

The Roadrunner



Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society

Volume 31 No. 1 February & March, 2001

General Meetings

ANNUAL MEETING/AWARDS DINNER

Annual Awards Dinner: Saturday, February 17, 2001. 6:30 PM.

El Convento at Loretto Academy, 1400 Hardware.

A Gourmet dinner consisting of dinner salad, roast beef, scalloped potatoes and Chef's choice of vegetable, bread, coffee and tea, Bundt Cake with Kahlua sauce, cost \$15.00. A vegetarian plate with a separately prepared entree is \$16.00.

Philip Goodell will be the recipient of the chapter award and Dr. Richard Worthington will be the guest speaker.

Reservations must be made by sending a check, payable to El Paso Audubon Society, to Jane Fowler, ~~69110~~³²¹² Kilkenny, El Paso, TX 79925, no later than February 9, 2001.

Flora of the New Mexico Portion of the Guadalupe Mountains

The New Mexico portion of the Guadalupe Mountains is to this day still imperfectly known for its flora. Vernon Bailey, well known to ornithologists, was the first biologist to collect plants in the New Mexico Guadalupe (1901 and 1902 trips). Some of his plants became new types of species. Later visitors such as Wootton, Stanley, Hitchcock, Hershey, Castetter, and others added to a growing knowledge of an interesting flora. Only the Carlsbad Caverns area has been worked hard by collectors, but the data on those collections have not been adequately compiled because most have been "lost" among millions of sheets at institutions such as the Smithsonian and the Missouri Botanical Garden. Recent intensive survey efforts over the last three years have enumerated almost 800 vascular plant taxa which include range extensions and new state records. With elevations ranging from 4000-7000 ft., unusual substrate types of gypsum and sandstone and remote riparian communities as yet unsurveyed, more discoveries will be made.

This year's recipient of our Conservation Award is Dr. Philip Goodell of UTEP's Department of Geological Sciences. In 1994, Dr. Goodell conceived the idea of a weekend extravaganza of field trips, lectures, open houses and other events, all focused on the rich natural and cultural history of our region's mountains. The Celebration of Our Mountains has grown steadily ever since. Today, it is firmly established as a major fall event in the Paso del Norte region and plays a crucial role in increasing public awareness and appreciation for the Franklins, Organs, Sierra de Juarez and other local mountains. It has thrived entirely due to the enthusiasm, energy and organizational efforts of Phil Goodell.

Monday, March 19, 2001
Texas Parks & Wildlife
Biologist, Lois Balin
see next page

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From the Presidents' Arc

This will be my last column, as Betty Fisbeck takes over the presidency this month at the annual dinner, come on out and enjoy the company and the good food. I want to thank the membership for all they have done the last two years. Keep up the good work and help Betty as she moves forward improving the chapter.

A great bargain! We have The National Audubon Society book, *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. We have it at our sales counter at each meeting at about 30% off (\$27 - tax included). Also a special on our T-Shirts (\$3).

We Desperatly need some more people to help with groups coming to Feather Lake during the week. Its an easy task, usually about 3 hours, and we will pair you up the first couple times with one of our 5 (yes folks thats all we have) current guides. PLEASE call Mary Lou Alcorn (584-8768) and say that you will help.

Our chapter will be teaching a class at UTEP's Center for Lifelong Learning on Finding and Identifying Birds in the El Paso area. If you are over 50, join the center and enjoy the classes. They start Wednesday February 21 at 1:30 PM and continue for 6 weeks.

Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson President

Highlights of observations from Sep. 16 to Nov. 15

Common Loon, Barry Zimmer-McNary: *Surf Scoter*, Ross Rasmussen-Fort Bliss Ponds: *Yellow-Crowned Night Heron*, BZ-McN: *White-tailed Kite*, Susie Jenson/BZ-Canutillo: *Sabine's Gull*, Jim Paton-Tornillo: *Band-tailed Pigeon*, Mary Homsley-Rim Rd. area: *Flamulated Owl*, eight(8) turned into CDWR: *Saw Whet Owl*, Jeff Groff-Sunrise area: *Vaux Swift*, JP/RR-FBP: *Red-headed Woodpecker*, JP/RR-FBP: *Lewis' Woodpecker*, John Kiseda-Coronado CC: *Williamson's Sapsucker*, BZ-FBP: *Clark's Nutcracker*, Jimmy Zabriskie-Canutillo: *Juniper Titmouse*, JZ-Arroyo Park: *Philadelphia Vireo*, JZ-Can: *Black-throated Green Warbler*, Sallie Homan-Love Rd: *Baltimore Oriole*, RR-FBP: The following species have been seen by numerous observers in many parts of the city. *Mountain Chickadee*, *Cassin's Finch* and *Red Crossbill*.

Monday, March 19, 2001
Memorial Park Garden Center
3105 Grant Street 7:30pm

Lois Balin is currently the El Paso Urban Wildlife Biologist and is developing the first Urban Wildlife Program in El Paso. She obtained her Bachelors of Science degree in Wildlife Program in El Paso. She obtained from the University of Arizona in 1993 and a Master of Science from Texas A&M- Kingsville in 1996. Her graduate thesis was entitled "Habitat Use of Neotropical Migratory Birds in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas." Since graduate school, Lois has branded birds for the Rocky Mountain Forest Experimental Station at Bosque del Apache, conducted bird surveys and bird banding on the "Birds of Special Concern Project" for White Sands Missile Range and conducted research on the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher on the Salt River in Central Arizona.

This program covers the hummingbirds of Texas. Emphasis will be placed on hummingbirds of the Trans-Pecos region. First she will highlight the the geographic distribution, winter and breeding ranges, migration strategies, habitat preferences, behaviors, and include some aspects of hummingbird biology. Learn how hummingbirds fly and the difference between pigmented and iridescent stucturally-colored feathers. Then she will provide some good hummingbird identification tips that include looking at the relative size, bill and tail shapes, and color, and listening to hummingbird sounds. Finally, Lois will give us some tips on gardening for hummingbirds and care of hummingbird feeders. She will present information on providing the essential habitat components for hummingbirds and discuss the essentials of native plants, water, and cover.

RIO BOSQUE WETLANDS PARK

UTEP's Center for Environmental Resource Management 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:

- * 3 p.m. Sun., Feb. 4 (Introduction to Rio Bosque)
- * 9 a.m. Sat., Feb. 10 (Rio Bosque Birds)
- * 9 a.m. Sat., Feb. 17 (Workday)
- * 3 p.m. Sun., Mar. 4 (Birds)
- * 9 a.m. Sat., Mar 10 (Introduction)
- * 9 A.M. Sat., Mar. 17 (Workday)

For all of these activities, 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. Info: (915) 747-8663.

COS MEETS IN ALBUQUERQUE, APRIL 18-21

The Cooper Ornithological Society will hold its 2001 annual meeting in Albuquerque April 18-21. Two items of special interest will take place Sat., April 21:

- * a workshop on Techniques for Preserving Avian Specimens, led by Scott Cutler of the UTEP Centennial Museum; and
- * a symposium on Conservation of Borderland Birds, chaired by Carol Beardmore, Western Regional Coordinator for Partners in Flight.

For more information and online registration:
<http://www.cooper.org/2001mtg/cos.html>

El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society

Board of Directors:

President	Bob Johnson	757-1876
V-President	John Kiseda	533-4615
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Hospitality	volunteer needed	
Membership	Jane Fowler	598-2448
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Publications	Kathleen Whelen	751-2408
Publicity	Roxanne Schroeder	534-7019
Sanctuary	John Sproul	545-5157

About the Roadrunner:

Roadrunner is your newsletter. We welcome your contributions. Contact Bob Johnson 757-1876 or Kathy Whelen 751-2408 email: whelenk@aol.com

Feather Lake Workday
Saturday, March 24
2:00
Please Join Us!

UPDATE ON STATUS REVIEW FOR YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO

A federal judge has ordered the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to make a decision by July 1, 2001 on whether to propose listing the Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo as an endangered species.

When the USFWS announced in February that it would conduct a status review to determine if the cuckoo warrants listing (RR, Apr-May 2000), it did so in response to a lawsuit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity and 11 other groups. The Center had submitted its original petition requesting listing in February 1998. After receipt of such a petition, the Endangered Species Act requires the USFWS, to the maximum extent practicable, to make an initial finding within 90 days on whether listing may be warranted and decide within 12 months whether to propose listing.

The USFWS's failure to meet the 90-day deadline prompted the lawsuit. By the time the 90-day finding was finally made, the USFWS had also missed the 12-month deadline. Moreover, the Center's original petition sought endangered status for the full species, not just western populations. Though not dropping as fast as western populations, eastern populations of the cuckoo are also in decline. In the 90-day finding, the USFWS concluded listing the full species is not warranted. The Center contended that this finding was arbitrary and capricious and that the USFWS failed to rely on the best available scientific information in making it.

So, on July 31 the Center and its co-plaintiffs filed a second lawsuit. They asked the courts to direct the USFWS to make the required 12-month finding within 30 days and make a new initial determination on whether listing the species as a whole may be warranted. The federal judge's recent ruling stemmed from that suit. The ruling dealt only with the status review for western populations of the cuckoo. Still at issue is the question of whether to review the status of the species as a whole.

Support Local Wildlife Conservation Organizations

Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue, Inc.

Board Meetings are all "open" meetings and held at the El Paso Environmental Center at 800 S. Piedras.
Visit the CDWR website at:
www.whc.net/cdwr

Visit the El Paso Zoo website at:
www.whc.net\epzoo

KEYSTONE MARSH

Contact: Carol Miller at 584-7088
Visit the KAPPA website at:
www.keystone-site.org

**Remember to make reservations
no later than February 9, 2001
for the Awards Dinner**

send a check, payable to El Paso Audubon Society,
to Jane Fowler, 32112 Kilkenny, El Paso, TX 79925, .

HAPPY 25TH BIRTHDAY, FEATHER LAKE!

On February 12, 1976, El Paso's City Council approved leasing the Mesa Drain Detention Basin to the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society, and Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary was born. The past 25 years have been full of change at the lake but not in our management focus: Throughout, we've managed Feather Lake to benefit river-valley wildlife and to give citizens a place to enjoy and learn about that wildlife.

It has all been done by volunteers. Among the most recent are the folks who took part in our 6 Feather Lake workdays in 2000. Participating chapter members were Matt Carroll, Sylvia Carroll, Jane Fowler, Bob Johnson, Roxanne Schroeder and John Sproul. In June we were joined by Mission Valley Elementary School students Jorge Aguilar, Janette Avila, Carlos Chavez, Diego Corona, Oscar Medina, Eric Rodriguez and Paul Trujillo and their teachers Yvonne Center and Edgar Huizar. Also in line for thanks are Robert and Sylvia Raye for their yeoman efforts in 2000 removing mature saltcedars from the east side of the basin.

We greatly appreciate the contributions all these hardworking folks made to sanctuary maintenance and habitat management. Our next workday will be Saturday, March 24, beginning at 2:00 p.m. Come on down!

More thanks are in order. On November 18-19, we held two wetlands workshops at Feather Lake. Elizabeth Chase and National Audubon's Beth Lapin ensured the workshop for teachers on November 18 was a great success. Bob Johnson, John Kiseda, Beth Lapin, Carol Miller, John Sproul and Sue Watts did likewise with their presentations at the public workshop November 19. Thanks to all!

Feather Lake is open to the public every Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to noon, and every Sunday, 2:00 p.m. to dusk. Remember, we need your help to keep the sanctuary staffed during these hours. Want to spend a relaxed, enjoyable morning or afternoon helping at the lake in this way? Please contact Charles Simpson at 598-2274.

Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave. Admission is free.

The Chapter Has a New Web Site

Our chapter has a new web site located at <http://www.gbarnett.com/eptpas/eptpashome.html>.

The new site, called El Paso Audubon Online, features updated graphics and more 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 events, recent bird sightings and an updated list of birding links to the Internet. While some pages are "under construction", much of the site has been completed. There is new information about Feather Lake, and in the future, we will add a checklist of birds to be found at our Chapter's wildlife refuge. The new Contacts page allows you to schedule a tour at Feather Lake, submit articles to the Roadrunner and even make bird sighting reports at

ElPasoBirdAlert@gbarnett.com

On The Trail

GREAT KISKADEE

We are going to Rattlesnake Springs, which is located near Carlsbad Caverns, the purpose of this trip will be an attempt to find a *Great Kiskadee*. This bird has been seen regularly since the end of July.

On January 12th, John and Kathy Kiseda and your trip leader drove over and found the bird within the first hour and a half. We had great looks at it as well as 46 other species, these included Wild Turkeys, a couple *Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers*, all 3 *Bluebird* species, *Townsend's Solitaire*, and *Evening Grosbeaks*.

It will take about 3 Hours, which includes a relief stop at the Guadalupe National Park Visitors Center. Bring lunch and liquids, we will eat at the Springs, then a stop at Washington Ranch, which is adjacent to the Springs. On the way back a stop at Friole Ranch, then on to El Paso, plan on arriving back about 5 PM.

DATE: Sunday February 11, 2001
TIME: 6:39 AM
PLACE: North side of Big 8 parking lot. Corner of Montana and McRae
LEADER: Bob Johnson

The following field trips will be held jointly with the class from the UTEP Center for Lifelong Learning, that the chapter is presenting. Call Bob 757-1876.

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 on to the Keystone Marsh to get close views of the birds located there.

DATE: Saturday, February 24.
TIME: 8:04 AM (Please be on time, as we are going in as a group before regular opening time.)
PLACE: El Paso Zoo

BACKYARD BIRDS

A few stops in members backyards to learn something about the birds, feeders and feeding.

DATE: Saturday, March 3.
TIME: 7:47 AM
PLACE: 4331 Emory (near

Doniphan)

WATER and WADING BIRDS

Down the valley to the reservoirs in McNary, Fort Hancock, and Tornillo. A good chance to see *Cormorants*, *Hérons*, *Egrets*, a number of duck species including *Mergansers* and *Buffleheads*.

DATE: Sunday, March 11.
TIME: 7:14 AM
Place: Feather Lake

MOUNTAIN BIRDS

Up to Dripping Springs, located on the west side of the Organ Mountains, this area is operated by the BLM. We should get a number of higher elevation birds not found in the open desert.

DATE: Saturday, March 31.
TIME: 7:07 AM.
PLACE: I-10 & Trans Mt. (across from Texaco Station)

DESERT BIRDS / BIRDS of PREY

A chance to see some of the birds that inhabit the desert scrub. Then out along Hawk Alley and on to the Fort Bliss Ponds.

DATE: Sunday, April 8.
TIME: 7:37 AM
PLACE: Wilderness Park Museum.

FRIENDS of HUECO TANKS

Admission: Hueco Tanks Historical Park - \$4.
\$2 for Seniors 65 and older. Children under 12 FREE

Bird Identification Tours

Sunday February 18	8 AM
Sunday March 18	8 AM
Sunday April 15	8 AM

Check in at the Headquarters. Leader Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson. 757-1876

On The Trail *continued*

PLANNING AHEAD

BIRDATHON: Sat. / Sun. May 5 / 6.

IMBD Count: Sat. May 12.

B.I.T. Hueco Tanks. Sun. May 20.

CAVE CREEK at Portal Arizona.

Sat./Sun./Mon.

May 26, 27, 28. Make your reservations early.

CLOUDCROFT TRIP

The August 12th and 13th tour was birding at its best. Special thanks to Carole and Jay Fenberg our leaders. Jay guided the group to orchards in Haynes Canyon, then on to Sunspot where the trees and grounds were "alive" with birds. We toured the Observatory then lunch break at the picnic area.

On to Sixteen Springs canyon Road and a tree full of Yellow Warblers. Thanks to Audrey and Mose Corona for a Bed & Breakfast and a campsite.

The Pot Luck Supper setting was spectacular in the spacious hillside home of the Fenbergs. Audrey Corona brought a freezer full of her special home made ice cream to top off a perfect day. Good friends, good birding and good food.

We tallied 52 species of birds, good sightings were Hairy Woodpecker, Cassin's Kingbird, Band-tailed pigeon, Mountain Bluebird, Juniper Titmouse and Pigmy Nuthatch. Alas no Evening Grosbeak, but the best sightings were of a Hooded Warbler and Montezuma Quail. Mary Lou Alcorn, Trip leader.

Bosque del Apache Field Trip January 13 and 14.

The field trip to Bosque del Apache was very *cool* (literally and figuratively). Both days were clear and cold with temperatures in the 20's in the morning and warming up nicely to the 40's in the afternoons. We, being an intimate group of 3 (Bob Johnson, Patricia Russell and yours truly) saw a total of 74 species over the weekend. We observed 15 species of waterfowl, 3 species of grebes, 8 species of raptors, and 5 species of sparrows and blackbirds among numerous other genera.

The highlights of the trip were (not surprisingly) the abundance of eagles and other raptors. The refuge reported 92 Bald Eagles present on the refuge and we saw 25 to 35 in one wetland cell at a time. We enjoyed seeing the Bald Eagles and the Ferruginous Hawks in their various-aged plumages. There were numerous opportunities to observe their foraging behaviors and interactions among the mature and juvenile birds. Eagle observations and bird abundance were greatest in the mornings. We also enjoyed the presence of a Merlin, numerous American Kestrels, Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks, and too many Northern Harriers to count. We observed at least 5 male harriers. Other highlights included a Belted Kingfisher, numerous Hooded and Common Mergansers, and of course the Whooping Crane. On Saturday evening, we enjoyed a spectacular fly-in on one of the ponds along the road leading into the refuge from San Antonio. The sun was setting behind the mountains in various stages of reds, pinks, and purples while the Sandhill Cranes flew in and landed while playing their fantastic horn symphony. We enjoyed several Snow Geese orchestras as well at various times of day amongst the farm fields. Also we were privileged to have a long view of a magnificent 10-point Mule Deer buck. On Sunday morning we all enjoyed watching the birds navigate on the frozen waters.

Despite the cold, we all had a great time! On returning Sunday afternoon, we stopped at Percha State Park and Caballo Dam and added 10 species to the list that include a flock of White Pelicans, a raft of Common Mergansers, and flocks of Clark's Grebe.

Lois Balin, Trip Leader

**El Paso/Trans-Pecos
AUDUBON WEB SITE**

http://www.gbarnett.com/ep_tpas/eptpashome.html

Find out information, make reservations at Feather Lake, bird reports, submit articles to the Roadrunner; e-mail us through the web site.

Dates to Remember

See page 6 for details

February

Fri. 9th- Awards Dinner Reservations
Deadline
Sun. 11th - Rattlesnake Springs
Mon. 12th - Board Meeting
Sat. 17th - Awards Dinner
Sun. 18th - Bird ID Tour
Sat. 24th - El Paso Zoo

March

Sat. 3rd - 4331 Emory
Sun. 11th - Feather Lake
Mon. 12th - Board Meeting
Sun. 18th - Bird ID Tour
Mon. 19th - General Meeting
Sat. 31st - Dripping Springs

April

Sun. 8th - Wilderness Park
Mon. 9th - Board Meeting
Sun. 15 - Bird ID Tour
Mon. 16th - General Meeting

Friends of Hueco Tanks (see p.6)

Rock Art Tours

Every Sat & Sun 10:00am & 2:00pm

Birding Activities at Hueco Tanks

Bird Identification Tours & Slide Show Presentations

**National Audubon
Society**

Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join.

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 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
SOCIETY**

W10

Local Chapter Code

7XCHA

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