

The

# Roadrunner

**Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society**  
**Volume 27 No. 4** **September, 1997**

---

## **MEXICAN GRAY WOLF RECOVERY PROJECT**

**SEPT.**

**GENERAL  
MEETING**

At the general meeting, on Monday, 15 September, 1997 at 7:30 pm. Our guest speaker will be Dave Parsons of the United States Fish and Wildlife Department. Mr. Parsons holds a Masters in Wildlife Biology and has been employed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department for twenty-two years. He has spent the last seven years as coordinator of the Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Project which is a plan to reintroduce the Mexican gray wolf back into its wild habitat. This promises to be a great first meeting of the season and we look forward to seeing you There. The general meeting will be held in the Garden Center at 3105 Grant in Memorial Park in El Paso.

**Next Feather Lake Appreciation Day:** Want to help get Feather Lake ready for the upcoming visitor season? Join us for a clean-up session at the sanctuary on **Saturday, September 20 at 9 AM.**

---

**El Paso / Trans Pecos Audubon Society Board of Directors:**

**OFFICERS:**

President	Elizabeth W. Chase	591-5119
V-Pres.	John Kiseda	833-6212
Secretary	Betty Fisbeck	581-0174
Treasurer	Larry Jordan	833-5969

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS:**

Conservation	John Kiseda	833-6212
Education	Weldon Fisbeck	581-0174
Field Trips	Bob Johnson	757-1876
Hospitality	Betty Pagel	772-2686
Membership	Jane Fowler	598-2448
Programs	Nancy Wilson	833-3907
Publications	Theresa Fanney	584-5221
Publicity	Hector Montes	565-4032
Sanctuary	John Sproul	545-5157

Roadrunner is your newsletter. We welcome your contributions. The next deadline is on October 13, 1997. For further information, you may contact Elizabeth W. Chase :  
W: 857-4323  
fax: 857-4324  
email: echase@socorro.k12.tx.us

**HELP WANTED!!!!**

We are looking for members who would like to volunteer. We encourage you to join any of the committees listed. The El Paso/Trans Audubon is operated entirely by volunteers. Please consider becoming more involved in our organization. **We need YOU!**

**PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

Last July 7, 1997, the Board of Directors met for a Planning Session. In this session, the following areas were addressed:

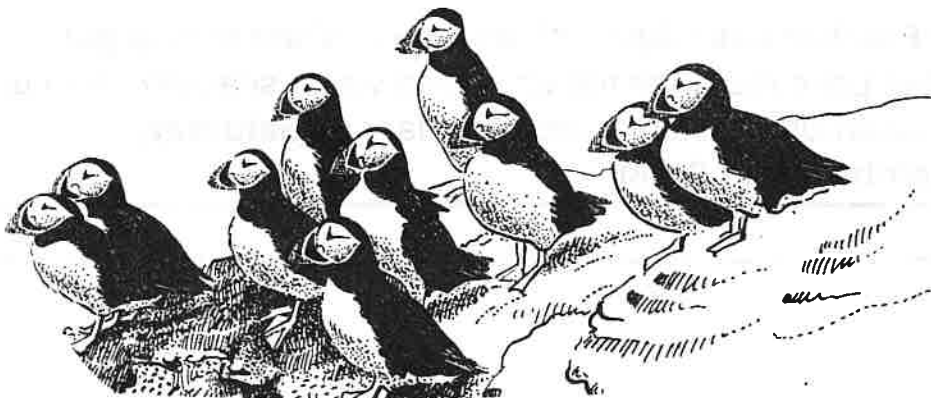
- a. Certification of Report for the National Audubon Society
- b. Plan of actions for our goals 97-98
- c. Roles of committee chairs

Catriona Glazebrook, who is the Texas Audubon Society Executive Director attended the planning session as well. It was a very productive session and I'm proud to say that your board members worked real hard . They accomplished so much to keep our local focus for our next year's plan of actions.

The first meeting of the Texas Audubon Society Board of Directors was held at the National Wildflower Research Center in Austin August 12, 1997. I had the honor of representing you in that meeting.

One of the subjects that was discussed was the Partnership Agreement between the NAS and TAS. The partnership will address the issue of staffing, program implementation, fund raising, financial issues and a process for modification. Our next meeting will be on October 11, 1997 at Austin.

Our first general meeting will be on September 15, 1997 at the Garden Center. I hope to see you all there.



*Atlantic Puffins*

---

## FEATHER LAKE TO BE OPEN MORE OFTEN

By John Sproul

### Feather Lake News

Our Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

opens to the public 4 October with new, expanded hours. From October through the end of April, it will be open every Saturday morning from 8 AM to Noon and every Sunday afternoon from 2 PM to dusk. The Saturday schedule is a change from just being open the 1st and 3rd Saturdays each month. Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop in El Paso's lower valley. Admission is free.

The new schedule increases by 35% the number of days Feather Lake will be open. We have made this change in part because of the outstanding volunteer support our visitor program received last year. For this new schedule to work, we need that volunteer support to continue. If you can help staff Feather Lake one or more days during visitor hours this season, please contact Charles Simpson (598-2274). The work is easy, enjoyable, and essential to Feather Lake's role as a community educational resource. The expanded hours are just one element of the

newly completed master plan for Feather Lake. The plan, a mere 8 years in preparation, offers a vision of what we want Feather Lake to be 25 years from now and identifies specific actions for achieving that vision. For a copy, please contact John Sproul (545-5157).

Many of the master-plan elements involve habitat management. Summer can be a challenging time to work at Feather Lake, but several groups braved the heat to help us out. Thanks go to the Sierra Club's Inner City Outings program and to Cub Scout packs 90 and 278 for their recent work removing young saltcedars along the inner berm and rebuilding eroded areas on the embankment surrounding the lake.

Finally, plan to join us **Saturday, October 11** for an evening of truly fine dining under the Feather Lake ramada. It's our annual pot-luck dinner at Feather Lake. See "On the Trail" for all the details

### AOU CHECK-LIST CHANGES

By John Sproul

The American Ornithologists' Union recently published the 41st supplement to its Check-list of North American Birds (The Auk 114(3):542-552).

Among the taxonomic and name changes presented are several involving Trans-Pecos birds, including two "splits" of single species into more than one species:

The Solitary Vireo is split into 3 species: Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*), Cassin's Vireo (*V. cassinii*) and Plumbeous Vireo (*V. plumbeus*). Of the 3, Plumbeous Vireo is the one most often seen in Trans-Pecos Texas. It is a summer resident in the Guadalupe, Davis and Chisos mountains (and the Organ Mountains in New Mexico) and a regular spring and fall migrant throughout the region. Blue-headed Vireo is a bird of northern and eastern North America, and Cassin's Vireo is a bird of the Pacific Coast states and British Columbia. Both are rare migrants and very rare winter visitors in the Trans-Pecos.

The Plain Titmouse is split into 2 species: Oak Titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*) and Juniper Titmouse (*B. ridgwayi*). The Oak Titmouse is a bird of the Pacific Slope, west of the Sierra Nevada, and is not likely to appear in our region. The Juniper Titmouse is a bird of the Great Basin and southwestern states. It is an uncommon resident in

the Guadalupe and Delaware mountains (and the Organ Mountains in New Mexico) but is rarely seen in the Trans-Pecos away from those haunts.

Also presented in the 41st Supplement are a number of changes that will appear in the next (7th) edition of the AOU Check-list and that involve the sequence or taxonomic rank of certain groups of birds. The Check-list is arranged in

an order that proceeds roughly from the oldest groups of birds to the most recently evolved. New insights into the evolutionary relationships of birds have led to some conspicuous changes in this order. For example, New World vultures (e.g., Black and Turkey vultures, California Condor) are now considered more closely allied to storks than to hawks and eagles.

Shrikes and vireos are now considered allied with jays and crows, starlings with thrashers and mockingbirds. Increasingly in the months and years ahead, you'll see bird reports, scientific papers, technical documents, local checklists, field guides and other bird-related materials all reflecting this new order.

---

#### **UPDATE: FT. BLISS PONDS**

John Kiseda *Conservation Chair*

The Ft. Bliss Ponds provide critical resting and feeding habitat for many types of migrating birds, including some species that are on the Texas and federal endangered species lists; more than 300 different species of birds have been observed utilizing the site. The locality also plays a vital role in the successful reproduction of a number of wildlife species and in providing important wintering habitat for many species of waterfowl and raptors.

Our organization has been increasingly concerned by the decreasing amounts of water existing in the Ft. Bliss Ponds throughout 1997. For decades, the water filled wastewater ponds at the Fred Hervey Plant site have provided a haven for wildlife; but until recently, this important oasis in the desert was being allowed to dry out, degrade and have its usefulness to wildlife and non-consumptive recreational users severely limited.

At a recent meeting with the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board General Manager, Edmund Archuleta, our concerns were addressed and responded to. Mr. Archuleta agreed to work with our organization to maintain the habitat at the site, at a level that had previously proved extremely beneficial to wildlife; this is significant, because it not only provides for the biological needs of wildlife, but because it also demonstrates the importance of how a constructive approach to a problem, can result in cooperation between organizations with different goals and objectives.

We are extremely grateful to the El Paso Water Utilities for agreeing to work with our organization in ensuring that this important wildlife locality remains useful for wildlife and non-consumptive recreational users.



**UPDATE: DONIPHAN MARSH**  
John Kiseda *Conservation Chair*

Carol Miller, President of the "Save the Doniphan Marsh" coalition, has been able to garner more interest and support in her organization's effort to protect Doniphan Marsh and the acreage surrounding it, from further degradation and development. This property is owned by the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad. For those of you who haven't yet experienced a visit to Doniphan Marsh, it is located near El Paso's Upper Valley area, along Doniphan Drive between Frontera & Bird streets (it isn't easily visible from the roadside, because you are "below" it; it is situated at the base of the Keystone Dam, which is parallel to I-10).

Doniphan Marsh has been used recreationally by numerous local residents and visiting birders for decades. This site has important cultural and archaeological significance due to its past use by native peoples, thousands of years ago. The marsh is also a magnet for wildlife and people alike; its adjacent vegetation furnish a stop over place for hungry and tired wildlife to find food, water and a safe place to rest. Over one hundred species of birds have been observed at the marsh and over one dozen species are known to have nested there and raised young.

The Texas Dept. of Transportation (TX DOT) has been working on a Doniphan Drive construction project that has entailed de-watering and lowering at least part of the water table near the construction site and this may have had a negative effect on the water levels at the Doniphan Marsh.

Here is some "up to date" information given to me by Mrs. Miller:

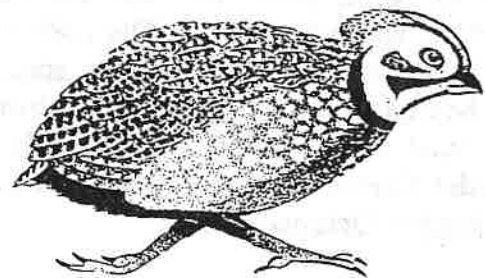
- The "Save the Doniphan Marsh" coalition has garnered more support from our Congressman, Sylvestre Reyes; Dian Copeland, a researcher from Congressman Reyes's Washington DC office, is scheduled to arrive in El Paso and challenge the section 404 authorization that the Army Corps of Engineers previously issued to TX DOT

to initiate their dewatering process near the marsh.

- Matt Letner, a US Fish & Wildlife Service Aquatic Biologist out of Austin, is scheduled to arrive in El Paso and check on the status of the marsh and the possible effects of the TX DOT dewatering project on it; Mrs. Miller has also been informed that Mr. Letner has notified TX DOT that they must discontinue the dewatering part of their construction project by September 1, 1997.
- The Trust for Public Land may become involved with the Doniphan Marsh project at some future date as a transitional "responsible party", if the property is due to be transferred from private ownership to public ownership.
- Westside City Council Representative, Jan Sumerall will be trying to set-up a meeting about the Doniphan Marsh with our mayor, the Honorable Carlos M. Ramirez and our State Representative, Eliot Shapleigh.

**Show your support in the efforts to preserve the Doniphan Marsh by contacting:**

- *President Carol Miller at 584-7088 or Vice-President Ron Holman at 833-3129.*
- *Congressman Reyes at his Capital office: 1-800-962-3524, thank him for his project support.*
- *El Paso Mayor, Carlos M. Ramirez & your City Councilman, request they support the Doniphan Marsh efforts.*



# ON THE TRAIL

## MIGRATION

The *Vireos and Warblers* are starting to come through early in September and who knows maybe we could catch a rare one. We will drive and walk and drive and walk, in the vicinity of the El Paso Country Club. The *Red-shafted Flickers and Belted Kingfishers* could be around, and a unusual duck could be in the Crossroads Ponding Area. That is where you will meet **Bob Johnson (757-1876)** at **7:47 AM on Saturday September 6**. For those who do not know where that is, turn **LEFT immediately** over the railroad tracks at Mesa/Country Club Road and Doniphan, on the west side of town.

## HUECO TANKS

Why don't you join **Richard Hermosillo** as he conducts the **FRIENDS of HUECO TANKS Bird Identification Tour** on **Sunday September 21st**. Check in at the entrance building **8 AM** (park entrance fee is \$2 and tour cost is \$2), then meet Richard at the Ranch House about **8:15 AM**. Hueco Tanks has a lot of good winter birds, and some will be in, and it's also a good migrant trap.

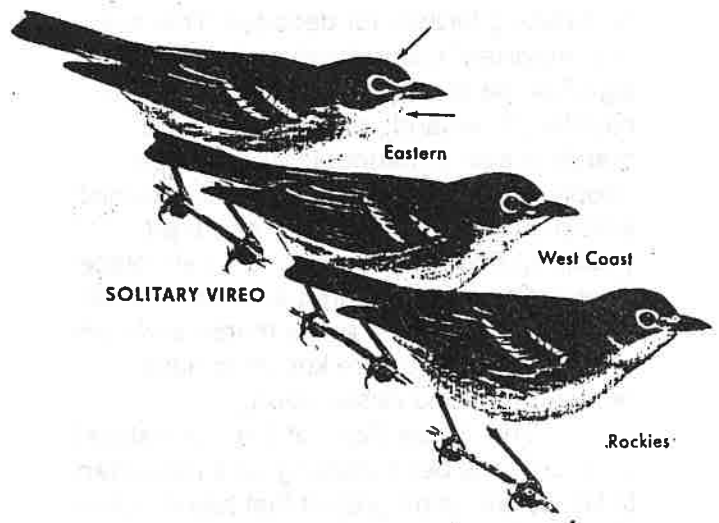
## MEMORIAL PARK

Another good place to look for migrating *warblers* and other types. The *Solitary Vireo* has been split into three separate species (this will be explained to you) and two of them could be found here. Meet **John Kiseda** at the **Garden Center in Memorial Park at 7:32 AM on Sunday October 5th**.

## GOOD FOOD

AT FEATHER LAKE

Also a lot of fun and friendship, included with a little bird watching. This will all happen at our annual **POT LUCK PICNIC**. The Chapter provides the burgers, hot dogs, rolls and toppings - you bring your beverage and utensils - and one of your favorite dishes to share with others, salad - dessert - pasta - or something else. The grill will be fired up about **5:30 PM on Saturday October 11**. Come earlier and enjoy some of our winter visitors which will have started to arrive. If you think you might come, call Betty Page1 (772-2686).



## FRIENDS of HUECO TANKS

We are still looking for members, call 857-1135. Activities this month: Every Saturday and Sunday at 9 AM and 11AM, Rock Art Tours. Sat. Sept. 20, Rock Art Slide Show 7:30 PM. Sun. Sept. 21, Bird Identification Tour. 8:00 AM

# Observations

May 16, 1997 to August 15, 1997

Uncommon, Rare, and Casual sightings

A very rare sighting has the full entry italicized, bold and underlined. Some of the listings may not be considered RARE, but because of the season or habitat (date and/or location, bold and underlined) they are unusual. The listing of birds here is determined using the checklist "Birds of El Paso County, Texas and Adjacent Areas" 7th Edition, October 1987. If you are unsure of a sighting, don't hesitate-report it-to Bob "WILDBIRDER" Johnson 757-1876 (recorder).

Observers: Mary Lou Alcorn; Helen Bigalow; Jane Fowler; Robert Garcia; Inga Groff; Sallie Homan; Bob Johnson; Larry Jordan; John Kiseda; Lynn Mosley; Jim Paton; Patricia Russell; John Sproul; Jimmy Zabriskie; Barry Zimmer; MOB-many observers; Var-Variou; -yd - in their yard.

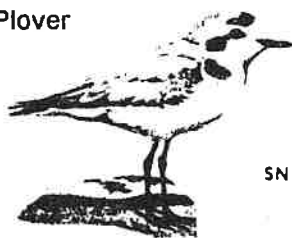
Locations: Ant/Anthony; Asc/Ascarate Lake; Can/Canutillo; Emy/Emory; FBP/Fort Bliss Ponds; FHc/Fort Hancock; FLk /Feather Lake; HTk/Hueco Tanks; McN/McNary Reservoir; NEE/Northeast El Paso; PtD/Painted Dunes; SLR/State Line Road (Chaparrel NM); SRS/Stn Roberts Sr. Dr; STA/Santa Teresa Area; Tor/Tornillo.

## GREBES THRU DUCKS

<u>Clark's Grebe - with young</u>	Var	MOB	McN
<u>1st area record of breeding</u>			
Double-crested Cormorant	Var	JS	FLk
Neotropical Cormorant	5/25	JP	McN
Great Egret	Var	MOB	FLk
<u>Reddish Egret</u>	<u>7/10</u>	<u>JP</u>	<u>McN</u>
<u>2d area record</u>			
<u>Yellow-crowned Night Heron</u>	<u>7/11</u>	<u>SH</u>	<u>McN</u>
White-faced Ibis	<u>7/11</u>	SH	McN
Black-bellied Whistling Duck	<u>Var</u>	LJ	Asc
Canada Goose - with Young	<u>Var</u>	MOB	FLk
<u>1st F. Lake record of breeding</u>			
Green-winged Teal	<u>6/2</u>	BJ	FBP
Blue-winged Teal	6/8	JS	FLk
	6/14	JK	FBP
American Wigeon	<u>7/1</u>	JS	FLk
	<u>7/11</u>	SH	McN

## OSPREY THRU PLOVERS

Osprey	5/22	PR	STA
Mississippi Kite	5/18	MLA-yd	Emy
Northern Harrier	<u>6/1</u>	BJ	FBP
	<u>6/14</u>	JK	FBP
Harris' Hawk	Var	BJ	PtD
Golden Eagle	6/3	BJ	SRS
	7/29	BJ	SLR
<u>Am. Golden Plover</u>	<u>5/20</u>	<u>BZ</u>	<u>FBP</u>
	<u>5/21</u>	<u>LJ</u>	<u>FBP</u>
Snowy Plover	<u>6/28</u>	BJ	FHc



SNOWY PLOVER

## WILLET TO DOWITCHER

Willet	7/5	JF	McN
Spotted Sandpiper	<u>6/14</u>	BJ	FBP
	<u>7/26</u>	RG	Tor
Long-billed Curlew	<u>7/5</u>	JF/JS	McN
	<u>7/10</u>	JP	McN
<u>Hudsonian Godwit</u>	<u>6/6</u>	<u>BJ</u>	<u>FHc</u>
<u>First area record since 1918</u>	<u>6/7</u>	<u>JK</u>	<u>FHc</u>
Marbled Godwit	<u>7/10</u>	JP	FHc
Stilt Sandpiper	<u>5/20</u>	BZ	FBP
	<u>5/21</u>	LJ	FBP
Long-billed Dowitcher	<u>7/11</u>	SH	McN

## TERNs

Caspian Tern	<u>7/5</u>	<u>JF/JS</u>	<u>FHc</u>
Common Tern	<u>6/27</u>	JP	McN
Arctic Tern	<u>6/5</u>	<u>JP</u>	<u>McN</u>
<u>1st Texas Record</u>	<u>6/7</u>	<u>JK</u>	<u>McN</u>
Foster's Tern	<u>Var</u>	MOB	McN
	<u>8/12</u>	JS	FLk
Least Tern	<u>Var</u>	MOB	FHc
	<u>Var</u>	JF/JS	FLk
Black Tern	<u>7/26</u>	JS	FLk
	<u>8/12</u>	PR	FBP

## HUMMINGBIRDS THRU TANAGERS

Calliope Hummingbird	<u>7/17</u>	PR/yd	STA
	<u>7/28</u>	RG-yd	NEP
Rufous Hummingbird	<u>7/6</u>	PR-yd	STA
	<u>7/10</u>	LM	STA
Cave Swallow	5/20	JS	FLk
Townsend's Solitaire	5/18	BJ	HTk
Cedar Waxwing	5/18	JK	STA
Warbling Vireo	5/21	PR-yd	STA
Western Tanager	5/18	JK	STA
<u>3d Fthr. Lake record</u>	8/2	JS	FLk

## GROSBEAK TO CROSSBILL

Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5/18	BJ	HTk
Black-headed Grosbeak	<u>5/21</u>	PR	STA
	<u>7/28</u>	IG	NEP
Lincoln's Sparrow	5/20	BZ	FBP
Yellow-headed Blackbird	7/15	JS	FLk
Common Grackle	<u>Var</u>	JZ	Can
Bronzed Cowbird	6/15	HB-yd	Ant
Scott's Oriole	8/11	PR-yd	STA
Red Crossbill	<u>5/18</u>	JK	STA

**September**

**Sat., 6 - Crossroads Ponding Area -  
7:47 am**

**Mon., 8 - Board Meeting Environmental  
Center**

**Mon., 15 - General Meeting - Garden  
Center Memorial Park**

**Sun., 21 - Hueco Tanks Bird  
Identification Tour - 8:00 am**

**October**

**Sun., 5 - Memorial Park Garden Center  
- 7:32 am**

**Sat., 11 - Pot Luck Picnic - Feather  
Lake**

**Friends of Hueco Tanks**

**Birdings Activities at Hueco Tanks  
Every Sat. & Sun. - Pictograph Tours  
9am & 11am**

**Sat., June 14 - Slide-Birds of Hueco  
Tanks 8:30pm**

**Sun., June 15 - Bird Identification Tour  
8am**

**Sun., July 20 - Bird Identification Tour  
8am**

**Sat., August 16 - Slides-Birds of Hueco  
Tanks 8pm**

**Sun., August 17 - Bird Identification  
Tour 8am**

---

**El Paso Trans/Pecos Audubon Society**  
P.O. Box 9655  
El Paso, Texas 79986

Return Service Requested

THE ROADRUNNER is printed on recycled  
paper.

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
El Paso, Texas  
Permit #2440