

the ROADRUNNER.....



newsletter of the
El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
P.O. Box 9655, El Paso, TX 79986

Editor: John Sproul

April 1981

Volume 11, Number 4

GENERAL MEETING

MON. 20 APRIL 1981, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, 3105 Grant St., in Memorial Park. EL PASO MAMMALS: PAST AND PRESENT. April's meeting will be a journey through time. Dr. Arthur Harris, UTEP biology professor and co-author of the book MAMMALS OF NEW MEXICO, will take us back 11,000 years to the Pleistocene Epoch. Dr. Harris will

discuss the mammalian fauna found in our area at that time, then progress to our present-day mammals. It should be a most interesting journey for everyone.

MON. 18 MAY. MT. SAINT HELENS. What better subject for the 1st anniversary of this volcano's eruption? #

FIELD TRIPS

SAT.-SUN. 4-5 APRIL. CLAY MILLER RANCH. Meet at 8:30 AM at Feather Lake (9500 N. Loop Rd., 0.3 miles n.w. of Ave. of the Americas). From there, we'll drive directly to the Clay Miller Ranch, near Valentine, Texas. You can bird as little or as much as you want at the ranch. We should see Vermilion Flycatchers, Scrub Jays, "Black-crested" Titmice, Clay-colored and other sparrows, and much more. Be sure to pack food and sleeping gear. Please call in advance if you plan to attend. Leader: Joe Guinn (566-8438).

different bird species as possible in a 24-hour period. We'll be encouraging such insanity 2 May. Unlike the Christmas Count, there are no limits to the area you can bird. To make sure everyone doesn't start in the same place and to pair inexperienced with experienced birders, we'll have a planning meeting the night before, Fri. 1 May, at 7 PM at Earle and Paula King's, 3801 Waymore (532-1107). If you want to participate, but can't make this meeting, call Jane Fowler (772-0296).

SAT. 18 APRIL, WHITE ROCK CANYON. Meet at 7:30 AM at the Wilderness Park Museum (2000 Transmountain Rd., on the e. side of the Franklin Mtns.). From there it is a short hop to White Rock Canyon, where we'll take an easy walk. We should see towhees, sparrows and perhaps some early-migrant warblers. Leader: Jeff Donaldson (755-2455).

Participants in the Big Day Count will have extra incentive to bird long and hard this year: the count will be part of the 1st annual Audubon Birdathon (see enclosed flyer). You will be raising money for Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary and for Audubon's national and regional programs with each species seen. You also will be competing for a variety of prizes.

SAT. 2 MAY. SPRING BIG DAY COUNT/BIRDATHON. Some purists look down their noses at bird listing. But admit it, purists, it's fun! One particularly insane and enjoyable variation is the Big Day Count, an attempt to find as many

At day's end we'll meet in the Fiesta Room at the Hillmark Apartments (5000 Alabama) for a pot-luck dinner and a drawing for our Birdathon Grand Prize, a Peregrine Falcon etching by Lois Carson. All bird counters and sponsors of counters will be

eligible for this drawing, so sponsor someone even if you won't be birding yourself. Doors open at 6 PM, dinner is at 7 PM, the drawing at 8 PM. Call in your

results by 8 PM if you can't attend (566-8438). Questions? Jane Fowler (772-0296) is the Birdathon Coordinator.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MON. 13 APRIL, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Peggy Heisel, 10423 Adonis, El Paso (821-0989). All members are welcome. #

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

(Editor's Note: Kevin Zimmer's column will return next month. To tide you over, I am reprinting Dustin Huntington's notes on "Cinnamon/Blue-winged Teal Females" from the February-March 1981 BURROWING OWL, newsletter of the Central New Mexico Audubon Society.)

Both Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal occur commonly in New Mexico. The standard field guides state that the females of these 2 teal cannot be separated in the field. This leaves identification based only on association with the male teal. Recent work by D. I. M. Wallace (BRITISH BIRDS 70:290-294, 1977) summarized in WESTERN BIRDS (10:96, 1979) provides some characteristics that can be used to separate these difficult species.

The face of the female Blue-winged is more strongly patterned. The light area at the base of the bill is whiter, cleaner and more extensive. The superciliary and eyeline are more contrasty and sharply defined. The Cinnamon has less contrast overall on the head, with only a small light area at the base of the bill and a much more unpatterned

appearance. The bill of the Cinnamon is larger and more spatulate than the Blue-winged (more like a Shoveler). The Cinnamon's bill appears slightly too large for the bird. The Blue-winged does not give this oversized-bill appearance. The browns of head and underparts of the Cinnamon are warmer and redder than the Blue-winged. The photos (numbers 152 and 153) in the western AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS show the differences in the 2 teal well.

Three cautionary notes before we start identifying teal:

1. The field marks are "soft" and require experience and practice.
2. Not all female teal can or should be identified to species.
3. There are hybrids which would certainly cause confusion.

Bearing these cautions in mind and practicing on female teal that are with males, one can learn to identify individual female teal most of the time. /Dustin Huntington/

OBSERVATIONS - 26 February to 26 March 1981

HERONS THROUGH HAWKS

Twenty Great Blue Herons at Tornillo Lakes 2/26 was a good concentration (JC,JF). Four Black-crowned Night Herons visited Feather L. 3/2 (TG), and a single Green Heron was at Randel's Pool 3/22 (JD). The lone White-faced Ibis was still at Feather L. as of 3/17 (JG,JS). The best waterfowl sighting for the period came via Al Canaris (UTEP Biol. Dept.), who found 4

ROSS' GEESE at the Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds 3/4. Fifty Canada Geese alighted on the Newman Power Station Pond 3/5 (JD). The 5000 Northern Shovelers at Ft. Bliss Ponds 3/6 (JD,KZ) and 24 Ring-necked Ducks at Feather L. 3/7 (JF,JS) were good numbers for those species. Two Harris' Hawks were near Acala 2/26 (JC,JF). The pair of Ferruginous Hawks present since December at Santa Teresa were last seen there 3/2 (JD). Pairs of Golden Eagles were

reported over Santa Teresa 3/1 (JD) and over Aguirre Springs 3/9 (BZ,KZ).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Solitary Sandpiper at Hueco Tanks 3/22 was early (SR,KZ). Ring-billed Gulls were seen in good numbers in early March, with 18 at Ft. Bliss Ponds 3/8 (m.ob.), 50 in the upper valley 3/8 (SJD) and a peak of about 300 in the upper valley 3/6 (TD). A single Bonaparte's Gull at Ft. Bliss Ponds 3/6 was unusual (KZ). Four Short-eared Owls were at the usual spot in n.e. El Paso 3/5 (JD), and 1 was still there 3/9 (JD,BZ,KZ). Three Long-eared Owls at Garton L. in New Mexico 3/21 highlighted a field trip to the area (m.ob.). Hummingbirds are with us once again. Black-chinneds were reported from city feeders 3/24 (fide JDIP) and 3/25-26 (EG, ELG). A male Broad-tailed visited the Gilboe's feeder 3/25. A pair of "Yellow-shafted" Flickers at Memorial Park 3/2 may have been present since December (JDIP).

PASSERINES

A Black Phoebe at the Ft. Bliss Ponds 3/6 (JD,KZ) and 3/8 (m.ob.) was unusual. Swallows are trickling in with the warm weather. A lone Barn Swallow at Feather L. 3/7 (JS) was reported to have been present since mid-February (TG). Five Barn Swallows were at Burn L. (Las Cruces) on 3/9 (BZ,KZ). Five Cliff Swallows were also at Burn L. 3/9, and 2 Tree Swallows (uncommon in our area) were at Los Nogales

pond later that same day (BZ,KZ). A Violet-green Swallow at Ft. Bliss Ponds 3/6 was the only 1 reported so far (JD,KZ).

A flock of 125 Common Crows near the Socorro Sewage Ponds 2/26 was surprising (JC,JF). The only Sage Thrasher reported all year was 1 in McKelligon Canyon 3/11 (DT). Reports of Western Bluebirds were widespread, with 100s at Hueco Tanks 3/15 (EG,ELG). Mountain Bluebirds were less common, with 20-25 at Hueco Tanks 3/15 (EG,ELG), and 5 there 3/22 (SR,KZ). Small flocks of Cedar Waxwings were in n.e. El Paso throughout the month, with a peak of 150 on 3/10 (JD). A pair of Phainopeplas were at Hueco Tanks 3/22 (SR,KZ), and 1 was near Tornillo that day (EG,ELG).

A Townsend's Warbler in n.e. El Paso 3/26 was early (JD). A male Common Yellowthroat was at Ft. Bliss Ponds 3/8 (DT et al). Ten Eastern Meadowlarks at Hueco Tanks 3/22 were unusual (SR,KZ). Pine Siskin reports were scattered, with 12 at Memorial Park 3/2 (JDIP), 5 at Aguirre Springs 3/9 (BZ,KZ) and 7 in n.e. El Paso 3/11 (JD). A pair of Cassin's Finches at Aguirre Springs 3/9 (BZ,KZ) were the only ones reported. A Fox Sparrow was seen near Tornillo on 3/22 (AG,CG,TW).

OBSERVERS: Al Canaris, John Carey, Tony Debona, Joe DiPasquale, Sarah Jane Dodds, Jeff Donaldson, Jane Fowler, Al Gavit, Chris Gavit, Tom Gavit, Ed Gilboe, Elza Gilboe (ELG), Joe Guinn, many observers (m.ob.), Susan Rucci, John Sproul, Dornis Taylor, Tony Worth, Barry Zimmer, Kevin Zimmer. (Report observations to Kevin Zimmer, 5115 N. Mesa #A-226, El Paso 79912; 581-0665.) #

FIELD TRIPS FOLLOW-UP

On 8 March, 19 participants turned out for the Ft. Bliss Ponds trip. We had beautiful weather and good birding. The 34 species seen included Great Blue Heron, Bufflehead, Red-tailed and Marsh hawks, Ring-billed Gull and Common Yellowthroat.

On 21 March, 12 people journeyed to Aguirre Springs. The day was cold and

windy, but the Organ Mtns. were lovely, touched with scatterings of snow. Sightings included an Acorn Woodpecker, Scrub Jays, Bushtits, Western Bluebirds, a Townsend's Solitaire and mule deer. Before returning to El Paso we stopped at Garton L., a small pond near White Sands Natl. Monument, and flushed 3 Long-eared Owls to cap the day. Species total: 30.
/Jane Fowler/

CONSERVATION

RECYCLE!

El Paso's 6-month experimental recycling program is in its final month, but the Sanitation Advisory Board will request a 2-month extension, according to Mildred Smith, the board's vice-chair. After the extension, the board will recommend a format for a permanent program. To date, the city has collected 1,445 tons of recyclables and earned \$39,638.

Though the 18 March pick-up yielded 80 tons of newspapers and 10 tons of cans, there is much room for improvement. The city used a new method to estimate the number of participants and learned that less than 12% of El Paso's 90,000 households now recycle.

With the 18 March pick-up, junk paper was dropped from the list of recyclables. It seems El Pasoans were failing to keep cellophane, wax paper, carbon paper and other nonrecyclables out of their junk paper. There are no plans now to resume junk-paper pick-ups. The items you should continue to recycle are newspapers, magazines, brown corrugated cardboard and metal cans. Remove labels from the cans. Next collection dates are 1 and 15 April and 6 May. /John Sproul/

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE OFF AND RUNNING

At its 9 March meeting, the Board of Directors instructed the Conservation Committee to:

- * work for establishment of a wildlife sanctuary at the now-undeveloped Rio Bosque Park;
- * prepare within 6 months a raptor-protection program for the El Paso area; and
- * begin a natural-areas survey in the El Paso Southwest, with findings to be reported after 5 years.

You will hear much about these projects in the months ahead. Want to learn more in the meantime? Contact Tony Worth (592-4926). #

LEGISLATIVE ARENA NEXT FOR SNAKE RIVER RAPTORS

When outgoing Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus designated 482,640 acres in Idaho as the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (BPNCA) on 24 Nov 1980 (RR, Jan), his order had a catch: Congress could negate it if both the House and Senate acted within 90 congressional working days.

The 90 days have come and gone with no congressional action. Score 1 for the Idaho raptors. Now, what happens next? A group of plaintiffs headed by Sagebrush Rebellion, Inc. has filed suit against the government to overturn Andrus' order. Also, new Interior Secretary James Watt could revoke or modify it. But these are only preliminaries to the main event.

Andrus issued his order to prod Congress into action. The land withdrawal is for 20 years; more lasting protection can be achieved only through legislation. Thanks to Andrus' forcing the issue, congressional debate is about to begin. Senator James McClure (R-ID), Chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and no friend of the withdrawal, has announced he will hold hearings on the BPNCA and will introduce legislation for a permanent BPNCA this session.

Audubon, National Wildlife Federation and other conservation groups support the full 515,257-acre BPNCA originally proposed by the Bureau of Land Management. Addition of state lands to these federal lands could increase the area further. Such a BPNCA would protect the entire ecosystem on which the raptors depend for food. Existing uses--grazing, hunting and fishing, National Guard training and existing farming--could continue. Not permitted would be massive conversion of the land to irrigated agriculture, a move conservationists contend is economically unjustified anyway.

Expect McClure and Senator Steve Symms (R-ID) to push for a minimal BPNCA. Be

ready for a lively debate over the future of the highest-known-density nesting pop-

ulation of raptors in the U.S., perhaps the world. /John Sproul/

FEATHER LAKE REPORT

The Sanctuary Committee met at Feather L. 20 Feb and decided to give habitat enhancement at the lake top priority. Dale Tate, Director of the Parks and Recreation Dept., attended and offered many helpful suggestions, including moving the fence to enclose all of the property. He also offered trees from his department's nursery.

planting program in the fall. Species we'll work with include: honey mesquite, fourwing saltbush, wolfberry, desert willow, creosotebush and Apache plume. He also suggested planting trees along the road encircling the lake and at the site we have selected for a small picnic area.

On 17 Mar, we met with Jim Tipton, Texas A&M Research Center, to get his advice on establishment of native shrubs at the lake. He suggested preparing now for a

With a successful Birdathon and with approval from the city, we hope to make things happen soon at Feather L. /Al Gavit/

LOOSE FEATHERS

SIERRA CLUB MEETING

WED. 29 APRIL, 7:30 PM, St. Paul's Methodist Church, 7000 Edgemere. A slide show on ANDERSON RANCH highlights the program. The State of Texas is considering acquisition of this ranch adjacent to Big Bend Natl.Park for a state park. #

EDITOR SEARCH ENDS

First inductee into the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Gallery of Stars is Sarah Jane Dodds. She has volunteered to edit the ROADRUNNER, starting with the June issue. Three cheers! #

WHEREAS, WHEREAS, WHEREAS

At the 31 Mar City Council meeting, Mayor Tom Westfall presented Chapter President John Sproul with a proclamation that declares April to be National Audubon Society Month. Aren't you glad it's official? Celebrate by getting out and enjoying the world around you. #

RUMMAGE = \$\$

Remember that our next rummage sale will be in May. Get your castoffs to Peggy Heisel (821-0989), Joe Guinn (566-8438) or Jane Fowler (772-0296), or have 1 of these worthies pick them up. #

AUDUBON + KCOS = \$\$\$\$

On Sun. 22 Mar, 8 Auduboners--Bob Bleicher, Gary Bureson, Jane Fowler, Joe Guinn, Kris Kohlhoff, Jo Nagel, John Sproul and Jo Warolin--put to good use their ability to talk on the phone for hours on end. In

April 1981

5-The Roadrunner

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El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I want to join the National Audubon Society and its El Paso/Trans-Pecos chapter.

name

address

city state zip

phone

Membership category desired:

- Individual/\$20 Family/\$25
- Sr. Citizen, Individual/\$13.50
- Sr. Citizen, Family/\$15
- Student/\$13.50

This is a ___new___renewal membership.

Make checks payable to National Audubon Society. Mail to Jo Ellen Warolin, 1406 N. St. Vrain, El Paso, TX 79902.

5 hours of assisting with Public Broadcasting's Festival '81 fund drive, they helped KCOS-TV raise over \$12,000. They also got Audubon plenty of exposure and had a great time. We'll do it again. #

CARSON ETCHING ON DISPLAY

The Membership Committee is preparing a display that will appear at the UTEP Bookstore 20 Apr-1 May. It will feature the Grand Prize for our Birdathon, Lois Carson's etching of a Peregrine Falcon. Drop by and see what you have a chance to win. #

FIRST MONTHLY COLOR SLIDE CONTEST

The categories are: 1) El Paso birds and 2) their habitats. Grand Prize winner in each category has the choice of 1) having a shrub planted in his or her honor at Feather L. or 2) rising at 2:30 AM to lead an owling field trip. Finalists will be named in the May ROADRUNNER.

Slides will be judged by the Education Committee, whose decisions will be final. Bring slides to the April meeting or mail them to any Education Committee member. Identify each slide with: date taken, your name, species and/or habitat, and location. Enter as often as you like. Deadline: 20 Apr 1981. Slides received after 20 Apr will be entered in next month's contest. All slides become property of El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society.

Should you choose to enter, you'll help the Education Committee--Kris Kohlhoff (6945 La Cadena, El Paso 79912; 581-3565), Virginia Baker, Jeannette Cole and Jan Hayse--develop a chapter slide library. This resource will be available to all chapter members who put on programs for school classes, youth groups or other organizations or who just like to look at bird photos. /Kris Kohlhoff/

VOTE

City elections for El Paso are Sat. 4 Apr. Polls are open 7 AM-7 PM. #

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The ROADRUNNER is sent to all members of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. Nonmembers can subscribe for \$3 per year. Mail payments to John Sproul, 601 W. Yandell #25, El Paso, TX 79902. Make checks payable to El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society.

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Deadline for the May ROADRUNNER is 22 April.
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