

SIGNAL SMOKE

The Newsletter of Travis Audubon Society

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TAS Regular Monthly Meeting

Thursday, Oct 19, 7:00 pm

Doors open at 6:30 pm for social time

Mexican Grasslands Project

Speaker: Alicia Craig

Bird Conservation Alliance

LCRA Board Room
in the Hancock Building
at 3700 Lake Austin Blvd. Austin TX



Our October meeting is
sponsored by

the TAS Latin America Committee

see page 6 for additional details

VOLUME 55, NO. 10

October 2006

Annual Golden-cheeked Warbler Survey at Baker Sanctaury



The Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Dendroica chrysoparia*) has the distinction of being the only avian species whose members are all genuine native Texans. These small songbirds migrate early each spring from the highlands of Central America to twenty-five counties in Central Texas to breed. By mid- to late-June, most have started the return trip to their wintering grounds. Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) breeding habitat is characterized by closed-canopy juniper-oak woodlands, which were historically common in western Travis County. Baker Sanctuary, along with other areas under the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve system, protects GCWA breeding habitat from destruction, thus helping to ensure the continued existence of this unique species.

For 2006, I conducted Baker Sanctuary's annual GCWA survey following protocols of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Management Plan. Ten visits were made at least 5 days apart to the defined 100-acre survey plot within the Sanctuary. The first visit was on March 16, shortly after the first GCWA males were seen in Travis County; the last visit was on May 29. Each survey visit began no earlier than thirty minutes after sunrise and lasted approximately 6 hours. The entire plot was surveyed on each visit. Surveys were not conducted when temperatures were below 55° F, nor in rainy or windy (greater than 15 mph) conditions.

I mapped the locations of individual GCWAs in the field and obtained GPS coordinates whenever possible. Most birds detected were singing males, whose songs were generally one of two types, A or B. The A song is a series of ascending "zee" notes with a longer penultimate note. This song has been called the prenuptial song and is used for mate attraction and courtship. The A songs were most common throughout March. By April 2, B songs were more common and remained so, although A songs continued to be sung throughout the season. The B song is variable but most commonly described as "layzee dayzee." It is apparently used for male-to-male interaction. Counter-singing (two or more males singing A or B songs at the same time near each other) was common, especially in the early visits, and helped me distinguish between individual males and identify their territory boundaries. Both males and females chip while foraging, when approaching young to feed them, and when alarmed, and young birds chip rapidly when begging for food. During May I detected many individuals and family groups by their chipping sounds.

The number of males detected on each survey ranged from a low of twelve to a high of sixteen within the plot, plus four more using habitat partially outside the plot. I first detected female GCWAs on March 21. They are generally silent and much more difficult to detect than singing males. In early April I was lucky enough to see one female carrying material to a nest under construction. This was the only nest I found during the survey. Fledglings were first detected on May 9. One of those had yellow lores and yellow under the wing, which indicates it was approximately nineteen days out of the nest. I saw new fledglings on each visit in May. On May 29, I found two separate family groups with very

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Travis Audubon Society

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

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The office number is 512-300-BIRD (2473). To leave a message for Board President Shelia Hargis, press 1. To leave a message for Executive Director Valerie Staats, press 2. 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

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Mission Statement

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

LETTER FROM THE TAS PRESIDENT

It's early September as I write this, and we just survived one of the hottest Augusts on record. I wonder if this is an omen of things to come. I'm encouraged that the global warming issue, as presented by mainstream media, has changed from a debate over whether the phenomenon is occurring to one of what can we do to lessen our impact on the earth. If you haven't seen the documentary "An Inconvenient Truth," I encourage you to do so. It is educational and well presented. Then take the next step and commit to lowering your contribution to global warming. California recently passed their Global Warming Solutions Act that sets a statewide cap on global warming pollution and creates incentives for businesses and entrepreneurs to invest in clean energy innovations. Will Texas follow? Not unless your elected officials hear from you.

Along those same lines, my yard, planted with Central Texas natives, has struggled but has survived the drought. I can't image trying to keep a non-native yard alive in this climate! If attracting more birds to your yard is not enough motivation to go native, consider landscaping with natives for the water conservation and drought-resistant aspects. You'll be glad you did.

continued on page 5



Shelia Hargis,
photo by Robert Baumgardner

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		select option #3
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Newsletter Deadline

The submissions deadline is the first day of the preceding month (for example, September 1st for the October 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.

GCWA survey, continued from page one

young (less than eight days out of the nest) fledglings in an area where a much older fledgling had been seen twelve days earlier. It is likely that at least one of the younger fledglings was the product of a second brood for that pair.

My compiled observations, including counter-singing and the presence of females and fledglings, indicate that at least twenty-two males established territories completely within the plot boundaries and 4 more used edges of the plot. For nineteen of the twenty-two in-plot territories (and all four of the edge territories), pairing success was indicated by presence of a female and/or a male tending one or more fledgling. At least eleven in-plot territories and to edge territories had at least one successful fledgling. Total count for fledglings within the plot was fourteen, plus three more in the edge territories.

I identified a total of forty-eight bird species in the course of this survey. The most common species were Northern Cardinal, Bewick's Wren, Black-crested Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee,

Carolina Wren, White-eyed Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, Turkey Vulture, and White-winged and Mourning Doves. Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers were seen in March, and migrating Nashville Warblers appeared in April. Other species of interest included Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Painted Bunting, Lesser Goldfinch, Red-eyed Vireo, Chimney Swifts, Western Scrub-jay, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Chuck-will's Widow. Common Grackles began roosting and foraging in the study plot in May. Brown-headed Cowbirds were seen in or near the plot on five surveys, but no parasitism was detected. A coral snake was the only snake seen. White-tailed deer, fox squirrels, and cottontail rabbits were the common mammals. On May 9th I almost stepped on a baby armadillo rooting along a creek bottom. This baby and two siblings eagerly scuffled toward me until, at about a foot distance, they realized I was not "Mama" – then they scuffled away as quickly as they could (which is not very quickly). Armadillos are always born as identical quadruplets, but the fourth sibling was not in sight.

Cindy Sperry

Arizona Field Trip Report

West Texas and Southeast Arizona July 18 - 29, 2006

Participants: Meta Hunt, Mark Lyons, Bert and Louise Marcom, Trent Miller, Dennis Palafox, Jane Tillman, Stan Van Sandt, Magill Weber.

Big Bend started with a bang when Trent and Meta arrived at Chisos Lodge and announced that they had seen a female Lucifer's Hummingbird just down the road. We all trailed them back to the spot and watched the little bird defend her nectar source from another hummer. It was a life bird for most of us and an auspicious beginning to a very productive trip. Later that evening we walked the Window View Trail and picked up several arid-scrub birds, including Varied Bunting, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, and the first of a number of ragged gray mystery birds (LGBs rather than LBJs).

Wednesday morning saw us well up the Pinnacles Trail by the time the sun rose, struggling to get the worst of the 2000-ft. climb behind us before the heat got too bad. By mid-morning we had arrived at Boot Springs on the far side of the mountain, and after watching a Blue-throated Hummer for a while we managed to call up a male Colima Warbler. After a picnic lunch most of us elected to head back to the lodge, but Mark and Jane wanted to see the view from the South Rim and so added another four miles to the nine-mile trek, as well as five more Colimas to our trip list. The trail back was too hot for much birding, though we had good looks at Two-tailed Swallowtails and Golden-banded Skippers on the same agaves that had attracted hummingbirds in the cool morning hours. The presence of millions of American Snouts made finding other butterflies a needle-in-the-haystack proposition. After a nap and a good meal, we couldn't resist a bit more birding on the lower Window Trail, where the most common birds were Varied Bunting, Verdin, Cactus Wren, and, of course, LGBs.

On Thursday we drove down to Dugout Wells, which produced many Bell's Vireos and two young Elf Owls hiding in the thick brush. Rio Grande Village had some different birds, including our only water birds of the trip, but was very much hotter than the mountains so we bailed out fairly quickly. Luckily an adult Gray Hawk chose to perch near the road where we could watch from air-conditioned comfort in the cars. After a great meal in Alpine, we visited the Chihuahuan Desert Research Center near Fort Davis and saw the first of many Rufous Hummingbirds migrating south, as well as many cacti and other desert plants. An early evening search for Montezuma Quail and Black-chinned Sparrows in the state park was not productive.

Early Friday morning we met Pete Szilagyi at the Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountain Preserve and he took us straight to the spot where the Buff-breasted Flycatchers had been nesting. We very quickly saw four or five of them, still moving as a family group. This was the easiest empid to identify on the whole trip: though we eventually counted Cordilleran and Gray among the birds seen, I wouldn't submit either of those to a review committee. The Cordilleran sounded more like a Pacific-slope, and the Gray was awfully similar to the abundant Western Wood-Pewees and Hutton's Vireos. There were also Gray Vireos and possibly Greater Pewees around to confuse the issue. Not every bird seen was hard to ID: the Grace's Warblers, Hepatic Tanagers and Common Black Hawk gave us great looks.

Saturday afternoon found us in Portal, Arizona, where we met up with Magill to look for owls. Spotted Owls, Whiskered Screech-Owls, and more Elf Owls revealed themselves to us before the evening was over. The Chiricahuas were productive over the next two days, with many species of hummingbirds, Elegant Trogons, Mexican Chickadees, Juniper and Bridled Titmice, and Crissal Thrasher among the highlights. A stop at Miller Canyon on the

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NATURALIST'S CALENDAR

by Bill Reiner

photo by Robert Baumgardner

If you go walking in the parks around Austin in October, you may spy a lovely wildflower that has five showy lavender-pink petals rising on a stalk above shamrock-like three-parted leaves. Drummond's Oxalis or Drummond's Wood-Sorrel (*Oxalis drummondii*), as it is called, grows only in Texas, where you can find it in woodlands or prairies, on limestone or sand.

Drummond is a name that is common in Texas botany, especially in the scientific nomenclature. Several central Texas plants that carry it are quite noticeable in October. Along streams and rivers, and in roadside ditches, you'll see the showy white berries of Roughleaf Dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*). Draped over fences or brush is the well-named Old-man's-beard (*Clematis drummondii*), whose seeds have long hairy tails. Drummond's Rain-Lilies (*Cooperia drummondii*) spangle yards with snowy-white six-petaled flowers on foot-tall stalks within days after rain in late summer and autumn. (The rain-lilies that bloom in spring are a different species.) Then there are the tall, weedy stalks on the dikes of the Hornsby Bend ponds – whose seedpods rattle in the wind, prompting the name Rattlebush (*Sesbania drummondii*).

Who was this Drummond person, and why are so many plants named for him?

Thomas Drummond was born in 1793 in Scotland. Little is known of his early training, though his older brother James was director of the botanical garden at Cork and became an associate of the Linnaean Society of London. Thomas must have had some scientific expertise, however, for the botanist Sir William Jackson Hooker arranged for him to accompany Sir John Franklin as assistant naturalist on the latter's second overland expedition to what is now northwestern Canada from 1825-27. (Franklin's Gull takes its name from the expedition leader.)

In the area that is now the Canadian Rocky Mountains, Drummond distinguished himself by collecting specimens of many plants new to European scientists. He returned to North America under the patronage of Sir William in 1830, intending to join an expedition of Kenneth MacKenzie to what is now Montana, but he missed his rendezvous in Saint Louis. Instead, he collected plants in the vicinity of Saint Louis, and then around New Orleans.

In the spring of 1833, he came to Texas, landing at the port of Velasco at the mouth of the Brazos River. The timing was not fortuitous. His arrival coincided with the Great Overflow of 1833, extreme flooding of the Brazos River caused by unusually heavy March rains. Drummond was forced to wait a week before a boat could navigate the river upstream to the village of Brazoria. The flood killed many of the native plants that Drummond had hoped to collect. It also decimated the

corn crop in the Brazos valley, which caused a significant food shortage later that year.

A cholera epidemic that was sweeping the continent struck Velasco and Brazoria while he was there, killing many of the inhabitants. In a letter to his patron, Drummond reported that nine people died of the disease in Velasco alone, "a large number for this small place, where there are only four houses..." Drummond himself suffered a bout of the disease, though he recovered – probably despite the dosage of opium he took for it.

Tensions were also high between Mexican authorities and the increasingly belligerent Anglo settlers of the upper Texas coast. Less than a year earlier, settlers from Anahuac had captured a cannon from Mexican troops in what became known as the Battle of Velasco, one of the first skirmishes in the fight for Texas independence.

Drummond traveled Texas from March of 1833 to December of 1834. He collected primarily from what is now Brazoria County and the vicinities of Galveston, San Felipe, and Gonzales, but he also visited Fort Tenoxtitlan in what is now Burleson County, where the Old San Antonio Road (now Texas Route 21) crosses the Brazos River. Despite flood, cholera, fever, an infection of his thumb that rendered his hand useless for two months, rumors of Indian attacks, the pilfering of his belongs, exorbitant travel costs, and the scarcity of provisions, he managed to collect, preserve, and ship to Europe over 750 species of plants, 150 bird specimens, and an assortment of reptiles and insects.

The hardships he experienced here – and the low opinion he held of Texans – did not lessen his interest in the area. He wrote to Hooker that he planned to settle in Texas, to continue his explorations into Mexico, and to "publish a tolerably complete catalogue of the plants of that country..." Unfortunately, he did not survive to carry out his plans. He died in Cuba, of unknown cause, in March of 1835.

Though Thomas Drummond was not the first naturalist to explore Texas, his specimens were the first significant collections of Texas plants to circulate widely among European scientists and museums. Jean Louis Berlandier preceded him, and reports of Berlandier's finds inspired him to visit Texas. In turn, Drummond laid the groundwork for the biologists who followed him, such as Ferdinand Jakob Lindheimer and Charles Wright. If you are familiar with the botanical names of Texas plants, you will certainly have seen these names. You can read more about all of these pioneers in Samuel Wood Geiser's book, *Naturalists of the Frontier*.

Other references for this article included *Ray Miller's Eyes of Texas Travel Guide*, and the website www.stferguskirkglamis.co.uk/drummond.html



THE DAN CALLAWAY REPORT

Dan Callaway,
photo by Robert Baumgardner

Birding to Alcoa Lake - 8/16/06

Participants: Homer Cunningham, Catfish Kelly and Dan Callaway

Target bird: Wood Stork

From the Austin area, we headed East on US 79, then right on FM 1786 to Alcoa Lake. In the slough to the right of the road, we saw two Green Herons perched atop two tall dead tree stumps. After checking in with security, we parked just beyond the first curve after leaving the coal-fired generators. Here we saw three Wood Storks but they were about 400 yards away perched in a dead tree along with herons, egrets, and cormorants. We did see two flotillas of American White Pelicans, and numerous Great Blue Herons, Great and Snowy Egrets. Swarming above the lake were dozens of Black Terns and one Forster's Tern. At the East end of the lake at the training facility fishing pier were about fifty cormorants perched along the railing and facing into the South wind. After noticing some had the white "V" mark on the face, we assumed the others to be Double-crested and tried to see the size difference. We finally decided all birds were Neotropic with most being young birds. Homer and Catfish got good, close pictures of the adults which revealed white "ear"-feathering we'd never

seen before. Out beyond the pier was one lone Ring-billed Gull perched on a dead snag. Woodland birds in this area were Red-bellied Woodpecker, White-eyed Vireo, Carolina Chickadee, and Northern Cardinal. Below the dam we flushed out a male Orchard Oriole from the brush.

After leaving Alcoa, we went through the country to Thorndale on CRs 448, 449, and 446 passing by Salty Cemetery. Along here we added Inca Dove, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Brown-headed Cowbird and Lark Sparrow. After a late lunch at Louie Mueller BBQ in Taylor, we perused the harvested fields of milo and corn South and Southwest of Frame Switch along FM 3349 and CRs 132 and 134. Along here we were treated with great looks of numerous Upland Sandpipers as they had stopped to feed, migrating their way South. On our return to Austin, we stopped by Pflugerville Lake to add a Pied-billed Grebe, three American Coots and a small flock of female Red-winged Blackbirds. The temperature reached 104 degrees, Austin's eighth day in a row and twenty-second day this year over 100 F.

Total species: forty-three

Best bird: Neotropic Cormorant

President's column, continued from page 2

We have over 600 Chapter members now, and we're building our Life Member roster. Bequests continue to arrive, and the Bigger Baker campaign has been wonderfully successful. Whether you support us with a huge bequest or donation, or join us as a Chapter member, your financial support is very much appreciated and allows us to continue to pursue our vision of *inspiring conservation through birding*. Thank you.

Fall migration is underway, and the calendar is busy this month. On October 7, I will co-lead a field trip to the Burselson Prairie, a restored, ~100-acre Blackland Prairie near Temple. This is a joint field trip with our friends at the Native Prairie Association of Texas. I'd love for you to join me as we visit a habitat type that is in dire need of conserving, learn about the challenges and rewards of restoring a prairie, and, hopefully, see some of "our" prairie birds that have returned to spend the winter with us. Check out the field trip calendar for details. The Big Sit is Sunday, October 8. We'll once again have a team "sitting" at Hornsby Bend for the day. Not only is this event a great way to watch birds and contribute to citizen science, it is a cool way to make new birding friends. Join us for an hour or for the day! See page 9 for more details. And thank you to Laurie Foss for coordinating the TAS team this year. Our 6th Youth Birding

Camp 2006 happens on October 14. We can always use more help exposing the campers to our wonderful birds. Consider volunteering to help (see page 7). Thanks to Linda Anderson and Howie Richey for running the day for us.

Join us for our October membership meeting. Alicia Craig with the American Bird Conservancy will be our presenter. I look forward to seeing you there.

Shelia Hargis



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Monthly Meeting Information

Our October meeting is sponsored by the TAS Latin America Committee
Thursday, October 19, 2006, 7:00 pm (doors open at 6:30 pm for social time)

TAS Regular Monthly Meeting **Program: Mexican Grasslands Project**

Presenter: Alicia Craig, Director, Bird Conservation Alliance, American Bird Conservancy



Alicia Craig works for American Bird Conservancy as the director of Bird Conservation Alliance. Alicia does songbird rehabilitation and bands birds. She has worked as a naturalist in Florida where she created educational program and materials. Alicia was the Education Manager and Cause- related Marketing Manager focusing for a national bird feeding retail franchise. Alicia serves on the Association of Field Ornithologists council and on the boards of Operation Migration, the Ornithological Council and serves on the American Ornithologists Union Committee on Conservation.

Alicia served as a guest host on the PBS BirdWatch television program series for Connecticut PBS television. She hosted the Bird Feature segment on Discover the Wild for Wyoming PBS and created and regularly appeared as the host on 'For the Birds' for the Indianapolis local CBS affiliate. Alicia lectures and presents workshops to all age groups on bird identification, conservation issues, habitat creation, Eastern Partnership Whooping Crane Reintroduction and organizational workshops such as gaining publicity, volunteer acquisition and retention, and organizing a conservation campaign.

Program begins at 7:00 pm. **Location:** LCRA Board Room, 3700 Lake Austin Blvd. The board room is in the Hancock Building, the middle building in the courtyard. We'll be in the room on the left upon entering. Parking available in garage. **Bus Routes** available at www.capmetro.austin.tx.us. **Bicycle routes** at www.ci.austin.x.us/bicycle/bikemap.htm; 974-7240. Refreshments provided.

A few Web pages on the meeting topic:

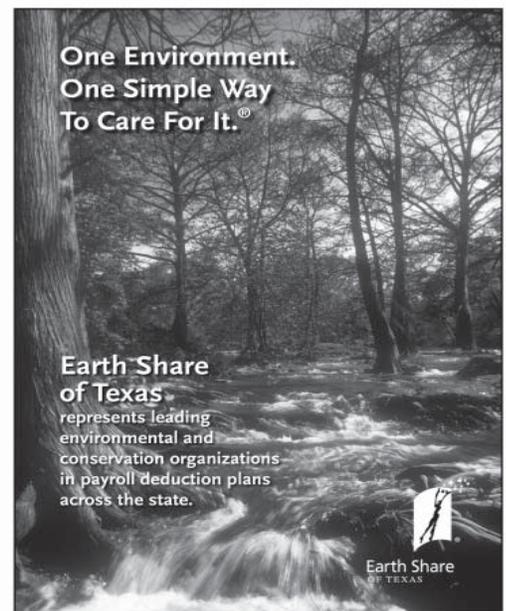
www.abcbirds.org/counterparts/Project_saltillo.asp
American Bird Conservancy information on the project

www.zeroextinction.org/saltillo.htm
Image of the site ABC and other groups seek to protect

www.greglasley.net/wortspa.html
Images of the Worthen's Sparrow by Greg Lasley

And check out all the latest details
about the upcoming 2007 TAS
trip to Panama on page 11.

It's a trip of a lifetime!



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

Youth Birding Camp News

Travis Audubon's 6th Annual Youth Birding Camp Saturday, October 14, 2006

Travis Audubon's 6th Annual Youth Birding Camp is getting in gear and we hope that you will register your child or a child you know to participate in this fun day. Giving the gift of birding and nature appreciation to a child is about the best thing you can do. The Camp is for kids **aged 8-12 years old** – whether first-time birders or already having some experience – and takes place at **Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory** in southeast Austin (see www.hornsbybend.org for directions).



photo credit: Andy Balinsky

Youth Birding Camp is an easy day for some 20 kids to come together with Travis Audubon expert-leaders to be introduced to, and practice in the field, birding and nature observation skills. The adult-child ratio is typically 1 adult for 3 kids, so each participant gets a lot of hands-on attention. We show the youth how to use binoculars and a field guide and take them outdoors to practice their new skills. This year's Camp also includes hands-on presentations by local experts on **frogs** and **raptors**, and a

wonderful session on learning **how to draw birds** for the kids' field journals.

Leaders for the day are Brentwood Elementary art teacher **Linda Anderson**, and husband **Howie Richey**, proprietor of Texpert Tours. Rumor also has it that **Mr. Habitat** (aka Bill Oliver) will be paying the campers a visit with his guitar! Tuition includes all this plus snacks, lunch, a field guide, a complimentary one-year youth

membership in Travis Audubon, and a follow-up bird walk next Spring to hone those birding skills! They both have a lot of experience with kids, nature, and leading groups outdoors.

To register, please go to www.travisaudubon.org, click on "For Kids," and get the form there (or register and pay online). You may also e-mail youth@travisaudubon.org or call 512-300-BIRD (2473) to get the registration form. Tuition is \$40 for one child or \$75 for two siblings at the same address (they would share the complimentary Travis Audubon membership). If you know a parent or child who would enjoy this, please pass the word on.

Comments from parents of our 2005 youth campers:

"What a great experience...The next day Lucy was perusing her new field guide - going over the book page by page and announcing each bird's status in Texas."

"Chris really likes his field guide and journal. When we got home he just 'had' to show Dad everything he got and the drawings he made...Thanks for everything. We would like to do this again."

"I just wanted to let you know that we thoroughly enjoyed the camp. My son was so excited about it that he couldn't stop talking about it Friday night."

Audubon Adventures Classroom Kits Need Donations

Three new themes for fall! Audubon Adventures has released another all new classroom kit for grades 3 - 6. The featured topics are:

- *Bees
- *Birds
- *Bats

Audubon Adventures includes action-oriented content about healthy habitats, essays, written puzzles, word challenges, games, and recommended web sites.

Please consider sponsoring a classroom by donating to the TAS Audubon Adventures program. Mail your donations to Travis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 40787, Austin TX 78704. The cost is approximately \$45 per kit which serves 32 students. Please note on the check that it is for Audubon Adventures.

Please contact the TAS office (info@travisaudubon.org) if you know of an area teacher who would like to receive a Classroom Kit. Many thanks.



Many of us got hooked on the beauty of birds thanks to encounters we had with our feathered friends during their Spring Migration. Perhaps it was our first Painted Bunting in the backyard or neighborhood park, or the day we went downtown to the Capitol grounds and were able to get nice looks of an assorted variety of brilliantly colored warblers, grosbeaks and tanagers. If you've been watching birds for a while, you may now get visibly excited in late April and early May as you watch for thunderstorms and winds out of the north, in anticipation of another great day of birding. What takes longer to notice and appreciate is the wonder that Fall Migration holds.

"Fall" migration is the journey that many species of birds take from their breeding grounds back to the areas where the birds will spend their winter. In North America, this trip is generally a southerly trek with many species that nested in the high Arctic or the northern US moving south to areas of the southern US, Mexico or points as far as South America.

Though "fall" is a time period that people often associate with cooler temperatures and months named September or October, in reality southerly bird migration here in central Texas can first be noted in our area as early as late June when the temperatures are only moderately hot, and getting still hotter! Indeed, the first southbound shorebirds can be found before July 1st. Passerine migrants, like orioles and warblers, are usually seen in moderate numbers by the end of July. By mid-August, there is a steady trickle of migrants coming through our area that will continue for a few more months. Fall migration is a long and steady process that lasts almost half a year, with different species starting and finishing their journey even later. In fact, there is still a noticeable movement of certain birds into early December.

Several species that nest in the Austin area also undergo a Fall migration and can be noticed by their diminished numbers or absence as they leave the area. Golden-cheeked Warblers, a species that brings many bird watchers to Austin, is one of the first to leave, with many individuals having headed for Mexico by mid-June, and the remainder are usually gone by the end of July. Other locally nesting species, like Purple Martins and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, will gather in large groups or flocks before heading south together.

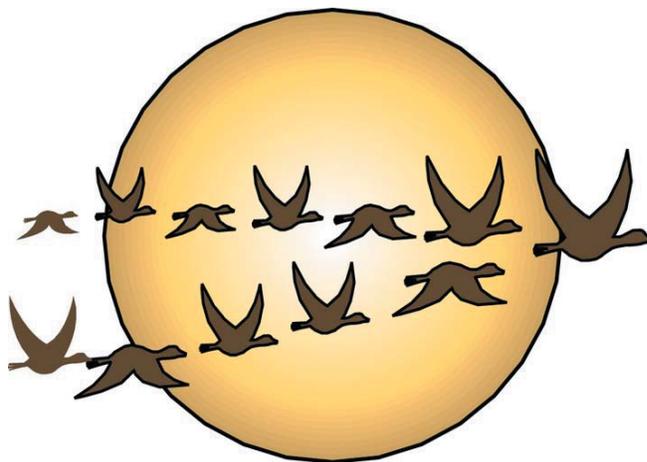
Fall migration occurs much more gradually than spring migration does, and the quantity and variety of birds on a given day will average less than it does in the spring. With the addition of juvenile birds that were hatched during the nesting season, there are typically more birds moving south in the fall than trekked north in the spring, but the bird movements are more gradual and steady than the concentrations that occur in the spring. Any day in the fall can bring migrants, though days that immediately precede cool fronts ("cool" may be quite a relative term during the heat of late August) seem to push birds ahead of it and can be good days to be on the lookout.

Since there is less of a concentration of birds, it is harder to predict when and where to go look in central Texas for migrants in the fall. Much more so than in the spring, birds are "where you find them" in the fall. A visit to your local park or pond for a couple hours may be just as productive and interesting as visits to hotspots like the Granger Lake area or Hornsby Bend.

So what is the allure of Fall Migration? It's a great time to hone your identification skills and experience. For several species, juveniles that were just hatched during the breeding season wear a distinctive plumage through the summer and into their first winter. By time spring rolls around again, these first-year birds will have acquired more of an adult-like plumage, so fall is a great time to study up on these birds. Shorebirds in particular often have quite bright and crisp juvenile plumages that are rather unlike adult birds. In addition, adults of several species have had their brilliant spring plumages worn down during the breeding season. During the fall many of these birds bear only a dull resemblance to the plumages they you might have seen them in during the spring. Species of warblers in particular have lost their bright spring plumages to take on a different, duller appearance that has lead them to being described as "confusing fall warblers."

But what makes Fall the most exciting time of year to be out birding for me is the possibility of something rare that may be just down the trail or around the corner. For a variety of reasons, vagrant species seem to have a propensity for showing up during the fall than they do during any other time of year. Who can forget the Fork-tailed Flycatcher that showed up in our area last fall and stayed for a month! There was also the only Spotted Redshank ever recorded in Texas which was found in late September (of 2000) at Hornsby Bend. It seems that birds that are migrating away from their breeding grounds seem to wander more than they do when they are heading to their nesting grounds. If you are able to get out often enough, you might be lucky to find something as exciting yourself!

Eric Carpenter



TAS News and Notes

What a summer it was: hot, long, and busy! We had the groundbreaking in September for our wonderful **Jackie Arnold Education Center** at Baker Sanctuary – stay tuned for news of the grand opening. We've been raising money to purchase land that will increase Baker Sanctuary, and Travis Audubon is grateful to the members and friends who made contributions to the A Bigger Baker fund. And it is not too late to make a gift to our **Malcolm C. Damuth Foundation \$10,000 Challenge Grant** – we are still raising funds to meet our goal. Please use the coupon on p. 10 to make a tax-deductible gift – and thank you again.

Travis Audubon also recently moved to a bigger office in the AGE Building, and we're actively recruiting for a part-time administrative person. You can find the **recruitment announcement** on our home page. A chapter as busy and productive as Travis Audubon needs a solid infrastructure, and that is what we are building. We still rely, however, nearly entirely on volunteers for many of our services: volunteers lead our field trips, work with the Bird Records database, answer bird questions from the public, serve on our Board of Directors, organize our book club, give talks, support our Youth Birding Camp, lead our citizen science projects, and more. I'd like to recognize again three volunteers who help out the office on everything from clerical work to physical labor to data entry: **Ken Blake, Ethel Kutac, and Stan Van Sandt**. Kudos and thanks – you make a concrete difference to Travis Audubon and the birds we protect.

We're working hard to increase our chapter membership and ask you to become a **chapter member** if you are not yet. Check the mailing label on your *Signal Smoke*. If you joined national Audubon but not the local chapter (you sent a check to Audubon in another state), your label will say, "National Member Only." If you paid Travis Audubon here in Austin, your label will indicate your chapter membership status, such as "Family Chapter Member." When you join Travis Audubon locally, 100% of your dues remain here with the chapter for programs in our area. You also receive a discount on our course tuition and subscription to our e-mail list, can vote in our elections, and we mail you a letter when it's time to renew each year. We encourage everyone to support national Audubon, but we hope you will also **support your local chapter** directly.

Can you believe we are thinking ahead to the holidays? Save the date for another fun Travis Audubon holiday party: **Thursday, December 14th, 7 p.m.**, at the **Zilker Clubhouse** in Zilker Park. We will once again offer refreshments, a tax-free sales day on wonderful items such as the Audubon wall calendar, a fabulous silent action, and a slide show of members' bird images from their road trips outside Central Texas over the past year.

Valerie Staats

Chapter Member Anniversaries

Congratulations and *thank you* to those who had the following anniversaries (consecutive years of chapter membership) in the past 6 months:

5 Years

Elizabeth Maxim
Jane Mick
Stu Wilson

15 Years

Julie Ewald & Family
Sam & Maydelle Fason
John Hendrick

10 Years

Fred & Judy Helms
Marcia Sims
Terri Wegner
Anthony & Sharon Venza

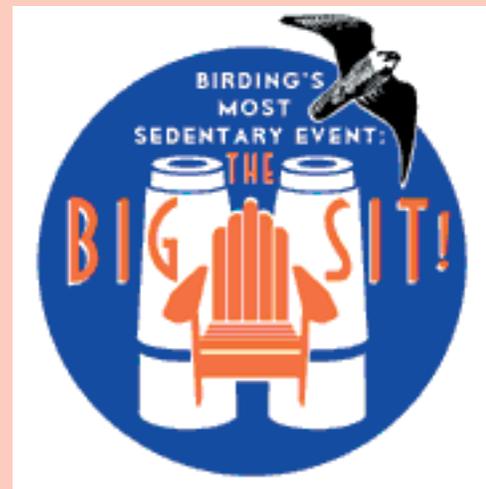
20 Years

Marian Maxwell
Lela Jane Tinstman

Hawkwatch Reminder

Don't forget – the Hawkwatch is running out at Hornsby Bend through October 21st (on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday every week, from 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., although certain days may be switched due to weather or other conflicts). Visitors are encouraged to come and participate in helping to locate the raptors migrating through the area. Stop out to visit hawkwatch surveyor Gary Newgord. By the way, Gary reports that typically over fifty percent of all the migrating hawks are counted between October 6th-12th.

Join us on Sunday, October 8th – sunup until sundown – at Hornsby Bend for the 2006 Big Sit, billed as the "most sedentary event in birding." The basic rules? Count as many species as can be identified while staying within a 17-foot circle. We like to think of it as a tailgate party for birders, so if you come be sure to bring a chair and a contribution to the feast.



Please e-mail this year's TAS Big Sit coordinator, Laurie Foss, at [lauriefoss\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:lauriefoss(at)gmail.com) if you can sign up for a shift. Any time you can be there would be great, or just show up on the day of the event and join the party! If you'd like more information about the Big Sit nationally, go to www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx to see the official rules, other "circles" that have registered, data from past years, and more.

PS: Last year the Travis Audubon team came in second place in Texas (out of 6 teams reporting in), with 74 species. The winning team, Port O'Connor, had 95 species!

Baker Sanctuary News

When the current budget was planned, I included money to have more trash hauled off the Sanctuary. Before I scheduled the cleanup, I wanted to be sure the contractor would have enough trash to make a full load, so I used the month of August to complete dismantling the old sheds around the Baker Cabin area and stacking them on the trash pile. In addition, I hauled some old abandoned deer blinds out of the woods and put them on the trash pile as well. Finally, I contacted our neighbor to remove an abandoned power pole at the Baker Cabin. The evening of August 16th, Rodney Eckhardt brought his utility truck up, pulled the pole and the ground rod, then backfilled the hole and laid the pole down for the beginning of our parking lot border.

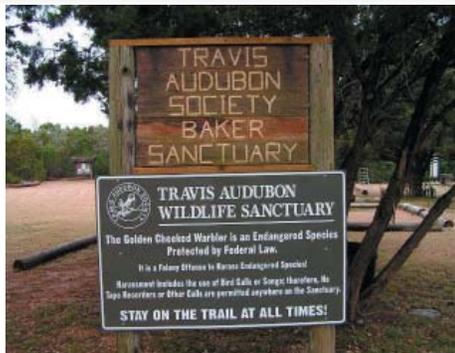


Photo courtesy of John Wilcox

The Sanctuary received .4 inches of rain early in August and an additional 1.3 inches of rain the morning of August 29th for a monthly total of 1.7 inches of moisture. At this time, the Austin area has also recorded at least thirty days of 100 degree temperatures or more. As of the last week of August, 158 Texas counties have declared burn bans as a result of extreme fire risk. This includes most of the middle third of the state and the Texas Forest Service continues to list Travis County at a moderate fire threat. The Keech-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) through the middle third of the state ranges from 600-700 to 700-800, which includes Travis County and places us under maximum drought conditions.

After the auto wreck of June 22nd on Lime Creek Road, I conducted a cursory Internet search and I found six web sites posted by user groups that mention and recommend the Lime Creek Road ride. Sports car enthusiasts operate some of the sites, while other sites are set up for motorcyclists and bicyclists. One thing we have personally observed in the past is that on weekend mornings, groups of sports cars frequently make high-speed runs on Lime Creek Road. The lead vehicle communicates with the remainder of the pack by either cell phone or two-way radio to let the followers know if the road is clear. Sometimes the sports cars run late at night or early in the morning. Travis County had previously posted 40 mile-per-hour speed limits on this end of Lime Creek Road and, as a result of another tragic accident on Lime Creek Road on August 6th, have added two “S” curve signs with 35 mile-per-hour speed limit signs at two curves just west of our trailer. This has helped slow traffic down some, however Lime Creek Road remains an attractive drive through the hills of western Travis County that requires drivers operate their vehicles, either two or four wheeled, with extreme care.

Sanctuary Closed Dates

In order to reduce the browse pressure on our Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat, the Baker Sanctuary will close on October 22, 2006 in preparation for our annual White-tailed Deer hunt. Weather conditions permitting, the sanctuary will reopen on February 3, 2007. Thank you all for your patience and continued support!

John Wilcox, TAS-Baker Sanctuary Steward

Yes! I want to help Travis Audubon meet the A Bigger Baker challenge grant!

I understand that my gift will count toward the \$10,000 grant match Travis Audubon must raise and that it will be used solely to purchase the new parcel adjacent to Baker Sanctuary.

\$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$

Name

Address

City State Zip

Please make checks payable to “Travis Audubon Society” and write “A Bigger Baker” in the memo. line. Your contribution is fully tax-deductible.

Mail to Travis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 40787, Austin, TX 78704



Join fellow TAS members on a tropical trip of a lifetime!

Panama's Canopy Tower & Canopy Lodge June 2 – 9, 2007

Panama is a great destination for first time travelers to the Tropics, and seasoned travelers will find it to be a unique experience. In this one week trip you will stay at two of the top birding lodges in Central America, the Canopy Tower in the Gamboa area and the Canopy Lodge in El Valle, a quaint village in the center of an extinct volcano.

At the Canopy Tower, overlooking Soberanía National Park as well as the Panama Canal, one has eye-level-with-the-canopy views of Blue Cotinga, Green Shrike-Vireo, Keel-billed Toucan and more, as well as monkeys and sloth. And that's before we even step foot off the property! The proximity to Pipeline Road is a plus, and you will spend a full day birding what the Spring 2006 *Living Bird*, the magazine of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, calls "the hottest birding spot in Central America."

In El Valle, about 2 hours from Panama City, a different habitat will give you a chance to see some birds found only in these foothills of the dry Pacific Forest, such as Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Yellow-olive Flycatcher, Lance-tailed Manakin, Rufous-and-white Wren, and Rosy Thrush-Tanager. Around the very comfortable lodge, the feeders tend to bring in Crimson-backed, Blue-gray, Dusky-faced and Plain-colored tanagers, Social Flycatcher, Ruddy-ground Dove, Barred Antshrike, Yellow-faced Grassquit, Rufous-tailed and Violet-headed hummingbirds.

This trip will show you that Panama is more than just a canal. Don't worry, though, you'll spend some time birding around the locks of the Canal and have an opportunity to see ships navigating the 8th Wonder of the World. Additionally, you will get a chance to ride the very first trans-continental railroad, one of the great train rides of the world. The train follows a picturesque path across the Isthmus of Panama, flanking the Panama Canal, passing through lush rainforests, cruising alongside the Canal's locks, through the historic Gaillard Cut and gliding over causeways in Gatun Lake.

Also, in furthering the mission of Travis Audubon's Latin America Committee, we have made special arrangements for you to meet members of Panama Audubon at dinner, and to learn about their projects. Panama Audubon has been a force in habitat protection and getting laws passed that help the environment.

Panama is a year-round destination, and while locals call June the 'Green Season' because of fairly regular afternoon showers, the landscape is lush green and the birding is always fantastic. In a second article in the Spring 2006 issue of *Living Bird*, Mel White writes with great enthusiasm about his trip to the Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge during the Green Season, and he was more than happy with his bird list.

The Canopy Tower and Lodge employ some of the best bird guides in Panama; among them is Carlos Bethancourt. Although young, Carlos knows the forest like his own back yard, which it is, as he grew up in a small village around the old Canal Zone. He tells of visits to his grandmother's house and watching birds whose names he didn't even know. Now he knows their names in Spanish, English, and Latin, as well as their behavior, mating habits, and calls. After high school in Panama, Carlos earned a scholarship through USAID to study at Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham, Oregon, where he began his formal studies in ornithology. Carlos is quick, knowledgeable and a caring guide; you are in good hands.

Finally, a portion of each participant's fee will benefit the work of the Travis Audubon Society, and you will receive a tax-receipt from Travis Audubon documenting this. Contact us now for full details, rates, and to reserve your spot. Places are limited!

Panama Boutique™

PO Box 2388
Austin, TX 78768-2388
Tel: 512-217-4814
512-217-4836
panamaboutique@yahoo.com
www.panamaboutique.com



Many people think Pipeline Road is the highlight of a birding trip to the tropics. According to the Spring 2006 *Living Bird*, "Panama's famed Pipeline Road is the hottest birding spot in Central America."

Species often seen on Pipeline Road

- Black-breasted Puffbird
- Broad-billed Motmot
- Spotted Antbird
- Bicolored Antbird
- Northern Barred Woodcreeper
- Plain-brown Woodcreeper
- Purple-throated Fruitcrow
- Black-faced Anthrush
- Streak-chested Antpitta
- Blue Cotinga
- Masked Tityras

TAS Events - Oct 2006

Saturday, October 7 Field Trip to Burleson Prairie

9 a.m. to noon In conjunction with the Native Prairies Association of Texas, a visit to Burleson Prairie (near Temple in Bell County), with Bob and Mickey Burleson. Their tallgrass prairie is a terrific ~100- acre Blackland Prairie restoration, created using local seeds from area hay meadow prairie remnants, many of which no longer exist. Contact Shelia Hargis, shargis@austin.rr.com, to register.

Sunday, October 8 The Big Sit! is back.

All day, any circle of your choosing

There's no birding event like it. Compete with teams throughout the country to see how many species you can count in a 17-ft diameter circle of your choosing – while sitting and relaxing! – within a 24-hour period. Contact Laurie Foss at lauriefoss@gmail.com for local information and visit www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx to register your “circle” and read the “rules of play.”

Saturday, October 14 Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

7:00 am & 4 pm

Contact Kevin Anderson (972-1960) for more information. Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory.

Saturday, October 21 Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

7:30 am to noon

Contact Richard Kaskan (kaskan@ieee.org, 748-8660) for more information.

Wednesday, October 25 Brown Bag and Birds at Central Park Pond

12 noon to 1 pm

Excellent for first-timers and beginners. Lunchtime birding at Central Park, led by Travis Audubon's Executive Director. Bring your lunch and binox and we'll see what turns up at the Park's pond and grounds. If you live or work in the 'hood, walk over to meet us at the NW corner of 38th and Guadalupe. If driving, you could park at Central Market and walk to that corner. Dress for the weather, including hat and sunscreen. We'll walk the flat trail at a leisurely pace.

Saturday, October 28 Field Trip to McKinney Roughs

7:30 am to noon

Explore the western edge of the Lost Pines and some excellent riparian habitat along the Colorado River. Meet at the CER at Hornsby Bend at 7:30 am to carpool – there is a fee to enter the LCRA preserve. Contact Charles Stephens at 512-297-9127 or charles_stephens@yahoo.com.

Sunday, October 29 Fall Bird Survey at “Acacia”

7:00 am through lunch and beyond

Join Anne Donovan and Nancy Moore as they survey fall migrants and year-round residents on Nancy's property, located near the Pedernales River. Participants will meet at the Albertson's in Oak Hill at 7:00 am and carpool from there. Please bring a sandwich and water. Nancy will provide drinks, fruit, and cookies. The survey will continue after lunch for those who want to stay. Please contact Anne Donovan at 512-472-3030 or e-mail ajdonovan@austin.rr.com to reserve your place or for more information.

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.travis-audubon.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

TAS Events - Nov 2006

- Saturday, November 4
8 am to Noon
- Cherry Springs Ranch Bird Count**
This 1000 acre Hill Country property contains many of the west-of-the-escarpment specialties like Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Canyon Towhee and Bushtit, not to mention dinosaur tracks! Come help us survey this nice piece of wildlife habitat. Contact Stan VanSandt for directions or more info at empidider@yahoo.com, or 707-7438.
- Saturday, November 11
7:00 am & 4 pm
- Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend**
Contact Kevin Anderson (972-1960) for more information. Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory.
- Saturday, November 18
7:30 am to noon
- Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend**
Contact Richard Kaskan (kaskan@ieee.org, 748-8660) for more information.
- Thanksgiving Weekend
November 23 - 26
- Bird the local hot-spot near Grandma's house!**
Those are your instructions from TAS – now you have an excuse to skip out on the clean-up. Happy holiday!

And coming up in December....

- Saturday, December 2
8 am to Noon
- Bird Walk At Tejas Campground**
A rarely visited, publicly accessible trail along the San Gabriel River, west of Lake Georgetown. Many winter visitors including Fox Sparrow and American Woodcock are often found here. Contact Stan VanSandt for directions or more info at empidider@yahoo.com, or 707-7438. *Co-leaders needed.*
- Saturday, December 9
7:00 am & 4 pm
- Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend**
Contact Kevin Anderson (972-1960) for more information. Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory.

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. Below is a list of books we will read for the next two months:

Thursday, October 26 - *Prodigal Summer* by Barbara Kingsolver

*Thursday, November 30 - *Life History of a Texas Birdwatcher: Connie Hagar of Rockport, Texas* by Karen Harden McCracken.
Please note that the date for the November Book Group is changed because of Thanksgiving - the meeting will be on November 30 instead of Nov 23.

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.

Education Committee News - Classes

Please note that in some of the e-mail addresses listed for class registration, the “@” symbol has been replaced with the phrase “(at)”. This is an attempt to protect the personal e-mail accounts of registrars from spam. To send e-mail to one of these addresses, please substitute @ where (at) appears. We apologize if this is an inconvenience.

Bill Reiner for the Education Committee

Nestbox Workshop

Paul and Georgan Kyle will lead their third annual workshop on building nestboxes (birdhouses) on Sunday, October 15, from 1-4 pm. Each class member will be given a pre-cut kit to construct his/her own nestbox during the class. Participants will learn about the nesting needs of several cavity nesting birds such as Carolina Wrens, Eastern Bluebirds, Black-crested Titmice, etc. and the proper placement and care of the boxes. Plans will also be available for Screech-owl boxes.

After the boxes are completed, Paul and Georgan will lead the class through the trails of Chaetura Canyon Bird Sanctuary, looking for nests and checking nestboxes for occupation earlier this year. One of their Chimney Swift towers will also be investigated. The class will also install a new nest box along the hike.

Registration is limited to 12 builders. Children age 8 and above will be welcome if accompanied by a parent. The cost of this workshop is \$25 for TAS chapter members and \$35 for non-members. This includes the cost of one nestbox and plans. Additional kits may be purchased for \$15. For more information or to sign up, call Anne Donovan at 472-3030 or send e-mail to ajdonovan@texasrr.com

Introduction to Grasses

Fall is the time of year when most of our native prairie grasses bloom, making them easier to identify. Learn to recognize many of the common grasses of central Texas during a two-day class held at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., on October 21 and 28.

Bill Reiner will teach the class. He was a biological technician at Balcones Canyonlands NWR for five years, where he became familiar with most of the more than 80 grass species that have been identified there. He has led grass-identification walks at the refuge, and last year taught this class for the first time.

A short indoor introduction to the parts of the grass plant will be held at the Flying X Ranch of the Balcones Canyonlands NWR, west of Liberty Hill, on October 21. The remainder of the class time that day, and on October 28, will be devoted to visiting various refuge tracts to see the grasses in their natural setting. The hike to one area will cover roughly a mile over uneven terrain, but no significant uphill climbing.

The fee is \$30 for TAS chapter members and \$40 for non-members. Participants may find that a hand lens of 5X to 15X magnification will be helpful. To register, contact Barbara Anderson: phone (preferred), 346-6584; e-mail, bsfanderson@earthlink.net. Upon registration, you will be provided with additional information about the class and directions to the meeting place.

Beginning Birding Classes

Once again TAS will conduct both a daytime class and an evening class for beginning birders. Participants may register for either class; each will include four lecture/slide sessions and four field trips. Because field trips provide the opportunity to put into practice the skills taught in the classroom, we strongly encourage registrants to make a commitment to attend the field trips as well as the lectures.

Jean Martin will teach the classes, which are designed to provide new birders with the techniques and skills to help them identify unfamiliar birds. Jean, an avid birder for a number of years, has taught this course twice a year for the past 7 years. Participants will receive a beginning birding booklet, plus many other handouts. Among the topics to be discussed are choosing binoculars and field guides, identification tips, and bird migration.

The lecture/slide presentations will be held at First Presbyterian Church, 8001 Mesa Drive, in northwest Austin. Field trips will go to various locations in Travis and nearby counties. Trips will begin early in the morning and end early in the afternoon, according to the following schedule:

Schedule for the Thursday Morning Class

Lecture/slide presentations will be held from 9:30am-noon on Oct. 26, Nov. 2, Nov. 16, and Nov. 30. Field trips will be on Fridays beginning about 7am. The first two field trips will end about noon and the last two will end about 2pm; the dates are Oct. 27, Nov. 3, Nov. 17, and Dec. 1.

Schedule for the Tuesday Evening Class

Lecture/slide presentations will be held from 7-9:30pm on Oct. 24, Nov. 14, Nov. 28, and Dec. 5. Field trips will be on Saturdays beginning about 7am. The first two field trips will end about noon and the last two will end about 2pm; the dates are Nov. 4, Nov. 18, Dec. 2, and Dec. 9.

The class fee is \$45, and class size will be limited to twelve people for each class. To register, send e-mail to Jean Martin at begbird@texasrr.com or phone her at 343-7053. Be sure to specify whether you want to attend the class with the Thursday morning lectures and Friday morning field trips or the class with the Tuesday evening lectures and Saturday morning field trips.

more classes on next page

Sparrow Identification Class

By early November, most of our wintering sparrows have arrived in force, and this course will help participants take advantage of that fact. Byron Stone will teach the class, which will focus on the two dozen members of the family Emberizidae that occur regularly in Central Texas – everything on your checklist from Spotted Towhee to White-crowned Sparrow. Participants in Byron's previous classes have pronounced this course "awesome"!

There will be four evening lectures, each followed by a Saturday-morning field trip. Lectures will be from 7 to 9 pm on Wednesday, Nov. 8; Tuesday, Nov. 14; Wednesday, Nov. 29, and Wednesday, Dec. 6, at Tarrytown United Methodist Church, 2531 Exposition, in west Austin. Field trips will visit a variety of locales in the Austin area.

This is a good class for people who already have some birding experience but want to refine their approach to the identification of sparrows, including subspecies. Byron also says it is a good class for "people who don't mind tromping through some grass." Sturdy footwear is strongly recommended! Tuition is \$60 for TAS chapter members and \$70 for nonmembers. Contact Byron Stone at [DrBirdie\(at\)aol.com](mailto:DrBirdie(at)aol.com) or 970-5154, to register for the class. The class is limited to 12 participants.

Arizona, continued from page 3

way to Madera Canyon yielded one of our best finds, the White-eared Hummingbird.

We started birding the next morning at Florida Wash without finding much new, but while stopping along the road to scope out a Cassin's Sparrow, we heard news of Aztec Thrushes being seen up the canyon. We wasted no time heading up there and found five or six of the black-and-white beauties feeding in chokecherry trees, their every move followed by a score or more of birders. Further up the canyon, away from the crowd, we enjoyed seeing Red-faced Warblers, Elegant Trogons, and Arizona Woodpeckers.

The following day we explored the Patagonia area, finding Thick-billed Kingbird and Groove-billed Ani (but no Becards, alas) before having a picnic in the attractive town square. Our last day turned out to be seriously rainy and not conducive to

THE TRAVIS AUDUBON SOCIETY NOMINATING COMMITTEE has begun work to find several new board members for 2007-2010, to replace members whose terms expire in April 2007. Our slate will be proposed for election by the membership at the March General Meeting. Board members must be chapter members of TAS, willing to attend monthly Board meetings, monthly General meetings, and serve on one of TAS's committees. They must be interested in and able to participate in fund-raising, and of course share the mission and goals of TAS. If you are interested in being considered, please send us a biographical statement which includes your experiences and abilities that would be helpful to the board, a paragraph about why you would like to serve TAS in this leadership role, and the names of three people who you think would be good references for you. We would like to begin deliberations in mid-October, so please get your information to us as soon as possible. Send it to Anne Donovan by e-mail: ajdonovan@austin.rr.com or by regular mail to 2506 Spring Lane, Austin, TX, 78703.

We also would appreciate any suggestions you have for people other than yourself who you think might be interested in serving on the TAS Board. You may ask them to send the information listed above, or you may give us their name and contact information, so that we can contact them. Thanks for your help!

Anne Donovan

finding birds. Dennis elected to drive over to Ramsey Canyon in the Huachucas for more hummingbirds and the payoff was a look at a Berylline Hummer.

Our trip list contained over 160 bird species, many of them lifers for one or more of us. I, for one, not only saw many new birds, but got to make friends with some wonderful people, eat at some great restaurants (thanks to Louise Marcom's research), and see some of the most beautiful country I have ever encountered. Every person involved had useful things to contribute, but special thanks have to go out to Trent Miller – we wouldn't have identified half the birds we did if he hadn't been along. The Marcoms were very kind to allow me to ride out there in their van, and they were wonderfully tolerant of my whims and moods.

Anybody up for Oregon next summer? Eight kinds of woodpeckers and a Varied Thrush. Maybe a pelagic thrown in. And so far away that no one will be tempted to drive!

Stan Van Sandt

Ongoing TAS Meetings

Program Committee: meets on the 2nd Monday of each month, contact Marsha Reimer, 965-6714

TAS Board of Directors: meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month (except for December), contact Shelia Hargis, 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 Bill Reiner, 445-0565

Latin America Committee Meeting: meets most 3rd Wednesdays, contact Bob Warneke at warneke@austin.rr.com for details

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 BookPeople, contact Terry Banks at tessiebanks@msn.com

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

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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 eleven 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) _____

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