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On the cover: Male American Robin, December, Ohio • Photo by Bill Reiner
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### Welcome!

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Welcome to the Flock

Travis Audubon is happy to welcome Joan Marshall as our new Executive Director. Joan was most recently the Director of the Bullock Texas State History Museum and brings over 20 years of experience in the nonprofit world. Joan is a native Texan — from Fort Worth — and received her Master in Business Administration from the University of Texas. You can reach Joan at: Joan@TravisAudubon.org or call her at: 512-300-BIRD.
**Monthly Meetings**

**Birds and Water in Texas with Karen Huber**

**Thursday, January 15, 2015**

Time: Doors at 6:30 PM; Meeting at 7:00 PM  
Location: Hyde Park Christian Church  
610 E 45th St., Austin, TX 78751

The health of Texas bays and estuaries, as well as the health of our rivers and springs, impact the lives of birds. How we handle water in the future will be critical to their survival. Former Travis County Commissioner Karen Huber will highlight the challenges and opportunities we face as Texas’ population grows and water needs rise. The current state of water law, the uncertain future of Whooping Cranes, and simple actions all of us can take to reduce water use will be covered in this thought-provoking, informative talk.

Karen Huber is a sixth generation Texan, born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley. She has a B.A. from UT-Austin and M.A. from the University of North Texas. Her professional experience includes agri-business, real estate development, economic development, and management consulting to electric, water/wastewater utilities. Also she served as a Travis County commissioner from 2009 to 2012. A common theme in her professional and personal endeavors has been “water,” scoring many victories on behalf of Texas’ natural resources. She currently is an Adjunct Professor at the UT-LBJ School of Public Affairs, teaching a graduate course on Texas water policy.

Karen and husband Leonard Huber have lived on Lick Creek in far western Travis County since 1995, where they harvest rainwater.

**Snowy Owls: Spectacular Nomads of the Far North with Denver Holt**

**Thursday, February 19, 2015**

Time: Doors at 6:30 PM; Meeting at 7:00 PM  
Location: Hyde Park Christian Church  
610 E 45th St., Austin, TX 78751

International owl expert Denver Holt will be in Austin to present on Snowy Owls, one of the bird world’s most captivating predators. His talk will center on the breeding ecology of these spectacular nomads, based on his 20 years of Snowy Owl research in Barrow, Alaska. Denver will also address the Snowy Owl invasion that occurred last winter and its causes. Denver is an enthusiastic and entertaining speaker in demand by birding organizations and festivals. Join us for this special event, made possible by Austin-based Victor Emanuel Nature Tours.

Denver is among the world’s top owl researchers and experts. A graduate of the University of Montana, he is the founder and president of the Owl Research Institute and the Ninepipes Wildlife Research Center, a nonprofit in Charlo, Montana. Since 1978, Denver has been doing long-term field studies on owls and their ecology, with special focus on Snowy, Long-eared, and Northern Pygmy-Owls.
Sanctuary News
Once again, it was a busy year at Baker Sanctuary. The summary below is by no means an exhaustive list but it does offer a glimpse into the activities of 2014.

The annual Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) survey yielded an adjusted total of 8.5 territories present in and around the 100-acre study plot. This total is a bit lower than the approximate ten territories observed since the 2010 season however, with a total of 22 fledglings observed in and around the 100-acre plot, observed fecundity was elevated compared to prior seasons. There is no one obvious reason why the total adjusted territory number was depressed for 2014; one possible factor may have been the severe cold snap experienced on March 2 when overnight temperatures dropped to 20º F, possibly adversely affecting arthropod prey items. Another factor may have been low productivity in the previous breeding season. During the 2013 survey a total of 17 fledglings were observed, the fewest detected since the initiation of the population viability study in 2011. If productivity was depressed in 2013 there would likewise have been fewer individuals available to return for the 2014 season. Another explanation may simply be observer bias since the designation of ‘full’ or ‘edge’ status depends solely on the males’ position when he is discovered and recorded by the observer. If the total number of territories is considered regardless of status designation, the 100-acre plot supported twelve territories in 2014, a number quite similar to the fourteen, twelve, and fifteen territories documented in 2013, 2012, and 2011 respectively. More importantly, the observed productivity of 22 fledglings for the 2014 season was the second highest amount documented in the past nine years, surpassed only by the 38 fledglings recorded for the 2012 breeding season.
This year the breeding bird point count survey was conducted mid-May with the assistance of three volunteers willing to brave the challenges posed by off-trail navigation in the juniper-oak woodland. Of the 40 species recorded, not surprisingly the top three detected were Northern Cardinal, Black-crested Titmouse, and Carolina Chickadee. Golden-cheeked Warblers were detected at 46% of the point count stations compared to 49% during last year’s survey.

The never-ending battle against invasive plants raged on during 2014. Malta Star-thistle was still quite present in the Baker Cabin area but due to intensive efforts in selected management zones, it emerged in a patchier fashion and not as the disheartening carpet of years past. In the same area, 96 Common Horehound and 1040 Common Mullein were also removed. The Tree-of-heaven grove discovered in 2010 continued to be monitored and treated with the pulling of 788 seedlings and suckers. In the same area 11 Chinaberry seedlings were also removed. The second, slightly smaller, Tree-of-heaven grove discovered further downstream in 2012 lost another 1875 seedlings as well as 12 larger individuals which were stump-cut and treated with herbicide. Other invasive plants were removed when encountered throughout the Sanctuary, including 710 ornamental Allium species near the Steward’s residence, and nine Heavenly Bamboo and 26 Chinaberry discovered throughout the Sanctuary.

The Hiking Club convened once again for sessions in both the spring and fall. For six consecutive weeks per session approximately 20 fifth grade English language learner (ELL) students spent two hours per session hiking the Sanctuary, learning about central Texas flora, fauna, and habitats.

Other activities to enhance community involvement and knowledge of Baker Sanctuary and the BCP mission included Baker Open House, nine guided hikes for various community groups, two BCP sponsored guided hikes, eight field trips for LISD and Round Rock Intermediate School District elementary students, five LISD GCWA presentations to a total of 550 fifth grade students, three adult-centered birding and GCWA presentations, and participation in three off-site field trips. Not including organized activities such as guided hikes and TAS events, Baker Sanctuary experienced a total of 314 visitations. Of those visitations, 275 were by TAS members and 39 were by non-members. An additional 766 visitations occurred during organized activities such as educational programs, TAS events, and guided hikes.

A total of 393 volunteer hours were logged at Baker on a variety of activities including leading guided hikes, teaching, performing grounds and trail maintenance, removing invasive species, nest box installation, and caging oaks, to name a few. Many thanks to the few dedicated volunteers who made it possible! 🌿
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<td>producer</td>
<td>plant</td>
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<tr>
<td>A producer is a plant that produces its own food.</td>
<td>Notes: some people call it cedar. This is the most common tree in Texas. The leaves are waxy to save water.</td>
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<th><strong>consumer</strong></th>
<th><strong>leaf</strong></th>
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<td>A consumer is an animal or person that gets its food from something else and kills it.</td>
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<th><strong>decomposer</strong></th>
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<td>are things that eat something dead, like a tree's branch falls off and a mushroom eating it. Another example is earthworm, bacteria.</td>
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October signaled many changes at Chaetura Canyon. The temperatures began to moderate, rains began to fall, many of the summer breeding birds were moving out, and migrants began to arrive from the north. A dramatic example of this changing of the guard occurred on October 13th when large groups of Sandhill Cranes were flying overhead and the last four Chimney Swifts of the season spent their final night in the North Tower on the steward’s residence. The next morning a Wilson’s Warbler showed up at one of the water features.

The most dramatic change for us is always the departure of the Chimney Swifts. The absence of their cheerful chattering that dominates the skies over the Canyon seems to leave the sky empty and a little sad. On October 11th there were 265 swifts in the main roost. The next day there were 211, then just four on the 13th. This year the swifts inhabited the towers of Chaetura Canyon for 205 days. All but two of the 18 towers were occupied by a pair of nesting birds laying a total of 77 eggs. Fifty three of the eggs hatched and 41 young swifts were fledged and added to the population. This was not much of a net gain, but it is a gain never-the-less. It is easy to see why the numbers of Chimney Swifts are declining throughout their range and why we all need to continue our conservation effort on their behalf.

Another change that always seems to occur in the fall is the beginning of another major project, and this year is no exception. In fact, there are several now underway. Phase 2 of the Donor Brick Project has begun. This involves a great deal of site preparation and excavation in the area between the new entry (completed last year) and the residence. Those of you...
who have been to the Canyon will be happy to know that once this project is completed, you will no longer need to thread your way down that narrow little set of rock steps to reach the deck. The new steps will make room for many more Donor Bricks. Mark Wilson has been busy selling the bricks, and the next order will be placed in mid-January.

Once the steps are completed, the old deteriorating side deck will be enlarged and replaced. This will remove yet another barrier to visitors of all physical abilities. We are once again grateful to Carl C. and Mary Jo Anderson Foundation for the matching grant that is making this project possible. The Anderson Foundation has supported all of the previous mobility accessibility projects at Chaetura Canyon. The goal is to have both projects completed in April just in time for the beginning of events at the Canyon.
Having trouble keeping that New Year’s resolution to be more active and work off a few pounds? Join us at Chaetura Canyon for our annual Stewardship Day for some hill climbing, brush removal, food and fellowship.

The event will start with a continental breakfast followed by a walk of the Sanctuary stopping at the various sites where work is needed. After a few hours of labor we will adjourn to the deck for lunch.

This will be a physical outdoor work event on sloping terrain, so dress appropriately with sturdy shoes or boots. Consider dressing in layers; bring work gloves, sunscreen and a hat.

This event is limited to ten volunteers, and just a few spots remain available. Reserve your spot today!

Contact Stewards Georgean and Paul Kyle: Kyle@ChimneySwifts.org 📞

Bird-A-Thon 2014 Sponsors

Victor Emanuel Award Auction Donors

Thanks to our donors who made the Victor Emanuel Award Luncheon Auction possible.

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Classes

Jumpstart your birding skillset with our fantastic courses.

Waterfowl Identification Class

Instructor: Jean Martin
Saturdays, January 3, 10 and 24, 2015

Begin the New Year by learning how to identify those ducks! If you’ve been walking around Lady Bird Lake and wondering what kind of ducks you see, this class will provide answers. Travis Audubon is pleased to announce that Jean Martin will again teach the Waterfowl Identification Class. Jean taught the Beginning Birding Class for over 10 years, and has over 25 years’ birding experience. This course will focus on ducks, grebes, geese, and other waterfowl found in Texas, especially during winter. It is well suited for birders who have completed an introductory class or those who have ignored ducks because “all those females look alike.”

The class will consist of two lecture/photo presentations and three field trips. Lectures will be Saturdays, Jan. 3 and 10, 8–10 a.m., with each followed by a field trip lasting until about 2 p.m. Locations will be announced at class time. A third field trip will be conducted outside the Austin area on Saturday, Jan. 24, lasting 6–8 hours. Tuition is $55 for Travis Audubon members; $65 for nonmembers. Class is limited to 14 participants. Register at http://travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/waterfowl-identification. For more information, contact Cindy Cannon at prsart@yahoo.com

Birding 102

Instructors: Shelia Hargis
Saturday, January 10 and February 7, 2015

After many requests from graduates of Introduction to Birds and Birding, we are finally able to offer a follow-up “course”—Birding 102. The goals of Birding 102 are to continue the intensive instruction and practice in the field that we had during Intro to Birds; to visit more interesting birding locations; to see more great birds; and to experience and discuss different aspects of birds and the birding year such as migration, breeding, behavior, and conservation. The “course” is comprised of numerous field trips throughout the year and is open to graduates of Travis Audubon’s Intro to Birds classes. Typically there will be the field trip followed by lunch and a debriefing session/discussion about the birding topic for that month. Our hope is to offer six to eight Birding 102 field trips each year. Each field trip will be advertised as a stand-alone session, and registration will be required for each field trip.

Shelia Hargis is the instructor. She loves teaching Introduction to Birds and Birding and looks for any reason to go birding with students after they have graduated. Laurie Foss, co-instructor of Intro to Birds and eBird guru, will assist with the field trips. Liz Gushee, an Intro to Birds graduate and Digital Collections librarian at the Harry Ransom Center, will provide resource materials for the field trips.

Tuition for each field trip is $25 for TA members; $30 for nonmembers. Register at http://travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/birding-102. If you have questions, contact Shelia at intro2birds@gmail.com or 512-294-0272.

January Birding 102: Owl Prowl

The first Birding 102 field trip will be an owl prowl on Jan. 10. We will meet at 4 p.m to discuss the owls we will be targeting, grab an early dinner, and then head to various locations in search of the owls. We expect to hear three to five species of owls. We will attempt to see the owls, but can’t promise good looks. This will be our first time leading an owl prowl, so only sign up if you are adventurous! The field trip will end once we have tried for all the expected species, but no later than 10 p.m.

February Birding 102: Trip to Mitchell Lake, San Antonio

This Birding 102 field trip will be to Mitchell Lake Audubon Center in San Antonio on Feb. 7. It is a great
location to view many of our winter residents such as raptors and water birds. Frequently some of our South Texas birds wander up to Mitchell Lake, so we’ll be on the lookout for them too. Mitchell Lake is similar to Hornsby Bend with many ponds and a lake to explore, along with wooded and open habitats. There is an entry fee of $5, which is in addition to the cost of the field trip. We will meet in south Austin at 7 a.m. and carpool to San Antonio. After the field trip, we lunch together and discuss that morning’s finds. We will be back in Austin no later than 4 p.m.

**Purple Martin Workshop**

Instructor: Andy and Julia Balinsky  
Saturday February 14, 2015, 1-4 PM

Remember the birds roosting at Highland Mall last summer? Come learn about what the Purple Martins do the rest of the year. Do you want to know more about Purple Martins, how to set up a colony, and be a Purple Martin landlord? Are you an existing landlord, wanting to meet other Martin aficionados and learn tips? Have you always wanted to be a citizen scientist, gathering useful data to help Martin conservation efforts? If so, this class is for you. The class will meet in southeast Austin on Saturday, Feb. 14, from 1-4 pm.

The first Purple Martins typically arrive in Austin at the end of January, so this class will provide information you can put to use right away, either at your own colony or observing Martins at Hornsby Bend or any other existing colony.

This class will focus on the life cycle of Purple Martins and how you can participate as a Purple Martin landlord or helper. You will learn the maintenance routine recommended by the Purple Martin Conservation Association and how to record and submit nesting data that is compiled nationally. We will also include hands-on nest preparation and discussion at the Hornsby Bend colony.

Attendees are invited to participate through mid-June as helpers and observers as the class teachers maintain and record the 2015 Purple Martin season at Hornsby Bend. Later in the summer, we invite class members to join us in educating others at the giant Purple Martin roost at Highland Mall.

Andy and Julia Balinsky have been the stewards of the Hornsby Bend Purple Martin colony since 2003 and have watched over 1,300 Purple Martin babies fledge during that time. They have also spent many evenings watching the Martin pre-migration staging roost in the late summer.

Class participants should bring paper and pen for taking notes. We will provide data gathering forms and an electronic Excel version for those interested. Snacks will be provided.

Tuition for the class is $15 for TA members; $20 for non-members. Register at [http://travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/purple-martin-workshop](http://travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/purple-martin-workshop). If you have questions, contact Nancy Radding nradding@sbcglobal.net

**Beginning Backyard Birding**

Instructor: Jane Tillman  
Wednesday, February 18  
Field trip: Saturday or Sunday February 21 or 22

How many different species of birds can I attract to my yard? What woodpeckers can I expect to see here? What is that song I am hearing? Are there any plants that are bird magnets?

If you want to get acquainted with common backyard birds that reside here year round, as well as common winter visitors, this class is for you.

The class includes two sessions. The classroom session will be held Wednesday, Feb. 18, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at a central Austin location. The following Saturday or Sunday, Feb. 21 or 22, from 7:30-11 a.m., the second session will be held at a “Best of Texas Backyard Wildlife Habitat” in north Austin, where we will do some armchair birding and investigate bird-friendly plants. You will have fun learning Austin’s backyard birds and what it takes to keep them happy. If time allows, we will visit a local preserve to practice identification skills.

The class will be taught by Jane Tillman, past chair of the TAS Urban Habitat Committee and current chair of the TA Speakers Bureau. Tuition is $25 for TA members; $30 for nonmembers. Class limit is 10 for each field trip day. Participants will choose to attend
either the Saturday or Sunday morning session at registration. Register at: [http://travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/beginning-backyard-birding](http://travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/beginning-backyard-birding). Contact Jane at jtillman@utexas.edu for more information.

**Bird Song and Vocalization**

Instructor: Jeff Patterson  
Wedgesdays, February 18, March 25, April 15 and 29  
Field trips on Saturdays, February 21, April 4 and 25, May 9

Learning birdsong is a difficult but rewarding undertaking. Highly skilled birders rely on bird vocalizations for many of their field identifications. Some closely related species are only distinguishable in the field by their songs or calls. However, with over 380 species listed on the Austin region checklist, even learning local birdsong can be intimidating. Join Jeff Patterson for this class intended to improve your skills with, and understanding of, bird vocalizations.

The class is designed for intermediate birders who want to begin to develop or to sharpen their skills. It will focus on the breeding birds and winter Texans that regularly vocalize in the Central Texas area. While learning birdsongs, flight calls, contact calls, scolds, and other vocalizations for field identification are the primary goals, the class will also include lectures on such topics as why birds sing, the vocal anatomy of birds, use of spectrograms, dialects, diagnostic birdsongs, resources, and other subjects related to bird vocalization.

The species that vocalize and the types of vocalizations change throughout the year. Therefore, the class and subsequent fieldtrips will be held in February, March, and April. Classroom sessions will be held at a local venue on Wednesdays, Feb. 18, March 25, April 4 and 29, 6:30-9:00 p.m. Local field trips will be Feb. 21, April 4 and 25, and May 9, starting at sunrise and progressing to 11 a.m. or noon. Jeff is a life-long birder who developed a curiosity for birdsong in the 1980s. With the current availability and variety of birdsong resources, he has been able to improve his birdsong knowledge over the past few years and is eager to interact with interested students. Jeff is employed as a technical specialist at the state environmental commission where he often teaches work-related technical classes.

Registration is limited to 15 participants. Tuition is $75 for TA members; $90 for non-members. Register at: [http://travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/bird-song-and-vocalization](http://travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/bird-song-and-vocalization). For questions or to be put on the waiting list, contact Cindy Cannon at prsart@yahoo.com.

**Bluebird Workshop**

Instructor: Pauline Tom  
Saturday February 21, 2015, 9am – 12 pm

Three species of bluebirds occur annually in Texas. Eastern Bluebirds will nest in suitable habitats in Central Texas if appropriate cavities or nest-boxes are available. Travis Audubon will sponsor a Bluebird Workshop conducted by nationally known bluebird expert Pauline Tom on Saturday, Feb. 21, from 9 a.m. to noon.

Pauline is president of the Texas Bluebird Society and has conducted popular workshops on bluebird husbandry in different parts of the state. She lives in Central Texas and is regarded as one of the foremost experts on and advocates for bluebirds in Texas. Her workshop will cover the following:

- best practices for nestbox installation to attract Eastern Bluebirds
- gardening for bluebirds
- how to recognize and improve appropriate habitat for Eastern Bluebirds
- how to interpret bluebird activity outside of the nestbox
- how to deter predators and alien competitors
- the process of egg-laying and incubation
- how to “age” nestlings
- recordkeeping/record-sharing with NestWatch,

Also Pauline will take participants outdoors to view bluebird habitat and manmade nestboxes.

Workshop fee is $15 for TA members; $20 for nonmembers. Older teens are welcome and younger children with an adult. A free “Texas Nestbox” with $15 Texas Bluebird Society membership will be available at the workshop. Register at: [http://travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/bluebird-workshop](http://travisaudubon.org/education/adult-classes/bluebird-workshop). If you have any questions, contact Byron Stone, drbirdie@aol.com.
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(October–December 14)

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*Carl C. Anderson, SR. and Marie Jo Anderson Charitable Foundation; Powell Foundation; and the Still Water Foundation.*

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<td>Patricia Gallagher</td>
<td>Jane Lowrimore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judith Harrison</td>
<td>A. M.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Heather</td>
<td>Julia Marsden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jerry &amp; Helen Hopson</td>
<td>Mary Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Korioth</td>
<td>Jane Politi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mary Lou Rizzo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Suzy Vrana</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Susan Kleinman</td>
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<td>Paul W. Schilling</td>
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## Holiday Party Auction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacque Sue Austin</td>
<td>Julie Fields</td>
<td>Ruth Pelphrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Bailey</td>
<td>Ellen Filtness</td>
<td>Nancy Podio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephanie Barko</td>
<td>Denise Garza</td>
<td>Jorjanna Price</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valarie Bristol</td>
<td>Ethel Kutac</td>
<td>Jimmy Stanley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances Cerbins</td>
<td>Clifton Ladd</td>
<td>Nancy Townsend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie Davis</td>
<td>Roy Mann</td>
<td>Bob Warneke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leola Decker</td>
<td>Joan Marshall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Doherty</td>
<td>Katherine Mundy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Land Conservation Fund

Carol Bennett  
Malcolm C Damuth Foundation

## Memorial Donation

Valerie Dunnam

## Memorial Donation in Memory of Jack Phipps

Judith Harrison

## Memorial Donation in Memory of Jaime Ferguson

Susie Scruggs

## Victor Emanuel Award Auction Donation

Faye Harris (Hummer House)  
Bryan Hale (G&P Show)  
Jo Wilson (Painted Bunting)  
Carolyn Nichols (South Padre)  
Lin Weber (Tropical Birding)

## Victor Emanuel Award Centerpieces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Anderson</td>
<td>Bryan Hale</td>
<td>Phillip Scott</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacque Sue Austin</td>
<td>Bonnie Holmes</td>
<td>Edward Sones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ann and Don Connell</td>
<td>Caroline Jones</td>
<td>Andrea Walsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leola Decker</td>
<td>Stewart Mill</td>
<td>Bill Reiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Donovan</td>
<td>Trent Miller and Meta Hunt</td>
<td>Eddie and Diane Priour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Edwards</td>
<td>Barbara Paul</td>
<td>Therese Tepe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corey Gaskill</td>
<td>Nona Sansom</td>
<td>Melanie J. Truesdell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Victor Emanuel Award
Donation
Coralie Blount
Lynn Box

Victor Emanuel Award
Fund-A-Cause
Barbara Anderson
Jacque Sue Austin
David Bamberger
Stephanie Barko
Ilene Barr
Bob Barth
Sean Bender
Carol Bennett
Jennifer Bristol
Valarie Bristol
Sandy Brown
Ruth Buskirk
Claire Caudill
Ann and Don Connell
Cinda Crosley
Doug Curry
Noreen Damude
Craig Damuth
Shannon Davies
Jackie Davis
Leola Decker
Sallie Delahoussaye
Gina Donovan
Ann Edwards
Carol Edwards
Vella Fink
Terry Friggle

American Kestrel
Birds & Business Partners
JB Journeys
Mark Lyon
Montemayor Hill & Company, P.C.
Parmer Lane Pet Hospital
Precision Camera & Video
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Jane Lowrimore

Painted Bunting
Ellen Smith & Alan Campion
Dennis Brown
Kelly Logan
O.R. Schmidt

Sustaining
Valerie Dunnam
Toni Herman
Trent Miller & Meta Hunt
Carol Ray
Jo Wilson
Julie Zess

Vireo
Jacquie Sue Austin
Rosalyn Clifton
David & Virginia Fischer
Thomas & Elizabeth Linker
David Litttlewood
Karen & Patrick O’Brien
J.P. Patterson
Cynthia & Paul Roush
Eleanor Sellstrom
Eric Stager
Charles & Amy Stephens
Colleen & Brad Theriot

Warbler
Suzanne Burgess
Michelle Cutrer
Sarah Heather
Bryan & Diane Jones
Michelle Morrison

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Our 2014 Annual Holiday Party Auction was made possible by the generous support of the following donors.

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The Damuth Foundation
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Julia Balinsky, Sleep On It
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Mama Fu’s

Rootin’ Ridge Toymakers
Georgean Kyle
Jane Tillman
Robert Hardgrave
Jo Wilson & Carol Bennett
Gus Cannon
Linda Anderson
Chuck Sexton
Mikael Behrens
Cullen Hanks

New Family Tree for Birds Spurs Ideas on Evolution

Did you know that Flamingos are more closely related to pigeons than other shore birds? Read more about new ideas on evolution here. 🦃
## Field Trips

### January – February 2015

Click the class description below for event webpage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Location/Description</th>
<th>Registration Required</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, January 1</td>
<td>Bastrop Christmas Bird Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday January 3</td>
<td>Beginner's Bird Walk at Walnut Creek Trail</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Virginia Rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 AM – 10:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:virginia.rose@att.net">virginia.rose@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, January 4</td>
<td>New Braunfels Christmas Bird Count</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Julie Crouch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:dipper2c@gmail.com">dipper2c@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, January 6</td>
<td>Two–hour Tuesday at Circle Acres led by Jane Tillman and Ken Zaslow</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ken Zaslow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 AM – 9:30 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:khz@att.net">khz@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, January 10</td>
<td>Fort Hood with Barry Lyon and Victor Emanuel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 AM – 3:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, January 10</td>
<td>Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Carpenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 AM and 4:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, January 13</td>
<td>Super–Tuesday at Granger Lake led by Ray and Ginny Steelman</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ray and Ginny Steelman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 AM – 1:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:rgsteel@comcast.net">rgsteel@comcast.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, January 17</td>
<td>Commons Ford Sparrow Chase with Ed Fair</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 AM – 1:30 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, January 17</td>
<td>Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Walk</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Stager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 AM – 11:00 AM</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:estager@gmail.com">estager@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, January 20</td>
<td>Two–hour Tuesday at Barkley Meadows led by Dan Callaway</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ken Zaslow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 AM – 10:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:khz@att.net">khz@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, January 23</td>
<td>Birding the Balcones Canyonlands/Water Quality Preserves – Part 5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:00 AM – 11:00 AM</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, January 24</td>
<td>Balcones Canyonlands NWR</td>
<td>Yes (15)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:apeld@austin.rr.com">apeld@austin.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 AM – 11:30 AM</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, January 27</td>
<td>Super Tuesday Winter Birding at Mother Neff State Park led by Craig Rasmussen, Deb Wallace, and Lee Wallace</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:apeld@austin.rr.com">apeld@austin.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 AM – noon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, February 1</td>
<td>Colorado Bend Park led by Craig Rasmussen and George Kerr</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30 AM – 11:30 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, February 3</td>
<td>Two-hour Tuesday at Hornsby Bend led by Ken Zaslow</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ken Zaslow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 AM – 9:30 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:khz@att.net">khz@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday February 7</td>
<td>Beginner's Bird Walk at Richard Moya Park</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Virginia Rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 AM – 10:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:virginia.rose@att.net">virginia.rose@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, February 10</td>
<td>Super Tuesday at Commons Ford Ranch Park led by Deb and Lee Wallace</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:apeld@austin.rr.com">apeld@austin.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 AM – 11:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, February 14</td>
<td>Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Carpenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 AM and 4:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, February 15</td>
<td>Balcones Canyonlands NWR</td>
<td>Yes (15)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:apeld@austin.rr.com">apeld@austin.rr.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 AM – 11:30 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, February 17</td>
<td>Super Tuesday at Pedernales Falls State Park led by Terry Banks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:55bluebirds@austin.rr.com">55bluebirds@austin.rr.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>6:45 AM – noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, February 21</td>
<td>Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Walk</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Stager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 AM – 11:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:estager@gmail.com">estager@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, February 22</td>
<td>Commons Ford with Deb and Lee Wallace</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7:30 AM – 11:30 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, February 24</td>
<td>Two-hour Tuesday at Lake Pflugerville Park led by Dan Callaway</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ken Zaslow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 AM – 9:30 AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:khz@att.net">khz@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, February 27</td>
<td>Birding the Balcones Canyonlands/Water Quality Preserves (Bird Banding) – Part 6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>8:00 AM – 11:00 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, February 28</td>
<td>Mitchell Lake with Jean Martin</td>
<td>Yes (12)</td>
<td>Jean Martin</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Travis Audubon Society • 3710 Cedar Street, Box 5, Austin, TX 78705 • 512-300-BIRD (2473) • travisaudubon.org
Since juniper is a dominant or co-dominant canopy tree in many parts of the Hill Country, if all the female trees produced cones at once, frugivores would have no incentive to move on. Botanists have found, however, that Ashe Junipers have a prolonged “harvest” season, essentially all winter long.
The American Robin has been a cherished sign of spring in North America at least since English colonists settled on the eastern seaboard. But as with other treasured myths of birds in American culture, things are a bit different in central Texas. Small numbers of robins are present here year-round, but the big flocks appear in November and begin to disperse in March to carry spring to northern parts of the continent.

Robin migration outside of the breeding season is neither orderly nor predictable. The flocks appear to be nomadic, leaving one area for another in response to cold fronts or depleted food sources. The authors of the Birds of North America account of the species go so far as to write that “the term ‘routes’ does not really apply to robin migrations.” Robins banded in Maryland were found from North Carolina to Texas. Some birds ending up in Florida had been banded in North and South Dakota. And there is no evidence that individual robins return to the same wintering areas in subsequent years.

Some years the flocks can be immense during Austin’s winter months. As a newly-arrived Texan myself many years ago, I was disdainful of the common yard bird I had left behind in the Midwest, especially since the flocks were everywhere my first winter here — hiding by sheer numbers the more interesting western species I hoped to see.

What brings them here in such multitudes? A wide variety of native (and, increasingly, non-native) fruit. They will risk the wrath of the resident mockingbird to scarf up the berries from Possumhaws — or any other fruit-producing shrub or tree “owned” by the mocker. They may become intoxicated by eating too many berries whose pulp has fermented by repeated freezes and thaws. They will storm through a cedar brake eating the berry-like cones as they ripen. And they have also adapted to eating the similar-looking blue berries of Glossy Privet (also known as Waxleaf Ligustrum), an Asian import — though whether these are beneficial for the birds is not known.

Analysis of stomach contents of robins in eastern, central, and western sections of the country showed the birds have a particular predilection for fruits in the Prunus genus: the plums and cherries. Some years our native Black Cherry (Prunus serotina) will have a particularly bountiful year, and hold the small, thinly-pulp-covered drupes into the fall. Such trees then become a nexus for a feeding frenzy of robins, waxwings, Hermit Thrushes, and other frugivores (fruit-eaters).

But robins also eat a wide variety of other fruits, whatever is available: mulberries, sumacs, hollies, greenbriars, hackberries, ...and junipers. The large swaths of Edwards Plateau landscape dominated by Ashe Juniper, whose “berries” ripen during the winter, are likely the magnet that has drawn robins here for centuries.

Because robins are so numerous, they are important agents of dispersal for the fruiting trees and shrubs that bribe them. Many plants have developed a symbiotic relationship with seed-eating and fruit-eating birds. Plants sacrifice resources to make their seeds desirable to eat but also able to withstand the acids in a bird’s digestive tract. Many seeds actually require acidic scarification and removal of the pulp in order to germinate, or at least they have higher germination rates if subjected to such treatment. The birds then unwittingly give those seeds wings — literally — by carrying them some distance away from the parent plant before depositing them via their droppings.
Other animals may also be important dispersal agents. Squirrels, raccoons and ringtails, foxes, mice, and coyotes all partake of wild fruits. Some harvest and cache their loot, then forget where they put it (or get eaten before they return to it); most deposit the seeds in their droppings. But four-legged frugivores are unlikely to take seeds as far from the parent plant as a bird, particularly a nomadic one.

The robins’ flocking behavior may also work to the plants’ advantage. A single mockingbird may take weeks to consume all the berries on its personal Possumhaw bushes, and never deposit droppings more than a hundred yards away. A flock of robins can strip those same shrubs in an hour, then must travel elsewhere to find food. By the time the Possumhaw seeds have passed through the digestive tract of each robin, the flock will be far from the parent plant.

Such a strategy works well for plants that are sparsely scattered across the landscape. Black Cherry trees, for instance, are widespread but uncommon in Hill Country woodlands, never dominant. A large tree, loaded with fruit, will often stand above the surrounding canopy, serving as a beacon to passing flocks. But the next laden tree may be a quarter mile away.

Junipers employ a different strategy. Since juniper is a dominant or co-dominant canopy tree in many parts of the Hill Country, if all the female trees produced cones at once, frugivores would have no incentive to move on. Botanists have found, however, that Ashe Junipers have a prolonged “harvest” season, essentially all winter long. All the fruit on each tree will ripen at once – so there is a very visible feast on display to passing birds – but the cones of neighboring trees may still be green, or have already been picked clean. The last fruits may not ripen for four or five months after the first. So flocking birds must move around to find ripe fruit, but may be bribed to stay in the general area as the fruits continue to ripen on different trees.

Like robins, Cedar Waxwings are important seed-dispersers who also travel in large flocks. Waxwings, however, are strictly arboreal, rarely descending to the ground from their perches in trees and shrubs. Their droppings, then, will almost always fall to ground beneath an existing perch, usually a taller tree. The crowds of junipers and other fruit-bearing trees and shrubs that grow under isolated oaks and elms in a savanna setting may have originated with waxwings.

Robins, on the other hand, are equally at home on the ground, foraging for insects, earthworms, or fallen fruit. They are particularly drawn to lawns and other areas of short vegetation, and to recently disturbed ground – whether it has been plowed, bulldozed, or burned. Sumacs, junipers, and hackberries that sprout in such open areas may well have been “planted” by a foraging flock of robins.

Unfortunately, a system that has worked well for perpetuating natural ecosystems is now the vector for an invasion – begun by humans importing non-native
fruited trees and shrubs. Many wild areas are being transformed as birds drop seeds of such species as Glossy Privet and its relatives (Ligustrum sp.), Nandina (a.k.a. Heavenly-Bamboo, Nandina domestica), Chinaberry (Melia azederach, whose large drupes are swallowed by doves), Fire-thorn (Pyracantha koidzumii), and at least one species of Photinia. Some areas of the Barton Creek Greenbelt and other urban parks look more Asian than American due to the invasion. (Blair Woods was a prime example, before Travis Audubon’s massive invasive-eradication effort.) But even woodlands far from residential areas are subject to invasion as a result of robins’ far-ranging wanderings. That is why protecting the integrity of our Texas natural heritage means choosing native shrubs and trees for your landscaping, even if you live in the center of town.

Legacy Giving & Membership Info

Support local conservation efforts by joining Travis Audubon! Your membership dues are vital in sustaining the organization’s important work in land conservation, habitat restoration and management, environmental education, and conservation advocacy.

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For more information on membership or Legacy Giving, please call or email Joan Marshall at 512-300-BIRD.