

the ROADRUNNER



newsletter of
EL PASO-TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Lucretia Chew, Editor

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, Wednesday, January 19, 7:30 p. m., El Paso Garden Center,
3105 Grant.

Dr. Dede Armentrout, who became Southwest Regional Representative for the National Audubon Society last summer, will be our guest for the regular January meeting. Dr. Armentrout is a biology professor living in Brownwood, Texas. She will present the program on the adaptation of herptiles to the desert environment.

In the six years that our local chapter has been an affiliate of National Audubon, we have never before had a regional representative come way out here in far West Texas to meet with us. Won't you please join us for the meeting on the 19th so we can show her how much we appreciate her interest in us.

FIELD TRIP, Bosque del Apache Refuge, New Mexico, Saturday, January 22, 5 a. m.

Here is the opportunity to see those four famous young whooping cranes which are wintering over in the Southwest, and of course also thousands of geese and ducks. The group will leave from the parking lot of the Royal Inn (Executive Center exit of the I-10 freeway) PROMPTLY at 5 a.m. Participants should provide their own lunches. The group plans to leave the refuge in mid-afternoon, but any who wish to remain later to watch the waterfowl fly in at sunset are welcome to do so. Those remaining later will need to make their own arrangements for supper and accommodations at nearby Socorro, New Mexico. Kevin Zimmer is field trip leader. More information available by calling him at 751-0552.

PRESIDENT JENSEN LEAVES EL PASO

It is with much regret that we announce the recent and sudden move of President Charlie Jensen to Houston to accept a new position with IBM. Charlie goes to a challenging new assignment for which his background and experience make him especially well qualified. Our congratulations and best wishes go with him.

Charlie has been invaluable in his services to our local chapter for the past several years, including positions as board member and vice-president and a two-year term as president. He has devoted countless hours to Audubon affairs and recently to the Feather Lake project in particular. Our special thanks go to wife Marcie and daughter Katy Beth for their fine hospitality during so many parties and board meetings. He and his family will be much missed.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CORNER

Since Charlie isn't here to do so, I'm going to take matters into my own hands and review a few highs and lows of 1976.

FIRST THE BAD NEWS. Attendance at meetings and field trips dropped to the lowest point ever. Although we had some fine programs and some exciting field trips, the people just weren't there; speakers directed their remarks to empty chairs, and several field trips had no participants at all. Whatever special magic was needed to get folks out, we didn't have it.

And we went the entire summer without any organized activity, not even a picnic!

Our president Charlie Jensen and two board members, Eddie Chew and Bill Hunt, left El Paso due to job transfers. Miss Mary Belle Keefer, who had been a driving force behind birding in El Paso in earlier years, passed away in April.

THEN THE GOOD NEWS. What we lack at meetings, we make up for in bird counts. Over 20 participants in each count: May Big Day--125 species, Fall Migration--127 species, two recent Christmas counts--104 and 63 species.

We had excellent out-of-town field trips to Cave Creek, Arizona, and Bosque del Apache, New Mexico, and a delightful Saturday in the Tornillo area with emphasis on raptors.

The very rare masked duck entertained us at the Sewage Ponds, and we began the year with a marvelous first-hand report on the new whooping cranes given by Dr. Drewien.

And the energies expended at Feather Lake have paid off. The birds are still there, the habitat has been increased, the caretakers are in residence, and the sanctuary is open to the public a good portion of each week. It's a long way from our ultimate goal, perhaps, but definitely a giant step in the right direction.

WHICH BRINGS US TO SOME MUCH-DESERVED THANKS. First to Charlie Jensen for his untold hours in every possible area.

To Kevin Zimmer for help in programs, field trips, bird listing contest, and as editor of the birding column in the El Paso Times.

To the Barnharts who arrived with the refreshments at every single meeting for the past several years.

To Carl Jones, Joe Guinn, Ed Gilboe, Steve Chew, Joe DiPasquale, the Ed Whites, Jeanette Cole, and unnamed others for their dedication to Feather Lake.

To Helen Ponder for another lovely local society scrapbook.

To the officers and board members for their time and service this past year.

And last but not least, to all of those faithful members and friends who attended meetings and field trips and bird counts and helped behind the scenes in a variety of ways.

Thank you, one and all!

AND THE BEST NEWS (at least for your editor). Kevin Zimmer, glutton for punishment that he is, has agreed to become ROADRUNNER editor effective in February. Having served for the past two years and at odd moments prior to that, I think it will be kind of nice to let someone else be the resident journalist for a while. And besides, I have ulterior motives; if Kevin is kept busy enough with the newsletter, just maybe I can see more birds than he does (but I doubt it)!

In the future, information may be phoned to Kevin at 751-0552, and the ROADRUNNER address will be 8911 Galena, El Paso, TX 79904.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS--NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

The annual election of officers and board members of the local chapter will take place at the January meeting. The nominating committee composed of Geth White, Chairman, Berttye Barnhart, and Margaret McDaniel, submits the following report.

Vice-president/President-elect: Joe Guinn
Secretary-Treasurer: Dorothy Williams
Board Members: Berttye Barnhart
Helen Barto
Bob Bleicher
El Gilboe
Linda Jones
Kevin Zimmer

EDITOR'S NOTE: Some explanation of this year's rather complice officer situation seems in order. With the departure of President Charlie Jensen, the presidency has already been assumed by the Vice-president/President-elect Lucretia Chew, who was elected to a combined three-year term in January, 1976. However, Lucretia knows that she will not be able to serve a full term since she is leaving on approximately June 1 to join her husband who is already at work in Idaho Falls, Idaho. For this reason the local society will be electing a vice-president/president-elect who will step into the presidency in June. Prior to that time the board will have the make the necessary arrangements for a vice-president to serve the remainder of 1977. (f you've got all that straight, then you're in great shape!)

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

There is one absolute regarding Christmas counts: there is absolutely no way to predict what will happen on them--not the weather and definitely not the birds nor the birders. Although the El Paso count with 104 species reached its high this year, one party was badly hampered by fog which finally lifted at Ascarate Park but which entirely prevented identification of duck at the Phelps-Dodge cooling ponds. Who ever would have believed FOG in El Paso? The count continues on a slow upward trend from the 69 species in 1967, 88 in 1970, 99 in 1974, and 101 last year.

Seen this year at Ascarate Park was an olivaceous cormorant, the first ever on an El Paso Christmas count. Other rare species were the merlin, Eastern bluebird, and field sparrow; other unusual species, black-crowned night heron, Ross goose, Baird's sandpiper, barn owl, long-eared owl, and red-breasted nuthatch. The hummingbirds observed at city feeders are always a thrill, but especially so this year after a November with 13 inches of snow and a low temperature of one degree. Six additional species were sighted during the count week: great blue heron, Canada geese, ruddy duck, cedar waxwing, yellow-headed blackbird, cardinal, and white-throated sparrow.

The Hueco Tanks--Horizon Lake count was disappointing in terms of total species; only 63 this year after totals of 67 last year and 75 in 1975. This drop can be attributed almost entirely to the absence of waterfowl; only 6 species were sighted, while 13 species were seen in 1976, and 19 in 1975.

Four species on this count should receive special note: turkey vulture which is unusual in winter, the abundance of long-eared owls in such a small desert habitat, the unusual white-throated sparrow, and the rare field sparrow.

For the second straight year the observers were observed and detained by our faithful Border Patrol. Last year we couldn't find the wintering sparrows; this year it was the waterbirds, and I guess that's what makes Christmas counts interesting--the surprise of it all or maybe it's the good food served at the after parties. This year our special host/hostess thanks go to the Charlie Jensens and the Bob Bleichers.

EL PASO CHRISTMAS COUNT

December 19, 1976

Eared Grebe	3	Rufous Hummingbird	2
Pied-billed Grebe	7	Belted Kingfisher	6
Olivaceous Cormorant	1	Common Flicker	30
Green Heron	1	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	2
Black-crowned Night Heron	4	Say's Phoebe	3
Snow Goose	18	Black Phoebe	1
Ross Goose	1	Horned Lark	50
Mallard	29	Verdin	6
Gadwall	56	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Pintail	61	Bewick's Wren	3
Green-winged Teal	114	Cactus Wren	17
Blue-winged Teal	1	Long-billed Marsh Wren	2
Cinnamon Teal	35	Canyon Wren	4
Wigeon	527	Rock Wren	48
Shoveler	344	Mockingbird	15
Redhead	3	Curve-billed Thrasher	7
Ring-necked Duck	8	Crissal Thrasher	3
Canvasback	15	Sage Thrasher	1
Lesser Scaup	6	Robin	112
Common Goldeneye	2	Eastern Bluebird	24
Bufflehead	10	Western Bluebird	17
Common Merganser	1	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	23
Cooper's Hawk	4	Water Pipit	60
Red-tailed Hawk	14	Loggerhead Shrike	33
Rough-legged Hawk	1	Starling	194
Golden Eagle	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	10
Marsh Hawk	4	House Sparrow	1447
Merlin	1	Meadowlark Species	48
American Kestrel	38	Red-winged Blackbird	72
Scaled Quail	42	Brewer's Blackbird	936
Gambel's Quail	47	Great-tailed Grackle	283
Common Gallinule	7	Common Grackle	20
American Coot	64	Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Killdeer	19	Pyrrhuloxia	16
Common Snipe	5	Cassin's Finch	4
Spotted Sandpiper	2	House Finch	1563
Baird's Sandpiper	103	Lesser Goldfinch	14
Lesser Yellowlegs	8	Green-tailed Towhee	3
Least Sandpiper	80	Rufous-sided Towhee	7
Western Sandpiper	10	Black-throated Sparrow	224
Ring-billed Gull	8	Black-crowned Sparrow	24
Rock Dove	143	Dark-eyed Junco	63
White-winged Dove	5	Gray-headed Junco	13
Mourning Dove	126	Chipping Sparrow	13
Inca Dove	12	Brewer's Sparrow	7
Roadrunner	6	Black-chinned Sparrow	4
Long-eared Owl	1	White-crowned Sparrow	278
Barn Owl	1	Song Sparrow	15
White-throated Swift	120	Field Sparrow	1
Black-chinned Hummingbird	5		
Anna's Hummingbird	1		

TOTAL SPECIES: 104

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS: 7838

HUECO TANKS COUNT
January 2, 1977

Eared Grebe	1	Crissal Thrasher	12
Canvasback	2	Sage Thrasher	17
Common Goldeneye	3	Western Bluebird	12
Bufflehead	12	Mountain Bluebird	32
Common Merganser	12	Water Pipit	1
Turkey Vulture	2	Loggerhead Shrike	34
Cooper's Hawk	1	Starling	35
Red-tailed Hawk	11	House Sparrow	53
Rough-legged Hawk	1	Meadowlark Species	28
Marsh Hawk	12	Red-winged Blackbird	54
American Kestrel	4	Brewer's Blackbird	16
Scaled Quail	41	Great-tailed Grackle	75
American Coot	25	Pyrrhuloxia	140
Killdeer	3	House Finch	644
Ring-billed Gull	8	Lesser Goldfinch	2
Rock Dove	11	Green-tailed Towhee	6
Mourning Dove	7	Brown Towhee	28
Roadrunner	1	Savannah Sparrow	5
Long-eared Owl	6	Vesper Sparrow	4
Common Flicker	9	Rufous-crowned Sparrow	12
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	1	Black-throated Sparrow	82
Say's Phoebe	7	Sage Sparrow	13
Horned Lark	278	Dark-eyed Junco	893
White-necked Raven	2	Gray-headed Junco	79
Verdin	6	Chipping Sparrow	102
Bewick's Wren	3	Brewer's Sparrow	2
Cactus Wren	26	Black-chinned Sparrow	1
Canyon Wren	4	White-crowned Sparrow	360
Rock Wren	6	White-throated Sparrow	2
Mockingbird	1	Song Sparrow	3
Curve-billed Thrasher	3	Field Sparrow	2

TOTAL SPECIES: 63

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS: 3018

CHRISTMAS COUNT PARTICIPANTS. El Paso Count: Ruby Allen, compiler; Bertha and Berttye Barnhart, Bob Bleicher, Jack Carpenter, Lucretia and Steve Chew, Sarah Jane Dodds, Al and Chris Gavit, Ed Gilboe, Joe Guinn, Carl Hoffmann, Charles Jensen, Joseph DiPasquale, Ricky Salcedo, Ed and Geth White, Leon Wiard, Scott Wilson, Barry and Kevin Zimmer.

Hueco Tanks Count: Ruby Allen, Bob and Beverly Atwell, Bertha and Berttye Barnhart, Bob Bleicher, Claudia Davis, Joe DiPasquale, Bob Dukes, Bob Dukes, Jr., Al, Chris, and Madeline Gavit, Ed and Elsa Gilboe, Martha Gooden, Joe Guinn, Lucille Swick, Sandra Tatus, Barry and Kevin Zimmer, compiler.

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FIRST CLASS