



The Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

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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.

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El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society's Monthly Public Meeting

**Monday, September 21, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at
The Rio Grande campus of El Paso Community College
Rio Bosque Birdlife: Thirty years of change**



White-tailed Kite

John Sproul, with UTEP's Center for Environmental Resource Management, will speak on the changes in the birdlife at El Paso's Rio Bosque Wetlands Park over the past 30 years. The landscape at Rio Bosque has experienced dramatic changes during that time, and those changes are reflected in the birds that use the park. Since construction of the wetlands project at the park in 1997, the bird-species list for Rio Bosque has grown from 107 to 225 species. As ecological restoration at the site continues, the park landscape continues to change. Every year, its avian habitats grow richer and more complex, offering the promise of more exciting changes in the birdlife of the park in the years ahead.

**Monday, October 19, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at
The Rio Grande campus of El Paso Community College**

Those Amazing BATS!

Did you know that bats are the most significant predators of night-flying insects (US Geological Survey 2003)? A bat will eat half its weight in insects in a single night! On a summer evening 400,000 Mexican Free-tailed Bats emerge in an unforgettable display from Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico. Lois Balin, urban wildlife biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife, will present a program on bat ecology on Monday, October 19 at 7:00 p.m. at the El Paso Community College, Rio Grande campus.



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



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

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

Officers

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

Committees

Membership: Roxanne Schroeder, 533-0061	Publicity: Janet Perkins, 581-2849
Programs: Ursula Sherrill, 526-7725	Education: Kathleen Whelen, 751-2408
Conservation: vacant	Publications: Jane Fowler, 598-2448
Field Trips: Ursula Sherrill, 526-7725	Ways & Means: vacant
Hospitality: Janet Perkins, 581-2849	Sanctuary: John Sproul, 545-5157

Feather Lake needs YOU!



Every great wildlife refuge thrives on the commitment of its volunteers. The stormwater detention basin that is now Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary is 40 years old this year. You can help celebrate this milestone by volunteering at one of the work days listed below.

To offer the best habitat, wildlife preserves require regular maintenance, such as clearing trails and removing invasive plants and trash. Why not invest your volunteer time in a critically important wildlife haven? Over 200 species of birds depend on this sanctuary, including White-faced Ibises that in some years roost at Feather Lake by the thousands during migration. Feather Lake needs YOU!

The dates and times for Feather Lake workdays for the rest of the year are:

Sat., 26 Sep, 2 p.m.
Sat., 5 Dec 2 p.m.

To volunteer, please call John Sproul, at 747-8663. Thank you!

To get to Feather Lake, take I-10 east to Americas Avenue (Exit 34), then go south/right for 1.2 miles on Americas to North Loop. Turn right onto North Loop and go 0.4 miles to the stoplight at Bordeaux Street; the Feather Lake entrance is on your left.

KEYSTONE HERITAGE PARK

The wetlands are open the last weekend of each month for bird-watching. No Tour Guides, bring binocular

Saturdays 7:30 - 10:00 AM
Sundays 2:30 - 4:30 PM

Bob (915) 751-0125
wildbirderbob@sbcglobal.net

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
 (505) 524-3334 www.asombro.org

Friends of Rio Bosque 747-8663
www.riobosque.org

Southwest Environmental Center
 (505) 522-5552
www.wildmesquite.com swec@zianet.com

Franklin Mt. Wilderness Coalition
www.franklinmountains.org/

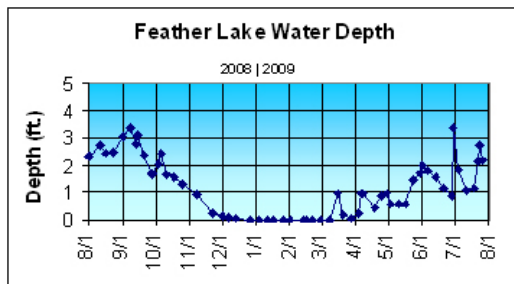
AT FEATHER LAKE

With the rainy season now upon us, storm runoff is the main influence on water levels at Feather Lake. With each storm, the water level spikes. Then it drops as the water drains at the lake outlet. So far in 2009, the greatest water depth has been 3.35 feet in late June.

Our 3-month period of summer closure is nearing an end. Feather Lake re-opens to the public September 5. That, of course, means we need volunteers to staff our sanctuary during visitor hours. Can you help? Please contact John Sproul (747-8663, jsproul@utep.edu) if you can put in a morning or afternoon at Feather Lake this fall.

We also welcome help at our next workday. It takes place **Sat., September 26**, an afternoon session starting at **2 p.m.**

Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave. Hours, starting in September, are 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays and 2 p.m. to dusk on Sundays. Admission is free.



Audubon at RIO BOSQUE WETLANDS PARK

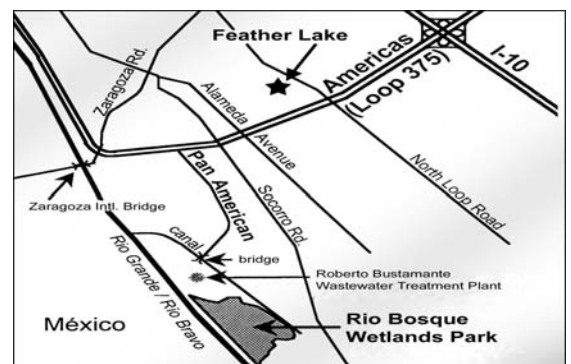


Southbound migratory birds began appearing at Rio Bosque in late July. For the latest on what is being seen, check the recent-bird-sightings page on the Park's website, www.riobosque.org. Upcoming free walking tours at the Park:

8 a.m. Sun., August 2 (Bird tour)
8 a.m. Sat., August 8 (Introductory tour)

8 a.m. Sat., September 5 (Bird tour)
8 a.m. Sat., September 12 (Introductory 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 new website is here!

Board members and volunteers attended training to provide updated information about upcoming field trips, a calendar of upcoming events, recent bird sightings.

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

HUECO TANKS

Admission

Adults-\$5, Seniors-\$2, Children-free

Bird Identification Tours

Third Sunday Each Month

Please check in at the Headquarters.
Reservations and information 857-1135

Bird-watching

August Field Trips of the El Paso / Trans-Pecos Audubon Society



Willet (Eskin-08)

Saturday, August 8, 2009 Shorebirds

The shorebird migration through our area usually peaks in August, at the same time that fall land bird migration could be beginning. We'll visit watery areas of the northeast to see these feathered tourists and possibly also cruise Hawk Alley to view any hawk fledglings still hanging around their nest.

Date: Saturday, August 8

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Meet at: South end of Lowe's parking lot, 4531 Trans-Mountain Rd., behind Taco Bell.

Trip Coordinator: Ursula Sherrill, 526-7725; usherrill@miners.utep.edu.



Semipalmated Sandpiper

Saturday, August 22, 2009 Dripping Springs Natural Area



Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (Eskin-08)

At the turn of the 19th century Dripping Springs was a popular resort on the eastern side of the Organ Mountains. Today its scattered ruins are woven into the desert scrub, pinon-juniper and oak woodlands that are home to Red-tailed Hawk, Gambel's Quail, and Golden Eagle. We will look for these as well as for Black-throated Sparrows, Scott's Oriole, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher and Lesser Nighthawks. This historic site features the famous "weeping walls," in which a natural spring seeps out of the rocks.

Date: Saturday, August 22

Time: 7:30 a.m. BRING LUNCH

Meet at: I-10 & Trans-Mountain Rd., Shell Station parking lot.

Trip Coordinator: Ursula Sherrill, 526-7725; usherrill@miners.utep.edu.



Black-throated Sparrow

Ready! Set! Click!



It's not too early to begin collecting your snapshots to submit to our annual PHOTO CONTEST. The El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon holiday party happens in early December, and the photo contest is a big part of the festivities. So, take some photos of your favorite bird, other wildlife, landscapes, kids and pets, or something you thought was hilarious. Our snacks and great prizes will make you smile! For more information, contact Bob Johnson, wildbirderbob@sbcglobal.net

Sunday, August 30, 2009 Reservoirs Down in the Valley

McNary Reservoir has been called the “best birding location in the valley east of El Paso (Lockwood *et al.* 1999), and is a notable haven for northern water-birds, such as resident Western and Clark’s grebes, Eared Grebes, pelicans, gulls, egrets, cormorants, and many species of ducks. Fort Hancock often has more open mud flats than McNary, and these attract herons and White-faced Ibis. Tornillo is also known for its winter waterbird population. Land birds that have been sighted at one or more of these three reservoirs include Harris’s Hawk, Northern Harrier, Ferruginous Hawk, Say’s Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike, Pyrrhuloxia, and Lark Bunting. We will have lunch at a rest stop near Tornillo Reservoir under some towering cottonwoods.



Greater Yellowlegs
(Wikipedia-08)

Date: Sunday, August 30

Time: 7:30 a.m. BRING LUNCH

Meet at: Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso, 0.3 miles west of Americas Avenue.

Trip Coordinator: Ursula Sherrill, 526-7725; usherrill@miners.utep.edu.

September Field Trips



Vermillion Flycatcher (Wikipedia-09)

What: Finding Fall Migrants

When: 8:00 a.m., Saturday, Sept 12 BRING LUNCH

Where: We travel to Sunland Park race track, the sod farms, and out NM Hwy 9 to Pancho Villa State Park in Columbus, NM, an oasis for migrating birds.

Meet at: Keystone Heritage Park (4200 Doniphan Drive)

Trip Coordinator: Ursula Sherrill, 526-7725;

usherrill@miners.utep.edu.

Celebration of Our Mountains

What: Birds of the Keystone Heritage Park and Gardens

When: 7:30 — 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 26 and Oct. 24

Where: Keystone Heritage Park (4200 Doniphan Drive)

Leader: Ursula Sherrill, El Paso Audubon Society. Information: 526-7725;

usherrill@miners.utep.edu

Bring: Binoculars and a hat. We will have a few pairs of binoculars to loan.

Cost: Free

Summary: Since Keystone opened in 1997, over 200 species of migratory and local birds and 22 rare birds have been found in this 52-acre permanent wetland. Keystone attracts a variety of ducks and shorebirds, plus other birds that are passing through. Young and beginner birders are welcome. Keystone is also the setting for an archaeological site estimated to be 4,500 years old.

What: Day trip to Otero Mesa, NM

When: Sunday, Sept 27

More information: Please call Ursula Sherrill, 526-7725; usherrill@miners.utep.edu.



Otero Mesa, NM (S. West-09)



Sprague's Pipit (S. West-09)

October - Celebration of Our Mountains 2009

What: Hawk watch/bird migration observation

When: 11:00 a.m. — 2:00 p.m., **Saturday, Oct. 3**

Where: Meet at Wyler Aerial Tramway parking lot, 1700 McKinley Avenue

Leaders: John Kiseda, El Paso Zoo senior staff member, and Ursula Sherrill, El Paso Audubon Society field trip coordinator. Information: 526-7725; usherrill@miners.utep.edu

Bring: Binoculars, water, a wind-breaker & hat. Dress comfortably

Cost: \$7 tramway fee (\$4 for children 12 and under).

Summary: Ride the tramway to the mountaintop observation platform for an unforgettable nature experience: watch a variety of hawk species and some eagles in migratory flight to Mexico, and Central and South America. Late September and early October is the usual peak time in El Paso for these magnificent birds of prey to fly over the Franklin Mountains toward their wintering grounds. Volunteers from El Paso Audubon Society will be on hand to help participants identify the different species.



Cooper's Hawk



Red-Tailed Hawk

What: Franklin Mountains State Park Birding Tour

When: 7:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., **Saturday, Oct. 10**

Where: Entrance to Tom Mays Unit of FMSP, Trans-Mountain Rd

Leader: Ursula Sherrill, 526-7725, usherrill@miners.utep.edu

Summary: We will hike the Nature Walk, an easy trail 0.62 miles long, that features Chihuahuan Desert native plants growing along a broad arroyo. The thickets offer berries and seeds to fall migrant birds, including warblers, and the newly completed blind helps hikers observe birds without startling them.

Cost: \$4 for adults, and free to children 12 and under (with family).

No limitation on number of participants.

Wear hiking shoes and bring a light jacket and water.





TAXONOMIC NOTES

The 50th Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) *Check-list of North American Birds* will appear in the forthcoming July 2009 issue of the AOU's journal, *The Auk*. It summarizes decisions made in 2008 by the AOU's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature regarding changes in the *Check-list*. Two changes involve West Texas birds:

1. Finches that were moved in 1983 from the genus *Spinus* to the genus *Carduelis* (including Pine Siskin, Lesser Goldfinch, Lawrence's Goldfinch and American Goldfinch) are now back in the genus *Spinus*. The Pine Siskin, for example, is once again *Spinus pinus* rather than *Carduelis pinus*.
2. Birds in the genus *Piranga* (including Hepatic Tanager, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager and Western Tanager) are moved from the Thraupidae, the tanager family, to the Cardinalidae, the family that includes cardinals, grosbeaks and buntings. The question whether these birds should still be called tanagers is generating a fair amount of discussion. The Committee's thinking? "No changes in English names are implemented at this time."

ALBERTSONS, A GENEROUS BENEFACTOR



Lately I've been fielding questions about our fund raising partnership with the Albertsons grocery chain. It seems that other organizations have had to reapply, or reregister their members in order to continue to receive donations. I think that perhaps the rumors that change is in the wind have prompted some of our own members to stop presenting their cards upon checking out.

I would like to reassure all of you that our participation in the Community Partners program continues unchanged. Every time you shop at any Albertsons store, and present one of our Community Partnership id cards upon checkout, 1% of your transaction will be donated to our Audubon chapter for use in educational programs. That may not seem like much, but believe me it adds up quickly.

All of our partnership cards have the same registration number on them, 49001008196. If you have misplaced your card or would like some to pass out among your friends, please call Scott Cutler at 581-6071.



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*Please make all checks payable to the
National Audubon Society*

National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center
P.O. Box 51001
Boulder, Colorado 80322-1001
El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon

W10
Local Chapter Code
7XCHA

Dates to Remember Call Ursula Sherrill for details 526-7725

August

Sat 8: **Shorebirds**
Sat 8: **Rio Bosque**
Sat 22: **Dripping Springs**
No Board Meeting
No General Meeting
Sun 30: **Down the Valley**

September

5 & 12: **Rio Bosque**
Sat 12: **Fall Migrants**
Mon 14: **Board Meeting**
Mon 21: **Gen. Meeting**
Sat 26: **Feather Lake**
Sun 27: **Otero Mesa**

October

Sun 3: **Hawk Watch**
Sat 10: **Franklin Mts.**
Mon 12: **Board Meeting**
Mon 19: **Gen. Meeting**
Sat 24: **Keystone**

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.

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