

# The Roadrunner



Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society  
Volume 31 No. 12 October & November, 2002

## General Meetings

Monday, October 21, 2002  
Memorial Park Garden Center  
3105 Grant Street 7:30pm  
Black Bears  
Scott Mitchell, Texas Parks and Wildlife

Scott Mitchell, a Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) Biologist from Sanderson, will discuss the results of his M.S. Thesis on black bears (*Ursus americanus*). Black bears were once common in the mountain ranges of western Texas. A combination of many factors led to the extirpation of bears from west Texas by the mid 1900s. Anecdotal information supplies researchers, federal agencies, and state agencies with some of the most useful historical data concerning black bear habitation in western Texas. In 1977 TPWD initiated "voluntary reporting" of black bear activity in the state. Of the 3700+ sightings received since 1977 the majority come from west Texas and more exclusively from Big Bend National Park (BBNP). The National Park Service initiated a cooperative study in 1998 to learn more about resident bears in BBNP. During Scott's 2-year study he monitored 10 radio-collared bears, observed winter ranges, recorded reproductive rates, collected den data, and conducted a food habit study. Scott will also discuss the statewide recovery plan requested in 2001 by the TPWD commission.

Monday, November 18, 2002  
Memorial Park Garden Center  
3105 Grant Street 7:30pm  
Aplomado Falcons of Northern Chihuahua, Mexico  
Alberto Macias-Duarte

Alberto Macias-Duarte a student at the Universidad Autonoma Chihuahua has spent the last two years researching the breeding behavior and habitat use of Aplomado Falcons in northern Mexico. His presentation will focus on connections between vegetation structure, grassland bird populations, and the reproductive success of these endangered falcons. He will also give a brief discussion on the introduction efforts of west Texas.

## Chapter Web Site

<http://www.gbarnett.com/eptpas/eptpashome.html>.

El Paso Audubon Online, features updated graphics and more information for chapter members and visitors to El Paso.

El Paso Audubon Online supplements The Roadrunner and includes information about upcoming field trips, a calendar of events, recent bird sightings and an updated list of birding links to the Internet. make bird sighting reports at  
[ElPasoBirdAlert@gbarnett.com](mailto:ElPasoBirdAlert@gbarnett.com)

Thank you very much

Mike Gaglio  
for the September 16th  
meeting presentation

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## El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society

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The Roadrunner is published six times a year. Contributions are welcome. Please e-mail to [whelenk@aol.com](mailto:whelenk@aol.com) or mail to 6120 Quail Ave. El Paso, TX 79924. (915) 751-2408

## BIRDATHON 2002

Thanks to the hard work and generosity of everyone involved in our annual bird counting, fund raising effort, the chapter raised at least \$6,000.00 this year.

Funds have already been submitted for the operation of the Texas Audubon State Office. Future distributions will include funds for "outside" projects such as Keystone Heritage Park and Rio Bosque Wetlands, as well as "internal" projects such as our own Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, and other Audubon education & conservation endeavors.

Over a 150 species of birds were seen &/or heard, with the most "unusual" possibly being an American Golden Plover seen by many observers at the Ft. Bliss Ponds.

Contact John Kiseda if you want a chapter list of Birdathon 2002 bird sightings, want to volunteer to be involved in next year's efforts, or have any other questions.

**Help Wanted:**  
Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary  
Saturday, November 23, 2002 2:00pm  
Volunteers invited  
no experience necessary

## From the President's Aerie

by, Betty Fisbeck

October is a special month for all of us who enjoy nature and the outdoors. It is the month of the "Celebration of the Mountains" which has become more successful every year, both in attracting participants and expanding the number and variety of activities. Activities range from two hour hikes to three day camping trips. Many of the activities are free, some at minimal cost. All are lead by people who are knowledgeable about their topic and willing to share with others. We live in an area that is unique historically, ecologically, and culturally. Look for the complete schedule of activities in the October El Paso Scene and take advantage of the fun and educational outings offered.

### Raptor Watch @ the Wyler Tramway

#### COME ON "UP" & HELP OUT !

John Kiseda has been conducting a hawkwatch since mid August from the top of the Wyler Tramway. He would love to get some help with this project and he will train you to be as accurate & thorough as possible.

This is a great opportunity to learn about raptor migration & raptor identification. Observation periods vary to a certain degree but are typically from ~ 9am-12pm, or 12pm-4pm (varies due to scheduling, prevailing winds, etc.).

Contact John at the zoo @ 521-1850 or in the eve. at home @ 533-4615.

A few peregrine falcons have been sighted, numerous turkey vultures and one zone tailed hawk, which is a very rare bird, only the second sighting ever reported in El Paso.

## At Feather Lake

by, John Sproul

Feather Lake, our 43.5-acre wildlife sanctuary located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso, is again open to the public. Hours are 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays and 2 p.m. to sunset on Sundays. Admission is free.

To start the season in style, join us at the lake on Saturday, October 12 for our annual potluck dinner. See page 5 for all the details. You'll enjoy good food, good conversation, and mind-boggling numbers of Yellow-headed Blackbirds. With water levels again relatively low this summer, cattails continued their inexorable march across the basin. The areas of open water are shrinking, but blackbird roosting habitat is definitely on the increase.

Looking for a brilliant display of fall color in El Paso? Check out Feather Lake in November. The cottonwoods are a sight to see. Word has it they'll be at their peak Saturday, November 23, coincidentally the date of our next workday. Our work session starts at 2 p.m. We'll work a few hours then enjoy the late afternoon light on the cottonwoods.

## RIO BOSQUE WETLANDS PARK

UTEP's Center for Environmental Resource Management offers free walking tours twice each month and also holds monthly community workdays at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park in El Paso's Mission Valley.

### Coming up:

- 8 a.m. Sun., October 6 (Birds)
- 9 a.m. Sat., October 19 (Workday)
- 9 a.m. Sat., October 26 (Introductory Tour)
- 9 a.m. Sat., November 9 (Birds)
- 9 a.m. Sat., November 16 (Workday)
- 3 p.m. Sun., November 24 (Introductory)

For all of these activities, the meeting place is a bridge crossing Riverside Canal. To get there from I-10, take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Dr., turn left onto Pan American and travel 1.5 miles to the bridge. Please be prompt. Information: 747-8663.

### Keystone Marsh

Please continue to inform John Kiseda of your bird sighting observations, because he continues to add to and refine the current checklist [you can view the current checklist on the Keystone Website].

In other news, the Master Plan for Keystone Heritage Park (KHP) has just been completed, and the Junior League continues to play a vital role in the plans for the Botanical Garden and other aspects of the KHP. Contact Bernie or Melissa Sargent @ 581-7920 for information on how you can become more involved in this valuable local project.



## Conservation

### Mexican Grey Wolves: Current Status in the Wild & in Captivity

John Kiseda just returned from the Mexican Grey Wolf Species Survival Plan (SSP) Annual Meeting & Reunion Binacional sobre el Lobo Mexicano, in San Diego, CA. [John is a member of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association's Mexican Grey Wolf SSP Management Team].

The meeting was attended by various people and entities involved in the restoration of the Mexican Grey Wolf in the wild, in the U.S. and in Mexico. Representatives of the U.S. and Mexican federal wildlife departments, Mexican and U.S. zoo's, and other facilities involved in the recovery process, met in a multi-day meeting to make plans and set goals for the coming year.

There are approximately 250 Mexican Grey wolves in captivity. 14 Mexican facilities hold ~ 110 wolves, and 3 of these facilities are considered pre-release facilities where wolves are maintained in a manner that makes them suitable for eventual release into the wild. 28 U.S. facilities maintain ~ 140 wolves, and 3 of these facilities are considered pre-release facilities where wolves are maintained in a manner that makes them suitable for eventual release into the wild. There were over 60 captive surviving births during the past pupping season.

"Wild in the U.S. Wolves" have done extremely well in the past year. There have been few "losses" of these wolves and few negative interactions with people and their property. There are ~ 40 wolves in the wild [and possibly even more] in the Blue Range area of the southwest. It is thought that 7 of the 8 existing packs [6 packs in AZ & 2 packs in NM], have pups.

Another very positive event of the past year, was the agreement reached with the White Mountain Apache Tribe, that will allow wolves to disperse onto their vast tribal lands.

## AOU CHECKLIST CHANGES

The American Ornithologists' Union recently published the 43rd supplement to its Checklist of North American Birds. It summarizes decisions made by the AOU's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature 2000 and 2001. Among the changes:

- The genus name for Roseate Spoonbill is changed from *Ajaia* to *Platalea*.
- The Common Snipe is split into 2 species: Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*), found in North America, and Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), an Old World species.
- The scientific name for Red Phalarope is changed from *Phalaropus fulicaria* to *P. fulicarius*.
- The Eared Trogon is now known as the Eared Quetzal.
- The Tufted Titmouse is again split into two species, the Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*) and the Black-crested Titmouse (*Baeolophus atricristatus*). The Black-crested occurs in Trans-Pecos Texas, though not as far west as El Paso.
- The genus name for Blue Grosbeak is changed from *Guiraca* to *Passerina*. The grosbeak is now in the same genus as the buntings.

### Wildlife Conservation Organizations

Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue  
[www.whc.net/cdwr](http://www.whc.net/cdwr)

El Paso Zoo  
[www.elpasozoo.org](http://www.elpasozoo.org)

Keystone Heritage Park  
[keystonepark.com](http://keystonepark.com) or [keystonepark.org](http://keystonepark.org)

Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park  
[www.cdnep.org](http://www.cdnep.org)

Friends of Rio Bosque  
747-8663

Friends of Hueco Tanks  
857-1135

Southwest Environmental Center  
[severn.swec@zianet.com](mailto:severn.swec@zianet.com)

Franklin Mountain Wilderness Coalition  
[www.iloveparks.com/fmw/](http://www.iloveparks.com/fmw/)

# GOING ON THE TRAIL

## BIRDS and PEOPLE

SATURDAY OCTOBER 12; 4:30  
until ????

What's going to happen?  
**11th Annual Pot Luck Picnic.**

Where?  
At our **FEATHER LAKE** sanctuary.

The chapter will provide the burgers, dogs and rolls, also the condiments to top them off. This is a family affair, the kids will enjoy it as the birds will be performing. The grill will be hot about 5:30. But come at 4:30 PM so you can build up your appetite as you walk around looking at the birds. By early Oct. some ducks are starting to arrive and we will have some of regular night roosters(not chickens) flying in.

We ask you to bring a dish (Salad, Pasta, Dessert, or something else) to share with a few others, Also your own utensils and what ever beverages you like. If you would like something other than burgers or dogs feel free to cook on the grill, and you are not required to share your filet mignon. Our coffee pot with hot water and instant mix will be ready.

If you think you might be coming give John Sproul (545-5157) or Bob Johnson (757-1876) a call. as we need an approximate count for buying the goodies. If you have a change of plans and on the last day you find you can come, **please come** even if you haven't called.

## CELEBRATION of THE MOUNTAINS

During October we will be having a number of birding observation and identification locations staffed in El Paso. These will be in conjunction with various tours conducted for the Celebration of The Mountains. Check the October EL PASO SCENE, the El Paso Times each week from the end of Sep.

The first of these will be **FEATHERFEST** at Keystone Heritage Park. We will have a booth telling about the birds of Keystone and about our chapter. A talk about the birds will be given about 12N. Other exhibits, tours and talks will also take place. Bring your friends and family out to the site to see what it is all about.

Date: **Saturday, October 12, 2002**

Time: **11 AM - - 2 PM**

Where: **Keystone Heritage Park**

The second activity we will conduct, will be a birding tour in Tom Mays Park. The first part of the walk will be fairly level, the second half will be a moderately steep trail up to **West Cottonwood Springs**. For those that think its too tough we will have a knowledgeable birder stay at the lower level. Birds to be seen probably will include *Black-chinned*, *Rufus-crowned*, *Black-throated*, and *White-crowned Sparrows*. *Rock*, *Canyon*, and *Cactus Wrens*, and *Ruby-crowned Kinglet*.

Date: **Sunday, October 27, 2001**

Time: **7:49 AM**

Meet at: Entrance to Tom Mays on the TransMt. Road. West side.

Leader: *Richard Hermosillo and Bob Johnson (757-1876)*

## GOING ON THE TRAIL CONTINUED

### ANOTHER DOUBLE SUNSET

Our first double was very popular, let's try it again. It will be a **SUNSET** tour (it will set about 5:03 PM) along **SUNSET** Drive. The winter birds are in, have had many reports of *Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches* already. We always see some great birds in the thickets along the Nemexas Drain at the west end of Sunset. A possible detour along Emory, and maybe Mary Lou Alcorn will let us look in her back yard.

**DATE:** Sunday, November 10th  
**TIME:** 2:53 PM  
**PLACE:** Crossroads Ponding Area  
**Leader:** Bob Johnson (757-1876)

### WINTER WATER BIRDS

One of the best places to find good birds in El Paso is the Fort Bliss Ponds. The water is coming back in so the numbers should be up. We will also take a ride along Hawk Alley to check the Red-tailed Hawks, and other birds of prey are often sitting on the poles.

**Date:** Saturday, November 30  
**Time:** 7:17 AM  
**Place:** Walmart, 4530 Woodrow Bean/  
Transmountain Road.  
(North end of parking lot)  
**Who:** Bob "Wildbirder" (757-1876)

### REPORTS FROM THE TRAIL

On Saturday August 17 five people showed up for the trip to the Fort Bliss Ponds. They enjoyed seeing 33 species, included were a *Great Blue Heron, Black Tern, Western Tanager,* and *Blue Grosbeak.* But one of the best birds was a Black-crowned Night Heron in the North pond. The top of the list, a pair of **GOLDEN EAGLES** sitting along Stan Roberts Sr. Ave.

The trip from the crossroads ponding area to the Sod Farm had 22 species enjoyed by 4 happy birders. A stop at the end of Sunset Drive, along the canal turned up 4 different Warbler specie. The best of the trip came at the Sod Farm where a **WHIMBREL** walked around within 100 feet of the cars.

### ANNUAL INTERPRETIVE FAIR

October 19th and 20th, 2002

#### **HUECO TANKS STATE HISTORICAL PARK**

This will be the 8th Annual Interpretive Fair and will be held in conjunction with the **LONE STAR LEGACY WEEKEND.** Fair activities include *Birding tours, Rock Art Tours, Guest Speakers, Kiowa Dancers and Singers, Climbing Demo, Wagon Rides, Mescalero Apache demonstrations, Tigua Tribe, Folklorico Dancers, Ralph Zotigh drum group, Matachine, Bowen Ranch Cowboys, Buffalo Soldier display and program Cowboy Singers and Storytellers, an evening Campfire Program.* Crafts and a Food Booth (with our famed **BUFFALO STEW**)

Saturday 19th Oct. 10 AM - 9 PM

Sunday 20th Oct. 10 AM - 5 PM

**FREE ADMISSION TO THE PARK**

### **FRIENDS of HUECO TANKS**

**Admission:** Hueco Tanks Historical Park - \$4.  
\$2 for Seniors 65, Children under 12 - FREE.

#### **Bird Identification Tours**

Sunday Nov. 17 8:08 AM

Sunday Dec. 15 8:08 AM

Sunday Jan. 19 8:08 AM

Please check in at the Headquarters.  
Reservations and Information **857-1135.**  
Leader Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson **757-1876.**

### **ACTIVITIES AT KEYSTONE**

Sat., Oct. 19 will be **PRIDE** day at **KEYSTONE.**  
Come help pick up the place. 8 AM --?

# OBSERVATIONS

## RARE AND UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

July 16, 2002 to Sep 15, 2002

Listing of birds is determined using the checklist "Birds of El Paso County, Texas and Adjacent Areas" 7th Edition October 1987. Leave sightings at Bob "Wildbirder" Johnson (757-1876), or E-mail bobwildbirderj@cs.com.

**Observers:** Jim Alcorn: Dan Allen: Helen Bigalow: Bob Johnson: John Kiseda: Jim Paton: Flora Pittard: Roxanne Schroeder: John Sproul: Barry Zimmer. -FT (on a chapter field trip) -yd (seen from their yard)

*Specie*                      *Date*      *Obsv*      *Loc*

### GREBES TO DUCKS

Western Grebe	8/23	BZ	McN
<i>Over 200 Large Grebes with a number of recently hatched young</i>			
Clark's Grebe	8/8	BZ	McN
American White Pelican	9/2	JP	McN
Great Blue Heron	7/21	BJ-FT	HTk
Tricolored Heron	8/18	JS	RBq
Yellow-crown Night Heron	9/8	JP	McN
Black-bellied Whist-Duck	9/2	JA	Ranch pond north of FtH

### OSPREY TO SORA

Osprey	8/15	BZ	McN
	9/2	JP	McN
Cooper's Hawk	8/14	BZ	FBP
Broad-winged Hawk	8/19	DA	CCA
Zone-tailed Hawk	8/19	JK	Trm
Golden Eagle	8/17	BJ-FT	SRS
Peregrine Falcon	8/20	BZ-yd	Ton
Sora	8/28	Fide HB	

### PLOVERS THRU PHALAROPES

Semipalmated Plover	9/12	BZ	McN
Solitary Sandpiper	8/14	BZ	FBP
	9/2	JP	McN
Upland Sandpiper	8/14	BZ	FBP
	8/30	BZ	Bor
Whimbrel	9/8	BJ-FT	Sod
Long-billed Curlew	9/2	JP	McN
Western Sandpiper	8/3	JK	Key
Stilt Sandpiper	8/23	BZ	McN
Wilson's Phalarope	8/19	JK	Key

### GULLS AND TERNS

Laughing Gull	9/12	BZ	McN
Franklin's Gull	8/8	BZ	McN
Sabine's Gull	9/12	BZ	McN
Common Tern	8/19	JK	Key
	9/8	JP	FtH
Foster's Tern	8/8	BZ	McN
	8/19	DA	Key
Least Tern	8/15	BZ	McN
Black Tern	8/17	BJ-FT	FBP

### DOVES THRU FLYCATCHERS

Common-ground Dove	8/8	BZ-yd	Ton
Red-crowned Parrot	8/3	JK	Sun
	8/15	BL	Sun
Common Nighthawk	9/1	JS	RBq
Calliope Hummer	8/3	JK	Ken
Broad-tailed Hummer	8/10	JK	Ken
Allen's Humminbird	7/22	BZ-yd	Ton
Belted Kingfisher	8/3	JS	FLk
Olive-sided Flycatcher	8/21	DA	Mon
Willow Flycatcher	8/17	JS	FLk
Gray Flycatcher	8/14	BZ	FBP

### VIREOS THRU WARBLERS

Warbling Vireo	8/16	DA	CCA
Blue Jay	8/6	JK	Zoo
Western Scrub-Jay	9/7	RS	LaC
Purple Martin	8/29	Fide HB	
Nashville Warbler	9/2	JP	McN
Yellow-throat Warbler	8/15	BZ	Ton
		3d area record	
Black-&White Warbler	8/26	BZ-yd	Ton
Northern Waterthrush	9/3	Fide HB	

### TANAGER TO ORIOLE

Western Tanager	8/4	JK	Ken
	8/7	FP	Hor
Lark Bunting	7/30	BJ	McM
Painted Bunting	8/4	BZ-yd	Ton
Dickcissel	8/24	BZ-yd	Ton
	9/8	JP	McN
Eastern Meadowlark	8/8	BZ	McN
Orchard Oriole	8/30	BZ-yd	Ton

**Locations:** Bor-Borderland; CCA-Country Club Area; FLk-Feather Lake; FBP-Fort Bliss Ponds; FtH-Fort Hancock; HTk-Hueco Tanks; Key-Keystone Marsh; Ken-Kenyon Joyce; LaC-LaCruz McN-McNary; McM-McCombs; Mon-Montoya; RBq-Rio Bosque Park; Sod-Sod Farm; SRS-Stan Roberts Sr. Drive; Sun-Sunset Drive; Trm-top of the Wyler Tramway; Ton-Tonto; Zoo-El Paso Zoo.

El Paso/Trans-Pecos  
 Audubon Society  
 P.O. BOX 972441  
 El Paso, Texas 79997

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**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*

**National Audubon Society**  
 Chapter Membership Data Center  
 P.O. Box 51001  
 Boulder, Colorado 80322-1001  
**EL PASO/TRANS-PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY**

W10  
 Local Chapter Code

7XCHA

**Dates to Remember**

Call Bob Johnson for details 757-1876

October	November	December
FeatherFest/ Keystone Picnic at Feather Lake Saturday, 12th	Double Sunset Tour Sunday, 10th	Board Meeting Monday, 2nd
Board Meeting Monday, 14th	Board Meeting Monday, 11th	General Meeting Monday, 9th
Pride Day - Keystone Saturday, 19th	Hueco Tanks Sunday, 17th	Keep watch for Christmas Bird Count dates
Hueco Tanks Fair Sat & Sun 19th & 20th	General Meeting Monday, 18th	
General Meeting Monday, 21st	Feather Lake Workday Saturday, 23rd	
Cottonwood Springs Sunday, 27th		

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