

Tulsa Audubon Society

Recent Activities

December, 2013

A summary of Tulsa Audubon Society's recent activity includes many familiar events as well as some exciting new plans and future possibilities. Over the past year, we have continued with many activities such as Tuesday morning birders, led by Jo Loyd and Jana Singletary, and Saturday morning birders, led by Terry Mitchell. Terry reports having some new folks joining in the outings, and he is interested in developing field trips focused on attracting and teaching beginning birders. Monthly meetings have featured programs by well-known professors, researchers, and ornithologists from around the state. In September, Dr. Mia Revels of Northeastern Oklahoma State in Tahlequah shared her experiences studying Swainson's warblers in Oklahoma over the past 13 years. October brought Dr. Doug Wood of Southeastern Oklahoma State in Durant to Tulsa for an account of his recent birding trip to China. Our November meeting will feature Dr. Jim Lish from Oklahoma State University. Dr. Lish will discuss his work with golden eagle trapping in Montana. In December, we will have our usual members' "show and tell" with individuals sharing photographs and anecdotes about their birding travels and adventures. During the remainder of the year, we will hear about whooping crane restoration projects, the treasures of the Red Slough in southeastern Oklahoma, dragonflies and damselflies, the benefits of our connection with nature and the evolutionary basis for human interest in biodiversity. We will also be able to enjoy the photographs of long-time Tulsa Audubon member Terry Mitchell.

Our November meeting featured the inauguration of a new event, Wild At Art, a fundraiser benefiting both TAS and our newest affiliate group, Wing-It (Wildlife In Need Group - in Tulsa). Kim Doner, Wing-It founder and current TAS board member, put together an exciting array of Oklahoma artists and artisans who offered their nature-related work at a pre and post meeting art fair. As noted, a portion of the proceeds benefited TAS and Wing-It. The inaugural Wild at Art was a resounding success, and we plan to continue developing into a premiere annual fund raiser for TAS and Wing-It. If you have not been able to attend monthly Audubon meetings or to keep up with TAS activities on our website, you may not have realized that board members voted to become the "parent" organization for this group of dedicated wildlife rehabilitators in our area. The decision to take Wing-It "under our wing" has brought Tulsa Audubon Society many unexpected positive results. Kim has become a very active board member who brings her vast creative talents to the organization. Not only is Kim a continual source of new ideas and energy, she has used her artistic ability to create T-shirt designs for the annual Eagle Days program and has recently developed a new TAS logo.

We have continued to present the annual wildlife habitat garden tour and plant sale each May. Alyne Eiland has taken over the organization and guidance of that event since the passing of Carol Eames. The tour continues to draw hundreds of people not only from Tulsa and other parts of Oklahoma but also from Arkansas, Texas, and Missouri. We

offer the opportunity to enjoy beautiful, wildlife-friendly gardens at this event as well as providing an opportunity to learn the basics of creating your own habitat garden. Our native plant vendors are some of the best in the region: Pine Ridge Gardens from Arkansas, Missouri Wildflowers, Wild Things Nursery from Shawnee, and Grogg's Green Barn from Tulsa. These vendors continue to offer an enticing selection of healthy, native plants at this event. If you are looking for a way to volunteer your time for a TAS project, consider spending a morning or an afternoon working at one of the gardens this spring.

Tulsa Audubon Society continues to participate in the Together Green grant program, a joint venture of the Toyota Corporation and the National Audubon Society. In addition to our past grants that have allowed us to establish a native plant and butterfly garden at Ray Harral Nature Center in Broken Arrow, contribute to habitat improvement at Oxley Nature Center and Redbud Valley, and develop the Leks, Treks, and More Lesser Prairie Chicken Festival in Woodward, a new grant awarded this year is giving TAS the opportunity to develop a demonstration habitat on the Jenks High School campus. This project is possible because of the vision of TAS board member Todd Humphrey. As you may know, Todd teaches freshman biology in Jenks and has developed the only high school ornithology class in the state. That class has become wildly popular with Jenks students, prompting Todd to develop a follow-up Ornithology II class. The class popularity has also resulted in the need for an additional instructor in ornithology. The Jenks ornithology classes will be hosting an open house in early December to give community members a snapshot of some of their activities. Check the TAS website for specific dates if you would like to attend.

Among recent activities for Jenks freshman biology and ornithology students has been participation in the newest Together Green grant awarded TAS. Partnering with the Jenks School System, Oklahoma Landscape Design, and Grogg's Green Barn, TAS and Jenks student volunteers are creating a backyard habitat on the campus of the Jenks Freshman Academy. The Flycatcher Trails Living Classroom will demonstrate the use of native plants for food, shelter, and larval development. Our habitat tour coordinator, Alyne Eiland, has assisted with native plant selection for the site, and most of the plants obtained thus far were donated by Grogg's Green Barn. The living classroom will demonstrate prudent water use with examples of a rain collection system to reduce runoff. It will also introduce the concept of how to create a rain garden to conserve water. The living classroom will demonstrate that pesticide use is not essential in creating a pleasing garden and will demonstrate that a bird and wildlife-friendly environment can be an inviting sanctuary for people as well as the wildlife one hopes to attract. The grant is especially geared toward engaging new and diverse individuals and groups in the conservation efforts of both Tulsa Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society. Todd Humphrey, who was instrumental in obtaining the grant, is overseeing hardscape construction and other aspects of the site development. If you are in Jenks and want to observe the progress as the living classroom takes shape, drop by the Jenks Freshman Academy at the southwest corner of 3rd and F streets in Jenks.

Another major event undertaken by Todd and his ornithology students was expansion of our annual Eagle Days. In 2012, Todd and his class took over organization of that event, creating a 2-day extravaganza that introduced many Tulsa residents to our national bird. This event included not only the opportunity to observe nesting bald eagles on the Arkansas River but offered educational workshops to the public. Both Sutton Avian Research Center and the Iowa tribe's Grey Snow Eagle House brought live eagles and other raptors to allow an "up close and personal" view of these majestic birds. Staff members from these organizations also gave educational presentations about their birds. TAS members and raptor rehabbers, Kathy and Gary Siftar, also brought a Mississippi kite and peregrine falcon to accompany their talks. The Tulsa Zoo added to the live birds present with a Barred Owl, a Red-tailed Hawk, and other birds. Estimates are that at least 500 people have participated in this program in the first two years of the expanded format. Upcoming Eagle Days will be January 25 & 26, 2014. We hope you'll consider joining other TAS members in introducing Tulsa area residents to the wonders of our incredible national bird.

This coming year's "Leks, Treks, and More" lesser prairie chicken festival in Woodward will be the 6th year for this event sponsored by Tulsa Audubon Society and the Oklahoma Audubon Council. In 2013, the festival added an opportunity to view greater prairie chickens in Osage County as a part of the Woodward festival. This event has drawn people from across the United States as well as from Canada. The festival is the brainchild of TAS President John Kennington and would not occur without his tireless efforts to make it happen each year. Jay Pruett, TAS board member and Nature Conservancy Conservation Director, has also played a key role in ensuring the success of the event. The Nature Conservancy has made a substantial financial contribution to the festival. This event provides birders the opportunity to observe the chickens on their leks and at the same time reminds local, state, and national figures of the economic impact that can occur from appreciation of threatened and endangered species. Although the LPC has not been listed as an endangered or threatened species as yet, this event continues to provide an avenue for developing relationships that may help to ameliorate the impact of the ever-increasing wind farms in western Oklahoma. The festival is fun and informative. It also offers participants the opportunity to assist in conservation efforts. During the festival, time is set aside for fence marking to decrease mortality that occurs when low-flying chickens collide with the fences of ranchers and farmers. The fence marking project has been successful in reduction of chicken-fence collisions. If you haven't experienced the mating ritual of this interesting species, mark your calendar for April 23-30, 2014 and join other TAS members for a week or a few days of camaraderie, birding, and conservation.

Another important activity made possible by a generous anonymous donor has been the provision of youth scholarships for summer birding camps. As a result of this donor's generosity, TAS has been able to provide scholarships that have sent 4 young birders to birding camps in Maine, Arizona, and Colorado. We have also been able to award scholarships to students interested in attending the lesser prairie chicken festival. Our plan is to continue providing scholarships to interested and deserving young people. What better way to involve the younger generation in the enjoyment of birding and the

conservation of our planet? We offer a heart-felt thank you to our generous donor. If you know a young person who is deserving of this opportunity, consider nominating that individual for one of these scholarships. Watch the website for dates about when to submit scholarship applications.

TAS Members have contributed to a second youth-oriented program, which was initiated in 2010 by Lori Jones, naturalist at Deep Fork National Wildlife Reserve near Okmulgee. That event was a Christmas Bird Count for kids. Although a count was not held in 2012, Tulsa Audubon members assisted in the counts for the two preceding years. John McQuaig and Cameron Cross, both recipients of our youth scholarship, were key players in helping with the counts. Plans are for TAS members to assist in a third CBC for kids at Deep Fork December 28 this year. Again, stay on top of this activity by checking out any updates about the event on the website. The traditional Christmas Bird Count continues to be organized by Jo Loyd.

Of course, the annual purple martin roost watch in August has become a popular event over the past years. The martins returned to the downtown Doubletree Hotel area this past summer and provided a spectacular experience as they prepared to roost each evening. TAS advertised two Saturday viewings for the public. We estimate that at least 200 people attended the event over both nights. The Doubletree has been supportive of this event. As a result, TAS will be awarding the hotel a citation, denoting the Hotel as a “bird-friendly business” for their acceptance of the martins and of Tulsa Audubon’s viewing events. If you are in downtown Tulsa, check out the signs posted by the hotel designating the roosting area as a bird sanctuary and advising caution about parking under the martins’ preferred roosting trees. Also, if you have an opportunity to patronize the hotel’s dining room, think about letting them know you value their appreciation of the purple martins.

As this accounting of activities and events reflects, Tulsa Audubon Society is home to an active group of individuals who are passionate about birds and about the well-being of our planet. Many individuals play an active role in keeping our organization vibrant and vital. We would not be able to sponsor the varied activities noted, with the relatively limited funds available, without the careful, ongoing oversight of our long-time treasurer, Mary Jackson. She maintains detailed records and accounting of all our financial activities to ensure that we are in compliance with any regulatory requirements for nonprofit organizations. Pam and Dave Edwards always ensure that our monthly meetings are replete with delicious snacks. Dave Edwards continues to organize maintenance and monitoring of our eagle property on Lake Keystone. Anita Mitchell provides lovely table decorations for every meeting while husband Jim continues to serve as the key nominating committee member, and both are always quick to do everything from providing a place for a visiting speaker to sleep to setting up the TAS display at some unanticipated opportunity, often with only a moment’s notice. Jo Loyd organizes and tabulates the results of the annual Christmas Bird Count in December as well as the Big Day Count in May. Terry Mitchell is a dedicated leader for Saturday morning birding experiences that have been attracting interest among potential members. Paul Ribitzki continues to serve as recorder for Tulsa Audubon.

In addition to the summary of the past year's activities, there are exciting new possibilities on the horizon for Tulsa Audubon Society. On November 2, board members participated in a day long retreat led by Brian Trusty, executive director of Audubon Texas, and Lynn Teneffoss, National Audubon Society's Vice President and Director of State Programs and Chapter Services. We worked to develop a five year plan for Tulsa Audubon Society and are excited about unveiling the results of the brainstorming that occurred among board members and Audubon Society staff. Watch the website for a formal presentation of the five year plan, which will also be presented in monthly TAS meetings once board members have continued clarifying and elaborating the plan.

Finally, thank you for taking the time to read about our past and future activities. If you have feedback about any of our activities, wish to participate in an event or an activity, or are able to contribute financially to our ongoing efforts to educate others in our community about ways to enjoy birds and conserve their habitats, please feel free to contact a board member and attend a meeting or event. Contact information is always available on our website, developed and maintained by TAS President John Kennington:

www.tulsaaudubon.org.

The website will keep you informed of dates and times for upcoming activities. We hope you will join us for friendship, fun, learning, and stewardship. Tulsa Audubon Society continues to be a collection of cool birds! Don't forget to "like" us on Facebook and feel free to Tweet about our activities.

Cheryl Kilpatrick, Vice President
Tulsa Audubon Society