonbreeding males are much more cryptic, with more limited rusty coloring on the flanks (or lacking completely for a young female) with a yellowish cast overall, resembling fall Blackpoll Warblers. Blackpolls will always have yellow soles of their feet though, while Bay-breasted has dark feet.

Bay-breasted Warblers are long distance migrants, wintering in Central and northern South America, while breeding in Canada as well the northern US from Minnesota to Maine. The females are largely responsible for building the nest rather low in dense coniferous trees (usually around 16ft high), although the male helps some. Other species they share breeding habitat with may nest as high as 80ft!

Bay-breasted Warblers are listed as low concern for conservation, but because they are uncommon and nest in largely remote areas, their population is difficult to track. They also specialize in eating spruce budworms, so their population rises and falls with the abundance of their favorite summer food. However, like many birds they are still considered to be in decline overall, with habitat loss and pesticide use being factors. Best of luck as you look for warblers to finish out the month!



Bay-breasted Warbler © Grace Huffman

References: allaboutbirds.org

Minutes of the OKC Audubon Society Meeting April 20, 2026

Meeting was called to order by club president Cole Penning. Minutes of the March meeting were read and approved. No new or old business is recorded from that meeting.

Treasurer Nancy Vicars reported \$10,402.39 in the bank account.

Cheryl Allen passed around a signup list for upcoming snacks and drinks for May and June.

Upcoming field trips and conferences are recorded. A field trip to South Jenkins Rd near Norman will be April 28.

Oklahoma Ornithologic Society has its spring meeting at Idabel from May 1-3 with field trips to Red Slough and other spots and educational papers.

May 2nd will be an Audubon-guided tour at Mollie Spencer Farm in Yukon.

Trip to Wichita Mountains is scheduled May 4th on a Monday.

There was discussion of a request by the First Unitarian Church for a presentation on May 5th but no volunteers responded.

Saturday June 20 is the date for our annual picnic at Terri Underhill's home north of Edmond.

Cathy Chernausek presented information for renewing our Adopt-a-Park commitment for cleanup around Prairie Dog Point at Lake Hefner. This had expired years ago but a sign remains in the area. No decision was made.

After a snack break, Dr. Rachel Jones spoke about research on paleobotanical core specimens in determining past changes in the ecology of the southern US and its variations over time as Native American settlements developed.

Next meeting will be Monday May 18th at 7-9 pm at the Will Rogers Park Garden Exposition Building. Sharon Henthorn, club secretary

After-Action Report: May 4th Field Trip to the Wichita Mountains

by Neil Garrison

I was one of the nine people that attended this event. Here is a short summary of my impressions from that outing.

HARLEQUIN DUCK

Nope ... we didn't see one.

Ha! ... but, seriously ... trip participant, Nancy Vicars, mused as to why there is no such thing as a Harlequin Sparrow. The distinctive facial pattern on the Lark Sparrows (that we did see on this trip) sure seem to bear a strong resemblance to what you see on the face of a Harlequin Duck. ...we're just saying!



YOU CAN'T TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS

.....well, yeah ... yeah, you can! I had never seen how a laser pointer can be used to help in pointing out the location of a wild bird that is hiding in dense tree foliage. (...again: thanks to Nancy Vicars for demonstrating this ingenious use of a high-tech tool)

CAROLINA WRENS ... AS LARGE AS WILD TURKEYS!

No joke! How is it that these pip-squeak feathered sprites can belt out a song that is so loud and explosive?

BOBWHITE QUAIL

It was very, very encouraging to hear such an abundance of Bobwhite Quail courtship/territorial calls all day long on our field trip. Many other areas in Oklahoma have experienced significant population declines in this species.

EXPLOSION IN A PAINT FACTORY

I have heard that amusing description as it is applied to the extremely colorful plumage of the PAINTED BUNTINGS. During this field trip, we were almost never out of range of the voice of Painted Buntings (...in those portions of the Refuge where there were trees....). That was definitely a highlight of this field trip. We were fortunate to get good, long looks of several adult male Painted Buntings. That was a definite bonus!

I AM NO SPRING CHICKEN

I have lived long enough to take 75 trips around the sun. I started birding back in my high school years. Despite that long tenure, I had no earthly idea that a bird called the Cave Swallow even existed! This old dog learned a new trick today! On this field trip, we got some close-up looks at this fascinating bird.

Fun Facts about the American Goldfinch

The American Goldfinch is one of North America's most cheerful backyard birds, famous for the male's bright yellow summer plumage. In Audubon's "10 Fun Facts About the American Goldfinch," the bird is highlighted as a fascinating seed specialist with unusual behaviors and adaptations.

1. *****Almost entirely vegetarian*****

Unlike most songbirds, American Goldfinches feed their young mostly seeds rather than insects.

2. *****Brown-headed Cowbirds usually fail in their nests*****

Cowbird chicks need insects to survive, so they often die when raised by goldfinches on a seed-only diet.

3. *****They love thistle and Nyjer seeds*****

Their favorite food is thistle seed, and they readily visit feeders stocked with Nyjer seed.

4. *****They nest later than most songbirds*****

Goldfinches typically breed in July and August when thistle seeds are plentiful.

5. *****Their flight call sounds like "po-ta-to-chip"******

Their bouncy flight is accompanied by a distinctive four-syllable call.

6. *****Mated pairs develop similar calls*****

Researchers believe matching calls help partners recognize each other in flocks.

7. *****Males molt twice a year*****

Bright yellow in spring and summer, they turn dull brown in fall and winter.

8. *****Their beaks change color too*****

During breeding season, both sexes have orange bills that fade to gray in winter.

9. *****They are the state bird of three states*****

New Jersey, Iowa, and Washington all honor the species under different names.

10. *****Some migrate to avoid severe cold*****

Northern birds move south, often avoiding areas where January temperatures average below 0°F.

[Audubon's article](#) shows that these tiny "drops of sunshine" are much more remarkable than their appearance suggests.



Our Annual Summer Picnic, hosted by Terri Underhill, will be held on June 20th at Terri's home in North Edmond. Information will be sent in early June.

Upcoming Field Trip

On Saturday, May 30, Sharon Henthorn will be leading a field trip through [Northeast Park at Zoo Lake in OKC.](#)

The trip will begin by the main parking lot at 8AM. Enter the park from east of the Zoo across the bridge. Turn right on Grand Blvd and immediately right again to enter the park.



As a regular visitor to this local birding hot spot, Sharon has recently IDed these birds among 35-40 species/trip. All these listed are from the past month.

Greater Roadrunner
Little Blue Heron
Great-crested Flycatcher
Northern Yellow Warbler
Blue-headed Vireo
Belted Kingfisher
Least Flycatcher
Painted Bunting
Fish Crow
Cedar Waxwing

Black-crowned Night Heron
Blackpoll Warbler
Northern House Wren
Eastern Kingbird
Red-eyed Vireo
Baltimore Oriole
White-crowned Sparrow
Chipping Sparrow
Red-shouldered Hawk

You can contact Sharon by phone or text at 405-778-9662 for updates or questions.

Field Trip Report: South Jenkins in Norman

This fieldtrip is one of my favorites and it never disappoints. Mother Nature provided cool, cloudy skies and fairly calm winds this morning.

A White-eyed Vireo was the first heard bird of our morning and was soon joined by Red-eyed Vireos, Indigo Buntings, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Northern Cardinals, Great-crested Flycatcher, Carolina Wren and Tufted Titmouse.



A mulberry tree full of ripe fruit provided good looks at a flock of Cedar Waxwings and a Swainson's Thrush. A pair of Blue Grosbeaks and a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak went right to the top of our list!!

American Goldfinch (in full breeding plumage), Lincoln's and Chipping Sparrows, Eastern Bluebird, Barn and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, an Orchard Oriole and a pair of Northern Yellow Warblers were found.



About 9:30 we began to hear rumbling thunder in the distance soon to be followed to by lightning and very loud thunder. As we beat feet back to our cars along came the rain.

Oh well, this is Oklahoma and we are somewhat accustomed or should be to rapid changing weather.

Thanks again to Dick Gunn for leading us on a beautiful and successful trip to one of the [top birding HOT spots in Central Oklahoma](#).

Field Trip Report: Wichita Mnts. Wildlife Refuge

This fieldtrip never disappoints. One of the first birds heard was a Bobwhite Quail and we continued to hear them at almost every stop. It is so refreshing to once again find a good population of this very scarce species in Oklahoma.

The Vireos were in good supply including Black-capped, Red and White-eyed and Warbling. Summer Tanager, Swainson's Thrush, Eastern Bluebird, Great-crested Flycatcher, Painted Bunting, White-breasted Nuthatch, Dickcissel and Orange-crowned Warbler were found. Sparrow species included Rufous-crowned, Lark and Chipping. Both Black-chinned and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Mississippi Kites, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks and Red-headed & Red-breasted Woodpeckers were also found.

If you need to see Cave Swallows, you will not find an easier place than the carport at the Ferguson House on the road near the Visitor Center.

We spent time waiting for the nesting Zone-tailed Hawk to make an entrance but it was a no-show today. A big surprise was finding an Inca Dove in the Sunset Picnic area.

A little icing on the cake was a Greater Roadrunner running across the road on our way home.

Refreshments

Refreshment volunteers for the
May 18, 2026 meeting:

Snacks: Chris Eckart, Nancy Vicars, Pilar Escobar, and Jeanne Mather.

Ice & Drinks: John Eagleston & Cathy Chernausek