



EL PASO BIRD STUDY CLUB

THE ROADRUNNER

Editor, Marguerite Wright

December, 1943

TO A ROADRUNNER

Brown as the sands that whirl about you,
Swift as the winds that buffet and flout you--
Lonesome the desert were without you,
Runner of desert lands.

Ruby Allen

THE DECEMBER MEETING

The fifth anniversary of the club was observed at the meeting on Saturday night, Dec. 4, 1943, at the home of Mrs. J. Owen Allen. Miss Mary Belle Keefer reviewed the history of the club. Mrs. Lena McBee gave a report of birds seen by her and Mrs. Wright on the trip to Chihuahua, Mexico, at Thanksgiving. Plans were initiated for the Christmas bird count, Dec. 19. Visitors were Mr. J. Owen Allen, Mrs. C. F. Bautin and Sargeant and Mrs. George M. Bradt. Sargeant Bradt's illustrated article from NATURE MAGAZINE of May, 1943, on "All in the Life of a Swainson Hawk" received favorable attention.

The next meeting of the Club will be held at 7:30 P. M., Monday, February 6th, at the home of Mrs. Slater, 516 Prospect Avenue.

Miss Grace Rose is a new member of the Club.

Dr. Anton Berkman plotted the route of the Christmas count this year, taking for the center of a circle of seven and a half miles' radius, the stone quarry on Scenic Drive. Territory covered includes McKelligon's Canyon, the Country Club area, Dr. Randel's Pool, Cement Lake, Memorial Park, and an arc of the lower valley, extending from the El Paso dairy and Ascarate Park to the Rio Grande.

Club members who took part in the count are: Mrs. J. Owen Allen, Mrs. A. E. Eynon, Lieut. A. E. Eynon, Miss Mary Harper, Miss Mary Belle Keefer, Mrs. Marguerite Wright, Mrs. E. McElory Slater, and Mrs. Lena McBee.

Officers for 1943-44 are: Mrs. Marguerite K. Wright, President; Mrs. J. Owen Allen, Vice-President and Mrs. Lena McBee, Secretary-Treasurer.

The next issue of THE ROADRUNNER will carry an article by Sargeant George M. Bradt on "Raptors of the El Paso Area", and another by Mrs. Carolyn McKee Bartlett of La Mesa, New Mexico, on the bird visitors of her garden.

A revised Check-list of El Paso Birds is soon to be printed.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

A compilation (made for the Audubon Magazine by Lieut. A.E. Eynon), of birds seen on the Christmas Bird Count included the following species:

Pied-billed Grebe, 2; Great Blue Heron, 12; Black-crowned Night Heron, 2; Gadwall, 23; Baldpate, 48; Pintail, 18; Shoveller, 3; Redhead, 1; American Merganser, 5; Cooper's Hawk, 1; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 2; Red-tailed Hawk, 3; Marsh Hawk, 12; Pigeon Hawk, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 6; Scaled Quail, 21; Gambel's Quail, 15; Florida Gallinule, 1; Killdeer, 6; Wilson's Snipe, 1; Least Sandpiper, 35; Mourning Dove, 86; Roadrunner, 4; Horned Owl, 3; Short-eared Owl, 1; Belted Kingfisher, 2; Red-shafted Flicker, 10; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Cactus Woodpecker, 1; Black Phoebe, 2; Say's Phoebe, 2; Crow, 25; White-necked Raven, 465; Verdin, 7; Bush-tit, 1; Bewick's Wren, 1; Marsh Wren, 3; Crissal Thrasher, 1; Chestnut-backed Bluebird, 5; Plumbeous Gnatcatcher, 2; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 10; American Pipit, 7; White-rumped Shrike, 14; Audubon's Warbler, 7; Western Meadowlark, 25; Yellow-headed Blackbird, 26; Red-wing, 960; Brewer's Blackbird, 20; Pyrrhuloxia, 2; English Sparrow, 620; House Finch, 357; Arkansas Goldfinch, 7; Green-tailed Towhee, 2; Spotted Towhee, 3; Canyon Towhee, 5; Lark Bunting, 180; Savannah Sparrow, 8; Scott's Sparrow, 3; Desert Sparrow, 15; Schufeldt Junco, 35; Pink-sided Junco, 16; Gray-headed Junco, 2; Chipping Sparrow, 2; Brewer's Sparrow, 3; Black-chinned Sparrow, 1; Gambel's Sparrow, 751; Song Sparrow, 19.

Club records show that several common species were not observed this year. These are as follows: Common Mallard, New Mexican Black, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Canvas-back, Lesser Scaup, Turkey Vulture, American Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Sora, American Coot, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral and Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitcher, Western Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Burrowing Owl, Woodhouse's Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch, W. House Wren, Cactus Wren, W. Mockingbird, Mountain Bluebird, Cassin's Purple Finch, W. Savannah Sparrow, W. Vesper Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrow.

Less common species seen in former counts are: Common Loon (Kirksey), American Egret, Osprey, Spotted Sandpiper, Barn Owl, W. Yellowthroat (Keefer), Pale Goldfinch and Slate-colored Fox Sparrow.

Compiled from Club notes by Ruby Allen

CHIHUAHUA BIRDS AT THANKSGIVING

The El Paso-Chihuahua bus rolled southward, (Nov. 26, 1943) through cloudy, chilling weather. Vulture, Sparrow Hawk and Mourning Dove seemed not to mind the drizzling rain. During the afternoon a timid sun, intermittently lighted the countryside. Horned Lark, Western Robin, White-rumped Shrike and Meadowlark were in evidence.

Early on the two following mornings, two members of the El Paso Bird Study Club taxied out to La Junta, a natural picnic ground located at the junction of two streams. The grove of cottonwood, salt cedars and willows wore the green and yellow of autumn. The grass-covered hills showed an occasional clump of bare thorned mesquite. The first morning was dismal and cold and drizzling; the second cloudy, but with a reluctant sun brightening the last hour. The list obtained on the two mornings (about five hours) was as follows:

Turkey Vulture; a large Buteo (probably Ferruginous Roughleg); Killdeer; Western Mourning Dove; White-winged Dove; Inca Dove; Belted Kingfisher; Red-shafted Flicker; Red-naped Sapsucker; Downy Woodpecker (Bachelder's ?); Golden-fronted Woodpecker; Black Phoebe; Vermillion Flycatcher; Western Crow; White-necked Raven; White-breasted Nuthatch; Rock Wren; Western Mockingbird; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; White-rumped Shrike; Audubon's Warbler; Black-and white Warbler(?); Brewer's Blackbird; Great-tailed Grackle; Pyrrhuloxia, Cassin's Purple Finch, Purple Finch; Arkansas Goldfinch; Green-tailed Towhee; Canyon Towhee; Desert Sparrow; Pink-sided Junco; Red-backed Junco; Gray-headed Junco; Western Chipping Sparrow; Clay-colored Sparrow.

The Brewer's Blackbirds and Great-tailed Grackles dominated the grove, calling and singing noisily to one another; the Western Mourning Doves were numerous in the bordering cotton fields, the Juncos, in a considerable flock, fed in a tangle of wild sunflowers.

Marguerite Wright

THE EL PASO BIRD STUDY CLUB

It was on Dec. 4, 1938, that a small group of birdlovers met at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Epstein to form an organization. The name was chosen for the club and the following officers were elected:

President, Dr. I.M. Epstein, Vice-President, Mrs. F. A. Snidow (who was very shortly succeeded by Mrs. W.W. Wimberly); Secretary, Miss Mary Belle Keefer; Treasures Mrs. Jasper Haraway.

The aims of the club were set forth as follows:

- To quicken interest in birds
- To cooperate with agencies of kindred nature
- To report findings to the Fish and Wildlife Service
- To get Nature Study taught in the City Schools
- To get the cooperation of agencies now destructive to bird life, as mosquito exterminators and land owners who burn coverage
- To procure a bird refuge near El Paso
- To cooperate with the College of Mines in getting ornithological specimens for the museum

While we can not say that these aims have been realized, let us review very briefly some of the activities of the club.

Our most intensive efforts were put into the procurement as a bird refuge of some 500 acres near El Paso on the west side of the Rio Grande, extending from the settlement of Courchesne to the Country Club Road, which came into the possession of the Federal Government with the straightening of the river. At one time we were told that the land was to be set aside for this purpose, but after three years the final steps have not been taken and we do not know if they will ever be.

A Christmas bird count has been made by the club every year except in 1942 and the report has appeared in the Audubon Magazine.

Information has been furnished to Dr. Oberholser, formerly of the Fish and Wildlife Service, on unusual bird records for this region which he made use of in his book on "Birds of Texas", still unpublished.

A check list of the birds of the El Paso region was compiled by the late Tom Miller Kirksey and Mrs. Lena McBee for use by the club members and others interested.

In January, 1942, the first number of THE ROADRUNNER made its appearance; a three-page bulletin which was almost entirely the work of Tom Miller Kirksey. Its purpose as announced by the editor was; To preserve and dispense information about birds; to serve as a source of reference and as a notice of club meetings. THE ROADRUNNER continues to be published; since Tom's death it has been ably carried on by Mrs. Wright, Mrs. McBee, and Mrs. Allen.

Meetings were formerly held monthly except for the summer months. Now for the duration, they are called at the discretion of the president. The programs are varied. There have been papers by the members, some bird movies, and a few out-of-town speakers.

The club has not grown much in membership, but we are holding our own. A number of our men are in the armed forces; but we are trying to keep the organization alive until the time, if and when the Government sees fit to grant the Bird Refuge. If we obtain that, we shall at least feel that we have justified our existence.

Mary Belle Keefer

The seasons change, the winds they shift and veer;
 The grass of yesteryear
 Is dead; the birds depart, the groves decay;
 Empires dissolve and peoples disappear;
 Song passes not away.

William Watson

The Game Birds and Mammals of the San Andres Refuge, New Mexico

Written for THE ROADRUNNER, publication of the
El Paso Bird Study Club. December, 1943

by

Arthur F. Halloran
Refuge Manager

The San Andres National Wildlife Refuge of the fish and Wildlife Service U. S. Department of the Interior was created by executive order of the President, January 22, 1941. The primary purpose of the refuge is to increase the remnant herd of Mexican bighorn or mountain sheep (*Ovis canadensis mexicana*) in the San Andres Mountains of south-central New Mexico. Sportsmen through out the world have long recognized the bighorn sheep as one of the finest big-game animals of this continent. Men interested in the perpetuation of this native wild sheep recently found but three native herds left in New Mexico. The native sheep of Texas too have been found to be on the decline. The San Andres Refuge, then, is one of a series of Federal big game refuges created to learn more of the bighorn sheep and to protect it so that this animal may not disappear from our fauna.

The massive curved horns of the bighorn ram are well-known to most people interested in natural history. The slender, backward-curving horns of the ewes, however, have not been pictured as often, and are less well known. Also the ewes are much smaller than the rams, their weights have been estimated at ~~200~~ 100 to 150 pounds. Rams up to 350 pounds are recorded in the literature.

Present indications are that under protection the bighorns on the San Andres Refuge are slowly increasing. The present estimate is at least 60 head.

The gray mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus crooki*) is also present on the refuge. This animal is common and is frequently seen even from the main trails in the early morning and late afternoon hours of the day. In order to insure an adequate forage crop for our increasing sheep and to keep the deer herd from overrunning the range, special permit deer hunts have been inaugurated on the refuge. Both in 1942 and 1943 a limited number of deer of both sexes were removed by hunters in cooperation with the New Mexico Game and Fish Department.

Four types of game birds have been noted on the area. These birds are given full protection at all times. Both the Arizona scaled quail and the Gambel quail can be found in the vicinity of water. Generally speaking the two species keep to themselves, but rarely one may find coveys that, for the time being at least, include both species.

In addition to these common residents the band-tailed pigeon and the elusive Mearns' quail have both been noted twice on the refuge. Plants of Hungarian partridge have been made in the past, (previous to 1941 by other agencies) but were not successful and no local birds can be found of this exotic species. No old or recent records of turkeys in the San Andres Mountains have been found so we may assume for the present at least that this fine game bird was not a part of the native fauna of this rugged area.