


 Travis Audubon SOCIETY
SIGNAL SMOKE
The Newsletter of Travis Audubon Society

INSIDE

THIS ISSUE ...

From the President.....2
 Birding Among Old Friends.....3
 Naturalist's Calendar.....4
 Dan Callaway Report.....5
 TAS News & Notes.....6
 Habitat Steward Information.....7
 Spotlight on TAS Committees.....8-10
 Survey Questions.....10
 Baker Sanctuary News.....11
 TAS Events.....12-13
 Birdathon Supporters.....14
 TAS Classes.....15
 Travis Audubon Society
 Membership Form Back page

VOLUME 56, NO. 7 & 8

July/August 2007

Birdathon 2007 - Everyone Wins

Gone Pishing's 2007 Birdathon highlights

Team Gone Pishing consisted of Larry and Jane Wilson, Shelia Hargis and Laurie Foss. Our plan for the 2007 Birdathon was to have a Travis County Big Day. In the end, we drove 225 miles and walked, we're not sure how many miles, all in Travis County. When we asked folks to sponsor our team we told them we were targeting 105 species, a stretch goal but one we thought was attainable based on prior experience. I'm pleased to report that we beat that goal and logged 107 species for the day (ka-ching)! We didn't always think we would get there, but we never lost sight of our goal and we never lost enthusiasm for the quest.

Team Gone Pishing assembled in south Austin at 5 a.m. and headed first to Commons Ford Ranch Park. Our first highlight of the day was right on the road into the park where we had Common Poorwill and Chuck Will's Widow calling from opposite sides of the road. We then birded our way out Hamilton Pool Road to Reimers Ranch for western species, then back to the Nature Conservancy's Barton Creek Preserve (we had special permission to enter the preserve) which very quickly yielded a singing Black-capped Vireo.

Town Lake Hike and Bike trail was next (we walked all the way from under the MoPac bridge down the lakeside trail, around to Barton Springs, then back across the soccer fields to the car - and didn't see a single species that we did not see elsewhere during the day! As one of us said, "there we were, four bird nerds in our hats, long-sleeved shirts, jeans and hiking shoes amidst all of the lithe young runners, cyclists, and dog walkers in their brief outfits ." Then, across the river to the Capitol grounds hoping for migrants, which were just hard to find all day. If only they had been as numerous as Dickcissels!

By then it was afternoon and we drove east out of town on back roads to hit Walnut Creek Water Treatment pond (which held a surprising number of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks) and Big Webberville Park. On the way to Big Webberville Park we stopped at a spot we had scouted that had a reported Bald Eagle nest and got to see an adult eagle soaring with Turkey Vultures over the river – another highlight for us!

As the day wore on, we visited Hornsby Bend for shorebirds, then on to Longhorn Dam as it was getting dusk for some additional hoped-for waterfowl and Monk Parakeets, and finally back to our team captain's neighborhood after dark to try to call up a Great Horned Owl (not successful) at 8:30 p.m.

Tired, sweaty, happy, satisfied, all describe how we felt to be finished. Thanks to our many sponsors we raised over \$4000 for Travis Audubon Society! Until next year...

Laurie Foss

Our Grand Total raised during Birdathon 2007 was \$6,910.75!!!

And the winners are (drum roll please)

Biggest team; Right-wings
 Dan Callaway, leader, five birders in the field

Most species seen; 120 species
 High Island Teachers, Anne Donovan and Barbara Anderson, Leaders

Rarest bird seen; Blue-winged Warbler
 Bamberger Birders, Marsha May and Kelly Logan

Most team sponsors, most dollars raised;
 79 sponsors, \$4,182.75 raised!
 Gone Pishing, Shelia Hargis, Leader

Travis Audubon Society
Regular Monthly Meeting
on Summer Break

See you
in September!



Travis Audubon Society

General Address

P.O. Box 40787, Austin TX 78704

Address for Donations

P.O. Box 40787, Austin TX 78704

Phone numbers listed below without an area code are local numbers in the 512 area.

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2007-08

President

Marsha May 300-BIRD

Vice President

Valarie Bristol 300-BIRD

Treasurer

Doran Bradberry 300-BIRD

Secretary

Donna Brasher 300-BIRD

Directors

Anne Donovan
Sam Fason
Gray Jolink
Kelly Logan
Chris Masey
Jeff Mundy
Bill Reiner
Terri Siegenthaler

Office Administrator

Diana Digges 300-BIRD

BAKER SANCTUARY STEWARD

John Wilcox 219-8425

ACT REPRESENTATIVES

John Kelly (state president) 331-8693
Bryan Hale (state treasurer) 474-5599

SIGNAL SMOKE EDITOR

Tess Sherman 300-BIRD

TAS TELEPHONE

The office number is 512-300-BIRD (2473). To leave a message for Board President Marsha May, press 1. To report sightings of rare or unusual birds in Central Texas, press 3. To ask a bird-related question, press 4.

TAS WEB SITE

www.travisaudubon.org

TAS EMAIL

info@travisaudubon.org

Signal Smoke (ISSN 1931-9282)

*Signal Smoke is printed
on recycled paper
using soy ink.*

Mission Statement

The Travis Audubon Society promotes the enjoyment, understanding, and preservation of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats in Central Texas.

From the TAS President

Summertime and the living is easy....I hope you all are enjoying the lazy days of summer. I am listening to a Gershwin special on KUT as I write this note. We are lucky to live in Austin where we can tune in our radios to such incredible programming. That reminds me that I need to send in my membership to KUT. In order for them to continue doing what they do, they need active members. That reminds me of another organization that is dependent on an active membership. That's right – I am thinking about our own Travis Audubon Society. We too have incredible programs from our monthly speakers to all of our amazing classes and field trips. Is your chapter membership up to date? Are you a chapter member? If not, please take the time to send in your dues using the form on the back page of this *Signal Smoke*. Your dues will be put to good use by supporting the mission of Travis Audubon Society. Also, you will receive benefits from being a chapter member. Some of these benefits are discounts on many of our classes and the ability to vote annually for new board members.

This issue contains descriptions of current committees and also has a very important membership survey. Would one of these committees benefit from your expertise? If you feel that Travis Audubon Society has been good to you, please take the time to give back. Your help is greatly needed. Several committees submitted questions for the survey that is included in this issue because they want

continued on page 3

COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

TAS Rare Bird Alert	Eric Carpenter	300-2473 select option #3
Advocacy	Jeff Mundy	334-4300
Bird Records	Lawrence Buford	452-6344
	Ethel Kutac	346-7659
Habitat Conservation	Valarie Bristol	300-BIRD
Education	Byron Stone	970-5154
Field Trips	Laurie Foss	300-BIRD
Hornsby Bend	John Kelly	331-8693
Hospitality	Susan Moak	925-4590
Latin America	Penny Potter	462-3805
Programs	Ann Gardner	306-0737
Property and Finance	Pat Dillon	663-4448
Publications	Tess Sherman	300-2473
Sanctuary Chair	Terri Siegenthaler	263-2237
Society Historian	John Kelly	331-8693
Urban Habitat	Jane Tillman	794-0058

ABOUT SIGNAL SMOKE

Subscription Information

Signal Smoke (ISSN 1931-9282), was published 11 times yearly through Volume 56, No.4, and beginning with Volume 56, No.5, is published 6 times yearly. Subscription is a TAS membership benefit. To join, use the form on the back page of this issue or go to www.travisaudubon.org for an on-line form. For address or subscription changes, please call 512.300.BIRD (2473) or e-mail info@travisaudubon.org. The USPS does not forward *Signal Smoke*. Copyright © 2007. No part of this publication may be reproduced

without permission in writing from Travis Audubon Society.

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 floppy are preferred but not required. Call Tess at 300-BIRD if you have questions.

Birding Among Old Friends

I have wondered for several years if I should try participating in Birdathon. I was under the impression that every participant had to go from dawn until well after sunset in the heat and humidity, and I was hesitant to do that. I have pursued an interest in natural history all of my life, but have never enjoyed an endurance contest. I prefer to go at a leisurely pace where I can pause frequently to linger in the presence of any interesting sight or sound I come upon. This year, however, seemed different. The promotion in the *Signal Smoke* seemed to be saying that there is more than one way to go about joining in this spring fundraiser. So I decided to give it a try.

I now spend most of my time at home, having joined the ranks of senior citizens. I have developed a particular interest in urban ecology and have gotten into the habit of recording birds (and butterflies) on my wooded inner city lot in East Austin and on frequent walks in the vicinity. Although this area would not be “productive” in the same way as a place with several different habitats in close proximity, like Hornsby Bend, it is nonetheless interesting and sometimes surprising.

Since I also enjoy being with others, as well as the pleasure of solitary walks, I decided to see if some of my long-time friends would like to share Birdathon with me by observing birds in their part of Austin for part of the day and then getting together later to ferret out any “new” species for the day. I called up my old friends Marshall and LaVerne Johnston, whom I have known for over forty years and who are also now retired, and found that they would be delighted to participate. Each Birdathon team had to have its own name. Thus was the Old Friends’ Party born.

On Birdathon morning before I set foot on the street, I went into my backyard with the intention of recording sure species like Cardinal, White-winged Dove, and House Sparrow. The first bird I saw was a magnificent adult Yellow-crowned Night Heron sitting in plain sight on a horizontal branch of a tall cedar elm tree! Five minutes later about two blocks from my house, I saw and heard a Warbling Vireo perched in a neighbor’s tree. I continued on,

walking about four miles in a thoroughly urban setting of modest houses, tree-lined streets, expanses of pavement, small commercial establishments, athletic fields, and drainage ditches. I was looking for a few specialties, such as Monk Parakeets which nest near the top of light towers at the U.T. baseball stadium (found) and Green Herons along Waller Creek (not found). Once I came across a heretofore unknown spot at the end of a short street where a thick bamboo stand was growing in a broad wet swale. Thinking that this would be a good place to find a Wilson’s Warbler, I stepped inside this thicket attended by many mosquitoes and pished quietly. Immediately a male of this species appeared only a few feet from me and quickly flew back into this substitute willow thicket. After a break at my house for lunch, I drove down to the east end of Town Lake near Longhorn Dam, where I added one American Coot, one Double-crested Cormorant, and a few Cliff Swallows (but no kingfishers).

Meanwhile Marshall and LaVerne birded during the morning at Bright Leaf, a private nature reserve in Central West Austin near 2222 between MoPac and Loop 360. Their “best” sighting was three Golden-cheeked Warblers, plus a Chuck-will’s-widow. Their daughter Laura also went on a walk along Bull Creek at St. Edwards Park and contributed her observations for our list. In the late afternoon, we got together at their house near Jollyville, where we spent several hours sitting on their deck which overlooks a mostly undeveloped expanse of typical eastern Edwards Plateau habitat. There we were entertained by lively Lesser Goldfinches feeding in a wildflower/weed patch and a handsome Rock Squirrel which came to take sunflower seeds scattered on a nearby feeding board. On the way home, I added about six Common Nighthawks, all heard flying overhead as I drove slowly down Shoal Creek Boulevard.

On this day of rather haphazard and definitely leisurely birding, we accumulated 48 species, almost all common, for our Birdathon list. I think that the Old Friends’ Party will now flourish, and I invite others who like this approach to birding to join us next year.

Mary T. Parker

From the President, continued from page 2

to know where your interests lie and what it is that they can do to be more successful. Please take a moment and fill out this survey and let your voice be heard!

By the time you receive this edition of *Signal Smoke* there will be a new Executive Director on board who will lead this wonderful organization into the future. To find out more about our new Executive Director, please go to our web site at www.travisaudubon.org.

Travis Audubon Society provides an array of birding/nature classes for the community and I would like to see us continue to expand on these. Wouldn’t it be great to have more opportunities for children? I feel it is important for the youth in our community to have a connection with nature, for they are our hope for conservation in the future. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv was the TAS Nature Book Club’s book for June. I believe that anyone

involved in environmental education, as well as all parents, should read this book. Let’s find ways for getting children involved.

Travis Audubon Society also needs a home. We need a place to hold our monthly meetings without the worry of having to look for another place at the last minute because of schedule changes. This would be a place where we could house our office, hold classes, maybe even have a library. I envision something like Frontera Audubon’s building in Weslaco. I would like to work toward this goal.

I look forward to working with you as we pursue the mission of TAS, “To promote the enjoyment, understanding, and preservation of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats in Central Texas.”

Marsha May



NATURALIST'S CALENDAR

by Bill Reiner

photo by Robert Baumgardner

In July and August, the breeding season for most of the local birds is waning. Territorial defense, including song, is less common, and many birds are harder to find. Some, such as Golden-cheeked Warblers and Ash-throated Flycatchers, leave central Texas altogether. Yet, even on a hot summer afternoon, a common sight in the hazy blue skies of central Texas is the silhouette of a soaring vulture.

Most people who watch birds in Austin know that there are two species of vultures here. Turkey Vultures fly with wings held in a shallow V, often teetering unsteadily from side to side, and flashing the silvery undersides to their flight feathers. The adults have featherless red heads, like their gallinaceous namesakes. The smaller, gray-headed Black Vultures fly with their shorter wings held flat, and they flap more in flight. From below, a white patch toward the end of the wing is distinctive. (It's best not to rely too heavily on head color right now, for juvenile Turkey Vultures may have dusky heads through the summer and well into fall.)

You might assume that the two species are very much alike, since they often occur together – soaring on the same updrafts, roosting on the same high perches, feeding on the same carrion. That assumption may have clouded a scientific debate that went unresolved for more than a century. The two species are actually quite different, and interactions between them are interesting.

Turkey Vultures have a highly-developed sense of smell – rare among birds – that helps them find carrion hidden under forest canopy or otherwise invisible from the air. Though this ability was long suspected, experimental corroboration came only within the last 50 years. In fact, when a 19th-century naturalist, Charles Waterton by name, first suggested that Turkey Vultures find their food by smell, he ignited quite a controversy in ornithological circles. John James Audubon himself weighed in against what was considered, at the time, a preposterous notion.

Controlled experiments begun in the 1930s by Kenneth Stager, a Los Angeles researcher, confirmed that Turkey Vultures do rely heavily upon their sense of smell to find food. He reasoned that contrary results in crude earlier tests may have come from using Black Vultures as subjects, since he found that Black Vultures have little or no sense of smell.

In addition to their superior olfactory sense, Turkey Vultures are also comparatively lighter-bodied and longer-winged than Black Vultures. Such low “wing loading” gives Turkey Vultures greater aerial mobility, and helps them lift off from the ground or a perch with minimal expenditure of energy. A Turkey Vulture can better exploit weak updrafts near the ground, allowing it to sail along slowly at lower altitudes, where odors are easier to detect. It can also leave its nighttime perch earlier in the morning, while Black Vultures at the same roost are still waiting for the sun to stir stronger thermal currents.

So how do Black Vultures overcome the handicaps of a poor sense of smell and high wing loading? Watchfulness, teamwork, and...well, for lack of a nicer word, chutzpah.

While Turkey Vultures cruise low to catch odors, Black Vultures soar high, where they can watch the movements of other vultures. When one vulture begins its descent to a food source, others (of both species) flying near it will notice, and quickly follow.

First to arrive at fresh carrion will usually be a Turkey Vulture. It will have a few precious minutes to gulp down as many delectable entrails as possible before the sharp-eyed Black Vultures in the vicinity arrive. A Turkey Vulture can defend its find against one Black Vulture, but not against a group of them. The more aggressive Black Vultures will quickly join forces to displace the larger species.

Studies have suggested that, in many cases, these Black Vultures are closely related to each other: immediate or extended family. Strong family ties may develop from the prolonged dependence of the juveniles upon the parents. Adult Black Vultures have been known to feed their young for as long as eight months after they have left the nest. By contrast, Turkey Vulture parents are rarely observed to feed fledged offspring.

A Black Vulture family, or a coalition of related families, will feed together, roost together, even preen each other. They will fight off unrelated Black Vultures that attempt to join them at a meal or a roost.

The teamwork that comes with such social bonding yields benefits beyond simply being able to shoulder aside a Turkey Vulture from a roadkill. Having more eyes alert for danger may mean that each individual Black Vulture can devote more time to ripping apart and eating the carcass. The birds may also work together to dismantle a carcass. For instance, two birds might pull at opposite ends of a tough piece of hide to rip it apart. The communal roost may also act as an information center: a Black Vulture coming hungry to roost can follow its more successful relatives when they return to a carcass the next morning.

Of course, teamwork and a scrappy nature can only take Black Vultures so far. Other scavengers that they encounter in different parts of their range, such as Crested Caracaras, King Vultures, and Andean Condors, are not as easily cowed as Turkey Vultures. A single individual of these larger or fiercer species will displace a group of Black Vultures.

For that matter, neither Black nor Turkey Vultures have the strength to tear the hides of some animals, such as cattle and deer, and they must wait for a mammalian scavenger, such as a coyote, to rip the hide so that they can reach the innards of the carcass. (This is one more reason why coyotes are important players in the web of life in central Texas.)

continued on next page



Dan Callaway,
photo by Robert Baumgardner

THE DAN CALLAWAY REPORT

Birdathon Day - 5/14/07

Participants: Terry Banks, Homer Cunningham, Tamara Knox, Catfish Kelly and Dan Callaway

Target #: 100 species

The first birds noted were Purple Martins and Common Nighthawks feeding in the pre-dawn sky. Upon meeting at Bull Creek Park, we heard an Eastern Wood-Pewee and saw a Green Heron and several Snowy Egrets. We birded Reimers Ranch until 11:00 a.m. Upland birds included Field, Lark, Grasshopper, and Chipping Sparrows, Canyon Towhee, Black-crested Titmouse, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Phoebe, House Finch, Bewick's Wren, Painted Bunting, Bell's and White-eyed Vireo, Summer Tanager, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Carolina Chickadee, Inca, Mourning and Common Ground-Dove, Lesser Goldfinch, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Chimney Swift, Blue Grosbeak and Orchard Oriole. Birds along the Pedernales River were Spotted Sandpiper, Canyon Wren, Eastern Screech Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Yellow-throated and Red-eyed Vireo, Great Blue Heron, and Great-crested Flycatcher. The only warblers seen on the ranch were Magnolia and a Golden-cheeked which was the first record for this ranch tract. It was in a side canyon at the down-stream end of the river road. Catfish saw a "mystery bird" which resembled a Gray Vireo, but is unlikely due to range.

Naturalist's Calendar, continued from page 4

Lest you feel pity for the Turkey Vultures, they are doing quite well, despite the competition. Counts show that, continent-wide, their population has increased since the 1960s. They apparently specialize on carcasses of smaller animals, for which a Black Vulture posse may not bother to fight. Black Vultures are more likely to gather at a dead cow, deer, or hog, and leave the squirrels and lizards to the larger birds.

Today the greatest threats to both vulture species comes from humans: collisions with cars, trucks, and aircraft, and poisoning by human-manufactured chemicals. That we still have so many vultures today, cleaning up the roadkills along our highways, is partly thanks to the banning of DDT in the 1960s. This pesticide and its derivative, DDE, were responsible for thinning the eggshells of vultures as well as those of Bald Eagles and Ospreys – a phenomenon that led to the drastic decline of the latter two species. A study of vulture eggs in Texas showed that shells were, on average, 16% (Turkey Vultures) and 17% (Black Vultures) thinner during the period when DDT was used than they were before that time.

Today, the most widespread poisoning of vultures comes from lead shot, which the birds often consume when gulping down carcasses of deer and other wildlife that are not retrieved by

We didn't see a Western Scrub-Jay until our return along Hamilton Pool Road. We got the Eurasian Collared-Doves at Bee Cave. Terry saw a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at Tom Miller Dan and a Yellow Warbler at Barton Springs. At Longhorn Dam we added Lesser Scaup and Monk Parakeet. The Black-bellied Whistling Ducks were at Walnut Creek WWTP pond. The Hornsby Bend area included Crested Caracara, Red-tailed Hawk, Eastern Bluebird, Eared Grebe, Ruddy Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Wilson's Phalarope, Black-necked Stilt (nesting), Greater Yellowlegs, Pectoral and Least Sandpiper, and Red-bellied Woodpecker. We finally saw some Cattle Egrets along FM 969. At the Little Webberville Park, I thought I was getting a new species, (Tufted Titmouse), but it was a black-crested surprisingly this far east. At Big Webberville Park we added Indigo Bunting and Bald Eagle. An Eagle nest has been reported along the five-mile stretch of the Colorado River below Webberville. We tried to find Eastern Kingbirds here which were seen a few days earlier, but to no avail. We stopped birding at 4:30 p.m.

Total species: ninety-two

Best birds: Wilson's Phalarope, Painted Bunting, Golden-cheeked Warbler, and Grasshopper Sparrow

Dominant birds: Northern Mockingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Dickcissels

hunters. Ingestion of lead shot is also a major concern in attempts to restore the population of the related California Condor. Fortunately, hunters are being encouraged to replace lead shot with the more expensive, but non-toxic, steel shot.

References included: *The Life of Birds*, by David Attenborough; *Turkey Vulture*, by David A. Kirk and Michael J. Mossman, and *Black Vulture*, by Neil J. Buckley, in *The Birds of North America : Life Histories for the 21st Century*, nos. 339 and 411, respectively; *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*, edited by John K. Terres; and *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*, by David A. Sibley.

SUCCESS DEPENDS ON THE RIGHT CHOICES.

Helping you make the right choices is what our financial consultants do best.



Michael Portman
Financial Consultant
Vice President - Investments
301 Congress Avenue, Suite 100
Austin, TX 787745
(512) 472-6852
michael.portman@agedwards.com



A.G. EDWARDS
FULLY INVESTED IN OUR CLIENTS®

2007 A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc. • Member SIPC • agedwards.com

024778-011511M-SBT-0408

GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CLASSIC WINNERS

TAS is proud to congratulate the Travis Audubon Towhees, second place winners in the teen category, of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Great Texas Birding Classic. The TAS sponsored team, Jesse Huth, Lindy Arbuckle, Katrina Troppy, Austin Walker, and Christian Walker, spotted 160 species. Applause! Applause! We'll have details and photos in our Sept/Oct issue of *Signal Smoke*.

LARGE GRANT AWARDED TO TRAVIS COUNTY

The US Fish and Wildlife Service today announced that Travis County has been awarded \$5,700,000.00 to continue acquiring endangered species habitat as part of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve.

The Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP) created the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve to mitigate for endangered species habitat impacted due to development or other changing land uses. The goal of the BCP is to set aside and manage one acre of habitat within the preserve for each acre impacted by otherwise lawful activities that result in "take" or "harm" to endangered species within the 561,000 acre permit area in western Travis County. The BCCP allows Travis County and the City of Austin to offer landowners with endangered species concerns a streamlined path to compliance with federal law. The BCCP has facilitated the continuing growth and development of the area by balancing desired economic growth with environmental protection, and has created one of the largest urban preserve systems in the nation.

Travis County plans to use these new grant funds to protect lands that provide habitat for five endangered invertebrates and two endangered songbirds. The BCP today consists of 27,852 acres of songbird habitat spread across seven watersheds in western Travis County and forty-four cave locations that protect unique invertebrates found nowhere else in the world.

Kevin Connally, Sr. Environmental Resource Management Specialist for Travis County adds: This particular grant is going to help us secure a location under extreme development pressure that includes GCWA and BCVI habitat as well as important karst features that are known to provided habitat for five listed inverts and three other invert "species of concern."

The USFWS believes that for at least a couple of the endangered karst inverts, recovery would not be possible without protecting these specific locations.

You can contact Kevin Connally at:

512-854-7213 office

512-848-7697 mobile

512-854-6474 fax

kevin.connally@co.travis.tx.us

For more information about the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan, the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve, or the US Fish and Wildlife Service, please see:

<http://www.co.travis.tx.us/tnr/bccp/default.asp>

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/austintexas/>

Calling all businesses!

For a limited time TAS is offering Business Memberships and employees who sign up their employers, a reduced rate on TAS membership. Any business joining TAS by August 15, 2007 will receive their Business Membership for \$225 per year, a savings of \$25 per year.

Any employee who successfully "persuades" his/her employer to join as a Business Member shall receive a one year individual membership for \$22.50.

Business Members of Travis Audubon receive:

- Listing in each issue of our newsletter, *Signal Smoke* (circulating 2,100 in print and by PDF on-line)
- Listing on the TAS Web page with your logo and a hyperlink to your company's web site
- All our regular membership materials and opportunities (1 vote in TAS elections)
- One free business-card ad per year in the *Signal Smoke* newsletter
- Tax-deductibility of the \$250 business membership fee with a receipt documenting the gift

Business Members

Travis Audubon is delighted to recognize its Business Members:

Capital Printing Co.

Jeff Baker Stanberry Realtors

Mundy & Singley, LLP

Powell, Ebert & Smolik, PC

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

Austin as a Certified Wildlife Community

Becoming a Habitat Steward Host

National Wildlife Federation has two major volunteer opportunities:

Habitat Steward Host

Purpose – To train stewards and support the group throughout the year. Hosts are organizers, facilitators and mentors. We don't have to be experts but must be able to pull together a team of guest speakers and other resources to educate Stewards. Be a contact person for HS with NWF. Complete a correspondence training course to be eligible.

Habitat Steward

Purpose - To help people in the community create and restore wildlife habitat. Stewards take the intensive, hands-on training facilitated by the Host. Stewards make a commitment of providing 30 hours of service to NWF within a year of completing their training.

What do Stewards do?

- Help neighbors certify their yards
- Help schools install and maintain their habitats
- Work at booths such as Green Garden Festival and Wildflower Center plant sales
- Give talks and walks
- Participate in community wide events like Austin Parks Day
- Invasive species removal
- Stream clean ups
- Write articles for neighborhood newsletters
- Organize and/or participate in plant rescues
- Apply for grants for tree planting projects in neighborhoods

Austin Goal

To become a certified Community Wildlife Habitat. It is a community that has provided habitat for wildlife – in individual backyards, on school grounds, and in public areas such as parks, community gardens, places of worship and businesses. It is a place where the residents have made it a priority to provide habitat for wildlife

by providing the four basic elements that all wildlife needs: food, water, cover, and places to raise young. The community has also educated its residents about sustainable gardening practices such as reducing or eliminating chemical fertilizers and pesticides, conserving water, planting native plants, removing invasive plants, and composting. It has held workshops about gardening for wildlife, and held community events such as stream or trail cleanups to make the community healthier for wildlife and people alike. We must certify 600 homes, ten common areas, and six schools.

Contacts:

Jane Tillman, NWF Habitat Steward Host, mljt@mail.utexas.edu, 794-0058

Michael Herrera, in charge of Host Training, habitatstewards@nwf.org in Reston, VA

Alice Nance, nancea@nwf.org at our local affiliate, the Gulf States Natural Resource Center, in Austin.



LEGAL BEAGLES AT WORK

TAS' foremost mission is to promote bird conservation. In our area, we have a special responsibility to protect two species, the Golden-Cheeked Warbler and Black-Capped Vireo, which are uniquely dependent on our area's habitat and resources. Both species are protected by the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ESA often is misunderstood to prevent any destruction of an endangered species' habitat. Actually, the ESA allows for the destruction or "take" of habitat of an endangered species, but requires the loss to be mitigated by protecting habitat for the species elsewhere. In Travis County, a large scale mitigation plan was established to acquire and protect land for Golden-Cheeked Warblers and Black-Capped Vireos, which is pooled into a joint holding known as the "Balcones Canyonlands Preserve" or the "BCP." The BCP is not a public park, recreation land, or anything else. The BCP was created specifically for the Golden-Cheeked Warblers, Black-Capped Vireos, and some other endangered species. Today, landowners may obtain permits from the United States Fish & Wildlife Service to "take" habitat by paying a fee to allow for the acquisition of mitigation lands to add to the BCP.

Recently, some citizens brought to TAS' attention that an apparent unpermitted destruction of Golden-Cheeked Warbler habitat occurred on RM 2222, just west of Loop 360. TAS

retained the University of Texas, Environmental Law Clinic to advise on this situation. UT professor, Melinda Taylor, and several of her students, undertook representation pro bono. TAS sent a letter to the USFWS requesting it to investigate, and if warranted, take enforcement action against the companies involved in the apparent unpermitted destruction of habitat. As the result of these efforts, the developer has already offered to pay the permit fee, but the USFWS still is investigating as there may be some evidence of a knowing violation, which would warrant the imposition of penalties. SOS and Environmental Defense joined in this letter. The investigation is still pending at this time.

Jeff Mundy

HybridRealtor@Stanberry.com



Jeff Baker, REALTOR®, Birder

Cell: (512) 619-7421

Fax: (512) 371-9952

4000 Duval St. Austin TX 78751

SEARCH AREA LISTINGS @

jeffbaker.stanberry.com

Also check out:

bakerproperties.biz & jeffbakerart.biz

Stanberry Associates
REALTORS®

Environment & Client Friendly

SPOTLIGHT ON TRAVIS AUDUBON SOCIETY COMMITTEES

Travis Audubon Society has been fortunate to have a membership actively involved with committee work. Without the amazing work and dedication of our committee members the programs, events, education, and community involvement would not be possible.

This month we take the opportunity to highlight the activities of our committees and ask you to participate in a short survey to further our ability to serve you and our community.

Urban Habitat Development Committee

Chair: Jane Tillman.

Contact Jane for meeting information.

Contact info: mljt@mail.utexas.edu

794-0058

This Committee works with home owners and schools providing information and education on good stewardship for wildlife, emphasizing the impact of our activities on wildlife habitat.

This committee provides training to those interested in becoming a habitat steward. The next training will take place in September, 2007. Watch our web site and your email for dates.

The Urban Habitat Development Committee is spearheading TAS efforts to qualify Austin as a Certified Wildlife Community. The Urban Habitat Development committee recently made several presentations including to the Austin Neighborhood Council on the Community Wildlife Habitat program, the Neighborhood Planning Conference on creating wildlife habitat and for REI.

On May 12th, Jane Tillman and Pat Bulla participated in the Lady Bird Johnson Home Tour at Cathy Nordstrom's house. Cathy is an active landscape designer who is a NWF Habitat Steward Host, master gardener and master naturalist. Jane and Pat distributed habitat applications, information about TAS membership, the TAS hummingbird handout, as well as NWF and Texas Parks and Wildlife handouts. Approximately 500 people visited.

Program Committee

Chair: Ann Gardner

Meets: Contact Ann for meeting information.

Contact Info: anngardner@austin.rr.com, 306-0737

The program committee provides a wide variety of speakers for our monthly general membership meeting. They are always open to new ideas and suggestions on topics that you may want to learn about. Join this committee and help to make our meetings *the* place to be each third Thursday of each month, eight months out of the year! The fall lineup is in the developing stages – get involved!

Hornsby Bend Committee

Chair: John Kelly

Contact info: 331.8693, jfkellyaustin53@hotmail.com

The Hornsby Bend Committee meets quarterly to discuss improving the birding experience at Hornsby Bend and also to support the activities of both the Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend and the Hornsby Bend Bio-solids

Treatment Facility. Hornsby Bend is, of course, the best place to observe birds in the Austin area. We want to ensure this continues to be the case, especially as recent development around Hornsby Bend threatens this important habitat.

The Hornsby Bend Committee sponsors the Hawk Watch each year. This year's Hornsby Bend Hawk Watch starts on Saturday, August 18, 2007. It will run until October 28, 2007. Both Gary Newgord and Peg Wallace will be leading the watch this year. Current plans call for the watch station to be open on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays from around 9 a.m. till 5 p.m. This schedule may vary somewhat in order to catch mass movements in the wake of cold fronts. Check the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory web site for hawk watch results from past years.

Visitors to this year's Hawkwatch will see some big improvements. We've added chairs to allow for a more comfortable viewing experience and we've acquired a new, stable tripod for the spotting scope. We have also bought a portable weather station to correlate hawk movements with meteorological conditions. Pick a day (or days) to come on out.

Education Committee

Chair: Byron Stone

Meets: 8 – 9 times per year.

Watch *Signal Smoke* and your email for next meeting date.

Contact Info: Byron Stone

970-5154; DrBirdie@aol.com

The Education Committee is dedicated to providing high-quality educational opportunities geared toward environmental conservation, bird identification, and bird-friendly habitat awareness for all ages. We focus on topics related to birds but also offer other nature topics as appropriate, and suggestions for new courses are welcomed.

The Education Committee oversees the development and implementation of Travis Audubon's popular series of classes (see the webpage for a listing of TAS classes). If you are interested in conservation, natural history, and education, you should consider joining the Education Committee. See page 15 for upcoming classes.

Publication Committee

Chair: Tess Sherman

Contact Info: tsherman1@austin.rr.com

The Publication Committee oversees the bi-monthly publication of the Travis Audubon newsletter, *Signal Smoke*. Additionally, the committee creates other TAS-related flyers, logos, announcements as needed. We're always looking for good writers with a strong interest in developing articles covering a range of topics including birding, conservation issues, and broader nature themes. If you can provide photos or other graphics for your article, even better! Our readership spans from beginning birders to very advanced enthusiasts and professionals working in the biological and environmental sciences.

Field Trip Committee

Chair: Laurie Foss

Meeting Info: The Field Trip committee meets 30 minutes before each TAS general membership meeting

Contact Info: fieldtrips@travisaudubon.org

The Field Trips Committee is dedicated to providing diverse and interesting field trips every weekend of the year except for holiday weekends. In addition we offer some mid-week field trips as well as multi-day excursions to more remote locations. It is unique among Audubon societies to offer field trips every weekend. In fact, it is not uncommon to have more than one field trip to choose from on a given weekend.

This committee is exploring opportunities that can broaden the knowledge base of birders to include grassland tours, butterfly/dragonfly/damselfly ID walks, and bat emergence viewing. These varied opportunities in addition to our focus on the birds also provides outreach to the communities we serve while not losing site of our primary purpose to “inspire conservation through birding.”

The Field Trip Committee maintains an active email conversation during the month where we share ideas and handle scheduling for future field trips. This committee is made up of TAS members who are passionate about the diversity of nature and “inspiring conservation through birding.” We always welcome new committee members and we would love to hear from you if you have a field trip that you want to lead or would like to suggest a place to go. Please see pages 12 and 13 for upcoming Field Trips.

Habitat Conservation

Chair: Valarie Bristol
Contact chair for next meeting date.
Contact Info: vbristol@tnc.org

The mission of the Habitat Conservation Committee is to provide the Travis Audubon chapter with opportunities to preserve bird habitats in the chapter’s service area. The committee will gather and compile information on bird habitats in prairies, riparian forests, hill country areas, and any other important bird areas. The Committee will look for partnerships to support protecting important habitats identified by the Committee and make recommendations to the chapter for action.

Recently, the Habitat Conservation Committee working in cooperation with other environmental groups in Hays County, helped ensure passage of a \$30 million bond package for land and water conservation as well as for parks. The voters of Hays County approved the bond package on May 12, 2007 by 68% of the vote.

The Hays County Commissioners will now form an oversight committee to make recommendations for projects. One possible project is for Golden-checked Warbler habitat in Hays County.

Sanctuary Committee

Chair: Terri Siegenthaler
Meets quarterly. Contact Terri for meeting information.
Contact Info: terrisiegenthaler@shieldranch.com.

The Sanctuary Committee oversees the management of the sanctuaries, facilitates sanctuary management by the stewards and determines the best management practices. The Committee

also offers direction and support to the sanctuary stewards. The calendars for the sanctuaries are established during the Committee’s quarterly meetings. The Sanctuary Committee hosts periodic work days at the sanctuaries. Watch for these work days in *Signal Smoke*.

Hospitality Committee

Chair: Susan Moak
smoak511@austin.rr.com

You can thank Susan Moak for that yummy food at each of our general membership meetings.

Latin America Committee

Chair: Penny Potter
Please contact Penny for meeting information at pfpotter@austin.rr.com or by phone: 462-3805

In recognition of the fact that many of our central Texas birds, including the Golden-cheeked Warbler and the Black-capped Vireo, live a significant portion of their lives in Latin America, the Latin America Committee seeks to help preserve Latin American habitat so that we can continue to enjoy these birds in Central Texas. To that end, this Committee has established the following goals:

1. Partner with other environmental organizations in projects that will preserve and enhance the environment for birds in Latin America.
2. Find projects that TAS can accomplish on our own that will preserve and enhance the environment for birds in Latin America.
3. Encourage travel to Latin America by TAS members in order to increase interest in and commitment to preserving the environment in LA.
4. Partner with Birders Exchange to help collect equipment and ensure TAS groups visiting Latin America serve as couriers when needed.

Property and Finance Committee

Chair: Pat Dillon
Meets quarterly. Watch for next meeting date.
Contact Pat Dillon at 512-633-4448, hellopdillon@hotmail.com

The Property and Finance Committee safeguards the assets and investments of TAS. This Committee provides information and recommendations to the Board for the best use of our assets and investments. The Board, after receiving the information and recommendations, provides direction to the Committee for the use and management of our assets and investments.

Bird Records Committee

Chair: Ethel Kutac
Co-Chair: Lawrence Buford
Generally meets the 4th Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

Contact Info: Ethel Kutac, 346-7659; Lawrence Buford: 452-6344, landybuford(at)grandecom.net

This Committee compiles and records bird records received from birders in a 60-mile radius of Austin, Texas. The purpose of the committee is to develop and compose a checklist providing where specific birds can be located, their abundance, their breeding status, etc. These checklists are published in 5-year intervals.

This web site (www.travisaudubon.org/BirdRecordsEntry/BRC/) was developed for entering bird records and was set up in 2005 for your convenience. One objective was to compile accurate records for the next check list. If you do not have a computer, please send records to Ethel Kutac, c/o Travis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 40787, Austin, TX 78704

Advocacy Committee

Chair: Jeff Mundy

The Advocacy Committee pursues the most fundamental aspect of TAS' mission. Historically, Audubon members have been the

voice for bird conservation speaking for the birds who cannot speak for themselves. This committee works on very targeted issues to advise the Board of Directors on issues in our area of particular importance to bird conservation. If the Board of Directors decides that TAS should undertake advocacy on an issue, this committee then becomes the voice of TAS, appearing before the appropriate governmental entities to advance the position authorized by TAS.

Contact the TAS office at 300-BIRD if you have any issues you feel might be appropriate for the Advocacy Committee to review.

Nature Book Club

Chair: Theresa Banks

Meets: 4th Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Book People

Contact Info: tessiebanks@msn.com

This book club is informal and fun. You can choose to go to all the meetings and discuss all the books, or you can pick and choose the meetings featuring books you would like to discuss. You do not have to read the book to attend. See page 12 for our upcoming selection.

Survey Questions



To answer these questions in a few short minutes, please go to http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Y8L8e6hGFiZHKprPIPoULg_3d_3d or get there via a link on our TAS website. You can also fill out these questions and mail your responses to:
Travis Audubon Society
P.O. Box 40787
Austin, TX 78704

From the Latin America Committee:

Would you be interested in attending the El Cielo Birding Festival in Mexico if Travis Audubon arranged for group transportation?
Yes No

Are you interested in Travis Audubon arranging other birding trips to Latin America?
Yes No

From the Urban Habitat Committee:

Is your yard certified as a wildlife habitat? Yes No
How important are urban homeowners' gardening practices on the health of our water supply?

How important are urban homeowners' gardening practices on resident wildlife?

How important are urban homeowners' gardening practices on migrating birds?

How important are homeowner's gardening practices to air quality?

From the Field Trip Committee:

Are there any sites / locations you would like to suggest for a field trip? If so, please, please list suggested locations:

From the Bird Records Committee:

The web site, www.travisaudubon.org/BirdRecordsEntry/BRC/ for entering bird records, was set up in 2005 for your convenience. One objective was to compile accurate records for the next check list.

- 1. Are you entering your bird records? Yes No
- 2. If no, please tell us why.
- 3. Have there been problems with the set up? Yes No

From the Programs Committee:

Are there topics that you would like to learn about at the TAS General Meeting? If so, please list suggested topics:

Do you know a fantastic speaker or two who would be willing to present at one of our General Meetings? If so, please list suggested speakers:

From the Education Committee:

Are there any specific topics you would like TAS to offer as a course/class/workshop? If so, please list suggested topics:

From Travis Audubon

Are you interested in joining one of the committees spotlighted in this issue of *Signal Smoke*? Yes No
If not, why not?

Would you be interested in serving on either of these suggested new committees?

- Fundraising Committee Yes No
- Membership Volunteer Committee Yes No

Baker Sanctuary News

All through the spring wild turkey breeding season, we have seen as many as five tom turkeys and an occasional hen around the Headquarters Area at various times. Often, a tom, resplendent in his breeding plumage, will enter our back yard and see his reflection in Marcie's greenhouse. He will gobble, fan, strut, and drag his wings back and forth, keeping an eye on his "rival" reflected in the glass. In May, a tom actually went into the green house and spent over thirty minutes inside confronting his adversary! All the while he was inside the greenhouse, Marcie and I were afraid that a sudden roar of traffic on Lime Creek Road might panic the turkey and cause him to injure himself. We kept hidden until he had "subdued" his opponent and left. We then slipped out and shut the door to prevent another such encounter.

We have recorded much more rain here at the Sanctuary this spring than for the same time last year. In March, we received 7.2 inches of rain here. In April, the Sanctuary recorded 2.6 inches and we received over seven inches of rain in May, three inches of which fell with the passage of a squall line early in the morning of May 16th. This is the most rain we have received in any May since 2000. It appears that the drought has eased somewhat because all the runoff has brought Lake Travis back up to over the 682 foot elevation and caused flood gates to be opened at Mansfield, Tom Miller, and Longhorn Dams over the Memorial Day weekend. Likewise, all the moisture has got the Baker Springs flowing again, caused the grass to take off, and also caused a lot of wildflowers to bloom including Indian Blanket and Bluebonnets, which have now gone to seed.

On May 13th, we recorded the seventh wreck here on the Travis County right-of-way when an eastbound pick-up truck towing a jet ski left Lime Creek Road in the curve across from the TCEQ Air Monitor Station. Marcie and I hurried down to check the fence. The truck had stopped just short of plowing through the barbed wire and posts. We called the Travis County Sheriff's Office so a deputy could be dispatched and conduct traffic control while the truck was pulled off the rocks. We were lucky this time that only a few junipers were knocked over and a few rocks were rearranged.

The cities of Cedar Park, Leander, and Round Rock have created the Brushy Creek Regional Utility Authority (BCRUA) to meet the immediate and future water demands of customers for these three cities. The participating cities will share the costs of building the raw water intake structure, a distribution system that includes a 96" diameter raw water pipeline and water treatment facilities. BCRUA has contracted with Geotech and research is underway to take samples from the lakebed to select a site for the new deep-water intake structure to be built in Volente near lot 68 just off Booth Circle.

John Wilcox, TAS-Baker Sanctuary Steward



*Photo credits:
Marcie Wilcox*



1-800-GREENTX • www.earthshare-texas.org
estx@earthshare-texas.org

TAS Events - July 2007

The Field Trips Committee has a new email address - please feel free to use it. It is fieldtrips@travisaudubon.org.

Sunday, July 8 Lake Somerville State Park (Nails Creek Unit)

8 am to Noon

Meet us at the headquarters of the Nails Creek Unit of Lake Somerville State Park. There are wooded trails and several access points to the lake within the Nails unit. There should be good birding for at least the first two hours and then, for those that have an interest, there may be very good butterflies with all of the wildflowers seen during a late May scouting trip. This location is in Lee County but the lake also is in Burleson and Washington Counties. Directions: This park is located east of Austin (~75-80 miles) on highway US 290, east of Giddings about 6 miles. Take FM 180 for about 13 miles northeast to the entrance to the Nails Creek Unit. Without the state park pass, there is a \$3 entrance fee for each vehicle. Contact Gary Waggerman at waggerman@sbcglobal.net or by cell phone at 512-775-8720 for more information. This is about 70 miles from Austin so it would be wise to car pool if possible.

Saturday, July 14 Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

7 am & 4 pm

Contact Eric Carpenter at ecarpe@gmail.com for more information. Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory.

Saturday, July 21 Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

7:30 am to Noon

Led by Gary Newgord and Kirsti Harms. Austin's premier birding site. No registration required. Contact fieldtrips@travisaudubon.org for more information.

Saturday, July 28th To the Bat Cave! Bat Emergence Field Trip to Old Tunnel WMA

5 pm to dark

Join us at the Bat Cave, aka The Old Tunnel WMA, as we watch the emergence of nearly 4 million bats as they go on their nightly feeding foray. The Old Tunnel WMA is the smallest Wildlife Management Area in Texas, containing only 16.1 acres of land. The abandoned railroad tunnel is home to up to three million Brazilian free-tailed bats (*T.b. mexicana*) and 3,000 Cave myotis (*Myotis velifer*) from April to October, more mammals than any other WMA. Contact George Kerr at George.Kerr@austin.rr.com or 785-3579 for more information and/or to be placed on trip list and receive updates. The Old Tunnel WMA is located in Kendall County, Texas, approximately 13 miles north of Comfort and 11 miles south of Fredericksburg. Proposed itinerary for Saturday August 28, 2007 is listed below. Times are subject to change, so coordinate with Bat Emergence.

4:00 Meet/carpool at former Albertsons parking lot at the "Y" in Oak Hill

4:20 Depart enroute Old Tunnel WMA (76 miles), arrive approx 5:50

6:35 Interpretive program begins

7:20 Emergence begins

9:15 Depart for Oak Hill

10:45 Arrive Oak Hill

Cost is \$5.00 for adults and \$3.00 for seniors. It will probably be quite hot when we arrive at Old Tunnel WMA. Bring plenty to drink and your dinner to eat there. Intrepid bat watchers may wish to spend the night in Fredericksburg in order to come back to Old Tunnel WMA early in the morning to see the bats return to the Tunnel.

TRAVIS AUDUBON SOCIETY NATURE BOOK CLUB

We invite you to join the Travis Audubon Society Nature Book Club, which is usually held the 4th Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm at BookPeople (6th and Lamar, thank you BookPeople!). The group is informal and fun, and you can choose to go to all the meetings and discuss all the books, or you can pick and choose the meetings featuring books you would like to discuss. You do not have to have read the book to attend. In the coming months we're reading:

July 26, 2007 - *Letters from Eden: A Year at Home, in the Woods* by Julie Zickefoose (Houghton Mifflin, 2006)

August, 2007 - No meeting this month, we're on vacation

This selection is tentative! Before you commit to reading a book for a particular month, you may want to call Terry Banks at 451-6302 or e-mail tessiembanks@msn.com to find out if the book is still current.

TAS Events - August 2007

The Field Trips Committee has a new email address - please feel free to use it. It is fieldtrips@travisaudubon.org.

Saturday, August 4th
7 am to 11:00 am

Nature Day at the Travis Audubon Baker Sanctuary

Please join us at the Baker Sanctuary for our 2007 Nature Day. We will hike the sanctuary in the morning to see what birds are around. Then the rest of the day we will have guided walks with local experts to explore and ID the native plants, butterflies/dragonflies/damselflies and whatever else comes into our field of view. As "Citizen Scientists" we will begin the cataloging process of all flora and fauna that we encounter, including our most recently acquired ten acres which is bordered on the west side by Lime Creek.

Over the years, many TAS members and guests have visited our beautiful Baker Sanctuary in northwest Austin. Currently at 690 acres, our Sanctuary provides nesting and breeding habitat for Central Texas' very special Golden-cheeked Warbler, listed as endangered by the U.S. Government and the State of Texas. No registration is required. Be sure to bring plenty of water. For more information email us at fieldtrips@travisaudubon.org.

Saturday, August 11
7 am & 4 pm

Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

Contact Eric Carpenter at ecarpe@gmail.com for more information. Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory.

Saturday, August 18
7:30 am to Noon

Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

Led by Kirsti Harms. Austin's premier birding site. No registration required. Contact fieldtrips@travisaudubon.org for more information.

Saturday, August 25th
7:30 am to 11 am

Lake Buchanan

Led by Gary Wagberman. Lake Buchanan is host to scores of shorebirds each fall as the flocks head south for the winter. Join field trip leader Gary Wagberman to see what shorebirds as well as early fall migrants have stopped over here. Details to be determined based on scouting the area closer to the date. Please check the TAS website for details.

The Field Trip Committee is working hard to provide diverse and interesting field trips for Travis Audubon Society members. But our work doesn't stop there! Our field trips are also an outreach tool for the rest of our community, and in fact our reach extends beyond our local charter area. I recently received a call from the president of an Audubon chapter in the northeast inquiring about field trips while she's in the Austin area. You may not realize this, but it is somewhat unique among Audubon chapters to provide a field trip every weekend. We do that, and more! It's not uncommon to have more than one field trip to choose from on a weekend, as well as mid-week field trips at least once a month.

We have a couple of exciting field trips coming up in September that I can tease you with right now. On Saturday, September 8th mark the date for TAS's annual visit to the Jonestown Chimney Swift Roost in conjunction with one of the national "A Swift

Night Out" weekends (see www.chimneyswifts.org for details). An optional hike in the Lago Vista area (Balcones Canyonlands NWR, private property, TBD) may be scheduled for the late afternoon to be followed by an optional dinner at the True Grits restaurant on FM 1431 in Jonestown from 6:00 – 7:30 PM before we walk across the street to watch thousands of Chimney Swifts swirl into their roost in an old cistern at sunset (picture the Congress Street Bridge bat emergence in reverse). Also on September 8th we have our annual pelagic trip out of South Padre Island scheduled. Details for both will be published in the September/October TAS newsletter.

For the balance of the year, look for field trips that will provide first-time access to private property in Williamson County, a "birding by mountain bike" trip in the hill country, and more opportunities to visit our TAS-supported sanctuaries.

Laurie Foss

About TAS Field Trips All TAS field trips are open to members and nonmembers and to experienced and inexperienced birders. Wear appropriate clothing and walking shoes, and bring binoculars and water. Unless otherwise noted, field trips are free. Carpoolers should expect to pay a share of the gasoline expense. For complete, up-to-date information on field trips, including cancellations due to weather or other circumstances, please check the TAS website at www.travisaudubon.org. Because of the publication schedule of the newsletter, things can change. If you do not have Internet access, please contact the person(s) listed with the event description.

About Hornsby Bend Maps and other information about the Hornsby Bend facility may be found on the Hornsby Bend website at www.hornsbybend.org

Birdathon 2007 Supporters!!

Round of Applause for All!!
As of press time the following persons made financial contributions to support Birdathon 2007! Heartfelt thanks to:

Barbara Anderson
Wilma Anderson
Andy and Julia Balinsky
J. David Bamberger
Joel Banks
Terry Banks
Joanna Bannen
Stephanie Barko
Wayne Bartholomew
Sharon Bauer
Theresa Bayoud
Mr. and Mrs. Don E. Beere
Eba Bejarano
Anne Bellomy
John Bendall
Ann Bishop
Doran Bradberry
Eric Broockman
Dan Callaway
Claire Caudill
Mark Cavin
John and Linda Chenoweth
Dennis Clark
Rebecca Cole
Martha Correnti
Homer Cunningham
Jack Cunningham
Norine Cunningham

Sharon Decker
Dawn Dickson
Charles Dittmer
Anne and John Donovan
Ed Fair
Marilyn Folta
Laurie Foss
Dagmar Grieder
Nancy Hall
Ann Hargis
Shelia Hargis
Daniel Hyink
Andy Jackson
Al Johnson
Judith Johnson
Karen S. Johnson
John Kelly
Joy Kelly
Trey Kelly
George Kephart
Carol Knight
Shari Kolding
Marla Koosed
Dr. Jim Lansford
Kelly Logan
Gregg Mack
Richard and Michelle Manson
John Marcincavage
Jean Martin
Marsha May
Lisa Meacham
Suzanne McAnna
Julia McArdle-Moore
Greg McClendon

Kathy McCormack
Colleen McGinn
Gail McGlamery
Melissa McGrath and Julie O'Brien
Frances McMath
Ricki & Bill McMillian
Jim Meyer
Mary Milam
Nancy Moore
Jean Nance
Nader Nekooi
Pamala A. Nelson
David Nix
Joseph O'Leary
John Pacourek
Mary T. Parker
Royce Pendergast
Robert Perez
John Porter
Thomas Pugliese
Judy and Bill Quick
Maggie Ramsey
Katherine Read
Bill Reiner
Eric Reiner
William Reiner

David Rhodes
Saundra Roark
Roxie Rochat
Frank Rodriguez
Virginia Rose
Alan Roth
Elaine Rushing
Wayne Russell
Robert Sanchez
Mark Sass
Kevin Schmeisser
Chuck Sexton
Jules Shelby
Kevin Shelby & Libby Brace
Marley Shelby
Tess Sherman
Diane Sherrill
David Shoemaker
Lolita Slagle
Linda Slater-Nagy
Thor Thayer
Ralph Tijerino
Jane Tillman
Dr. Guoen Wang
David Weber
Oliver Werther
Robert White

Michael Whitten
Jane Wilson
Kim Wilson
Larry Wilson
Stu Wilson
Tim and Julie Wilson
Cathy Wofford
Kathleen Woodby
Michele Woodfin
Walter Wright

(We'll list Birdathon supporters who came in after press date in the next Signal Smoke.)

Thank you to Austin area contributors who also supported Birdathon 2007:
Braun & Associates
Santa Elena Coffee Company
Whole Foods Market
Wild Birds Unlimited (Bee Caves Road)



Ongoing TAS Meetings

Program Committee: meets on the 2nd Monday of each month, contact: Ann Gardner, anngardner@austin.rr.com

TAS Board of Directors: meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month (except for December), contact: Marsha May, 300-BIRD

Urban Habitat Development Group: meets on the 3rd Monday of each month, contact: Jane Tillman, 794-0058

Education Committee: meets on the 3rd Monday of each month, contact: Byron Stone, 970-5154

Latin America Committee Meeting: meets most 3rd Wednesdays, contact: Penny Potter, pfpotter@austin.rr.com

TAS Regular Monthly Meeting: meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month except for June, July & August

Bird Records Committee: meets on the 4th Thursday of the month, contact: Ethel Kutac, 346-7659

TAS Nature Book Club Meeting: the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at BookPeople, contact: tessiembanks@msn.com

Education Committee classes

Hummingbird Identification with Mark Klym

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 Violet-ears, central Texas hummingbirds can be a challenge to identify.

Mark Klym, Coordinator of the Texas Hummingbird Roundup and Texas Wildscapes programs for Texas Parks and Wildlife, will present another of his very highly-rated Hummingbird Identification classes. The class will introduce the 15 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. Each species will be examined in detail, looking at key diagnostic features, and compared to similar, often confusing species. No prior birding experience is necessary. Participants will receive a Hummingbird Roundup kit from TPWD as well as other handouts. Mark is also co-author of *Hummingbirds of Texas* (Texas A&M Press, 2005). Signed copies of this book will be available for purchase (\$25) at class meetings.

The two-session class will be held the evenings of July 17 and 24, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m., at Tarrytown United Methodist Church on Exposition Blvd. Tuition will be \$15 for TAS members and \$20 for non-members. To register or to learn more, call Trent Miller, 327-6454, or e-mail him at trent9719@aol.com.

Shorebird Identification with Tim Fennell

Sandpipers and plovers are a fascinating group of birds. They undertake some of the most spectacular long-distance migrations of any animals, and are already moving southward through our area. Can you tell which of those little brown birds on the mudflats at Hornsby Bend are which? If not, Tim Fennell's Shorebird Identification Class is a great way for intermediate birders to learn how to distinguish the Least, Semipalmated, and Western Sandpipers, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, and other similar shorebirds. Tim teaches science at the Liberal Arts and Science Academy of Austin at LBJ High School and has been teaching the Shorebird Identification Class for Travis Audubon since 1998.

Class lectures will take place from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on July 26, August 16 and September 6 at the Hornsby Bend Center for Environmental Research. There will be local field trips on July 28 and August 18, and an optional trip to the Texas coast on the weekend of September 8-9.

The tuition is \$60 for TAS members and \$70 for non-members. For those who go to the coast, there will be an additional fee to cover Tim's expenses. This should range from \$15 to \$30, depending upon how many sign up. Birders who want to take this class should register by sending e-mail to Jean Martin at gobirding@verizon.net or call 343-7053.

Hummingbird Gardening with Mark Klym

Learn how to make your own garden a haven for hummingbirds by registering for this workshop to be taught by Mark Klym,

Coordinator of the Texas Hummingbird Roundup and Texas Wildscapes programs for Texas Parks and Wildlife. Participants from the past two years gave this workshop high marks. This class will explore native plants that are hummingbird friendly - their characteristics, needs and culture (maybe even some sources!); garden designs and maintenance tips; as well as feeders and their proper use.

This two-session workshop will be held the evenings of July 12 and 19 (6:30 - 9:00 p.m.) at Tarrytown United Methodist Church. There will be an optional field trip on the morning of July 21 to a local garden which is noted for its attractive, nature-friendly landscaping. Tuition will be \$20 for TAS members and \$25 for non-members. Participants will receive a Hummingbird Roundup kit from TPWD as well as other handouts. To register or to learn more, call Trent Miller, 327-6454, or e-mail him at trent9719@aol.com.

Introduction to Raptors with Robert Reeves.

Robert has been a serious birder for about 33 years, and has been a TAS member for 13 years. Other TAS classes he has taught include Beginning Birding, Waterfowl Identification, and Backyard Birding. Two-hour morning classroom sessions will be held in the auditorium at Hornsby Bend on September 15 and 22, followed by visits to the Hornsby Bend hawkwatch site. Classroom activities will focus on basic identification techniques for the species of diurnal raptors (hawks, eagles, falcons, etc.) occurring in central Texas and along the Texas coast at all seasons. The class will feature a field trip September 28-30 to the annual Celebration of Flight at Hazel Bazemore County Park near Corpus Christi. Hazel Bazemore is one of the most important hawkwatch sites in North America, hosting incredible numbers of Broad-winged Hawks (up to 100,000 and possibly more) and many other raptor species during fall migration. The class will visit during the peak of the migration, and will have the additional pleasure of observing a Native American blessing ceremony and other activities. Registration is limited to twelve participants. The class fee is \$60 for TAS members, \$70 for non-members. The fee includes the instructor's field trip expenses. Class times and registration information will be provided in the near future.

Native Trees of Central Texas and Their Associated Plant Communities

Sept 27 (7 - 9 PM) & Sept 29 (9 - 11 AM), 2007

Lecture and field trip to be offered by the Native Plant Society of Texas - Williamson County Chapter. Details will be published in the Sept/Oct *Signal Smoke* and can be found at <http://www.npsot.org/WilliamsonCounty/default.htm>.

Conservation Groups Host Texas Prairie Conference

Two Texas conservation groups, the Native Plant Society of Texas and the Native Prairies Association of Texas, are hosting a joint annual conference October 18-21 to draw attention to the beauty and plight of Texas' tallgrass prairies and grasslands.

The symposium will be headquartered in Georgetown, TX and is open to the public. A complete list of confirmed speakers and other details, along with registration information, can be found on the symposium web site at <http://npsot.org/symposium2007/>.

Travis Audubon Society
Membership Secretary
P.O. Box 40787
Austin TX 78704

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 2301
Austin, Texas

Dated Material - DO NOT DELAY

Visit the TAS Web site:
www.travisaudubon.org



Join your local Audubon chapter, Travis Audubon Society, 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 Web site at www.audubon.org.)

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

Travis Audubon Society 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 Society:

Make your check payable to Travis Audubon Society and send it with this form to TAS Membership Secretary, P. O. Box 40787, Austin, TX 78704, or join on-line using any major credit card by going to www.travisaudubon.org and clicking on Membership.

Travis Audubon Society

YES! I want to enjoy the benefits of Travis Audubon Society chapter membership. Enroll me as a member of Travis Audubon Society. Enclosed is my check for:

- \$12 **Youth Membership** (up to age 18)
- \$25 **Individual Membership**
- \$35 **Family Membership**
- \$75 **Painted Bunting Membership** (bonus Travis Audubon T-shirt)
- \$100 **Vireo Membership** (bonus T-shirt and book)
- \$250 **Warbler Membership** (bonus T-shirt, book, and free workshop)
- \$1,000 **Lifetime Membership** (bonus T-shirt, book, free workshop, and listing in annual report)

T-shirt size (for premium memberships) _____

This is a gift membership from _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____