

the ROADRUNNER

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



Editors: Jane Fowler - Jo Nagel

Volume 15 (7)

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September 1985

GENERAL MEETING

MON., SEPTEMBER 16, 1985, 7:30 PM,
Garden Center, 3105 Grant in
Memorial Park. Here is the news
you've all been waiting for. Mr.
Don St. Clair will bring us an
informative program about pigeons
as well as 8 different breeds of
pigeons. See you there.

FIELD TRIP CALENDAR

DURLING'S FARM

SAT. SEPT. 7. Leader: Tom Baker,
562-9461. Meet at I-10 and Trans-
Mountain at 7:30 AM. After birding
the area we will travel to Helen
Bigelow's in Anthony to tour her
bird rehabilitation facility.

APACHE SPRINGS

SUN., SEPT. 15. Leader: Joe Guinn,
566-8438. Join Joe for an easy walk
on the east side of the Franklins.
Last year many hummingbirds were
in the canyon feeding from scarlet
morning glory blooms. We will meet
at 7:30 AM in the Wilderness Museum
parking lot on Transmountain Dr.

BONITA LAKE/HONDO

SAT. SUN., SEPT. 21-22. Leader:
Jeff Donaldson, 821-2242. We will
leave from the K-Mart parking lot
on Dyer at 7:30 AM. We will camp
overnight at the South Fork camp-
ground in the Lincoln Natl. Forest.
Northern Pygmy Owl may be here;
also Clark's Nutcracker, Spotted
Owl and others. Sun. we will bird
down the Bonita through Lincoln
to the Hondo River valley.

COUNTRY CLUB/RANDAL 'S POOL

SAT. OCT. 5. Leader: Joyce Davis,
581-9740. Meet at the Crossroads
pond at 7:30 AM; drive to vari-
ous open water in the area, i.e.
Gary Lane, Willows, etc.

DOG CANYON (GUADALUPE MTS.)

SAT.-SUN., OCT. 19-20. Leader:
Tom Baker, 562-9461.

NORTHEAST OXIDATION PONDS

SUN., OCT. 27. Leader: Bob John-
son, 751-0125.

W. COTTONWOOD SPRINGS

SAT., NOV. 2. Leader wanted. Call
Tom Baker - 562-9461.

FEATHER LAKE/RIO BOSQUE

SAT., NOV 16. Leader: John Sproul
545-5157.

MESILLA REFUGE/PERCHA DAM

SUN., NOV. 24. Leader: Joyce Davis
581-9470.

MADDEN LAKE/TORNILLO

SUN., DEC. 8. Leader: Bob Johnson
751-0125.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT/HUECO TANKS

SAT., DEC. 21

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT/EL PASO

SAT., JAN. 4

BOSQUE DEL APACHE REFUGE

SAT.-SUN., JAN. 18-19

FRIENDS OF FEATHER LAKE

Our chapter wishes to thank Mary and George Yelderman for their generous donation to the Sanctuary Fund.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MON., SEPT. 9, 1985, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Joyce Davis, 5900 Enterprise, Apt. B 9, El Paso (581-9470 h, 544-6772 w). All members are welcome.



CONSERVATION CAPSULES

TEXAS WILDLIFE STAMPS: Last year, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. (TPWD) acquired 1,530 acres of coastal wetland in Calhoun Co. This March, through a lease/purchase agreement with the Texas Nature Conservancy and a partial donation from 6 major petrochemical companies, TPWD acquired the 8,580-acre Peach Point Marsh in Brazoria Co. Closer to home, the agency recently acquired 1,820 acres on the Rio Grande one mile north of Ruidosa in Presidio Co. for management as a White-winged Dove habitat area. Where does the money for these purchases come from? In the first 2 cases, from sales of state duck stamps and art prints; in the 3rd case, from sales of White-winged Dove stamps. Hunters are required to buy these stamps, but you don't have to be a hunter to do so. You can get them (duck stamp \$5, whitewing stamp \$6) from hunting license outlets and TPWD offices. You'll help protect wildlife habitat in the process.

TEXAS NONGAME STAMP: Now, why can't TPWD acquire key habitat parcels for nongame wildlife and endangered species? It can,

if you'll help. The Texas Nongame Stamp and Decal (both \$5) are available at all TPWD offices and from EP/TPAS.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT: On July 29, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 1027 by unanimous voice vote and without debate. This is the bill to reauthorize the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for 3 years, increase ESA funding and provide some increased protection for species that are candidates for endangered status (RR, Jun). Attention now moves to the Senate, where S. 725, Sen. John Chafee's (R-RI) bill to reauthorize the ESA for 5 years should come before the Environmental Pollution Subcommittee of the Environment and Public Works Committee in September. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-TX) is a member of the full committee. Let him (U.S. Senate Wash., DC 20510) know your views on reauthorization of a strong ESA.

INTERIOR LEAST TERN: Newly protected under the ESA is the interior U.S. population of the Least Tern. On May 28, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced it had assigned endangered status to this population. Interior Least Terns nest on bare or nearly bare islands or sandbars on rivers and on the barren flats of saline lakes and ponds. In New Mexico, a small population breeds at Bitter Lake Natl. Wildlife Refuge near Roswell. Historically widespread in the interior U.S., the tern's breeding distribution has been reduced to scattered remnants by man's development and modification of river systems.

IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER: A species that may soon lose its protection under the ESA is the

Ivory-billed Woodpecker. The USFWS is reviewing the status of this species to determine if it is extinct and should be removed from the endangered species list. Are you aware of any recent sightings or evidence that the Ivory-bill may still exist? You're encouraged to contact the USFWS, (Regional Director, USFWS, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103). The formal deadline for comments and data was Aug. 8, but the USFWS can still use any available information.

TEXAS WATER: In May, the Texas Legislature passed comprehensive legislation concerning future development, conservation and management of state water resources. Final approval of this "water package" and its \$1.4 billion price tag requires passage of 2 constitutional amendments that Texans will vote on in a statewide election Nov. 5. The final package was hammered out by a House-Senate conference committee established to resolve differences between an environmentally strong Senate version of the bill and an environmentally weak House version (RR; Apr, May). Texas conservation groups have serious reservations about the legislation ultimately passed. The package addresses important issues such as groundwater management, water conservation, agricultural water use, instream flow and protection of bays and estuaries. But the provisions are relatively weak, the language ambiguous. Conservation groups have been studying the package carefully and discussing it thoroughly prior to taking formal positions on the November ballot measure. The Natl. Audubon Soc. expects to announce its position in early September. /John Sproul/

FIELD TRIPS FOLLOW UP

First of our summer trips was to Rio Bosque Park on June 1. The 6 participants found 23 bird species, mostly summer residents such as Yellow-breasted Chat and Painted Bunting but also some late-migrant Western Tanagers and Black-headed Grosbeaks. A dead Common Barn-Owl was a reminder that raptors still get little respect in the El Paso area.

Five people birded the Dripping Springs Canyon above La Cueva. 28 bird species were counted for the day. Two black-tailed Rattlesnakes were observed closely as we ventured up the canyon into the west side of the mountains. When you reach the end of the dirt road, nestled back in the oaks and up against the rock are the ruins of the dripping springs resort. This area should make for an interesting field trip in the future. It's a very unusual place, and is not far or hard to get to.

The Black Range trip produced numerous sightings of uncommon birds. Both Railroad Canyon and Iron Creek Campground had their moments when the treetops were full of Warblers. Good numbers of Red-faced, Black-throated Gray, Grace's and Townsend's Warblers were seen as they came through the area. Painted Redstarts and Hermit Warblers were seen near our camp. Total species seen by the 11 who went neared sixty. Daytime temperatures were pleasant. Rain dampened Bart and the camp area during the night.

Many thanks to the Gilboes for the use of their cabin near Cloudfroft, and we were glad they were able to come for the day. 14 birders enjoyed the trip.

Wildlife Report Available

The Audubon Wildlife Report 1985, a new publication from the National Audubon Society, traces the history of 20th century wildlife management and discusses its role in protecting our wildlife resources. A thorough reference to the nation's major wildlife management programs, the 671-page book examines the history, legislation, budget, current trends, issues and responsibilities of such agencies as the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service and the Forest Service.

The first edition in an annual series, the Audubon Wildlife Report 1985 includes authoritative accounts on federal migratory bird management, animal damage control, endangered species management, wetlands preservation, marine mammal protection and many more subjects. Twelve chapters are devoted to individual species such as the grizzly bear, California condor, bald eagle, desert bighorn and green pitcher plant.

Diligently researched and authoritatively written, the report will be welcomed by Auduboners with a serious and active commitment to wildlife conservation.

To order, send \$16.50 (make checks payable to National Audubon Society) to Audubon Wildlife Report, National Audubon Society, 950 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

• Oct. 7-10: American Ornithologists' Union, Annual Meeting, Ariz. St. Univ., Tempe. Contact: Dr. Robert Ohmart, Ctr. for Envir. Studies, ASU, Tempe, AZ 85287

• Nov. 5-8: First Regional Conference of the Rio Grande Border States on Parks and Wildlife, Laredo, TX. Contact: Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., 512/479-4901.

• Nov. 14-16: Texas Ornithological Society, Fall Meeting, Amarillo, TX.

• Nov. 15-17: Audubon Council of Texas, Fall Meeting, Bastrop, TX. Contact: John Sproul, 545-5157.

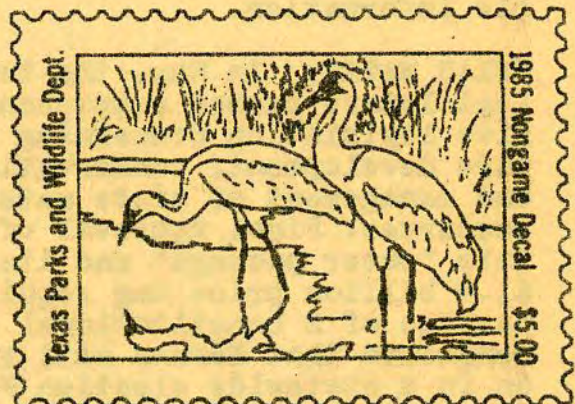
• May 1-3, 1986: Texas Ornithological Society, Spring Meeting, Lajitas, TX.

• July 28-Aug. 3, 1986: American Birding Association, Biennial Convention, Tucson, AZ.

* * *

The deadline for the Oct. Roadrunner is Sept. 23.

THE ROADRUNNER is sent to all members of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. Nonmembers can subscribe for \$4 per yr. Make checks payable to "El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society" and mail to: RR Editor, P.O. Box 9655, El Paso, TX 79986. Send any changes or corrections in name, address or telephone # to this address. Please Note: Bulk mail is not forwarded. Save us 22¢ in return postage by notifying us before you move.



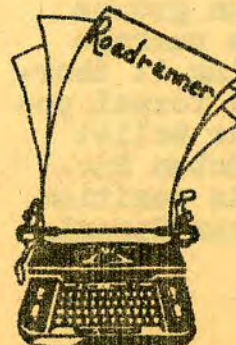
YES, I want to help support the nongame wildlife and endangered species programs of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Please send me:

	Qty.	Each	Total
1985 Nongame Stamp		\$5	
1985 Nongame Decal		\$5	
Amt. Enclosed			

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Address _____

_____ Zip _____



BOUNDARY PROJECT LAWSUIT ADVANCES

In 1983, the Natl. Audubon Soc. and El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon were among several groups that sued the Intl. Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) to force that agency to adhere to its environmental-protection commitments on its Rio Grande Boundary Preservation Project. This is a project now underway to stabilize the international boundary by dredging a 199-mile reach of the Rio Grande between Ft. Quitman and Presidio, Texas.

In its environmental impact statement for the project, the IBWC said it would be taking many enlightened measures to protect wildlife habitat and other environmental resources in the project area. But once construction began, those measures were largely ignored (RR, Mar 1983). Hence the lawsuit.

In late 1983, the U.S. Justice Dept. filed a motion to have the suit dismissed (RR, Dec 1983). Until recently, though, no action was taken on that motion. Finally, early this summer the federal judge handling the case told the parties involved he had no intention of dismissing. He offered the parties one last chance to negotiate a settlement before he brings the matter to trial.

Prior attempts at a settlement have failed. This time, though, there are signs one can be achieved. We are now awaiting receipt of a proposed settlement agreement the IBWC and the Justice Dept. have drafted. We hope it is substantive and can be the starting point for negotiations to achieve a final agreement. /John Sproul/

FOREST PLANNING

The Natl. Forest Management Act of 1976 requires the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to prepare detailed management plans for all national forests by 1985. With that year now upon us, a flood of draft plans has been released in recent months, including plans for 3 national forests often used by El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon members: the Coronado, the Gila and the Lincoln.

These are long-term, comprehensive plans that will guide the protection and use of our national forests for the next 50 years. They'll be revised every 10-15 years. Where will timber harvests take place? Where will roads be built? What levels of grazing will be permitted? Where will trails be maintained? What roadless lands will remain roadless? Where will wildlife-management efforts be concentrated? The key decisions are being made now through the forest planning process. Conservationists have been highly critical of the emphasis on timber harvest in the plans released thus far

What is the USFS proposing for specific areas you may be familiar with? Here are some examples:

Coronado NF: Designate 762 acres within the South Fork of Cave Creek in the Chiricahua Mts. as a zoological botanical area and 3478 acres in Guadalupe Canyon in the Peloncillo Mts. as a zoological area. Leave the road into South Fork open, but convert the existing campground to a day-use area.

Gila NF: In the lower San Francisco River canyon, eliminate the existing seasonal (Mar 15-July 15) off-road-vehicle closure that is intended to protect nesting raptors, lambing bighorn sheep and other wildlife. Recommend that the existing Wilderness Study Area (WSA) along the lower San Francisco not be designated Wilderness.

Lincoln NF: Recommend that the Guadalupe Escarpment WSA between Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe Mts. national parks not be designated Wilderness.

Want to review one of these draft plans and comment on it? You need to act fast. All 3 have October comment deadlines. You can request copies of the draft plans and their accompanying environmental impact statements from the USFS by calling the numbers below (comment deadlines in parentheses):

Coronado NF (Oct 11): 602/629-6805
Gila NF (Oct 8): 505/388-1986
Lincoln NF (Oct 18): 505/437-6030

(cont. on p.6)

These documents are lengthy. They're complex. They're also important. They're going to decide the future of our public forests. For some ideas on how to simplify the review process and still make effective comments, see Brock Evans' article on forest planning in the June 1985 AUDUBON ACTION. /John Sproul/

OBSERVATIONS

May 23 to August 21

The data for this period reflected less activity in the field than usual and many species were either not seen or reported.

LOONS - FALCONS

A Great Blue Heron was observed flying out of a ponding area formed by recent rains in n.e. El Paso 8/21 (JNi). Snowy Egrets were reported on four occasions: 2-3 at Feather Lake 6/30 (JS), 5 there 7/7 (JS, et al.), and single ones at the Crossroads Pond 7/2 (BJ) 7/20 (JoD). A Green-backed Heron was at Randel's Pool 7/20 (JoD). A lone White-faced Ibis was noted flying over Feather Lake 6/29 (JN). On 6/30, a female Wood Duck with 6 ducklings was observed in an irrigation ditch near Randel's Pool (DW)(#). Male and female Wood Ducks were seen previously on several occasions at the Gary Lane pond in the upper valley. A male Blue-winged Teal was at the Crossroads Pond 6/30 (JoD), 7/2 (BJ) and 7/4 (JS). In early June, a pair of Mississippi Kites was reported nesting in the El Paso Country Club (EPCC) area where 7 had been seen soaring overhead (fide JS).

QUAIL - WOODPECKERS

A Virginia Rail was heard calling at Feather Lake 6/8 (JS, et al.). Single Yellow-billed Cuckoos were at Rio Bosque Park 5/29 (TB, BB), Feather Lake 6/8 (JS), near Randel's Pool 7/4 (JS) 7/20 (JoD), and the EPCC area 8/17 (JoD). A Common Barn-Owl was found dead at Rio Bosque Park 6/1 (JS, et al.). A male Calliope Hummingbird visited a Cielo Vista feeder 7/24 (EG) and 2 males were reported from Grand Canyon in Mt. Park 8/9 (RGo, MGo). A male Broad-tailed Hummingbird (first fall migrant) was at a Coronado feeder 7/21 (JoD). The first fall Rufous Hummingbird reported was a male on W. Yandell 7/13 (JS). Numerous

Rufous reports were received the following week (mob).

FLYCATCHERS - VIREOS

A pair of Am. Robins was observed building a nest in the Yaleta area 6/9 (EC). Reports of this species continued into late June. Six Phainopeplas were counted in one tree near Randel's Pool 7/20 (JoD) and a pair was at Mt. Park 8/16 (JB).

WARBLERS - WEAVER FINCHES

A N. Waterthrush put in an appearance at Horizon City 8/21 (MG, CG). Three late male W. Tanagers were at Rio Bosque Park 6/1 (JS, et al.). A W. Tanager at Horizon City 7/24 (AG, MG, CG) was the first fall migrant to be reported. A male N. Cardinal was singing near Randel's Pool 7/2 (BJ) and 7/4 (JS). A pair of rather late Black-headed Grosbeaks was also at Rio Bosque Park 6/1 (JS, et al.). At least 2 (possibly 3) male Indigo Buntings were singing continuously in Whispering Spring Canyon and a female bunting (sp) was noted in company with one of them 6/15 (JS)(*2). An E. Meadowlark was observed in the Rio Bosque Park area 5/27 (JS, JF), and a single male Yellow-headed Blackbird was at Feather Lake 6/30 (JS). As many as 3 Bronzed Cowbirds spent the summer in Mt. Park as did 3 species of orioles. A male Hooded returned there 6/8 with 2 pair present as of 7/20, 2 imm. "Bullock's" were following a male begging to be fed 5/27, and a male Scott's was observed feeding a young cowbird 7/17 (JB). Red Crossbills frequented an e.central El Paso residential area from last Thanksgiving through May. On 7/9, it was reported that a male and female had been noted feeding at least 2 young 5/16 and a female was last seen 5/30 (LS)(#).

CONTRIBUTORS: Tom Baker, Janet Brockmoller, Bob Byrd, Elizabeth Clark, Joyce Davis, Jane Fowler, Al & Madeline Gavit, Chris Gavit, Elza Gilboe, Roger & Marian Gore, Bob Johnson, Jo Nagel, John Nielson, Patricia Russell, John Sproul, Lucile Swick, Dave Weinstein, Ray Waite.

(cont. on p.8)

EL PASO-LAS CRUCES RARE BIRDS COMMITTEE

Q & A

The El Paso-Las Cruces Rare Birds Committee has been in existence slightly over a year now, and already it has accumulated a valuable set of bird records for the El Paso/Las Cruces area. To date, the committee has reviewed and catalogued 243 documented records, 107 submitted in 1984 and 136 in 1985. Thank you, everyone who has provided the committee written details and/or photos of your rare-bird observations. You've made a significant contribution to El Paso/Las Cruces area ornithology.

To give you further background on the workings of the committee and refresh your memory on its purposes, here are some answers to frequently asked questions:

Q: Am I required to send observation details to the committee?

A: No, you're not. Submittal of details is entirely voluntary. The committee encourages you to do so because 1) you'll contribute to a data set that will be of great value to future students of local birdlife, 2) only when documented will your rare-bird sightings gain the scientific acceptance they deserve, and 3) you'll find that preparation of written details helps hone your birding skills.

Q: Where are the committee's records maintained?

A: Two places: The Centennial Museum, U.T. El Paso, for El Paso-area records and the N.M. St. Univ. library, Las Cruces, for Las Cruces-area records. These record files are non-circulating but are available for study by interested members of the public. To see the El Paso files, check with Tom O'Laughlin or another member of the Centennial Museum staff (747-5565).

Q: What should I include in a written description of a rare-bird observation? What format should I use?

A: Because many local birders have requested more guidance on these points, the committee has prepared a sample set of written details that you can use as a model. For a copy, contact any member

of the committee: Jeff Donaldson (821-2242), Bettie Roberts (591-0421), Lorraine Schulte (505/524-7029), John Sproul (545-5157), Scott Wilson (566-3843) or Barry Zimmer (545-5184).

Q: Randy Hill and Kevin Zimmer are not on the list of committee members above. What happened to them?

A: Randy moved to North Dakota in June, and Kevin moved to Santa Barbara, California in August. The committee needs 2 qualified replacements from the Las Cruces area.

Q: How do I know when an observation is unusual enough to merit documentation?

A: The committee's review list -- the list of bird species for which it encourages documentation -- was published in the Dec 1984 ROADRUNNER. If you no longer have that list, you can get a copy from any committee member.

Q: Texas and New Mexico both have state records committees. Why do we need a local committee?

A: One reason is the relative isolation of our area. We're well removed from other centers of birding activity in Texas and, to a lesser extent, New Mexico. Another is the value of having local records readily accessible to local birders, the folks most likely to use them.

A final reason is local expertise. Local birders are best equipped to evaluate locally important records. They can devote time to records a state committee might not normally consider. In this way, a local committee complements rather than competes with a state committee. In the Spring 1985 issue of AMERICAN BIRDS, Paul DeBenedictis discussed the importance of good documentation for bird records and commented on the value of local committees:

"The long-term solution for handling difficult records appears to be the various rarities committees that have the time and expertise to provide the full evaluation that is required. I urge everyone who submits records from an area covered by a rarities

committee to prepare reports for review by that committee. A copy of such a report will always be suitable documentation for a Regional Editor (of AMERICAN BIRDS), and gives that editor an easy way to assure skeptics that an observer has done his part. If there is no local rarities committee, now is a good time to get one started."
/E.P.-L.C. Rare Birds Committee/

(OBSERVATIONS cont. from p.6)

Please report your bird observations to Bettie Roberts (591-0421). For rarities, you're encouraged to submit written details or photographs to the El Paso-Las Cruces Rare Birds Committee. In the account above, the following symbols are used to indicate records reviewed by the committee:

Documentation: * - description
- no details
Committee Evaluation: 2 - highly probable

The committee assigns a rating of "definite" only when a record is supported by photographs or a specimen.
/Bettie Roberts, Observations Editor/



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Yes, I'd like to join. Local Chapter:

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