

# the ROADRUNNER . . . . .



newsletter of the  
El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

October 1981

Editor: Sarah Dodds

Volume 11, Number 8

## GENERAL MEETING

MON. 19 OCTOBER, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, 3105 Grant St., in Memorial Park. GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK will be the topic of our program. In 1963, management of what was to become Guadalupe Mtns. Natl. Park began as a one-man operation. That man was Roger Reisch. Today the staff is larger and the park has seen changes, but Roger, now a ranger at the Dog Canyon Ranger Station, is still with it. He knows the park like no one else, and this month he'll share his knowledge with us. On a slide-illustrated tour of the park, we'll learn about its condition today, its changes over the years, its wildlife and more. Join us 19 October, meet Roger Reisch, then visit the park with us 24-25 Oct. (See Field Trips).

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MONDAY 12 OCT. 7:30 PM. The Board will meet in the home of Kris Kohlhoff, 6945 La Cadena, El Paso 79912. All members are welcome. ##

## FIELD TRIPS

SUN. 11 October, Durling's Farm. Meet at 7:00 AM near the bottom of Transmountain Rd. just above the Interstate 10 on the west side of the Franklins. Durling's Farm is a local magnet to fall migrants, and could hold some surprises on the side. Leader: Jo Nagel (566-2143).

## FIELD TRIPS (continued)

SAT.-SUN. 24-25 October. McKittrick Canyon/Rattlesnake Springs. Meet at 7:00 AM at the Bella Napoli Restaurant, located at 10600 Montana. McKittrick Canyon and Rattlesnake Springs are located within the Guadalupe Mtns. Natl. Park of Texas, east of El Paso. Some interesting late migrants and also residents will be in evidence. Reservations are needed. Leader: John Sproul (H)545-5157 (O) 543-6126.

## FIELD TRIPS for NOVEMBER

SUN. 8 November. Hueco Tanks St. Park. Meet at 7:00 AM at the Bella Napoli Restaurant, located at 10600 Montana. Hueco Tanks will offer various types of sparrows, towhees, several species of raptors and more. Leader: Jane Fowler (772-0296).

SAT. 21 November. Lower Valley. Details in November newsletter.

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## FIELD TRIP FOLLOW-UP

On our West Cottonwood Spring trip 13 Sept. fourteen Auduboners saw over 30 species of birds. A Sharpshinned Hawk, two Golden Eagles, a Prairie Falson, Western Flycatcher, several Hermit Thrushes, a Virginia's, Townsend's and Hermit Warbler (male) were the outstanding birds seen. /Jeff Donaldson/

## IDENTIFICATION TIPS

Many birders have trouble with the many species of small sandpipers (collectively called "peeps" in this country), and with good reason. Careful observation, much comparative experience, and a knowledge of molt sequences are critical in making accurate identifications.

Two species, the Least and the Western, commonly occur in our area. The Baird's is rare but regular, and the Semipalmated and White-rumped occur casually. Before attempting to identify the rarer species, you should become intimately familiar with all plumages of the Least and the Western.

The Least is our most common peep. It is smaller than the other species, with a shorter, more slender bill. This is very evident when the birds are seen side-by-side with Westerns. The legs are a dull yellowish color, while those of the other species are black. Depending on the light however, the legs can appear blackish, so this mark should not be used by itself. At very close range it can be seen that the forward toes of Least Sandpipers are not connected by webs, while those of other species are. The Least is a very brownish bird. In Spring the back feathers are blackish with cream-colored or brown edgings. The breast is broadly streaked with gray-brown, sometimes washed with a lighter brown. The overall appearance is that of "warm" tones. Juvenal and winter plumaged birds are also quite brown, but the impression is of a flatter, duller color, and the breast band of streaks appears very smudged and indistinctly marked.

The Western Sandpiper is distinctly larger than the Least, with a longer, heavier bill. Bill length is a sexually dimorphic character, with the females having the longer bills. In either sex, the bill is broad at the  
(continued next column)

at the base and narrows with a downward droop at the tip (again, this is most pronounced in females). Plumages are very different from those of the Least. Westerns are gray rather than brown, with bright rusty edgings to the feathers of the back, scapulars, crown, and auricular region. Birds in good spring plumage give an orange on silver appearance. The breast is covered with distinct but fine streaks (with no smudged look) which extend down the flanks as V-shaped wedges. Juvenal plumage is similar with much rust to the feather edgings, but with less streaking on the breast and flanks. winter-plumaged birds are very gray, with a broad white eye-stripe, and little, if any streak to the breast or sides. The call note is high-pitched.

Most reports of Semipalmated Sandpipers in our area really involve Westerns. Female Semipalms (with the longer bill) overlap male Westerns in bill length, thus causing some confusion. The Semipalmated lacks the distinctive droop and narrowing to the tip and in fact has a somewhat bulbous tip to its bill. Breeding-plumaged adults are darker gray-brown than the Westerns, without the rusty feather edges. The breast band is also narrower, and lacks the trailing edges down the flanks. Winter plumage is similar to that of the Western, but is more of a gray-brown, and the breast band is more smudged. Juvenal Semipalms have a buffy rather than rusty feather edging, giving the back a scaled appearance. The call note is low-pitched.

The next column will deal with separating out some of the rarer peeps.

Kevin Zimmer, Identification  
Editor

## ONLY TREATS FOR AUDUBON COUNCIL HERE

No tricks only treats are in store for the Audubon Council of Texas (ACT) when it meets in El Paso on Saturday, October 31 and Sunday, November 1. The Saturday meeting will begin at 9:00 A.M. at the Memorial Park Garden Center.

On the Saturday afternoon agenda at 2:00 P.M. John Green will present his beautiful color slide program on the Franklin Mountains State Park. The slide presentation will be followed by Joan Duncan, President of the Wilderness Park Coalition. Mrs. Duncan will discuss the history of the park and the efforts which led up to the signing of the bill by Governor Clements forming the Franklin Mountains State Park in June 1979.

After the 5:30 P.M. no-host dinner at Carlos and Mickey's Restaurant, 1310 Magruder, we will return to the Garden Center to hear Dr. Noel Snyder of the Condor Research Center. Dr. Snyder will speak at 7:30 P.M.

Dr. Snyder is a research biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is one of the two project leaders on the California Condor Recovery Program. He has extensive experience working with raptors, most notably Cooper's Hawks, and with the endangered Puerto Rican Parrot. Dr. Snyder will explain the California Condor Recovery Program and what the program plans are for the future of the California Condors.

A birding trip to Hueco Tanks will be on Sunday morning, November 1. We will meet at the Bella Napoli Restaurant at 10600 Montana at 6:30 A.M. John Sproul will be our trip leader. (Be reminded that we return to Mountain Standard Time on Sunday, November 1 at 2:00 A.M.)

Members and friends of our Audubon Society are invited to attend all or part of this Audubon Council of Texas meeting. If you plan to attend the Saturday dinner, please call Helen Barto at 755-4744 before October 10, as reservations will be needed at the restaurant. # # #

## ACHTUNG! ATTENDEZ VOUS!

(PLEASE carefully read this article by John Sproul on the dastardly Water Trust Fund amendment. It will appear as Proposition 4 on the November ballot. This amendment is a sneaky attempt to get control of your tax money to construct water development plans over which you as a voter will have no vote. Beware! Be informed! Inform others! Ed.)

## WATER FUND PLAN

In addition to a proposed regional mass-transit authority, you will be voting on another important conservation issue November 3rd. This summer the Texas legislature passed House Speaker Clayton's Water Trust Resolution, which calls for a constitutional amendment that would promote water development in Texas. The proposed amendment, Proposition 4 on the ballot, is a poor one.

If approved by the voters, the amendment will do several things, some harmful, some not. The key offending provision is the dedication of 1/2 of all non-dedicated revenues above the state spending ceiling to a trust fund for water development projects. This fund would encourage the pursuit of unsound projects. Presently the state has to sell voter-approved bonds for major water development projects. A project with merit can withstand voter scrutiny and gain approval. An unsound plan generally gets rejected. Witness the fate of the Texas Water Plan, a massive water-redistribution scheme, which voters in Texas have at least twice rejected.

(continued on page 4)

WATER FUND PLAN (cont.)

The water trust fund offers the state a way to fund major projects without submitting them to voter referenda.

Moreover, creation of the fund would establish water development as the top priority use for 1/2 of all non-dedicated state surplus revenues. Other legitimate public needs--education, health care, environmental protection, tax relief--would be shunted aside. As Rhea Copening, Audubon's Southwest Regional Representative, points out, legislators would have to prove that appropriations of these surplus revenues should not go to water rather than the present more direct approach of deciding, based on current needs, where the monies should go. The present system is more responsive to public needs and should not be changed.

The trust fund eventually could enable Texas to finance major water projects without any federal cost-sharing. Federal dollars, of course, come with strings attached, but certain of those strings are very desirable. For one, a project has to be cost-effective. For another, it has to include environmental safeguards, including mitigation for loss of wildlife habitat. Texas has no comparable requirements.

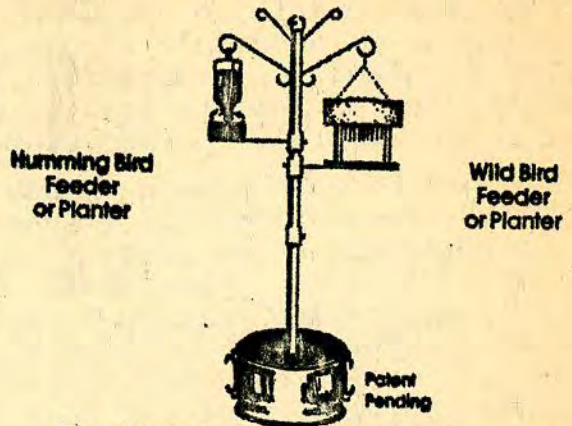
These are the most obvious drawbacks of the proposed trust fund. There are others. Should you hear or see any advertising on radio or TV promoting Proposition 4, please note: the station involved, the time of day and the length of the advertisement. Contact John Sproul (545-5157h, 543-6126w) and we can request equal time.

Also, be cautious when you read the proposition and it says the fund is for water development and conservation. According to Dede Armentrout, Audubon's Southwest Regional Vice-president, water conservation in Texan means reservoirs and impoundments, not desert landscaping or drip irrigation. Vote November 3rd!

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BIRD WATCHER'S DREAM

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COLOR SLIDE CONTEST

All you shutterbugs get busy and enter your slides in the following categories: 1) Birds, 2) Habitat, 3) Flora and Fauna. send entries to Kris Kohlhoff, 6945 La Cadena, El Paso, 79912.

Identify each slide with date taken, your name, location and species and/or habitat. Slides received after October 19 will be entered in November's contest. All slides become the property of EP/TPAS.  
/Kris Kohlhoff/

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WHAT GOES UP BUT NEVER COMES DOWN?

You may already know that the National Audubon Society dues have increased, but it just may have slipped your mind. In that case, here is a reminder. The new rates: Individual/\$25; Family/\$32; Senior Citizen, Individual/\$17; Senior Citizen, Family/\$19; Student/\$15. The only good news here is that Audubon only raised the Student rate to \$15, instead of \$17 as originally planned.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

Name .....

Address .....

City.....State.....Zip.....

Phone .....

Membership Category desired:

\_\_\_ Individual/\$25 \_\_\_ Family/\$32

\_\_\_ Sr. Citizen, Individual/\$17

\_\_\_ Sr. Citizen, Family/\$19

\_\_\_ Student/\$15

This is a \_\_\_new\_\_\_ renewal membership.

Make checks payable to National Audubon Society. Mail to Jo Ellen Warolin, 1406 N. St. Vrain, El Paso, TX 79902.

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FEATHER LAKE OPENS OCTOBER 10th

Did you drive by Feather Lake recently and see a long line of people at the front gate? They are awaiting OPENING DAY. Remember, starting 10 October our sanctuary will be open to the public 8-11A.M. every Saturday. Anyone willing to spend an occasional Saturday morning helping visitors at Feather L. should contact Ginny Baker (562-9461) or Jeannette Cole (5651957). Organized groups desiring tours at the lake should call Ginny or Jeannette in advance.

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WE HELP TV, TV HELPS US

"KCOS, Summerfest. May I take your pledge?" Thus the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Auduboners answered the ring of the telephone at KCOS studio, Friday, Sept. 4, 1981, 6:30-11:30 P.M.

On this our second time to help out their cause in return for publicity and TV coverage, we helped them raise \$4,081.

Our thanks to Peggy Heisel, Jo Ellen Warolin, Jane Fowler, Bob Johnson (the cap model), Bart Rumaker, John Sproul and Jo Nagel. /Jo Nagel/ # # #

SIERRA CLUB MEETING

WED. 28 OCTOBER, 7:30 PM, St. Paul's Methodist Church, 7000 Edgemere. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) personnel from that agency's Las Cruces District Office will give a status report on the Wilderness Review for BLM lands in s.w. New Mexico. # # #

CLEAN AIR ACT COORDINATOR

Anyone interested in being the Clean Air Act Coordinator for our chapter? You would receive information from Washington and Audubon's SW Regional Office on progress of reauthorization of Clean Air Act and would be responsible for alerting our EP chapter to key developments. Call John Sproul if you are interested. (545-5157 or 543-6126).

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OUR BUSY PRESIDENT

We don't mean Ron, we mean John! The Education Committee would like to thank our man of all seasons and all tasks, John Sproul, for the quality bird program at Four Seasons Nursing Home on September 18th.

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## OBSERVATIONS

(Last month the observations were divided into two sets, one for Texas the other for New Mexico. This month your editor put the sightings for both the states all together. /Jeff Donaldson/)

## GREBES THROUGH FALCONS

A single Horned Grebe in winter plumage was observed at the Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds on 9/6 (JDP, SW). A good number of Snowy Egrets were seen feeding in the Tornillo Pond area on 8/30 (TW). Some 70-80 White-faced Ibis were observed flying over the Cashway Store on Mesa, along the west side of the Franklins, before turning north-east 9/17 (BJ). On 9/19, over the Santa Teresa Country Club area a flock of 13 White-faced Ibis flew over in a south-west direction (JD). An early Sharp-shinned Hawk was seen flying near two Golden Eagles over West Cottonwood Spring in the Franklins on 9/13 (JF, JN, JS). Several reports of Harlan's Hawk have come in, with the earliest being from the Rio Bosque area of the lower valley, where a lone bird was seen on 8/30 (TW). A lone bird was also observed at Hueco Tanks State Park east of El Paso on 9/19 (BZ). (The terminal band was evident on both bird.) Also seen at Hueco Tanks were seven immature Redtails clustered on one rock, also on 9/19 (BZ). Marsh Hawks were seen on 8/30 in the Rio Bosque area (TW). Several others were seen in the upper valley in September. A lone male Marsh Hawk was seen flying near the Yucca golf course at the Santa Teresa Country Club on 9/7 and 9/19 (JD). ON 9/5 the earliest know report for an Osprey came from the upper valley in NM 4-5 miles north of Gadsden High School, where a single bird was seen flying near the river (EK). Another lone Osprey was observed flying over the Yucca golf course of Santa Teresa C.C. headed toward the river on 9/7 (JD). Single Prairie Falcons were seen in the upper valley on 9/4 (JD) and on 9/6 (JD, BZ). Another Prairie Falcon was seen over West Cottonwood Spring on 9/13 (JF, JN, JS).

## QUAIL THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

A dead Sora Rail was found hanging on a fence along McNutt Road in the upper valley on 9/6 (JD, BZ). Another Sora was observed at the big pond within Hueco Tanks State Park on 9/15 (JdP). Solitary Sandpipers were seen on 9/6 north of Randle's Pool (JD, BZ), farther south of the same area on 9/20 (JD, JS, BZ), and also on 9/20 along McNutt Road in the upper valley (JD, JS, BZ). One, possibly two Baird's Sandpipers were found with a flock of Least Sandpipers along a flooded area near McNutt Road on 9/6 as well as a single Wilson's Phalarope (JD, BZ). On 9/8 a Barn Owl was sighted along the irrigation ditch north of Randle's Pool (BZ). Male Broad-tailed Hummingbirds appeared early this season with one at a feeder in Mission Hills in west El Paso on 8/30 (EK) and another in north-east El Paso on 9/4 (JD). On 9/8 a male Calliope Hummingbird fed several times from a feeder in northeast EP (JD) and on 9/18 and 9/20 a male Calliope was also seen at a Mission Hills feeder (EK).

## PASSERINES

Olive-sided Flycatchers were observed at Hueco Tanks on 9/5, 9/7 (AG, MG, CG). Also on 9/19 several Olive-sided Flycatchers were seen north of Randle's Pool (JD, JS, BZ). A pair of Vermilion Flycatchers were observed past Indian Hot Springs in the lower valley on 8/30 (YW). Scrub Jays have been observed several times this month, with one being seen at Hueco Tanks on 9/15 (JdP). A dozen or more were seen again at Hueco Tanks on 9/19 (BZ). A single bird was also reported on El Paso's west side 9/19 (EK). A single Stellar's Jay was spotted in the Trowbridge area on 9/15 (EG, ELG).

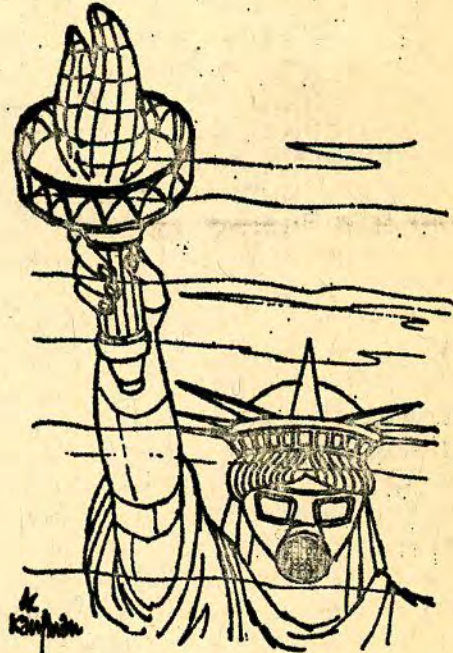
## PASSERINES (continued)

House wrens were moving through the Handle's Pool area 9/19 (JD,JS,BZ), as well as two Long-billed Marsh Wrens at Diez Lagos on 9/19 also (JD,JS,BZ). A single Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was observed at Hueco Tanks 9/15 (JdP). Hermit Thrushes were seen on 9/13 in West Cottonwood Springs (m.ob.). Durling's Farm held an early Ruby-crowned Kinglet on 9/6 (JD,BZ). A male Phainopepla was reported near Burges High Sch. 9/16 (ELG). A philadelphia Vireo was observed in Hueco Tanks on 9/15 (JdP). Also Warbling Vireos were seen at Durling's Farm on 9/6 (JD,BZ), and again on 9/15 at Hueco Tanks also (JdP). September was quite the month for vagrant warblers with a female Black and White Warbler at Durling's Farm on 9/7 (EK,PK). Another good sighting was of a Tennessee Warbler in fall plumage at Hueco Tanks on 9/19 (BZ). There was also a very probable Lucy's Warbler on 9/6 (BZ, et al JD). However, top honors must go to the male Hermit Warbler in West Cottonwood Springs Canyon in the Franklins on 9/13, a first record, at least in many years, for El Paso. (JS et al JF,JN). On 9/7 six Western Tanagers were seen in Memorial Park (JF,JN,JS) as well as an adult male near Santa Teresa C.C. on 9/7 (TD). A male Summer Tanager in molt was passing through Hueco Tanks on 9/19 (BZ). On 8/25 in northeast EP six birds fitting the description of Evening Grosbeaks flew near a house, leaving before identification was possible (JD). On 9/1 three birds were sighted again fitting the description of Evening Grosbeaks (JD). It wasn't until 9/4 a single male was positively identified in Mountain Park (JB). A pair of Lazuli Buntings were at Durling's Farm on 9/20 (BZ, et al JD,JS). On 8/30-8/31 in Mt. Park a pair of American Goldfinches were observed (JB). Green-tailed Towhees were found in good numbers at Hueco Tanks on 9/19 (BZ). A lone Song Sparrow appeared in a yard on EP westside Mission Hills area, 9/21 (EK).

OBSERVERS: Janet Brockmoller, Tony DeBona, Jr., Joe Di Pasquale, Jeff Donaldson, Jane Fowler, Al Gavit, Madeline Gavit and Chris Gavit, Elza and Ed Gilboe, Bob Johnson, Earle and Paula King, Jo Nagel, John Sproul, Scott Wilson, Tony Worth, Kevin Zimmer, Barry Zimmer. # #

## A REMINDER

This is just a reminder that our chapter needs a Clean Air Coordinator.



## COLOR ME GRATEFUL

Your editor wants to thank all you grand people who have sent, given or phoned in contributions to the newsletter. Special thanks to John Sproul and Jeff Donaldson.

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