



The Pileated Post

A National Audubon Society Chapter

photo by Tom Whipple

Grand Lake Audubon Society

March – May 2020

From the President's desk..

We now enter the last third of the 2019-2020 year of the Grand Lake Audubon Society. Our last regular meeting is in May, followed by the annual picnic or banquet.

A top priority is to continue to boost membership in our organization. Every year presents some attrition of membership.

We continue to have enjoyable field trips, visiting parks and other special places of bountiful wildlife and natural beauty. The trips have fewer participants than in the past—but they continue to be remarkable adventures. In January seven members traveled in two vehicles for the annual bald eagle watch. We were rewarded with over 100 bald eagles, along with many other birds, showing up to entertain us!

We still have several fun field trips scheduled this year!

Every month, we continue to have an interesting expert or specialist presenting information and a discussion on some aspect of wildlife—whether it is bats, birds, bees, butterflies or something else.

We will be needing to select and install some new board members for the coming year. Any one interested in being a board member, please speak up.

We will also need to consider selection of a recipient of the Cy Siebert award to be given to one of our members who has made great contributions this year to our group.

For the remainder of the year, I want everybody to brainstorm ideas on expanding our membership. For that matter, I welcome ideas on new ventures, or other ways, to make our group more worthy and enjoyable.

And don't forget to show up for meetings and field trips!

~~Erin

Calendar of Events

March 9 – “Nichols Preserve Update”, Jeremy Buxby.

March 21 – Oxley Nature Center; depart 7:30*; bring sack lunch; S. Sullins, 918-786-2638

April 13 – “Birds of South Texas”, Bill Petrunich, a nature photographer of nearly 6 decades living in Bentonville, Arkansas.

April 20 – Spavinaw Creek; depart 8 a.m.*; S. Sullins, 918-786-2638; bring sack lunch.

May 11 -- “Peru”, Sandy Sullins, GLAS member.

April 20 – Spavinaw Creek; depart 8 a.m.*; S. Sullins, 918-786-2638; bring sack lunch.

May 16 – GW Carver Park, depart 7 a.m.*; John Beyer, 918-801-2231; bring sack lunch.

**Meet at Wal-Mart parking lot, north of wildlife area behind Rib Crib to car pool. We leave on time so don't be late!*

REMEMBER to check the GLAS web site for information and schedule changes that may occur from time to time.

www.grandlakeaudubonsociety.com

Tongue Twister

(Repeat rapidly three times)

Found a flock of frisky flickers at the feeder.

“In order to see birds, it is necessary to become part of the silence”. ~Robert Lynd

First Hike Day

On Wednesday, January 1, 2020, Oklahoma State Parks hosted a “First Day Hike” at nineteen state parks, including Bernice State Park. Over 40 participants arrived for a beautiful day to begin the New Year with a nature hike.

A mature Bald Eagle soared overhead as the participants waited to begin at the Nature Center at Bernice State Park. Two Turkey Vultures were the only other birds that were seen.

The many youngsters and dogs on leashes may have contributed to the limited number of birds and wildlife.

Amanda posted on the Bernice State Park face book page that it was “the largest First Day Hike in Bernice Area history”. Bernice State Park has offered a First Day Hike since 2012.

~~Sandy Sullins



Short-eared Owl – photo by Terry Mitchell
Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

This photo of the Short-eared Owl at Tallgrass Prairie Preserve was taken by Terry Mitchell who granted permission for the photo to be shared. Terry reported seeing at least 18 of the owls just as the sun was beginning to set on January 5, 2020.

Another report on OKBirds was of seeing 18 of the owls during the Christmas Bird Count at the preserve on January 4.

Meeting Notes

(not official minutes)

The first official GLAS meeting of the new year was held January 13 at Grove’s First United Methodist Church. President Erin Lanway presided and opened the meeting with the group of 17 saluting the United States flag. R.C. Livesay presented the program, “Eagles on the Nest” with photos he had taken of Bald Eagles in our area. One comment that he made was that eagles like windy days. A short, interesting video he shared was of an eagle pouncing numerous times on the grass in an open field. The end of the video showed the eagle flying away to the nest site with clumps of grass and (dirt) in its claws. At the Board of Directors meeting prior to the stated meeting, the board voted to make donations to Bernice Nature Center, Bernice; Sutton Center, Bartlesville; Oxley Nature Center, Tulsa, and a local garden club in memory of a deceased member.

Refreshments were enjoyed provided by the Hospitality Committee.

February 10 GLAS meeting

Melynda Hickman was named the 2018 Wildlife Biologist of the Year at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies in Mobile, Alabama. Melynda holds a B.S. in biology from Appalachian State University. She will have been with the ODWC 30 years in August, 2020. Director of ODWC, J. D. Strong, says that Melynda has a unique ability to energize folks about bats, bluebirds, butterflies and the importance of conserving ecosystems as a whole. Those attending the meeting can all agree with that!

Melynda was certainly an inspiration to attendees and an encouragement to beautifying our yards while at the same time supplying food, water, and shelter for our birds, butterflies, and other wildlife.

Eleven members and 6 guests attended the meeting. During the business section of the meeting, discussion was held regarding meeting attendance and ways to encourage members/guests to attend the meetings and events of the chapter.

GLAS Bird outings

Eagle Watch, January 18, 2020, found a caravan on their way to Arkansas to spot Bald Eagles. Leaving Grove at 6 a.m., the temperature was 48 degrees, moon shining, and south breeze. After awhile, the wind changed to the north and temperature changed too! Riding in the car, it was quite comfortable and that was the major part of the trip, except when walking to SWEPCO Power Plant at Gentry and early in the trip when several chose to stand outside the car for views of the birds leaving their roost. Breakfast was delicious at the café in Gravette, too. It was an enjoyable trip for seven GLAS members, returning to Grove near noon. The totals for the day were 25 species, 79+ birds. That does not include the 131 Bald Eagles that were counted. It was exciting to see a large number together in one spot!

Purple Martin

From *Purple Martin Conservation Assoc.*

Location, location, location! One of the most important steps in attracting Purple Martins is choosing the right location for your martin housing. Martins prefer housing that is placed in open areas with clear flyways. Choose the center of the largest open spot available, about 30-120 feet from human housing and at least 40-60 feet from trees. In the southern half of their breeding range, martins may accept housing that is placed within 25 feet of trees, but open areas are always best.

Place the housing where you can enjoy watching the birds. Entrance orientation---north, east, south, or west—doesn't matter. But once the martins have arrived, make sure the housing is kept in the same orientation. If the housing spins or twists around the pole and is not reoriented, the martins may become disoriented and abandon their nests. Do not attach any wires to the house or pole that may lead to trees, buildings, or the ground as they may allow predators to access the housing.

Note: Bluebird boxes need to be ready for their occupants, with cleaning them a priority.

Websites to Watch Eagle Nests

There are a number of websites to watch live and see activity at eagle nests.

One site is at suttoncenter.org; the camera near Vian, Oklahoma. However, in a report by Kelly Bostain in the *Tulsa World* on February 24, tells of the Vian site being invaded by a third eagle. What appears to have been a territorial dispute between eagles left the nest in ruins. The third eagle attacked the nesting female as she was incubating two eggs. One egg was clearly broken in the fight and the other might have been damaged or might have been infertile.

It appears the pair won't renest and that it is a failed site. However, good news is that about 25 new nest sites have been reported in Oklahoma and that the number of active nest sites across the state will easily climb over 200 for the first time.

Eagles that hatch in Oklahoma migrate to the northern Midwest states, Great Lakes area or Canada, then they migrate south again until they reach maturity and start to nest in areas across the southern states.

By Googling "nesting eagle site cam", one can find a number of sites to watch.

Sleeping Birds

Birds use many adaptations when sleeping.

One of the first things that may come to mind when thinking of a sleeping bird is having its bill tucked into its feathers. The featherless parts of birds, such as the bill and legs, are sources of heat loss in cold weather.

Tucking its bill into its feathers helps reduce a bird's heat loss. Many birds also raise one leg into the body feathers while roosting for the same reason. With weight resting on one foot, tendons automatically cause the toes to grip the branch and keep the bird from falling over while asleep.

Birds are also capable of what is named unihemispheric slow-wave sleep. That basically means an ability to keep half of its brain asleep while the other half is awake, with an eye open for potential danger. ~~Dan Reinking, *Tulsa World*, March 24, 2019

Remember to turn your clocks forward one hour March 8!!

Black Vulture Problems In Missouri

An article in The Joplin Globe on February 15, 2020, by Brendan Crowley, clearly defines how black vultures are menacing to Missouri's cattle.

Over the past two years, one farmer near Cape Girardeau reports having lost four calves and a cow to black vultures.

They have been permanent residents in the southern U.S. for a long time and were documented by John J. Audubon in the 19th century. But their move into Missouri is relatively recent and it's causing problems for cattle production in the lower third of the state.

They've spread north over the past decade as temperatures have risen and the proliferation of cell phone towers has given them convenient places to roost. Turkey vultures, distinguished by the red heads, are common across Missouri.

Both are scavengers that eat carrion, but they find their food in different ways. Turkey vultures can smell a dead animal from a mile away. They use that sense of smell to find food. Black vultures don't have a strong sense of smell and hunt based on sight. That can make them more aggressive, and they have been known to attack smaller animals such as young cows, sheep, and other livestock, though they primarily feed on carrion.

Both black vultures and turkey vultures are protected by treaties the United States has with Canada, Mexico, Japan and Russia, which outlaw the killing of birds that migrate across national borders. That means that when cattle producers see

a black vulture attacking one of their calves, they can't just shoot it without a permit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does offer permits that allow producers who are losing cattle to black vultures to take small numbers of the birds.

Vulture stomach acids are so strong that they can digest diseases, such as botulism, leprosy and rabies. When they eat contaminated carcasses, they remove those diseases harmful to humans and wildlife from the landscape.

Black vultures are being black vultures. It is understandable the roll vultures play in eating carrion. They do serve a purpose, but attacking livestock is not a good thing.

Black vultures have gray/silver tips on the underside of their wings and shorter tails than turkey vultures.



(Photo from the internet)

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