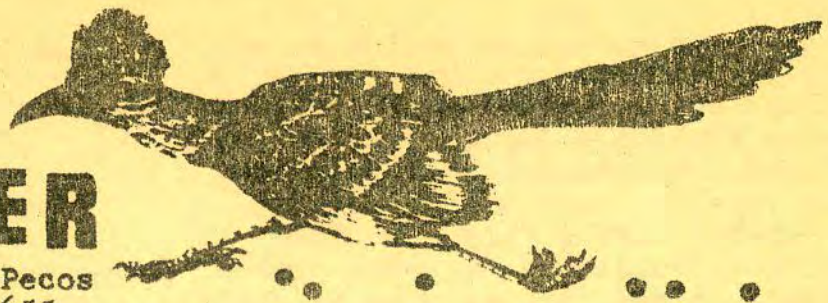


# the ROADRUNNER

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



Editors: Jane Fowler - Jo Nagel

Volume 15 (10)

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December 1985

## GENERAL MEETING

MON., DEC. 16, 1985, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, 3105 Grant St. in Memorial Park. BIRD IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP and CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS. Whether you know a little or a lot, come to this meeting to learn more about how to identify birds and where to find them.

### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS



who will report their birds to Elza Gilboe (772-1942) for compiling. Call compiler, Bob Johnson (751-0125 or 757-1876), if you are unable to be present Dec. 16 and want to count. Pot-luck is to be at Garden Center, 3105 Grant St. at 5:30 PM, January 5th, after which the species will be totaled.

### ....AND MORE CBCs

If 2 CBCs aren't enough for you, note that Mesilla Valley Audubon in Las Cruces also will conduct a pair of counts, one in the Las Cruces area and one in the Percha Dam-Caballo Lake area. The Las Cruces CBC is Dec 21, same day as the Hueco Tanks Count, but the Percha-Caballo Count will be Dec 23. Last year, approximately 125 species were tallied on the Percha-Caballo Count, a New Mexico state record. The count circle includes a wide variety of habitats, and observers are definitely needed if last year's success is to be equaled. Want to take part? Call Barry Zimmer (545-5184).

### FIELD TRIP CALENDAR

LOWER/LOWER VALLEY  
SUN., DEC. 8. This is always a

### HUECO TANKS CBC

SAT., DEC. 21. Groups of birders will search the various sections of the count circle to find as many birds as possible. Besides the regular desert and wintering birds, there is always the chance of seeing a rarity. Contact compiler, Joyce Davis (581-9470 h, 544-6772 w), if you plan to participate but cannot make the meeting Dec. 16. A fee of \$3.00 is required of participants to help defray the cost of printing results. Following the count, we'll meet at Helen Barto's, 3323 Moonlight (755-4744), after 5:30 PM for pot-luck dinner and species count-down.

### EL PASO CBC

SAT., JAN. 4, 1986. Expert, novice or in between birders should plan to take an active part in this count. Teams will cover designated areas of the 15 mile diameter. A \$3.00 fee is to be paid by each birder to defray printing results except for backyard watchers.

good trip to see migrating or wintering water birds. The last 2 years we have seen over 50 species including Rufflehead, Common Loons, Cormorants, Snow and Cattle Egrets, Harris Hawks, White Pelican, Canada Geese, Western Grebes, gulls and Savannah Sparrows. It was raining when we started out last year, but the sun was shining by 1 PM, so don't let a little rain stop you. Plan to meet at Feather Lake at 7:15 AM; bring your lunch. Call leader Bob Johnson (751-0125 or 757-1876) if you can go.

HUECO TANKS CBC-SAT, DEC.21

EL PASO CBC-SAT, JAN. 4, 1986  
BOSQUE DEL APACHE-SAT-SUN JAN 18, 19  
COUNTRY CLUB/RANDEL'S POOL  
SUN, JAN 26

INDIAN HOT SPRINGS-SUN, FEB 9  
HUECO TANKS-SAT, FEB.22

FT BLISS PONDS/E P ELECTRIC POND  
SUN, MAR 2  
LOWER VALLEY/TORNILLO-SAT, MAR 15

E COTTONWOOD SPRINGS-SAT, APR 5  
BITTER LAKES/PRAIRIE CHICKEN  
SAT-SUN, APR 12-13  
HOLLOMAN/LA LUZ-SUN, APR 20

BIRDATHON-SAT, MAY 3  
DURLING'S FARM/OWENS-SUN, MAY 11  
HUACHUCA MTS/RAMSEY CANYON  
SAT-MON, MAY 24-26

LA CUEVA/DRIPPING SPRINGS  
SUN, JUNE 1  
FEATHER LAKE/RIO BOSQUE  
SAT, JUNE 7  
SANTA FE/RANDALL DAVEY CENTER  
FRI-SUN, JUNE 20-22

VALENTINE/FT DAVIS  
SAT-SUN, JULY 12-13  
COUNTRY CLUB/RANDEL'S POOL  
SUN, JULY 27

HUECO TANKS EVENING-SAT, AUG 9  
THREE RIVERS-SAT-SUN, AUG 16-17  
LOWER VALLEY-SUN, AUG 24

LOWER GILA/RED ROCK  
SAT-SUN, SEPT 13-14  
WEST COTTONWOOD SPRINGS  
SAT, SEPT 27  
\*\*\*\*  
AUDUBON COUNCIL OF TEXAS

The Audubon Council of Texas (ACT) fall meeting, held Nov 15-17 at the U. Texas Research Science Park next to Buescher St. Park in Bastrop County, was a success from start to finish. Delegates shared the recent activities of their chapters, elected officers for the year ahead, addressed a variety of conservation issues, enjoyed an evening with environmental songwriter Bill Oliver, and more. New ACT officers are Wilma Anderson (Dallas Co. Audubon Soc.), who continues as president; David Carson (Bastrop Co. A.S.), vice-president; Leanna Smith (Huntsville A.S.), who remains secretary; Jean Lauder (Frontera A.S.), treasurer; and Marilyn Sumner (Ft. Worth A.S.), at-large board member.

In the conservation arena, ACT voted to:

- support the Natl. Audubon Society's position against the recently passed Proposition 1 on the November general-election ballot.
- urge Land Commissioner Garry Mauro to deny an easement for an overhead powerline that Central Power and Light wants to build across an environmentally sensitive portion of Laguna Madre and instead require use of a less damaging route.
- urge the Austin City Council to call for a bond issue for purchase of 217 acres of prime Black-capped Vireo habitat threatened by development.

Bastrop County Audubon was a fantastic host chapter and set a standard that will be hard to match. Very soon, we'll have to try, for ACT has accepted our in-

vation to hold its fall 1986 meeting in El Paso./John Sproul/

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MON., DEC. 9, 1985, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Jane Fowler, 8212 Parkland Dr.. (772-0296). All members are welcome.

\*\*\*\*

#### FIELD TRIPS FOLLOW-UP

Five species of wren and at least 7 Black-chinned Sparrows were among the highlights on the Nov 2 trip to W. Cottonwood Spring. Ten participants enjoyed the fall wildflowers, the crisp weather, the birds and even a tarantula (found by Virginia Hair and Jo Nagel) during this walk in the Franklin Mts. Afterwards, a visit to the Owen yard in the upper valley produced a fine look at a Brown Creeper. Some 32 bird species were seen in all.

\*\*\*\*

A total of 23 species were seen on the Nov 16 field trip at Feather Lake and Rio Bosque Park in the lower valley. A Wood Duck was observed in some shallow water on the northwest area of Rio Bosque by the 4 who attended.

\*\*\*\*

#### FROM THE PRESIDENT'S EYRIE

This month, THANK YOU'S are in order for several members. MUCHO thanks to Peggy Riede, chair of the Awards Committee, and to Sarah Jane Dodds and George Yelderman for serving with her. They worked long hours to select this year's recipients of the Conservation Achievement Awards and the Chapter Service Awards. And for making the Awards Dinner surroundings into such a beautiful setting, thank you, Sarah Jane, Betty Bowen and Helen Barto.

Thanks to Ray Waite for the wonderful slide show at our last general meeting. Over 40 were in attendance and all enjoyed the evening. We will have to repeat

this program.

If any member is going down to Big Bend, information on recent bird sightings can be obtained by calling our new friends, Cindy and Rich Simmons (915)477-2341. They live at Rio Grande Village.

We have another work day scheduled at Feather Lake. This one will be Sat, Dec 7, 8 AM. Come on out and help; work until you are tired or have to leave.

REMEMBER - by recycling your aluminum cans and junk (for our rummage sale), you can add money to the chapter treasury.

Have you missed the last 2 meetings? If so, you have missed a new feature. We are playing some selected bird calls as a quiz. In Jan., we are going to add slides so you will see each bird that you hear. This feature is to acquaint members and guests with birds common to our area.

REMEMBER the Christmas Bird Counts. We need your eyes to help spot those birds. If you can't identify what you see, perhaps someone else can.

\*\*\*\*

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.

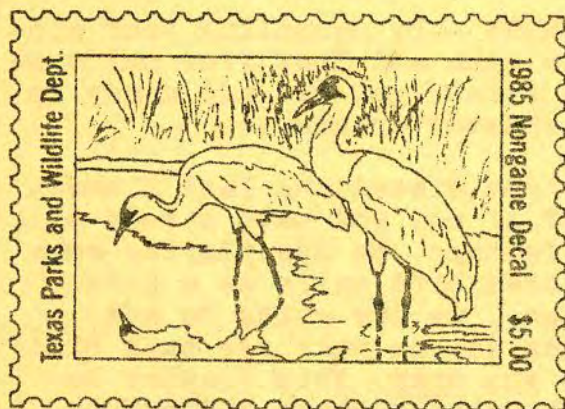
\*\*\*\*

The deadline for the January Roadrunner is December 30.



## CONSERVATION CAPSULES

**NONGAME WILDLIFE:** For the past year, you've enjoyed the rich diversity of birds and other wild things in Texas. Their beauty is a gift to us all. This Christmas, why not reciprocate? Consider a gift to Texas wildlife. Contribute to the Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund by buying a 1985 Texas Nongame Stamp or Decal. It's a way we can all say thanks.



YES, I want to help support the nongame wildlife and endangered species programs of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Please send me:

	Qty.	Each	Total
1985 Nongame Stamp		\$5	
1985 Nongame Decal		\$5	
Amt. Enclosed			

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

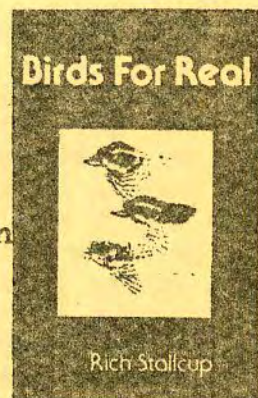
Please make checks payable to:

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 9655, El Paso, TX 79986

**FRANKLIN MTS. II:** The Coalition's first official act under its new name came at a City Plan Commission hearing the next day. The El Paso Mountain Committee, the advisory body that makes recommendations to the City concerning mountain development, has proposed certain revisions to El Paso's Mountain Development Area (MDA) and application of Planned Mountain Development (PMD) zoning to all land within the MDA. The Coalition strongly supports these proposals and said so at the hearing. In mountainous areas, PMD zoning constrains developers to cluster dwellings on more developable terrain and leave land of higher natural value protected as open space. The Plan Commission considered the Mountain Committee's proposals and voted to recommend to City Council that they be approved. Council is expected to take up the proposed changes in mid-to-late December. El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon also supports the proposed changes, and thanks are due Mary Bradley for representing us at the hearing and stating our position. (cont. on p. 6)

## Birds for Real

Veteran birder Rich Stallcup has taken a thorough, critical look at the 1983 edition of the Golden Press "Birds of North America" field guide and put his findings into a new, 100-page, self-published book. Birds for Real critiques the Golden Guide and provides corrections on fine points of identification, behavior and distribution on a species-by-species basis. The text is laid out in workbook format and must be used in conjunction with the Golden Guide to make sense. Birds for Real sells for \$7 and is available from Rich Stallcup, Box 36, Inverness, CA 94937.



**FRANKLIN MTS. I:** El Paso's Wilderness Park Coalition, to which El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon belongs, has a new name. After extensive discussion of the subject at its last 2 meetings, the group decided Nov 20 to change its name to Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition. The purpose of the change is to make the Coalition's connection with the Franklin Mts. clearer to the general public.

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## FRIENDS OF FEATHER LAKE

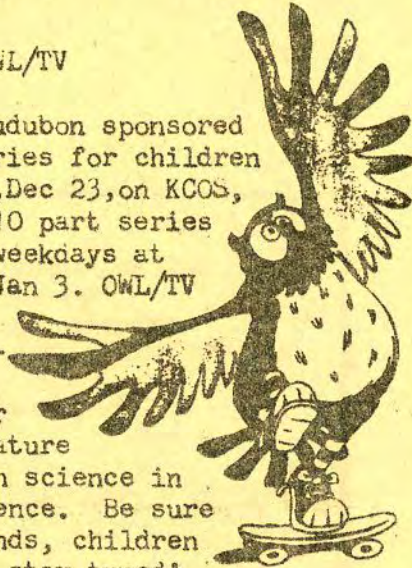
We gratefully acknowledge a donation from Mr. and Mrs. D. E. Baker to the Feather Lake Fund in memory of Lena McBee and Mary Belle Kiefer.

### NEW MEMBERS

We wish to extend a warm welcome to the following new members of NAS and our local chapter: Mario Muzquiz, Alva La Rue, Nancy Harvey, James Vaughn and L. Monroy.

### OWL/TV

OWL/TV, the new Audubon sponsored nature-science series for children is premiering Mon, Dec 23, on KCOS, channel 13. The 10 part series can be viewed on weekdays at 2:30PM, Dec 23 - Jan 3. OWL/TV will be entertaining and humorous but will also strive to engender a reverence for nature and an interest in science in its youthful audience. Be sure to tell your friends, children and colleagues to stay tuned! This will be a special treat for viewers during the holidays.



Our thanks to KCOS for materials on OWL/TV which they furnished for a showcase at Memorial Park Library. The display was a project of EPTPAS' Education Committee and was at the library during the month of Nov.

### WILD IN THE SUBDIVISION

A conference on Integrating Wildlife Conservation and New Residential Developments will be held in Tucson, Arizona, Jan 20-22, 1986. Its focus will be on how to ensure adequate consideration for wildlife in the planning, construction and marketing of new residential developments. For details, contact: William Shaw, School of Renewable Natural Resources, U. Ariz., Tucson 85721, ph. 602/621-7265.



December 1985

## BLACK-FOOTED FERRET: BACK ON THE BRINK?

Canine distemper has been discovered in the only known population of the endangered black-footed ferret. Ferrets are highly susceptible to this viral disease, and an emergency effort is now underway to keep it from wiping out the entire population.

In the late 1970s, some observers feared the black-footed ferret to be extinct, but the discovery of a population near Meeteetse, Wyoming in 1981 brightened the prospects for the species considerably. Researchers have since found this population to reach annual peak numbers of 130-150 in mid-summer and decline to an annual low of approximately 50 by the following spring. In 1985, there were signs that this annual decline had begun earlier and was more precipitous than in previous years. The initial reaction, though, was to consider the decline partly an artifact of inexact population estimates and partly a normal response to fluctuating environmental conditions (AUDUBON, Nov).

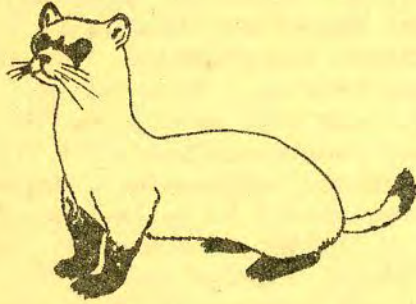
Now we know better. In September, a long-planned captive breeding program was started by taking 4 ferrets from the Meeteetse population into captivity. Two more, a male and a female, were captured in mid-October. But the male died soon thereafter, and the necropsy revealed canine distemper. The female also was found to have distemper, and it appears this pair transmitted the virus to the other 4 captive ferrets. The male clearly was exposed to the disease in the wild and the female may have been. How distemper was introduced into the wild population is not known.

Researchers expect all infected ferrets in the wild population to die. The Wyoming Game and Fish Dept., in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is now capturing as many wild ferrets as possible from the known infected area and holding them in isolation. Animals that remain healthy and that do not carry the distemper virus will be used for captive propagation. In addition to the infected area, 2 outlying areas may contain ferrets,

5-The Roadrunner

and these animals could possibly escape exposure to the disease. All activity other than normal ranching operations is being curtailed in these areas to reduce stress to the ferrets and reduce potential for spread of the disease.

If you want to help support the current ferret rescue effort, donations can be sent to: Ferret Fund, Wyoming Game and Fish Dept., 5400 Bishop Blvd., Cheyenne, WY 82002. /John Sproul/



(CONSERVATION CAPSULES cont. from p.4)

**TEXAS WATER:** On Nov 5, Texas voters overwhelmingly approved 2 constitutional amendments that put into effect the package of water legislation passed by the state legislature last spring. Proposition 1, the key measure, was approved by a 74%-26% margin statewide and by 82%-18% in El Paso County. By comparison, when Texans last considered a statewide water-development proposal in 1981, the vote was 42%-58% against statewide and 64%-36% in favor in El Paso County. The 1981 proposal totally ignored water management, water conservation and environmental protection. The 1985 proposal, in contrast, did address these issues, and that shifted emphasis undoubtedly played a role in its passage. The Natl. Audubon Soc., nevertheless, had opposed Proposition 1, largely because its environmental provisions were not strong requirements and could be ignored if an environmentally unsympathetic Texas Water Commission or Texas water Development Board chose to do so (LR; Oct, Nov). Now that the water package is approved, the challenge for conservationists will be to ensure that the water management, water conservation and environmental protection provisions of the package are in fact implemented.

**UPPER GILA WATER SUPPLY STUDY:** Last month's newsletter reported on the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (USBR's) intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the Upper Gila water Supply Project in southwest New Mexico. Included was an address to which you can write to get on the project mailing list. Unfortunately, the address was incomplete. The complete address: June Gibbons, Arizona Projects Office, USBR, 23636 N. 7th St., P.O. Box 9980, Phoenix, AZ 85068, ph. 602/870-2221.

/John Sproul/

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Chapter  
Membership Application

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

El Paso/Trans-Pecos  
W10                                  7XCH

Membership Category desired:

Individual/\$30 (H)       Senior Citizen  
 Family/\$38 (J)         Individual/\$21(N)  
 Student/\$18 (K)         Senior Citizen  
                                         Family/\$23 (P)

This is a  new  renewal membership.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Zip.....Phone.....

Please make checks payable to National Audubon Society. Mail to Bob Johnson, 5109 Paris, El Paso, TX 79924.



OBSERVATIONS  
October 24 - November 22

Interesting reports continued during this period with several species of accidental or casual status appearing.

LOONS - FALCONS

Four Horned Grebes observed at Northeast Oxidation Ponds (NEOP) 10/27 (BJ,mob) (#) are of note. That same day 3 Western Grebes and 1 Cormorant (sp.) were at the Newman Power Station (BJ,mob). A Wood Duck was studied at Rio Bosque Park 11/16 (GB,mob). Buffleheads were at NEOP 10/27 (BJ,mob) and 11/3 (BJ,Rw). A Ferruginous Hawk was seen flying over a desert area in the 7100 block of n. Mesa 11/5 (BR). Very notable was a Peregrine Falcon at Durling's 10/30 (Rw) (#).

QUAIL - WOODPECKERS

American Avocets were still being seen at NEOP 10/27 (BJ,mob) and 11/3 (BJ,Rw). Most exciting were 2 Dunlins observed at NEOP 10/27 (BJ,mob) (#). A lone Bonaparte's Gull was at NEOP 11/17 (BJ, Rw). Twenty-four Ring-billed Gulls were counted there 10/27 (BJ,mob). Anna's Hummingbirds were reported on 3 occasions. A pair was at Mt. Park 10/28 and 10/29 (JB), a male in e. El Paso 11/1 (BR), and 2 in Thunderbird Heights 11/9 (FB). Rufous Hummingbirds were still being seen in Mt. Park 10/29 (JB), Thunderbird Heights 11/9 (FB), and e. El Paso 11/19 (HJ).

FLYCATCHERS - VIREOS

A number of Barn Swallows were at NEOP 10/27 (BJ,mob). A Scrub Jay at Owen's 11/1 (BR) was the only 1 reported. A Verdin seen just west of Mundy's Gap at an elevation of approximately 5,800' on 10/27 (JS) was unusual. A Brown Creeper was observed at Owen's 11/2 (JS,et al.).

WARBLERS - WEAVER FINCHES

A "Myrtle" warbler was at Mt. Park 10/29 (JB). Three Black-chinned Sparrows were noted in the Franklins 10/27 (JS) and at least 7 were in W. Cottonwood Spring Canyon 11/2 (JS,mob). A Swamp Sparrow was observed at NEOP 11/17 (BJ,Rw), and a white-throated Sparrow at Owen's 11/5 (BR). Two female Hooded Orioles were still being seen in Mt. Park (JB), and a late Scott's Oriole was at Owen's 11/1 (BR). A Pine Siskin at NEOP 10/27

(BJ,mob) was the first to be reported this fall.

CONTRIBUTORS: Gloria Basden, Flora Bittick, Janet Brockmoller, Howard Jackson, Bob Johnson, John Sproul, Ray Waite.

Please report your bird observations to Bettie Roberts (591-0421). For rarities, you're encouraged to submit written details or photographs to the El Paso - Las Cruces Rare Birds Committee. In the account above, the following symbol was used:

Documentation: # - no details

/Bettie Roberts, Observations Editor/

GOOD SHOW

After months of waiting and anticipating, EPTPAS members and visitors were privileged to view Ray Waite's program of bird slides Nov 18 at the Garden Center. You've heard of saving the best until last. Well, Ray's slides were saved until the last of the year, and they were certainly some of the BEST we've ever seen. Who of us could forget the glowing sunrises at Bosque del Apache with sandhills and snow geese winging through the sky, the sunlit cardinal at Big Bend, or the Rufous-sided Towhee or Lawrence's Goldfinch at Hueco Tanks. Any of Ray's birds would enhance the covers of American Birds, Birding or Audubon. Thanks so much, Ray, for an unforgettable show.

ELECTIONS

The Nominating Committee is seeking your nominees for the positions of President-elect, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and 3 elected Directors for the Jan elections. Please call in your suggestions to Neil Keith (778-5937), Carlyle Navidomskis (852-4032) or Madeline and Al Gavit (852-3119).





# Season's Greetings

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