



The Roadrunner

NEWSLETTER OF THE TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Lucretia Chew, Editor

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- January 12 FIELD TRIP to Lower Valley. Meet at Horizon Blvd. and I-10 at 8 a. m. for an all-day trip down the valley. Bring a lunch. Places to be visited include the reclamation lake near Fort Hancock, the valley area around Fort Hancock and the brushland along the river near Little Box Canyon southeast of McNary. The lake should be good birding this time of year. This particular part of the river is probably a new one for most of us. Make arrangements to fill cars if you can by contacting others from your area of town who are going.
- January 21 REGULAR MEETING at Centennial Museum at UTEP, 7:30 p. m. Election of officers will be held. Our speaker will be Dr. Albert Canaris from the Biology Department at UTEP. He will speak on parasites in birds with particular examples from the work that is being done in the El Paso area.
- January 27 FIELD TRIP to Rim Road, Kern Place area. An in-town trip to conserve gas. Meet at the El Paso Tennis Club parking lot (Virginia St. below Robinson) at 7:45 a. m. That's about sunrise MDST. Areas include Arroyo Park, Tom Lea Park, and the canyon behind Crazy Cat (the Palisades to you old-timers) if permission can be obtained. The trip will let those of you wishing to go to church get in an hour or two of birding first. The arroyo includes plenty of scaled and Gambel's quail, some cactus wrens, crissal thrashers, pyrrhuloxia, and perhaps jays.
- January 28 BOARD MEETING for new and old officers at 7:30 p. m. at the Chews', 4220 Wallington.

VIRGINIA ENCOURAGES CAR POOLING. The Virginia Department of Highways has opened up reserved express bus lanes to cars with four or more occupants on a nine-mile stretch of Interstate 95 in Northern Virginia during the morning and evening rush hours. The privilege will be extended after some further construction.

If you did not see the article on car pooling in PARADE in October, it has been condensed and reprinted in the January READER'S DIGEST.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Sora Rail	12-17	Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds	Luis/Sue Santaella
Short-eared Owls	12-21	Horizon Lake	Luis/Sue Santaella
Black-chinned Hummingbird	12-25	3130 Mesa Verde	Luis/Sue Santaella
Herring Gull	12-30	Tornillo	Luis/Sue Santaella
Long-billed Dowitcher	12-30	River at Borderland	Carl/Linda Jones
Violet-green Swallow	1-4	Randall's Pool	Luis/Sue Santaella
Golden Eagles	1-5	Near Coronado	Ruth Fenner

AN OWL WITH A TAIL or THE EL PASO CHRISTMAS COUNT

"An owl with a tail? But owls don't have tails that show. But he's round-headed and tiny." So goes the conversation between Sarah Jane Dodds and Ruby Allen. A leap to the telescope, hurried focus, and the stronger eye of superior optics reveals a tiny owl on a wire, rusty in color. The birdwatchers' hearts beat faster for they know they had a rare one for the seventy-fourth annual Audubon Christmas bird count in El Paso on December 15.

Checking on the obvious field marks--rusty color, small round head, plain rusty back, rusty streaked sides, a black patch on each side of the hind neck suggesting "eyes on the back of the head,"--these identified the bird as a Ferruginous Owl. A diurnal creature, much hated by the birds he is known to capture in spite of his small size, the Ferruginous Owl is found in the United States only on the U. S.-Mexico border south to the Strait of Magellan, according to Roger Tory Peterson, author of FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF TEXAS. It is a rare resident of the lower Rio Grande delta in brushy woods, and as this is a non-migratory bird, possibly in the brushy bosque near the Rio Grande in El Paso County where he was seen.

A warm, sunshiny day of the kind El Paso likes to brag about cast a benevolent glow as the nineteen observers in six parties took to the field. A fifteen-mile diameter circle, its center on the south side of Mount Franklin, is drawn to include as much good birding territory as is possible in a difficult situation. What other count has a 7000 foot mountain range, a river dividing two countries, a bordering state, and precious little water in the desert terrain? In order to include both Ascarate Lake and some industrial cooling ponds as well as the valuable Rio Grande River with its old drainage ditches and irrigated fields, the circle has to include much of the downtown urban brick and asphalts, barren of birds except for pigeons.

Specific areas within the count circle which were visited by the various parties included Fusselman Canyon and slopes, North Franklin Peak, Mountain Park residential areas, Frontera Road, Sunland Park, Diez Lagos, Upper Valley residential areas, fields, orchards, ditches to Borderland Road, Ascarate Park, Phelps-Dodge cooling ponds, Memorial Park, Arroyo Park, Cement Lake, canyons off Rim Road, and Kern Place residential areas.

As the group gathered for lunch along the levee at the Country Club bridge, it was hard to realize that the visible desert, stretching to the escarpment on the west and bounded by barren rocks to the high mountains on the east, could hold so many different species of birds--102 this year--within our count circle.

Last year in the 54 recorded counts in Texas, El Paso received a line for its Anna's hummingbird, a western species overwintering at a feeder. Our count is not especially high in numbers (You must have 150 species at least to be listed in that category in the Christmas count issue of AMERICAN BIRDS.), but Texas led the nation in a tie with Coco Beach, Florida when Freeport tallied 209 species. In 1972 20,273 people took part in the count which included the United States, Canada, Alaska, Hawaii, and the West Indies.

Christmas count participants in El Paso included Ruby Allen, Mrs. Barnhart, Bertye Barnhart, Sarah Jane Dodds, Lucretia Chew, Eddie Chew, Steve Chew, Al Gavit, Madeline Gavit, Bill Hunt, Carl Jones, Charles Jensen, Helen Barto, Mary Moore, Luis Santaella, Suzanne Santaella, Clarence Shelfer, Libby Shelfer, Ed White, and Geth White.

Geth White

FEATHERS NEEDED. Carl and Linda Jones are advisors to a co-ed Explorer Post which is composed of members of an Indian Dance Team. These young people make authentic Indian costumes with feather bustles and fans. Any road kills would be greatly appreciated. Hawks and owls are especially desirable but feathers from waterfowl, pheasant, or even flickers can also be used with beautiful results. If you would like to help, remember to carry some plastic trash bags on your next trip!

CHRISTMAS COUNT - 1973

Red-billed Grebe	2	Verdin	12
Green Heron	2	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Canada Goose	8	HOUSE WREN	3
Snow Goose	24	Bewick's Wren	5
Mallard	64	Cactus Wren	11
Gadwall	62	Long-billed Marsh Wren	1
Green-winged Teal	125	Canyon Wren	1
American Wigeon	427	Rock Wren	21
Northern Shoveler	455	Mockingbird	9
Redhead		Curve-billed Thrasher	3
Canvasback		Crissal Thrasher	4
Ruddy Duck		Robin	17
WOOD DUCK	1	Western Bluebird	24
RED-BREASTED MERGAUSER	4	BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER	3
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	2	BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER	2
Cooper's Hawk	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	45
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	2	Water Pipit	117
Ferruginous Hawk		Cedar Waxwing	8
Red-Tailed Hawk		Loggerhead Shrike	26
Swainson's Hawk		Starling	58
Golden Eagle		VIRGINIA'S WARBLER	2
Marsh Hawk		Yellow-rumped Warbler	42
PEREGRINE FALCON	1	Black-throated Gray Warbler	1
American Kestrel	44	House Sparrow	413
Scaled Quail	94	Western Meadowlark	29
Gambel's Quail	131	Yellow-headed Blackbird	229
Sandhill Crane	8	Red-winged Blackbird	65
Common Gallinule	23	Brewer's Blackbird	est. 2290
American Coot	12	Great-tailed Grackle	79
Killdeer	61	Brown-headed Cowbird	2
Common Snipe	4	Pyrrhuloxia	11
Baird's Sandpiper	14	House Finch	186
Least Sandpiper	44	Pine Siskin	1
Ring-billed Gull	25	American Goldfinch	11
White-winged Dove	23	Lesser Goldfinch	29
Mourning Dove	325	RED CROSSBILL	10
Inca Dove	72	Green-tailed Towhee	2
GROUND DOVE	1	Rufous-sided Towhee	2
Roadrunner	16	Brown Towhee	12
FERRUGINOUS OWL	1	Savannah Sparrow	73
ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD	3	Vesper Sparrow	1
BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD	1	Lark Sparrow	2
ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD	1	Rufous-crowned Sparrow	18
Belted Kingfisher	5	Black-throated Sparrow	60
Common Flicker	16	Dark-eyed Junco	34
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Gray-headed Junco	26
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	1	Chipping Sparrow	16
VERMILLION FLYCATCHER	2	BLACK-CHINNED SPARROW	6
Black Phoebe	7	White-crowned Sparrow	447
Say's Phoebe	17	Lincoln's Sparrow	1
Steller's Jay	4	Song Sparrow	5

TOTAL: 102 species, 9,867 individuals

RARITIES ARE CAPITALIZED.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The election of officers for the coming year will take place at the regular meeting on January 21, and these officers will be installed at the February meeting. The president's current two-year term does not expire until January, 1975. The chapter by-laws call for a Board of Directors of not more than six directors. (The officers and the standing committee chairmen also serve on the board.) Last year three directors were elected to one-year terms. The membership present at the January meeting will vote on the number of directors prior to the election.

Those being nominated by the nominating committee are:

VICE-PRESIDENT and PRESIDENT-ELECT: Charlie Jensen

SECRETARY-TREASURER : Linda Jones

DIRECTORS: Berttye Barnhart, Helen Barto, Al Gavit, Jack McDaniel, Clarence Chelfer, Weldon Yerby

Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the meeting. Please check with anyone you wish to nominate as to their willingness to serve.

The nominating committee consisted of Jack McDaniel, Berttye Barnhart, and Sarah Jane Dodds.

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FIRST CLASS



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