



The Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

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General Meetings Centennial Museum at UTEP 500 W. University Ave

September 18, 2017 7:00pm

Conserving Central American Habitats for the Scarlet Macaw and Yellow-headed Parrot



Charles Britt

Las Cruces resident Charles Britt, recently featured in Audubon Magazine, will give a presentation on the importance of Central American forests and the species that depend on them.

The Electronic Roadrunner

The Roadrunner is now also available electronically as a PDF file. If you would like to receive our newsletter in this way via e-mail, just send a note to John Sproul at jsproul@utep.edu.

Britt will discuss his conservation work with Scarlet Macaws and Yellow-headed Parrots. A professional wildlife biologist and graduate of NMSU, Britt is co-founder of the Belize Bird Conservancy.

October 16, 2017 7:00pm

Hybrid Cacti of the Jarilla Mountains Otero Co., New Mexico



Dr. Paul Hyder

Two species of cactus, the Claret Cup and the Texas Rainbow, hybridize in the Jarilla Mountains of south-central New Mexico. This talk covers the biology of these hybrids and examines the diversity of flower colors and spination of these plants.

Dr. Paul Hyder is a local ecologist/photographer/musician who, in addition to teaching Environmental Science and Physics at Eastwood High School, gives natural-history-based field trips and lectures to interested parties in the El Paso/Las Cruces area.

**El Paso/Trans-Pecos
Audubon Website!**

**Updated information about
upcoming field trips,
calendar of upcoming
events, and recent bird
sightings.**

www.trans-pecos-audubon.com

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

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The Audubon Foundation of Texas



represents Texas
Audubon chapters in the Earth Share of Texas payroll deduction plan for charitable giving.

BUTTERFLY FLUTTERBY AT THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT NATURE PARK



Join the Asombro Institute for Science Education on Saturday, August 19, 2017 from 9:00 am - noon at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park for their 15th Annual Butterfly Flutterby. There will be new stations and family favorites return such as face painting, butterfly experts, butterfly gardening, and bucket auction. Rain or Shine. Admission is \$3.

The Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park is located northeast of Las Cruces. From I-25 in Las Cruces, head east on Highway 70. Take the Mesa Grande Road exit (at Oñate High School). Make a U-turn under the highway to head west and stay in the right lane. Turn right (north) on Jornada Road. Follow Jornada Road for 6.4 miles and turn left at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park sign. Follow the entrance road to the parking area and trailhead.

The Asombro Institute for Science Education is a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing scientific literacy by fostering an understanding of the Chihuahuan Desert. The Asombro Institute provides hands-on science education programs for more than 17,000 students throughout southern New Mexico and west Texas each year. Anyone interested in learning more about the Asombro Institute for Science Education, membership, and volunteer opportunities should call the Institute office at 575-524-3334 or check our web site at www.asombro.org.

Conservation Organizations

Chihuahuan Desert Education Coalition
www.chihuahuandesert.org

Second Chance Wildlife Rescue
www.secondchancewildliferescue.org
Josie Karam (915) 920-7867

El Paso Zoo 521-1850
www.elpasozoo.org

Keystone Heritage Park 581-7920
www.keystoneheritagepark.com

Asombro Institute
(Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park)
(575) 524-3334 www.asombro.org

Friends of Rio Bosque 747-8663
www.riobosque.org

Southwest Environmental Center
(575) 522-5552
www.wildmesquite.org

Franklin Mt. Wilderness Coalition
www.franklinmountains.org/

Stick House Sanctuary
www.facebook.com/epwildliferescue/

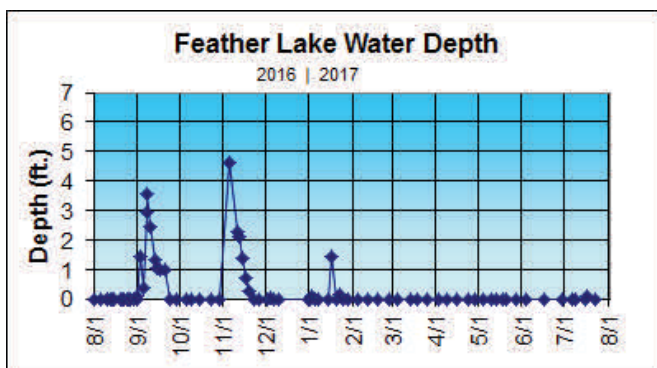
AT FEATHER LAKE

Feather Lake received two decent flows of storm runoff in mid-to-late July. Not enough to flood the entire basin, not enough to keep the water present more than a few days, but enough to promote vigorous plant growth in the central part of the basin.

The dry uplands are a different story. Many tornillos are mostly leafless and forlorn, and the arrowweed stands include large patches of dead plants.

Our next workday at Feather Lake will be **Sat., August 12**, starting at **8 a.m.** We'll work in the basin if it is dry, in the uplands if it is flooded.

Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave.



El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
<http://www.trans-pecos-audubon.com>

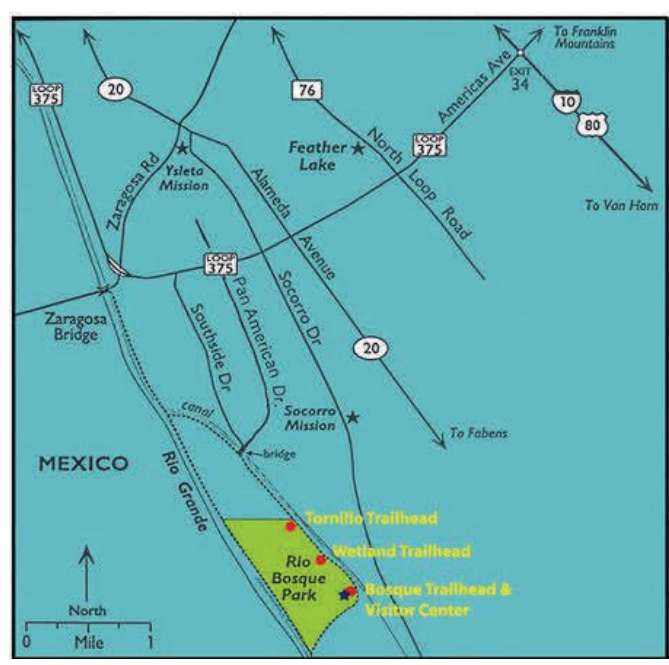
Audubon at



Summer-resident Painted Buntings are still conspicuous at Rio Bosque but will be hard to find after mid-August. For up-to-date information on the park's birds and water conditions, visit www.riobosque.org. Upcoming free walking tours:

- 8 a.m., Sun., Aug 13 (Introductory tour)
- 8 a.m., Sat., Aug 26 (Birding tour)
- 8 a.m., Sat., Sep 9 (Birding tour)
- 8 a.m., Sun., Sep 17 (Introductory tour)

The meeting place for these tours is a bridge crossing the Riverside Canal. To get there from I-10, take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Drive, turn left onto Pan American and travel 1.5 miles. Information: 747-8663.



YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT: ONE OF A KIND

In the early editions of *A Field Guide to the Birds*, Roger Tory Peterson observed, “Except for its color, the [Yellow-breasted] Chat seems more like a Catbird or a Mocker than a Warbler.” The chat’s placement in the wood-warbler family (Parulidae) has long been questioned. Many taxonomists suspected it should be assigned elsewhere. But lacking persuasive evidence for a change, and with some evident ties to Parulidae, it remained classified a wood-warbler. Until now.

The North American Classification Committee of the American Ornithological Society (AOS) recently released the 58th supplement to the AOS’s Check-list of North and Middle American Birds. As genetic studies continue to bring new insights into avian taxonomy, the check-list continues to undergo large changes.

This year, one set of changes involved revising “familial limits and the linear sequence of families within the nine-primaried oscines.” And that revision included placing the **Yellow-breasted Chat** in a new family. Recent studies indicate the chat has evolutionary relationships with both Parulidae and Icteridae (blackbirds, meadowlarks and orioles) but is sufficiently distinct from both to merit placement in a family all its own – the **Icteriidae** (differing from Icteridae by only an extra “i”). The chat is the sole member of this new family.

The 58th supplement presents many other changes, including:

- The “white goose” genus *Chen* has been merged into the “gray goose” genus *Anser*. The scientific name for **Snow Goose** is now *Anser caerulescens*; for **Ross’s Goose**, *Anser rossii*.
- Ducks in the genus *Anas* have been split into 4 genera (*Sibirionetta*, *Spatula*, *Mareca* and *Anas*). Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal and Northern Shoveler are now in the genus *Spatula*. Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon and American Wigeon are in *Mareca*. Mallard, Northern Pintail and Green-winged Teal remain in *Anas*.
- The Magnificent Hummingbird has been split into 2 species. The species found in the southwestern U.S. retains the scientific name *Eugenes fulgens* and regains its old common name, **Rivoli’s Hummingbird**. The other species, Talamanca Hummingbird (*Eugenes spectabilis*), is found in Costa Rica and Panama.
- **Thayer’s Gull** is no longer a full species. It is now treated as a subspecies of Iceland Gull.
- The **Northern Harrier** is now treated as a separate species from the Hen Harrier of the Old World. The Hen Harrier retains the scientific name *Circus cyaneus*, and the Northern Harrier is now *Circus hudsonius*.
- The **Northern Shrike** is now treated as a separate species from the Great Gray Shrike of the Old World. The Great Gray Shrike retains the scientific name *Lanius excubitor*, and the Northern Shrike is now *Lanius borealis*.

And, of course, there are again multiple changes in the linear sequence of families and species on the check-list. Don’t expect these to be the last of such changes.

Notes from the Field

Rattlesnake Springs Field Trip (June 10, 2017)



Grey Hawk

We left for Rattlesnake Springs very early to avoid the heat. Wow! We got the color - Orchard Orioles, Bullock's Orioles, Hooded Orioles, Northern Cardinals, Yellow-breasted Chats, Summer Tanagers, Black-headed Gros-

beaks, Blue Grosbeaks, Painted Buntings, Indigo Buntings, Yellow Warblers, and scads of Vermilion Flycatchers. Other birds, but not all, were Gray Hawk, Cassin's and Western kingbirds, Lucy's Warbler and Lark Sparrows. The Orchard Orioles were nesting and the female was on the nest. In all, 52 species. After lunch, we returned to El Paso, it was starting to get hot. We made one stop in El Paso County to see a nesting Cassin's Kingbird.



Summer Tanager
Photo by John Groves

Upper Valley Sunset Field Trip (June 24, 2017)

We met at 6:30 pm at Keystone. Keystone was very low on water but there were lots of American Avocets in breeding plumage and Black-necked Stilts wading. We also had White-faced Ibis fly over, Killdeer, Gambel's Quail and Mallards. Next, we went to the Willows Lake where we had an unusual sighting of an Osprey perched in a tree. We also had Wood Ducks and a flyby of a Harris's Hawk. We ended up on Westside Road at the Monk Parakeet nests. There are about five nests made of sticks. There were some hawks hanging around and remnants of a killed parakeet. The parakeets didn't return to their nest that night. We left at dusk.

Cave Creek & Chiricahua Mountains Field Trip (May 26-29, 2017)

On Memorial Day weekend, 23 avid birders headed to the Chiricahua Mountains for four days of birding. Some of us left early Friday morning and caravanned to the Chiricahuas.

Our first stop was at the new Chiricahua Desert Museum at the junction of the Portal Road and Highway 80 to Rodeo. They have a nature garden and wildlife exhibits. They were free to view and walk around in. They have very large tortoises with young there that they must protect from the roadrunners which will kill the young. They have a large netting that covers the tortoise's pen.

We saw Cactus Wrens, Curve-billed Thrashers, Blacked-throated Sparrows and Red-winged Blackbirds. We got great looks at and pictures of an Eastern Blue Collared Lizard, which was beautiful.



Cave Creek Canyon

Notes from the Field continued

Cave Creek & Chiricahua Mountains Field Trip (May 26-29, 2017)



Loggerhead Shrikes
Photo by Tom Taylor

From the Museum, we drove to Portal and checked into Cave Creek Ranch Cabins. There are always lots of birds at their feeders: Hooded Orioles, Northern Cardinals, Arizona Woodpeckers. And not to forget the hummingbirds: Blue-throated, Broad-billed, Magnificent and Broad-tailed. After checking in and watching the feeders we headed to Portal and Rodriguez's feeders which were formerly Dave Jasper's feeders. There we saw a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak which was the best look at that bird for most of us and a lifer for some. We also saw Western Tanagers, Northern Cardinals, Blue Grosbeaks

and a Peregrine Falcon flyover to end the day.

Early Saturday we went up the south fork of Cave Creek where we heard and some of us saw the Elegant Trogon. There were six or more trogons in the canyon. Other birds seen were Brown-crested and Dusky-capped flycatchers, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse and nesting Hutton's Vireos. From South Fork we went to the research center to eat lunch at their hummingbird feeders. Everybody got lots of looks and pictures of the hummers.



Elegant Trogon

That afternoon we birded around Portal and had early dinner at the Portal Café, where we took over the back room and enjoyed the evening. We ended the day owling; we heard the Whiskered Screech-Owl. Sunday morning, we headed up to the Onion Saddle and Rustler Park. On the way up we stopped at Turkey Creek where we had Wild Turkeys and heard Mexican Chickadees. At Onion Saddle, we had Warbling Vireos and Yellow-eyed Juncos.



Magnificent
Hummingbird

From Onion Saddle, we went down into the Pinery where we got our rarest bird, and lifer for most, the Slate-throated Redstart. The redstart was next to the road by a small creek. The bird was a female and was building a nest; she was mated with a male Painted Redstart. We also had a Red-faced Warbler at the Pinery. On the way back to Portal we stopped at George Walker's house in Paradise. The owners were friendly and gracious and welcomed us in. The birds we had there were Scott's Oriole, Hooded Oriole, Hepatic Tanager, Summer Tanager, Bridled Titmouse and a Cooper's Hawk fly over. Back to Portal and a group dinner outside at Cave Creek.

We ended the day with owling again and we heard Elf and Great Horned owls, also a Mexican Whip-poor-will. Monday, our last day, we went back for the trogon again and we got lots of views and pictures. Back to El Paso and the heat, a great trip for all. We had 109 species.

Field Trips

DAVIS MOUNTAINS HUMMINGBIRD CELEBRATION August 24-27, 2017

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society members and friends are invited to the Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration on August 24-27, 2017.

The event, sponsored by the Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce, will be bigger and better than ever this year: multiple great field trips, informative workshops, banding demonstrations, knowledgeable speakers and more. It's all focused on the remarkable diversity of hummingbirds found in the Davis Mountains. Renowned Texas nature photographer and naturalist [Greg Lasley](#) will give the keynote address on "Birds of Texas and the Big Bend." He'll also lead a number of field trips and a field workshop on hummingbird photography.

To view the full Celebration schedule, the special pre-event "Exclusive Hummingbird Experiences" (most of which are already sold out) and to register online, visit www.fortdavis.com.



Saturday, August 19, 2017 Reservoirs Down the Valley

We'll be traveling down I-10 East to visit the reservoirs of McNary, Ft. Hancock and Tornillo.

Possible sightings could be Western and Clark's grebes, Eared Grebe, American White Pelicans, gulls, egrets, sandpipers, cormorants, herons and ducks of many species.

Meet at 6:00 a.m. at the Parking Lot at Burlington Coat Factory at 1144 N. Yarbrough. Exit at Yarbrough. Bring a lunch. Nonmembers and beginners are welcome.

Contact Mark Perkins at (915) 637-3521

Saturday, September 9, 2017 Percha Dam and Caballo Dam

Looking for migratory birds, gulls and ducks.

Meet at 6:30 a.m. at the southwest corner of the El Paso Outlet Mall at I-10 and Transmountain (Talbot Rd. entrance to the Mall).

Bring a lunch. There is a nominal fee of \$5 per car which is good for both areas.

El Paso/Trans-Pecos
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Yes, I'd like to join. Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter.

Send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to address below.

Check for \$20.00 enclosed payable to National Audubon Society

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**National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center
PO Box 97194
Washington, DC 20090-7194**

Dates to Remember Call Mark Perkins for details 637-3521

August

Sat 12: **Feather Lake Workday**
Mon 14: **Board Meeting**
No General Meeting
13 & 26: **Rio Bosque**
Sat 19: **Down the Valley**
24-27: Hummingbirds Ft. Davis

September

9 & 17: **Rio Bosque**
Sat 9: **Percha & Caballo Dams**
Mon 11: **Board Meeting**
Mon 18: **General Meeting**

October

Mon 9: **Board Meeting**
Mon 16: **General Meeting**

www.trans-pecos-audubon.com

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