TULSA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Promoting birds & the natural world since 1935
At the formation of the Tulsa Audubon Society (TAS) on April 3, 1935, the stated objectives of the organization were to study and protect wild bird-life and kindred subjects in nature, conservation of the nation’s natural resources, and conservation education. These objectives hold true for present members of TAS. The Society is an affiliate of the National Audubon Society, both non-profit organizations, devoted to the cause of conservation.

For more than three-quarters of a century, TAS members have contributed significant time and effort to the achievement of the objectives as described above. Members make this contribution because they recognize the importance of conservation, have a desire to continually increase their knowledge of nature, value the satisfaction that comes from seeing what is accomplished through their efforts, and enjoy the experience of sharing time in nature with other people. Please visit the TAS website www.tulsaaudubon.org for additional information regarding the Society’s history. Members of the Tulsa Audubon Society take pride in over seventy-five years of service to the Tulsa area and Oklahoma.

75th Anniversary

Tulsa Audubon Society celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2010 with a week of events shared with the Tulsa community. Nationally known storyteller and author Brian “Fox” Ellis, in the persona of John James Audubon, brought history, ecology, art and literature to life in his meticulously researched Chautauqua-style programs that explore the life work of one of America’s greatest artists and naturalists.

Working with local school administrators, arrangements were made for Brian to visit eight area schools, giving eleven performances and conducting sixteen student writing workshops as John James Audubon. He interacted with approximately fifteen hundred students ranging in age from pre-school to high school. All events for the week were primarily underwritten by Tulsa Audubon as a gift to the community in recognition of seventy-five years of support.
Conservation and Wildlife Protection

In the areas of wildlife protection and conservation, much of the Society’s activity has been directed toward bird-life and its habitat in Oklahoma. A few examples include:

Bird Observation

One of the first activities of TAS was the gathering and recording of data on bird observation. Annual bird counts for Tulsa County are performed by TAS members in May and December. Monthly bird sightings of an unusual nature are reported to the office of the Recorder. The December count is held in conjunction with a National Audubon Society count covering North America, the Caribbean and Latin America and is the oldest scientific database on bird population in the world. All accumulated data is supplied to the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee and added to our archive of 75 years of bird data. Using information from the various counts and the knowledge of TAS members, publications are made available to the public including the Check List of Birds of Tulsa County and Tulsa County Date Guide. Members also participate in butterfly counts across Oklahoma.

Another TAS publication is A Guide to Birding in Oklahoma, first published in 1973, followed by a second edition in 1986. Both are now out of print. These were the only statewide birding guides ever published, and were a collaborative effort of many birders throughout the state. In 2007 the guide was updated, digitized and published on-line on the TAS web site. Google Maps and Google Earth interfaces were developed to take advantage of 21st century technology. The guide can be found at www.tulsaaudubon.org/birding-guide.htm

Bald Eagles

In 1979, TAS members raised funds to purchase land in a particular cove along Keystone Lake to protect a winter roosting site for the Bald Eagle and encourage their return to Oklahoma. Since that time, Bald Eagles have increased their presence in the state in significant numbers. Important contributors to this increase have been the Sutton Avian Research Center located near Bartlesville and the protection of the Eagle though the Endangered Species Act. TAS annually holds “Eagles Days” during a weekend in January when members set up field scopes and assist visitors in viewing Bald Eagles. Seminars and live bird exhibits/lectures are also part of Eagle Days activity and are provided free to the public.
Least Terns

TAS member Fred Pianalto in 1977 began monitoring the Interior Least Terns that were nesting on the sand bars of the Arkansas River. Fred was the “Birdman of Riverparks” and educated thousands of people about this endangered species. His observations resulted in the establishment of the Least Tern Preserve which is still in existence.

Oxley Nature Center

Perhaps one of the most significant contributions of TAS to Tulsa was the Society’s involvement in the creation of the Mary K. Oxley Nature Center. In 1974, TAS president Dick Sherry appeared before the Tulsa Park Board to express the interest of the Society in the previously approved project of a Nature Center that had been inactive for a period of time. The National Audubon Society was eventually requested to develop a master plan for the Nature Center. Upon final approval of the master plan, a group of interested Audubon members and community leaders arranged funding for the Nature Center including a major contribution from Mr. and Mrs. John T. Oxley. For more detailed information on the creation of the Nature Center visit its website at www.oxleynaturecenter.org/history.

Important Bird Areas

TAS is a very active and major presence within the Oklahoma Audubon Council. The Council has organized and developed funding for a program to identify Important Bird Areas (IBAs) within Oklahoma. This is part of an international effort, the National Audubon Society being the U. S. representative, to identify a network of sites that provide critical habitat for breeding, wintering and/or migrating birds. To date, nine sites within Oklahoma have been recommended by the Council, and three have been accepted as meeting the requirements for designation as globally-important IBAs. Those three locations are the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge and the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge. For more information on Council activities and the IBA program visit the Council’s website at www.okaudubon.org.
Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival

Starting in 2007, in conjunction with the Oklahoma Audubon Council, considerable effort continues to be provided by TAS members toward the development of an annual Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival in Woodward, Oklahoma. A key aspect of the Festival has been to make the public aware of the decline of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken in Oklahoma, primarily due to loss of habitat. Each year individuals from Oklahoma, and so far over 30 states and provinces from Alaska to Florida, have attended the festival to view the Prairie-Chickens and other bird life. Festival participants also volunteer their time to assist in Prairie-Chicken protection by placing plastic markers on wire fencing crossing the Chickens’ habitat, which help the birds avoid collision and fatalities. For more information regarding the Festival, visit the Festival website at www.lektreks.org.

Backyard Wildlife Habitat Garden Tour

The Society also holds an annual Backyard Wildlife Habitat Garden Tour. The purpose is to educate the public and provide ideas for creating backyards attractive to wildlife. Homeowners who have developed their backyards with this purpose in mind volunteer to open their gardens to the public. Representatives from several nurseries that emphasize native plants are also on hand during the Tour and provide material and guidance in developing a garden conducive to attracting wildlife.

Volunteer Days

TAS organizes events each year where members and non-members assist in improving and maintaining nature areas that are provided for public enjoyment. Many volunteer hours are annually directed toward this activity at locations such as Oxley Nature Center, Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuge, Redbud Valley Nature Preserve, Ray Harral Nature Center and other locations across Oklahoma. Many members contribute additional time to other conservation activities within the Tulsa area and across Oklahoma outside those organized by TAS.
Flycatcher Trail

Flycatcher Trail Living Classroom and Demonstration Garden was created by TAS in association with Jenks High School. It is designed to serve as a model of a "backyard bird friendly space" and idea center for members of our community. More specifically, the space is used as a demonstration garden to help the community learn about and see transferable backyard bird friendly concepts that they can use in their own backyards. The garden is a model of a wildlife habitat for all types of wildlife by providing food, shelter/cover, water and a place to raise young. The space is also used by Jenks High School to engage students in outdoor learning experiences across many different disciplines including Biology, Environmental Science, Ornithology, Horticulture, Oklahoma History, Art and more.

Flycatcher Trail has been certified as an "Oklahoma Wildscapes Garden", a "National Wildlife Federation Bird Friendly Habits" and is an official MonarchWatch "Monarch Way Station".

Youth Birding Camp Scholarships

TAS annually offers scholarships for two high school students to attend summer birding camps. There are several such camps in different parts of the country and the scholarship can be applied to any of these. Students must meet certain criteria and complete an application. The scholarships cover the camp fee while transportation and other incidental expenses are paid by the camper or his/her family. The camps provide an opportunity for students that have a serious interest in ornithology to interact with other students having the same interest and be guided on outings by highly experienced bird experts. The students share their experiences upon their return home with TAS members at a monthly meeting.
Purple Martin Roost Watch

Every summer a true wildlife spectacle takes place in downtown Tulsa when between 100,000-250,000 Purple Martins gather nightly in a concentrated roost area. Purple Martins are highly social birds, and after leaving their nesting colonies, form large, communal roosts where they sleep at night prior to and during migration. In late summer each year, TAS hosts a Purple Martin Roost Watch in at a location in downtown Tulsa. People can enjoy a unique opportunity to see the thousands of Martins as they return in the evening to a roost area.

Wild At Art

The Wild At Art show features works of art by area artists and artisans in a wide variety of media. Admission to the event is free, and a percentage of proceeds from art sales go toward helping WING-IT members cover the costs of rehabilitating animals. WING-IT, a part of the Tulsa Audubon Society, is a network of volunteers who devote considerable time, effort, and expense to the care of compromised wild animals, primarily infant creatures. Such care includes feeding, hydrating, splinting, medicating, and housing, all with the goal of releasing the animals back into their natural habitat. Rehabbers absorb thousands of dollars in expenses to care for injured and abandoned animals, and the funds raised through events such as “Wild at Art” help defray some of those costs.

Monarchs on the Mountain Festival

This event is hosted by Tulsa’s River Parks Authority in partnership with various local organizations including Tulsa Audubon Society. The festival, now held at The Gathering Place, celebrates the vital role Eastern Oklahoma plays in the Monarch Butterfly migration. The event includes fun and educational activities highlighting the life cycle of the butterfly and its migration. Information is made available and plants may be purchased that participants can use to establish their own Monarch waystation. The Festival is free to the public and organized to appeal to all ages.
Wildlife Rehabilitation

WING-IT (Wildlife In Need Group – In Tulsa) is an organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of orphaned, sick, injured or otherwise displaced wildlife with the ultimate goal of releasing them back into the wild. The organization allows rehabbers to assist and support each other in the demanding commitment of rehabilitating wildlife. It also provides a basis for educating the public regarding assisting wildlife in need and recruiting additional volunteers to work as rehabilitators. Tulsa Audubon provides administrative assistance to WING-IT, freeing them to focus on their work of rehabilitating wildlife. For more information related to WING-IT, a link to their website can be found at www.tulsaaudubon.org.

Study and Education

In the area of conservation education, TAS schedules monthly meetings from September thru May each year where invited speakers cover a wide range of topics related to wildlife and the environment. These meetings are open to the general public free of charge. In addition, many field trips throughout the year to various Oklahoma locations are arranged and available for public participation free of charge. TAS members provide leadership for the trips or arrange for other individuals to act as leaders who are familiar with the area to be visited. These field trips are enjoyable, educational and provide people the opportunity to see parts of Oklahoma they may not otherwise visit. Please visit the TAS website www.tulsaaudubon.org for additional information on meetings and field trips.

The Future

Tulsa Audubon Society’s activities and projects in coming years will continue to focus on the objectives established at the organization’s founding. As in the past, the challenge of achieving the objectives will be met by TAS members who recognize the importance of conservation and volunteer their time and resources. It is important that all individuals play their part in protecting our country’s wildlife and resources and educating others on their importance. Please take time to visit Tulsa Audubon Society’s website at www.tulsaaudubon.org to learn more about its activities and consider becoming a member.

www.tulsaaudubon.org
Excerpts from the first edition of THE SCISSOR-TAIL, published in May, 1949, describes the Society’s resolution to make the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher the state bird, presented in the state legislature in 1949. The measure passed the Senate, but was laughed out of the House. It eventually passed in 1951.
A meeting, for the purpose of organizing an
Audubon Bird Club was called by Mr. James H. Gardner,
to be held in his home the evening of Tuesday April 23rd at 8:00 o'clock.

The following were present:

Mr. & Mrs. James H. Gardner
Mr. Will O. Doolittle
Professor E. L. Chase
Mrs. W. A. Brumifff
Mrs. Sewell Pitt
Miss E. Roeboes
Miss Cline (out-of-town guest)
Mr. F. A. Bush
Mr. & Mrs. J. L. Borden
Mr. Robert M. Lee
Mr. Bob Luckhardt
Mr. Bob Coggeshall
Miss Sadie V. Allan
Miss Jean Buckley
Miss Ethel S. Force

Mr. Gardner was elected temporary chairman and
Jean Buckley temporary secretary.

Motion that the club be called the "Tulsa Audubon Society" made by Miss Roeboes, seconded by Mr. Luckhardt - carried.

Motion that the following officers be elected and
form an executive committee: Pres., Vice Pres., Sec.-Treas., Recorder of Lists, Program Chairman - made by
Miss Roeboes, seconded by Mr. Gardner - carried.

Nominating Committee appointed by the chair: Miss Force, Mr. Lee, Mr. Coggeshall.

Report of nominating committee:
Pres. Bob Coggeshall, Mr. Bush.
Vice Pres. Mrs. Borden, Miss Roeboes.
Sec-Treas. Miss Allen, Miss Buckley.
Recorder of Lists Miss Force, Mr. Luckhardt.
Program Chairman Mr. Doolittle, Prof. Chase.

The following officers were elected:

President F. A. Bush
Vice Pres. Mrs. J. L. Borden
Sec-Treas. Jean Buckley
Recorder Ethel Force
Programs Will O. Doolittle

The same to be the executive committee.

Motion that the dues of this organization be $1.00 per
year made by Mrs. Pitt, seconded by Mr. Luckhardt - carried.

Mr. Borden and Mr. Bush kindly offered to print the
program of bird walks and leaders for this spring on
the multigraph.

Meeting was adjourned.

Jean Buckley
Secretary