Oklahoma City Audubon Society

OKC-AUDUBON.ORG

Birds as Pets

Join us March 21 when Tiffany LaLonde will give the presentation.

The program will center on the topic of birds as pets. Birds from tiny to condors have been kept by humans for many centuries. Not just for their ability to catch food for humans, such as falcons and cormorants do, but also for the pleasure of their beauty, such as with colorful finches and buntings, the pleasure of song, such as with canaries and cardinals, and the pleasure anthropomorphizing, such as teaching a parrot to talk. Canaries were kept in mines to warn workers of the presence of poisonous and explosive gas. One of our most famous pet birds in USA history is Peter, the Bald Eagle, a resident in the Philadelphia Mint in the 1830s and later a model for the eagle image on a minted dollar coin. Birds of all kinds worldwide are currently kept as pets, the most common being parrots.



So, this month's presentation is entitled "Parronting 101" by our own Tiffany Lalonde who will have her two members of the parrot family to illustrate the beauty and fun of conures as pets. Tiffany will focus on the basics of parrot ownership and discuss topics such as diet, habitat, and the challenges of captive care. She will also address some common misconceptions and misinformation about parrots.

Tiffany is a graduate of Middle Tennessee State University with a Bachelor's of Animal Science. She currently volunteers at the Oklahoma City Zoo and works at Neel Veterinary Hospital as a Veterinary Assistant. Tiffany has been a parrot owner since 2007. Educationally, she has recently been accepted into a Graduate Certificate Program in Zoo and Aquarium Studies at Western Illinois University and hopes that upon completion of that certificate to further pursue her education with a focus on exotic bird nutrition and behavior.

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

President's Perspective

By Bill Diffin

I am starting this article fresh off of our OCAS field trip to Hackberry Flat. There were 26 participants on the trip, the most for any club trip I have been on. It was a lot of fun to have so many people, and the numbers didn't hurt the birding thanks to the good management of the leaders, Lou and Mary Truex. We saw a long list of rare to uncommon species for almost



anywhere in Oklahoma: Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Blackcrested Titmouse, Lark Bunting, Cinnamon Teal, American Pipit, Eared Grebe, Burrowing Owl, Short-eared Owl, Barn Owl and Great Horned Owl. The Short-eared Owls were flushed from a field near the Headquarters, around ten owls with maybe four harriers. They all took flight nearly at once



and from a fairly long distance from the group. The mixture of Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls probably had something to do with the simultaneous eruption. The two species don't like each other as evidenced by the aerial skirmishes that birders occasionally see.

The Burrowing Owls were in two different den locations, a pair of owls at each. Apparently Blackcrested Titmouse is not a

hard bird to find in the area near the refuge if you know where to look. Golden-fronted Woodpeckers were discovered just recently at Hackberry Flat and are definitely new for the area. Sightings of Golden-fronteds are extremely unusual outside of the far southwestern corner of the state around the town of Eldorado. The two we saw appear to be a mated pair. Perhaps they will nest and found a population. We saw a male Northern Harrier engaged in a continuous series of identical diving loops, down and up, down and up, about fifteen or twenty times over a stationary spot on the ground. This behavior might have been a courtship display for the nearby female, or it might have been a hunting method which was intended to startle a rodent from cover. Northern Harriers are known for their looping courtship flights, called skydancing. There are videos of it on the Arkive website. Since courtship flights are presumably designed to prove fitness, it would not be surprising if the courtship flight pattern mimics a hunting technique. Our group of birders was friendly, orderly and courteous. The new members got all the help they wanted with sightings and identifications from the more experienced. It was a very nice day for our club.

Apart from a few interruptions, for about four years in this space we have been working a lever on the vast diversity of the Passeriformes order, attempting to generalize the characteristics of birds we know in North America to other related birds worldwide. We have treated all nine of the major passerine supergroups (superfamily or higher taxonomic rank) we selected for separate study. In last month's article we finished up with the characterization of the Passeroidea superfamily which was the last of the four superfamilies in the infraorder, Passerida. However there are a number of families and genera in Passerida which don't fit comfortably into any of the four superfamilies. We knew this when we began, and so we created a tenth group for the "none of the above" families and genera in Passerida which we called Other Passerida (February 2012 PP).

One version of the situation with Passerida can be seen in the phylogenetic tree on the following ToL page, <u>http://goo.gl/</u> <u>VNvz3a</u>. The six families and one genus in the tree are so distant in their relationship from each other and from any of the four superfamilies that they might best be treated as



superfamilies in their own right albeit very small ones. Except for the Regulidae (kinglets) none of them contain species resident in North America, so with the exception of the kinglets they are not accessible to our method of trying to learn something about their characteristics

outside North America by characterizing their North American members. A more current treatment of Other Passerida is given in the following article in Wikipedia in the sections titled "Passerida incertae sedis" (definitely belong in Passerida but the placement in relation to the other groups is uncertain) and "Probably not Passerida" (probably better placed in Corvoidea or in the basal songbird Australasian grade) https://goo.gl/PbYrok. The Wikipedia article suggests a couple of possible Other Passerida superfamilies which are treated at lower rank on the ToL site. Possible superfamily Bombycilloidea consists of Bombycillidae (waxwing family), Ptilogonatidae (Phainopepla and relatives, i.e. silky flycatcher family), and two species in monotypic (one species) genera, the Hypocolius (image https://goo.gl/ffxqsx) and the Palmchat (image https://goo.gl/Y76SRP). We had passed the waxwings and their relatives by in our characterization of the Muscicapoidea due to ToL's uncertainty about their placement as indicated by question marks, http://goo.gl/QLDHIR. Wikipedia also suggests a possible superfamily Paroidea containing Paridae (chickadees, titmice and relatives), Remizidae (Verdin and relatives) and Stenostridae (Fairy Flycatcher and relatives, image https://goo.gl/pzM1Am). We treated them as part of the Sylvioidea per ToL, http://goo.gl/wTf2Bm. More on Other Passerida next month.

Bird of the Month

By John Shackford



The **House Wren** (*Troglodytes aedon*) is a fairly frequent migrant through central Oklahoma during spring and fall, although it does not advertise itself well. But during winter and the breeding season, it is a "just barely" bird. Just barely does it reach central Oklahoma in the winter; we are on the northern fringe of the wren's range in winter. On our Christmas Bird Count we usually see one about

every 2-3 years. During this last Count, Nathan Kuhnert found one in the vegetation at the north end of Lake

Overholser. Since our Count is in early winter, there is no guarantee that this particular bird hung around for the rest of the winter.

In summer, it just barely reaches central Oklahoma, on the very southern edge of its breeding range, although it can be found more commonly in summer than winter. Diane Newell, and before that her father John Newell, has one nest in a box in her yard about every summer. If



year. As I recall I could verify only 1 nestling—I do not even remember how I determined that. Perhaps I saw it at the entrance hole when the adults came to feed the young. Summer-time heat may have gotten most of the brood.

Then I got to looking around in the surrounding blocks of Duncan and came up with another singing House Wren a couple blocks away. It was in a back yard that had nice habitat—in the way of watered plants and garden vegetable plants. The wren had apparently tried to start a nest, based on sticks that protruded from the entrance hole of a nest box there. But I never picked up any evidence that the nest box was actively being used: a single male house wren will start several dummy nests from which the female makes its final selection for its real nest. Later, when checking with the owner of the yard, it

> turned out to be the yard of Frances Neeld and her husband, longtime members of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society: what a coincidence!

> Many years ago (maybe 1985 or so) I had an interesting encounter with House Wrens in the northwestern part of the state. I was making a checklist of Panhandle birds for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. Just barely inside the eastern edge of the Oklahoma Panhandle, and I do mean "just": if you go west out of Laverne, Oklahoma, about 5-6 miles you will have a highway course correction, a section correction, as you enter the Oklahoma Panhandle. Within a quarter of a mile inside the Panhandle, you will come to a huge plot of wind breaker trees, most of

you really look, there are a few around, particularly in towns. I think the magic habitat for them this far south is well-watered, luxurious, vegetation that now grows up around well-tended yards in our towns and cities. I believe it was Dr. George Sutton's opinion that summertime heat is the limiting factor on the wren's breeding range, coming southward. It just gets too hot, especially in nests with young, to allow the birds to rear young successfully.

I was once very pleased to find a noteworthy nest because it was so far south—in Duncan, Oklahoma, in the south central part of the state. I do not know what got me to looking, but I found a House Wren in a yard there and eventually found, in the middle of a front yard, a nest hole in a mimosa tree, of all places. Clearly, some other bird, probably a Downy Woodpecker, had drilled the hole during a previous year, and the wren used it in this later them silver maple trees I believe, along a usually dry creek course. I started hiking south in this extensive patch of trees and I began hearing House Wrens singing. I walked maybe one-third mile and in this distance I heard maybe 30-40 of them! Never have I seen the likes of this number anywhere else; it occurs to me that it may have been the most concentrated population of House Wrens anywhere in the wren's range that year. One caveat: rather than nesting birds, it could have been a concentration of House Wrens still in migration—I do not remember the date. I have not checked this area in many years, but I suspect it is still full of House Wrens.

The House Wren usually lays 6-7eggs, although it can vary from 5-8. The species is known for nesting in a number of unusual places, such as pockets of clothes hanging outside (scarecrows, clotheslines), tin cans, flowerpots, and in the engine of unused cars--sometimes even around the engine of used cars.

Chirpings

By Patti Muzny

February/March 2016



Spring has sprung up all around us and it's always fun to be able to spend some quality time out of our homes and absorb the sights and sounds of a new season. A few household dust bunnies and a pile of paperwork don't affect me as much as it should, I guess. I will choose the outside world of nature.

A few weeks ago

our back yard was picked as a stopping place for hundreds of grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds. For over a week they shrieked and gobbled up every morsel of birdseed available. They even chased off the generous population of White-winged and Eurasian Collared Doves. This invasion happens every year as these birds migrate.

One Saturday afternoon I was taking a break from flowerbed weeding and had curled up on the lawn furniture under our patio to rest. On the shelf of our gas grill we had left a piece of a limb that had a woodpecker hole in it. Didn't even think about wrens or chickadees spotting it. We have various birdhouses on our acre with various hole sizes.

I sat very still and a Bewick's Wren flitted up to the piece of wood with a small white dove feather in its beak. It enthusiastically made several attempts to get that feather into the woodpecker hole. Finally it gave it up and flew away, dropping the feather into the yard. Currently there is a lot of singing and fussing going on in our yard. We'll see which home site Mama chooses this year.

Another evening I watched a male Eastern Bluebird flapping his wings and singing his heart out in the top of our large pecan tree. We have a few bluebird houses, but the English Sparrows are incredibly aggressive and have claimed the favored bluebird house. I just keep hoping. And I hope there is a female Bluebird in the neighborhood. On the weekend of the Backyard Bird Count (February 13-14, 2016), we counted birds in our backyard on Sat-



urday and at Byars on Sunday. In Oklahoma City we tallied 25 species, including a nearly all-white English Sparrow and at Byars we had 40 species, including a surprisingly large and unusual number of 25 Purple Finches – 15 at our feeder and 10 down along our creek. We also got to add 4

American Woodcocks that displayed just after sunset.

On March 6th, I was hiking on our Byars property and found a sheltered copse of trees out of the wind and was thoroughly fussed at by a pair of Carolina Chickadees. I began to "pish" and suddenly that copse of trees was chock-full of birds. There were Chickadees, Field Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, Purple Finch, a Towhee, 25-30 Robins, Cardinals, a Sapsucker and a Downy Woodpecker. Quite a treat on a windy, mild Sunday afternoon. Enjoy Spring!

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

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Publicity	Doug Eide	495-8192
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Refreshments	Sue Woodson	601-622-3467
Webmaster	Pat Velte	751-5263

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

For up-to-dateOklahoma City Audubon news log onto: OKC-Audubon.org

February 15, 2016 OCAS minutes

Meeting called to order by President Bill Diffin.

Minutes of 1/25/16 were approved without objection.

Treasurer Nancy Vicars reported \$5802 in the account.

Conservation chairman Dave Woodson described the upcoming Martin Park Earthfest which will be held on Saturday April 30. Volunteers are needed to cover the time between 1:00 to 4:00.

Conservation litter pick-up. Sharon Henthorn requests each member take an hour or so to pick up litter at Lake Hefner's Prairie Dog Point when weather allows. Reachers and trash bags are available.

Conservation litter pick-up. Sue Woodson announced the Nature Conservancy south of Ada will have a cleanup from 10-4 on February 27, Saturday.

Field trip: March 5, Saturday. Hackberry Flat in Tillman County will be hosted by Lou and Mary Truex. Meet at the headquarters building near Frederick at 10:00.

Field trip: May 1, Sunday. Wewoka Woods. Plans will be announced soon.

New member Grace Kaspar-Kirch attended.

The group shared recent fun sightings of birds seen this month. There was no other new business, meeting was adjourned.

After break, we were entertained by Jelena Bujan, a PhD candidate at OU, who is studying ants and their behaviors all over the world. At Panama's Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, she studies the effects of fertilization of the soil on the nomadic habits of tropical ants. What an eyeopening presentation!

Meeting for next month will be Monday, March 21 at 7:00pm.

Sharon Henthorn, secretary

What Makes a Good Birder?

By Kenn Kaufman (Facebook, February 16, 2016

Occasionally I'm asked: What makes a good birder? Is it the person with the biggest list, the person who finds the rare birds, the person who can ID the most challenging species? Actually, I don't like such definitions. Those could be good things to strive for - only IF you want to - but they're not the most important criteria. So I have a simpler answer. I wrote this in the intro to my field guide several years ago, and I still think it applies.



...so if you enjoy it, you're a good birder. If you enjoy it a lot, you're a great birder. - Kenn Kaufman

Upcoming Field Trip

APRIL 30 – Big Sit: Marion Homier and John Cleal are opening up their property in Choctaw for an unofficial 'Big Sit'. Address is 3626 Santa Fe Drive, Choctaw, OK 73020. Phone 405 390 2001 or email at: johncleal2@yahoo.com. They live in the Railhead Addition. Santa Fe Drive is off Triple X, in the section of Triple X between SE 29th and SE 44. We will be open from 9 am until the light fails. It is suggested visitors bring folding chairs. In the event of rain, we will reschedule for the following Saturday, 7 May. We suggest intending visitors phone us before hand and leave their phone numbers, so we can advise them if there is a last minute postponement due to weather. Details pending. Leader: John Cleal (johncleal2@yahoo.com)

Recorders Report Early Birds

As winter winds down, the early bird summer nesters arrive as late winter migrants and quite a few people took part in the Great Backyard Bird Count. Tis time to clean out the Bluebird and Purple Martin houses for they will be arriving and nesting shortly. Eastern Phoebes have arrived and can be heard singing in the woods. The large flocks of geese are smaller and pairs can be seen wandering together. Ah, yes, spring is just around the corner. Even so there is still time to include birds and butterflies in this year's garden planting plans.

On the 1st Kelly Raines noticed Le Conte's Sparrow in the Timber Ridge Neighborhood in Oklahoma City. On the 2nd Megan Haughey and Samantha Cady reported a **Lark Sparrow** at Sanborn Lake in Payne County. On the 3rd Laura Madden saw a Purple Finch and Hairy Woodpecker at Spring Haven in McClain County; and Steve Davis, Mary and his brother spotted a



Horned Lark at Lake El Reno. Meanwhile, Jim Jorgensen was looking for Greater Roadrunners but instead discovered a **Prairie-chicken** along I-240 just north of Draper Lake. On the 5th Christie Stoops detected a Brown Creeper at Cottonwood Creek in Logan County. On the 6th Zach Poland birded Dover Marsh in Kingfisher County and recognized Canvasback, Redhead, Ross's Goose, Horned Lark, and American Tree Sparrow. Joe Grzybowski checked the east side of Lake Hefner and among the gulls he identified were Lesser Black-backed, Thayer's and a Glaucous Gull. At Lake Carl Blackwell Tim O'Connell came across Winter Wren, LeConte's Sparrow and a **Western Grebe**.

On the 7th Eric Duell birded the Red Barn Land in Kingfisher County and located a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, and Brewer's Blackbird. In Lincoln County, Joe Buck had a Ring-necked Duck at Buck Lake. Scott Loss identified Snowy and Ross's Goose at Whittenberg Park in Stillwater. On the 8th Scott had his bike commute delayed by a group of at least a dozen Rusty Blackbirds at the north Boomer Creek parking lot in Stillwater. On the 11th Dala Grissom detected a Redhead Duck at Tecumseh Lake, and Roy Cruz counted Red-breasted Merganser at Boomer Lake Park in Stillwater.

On the 12th the Great Backyard Bird Count began and was greatly supported in central Oklahoma. On the 13th in Pottawatomie County Tim O'Connell spotted a **Barn Owl** at Shawnee Reservoir, Brandon Vicknair had a Redheaded Woodpecker, and Donald Winslow found a Carolina Wren at Catalpa Cottage. In Logan



County Melinda West noticed a White-throated Sparrow, Pine Siskin and Spotted Towhee. In McClain County, Phil Floyd counted Pied-billed Grebe in Purcell. In Grady County Renee Kendall saw a Red-shouldered Hawk in Bridge Creek. In Payne County Scott Loss encountered a Lesser Black-backed Gull at Boomer Lake Park, and Ashley Love noticed an Orange-crowned Warbler in Stillwater.

On the 14th Jeaneen Canfield identified a Greater Roadrunner, Cooper's Hawk and Brown Creeper in Seminole County. In Pottawatomie County Hope McGaha spotted White-breasted Nuthatch, Harris's Sparrow and Pine Siskin. In Wynnewood in Garvin County John Zempel discovered a Carolina Wren and Golden-crowned Kinglet. In McClain County east of Bvars an American Woodcock, Barred Owl, Hermit Thrush and Pileated Woodpecker were reported. In Canadian County Chad Ellis saw a Ross's Goose at Lake El Reno; and Brandon Mace noticed a Redbreasted Nuthatch at Lake Carl Blackwell. Tim O'Connell saw a Barn Owl in eastern Oklahoma City. On the 15th Delores Seymour tallied Wild Turkey and Purple Finch at her home in southwest Oklahoma City.

On the 20th Calvin Rees saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk near Carney in Lincoln County. On the 21st Zach Poland came across a Golden-crowned Kinglet and a Hermit Thrush in Logan County. Joe Grzybowski discovered Western Meadowlark at the Goldby Sod Farm. Caitlin Laughlin found American Woodcock at West Richmond Road in Payne County. Elizabeth Pratt noticed a flock of **Sandhill Cranes** near Calumet. On the 21st Calvin Rees spotted a Prairie Falcon at Rose Lake. On the 24th Chris Williams discovered a flock of **Short-eared Owls** near the Stillwater Regional Airport. (*continued on pg. 7*)

Recorder's Report (cont.)

On the 26th at Lake Konawa in Seminole County, Monte Orr reported American Coot; and Scott Loss documented **Lapland Longspur** in Payne County near the

Stillwater Regional Airport.

On the 27th Jimmy Woodard birded Meeker Lake in Lincoln County and encountered Ruddy Duck, Hairy Woodpecker, and Whitethroated Sparrow. Tom Johnson saw an American



Wigeon on the Norman Spur Turnpike. Zach Poland discovered a **Ladder-backed Woodpecker** near Guthrie. Joe Buck spotted a **Great Egret** at the OKC Zoo Lake. On the 28th Linda Adams identified a Black Vulture and Eastern Phoebe at Taylor Lake in Grady County; and Deanne McKinney reported a flock of Greater Yellowlegs at the North Mustang Road Playa.

In February 2016, in the Central Oklahoma area **137** bird species were reported with **9** new species bringing the year's total to **151**. 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.

Welcome!

The Oklahoma City Audubon Society welcomes new members:

Kate Burger, Moore, OK Carrie Cooke, Ada, OK

Refreshments

Refreshments for the March meeting will be provided by:

SNACKS: Larry Mays and Scott Jantz

DRINKS & ICE: Nancy Vicars

Hackberry Field Trip

by Jimmy Woodard

A group of 23 birders met up at Hackberry Flats headquarters at 10AM, Saturday, March 5 for an OKC Audubon field trip. Lou and Mary Truexgraciously led us around the property and surrounding areas.

We started with a almost a dozen Short-eared Owls in a field north of the headquarters. They all came out very quickly at once so we proceeded no further into

the field to limit their disturbance. Next we had a couple of Barn Owls in a barn on the south edge of the WMA.

We then headed to a couple of county roads southeast of Grandfield where we relocated the pair of Golden-fronted Woodpeckers possibly investigating a nesting hole.

At another stop, we

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called up Black-crested Titmice. A few folks saw another Barn Owl roosting in some trees along a creek. An Eastern Screech Owl responded but we couldn't see the bird. We also found Vesper Sparrows and some Lark Buntings as we travelled the dirt roads.

On the way back to the WMA, we found a beautiful Ferruginous Hawk perched on a power pole. At the big cotton gin on Hwy 70, we flushed two Great Horned Owls and another Barn Owl. Back at the headquarters, most of the group had a picnic lunch while some of us went into Frederick for lunch, including my group. After lunch, my car found a pair of Burrowing Owls attending a nesting hole in a dirt embankment of a pond east of the refuge.

Lou found the rest of the group that continued to bird on the refuge several nice birds like Dunlin, dowitchers, Baird's Sandpipers, Blue-winged Teal, several Cinnamon Teals.

Thanks to all who attended and OKC Audubon hopes they all had a fun day of birding.

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

How many birds can we find in a single day?

Contributed by Esther Key

Global Big Day, 14 May 2016. A single day, uniting birdwatchers worldwide across political boundaries and language barriers, all brought together by our shared passion for birds. In 2015, 14,000 people from 135 countries took part.

In 2016, will you join us? It's simple to contribute: go birding and then submit your data to eBird—how easy and fun is that? You don't need to do a full day of birding; even an hour or 10 minutes makes a difference!

How do I make my sightings count? To have your sightings be included in the Global Big Day, they have to be entered in eBird as one or more checklists. Go to <u>http://eBird.org/globalbigday</u> to learn more. Don't forget, every bird counts for the Global Big Day. Whether it is a Red-winged Blackbird in your neighborhood or a critically endangered species on some remote island, eBird and the world want to know about it.

How can I follow the Global Big Day results? http://eBird.org/globalbigday. This page will be updated throughout May 14th with sightings and photos from eBirders worldwide. Team eBird will also be posting updates here. Use **#GBD2016** to join in and share on Facebook or Twitter, and perhaps you'll be featured on the Global Big Day summary page!

And for Serious Birders: Get your competition on. On May 14th, we're all working together to compete against last year's total. How many species can we coax out of the corners of our planet in one day? The number to beat: 6,085. Can we do it? Apart from the global goal, consider some friendly competition: ***county vs. county,*** state vs. state, or even country vs. country! In GBD 2015, Peru narrowly edged out Brazil for the most species. That friendly competition drove the species total through the roof, got people eBirding like crazy, and created 1000s of checklists. Can you create a similar competition? Esther's challenge: ****Can we cover all of the central Oklahoma counties on the count? Who can count where?** And check out the t-shirt**. http://shorepromotions.com/ebird_store

Of course, most importantly, get outside, see some birds, have fun, and contribute your sightings to global bird conservation! Thanks for being a part of a truly Global Big Day.