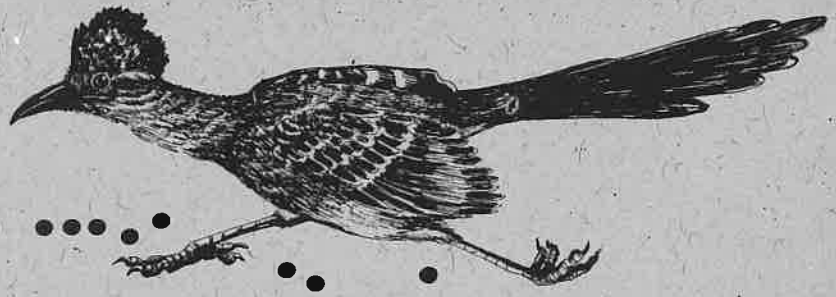


the ROADRUNNER.....



newsletter of
EL PASO-TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY
published at
8911 Galena El Paso, Texas 79904

February, 1977 Vol. VII No. 2

Kevin Zimmer, Editor

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, Wednesday, February 16, 7:30 p.m., El Paso Garden Center, 3105 Grant.

Gayle Eads, President of the local chapter of the Sierra Club, will be our guest speaker for the February meeting. She will be speaking on the Rio Grande channelization proposal, a subject of great interest to all of us who live in the Rio Grande Valley. For an excellent summary of the issue see the November issue of Audubon magazine.

FIELD TRIP, McNary-Ft. Hancock, Saturday, February 19, 6 a.m.

This trip will include stops at the United Farms Game Preserve, Tornillo Lakes, and nearby levees. We should see lots of ducks, hawks, and sparrows; and possibly some herons and egrets. We should also get Vermillion Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Marsh Wren, and Swamp Sparrow. This area has consistently turned up rare birds in the past. The last was an Oldsquaw on December 10. The group will leave from the Denny's at the intersection of I-10 and Geronimo at 6 a.m. Participants may wish to bring their own lunches.

FIELD TRIP, La Cueva Park, Saturday, March 5, 6 a.m.

La Cueva is a private park on the west side of the Organ Mountains. This combination of mountain-desert, wooded draws, and small springs should provide us with a pleasant setting for an interesting day of birding. Some of the birds which showed up there last winter include Williamson's Sapsucker, Dipper, and Fox Sparrow. The group will leave from the parking lot of the Royal Inn (Executive Center exit of the I-10 freeway) at 6 a.m.

MARCH MEETING: Wednesday, March 16, 7:30 p.m., El Paso Garden Center, 3105 Grant.

Dr. Arthur Harris, professor of biology at UTEP, will present what should be an extremely interesting program on paleoecology. This program (based on a paper which won him the faculty research award) will trace the evolution of southwestern wildlife over the past 35,000 years.

BOARD MEETING: A number of things were discussed at the January board meeting. One of the main concerns was that we need to work out a budget. The biggest news to come out of the meeting is that the society will be a co-sponsor with the UTEP Ecology Club, in bringing the Audubon film-lecture series to El Paso starting next fall. The series will bring some outstanding films and speakers to El Paso. Besides providing some fantastic entertainment, we are hoping that the films will generate some much-needed money for our treasury.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CORNER

I had 1977 pegged as a bad year for the El Paso Audubon Society. In fact, it looked for awhile as if "bad" might be a mild word to describe our outlook. However, the forecast has become considerably better since the beginning of the year.

We kicked off the new year with an informative program on adaptations of amphibians to arid environments by Dede Armentrout, our regional Audubon representative. The meeting drew very well, as attendance was higher than at any meeting since last January (1976). Our January field trip to Bosque del Apache was also very rewarding. But how long will this last? We started 1976 off in the same manner, with a well-attended meeting and field trip in January. But from there on it was mostly downhill. Eleven people made the trip to the Bosque last month. This was in spite of the very early start, the 175-mile drive, and the miserable weather. Why then do some trips which are much closer to home, involve only half of the day, and come on days when the weather is perfect, only draw a few people.

Programs have been the same way. Attendance has been very poor over the last year, even though we have had some very good programs. We will be trying to schedule some very interesting programs which will cover a variety of topics in the months ahead. However, it's hard to get good speakers if we can't guarantee a decent-sized audience.

On the brighter side, I have been cheered by several recent developments. Getting Mr. and Mrs. Frisch settled as caretakers at Feather Lake has been a very big plus. We have also gotten some good publicity on Feather Lake through Lance Murray of the El Paso Times. I am glad to announce that we will have a couple of real pros working on publicity this year. The job will be split between Roxanna Hagerman and Ed Gilboe. Roxanna works for an advertising agency and Ed works for one of the local radio stations. Roxanna has also kindly volunteered to help with the newsletter, which was certainly good news to your editor. Now if I can just keep Barry and Joe DiPasquale from running off, I'll have a staff of three. Of course I'm also very excited about bringing the Audubon film series to El Paso. Our co-sponsors, the UTEP Ecology Club, are to be commended for initiating this action.

Hopefully, things will continue to look up. Nothing would be a bigger step in the right direction than to have good attendance at meetings and field trips for the whole year, and not just January. So please join us. We have some interesting programs and exciting field trips planned for the next several months. Let's make the most of it.

PLEASE NOTE:

On Tuesday, March 10, at 8 p.m., Dr. Richard Leakey will be lecturing at UTEP. Dr. Leakey is a world-renowned anthropologist who has made several contributions to our knowledge of primitive man. The lecture will be open to the public, and should be quite interesting. For further information call me at the following number---751-0552.

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FIELD TRIP REPORT: Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge 1/22

Eleven people made the long drive (175 miles) to Bosque del Apache in spite of the miserable weather, and all were rewarded by seeing at least one of the famous young Whooping Cranes which are spending the winter there. Ruby Allen and Kevin and Barry Zimmer made it to the refuge shortly after dawn in hopes of pinning down any rarities before the main group arrived. In doing so they observed two of the five whoopers. The first was one of last year's birds, as was evident from his nearly adult plumage. The rest of the group arrived about ninety minutes later, and everyone got good views of at least one of the two first-year birds that were seen during the day.

In addition to the three whoopers, the group was treated to thousands of ducks, Snow Geese, and Sandhill Cranes; as well as Great Blue Herons, Ross' and Canada Geese, several species of hawks, 3 Bald Eagles, Ring-necked Pheasants, and several species of sparrows including Swamp and White-throated. A total of fifty-two species were observed by the group within the confines of the refuge. Everyone left the refuge shortly after noon. Two parties stopped at Caballo Dam on the way home, and turned up three more Bald Eagles, including one adult. All in all it was an extremely enjoyable field trip for everyone involved.

LISTING CONTEST:

The fourth quarter lists are all in, and the winner was our recently departed President, Charlie Jensen. Charlie won with a total of 128 species for the quarter. Kevin Zimmer took first place for the year's contest, with brother Barry a close second, and Charlie third. Each quarter contest produced a different winner, and the competition was often quite keen. Unfortunately, only about a half-dozen people continued to submit lists after the first quarter. Because of this we have decided to scrap the contest, at least for this year. We did get a lot of good out of the contest. Besides being a lot of fun and providing us with an incentive to bird more often, it gave us a much better idea of bird distribution in the area.

STRAY FEATHERS & OTHER TIDBITS:

The most recent issue of American Birds (covering the breeding season) was loaded with exciting reports from our three "home" states of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Some of the juicier ones follow.

Berylline Hummingbirds (a vagrant from Mexico) nested at the Southwestern Research Station in the Chiricahuas this past summer. This marked only the fourth recorded appearance of this species north of the border, and the first nesting attempt. Two young hatched but it is not known if they ever fledged.

Four White-eared Hummingbirds were found in the Animas Mountains of southern New Mexico in mid-July. This represents not only the largest number of this species found in one spot in the U.S. in recent years; but also the first verified records for New Mexico.

Most exciting was the reappearance of the Ruff-collared Nightjar (formerly Ridgeway's Whip-poor-will) in Guadalupe Canyon this past summer. Bill Baltosser of Las Cruces tape-recorded the song of this species in the Arizona end of the canyon in early July. This was the first documented record for the country since 1960. We are hoping to get Bill for a program this spring.

The elusive Rufous-capped Warbler put in another appearance at Big Bend National Park in August. This latest sighting seems to strengthen the argument that this Mexican vagrant is actually a summer as well as winter resident in the park.

El Paso was not to be outdone by surrounding areas as regards to rare birds this past summer. Frances Williams, American Birds editor for the Southern Great Plains Region; called our two adult male Masked Ducks (at the Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds) "the most exciting record of the summer."

The Gila River Christmas Count (taken in December) turned up 92 species, including a Surf Scoter and an incredible NUTTING'S FLY-CATCHER! If the flycatcher is verified it will be the second U.S. record for this Mexican species.

The Las Cruces Christmas Count (12/18/76) also turned up 92 species, including such unusual birds as Western Grebe, Whistling Swan, Hooded Merganser, Long-eared Owl, Eastern and Mountain Bluebirds, and White-throated and Swamp Sparrows. The mergansers and grebes were at Burn Lake (located right along I-10), and may still be there.

Outside of the Bosque del Apache field trip, few of us have been out birding lately. There have been some interesting sightings which have come to my attention however. There has been a flock of about 50 Canada Geese staying at Feather Lake, along with four Red-breasted Mergansers (quite rare), and loads of Common Mergansers. The Red-breasted Nuthatch that we got on our El Paso Christmas Count is still hanging around the tennis courts at Memorial Park. Joe DiPasquale turned up a Pygmy Nuthatch in the same area on 1/29.

Patti and Al Canaris observed approximately 10,000 ducks and geese feeding in a flooded alfalfa field in the lower valley on 1/22. The question arises as to whether these birds represent a winter-

resident population or an early migratory movement. The Whites report a Rufous-sided Towhee, White-throated Sparrow, and a flock of 25 Lesser Goldfinches from their block. We have a large flock of juncos coming to our feeders every day. Most of them are Dark-eyed Juncos (Oregon race), but there are several Gray-headed and one Dark-eyed of the Slate-colored race. Bob Bleicher turned up a pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets at Hueco Tanks for a second park record.

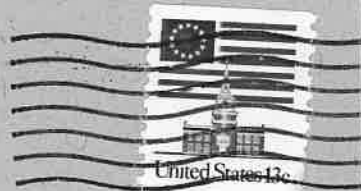
Lucretia Chew, Bill Hoppes, and Geth and Ed White participated in a very enjoyable Sierra Club field trip to Box Canyon (south of McNary) on Saturday, February 4. Fifty species of birds were seen including lots of ducks, an Osprey, and a Vermillion Flycatcher.

TWO VERY GOOD MAGAZINES ON BIRDS are American Birds and Birding. The former is published by the National Audubon Society and comes out six times a year. It contains many interesting articles (written for the layman) on birds, as well as good photos and a region-by-region report on bird sightings for the entire United States and Canada. The April issue contains the published results from every Christmas Count taken in North America. Subscription price is \$8.00 a year. To subscribe, send check to American Birds, 950 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

Birding is the official publication of the American Birding Association, and is also bi-monthly. This is a very enjoyable magazine to read. The purpose of the organization is to promote the hobby of birding as a sport, and the magazine reflects this goal. Articles concern bird-finding areas all over the U.S. and Canada (with occasional articles on finding birds in Mexico, South America, Europe, etc.), articles on bird-identification (with many tips that aren't in the field guides), and other general interest material. In addition to this, they publish life, state, and year's lists sent in by birders from all over the country. To join the A.B.A. (thereby subscribing to Birding) send \$7.50 (\$10.00---family) to Benton Basham, ABA Membership Chairman, Box 6, Dunlap, Tennessee 37327.

SPECIAL THANKS go to the Chews, who helped me get this issue of the newsletter done, even though it was no longer their responsibility.

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