

The Roadrunner

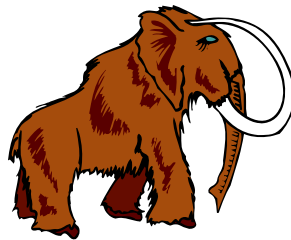


Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

Inside the Roadrunner

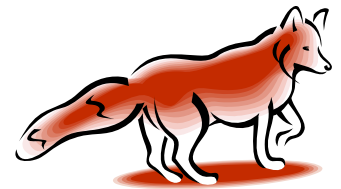
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**El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
General Meeting
Monday, April 18, 2011,
Memorial Park Garden Center,
3105 Grant Street, 7:00 p.m.**



Dr. Arthur Harris, Professor of Biology, UTEP, will present a program entitled "Comparisons and Contrasts: The Ice Age and Today". This will be a look at the regional animals near the end of the Ice Age compared to those of today. Dr.

Harris has spent decades studying the changes in the species of animals from the Ice Age to the present through his excavations in caves deposits. Much of the work has taken place in West Texas and Southern New Mexico. The public is welcome. Refreshments will be served. Contact Janet Perkins at 637-5269 for more information.



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.

**General Meeting
Monday, May 16, 2011,
Memorial Park Garden Center,
3105 Grant Street, 7:00 p.m.**

We would like to thank Tom Hussmann for donating some bird drawings and prints in memory of his wife, Anne Hussmann, a former member of EPTPAS.



May's program is, as of yet, unscheduled. Of course, as always, the guest speaker is sure to be both entertaining and informative. Please check the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society website for up-to-date information regarding programs, meetings and field trips.



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

Earth Share OF TEXAS

Membership: Roxanne Schroeder, 533-0061
Programs: vacant
Conservation: vacant
Field Trips: Mark Perkins 637-3521
Hospitality: Janet Perkins, 581-2849

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

Officers

President: Eddie Chew, 587- 9589
Vice President: Scott Cutler, 581-6071
Secretary: Jane Fowler, 598-2448
Treasurer: Lucretia Chew, 587-9589

Committees

Publicity: Janet Perkins, 581-2849
Education: Kathleen Whelen, 751-2408
Publications: Jane Fowler, 598-2448
Ways & Means: vacant
Sanctuary: John Sproul, 545-5157

Albertson's ...

Every time you swipe your Community Partners Card, you earn cash for the Audubon Society.

Now isn't that a good reason to shop at Albertsons?



Birdathon 2011

May 7 & 8



Sponsor a counter and help your local Audubon Society Chapter.



Conservation Organizations

Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
www.whc.net/cdwr

El Paso Zoo 521-1850
www.elpasozoo.org

Keystone Heritage Park 581-7920
www.keystoneheritagepark.org

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/

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

Let's "Fly" into Action! Audubon's Birdathon 2011!

Birdathon counters are already "in training" in preparation for Birdathon 2011.
It all takes place May 7-8.

What is Birdathon, you might ask?

One thing is for sure, it's not your average bird count or fund raiser! Birdathon is unusual and different: a wild weekend of birding and our organization's most important source of income for conservation and education programs.

We hope you can join us for a full, rewarding weekend of birding by being a **sponsor** and possibly even a counter (if you want to become part of the "Birdathon Flock" as a counter, please contact Jane Fowler at 598-2448 or Betty Fisbeck at 581-0174).

Birdathon 2011 will benefit the following programs and projects:

CHAPTER OPERATIONS & FEATHER LAKE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Scouts, students and adults can enjoy seeing birds up close in a natural habitat. When the lake has water, we have docents on duty to answer questions, provide printed trail guides & lend binoculars.

RIO BOSQUE WETLANDS PARK

Each year, this site along the Rio Grande becomes more valuable as habitat for birds and other wildlife.

AUDUBON TEXAS

Our support helps keep National Audubon's state office an effective voice for birds, other wildlife and their habitats in Texas.

How Birdathon Works

On the weekend of **May 7-8**, our dedicated Birdathon counters will be busy scouring the countryside, trying to find as many bird species as possible, in a single 24-hour blitz. These hardy, energized and intrepid individuals will start early, stay out late, visit varied wildlife habitats and give their eyes, ears and bird knowledge a full workout. Why do they push themselves so hard? For the pleasure of a day in the field, for a test of their birding skills and **most importantly, for a better West Texas environment.**

Each counter will be backed by sponsors who pledge either a given amount for each species seen or a fixed total amount. Most counters will identify 50 to 100 species. A pledge of, say \$0.50 per species for 60 species would result in a contribution of \$30. 95% of Birdathon income goes to the programs and projects; 5% to fundraising (printing, paper and postage).

Looking for someone to sponsor for Birdathon? This year's outstanding counters are a dedicated bunch, most of whom are experienced Birdathoners. If you supported one of these people last year, please give them a call and sponsor them again. If you don't know any of the counters personally and don't know whom to choose, please give Jane (598-2448) or Betty (581-0174) a call.

At press time, our confirmed counters for this year's Birdathon include:

Lois Balin	Scott Cutler	Jim Paton	Susan Schneider
Joe Cancellare	Jane Fowler	Janet Perkins	John Sproul
Eddie Chew	John Kiseda	Mark Perkins	

Please pick one or more individuals and give them your support!

Birdathon 2011 POT LUCK Sunday, May 15 at 6:00 p.m.

Join us for the POST-BIRDATHON pot-luck picnic. This year, our Birdathon falls on Mother's Day weekend. To avoid Mother's Day conflicts, our picnic will be on the **following Sunday, May 15**. While enjoying good food, we will be totaling all the counters' sightings, unusual birds and other events of the weekend. Those who saw the most species and raised the most money will be recognized at the May 16 general meeting,, so plan to join us then also.

Bring something to share: salad, dessert or a favorite casserole. The chapter will furnish tableware, coffee, tea, sodas, fruit juice. Everyone is invited, **sponsors, counters and all chapter members**. The potluck/picnic is May 15 at 6:00pm at the home of Janet and Mark Perkins, 813 Montclair Drive.

Whether it's \$0.25 per species or \$1.00 per species or any given amount, we hope you will consider a pledge to Birdathon 2011. Please pick one or more counters to sponsor and return the enclosed coupon today. **Your generosity and support help make Audubon Birdathon a success.**

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

BIRDATHON 2011

YES! I'll sponsor _____
for \$_____ per species for each species she/he finds
on Birdathon 2011.

From _____

YES! I'll sponsor _____
for a flat \$ amount of _____.

Address _____

I will add a bonus of \$_____ if my
Birdathon counter sees a _____
_____.

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

My tax deductible gift of \$ _____
sponsoring _____ is enclosed.
Payable to El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society.

Please return this form by May 1 to:
Birdathon 2011
c/o Betty Fisbeck
613 W. Sunset
El Paso, TX 79922

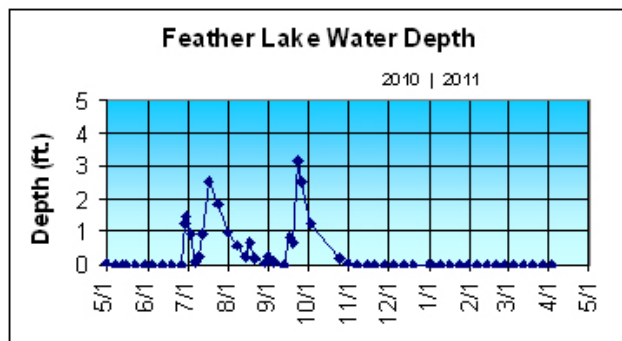
Thank you for your generous Birdathon pledge! Your gift is tax deductible as allowed by law

AT FEATHER LAKE

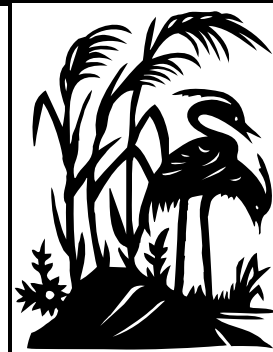
In 2006, Feather Lake was dry for 7 months before the remarkable succession of storms that began in late July of that year. Now, we're on track to equal or exceed that dry stretch.

The basin has been dry since late October, over 5 months. If you couple this dry spell with the 3.5 months Feather Lake was dry in spring and early summer 2010, we've experienced our driest year since the basin was deliberately kept dry while it was being expanded in 1986-87. Unless conditions change, we likely won't have Feather Lake open to the public again until fall.

The lake will, however, be open for our next workday on **Sat., June 4**, starting at **8 a.m.** Join us to help with sanctuary maintenance. Come any time during the morning, but be aware that parking is limited and early arrivals are most likely to secure one of the coveted spots. Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave.



Audubon at RIO BOSQUE WETLANDS PARK



Again this year, two pairs of White-tailed Kites are nesting at Rio Bosque. For the latest on birds being seen, check the recent-bird-sightings page on the Park's website, www.riobosque.org. Upcoming free walking tours at the Park:

- 8 a.m. Sat., April 2 (Bird tour)
- 4 p.m. Sat., April 30 (Wildflower tour)
- 4 p.m. Sat., May 7 (Wildflower tour)
- 8 a.m. Sun., May 15 (Bird tour)

The meeting place 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.



The Audubon website!

Updated information about upcoming field trips, a calendar of upcoming events, recent bird sightings.
El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon <http://www.trans-pecos-audubon.org>

WESTERN FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS TO MEET IN SIERRA VISTA, AZ

Western Field Ornithologists (WFO) is an organization of amateur and professional field ornithologists that promotes the study of birds throughout western North America including Hawaii, the northeastern Pacific Ocean, and Western Mexico. Each year WFO holds a multi-day conference with scientific papers, field trips, workshops, panels, a keynote address, its annual membership meeting, and other events. This year, the conference will be **August 17-21**, in a location West Texas birders often enjoy visiting: Sierra Vista, Arizona.



If you've never been to southeast Arizona during the late summer season (or even if you have), this is an opportunity you won't want to miss. Besides a program of speakers and workshops, WFO will offer field trips to

all the southeast Arizona hotspots looking for local specialties like Scaled and Montezuma quail, Gray, Short-tailed, and Zone-tailed hawks, a dazzling variety of hummingbirds and flycatchers, Elegant Trogon, Red-faced Warbler, Cassin's, Botteri's, Rufous-winged, and Five-striped sparrows and much more.

To register and see full details go to www.westernfieldornithologists.org and click on the 'Annual Conference' banner in the middle of the page. You will probably want to download the Conference Details document and review before you begin registration.

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Audubon Society
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Field Trips



Hawk Alley April 9, 2011

Saturday, April 9, 2011. We will visit Hawk Alley and the Ft. Bliss Ponds in Northeast El Paso. This is a great area for Northern

Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels and more. Possible sightings might include Cooper's Hawk, Prairie Falcon and/or Golden Eagle. We'll also check out the Ft. Bliss ponds. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Lowe's parking lot, 4531 Transmountain Rd., behind Taco Bell in Northeast El Paso. Nonmembers and beginners always welcome. For reservations, contact Mark Perkins at 637-3521 or mperkins4@elp.rr.com.

Memorial Park April 23, 2011

Saturday, April 23, 2011. Memorial Park and Arroyo Park. Memorial Park is a good place to see migrating warblers. Also a stop at Arroyo Park could produce some rare ones. We might see orioles, vireos and possibly a tanager. Nonmembers and beginners always welcome. Meet at the Memorial Park Garden Center, 3105 Grant Street at 8:00 a.m. For reservations, contact Mark Perkins 637-3521 or mperkins4@elp.rr.com.



Buenos Aires NWR & Southern Arizona Tucson, AZ May 27-30, 2011

Highlight of the Trip is a Tour of the Masked Bobwhite Reintroduction Program Facility

****Preliminary Itinerary

Feel free to join us for any and all of the following activities over these four days. All trips will depart from the Headquarters in Tucson (the hotel where Mark and Janet Perkins will be staying) **TO BE ANNOUNCED**. In Arizona, we will follow **Arizona's time (Mountain Standard Time)**, which is **one hour earlier than El Paso**. Arizona does not follow Daylight Savings Time.

Approximate mileage from El Paso to Tucson is 316 miles, approximately 5 hours.

Friday, May 27 – Mark and Janet arrive at their hotel in Tucson. They will be birding in the area (**locations to be announced**). Everyone is invited to join them.

Saturday, May 28 – Depart **7:00** a.m. from Headquarters for Madera Canyon, which is one of the most famous birding areas in Southeast Arizona, where we hope to see the Elegant Trogon, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, tanagers, orioles, and several species of hummingbirds. Return to Tucson approximately 1:00 p.m., meet up with Saturday arrivals, eat lunch and bird the Sweetwater Wetlands and Santa Cruz River in Tucson. If there is time, we may go to Catalina State Park in Tucson. Dinner as a group, location to be determined.



Sunday, May 29 – Depart **6:30** a.m. (because we are meeting the Refuge Staff at 8:00 a.m. and we must be prompt)

from Headquarters for Buenos Aires NWR, approximately 1-1/2 hour drive southwest of Tucson for the planned tour of the breeding facilities and flight pens for the Masked Bobwhite program to be given by the Refuge Staff. **IMPORTANT – YOU MUST BRING FOOD AND DRINKS WITH YOU BECAUSE THERE WON'T BE ANY PLACE TO PURCHASE THEM.** The tour will be 4-5 hours. After the tour, we'll have our lunch at the Park Headquarters. After lunch we'll drive a short distance to Arivaca Cienega Trail and Arivaca Creek Trail where we hope to see lots of Arizona species and Gray Hawks. Return to Tucson.

Monday, May 30 – Check out from hotels and depart at **7:00** a.m. from the Headquarters for the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson. Admission cost per person is \$14.50. This is a beautiful zoo, natural history museum and botanical garden all in one! Return to El Paso.

The final itinerary will be available on the website or by contacting Mark Perkins 637-3521 or mperkins4@elp.rr.com in late April.

Spotting an Elegant Trogon

El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Memorial Weekend Offers Experienced and Neophyte Birders a Rare Chance to See this Beautiful Bird

By Roxanne Schroeder

Mark, the leader of our small band of intrepid birders, held out his hand to steady me across the creek cascading out of Huachuca Canyon. The six of us were following a tip from the Fort Huachuca environmental police, at least that was how they had identified themselves when they waylaid us at 8 AM on the flats below Garden Canyon. "We're just here to check on you," one said smartly, "advise you of the Fort's environmental rules, and give you a contact number just in case someone falls and twists an ankle or something." His partner then offered, "If you're looking for the Elegant Trogon (of course, who wasn't?), we heard two males at the head of Huachuca Canyon yesterday morning, right where the road ends, by the picnic tables."

This was day three of El Paso Audubon's Memorial Weekend trip to Sierra Vista, Arizona, and we were scoring zero in our pursuit of this breathtaking bird, a 12 and a half inch spring and summer visitor from Mexico. Obviously we needed a hot tip. Four other sightings of the Elegant Trogon had only whetted my appetite, and taught me that a serendipitous mix of faith, patience, physical fitness, and luck is mandatory. Those of a certain age like me, who have never seen it, should be cautioned. Why? It's addictive. Once initiated, seasoned and neophyte birders, hikers and out-of-shapers, can behave like possessed and stricken lovers. No challenge of logistics, terrain, heat, age, endurance, balance, and sleep deprivation constitutes a convincing deterrent. More, more, more sings the heart! Just to hear the Elegant Trogon calling in that odd harsh bark or croak,... there close by, no to the left, no to the right?, can send shivers down the spine and turn a sensible flock of birders into dotty Indiana Jones types. Yes, I speak from experience.

So, what is so special about this cavity nester that breeds among the Sycamore canyons of three "sky island" mountain ranges in Southeastern Arizona? The male is gorgeous, an avian masterpiece. The breast is scarlet, topped by a blazing white feather necklace and metallic green head. Against the green, the blunt hooked bill is golden, the eye ring tangerine. From the rear, in certain lights, the male sports a coppery green/ turquoise tuxedo enhanced by long, intricately barred, dove-gray tail. This bird is almost mythic. Indeed, the Elegant Trogon and much rarer Eared Trogon are related to the fabled Quetzal bird revered by Aztecs and Mayans.

Unfortunately, a bird so gorgeous is not always easy to find. As I trudged up the remnants of the gravel road whose car-friendly section had ended at the picnic tables, I struggled to keep my footing on the wet, slippery stones (the creek was now cascading down the side of the road) and said a little prayer: "please, please oh mysterious Gods of nature, let us be lucky. Let the Trogon be here. Let us get a fine view."



Two years prior on our Memorial trip to another excellent Trogon site, Cave Creek Canyon in the Chiricahuas, the Audubon group had heard the Trogon calling enticingly up canyon, but only those with much quicker eyes and more powerful binoculars caught a brief glimpse of the elusive bird. Ordinarily, Trogons perch for long periods quietly in the cover of canyon sycamores, as still as statues, but this Trogon was in a hurry. Maybe a lady Trogon was waiting. In late April, early May, the male Trogons are busy searching for a choice nesting site, usually an abandoned woodpecker cavity, and trying to convince a female that not only is his site better than the other guy's, but he is by far the best choice for raising babies.

As we clambered uphill, whispering and evaluating the terrain, I tried to keep up. I was encumbered by only my binoculars and case holding bird book and water bottle. The others were draped bandoleer fashion - with cameras, large telephoto lenses, high-powered binoculars, and fanny or backpacked water bottles and bird books. But they were all younger.

John, a very seasoned birder and fine photographer, suggested to Mark that the Sycamores seemed sparse and scrawny and that we might have better luck down canyon. "Maybe, maybe not," argued Lois, a Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist, who was leading us upslope and was surely the most knowledgeable Trogon hunter among us, having spent a summer as an undergraduate inventorying Trogons in the Huachuca's. So, on we marched, another mile upwards, pausing occasionally to rest and observe some other "nice" birds: Bridled Titmouse, Black and White Warbler.

Then Lois stopped, turned, finger on lips. "Hush, I hear him!"

I hadn't heard a thing.

"There, hear it?"

Yes I did then, faint, but unmistakable.

"He's closer than we think," warned Lois.

We all came to a dead standstill, binoculars up, holding our collective breaths.

"Yes! Yes! There. Right ahead, Three o'clock. Sycamore."

I swung up my inexpensive binoculars and surveyed the spot indicated.

"No. He moved. Back to us."

Oh honestly. I still didn't see him. And everyone was so focused, cameras pointing, clicking, I didn't dare ask for help like I usually did.

I can do this, I swore silently. He's there. I'm going to see him. And with that affirmation, I re-focused my binoculars and found him sitting, back to us, in dappled sunlight, on a Sycamore branch, coppery turquoise back, long barred tail. Oh! Oh my goodness! And then, as if he aimed to please this odd gaggle of humanity, he turned on the sycamore branch to face us, crimson breast, white necklace, shimmery green head. I have never had such a glorious view of an Elegant Trogon. He did not move for at least five minutes. And I did not lower my binoculars for one second.

He took flight and disappeared up canyon, calling.

"Wasn't that amazing," Lois called out. "Wow!" we chorused. Mark's wife raised her thumb skyward in acclamation.

"See. I told you he was close," Lois confirmed. "Trogons are like ventriloquists. They swivel their heads like owls so you're never exactly sure. The Trogon may sound like it's up or down canyon and it may be right overhead."

So, Trogon sighting demands determination, an unflappable willingness to expect the unexpected, and a fortuitous combination of the afore-mentioned elements: faith, patience, fitness and luck. The last one, luck, is paramount. Of course the company of a trained biologist and other expertly experienced birders, all like-minded, doesn't hurt.

El Paso/Trans-Pecos
Audubon Society
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**National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Application.**

Dates to Remember Call Mark Perkins for details 637-3521

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

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State ____ Zip _____

**National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center
PO Box 422250
Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250**

Local Chapter Code C1ZW100Z

April
Sat 2: **Feather Lake**
2 & 30: **Rio Bosque**
Sat 9: **Hawk Alley**
Mon 11: **Board Meeting**
Mon 18: **General Meeting**
Sat 23: **Memorial Park**

May
7 & 8: **Birdathon**
Mon 9: **Board Meeting**
7 & 15: **Rio Bosque**
Sun 15: **Picnic**
Mon 16: **General Meeting**
27-30: **Arizona Weekend**

June
Sat 4 : Feather Lake
AUGUST - WFO Conference

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Local **Chapter Only Membership** Your \$15.00 will help support chapter activities & you'll receive ***The Roadrunner*** delivered to your mailbox. Make checks payable to the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
Name: _____
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