



The Roadrunner

NEWSLETTER OF
EL PASO-TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY
Published at 4220 Wallington, El Paso, Texas 79902

March, 1975, Vol. V. No. 3

Lucretia Chew, Editor

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sunday, March 16
7:30 a. m.
FIELD TRIP
Dave Steinbach will lead this trip into the Franklins to look for raptors. Rendezvous at the intersection of the War Road and Trans-Mountain Highway.
- Monday, March 17
7:30 p. m.
REGULAR MEETING.
Centennial Museum
Shawn Ogburn, raptor specialist from Austin and founder of the Raptor Preservation Society, will be speaker. Mr. Ogburn has contributed an article on treating injured birds to our local "For the Birds" column.
- Saturday, April 5
7:30 a. m.
FIELD TRIP
Aguirre Springs trip with Eddie Chew as leader. Meet at Stuckey's Interstate 10 at Vinton Road. There should be good possibilities for spring migrants in the Organ Mountains. Bring lunch and water; wear your walking shoes.
- Wednesday, April 16
7:30 p. m.
BOARD MEETING
Monthly meeting of officers and board members at the home of Charlie Jensen, 5816 Vista Clara.
- Sunday, April 20
3:00 p. m.
FIELD TRIP
Trip into Franklin Mountains led by Dr. Barton Warnock, who will present the program at the regular meeting the following night. Meet in the parking lot beside the UTEP Student Union Building.
- Monday, April 21
7:30 p. m.
REGULAR MEETING
Featured will be a color slide show of wildflowers presented by Dr. Barton H. Warnock, botanist from the Department of Biology at Sul Ross University, Alpine. Dr. Warnock is the author of WILD-FLOWERS OF THE BIG BEND and of a second volume which should be in print by meeting time.
- Saturday, May 4
All Day
BIG DAY COUNT
Mark this date on your calendar now and plan to join us for a day of exciting birding. Migration will be in progress and there should be opportunities to see many birds not seen at Christmas Count time. More details in the April newsletter.

TEXAS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

New Trans Pecos President Charlie Jensen recently attended a meeting in Austin with Audubon Regional Director John Franson and representatives of other Audubon chapters from across Texas. The purpose of this conference was to work out basic plans for a Texas Regional Advisory Council which had been proposed by Mr. Franson. The council would aid Mr. Franson with recommendations to National Audubon. Proposed activities include study committees, teacher training, and a legislative action hot line.

In its board meeting on March 6, the officers of our local chapter voted to support the new council with an initial contribution of ten cents per member, the per capita amount requested by Mr. Franson. Our contribution will be about \$15.

FIELD TRIP NOTES

On February 15, eight people met at Horizon Lake where the weather was chilly and windy. Eight species of water birds were seen, including the ring-necked duck, ruddy duck, and redhead. Because of the weather, plans to explore nearby canyons were abandoned, and the group went instead along the Rio Grande levee from the Fabens port of entry toward El Paso. Here an additional ten species were seen, including the white-tailed hawk, horned larks, a flock of yellow-headed blackbirds, and mountain bluebirds.

Eleven people, ably led by Bill Principe of New Mexico State, had a most enjoyable morning of birding in the Las Cruces area on February 23. Stopping first at Burn Lake beside Interstate 10, thirteen species of water birds were seen, including common merganser and ring-necked duck. Most of the morning was spent in a bosque and a grove of trees along the Rio Grande levee. Here an additional thirty species were seen. These included a pair of great horned owls, eleven great blue herons, long-billed marsh wren, phainopepla, sharp-shinned hawk, and ruby-crowned kinglet.

On a field trip led by Charlie Jensen to the canyons on the east side of the Franklin on March 8, the fourteen participants got a very special treat -- an excellent and lengthy view of a Costa's hummingbird. It was a first sighting in Texas for everyone in the group. This very rare bird prefers isolated areas and is probably migrating from Mexico to its nesting area in California. The group saw a total of twenty-five species, including verdin, house wren, cactus wren, canyon wren, rock wren, green-tailed towhee, rufous-sided towhee, brown towhee, the lesser goldfinch, and many sparrows. In addition to an already fantastic outing, the poppies on the mountainside in full bloom were gorgeous!

If you haven't been going along on the field trips, you're really missing out on a good thing. There's beautiful scenery, some pleasant exercise in good company, and of course, some fine birding and the chance to improve your own birding knowledge through other members and guests who join us on these trips.

Why not plan now to join us for the outings listed in the Calendar of Events on the front of the newsletter!

FEBRUARY MEETING

Those hardy souls who braved cold, blustery weather and unfamiliar territory to attend the regular February meeting were treated to a lovely double feature. In addition to the announced closed circuit color television film, "The Guadalupes," there was a second film on the Rio Grande, especially in the Big Bend Area, entitled, "Wild River." Both films produced by KBAP-Fort Worth are excellent in the portrayal and narration of two beautiful natural features of the Southwest. One of the scientists featured in the Guadalupes film, Dr. Barton Warnock, will be the guest for our April meeting. And those who looked closely spotted El Paso's Dr. Joe Leach.

GET A FRIEND TO JOIN AUDUBON

An important reminder that the Whittell Challenge Grant announced in the January newsletter is still in effect. Those chapters of National Audubon in each region which show the largest numerical membership increase and/or largest percentage membership increase in the period January to June, 1975, will be awarded a \$1000 cash prize. Second prize is \$500. . . . Just think what all those new members would do for the Trans Pecos Chapter and what a nice addition one of those cash prizes would be to our treasury. Make it your goal to bring in a new member this month!

REPORT OF THE GUADALUPE WILDERNESS COMMITTEE

Membership in the Guadalupe Wilderness Committee is growing in number and geographical diversity -- from Maine to California literally. Permanent officers recently elected are Wesley Leonard, Chairman; Rich Breisch, Vice-Chairman; Marianne Smith, Secretary; Paul Garland, Treasurer; Edward Leonard, Legislative Chairman, and Gayle Eads, Director of Information.

Early this year the draft environmental statement for the Guadalupe Mountains National Park master plan was released. The most objectionable proposals were the Guadalupe Peak Tramway and the west side desert development. The committee sent out an alert requesting comments to the National Park Service emphasizing our position on these points. A second alert was mailed in March concerning a part of the final environmental statement for the master plan of the Carlsbad Caverns National Park. In this mailing about Slaughter Canyon development, the committee supported Alternative "A" which essentially is to leave the area as it is now with no further development.

GWC has sponsored several field trips to the Guads and have one scheduled for the middle part of March and another in early April. Anyone interested in going should contact Wes Leonard, 3500 Sun Bowl #24, El Paso, TX 79902. Telephone (915) 544-6340. Several members are doing some boundary revision work on the Guadalupe Wilderness as proposed by the NMWSC. Help in this area would be appreciated.

On April 4-5 Texas Tech in Lubbock is sponsoring a biological symposium on Guadalupe Mountains National Park, and GWC will be represented. Again, anyone wishing information should contact Wes Leonard.

A slide show is ready for presentation to clubs and organizations and a brochure is in the works. Our local organizing and political education campaign is gaining momentum with meetings being held with various governmental agencies, politicians, and regional planning agencies. With all these plans and activities, a fund-raising drive is planned for the near future.

Gayle Eads, Director of Information
Guadalupe Wilderness Committee

EL PASO-TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY

Officers

President: Charlie Jensen, 5816 Vista Clara, 79912, 584-7626
Vice-President: Weldon Yerby, Publicity, 5200 Wally, 79924, 755-7360
Secretary-Treasurer: Linda Jones, 351 Thunderbird #10, 79912, 584-4652

Board Members

Jack McDaniels, Membership, 4155 Krupp #A, 79902, 533-7728
Berttye Barnhart, 2200 Febrero, 79935, 592-3651
Sarah Jane Dodds, Conservation, 2809 N. Florence, 79902, 533-7990
Mary Moore, 4613 Yandell, 79903, 565-8065
Helen Ponder, Historian, 4010 Flamingo, 79902, 542-0202
Geth White, Program, 2906 Silver, 79930, 566-2328

Additional Committee Chairmen

Dave Steinbach, Education, 10333 Lufkin, 79924, 751-9729
Eddie Chew, Feather Lake Project, 4220 Wallington, 79902, 532-6410
Bertha Barnhart, Hospitality, 2200 Febrero, 79935, 592-3651
Bill Hoppes, Field Trips, 3333 Zion #C16, 79905, 757-0797
Lucretia Chew, Newsletter Editor, 4220 Wallington, 79902, 532-6410

RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

At Hueco Tanks on February 11, 12, 13, PRAIRIE FALCON, TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE, SAGE THRASHERS, 5 CASSIN'S FINCHES, 2 COMMON BUSHTITS (black-eared form), BROWN CREEPER, VESPER SPARROWS, CASSIN'S SPARROW, BLACK-CHINNED SPARROW, by Kevin and Barry Zimmer.

Also at Hueco Tanks, IMMATURE BLACK-CHINNED SPARROW and CASSIN'S SPARROW by Geth and Ed White on February 16.

In Mountain Park, Mrs. Fleager's HUMMINGBIRDS, except for one ALLEN'S or RUFOUS IMMATURE, departed on February 15.

A SAGE THRASHER in McKitttrick Canyon, Guadalupe Mountains, by Kevin and Barry Zimmer on February 16.

A GREAT HORNED OWL and LESSER GOLDFINCHES at the Crown Point home of Charlie Jensen on February 16.

ORANGE CROWNED WARBLER at the bosque near the sewage ponds by Bill Hunt on February 17.

By Kevin and Barry Zimmer at their Mountain Park home on February 17, 18, 19, a HERMIT THRUSH; on February 18, 10 LESSER GOLDFINCHES, on February 22, 122 CEDAR WAXWINGS, on February 21 and 25, a RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD.

Over 100 CEDAR WAXWINGS near their home on Silver Street by Geth and Ed White.

On February 20 a MALE HOODED MERGANSER at Hueco Tanks by Kevin and Barry Zimmer, and on February 27 a SHARP-SHINNED HAWK also by the Zimmers at Hueco Tanks.

INCA, WHITE-WINGED, AND MOURNING DOVES all observed carrying nesting material by Geth White on Silver Street on February 23.

Large HUMMINGBIRD SPECIES reported by the Ponders, 4010 Flamingo, very shy, coming to the feeder just before dark last week in February. Still not identified, but not coming as often at the end of the month.

Two RINGED TURTLE DOVES by Caroline McClintock at the Medical Center on Arizona on February 27. Seen by the Zimmers and photographed by Kevin the following day.

YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER by Geth White on Silver Street on February 28.

Flock of about 30 COMMON CROWS seen by Ruby Allen and Sarah Jane Dodds in late February near Mesilla.

BROWN CREEPER seen at Aguirre Springs by Eddie Chew on March 1.

A WORD ABOUT THE ZIMMERS. Kevin and Barry are new to El Paso, having moved here less than a month ago from Fargo, North Dakota, where they rank third and fourth in the state in bird records. Kevin has finished high school at 16 and is an excellent photographer, handling his long, light lens as easily as his binoculars and scope. Barry is 11. They have already been to Hueco Tanks many times, to the Guadalupe, and to Cloudercroft on birding expeditions, keeping daily records. They live in Mountain Park and are possessed of understanding, cooperative non-birding parents. Kevin hopes for a career in zoology.

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS TRIP

(The following are excerpts from a journal kept by Mrs. Lee Hardaway on a recent trip with her husband to the Galapagos Islands.)

Tuesday, January 21 - We were up at six to get our taxi by 6:30 to get to the airport at seven for our flight at eight . . . and were at long last able to take off about eleven. . . . After about a two-hour trip on a prop plane we landed on the island of Baltra in the Galapagos The dark blue of the Pacific had changed to clear green as we approached it, so clear we could see the bottom deepening out from the fringe of surf breaking on the black basalt lava rocks. Into a rickety old bus for the short distance to the dock where the Floreana awaited us. She was a bit of a tub to look at but really quite a comfy little ship for 55 passengers. . . .

Our first trip shortly after was a dry landing on Santa Cruz Island, a small white crescent of beach flanked by curving arms of black lava to which hung big, bright red crabs. Strange, this brightness, because as a general thing the birds and animals in the Galapagos Islands are small and of duller coloring than their counterparts in other places -- the penguins, for instance, are only about half as big as those in the Antarctic, and the finches are of much dimmer colors than those we know. Nature so often uses protective coloring as a defense, and this brilliance against the rocks makes them easily visible to the gulls and other birds that prey on them. Farther up the beach . . . we saw little fiddler crabs. . . . As we trekked deeper into the island's interior it became more woodsy, with bare sagrada trees We had read in Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle that the animals were very tame, but we could hardly believe it when the first land bird that we saw -- a tiny yellow warbler with red-streaked breast and a ruby cap -- hopped about with total disregard for our presence only a few feet away. . . .

. . . But the most satisfying and welcome surprise was the guides -- not only were they knowledgeable and competent and most pleasant and accomodating, but the especially wonderful part was their enthusiasm for the islands. They were never bored or just going through their paces; they seemed to enjoy each trip just as much as we did who were seeing them for the first time. Of course all were scientists . . . recruited from the universities, especially in Europe. . . . Anyway, all seemed to regard their job of being on the islands as the privilege of a lifetime. They had a deep concern and sensitivity for the welfare of the animals, but they were never patronizing with us. . . .

. . . . Aside from their intrinsic interest, the islands are really very significant in the history of scientific thought. Darwin's observations were so acute and so excellently and thoroughly documented that they give an accurate picture of the islands even today. And, of course, it was the basis of his origin of species he would publish twenty-five years later, especially from his observation of the thirteen kinds of finches: "Seeing this gradation and diversity of structure in one small, intimately related group of birds, one might really fancy that from the original paucity of birds in this archipelago, one species had been taken and modified for different ends." Some have heavy bills, others needle-like ones, peculiar to the needs of the island they live on, for cracking seeds or for digging into the cacti for worms.

And still proceeding inland on our first island we saw in addition to finches, a Galapagos mockingbird; in fact, we saw him on almost every island. . . .

Wednesday, January 22 - The ship had set sail about five this morning for Bartholome Island This afternoon we went to Darwin Bay on Tower Island. We made a wet landing on the beach and were almost immediately in a fantastic settlement of red-footed boobys, frigate birds, and swallow-tail gulls on their nests made of sticks and guano. They were at all stages -- eggs, newly hatched chicks, or much older ones. The five-month-olds of the frigate birds were still large fluffy nestlings, and those silly birds, looking practically like adults, were still sitting on the nests at almost a year, waiting from Mommy to bring them something to eat!

The breeding season is not supposed to begin until February and March, but a few were already beginning to show the big scarlet neck pouches under their bills, and at least one had it extended in a great scarlet bubble. Should a female appear, he would raise his bill skyward to allow an unobstructed view of his bubble and would then extend his wings and flutter them in a trembling motion to further attract her attention. We also saw mockingbirds, warblers, thick-billed ground finches, a heron, and in a tidal pool a number of

small black fish. . . .

Thursday, January 23 - Another six o'clock wake up so that we could be on deck to see the porpoises and whales they knew we would encounter on our way to Cape Barkley on Isabella Island. . . . We made a dry landing at Tagus Cove . . . and at the cone top of the island we saw several big-billed flycatchers. Then just as I had about given up hope, although I knew they were supposed to be there, I saw not only a vermillion flycatcher but also his mate. . . . Before returning to the ship the tenders took us around the rocky cliffs of the cove where there were many sea lions and marine iguanas on its ledges, and also blue-footed boobys, penguins, and flightless cormorants. The water is so clear we could see the red coral growing in the shallows. The noddy terns sat on their nests under overhanging rocks which made sort of caves over the water.

The guide pulled off a red and black sun-ray type starfish for us to examine. Instead of five arms it must have had some 400 tentacles forming a sort of scalloped effect round his edge. We had a chance to study many of the varied results of lava flow, that of different viscosity and density forming swirls and bulges and layers of volcanic ash with floating stones of various sizes, which were deposited in layers with each eruption. The guide said there had been a slight earthquake the last time he had been on the island.

The iguanas were beginning their breeding season; the males were a little larger and more greenish. They would establish little groups of females as harems and stand guard to ward off intruders. There were sea lions and schools of fish as we went back to the boat for a lunch of chicken, fried bananas, and tropical fruit. . . .

Lee Hardaway

El Paso-Trans Pecos Audubon Society
4220 Wallington
El Paso, Texas 79902

FIRST CLASS