Carter Smith is Our 2012 Honoree

Youth award also announced

Carter Smith, executive director of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD), has been named Travis Audubon’s Conservation Hero of 2012. Smith will be honored at a luncheon Oct. 27, 2012, at the Hyatt Regency, where he will be presented with the Victor Emanuel Conservation Award. The fundraiser will cap a 60th anniversary celebration for Travis Audubon.

Smith, an Austin native and biologist by training, was selected based on his remarkable record of land conservation. In his previous post as state director of The Nature Conservancy of Texas, he spearheaded a drive to protect almost 250,000 acres.

Since 2008, when he took the helm of TPWD, he has pursued additional park land, including the new Palo Pinto Mountains State Park near Fort Worth, the Devils River Ranch in West Texas, the 3 K’s Ranch in Bandera and Kendall counties, Fortress Cliffs along Palo Duro Canyon, and other strategic properties in Central, South, East, and West Texas. He has also focused on programs aimed at private land stewardship, children and families in nature, and invasive and exotic species control. In addition, he encourages urban populations to be more involved with state parks and other fish and wildlife-based recreation. At TPWD, he oversees a staff of 3,100, all working to steward the state’s lands, waters, fish, and wildlife for future generations.

Smith says he found his passion for wildlife and the outdoors as a youngster roaming his family’s farm and ranchland in Gonzales, Williamson, and Edwards counties. He earned a wildlife management degree from Texas Tech and a master’s in conservation biology from Yale. As a biologist, his projects have been as diverse as studying waterfowl in the Laguna Madre, pronghorn antelope in West Texas, and moose in the boreal forests of Saskatchewan.

At this year’s Conservation Awards Luncheon, Travis Audubon will inaugurate the Youth Conservation Award. Dotty Woods, a soon-to-be seventh grader at the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders, is the first recipient.

For Dotty’s devotion and hard work, she has been selected for Travis Audubon’s first Youth Conservation Award. The award will be presented Oct. 27, 2012, at the Victor Emanuel Conservation Awards luncheon, a fundraiser at the Hyatt Regency.

Dotty, who just completed sixth grade at the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders, is the daughter of William and Michael Shannon Woods. Community service has interested Dotty since age 5 when she had emergency treatment and hospitalization for pneumonia with complications. “After they saved my life, I donated my books to the hospital. Then I started a book drive. Last year we gave 20 boxes of books to Dell Children’s.”

Three years ago, Dotty visited Blair Woods with her fourth grade class at Norman Elementary, which takes part in Travis Audubon’s Explore & Restore Program. Dotty discovered she loved identifying plants and animals, and reading topographic maps. She also noticed her classmates were having a good time too. “They weren’t making fun of it like they usually do,” she recalls. “All of us were learning, but didn’t even know we were learning.” That’s when Dotty decided to become a regular volunteer at Blair Woods, which has been undergoing restoration for several years. Travis Audubon is transforming the property on Martin Luther King Boulevard by removing invasive plants, building walking trails, and restoring the natural ecology. The goal is to use the preserve for youth education. Dotty has her eye on a career as a marine biologist because she enjoys science and being close to nature. It worries her that many of her classmates don’t do more outside. “As kids get older, they seem to just crash on the couch and watch TV.”

After a long bus ride home each day, the first thing she does is to go outside and play with her dog. “It’s where I want to be because everything is interesting outside.” That’s one of the many reasons she’ll continue volunteering at Blair Woods. She enjoys the hard work and loves the fact that the volunteer crews have “just scooped me up and treated me like family.” Travis Audubon hopes Dotty remains a member of the family for a long time.

The awards luncheon will include remarks by Smith and a live auction to raise funds for the chapter’s conservation and education programs. This year’s Fund-a-Cause theme will be land conservation.
Mission Statement
Travis Audubon promotes the enjoyment, understanding, and conservation of native birds and their habitats.

From the Travis Audubon President

My mother had a passion for family history and genealogy. I did not fully appreciate her work on our heritage until I took a family history trip to South Carolina in 2003. In Columbia, I had the opportunity to visit the home once owned by another Caroline Clarkson in the family.

Family lore had it that as a young bride in the 1860s, she had used her diamond engagement ring to carve her nickname into the front parlor window. When I entered the home, I immediately went to that window and there it was—small but legible, the name “Carrie.” I have felt a connection to Carrie ever since and wondered how having her, a woman of the Civil War era, as my ancestor, defines my life as a 21st century woman.

As a 60-year-old organization, Travis Audubon has a rich history of its own. We have seen and read about our beginnings in photos and articles from the Austin History Center. We are fortunate to have members who count their memberships in decades, rather than solely in years. From them, we learn Travis Audubon’s history as they experienced it—what has changed, what core values remain the same.

By blending our long-term members with those who have joined more recently, the current membership can honor our history and live fully as members at this particular time, always remembering that all of our actions and decisions impact the future.

Caroline Clarkson Jones

About Signal Smoke

Signal Smoke is printed on recycled paper with soy ink.

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Newsletter Deadline
The submissions deadline is the first day of the month preceding the first month of publication (for example, June 1 for the July/August issue). Submit uncopyrighted articles, announcements, and art to Tess Sherman, tsherman1@austin.rr.com; or mail to 210 E. Walnut Dr., Austin, TX 78753. Submissions by email or on a CD are preferred but not required. Call Tess at 300-BIRD if you have questions.
Let us take you on a world-class birding and archeological adventure in the southern state of Chiapas, one of the last wilderness areas of Mexico. With unbelievable Maya archeological sites, you can explore for great birds as well as this lost culture of a highly advanced civilization. And what better time than during 2012, the year of the end date of a 5,125-year-long cycle in the Mesoamerican Long Count calendar.

Our itinerary travels in a clockwise fashion, beginning in Palenque, continuing to Frontera Corozal and Las Gucamayas, and finishes in San Cristóbal de las Casas. Each area boasts amazing Maya sites, cultural offerings, and a varied and colorful avian population. Among the birds we can expect to see are Chestnut-collared Araçari, Keel-billed Toucan, Blue-crowned Motmot, the Citreoline and Violaceous Trogons, Lovely Cotinga, and Green Honeycreeper. We expect to see Scarlet Macaw, the last known wild flock in Mexico. A river trip will show us Ornate Hawk-eagle and Howler Monkeys. And we’ll be looking for a Texas native, the Golden-cheeked Warbler, in their winter territory. The warbler is seen regularly around San Cristóbal.

Laurie Foss of JB Journeys will lead this group, and a donation will be made to Travis Audubon for each passenger. A full itinerary is available at www.jbjourneys.com. For more information, contact Laurie at 512-751-3677 or Jean Warneke at 512-217-4814, or email us at jbjourneys@yahoo.com.

Save the Date
Travis Audubon Society honors
Carter Smith
Saturday, October 27, 2012
Austin, Texas

Tickets can now be purchased online at:
www.travisaudubon.org/events/victor-emanuel-conservation-award-2012-carter-smith
Blair Woods Update

Judy Walther of Environmental Survey Consulting designed the original Explore and Restore program in 2009 and has spearheaded this program every year since. We now offer Explore and Restore to Norman Elementary twice per year and will begin the program for Pecan Springs Elementary in September 2012.

Each year Judy surprises us with something new. On April 13, 2012, the Norman Elementary kids were delighted to learn that the water quality-monitoring group would row to the center of the Blair Woods pond to obtain their water samples for analysis on the banks of the pond. Of course, all the kids got time on the pond during the restoration phase of the day, and some children were put to work removing the over-abundant duck weed in the pond. The children also put on their waders to plant aquatic native plants around the banks of the pond.

On April 26, 2012, Austin City Council Member Kathie Tovo presented a Proclamation to Travis Audubon and the children of Norman Elementary for the work the children are doing at Blair Woods and proclaimed “The Audubon/Norman Elementary Collaboration at Blair Woods as The Ecological Restoration Project of 2012.”

Nancy Manning

BAKER OPEN HOUSE 2012

What fun we had on April 15th, hosting 141 folks at Baker Open House! This year we offered many more children’s activities and served lunch for the first time. Although it was a very windy day, our intrepid guides led nature walks, and most hikers saw and heard Golden-cheeked Warblers. A total of 111 people participated in 15 hikes, coordinated by our amazing nature tour captain, Laurie Foss.

The majority of our guests were not Travis Audubon members, but neighbors of Baker Sanctuary. Most of them said they didn’t even know that the sanctuary was next door! Several joined Travis Audubon and some joined our new Friends of Baker group. The Friends group will be hosting quarterly hikes at Baker featuring birds, plants, geology, and more (see the mission statement below). If you live near Baker Sanctuary and would like to join this group, please contact Nancy at 512-300-BIRD.

Friends of Baker Sanctuary Mission Statement

Friends of Baker Sanctuary is a group of neighbors and supporters working in collaboration with Travis Audubon to educate the local community about the sanctuary and its purpose; to foster appreciation of the importance of the sanctuary to the natural world and the community’s quality of life; to offer educational nature programs to further the understanding of the sanctuary’s purpose; to work toward protecting and enhancing the natural resources of the sanctuary; to advocate in opposition to any project or activity that would adversely affect the environmental integrity of the sanctuary; and to raise funds to further these goals.
When the Travis Audubon Society (TAS) was formed in 1952, its members immediately elevated education and conservation to the top of their priorities. To recruit volunteers for these endeavors, the organization advertised “the most promising rewards for the energies expended.”

By 1954, Travis Audubon had worked with the city to establish Austin’s first nature trail. A year later, the Austin City Council declared Austin a “bird sanctuary” in a resolution that read: “It is the firm conviction of members of Travis Audubon Society that conservation affects profoundly the physical, spiritual and economic welfare of every man, woman and child everywhere and always, and … protection of birds in Austin is a conservation measure of utmost importance.” That same year, TAS and the city’s recreation department co-sponsored nature and wildlife films at Zilker Park Hillside Theater on summer evenings.

Members soon became advocates for backyard sanctuaries. The Signal Smoke newsletter, which debuted in 1954 with a name reminiscent of smoke signals used to warn of possible danger, urged members to “bird watch in your own backyard by providing water, food and protection for birds.” Native food-bearing vines, plants, and seedling trees were recommended.

In 1957, the Board of Directors adopted the emblem of the Golden-cheeked Warbler and added a drawing of the Central Texas native to the Signal Smoke masthead.

TAS members were well aware of conservation issues beyond their home turf. They went to bat for the whooping crane by following the bird population and advocating for its safety. Signal Smoke called attention to the plight of the threatened bird, which winters along the Texas coastline. When the Air Force proposed establishing an area off Matagorda Island for photo flash bombing, TAS filed a petition in protest.

In the early 1960s, the newsletter reported on a movement to make Padre Island a national seashore. TAS members sent op-ed pieces to newspapers in Central and East Texas, and wrote the U.S. House of Representatives to advocate for the park designation.

TAS also made a strong push for protection of the Golden Eagle and passed a resolution commending U.S. Sen. Ralph Yarborough of Texas for his support.

In a 1962 issue of Signal Smoke, TAS president Frank Oatman Jr. commented on the progress of the Padre Island proposal and the fight to protect the Golden Eagle (both of which succeeded).

“I am proud that the Audubon Societies have played a large part in this awakening to American’s natural heritage,” he said.

Jorjanna Price

Correction
We apologize for the error on page 3 of the May/June issue of Signal Smoke, where we intended to thank Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT) for their sponsorship of the March General Membership meeting. We are very grateful to VENT for their support!
A Day in Texas Woods: Tallichet Redux

One of the earliest accounts of Austin birdlife is by a young bird student, J. H. Tallichet, who made a long hike through Central and West Austin in 1892. He published his observations the same year in a note entitled “A Day in Texas Woods.” On May 5, as the 120th anniversary of his hike approached, I re-created Tallichet’s effort to gauge how changes in the Austin landscape might be reflected in its birdlife.

His detailed descriptions allow us to plot his pathway with some specificity. From downtown Austin, he walked north through the U.T. campus, thence through the “thinely settled suburbs” up to the edge of the vast prairie. Turning west, he made his way into the “cedar-clad, limestone hills,” eventually reaching the mouth of Bull Creek. His return path home took him along “the road that wound…between the [Colorado] river and steep canyon walls.” For my re-creation, I drove an approximation of his route and spent considerable time on foot as I birded urban habitats, as well as various parks and other open space along the way.

Tallichet mentions 45 bird species; I encountered a total of 67 species but only 27 are shared on both lists. Many of the missing ones are indicators of major environmental shifts. Prairie species such as bobwhite and meadowlarks have been pushed out of the city. Birds of savannahs and brush country such as Lark and Field Sparrow have also been crowded out or, as with the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, have adapted to new sorts of urban “edge” habitats. Austin is a much more heavily-wooded city now. Thus I still found woodland denizens like Great Crested Flycatcher and Red-bellied Woodpecker in the modern suburban landscape.

Tallichet found a Golden-cheeked Warbler as he entered the hills west of town. This species still hangs on in some of the wooded canyon slopes just west of the Balcones Fault. He mentions that, among other

Due to conservations efforts from the 1970s to the present, there are still a few enclaves of Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat on the western edge of urban Austin. Photo credit: Chuck Sexton

Tallichet’s estimated pathway on May 6, 1892, is shown in green with green pins marking probable landmarks along his route. The yellow path and pins show my reconstruction of the route (by car and on foot) on May 5, 2012. Base photography from Google Earth.
species, Black-capped Vireos were “always in sight” in the canyons, but this endangered bird has now declined and withdrawn from the edge of the city as its specialized brushy habitat has been lost. I encountered Golden-cheeks but no vireos on my journey.

Blue Jay. Perhaps most remarkable, I enumerated six common nesting species which had not even arrived in Tallichet’s era: White-winged Dove, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Cave Swallow, European Starling, House Finch, and House Sparrow.

Every one of these has an interesting story to tell, but perhaps most remarkable is that of the White-winged Dove. This species has faced many ups and downs in its native South Texas habitats. Then late in the 20th Century, out of Mexico came a new breed of urban-adapted White-wings, island hopping from town to town northward. The species first nested in Austin in 1985. By the 1990s, large suburban roosts of White-wings were turning heads. And now on the 120th anniversary of Tallichet’s review, the White-winged Dove may lay claim to being the most conspicuous bird species in Austin, out-numbering even Great-tailed Grackles in many suburban yards.

Chuck Sexton

[An extended version of this article, with additional photos, is available on the Travis Audubon website.]
The first of this year’s many visitors to Chaetura Canyon arrived on the third and fourth Sundays in April. The Texas Outdoor Women’s Network (TOWN) filled the breakfast and lunch tables on the deck, with two-hour hikes of the entire canyon sandwiched neatly between meals. These back-to-back weekends are consistently filled to capacity with participants that are curious about, and appreciative of, everything that the canyon has to offer.

The first brood of Canyon Wrens fledged early in the month. The industrious parents quickly began constructing a second nest in their traditional second location on the north side of the residence.

On the last weekend in April, members of the Chaetura Canyon Management Committee were pleased to host Caroline Jones, our new Travis Audubon president, for a tour of all the properties that currently comprise the sanctuary. We were not pleased to discover a sizeable patch of Malta Star Thistle—these invasive, non-native plants did not survive the week.

By May 1st most of the Chimney Swift pairs were producing eggs and noisily visiting their neighbors’ towers for “tumble and peak” glimpses of each other’s families to be. While the swifts and other avian residents were preparing to care for their new arrivals, we were also deep in preparations for the arrival of guests for the annual “Chalupas and Chimney Swifts” Tex-Mex buffet and fundraiser. Paul was working feverishly to make the ongoing construction on Phase 2 of the new access ramps acceptable for guests (more about this project in the next issue of Signal Smoke.) Georgean was busily cooking up her many specialties, including hand-made tamales, empanadas, marigold mint roasted corn salad, and Texas pecan pralines, to name a few. When the evening of May 19th rolled around, we had a record number of guests munching the great food, wandering the upper canyon trails, and enjoying each other’s company. As dark enveloped the canyon, everyone reveled in the spectacle of the swifts going to roost as a finale to a truly fine evening. The official count was 35 humans/56 Chimney Swifts. One guest who has never missed the annual event beamed: “It just keeps getting better every year!”

May ended on several very special notes. The second brood of four Canyon Wren fledglings emerged from their nest to spill out over the walkways of the residence. Older Carolina Wren siblings played “Tug-a-Bug” with mealworms from the special feeder on the front deck and color-morphing Northern Cardinals seemed to fill the shrubbery around the sunflower seed feeders as they begged their harried parents for food.

It has been a wonderful spring for flora, fauna, and folks at Chaetura Canyon. Come see for yourselves!

Georgean and Paul Kyle
Sanctuary Stewards

Photos from top:
TOWN Austin group
Photo credit: Gloria Blagg

TOWN Bastrop group
Photo credit: Belinda Goertz

Chalupas and Chimney Swifts
Photo credit: Paul Kyle
If I had to pick a favorite month for Baker Sanctuary, May would be that month. The weather is pleasantly mild with only hints of the summer heat to come and, given a bit of luck, water can be found flowing in most of the creeks. The spring rains also fuel the greening of vegetation which is nicely offset by the late spring blooms of Firewheels, Brown-eyed Susans, and Slender-leaf Hymenoxys – a far cry from the muted landscape that will emerge as the summer heat takes hold. Flitting amongst the junipers and oaks can be found harried Golden-cheeked Warblers ceaselessly feeding their vocal brood of fledglings as they fatten up for their eventual long migration south. By May the sanctuary is teeming with the calls of our summer residents such as the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Summer Tanager, and Painted Bunting, to name a few. Best of all, it is also treasure-hunting season, when a leisurely hike can result in the spotting of a Blackburnian, Nashville, Black-throated Green, or Wilson’s Warbler, amongst others. While I do reserve the right to change my mind in the future, for now I am sticking with May as the premier month at Baker Sanctuary.

Last year’s drought was rough on the trees. While it is difficult to see a pattern in survivorship, juniper trees in exposed areas, especially younger trees, experienced considerable mortality. In addition to the more exposed trees, there are also large swaths of junipers in several interior areas of the preserve that have died. Oaks of all species also did not fair well in 2011, but since they are more dispersed than the juniper, their mortality is not as readily apparent. Golden-cheeked Warblers need the oaks as well as juniper, and one could argue that since we have far fewer oaks, every one lost is of concern. To add insult to injury, Travis County, along with 10 other counties in Central Texas, is currently under ‘outbreak’ status for a plump critter called the Central Texas Leaf-katydid, aka Truncated True Katydid – aka Red Katydid – take your pick – or you could just refer to it by its Latin name, Paracyrtophyllus robustus. My personal favorite is ‘croach’, coined by Travis Audubon member Brenda Ladd, due to their resemblance of a cross between a roach and a cricket. The croach is always present in Central Texas, usually only detected by its singing during the months of May thru August. In fact, in non-outbreak years, they are difficult to find because their green bodies blend in well with their preferred food source, oak leaves. This year is an exception. For some reason during outbreak years, the body of the croach turns a lovely hue of pink and they can be found everywhere. A walk through the woods yields a wave of croaches preceding the hiker as they slowly motivate their plump bodies out of the way. They fall out of trees, they stare at you from twigs and branches, and their little bodies can be found squished on the road (much to the delight of roadrunners).

So, the oaks that managed to survive the drought will now have to endure being munched by croaches. While they have been known to defoliate oaks during severe outbreaks, I have not yet seen evidence of defoliation at Baker, but it is apparent the canopies of many oaks are being substantially thinned; whether this process will eventually result in cases of complete defoliation remains to be seen. I asked my son Braeden what we should do about the croaches and he suggested we just shake all the trees so they fall out and then feed them to the chickens. We could give it a try, but we would certainly need more volunteers.

The native plant garden at the Jackie Arnold Education Center (JAEC) experienced its second work day in early May. I had hoped to get at least half the bed weeded in preparation for mulching and, at first, it seemed as if even that goal would be impossible since only two Travis Audubon members signed up to work. Luckily Bruce Layman rounded up six volunteers from Boy Scout Troop 202 at the last minute and they came ready to work. We raked, pulled, twisted, dug, and harangued a veritable forest of weeds for three solid hours. At the end of the day, 75% of the bed had been weeded. I am very thankful to the crew that helped that day; we accomplished more than I thought possible. When the Golden-cheeks leave in July or so, another workday will be held at JAEC to chip and spread the mulch in addition to weeding the remainder of the bed. If you are interested in helping, keep an eye out for upcoming eBlasts – don’t make the scouts do all the work.

Christopher Murray, Baker Sanctuary Steward
512-219-8425 or christophermurra@hotmail.com

Thank you to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center for the donation of 39 native plants for the landscaping project to take place this fall at the Jackie Arnold Education Center at Baker Sanctuary.

Above: Slender-leaf Hymenoxys. Upper right: Central Texas Leaf-Katydid
Photo credits: Christopher Murray

Above: Baker Sanctuary News
Due to the large number of events and limited space in Signal Smoke, readers are asked to visit the Field Trips page at www.travisaudubon.org for complete trip details and possible updates. Although emails to the registrar are preferred, those who do not have email access can register for any field trip by contacting Jeff Patterson at jepbird@att.net or 512-487-2755.

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### Travis Audubon Field Trips - July 2012 - At a Glance

<table>
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<th>Date and Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Limit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, July 13, 8:00 pm to 9:00 pm</td>
<td>Purple Martin Roost at Highland Mall</td>
<td>Every summer in mid-to-late July an amazing natural phenomenon occurs at a very unlikely location. For some unknown reason, thousands (or more likely hundreds of thousands) of Purple Martins come together and roost in the three live oak trees in the parking lot of Wells Fargo Bank on the north side of Highland Mall. Watching them gather and then roost for the night is spectacular. Lawn chairs and binoculars are optional. We’ll be watching from the Highland Mall parking lot across from Wells Fargo at 300 E Highland Mall Blvd on Friday and Saturday nights for three weekends in July. No registration is required, so join us for one night or all six nights! If you have questions, contact Shelia Hargis at <a href="mailto:shelia.hargis@gmail.com">shelia.hargis@gmail.com</a> or 512-294-0272.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Shelia Hargis</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shelia.hargis@gmail.com">shelia.hargis@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, July 14 7:00 am and 4:00 pm</td>
<td>Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend</td>
<td>This event is sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Conservatory. All levels of birders are welcome and no registration is required. Contact Eric Carpenter at <a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a> for more information. For information, maps, and eBird data about this location, visit Central Texas Birding.</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Eric Carpenter</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>Purple Martin Roost at Highland Mall</td>
<td>See the event details for July 13.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Shelia Hargis</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shelia.hargis@gmail.com">shelia.hargis@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, July 15, 6:30 am to 11:00 am</td>
<td>Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, co-sponsored by TA and Friends of Balcones Canyonlands NWR</td>
<td>Please join us for a different type of field trip at the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge. Bring your favorite lawn chair and join us for a morning of sitting in the shade, watching and discussing bird behavior, practicing your fledgling ID skills, and practicing your birding-by-ear skills. If you haven’t figured it out yet, this trip is NOT strenuous so if our usual “moderately strenuous” statement has scared you off from other Refuge field trips, this might be the perfect field trip for you! The trip is limited to 20 participants and reservations are required. If you’re interested, reserve your spot online at <a href="http://www.friendsofbalcones.org">www.friendsofbalcones.org</a>. After you register, you will receive more details on the trip. For further questions, contact Shelia Hargis at <a href="mailto:shelia.hargis@gmail.com">shelia.hargis@gmail.com</a> or 512-294-0272.</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>See the event details for July 13.</td>
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<td>Shelia Hargis</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shelia.hargis@gmail.com">shelia.hargis@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>Saturday, July 21 7:30 am -11:00 am</td>
<td>Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Walk</td>
<td>Join us to explore Austin’s premier birding site. All levels of birders are welcome and no registration is required. For information, maps, and eBird data about this location, visit Central Texas Birding.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Stager</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>See the event details for July 13.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, August 10, 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm</td>
<td>Multiple Chimney Swift Roosts Across Austin</td>
<td>Purple Martins aren’t the only species to gather in large groups before heading south. Chimney Swifts do it too, just a little later in the summer and in numerous locations across Austin. Join us as we participate in &quot;A Swift Night Out,&quot; an annual continent-wide event of the Driftwood Wildlife Association and our Chimney Swift heroes Paul and Georgean Kyle. The event, held over one weekend in August and one weekend in September, raises awareness about swifts and plays a vital role in determining population trends. Check out <a href="http://www.chimneyswifts.org/">www.chimneyswifts.org/</a> for more information. Lawn chairs and binoculars are recommended. We’ll have teams at several roost sites on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, August 10 – 12. Registration is required, but there is no limit to the number of participants so join us for one night or all three nights!</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Shelia Hargis</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shelia.hargis@gmail.com">shelia.hargis@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, August 11, 7:00 am and 4:00 pm</td>
<td>Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend</td>
<td>This event is sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Conservancy. All levels of birders are welcome and no registration is required. Contact Eric Carpenter at <a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a> for more information. For information, maps, and eBird data about this location, visit Central Texas Birding.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Carpenter</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, August 11, 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm</td>
<td>Multiple Chimney Swift Roosts Across Austin</td>
<td>See the event details for August 10.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Shelia Hargis</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shelia.hargis@gmail.com">shelia.hargis@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, August 12, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm</td>
<td>Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, co-sponsored by TA and Friends of Balcones Canyonlands NWR</td>
<td>Plants and people tend to take a breather at this time of year. Although as of May, we’ve had good rains and all the plants, insects, birds, herps and mammals are pretty happy, we can count on it being hot and dry in August. What a great time to meet with Diane Sherrill, local native plant landscaper and property restoration consultant, to talk about all the changes in our landscape over the past year. We’ll start in the air conditioning, and Diane will talk about drought tolerance, wildlife values of various native plants, and landscaping values of those plants. Bring your questions, and any “mystery plants” you’d like identified. Bring sturdy walking shoes, water, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent, a lot of curiosity, and an eagerness to learn and share. Details and directions will be provided upon registration.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Diane Sherrill</td>
<td><a href="mailto:NativeEarthscapes@gmail.com">NativeEarthscapes@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, August 12, 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm</td>
<td>Multiple Chimney Swift Roosts Across Austin</td>
<td>See the event details for August 10.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Shelia Hargis</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shelia.hargis@gmail.com">shelia.hargis@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, August 18, 7:00 am to 9:30 am</td>
<td>Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Walk</td>
<td>Join us to explore Austin’s premier birding site. All levels of birders are welcome and no registration is required. For information, maps, and eBird data about this location, visit Central Texas Birding.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Stager</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jepbird@att.net">jepbird@att.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, August 19, 7:00 am to 9:30 am</td>
<td>Shorebird Primer</td>
<td>Join Jeff Patterson and Ken Zaslow for a brief shorebird review at Hornsby Bend. We will start in the CER at 7:00am with a brief discussion on which shorebirds to expect in central Texas during fall migration. Then we will proceed to the ponds to see what's what. This short excursion will try to beat the heat by finishing by about 9:30am. Limited to 15 people so please sign up by contacting Jeff Patterson at <a href="mailto:jepbird@att.net">jepbird@att.net</a> or by calling 512-487-2755.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jeff Patterson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jepbird@att.net">jepbird@att.net</a></td>
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<td>Tuesday, August 21, 7:30 am to 9:30 am</td>
<td>Two-hour Tuesday at Hornsby Bend led by Ken Zaslow</td>
<td>Tread the late summer doldrums with a search for migrant shorebirds at the Hornsby Bend ponds. Take Hwy 71 east, turn left at the first light past the airport (FM973), continue north about one mile and take paved left into Hornsby Bend. Turn right after the first gate into the parking lot at the Ecological Research Center. No registration required.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ken Zaslow</td>
<td><a href="mailto:khz@att.net">khz@att.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, September 8, Swift Fest in Jonestown (2:00 – 8:00 PM) Annual Swift Count (7:00 – 8:15 PM)</td>
<td>Swift Fest in Jonestown + Annual Swift Count</td>
<td>Join us for Swift Fest in Jonestown, a Community celebration to protect and promote the swifts of Jonestown featuring live music, an environmentally themed art show, and craft activities that will culminate with the return of the swifts to their historic cistern colony at dusk. We will 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 <a href="http://www.chimneyswifts.org">www.chimneyswifts.org</a> for details) and we will be submitting our count data from this field trip. The viewing area for the Chimney Swift roost is wheelchair accessible. The festival starts at 2:00 PM, so feel free to come early and enjoy art and music before counting the swifts. No reservation is required, but you can contact Kathy McCormack (<a href="mailto:VEFL21@yahoo.com">VEFL21@yahoo.com</a>, or 512-698-9880) if you have any questions.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td><a href="mailto:VEFL21@yahoo.com">VEFL21@yahoo.com</a></td>
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Travis Audubon Classes

Feather Identification
Saturday, July 7; 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Learn everything you need to know to master bird feather identification with Dave Scott, author of Bird Feathers: A Guide to North American Species. This class will teach participants to identify feathers that they find in the field through a combination of shape, size, and color. Dave will share all of the information necessary to unlock the mysteries found within a single feather. This class will not only teach you how to identify feathers but will help you understand an incredible amount about the flight, lives, and habits of the world’s bird species. Knowledge of wing morphology and feather identification is an amazing addition to your birding tool box, and this class will provide you with a great start.

Dave Scott is a skilled wildlife tracker and naturalist who has been involved in environmental education since 2003. Dave’s focus as an educator is to help his students reconnect with the natural world through wildlife tracking, increased sensory awareness, wilderness survival skills, and the development of a strong sense of place. Dave is the founder of Earth Native Wilderness School in Austin, where he currently teaches courses on bird feather identification, wildlife tracking, wilderness survival, and ecology. For more information, visit www.EarthNativeSchool.com. Autographed copies of Bird Feathers: A Guide to North American Species will be available for purchase at the class; cash or check accepted.

The class will be half lecture/PowerPoint and half hands-on feather identification using field guides. Dave will be bringing feathers from over 50 species occurring in North America for students to identify in small groups during the second half of the class. The workshop is limited to 36 participants and will be held on Saturday, July 7, from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm in a southeast Austin location. Plan to bring your lunch to eat on-site. Tuition is $45 for TA members and $60 for non-members. Register online at www.travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/feather-identification-class. For more information contact Shelia Hargis at shelia.hargis@gmail.com or at 294-0272.

Hummingbird Identification
Tuesdays, August 7, 14; 6:30 – 9:00 pm

Central Texans have a wealth of hummingbirds visiting us each year. From our nesting Ruby-throated and Black-chinned Hummingbirds to the elusive visitors like Broad-billed Hummingbirds and Green-breasted Mango, Central Texas hummingbirds can be a challenge to identify. This class will introduce the fifteen hummingbird species that have been seen in Central Texas. Mark Klym will discuss their ranges, habitat, and frequency of occurrence, and will emphasize those characteristics that can be used for effective identification, and sounds that can be used for locating and differentiating these birds. Each species will be examined in detail, looking at key diagnostic features, and compared to similar, often confusing species.

Mark Klym is Coordinator of the Texas Hummingbird Roundup and Texas Wildscapes programs for Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD). He is also co-author of Hummingbirds of Texas (Texas A&M Press, 2005). No prior birding experience is necessary. Participants will receive a Hummingbird Roundup kit from TPWD as well as other handouts. Two lecture sessions will be held on Tuesday evenings August 7 and 14 from 6:30 to 9:00 pm at a southeast Austin location. An optional field trip to the Fort Davis area will be offered August 17-19. Tuition for the class is $40 for TA members and $55 for non-members. For those who go on the field trip, there will be an additional fee to cover Mark’s expenses. For more information or to register for the class, contact Frances Cerbins at tacles@yahoo.com. Field trip size limit: 12.

Shorebird Identification
Thursdays, July 26, August 2, August 16; 6 – 8 pm
Saturday Field Trips: July 28, August 4
Field Trip to Coast: August 18-19

Sandpipers and plovers are a fascinating group of birds. They undertake some of the most spectacular long-distance migrations of any animals (radio-tagged Bar-tailed Godwits have recently been recorded flying over 6,200 non-stop miles in six-and-a-half to seven-and-a-half days!) and are already moving southward through our area. Can you tell which of those little brown birds on the mudflats at Hornsby Bend are which?

If not, Tim Fennell’s Shorebird Identification Class is a great way for intermediate birders to learn how to distinguish between Least, Semipalmated, and Western Sandpipers, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, and other similar shorebirds. Tim teaches science at the Liberal Arts and Science Academy High School in Austin and has been teaching the Shorebird Identification Class for Travis Audubon since 1998.

Class lectures will take place from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Thursdays July 26, August 2 and August 16 at a southeast Austin location. There will be local field trips (most likely to Hornsby Bend, Granger Lake or Lake Buchanan) on Saturdays, July 28 and August 4, and an optional trip to the Texas coast on the weekend of August 18-19.

The tuition is $75 for TA members and $85 for non-members. For those who go to the coast, there will be an additional fee to cover Tim’s expenses. This should range from $30 to $45, depending upon how many sign up for the coast trip. Register online at www.travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/tas-shorebirds-identification-with-tim-fennell. For more information, contact Jane Tillman at mljt@mail.utexas.edu.
**Baker Sanctuary Hands-On Gardening**

Saturday, Sept 29, 2012; 8:30 am – 12:30 pm

If you want to learn more about native, organic, sustainable gardening in Central Texas while helping to restore the planting beds at Travis Audubon’s Baker Sanctuary, be sure to sign up for this class! Diane Sherrill, owner of NativeEarthscapes, will discuss the principles of earth-friendly gardening—why natives are so important; gardening in arid conditions; helping the birds and other wildlife with your gardening choices (all of them!); the basics of organic gardening. Diane will also talk about the design principles she used in the beds at Baker. Then you will get hands-on experience as you plant the garden that will soon be the showcase of the county! The hard work has already been done—you will just have the joy of putting these beautiful and useful plants in the earth. Diane will be on hand for one-on-one questions and explanations. Feel the thrill of accomplishment while you learn. The class will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 29, 2012.

Tuition for the class is $20 for Travis Audubon members and $25 for non-members. Register online at www.travisaudubon.org/home/?page_id=23. For information, contact Diane Sherrill at nativeearthscapes@gmail.com. Class limit: 12.

**Odonate Identification**

Tuesdays and Thursdays, September 25, 27, and October 2, 4, 2012; 7 – 9 pm

Field Trip: Saturday, October 6, 2012; 9 am – 2 pm

Dr. John Abbott, Curator of Entomology for the Texas Natural Science Center (Texas Memorial Museum) at the University of Texas, will once again be teaching this popular class. He is editor-in-chief and past president of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas, and the author of *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Texas and the South-Central United States*, *Damselflies of Texas*, and five volumes of the Texas Dragonfly Atlas, along with numerous papers. The lecture portion of the class will meet in downtown Austin and the field trip will be at a nearby park. There will be easy walking on the field trip, and close-focusing binoculars are encouraged. The class fee is $60 for TA members, $70 for non-members.

To register go to www.travisaudubon.org/home/?page_id=23. For information, contact Kathy McCormack at VEFL21@yahoo.com or 512 698-9880. Class limit 15.

**Trees and Shrubs for Birders**

Wednesdays, Sept 12 and 19; 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Field Trips: Saturdays, Sept 15 and 22; 8 am - noon

This class is for everyone who’s ever missed seeing a bird, or missed getting others on their bird, because they couldn’t identify the tree correctly. We will cover a couple dozen of the most common trees and shrubs in Central Texas. Knowing these species will enable you to recognize at least 90% of what you’ll see in the area. The class will focus on identification in the field, and NOT on botany or any fine points of taxonomy.

The class will be held on two consecutive Wednesday evenings, September 12 and September 19, 2012, 6:30-8:30 pm, at a NW Austin location, with field trips on the following Saturday mornings.

The class will be taught by Diane Sherrill, a local native plant landscaper and property restoration consultant. Diane is a member and former president (1999) of the Williamson County Native Plant Society of Texas. She is also a member of Travis Audubon and longtime volunteer and tour leader for Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge.

Participants will need to bring paper and a pen to the classroom sessions. Binoculars, hats, sturdy closed-toed shoes, sunscreen, and water are needed for the field trips. Tuition for the class is $50 for TA members and $65 for non-members. Participants will be provided with additional information about the class and directions to the meeting place when they register.

The PowerPoint presentation will be available for printing by students. It is recommended that students purchase *Trees, Shrubs and Vines of the Texas Hill Country* by Jan Wrede, prior to class start. Register online at www.travisaudubon.org/home/?page_id=23. For information contact Diane Sherrill at nativeearthscapes@gmail.com.

Watch the TA Website for additions and changes. A Fall Warbler class will be announced in July.
**Wildscaping the AGE Building**

On the grounds of Elderhaven, the adult daycare center in the Austin Groups for the Elderly (AGE) Building, Travis Audubon’s Urban Habitat Committee has been hard at work heading up a project that will enhance the beauty of this special place.

Urban Habitat Committee members and other collaborating volunteers created a butterfly/hummingbird garden and prepared a site for the installation of a wildscape that will contain native Texas, bird-friendly plants. They eliminated 3,600 square feet of lawn on the south and east sides of the building and added to the south side a birdbath, butterfly puddling station, trellises, and a decomposed granite path. They also installed over 40 species of native Texas plants. The south yard now meets the requirements of a National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Certified Wildlife Habitat. The areas that will be wildscaped border the Elderhaven wing and entrance, as well as the main public entrance to the AGE Building.

AGE, located at 3710 Cedar Street, is a non-profit serving over 3,000 seniors and their families every year. Elderhaven specializes in providing daytime care to the frail elderly and those with memory problems, and giving respite to their family caregivers. The south yard is an important gathering place for 40-plus clients each day. The garden is already enriching the daily lives of these clients, who also help maintain it.

Why native plants? Why this location? Why this institution?
The Urban Habitat Committee consists of NWF Habitat Stewards, who are dedicated to promoting the use of native plants and gardening for wildlife. Travis Audubon’s office is housed at the AGE building, and the grounds will be used as demonstration gardens for Travis Audubon and NWF Habitat Steward classes. AGE personnel are very supportive and welcoming and have been directly involved in every aspect of this project.

The AGE Building covers three city blocks in Central Austin and houses several non-profits. Thus, the wildscaping project has a wide audience, serving as a model for neighbors and those who work in or visit the building, hopefully inspiring them to reduce their lawns and plant native plants.

This project is a collaboration among several different individuals and groups. Volunteers who contributed to the project include: Urban Habitat Committee members, Elderhaven and AGE staff and clients, City of Austin LEAPS participants, City of Austin Wildlands Park Ranger Erin Cord, Dell employees, and family members of other volunteers.

A grant from the Austin chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas covered the wholesale cost of most of the plants for the south yard. Prairiewood Landscaping provided those plants and donated additional plants and their installation. The Natural Gardener donated mulch and decomposed granite for the south yard, and First Capital Environmental Services, LLC, donated the pick-up and delivery of those materials. Organics by Gosh provided the mulch for the east side at a reduced price. Austin Wood Recycling donated 15 bags of native mulch. Baker Sanctuary donated specially-cut cedar posts for a trellis, and Urban Habitat Committee members donated various plants and materials. Cash donations were made by Dell and the Elderhaven Director of Finance. We couldn’t have done all this without these wonderful volunteers and donors!

Lynn Hill

**UHC members:** Sue Anderson, Lynn Hill, Meredith O’Reilly, Julie Sanford, Jane Tillman, Nancy Townsend, and Ashley Williams

**Elderhaven and AGE staff and clients:** Stephanie Hoffman, Teri Eidelbach, Chris Leto, and Bob Unger

**City of Austin LEAPS participants:** Allison Dietzel, Tiffany Hodge, LeAnn Ishcomer, and Kenneth Penson

**NWF Habitat Stewards and former UHC members:** Anne Bellomy, Cathy Nordstrom, Joan Rivers, and Zoila Vega-Marchena

30 to 40 Dell Inc. employees

First Capital Environmental Services, LLC

Prairiewood Landscaping

David Heberling
1212 Dunstan Drive, Austin, TX 78745
512-922-3744

Austin Wood Recycling info@ austinwoodrecycling.com
Ph: 512-259-7430 Fx: 512-259-6482

Organics by Gosh

The Natural Gardener

512-288-6113
8648 Old Bee Caves Road
www.naturalgardeneraustin.com

14 SIGNAL SMOKE / Jul/Aug 2012
Travis Audubon greatly appreciates a grant from the RAM Foundation of Paris, Texas in the amount of $2,500 for new computers for our office. We also extend our gratitude to the Winkler Foundation for their generous grant of $6,000 to fund our future “Hiking Club” at Baker Sanctuary, an after school nature education program for Deer Creek Elementary (Leander ISD) students. And we thank Audubon Foundation of Texas for contributing $1,000 for the creation of a native plant garden at the Jackie Arnold Education Center at Baker Sanctuary.

Many thanks to all our donors – your support is critical to the ongoing conservation and education efforts of Travis Audubon.

Viero
Julie Byers
Joan Hilgers
Lynn Hill
David Killen
Jane Little
Sally Means
Michael Savercool

Bird-a-thon
R. Michael Anderson
Barbara Anderson
Bonnie Anderson
Robert & Cynthia Anderson
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Jim Arnold
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Marc Bernat
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Nell Martin
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Evelyn Monnich
Leslie Morris
Priscilla Murr
Jean Nance
Shirley Norwood
Janel Nye
Julie O’Brien
Dennis Palafax
Laura Paulson
Stan & Diane Powers
Margaret Price
Jorjanna Price
Mary Helen Quinn
Jeffrey Raasch
Mary Lou Ramsey
Maggie Ramsey Burnett
Jeff Richardson
Sharon Richardson
Fernando Rodriguez
William & Peggy Sakach
Diana Seidel
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Mark Wilson
Stu Wilson
Walter Wright
Scott Young
Ken & Barbara Zaslow

Warbler
Caroline Jones
Rose Ann Reeser

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Marsha McCary
Priscilla Murr
Mrs. Greg Owens
Beverly Policano
Sally Scott
Jane Tillman & Mark Lyon
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Katherine William

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Donations for expansion of Chaetura Canyon in honor of Valarie Bristol
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Enclosed is my check for:

☐ $10  Youth Membership (up to age 18)
☐ $30  Individual Membership
☐ $45  Family Membership
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☐ $100 Vireo Membership (embroidered patch of Vireo, bumper sticker)
☐ $250 Warbler Membership (embroidered patch of Warbler, one free class, VIP field trip)
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