



Volume 25 (4)  
September, 1995

# The ROADRUNNER

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society

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## *Another Season...*

Welcome back to another season with the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society. We hope everyone had a safe and fun summer. Bob Johnson's Observations page shows that many of us did some productive birding over the summer. That should continue as we enter the period for migration and many more birds pass through our area. Bob has already set up a number of field trips for the fall and winter, so plan on being busy. Feather Lake will be opening soon (see page 2) and that oasis in the city has become a favorite resting spot for many birds. Nancy Wilson has lined up interesting, informative, even controversial speakers for our General Meetings several months in advance. All of this adds up to another great season for our chapter and you shouldn't have to look any further for something to do.

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## *Wherefore the Wilderness*

September  
General  
Meeting

### **General Meeting, Monday, September 18 -**

The first general meeting of the season is entitled "Wilderness on Trial" and will be presented by Ms. Susan Schock. Ms. Schock has been the Director of Gila Watch for five years and is deeply involved in a continuing controversy in the Gila Wilderness area near Silver City, New Mexico. The controversy has pitted livestock ranchers, bankers, and the "Wise Use" movement against the public interest with the federal government doing a very poor job in the middle.

Susan Schock is a native westerner concerned that her daughter - and all of our children - will not have a wilderness to enjoy. This fight is taking place in many areas of the West, but this one is in our own backyard and deserves our attention. This meeting is a "must" for all of us who have any concern for the wilderness areas of our country. The meeting will be held in the Garden Center, 3105 Grant, in Memorial Park in El Paso at 7:30 PM.

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## *Inside...*

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## Armchair Activist

### Audubon Activist

Audubon's Armchair Activist is an exciting chapter development program that builds both membership and leadership. As one of the cornerstones of Audubon's grassroots efforts, chapters across the country work together under the banner of the Armchair Activist program and are truly making a big impact in our collective efforts to protect the environment.

Armchair Activist is directed toward Audubon chapter members who — for whatever reason — don't participate in mainstream chapter meetings, but want to make a difference. Individuals in the Armchair network have committed a small amount of time each month to the Audubon Cause in ways that can really make a difference while accommodating a busy lifestyle. Through activities such as Letter of the Month, chapter members can respond to national, state, local and regional issues without leaving their home. The Telephone Rapid Response Team is another successful effort to mobilize and generate phone calls on urgent issues when needed. When Auduboners across the country unite in action, we are able to move critical legislation and affect policy in a new and powerful way.

We hope you will join Audubon's Armchair Activist program and become part of the growing network of individuals working together to protect our natural world. For more information on joining an existing program, contact Armchair Activist at 800-659-2622.

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## Federal Funds and Nonprofit Organizations

from Liz Raisbeck of National Office of the National Audubon Society

**D**uring the summer there were accusations that non-profit organizations use federal grants for political advocacy. The National Audubon Society is a large recipient of federal grants and in fiscal 1994 received \$395,000 from the federal government in direct grants or pass throughs from other

entities, such as universities. This is slightly less than 1% of the NAS budget. Samples of the kinds of grants received are:

- Study of influence of hydrology on fish populations in the Everglades ecosystem: \$52,000
- Study of wood stork populations at Silver Bluff sanctuary, Georgia: \$57,544
- TV advertisement on waste recycling and waste reduction: \$15,364
- Assistance to Russian wildlife managers of crane populations on the Amur River: \$15,000

These studies appropriately lead to wildlife conservation management policies by federal, state and international governments. The NAS does not use its grants to lobby the federal government. They are for specific research projects only, or as in the case of the TV spot, to support non-controversial public education. The move by Congressman Macintosh and others to restrict organizations that receive federal grants from engaging in lobbying activities is an effort to weaken progressive groups. But both conservative and progressive non-profits receive grants from the federal government. Audubon must speak out for the appropriateness of the federal government contacting with non-profits to gather expert information to assist the government in making responsible decisions.

In 1993, the NAS received a total of \$275,726 from federal grants for similar types of projects. A similar amount was received in 1992.

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## Anticipation Builds Towards Opening Day

By John Sproul

### Feather Lake News

The countdown has already begun. This year's eagerly awaited Opening Day at our Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary will be Sunday, October 1. Once again, Feather Lake will be open through the end of April every Sunday afternoon from 2 PM to dusk and the 1st and 3rd Saturday mornings each month from 8 AM to Noon.

Feather Lake is located at 9500 N. Loop, between

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Zaragosa Road and Americas Ave., in El Paso. Last year, an excellent fall flight of North American ducks plus good winter habitat conditions at Feather Lake combined to yield the largest numbers of waterfowl in memory at our sanctuary. All indications are that this winter will be equally impressive.

Last year was also our best ever for public visitation. And the success of our visitor program depends on you! As always, we need volunteers to staff the sanctuary when it is open to the public. Can you help? Please contact Craig Braginton (877-4138).

The Audubon Navy suffered a severe blow this summer when Gene Groth moved to Fredericksburg and took with him the rowboat he had let us use at Feather Lake since 1991. Many thanks, Gene, for sharing your sturdy craft with us. Does anyone else out there have an old rowboat they would be willing to sell, contribute or loan to our organization for use at Feather Lake? If yes, please call Craig Braginton (877-4138) or John Sproul (545-5157).

Also in line for thanks are the good folks at Graffiti Wipe Out. They did a great job removing the graffiti spray-painted this spring on the rock wall along the west side of the sanctuary.

Speaking of good work, our next workday at Feather Lake will be an afternoon affair, starting at 2:30 PM on Sunday, September 17. After a few hours of honest labor, we'll relax and enjoy the birds returning to the lake at the end of the day.

—  
John Sproul  
ae494@rgfn.epcc.edu

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## **Coastal Communities Flock to Join Texas Birding Trail**

Austin—Ninety-five sites in dozens of communities are included in the state's Central Texas Coast section

of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail that will be launched next month to promote birding along the 500-mile Texas coast.

Coordinators of the \$1.5 million birding trail have been overwhelmed with the response of local communities, which nominated 120 premier birding sites for Phase I of the trail. The new trail, which is being developed in three phases - the Central Texas Coast (CTC), Upper Texas Coast (UTC) and Lower Texas Coast (LTC) - will be completed over the next two years and ultimately include more than 200 sites.

The first official site along the Birding Trail will be dedicated at 11:15 a.m., Friday, Sept. 8 in Rockport to coincide with the annual HummerBird Celebration. Presiding at the ceremony will be legendary birdwatching authority Roger Tory Peterson, as well as state and local government leaders.

"We received three times more site nominations than we expected from communities that wanted to be included in the new trail," said Madge Lindsay of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's nongame and urban wildlife program. "Rural communities especially recognize the economic benefits nature tourism activities such as birding can bring to their areas."

Lindsay said the new trail will make it easy for birdwatchers to drive from Beaumont to Brownsville and take in what has been called the "mother lode" of birding experiences. Phase I of the trail focuses on sites along the mid-coast from Big Boggy National Wildlife Refuge near Wadsworth to the uppermost tip of Padre Island.

"When you look at the sheer number and species we have on the Texas coast, there is no richer birdwatching experience in the nation," said Andrew Sansom, TPWD executive director. "The problem is that birding in Texas has historically been unorganized, with most sites functioning independently. This trail will combine these independent sites into one cohesive, marketable unit."

Serving as the glue to bind the communities, which are located up to 100 miles inland, and the myriad

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birdwatching sites will be interpretive signs, a free map distributed at Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Highway Information Centers and a nominally-priced trail guide detailing birds, sites, local services and accommodations. The project is funded by TxDOT through the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA).

Distinctive brown roadside signs sporting the reflective birding trail logo—a black skimmer—will alert travelers to a nearby birdwatching site. A numbered placard beneath each sign designates the site's location on the trail map and a corresponding entry in a field guide to be published later.

The completed trail will encompass eight state parks and nine state wildlife management areas, as well as nine national wildlife refuges, offering an outstanding diversity of avifauna and other wildlife. In addition to public lands, the central coast section of the trail takes in a number of privately owned sites as well, including those on the Fennessey and King ranches and a bed and breakfast inn near Sarita.

For more information, call Madge Lindsay in Austin at (512) 389-4772 or write to Lindsay, c/o Texas Parks and Wildlife, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744.

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### *Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology* **New Bird Conservation Guide Available**

**I**f you care about birds, you probably know that some of our most beloved songbirds are in trouble.

Scientists call these birds neotropical migrants because they raise their young here in North America, then migrate south to winter in tropical climes. Some studies suggest that nearly three-quarters of all populations of neotropical migrants have declined in numbers over the past decade. It's enough to drive a birder to

despair.

Don't despair! Instead, get to work! A new bird conservation guide, available through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, gives you all the tools you need to swing into action on behalf of your favorite birds—and help ensure their future. The 32-page booklet, titled *Citizen's Guide to Migratory Bird Conservation*, is loaded with great ideas for projects and activities you can do on your own or with a group of like-minded conservationists.

Chapters include "Action from Your Desk" and "Action in Your Yard." "Action in the Field" lists a host of nationwide research projects that depend on volunteers like you to collect essential information about bird populations. These projects include federally supported monitoring programs, such as the Breeding Bird Survey and Breeding Bird Census; state-level atlasing programs; bird banding programs; single-day counts such as Christmas Bird Count; and many others. You're sure to find one that fits your interests and birding skills.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society published the *Citizen's Guide to Migratory Bird Conservation* as a joint project under the auspices of Partners in Flight/ Aves de las Americas (PIF). Established in 1990, PIF is an international conservation program for neotropical migrants.

The *Citizen's Guide to Migratory Bird Conservation* is \$5.00 each or \$2.00 each for five or more copies. The guides can be ordered from: Martha Fischer, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

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### **Donation**

**T**he El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society gratefully acknowledges a donation from Mary Lou Alcorn for work at Feather Lake. The donation was made in memory of Irma Clark.

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## **Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival**

Birders from Texas and across the country are already making plans to attend the 2nd annual Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, "Tropical Birds of the Border," to be held November 8-12 at the Harlingen Municipal Auditorium Complex. As last year, the festival will feature field trips, seminars, a trade show and a children's program.

Speakers include authors Chandler Robbins, Kenn Kaufman, John Tveten and Charlotte Seidenberg, as well as noted cinematographer John Bax and well-known naturalist artist F.P. (Tony) Bennett. Master of ceremonies will be South Texas' foremost birder Fr. Tom Pincelli.

Seminar and presentation topics include "Tropical Flycatchers," "Lesser Known Rio Grande Valley Hot Spots," "Wildlife Gardening," "Owls of Texas," "Rarities of South Texas," "Optics 101," "Birding by Sound," "Birding in the 21st Century," "Raptor Identification," "Eagles of the World," and "Birding Trail of Texas," among others. Field trips will be led by experienced guides to such popular areas as Santa Ana and Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuges, Falcon Dam and Bentsen State Park. Special tours will also be conducted in Harlingen for native landscaping viewing and for flocks of wild Red-crowned Parrots frequently seen in the city.

Attendees will have the opportunity to see many of the 465 species seen in the Rio Grande Valley, including many of the 34 species found nowhere else in the U.S. Victor Emanuel Nature Tours will also be conducting a special tour into Mexico immediately following the festival.

Registration for the festival is \$35. Forms may be obtained from the Harlingen Area Chamber of Commerce, 311 E. Tyler, Harlingen, Texas 78550. Call 210/423-5440 or 1-800-531-7346.

## **About the Newsletter**

The chapter newsletter, THE ROADRUNNER, is published six times a year by the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society. The annual subscription rate for the newsletter only is \$5.00. The newsletter is included with your membership in the National Audubon Society.

Chapter members are encouraged to submit articles for publication in THE ROADRUNNER. The articles may be of any length and in any format, but the editor reserves the right to modify submissions to fit space available.

Articles may be submitted to the editor:

George Barnett  
600 Espina Dulce Pl.  
El Paso, TX 79912

Day: 779-3835  
Night: 581-1829  
Fax: 778-2808  
Internet: labelman@aol.com  
or ac968@rgfn.epcc.edu

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## **Officers of the El Paso/ Trans Pecos Audubon Society**

**President** Craig Braginton 877-4138  
**Vice President** John Kiseda 833-6212  
**Treasurer** Larry Jordan 833-5969  
**Secretary** Jane Fowler 598-2448  
**Directors:**  
Charles Simpson  
Roxanne Schroeder 534-7019  
Bob Johnson 757-1876

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# On The Trail

## MIGRATION

You'll be looking for migrating fall warblers in **Memorial Park**. Meet John Kiseda at the Garden Center on **Saturday September 9th at 7:29AM**. Good possibilities are Solitary and Warbling Vireos, Orange-crowned, Yellow and maybe MacGillivray's Warblers and at this time of the Month always Wilson's Warblers.

## MORE MIGRANTS

For those of you who have a hard time getting up early to go birding, we will have a late afternoon trip on **Sunday the 24th of September**. Meet Bob Johnson at the Crossroads (Doniphan and Mesa) Ponding area - **Time 4:22 PM**. We will check the Doniphan Marsh and the El Paso Country Club area. Snipe and Dowitchers, Yellowlegs and Sandpipers, also the ducks are starting to arrive. Scrub Jays and Red-breasted Nuthatches could be around and Brewers and Yellow-headed Blackbirds will be there.

## MONTAZUMA QUAIL

A weekend trip on **October 7 & 8** to a great place, if you have never been to **Davis Mountains State Park**, try it you will like it, if you have tried it you know its great so come again. The possibility of seeing the elusive little Montazuma Quail is much better (possibly 90%) now than it was a few years ago. Other good bets are Thrashers and Tufted Titmice plus other wildlife including deer and racoons. If you do not camp try the Indian Lodge located in the State Park or a Motel in Fort Davis (5 miles). For details call Bob Johnson 757-1876.

## PLAN AHEAD

More good trips this fall - mark you're calander **NOW** - Details in the October ROADRUNNER.

October 22 McKittrick Canyon-Fall Foliage  
October 28 Feather Lake-Annual Picnic  
November 4 Hueco Tanks-Winter Birds  
November 11 McNary Resivoir-Water Birds

## HUECO TANKS

Activities at Hueco Tanks Historical Park that benifit the park and FOHT (Friends Of Hueco Tanks).

On the third Sunday of each month a BIT (Bird Identification Tour) will be conducted, starting at **8:30 AM**, by volunteers from the El Paso Trans Pecos Audubon Chapter. The next BIT will be Sunday **September 17th**.

On Friday **September 22d at 8:00 PM** a slide show on Wildlife, Vegetation and Native American Pictgraphs.

On Sunday **September 24th at 9:30 AM** a Native American Pictograph Tour.

On Saturday **October 7, all day - GRAND OPENING of THE RANCH HOUSE** - Display booths, Food booths, Dancers and many other actiities.

For information call 857-1135.

## THE CAN MAN

Don't forget to bring your aluminum cans to the General Meetings. Westsiders can leave them behind the Purple Sage bush located at the right front of the Miskimins home, address - 511'4 Thorton Street - which runs off Country Club Road.

# Observations

May 16, 1995 - August 15, 1995

Uncommon, RARE, and CASUAL sightings.

Due to space limitations only one or two sightings are listed, although in some cases more were reported. This summer we had a number of very rare sightings (full entry underlined). Some of the listings may not be considered RARE, but because of the season or habitat, they are unusual. The listing of birds in this column is determined using the checklist "Birds of El Paso County, Texas and Adjacent Areas" 7th Edition, October 1987. If you are unsure, don't hesitate to report it, to Bob "WILDBIRDER" Johnson 757-1876 (recorder).

(Observers: Helen Bigalow, Craig Braginton, Doug Emkalns, Betty Fisbeck, Jane Fowler, Madaline Gavitt, Delphina Green, Richard Hermosillo, Sue Hill, Hugh Jameson, Juron Janowski, Bob Johnson, John Kiseda, Bruce Neville, Al Olivas, Estela Rodarte, Patricia Russell, John Sproul, Barry Zimmer.)

(Locations: APk-Arroyo Park, Ant-Anthony, Asc-Ascarate Park, Can-Canutillo, Cen-Central El Paso, Cor-Coronado, DMA-Doniphan Marsh, DrS-Dripping Springs, EEP-East El Paso, EFM-Eastside Franklin Mts., FBP-Fort Bliss Ponds, FLk-Feather Lake, Hor-Horizon City, LaC-Las Cruces, Lin-Lincoln School, McN-McNary, Mem-Memorial Park, MPk-Mountain Park, RBq-Rio Bosque Park, STA-Santa Teresa Area, Tor-Tornillo Area, Xrd-Crossroads area.)

## GREBES to DUCKS

<u>WESTERN GREBE</u>	7/7	(JK)	Asc
<u>BROWN PELICAN</u>	6/18	(JJ)	Ant
	6/25	(CB)	Ter
DBL-CRESTED CORMORANT	6/17	(JK)	Xrd
	7/23	(PR)	Xrd
<u>NEOTROPIC CORMORANT</u>	7/15	(JK)	Xrd
WHITE-FACED IBIS	5/28	(JS)	FLk
<u>WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (2)</u>	7/7	(JK)	Asc
<u>CANADA GOOSE</u>	7/7	(JK)	Asc
<u>WOOD DUCK</u>	7/8	(JK)	DMA
GADWALL	6/11	(JS)	FLk
RING-NECKED DUCK	5/23	(BZ)	FBP



LEAST TERN

## BIRDS OF PREY

<u>SHARP-SHINNED HAWK</u>	6/17	(JK)	DMA
HARRIS' HAWK	7/25	(JS)	RBq
	7/25	(BF/GN)	FBP
<u>PEREGRINE FALCON</u>	7/22	(JS)	McN

## RAILS to TERNS

<u>SORA</u>	7/19	(AO)	EFM
Greater Yellowlegs	8/13	(BJ)	FBP
<u>LESSER YELLOWLEGS</u>	6/25	(BJ)	FBP
<u>SOLITARY SANDPIPER</u>	6/25	(BJ)	FBP
WILLET	7/16	(BJ)	FBP
<u>WHIMBREL</u>	5/22	(BZ)	FBP
<u>LONG-BILLED CURLEW</u>	5/22	(BZ)	FBP
BAIRD'S SANDPIPER	7/29	(JK)	FBP
RING-BILLED GULL	7/26	(RH)	FBP
<u>LEAST TERN</u>	6/17	(JF/JS)	McN
FORSTER'S TERN	7/16	(BJ)	FBP
Black Tern	7/29	(JK)	FBP



Brown Pelican  
nesting

## PARAKEETS to HUMMINGBIRDS

MONK PARAKEET	5/30	(MG-yd)	Hor
<u>GROOVE-BILLED ANI</u>	7/25	(BF/GN)	FBP
	7/26	(DE/BN)	FBP
Barn Owl	7/2	(JK)	FBP
WESTERN SCREECH OWL	7/15	(HB)	Lin
<u>BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD</u>	5/17	(BZ)	DrS
	5/18	(PR)	STA
CALHOPE HUMMINGBIRD	7/16	(CB-yd)	Can
	7/23	(KR-yd)	Cen
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	7/30	(JK-yd)	Cor
Rufous Hummingbird	7/13	(HB-yd)	Ant

## KINGFISHERS to MOCKINGBIRDS

BELTED KINGFISHER	7/23	(JS)	FLk
<u>ACORN WOODPECKER</u>	5/18	(BZ)	FBP
<u>LEAST FLYCATCHER</u>	5/25	(BZ)	FBP
GRAY FLYCATCHER	5/23	(BZ)	Mem
<u>BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER</u>	6/10	(JK)	FBP
<u>GREEN JAY</u>	6/10	(JK)	FBP
SCRUB JAY	6/29-7/15	(JS)	Cen
Hermit Thrush	5/23	(BZ)	Mem
<u>BLUE MOCKINGBIRD</u>	(very rare in the US)		
	8/8	SH	LaC

## WARBLERS to GOLDFINCHES

<u>CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER</u>	5/19	(BZ)	Mem
BLACK-THROATED GRAY WBLR	8/5	(JK-yd)	Cor
Townsend's Warbler	5/22	(JK)	Mem
NORTHERN CARDINAL	6/21	(DG)	APk
BLACK-HEADED GROSBK	7/17	(HJ)	MPk
<u>VARIED BUNTING</u>	5/17	(BZ)	DrS
	5/25	(BZ)	FBP
RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE	5/19	(JF-yd)	EEP
Lark Sparrow	5/30	(MG-yd)	Hor
BRONZE COWBIRD	5/16	(MG-yd)	Hor
LESSER GOLDFINCH	7/25	(JS)	RBq

# CALENDAR

## September

- Sat., 9** - Field trip to Memorial Park, see page 6.  
**Mon., 11** - Board meeting at Peggy Laswell's home, 7:30 PM.  
**Sat., 17** - Feather Lake workday, 2:30 PM.  
**Sat., 17** - Bird identification tour at Hueco Tanks, see page 6.  
**Mon., 18** - General Meeting, see page 1.  
**Fri., 22** - Hueco Tanks slide show, see page 6.  
**Sun., 24** - Field trip to the Upper Valley area, see page 6.  
**Sun., 24** - Native American Pictograph tour at Hueco Tanks, see page 6.

## October

- Sun., 1** - Feather Lake open, 2:00 PM to Dusk.  
**Sat., 7** - Feather Lake open, 8:00 AM to Noon.  
**Sat., 7** - Field trip to Davis Mountains, see page 6.  
**Sat., 7** - Grand opening of the Ranch House at Hueco Tanks, see page 6.  
**Sun., 8** - Feather Lake open 2:00 PM to Dusk.  
**Mon., 9** - Board Meeting at The El Paso Environmental Center, 7:30 PM.  
**Sun., 15** - Feather Lake open, 2:00 PM to Dusk.  
**Sun., 15** - Bird identification tour at Hueco Tanks.  
**Mon., 16** - General Meeting.  
**Sat., 21** - Feather Lake open, 8:00 AM to Noon.  
**Sun., 22** - Feather Lake open, 2:00 PM to Dusk.  
**Sun., 22** - Field trip to McKittrick Canyon, see page 6.  
**Sat., 28** - Feather Lake annual picnic, see page 6.  
**Sun., 29** - Feather Lake open, 2:00 PM to Dusk.

### El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society

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U.S. Postage  
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El Paso, Texas  
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5109 Paris  
El Paso, Tx 79924