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The



ROADRUNNER

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society

Volume 23 (2)

April-May, 1993

The Gray Ranch

GENERAL MEETING - Monday, April 19, 7:30 PM - Our guest speaker for the April General Meeting will be Mr. Ben Brown, manager of the Gray Ranch Preserve. The Gray Ranch is a Nature Conservancy preserve located south of Animas, New Mexico.

Those of us who have followed the Nature Conservancy's struggle to acquire the Gray Ranch know the value of this remote preserve. It has attracted the attention of ranchers, conservationists, legislators, even Ted Turner and Jane Fonda. Now we can be thankful that it is finally under the protection of the Nature Conservancy.

Mr. Brown will provide an overview of the Gray Ranch facilities and opportunities for birding and wildlife watching. The Gray Ranch may be a good destination for future EP/TPAS field trips. Also, anyone planning to attend the Memorial Day weekend trip to the Chiricahua Mountains may find the Gray Ranch an interesting side trip if you have a little extra time to spend. The meeting will be held at the Garden Center, 3105 Grant in Memorial Park.

Water and the Border

GENERAL MEETING - Monday, May 17, 7:30 PM - Our general meetings occasionally are of such interest or importance that they draw many people from our community. The first planning session for the Franklin Mountains State Park was an example. The May General Meeting should be one of those as our guest speaker will be Mr. Hector Villa, Director of Border Affairs of the Texas Water Commission. If water quality and water usage in the Rio Grande Valley is a concern of yours, this is the meeting to attend.

Mr. Villa will be addressing these concerns as well as present and proposed legislation affecting our water quality and usage. There will be a question and answer period following Mr. Villa's presentation.

The public is cordially invited. The meeting will be held at the Garden Center in Memorial Park.

// Craig Braginton //

Audubon Activist

Senator Carl Parker has introduced a bill (Senate Bill 179) which amends the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code to open seasons for recreational hunts in state parks, forts, natural areas and other state owned sites of sufficient size to accommodate hunting. Parker's bill changes existing law by adding the word "recreational" - a small word for Parker, but a giant word for conservationists.

In practice, the Parks and Wildlife Commission has only allowed hunting in state parks when overpopulation of deer or the presence of feral or exotic species have degraded the habitat. This year, dozens of new parks were added to a recommended "hunt list" without biological data to justify the need. When Sierra Club and Audubon challenged the additions, those parks without biological justifications were dropped from the hunt list. Parker's bill is seen as providing the loophole to relieve Parks and Wildlife Department of the burden of having biological justification to hold a hunt on a state park. In addition, the open season in state parks for hunting of waterfowl, quail, turkey, white wing and mourning doves, pheasant, lions, bobcats, squirrels... any species that can be legally hunted in Texas.

Audubon's position on state park hunts has been to agree to hunts that are needed to eliminate feral or exotic species or to respond to overpopulation problems that have become severe enough that important habitat is degraded. We have challenged new hunts when we believed that the Parks and Wildlife Department lacked data to support the need for a hunt. If Parker's bill passes, we will lose much of our leverage to oppose unnecessary hunts on additional state parks or expansion to recreational

hunting on state parks which have been previously hunted only to solve problems. The Audubon Regional staff recommends that Audubon members oppose this bill.

What you can do:

Write or call your state senator and state representative and oppose Parker's bill (SB 179). No companion bill has been filed in the

House, but you can write your representative now and express opposition to Parker's bill and its companion bill when it does appear.

Senator Parker has introduced SB 179 to open seasons for hunting of all legally hunted species in all state parks where hunting would be practicable. Regional staff strongly recommends that members write their state senators and representatives to oppose this legislation. Audubon staff has drafted counter legislation.

State Senator Peggy Rosson
One Capitol Square
Room #323
Austin, TX 78701
Fax: 512-463-0358
Phone: 512-463-0129

Representatives:
Jack Vowell
Pat Haggerty
Paul Moreno
Nancy McDonald
Tony Parra
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78769

Write Governor Richards and urge her to veto the Parker bill if it passes. Also urge her to appoint more park champions to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. Currently the Parks and Wildlife Commission votes have been going 7 - 1 against good park policies.

Hon. Ann Richards
P.O. Box 1242A
Austin, Texas 78711

Governor's Hotline: 1-800-252-9600

Bitterlake NWF

This is an overnite trip on the weekend of April 10 and 11 to the Bitterlake National Wildlife Refuge in the vicinity of Roswell, NM. Camping is available and there are a number of good motels in Roswell. Bring food and refreshments for the trip up and back. Plan on meeting at Trans-Mountain Rd. and I-10 on Saturday morning at 7:30 AM. We'll rise early on Sunday to try to catch the Lesser Prairie Chicken in its mating ritual. The trip back will take us through Carlsbad and a stop near the caverns for hawks and spring migrants attracted by natural springs. For specifics, contact Hugh Jameson at 751-7952.

Alamogordo, NM

Meet at Northpark Mall (in front of the Popular) at 7:30 AM on Saturday, April 24 for an excursion to Alamogordo and the surrounding area. The trip will take about eight hours, so bring food and drink for the day. Along the way we'll be stopping at Dog Canyon and La Luz Canyon as well as the lakes in Hollaman AFB area. We can expect to see late spring migrants, a variety of hawks, Golden Eagles and perhaps birds from the montane ecosystem. The trip leader is Hugh Jameson and he should be contacted to make reservations and for other details.

ON THE TRAIL

Central El Paso Parks

Sometimes the best birding can be found close to home. Meet at the Garden Center at 7:30 AM on Sunday, May 9 for a pleasant stroll through Memorial Park and Arroyo Park. Memorial Park has a reputation for attracting warblers, flycatchers, creepers and various odds and ends that you may not see elsewhere in the city. Your editor once had the honor of spotting a Lazuli Bunting cheerfully feeding among the weeds on a hillside in this park. Next we'll drive over to Arroyo Park for an entirely different ecosystem and, therefore, different birds. This is an excellent field trip for the beginning birder or to introduce a friend to the art of birdwatching. The trip leader is Bart Rumaker and he can be reached at 544-6432

Chiricahua Mts.

The Memorial Day weekend, May 29 - 31, will see us traveling to the Chiricahua Mountains of Southeastern Arizona for the kind of birding that is just not found anywhere else. You'll be able to see Blue-throated and Magnificent Hummingbirds, Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers, Painted Redstarts and the Yellow-eyed Junco. Best of all will be the Elegant Trogon. Bob Johnson, the leader for this trip, will secure campsites. However, if camping doesn't appeal to you, try the Cave Creek Ranch (602-558-2334), Cathedral Rock Lodge (602-558-2254), or the Portal Store/Bed and Breakfast (602-558-2223). If you plan to go, contact Bob at 751-0125/757-1876.



The El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society wildlife refuge is located at 9500 N. Loop Dr., El Paso.

As expected, Feather Lake's water level declined through January and February. Down, down, down it went, the mudflats again expanding. Slowly but surely, work progressed on the new bridge over the lake inlet. The temporary earthen dam across the inlet remained in place. And the irrigation season approached.

Usually, excess irrigation water fills the lake in early March. Would the bridge work be far enough along to allow breaching the dam in time for the first water deliveries?

Sometimes, things go right. The contractors for the North Loop Road expansion breached the dam at the end of February, and, right on schedule, water was coming through less than a week later. Again, thanks are due the Dan Williams Co. and the El Paso County Water Improvement District for their cooperation and help.

Thanks are also due the students in Tim Channell's sociology classes at El Paso Community College who helped at Feather Lake on February 20 and March 6, 13 and 27. They worked hard clearing saltcedar seedlings and planting tornillo seeds in the cleared areas

This year, regular visitor hours at Feather Lake end April 25 (see back page), so plan to pay a visit soon. With the cottonwoods and willows freshly leafed out, our sanctuary looks good right now.

Saturday, May 8, is International Migratory Bird Day. Not by coincidence, it's also the date for our next Feather Lake workday. Want to make a difference for migratory birds? Spend a few hours lending a hand at our sanctuary. The gates open at 8:00 AM, but feel free to come whenever you can during the day.

// John Sproul //

Mountain Lion Bill Introduced

Of the 11 western states with verified mountain lion populations, ten regulate the taking of this species. They monitor the status of populations. They set hunting seasons and taking limits based on the biological information obtained. They restrict hunting in areas where lion densities are not sufficient to support it.

And then there is Texas. Here, the mountain lion is a "nonprotected non-game species." It can be killed at any time, by anyone, for any reason, or no reason at all.

The mountain lion is an important part of many Texas ecosystems and the wildlife heritage the Texas Parks and Wil-

dlife Department (TPWD) is mandated to manage and protect. In December 1991, the Sierra Club's Lone Star Chapter petitioned the TPWD to adopt rules regulating the taking of mountain lions. The agency admitted it lacked reliable data on the health of lion populations statewide, but it denied the request.

Given the unwillingness of the TPWD to regulate the taking of mountain lions on its own, some outside guidance appears appropriate. On March 3, Senators Chris Harris (R-Arlington) and Gonzalo Barrientos (D-Austin) introduced SB 583 in the Texas Senate to designate the mountain lion a game animal. Under this designation, the TPWD would be required to monitor Texas lion populations and set hunting seasons and taking limits based on sound biological information on lion densities. It would be a major step forward over the existing situation.

The bill has widespread support, including groups such as National Audubon, the Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, the National Parks and Conservation Association, and the Sportsmen Conservationists of Texas.

By the time you read this, SB 583 should be well along in the legislative process. Senator Peggy Rosson has already made known her support of the bill and is cosponsoring it. Be sure to thank her (Texas Senate, P.O. Box 12068, Austin TX 78711)! Also let Senator Judith Zaffirini and Representatives Jack Vowell, Pat Haggerty, Paul Moreno, Nancy McDonald, and Tony Parra (Texas House of Representatives, P.O. Box 2910, Austin TX 78769) know

you support this bill providing game status to the mountain lion in Texas.
// John Sproul //



Franklin Mountains Park Plan

Remember those planning workshops way back in Fall 1991, where you gave the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) your thoughts on how Franklin Mountains State Park should be managed in the future? Using input from the workshops as a starting point, the TPWD then set to work preparing a draft initial management plan for the Park. That document is now on the verge of being released. It will be crucial to the future of the Park and deserves your careful study and comment. If you're not already on the TPWD's mailing list for the Park planning and want to receive the draft management plan, contact the Franklin Mountains State Park office (544-7184). Effective March 1, that office is no longer in Canutillo; it is now at Magoffin Home State Historic Site.

// John Sproul //

Birdathon '93

Led by this year's celebrity counter, noted historian and raconteur **Leon Metz**, we plan to do some serious bird counting May 1 - 2. Can we count on you?

May 1 - 2 is the weekend of our 13th annual **Birdathon**, the fun and fundraising event that's vital to Audubon's conservation and education programs. Participating counters will scour the countryside trying to find as many bird species as possible in a 24 hour period. They'll be backed by sponsors who pledge contributions based on the number of species found.

Each year, our organization stages one of the top Birdathons in the country. We can't compete with coastal locations in terms of numbers of bird species found, but the generosity of our sponsors is unsurpassed. We hope you'll be among those sponsors in 1993!

The flyer enclosed with this newsletter gives all the details. Please read it, then make a Birdathon pledge! Sponsor **Leon Metz** or one of our other hardworking counters. You'll be entered in a drawing for some great prizes. More important, you'll make a real difference for our wildlife and our West Texas environment.

Coming Events

Earth Day On The Border

This year's Earth Day celebration will be held at the Chamizal National Memorial on April 17 and 18. The EP/TPAS, among many

other organizations, will have a booth at the activity. The celebration hours are 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM on Saturday, and 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM on Sunday. If you would like to participate, give John Sproul a call at 545-5157 to volunteer some time at our Chapter's booth.

Conservation Day at UTEP

Friday, April 30, is Conservation Day at the University of Texas at El Paso. Hours are 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. EP/TPAS will also have a booth here. Take some time from your lunch hour to stop by.

International Migratory Bird Day.

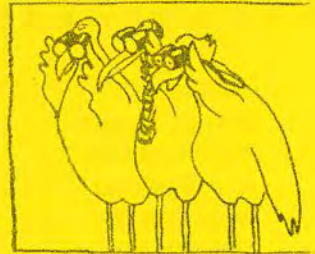
Saturday, May 8, has been declared the first annual International Migratory Bird Day. Bird watchers throughout the western hemisphere will encourage conservation action for migratory birds with a host of special events: bird walks, bird counts, habitat restoration, educational displays, and more.

Each year millions of birds - more than 330 species - embark on migrations across the Americas, breeding in the north and wintering in the south. Recently, however, scientists have documented drastic declines in some migratory bird populations. Because of the concern for these birds, governments and conservation groups in North and South America joined forces to launch the international program, "Partners in Flight-Aves de Las Americas." Its mission: to develop coordinated plans for migratory bird conservation.

International Migratory Bird Day is the Brainchild of the Smithsonian Institution, working in cooperation with Partners in Flight. You can keep current with the program's activities by receiving the Partners in Flight newsletter. And it's free. Add your name to the mailing list by writing Peter Stangel, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 1120 Connecticut Ave, NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036.

AUDUBON BIRDATHON '93

Birdathon '93 is coming! Please join us May 1-2 for a full, rewarding weekend of birding throughout the El Paso area. Birdathon is both our annual Spring Big Day Count and El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon's most important annual fundraising event, each year supporting vital conservation and education projects.



Birdathon contributions are divided equally between National Audubon Society programs and local Audubon projects. Our 1993 Audubon Birdathon will benefit:

- ☛ Audubon Adventures. We enroll as many local 3rd-to-6th-grade classes as we can in this highly successful Audubon youth-education program, and Birdathon is crucial to that effort.
- ☛ Scholarships. Our scholarship program gives local educators the chance to attend Audubon Ecology Camps in Wyoming, Maine or Connecticut, where they can enhance their environmental education skills. Birdathon is our main source of scholarship funds.
- ☛ Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue. Operating with very limited means, CDWR does remarkable work rehabilitating injured/orphaned wildlife in the El Paso-Las Cruces area. We hope to make that work a little easier through Birdathon.
- ☛ El Paso Environmental Center. The Environmental Center at 800 S. Piedras continues to grow as an environmental information and education resource, a recycling center and a focal point for citizen environmental action in the El Paso-Juarez area. Through Birdathon, we want to help keep the Center moving forward.
- ☛ Audubon's Southwest Regional Office. Whether it's endangered species, the Rio Grande, mountain lion management or another critical issue, Audubon's Southwest Regional Office speaks forcefully and effectively for our Texas environment. Birdathon support from Audubon chapters throughout the state is critical to keeping that office at full strength.

The counters on the reverse are ready to do their all for Birdathon. How can you help? (over)

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society BIRDATHON '93

- _____ Yes! I'll sponsor _____
for \$ _____ per species for each species
s/he finds on the 1993 Birdathon.
- _____ I'll sponsor _____
for a flat \$ _____.
- _____ I will add a bonus of \$ _____ if my counter
sees a _____.
- _____ My tax-deductible gift of \$ _____
sponsoring _____ is
enclosed, payable to El Paso/Trans-Pecos
Audubon Society.



FROM: _____
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone _____

Please clip and return this form by April 28 to
Birdathon, c/o Jane Fowler,
3212 Kilkenney, El Paso, TX 79925.

Thank you for your Birdathon Pledge!
Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.

THE COUNTERS

We're pleased and honored to have **Leon Metz**, renowned local historian and legendary raconteur joining us as our celebrity Birdathon counter in 1993. Leon heads a great list of people planning to be in the field May 1-2:

Tom Baker	Sarah Jane Dodds	Anne Hussmann	Jo Nagel	Susie Schneider
George Barnett	Dayle Edwards	Hugh Jameson	Iola Pennington	John Sproul
Matt Bingham	Cliff Eidson	Bob Johnson	Mathew Ponton	Mary Ann Vernon
Paul Bingham	Jane Fowler	Larry Jordan	Kyle Reidland	Chad Wayne
Betty Bowen	Joe Guinn	John Kiseda	Mark Riede	Nancy Wilson
Craig Braginton	Chris Hahn	Leon Metz	Peggy Riede	Scott Wilson
Karen Braginton	Jim Harvey	Paul Milios	Bart Rumaker	

We welcome additional counters. Would you like to participate? Please contact Jane Fowler (598 2448) for details.

HOW BIRDATHON WORKS

On the weekend of May 1-2, each counter will go all out trying to find as many birds as possible in a single 24-hour period. To this task, they'll apply careful planning, knowledge of avian habitats, alert eyes and ears, endurance, finely honed birding skills, luck, general craziness...and dedication and concern for our West Texas environment. For each counter will be on a mission. They'll be backed by sponsors who have pledged tax-deductible gifts based on the number of species found. Every new species thus means another big boost for Audubon Adventures, our scholarship program, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue, the El Paso Environmental Center, and Audubon's Southwest Regional Office.

Whether it's 25¢ per species, \$1 per species or whatever, we hope you will consider a Birdathon pledge. Your support makes Birdathon work. Some counters will see around 40 species, others over 100; most will be somewhere in between. Please use the form on the reverse of this flyer to sponsor one or more of our hard-working Birdathon counters. Don't forget celebrity counter Leon Metz. Help make his day in the field a successful one!

PRIZES

The satisfaction of supporting a worthy cause isn't the only benefit your sponsorship brings. All sponsors will be eligible for a drawing to be held **May 2**. We have a real heavyweight of a Grand Prize this year: Audubon's Birds of America: the Audubon Society Baby Elephant Folio, published by the Abbeville Press. Other great prizes include an Enesco porcelain bird figurine, a Banana Republic gift certificate, a Duncraft bird feeder, and Songbirds: How to Attract Them and Identify Their Songs.

POT-LUCK DINNER

The drawing will take place at our annual post-Birdathon pot-luck dinner, starting at **6 p.m.** on **May 2** at the Garden Center, 3105 Grant, in Memorial Park in El Paso. Please join us. Great food, reports of the weekend's best birds, great food, results of our drawing, and great food await you.

Approximately 95% of Birdathon income will go to conservation and education projects;
5% pays for the cost of fundraising.



OBSERVATIONS



January 16, 1993 - March 15, 1993
Uncommon, RARE and CASUAL sightings.

(ArP- Arroyo Park area; Can-Canutillo;
CCA-Country Club area; Dmr-Doniphan
Marsh; EEP-East El Paso County; Ewd-
Eastwood area; FBP-Fort Bliss Ponds;
Fhc-Fort Hancock; FLk-Feather Lake;
Fmt-Franklin Mountains; FQt-Fort
Quitman area; RBq-Rio Bosque Park
area; ThH-Three Hills Area; Tor-
Tornillo area.)

CORMORANTS TO MERGANSERS

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT: 3/13
Fhc (BJ-ft)
GREAT EGRET: 1/27, 2/2, 2/6, 2/28
FLk (JS): 3/13, FQt (BJ-ft)
CANADA GOOSE: 2/13-2/28, FLk (JS, M.ob)
EURASIAN WIGEON: 1/27, Fhc (BZ)
COMMON GOLDENEYE: 1/16-2/6, FBP (JP, Mob.)
HOODED MERGANSER: 1/26, Ewd (BR)
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER: 1/24, Fhc (DE);
1/26, Fhc (BZ); 3/13, Fhc (BJ-ft)

HAWKS TO DUNLINS

HARRIS' HAWK: 3/13, FQt (BJ-ft)
Red-tailed (HARLAN'S) Hawk: 2/15
RBq (SS, JS)
Golden Eagle: 2/25, Fmt (BJ)
BLACK-NECKED STILT: All period, Dmr
(M.ob)
LESSER YELLOWLEGS: 2/13, Fhc (JS, M.ob)
LONG-BILLED CURLEW: 1/27, Fhc (BZ);
2/13, RBq (JS, M.ob); 3/13, FQt (BJ-ft)
DUNLIN: 1/24, Fhc (DE); 1/26, Fhc (BZ)

GULLS

MEW GULL: 1/26, Fhc (BZ)
FRANKLIN'S GULL: 1/26, Fhc (BZ)
BONAPART'S GULL: 1/24, Fhc (DE)

OWLS TO SWALLOWS

BARN OWL: 2/13, FBP (KR-ft)
Great Horned Owl: 2/13, FBP (KR-ft)
YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER: 2/3, CCA (BJ)
DOWNY WOODPECKER: 1/22, FBP (BZ);
2/4, Can (JZ)
VERMILLION FLYCATCHER: 3/13, FQt (BJ-ft)

TREE SWALLOW: 2/13, FBP (KR-ft)
CAVE SWALLOW: 2/15, RBq (SS, JS)
BARN SWALLOW: 2/13, Dmr (DE)

NUTHATCHES TO SPARROWS

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: 1/16-3/15, CCA (M.ob)
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET: 1/16-3/6, CCA (M.ob)
Western Bluebird: 1/24, Tor (DE)
NORTHERN CARDINAL: All period, ThH (DE-yd)
: 3/11, ArP (LJ)
Rufus-sided Towhee: All Period, EEP (RT-yd)
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW: 2/13, FBP (JK)

Observers; Doug Enkalms, Bob Johnson,
Larry Jordan, John Kiseda, Jim Patton,
Bettie Roberts, Kyle Reidland, Sandra
Skrie, John Sproul, Rae Thomas, Jimmy
Zabreski, Barry Zimmer.

ABA BIRDERS SUPPORT!

ethical birding

habitat protection

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Increase your enjoyment of birding.

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AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION

Write to ABA Membership: P.O. Box 6599,
Colorado Springs, CO 80934

or call toll-free (800)634-7736

For additional local information

TALK TO

Bob Johnson 757-1876

REPORT YOUR SIGHTINGS TO BOB JOHNSON 757-1876 (recorder)

RESERVATION

Reservations are subject to availability. Please call for details.

Room rates include breakfast and taxes. Single occupancy is \$100 per night. Double occupancy is \$120 per night. Rates are subject to change without notice.

Reservations are accepted up to 30 days in advance. Cancellations made within 30 days of arrival will incur a cancellation fee of \$50. Cancellations made within 14 days of arrival will incur a cancellation fee of \$100. No refund will be given for cancellations made within 7 days of arrival.

Check-in time is 3:00 PM. Check-out time is 11:00 AM. Late check-out is available for an additional fee of \$25. Early check-in is available for an additional fee of \$25. Pets are not allowed. Smoking is prohibited in all rooms.

For more information, please call 1-800-555-1234.

Thank you for your reservation.

Reservations Department

123 Main Street, Suite 100, New York, NY 10001

Phone: (212) 555-1234

Fax: (212) 555-5678

Website: www.reservations.com

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For more information, please call 1-800-555-1234.

Thank you for your reservation.

Reservations Department

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Phone: (212) 555-1234

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