

the ROADRUNNER

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



Editors: Jane Fowler - Jo Nagel

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April 1984

GENERAL MEETING

MON., APRIL 16, 1984, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, 3105 Grant St., Memorial Park. The program this spring evening will be on native desert plants, many of which we will have seen just the day before (See Field Trip Calendar). For those of us who are slow learners this program will be a reinforcement, and for those of us who are more expert, it's a chance to enjoy an authority from the Native Plant Society of Las Cruces, New Mexico. Tom Wooten, owner of Dry Country Plants Nursery, has graciously accepted our invitation to review with us the unique plants of our Chihuahuan Desert. Both Mr. Wooten and his wife, Eleanor, will be here, and both are members of the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society chapter. So come and meet and greet Audubon neighbors, and enjoy a timely program on the beauty that surrounds us. / S.J. Dodds.

FIELD TRIP CALENDAR

BITTER LAKE NWR/PRAIRIE CHICKENS
SAT., SUN., APRIL 7-8. Most of the wintering water birds will be gone from Bitter L. Natl. Wildlife Refuge, near Roswell, NM, but spring migrants should keep things lively. We'll spend Sat. at the Refuge, then venture forth early Sun. morning to find Lesser Prairie Chickens on 1 of their most reliable NM display grounds. Our return to El Paso will include a stop at L. McMillan, n. of Carlsbad. Sat. night you can camp with us at Bottonless L. State Park or

stay at a Roswell motel. Leader: John Sproul (545-5157 h, 541-6126 w.). Call John for reservations, motel phone numbers, Sun. mornin wakeup time and other details.

DOG CANYON/LA LUZ CANYON, NM
SUN., APRIL 15. Interested members should meet at 7:30 AM at the K-Mart parking lot, 9484 Dyer St. We will travel north on Highway 54 to Oliver Lee State Pk. for morning birding, and this includes a walk with Jean Dobbs who will be identifying the plant life for us. (This tie in with April's General Meeting) After lunch we will travel up to La Luz Canyon, north of Alamo-gordo, to wind our way up into the western flank of the Sacramentos to higher elevations for some different birding. Leader: Sarah Jane Dodds (533-4150).

BIRDATHON

SAT., APRIL 28. The Birdathon IS FUN and helps us raise funds for wildlife conservation. This year we will use our chapter's share of the money raised to support the Texas Nongame Wildlife Program. Get some sponsors and see how many bird species you can see. Go alone or with a group. Look for birds in your neighborhood or all over the county. IT IS EASY. Just by walking for 15 minutes and by driving for 15 minutes in n.e. El Paso, I saw Inca Doves, Rock Doves, House Finches, House Spar-

rows, Juncos, Great-tailed Grackles, Robin, Pyrrhuloxia, Starlings, White-crowned Sparrows, White-winged Dove and a Yellow-rumped Warbler. If it had been Birdathon Day, and I had 10 sponsors pledging 25¢ per species, I would have raised \$30.

So come join us and have fun for part of a day or all day. If you have questions or wish to be placed with a group of birders, call Bob Johnson (757-1876 or 751-0125), Jane Fowler (772-0296) or Ray Waite (751-1849). See flier (p. 7) for more details. /B.J./



W.COTTONWOOD SPR. BEGINNERS TRIP
SUN., MAY 6. Meet at 6:45 AM at the entrance to the Tom Mays Area of the Franklin Mountains St. Park, along Transmountain Rd. on the w. side of the Franklins. The emphasis on this beginners trip will be on learning the songs and calls of common breeding birds in the Franklins. Plan to walk 2 miles, some of it steep. Leader: John Sproul (545-5157 h, 541-6126 w).

RAMSEY CANYON/PATAGONIA, AZ
FRI., SAT., SUN., MAY 18, 19, 20. Ramsey Canyon is about 5 mi. s of Sierra Vista, AZ (which is adjacent to Ft. Huachuca). Listed here are 2 of many motels in Sierra Vista: A Best Western, Thunder Mt. Inn (1-800-528-1234) and Motel 6 (1-602-459-0666). Campers have KOA 17 mi. e. in Tombstone, AZ as well as 2 mobile home parks there: Bel Aire (1-602-458-5688) & Sierra Grande (1-602-458-6908). Down-to-earth campers will be in Miller Canyon 9 mi. from Sierra Vista and 2 mi. s. of Ramsey Canyon. Mark this great trip on your calendar. Details next month, Meantime call B. Johnson for answers (757-1876 or 751-0125).

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MON., APRIL 9, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Tom and Virginia Baker, 2716 Louisville, El Paso (562-9461). All members are welcome.



FIELD TRIP COMMITTEE MEETING
WED., APRIL 4, 7:30 PM. The committee will meet at Tom Baker's home, 2716 Louisville, El Paso (562-9461). We will be scheduling dates and places for the remainder of the year. All members and their input are welcome. If you are interested in going to a certain area or in leading a particular field trip, please come or call in your requests.

/T.B./

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING

MON., APR. 23, 7:30 PM. The Conservation Committee will meet at the home of Jane Fowler, 8212 Parkland, El Paso (772-0296). All members are welcome. A representative of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will brief us on the proposed American Canal Extension (see p.6). /J.S./

FIELD TRIP FOLLOW-UPS

Ten birders and the Baker girls ventured down the Rio Grande Valley Feb. 25 to Indian Hot Springs with leader Joe Leach. Bob Johnson was able to identify several Cave Swallows for us as we exited I-10 at Fort Quitman. Further down we saw Great Egrets and other waterfowl. Also seen were a Vermillion Flycatcher, an Orange-crowned Warbler and a Violet-green Swallow. A total of 37 species were counted. /J.L./



2-The Roadrunner

Sarah Jane Dodds, filling in for Joyce Davis, led 13 other participants on the March 4 Upper Valley field trip. Highlights at the Singh pond/Anthony Country Club area were a Wood Duck and a Merlin. After working their way back through the Valley, a total of 48 species had been identified./ S.J.D.

Most likely we saw more joggers and bikers Mar 10 at Arroyo Park than bird species, which numbered only 15. It was pleasant and sunny, but the birds were sunning elsewhere. A Curve-billed Thrasher was very visible, though indifferent to the stares of 7 birders. a Rock Wren jiggled on concrete rubble, Gambel's Quail called plaintively and Mockingbirds sang happily from high places. Several Pyrrhuloxias flew about for us to admire their beauty. We ate donuts and chuckled at Bart Rumaker's jokes before leaving the arroyo./ J.F.

RIO BOSQUE: THE FUTURE IS NOW

Protection of Rio Bosque Park as a natural area has long been an Audubon priority, and now the 286-acre undeveloped city park along the Rio Grande in El Paso's lower valley is at a crossroads. Its future will be decided very soon.

When this land was acquired in 1973 (277 acres) and 1977 (9 acres) from the federal government for open-space recreation, the terms of El Paso's agreement with the government included a provision that Rio Bosque would be put to recreational use within 5 years or revert to federal ownership. But, in the years since, the City has done little to use the land and has long been out of compliance with that agreement.

In late Feb., this point was brought home forcefully by 3 Natl. Park Service(NPS) representatives who were in town to review the status of Rio Bosque and 7 other land parcels acquired under the same pro-

gram. The NPS representatives said they could see no evidence of recreational use. Further, they said they must see progress within 90 days or they would start the wheels moving for a reversion to federal ownership. Under current Reagan administration philosophy, such lands would then be offered for sale to the highest bidder.

Two years ago, Tony Worth, then our conservation chair, approached the City about Audubon participating in management of Rio Bosque. The argument Tony made was that the City could fulfill its commitment on Rio Bosque relatively inexpensively if the land were managed as a natural area and used for environmental-education and nature-study purposes.

The proposal was not accepted, but it was not forgotten, either. Now, with the future of Rio Bosque on the line, the City has taken us up on our offer. We are working with the City to develop a cooperative management agreement for use of Rio Bosque as an environmental-education and wildlife area. We are working hard to integrate use of Rio Bosque into Chapter educational programs immediately.

We have 2 months in which to demonstrate progress towards establishing an educational program at Rio Bosque. We need your help. Specifically:

- The El Paso Sierra Club Group has endorsed the concept of using Rio Bosque as an environmental-education and wildlife area. Can you suggest other groups that would also give endorsements? Can you help obtain them?

- Can you recommend groups that would benefit from field trips to Rio Bosque? Can you help line up such field trips? We want to start taking groups to the area as soon

as possible.

• Can you help develop educational programs that make use of Rio Bosque?

• Can you lead outdoor-education walks at Rio Bosque?

In its Planning Aid Report for the s.e. El Paso Flood Control Project, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) called Rio Bosque "irreplaceable because it is the only wooded habitat left in the project area and could not be duplicated." "It should," said USFWS, "receive the highest priority for preservation." The time for protecting Rio Bosque is now. If you can help, contact Education Chair Gloria Basden (581-2365) or President Joyce Davis (581-9470 h, 544-6772 w). /John Sproul/

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* ...ibis, jaguarundis,
* kangaroo rats, Leon Springs
* pupfish...?
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* * * * *

WANTED

The Education Committee needs a collection of colored pictures of local birds. If you have or find any good pictures (at least 5"x5"), please bring them to the general meeting at the Garden Center. There will be a collection file on the display table. If you can't attend meetings but have pictures to donate, call Jeanette Cole (565-1957) or Virginia Baker (562-9461). /J.C.

BART'S CORNER

Bart sez: "One year, I got up so early for a Big Day Count that even the vireos were red-eyed."

Flea Market!



RUMMAGE SALE

We will conduct our parking lot rummage sale on Sun., May 6. Please save your household items, clothing, tools or knickknacks for this sale. More information next month. Call Joe Guinn (566-8438). /J.G./

We gratefully acknowledge donations to the chapter from

Mr. & Mrs. D.E. Baker in memory of
Lena McBee

EPTPAS welcomes to our chapter and Natl. Audubon Judy Grubbs, Susan B. Harrison and William Morris. *****

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 "El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society" and mail to: RR Editor PO Box 9655 El Paso, TX 79986. Please send any changes or corrections in name, address, or telephone# to this address.

OBSERVATIONS - February 20 to March 19

With the advent of warmer weather in the area during this period and birding activities increased, some very exciting reports came in. Several early migrants appeared, and 5 species of accidental or casual status.

LOONS - FALCONS

A lone Double-crested Cormorant was at Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds (FBSP) 3/6 (BJ). Six Great Egrets were noted in the Lower Valley 2/25 (BJ,SS), and 2 Cattle Egrets at FBSP 3/6 (BJ). Four to five Black-crowned Night-Herons in the Lower Valley 2/25 (BJ,SS) were the first reported for awhile. That same day, a single Snow Goose was seen and 9 to 12 Canada Geese were at Madden Lake (BJ,SS). A male WOOD DUCK at Singh Pond was one of the highlights in the Upper Valley 3/4 (BJ, et al.). An interesting waterfowl sp., sitting with Gadwalls at the Crossroads Pond 3/4 (BJ), was later reported to be a hybrid, possible White-cheeked Pintail x Gadwall (fide BJ). Thirty Redheads were in the Upper Valley area 3/4, and a rare Hooded Merganser observed at a pond near Gary Lane that day remained until at least 3/17 (BJ,NH,et al.). Ferruginous Hawks were reported on 2 occasions, 1 in the Upper Valley 3/4 (BJ,et al.) and another in the Newman Rd area 3/6 (BJ). Single Golden Eagles were reported on 4 occasions during the period (AG,MG,BJ,SS). A female MERLIN was another of the highlights in the Upper Valley 3/4 (BJ).

QUAIL - WOODPECKERS

Seven Sandhill Cranes were seen in a field near Fort Hancock 3/3 (AG,MG). A lone Am. Avocet was noted in the Lower Valley 2/25 (BJ,SS). Thirty Long-billed Curlews were seen along the river near Fabens 2/25 (AG,MG) and on 3/17, 130 were counted at the Borderland Crossing near Fabens (AG,MG). A PECTORAL SAND-PIPER, casual to the area, was observed near Tornillo Lake 3/1 (AG,MG). That same day, 30 Long-billed Dowitchers were in the Tornillo Lake area and 3 noted near Fabens 3/17 (AG,MG). A Ringed Turtle-Dove, present for some time in an e. central El Paso yard, has been observed "courting" white-winged Doves there recently (JN). Two Great Horned Owls were seen in the Upper Valley 3/4

(BJ,et al.). A hummingbird sp. paid a brief visit to a Thunderbird Heights feeder 3/4, but did not remain long enough to be identified (FB).

FLYCATCHERS - VIREOS

A Vermilion Flycatcher was in the Lower Valley 2/25 (BJ,SS). Also in the Lower Valley that day, several Tree and Violet-Green Swallows (1st Spring) were seen (BJ,SS). Most exciting were 7 CAVE SWALLOWS carefully studied as they sat on wires near the Ft. Quitman exit 2/25 (BJ,SS). This is the second sighting for this species in our area. The first Spring Barn Swallow reported was seen at Rio Bosque Park 3/11 (TB). Six w. Bluebirds were in the Upper Valley 3/4 (BJ,et al.), and a single Townsend's Solitaire at Hueco Tanks 3/8 (RW). Another very exciting report was a WOOD THRUSH that appeared in an e. El Paso yard 2/28, reported 2/29 (DT), and observed there again 3/1 (DT,BR). Photos were taken 3/2 and it was last seen 3/16 (fide DT). This is the first sighting in many years (Acc.-'67 Checklist) and possibly the second for our area. Six Sage Thrashers were at Hueco Tanks 3/8 (RW) and 1 seen at Hondo Pass Rd 3/18 (TB). A single Brown Thrasher was at Hueco Tanks 3/2 (RW). Flocks of Cedar Waxwings were reported on 3 occasions; 19 in e. El Paso 2/20 (JF), 25-30 in Mt. Park 2/22 (JB), and 18 2/28, again in e. El Paso (JF). A Phainopepla in the Upper Valley 3/4 (BJ,et al.) was the only 1 reported.

WARBLERS - WEAVER FINCHES

An Orange-crowned Warbler was in the Lower Valley 2/25 (BJ,SS), and a "Myrtle" race of the Yellow-rumped Warbler at Horizon City from 3/14 to at least 3/17 (MG). A Lincoln's Sparrow that appeared in an e. El Paso yard 1/7 was still being seen daily as of 3/19 (Bii). A male Hooded Oriole returned to a Mt. Park residence on 3/16 (JB).

CONTRIBUTORS: Tom Baker, Flora Bittick, Janet Brockmoller, Tom Carson, Sarah Jane Dodds, Mary Ann Dodson, Jane Fowler, Al Gavit, Madeline Gavit, Elza

Gilboe, Sid Shepperd, John Sproul, Dennis Taylor, Ray Waite.

NOTE: Spring migration should be well under way the next 2 observation periods. As always, rarities should be reported as soon as possible. We are also interested in first Spring dates for all of our migrant or returning species.

Please call 591-0421.

/Bettie Roberts, Observations Editor/

CONSERVATION CAPSULES

BOUNDARY PRESERVATION PROJECT: Construction has resumed on a 10-mile segment of this International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) project to stabilize the international boundary by dredging a 199-mile reach of the Rio Grande between Ft. Quitman and Presidio, Texas. The 10-mile segment is between Rancho San Miguel and the Talley Ranch, upstream from Indian Hot Springs. The IBWC advised the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in late Feb. that it would start this work on March 5. Since the project is the subject of a lawsuit to force the IBWC to adhere to its original environmental-protection commitments when building the project, the plaintiffs in the suit (including Natl. Audubon Soc. and El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon) immediately sought a temporary restraining order (TRO). Following a hearing in Austin March 7, the TRO request was denied. The judge hearing the request applied the strictest possible criteria, those applicable to permanent injunctions, to our request. Because no discovery (gathering of evidence from the IBWC) has been allowed yet, we were unable to present the evidence needed to support issuance of the TRO. Why did the judge apply the strictest possible criteria? One theory is that he wants the legal dancing to end, so the trial can begin.

AMERICAN CANAL EXTENSION: The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec) is talking about replumbing the Rio Grande. Last year, Congress allocated funds to BuRec to begin planning for a proposed new canal through El Paso. The agency's initial proposal is to:

- enlarge a 1.4-mile portion of the existing American Canal below International Dam downtown,

- abandon a 5.2-mile portion of the existing Franklin Canal through congested residential areas, and
- build a new extension of the American Canal that would parallel the Border Highway for 13 miles and join the existing Riverside Canal near Rio Bosque Park in the lower valley.

In Bu Rec's words, "Flows within the Rio Grande channel between the International Dam and the Riverside Diversion Dam will be reduced considerably, if not eliminated..." Our organization plans to follow this project closely.

The agency plans 3 public meetings soon for citizen comment on the project: 2 on April 4 at the El Paso Room in the Exhibition Hall of the Civic Center, one beginning at 2PM, the other at 7PM; and the 3rd meeting April 5 at the Piedras-Alameda Neighborhood Community Center (the old St. Anne's Episcopal Church building, 600 S. Piedras), beginning at 7PM.

RECYCLING: El Paso's revamped recycling program is showing signs of life. Last Oct., the final month under the old program (where recyclables were put out with other garbage), only 1% of El Paso households participated, and income was only \$310. Under the new program of special recycling pickups, income has been \$1,000 in Nov., \$2,000 in Dec. and \$3,690 in Jan., when 6% of El Paso households took part. In Feb., earnings were down slightly to \$3,036 but participation rose to 7%. Encouraging trends. Remember that, depending on what part of the City you live in, you can put your recyclables at curbside for pickup on either the 1st and 3rd or 2nd and 4th Fridays each month. Have them out -- newspapers in 1 bag, cans in another, corrugated cardboard in another -- by 7:30AM. To learn what recycling zone you are in, get a map from the Sanitation Dept. (594-8625). All of you who are recycling deserve a big Thank You. Keep it up!

/John Sproul/

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April 1984

The deadline for the May Roadrunner is April 23.



NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY'S

BIRDATHON

The El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter of the National Audubon Society is once again planning to participate in the Birdathon, making this the fourth year that we have done so. The proceeds from the Birdathon are evenly distributed three ways among participating chapters, regions and National Audubon. Within the region, funds raised could support a variety of projects, workshops, conferences and chapter related activities. At the national level, money is used for nature centers and sanctuaries, endangered species programs, research, and wildlife film lectures.

(cont. on back)

HERE'S HOW

Sponsor yourself or any bird watcher for a stated amount per species seen within a 24 hour period. (Count day is April 28.) For example, you sponsor Ima Birder for 10¢ per species; she sees 75 species. Your donation to National Audubon would be \$7.50, TAX DEDUCTIBLE. As a sponsor, you may stipulate a maximum amount to your pledge, if you wish.

Or be a counter yourself and get as many sponsors as you can. You don't have to be an El Paso resident or a member of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter to be a counter or a sponsor.

The following evening (Apr 29), we will meet at 5PM at the Camelot Apartments (4800 N. Stanton) in the Party Room for a pot-luck dinner and drawing. The Grand Prize for our drawing is an exquisite oriole on Haviland china DONATED and painted by wildlife artist Patti Canaris. All sponsors are eligible for the drawing. All counters are eligible for national and regional prizes. Local prizes will be awarded at the general meeting on May 21. There will be prizes for the person who raises the most money, sees the greatest number of species, and gets the most sponsors. Also the new birder seeing the most species will win a prize.

The week following the Birdathon, collect pledges from your sponsors and send them to Bob Johnson, 5109 Paris, El Paso, TX 79924. BE PROMPT! This must be sent in to Nat'l Audubon in June. Make checks payable to National Audubon Society.

Mail in this form by April 28 and have a chance to win the lovely Canaris oriole to be given away the evening of April 29 at our pot-luck dinner.

Yes, I will sponsor* at \$. . . . per species,
(if you desire - maximum amount of \$. . . .)

Yes, I will be a counter. Please send the forms I need.

Signature. Name (please print).

Address. Phone.

*who to sponsor. Sponsor yourself or the counter of your choice. In the past, counters have seen from 50-100 species on count day.

Clip and send this form to Bob Johnson, 5109 Paris, El Paso, TX 79924.
(Must arrive by April 28 to be eligible for drawing.)



This year, with your help, we plan to use our local portion of the funds we raise to support the nongame wildlife and endangered species programs of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). When we say "nongame wildlife", we refer to species of wildlife not hunted or taken for commercial purposes. Historically, TPWD has never had the money to give these species the management attention they deserve. Now that may change. Last year, the State Legislature passed a law establishing a Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund for Texas. It will enable TPWD to carry out a variety of programs for nongame and endangered species: scientific research, status surveys, habitat acquisition and development, public information and education, development and implementation of management plans. It will, that is, if the public supports the Nongame Fund.

The Fund gets no money from tax dollars. Rather, the main sources of income are private contributions and sales of special wildlife art prints, stamps and decals. The artwork and stamp sales won't begin until November, but contributions can be accepted now. A successful first year is critical to the long-term success of this program, and El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon wants to see it succeed. To get the Texas Nongame Fund off on the right foot, we plan to donate our share of the Birdathon earnings to this very worthy cause. AND to add extra incentive, an anonymous donor has pledged to match dollar for dollar the money we raise for the Fund, thus doubling our Chapter's donation to it.

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TROGON ECOLOGY SEMINARS

Study courses on Trogon Ecology will be held May 31 - June 4 or June 7 - 11 in the Chiricahua Mountains. Bird-watching trips conducted by Borderland Productions are timed to catch outstanding natural history locations at the peak of both bird activity and bird diversity. Principal interpreter and director is Richard Taylor, who presented our outstanding program on Mar 19. For further info, write or call: 1 (602) 558-2952, Borderland Productions, Box 122, Portal, AZ 85632. If interested, see Jo Nagel for a registration form. (566-2143)

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ROBERT S JOHNSON
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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.

IN THIS ISSUE...

wood Thrush in e. El Paso yard...
Boundary Preservation Project update...