

the ROADRUNNER



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

Editor: Sarah Dodds

December 1981

Volume 11, Number 10

GENERAL MEETING

FRI. 11 DECEMBER 1981, 7:30 PM, Fiesta Room, Hillmark Apartments, 5000 Alabama St. CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS--1981. Our December general meeting will be a planning session for our two Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs). We will review organizational details and finalize teams for both the El Paso and Hueco Tanks CBCs. As an added feature, Kevin Zimmer will conduct a bird-identification workshop, a review of some simple and not-so-simple identification problems with birds you are likely to see on the counts. We urge members and non-members alike to be at this meeting and to participate in the CBCs. If you want to take part in a count but can't attend the meeting, contact one of the compilers, Joe DiPasquale (565-2969) or Al Gavit (852-3119) for the Hueco Tanks count. Need directions to the meeting room? Call Joe Guinn (566-8438). #

FIELD TRIPS

SAT. 5 DECEMBER. LAKE HOLLOMAN. Meet at 6:30 AM at the blue spire in Sunrise Shopping Center, 8500 Dyer. Bring lunch and liquids. Lake Holloman, immediately n.e. of White Sands Natl. Monument in New Mexico, is a site we've never visited. The promise of shorebirds and a wide variety of waterfowl is made. Forrest Sprester, Environmental Officer for Holloman AFB, will be our leader. Contact: John Sproul (545-5157 h, 541-6126 w).

FIELD TRIPS (cont.)

SAT.-SUN. 16-17 JANUARY 1982. Bosque del Apache Natl. Wildlife Refuge. Details next month. #

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The Christmas Bird Count (CBCs), North America's largest cooperative ornithological exercise, are almost here. From humble beginnings in 1899, when Frank Chapman suggested the "Christmas Census" as a nonlethal alternative to Christmas hunting contests, these counts have grown...and grown. Last year, 33,802 birders took part in 1,358 counts and tallied over 49 million birds.

Why such enthusiastic participation? For some it's the competition; for others, the pure pleasure of birding. Still others enjoy contributing through CBCs to ornithological knowledge. For everyone, the CBCs are a fun way to cap the birding year.

What's involved? On a selected day near Christmas, we fan out and count all birds seen within a 15-mile-diameter circle. We divide into teams, each team covers a given area, and each is led by a person who knows that area. Newcomers are welcome; you have a great opportunity to learn from veterans on your team. To increase the scientific value of our CBC results, we emphasize counting all birds seen, rather than just compiling the longest possible list of species. (continued on page 2)

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SAT. 19 DECEMBER 1981. El Paso Count. Over 40 years old, the El Paso Count is probably the only CBC that includes 3 states (Chihuahua, New Mexico and Texas) in 2 nations (Mexico and the USA). The count circle is centered on the south end of Mt. Franklin. Last year we equaled our all-time high for participants, as 32 observers saw 8,887 individual birds of 92 species (including a first count record for a Short-eared Owl). Other all-time highs are 104 species in 1976 and 60,200 individual birds in 1953.

Joe DiPasquale (565-2969) will compile this year's count. Contact Joe if you can be on one of the count teams. Even if you can't be afield with us 19 Dec. you can contribute by recording observations at your backyard feeder. If you have a feeder and will be able to keep a tally of birds on count day, if even for a few minutes, contact the feeder compiler, Elza Gilboe (772-1942). Elza also will be the clearinghouse for rare-bird reports. Call her if you see anything unusual, and she'll try to dispatch an observer to confirm it.

After the count, at 5 PM, we will meet at Kris and Leon Kohlhoff's (6945 La Cadena, El Paso, 581-3565) for a pot-luck dinner and listing of the day's species. If you wish, you can leave your contribution to the dinner with Kris the day before.

Please remember the participation fee for the count, necessary to defray the cost of publishing our results in AMERICAN BIRDS, is \$1.50 for all field and feeder participants.

SAT. 2 JANUARY 1982. HUECO TANKS COUNT. The Hueco Tanks CBC, centered on a peak in the Hueco Mts. 1.9 mi. south of US Hwy 62/180, began in 1974. Last year, an all-time high of 29 observers saw 2834 birds of 52 species, including 12 sparrow species. Other all-time

HUECO TANKS COUNT (cont.)

highs are 75 species in 1974 and 3018 individual birds in 1976.

Al Gavit (852-3119) is the Hueco Tanks compiler; contact him to participate. Al and his wife Madeline also will host the pot-luck dinner and "species countdown" following this CBC. It begins at 5 PM at 1712 Opossum Circle in Horizon City. You can bring food with you to the dinner or deliver it the day before.

Once again, the participation fee is \$1.50 for all participants. #

BOOKFAIR WRAP UP

Thanks to some super volunteers-- Lucile Swick, Bob Johnson, Jo Ellen Warolin, Sid Shepperd, Bertha Barnhart, Berttye Barnhart, Elza Gilboe, Art Arteaga, Joe Guinn, and Jo Nagel--we had a super Bookfair, November 7th at B. Dalton Bookseller, Cielo Vista Mall. For our efforts, B. Dalton will donate \$378.26 to Audubon. We'll use it to repay Dr. Snyder's air fare to our ACT meeting and for our Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary.

A special thanks to Ms. Judy Coons who is manager of B. Dalton for her cooperation and interest in our chapter. /Jane Fowler/

CHRISTMAS IS RUMMAGE SEASON

You've got all those Christmas presents you have to hide, right? But your closets are so full of junk, you've no place to hide them. What to do? Call Audubon elves for help! They will come to your house to collect for the next rummage sale, which will be held in early 1982.

Elves who have volunteered are: Peggy Heisel (821-0989), Joe Guinn (566-8438) or Jane Fowler (772-0296). Busy elves are happy elves.

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AUDUBON COUNCIL OF TEXAS

ACT (continued)

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society hosted the Audubon Council of Texas (ACT) meeting and field trip on October 31 and November 1. All delegates reported that the ACT meeting was a success. The delegates have expressed their thanks for the kindnesses and courtesies extended to them on their visit to El Paso. We wish to thank the following people:

Peggy Heisel, who was responsible for obtaining our excellent guest speaker, Dr. Noel Snyder of the California Condor Research Project.

To Nagel, for providing the publicity for our meeting and our guest speaker in the newspapers and on television.

Jane Fowler, who was in charge of refreshments and the delicious lunch arrangements. Jane also set up our evening dinner at Carlos and Mickey's.

Frances Herron (non-member), Jo Nagel, Sarah Jane Dodds, Jean Coyle, Joyce Davis, Peggy Heisel, Elizabeth Guinn, Gretchen Bleicher and Jane Fowler all contributed food for lunch.

Cindy Linam, Kris Kohlhoff and Sarah Jane Dodds who volunteered to be hosts for overnighting council members. (They considered it a big treat. Ed.)

Jeff Donaldson, Kevin and Barry Zimmer who led the Sunday morning field trip. Kevin's birding expertise is equaled only by his ability to communicate with tact and patience with more ordinary mortals. His brother Barry is following in his older brother's remarkable footsteps. Jeff Donaldson is a relative new-comer to our desert, but has quickly become resident expert. Special thanks to this keen-eyed triumverate!

(continued next column)

A big round of applause goes to our chapter president, John Sproul, who along with John Green and Joan Duncan, gave an excellent afternoon program on the Franklin Mountains State Park. Also, it was his overseeing of all the committees that made for a smooth running ACT meeting.

Delegates attending the ACT meeting were Kitty Orr of Houston Chapter, Bob Viets of Frontera Chapter, (Harlingen), Marion Einerson of Llano Estacado Chapter (Ropesville), Mary Moyer and Winnie Webster of Texas Panhandle Chapter (Amarillo), Becky Lasley of Travis Chapter (Austin), and Helen Barto, El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter. National Audubon, Southwest Region was represented by Rhea Copening.

New ACT officers are Bill Craighead of Ft. Worth Chapter, President; Becky Lasley, Vice President; Marion Einerson, Secretary; and Bob Viets, Treasurer.

The next ACT meeting will be in Rockport, Texas on Saturday, April 24, 1982. This meeting will be in conjunction with an Audubon Regional meeting. /Helen Barto/

HALLOWEEN TRICK

If you weren't at the Halloween night meeting of the ACT to hear Dr. Noel Snyder's excellent program, then you missed the biggest laugh of the Audubon year. Below is a picture of our president, John Sproul, as he introduced Dr. Snyder.



FIELD TRIPS FOLLOW - UP

On October 24-25, ten Auduboners observed 34 species of birds at McKittrick Canyon and Rattlesnake Springs. Birds worthy of mention area Lewis' Woodpecker, a male Vermilion Flycatcher, and a flock of Cedar Waxwings.

For the special November 1 trip to Hueco Tanks State Park, 22 observers, many of them ACT members, as well as Dr. Noel Snyder, head research biologist with the California Condor Research Center, aided in counting 54 species of avifauna. Memorable species see were a male Merlin, several red-naped Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 5 Scrub Jays, as well as several Townsend's Solitaires, a Golden-crowned Kinglet, and a female Cassin's Finch.

On November 8, ten participants observed 24 species on a return trip to Hueco Tanks. Among the species seen were a Prairie Falcon, Scrub Jay and a possible Sage Thrasher.

/Jeff Donaldson/

RANDEL POOL ALERT

As of Sunday, November 8, I noticed more indications that the already existing residential area just south of Country Club Road, on the New Mexico side of the river, is to extend south almost to Randel's Pool. According to the real estate representative with whom I spoke, the area will remain much the same as it is now because of present land use restrictions; the realators wish that it be a country home development. Let us all as Audubon members hope that these developmental plans make only a minimum impact on the area because for species such as the Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo, to name but a few, a bosque area is essential to their survival. It will be a sad day if this area is disturbed to the extent that these birds fly elsewhere.

/Jeff Donaldson/

OBSERVATIONS

Grebes through Falcons

On 11/8, a Western Grebe was found in the parking lot of the PX at Ft. Bliss. It was brought to Carol Beach, a local bird rehabilitator in n.e. El Paso, who is presently caring for it. A report of a single female Wood Duck came in from a home in the upper valley off Country Club Rd. (BF, fide JF). This particular bird stayed in the area from 11/8-11/12. A single White-faced Ibis tarried in a flooded area off Gardner Rd. in the upper valley on 10/25 (JD, BZ, KZ). A Ferruginous Hawk, the first one seen this fall, was in the Newman Rd. area on 10/22 (JD, BZ). A pair of adult Golden Eagles were observed at Hueco Tanks on 11/10 (CJ, BZ). On 11/12, a Prairie Falcon flew over Gadsden High School in the upper valley (TD). There was a report of a Peregrin Falcon just east of El Paso off Montana ST. on 10/27. The sex and age were unknown (JC, fide JS). On 11/1, a male Merlin was seen near the south dam at Hueco Tanks (KZ), while still another male Merlin was observed at Durling's Farm on 11/10 (CJ, BZ).

Gallinules through Woodpeckers

A single Common Gallinule was on the first pond at Hueco Tanks on 11/10 (CJ, BZ). On 10/25, a Flammulated Owl was closely observed at Durling's Farm (BZ, JD) and photos were taken (BZ, KZ). This was the first sighting in several years for this species in our check list area. Another report of a small owl came from the Wilderness Park Museum on 11/9, when this bird was seen by a sizeable group of people and photographed. A positive identification will have to wait until the pictures are developed (JB, SS). A Long-eared Owl was sighted near Hueco Tanks State Park on 11/10 (CJ, BZ).

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OBSERVATIONS (continued)

There was a male Anna's Hummingbird in a west El Paso yard from 10/23-11/8 (EK), while yet another report of a possible male Anna's came in from Mt. Park on 11/13 (JB). A Yellow-shafted Flicker was seen at Hueco Tanks on 11/10 (CJ,BZ) and again at Hueco Tanks on 11/11 (CJ,KZ). At least 3 red-naped Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were in Hueco Tanks on 11/1 (m.ob) while on 11/10, a single bird of this species was also seen at Hueco Tanks (CJ,BZ)

Passerines

On 10/25, an Eastern Phoebe was seen and photographed just east of Diez Lagos in the upper valley (BZ, JD). Also on 10/25 there was a late Dusky Flycatcher at Durling's Farm (JD,BZ). A Stellar's Jay was observed in Memorial Park in central E.P. on 10/22 (TD, fide JS), while another Stellar's Jay was sighted on 11/2 in the Coronado Hills area (MD, fide SD). Several small groups of Scrub Jays were seen in Hueco Tanks on 11/1 (m.ob) as well as 11/10, in the same area when six were observed (CJ,BZ). Finally, a lone Scrub Jay was spotted on 11/8 south of Randel's Pool (JD). A flock of nearly 100 Common Crows were seen near El Paso's airport on 11/2 (EG), while a single Common Crow was near Randel's Pool on 11/8 (JD). On 10/29, in central El Paso, a lone Red-breasted Nuthatch was observed (SW). Several Brown Creepers traveled through our area, with one bird in the Horizon City area on 11/2 (MG), another bird was heard just west of Randel's Pool on 11/8 (JD), and two birds were seen at Hueco Tanks on 11/11 (CJ, KZ). Six happy wren species were at Randel's Pool on 11/8 (JD). A Brown Thrasher was at Durling's Farm on 10/25 (JD,BZ,KZ). On 11/6 in n.e. El Paso, six possible Western Bluebirds were seen (JD). Small groups of Townsend's Solitaires were observed at Hueco Tanks

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on 11/10 (m.ob) and again on 11/10 in the same area (CJ,BZ), as well as a flock of eight birds in n.e. El Paso on 11/5 (JD). A male and female pair of Black-tailed Gnatcatchers were seen just outside Hueco Tanks on 11/11 (CJ,KZ). On 11/1, at Hueco Tanks a Golden-crowned Kinglet was observed (m.ob). There was a male Phainopepla at Hueco Tanks on 11/1 (m.ob) and again in the same area on 11/10 (CJ,BZ). Several late Townsend's Warblers were in the Randel Pool area on 10/25 (JD,BZ). A female Hooded Oriole was in a Mt. Park yard on 11/3 (JB). At Hueco Tanks on 11/1, a female Cassin's Finch was closely observed (KZ,m.ob). Top honors in the finches go to a female Purple Finch that was seen in Diez Lagos on 10/25 (BZ,JD). Eight American Goldfinches were seen at Diez Lagos on 11/8 (JD). On 10/2 a dead Grasshopper Sparrow was found in the n.e. El Paso Datsun parking lot (JDP,SW), a good and unusual find. A Clay-colored Sparrow was observed at Hueco Tanks on 11/10 (CJ,BZ). On 10/25 a White-throated Sparrow was heard at Durling's Farm (BZ). One or possibly two Swamp Sparrows were at Diez Lagos on 11/8 (JD).

List of observers: Tom Baker, Carol Beach, Janet Brockmoller, John Caraway, Tony Debona, Jr., Joe DiPasquale, Mary Ann Dodson, Sarah Dodds, Jeff Donaldson, Bill Follett, Madeline Gavit, Ed Gilboe, Charlie Jensoen, Earle King, Sid Shepperd, Scott Wilson, Barry Zimmer, Kevin Zimmer.

SPECIAL NEW MEXICO OBSERVATIONS

On 10/22, Barry and Kevin Zimmer and Jeff Donaldson were at Aguira Springs and heard 2, perhaps 3, Pygmy Owls. Seen that day were Stellar's Jays, Plain Titmouse, Townsend's Solitaires, Western Bluebirds, Golden-crowned Kinglet and a very casual and late Hermit Warbler and a Black-chinned Sparrow.

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OBSERVATION EDITOR CHANGE

Bettie Roberts will write the next two Observations columns. Report your notable finds to her at: 2817 Cabot, El Paso 79935; 591-0421. Many thanks to Jeff Donaldson for ably handling this task in recent months. He is now going to concentrate on finishing his book on birds of the Franklins. We are most grateful for his help. #

FEATHER LAKE NEWS

The ducks are back at Feather Lake; drop by and see them. Our wildlife sanctuary, located at 9500 N. Loop Rd., 0.3 miles n.w. of Ave. of the Americas, is open every Saturday, 8-11 AM. Also, we're always looking for new helpers to show visitors around the lake. Call Ginny Baker (562-9461) or Jeannete Cole (565-1957) if you can help. Organized groups desiring tours should call Ginny or Jeannete in advance.

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1982 CHAPTER ELECTIONS

At our January general meeting we will elect chapter officers for 1982. We need candidate for vice president, president-elect and secretary-treasurer. Know a good candidate? Want to get even with somebody? Want to run yourself? Contact our nominating committee: Bob Johnson, Chair (751-0125), Berttye Barnhart (592-3651) or David Weinstein (584-7935). #

YOU FOLKS ARE GREAT!

Look around this newsletter and you'll see a lot of "thank you's". That's because so many of you have done so much for Audubon this year. I could use this entire newsletter to detail everyone's many contributions, but I know you'd rather read the Observations column. So I'll leave it at this: Merry Christmas and my thanks to you all for making 1981 a very satisfying year.

/John Sproul/

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