

Vermilion Flycatcher

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Bird of the Month by Grace Huffman

This summer, we were treated to a very special sight at Longmire Lake: a male **Vermillion Flycatcher!**

Male Vermillion Flycatchers look like fiery masked bandits, with a bright red head and lower body and a dark mask, wings, tail, and upper side. Females are much more muted with lots of brown and a tinge of color

near the base of the tail. And they're small: about 5.5 inches in length. Here in the US they are primarily found in the Southwest, and they winter along the Gulf Coast. But their range extends deeply into South America. Throughout their range there are many different subspecies, including some with more gray than red! They love the open country, and can also often be found in stream corridors out in the desert, where they will usually nest.

After nesting, they have been known to wander, which is likely how the one ended up at Longmire Lake near Pauls Valley, OK. He arrived in early or mid- July, and stayed until the end of August. Betsy Hacker and I went to see him in late July, and he didn't not disappoint.

Within 5 minutes of arriving at the boat docks where he hung out, we found him! And he put on quite a show, darting back and forth catching bugs and doing display flights. I've had a lot of lifers this year but this has been one of my favorites to this point!



President's Perspective

The COVID SUMMER OF 2020

Greetings to all members. As you may have heard the officers have decided that it just not "in the cards" to hold regular meetings. We have got to wait until it is safe for all, young, old and all others including our speakers. So NO MEETINGS IN SEPTEMBER THROUGH DECEMBER. We hope for an in-person meeting in January (remember Jan. meeting is the 4th Monday).

If you are like me you found a way to go birding often at one of our great local metro birding hotspots - although not much but heat in the summer, and few birds. My local hotspot is Mitch Park. Nothing exotic, but Bell's Vireo, Painted Buntings and hummingbirds (including 1-2 Black-chinned ones) helped the summer move along. Fish Crows and Belted Kingfishers, as well as most of the herons and egrets were seen daily.

Usually I was alone, very easy to comply with social distancing that way. Several times in July and August four of us got together, for more eyes and ears at Rose Lake, Stinchcomb east and west, Lake Hefner, Arcadia south end and Silver Lake. In

early July I made a trip to Denver, CO to take an entire car full of my oldest daughter's "stuff" that we had been guardian of for nearly 20 years. I went by way of Kenton,OK (4 days) and then on to Longmont, CO. That is right near Rocky mountain National Park. In Kenton I saw the summer resident pair of BRONZED COWBIRDS. Also Scaled Quail, Curved-billed Thrasher, Burrowing Owl, Bullock's Oriole, and many other local birds there.

While in CO at a bird sanctuary near Boulder I had Common Yellowthroats, Yellow, Wilson's and Virginia's Warblers, and a pair of Osprey among others. My daughter Heather is a rather good birder herself. She and I spent an entire day at 11,600 ft. Guanella Pass (near Idaho Springs) searching for the White -tailed Ptarmigan. We dipped on that elusive bird, but at least talked to several hikers that had seen them that day. Did see a Clark's Nutcracker. Had a great day birding with my daughter and lunch atop the pass.

On my return I stopped at the top of Raton Pass on I-25 at a RV park with many feeders and saw 4 species of hummingbirds: Ruby-throated, Black-Chinned, Broad-tailed and Rufous. I then drove the back roads over Johnson's Mesa Road to Capulin Vulcano where I saw Steller's Jay, Cassin's Kingbird, American Kestrel, and Say's Phoebe. Missed the Woodhouse Scrub Jay (common there) - darn. I managed 22 year birds for the entire trip.

COVID restrictions did not stop this birder. Done safely and with great results.

Finally wanted to tell you about an interesting article on the vision of hummingbirds. The author is a sensory ecologist, Mary Casswell Stoddard of Princeton University in the *Wall Street Journal*, Tues. July 14, 2020, page A10. It seems that her research shows that hummers have additional cones in their retina that enables vision in the ultraviolet range. She monitored 6000 hummingbird visits to feeders over 3 years that were light shielded to only the UV range. The birds could always find the one with the nectar no matter how many times they moved it. (See graph illustration on page 8.)

—Hal A. Yocum



Welcome to OKC Audubon

Eugene Rodrigues, Yukon, OK

Siobhan Gibbons, OKC

Ron Bush, Choctaw, OK

From Eagles to Atlas

September
2020

By Patti Muzny

Back in June, my birding sister, Nancy Vicars, and I finished the successful and entertaining monitoring of Bald Eagle nests in the Lake Eufaula and Kingfisher/Crescent areas. We monitored existing nests and also found a few new ones on our own that



were previously unknown. The eagles completed their nesting cycle and that project ended for this spring, so now we were ready to tackle the Sutton Center's atlasing project across the state. As birders, we really were not affected by the pandemic and the many restrictions on our "normal" activities. We rarely encountered other humans, since we were mostly working in rural areas. Our biggest challenge was heat and a lot of Oklahoma red dirt!

We located the "usuals" in our areas, but we also found a few surprises and had a lot of laughs. Birds can be pretty funny, but the humans who watch them provide quite a bit of entertainment as well. We were in Kingfisher County on an extremely windy day – one of those days where we could track the rapid advancement of the cold front due to the cloud of roiling dirt across the plains. A Scissortail nest was located when the male bird with a resplendent "scissortail" landed on the nest facing north in a gale force south wind. It appeared he was having issues with where to place that long tail while on the nest. His "scissor" kept blowing straight up, but he just kept on incubating. It was rather comical. Things we learned: The male Scissortail does most of the incubating.

On our first visit to Caddo County, we were sneaking down a narrow tree lined county road when an owl flew out in front of the car. That was pretty neat. On our second visit to the area, we drove the route in the opposite direction and Nancy was hoping to find the owl again. This time we were really excited when an adult Barred Owl AND a recently fledged youngster flew out of the trees! Confirmed as nesting!

The birding in Caddo County had a better variety of habitat and more birds than Kingfisher County, which is mostly farmland with few creeks and ponds. And of course, the McIntosh County area had more species. At the end of a dead end county lane near Lake Eufaula, we located a previously unknown Bald Eagle nest, which we will add to our list for the 2021 nesting season. We saw no eagles in the vicinity. In one of the Kingfisher County blocks, we did see an adult Bald Eagle flying across a field. We have noticed that although we had verified that Bald Eagles nested, when we revisited those nests, we didn't see any eagles.

Bobwhites are becoming more and more difficult to find, but we were delighted to see and hear them at several areas. Our favorite treat was to see one perched on a fence post at the roadside while he loudly proclaimed his territory. We hoped for a family group, but that was not to be.

In the farmland area near the Dover Marsh, which was not in a designated atlas block, there was a large heron rookery. This rookery was about a mile from our area, so what we saw there we were not able to count, but large flocks of Cattle Egrets were flying to and from the rookery, so we could count them on our list.

Even though at a glance, the Kingfisher County area appeared to be rather mundane, it's interesting how many species do nest there. We located Grasshopper Sparrows, Lark Sparrows, Dickcissels, Swainson's Hawks, Roadrunners, Cliff Swallows, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, quite a few Painted Buntings, Horned Larks, and Blue Grosbeaks.

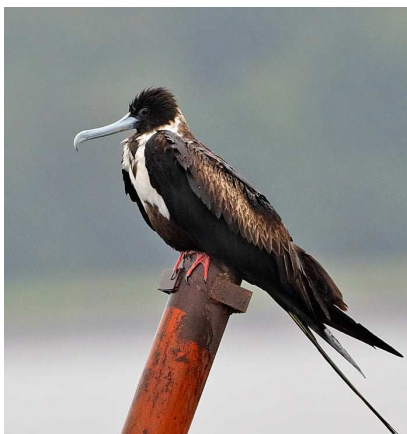
In McIntosh County, the Indigo Buntings outnumbered the Painted Buntings. We came across a pair of Black Vultures perched on a utility pole near an abandoned house. Had we been prone to trespass and wade through weeds taller than us that were undoubtedly saturated with chiggers, I'll bet we could have found their nest, but we settled for the pair in this case.

We spent nearly three months driving across our beautiful state and meeting a few friendly Oklahoma folks when they would stop to see if "you ladies" were OK, and had the opportunity to educate others about the many species of birds that nest in Oklahoma. Very much looking forward to the 2021 nesting season! If you haven't done so already, get in touch with the Sutton Center and volunteer to monitor eagle nests and/or Atlas Blocks. Stay healthy! Stay safe and enjoy the rest of Fall Migration!

Recorders Report

Summer 2020

What a busy summer for birdwatchers!! Thirty-one Breeding Bird Atlas blocks were assigned in eight central Oklahoma counties. But there are still quite a few left for next year for those that want to participate in nearby locations. For the first time all 12 counties have surpassed the 100 species mark with four counties over 200 species, and three others over 140 species. A beautiful rare red bird was found in Garvin county and just after the hurricane a Magnificent Frigatebird and two Jaegers briefly arrived in Tulsa county. Keep your eyes open for you never know what will visit. © Steve Metz



JUNE

On the 3rd Chris Butler came across Belted Kingfisher and Orchard Oriole at Bethel Acres in Pottawatomie County; and during a nocturnal count Mike Yough detected Common Nighthawk and Chuck-will's-widow near Perkins in Lincoln County. On the 4th Jimmy Woodard recognized Northern Parula during his Luther BBA plot. On the 5th Braden Farris turned up Cliff Swallow along OK-33 in Kingfisher County. On the 6th James Hubbell counted Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Brown Thrasher and Dickcissel in Seminole County; while Jerry Vanbebber got Ruby-throated Hummingbird at Bell Cow Lake in Lincoln County.



© Matt Gore

On the 7th in Grady County Matt Gore photographed Black-bellied Whistling Duck on the roof of a house near Minco and Jennifer Atwell found Gray Catbird in Chickasha. On the 8th Caleb McKinney observed Northern Bobwhite in Ninneka in

Grady County. On the 9th Chris Butler reported Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Yellow-breasted Chat at Maud Wetland in Seminole County and Black-and-white Warbler and Summer Tanager in Macomb in Pottawatomie County. On the 10th Cole

Sites saw House Finch at Cromwell in Seminole County. On the 13th Aaron Milligan discovered Wood Duck at Washington in McClain County.

On the 14th Scott Loss documented **Common Gallinule** at Cushing Water Treatment Plant in Payne County; and Richard Hasegawa recorded Northern Rough-winged Swallow



© Scott Loss

along the H E Bailey Turnpike near Chickasha. On the 17th Chris Butler identified Pileated Woodpecker at Paul's Valley Lake in Garvin County. On the 27th K Dean Edwards had Mississippi Kite along I-40 in Seminole County. On the 28th in Pottawatomie County Jerry Vanbebber located Northern Bobwhite and Great Egret at McCloud, Purple Martin at Wes Watkins Lake and Cooper's Hawk in Shawnee; while in Logan County Scott Loss spotted Blue Grosbeak on Hiwassee Road north of Langston University.

JULY

On the 3rd in Logan County Braden Farris found Little Blue Heron and Eastern Wood-Pewee at Cimarron National Golf Club at Cedar Valley; and Jerry Vanbebber came across Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at Mineral Wells Park. On the 4th at various locations in Kingfisher County Jerry Vanbebber added 18 species to that county's yearly count including Northern Bobwhite, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Common Nighthawk, Western Kingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Blue Grosbeak, Painted Bunting, Solitary Sandpiper, and Swainson's Hawk. On the 7th Someone had Fish Crow and Louisiana Water-thrush in Paul's Valley.



© Trina Arnold

On the 11th Trina Arnold photographed **Vermilion Flycatcher** at Lake R.C. Longmire in Garvin County which she first posted on the OOS Facebook page. The bird continued at the lake until the

end of August and into September. Meanwhile, several other new species for the county are being reported as birders visit the site to see this special bird. On the 15th Brian Marra detected Neotropic Cormorant at Lake Hefner – Prairie Dog Point. On the 16th Rod Lusey verified **Laughing Gull** at Arcadia Lake in Edmond. On the 18th Braden Farris watched Chimney Swift fly over the Kingfisher Golf Club; and Zach DuFran noticed White-winged Dove in Purcell in McClain County.



© Rod Lusey

On the 19th Brian Marra encountered Wood Duck, Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Hairy Woodpecker, and Northern Paula at Lake R.C. Longmire; and Zach Poland confirmed Green Heron in Shawnee. On the 20th Braden Farris observed Mallard, Chimney Swift and Forster's Tern at Lake R.C. Longmire. On the 24th Susan Mac recorded Rock Pigeon and Chimney Swift along I-40 in Earlsboro in Seminole County. David Schneider saw Mallard at Seminole State College and at Lake R.C. Longmire Spotted Sandpiper and Acadian Flycatcher. On the 25th Braden Farris viewed Rock Pigeon in Lincoln County; while Mike Yough identified Western Sandpiper at Cushing Water Treatment Plant. On the 26th Lisa Sellers had Western Meadowlark and Killdeer in Shawnee; and Mike Yough discovered Yellow-throated Vireo at Lake R.C. Longmire. On the 27th Patrick Dechon spotted Snowy Egret along I-40 in Seminole County. On the 30th Chris Butler counted Great Egret and Snowy Egret in Byars in McClain County.

AUGUST

On the 1st Don Pearson recognized White-faced Ibis flying over Elmore City Lake. On the 4th William Funk added Snowy Egret at Lake R.C. Longmire. On the 7th Joe Grzybowski documented **Laughing Gull** at Lake Thunderbird – East Sentinel in Cleveland County. On the 12th Susan Ross noticed Black-necked Stilt in Stillwater. On the 14th Cindy Crane detected Prothonotary Warbler at Guthrie Lake in Logan County. On the 15th Braden Farris described Olive-sided Flycatcher at Rose Lake in Canadian County; and Cody Delano found Western Sandpiper at Lake Thunderbird – East Sentinel. On the 16th Aaron Milligan located Little Blue Heron and



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Macomb.

On the 17th Scott Loss described **Laughing Gull** and saw Caspian Tern at Lake Carl Blackwell in Payne County. On the 19th John Tharp discovered Willow Flycatcher at Lake Thunderbird – East Sentinel. On the 20th Melinda Stringfield counted Prothonotary Warbler at Lake R.C. Longmire. On the 22nd Don Pearson spotted Green Heron, Osprey and Yellow Warbler at Elmore City Lake. On the 24th Jacob Crissup identified Forster's Tern at Lake Elmer in Kingfisher County. On the 25th Ron Clifton got Little Blue Heron near Rush Springs. On the 28th Joe Grzybowski confirmed Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Lake Thunderbird – East Sentinel. On the 30th Chris Butler came across Spotted Sandpiper, Black Tern, Forster's Tern and Least Flycatcher at Maud Wetlands and Least Flycatcher and Black-throated Green Warbler at Wes Watkins; while Grace Huffman and Elizabeth Hacker observed Mourning Warbler at NW 50th and Morgan in Yukon. As fall migration begins what returning birds will be seen?? Time to make plans for the biggest ever birding **October Big Day** on October 17th. For further details see <https://ebird.org/news/october-big-day-2020-bigger-than-ever>.



In the Central Oklahoma area during the summer of 2020, **166** species were reported with **3** new species bringing the total for 2020 to **287**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds. Information is accessed at: [ebird](http://www.ebird.org/subnational1/US-OK/region). 2020 eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Available: <http://www.ebird.org/subnational1/US-OK/region>. (Accessed: August 31, 2020). And occasionally from Facebook, the OK-BIRDS List and BBA information can be found at <https://www.suttoncenter.org/research/ok-bird-atlases-surveys/second-oklahoma-breeding-bird-atlas/>. I can be contacted by e-mail at emkok@earthlink.net. Esther M. Key, Editor.

Splits & Lumps

© ABA.org, Michael Retter

Based on recent changes by the American Ornithological Society's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of North and Middle American.

Say hello to Mexican Duck!

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Mexican Duck (*Anas diazi*)

Some of you may remember Mexican Duck as a species from pre-1983 bird books, such as the original *Golden Guide*. Well, it's back! After rejecting this split just two years ago, the committee reevaluated the situation in light of new genetic evidence and accepted the treatment of Mexican Duck as a full species. This follows the decision of Clements/eBird in 2018 to do the same, and it eliminated one of the four instances in which the AOS and eBird lists disagreed within the ABA Area.

(Like American Black and Mottled ducks, Mexican Ducks are "brown mallards" that lack a distinctive adult male plumage. Adult males resemble slightly darker versions of females with brighter yellow bills.



Mexican Duck, female

Mexican Ducks most closely resemble "Texas" Mottled Ducks (*Anas fulvigula maculosa*) but differ in having white borders to the speculum, slightly paler body plumage, a less prominent or absent black gape spot, and grayer (vs. peachy) cheeks with fine streaking.

Mexican Duck was lumped with Mallard for the last 37 years because the two interbreed in the southwestern U.S. Indeed, hybrids with Mallard are common at many locations, such as in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Compared to female Mallards, Mexican Ducks have darker (not white) tails, darker undertail coverts, darker bodies, duller bills, and have narrower white

borders to the speculum; they also tend to have greener speculums. Mallard ancestry is readily detectable in males by the presence of green on the head, rust on the breast, and/or curled central tail feathers. (Confusingly, an illustration of a "good" male Mexican Duck long appeared in the National Geographic guide with the label "intergrade". Thankfully, this is no longer the case. And confusingly, the Sibley Guide states that "virtually no pure Mexican [Ducks] occur in North America"—yet the species is a North American endemic!)

Mexican Ducks are mostly resident in interior Mexico north to the southwestern United States. They are commonly found as far north as Albuquerque, New Mexico, as far west as Yuma, Arizona, and as far east as McAllen, Texas. Post-breeding dispersal is made apparent by sporadic records from as far north as Utah, Wyoming, and Nebraska, as far west as coastal southern California, and as far east as South Padre Island, Texas. The species's status further north and east in Texas, the Great Plains, and Tamaulipas is greatly complicated by the presence of the extremely similar-looking "Texas" Mottled Duck, with which it hybridizes. (But with Mexican Duck's newfound status as a full species, birders in these areas may be more likely to scrutinize "brown mallards" and elucidate the situation there.) As many birders who have searched for wild Muscovy Ducks on the Rio Grande in south Texas know, Mexican x Mottled hybrids are routinely seen there.

Say goodbye to Northwestern Crow!

What many of us have long known has come to pass. In the words of the Supplement authors, Northwestern Crow is neither a species nor even a subspecies, but rather, a "geographic trend" within American Crow. Now we can all stop fighting with one another over how far north you have to be along the Pacific coast of North America to be able count a "Northwestern Crow".



At least 28 extinctions prevented by conservation action since 1993

Excerpt from *BirdWatchingDaily.com*.

Conservation action has prevented the global extinction of at least 28 bird and mammal species since 1993, a study published today shows. The bird species include Puerto Rican Parrot, California Condor, Hawaiian Crow, Guam Rail, Guam Kingfisher, Alagoas Antwren, Orange-bellied Parrot, and Black Stilt, among others.

Mammals that were prevented from being lost include Iberian lynx, red wolf, black-footed ferret, and Przewalski's horse.

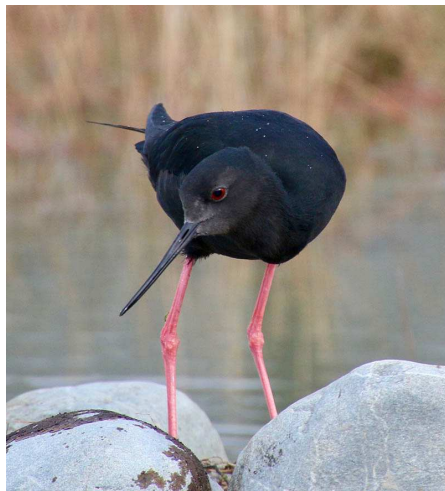
Publishing their findings in the journal *Conservation Letters*, an international team of scientists estimated the number of bird and mammal species that would have disappeared forever without the efforts of conservationists in recent decades.

Bird & mammal extinctions prevented

The researchers found that 21-32 bird and 7-16 mammal species extinctions have been prevented since 1993. The ranges reflect the uncertainty inherent in estimating what might have happened under hypothetical circumstances.

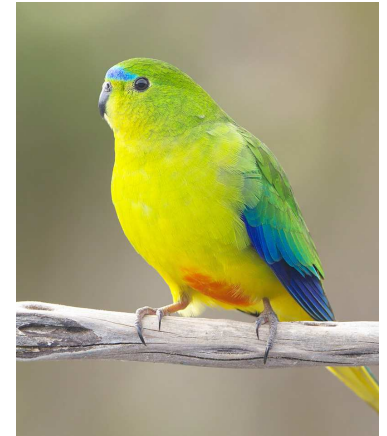
The study has highlighted the most frequent actions to prevent extinctions in these bird and mammal species. Twenty-one bird species benefited from invasive species control, 20 from conservation in zoos and collections, and 19 from site protection. Fourteen mammal species benefited from legislation, and nine benefited from species re-introductions and conservation in zoos and collections.

The research team, involving experts from BirdLife International, Newcastle University of the UK, Sapienza University of Rome, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and the Zoological Society of London, among others, identified bird and mammal species that were listed as threatened on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List.



Captive bred Black Stilt

Led by Dr. Rike Bolam and Professor Phil McGowan, from Newcastle University's School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, and Dr. Stuart Butchart, Chief Scientist at BirdLife International, the team compiled information from 137 experts on the population size, trends, threats, and actions implemented for the most threatened birds and mammals to estimate the likelihood that each species would have gone extinct without action.



Orange-bellied Parrot

Their findings show that without conservation actions, extinction rates would have been around 3-4 times greater.

McGowan, who leads an IUCN Species Survival Commission task force that provides scientific input into current negotiations on a new set of intergovernmental commitments on biodiversity and who is professor of Conservation Science and Policy at Newcastle University, added: "While this is a glimmer of hope — that if we take action we can prevent the irreversible loss of the last individuals of a species — we mustn't forget that in the same period, 15 bird and mammal species went extinct or are strongly suspected to have gone extinct."

Big Sit Scheduled

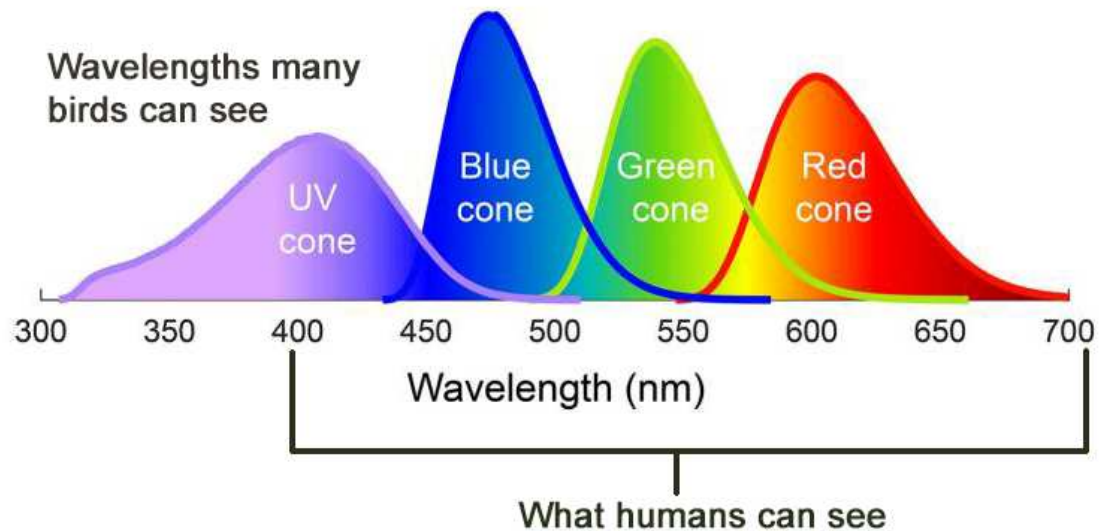
Jimmy Woodard has scheduled a Big Sit again this year for people who want to get out. Since the event is outdoors and birders come and go throughout the day (there are usually a limited number of people at any one time) social distancing is easy to accomplish.

Jimmy has extra masks and hand sanitizer and will provide a lunch or soup or chili, paper plates, utensils and light snacks and drinks. Everyone is encouraged to bring food and drink to share and their own lawn chair.

Friday October the 9th from 9 am—5 pm.

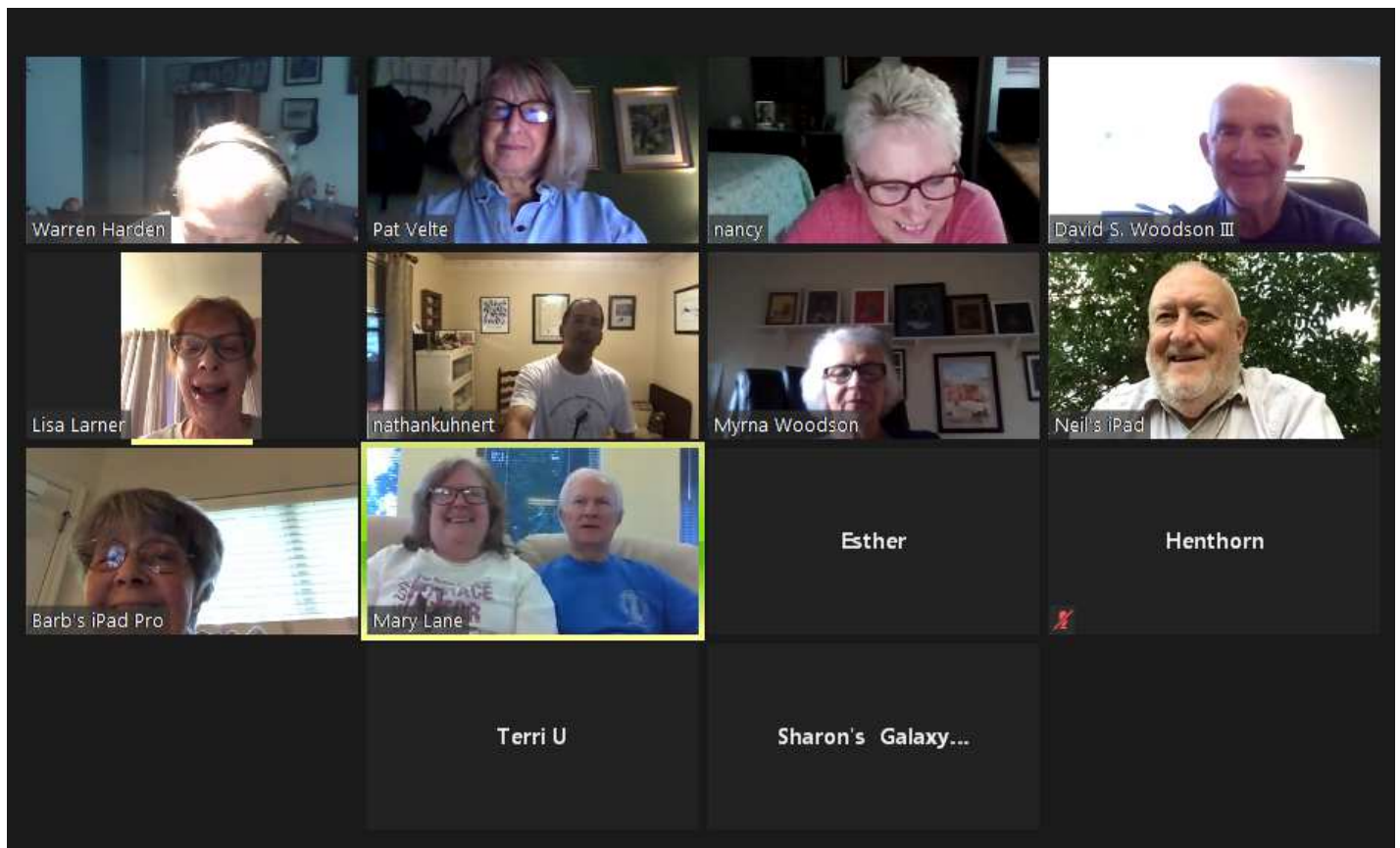
The raindate will be the following Friday, October 16th.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP either by phone, 405-365-5685, or email, j.woodard@cox.net.



Humans see spectral colors in wavelengths of light detected by three cones.

Sources: Stoddard Lab; Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Nature Communication



A Zoom Get-Together

Several Oklahoma City Audubon Society members responded to Warren Harden's invitation and participated in a Zoom online get together September 15, 2020.. For several, it was a first attempt at using the Zoom online app. A few others joined the group with audio only. If you would like to participate in a weekly or biweekly Zoom meeting to share and discuss birding activities, please send your email address and desire to join to Warren Harden at warhar@yahoo.com. Please include the day of week and time of day advantageous to you.