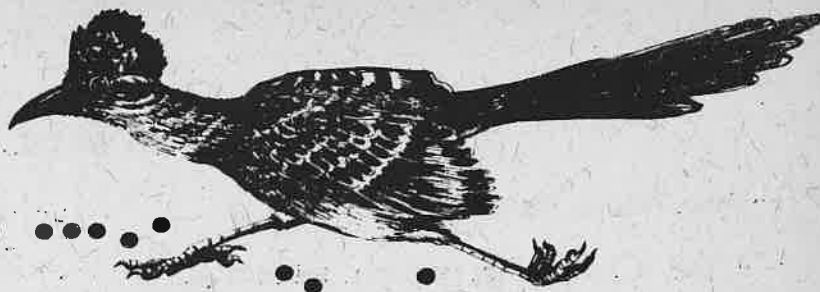


the ROADRUNNER.....



newsletter of the
El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
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September 1980

Editor: John Sproul

Volume 10, Number 7

CALENDAR

PROGRAM

MON. 15 SEPTEMBER 1980, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, 3105 Grant St., in Memorial Park. HUMMINGBIRDS, ETC. Dave Brown is a local photographer who has concentrated on hummingbirds in recent years. His slides of hummers and other typical and not-so-typical southwestern species will highlight our September meeting. Dave also will share what he has learned in 4 years of observing hummingbirds and will offer some insight into techniques of hummingbird photography. A special prize goes to anyone who can identify the mystery hummer.

TUES. 14 OCTOBER. GALAPAGOS. Rhea Copening, Audubon's Assistant Southwest Regional Representative, will visit El Paso in October to give us a slide-illustrated tour of the Galapagos Islands. Note that this meeting will not be on the third Monday of the month. We shifted the date to fit Rhea's schedule.

FIELD TRIPS

SAT. 13 SEPTEMBER. WHITE ROCK CANYON. Meet at the Wilderness Park Museum, Transmountain Rd. on the east side of the Franklin Mtns., at 7 AM. We'll find out what is moving through the Franklins in September. Leader: Joe Guinn (566-8438).

SUN. 28 SEPTEMBER. EVENING AT FEATHER LAKE. Meet at Feather Lake on North Loop Dr. (0.3 miles n.w. of Ave. of the Americas) at 4:30 PM. We'll enjoy a pot-luck supper and a colorful sunset while we observe the early-fall avian arrivals at our sanctuary. If you can attend, call Elizabeth Guinn (566-8438).

SAT. 11 OCTOBER. FORT BLISS PONDS. Details next month.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MON. 8 SEPTEMBER, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Al Gavit, 1712 Opossum Circle, Horizon City. Take Horizon Blvd. into Horizon City. Go 2 blocks past the Qik-N-Eze Market and turn right on Duanesburg. Go 3 streets beyond the church and turn right on Opossum. Stop at the 4th house on the left. Still lost? Go back to the Qik-N-Eze and call 852-3119.

FROM THE PEN OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow Auduboners,

After a long, hot period, including May, June, July and August, of many (too many) days of temperature over 100°F and too little rain, we hope September will bring us weather relief.

Yes, it's time to resume our Audubon activities, including our monthly meetings at the El Paso Garden Center, in Memorial Park on Grant St., and our bi-monthly field trips which we all enjoy so much.

At our Chapter board meeting on 18 Aug we programmed the September and October Chapter activities to include the programs and field trips described in this newsletter. We hope you will join us in these activities and give us your ideas and support. Give your program ideas to our program chairperson Peggy Heisel (821-0989) and any prospective member names to our membership chairperson Jo Ellen Warolin (533-8731). And if you have field trip suggestions, let our field trip chairman Joe Guinn (566-8438) know about them. Please try to arrive at our monthly meetings around 7 PM and enjoy the hospitality we extend through

our hospitality chairperson Elza Gilboe (772-1942). We start our meetings at 7:30 PM. Also, plan to join us 28 Sept at the Feather Lake Bird Sanctuary; read the newsletter for details.

Last year our Audubon chapter voted in the majority to support the Wilderness Park Coalition. Joe Guinn was appointed Chapter representative, and he informs us that we should renew our annual membership support. Please contact him at 566-8438 in regards to your support, as we hope that someday the Franklin Mtns. will be established as a wilderness park for all of us and that their unique plant and animal species will be preserved.

At any rate, give us your opinion (pro or con) on the merits and limitations of any project. Your views should be listened to and evaluated so that the "right" course of action is taken for the majority concerned. We realize that there are no easy resolutions to issues that are divisive in their nature.

We'll be out of town for a few days, but Vice President John Sproul (545-5157) will carry on in the Audubon tradition.

- Robert P. Bleicher, Chapter President

OBSERVATIONS - 30 May to 24 August 1980

GREBES THROUGH FALCONS

Eared Grebes were confirmed as breeding locally when an adult with a single young was spotted at the Ft. Bliss Ponds 3 Aug (JF, JS). Great Blue Herons were observed in our area throughout the summer. Single birds appeared 6 Jun and 23 Jul in the upper valley and 10 Jul flying over n.e. El Paso (all JD). A Great Egret graced Feather L. the first 3 weeks of August (TG, AG, MG). Of the 3 LOUISIANA HERONS at Tornillo Lakes 31 May (KZ), at least 1 was still there 8 Jun (JS). The only other recent record hereabouts was an adult photographed 5 Apr 1977 near Mesilla. Our first breeding record for Ring-necked Duck was a female who raised

3 young this summer on a pond at Santa Teresa Country Club (JD).

At least 2 pairs of Mississippi Kites fledged young in our area in 1980 (JD, GS). There may have been more, as 6 adults were observed 6 Jun (JD). The species was first reported 4 Jun when 4 adults were spotted together (TD). The suspicion that Cooper's Hawks breed near El Paso grew stronger 13 Jul when an adult Cooper's was seen near Randle's Pool (JD), just 30 min. after and $\frac{1}{2}$ mi. away from another accipiter sighting (age not determined, probably a Cooper's, possibly the same bird) (JDiP, KZ). An immature accipiter also was near the pool 3 Aug (JD). On 30 Jul, the Ft. Bliss Ponds hosted a pair

(Continued on p. 3)

OBSERVATIONS (Continued)

of Marsh Hawks, accidental in our area in summer (SL, fide JD). Single Prairie Falcons were in the upper valley and the Franklin Mtns. 3 Jun (JD). The bird in the Franklins was audacious enough to attack a Golden Eagle. On 19 Jun a Prairie Falcon was chasing another falcon, probably a Prairie, in the Franklins (JD).

SANDPIPERS THROUGH TERNS

Long-billed Curlews started arriving in El Paso early this summer and have been reported frequently from the upper valley (TD, JD, EK). The first sighting came 5 Jul, when 4 flew W over the sand cliffs w. of Santa Teresa (TD, JD). The largest group seen, 20 birds, flew over Santa Teresa 10 Aug (JD). Baird's Sandpipers, en route from their high-arctic breeding grounds to S. America, rested at Santa Teresa 2 (1 bird), 10 (2) and 11 (3) Aug (all JD). Age was not determined, but these arrival dates are within the peak period for adult migration. Adult Baird's migrate before their young and stay only briefly in the United States. A Forster's Tern was flying S near Randle's Pool 3 Aug (JD) and 2 were diving after minnows 5 Aug at a Santa Teresa CC pond (JD).

CUCKOOS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

At least 2 pairs of Yellow-billed Cuckoos are thought to have nested near Randle's Pool this year (JD, mob); a single bird also was in Horizon City 25 Jun (AG, MG). A Common Nighthawk was calling above the w. slopes of the Franklin Mtns. 30 May (JD). The last reported spring-migrant Broad-tailed Hummingbird was the male in the Cielo Vista area 30 May (JF). First reported fall migrants were the 2 that appeared in the Mountain Park area in late Jul (JB). First Rufous Hummingbird was the male in Kern Place 6 Jul (EK). Calliope Hummingbirds have visited yards throughout El Paso: a male in n.e. El Paso 21 Jul (JDiP), a male and possible female in the Regal Crest area in the upper valley 28-30 Jul (DB), another male near Regal Crest 11 Aug (DB) and a male

and possible female in the Cielo Vista area since 3 Aug (EG, ELG).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH TANAGERS

A WIED'S CRESTED FLYCATCHER in Memorial Park 14 Aug was an excellent find (JDiP). Last of the spring's Brown Thrashers was at Randle's Pool 7 Jun (TD, JD, KZ). American Robins nested in the upper valley and probably in Kern Place. An immature robin was observed in an upper-valley yard 18 Jun (JF, JN), 2 were near Randle's Pool 6 July (JD, JS) and an adult was near El Paso Country Club 22 Jul (JD). An adult was in Kern Place 19 Jun (SJD). A Bell's Vireo was singing at Tornillo Lakes 31 May (KZ), rare but not unexpected in that area. More surprising was the PHILADELPHIA VIREO in Horizon City 17 Aug (AG, MG), possibly our first fall record.

Black-throated Gray Warblers were at Randle's Pool 23 Jul and W. Cottonwood Springs 25 Jul (JD). A WATERTHRUSH, most likely a Northern, was at Hueco Tanks 23 Aug (DT). A late spring migrant was the female AMERICAN REDSTART in Horizon City 11 Jun (AG, MG). Fall-migrant Western Tanagers were fairly common throughout El Paso in late July and early August (mob). Would the male at Rio Bosque Park on 12 Jul also be a fall migrant? The Randle's Pool area held 8 Western Tanagers 10 Aug (JD). Attracted to the Ft. Bliss Ponds 18 Aug was a female ORCHARD ORIOLE (JDiP). A male "Baltimore" Oriole turned up in Thunderbird Hgts. 12 Aug (FB) along with the residue from Hurricane Allen.

FINCHES AND SPARROWS

A male Cardinal was seen at Randle's Pool 23 Jul and heard 3 and 10 Aug (JD). On 24 Aug a male Cardinal flew over Frontera Rd. in the upper valley (JD). Our 3rd and final male ROSE-BREADED GROSBILL for the spring took refuge at Durling's Farm 1 Jun (KZ). A male Indigo Bunting was singing near W. Cottonwood Spr. 10 (JD) and 14 (mob) Jun, and 2 male Lazuli Buntings were at Ft. Bliss Ponds 18 Aug (JDiP). A singing male RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE near

(Continued on p. 4)

OBSERVATIONS (Continued)

Randle's Pool was a first summer record and indicated possible breeding in our area. First spotted 28 Jun (KZ), it was still singing vigorously when last seen 23 Jul (JD). Very late for a spring migrant was the Swamp Sparrow in the reeds at a Santa Teresa CC pond 23 Jun (JD).

OBSERVERS: Flora Bittick, Janet Brock-

moller, Dave Brown, Tony Debona, Joe Di-Pasquale, Sarah Jane Dodds, Jeff Donaldson, Jane Fowler, Al Gavit, Madeline Gavit, Tom Gavit, Ed Gilboe, Elza Gilboe (ElG), Earle King, Steve Lopez, many observers (mob), Jo Nagel, John Sproul, Gary Starr, Dennis Taylor, Kevin Zimmer. (Report observations to John Sproul, 601 W. Yandell #25, El Paso 79902; ph: 545-5157 home, 543-6126 work.)

NEW CHECKLIST AVAILABLE

Included with this ROADRUNNER is the revised field checklist for birds of El Paso County and adjacent areas. The compilers deserve a long and sustained round of applause for bringing the list up to date. Actually, it is now slightly out of date, thanks to observations made this summer. Still, it is a largely accurate guide to seasonal status of birds in the El Paso area.

Additional copies are available at 5¢ each (cost of printing) for El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon members and 15¢ each for nonmembers. Get them at the general meetings or from Elza Gilboe, 1305 Oakdale, El Paso 79925, ph: 772-1942. Provide a self-addressed stamped envelope for mail orders of 10 or less.

CONSERVATION - End-of-summer Update

CONDOR PROGRAM STYMIED

On 31 May, the California Fish & Game Commission approved the radio-telemetry and captive-breeding permit for the California Condor recovery program (ROADRUNNER, May 1980). On 30 June, a baby condor, 1 of 2 known to have hatched this year, died from stress induced during a nest check by Condor Research Center biologists. The center, staffed by Audubon and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service personnel, immediately stopped hands-on field work, as it had stated it would if anything went wrong. The Fish & Game Commission suspended the research permit. In the present emotion-charged atmosphere, it is not clear when and in what form the research will resume. National Audubon supports continuation of the program.

FT. BLISS PONDS DOOMED

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has made its decision: the sewage ponds in n.e. El Paso must go, and there will be no mitigation for loss of this outstanding wildlife habitat (RR, Apr 1980). Or will there? Though it isn't being linked with the loss of the Ft. Bliss Ponds, EPA is strongly encouraging the Public Service Board to include wetland-habitat development in the plan for expansion of the Socorro sewage-treatment plant. Thanks go to all of you who let EPA know your views on loss of the ponds. You helped make EPA receptive to this habitat-development idea. It will take more work to make the idea a reality.

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The ROADRUNNER is sent to all members of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. Non-members can subscribe for \$3.00 per year. Mail payments to John Sproul, 601 W. Yandell #25, El Paso, TX 79902. Make checks payable to El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society.

Deadline for the October ROADRUNNER is 24 September.

ALASKA BILL CLEARS SENATE

Final resolution of the Alaska lands issue is 1 step closer after the Senate passed a new substitute agreement by a vote of 78-14 on 19 Aug. It is superior to the Senate Energy Committee bill but still falls short of the strong bill the House passed in May 1979. The Alaska Coalition now stresses that any final bill must be a balance of the House and Senate positions. Some senators, on the other hand, are urging the House to accept the Senate bill as is. Sen. Gravel of Alaska wants to kill the whole thing.

What's next? Congress is avoiding a formal conference, for it would give Sen. Gravel extra chances to filibuster. Rather, according to the Alaska Coalition, an ad hoc committee of House and Senate leaders is meeting and trying to incorporate some of the strengths of the House bill into the Senate version. If achieved, this compromise would then go back to the House and Senate for a final vote. Expect Sen. Gravel, possibly with help from Sen. Stevens of Alaska, to filibuster 1 last time. The next key vote on Alaska could be for cloture to stop this filibuster.

How have the Texas senators performed? There have been 6 key votes so far. Sen. Tower has opposed the conservationists' position on all 6. Sen. Bentsen has been with the conservationists on 5 of 6, including final passage of the substitute agreement. Thanks go to all of you who contacted your senators regarding this issue.

NONGAME BILL ADVANCES

The Senate passed S 2181 (RR; Feb, May 1980) by unanimous consent 22 May. This bill would allocate \$20 million over 4 years for planning and implementation of state nongame-wildlife programs. It is slightly stronger than HR 3292, the nongame bill the House passed in 1979. Rather than hold a House-Senate conference to iron out differences between S 2181 and HR 3292, the staff members from the committees that reported these

bills recently met to draft a new bill. According to Ann Corcoran in Audubon's Washington office, it is based mostly on S 2181. Once scheduled for floor action, its chances of passage in both House and Senate are excellent. With the current crush of unfinished business, though, we may not see action until Congress' lame-duck session following the November elections.

NEW MEXICO WHOOPERS STAY "ENDANGERED"

After discussions with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service officials and Audubon biologists, New Mexico has decided it can live within the framework of the Endangered Species Act. The state has stopped its efforts to amend the act and lower the status of the Gray's Lake/Bosque del Apache Whooping Cranes from Endangered to "experimental" (RR, Apr 1980).

The cranes remain unaware of this controversy. They are now making preparations for fall migration from Gray's Lake to the Bosque. Of the 15 Whoopers at Bosque del Apache last winter, at least 11 are alive and well, and 2 5-year-old males established territories this spring--a first sign of reproductive behavior. In addition, of 14 Whooping Crane eggs

(Continued on p. 6)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I want to join the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter of the National Audubon Society.

name

address

city state zip

Membership category desired:

___ Individual/\$20 ___ Student/\$13.50
___ Family/\$25 ___ Sr. Citizen/\$13.50

This is a ___ new ___ renewal membership.

Make checks payable to National Audubon Society. Mail to Jo Ellen Warolin, 1406 N. St. Vrain, El Paso, TX 79902.

WHOOPING CRANE (Continued)

placed in Sandhill Crane nests at Grays Lake this year, 11 hatched. Bosque del Apache could be thick with Endangered Whooping Cranes come December.

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