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

*The Oklahoma City Audubon Society Welcome Back:
Kent Bynum, OKC*

Rails: Secretive and In Decline

The speaker for our October 17 OKC Audubon meeting will be Tabatha Olsen with a presentation entitled “Rails: Secretive, Understudied, and In Decline.” Tabatha will give a general overview of some of the rail research currently being conducted at the University of Central Oklahoma together with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department including her field work along the Texas coast.

Tabatha says about herself:

I originally started birding in high school as part of the Maryland Ornithological Society’s youth division. My love for chasing rare birds eventually turned into a love of reading and studying them, so following high school I attended Purdue University where I pursued degrees in Wildlife Science and Forestry. There, I worked extensively with Northern Saw-whet Owls as I co-lead the student run owl banding station for 2 years during my undergrad.



Immediately following my graduation from Purdue, I transitioned from owls to an equally nocturnal and elusive species: Chuck-will’s-widow. There in Mississippi, I worked with a PhD student where we banded and surveyed for passerines during the day and trapped elusive Chuck-will’s-widow at night. From there I finally found my way over to Oklahoma where I joined Dr. Chris Butler’s lab at the University of Central Oklahoma, continuing my trend of studying the understudied.

While I’d never been to Texas prior to working on this project, entering the isolated salt marshes of the Gulf Coast is seemingly nostalgic. Every time I go to survey for rails, I am reminded of the salt marshes of Maryland.

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

We're in that time of "betwixed and between." Summer nesters have mostly gone, migrants have come and gone, most wintering residents have yet to arrive. so it leaves us time to just enjoy perusing our lists and reminiscing about those new birds we've added so far this year and those birds we "just missed" and must try again. A bird in this latter category that will forever stand out as my highest ranking "just missed" has to be the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock. I "just missed" it for over 30 years!

My searches began way back around 1973 when I moved to the Amazon side of the Andes in Peru. Those early years, I birded pretty much alone since I was one of perhaps no more than 4-5 birders living in the country. I lived for a year in Iquitos then moved to Pucallpa for another couple years. My work took me frequently to the "seja de selva" (jungle foothills of the Andes) along the chain of towns from Tingo Maria all the way to Yurimaguas. Crazy adventures, there were many, each was its own story--not for this topic. But each trip I kept looking for the bird. I described it to many locals; they all knew exactly which bird I meant and always seemed "to know exactly where it always was." Except it never was.



Bob Holbrook on the Essequibo River, Guyana

Then one day a tour leader for Questers Tours, Frank Oatman (The Hoopoe), came to town. By then I was living in Lima. He contacted me since I was the only member of the ABA in Peru and invited me to travel with his tour group as a resident bird guide--all expenses paid. I couldn't turn that down! We traveled to various corners of the country and eventually ended up doing the tourist thing up to Machu Picchu. He had it on good information that the Cock-of-the-Rock could be seen along the railroad tracks heading out of the village at the bottom of the mountain so before taking the tram up to the ruins our whole group took a nice long walk along the tracks. I must state that not all members of our group were die-hard birders--some were tourist-types that enjoyed a bird now and then. The jungle along the tracks was quite heavy but we figured with all these pairs of eyes, the bird would be spotted. After some time, we had to turn back to catch the tram up to the ruins. As we returned, one of our group, a Danish "tourist" suddenly spoke: "Oh! That must have been the bird! On our way down, I saw a red thing over there but thought it must be maybe a piece of trash, except now it's not there." I will not repeat what was said by the rest of us. That was about 1976.

The years passed. Trips to North Peru, living a year in Ecuador, trips to Colombia, Venezuela, living in Brazil for three years....zero.

Finally it was 2004--October. I was with a group trip to Ecuador building a school. At the close of the project, several wanted me to take them on a birding trip for a few days. One of our stops was Mindo, I had contacted a friend who would take us to see some birds. I asked him about "The Bird." He said: "Not a problem at all!" But he took us to see this bird, that bird, another bird, our time was running out and I kept asking about "The Bird." Finally he said, "OK, now we'll go see it." We drove down a dirt road a ways, stopped at a fence line, and he said, "they are up there," he pointed to a mountain side. We got out of the car and I could already hear them croaking at their lek! I ran up the mountainside while the rest walked up. I was in the blind easily 10-15 minutes before the others finally arrived and had already seen three males doing their thing. We sat there for another 30 minutes, saw a female approach and the males throw an incredible frenzied dance which did not interest her in the least and soon flew away. I didn't come down off my "high" for at least 2 days! We did have over 300 bird species seen and many were certainly spectacular but nothing compared to those minutes up on that mountainside.



Bird of the Month: Red-breasted Nuthatch

By Grace Huffman

It's October and it's been finally starting to cool down a little. Migration marches on, and now winter birds are starting to show up even more. One of my favorite winter birds is already showing up with regularity, and that is the Red-breasted Nuthatch!

Here in Oklahoma we have White-breasted Nuthatches year round, but in the winter we also get to see their smaller

cousins, the Red-breasted! They are tiny little birds that love to climb down trees head first. Red-breasted Nuthatches have gray backs, rusty undersides, and a black and white head. Females are paler below and grayer on the head. They can be found over much of the US & Canada in the winter, but in parts in the north & west they are year-round. They use their bills to excavate nest sites most of the time, or occasionally use old nest sites. The male will sometimes start excavating several sites but the female chooses the nest site. They also work together to cover the entrance in sap. In a rare example of animal tool use, they use pine bark to help them spread it around! The female builds a nest in the cavity, where they raise the brood of little ones.

Red-breasted Nuthatches are irruptive migrators, meaning if they have plenty of food fewer move south. This year, they are already here and more are showing up every day. I often hear them before I see them, so listen for their nasally *hank-hank-hank* calls. Then look up in the trees to see if you can spot one! They also love to come to feeders. They'll fly in, grab a sunflower seed, and dash off to either wedge it into the bark to pry it open with their bill, or cache it away to eat later. I used to watch them fly right up to my windowsill where I had spread some black oil sunflowers, and it was so fun to watch them from inches away. They also like peanuts and suet.

Red-breasted Nuthatches are increasing in population, and with seeing several already this year it looks like we will have quite a few around this winter. Have fun looking for them!

References: allaboutbirds.org



Red-breasted Nuthatch © Grace Huffman

Recorder's Report

September 2022

Still no rain during the month but that hasn't stopped the birds from making their fall migration. With the lack of rain a sand bar has opened up on Lake Hefner that is attracting a group of interesting migrants. Other locations are also reporting interesting stop over birds including a lost one at Walmart.

On the 2nd Robyn Parker came across Chimney Swift at Chickasha in Grady County; Joe Grzybowski detected Yellow Warbler at Lake Thunderbird – Twin Bridges; Nancy Reed found Yellow-throated Vireo in Norman; Steve Davis spotted Black Tern at Lake Hefner; Robert Merideth tallied Least Flycatcher at Joe B. Barnes Park in Midwest City; and Lucas Bobay noted Eastern Wood-Pewee at The Botanic Garden at OSU. On the 3rd Joe Grzybowski added Broad-winged Hawk at Lake Thunderbird SP; and Mike Yough recognized American Golden-Plover at Lake Hefner – Prairie Dog Point. On the 4th Megan Miguez counted Wilson's Warbler at Stroud in Lincoln County. On the 5th Tabitha Olsen got Wilson's Warbler at Arcadia Lake.

On the 6th Joe Grzybowski identified Caspian Tern at Lake Thunderbird in Cleveland County. On the 7th Frank Walker located Rufous Hummingbird at Bethany; Steve Davis observed Caspian Tern at Lake Hefner; Jimmy Woodard recorded Blue-headed Vireo in Midwest City; and Lucas Bobay documented **Swallow-tailed Kite** in Stillwater. On the 8th Samuel Cox saw Red-headed Woodpecker and Red-bellied Woodpecker at Wynnewood in Garvin County; Jacob Kirkland viewed Hudsonian Godwit, Upland Sandpiper and Western Sandpiper at Calumet in Canadian County; and Jacob Kirkland verified Canada Warbler at Myriad Botanical Gardens in OKC. On the 9th Aileen Cunliffe confirmed Gray Catbird in Moore; and Steve Stone discovered American Redstart at Myriad Botanical Gardens.

On the 10th Jason Shaw encountered Wood Duck and Green Heron at USAO Habitat Area in Grady County; Joe

Grzybowski noticed Wilson's Warbler along South Jenkins Ave in Cleveland County; Grace Huffman reported Ovenbird at Myriad Botanical Gardens in OKC; Tabitha Olsen turned up Peregrine Falcon and Mourning Warbler at Myriad Botanical Gardens; and Landon Neumann had Eared Grebe at Lake Carl Blackwell. On the 11th D&D Norris detected Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Kairworks Garden in Lincoln County; Trina Arnold came across Eared Grebe at Lake Overholser; Tabitha Olsen found Willow Flycatcher at Myriad Botanical

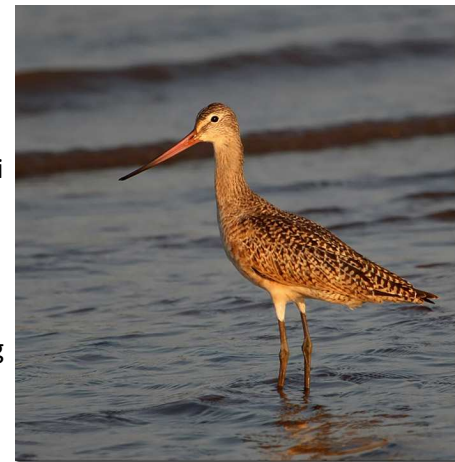


Sabine's Gull © Chase Moxley

Gardens; Chase Moxley recognized **Bay-breasted Warbler** at the Myriad Botanical Gardens and **Sabine's Gull** at Lake Hefner – Prairie Dog Point; Allen Coddling counted Alder Flycatcher and Black-throated Green Warbler in Ed-

mond; Scott Loss identified **Golden-winged Warbler** at Sanborn Lake; and Lucas Bobay photographed Olive-sided Flycatcher at The Botanic Garden at OSU.

On the 12th Grace Huffman spotted Snowy Egret and Red-breasted Nuthatch at Twin Lakes in Pottawatomie County; Nancy Reed tallied Yellow-throated Warbler in Norman, and Joe Grzybowski noted Northern Parula along South Jenkins Ave in Norman. On the 13th Jake Gerrlt added Broad-winged Hawk at Mustang in Canadian County. On the 15th D&D Norris counted Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Kairworks Garden; Chase Moxley got Marbled Godwit at Lake Hefner – Prairie Dog Point; and Scott Loss documented **Common Tern** at Boomer Lake Park in Stillwater. On the 17th Brian Marra witnessed Black-headed Grosbeak at Crystal Lake. On the 18th Joel Buford identified Swainson's Hawk at Cement in Grady County; Adrianh Martinez Orozco observed Northern Harrier at Okarche in Canadian County; and Jacob Kirkland located Red-necked Phalarope at Lake Hefner – Prairie Dog Point.



Marbled Godwit

On the 19th Randy Soto discovered Common Tern at Lake Thunderbird and on the 20th Joe Grzybowski described it. On the 22nd Grace Huffman photographed Common Tern at Lake Hefner Prairie Dog Point. On the 23rd Lucas Bobay recorded Caspian Tern at Lake Carl Blackwell. On the 24th Braden Farris saw Eastern Screech-Owl and House Wren at Prairie Prime Ranch in Lincoln County;

Scott Loss watched **Glossy Ibis** for almost an hour at Cushing WTP; Clay Billman was alerted by Philip and Shawna Goodwin of an American Bittern hiding in plain sight at the Stillwater



Glossy Ibis © Scott Loss

Walmart Garden Center. After the bird was documented, it was rescued into proper habitat. On the 25th Trina Arnold had Bald Eagle at Wewoka Lake in Seminole County; Lucas Bobay viewed Northern Harrier at Hennessey in Kingfisher County; and Jake Henning verified Red-breasted Nuthatch at Mulhall in Logan County.

On the 26th Larry Mays found Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Newcastle in McClain County; Curtis Stewart described Kentucky Warbler at South OKC in Cleveland County; and Tabitha Olsen spotted Red-breasted Nuthatch at the University of Central Oklahoma. On the 27th D&D Norris photographed Nashville Warbler at Kairworks Garden; and Brian Marra recorded Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Lake Stanley Draper. How many species will be reported on October Big Day, October 8th, 2022? When will the winter birds start arriving?

In the Central Oklahoma area during September **192** species were reported with **6** new species which brings the year's total at **297**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds. Information is accessed at: [ebird](http://ebird.org). 2022 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 28 & 29, 2022); and occasionally from Facebook, and the OKBIRDS List. I can be contacted at emkok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

Minutes

September 19, 2022

By Patti Muzny, Secretary

The meeting was opened at 7:00 PM at the Will Rogers Garden Center by President Bob Holbrook. Nancy Vicars presented a treasurer's report and distributed copies. Cash on hand as of September 19, 2022, was \$7,412.18. The minutes of the June 20, 2022, meeting were approved as published in the newsletter.

The next meeting will be held at the Will Rogers Garden Center on Monday, October 17, 2022, at 7:00 PM.

Visitors were introduced and welcomed.

Our recording secretary, Esther Key, has asked to step down from her recording duties. President Holbrook asked for volunteers for this position.

Warren Harden asked for volunteers to form a team of two or three persons to secure eight program speakers each year.

Volunteers are needed to lead a bird walk at Will Rogers Park on October 15th, 2022. There will be a field trip sometime in November at Molly Spencer Farm. More details to come.

Patti High asked for volunteers to provide refreshments for our meetings.

Recent sightings included warblers seen by Hal Yocum at the Myriad Gardens (Tennessee, Redstart and Bay Breasted). Nancy Vicars reported a Blue-headed Vireo and Baltimore Oriole. Nadine Varner located a Sabine's Gull at Lake Hefner. Also Brown Booby was found at Boomer Lake in Stillwater.

The October meeting will feature a program about Rails in Texas.

Our program was presented by Brenda D. "Bee" Smith of the Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory. Her presentation encouraged birders to expand their knowledge of dragonflies.

Respectfully submitted,

Patti Muzny
Secretary

Cemetery Birding

American Birding Association
October 12, 2022

Spend any amount of time at all in the company of birders, and you quickly discover their proclivity for places that are, in a word, weird. For example, ice-slicked jetties in a New England blizzard when it is too miserable for even the fisherman. Or mosquito-infested swamps in the Deep South *in summer*. There are the pelagic trips, of course, with their chopped-up fish, *odeur de diesel*, and birders barfing off the stern. And SEWAGE TREATMENT PONDS. And cemeteries.

Going to cemeteries may seem “weird,” but it’s not miserable (New England), nauseating (pelagics, sewage lagoons), or downright unbearable (Atlanta in summer, anyone)? As wildlife biologist Danielle Belleny, a. k. a. “The Cemetery Birder,” relates in the Mar. 2022 *Birding*, cemeteries are among the most enchanting of all venues for bird study. They’re also one of the most accessible.

To be blunt about it, people die all the time and all over the place—with the result that the ABA Area is filled with cemeteries. There are at least 150,000 such burial grounds in the U.S. and Canada, with the particularly notable ones being near, and often *in*, our biggest metropolises.

ABA webczar Greg Neise, himself a big city denizen and regular visitant to cemeteries, has shared with *Birding* magazine a suite of photos from cemeteries around his home in Chicago. Greg tells *Birding*, “Urban cemeteries are great places to go birding, and I’m lucky to have several near home. They’re wonderful for quiet study of common residents, the chance for a migration fallout, or even a rare owl.”

Fieldtrip Schedule:

October 15, 2022:

Nancy Vicars will lead a field trip at Will Rogers Gardens and Arboretum on Saturday, October 15, 2022 from 8-10 AM. Contact: Nancy Vicars, 405-831-1945

October 29, 2022:

Hal Yocum will lead a field trip to his favorite “patch,” Mitch Park in Edmond on October 29. Meet at 8 AM at the skate park parking lot that is located behind the Cimarron Middle School on the corner of Covell and Kelly in Edmond. Folks can enter from Covell or Kelly. drhal2@cox.net

November 1, 2022:

Nancy Vicars will lead a scouting trip for members only at Mollie Spencer Farm in Yukon.

November 5, 2022:

This field trip to Mollie Spencer Farm in Yukon, led by Nancy Vicars, will be a public outing.

Watch your inbox for more information as it becomes available.

REMINDER

It is time to renew your state park parking pass, if you have one.

Go to [Travelok.com](https://www.travelok.com), then click on State Parks, then to Get a Parking Pass. It is free for 62 and older.

Refreshments

The following folks will be providing refreshments for the Monday, October 17 OCAS meeting:

Snacks: Franny Pasternik, Hal Yocum, Jimmy Woodard and Jeanne Mather

Ice/drinks: John Eagleston and Cathy Chernausek