

the ROADRUNNER

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



Editors: Jane Fowler - Jo Nagel

Volume 14 (3)

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March 1984

GENERAL MEETING

MON., MARCH 19, 1984, 7:30 PM,
Garden Center, 3105 Grant St.,
Memorial Park. We are just plain,
flat lucky to have Rick Taylor
drive in from his home in Portal,
Arizona in the Chiricahua Mts.
to give us his program on the
(now) Elegant Trogon. Mr. Taylor
has as his business the guide
service, Borderland Production,
specializing in tours to Mexico
and southeastern Arizona. He ar-
rives back in Portal from leading
a trip just the day before our
meeting. How lucky can we get? Mr.
Taylor is the author of the books-
Hiking Trails and Wilderness
Routes of the Chiricahua Mts. and
The Coppery-Tailed Trogon, Arizo-
na's Bird of Paradise. Come for
the pleasure and privilege of
hearing a dedicated expert speak
on his special interest, the
Elegant Trogon.



FIELD TRIP CALENDAR

SINGH POND/UPPER VALLEY

SUN., MARCH 4. Meet at Trans-Mt.
and I-10 at 7:00 AM with leader
Joyce Davis (544-6772 w, 581-9470 h).
Bring lunch if you wish to bird
into the afternoon.

ARBOYO PARK

SAT., MARCH 10. Meet at 7:30 AM
at New York and n. St. Vrain in
the gully between Kern Place and
Rim Rd. Gambel's Quail and thrasher
species should be seen, and
hopefully some surprises. Leader
Jane Fowler (772-0296)

HONDO PASS

SUN., MARCH 25. Leader, Tom Baker
(562-9461 h, 566-9461 w), will take
a morning walk through the Frank
lin foothills. We should see ear
ly spring migrants and wild flow
ers. Meet at the west end of
Hondo Pass Dr. at 7:30 AM.

HUECO TANKS

SAT., MARCH 31. Leader: Bart Ru-
maker (544-6432 h, 541-7337 w).
We will meet in the parking lot
of the Bella Napoli Restaurant
at the corner of Montana and Yar-
brough at 7:00 AM. This is the
season to bird the tanks as mi-
grating spring birds should be
everywhere. We should see a full
range of birds from raptors to
passerines and even some water-
fowl. A picnic lunch might come
in handy.

BITTER LAKE NWR/PRAIRIE CHICKENS

SAR., SUN., APRIL 7-8. Most of the
wintering water birds will be
gone from Bitter L. Natl. Wild-
life Refuge, near Roswell, NM,
but spring migrants should keep
things lively. We'll spend Sat.
at the refuge, then venture forth
early Sun. morning to find Lesse
Prairie Chickens on 1 of their
most reliable NM display grounds
Our return to El Paso will in-
clude a stop at L. McMillan, n. o.

Carlsbad. Sat. night, you can camp with us at Bottomless L. State Park or stay at a Roswell motel. Leader: John Sproul (545-5157 h, 541-6126 w). Call John for reservations, motel phone numbers, Sun. morning wakeup times and other details.

DOG CANYON
SUN., APRIL 15. Details next month.

ATTENCION! OUR LOSS IS MINNEAPOLIS' GAIN. Read on.....

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MON., MARCH 12, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Liz and Joe Guinn, 5000 Alabama, #31, El Paso (566-8438). All members are welcome.



FIELD TRIP FOLLOW-UPS

We saw no Whooping Cranes or Bald Eagles on our 2nd Bosque trip for January. Of course, this 1 was to Rio Bosque Park in El Paso's lower valley. The 11 participants on the Jan. 29 outing did enjoy warm weather, 3 Soras calling from the cattail-choked Riverside Intercepting Drain, American Crows crossing and recrossing the Rio Grande with impunity, and a variety of raptors and sparrows. The group found 31 species in and near the park.

The Feb. 6 beginners outing on the following weekend lured 6 participants to the Tornillo area, where shorebirds highlighted the morning. One that stood out from the rest was later confirmed as a winter-plumaged Dunlin. A side trip to the Ft. Hancock holding reservoir found it alive with ducks, geese of 3 species, and Sandhill Cranes. Some 56 species were found on the day. / John Sproul

SUN., FEB. 19, 7 members toured Holoman Lake area (Alamogordo, NM). The weather n. of Orogrande was low clouds and cold wind. 34 species were seen. Highlights were a Golden Eagle and a Ferruginous Hawk on poles just s. of Alamogordo. After lunch at Mile Long Park we went to the Space Museum and saw the I-MAX movie "To Fly" which was an exciting viewing experience. / Bob Johnson

*
* ..Eskimo Curlews, Felis
* pardalis, Golden Eagles, *
* horned lizards, ...? *
*

SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER

The Feb. 11 Book Fair was a big success. Thanks to all volunteers: Liz and Joe Guinn, Jo Nagel, Joyce Davis, Jean and John Coyle, Gloria Basden, Sid Shepperd, Dale Edwards, Carlyle Navidomski, Jane Fowler, John Sproul-who spent part of their Sat. representing us at the B. Dalton bookstore. Our special thanks go to B. Dalton who will be sending the chapter \$491.00, our share of the day's sales. / Jo Ellen Warolin

SHE SANG LIKE A LARK

Our Feb. meeting was probably one of the more enjoyable annual meetings any of us will attend. Our brave new officers were installed and we had the most unique committee report format it will ever be our pleasure to hear. Many thanks for this presentation go to the committee chairmen who were stationed at their displays around the meeting room. The chairmen were listed in the program announcement in the last Roadrunner. My extra special thanks to the unique part of the format, the one and only Jo Ellen Warolin. She wrote, played and sang almost the entire program.

excluding only the committee chairmen's reports interspersed throughout the production. Thank you! Jo Ellen, for sharing your considerable talents with us in this delightful evening. /Sara J.Dodds

BOUNDARY PRESERVATION PROJECT: The legal maneuverings continue in our lawsuit to force the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) to adhere to its original environmental-protection commitments on its project to dredge the Rio Grande between Ft. Quitman and Presidio, Texas. At last report, the Justice Dept. had filed a motion to dismiss the lawsuit on grounds that we, the plaintiffs, lack standing to bring such a suit (RR, Dec. 1983). In early February, our attorney filed an amended pleading that spells out in more detail the nature of our complaint. The Justice Dept. then requested a 45-day delay in which to amend its motion to dismiss. Meanwhile, on Feb. 22, the IBWC released a completely revised draft of its environmental assessment for work done thus far on the project. The original draft, released last May, had been widely criticized as inadequate. The deadline for comments on the new draft is March 26. You can get a copy from: IBWC, 4110 Rio Bravo, El Paso, TX 79902, 915/541-7300. John Sproul

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I want to join the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter of the National Audubon Society.

Name

Address

CityState.....

ZipPhone.....

Membership Category desired:

— Individual/\$30 — Family/\$38

— Sr. Citizen, Individual/\$21

— Sr. Citizen, Family/\$23

— Student/\$18

This is a — new — renewal membership.

Please make checks payable to National Audubon Society. Mail to Bob Johnson, 5109 Paris, El Paso, Tx 79924.

BIRDATHON '84

This is not only leap year but it is also our chapter's 4th year to participate in the Birdathon. "What is a Birdathon?", you ask. The Birdathon was initiated by the Natl. Audubon Society as an annual fundraiser in which bird watchers solicit pledges from sponsors who agree to contribute a stated amount for each bird species identified on count day. This year the big day will be Sat., April 28th. Our chapter, the southwest regional office and Natl. Audubon each get 1/3 of the money we raise. We are still accepting ideas for a Grand Prize. If you have a suggestion, please give Bob Johnson a call (751-0125, 757-1876). If you would like a chance to win the Grand Prize or other prizes, read next month's Roadrunner for details.

We gratefully acknowledge donations to the chapter from

Helen Porras in memory of Frances B. Davis

Mr. & Mrs. D.E. Baker in memory of Kris Kohlhoff



WHOOPING CRANE DEATH MAY PROMPT MANAGEMENT CHANGES

wednesday, Dec. 28, 1983. It's the 1st day of a 4-day Snow Goose hunt at Bosque del Apache Natl. Wildlife Refuge, near Socorro, NM. As the morning advances, an 18-month-old male whooping Crane that is wintering on the refuge decides to leave its roost. #82-13, as the bird is known, flies over the hunt area and out of view. That night, it doesn't return.

The bird's absence is not surprising, actually. Data gathered this winter by whooping Crane researchers Rod Driewen and Wendy Brown show clearly that the Snow Goose hunts at the Bosque are forcing whoopers off the refuge. There are four 4-day hunts each winter, each carefully run to ensure no accidental killings of whooping Cranes. With each hunt, however, the count of whoopers on the refuge drops. Some return once the hunt is over. Many don't.

One week later, # 82-13 does return. The bird keeps apart from the other cranes and shows unusual gasping and gaping behavior. Researchers note what appear to be blood stains on its side. But the bird is able to fly, drink and feed, and over the next week or so it shows signs of improving.

Then comes a mid-January cold front. The weather stresses #82-13 hard, and its condition deteriorates. In a last-ditch effort to save the bird, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) personnel capture #82-13 on Jan. 21 and take it to the Rio Grande Zoo in Albuquerque, NM. Too late. The whooper continues downhill and dies Jan. 23. The necropsy reveals 2 lead shot in the bird's leg, 1 in its abdomen, and 8.35 grams of fragmented lead pellets in its gizzard. The lead level in its blood is 5.66 parts per million (ppm); in its liver, 24 ppm.

Lead poisoning from ingested lead shot is the likely cause of death. The shotgun wounds appear to have healed without infection or excessive blood loss. But 1 of the classic manifestations of lead poisoning is that it leaves the poisoned organism more susceptible to other environmental insults. The combined stresses

of lead poisoning, shotgun wounds and severely cold weather may have done #82-13 in. No one knows when or where the bird was shot, nor when or where it picked up the lead in its gizzard.

* * *

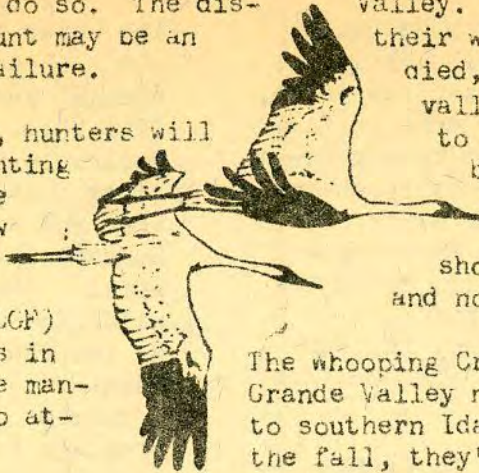
Not a very happy story. And it is far from over. The bird's death raises some serious questions about how the whooping Crane flock that winters in NM is managed. The National Audubon Society has called on the USFWS and the State of NM to take a number of steps to improve future prospects for this Endangered species. The public is well aware of the \$1,000 reward Audubon is offering for information leading to arrest and conviction of any person shooting a Whooping Crane or killing other Endangered species. The Society has also called for:

- mandatory use of nontoxic steel shot along the Whoopers' migratory pathway and in all areas where concentrations of waterfowl and concentrations of hunters occur together.
- a halt to the Snow Goose hunt at Bosque del Apache. The disturbance caused by the hunt is pushing whoopers off the refuge to areas where they are more vulnerable. They are exposed to more untrained hunters, more lead shot (Bosque requires steel shot), more power lines and more barbed-wire fences than when they stay on the refuge.

Moreover, the displaced Whoopers become scattered throughout the middle Rio Grande Valley, making it less likely they will find each other and establish pair bonds. Recent studies indicate interactions of sub-adult whoopers on their wintering grounds are important to pair formation. The Bosque flock, of course, is part of an ambitious experiment to establish a 2nd wild population of Whooping Cranes. The birds, now numbering 25-30, are raised by Sandhill Crane foster parents in Idaho and migrate with the Sandhills to the Bosque. Though some of these Whoopers are now old enough

to breed, they have yet to do so. The disruptive influence of the hunt may be an important factor in this failure.

Should the hunt be stopped, hunters will not lack for Snow Goose hunting opportunities in NM. There were 115 days open for Snow Goose hunting off the refuge this winter. The NM Dept. of Game and Fish (NMDGF) has 4 Game Management areas in the Rio Grande Valley where management could be altered to attract more Snow Geese.



Valley. The USFWS did not know their whereabouts. After #82-13 died, USFWS personnel flew the valley in a plane and were able to find most of the missing birds. With the Bosque population so small and vulnerable, such monitoring should be a matter of routine and not just a crisis response.

* * *

The whooping Cranes have left the Rio Grande Valley now. They are headed back to southern Idaho and adjacent areas. In the fall, they'll return. Perhaps they'll find a new approach to whooping Crane management in place at Bosque del Apache and elsewhere in NM.

* * *

Will any of National Audubon's recommendations regarding the whooping Cranes be heeded? Public support will help. Express your views to:

- an investigation into cropping patterns and the general management scheme at Bosque del Apache. Part of the reason for whooping Cranes going off the refuge this winter was the amount of food available on the refuge. Much of the food grain raised at Bosque does not stay there. It is harvested and sold. By leaving a greater percentage of grain for the birds, the refuge should be better able to hold them. Further, there are signs that the crop yield last year was lower than it should have been, and poor farming practices may have been to blame.

- a stronger hunter education program. Hunters that take part in the Bosque goose hunt are trained in whooping Crane identification. The NMDGF should expand such training beyond the confines of the refuge.

- increased wildlife law-enforcement efforts and increased citizen-education efforts in the Rio Grande Valley. The USFWS and NMDGF used to be conscientious in this regard, but the agencies have been backsliding. Signs that show the differences between whooping Cranes and other similar-appearing species need to be displayed more prominently throughout the valley. Citizens need to be aware that the birds are present, that their protection is important and that any harm to them will not be tolerated.

- closer monitoring of whooping Cranes in the Rio Grande Valley. At the time of #82-13's death, 11 other whoopers were missing in the middle Rio Grande

- Secretary William Clark, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240

- Mr. Michael Spear, Regional Director, USFWS, Region II, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103

- The Honorable Lloyd Bentsen, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510

- The Honorable John Tower, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510

- The Honorable Ronald Coleman, U.S. House of Reps., Washington, DC 20515

National Audubon's SW Regional Office is putting up the \$1,000 reward for information leading to arrest and conviction of anyone shooting a whooping Crane. Contributions towards this reward are welcome. Please send checks, payable to "National Audubon Society", to: NAS, SW Regional Office, 2525 Wallingwood, Suite 1505, Austin, TX 78746. Please write "Endangered Species Reward Fund" somewhere on the check.

/John Sproul/

Minneapolis, Mn. will shortly become a brighter place because Jo Warolin is moving there. During the past few years, Jo has been a member of our chapter family and an outstanding asset to our organization, serving as membership chair, secretary-treasurer, and our writer of songs. We will sorely miss her serene nature, her lovely warm smile, her quick wit and keen mind, and her music. We wish you Godspeed, dear Jo, in your musical career and your new surroundings. Stay well and warm.

FUERTES EXHIBIT OPENS SOON IN DALLAS

"A Celebration of Birds: Louis Agassiz Fuertes and His Art" will take center stage at the Dallas Museum of Natural History from March 31 to May 27. If you'll be anywhere near Dallas during this period, you'll want to take in this exhibition of over 100 works by the man widely regarded as America's greatest-ever bird artist. The museum also will stage several special events -- seminars, a bird walk, a field trip to Big Bend -- in conjunction with the exhibit. Dallas County Audubon Society is a cosponsor of the exhibition.

DIRECTORY

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w544-6772
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* - Board of Directors
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The water is low but, yes, there are still ducks at Feather Lake. Now, though, you must look more closely to find them. A spotting scope is most desirable, if you have one to bring along. At least bring your binoculars when you come out to the sanctuary on Sunday afternoons during March and April. (Feather Lake is our chapter's wildlife sanctuary, located at 9500 N. Loop Rd., 0.3 miles n.w. of Americas Ave.) The gate will be open and a chapter volunteer will be present from 4PM to sundown beginning on March 11. There isn't much water in the lake, but there are cattails and bulrushes aplenty. So travel out to Feather Lake for a tranquil evening, visit with the volunteer and be bewitched by the birds.

RUMMAGE SALE SET

May 6 is the date of our chapter rummage sale. If you have any saleable items that you wish to donate, contact Tom Baker (562-9461), Jane Fowler (772-0296) or Bart Rumaker (544-6432).

* * *

A big EPTPAS WELCOME to Joe Summerour, who has recently joined our chapter and National Audubon.

* * *

THE ROADRUNNER is sent to all members of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. Nonmembers can subscribe for \$4 per year. Make checks payable to "El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society" and mail to: RR Editor PO Box 9655 El Paso, TX 79986. Please send any changes or corrections in name, address, or telephone # to this address.

The deadline for the April Roadrunner is March 21.



6-The Roadrunner

OBSERVATIONS - January 20 to February 19

Some very interesting reports came in during the second half of this observations period, but little if any change in the trend set previously can be noted.

LOONS - FALCONS

In an effort to determine positive identification of the loon sp. observed and photographed 11/24/83, the photos were sent to the California Bird Records Committee for review. Their decision was that it could not be definitely identified as to species (fide JS).

A single Double-crested Cormorant was at Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds (FBSP) 2/12 (BJ). Two Snowy Egrets seen in the Tornillo area 2/18 (AG, MG) were the only members of the heron family reported. On 2/5, 10 Snow Geese, 2 ROSS' GEESE, and 140 Canada Geese were at Fort Hancock Reservoir (FHR) (JS, BJ, et al.). The imm. Snow Goose at Feather Lake was seen there again 1/23, 1/29 and 2/5 (JS, et al.), and another 2 ROSS' GEESE, observed at Tornillo Lake on 2 separate occasions on 2/18 (JS, AG, MG), might or might not have been the same individuals seen previously at FHR. Large numbers of N. Pintails were at FBSP 1/21 (JS, et al.), but only 3 were seen there 2/12 (BJ). Three Redheads were at Tornillo Lake 2/18 (AG, MG), 2 female Com. Goldeneyes at FBSP 1/21 (JS, et al.), single female Buffleheads there 1/21 (JS, et al.) and 2/12 (BJ), and Com. Mergansers were present at both FBSP and the Newman Power Station Reservoir 1/21 (JS, JF, et al.). A male N. Harrier was observed in the Timberwolf area in e. El Paso 2/15 (HJ). A single Cooper's Hawk was at FBSP 2/12 (BJ) and another 1 raided an e. El Paso yard 2/13 (JF). Two adult Golden Eagles were seen on the e. side of the Franklins 2/2 and single adults on the w. side 2/10 and 2/14 (BJ).

QUAIL - WOODPECKERS

Three different Soras were heard calling from an irrigation ditch at Rio Bosque Park 1/29 (JS, et al.) and at least 2 at the Tornillo Channel 2/4 and 2/5 (JS, JN, et al.). On 2/5, 19 Sandhill Cranes were seen in the Tornillo area by one group of observers (JS, et al.) and 3 by

another observer that same day (BJ). Fifty Greater Yellowlegs were present in the Tornillo Lake area 2/4 and 2/5, and 1 lesser Yellowlegs noted there 2/5 (JS, JN, et al.). Long-billed Curlews were seen in 2 separate locations, 30 in each group, in the Fabens-Socorro (Mex. side) area 2/5 (JS, et al.) and 15 were spotted at the border crossing near Fabens 2/18 (AG, MG). Very exciting was a DUNLIN in winter plumage first seen in the Tornillo Lake area 2/4 and observed there 2/5 on at least 2 separate occasions (JS, BJ, et al.). This is probably the first winter record for this species in our area. Also on 2/4 and 2/5, 20 Long-billed Dowitchers were in the same area (JS, et al.). Common Snipe were observed in the river area near Canutillo 1/24 (RW). Twenty White-throated Swifts were at the junction of I-10 and Trans Mountain Road on 2/1 (BJ).

FLYCATCHERS - VIREOS

A flock of Horned Larks was observed at the intersection of Cross and Sun Valley in n.e. El Paso 1/25 (KB). The 5 very early N. Rough-winged Swallows seen at Madden Lake 2/5 (BJ) are of special interest. Several Am. Crows were seen across the river from Rio Bosque Park 1/28 and 1/29 (JS, et al.) and very large numbers were observed going to roost there 2/5 (JS, et al.). An Am. Robin was singing in a yard on Timberwolf Dr. 2/7 (HJ). Single Sage Thrashers were noted at Hueco Tanks 2/8 (AG, CC) and 2/10 (AG, MG), and a Brown Thrasher was there 2/10 (AG, MG). A flock of 18 Cedar Waxwings in e. El Paso on 2/13 (JF) were the only ones reported.

WARBLERS - WEAVER FINCHES

A Com. Yellowthroat was at the Tornillo Channel 2/5 (BJ). Two Rufous-sided Towhees were at FBSP 2/12 (BJ), a Black-chinned Sparrow was at Hueco Tanks 2/8 (AG, CC), and an adult White-throated Sparrow at Rio Bosque Park 1/28 (JS). Six E. Meadowlarks were singing in the Madden Lake area 2/5 (BJ). (cont. on p.8)

AIR QUALITY IN EL PASO

There will be a conference on "Air Quality in El Paso" at the Valle Verde Campus of El Paso Community College, Sat., March 31, 8:30 AM to 2 PM. A \$5 registration fee includes lunch.

Sponsoring organizations include: El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society, Sierra Club, League of Women Voters of El Paso (who made all the arrangements), El Paso Community College, and the Center for Inter-American and Border Studies.

Highlights of the morning session will include "Overview and Update from EPA on the Air Quality in El Paso" by Randall T. Sabine, Director, Office of Intergovernmental and Congressional Relations, EPA, Dallas. Then Raul V. Munoz, Jr., Chief, Environmental and Community Health Services, El Paso City-County Health Dept. and Manuel Aguirre, Regional Director, Texas Air Control Board will discuss "All You Ever Wanted to Know About the Six Controlled Pollutants Affecting the El Paso Air Shed."

Looking at international air pollution problems will be Conrado Diaz from the Instituto Tecnologica in Juarez, the luncheon speaker.

The afternoon session will include a panel discussion (Pros & Cons) of Mandatory Automobile Emission Control (Inspection/Maintenance). "Where Do We Go From Here?" will be moderated by Ann Books, Director, Air Quality Committee, League of Women Voters. This will give all conference speakers and the audience a chance to share views on ways in which progress can be made toward cleaner air in El Paso. Following the conference, there will be a demonstration of auto emissions inspection equipment and free car inspections in the campus parking lot.

#

(Observations cont.)

CONTRIBUTORS: Ken Beno, Charles Clark, Mary Ann Dodson, Jane Fowler, Al Cavit, Madeline Gavit, Howard Jackson, Bob Johnson, Jo Nagel, John Sproul, Ray Waite. /Bettie Roberts, Observations Editor/ (Call in your observations to Bettie, 591-0421. And "Thank You" Bettie for your concise, superb reporting. Ed.)

EL PASO AIR QUALITY CONFERENCE
Saturday, March 31, 1984
8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

El Paso Community College
Valle Verde Campus
Room S136
\$5.00 - lunch included

Reservation Deadline: March 24, 1984
Cancellations will be honored if made before March 28, 1984.

Please reserve _____ places for me. My check for \$ _____ is enclosed.

NAME _____

ORGANIZATION _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

Make check payable to EL PASO LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS and mail to 1020 Mohegan, El Paso, TX 79912. For more info call 532-2264 or 581-2201.

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