

Signal Smoke

The Newsletter of Travis Audubon

VOLUME 59, NO. 7 & 8

Inspiring Conservation Through Birding

July/August 2010

What a Bird-a-thon!

The competition was fierce during this year's Bird-a-thon and resulted in raising \$17,361.63 and in bringing in 4 new lifetime members. There were 81 team participants, up from 53 last year. The number of donors was 220, up from 150 last year. The number of teams was ten, up from nine last year. And the winners are... drum roll, please...

Most money raised

1st place: *Gone Pishing* – \$6,306.78
(Team captains: Shelia Hargis and Laurie Foss)

2nd place: *Legal Migrants* – \$2,961.50
(Jane Tillman, Kenneth Zaslow, Jeff Patterson)

3rd place: *Owl-a-thon* – \$1,764.40
(Anne Donovan & anonymous co-captain)

Most Money Raised by a new team

1st place: *Plateau Parulas* (Mark Gray) – \$1,910.15
2nd place: *Peerless Passerines* (Judith Bailey) - \$1,588.80
3rd place: *Keep Austin Birding* (Eric Stager) - \$457.55

The Jackie Arnold prize for most Golden-cheeked Warblers seen goes to Marsha May's *Bamberger Birders*, who saw 12.

The Eyes of Texas prize for most Northern Mockingbirds seen goes to Marsha May's *Bamberger Birders*, who saw 26.

The Eskimo Curlew prize for rarest bird seen goes to the *Legal Migrants* for the Hairy Woodpecker.

The Best Team Name prize goes to Dan Callaway's *Aviphiliacs*.

The Most Hours Birded Consecutively prize goes to *Gone Pishing*, for 17 hours and 10 minutes.

The Most Species Seen prize goes to *Gone Pishing*, for 148 species.

The Funniest Story prize goes to *Legal Migrants*. The story can be found on page 6.

And in our new category, most "birdy" story goes to Dan Callaway. The story can be found on page 5.

Although, we didn't have a prize for the most creative team member, we just invented it. It goes to Judie Tasch of the *Peerless Passerines*, whose drawing appears here on our cover.

BIRD-A-THON Spring 2010



Nancy Manning



Photo courtesy of the Owl-a-thon team

Owl-a-thon team vignette

"One evening as we were returning from the grasslands, Scott received a call from the Estes Park PD. A Great Horned Owl chick had been turned in and they wanted Scott to retrieve it. Scott whispered words of comfort to the frightened chick. Once in Scott's house the chick rapidly devoured five small and two medium size mice. As each mouse was presented it snapped its bill in anticipation. Scott plans to care for the owl until it can feed itself, at which time it will be turned over to the Birds of Prey Foundation where it will be trained to be a Great Horned Owl and released to the wild."

TA Monthly Meetings

No Meetings in June, July, August. See you in September!

Travis Audubon

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an area code are local numbers in the
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Mission Statement

Travis Audubon promotes the enjoyment, understanding,
and conservation of native birds and their habitats.

From the Travis Audubon President

I recently had the joy at first light of seeing an Eastern Screech Owl taking a bath in my bird bath. This is the time of the year when all critters welcome water, food and shelter. Travis Audubon's work on backyard habitats and urban habitats educates many of us on best management practices and brings life to our urban surroundings.

The Urban Habitat Committee led by Jane Tillman has developed a great resource on the Travis Audubon website. You will see it listed on the right side of the homepage. You will find lists of bird-friendly plants, ideas on water features and plenty of reference resources to carry you as far as you want to go. Turning my traditionally landscaped yard with nandinas and San Augustine grass into a more vibrant space filled with native plants has been a great pleasure.

When grandchildren visit we hunt for bugs, listen for the woodpeckers, and watch over ten species come to the feeder. Give yourself this pleasure or pick a park, a schoolyard, or any urban space and help it become urban habitat. The birds will love it.

Valarie Bristol

Travis Audubon Committee Chairs

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Newsletter Deadline

The submissions deadline is the first day of the month preceding the first month of publication (for example, June 1 for the July/August issue). Submit uncopyrighted articles, announcements, and art to Tess Sherman, tsherman1@austin.rr.com; or mail to 210 E. Walnut Dr., Austin, TX 78753. Submissions by email or on a CD are preferred but not required. Call Tess at 300-BIRD if you have questions.

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A Salute to Victor Emanuel

The Travis Audubon Society will soon break new ground by issuing its first conservation award. The chapter has created the Victor Emanuel Conservation Award to honor Texans who excel in promoting habitat preservation and the public's understanding of the bird world.

The first recipient is none other than Victor Emanuel himself. Emanuel will accept the chapter's first conservation award Oct. 16 at a festive luncheon at the Four Seasons Hotel in Austin. Travis Audubon will also celebrate his 70TH birthday and hold an auction to raise funds for the chapter.

Victor has spent decades studying and observing birds and sharing his knowledge with others. His company, Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, escorts people to exotic birding destinations around the world. With binoculars and field books in hand, Victor has single-handedly advanced international ecotourism. He has treated throngs of nature lovers to firsthand observations of rare and endangered species, and taught them the importance of preserving natural areas.

Valarie Bristol, president of Travis Audubon, said the Victor Emanuel Conservation Award was created to call attention to conservation leaders and to recognize their work and dedication. "Victor Emanuel, for whom we have named the award, has spent decades leading people on wonderful nature tours—domestically and internationally," she said. "In Austin, he founded one of the best known tour companies in the world. Through his work,

thousands of people have come to recognize birds of all kinds and to understand the fragility of their habitats.

"As Travis Audubon grows and develops as an organization," she continued, "it's important that we recognize the conservationists who are making a difference. And Victor has been leading the way."

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, which opened 30 years ago and operates in South Austin, is the largest company in the world specializing in birding tours. Each year, the company leads patrons to more than 100 destinations—from the Texas coast to Africa and the Antarctic. While Victor's nature tours have covered all the continents, his primary concentration is in Texas, Arizona, Mexico, Panama and Peru.

His personal interest in birding and natural history began at the tender age of 8, and at 16 he started the now-famous Freeport Christmas bird count, which records the number of bird species spotted during 24 hours. Victor graduated from the University of Texas with degrees in zoology and botany and earned a Masters degree at Harvard.

This bird authority has served as president of the Texas Ornithological Society and is the recipient of a number of distinguished awards and honors. Of all his achievements, Emanuel considers one of his greatest to be initiating the first birding camps for youth. Many of those young birders went on to become naturalists themselves.

Jorjanna Price

Photo credit: Terri S.



SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, October 16, 2010

Victor Emanuel Conservation Award
Luncheon and Birthday Party
Four Seasons Hotel, Austin
Ballroom A-B
Doors open at 11:45 a.m.

Presented by the Travis Audubon Society
More information at www.travisaudubon.org



NATURALIST'S CALENDAR

by Bill Reiner



photo by Robert Baumgardner

The flower show of spring has faded, but many of the plants that bloomed in April and May produce fruit that ripens in July and August. Their seeds are often wrapped in a sweet or fatty pulp, forming berries or drupes. (A drupe, such as a cherry or a peach, has a hard pit encasing the seed or seeds.) Producing this pulp consumes much of a plant's energy, but it has proven an effective strategy for seed dispersal.

In a way, the plants are bribing birds and mammals to carry their seeds away. In the animal's digestive tract the pulp will be absorbed, but the seeds may pass through intact, and sprout wherever they drop. It is, therefore, a mutually beneficial relationship: the animal gains nourishment, and the plant distributes its progeny. The relationship has been so successful that many plants employ it, resulting in a virtual smorgasbord for birds and other wildlife...and sometimes people.

Texas Persimmon (*Diospyros texana*) is one of the plants whose "bribes" ripen in the next two months. This shrub is most common on dry, rocky slopes and thin-soiled hilltops of the Edwards Plateau, but it can grow to be a small tree in deeper soils. It is recognizable by its smooth, gray bark. As the plant grows, the bark peels in patches in the manner of American Sycamore, so that bigger specimens have a mottled appearance. The simple, round-tipped leaves are usually only 1 to 1.5 inches long, and have smooth margins that curl downward. The bell-shaped, cream-colored flowers appear in April, but you are not likely to notice them among all the showier spring blossoms.

Come August, female plants (Texas Persimmon is dioecious – having staminate and pistillate flowers on separate plants) are often loaded down with globular black berries. These "fruits of the gods," as the Latin name translates, are slightly hairy and usually as big around as a nickel or a quarter. The thin skin holds 3 to 8 large seeds and a sweet, runny pulp that tastes much like that of a prune. Do be warned, though, that the juice stains the tongue (and other things) dark brown. It was used by pioneers to dye buckskin black.

I have found Texas Persimmons to be particularly tasty when warmed in the August sun – though the seeds don't leave room for much pulp. Other wildlife apparently agree. A wide variety of mammals partake of Texas Persimmons, including coyotes, raccoons, Virginia Opossums, skunks, javelinas, feral hogs, and White-tailed Deer. David Schmidly, in his *Mammals of Texas*, claims that Gray Foxes on the Edwards Plateau eat more of these fruits than of any other vegetable matter.

During the drought and record heat of 2000, I watched a pair of immature Painted Buntings peeling back the skin of Texas Persimmons to sip the sweet juice. A Carolina Chickadee was doing the same, but not with the same gusto as the buntings. On another occasion, I noticed a Verdin sampling a persimmon.

Far from the rocky habitat of Texas Persimmon, you may find American Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis* or *S. nigra*) offering its fruit now. This large shrub with compound leaves, of five to seven toothed leaflets, grows best in rich, moist soils, especially in full sun. In central Texas it is often restricted to ravines and riverbanks. Flat-topped clusters of white flowers appear at the top of the plant in May. Though the flowers themselves are small, the clusters are quite showy, spanning 6 inches or more.

By July, the flowers have been replaced by small drupes, often only 1/8 inch across and mostly pit, that turn black when ripe. Robert A. Vines, in his *Trees of Central Texas*, writes that 45 or so species of birds are known to eat elderberries, including Northern Bobwhites.

I would not recommend eating elderberries straight off the bush. The taste is not especially pleasant, and if you eat too many, you may end up with an upset stomach from the cyanide compounds in the pits. These compounds break down when cooked, so the fruits are superb for making wine or jelly. I remember summer afternoons spent stripping the tiny drupes from their stems for my mother to make elderberry jelly.

Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), a cousin of the grapes, also has ripe fruits now, but they are toxic to humans. This vine of shady woods may grow along the forest floor or climb high into the canopy on tree trunks. The leaves are *palmately* compound, meaning that the five leaflets all attach at one point atop the leaf stalk (so they look like five fingers radiating from the palm of a hand). The deep-blue berries, in small clusters from the leaf axils, have a high fat content. That makes them particularly valuable to migrating birds that need dense sources of fuel for their travels.

Birds might have a problem finding these inconspicuous clusters of berries in the shade of the forest. This may be why Virginia Creeper leaves sometimes begin to turn bright autumn red as early as July, as a sort of flag to hungry birds.

Not all of the fruits ripening now are blackish in color. Those of Rough-leaf Dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*) are white when ripe. They may also have a high fat content. (The Flowering Dogwood, *Cornus florida*, has fruits that are 35% fat by dry weight.) Robert Vines reports that at least 40 species of birds, including Wild Turkeys, are known to eat these fruits. I was amazed to see a Least Flycatcher, a normally insectivorous bird, plucking and eating a dogwood drupe one August day.

These are just a few of the many native plants bearing fleshy fruits now. Others are Escarpment Black Cherry, Pokeweed, Creek Plum, Mustang Grape, Prickly-Pear, and Sugar Hackberry. See whether you can spot wildlife harvesting some of them, or recognize their seeds in animal droppings.

As always, be certain of the identity of a plant before you sample any part of it. Some fruits may be quite toxic, though they look edible – and an animal eating a fruit does not mean that it is safe for a human. After all, squirrels and some birds relish the greenish-white drupes of Poison-Ivy, and White-tailed Deer will browse the twigs! It is always safer just to watch the wildlife enjoy them.

In addition to the works cited in the text, the author consulted many other references for this article, including: *Native & Naturalized Woody Plants of Austin & the Hill Country*, by Brother Daniel Lynch, *A Field Guide to Common South Texas Shrubs*, by Richard B. Taylor et al., and *Shinners & Mahler's Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas*.

Reprinted from a 2005 *Naturalist's Calendar* column.

Most 'Birdy' Bird-a-thon Story

Participants: Ethel Kutac, Ingrid Huskey, Terry Banks, Ron and Susan Martin, Catfish Kelly and Dan Callaway

Before coming together as a group, we all birded near our homes. My day began at 6:30 a.m. with the clear, pre-dawn Northeastern horizon glowing pink-orange in advance of the sunrise. Northern Mockingbirds, Northern Cardinals and House Sparrows greeted me as I emerged from the house. As I began driving, a Loggerhead Shrike perched on a highwire and I heard Grasshopper Sparrows buzzing and Dickcissels voicing their 3-note caustic rasp. The inevitable Great-tailed Grackles and European Starlings seemed to dominate the urban commercial habitation. Along the road to Lake Pflugerville, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers snared aerial bugs for an early breakfast.

At the lake, hordes of Barn Swallows and a few Cave Swallows darted swiftly above the lake and shoreline. Savannah Sparrows scooted across the trail along the quarter-mile walk to the wetlands corner of the lake. The shoreline harbored Killdeer plus Spotted, Least, and a single Semipalmated Sandpiper. The waterfowl consisted of Blue-winged Teal, American Coots, and a lone Ruddy Duck. Flyovers included Great Blue and Green Herons, Crested Caracara along with Purple Martins, Mourning Doves and a Eurasian Collared-Dove. Red-winged Blackbirds dominated the reedy wetlands along with a single female Yellow-headed Blackbird. Fussy little Marsh Wrens scolded from thick cover, frequently shaking the reed-tops as they moved about, revealing their position down below.

Next stop was the Wilbarger Creek greenbelt north of Pflugerville. Western Kingbirds, Painted Buntings, and Lark Sparrows visibly and audibly maintained their territories. Chimney Swifts twittered overhead. Carolina Wrens sang along the creek. Two early summer resident Yellow-billed Cuckoos appeared and clucked from the tree-tops. A lone Rock Pigeon flew over. I identified the song of a Nashville Warbler, the first of only two warblers for the day. Then I heard a song I'd never heard before. A Lincoln's Sparrow let me know he was ready to head north to happy breeding grounds.

I then returned to my own backyard for a quick 15-minute sit in hopes to get the Yellow Warbler and Clay-colored Sparrows seen the day before. But alas, all was quiet as if an accipiter had just flown by. I did manage to watch a Blue Jay, hear my Black-chinned Hummingbird, a House Finch, a White-crowned Sparrow, and observe three White-winged Doves fly high overhead. Then a quick 5-minute stop by Pflugers Park produced my expected Swainson's Thrush and a flock of Cedar Waxwings feeding in the mulberry trees. The pond at the NE corner of Parmer and Macallen contained only a partially-submerged, swimming Double-crested Cormorant.

By mid-morning I joined Ethel and Catfish at Central Market where they had seen Wood Ducks. Catfish found a Common Moorhen at the Triangle and added a Red-shouldered Hawk and Monk Parakeets. We were now about halfway to our goal of 100 species. We three headed to Barton Creek Habitat Preserve, where Black and Turkey Vultures and a Red-tailed Hawk were soaring high. We saw another Swainson's Thrush, and heard White-eyed Vireos and Black-crested Titmice. We heard the "quick-three-beers" voice of the Ash-throated Flycatcher, then spotted him in the top of a pecan tree. While eating lunch we watched a Western Scrub-Jay approach in good view and heard the high-pitched whistle of a Lesser Goldfinch.

On the road to Reimers Ranch, a male Common Grackle flew across the road. The entrance road inside the ranch produced singing Bell's Vireos, Bewick's Wrens and Field Sparrows. The trap near the gatehouse was full of Brown-headed Cowbirds awaiting a bleak future. The river road along the Pedernales was fairly active for early afternoon with Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Carolina Chickadees, Summer Tanagers, and a Golden-fronted Woodpecker. Across the river we heard a Great-crested Flycatcher and several Canyon Wrens. Ron and Susan Martin joined us at this point. They added to the list Chipping Sparrows on the ranch plus a Barn Owl and a Common Poorwill heard after midnight from their house near here. Our last bird on the ranch was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet as we walked down the road to the gravel swimming area. A mated pair of Painted Buntings and a screaming White-eyed Vireo appeared in the same bush. Our only guess for the commotion was an encroaching snake.

Now with only Ethel and me left, we raced to the eastern half of the county. Near the entrance to Hornsby Bend we got the trusty Eastern Bluebird perched in the open. A lone Green-winged Teal preened himself alongside sunning turtles atop the flotation boom that stretches across pond one east. A one-stop bonanza in the mud flat near the NE corner of pond one west produced Black-necked Stilts, two Lesser Yellowlegs, a Stilt, a Pectoral, a Baird's, and two Western Sandpipers. In the western end on the same pond we added Northern Shoveler and a huge flock of Wilson's Phalarope. We called up a Sora and then a brightly colored Blue Grosbeak perched on a close stick in good light for a full minute. An Inca Dove pecked at the ground in the road near there. Besides Ruddies on pond two, we added Eared Grebe, Gadwalls and a Redhead. An Eastern Kingbird sparked from the highwire near the long greenhouse. While walking the river trail we heard a Red-eyed Vireo and an Indigo Bunting singing.

Next we headed to Webberville. As we scanned the field of low vegetation along Post Oak Road, we spotted two Upland Sandpipers. The sun was sinking fast as we entered Big Webberville County Park. Our target bird here was the Prothonotary Warbler seen here last year but was not found while scouting last week. The river trail was fairly quiet until we approached the fishing pier. We could hear him sing, and finally located his movement in the tree directly above the pier. He left, so we stationed ourselves on the pier and waited. Eventually he returned to perch on a dead willow twig right over us. We wondered if the nest in the willow was his. It was in the location from where we first heard him sing. We added three more birds here in the park – a Great Egret, Downy Woodpeckers and a Tufted Titmouse.

The sun was down and light was fading fast as we circled Walnut Creek pond. There on the shore preparing to bed down for the night with domestic mallards were two Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. Back to Central Market to end the day and watch a Common Nighthawk patrol the artificially-lit evening sky. Ingrid couldn't join the team but did report seeing an Eastern Screech Owl. Terry was also unable to be with us on Monday, but did report seeing Hudsonian Godwits on Tuesday at Hornsby, which sadly we can't count. Amazingly on Monday we never saw or heard an American Crow or Eastern Meadowlark. Our total count was 102 species with the best being Barn Owl, Common Poorwill, Prothonotary Warbler and Blue Grosbeak.

Dan Callaway

Photo credit: Jim deVries

Blair Woods Rests

Travis Audubon is pleased to announce that we have just been awarded another round of the TogetherGreen Volunteer Days grant for the September 2010 – May 2011 year. This summer, while Blair Woods is resting, we will hold meetings to plan the work for the next granting period and to continue development of our long term management plan for Blair Woods.

Our overall progress at Blair Woods is impressive. In the last two years, 424 volunteers have helped to remove 870 cubic yards of non-native plants, plant 604 native plants and build two trails. Environmental Survey Consulting spearheaded the stabilization of the pond and riparian corridor while also heading up the education programming for Norman Elementary and for the individual work days.

Shield Ayres made it possible to create a parking area that now allows Travis Audubon members entry to Blair Woods without disturbing Wildlife Rescue and provides parking for our team leaders for our work days.

Norman Elementary has voted for Blair Woods as their “service learning” choice for next year. We will provide a fall and spring Work and Learn Day for their fourth and fifth graders next school year. We look forward to the fall and the promise of meeting new neighbors, the satisfaction of significant restoration and the fun of working with such a diverse and energetic group of volunteers.

Nancy Manning



Photo credits: Nancy Manning

Our Funniest Bird-a-thon Story

The Legal Migrants went to the Lake Somerville area to have a good time while raising money for TAS. We visited the lake area of the state park first and walked a nature trail. At one point Jane said, “This looks like a good spot for Barred Owl.” Lo and behold one showed up on cue. Later we visited Newman Bottom, led there by an obliging park ranger. What a great spot! It was thick with Dickcissels, a life bird for some.

Leaving there we went to Yegua Creek Park which is a Corps of Engineers facility. Two of our cars got separated and strangely enough, even though they were behind the lead cars, managed to get to the park first – plus get a Bald Eagle to boot. Just goes to show that different GPS systems tell you different ways to get from Point A to Point B.

Although both Ken and Jane had called the park earlier in the week, they had neglected to tell us that Yegua Creek is not a

day-use park. They had said it is free admission, unless you want to have a picnic – then it is a \$20 fee. So there we were, all set to see what birds were on offer, and we were being turned down at the entrance. Ken made a comment that we were running a Bird-a-thon, and then the attendant said, well the *only* way to get in was to **only** go to the nature trail. So we got in after all, and if 12 people can be surreptitious, then we were as we made the long walk to the restrooms, which were another ¼ mile past the nature trail. Fortunately the nature trail had good birds like Swainson’s Thrush, Gray Catbird, and Yellow-breasted Chat so it was worth a stop.

Then the all important question was, “Is there a DQ in Somerville?” Those fantastic GPS units all said nope, needed to go to Brenham. Since we needed to check out Welch Park anyway, we drove to Somerville, where we did recuperate and do a bird tally at the - you guessed it – DQ! Since Welch did not look particularly promising we bailed and ended up at Hornsby to finish the day getting the shorebirds that had eluded us at Lake Somerville.

Jane Tillman

With Gratitude to our many Bird-a-thon 2010 donors

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Sally L. Scott
Greg W. Scott
Martha Scott
Philip C. & Beverly Scott
Steve Scott
Diana M. Seidel & Jim W.
Thatcher
John Selle
Mary Kay & Chuck Sexton
Evalyn Shea
Tess Sherman
Diane Sherrill
Angela Shuford
Trey Simonton
Forrest Simonton
Lolita Slagle
Ellen Smith
Katherine & Douglas Smith
Kim Soechting
Charlotte J. Sparks
Bryan & Cynthia Sperry
Valerie Staats
Annette Stachowitz
Eric Stager
Stan Starrett
Byron Stone
Jason Stuck Family
Janice Summer & Kay Little
Christian Swanson
Tom Sweeney
Jeanette Swenson
Scott Szabo
Judith Tasch
Ken Thigpen
Mandy & Chad Thomas
Jane Tillman & Mark Lyon
Jonathan Tucker
Robert Turner
Leslie Uppinghouse
Daphne Vaughan
Debbye Wallace
Martha Ward
Bob & Jean Warneke
John Weems
Andrea Weissenbuehler Family
Dennis & Sue Welch
Virgina Wheeler
Paul & Anne Wheeler
Penny Wheeler
Evelyn Jo Wilson
Stu Wilson
Larry & Jane Wilson
Chris Winland
Mary Jane Winslow
Nancy Wooley
Walter Wright
Edward & Dottie Yturri
Ken & Barbara Zaslow

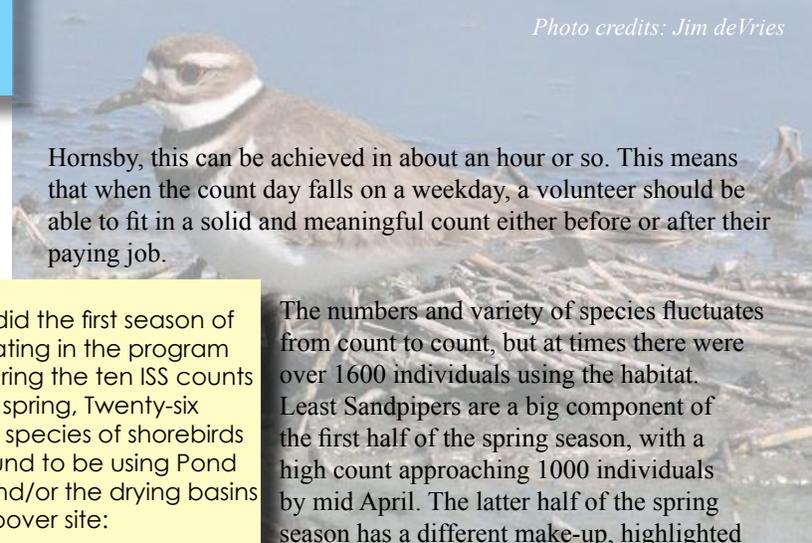
Shorebird Monitoring at Hornsby Bend

In 1974, the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences started its International Shorebird Surveys (ISS) program, in an effort to get a better idea of the migration patterns of shorebirds, as well as to document numbers of individuals and species that use different stopover sites. The program is fueled by citizen science; the surveys are undertaken by volunteer, amateur birdwatchers (like you and me) who enjoy studying and identifying shorebirds.

The protocol is simple: count shorebirds every 10 days from March 15th through June 15th. The dates that should be used year after year should be March 15th, March 25th, April 5th, April 15th, April 25th, May 5th, May 15th, May 25th, June 5th and June 15th. There is also a fall season that runs from July 15th through October 25th with the counts every 10 days (like in the spring, on days of the month that end in “5”) to count returning birds. It is also helpful in the fall to count and distinguish between adults and juveniles. Data entry is easy and goes into immediate use – the volunteers need to enter their sightings into the ISS portal of eBird, where it goes into the ISS portion of the eBird database and is visible to ISS researchers.

With that in mind, the TAS Hornsby Bend Committee signed up to participate in the ISS program, and Spring 2010 marked the first season where shorebirds were monitored on the ponds for this purpose. The key stopover location for shorebirds at Hornsby is Pond 1West, which is the 2nd small pond that often has more mud than water during the spring season and is usually teeming with shorebirds. Occasionally after rains, there are ethereal puddles on the drying basins just to the north of the ponds that can also attract hundreds of shorebirds.

The ISS protocol is not specific about how long a count should be done nor what time(s) of day it must happen, so this allows a lot of flexibility for volunteers to find the appropriate amount of time to count birds and fit that time around the commitments of their daily lives. What the protocol does ask is that the counts being made should represent actual numbers instead of gross estimates, and we have found that on a typical day at



Hornsby, this can be achieved in about an hour or so. This means that when the count day falls on a weekday, a volunteer should be able to fit in a solid and meaningful count either before or after their paying job.

So how did the first season of participating in the program fare? During the ten ISS counts held this spring, Twenty-six different species of shorebirds were found to be using Pond 1West and/or the drying basins as a stopover site:

Black-bellied Plover
American Golden-Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Killdeer
Black-necked Stilt
American Avocet
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs
Upland Sandpiper
Whimbrel
Hudsonian Godwit
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
White-rumped Sandpiper
Baird's Sandpiper
Pectoral Sandpiper
Dunlin
Stilt Sandpiper
Long-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Snipe
Wilson's Phalarope

The numbers and variety of species fluctuates from count to count, but at times there were over 1600 individuals using the habitat. Least Sandpipers are a big component of the first half of the spring season, with a high count approaching 1000 individuals by mid April. The latter half of the spring season has a different make-up, highlighted by counts of several hundred White-rumped Sandpipers into the heat of early summer. In between, there were well over 50-150 or more individuals of several other species (ranging from Lesser Yellowlegs to Wilson's Phalaropes). A few other species only appeared once on a survey day (like Dunlin, Whimbrel and Ruddy Turnstone) and served as a reminder of just how many different shorebirds pass through Central Texas.

All of this data was entered into the eBird ISS portal and will serve as good starting point for future Hornsby counts to be held this fall and in seasons to come. Year over year counts should show us any trends and give researchers not only an idea of how important Hornsby is as stop-over site, but perhaps also tell them if the trends in numbers are in line with numbers produced at other ISS program sites, and might give an indication of changes in various species' abundance throughout the continent.

Interested in helping out? If you have a penchant for counting shorebirds and enjoy visiting Hornsby Bend, please consider participating in a count or two. Feel free to contact me for more details.

Eric Carpenter
ecarpe@gmail.com

Are you interested in learning more about bird distribution in our area? Do you want to hear about rare birds in our area as they happen, and be able to spread the word to other local birders so everyone can see them? Then perhaps you'd like to be the Rare Bird Alert compiler for Travis Audubon. We are looking for a new Rare Bird Alert compiler. The current compiler, Eric Carpenter, is stepping down after four and a half years of service, so there is an immediate need to fill this role. The basic role of the compiler is to put together regular updates on the rare birds in our area for the local (and visiting) birding community.

Some of the tasks include: updating the Rare Bird Alert page on the TAS website, sending regular updates to Texbirds, conversing

Rare Bird Alert Opportunity

and e-mailing with reporting observers for details on the rare birds they are seeing, providing additional sighting details to both local and visiting birders, and, of course, getting out to confirm reports of rare birds, and perhaps even finding a few unusual birds of your own in the process. What you'll be able to learn and take away from being the compiler is a new network of birders and friends and a much better understanding of the comings and goings of the 325 or so birds that visit the Austin area on an annual basis.

If you are interested or want more details, please let us know, or you can contact Eric at ecarpe@gmail.com as he is willing to help transition the position for his replacement.

Travis Audubon Committee Corner

Hi Travis Auduboners,
You are undoubtedly aware that Travis Audubon Society offers a variety of classes to help its members live up to the TAS motto of “Inspiring Conservation through Birding.” In a typical year, Travis Audubon offers over a dozen classes, ranging from Beginning Birding and Waterfowl Identification to Hummingbird Identification and Hummingbird Gardening, to classes that help improve field identification skills with challenging groups of birds such as sparrows, raptors, shorebirds and gulls. And our classes don’t stop with birds. In the past few years, we have offered classes on photography, bird drawing, nest box construction, attracting bluebirds, backyard birding, odonates and even classes on grasses. In fact if you are a typical Travis Audubon member, you have probably taken one or even several of our classes. Some classes are so popular that they routinely attract “repeat offenders,” participants who have taken the class before, but enjoyed it enough to clamor for more.

What you may not be aware of is that each Travis Audubon class requires a volunteer registrar to serve as a liaison between teacher, class participants and Travis Audubon staff. Class registrars are members of the TAS Education Committee who volunteer to facilitate the production of a particular class. Registrars help insure that our classes run smoothly and that instructors have the resources and information that they need to teach successfully. Registrars also help insure that our classes remain consistent with Travis Audubon principles and the high expectations of our members. The Education Committee meets every other month, typically on a Monday evening, to review and discuss class evaluations and the registration process, plan for upcoming classes, and brainstorm new classes. Unfortunately, however, the committee has reached the limits of its abilities to sponsor classes. If Travis Audubon is to expand the number or variety of its classes, the membership of the Education Committee must expand. If you have taken a Travis Audubon class, or have



Photo in left column: Anne & Paul Wheeler, Photo in right column from left to right: Kathy McCormick, Jane Tillman, Byron Stone, Jim deVries, Frances Cerbins, Anne Donovan, and in front, Barbara Anderson
Photo credits: Nancy Manning

an interest in taking a class or perhaps even proposing a new class for Travis Audubon, then perhaps you should consider volunteering a bit of your time to serve on the Education Committee.



It isn’t necessary to attend every meeting, but it is necessary to “learn the ropes” and to participate in the process a bit. Just as we have standards for our classes, we have standards for the conduct of our registrars. But we have a friendly, experienced group of current committee members who are eager to help newcomers learn how it is done. And there is a bonus available to class registrars, a nice little carrot to serve as an incentive or reward for those who serve as class registrars. We know that if we can induce and teach others to serve as registrars, then we can potentially offer more classes. We have lots of ideas about this. We are the Education Committee, after all.

Besides having a genuine interest in Travis Audubon classes, you might be interested to know more about that carrot, huh? To learn more about the committee and that carrot, contact either of the Education Committee co-chairs, Byron Stone or Frances Cerbins, or any of the following active Education Committee members - Kathy McCormack, Anne Donovan, Jane Tillman, Paul Wheeler, Anne Wheeler, Barbara Anderson, Jim deVries or Trent Miller. We look forward to continuing and expanding upon the fine program of classes which has made Travis Audubon the envy of Audubon chapters across the state.

You can contact Bryon Stone at: drbirdie@aol.com
You can contact Frances Cerbins at: francescerbins@yahoo.com

Byron Stone

Are you getting our e-blasts?

Not receiving our weekly e-blasts? If you are a member, simply send your email address to us with “add me to your e-blast” in the subject line. Send an email to nancy@travisaudubon.org. Weekly e-blasts include relevant conservation and bird news, community events, TAS events and much more.

Can you help?

We’re having a problem with our Outlook program and sending images. If you’re an Outlook guru and can help us troubleshoot what’s wrong, please call Nancy at 300-BIRD or email her at nancy@travisaudubon.org. Thank you!

Notes from Chaetura Canyon

July/August 2010

April was a busy month at the Canyon for local wildlife as well as our many visitors. As rains continued to be reliable, new vegetation gave rise to an abundance of flowers, fruit and insects. The three species of resident wrens, Lesser Goldfinches and House Finches all had young out and about by the end of the month. We were particularly delighted by the antics of five Canyon Wren fledglings that possessed the front deck for nearly one month.

Groups from the Texas Outdoor Women's Network (TOWN) of Austin and Bastrop visited the Sanctuary on separate weekends for breakfast and walking tours of the entire canyon to study the plants and our ongoing habitat restoration projects. Each tour was followed



TOWN Austin visitors
Photo credit: *Georgean Kyle*

by lunch on the deck, and plans were made for both groups to return in 2011. While walking in the field with the TOWN Austin group, the 159th avian species was recorded for the property as a Little Blue

Heron flew overhead. Species # 160 was added when a Western Kingbird was sighted a few days later.

May found 14 of the 16 Chimney Swift towers occupied and brought the return of Second Saturday Swift Watches which will run through August. These include drinks and snacks on the deck, a guided tour of the upper trails and a tally of the Chimney Swifts as they go to roost at dusk. See the TAS website for more information and to sign up for these popular events.

The third annual Chalupas and Chimney Swifts fundraising Mexican food buffet dinner was served on May 15th to a sold out overflow crowd. An early morning thundershower threatened to wash out the event, but actually left the vegetation fresh and the evening comfortably cool. Guests pleasantly wandered the upper trails before feasting on Georgean's homemade tamales, empanadas, guacamole and much more. No one went away hungry, and Paul's supply of homebrewed Canyon Rim Stout was completely wiped out. This is one of our two major fundraisers to help cover the cost of maintenance of Chaetura Canyon, and we wish to express our sincere thanks to all participants.



Amorous amphibians
Photo credit: *Paul Kyle*

Late in May the night air was ringing with the calls of amorous amphibians, and the main water feature on the Sanctuary was crowded with numerous pairs of toads and frogs. Several days later the water seemed to literally boil with newly hatched tadpoles. As is often the case, the influx of amphibians drew in a couple of snakes, and the drama of wildlife at Chaetura Canyon continued....

Georgean and Paul Kyle, Sanctuary Stewards

Second Saturday Swift Watch at Travis Audubon's Chaetura Canyon Sanctuary

Join Sanctuary Stewards Georgean and Paul Kyle for an evening of Chimney Swift watching and native plant sale at Travis Audubon's Chaetura Canyon Bird Sanctuary on the second Saturday of each month of May through August from 7:00 until 9:00 PM.

To begin the evenings, the upper trails of the Sanctuary will be open for a guided tour. You are invited to bring your own favorite adult beverage or soft drinks to enjoy with snacks provided on the outdoor deck as the swifts gather at dusk. Participants are also able to watch a live video feed of nesting and roosting activity inside the Observation Towers that provides a rare look at the secret home life of Chimney Swifts on the Sanctuary.

Participants are asked to make a \$10 donation per person. Of course any and all donations to TAS for support of projects and programs at Chaetura Canyon are gratefully accepted. Proceeds from the sale of native plants also help with the maintenance of this Sanctuary. Scheduled dates for 2010 are July 10 and August 14. Each evening is limited to 15 participants, so contact Georgean and Paul as soon as possible to make your reservation. Email: dwa@austin.rr.com

Chimney Swifts over Chaetura Canyon
Courtesy of Georgean & Paul Kyle

BAKER SANCTUARY NEWS

For the past few months, Baker Sanctuary has been transitioning to a new steward. In mid-June my family and I moved into the Baker residence and have been busy making it a new home. We feel fortunate to be selected as the stewards of Baker and look forward to getting to know not only the preserve but also the wonderful people who make TAS such a success. To break the ice, I will begin by introducing myself (Christopher Murray) and my family.

Growing up in rural western Michigan, I was not very interested in birds. I attended Michigan State University and eventually graduated with a degree in Zoology, after a brief stint in southern Florida. While in Florida, I had the opportunity to conduct a gopher tortoise study as well as assist with tagging bull sharks, experiences that provided my first taste of hands-on wildlife biology. I loved it, however birds were still not a priority.

Upon graduation from MSU, I was fitfully employed as a substitute teacher, a job that gave me great impetus to blanket the country with job applications. By great fortune, I was awarded an internship on the Big Island of Hawaii, working on the forest birds of Hakalau NWR. I could literally spend pages describing the Hawaiian rainforest in all its fascinating aspects but, suffice to say, after four months in the field, I was hooked on birds.

From Hawaii, my path was clearly focused on research and travel. In the years that followed, I worked on ornithological projects in Australia, northern California, North Carolina, Mexico (Baja), and Montana, learning new field skills and meeting colorful people from all walks of life. After Montana I landed in Hawaii again, a locale that seems to have a significant pull on my fate.

On my second visit to Hawaii, I was once again based on Mauna Kea but this time I was in the dry forest and helping to research the effects of predators on the survival of Palila, an endangered honeycreeper. It was there, under the spectacularly bright night sky awash in the Milky Way, that I fell in love with Julie and from that moment on, we were inseparable.

Papua New Guinea was our next stop. There is nothing like being isolated in the middle of a vast wildlife preserve to get to know someone better. I learned Julie could cut a leech off a leg faster than anyone I knew, I was forever smitten. Ornithological jobs in Texas (working on Golden-cheeked Warblers for TNC), Guantanamo Bay, South Carolina, Nevada, and Arizona followed, but we were preparing for change. We immigrated to Austin where we both enrolled at UT with Julie earning a Masters in Community and Regional Planning and I a teaching certificate. During our time in Austin, we were wed and also fell in love with the vibrant city and the rolling hill country. Out of all the places we had lived, Austin was certainly one of our favorites, but there was one with an even stronger pull – Hawaii was not through with us yet.

Returning to Hawaii, I was employed as a teacher at Halaula Middle School in North Kohala, one of the most beautiful places to live in all the islands. After a year our first son, Braeden, was born in sight of the volcano where we had met. With children comes change and we were not immune. After much discussion, we fondly bid aloha to the islands and moved back to the mainland.

Back in Texas, I was fortunate to be selected as part of the founding staff for the newly opened Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders, a public, all-girl magnet school located in south Austin. During the chaos of getting a new school up and rolling, our second son Connor was born, rounding out our family.

Leaving ARS was not an easy decision. What drew me to the Baker Sanctuary position was a combination of factors. Professionally, it is an opportunity to meld the two fields about which I am most passionate: education and environmental stewardship. Personally, having roughly 700 acres on which to raise children is priceless. Thank you for having us as your stewards and we are looking forward to a long and productive relationship with TAS.

*Christopher Murray
Baker Sanctuary Steward*



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TA Events - July/Aug 2010

Saturday, July 10 **Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend**

7 am & 4 pm Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Conservatory. All levels of birders are welcome and no registration is required. Contact Eric Carpenter at ecarpe@gmail.com for more information.

Saturday, July 10 **Second Saturday Swift Watch at Travis Audubon's Chaetura Canyon Sanctuary**

7:00 pm to 9:00 pm Join Sanctuary Stewards Georgean and Paul Kyle for an evening of Chimney Swift watching and native plant sale at Travis Audubon's Chaetura Canyon Bird Sanctuary on the second Saturday of each month of May through August from 7:00 until 9:00 pm. See page 10 for more details.

Saturday, July 17 **Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend**

7:30 am to noon Join field trip leaders Kirsti Harms and Shirley LaVergne at Austin's premier birding site. For more information go to www.hornsbybend.org. All levels of birders are welcome and no registration is required.

Saturday, July 31 **Ecological Literacy Day at Hornsby Bend**

Every last Saturday of the month, for more information: Julia Balinsky at jwaxwing@gmail.com or Kevin Anderson, 972-1960.

August 11 to 15 **Davis Mountains and Big Bend with the Davis Mountains Education Center**

Who would have thought that August was a great time to bird the Trans-Pecos region of West Texas? Mid-to-late summer is actually an ideal time to bird in the Davis Mountains and Big Bend. The desert rainy season and the nesting seasons of endemic and summer species combine to set the stage for unique bird sightings. Birding is done early in the morning and in the evenings to maximize bird sightings and to take advantage of the cooler desert mountain temperatures.

The Davis Mountains Education Center (DMEC) has put together a guided, all-inclusive, 4-night, 5-day tour especially for the Travis Audubon Society. Highlights of this trip include: a visit to Texas Nature Conservancy property; a refreshing swim in San Solomon Springs; burrowing Owl and wetland habitat near Marathon; dinner at the Starlight Theater in Terlingua; and birding in the Davis Mountains, Chisos Mountains, Chihuahuan Desert, and along the Rio Grande River. This tour includes a guide, meals, transportation, and lodging. The tour will be lead by an expert guide with over 20 years of experience in the region. For further information visit the DMEC website at <http://www.dmectexas.org>, or call the DMEC at the number below.

In order to cover DMEC's operation costs, the price for this trip must depend on how many participants sign-up; a minimum of 8 people are necessary for the trip "to make" and if 8-11 people sign-up by the deadline, the price will be \$700; if 12-14 people sign-up by the deadline the price will be \$620. A maximum of 14 people can be accommodated. Each of these prices is all-inclusive except for travel expenses to and from the starting location in the Davis Mountains. A portion of the fee is a donation to the Travis Audubon Society. If you are interested in this trip, please register and make a deposit of \$100 with DMEC. Payment will be made to the DMEC, and your spot is not reserved until the deposit is received. Payment-in-full must be received by DMEC by July 28th, 2010, which is also the cancellation date.

Jeff Patterson and Ken Zaslow will assist the group from Austin by maintaining a list of participants who may want to car-pool to the starting location in the Davis Mountains. Therefore, in addition to registering with DMEC, please contact Jeff Patterson by email at jepbird2@austin.rr.com or by phone at 512-487-2755, or by contacting Ken Zaslow at khz@att.net. For further information or to register for this trip please contact Jennifer Turner of the Davis Mountains Education Center (DMEC) at administrator@dmectexas.org or 1-800-403-3484.

TA Events - August 2010

- Saturday, August 14 7 am and 4 pm** **Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend**
Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Conservatory. All levels of birders are welcome and no registration is required. Contact Eric Carpenter at ecarpe@gmail.com for more information.
- Saturday, August 14 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm** **Second Saturday Swift Watch at Travis Audubon's Chaetura Canyon Sanctuary**
Join Sanctuary Stewards Georgean and Paul Kyle for an evening of Chimney Swift watching and native plant sale at Travis Audubon's Chaetura Canyon Bird Sanctuary on the second Saturday of each month of May through August from 7:00 until 9:00 pm. See page 10 for more details.
- Saturday, August 21 7:30 am to noon** **Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend**
Join field trip leaders Kirsti Harms and Jane Tillman at Austin's premier birding site. For more information go to www.hornsbybend.org. All levels of birders are welcome and no registration is required.
- Tuesday, August 24 7:30 am to 9:30 am** **Two-hour Tuesday! at Hornsby Bend, led by Ken Zaslow**
We will kick off the fall series of short Tuesday morning walks with a search for migrant shorebirds at the Hornsby ponds. Take Hwy 71 east, turn left at the first light past the airport (FM973), continue north about one mile and take the paved left into Hornsby Bend. Turn right into the parking lot at the Ecological Research Center. No registration required.
- Saturday, August 28 5:45 am to 2:00 pm** **Choke Canyon State Park Day Trip**
Choke Canyon State Park offers numerous opportunities for birds not normally seen in the Austin area, such as Great Kiskadee, Couch's Kingbird, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Green Jay and occasionally even a Northern Jacana. Doug Booher will lead this day trip to the park south of San Antonio. Meet at the What-a-burger parking lot on the west side of I35 near the southwest corner of Slaughter Lane and I35 at 5:45am to car-pool to the park; additional drivers and cars may be needed depending on how many attend; so please plan to car-pool and contribute to gas. Trip leaves promptly at 6:00am so please be ready with water, snacks, a lunch and your birding essentials. Doug plans to be back in Austin by mid to late afternoon. Please contact Jeff Patterson at 512-487-2755 or jep-bird2@austin.rr.com to register for this trip.
- Saturday, August 28** **Ecological Literacy Day at Hornsby Bend**
Every last Saturday of the month, for more information: Julia Balinsky at jwaxwing@gmail.com or Kevin Anderson, 972-1960.

Recognition and Thanks

Lawrence Buford and Ethel M. Kutac would like to thank the following Bird Records participants: Dan Callaway, Ingrid Huskey, Catfish Kelly, Mike Purdy and Kathy Schwab. They have worked diligently, consistently, *and* had fun in the process. Their loyalty is greatly appreciated.

The Bird Records Committee has functioned for over forty years with different folks serving as chairpersons, starting with Ed Kutac and followed by Rick Armstrong and Bob Barth. We would also like to remember the following loyal members: Jane Connelly, Pat and Hilton Hagan, John Kelly, Jackie Davis, Shelia Hargis, Jeff Hansen, Jack Sunder, Janet Thompson, Norma Hart and

Hugh Brown. (We're sorry if we've left anyone out!) It has been a pleasure to serve as the Bird Records Chairpersons for these past years.

Lawrence Buford & Ethel M. Kutac

And a BIG Travis Audubon Thank You to Ethel and Lawrence for their many years of dedicated service!

Travis Audubon gratefully thanks Eric Carpenter for his 4 1/2 years of service as our loyal Rare Bird Alert compiler. We also want to recognize our talented and dedicated office volunteer, Patee Franks, who has worked on our website and e-blasts for a year. We wish her the best and will miss her dearly.

Travis Audubon Classes

TAS Hummingbird Gardening Class 2010

We are pleased to offer Mark Klym's Gardening for Hummingbirds class. Mark Klym is Coordinator of the Texas Hummingbird Roundup and the Texas Wildscapes programs for Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD). This class will explore native plants that are hummingbird friendly, including their characteristics and cultivation, garden designs and maintenance tips, as well as discussing the proper use of hummingbird feeders.

This workshop will be held Thursday evenings, **July 15 and 22** (6:30-9:00 pm) in a central Austin location. More specific information will be provided after registration. There will be a field trip on the morning of **July 17** to a local garden noted for its attractive, nature-friendly landscaping. Tuition will be \$40 for TAS members and \$55 for non-members. Participants will receive a Hummingbird Roundup kit from TPWD as well as other handouts. For more information or to register for the class, contact Frances at fcerbins@yahoo.com

TAS Hummingbird Identification Class 2010

Central Texans have a wealth of hummingbirds visiting us each year. From our nesting Ruby-throated and Black-chinned Hummingbirds to the elusive visitors like Broad-billed Hummingbirds and Green-breasted Mango, Central Texas hummingbirds can be a challenge to identify. This class will introduce the fifteen hummingbird species that have been seen in Central Texas. Mark will discuss their ranges, habitat, and frequency of occurrence, and will emphasize those characteristics that can be used for effective identification, and sounds that can be used for locating and differentiating these birds. Each species will be examined in detail, looking at key diagnostic features, and compared to similar, often confusing species. Mark Klym is Coordinator of the Texas Hummingbird Roundup and Texas Wildscapes programs for Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD). He is also co-author of *Hummingbirds of Texas* (Texas A&M Press, 2005).

No prior birding experience is necessary. Participants will receive a Hummingbird Roundup kit from TPWD as well as other handouts. For the third year in a row we are pleased to announce that the class has been extended to include an optional weekend field trip to Ft. Davis. Two lecture sessions will be held on Thursday, **July 29** and Tuesday, **August 3** (6:30 to 9:00 pm), at a central Austin location. More specific information will be provided after registration.

The optional West Texas field trip will be **August 13 - 16**. The group will arrive on the evening of the 13th, bird all day on the 14th and 15th and return on August 16. More details about the trip will be provided to registrants. Tuition for the class is \$40 for TAS members and \$55 for non-members.

In addition, class participants will share Mark's travel expenses on the field trip. For more information or to register for the class, contact Byron Stone at drbirdie@aol.com.

Introduction to Shorebird Identification

For the past 11 years, Travis Audubon's Shorebird Identification class has been taught by Tim Fennell. Regrettably however, professional commitments will prevent Tim from teaching the class this year. Byron Stone has humbly offered to teach a class in Tim's absence this year, so that Travis Audubon can keep the shorebird drive alive. When suitable habitat is available, central Texas is a very good location for shorebird study because of its position in the central flyway. Many species of shorebird migrate through the central part of the continent on their way to and from arctic breeding grounds. The classroom sessions and field trips will take place on two Saturdays from 9 am to 12 pm, July 31 and August 14 at in Southeast Austin. We will cover the basics of shorebird identification, and will view slides of the two dozen plus shorebird species that occur regularly in Central Texas in spring, summer and fall. Special attention will be given to certain difficult groups such as peeps, dowitchers and the two yellowlegs species.

Class fee is \$50 for TAS members, \$65 for non-members. If there is sufficient interest, an optional weekend excursion to the central coast will be available at additional cost (to cover Byron's expenses). For additional information, or to register for the class, contact Byron at drbirdie@aol.com.

Bird Drawing Workshop

Have you ever wanted to sketch an unfamiliar bird in the field so you can identify it later, but you don't even try because you "couldn't draw a stick"? Despair not! Travis Audubon Society is once again offering a bird drawing class, and the instructor, Linda Anderson, will show you just how much latent talent you really have. This class will be helpful for those who just want to make better sketches in the field, as well as serve as an introduction for those who are more serious about becoming bird illustrators.

Linda has taught bird drawing sessions at our Youth Birding Camps and for the last four years she has presented workshops for adults on the same topic. Both levels of audience were very enthusiastic about her presentations. You will learn the language of drawing, which is applicable to all objects, although birds will be the focus of this workshop. The class will sharpen your observation skills and teach you to look at birds in an entirely new way. You will use your new skills in the very first classroom session by beginning to draw birds. You can either purchase a set of drawing supplies the first night of class for approximately \$10, or the instructor will provide a list of supplies that you can purchase on your own. After you have registered for the class, the instructor, Linda, will provide you with a supply list for the first class.

Two classroom sessions will be held - at the AGE building, located off 38th Street, north of the U.T. campus in the Hyde Park area of Austin, **Monday and Wednesday evenings, July 26th and 28th, 2010, 7-9 pm.** and a field trip on the morning of Saturday, **July 31** at a location to be announced. Tuition for this class is \$40 for TAS members and \$55 for non-TAS members. For more information or to register, contact Anne at anne.wheeler@alumni.utexas.net.

TAS Odonate Identification class

Lectures in downtown Austin – Tuesdays and Thursdays, September 21, 23, 28, and 30, 2010, 7 – 9 pm. Field Trip at nearby park – Saturday, October 2, 2010, 9 am – 2 pm

Dr. John Abbott, Curator of Entomology for the Texas Natural Science Center (Texas Memorial Museum) at the University of Texas, will once again be teaching this popular class. He is editor-in-chief and past president of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas, and the author of *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Texas and the South-Central United States* and four volumes of the *Texas Dragonfly Atlas*. Dr. Abbott's new damselfly field guide will be available in spring 2011. There will be easy walking on the field trip, and close-focusing binoculars are encouraged. The class fee is \$50 for TAS members, \$65 for non-members. For more information or to register contact Kathy McCormack at VEFL21@yahoo.com or (512) 698-9880.

Warblers of Texas - Natural History and Identification

Lectures in SE Austin – Wednesdays, September 15 and 22, 7 – 9 pm. Local field trip - Saturday September 18. Optional out-of-town field trip to Corpus on the weekend of September 25 (extra cost).

Doug Booher is going to teach a fall warbler class for intermediate birders (at least one year bird-watching experience). The course will be an introduction to the 46 species of warblers that regularly occur in Texas including discussion of taxonomy, range of occurrence, breeding status, and habitat. Further, the class will focus on identification of those warblers that are particularly challenging to identify in non-breeding plumage. Doug is a past president of Travis Audubon and has taught several of its classes.

The tuition for the class is \$60 for members of Travis Audubon and \$70 for non-members. The lecture portion of the class is limited to 30 participants and the out-of-town field trip size is limited to 16. To register for the class contact Frances Cerbins at fcerbins@yahoo.com or (512) 372-9039 with your name, phone, email address and whether you want to go on the out-of-town field trip.

Watch the August Travis Audubon website for information on [Fall Grasses Workshop taught by Bill Reiner](#).

Business Members

Travis Audubon is delighted to recognize its Business Member:

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To learn about the benefits of supporting Travis Audubon as a Business Member, please go to www.travisaudubon.org and click on Business Member, or contact Travis Audubon at 512.300.BIRD (2473).

Our Donors

We gratefully acknowledge the Powell Foundation for their generous grant of \$85,000 which supports our programs and activities. We also thank the Audubon Foundation of Texas through Earth Share for their support, along with Audubon Texas for Chimney Swift Tower repairs. We extend our deepest thanks to all our Donors. Your support is critical to the ongoing conservation and education efforts of Travis Audubon.

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www.travisaudubon.org



Join your local Audubon chapter, Travis Audubon, by using the form at the right. Your dues will be put to use supporting local conservation, education, research projects, field trips, and other Travis Audubon activities right here in Central Texas. We seek your support through your membership in our local chapter. (To become a member of the national Audubon, please go to their website at www.audubon.org. Don't forget to include the National Audubon Source Code of 79M7 and the Travis Audubon Chapter code of W03, so Travis Audubon receives credit.)

Join Travis Audubon now and support local birds, wildlife, and their habitats.

Travis Audubon chapter members receive six issues of this *Signal Smoke* newsletter, priority sign-ups on local field trips, discounts on our educational classes, the opportunity to participate in our e-mail group and attend our wonderful monthly lectures, and more!

To join Travis Audubon:

Make your check payable to Travis Audubon and send it with this form to Travis Audubon, 3710 Cedar St., Box 5, Austin, TX 78705, or join on-line using any major credit card by going to www.travisaudubon.org and clicking on Membership.

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