

the ROADRUNNER



newsletter of
EL PASO-TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY
published at
4220 Wallington El Paso, Texas 79902

October, 1975 Vol. V. No. 8

Lucretia Chew, Editor

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Friday, October 17
7:30 p. m.
CAMERA CLUB
3105 Grant
Regular meeting of the Sun Country Camera Club at the El Paso Garden Center in Memorial Park. The program on nature photography will be presented by Audubon member Carl Jones. Interested Audubon members are invited to be present.
- Monday, October 20
7:30 p. m.
REGULAR MEETING
CENTENNIAL MUSEUM
Dr. Carleton Herbel, Jornada Range Management consultant at New Mexico State University, will speak on current range management practices and will show slides.
- Saturday, October 25
7 a. m.
FIELD TRIP
Trip with Dr. Herbel to visit the Jornada Range for study and birding. El Paso participants should meet at the Coronado Shopping Center parking lot. We will join others from New Mexico at the Howard Johnson's in Las Cruces at 8 a. m.
- Wednesday, October 29
7:30 p. m.
BOARD MEETING
5816 Vista Clara
Meeting of the officers, board members, and committee chairmen at the home of President Charlie Jensen.
- Saturday, November 1
FIELD TRIP
Sierra Club field trip to the Guadalupe Mountains. (See story inside for details.)
- Thursday, November 6
7 p. m.
PUBLIC HEARING
Public hearing at Howard Johnson's, 8887 Gateway West, to discuss development plans for Pine Springs Canyon, Guadalupe National Park. (Details in story inside.)
- Saturday, November 15
7:30 a. m.
FIELD TRIP
Trip to Lower Valley for birding along river and various ponds. Meet at Denny's on Gateway East near Bassett Shopping Center. Kevin Zimmer is leader.
- Monday, November 17
REGULAR MEETING
Environmental Engineer Jim Shoultz will be our speaker.
- November 19-22
T O S FALL MEETING
Fort Davis
Texas Ornithological Society Fall Meeting at Davis Mountains State Park, near Fort Davis. (Details inside newsletter.)

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings to discuss development plans for Pine Springs Canyon, Guadalupe National Park, will be held in Carlsbad, New Mexico, on Wednesday, November 5, and in El Paso on Thursday, November 6. (See page 1 for specifics.)

Six alternatives have been suggested, and a limited number of copies of these proposals are available at Chamizal National Memorial in El Paso and at Carlsbad Caverns.

Those wishing to make an oral statement at either hearing should inform the Superintendent, Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe National Parks, 3225 N. Parks Highway, Carlsbad, New Mexico, 88220, before November 5. Written statements will be accepted for 30 days following the hearings.

The Sierra Club will have an outing to Pine Springs Canyon on Saturday, November 1; anyone interested in seeing canyon on that day should contact Wesley Leonard, 584-7730.

INCORPORATION

The legal steps necessary to achieve non-profit incorporation status for El Paso-Trans Pecos Audubon chapter have now been completed. We are greatly indebted to Carl Jones and his wife Linda who did all of the necessary work on this much-needed project.

UPDATE WHOOPING CRANES

Southwestern birders may get to view young whooping cranes at Bosque del Apache Refuge this winter. Six of the nine whooping crane chicks which were hatched in sandhill crane nests at Grays Lake Idaho remain alive and are expected to fly with their foster parents to their regular wintering quarters at Bosque del Apache during October.

Many years remain between the hatching and the successful conclusion of the project, but thus far the signs are encouraging. from the NMOS BULLETIN

T O S FALL MEETING

The Texas Ornithological Society will hold its semi-annual Fall Meeting at Indian Lodge, Fort Davis State Park, on November 19-22. (Some of you may remember that our local Audubon chapter hosted the fall meeting here at Del Camino several years ago.)

Although it would be a fascinating experience, your editor is hesitant to encourage attendance because of the limited accommodations. Indian Lodge has been booked for several months, and although delightful camping is available in the park, it is on a first-come, first-served basis; no reservations are accepted. Those who are interested in attending might contact the Ed Whites or the Eddie Chews for additional details.

T O S BIRD RECORDS

Mrs. Clay Miller of Valentine, Texas, is now TOS reporter for bird sightings in our area. Documented unusual bird records should be sent to Mrs. Miller.

FEDERAL WATERFOWL LIMITS UP

In a last minute switch, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has sharply increased the bag limits for hunting waterfowl, allowing the taking of ten low-point ducks per day. National Audubon President Stahr has served notice on the federal government that Audubon intends to "proceed with legal action" to prevent future use of the point system for setting bag limits.

Stahr explained that Audubon was withholding action this fall because the federal regulations were announced at the eleventh hour. A law suit now, he said, just as hunting season is about to start, could cause "great inconvenience and confusion" for the state wildlife agencies bound by the federal regulations. from AUDUBON LEADER

DDT LEVELS DROPPING

An Environmental Protection Agency study reports that the levels of DDT in human and wildlife tissues have dropped significantly since 1972 when the long-lasting pesticide was banned for virtually all U. S. uses. However for some big predatory birds at the top of the food chain, residual DDT is still causing harm.

What is a pelagic trip?

It is setting the alarm for 3:30 a. m. to make an hour's run down the freeway in pre-dawn darkness to catch a fishing boat cum birding boat for a day to go thirty miles offshore to San Clemente Island.

It is hoping, along with one hundred or more other people, that these elusive sea birds, riding air currents at great heights, and filling an almost mystical niche in the vast ocean feeding grounds, will somehow come close to California's shore and let all those who want a glimpse of one of these elusive oceanic creatures have it.

It is taking a pill guaranteed to ward off seasickness. It is wishing the boat were just a little steadier underfoot -- a try at the bow where the leaders were scanning the sea, but the rise and fall of the ship would never do here; then a try at the dining salon, but no, the water level is almost eye-level through the double fixed glass windows and that motion, along with the scent of food, is bad. It is up to the deck and settling down with a chill wind blowing off a foggy sea, churning forward at a good clip in the grey mist for almost an hour beside my companions, Sue and Luis.

A tiny dark bird is slicing the wave tops a long ways out, but by its behavior and form, Luis announces a sooty shearwater. Pretty soon another shearwater but with pale breast and lighter wings, the pink-footed shearwater. These fluttering wraiths, so far away they're enveloped by a grey environment of water and fog, it is hard to accept that this is the way you're going to see them. We're seeing one or two birds or a few at a time at great distances. Some storm petrels flutter just above the water; the ones with white rumps, the Leach's petrel, the more common. The plainer one with dark body and a little more graceful flight is the black petrel. A xantus murrelet stops the boat and people rush from side to side to see this little bird calmly riding the waves, reminding one of an eared grebe. Close to the boat, we saw this one clearly.

The sky lifted as we neared San Clemente, and a small land bird was attracted by the light on the boat, flying in tired little leaps, but not daring to land. A second warbler, the yellow-breasted chat, came in close to the boat, and amid shouted encouragement, he made a landing and was immediately captured in a cap and shown around until released near the island. There was much conjecture as to why the land birds were appearing so far from shore.

We turn around at San Clemente, aided by a burst of shells from the Navy which was having target practice, and head back toward San Diego. With the change of direction came a pleasant change of wind and the sky cleared some. Chumming was started aft and these small silver fish soon attracted a hungry mob of gulls and a few terns. In came the jaegers -- this is the kind of birding you like. These great wanderers, some of whom have transequatorial migration, were not harassing the gulls as they customarily do, but rather grabbing their share of the chum. At one time we had all three jaegers, parasitic, pomarine and long-tailed, close enough to see the differentiating details. We also attracted the graceful arctic tern which migrates far off shore, but the bird that raised a shout was the red-billed tropic bird, long white tail streaming, followed by a second one, the first time this species had been seen in eight years on this pelagic trip.

Probably every pelagic trip is different, varying with the season and the weather. We enjoyed this one especially to be with our friends, the Santaellas, who extend cordial invitations to their birding El Paso friends to come see them at San Juan Capistrano, and to be able to see species out of range of the landlocked.

Guy McCaskie was the leader of our trip and Arnold Small was present with other very capable sea bird experts who shared their knowledge. I added ten sea birds to my life list, but feel like many more off-coastal trips are needed to be sure of my species, and maybe a long sea voyage to the South Pacific!

Geth White

RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

In the Organ Mountains on September 13, TOWNSEND'S and BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLERS, HEPATIC Tanager by Kevin and Barry Zimmer.

Two MERLINS, 2 BLACK-CHINNED SPARROWS, LAZULI BUNTING at Huecon Tanks on September 26 by the Zimmers and Jim Lane.

At Feather Lake during "Open House" on September 27, BLUE-WINGED, GREEN-WINGED and CINNAMON TEAL, WIGEON, PINTAIL, REDHEAD, RUDDY and MALLARD DUCKS, PIE-BILLED and EARED GREBE, GREAT BLUE HERON, KESTREL, ROADRUNNER, many YELLOWHEADED BLACKBIRDS.

On September 28, 29, 30 a BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER photographed in the Zimmer's yard in Mountain Park.

BELTED KINGFISHER in the Upper Valley on October 4 and 5 by the Eddie Chews.

On October 7 in the Upper Valley a GOLDEN EAGLE, BAIRD'S, WHITE-CROWNED and CHIPPING SPARROWS by Geth White, Sarah Jane Dodds, and a visitor from Memphis.

At Hueco Tanks on October 11 a PHAINOPEPLA by Barry Zimmer.

In the Franklins off Trans-Mountain Road on October 11, BLACK-CHINNED SPARROWS, RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRDS, CANYON, ROCK, CACTUS, and BEWICK'S WRENS, YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER on a field trip led by Kevin Zimmer.

At Hueco Tanks on October 12, 12 SCRUB JAYS, MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE, GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH by the Zimmers.

BLACK and SAY'S PHOEBES in the Upper Valley on October 13 by Geth White, Sarah Jane Dodds and visitor.

EL PASO-TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY
4220 Wallington
El Paso, TX 79902

FIRST CLASS