

Williamson's Sapsucker

Bird of the Month

by Grace Huffman

Officers

President	Hal Yocum
Vice President	Grace Huffman
Secretary	Sharon Henthorn
Treasurer	Nancy Vicars
Parliament	Vacant
Programs	Warren Harden
Recorder	Esther M. Key
Conservation	Ann Sherman
Field Trips	Nancy Vicars Jimmy Woodard Hal Yocum
Newsletter	Patricia Velte
Publicity	Doug Eide
Historian	Vacant
Refreshments	Patti High
Webmaster	Patricia Velte

*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*

Last month I spent a few days in the panhandle. It was a wonderful time, and I added over 25 species to my life list! I had a tough time narrowing down which species to write about this month, but I finally decided on one of the least expected birds of the trip: Williamson's Sapsucker.

I'm sure many of you are familiar with Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. They're bigger than Downy Woodpeckers, and are patterned with black, white, yellow, and red. They spend their win-

tters here in the state drilling rows of small little holes while they forage for sap. I see them at places like Stinchcomb and Lake Hefner, and the occasional one in my backyard (I have a tree with many sapsucker rows in it).

Williamson's Sapsucker is a much less common relative of the Yellow-bellied. Slightly larger, males are striking, being mostly black with a large white wing patch and white stripes on the face, a red throat, and yellow on the belly. Females are less vibrantly colored, with a brown face and dark wings and back.

Typically they breed in many western states, and migrate to places like southern Arizona and New Mexico, with some patchy areas where they live year-round. They nest primarily in forests of Ponderosa Pines, but after breeding they will wander to other habitats and lower elevations.

This male must have been done breeding, because he was quite a ways from where he should have been! We spotted him right in the town of Kenton, and our president Hal Yocum was very quick with the ID. The sapsucker was very hard to photograph as he didn't like to stay still, but at least he hung around long enough for a couple more birders to get a good look at him, and he was spotted again a couple of days after I got back home. Williamson's Sapsuckers are very rarely recorded here in Oklahoma, so I feel very blessed to have seen this one and for it to be my first one ever!



© Grace Huffman

President's Perspective

Fall Migration with COVID-19

I trust that each of you has found a way to do some interesting birding as the fall migration moves our way. When are they coming? Any day now! Where will they show up? The usual places, wait maybe some unusual places! Maybe a rarity, life bird or a first for Oklahoma bird.

I live in Edmond and spend a lot of my mornings at Mitch Park. Needless to say the same old, same old summer birds were getting very predictable. I was ready for some new arrivals. If you have birded Mitch Park you likely know that both the city and local interested birders have developed numerous feeder and ground feeding areas to specifically attract the many birds seen here.

This September and a bit of early October have brought some changes. Some early warblers- yellow and Wilson's came through , but nowhere near in the numbers of some previous years. Orange crowned warblers came in dribbles and drabs, but usually stay quite a while. By now we have a steady flow of winter birds: yellow rumped warblers, kinglets, house wrens, spotted towhees, and a number of red breasted nuthatches. We await the many winter sparrows, the hawks and hopefully a few surprises!

Many of us have made trips to other special areas like Salt Plains , Hackberry Flats , Kenton (way out west) and Oxley Nature Center , the Tall Grass Prairie and Sequoia (out to the east). These areas and our own lakes around the metro as well, serve as temporary stopover for dependable favorites or new birds. Some of the unusual birds reported so far have included Sabine Gull, Parasitic Jaeger, Williamson's Sapsucker, Couch's Kingbirds and the Red-necked Phalarope, Black-throated and Townsend's Warblers (near Black Mesa)

Go birding, but do it with proper safety precautions related to Covid-19. Many of us, me included, are in the HIGH RISK group, but using birding outings are one of the best things all of us can do to stay healthy and escape the confines of our house for a while.

I try to go out somewhere every day.

—Hal A. Yocum



Extra! Extra! Our Program Chairman, Warren Harden, has set up special ZOOM sessions. You all get the "link" to jump on and talk about birding and what you have been doing! Contact Warren at warhar@yahoo.com.

Welcome to OKC Audubon

Madeline Lynn, Edmond, OK

There will be no meetings September through December. We hope to be able to meet early next year.

Bird-Window Collisions Update

By Nathan Kuhnert, October 13, 2020

Similar to my April update, I continue to try to keep a low-profile in monitoring/advocating, especially in the midst of this terrible pandemic.

We did just wrap up participation in [Global Bird Rescue 2020](#) that took place from October 5 through 11, 2020. This is an annual event hosted by [FLAP Canada](#) designed to raise awareness about bird-window collisions and to inspire home and workplace bird-safe retrofits across the globe.



Fortunately, the casualties for this portion of the fall monitoring campaign were down with a total of 13 birds (7 fatalities and 6 concussed), comprised of 8 species including an Ovenbird and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. A weather pattern produced warm, southerly winds and dominated most of the count. Also, building access is limited. October typically is the deadliest month for collisions and several frontal boundaries are in the forecast so I will continue to monitor.

Dave Woodson and Jimmy Woodard gave me a heads-up on an exciting development just down the interstate as Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson on October 2, 2020 issued a proclamation declaring all nights through Oct. 10 as “[Lights Out Nights](#)” in the city.



This proclamation urges residents and businesses to turn out non-essential lights between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. during the critical migratory period.

In addition, the cities of Dallas and Houston are utilizing [action alerts](#), which is a product of [BirdCast](#) via email and other forms of social media to alert interested building owners/managers. These alerts would help further prioritize the evenings that are forecasted to see medium to heavy migratory movements.

Needless to say, these developments were recently shared with certain downtown OKC stakeholders. And I talked to Pat Velte about the communication logistics and issuing a similar alert to our stakeholders and she was very receptive. Pat already does a great job at building/maintaining our website at [safepas-sageokc.org](#). For starters we got to address the low-hanging fruit, which is getting the lights dimmed at the highly-illuminated glass facades.

Montane Species Irrupt onto Great Plains

(excerpt from [ABA.org](#), Alec Hopping)

As of mid-October 2020, this irruption has been primarily concentrated in southeastern Colorado, southwestern Kansas, and the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles, but there's no telling how far western birds might make it this fall. Of the western species outside of their normal ranges, Mountain Chickadees and Woodhouse's Scrub-Jays have been the most prevalent. Both have been downright common in towns and woodlots in parts of Cimmaron County, OK; Dallam County, TX; Morton County, KS; and surrounding areas; thus far scrub-jays have made it at least as far as Garden City, Kansas. Steller's Jays, which have been popping up in eastern Denver, Colorado, where they are usually rare, have made it as far east as Hugoton, Kansas. While the species is known to occur as a winter visitor in the Oklahoma panhandle in some years, this season's Oct 5 arrival date is exceptionally early. Multiple individuals have also been documented past the canyonlands and out on the plains of Cimmaron County, OK and Morton County, KS, where they are even rarer.

The eastern limit of this irruption is difficult to define because of both the low density and uneven spatial distribution of birding coverage on the western Great Plains, which is one of the most sparsely-populated areas in the Lower 48. Coverage, of course, is biased to where rare birds have already been reported, particularly in a region where almost all of the birders are 4+ hours from home. That makes questions about the nature and extent of this event difficult to answer. How far east could western species make it this year? Will this irruption continue to accelerate,

(continued on page 5)

Recorders Report

September 2020

It has been a busy month with some of the last of the summer bird lingering and the beginning arrivals of the winter birds. A few rare birds arrived, some to be seen briefly and others hung around a bit. Will the fires out west change what species will be seen in our area this month and during the winter? The only way to find out is for birders to take to the field and share their sightings.

On the 1st along the Turner Turnpike in Lincoln County Chris Butler spotted Common Nighthawk, at Lake Hefner – Stars & Stripes Park Braden Farris discovered Canvasback and Blue-winged Teal; at Ten Mile Flats west of Norman in Cleveland



County John Tharp found Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Western Sandpiper and Zach DuFran observed Long-billed Dowitcher, while at Boomer Lake Park in Stillwater Scott Loss located Yellow-throated Warbler and at Lake Carl Blackwell Chipping Sparrow. On the 2nd John Tharp de-

tected Semipalmated Plover at Ten Mile Flats; and Yellow-throated Warbler along South Jenkins; John Moyer photographed Least Tern at Lake Thunderbird – East Sentinel; and Braden Farris noticed Grasshopper Sparrow near Deer Creek in Oklahoma County. On the 3rd Scott Loss verified Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Stonecrest Falls in Stillwater.

On the 4th Zach DuFran turned in the last reported sighting of the Vermilion Flycatcher at Lake R. C. Longmire in Garvin County; and Larry Mays counted Mississippi Kite, and Cattle Egret at his home in McClain County. On the 6th Melanie Gilbertson added Pileated Woodpecker along Coltrane Road in south Logan County; Brian Marra recorded House Wren and Northern Waterthrush at Stinchcomb WR west; Randolph King encountered Prothonotary Warbler at Lake Thunderbird – East Sentinel; and Frank Walker photographed Rufous Hummingbird at his feeder in Bethany. On the 7th Mike Hudson viewed Eared Grebe at NW 63rd & Kilpatrick Turnpike in Canadian County; Someone came across Kentucky Warbler in Lexington; and Jacob Crissup confirmed Northern Shoveler at Lake Hefner – Oklahoma City Docks. On the 8th Matt Jung identified two Osprey preening at Lake Hefner and White-faced Ibis in the Yukon Parkway west play; Brian Marra recognized Willow

Flycatcher at Arcadia Lake; and at Lake Carl Blackwell Scott Loss saw Pine Warbler and Caleb McKinney photographed a juvenile **Jaeger** species.

On the 9th Caleb McKinney reported Least Bittern at Teal Ridge Wetland in Stillwater; and Scott Loss tallied Caspian Tern at Lake Carl Blackwell. On the 10th Scott Loss documented **Common Tern** at Boomer Lake Park. On the 11th in Grady County Chris Butler detected White-eyed Vireo and Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Lake Louis Burttschi, and Warbling Vireo at Shannon Springs Park; while Ron Clifton noticed Wilson's Warbler and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Rush Springs. On the 12th Joe Grzybowski



© Chris Butler

spotted Red-breasted Nuthatch at his feeder in Norman; Don Pearson found Belted Kingfisher at Elmore City in Garvin County; and D&D Norris discovered Wilson's Warbler at Kairworks Garden in Logan County. On the 13th Linda Jones verified White-breasted Nuthatch at the Lazy J in Lincoln County; and Bill Diffin located Chestnut-sided Warbler along NW 50th in Canadian County. On the 14th Scott Loss observed Yellow-breasted Chat at The OSU Botanic Garden.

On the 15th in Grady County Jason Shaw added Cooper's Hawk at USAO Habitat Area in Grady County



© Randolph King

and Caleb McKinney came across Indigo Bunting and Northern Bobwhite near Alex; Cody Delano and his child watched 3 Black-throated Green Warblers at Lakeview Park in Norman; while Red-breasted Nuthatches were encountered in Norman during lunch at home by Nathan Kuh-

nert and in Payne County at Sanborn Lake by Landon Neumann. Randolph King photographed a kingbird at Buck Thomas Park in Moore. Later the photograph was reviewed and the bird was confirmed as **Couch's Kingbird**.

Several birders went to see the bird but at times it would disappear so a few had to return to the location to finally find it. It continued to be seen into October.

On the 16th Dawn Lloyd identified Chimney Swift in Okarche in Kingfisher County. On the 17th in Canadian County along South Overholser Road Bill Diffin reported Olive-sided Flycatcher and Clay-colored Sparrow; Braden Farris viewed Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge; in Norman along South Jenkins Dawn Lloyd recorded Peregrine Falcon; and at Lake Hefner – Stars and Stripes Park Braden Farris recognized Long-billed Curlew. On the 18th Someone saw Ovenbird at Myriad Botanical Gardens. On the 19th John Tharp saw Tennessee Warbler and Mourning Warbler along South Jenkins; Mike



Yough tallied Sedge Wren at Cushing Water Treatment Plant; William Radke discovered American Wigeon at Lake Hefner – Stars & Stripe Park; and Marc Kramer located Northern Pintail at Cushing Water Treatment Plant. On the 20th Mike Yough got Swainson's Thrush at Sanborn Lake in Stillwater.

On the 21st Caleb McKinney verified Swainson's Hawk and Northern Flicker in Okarche; and Scott Loss had Horned Lark at OSU Magruder Plots. On the 22nd Braden Farris



spotted Virginia Rail and Green-winged Teal at Lake Hefner – Edgewater Lake Preserve. On the 23rd Michael Horn found Northern Shoveler at Arcadia Lake – Edmond Park. On the 24th Nancy Reed watched waves of Common Nighthawks flying over her house in east Norman; and Samuel Cox turned up Greater Roadrunner at Wynnewood in Garvin County. On the 25th Someone detected Pine Warbler in Norman; and Braden Farris noticed Summer Tanager at Tecumseh Lake and Red-eyed Vireo and Chimney Swift at FireLake Golf Course in Shawnee.

On the 26th Richard Hasegawa confirmed Scissor-tailed Flycatcher along the Turner Turnpike; and Mike Yough recognized American Pipit at Cushing Water Treatment Plant. On the 27th Randolph King tallied Spotted Sandpiper and Osprey at Wes Watkins Lake in Pottawatomie County; Caleb McKinney recorded Redhead at Lake Carl Blackwell;

Brian Marra observed Marsh Wren at Lake Hefner – Prairie Dog Point; Rod Lusey identified Lesser Black-backed Gull at Arcadia Lake – Edmond Park;



© Grace Huffman

and Elizabeth & Tim Pratt flushed Sora Rail at Lake Hefner – Prairie Dog Point. On the 29th Grace Huffman documented **Parasitic Jaeger** at Lake Hefner – Prairie Dog Point. On the 30th Bill Diffin encountered Ruddy Duck at Lake Hefner – Prairie Dog Point. As the trees change their leaf color, what bird species will change in our area?

In the Central Oklahoma area during September, **191** species were reported with **3** new species bringing the total for 2020 to **290**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds. Information is accessed at: [ebird](https://ebird.org/region/US-OK?yr=all). 2020 eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Available: <https://ebird.org/region/US-OK?yr=all>. (Accessed: September 29 & 30, 2020). And occasionally from Facebook, and the OK-BIRDS List. I can be contacted by e-mail at em-kok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

Irruption (cont.)

or have we already observed its peak? Could it be possible to find even scarcer western species, such as Clark's Nutcracker, Pine Grosbeak, or even American Three-toed Woodpecker? There have already been records of far-flung, early western vagrants this fall, like Townsend's Solitaire in South Carolina and Varied Thrush in Texas, which may or may not be related to the dynamics driving the irruption on the plains. The only way to find out is to go birding, so birders across the central and eastern portions of the U.S. and Canada should make sure to have western species on their radar this fall.

BLACK MESA BONANZA

by Jimmy Woodard, Midwest City

I left MWC at 5AM on Sunday, September 6th to meet up with Lawton birders Lou and Mary Truex in Boise City. Brief stops were made on the way at Ft. Supply Lake, Optima Lake, Keyes sewage ponds, and Boise City sewage ponds.

We joined forces in Kenton then birded in the state park. Despite the 100 degree heat and windy conditions, the birds were quite plentiful.

Along Carrizo Creek, the brush and weeds had grown up. Wilson's Warblers popped up and down constantly and were numerous in the creek bed. Also seen were Northern Waterthrush, MacGillivray's Warbler, Dusky Flycatcher, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Cassin's Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Lesser Goldfinch, Western Pewee, and Cassin's Kingbird.

Monday dawned with a walk along the Cimarron River behind the Black Mesa B&B. I saw one Western Screech Owl and heard another.

After breakfast, we visited Kenton to search for unusual hummingbirds. Black-chinned were all we found that day. Surprising was the six Woodhouse Scrub Jays found at Steve's Metz's house in Kenton. Also seen was a Black-throated Sparrow on a fence just west of town. It was mixed in a large flock of Chipping, Clay-colored, and Lark Sparrows.

The state park was again very birdy. A flock of nine Scaled Quail was a nice sight in the cactus flats coming into the park. The lake held twenty-eight White-faced Ibis, thirty-eight Black Terns, nine Forster's Terns, Osprey, Eared and Pied-billed Grebes. A Sora in the flooded flats near the dam was an unexpected find.



© Steve Metz

Incredible were the SIX Townsend's Warblers we found in the park. This is more Townsend's in one day than I have seen in 34 years of birding in Oklahoma!

Other finds in the park were three Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Cassin's Vireo, three Sage Thrashers, Northern Waterthrush, two

MacGillivray's Warblers, Summer Tanager, 107 Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and a boatload of Wilson's Warblers again.

After another 100 degree day on Monday, a strong cold front blew thru about midnight. Tuesday came in cold with strong north winds and a temp of 45. Lou and Mary had to leave so I birded the rest of the day alone.

Kenton and the park held mostly the same birds but in lower numbers. The lake had two adult Bald Eagles, teal, Osprey, and one Franklin's Gull.

On Wednesday, it was again cold, rainy, and overcast. Steve and Kim Metz had arrived at their house in Kenton. He and I went to Asa Jones's hummingbird feeders at the south edge of town. Steve located a young Calliope and Broad-tailed Hummingbird amongst the many Black-chins.

We spent the rest of the day birding around Boise City, Wheelless and Felt. We visited the cemetery and sewage ponds in Boise City and various homesteads in the western half of the county. We didn't see much new but did find Wood Duck, Turkey, 12 Marbled Godwits, and a flock of phalaropes flying around the lake that would never land so they could be identified (presumed to be Wilson's).



© Steve Metz

I spent Wednesday night with Steve and Kim. He and I birded together on Thursday. We got a late start because it rained steadily till about 10AM. We went to Boise City for supplies. A homestead south of town had few birds but we did get a Gray Flycatcher who posed for photos.

The bird called and responded aggressively to playback of its call. We also had a Curve-billed Thrasher and a covey of Northern Bobwhites too.

A nearby property, known locally as "the Dairy," has a double line of evergreen, pine and deciduous trees. This shelterbelt harbored a good collection of birds. We flushed Barn and Great Horned Owls. Other finds were Yellow-breasted Chat, MacGillivray's Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, and several more Wilson's. Felt and the Rita Blanca Grasslands trail were our next
(continued next page)

Conservation News

By Ann Sherman

In mid-October at Ft Cobb I was witness to the arrival of a thousand Pelicans. That's my guess. The fall migration is on! Yesterday driving down a country road I saw a very large hawk accompanied by 3 large crows sitting in a tree. I think it was a sharp shinned hawk. As soon as I pulled over he was on his way. The crows hung around a bit longer. This is the time of year to see raptors. They are everywhere.

One of the most exciting migrations thru Oklahoma occurs at the Great Salt Plains. If you look in back of the pelicans you can see a lone Sandhill Crane. If you go to the Great Salt Plains you can see

thousands of them. It's still a little early but you can see for yourself they are on the move. I have been numerous times and some years you can get close and see the birds....some years they are shy and there is no way to see them resting in the lake. But at sunrise you can watch them take off for the farmers fields to eat their crops and at sunset they return to sleep in the lake safe from their predators. I've seen coyotes on the shore pacing trying to figure out a way to get their paws on a crane. As they fly they honk. It's a wonderful thing to see and hear. If you have never been to the Great Salt Plains I recommend the trip. The Whooping Cranes migrate with the Sandhills. I once saw a couple white dots in the distance that might have been Whoopers...but I can not claim them. A word of advice...do not speed thru Jet. It is the only source of money for the town and the tickets are quite expensive if you dare to speed...even a little.



It is a key stopover site for 40,000 American White Pelicans, 100,000 geese, 70,000 ducks, thousands of Sandhill Cranes and hundreds of thousands of shorebirds. Heron and Ibis rookeries are among the largest in OK. The Whoopers come every year. It's a major nesting site for the federally endangered Interior Least Tern. The Western Snowy Plover appears and the refuge provides habitat for the Bell Vireo and Prothonotary Warbler. Prime viewing of the Cranes is late October and early November. I'm going to wait a week or two and make the trip. Wear bright non deer colors. It is hunting season and my feeling is the brighter and non natural color the better for walking around in the woods this time of year. Happy Birding! Everyone is doing it now. There is a big write up in the NYTimes on backyard birding. What better way to spend a pandemic?

Black Mesa Bonanza (cont.)

stops. Notable was another Townsend's Warbler in addition to flycatchers, pewees, phoebes, more Wilson's, and numerous sparrows.

At an old homestead near Wheelless, a birding fallout gave us perhaps the best birding of the trip. Migrants included five Green-tailed Towhees, two female Western Tanagers, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Rock Wren, House Wren, Red-breasted Nuthatch, four Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Spotted Towhee, two more Townsend's Warblers, Orange-crowned Warbler, and a MacGillivray's Warbler. Another Barn and Great Horned Owl were seen in addition to many sparrows and more Wilson's Warblers! Our Ebird list for this place had 44 species. This place was rocking!

Vicky Robert's sister has a place near Hwy 325 and the Wheelless-Felt cutoff road. John Sterling joined us there for more good birding. We recorded another Barn Owl, Cassin's Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Rock Wren, House Wren, MacGillivray's Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and a Black-headed Grosbeak. Nearby on the road to Kenton, we found a Prairie Falcon and a Golden Eagles perched on different telephone poles.

We celebrated another great day of birding in the mesa. I had to leave for home on Friday after enjoying a wonderful week of birding in Cimarron County! It's my favorite place in the state.