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AVIAN RESEARCH CENTER



*The*

**SUTTON**

**NEWSLETTER**

*Volume 37, Winter 2011*



# ***Sequoyah Nest Cam Success!***

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## What's Inside...

- 2 Sequoyah Nest Camera
  - 3 Lesser Prairie-Chicken Listing
  - 4 White-tailed Ptarmigan Surveys
  - 6 Christmas Bird Counts
  - 8 Alan Jenkins' Retirement
  - 10 New Bird Species
  - 11 Show Booth Facelift
  - 12 Wild Brew 2011
  - 14 Publications and Presentations
  - 15 Thank You to Supporters
- 

Cover: The Sutton Center "extended" its nest cam project this year. *Photography by Jeff Haas.* Inset: A nest at Sequoyah NWR presented a new set of access challenges. *Photography by Cheryl Calvert.*

# Public Enjoys Sequoyah Nest Cam

by Chad D. Ford, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

with Webcam Photography



Figure 1. (12/28/2010) Adult female eagle with two remaining eggs.



Figure 2. Snow covered adult female incubates eggs in snow with male beside her.



Figure 3. Dark circle from incubating mother's heat with hatching eggs and chick inside as parent feeds.



Figure 4. Flight path of one eaglet. You can follow its progress at [suttoncenter.org](http://suttoncenter.org).

In 2010, the Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge (SNWR) first partnered with the Sutton Center through a Challenge Cost Share grant to monitor a Bald Eagle nest located just south of Vian, Oklahoma, at the entrance to the refuge. The location allowed visitors an excellent view while feeling close to the eagles but without creating a disturbance. It was September 2010 when the Sutton crew initially installed two cameras above the nest utilized by a pair of Bald Eagles for their 2010-2011 breeding activities.

The first sighting of eagles on the camera was in November, a few months after installation. A lot of anticipation surrounded the eagle cam as everyone anxiously awaited some sign that the eagles were going to use the nest. Around Christmas, the birds laid three eggs, but shortly after, one of them disappeared. During the incubation period, the feed from the camera bubbled with activity. The male and female were always present and giving attention to the eggs. By early February when the two remaining eggs hatched, the adults and their young had become internet celebrities. A large number of viewers were watching the nest and posting comments about the activities they were seeing. The winter months of 2011 were abnormally harsh with a number of snowfalls and extended periods of single digit temperatures, but the eagle parents proved resilient, caring for their young during one of the coldest local winters on record.

In April, when the eaglets were about to leave the nest, the Sutton crew placed a GPS backpack mounted transmitter on the body of one of the young eagles. The second eagle decided to take flight the same day and was able to avoid being fitted with a GPS unit. The GPS transmitter will allow the young eagle to be tracked for up to three years. The device allows researchers and the public to follow the eagle's movements as it moves through different hunting grounds. By using the Sutton Center eagle tracking site ([www.suttoncenter.org](http://www.suttoncenter.org)), we have witnessed the eagle's traveling all the way to Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Unfortunately, during April 2011 the eagle camera was struck by lightning and the live images streaming to the internet were terminated. After a lot of hard work between SNWR and the Sutton Center, the eagle cam was functioning again by early September. Two new cameras were installed on the tree. One camera views the nest from the side, and the other looks down at the nest from above. In addition to the cameras in the tree, there is also a wide angle camera positioned near the SNWR headquarters, which shows the upper half of the tree where the eagle nest is located. This camera provides a panoramic view of the nesting territory. The day after the new camera was installed, a subadult eagle (probably a fledgling from 2 or 3 years prior) suddenly appeared in the nest. It was likely challenged by the adults and jumped to a branch above one of the cameras before leaving the area.

By mid September, two adult eagles were seen occupying the nest, adding new sticks and refurbishing the structure. Currently, the eagles have been consistent in occupying the nest every morning until 7 or 8 o'clock and are frequently seen visiting the nest throughout the day. These behaviors are all part of the pair bonding that takes place between eagles in the months prior to the nesting season.



**Figure 5. (9/2/2011) Subadult eagle, likely an offspring from years prior, showing up in nest.**

**Figure 6. Same eagle as Fig 5, on limb above camera before vacating area (tail of eagle seen in upper left corner).**

**Figure 7. (9/13/2011) Both adult eagles rebuilding the nest during fall construction.**

Besides broadcasting the activity of these eagles via the internet, SNWR also provides eagle tours. On these tours, visitors learn about eagle behavior, nesting and hunting habits, and life history, and they are shown several of the eagle nests on the refuge. The tours are conducted by Chad Ford, Outdoor Recreation Planner for the refuge, and Leann Bunn, Naturalist from Tenkiller State Park. The tours are offered at 9AM on Saturday mornings starting in mid January and going through the first Saturday of March. Thanks to the Sutton Avian Research Center, the SNWR is able to continue to provide live images of

a Bald Eagle nest for the 2011-2012 nesting season. The addition of the cameras has greatly increased the number of people interested in the eagles and the refuge. The live nest feed can be accessed by visiting the SNWR website at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/oklahoma/sequoyah/index.html>. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the link to the eagle cam or access the Sutton Center website at: <http://www.suttoncenter.org>.

Enjoy viewing your national treasure!

## OKLAHOMA AND THE LISTING PROCESS FOR LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN

*by Lena C. Larsson and Steve K. Sherrod*

Since the listing process for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) began in January 2011, some Oklahomans have been concerned that if USFWS determines the Lesser Prairie-Chicken to be considered endangered, it could economically impact oil, gas, and wind power development, along with agriculture and possibly even ranching operations.

According to the Federal Endangered Species Act, projects involving federal funding or federal approval will then need to consider potential impact to Lesser Prairie-Chickens, and federal agencies will be required to take positive actions to further conservation of the species. The Endangered Species Act also prohibits 'take', which includes harassing, harming, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, or collecting, or attempting any such activities.

When Dan Ashe was confirmed as the new Director for USFWS last June, 2011, Senator Inhofe requested that he come to Oklahoma and listen to the residents' economic concerns. Senator Inhofe had unsuccessfully introduced a bill earlier that month attempting to amend the Endangered Species Act to specifically prohibit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from listing the Lesser Prairie-Chicken.

Representatives for energy and farming/ranching industries, along with Oklahoma State Representatives, voiced their opinions to Director Ashe in public forums held in Woodward, September 7, and in Edmond, September 8, 2011. The Oklahoma representatives proposed that USFWS extend the listing decision by 24 months to give more time for conservation programs to take effect. An 'Endangered Species and Economic Development Task Force' has been established with a mandate to develop an agenda and to deliver conclusions and recommendations to the Oklahoma legislature by the end of this year.

The Task Force consists of state legislative employees, although Sutton Avian Research Center representatives, along with other Lesser Prairie-Chicken conservationists, have been included in these meetings. At the first meeting, we were requested to share our knowledge, and together with Oklahoma State University researchers and representatives from The Nature Conservancy, we have provided a brief summary entitled 'Collective Suggestions for Causes of Decline, and Management Needs to Recover Lesser Prairie-Chicken in Oklahoma'.

Three more meetings are to take place this fall. We hope that the recommendations by the Task Force will result in a positive impact on the management of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken in Oklahoma.

# White-Tailed Ptarmigan Survey Efforts – 2011

by Don H. Wolfe,

Photography by Randy Lewis and Kim Potter



**We put a tarp under the tent to protect ourselves from the snow on our June expedition to Wheeler Peak.**

As many of you know, or at least could probably guess, conducting research in the mountains can be exceptionally challenging. In addition to the inherent hard, steep hikes and greatly reduced oxygen, one has to be prepared for everything that Nature can possibly throw your way, including high wind, frequent thunderstorms, marble-sized hail, etc., and all can change in less time than it takes to read this sentence. During the 2011 White-tailed Ptarmigan research season, extreme weather conditions and other adversities were especially memorable. Below are the summaries of our New Mexico trips from July through September.

**June – Fire and Ice** – Having been hampered by heavy snowpack in May 2010, we thought we would play it safe this year by waiting until early June to begin our survey efforts and to deploy temperature and humidity data loggers in the Pecos Wilderness Area and Wheeler Peak Wilderness Area. Thinking that it was possible that there was still some snow in the Wheeler Peak area, Randy Lewis, Kim Potter, Madeline Wolfe, and I wisely decided to hike into the Pecos first. However, as we attempted to approach our trailhead southwest of Taos, we



**Kim Potter watches a displaying cock Dusky Grouse.**

encountered a roadblock. Apparently a beaver (*Castor canadensis*) had decided to down a tree that hit a powerline, sparking an inferno that required nearly 600 firefighters more than a week to contain, and resulting in several road closures. Not being terribly distraught, we quickly changed our plans, and decided to go to Wheeler Peak first (albeit after losing 2-3 hours). When we arrived at the Wheeler Peak trailhead, near Red River, NM, the tinder-dry conditions there made it clear why the fire threat was so high. Having a later-than-planned start on the day, we made it to a decent campsite area about 3 miles up the trail by dark, praising ourselves for our ability to adapt and overcome. The second day, however, our self-congratulatory attitude quickly changed, as we started encountering heavy snow pack within the first mile from base camp. Figuring that we could work our way over or through the snow, we trudged onward and upward. After a couple of hours, we neared the treeline, and then saw that the entire alpine ridge was completely covered by heavy snow and ice. Even if we could have reached the ridge, our options for deploying data loggers would have been severely limited. The highlight of the day was being able to watch a cock Dusky Grouse displaying for about 30 minutes, and we spent the next few hours drying our clothes and boots. On day three, we hiked back out from Wheeler Peak, sure that the roads near Pecos would now be opened. Well, as you can probably guess, the road we needed was still closed. A second much longer approach route was available, so we went that route and were able to get about 6 miles in by dark. On day four, we made it to our base camp at the Pecos, with only a few detours due to snow. Fortunately, we were able to get the 12 planned data loggers deployed at Pecos with no further setbacks, and we were able to observe three ptarmigan.

**July – Triple Lockout** – It seems that the past few years for me have almost revolved around three seasons: football season, basketball season, and ptarmigan survey season, with slight overlaps of a month or two at the beginning and end of each season. Then come the lockouts. First, the NFL lockout (which fortunately was resolved in August). Second comes the NBA lockout, which I am still hoping will be resolved in the near future so that I can watch our Oklahoma City THUNDER make a run for the NBA championship next summer. As we still did not have data loggers deployed at the Wheeler Peak Wilderness Area, the first priority in July was to complete that task. However, due to the high fire risk across the state, the US Forest Service followed the precedent set by the NFL and NBA, and shutdown all the national forests in New Mexico (lockout number three!). Complete disaster was averted, however, thanks to a single-day special use permit I was able to get from the US Forest Service (requiring a 20+ mile, 12 hour



*Left:* Don Wolfe looks for data loggers buried under two feet of freshly fallen snow on the ridges at Pecos Wilderness Area. *Right:* A White-tailed Ptarmigan spotted on Wheeler Peak, near Red River, New Mexico.



hike). Also, we were able to gain unexpected access to the various alpine peaks and ridges within the Vermejo Park Ranch (600+ square mile ranch owned by TV mogul and conservationist Ted Turner), so we spent a few more days surveying for birds (which, as a reminder, was our primary purpose).

**August – Fool’s Gold Hill** – Just a few short miles north of the Wheeler Peak Wilderness Area there is another rather large region of alpine peaks and ridges known as Gold Hill (Gold Hill is the largest of three peaks, all connected by vast, wide ridgelines). In recent years, there have been unsubstantiated reports of ptarmigan in this area, which we felt justified exhaustive searching. After four days of surveying, the only grouse seen were Dusky Grouse (at elevations of about 12,200 feet to above 12,600 feet!). Due to the lack of willows and other habitat features that we deem suitable for ptarmigan, we eventually concluded that all of the recent ptarmigan reports were most likely misidentifications.

**September – Early White-out** – Typically, September is the nicest time to be in the mountains; the monsoons are over and temperatures are pleasant. September is also when we “wrap up” our summer’s efforts, including retrieving data loggers. As with every other earlier ptarmigan trip this year, September held some surprises for us. During our first night of camping at Wheeler Peak, an early snow fell on camp, and continued throughout the next day and night. Additionally, low clouds teamed up with blowing snow to limit visibility to no more than a few yards for most of the day. In spite of the weather, we were able to retrieve 11 of the 12 data loggers at Wheeler Peak; the final data logger was completely missing, and may have been carried off by a raven or bighorn sheep, or was possibly buried under several feet of rocks following an August earthquake (oh yeah, I didn’t mention that, did I?). After near complete success at Wheeler Peak, we headed to the Pecos Wilderness Area to retrieve the remainder of our data loggers. Once again, Nature threw us a curveball, with two feet of freshly fallen snow on the ridges at Pecos. Even though we had good GPS coordinates for our data loggers, finding

them under the snow was challenging at best, and impossible for some locations. Thus, we had to leave six loggers behind with the intention of returning in a week or so equipped with a metal detector and snow shovel. Since Randy and Kim (our hard-working, faithful mountain field techs) had commitments that prevented them from going a fifth time, I recruited the help of a coworker from our Bartlesville office, Luke Foster, to accompany and assist me. When we got up on the alpine, there were no remnants left of the snow that had completely blanketed the area a mere 9 days earlier (I’m sure the 4 hikers we met on the trail thought we were a bit strange, carrying a metal detector and snow shovel). We were easily able to retrieve the remaining data loggers, except for one which likely suffered a similar fate as the missing logger at Wheeler Peak (earthquake, raven, or bighorn sheep).

**Wrap-up** - Five trips to the mountains, hundreds of miles of hiking, a ratio of more than 5 to 1 alpine-dwelling Dusky Grouse to White-tailed Ptarmigan, and 22 of 24 data loggers retrieved. Still, we have now surveyed over 60 alpine peaks and ridges in New Mexico, and have less than ten more that potentially, however unlikely, have suitable ptarmigan habitat. I want to especially thank Randy Lewis and Kim Potter for their work and tenacity during the entire 2011 season, as well as Madeline Wolfe (yes, she is related to me) and Luke Foster for their assistance.



The team carefully descending a scree slope on Wheeler Peak.

# ***You can count, in more ways than one!***

*by Dan L. Reinking*

Times have changed. Some lasting traditions are still intact, but have evolved and adapted to the changing times. In the 19th century, one such tradition built around the Christmas holiday was known as a side hunt. Teams would set out for a day of shooting, and whichever team came home with the most birds and animals was the winner. Ornithologist Frank Chapman perceived an opportunity to change this tradition from a wanton hunt to a non-destructive count of bird species, and initiated the first Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in 1900. Each CBC takes place within a 15-mile diameter circle and within a 24-hour period during which all birds found are counted. Twenty-seven counters conducted 25 counts and recorded 90 species that first year, a modest start for a project that in 2010 included over 62,600 counters, a record 2,215 counts, and in the U.S. alone a total of

646 species. Of these counts, 1,714 were from the U.S., with the remainder located in Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Pacific Islands.

The competitive aspect of this holiday tradition is still alive and well. Neighboring or rival counts still try to outdo one another by finding more species. Counts vie for bragging rights within each state, as well as nationally and internationally. Geography, climate, and the natural history of many birds (I'm referring mainly to migration, but also to preferences for coastal areas in some species) strongly influence the potential number of species that can be found at a given location during the Christmas count period (each count selects one day between December 14 and January 5 for their team effort). Southern and coastal locations have a distinct advantage over far northern counts in

terms of the number of species that can be found. The Prudhoe Bay, Alaska CBC has only ever recorded one species, Common Raven, while a count in Ecuador recorded 423 species last year. Among CBCs north of Mexico, Mad Island Marsh, Texas frequently comes in first place, and recorded 236 species last year. Of the top 30 counts last year, all but two were in either Texas (11) or California (19), with one count each from Florida and North Carolina tied for 30th place with a California count. Landlocked Oklahoma can't vie for a national title, but a friendly spirit of competition exists between several counts in our state. The Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge CBC took top honors last year (as it often does) with 130 species, and Tulsa edged out Oklahoma City 115 to 114.

With about 20 available counts in Oklahoma, and three weeks during which these counts can be scheduled (most are



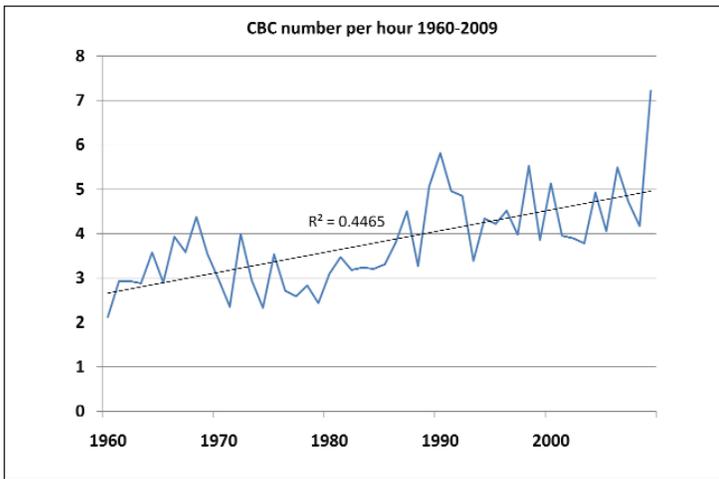
## **Double your donation!**

Many companies, including ConocoPhillips, will match employee donations, even for retirees! Check with your human resources department for information on boosting your conservation impact!

Dan Reinking



A brilliant red male Northern Cardinal posed against snow or ice is an iconic and beautiful winter image.

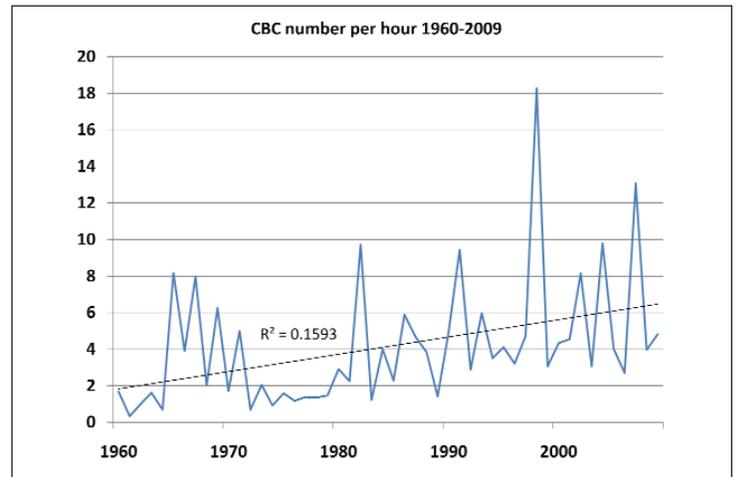


Oklahoma Christmas Bird Count results (above) showing a gradual increase in Northern Cardinal numbers are consistent with summer data collected for the Breeding Bird Survey which indicate an increasing population trend for this species in Oklahoma.

on Saturdays but a few are on weekdays), there are ample opportunities for Oklahomans to participate in one or more counts each year. Beginning birders are welcome, and can be grouped with more experienced participants. Besides the comradery and fun of a day spent birding, there is real scientific and conservation value to the information that is collected. Think about it—for well over 100 years now, data on the numbers and kinds of birds seen each year in specific places has been carefully collected and tallied. The CBC database represents the longest running, continuous bird population monitoring program in North America. One of the best parts is that the data are now online and available to anyone, along with some tools to help users of the data easily produce maps and graphs of the results. Find a Christmas Bird Count or two and participate this year, and then spend an hour or two online poking around in the past results of the counts you attended. Have the numbers or kinds of birds changed over the years? Your involvement counts. Please be a part of this fun, family-friendly annual tradition while at the same time contributing to our knowledge of bird distribution and population trends.



The subtle browns, grays, and yellows of the Cedar Waxwing's body plumage are accompanied by brilliant yellow and red feather tips, a black mask, and a cardinal-like crest, which together compose a very attractive bird.



Cedar Waxwings are both gregarious and nomadic during winter, always traveling in groups in search of trees with berries. This behavior is reflected in the dramatic swings in number recorded from year to year on Oklahoma Christmas Bird Counts (above).

For more information about the Christmas Bird count, visit its web page at <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>.

**Oklahoma's Christmas Bird Count participants would welcome your help, even if you are a beginner. Find one of these counts near you or travel to a different part of the state for a change of scenery. Arnett, Broken Bow, Fort Gibson, Hulah Reservoir, Kenton (Black Mesa), Norman, Oklahoma City, Red Slough, Rogers County, Salt Plains NWR, Sequoyah, Sooner Lake, Spavinaw, Stephens County, Stillwater, Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, Tishomingo NWR, Tulsa, Washita NWR, Wichita Mountains NWR.**

# Alan Jenkins: Old Friend, Sutton Founder, and Committed Conservationist

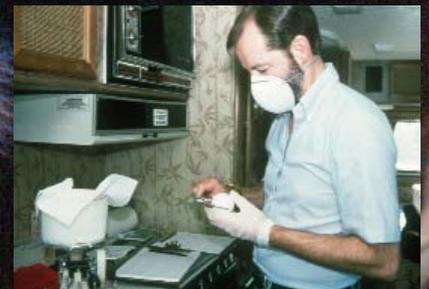
*by Steve K. Sherrod*

I believe it was in late 1969 when I first met Alan Jenkins, and it seems like barely a heartbeat since then until today when Alan is retiring from the Sutton Center. He was stationed at Clinton-Sherman Air Force Base in far western Oklahoma, and after his name showed up on a membership list for the North American Falconers' Association, another friend and I invited Alan over for a visit. Alan's base soon closed, and Alan and family were moved to Kincheloe AFB on the upper peninsula of Michigan. At both bases Alan trained and then later flew B-52 bombers in Vietnam. Ironically, at the same time, my wife and I also moved to the upper peninsula of Michigan to work for the summer at the University of Michigan Biological Station. Alan and I kept in touch, and as recent college grads, we continued to talk birds and especially bird of prey which were our passion.

From there I moved on to Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, to work on a M.S. degree studying the biology of Bald Eagles in the Aleutian Islands with Clayton White, and Alan showed up within a year to work on his M.S. initially with Joe Murphy, and eventually with Clay White as well. Alan joined up with Bill Mattox's crew in Greenland and undertook a pioneering study on nesting Gyrfalcons there through the use of time-lapse cinematography. During our days at Brigham Young, we were in adjacent offices and remained good friends who were always in touch. From BYU, Alan headed off to Denver to work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a variety of subjects including Peregrine Falcons with Dee Porter and assisting with tracking of Black-footed Ferrets.

It was in 1984 that I had moved back to Oklahoma after working in Ithaca, NY and then Ft. Collins, CO for The Peregrine Fund. I called Alan to ask if he would consider joining me in a new endeavor to establish an avian research center in Bartlesville named after OU Ornithological Professor Emeritus, George Miksch Sutton. He talked to his wife, but he did not hesitate for long. Soon, with the help of Harold and Sandy Price who donated land and buildings in Bartlesville, along with Oklahoma ornithologists John Shackford, Jack Tyler, Warren Harden, and John Tomer, and several Tulsa business men including Joe Williams, Jack Zink, Bob Lorton, and Len Eaton, we hatched a plan to help repopulate the southeastern U.S. with our national symbol. It included taking eggs from Florida eagle nests early in the incubation cycle, allowing the birds to recycle and lay more eggs thus avoiding impacts on the sunshine state's population, and hatching and raising the resulting young behind one way glass with puppets before release and restocking—all in all, about a year long process. This novel and ambitious plan was considered risky by many who did not think it would work.

With criticism coming from many fronts, we gave it a try for the first time in 1985 and continued it





through 1992. It was daring, grueling, stressful, and physically exhausting, but it worked beyond our wildest imaginations. After we developed successful techniques on the first trips, Alan led the teams down each successive year to complete the annual expeditions while I stayed in Oklahoma to help raise much needed funding. The rest is history that included the cooperation, funding, and dedicated work from many agencies and other parties, and today where we had no nesting eagles in Oklahoma, we now have over 125 nesting pairs with similar numbers from releases in GA, AL, MS, and NC. Alan has tracked the expansion of Oklahoma nesting Bald Eagles in detailed records since the released birds and their offspring began to reproduce in the state. In addition, he has been a constant presence as a silent but ever vigilant observer and sometimes moderator with the Sutton eagle cameras, and he is always present to help answer questions from the myriad phone calls that are directed to the Sutton Center annually. Alan is a really good scientist who asks critical questions and maintains focus on details. That, in addition to his trustworthiness, is why he has also excelled at keeping accurate accounting and financial records for the Center against which our annual audits never levy any significant questions. It is also why he was in charge of keeping our scientific collection and banding records for the Sutton Center.



Alan has always been a low key, understated type of person who never bragged or carried on about his projects or his accomplishments. He knows how to do many things and quietly does them without any fanfare. For example, if we needed a mist net for trapping raptors, Alan would quietly sit down and make one that was perfect. Who would have known that Alan had silently been collecting moths in Oklahoma with the help of a black light and a white bed sheet for a total of 94 new state and county records? Did you know that Alan had not only quietly amassed a huge collection of books on falconry and birds of prey, but that he has an absolutely outstanding collection of bird of prey stamps as well, and a collection of raptor and falconry pins and patches? And many do not realize that Alan and his wife Sally are not only skilled kayakers who paddle regularly, but are also accomplished folk dancers who travel locally, throughout the U.S. and internationally to participate in folk dances. Until giving it a try, one does not realize just what good exercise this provides for the cardiovascular system. And for almost every event, Alan has a circle of friends that show up and share their enthusiasm for whatever the Sutton Center is doing.

Alan is totally dedicated, dependable, and honest. He is someone who could always be trusted to perform as promised and to help make things work out successfully. It is his presence and hard work that has been such an important part of making the Sutton Research Center's work successful all of the way back to its establishment, and we will miss him tremendously. We wish Alan and Sally the best of luck in their retirement years, even if they do move to Oregon, and we are especially grateful that Alan plans to stay around the area for a year or more to help fill a big hole and ease the transition that must take place following his departure.

# Q: How many kinds of birds are there?

## A: More than we now know.

*Story and Photography by Dan L. Reinking*

Humans in general and scientists in particular like to organize, classify, and keep track of things. It helps us make sense of our world. Perhaps you sort the clothes in your closet by color or by season of use. Maybe you can recite statistics for your favorite sports team going back decades. A stamp collection sorted by country, a book collection organized by subject or author, and a list of birds you have seen in your yard or in your lifetime are all examples of this passion for categorizing and record keeping. Taking stock of our surroundings is something we do without even thinking about it.

**“We have barely scratched the surface in terms of classifying and recording our surrounding life forms.”**

Does the hotel room you just entered have a decent TV and a handy outlet for charging your phone? Which brands of products does the store you are in carry? How many of your acquaintances do you see at an event? We tend to pay attention to inventorying even trivial things while barely realizing it.

Many people assume, given the many generations of humans before us, our habit of cataloging our surroundings, and the scientific advances of the past few centuries, that there are few discoveries left to be made, at least with regard to the basic inventory of creatures that share our

planet with us. This is far from the truth. Approximately two million species of plants and animals have been identified. Estimates vary widely, but one recent study pegs seven million plant and animal species as the actual number that likely exist, meaning that we have barely scratched the surface in terms of classifying and recording our surrounding life forms. This doesn't even include other groups such as lichens, mushrooms, and bacteria, which could raise the total to 11 million species. Of course, some groups such as mammals and birds are much better studied than others such as insects and mollusks. This is partly because of their size (making them easier to see than microscopic species), partly because their habitats and ranges often overlap with those that are easily accessible by humans (in contrast to deep marine species), and partly because they are or have been important for food, sport (such as birdwatching), or because they have cultural significance to humans.

However, even within a popular and well studied group of animals such as birds there are still new surprises and discoveries to be made. Approximately 10,000 species of birds have been classified worldwide, but species new to science are still occasionally being found, especially in parts of South America and southeastern Asia. Recently, a species of cotinga (a diverse group of forest species found in Central and South America) was rediscovered in Bolivia after going unreported for 100 years. This Bolivian population had previously been considered to be a subspecies of a more widespread species, but with its recent rediscovery was found to be a new species, now with an estimated total population numbering fewer than 800 birds due to deforestation.



**The wide array of Fox Sparrow subspecies with distinct appearances cluster into four main groups and may represent four species rather than one.**

Discoveries of new species are by no means limited to far-off places. Even here in North America the list of bird species is growing as well. Usually these new species are the result of a spilt, when an existing species is determined to be composed of two or more similar but separate species. The research papers that document the differences between similar appearing bird species are traditionally based on field studies of differences in vocalizations or appearances and a tendency to avoid interbreeding, but in recent decades are frequently also based on DNA evaluations that reveal significant genetic differences between populations. Recent examples of species split in this way include the newly classified Pacific Wren in parts of the western U.S. and Canada being found to be genetically distinct from the Winter Wren of eastern North America, and the large and showy but locally distributed Gunnison Sage-Grouse of western Colorado and Utah being determined to be distinct from the much more



The White-breasted Nuthatch occurs in nearly every state, but might in fact consist of three different species with distinct eastern, Pacific, and interior western ranges.

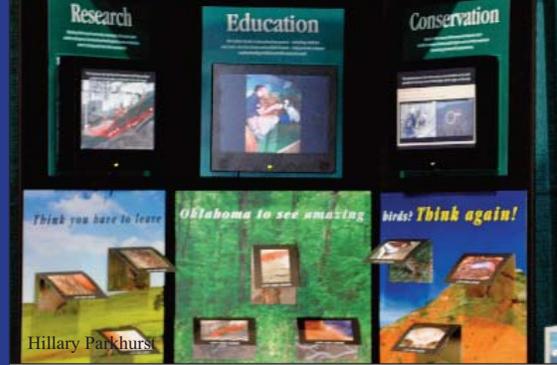
widespread Greater Sage-Grouse of the interior western U.S. A number of additional such species splits in common North American birds have been proposed or are currently being evaluated for merit, including some within current White-breasted Nuthatch, Willet, Fox Sparrow, and Red Crossbill species, among others. North America will likely have several new bird species named in the coming years as a result of detailed genetic examinations coupled with additional field studies.

One of the more interesting recent discoveries of a new bird species occurred just this year in the United States, and followed a manner of discovery quite different in path if not in method from the above examples. Biologist Peter Pyle, a former colleague of mine at Point Reyes Bird Observatory (now PRBO Conservation Science) who currently works for the Institute for Bird Populations, was studying seabird specimens at the Smithsonian. He encountered a shearwater specimen that he was sure was misidentified, but despite his decades of seabird study he couldn't determine its proper identification. Shearwaters are pelagic species, found over the open ocean for most of their lives except when on land to breed, when they are primarily nocturnal and

nest in burrows. They are generally long-lived (over 50 years has been documented), and many perform long-distance migrations each year (in some cases well over 8,000 miles annually). The bird he was examining had been collected from a burrow on Midway Atoll in the Hawaiian Islands in 1963, and had been deposited in the Smithsonian's collection as a Little Shearwater. Peter's experienced questioning was proven correct after DNA testing was

**“One of the more interesting recent discoveries of a new bird species occurred just this year in the United States...”**

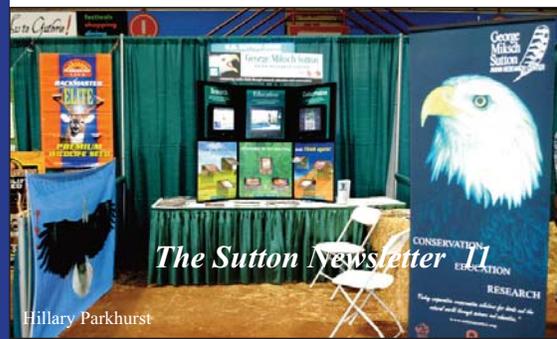
performed on the specimen and it was confirmed to be neither a Little Shearwater nor any other previously described species. The new species has been named Bryan's Shearwater, and aside from species splits, is the first new-to-science species discovered in the U.S. since 1974 when a forest species also from Hawaii was first described. Because of the huge distances shearwaters can travel, and their habit of investigating potential nesting sites while traveling, it is not known where the Bryan's Shearwater nests, though it is not believed to have nested regularly in Hawaii. Almost nothing is known about it. Indeed, it is not even known if this smallest species of shearwater in the world is simply very rare or if it is now extinct. Time will tell, as long as people continue to be interested in making new discoveries. The opportunities are still immense, even in our own backyards, and even for things as obvious as birds.



**Sutton Show Booth Gets a Facelift!**

*by Hillary A. Parkhurst*

Just in time for the 2011 Oklahoma Wildlife EXPO, the Sutton presentation booth received a new look. We wanted an attractive and professional show booth that would proudly display who “we” are and what “we” are about. The top portion of the booth has a banner with our logo, affiliate organizations/university, and our mission. Below are three monitors displaying rotating images and information about the three main areas on which the Center focuses, research, education and conservation. The lower half of the display features three panels with different types of terrain found in Oklahoma; high plains and mesas, woodlands, and prairies, and each panel features three cards with an up-close image of a bird's feathers. When you flip open the card, you can discover to which bird the feathers belong and more information about that particular bird. The tag line above the three panels states, “Think you have to leave Oklahoma to see amazing birds? Think again!” We hope that you will have the opportunity to visit our booth at an upcoming show as we expand and grow our educational reach.





# Wild Brew

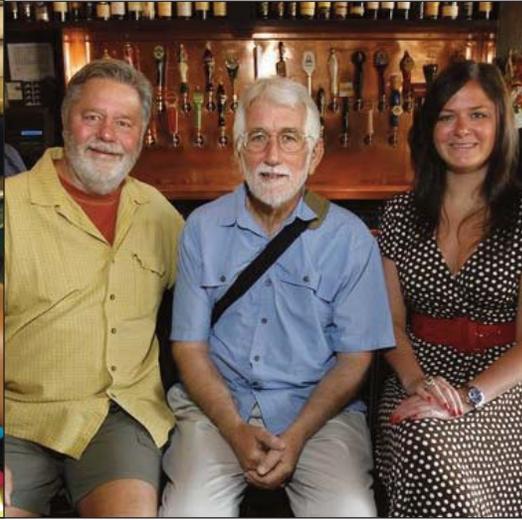
by Hillary A. Parkhurst

Wild Brew 2011 went off without a hitch! With many new faces added to the committee, ideas were floated around on how to grow the event and add new elements, but still keep the formula that brings people back every year. Wild Brew is the Sutton Center's largest annual fundraising event and Oklahoma's largest beer tasting festival. The volunteer committee was led by co-chairs Tom Hutchison and Haley Downing who were keys to Wild Brew's success. This year's honorary co-chairs were the original founders of Wild Brew, Gary Neal, Jerry Parkhurst and in memoriam of Rocky Stegman.

Over 500 patrons attended the special patron hour with musical guests Shelby Eicher and Mark Bruner, and as an added bonus, the upstairs of Central Park Hall was converted into an additional party space for patrons to nosh on delicious treats from some of Tulsa's specialty restaurants along with the opportunity to talk to several Oklahoma craft ale makers on a more intimate level. We received very positive feedback on this new addition and will be working on ways to make it even better for next year.

The party really came alive once the doors opened to the general admission ticket holders. Over 100 different types of beer from domestic to international were flowing and amazing food was available to sample from over 30 of Tulsa's hot spots. A special thank you goes out to all of the beer vendors and restaurants for their generosity and contributions to the event. A complete list can be located at [www.wildbrew.org](http://www.wildbrew.org). To top off the event, the crowd danced away to the tunes of the





# 2011

*Photography by Tom Gilbert, Dan Reinking, and Ryan VanZant*

fabulous Mid Life Crisis Band, who have continually contributed to the success of Wild Brew each year!

This year the “Golden Tap” award was presented to Choc Brewery for their continued support of the Sutton Center and for helping to create the Wild Brew collaboration beer with Marshall Brewery in 2010. Again in 2011, they produced Wild Brew beer, this time in collaboration with FOAM, the Fellowship of Oklahoma Ale Makers, and they also created a delicious Belgium IPA sold in liquor stores across Oklahoma and in parts of Arkansas to help promote the event and produce extra revenue for the Sutton Center. We greatly appreciate the support of Choc and FOAM for all of their extra efforts this year.

We would also like to thank our sponsors, especially the Tulsa World, Shamrock Communications, Idea Studio, Tulsa People, ConocoPhillips, Mary K. Chapman Foundation, John Steele Zink Foundation, Spectra Press, Tim Jessell, and Riggs, Abney, Neal Turpen, Orbison & Lewis

The committee and the Sutton Center would like to thank Lisa Riggs and Gary Meek for hosting the Wild Brew thank you party in their lovely home this year, a big thank you to Riggs, Abney, Neal, Turpen, Orbison & Lewis for sponsoring the thank you party, and lastly a huge thank you goes out to our incredible committee of volunteers who worked tirelessly to provide a fun and vibrant event. Their support for the Sutton Center is truly appreciated and once again, Wild Brew proved to be “the greatest party ever hatched!”





## Sutton Center's Recent Publications



- Horton R, Bell L, O'Meilia CM, Hise C, **Wolfe DH**, and Elmore D (2010) A spatially-based planning tool designed to reduce negative effects of development on the Greater Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*) in Oklahoma: A multi-entity collaboration to promote Greater Prairie-Chicken voluntary habitat conservation and prioritized management actions. Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. 29pp. Available online at: <http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/grpcdevelopmentplanning.htm>.
- Marantz CA, **Patten MA** (2010) Quantifying subspecies analysis: A case study of morphometric variation and subspecies in the woodcreeper genus *Dendrocolaptes*. *Ornithological Monographs* **67**:123-140.
- Patten MA** (2010) Null expectations in subspecies diagnosis. *Ornithological Monographs* **67**:35-41.
- Patten MA** (2010) Evolution and historical biogeography of a Song Sparrow ring in western North America. Pages 329-342 in Pontarotti P, editor. *Evolutionary Biology - Concepts, Molecular and Morphological Evolution*. Springer, Berlin.
- Patten MA** (2011) Olivaceous Woodcreeper (*Sittasomus griseicapillus*). In Schulenberg TS, editor. *Neotropical Birds Online*, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, N.Y
- Patten MA**, Gómez de Silva Garza H, Smith-Patten BD (2010) Long-term changes in the bird community of Palenque, Chiapas, in response to rainforest loss. *Biodiversity and Conservation* **19**:21-36.
- Patten MA**, Kelly JF (2010) Habitat selection and the perceptual trap. *Ecological Applications* **20**:2148-2156.
- Patten MA**, Smith-Patten BD (2010) Book review: A Bird-Finding Guide to Costa Rica. *Quarterly Review of Biology* **85**:519.
- Pruett CL, Johnson JA, **Larsson LC**, **Wolfe DH**, and **Patten MA**. (2011) Low effective population size and survivorship in a grassland grouse. *Conservation Genetics* **12**:1205-1214.
- Smith-Patten BD, **Patten MA** (2010) Broken antehumeral stripes in a male *Enallagma civile* (Familiar Bluet). *Argia* **22**(3):20-21.
- Wolfe DH** (Updated on 20 September 2011) Grouse Bibliography compilation. (4+ MB PDF file) More than 600 pages of grouse citations organized by genus.

## Sutton Center's Recent Presentations

- Callahan R, **Patten MA** (2010) Composition and diversity of Ramphastos toucan foraging flocks at La Selva, Costa Rica. Symposium-Workshop on Frugivores and Seed Dispersal. 15 Jun.
- Curry C, **Patten MA** (2010) Vocal dynamics of a complex avian hybrid zone. Southwestern Association of Naturalists. 23 Apr.
- Curry C, **Patten MA** (2010) Vocal dynamics of a complex avian hybrid zone. Association of Field Ornithologists. 15 Aug.
- Curry C, **Patten MA** (2010) Vocal dynamics across a complex avian hybrid zone. Oklahoma Ornithological Society. 16 Oct.
- Larsson LC**, **Wolfe DH**, Pruet CL, Johnson JA, **Patten MA** (2011) Effective population size in Lesser Prairie-Chicken. Prairie Grouse Technical Council. 4 Oct
- Larsson LC**, **Wolfe DH**, Pruet CL, Johnson JA, **Patten MA** (2011) Effective population size in Lesser Prairie-Chicken. Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. 12 Oct
- Larsson LC**, Pruet CL, Johnson JA, **Wolfe DH**, **Patten MA** (2011) Low effective population size and survivorship in Lesser Prairie-Chicken. Wildlife Society. 7 Nov
- Patten MA** (2010) Correlates of avian resistance and vulnerability in a fragmented rainforest. Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation. 20 Jul.
- Patten MA** (2010) Habitat selection and the perceptual trap. International Ornithological Congress. 24 Aug.
- Reinking DL** (2010) Northern Coastal California Bird Banding and a Trip to the Farallon Islands. Grand Lake Audubon Society. 11 Oct.
- Reinking DL** (2010) Northern Coastal California Bird Banding and a Trip to the Farallon Islands. Tulsa Audubon Society. 16 Nov.
- Smith-Patten BD, **Patten MA** (2010) Altered microclimate as a mechanism for avian extirpation in tropical forests. Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation. 20 Jul.
- Wolfe DH** (2010) Habitat Fragmentation and Lesser Prairie-Chickens. ConocoPhillips Wildlife Habitat Group. 20 Apr.
- Wolfe DH** (2010) Results of 11 years of research on Lesser Prairie-Chickens in Oklahoma. ODWC, Lesser Prairie-Chicken Meeting. 8 Nov.
- Wolfe DH**, **Patten MA** (2010) Potential effects of wind energy development on the prairie-chickens (*Tympanuchus*). Society of Range Management. 9 Feb.
- Wolfe DH**, **Patten MA**, **Sherrod SK** (2010) Mitigating fence collision risks for Lesser Prairie-Chickens. Society of Range Management. 10 Feb.

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