


SIGNAL SMOKE
The Newsletter of Travis Audubon Society

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VOLUME 56, NO. 4

April 2007

**Travis Audubon Joins the City of Austin
 to Be a *Community Wildlife Habitat* with
 the National Wildlife Federation**

On March 8th, in downtown Austin on the plaza of the beautiful, green-built City Hall overlooking Town Lake, Travis Audubon Society joined the City of Austin and the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) to announce plans to become a NWF-certified Community Wildlife Habitat. This historic event marked the commitment of many to make our city the *first* certified Community Wildlife Habitat in Texas, and the *biggest* certified city in the U.S. so far!



City of Austin Council Member Lee Leffingwell, with Council Member Mike Martinez and Mayor Will Wynn, co-sponsored a Council resolution to register Austin as the first Community Wildlife Habitat in Texas and to develop an implementation plan to become officially certified by the NWF. Each of these elected officials spoke about the project, as did NWF's Gulf Coast States office staffer Alice Nance and Travis Audubon's President Shelia Hargis. Forty local groups have signed on in support of the city certification project.

Mayor Wynn said that this project fits well with the city-wide effort to reduce carbon emissions, as more urban forest will help mitigate the "urban heat island," reducing the temperature and the consumption of electricity. Nance lauded the broad coalition of groups in Austin who will make the project a success – from individuals to government, business, and schools – and the particular importance of the City of Austin's endorsement. Hargis described the importance of creating a natural, tiered habitat, from ground cover to top story, with native plants and water that will provide food and nesting material for birds and other creatures as well.

The press conference took place in bright sunshine and was attended by many local environmental groups, including the Austin Butterfly Forum, Friends of Bright Leaf, Hill Country Conservancy, Native Plant Society of Texas, TreeFolks, the LBJ Wildflower Center, Travis Audubon, children from the Austin Discovery School, and others. Timely sound effects were provided by Great-tailed Grackles, a Northern Mockingbird, and a flock of Cedar Waxwings landing in a plaza tree; a Red-tailed Hawk scanned the scene from a nearby lightpole.

The City of Austin, National Wildlife Federation, and Travis Audubon Society urge you to participate in this momentous commitment to creating and protecting wildlife habitat. Creating wildlife habitat gardens not only helps local wildlife survive in urban areas, but also promotes water conservation, builds healthier communities, mitigates the impacts of climate change, and gives Austinites the opportunity to take action right in their own backyards and neighborhoods.

**TAS
 Regular Monthly Meeting**

Thursday, April 19, 7:00 pm

Doors open at 6:30 pm for social time

**Exploring Nature through
 Tracks and Signs**

Speaker: Dwight Wilson

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



see page 8 for additional details

continued on page 3

Travis Audubon Society

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Address for Donations

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

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TAS WEB SITE

www.travisaudubon.org

TAS EMAIL

info@travisaudubon.org

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on recycled paper
using soy ink.**

Mission Statement

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

Change Afoot for *Signal Smoke*!

We are delighted to tell Travis Audubon members and friends about a decision that will benefit our programs and our conservation work. A conversation with a donor set this ball in motion, when he asked, "Why does Travis Audubon spend so much money and human resources on a printed newsletter? You could use that money for programs and land conservation." So began an exploration with us and the Board of Directors. We looked at the numbers and did some benchmarking with other Audubon chapters. The Board thoughtfully considered the matter over two Board meetings, and in the end voted to reduce our printed newsletter from 11 issues per year to 6, making it a bi-monthly. This change will be effective with our next issue, May/June 2007. It will still appear as a PDF file on our Web site. Why did we make this decision?

First, it will free up approximately \$12,000 per year that TAS can redirect to programs or habitat conservation efforts. Second, it will free up staff and volunteer writers' time for other work on behalf of Travis Audubon. Third, as a conservation organization, we want to respond to those members who have asked us to reduce our paper and ink consumption and the fossil fuel consumption in the production and mailing. Some will think we are not doing enough to reduce; others may wish that things would remain the same as they were. We know that change can go down hard for long-time chapter members, but we hope that you will see the benefits for Travis Audubon as well as for the environment.

continued on page 3

COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

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ABOUT SIGNAL SMOKE

Subscription Information

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Newsletter Deadline

The submissions deadline is the first day of the month preceding the first month of publication (for example, June 1 for the July/August issue). Submit uncopyrighted articles, announcements, and art to Tess Sherman, tsherman1@austin.rr.com; or mail to 210 E. Walnut Dr., Austin, TX 78753. Submissions by email or on a floppy are preferred but not required. Call Tess at 300-BIRD if you have questions.

Community Wildlife Habitat, continued from page 1

What is a Community Wildlife Habitat?

The NWF defines a certified Community Wildlife Habitat as, “[A] community that has provided habitat for wildlife throughout the community – in individual backyards, on school grounds, and in public areas such as parks, community gardens, places of worship, and businesses. It is a place where the residents make it a priority to create habitat for wildlife by providing the four basic elements that all wildlife needs to survive: food, water, cover and places to raise young. The community has also educated its residents about sustainable gardening practices such as reducing or eliminating chemical fertilizers and pesticides, conserving water, planting native plants, removing invasive plants, harvesting rainwater, and composting. It has held workshops about gardening for wildlife and organized community events such as stream or trail cleanups to make the community healthier for wildlife and people alike. In the end, a Community Wildlife Habitat creates a place where people, flora, and fauna can all flourish.”

For Austin to meet the certification requirements, we will have to certify 600 new private residences in the coming year as well as 10 workplaces and six schools. Outreach and public education activities are also required. Then, in following years, to maintain the certification, Austin would have to meet minimum requirements of continued community education and outreach as well as additional properties being certified as wildlife habitats. Travis Audubon has committed to helping put on habitat steward trainings to multiply the number of sites than can be certified in our city.

To read more about this great program, please go to www.nwf.org/community/. By the way, the National Wildlife Federation’s mission is to inspire Americans to protect wildlife for our children’s future. Travis Audubon’s mission is to promote the enjoyment, understanding, and preservation of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats in Central Texas. This city certification project is a perfect way to bring our goals together! We hope that Travis Audubon members will want to get their own backyards certified as wildlife habitat, and get their workplaces on board as well. As Council Member Martinez said, this is a perfect way to live out the value of thinking globally and acting locally.

Certified Community Wildlife Habitat Sites

As of March 2007, from NWF Web site

www.nwf.org/community

Arizona

Sweetwater in the Foothills

California

Alpine
Sonoma County

Florida

Broward County
Coconut Creek
Wilton Manors

Georgia

Chamblee

Idaho

Hidden Springs

Indiana

Zionsville

Kansas

Hesston

Massachusetts

Milton

Michigan

Belding
Missouri
Chesterfield

North Carolina

Montreat

South Carolina

Briarcliffe Acres
Callawassie Island

Virginia

Arlington County
Reston
South Riding

Washington

Camano Island
Lake Forest Park
Tukwila

Change Afoot, continued from page 2

As for content, our Calendar of Events, already published on a two-month basis in each newsletter, won’t be affected. The newsletter deadlines remain the first of the month preceding the month of publication, and now will be December 1st for the January/February issue, February 1st for the March/April issue, April 1st for the May/June issue, June 1st for the July/August issue, August 1st for the September/October issue, and October 1st for the November/December issue. By the way, we’ll continue updating our Web site weekly and sending out e-mail news twice a month. (If you’re not on our e-mail list but would like to be, please send an e-mail to info@travisaudubon.org.) In addition, we are reinstating (effective May 1st) the TAS telephone hot-line (512.300. BIRD), where you can call in for a timely update on that week’s TAS events.

Tess Sherman and Valerie Staats



NATURALIST'S CALENDAR

by Bill Reiner

photo by Robert Baumgardner

Reprinted from previous *Naturalist's Calendar* columns

The pageantry of spring is never more apparent than in April, but it is also fleeting. Miss a few days and you may be astounded by how much has changed the next time you look around.

The wildflower palette, in particular, can shift from day to day. On the roadsides, Texas Bluebonnet, Pink Evening-Primrose, and Texas Paintbrush mingle with, then give way to, Firewheel, Purple Horsemint, Winecup, and pale blue Prairie Larkspur. Along streams Golden Groundsel, Missouri Violet, Large Buttercup, and Baby Blue Eyes yield to delicate red-and-yellow Columbine and royal-blue dayflowers. Scarlet Cedar Sage ignites wooded slopes. On sunny limestone hillsides, orange Prairie Paintbrush and the purple skullcaps are joined by lavender Engelmann Salvia and white-rayed Blackfoot Daisy. There are dozens more, and the weather patterns of the preceding months will tweak the timing and proportions of the blooms from year to year. The show is never exactly the same.

The backdrop for the wildflowers becomes ever greener. Early blooming trees and shrubs – such as Mexican Plum, Redbud, Spanish Oak, American Elm – are in full leaf by April. The other deciduous trees soon join them and the woodlands grow shadier. Even the cautious Pecans leaf out by the end of the month, frustrating the birder searching for migrant songbirds. On the other hand, Red Mulberries that flowered in March offer their berries by late April; these are magnets for Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Baltimore Orioles, Cedar Waxwings, Summer Tanagers, and even the ground-foraging thrushes.

Songbird migration is near its peak by the end of the month. Aside from those already mentioned, 28 warbler species, 15 sparrows, 11 flycatchers, 8 vireos, and various swallows, buntings, wrens, blackbirds, and thrashers regularly leave, arrive, or pass through the Austin area in April. Many don't stay long, stopping only to rest, to eat, or to dodge an April squall. Most migrate at night, when they can avoid hawks. (Exceptions are the strong-flying swallows and the tight-flocking blackbirds and waxwings.)

Others of our migrants, in particular a few prairie birds, can be detected in flight during the day. The last trumpeting skeins of Sandhill Cranes trickle through in April, as do stunning flocks of American White Pelicans, and early kettles of Mississippi Kites. A male Dickcissel may shout his name – *Dick. Dick-dick-ciss-ciss-ciss* – but more often only a gurgling grunt from above tells of his passing. Likewise a quick, windy *whit-will-do* is the calling card of an otherwise invisible Upland Sandpiper. And if you hear laughter from the heavens, you may look up to discover a band of Franklin's Gulls winging north to breeding grounds on the Saskatchewan prairies.

Many of the migrants are not simply passing through, but returning. Green Herons again stalk the shores of Town Lake. Western Kingbirds resume their caviling in the trees around the parking lots at the mall, and Chimney Swifts twitter again over rooftops. Technicolor Painted Buntings return to warble sweetly in brushy spots. Blue Grosbeaks arrive soon after Indigo Buntings to challenge them for the title of "Deepest Blue Songbird."

Male Orchard Orioles, tastefully garbed in black and russet, carol in open woods. The long-winded song of "the Preacher" (a.k.a. Red-eyed Vireo) reverberates through the forest canopy, where a flash of red or gold among the leaves may be a male or female Summer Tanager. A loud "Hreep!" signals that the Great Crested Flycatcher has returned to woodlands and shaded residential yards. After dark, the chorus of Chuck-will's-widows resumes where it left off last summer.

Most of the year-round residents are already courting or raising families. Wild Turkey toms make spectacles of themselves in front of hens who seem quite annoyed by the whole show. You may see a Crested Caracara carting a twig to a prospective nest site. Greater Roadrunners, Bewick's Wrens, and Eastern Screech-Owls are all incubating eggs. Eastern Phoebe and Black-crested Titmouse parents are either sitting on eggs or feeding young. House Finches, too, have hungry mouths to feed. Killdeer chicks scurry around under the watchful eyes of their parents.

April is a month for new beginnings and long journeys – and for enjoying the spectacle of the changing season.

Wonder

by Marjorie (and Red) Adams

On this worn and unloved schoolyard all these years
strange scatterings of grain,
and children quiet and waiting.

The man steadies a child to look just right through
the long black tube.

"See!" the woman whispers. "There's one now."

"Yes!" the child exclaims, "I see it!"

"And can you see the dark mark under the throat?"

"I see it, Miss. I see the dark mark. It's there.

I see it!"

A child knowing a House Sparrow for the first time.



Dan Callaway,
photo by Robert Baumgardner

THE DAN CALLAWAY REPORT

Birding to Meadow Lake - 2/28/07

Participants: Homer Cunningham, Catfish Kelly and Dan Callaway

Target Bird: Greater Scaup (none found)

We headed North from Pflugerville on Heatherwide Blvd. which becomes Red Bud Lane at the Williamson Co. line. At Forest Creek Blvd, we turned right and followed the road to the golf/country club lake. The lake had Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Pied-billed Grebe, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Northern Shoveler, Mallard, American Coot, and Ring-billed Gull. Flying over the lake were our first-of-the-season Barn Swallows, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Belted Kingfisher. The woodlands produced Red-bellied, Ladder-backed and Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Carolina Wren, Carolina Chickadee, Black-crested Titmouse, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song and White-crowned Sparrow. We continued North and birded CR 123 that parallels Brushy Creek. Along here we added Inca Dove, Eastern Phoebe, American Robin, Savannah Sparrow, Common Grackle and American Goldfinch. At the low-water crossing we watched a male Belted Kingfisher darting back and forth, perching on low limbs over the water. Suddenly there was another, but no, it was a small hawk similar in size to the kingfisher. It plunged to the surface of the water then flew off into the woods. It was either a Sharp-shinned

Hawk or a Merlin. We failed to focus our attention on the shape of the wing tips in order to make a distinction. We were surprised to see it hit the water. Do small hawks ever fish? Or could it have missed the kingfisher in its attempt to catch it?

We then proceeded to Old Settlers Park Lake behind the Dell Diamond. Here we added Ruddy Duck and Bufflehead. At Meadow Lake we added Green-winged Teal. As we walked the short swampy grass at the upper end, we flushed five Wilson's Snipe, one at a time. Several Purple Martins were scouting their houses, which were already occupied by House Sparrows. We broke for lunch at Rudy's BBQ in Round Rock. South of Hutto, at the corner of CRs 137 and 139, a small pond revealed a small group of Blue-winged Teal, which became a little nervous at the presence of a Cooper's Hawk making its raid of the area. At Pflugerville Lake we added a flock of Least Sandpipers. Other interesting birds for the day were Red-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, American Kestrel, Killdeer, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Loggerhead Shrike, Eastern Bluebird, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged and Brewer's Blackbird, and House Finch.

Total species: 65

Weather: Cloudy, South wind, upper 60s.

TAS Sponsors GTBC 2007 Team

For those who don't already know it, The Great Texas Birding Classic is a competitive birdwatching tournament sponsored by the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and Texas Parks and Wildlife. It is held in April each year to coincide with the spectacular spring bird migration in Texas. The purpose is to "increase the appreciation, understanding and conservation of birds along the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail through education, recreation, nature tourism and conservation fundraising." For lots more information, just go to www.gcbo.org.

This year Travis Audubon sponsors a Gliders Team, for young people 14-18 years old who want to tackle a 24-hour birding challenge. Gliders choose any of the three sections of the coast (Upper, Central, or Lower) as defined by the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. The 2007 tournament date is Saturday, April 21st. Participating in the Classic gets youth involved in a project that donates at \$50,000+ each year to habitat conservation projects benefiting birds.

Team organizer Jesse writes, "I first became involved by coming to your Youth Birding Camp about five years ago. There I heard about the Great Texas Birding Classic (GTBC). I assembled a team of youth birders and you very kindly sponsored us. You have sponsored my team, the Travis Audubon Towhees, for the last four years in the GTBC. We came in 3rd last year and got 1st the year before that. We hope, once again, to come in 1st this year. I have assembled a team of 14-18 year-old birders for this year's Classic and we are very excited about competing again."

"The TAS Towhees team is solid. The members are: Team Captain (me) Jesse Huth, Wimberley; Austin and Christian Walker, Austin; Katrina Troppy, Fredericksburg; and Lindy Arbuckle, Spicewood. We will absolutely send you a disk with lots of pictures from our competition day. We have chosen to bird the Upper Coast this year. My mom and I will be going to High Island the week before to scout the area."

Travis Audubon is proud to sponsor the TAS Towhees once again, and we wish the team much success and a wonderful day of birding!



DASTARDLY DUOS

Reprinted with permission from the October 2001 *Vermilion Flycatcher* newsletter of the Tucson Audubon Society (www.tucsonaudubon.org).

Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes

by Larry Liese

Fall is here again, bringing with it cooler temperatures and birds that we haven't seen for a while. One uncommon migrant that can give us a little trouble is Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*). It shares a number of similarities with the Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*), a common summer resident and migrant, as well as irregular winter resident. Being cognizant of the differences between these two may give you a good bird for the day, if you're lucky enough and remember a few tips.

Since the Swainson's Thrushes won't be singing when they are here, we'll concentrate on habitat, timing, and visual cues.

Hermit Thrushes are found in a variety of habitat and wide range of elevation. In summer look for them in dense, mixed-conifer forest and riparian canyons at middle to high elevations. During the rest of the year, they might be just about anywhere. Swainson's Thrushes are uncommon in fall (most of September and into October) and slightly more common in spring (late April, May, and early June). The only two I've seen in southeast Arizona are one in Aravaipa Canyon right next to the creek in mid-June (late!) and one near Bog Springs in Madera Canyon in May. When here, the Swainson's Thrushes should be in oasis situations and in dense riparian vegetation in mountain canyons.

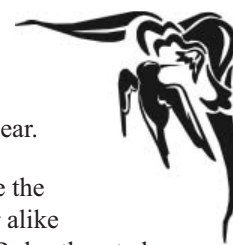
The two species look quite a bit alike in the shade. Sub-species of Swainson's Thrushes differ: the one we're most likely to see is the dominant race, *Catharus ustulatus*, which is rusty-brown above, warmer looking than the Hermit Thrush, and less distinctly spotted below. Swainson's Thrushes have a bold buffy eye-ring and buffy line running from the eye to the bill. Also, there is little contrast between back and tail. The dark eye standing out on its light face gives this bird an alert look. Hermit Thrushes have a whitish eye-ring and a telltale reddish tail that contrasts sharply with the back. Hermit Thrushes are a bit smaller and less robust, but this may not help until you've seen a few of them.

Ready? Then stop being a *Hermit*, drop your *Swainson's* ice cream, get out there and *Thrush* your binoculars forward to *get that bird!*

The Travis Audubon Society's checklist, "Birds of the Austin, Texas Region," indicates that Hermit Thrushes spend the winter in our area (November through mid-April), but the Swainson's Thrush is generally observed only during spring migration (mid-April through mid-May) in forested areas (e.g., along the Colorado River at Hornsby Bend, at McKinney Falls State Park, and at Bastrop and Buescher State Parks).

Here Come the Hummingbirds!

Computer on, all eyes were fixed on www.hummingbirds.net/map.html looking eagerly for that first little dot to appear.



This scene was repeated in home after home the last couple of weeks, as gardener and birder alike eagerly awaited the first reports of migrant Ruby-throated Hummingbirds north of the Gulf of Mexico. This year, the first dot was reported by a well known hummingbird bander in Louisiana on February 26th, but reports from Texas were not far behind.

The anticipation we share in looking for these birds seems to be universal, and Texans can enjoy both spring and fall migrations in slightly different numbers and over slightly different paths. Spring migration is generally less noticeable; the birds are in a hurry north and do not linger in huge numbers the way they do in the fall. Generally, the birds return north over a slightly different route.

So when can we expect to start seeing Ruby-throated Hummingbirds moving north in Austin? I do not know of any Austin locations that have enjoyed Ruby-throats through the winter this year, though that is possible. We will likely begin seeing Black-chinned first, trickling north over the next couple of weeks. Ruby-throat reports are generally about two to three weeks behind the Black-chinned.

You can help us learn more about these amazing birds through participation in projects like the hummingbird migration map, Great Backyard Bird Count and the Christmas Counts, and the Hummingbird Roundup. Learn more at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hummingbirds.

Mark Klym

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Travis Audubon Birdathon 2007



Travis Audubon's Birdathon 2007 *
Saturday, May 12th
www.travisaudubon.org/birdathon07.html

More FAQs (We're glad you asked!)

What is it again? Birdathon is the biggest birding event in the country, according to Audubon, and it's Travis Audubon's annual fundraiser that makes our programs possible all year. Like a walkathon, Birdathon is a day when our friends go out birding and collect pledges for each species they count. A quarter, a dollar, ten dollars a species – it's up to you and your sponsors.

Why is TAS doing a Birdathon?

We raise much-needed general operating funds to underwrite all our programs and activities.

Do I have to be a member of Travis Audubon to participate? Not at all, although we welcome your Chapter Membership at any time!

How many make a Birdathon team? Two or more people are a team, and the more the merrier. But if you're a loner, do Birdathon by yourself – just register with TAS and start collecting pledges! Don't forget to name your team – no name too silly. (Last year we gave an Honorary Best Team Name award to the "Legal Migrants"!)

I'm already doing a birding project that day. Whether it be surveying a particular property, a bird fest, or a species count, that can be your Birdathon day, too! As long as you are birding in Central Texas and collecting pledges, that's a Birdathon. It's

-
-
- **Birdathon 2007 Honors**
- Most Dollars Raised
- Most Species Seen
- Largest Number of Team Sponsors
- Rarest Bird Seen
- Most Unusual Birding Location
- Biggest Team
-
-

just a fun day in the outdoors and a great way to help support your local Audubon chapter.

Can children participate? Absolutely! This is a family friendly activity and a great way to have fun with your kids and learn a thing or two as well! You'd be surprised how the kids enjoy it.

Can a school group be a team? Yes! School groups, Scout troops, church groups, and neighborhood blocks all make great Birdathon teams.

What if I've never been birding before? No better time to give it a go than Birdathon 2007. If you are brand-new to birding, we will provide you with information to get you started. And please don't blame us if you get hooked on birding - America's fastest-growing hobby!

What if it rains on May 12th? Die-hard birders will go out anyway; the rain date will be Sunday, May 13th. Take Mom for Mother's Day! PS: You can do Birdathon indoors, too, counting species from your armchair. And you don't have to do Birdathon on May 12th – it could be a week early, or a few days later, as long as you are collecting donations for Travis Audubon.

How do I know what to do? Register with the printable form on our Web site. We will contact you to confirm and provide you all the information you need to have a wonderful Birdathon day.

If you are a team leader: You will receive Birdathon 2007 ballcaps for all your sponsors of \$25-\$49. Birdathon goodie bags and ballcaps will go to the first 100 donors of \$50 or more. You'll need to collect the pledges and turn the funds into Travis Audubon by Friday, May 18th.

Can't do Birdathon 2007 but still want to support our event? We welcome your tax-deductible contribution in any amount to our Birdathon. Just mail us a check (payable to Travis Audubon Society with "Birdathon 07" in the memo. line) or go to our Birdathon Web page for an instant on-line donation button. Thank you for supporting TAS' Birdathon 2007!

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→ Please contact the Travis Audubon office at **512.300.BIRD (2473)** or info@travisaudubon.org with any questions you have about participating in or supporting Birdathon 2007!

Monthly Meeting Information

Thursday, April 19, 7:00 pm (doors open at 6:30 pm for social time)

TAS Regular Monthly Meeting

Program: *Exploring Nature through Tracks and Signs*

Rescheduled from January 18th postponement due to bad weather.

Presenter: Dwight Wilson

Have you ever wondered who left those footprints in the mud or what prompted a robin's alarm call? Dwight Wilson will share his experiences exploring nature through reading the tracks and signs that are left behind. He will share personal stories and photographs. Learn how birds lend an amazing element to tracking because they vocalize what is going on in the forest floor. Each song or call can tell us something about a specific predator or potential food source. It is possible for you to understand the signs that nature gives and add a new dimension to your outdoor experiences.

Dwight Wilson has over 20 years of tracking experience with wildlife and humans. He has trained with some of the nation's best trackers including Charles Worsham, Paul Rezendes, Stanley Liston, Nate Kempton, Jon Young's Wilderness Awareness School, and Tom Brown's Tracker School. He has provided his services for institutions such as the National Park Service, Texas law enforcement officers, and the Dallas FBI (ERT) in man tracking. He also gives classes on wildlife tracking and behavior, land navigation, and wilderness survival.

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

More information on April's topic



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On-line resources:

- www.princeton.edu/~oa/nature/tracking.shtml
The Outdoor Action program at Princeton University, this site includes a section on animal tracking with very detailed guides, instructions, tracking cards, and more.

- www.bear-tracker.com/birds.html This commercial site features bird tracks including excellent images of 16 species' tracks. It also has sections on tracks of many mammals, some reptiles, and other animals.

On-line for kids:

- www.concord.org/~btinker/guide/tracks/tracks_activities.html
From the Concord Consortium, a nonprofit educational organization, a set of interactive activities and "lessons" that teach tracking and will definitely appeal to kids.

Recommended reading:

Field Trips: Bug Hunting, Animal Tracking, Bird-watching, Shore Walking by Jim Arnosky (HarperCollins, 2002)

Mammal Tracks & Sign: A Guide to North American Species by Mark Elbroch (Stackpole Books, 2003)

Peterson Field Guide to Animal Tracks: Third Edition, by Peterson Field Guides (Houghton Mifflin, 2005)

Tracking and the Art of Seeing: How to Read Animal Tracks and Signs by Paul Rezendes (Collins, 1999)

Baker Sanctuary News

The Sanctuary received only a trace of rain during February. As a result, the amount of water flowing from the Baker Springs had diminished to a slow trickle. On February 15th, Lisa O'Donnell with the City of Austin Watershed Protection and Development Review Department came out and surveyed the spring pool and run for Jollyville Plateau Salamanders. In spite of the flushing that Baker Creek had as a result of the heavy January rains, the ephemeral pool above the spring had dried up and the level of water in the pool below the spring run had dropped to about half. Algae had begun to grow in the pools and a good bit of detritus was at the bottom of the creek and pools. Lisa found one salamander, approximately 1.5 inches long in the pool below the spring.

Construction of the Jackie Arnold Education Center (JAEC) accelerated during the last half of February, unhindered by any bad weather. The erection of the remaining structural steel was completed earlier in the month and the shade screen on the south and west side of the center was installed. The wood framing, decking, doorframes and windows for the restroom/storage areas were then installed. In preparation for the stonemason's to begin laying the Leuder's limestone, I hauled 100 gallons of water to the site so they could mix the mortar to lay the stone. The masons had laid all of the stone around the Restroom/Storage Room area, the fireplace hearth and chimney by the last week of February. Once the structural contractor finished installing the purlins and blocking on the roof, the roofing contractor arrived and installed the flashings and the Galvalume standing seam metal roof over the JAEC and the Storage Area/Restrooms. Once the remaining items, such as the installation of the composting toilets, finish trim, painting, power and lighting, and site clean up are completed, construction on the center will be complete. To save construction costs, Jim Arnold graciously donated a 2000-gallon cistern to the project. IDM Builders picked up the cistern, delivered it to the job site and set it on a pad of



Photo credit: Marcie Wilcox

crushed limestone at the back of the center. After the gutters are installed, I will build a First Flush Diverter to catch the first rain runoff from the roof. This diverter, which is essential to any rainwater collection system, will collect the accumulated dirt and leaves washed off the roof and divert them past the cistern inlet into a pipe that can be emptied into the drain field behind the center. All of the heavy work (structural steel, stone work and roofing) on the center was completed by February 28th, just in time for Golden-cheeked Warbler season!

It is one thing to look at a project on paper and quite another to see the nearly completed facility. As planned, the simple, clean lines of the facility nestled under the trees are minimally intrusive, yet the structure creates a sustainable, appealing and welcoming gathering place for our members and visitors. Please come out to see the Golden-cheeked Warblers and visit the Jackie Arnold Education Center at the Baker Sanctuary.

John Wilcox, TAS-Baker Sanctuary Steward

Baker is Bigger!

On March 1st, after a 9-month fundraising campaign, Travis Audubon closed on the purchase of nearly 10 acres of undeveloped land adjacent to our Baker Sanctuary. TAS Audubon President Shelia Hargis and Executive Director Valerie Staats met with Ruth Fredericksen, the seller, and her attorney in downtown Austin, and celebrated both the deal closing and the seller's commitment to conserving land. Wanting the land preserved as wildlife habitat, Ms. Fredericksen had offered TAS the parcel at well below the appraised value. By selling it to us, she made a significant donation to Travis Audubon and to the natural world.



From left to right:
TAS President Shelia Hargis, Ruth
Fredericksen, Thomas Hall.

Travis Audubon would like to thank the many donors, from Texas and as far away as California and Minnesota, and the Malcolm C. Damuth Foundation, for supporting this purchase. We also thank Baker Sanctuary Steward John Wilcox for his guidance on this project, and Ed Groff for pro bono legal work for Travis Audubon. As you know, by adding this land to our Sanctuary, we are providing a vital buffer between our protected Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat, and an active housing development on the other side. By the way, our fundraising campaign netted us about 43% of our purchase price and closing costs. We welcome any further tax-deductible contributions that you would like to make to A Bigger Baker!

Education Committee News - Classes

Animal Tracking and Signs

Have you ever wondered who left those footprints in the mud or what prompted a robin's alarm call? A tracking class with Dwight Wilson will teach you how to locate mammal, bird, and insect tracks in any substrate, from wet mud or sand to leaf litter and tall grass. You will be able to tell if the animal is running, walking, stopping, looking left or right, is right or left handed, male or female. Animal tracks can even reveal emotions and physiological states like gestation or stress that change the foot's pressure points.

Why do cardinals have different vocalizations? Birds lend an amazing element to tracking because they vocalize what is going on in the forest floor. Each song or call can tell us something about a specific predator or potential food source.

Want to see a fox licking its paw? Dwight will show us how to move and blend with nature allowing you to observe more wildlife. This amazing class not only shows you the tracks but the different signs and signals these animals leave behind. It is possible for you to understand the signs that nature gives and add a new dimension to your outdoor experiences.

Dwight Wilson has over 20 years of tracking experience with wildlife and humans. He has been featured in recent newspaper articles and Passport to Texas interviews (see

www.earthtracks.net/). He has trained with some of the nations best trackers including Charles Worsham, Paul Rezendes, Stanley Liston, Nate Kempton, Jon Youngs Wilderness Awareness School, and Tom Browns Tracker School. His knowledge is so specialized and fine-tuned that he has been asked to provide his services for institutions such as the National Park Service, Texas law enforcement officers, and the Dallas FBI (ERT) in man tracking. He also gives classes on wildlife tracking and behavior, land navigation, and wilderness survival. All of these skills allow Dwight to understand and recognize the signs that are given to us in nature and help him to lead you in the direction of seeing nature through these eyes.

Normally offered in Dallas only, this is Dwight's second class in the Austin area and is available at a special reduced price. Future classes will be smaller and more specialized and will be priced accordingly.

The 8-hour class will be held outdoors in the Austin area on Saturday, April 21st with an additional optional dawn session. The class fee is \$45 for TAS chapter members and \$55 for non-members. Class size is limited. To register, e-mail Roxie Rochat at tastrack@austin.rr.com or call 345-6935.

H-E-B Supports Earth Share of Texas in April!

Great news! H-E-B has selected **Earth Share of Texas** to be the beneficiary of its Central Texas in-store coupon promotion for April, in recognition of Earth Day. This means that customers can tear off and add **check-out coupons worth \$1, \$3, or \$5** to their total bills.

H-E-B has supported many Earth Share of Texas organizations with corporate grants or in-kind contributions. The April tear-pad promotion enables H-E-B customers to support the Central Texas program work of more than two dozen Earth Share of Texas organizations. Audubon chapters in Texas will benefit, because the contributions will be divided equally among 28 Earth Share of Texas organizations with program work in Central Texas. Audubon Foundation of Texas, one of those 28 organizations, divides its share of contributions among the Audubon chapters in the state.

Look for the Earth Share of Texas display and tear-off coupons at the check-out stands in **70 Central Texas H-E-B stores and the two Austin Central Market stores** beginning **April 1st**, or a few days earlier.

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GBBC RESULTS - 2007

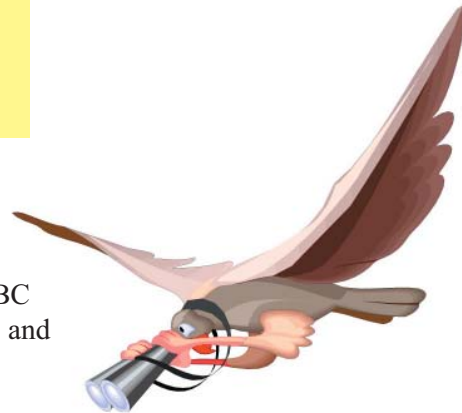
2007 Great Backyard Bird Count Results

Austin Counts Big in the 2007 Great Backyard Bird Count!

Travis Audubon members and friends did beautifully in this year's 10th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), which took place over President's Day Weekend, February 16-19, 2007. Citizen science at its most fun, free and open to everyone, the Count can be done for an hour, a day, or the whole weekend, and from the comfort of your window seat or while striding outdoors in your favorite birding spot. The data, says Paul Green of Audubon, "... [y]ield what would have been otherwise impossible—a comprehensive snapshot of the continent's birdlife," and they help ornithologists identify trends.

The GBBC is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon. They have made reporting the results easy through the user-friendly, on-line form that is updated in real time as birders submit their checklists. And they've given the data back to us in

myriad ways. You can view lists by species, locale, state, or year (the GBBC data go back to 1998), and you can view maps, compare maps side by side, get detailed reports on species, and more. There's also a spectacular on-line photograph gallery, with this year's edition including 165 images.



The final Count results as of press time (early March):

* Texas comes in **First** out of the **Top 10 States/Provinces Reporting the Most Species!**

and (here comes the best part):

* Austin ranks **First** (by a lot) out of the **Top 10 Localities in Texas Submitting Checklists!**

To see lots more data and images from the 2007 Count, just visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

The **Top 10 Species Counted in Texas** with the most individuals in a species were:

1. Laughing Gull
2. Red-winged Blackbird
3. Ring-billed Gull
4. American Robin
5. Cedar Waxwing
6. American Goldfinch
7. Redhead
8. Great-tailed Grackle
9. House Sparrow
10. Common Grackle

Compare that to the **Top 10 Species Counted in Austin** with the most individuals in a species:

1. Cedar Waxwing
2. Great-tailed Grackle
3. White-winged Dove
4. American Robin
5. American Coot
6. House Sparrow
7. Rock Pigeon
8. European Starling
9. Northern Cardinal
10. Northern Shoveler

Localities in Texas	Number of Checklists:
Austin	275
Houston	214
Fort Worth	122
Arlington	113
San Antonio	95
Dallas	93
Spring	66
Georgetown	64
Southlake	63
San Angelo	58

New Program Chair

We are delighted to announce that, effective April 1st, Ann Gardner is taking over as the new Program Chair for Travis Audubon. (She replaces Marsha May, who has done a great job in the role for well over a year, but who is taking on other leadership roles within TAS.) Ann has been informally "apprenticing" with Marsha through the current program year. A Life Member of Travis Audubon, Ann is a psychotherapist in private practice and an avid nature and travel photographer. Check out some of her great images at www.anngardnerphotography.com.

Ann's job will be to identify interesting and relevant program speakers for our 8 membership meetings during September-May, and to work with the TAS office on speaker logistics. If you don't know Ann, please introduce yourself to her, and give her any program suggestions you may have. She can be reached at [anngardner \(at\) austin.rr.com](mailto:anngardner@texasbirders.org) or 512.306.0737.

TAS Events - Apr 2007

- Sunday, April 8**
7:30 am to 10 am
Bird Walk at Turkey Creek
Listen and watch for nesting Golden-cheeked Warblers, Canyon Wrens and other Hill Country specialties. The rocky trail crosses the creek repeatedly, so wear sturdy footwear. Contact Charles Stephens (charles_stephens@yahoo.com) for more information.
- Saturday, April 14**
7 am to early afternoon
Field Trip to Bastrop County, led by Barry Lyon
Barry leads trips for VENT to places like Antarctica and India, but he's offered to help us try for some really tough local birds like Swainson's and Hooded Warblers, Philadelphia Vireo, and Red-headed Woodpecker. Meet at the Hornsby ERC to carpool; bring a picnic lunch and money for entrance to the park(s). Participation limited to 12. Contact Stan Van Sandt (empidider@yahoo.com) to register or for more information.
- Saturday, April 14**
7 am & 4 pm
Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend
Contact Kevin Anderson (972-1960) for more information. Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory.
- Saturday, April 21**
7:30 am to 12 noon
Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend
Ponds, wetlands, riparian corridor, fields, pecan groves, mountains – Hornsby has it all. Well, maybe not mountains, but it's still Austin's premier birding site. With migration in full swing we should see Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Magnolia Warblers, Swainson's Thrushes, and who knows, maybe a Hudsonian Godwit. Contact Shawn Ashbaugh (sashbaugh@austin.rr.com) for more information.
- Date and Time TBA**
Mid-week Bird Walk in West Austin
Terry Banks will lead her monthly mid-week walk in town this month to take advantage of the migrant magnets in our own city. Watch the Web site for the date and time announcement.
- Wednesday, April 25**
12 noon - 1 pm

Brown Bag and Birds at Central Park Pond
Excellent for absolute first-timers, kids, and beginning birders. Lunchtime birding at Central Park, led by Travis Audubon's Executive Director. Bring your binox and we'll see what turns up at the Park's pond and grounds. We've seen a Green Heron, a Yellow-crowned Night Heron, and a large family of Wood Ducks. If you live or work in the neighborhood, walk over to meet us at the NW corner of 38th and Guadalupe. If driving, you could park at Central Market and walk to that corner. Please dress for the weather! We'll walk the flat, crushed gravel trail at a leisurely pace. Please e-mail valerie@travisaudubon.org to sign up. Wheelchair accessible.
- Sunday, April 29**
7:30 am to 10:30 am
Bird Walk at Mary Moore Searight Park
Another opportunity to look for migrants in a convenient location with excellent habitat. Contact Stan Van Sandt (empidider@yahoo.com) for more information.
Two co-leaders needed.

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

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

TAS Events - May 2007

Sunday, May 6
8 am to 12 noon

East Metropolitan Park

This new Travis county park opened in June of 2006 and appears to have excellent bird habitat with 3 ponds, brushy fields, and numerous scattered oaks. Join us to see if the spring migrants find it as enticing as we do and if the Common Ground-Doves or any of the 14 sparrow species that wintered there are still present. The park is southeast of Manor at Burlison-Manor and Blake-Manor roads. We will meet in the first parking lot on the left after you enter the park. Directions: Going east on US 290 from Austin, turn south on FM 973 at Manor. After crossing the railroad tracks at the south edge of town, turn left (southeast) on to Blake-Manor Road. Stay on Blake-Manor Road for about 3.5 miles until you see the Park Entrance on the right. Coming from the south, take MLK/RR 969 east past RR 973 to Burlison-Manor Rd. Go left (north) to the intersection with Blake-Manor Rd. Go left and the entrance to the park will be around 100 yards on the left. Contact Roxie Rochat (email: roxier at austin.rr.com; phone: 512-345-6935) or Ed Fair (email-preferred: ezflaz at sbcglobal.net; phone: 512-560-1943) for more information.

Date and Time TBA

Field Trip to Warbler Woods

Early May is the peak of migration and twenty or more warbler species may be present, along with other special birds usually found on the Schaezler's property like Pauraque and Curve-billed Thrasher. Limited to ten participants: contact Terry Banks to register or for more information at 451-6302 or tessiembanks@msn.com.

Saturday, May 12

Travis Audubon's Annual Birdathon

Open to everyone! Please see p. 7 for details!

Saturday, May 19
7:30 am to noon

Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

Austin's premier birding site. No registration required. Contact Kevin Anderson (972-1960) for more information.

Wednesday, May 23
12 noon to 1 pm



Lunchtime at Central Park Pond

Excellent for absolute first-timers, kids, and beginning birders. Lunchtime birding at Central Park, led by Travis Audubon's Executive Director. Bring your binoculars and we'll see what turns up at the Park's pond and grounds. We've seen a Green Heron, a Yellow-crowned Night Heron, and a large family of Wood Ducks. If you live or work in the neighborhood, walk over to meet us at the NW corner of 38th and Guadalupe. If driving, you could park at Central Market and walk to that corner. Please dress for the weather! We'll walk the flat, crushed gravel trail at a leisurely pace. Please e-mail valerie(at)travisaudubon.org to sign up. Wheelchair accessible.



REQUEST FOR SPRING CHIMNEY SWIFT SIGHTINGS

Soon we will be receiving reports of the first Chimney Swifts of the season retuning from their wintering grounds in South America. As in past years we will be plotting the swifts' movements northward over the next few months. Please let us know when you see the first ones in your area. This year's results will be posted on our web site at: WWW.CHIMNEYSWIFTS.ORG along with past years' efforts.

We look forward to hearing from you!
Paul and Georgan Kyle
North American Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project

Celebrate Nature!

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Celebrate Nature! 2007 * Friday - Monday, April 27-30, 2007

Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge

A collection of interpretive events to experience birds, butterflies and wildflowers.

Quite a few Travis Audubon members, instructors and field trip leaders will be among your guides!

► On-line registration/payment at **www.balconessongbirdfestival.org**.
You can also print a form from the Web site and mail it with your payment.
Hurry, some events are already selling out! Here's this year's super line-up:

Friday, April 27 Wine & Star Shine! Z Tejas food pairings will complement Flat Creek Estate wines. Jeffery Phillips will provide tales and lights of the sky at dusk

Saturday, April 28 Warbler & Vireo Habitat with Chuck Sexton and John Kelly

Explore Hill Country Birding with Byron Stone

Little Bend Native Landscape Tour & Color Pots with Evelyn Nugent

Golden-cheeked Warbler Habitat with John Kelly

Exploring the Backcountry with Jean & Seay Nance

Ranches to Refuge Dinner - BBQ dinner at the Flying X Ranch on the Refuge

Sounds of the Night with Kathy McCormack

Sunday, April 29 Warbler & Vireo Habitat with Laura Zebehazy

Creeks to Canyons with Chuck Sexton

Exploring the Backcountry with Jean & Seay Nance

Nature Photography Workshop with Karen Kilfeather

Habitat of the Black-capped Vireo with John Kelly

Beginning Birders Walk with Jean Martin

Monday, April 30 Warbler & Vireo Habitat with Chuck Sexton and John Kelly

Free Family Events

Sunday, April 29, 2007

It's a Pond's Life with Kathy McCormack

Spider Hunt with Joe Lapp

Last Chance Forever Raptor Show

Singing Like a Bird with Lucas Miller

Miss Poppy the Clown

Birdhouse building (materials cost), seed balls, rope making & insect stamping

Don't miss one of the best birding and nature events in the Hill Country!

Detailed event descriptions, times, costs, at www.balconessongbirdfestival.org

Festival Volunteers Needed

If you can help out at the Songbird Festival during the last weekend in April, we have a deal for you. We need workers to staff the Audubon table and help out in other ways. In return, you can have your pick of any of the tours of the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge that aren't sold out. For information, contact John Kelly at jfkellyaustin53@hotmail.com.

More Events of Interest

“How To Know and Grow Austin Butterflies”

will be the focus of the Butterfly Workshop the Austin Butterfly Forum has scheduled for Saturday, May 5th at the Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Road, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The cost of \$35 includes a light lunch. For more information, and to register, please call Jeff Taylor at 255-0368 or kscjtaylor@prodigy.com.

Tips on butterfly identification, rearing butterfly caterpillars, creating a garden to attract butterfly larva and adults, and a butterfly walk will be given.

Contact:

Mary Helen Quinn

7739 Kiva Drive

Austin, TX 78749

Telephone: 512-892-7078

Email: mhquinn@mailutexas.edu



LBJ Wildflower Center Spring Plant Sale

Get a refill for your garden! The best selection of native plants you'll find anywhere – almost 280 species with plenty to attract the birds. Artists and authors will sign their works in the on-site Store both days. View the Plant list with photographs, on-line at wildflower.utexas.edu/plants/collection.php?collection=spring_sale.

Wildflower Center Members' Only Preview Sale – 1-7 p.m. Friday, April 13. Public Sale runs from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, April 14th and 15th. Travis Audubon Society is a proud Affiliate of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and we encourage you to support their work.

TRAVIS AUDUBON SOCIETY NATURE BOOK CLUB

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

April 26, 2007 - *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail* by Bill Bryson (Broadway, 1999)

May 24, 2007 - *Into the Wild* by John Krakauer (Anchor, 1997)

June 28, 2007 - *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv (Algonquin Books, 2006)

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

Ongoing TAS Meetings

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

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

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

Education Committee: meets on the 3rd Monday of each month, contact: Byron Stone, 451-3380

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

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

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

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

Travis Audubon Society
Membership Secretary
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Austin TX 78704

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Visit the TAS Web site:
www.travisaudubon.org



Join your local Audubon chapter, Travis Audubon Society, by using the form at the right. Your dues will be put to use supporting local conservation, education, research projects, field trips, and other Travis Audubon activities right here in Central Texas. We seek your support through your membership in our local chapter. (To become a member of the national Audubon, please go to their Web site at www.audubon.org.)

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

Travis Audubon Society chapter members receive eleven issues of this *Signal Smoke* newsletter, priority sign-ups on local field trips, discounts on our educational classes, the opportunity to participate in our e-mail group and attend our wonderful monthly lectures, and more!

To join Travis Audubon Society:

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

Travis Audubon Society

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

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

T-shirt size (for premium memberships) _____

This is a gift membership from _____

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