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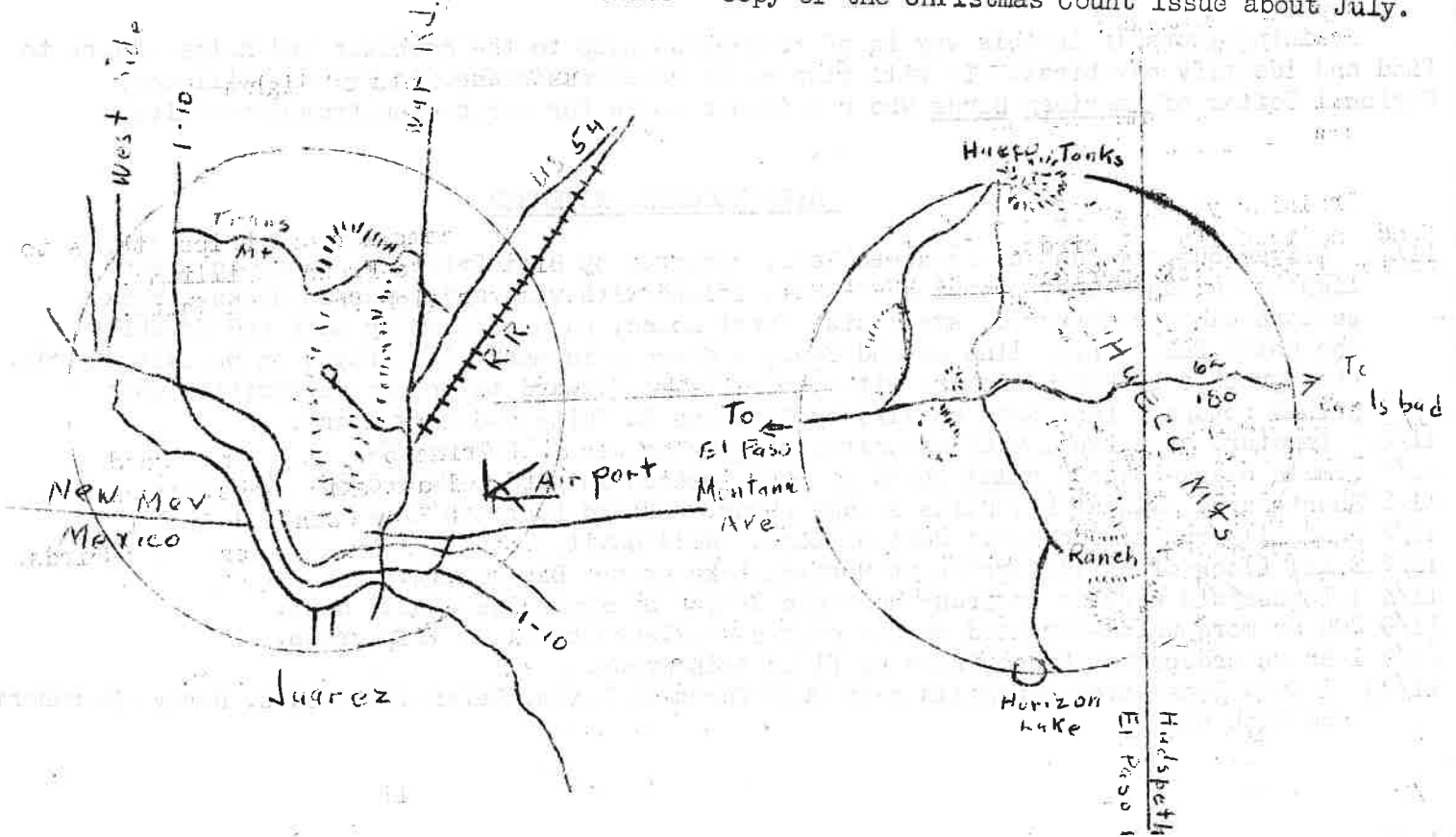
Geth Osborn White, Editor

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

We have two Christmas counts this year, the first on December 14 with its center just south of Mt. Franklin Peak to include Phelps Dodge Cooling Ponds, Ascarate Lake, Cement and fee-fishing lakes, the Rio Grande from Ascarate to Borderland Road, canyons in Trans-mountain Road, Memorial and Sunland Parks, El Paso Country Club residential district. See skeleton map below. Ruby Allen is official compiler. Leaders are: Bill Hunt, Charlie Jensen, assistant compiler, Geth and Ed White, Welden and Louise Yerby, Eddie Chew

Our second count on this 75th anniversary of annual Christmas bird counting will be a 15 mile diameter circle including Hueco Tanks State Park and Horizon Lake. See map below. Some of this is new territory and needs to be scouted. Much of it is scrub desert, the Hueco Mountains and the Tanks. This count is Sunday, December 15.

There is a fee of \$1.00 for each count for each participant who subscribes to American Birds, a fee of \$2.00 for the first count and \$1. for each subsequent count for non-subscribers. The non-subscriber will receive a copy of the Christmas Count issue about July.



PRE-COUNT PARTY AT THE EDMUND WHITES, 2906 SILVER, 7:00 P. M. This will be a soup and sandwich party with details of planning and assigning to areas will be finalized. Please come if you possibly can on Thursday, the 12th of December. Geth would appreciate an R.S.V.P. at 566-2328. New people are especially invited. More people always means better coverage. We will have to work to beat our record of 102 species last year. The birds are here if we have enough sharp eyes to see them in their habitats. Charlie Jensen will again tell us what birds we should be able to see in a given habitat, the possibilities, and techniques to employ to get the optimum number of birds in a given habitat.

Each birder must be prepared to support his observations with detailed notes if the compiler requests them. Birds out of range must be supported by careful observations of two or more birders. AFTER COUNT PARTY AT CHEWS, 4220 WALLINGTON, the 14th, the WHITES, the 15th.

From Roger Tory Peterson are these tips for bird watching:

- "W" - Where and when: locality and date
- "H" - Habitat: is it in the brush, canyon or water's edge?
- "I" - Impressions: what does the bird look like at rest, in motion?
- "C" - Comparison: what size is it in comparison to well-known birds?
- "H" - Habits: how does the bird behave, feed, move, fly?
- "I" - Identification: field marks, diagnostic patches, stripes, wing bars, etc.
- "S" - Sounds: listen to the bird, write down your impressions.
- "I" - Important details: size, shape, color of legs, feet, bill, eyes
- "T" - Tail: tail and wings, shape, length and pattern.

On keeping field notes, Peterson says: "DO IT."

- "D" - Distance: how far away is the bird?
- "O" - Optics: what kind of binoculars and/or scope? Comments on lighting.
- "I" - Instant: how long did you see the bird?
- "T" - Total: list name of observers.

Training yourself in this way is of tremendous help to the compiler and helps others to find and identify new birds. It will also be of great assistance to Frances Williams, Regional Editor of American Birds who receives reports for our region from Geth White.

BIRD RECORDS, NOVEMBER.

- 11/2 Olivaceous cormorant on Ascarate Lake, reported by Bill Principe. Seen in a good light on a sunny day, preening on small island with wild and domestic ducks. Back pattern closely observed, small size first noted; seen on 11/3 by Geth and Ed White who noted faint white line around face, a diagnostic mark also, found on breeding birds. Photographed by Bob Bleicher, with photos to go forward to proper authorities when prints return. Last seen on 11/4 by Geth and Ed White and Mary Moore.
- 11/4 Immature tree swallow at Ascarate, singing on wire. GOW and EW.
- 11/5 Female black-chinned hummingbird at tree tobacco in yard, GOW and EW. Silver.
- 11/2 Short-eared owls at Ft. Bliss sewage ponds. Ed and Lucretia Chew.
- 11/2 Sandhill cranes, flock, at Horizon Lake. Bill Gavit.
- 11/2 Small flock of cattle egrets at Horizon Lake area. Bill Gavit.
- 11/4 1 Townsend's warbler in Trans Mountain Canyon of Franklins. Bill Hunt.
- 11/9 200 or more white-throated swifts over Hueco Tanks by field trip group.
- 11/9 1 Brown creeper at Hueco Tanks by field trip group.
- 11/23 1 Snow Goose over sandhills near Owen farms in Texas, Sarah Jane Dodds, Bertye Barnhart and Geth White.

SOUTHWESTERN NEW MEXICO HAWK COUNT, '74

By Geth White

A cloudless day with a brilliant blue sky stretching from mountain range over vast grasslands and desert scrub was a perfect setting for our task, yielding for us a total of 63 raptors of twelve different species.

Dr. Bruce Heyward and Tom Brake of Silver City organized the event with the purpose of attracting as many competent birders as possible to census most of Grant, Luna and Hidalgo Counties -- some of the wildest open space in New Mexico. Details of numbers of people and totals are not yet available, but will follow later.

Participants had a choice of nine routes and the one Ed and I chose was from Deming south on N.M. 11, west on NM 9 to Hachita, north on NM 81 to within a mile of I-10, but following an El Paso Natural Gas Company unpaved maintenance road bordered with high power poles to Deming.

The first two hours south on NM 11, with the Floridas to our left, kept us busy scoring hawks as we passed through farmlands, stubblefields, standing sorghum grains, with a few scattered farmhouses having trees in yards and livestock nearby. Our one and only Merlin was seen in trees in the yard of one of the farmhouses and the two Cooper's Hawks in this first leg of the trip. We were of course mainly concerned with hawks, but the loud purring rattle of the sandhill cranes drew our eyes to two separate skeins of these majestic creatures bound for distant feeding grounds. A Great Blue Heron standing on an old wooden windmill platform was vigorously preening himself, proving that water-is-water in dry ranch country where the stock tanks may be the only source for sections.

We developed a technique of spotting a hawk some distance away on a perch, stopping afar and looking through the telescope to study field marks and be sure of identity, easing up closer and closer, continuing our scrutiny under binoculars. Some cooperative creatures let us get beneath the pole before taking off to give us a view of the soaring bird. Some unconcerned hawks refused to fly even with handclaps and shouts; mostly immature Redtails, innocents yet to learn some two-legged creatures have guns.

Our first Golden Eagle was a mature bird with a gilded head, beautiful and majestic as he soared leisurely back toward the Floridas from his preening pole. Our other Golden Eagle was seen toward the end of the day, an immature sitting on a pole with his back to the sun, closer to the foothills of the Cedar Mountains.

The seventeen Marsh Hawks, females outnumbering about five to one the males, were always quartering low over the desert scrub or perched on yuccas or mesquites. A good many of the Kestrels were in pairs. Occasionally we saw one eating a grasshopper, these big insects still sluggishly moving through the grasses which had the benefit of an October rain.

Best birding was late day on the EPNG gravel road winding at the base of the Cedar Mountains, more gravelly soils supporting heavier vegetation, and having a few isolated ranches with cultivated ground and stock tanks. Literally thousands of lark buntings and horned larks were moving across the desert scrub in feeding flocks here. Longspurs came in a flock of about 200 to a stock tank just off the road, making at least ten nervous passes before finally alighting to drink as if they had just arrived for the winter season. Possibly they had as we saw the first snow of the season in Santa Fe with three inches on the ground and the Sangre de Cristos wearing a snowcap.

This rich thirty mile strip yielded four of the five Prairie Falcons sighted during the day. Preferring the top of poles, their sweeping flight was pure grace. The three Rough-legged Hawks, almost as big as the eagles, chose the cross-arms as perches as did the one Black Hawk with its distinctive white band in the tail pattern. The single Peregrine we saw almost at the end of the day, darting swiftly from the tip-top of a high pole, twisting and turning to reveal a darker back and more vivid moustances than the

Just at dusk we ended our count with an unidentified hawk, one of three on our list. He was perched in a clump of bare-limbed trees near a farmhouse, a dark buteo silhouette. Even the telescope revealed no identifying marks and when we got closer, he flew off with a small bird chasing him, but still no tell-tale marks -- one that got away.

Our tally at the end of this memorable day included 9 Red-tails, 1 Merlin, 17 Marsh Hawks, 2 Swainson's Hawks, 17 Kestrels, 2 Cooper's Hawks, 5 Prairie Falcons, 3 Rough-legged Hawks, 1 Porengrine, 2 Golden Eagles, 1 Black Hawk and 3 unidentified hawks for a total of 63 hawks of 12 different species.

BIRD RECORDS ADDENDA

- 11/15 10 Bonaparte's Gulls - Burn Lake, Las Cruces, Bill Principe
- 11/18 Snow Goose, Burn Lake " "
- 11/22 Pectoral Sandpiper, Rio Grande near Mesilla Dam " "
- 11/23 Great Egret, Old Coe Lake near White Sands " "
- 11/30 Spotted Sandpiper, Anthony, Texas " "

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL, AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT.

I wish to subscribe to membership in the National Audubon Society, El Paso-Trans Pecos Chapter.
Dues are \$15 individual, \$18 family; includes 6 issues of Audubon Magazine, 10 issues of newsletter. Please mail check to Treasurer, Linda Jones, 351 Thunderbird, El Paso, Texas 79912.

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