



# EL PASO BIRD STUDY CLUB

## THE ROADRUNNER

February 1942

### Geococcyx Californianus again

The Roadrunner runs in the road,  
His coat is speckled, a la mode,  
His wings are short, his tail is long,  
He jerks it as he runs along.  
His bill is sharp, his eyes are keen,  
He has a brain tucked in his bean;  
But in his gizzard - if you please -  
Are lizards, rats, and bumble bees;  
Also horned toads - on them he feeds -  
And rattlesnakes! and centipedes!

Eve Ganson, in "Desert Mavericks"

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### Additional Winter Birds

Here are some additions to the list of El Paso winter birds published in the January issue:

American Bittern	Long-eared Owl	Canyon Towhee
Canvasback Duck	White-throated Swift	Brewer's Blackbird
Redhead Duck	Red-naped Sapsucker	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Least Sandpiper	Long-crested Jay	Western Meadowlark
Killdeer	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Sage Sparrow
Ring-necked Pheasant	Arizona Pyrrhuloxia	Brewer's Sparrow
Golden Eagle	Green-tailed Towhee	Baird's Sparrow

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### The January Meeting

Last month's meeting of the El Paso Bird Study Club was held at the El Paso Centennial Museum on January 9th. The program of the evening was the showing of two motion picture reels of wild bird life filmed in Canada by the American Museum of Natural History. Particularly good was the reel entitled "A Bird City", showing vast numbers of waterfowl of several kinds, at home at the Johnston Lake National Wildlife Refuge of Canada.

The newly elected Club officers for 1942 were installed; the Treasurer gave her report and called for membership dues; it was decided that official membership cards for the club would be printed at once, and issued to all members in good standing (those members who have already paid dues for 1942 will receive their cards with this issue of the bulletin).

The question of THE ROADRUNNER was submitted to vote, and accepted by the club without opposition as its official organ, to be published prior to the regular meeting each month for nine months of the year. Editorial responsibility was left to the discretion of the President.

It was decided that regular monthly meetings of the club will be held on the first Monday of each month excepting June, July, and August.

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### The February Meeting

The next meeting of the El Paso Bird Study Club will be held Monday, February 2, at 7:45 p.m. in room 504 Mills Bldg. This is the club room of The El Paso Camera Club, and should prove quite satisfactory for our regular meeting place. The Camera Club has graciously consented to the free use of the room as a regular meeting place for the El Paso Bird Study Club on the condition that we arrange to provide two or three folding chairs to be left in the room to replace some there that are in bad condition. (Volunteers to this matter are hereby invited).

As a program for the meeting, Vice-President Marguerite Wright will discuss birds and birding at Picacho Bosque, one of the best birding areas in our region. Guests are invited.

## The El Paso Bird Study Club

Organized to promote knowledge of, interest in, and protection for the wild bird life of the El Paso region. Meetings are held the first Monday evening of each month except June, July, and August. Membership dues are \$1.00 per year, payable in January.

Corresponding Secretary - Miss Gertrude Fink, 2610 Wyoming Street

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### Call for Dues

If you have not yet paid your dues for 1942 Club membership, you are already delinquent. Dues are payable to the Treasurer, Mrs. Elsie McElroy Slater, 516 Prospect Avenue, or to the Corresponding Secretary.

The following are paid up and in good standing:

Mary Belle Keefer	Maude Rogers
Tom Kirksey	Elsie McElroy Slater
Jane Kirksey	Ethel Wiggs
Lena McBee	Marguerite Wright

Official membership cards are being enclosed with this bulletin to paid members. Come to the next meeting and pay your dues.

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### A Greeting from the Garden Club

Jan. 22

"Congratulations on the attractive little periodical called 'The Roadrunner.' Fledgling though it is, it bears the earmarks of masterly construction and artistic design...

"The El Paso Garden Club and your own organization should work in harmony, as birds and gardens just cannot be separated. Teach us more about our native birds and how to attract them to our gardens.

"Wishing you and your new publication every success,

Amy J. Jenness

Editor, Garden Club News Letter"

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### A Letter from the National Audubon Society

Jan. 22

"Thank you for sending to our Society a copy of your Roadrunner. Congratulations to the members of the El Paso Bird Study Club. I think it is a fine start, and hope you will keep it up.

"Would it be possible for you to place the library of our Society on your mailing list in order to receive the Roadrunner as issued.

"Wish I could be in El Paso now to see the winter birds you have listed in the Roadrunner.

Sincerely yours,

Marie V. Beals  
National Audubon Society  
1006 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N. Y."

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### Espionage or Birding?

As a new angle on the war situation as well as the best birding story of the month we offer the following contribution from Hot Springs, in the Texas Big Bend:

Mrs. John Whittaker, widely known for her bird observations in the Big Bend country, was afield on her annual Christmas Census for Bird Lore. As she followed the course of the Rio Grande on her lone hike, she was spotted by an Army patrol, who watched her for some time as she strolled along, peering about with binoculars and carefully making notes in her notebook. The Army patrol "captured" her and placed her under arrest for indulging in suspicious activity. Mrs. Whittaker had a lot of explaining to do.

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### Decline in Abundance of Waterfowl Here

The extremely small numbers of migratory waterfowl wintering in the El Paso region have aroused local comment and concern. Several species of ducks usually rather common here at this season are nearly or totally absent. All species are scarce. It has been suggested that the record-breaking rains of last fall to the east, north, and west of here have left large areas still inundated, and that in this region of normally scarce water, large numbers of waterfowl have been attracted to those places. No other explanation is apparent to us at this time.

Outstanding Birding Areas of the Southwest  
(To be continued)

That strange isolated region, unique in America, the Big Bend of Texas! Swerving far south to cut a vast piece-of-pie-shaped area of burnt up desert, over-grazed valleys, and lofty wooded mountains out of Mexico, the Rio Grande here makes its spectacular "Big Bend." In this caprice of physical geography, the river has scoured its dark, mysterious way through three long rut-like canyons, Santa Helena, Boquillas, and Mariscal. You might lose half a dozen eastern States in this waste of sun and silence. Towering high over the west of Texas, filled with a strangely assorted plant, bird, and animal life this Big Bend is often referred to as a "Biological Island." It is said that every plant in the Big Bend "either sticks, stings or stinks."

The following is quoted from Herbert Brendt in his book Texas Bird Adventures:

"Texas is a rich ornithological empire. It may be divided into several definite bird regions, each of which has characteristic inhabitants that are usually not found elsewhere in the State. Among those areas none is more interesting from a floral and faunal standpoint than the Big Bend region of the Rio Grande.

This area lies in far central western Texas, directly south of the south-western corner of New Mexico, and is nearly five hundred miles northwest of Brownsville and the Gulf of Mexico. At this point the Rio Grande makes a wide, sweeping bend the diameter of which is about 150 miles, the river here swinging northward, avoiding a great mountain group that rises majestically in Mexico and deflects the waters around its northern base.

"This region of the Big Bend is a vast solitude...culminating at the elbow of the Big Bend in a strange major mountain mass...which the Indians have named 'Chisos' or 'Ghost Mountains.' Rearing high above are numerous smaller pinacles, but all dominated in stately magnificence by Mount Emory, 7,835 feet in altitude, the tallest peak in the Chisos Mountains and the highest point of land between there and the whole Atlantic coast of North America.

"The birds of the Big Bend region may be divided into three faunal zones: those that breed in the hot Lower Sonoran mesquite, cactus, and creosote-bush-covered mountains, valleys, and plains of the lowlands; those that breed in the Upper Sonoran forests of juniper, nutpine, and live oak of the Chisos Mountains; and those that live among the Transitional Zone yellow pines, cypress, and Douglas firs of the colder upper slopes of the mountains.

"The Chisos Mountains are in many respects distinctive from the southern Rocky Mountains. The general type of the latter is a mountain having a central ridge trending north and south from which many lateral ridges descend. The Chisos Mountains mass, on the other hand, is more inclined to be rectangular in outline. The entire upper area is guarded largely by ramparts of huge, vertical cliffs measuring up to 2000 feet sheer; and below these rocky walls are steep, sometimes wooded talus slopes...

"The highland area within these ramparts is somewhat rolling and the mountains lack a definitely defined backbone. The upper Chisos region is divided into two distinct areas. The northwestern section, which is known as Green Basin, is a wonderful, broad, rugged valley almost entirely surrounded by huge, vertical cliff; while the southeastern area is considerably higher and more extensive is a rough rolling plateau whose outer most edge sheers off into dizzy cliffs.

"All the slopes are generously covered with the typical trees of the mountains, consisting principally of oaks - live and deciduous - pinon, and juniper of three species. There are few large trees except in rare spots favored by soil and water. The hills are stony, the gulches rocky, with little soil anywhere.

"Eastward, in the distance, is the tall Sierra Del Caballo Muerto, reaching up to an elevation of nearly six thousand feet; but this entire mountain mass is uninhabited, for there is not a single permanent water hole in the area. To the south, deeper in the distance, winds the romantic Rio Grande which is marked only by a green strip in the sea of sandy grey. Beyond, and rising to the limit of vision, tower range upon range of large, alluring mountains in Old Mexico.

"It is in Boot Canyon, in the top of the Chisos, that the mountain vegetation becomes most prosperous, for there the trees tower up to sixty feet, and in places fill the canyon bottom with their luxuriant growth; while below, trickling from one rock basin to another in the gorge bottom is usually a slight flow of water. It is here that certain of the rarest North American birds are found, such as the Colima Warbler, the Painted Redstart, and the Blue-throated Hummingbird."

Some Birds Seen in the Big Bend.

Birds listed in this brief account were seen in the southwestern part of Brewster County, Texas, in the summers of 1939 (August 6 to September 6) and 1940 (July 21 to August 26). Altitude varies from 1,000 feet (along the Rio Grande at Hot Springs) to 7,000 feet or more (in the Chisos). Faunal zones are three: (see above). Points visited are: Hot Springs, Boquillas, San Vicente, Johnson's

Ranch, Glenn Springs, Wade Canyon, Homer Wilson's Ranch, Boot Springs, Green Basin  
(explored from Green Gulch to the Window by way of Oak Canyon), and Burnham's Ranch.

Birds seen: (asterisk indicates nest found)

Herons - Treganza's, Louisiana, American Egret

Mexican Cormorant

Ducks - Mallard, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal

Hawks - Strainson's, Western and Fuertes' Red-tailed; Desert Sparrow; Osprey;  
Duck; Golden Eagle, common in the Chisos; Turkey and Black Vultures,  
often seen together.

Doves - Western Mourning\*, White-winged\*, and Inca\*, Band-tailed Pigeon.

Roadrunner\*, Yellow-billed Cuckoo\*.

Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper.

Owls - Flamulated Screech, Western Horned

Stephen's Whip-poor-will, Texas Nighthawk, White-throated Swift.

Hummingbirds - Black-chinned\*, Broad-billed\*, Broad-tailed, Rufous, Anna's,  
Blue-throated.

Woodpeckers - Ant-eating, Cactus, Red-shafted Flicker.

Flycatcher - Arkansas Kingbird, Cassin's Kingbird, Scissor-tailed, Ash-throat-  
ed, Olive-sided, Traill's, Alder, Hammond's, Wright's, Western, W. Wood  
Pewee, Say's Phoebe\*, Black Phoebe.

Swallows - N. Violet-green, Bank, Barn, Rough-winged, Mexican Cliff.

Couch's Jay, White-necked and American Raven.

Black-crested Titmouse, Verdin, Lloyd's and Lead-colored Bush-tit.

Wrens - Baird's, Canyon, Rock, Cactus.

White-breasted Nuthatch.

Western Mockingbird

Thrashers - Crissal's, Curve-billed\*.

Gnatcatchers - Plumbeous, Western

Sonoran Shrike

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Vireos - Texas, Gray, Stephen's

Blackbirds - Red-winged, Yellow-headed, Brewer's, Dwarf Cowbird

Warblers - Colima, Nashville, Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, Sonoran Yellow,  
N. Pileolated, Long-tailed Chat, W. Yellow-throat, Grinnell's Water  
Thrush.

Orioles - Bullock's, Scott's\*, Orchard.

Tanagers - Western, Cooper's Summer\*, Arizona Hepatic.

Crosbeaks - Gray-tailed Cardinal\*, Texas Pyrrhuloxia\*, Blue, Blackheaded.

Sparrows - House Finch\*, Texas Painted Bunting, Arkansas Goldfinch, Texas

Brown Towhee\*, Spotted Towhee, Lark Bunting, Rock Sparrow, Desert Spar-  
row\*, W. Vesper, W. Chipping, W. Lark, Mexican Black-chinned.

Lena McBee

The Black Range of New Mexico and the Chiricahua Mountains of Arizona will be  
covered in the next issue.

Material for this publication should be submitted to Tom M. Kirksey, 570 First  
National Bank Building. Contributions and suggestions, as well as criticisms, are  
greatly appreciated.