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

**New Member:**

Patrick McGaugh, Edmond

**Welcome back:**

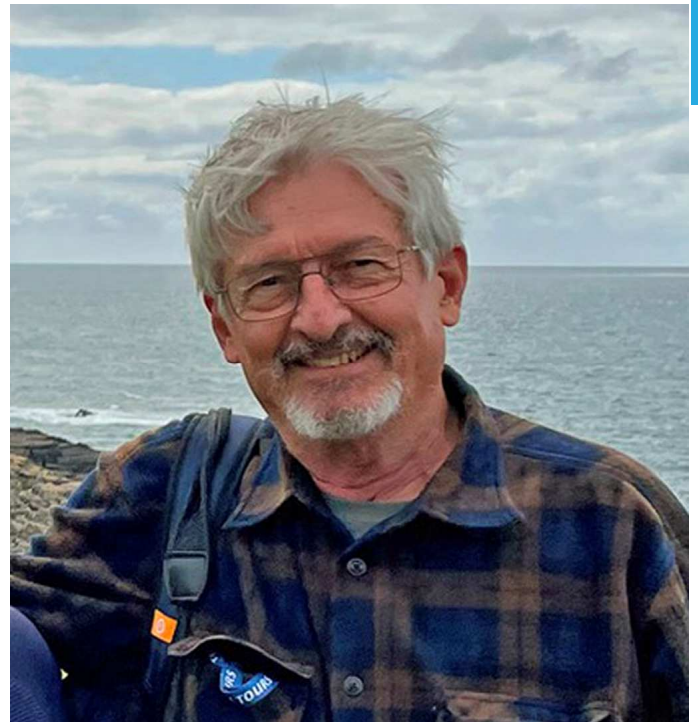
Deanne Hardy, OKC

Jacob Crissup, OKC

# Those Darn Winter Sparrows

**The speaker for our November 20 meeting will be member Joe Grzybowski**

Among the groups of birds that can create identification dilemmas are the sparrows. While identification of many can become second nature, getting there can be a trick... or two...or three. The November program will be presented to help birders learn to, or even share their abilities, to identify sparrows that might be observed on the Christmas Bird Count... even longspurs. The program will be designed around creating some insights into not only learning the characteristics for species in this group, but into the eyes-on and “mental-gymnastic” processes for identifying them.



Joe Grzybowski has long-standing experience in birding central Oklahoma. Chasing down sparrows and longspurs was part of his research, publications and interest for many years. Retired, he is still a Research Associate with the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History. His personal experiences began in western New York where his mentors were individuals like Harold Axtell and Stephen Eaton. Dr. Axtell gave Joe a very structured perspective on making bird identifications, and Dr. Eaton broadened that to include bird songs and calls—expanding his horizon on what was possible for even calls before the electronics of bird recordings and apps were developed. Joe continued George Sutton’s record-keeping pattern with the formation of the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee, and has written accounts on the birds of the Southern Great Plains for *American Birds*, now *North American Birds*, since the late 1980’s. He is also reviewer for eBird covering Oklahoma. He is also a Fellow in the American Ornithological Society.

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

My old birding buddy says: "They can take everything away from me, but they can't take my birding lists."

I don't get out near as often as I'd like to just do a strictly birding trip. In fact I've not gotten to do an International trip now for several years—retirement funds tend to interfere with those ideas/dreams. But I do still have all my bird guide books that are full of notations and I still have my lists on my computer. On occasion I enjoy just perusing through the lists or grabbing one of those well worn guides and remembering.

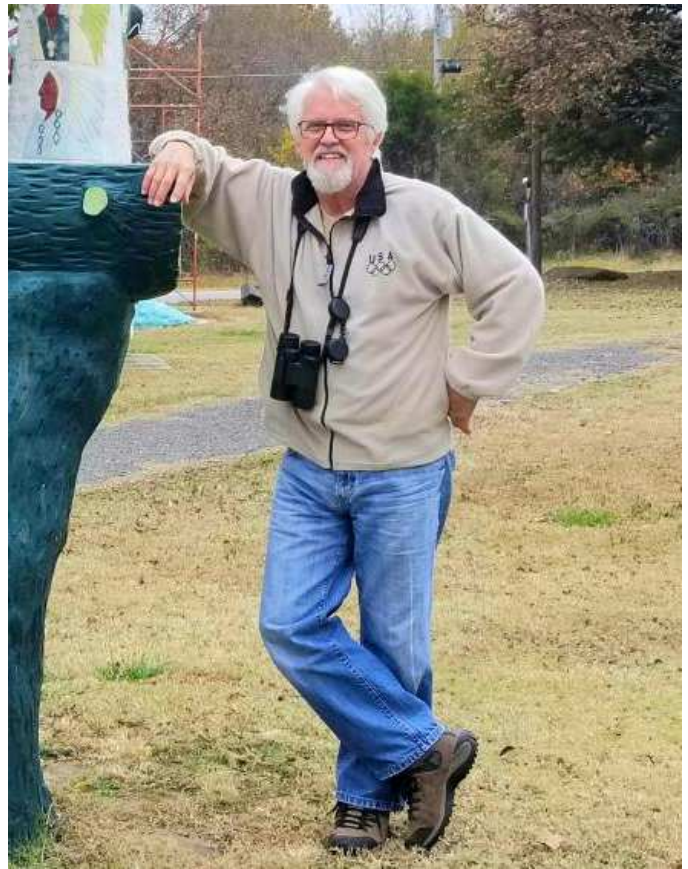
Now that it's November already and Thanksgiving is coming up next week, I thought about where I was during Thanksgivings past. I see by my lists that back in '94 I had the privilege of spending these days between Mozambique and South Africa. (I don't suppose my family was too pleased with my absence, but the birding was awesome!) My *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa* is near the point of falling apart. During those years, I was traveling to the countries of Southern Africa several times

a year mostly focusing on relief work projects in Mozambique and using South Africa as a breath of fresh air. My Mozambique list stands at 298 and my South Africa list at 324. My book has 540 species checked off from the 888 that are theoretically seen in that region.

But back to the days of Thanksgiving...that year ('94). I got to spend the days just before Thanksgiving in Kruger National Park with friends Pierre VanHeerden and Chris Botha, both guys avid birders and nature lovers in general. Pierre's Mercedes Benz was equipped with stuff I'd never seen in a car before, stuff that was not yet available here in the US.

It would take several pages for me to tell all the critters we saw those days, all the mammals, reptiles, and BIRDS, and happenings. I see on my list, birds seen at Satara Camp and the nearby pans, like the Saddle-billed Stork, Knob-billed Duck, Red-crested Korhaan and its crazy looping nuptial flight, the tiny Kurrichane Buttonquail that looked like a bit of dirt clod in the road, several different vultures at a lion-kill buffalo (that was an experience that would take several minutes/pages to tell). Then we get into stuff like the Scimitar-billed Woodhoopoe, Purple Roller, Plum-colored Starling... and well, you get the picture...as I turn the pages and see the birds again, yes, memories come floating back but it was already 29 years ago; 29 more Thanksgivings have come and gone, and I think, "Was I really there once upon a time? Did I really see those birds?" There has been so much "water under the bridge" since those days it seems a bit surreal. Yet, the book is worn down, the checkmarks are there, the list has the dates. It must have been. Life can indeed take everything from me but it can't take my lists. One day, even memory might fail me, but I still have my lists. For all that and way so much more, I have soooo much to be thankful for this and every Thanksgiving Day.

*Bob Holbrook*  
*President*





## Bird of the Month: Pine Siskin

By Grace Huffman

As the weather gets colder and the days get shorter, the winter birds are settling in. One such bird that seems to be making a very strong return this winter is the Pine Siskin.

Pine Siskin are small finches, about the size of a goldfinch. They look very similar to our year-

round House Finches as they are brown and streaky all over. They are smaller than House Finches though, with a smaller and more pointed bill. Siskins also have yellow in the wings, much more visible in the males but still present in the females. When I am out walking I often hear them more than I see them, with their laser-like “ti-dew” calls high overhead.

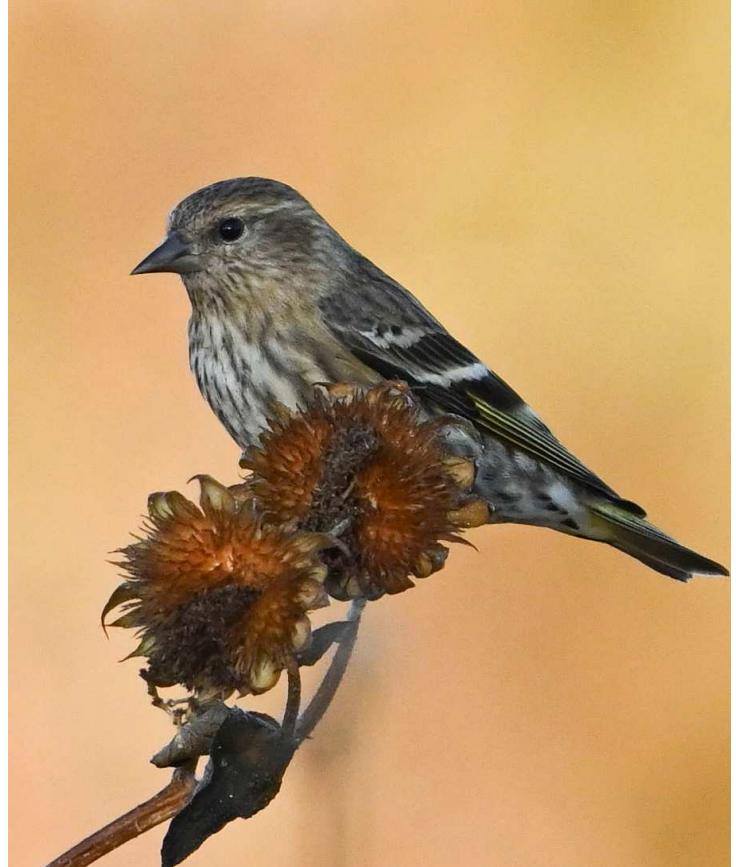
These birds can be found from Alaska and Canada south to Mexico, but much of that range is winter only, and they can be inconsistent from year to year as they are a very nomadic species. As a result, some years are huge “irruption” years where many come south, and other years you might barely find any at all in the winter.

Where they breed, female siskins will build a nest, usually in a conifer tree, out of twigs, grass, etc. The inside is lined with mud, softer materials like moss and fur, helping to make sure those eggs stay nice and warm. The male may help some, but the female does the bulk of the work. Sometimes she finishes the nest well in advance of starting to lay eggs.

Here in Oklahoma, they might come by and visit your feeders while they are here for the winter. They love thistle and sunflower stalks, like the one I photographed here.

It’s hard to estimate the population of Pine Siskins since they are so nomadic, but they are considered to be in steep decline. Pesticides, loss of habitat, even cyanide used in gold mining are a few of the reasons for their decline. Thankfully they are still fairly common and hopefully you will get to see some this winter!

References: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org)



Pine Siskin © Grace Huffman

# Recorder's Report

## October 2023

One of the big birding stories this month is multiple sightings of American Flamingos in places that don't normally see Flamingos! There were sightings in 11 states including Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. The closest to Oklahoma was last reported on the 9<sup>th</sup> in Kansas. Hurricane Idalia seems to have scattered American Flamingos in some unlikely places! Bird-Cast called it American Flamingo madness.



Guyla Mayo

Maybe you've been following the American Ornithological Society's announcement to rename eponymous birds but may have missed that Cattle Egret was been changed to Eastern and Western Cattle Egret. Here in the USA we have the Western variety. Eastern Cattle Egrets occur in southern and southeast Asia, New Zealand and Australia.

October 2023 saw 189 species reported in central Oklahoma.

## October Sightings

### Oklahoma County

Kentucky Warbler 1<sup>st</sup>  
Myriad Gardens Hal Y

Swamp Sparrow 1<sup>st</sup>  
Crystal Lake Grace H and Brian M

Sabine Gull 4<sup>th</sup>  
Lake Hefner Devin B

Palm Warbler 5<sup>th</sup>  
Lake Hefner Grace H

Piping Plover 5<sup>th</sup>  
Lake Hefner Grace H

Wilson's Warbler 5<sup>th</sup>  
Myriad Gardens Zach D

Pine Warbler 6<sup>th</sup>  
Choctaw Creek Park Matt R

Summer Tanager 9<sup>th</sup>  
Myriad Gardens Zach D

Wood Duck 9<sup>th</sup>  
Zoo Lake Sharon H

Little Gull 11<sup>th</sup>  
Lake Hefner PDP Jimmy W, Steve S

Iceland Gull 15<sup>th</sup>  
Stars and Stripes Chase M

Eastern Towhee 27<sup>th</sup>  
Bluff Creek Trails Brian M, Grace H

Ruby-throated Humming. 30<sup>th</sup>  
Topeka Ln and Santa Fe Dr Marion H

### Canadian County

Marsh Wren 15<sup>th</sup>  
Lake Overholser Cole P

Orange-crowned Warbler 18<sup>th</sup>  
Stinchcomb Jason L

Nashville Warbler 18<sup>th</sup>  
Stinchcomb Jason L

### Payne County

Warbling Vireo 1<sup>st</sup>  
Botanic Garden OSU Hande A and Michael R

Rusty Blackbird 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Lake Sanborn Scott L

Sabine Gull 7<sup>th</sup>  
Sooner Lake Landon N

Ladder-backed Woodpecker 7<sup>th</sup>  
Sooner Lake Landon N

Yellow-throated Warbler 13<sup>th</sup>  
Lake Carl Blackwell Lucas B

Common Poorwill 15<sup>th</sup>  
OSU Landon N, Lucas B, Tim O, Riley L, Mike Y, Alex H, Riley L

Rock Wren 21<sup>st</sup>  
Lake Carl Blackwell Michael R

Black-throated Gr. Warbler 27<sup>th</sup>  
OSU Botanic Garden Lucas B

## Cleveland County

White-faced Ibis 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Lake Thunderbird Joe G

Snowy Egret 6<sup>th</sup>  
Lake Thunderbird Joe G

Tree Swallow 12<sup>th</sup>  
Lake Thunderbird Ken B

Ruby-throated Humming. 16<sup>th</sup>  
Sutton Yard Rosario D

Eastern Screech Owl 23<sup>rd</sup>  
WildCare Ok Jesse P

## Logan County

Greater Yellowlegs 8<sup>th</sup>  
Crescent George Z

White-faced Ibis 8<sup>th</sup>  
Crescent George Z

## Lincoln County

Short-eared Owl 31<sup>st</sup>  
Chandler Sarah C

## Garvin County

Loggerhead Shrike 20<sup>th</sup>  
USAO Habitat Area Jason S

Information for this report was gathered from eBird, ABA Birding News, Facebook and Oklahoma List Serve. Any questions, comments or corrections should be referred to me at [guyla1mae@gmail.com](mailto:guyla1mae@gmail.com).

## Refreshments

Refreshment Volunteers for Nov. 20, 2023:

Snacks: Sharon Henthorn, Nancy Vicars, Jeanne Mather and Bob Holbrook.

Ice/drinks: Randy Henthorn.

# Field Trip Reports

## Little Sit

By Jimmy Woodard

On Sunday, October 8, we held the annual OKC Audubon "Little Sit" at our house in Midwest City. There were 16 participants: Gayle Snider, Hal Yocum, Don Maas, Jerry Vanbebber, Nancy Vicars, Larry Mays, Marion Homier, John Cleal, Steve Davis, Mary Lane, Steve Stone, Deborah Langley, Mark Langley, John Sterling, Nadine Varner and Jimmy Woodard.

The weather began cool and calm but the wind picked up from the south mid-morning and temps hit the mid-70's later in the day.

We noted 44 species during the day as we stayed in the yard, roamed the neighborhood and walked a nearby field. Some of the species found were Turkey, White-faced Ibis, Black Vulture, Osprey, Mississippi Kite, Harrier, both accipiters, Chimney Swift, Eastern Phoebe, Fish Crow and Indigo Bunting.

Everyone brought food and drink. We enjoyed two kinds of chili, kimchi, salads, cornbread, and several kinds of desserts.

We all enjoyed the birds, friendship and food for a fun day.

## Mollie Spencer Farm

By Nancy Vicars

Outings to the Mollie Spencer farm are scheduled by their program manager. They are advertised to the general public as a means to introduce folks to the hobby of birding. Birding 101 so to speak.

Saturday, November 4th was a delightful morning for a walk around the farm. I always start out explaining, it is called Bird Watching but Listening is, in my opinion, just as important. Your ears tell you where to start watching!

There were a few winter migrants present including one of my all time favorites, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. I had just pointed out the trunk of an apple tree and explained what bird had made these perfect rows of sap wells. Five minutes later the bird made his appearance for all to behold.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Rufous-sided Towhee, Eastern Phoebe, Brown Thrasher, Northern Cardinal, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker and a Pied-billed Grebe were nice additions to our list. The scolding calls of Blue Jays and American Robins notified us of the presence of a Red-shouldered Hawk and a Cooper's Hawk. A big miss was NO winter sparrows were seen.

We managed to tally 20 species by sight and sound.

# Minutes of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society Meeting

October 16, 2023  
By Patti Muzny, Secretary

President Bob Holbrook opened the meeting at 7:00 PM at the Will Rogers Garden Center. The treasurer's report was presented by Nancy Vicars. Cash on hand as of October 16, 2023 was \$8,012.97. The minutes of the September 18, 2023 meeting were approved **as read** by Patti Muzny, since the minutes were not submitted in time to make the newsletter editor's deadline.

The next meeting is scheduled to be held at the Will Rogers Garden Center on Monday, November 20, 2023 at 7:00 PM.

There were 38 members and guests present. One visitor and one new member were welcomed.

Patti High once again made the snack sign-up sheet available for upcoming meetings and thanked members who have volunteered to provide refreshments for past meetings.

Old Business: Bob Holbrook introduced the Club's new tote bag, which will cost around \$30 and also a newly designed coffee mug.

Nancy Vicars reported that Field Trips are tentatively planned, but still "up in the air" at this time due to unpredictable weather. First field trip is scheduled for Salt Plains on October 28<sup>th</sup> and the next will be Molly Spencer Farm in Yukon on November 4<sup>th</sup>. This field trip is advertised to the public and Nancy is asking for volunteers to help with leading the group. Also on November 4<sup>th</sup>, Warren Harden will lead a field trip to an eagle aviary in Shawnee.

Jimmy Woodard and Nadine Varner hosted their "Little Sit" at their Midwest City home, although only 44 species were tallied. There were no migrants, but the food was good, as reported by Jimmy.

There was no Conservation report.

Oklahoma has been the source of several interesting species during this migration. Among the more interesting were: Pomeranian Jaeger and Brown Booby in southern Oklahoma, American Bittern at the Cofferdam, Wilson's Snipe and Little Gull. The area of Cottonwood Springs in Kansas enticed Hal Yocum to travel there for a sighting of a Flamingo.

## New Business:

A nominating committee was formed, consisting of the following members: Jimmy Woodard, Steve Stone and Steve Davis.

The speaker for our November 20th OKC Audubon meeting will be Dr. Joe Grzybowski, who will enlighten members with timely tips for identifying winter sparrows.

## Louisiana Gives Oklahoma's Endangered Woodpecker Population a Boost

Oklahoma's last remaining population of federally endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers grew by 12 birds this fall thanks to a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker © All About Birds

Twelve birds, six males and six females, were relocated from a source population at the Kisatchie National Forest near Pineville, Louisiana to the McCurtain County Wilderness Area and the adjacent Ouachita National Forest in southeastern Oklahoma. The hope is the birds will remain in the area and contribute to Oklahoma's population of less than 50 birds.

The Kisatchie National Forest's Red-cockaded Woodpecker population is estimated at 700 birds, and Forest Service staff maintain at least 250 active clusters for the communal birds. The Kisatchie also served as a source population for Oklahoma in 2018, when 10 birds were relocated to Oklahoma.

Source: ODWC, "Your Wild Side" Nov. 16, 2023

# Christmas Bird Count

This year's CBC will be held on **Saturday, December 16, 2023!** A county party will be at Johnnie's Charcoal Broiler at 2652 W Britton Road, OKC. A front room is reserved from 5:30 to 8:00 where we'll read the list starting around 6:30.

Please see the newsletter article from last year's [count](#) where we logged 113 species and over,22,300 birds!

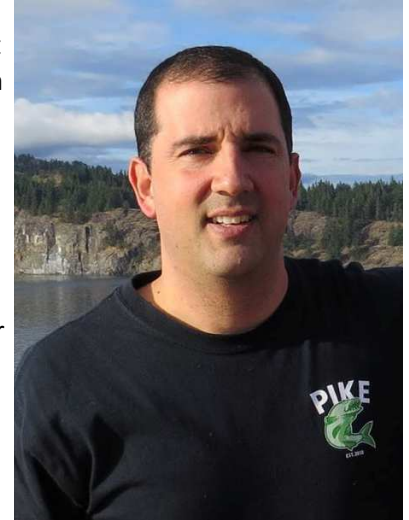
I can only add birds that are compiled on these [checklists \(download\)](#) and for parties with multiple territories, I respectfully ask that the party leader also compiles a master list.

As the time gets closer, I will try my best to reach out to the traditional count leaders to confirm participation and discuss logistics. We had 45 participants last year!

We always encourage new counters and if you contact me or come to the meeting, I'll do my best to assign you to a team or a territory if one is available. Lastly, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Nathan  
405.496.2077  
[nrkuhnert@hotmail.com](mailto:nrkuhnert@hotmail.com)



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## Forget social distancing: House finches become more social when sick

Social distancing when sick has become second nature to many of us in the past few years, but some sick animals appear to take a different approach. A new study of house finches led by Marissa Langager, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Biological Sciences in the College of Science - Virginia Tech, uncovered a surprising result. Unlike other social animals who passively or actively isolate themselves when sick, this gregarious backyard bird species gravitates toward healthy flock mates when they are sick, even more so than healthy birds do.

In particular, the study found, they want to eat together with their flock.

"The recent pandemic years of isolating and quarantining have shown us that social distancing to avoid getting sick can also have detrimental aspects for group living animals," said Langager, whose research interests are social behavior and disease ecology. "The costs of going solo may be particularly high for sick animals especially if they rely on their healthy groupmates to help them find food or avoid predators. Ultimately, this might be the reason that finches become even more social when sick, inadvertently putting their healthy flock mates at risk because bird feeders, where house finches like to gather to feed, are a major means of spreading disease."

