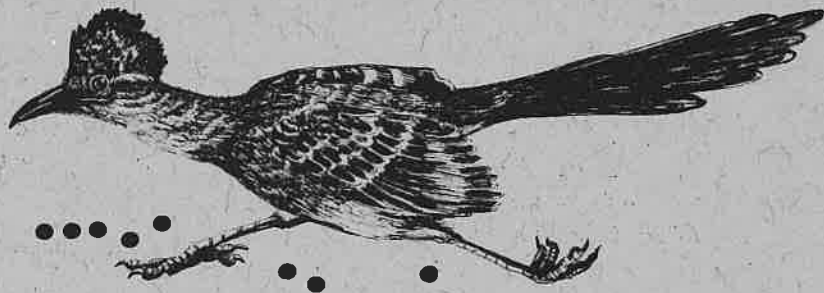


# the ROADRUNNER.....



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Kevin Zimmer, Editor

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, Wednesday, April 20, 7:30 p.m., El Paso Garden Center, 3105 Grant

Due to some unexpected problems on the home front, Steve West had to postpone his program on birds of Panama until a later date. In place of Steve's program, we will be putting together a program on attracting birds to your yard. Included will be discussions on the best kinds of feeders, bird baths, nest boxes, food, landscaping, etc., along with displays of these items. This should be a very informative and practical program for all of us who enjoy having birds in our yards.

FIELD TRIP: Aguirre Springs, Sunday, April 17, 5:30 a.m.

The group will leave for the Organ Mts. from the Sunrise Center parking lot (by the blue spire) at 5:30 a.m. Participants should bring their own lunch. For more details see the March newsletter.

SPRING BIG DAY COUNT: Saturday, April 30

This is always one of the highlights of our Audubon season. First we will meet at the Bleicher's house (2809 Hector) at 7:00 p.m. on Friday night (April 29) to organize the count. Then on Saturday we will split up into groups and fan out over the county. When night comes we will again gather (at a place to be announced later) for the compilation. Big day counts are always a lot of fun, as we get to see a lot of birds and enjoy a lot of good company. Our all-time record for the whole group is 150 species, and the best a single party has done was 89 (although one group did get 102 on the fall count). Our goal is to smash the group record, and each party will be competing to top the previous one-party record. To do this we need lots of birders. For all those who plan to attend the planning party, please phone Rob Bleicher at 591-7261 in advance. For those of you who can't make it to the party Friday night, but who wish to participate Saturday, call the editor at 751-0552.

FIELD TRIP: Durling's Farm-Randle's Pool, Sunday, May 15, 7:00 a.m.

This will be a short trip to two of our better migrant traps in the upper valley. Durling's Farm has consistently turned up rare birds in the

past. Last year on this date Barry and I found 40 species in less than an hour, including such rarities as Northern Waterthrush, Ovenbird, and Red-faced Warbler (the latter would have been a first verified record for Texas, but the wood lot is .2 miles inside New Mexico!). The group will meet at 7:00 a.m. at the bridge on Country Club Road.

MAY MEETING: Program to be announced later, Wednesday, May 18, 7:30 p.m.

\*\*\*\*\*FIELD TRIP TO GUADALUPE CANYON, Weekend of May 20,21, and 22\*\*\*\*\*

This is without a doubt our best trip of the year, and will be one of our most exciting trips ever. Guadalupe Canyon is situated in the southwest corner of New Mexico and the southeast corner of Arizona. It is considered to be one of the very best birding spots in the entire country. The plan is to leave El Paso on Friday afternoon and make it to the canyon that night. Many of us will be camping (few things beat sitting around a campfire to talk birding with good friends), but there should also be motels available in nearby Douglas, Arizona. We will bird the canyon all day Saturday and for half of the day on Sunday. We will head back for El Paso at noon on Sunday. If you are interested in going, please call the editor at 751-0552.

#### FROM THE EDITOR'S CORNER:

Occasionally I have people tell me that they have gotten somewhat bored with birding in El Paso. It seems that they get tired of seeing the same old things time after time. In my opinion these people have the wrong attitude. Sure, everyone likes to see new birds. I have been known to run all over the country just to see new birds. However, we birders are playing a self-defeating game. The object of it is to keep adding new birds to our list. Yet in doing so we are slowly decreasing our chances of seeing new birds in the future. Take me for example. I have seen 502 species of birds in the U.S. That is a pretty fair number, but still not a lot when you consider that some birders have seen over 700 species within our country. I can still add lots of life birds within the U.S. To do so however I must travel to places like California, Florida, Maine, or Alaska. There are only a few new species which I can expect to get in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. It will be some time, but eventually I hope to reach 700 myself. If I do achieve that goal however, I will have for the most part run out of potential lifers for the U.S. Since biologists do not usually draw huge salaries, and since I don't have any rich relatives who could will me a fortune, the chances aren't too great that I'll get to jet all over the world looking for new birds once I've exhausted the possibilities in the U.S. (unless I marry into money).

Does this mean I'll get bored having to see the same old U.S. birds all of the time? Of course not! I can't think of a single time that I have gone birding that I haven't learned something new about birds or bird identification. As in everything else, practice makes perfect. Have you ever seen people instantly identify a bird under poor light conditions and at incredible distances? You don't pick up techniques for doing this from books. The only way to do it is to really study the birds you see, even though you may have seen that species hundreds of times. Can you identify a Black-throated Sparrow just by the way it flies? How about a Ferruginous Hawk in flight from a Swainson's Hawk, just by the shape of the wings? I can do these things, and so can many

hauling the papers and cans on the 23rd. If you can help in this regard, or if you want further information on the project, call Mildred Smith at 755-7027.

CLEAN-UP DAY AT FEATHER LAKE WILL BE ON SATURDAY, MAY 7. We need volunteers with rakes, shovels, and hoes to help out. Please give us a hand. Clean-up will start at 9:00 a.m. For further information call Joe Guinn at 566-8438.

### RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS (Or, spring is on the way!)

From.....

Joe DiPasquale- at Memorial Park

March 20- 1 Long-eared Owl, 1 Eastern Phoebe (also seen on the 22nd), and 8 Red Crossbills.

March 30- 1 Western Flycatcher (very early), 1 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and the same old Red-breasted Nuthatch.

April 2- a Hooded Oriole in his yard

April 4- 1 Black-throated Gray Warbler at Memorial Park

April 8- 1 Bell's Vireo at Memorial Park

April 10- 1 Northern Oriole in his yard.

Bob Bleicher- Bob had a Long-eared Owl in his yard on March 27!

Kevin and Barry Zimmer-

March 23- first Black-chinned Hummingbird at the feeder

April 11- 1 Common Goldeneye (Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge), 3 Swainson's Hawks (Guadalupe Mts.), 20 Lesser Prairie Chickens (Caprock), 5 Snowy Plover (Bitter Lake), 8 Black-necked Stilts (Bitter Lake), 1 Ash-throated Flycatcher (Rattlesnake Springs), 3 Vermillion Flycatchers (Rattlesnake Springs), hundreds of Tree, Barn, Cliff, and Rough-winged Swallows (Bitter Lake), 1 Brown Thrasher (Rattlesnake Springs), and 2 Pine Siskins (Rattlesnake Springs).

April 2- 6 Black-necked Stilts, 11 American Avocets, and 7 Ring-billed Gulls at the sewage ponds

### NOTE:

Your editor would appreciate hearing of any sightings of Least or Western Sandpipers in the past week and in the weeks ahead. I am doing parasite research on these species at UTEP, and it is vital to my project that I obtain a sample from the spring population. If you find either of these species call me at 751-0552.

Bob Bleicher has been working at McGregor Range all winter, and has provided us with a checklist of birds to be found there in winter. The range is about 30 miles northeast of Fort Bliss.

Northern Harrier- Common. Actually one sees 3 Northern Harriers for

other birders who have taken the time to really study familiar species. There is an added benefit to this as well. By knowing all of the common species inside-out, you will be much more likely to single out the rare ones as something different.

Of course even with all of this, birding is much more exciting when you get to see something new. We who live in El Paso are especially fortunate in that we can often find new birds without leaving town. El Paso is a natural vagrant trap because of the mountains, the river, and the fact that our green valley is an oasis in this arid part of the country. Because of this we get more than the usual number of rare birds. After Barry and I had already seen everything new that we could expect to see in El Paso, we still got several lifers here. The first was the very rare Costa's Hummingbird which was discovered on an Audubon field trip to Indian Springs. Then came the Black-throated Blue Warbler in our back yard, the Williamson's Sapsuckers at Memorial Park, Barry's Louisiana Waterthrush at Hueco Tanks, and the Oldsquaw at McNary. And topping all of our unexpected lifers from El Paso were those incredible Masked Ducks from the Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds! It is the discovery of rarities like these that makes every trip exciting to me, because I never know when I might find another one.

With the advent of spring migration, we will probably turn up more rare birds, but not if people stay at home thinking they've seen everything around here. If you've tried everything else and find that your pulse still won't quicken at the thought of local birding, then take a trip to a new area. A couple of us managed that over the Easter weekend. Lucretia Chew took a trip to Idaho (not just for birding) and picked up five quality lifers: Gray Partridge, Barrow's Goldeneye, Sage Grouse (performing the courtship ritual), Bohemian Waxwing, and Bald Eagle (a pair on the nest)! Barry and I had the thrill of seeing our first Lesser Prairie Chickens over the weekend as well. We visited a dancing ground on the prairie about 40 miles east of Roswell. It was some experience to sit in the pre-dawn darkness with a cold wind blowing across the prairie, and to be able to hear the prairie chickens booming all around us. As it gradually got lighter we were able to obtain fantastic views of this endangered species as they danced. Trips like these not only provide us with new adventures in birding, but also make us appreciate our local species that much more when we get back.

\*\*\*\*\*SPECIAL NOTE\*\*\*\*\*

Don't forget the recycling drive which we are co-sponsoring along with the League of Women Voters and the Environmental Council.

Mildred Smith (the "tin-can lady") called me recently to give me some very good news. The city has agreed to give the Audubon Society all proceeds from the collection of newspapers as well as tin cans! This should contribute many more dollars to Feather Lake, so make sure to gather up any old papers that you have, and turn them in along with your tin cans on Saturday, April 23.

Pick-up points will be at Basset, Sunrise, and Coronado Shopping Centers. Collection time will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Mrs. Smith has informed me that she needs four pick-up trucks for

every 2 Red-tailed Hawks,  
Red-tailed Hawk- Seen daily in various locations, as well as perched on poles along the access road.  
American Kestrel- Only one sighting.  
Gambel's Quail- Present but elusive. Have flushed a covey accidentally several times.  
Mourning Dove- Flocks are present but seen randomly.  
Say's Phoebe- Seen daily, but as solitary birds.  
Horned Lark- Very abundant. They fly in flocks of 40-60. Several flocks can be seen daily.  
Cactus Wren- Present, but usually in limited numbers. Usually heard first.  
Bewick's Wren- Seen occasionally but usually only one bird at a time.  
American Robin- Uncommon. Seen intermittently; three or four one day and none the next.  
Loggerhead Shrike- Very common, seen daily.  
European Starling- At least a dozen can be seen each morning roosting on power lines.  
Western Meadowlark- Fairly common but not seen in large numbers.  
Pyrrhuloxia- Seen often. A flock of between 12-24 live along the roadside east of the base area.  
House Finch- Very abundant, seen daily.  
Black-throated Sparrow- Uncommon. A pair can usually be found at a couple of sites.  
White-crowned Sparrow- Very common and easily seen.

We'll be looking forward to seeing what Bob finds on the range this spring and summer.

MY SPECIAL THANKS once again to Lucretia Chew and Barry Zimmer who helped get this newsletter out.

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