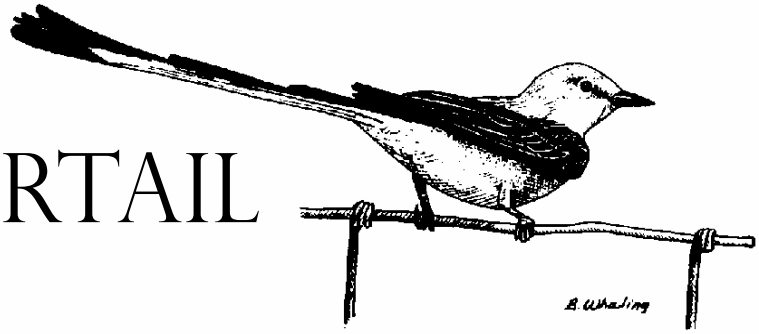
TULSA SCISSORTAIL



TULSA AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
VOL. LXVI, NO. 4

SUMMER 2005

EDITOR: PETER LOWEN

From the President

Thank you to all our members, committee members and officers for another wonderful year of Tulsa Audubon activities. Every month has brought us exciting field trips and very interesting, informative programs. And the newest TAS activity, the Audubon At Home in Tulsa - Gardening For Wildlife program continues to be a huge success. Thanks again to everyone for all you do for Audubon!

Speaking of the Garden Tour, be sure to get out and support this year's tour on June 11-12, featuring five homes in Owasso. We also need many of our TAS members to volunteer to help sell tickets that weekend. If you can help please contact Jan Curth at 747-4017 or Jgpj@cox.net. Volunteers receive a free ticket.

I want to welcome John Fisher and Brandon Scott to our Board of Directors, who are replacing Bob Gard and Patty Moser, whose terms are expiring. Gail Storey will be our new vice-president, and all of our other officers are returning, including me! Thanks to Bob & Patty for your service, but I'm certain you will still be involved as ever!

One major conservation effort I need to report on is the proposed "Master Plan" for Mohawk Park. A group of concerned people, including many from TAS, have been meeting to formulate a response. I can report that the proposed soccer complex has been removed from the plan. We are still waiting for the city to again start work on the rest of the plan – but the soccer fields was by far the biggest impact of all the proposals, so this is excellent news.

As always, please contact me at 809-6325 or johnkennington@cox.net with any questions or concerns about Tulsa Audubon.

John Kennington

TAS Upcoming Events

Tuesday Morning Birders. The Tuesday Morning Birders meet at 7:30am April through October, at the Tulsa Garden Center.

First Saturday of every month. Bird with Oxley Nature Center Staff in Mohawk Park. Meet 8:00 am at parking lot. Call 669-6644 for details.

June
11-12 **Audubon at Home in Tulsa** Your favorite Backyard Habitat Garden Tour is now sponsored by Tulsa Audubon. Tours 9 to 5 Saturday and 12 to 5 Sunday. For details contact Carol Eames, 446-2720.

June
25-26 **Field Trip** Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for Black-capped Vireos and then to Hackberry Flats with Joe Grzybowski . Contact Cyndie Browning, 492-5622, or Patty Moser, 252-2824.

July
8-10 **Field Trip** Bats and Birds. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation leads evening tours to the Selman Bat Caves near Freedom, OK. Advance registration required. See Information page 2. Contact Peter Lowen, 296-3093.

Bats and Birds!!

Your editor is coordinating a field trip for the weekend of July 7-9 to see the bats of the Selman Bat Caves near Freedom, OK. I am for TAS to attend the Thursday evening outing, but if it is full, the Friday should work just fine. For an additional fee, you can join the ODWC astronomers after the Bat Watch for an evening under the stars. Of course during daylight hours we'll be birding, and during the heat of the day we can visit the Alabaster Caverns to cool off.

Want to come along for the fun? As the OK Dept. of Wildlife Conservation requires advance registration (and advance payment: $10/adult & $5/youth under 12), sign up at the ODWC website www.wildlifedepartment.com/05Batabout.htm. Contact me so I can organize activities somewhat (296-3093, thelowenfamily@aol.com), or just go incognito.

Nickel Preserve Spring Count

I hope that many of you will be able to attend the fourth annual J. T. Nickel Family Nature and Wildlife Preserve Spring Bird Count on Saturday, May 28th from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. We should get lots of warblers, vireos, tanagers and other exciting birds!

We will be meeting at the Eagle Bluff resort parking lot on Hwy 10 just a few miles northeast of Tahlequah. Newcomers are very welcome and can contact me for more specific directions (revels@nsuok.edu, (918) 456-5511, x-3824).

I will pass out checklists and we will organize into groups with assigned areas. Folks can lunch on their own, and we will meet back at the Visitors Center/Preserve Headquarters at 3:00 for Spaghetti and whatever potluck dishes people feel like contributing. At that time we will compile a species list for the day (with numbers to be tabulated later).

I look forward to seeing you all there!

Mia Revels
Tahlequah OK

North American Life Bird #487

Over the weekend of April 14-16, 60-ish Oklahoma birders descended on Broken Bow, ostensibly for the annual OOS meeting. Actually, the goal was to bird the Little River NWR and Red Slough WMA, guided by Dr. Mia Revels and Berlin Heck, respectively. They valiantly tried to show each of us birders all the birds, but for any variety of reasons there weren't a huge number of birds to be seen. So we enjoyed the camaraderie of other birders, groaned at Berlin's jokes, and appreciated the birds we did see.

The big draw was the opportunity to see a Swainson's Warbler. For those good readers who enjoyed Dr. Revels' talk in Tulsa back in January, recall her title, "A View from Inside the Impenetrable Thicket". This was quite accurate, as a machete would have been the best mode of transportation.

A dozen of us risked soaking feet and myriad injuries to flesh and eyes to wander off the beaten path, watch her set up her net, tape recorder, and dummy warbler, and call in a Swainson's Warbler. He appeared almost immediately, zoomed back and forth three or four times trying to scare off the competition, and then tumbled into the net. Dr. Revels showed him off, then inspected and banded him. She made it look easy, but getting up at 5am daily to fight the greenbrier and other vines, any number of pests, and sucking mud in order to research this rare bird cannot be simple.

TULSA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS

President: John Kennington 809-6325 Vice-President: Gail Storey 742-2684
Secretary: Cyndie Browning 492-5622 Treasurer: Mary Jackson 254-1350
Recorder: Amy Lambert 272-4794, 747-4202

Directors: Martin Brown, Carol Eames, David Edwards, John Fisher, Tomye Mainer, Brandon Scott

TAS Website: http://www.tulsaaudubon.org

"Tulsa Scissortail" is the quarterly newsletter of the Tulsa Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, P.O. Box 2476, Tulsa, OK 74101. As the "Scissortail" newsletter goes to the printer two weeks before the date of issue, your editor needs items for that issue at least a week prior to that (For Fall 2005, that will be August 12th or so).

e-mail: thelowenfamily@aol.com Peter Lowen, Editor

CONSERVATIONISTS WORLDWIDE CELEBRATE REDISCOVERY OF IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER

Globally Significant Discovery Offers Second Chance to Protect America's Largest Woodpecker

- Audubon News Release

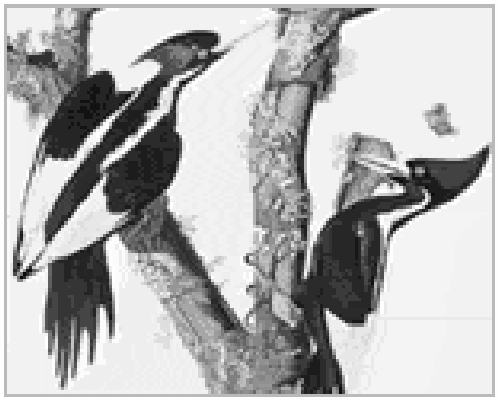
New York, NY, April 28, 2005 – National Audubon Society, BirdLife International, and other conservationists around the globe joined in celebration at today's announcement that the Ivory-billed Woodpecker has been found in eastern Arkansas. The last accepted sightings of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker were in Cuba in 1987 and 1988, and the last fully documented United States sighting occurred in Louisiana in 1944. While there have been a number of reports of possible Ivory-billed Woodpecker sightings since then, none have been confirmed prior to today's announcement.

"All of us who share this planet owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the individuals and organizations, especially The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Nature Conservancy, whose tireless efforts led to the rediscovery of this bird," said John Flicker, president of the National Audubon Society. "Thanks to their dedication, we all have a second chance to save this magnificent woodpecker from extinction. As it inspires our hopes, this resilient Ivory-billed Woodpecker must also inspire our commitment to protect the habitat it needs for survival."

"This extraordinary rediscovery provides hope for the 18 species classified as Potentially Extinct, such as Jamaican Petrel, Javan Lapwing and Pink-headed Duck," says Dr. Michael Rands, director and chief executive, BirdLife International.

A large, approximately 20-inch bird, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker is dependent on old-growth forests of very large trees, such as cypress, for its habitat. Destruction and fragmentation of virgin bottomland forests throughout the southern United States, including floodplain forests along the Mississippi River and its tributaries, led to its decline and eventually to its believed extinction.

"The discovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker will make this site an Important Bird Area of global significance," said Flicker. Launched in 1981 by BirdLife International, the Important Bird Areas (IBA) program is a global effort to identify and protect critical bird habitat. Audubon fosters the protection of more than 1,800 IBAs coast to coast by engaging individuals, communities, organizations, and agencies in the stewardship, restoration, and conservation of Important Bird Areas.



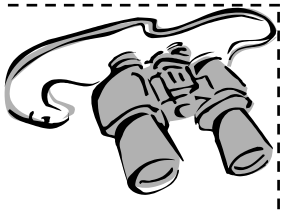
From the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website

"We must work to protect other remaining tracts of mature contiguous forest, and the IBA program is an important tool in this endeavor. Audubon pledges to work with state, local, and federal agencies and other conservation organizations involved with this effort to protect this bird and its habitat," Flicker continued.

Audubon and BirdLife International are urging members of the public to ensure the safety of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker by respecting its privacy. Stress from human disturbance poses a threat to its survival.

More information from Audubon Arkansas <http://ar.audubon.org/press/news_release_20050429.html>

Recorder's Report



Recorder: Amy Lambert
lambert.a@sbcglobal.net

Mail: 12006 E. 80th Street North
Owasso, OK 74055

Amy Lambert 272-4794 or Pat Seibert 747-4202

	Species	Date	Count	Location	Observer
	American Bittern	13-Apr-05	1	Oxley Nature Center	B. Carrell
	American Bittern	21-Apr-05	1	North Tulsa County	P&V Seibert
	Least Bittern	06-May-05	1	Apache Sewage Pond	P. Ribitzki
F	Great Egret	26-Mar-05	1	Leonard Sod Farms	J. Loyd
R	White-faced Ibis	29-Apr-05	8	Woodward Park	E. Edgar
R	Black Vulture	19-Mar-05	2	Keystone Dam	B. Carrell/T. Mitchell
R	Black Vulture	20-Mar-05	5	Avery Drive & Hwy 97	J. Fisher
R	Black Vulture	27-Mar-05	2	Ancient Forrest	J. Fisher
R	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	10-Apr-05	2	Residence, Sand Springs	F. Sanford
R	Surf Scoter	04-Mar-05	1	Lynn Lane Reservoir	E. Edgar
R	Long-tailed Duck	15-Mar-05	1	Lynn Lane Reservoir	J. Loyd, et al
R	Long-tailed Duck	08-Mar-05	2	Mohawk Park (since Dec)	B. Germany, et al
R	White-tailed Kite	21-Apr-05	1	North Tulsa County	D & R John
	Merlin	27-Mar-05	1	Bixby Sod Farm	B. Carrell
C	Virginia Rail	06-May-05	2	Apache Sewage Pond	P. Ribitzki
C	Virginia Rail	07-May-05	9	Apache Sewage Pond	M&G Kamp
O	Sora	03-Apr-05	1	Apache Sewage Pond	B. Carrell
F	Least Tern	11-May-05	4	Ark River at 31st St	B. Germany
R	Ringed Turtle-Dove	02-May-05	1	Jenks Area	M. Brown
R	Eurasian Collared-Dove	13-Feb-05	1	Pine & Garnett	B. Carrell
R	Eurasian Collared-Dove	19-Mar-05	4	Residence Pawnee Cty	P. Ribitzki
R	White-winged Dove	15-Apr-05	1	Residence, Tulsa	J. Singletary
	Short-eared Owl	18-Mar-05	5	North Tulsa County	B. Carrell
F	Chimney Swift	08-Apr-05	3	21st St & Harvard	P. Seibert
F	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	17-Apr-05	1	Turkey Mountain Park	B. Carrell
R	Black-chinned Hummingbird	01-May-05	1	Res Lake Keystone	P. Ribitzki
O	Great Crested Flycatcher	10-Apr-05	1	Oxley North Woods	B. Carrell
F	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	29-Mar-05	1	Tulsa County	D. Dyer
R	Red-eyed Paper Grader	01-Apr-05	1	Residence, S. Tulsa	D & S Lowen
O	Purple Martin	19-Feb-05	2	Oxley North Woods	B. Carrell
O	Cliff Swallow	22-Mar-05	2	Osage Trail	B. Scott, et al
F	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	26-Mar-05	1	Snake Creek	J. Loyd
	Magnolia Warbler	10-May-05	1	Woodward Park	M&G Kamp
	Yellow-throated Warbler	29-Mar-05	1	Mohawk Park	T. Mitchell
R	Pine Warbler	19-Mar-05	3	Keystone Dam	B. Carrell/T. Mitchell
R	Pine Warbler	01-Apr-05	3	Residence, Tulsa	B. Carroll
R	Bay-breasted Warbler	09-May-05	1	Woodward Park	E. Edgar
R	Bay-breasted Warbler	11-May-05	1	Woodward Park	T. Mitchell
O	Prothonotary Warbler	05-Apr-05	1	Oxley Nature Center	B. Carrell
O	Common Yellowthroat	18-Feb-05	1	Oxley North Woods	B. Carrell
O	Common Yellowthroat	29-Mar-05	1	Mohawk Park	T. Mitchell
R	Hooded Warbler	09-Apr-05	1	Mohawk Park	B. Carrell
R	Henslow's Sparrow	21-Apr-05	2	North Tulsa County	B. Carrell/T. Mitchell
R	Henslow's Sparrow	21-Apr-05	1	North Tulsa County	P&V Seibert
O	Blue Grosbeak	12-Apr-05	1	S.W.Tulsa County	B. Germany, et al
	Bobolink	03-May-05	12	141st St & 129th E Ave	J. Loyd
	Yellow-headed Blackbird	20-Apr-05	1	Lake Yahola	T. Mitchell

O = Out of Date R = Rare C=Chicks F=First

TAS FIELD TRIP REPORT – MENA, ARKANSAS

May 13 – 15, 2005 Leader: Jo Loyd

submitted by Suzie Tramel

We left early morning Friday in the middle of a May drizzle for a pleasant 4-hour drive into Mena, Arkansas, where we contacted Bruce and Lana Ewing. They live on 40-acres of wooded bottomland and own another 20 acres of riverfront property, both of which we toured during our 3-day field trip. They also took us to the top of Rich Mountain along the scenic Queen Wilhelmina drive. Their hospitality went beyond mere courtesy…it was extraordinary. So was the birding! We had 92 species, with these notables included:

Yellow-Breasted Chat	Hooded Warbler
Kentucky Warbler	Ovenbird
Pine Warbler	Rose-Breasted Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak	Indigo Bunting
Summer Tanager	Painted Bunting
Dickcissel	Black & White Warbler
Wood Thrush	Louisiana Waterthrush
Black Vultures	Bobwhite
Red-Headed Woodpecker	Hairy Woodpecker
Brown-Headed Nuthatch	Spotted Sandpiper
Wood Duck	Scarlet Tanager
Pileated Woodpecker	

Those of us who made the trip - Jo Loyd, Tomye Mainer, Art Browning, Suzie Tramel, and Jana Singletary - were in excellent hands. The Ewings opened their home to us and delighted us with a chicken-fried picnic, ***to-die-for*** looks from their screened-in porch at the feeders they maintain at eye level with an elaborate set of pulleys. We observed Indigo Buntings, at least 5 male Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks at one time on the feeder, the little Pine Warbler, titmice, a whole family of White Breasted Nuthatches, and Red-Headed and Red-Bellied WPs.

On our walks through their properties, we not only birded but received excellent information from both Lana and Bruce about the flora & fauna. You see, Bruce is a past President of Tulsa Audubon Society and both he and Lana have been President of Arkansas Native Plant Society and they know their stuff. Their other hobbies include Lana's intricate sewing techniques…and, Bruce finds time to create musical instruments in his workshop….using native woods from their land…..guitars, mandolins, violins, ukeleles, and dulcimers; it's amazing what they pack into a day. Why, it must take hours just to get their feeders ready for the day's guests! They also put out salt licks for the deer, which we were lucky to observe, and Bruce coaxed a tiny flying squirrel from its nest so we could look at it. (Eat your heart out, Gail!)

Bruce showed us a video of critters he and Lana have as visitors….squirrels, mink, river otters, deer, coyotes, and bears (oh my!).

The Ewings are a study in knowing how to "stop & smell the roses" because even though their properties must require a tremendous upkeep effort, they seem to sincerely enjoy them and find time for hosting folks like us who don't have these treasures right in our back door! Thanks Bruce & Lana…Thanks Jo….Thanks Art, Tomye & Jana. This was truly a wonderful trip!

Puffins and Murres

- Audubon News Release

Fans of Audubon's Puffin Cam can now catch even more seabird action through a Murre Cam that beams live-streaming video of breeding Common Murres and Brandt's Cormorants from the California coast. Hosted by the National Audubon Society, the Murre Cam is part of the Common Murre Restoration Project, a cooperative venture of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Humboldt State University, and Audubon to restore depleted populations of Common Murres in Central California.

From March through July 2005 visitors can find the Murre Cam link and information about the restoration project on Audubon's Project Puffin website, www.projectpuffin.org/common-murre.html. The popular Puffin Cam will also continue to operate from the website, beaming images of nesting Atlantic Puffins from mid-May through August.

For the entire release visit www.audubon.org/news/press_releases/Murre_Cam_2005.html.

Tulsa Audubon Society 2005 Spring Census

Jo Loyd

Tulsa Audubon Society's annual spring census on Saturday, May 7 resulted in 162 species being observed. The Black-necked Stilt report is the first record for Tulsa County in TAS files. Thanks to all who participated in the count. This count compares to the 2004 May 1 count of 165 and 2003 May 3 count of 157 for a day. The number was good in comparison with previous years in that 4 areas in the county were not covered this year and it was the second weekend rather than our traditional first weekend date in May. Following is the list and numbers of each species.

Pied-billed Grebe, 9
Am. Wh. Pelican, 24
Dbl.-cr. Cormorant, 21
American Bittern, 1
Great Blue Heron, 90
Great Egret, 139
Snowy Egret, 17
Little Blue Heron, 15
Cattle Egret, 60
Green Heron, 9
Black Vulture, 2
Turkey Vulture, 156
Canada Goose, 219
Wood Duck, 11
Mallard, 64
Blue-winged Teal, 64
Northern Shoveler, 24
Osprey, 1
Mississippi Kite, 12
Bald Eagle, 1
Northern Harrier, 1
Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1
Cooper's Hawk, 2
Red-sh. Hawk, 27
Broad-winged Hawk, 3
Swainson's Hawk, 5
Red-tailed Hawk, 54
American Kestrel, 11
Wild Turkey, 1
Northern Bobwhite, 9
Virginia Rail, 8
Sora, 6
American Coot, 1
Killdeer, 94
Black-necked Stilt, 1
Greater Yellowlegs, 26
Lesser Yellowlegs, 35
Solitary Sandpiper, 3
Semipal. Sandpiper, 80
Least Sandpiper, 10
White-ru. Sandpiper, 1
Baird's Sandpiper, 3
Pectoral Sanpiper, 89
Buff-br. Sandpiper, 5
Long-billed Dowitcher, 1
Wilson's Phalarope, 19
Franklin's Gull, 134
Ring-billed Gull, 18
Herring Gull, 1
Rock Dove, 204
Eurasian Col.-Dove, 2
Mourning Dove, 236
Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 40
Greater Roadrunner, 1
Barred Owl, 10
Common Nighthawk, 15
Chuck-will's-widow, 23
Chimney Swift, 5
Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 28
Belted Kingfisher, 4
Red-hd. Woodpecker, 36
Red-bel.Woodpecker, 38
Downy Woodpecker, 80
Hairy Woodpecker, 3
Northern Flicker, 19
Pileated Woodpecker, 8
Olive-sided Flycatcher, 1
Eastern Wood Pewee, 30
Acadian Flycatcher, 1
Least Flycatcher, 14
Eastern Phoebe, 66
Great Cr. Flycatcher, 95
Western Kingbird, 73
Eastern Kingbird, 83
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 189
Loggerhead Shrike, 9
White-eyed Vireo, 22
Bell's Vireo, 19
Yellow-throated Vireo, 3
Blue-headed Vireo, 3
Warbling Vireo, 64
Red-eyed Vireo, 55
Blue Jay, 90
American Crow, 173
Fish Crow, 53
Horned Lark, 5
Purple Martin, 230
No. Rough-winged Swallow, 91
Cliff Swallow, 212
Barn Swallow, 246
Carolina Chickadee, 229
Tufted Titmouse, 118
Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1
White-br. Nuthatch, 5
Carolina Wren, 156
Bewick's Wren, 2
House Wren, 11
Marsh Wren, 1
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 204
Eastern Bluebird, 160
Gray-cheeked Thrush, 2
Swainson's Thrush, 195
Wood Thrush, 1
American Robin, 497
Gray Catbird, 28
No. Mockingbird, 219
Brown Thrasher, 55
European Starling, 1298
Cedar Waxwing, 50
Tennessee Warbler, 68
Orange-cr. Warbler, 4
Nashville Warbler, 44
Northern Parula, 53
Yellow Warbler, 12
Yellow-ru. Warbler, 16
Black-throated Green Warbler, 2
Blackburnian Warbler, 1
Yellow-thr. Warbler, 5
Palm Warbler, 1
Blackpoll Warbler, 8
Black-and-white Warbler, 18
American Redstart, 1
Prothonotary Warbler, 16
Ovenbird, 5
No. Waterthrush, 1
Louisiana Waterthr., 13
Kentucky Warbler, 3
Com. Yellowthroat, 16
Yellow-breasted Chat, 1
Summer Tanager, 46
Scarlet Tanager, 1
Chipping Sparrow, 289
Clay-colored Sparrow, 5
Field Sparrow, 27
Lark Sparrow, 19
Savannah Sparrow, 43
Grasshopper Sparrow, 8
Song Sparrow, 8
Lincoln's Sparrow, 20
White-thr. Sparrow, 10
Harris's Sparrow, 5
White-Cr. Sparrow, 53
Northern Cardinal, 447
Rose-br. Grosbeak, 14
Blue Grosbeak, 29
Indigo Bunting, 285
Painted Bunting, 67
Dickcissel, 482
Boblink, 105
Red-wi. Blackbird, 419
Common Grackle, 208
Great-tailed Grackle, 63
Brown-hd. Cowbird, 165
Orchard Oriole, 24
Baltimore Oriole, 89
House Finch, 61
Pine Siskin, 25
American Goldfinch, 311
House Sparrow, 476

Bob Jenning's Field Guide

By Kelly Jennings

Bob Jennings, retired director of Oxley Nature Center in Tulsa, OK, was finishing a bird guide last year when he learned he was ill with cancer. He had finished most of the book and had the work to the publisher before he died In September. I asked one of Bob's colleagues, Dr. Ted Cable a professor at KSU, to finish the final editing.

Birds of the Great Plains (Lone Pine Publishing) is finally available at the Oxley bookstore, Steve's Sundries and amazon.com. Other bookstores should be able to order also. Authors are Bob Jennings, Ted Cable and Roger Burrows. It is for both serious and casual birders.

The editor's acknowledgment to Bob says: "We feel blessed to have been touched by his enthusiasm for the natural world and by his humor, and we are pleased that some of his personality and knowledge live on within the pages of this book." I wish he could have seen it, but he knew it was being published and it will help continue to teach his love of the outdoors. He loved birding - in his job as Naturalist at Oxley, with his fellow professionals at NAI meetings and with friends here in Tulsa (especially trips to Attu, Churchill, Arizona and Texas).

I now know how the maps in these books are created - with a lot of research and coloring! He worked with a page of four identical maps. Using Sibley, other regional bird books and research with university and other bird sites, he would make three maps and from these would create the map he sent to the publisher. The guide has a list of top birding spots, which Ted updated - remember some of this info goes out of date before even published so always double check hours and phone numbers before traveling to a site. The writing and editing was done by all three people listed as authors in addition to staff writers - writing by committee as Bob called it.

There is one page per bird, including a paragraph on how and where it lives, a range map, and notes on identification markings, size, habitat, nest, feeding, voice and similar species. There is an appendix of occasional bird species and indices of both common and scientific names. A quick thumbnail illustration of each bird is in a front reference guide by type of birds: waterfowl, hawks and eagles, etc. Like the Kaufman guide, the color of the page makes a handy thumb marking for the rest of the book. (I'm a librarian so I look for all of these things!)

I have had some people in the field comment that they find it useful and accurate, plus I know Ted's credentials and how picky Bob was so I feel confident in recommending this to new and seasoned birders.

From the Editor

To-very-day, when my personal deadline for this newsletter was waning with the sun, I found the inspiration to fill this last chunk of space. I had been at a considerable loss, but with the chaos of my school's finals, grading, textbooks, imploring students and demanding parents to contend with, this space had not been my highest priority. But, on my first afternoon of freedom from the classroom, I parked my car in the driveway and exited only to hear behind me the raucous cries of a trio of Blue Jays. I turned as quickly as my tired body could, and saw twenty feet from me a Cooper's Hawk trying to gain altitude with a bird in its talons while being supremely harassed by the jays. The hawk quickly dropped its prey and took off for parts unknown with three jays still in hot pursuit, and its prey tumbled onto my neighbor's driveway. The fledgling jay, two-thirds blue with a sorry crest and one-third downy gray, stood on the concrete looking quite dazed. Assuming it was mortally wounded, I approached it to inspect and was truly surprised when it flapped noisily around, elevated to about three feet high, and collapsed under a nearby shrub. Shortly thereafter, an adult jay returned and landed in my neighbor's oak tree where it had a fine view of its baby. I figured I wasn't needed at this point and left the parenting to one better suited to it.

I would have been happy with either outcome, a satisfied hawk or a surviving jay, but it was a thrill to see the chase of the harried hunter and to know that in our unnatural world there is still room for real honest-to-goodness nature.

Barbed Wire + Somersault = Burrowing Owl!!

by Cyndie Browning

My friend Phil Floyd and I journeyed out to the Great Salt Plains on Friday, April 29th, to participate in Cherokee's annual Celebration of Birds Festival. That afternoon, we drove thru the Auto Tour at the Refuge, just to whet our appetites for all the birds we expected to see the next day. At one spot where a creek runs under the highway, we found several Amer. Avocets and one Black-necked Stilt and at another stop, a lone Willet. Also, lots of Snowy and Great Egrets, a few Cattle Egrets, and the occasional Little Blue Heron. We found a few Ibis, too, but the light wasn't very good and it was too cold and windy, so I just counted them all as White-faced. Aside from Killdeer, the only shorebirds were a few Greater Yellowlegs and hundreds of Wilson's Phalaropes!! And we found the usual ducks and a family of Canada Geese, the babies like fluffy yellow tennis balls.

At one little "hot spot" on the Tour, a motley crew of passerines suddenly flew thru "in a single pile," and we added Spotted Towhee, Brown Thrasher; White-throated, Lincoln's, and Lark Sparrows; Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers, the ubiquitous Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and overhead, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Barn, Cliff, and Tree Swallows and Purple Martins to our trip list, then finished the Tour with a Marsh Wren at the Big Marsh. At the northwest corner of Hwys 8 and 11, we watched a Swainson's Hawk adding sticks to its nest. A year ago, Anne Wilber had told Phil and me that Swainson's Hawks nearly always nest at this corner, and here they were again.

About 20-25 birders gathered at 7:00 am Saturday morning at the Refuge HQ for the Advanced Bird Walk. Carolina Wrens and Gnatcatchers were up early, too, and I heard an E. Wood-Pewee calling nearby and waaayyyy too many Brown-headed Cowbirds!! Someone spotted a Belted Kingfisher perched on a Wood Duck nestbox out in the cattails, and looking thru Jim Harmon's scope, I got a great look at the Kingfisher, a Barn Swallow, and a Tree Swallow, all perched in close proximity so that I saw all 3 at the same time. All the herons/egrets were out there, as well as abundant Red-winged Blackbirds and singing Com. Yellowthroats. Nearby, we found a cluster of warblers: Nashville, Prothonotary, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, and Orange-crowned, and at least one Warbling Vireo, and more than a handful of Baltimore Orioles. When we got out to the lake, we picked up Amer. White Pelicans, Franklin's and Ring-billed Gulls, Forster's Terns (whose method of diving for fish always gives me a headache!), Green-winged Teal (a welcome change from all the Blue-wings), Avocets, flocks of Semipalmated Sandpipers, and more Willets.

Back at the Headquarters, we joined about 10-15 other birders for one of the scheduled "refuge management tours" in an open trailer lined with hay bales for seating, towed by a large 4WD pickup. At one of our first stops, we got a closer look at the gulls, terns, pelicans, Willets, and Avocets we'd seen earlier, and one shorebird that "didn't look right" to me. I asked some of the others to take a closer look at it and they soon declared it a Black-bellied Plover, a species I'm not familiar with but was very pleased to find. At the next stop, I found a single Com. Goldeneye, a yearbird for John Sterling. (So you owe me one, John!!) A Black-crowned Night-Heron flew up the creek, and later, we all got great looks at a Swainson's Thrush, both yearbirds for me.

As we broke out of the trees beside vast expanses of shallow water filled with birds, we soon added Lesser Yellowlegs, No. Pintail, and more Black-necked Stilts to our list. Nancy Vicars had just asked, "where are all the Yellow-headed Blackbirds?" when we came upon one perched in the reeds, just begging to have his picture taken. I found a lone Bonaparte's Gull resting on the water. And did I mention the Wilson's Phalaropes?? Hundreds and hundreds of 'em.... y'know, if all their whirly-gigging had any power at all, they'd have stirred that water into a froth!!

And then all of a sudden, every bird there took the air, thousands of 'em, a vast white cloud of birds, and we all looked around for the predator that must've scared them all, and quickly found a Peregrine Falcon!! He made 4-5 passes across the water, scattering birds on each pass but didn't catch anything. I marveled each time he'd fly up into the air and turn after each pass, right over our heads, so that I could clearly see the dark teardrop markings on his face. I've heard and read accounts of Peregrines "raiding" shorebird gatherings like that but I'd never seen it before. What a thrill!!!!!

After lunch, we headed out to where people dig for selenite crystals (recently designated Oklahoma's state crystal). We enjoyed watching a tiny Snowy Plover right in front of our car as it scurried this way and that, like a drunken sailor, catching bugs. Anne Wilber pointed us toward a Snowy Plover nest she'd found inside the roped-off digging area, that she'd framed with logs and marked with a tall stick, to make sure no one accidentally trod on the 3 sandy-gray/brown eggs with black spots, laid in the impression left by somebody's shoeprint.

From the digging site, we drove north and soon found 3 White-rumped Sandpipers snoozing on the muddy bank of a small creek. We zig-zagged our way over to the Cherokee sewage lagoons where we found more Wilson's Phalaropes than you can shake a stick at!! and a one-legged Long-billed Dowitcher that hopped from point to point, feeding in the mud. For some reason, the female phalaropes would run up to the poor Dowitcher and peck at it, apparently trying to drive it off ... poor thing! There were a few Ruddy Ducks and several Lesser Scaup in one of the lagoons, 3-4 Franklin's Gulls overhead, and we found several Least Sandpipers (yellow feet!) in among the Semipalmateds. I heard a Ring-necked Pheasant call nearby, another yearbird.

Now, there are two large vehicle gates at the sewage lagoons, both of them locked. However, the barbed wire fences are low and each section of fence sags in the middle, probably because people like us hold down the top strand of wire and carefully step over the fence to get closer to the lagoons. I noticed a people gate but expected it to be locked, so we didn't even try to use it. Instead, we carefully held down the top strand of barbed wire and stepped over it, one leg at a time. No problem, right??

WRONG!!! As we walked back to the car, I handed my scope to Phil, then held down the top strand of barbed wire and verrrry carefully stepped over it with one leg, then shifted my weight to swing the other leg over..... and snagged my jeans on one of the barbs, lost my balance, let go of the fence, and more-or-less somersaulted over it!!!! coming to rest curled up on my back with one leg stuck up in the air, my jeans tangled in TWO barbs of the wire which continued tearing my jeans everytime I moved. Phil managed to make the fence let me go. I finally stood up, shook myself off, scowled at the two air-conditioning holes in my new jeans, and peeked inside the holes to assess the damage. I had two bloody scrapes on the inside of my left thigh, but they didn't look too bad so I applied some Neosporin cream (that I always have with me), and we continued on---intrepid birder that I am!!

Heading west back to town, both Eastern and Western Kingbirds were perched on power lines along the road, and we stopped to take a good long look at a Grasshopper Sparrow perched on a fence. We were bound-and-determined to find a Western Meadowlark to go with all the Easterns we'd been hearing, stopping near each perched Meadowlark to give it a chance to sing and "be Western": "sing now, or forever hold your peace!" and we finally found one!!

And then we pulled up to an intersection where, perched at the top end of a plastic sheath that protects a guy-wire supporting a power pole, we found a BURROWING OWL!!!!! He was maybe 10' away from us, just lookin' around, scanning the sky and surroundings, and didn't seem the least bit alarmed at our presence. In fact, we sat and looked at him for 5-10 minutes. We'd about given up hope of finding any Burrowing Owls on this trip since the only prairie dog town we know of is on private land. And then not 10 minutes after my shedding of blood via somersault over a barbed wire fence, here's a verrrrry cooperative Burrowing Owl giving us kick-"butt" looks!! and not a prairie dog in sight! Phil laughed and said maybe I should somersault over barbed wire fences more often!!

We found an adult Great Horned Owl at _9th_ and Oklahoma in town (but no babies), right where Anne had said it would be. By now, we had 105 birds FOR THE DAY!! and 114 species for the trip. Our best weekend trip ever to the Gr. Salt Plains was last year when we accumulated 119 species!! so we knew we were close to breaking our record. Back at the motel, I showered, applied more Neosporin to my barbed wire wounds, and went to bed and died.

Sunday morning, as we loaded up our gear and said good-bye to Her Honor, the Mayor (who owns the motel), we learned that the people gate at the sewage lagoons WAS unlocked ("NOW she tells me!!") and she laughed heartily as we described my mis-adventure with the barbed wire. She also gave us permission to stop and see the Barn Owls who live in the metal barn on her property nearby, and we did find a Barn Owl there, as promised, then headed back out Hwy 11 toward the Refuge. As I turned off the highway, I stopped the car and we listened for several minutes for the Field Sparrows we always hear at that corner. Then Phil found a Hairy Woodpecker in a tree across the fields from us, we found two very young Red-tailed Hawks perched on the edge of their nest, a Bobwhite sang out a couple times, and THEN we heard the Field Sparrows!!

We drove slowly east from the HQ building, and as we swung around the curve out of the woods and into the open pasture near Hwy 38, I realized that what I'd thought was a Killdeer flying away from the car was actually an Upland Sandpiper!! and another, and another, and then another!! There must've been 2 dozen Uppies in that field, right next to the fence and beside our car. We heard a Wild Turkey gobble and found him over by the fence at the lowest end of the property.

Down near the State Park, we found a No. Flicker, a singing Bewick's Wren, and a Green Heron perched high in a tree pretending to be a woodpecker, and picked up our only Spotted Sandpiper of the trip below the dam. All of these Sunday birds kicked our trip list up to 125 birds!!!!!! The best we've ever done, ever!!

If you haven't participated in the Celebration of Birds Festival in Cherokee before, mark your calendars NOW for April 29-30 next year. Martin Brown of Tulsa Audubon attended the Beginning Birding Workshop with his family on Saturday afternoon, and wrote that each attendee was given the latest edition of the Nat'l Geographic Field Guide, just for attending the class. There was to have been a drawing at the end of the class for a set of new Bushnell 7x35 binoculars, but so few people attended (only 10) that everyone in the class received new binoculars!! As Martin wrote, they aren't "Swarovski's, but they aren't junk by any means. Coated optics, close focus to about 10-12 feet. Very serviceable." And now his wife and daughter each have their very own binocs! Now, don't you wish you'd been there?

Editor's Note: While considerably pared down, I hope I maintained Cyndie's Inimitable style.

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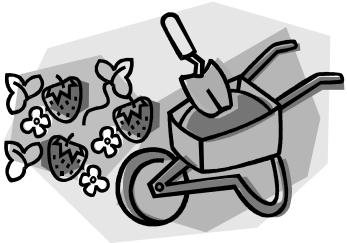
Forget-me-not

(aka, Reminder)

The second annual Audubon at Home in Tulsa garden extravaganza will take place on June 11-12.

Volunteer and help TAS; see amazing gardens that you don't have to tend yourself; support local nurseries, and more. Details on page 1.



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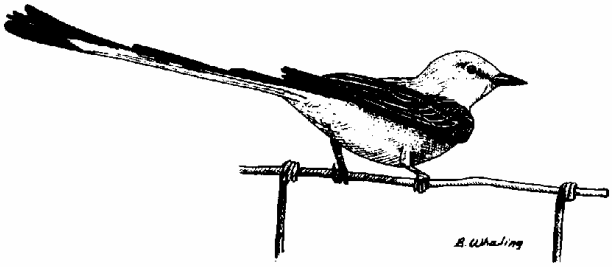

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