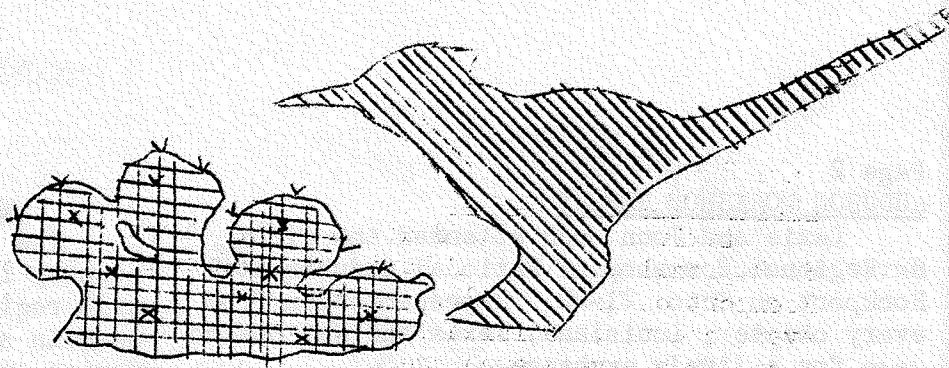


# The Roadrunner

NEWSLETTER OF  
EL PASO-TRANS PECOS  
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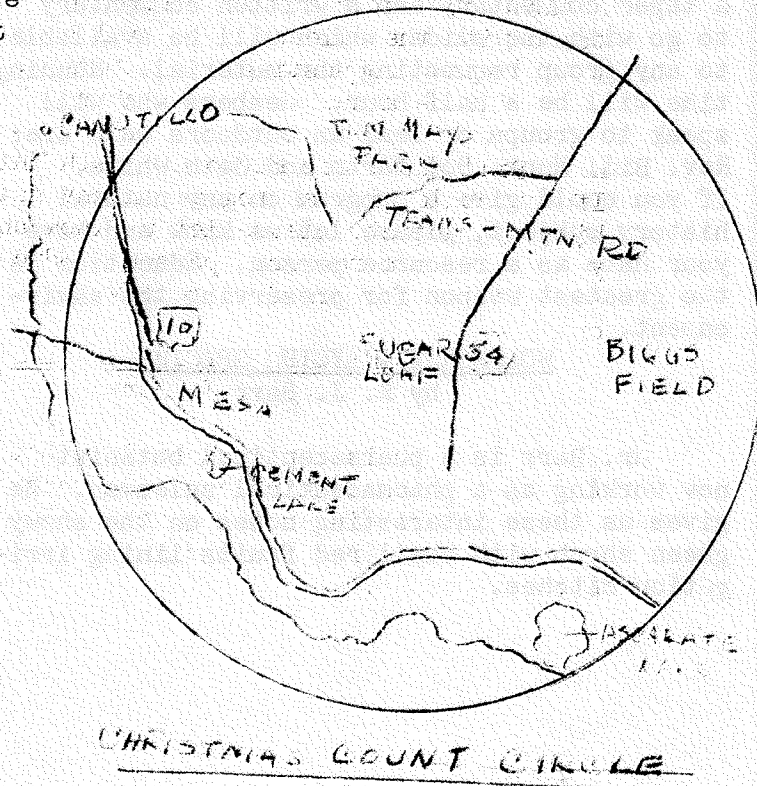


Vol. II, November, 1972

Geth Osborn White, Editor

## CALENDAR

- Mon. Nov. 20  
7:30 P. M. Regular meeting, Centennial Museum, U.T.E.P. campus. Remember all the beautiful blooms in the desert late summer and fall? John Green, Botanist and photographer, has made a slide collection of the extraordinary flower show we had this season. John is plant inspector for the U. S. Customs and has a thorough knowledge of the plants of our area.
- Sat. Nov. 11  
7:30 A. M. Field trips to check Christmas count territories. Please call the leaders and join a count group on their territory. Leaders are: Bill Hunt, from Anapra crossing up the Rio Grande river banks, including Cement Lake region to Country Club Road. Bill Hunt's telephone 591-5630; Ruby Allen and Gertrude Rose, telephone 584-0171, residential area in Country Club district, county roads, irrigation ditches, fee fishing lakes; Rita Ward, Memorial Park, yards and gardens in vicinity, tel. 565-4414; Clarence and Libby Shelfer, 568-7774, Mountain Park residential area; Ascarate Lake, Caroline McClintock, 565-3566; canyons on Trans-Mountain Road, Phelps-Dodge cooling ponds, Geth and Ed White 565-1024; Tom Mays Park is open for a leader and counters; Coronado residential area, Joan Pierce, 584-1779. Informal birding in territories can be done during the week also by mutual agreement. Please report unusual finds to Clarence Shelfer, 568-7774. He will coordinate the count and Ruby Allen compile when she returns holidaytime. If you need checklists, there are some at Centennial Museum and at the White's residence. If you would like to try tape recordings of owls or rails, you can borrow a cassette tape and make up your own from the Whites.
- Sat. Nov. 18  
7:30 A. M.



AUDUBON WORKSHOP REPORT

Lexie and John Mudd attended the first Regional Workshop of National Audubon at Rockport on Octo. 21-22. Representation from every chapter, Louisiana, Texas and New Mexico made for a lively exchange.

National Audubon hopes to keep in closer touch with local chapters in future. A hot line for closer communications on environmental affairs that need quick action was proposed. This same idea on a regional basis was discussed at the Wilderness Conference. Meantime, if the need arises for action, please call Geth White at 565-1024 or Bob Barto, Conservation Chairman, 755-4744.

Incorporation was urged by National Audubon Society to safeguard individuals who are members in the event of a lawsuit, as well as insurance. Rates are very low for non-profit groups such as ourselves.

Education and youth involvement programs were recommended. We have an education committee beginning to function, chaired by Mrs. Carl Jones (Linda) with Lexie Mudd, Rita Ward and Dorothy Chrapliwy willing to help on this committee. They are working up a color slide program on the birds of the region, using a nucleus of purchased slides to be augmented by members' slides which can be copied. If you have a slide or slides to contribute, please let us know. We will have a taped commentary and a written commentary to go with the slides which will be available to any group requesting the material. Running time will be a half hour. Members who will speak to groups or lead an outdoors walk are: Rev. Bill Hunt, Bob Barto and Geth White. If you could give a program on any natural history subject, please let us know and have your name as a resource person. Education is the greatest weapon for preserving the environment.

WOLFBERRY - LYCIUM SPECIES

by R. J. Barr

Mr. Barr is a pharmaceutical botanist now working as a pharmaceutical salesman. He gives us these interesting notes on the showy green shrub with small red fruits lining irrigation ditches.

NOTES ON LYCIUM SPECIES cont'd.

The name is taken from Lycia, an ancient country in Asia Minor. Ca 100 species from arid regions in all continents. Common names used in southwestern United States and northern Mexico are: wolfberry, desert-thorn, squawberry, box-thorn tomatillo (New Mexico and Sonora) cilinrillo (Coahuila) garambullo (Chihuahua).

There are three species in west Texas: Lycium pallidum, L. torreyi, and L. berlandieri. These are drought deciduous, tolerate a high degree of soil salinity and flower regularly in spring and again after summer rains.

The southwestern Indians used the fruit raw or dried for winter use. Edible and juicy, it is insipid of flavor and slightly bitter, but nonetheless important food in dry years. Fruit was sometimes prepared as a sauce. The bitterness was removed by mixing with clay 1:1 and dried on rocks in the sun. Sources: Arizona Flora, Kearney and Peebles Trees and Shrubs of Mexico - Paul C. Standley A California Flora - Philip Munz.

WORN OUT VALLEY LAND OFFERS CHANCE FOR HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

A Lower Valley church, Faith Presbyterian at 661 Lomaland, owns five acres of land that for years have been sown in cotton. Each year as the sandy soil became depleted, the plants grew shorter and the yield grew poorer. Finally, the contract farmer quit. This summer the land raised a bumper crop of weeds. The church has no immediate plans for land use.

In consultation with the Soil Conservation Service and interested friends, I have begun plans to improve a half-acre strip of this land as wildlife habitat. We are studying both native plants and nursery stock for their usefulness as food and cover.

In developing this small plot, we hope to furnish an example that can be copied elsewhere in the Valley where such land is either lying unused or being held for future development. We want also to provide an area to be used for study by schools or groups.

Even a project as small as this one will

need many friends and supporters if it is to succeed. Any reader who wants to help may at any time offer suggestions, and can make a contribution by collecting aluminum or steel cans for redeeming and recycling. You may contact me at 591-5630 or 598-6735. -- -- Bill Hunt.

BIRDS OF THE MONTH: JAYS

The phone rings and a voice inquires: "What's the big blue bird with a crest, coming in to my feeder, sometimes scolding the other birds with a scratching voice?"

On the basis of sheer number of inquiries, the Stellar's jays have it. They have been seen all over El Paso from the Coronado foothills to Memorial Park in October and have excited much interest, along with the Scrub Jays and a few Pinyon jays which have come down from the higher mountains of their normal summer range in a vertical migration.

Why are there so many Stellar's jays in El Paso this fall? Scientific research has provided some answers in the past.

Irruption is a mechanism which helps a species, constantly under threat of dispossession in their home ranges, to invade a new area. In years of high population and low food supply, species resident in north temperate boreal zones, for example, leave their traditional ranges. The snowy owl, for example, has repeatedly irrupted southward when the lemming supply, its favorite food, was scarce.

Pine nuts are important food for jays. There was a heavy insect infestation of the Ponderosa pine in the Lincoln forest in the Cloudcroft area this year which may have been more widespread than the writer's personal observation. This could be a contributing factor.

Population pressure also promotes range expansion of the young of all species. They have to compete with older birds well established in feeding territories; secondly, it seems to be innate in the young of all species, include homo sapiens, to explore and live dangerously. Wanderlust seems to be an

an adaptive mechanism where natural selection has met this contingency.

Still another reason is the abundance of natural foods this year in the lower deserts as a result of the heavy summer and fall rains. Colder weather at an earlier date in the higher altitudes could be a part of the rationale, with light snow on higher New Mexican ranges in late October.

In my neighborhood the Stellar's seems to be in ascendancy, appearing at feeders, picking off the chinaberries, ash seeds and pine nuts. An unusual feeding observation: two Stellar's jays quarreling with two flickers for the fruits of a Virginia creeper which had crawled up an ash tree, twining loosely around its branches. All four birds were too heavy to be supported by the vines, losing their balance and flapping around amid loud cries, chasing each other and returning to pick off the fruits one by one.

Stellar's jays are the crested ones, shiny dark blue on the body, black on the head and crest. It eats a variety of foods like all jays: acorns, pine nuts, insects, eggs and young of other birds.

The Scrub jay descends to lowlands in winter also and is a common resident of the Upper Sonoran zone. It has no crest, being a large blue bird (about 11") with back and shoulders deep mouse-grey. The chin, throat and chest are a grayish white, streaked with dark bluish grey, giving the appearance of a necklace. Young birds have a browner appearance generally, without a necklace.

The Pinyon jay is smaller than the Scrub and Stellar's jays, has no crest and is uniformly grey blue with a long, heavy bill. They flock in the fall of the year and travel beyond their normal summer range, but not as frequently as the scrub jays. There have been several reports of pinyon jays this autumn, and on August 29 the writer observed a flock of six jays in one of the canyons off Trans-Mountain Road.

WILDERNESS CONFERENCE WAS QUITE A SUCCESS.  
People attending the Workshop on Oct. 28-29 learned how to conduct a wilderness survey.

Leaders were familiar personally from hiking into various mountains in New Mexico and West Texas or making aerial surveys in the Lincoln, Gila and Guadalupe.

There is to be a public hearing on the Gila Wilderness which is proposed in the counties of Catron and Grant in New Mexico, on December 16 in the Convention Center, Acoma and Zuni Rooms, Albuquerque, N. Mex. The new wilderness proposal covers 514, 678 acres.

You may write your views to the Regional Forester, 517 Gold Avenue SW, Albuquerque, NM 87101 until January 16, 1973.

Conservationists views are important as the Forest Service is all too prone to listen to timber interests, grazing interests and others for local, short-term gains. Only 1/2 of 1% of our land is in wilderness. The need is not so much for us but for future generations.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION EDUCATION COUNCIL surveyed an escarpment site as a public land with designation of educational use. The parcel is located just east of I-10 at the Clint exit, a square mile including 640 acres. The group will view the floodplain site on November 7/13 which includes a bosque.

The group sees the need for outdoors learning centers for use by the school system and are inventorying possible sites; a number of science teachers are developing curricula for use on the sites and ways of funding are being explored.

RIVERSIDE PARK SITE, or the bosque on the lower Rio Grande near Socorro, is being studied by several groups. There is to be a meeting the last Monday in November, the 27th at the VIP room, American Airlines, at the Regional Airport. There are many agencies involved and we need input from many individuals. You're invited to attend and express your views. This is not a hearing, just an informal group. Duffy Stanley, chairman of Open Space Section, Citizens Environment Council, will preside.

EXHIBIT ON BASSET HALL AND NORTHGATE HALL was eye-catching and informative. Thanks to Joan Pierce, chairman, Wanda Joyce, Bob and Helen Barto, Lexie Mudd and E. White for the combined efforts in putting together the display. Thanks also to Mary Moore and Roberta Wilcox for art work on the posters which are going to be re-cycled on another project with the Girls Scouts and for publicity at the ports of entry information booths.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE, chaired by Mary Moore, is putting together a slate of officers which will be presented and voted on at the January meeting.

NEW BOOK ON CHIAPAS BIRDS entitled Las Aves de Chiapas, by Manuel Alvarez del Toro (Instituto de Historia Natural, Depto. de Zoologia, Apartado Postal No. 6, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, Mexico; 82 color plates covering all species found within the State of Chiapas) is selling at cost \$6.50.

Sr. Alvarez, the first to sound the alarm on the quetzal and Horned Guan back in the 50's is one of Mexico's leading ornithologists and an expert on birds of far southern Mexico. Mrs. John Whitaker says the book is a must for anyone interested in birds of rainforests and cloudforests of Middle America.

The governor of Chiapas is supporting surveys now underway toward preserves for several hard-pressed species of birds, including the Horned Guan and the quetzal. Expressions of interest from those who go down to enjoy the birds of Mexico, and who see the need for more natural areas in preservation, might be helpful. Write to the Governor of Chiapas:

Dr. Manuel Velasco Suarez  
Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas  
Palacio de Gobierno  
Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, MEXICO.

The Governor is bi-lingual and you can write to him in English.

OFFICERS

President: Mrs. Edmund White  
Vice-president: Eddie Chew  
Secretary-  
Treasurer: Mrs. Clarence Shelfer  
Historian: Mrs. Jack Ponder

El Paso-Trans Pecos Audubon Society dues are \$12 individual, \$15. family; includes subscription to Audubon magazine, local newsletter, participation in eco-action matters, field trips.

Please mail check to Mrs. Clarence Shelfer, 3050 A Chandler, El Paso, Texas 79904.

COMMITTEES

Conservation: Bob Barto  
Field Trips: Ed White  
Membership: Mrs. Leigh Wilcox (Roberta)  
Education: Mrs. Carl Jones (Linda)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

OCTOBER BIRD RECORDS

10/15	Sandhill Cranes (overhead) est. 500	Geth White	Federal Street
10/13	Perengrine falcon (1)	"	NE El Paso
10/16	Acorn woodpecker (1)	"	Captive bird injured
10/2	Stellar's jays (5) numerous reports	"	released
	during month	"	Federal Street
10/5	Scrub jays numerous reports during		Federal Street
10/16	White-breasted nuthatch 1	GOW & EW	Federal Street
10/12	Red-breasted nuthatch (1)	Lee & Joanie Hardaway	East El Paso
	" " " (1)	Joan Pierce	West E. P.
10/12	Robin (6)	GOW & EW	Federal
10/17	Baird's sparrow	GOW, EW, Byron Berger	East EP
10/17	Clay-colored sparrow (flocks)	" " "	East EP
10/17	Sp. e Sparrow (flocks)	" " "	"

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