



The Roadrunner

NEWSLETTER OF

EL PASO-TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Geth Osborn White, Editor

CALENDAR

Monday, February 17, Fort Bliss -- at Building 769 -- on Merritt Street. Use Airport Road Gate straight ahead to Pleasanton, right to Merritt. 7:30 P.M.

A closed-circuit color television program on "The Guadalupe" nominated as the outstanding film of the year in Texas in 1972, this program was produced by WBAP-TV in Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. John T. Baker guided the TV team through the Guadalupe, the scenic mountain range at our backdoor. Botanist Barton Warnock, Texas Explorers Club Bob Burleson, Kenneth McClougherty are featured people interviewed in the program with the pros and cons of wilderness status vs. development of the new National Park with its delicate arid land flora and fauna, its magnificent underground caves, its relict forest of pines known as "The Bowl."

Saturday, February 15, 8:00 A.M. -- Horizon Lake, for water and shore birds. Possible exploration of one of canyons back from Helm Ranch. If anyone wants to car-pool or ride together, call persons of their choice. Leaders: Al and Madeline Gavit.

Sunday, February 23, 8:30 A.M. -- Field Trip to Las Cruces, Bill Principe, leader. Meeting place Howard Johnson's Coffee Shop just off I-10 as you enter Las Cruces. Bill has been reporting many interesting bird sightings from the area and I'm sure the trip will be a treat to everybody who goes. Those who want to carpool, again phone persons of your choice.

Saturday, March 8, 8:00 A.M. Field Trip. Meet at the curve on the east side of Trans Mountain Road to explore one of the canyons of the Franklin Mountains. Charlie Jensen will lead this trip. It will be interesting to see what birds are in this habitat at this time of year, also a chance to learn a little geology. Just possibly the wild poppies will be in bloom with all the extra moisture we have had this year.

Sunday, March 16, 7:30 A.M. Field Trip. Shawn Ogburn, raptor specialist from Austin, will lead this trip, aided by his friend, Dave Steinbeck of El Paso. Rendezvous at the intersection of the War Road and Trans Mountain Highway.

Monday, March 17, 7:30 P.M. Regular Meeting at Centennial Museum, UTEP campus. Shawn Ogburn, founder of the Raptor Preservation Society, will be the speaker. Many of you will remember the article Ogburn wrote for the El Paso Times column For The Birds and will recall his work with caring for injured birds of prey. Don't miss this meeting.

Friday and Saturday, April 4 and 5. Symposium at Texas Technical University, Lubbock, Texas, on the Biological Resources of the Guadalupe. Papers from various professors will deal on (1) Geology, (2) Paleo Plant Communities, (3) Summary of the Vegetational Zones of Plant Succession Following Wildlife, (4) Status of Related and Disjunct Species, (5) Agave Complex of Guadalupe Grasslands and Forests, (6) Status of Mollusca, Amphibians and Reptiles, (7) Comparative Aspects of Breeding Avifauna in Selected Woodlands in southern Guadalupe, (8) Sloths, (9) Mammals -- other papers in biological sciences.

BOOK REVIEW

THOMAS P. McELROY, JR. THE HABITAT GUIDE TO BIRDING
Alfred A. Knopf, 1974

By Geth White

The joy of birding -- the reality of walking into the green stillness of an evergreen coniferous forest in our nearby mountains -- the discovery of how meadowlarks sing along the grassy banks of the Rio Grande at sunset -- these are experiences we all share when we go out looking for birds.

Why we would expect warblers in the coniferous forest and meadowlarks on the grassy habitat is explained with great clarity and scientific accuracy in McElroy's book on birding by understanding the complexities of habitat.

Designed to be used by field birders from the Arctic tundra to the Florida Keys, from roughly the 100th meridian east to the Atlantic, by studying this book you can reasonably predict what bird you may expect to see in the eastern half of the North America. Packed with techniques on birding, full of a field biologist's knowledge, it will increase your pleasure in locating and identifying birds for your life list wherever you are, for the know-how you learn in this book can be applied to your area. For example, in the chapter on the Coniferous Forest, he points out you may expect to find chickadees, creepers, flycatchers, grosbeaks, finches, crossbills, pine siskins, grouse, hawks, jays, kinglets, thrushes, vireos, warblers, woodpeckers and wrens. With a good field book applicable to the area, you can co-relate this information to just which chickadee, flycatchers, vireos, etc. If you travel, as most of us do, at least until the energy and economic situation cramped us, this book will be invaluable to the visitor in the eastern half of North America.

In addition to the chapters on habitats, such as Birds of Fields and Meadows, Birds of Brushy Borders, Pond and Streamside Bird Watching, Birds of the Seashores and Beaches, there are chapters on using binoculars and Scopes, Bird Watching in the Garden, Birds in the Night.

The Habitat Guide to Birding includes an index by chapter, and an index by species, an excellent bibliography, enchanting marginal drawings by Matthew Kamenoff. It is strongly recommended to the beginning and experienced birder as a most welcome addition to the natural history library.

NEW OFFICERS OF SOCIETY

By unanimous vote, the slate presented by the nominating committee, chaired by Welden Yerby, was elected. Charlie Jensen will be president for a two-year term; Welden Yerby, vice-president and president-elect; Linda Jones, secretary-treasurer. Board Members: Jack McDaniels, Berttye Barnhart, Sarah Jane Dodds, Mary Moore, Helen Ponder and Geth White. The new Officers will be installed in February.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We would like to see you at meetings and on field trips. Object: Like the song: "Getting to Know You".....

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bernhard
Mr. David Steinbach
Mary Katherine Saunders
William Cotter White, Jr.
Major F. William Tench
Raymond Annas, Director of
El Paso Zoo
Erik S. Andran
Mr. and Mrs. William R. Bickley

Mr. and Mrs. L. I. Davis and family
Mr. Roy A. Dean
Kelly Mulliville
Mrs. H. E. Woten
Mrs. Josephine Yarborough
Transfers:
Dr. Walker P. Porter
Mrs. John K. Rose

OUR LAST MEETING IN JANUARY was one of the most interesting and best attended ones we've ever had. Rare it is to have a perfectly free Golden Eagle nesting quietly on a chair, only blinking slightly at photo-flashes, the perfect guest.

Mike Lockhart painted a graphic picture of his research project in the region of Alpine where he has a successful trapping and marking program, including such sophisticated techniques as telemetry. Eagles with great patches of white in their primaries, eagles with little white, eagles with a wingspread of seven feet, and much smaller ones brought home the challenges of identification of raptors generally with their plumage variations. His time-lapse studies of food items filled one with awe at the ability of the female to lift the weight of prey to the high mountain cliff nest where theavenous eaglets fought over the bloody carcasses of rabbits and gophers, for the most part, and one coyote cub.

Mike will continue his research for two years more under the auspices of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute at Alpine's Sul Ross University. Later work will lead him into regions of the state where sheep and goat raising will give him data on eagles' predation of these animals.

BOARD MEETING will convene at the home of Charlie Jensen, 5816 Vista Clara, on Wednesday, March 5, at 7:30 P.M.

SOME NOTEWORTHY BIRD SIGHTINGS

On January 5, a prairie Falcon was sighted on Railroad Drive in east El Paso and a burrowing owl by Dave Steinbach.

Bill Hunt was checking out Feather Lake for wintering waterfowl and saw 17 Cattle Egrets, the resident Pied-billed Grebe, canvasbacks, redheads, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers when a hunter fired shots. To his great surprise, an estimated 500 birds took off from the heavy cattail growth in this 40-acre flood control pond.

On January 9, Geth White had a call from Dr. Gregory Nauck, of the University of Wisconsin, in El Paso for Reserve Training, an experienced birder, who was looking for the Rufous-crowned Sparrow and wanted directions. After being told of likely locations, including McKelligon Canyon, he commented: "I saw an out-of-range bird there, but I

assume you have a few every winter, and immature Golden-crowned Sparrow in one of the canyons." This is a confirmation of Andy Sigler's immature Golden-crowned Sparrow which is anything but a regular visitor to El Paso though some were trapped in Big Bend in 1972.

On January 10, Charlie Jensen reported a female over-wintering hummingbird coming to his rushing water fountain to bathe, this clean little bird not confining her ablutions to Saturday nights, but three or four times a week all winter. He hopes for a photo of this rather rare observation of a hummer bathing.

On January 18, Bill Principe and Carol Dimeff from Las Cruces reported an unusual bird, the Dipper, at a dammed-up spring in the Organs at La Cueva Park on Ligon Ranch. It may be over-wintering, and there was no doubt about the identification of this chunky grey bird which dipped and blinked white eyelids constantly.

Geth and Ed White had a try at photographing some of Mrs. John Fleager's six hummingbirds which are over-wintering at her two feeders which are supplied with sugar water and protein supplement. While we waited we observed a male Anna's in beautiful plumage, male Black-chinned, female Anna's and Black-chinned and a male Broad-tailed. She has spent so many hours watching these little sprites she can separate each one by personality traits as well as behavior and her life has been completely disrupted. She lives in Mountain Park on El Morro,

Field-trippers on January 18 to EPNG Pumping Station had good studies of large flocks of Horned Larks and other usual wintering birds of this habitat, mowed alfalfa fields and bordering scrub desert. Sage sparrows were absent from the scrub this year.

Those who made the trip to Tornillo in the lower valley saw a small flock of Black-crowned Night Herons on the 25th, for quite an early record, and an Orange-crowned Warbler in the brush.

Byron Berger, graduate student at NMSU, missed the Dipper and the Groove-billed Ani in the Cruces area, but was rewarded with a glimpse of a Snowy Owl (some numbers were wintering in a nearby refuge at Great Bend, Kansas the last week of January).

Ruby Allen has found her Phainopeplas. She and Sara Jane Dodds birded up at the Rio near Old Mesilla in an old bosque and were rewarded. Ruby is doing research on Phainopeplas at the University of Arizona and would appreciate reports at 751-7024.

On January 30, a neighbor of Esther Bernhard's had a hummingbird repeatedly flying down to a bouquet of artificial posies in the yard. Her husband is going to try for a photo.

That White-tailed Hawk again. This seems to be Al Gavit's bird. For two winters he has seen them in the lower valley in the country. He and Madeline did their own hawk count following levees and back roads to Fort Hancock on February 8 and saw one immature and one mature White-tailed Hawk which is a bird confined to the Rio Grande region in Texas. They had a total of 43 hawks, the usual Marsh, Redtails and Kestrels plus the rare White-tailed. At Horizon Lake near where they live they are puzzled over an unusual buteo which has a light area at the rump like a Rough-legged but a light tail without apparent barring.

On February 9 Geth and Ed White went over to the home of the Dillon Cole's, 4608 Caples, across from Radford School to see a Ringed Turtle Dove, an escaped cage bird which has been reproducing successfully in the wild in Los Angeles and Miami, Florida. It is a lovely pale dove with a black crescent at the back of the neck and seemed quite interested in the courting antics of a pair of White-winged Doves in a pine tree. Some people count this bird on their life list and some do not. It's status is uncertain in birding circles.

CEC HAS STIMULATING MEETING

Citizens Environmental Council, under the chairmanship of Dr. Howard Applegate, met at luncheon at the Student Union Building in the Faculty Dining Room on the 8th of February. Candidates for current city elections were special guests as well as students who won the environmental awareness contests in the city schools, conducted by Charles Webb. Examples of their excellent and original art, poems, graphics were displayed.

Dr. Applegate spoke on Border environmental programs and the organization of scientists at universities in all the border states, together with Mexico's government to present a symposium on mutual concerns of air and water pollution at Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico, On March 13 and 14, 1975; a frontal attack upon a neglected problem by qualified people.

Mrs. Tony Conde, member of the Mayor's El Paso's Energy Saving Commission, reported on her commission's annual activities including considering bumper stickers to combat public apathy, enlisting the cooperation of utility companies with TV spots of energy conservation, and mailing enclosures in bills, building code changes, reduced lighting in shopping centers, computerized carpooling inspection in Dallas, and others.

Mr. Gilbert Saucedo, Sanitary Engineering head, spoke of the successful program of recycling newsprint, using sanitation people at no additional cost, resulting in revenue to the city of \$18,375, with small participation in the city. He urged everyone to talk to neighbors to enlist their cooperation in the program and enlarge it. He also spoke on a plan to recycle, by the city, solid waste.

Malcolm Harris and Geth White spoke on the legal need to save the Relict Forest in the Franklins through the Antiquities and Scientific Areas Preserve Act. Dr. Applegate appointed them and Dr. Al Canaris as a committee to proceed to accomplish this.

REPORT ON BLM MEETING

By Sarah Jane Dodds

The State of New Mexico is inquiring into areas for administrative proposals for BLM in four regions: Socorro, Albuquerque, Roswell and Las Cruces. The latter being the closest to El Paso, environmentalists from here attending the meeting decided to concern themselves with it. Encompassing nine management areas, to be reviewed in 1975 are the Las Unvas unit and the Caballo Unit. Resource analysis is divided into 1) Land, 2) Mineral, 3) Timber, 4) Watershed, 5) Wildlife, 6) Recreation, 7) Forage.

Each of these seven resource categories is studied in depth by BLM's tunnel vision technique; a presentation is made on all by the various technical heads, and a compromise on best use is made by the whole BLM management region. By previous experience with the Organ Mountains, they have found the most effective time for public input comes at the time they start compromising when they announce public meetings. If you want to be notified individually, please request it from the Bureau of Land Management, 1705 N. Valley Drive, P.O. Box 1420, Las Cruces, N.M., 88001. Over 100 people attended the January meeting, conservationists² in the greatest numbers.

The Environmental Impact Statement on McGregor Range is due in 1975. Heavily used for grazing livestock, the plan will be ready for distribution very soon. In 1975 the Gila Wilderness comes up for review by the Las Cruces BLM Management Unit. Guadalupe Canyon was classified as an Outstanding Natural Area this year.

Wesley Leonard, of the Sierra Club, was appointed as Temporary Coordinator for environmentalists. He is especially interested in the Killbourne Hole and Mt. Riley regions which are quite close to El Paso and welcomes your help.

Our thanks to new members Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bernhard, for cutting the stencil, assisting in collating, mimeographing and mailing this newsletter.

DON'T FORGET TO RECRUIT A NEW MEMBER. DUES \$15 single, \$18 family, payable to El Paso-Trans Pecos Audubon Society, mailed to Mrs. Carl Jones, 351 Thunderbird, El Paso, 79912.

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FIRST CLASS