



The Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

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The e-Roadrunner

The Roadrunner is now also available electronically as a PDF file. If you would like to receive our newsletter in this way via e-mail, just send a note to John Sproul at jsproul@utep.edu.

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Website!

Updated information about upcoming field trips, calendar of upcoming events, and recent bird sightings. www.trans-pecos-audubon.com



General Meeting Monday, December 14, 2020, 7 p.m.

This year we will be doing our annual photo sharing virtually through Zoom. However, we will be assembling the program in the same way. We invite you to share some of your favorite images taken this year with the group. Here are the guidelines.

Subjects: birds; other animals; landscape; plants; humorous

Number of images: up to 15 per person

Format: all images must be in digital format.

Send photos by e-mail to Scott Cutler at scottmcutler@sbcglobal.net. He will assemble the images into a PowerPoint presentation. If you cannot e-mail the images, contact Scott at 915-494-2193 to see about making other arrangements. **Please submit photos by November 30, 2020.**

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcof-ChqTsvEtGy9myNWc8D-dPmwvqGoX6>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



General Meeting Monday, January 18, 2021, 7 p.m. Topic To Be Announced

You are invited to a Zoom meeting of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

When: Jan 18, 2021 07:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYpce-grDMvE9ejvLhCOEwT1cKOL25unSdz>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

Officers

President: Scott Cutler, 494-2193
Vice President: Jane Fowler, 598-2448
Secretary/Treasurer: Eddie Chew, 587-9589

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Conservation: Kevin Floyd, 613-6354
Education: Kathleen Whelen, 820-1895
Field Trips: Star Posada, 407-6442
Hospitality: vacant
Membership: Elizabeth Chase, 539-1191
Newsletter Editor: Kathleen Whelen, 820-1895
Programs: Susie Schneider, 542-3041
Publications: Jane Fowler, 598-2448
Publicity: Heather Rivera, 212-2825
Sanctuary: John Sproul, 545-5157
Website: vacant
Facebook: Kevin Floyd, 613-6354

**The Audubon
 Foundation of
 Texas**



represents Texas
 Audubon chapters in the Earth Share of Texas
 payroll deduction plan for charitable giving.

Bright Idea to Dim Lights Made Birds Safer Over Texas

Great participation in [Dallas, TX] Lights Out project

Fall migration over Texas was safer for birds this year. Reduced nighttime lighting on tall buildings and in residential areas took some of the risk out of the grueling trip. Backed by former First Lady Laura Bush, local businesses, and residents, Dallas took the effort to heart by declaring a series of Lights Out Nights in October to lessen the dangers presented by light pollution.

The full article can be accessed Here: https://mailchi.mp/cornell/lights-out-texas-fall2020_followup-1319328?e=f0b505020c

Partners for the Lights Out Texas project include Houston Audubon, Texas Conservation Alliance, Houston Zoo, Dallas Zoo, and the Perot Museum of Nature and Science, working with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Colorado State University, & others.



Join us on Facebook!

There is now an El Paso Audubon Society group on Facebook. Our aim is to provide a space for people around El Paso to share pictures, sightings, and other information about birds and conservation.

All levels of pictures are welcome. If you are looking for help with identification, please include the location and date of the picture, as both are important with narrowing the possibilities.

Conservation Organizations

Greater Big Bend Coalition
<https://greaterbigbend.wordpress.com/>

Chihuahuan Desert Education Coalition
<http://www.chihuahuandesert.org>

Second Chance Wildlife Rescue
<https://www.secondchancewildliferescue.org>
 Josie Karam (915) 920-7867

El Paso Zoo (915) 212-0966
www.elpasozoo.org

Stick House Sanctuary
<https://www.facebook.com/epwildliferescue>
 (915) 219-2365

Keystone Heritage Park 581-7920
www.keystoneheritagepark.com

Asombro Institute
 (Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park)
 (575) 524-3334 www.asombro.org

Friends of Rio Bosque 747-8663
www.riobosque.org

Southwest Environmental Center
 (575) 522-5552
www.wildmesquite.org

Franklin Mt. Wilderness Coalition
www.franklinmountains.org/

Celebration of Our Mountains
www.celebmtns.org

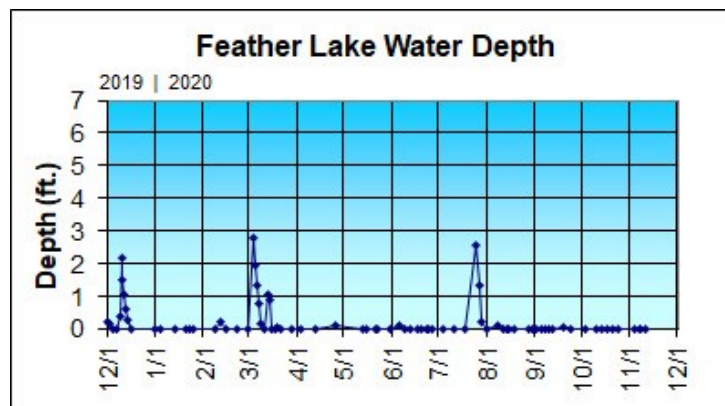
AT FEATHER LAKE

If current trends continue, 2020 will be a year with just 2 storm events large enough to flood all or most of the Feather Lake basin. One took place in early March, the other in late July.

On the other hand, it was also a year with adequate supplies of river water available for irrigation in El Paso County. Every few weeks throughout spring and summer, excess water that was discharged from irrigation-delivery laterals to the Mesa Drain Interceptor provided pulses of flow to Feather Lake. Parts of the basin saw brief but regular shallow flooding, and the vegetation on the banks and within the basin responded favorably.

When the irrigation season ended, so did those pulses. Until the next significant storm rolls in, we can expect a dry basin. And we cannot count on a similarly favorable irrigation season in 2021.

Want to check out the current conditions? Join us for our next workday. It takes place **Sat., December 5**, starting at **2 p.m.** Those March and July storms washed in plenty of trash, and we are still cleaning it out. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, group size will be limited to 10 participants, and you will need to wear a mask. Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave.



Audubon at

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park



Rio Bosque’s wetland cells are fully flooded, and there is plenty of avian activity...and beaver activity. Tours at the park have resumed, but they remain subject to possible cancellation if COVID-19 conditions so dictate. Due to the pandemic, tours are limited to 9 participants plus the tour leader, and masks are required.

For up-to-date information on tours, birds and water conditions at the park, check www.riobosque.org. Upcoming tours:

3 p.m., Sun., December 6 (Introductory tour)
8 a.m., Sat., December 12 (Birding tour)

8 a.m., Sat., January 9 (Birding tour)
3 p.m., Sun., January 17 (Introductory tour)

The meeting place is a bridge crossing the Rierside Canal. To get there from I-10, take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Drive, turn left onto Pan American and travel 1.5 miles. Information: 747-8663.



www.trans-pecos-audubon.com

The following is an edited article that Kevin Floyd wrote for the October newsletter of UTEP's Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens. To read the entire piece, visit <https://www.utep.edu/centennial-museum/About/newsletter.html>. While you are there, consider signing up for our email list using the link below the current issue. You will be the first to learn about events, newsletters, and other information about the museum and gardens.

Feeding Insects to Feed Birds

Kevin Floyd, Botanical Curator of the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens

Fall migration is always exciting for bird watchers like me, with birds like Wilson's and yellow warblers, olive-sided flycatchers and western wood-pewees passing through El Paso on their way south for the winter. This year has been especially great, with large numbers of the expected migrants and several unexpected ones as well. It was a shock when reports started showing up of large numbers of dead birds in New Mexico following the cold front that moved through in early September. This was a particularly extreme event, with temperatures dropping more than 40 degrees from one day to the next. However, cold fronts are not that unusual, and the number of birds that people were finding certainly was. All the wildfires up and down the West Coast were in the news at that same time, and many people thought that the mass mortality might be related to the smoke and possibly something toxic in the air. The pictures of dead birds from across New Mexico and the lack of an obvious cause created a mystery that was picked up by many local and national news outlets.

Fortunately, researchers went right to work. When possible, carcasses were collected for examination and toxicology screening. Most of the affected birds were insect-eaters and appeared to be starving, with no fat and some muscle atrophy. Jenna McCullough, a Ph.D. student at UNM, concluded that the cold front reduced the number of insects available to the birds, either by killing them outright or reducing their activity. Migration is hard on birds, and they are often at the limit of their reserves. The lack of food for even a day, especially when they need to burn more energy to stay warm in the cold, probably caused most of the deaths. The tests to determine if there were any toxic effects from the smoke are pending, but the fires likely contributed to the die-off by changing the migration behavior of some of the birds. They might have had to leave early, before building up sufficient fat reserves, or shift their flight paths into less favorable areas. As Dr. Martha Desmond of NMSU put it, "[...] there might be multiple stressors coming together to create the perfect storm."

What can we do to help protect the birds from unusual weather events like this? Given that starvation was the likely cause of most of the deaths, we need to focus on providing food. Excluding raptors, most birds you might have in your yard eat insects, seeds, fruits, or nectar.

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Providing insects for birds probably does not occur to many people, likely because we do not like having bugs in our yards and we do not see insectivorous birds at our feeders. Especially given recent studies showing declines in insect populations, any actions we can take to increase insect populations will help the birds. We need to feed the bugs to feed the birds! This means changing our yard management and what we consider to be acceptable damage to plants. Instead of using insecticides at the first sign of insect damage, try to only treat when necessary to protect the life of the plant. Consider having some plants that can be sacrificed to the insects. Avoid including non-native plants that have no insect herbivores. Not being eaten by pests is a good selling point in plant nurseries, and because insects and their host plants are often very specific, bringing in non-native plants reduces the potential insect damage. But no damage means no insects, which means fewer birds!

Of course, pay attention to whether the insects are invasive pests that need to be controlled to prevent them from causing a lot of damage. The message is not to allow all insects to destroy all your plants, but rather to work to find coexistence between the plants you want to be healthy and the need to feed the birds. Reducing insecticide use and working to increase the number and variety of native plants in our yards and parks are important actions we can all take to protect birds.

You can learn about which plant species support birds by using the Audubon Native Plants Database (<https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>) and by visiting the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens and observing which plants have the most birds.

National Audubon Society's "I Saw A Bird"

Tune in the last Wednesday of Each Month at 7:00pm Eastern Time

Episode 13 Can Be Viewed at the Following Link:

<https://youtu.be/TXAZMioi9A0>

While people across the country and globe are staying home to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, Audubon has launched *I Saw A Bird* to bring a bit of the bird world indoors for everyone, no matter where they are. This monthly Facebook Live show highlights funny, engaging, educational, and sometimes weird bird-related topics and discussion, all while fostering a sense of community for everyone who has found joy in birds while stuck at home.

Each month, Audubon's visual storytelling senior producer Christine Lin and chief network officer David Ringer will welcome celebrities and guests to offer a fresh look at the world of birds and birdwatching. Episodes will air the last Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm ET as a Facebook Live on [Audubon's Facebook page](#).

El Paso/Trans-Pecos
Audubon Society
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**National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Application.**

Yes, I'd like to join. Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter.

Send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to address below.

Check for \$20.00 enclosed payable to National Audubon Society

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State ____ Zip _____

**National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center
PO Box 97194
Washington, DC 20090-7194**

Local Chapter Code **C1ZW100Z**

Dates to Remember

December

Sat 5: **Feather Lake Workday**
6 & 12: **Rio Bosque**
Mon 7: **Board Meeting**
Mon 14: **Virtual Holiday Meeting
and Photo Sharing**

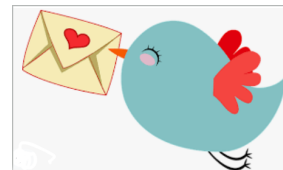
January

Mon 11: **Board Meeting**
9 & 17: **Rio Bosque**
Mon 18: **General Meeting
(Virtual -TBA)**

February

Mon 8: **Board Meeting
Awards Meeting TBA**

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
<http://www.trans-pecos-audubon.com>



El Paso/Trans-Pecos Local **Chapter Only Membership** Your \$15.00 will help support chapter activities & you'll receive *The Roadrunner* delivered to your mailbox. Make checks payable to the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
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