

the ROADRUNNER.....



newsletter of the
El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
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Editor: John Sproul

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CALENDAR

PROGRAM

17 MARCH 1980, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, 3105 Grant St., in Memorial Park. **TIME FOR SURVIVAL** focuses on the plight of endangered species and the need to preserve diversity in nature. This award-winning new film from the National Audubon Society spans the globe, from tropical rain forests to the Arctic tundra. It is a visually stunning lesson in what makes natural ecosystems tick, how their plants and animals interact. It is also a plea for concern. Our species is busy simplifying ecosystems the world over, eliminating habitat on which less adaptable species depend. **TIME FOR SURVIVAL** will awe you with its beauty, and it will make you think. No, we don't have Roadrunner cartoons to accompany this film, but we may include a surprise second feature.

FIELD TRIPS

SUN. 9 MARCH. ARROYO PARK. Meet at 7:30 AM at New York and N. St. Vrain Sts. This is an excellent trip for beginners. Arroyo Park, below Rim Rd., harbors most bird species typical of desert-scrub habitats around El Paso and often has a few surprises for us. Plan to walk about 2 easy miles. Leader: John Sproul (545-5157).

SAT. 22 MARCH. FT. BLISS PONDS. Meet at 7 AM at Furrow Building Materials (Fred Wilson at Railroad) for a trip to the Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds. We should see a variety of ducks and shorebirds, as well as hawks and other birds. Easy walk. Leader: Joe Guinn (566-8438).

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

10 MARCH, 7 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Joe Guinn, 5000 Alabama #31, El Paso, Ph: 566-8438. Note that the meeting begins at 7, not 7:30.

FROM THE PEN OF THE PRESIDENT:

Every once-in-a-while an extra special day comes along—one in which new discoveries are made. Just such a day "came along" on Sunday 24 Feb, our Chapter field-trip day.

Participants numbered 18 at our gathering point at Feather Lake, and that is "far better" than just 4, which has

happened. The Whistling Swan and Snow Goose were exceptional birds present among the lake's many other regular inhabitants. Fifteen participants took the trip to Surratt's Pond, where we were treated to a special bird sighting: a Wood Duck. (Turn to page 50 of your **BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA: A GUIDE TO FIELD IDENTIFICATION** for a view of this exceptionally colorful

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duck.)

While traveling along the lower Rio Grande levee, Leigh Jenkins, a passenger in my car, spotted a Cardinal in the roadside brush. My, what excitement this brought as we tried to get pictures and additional views. Two males and one female were seen. This is my first Cardinal sighting in Texas, and though I went to the Rim Rd. arroyo several times after receiving a report of a Cardinal there, I never did even get a glimpse before!

Then while standing around the Port of Entry at Fabens, we saw the Black Phoebe, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warblers and the Vermilion Flycatcher. I was well pleased with the field-trip turnout and even more with the great results. Oh, how I wish all of our readers could have been with us, for it was indeed a "special day."

—Bob Bleicher

THANK YOU TO:

Al, Madeline and Tom Gavit - for their generosity in providing refreshments to the field-trip participants during our visit to Feather Lake on 24 Feb.

Mr. and Mrs. David Surratt - for their kindness in allowing us to bird at their backyard pond where we were so fortunate

in being able to see the very beautiful Wood Duck.

John Sproul - for a truly exceptional program in February. The program, "The Future of Mono Lake," was viewed by one of our larger gatherings, and it proved both interesting and educational.

OBSERVATIONS - 24 January to 24 February 1980

WATERBIRDS

The Whistling Swan has been in residence at Feather Lake for almost 3 months now, the Snow Goose for over 2 (AG, mob). Our sanctuary also had a Ring-necked Duck 26 Jan (JDIP). On 23 Feb, 2 male Wood Ducks were on Surratt's Pond in Clint (SJD); 1 was there the next day for our field trip (mob). Approximately 15 Sandhill Cranes were scattered about the upper valley near the Rio Grande 10 Feb (JD). Back in December, 2 Lesser Yellowlegs were at the water-catchment basin at Doniphan and Country Club Rd. On 26 Jan, this spot held a Greater Yellowlegs (KZ).

Eagles were in the upper valley 27 Jan (JD), 1 was there 10 Feb (JD) and 2 were soaring over Hueco Tanks 17 Feb (KZ, JDIP). Single Prairie Falcons occurred in the upper valley 10 Feb (JD) and the lower valley near Tornillo 24 Feb (JD).

PASSERINES

The ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER in Memorial Park was last seen 5 Feb (JDIP), not surprisingly just a few days before our snow-storm. The male Vermilion Flycatcher flying out after insects from the cottonwoods at the Fabens Port of Entry 24 Feb (JF, BB et al.) may have overwintered or may have been an early spring migrant. Certainly the 3 Tree Swallows at Feather Lake that same day (EG) fall in the latter category. Arroyo Park seems to be a good spot for House Wrens; 2 were there 29 Jan (JDIP). Brown Thrashers continue to turn up, with 1 in the Tornillo area 24 Feb (JG, AG). A Sage Thrasher was in the canyon to Indian Springs 27 Jan (BB et al.) and 1 was at Hueco Tanks 17 Feb (JDIP, KZ).

RAPTORS

Worth noting among the raptors in the upper valley this winter were 3 possible Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawks, seen from late Dec through 16 Feb (JD). Two were apparently adults. This subspecies is very difficult to distinguish from other melanistic Red-taileds, but these sightings suggest El Paso could be on the margins of its winter range. Two Golden

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OBSERVATIONS (Continued)

Not reported last month but very worthy of mention was the Phainopepla in the Mountain Park area 16 Jan (JD). January's string of lingering warblers continued with an Orange-crowned and a COMMON YELLOWTHROAT at Randle's Pool 29 Jan (KZ). One blackbird stood out from the rest in a flock at N. Loop Rd. and Horizon Blvd. in late Jan: except for a few feathers under the wings, it was all white (AG)! Two males and a female Cardinal in the Tornillo area 24 Feb successfully entertained 8 field-trip participants (LJ et al.). Red Crossbills appear in El Paso in some, but not all, winters; a flock of 25 flew over Memorial Park 10 Feb (JDiP). The White-throated Sparrow is now in its 3rd

month in the Cielo Vista area (ElG). Other noteworthy sparrows included FOX (western race) and Swamp at Hueco Tanks St. Park 17 Feb (KZ, JDiP), both first park records, and a probable Fox at Santa Teresa Country Club in the upper valley 18 Feb (JD). In the lower valley, a flock of 40 Chestnut-collared Longspurs was near Fabens 23 Feb (AG).

OBSERVERS: Bob Bleicher, Joe DiPasquale, Sarah Jane Dodds, Jeff Donaldson, Jane Fowler, Al Gavit, Ed Gilboe, Elza Gilboe (ElG), Joe Guinn, many observers (mob), Leigh Jenkins, Kevin Zimmer. (Please report your observations to John Sproul, 601 W. Yandell #25, El Paso 79902; ph. 545-5157 home, 543-6126 work.)

CARE OF INJURED WILDLIFE

West El Paso residents: Next time you find an injured wild animal, you may want to know that Dr. Jon Esposito (3233 N. Mesa, Ph: 533-9070), a veterinarian and Audubon member, includes care of injured wildlife in his practice. He charges only for medicine and materials when working on wild birds or mammals.

CONSERVATION

SEWAGE PLANT ES OUT SOON

The Environmental Statement (ES) for the proposed wastewater reclamation plant for northeast El Paso will be released by 13 Mar. A copy will be available for public inspection at the offices of El Paso Water Utilities, 320 S. Campbell, Ph: 533-9701. If this project goes as planned, the Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds and their freshwater marshes will be converted to temporary holding ponds. The Environmental Protection Agency will hold a hearing on the ES in El Paso in mid-April. Details will be in the next ROADRUNNER. In the meantime, read the ES!

COYOTE CONTROL BILL

U.S. Senator John Tower recently introduced S 2195, which would require the Depts. of Interior and Agriculture to develop and carry out jointly "a balanced animal damage control program that effectively utilizes both lethal and non-lethal control measures." In introducing the bill, our senator emphasized livestock losses to coyotes. S 2195 would permit use of steel traps, aerial gunning, the M-44 device and snares, as well as authorize research on chemical toxicants, including the lethal Compound 1080. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

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Deadline for the April ROADRUNNER is 26 March.

The ROADRUNNER is distributed to all members of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. Nonmembers can subscribe for \$3.00 per year. Mail subscription payments to John Sproul, 601 W. Yandell #25, El Paso, TX 79902. Make checks payable to El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society.

ALASKA: 1978 REVISITED?

In 1978, the U.S. House passed a strong Alaska lands bill. Because of delays in the Senate, though, the 95th Congress never completed action on Alaska. In response to this inaction, Pres. Carter created 56 million acres of National Monuments in Alaska, and Interior Secty. Andrus withdrew for 3 years an additional 52 million acres.

In 1979, the House again passed a strong bill. Again the Senate delayed. And delayed. On 7 Feb 1980 came the capper: a scheduling agreement that, if followed, will put off floor debate on the Alaska lands issue until at least 21 July. The Senate has the time to debate the issue now. Apparently it lacks the will.

The scheduling agreement is not all bad. For example, it limits debate and forbids filibusters. Under its terms, it appears we would have a Senate vote on

Alaska in 1980. But it would come late in the year. And a Senate vote does not a law make. A conference committee must resolve differences between the Senate- and House-passed bills. The conference, expected to be long and difficult, probably would not finish before the end of the 96th Congress, meaning no Congressional solution to the Alaska lands issue in 1980.

On 12 Feb, Secty. Andrus extended protection for 20 years for 40 million of the 52 million acres he withdrew in 1978. He created 37 million acres of National Wildlife Refuges and 3 million acres of Natural Resource Areas. He is studying similar protection for the remaining 12 million acres. Said Andrus, "If Congress doesn't act this year, and from that timetable it's unlikely it will, these lands won't be destroyed by development." Déjà vu?

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