



EL PASO BIRD STUDY CLUB

THE ROADRUNNER

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MARGUERITE WRIGHT, CHAIRMAN No. 13 FEBRUARY, 1945

THE OCTOBER MEETING

After a pleasant walk in Mrs. Slater's garden, members of the El Paso Bird Study Club met at her home, October 2, 1944. New check-lists for El Paso and the surrounding territory were distributed. The Tom Miller Kirksey Memorial, which the club is sponsoring, was discussed. Sergeant George McClelland Bradt volunteered to collect specimens for the memorial.

THE FEBRUARY MEETING

There will be a meeting of the club at the home of Mrs. H. D. Slater, 516 Prospect Avenue, Monday, February 26, 1945, at 7:30 P.M. Dr. Anton Berkman, Head of the Biology Department of the College of Mines, will address the club members and their guests. Annual dues will be collected.

THE MESILLA VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Club members who have recently visited the refuge report that the area has been posted and that preparations for fencing are well under way. This project is now under the supervision of Mr. Charles Keefer, Manager of the San Andreas Wildlife Refuge. He has manifested considerable interest already in our local refuge. We hope to have him speak to the club in the near future.

NEWS OF FOLKS

Mr. Arthur Halloran, former Manager of the San Andreas Wildlife Refuge, has been transferred to Arizona. We appreciate his friendly interest and cooperation. We wish for him and Mrs. Halloran every success in their new assignment.

Club members are delighted to learn that Dr. Brown Randol is back in El Paso, after serving in the armed forces.

Major I. M. Epstein is somewhere in Southern France. We are looking forward to some of his observations of bird life overseas.

Lieutenant and Mrs. A. E. Eynon are in Anniston, Alabama. Reports of their birding activities are most interesting.

Sergeant George McClelland Bradt has been transferred to Paris, Texas. Watch the coming issues of "The Desert Magazine" for several illustrated articles by him.

THE TOM MILLER KIRKSEY MEMORIAL

College of Mines students, directed by Mr. Strain, Curator of the College of Mines Museum, have designed two habitat cases. Desert-mountain and irrigated valley types of terrain will be represented. Plans are being completed for the El Paso Bird Study Club to secure specimens for these cases, which will form a part of the memorial. Donations to the memorial fund are hereby acknowledged. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas C. Miller have sent checks. Mrs. Tom M. Kirksey sent checks, and also donated the valuable Nicholson collection of mounted specimens, which Tom once placed in the Mines Museum as a loan. Mrs. Miller, who has a deep and abiding interest in the project, has volunteered to assist further, when the need arises, as the memorial progresses.

THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The El Paso Bird Study Club took its annual Christmas bird count, December 31, 1944. A quiet, sunny day added to the occasion. Participants in the census were Miss Mary Belle Keefer and Mrs. J. Owen Allen.

Mallards were plentiful. A Townsend's solitaire, seen in McKelligon's Canyon, was the first to be reported this year. Woodhouse's jays were more numerous than usual.

The following species were observed: Treganza's heron, 15; black-crowned night heron, 1; sharp-skinned hawk, 2; common mallard, 59; New Mexico duck, 10; gadwall, 65; baldpate, 8; green-winged teal, 11; shoveller, 53; American merganser, 9; turkey vulture, 1; red-tailed hawk, 1; marsh hawk, 3; sparrow hawk, 2; scaled quail, 6; Gambel's quail, 10; American coot, 23; killdeer, 1; ring-billed gull, 3; mourning dove, 8; red-shafted flicker, 9; Woodhouse's jay, 7; white-necked raven, 23; crow, 3; cactus wren, 1; rock wren, 3; Townsend's solitaire, 1; ruby-crowned kinglet, 5; white-rumped shrike, 12; western meadowlark, 2; red-wing, 50; Brewer's blackbird, 37; Arizona pyrrhuloxia, 3; English sparrow, 300; house finch, 150; desert sparrow, 5; Shufeldt's sparrow, 200; song sparrow, 3;

A report was sent to the "Audubon Magazine."

-Compiled by Mrs. J. Owen Allen

TAOS BIRDS AT CHRISTMAS

The village of Taos, seventy-five miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico, nestles on a high mesa (7,050 feet) at the base of the lofty Sangre de Christos, which here reach an altitude of 13,300 feet. These mountains were belted broadly with Christmas trees in white--trees which in summer we had recognized as juniper, pine, fir, and spruce. The floor of the Taos mesa gleamed white also, except for gray patches of shrubbery or of deciduous timber. Shrubbery included sage brush (*artemesia tridentata*), wild rose in profuse fruition, and wild red plum, interspersed with growth of low pinon and juniper. Timber along stream and highway included lance-leaved cottonwood, black willow, and locust.

My modest excursions were made mostly on foot and within a three-mile radius of Taos. The favorite route was the Pueblo road out of Taos to its crossing of the Pueblo Creek (Rio del Pueblo de Taos) and thence up or down the stream for a mile or so. Another route was the Taos highway east through Canon, past the San Geronimo Ranch, and around or over Lookout Point (Devisadora), and thence along the Taos Creek (Rio Fernando de Taos) to the picnic grounds in the Carson National Forest. If walking was bad because of new-fallen snow or rain, I studied the tall trees of Taos, now revealing last summer's nests of goldfinch and oriole, and flaunting flocks of noisy pinon jays or silent evening grosbeaks, with an occasional Lewis's orred-shafted wood-pecker. Where frozen apples hung, house finch and English sparrows worked dilligently, aided sometimes by mountain chickadee and evening grosbeaks. Juncos were ubiquitous, often in considerable flocks--pink-sided, red-backed, gray-headed, and Shufeldt's.

Along the Pueblo stream, December 17, a flock of twenty McCown's longspurs fed among the juncos. Other birds noted on that occasion were these: 1 Cooper's hawk, 6 mourning doves, 6 Woodhouse's jays, 8 pinon jays, 15 magpies (half a dozen huge nests in the trees), 1 American raven, 1 crow, 2 meadowlarks, 8 evening grosbeaks, 1 spurred towhee, 1 female lazuli bunting, 1 Gamble's sparrow. A second trip added to this list the belted kingfisher, a ferruginous rough-leg, a few siskins and two goldfinches, not of the green-backed species. At a stack of oat straw, a flock of perhaps 100 pinon jays were feeding, devouring the grain left in the straw. Juncos were pulling at the straw too. A siskin fed at a stalk of grama grass near by.

At Geronimo Ranch, December 22, Townsend's solitaires were numerous. Following a trail at the back of Lookout Point, I found one flock of fifteen solitaires, with several smaller flocks, among the junipers and yellow pines. Among them were twenty or more evening grosbeaks. High overhead was a flight of Clarke's nutcrackers. Along the river some solitaires were singing snatchily, and song sparrow and mountain chickadees were calling. Long-crested jays were common here. Most exciting of all was the spectacle of a pair of western bluebirds, flitting in and out of an adobe wall near the ancient Canon church.

-Lena McBee

3.
CAPTAIN COFFEE'S DAY ON THE REFUGE

Captain Coffee, of Memphis, Tennessee, visited the refuge January 28, by courtesy of Miss Keefer and Mrs. H. D. Slater. He managed to roll up a list of fifty-four birds, as follows: Pied-billed grebe, 1; Treganza's heron, 14; black-crowned night heron, 7; mallard, 35; gadwall, 10; baldpate, 21; pintail, 4; green-winged teal, 58; shoveller, 2; American merganser, 42; Cooper's hawk, 1; Western red-tailed hawk, 3; marsh hawk, 3; desert sparrow hawk, 2; Gambel's quail, 7; Florida gallinule, 1; American coot, 2; killdeer, 2; Wilson's snipe, 19; least sandpiper, 7 (unclassified "peeps", 30); mourning dove, 11; road-runner, 2; barn owl, 6; western horned owl, 1; belted kingfisher, 2; red-shafted flicker, 9; cactus woodpecker, 1; black phoebe, 5; Say's phoebe, 1; Woodhouse's jay, 8; white-rocked raven, 32; mountain chickadee, 2; western house wren, 1; Baird's wren, 1; western marsh wren, 1; Audubon's hermit thrush, 2; western golden-crowned kinglet, 2; western ruby-crowned kinglet, 5; American pipit, 6; white-rumped sparrow, 5; western meadowlark, 30; red-wing, 14; (500 unclassified blackbirds) Brewer's blackbird, 25; Arizona pyrrhuloxia, 2; house finch, 125; pine siskin, 22; pale goldfinch, 6; spurred towhee, 2; Savannah sparrow, 3; Snufeldt's junco, 20; pink-sided junco, 6; gray-headed junco, 10; Gambel's sparrow, 415 (Of these, one was an albino, all white, except for brownish wash on the back); Rocky Mountain song sparrow, 22; Lincoln's sparrow, 2.

CAPTAIN COFFEE AT TURKEY CREEK RANCH

About half-way between Uvalde and Del Rio, Texas, at an altitude of 900 to 1000 feet, lies Turkey Creek Ranch. As we turn from the highway, we drive through a bump-gate and down three miles of an excellent private road to the George Rose home. Here the writer was a guest of Miss Grace Rose, another member of the El Paso Bird Study Club, for the Christmas holidays.

In front of the house lies the dry creek bed, bordered with live oaks, persimmon, hackberry, and elm trees. To the left were the corrals, where one could always find ladder-backed and golden-fronted woodpeckers, red-shafted flickers, mockingbirds, house wrens, cardinals, wood pewees, and other flycatchers. Several pairs of vermilion flycatchers chose the trees in and near the corrals for their feeding perches, rising like winged flames into the air for an insect and descending to the same high branch.

Behind the house was a wind-break of ligustrum, its purplish-blue berries a pleasant food for cedar waxwings, its branches a refuge for black and Say's phoebes, song sparrows, warblers, wrens, and brown creepers.

Numbers of Inca doves stayed near the corrals and barns. In the pasture back of the house were sparrows of many kinds--English, lark, white-crowned, white throated, and shipping--as well as house finches and slate-colored juncos.

As we rode out from the ranch buildings, we found everywhere the beautiful green huajillo, an important feed shrub for the sheep and blooded angoras that wandered over the rolling pastures. From blossoms of this bush and the black brush and cat claw comes the famous Uvalde honey. Here and there grew algerita bushes, their prickly leaves reminding one of holly.

Wild turkeys were seen and heard occasionally. Once a group of javalinos (wild pigs) were surprised in a swale. A scurrying armadillo afforded a delightful surprise, to one accustomed to see them only as blankets in a curio shop. Most of all do I treasure the memory of three deer, taking a fence as easily as brown leaves before the wind.

One particular low, brushy spot on the highway invariably yielded several hawks--Swainson's, Sonnett's white tailed, Cooper's and sparrow hawks. One evening at dusk a Texan screech owl took off from his perch on a fence post and flew straight into our windshield.

A bird new to me was the black vulture. A group of eight, walking about on the ground or perched on fence posts, took to the air aironly when we were within eight or ten feet of them. A flock of them (black-crested titmice) sometimes flew back and forth from wash house to garage, then back to the trees outside the the glassed-in porch.

As we were leaving, a roadrunner crossed in front of the car; then he hopped to a fence post and bobbed a polite farewell.

-Marguerite Wright

UNUSUAL FIND BY MAJOR BURROWS

kinglet was made

4.
SEPTEMBER IN MEMORIAL PARK

By Mary Belle Keefer

Lack of gasoline for field trips has made us more aware of the advantages to be derived from a closer scrutiny of our city parks. Unable to go to the Upper or Lower Valley last fall, nevertheless, I was surprised and pleased at the number of fall migrants to be seen in Memorial Park.

Hitherto, I had considered this park as not very productive, having made only rather cursory visits to it, often at a time when there were too many casual strollers or playing children about; but living now--as I do--within a block and a half of it, I made it my business last September to make almost daily visits to it, mostly at a time when school was in session and there were fewer disturbing elements.

This little park is a tract of forty-two acres in the closely settled residence district of Manhattan Heights. As it lies just southwest of Crockett School, the grounds of the school, which are planted in trees and shrubs, as well as the wooded neighboring lawns, may be said to add some what to its acreage.

It should be borne in mind that the altitude of eastern El Paso is about 5,700 feet. Starting with a level strip on Copper Street, the park grounds drop more or less steeply to the level of Grant, forming several ravines, running north and south with the wooded slopes between. The tracks of the Southern Pacific Railroad bound the park on the south and east.

There are a number of deciduous trees in the park, principally ash and cottonwood; but for the most part, the slopes are planted with evergreens, largely cypress, arbor vitae, juniper and pine (*halapensis*). There is a good deal of the native tamarix and fairly extensive plantings of euonymus and cotoneaster, especially in the Hilltop Gardens, which occupy the northwest corner of the park. These shrubs, with the grasses and weeds in what was the old lake bed, and the stand of wild bamboo in the southwestern part of the park, offer diversified forms of food and shelter for many kinds of birds. Occasionally there is a little water standing in the old lake bed; but generally the only water available to birds in the park is from faucets which are allowed to run and from the lily pool in Hilltop Gardens. Unfortunately, the walls of the pool are too steep for use by the smaller birds; but I have seen a hawk drinking from the pool while perched on the wall, standing practically on his head to reach the water. Flickers use the pool too.

The earliest arrivals in considerable numbers last fall were the pileolated warblers, the hummingbirds and the woodpeckers. On Sept. 14, Mrs. McBee saw 25 hummers, of which two were Rufous and the rest were black-chinned and broad-tailed. They were abundant during the first half of the month. The wood pewees, while not so abundant as the hummers, were plentiful up to the middle, and a few were seen through the month. Also noted during the first half were the western flycatcher and a few other empidonaxes--probably Wright's. On Sept. 7, an olive-sided Flycatcher was seen.

The pileolated warbler came early and stayed late. Up to the middle of the month they were seen everywhere in the park; gradually thinning out, but seen up to the last day. Other warblers, in much smaller numbers, were MacGillivray's, orange-crowned, and (toward the end of the month) Audubon's.

One of the biggest finds was a Natalie's woodpecker, on Sept. 20, a first record for me. This bird was also seen by Sergeant *Charles* Wonderly a few days earlier. I saw a red-naped sapsucker twice in the month.

Another exciting record was the Red-eyed Vireo, two of which were seen Sept. 11, by Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Eynon, one was seen there on Sept. 16. This was the first record for this region.

Other vireos seen were the warbling, the plumbeous, and Cassin's. Of great interest to me were three flocks of black-eared nuthatches, seen at different times in the month. The flocks varied in size from eight to fifteen, each flock staying for several days. A few of these pygmies were there as late as Dec. 17.

Ruby-crowned kinglets began to come about the middle of the month and are common winter residents. Other scattered records are a few mourning doves, 4 immature western tanager, 2 Audubon's hermit thrushes and a robin or two.

Of the sparrow tribe, comparatively few were noted, aside from the numerous English sparrows and house finches that are permanent residents of the park. The most notable record was a female lazuli bunting, early in the month, my first record of this bird in the El Paso region, though it has been seen several times by other members of the club. Other sparrow seen were chipping, lark, and