

# the ROADRUNNER . . . . .



newsletter of the  
El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society  
published at  
601 W. Wandell #25, El Paso, TX 79902

Editor: John Sprout

Volume 10, Number 1

January 1980

## CALENDAR

### PROGRAM

21 JANUARY 1980, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, 3105 Grant St., in Memorial Park. Remember the article in the El Paso Times last November on El Pasocns who rehabilitate injured birds? At this meeting you'll see one of them in person. John Caraway will present our January program and the subject will be RAPTORS. John has over 30 years experience caring for injured birds. He will bring some of his avian patients to the meeting and should get our Audubon year off to a great start. Be there!

18 FEBRUARY. The birds of Mono Lake in California face an uncertain future. Come and learn why.

### FIELD TRIPS

12 JANUARY. RIO GRANDE. This will be a walking trip to a good area we have overlooked in the past: the Rio Grande and the irrigation ditch near the Hacienda Cafe. We could see most anything. For the Christmas Bird Count, this area held Spotted Sandpipers, a House Wren, Common Grackles, Vesper Sparrows and, amazingly, a Northern Parula. Three days later, a Nashville Warbler and a White-throated Sparrow were in the area. Meet at the Hacienda, 1720 W. Paisano, at 7:30 AM. If you take I-10 going west, get off at the Porfirio Diaz exit, go up to Wandell, then go left onto the overpass. This will take you to Paisano. As soon as you are off the overpass, take a left and get onto the frontage road that goes south 0.7 mile to the Hacienda.

27 JANUARY. INDIAN SPRINGS. Does your sparrow identification need improvement? This trip will concentrate on finding wintering sparrows. We will almost certainly see Black-chinneds; if we're lucky, we could turn up a Field Sparrow. Other species we'll look for include Clark Bunting and Vesper and Clark Sparrows. Be at the Wilderness Park Museum, Transmountain Rd., at 7:30 AM.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

14 JANUARY, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of President Bob Bleicher, 2809 Hector, El Paso, Ph: 591-7261.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Your Nominations Committee will present the following persons for election at the 21 January meeting:

For Vice President: John Sproul  
For Secretary-Treasurer: Jane Fowler

(Note: The President, Robert P. Bleicher, will be in his 2nd year as president.)

Thanks to Jeannette Cole, Sid Sheppard and Bettie Barnhart for serving on the Nominations Committee.

THANK YOU:

Cecil and Minnie McNutt - for your December donation to the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. The money will be used to continue our Feather Lake Bird Sanctuary operation.

John Sproul - for agreeing to help our chapter as editor of the ROADRUNNER and for being the El Paso Christmas Bird Count compiler.

Bill Hoppes - for being compiler for the Hueco Tanks Christmas Count.

FROM THE PEN OF THE PRESIDENT:

In January our election takes place for the coming year (1980). Additionally, other people are needed to serve as chairmen of various committees--meaning we need your help. If you can help and are willing to do so, please call or write Bob Bleicher, 2809

Hector Drive, El Paso, TX 79935;  
Ph: 591-7261.

The Chapter Board of Directors will discuss Chapter finances in January and propose an operating budget for the new year. This will be published in the February newsletter.

.....  
Deadline for the February ROADRUNNER is 24 January. The Editor is much more effective when he doesn't receive newsletter material at the last minute.

The ROADRUNNER is distributed to all members of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. Nonmembers can subscribe for \$3.00 per year. Mail subscription payments to 601 W. Handell #25, El Paso, TX 79902.

## 1979 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Once again we ended the birding year on a high note, with two successful Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs). Some thanks are in order: to Bob and Gretchen Bleicher, Ed and Elza Gilboe, and Joe and Elizabeth Guinn, hosts for our various pre- and post-count gatherings; to Mary Margaret Davis of the El Paso Times

for publicizing the counts in her column; to Phelps-Dodge, St. Anthony's Seminary, and Sunland Park Race Track for giving us access to their grounds; and to all the participants, especially those who documented their observations of rare birds.

### HUECO TANKS COUNT - 23 DECEMBER 1979

Nineteen dedicated birders braved cold and blustery weather to participate in the 6th annual Hueco Tanks CBC. Fifty-five species were seen, not a record, but several good birds were found. These included a Prairie Falcon, Cassin's Kingbird (first for the count), a flock of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers (also a first for the count), and a Cassin's Finch. Notable for the count were the lack of bluebirds; the lack of any large flocks of sparrows, Lark Buntings or Horned Larks; the rather larger numbers of quail of both species; the low numbers of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Rock and Canon Wrens; and the very high number of Pyrrhuloxias. I want to thank everyone who participated in the count; I sure had fun. Below is a list of species observed:

Turkey Vulture	Cactus Wren	Green-tailed Towhee
Cooper's Hawk	Canon Wren	Rufous-sided Towhee
Red-tailed Hawk	Rock Wren	Brown Towhee
Swainson's Hawk	Mockingbird	Lark Bunting
Marsh Hawk	Curve-billed Thrasher	Savannah Sparrow
Prairie Falcon	Crissal Thrasher	Vesper Sparrow
American Kestrel	American Robin	Lark Sparrow
Scaled Quail	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Gambel's Quail	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Black-throated Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Phainopepla	Sage Sparrow
Killdeer	Loggerhead Shrike	Dark-eyed Junco
Roadrunner	Starling	Gray-headed Junco
Common Flicker	House Sparrow	Chipping Sparrow
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Western Meadowlark	Brewer's Sparrow
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	meadowlark, sp.	Black-chinned Sparrow
Cassin's Kingbird	Red-winged Blackbird	White-crowned Sparrow
Say's Phoebe	Pyrrhuloxia	
Horned Lark	Cassin's Finch	
Scrub Jay	House Finch	
Verdin	Lesser Goldfinch	

-- Bill Hoppes, compiler



EL PASO COUNT - 29 DECEMBER 1979

In contrast to last year's drizzly conditions, this year's count enjoyed fine weather: temperature 33-51 F, winds NNE 0-6 mph, clear in AM, partly cloudy to cloudy in PM, and no rain. The 32 participants, highest ever, recorded 6822 individual birds of 103 species.

In general, bird numbers were down from last year, but for a few species we equaled or exceeded our all-time highs: Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Inca Dove, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Bushtit, Canon Wren, Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Curve-billed Thrasher, Crissal Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia, Brown Towhee, Black-throated Sparrow, and Brewer's Sparrow. Species that were noticeably down in numbers included American Robin, Western Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Brewer's Blackbird. We found no owls and no jays.

We had our first count records for Franklin's Gull, Ringed Turtle Dove, Solitary Vireo and Northern Parula. The Northern Parula is easily THE bird for the count. This eastern warbler is a rare vagrant in the Trans-Pecos. Other excellent records are shown in capital letters in the count results; unusually high numbers are underlined.

RESULTS

Eared Grebe 2, Pied-billed Grebe 2, DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT 1, Green Heron 1, Canada Goose 15, Snow Goose 15, Mallard 37, Mexican Duck 2, Gadwall 35, Pintail 13, Green-winged Teal 227, Cinnamon Teal 4, American Wigeon 205, Northern Shoveler 314, Redhead 3, Canvasback 17, Bufflehead 19, Common Merganser 2, Sharp-shinned Hawk 1, Cooper's Hawk 7, Red-tailed Hawk 12, SWAINSON'S HAWK 1, Golden Eagle 2 adult, Marsh Hawk 5, American Kestrel 76, Scaled Quail 99, Gambel's Quail 41, Common Gallinule 1, American Coot 50, Killdeer 79, Common Snipe 8, Spotted Sandpiper 2, LESSER YELLOWLEGS 2, Least Sandpiper, 61, peep, sp. 14, Ring-billed Gull 2, FRANKLIN'S GULL 2, Rock Dove 597, White-winged Dove 20, Mourning Dove 112,

RINGED TURTLE DOVE 1, Inca Dove 127, Roadrunner 5, WHITE-THROATED SWIFT 65, Black-chinned Hummingbird 2, ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD 3, Rufous Hummingbird 3,

hummingbird, sp. 2, Belted Kingfisher 3, Common (Red-shafted) Flicker 34, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 2, Ladder-backed Woodpecker 3, Black Phoebe 5, Say's Phoebe 9, CROW, sp. 2, Verdin 3, BUSHTIT 2, House Wren 3, Bewick's Wren 2, Cactus Wren 20, Canon Wren 5, Rock Wren 47, Mockingbird 23, BROWN THRASHER 2, Curve-billed Thrasher 7, Crissal Thrasher 16, American Robin 4 (low), Hermit Thrush 1, EASTERN BLUEBIRD 10, Western Bluebird 1 (low), Ruby-crowned Kinglet 11 (low), Water Pipit 16, Loggerhead Shrike 30, Starling 62, SOLITARY VIREO 1, NORTHERN PARULA 1, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler 31, House Sparrow 1026, Western Meadowlark 29, meadowlark, sp. 120,

Yellow-headed Blackbird 50, Red-winged Blackbird 87, Brewer's Blackbird 136 (low), Great-tailed Grackle 267, COMMON GRACKLE 2, Brown-headed Cowbird 194, Pyrrhuloxia 30, House Finch 700, Lesser Goldfinch 33, Green-tailed Towhee 4, Rufous-sided Towhee 12, Brown Towhee 18, LARK BUNTING 3, BAIRD'S SPARROW 1, Vesper Sparrow 33, Lark Sparrow 18, Rufous-crowned Sparrow 24, Black-throated Sparrow 440, SAGE SPARROW 10, Dark-eyed Junco 189, Gray-headed Junco 10, Chipping Sparrow 35, Brewer's Sparrow 273, Black-chinned Sparrow 6, White-crowned Sparrow 376, White-throated Sparrow 1, Song Sparrow 23.

TOTAL: 103 species (1 additional race); about 6822 individuals. (In area count week but not seen count day: Ruddy Duck, NASHVILLE WARBLER, Lincoln's Sparrow.)

PARTICIPANTS: Derek Aleman, Tom Baker, Berttye Barnhart, Flora Bittick, Bob Bleicher, Janet Brockmoller, Jeannette Cole, Joe DiPasquale, Sarah Jane Dodds, Luz Cecilia Flores, Jane Fowler, Al, Chris and Madeline Gavit, Ed and Elza Gilboe, Mary Giles, Nathan and Richard Gilliland, Joe Guinn, Bill Hoppes, Earle and Paula King, Kris Kohlhoff, Josephine Nagel, Helen Ponder, Sid Shepperd, John Sproul (compiler), Lucille Swick, Marilyn Waller, Chad Wayne, Sunny Wratten. (Gretchen Bleicher, Catherine Gambill and Joe Pugh watched noncounting yards outside the count circle.)

OBSERVATIONS - 24 November to 23 December 1979

WATERBIRDS

Feather Lake has hosted a Whistling Swan since 8 Dec (AG, mob), first record of this species at our sanctuary. On 23 Dec the lake also held a Snow Goose (BH). Common Goldeneye were in the upper valley on 2 Dec; in a group of 6 ducks flying downriver near Randel's Pool, at least 2 were male goldeneye (JS).

OTHER NONPASSERINES

A Prairie Falcon seen along the Hueco Ranch Rd. east of Hueco Tanks and Pow Wow Canyon on 9 Dec (BH, JS) remained through 23 Dec for the Hueco Tanks Christmas Bird Count (CBC) (BH et al.). El Paso's hummingbird population thins out in late fall but doesn't disappear. A pair of Anna's stayed in the Mountain Park area all fall and is still there (JB). A male Broad-tailed visited Kern Place on 9 Dec (BH). Our second Downy Woodpecker record for this fall came 14 Dec when a male was in a yard near the El Paso Medical Center (SW).

PASSERINES

Best bird seen on the Hueco Tanks CBC

was a CASSIN'S KINGBIRD at a stock pond along Hueco Ranch Rd. (BH et al.). Memorial Park produced no Red-breasted Nuthatches for the El Paso CBC, although 1 was there in late Nov and early Dec (JN).

More cooperative for this CBC were the 2 male Eastern Bluebirds found in the upper valley near the Country Club Rd. bridge 2 Dec (JS) and the White-throated Sparrow that first appeared in the Cielo Vista area 16 Dec and is still seen daily (EG, ElG). The "Slate-colored" Junco seen on the Hueco Tanks CBC was at Hueco Tanks (JDiP et al.) and the Cassin's Finch was along the road to the tanks (BB et al.).

Details on noteworthy sightings from the El Paso CBC will be in the next ROADRUNNER.

OBSERVERS: Bob Bleicher, Janet Brockmoller, Joe DiPasquale, Al Gavit, Ed Gilboe, Elza Gilboe (ElG), Bill Hoppes, many observers (mob), Jo Nagel, John Sproul, Sunny Wratten. (Please report your observations to John Sproul, 601 W. Yandell #25, El Paso 79902; ph. 545-5157 home, 543-5126 work.)

CONSERVATION

1979 VOTING RECORDS AVAILABLE SOON

Would you like to know how your U.S. Senators and your Representative voted on key conservation issues last year? In late January, Audubon's Washington office will be sending such voting records to all members on the NATIONAL OUTLOOK mailing list. NATIONAL OUTLOOK is published as necessary to alert Audubon members when conservation issues are coming to head and citizen pressure on Congress is needed. To request the conservation voting records of our Senators and Representative and to get on the NATIONAL OUTLOOK mailing list, write: National Audubon Society, 1511 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20005. Indicate that Richard White

of the 16th District is your Representative.

ALASKA BILL STILL STALLED

The U.S. Senate continues to procrastinate on the Alaska national-interest lands issue. Audubon expects no floor action until late February or March, perhaps later if support slackens.

The conservationist-backed Tsongas-Roth substitute now has 14 cosponsors. This bill will be offered on the Senate floor in place of the weak Alaska bill reported by the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Tsongas-Roth is patterned after the strong House-passed bill but contains key concessions designed to balance the needs for conservation and development in Alaska.

Editor John Sproul  
601 West Yandell #25  
El Paso, Texas, 79901  
Ph: 915-545-5157

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U. S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 2440  
EL PASO, TEXAS

762-143-006 48012 01 4412  
MR JOHN A SPROUL JR  
601 W YANDELL #25  
EL PASO TX 79902