

The Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

Volume 33 Issue 1

February & March, 2004

New Meeting Location

New Meeting Site for Audubon Society
UTEP Centennial Museum

After meeting at the Garden Center for many years, our chapter has found a new meeting place due to the Garden Center closing its doors.
Parking is available in the lot at Sun Bowl & University Ave

Awards Dinner

cost: \$16

Your choice of brisket, chicken, or fish.

Includes tea, coffee, ice cream and gratuity.



Please make check out to:

El Paso Audubon Society
mail to:

Nancy Wilson
87 Statesburg St.
Canutillo, TX 79835

Please make payment by February 12th or call Nancy at 747-8604 to place your reservation.

Awards Dinner

Saturday, February 21, 2004 6:00pm

Great American Steakhouse Westside, 701 S. Mesa Hills

All are encouraged to attend the upcoming February Awards Banquet, especially since this is the time of year where we take stock of past efforts and past accomplishments, while continuing to look towards the future. It should be a very nice and interesting evening.

Kathy Whelen will be receiving the chapter's Meritorious Service Award, in recognition of her success at helping the chapter with it's newsletter, it's fact sheet pamphlet and a number of its educational endeavors over the years.

The City of El Paso's Street Department will be recognized for its commitment to partnering with other community entities to aid in the management of natural areas. This City of El Paso department has been very helpful in work done at Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, among other sites, and will receive the chapter's Conservation Award.

Rick LoBello, the El Paso Zoo's Education Curator, will be the guest speaker for the banquet, and he will discuss the dream [and ongoing activities] to create a great international park on the border of the US and Mexico in the Big Bend region of Texas and the northern frontier of Coahuila and Chihuahua.

An International Peace Park between the U.S. and Mexico in the Big Bend area of Texas, Chihuahua and Coahuila was first proposed in 1935, but the project was interrupted by the onset of World War II. Fifty years after the creation of Big Bend National Park in Texas in 1944, the government of Mexico designated the Maderas del Carmen Protected Area in Coahuila and the Canon de Santa Elena Protected Area in Chihuahua in 1994.

In 1997 both governments signed a Letter of Intent calling for increased cooperation between all the protected areas and on both sides of the Rio Grande. Legislation is needed now to combine all three areas into an International Peace Park while respecting each country's sovereignty and management authority. The dream was rekindled and brought back into the public spotlight when in 1997 Rotarians from Mexico and the US agreed to work towards the project's completion, and their efforts have resulted in the endorsement of a number of non-profit conservation groups and government officials from both countries.

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Keep them in your thoughts...

We've had a number of members recently experience some medical problems, Bob Johnson, Lois Balin. Another passed away, Jeanette Cole. Please keep them in your thoughts & prayers.

7th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

It's once again time to participate in the annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), & this year's event will take place from Feb 13-16, 2004.

This project was developed and is managed by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Whether you watch for birds for a few minutes or a few hours, your data will help to determine the status of birds throughout the continent. The project also teaches participants how to turn their backyards into good habitat for wild-life.

Your data can be submitted on-line at www.birdsource.org.

Last winter's event yielded 50,000 checklists from participants across North America, yielding an observation list of 512 species of birds!

Some interesting finds from last year's counts.....

- American Crow numbers were in decline, perhaps due to West Nile Virus
- Dark-eyed Junco numbers showed an increase, perhaps being "driven" to birdfeeders by the massive eastern seaboard snowstorms.
- Mountain Bluebirds were reported further south in the western US, compared to the previous year's count.
- the Eurasian Collared-Dove population's northwestward movement appears to have slowed down.

The GBBC will also highlight the newly expanded "Audubon at Home" website, where people can learn about the best ways to improve the health and diversity of their backyards.

Christmas Bird Counts

The Hueco Tanks CBC count, coordinated by Bob Johnson, saw a respectable number of species at 55, but the numbers of individuals seen was quite low at 1127. Lower overall numbers might in part be an artifact of the number of counters involved in this year's CBC (8).

The El Paso CBC count, coordinated by Jim Zabriskie, saw a new "high species" count reached at 123, but the numbers of individuals seen was quite low at 11,889. Huge flocks of blackbirds going to roost, were not observed this year, as has been typical of years past. In general, the number of seedeaters seen during the counts, were particularly low. This could in part be due to the ongoing drought.

General Meeting Monday, March 15, 2004 7:30pm
 UTEP Centennial Museum
 Rink Summerday
 Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, Las Cruces

Be Bear Aware

This may be the desert but there are bears in them there hills! Are all black bears black? What do bears eat? What to do if you see a bear? Learn these and other answers to those nagging bear questions.

Explore criteria for bear habitat, eating habits, life span and pregnancy. Included will be safety tips in the event that you encounter a bear (while birdwatching).

Chapter Web Site

<http://www.gbarnett.com/eptpas/eptpashome.html>

El Paso Audubon Online features updated graphics and information for chapter members and visitors to El Paso. El Paso Audubon Online supplements the Roadrunner and includes information about upcoming field trips, a calendar of upcoming events, recent bird sightings and an updated list of birding links to the Internet.

Make bird sighting reports at

EIPasoBirdAlert@gbarnett.com

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

Officers

President	vacant	
Vice President	John Kiseda	533-4615
Secretary	Roxanne Schroeder	533-0061
Treasurer	Peter Dunavant	584-5351

Directors

John Sproul	747-8663	Jane Fowler	598-2448
Bob Johnson	757-1876	Lois Balin	774-9603
Paul Hyder	751-2408	Kathleen Whelen	751-2408
Nancy Wilson	747-8604		



The Roadrunner is published six times a year.
 Contributions are welcome.

Please email to whelenk@aol.com or mail
 6120 Quail Ave. El Paso, Texas 79924 (915) 751-2408

AT FEATHER LAKE

Feather Lake continues to be dry, so we have had it closed since December. The only benefit of this prolonged dry period is that the basin is now firm enough to support heavy equipment, and the City of El Paso's Streets Department has begun clearing some of the cattails that cover 75% of the basin.

Many thanks to Jane Fowler, Bob Johnson, Marty Morrow, Roxanne Schroeder, John Sproul and Bob White, the participants in our bimonthly workdays at Feather Lake in 2003. Our next workday is Sat., March 27, starting at 2 p.m. Will we have water? Will there be fewer cattails? Join us to find out.

Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave.

Keystone Heritage Park

If you go birding at this site, please contact me and let me know what birds you saw during your trips. I am still attempting to "add to" the bird checklist that has been compiled for the site & there are still a few "gaps" in the list, especially of some relatively common species. For example, I have not yet been able to document that anyone has seen a goldfinch or a junco at Keystone Marsh & I would think that some of these birds should have been observed using this site, at some point in time. I have received information from only a very few people and am still in need of whatever information you may have! Please send me information that you have regarding bird species seen, the dates of the observations, the numbers of individuals of observed, etc.

Also, if anyone is also interested in coming out to the site when I do my weekly check, you're more than welcome to join me. Just call me during the week to verify my schedule & when /where we should meet.

It will soon also be time to get the pitfall array traps (we conduct live animal trapping and then release the animals after we note what we have found) ready for this year's reptile, amphibian & invertebrate trapping endeavors. So if you would like to gain some hands-on experience with some of our less well known types of wildlife, contact John Kiseda at 521-1850, days.

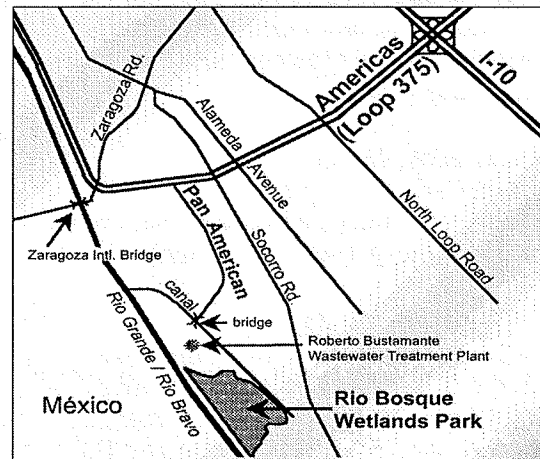
RIO BOSQUE WETLANDS PARK

UTEP offers free walking tours twice each month and also holds monthly community workdays at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park in El Paso's Mission Valley. Coming up:

- 9 a.m. Sat., Feb 14 (Birds)
- 9 a.m. Sat., Feb 21 (Workday)
- 3 p.m. Sun., Feb 22 (Introductory)
- 3 p.m. Sun., Mar 7 (Birds)
- 9 a.m. Sat., Mar 20 (Workday)
- 9 a.m. Sat., Mar 27 (Introductory)



For all of the tours and workdays, the meeting place is a bridge crossing Riverside Canal. To get there from I-10, take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Dr., turn left onto Pan American and travel 1.5 miles to the bridge. Please be prompt. Information: 747-8663.



Birdathon 2004

As the winter season continues to move inexorably towards Spring, my thoughts begin to dwell on the next Birdathon extravaganza, which is unbelievably just around the corner.

Please help us to prepare, plan and conduct our chapter's next Birdathon! Anyone and everyone that wants to help us to once again make this a successful event, is more than welcome; we are especially in need of someone who has some experience in coordinating fundraising opportunities/partnerships with local businesses. Contact John Kiseda, 533-4615, to offer your help with Birdathon, our primary fundraising event of the year.

On the Trail

Seventh Annual Backyard Bird Count

We are not conducting this as a field trip with a leader but we are encouraging members to find out about it and participate. Call any board member for more details.

The following field trips will be held jointly with the class from **UTEP Center for Lifelong Learning** that the chapter is presenting. The classes at UTEP will be held on Thursdays from 3:15-4:15 on March 4, 11, 25 and April 1, 8, 15. For info. on the classes, call **747-6280**.

Zoo/Keystone

The first stop will be at the America's Aviary, located in the El Paso Zoo. This will allow close up looks that will help in understanding identification features. Then go on to Keystone Marsh to get close views of the birds located there, Ring-billed Gulls, Mallards, Pied-billed Grebes, Common Moorhens, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs and Least Sandpiper.

Date: Saturday, March 6
Time: 8:04 am (Please be on time).
Place: El Paso Zoo 4001 E. Paisano

Backyard Birds

A stop in a member's backyard to learn something about the birds, feeder and feeding. Phaioppepla, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and House Finch.

Date: Saturday, March 13
Time: 7:27 am
Place: Mary Lou Alcorn's Wildbird Sanctuary
4331 Emory, (near Doniphan)

Mountain Birds

Tom May's Unit of Franklin Mountain Wilderness Park. We should get a number of higher elevation birds not found in the open desert. White-throated Swift, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Canyon and Bewick's Wren, Spotted Towhee, and Rufus-crowned Sparrow.

Date: Sunday, March 28
Time: 7:07 am
Place: Tom Mays entrance on west side of TransMountain Rd.

Water and Wading Birds

A trip down the valley to McNary, Ft. Hancock and Tornillo Reservoirs. Herons, Egrets, White-faced Ibis, Gadwalls, Green-winged Teal, & Northern Shoveler.

Date: Sunday, April 4

Time: 7:24 am
Place: Feather Lake WS at 9500 North Loop

Desert Birds/Birds of Prey

A chance to see some of the birds that inhabit the desert scrub, Cactus Wren, Pyrrhuloxia, Scaled Quail, and Curved-billed Thrasher. Then out along Hawk Alley for Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Swaison's Hawk, American Kestrel and Turkey Vulture. If time permits, it will be on to the Ft. Bliss Ponds.

Date: Saturday, April 10
Time: 7:47 am
Place: Wilderness Park Museum 4301 TransMT Rd

Birds of Hueco Tanks

The class will tour the rocks and desert scrub of HTSHS for the birds that inhabit the area. Gambel's Quail, Black-throated Sparrow, Verdin, Rock Wren, Canyon Towhee, Say's Phoebe and many more.

Date: Sunday, April 18
Time: 8:08 am
Place: Hueco Tanks SHS, 20 miles east of the airport on US62/180, take FM 2775 north.

Class instructors & field trip coordinators not assigned at this time. Will most likely include Lois Balin, John Kiseda, John Sproul, and Bob Johnson.

Friends of Hueco Tanks

Admission: Hueco Tanks State Historical Site - \$4 adults, \$2 seniors 65 and over. Children under 12 free.

Bird Identification Tours

Sunday, February 15
Sunday, March 21
Sunday, April 18

Check in at Headquarters. Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson

Planning Ahead

Birdathon: Sat & Sun, May 1 & 2

Texas Ornithological Society Spring Conference in Guadalupe National Park: May 6-8

Bird ID Tour Hueco Tanks Sunday, May 16

Memorial Day Weekend, May 27-31 Tucson area

Observations

Bird sightings are not included in this publication due to illness of the observation editor. A good place to check out might be on the westside, Cherry Hill up to Broadmore. Three Acorn Woodpeckers and two Lewis Woodpeckers have been seen regularly from mid December.

Wyer Tramway Law Kwalah

John Kiseda plans to continue with his bird migration observations at the Ranger Peak tramway platform, which will resume towards the end of February.

Come enjoy the spectacular view & hopefully sight more than a few interesting birds, mammals and other types of wild. John hopes to expand the observation hour totals of the past, with a goal of at least 100 platform hours, but he will certainly need help to accomplish this. Don't be bashful, if you are unsure of your skills, because training sessions do take place, in the field, at the tramway, and in the classroom (besides the best training of all, which is actually conducting observations). Please contact John at the zoo, at 521-1850 during the day, or at night at 533-4615.

Bienvenidos & Welcome, from John Kiseda!

I hope that you have all had a healthy and happy holiday season and that you are all now energized, reinvigorated and ready to aid YOUR chapter in some of the upcoming year's major endeavors.

As usual, we will need your "smarts", good work ethic and enthusiasm to help us accomplish some of our most worthwhile tasks of the coming year. Here are a few examples of some projects where YOUR participation can really make a difference and help make 2004 one of the best in the chapter's history...

We want to do more to involve kids in the outdoors and help them gain a greater understanding, appreciation and empathy for our natural world and the wildlife that is part of it. If YOU can help coordinate this project with other organizations and develop some wildlife conservation programming for some of our local children, it should prove very gratifying and help set these youngsters on the road to a life more in tune with nature that will be filled with fun, wonder & excitement.

-we will need someone to take the lead for the annual International Migratory Bird Day event at the zoo, if it is going to take place this year. If YOU don't do this, it may no longer get done.

-we will need help in translating English documents into Spanish, etc. and in developing our El Paso Site Guide. By using YOUR linguistic and possibly graphic arts skills, you may help to make our organization a more welcoming and inviting group to those that don't yet know us well enough to have become part of our "Audubon Community".

Please call me, if you wish to discuss any of the items mentioned above, and I thank you for your consideration of helping us, help our community.

Conservation Organizations

Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
www.whc.net/cdwr

El Paso Zoo 521-1850
www.elpasozoo.org

Keystone Heritage Park 581-7920
Keystonepark.com keystonepark.org

Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park
www.cdn.org (505) 524-3334

Friends of Rio Bosque 747-8663
www.cerm.utep.edu/riobosque

Friends of Hueco Tanks 857-1135

Southwest Environmental Center
Severn.swec@zianet.com

Franklin Mt. Wilderness Coalition
www.iloveparks.com/fmwc/



El Paso Native Plant Society

"EL PASO'S DESERT GARDEN"

THE CENTENNIAL MUSEUM of UTEP CAMPUS
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH AT 7:00 PM

In a colorful electronic slide show biologist Gertrud D. Konings presents our city as a marvel of the desert. Join us for a fascinating virtual hike through the mountains and valleys of our city and admire their colorful flowering cacti and other desert dwellers

AFTER OUR PROGRAM,

Wynn Anderson will conduct "Plant Clinic Services" So, bring a photo or a secure plastic bag containing your plant or problem samples, prepare your questions, and get ready to find the answers that your garden has been looking for.

Coming: Caracara Program in Las Cruces

The Mesilla Valley Audubon Society will have a presentation to include live Caracaras. Caracaras are a very unique type of raptor (take a look at your field guide, if you have never seen one in the wild, a zoo or the TV), a few of which are found in the wild Southwest in AZ. The meeting will probably take place on March 17. Contact Mesilla Valley Audubon to verify, 505-524-7029 or <http://www.lascruces.com/~mvas/> prior to making the trip. Exact information, was unavailable by our publishing deadline.

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society programs and meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, September through April, at the Village at Northrise, Hallmark Building, 2882 N. Roadrunner Parkway, Las Cruces. Programs begin at 7:30 pm. News, announcements and information begins at 7:00 pm, preceding the program.

El Paso/Trans-Pecos
 Audubon Society
 P.O. Box 972441
 El Paso, Texas 79997

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National Audubon Society
 Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join.
 Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.
 My check for \$20.00 is enclosed

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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 Bob Johnson for details 757-1876

<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>
Board Meeting Monday, 9	Zoo/ Keystone Saturday, 6	Water Birds Sunday, 4
Awards Dinner Saturday, 21st	Board Meeting Monday, 8	Birds of Prey Saturday, 10
Rio Bosque Wetland Park Sunday 14, 21, 22	Backyard Birds Saturday, 13	Board Meeting Monday, 12
Hueco Tanks Sunday, 15	Rio Bosque Wetland Park Sunday 7, Saturdays 20, 27	Hueco Tanks Sunday, 18
	Hueco Tanks Sunday, 21	General Meeting Monday, 19
	Mountain Birds Sunday, 28	Keystone Saturday, 31st

Birdathon May 1 & 2