

The Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

General Meetings

7:00pm at UTEP Centennial Museum Sun Bowl & University

Monday, December 13th, 2004
HOLIDAY GATHERING

Last year's party was so much fun that we're going to bring back our photo and slide contest. This year there will be five categories of photos, preferably, taken in 2004: **Scenic Views, Birds, Animals, Humor & Children**. Each will have it's own winner. You may enter as many categories as you'd like, however, we ask that you limit your entries to a maximum of three in each.

Come join the fun, enjoy the photo show and vote for your favorites, we'll have plenty of prizes, door prizes and holiday treats to munch on.

MORE INFORMATION Call

Bob: 757-1876 or email at
bobwildbirderj@cs.com

Monday, January 17th, 2005

Chihuahuan desert springs: Oases for wildlife...big and small, is the title of an upcoming talk by Dr. Elizabeth Walsh at the first El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Chapter meeting of 2005 which is set for January 17 at 7:00 pm in the UTEP Centennial Museum.

Dr. Walsh is an Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at UTEP who studies microscopic aquatic animals called rotifers in her campus laboratory, at Big Bend and in other aquatic habitats of the region. Dr. Walsh will show photographs taken in winter of the springs and wildlife that have made Big Bend a choice destination for cold weather birders.

For further information about the meeting, please call 757-1876.

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President's News

Happy Holidays, Everyone! I hope that this issue of the Roadrunner finds you in the best of health and living joyously in the glad tidings of the holiday season! Our fun and informative field trips and general meetings have been enjoying good attendance, some interesting birds have recently been sighted in the area, and your officers and board have been pretty busy....

- ◆ funds were raised for a child literacy endeavor by our recent "book fair" event with the Westside's Barnes & Noble
- ◆ the chapter's action plan for the coming year has been decided upon (contact me if you would like to receive a copy)
- ◆ we have pledged support (financial and otherwise) in the continuing efforts to preserve Castner Range and in helping the continuing maturation of the Frontera Land Alliance
- ◆ we have received a grant from the Texas State Audubon Office through the TCEQ Separate Environmental Project program for the Rio Bosque Wetlands Project
- ◆ we are preparing to disperse the funds raised by this year's Birdathon fundraiser

As we once again head towards the coming new year, we also have a pending change of Audubon board members and officers. I once again urge you to become involved with our chapter on a more personal level because we can use your knowledge, experience, skills, work ethic and most importantly, your spirit and caring nature, in helping us to accomplish our chapter's goals. So please, help us to do more for our community, our wildlife & wild places.

Have a wonderful holiday with friends and family & please try to find the time to enjoy our amazing natural world during this special time of year! Happy Holidays!

John Kiseda, President EPTP Audubon

Healthy Bird Feeding, Watering & Hanging Out at Your Home

Now that the fall/winter season has arrived, it is a good time to remind ourselves that we need to put some extra effort in keeping our feathered friends that visit with us, healthy and whole.

Bird baths and feed stations concentrate numerous birds in a small area, and birds being birds, they have no way to prevent themselves from going to the bathroom wherever they tend to spend time. This means that birds that utilize our feeders and bird baths, tend to come into frequent contact with feces and other items that can be sources of disease.

Other unpleasant and harmful things such as molds, fungus, etc., can also arise from the buildup of old, wet, uncollected food items and seed husks at feeders or feed areas. We need to do our best in maintaining clean feeding and watering areas. Here are some suggestions on how to keep the little guys that are nice enough to visit us, healthy!

Water

Bird baths should be cleaned out and receive fresh water, daily or more often, if necessary. Bird baths should be scrubbed, cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis.

Solid Food

If possible, try to replace seed in your feeder only when it is practically empty; this makes it much easier to do a "quick clean-up" without having to possibly either throw out much "good seed" or feeding out much "bad seed".

Seed gravity feeders, platform feeders and similar devices should be regularly cleaned out, and soap/water cleaned and bleach disinfected, irregularly. Start out by removing all old seed husks and any food that appears unfit to be eaten. Then, as necessary, clean with soap & water and then disinfect (be sure to let your feed device dry thoroughly before placing food in it. Also don't forget to regularly clean those areas near and around your feeders where hulls, seeds, bread, fruit, etc. fall and build-up (such as the ground underneath your feeder).

Liquid Food

For those of you who maintain hummingbird feeders year-round, be sure to clean & disinfect them on a regular basis (an every three to four day interval should be safe, as our ambient temperatures get cooler and cooler). Also be sure to rinse the feeders very well before reuse.

Miscellaneous

Also be sure to periodically clean those areas where "your" birds really like to hang-out, roost and perch such as that favorite rock wall, branch or bush of theirs, because these areas will also be of concern due to fecal build-up.

Have a great time feeding, caring for and watching your feathered friends in the coming months!

Chapter Web Site

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

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
ElPasoBirdAlert@gbarnett.com

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

Officers

President: John Kiseda, 533-4615
 Vice President: open
 Secretary: Nancy Wilson, 747-8614
 Treasurer: Carol Nelson, 544-2521



Directors

Feather Lake: John Sproul, 545-5147
 Education: Beth & Bob Garcia, 755-9119
 Membership: Jane Fowler, 598-2448
 Ways & Means: Flora Pittard, 852-2353
 Conservation: open
 Field Trips: Bob Johnson, 757-1876
 Programs: Lois Balin, 774-9603 and
 Virginia Galarza, 727-6399
 Publicity: Kathy Kiseda, 533-4615
 Special Events: Roxanne Schroeder, 533-0061
 Hospitality: Scott Cutler, 581-6071
 Projects: Ursula Sherrill, 526-7725 and
 Carol Maxwell-Moreno, 593-0967
 Publications: Kathleen Whelen, 751-2408

The Roadrunner is published six times a year.

Contributions are welcome.

Please email to whelenk@aol.com

Donate Live Holiday Trees to the El Paso Zoo



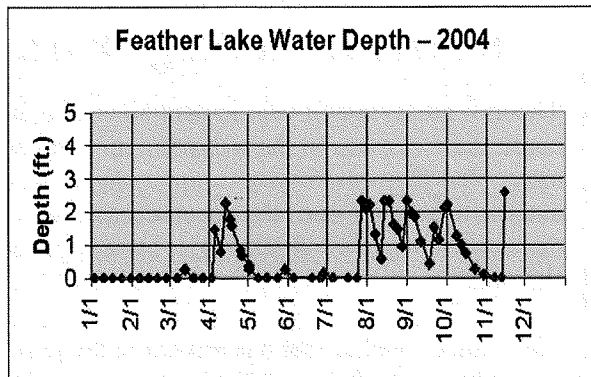
If you are purchasing a living tree for the holiday season (those trees in pots or with root balls, that haven't been "chopped down"), you can donate the following species to the El Paso Zoo after the holidays & receive a tax write-off:

Aleppo Pine Mondale Pine
Norfolk Pine Yaupon Holly

Contact Cheryl Garing, the El Paso Zoo Horticulturist, at 521-1850, if you have any questions.

AT FEATHER LAKE

Feather Lake's water level continues its roller-coaster ride. It dropped throughout October, and the lake went dry in early November. Then came the storm in mid-November. The water level jumped to 2.6 feet, the highest level recorded in 2004. Some water should persist well into December.



Feather Lake will be open to the public through at least the end of the year. Hours are 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays and 2 p.m. to dusk on Sundays. Visit in early December and you might get to enjoy a combination of water, plentiful waterfowl, and cottonwoods still holding their fall color.

As always, we rely on volunteers to staff our sanctuary during visitor hours. Can you help on one or more days in December or January? If yes, please contact John Sproul (747-8663, jsproul@utep.edu).

We were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Charles Simpson on Nov. 10. In 1998, Charles received our organization's Meritorious Service Award in recognition of his many contributions to Feather Lake and our education programs. As the driving force behind the Feather Lake visitor center, his memory will live on at our sanctuary.

Our first 2005 workday at Feather Lake will be **Sat., January 22**. Once again, we'll start at **2 p.m.**, work a few hours, then see what birds arrive at the end of the day (if we still have water). Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave. Admission is free.

RIO BOSQUE WETLANDS PARK



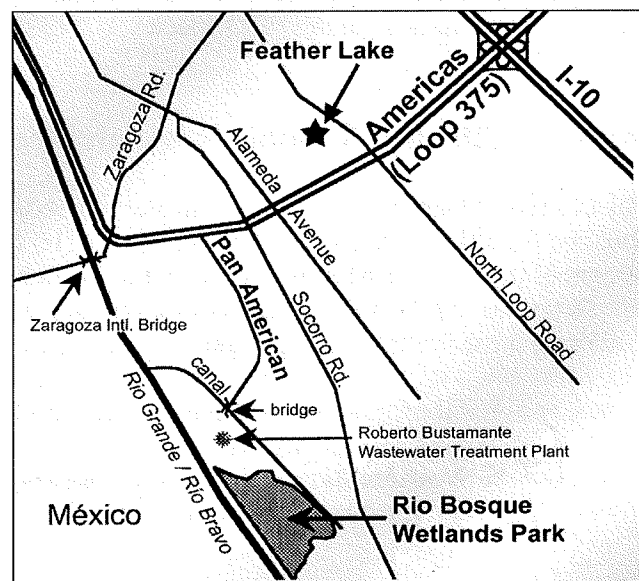
UTEP offers free walking tours twice each month and also holds monthly (except December) community workdays at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, 4 miles from Feather Lake.

Coming up:

- 9 a.m. Sat., Dec. 4 (Birds)
- 3 p.m. Sun., Dec. 12 (Introductory)

- 3 p.m. Sat., Jan. 8 (Birds)
- 9 a.m. Sat., Jan. 15 (Workday)
- 3 p.m. Sun., Jan. 16 (Introductory)

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. **Information: 747-8663.**





Wylers Tramway Hawkwatch

Here is some information regarding the 2004 Hawkwatch activities at the Wylers Tramway, and some updated Hawkwatch project summary information.

Fall 2004

Observers made 44 visits to the site for a total of 110 hours of observation time at the topside platform. El Paso-Trans-Pecos Audubon Society chapter members accounted for 20 observation hours, with some of these observation periods being conducted by more than one person. Texas Master Naturalists, Charles & Marian Mayer accounted for 11 hrs of observation time. NMSU students accounted for 9.5 observation hours, with some of these observation periods being conducted by more than one person.

262 raptors were observed from 8/13/04 through 11/4/04.

60 Turkey Vulture	44 Red-tailed Hawk
1 Ferruginous Hawk	3 Swainson's Hawk
50 Sharp-shinned Hawk	41 Cooper's Hawk
9 American Kestrel	5 Peregrine Falcon
2 Prairie Falcon	13 unidentified accipiters
13 Northern Harrier	5 unidentified falcon
3 Osprey	5 unidentified buteo
2 Golden Eagle	6 unidentified raptor

Project Summary information

The bird checklist for the site, increased to 110 species observed. Since the Spring of 2001, over 400 hours of platform observation time spread out over 174 site visits, have yielded just over 1500 raptor sightings of 17 species.

Audubon/Barnes & Noble Bookfair Results

The El Paso / Trans-Pecos Audubon Chapter will receive a donation from Westside Barnes & Noble of \$151.16, or 15 percent of the total net sales from the October 24-30 book fair. Decisions will be made in the coming year about how to allocate these funds to meet program commitments.

Thank you Audubon members and community friends for your support.

Thanks to the Westside Barnes & Noble for making this fund-raising effort.

ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

Mark your calendar now for our annual dinner.

Saturday, February 19, 2005

details in the February/March

Roadrunner

Keystone Heritage Park

This is a great time of year to visit Keystone, because there is water in the wetlands, the temperatures are cooler, the waterfowl and raptors have "arrived" and the color change of the vegetation, now in various shades of yellow & orange, is always pleasing to the eyes.

The wintry weather that has arrived in the past few weeks has really "slowed down" the activity of the reptiles and invertebrates at the site. Lately, "trap checks" on my day to check the pitfall arrays have yielded very little other than the occasional side-blotched lizard and a few beetles and wolf spiders.

The site's bird checklist has once again inched-up a bit & now stands at 185 species; recently sighted was a very rare to this area Western Gull, in amongst 100's of ring-billed gulls. Other recent sightings include Thayer's & Franklin's Gulls, a male and a female Peregrine Falcon [at the same time], Swamp Sparrows, Soras, Black-tailed Gnatcatchers & Common Yellowthroat warblers.

If you visit Keystone, please keep your eyes open for unusual birds or those birds that haven't yet been reported, & then let me know what you saw.

Crossroads Ponds

Have you birded there recently?

A bird checklist was developed earlier in the year for the site by John Kiseda (~110 documented species seen); a number of rare, unusual species have been noted at the site, but many "common" birds, have not been noted. Please give me your sightings, if you visit this little gem of a birding spot (a site guide & bird checklist can be found on our Audubon website).

**THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
AT HUECO TANKS
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18TH, 2004 at
6:30 AM at the Flying Saucer Building
(Junction of US 62/180 + FM 2775)**



or

FOR THOSE WHO WANT A LITTLE MORE SLEEP

7:45 AM at the entrance gate to the State Park (on FM2775)
Audubon invites birders and other nature enthusiasts to join over 55,000 other volunteers from all across the western hemisphere and participate in Audubon's longest-running winter-time tradition, the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC).

Volunteers of every skill level are needed to locate and count each and every bird at Hueco Tanks. Experienced birders will be available to identify the different species, but many eyes are needed to spot the birds locations, you really can help. The results of these counts help prioritize Audubon's bird conservation activities and provide good estimates of population trends for several important species.

PLEASE CALL, VOLUNTEER, AND HAVE SOME FUN!
For information or to volunteer, call Bob at 757-1876 or email him at bobwildbirderj@cs.com

**Help Advocate for the Preservation of
the Valle Vidal in N.M.**

Located in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of NM (above Taos), the Valle Vidal portion of the Carson National Forest is being considered for the widespread development of methane gas production.

This development, if allowed to occur, could ruin tens of thousands of acres of precious watershed, recreational activity areas and homes for a multitude of wildlife (to include Rio Grande cutthroat trout, elk and mountain lion).

If you want to try to preserve this amazing slice of nature, contact the Coalition for the Valle Vidal at 505-776-3276 or www.ValleVidal.org

**EL PASO AUDUBON SOCIETY
FIELD TRIP THROUGH THE UPPER VALLEY
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5TH AT 7:42 AM**

After checking out the birds at the ponding area, we will move through the valley visiting a few of the hot spots. We may go to the Sod Farm and up Route 28 possibly to La Union, depending on the results of our reconnaissance of the areas.

Participants will meet at Crossroads Pond - due to the construction projects, we will meet at the corner on Love Road. To get there from Doniphan go west on Country Club Road about 1/2 mile and turn left onto Love, go south until you are about 100 yards past Lombardy, and park on the left.

ADMISSION IS FREE, AND NON-MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL BOB AT: 757-1876 or email him at bobwildbirderj@cs.com

The Frontera Land Alliance NEWS!

After a little help from its regional and community friends, the newly formed Frontera Land Alliance is now ready to file for tax-exempt status as a non-profit group with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. At the November 8 El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon board meeting, Ed Storey of the FLA steering committee told of progress made since the spring 2004 beginnings, and of the group's efforts to raise a \$500 IRS filing fee. After discussion, the Audubon board agreed to give a \$300 matching grant to FLA. Later that week El Paso Native Plant Society donated \$200, and an anonymous donor added \$100 to clinch the deal.

Ed Storey wants all Audubon members to know that, "The land alliance is very grateful for the assistance. It is the early support of organizations like the Audubon people that will make it possible for the land trust to be formed and serve the greater El Paso region." Ed also invites Audubon members to get involved in TFLA to help with the many needs of a new land preservation alliance.

Everyone is welcome to attend The Frontera Land Alliance meetings at Chamizal Memorial Conference Center on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm. The next meeting is January 20, 2005.

OBSERVATIONS

Due to editorial license the observation column will be carried in the Feb—Mar ROADRUNNER. However a few great sightings are listed.

The RAREST sighting was made by Madaline and Al Gavit at Lake El Paso In Horizon City on the 14th of October.

It was a *Fork-tailed Flycatcher*, only the 16th record for the State of Texas.



Another great bird was a Painted Redstart by Barry Zimmer in his yard. This was one of only 15 or 20 sightings in our check-list area.

Also John Kiseda had a Golden Eagle at the Tramway Hawk Watch on October 10.



HUECO TANKS

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

Bird Identification Tours

Sunday	December 19	8 AM
Sunday	January 16	8 AM
Sunday	February 20	8 AM

Check in at the Headquarters. Info 857-1135. Leader Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson 757-1876.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Chapter calls upon volunteers in the El Paso area to join with birders across the western hemisphere and participate in one of Audubon's winter time traditions, the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This years count will be the 104th.

Today, over 55,000 volunteers from all 50 states, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, Bermuda, the West Indies, and Pacific Islands count and record every individual bird and bird species seen in a specified area. During the 104th CBC last year, about 63 million individual birds were counted. Last year saw a new record high of 1,996 individual counts. Each individual count group completes a census of the birds found during one 24 hour period in a designated circle 15 miles in diameter—about 177 square miles.

People are asked to contribute \$5.00 to help defray the expense of publishing "American Birds", This is the volume detailing all 1900 plus counts. The El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Chapter will cover \$3.00 of this for the Hueco Tanks and El Paso counts.

On The Trail

HUECO TANKS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The first count in this area will be conducted in and around Hueco Tanks State Historical Park. Lets see if we can get over 65 species this year, a number that has been achieved only a couple of times since 1970. To accomplish this I will need at least 10-12 counters, Please call and volunteer. With the montane invasion this year it could be accomplished, during the Nov. monthly BIT for a period of 3 hours and only in the park we had 37 species, unusual were Stellar's Jay, Townsend's Solitair, and Mountain Chickadee.

Date: Saturday, **December 18, 2004**
Time: 6:30 AM, Flying Saucer Building
 (Junction US 62/180 & FM 2775)
Compiler: Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson 757-1876
 E-mail; bobwildbirderj@cs.com

It would be better to call ahead of time, so that you can be assigned to a zone leader and report to that specific location.

EL PASO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The compiler for the El Paso area count is Jimmy Zabriskie. For information, contact him at (505) 541-8083 or E-mail jzabris102@aol.com

Date: Saturday, January 1, 2005

Other nearby counts, dates, & contact info follows:

- 18 Dec. -Las Cruces NM, Tim Lawton (505)522-2056
 18 Dec. -Ruidoso NM, Anita Powell (505) 257-5352.
Flicker@ziznet.com
 29 Dec. -La Luz NM, Hildy Reiser (505) 439- 5196.
Hilranger@totacc.com
 2 Jan. -Caballo NM, Brad Vaughn (505) 857-0869.
bradvaughn@prodigy.com
 McNary TX, Barry Zimmer (915) 757-8682.
Brzimmer@aol.com
 2 Jan. -Peloncillo Mts. Alan Craig (520) 558-2220
narc@vtc.net

CBC's will also be conducted in Bosque Del Apache NWR, Carlsbad, Gila, Guadalupe Mts., Loving, Portal, Roswell, and Silver City. The dates for these will be between December 14, 2002 and January 5, 2003, for information on whom to contact, call Bob the Hueco Tanks compiler.

BOSQUE DEL APACHE NWR

One of the more popular National Wildlife Refuges in the country (there are over 500) is located about 180 miles north of El Paso off of Interstate 25. How about 20,000 *Snow Geese* with a number of *Ross's* included, see if you can tell them apart, 12,000 *Sandhill Cranes*, 25,000 *ducks* and *Bald Eagles*.

Start off your 2005 bird list with some great entries. Last year over 70 species were recorded on our trip, these included 15 waterfowl species, 8 Raptor and 3 Merganser, also a number of passerines and other wildlife. We will probably have a tour on Sat at 1 PM, in a large refuge van, so try to call Bob if you think you might attend, we need an approximate count.

Many good motels in Socorro NM, located about 12 miles to the north. (in Itinerary)

Date: Sat/Sun, January 15/16, 2005
Time: Between 10:30 and 11:30 AM
Place: Parking lot of the Visitors Center.
Leader: Bob Johnson, Call for itinerary & map. (915)757-1876, bobwildbirderj@cs.com
 Bob will go up Friday & stay at ECONO LODGE.

KEYSTONE - SUNLAND

A look at hundreds of gulls, mostly *Ring-billed* but quite often a *Herring Gull* or *California Gull* has been around, and remember last January when a State of New Mexico first, the *Lesser Black-backed Gull* was in the area for almost 2 weeks. You probably will see *Snow Geese*, maybe *Buffleheads*, and some wading birds, perhaps *Great Egrets* or *Longbilled Dowitchers*.

Date: Sunday, January 30
Time: 2:48 AM
Place: **Keystone Heritage Park.**

On the east side of Doniphan, between Frontera and Bird, about 1/2 mile north on Doniphan from Sunland Park Drive.
Leader: Bob Johnson, contact numbers above.

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

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Return service request

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

December

Rio Bosque
 Sat. 4, & Sun. 12

Board Meeting
 Monday, 6

General Meeting
 Monday, 13

**X-mas Bird Count
 Hueco Tanks**
 Saturday, 18

January

X-mas Count El Paso
 Saturday, 1st

Rio Bosque
 8th, 15th, 16th

Bosque del Apache
 Sat & Sun 15 & 16

General Meeting Mon-
 day 17

Feather Lake Workday
 Saturday, 22

January continued

Keystone/Sunland
~~Saturday 29~~
 SUNDAY 30

February

Annual Dinner
 Saturday 19th

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.

Make checks payable to the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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