

the ROADRUNNER

Newsletter of El Paso/Trans-Pecos
Audubon Society - P.O. Box 9655
El Paso, Texas 79986



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GENERAL MEETING

MONDAY, 18 OCTOBER, 1982, 7:30 PM.
Garden Center, 3105 Grant in Memorial Park. Joyce Davis, one of our chapter members, will share her slides of a trip to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. Audubon members will be especially interested in seeing the famous turtles, iguanas and finches of the Galapagos. Don't miss hearing Joyce show and tell about the courting activities of the Blue-footed Booby and the Waved Albatross. #

FIELD TRIP CALENDAR

SAT-SUN 9-10 OCTOBER, SITTING BULL FALLS. Meet at 7 AM at Bella Napoli Restaurant, 10600 Montana. We'll travel to the north side of the Guadalupe Escarpment and spend Saturday at Sitting Bull Falls, 150 miles from El Paso. After car camping that night in the Guadalupe Mts. above the Falls, we'll search for montane birds on Sunday. A surprise stop on the way back to El Paso will cap the trip. Leader: John Sproul (545-5157 h, 541-6126 w). Reservations required. ##

SUN 24 OCTOBER. LA CUEVA PARK
We will meet with the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society in front (north entrance parking lot) of the Pan American Center, Las Cruces, N.M. at 7:00 AM. Please leave El Paso by 6:00 AM at least so as to have

ample time to arrive safely. We will then go to the park (entry fee \$2 per car). Dan Jones of MVAS will be the leader. Art Arteaga will "assist". Get information from Art at 598-5723 h.

FIELD TRIP FOLLOW UPS OR WHAT HAPPENED?

Sat. Sun, 11-12 Sept. Car camping in the Ed Whites' yard. 14 El Paso Audubonners took advantage of the Ed Whites' gracious invitation to visit them in their Sunny Glen Canyon home west of Alpine. The weather was lovely and the birding first rate. Ed and Geth and Hal and Mary Flanders of Alpine were apt leaders. Several sightings of note were 3 female Painted Buntings, a Northern Waterthrush and a long look at the secretive Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Many thanks, Geth and Ed. #

Saturday, 18 September. Beginners Trip to W. Cottonwood Springs attracted high winds, drizzly skies, 3 birders (none of them beginners) and very few birds. The voice of a Scrub Jay calling far up-canyon highlighted the trip, as only 7 species were found. #

Wednesday, 22 September. This bright cool morning found 7 eager birders scanning the trees and bushes at Memorial Park,

we had some excellent sightings: Clay-colored Sparrows, probable female Dickcissel and Philadelphia Vireo, Solitary Vireo, Pygmy Nuthatches, Wilson's Warblers and an Am. Robin. The reported Gray Flycatcher elected to hide from view./A. Arteaga/

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MON. 11 OCTOBER, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Sarah Jane Dodds, 2809 N. Florence, El Paso (533-7990). All members are welcome.



SIERRA CLUB MEETING

WED. 27 OCTOBER, 7:30 PM, St. Paul's Methodist Church, 7000 Edgemere. Ron Coleman, Pat Haggerty and Catherine McDivitt, the 3 candidates for Richard White's seat in Congress, have been invited to give their views on conservation issues at this meeting. Also invited to speak is Doug Scott, Director of Federal Affairs for the Sierra Club.#

A.B.A. CHECKLIST AVAILABLE

The 2nd edition of the American Birding Association's A.B.A. CHECKLIST is now available. A complete checklist of N. American birds, it covers 838 species, gives locations of known occurrences of rarities and provides space for recording data. You can get 1 for \$9 (\$8.25 to ABA members) plus \$2.25 for shipping and handling from: ABA Sales, P.O. Box 4335, Austin, TX 78765.#

ACT BULLETIN

At its Aug 14 meeting the Audubon Council of Texas continued its discussion on non-game wildlife legislation/funding. A sponsor of this legislation has been found in the Texas House of Representatives. Further support in the Senate and with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept. is being solicited.

Equally encouraging, the Texas Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (TCAST) expressed great interest in the non-game project. TCAST would like to produce a planning document for non-game wildlife management that could be used in conjunction with the funding and implementation programs.

Thanks to the leadership of the ACT, the creation of a viable non-game wildlife program in Texas may become a reality.

The next ACT meeting will be in Fort Worth, Sat. Oct. 16. On Sun. Oct. 17 there will be a field trip to the Fort Worth Nature Center. Contact Helen B... (755-4744) for the tentative agenda and registration form.#

UPCOMING ELECTION

In Jan. we elect new officers: President, Vice-pres. & Sec.-Treas. Please submit your suggestions to the nominating committee: Peggy Riede (821-0989), Bob Johnson (751-0125), Sid Shepperd (566-2162). They will also welcome additional volunteers on the committee.

MEMORIALS

From

Virginia Baker
Mary Ellen Work
Jane Fowler
El Paso Trans/Pecos Audubon Society

In memory of

Kris Kohlhoff

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM LECTURE

THURS. 21 OCTOBER, 7:30 PM, Horizon City Community Chapel, 14802 Duanesburg, Horizon City. Albert J. Wool will present his film ROAMING CALIFORNIA'S COAST RANGE as the Audubon Wildlife Film Lectures return to El Paso following a 4-year absence. Nestled between the Pacific Coast and California's great Central Valley, the Coast Range is a rugged land where springs, a few small streams, stockponds and seasonal rains are vital to life. The film portrays vividly the ties between water and Coast Range plants and wildlife. Studies of Golden Eagles, dragonflies and gray foxes, a visit to a "sapsucker bar", and a search for an American Dipper's nest all highlight Mr. Wool's presentation.

We can thank chapter member Walter Brown and the Horizon City Community Chapel for making this event possible. They are requesting donations of \$2 for adults and 50¢ for children 12 and under to cover expenses. #

EP/TPAS DIRECTORY AVAILABLE

Now you can find out who your fellow Auduboners are. Now you'll know who to call when you want to tell EVERYBODY about the Aztec Thrush that just appeared in your yard. Our new directory is hot off the press, and it lists all members who live within our chapter's geographic territory. A bargain at 25¢ each, you can get 1 at our general meetings or from Jane Fowler (8212 Parkland, El Paso 79925, 772-0296), who deserves thanks for typing the whole thing. #

HEADED FOR INDIANA...?

...Then you may want to read the latest addition to our chapter library. Noted Hoosier Bob Bleicher has donated INDIANA BIRDS AND THEIR HAUNTS by Charles, Shirley and Timothy Keller to our collection. The book includes

descriptions of 63 promising birding areas and an annotated checklist covering 382 species. Thank you, Bob. Be prepared to lead our Indiana field trip. #

VOLUNTEERS' CORNER

The recent rains have restored Feather L. to some semblance of its former grandeur. Early-migrant ducks are finding its sparkling waters. People all over town are talking once again about visiting this idyllic spot. Clearly, the fall opening of our wildlife sanctuary at 9500 N. Loop Rd. is drawing near.

That means we need volunteers. Can you spend an occasional Sat. morning at the lake greeting visitors and answering their questions? Please call Jeannette Cole (565-1957) or Ginny Baker (562-9461) if you can help.

We also need help in the photography department. Specifically, the Education Committee needs slides of common El Paso area birds for the program they are now preparing. Good, clear close-up shots including familiar and local backgrounds would be most useful and appreciated. Slides needed are: Mockingbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle(s), Pyrrhuloxia, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Canyon Wren, and Ladder-backed Woodpecker. It would be great if we could obtain slides of any birds including the above: drinking water or bathing, eating from yard feeders, or feeding from natural sources.

Slides of water birds needed are: Cinnamon Teal, Green-winged Teal, Pied-billed

Grebe, and Ring-necked Duck. If you have good slides of any of these subjects now, could we make copies of them? How about trying your hand at photographing some of them? Please contact Ginny Baker for more information(562-9461).

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YOU CAN WIN!

There is still time to enter your junk in our Great Rummage Contest! Who will win the prize for the tackiest painting? For the most pairs of shoes entered? For the oldest paperback book? It could be you! Maybe you even have a shot at our Grand Prize, for the most totally unidentifiable object. Enter as many items as you like, as often as you like, but get your entries to 1 of the judges--- Joe Guinn (566-8438), Jane Fowler (772-0296) or Peggy Riede (821-0989) before 17 Oct. Winners will be announced that day at the flea market in the Woolco parking lot on Dyer. Remember ,all entries become property of El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon. #

THE FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS:
TALKIN" WITH TATI

On 15 Sept. a group of over 40 El Paso-area conservationists met with State Senator H. Tati Santiesteban, Chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, for an informal discussion about future management of the Franklin Mrs. State Park. The talks centered on possible creation of an advisory committee on the Franklins. Who should be on the committee? Who should it advise? Who should appoint its members? Should it be created by an act of the legislature or would it be more effective without such a mandate? At the meeting's end, the senator was leaning towards an informal advisory group that would advise him directly, and he asked the conservationists to prepare a proposal for such a group. Senator

Santiesteban deserves thanks for opening these lines of communication with the El Pasoans working hardest to protect the Franklins. /John Sproul/



DR. RANDEL'S POOL

That fire you saw at Randel's Pool on Sat. 18 Sept. was no accident; it was the deliberate clearing of salt cedar from around this tiny pond along the Rio Grande in the upper valley. Lots are selling fast in the new Santa Teresita Acres "country home" development (RR, Dec. 1981) off Country Club Rd. just w. of the river. It appears 1 of the first homes to be built will be hard by Randel's Pool. The land has been cleared, and the house frame is now going

The Randel's Pool area has long been a favorite with El Paso birders. Dr. Brown Randel, a member of the El Paso Bird Study Club in the 1940s and 50s, once owned the land and gave club members access. In 1944, the 550-acre Mesilla Valley; Natl. Wildlife Refuge was established on the w. side of the Rio Grande between the Country Club Rd. Bridge and the Courchesne bridge (Anapra). In time the pool might have become refuge land, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service abandoned this refuge in 1949. Now, Dr. Randel's pool awaits a different fate. Let's hope its new owners appreciate and protect its natural values.



OBSERVATIONS

August 19 - September 19

(Note: The new nomenclature and taxonomic sequence have been used in this report and will continue to be used in future reports.)

The only way to follow up a great summer of birding is with an outstanding fall; and up to this point, it has been nothing less. Four new species were recorded for our checklist area, along with 8 others that had previously been seen 5 times or less. Many migrants arrived earlier than usual, and several montane species seen (also early) may be an omen of more excellent birding to come.

LOONS-FALCONS

A single Double-crested Cormorant flew overhead at Arroyo Park 8-26 (DoT). Snowy Egrets, Cattle Egrets, and B. C. Night Herons were present at Tornillo throughout the month (BZ,AG). Most noteworthy was a group of 111 Snowys there 8-28 (BZ). Y. C. NIGHT HERONS (verified for El Paso only last month) were noted on 6 occasions. A lone adult was present at Randel's Pool 8-19 (AA), 8-22 (JD), 8-24 (BZ, KZ), and 9-18 (BZ,KZ). An immature was studied in the same location on 9-12 (BZ, JD). Finally, 2 adults and 1 immature were in the Tornillo drainage 8-28 (BZ).

The BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCK remained near Canutillo where it was seen by many during the month (BZ,KZ,SWe,JS). Incredibly, another one was sighted off the river levee near Tornillo on 9-12 (AG, TW). Mississippi Kites were noted near Randel's Pool 8-22 (JD) and 8-24 (BZ,KZ). An early Northern Harrier was at the Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds (hereafter FBSP) 8-21 (SW,JDP,MB). Lone Ospreys were at FBSP 9-16 (BZ,JD), Durling's Farm 9-16 (BZ), and Randel's Pool 9-18 (JD,JS,JF). An adult Golden Eagle soared over I-10 on the west side 9-17 (BZ).

RAILS-WOODPECKERS

Sora Rails were heard at Tornillo 8-28 (BZ) and FBSP 9-16 (BZ,JD). A solitary Marbled Godwit was at FBSP on 9-6 (SW, MB). Runner-up honors for bird-of-the-month go to the UPLAND SANDPIPERS (1st

El Paso record), which were seen in invasionary proportions. The first observation was of a lone bird at FBSP 8-21 (SW, JDP,MB). This would prove to be only the tip of the iceberg. Subsequent checks of recently cut alfalfa fields in both the upper and lower valleys produced a total of 7 more sightings of no less than 96 individuals (BZ,KZ,JD,SWe, JS,AG, et.al.). Has this species been overlooked in the past or was this simply a freak year? Solitary Sandpipers were unusually common this month, as were the normally rare Baird's. A high count of 12 Bairds were at Feather Lake 8-26 (BZ). Lone Stilt Sandpipers were sighted at FBSP 8-25 (BZ,JD) and at the dairy pond off McNutt Rd. 9-7 (BZ).

Two Red-necked Phalaropes were meticulously picked out of a group of over 6000 Wilson's at FBSP 8-25 (BZ,JD). Unusual was a very early Ring-billed Gull at Tornillo 8-28 (BZ). Forster's Terns were noted on two occasions, at FBSP 8-21 (SW,JDP,MB) and Tornillo 9-19 (BZ). Four Common Nighthawks were seen hawking insects high over Durling's Farm 9-8 (BZ). A female Calliope Hummingbird visited an east side feeder 8-22 thru 8-29 (EG), another female was at a feeder in northeast El Paso 8-25 (JD,BZ), and finally, a male was observed at Randel's Pool 9-18 (BZ). A late Broad-tailed Hummingbird frequented a backyard feeder from 9-14 thru 9-17 (JD).

FLYCATCHERS-VIREOS

Cassin's Kingbirds were noted on several occasions (BZ,KZ,SW,MB). Willow Flycatchers, normally uncommon-rare, were seen on nearly every day of the month. A HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER (1st El Paso record) was carefully scrutinized at Durling's Farm 8-24 (KZ,BZ). Three more sightings of lone birds were made in the same location 9-8, 9-16, 9-17 (BZ). A Gray Flycatcher foraged around the campground area of Hueco Tanks 9-2 (JD,BZ), while another was photographed at Memorial Park 9-19 (SW). Inadvertantly omitted from the summer report was a pair of

PURPLE MARTINS (3rd El Paso record) at Los Nogales 6-15 (JD). Scrub Jays arrived early in the Franklins 8-25 (JD). This coupled with a glut of nuthatch reports may foreshadow a good invasion of montane species later in the year. Single White-breasted Nuthatches were at Hueco Tanks 9-12 (SW,MB) and Memorial Park 9-19 (SW,JDP). The first record of PYGMY NUTHATCH in many years was a lone bird at Durling's 9-1 (BZ). Finally, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, rarely if ever recorded away from Memorial Park, was at Durling's 9-19 (BZ).

An early Marsh Wren was sighted at FBSP 9-5 (SW,MB). Very unusual was a Sage Thrasher off McNutt Rd. 8-31 (BZ). This species normally does not arrive in our area until late Oct. Several Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were noted at Randel's Pool 8-24 (KZ,BZ), and a single Black-tailed was at Hueco Tanks 9-12 (SW,MB). A post-GRAY VIREO (no verified records) was glimpsed at Durling's Farm 9-19 (MB). PHILADELPHIA VIREOS (2 previous records) were sighted 3 times this month (all lone birds), Randel's Pool 8-27 (BZ) and 9-18 (BZ), and Whispering Springs 9-19 (SW,MB).

WARBLERS-HOUSE SPARROW

The bird-of-the-month honors go to a pair of PROTHONOTARY WARBLERS discovered at Randel's Pool 9-18 (BZ). A strong storm the previous night apparently blew them in, giving us a first El Paso record. Both birds were photographed later in the day (KZ), while only the female could be relocated by early evening (BZ,JD,SW). On 9-19 however, the male was sighted again in the same area (JoD). Many warblers arrived early: an Orange-crowned was at Durling's 8-26 (KZ), a Black-throated Gray at Arroyo Park 8-26 (Dot, DD), and a Townsend's at Arroyo Park 8-23 (DoT,DD). Northern Waterthrushes were frequently reported: one in an east side backyard 8-29 (DT), 1 at Durling's 8-30 thru 9-1 (BZ), 2 at FBSP 9-6 (SW), and 1 at Whispering Springs 9-6 (SW). A KENTUCKY WARBLER (2nd El Paso record) was at Durling's 9-19 (BZ). Female Am. Redstarts were sighted at Randel's Pool 8-25 (DoT,DD) and just off Mesa at the BTK office complex 9-2 (SW). Summer (BZ,JD, AG,MG) and Western (BZ,KZ,JD,DT) Tanagers

were somewhat numerous throughout the month. A dingy male HEPATIC TANAGER (2nd EP record) fed in the company of orioles at Owen's farm 9-8 (BZ). Lone male Northern Cardinals were near Randel's Pool 8-24 (KZ) and 9-12 (JD,BZ), while another spent several days at a feeder near Anthony (HB). A brilliant male Lazuli Bunting was at Durling's 8-31 (BZ), a female was in the same location 9-13 (BZ), and another female at Hueco Tanks 9-19 (BZ).

An imm. male DICKCISSEL (2nd EP record) was discovered at FBSP 9-16 (BZ,JD). Subsequently, a lone bird was at Hueco Tanks 9-18 (JDP) and 2 were there 9-19 (BZ,AG,MG). An early G.T. Towhee was at Durling's 9-8 (BZ). The Cassin's Finches reported in a June field trip follow-up in last month's RR should be retracted. This species occurs only rarely in our area in winter. It does not occur anywhere in the state in summer. Peterson's "Field Guide to the Birds of Texas" lists Cassin's Finch as "a winter visitor to the Trans-Pecos". More care should be used in identifying this species by inexperienced observers. No status revision is needed. Clay-colored Sparrows were unusually numerous this month with a high count of 150 birds at FBSP 9-16 (BZ,JD).

CONTRIBUTORS

Art Arteaga, Helen Bigelow, Mike Butler, Joyce Davis (JoD), Joe Di Pasquale (JDP), Jeff Donaldson, Diane Dutton, Jane Fowler, Al & Madeline Gavit, Ed Gilboe, John Sproul, Dennis Taylor, Dorothy Tobkin (DoT) Steve West (SWe), Scott Wilson, Tony Worth, Barry Zimmer, Kevin Zimmer.

Please report all sightings of rare birds immediately to 545-5184. Feel free to call anytime between 8AM-11PM. Time is often of the essence in getting someone else there to verify rare species. Your cooperation in reporting unusual birds will be greatly appreciated.
/Barry Zimmer-Observations Editor/

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The deadline for the November Roadrunner is October 20th.

CONSERVATION UPDATE

Gleanings from this summer's environmental news:

CLEAN AIR ACT: In August, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved a moderate set of proposed revisions to the Clean Air Act (CAA) (RR; Apr, June 1982). Unfortunately, the full Senate is not likely to act on them this year. In the House, the Energy and Commerce Committee continues to squabble over H.R. 5252. The full House took some negative action in mid-September when it passed (200-184, Richard White voting "Aye") an amendment to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding bill that would prohibit EPA from requiring cities with serious air-pollution problems to initiate vehicle Inspection and Maintenance programs. At press time, conservationists were working hard to convince the Senate not to take like action.

WETLAND PROTECTION: In July, Congressional debate over reauthorization of the Clean Water Act began in earnest. Possible weakening of the wetland-protection provisions in Section 404 (RR, May 1982) got much of the attention. Meanwhile, the Army Corps of Engineers has issued new regulations that reduce its role in wetlands protection, and both the Corps and the "Environmental Protection Agency" are working on additional changes in their Section 404-related rules. Wetlands are not likely to benefit from these changes.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT: A big victory! A 3-year reauthorization of a strong Endangered Species Act (RR, Mar 1982) passed both the U.S. House and Senate unanimously in early June.

MONO LAKE: The news from Mono L. in California (AUDUBON, Sept 1980) remains grim. The annual census of Mono's California Gull colonies revealed 5010 chicks this year, compared to 11,968 in 1981, 28,197 in 1980 and 35,500 in 1976. Los Angeles did agree to stabilize the lake for the rest of 1982. That sounds nice until you consider that runoff in the Mono Basin in 1982 is expected to exceed 153%

of average and that LA will still export 120,000 acre-feet of water from the basin, compared to 100,000 in an average year.

IT'S AN EYAS!: The Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute (CDRI) in Alpine (RR, May 1981) made history on 3 July with the first-ever birth of an Aplomado Falcon in captivity, the initial success in the CDRI's 5-year-old captive breeding program. Eventually, the program may lead to reintroduction of the Aplomado to its former U.S. range, including s. and w. Texas, s. New Mexico and s.e. Arizona. Contratulations, CDRI!

EL PASO RECYCLING: El Paso's recycling program (RR: Nov 1980, Jan 1982) is floundering. Only about 4% of the city's households participate. Remember to put your recyclables--newspapers in 1 bag, cans in another--out with your trash for the 2nd garbage pick-up each week. If you live in an apartment complex, call the Sanitation Dept. (594-8625) to arrange a special pick-up. Remind your friends to recycle.

ASARCO: The Texas Air Control Board decided 8 June to delay, pending completion of certain air-quality studies, a decision on whether to make permanent ASARCO's variance from the statewide sulfur-dioxide standards (RR, Jan 1982). After the study results are known, new public hearings will be held, probably in Spring '83.

CALIFORNIA CONDOR: Three pairs are known to have nested in 1982. Only 1 is now raising a chick. The 2nd pair experienced 2 widely-publicized egg losses. The 3rd hatched its egg but didn't give proper care to its offspring. Condor Research Center biologists got emergency permission to take the chick from the nest, and it is now doing well in captivity. In Aug, the Calif. Fish & Game Commission restricted severely the research center's permit for condor captive breeding and radio telemetry. Labeling this action a retreat from the original inter-agency agreement for the research program (RR: May '80, Jan '81), the Natl. Audubon Society threatened to withdraw (cont. next page)

its support from the program. It has since reconsidered and is continuing its participation under protest. Research center biologists peg the current wild condor population at 20 or less. #
/John Sproul/

CHAPTER DISPLAY

Our chapter display will be at Northgate Shopping Center Sat. Oct. 30th. If you haven't seen it yet, stop by; better yet, volunteer to help pass out pamphlets for a few hours. The annual membership campaign has started. Help get the word out to the community. Anyone wanting to join Audubon, please use the application form printed at the right. Our chapter gets a rebate when you join thru us, but does not when you join in response to a National membership solicitation. For more info, or if you can help, contact Bob Johnson, 751-0125, 5109 Paris, EP 79924.

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THE ROADRUNNER is sent to all members of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. Nonmembers can subscribe for \$4 per year. Make checks payable to "El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society" and mail to : RR Editor PO Box 9655 El Paso, Tx 79986. Please send any changes or corrections in name, address, or telephone # to this same address. #

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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