

# THE ROADRUNNER

NEWSLETTER OF THE EL PASO--TRANS PECOS AUDUBON SOCIETY

8365 Beverly Place, El Paso, Texas 79907

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Bill Hunt, Editor

## COMING EVENTS

Monday, April 16 Regular meeting Centennial Museum at UTEP. Several movies dealing with the environment will be shown. "Year of Disaster" deals with the nation's worsening water crisis. "The Runaround" is a short animation about who causes pollution. A new film, "Where Should a Squirrel Live?" will also be shown.

Saturday, April 28 Field trip to an unnamed spring off Transmountain Road. Meet at Gibson's parking lot, 9817 Dyer at 8 a. m. The spring migration should make the birding quite good in the canyon.

## WINTER BIRD SIGHTINGS

Although our local society has not yet established and perfected methods of confirming and reporting unusual sightings, the following observations have been reported by several observers, by photograph, or by very careful study.

|                        |                                                                                               |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Snow Goose             | Ascarate Lake(1), Sunland Park(7) Nov./Dec. B. Hunt                                           |
| Boss Goose             | Sunland Park(1) Nov./Dec. B. Hunt                                                             |
| Mexican Duck           | W. El Paso(2) Dec. 30, et. al. B. Hunt, E. Chew                                               |
| Golden Eagle           | W. El Paso Dec. 30 (2), Feb. 3(2) Joan Pierce,<br>Mar. 4(1) Eddie, Steve, Beth Chew           |
| Chukar                 | E. El Paso Mar. 29(1) B. Hunt<br>Close study of bird on church roof!                          |
| White-winged Dove      | W. El Paso Dec. 30 G. Rosé, Jan. Helen Ponder                                                 |
| Anna's Hummingbird     | E. El Paso feeder of Roberta Wilcox<br>male all winter; female, Jan. 14-Feb. 2                |
| Vermilion Flycatcher   | Clint Dec. 4-Jan 15(2) Faye Surratt, Cabana Ponds<br>Mar. 5(1) L. & W. Yerby                  |
| Steller's Jay          | Numerous records all over El Paso                                                             |
| Scrub Jay              | Numerous records all over El Paso                                                             |
| White-necked Raven     | E. El Paso (100) Dec.-Mar. B. Hunt                                                            |
| Common Crow            | E. El Paso (flocks of 5-30) in pecan orchard in association<br>with ravens, Feb./Mar. B. Hunt |
| Clarke's Nutcracker    | Mt. Park, NE El Paso (1-2) Dec. 20 E. Kimmelman,<br>Feb./Mar. Janet Brockmoller               |
| Long-billed Marsh Wren | Clint (2) Mar. 7 B. Hunt                                                                      |
| Sage Thrasher          | E. El Paso Dec.-Feb. (1), Mar. 8(8) B. Hunt                                                   |
| Robin                  | Numerous flocks of up to 50 birds all over El Paso                                            |
| Western Bluebird       | Several reports of small flocks in Jan.-Feb.                                                  |
| Mountain Bluebird      | Several reports of small flocks in Jan. Feb.                                                  |
| Townsend's Solitaire   | Singles reported in Arroyo Park, Mem. Park, E. El Paso                                        |
| Northern Shrike        | W. El Paso(1) Jan. 13, 17 G. & E. White, L. & W. Yerby                                        |
| Evening Grosbeak       | W. El Paso                                                                                    |
| Lazuli Bunting         | W. El Paso (1) Jan. 13-17 G. & E. White, L. & W. Yerby                                        |
| Cassin's Sparrow       | E. El Paso(1) "skylark" song, Apr. 2 B. Hunt                                                  |

Please report unusual sightings to Bill Hunt 591-5630 or 598-6735  
or Geth White 565-1024

BIRD OF THE MONTH: MOCKINGBIRD

The mockingbird is one of the most common birds in the southern part of the United States. He has been chosen as the official bird for five states--Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas.

The mockingbird is about ten and a half inches long with a gray head and gray back, and pale breast. He has white wing bars and white tail patches. Both male and female adults have the same plumage, but the young mockingbirds have brown backs and spotted breasts. The mockingbird is similar to the shrike, but he does not have a face mask and he is slimmer than the shrike.

The mockingbird does not usually migrate and is found year round in warm climates. He is common in populated areas and is often seen around houses. At one time they were sold as pets in the South.

The mockingbird is one of the thirty-two species of the mimidae family which is found only in the Americas. The Indians called him "cencontilatolly" which means four hundred tongues, but his scientific name is mimus polyglottus which means many tongued mimic. One mockingbird is credited with the reproduction of thirty-nine bird songs, fifty bird calls, and the noises of a cricket and a frog. A mockingbird was heard changing his tune eighty-seven times in seven minutes, and another one imitated the flute which was imitating the bird songs in "Peter and the Wolf." The mockingbird sings at all hours. He starts tuning up in January and reaches the peak of his singing in the spring.

The mockingbird is an extremely territorial bird and it will attack anything that tries to invade his territory, especially his own kind. Many times they will attack their own reflection in a window or a hubcap. They get in many dogfights over territory; there are sometimes six birds in one dogfight.

In the spring both of the parents build the nest of grass and twigs. It is within ten feet of the ground. There are three to six red-spotted greenish or bluish eggs laid. They hatch in about twelve days and the young take wing about two weeks later. After that the parents build a new nest and the second brood is raised. During this time the nest is being protected by the diving and pecking of the parents.

The mockingbird has many strange habits. We have seen it singing on top of a telephone pole and then all of a sudden jump up off the pole three to seven feet and light back on the pole still singing.

The mockingbird molts in August and his feathers come back in the fall. During this molting time the female sings a soft beautiful song from the seclusion of a bush.

ENVIRONMENTAL BULLETINS

TRINITY CANAL DEALT SERIOUS DEFEAT

Voters in 17 watershed counties turned down a \$150 million dollar bond issue on which the entire project may well have depended. The future of the proposed 335-mile barge canal is apparently very bleak. Though only 9 of 17 counties rejected the issue, the popular vote was decidedly in favor of the conservationists won the day with less than a tenth of the financial resources of the opposition.

Earlier, the project was inhibited by the courts when the Wallisville Dam work was stopped pending review of an Environmental Impact Statement on the entire canal project.

LETTERS NEEDED FOR ROADLESS WILDERNESS AREAS

Of the ten original qualified wilderness areas for study, the Forest Service selected only one (Frisco) in the Gila National Forest. Conservationists are urged to write John McGuire, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. asking that (42)Mineral Creek, (43)Saliz, (44)Kelley, (49) A4, Aspen Mountain and Sawyers Peak be added to the study areas. Areas (46), (47), and (48) do not warrant study.

In the Lincoln National Forest, 3 of 5 original areas were proposed for study. Conservationists are urged to ask that (58)Little Dog, and particularly (57)the West face of Sacramento Mountains be included in the studied area.

SHOWDOWN ON ALASKA PIPELINE

To the consternation of environmentalists, Chairman Henry Jackson of the Senate Interior Committee is urging speedy action on right-of-way legislation needed for construction of the Trans-Alaska pipeline. Scare concepts such as "there are only drops left in the oil barrel" or there is a potential "domestic disaster" are part of his rhetoric. He has also proposed establishing a policy governing the conditions under which air quality standards will be relaxed to deal with critical energy shortage.

A more responsible approach has been proposed by Chairman Morris Udall of the House Environmental Sub-Committee in H. R. 5750 asking for a comprehensive study of Alaska oil transmission routes and methods (to be coordinated perhaps with Canadian plans) by the Congressional Office of Technological Assessment. The U. S. market areas most in need of the North Slope oil (e.g. the Midwest), the most ideal geographical route, and the best delivery method could then, without bias, be determined.

Other Environmental News A federal district court recently enjoined a private developer from continuing work on his housing project that had received mortgage guarantees from the Department of Housing and Urban Development until such time as HUD completes a court-ordered environmental impact statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

On or before April 15, 1973, the various states must submit a Clean Air Act implementation plan that provides for attainment of primary ambient air standards as soon as possible, but in no case later than May 31, 1975.

Thanks to Carl Jones and John Mudd for the environmental notes.

Sing to the fallen eagle,

Helicopters fly.

Chase him 'round the mountain,

Chase him 'til he dies.

They say that it's good sportin'

Shooting him on the wing.

Above the roar and clutter

You can hear your rifle sing his death song...

It won't be long.

Stephen Stills

(c)Gold Hill Music, BMI

The New Mexico Legislature just enacted into law the "Airborne Hunting Act." The new law provides for fines "of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500" and imprisonment of six months to one year for any person who uses an aircraft for purposes of shooting or attempting to shoot, or flying or attempting to fly the aircraft "in any manner intentionally menacing to any bird, fish, or other non-domestic animal which causes the bird, fish, or other non-domestic animal to move its chosen place of rest or change its direction of travel...."

WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO? Tin foil and plastic wraps are not biogradable-- use as little as possible.

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