

The Roadrunner

Volume 18 (2)

EL PASO/TRANS-PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY

March 1988

GENERAL MEETING

MON., MAR. 21, 7:30 PM in the Garden Center, 3105 Grant in Memorial Park. The Lower Rio Grande Valley. A birder's mecca. A unique mix of 10 distinct biological communities. And one of the biggest conservation challenges in North America. Fully 95% of the Valley's native wildlands are gone, and the rest are going fast. With good reason, habitat protection in the Lower Rio Grande Valley is Audubon's top conservation priority in Texas.

Please join us March 21 for 2 excellent slide programs the Frontera Audubon Society has prepared on the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The first, VALLEY WILDERNESS: 'A VANISHING LEGACY, takes us on a 190-mile tour from Falcon Dam to the Gulf of Mexico. We'll see the Chachalacas, Green and Brown jays, Sabal palms, ocelots, jaguarundis and other elements that make up the Valley's intricate biological tapestry. The second, NOT A LOT OF OCELOT..., is brief but brilliant. For now, we'll tell you only that Texas folksinger Bill Oliver provides the lyrics, the Valley provides the scenes, and you're going to enjoy it!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MON., MAR. 14, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Tom and Ginny Baker, 958 Kelso Dr. (877-3365). All members are welcome.

SANCTUARY WORKDAYS

March 12

April 10

FIELD TRIP CALENDAR

NORTHEAST OXIDATION PONDS

SUN., MAR. 6. Meet at 4801 Fred Wilson (formerly Furrow Building Materials) at 2:30 PM. This trip will produce many ducks and possibly a wader that is uncommon to this area. Leader: Jean Coyle (595-2225), Asst. Leader: Bart Rumaker (544-6432).

BEGINNERS TRIP AT FEATHER LAKE

SAT., MAR. 12. Want some help in identifying a few of our common visitors? Take I-10 east to Ave. of the Americas, exit right, go to 1st stop light, take another right on North Loop, entrance to Feather Lake is $\frac{1}{4}$ mile on the left. Meet Neil Keith (778-5937) at 8 AM. Asst. Leader: Debbie Johnson (593-5442).

GYPSUM DUNES, ETC.

SAT.-SUN., MAR. 19-20. Meet at Avila's restaurant, 10600 Montana at Yarbrough, at 7:30 AM. Steve West of Carlsbad will be joining us for an exciting weekend on either side of the Guadalupe Mts. Steve wears many hats, one of them being Preserve Monitor for the Nature Conservancy's Gypsum Dunes Preserve. We'll spend much of Saturday among these dramatic white dunes immediately west of the Guadalupe. Those who wish can return to El Paso after this part of the trip. Those making a weekend of it will head east to s.e. New Mexico. A limited number (6-8) of participants will have a chance to help Steve band Cave Swallows at Carlsbad Cavern late Saturday afternoon. Sunday, we'll visit Rattlesnake Springs and L. McMillan before returning to El Paso that afternoon. For **Saturday**

night lodging, you have the option of camping or Carlsbad-area motels. Leader: John Sproul (545-5157 h, 541-6126 w). Reservations required, please.

INDIAN HOT SPRINGS

SUN., MAR. 27. Meet at Feather Lake at 7 AM. An early start is required as this is a 2 hour drive. This will be a good trip to see Vermilion Flycatchers and early spring arrivals. No restaurants are in the area so bring your own lunch. Leader: Joyce Davis (581-9470), Asst. Leader: Ann Schultis (584-7382).

EAST SIDE OF FRANKLIN MTS.

SAT., APR. 9. Leader: Joe Guinn (566-8438)

BIG BEND NATL PARK

FRI.-SUN., APR. 15-17. Local contact: Helen Barto (755-4744)

PERCHA AND CABALLO DAMS

SUN., APR. 24. Leader: Scott Cutler (548-2476)

1988 BIRDATHON

What is Birdathon?

- a) A nationwide fundraising effort by National Audubon Society and its chapters;
- b) A day of birdwatching in the field or in your own backyard;
- c) A chance to sponsor birdwatchers from our chapter;
- d) All of the above!!

How does it work?

Birdathon participants obtain pledges from sponsors who agree to contribute a certain amount of money for each species seen on Saturday, April 30 (midnight Fri to midnight Sat). Pledges can range from 5¢ to any amount that you wish. The funds raised are split between our chapter and Audubon's Southwest Regional Office.

How to participate?

Anyone can participate as a counter, a sponsor, or both.

As a counter:

- 1) Plan to go birdwatching either in the field or in your backyard on April 30.

- (2) Before Birdathon Day, ask friends, neighbors, and relatives to sponsor you by pledging a set amount for each species you see on the 30th. Thank them for their support.

- (3) Notify the Birdathon Chair, Ann Schultis, 7301 Clemente, El Paso, 79912 (584-7382 h, 747-5672 w) of the names of your sponsors so they can be included in the drawing for prizes at the Birdathon dinner (details in the April newsletter).

- (4) After Birdathon Day, collect the pledges from your sponsors and turn them in to the Birdathon Chair by June 1.

As a sponsor:

- (1) Notify the person(s) you want to sponsor of the amount you will pledge per species. You may stipulate a maximum amount to your pledge, if you wish.

- (2) Send the names of the individual(s) you are sponsoring to the Birdathon Chair.

Sign-up sheets for counters and sponsors will be available at the March and April general meetings or can be mailed to you.
/Ann Schultis/

Ed. note: Some of you already have a sponsor! Joyce Davis will sponsor any first-time Birdathon counters for 10¢ per species and any counter 18 years or under for 20¢ per species.

THE ROADRUNNER

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FEATHER LAKE NEWS

The City of El Paso's recent expansion of the stormwater-detention basin at our Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary (9500 N. Loop in the lower valley, 0.3 mi. n.w. of Americas Ave.) resulted in a deeper basin but apparently not one deep enough to avoid periodic drying. The water level at Feather Lake has dropped more or less steadily through the fall and winter, and, at this writing, open water is limited to several scattered small ponds within the 40-acre basin. Approximately 300-500 ducks, mainly Green-winged Teal, are using these ponds.

The lack of water doesn't mean there's a lack of work to do at the sanctuary, though. The next scheduled workday will be Sat., Mar 12. The morning's principal task will be installation of a low fence bordering the basin's new concrete inlet. Festivities start at 8 AM and continue as long as necessary. You won't want to miss it.

Want a bird's-eye view of what the sanctuary looked like not long after the Feather Lake expansion project was completed? Stop by the Audubon exhibit at Cielo Vista Mall in April (details next month). 'A striking aerial photograph of Feather Lake and its surroundings will be on display, a gift to our chapter from Cardenas-Salcedo and Associates, the El Paso engineering firm that designed the expansion project. Thanks, CSA! /John Sproul/

SLIDE PROGRAM REMAINS POPULAR

Groups throughout El Paso are continuing to place a steady stream of requests for our "Birds of the El Paso Area" slide program. Thanks are again due the chapter members who have given the program during the past year: Ginny Baker, Tom Baker, Sarah Dodds, Jane Fowler, Neil Keith, Jo Nagel, John Sproul and Gloria Woelfel.

We're always looking for additional helpers to present the program. We're also seeking volunteers to develop new slide programs. "Birds of the El Paso

Area" gives a broad overview of this area's birdlife, introducing the viewer to birds of the desert, the mountains, the river valley, residential areas and open water/wetland areas. We would like to have additional programs on each of these habitats, their birds and their conservation problems. The residential-areas program would be geared particularly towards children.

If you're interested in presenting the current program or would like to try your hand at developing a future program, please call Ginny Baker (877-3365).

WILDLIFE REHABILITATION GROUP FORMING

Wildlife rehabilitation involves nursing injured animals back to health and returning them, where possible, to the wild. Birds of prey are probably the most frequent and best known patients of wildlife rehabilitators, but a rehabber's charges can range from hummingbirds to turtles to deer. Historically, wildlife rehabilitation in the El Paso area has been the work of a few dedicated individuals who have seen a need and acted to fill it. They gratefully accept help and contributions when offered, but most of the effort and most of the expenses are their own.

That may change. A new support group is now being organized to help local rehabilitators. It will be:

- a vehicle for accepting tax-deductible contributions for wildlife rehabilitation work,
- a network of volunteers to help active rehabilitators, and
- a source of encouragement and training for individuals interested in becoming licensed rehabilitators.

The group is in its formative stages. Want to learn more about it? Better yet, would you like to be involved, as an Audubon representative, in getting it started? Please contact John Sproul (545-5157) or Helen Bigelow (882-2910). /John Sproul/

SPRING A.C.T. MEETING IN "VALLEY"

After our March general meeting, you'll no doubt be inspired to visit the Lower Rio Grande Valley. May 21-22 will bring the perfect opportunity: the Spring 1988 Meeting of the Audubon Council of Texas. More next month.

MURRAY WALTON GOES FROM N.A.S. TO T.D.A.

In December, National Audubon's Southwest Regional Representative Murray Walton resigned in order to accept a position with the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). The search for a new regional representative is underway.

Murray did an excellent job as regional representative, and our chapter in particular will miss him. With the Trans-Pecos a long way from Austin, we can't always represent ourselves before the legislature or state agencies. By attending legislative committee hearings on Franklin Mountains State Park, by representing us before the Public Utilities Commission during hearings on a proposed power line in Brewster County and in many other ways, Murray gave us a voice in Austin we otherwise would not have had.

In his new job, Murray will be overseeing TDA's predator-control programs. To have a person with his conservation credentials in this position is a very positive development, and we wish him well.

No small part of Murray's decision to take the TDA job was the uncertainty surrounding the regional representative position in 1987. It was first eliminated as part of major National Audubon cost-cutting measures, then re-instated when the Audubon Council of Texas (ACT) committed to funding the position's salary and fringe benefits (RR, Sep 1987).

ACT made this commitment because it recognized the value of a regional representative to chapters throughout our region. ACT is counting on the annual Birdathon to be the main vehicle for raising the needed funds. As Murray

demonstrated so well, it means a lot to El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon to have a regional representative on Audubon's staff in Austin. I hope you'll keep that thought in mind as this year's Birdathon (see p. 2) approaches.
/John Sproul/

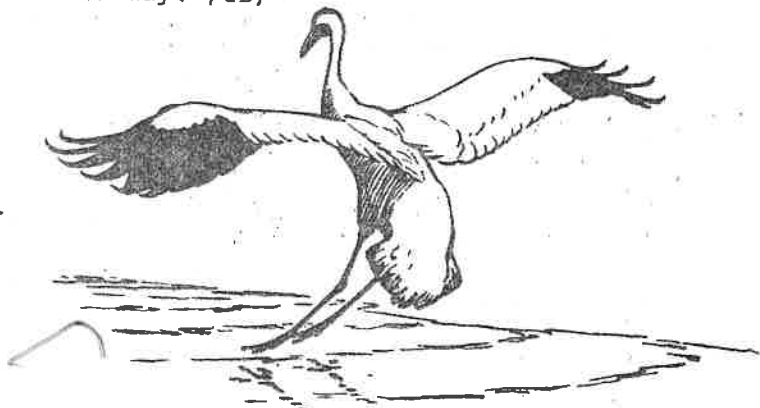
PAST FIELD TRIPS

Thirteen people saw 60 species during the trip to Bosque del Apache NWR, Jan 9-10. We also made stops at Caballo and Percha Dams. Top sightings were of course the Whooping Cranes and Bald Eagles, but a White-throated Sparrow and a porcupine lounging in a tree were also exciting. /BJ/

On Sun, Jan 24, sixteen of El Paso's finest (bird watchers) enjoyed a sunny but cold day in the country club area. In all, 48 species were seen, including 20 Wood Ducks, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Mountain Chickadees and White-throated Swifts. /BJ/

The trip to Ft. Hancock was postponed until Feb 7. Still 4 birders enjoyed 49 species that day. We had 3 species of gulls, Common Mergansers, a Horned Grebe, and the first Tree Swallows of the year. /BJ/

On Feb 14, our group of 14 drove the desert roads on the western mesa to Hunt's Hole, Kilbourne Hole and to the far side of Mt. Riley. Birds were not abundant; total species on the trip was near 30. Big crowd-pleasers were the 3 immature golden eagles (one came right over our lunch site) and the 8 Long-eared Owls seen dispersed through a juniper tree at the end of the day. /TB/



OBSERVATIONS

January 19 - February 18

Sightings on field trips are indicated by a "+" after leader's initials. Birds so noted were seen by one member of the group -- not necessarily the leader or all members of the group.

CP - Crossroads Pond
 FH - Ft. Hancock reservoir
 FL - Feather Lake
 HT - Hueco Tanks
 L - Lombardy
 LV - lower (El Paso) valley
 Mtr - Mt. Riley
 MtS - Mt. Shadows Lake
 RG - Rio Grande (back of Willows)
 WP - Westside Park

LOONS - FALCONS

Horned Grebes were found at FH 2/7 (BJ+). Cattle Egrets were seen at FL 1/31, 2/7, 2/13, 2/15 (JD,JS) and at FH 2/7 (BJ+). Black-crowned Night-Herons were spotted at CP 1/24 (PR+) and upper valley 2/15 (PR). A Canada Goose was found at MtS 1/30 (A&MG). Several Wood Ducks were seen on Cary Rd. 1/24 (PR+). A Common Goldeneye was spotted in RG 1/24 (PR+). Buffleheads were found at MtS 1/30 (A&MG) and at FH 2/7 (BJ+). A Common Merganser was spotted at FH 2/7 (BJ+). Sharp-shinned Hawks were seen in n.e. El Paso 2/5, 2/12 (RH) and upper valley 2/14-15 (PR). Three immature Golden Eagles were found at Mtr 2/14 (TB+). A Peregrine Falcon was seen over Castner Range 1/26 (JG). A Prairie Falcon was spotted at MtS 1/30 (A&MG).

QUAIL - WOODPECKERS

Several Greater Yellowlegs were seen frequently at FL between 1/23 and 2/15 (JS) and at RG 1/24 (PR+), FH 2/7 (BJ+). A Spotted Sandpiper was found at RG 1/24 (PR+). Common Snipe were spotted at FL 2/13 (JS) and at Mission Hills Park 2/14 (BR). Bonaparte's and Herring gulls were seen at FH 2/7 (BJ+). Eight Long-eared Owls were found in one juniper near Mtr 2/14 (TB+). White-throated Swifts were seen over RG 1/24 (PR+).

FLYCATCHERS - VIREOS

Tree Swallows were found at FH 2/7 (BJ+). American Crows were seen at FL 1/23, 1/31, 2/7, 2/13, 2/15 (JS) and LV 2/7 (BJ+). Mountain Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches were spotted on L 1/24 (PR+). A White-breasted Nuthatch was seen in a central El Paso yard the week of 2/7-13 (BC). A House Wren was found in LV 2/7 (BJ+). Two Townsend's Solitaires were seen in a north El Paso yard 1/30 (IG). Some 110 Cedar Waxwings were seen in n.e. El Paso 2/4 (RH).

WARBLERS - WEAVER FINCHES

A Rufous-sided Towhee was seen at Mtr 2/14 (TB+). A rare Field Sparrow was found at HT 1/30 (DT). Flocks of Lark Buntings were seen at WP 1/31 (JD) and FL, FH 2/7 (JD,BJ+). A Swamp Sparrow was found at FH 2/7 (BJ+). Lesser Goldfinches were seen near Mtr 2/14 (TB+).

OBSERVERS: Tom Baker, Branch Craige, Joyce Davis, Al & Madeline Gavit, Irene Groff, Joe Guinn, Richard Hermosillo, Bob Johnson, Peggy Riede, Bart Rumaker, John Sproul, Dennis Taylor.

/Joyce Davis, Observations Editor/
 (581-9470 h, 544-6772 w)

GIFT TO SANCTUARY

We gratefully acknowledge a donation to Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary from Mrs. D. E. Baker in memory of Lena McBee.



Arctic Issue Heats Up

The oil industry, with the full support of the Reagan Administration and the Department of Interior, is making every effort to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. Conservationists are equally determined to keep the industry out of this large and most northerly refuge.

Congress must decide whether the Arctic refuge will remain our last great unspoiled wilderness or become another Prudhoe Bay. Since the oil industry knows that their best shot is while Reagan is still in office, its high-dollar lobbyists are turning up the heat on representatives and senators.

Many of you have been following this issue—one of National Audubon Society's high priority campaigns—in the pages of *Audubon Activist* and in this newsletter. Now is the time to take action.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has delayed consideration of pro-development legislation THREE times, thanks to the letters and phone calls from Auduboners around the country asking that the committee look for alternatives to opening up the refuge.

But now, the oil and gas industry is redoubling its efforts to move legislation forward. This is a crucial time for the refuge in the Senate, and more letters to your senators are needed—particularly if your senator sits on the Energy Committee. Key votes on that committee include: Weicker (Conn.), Ford (Ky.), Bumpers (Ark.), Melcher (Mont.), Bingaman (N.M.), and Conrad (N.D.).

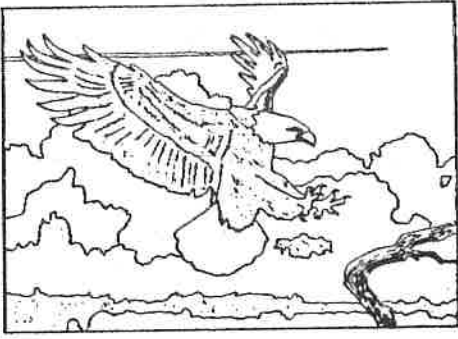
Even if your senator is not on this list, let him or her know that you oppose oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It's important that we tell our side of the story now, as the oil and gas lobbyists make the rounds. Write your representative in the House as well.

If you would like more information on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or other issues, please call Connie Mahan at Audubon's Washington, D.C., office, (202) 547-9009.

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Recycle

Don't forget to save those aluminum cans and bring them to the general meeting for our "Can Man", Bob Johnson, to recycle.

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