

The

Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society
Volume 27 No. 2 **April - May, 1997**

"BRINGING BACK THE RIVER"

April General Meeting

Last year's April general meeting at Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary was such a success, we're going there again this year. Please do not go to the Garden Center on April 21! Feather Lake is at 9500 North Loop in El Paso's lower valley. The meeting will start at 7:30 p.m. For those interested, a pre-meeting walk around the lake will start at 6:30 p.m. Plan to join us (and several 1000 White-faced Ibis) at Feather Lake!

Historically, the wetlands and riverside forests and woodlands of the Rio Grande Valley were the most productive wildlife habitats in the El Paso region. Today, they are largely gone.

The Las Cruces-based Southwest Environmental Center puts restoring the ecological health of the Rio Grande among its top priorities. At our April general meeting, Kevin Bixby, the Center's Executive Director, will tell us why. His slide presentation, "Bringing Back the River," will discuss the historic Rio Grande environment, current conditions and how they came to be, current problems, and some of the opportunities that exist for restoring a measure of health to the Rio Grande.

May General Meeting

The May general meeting on May 19, will be held at the El Paso Zoo for a tour of the Asian expansion and the Americas' Aviary. The tour will begin at 6:30 pm. This was a popular program last year. We hope to see you there.

SPRING HAS SPRUNG AT FEATHER LAKE

By John Sproul

Feather Lake News

The White-faced Ibis numbers are growing rapidly. The cottonwoods and willows are leafing out. Spiny Softshell turtles are basking at water's edge. The sand pricklypear is getting ready to bloom. Little Striped Whiptail lizards skitter about the uplands, and Bullfrogs are again calling from the marsh. Spring is a great time to visit our Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary at 9500 North Loop in El Paso's lower valley. Come on down!

In addition to the regular visitor days shown on the back page, you'll have two special opportunities to enjoy Feather Lake this spring. One is our April 21 general meeting, described on page 1. The other is our May 17 service day. Join us for breakfast at Feather Lake at 8 AM, followed by some good honest work on behalf of the sanctuary.

Your Birdathon dollars at work: Feather Lake was one of the beneficiaries of last year's Birdathon, and we recently put the funds raised to good use. We purchased 15 binoculars for school classes and other groups to use when they visit our sanctuary. Thank you, Birdathon donors, for making this purchase possible! Feather Lake will also benefit from this year's Birdathon; we encourage everyone's continued support.

MEMORIAL GIFTS

The El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society gratefully acknowledges recent donations to our organization from these thoughtful friends:

In Memory of Evelyn Heard

Ms. O. M. Smith

In Memory of David Hillis

David and Maggie Alvidrez
Mr & Mrs. Leland V. Edwards
Mr. Robert Fouts
Mrs. L. Holmes Ginn, Jr.
Judith Goggin
Mr. Jose M. Gomez
Mr. and Mrs. Fred K. James
Honday & George McAlmon
Mr & Mrs Clinton L McCombs
Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Oliveira
Mrs. Esther J. Rice
Mandy and Jean Zabriskie
American Contraact Bridge
League Unit 159
Carolyn and Milton Leech
Estelle B. Maxwell
Dr & Mrs Robert D Schneider
Mr & Mrs Donald H
Wadsworth
Barbara Willis
Mr. and Mrs. John Woelfel

For General Fund

Vince and Carol Giordano

A SNOWBIRD IN TEXAS

I had the pleasure of accompanying Bob Johnson of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society on a morning bird trip in the city on Valentines Day. Like the Snow Bunting flocks I see on Long Island, New York, I had folwn a great 6,000 mile arc into the Southwest to visit my cousin.

I was surprised when Bob showed me the El Paso Christmas Count which he complies. Our Long Island count numbers are very close to here, so I felt right at home.

We bumped into John Kiseda and I was soon seeing new birds such as Yellow headed Blackbirds, Lawrence's goldfinch, and the moorhen. Both men chuckled at my enthusiasm for birds they were very familiar with.

Aside from excellent birding (46 species for a leisurely morning is double what I'd list back home), I was impressed with the pace of the people. I questioned why life is so rushed back home. Its as if El Pasoans have had to slow down on hot, humid summerdays and used this learned adaptation all year long.

I was fascinated as Bob told me about how birds aid in the propagation of the parasitic Mistletoe plant. I also appreciated learning of the Lewis' Woodpecker's relationshipwith dead Cottonwood limbs and nearby Pecan trees and actually seeing this ecology firsthand.

By the end of the tour, I not only had added 24 birds to my year list, I had the pleasure of the company of a generous representative of all El Pasoans. I will remembre and appreciate the friendliness of the people and...the birds.

Thomas Allen Stock
Smithtown, New York

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY GOOD BIRDS AROUND HERE?

By John Kiseda, Conservation Chair

If you have enjoyed birding at Rio Bosque Park or the NE Sewage Ponds (also known as the Ft. Bliss Ponds or the Fred Hervey Water Reclamation Plant) two of the El Paso area's best favorite birding spots, then read on and see how you can help me with some project work for both of these areas.

Rio Bosque Park is about to be partially transformed into a 300+ acre wetlands that will be managed by UTEP. This "park" has been one of the best places in El Paso to regularly find Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Painted Buntings. The park has also been known to have a good sized heronry and numbers of Barn Owls. I am going to compile a list of bird observations from EP/TP NAS chapter members and put them into a checklist format. This information will be given to UTEP with the idea that this will give them a headstart in forming their own checklist for their project area. This information may also be valuable to UTEP by providing them with baseline data to aid them in determining the effects of their mitigation project on resident and migratory bird populations over time. Also, if you have slides of local wildlife or of the Bosque Park that you would be willing to donate (or possibly have reproduced in the future) let

me know; UTEP may want our help in setting-up education/public information programs.

The NE Sewage Ponds are one of the premiere birding spots in our area. It is a wellspring of life for wildlife because of the water and its associated terrestrial plant habitat; it provides important stop-over habitat for migrants and it provides nesting habitat for a number of waterfowl, shorebirds, birds of prey and passerines. I have found out that in approximately 3 years time, the sewage treatment plant will no longer be regularly placing any water in any outdoor ponding areas; water treatment will almost always be able to be completed exclusively indoors due to expanded treatment facilities. This will result in the loss of an extremely valuable resource for wildlife and an important recreational resource for the citizens of El Paso. I can't name all of the rarities that have been spotted there in the past, but here are just a few of them plus other hard-to-find-elsewhere-in-El Paso birds from the past few years: Rufous-necked Stint, Ruff, Black Tern, Osprey, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Whimbrel, Harris' Hawk, Red-necked Phalarope, Groove-billed Ani, Coopers Hawk, etc.

Quite a little list, isn't it? I'm hoping to acquire all the information I can on the wildlife (not just the birds) of the site to hopefully make a compelling enough case in the future to save the ponds for wildlife use and possibly

turn the area into an urban wilderness park with hiking trails, bird observation areas, etc. If we are going to save this important area, we need to begin working on the project proactively and now!

Please provide me with whatever information you can on these two areas. Hardcopy information is fine but, if you can provide information to me via some type of computer listing program, let me know and I'll see if I can use it in that format (if nothing else, information given to me on disk, will save on paper/photocopying costs).

If these projects get off the ground, I will also be able to use some help in getting the work done; so if you think that these projects are important enough for you to donate some of your hard-pressed time and awesome talents, let me know. I can be reached in the evenings at 833-6212.

THANKS!

Observations

January 16, 1997 to March 15, 1997

Uncommon, Rare, and Casual sightings

A very rare sighting has the full entry *italicized, bold and underlined*. Some of the listings may not be considered RARE, but because of the season or habitat (date and/or location **bold and underlined**) they are unusual. The listing of birds here is determined using the checklist "Birds of El Paso County, Texas and Adjacent Areas" 7th Edition, October 1987. If you are unsure of a sighting, **don't hesitate - report it**, to Bob "WILDBIRDER" Johnson 757-1876 (recorder).

Observers: Carmen ?, Mary Lou Alcorn, Craig Braginton, Gloria Cowling, Madaline Gavit, Sallie Homan, Bob Johnson, John Kiseda, Kathy Kiseda, David Kruzich, Mark Lockwood, Lillian Mares, Jan Martinez, Jim Paton, Patricia Russell, John Sproul, Ro Wauer, Jimmy Zabriskie, Barry Zimmer. Mob - Many observers, Var - Various.

Locations: Can/Canutillo, CaC/Casitas Coronado, CDo/Cielo Dorado, CCC/Coronado Country Club, CCA/Country Club Area, CCB/Country Club Bridge, Emy/Emory, FLk/Feather Lake, Fro/Frontera, GDe/George Dieter, GbV/Gibson Veck, Hor/Horizon City, HTk/Hueco Tanks, Lom/Lombardy, Msn/Mason Farm, McN/McNary, MNt/McNutt, MPk/Mountain Park, NoL/North Loop, PtD/Painted Dunes, RLk/Rainbow Lakes, STA/Santa Teresa Area, SRS/Stan Roberts Sr. Dr., SLR/State Line Rd. Sun/Sunland Park Area, Tor/Tornillo, UpV/Upper Valley, VPk/Veterans Park, VDM/Vista Del Monte, WEP/West El Paso.

LOON to VULTURE

<u>Common Loon</u>	3/1	(RW)	Tor
Great Egret	Var.	(Mob)	FLk
Canada Goose	Var	(JS)	FLK
Wood Duck	2/8	(JS)	FLk
Common Merganser(800)	1/28	(BZ)	McN
	3/1	(CB)	Can
Turkey Vulture	3/14	(LM)	HTk

HAWKS thru WADERS

Sharp-shinned Hawk	2/2	(GC-yd)	GDe
Harris' Hawk (3)	2/24	(BJ)	PtD
<u>Rough-legged Hawk</u>	<u>3/2</u>	<u>(BJ)</u>	<u>SRS</u>
Golden Eagle (A)	2/24	(BJ)	SLR
(J)	3/1	(RH)	SRS
Merlin	1/18	(JK)	CCC
Snowy Plover	3/9	(BJ)	FLk
American Avocet	1/25	(JS)	FLk
Lesser Yellowlegs	2/19	(JP)	UpV

GULLS thru WOODPECKERS

Herring Gull	1/25	(JS)	FLk
<u>Thayer's Gull</u>	<u>1/28</u>	<u>(BZ)</u>	<u>NoL</u>
	<u>2/2</u>	<u>(BZ)</u>	<u>Sun</u>
<u>Lesser Black-backed Gull</u>	<u>1/28</u>	<u>(BZ)</u>	<u>NoL</u>
Broad-tailed Hummer	3/1	(DK)	MPk
Lewis' Woodpecker	All	(Mob)	Lom & Fro
Acorn Woodpecker	2/13	(SH)	CDo
<u>Downy Woodpecker</u>	<u>3/6</u>	<u>(BJ)</u>	<u>VDM</u>

SWALLOW to BLUEBIRD

N. Rough-winged Swallow	2/25	(JS)	RLk
Steller's Jay	Var	JK	CCC
	All	JM	WEP
Scrub Jay	Var	JK	CCC
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2/13	(MG-yd)	Hor
Mountain Bluebird	1/31	(SH)	CCB
	2/27	(C?)	VPk

SOLITAIRE to SPARROW

Townsend's Solitaire	2/7	(KK)	CCC
Hermit Thrush	2/25	(SH)	CCA
Sage Thrasher	1/27	(BZ)	MNt
Curve-billed Thrasher	2/7	(KK)	CaC
Orange-crowned Warbler	All	(PR-yd)	STA
<u>American Tree Sparrow</u>	<u>3/9</u>	<u>(ML)</u>	<u>HTk</u>

JUNCOS thru GOLDFINCHS

D-eyed Junco(Slate Color)	3/2	(CB)	Can
Yellow-eyed Junco	1/16	(MLA)	Emy
Bullock's Oriole	1/25	(SH)	Msn
<u>Cassin's Finch</u>	<u>1/27</u>	<u>(BZ)</u>	<u>MNt</u>
Red Crossbill	All	(Mob)	CCA
<u>Lawrence's Goldfinch</u>	<u>Var</u>	<u>(Mob)</u>	<u>GbV</u>
	<u>3/9</u>	<u>(ML)</u>	<u>HTk</u>

On The Trail

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

The weekend of April 11-13 we will be looking for the *COLIMA WARBLER* in the Chisos Mountains, which are located in Big Bend National Park. This is the only place in the USA where this bird nests. Other great birds can also be found in the park and we will search out *Summer Tanagers*, *Painted Buntings* and *Cardinals*, also many others.

Some of our tour already has reservations at Big Bend Motor Inn (1-915-371-2218) and others will be in the campground. Contact your leader, Bob Johnson (757-1876) for details.

MEMORIAL PARK

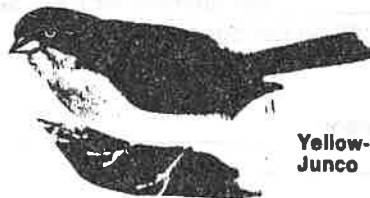
Warbler migration should be near its peak and Memorial Park is always one of the better places to see them. Also a stop at Arroyo Park could produce a few rare ones. In addition to *Warblers*, *Orioles* and *Vireos*, possibly a *Tanager* could be spotted. The meeting time will be 7:14 AM, Sun. Apr. 27, the place is The Garden Center in Memorial Park, 3500 Grant Street, the leader is Bob Johnson (757-1876).

BIRDATHON

Saturday and Sunday May 3/4 is the day to help raise funds. Additional information on this project is published elsewhere in this issue.



Olive Warbler



Yellow-eyed Junco

CAVE CREEK

Sat. - Mon May 24/26. Cave Creek is located in the Coronado National Forest, next to Portal Az. which is 7 miles west of Rodeo NM. This is one of the best places to see the *Elegant Trogon*, *Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher*, *Painted Redstart*, and *Blue-throated Hummingbird*. On Sunday a trip up high to Rustler Park could find *Mexican Chickadee*, *Yellow-eyed Junco* and maybe *Olive Warbler*. We will be having our famous campground picnic on Sat. evening (no singing required). Great camping among the Arizona Sycamores, and for those of you who like more comforts the Cave Creek Ranch is nearby and just below that is Portal Lodge (520) 558-2223. For detailed itinerary call Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson (757-1876). Bob's going on Fri. the 23d.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

On Sat. May 10th we will participate in the Sixth Annual North American Migration Count. This event is not affiliated with any particular organization. Partners in Flight, American Birding Association, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society, and numerous state and local bird clubs provide support by increasing awareness of this activity. The NAMC collects no dues. You can not join, only participate. THERE ARE NO FEES. Call John Sproul (545-5157) for details.

ANTHONY

What's in Anthony that would attract birders? First Helen Bigalow lives there, and its at her home that she will give us an insight to the CHIHUAHUAN DESERT WILDLIFE RESCUE. Second we will take a look at Rainbow Lakes to see what birds might be lurking at the waters edge and in the trees nearby. Thirdly we will cross the river to the Heron Rookery which has over 100 nests of *Cattle Egrets*, *Snowy Egrets*, and *Black-crowned Night-Herons*. Gail Nickel (584-9621) will show you how to find these places. Meet her at Trans-Mt. and I-10 on Sat June 7th at 7:12 AM.

Audubon Birdathon '97

Birdathon counters are psyching themselves up for 1997! What is Birdathon? It's not your average bird count or fund-raiser, that's for sure! Birdathon is very unusual and unconventional: a wild weekend of birding **and** our organization's most important source of income for conservation & education programs. Birdathon '97 will occur on May 3rd-4th & we hope you can join us for a full, rewarding weekend of birding throughout the El Paso area.

The proceeds of our 1997 Birdathon efforts will benefit local & Texas Audubon Society programs equally. This year's beneficiaries will be:

- **EDUCATION.** Birdathon is the main source of funding used in support of our Audubon Adventures youth education program and the other conservation education endeavors of our local NAS chapter.
- **FEATHER LAKE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY.** Our chapter manages this "Wellspring of Life" for the benefit of local wildlife and also as a wonderful teaching tool for environmental education concepts. The sanctuary's Master Plan has recently been updated and completed, and funds are needed to implement some of it's initiatives. **PS:** Feather Lake is also a *great* place to watch birds and enjoy a pleasant hike.
- **RIO BOSQUE WETLANDS PROJECT.** UTEP has recently accepted the challenge of managing the project to transform this neglected and fairly barren city "park" into a 300 + acre wetland. We need to demonstrate our support for this exciting and unique El Paso venture by providing UTEP with sorely needed "seed" funds to establish education and public information programs about this project
- **TEXAS AUDUBON SOCIETY.** Our support helps to ensure that this NAS office based in Texas can be an effective, respected voice for the Texas (& especially *our* West Texas) environment.

The counters on the reverse side are ready to do their all for Birdathon. How about you? Turn the page to see how *you* can help (over)

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

BIRDATHON '97

YES! I'll sponsor _____
for \$_____ per species for each species
s/he finds on the Birdathon.

From _____

I'll sponsor _____ for a flat
\$_____.

Address _____

City State Zip

I will add a bonus of \$_____ if my
counter sees a _____.

Telephone _____

My tax deductible gift of \$_____
sponsoring _____
is enclosed, payable to El Paso/Trans-Pecos
Audubon Society.

Please clip & return this form by April 25 to:
Birdathon '97
c/o Craig Braginton
125 Libby Canutillo, TX 79835

Thank you for your Generous Birdathon pledge!
Your gift is tax deductible as allowed by law.

How Birdathon Works

On the weekend of May 3-4, our dedicated Birdathon counters will be wildly scurrying about the countryside, trying to find as many bird species as possible in a single 24-hour blitz. These hardy (foolhardy, some might say) & intrepid individuals will start early, stay out late, visit varied wildlife habitats and give their eyes, ears and bird knowledge a full workout. Why do they push themselves so hard? for the pleasure of a day afield, for the chance to collect meaningful data for a nationwide census project, for a test of their birding skills and most importantly, for a better West Texas environment. Each counter will be backed by sponsors who pledge either a given amount for each species seen or a fixed total amount. Most counters will see 50 to 100 species. A pledge of, say \$0.50 per species for 60 species would result in a Birdathon contribution of \$30. All contributions are tax-deductible. Fully 95% of Birdathon income goes to our named projects; 5% pays for the cost of fundraising. Every new species identified thus means another big boost for our Education Fund, Feather Lake Sanctuary, the Rio Bosque Project and the Texas Audubon Society.

Your support makes Birdathon work! Whether it's \$.25 per species, \$1.00 per species or any given amount, we hope you will consider a Birdathon pledge.

Prizes (believe it or not you may get something back besides a "good feeling that you've done the right thing") As usual, this year's loot will be great! As a Birdathon sponsor, you'll be entered in our ever-popular local Birdathon drawings for a number of wonderful prizes. The prize drawings will take place at our annual post-Birdathon pot-luck.

Pot-luck Dinner will start at 6 PM on Sunday, May 4th, at the Garden Center, 3105 Grant, in Memorial Park in El Paso. Please join us. Reports of the weekend's best birds, great food, door prizes, and results of our drawing await you!

The Counters

So, whom can you sponsor? Here is a list of last year's counters; most of whom will surely be back at it "fighting the good fight" in the upcoming Birdathon. Your soon-to-be-in-the-post mailing will provide you with a more current list of wonderful, enthusiastic Birdathon-ers whom you will hopefully support generously.

Last year's roster of individual counters were a hardy and dedicated group & most have been involved in a number of Birdathons. These people are:

Mary Lou Alcorn	Weldon Fisbeck	Paul Milios	Art Arteaga
Jane Fowler	Jo Nagel	George Barnett	Joe Guinn
Gail Nickle	Matt Bingham	Richard Hermosilla	Terry Nickle
Paul Bingham	Ann Heying	Jim Paton	Mary Bradley
Sallie Homan	Iola Pennington	Craig Braginton	Anne Hussmann
Mark Riede	Joe Cancellare	Bob Johnson	Susie Schneider
Cliff Edison	Larry Jordan	Charles Simpson	Theresa Fanney
John Kiseda	John Sproul	Betty Fisbeck	Peggy Laswell
Nancy Wilson			

Please pick one or more and give them your support!

We welcome & encourage additional counters (**or ones I haven't tried to "entice/coerce" back into service from last year's group of OUTSTANDING BIRDATHON-ERS by listing their names again!**). Would you like to participate as a counter or sponsor? Please contact John Kiseda (833-6212) or Nancy Wilson (833-3907) for details.

April

Fri., 11, Sat., 12, Sun., 13 - Big Bend National Park.

Mon., 14 - Board Meeting at Environmental Center

Mon., 21 - General Meeting- Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

Sun., 27 - Memorial Park Tour- see page 5

May

Sat., 10 - Sixth Annual North American Migration Count - see page 5.

Mon., 12 - Board Meeting at Environmental Center

Mon., 19 - General Meeting - El Paso Zoo - 6:30 pm

Sat., 24, Sun., 25, Mon., 26 - Cave Creek in Coronado National Forest, AZ - see page 5

June

Sat., 7 - Anthony Tour - See page 5

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.



Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society

Chapter Membership Data Center

P.O. Box 51001 • Boulder, Colorado 80322-1001

LOCAL CHAPTER

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El Paso, TX 79986

W10
Local Chapter Code
7XCHA

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