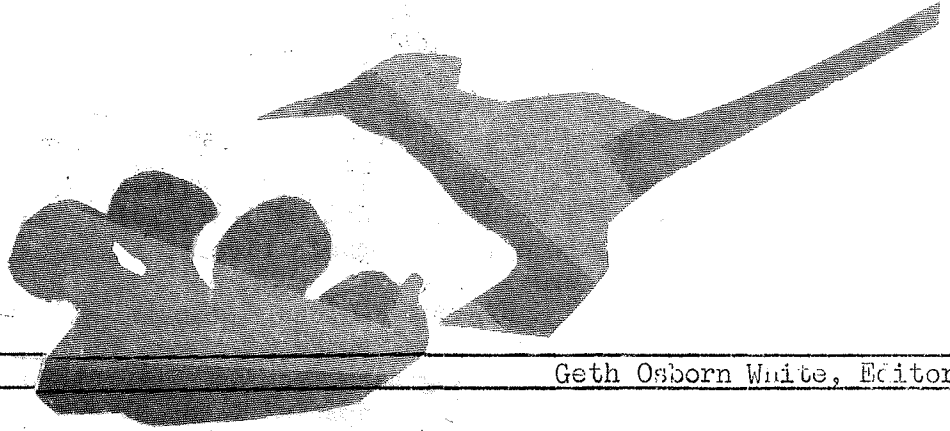


The Roadrunner

NEWSLETTER OF
EL PASO-TRANS PECOS
AUDUBON SOCIETY
PUBLISHED AT 3123 FEDERAL AVENUE
EL PASO, TEXAS 79930
SUBSCRIPTION \$2. PER YEAR



Vol II, October, 1972

Geth Osborn White, Editor

CALENDAR

Sat.-Oct. 14

FIELD TRIP to Karr Canyon in the Lincoln National Forest in the Sacramentos. Larry Clark, science teacher at Alomogordo, and one of the editors of The Phainopepla, a monthly newsletter devoted to natural history and ecological investigation in southern New Mexico, will lead the birding trip up the canyon.

Karr Canyon road (gravel) winds up from the pinion-juniper association through the ponderosas up to spruce-fir, from approximately 6,500 feet to 8,000 feet. Big-tooth maples lend a splash of scarlet at the lower roadsides and higher up the aspens should be pure gold.

Those who wish to go up the evening before and camp out, please use the first campground (about 5 miles of entry). Those driving up on Saturday morning, it is about a 2½ hour drive. We will rendezvous at 9:00 A. M. at the campground.

J. Stokley Ligon's New Mexico Birds is especially recommended for study, having much useful material about the birds of this state and where to look for them. Overnight campers might like to try their luck in calling up western owls.

Mon.-Oct. 16

7:30 P. M.

REGULAR MEETING at Centennial Museum, U.T.E.P. campus. We will have an interesting program on Mexican birds to be presented by Byron Berger, graduate student engaged in research at N.M.S.U. He had an extended trip to Mexico, birding with the famous Peter Alden, author of one of the field guides to Western Mexico, and exploring for birds at Tamazunchale and in Vera Cruz state. He will have color slides to illustrate his talk. In addition, he will give us a briefing on identifying puzzling wintering sparrows.

George Pearson, of the El Paso Parks and Recreation staff, will devote a quarter hour to presenting the city's plans for acquiring a tract of land known as the Riverside Park Study for use as water-oriented outdoors recreation and wildlife sanctuary. More about this in the newsletter.

Sat.-Octo 21

7:00 A.M.

FIELD TRIP to Jornada Range Management Area. Rendezvous at Coronado Shopping Center. Our leader will be Dr. Ralph Raitt, N.M.S.U. Biology Department. They maintain continuous research on the experimental range. We may have an opportunity to see some birds captured in nets and to learn about the bird life on desert grassland which is part of an international biological year's study.

Sat.-Nov. 4

BOOTH ON THE MALL at Basset Center and at Northgate Center, shared with the Girl Scouts at a nationally known camping equipment show to be brought here by commercial interests selling camping supplies. Joan Pierce is chairman of this committee, and is assisted in setting up display booths showing birds of the desert dooryards, feeders, posters by Mrs. Jack Ponder, Mrs. George Boyce, Mrs. Mary Moore, Mrs. Leigh Wilcox, Mrs. Jack McDaniel.

Oct. 28-29

WILDERNESS WORKSHOP to be held in El Paso, sponsored by the El Paso Centennial Museum. The program will cover wilderness preservation system, applicable legislation; the wilderness Act of 1964; multiple-use -- sustained yield act; influencing public opinion; scenic rivers, state trails, underground wilderness; local natural areas.

FIRST SOUTHWEST REGIONAL WORKSHOP of the National Audubon Society will have El Paso-Trans Pecos representatives, Dr. John Mudd and his wife, Lexie, who are new members coming here from New York where they were associated with the National Audubon Society as a special interest and recreational outlet. Date of the workshop at Rockport is October 21 when representatives from three southwestern states will exchange ideas and information.

RIVERSIDE PARK STUDY

Many of us have been down the valley to see the little bosque on the Rio Grande to note the plants, birds and animals we might see in the early morning when the sun transforms heavy frost on grasses to diamond-studded fairy stuff.

On the 16th of September long streamers of yellow-headed blackbirds rose and settled down, peapfrogging over each other as they fed on stalks heavy-to-bursting with seeds. Hundreds, running into possibly 2,000 birds followed the weed rows left in plowed fields down to the oorro treatment plant.

An old drainage ditch heavily grown up with salt cedar, cattails and other aquatic growth runs parallel to the levee road, providing a small habitat interesting to observe -- a muskrat, a scolding marsh wren, a bullfrog leaping from the bank in fright, a bright butterfly.

They're not very impressive as plants go, inhabitants of the bosque. Screw-bean mesquites, salt cedars, wolfberry, four-winged saltbush. But these are the natives of the Chihuahuan, one of the hottest deserts in the world, and worthy of your respect. They can survive long drought and brief periods of bitter cold, growing luxuriant in periods of prolonged rain as we had this season. Birds remained to nest and nested quite late in this little 40 acre tract. There were yellow-breasted chats, painted buntings, blue grosbeaks and yellow-billed cuckoos gracing the thicket with their territorial songs. The mourning dove population soared, with birds still on the nest on the 16th.

Disappearance of habitat is one of the tragedies of urbanization. Increasingly it is hard to find a place where wildlife can have sanctuary. When school classes, scout groups, Audubon societies and other outdoors oriented groups look for a place to see native plants and birds, alas, they discover it has almost disappeared.

With a new (and belated) interest in ecology and the environment, large cities like El Paso need to have protected places where children and adults can see nature undisturbed.

This land, part of a tract consisting of 291.84 acres, designated as Parcel No. 18, is available for acquisition. This comes about because the lease on it terminates on December 31, 1973, at which time it is expected the U. S. Boundary Commission will put it into GSA land pool, and the Bureau of Reclamation will take over the land for construction of a storage lake.

If a water storage area can be developed for multiple use, the land can be available for a very small fee or no fee at all. 1,000 acres surrounds this parcel, owned by the Public Service Board.

The City plans a multiple use recreation area, creating two permanent groundwater lakes, one for skiing and one for fishing. Camping and picnicking units with access roads are proposed; bike trails could be developed; a wildlife sanctuary would protect the bosque which could have a trailside museum with interpretive and educational material concerning the Chihuahuan desert.

In addition, north of the site is a proposal for a 36 hole golf complex, using some of the excess soil from lake excavation for mounds and terracing to provide a challenging course. Sewage effluents and water could be used from the nearby treatment plant.

Overnight campgrounds with modern facilities are also proposed as part of the multiple-use recreation area.

The Bureau of Reclamation needs a water storage area for the lower valley; the community and its visitors needs outdoors recreation oriented to water. One of the last remaining native bosques could be preserved and a much-needed sanctuary for wildlife in arid country be provided.

Let's get behind the proposed Park in every way we can. Citizens Environmental Council has recommended its implementation.

OF PEOPLE. We want to thank Eddie and Lucretia Cnew for running off the newsletter on the University Presbyterian Church mimeo and for assisting in the mailing.

We miss Ruby Allen, who is taking time out for some study at Sam Houston State University at Huntsville. Address P. O. Box 1299, Huntsville, Tex. 77340. She was historian, field birder, dedicated science teacher, Christmas count compiler and quite a contributor to Audubon activities. She hopes to be here for the Christmas count.

Mrs. Jack Ponder has consented to be Historian. She will prepare a scrapbook similar to one she has made for herself about birds, as a hobby. It has clippings from the local papers and other periodicals pasted in a looseleaf binder. She has "decorated" the book with pasteup of colored birds from Christmas cards and advertising material. She will bring her book to the next meeting. See for yourself how attractive it is, and save for her articles you wish preserved in the daily papers, and cutouts for decorations.

KELP-TV TOWER ON THE FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS. Bob and Helen Barto, Sarah Jane Dodds, Geth and Ed White went to a meeting called by KERP-TV to present their plans for locating a transmitter tower on the Franklins. At the meeting on the 20th they proposed to use a tramway with minimal pylons; to erect a suitable building and tower with minimal disturbance to the landscape; to remove rubbish and construction material; to share their building with other commercial users; making the transmitter available to the proposed public television channel. LeBron Hardie, of Citizens Environmental Council, was chairman of the task force which made inquiry to this use of the top of the mountains.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Big Bend Natural History Association, Box 86, Big Bend Nat'l Pk. Tex. 79834

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Day (Marjie) 1508 N. Stanton, El Paso 02

Mr. and Mrs. John F. Dryden, 301 Rainbow Circle, El Paso 12

Mrs. Emil J. Dittmer, 1800 N. Stanton, El Paso 02

Mrs. Linda M. Forman, 8034 Lord, El Paso 07

Edward N. Gilboe, 1305 Oak Dale, El Paso 25

Seth W. Hinshaw, 1015 Prospect, El Paso 02

Mr. and Mrs. Carol Jones, 351 Thunderbird, El Paso 12

Mrs. George Joyce, 5689 Burning Tree, El Paso 12

Michael R. Kirkland, 3208 Harrison Ave., El Paso 30

Alva La Rue, P. O. Box 17046, Ysleta Sta., El Paso, 17

Mr. and Mrs. Jack McDaniel (Margaret)

Dr. and Mrs. John Mudd (Lexie) 5316 Yvette St., El Paso 24

C. L. Perkins, 110 Sutton Pl., El Paso 12

Sue Ann Warren, P. O. Box 271, Dell City, Tex. 79837.

CHECKLIST COMMITTEE NEEDED. Bill Hunt, 8365 Beverly (591-5630) has agreed to chair the Checklist Committee. He needs help on the revision. Those who have records please help, especially Mrs. Lena McBee and Mary Belle Keefer, who are largely responsible for the existing checklist which needs updating. Bill has a form which simplifies record-keeping which can be yours upon request. Mrs. Ponder's scrapbook has clippings of old Christmas counts which will help and our newsletter's published records can be incorporated. This work will become a part of the Texas Bird Checklist currently being compiled by the Texas Ornithological Society.

BIRD RECORDS

Pinyon Jays	9/6	10/5	Memorial Park Sector	GOW
Scrub Jays	9/6	10/4	Coronado Section	Joan Pierce, GOW
			Memorial Park	Mrs. Jack Ponder
Lark Buntings (5)	10/1		East El Paso off Carlsbad Highway	John & Lexie Mudd
				GOW & EW
Clay-colored Sparrow				"
Brewer's Sparrows				"
Lark Sparrows				"
Grasshopper Sparrows				"
Black-necked stilt (3)			Horizon Lake	"
Forster's Tern (1)			"	"
Green-tailed Towhee			Horizon Lake Environs	GOW & Sarah Dodds
Brewer's Sparrow				
Clay-colored Sparrow				
White-crowned Sparrow				
Short-eared Owl	9/17		Upper Valley	Lena McBee & GOW
White-throated Sparrow	"		"	"
Rufous hummingbird	"		"	"

TRIP TO JORNADO RANGE On September 23 the Junior League sponsored a bus trip to the experimental range located 23 miles north of Las Cruces and operated by the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S.D.A. Purpose of the trip was to learn about the ecology of the range and some of its management problems. Geth and Ed White were among the busload who spent the better part of the day in the field, accompanied by Dr. Carlton Herbel, Range Scientist, D. Gould, whose primary work was in chemistry, and Dr. Piper, who was conducting a study of desert grasslands within the Jornado as part of an international biological year worldwide in scope.

This is a digest of the scientists' remarks as we disembarked from pasture to pasture to study the land.

When we discuss brush control on rangeland we are discussing one practice that will conserve or improve one of our most valuable resources. When our arid native grasslands are depleted by brush invasion, overgrazing, or drought, it is a costly and time-consuming job to restore their productivity. When rangelands are greatly depleted, it is virtually impossible to restore. The research station has data on vegetational changes from 1858 to 1963 from early General Land Office surveys.

Creosotebush, tarbush and mesquite are the invading plants. In 1858 mesquite dominated 4.8% of the area; in 1963, 50.3% of the area. Creosotebush dominated 0.4% of the area in 1858 and 14.2% in 1963. Tarbush dominated 0.4% of the area in 1858 and 8.6% of the area in 1963. These three shrubs were not recorded on 57.9% of the area in 1858, whereas in 1963 there were at least a few shrubs present over the entire area.

Main invasion of mesquite was on sandy soils, with most origins associated with Indian Pueblos and campsites in 1858. It was not until later years that mesquite became prevalent in overgrazed areas around wells even though the study area was heavily stocked from about 1904 to 1925. Mesquite seed dispersal through the droppings of livestock was the main factor responsible for the initial spread of mesquite. Grass cover was reduced through livestock grazing and periodic droughts.

As a mesquite plant grows, the bare area around the plant increases. Grasses cannot compete with mesquite successfully for soil moisture. Ever-present spring winds moves the sand into dunes around the mesquite plant. Rodent and rabbit activity increases as the brush increases, further depleting grasses.

Try to imagine a vast grassland area on undisturbed mesas with mesquite confined to the arroyos, creosotebush to dry ridges and virtually no tarbush. This is how it was 100 years ago.

In 1858 creosotebush occurred on the shallow-coarser-textured soil on slopes having also a good stand of grass. With selective grazing of grass by livestock, the equilibrium between creosotebush and grass on drier sites was shifted in favor of brush, and creosotebush increased rapidly. It also invaded and began to dominate sites where mesquite and tarbush formerly dominated, being the best adapted of the three desert plants.

Tarbush originally occurred primarily on medium-textured soils having mixed grasses. Its primary movement has been onto heavier soils formerly dominated by tobosa, sideoats grama and burrograss. These are generally the most productive sites because they receive run-in water from adjacent mountains and foothills. Grass production is greatly reduced when tarbush invades these areas, its light and fluffy seeds being widely spread by the wind.

Grazing capacity of grassland is about 8 to 10 head of cattle per section yearlong; on brush-infested areas, it is about 1 or 2 head per section yearlong.

Handgrubbing of mesquite is the most economical control method. Fenuron 25% pellets and 80% monuron powder have been found to be effective herbicides in controlling brush. High mesquite kills have been obtained with one gram of active ingredient per foot canopy diameter. Herbicides are non-toxic to the soils and to animals and non-persistent, having to be re-applied to be effective.

They are just beginning to study the effect of rodents and rabbits on the grasslands. There is a greater impact than at first thought. Plots protected from rodents by fences had remarkable stands of grasses. Predator relationships in controlling rodents are important, the hawks, eagles and owls as well as the coyote being important controls.

Pastures sprayed only a year ago showed a remarkable come-back to grassland and forbs. First to return was usually the Four-winged saltbush, relished by cattle. Dropseed grass made a decided showing the first year. This arid land's capacity to regenerate grasses was remarkable, dependent solely on residual seed stock. This kind of agricultural research is invaluable.

Incidental intelligence: lemonwood, blooming abundantly, is a natural insect repellent which has a delightful scent. Mormon Tea has natural cortisone. A Utah Medical School is working on the anti-oxidants of creosotebush which should be useful in cancer research. Small boys who lose small lizards on a bus are remarkably persistent in recovering their trophy, going so far as paying a 25¢ reward.

EL PASO TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY

Meeting: Each third Monday, U.T.E.P. Centennial Museum.

President: Mrs. Edmund White

Vice-president: Eddie Chew

Secretary-treasurer: Mrs. Clarence Snelfer

Membership: Mrs. Leigh Wilcox

Field Trips: Ed White

Historian: Mrs. Jack Ponder