

# The Roadrunner



Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society  
Volume 28 No. 13 February & March 2000

## General Meetings

**ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET**  
Saturday, February 19, 2000 6:30pm  
El Convento at Loretto, 1400 Hardaway

Our February meeting and annual awards dinner will take place Saturday, Feb. 19, 6:30pm at El Convento at Loretto, 1400 Hardaway. We will recognize our meritorious Service and Conservation Award recipients and have the installation of chapter officers for 2000. This year's honorees will be Elizabeth Chase, chapter Education Chair and former president, and the Keystone Heritage Park Association, represented by Carol Miller and Bernie Sargent.

Our gourmet meal, created by Chef Woody Clark (a graduate of the American Culinary Federation) will consist of salad, pork loin with piñon dressing, chef's choice of rice, pasta or potato, vegetables, freshly baked bread, dessert, iced tea and coffee. To make your reservation, send your check for \$15.00 payable to El Paso Audubon Soc. to Jane Fowler, 3212 Kilkenny Rd. El Paso, TX 79925 by FEB. 11th!! (Questions-- call Jane 598-2448).

A few directions: Turn off Trowbridge to Hardaway. Where Hueco intersects Hardaway, take the circular drive toward the school. There is a parking area at each end of the drive. Proceed around the drive (which is one-way) to the lot by the exit. Parking in the street is also allowed. The large building just to the left but adjoining the chapel (with the bell tower) is where we are meeting. A festive winter wreath adorns the door and X-mas lights decorate the stair railing. Doesn't this sound exciting? Plan to attend and have a delightful evening.

Our award recipients will double as guest speakers for this occasion. Learn of how the Keystone Heritage Project has raised over one million dollars to preserve this important archeological site and wetland area. Finds out about this site's future plans to become a multi-use park and educational resource.

Monday, March 20, 2000  
**POLAR BEAR COUNTRY**

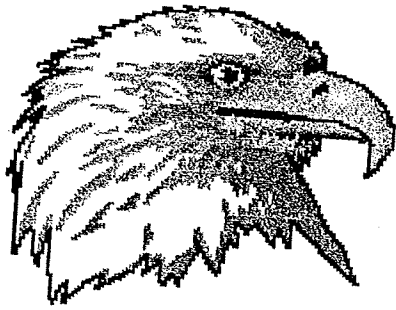
Dr. Joe Leach  
Memorial Park Garden Center  
3105 Grant Street 7:30pm

Dr. Joe Leach never fails to take his audiences on fascinating photographic journeys to far-away places. His upcoming presentation on Polar Bears should present itself to be a no exception. Join us at the Garden Center for an exceptional treat and learn about these beautiful and majestic animals of the far north.

A special thanks to John Kiseda, El Paso Zoo Animal Curator, for his presentation in the December general meeting and Lois Ballin, Texas Parks Wildlife Biologist, for her presentation in the January general meeting.

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## PRESIDENT'S AERIE

### ***Some interesting facts about this year's Hawk Watch.***

At the Manzano Mountains site outside Albuquerque, the 15th year of observations took place under less than ideal weather conditions, with a rainy September limiting observations. This did not stop the observers, banders, or site educators from keeping a chipper attitude, and the numbers started to pile up as the season wore on. The final count of migrants was 4,735, and 767 raptors were banded. Some noteworthy moments in the season included the banding of a rare Prairie race Merlin, and an ambitious ( or extremely hungry ) Peregrine Falcon that was banded at the North blind and then subsequently trapped in the South and West blinds!

If you remember we had our trip up there on the weekend of October 2nd & 3rd. Well on the weekend of October 16th & 17th. They had over two feet of snow. Finally on Sunday evening a road grader got up to them, which had to push through 6 foot drifts. They could not drive down, so they had to walk the four miles to the lower campground (which is where we stayed) behind the grader.

## **HELP WANTED**

**A couple of hours a month, usually in the morning.**

**Meet a teacher with their student group at Feather Lake and walk around the lake. Teachers will have other adult chaperones with them.**

**Call MaryLou Alcorn and say you will assist, 584-8768.**

## ***The Texas Hummingbird Roundup***

The Texas Hummingbird Roundup is a special project of the Nongame and Urban Wildlife Program at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This 5-year survey of backyard hummingbird watchers is beginning its final year, except in the Trans-Pecos. Starting in 1998, we are beginning a special focus survey just for the Trans-Pecos region which will last two years. The Trans-Pecos has the largest diversity of hummingbird species in Texas.

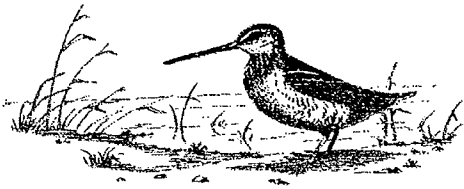
### ***But...I'm no expert!***

You don't have to be. It's true, with more species of hummingbirds in the Trans-Pecos than anywhere else, there are more birds to identify. However, there are many useful guides which can make distinguishing them much easier, including the hummingbird identification wheel offered through this program. Watching and enjoying the birds is the best way to learn - and there's no pressure. Enjoy yourself while you learn more about these incredible creatures! If you're not sure of what you've got, take a picture or call us and we can help you with identification. Call 1-800-792-1112 and ask the switchboard operator for the Texas Hummingbird Roundup, or dial direct (512) 389-4470. Or call Lois Balin, in El Paso, the urban wildlife biologist at 881-8687 for brochure and sign-up form.

### **Chapter Volunteers are Needed**

If you are not currently active in the chapter, WE NEED YOUR HELP!!! There are many ways that you can help your local chapter become better, so please consider it as a Fun and worthwhile endeavor for the new year! contact Bob Johnson (757-1876) for more information about the many, many different ways in which you can become involved in the chapter.

## Conservation Corner



by, John Kiseda

## Conservation Committee

### Jan 15 Westside Field Trip: The Search for NUTCHATCHES

This trip did not "turn up" any nuthatches (the only one reported in quite a while, was the one red-breasted nuthatch my wife saw in our backyard early in Jan.). The six people who participated in this field trip saw 47 species, not counting the pair of chunky looking parrots that flew past us while we were walking along Lombardy. They were probably the pair of red-crowned parrots that have been previously seen by a number of people.

We saw a number of passerines, shorebirds, waterfowl, and raptors. The "best" sightings were of a cooper's hawk, a few snipe, an orange-crowned warbler and many, many wood ducks. We also saw sure signs of Spring, such as a mourning dove sitting on a nest and male bufflehead ducks involved in courtship displays.

## BIRD CHECKLISTS

A call for your reports on bird sightings at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, Keystone Marsh and the Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds:

If you go birding at these sites, please contact me and let me know what birds you saw during your trips. I am still attempting to "add to" the bird checklists that have been compiled for these two areas and there are still many gaps in the lists. For example, I have not been able to document that anyone has seen a ladderback woodpecker or any species of oriole, towhee or goldfinch at Keystone Marsh and I would think that some of these birds should have been observed using this site. I have received information from only a very few people and am still in need of whatever information YOU may have! Please send me information that you have regarding bird species seen, the dates of the observations, the numbers of individuals observed, etc. Contact John Kiseda in the evenings at 533-4615 (phone and fax). Thanks for your help, and contact me if you would like to receive a copy of either checklist.

## UPCOMING ZOO CONFERENCE

The El Paso Zoo will be hosting the American Zoo & Aquarium Association's Western Regional Conference during the April 5-8, 2000 time period. Much help will be needed in diverse aspects of conference planning, management and logistics (from leading bird watching trips, to being an AV aide at conference sessions, to helping be a zoo host on Zoo Day). Please contact Program Chair, John Kiseda, at 521-1850 for more information if you are willing to help out.

## Keystone Marsh

The marsh continues to maintain fairly good water levels & a good number of waterfowl and shorebirds can be seen.

On a recent EP/TP field trip that included the marsh, a red-tailed hawk, a snowy egret, some green-winged teal and numerous shorebirds were seen; the "coolest" sighting of the morning was watching the courtship displays of the male bufflehead ducks..

Protection efforts for the wetlands & archaeological site continue, and I've been told that a million dollar plus grant from TXDOT is pending. If you want to help with the efforts to preserve the Keystone Marsh & archeological site, contact Bernie Sargent at 581-7099 or Carol Miller at 584-7088. You can also check out their web site at [www.keystone-site.org](http://www.keystone-site.org).

## El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society

### Board of Directors:

President	Bob Johnson	757-1876
V-President	John Kiseda	533-4615
Secretary	Betty Fisbeck	581-0174
Treasurer	Hugh Jameson	751-7952
	Craig Braginton	877-4138

### Committee Chairs:

Conservation	John Kiseda	533-4615
Education	Elizabeth Chase	591-5119
Field Trips	Bob Johnson	757-1876
Hospitality	Jane Fowler	598-2448
Membership	volunteer needed	
Programs	Nancy Wilson	877-4600
Publications	Kathleen Whelen	533-6630
Publicity	Roxanne Schroeder	534-7019
Sanctuary	John Sproul	545-5157

### About the Roadrunner:

Roadrunner is your newsletter. We welcome your contributions. For further information, you may contact;

Bob Johnson: 757-1876  
Kathleen Whelen 533-6630  
Elizabeth Chase:  
email: [echase@socorro.k12.tx.us](mailto:echase@socorro.k12.tx.us)

## FEATHER LAKE NOTES

by, John Sproul

### At Feather Lake

Despite the dry winter, the central and western sections of Feather Lake are holding more water than usual for this time of year. At the same time, the eastern section is largely dry. What's going on? It is all connected to the construction now nearing completion at the lake outlet. The contractors are keeping the area around the outlet dry by constantly pumping ground water. They discharge this water to the western section of the basin, from which it also flows to the central section. There is not enough water to reach the eastern section, though, so it has gone dry as winter has progressed.

Many thanks to the volunteers who took part in our six workdays at Feather Lake in 1999: Chris Allen, Peter Boynton, Cindy Edgar, Sarah Edgar, Betty Fisbeck, Jane Fowler, Vince Giordano, Bob Johnson, Betty Pagel, Robert Raye, Sylvia Raye, Susie Schneider and John Sproul. We greatly appreciate their contributions to sanctuary maintenance and habitat management. Thanks are also due the hard working Hanks High School students who helped remove saltcedars at the lake December 4. Our next workday will be Saturday, March 25, beginning at 2:00pm. Come on down!

Our 1999-2000 visitor season is progressing well. There are still a few dates, though, for which we need volunteers. Want to spend a morning or afternoon helping visitors enjoy our sanctuary? The setting is beautiful, the birds are great and the work easy. Call Charles Simpson (598-2274) to volunteer.

Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso's lower valley, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave. It is open every Saturday, 8:00am to noon, and every Sunday, 2:00pm to dusk. Admission is free.

## EL PASO ZOO INFORMATION

Visit the El Paso Zoo website at [www.whc.net/epzoo](http://www.whc.net/epzoo)

The El Paso Zoological Society is planning a 2nd trip to Kenya in the year 2000! This will be a great opportunity to add many, many birds to your lifelist! See fantastic birds such as secretary birds and marabou storks, & "up close & personal" views of many animals such as zebra, impala, cheetah, crocodiles, monitor lizards & more....OH MY!!!

Destination: Kenya, East Africa

Date: May 27 - June 9, 2000

Cost from Atlanta is \$3,250

(which is even less than last year's extremely well priced trip!)

Local leader: John Kiseda EP Zoo Animal Curator/EP-TP Audubon Conservation Chair. John led the 1999 trip to which included locales such as the Maasai Mara & Lake Nakuru.

On the 1999 safari, the group saw more than 40 species of mammals, including the "Big Five"-elephant, lion, rhino, (both white & black), cape buffalo & leopard. Almost 200 species of birds were also observed & identified (there were also a number of "unknowns")

An informational meeting at the zoo's Paraje building at 7 pm on the eve. of Thursday, Feb. 10, 2000.

Call John Kiseda at 521-1850

### Support Local Wildlife Conservation Organizations

#### The El Paso Herpetological Society

The El Paso Herpetology Society now meets at the El Paso Zoo on the first Wednesday (previously Thursday) of each month at 7:00pm. For more information contact Stella Ramirez at 751-3772 or Al Dominguez at 747-5844 or 566-3598.

#### Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue, Inc.:

Board Meetings are all "open" meetings and held at the El Paso Environmental Center at 800 S. Piedras.

Visit the CDWR website at:  
[www.whc.net/cdwr](http://www.whc.net/cdwr)

Visit the El Paso Zoo website at:  
[www.whc.net/epzoo](http://www.whc.net/epzoo)

#### KEYSTONE MARSH

Contact: Carol Miller at 584-7088

Visit the KAPPA website at:  
[www.keystone-site.org](http://www.keystone-site.org)

**Workday at Feather Lake**  
**Saturday, March 25, 2000**  
**2:00pm**

## **ELEGANT TROGAN SURVEY** by, Betty Fisbeck

Have you ever wanted to do a little bird research? Of course, most of you do when you help with the Christmas Bird Count or the Breeding Bird Survey. Last June 19th, Weldon and I spent a morning helping with the Elegant Trogon Survey in the Chiricahuas. What a beautiful place and what a beautiful bird! All we needed was a watch and ears to hear the call, which is very like the bark of a dog - very easy to recognize. There were 28 of us and we worked in pairs. Each pair of observers had a one mile stretch of the canyon. We stationed ourselves in the middle of that area at 6:00am and stayed until 11:00am. We had a form and marked off in 5 minute time intervals and when we heard the call, we marked the time interval and from where the call came--downstream, upstream, or right in front of us. Our mile was on the road from the parking lot at South Fork trail toward the campground- an easy assignment done in lawn chairs with coffee in hand. Some people had to hike up the canyon five miles and be there at 6:00am.

About three weeks later, the ranger sent us the results. there were 12 trogons (4 pairs and 4 males) recorded and a total of 90 species seen. Last summer was the ninth year of the survey and the count was down from a high of 22 in 1994. The ranger speculated that some females had not arrived or were not ready to nest and are easily missed. The 2000 survey is scheduled for June 23rd or 24th. Helping with this survey makes for a great birding weekend.

## **Birdathon 2000... We Need You**

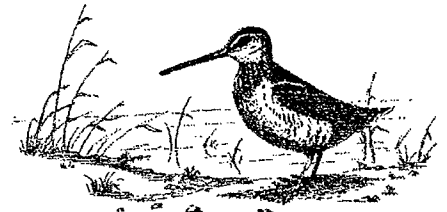
It is already time to begin work on this year's Birdathon fund raiser & bird-finding event! Please help us continue to make a difference not only in our community, but beyond!

We need fund raisers, publicity people, bird counters, counter sponsors and event preparation people!

Contact Jane Fowler (598-2448) or John Kiseda (533-4615)

## **INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY (IMBD) AT THE EL PASO ZOO**

The zoo will almost certainly be hosting another IMBD event this Spring! This event will be great fun for all involved, and everyone will have the opportunity to learn something about birds and factors that affect them. Won't you help me make this event even better by volunteering your time. People like to teach and interact with adults and kids will definitely be needed. You can help to give out information, lead local birding trips help kids make bird feeders and more. Come on out and help support the birds. If you like to have fun while helping others to have fun and learn please contact John Kiseda at the zoo at 521-1850.



## **IMPROVED BIRD VIEWING AT SUNLAND PARK RACETRACK**

If you have not gone birding in the racetrack area in the past year, you may not have realized that you can access the parking lot area adjacent to racetrack lake, for a different viewing opportunity. With the casino now open, the racetrack parking lot is open early in the day and practically year round. This allows you to get fairly close to the lake with the sun position behind you (not in your face with the associated glare). Remember to bring a milk crate or something similar to stand on if you don't like to use your vehicle as an elevated platform.

# Audubon's Birdathon 2000 Event

**Birdathon counters are already "in training", preparing for Birdathon 2000! What is Birdathon? It's not your typical bird count or fund-raiser, that's for sure! Birdathon is a wild weekend of fun and "birding for sponsor dollars"; it is also our organization's most important source of income for conservation & education endeavors.**

Birdathon 2000 will occur on **May 6th-7th** & we hope you can join us for a full, rewarding weekend of birding throughout the El Paso area by being a sponsor and possibly even a counter (if you want to become part of the "Birdathon Flock" by becoming a birdathoner yourself, contact John Kiseda at 533-4615 for details ).

## How Birdathon Works

On the weekend of May 6-7, our dedicated Birdathon counters will be wildly scurrying about hither and yon, trying to find as many bird species as possible in a single 24-hour blitz. These hardy (some say foolhardy) & intrepid individuals will start early, stay out late, visit varied wildlife habitats and give their eyes, ears and bird knowledge a full workout.

Why do they push themselves so hard? For the pleasure of a day afield, for the chance to collect meaningful data for a nationwide census project, for a test of their birding skills and most importantly, for a better West Texas environment.

Each counter will be backed by sponsors who pledge either a given amount for each species seen or a fixed total amount.

Most counters will see 50 to 100 species. A pledge of, say \$0.50 per species for 60 species would result in a contribution of \$30.

Fully 95% of Birdathon income goes to named projects; 5% pays for the cost of fundraising (printing, paper, postage, etc.).

As usual, all Birdathon sponsors are automatically entered in our ever-popular drawings for a number of wonderful prizes such as binoculars, books and the like. Counters will also be eligible for some cool prizes. The prize drawings will take place at our annual post-Birdathon pot-luck dinner that will start at 6 PM on Sunday May 7th, at the Memorial Park Garden Center, 3105 Grant. Reports of the weekend's best birds, great food and the results of our prize drawings await you! How about joining us? **ALL ARE INVITED!!!**

So, whom can you sponsor? Here is last year's roster of outstanding, hardy and dedicated counters.....

Mary Lou Alcorn  
Berttye Barnhart  
Matt Bingham  
Paul Bingham  
Mary Bradley  
Craig Braginton

Elizabeth Chase  
Tara Ditlevson  
Betty & Weldon Fisbeck  
Jane Fowler  
Richard Hermosilla  
Sallie Homan

Bob Johnson  
Larry Jordan  
John Kiseda  
Peggy & George Laswell  
Mark Riede  
Susie Schneider

Marcy Scott  
Charles Simpson  
John Sproul  
Kathy Whelen  
Nancy Wilson  
James Zabriskie

**and Special Student Counters from Eastwood Heights Elementary School!**

***Please pick one or more and give them your support!***

We anticipate that most of our 1999 Birdathon counters will surely be back at it this year, "fighting the good fight" and ready to do their all for the Birdathon 2000!

If you supported one of these people last year, please give them a call if you are not yet sure if they will be a counter this year. If you would rather have someone else pick a counter for you to sponsor, call Jane Fowler (598-2448) and she will help you to do that!

**Thank you very much, for your previous generosity and your continued support!**

John Kiseda & Jane Fowler

Birdathon Coordinators

# ON THE TRAIL

## NORTHEAST EL PASO

One of the best locations to find birds in the northeast part of town is at the Fort Bliss Ponds (The Fred Hervey Reclamation Plant). Good winter water birds and some raptors, Larry Jordan had a roughlegged Hawk on Jan. 16 We will also take a drive down HAWK ALLEY on the way Bob had 14 red-tailed hawks and 2 adult golden eagles on Jan. 17.

Date: Sunday, February 6th

Time: 7:33am

Place: 825 Dyer St. parking lot (Big8, Norwest Bank)

Who: Bob Johnson

\*\*NOTE: this date was incorrect in the last issue

## DOWN THE VALLEY

McNary, Ft Hancock, and Tornillo Reservoirs are always good for *Gulls, Ducks, Egrets, Cormorants,* and *White Pelicans* are very possible. Quite a few species of passerines could also be present and who knows maybe *Vermilion Flycatchers*. Some birds of prey to include *Harris' Hawk*, quite often a *Peregrine* have been in the area. Lunch break at the Tornillo Rest Area.

Date: Saturday, March 4, 2000

Time: 7:33am

Place: Feather Lake (our sanctuary)

Who: Bob Johnson

## BEGINNERS BIRD IDENTIFICATION

We will continue our Beginner Bird Trips hoping you will bring a new birder, a young (under 90) one. We are trying to get more youth interested. These will be conducted at the Crossroads Ponding Area and Keystone Marsh. We spend an hour plus at each location with scopes and binoculars (we have extras) pointing out key identifying features.

1st Date: Sunday, March 12, 2000

2nd Date: Saturday, March 18, 2000

Place: Crossroads Ponding Area (Doniphan & Country Club)

Instructors: John Sproul, Bob Johnson, John Kiseda, MaryLou Alcorn

## PERCHA DAM

A trip up I-25 (about 1&1/2 hours) to Percha Dam and Caballo Dam State Parks. *Mergansers* and *Cormorants* fish in the Lake just above the dam and many gulls are continuously flying by. A *Common Loon* is possible in Caballo and unusual *Warblers* are sometimes found at Percha.

Date: Saturday, April 1, 2000

Time: 7:12am

Place: I-10 & Transmountain Rd. across from the Texaco station)

Who: Bob Johnson

## Friends of Hueco Tanks

Admission: Hueco Tanks State Historical Park is \$4  
\$2 for senior 65 and over  
children under 12 free

### Feb. 20 Bird I D Tour 8:15 AM

A long eared owl has been roosting in the park for over a month, through Jan. 20. Maybe he will still be on his perch.

### March 19 Bird I D Tour 8:15 AM

## Rock Art Tours

Every Sat & Sun at 10:00am & 2:00pm  
RESERVATIONS ARE RECOMMENDED  
Telephone (915) 857-1135

## LOOKING AHEAD

The Texas Ornithological Society will have the spring conference in Lajitas Texas (next to Big Bend National Park) on April 27, 28 & 29. Hope to see the *Columbia Warbler*. For information, call MaryLou Alcorn 584-8768 or Bob Johnson at 747-1876.

## EP AUDUBON WEB SITE

Check it out at:

<http://www.whc.net/cdwr/tpashome.htm>

There is information for our chapter about upcoming events, Feather Lake, local birding, and links to other web sites of ornithological interest in Texas and New Mexico. There are other possible improvements; e-mail us your ideas through the web site.



## Dates to Remember

See page 6 for details

### February

Sun. Feb. 6 - Ft Bliss Ponds  
Mon. Feb 14 - Board Meeting  
Sat. Feb. 19 - Awards Dinner  
Feb. 20 - Hueco Tanks ID

### March

Sat March 4 - Down the Valley  
Sun. March 12 - Beg. Bird Id  
Mon. March 13 - Board Meeting  
Sat. March 18 - Beg. Bird Id  
March 19 - Hueco Tanks ID  
Mon. March 20 - General Meeting

### April

Sat, April 1 - Percha Dam  
April 27, 28 & 29 - Northeast El Paso

Friends of Hueco Tanks (see p.6)

#### Rock Art Tours

*Every Sat & Sun 10:00am & 2:00am*

#### Birding Activities at Hueco Tanks

*Bird Identification Tours & Slide Show Presentations*

### National Audubon Society

Chapter Membership Application

**Yes, I'd like to join.**

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 is enclosed.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make all checks payable to the National Audubon Society*

**National Audubon Society**

Chapter Membership Data Center

P.O. Box 51001

Boulder, Colorado 80322-1001

**EL PASO/TRANS-PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY**

W10

Local Chapter Code

7XCHA

The Roadrunner is published six times a year. Contributions are welcome. Please e-mail to [echase@socorro.k12.tx.us](mailto:echase@socorro.k12.tx.us) or mail to 1811 Robinson Ave El Paso, Texas 79902. Publication is assisted by Eastwood Heights Elementary Junior Audubon Society Club students.  
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