

the ROADRUNNER

Newsletter of El Paso/Trans-Pecos
Audubon Society - P.O. Box 9655
El Paso, Texas 79986



Editors: Jane Fowler - Jo Nagel

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February 1986

GENERAL MEETING

MON., FEBRUARY 17, 1986, 7:30 PM,
Garden Center, 3105 Grant in Me-
morial Park. Through slides we
have a chance to visit the Baja
from one end to the other, and
to have as the leader, Joyce Da-
vis, who lived the tour and took
the pictures. Come and bring a
friend.

FIELD TRIP CALENDAR

INDIAN HOT SPRINGS

SUN., FEB. 9. Meet in Feather Lake
parking lot, 9500 North Loop at
7:00 AM. We will take I-10 east
to the Ft. Quitman exit and turn
off to continue down the Rio
Grande to the former resort. This
will be a full day outing so pack
a lunch. Good trip for seeing a
mix of raptors, waterfowl and
passerines. Any questions call
Tom Baker (562-9461 h, 566-9461 w).

HUECO TANKS STATE PARK

SAT, FEB 22. Meet at 7:30 AM at
Bella Napoli restaurant (corner
Montana and Yarbrough). Plan on
a relaxed 2½-mile walk as we look
for common park residents and
the usual rich mix of winter
sparrows. We'll also check a few
areas for Eastern Meadowlarks.
Bring lunch and liquids. Leader:
John Sproul (545-5157).

NORTHEAST OXIDATION PONDS/NEW- MAN ELECTRIC PLANT

SUN, MARCH 2. Beginners and Regu-
lars. A good trip to see the
last of the winter waterfowl and
maybe some early spring waders.

We will split into 2 groups.
The beginners will spend about
2 hours on identification and
then join the regulars. We
will go to the Newman plant a-
bout 11:30, eat lunch (bring
your own) then check out the
cooling pond. Meet at the K-
Mart parking lot at 9484 Dy-
er; regulars at 7:15 AM and
beginners at 8:15 AM. Leader:
Bob Johnson (751-0125).

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MON., FEB. 10, 1986, 7:30 PM.
The Board will meet at the home
of Virginia and Tom Baker,
2716 Louisville, El Paso (562-
9461). All members are welcome

FIELD TRIP FOLLOW-UP

On Sat., Jan. 11, 8 adults and 4
youths showed up for bird iden-
tification help. We started at
the crossroads pond where there
were Red-wing Blackbirds, Ameri-
can Coots and Gadwalls. At the
river near the racetrack were
Water Pipits, Least Sandpipers
and Killdeer. A Black Phoebe
moved along the far bank. Fina-
ly we moved to Gary Lane, and,
thanks to Mrs. Heitzman, all
had good views of Canvasbacks,
Ring-Necked Ducks, American
Wigeons, Mallards and the beau-
tiful Wood Ducks.

The deadline for the March Roa-
runner is February 21.

FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS COALITION

Nineteen eighty-five was an eventful year for the Franklin Mts. At long last, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. gained authority to spend funds for operation and maintenance of Franklin Mts. St. Park. The process of developing a master plan for the Park began. Key gains were made in the effort to protect natural features on mountain lands outside the Park.

Will 1986 see similar progress? The Franklin Mts. Wilderness Coalition (nee Wilderness Park Coalition) is working hard to ensure it does. The Coalition consists of 14 member organizations, including El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon, dedicated to protection of the natural values of the Franklins. Individuals can also join, and we hope you will. Annual dues are: Student/\$3, Regular/\$5, Contributing/\$25-\$100, Sustaining/over \$100. Checks, payable to "Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition", may be sent to: Betty Wallis, Treasurer, FMWC, 1208-D Avalon, El Paso, TX 79925. /John Sproul/

TAKE A BOW, EDGAR!

What do surplus wooden powerline poles and the paper on which this newsletter is printed have in common? Why, yes, you're absolutely right. The answer is Ed Dodds. Ed made 2 major contributions to our chapter recently. First, through his firm A.B. Dick Products of El Paso, he donated a large supply of the paper you are looking at right now. Then, through contacts at El Paso Electric, he arranged for our chapter to obtain free some surplus utility poles for use at Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary. Thanks are due A.B. Dick, El Paso Electric and especially Ed Dodds for their generosity and assistance. We appreciate it!

CITY RECYCLING PROGRAM CANNED

On Jan 14, the El Paso City Council voted unanimously to end the City's recycling program. Although there has been some talk of a new program with a different collection strategy (dumpsters at fire stations), to date it is nothing more than talk. There are no firm plans, or even shaky ones. Just because the City has lost (never had?) the recycling habit, you don't have to lose it, too. Next month, we'll list some locations where you can still take materials for recycling. One you know already. Bring your aluminum cans to our general meeting or have Bob Johnson (757-1876/751-0125) pick them up, and we'll recycle them into dollars to support our chapter's programs.

NEW MEMBERS

We wish to extend a hearty welcome to the following new members: S.R. Bishop, Joan Hardaway, William J. Liles, Mrs. B. Milson, Frank Parsons, Mr. & Mrs. Sam Calhoun, W.B. Shoemaker.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S EYRIE

Birdathon Alert! Mark May 3, 1986 on your calendar. Plan now to go out and see how many species you can find; plan now to help raise needed funds for the chapter. More details in March and April's newsletters.

Have you been saving aluminum cans for the city's recycling program? Two weeks ago, the city ended that operation; now save your cans for our chapter. We haven't cancelled our recycling program. Ask your neighbors if they would like to donate their cans also. Bring cans to meetings, field trips, or if you can't make either, call me (Bob Johnson, 751-0125), and I will pick them up.

(cont. bottom of p. 3)

EL PASO/TRANS--PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY BUDGET

INCOME	1985	1985	1986
	Proposed	Actual	Proposed
Dues	2120.	1822.50	1950.
Contributions	300.	520.65	250.
Sales	550.	799.35	650.
Rummage	420.	816.	750.
Newsletter subs.	50.	112.	75.
Bood Fair	420.	349.67	200.
Birdathon	800.	1725.22	1250.
Interest	400.	420.42	125.
Caretaker	420.	254.27	400.
	<u>5500.</u>	<u>6820.08</u>	<u>5650.</u>

EXPENSES

Membership	50.	26.04	60.
Program	150.	240.	220.
Conservation	650.	1162.35(c)	550.
Field trips	25.	21.83	20.
Hospitality	30.	00.	20.
Publicity	40.	00.	20.
Education	230.	214.37	230.
Publications	800.	733.41	850.
Ways and Means	75.	30.50	400.
Sanctuary	1720.	1585.80	1030.
Audubon Council of Texas	230.	296.10(d)	200.
Library	100.	91.50	80.
Birdathon	150.	171.55	1250.(a)
Awards and gifts	740.	300.92	200.
General Administration			
Meeting rental	135.	151.21	190.(b)
Office supplies	125.	89.53	90.
Insurance	140.	216.50	190.
Other	100.	42.62	50.
	<u>5500.</u>	<u>5374.42</u>	<u>5650.</u>

- NOTES: a. Birdathon income carried here until determined how to allocate.
 b. Rent now to include phone, PO box rental, meeting hall.
 c. Includes cost of Texas Parks & Wildlife Nongame Stamps & Decals; to appear under Ways & Means in '86.
 d. Includes cost of T-shirts. In '86, to appear under Ways & Means.

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(cont. from p. 2)

Do you have any GOLDBOND stamps gathering dust? We are saving them to redeem for Birdathon prizes and door prizes.

would you be willing to serve on one of our chapter committees? We will have a sign-up sheet to pass around at the Feb meeting. If you can't attend, call me and volunteer. Plan to get more involved in '86. We need you!

Next month, this column will be devoted to the "State of the Chapter"---

what we accomplished during 1985. Watch for it.

Be a friend to Feather Lake. Feb 15 is our next Sanctuary work day. Come lend a hand. We have much to do.

Last, but not least, B. Dalton, Cielo Vista Mall, has given us a BOOKFAIR date, June 14. Save up your book purchases and patronize B. Dalton on Sat, June 14.

CONSERVATION CAPSULES

1986 NONGAME STAMP: What makes Attwater's Prairie-Chicken an appropriate subject for this year's Texas Nongame Stamp? Two things. First, this endangered subspecies of the Greater Prairie-Chicken is today found only in Texas (it formerly ranged into Louisiana). The entire population consists of an estimated 1430 birds in 8 east Texas counties. And 2nd, the bird is clearly in trouble. Attwater's Prairie-Chicken habitat has declined 81% in the last 18 years, and now there are only 46,000 acres of suitable coastal-prairie habitat left. By 1990, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) expects another 9,000 acres to disappear. Attwater's Prairie-Chicken is one reason Texas needs a strong nongame wildlife and endangered species program. What will the 1986 Nongame Stamp look like? Tune in next month.



FRANKLIN MTS.: On Jan 14, El Paso's City Council approved the application of Planned Mountain Development zoning to all lands within El Paso's Mountain Development Area (MDA) (RR, Dec 1985). The El Paso Mountain Committee, the City's advisory body on mountain-development questions, deserves a long round of applause for its hard work in making this environmentally protective zoning a reality. Now the committee is addressing another important issue: How can the steep-slope areas at lower elevations outside the MDA be adequately protected?

PIPING PLOVER: Effective Jan 10, the USFWS has determined the Piping Plover to be an endangered species in the Great Lakes region and a threatened species elsewhere in its range, including coastal Texas. The species breeds in the Great Lakes region (an estimated 17 pairs in 1985), on the northern Great Plains (an estimated 1,439 pairs) and along the Atlantic Coast (an estimated 722 pairs). It winters on the southern Atlantic Coast and along the Gulf of Mexico. Since the 1920s, the Piping Plover has decreased over most of its range, and it has vanished as a nesting species from many areas. Primary threats to the plover today are habitat disturbance and destruction, and disturbance of nesting adults and chicks. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. estimates a 20% loss of wintering habitat in Texas over the past 20 years.

APLOMADO FALCON: How did the 4 captive-reared Aplomado Falcons released in south Texas last summer (RR Nov 1985) fare? Not well, according to a recent report in THE EYAS, newsletter of the Natl. Wildlife Federation's Raptor Information Center. Great Horned Owls killed 2 of the birds within 2 nights of the release. The remaining 2, after being badly harassed by resident Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, had to be captured after one week and later re-released. Both then flew out of the release area before sunset on release day and were never relocated. /John Sproul/

OBSERVATIONS

December 29 - January 20

Few reports were received during this period with most data provided from the El Paso Christmas Count. Many species normally present were absent or in low numbers.

LOONS - FALCONS

On 12/31, a Great Egret was being treated at Anthony for a gunshot wound sustained elsewhere (HB). Twenty-five Snow Geese were in Sunland Park 1/1 (AB, HaB). A Ross' Goose was among

the several Snow Geese seen there on 1/4 (BJ, BaR). That same day, 14 Wood Ducks were counted at the Gary Lane Pond (BJ, et al.), 3 at a pond near the Plantation Restaurant in the upper valley (BJ, et al.), and 1 at Ascarate Lake (AG, MG, et al.). An adult Golden Eagle was soaring along the ridgeline above W. Cottonwood Spring 1/4 (JS, JF).

QUAIL - WOODPECKERS

Four Western Sandpipers were counted along the river area in the upper valley 1/4 (BJ, et al.). At least 2-3 Great horned Owls were heard calling in the canyons of the east Franklins off Transmountain Road 1/1, and 1 heard in approximately the same area 1/4 (JS). The pair of Anna's Hummingbirds reported last month remained in Mt. Park until approximately 1/18 (JB). Another Anna's has frequented a Thunderbird Heights feeder from early November through the present (FB). On 1/3, it was reported that the male Rufous Hummingbird in the Cielo Vista area was last seen 12/25 (AB).

FLYCATCHERS - VIREOS

On 1/1, an empidonax sp. was seen at a residence just north of the Tennis West area (BJ, PR) and another possible 1 in a ditch just back of the airstrip at Sunland Park (AB). A Black Phoebe was also in the Sunland Park area 1/1 (AB, HaB). A male Vermilion Flycatcher was noted along the Rio Grande near Sunland Park 1/4 (BJ, AB, HaB). A Scrub Jay seen on the Christmas Count (JoD, et al.) was the only 1 reported. Three American Crows were in the Chamizal area 1/4 (NK, MG, et al.). A House Wren was observed in a ravine in the upper foothills of the W. Franklins 1/1 (JS). Three Black-tailed Gnatcatchers were counted near Mt. Cristo Rey 1/4 (TB, BB). The only American Robins reported were 2 in n.e. El Paso 1/2 (RH). A Sage Thrasher was observed near Wm. Beaumont 1/4 (JC, JK), and 2 Brown Thrashers in the Timberwolf-Ft. Bliss area that same day (HJ).

WARBLERS - WEAVER FINCHES

Other interesting reports on count day were: 4 Black-chinned Sparrows in W. Cottonwood Spring Canyon (RD, JF, BP, JS), another 2 at Apache Springs (JC, et al.),

38 Sage Sparrows near Mt. Cristo Rey (TB, BB), and 2 Cassin's Finches in the Phelps Dodge area (SJD, CK).

CONTRIBUTORS:

Tom Baker, Helen Bigelow, Flora Bittick, Anne & Hampton Bowman, Janet Brockmoller, Bob Byrd, Jean Coyle, Joyce Davis, Sarah Jane Dodds, Robert Doss, Jane Fowler, Al & Madeline Gavit, Joe Guinn, Richard Hermosillo, Howard Jackson, Bob Johnson, Cindy & Neil Keith, Jo Nagel, Betty Pagel, Peggy Riede, Bart Rumaker, John Sproul. /Bettie Roberts, Observations Editor/ (591-0421)

CALIFORNIA CONDOR:

ONE DIES, FIVE STILL WILD

The story of the California Condor recovery effort is a complex and compelling one. Some day, it will be the subject of an excellent book. Right now, no one knows if the final chapter will be happy or sad.

Trapping of the remaining wild condors (RR, Jan) began Jan 2, and the female of the only known breeding pair was captured the next day. Her lethargic behavior in preceding weeks had suggested lead poisoning, so she was the logical candidate to bring in first. X-rays revealed a body load of 7 lead shotgun pellets, indicating she had been shot at some time during her life, and an ingested lead fragment in her gastrointestinal tract. Following capture, her condition continued to deteriorate; she died 2 weeks later in the course of an operation that was a last-ditch effort to save her life. Condor researchers believe lead poisoning from the ingested lead was the cause of her death.

Meanwhile, the Natl. Audubon Society had requested a federal court injunction to block the trapping of the remaining wild condors. Before any more birds could be taken, U.S. District Court Judge Barrington Parker in Washington, DC issued a temporary restraining order, barring capture of condors through the end of January. Audubon is seeking an injunction that

would remain in effect until the U.S. Fish and wildlife Service does 3 things:

- It prepares an environmental impact statement on the trapping program.
- It purchases the Hudson Ranch (RR, Nov 1965) as a condor sanctuary. (The Interior Dept. is once again refusing to acquire this 13,800-acre key condor foraging area.)
- It takes action to ensure that the 2 zoos with populations of captive condors handle these birds in a way that prepares some of them for release to the wild. (Through a misunderstanding, birds at the Los Angeles Zoo that were candidates for release had been fed directly by humans since last May and currently are too tame for release.)

At press time, 5 condors remain in the wild and 21 in captivity. By the time you read this, Judge Parker may have reached his decision on the injunction. The next chapter in the story will have begun. /John Sproul/

THE WESTERN BIRD WATCHER

Kevin Zimmer's latest book, THE WESTERN BIRD WATCHER, is now available from EP/TPAS. Prices are \$10.95 + 0.56 tax paperback and \$17.95 + 0.92 tax hard-bound. You can order a copy by writing EP/TPAS (P.O. Box 9655, El Paso, TX 79986) or calling John Sproul (545-5157). Please make checks payable to "El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society". Non-El Paso residents, please add \$1 for postage and handling. Watch for a review of this book in next month's ROADRUNNER.

1985 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

HUECO TANKS-Dec 21, 1985

Thirteen observers spotted 2583 birds of 43 species. Sparrows, of course, were the most commonly seen birds; a gnatcatcher, the most uncommon. This year, we had the fewest observers and the lowest number of species reported since the count started in 1974. Other Trans-Pecos CBC reports: balmornea-100 species, Fort Davis-84 sp., Alpine-56 sp., Caballo, NM-111 sp. /Joyce Davis, Compiler/

EL PASO-Jan 4, 1986

Forty-one people participated on count day (36 in the field, 5 at feeders); it was a very successful day. We reported 103 species; our record is 104 species seen in 1976. Highlights reported: Ross' Goose, Wood Duck, Vermilion Flycatcher, Am. Crow, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Sage and Brown thrashers, Cassin's Sparrow, Common Grackle and Cassin's Finch. All-time chapter highs for: Red-tailed Hawk (25), white-winged Dove (175), Inca Dove (207), N. Mockingbird (34), Sage Sparrow (38). We had lower than usual numbers for: Rock wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped warbler, Rufous-sided Towhee, Brown Towhee. No pintails were reported; this occurred only once before in 1960. I want to thank all who participated and ask that you keep your interest peaked so we will have as good a turnout for the BIRDATHON on May 3.
/Bob Johnson, Compiler/

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THE ROADRUNNER is sent to all members of the El Paso/Trans-pecos Audubon Society. Nonmembers can subscribe for \$4 per year. Make checks payable to EP/TPAS and mail to our return address below. Please send any changes or corrections in name, address, or telephone # to this address

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