



Travis Audubon SOCIETY

SIGNAL SMOKE

The Newsletter of Travis Audubon Society

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TAS Regular Monthly Meetings

Thursday, September 20, 7:00 pm
A Great Big Year of Texas Birding
 Speaker: Lynn Barber

Thursday, October 18, 7:00pm
Birds of the Prairie Grasslands
 Speaker: Greg Lasley

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

Doors open at 6:30 pm for social time



see page 8 for additional details

VOLUME 56, NO. 9 & 10

September/October 2007

On the Road with TAS - Panama!

Our group of eighteen Travis Audubon members went on the first ever Travis Audubon-sponsored trip, arranged and facilitated for us by Panama Boutique. And what a trip it was – an amazing trip to an incredible destination – Panama! I expected the birding to be outstanding, and it was. But it was also a trip that gave us a look at many facets of Panama. In addition to birding two different and very distinct geographies with outstanding guides, we saw the Panama Canal and toured the Miraflores Lock, rode the world's first Transcontinental Railroad from the Caribbean to the Pacific, met with the Executive Director of Panama Audubon for an exchange of ideas, and enjoyed a week of outstanding food and lodging at both Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge. And that doesn't even start to cover the birding...

Before the trip, Barbara Baggett and Jean Warneke of Panama Boutique were our hosts for one evening so we could meet each other, discuss logistics, and ask questions. Part of each member's trip cost benefited Travis Audubon, and at that meeting, Panama Boutique presented a check for Travis Audubon to Shelia Hargis, past President of Travis Audubon.

We arrived in Panama City on Saturday and drove to Canopy Tower, which is an hour from the airport, inside Soberania National Park. We got our first glimpse of where we'd be for the next four days as we drove up a winding road, forest crowding the edge of it, to the top of Semaphore Hill. At an elevation of 900 feet, there is a tower which was formerly a US Air Force radar facility. It's been converted to a lodge, situated at the top of the hill, surrounded by the the park, with views of the Panama Canal and surrounding forests.

Sunday morning, we woke to the sound of Howler monkeys. By 6 am, we were having coffee on the top deck of the tower and viewing birds such as Collared Aracari and Keel-billed Toucan in the tree tops surrounding the deck. We met our guides, Carlos Bethancourt, who was with us all week, and Jose, who was with us while we were at Canopy Tower. We spent the morning birding Semaphore Hill, the road we'd driven up the night before. After lunch, we birded nearby Summit Botanical Gardens, where we saw the Harpy Eagle exhibit. After a BBQ dinner outside, we met with Rosabel Miró, the Executive Director of Panama Audubon Society, and learned about some of that organization's impressive bird and habitat conservation accomplishments. The Latin America Committee of TAS presented Rosabel with a delivery from Birders' Exchange. That was just our first day!

Monday was devoted to birding the famous Pipeline Road and then the nearby town of Gamboa. We got to Pipeline Road early and birded the road all morning, seeing an incredible variety of antwrens, tanagers, motmots, trogons, and tityras. After lunch, we drove to a resort in Gamboa, where we saw water birds such as the Rufescent Tiger-Heron and Wattled Jacana at the resort's marina. Pipeline Road was indeed the premier birding experience I'd heard about, thanks to Carlos, Jose, and our other guides, who were able to spot and put all of us on even the most hard-to-see birds.

Tuesday was our trip to the Caribbean side of Panama, so we left Canopy Tower before dawn to have enough time to drive to the Caribbean side and still get an early start to birding. By 7:30 am, we were nearing the city of Colon, and crossed the locks at Gatun Lake to reach Achiote Road. We ate lunch at San Lorenzo Fort, an historic and strategic spot where the mouth of the Chagres River meets the Caribbean. The fort dates from the 1500s and still has the remains of the old fort and its cannons. Crested Oropendulas nest there, we got to see their pendulous nests hanging down from the high branches. After lunch, we headed back through San Lorenzo National Park, where we saw a rare King Vulture overhead as well as Gray-necked Wood Rail, Common Black-Hawk, and

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Travis Audubon Society

General Address

P.O. Box 40787, Austin TX 78704

Address for Donations

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

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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\(at\)travisaudubon.org](mailto:info(at)travisaudubon.org)

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on recycled paper*

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

Wow! Panama was absolutely amazing! Knowledgeable guides, lush vegetation, scenic vistas, friendly people, and a bird diversity that can't be beat only begins to describe my wonderful experience on Panama's Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge Tour. My gratitude goes out to Panama Boutique and the Travis Audubon Latin American Committee for organizing this fantastic opportunity for Travis Audubon members. Check out the TAS Latin American Committee article in this *Signal Smoke* to read about other member's experiences. I can't wait to see what the TAS Latin American Committee and Panama Boutique comes up with next!

Thank you for participating in the membership survey! Only around 60 people completed the survey and we appreciate your input. I hope that next time more members will take the opportunity to have their voices heard. Your input is very important to this organization.

We are excited about adding two new very important committees to our list of volunteer opportunities. These committees are a membership/volunteer committee and a fundraising committee. This organization is growing by leaps and bounds, so to keep up with demand, these committees are essential.

I hope you get a chance to get out and enjoy the beauty of nature in Central Texas! See you at the September 20th General Meeting.

Marsha May

COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

TAS Rare Bird Alert	Eric Carpenter	300-2473 select option #3
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Society Historian	John Kelly	331-8693
Urban Habitat	Jane Tillman	794-0058

ABOUT SIGNAL SMOKE

Subscription Information

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Newsletter Deadline

The submissions deadline is the first day of the month preceding the first month of publication (for example, June 1 for the July/August issue). Submit uncopyrighted articles, announcements, and art to Tess Sherman, [tsherman1\(at\)austin.rr.com](mailto:tsherman1(at)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.

On the road to Panama...

continued from page 1

Bright-rumped attila. Before we went to the train station for the train ride back to Panama City, we made one more stop. At a resort hotel, Carlos shared a special spot with us: the daytime tree roost of two western night monkeys. Carlos threw banana halves into the cavity of the tree, and we could see tiny monkey hands and then their eyes peer out and grab the bananas.

Wednesday was a transition day, as we left Canopy Tower and moved to Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton, at an elevation of 2500 feet. As we packed to leave Canopy Tower, Carlos took us for a short trip to nearby Old Gamboa Road and Summit Ponds. On this quick trip, the highlight was a Spectacled Owl, but we also saw a Boat-billed Heron, Greater Ani, Rufous-breasted Hermit, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, and Fasciated Antshrike.

We said good-bye to our hosts at Canopy Tower mid-morning, and boarded a bus for the 2-hour trip to Canopy Lodge. When we arrived just after noon, in the midst of rain, we could feel the cooler temperatures at the higher elevation. Canopy Lodge is a stunning place. We were welcomed to the lodge by Raúl Arias de Para, responsible for creating both Canopy Lodge and Canopy Tower, and settled in. The lodge is beautifully designed, open and airy, to take advantage of views of the stream and bird feeders below the open dining/living/library area. Those feeders are very productive and were a highlight of the trip.

Both Thursday and Friday mornings, we birded the elevations above Canopy Lodge. Thursday morning we went up to La Mesa, a beautiful, open high area, and birded there most of the morning. We saw Gray-headed Chachalaca, Silver-throated Tanager, Black-chested Jay, a Bat Falcon, and Crimson-backed Tanager, among other birds. On our way back down, we found a Tawny-crested Tanager in trees along the road and then walked down a rocky trail near Canopy Adventure, where we saw Mottled Owl and Black-throated Trogon. Back at the lodge for lunch, we saw a Red-crowned Ant-Tanager and a Green Kingfisher at the stream.

On La Cara Iguana, a road up among beautiful estates, we saw both male and female Barred Antshrikes, as well as a tropical screech owl. Our last stop of the afternoon was a park in El Valle, where we saw Blue-and-white Swallows.

Friday morning, we went higher up the mountain, past La Mesa, to Cerro Gaital National Monument. We birded in light rain for a while, then waited out heavier rain, before starting to walk up the trail into the National Monument area. Carlos and Danilo found a Green Hermit just off the trail, and got all of us on it. And at the top of the trail, we finished a wonderful morning of birding when we saw two Black Guan and a Green Brilliant.

Saturday we were up early for one last wonderful breakfast, before we left for the airport. On our drive back to Panama City, we saw a Fork-tailed Flycatcher, my last life bird of the trip, which brought us to the neighborhood of 205 species for the trip.

Here are some of the favorite moments and experiences from members of our group...

My favorite experience was seeing the spectacled owls nesting in the forest. Carlos didn't tell us what we were looking for at the time, just to move slowly and be as quiet as possible. Seeing

the pair of owls brought tears to my eyes because they were so magnificent! I loved the guides because they made sure that every person got to see every bird – I added over 150 birds to my life list. This was truly a trip of a lifetime.

Sheryl

My favorite experience was not breaking both ankles and dislocating both hips when I took the second zip line too quickly, not realizing as much until I was 5 feet from the platform and my “brake” wouldn't work. All the birds were terrific, I can't pick a favorite. The bats coming to the hummingbird feeders at night was way cool, too.

Mike

Although I was delighted to see so many wonderful, colorful birds, the week was also enhanced by people who not only “knew” birds but were also interesting folks (and most helpful and kind to a neophyte like me). Carlos and the other guides were superb, the food was fresh and tasty, the environment at Canopy Lodge and Canopy Tower very special. Thanks for a very special time.

O.R.

Canopy Tower provided an intense birding experience with 360 degrees viewing of the rain forest canopy. Every morning I awoke to Howler monkeys calling from deep within the jungle. Though sleeping arrangements are simple, cooperation among visitors at the Canopy Tower is what makes this structure a birder's delight. At both the Lodge and Tower we were treated to **fabulous** Panamanian gourmet meals designed by the owner's sister. Our two lead guides, Carlos and Jose, were not only exceptional birders but gracious hosts. Truly amazing was the absence of mosquitoes! I never used bug repellent.

Visiting the Panama Canal and its locks in operation was an historic moment as was viewing the Harpy Eagle, Panama's national bird, at Summit Gardens. After meeting Panama Audubon's Executive Director we learned conservation efforts are alive and well in Panama.

Susan

For someone new to birding like me, the most memorable birds are those that are unlike any you have ever seen. The Panama trip presented an overwhelming number of unusual examples so let me try to pick a few. On the first day we got an unexpected look at a Blue Cotinga and even though it was at a great distance, the blue color was, as some described it, “electric.” We saw several species of Motmots with their striking colors and racket tipped tails. There were also several types of Trogons with their distinctive colors and ringed eyes.

But wait, I must include the Flame-rumped Tanager which did indeed look like it turned on a bright yellow after-burner as it flew away. It seemed that all of the Tanagers had remarkable colors, from brilliant red to subtle blue and gray. I can't leave out the Red-legged Honeycreeper, the Keel-billed Toucan, the Tiger-Heron, the

Carroll H.

continued on page 6



NATURALIST'S CALENDAR

by Bill Reiner

photo by Robert Baumgardner

The autumn wildflower season is here! What? You don't think of September and October as wildflower season? Well, then, you're obviously not a butterfly. Butterfly diversity reaches a peak about now, and all those nectar-sippers have to eat somewhere, eh? But you're probably thinking of all those wimpy little spring flowers that rarely even reach knee height, right? Many of the wildflowers of late summer and fall are tall, robust plants that have been competing for sunlight all summer long. This year, after such a wet summer, they should be particularly healthy, and ready to put on a show.

For starters, check out the grassy Hill Country slopes, which should soon stock enough wands of amber and lavender-pink to spark the imaginations of a throng of Harry Potter fans. These are, respectively, Gray Goldenrod (sometimes called Oldfield Goldenrod, *Solidago nemoralis*) and Chalkhill Blazingstar (also called Gayfeather, *Liatris mucronata*).

The understories of some woodlands are bejeweled with their own magic: the amber flowers of Goldeneye (*Viguiera dentata*) spangling bushy, leafy, three-foot stalks. But the migrating Monarch butterflies that dance in shady mottes are probably enchanted by tall, white-topped stalks of Frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*), a favorite nectar source.

Along sunny streams and roadside ditches where there are no Frostweeds, Monarchs, Queens, and a multitude of other butterflies find sustenance among other showy flowers. The yellow heads of Tall Goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*), the dusty-white of Late Thoroughwort (*Eupatorium serotinum*), and the pale lavender-blue of Tall Aster (*Aster praealtus*) seem to compete with each other for height. However, blooms of pink Marsh Fleabane (*Pluchea odorata*) and purplish-blue Mistflower (*Eupatorium coelestinum*), though shorter, manage to garner plenty of attention.

A relative of Mistflower, Shrubby Boneset (*E. havanense*) is sought out by butterflies where it grows on limestone bluffs. Its fuzzy white flowerheads are often crowded with fluttering wings. Brickell-bush (*Brickellia cylindracea*) is not so showy but its wands of yellow-tan flowers can be quite numerous on rocky woodland slopes.

On disturbed ground you can find the twiggy white-flowered aster Hierba del Marrano (*Aster subulatus*) and the yellow-flowered Camphorweed (*Heterotheca subaxillaris*), whose crushed foliage gives off the distinctive odor that gives it its name. These are both annuals, but a cousin of the latter, Gray Golden-Aster (*H. canescens*) is perennial. This plant grows in exposed rocky or sandy soil, where it can hug the ground because it has so little competition; it has yellow flowers that contrast picturesquely with its gray-green foliage.

Overgrazed pastures, too, are brightened by a haze of yellow broomweed (*Gutierrezia* sp.) or pink Palafoxia (*Palafoxia*

callosa). In less-trampled corners stand two big annuals with showy yellow flowers: the leafy, gray-green, Cowpen Daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*) and the rough-hairy, sprawling, Common Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*). A perennial cousin of the latter, Maximilian Sunflower (*H. maximiliani*), has similar big yellow flowers, but they grow in tidy, columnar spikes; it prefers less-disturbed wetter areas, often along streams. Even the weedy shrub Seepwillow (*Baccharis neglecta*), also called Poverty Weed, displays a pretty face this time of year, with sprays of white flowers that mature to silvery-haired seeds.

Of course some fall flowers we might rather not bloom, such as the weedy, green-flowered, wind-pollinated (and highly allergenic) ragweeds (*Ambrosia* species) and sumpweeds (*Iva* species).

Okay, I'm playing a game here. Other showy flowers bloom now, but I've only listed those connected by a common thread. Did you figure out the common denominator? (Yes, yes, they all bloom in fall, but beyond that.)

They are all members of one huge family, Asteraceae, the aster or sunflower family, which is second only to the grass family (Poaceae) in worldwide diversity. It accounts for an estimated one-tenth of all flowering plant species around the planet, including such well-known species as the marigolds, the dahlias, the lettuces, and the artichoke. It's also one of the two largest families of flowering plants in North America and in Texas. (Experts disagree whether there are more species in the Asteraceae or the Poaceae.)

Before botanists standardized family names, the Asteraceae was known as the Compositae, and the plants in this family are still sometimes called "composites." They earned this name for the compound flower structure characteristic of all plants in the family. When you look at a composite flower, you are actually seeing many flowers at once.

For example, take a close look at a sunflower (with a hand lens if you have one). The golden-yellow parts around the outside of the flowerhead, which we often call "petals," are actually individual flowers, called ray flowers. The outer portion is broad and flat, strap-like, but at its base it curls to form a tube. In some composite species this tube would cup the female flower part – the pistil – which may produce a seed, but it is infertile in the Common Sunflower.

The brown central part of the flowerhead – the "disk" – is comprised of many tiny, crowded, tubular flowers, called disk flowers. The tube is actually the corolla, a ring of petals fused together. In the center is a column that is the pistil, surrounded by the stamens (male parts, producing pollen). At the base of it all is the swollen ovary, which, when fertilized, develops into the sunflower seed that we feed to our chickadees and cardinals (or eat for ourselves).

continued on next page

Opportunity to Contribute

The Board of Directors of Travis Audubon Society is composed of twelve passionate volunteers who care deeply about our birds and who have taken a stand to make a difference through their contributions to TAS and our Central Texas community. The Board provides governance and oversight, sets policies, and determines the overall direction of the organization. TAS' success is directly related to the commitment, skills, and experience of its Board of Directors. YOU could be one of those awesome Board members!

The Nominating Committee is searching for several new board members for the 2008-2011 term, to replace members whose terms expire in April 2008. Members with skills and experience in fundraising, investments, marketing/public relations or real estate would especially add needed expertise to the Board, but all skill sets and experience levels will be considered. So, will you answer the call? To learn more or to recommend someone for consideration, contact Nominating Committee Chair Shelia Hargis at shargis(at)austin.rr.com or 291-1861. Thank you!

Introduction to Grasses with Bill Reiner

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 am to 1 pm, on October 27 and November 3.

Bill Reiner, biologist with the City of Austin, 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 ninety grass species that have been identified there. He has led grass identification walks at the refuge, and has taught this class for the last two years.

A short indoor introduction to the parts of the grass plant will be held at the Balcones Canyonlands NWR, west of Liberty Hill, on October 27. The remainder of the class time that day, and on November 3, 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 members and \$40 for non-members. Participants may find that a hand lens of 5X to 15X magnification will be helpful. To register, email to grassclass(at)travisaudubon.org or call Paul at 512-338-1131. Upon registration, you will be provided with additional information about the class and directions to the meeting place.

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Naturalist's Calendar, continued from page 4

The seed structure itself is called an achene (pronounced "ay-KEEN" or "uh-KEEN"), and is another characteristic common to all composites. The word comes from the Greek and means "not yawning." That may seem an odd name for a seed, but it is a good one. Unlike many seed hulls (such as those of Pecan), the hull of an achene does not split open ("yawn") when the seed is ripe. Each achene also contains only one seed (in contrast to, say, the peas, whose pods hold several seeds), which is loose inside the hull. If you crack open a sunflower seed, you'll find the seed is not attached to the hull.

All composites bear achenes, but the shape of the achene varies a great deal, and can be useful for distinguishing species. The achene of a dandelion, for instance, with its parachute-like pappus, is quite different from a sunflower seed.

Many composites have both ray flowers and disk flowers, but some have only disk flowers, such as the goldenrods, the ironweeds, the thistles, and the ragweeds. Others have only ray flowers; to see some of these, inspect the dandelions in your yard or the lettuce in your garden when it bolts. A few, such as the little Silverpuff (*Chaptalia texana*) that blooms in spring, have unusual two-lipped disk flowers – sort of like double ray flowers.

The composite structure of the flowers is one reason plants in the Asteraceae are so successful. A composite flowerhead has

been compared to a thick-pile rug – a rug on which nectar-feeding insects can revel, while picking up pollen grains from many flowers at once. This is a definite advantage for insect-pollinated flowers. Insects can visit hundreds of different flowers on a single trip, resulting in much cross-pollination and greater genetic diversity.

The composites can be a difficult group of plants to learn. There are many of them, and sometimes they all look like yellow daisies – leading to the nickname DYC, for "darned yellow composite" (or something more colorful). Some, such as goldenrods and asters, have a frustrating habit of hybridizing with each other. However, as with other groups whose members are a challenge to distinguish (think grasses, oaks, skipper butterflies, sparrows, sandpipers...) the reward is an appreciation for the diversity around us. Give it a try. You might have some fun.

References included:

Wildflowers of the Texas Hill Country, by Marshall Enquist (an excellent beginning guide). *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas*, by Donovan Correll and Marshall Johnston. *Shinners & Mahler's Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas. An Annotated Checklist of the Vascular Plants of Travis County, Texas*, by Bill Carr. *A Field Guide to Ecology of Eastern Forests*, by John C. Kricher and Gordon Morrison

The Big Sit! is back

Sunday, October 14, 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-foot diameter circle of your choosing within a 24-hour period – while sitting and relaxing!

The “official” Travis Audubon circle will once again be at Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory by the ponds, so drop by and join us when you can for the biggest tail-gate party in birding. Last year we tallied 54 species, so help us top that if you can!

Bird Watchers Digest, who hosts the event, encourages us to use The Big Sit! as a fundraiser. Our official Travis Audubon circle will be following their example this year by asking any participants who would like to do so to ask for sponsors to pledge for each species we see. For example, if twenty sponsors pledged \$0.20 per species and the team tallies fifty species during The Big Sit! that means the team could generate \$200 for Travis Audubon! Also note that participating in fundraising is not a requirement of participation in the Big Sit! The only requirement for participation in the Big Sit! is to have fun!

Panama, continued from page 3

Panama

An emotional smorgasbord of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. The rain forest bathes our senses. The food delights our palates.

The sounds a symphony of rain, birds, and monkeys.

The birds: secretive, flamboyant, bright and drab, but never dull.

Take me back. Let me live in the memory of the most fantastic adventure of my life.

Carroll P.

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It was a great trip, and a big Thank You goes to Panama Boutique for making it happen, as well as to our hosts and birding guides at Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge. As Sheryl says, it was truly the trip of a lifetime.

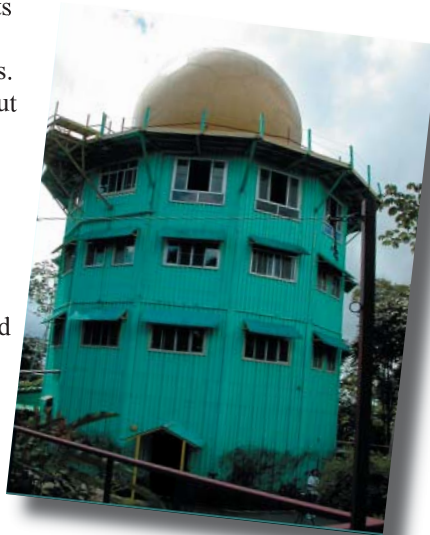
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Our gang in Panama. Photo credit: *Barbara Baggett*

Canopy Tower. Photo credit: *Jean Warneke*

Through the scope, a Rufous Motmot. Photo credit: *Marsha*

The Big Sit! is an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event hosted by *Bird Watcher's Digest* and founded by the New Haven (CT) Bird Club. The Big Sit! is sponsored by Swarovski Optik and Eagle Optics. Today there are Big Sit! circles all over the world, including Guatemala, India, the Netherlands, England, Vietnam, and New Zealand.

The simplicity of the concept makes The Big Sit! so appealing. Find a good spot for bird watching – preferably one with good views of a variety of habitats and lots of birds. Next you create a real or imaginary circle 17 feet in diameter and sit inside the circle for 24 hours, counting all the bird species you see or hear. That's it. Find a spot, sit in it, have fun. THE BIG SIT! is like a Big Day, or a bird-a-thon in that the object is to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard within twenty-four hours. The difference lies in the area limitation from which you can observe. THIS FREE EVENT is OPEN to every person and club in any country!

Visit www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx to register your own circle and read the rules of play. Contact fieldtrips (at)travisaudubon.org for local information. The Big Sit!- the most sedentary event in birding. Don't miss it!

Laurie Foss
Field Trips Chair

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Travis Audubon is delighted to recognize its Business Members:

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

Austin as a Certified Wildlife Community

According to the City of Austin's latest statistics there are currently 470 sites, and counting, in Austin that have registered to become a certified wildlife habitat. These sites include backyards, schools and public sites. Austin is the largest City in the Country to apply for certification as a Wildlife Habitat Community.

Make your yard a wildlife sanctuary!

The recent TAS survey showed that most TAS members have not certified their yards as wildlife habitat. Reduce your impact on the planet while having fun and getting closer to nature on the home front. Take some time to check out the info on the National Wildlife Federation, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Audubon Society's websites and get ready for fall planting. The National Wildlife Federation website, www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/, explains the certification process and has lots of tips for this Certified Wildlife Habitat program. The application is available online and costs \$15. You are eligible to purchase a sign that is useful for outreach and costs \$25.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department offers two certification programs, Texas Wildscapes and Best of Texas Backyard Habitats. For the **Texas Wildscapes** program the application fee is \$15. Your yard must be at least 50% native. The application is sent directly to TPWD, and upon approval you can purchase a Texas Wildscapes sign. The excellent TPWD website, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/wildscapes/ will take you through the certification process. The technical resources such as the Texas Plant Information Database are extremely helpful as you get deeper into plant selection. The crème de la crème of the certification programs is the **Best of Texas Backyard Habitat** program. The application fee is \$28. Your yard must be primarily native plants; more than two non-native invasive plant species will disqualify you. This program is jointly administered by Texas Parks and Wildlife and the National Wildlife Federation.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR WILDLIFE EXPO

Travis Audubon Society needs your help to man our booth at this year's Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Expo.

October 6, 2007 – 2 shifts	October 7, 2007 – 2 shifts
2 volunteers needed per shift	2 volunteers needed per shift
8:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.	8:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.
12:45 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.	12:45 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR GREEN CITY FESTIVAL

October 13, 2007
(10:00-4:00)
2 shifts, 2 volunteers per shift
9:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
1:00 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.

Please contact our executive director, Nancy Manning, at the TAS office at 300-2473 if you would like to volunteer for the Green City Festival or the Wildlife Expo.

For all the programs it is important to make every effort to have natural food sources available year round, to provide a reliable water source, and to practice sustainable gardening practices such as mulching, eliminating chemicals, and composting. The Best of Texas Program requires that you also take active measures to control cats, starlings and house sparrows, and requires that more conservation



measures be taken. While the Audubon Society does not have a certification program, its Audubon at Home website www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/index.html has, not surprisingly, a gardening for birds emphasis and a healthy yard pledge you can make online.

You may already be gardening with wildlife in mind. Take the next step - certify your yard, post the sign and begin to educate your neighbors!

Website and Book Resources

The City of Austin's Grow Green website on plants at www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/ and its Green Garden website at www.ci.austin.tx.us/greengarden/ are good for black and green thumb gardeners.

Native Texas Plants: Landscaping Region by Region by Sally Wasowski, 2002. The classic that you will refer to again and again.

Wildflowers of the Texas Hill Country by Marshall Enquist, 1989.

How to Grow Native Plants of Texas and the Southwest by Jill Nokes, 2001. Helps answer the question, "Is this plant right for my site?" Propagation tips, too.

Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife by Noreen Damude and Kelly Bender, 1999. Detailed information on plants.

Caterpillars in the Field and Garden, A Field Guide to the Butterfly Caterpillars of North America by Allen, Glassberg and Brock, 2005. Comprehensive list of larval host plants to provide a deli for your birds.

Jane Tillman

HybridRealtor@Stanberry.com



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Monthly Meeting Information

TAS Regular Monthly Meeting 7:00 pm (doors open at 6:30 pm for social time)

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 the adjacent garage and lots. Refreshments provided.

September 20, 2007

Lynn Barber

Great Big Year of Texas Birding

Lynn Barber will talk about the highlights of her record-breaking Texas Big Year in 2005 and will show pictures of some of the birds seen and the sites visited. During that year, she drove more than 90,000 miles and observed 522 bird species in Texas. Her quest, in a year with a remarkable influx of birds from the south, took her to practically every nook, canyon, forest, and beach in Texas.

Lynn has been a birdwatcher/birder since she was seven years old, and has birded across much of the United States and in many other countries. She has given many talks about her birding travels, and since her big year in 2005, she has spoken to many groups about the experience. She has a Ph.D. in bacteriology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a JD from Duke University Law School (1985). She has been active in local Audubon organizations for many years, and is currently president-elect of the Texas Ornithological Society and past-president of the Fort Worth Audubon Society. Information about birds she saw in her big year and a few pictures of them, as well bird lists for some of the other years since she's been in Texas can be found at www.lynnbarber.com.

October 18, 2007

Greg Lasley

Birds and Other Wildlife of the Prairie Grasslands

Greg will present images taken on a trip he took in June, 2007, from west Texas to New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and Montana to photograph some prairie nesting birds. Some of the nesting bird species will include Burrowing Owl, Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Baird's Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Lazuli Bunting, Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, Wilson's Phalarope, Short-eared Owl, Eared Grebe, both Clark's and Western Grebe and others. Also included are images of the rare and elusive Swift Fox and an American Badger.

Greg spent 25 years in law enforcement, retiring from the Austin Police Department in 1997 as a lieutenant. From 1997 through early 2005 he divided his time between photographing wildlife and leading birdwatching trips over much of the western hemisphere for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. In March, 2005, Greg decided to take a sabbatical from regular tour leading and now concentrates on photography and other wildlife pursuits. His photos appear regularly in a variety of nature and wildlife-oriented books and magazines. He and his wife, Cheryl Johnson, reside in Austin, Texas.

Earth Share Campaign News

September marks the start of workplace campaigns for Earth Share and other charitable organizations. If your workplace offers the Earth Share option, we'd like to urge you to direct your contribution there.

And specifically, we'd like to encourage you to contribute to the Audubon Foundation of Texas (AFT), one of Earth Share's member organizations. AFT's mission is to support the National Audubon Society's twenty Texas chapters. Among other things, it has provided funding for new chapters just getting off the ground. It helps other chapters meet their operating expenses (Travis Audubon gets over \$2000 each year from AFT). And it provides grants to support chapters' special projects. Some recent grants include \$1000 to Travis Audubon for work at Chaetura Canyon, our newest sanctuary. Big Country Audubon Society used its grant to construct an observation blind in Abilene State Park. Other grants support conservation work in Latin America. Working with the Houston Audubon Society, AFT has helped fund Niños y Crías, an educational organization in the Yucatan which works to protect Caribbean Flamingos and encourage sustainable development. And through the Travis Audubon Society, AFT helped support researchers in Guatemala in their studies of the Golden-cheeked Warbler's wintering grounds.

For a complete list of workplaces participating in the Earth Share campaign, visit www.earthshare-texas.org/workplace.htm.

John Kelly

REMEMBERING LADY BIRD

April 1965. Lady Bird Johnson, already famed for her love of nature, was eager to learn more about the wildflowers of the LBJ Ranch (this was a time when field guides to wildflowers were scarce). So she approached Travis Audubon Society for help in conducting a botanical survey. Two Audubon members – Margaret Houck and Mrs. Paul Bolton – responded to her request, and soon found that Lady Bird herself would be driving them around the ranch. As Ms. Houck later recalled, “the day at the ranch was a beautiful one; valleys and meadows were waist high in bluebonnets. Lady Bird, dressed partly in red, was photographed in the bluebonnets and again against the granite outcrop on the higher northern part of the ranch, where she was surrounded by the beautiful claretcup cactus...in full bloom..”

Fast forward some 30 years. I was asked to represent Travis Audubon at a reception held in honor of Mrs. Johnson at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The line was long and time was short, but Lady Bird was unhurried and graciously welcoming. We spoke briefly about the ranch's wildflowers, but conversation quickly turned to the Golden-cheeked Warbler, then much in the news. I found that Mrs. Johnson had never observed our society's emblem, and invited her to the Baker Sanctuary to search for the warbler. She suddenly turned serious. “You know,” she said, “my eyesight is so poor I don't think I'd ever be able to see it.” “But at least we could get one to sing for you,” I said. She laughed, delighted at the thought.

I'm not sure that Mrs. Johnson ever saw or heard the Golden-cheeked Warbler. But the love of nature she helped impart to Texans will do much to insure that generations to come will continue to hear the warbler's song and rejoice in the natural beauty of Central Texas.

John Kelly

Notes from Chaetura Canyon

The first official activity for the Travis Audubon Society's new Chaetura Canyon Bird Sanctuary was a Christmas Bird Count led by Dan Callaway on January 1st.

Unfortunately, the overall bird activity for the day was very subdued in comparison to previous days. Aerial fireworks set off by neighbors the night before the count apparently caused the wildlife to "lay low". The most notable migrant species was a parade of Golden-crowned Kinglets. These tiny and rare visitors to our area remained an uncommonly common species throughout the winter months.

Fifty straight hours of freezing temperatures spanned January 15 through 17. Although not as devastating as the ice storm of 2000, the damage to the trees was considerable. The trunk of one of our dwindling mature Red Oaks was snapped in half, leaving quite a mess for the caretakers while providing considerable habitat for the native beetles and other invertebrates. Three large Cedars were completely uprooted from the weight of the ice accumulation, and broken branches from numerous other Cedars blocked many of the trails. The detritus was cut into manageable pieces, and after many trips up and down the canyon walls, finally hauled out and processed with a chipper. The resulting mulch was used to top-dress some of the upper trails of the sanctuary.



At our recent tower workshop. Photo credit: *Georgan Kyle*

Nestbox Workshop

Paul and Georgan Kyle will lead their fourth annual workshop on building nestboxes (birdhouses) on Sunday, October 14, 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 signs

of occupation earlier in the year. One of their Chimney Swift towers will also be investigated. The class will also install a new nest box along the hike.

After a continuation of the previous years' drought plagued the winter months, the remarkable spring and summer rainfall triggered a veritable explosion of the flora in the canyon. Examples such as 24 inches of new growth on many of the Mexican Silktassels on the Canyon Rim Trail were the rule rather than the exception. A succession of wildflowers has continuously carpeted "the field", providing tender new growth, nectar and seed as more than ample food for the local fauna. One of our local specialties, the Coral-root orchid, was late to appear this year, but the plants that were found were exceptional. The combined rainfall from January 1 to July 1 totaled 29.71 inches. The same time span in 2006 totaled 20.24 inches and in 2005 was only 11.43 inches. And the rains continued throughout the month of July. During the peak of the rains in July, the rumble from the four open flood gates at Mansfield Dam (just 1.5 miles up-river) was clearly audible.

Twelve very enthusiastic and capable builders attended the Chimney Swift Tower Workshop held in March. An eight foot tall nesting tower was constructed, bringing the total number of structures available to the swifts on the sanctuary to sixteen. Twelve of those towers, including the new "Workshop Tower", attracted nesting swifts. By the end of July, a nocturnal roost of more than 150 swifts had moved into the North Observation Tower on the residence – signaling the traditional start of staging for fall migration.

Remaining events for 2007 will include a "Dinner with the Swifts" fundraiser in mid-September, and the fourth annual Nest Box Workshop will be held on October 14. See the classes listed on the TAS web page and in this newsletter for more information on this popular class. Because Chaetura Canyon is such a new and unique facility for TAS, careful thought and care are going into the planning of future events for the sanctuary. An open-air classroom area is currently being hand-excavated into the hillside just south of the residence, and we hope to have this area completed in 2008. Workshops, classes and meetings are being planned for this picturesque location. We look forward to introducing each of you to this new sanctuary through regularly scheduled and special events over the coming months. Watch for a Calendar of Events to be presented before the end of the year. Until then, "Keep Your Eyes to the Skies!"

*Georgan and Paul Kyle
Chaetura Canyon Sanctuary Stewards*

Registration is limited to twelve builders. Children age 8 and above will be welcome if accompanied by a parent. The cost of this workshop is \$35 for TAS members and \$40 for non-members. This includes the cost of one nestbox and plans. Additional kits may be purchased for \$18.

For more information or to sign up, contact Anne Donovan at 472-3030 or [ajdonovan\(at\)austin.rr.com](mailto:ajdonovan(at)austin.rr.com)

NPSOT WC Tree Class Announcement

Native Trees of Central Texas and Their Associated Plant Communities

Sept 27 (7 – 9 pm) & Sept 29 (9 – 11 am), 2007

The Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) – Williamson County Chapter will be offering a class entitled, “Native Trees of Central Texas and their Associated Plant Communities”. The lecture will be held at the Georgetown Public Library on Thursday, September 27, 2007, 7 – 9 pm, and the field trip will take place along the North San Gabriel River Trail in Booty’s Road Park on Saturday, September 29, 2007, 9 – 11 am.

Heather Brewer (Urban Forester, City of Georgetown) will share information about the “Top Ten” most common trees in the three ecosystems that make up Williamson County – the Blackland Prairie (mostly tallgrass prairies) to the east, the Lampasas Cut Plains (prairies and woodlands) to the west, and the Edwards Plateau (savanna, woodlands, and streams) to the southwest. The tree’s leaves, bark, flowers, fruits/nuts/berries, and silhouette (or “gestalt”) will be reviewed in order to make an identification in the field. In addition, Bill Carr (The Nature Conservancy) and Jason Spangler (Native Prairies Association of Texas – NPAT) will be providing information on associated shrubs, vines, forbs, grasses, and soils and how they interact within these tree communities. The field trip will reinforce what we’ve learned in the classroom and identify specific native plants along a section of the North San Gabriel River Trail in preparation for

the kickoff walk of the NPSOT-NPAT 2007 Annual Symposium which will be hosted by the NPSOT Williamson County Chapter on October 18th – 21st (call 512-869-0356 or 512-736-4199, or see www.npsot.org/symposium2007/home/index.shtml for details).

The registration fee is \$15 for NPSOT-NPAT members and \$20 for non-NPSOT-NPAT members (see www.npsot.org and www.texasprairie.org for membership information). To register, contact Marilyn Perz (512-864-3828, [dmperz\(at\)thegateway.net](mailto:dmperz(at)thegateway.net)).

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 theme of the symposium is “The Blackland and Grand Prairies and the Grasslands of the Edwards Plateau: Efforts to Identify, Restore, Conserve and Celebrate a Natural Treasure.”

The symposium will be headquartered in Georgetown, TX and is open to the public. A variety of social events, field trips and a tour of homes which utilize native plant landscapes are also scheduled. A complete list of confirmed speakers and other details, along with registration information, can be found on the symposium web site at www.npsot.org/symposium2007/. Questions may be directed to event co-chairs, Phyllis Dolich and Jason Spangler, at 512-869-0356 or [symposium2007\(at\)npsot.org](mailto:symposium2007(at)npsot.org).

Baker Sanctuary Dedication

In 1966, Travis Audubon was seeking a sanctuary it could call its own – preferably a place which supported our emblem, the Golden-cheeked Warbler. A number of possibilities had been investigated, but none was suitable. Then one spring day, Stuart and Sarah Harris spotted a newspaper ad offering ninety-four acres west of Cedar Park. They drove out to see the property, and found it was just what the Society wanted – warblers included. Sarah Harris was so overjoyed that as they forded Lime Creek she opened the car’s door and jumped in, fully clothed, rejoicing. And in July 1966 Travis Audubon took title to its Sanctuary, at the reasonable price of \$180 an acre.

Ed Kutac soon became involved in the work that the Sanctuary required. He quickly found that two of our neighbors, Chell and Lena Baker, hoped to keep their 536 acres in its natural state even after their deaths. Ed, a natural diplomat, kept in touch with the Bakers, letting them know we shared their hope. And in 1972 the Bakers decided that TAS was the group they wanted to work with. Ed helped negotiate an agreement which gave the Bakers a life estate so they could continue living on the property, while Travis Audubon assumed management responsibilities. Ed later helped develop a bill, passed by the Legislature, that provided a tax break for sanctuaries such as ours, giving us the financial wherewithal to keep the land as we had found it.

The vision and pioneering work of Stuart and Sarah Harris and Ed Kutac were instrumental in bringing the Baker Sanctuary into being and preserving it in its natural state. In June 2007, family and friends of the Harris and Ed Kutac gathered to dedicate a plaque in their honor (Ed, alive and kicking in Amarillo, unfortunately wasn’t able to attend). We hope everyone who studies this plaque will be inspired by their work – and be reminded of what dedicated volunteers can accomplish.



Left to right: Lawrence Buford, Catfish Kelly, Ethel Kutac & Ann Jones.
Photo courtesy Jean Nance

John Kelly

Baker Sanctuary News

TAS member Cindy Sperry surveyed the Baker Sanctuary 100-acre plot again this year for nesting Golden-cheeked Warblers (GCWA). She conducted ten surveys from March 15 to May 20, 2007. Each survey lasted approximately six hours for a total of sixty hours survey time. Surveys were conducted following the protocol outlines in the BCP Land Managers Handbook. Locations of individual GCWAs were mapped by hand in the field and GPS coordinates were obtained whenever possible. Movements and counter-singing by males were documented and used to distinguish individuals and identify territory boundaries.

Based on her compiled observations, including counter-singing and the presence of females and fledglings, it appears that at least twenty GCWA males established territories within the plot boundaries and seven more occupied areas crossing or near plot edges. This is comparable to 2006 survey results showing twenty-two in-plot territories and four edge territories. However, Cindy was less successful this year in confirming pairing and mating success. She was only able to confirm the presence of a female and/or fledglings in nine in-plot territories and one edge territory, compared to last year's findings of nineteen in-plot territories and four edge territories. For 2007, sixteen fledglings were detected in six in-plot territories and one fledgling was detected in an edge territory. This compares to her 2006 counts of fourteen fledglings in eleven in-plot territories and three fledglings in two edge territories. No Brown-headed Cowbirds were detected in the 100-acre plot although they are commonly found near the Steward's residence and no evidence of brood parasitism was found in the survey plot. Once again, I thank Cindy for providing us with excellent data.

And speaking of GCWAs, one of the last Golden-cheeked Warbler sightings I had this season occurred on July 13. I was in our back yard and I saw a young hatch year warbler near our back deck. I watched as the clumsy, naïve fledgling fluttered around our pond and then hopped down into our birdbath. It leaned forward and fluttered its wings, all to no avail because it wasn't standing in the water. I waited and watched as the chick "dry cleaned" itself and then flew up into the canopy and perched on a limb. Shortly, the fledgling began to beg and a male Golden-cheeked Warbler flew up and stuffed something into the chick's waiting maw. The male then actively resumed gleaning insects from the live oak foliage and then periodically fed the chick as it fluttered after him. The male GCWA seemed in a hurry

as he foraged, as if to say: "Let's go! I'm going to be late for migration".

Regional Water Supply Project Update

The Regional Water Supply Project, comprising the cities of Leander, Cedar Park and Round Rock, has morphed into the Brushy Creek Regional Utility Authority (BCRUA). The recent deluges over Central Texas that filled Lake Travis bought more time for the water procurement partnership to plan for their future water needs.

Under Phase I of this project, plans call for adding a temporary floating intake facility beside Cedar Park's existing structure in Lake Travis, the construction of a new raw water pipeline and a treated water pipeline. The raw water line will follow Trails End Road from the area of Cedar Park's existing water treatment plant on the Sandy Creek arm of Lake Travis to the new water treatment plant near Hur Industrial Boulevard off of FM 1431. From there, the water line will follow New Hope Road to CR 180, and then drop down to follow CR 272.

Phase II of this project calls for the construction of a deep-water intake facility and a raw water pipeline, which will ensure the cities involved will have water even in drought conditions. The option of routing of the raw water line from the City of Cedar Park's Lake Travis floating intake barge to their water treatment plant at the corner of Anderson Mill Road and Cypress Creek Boulevard via the existing pipeline right-of-way just south of the Baker Sanctuary is not a dead issue yet, either.

Seven sites are under consideration for the location of the deep-water intake, four of which are located in the Village of Volente. Volente residents oppose locating the deep-water intake in their town and have hired a lawyer to assist them in prohibiting the Brushy Creek partnership from constructing the intake in Volente (portions of this update were taken from the July 2007, Volume 2, Issue 4, *Community Impact Newspaper*).

Sanctuary Closed Dates

In order to reduce the browse pressure on our Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat, the Baker Sanctuary will close on October 21, 2007 in preparation for our annual White-tailed Deer hunt. The Sanctuary will reopen on February 2, 2008. Thank you all for your patience and continued support.

John Wilcox, TAS-Baker Sanctuary Steward

Nicaragua

Friday, March 21 – Saturday, March 29, 2008: A charter Elderhostel program for the Wimberley Birding Society. Program price for eight nights is \$1535 per person, double occupancy, including lodging, guides, transfers, instructors, all meals. Single supplement is \$450. Group air will be available from Austin. Lodging in comfortable hotels with private bathrooms.

From Pacific beaches to prairie grasslands; arid scrub woodlands to towering volcanoes encircled by cloud forests – a day in Nicaragua offers natural contrasts on a scale unlike any other country. This varied topography supports an array of ecosystems that nurture a stunning variety of wildlife, including more than 680 bird species. In dining, expect a delicious combination of Caribbean flavors and cariole style dishes, including a variety of unique fruits and veggies. Itinerary: Arrive Managua, 1 night; coach to Matagalpa, 1 night; coach to Esteli, 2 nights; coach to Leon, 2 nights; coach to Granada, 2 nights; departure Managua. *To ensure a place on this trip, you must get on the sign-up sheet. For additional information, contact Jerry Hall, 512 847-3730 or jdothall(at)verizon.net.*

TAS Events - Sept 2007

The Field Trips Committee has a new email address - please feel free to use it. It is [fieldtrips\(at\)travisaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips(at)travisaudubon.org).

Saturday, September 8
3:30 pm to 8:15 pm

Saturday, Sept. 1 through Sunday,
Oct. 20, 9 am to 5 pm

Hawkwatch at Hornsby Bend

Join Gary Newgord and Peg Wallace in scanning the skies for migrating hawks and other birds. Bring water. For more information: Kevin Anderson, 972-1960 or [Kevin.Anderson\(at\)ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:Kevin.Anderson(at)ci.austin.tx.us).

BCNWR Post Oak Creek Hike and Jonestown Chimney Swift Roost

Meet Jean Nance and Kathy McCormack at the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge's (BCNWR's) Operations Center and hike along Post Oak Creek. The hike will be of moderate difficulty, with several steep, rocky sections and a possible wet creek crossing. You can also meet us for dinner at the True Grits restaurant on FM 1431 in Jonestown from 6:00 – 7:30 pm, and then we'll 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). This is one of the national "A Swift Night Out" weekends (see www.chimneyswifts.org for details), and we will be submitting our data from this field trip. Bring water, hat, hiking boots, and insect spray for the afternoon walk. The Chimney Swift roost is wheelchair accessible. Directions to the BCNWR Operations Center available online at www.travisaudubon.org. Click on the field trips link. Plan to arrive around 3:15 pm because the gate will be closed shortly after 3:30 pm. No registration required. Contact Kathy McCormack ([VEFL21\(at\)yahoo.com](mailto:VEFL21(at)yahoo.com), (c) 698-9880) if you have any questions.

Saturday, September 8
6:30 am to 6:30 pm
or until we're finished

South Padre Pelagic Birding Excursion

Texas seabirders will once again board The Osprey deep sea excursion boat in SPI for a day of pelagic birding. Cost for the boat is \$150 for TAS members and \$165 for non-members. There is a limit of 30 participants and reservations are on a first-call basis. Contact Laurie Foss ([fieldtrips\(at\)travisaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips(at)travisaudubon.org)) for more information.

Saturday, September 8
7 am and 4:00 pm

Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

Contact Eric Carpenter at [ecarpe\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:ecarpe(at)gmail.com) for more information. Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory.

Saturday, September 15
7:30 am to Noon

Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

Led by Jean Martin. Austin's premier birding site. No registration required. Contact [fieldtrips\(at\)travisaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips(at)travisaudubon.org) for more information.

Saturday, September 22
7:30 am to Noon

Return to Lake Somerville State Park

Back by popular demand, Gary Waggerman will lead a field trip to the Nails Creek Unit of Lake Somerville to reprise the well-attended trip that he led there in July. Bring your lunch or a snack and meet at the headquarters of the Nails Creek Unit of the Lake Somerville State Park. There is a \$3 entrance fee for each vehicle. There are wooded trails and several access points to the lake within the Nails unit. Maybe there will be less water (flooding in July) in Middle Yegua creek and we will be able to access more parts of the Wildlife Management Area. There should be several species of waterfowl, shorebirds and warblers, etc. moving through the county by then. Directions available online at travisaudubon.org. Contact Gary Waggerman at [waggerman\(at\)sbcglobal.net](mailto:waggerman(at)sbcglobal.net) or cell phone: 512-775-8720 for more information. This is about seventy miles from Austin so it would be wise to car pool if possible.

Just added

Downtown REI lecture: Beginning Birdwatching by Marsha May, TAS President and TPWD biologist at 7pm on September 25th. Call REI for more information: (512) 343-5550

Saturday, September 22
9 am to 2 pm

RESCHEDULE of the 2nd Annual Travis Audubon Floating Field Trip

Led by Claude Morris. Let's try again for this popular field trip on the Colorado River that got rained out in June. Again the trip will go from the park in the town of Webberville to the Big Webberville Park. Webberville is in eastern Travis County. This is about a 5-mile section of river with slowly moving or still water. You should be able to paddle that distance, as there usually is little in the way of swift water or rapids, and it should take 3-5 hours to complete, with a stop for lunch on an island included in the trip plans. Directions available online at travisaudubon.org. Contact Claude Morris at [cgmorris\(at\)flash.net](mailto:cgmorris(at)flash.net), 512-619-4797 (c)

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 (at 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:

Sept 27, 2007 - *All Things Reconsidered* by Roger Tory Peterson (2006)

Oct 25, 2007 - *A Natural History of Sex, the Ecology and Evolution of Mating Behavior* by Adrian Forsyth (1996)

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\(at\)msn.com](mailto:tessiembanks(at)msn.com) to find out if the book is still current.

TAS Events - Oct 2007

Saturday, October 6
7 am to Noon

Birding by Mountain Bike at Shield Ranch

Led by Laurie Foss. The Shield Ranch, located just outside Austin, has 4,668.5 acres of classic Hill Country terrain, straddling Barton Creek west of State Highway 71 and north of U.S. Highway 290. It has been in continuous operation by the same family since its purchase in 1938 by Patricia Shield Ayres' parents, Fred and Vera Shield of San Antonio. In 1999, more than two-thirds of ranch acreage was conveyed to a conservation easement, under the auspices of the Texas Nature Conservancy. This field trip will offer two options. If you are a mountain biker of any skill level you will enjoy seeing the ranch and its birds from your bike. The terrain is rolling hills and the trail is easily hiked so biking should be a blast! We'll take it easy enough to stop when we want to in order to get on the birds. If you've never birded on your bike, come with us and give it a try! **HELMETS ARE REQUIRED AND ALL RIDERS MUST STAY ON THE PATHS.** The second option is a more traditional approach to birding the ranch with a combination of driving and hiking. Bring your lunch to enjoy with the group when the field trip is completed. Contact [fieldtrips\(at\)travisaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips(at)travisaudubon.org) for more information and detailed directions to the site. A list of birds of the ranch is also available by email.

******Save the date!** There will be a field trip and photography workshop at Peaceful Springs Nature Preserve (next to the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, west of Lago Vista) the weekend of December 1st & 2nd. Overnight options (cabin or camping) will be available. Over a dozen species of sparrows can be expected. Details will be announced in the November/December newsletter.

Saturday, October 13
7 am & 4 pm

Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

Contact Eric Carpenter at [ecarpe\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:ecarpe(at)gmail.com) for more information. Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory.

Sunday, October 14
All day

The Big Sit!

There's no birding event like it. Compete with teams throughout the country to see how many species you can count in a 17-foot diameter circle of your choosing – while sitting and relaxing! – within a 24-hour period. Collect pledges for each species tallied to add to the TAS general fund and to raise awareness of our outstanding conservation organization. Pledge forms are available on-line at the link below. The "official" Travis Audubon circle will once again be at Hornsby Bend by the ponds, so drop by and join us when you can for the biggest tail-gate party in birding. Last year we tallied fifty-four species, so help us top that! Fund-raising is optional – having fun mandatory! Visit www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx to register your own circle, read the rules of play and download a pledge form. Contact [fieldtrips\(at\)travisaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips(at)travisaudubon.org) for local information.

Just added

Join us at the 2007 Fall Bamberger Bird Count at SELAH near Johnson City on Sunday, October 14. Email Marsha May at [marshmay\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:marshmay(at)gmail.com)

Saturday, October 20
7:30 am to Noon

Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

Austin's premier birding site. No registration required. Contact [fieldtrips\(at\)travisaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips(at)travisaudubon.org) for more information.

Wednesday, October 24
6:00 am to 1 pm

Pedernales Falls State Park

Join Theresa Banks for a mid-week trip to Johnson City to visit Pedernales Falls State Park (www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/pedernales_falls/). Boasting extraordinary scenery and a bird blind that puts you in the birds' living rooms. Do a little light hiking to discover what birds are foraging in the grasses and scrub. You'll find a lot to enjoy on this field trip. Bring water, a snack and lunch. We plan to meet at about 6:00 am at the Y in Oak Hill to carpool, and plan on leaving Pedernales about 1:00 pm. E-mail Terry Banks at [tessiembanks\(at\)msn.com](mailto:tessiembanks(at)msn.com). Limit 10 participants - please RSVP for this trip.

Saturday, October 27
8:00 am to 11:30 am

Private Property near Florence (NW Williamson County)

Travis Audubon Society has been given the opportunity to explore 80 acres of private property in northwest Williamson County, which includes two prairie restoration areas, riparian habitat, and dry woods. There are two bird viewing areas stocked with food and water, and walking will be on gently sloping trails for 1 – 2 miles with a possible wet creek crossing. Bring water, snack, hat, and sunscreen, wear hiking boots, and be prepared for poison ivy growing along the mowed and trimmed trails. Contact Kathy McCormack ([VEFL21\(at\)yahoo.com](mailto:VEFL21(at)yahoo.com), (c) 698-9880) to register or if you have any questions.

Sunday, October 28
7:00 through lunch and beyond

Fall Bird Survey on Nancy Moore's property, "Acacia"

Join Anne Donovan and Nancy Moore as they survey fall migrants and year round residents on Nancy's property, located on the Pedernales River, near Dripping Springs. Participants will meet at the former Albertson's in Oak Hill (corner of #290 and #71) 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 email Anne at [ajdonovan\(at\)austin.rr.com](mailto:ajdonovan(at)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. 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

TAS Supporters!!

We thank these persons and groups who generously made recent contributions to Travis Audubon Society (as of press time):

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Jim deVries
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John Sunder

WARMS MY HEART

I would like to thank these folks who have eased my transition into this position, making my life easier and happier!
Nancy Manning

Paul Wheeler – Computer wizard and webmaster; for teaching me how to manage the web site, for troubleshooting, and making me laugh.

Chris Masey – Fix-it guy; for fixing my workstation so it is habitable for short people and for putting furniture together.

John Kelly – Historian and Idea man; There is not a question about TAS that John hasn't been able to answer for me. He knows it all and I thank him for his willingness to share it.

Sharon Bauer – Fast on the Draw lady; for her expertise and speed in aiding us in computer efficiency.

Doran Bradberry – Math guy; for helping me figure out accounting and budget issues when my eyes glaze over because it's math.

Marsha May and my daughter, **Sarah Garry** for helping me put together a filing system on the 4th of July.

Chuck Smith for the use of his strength and his truck.

Jean Nance for taking great pictures and sharing them.

Youth Birding Camp needs your help!

Please donate \$40 to sponsor a child for the Youth Birding Camp in October.

Send your donations to TAS,
PO Box 40787,
Austin, TX 78704.

Ongoing TAS Meetings

Program Committee: meets on the 2nd Monday of each month, contact: Ann Gardner, anngardner(at)hotmail.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(at)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: tessiebanks(at)msn.com

Education Committee classes

Odonate (Dragonflies, Damselflies) Identification

Dr. John Abbott will again teach this exciting class on identification of Odonates: dragonflies and damselflies. Lectures will be held at Brackenridge Field Laboratory (2907 Lake Austin Blvd.) in room 114. on September 4, 5, 11, and 12, from 7-9 pm. Local field trips will be held on the two Saturdays, September 8 and 15, from 9 am-2 pm. The class is designed for beginners and will focus on dragonflies and damselflies of the Austin area. Previous class members quickly became ardent enthusiasts and are making significant contributions to the knowledge of the distribution and status of the Odonates of Texas.

Dr. Abbott is Curator of Entomology for the Texas Natural Science Center (Texas Memorial Museum) at The University of Texas at Austin. He has authored many papers on aquatic insects, the book *Dragonflies and Damselflies of the South Central United States*, and is working on field guides for Texas odonates. He is also the editor for the *Odonata Survey of Texas* and *ARGIA*, the News Journal of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas. Dr. Abbott also sits on the IUCN (The World Conservation Union) Odonata Specialists Group and is President-Elect of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas. He is an avid nature photographer whose photographs have appeared in numerous calendars, magazines, and books (see www.aeshna.com).

The fee for the Odonates class is \$50 for local TAS members and \$65 for non-members. To register and receive further information about the class, contact Trent Miller at [Trent9719 \(at\) aol.com](mailto:Trent9719@att.net) or leave a message at 327-6454.

Bird Drawing I

Instructor - Linda Anderson

Have you ever wanted to sketch an unfamiliar bird in the field so you can identify it later, but you don't even try because you "couldn't draw a stick"? Despair not! Travis Audubon Society is now offering a bird-drawing class, and the instructor will show you just how much latent talent you really have.

Linda Anderson has taught bird drawing sessions at our Youth Birding Camps to rave reviews. She presented expanded workshops for adults on the same topic and the response was just as enthusiastic. You will learn the language of drawing, which is applicable to all objects although birds will be the focus of this workshop. The class will sharpen your observation skills and teach you to look at birds in an entirely new way. Supplies: You can purchase a set of drawing supplies the first night of class for approximately \$10, or the instructor will provide a list of supplies that you can purchase on your own. Please email Linda at [lindartist \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:lindartist@gmail.com) to order supplies or to obtain a list, so she can pre-buy your order. She has a 20% discount at Jerry's so order from Linda.

Dates: October 1 and 3 (M, W) 7-9 pm. Location: Cafeteria in the AGE building at 3710 Cedar Street; Austin, TX. Field trip: Saturday, October 6th, TBA morning. Location: Hornsby Bend

Bird Drawing II

Instructor - Linda Anderson

After many requests to expand the bird drawing class, Travis Audubon is now offering Bird Drawing II for students who have taken Bird Drawing I, or who have some experience with drawing. The class will focus on learning painting and illustration techniques. Students will work from drawings in the field made previously in the first class, and/or photographs. Drawing skills will be expanded and experimentation with various media will be offered. Supplies: bring your supply kit from the first class plus \$5 for supplementary supplies. Email Linda if you have questions: [lindartist \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:lindartist@gmail.com)

Dates: October 15 & 17 (M, W) 7-9 pm. Location: Cafeteria in the AGE building at 3710 Cedar Street; Austin, TX.

Beginning Birding Classes

If you enjoy seeing birds in your yard and want to learn to identify them, or if you've been looking for a new nature-oriented hobby, consider taking the beginning birding class. At the beginning of previous classes some participants have said that they don't have many birds in their yards. Invariably, toward the end of the series of classes the same participants have remarked that, in fact, they have lots of birds in their yard. Prior to taking the class, they just had not noticed the birds. Once again TAS will sponsor both a daytime and an evening series of classes for beginning birders. Participants may register for either series, and 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 is in her 8th year teaching the classes, which are designed to provide new birders with the techniques and skills to help them identify unfamiliar birds. 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 a location in northwest Austin. Field trips will be taken to various locations in Travis and nearby counties later in the same week as the classes. Trips begin early in the morning and end between noon and 2 pm.

Schedule for the Tuesday Afternoon Class

Lecture/slide presentations will be held from 1-3:30 pm on Oct. 23, Nov. 6, Nov. 27, and Dec. 4. Field trips will be on Thursdays beginning about 7am. The first two field trips will end about noon and the last two will end about 2 pm; the dates are Oct. 25, Nov. 8, Nov. 29, and Dec. 6.

Schedule for the Thursday Evening Class

Lecture/slide presentations will be held from 7-9:30 pm on Oct. 25, Nov. 8, Nov. 29, and Dec. 6. 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 2 pm; the dates are Oct. 27, Nov. 10, Dec. 1, and Dec. 8.

The class fee is \$55, and class size is limited, so register early, especially for the evening class, which always fills quickly. To register, send e-mail to Jean Martin at [begbird \(at\) austin.rr.com](mailto:begbird@att.net) or phone her at 343-7053. Be sure to specify whether you want to attend the class with the Wednesday afternoon lectures and Thursday field trips or the class with the Thursday evening lectures and Saturday field trips.

Early Notice - SPARROW IDENTIFICATION CLASS

Tentative dates are Wednesdays Nov 14 & 28, and Dec 5 & 12, 2007. The fall 2007 Sparrow Identification Class will be taught again by Byron Stone. His previous classes have received rave reviews! Byron has been an avid birder and listener since the early 1970s. He became interested in sparrows when he found his first Fox Sparrow in a mixed winter flock near Luling twenty-five years ago. He spent much of the intervening two decades trying to figure out how to tell all those "little brown birds" apart. He has traveled all parts of Texas to observe and listen to birds and has seen all of the sparrows that occur naturally in Texas. This class will focus on the two dozen members of the family Emberizidae that occur regularly in Central Texas – everything on your checklist between Spotted Towhee and Dark-eyed Junco. There will be four Wednesday-night lectures, each followed by a Saturday-morning field trip. Lectures will be from 7 to 9 pm on Nov. 14 & 28, and Dec 5 & 12, in north-central Austin. (Details will be provided with registration.)

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 \$75 for TAS members and \$90 for nonmembers. Contact Byron Stone, [drbirdie \(at\) aol.com](mailto:drbirdie@att.net) or 451-3380 to register for the class. The class is limited to twelve participants.

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 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) _____

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