



The Roadrunner

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Geth Osborn White, Editor

CALENDAR

Mon. Nov. 18

REGULAR MEETING, 7:30 P. M. at Centennial Museum, UTEP campus.

One of our own members, Charlie Jensen, who is a petroleum geologist, will tell us, not where there's oil in them thar hills, but about the geology of the Franklins. Living with the mountains in our city, we are so familiar with them we forget how unique and interesting they are to geologists who travel from all parts of the country to view them.

Legends of gold mines worked by the padres of the 16th century pepper the history of the Pass to the North, with entrances to mines lost in time. A tale of massacred California miners, stalked by Comanches, who let one get away by climbing out of the box canyon the night the massacre occurred, to return years later with a tale of \$250,000. in gold hidden by the miners before they died, is another stimulus to treasure-hunters. Bars or nuggets?

Everybody knows about the tin mine. Cassiterite, the tin ore, was discovered by Captain Woodward in 1896 while prospecting for gold in the Franklins. Mined commercially until the company folded in 1913, the site is visible on the east side.

Many are unaware that Fusselman Canyon, largest in the range, is a source of serpentine marble, jasper, tourmaline, topaz, garnet and beryl.

Near Scenic Point are limestones with fossil fish and invetebrates imprisoned in the sediments of Mesozoic seas.

Want to learn more about the fascinating geologic history of the mountain peninsula that cuts into El Paso? Come to see the color slides and mineral specimens Mr. Jensen will bring to this meeting.

Sat. Nov. 23

FIELD TRIP. To Upper Valley with the Christmas Count in mind. This was the most productive area in last year's count and includes the floodplain bosques and irrigation ditches, the Rio Grande, orchards and fields, and old residential areas with mature trees. Meet at Camp Pioneer off Frontera Lane at 7:30 A. M. Geth White will lead.

Sat. Dec. 7

FIELD TRIPS. Will leaders of each count team please go over their respective territories with as many people who took part in last year's count as possible accompanying them. NEW PEOPLE WELCOME, WE NEED YOU. Field trip leaders are: Bill Hunt - Ascarate Lake, Phelps Dodge Cooling Ponds, Cement Lake. Charlie Jensen who will share with Ruby Allen, Compiler, who is in Tucson attending graduate school presently: Frontera Road, Sunland Park Lake, Fee Fishing Lakes, upper valley residential areas, orchards and fields, drainage ditches to Borderland Road. Geth and Ed White: Memorial Park and Fusselman Canyon and mountain slopes. Welden and Louise Yerby: Tom Mays Park. Luis and Sue Santaella are coming in from California to help us with the count and they can have the area of their choice to show our appreciation. More details about the El Paso count on December 14 and Hueco Tanks Park December 15 in December newsletter.

REPORT ON SOUTHWEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE, NAS. Eddie Chew attended the conference held in Beaumont, Texas, on October 18 through 20.

The workshop sessions covered establishing local sanctuaries, priorities, legislation, youth involvement and newsletters. Regional and national staff members were on hand to guide discussions.

The environmental dangers of the proposed Garrison Diversion Project were vividly outlined. Construction of this ill-advised irrigation project is continuing in South Dakota, despite the fact the state's two largest farm organizations have asked for a moratorium on it; Canada calls it unacceptable because of salinization of the Souris River; Russell Train asked that it be suspended; the North Dakota Audubon Council and environmental organizations are solidly arrayed against it. Rep. John P. Saylor (R-Pa) failed in his attempt to cut the appropriation for the project.

Dr. Elvis Stahr, President of National Audubon, spoke at the evening banquet. He stressed the need for conservation of our energy supplies. Dr. Stahr also presented the charter for full chapter status to our chapter. Sabine Audubon Society was a gracious and efficient host for the meeting.

One value of the conference was in meeting representatives from other chapters. Exchange of information and ideas among delegates was stimulating, especially with those from our neighbors in New Mexico. (The New Mexico chapters tried to adopt us. I didn't know whether to be pleased or insulted. I had thought New Mexico didn't want us either) Plans are underway to develop a more cohesive group among the Texas chapters. The conference was quite a success.

REPORT ON CHIHUAHUAN DESERT SYMPOSIUM, ALPINE TEXAS, October 16-18 BY GETH WHITE.

This stimulating examination of one of the least known biological frontiers of North America was conducted under the auspices of the newly formed Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute on January, 1974.

Two main goals of the CDRI are to increase the body of scientific knowledge relating to the Chihuahuan Biotic Province through basic research and to establish a Chihuahuan Desert Museum thereby increasing our understanding of mechanisms governing natural phenomena. Animals and plants would be exhibited in "natural habitats" and scientific interpretation would be displayed to the public.

They hope to receive funds from the general public as tax-deductible contributions, from research grants and funding foundations. A brochure may be received by requesting from: The Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, 800 North Bird Street, Alpine, Texas 79830.

Sponsored by the Southwest Region of the National Park Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the audience of more than 200 people listened to learned men and women from the U. S., Mexico and Canada who presented papers in their respective scientific fields. Beginning with the Quaternary environment, sessions progressed to mammalogy, botany, ichthyology, herpetology and ornithology.

A barbecue was held the first evening, and a cocktail party for the entire company was hosted by Mrs. Betty Gaddis in her lovely country home which had a view down the valley to the distant mountains. A banquet concluded the symposium with keynote speakers Bernardo Villal-Raimerez of the Instituto Biologia, UNAM, Mexico City, and Bob Burlison, Chairman, National Park Service and Commissioner, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Some small differences in the definition and boundaries of the Chihuahuan desert occurred between the scientists, but a remarkably similar map emerged with southern boundaries just south of Zacatecas, encompassing a small part of San Luis Potosi, a larger chunk of Coahuila, all of Chihuahua to the U. S. border, pointing a finger into the Jornada del Muerto in New Mexico, west to Columbus, New Mexico, encompassing the Trans-Pecos in Texas east to the Devil's River.

For tens of thousands of years a lovely tight mosaic of plants and animals having mountain islands jutting from a sea of desert existed under natural laws little touched by the careless intrusion of man. Even now much of it remains a natural wilderness because of its remoteness and harsh climate, little investigated by scientists and thinly populated by only the hardiest of pioneers and descendants of desert-adapted native peoples in scattered communities.

Some of the Chihuahuan Desert's mineral riches have been tapped, much of its protein-rich grasslands have been grazed by domestic animals, a lot of its waters have been diverted to irrigation and agriculture, but there remains a natural population of little-disturbed plants and animals of great current interest and potential -- a last geologic frontier large chunks of which should be set aside now before man has more opportunities to divert and alter it for his own uses.

Ancient drainage patterns from the Pleistocene showed a large lake in central Chihuahua into which the Rio Grande drained. The Rio Grande River, the Conchos and the Nazas river systems were and still are of infinite importance in a thirsty land. Paleological studies can contribute much more knowledge in conserving this desert's ecosystem as an international natural resource.

Relict populations of mammals in mountains have survived, but here are found endangered species, some already pushed to extinct like the Grizzly Bear or nearly extinct like the Desert Bighorn. These islands in the desert are always precarious, having unique and threatened species: moles, chipmunks, cotton rats, white-tailed deer, mountain sheep.

Grasslands have waned and certain meadowvoles and the grassland shrew are extinct with Black-tailed Prairie Dogs nearly extinct. Pronghorns are reduced in numbers, riparian animals such as the beaver and muskrat are sporadic. Many of the bats are decreasing. Pocket gophers and kangaroo rats are increasing, due to their increasing tolerance of aridity.

There is evidence that many desert forms are retreating. Grazing, farming, and over-hunting contribute to a diminution that has been going on for many centuries. Land use practices should be improved, human population increases cannot be ignored, political considerations in administering hunting is an undeniable pressure on game animals, the recreational value of viewing animals in the wild cannot be underestimated; endangered species need special study and protection.

Botanical resources of the Chihuahuan Desert region represent species capable of adapting to climatic conditions of heavy rainfall during brief periods of the year and prolonged drought which may last for a period of a few years. Marshall Johnston, of the University of Texas at Austin, gave a brief resume of botanical and vegetational features with special emphasis on their uniqueness.

Isolated mountain islands occur in the Chihuahuan where the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, lowered in height, link the mighty ranges of New Mexico and Colorado in the north to the awesome Sierra Madre of Mexico. Outwashing soils from the mountains' slopes to the desert flats have more luxuriant plant growth in the moisture-holding drainages. With the increase in elevation and rainfall, the vegetation gives way to woodlands with true forest in moist high canyons having intrusive Mexican plants.

One of the most outstanding areas of the Chihuahuan desert, the Cuatro Ciénegas Basin in Coahuila, has been a target for study by Donald J. Pinkava, ASU, Tempe, Arizona, and W. L. Minkley, Department of Zoology, ASU, Tempe, who are conducting research on endemic fish fauna in the pure, deep springs only last year tapped for irrigation. This unique place has more endemic fish species and is the richest biotic area.

David J. Morafka, Department of Biological Sciences, California State College, emphasized the tendency of American scientists to ignore the rich scientific literature of Mexico published in Spanish and urged more pursuit of the scientific reservoir there.

The distinguished Roger Conant, Adjunct Professor, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, presented a paper on the semiaquatic reptiles and amphibians and their relationships to drainage patterns of the Chihuahuan.

Chester Rowell, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas, was concerned with rare and/or endangered plant species of the region under study and published a list, with drawings, and a bibliography.

Roland H. Wauer and J. David Ligon, Office of Natural Science, Southwest Region, National Park Service, had a paper on the distributional relations of breeding avifauna of four southwestern mountain ranges. Wauer's beautiful color photos of the crags and canyons particularly of the little-known Sierra del Carmens, made it a pleasure to listen to their findings. They posed a question: why are not the Scrub Jays occupying an obvious niche in the Sierra del Carmens? The Mexican Jays display extremely aggressive behavior every time a Scrub Jay flies over from the nearby Davis Mountains.

A second paper by Wauer documented the changes in the breeding avifauna within the Chisos Mountains System. Due to over-use of the land by grazing domestic stock before the Big Bend National Park closed to grazing, the native Montozuma quail had disappeared from the Park. After a period of years of restoration of the native flora, and careful study of this

species habitats, a few pairs were released. The following spring, Wauer visited the site of the release and was pleased to hear the song of a territorial male. It appears this quail species will stage a comeback under the managed park.

Ralph Raitt and Stuart L. Pimm, Department of Biology, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, were authors of a paper on desert bird communities. Studying the migratory populations of wintering birds in the Jornada Range, these researchers discovered that during drought years usual wintering species might by-pass favored ranges to seek other places offering a better food supply. A projected stomach analyses of lark buntings never came off because no lark buntings appeared in the fall and winter of 1973 due to the drought on the Jornada.

Grainger Hunt, CDRI, Alpine, Texas, read a paper on the significance of wilderness ecosystems in West Texas and adjacent regions in the ecology of nesting Perengrines.

These birds have abandoned their traditional diet of waterfowl and shorebirds to prey upon cliff swallows and bandtailed pigeons and bats and they're doing well. A contributing factor is the wilderness with its lack of pesticides and the man-predator. Insectivorous bats could pose a danger, depending upon where the wide-ranging bats foraged.

Allen R. Phillips, Professor of Biology, University of Nuevo Leon, Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, chaired the Avifauna Section. He is interested in bird sightings in the Chihuahuan Desert, particularly little explored sectors in Mexico. He summed up the avian resources which are considerable, many of them unique.

More than 40 papers were presented at this symposium and will be published. Some of them are briefly highlighted in this report. Off to a good start, it is hoped that the CDRI has a brilliant and far-reaching future.

BIRD SIGHTINGS, OCTOBER

Oct. 1	First Brewer's blackbirds in numbers in lower valley.		Geth and Ed White.
1	Brewer's blackbirds	Betty Roberts	Cabot
2	2 Hummingbird species	Betty Roberts	Cabot
5	Townsend's warblers	Geth and Ed White	Silver
15	Rock wren	Betty Roberts	Cabot
26	15 Short-eared owls	Eddie Chew, Bob Bleicher	Pt. Bliss Sewage Ponds
26	10 Avocets	Eddie Chew, Bob Bleicher	" " "
27	Dark-eyed junco	Betty Roberts	Cabot
28	"		
29	"		
7	Rufous hummingbird feeding on Tree Tobacco flowers	Geth White	Silver

Several people called about hummingbirds remaining at their feeders this month.

Advised them to take down feeders as birds could stay too long and perish from the cold though we do have many hummers over-wintering at feeders in mild winters.

25	Dark-phase Rough-Legged Hawk	Bill Principe	Las Cruces area
28	Solitary Vireo, minus tail	Bill Principe	Jornada Range
30	2 Pale phase Ferruginous Hawks	Bill Principe	Along Rio, Las Cruces
30	1 Western Grebe	" "	Burn Lake, Mesilla
	1 Bufflehead	" "	" "

BIRDS OF THE WORLD

A Review by Bill Principe

American birds are among the most intensively studied in the world, and consequently, American birders have it about as easy as anyone because they know how many species there are out there to see (despite occasional revisions by the A.O.U. Checklist Committee!) But pity the poor birder who decides to visit some Pacific Islands, or Borneo, or Madagascar. He is going to have a heck of a time figuring out just how many species he has seen.

Up until now, the only systematic list of birds of the world available has been the huge 19-volume Peters' Birds of the World, begun in the 20's and still in progress! Yet just a few months ago, two new one-volume lists appeared. They are: Birds of the World: a check list, by James F. Clements (Two Continents Publishing Group, Ltd., New York, \$15.00, 224 pages) and A Coded List of Birds of the World by Ernest P. Edwards (published by Ernest P. Edwards, Sweet Briar, Va., \$9.00 174 pages).

Both books are little more than overgrown lists of species. Both books give the approximate range of each species, and both books have indices by genus name. Both come up with a total of almost exactly 8900 species for the world (the currently accepted figure has been 8600).

The similarity between the two books ends there. The Clements book is the slicker, thicker, and prettier of the two books, and it provides a space for the birder to write the place and date he first saw each species. It also comes with a two-page errata sheet, and even the errata sheet has errors! (The jacket describes the book as "...the first one-volume check list of birds of the world..." and one has the feeling the publishers were in a race with the Edwards book. (Edwards won by about two months!)

On the other hand, the Edwards book isn't as pretty, although it is still a good quality hardbound book. There is no space for the birder to write his life list, but there is no errata sheet either. And there are three features that make this author think the Edwards book is the best deal.

Firstly, Edwards has given every species of bird a code number. For instance, the Wandering Tattler is 6N29. 6 for family Scolopacidae, N for order Charadriiformes, and 29 for Wandering Tattler. Likewise, the Mistletoe Flowerpecker is 59Z43 and the Fluffy-backed Tit-babbler is 34Z107.

Secondly, Edwards has tried to cut through the maze that is vernacular nomenclature. For instance, the bird that we call the Marsh Hawk, the British know as the Hen Harrier. It is only a matter of time before one or the other of us will have to change and Edwards has suggested the name Northern Marsh Harrier. (There are also Eurasian and African Marsh Harriers, necessitating the "Northern.") This process has already begun (Northern Oriole, Common Flicker, Gray Catbird), and Edwards has the courage for stepping up.

Thirdly, only the Edwards book has a short index by common name, in addition to the index by genus name.

Each book is available from its publisher, and either would make a fine addition to the birder's bookshelf.



LIBRARY BOOKS ARE IN. Books ordered for the Audubon ornithology shelf in the public library have at last arrived and are in the office of Mrs. Henshaw, available for checkout.

I wish to subscribe to membership in the National Audubon Society, El Paso-trans Pecos Chapter.
Dues \$15 individual, \$18. family; includes 6 issues of Audubon Magazine, 10 issues of newsletter. Mail check to Treasurer Linda Jones.
Name _____

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