

THE ROADRUNNER

NEWSLETTER OF THE EL PASO--TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY

8365 Beverly Place, El Paso, Texas 79907

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Bill Hunt, Editor

COMING EVENTS

Saturday, May 12 Annual Spring "Big Day" bird count. El Paso County and parts of New Mexico in Upper Valley; no set times. Objective is to find as many species as possible. Party chiefs listed below will be lining up people to help. Please call one of them if you can participate.

Geth White	565-1024	Transmountain Road
Bill Hunt	591-5630	Lower Valley
Carl Jones	584-4652	Upper Valley
Bob Barto	755-4744	Horizon Lake

Monday, May 21 Regular monthly meeting, 7:30 p. m. at Centennial Museum at UTEP. A variety of subjects will be discussed, including a short report by James W. McDonald, new manager of the Soil Conservation Service office in El Paso. He will describe efforts in Texas to identify endangered species of many types.

Sunday, May 27 Field trip to McKittrick Canyon in Guadalupe National Park. Trip starts at Pine Spring Ranger Station at 8 a. m. Camping is available at Pine Spring Camp Ground, but there is no water and only containerized fuels are permitted. Please let Charlie Jensen know if you are going, since the Park limits the number of vehicles.

NATIONAL AUDUBON CONVENTION IN DENVER, JUNE 7-11

The Denver Audubon Society Convention Committee has announced a Host Family Program to be run during the June 7-11 National Audubon Convention. The volunteer hosts are looking forward to getting to know Auduboners from other parts of the country on a person-to-person and family-to-family basis. For information write: Mrs. Aleon DeVore, Star Rt. Box 75-A, Littleton, Colorado 80120.

LOCAL SOCIETY OFFICERS FOR 1973

President:	Eddie Chew
Vice-President	Bill Hunt
Secretary-Treasurer:	Libby (Mrs. Clarence) Shelfer
Historian:	Helen (Mrs. Jack) Ponder
Directors:	Margaret (Mrs. Jack) Daniel
	John Mudd
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Conservation:	John Mudd
Field Trips:	Charlie Jensen
Education:	Linda (Mrs. Carl) Jones
Hospitality:	Louise (Mrs. C. W.) Yerby
Publicity:	Geth (Mrs. Edmund) White
Publications:	Bill Hunt
Checklist:	Bill Hunt

WHY DO ROBINS LAY BLUE EGGS?

The following is excerpted from "The Bird Watch," newsletter of the Bird Populations Institute, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas:

Most birds that have open nests lay eggs that are white with brown specks. Such eggs are camouflaged and hard to see.... Birds with open nests lay such camouflaged eggs because their biggest problem is nest predation.... So, why do robins and some other birds lay blue eggs?

The answer is not known, but a good working hypothesis has been developed, in part by Dr. Stephen Rothstein. This hypothesis involves the cowbird. Cowbirds lay their eggs in other birds' nests, and let other birds raise their young.... As time passed, a parent bird (such as a robin) happened to have an instinctive or genetically based urge to toss the parasite's egg out of its nest, and so raised only its own young that year. This parent robin raised more young than its neighbor. Its young also tossed out cowbird eggs, and they too raised more young. Its descendants, in fact, filled the land, and crowded out the old robins, which had accepted cowbird eggs.

In the past, we presume that robins laid speckled eggs, like cowbirds, and like some of the other woodland thrushes. But in the family of egg tossers, those parents which laid eggs which were different from the cowbird could more easily toss out the stranger.... We assume that the eggs laid by these robins were bluish and more or less free of speckles. And the bluer the egg laid, and the freer of speckles, the more easily it could be distinguished from the speckled cowbird eggs, which were then tossed out. So, egg type crowded out egg type in the robin species until the only robins left lay robin's-egg-blue eggs.

NORTH AMERICAN NEST-RECORD PROGRAM

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology sponsors a nest-record card program, whose data have served a number of bird research projects. Studies in progress for which records are especially needed include Mississippi Kite, Cattle Egret, Red-winged Blackbird and Barn Swallow. Information is welcomed on all species, whether common or rare. Anyone interested in participating may write for free cards--specify number wanted--to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850.

ECO-NOTES

Good News for Oil-Soaked Ducks New techniques are being developed for cleaning oiled birds. Experts had believed that washing oiled birds with detergents removed the natural waterproofing and destroyed the birds' buoyancy. Additional research in the United States and Great Britain has shown that if the detergents are completely removed with a thorough rinsing and drying the feathers will not lose their waterproofing. American experiments under the auspices of the National Wildlife Health Foundation, with the assistance of a \$10,000 grant from Standard Oil of California, have been relatively successful.

The Wall Street Journal reported on April 13, 1973, that James Naviaux, head of the National Wildlife Health Foundation, is dry cleaning oiled birds with a hydrocarbon solvent known as Shell Sol 70. The birds are dry within twenty minutes and can be released within three days; however, the cleaning process requires three gallons of solvent per bird, and the solvent, which is highly flammable, makes the birds temporarily drunk. Intoxication has adverse effects on "high-strung" northern ocean birds like murre and razorbill auks; such birds can die from too much stress.

Part of the solution must be elimination of the problem: negligent and willful dumping of oil and other harmful substances into ponds, rivers, lakes, and seas.

Texas Bayou Saved Texas environmentalists have won a battle to preserve a twelve-mile stretch of a bayou that is a refuge for countless species of birds and fish. The bayou, near Houston, was to be straightened, converted to a sewer, and a housing development built along its banks. Local citizens had tests conducted to prove that the surrounding land was gradually sinking and was prone to flooding.

Despite lack of interest by the Texas Parks Department, matching funds were obtained from HUD and local sources. (Our society made a contribution.) Nine hundred fifty-six acres along the bayou have been purchased and turned into a public park known as Armand Bayou in memory of Armand Yramategui, who launched the fight to save the bayou.

Pollution Deadline Stands Prior to his appointment as Acting Director of the F. B. I., William Ruckelshaus, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, refused to extend deadlines for compliance by Four Corners power plants with federal sulphur dioxide emission controls. Primary air standards must be attained in the area by May 15, 1976.

Eagle Slayer Fined In an article appearing in the El Paso Times, the National Wildlife Federation reported that a Colorado rancher pleaded guilty in federal court to killing five Golden Eagles; he had originally been charged with slaying 65 eagles. The rancher was fined \$1700 and placed on probation, but he was allowed to retain his federal grazing rights. Further action on his privileges is pending with the Secretary of the Interior. The rancher is reported to be Dean Visintainer of Craig, Colorado. Mr. Visintainer's defense attorney stated that opposing lawyers "cannot show it is bad to kill golden eagles;...no one should be penalized and denied very valuable rights...merely because of something that he did...."

The following information was obtained from the records of the El Paso County Sheriff's Office on 11/11/77. The information was obtained from the records of the El Paso County Sheriff's Office on 11/11/77. The information was obtained from the records of the El Paso County Sheriff's Office on 11/11/77.

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FIRST CLASS

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