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the ROADRUNNER



Newsletter of El Paso/Trans-Pecos
Audubon Society - P.O. Box 9655
El Paso, Texas 79986

Editors: Jane Fowler - Jo Nagel

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May 1986

GENERAL MEETING

MON., MAY 19, 7:30 PM at the Garden Center, 3105 Grant St., in Memorial Park. An Eastern Screech-Owl in the lower valley? An American Dipper in the Franklin Mts.? A Black-shouldered Kite at the Old Refuge? An American Woodcock in n.e. El Paso?? All true. And all photo-documented in the files of the EL PASO - LAS CRUCES RARE BIRDS COMMITTEE. At our May meeting, we'll get an introduction to this committee -- its purpose, how it functions, how its records are organized, how to submit details of rare-bird sightings -- and enjoy a selection of the best bird slides from the committee's files. Be sure to join us! You'll see some of the surprising rarities that help make the El Paso-Las Cruces area such an exciting place for birders.

FIELD TRIP CALENDAR

WEST COTTONWOOD SPRING

SAT., MAY 17. Meet at entrance to Tom Mays Park (located on Woodrow Bean Trans-Mountain Road) at 7:30 AM. Leader: Bob Johnson 751-0125.

RAMSEY CANYON/PATAGONIA-SONOITA CREEK SANCTUARY, SE ARIZONA

FRI-MON., MAY 23-26 (Mon. is a holiday.) Ramsey Canyon is about 5 mi. s. of Sierra Vista (city at Ft. Huachuca). Motel possibilities: Best Western, Thunder Mt. Inn (1-800-528-1234) and Motel 6 (1-602-459-0666). A KOA is located in Tombstone, 17 mi. e.; 2 mo-

bile parks that accept overnighters in Sierra Vista are the Bel Aire (1-602-458-5688) and Sierra Grande (1-602-458-6908). Down-to-earth campers will rough it in Miller Canyon, 7 mi. s. of Sierra Vista. Birding on Fri. and Sat. will be along the San Pedro River and in Ramsey Canyon (Mile Hi Sanctuary -- hummingbird capital of the U.S.). Very probable hummingbirds are the Magnificent, Blue-throated and Broad-billed, also Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher and Virginia's Warbler. Our Sun. trip will be to the Nature Conservancy's Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Sanctuary which consists of a 1½ mi. stretch of Sonoita Creek and 312 acres of surrounding land. Some of the Fremont Cottonwoods reach a height of 100'. We could see the Gray Hawk, Thick-billed Kingbird, Rose-throated Becard and N. Beardless-Tyrannulet. There are many other possibilities; we saw 95 species on this trip 2 years ago. If you plan to go, call for details and map. Leader: Bob Johnson (751-0125) or Ray Waite (751-1849).

LA CUEVA

SUN., JUNE 1. Meet at 7AM at Transmountain and I-10 to drive up to the Organ Mts. e. of Las Cruces. We will be birding in one of the canyons on the w. side of the Organs, and hiking up to the old Dripping Springs resort complex from the La Cueva area. Leader: Tom Baker (562-9461).

RIO BOSQUE PARK

SUN., JUNE 8. Meet at 7 AM at Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, 9500 N. Loop Rd. After checking out Feather L., we'll travel to Rio Bosque Park near Socorro, where we'll practice our trash-collection skills. After each participant has picked up one bag of trash, we'll look for Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Yellow-breasted Chats, Painted Buntings and other denizens of Rio Bosque. Bring work gloves, a snack and liquids. Leader: John Sproul (545-5157).

Bill Doebele is our new field trip Chair. If you have suggestions for future trips or would like to lead an outing, please give Bill a call (779-7408).

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING...

MON., MAY 12, 7:30 PM The Board will meet at the home of Joyce Davis, 5900 Enterprise #B-9, El Paso (581-9470). All members are welcome.

...AND MORE MEETINGS

EP/TPAS CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
TUES., MAY 6, 7:30 PM at the home of John Sproul, 601 W. Yandell #25, El Paso (545-5157).

TACB PUBLIC HEARING
THURS., MAY 8, 7PM at El Paso City Council chambers, 2nd Floor, 2 Civic Center Plaza. The Texas Air Control Board (TACB) will receive public comment on its proposal to strengthen the vehicle-inspection-and-maintenance program for El Paso County by including idle emissions testing. For a copy of the proposal, contact TACB (591-8128).

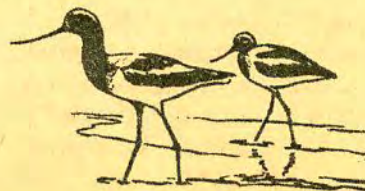
FRANKLIN MTS. WILDERNESS COALITION
WED., MAY 21, 7PM at the home of Jeannette Cole, 4608 Caples Circle, El Paso (565-1957).

FIELD TRIPS FOLLOW-UP

Seven members hiked up to the budding Cottonwoods on the east side of the Franklins. Bird species were low but early visitors like the Black-chinned Hummingbird and Violet-green Swallows were there. Crissal Thrashers and both Gamble and Scaled Quail were seen as we passed through Apache Springs.

The Lesser Prairie-Chickens of the Mescalero Sands gave a stellar performance Apr 12-13, and the 13 El Pasoans who ventured to this remote area e. of Roswell, NM, thoroughly enjoyed the show. Prairie-chickens, of course, weren't the only things to catch our eye. An American Bittern, an adult Peregrine Falcon, a Snowy Plover, single Herring and Bonaparte's gulls and 2 Downy Woodpeckers were among the many birds at Bitter L. Natl. Wildlife Refuge on Sat. On Sun., 2 pairs of Vermillion Flycatchers ignored the high winds and were appropriately conspicuous at Rattlesnake Sprgs. Approximately 101 bird species were found during the weekend. Also, among the mammals seen: black-tailed prairie dogs and pronghorns. And, among the comets: Halley's. Special thanks go to Linda Rundell of the U.S. Bureau of Land Mgt. for graciously extricating the trip leader from a sandy situation.

Avocets, Stilts and Franklin gulls were in abundance at Holoman ponds. Total species seen topped 50. For the three birders present all were able to add new bird species to their life list.



BLM RELEASES DONA ANA CO. LANDS EIS

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has released its draft Southern Rio Grande Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (SRGPA/EIS) for land-tenure adjustment in Dona Ana Co., NM (RR, Oct 1985). Basically, the document identifies lands in Dona Ana Co. that BLM either: • would like to retain in BLM ownership (1,025,000 acres), • thinks suitable for disposal from BLM ownership (82,000 acres) or • would like to acquire (41,000 acres).

BLM's decision on this issue of "land-tenure adjustment" could have profound effects on the New Mexico portion of the Franklin Mts. and on other environmentally significant lands in Dona Ana Co. The preferred alternative that the agency presents in the draft SRGPA/EIS has both good features and bad. Some examples:

Good. BLM proposes: • retaining 8710 acres in the Franklin Mts. to protect endangered-plant, recreation and visual resources; • acquiring 640 acres of State land within the Franklins; • acquiring 483 acres of private land at the Old Refuge near Mesilla and 2,310 acres along the Rio Grande between Las Cruces and Hatch to protect riparian wildlife habitat; • acquiring State and private inholdings within the 6 BLM Wilderness Study Areas in Dona Ana Co.; and • acquiring significant acreages of State and private land in the Organ Mts. Recreation Lands.

Bad. • BLM does not propose retention of enough land in and around the Franklins. The Franklin Mts. Wilderness Coalition (FMWC) has proposed retention of 11,899 acres. • BLM does not propose acquisition of 2 key parcels of private land (652 acres total) in the Franklins on the TX-NM state line. • BLM would not retain a wildlife/recreation corridor between the Organs and the Franklins. The FMWC has proposed that the Agency protect a 2-mile-wide corridor. • BLM identifies as suitable for disposal some 30% of the arroyo-riparian wildlife habitat remaining on public land in the county.

For a copy of the draft SRGPA/EIS, contact BLM, 1800 Marquess St., Las Cruces, NM 88005 (505/525-8228). Written comments on the document can be sent to the same address (comment deadline: July 2). BLM will hold public hearings on the document at 1:30 PM and 7:30 PM on June 4 at its Las Cruces offices. /John Sproul/

AN EVENING WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Want to learn more about the land-protection programs of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the highly effective national conservation organization dedicated to preserving natural diversity? You'll get a chance May 15 when representatives from TNC's Texas and New Mexico field offices come to El Paso for a special get-together to inform TNC members and friends about current projects and recent accomplishments in west Texas and southern New Mexico. Hosted by El Paso Natural Gas Co. (EPNG), the event starts at 7 PM in the EPNG auditorium, Paul Kayser Center I, corner of Texas and Stanton Sts. You're all invited.

THE WESTERN BIRD WATCHER

THE WESTERN BIRD WATCHER, Kevin Zimmer's latest book, is available from El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon. Prices are \$10.95 + 0.56 tax paperback and \$17.95 + 0.92 tax hardbound. You can order a copy by writing EP/TPAS (P.O. Box 9655, El Paso, TX 79986) or calling John Sproul (545-5157). Please make checks payable to "El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society". Non-El Paso residents, please add \$1 for postage and handling. * * *

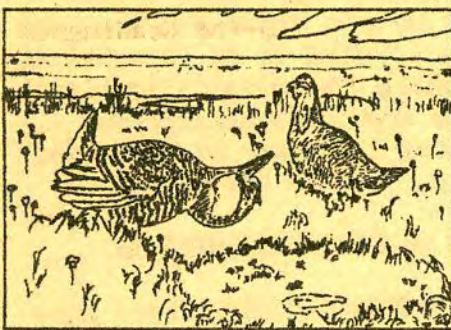
THE ROADRUNNER is sent to all members of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. Nonmembers can subscribe for \$4 per year. Make checks payable to EPTPAS and mail to: RR Editor, PO Box 9655, El Paso, TX 79986. Please send any changes or corrections in name, address, or telephone # to this address.

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CONSERVATION CAPSULES

TEXAS NONGAME ART PRINT: The 1986 Texas Nongame Stamp and associated limited-edition art print feature a fantastic pair of Attwater's Prairie-Chickens by noted wildlife artist John P. Cowan. If you plan to buy the print, now's the time to act. The edition size will be limited to the number of orders received by May 31. Locally, you can place orders with PRINTS CHARMING, 7040 N. Mesa, Space L, El Paso, TX 79912 (584-3808). The price (one stamp included) is \$130, of which \$41.50 goes to the Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. A special edition that includes a gold medallion will sell for \$255, with \$61.50 going to the Nongame Fund. The print image size will be 6½" x 9"; overall size, 12½" x 14".

Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.



1986 Nongame Stamp \$5.00

YES, I want to help support the nongame wildlife and endangered species programs of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Please send me _____ 1986 Texas Nongame Stamp(s) at \$5 each. Amount enclosed: _____.

Name _____

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endangered subspecies of the Greater Prairie-Chicken is 880 birds, down 39% from 1985. It's the lowest population in 21 years of records. The USFWS attributes the decline "largely to heavy rains during the 1985 hatch period though habitat deterioration is also an important factor."

SUPERFUND: The conference to resolve differences between the House and Senate versions of legislation re-authorizing Superfund (RR, Mar) is proving to be a long and contentious one. The little issues are getting resolved, but not many of the big ones. On Mar 21, the Senate conferees presented their House counterparts with a "new" Superfund proposal that revealed little interest in compromise. Noted the Natl. Audubon Society at the time, "In nearly all critical areas, the Senate offer merely repeats the weaknesses of the original Senate bill." Meanwhile, to keep Superfund programs alive while the conference committee deliberates, Congress passed and Pres. Reagan signed on Apr 1 a 2-month extension of the Superfund law. Don't forget that Lloyd Bentsen (U.S. Senate, Wash., DC 20510) is on the conference committee. Let him know your views on reauthorization of a strong Superfund. /John Sproul/

REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN NOVEMBER

The National Audubon Society's 1986 Southwest Regional Conference will be held Nov 7, 8 & 9 at MO-RANCH, 23 miles west of Kerrville, in the beautiful Texas Hill Country. Peter Berle, president of National Audubon Society, plans to attend. You'll get information on registration and programs as soon as plans are finalized. The Fall Meeting of the Audubon Council of Texas (ACT), originally scheduled for El Paso, has been moved to MO-Ranch to coincide with the regional conference. We now anticipate hosting ACT in El Paso in Fall 1987.



ATTWATER'S PRAIRIE-CHICKEN: Even though it's featured on the 1986 Texas Nongame Stamp, Attwater's Prairie-Chicken isn't enjoying all that great a year. According to a recent news release from the regional office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Albuquerque, the 1986 population estimate for this

OBSERVATIONS
March 21 - April 21

With few exceptions, Spring Migration appeared to be moving at a slower than usual pace. Notably absent were some species, shorebirds and swallows in particular, normally reported for this period. The peak of Spring Migration should occur during this next period and hopefully it will develop into an exciting one.

LOONS - FALCONS

Of special interest is an Am. Bittern flushed from a marsh area at Feather Lake 4/6 (JS) (details to RBC). This is the third sighting of this species at the lake this past year. Two Snowy Egrets were at Feather Lake 3/23 (BJ, et al.), 3 were there 4/6 (JS). Approximately 100 Cattle Egrets, seen in 3 separate groups, were also at Feather Lake 3/23 (BJ, et al.). Twenty + Black-crowned Night-Herons were seen near Anthony 3/28 (JS) and 45+ (adults & immatures) at Feather Lake 4/6 (JS). A lone White-faced Ibis was at Feather Lake 3/23 (BJ, et al.). A male Wood Duck was observed at the El Paso Country Club Golf Course 3/30 (BV) (details submitted). Fair numbers of ducks were at Feather Lake 3/23 (BJ) but considerably down in number by 4/6 (JS). Red-heads were at the Crossroads Pond 4/6 and 4/7 (JoD). Thirty Turkey Vultures flying overhead near the Crossroads Pond 3/23 (JoD, AS) were the first reported this spring.

QUAIL - WOODPECKERS

Three groups of Long-billed Curlews were in the lower valley near Fabens 3/29 (AG). The first male Black-chinned Hummingbirds were reported from e. central and e. El Paso 3/26 (JN, LS, AB). Most reports were received 3/29-3/31 (mob), females were arriving approximately a week later (JF, et al.). A Belted Kingfisher was at Randel's Pool 4/7 (JoD). A Ladder-backed Woodpecker appeared at a n.e. El Paso residence 3/21 and 3/26 (RH).

FLYCATCHERS - VIREOS

A Black Phoebe was at The Willows in the upper valley 3/23 (JoD, AS). A rather early W. Kingbird was in the EPCC area

4/7 (JoD), another 1 was in e. central El Paso 4/15 (JN). Of note are 2 Pygmy Nuthatches observed near Lombardy Lane in the upper valley 3/30 (BV) (details submitted). A Hermit Thrush visited an e. El Paso residence 4/13-4/20 (BR) and another 1 was at Horizon City 4/20 and 4/21 (MG). A young N. Mockingbird with a parent nearby was noted in e. El Paso 4/20 (AB, JF). Three Cedar Waxwings were in e. El Paso 4/10 (JF), and a pair of Phainopeplas at The Willows 3/23 (JoD, AS).

WARBLERS - WEAVER FINCHES

Spring warbler reports were: an Orange-crowned at Horizon City 4/9 (MG), single MacGillivray's at Horizon City (MG) and e. El Paso (BR) 4/21, a very early Wilson's at a woodlot near Anthony 3/28 (JS) and another 1 at Horizon City 4/6 (MG). Single male N. Cardinals were noted at Anthony 3/28 (JS) and Randel's Pool 4/7 (JoD). Three Cassin's Sparrows were seen and heard singing in the Wilderness Park area 3/22 (JoD). A lone Dark-eyed Junco was in e. El Paso 4/21 (JF). An E. Meadowlark was observed and heard singing just south of the Cattleman's Restaurant 3/31 (BV) (details submitted). Three species of orioles were represented by a male & female Hooded, a male "Bullock's" and a male & female Scott's in Mt. Park as of 4/16 (JB). Two female Red Crossbills were seen again in e. central El Paso 3/21 and 4/8 (LS).

CONTRIBUTORS: Anne Bowman, Janet Brockmoller, Joyce Davis, Jane Fowler, Al & Madeline Gavit, Richard Hermosillo, Bob Johnson, Jo Nagel, Ann Schultis, John Sproul, Lucile Swick, Dennis Taylor, Brad Vaughn, Ray Waite. RBC - Rare Birds Committee. /Bettie Roberts, Observations Editor/ (591-0421)

CAMP CHIRICAHUA

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT) and the American Birding Assn. are offering a unique summer birding camp this year for youths 11 to 18 years old. There will be 2 sessions: July 4-15 and July 16-27. Headquarters will be

Cave Creek Ranch in the Chiricahua Mts. of s.e. Arizona, and the focus of the camp will be on life zones of the American Southwest. The camp will be limited to 24 participants per session, and the fee is \$695 from Tucson. For an application contact EP/TPAS or VENT (P.O. Box 33008, Austin, TX 78764).

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S EYRIE

Be at the Garden Center, 3105 Grant at 6 PM on Sun May 4 for the BIRDATHON pot-luck dinner and drawing for the Grand Prize. We'll have congenial people and good food.

Thanks to those who gave a few hours to staff the booth at Cielo Vista Mall April 18-20. It was greatly appreciated.

THANKS! Keep 'em coming. Your aluminum cans that is. Some of you out there may still be throwing them in the garbage. Please stop and save them for us instead. If you need them picked up, just call me.

World of AUDUBON Special - W T B S June 5, 7:05 PM, to be repeated June 17, 22 and 29. "Unmasking a Mystery of Extinction" narrated by Loretta Swit. Subject: the Black-footed Ferret.

Feather Lake work day - Sat, June 7, 8 AM-?, light chores and heavy ones. We are not considering planting this year because of the possibility of heavy machinery working in the area as the City improves Mesa drain. Hope to have more on this next month.

Remember the Book Fair at B. Dalton Bookseller in Cielo Vista Mall June 14.

Hope to see you in the field on BIRDATHON, May 3./Bob Johnson/

OUR GENEROUS MEMBERS

We gratefully acknowledge donations from Mr. & Mrs. D. E. Baker. They have recently made a donation to the Franklin Mountains Fund in memory of Lena McBee and have also contributed to the Scholarship Fund. Our thanks to the Bakers for their support.

* * *

The deadline for the June Roadrunner is May 30.

* * *

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members of NAS and our chapter:

E. C. Alden, Sandra Barcus, Marie Baroz, Mrs. Herta Chafer, Rex Cochran, Dr. Lola D. Dawkins, Ms. Twila Dickinson, L. Escudero, J. Farrow, Jeanne French, Ruth Goodenough, Isidro T. Grau, Rod C. Heckel, Ms. Virginia Howarth, Jerome Hunter, Bruce Husbands, Teresa McGlone, Mrs. H.C. Murrie, Pat Russell, Edgar J. Spady, Sharon I. Stanley, & Mrs. Naomi B. Stumberg.

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
Chapter

Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join. Local Chapter:

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Membership Category desired:

Individual/\$30 (H) Senior Citizen
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 Family/\$23 (P)

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