

The



ROADRUNNER

Volume 18 (3)

EL PASO/TRANS-PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY

April 1988

GENERAL MEETING

MON., APR. 18, 7:30 PM in the Garden Center, 3105 Grant in Memorial Park. Dr. Jim Fowler will charm us with "A Photosafari in Kenya". See East Africa as you've never seen it before. It is a land of open plains and acacia woodlands, of forests and ravines. Mt. Kilimanjaro, the world's highest volcano, is found there. It is a land of spectacular wildlife: black rhinos, hippos, cheetahs, Thompson's gazelles, zebras, elands and elephants---the list is long.

Dr. and Mrs. Fowler spent 3 weeks in Kenya last October, and they were so impressed with the wildlife, the country and its people, that they plan to return this fall for MORE. And you will be impressed as well, seeing Africa's treasures with the aid of Dr. Fowler's expert photography. Plan to join us for this arresting, highly informative program. You won't be disappointed.

COMING NEXT MONTH: Robin Baxter, manager of The Nature Conservancy's Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Sanctuary in s.e. Arizona. We'll be visiting this area on our May 28-30 field trip.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MON., APR. 11, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Joyce Davis, 200 N. Mesa Hills Dr. # 1505 (581-9470). All members are welcome.

SANCTUARY WORKDAYS

April 10

May 22

FIELD TRIP CALENDAR

EAST SIDE OF FRANKLIN MTS.

SAT., APR. 9. Meet at Wilderness Park Museum, 2000 Transmountain Rd., at 7:30 AM. This area is usually good for Crissal Thrashers, Cactus and Rock wrens, Rufous-crowned and Black-throated sparrows. The trip will be over by noon. Leader: Joe Guinn (566-8438), Asst. Leader: Robert Doss (581-8090).

BIG BEND NATL PARK

FRI.-SUN., APR. 15-17. Meet at Park Headquarters Visitor Center (Panther Junction) 3:30 - 4 PM on Friday. If you're arriving later, bulletin boards at both visitor centers and Rio Grande Village camp store will have a 3 x 5 card with Bob's campsite number. We hope to see the Colima Warbler; good possibilities are the Golden-fronted Woodpecker, N. Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse and Hutton's Vireo. Asst. Leader: Bob Johnson (751-0125 or 757-1876), Local contact: Helen Barto (755-4744).

PERCHA/CABALLO DAMS

SUN., APR. 24. Meet at I-10 and Transmountain Rd. (Canutillo exit) at 7:15 AM. A great place for birds and a picnic lunch. We should be back in EP 3-4 PM. Leader: Scott Cutler (584-2476); Asst. Leader: Paul Bingham (755-9496).

SAT., APR. 30. BIRDATHON

SUN., MAY 8. PM trip to Rio Bosque Park. Al Gavit (852-4217)

WED., MAY 11. Memorial Park

SAT.-SUN., MAY 14-15. Spotted Owl research, Lincoln Natl Forest

BOUNDARY PROJECT LAWSUIT SETTLED!

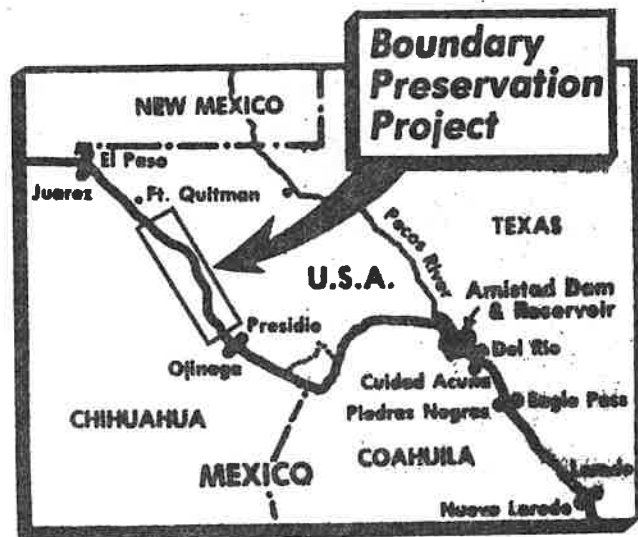
On Feb 26, just 3 days before it was to go to trial, our longstanding lawsuit challenging the International Boundary and Water Commission's (IBWC's) handling of its Rio Grande Boundary Preservation Project was settled out of court. The settlement terms were good ones and should ensure the project is completed in an environmentally sensitive manner.

For you newcomers, a little history: The Boundary Preservation Project is currently underway along a 200-mile reach of the Rio Grande between Fort Quitman and Presidio. Its purpose is to stabilize the international boundary in this remote and relatively wild area by dredging the river and confining it to a well-defined channel.

When the IBWC first proposed this project in 1976, its plans called for dredging the channel, clearing all vegetation for 50 feet on either side and straightening the river in places. Many citizens in El Paso and throughout Texas reacted with outrage.

Conservation groups and state and federal wildlife agencies objected strongly to these plans. To its credit, the IBWC listened, and, working with its critics, it redesigned the project. The inclusion of numerous features to reduce environmental impacts, enhance wildlife habitat along the river and mitigate for loss of wetlands earned the IBWC widespread praise.

But, for one reason or another, the IBWC chose to ignore some of its most important environmental-protection commitments once it started building the project. Construction began in April 1980. When several conservationists who had been involved in the redesign of the project visited the project area in Nov 1981, they saw some disturbing sights. Many key features -- retention of a 25-foot-wide fringe of vegetation next to the river, placement of dredged-material mounds to maximize benefits for wildlife, prompt reseedling of these mounds, timing of construction to avoid



the breeding season -- had not been fully implemented.

For the next 1½ years, conservation groups and wildlife agencies tried to convince the IBWC to live up to its original commitments. The agency, though, steadfastly indicated only limited intention to do so. With discussions at a standstill, the conservation groups filed suit in July 1983 to force adherence to the original environmental-protection measures.

Plaintiffs in the suit were the Natl. Audubon Society, Natl. Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, Sportsmen's Clubs of Texas and El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. The State of Texas also intervened on the side of the plaintiffs.

For the past 4½ years, efforts to settle the suit have been in progress. At times settlement seemed tantalizingly close; at times it seemed impossible to achieve. Early this year, the parties appeared to have reached a firm agreement. But at the 11th hour the IBWC insisted on 2 substantive changes the plaintiffs found totally unacceptable.

At this point, the district court judge handling the case decided it was time to get serious. On Feb 19, he scheduled the suit for a Feb 29 trial. Our side prepared carefully and fully expected to

win. Perhaps the IBWC saw a similar outcome, for on the eve of the trial it agreed to a consent order on our terms.

Major elements of the consent order are:

- a qualified biologist will be hired to evaluate deviations of the project from the original design and recommend appropriate mitigation;
- both the plaintiffs and IBWC will be represented equally on the panel that selects the qualified biologist;
- the IBWC will use its best efforts to mitigate where the qualified biologist identifies a need; and
- project completion and post-construction maintenance will follow the IBWC's original environmental-protection commitments, with certain limited exceptions.

The agreement is a real success. It benefits wildlife along the Rio Grande below El Paso. It sets a desirable precedent with regard to future IBWC activities. It wasn't easy to achieve, though. Sincere thanks are due Amy Johnson and Karl Bayer of the Pluymen and Bayer law firm in Austin for their skillful handling of the lawsuit. And special thanks go to Dede Armentrout, Audubon's southwest regional vice president. Dede has been the key conservationist working on this issue ever since it surfaced in 1976. More than anyone else, the successful outcome is thanks to her. /John Sproul/

FEATHER LAKE NEWS

With the basin at our Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary (9500 N. Loop in the lower valley, 0.3 mi. n.w. of Americas Ave.) virtually dry in early March, we canceled the remaining spring dates when it would be open to the public. No sooner had we made that decision, of course, than excess irrigation water began tumbling down Mesa Drain to cover much of the 40-acre basin. With the water back and the cottonwood and willow seedlings leafing out around the basin, Feather Lake looks good right now.

Thanks go to all who volunteered to help greet visitors at Feather Lake this

winter: Ginny and Tom Baker, Helen Barto, Ken Beno, Jeannette Cole, Jean and John Coyle, Joyce Davis, Jane Fowler, Joe Guinn, Anne Hussmann, Bob Johnson, Larry Jordan, Neil Keith, Jo Nagel, Iola Pennington, Bart Rumaker, John Sproul and Nancy Wilson. Our abbreviated season can be practice for next fall. The Board welcomes any ideas you have for improving our visitor program in the future.

Meanwhile, there are still opportunities to spend time at Feather Lake this spring. Upcoming workdays are Sun., Apr 10 and Sun., May 22. The April session starts at 1 PM and continues to dusk. Come anytime during the afternoon, help with our ongoing projects and see what Feather Lake has to offer. /Jeannette Cole & John Sproul/

TEXAS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS PROJECT

Even if you aren't covering a survey area this year, you can still contribute valuable data to the Texas Breeding Bird Atlas Project (RR, Feb). With the pace of avian breeding activity now picking up, please keep your eyes open for evidence of nesting activity whenever you're afield in Texas. When you discover a nest, or see recently fledged young, or note any other clear evidence of breeding, report what you've found for inclusion in the project database. If you live in El Paso, please contact John Sproul (545-5157). If you live elsewhere in Trans-Pecos Texas, contact Bonnie McKinney, Trans-Pecos Regional Coordinator for the project (Black Gap WMA, Big Bend Route, Box 433, Alpine, TX 79830, ph. 915/376-2216).



It's not too early to start thinking about sponsoring a school class in the Audubon Adventures program for the 1988-89 school year. You'll get full details next month. If you have questions in the meantime, please contact our Audubon Adventures coordinator, Peggy Riede (833-4881).

OBSERVATIONS

February 19 - March 20

Sightings by a field trip member are noted by a "+" after the leader's initials. Sightings in an observer's yard are indicated by an "*" before his/her initials. Migrants are moving into the area, so look carefully at all birds.

CL - Cement Lake
 CP - Crossroads Pond
 DP - Doniphan Playa (remains)
 FB - Ft. Bliss Ponds
 FL - Feather Lake
 HT - Hueco Tanks
 L - Lombardy
 MtP - Mt. Park area
 MtS - Mt. Shadows Lake

LOONS - FALCONS

Two Horned Grebes were reported at MtS 2/29 (A&MG). A Clark's Grebe was also seen at MtS 2/27 (JS). Cattle Egrets were found at FL 2/28 and a Green-backed Heron was there on 2/20 and 2/28 (JS). White-faced Ibis and a lone Snow Goose were found at FB 3/6 (BR+). A Blue-winged Teal was reported at MtS 2/29 (A&MG). A female Common Goldeneye and a female Hooded Merganser were seen at CP 2/21; the goldeneye was there again 3/13 as was a male Bufflehead (JD). Sharp-shinned Hawks were reported on McNutt Rd. near The Bluffs 2/20 (PR) and FB 3/6 (BR+). A Rough-legged Hawk was spotted on Horizon Blvd. 2/28 (A&MG). Golden Eagles were seen on the road to White Sands 2/20 (DE).

QUAIL - WOODPECKERS

Long-billed Dowitchers and Common Snipe were seen at FB 3/6 (BR+) and snipe were also at DP 3/13 (JD). A Great Horned Owl was found at HT 2/27 (JS+). A hummingbird has been seen all winter in MtP(*JB).

FLYCATCHERS - VIREOS

Violet-green Swallows were found at FB 3/6 (BR+). Scrub Jays are still in MtP (*JB). Am. Crows have been seen at FL 2/20, 2/28, and 3/5, 13, 18 (JS). Mountain Chickadees were reported all winter in Horizon City (*AG) and at L 3/6 (JD). A possibly migrating Hermit Thrush was seen in e. El Paso 3/9 (*BeR). In the past, thrushes

have appeared regularly in this area during migration but have been curiously absent for the last 18 months. A Phainopepla was seen on L 3/6 and 3/13 (JD).

WARBLERS - WEAVER FINCHES

A N. Cardinal has been seen regularly in n.e. El Paso since 2/22 (*BJ). Two Rufous-sided Towhees were found at HT 2/27 (JS+). Flocks of Lark Buntings were reported at FL 2/20, 2/28 (JS) and on McNutt Rd. 2/21 (JD). A Fox Sparrow was spotted at HT 2/27 (AG). Yellow-headed Blackbirds were seen at CL 2/20, 2/28 (JD) and at FL 2/28 (JS). A Hooded Oriole returned to MtP 3/16 (*JB). A female Red Crossbill was seen in Thunderbird Valley 2/23 (BJ). A finch, tentatively identified as a Cassin's, was seen for several days in e. El Paso 3/8 + (*DT). Pine Siskins were found at HT 2/26(A&MG).

OBSERVERS: Janet Brockmoller, Joyce Davis, Dayle Edwards, Al & Madeline Gavit, Bob Johnson, Bettie Roberts, Bart Rumaker, Patricia Russell, John Sproul, Dennis Taylor.
 /Joyce Davis, Observations Editor/
 (581-9470 h, 544-6772 w)

EL PASO/TRANS-PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY
Officers

President	Tom Baker	877-3365
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Paul Bingham	755-9496
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Membership	Neil Keith	778-5937
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Publicity		
Sanctuary	Sid Shepperd	566-2162
Ways & Means	Larry Jordan	833-5969

ACT Delegate	John Sproul	545-5157
Clean Air Coalition Representative	Joyce Davis	581-9470
Franklin Mts. Coalition Representative	Gloria Woelfel	833-7523

(Field Trip Calendar cont.)

WED., MAY 25. Memorial Park

SAT.-MON., MAY 28-30. Patagonia/Sierra Vista, Az.

BOOK FAIR

Our chapter is participating in a Book Fair at B DALTON Bookseller in Cielo Vista Mall on May 7. (Mother's Day is May 8!) This will be a most opportune time to buy that special lady and others a book. Plan to pay B Dalton a visit on May 7 and make your selections. See Larry Jordan at the April general meeting if you can help on that date in May.

IN APPRECIATION

The chapter wishes to thank Marilyn Fankhauser for her donation to the Scholarship Fund. This special fund was created in 1986 to send deserving educators and students to one of Audubon's Ecology Camps in Maine, Connecticut or Wyoming.

CHAPTER VISITS MALL

Our chapter display will be in Cielo Vista Mall on April 23-24. Contact Neil Keith (778-5937) if you can donate some time to talk with shoppers about chapter activities.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

MAY 20-22: Audubon Council of Texas, Spring Meeting, Lower Rio Grande Valley. Contact: John Sproul, 915/545-5157.

AUG 5-7: National Audubon Society, Southwest Regional Conference, St. John's College, Santa Fe, NM. Contact: NAS SW Regional Office, 512/327-1943.

PAST FIELD TRIPS

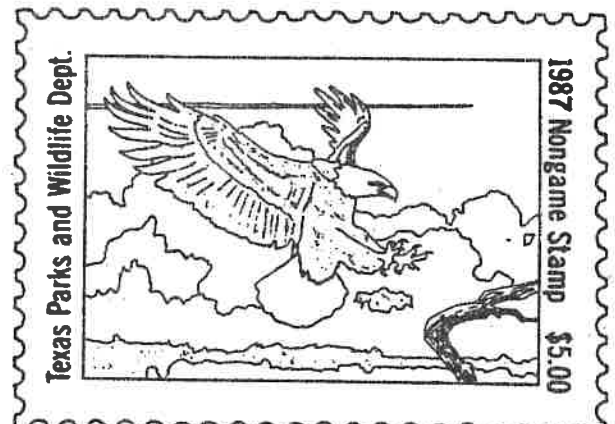
On Feb 21, six of us made the trip to Holoman Lake. Thirty species were identified including an elusive Common Barn-Owl. This was a "lifer" for Art and Donna Arteaga. Bob and Kay Jenness of the Otero Bird Club joined us for part of the trip. We ended the day by visiting the Alamo-Jordo Zoo.

John Sproul led 16 eager people to Hueco Tanks on Feb 27 where they located 26 species, including a Great Horned Owl. This means that 3 different species of owls have been seen on 3 consecutive field trips in Feb.

On our trip to the Ft. Bliss Ponds on Mar 6, twelve birders spotted 37 species of birds including a Snow Goose, 2 Tree Swallows and a White-faced Ibis.

With no water in Feather Lake, Neil Keith and Debbie Johnson took 4 new birders to the Socorro sewage ponds on Mar 12. They studied the identities of 15 birds including a Canada Goose and a Bufflehead.

/Bob Johnson, Field Trips Chair/



Are nongame wildlife and endangered species important Texas resources? You bet! So give 'em the support they deserve: buy a TEXAS NONGAME STAMP. You'll be contributing directly to the nongame wildlife and endangered species programs of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

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Amt. Enclosed			

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Address _____

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Please make checks payable to:

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P.O. Box 9655, El Paso, TX 79986

THE 1988 TEXAS WILDERNESS POW WOW

Expertly-guided walks to the proposed new LONGLEAF RIDGE WILDERNESS in the Angelina Natl Forest will highlight the 9th annual Texas Wilderness Pow Wow on April 22-24. Headquarters will be at Caney Creek Recreation Area on Sam Rayburn Reservoir (32 miles s. of Lufkin).

All are cordially invited to attend the weekend camping adventure or any part of the program, according to Wilma Anderson, Executive Director of Texas Committee on Natural Resources (TCNR) which is co-sponsoring the event, along with almost 40 other Texas conservation-minded organizations.

Ned Fritz, Forest Task Force Chair for TCONR, has arranged the walks to see some of the treasures of Longleaf Ridge on Sat. and Sun., April 23-24 at 8 a.m., 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. A bird walk will begin at 9 a.m. On Sat., there is a bicycle ride to a pitcher plant seep at 10 a.m. Registration is free. Campers must pay a daily \$5.00 campsite fee to the U.S. Forest Service. The weekend Pow Wow includes a Sat. afternoon program featuring Peter Kirby of The Wilderness Society and Congressman Steve Bartlett. Top-notch wilderness music will be provided by Bill Oliver of Austin, Leza Mesiah and Dianne McCollum of Dallas and the Banded Geckos musical group of Houston.

Pow Wow brochures will be available from all sponsoring organizations after March 25. Write: TCONR, 5934 Royal Lane, Suite 223, Dallas, TX 75230. (214/368-1791)

THE ROADRUNNER

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Editor - Jane Fowler
Publisher - Mary L. Bradley

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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of its local chapter, El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. Send AUDUBON magazine and membership card to:

Name.....

Address.....

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

Membership category desired:

Introductory Membership (1st year only)/\$20

Individual/\$30

Senior Citizen Individual/\$21

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Student/\$18

Please make checks payable to National Audubon Society. Send check & this form to AUDUBON, % N. Keith, 1525 Meadowview, El Paso, TX 79925. Send your renewals directly to Natl Audubon Soc.

LOCAL CHAPTER

EL PASO/TRANS-PECOS

W10

7XCH

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a hearty welcome to the following new members:

Jean H. Allen, Beryl T. Baker, Jenna T. Baker, Sandra Barcus. Marianne T. Berry, Mrs. D. L. Britton, Edwin Chuong, Mrs. Barry Coleman, James L. Cospser, Mrs. Florence J. Curry,

A. M. Derrick, Katherine Elam, Roger Fleshman, Joan T. Foster, Irvin J. Goldfarb, J. Gouch, Sandi Huebel, Shirley Ireland, Jerry Kracher, Oscar Lozano, R. L. McChesney, Mrs. C. D. McColister, F. R. McCormick, Kevin Meek, Regina Murphy, Ande Paulk, Merrell Pratt, Mrs. R. F. Schlaf, L. Schlicher, Robert Schultheis, Riva Siegel, Gerhard A. Staiger, David Steinback, Nancy Stierwalt, (cont. on p. 8)

BIRDATHON '88

The El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter of the National Audubon Society announces BIRDATHON '88. This will be our chapter's eighth year to participate in what has become a successful fund-raising effort throughout the country. Birdathon contributions are tax-deductible, and proceeds are divided between Audubon's Southwest Regional Office and our chapter. This year, the regional half of your contribution will go towards Audubon's Southwest Regional Representative position. Last year, Texas Audubon chapters assumed responsibility for funding this position, one crucial to furthering the Audubon Cause in the Southwest. We're relying on a successful Birdathon to fulfill our commitment. Locally, we will use the other half of your contribution for 3 important chapter education and conservation efforts: • our scholarship program to send local educators to Audubon Ecology Camps, • the Audubon Adventures youth-education program for local 3rd-to-6th-grade classes, and • to help cover costs of our recently settled lawsuit to force the International Boundary and Water Commission to live up to its environmental protection commitments on its Rio Grande Boundary Preservation Project (see p. 2). We need the support of all members as counters or sponsors or BOTH to make this a successful event. Will you help us?

HERE'S HOW

Birdathon day is April 30. On that day, chapter birders (counters) will go out to identify as many bird species as possible in a 24-hour period. Sponsor your-

Return this form by April 27 and have a chance to win the Grand Prize which will be given away the evening of May 1 at our pot-luck dinner.

___ Count on me to be a COUNTER.

___ Count on me to be a SPONSOR. I'll sponsor _____ at \$ _____ per species. (If desired, maximum contribution not to exceed \$ _____.)

Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

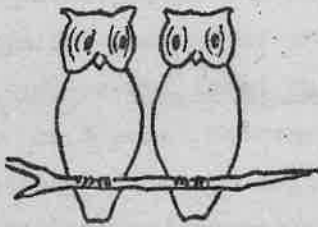
Whom to sponsor? Sponsor yourself or the counter of your choice. In the past, most counters have seen from 50-120 (some over 140) species on count day. Clip and mail this form to BIRDATHON Chairman Ann Schultis, 7301 Clemente, El Paso, TX. 79912.

self or another counter for a stated amount per species seen. This can be 5¢, 25¢ or any amount that you choose. Your donation is tax-deductible and you may stipulate a maximum amount to your pledge if you wish. You don't have to be an El Paso resident or (cont. on p. 8)

(Birdathon cont.)

a member of EP/TPAS to be a counter or a sponsor. The following evening (May 1), we will meet at 6 PM at the Garden Center in Memorial Park, 3105 Grant St., for a pot-luck dinner and drawing. All SPONSORS will have their names entered in the drawing for the Grand Prize: an original water-color generously donated by El Paso artist RUSSELL WATERHOUSE! Persons who raise the most money, see the most species, and recruit the most sponsors will be recognized.

The week following the Birdathon, report your findings to your sponsors and collect pledges. Send checks to BIRDATHON, c/o Ann Schultis, 7301 Clemente, El Paso, Tx 79912. Please make checks payable to "El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon".



(New Members cont.)

R. Thomas, C. Triolo, V. Webb, Jane R. Weller, Mr. & Mrs. Thomas L. Wrig. Transfer into chapter: Ramelle S. Carnahan.

#

The Audubon Activist

From the outside, conservation issues often seem complicated and impregnable. Many Audubon members want to help stop pollution and the destruction of wildlife habitat, but do not know where to begin. Whether you are new to the environmental front lines or a savvy veteran, the *Audubon Activist* is your ticket to greater effectiveness. This bimonthly newspaper, published by National Audubon Society, gives you background information on important conservation issues, the latest legislative picture, and advice from other Auduboners who are fighting the same battles.

As a member of Audubon's Activist Team, you will also receive occasional "Action Alerts," which are one-page summaries of issues that need your urgent attention. This system works: your voice will be heard.

For a free sample issue of the "Activist" (subscriptions are \$9 a year), write: *Audubon Activist*, National Audubon Society, 950 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.



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