

The



Roadrunner

VOLUME 21 (3)

EL PASO/TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY

JUN. - AUG., 1991

The El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society meets in General Meeting on the third Monday of each month September through May at the Garden Center in Memorial Park, 3105 Grant, El Paso. We will not be meeting during the summer months.

However, the Board of Directors will meet as usual on the second Monday of each month through the summer. Members are always welcome to join us at these meetings. Times and places of the Board meetings are in the Calendar on the back page.

There are also a considerable number of field trips scheduled during the next three months. The El Paso area and the Southwest are remarkable for the number of bird species that can be found here. The field trips will give you the best opportunity to see the greatest number of birds in the area. Okay, so you don't want to camp out. There's a field trip to Memorial park that may just surprise you with what you will find there.

Now if all that isn't enough, there is always Feather Lake. The sanctuary continues to attract wetland birds during the summer. The quality of the sanctuary is part of what brings the birds there, but it does take work to maintain that quality. All that's required is a couple of hours one Saturday a month. Yes, the work days are listed in the Calendar.

**National
Audubon
Society**



Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join.

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 is enclosed.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please make all checks payable to the National Audubon Society.

Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center
P.O. Box 51001
Boulder, Colorado 80322-1001

LOCAL CHAPTER _____

EL PASO/TRANS-PECOS AUDUBON SOC.
PO Box 9635
El Paso, TX 79986

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AUDUBON BIRDATHON

Birdathon Weekend, May 4 - 5, was an eventful one for local birders. We scoured the countryside. We searched every promising habitat. When we were through, the 27 counters on our 8 Birdathon teams had found 158 species of local birds, down from last year's record of 167 but still quite respectable. The Night Stalkers, with 138 species, were the top individual team.

Waterfowl provided the biggest highlights for the weekend. We found a record 18 species, including three new to Birdathon: a Greater White-fronted Goose and a Ross' Goose at Madden Lake and a female Oldsquaw at the Crossroads Pond. The Oldsquaw was truly remarkable, the first-ever spring record of this sea duck in our area. First spotted April 26, it remained at the Crossroads Pond through at least May 12.

Other noteworthy finds included an Osprey at El Paso Country Club, a hawk that was either a Broad-winged or a Gray in the Upper Valley, a Peregrine Falcon near Madden Lake, a Semipalmated Sandpiper at the Socorro sewage ponds, a Bonaparte's Gull at Ft. Hancock reservoir, single Blue-gray Gnatcatchers (also, surprisingly, a Birdathon first) at memorial park and near Hueco Tanks, and two Clay-colored Sparrows and a late Lincoln's Sparrow at Madden Lake.

Whether it was an Oldsquaw or an American coot, all 158 of those species were important. Our counters were backed by some 200 generous sponsors who had pledged Birdathon contributions. Each species found translated to funds raised for El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon's scholarship and Audubon Adventures programs, the El Paso Environmental Center, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue, and Audubon's Southwest Regional Office.

We appreciate our Birdathon sponsors! One way we thank them is through our annual Birdathon drawing. This year's lucky winners were: Dennis and Mary Joe Hulse (National Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds), Bea Husko (Lenox porcelain bird figurine), Bob Johnson (Reader's Digest Guide to North American Wildlife), Cornelia Owen (Bushnell Birder binoculars) and Iola Pennington (Pierpoint crystal cup plates).

Birdathon is extremely important to our chapter. It succeeds because many people work hard at it. Our counters richly deserve thanks, as do the folks who helped with the preparations for this year's event: Helen Barto, Jane Fowler, Bob Johnson, Barbara Shults, and especially Jean Coyle, Bettie Roberts and Sid Sheppard.

Finally, THANK YOU, everyone who supported Birdathon. You'll get a final report in the September newsletter.
//John Sproul//



DONORS

Recent donations by the following individuals/organizations are gratefully acknowledged by the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society.

FOR FEATHER LAKE

- Fourth-graders at LeBarron Park School

FOR GENERAL CHAPTER WORK

- La An Can Garden Club

ON THE TRAIL

RIO GRANDE NEAR QUITMAN CANYON

SUN., JUNE 9. Meet at 7:00 AM at Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, 9500 North Loop. We'll travel some 65 miles downriver to the area near the mouth of Quitman Canyon, where birdlife along the Rio Grande is far richer than what we see near town. Summer resident species there include Vermillion Flycatcher, Bewick's Wren, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Summer Tanager, Lucy's Warbler, Painted Bunting, Orchard Oriole and more. Bring a lunch and plenty of liquids. We'll do some walking and temperatures will be warm. We'll return to Feather Lake by mid to late afternoon. Leader: John Sproul, (545-5157).

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

The survey of breeding birds continues on Sat., June 22. If you want to do more than just look at birds, then the Breeding Bird Atlas is for you. This will provide an interesting and informative glimpse into the lives of birds as well as add to general scientific knowledge. Call John Sproul for all the details, 545-5157.

CENTRAL EL PASO PARKS

SAT., JUNE 29. How about a pleasant walk through the park on a warm Saturday morning with like-minded individuals? Then meet us at the Garden Center in Memorial Park (3105 Grant) at 7:30 AM for a gentle walk through Memorial Park, Arroyo Park and possibly Madeline Park. This is an excellent outing for the beginner birder as well as the folks who think they know what they are doing. Jo Engel will be the leader, and Nancy Wilson has the details.

BOULDER SPRING, ORGAN MTS.

SAT., JULY 13. We'll leave I-10 and Transmountain Road at 7:00 AM and head for this Bureau of Land Management recreation area on the east side of the Organ Mts. It's gonna be warm, and our hike on the 4.5-mile Pine Tree Trail will be somewhat strenuous, but the birding and the scenery will make it worthwhile. Among the species we'll be seeing: Golden Eagle, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker and Hepatic Tanager. Bring lunch, liquids, sunscreen and comfortable hiking shoes. Please call the leader, John Sproul (545-5157), if you plan to attend.



RUIDOSO, NEW MEXICO

SAT. and SUN., JULY 20 - 21. Meet at the K-MART parking lot (9484 Dyer St.) at 7:30 AM, departure about 7:45 AM. For those going earlier or wanting to travel on their own, meet at the East parking lot of the Inn of the Mountain Gods at 10:00 AM. Camping will probably be at the South Fork Campgrounds located at Bonito Lake. We will gather for a picnic dinner at the campsite Saturday about 6:00 PM. Bring your own food. Return on Sunday through Cloudcroft, stopping there for lunch. We can expect to see various Montane birds, Tree Swallows and Western Bluebirds. Leader: Nancy Wilson (635-3907).

OBSERVATIONS

March 11 - May 11, 1991

Uncommon, rare & casual sightings

- CP - Crossroads Pond
- DP - Doniphan Playa
- EPCC - El Paso Country Club
- FB - Ft. Bliss Ponds
- FH - Ft. Hancock
- FL - Feather Lake
- FQ - Ft. Quitman
- HT - Hueco Tanks
- LA - Lombardy Ave.
- MV - McNary Overpass
- MS - Mtn. Shadow Lakes
- SS - Socorro Sewage Ponds



Sightings by afield trip member are noted by a (+) after the leader's initials; sightings in an observer's yard or area are indicated by an (*) after his/her initials.

LOONS - FALCONS

- White Pelican - 3/29 FH (JD)
- Eared Grebe - 5/4, 5/5 FB (mo); 5/2 MS A/MG
- Least Bittern - 5/2 - 5/11 FL (JS)
- White Ibis - 4/7 FL (SS,MS) first sighting
- White-faced Ibis - 5/4, 5/5 FB (mo)
- White-fronted Goose - 5/2 ML (JS)
- Ross's Goose - 5/2 ML (JS)
- Wood Duck - 5/4, 5/5 CP, EPCC, LA (mo)
- Old Squaw - 4/26 - 5/12 CP (BZ, JS, mo)
- Sharp-shinned Hawk - 4/18 HB*
- Prairie Falcon - 4/28 AA*

QUAIL - WOODPECKER

- Black-necked Stilt - 4/27 - 5/11 DP (JD+)
- Willet - 5/2 MS (A/MG)
- Solitary Sandpiper - 5/4 HT (BJ)
- Black Tern - 5/2 SS (JS)
- Belted Kingfisher - 5/5 LA (JD+)

FLYCATCHERS - VIREOS

- Dusky Flycatcher - 5/3 - 5/5 HT (JS)
- Vermillion Flycatcher - 5/4 FQ (BJ+); (A/MG*)
- Cave Swallow - 5/4 MN (BJ+)

- Scrub Jays - 4/1 - 4/5 (SJD*)
- Gray Catbird - 5/4 (HB*)
- Phainopepla - 5/5 (JD+)

WARBLERS - WEAVER FINCHES

- McGillivrey's Warbler - 4/28 (AA*)
- Golden-winged Warbler - 4/28 FB (BZ+)
- Cardinal - 4/3 - 4/4 (J/NM*)
- White throated sparrow - 4/19 (HB*)
- Golden-crowned Sparrow - 5/1 (LS*)

Observers: Art Arteaga, Helen Bigelow, Joyce Davis, Sarah Jane Dodds, Al and Madeline Gavit, Bob Johnson, Mark Slipo, Susan Schneider, Lucille Swick, John Sproul, many observers.

// Joyce Davis, Observations Editor, 591-9470 //



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The EP/TAS Wildlife Sanctuary is located at 9500 North Loop.

With Feather Lake now closed until October, it's time to thank the many volunteers who staffed the sanctuary during visitor hours this past year. Good work, Ginny and Tom Baker, George Barnett, Helen Barto, Mary Bradley, Jeannette Cole, Jean and John Coyle, Joyce Davis, Sarah Jane Dodds, John Drissel, Dayle Edwards, Jane Fowler, Terese Garcia, High Jameson, Bob Johnson, Jo Nagel, Betty Pagel, Iola Pennington, Bettie Roberts, Bart Rumaker, Susie Schneider, Barbara Shuits, Lorraine and John Snelling, John Sproul, and Mary Ann Vernon.

Three new birds; Harris' Hawk, Cedar Waxwing and, incredibly, White Ibis, have been added to the Feather Lake list in recent months, but perhaps the most exciting news involves Least Bitterns. Shown on the 1944 edition of the El Paso bird checklist as a fairly common nesting species, this tiny heron all but disappeared from our area over the past 50 years with loss of wetland habitat. The last documented nesting took place near Canutillo in 1946. Prior to August, 1989, we had only three reports of this species in the 1980s.

Now, Least Bitterns have been at Feather Lake three years running, and this year a pair showed up earlier than ever, April 23. The potential return of Least Bittern as a nesting species in the El Paso area is the best possible testimony to Feather Lake's value as wetland wildlife habitat.

Want to see the bitterns? Rumor has it

they will be visible only three more times this summer, on June 15, July 20, and August 17. Amazingly, these are also the dates of our upcoming sanctuary work days. Gates open at 8 AM. Be sure to arrive early to beat the heat.

//John Sproul//

*All Nature seems at work. Slugs
leave their lair --
The bees are stinging, birds are
on the wing --
And Winter slumbering in the
open air,
Wears on his smiling face a
dream of Spring!
And I the while, the sole unbusy
thing,
Non honey make, non pain, non
build, non sing.
-- Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

EL PASO ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

The El Paso Environmental Center (800 S. Piedras, corner of Piedras and Paisano) was dedicated in style at a splendid open house April 19. Now, it's back to business. The grant the El Paso Group of the Sierra Club obtained to start the center runs out June 1, and, very likely, the operating hours will change at that time. As we go to press, one proposal is for the new hours to be 9 AM to 2 PM, Wednesday through Saturday.

Recycling operations at the Center are in full swing. Materials accepted include: - newspapers, - Aluminum cans, - steel cans, - glass bottles, - corrugated cardboard, - white office paper/stationery, and - used computer paper.

To operate at full strength, the Center needs volunteers both to staff the office and to help with the recycling activities. Especially needed right now is a volunteer to coordinate the volunteer program. Can you help in any of these capacities? Please contact Terese Garcia at 833-4946 or Neill O'Hara at 565-4735.

KUDOS!

Special recognition for those groups and individuals who have provided assistance to EP/TAS programs and projects.



FOR APRIL GENERAL MEETING

- John Hansen

FOR MAY GENERAL MEETING

- Joanne Foster

FOR WORK AT FEATHER LAKE

- Students from Camino Real Middle School
- Students from St. Clements Episcopal Parish School

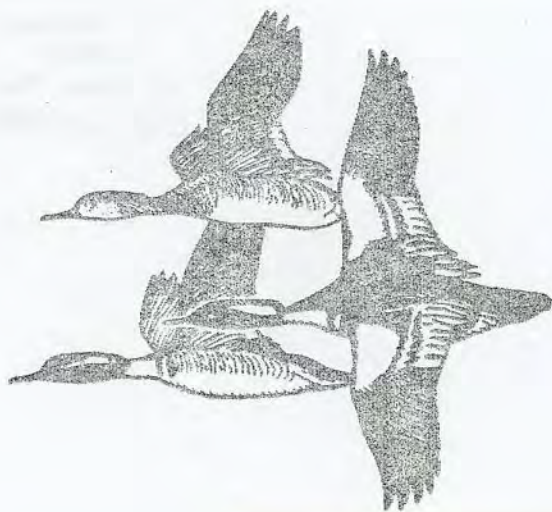
FOR NEWSLETTER ILLUSTRATIONS

- Carol Sullivan

We've Come a Long Way!

The National Audubon Society has grown from a small group of concerned citizens protecting wading birds to one of the world's largest and most influential environmental organizations, in little more than a hundred years. Auduboners have been active in the century's most critical environmental battles, from achieving a ban on DDT due to its effect on wildlife to today's struggle to save the last ancient forests. And they include unforgettable personalities such as Roger Tory Peterson, Oscar Arias, and others.

Audubon's story has now been published and is available in bookstores across the country. Longtime Audubon magazine field editor Frank Graham, Jr. has written a 352-page book, entitled *The Audubon Ark: A History of the National Audubon Society*, published by Alfred A. Knopf. Royalties from its sale will benefit National Audubon Society programs.



IN SYMPATHY

El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society extends its sympathy to Sarah Jane Dodds on the recent loss of her husband Ed. A long-time friend of our chapter, Ed helped us in many ways, particularly with production of THE ROADRUNNER. We will miss him.

Everything in Nature contains all the powers of Nature. Everything is made of one hidden stuff.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

CALENDAR

JUNE

- Sun. 9 - Field trip to Ft. Quitman, see page 3.
- Mon. 10 - Board meeting at the Snellings' home, 11689 Tony Tejada, 592-9642. 7:30 PM
- Sat. 15 - Feather Lake work day.
- Sat. 22 - Breeding Bird Atlas, see page 3.
- Sat. 29 - Field trip to Central El Paso Parks, see page 3.

JULY

- Mon. 8 - Board Meeting at Jane Fowler's home, 1594-B Bengal, 598-2448. 7:30 PM
- Sat. 13 - Field trip to Aquirre Springs, see page 3.
- Sat. & Sun. 20 - 21 - Field trip to Ruidoso, see page 3.
- Sat. 20 - Feather Lake work day.
- Sat. 27 - Field trip to Rio Bosque Park, see page 4.

AUGUST

- Sat. & Sun. 10 - 11 - Field trip to Gila Cliff Dwellings, see page 4.
- Mon. 12 - Board Meeting at Joyce Davis' home, 200 N. Mesa Hills Dr., #1505, 581-9470. 7:30 PM
- Sat. 17 - Feather Lake work day.
- Sat. 24 - Field trip to Hueco Tanks, see page 4.

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