

The Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society

Volume 28 No. 10 August & September 1999



General Meeting

Monday, September 20, 1999
Memorial Park Garden Center
3105 Grant Street 7:30pm
Bird and Wildlife Slideshow
Dr. Gordon Robertstad, Phd

This is a presentation that you won't want to miss! Dr. Robertstad, retired professor emeritus in Biological Sciences at UTEP will be our guest speaker. Dr. Robertstad earned his BA and MS at the University of Wisconsin and his doctorate of Microbiology at Colorado State University.

He and his wife spent time at the edge of a jungle in Shell, Ecuador setting up a tuberculosis lab in a mission hospital. The slide presentation will include pictures of birds and wildlife from this experience as well as slides taken from New Mexico, Arizona, Idaho, Washington, Wyoming and our El Paso area.

World Wildlife Fund's Chihuahuan Desert Program

by, Jennifer Atchley
Chihuahuan Desert Program Office

The Chihuahuan Desert may be the most biologically diverse desert ecoregion in the world, whether measured by species richness or endemism. In the US portions of the desert alone, there are over 100 species of cacti, 250 species of bird, 15 amphibian species, 100 reptile species, and over 100 mammal species. The sheer expanse of the desert is home to a wondrous combination of sky islands, playas, gypsum dunes, grasslands, bajadas, and rivers and springs. The desert we live in is not only beautiful to look at but it plays a critical role in supporting species and habitats that are globally significant for their values as migratory stopovers, sources of species radiation and evolutionary relicts. The Tularosa Basin, to the north of El Paso, and encompassing White Sands Missile Range, Fort Bliss, and the San Andres, Organ and Franklin Mountains, is thought to be the largest tract of intact habitat in the entire Chihuahuan Desert.

Over the past two years, World Wildlife Fund has been developing an ecoregional approach toward conservation in the Chihuahuan Desert. Ecoregional conservation is a new comprehensive process that many conservation organizations have adopted. Ecoregional conservation, in general, identifies sites throughout an ecoregion that are rich in biodiversity. Major threats to those sites are identified as well. Conservation of biodiversity then moves forward on several levels: Alleviation of Threats, Public Outreach and Education, and Site Projects. WWF works in coordination with the Nature Conservancy, Wildlands Project, and many others to identify these sites and issues. A few sites we have identified for immediate action are the Pecos River, the Rio Grande, and desert springs. Alleviating threats to these sites will involve assuring the availability of groundwater and surface water. We are working with the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition to eventually increase the general public's awareness of the problems facing the Rio Grande, and we are considering restoration projects on the Pecos River drainage that would benefit fish, birds, and all species dependent on healthy riparian zones.

..... Continued on page 3

Inside The Roadrunner

President's Page	2
Chapter Info.....	3
Sanctuary News.....	4
On the Trail	5
Calendar.....	6

FROM THE PRESIDENTS AERIE

We have the new National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America (Third Edition 1999) available for members, price \$20. Call Craig Braginton (877-4138) or me (757-1876), however the best way to get one is to come to the September 20th meeting.

I guess none of you took to heart the chastisement in my column last issue, I say this because only the same three people, who also come more than once every month, showed up. How about coming on September 25th?

If you cannot make it on our Hawk Watch trip (Oct. 2/3) and your on the Gulf Coast try the Watch in Hazel Bazemore Park in Corpus Christi. It is now recognized as the largest single site for migrating raptors in the United States. In 1998 the count was just under 1,000,000 and exceeded over 100,000 a day for 4 straight days starting on September 26.

Additional help is needed by "Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue" in the form of transporters, those that go and pick up a patient and take it to a rehabilitator. This is especially critical on the east side. PLEASE HELP call Helen Bigalow in Anthony NM (505-882-2910).

The "**BIG SIT**" coming in October. Any ??? ask Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson (757-1876).

Want to have some more fun? Join the Texas Ornithological Society (TOS). Its Fall Conference will be in McAllen January 6, 7, and 8, 2000. Always 8-10 good field trips to choose from.

Membership: Student--\$14.00; Active--\$20.00;
Family--\$25.00; Sustaining--\$40.00;
Life--\$300.00; Life w/Spouse--\$400.00;

Mail to: TOS c/o Jolene Boyd
401 Pinn Oak
Ingram, TX 78025

s/ Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson, Pres. EPTPAS

Cave Creek Report

Sixteen local birders made the trip to the Chir-Chiracahua Mountains located in the Coronado National Forest which is in southeastern Arizona. The campground picnic, Saturday evening May 29 was lots of fun and no one complained about any lack of food.

Highlights of compiled data from the trip, which took place from May 28 thru May 31, showed quite a few interesting facts. It appears 14 of our birders keep life lists; I have data from 8 who added to their totals. The greatest number was by Jennifer Boynton, **39** species, of course she is a very new birder.

Birds that were lifers included the Red-faced Warbler and Lazuli Bunting which helped 6 people increase their lists. Strickland's Woodpecker 5 and Dusky Flycatcher 4, were other multiple life birds. Olive Warbler, Pygmy Nuthatch, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Prairie Falcon and Whiskered Screech Owl helped one or two add to theirs.



Red-faced
Warbler

OBSERVATIONS

Sorry; no observations page this issue. We did not get enough input from our members to make up another page. Had to eliminate something and it was felt that observations could carry over to next issue, due out the first part of October.



Birdathon 1999

Your chapter's birdathon efforts were once again soundly rewarded! Because of the outstanding work of the hardy and talented bird counters and the generous support of our community (especially our local chapter members), approximately \$7500 was raised for our national and local conservation efforts!

Special thanks goes out to the birdathon counters and those few who helped out "behind the scenes" with a lot of the preparation/planning work. An extra special thanks to Jane Fowler, who once again did an outstanding job keeping track of sponsor dollars and making sure that the funds were quickly and responsibly dealt with - (along with many, many other tasks). Whether Jane wants it to occur or not, as of this date, I consider her to be the co-chair of the birdathon "committee" (I don't think that she will mind too much because I don't think she could work any harder on this annual project than she already does).

169 bird species were located during the "official" birdathon count period, and I think that this very high total (especially when you consider the horrendous Saturday afternoon winds) reflects the hard work and dedication of the birdathon counters. More birdathon information will be provided in the next issue of the Roadrunner.

Fort Bliss Ponds

Pond water levels have been manipulated to a good degree this season, and both the South and Middle ponds have had more than adequate amounts of water for both the vegetation and the wildlife. The number of White-faced ibis at the pond appeared to be exceptionally good this year, and as has been the "norm", excellent numbers of American avocets and black-necked stilts successfully produced young. The southward migration of birds has already begun as evidenced by the recent influx of hummingbirds (including the pugnacious rufous hummingbird) and shorebirds. Some noteworthy recent arrivals at the ponds include black terns, an American golden plover (in beautiful adult, breeding plumage) and thousands upon thousands of Wilson's phalaropes.

Keystone Site

Much progress has recently been made in the protection of this special El Paso locality. The City of El Paso recently made a decision that allows TX DOT funds to be used at this site and these funds (along with help from the City itself and the owner of the property, Chris Cummings,) will enable the Keystone group to protect and manage approximately 40 acres of this hundred acre site. The Keystone group has also applied for federal funding for the site. For more information about the Keystone Site and/or the KAPPA group, contact Carol Miller at 584-7088 or Bernice Sargent at 581-7920.

International Migratory Bird Day

The May IMBD event at the El Paso Zoo was once again very successful. More than 1500 zoo visitors had the opportunity to chat with representatives from over a dozen businesses, governmental agencies and other wildlife/wild place related organizations. Zoo visitors played bird related computer games, built bird feeders that they could take home, received packets of hummingbird flower seeds, and a few brave and extroverted individuals even participated in a bird call contest (with prizes for the winners). Much information was disseminated to the zoo's visitors about birds, our local resources and wildlife in general.

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	822-1319
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 822-1319
 Elizabeth Chase:
 email: echase@socorro.k12.tx.us

FEATHER LAKE NOTES

by, John Sproul

CHANGES AT FEATHER LAKE

When you next visit Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, you'll see some changes. Big changes. The City of El Paso is presently rebuilding the lake outlet. At the same time, it is also excavating a new 30-acre stormwater basin, Feather Lake II, in the large field just southwest of the lake.

And, as soon as we get final approval from the City, we'll be putting an extension on our ramada near the sanctuary entrance. The extension will serve as a visitor-contact station and the entryway to the sanctuary.

When can you see all these changes? Opening Day for this year's visitor season will be Saturday, October 2. Come on down! For a sneak preview, join us Saturday, September 25 for a work session to get ready for Opening Day. The gates will open at 8:00am.

Also, be sure to mark Saturday, October 16 on your calendar. That's the day of our annual pot-luck dinner at Feather Lake. See "On the Trail" for all the details.

Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux, 0.3 mi. west of Americas Ave. From October through April, it is open 8:00am to noon on Saturdays and 2:00pm to sunset on Sundays. It is closed from May through September.



**Workday at Feather Lake
Saturday, Sept, 25 1999
8:00am**

Support Wildlife Conservation Organizations

The El Paso Herpetological Society

Contacts for the El Paso Herpetology Society are Mike Ross at 585-6947 and Stella Jimarez at 751-3772. Meetings occur at the El Paso Zoo Paraje exhibit meeting room at 7:00pm on the first Thursday of each month. Typically there is a guest lecturer at each meeting.

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

Visit the El Paso Zoo website at:
www.whc.net\epzoo

DONIPHAN MARSH

Contact: Carol Miller at 584-7088

Visit the KAPPA website at:
www.keystone-site.org

WWF Chihuahuan Desert Program

(continued from page 1)

In the Chihuahuan Desert to date, WWF has sponsored:

- * 3 day Chihuahuan Desert biological assessment workshop
- * 3 day socioeconomic assessment of the Chihuahuan Desert
- * assessment of the northern Chihuahuan Desert
- * Environmental Education assessment of the desert
- * white paper which reconstructs biological conditions formerly characterizing the Rio Grande
- * retreat to discuss restoration of the Rio Grande
- * Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park operations
- * training of Mexican Wolf keepers
- * upcoming 5th Symposium on the Resources of the Chihuahuan Desert to be held at Sul Ross State University, October 7 & 8

assessments should be widely available by the year 2000.

For further information about WWF and its Chihuahuan Desert initiative, contact Jennifer at her Las Cruces office at (505) 525-9537 or at jatchley@zianet.com

ON THE TRAIL

Friends of Hueco Tanks

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

Aug 22 Bird ID Tour - 7:15 AM

Sep 19 Bird ID Tour - 7:15 AM

Rock Art Tours-Every Sat & Sun at 9AM & 11AM.

RESERVATIONS ARE RECOMENDED

Telephone 857-1135

FORT BLISS PONDS

Want to see some great birds ?? Then meet at the front of the BIG 8 parking lot (9825 Dyer St.).

The date: **Sunday August 29, 1999.**

The time: **7:27 AM.**

You will probably be met by Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson (757-1876), but do not worry if your a little late, we won't leave for at least 10 minutes. This is the time of year for migrating *water* and *wading* birds. We could see upwards of 12 duck species and 12 marsh and shorebirds types. Also passerines start appearing, last year at the end of August we had *Painted Buntings*.

WARBLER MIGRATION

The middle of September is one of the best times to see alot of migrating *Warblers*, and other passerines.

Memorial Park is one of the better places in town to see them, you might spot a *Plumbeous Vireo*, *Black-throated Gray Warbler* and *Western Tanager*.

The date: **Saturday September 11, 1999.**

The time: **7:36 AM.**

Look for Betty Fisback (581-0174) by the Garden Center building, 3500 Grant Street.

If time permits a stop at **Arroyo Park** will be included, this is another good migrant trap.

UPPER VALLEY HOTSPOTS

Did you know that we have other migrant hot spots in town? Well we do, and the Country Club area is one of them. It is also a good area to see some of our resident birds such as *Wood Duck* and *Green Heron*.

The date: **Sunday September 26, 1999.**

The time: **7:44 AM.**

Bob Johnson (757-1876) will be waiting for you at the crossroads ponding area (Doniphan and Country Club) the regular meeting place.

At this time of year some of our summer visitors will still be present, these include *Western Kingbird* and *Barn Swallow*. Also the winter birds will be arriving, you will probably get a look at *Belted Kingfisher* and *Ruby-crowned Kinglet*.

HAWK WATCH

An overnight trip to the Monzano Mountains to observe part of the annual migration of RAPTORS. This is one of a number of sites in the west that Hawk Watch International uses as a counting and banding site for the study of raptor migration. The raptor count is conducted from about the middle of August until the first part of November. The observation point is located on Capilla Peak in the Cibola National Forest. A few motels in Mountainair about 15 miles from a campground below the peak and motels in Albuquerque about 55 miles North. The last week in September and the first week in October are usually the best weeks. This trip will occur on October 2d and 3d. Contact Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson (757-1876) for map and additional details.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Annual Potluck Picnic at Feather Lake. **Sat. Oct 16.**

The Big Sit. **Sunday Oct 17.**

Hueco Tanks Interpretive Fair. **Sat./Sun. Oct. 30/31.**

WEB SITE UPDATED

Thanks to the wizardry of Bill Howe, our chapter's Home Page on the World Wide Web is now updated and sports a bright new look.

Check it out at:

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

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

Dates to Remember

See page 5 for details

August

Sun. August 22 - Bird ID Hueco Tanks

Sun. August 29 - Fort Bliss Ponds

October

Sat & Sun Oct 2/3 to Hawk watch

Sat. Oct 16 - Annual Picnic

September

Saturday, September 11 - Memorial Park

Monday, September 13 - Board Meeting

Sunday, September 19 - Hueco Tanks

Monday, September 20 - GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, September 25 - Feather Lake Work Day

Sunday, September 26 - Country Club Area

Friends of Hueco Tanks (see p.5)

Rock Art Tours

Every Sat & Sun 9:00am & 11:00am

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

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