

## What Birds Eat

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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:

Natalee Jamison, Edmond

Ethan Milller, OKC

Brittney Logan, Yukon

Gabrielle Bryant, OKC

**The speaker for our September 21 Oklahoma City Audubon meeting will be Kathleen Tucker talking about and showing her photographs of “What Birds Eat.”**

She will present pictures of birds she has photographed from around the world. They will include birds in the act of searching for, securing, or eating their food. I have placed the photographs into the different diet classifications for the birds: Insectivores, Nectivores, Carnivores, Omnivores, etc.

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 best-seller *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).

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.

Overall, the presentation will be fun, informative, educational, and... just lots of fun.

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

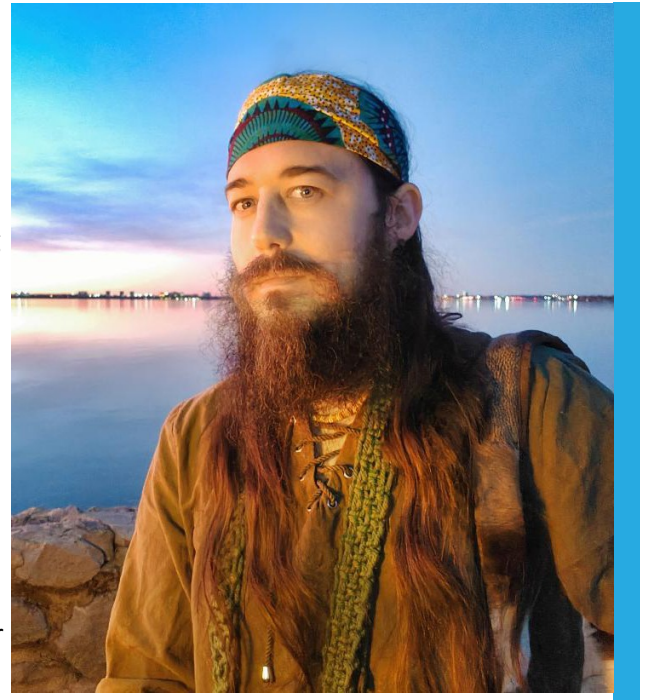
This summer has been insanely busy, and it's kept me from doing much birding. The heat hasn't helped either...

I did manage one incredible trip at the beginning of June: fourteen countries in fourteen days across Europe. Most of it was packed with tours, museums, and classes, but I carved out three full days dedicated to birding in the Netherlands, Portugal, and Hungary.

Each location had a completely different habitat and species mix, and I added over 100 species to my life list. One of the most interesting things was noticing how many European species have close North American counterparts.

Some highlights included Black-tailed Godwit, Bluethroat, Eurasian Hoopoe, European Bee-eater, Iberian Grey Shrike, Greater Flamingo, White-tailed Eagle, and Great Bustard. Europe in general isn't known primarily for birding, but the locations and culture were fantastic, and I got to meet a lot of great birders and visit some wonderful bird-focused spots.

—Cole Penning



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## Rare fossil goose rewrites the story of New Zealand's giant birds

The ScienceDaily article reports the discovery of a previously unknown fossil goose from New Zealand that changes scientists' understanding of how the country's unusual bird fauna evolved. The study was led by researchers from the University of Otago, Te Papa, and the University of Cambridge and was published in Historical Biology.

The new species: Researchers reexamined goose fossils from the Miocene-age St Bathans deposits in Central Otago and identified a previously undescribed small goose, named *Meterchen luti*.

It wasn't the ancestor of New Zealand's giant geese: Earlier interpretations suggested that the St Bathans goose might have been ancestral to the enormous, flightless *Cnemiornis* geese that lived in New Zealand until relatively recently. The new analysis concludes that *Meterchen luti* was not closely related to those giant geese.

DNA provides an important clue: Genetic evidence indicates that the ancestors of *Cnemiornis* arrived from Australia only about 7 million years ago, rather than having been isolated in Zealandia for more than 14 million years. The fossil reassessment is consistent with that later-arrival scenario.

A dead-end lineage: The ancestors of the newly identified St Bathans goose apparently reached Zealandia more than 14 million years ago, but that lineage eventually disappeared without leaving descendants.

Bottom line: The discovery reinforces a picture of New Zealand's bird evolution as dynamic rather than a simple story of ancient isolation. Birds repeatedly colonized the islands, some lineages went extinct, and others evolved strikingly large or flightless forms relatively quickly. The giant *Cnemiornis* geese—up to about 1 meter tall and 18 kg—are presented as an especially dramatic example of rapid island evolution.





## Bird of the Month: Rufous Hummingbird

*By Grace Huffman*

It's September and hummingbirds have been on the move. Some have been heading south since July. Keep an eye on your feeders for an orange bully, which could be a wandering **Rufous Hummingbird**! Males are almost completely orange, with limited green in the back and wings and a

bright red gorget. Females more closely resemble other hummingbird species, being much more green than the males.

Rufous Hummingbirds are amazing migrants, nesting as far north as southern Alaska. Females don't waste any time and begin building their tiny nests just days after arriving. If they are going to build a nest, that is. Those tiny cups of spiderwebs, moss, and the like are so well constructed they may be reused the next year, possibly even by a different female! They aren't picky about nesting sites, choosing between many options from vines to Douglas-fir and thimbleberry trees.

They winter in central Mexico and along the Gulf Coast here in the US, and some of them take the scenic route on the way south. August in the panhandle is the best time and place to find these gorgeous birds, but they can pop up anywhere, especially in years like this where fires and other hazards push them farther out of their usual migration routes. I photographed this female/immature that Devin Bosler found in the Myriad Gardens in August, and I've even seen one as late as October!

In spite of their ability to pop up just about anywhere, these birds are actually in decline. Considered an "Orange Alert Tipping Point" species in the 2025 State of the Birds, Rufous Hummingbird populations have declined over 50% in the last 50 years and are listed as Near Threatened. Reasons for the steep decline are likely climate change affecting the blooming window for flowers, and the over decrease in the insects they eat in the winter thanks to human intervention.

Enjoy the hummingbirds while you still have them, and keep your camera handy since you might just find a Rufous Hummingbird or other unusual hummingbird coming through!



Rufous Hummingbird © Grace Huffman

# Minutes of the OKC Audubon Society Meeting June 15, 2026

Meeting was called to order by president Cole Penning. Minutes from the May 18 meeting were reviewed and approved.

There were 27 attendees this evening and a new member, Matt Ratcliffe.

Treasurer report from Nancy Vicars shows cash on hand \$10,558.

## No old business.

Cheryl Allen passed around a sign-up page for fall snacks and drinks.

## Results of recent activities were reported:

Matt Ratcliffe reported on the Lake Arcadia BioBlitz field trip on May 30. Eight birders enjoyed the great weather and guided walk. Bald Eagle, Prothonotary Warbler and Northern Parula were highlights.

Terri Underhill reported that her resident Great Horned Owl parents successfully raised two owlets, which have now left the nest area.

Field trip to Zoo Lake led by Sharon Henthorn was enjoyed by eight birders of various ages and skill levels.

Hal Yocum reported sighting a female Painted Bunting on one of his daily walks at Mitch Park.

Will Rogers Gardens is supporting Eastern Bluebirds with their nestboxes.

## New Business:

The spring meetings have concluded and fall meetings resume on September 21.

Tonight's presenter was Rick Mardis, lifelong aficionado and racing pigeon expert. Detailed historical and current state of the sport reports were related to an enthralled group of attendees.

*Club secretary Sharon Henthorn*

## Zoo Lake Happenings

Zoo Lake is busy. Today I visited the very low lake and found many shorebirds. The highlight was two White-faced Ibis that flew into the mud flats. I also saw my first-of-season Pied-billed Grebes. There have been lots of wading birds, hundreds of turtles on driftwood and, three days ago an adult Bald Eagle flew in close to the first pier. Bell's and White-eyed Vireo are returning. Thirty three species today.

—Sharon Henthorn

## Which bird species holds the record for being the smallest living bird in the world?



Endemic to Cuba, the Bee Hummingbird weighs a mere 1.6 to 2 grams and measures only about 2 inches long.



# A Feather Found in Dinosaur Poop Might Explain How Birds Beat Extinction

Summary: *New York Times*, published September 17, 2026

*The New York Times* article describes a 66-million-year-old bird feather preserved inside fossilized dinosaur dung, a remarkably rare find that may provide clues about why some birds survived the asteroid-driven mass extinction while most other dinosaurs—and many ancient birds—died out.

The discovery: Researchers found the fossilized poop, or coprolite, in Montana's Hell Creek Formation in 2016. It contains several feathers, bird bones and fish scales—the remains of a small ecosystem captured in a single fossil. The dung probably came from a large theropod such as *T. rex* or *Nanotyrannus*.



A tiny bird feather in the fossilized excrement of a dinosaur, found at the Hell Creek Formation in Montana. Credit...David DeMar, Jr.

The bird: The bones indicate a hesperornithiform, an extinct group of aquatic, flightless birds somewhat analogous to modern loons. The fish scales suggest the bird had eaten fish shortly before becoming prey itself.

Why the feather matters: Using CT scanning, scientists could examine the feather in three dimensions. Its shaft has a lightweight, sponge-like interior—a feature previously unknown in Mesozoic feathers and unusually similar to the structure of feathers in modern birds.

The extinction hypothesis: The researchers noticed that the bird also had primitive, fuzzy body feathers that may have provided less insulation than the plumage of the ancestors of today's birds. After the asteroid impact, dust and debris likely caused severe global cooling and reduced sunlight. Better-insulated birds may consequently have had an advantage during this "impact winter."

An important caveat: The feather doesn't prove that insulation differences caused the survival of modern birds. Scientists quoted in the article emphasize that extinction was probably influenced by multiple factors, and chance may also have played a role.

**Bottom line:** The fossil is valuable less because it definitively solves the mystery of bird survival and more because it provides an exceptionally detailed snapshot of a bird living immediately before the extinction. It suggests that feather structure—and possibly how birds replaced their feathers—could have been one factor influencing which bird lineages survived.