

OCAS OFFICERS

Howard Malone: Treasurer
Ed Brown: Field Trip Chairman
Nancy Donald: CBC Coordinator
Ruth Ann Rosamond: Refreshments Coordinator
Daniel Burns: Newsletter Editor

Meetings are held at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Meridian every second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Trinity is located at 4223 Poplar Springs Drive.

Please use the SOUTH driveway on the church property (the one nearer downtown Meridian) and proceed around through the parking lot to the back, where you may enter the building through the double doors.

Next meeting: May 12, 2008

Okatibbee Creek Audubon Society

May 2008

***Be like the bird, who halting in his flight /
On limb too slight, / Feels it give way
beneath him, yet sings / Knowing he has
wings.***

--Victor Hugo, writer (1802-1885)

--contributed by Nancy Donald

Read OCAS' newsletter online at
<http://home.comcast.net/~ocas/>

Opinions in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Mississippi Audubon or of National Audubon but of individual writers. We view it as important to provide a forum for discussion and therefore we include articles from diverse sources where we can.

Birding in Las Vegas

By
Nancy Donald

When someone suggested that all my fellow employees take a trip to Las Vegas, my first thought was "New birds!". Believe me, I have taken a lot of ribbing about birding, but my excitement over birds vs. the fun of Las Vegas brought it on with brute force. I did enjoy the casinos and the shopping, but to me Gambel's quail running around like chickens at a local park was more entertaining.



I contacted the local Audubon Society through their internet site www.redrockaudubon.org. The current president, Pam Nickels, offered to take me birding at some of the local favorite hotspots. After studying their website and my field guides, I had a list of birds that I wanted to add to my life list. My fellow travelers could not believe I would take off on a jaunt with someone I did not know in a city I did not know, but they did not know that birders are great people who want to share their knowledge with others. And Pam exemplified this generosity by taking her Saturday morning off and showing out-of-towners more about her city than the usual tourist destinations. We were accompanied by one of my fellow travelers, Bruce Machamer, and his new digital camera. He became our official photographer.

Our first stop was a busy city park called Sunset Park. We took a maintenance road into the back of the park. The first bird we saw was a G. roadrunner. The Gambel's quail were in the same area. Really, it looked like someone's chicken yard with so many running around. A Phainopepla was spotted in the same area. The birds seem to fill the same niche as N. cardinals here--plentiful and striking.



While we were at the park, I added a Ladderback woodpecker, Abert's towhee, Cressel's thrasher, and Black phoebe to my list of new birds. There were also White-crowned sparrows, Dark-eyed juncos, N. mockingbirds, and Greater grackles and, of course, House sparrows. The small lake was filled with ducks and geese. Mallard, Redhead, Canada and one Ross'; and a few Great egrets were also seen. Great-tailed grackles were abundant in the park. Bruce was able to get a great shot of a female grackle with a piece of bread stolen from the geese. Great-tailed grackle calls are not as abrasive as our Common grackle, but I don't think they are any less the nuisance.



Our next stop was to the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve at the City of Henderson Wastewater Treatment Plant. This area is gated but open to the public at certain times and maintains feeders that can be viewed from classrooms and walking paths. Here we saw hummingbirds (Anna's and Costa's), Say's phoebe, and Verdin.

After leaving Henderson, we traveled into the suburbs of Las Vegas to view Burrowing owls. RRAS is working with local officials to protect Burrowing owls. Las Vegas is a sprawling city with large subdivisions under construction taking over the habitat that these owls use to make their homes. The owls burrow holes in the desert sand for nesting. We were told that the owls were protected during nesting season, but after that burrows were allowed to be bulldozed over. The Red Rock Audubon Society,

the US Game and Fish, and the City of Las Vegas are working to provide artificial burrows to encourage the owls to move to protected areas. The lot where this guy lived had eight active burrows. We saw three owls that were sharing a burrow.



The next day, we headed to Red Rock Canyon which is about twenty minutes from the strip in Las Vegas. On the way we stopped at Red Springs Park, a great birding spot with ½ mile boardwalk that loops by the actual springs and up against the canyon wall. The springs have been visited by travelers for hundreds of years. Here we saw many Anna's and Costa's hummingbirds, Spotted towhee, Say's and Black phoebe, Rock wren, and more Phainopepla. Ground squirrels and lizards were everywhere. There were signs describing the desert vegetation so that even the most hardened gambler could navigate his way through this natural wonder! By the end of this trip, I had my friends who are definitely not birders excited they saw the Costa's perched on a limb before I did.



At Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, we spent our time at the visitor's center and driving the scenic route. It is beautiful and I think I could have spent days trekking through the canyons. Still I did see Scrub jays and Black phoebes at one of the picnic areas. All in all it was a wonderful trip to Las Vegas.

Sightings:

Debra King: Mulberry trees are full of cedar waxwings, woodpeckers, and orioles.

Lomax and Ruth Ann Rosamond: Rose Breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, and Gray Catbird.

Tom and Susan Junkins: 6 Male Rose breasted Grosbeaks and 4 Indigo Buntings.

Ed Brown: Osprey Sighted at least three times. Wild Turkey Gobbler. Heard lots of Kentucky Warblers calling. Solitary Vireos nest. Scarlet Tanager and Cedar Waxwings. Red-tailed Hawk snatched up friend's turkey hunting decoy.

Daniel Burns: 6 Male Rose Breasted Grosbeaks and 3 Female Rose Breasted Grosbeaks at one time in the backyard eating seed. Downy Woodpeckers fledglings at feeder.

Three different pairs of Red-Bellied Woodpeckers at feeder daily, two of the pairs are carrying peanut butter mix to the nest to feed their young.