



The Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

Inside the Roadrunner

Chapter Info	2
Native Plants	3
City Nature Challenge	4
Sanctuary	5
Calendar	6

The e-Roadrunner

The Roadrunner is now also available electronically as a PDF file. If you would like to receive our newsletter in this way via e-mail, just send a note to John Sproul at jsproul@utep.edu.

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Website!

Updated information about upcoming field trips, calendar of upcoming events, and recent bird sightings. www.trans-pecos-audubon.com



General Meetings

Monday, April 19, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Our April meeting will be on Monday the 19th at 7 pm. Craig Hensley, one of the two Texas Nature Trackers Biologists with the Wildlife Diversity Program of Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept. will present about iNaturalist and the upcoming City Nature Challenge, which runs April 30-May 3 (see p.4). You'll be introduced to iNaturalist, the Texas Nature Trackers program, and the ins and outs of the CNC. Be sure to create an [iNat account](#) on your computer first, then download the app to your phone so you can practice.

Click [here](#) to register for this meeting. (Direct link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMpd-6hpz8rGtChYukbBXDXEVMN31KIAIJ5>)

You can learn more about our local City Nature Challenge at: <http://www.insightselpaso.org/city-nature-challenge-el-paso/>.

Monday, May 17, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Our May meeting will be on Monday the 17th at 7 pm. Local Audubon board member and field trip coordinator Star Posada will be sharing about bird photography. Those of us in the El Paso Audubon Facebook group have seen the brilliant pictures that Star takes. Come learn about how she does it, and how you can improve your own photography.

Click [here](#) to register. (Direct link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZctceirqD4tHNPLTo7rUr2MicObI3qV5Owz>)

GLOBAL BIG DAY – MAY 8

As we did last year, we are planning our 2021 Audubon Birdathon fundraising event for fall rather than spring. The August-September newsletter will have all the details.



That doesn't mean you have no opportunities this spring for big-day birding. Like **May 8**, for example, when [eBird](#) holds its annual [Global Big Day](#) (<https://ebird.org/news/global-big-day-8-may-2021>). Participation is easy, at any level you choose. You can watch birds in your yard when you have a few spare minutes, visit your favorite site for several hours, or engage in a day-long effort to find as many bird species as possible.

Enter the birds you see and hear in eBird, and follow in real time the sightings that come in from throughout the world that day. In 2020, some 52,226 participants from 175 countries found 6,540 species worldwide. Plan to take part. It will be good preparation for our Birdathon this fall.

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

Officers

President: Scott Cutler, 494- 2193
Vice President: Jane Fowler, 598-2448
Secretary/Treasurer: Eddie Chew, 587-9589

Committees

Conservation: Kevin Floyd, 613-6354
Education: Kathleen Whelen, 820-1895
Field Trips: Star Posada, 407-6442
Hospitality: vacant
Membership: Elizabeth Chase, 539-1191
Newsletter Editor: Kathleen Whelen, 820-1895
Programs: Susie Schneider, 542-3041
Publications: Jane Fowler, 598-2448
Publicity: Heather Rivera, 212-2825
Sanctuary: John Sproul, 545-5157
Website: vacant
Facebook: Kevin Floyd, 613-6354

**The Audubon
 Foundation of
 Texas**



represents Texas
 Audubon chapters in the Earth Share of Texas
 payroll deduction plan for charitable giving.

Make Castner Range a National Monument

In 2016 the people of El Paso came together to press for the permanent protection of Castner Range as a National Monument. The support shown by our community garnered national recognition, gave Castner Range state and national awareness and was poised to achieve monument status save for a change in the presidency.

With the new administration in the White House and with Congresswoman Veronica Escobar willing to advocate for us in Congress, it is time to renew our effort to have Castner Range declared a National Monument and insure its protection in perpetuity.

In order to accomplish this, we will build on the efforts from 2016 and once again make our case that our community wants and deserves this special place be protected forever. To show there remains strong local support, we are asking everyone to sign an electronic letter supporting the formation of Castner Range National Monument. It only takes a minute and anyone, local or out of town, young or older, can sign it at [SaveCastner](http://SaveCastner.org). It will automatically be added to the growing list of signed support letters.

All of us have worked hard over the decades to protect Castner Range from development and preserve this unique open space. We are now in a place where we can see this finally bearing fruit. You can help make this happen! Please take a moment to show your support by signing the letter and asking friends and family to do the same.

Conservation Organizations

Chihuahuan Desert Education Coalition
<http://www.chihuahuandesert.org>

Second Chance Wildlife Rescue
<https://www.secondchancewildliferescue.org>
 Josie Karam (915) 920-7867

El Paso Zoo (915) 212-0966
www.elpasozoo.org

Stick House Sanctuary
<https://www.facebook.com/epwildliferescue>
 (915) 219-2365

Keystone Heritage Park 581-7920
www.keystoneheritagepark.com

Asombro Institute
 (Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park)
 (575) 524-3334 www.asombro.org

Friends of Rio Bosque 747-8663
www.riobosque.org

Southwest Environmental Center
 (575) 522-5552
www.wildmesquite.org

Franklin Mt. Wilderness Coalition
www.franklinmountains.org/

Celebration of Our Mountains
www.celebmtns.org

This article also appears in the newsletter of the Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens at UTEP. Sign up to receive them and see the previous issues at <https://www.utep.edu/centennial-museum/About/newsletter.html>.

The Benefits of Growing Native Plants

Kevin Floyd, Ph.D., Botanical Curator

Growing native plants in your yard provides many benefits. Although there is no single definition of what makes a plant native to an area, the general concept is that the plant species that evolved within an area are native. People often consider plants that have been brought into a region with European settlement to be non-native or exotic, but there really is no firm dividing line. We sometimes talk about using “native-adapted” plants in our landscapes. These species evolved in similar environmental conditions, and tend to do well in our area. Native-adapted plants do have several of the same benefits as native plants, but with a few key differences that we will discuss.

Native plants are adapted to our environmental conditions, so typically require less water and fertilizer to maintain than exotic species. This saves you money and helps conserve precious resources, especially water. Water is always limiting in El Paso, but we are currently in the beginnings of what might be another megadrought, worse than anything since 1600. Climate change models predict warmer and drier conditions in the Southwest, so preparing now with drought-tolerant plants will future-proof your yard. Even the most drought-tolerant native plants will require supplemental irrigation when getting established, but many can survive just on rainfall after that. A little extra water, particularly during dry spells, will help them flourish in your yard. Native plants are also adapted to cold weather, like the freeze we had in February. Even with an unusual cold snap like that, many of the native plants in the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens survived and are looking great or are regrowing from the roots. Some of the exotic species used on campus are dead and not coming back.

One advantage that native plants have that native-adapted plants lack is fitting in with the broader ecological landscape. Native plants have co-evolved with the rest of the ecosystem, such as insects, birds, and mammals. Some species are specialist feeders, meaning that they can only feed on one or a few plant species. Perhaps the best-known example is the monarch butterfly, whose caterpillars can only feed on members of the milkweed genus. But many other butterflies and moths have similar requirements, as do some of our native bees. There are likely hundreds of species of native bees in our area, and some only collect pollen from a few species to provision their larva. If we do not consider feeding the insects in our yards, there will not be food for many birds, lizards, and mammals. Landscaping with native plants helps to restore the connections between plants and animals, and repair some of the damage done to our environment.

Perhaps the biggest challenge to growing native plants is being able to buy them. Our locally-owned nurseries do have some species available, but you will be lucky to find more than a few in the big box home improvement stores. This is one of the major reasons that we hold FloraFest each year, our native plant sale. This year it will be on April 17 and 18 on the UTEP campus. We are still working on ordering the plants, so I cannot tell you about all of the great options we will have. We will be updating our plant sale website, florafest.org, as we are able to finalize the orders. Many of the plants that we will sell are not available locally. The plant sale is also the only fundraiser for the maintenance and operations of the gardens. We will be following all the important safety rules, such as requiring face coverings and spreading things out a bit more than usual. We are also looking for volunteers to help with the sale. Learn more and sign up on the website.

Native plants are a beautiful addition to any landscape. The wildlife they attract can provide hours of entertainment. And you can feel proud about helping restore our ecosystem, one plant at a time.

**PRESS RELEASE**

Contact: Diana Moy (915) 256-4646
Diana.Moy@tpwd.texas.gov

City Nature Challenge 2021

EL PASO, TX – The City Nature Challenge is an international effort for people to find and document wildlife in cities across the globe. It is a bioblitz-style competition where cities are in a contest against each other to see who can make the most observations of nature, who can observe and record the most species, and who can engage the most people.

This challenge was invented by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and the California Academy of Sciences in 2016. This year observing and recording wildlife can be done on iNaturalist from April 30th to May 3rd followed by a period for identifying wildlife from May 4th to May 9th.

The following local organizations will be offering guided and self-guided opportunities for the community to participate in the challenge:

- **El Paso Audubon Society**
- **Frontera Land Alliance**
- **Green Hope Project**
- **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**
- **Insights**
- **Texas Master Naturalists**
- **El Paso Zoo**
- **4H**
- **National Park Service**

This is a great opportunity for the community to explore the open spaces and natural areas in the city of El Paso and to learn about the different plant and animal species of the area.

For more information: www.insightselpaso.org/city-nature-challenge-el-paso/

Wyer Aerial Tramway State Park
1700 McKinley Avenue, El Paso, Texas 79930
(915) 566-6622 or (915) 562-9899

AT FEATHER LAKE

The past 12 months have seen just one storm event – back on July 25 – that flooded much of the Feather Lake basin. Barring an unexpected storm, the dry conditions will likely continue. Last year, the irrigation season began in March. Throughout spring and summer, parts of the basin were flooded intermittently with irrigation water discharged into the Mesa Drain and the Mesa Drain Interceptor. This year, the irrigation season will likely not start until June, will last only a couple of months, and will include few water discharges to the drains.

The next Boy Scout service project to remove saltcedars at Feather Lake II starts Sat., April 10. Coincidentally, that is also the date of our next Feather Lake work-day. We'll help the scouts with their work. Join us **Sat., April 10**, starting at **8 a.m.** at Feather Lake, from which we'll caravan to Feather Lake II. Since the scouts will be using most of our tools, plan to bring your own shovel and loppers.

Also bring your mask, as COVID-19 safety guidelines remain in place. Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave.

Audubon at

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park



Normally at this time of year, Rio Bosque's wetland cells would be dry, and waterbirds would be long gone. This year, due to the work still in progress to concrete-line the Riverside Canal next to the park, treated water from the Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant is still being delivered to the park. Work on lining the canal is almost complete, though, and we can expect deliveries to the park to end soon. They will begin again, at a reduced level, in May.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, tours remain limited to 9 participants plus the tour leader, and masks are required. For up-to-date information on tours, birds and water conditions at the park, check www.riobosque.org. Upcoming tours:

4:30 p.m., Sat., April 10 (Introductory tour)
8 a.m., Sun., April 25 (Bird tour)

7 a.m., Sat., May 8 (Bird tour)
8 a.m., Sun., May 16 (Introductory tour)

The meeting place is a bridge crossing the Riverside Canal. To get there from I-10, take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Drive, turn left onto Pan American and travel 1.5 miles. Information: 747-8663.

Feather Lake Water Depth



www.trans-pecos-audubon.com

El Paso/Trans-Pecos
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**National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Application.**

Yes, I'd like to join. Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter.

Send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to address below.

Check for \$20.00 enclosed payable to National Audubon Society

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State ____ Zip _____

**National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center
PO Box 97194
Washington, DC 20090-7194**

Local Chapter Code **C1ZW100Z**

Dates to Remember

April

Mon 12: **Board Meeting**
Sat. 10: **Feather Lake**
10 & 25 : **Rio Bosque**
Mon 19: **General Meeting**

May

Mon 10: **Board Meeting**
Sat 8: **Global Big Day**
8 & 16: **Rio Bosque**
Mon 17: **General Meeting**

June

Mon 14: **Board Meeting**
No General Meeting

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
<http://www.trans-pecos-audubon.com>

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Local **Chapter Only Membership** Your \$15.00 will help support chapter activities & you'll receive *The Roadrunner* delivered to your mailbox. Make checks payable to the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
Name: _____
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