



Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

December 2015

Tall Bird Tales

Telling "Tall Bird Tales" will again highlight our annual December meeting on December 21, accompanied by holiday culinary delights and camaraderie. Bring yourselves and your anecdotes and yarns to regale fellow members with your wonderful, beautiful, harrowing or death defying birding experiences.

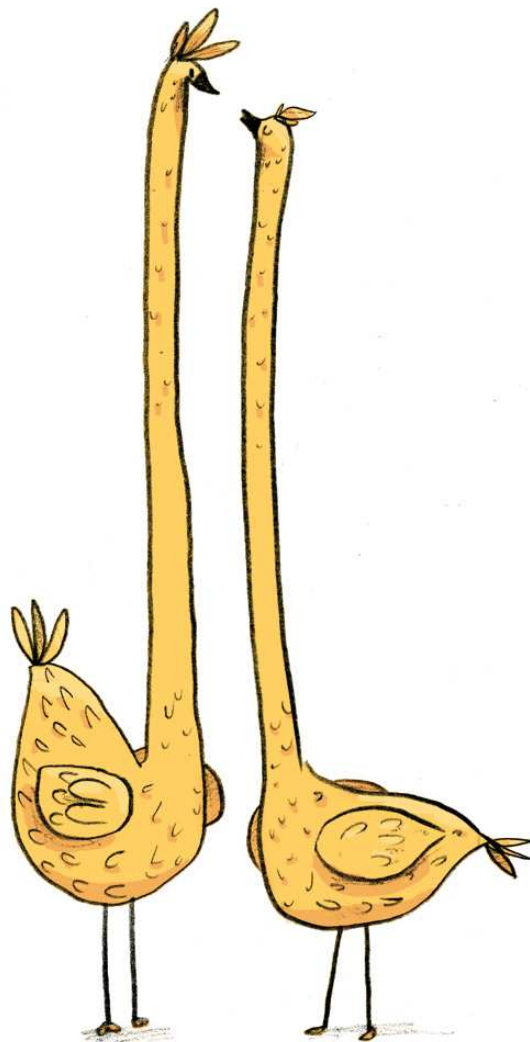
Some truly great birds have shown up in Oklahoma the past year and some truly great birders have had truly great times with those and many other birds, not only in Oklahoma but in other parts of the world.

Be certain to practice to insure the believability of your rendering. Come out for the fun and friendship and sharing. A good time will be had by all.

Our meetings are held September through June on the third Monday of each month (with the exception of January). They begin at 7 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center, I-44 and NW 36th Street. Visitors are always welcome.

Make a note!

The Will Rogers Garden Center is closed on the 3rd Monday of January 2016 in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. The January meeting will be held January 25, 2016.



Welcome!

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes new members:

Ann Thompson, OKC
Deborah Langley, Choctaw
Catherine Barrett, Norman
Cindy McIntyre, Lawton

DUES NOTICE

It's time once again to renew your annual membership for 2016. OCAS dues are \$15 per household and may be paid at the monthly meetings, online at our website <http://www.okc-audubon.org> or mailed to Nancy Vicars, Treasurer, 24 SE 57th St., OKC 73129.

REFRESHMENTS

Members are asked to bring a snack to share along with their story.

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin



Thanks to this year's Election Committee, we have a slate of candidates for the officer positions in 2016. The candidates are the same as the incumbents, Ted Golden - Parliamentarian, Nancy Vicars - Treasurer, Sharon Henthorn - Secretary, John Shackford - Vice President and the current writer - President. The election will be held at the

upcoming December meeting. The Election Committee was composed of Jimmy Woodard, Nancy Vicars and Marion Homier. These members took time between the October and November meetings to talk to the current officers and committee chairs and get their agreement to serve for another year. Their work was an essential service to the membership. Consider thanking them personally when the chance arises.

I thought we could take a break this month from the ongoing review of the passeroids. Instead we will look at a somewhat famous painting of a bird wing and see what we can take from it.



Albrecht Durer, *Wing of a Roller*, 1512.

It is the detached wing of a European Roller rendered in watercolor and gouache (opaque watercolor) by Renaissance artist Albrecht Durer, dated 1512. Durer was a contemporary of Leonardo da Vinci. Among many other things Durer is celebrated for his detailed illustrations of natural subjects. At the following link, click on the thumbnail image of the painting to expand it, and then click on the 'Fit width' button to expand it further, <http://goo.gl/USwq6P>. Compare the painting to the photos at the following links, Upper wing - <http://goo.gl/qpdK4h>, <http://goo.gl/HA0yvL>, <http://goo.gl/yzxpzZ>. Under wing - <http://goo.gl/rTMJcf>, <http://goo.gl/WxzD2>

Durer's painting shows the upper rather than the lower wing based on the brown scapulars, the rufous inner secondary coverts and the dark blue lesser coverts. It is hard to count the primary feathers in Durer's wing because the outer primaries seem to be doubled with a shorter, narrower companion lying to the outside of each of the three outer primaries. Leaving out the companion feathers, the total count is ten primaries which is the expected number. The companion feathers are mysterious. If they are added to the primary count the result is 13 total, a number with possible religious significance. Renaissance artists are often credited with working such religious symbols into their work. In comparing the colors of Durer's painting to the colors in the photos, it is apparent that the colorant he used for light blue has faded during the 500+ years since he applied it. The fading has produced areas that appear either whiter or greener than they should be, mainly the light bases of the flight feathers, the primary coverts and the secondary coverts rearward of the dark blue along the leading edge.

Durer's wing conveys a definite sense of three-dimensionality, a Renaissance innovation. Different feather groups appear to be at different distances from the viewer. Looking closely at individual feathers, most are plainly tilted, curved or bowed out of the plane of the painting. The unique structures and textures of the feathers in each of the different feather groups is apparent. The feathers are also distinctly imperfect. Almost every one shows a unique imprint of use in the form of torn webs and tattered edges. Each feather is an individual with its own position, purpose and scars born of experience. Perhaps this individuality is a reflection of the social revolution of the period, the new emphasis on the individual person as craftsman and owner, recorder and interpreter of events, theorizer on religion and morals and exponent of political ideas.

We are living through a new age of individual empowerment based on digital, mobile and internet. Technology is changing the practice of birding and the structure of the birding community. As knowledge and experience in the form of recordings, images, sightings data and behavioral information become ever more instantly accessible, the value of expert knowledge is inevitably diminished. Better and more economical optics, cameras and audio equipment are helping to make birding more accessible to people with ordinary sight and hearing. The power and prestige left to be had belongs less to those who have exceptional knowledge and capability and more to those who are adept at distributing knowledge and capability to others. Some will decry the substitution of technology for the long process of internalizing know how and experience and the training of sight and hearing. However the multitude who don't have ten or twenty years to invest in learning and who lack extreme sensory capabilities will be swept along by the tide of technology without even a conscious decision to forego the prescriptions and models of the past. Technology offers one great hope, that the more birders there are the more birds there will be. We should find a way to embrace it while still cultivating excellence in traditional birding skills.

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



I always have a moment of pleasant surprise when I see a **Cooper's Hawk** (*Accipiter cooperii*) fly over. Their flap-flap-flap—sail behavioral pattern is always a bit of a thrill, partly because most of the time I know I have just a few moments to observe the bird before it disappears. And if it is a fairly small *Accipiter* I know it may be a

Sharp-shinned Hawk instead: In wintertime—CBC time—we have both Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks.

It is particularly appropriate to discuss the Cooper's Hawk before our Christmas Bird Count. There are male and female size differences for both the Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawk. The two sizes that are not too difficult to identify are the relatively large female Cooper's Hawk (about 19 inches) and the quite small male Sharp-shinned Hawk (about 9 inches). But it is really tricky to separate the medium-sized male Cooper's (about 14 inches) and the female Sharp-shinned Hawk (about 13 inches): these two birds are about the same size, about the same color pattern, and both have the same flap-flap-flap-sail flight pattern. I hear that a number of falconers learn how to readily tell the differences between these 2 intermediate-sized birds, even in flight. I suspect that a number of the ones that hang around in backyards and watch for feeder birds may likely be Sharp-shinneds, but most of the ones I see while driving around seem to be Cooper's, usually the big females, which are fairly easy to identify.

Over the years I have become a little edgy about calling any of the "tweeners" either a Cooper's Hawk or Sharp-shinned Hawk. Some of it springs from a possible missed ID I made years ago. An excellent birder and I were in the field and saw a "tweener" and both of us thought it was a Sharp-shinned; we returned to the same area a couple of months later and found a pair of Cooper's Hawks and an active nest. I have kidded my friend about our possible

misidentification (and only a possible missed ID) by pointing out to my friend that I am just a "peon" birdwatcher, with no reputation to protect, but his background is such that he has considerably more standing than I—so what does he do if a mistake is made? Fortunately, my friend is a good sport about teasing—we are still friends.

Of course, we all make mistakes in bird identification. This subject brings to mind something John Newell once said: "If somebody tells you they have never made an ID mistake, you better check that person's bird records very carefully; we all make mistakes." The task, really, is to keep misidentifications to a minimum. (After this discussion don't all you Oklahoma City CBC counters turn in Cooper's Hawk when you really think you saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk!)



If it is in summertime, there is no identification problem of Cooper's, because the Sharp-shinned are not around—they nest far north of us—while the Cooper's nest here in central Oklahoma. They usually lay 4-5 eggs in a nest well up in a tree. In doing research on them in Cimarron County a number of years ago, I seemed to find the nests in areas where there were thicker forests of cottonwood trees that were about 2/3rds full-grown, rather than in areas with tall, well-spaced cottonwoods.

I believe the Cooper's Hawk, which feeds mostly on small birds has made a rather dramatic population recovery in central Oklahoma over the last decade or two. Dr. George Sutton, in his 1967 book *Oklahoma Birds*, makes no

mention of a declining population. But very roughly, from about the 1970s to about 2000, it is my opinion that the species became quite rare to nonexistent as a nesting species in central Oklahoma. This initial population decrease was probably due to the use of the pesticide DDT: DDT causes the eggshell of birds to thin, so that eggs will break just due to the weight on the eggs of an incubating adult. DDT became concentrated as it moved up the "food chain" and the Cooper's Hawk, being a top predator, was one of the worst sufferers of this eggshell problem from DDT. The use of DDT was banned in the U.S. in 1972, and I believe this resulted in Cooper's Hawks making a fairly dramatic comeback that has been most notable in the last 15 years or so.

Minutes of the Meeting

Audubon meeting minutes of November 16, 2015

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Diffin. Guest welcomed was Gailon Brehm of Plano, TX. Committee reports: Treasurer Nancy Vicars reports stable balances after multiple expenses were paid.

Christmas Bird Count chairman John Shackford will again coordinate this year's CBC on December 19, a Saturday. You should contact John by December 19 to get route info and bird lists and directions to the after-party. As usual, Diane Newell will welcome us into her home for a post-count get-together and dinner at her home.

Conservation Committee chairman Dave Woodson reports that MASS Architects plan a hearing about development of property near Prairie Dog Point at Lake Hefner. Those interested in attending should contact Dave.

Other field trips upcoming soon: none. The Lesser Prairie Chicken Festival will take place in Woodward from April 13-16; reserve a "lek-side-view" accommodation on the LPCF website.

The slate of officers chosen by the nominating committee has been announced and all current members agree to return to his/her position in 2016. Final election will be at the next meeting on December 21.

New business: Bob Holbrook will lead a field trip to Wewoka Woods in Seminole County on the first Sunday in May.

No other business; the business meeting was adjourned.

Presentation was by Dr. Doug Wood about his 2015 birding adventure in South Africa. There was a large turnout and the stories/slides were enthralling.

Next meeting of the OCAS will be December 21.

Remember that the January meeting will be on the fourth Monday-- January 25th as the garden center will be closed for Martin Luther King Day on the third Monday.

Recorded by the Secretary, Sharon Henthorn

Enjoy more bird sounds using new technology

Ed. Note: This is the first in a series of occasional articles featuring new technology and products to enhance birding experiences.

"I'll come right out and say it: Americans in general, and birders in particular, have a hang-up about hearing loss. Hearing loss is uncool. It's a sign that you're getting up there in years, that you're not the Young Turk you once were. I've been around the birding block more than once, and I can't begin to tell you how many times I've heard snickering about some poor sap who 'can't hear the Blackpolls anymore.' It's not that way with vision. A birder with corrective lenses isn't stigmatized. Noah Strycker, birding's reigning Young Turk, practically celebrated when he had LASIK surgery." -- *Ted Floyd, editor Birding Magazine.*

In Floyd's recent 3-part ABA.org blog series, "I'm Losing My Hearing," he wrote about coming to terms with no longer hearing birds like

Cedar Waxwings and Brown Creepers. He found a sympathetic voice from Laura Erickson's Tools of the Trade article in *Birding* magazine where Erickson discussed her recent use of hearing aids and compared the hearing aids with a

new device created by noted nature recordist Lang Elliott.



Elliott, who suffered severe hearing loss after an accident when he was eight, couldn't hear frequencies above about 3,000 Hz. Because of damage to his inner ear, not even the best hearing aids could help with these sounds. After 30 years working with battery operated pitch-lowering devices, Elliott and Cornell grad Herb Sussmann recently developed "The SongFinder--A Digital Bird Song Hearing Device." It consists of an electronic module that modifies sounds and headphones with miniature microphones.

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Let's Count Some Birds!

Christmas Bird Count 2015

Something I love about Christmas Bird Counts is that anyone with an interest in birds can participate and contribute valuable information. There are those who watch their home feeders for a little while, or more, on count day. Or if they do not have feeders up, count the birds they see in their yard and neighborhood. At the opposite end of the spectrum we have people like Jimmy Woodard who spends a tremendous amount of effort maximizing his group's list through a continuous count day "sprint." Everyone can participate at their own pace and for any amount of time they have available. Just keep a record of species seen and how many of each species you see.

This year's Christmas Bird Count is Saturday, December 19, 2015. Generally speaking, I hope most of you will cover about the same areas you covered last year, plus any new "sweet spots" you may have found in your area (or in someone else's area that you are pretty sure no one else knows about). If you have any questions to clear up, please contact me through the information given below.

Thanks for everyone's help on last year's CBC: We had 18 parties with a total of 49 observers and saw 116 species of birds! We usually run first or second in the state for total number of species seen. Last year I believe we were second only to Tishomingo Wildlife Refuge.

Christmas Count data are used in a number of ways: they help to identify bird species population problems—some of this population data, for example, is used to help set hunters' bag limits for game birds; the strength of bird invasions can be identified (looks like this is a Snowy Owl invasion year for the lower 48 states); bird data has even been useful in helping to support global weather changes (we are getting more birds that used to be found only south of us in winter, indicating a moderating weather pattern in winter). Some of the data is just plain fun. For example, our OKC count last year had the highest count in North America for Fox (W.) Sparrow:

apparently there is a Western and an Eastern population of Fox Sparrows and our count had the highest for the western population. We had 42 of them—who would have guessed we would be the leader!

The location of the After Count Tally Party has been changed to Patti Muzny's home, at 8516 S. Olie, in SW OKC. Patti, Sam and Brian Muzny have graciously offered to host us. Patti's phone number is 550-1337 should you need to contact her. If members want to contribute to the food, we encourage them to bring desserts; for major food items we will have Cheryl Allen's great chili, Patti's soup (she says it is really tasty, and Patti has good taste!), Bill Diffin's excellent pasta salad (for vegetarians or anybody else), and the Shackford's Corn Cheddar Chowder. We will also have sliced ham, cheese and rolls, along with other fixins' for the main items.

The party starts any time from 5 pm on. Nathan Kuhnert will read the bird list about 6:30. We look forward to seeing you there! It's a fun time to visit after a day of birding.

Directions to Patti's home are as follows: Go to I-240 and S. Walker; exit on S. Walker and go S. on it to SW 85th Street; turn right (west) on SW 85th Street and go to the second Stop Sign—where SW 85th intersects with S. Olie; turn the corner to the right (north) and just around the corner a few houses is 8516 S. Olie, Patti, Sam, and Brian's home: You are there! I look forward to seeing everyone!

John Shackford, Compiler
Oklahoma City Christmas Bird Count
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Home phone 405-340-5057
Email: Johnsshack@aol.com
Address: 429 E. Oak Cliff Dr.
Edmond, OK 73034--8626

Be as a bird perched on a frail branch that she feels bending beneath her, still she sings away all the same, knowing she has wings. —Victor Hugo

Recorders Report

Why worry about declining Monarch Butterflies?

As the beautiful fall weather turns into the first ice storm of the season, birders may be wondering why they should be concerned about the decline of monarch butterflies. After all the monarchs eat milkweed and are so nasty tasting that birds won't eat them. However, this fall there were lots of sunflowers blooming in patches along the wayside, but who was pollinating them? Because if no one pollinated the flowers, they will not turn into seed for the birds to eat this winter and thus the decline of monarch butterflies and other pollinators could lead to the starvation of birds.

Meanwhile, during this month which unusual warbler species was reported in which three counties? On October 30th Rachel Wrenn noticed a Short-eared Owl at Little River State Park. On the 1st Todd Alfes discovered Sandhill Crane at Lake Thunderbird's Alameda Drive Bridges, and Elizabeth Nichols saw an Eastern Screech-Owl in her yard near Oklahoma University. Deb Hirt found an Eastern Towhee north of Boomer Lake, and Bob Ellis had Wilson's Snipe at Jim's Sparrow Rest in Oklahoma County. On the 4th John Ault spotted



a Chipping Sparrow at Lake Louis Burtzchi in Grady County, and Cameron Carver reported Black-crowned Night-Heron at Lake Hefner City Docks. On the 5th Dr. Chris Butler located a Greater Roadrunner and Pileated Woodpecker in Choctaw.

On the 6th Joe Grzybowski and John Tharp identified a Sedge Wren along South Jenkins. On the 7th Donald Weidemann birded Wewoka Woods Camp, a restricted area in Seminole County, and located 36 species including Green-winged Teal, Red-headed Woodpecker, American Pipit, White-throated Sparrow and Spotted Towhee. At Rose Lake James Hubbell spotted a Common Yellowthroat and Swamp Sparrow. On the 8th in McClain County Joe Grzybowski noticed a Vesper Sparrow along Ladd Road; at the Goldsby Sod Farm a Merlin; and in Norman a Winter Wren while John Bates saw a Red-breasted Nuthatch along Melrose Lane in Oklahoma City.

On the 10th Steve Davis spotted a Horned Grebe along the west side of Lake Overholser; a Marsh Wren at Rose Lake and an American Pipit at the Mustang Road playas. On the 11th in Payne county Corey Riding identified Greater Scaup at the Meridian Technology Center Pond. On the 12th Scott Loss located LeConte's Sparrow and Purple Finches at Whittenberg Park. Matt Jung visited Lake Overholser and found a Brown Creeper and Sandhill Cranes. On the 14th Paul Cook reported a Ferruginous Hawk at the Goldsby Sod Farm in McClain County, and Joe Grzybowski discovered Le Conte's Sparrow at the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.



On the 15th Zach Poland saw Red-breasted Merganser and Common Loon on Liberty Lake in Logan County. On the 16th CH Hemphill found Brewer's Blackbird on a ranch in Logan County. On the 17th T K had a Pine Warbler in Norman, and Joe Grzybowski discovered an American Avocet at Lake Hefner's Prairie Dog Point. On the 18th Larry Mays spotted Hermit Thrush at the Cross Timbers Campground and Smith's Longspur and Eastern Towhee at the Draper Soccer Fields in Cleveland County.

On the 19th Hal Cantwell had a Red-tailed Hawk near Chandler in Lincoln County; Scott Loss saw the Pine Warbler at Lake Carl Blackwell; and Sharon Henthorn spotted a flock of Hooded Mergansers on Lake Hefner's Parkway Ponds. On the 20th Roy McGraw counted 15 Wild Turkey in Lincoln County; Jerry Taylor noticed Wood Ducks at Rose Lake, and Chris Williams identified a Prairie Falcon at Lake Carl Blackwell. On the 21st Dala Grissom discovered a Bald Eagle at the Shawnee Reservoir, while in Oklahoma City Lee Gosset reported a **Rufous Hummingbird** on his rose bush and feeder which was photographed by Deanne McKinney.



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On the 22nd Zach Poland identified Loggerhead Shrike and American Kestrel along SH#33 in Kingfisher County and at Whittenberg Park Scott Loss found Hermit Thrush and Smith's Longspur. At Taylor Lake in Grady County Linda and Bill Adams recorded American White Pelican and Red-headed Woodpecker while T K had a House Wren at Lake Thunderbird Little River Marina area. On the 23rd Dave and Sue drove around Lake Hefner and spotted lots of waterfowl including American White Pelicans, Pintail Ducks, and Horned Grebes.

On the 24th Aaron Reynolds saw a Horned Lark near Mulhall in Logan County and Corey Riding had Brewer's Blackbirds in Stillwater. On the 25th Deanne McKinney found White-faced Ibis at Rose Lake. In Norman Jennifer Kidney saw a pretty little male Pine Warbler flitting around in the tree. On the 26th Dala Grissom reported Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and American Goldfinch in her yard in Pottawatomie County, and Brian Marra discovered Brown Creeper and Pine Warbler at Martin Park Nature Center.



On the 27th Joe Grzybowski saw a Forster's Tern at Lake Thunderbird Twin Bridges. On the 29th T K had a Golden-crowned Kinglet at Lake Thunderbird Little River Marina area, while Brian Marra located Canvasback and Red-breasted Merganser at the John Marshall High School Pond.

On the 30th Noah Strycker, a writer, photographer, and adventurer who has embarked this year on an international Big Year, identified his 5,421 bird species this year. Will he get to 6,000 by the end of the year? As Noah says: "I'll go for it, but whatever the final tally, it has been an incredible adventure. I'm excited to see what this last month will bring!" And then on December 1st Noah achieved two milestones: his 6,000th life bird and 5,500th year bird... a Papuan Frogmouth.

And as our birding year ends what exciting sightings will we tally up especially on the Christmas Bird Counts. In the Central Oklahoma area **138** bird species were reported in November with **1** new species bringing the year's total to **287**. I appreciate those who help provide the history of central Oklahoma birds and can be contacted by e-mail at emkok@earthlink.net.

-- Esther M. Key, Editor.

Bird Sounds (cont.)

The SongFinder is an advanced digital device aimed at bird enthusiasts who suffer from high frequency hearing loss and who are unable to hear high-pitched bird songs in their natural surroundings. Unlike conventional amplifying-type hearing aids, the Songfinder works by lowering the frequency of high-pitched songs into a range where the user has normal or near-normal hearing.

Erickson wrote in her review: "When I added my hearing aids, nearby Nashville, Blackburnian, Black-and-white, and Black-throated Green Warblers came into sharp relief. I couldn't imagine that the SongFinder could do a better job than that. But when I turned it on and put on the headphones, the number of birds I heard tripled. I could hear high-

pitched singers from a much greater distance, and could pick up some nearby birds that my \$6,000 hearing aids missed high overtones I'd lost.

Headphones are obviously designed to place the earpieces against the ears. But I could easily hear the

sounds coming out of them when I wore them around my neck, the earpieces about five inches below my ears. I'm still thrilled at how much better things sound with my Phonak hearing aids.



"The SongFinder is entirely different: It picks up bird sound from a much greater distance and detects a higher number of nearby birds. It wasn't nearly as hard to figure out and adjust to the changed sounds as I'd expected.

Resources:

<http://new.lauraerickson.com/>

<http://aba.org>

<http://langelliott.com/>

<http://hearbidsagain.com/> (SongFinder site)

Oklahoma City Audubon Society
c/o Patricia Velte
1421 NW 102nd Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73114

Number of bird species reported in 2015 according to eBird www.ebird.org

	Nov	Oct	Sept	Aug	June	May	April	March	Feb	Jan
12 Kingfisher	119	119	119	119	107	099	072	072	041	041
11 Seminole	125	118	118	118	116	116	116	064	055	048
10 Grady	125	122	121	121	104	098	091	068	049	019
09 Lincoln	127	127	125	126	101	100	095	064	057	005
08 Garvin	130	130	130	130	128	123	091	075	019	000
07 McClain	133	127	126	125	118	111	085	068	059	045
06 Pottawatomie	134	131	131	130	129	129	105	076	044	035
05 Logan	166	163	155	148	147	140	118	101	087	053
04 Canadian	199	196	194	193	187	184	162	105	083	067
03 Payne	242	241	239	237	237	236	207	134	114	098
02 Cleveland	243	240	240	239	241	239	201	145	119	111
01 Oklahoma	243	242	241	237	233	228	199	143	128	115