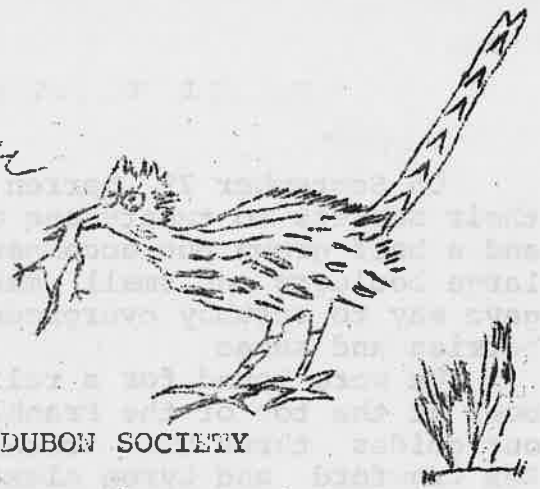


# The Roadrunner



NEWSLETTER OF THE EL PASO TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Bill Hunt, Editor

## COMING EVENTS

- OCTOBER 13-14** Overnight field trip to Davis Mountains, joining the Midland Naturalist Club. Meet at 2 p. m. on Saturday at the Cottonwood grove near the entrance to Fort Davis National Historic Site. We will proceed to Hadera Canyon, birding along the way. Bring a picnic supper.
- Meet Sunday at the same grove at 8 a. m.
- Accommodations - Excellent campground at Fort Davis State Park. Indian Lodge in the park provides the best overnight accommodations, but reservations are necessary. Motels in Fort Davis are not luxurious.
- OCTOBER 15** Regular meeting, Centennial Museum, UTLP, 7.30 p. m. Mr. Felix Hernandez, an environmental specialist with the National Park Service, will speak to us. Mr. Hernandez, who has been with the Park Service for eight years, has a masters degree from Sul Ross. His previous park service duty has been at Big Bend, Fort Davis, Tumacacori in Arizona, and Volcanoes National Park in Hawaii. Mr. Hernandez has also attended the National Park Service Environmental School at Harper's Ferry.
- OCTOBER 20** Duck and shorebird special to Horizon Lake! Meet at the Bordertown Drive In Theater, 9200 Montana, at 7 a. m.
- OCTOBER 27** Yucco Tanks trip. Meet at the Bordertown Theater at 7 a. m.
- NOVEMBER 22-24** Texas Ornithological Society Fall Meeting in El Paso with our club as hosts. Headquarters, Del Camino Hotel.

## FRANKLINS PEAK VISITED BY CARELESS TRENDSETTERS

On September 29 barren, rugged peaks of the Franklins revealed their secrets to twenty one of us. Our party included three children and a half grown pup accompanying the adults. We stepped high over large boulders and small making a gradual ascent until the creosote gave way to scrubby evergreen oaks and dense thickets of netleaf hackberries and sumac.

We were bound for a relict forest of ancient junipers set in a bowl at the top of the Franklins. This bowl had been discovered by our guides three UNM science graduate students. Dennis Appelhons, Rex Crawford and Byron Alexander have been studying this area for a year. We startled a covey of scaled quail and got a glimpse of a cactus wren and a few rock wrens as we made our way through the brush. It took us until noon to reach the base of the red granite cliff which loomed up 50 to 100 feet above us. Some scaled it with rope, others took a hidden path at one side. At the top a huge juniper greeted us almost on the contact between red granite and basal red Bliss sandstone in the bottom of the watercourse which drained the well grassed basin containing the old juniper forest. We explored the meadow and the crest which gave us a magnificent view east of the Franklins to the Huecos. The Fort Bliss sewage ponds showed up like jewels the greater the distance the more jewel-like they become, according to Ed White.

I sighted the two golden eagles who immediately soared off above the top of the mountains and disappeared to the other side. We saw the pile of sticks nestling in a hole higher in the rock face which was their nest.

There was much hesitation in beginning the return trip, mainly because we had a difficult decision: either go down the slippery steep path on foot or use the ropes and take the fast way down the face of the cliff. Jeremiah the pup, whimpered against my legs, and I thought he expressed my sentiments exactly. I chose the rope, and to my surprise, it was fun! As long as you were facing the cliff and looking for a toehold, you were not aware of the sheer drop to the bottom and first thing you knew you were at the base of the cliff, a few cactus spines in your hands and arms where the rope got mixed up in some prickly pears growing out of the rock.

From then on it was down the boulders and a whole new set of muscles went into play on the downhill slope. One of the largest black-tailed rattlers I've ever seen buzzed me a foot away from the trail and most of the party got a glimpse of him before he went away from me in a gentlemanly fashion and retired under some brush.

We were grateful for the generosity of the science students who shared their experiences with us and their knowledge and for giving us a day which will be long remembered. Our bird list was better than it seemed, as we were not aware of seeing so many birds. Cooper's hawk, red-tailed hawk, Golden eagle, scaled quail, white-throated swift, hummingbird species, ladderbacked woodpecker, black throated sparrow, Wilson's warbler, canyon wren, rock wren, cactus wren, curve billed thrasher, Townsends solitaire, pyrrhuloxia, house finch, brown towhee, gray headed junco, and red-breasted nuthatch.

Some of our clothing suffered, but the seat of a pair of jeans was a small sacrifice to make for such an exhilarating experience in such interesting company of members and friends.

Geth White

## THE RELICT FOREST IN RETROSPECT

Since it is a rare treasure and extremely vulnerable because of the nature of the arid mountains all of the conservation groups in our area would like to see the relict juniper forest set aside as a scientific preservation area with limited access by students and research people. A Texas scientific areas preservation law, which is an enabling act could make this possible. The land is currently under the jurisdiction of the City Parks Department within the Wilderness Park of the Franklins.

If we are to have truly a wilderness park, we must pay attention to the advice of the biologists who are studying the mountains and have a body of research and knowledge. There is now and has been a considerable migration of animals and birds from the Franklins to the Organ Mountains. If we develop the Franklins and put too many people in the mountains what little game is present in the arid desert highlands will move on out to the Organs. We truly need to save the wildest part of the Franklins by careful planning now.

If an easy trail were built to this bowl and visitation made possible it would not be long before the wilderness character, the game animals and birds would disappear. Even a road around the wilderness park should be carefully planned in order not to give easy access to some of the more vulnerable wilderness regions. One member of the field trip group who is a member of the Rod and Gun Club told of an acquaintance who bragged about coming to this area in hunting season several years ago and shooting three deer which he left to rot because of the difficulty of getting the dead animals out of the area. Unfortunately, there are too many sportsmen with this philosophy.

## BOOK REVIEW

Ro Wauer, formerly Park Naturalist for the Big Bend, is the author of two books on the Big Bend one, BIRDS OF BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK AND VICINITY, and the latest one, NATURALIST'S BIG BEND.

The first mentioned book came out last year, and many of us own it but if you do not, you can pick it up at the Park. It was published by the University of Texas Press, sells for \$4.95, and is extremely helpful for understanding where to find what species in the park in the various biomes.

NATURALIST'S BIG BEND goes into the total natural history picture a bit farther having chapters on trees and shrubs, the cactus, wildflowers, birds, reptiles and amphibians, fish, insects and invertebrates. Some of the key plants are illustrated with drawings, and there are excellent black and white photographs illustrating some of the park's most elegant scenery. Price is \$3.65, and this book can be ordered from Peregrine Productions, Box 5373, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501 postpaid.

Geth White

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

The club got off to a fine start with its September meeting. One of the real heartwarming aspects of the evening was the largest attendance ever a crowd of about fifty people.

Mr. Tom Westfall, member of the Mayor's El Paso Heritage Committee appraised the club of preliminary plans for the Wilderness Park Museum. Two sites are under consideration at this time, one on the east side in the present Castner Range, and another in Tom Mays Park on the west side. \$100,000 in funds is available for the building of this museum and Alderman E. M. Baeza, a local contractor, has offered to build the museum at cost.

Mr. Westfall asked for the cooperation of the local Audubon Society and other conservation groups in the planning of this museum and suggested the possibility of a set up similar to that of the Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum in Arizona. In response to Mr. Westfall's request for a representative from the club Charles Jensen was appointed to work with the Wilderness Park Museum planning committee.

The evening concluded with a delightful slide presentation by Dennis Appelhans and Rex Crawford of the bowl and relict forest described on previous pages. This area of the Franklins was the basis of study for their masters degree work.

## LCO NOTES

**POISON CONTROL.** The woolgrowers lobby and forces within the House Agriculture Committee are devoting large scale efforts to weakening H.R. 4579 the predator control reform bill. The bill is now being marked up by the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment chaired by Rep. John D. Dingell (D. Mich.). The woolgrowers lobby is pushing for amendments that would delete language specifically designating state wildlife agencies as responsible for management of predators, thus allowing a takeover by pro poison agriculture agencies and would reinstate use of the .44 cyanide gun presently banned. Although cyanide does not have secondary effects other species besides coyotes can still trigger the mechanism.

Although there have been individual reports of tremendous losses since the ban on use of poisons on federal lands went into effect, official statistics have not backed up the claims.

**TORTOISE SHELL SEIZED.** Federal authorities have confiscated illegal hawksbill turtle jewelry valued at \$250,000 from some of New York's most fashionable stores. The jewelry had been openly advertised, indicating the stores had not realized that import of the shell of this endangered species is against the law. Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel P. Reed stressed that he hoped the case would help educate merchants in other cities to the law, and to the fact that the government means business.

**NEW YORK NOISE CONTROL HEARINGS.** The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is holding statewide public hearings on new noise control regulations as required by New York's 1970 Environmental Conservation Law.

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

- 9/4 McGillivray's warbler, Wilson's warbler (Observer Geth White in Coronado and Franklin Foothills)
- 9/8 Lark sparrows 50+ vesper sparrows 25; sparrow hawks, 4 clay colored sparrows, 50+ lark buntings 15 Brewer's sparrows, 100+, mixed flock of blackbirds with Brewer's dominant, redwinged, yellowheaded starlings, 1 kingfisher on drainage ditch road runner Gambel's quail curve-billed thrasher. In Tom Mays Park. black throated sparrow, rock wren, brown towhee, canyon wren. (Observers Whites, Walpoles, and Hardaways from Rio Grande bridge west on country roads in Upper Valley, and at Tom Mays Park.)
- 9/15 Bared grebe, green heron, rail species heard, blue-winged teal, northern shoveler ruddy duck, Swainson's hawk, rough-legged hawk marsh hawk, American kestrel, common gallinule, coot, killdeer, greater yellowlegs, lesser yellowlegs, pectoral sandpiper Baird's sandpiper least sandpiper, semi-palmated sandpiper, western sandpiper, Wilson's phalarope, ring-billed gull, black tern mourning dove, roadrunner, western kingbird, Say's phoebe barn swallow rough-winged swallow, cliff swallow, yellow-headed blackbird, oriole species, house finch, Savannah sparrow vesper sparrow. (Observers Lucretia Chew, Berttye Barnhart and her mother, Al and Madeline Cavit, Charlie Jensen, Jack and Margaret McDaniel, Mary Moore, Ed and Geth White, at the Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds.)
- 9/24 Sanderling with western and least sandpipers, long-billed marsh wren (Observer Bill Hunt on Rio Grande levee in the Lower Valley.)
- 9/28 Wigeon 15 cinnamon teal, 24 (Observer Bill Hunt at Lower Valley water table lake.)
- 9/28 Yellowheaded blackbird, 300+ Brewer's sparrow, clay-colored sparrow Gambel's quail 60+ empidonax species; hummingbird species, common gallinule, coot, (Observers Geth White, Alene Bachman Marjorie Brown in Upper Valley near the Rio Grande.)
- 10/1 Townsend's warbler (Observer Dr. Luis Santaella in Mountain Park.)

**GAS MILEAGE RATES.** General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, and eight foreign companies have notified the Environmental Protection Agency that mileage rate stickers based on EPA test data, will appear on windows of their 1974 cars and light duty trucks.

**INVESTMENT IN THE ENVIRONMENT** can be made through the new Tax Exempt Environmental Bond Fund, a portfolio of tax-exempt bonds for financing pollution abatement and for other environmental purposes. For information write to The First Boston Corporation, 20 Exchange Place, New York, N. Y. 10005.

FOR THE BIRDS

The new series "For the Birds," engineered by Geth White and Weldon Yerby for our local Audubon Society made its debut in Sunday's EL PASO TIMES with a fine article by Geth on the black-chinned hummingbird.

Twelve articles for the series have already been submitted, with Audubon members currently busy preparing others. A photograph or sketch will accompany each article. The beautifully detailed sketches have been drawn by Byron Alexander, a graduate science student at UTEP.

Contributions or suggestions should be given to Weldon Yerby (755-7360) or Geth White (584-7783). Look for the continuing series each Sunday in the TIMES.

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8365 Beverly Place  
El Paso Texas 79907

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