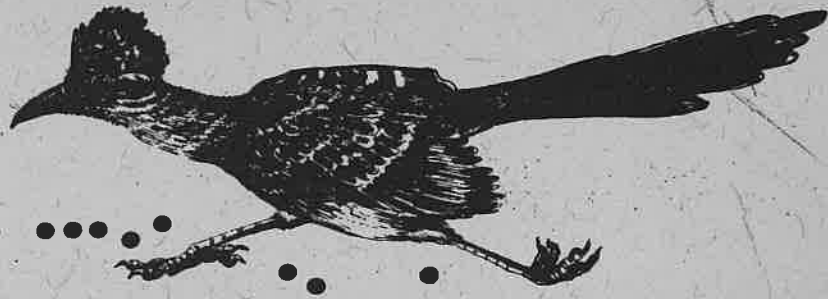


# the ROADRUNNER . . . . .



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

Editor: John Sproul

February 1980

Volume 10, Number 2

## CALENDAR

### PROGRAM

18

FEBRUARY 1980, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, 3105 Grant St., in Memorial Park. THE FUTURE OF MONO LAKE. Before 1979, about 25% of the world's California Gulls nested on Negit Island in Mono Lake. Last year, Negit hosted none, for last year it became part of the mainland, accessible to mainland predators. The loss of nesting gulls is but one indicator of the transition Mono Lake, east of Yosemite Natl. Park, is making from rich biological resource to dead sea. Los Angeles has diverted 4 of its 5 tributary streams, and this lake with no outlet is steadily dropping and becoming more saline. Its abundant brine shrimp now nourish millions of nesting and migratory water birds. If present water diversions continue, they will be gone. At our February meeting John Sproul will show us the beauty of Mono Lake today, describe the crisis it faces and explain how that crisis can be avoided. Mono Lake is one of the top conservation priorities of Audubon chapters in California. Join us and learn why.

17 MARCH. TIME FOR SURVIVAL has won a silver plaque from the Chicago Film Festival, a Cine Gold Eagle from the Council on International Nontheatrical Events, and a gold medal from the International Film and TV Festival in New York. We'll see this new National Audubon Society film in March.

### FIELD TRIPS

SAT. 9 FEBRUARY. AGUIRRE SPRINGS. Have you been disappointed by the lack of montane species around El Paso this winter? This field trip should raise your spirits. Aguirre Springs is in the Organ Mountains, east of Las Cruces. We'll look for species such as Acorn and Hairy Woodpeckers, Steller's and Scrub Jays, Bushtit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Townsend's Solitaire and Cassin's Finch. Meet at the Executive Inn, 500 Executive Center, at 7:00 AM.

SUN. 24 FEBRUARY. LOWER VALLEY. We hope we can catch some early spring migrants on this trip, as well as many of our common wintering species. We'll start with a look at Feather Lake, then drive to Surratt's Pond. We may see Cattle Egrets here. From Surratt's we'll head for the Tornillo area, then finish by working up along the Rio Grande levee to El Paso. Ducks, hawks and wintering sparrows will be our quarry, with the tantalizing possibility of some early swallows near Tornillo. Meet at Feather Lake on North Loop Dr. (0.3 miles NW of Ave. of the Americas) at 7:00 AM.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

11 FEBRUARY, 7:30 PM. The Board will meet at the home of Elza Gilboe, 1305 Oakdale, El Paso, Ph: 772-1942.

### OBSERVATIONS - 24 December 1979 to 23 January 1980

Local birds seem down in abundance and diversity this winter, but a number of species not expected in El Paso in winter are keeping things interesting. Not surprisingly many of the better sightings for this report period come from the El Paso Christmas Bird Count (CBC) of 29 Dec.

#### CORMORANTS THROUGH EAGLES

Los Nogales Pond in the upper valley had a Double-crested Cormorant for the CBC (RG, et al.) and an Olivaceous Cormorant on 12 Jan (KZ). Feather Lake continues to hold a Whistling Swan and a Snow Goose (AG, mob). On 16 Jan it also had 10 Canada Geese (JN, JF). The Canada Geese seen on the CBC were flying upstream over the Rio Grande due west of Cement Lake (BH, SJD, MG et al.). The CBC's 15 Snow Geese were at Sunland Park Race Track (EK). The only Cinnamon Teal for the CBC were the 4 on the Phelps Dodge ponds (AG et al.). Swainson's Hawks are supposed to winter in S. America, but for the CBC 1 was reported from a bosque 200 yds. south of Randle's Pool (RG et al.). The pair of adult Golden Eagles seen on the CBC were perched on power poles along I-10 between the Executive Center and Sunland Park exits (BH et al.).

#### SHOREBIRDS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

For the CBC 2 Lesser Yellowlegs were at the water-catchment basin at Doniphan and Country Club Rd. in the upper valley (RG et al.). Our first-ever CBC record for FRANKLIN'S GULL (2) came from Sunland Park Race Track (EK). The Gilboe backyard in the Cielo Vista area has had a Ringed Turtle Dove off and on since Aug 1978. For CBC day the bird chose to be on (EG). The only recent sighting of a Burrowing Owl came 8 Jan along Bosque Rd. north of Canutillo (RS).

Some 65 White-throated Swifts, uncommon in winter in El Paso, were overhead in the upper valley for the CBC (RG et al.). A pair of Anna's Hummingbirds has been in the Mountain Park area all winter (JB), as has a male in Thunderbird Heights (FB).

#### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH THRUSHES

One of the unexpected birds that has appeared this winter is the ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER, found in Memorial Park on 19 and 23 Jan (JDiP). For the CBC, 2 BUSH-TITS were in dry, scrubby habitat along the Rio Grande about 1.5 miles south of Country Club Rd. (RG). Memorial Park had a Red-breasted Nuthatch on 19 Jan (JDiP). House Wrens were spotted on the CBC both in Arroyo Park (BH et al.) and near the Hacienda Cafe near the Rio Grande (BH et al.). Brown Thrashers are turning up everywhere: 1 in Arroyo Park (BH et al.) and 1 in Mountain Park (JB) for the CBC, 1 in Horizon City 14 Jan (AG) and 1 at Durling's Farm 14 and 21 Jan (KZ, JDiP). A Hermit Thrush was in Kern Place 27 Dec (BH), but the only one recorded on the CBC was far up the canyon to Indian Springs (JDiP, TB). Eastern Bluebirds, with 11 in the cottonwoods east of the Rio Grande just below the Country Club Rd. bridge (RG, NG), outnumbered Westerns on the CBC. Two Townsend's Solitaires were at Hueco Tanks 12 Jan (KZ).

#### VIREOS THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

Memorial Park held our first CBC record for SOLITARY VIREO (JDiP, TB). The other big CBC first was a female NORTHERN PARULA, studied carefully as it flitted about the trees lining the irrigation ditch immediately south of the Hacienda Cafe (BH, SJD, MG et al.). The bird was in the same spot 7 Jan (JDiP) and was near the Hacienda 12 Jan (EK, JG, BB). On 1 Jan a NASHVILLE WARBLER was in the same general area (JS). The other note-

OBSERVATIONS (Continued)

worthy recent warbler sighting was of a Common Yellowthroat 19 Jan at Randle's Pool (KZ). Two Common Grackles were among the many Great-taileds near the Hacienda on CBC day (BH et al.).

Finally, a blackbird with a rusty head, upper back and breast and a yellow eye was in the Cielo Vista area in late Dec and early Jan (JF, BBl, JS) and was photographed. We will draw no conclusions until experts have examined the photos.

SPARROWS

As usual the CBC turned up many less common sparrows. A Baird's Sparrow was in the upper valley near the Country Club Rd. bridge (EK, NG). Vesper Sparrows occurred near the Hacienda (BH et al.), near the Wilderness Park Museum (JDiP) and in the upper valley (RG et al.). Lark Sparrows were also in the latter 2 spots. Two Sage Sparrows were in Tom Mays Park (BBl, JG, SS) and 8 were near Tobin Wells on Ft. Bliss (JS et al.). Black-chinned Sparrows were reported near Indian Springs (JDiP, TB), at Cottonwood Springs

(BBl, JG, SS) and in the Mountain Park area (JB). The CBC's lone White-throated Sparrow is still seen daily in the Cielo Vista area (EG). Other White-throateds reported include 1 along the Rio Grande near the Hacienda on 1 Jan (JS) and 2 at Durling's Farm 12 and 21 Jan (KZ). Also at Durling's Farm 12, 14 and 21 Jan was a FOX SPARROW (KZ, JDiP). To top things off, Randle's Pool hosted a Swamp Sparrow 19 Jan (KZ).

OBSERVERS: Tom Baker, Berttye Barnhart, Flora Bittick, Bob Bleicher (BBl), Janet Brockmoller, Joe DiPasquale, Sarah Jane Dodds, Jane Fowler, Al Gavit, Elza Gilboe, Mary Giles, Nathan Gilliland, Richard Gilliland, Joe Guinn, Bill Hoppes, Earle King, many observers (mob), Jo Nagel, Sid Shepperd, Roger Sperka, John Sproul, Kevin Zimmer. (Please report your observations to John Sproul; 601 W. Yandell #25, El Paso 79902; ph. 545-5157 home, 543-6126 work.)

FEATHER LAKE REPORT

Star boarders at Feather Lake this winter have been the Whistling Swan and the Snow Goose. A Green Heron has been seen several times, but a Great Blue Heron appeared only once. A Marsh Hawk visits daily and likes to chase up the many ducks. Ducks in evidence, probably around 2000 in number, include Mallard, Gadwall, Pintail, Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, scaup, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck and Common Merganser. The lake also has its usual American Coots and occasionally a Ring-billed Gull. In the surrounding grass has been a large flock of Lark Buntings and a variety of sparrows, such as Chipping, White-crowned, Lincoln's and Song.

With your support, we maintain Feather Lake Sanctuary to protect these birds. That protection is vital. Caretaker Tom Gavit recently chased off shotgun-toting vandals who cut through the fence with wire cutters. How many ducks do you think the lake would have if Tom were not in residence? We also maintain the sanctuary for public education and enjoyment, and the increasing number of legitimate users is very gratifying.

.....

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 John Sproul, 601 W. Yandell #25, El Paso, TX 79902. Make checks payable to El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society.

El Paso Trans-Pecos Audubon Society  
Proposed Budget for Calendar Year 1980

1.	Income:		+\$1,140.00
2.	Expenses:		-\$1,440.00
3.	Deficite Balance:		\$300.00

.....			
1.	Income:		\$1,140.00
	a. Dues		1,025.00
	b. Subscriptions (to the Roadrunner):		15.00
	c. Donations (Hopefully):		100.00
		Totals:	\$1,140.00

2.	Expenses:		
	a. Garden Club (Meeting Hall): (per year)		80.00
	b. Program (Advertisement/Material):		25.00
	c. Administration:		
	1) Texas Audubon Council:	\$22.00	
	2) Hospitality:	\$25.00	
	3) All other Admin expenses:	\$78.00	
	4) Printing of new Chapter Birdlists:	\$140.00	265.00
	d. Newsletter (Roadrunner)		
	1) Mailing permit:	40.00	
	2) Newsletter mailing:	102.00	
	3) Audubon Tables:	120.00	
	4) Materials:		
	a) Paste Ink:	37.50	
	b) Stencils:	20.70	
	c) Roadrunner Sheets (First Sheets):	80.00	
	d) 2d (& 3rd Sheets)	**47.80	
		\$448.00	448.00
		Totals:	

e.	Feather Lake:		
	1) Lease (per year):	1.00	
	2) Liability Insurance (per year):	\$141.00	
	3) Utilities (by Board Decision):	\$480.00	
		\$622.00	622.00
		Totals:	

3.	Checkbook Balance, as of Jan., 1980:		\$1,230.00
4.	Minus Expense Deficite:		-300.00
5.	Projected Checkbook Balance: (Jan. 1981):		\$930.00

## FROM THE PEN OF THE PRESIDENT:

### CHANGING TIMES

Have you ever looked back in time and said, "Those were the good old days?" I'm sure you have.

As I see quickly changing times (and rapidly increasing gasoline costs), I realize how fast "these" good old days are passing by. I hear we can expect even higher prices in the future, making it near impossible to do the "simple" things we've done in the past such as going out for a day of birding or photographing nature.

With an ever expanding population which threatens to eliminate those old favorite birding spots and other previously "quiet" places we once enjoyed, we certainly know and see "changing times."

So I ask you, fellow AUDUBONERS, to come out and enjoy our birding field trips, our hikes in the Franklin Mtns. or along the Rio Grande, because today is still one of the "good old days" and the times are changing fast.

### FIELD TRIPS FOLLOW-UP

Best thing about our most recent field trips has been the fine turn-outs. For the 12 January trip to the Rio Grande near the Hacienda Cafe, we had 17 participants: Bertha and Bertie Barnhart, Carlos and Virginia Cuellar and their 2 children, Sarah Jane Dodds, Mary Giles, Richard and Nathan Gilliland, Joe Quinn, R. E. and Jo Nagel, Sid Shepperd, John Sproul, Lucille Swick, and Chad Wayne. We saw 19 species, with some members spotting the bird we all came for, the Northern Perula. Those who stayed long enough also saw a female Ruddy

Duck and an immature Green Heron in the irrigation ditch.

The 27 January trip to Indian Springs had 12 participants: Bob Bleicher, Jeannette Cole, Joe Quinn, Peggy Heisel, Perry Jamieson, R. E. and Jo Nagel, Bart Rumaker, Arthur Sabrino, Sid Shepperd, John Sproul, and Sunny Dratten. Of the 21 species seen, only the Sage Thrasher Bob Bleicher spotted and the large mixed flocks of juncos were noteworthy. Gray-headed Juncos have been scarce around El Paso this winter; apparently they are all up at Indian Springs.

### ALTERNATIVES FOR SEWERAGE FACILITY PLAN TO BE EXPLAINED

The Citizens Advisory Committee for the Sewerage Facility Plan for the City of El Paso will hold public meetings on Wednesday 20 February 1980 at 7:30 PM at the meeting room of the Westside Community Recreation Center, 650 Mardi Gras Dr., and Thursday 21 February at 7:30 PM at the meeting room of the Carolina Community Recreation Center, 563 N. Carolina Dr. At these meetings the consultants preparing the Facility Plan will present the

alternatives which have been developed and are currently being considered in order to provide for the treatment and disposal or reuse of the City's wastewaters. The future of the Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds--one of our better birding areas--depends on which alternative is selected. A Fact Sheet with more information on what will be discussed at the meetings will be available after 8 February. For a copy, call 533-9701.

## A NONGAME BILL IN 1980?

Each year, when the wildlife-management pie is sliced, nongame programs get but a sliver. Well over 90% of state and federal wildlife dollars are funneled into programs for game animals. There is a very good reason for this imbalance: hunters and anglers pay the bills, through licenses and excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment.

Audubon has long campaigned to elevate the status of nongame fish and wildlife programs to that enjoyed by game programs. On July 9, 1979, the U.S. House took a step in the right direction when it passed HR 3292, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1979, on a voice vote. The bill authorizes \$19 million over 3 years to be allocated to state wildlife agencies for development or revision of comprehensive (game and nongame) wildlife plans. However, a plan doesn't mean much if there is no

way to implement it. Representatives Breaux (D-LA) and Forsythe (R-NJ) will introduce a companion bill this year that would provide a stable source of funds for nongame programs. The source? You and I! The bill would establish an excise tax on birdseed, bird houses and feeders, comparable to the existing tax on hunting and fishing equipment. It is a tax we should be more than willing to pay.

On 20 Dec, Senator Chafee (R-RI) introduced a nongame bill (S 2181) in the Senate that would cover both planning and implementation. It was referred to the Senate Resource Protection Subcommittee, where it will be the subject of hearings on 4 and 5 Feb. The subcommittee is part of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, to which Senator Bentsen belongs. Senator Bentsen could play a major role in deciding the fate of this bill.

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society  
601 W. Yandell #25  
El Paso, TX 79902  
Ph: 915-545-5157

