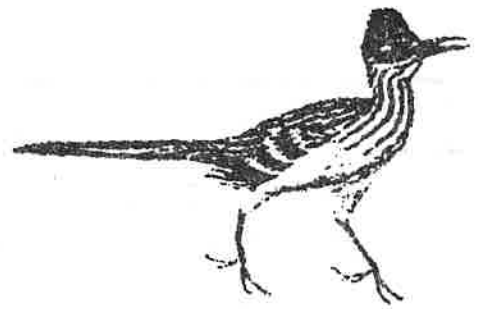


The Roadrunner



Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society

Volume 27 No. 6
28 1

~~December 1997 - January 1998~~
February - March 1998

General Meetings

Sunday, February 15, 1998 6:00pm

Awards Dinner & Guest Speaker

Scott Hedges, Director of Bird Conservation for Texas
Colonial Water birds of the Texas Coast

Call in your reservation to Griggs Restaurant at 9007 Montana (598-3451) by February 12 for the annual Awards Dinner.

Scott Hedges, our guest speaker, has been working with the Coastal Sanctuaries in Texas for two years. Prior to this, he was the manager of the Kissimmee Prairie Sanctuary in Okeechobee, Florida. He has a BS degree in Wildlife Management from the University of Maine.

Texas has the largest privately managed system of colonial water bird sanctuaries in the country. Twenty-one different species of terns, herons, and pelicans breed on the Texas Coast and as population increases pressure on the bays and estuaries, protection and monitoring of coastal bird populations becomes an increasingly important task. Texas Audubon is building on our 80 year old tradition of colonial water bird protection to meet modern challenges.

March 16, 1998 7:30pm

"Star" Party

For the March meeting we will be looking toward the skies, but this time it's the stars - not the birds who will captivate our attention. Mr. Hyder, who has Master's Degrees in science and physics and is currently an instructor at El Paso Community College, will be bringing an electronic telescope to our general meeting. Mr. Hyder is the faculty advisor for the Astronomy Club which is currently raising funds to build an observatory here in El Paso. Bring your birding scopes, telescopes and binoculars. We will be gathering ~~outside~~ at the Garden Club at 3105 Grant Street to see some stars and planets. Hopefully the weather will cooperate. Come join us for this astronomical feast!

Griggs

Gourmet New Mexican Food Since 1939
SERVING DAILY - 11:00AM to 9:00PM

DINNER PARTY MENU

Appetizer: Tostadas and Salsa

New Mexican Plates:

1. Topoppo Salad \$10.25

Crisp flour tortilla with guacamole, chicken, lettuce, cheese, tomato, and sour cream.

2. Combination Plate \$11.25

Rolled taco, red cheese enchilada, chile con carne, rice, beans, and slaw.

3. Chopped Steak \$12.25

Smothered with chile con queso, French fries and slaw.

Drink: Tea and/or coffee

Dessert: Empanada

Prices include Tax and Gratuity.

Inside The Roadrunner

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Chapter Info..... | 2 |
| Sanctuary News..... | 3 |
| Environment..... | 4 |
| National & TX. News..... | 5 |
| Special Features..... | 6 |
| On the Trail..... | 7 |
| Observations..... | 8 |
| Calendar..... | 10 |

The President's Corner

Happy New Year to all of you! My first as a president has been a learning and enjoyable experience. The officers and board of director have been so supportive and encouraging to the changes and future implementation of changes for our local. I appreciate their time, unlimited energies, and their valuable expertise to ensure my transitional term went as smoothly as possible. You have my heartfelt gratitude for all that you have done.

As we start the year 1998, the chapter will have a board comprised of new members: Hugh Jamison, Susie Schneider, and Margarita Kanavy. I'm looking forward to working with them and together continue the goals we have for our chapter.

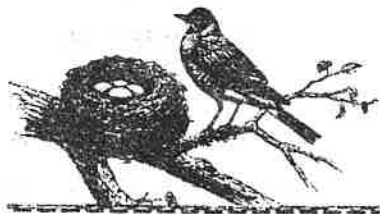
With the incoming new board, out goes some of the members whose term in office has expired. They are John Kiseda, Betty Pagel, and Nancy Wilson. They have done such an excellent job, and I appreciate their commitment to the memberships.

Congratulations to Charles Simpson and John White who are the recipients of the Meritorious and Conservation award respectively. Both are positive contributors to the preservation of our community. Let us show our support to them by attending Award's Night on February 15, 1998. Scott Hedges, who is our guest speaker from the Texas Audubon Society, will be very informative and entertaining with his slides presentation of the coastal sanctuary.

If we are going to be a strong chapter whose mission is to preserve the environment for our wildlife, we need to work together and commit to that mission. I'm confident that with the new board and the active participation of memberships, we can make several steps towards that mission.

Here's to a successful and productive year for the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter.

Elizabeth Chase



El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society Board of Directors:

| | | |
|-------------|-----------------|----------|
| President | Elizabeth Chase | 591-5119 |
| V-President | John Kiseda | 833-6212 |
| Secretary | Betty Fisbeck | 581-0174 |
| Treasurer | Larry Jordan | 833-5969 |

Committee Chairs:

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|----------|
| Conservation | John Kiseda | 833-6212 |
| Education | Weldon Fisbeck | 581-0174 |
| Field Trips | Bob Johnson | 757-1876 |
| Hospitality | Betty Pagel | 772-2686 |
| Membership | Jane Fowler | 598-2448 |
| Programs | Nancy Wilson | 833-3907 |
| Publications | Kathy Ditlevson | 751-2005 |
| Publicity | Hector Montes | 565-4032 |
| Sanctuary | John Sproul | 545-5157 |

About the Roadrunner:

Roadrunner is your newsletter. We welcome your contributions. The next deadline is on March 20, 1998. For further information, you may contact Elizabeth W. Chase:
W: 857-4323
fax: 857-4324
email: [echase @ socorro.k12.tx.us](mailto:echase@socorro.k12.tx.us)

Chapter Award Winners Named

Once again, we are excited to be honoring two highly deserving chapter-award recipients at our Annual Meeting on Feb. 15 (see p. 1). Please join us for this very special occasion.

Our Meritorious Service Award honoring a chapter member who has made outstanding contributions to El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon and its programs, goes this year to CHARLES SIMPSON. Charles has been a huge asset at Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, has served as our chapter's Education Chair, and has helped us in numerous other ways. He is both the brains and the brawn behind many recent facility improvements at Feather Lake. He and his wife Helen frequently staff Feather Lake during visitor's hours, and, for the past two years, he has done a fantastic job coordinating the Feather Lake volunteer program! Congratulations, Charles!

Our Conservation Award recipient will be JOHN M. WHITE, County Extension Agent-Horticulture with the El Paso County Extension Service. This award recognizes an individual, organization or other entity outside the chapter who has done exceptional work on behalf of the environment and the Audubon Cause in Trans-Pecos Texas. John has richly earned this recognition through his dedicated and creative work educating the El Paso public about environmentally sound, wildlife friendly gardening and landscaping practices.

HARD WORK IS FOR THE BIRDS AT FEATHER LAKE

Audubon's Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary is a productive wildlife habitat and outstanding educational resource thanks entirely to the efforts of a host of volunteers. Members and friends of our organization staff the sanctuary when it is open on weekends. They lead school classes and other groups on tours. And they don't mind working hard to help with habitat management, facility maintenance and trash clean-up.

We held 6 workdays in 1997, and the good folks who took part included Berttye Barnhart, Lupe Barrera, Joe Cancellare, Jan Harmon, Sallie Homan, Bob Johnson, Jo Nagel Betty Pagel and John Sproul. Many thanks to all!

Also deserving thanks are Junior Scout Troop 535 and the Cuckoo Conservation Club at Eastwood Heights Elementary School. Both groups helped remove saltcedars at the lake in recent months.

Plan to join us for one or more of our Feather Lake workdays in 1998. Our next session will be Sunday, March 15. We'll start at 2 pm, work a few hours, then see how many White-faced Ibis arrive at the end of the day.

Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Boudeaux in El Paso's lower valley, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave. It is open every Saturday, 8am to noon, and every Sunday, 2 pm to dusk. Admission is free.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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

For General Fund: Tom and Ginny Baker

Next Feather Lake Appreciation Day:
Join us Sunday, March 15 to help with
habitat management at Feather Lake.
We'll start work at 2:00pm.



The Joy and Wonder of Birdwatching John Kiseda

(silly subtitle: how to make your head explode in 10 not so easy lessons)

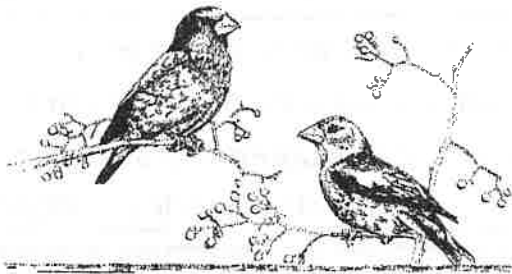
So you want to be a birder, eh! If you want to begin enjoying the wonders (and the trials and tribulations) of BIRDING (it used to be called bird watching, before "we" got trendy) there are a few basics that need to be dealt with right from the go:

*Get yourself a field guide for the birds of North America. If you are interested enough in birds to want to be able to observe them and able to be able to tell them apart from one another (eventually), this is a must! If I were not the proud (my wife would say insane) owner of many field guides, the one I would get for our locale is the Peterson's Guide to Western Birds. This field guide will introduce you to the "field mark" concept of bird identification that Peterson developed. It will also provide you with the birds that you are most likely to encounter in the Southwest and other U.S. areas.

The main reason that I suggest that you require a regional field guide, is that it won't confuse you with a lot of information on birds that you will probably never see anywhere around here; it limits the choices presented to you to what in all likelihood you will see, it is less clutter at this beginning period of your novitiate stage to birding, and in my opinion thus less confusing. Believe me, there is plenty of opportunity for you to buy more field guides in the future (and to get more confused). Cost < than \$20.

* Get yourself a pair of binoculars. If you are interested enough in birds to want to observe them "up close & personal" and to be able to tell them apart from one another (eventually), you will need to be able to do that via enhanced optics (your 20/20 vision, your skills at camouflage and stealth, and the large bird suit hanging in your closet will not enable you to you close enough to most birds, to be able to enjoy them to their fullest).

continued on page 6



El Paso Environmental Center

The El Paso Environmental Center, now 7 years old, enjoyed a busy year in 1997. Five groups -- the Border Environmental Network, Habitat for Humanity, Rio Bravo River Watchers, the Sierra Club, and El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon -- are full participants in the Center. Many others also use it for meetings, workshops and other activities.

Change is in the works for the Center's recycling program. After 7 years as an independent operation, recycling at the Center will now be operated by the City of El Paso. This change will allow an important expansion of the City's recycling efforts and will free the Center's volunteers to work on other projects.

To all the Center's recycling customers: Thank you for your past participation; please continue to bring your recyclables to the Center!

Volunteers run the Center, and a core group deserves special thanks for its work week after week after week: Berttye Barnhart, Erika Episcopo, Jane Fowler, Jo Nagel, Betty Pagel, Bill Phillips, John Sproul, and Vic Ward. Also deserving thanks for helping in 1997 are Cesar Fernandez, Jose Lujan, Barbara Mertig, Mike Seidensticker and Daniel Valdez.

The El Paso Environmental Center is located at 800 S. Piedras at Piasano. If you are interested in volunteering, please stop by or give John Sproul a call (532-9645).

Feather Facts

presented by
Eastwood Heights Elementary
Cuckoo Conservation Club

The Curve-billed Thrasher by, Tara Ditlevson

The curve-billed thrasher is a unique bird that can be found in deserts, brushy riverside washes, and southwest residential areas. It lives mostly in Southern Arizona, New Mexico, and in parts of the Panhandle and Southwestern Texas.

Some of its features include bright orange eyes, the obvious downward curve of the black bill, and the spread out, spotted markings on the chest. When it lands, it fans its tail, and you can see pale tips to the tail corners.

Chances are, that if you're looking for a curve-bill thrasher, you'll probably hear it before you see it. It has a bright *whit whuit!* or *whit whuit whuit!* sound. The song carries a long way, and if you hear it you will probably find the bird sitting on top of a cactus, road sign, or some other lofty perch from quite far off.

The curve-billed thrasher is about 10-11" in size. Its nest is a bulky cup of twigs and grass in cactus or brush. Its eggs are pale bluish green, and spotted with browns.

The younger curve-billed thrashers are similar to the adults, but their eyes are duller, and their bill can be shorter and less curved.



Birdathon 1998 by, John Kiseda



Now that the holiday season has finally ended for most of us, (my wife and I are diehards, our tree is up!) its time to begin planning for Birdathon 1998!

What is Birdathon? It's not your average bird count or fundraiser, that's for sure! Birdathon is a frenzied but satisfying weekend of birding and our organization's most important source of income for conservation and education programs. Dedicated Birdathon counters will be traveling the countryside, far and wide, trying to identify as many bird species as possible within a single 24 hour period. Many of these hardy and intrepid birdathoners will start out early, stay out late, visit varied wildlife habitats and test their eyes, ears and bird knowledge to the limit. But, if you only want to "bird" in one place for a few hours, that's also fine (as long as you ID birds and raise sponsor \$ for your efforts)!

Why do Birdathoners 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 field trial 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 -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 fund raising (supplies, printing, postage, etc.)

As usual, Birdathon '98 will take place in the Spring, and we hope you can join us for a full, rewarding weekend of birding throughout the El Paso area. If you haven't participated previously, do so this year (we'll help you get "jump started" and make sure that you have a quality experience full of birds).

We need your help in a number of ways:

- Aid in the pre-birdathon efforts to make this year's endeavor proceed smoothly. Volunteer to help folding inserts, drilling envelopes with Birdathon information, and with getting the mailings out in the post.
- We also need someone who can help keep track of the funds raised and in setting up "count teams", as needed.
- Be a counter on Birdathon day and ask a friend to join you. Be prepared for a most enjoyable experience!
- Be a Birdathon sponsor. As a Birdathon sponsor, you'll be entered into our ever-popular local drawings for a number of great prizes and helping to support our chapter's endeavors for the **WHOLE YEAR!**

The proceeds of our 1997 Birdathon efforts benefited

local & state of Texas Audubon Society programs equally, and the efforts of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos chapter were designated to fund the following endeavors:

EDUCATION

Birdathon is the main source of funding used in support of our Audubon Adventures youth education program and the other conservation education and 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 educational concepts. The Sanctuary's Master Plan was updated and completed, and funds are needed to update some of its initiatives.

RIO BOSQUE WETLANDS PROJECT

UTEP accepted the challenge of managing the project to transform this neglected and fairly barren City "park" into a 300+ acre wetland. We needed 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 helped to ensure that this NAS office based in Texas can be an effective, respected voice for the Texas (& especially West Texas) environment.

Join the "in" crowd and **HELP OUT!** We really do need you, especially "New Blood"!

Help ensure that our chapter continues to be the #1 NAS FUND RAISING CHAPTER IN THE ENTIRE SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES!

Please contact
John Kiseda (833-6212) or
Elizabeth Chase (591-5119)
for more details.
It really is a lot of fun!

Special Features



The Joy and Wonder of Bird Watching

continued from p. 3

Some important "binocular lingo" information are the magnification of the image number and the mm number of the large optics at the front end of the binoculars (these numbers are typically displayed on a box and printed on the binoculars themselves; for example, a pair of 7x35 binoculars magnify the image 7x what you see through your naked eye through a 35 mm wide optic).

One type of binocular problem, can be the limited range of field of a pair of binoculars; if the R or F is too small, it is sometimes hard to actually hard to "sight in" on the bird in question through the binocs, because the new birder can't bring his "Binoeyes" to the spot where her or his regular eyes just saw the bird just a few seconds ago (this typically leads to everyone else within a tan mile radius having gotten a great look at "your" bird, while you of course have barely been able to spot it through your binoculars and discern that it is not a Hereford cow, by the rippling impression its movement had temporarily left in the tree's leaves). It's tough going at the start, but persevere, and you will succeed [somewhat; eventually; if you're lucky; give up hope for a normal life, etc.]

If you already have a pair of "old" binoculars laying around the house, use them, but be forewarned that many a generic pair of binoculars have frustrated a new birder, because they didn't let enough light into the binoculars to enable the bird's colors and field marks to be adequately seen, or they were too heavy and powerful (10X) and the birder couldn't see the bird well because the high magnification caused him/her to have the "shakes". But remember, even if you are initially frustrated by the lack of quality of your binoculars, your having not initially spent exorbitant amounts of hard earned loot will enable you to decide on whether or not birding is for you and whether or not you want to continue doing it.

The wait will also enable you to "try on" other people's binoculars to see what you like and don't like and what you can and can't afford. You can also go to Feather Lake when it is open to the public and borrow a pair of binoculars for your trip around the sanctuary.

Binoculars can be either very expensive to buy or fairly inexpensive to buy, but for the most part you do only get what you pay for. If you want to (and can afford to) spend ~ \$100 on a pair of binoculars that will work very well, get yourself a pair of "endorsed by the N.A.S., Bushnell 8X42 Nature views (with a field range of 430' at 1000 yds); these binocs are a great value for the dollar. You can also sometimes get lucky and get a half decent pair of binoculars at garage sales or pawn shops. Whatever you do, remember that you are just starting this venture into the dark unknown and it is best not to invest too much money, too early. After a number of great, good, or horrible birding trips, you should be able to tell if this is something that you will want to continue doing [or if you have

just breached the depths of human suffering one time to many and have decided to call it a ball game]. If you have been able to get this far without being turned into a quivering mass of humanity, now is the time to begin narrowing down the search for a pair of binoculars that are comfortable and affordable.

* Get out and just do it.! You will only know if birding is for you if you go out and try it. Go out in your yard and try to figure out how to focus your binoculars (hint: it doesn't just focus with the middle of the binocular thingy; at least one of your eyepieces can be focused/unfocused depending upon your skill, dexterity and patience). Look at a bird [preferably a big bird that moves very slowly] and try to remember what it looks like and if there are any very distinguishing features to its body shape, plumage, etc. Then consult your field guide and see if you can find it in the book, or at least narrow it down to a few different types of birds. Success will be yours [sometimes; this is not the time to get overconfident and "cocky"].

The best thing that you can do at this stage is to just get out and do it with other birders [please remember that we are discussing birding]. Go out on chapter field trips. Go to Feather Lake. Go to the El Paso Zoo and practice "spotting" on those birds and mammals (they can only move away from you a limited distance). Make friends at the monthly chapter meetings and plan a bird outing with them. Also look at big birds that you can get relatively close to (like ducks); this will help you attain the skills you need for the real tricky stuff later on [try not to get too close to the real big stuff like swans or herons because they have offensive mechanisms that can dampen your holiday spirits and lessen the odds that you will want to continue birding, once the bandages are removed and you are once again ambulatory].

The more you go out and "bird" the more proficient you will become; you'll notice that after the 10th or 11th time out birding, you will have become somewhat coordinated in your actions and that it will become harder and harder to pour hot cocoa down your leg, while locking the car, while falling down an embankment [a small one], while hitting yourself in the nose with your binoculars, while you begin to blame your significant other [or anyone else that has been dead for less than 20 years] while you try to identify a bird.

Ah, the sweet smell of success and victory! You will eventually become one with the wonderful world of birds, just give it an effort, and you'll be repaid a thousandfold by the beauty, the complexity and the thrill that observing birds will add to your life!

ON THE TRAIL

NORTHEAST EL PASO

One of the best locations to find birds in the northeast part of town is at the Fort Bliss Ponds (check the observations page). Good winter water birds and quite a few raptors, often a Barn Owl and sometimes a rarity as the *Oldsquaw* in November. Meet **BOB JOHNSON** (757-1876) in the parking lot of the closed Walmart store (NORWEST Bank in the corner) 9825 Dyer St. at 7:33 AM on Saturday February 7th.

PERCHA DAM

A trip up I-25 (about 1 1/2 hours) to Percha and Caballo Dams State Parks. A *Mew Gull* and *Yellow-billed Loon* were recently spotted at Caballo and a *Lewis Woodpecker* at Percha. *Mergansers* and *Cormorants* fish in the Lake just above the dam and many gulls are continuously flying by. Meet **BOB JOHNSON** (757-1876) on the westside at I-10 and Transmountain Road on Sunday February 22, the time 7:28 AM.

DOWN RIVER

A stop at Macho Reservoir, then down to the end of the Levee, should see *Vermillion Flycatchers* and *Green Herons*. A stop at McNary Reservoir for *Western* and *Clark's Grebes*, then on to Fort Hancock and maybe a *Herring Gull*. We will gather at Feather Lake on Saturday March 1st about 7:19 AM, look at the birds there, then depart about 7:45.

PHAINOPEPLAS

An afternoon trip for those who cannot get out in the morning. We will cruise the roads in the 79922 Zip Code area looking for *Phainopepias*. Also while at the X-roads ponding area you will be shown how to tell a *Mallard* pair from a *Mexican Mallard* pair. Also a stop to see a *Barn Owl* is possible. Meet Sallie Homan (584-0415) at the X-roads ponding area, Doniphan and Country Club Road at 3:27 PM on Sunday March 14th.

WHITE-FACED IBIS

See many thousand *White-faced Ibis* and hundreds of other roosting birds take to the air early in the morning. You do not have to drive for hours to the Wildlife refuges in New Mexico for this. This field trip will start at our own Sanctuary where these birds roost at night while migrating. Come on now, get out of bed early for once and see this spectacle. Come to Feather Lake at 5:27 AM on Sunday March 29th. John Sproul (545-5157) will be your host. Plenty of time to get back home for church.

FRIENDS OF HUECO TANKS

Upcoming activities at Hueco Tanks State Park. Entry Fee is \$2.00 each, children under 13 \$1.00.

Rock Art Tours - Every Sat. Sun. 10 AM & 2 PM.

Bird ID Tour 8 AM; Sun Feb. 15 & Sun. Mar. 15.

Birds of Hueco Tanks Slides 7 PM Sat. Feb. 14.

Tours and shows are \$2. per person / \$1. ages 6-12

LOOKING AHEAD

Our annual trip to Southeast Arizona is planned for the Memorial Day weekend of May 23-24-25.

A Pelagic Trip (Boat trip to see birds that normally do not come to shore) is contemplated for this summer to the Gulf coast of Texas. The date of the Boat trip would be **July 11th**. Expected birds; *Cory's Shearwater*, *Leach's Storm-petrel*, *Masked Booby*, *Magnificent Frigatebird* and *Sooty Terns* and many others are always seen. Other marine fauna including various dolphins and whales. The logistics of the trip (whether to fly or drive and length of stay) are to be determined when enough people are committed. Please let Bob 757-1876 know if you are interested by **March 15th**.

Continued on page 9

Observations

November 16, 1997 to January 15, 1998

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: Craig Braginton, Beth/Bob Garcia, Al Gavit, Sallie Homan, Hugh Jameson, Bob Johnson, Larry Jordan, John Kiseda, David Ogle, Jim Paton, Patricia Russell, John Sproul, Jimmy Zabriskie, Barry Zimmer. > - thru, Var. - Various, -yd - yard.

Locations: Asc/Ascarate, Can/Canutillo, CCC/Coronado CC, Der/Deer, FBP/Fort Bliss Ponds, FHc/Fort Hancock, FLk/Feather Lake, Hon/Hondo Pass, Jau/Jaurez, Lam/Lamasa, Mdl/Meadowlark, McN/McNary, MPk/Mountain Park, PtD/Painted Dunes, STe/Santa Teresa, SRS/Stan Roberts Sr., Sun/Sunset, Tor/Tornillo, Vin/Vinton.

GREBES THRU GEESE

| | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| <i>Western Grebe</i> | 1/14 | BZ | McN |
| Clark's Grebe | 11/18 | BZ | Tor |
| <u><i>Brown Pelican</i></u> | <u>> 11/28</u> | <u>BZ</u> | <u>McN</u> |
| Double-crested Cormorant | 12/6 | CB | FLk |
| Neotropic Cormorant | > 1/15 | Var. | McN |
| Great Egret (41) | 11/18 | BZ | FHc |
| | Var. | Var. | FLk |
| <u><i>Black-bell'd Whistling Duck</i></u> | 1/5 | BZ | Asc |
| <u><i>Gr. White-front'd Goose</i></u> | 1/5 | BZ | Asc |
| Snow Goose (47) | 1/14 | BZ | McN |
| Ross's Goose (156) | 1/14 | BZ | McN |
| Canada Goose | 12/18 | AG | FHc |
| (14) | 1/14 | BZ | |
| | | McN | |

DUCKS

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| Wood Duck | 12/6 | CB | FLk |
| Cinnamon Teal | 12/12 | PR | FBP |
| <u><i>Oldsquaw</i></u> | <u>11/16>12/12</u> | <u>Var</u> | <u>FBP</u> |
| Common Goldeneye | 11/23 | JS | FLk |
| | 12/27 | CB | Vin |
| Hooded Merganser | 12/6 | BBG | FLk |
| | 12/12 | PR | FBP |
| | 1/14 | BZ | Tor |
| <u><i>Red-breasted Merganser</i></u> | 11/18 | BZ | Tor |
| | 1/14 | BZ | FHc |

BIRDS of PREY

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|-----|-----|
| Harris' Hawk (5) | 1/5 | BJ | PtD |
| Rough-legged Hawk | 11/28 | JZ | Can |
| | 1/5>1/15 | Var | SRS |
| Golden Eagle | 1/2 | BJ | Vin |
| Merlin | 11/20 | BZ | Hon |
| | 1/3 | BJ | Der |
| <u><i>Peregrine Falcon</i></u> | 12/24 | JK | FBP |

SORA THRU GULLS

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|-----|-----|
| Sora | 12/14 | JK | MHI |
| Semipalmated Plover | 12/10 | LJ | BRK |
| Black-necked Stilt | Var | Var | FLk |
| | 1/14 | BZ | FHc |
| <u><i>American Avocet</i></u> | Var | JS | FLk |
| | 12/18 | AG | FHc |
| Bonaparte's Gull | 12/6 | CB | FLk |
| Herring Gull | 1/14 | BZ | FHc |

HUMMINGBIRDS THRU CORVIDS

| | | | |
|--|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Anna's Hummingbird | 1/8 | BZ/DO | MPk |
| <u><i>Broad-tailed Hummingbird</i></u> | <u>1/8</u> | <u>BZ/DO</u> | <u>MPk</u> |
| <u><i>Rufous Hummingbird</i></u> | 1/8 | BZ/DO | MPk |
| <u><i>Acorn Woodpecker</i></u> | 12/14 | JK | CCC |
| Red-naped Sapsucker | 12/14 | JK | CCC |
| <u><i>Bank Swallow</i></u> | 11/28 | JP | McN |
| <u><i>Steller's Jay</i></u> | 1/8 | BZ | Sun |
| <u><i>Green Jay</i></u> | <u>1/5</u> | <u>SH</u> | <u>Lom</u> |
| Western Scrub Jay | 12/14 | JK | CCC |
| <u><i>Black-billed Magpie</i></u> | <u>11/22</u> | <u>JK</u> | <u>Jau</u> |
| American Crow (200) | 11/27 | PR | Lam |

BLUEBIRDS TO LONGSPUR

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| <u><i>Eastern Bluebird</i></u> | 11/24 | PR | FBP |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | Var | PR-yd | STA |
| | 1/14 | BZ | FHc |
| Northern Cardinal | 12/20 | HJ | MPk |
| <u><i>Golden-crowned Sparrow</i></u> | <u>11/19</u> | <u>JP</u> | <u>Mdl</u> |
| Chesnut-collared Longspur | 11/18 | BZ | FHc |

TRIP TO BOSQUE DEL APACHE NWR

The trip on Jan 10 & 11 was very successful one, in that 14 Birders showed up, plus Cathy Dittivson's school group of 20. Fifty Seven species were seen, including Whooping cranes, Bald Eagles, Ferruginous Hawk, Pheasants and of course Thousands of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese. Also quite a few Mule Deer and a couple of Porcupines were spotted.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The Christmas Bird Counts were very successful this year, in spite of the small number of counters. Hueco Tanks only had 7 people; the usual number is about 15, in El Paso we had 16 where we generally have about 30 plus.

At Hueco Tanks 2626 birds of 58 species were counted, this is about average. Our highest count in the last 12 years was 5873 birds in 67 species, and the lowest was 1417, in 42 species. We had no *American Robins* and low numbers of *Gambel's Quail*, and *Green-tailed Towhees*. We had high counts of *Chihuahuan Raven* and *Sage Sparrows*.

The El Paso count produced a record 117 species, the previous was set last year at 111. The number of birds was 24362, which is about average. We had no *Cinnamon Teal* or *Western Bluebirds*, low counts of *Cactus Wren*, *Crissal Thrasher*, and *Black-throated Sparrow*. High counts included *Ross's Goose*, *Red-tailed Hawk*, *Ring-billed Gull*, *Verdin* and *Phainopepla*. The greatest sightings were a *Broad-tailed Hummingbird* and a *Calliope Hummingbird* (both very very rare on Christmas Counts anywhere) seen by Barry Zimmer at David Ogles house.

DONIPHAN MARSH

If you have ever seen a Least Tern or a Willow Flycatcher at the Doniphan Marsh, please contact John Kiseda in the evening at 833-6212, ASAP, so that he can pass this information on to the USF&W Service. If any sightings can be documented, this information might improve the level of "protection" this area might receive.

SPECIAL MEETING

The El Paso Zoo will be hosting a one day meeting of the Bird Interest Group of Texas on March 12, 1998. This group is composed primarily of Texas zoo and aquarium personnel that have an interest in birds, but it does include some non-zoo/aquarium people. Topics usually focus on "at zoo" programs and projects but some of these do have a "wild bird" component, such as a cooperative Texas zoo/aquarium participation in the upcoming International Migratory Bird Day (May 9). For further information, contact John Kiseda at 521-1850, at the El Paso Zoo.

BALD EAGLES

Although bald eagles regularly winter in areas where much of the water surface freezes, direct observations of eagles coping with these conditions are limited. A recent series of observations in Arizona suggests that the birds can employ a variety of techniques to deal with frozen water ("Ice Fishing by Wintering Bald Eagles in Arizona," by Teryl G. Grubb and Roy G. Lopez, *Wilson Bulletin* 109:546-548). The authors observed eagles at Mormon Lake, southeast of Flagstaff, Arizona, during the winters of 1994 and 1995. The lake, which regularly freezes and thaws throughout the winter, supports a winter population of as many as 75 bald eagles. Once in 1994, and at least twice in 1995, the authors saw eagles break holes by jumping up and down on the ice and then subsequently catch prey at the holes. In 1994, an eagle created a hole, removed a loose piece of ice from the opening with its talons, and then hid in grass nearby until a fish approached the opening. The eagle leapt out, caught the fish, and returned to the grass to feed. In 1995, two adults created four holes, and immature birds were seen catching prey at the openings. In each case, the holes were created in areas of thin ice close to the shore. The authors also saw eagles picking minnows out of the surface of the ice after a fish kill had trapped numerous carcasses. In several other instances, eagles were observed jumping on the ice next to small natural holes. The movement caused small fish to surface at the holes, and the eagles grabbed them. Secondary evidence showed that the eagles chipped small holes in the ice around emergent plant stems and fed on the carcasses of small fish and snails trapped in the grasses. This is the second report of bald eagles feeding on mullusks in the area.

From BWD Skimmer, December 1997.

Dates to Remember

February

Fort Bliss Ponds

Saturday, February 7 at 7:33 am
Meet at the old Walmart, 9825 Dyer

Percha Dam

Sunday, February 22
Meet at I-10 & Trans. Mt. at 7:28am

March

McNary Reservoir

Sunday, March 1
Meet at Feather Lake at 7:19 am

El Paso Country Club Area

Saturday, March 14
Meet at Crossroads at 3:27pm

Fly-out of the White-faced Ibis

Sunday, March 29
Meet at Feather Lake at 5:30am
a birding trip will follow

April

El Paso Country Club Area

Saturday, April 11



Friends of Hueco Tanks Pictograph Tours

Every Sat & Sun 10:00am & 2:00pm

Birding Activities at Hueco Tanks

Birds of Hueco Tanks Slide Show - Saturday, February 14. 7:00 pm

Bird Identification Tour - Sunday, February 15, 8:00 am

Bird Identification Tour - Sunday, March 15, 8:00 am

Many Thanks To:

Dr. Raul Valdez for the interesting presentation on his studies of wildlife in Asia and Northern Mexico.

Barry Zimmer for sharing his slides and expertise of the birds and other creatures of Madagascar.

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