

The

Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society
Volume 27 No. 3 **June - August, 1997**

***Call for additional information on bird sightings at
Rio Bosque Park and the Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds***

By John Kiseda, Conservation Chair

In the last Roadrunner, I requested that people send me bird sighting information from any of their past birding trips to Rio Bosque Park and the Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds (*see the April edition of the Roadrunner for more information regarding these projects*). I have received information from a few people, but I'm still in need of whatever information **YOU** may have!

Please send me any information that you may have regarding bird species seen, the dates of the observations, the numbers of individuals of observed, etc.

Please contact me at 833-6212 (evenings) if you have any questions.

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

NO DULL MOMENTS AT FEATHER LAKE

By John Sproul

Feather Lake News

It has been a fascinating spring at our Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, located at 9500 North Loop in El Paso's lower valley. During April and early May, school and Scout groups visited at a record clip. On April 24, high winds toppled a large dead cottonwood on the lake's east side. A pair of Canada Geese from a captive-raised lower-valley flock took a liking to our sanctuary and nested, with the young first seen May 10. We also found 3 birds new to the sanctuary - Marbled Godwit, Cassin's Kingbird and Green-tailed Towhee -- bringing the Feather Lake species total to 175.

Feather Lake is now closed until fall. An outstanding crew helped with our visitor program this past year: Craig Braginton, Jean Coyle, Betty and Weldon Fisbeck, Jane Fowler, Vince Giordano, Hugh Jameson, Bob Johnson, Larry Jordan, Neil Keith, George and Peggy Laswell, Fran McCarty, Jo Nagel, Betty Pagel, Iola Pennington, Roxanne Schroeder, Charles and Helen Simpson, Rita Slusser, John Sproul, and Nancy Wilson. Thanks to all, and special thanks to Charles Simpson for coordinating our visitor program!

Ten years ago, the City of El Paso expanded Feather Lake from 30 acres to 40 acres. Except along the eastern shore, most of the

vegetation in the basin was cleared away. In Spring 1987, just a few tumbleweeds grew along most of the newly created shoreline. Not so today. A narrow band of native riparian forest is taking shape, a direct result of our habitat-restoration efforts over the past decade. Many groups have helped with this work, most recently the youths staying at Southwest Key Casa El Paso, who cleared non-native saltcedars from the margins of Feather Lake's large island on several dates this spring. Thanks, Southwest Key!

Our next workday at Feather Lake will be **Sat., July 12**. You can come any time, but we recommend an early start to beat the heat. Gates open at **8 AM**. Come on down and see what Feather Lake is like in mid-summer!

MEMORIAL GIFTS

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

In Memory of David Hilles
Linda and Mervin Moore
Patricia M. Rogers
Lois Rystad
Jane and Will Woodyard

For Feather Lake
Cub Scouts, Pack 92

Birdathon 1997 Pot Luck Dinner

John Kiseda

If you didn't make it to the Birdathon Pot Luck Dinner and Wrap-up, you missed out on

some great food, some wonderful company and the opportunity to hear "Birdathon Tall Tales"!

If you didn't make it to the dinner you might never find out why I named my team of gung-ho, yet confused birders, "The Lost Boys." You might also never find out how in the world Sallie Homan managed to see and/or hear 134 species of birds during her 24 hr Birdathon period. Some great prizes were also given out to lucky Birdathon sponsors and counters, as our way of saying **THANK YOU** for your support and/or hard work!

Janice Rubertstad won the grand prize: a great pair of 8x40 Swift Binoculars! Grace Thomas received the second prize, the widely acclaimed, large format book of wildlife portraits, "Witness"! Gerry Fitzgerald was the lucky recipient of a Solar Sipper. Carol Bryant and Don & Virginia Armstrong were also among the prize winners.

For those of you that didn't win anything, don't forget to participate in next year's Birdathon, so you have another chance at winning some great prizes (don't be upset if you didn't win anything, neither did I and I helped organize the "raffle"!).

The next Roadrunner will include some information on how successful we were on the fundraising aspect of this year's Birdathon.

Once again, thanks to all the people that helped make this year's Birdathon possible!

Doniphan Marsh: An opportunity possibly in the offing!

John Kiseda, Conservation Chair

Carol Miller, current president of the Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue (the El Paso region's injured wildlife rehabilitation organization) is attempting to garner support to protect Doniphan Marsh and the acreage surrounding it, from further degradation and development. Ms. Miller has organized "A Save the Doniphan Marsh" coalition made up of over 70 area residents and some businesses. This property is owned by the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad. For those of you who haven't yet experienced a visit to Doniphan Marsh, it is located near El Paso's Upper Valley area, along Doniphan Drive between Frontera & Bird streets (it isn't easily visible from the roadside, because you are "below" it; it is situated at the base of the Keystone Dam, which is parallel to I-10).

Even though Doniphan Marsh is an aquatic treasure hidden amongst construction debris and previously undeveloped frontage land, it has been used recreationally by numerous local residents and visiting birders for decades. It is a magnet for wildlife and people alike. Over one hundred species of birds have been observed at the marsh and over one dozen species are known to have nested there and raised young. Doniphan Marsh is the only known El Paso West Side site that regularly provides viable breeding habitat for Black-necked Stilts.

Doniphan Marsh plays a vital role in providing a resting place for many migrating birds, especially those very vulnerable neotropical migrants whose breeding and non-breeding season habitats throughout the Americas, are being lost to human development and use, at a tremendous rate. The marsh and its adjacent vegetation furnish a stop over place for hungry and tired wildlife to find food, water and a safe place to rest. Birds that are considered endangered or threatened in the state by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, such as White-faced Ibis & Peregrine Falcons, utilize Doniphan Marsh. Other rare and unusual to the area species such as Prairie Falcons, Mississippi Kites and Golden Eagles also use the marsh.

Doniphan Marsh also provides a role as a release site for rehabilitated wildlife that have been "saved" by the wildlife rehabilitators of CDWR. This site also has important cultural and archaeological significance due to its past use by native peoples, thousands of years ago.

Ms. Miller has enlisted the support of our Congressman, Sylvestre Reyes in this important project. Congressman Reyes is attempting to persuade the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad to enter into a land swap negotiation or to donate the land to an as of yet unidentified private or public entity who will protect the site as an urban wildlife park/preserve.

At this time, no public or private entity has stepped forward and agreed to take on the responsibility to own and manage this site, even if it is an outright donation from the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad. The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and the Army Corps of Engineers have been helpful in trying to find funding sources for land acquisition or other interested parties to possibly manage this site if it becomes available.

The City of El Paso has told Ms. Miller that it is not interested in acquiring the land (even as a donation) even though the City's Department of Planning, Research & Development had already designated this area as a "Wildlife Sanctuary" in its Northwest Planning Area zone. This is part of a detailed, non-binding, parks and recreation facilities plan for El Paso, as projected to the year 2010 titled "A Comprehensive Parks & Open Space Plan for El Paso, Texas". No specific details were provided as to why the city didn't want to accept this possible project; Ms. Miller was just told that the City of El Paso "couldn't afford it."

Our chapter has been approached to accept this property, if it becomes available as a donated parcel. The Board of Directors is currently looking into what the financial ramifications of this might be.

If you think that the Doniphan Marsh is worth preserving for your use, the use of future El Pasoans and wildlife, take an active part in trying to save it!

Contact Carol Miller at 584-7088 and offer her your help.

Contact EP/TP Audubon President Elizabeth Chase, and let her know if you think our chapter should become involved in this project (and if so, let her know that you are willing to help in some capacity).

Contact Congressman Reyes at his Capital office: 1-800-962-3524, and thank him for his support of this project.

Contact El Paso's new mayor, Carlos Ramirez and your City Councilman and request that they find out why the city does not want to become involved in this project, especially if the land is donated to the city.

On The Trail

DOWN THE VALLEY

On Sat. June 28th, () will take you on a tour of the Rio Grande Levee in the Lower Valley. The TARGET bird for this trip will be the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, you will probably get a chance to see Vermillion Flycatcher, Painted Bunting, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Orchard Oriole and Yellow-breasted Chat. Meet () at Feather Lake, time 7:19 AM, Bring Lunch.

LATE AFTERNOON

On Sun. July 13, () will guide you through the Upper Valley ending at the river levee by the Country Club Road Bridge, You will walk along the Levee to Randall's Pool hoping to see something special. During the trip we could see Mississippi Kites. Meet () at the Crossroads Ponding area at 5:16 PM.

GILA CLIFF DWELLINGS

The beautiful mountain country in the vicinity of Silver City, New Mexico will be the destination of this overnight trip during the weekend of July 19 and 20. We'll be visitings the Cliff Dwellings, the Gila Wilderness, and Lake Roberts. A Large Great Blue Heron Rookery is nearby and wild animals are usually visible, a few years ago we saw the Beaver Lodge and the Beaver swimming in the pool. Great camping along the Gila River, but if you would like more comfort call Doc Campbells Trading Post (505-536-9551). If you are interested we could have a campground picnic Sat evening. For more details call Bob Johnson (757-1876).

FRIENDS OF HUECO TANKS

Every Sat./Sun. 9 & 11 AM. Pictograph Tours.
Sat Jun 14 Slides-Birds of Hueco Tanks. 8:30PM
Sun Jun 15. Bird Identification Tour. 8:00AM
Sat Jun 21 Slides-Rock Art of Hu Tnks. 8:30PM
Sat Jul 5 Public Star Gazing. 8:30 PM
Sat Jul 19 Slides-Rock Art of Hu Tnks. 8:30PM

BONITO LAKE

This will be another overnighiter into beautiful New Mexico mountain country, this time near Ruidoso. Camping in the National Forest above Bonito Lake or Motels in nearby Ruidoso. In the stream above the campground we will look for the American Dipper (have seen it each time we have been there) and flycatchers nearby. Return on Sunday through Cloudcroft for Mountain and Western Bluebirds and lunch. Trip map and meeting place details, call Bob (757-1876).

MIGRATING SHOREBIRDS

During migration it's possible to see 10 or more different wading bird species at the Fort Bliss Ponds. Greater Yellowlegs and Spotted Sandpipers will proably be in along with some duck species. Remember last August we had the first Texas State record of a Rufus-necked Stint. Meet at the parking lot of the old Walmart store, 9825 Dyer St. on Sunday, Aug. 24 at 7:24 AM. Call bob (757-1876) if you have any questions.

MORE MIGRANTS

The Vireos and Warblers are starting to arrive the first week in September and we could catch a rarity. We will walk the streets in the vicinity of the El Paso Country Club, a little driving included. The Red-shafted Flicker and Belted Kingfisher could be around. Meet at the Crossroads Ponding area at 7:47 AM on Saturday September 6th. all Bob (757-1876) if you have any questions.

Birdathon 1997 - What a Weekend!

By John Kiseda

As usual, this year's Birdathon held its share of fun, adventure & of course "NEAT BIRDS" for all those who participated!

The chapter's 31 staunch bird observers and finders did another fine job of locating a number of hard-to-locate bird species, as well as many of the "familiar (but welcome) avian faces". **Berty Barnhart** became a Birdathon-er this year!

The information below was "gleaned" from the last 5 years of the chapter's Birdathon results:

Some of the "cool" bird species that have been found fairly regularly, in the appropriate habitat in the El Paso region at this ~ time of year, with some effort & travel (including Birdathon 97):

Western Grebe	Clark's Grebe
Blue-winged Teal	Snow Goose
Northern Harrier	Harris's Hawk
Mississippi Kite	Osprey
Wilson's Phalarope	American Avocet
Black-necked Stilt	Semi-palmated Plover
Forster's Tern	Lesser Nighthawk
Bank Swallow	Violet-green Swallow
Cave Swallow	Broad-tailed Hummer
Wilson's Warbler	Yellow Warbler
Blue Grosbeak	Blk-headed Grosbeak
Summer Tanager	Western Tanager
Indigo Bunting	Bullock's Oriole
Scott's Oriole	Hooded Oriole

Some of the "keen" bird species that are occasionally found in the appropriate habitat in the El Paso region at this ~ time of year, with some travel and a bit more effort & luck (including Birdathon 97):

Sora	Long-billed Curlew
Common Snipe	Snowy Plover
Common Tern	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Belted Kingfisher	Blk-tailed Gnatcatcher
Warbling Vireo	Bell's Vireo
Solitary Vireo	MacGillivray's Warbler
Townsend's Warbler	Painted Bunting
Bronzed Cowbird	Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch	Lesser Goldfinch

SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL:

Birdathon Prep People!

Birdathon Counters!

OUR BIRDATHON SPONSORS!

Some rarely observed birds not found this year but located in Birdathon 1996, included:

Prairie Falcon	Marbled Godwit
Black Tern	Tree Swallow
Herring Gull	

Some occasionally observed birds not found this year, but located in Birdathon 1996, included:

Spotted Towhee	Orchard Oriole
Blk-chinned Sparrow	Scrub Jay (this species had consistently been seen in El Paso since it "invaded" ~ 11/94)

For the 2nd year in a row, no Golden Eagle was found.

For the 3rd year in a row, no Painted Bunting was found.

Some birds that were recently seen in El Paso, but not seen on this Birdathon weekend include:

Golden Eagle	Steller's Jay
Eurasian Wigeon	Lewis's Woodpecker

For the fourth Birdathon in a row, a (the?) Western Screech Owl was located at the Tornillo Rest-stop.

A single Monk Parakeet was spotted on Sunset Ave in the Upper Valley, and it has taken up housekeeping with a Green Parakeet (a Mexican species; this individual has a band on its left leg).

Other Birdathon 1997 counter "highlights" included these bird sightings that haven't been recorded in a Birdathon since 1993 (ever?):

- Lazuli Bunting: south of Tornillo
- Long-eared Owl: across from Mrs. Owens
- Red Crossbills: Coronado Country Club
- Bustit: Kern Place (w/a neat Hooded Oriole)
- Black-bellied Tree Duck: Ascarte Park
- a pair of Northern Cardinals: Mrs. Owens
- a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Northeast Sewage Ponds).

A total of 171 species were observed (pretty good, huh?). If you weren't a counter this year, look at what you missed! **Don't be jealous, just vow to be a Birdathon counter in 1998!**

Observations

March 16, 1997 to May 15, 1997

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). Please excuse the fact that none of the entries are highlighted, this was due to computer time.

Observers: Mary Bradley, Ann Cone, Doris Gurs, Sallie Homan, Hugh Jameson, Bob Johnson, Larry Jordan, John Kiseda, Greg Lasley, Lynn Mosley, Jim Paton, Patricia Russell, Charles Simpson, Jimmy Zabriskie, Barry Zimmer. Mob-Many observers, Var-Variou.

Locations: Ant/Anthony, Asc/Ascarate Lake, Bor/Borderland, Can/Canutillo, CCC/Corodado Country Club, Cra/Crawford Road, D/O/Durlings Owens, Etw/Eastwood, Fro/Frontera, Hon/Hondo Pass, HTk/Hueco Tanks, Lom/Lombardy, Lin/Linbergh, McN/McNary, Mem/Memorial Park, MHI/Mesa Hills, MPk/Mountain Park, PtD/Painted Dunes, STA/ Santa Teresa Area, Sod/Sod Farm, SRS/Stan Roberts Sr. Dr., Sun/Sunland Area, Tor/Tornillo, UVy/-Upper Valley, WMu/Wilderness Park Museum, XRd/Cross Roads Area. Zoo/El Paso Zoo.

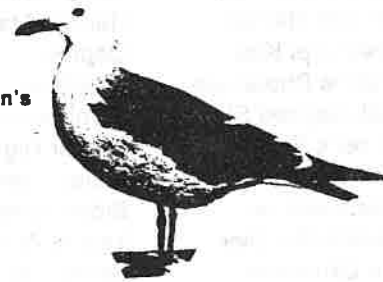
Cormorants to Hawks

Double-crstd Cormorant	4/14	JS	FLk
Neotropical Cormorant	5/14	LJ	Asc
Great Egret	Var	JS	FLk
White-faced Ibis (2800)	4/13	JS	FLk
Black-bellied Whis. Dk	5/14	LJ	Asc
Snow Goose	4/19	JS	FLk
Wood Duck	3/29	SH	Fro
	4/19	JK	XRd
Green-winged Teal	5/15	BJ	FBP
Northern Pintail	3/22	JK	FBP
	4/24	BZ	FBP
<u>Eurasian Wigeon</u>	<u>4/25</u>	<u>BZ</u>	<u>FBP</u>
Osprey	4/25	JK	FBP
	4/27	SH	FBP
Northern Harrier	5/15	BJ	FBP
Harris' Hawk	Var.	BJ	PtD
<u>Broad-winged Hawk</u>	<u>5/1</u>	<u>BJ</u>	<u>Lom</u>
Swainson's Hawk	3/27	BJ	PtD

Eagles to Yellowlegs

Golden Eagle	4/17	BJ	SRS
Peregrine Falcon	4/25	BZ	FBP
	5/9	SH	Cra
Virginia Rail	5/14	LJ	MHI
Snowy Plover	5/11	PR	FBP
Semipalmated Plover	4/22	BZ	FBP
	4/30	BJ	FLk
American Avocet	3/22	JK	FBP
Greater Yellowlegs	4/22	BZ	FBP
Lesser Yellowlegs	4/22	BZ	FBP

Heermann's Gull



Sandpipers to Terns

Solitary Sandpiper	4/22	BZ	FBP
	4/23	JS	FLk
Willet (40)	4/22	JS	FLk
(17)	4/24	BZ	FBP
Long-billed Curlew	3/29	JK	Zoo
	4/25	JK	FBP
Marbled Godwit	4/22	JS	FLk
	4/23	BZ	FBP
Semipalmated Sandpiper	4/23	BZ	FBP
Stilt Sandpiper	5/10	SH	UVy
Wilson's Phalarope	4/22	BZ	FBP
Franklin's Gull	4/6	SH	FBP
	4/22	BZ	FBP
Bonapart's Gull	3/28	SH	Can
	4/22	BZ	FBP
<u>Heermann's Gull</u>	<u>4/5</u>	<u>LJ</u>	<u>Tor</u>
<u>Caspian Tern</u>	<u>5/1</u>	<u>GL</u>	<u>McN</u>
<u>Least Tern</u>	<u>4/26</u>	<u>JP</u>	<u>Ant</u>

Parakeet to Swallows

Monk Parakeet	3/29	JK	Sun
Inca Dove(Albino)	5/13	CS-yd	Etw
Broad-tailed Hummer	4/27	PR-yd	STA
Lewis' Woodpecker	Var	Mob	Fro/Lom
Red-naped Sapsucker	3/29	SH-yd	Lin
Gray Flycatcher	4/27	SH	FBP
	5/2	BZ	WMu
Ash-throated Flycatcher	4/6	JK	Sod
Cassin's Kingbird	4/30	JS	FLk
Western Kingbird	4/6	SH	FBP
Tree Swallow	4/6	JK	XRd
Bank Swallow	4/6	JK	XRd
Violet-green Swallow	3/29	JK	XRd
Cave Swallow	4/26	JS	FLk

Cardinals to Blackbirds

Northern Cardinal	4/10	MB-yd	MPk
	4/17	DG-yd	MPk
	(M/F) 4/17	SH	D/O
Lazuli Bunting	5/4	AC	Bor
	5/14	SH	STA
Indigo Bunting	5/10	SH	STA
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5/10	SH	D/O
Black-headed Grosbeak	5/14	PR-yd	STA
Clay-colored Sparrow	4/23	BZ-yd	SPk
White-throated Sparrow	4/27	SH	FBP
Yellow-headed Blackbird	4/23	BZ-yd	SPk
	5/15	BJ	FBP

Jays to Warblers

Scrub Jay	4/6	JK	CCC
Stellar's Jay	4/19	JK	CCC
Red-breasted Nuthatch	3/29	JK	Lom
	4/27	SH	Mem
House Wren	3/26	SH-yd	Lin
Townsend's Solitaire	4/24	BZ	FBP
	5/11	BJ	HTk
<u>Swainson's Thrush</u>	<u>5/2</u>	<u>BZ</u>	<u>D/O</u>
Hermit Thrush	4/5	SH-yd	Lin
	4/20	JK	D/O
Cedar Waxwing	4/22	BZ	Mem
	4/27	SH	Mem
Solitary Vireo	4/22	BZ	Mem
(Cassin's)	4/23	BZ	FBP
Nashville Warbler	5/8	SH-yd	Lin
Black-throated Gray Wblr	4/20	PR-yd	STA
<u>Golden-winged Wblr</u>	<u>5/11</u>	<u>SH</u>	<u>Fro</u>
Townsend's Warbler	5/8	SH-yd	Lin
American Redstart	4/23	BZ	FBP
Northern Waterthrush	5/11	SH	Fro
<u>Louisiana Waterthrush</u>	<u>5/9</u>	<u>SH-yd</u>	<u>Lin</u>
MacGillivray's Warbler	4/23	BZ-yd	
Yellow-breasted Chat	4/26	PR-yd	STA

Golden-winged Warbler



Grackles to Goldfinches

Common Grackle	4/15	JZ-yd	Can
Bronzed Cowbird	4/17	PR-yd	STA
	4/19	BZ	Hon
	5/2	BZ	D/O
Hooded Oriole	4/10	MB-yd	MPk
Hooded (all at the			
Bullock's same			
Scotts time)	4/27	LM-yd	STA
Scotts Oriole	4/12	HJ-yd	MPk
Cassin's Finch	4/5	SH-yd	Lin
Red Crossbill	Var	SH-yd	Lin
	4/19	JK	CCC
	5/11	PR-yd	STA
Lawrence's Goldfinch(F)	4/5	SH-yd	Lin

June

Mon., 9 - Board Meeting - Environmental Center
Sat., 28 - Lower Valley Levee - Meet at Feather Lake - 7:19 am

July

Sun., 13 - Country Club & River - Meet at Crossroads Pond - 5:16 pm
Sat., 19, Sun., 20 - Gila Cliff Dwellings/Lake Roberts

August

Sat., 9, Sun., 10 - Ruidoso/Bonito Lake- Meet at closed WalMart 9825 Dyer St - Sat., 9, 7:37 am
Sun., 24, - Ft. Bliss Ponds - Meet at closed WalMart 9825 Dyer St - 7:21 am

September

Sat., 6 - Crossroads/Sunland Park - Meet at ponding area - 7:47 am

**National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Application**

Yes, I'd like to join.

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 is enclosed.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please make all checks payable to the National Audubon Society.



Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center
P.O. Box 51001 • Boulder, Colorado 80322-1001
LOCAL CHAPTER

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