



SIGNAL SMOKE

The Newsletter of Travis Audubon Society

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VOLUME 56, NO. 3

March 2007

Baker Sanctuary Open House: March 31st

Ribbon Cutting on the Jackie Arnold Education Center!

We are delighted to announce the ribbon cutting ceremony for our long-awaited Jackie Arnold Education Center (JAEC), to be held in conjunction with this Spring's Open House at Baker Sanctuary, on Saturday, March 31st. Please come celebrate with us.

Thanks to the generosity of the late Jackie Arnold, a past Travis Audubon President, we will be holding classes and workshops in the beautiful setting of our Baker Sanctuary – protected Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat. We broke ground last September and now it's time to celebrate our beautiful project and see the results of Ms. Arnold's gift to all who love nature.

As a conservation organization, Travis Audubon wanted our JAEC to be eco-friendly: a simple, sustainable, and low-maintenance facility. A rain water collection system, two composting toilets and efficient lighting are included. The JAEC is located on the hill top between the Baker Cabin and the Baker Family Cemetery. Stop by on the 31st and see the results for yourself!

The Travis Audubon Society thanks the project architects, PageSouthernlandPage, for donating their professional services, as well as the Architectural Engineers Collaborative and The Sunland Group. Finally, we would like to recognize Marcie and John Wilcox, who live at and take care of Baker Sanctuary, for their thoughtful and careful work overseeing this project. (Their photographs with this article show the progress of the building over the Fall and Winter.)

Celebration of A Bigger Baker Land Acquisition

Last year a seller approached TAS offering nearly ten acres with the idea of increasing Baker Sanctuary. The parcel adjoins Baker, is bordered on its west side by Lime Creek, and is a critical buffer between our existing Golden-Cheeked Warbler habitat and housing developments on the other side. Thanks to the generous support of many individual donors (including people from other states) and the Malcolm C. Damuth Foundation, Travis Audubon will soon be closing on the purchase of this property – thus securing it as a permanent buffer free from development.

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JAEC building progress through January 2007.
 Photo. credits: Marcie Wilcox

**TAS
Regular Monthly Meeting**

Thursday, Mar 15, 7:00 pm

Doors open at 6:30 pm for social time

Bird Watching in a Hunting World

Speaker: Mike Leggett

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



see page 8 for additional details

Travis Audubon Society

General Address

P.O. Box 40787, Austin TX 78704

Address for Donations

P.O. Box 40787, Austin TX 78704

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

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2006-07

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ACT REPRESENTATIVES

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Bryan Hale (state treasurer) 474-5599

SIGNAL SMOKE EDITOR

Tess Sherman 300-BIRD

TAS TELEPHONE

The office number is 512-300-BIRD (2473). To leave a message for Board President Shelia Hargis, press 1. To leave a message for Executive Director Valerie Staats, press 2. To report sightings of rare or unusual birds in Central Texas, press 3. To ask a bird-related question, press 4.

TAS WEB SITE

www.travisaudubon.org

TAS EMAIL

info@travisaudubon.org

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Mission Statement

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

LETTER FROM THE TAS PRESIDENT

Migration will soon be ramping up. I definitely plan to get out and enjoy migration more this Spring, and I hope you will do the same. If you are new to birding and aren't quite sure when and where to go birding, take advantage of Travis Audubon's field trips and classes. They are a wonderful way to learn birds and good birding locations. There's no telling what cool birds you will find passing through Central Texas!



Shelia Hargis,
photo by Robert Baumgardner

My term as President of Travis Audubon Society comes to an end on March 31st, so this is my last President's Column. It has been an honor to serve as your President for the last three years. Serving in that capacity has given me many things. It has allowed me to play a major role in conservation, a passion that permeates my life and a part of my life's purpose. It has allowed me to get to know and work with many others who share my passion for birds and conservation, and it has provided me the opportunity to practice and improve my leadership skills. I plan to use those skills to further conservation goals in the future.

Travis Audubon Society has accomplished many great things over the last several years, and I've highlighted some of those accomplishments in earlier columns. But,

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COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

TAS Rare Bird Alert	Eric Carpenter	300-2473 select option #3
Advocacy	Jeff Mundy	334-4300
Bird Records	Lawrence Buford	452-6344
	Ethel Kutac	346-7659
Habitat Conservation	Valarie Bristol	300-BIRD
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Publications	Tess Sherman	300-2473
Sanctuary Chair	Terri Siegenthaler	263-2237
Society Historian	John Kelly	331-8693
Urban Habitat	Jane Tillman	794-0058

ABOUT SIGNAL SMOKE

Subscription Information

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Newsletter Deadline

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

Baker Sanctuary, continued from page 1

Our Baker Sanctuary now tops out at nearly 690 acres, providing nesting and breeding habitat for the Golden-cheeked Warbler, which comes only to a few areas in Central Texas each year to brave the odds and raise new broods. This species is officially listed as endangered both by the U.S. Government and the State of Texas. We'd like to say that we did everything we could to promote the species' survival, and now we can do so by increasing the size of Baker Sanctuary.

You Can Still Support the Campaign

Though we have now closed on the land purchase, we can still use your contributions to help cover the total cost. Please take a few moments right now and use the envelope in this issue of *Signal Smoke* to mail us a check in any amount. Your check should be payable to "Travis Audubon Society" and please write "A Bigger Baker" in the memo. line. You may also go to our Web site and make an on-line donation with your credit card – just click on the **A Bigger Baker** link from our home page at www.travisaudubon.org. Your contribution is fully tax-deductible.

Baker Open House
All are Welcome - Join Us!

Schedule of Events

* Saturday, March 31st

- 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Walking tours of the Sanctuary
- 1 – 2 p.m. JAEC Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
- 2 – 4 p.m. Walking tours of the Sanctuary

- * Light refreshments will be available
- * A few children's activities are planned

Directions to Baker Sanctuary

(Please carpool if you can)

- Take Highway 183 North from Austin to Cedar Park
- Turn left (West) on RM 1431 and drive 1.5 miles
- Turn left (a protected left turn) onto Anderson Mill Road (it dead-ends into RM 1431 across from the TexDOT District Office)
- Drive Anderson Mill Road for 1.6 miles (past Ranger/Ruby quarry). (Anderson Mill Road transitions from a 2-lane, undivided road to a 4-lane, divided road before the Lime Creek Road right turn)
- Turn right on Lime Creek Road
- Drive .7 miles to the gate on your right at 12308 Lime Creek Road

Yes! I want to help make **A Bigger Baker!** My contribution is enclosed.

I understand that it will be used solely to purchase the new parcel adjacent to Baker Sanctuary.

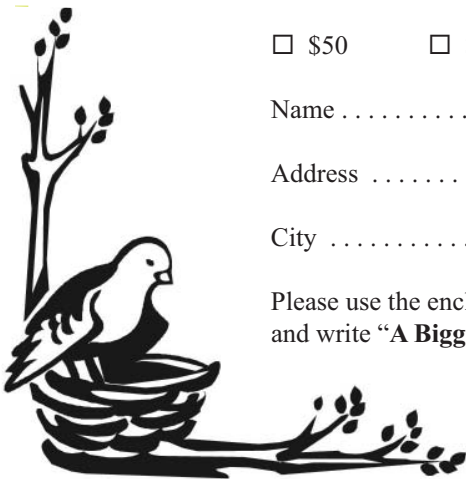
\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$

Name

Address

City State Zip

Please use the enclosed envelope. Make checks payable to "**Travis Audubon Society**" and write "**A Bigger Baker**" in the memo. line. Your contribution is fully tax-deductible.





NATURALIST'S CALENDAR

by Bill Reiner

photo by Robert Baumgardner

Sometime in March, or maybe in the waning days of February, it happens. You're driving to work or the store or another routine destination, not really watching for birds or signs of oncoming spring. You usually don't even notice the highway overpass or stream culvert that you pass en route, but today you see it – and the Cliff Swallows, like a cloud of gigantic gnats milling around it.

They weren't there yesterday, but they will be tomorrow, and next week, and all summer long. (And woe to any real gnat that blunders into their midst! These masters of aerial pursuit have a voracious appetite for high-flying insects.) Beneath the bridge or culvert, a cluster of mud nests, like a row of clay jugs stuck to the concrete, bears witness to their past residency. It's a wonder of life supported by the sterile, concrete infrastructure of our highway system.

If there is a mud puddle within view of the nest site, you may witness both ends of the nest-building process, as the late Austin nature writer Roy Bedichek described in his book *Adventures with a Texas Naturalist*:

“While thus gathering mud for pellets, this dainty bird barely touches feet to the ground, supporting most of the weight of his body by fluttering his wings high above his back. Craning his short neck forward, he excavates the raw material with his bill and takes off, working the mouthful into pellet form as he flies. Arrived at the nesting site, he presses the little brick into its place in a jiffy and is off again on another hod-carrier flight.”

Before humans built walls and other structures for them, Cliff Swallows were restricted to vertical cliff faces below sheltering ledges. (Hamilton Pool is one place you can still see these birds in such a natural setting.) But the birds quickly learned to exploit the new opportunities, spreading into previously-uninhabitable areas as Europeans settled North America. The Cliff Swallows of Austin were no exception. When a new Texas capitol building was completed in 1888, Cliff Swallows immediately began nest-building in the archway over the main entrance. Bedichek relates the story:

“At this time Congress Avenue, leading from the river to the capitol, was an unpaved expanse of soft limestone, yielding, under the pounding and grinding of horse-drawn traffic, an immense amount of floury dust which the south winds swept in stifling clouds up the main thoroughfare of the city. Thereupon a sprinkler system was established, which soon converted the powdered limestone into a pasty mulch which the swallows found very much to their liking....

Hundreds of the birds covered Congress Avenue, each intent on getting a supply of the gummy mixture of dust and water which the traffic had providentially churned into just the right consistency. Many observers thought the birds were eating mud.

They soon proved to be careless masons, dropping this whitish, adhesive material upon people entering the building; and the acceleration of a four-story descent gave the pellet, as it reached the shoulders of its victims, considerable spattering and daubing power.

The fire department came to the rescue with high-pressure hose, and the birds were driven from the city streets back into the hills.”

Cliff Swallows still face eviction from those who are distressed by their mess, but with a plethora of human structures, there are, fortunately, many more options now. Their appetite for flying insects, many harmful to crops or ornamental plants, make them welcome neighbors, much as their relatives the Purple Martins and Barn Swallows. The *Texas Ornithological Society Handbook of Texas Birds* considers this species to be the most common swallow in Texas.

Until recently, a flock of swallows building mud nests under a bridge in Austin could only be Cliff Swallows (with a few pairs of Barn Swallows among them), but now you need to look a little closer to be sure. These days the flock could be comprised, partly or entirely, of Cave Swallows, smaller cousins to the Cliff Swallows.

If you find a cluster of nests and there are no swallows present, you can determine the identity of the builders by the shape of the nest. A Cliff Swallow nest looks like a jug, with a narrow, spout-like opening. Barn Swallows build open cup-shaped nests. A Cave Swallow's nest is also cup-shaped, but, where the nest is attached to the wall, the sides curve up over the top, partially enclosing it. It suggests a hybrid between Barn and Cliff Swallow nests.

For some reason, Cave Swallows took a bit longer to learn what Cliff Swallows knew. Until the latter part of the twentieth century, they nested only on the naturally-occurring rock walls of sinkholes and deep caves. For instance, a large colony of Cave Swallows nested every year in the entrance to Carlsbad Caverns. However, such specific nesting requirements restricted the birds' range in Texas to the limestone karst topography at the southern edge of the Edwards Plateau, and a few scattered locations west of the Pecos.

According to *The Bird Life of Texas*, the first United States record of Cave Swallows building nests on human structures came in 1973. In that year, observers found over 600 pairs nesting in culverts in nine Texas counties – so they had likely been doing so, unobserved, for several years.

Since that time, Cave Swallows have dramatically expanded their range. The species did not even appear on the 1984 TAS checklist, and the 1989 edition listed it as accidental. By the mid-1990s, however, Cave Swallows were increasingly common in Austin. Several years ago they established a beachhead under a bridge in Sea Rim State Park, near Port Arthur, and they have spread northward almost to the Red River north of Dallas. They are widespread in south Texas, where some are year-round residents.

Cave Swallows may displace Cliff Swallows where they compete for nest sites – but apparently not without a fight. A few years ago, I watched a pair of Cave Swallows being hounded by Cliff Swallows for having the audacity to build a nest in their colony under a U.S. route 79 bridge in Milam County near the Brazos River. The Cave Swallows disappeared for a few years from that location, but last year they were back. Only time will tell what balance will develop between these two similar species.



Dan Callaway,
photo by Robert Baumgardner

THE DAN CALLAWAY REPORT

Birding to Lago Vista - 1/24/07

Participants: Ethel Kutac, Homer Cunningham, Catfish Kelly, Roy Reinartz, Jim Gilchrist, Dave Machart and Dan Callaway

Target bird: Green-tailed Towhee discovered on the Christmas Count (not found)

From Austin we went North on US183, then left on FM1431 to Lago Vista, where we met Roy, Jim and Dave. Constant light drizzle fell until about 11 a.m. The temperature was in the upper 30s. Most of the morning was spent in an undeveloped (but paved road) area East of Lohmans Crossing Rd. This typical hill country habitat produced a Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Common Raven, several squawking Western Scrub-Jays, Black-crested Titmouse, Carolina and Bewick's Wren, Carolina Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, lots of Mourning Doves and American Robins, Hermit Thrush, Northern Mockingbird, two flocks of Cedar Waxwings, Northern Cardinal, Spotted Towhee, Chipping, Lincoln's, Field, Song, Rufous-crowned and Savannah Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos. At the wastewater treatment pond were several Gadwall and a Spotted Sandpiper.

Our last stop in Lago Vista was Bar-K Ranch Park which used to be on the shore of beautiful Lake Travis. With current drought conditions, the shoreline has receded about 200 yards to muddy, rocky, stumpy, narrow canyons, with boat docks and launch ramps high and dry. Good birds here included Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Double-crested Cormorant, Osprey with a fish, lots of Black and a few Turkey Vultures, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a nice close look at a Canyon Wren, White-crowned Sparrow and House Finches. Since no one was in the mood for a picnic, we stopped in Jonestown on our return and we all enjoyed a steamy warm bowl of beef/vegetable/alphabet soup at True Grits. After lunch we toured the local park to find an Eastern Phoebe and a gathering of fourteen Killdeer.

Total species: forty-four

Best bird: Canyon Wren

Dominant bird: Black Vulture

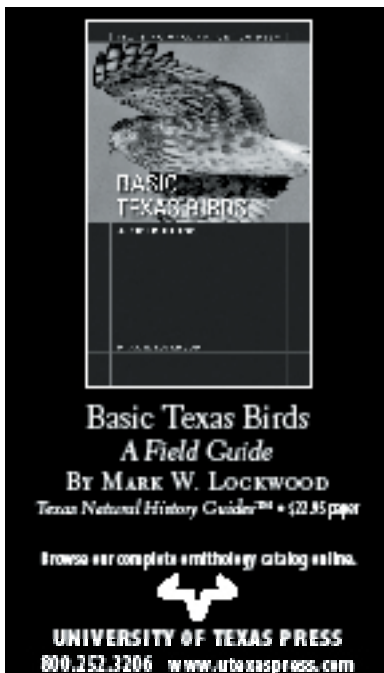
Westcave Preserve Christmas Bird Count Report

The third annual Westcave Preserve Christmas Bird Count was conducted on New Year's Day, 2007. Thirty-four participants identified 103 species including 4 rarities, which were Horned Grebe (Lago Vista), Snowy Egret (Pace Bend), Prairie Falcon (Reimer's Ranch), and Green-tailed Towhee (Lago Vista). Two reported rarities, the Chihuahuan Raven and Red-headed Woodpecker, were rejected by the Texas CBC editor. The total number of birds was 5,764, down from last year's 6,777. Conditions were very dry and food supply was fair.

The count circle consists of nine areas. This year area 1 was divided into two parties. The new area 1A consisted of Reimer's Ranch and Pogue Springs Preserve. Since no leader was found to cover Lakeway/Hudson Bend, it was divided. Some of the party doing Murphy Ranch in the morning did Lakeway in the afternoon. Hudson Bend was included on the Upper Lake Austin area.

Besides the four rarities, new species added this year were Merlin (Lago Vista), Common Ground-Dove, Downy Woodpecker, and Rock Wren (Reimer's Ranch), Blue-headed Vireo (Westcave), and the Western Meadowlark found in Lago Vista and on Murphy's Ranch. Species showing a marked increase from previous years were Golden-crowned Kinglet, Spotted Towhee, Rufous-crowned, Lark, and White-crowned Sparrows. The total species count for the three years combined is 127.

Dan Callaway



Travis Audubon Board of Directors Slate of Candidates

- *Current chapter members of Travis Audubon Society will vote in person at the March 15, 2007 general membership meeting.*
- *Four candidates have been nominated for four seats on the Board, for three-year terms.*
- *To be eligible to vote in the Board election, you must be a chapter member of Travis Audubon Society and current with chapter dues no later than March 9, 2007.*

Doran Bradberry

Doran E. Bradberry, CPA, MBA, has over thirty years of banking, investments, securities regulatory, consulting, and accounting business experience. He has also taught accounting courses at a community college and university in Oklahoma and Tennessee. He is Vice President and Controller for NFP Securities, Inc. in Austin, Texas. Doran earned a BBA in Banking and Finance from the University of North Texas and an MBA from Middle Tennessee University. He is a member of the Texas Society of Certified Public Accountants, the AICPA, and Beta Gamma Sigma.

"I enjoy and want to preserve the natural beauty that we have in Austin and Central Texas. The abundance of birds and the natural beauty of this area are very soothing and peaceful to me. These God-given treasures require us to be good stewards, and I will support projects that preserve the beauty that we enjoy in our bird and wildlife. I also believe that it is vital for our children and youth to experience the joy of birding and observing other wildlife and nature. I want our citizens to understand the delicate balance that exists in preserving our birds, wildlife, and nature. As a Board Member, I will support and promote the vision and mission of the Travis Audubon Society."

Donna Brasher

Donna Brasher has worked for the following municipal park and recreation departments: City of Denton, Grand Prairie, Austin, and Arlington. For the last 15 years she has worked for the Lower Colorado River Authority. In Arlington as Parks and Recreation Director, she was responsible for the River Legacy Parks Vision along the Trinity River which included the first nature center for the city. At LCRA, Brasher was responsible for the Colorado River Trail Vision which includes the consolidation and redistribution of LCRA lands to create 40+ parks along the Colorado River from San Saba to Matagorda and several National Science Centers and Economic Development. Additionally, she has served as both President and Board member of her state and regional professional organizations.

"I have recently retired after working in the areas of Parks, Open Space, and Conservation most of my career. Simply put ... I'm seeking ways in which I might continue to contribute to doing the same in Central Texas. Although I manage my property for song birds with a wildlife exemption, I would be the first to tell you that I am a beginner when it comes to birding ... so, I would hope to learn more about the birds I manage for and love."

Kelly F. Logan, CPA

Kelly Logan has over 20 years of experience in tax planning for owners and businesses in the areas of entity formation, operations and mergers/distributions. Kelly has served clients in a wide range of industries including technology, retail/distribution, real estate, financial services and medical products and services. An Austin native, he received a Bachelor of Business Administration and a Masters in Professional Accounting from the University of Texas at Austin. After working in Dallas for three years, he joined the tax department of KPMG Peat Marwick's Austin office in 1985 and was admitted to the partnership in 1998. In 2006 he left KPMG to join Powell, Ebert & Smolik. Kelly is active in numerous professional organizations, having been involved with the Association for Corporate Growth, Texas EComm Association and the Austin Technology Council.

"I am an Austin native and have seen great changes to wildlife habitat over the years. I have become interested in birding over the last 10 years and would like to serve in a position with an organization that addresses and acts on habitat/depredation issues. As Central Texas grows, I would like to be involved in decisions that impact wildlife."

Chris Masey

Chris Masey is an avid and long-time birder who grew up in Central Texas. He and his wife are members of the Capital Area Master Naturalists, and have volunteered many hours for local conservation organizations such as Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, LBJ Wildflower Center, Horned Lizard Conservation Society, and the Austin-Bastrop River Corridor Partnership. Masey graduated from UT with a BA in Geography with a specialization in Environmental Resource Management. He is currently employed at the Capital Area Council of Governments as a Solid Waste Planner, where he coordinates the Regional Environmental Task Force. The RETF focuses primarily on environmental crimes while concentrating on illegal dumping violations in the 10-county region surrounding Austin. Prior to this position, Masey was a long-time volunteer and the Land Steward at Wild Basin.

"We have been Travis Audubon members for several years, and I feel that the mission of Travis Audubon is identical to my personal and professional goals of ethical and informed environmental stewardship. In particular, we are interested in helping manage and preserve the important endangered species habitat that TAS has acquired."

Join us for the vote on March 15, 2007!

Travis Audubon Birdathon 2007



Saturday, May 12th

What is it?

One of Travis Audubon's two major fundraisers of the year.

Why do it?

To support Travis Audubon's many programs and activities throughout the year.

Who does it?

Any friend of Travis Audubon, from first-timers to advanced super-birders.

How do we do it?

1. Register for Birdathon – get the form in our April or May newsletters or find it on-line at www.travisaudubon.org/birdathon07.html.
2. Organize a team (start now) for Birdathon day. You can also do Birdathon solo. And don't forget to let us know if you would like us to place you on a team.
3. Gather pledges from as many sponsors as you can, and collect and turn in the funds to TAS by Friday, May 18th. Folks can sponsor you for a quarter, a dollar, or more, per species.
4. Lead your team on May 12th (dawn to dusk?) in counting as many species as possible while you bird a favorite spot (or two) anywhere in Central Texas.

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How many make a Birdathon team?

Two or more people are a team, and the more the merrier. But if you're a loner, you can also do Birdathon by yourself – just register with TAS and start collecting pledges.

What's in it for my sponsors?

1. A good time birding and exercise in the outdoors
2. Satisfaction of supporting a good conservation cause
3. Receipt for a tax-deductible contribution to TAS
4. The opportunity to compete for team honors (see below)
5. The first 100 team sponsors to donate \$50 or more* will receive a Birdathon goodie bag and the 2007 Birdathon Ballcap.
6. All sponsors donating \$25-\$49* will receive the 2007 Birdathon Ballcap.

Birdathon participants compete for honors:

Most Donation Dollars Raised

Last year's winning team raised **\$2,753!**

Most Species Seen

Last year's winning team counted **102 species!**

Largest Number of Donor Sponsors

Last year's winning team had **48 sponsors!**

Rarest Bird Seen

Last year's winning team IDed a **Least Bittern!**

Most Unusual Birding Location

Last year's winning team birded **livestock pens!**

Biggest Birdathon Team

Last year's winning team had **19 participants!**

We also had an Honorable Mention award for Best Team Name last year: **Legal Migrants!**

Information and forms: www.travisaudubon.org/birdathon07.html

* Funds must be received in the TAS office by Friday, May 18th to qualify for these premiums.

Monthly Meeting Information

Thursday, March 15, 7:00 pm (doors open at 6:30 pm for social time)

TAS Regular Monthly Meeting

Program: Bird Watching in a Hunting World

Presenter: Mike Leggett

Mike Leggett has been the Outdoor writer at Austin American-Statesman since 1985. Prior to that he was a news editor at the Houston Post. He has also been managing editor at Huntsville Item and Marshall News Messenger and has received numerous awards including Associated Press Managing Editors and Sports Editors awards for column writing, environmental stories on endangered species and canned hunting, and Dallas Press Club awards for stories on Texas Parks and Wildlife. He lives in Burnet County with his wife, Rana, and three dogs.

Mike will be talking about bird watching in a hunting world. Mike states, "I've come to appreciate birds more and more over the years, they add a dimension to hunting that makes it that much more enjoyable for me. Birding and hunting are compatible in any number of ways and we'll talk about how that works and how it could work even better." He will also present a short slide show of photos taken during hunting trips.

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.

Volunteers Needed – How about You?

Travis Audubon needs your hands and bird knowledge for two big events in March. Please consider giving us several hours of your time during this busy month! How about:

**Saturday, March 24th, 2 shifts,
3 volunteers needed per shift,
10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 1-4 p.m.**

Texas Natural Science Center Discover Nature! 2007 fair (at the Texas Memorial Museum, UT campus area). At the Travis Audubon booth, volunteers will give out literature and answer questions from children, families, and the UT community about the common birds of Central Texas. Up to 1,000 visitors are expected, according to the organizers. Chairs available if you need to sit down. To sign up to volunteer, please contact **Diana Digges** in the Travis Audubon office at **512.300.2473** or e-mail us at info@travisaudubon.org.

**Saturday, March 31st, 12-15 volunteers needed,
either all day or for 4-hour shifts,
8 a.m.-12 noon and 12 noon-4 p.m.**

Travis Audubon's annual *Baker Sanctuary Open House*, and this year, our grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Jackie Arnold Education Center. Volunteers may lead birding walks, possibly seeing Golden-cheeked Warblers, assist with visitor parking, greeting and signing in visitors, event set-up and break-down, and other tasks. To sign up to volunteer, please contact **John Wilcox** at Baker Sanctuary at **512.219.8425** or e-mail him at jmwoso@earthlink.net.

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Baker Sanctuary News

The prediction by weather forecasters that this will be an El Nino winter seems to be on target. In El Nino winters, the warm waters in the tropical Pacific energize the subtropical jet stream across the subtropics near the southern United States.

This usually means bouts with rains and snow across much of the south from California to Texas and Florida and up along the Atlantic Coast.

As predicted on January 13th, an Arctic front arrived, sliding under the Pacific subtropical jet stream and initially bringing the Sanctuary 2.5 inches of our monthly total of 6.7 inches of much needed rain. We really didn't need the freezing temperatures and additional moisture in the form of ice, sleet, rain and snow that resulted from the continuation of this overrunning pattern. Temperatures hovered in the mid-thirty's on Sunday and dropped into the upper-twenty's on Monday. Lime Creek Road became iced over and the Sanctuary was blanketed by nearly 1/2 inch of ice mixed with sleet and snow. Throughout the Sanctuary, tree limbs were weighted down by the ice and touched the ground.



Photos courtesy of Marcie Wilcox

Conditions had finally improved enough that Marcie was able to go to work Wednesday afternoon, however the ice on Lime Creek Road did not melt until Thursday and it wasn't until Friday, January 19th that the rest of the ice melted on

the Sanctuary. During a survey around the headquarters area, I found Juniper and Live Oak limbs, some four inches in diameter, broken by the weight of the ice. A Pedernales Electric Coop crew, summoned by a 911 call, came out on Thursday and trimmed some ice-covered limbs away from the HQ Area electrical service that were dragging the power lines and causing arcing.



The fabrication and hot dip galvanizing of the structural steel for the

Jackie Arnold Center is complete. The structural steel erection contractor had the steel loaded on his trucks and ready to deliver to the job site to begin work on January 15th, however here, as elsewhere throughout Central Texas, work and travel was at a standstill and his crew wasn't unable to begin work until January 22nd due to the inclement weather. By the end of the month, all of the columns had been set and grouted and most of the "X" brace wind frames had been installed (see lead story for pictures).

Date Change for the Baker Sanctuary Annual Open House

Please remark your calendars for the Annual TAS Baker Sanctuary Open House that is now scheduled for Saturday, March 31, 2007. Nature walks, including Golden-cheeked Warbler tours, are scheduled for the day. The ribbon cutting for the Jackie Arnold Center and other activities are planned for the afternoon. This year, we will need at least ten guides to arrive early and begin showing our visitors our Golden-cheeked Warblers at 9:00 a.m., plus other volunteers are needed to greet our visitors, help sign them in and show them where to park. Please contact us here at the Sanctuary at 219-8425 if you would like to volunteer to help with the Open House.

Business Members

Travis Audubon is delighted to recognize its Business Members:

Capital Printing Co.

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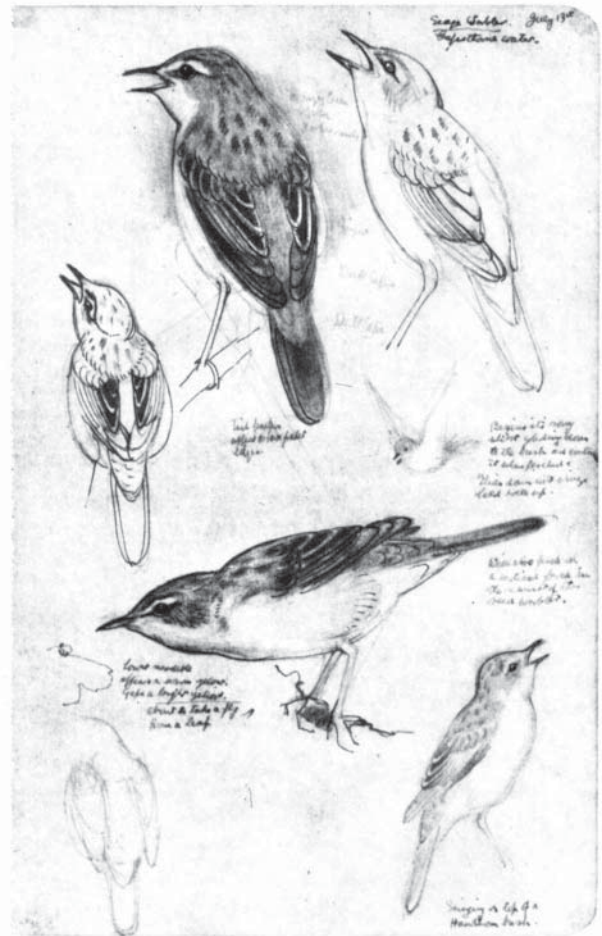
To learn about the benefits of supporting Travis Audubon as a Business Member, please go to www.travisaudubon.org and click on Business Members, or contact Valerie Staats at 512.300.BIRD (2473).

Warbler Identification Class

Spring warbler migration will soon be underway, and so will Travis Audubon Society's Warbler Identification Class. The instructor will again be Cliff Shackelford, ornithologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., who has taught the class every spring for the past 9 years. This popular class will focus on the warbler species likely to be seen in Texas, but other species will be included as time allows.

Lectures will take place Tuesday, April 17 and 24, and Thursday, April 26, from 7-9pm. The field trip will be to the Winnie-High Island area on the Upper Texas Coast from April 28-29. Tuition is \$60 for TAS members and \$70 for non-members. Class members who participate in the field trip to the Upper Texas Coast will pay an additional \$15 to cover the expenses of the instructor. The field trip will be limited to 14 participants and it fills very quickly. However, additional registrants may sign up for only the lectures.

Send e-mail to Jean Martin at gobirding@verizon.net or call her at 343-7053 to register for the class. Meeting location and other details will be provided when you register.



President's column, *continued from page 2*

what has been most rewarding for me are the relationships that I have formed over my years as President. I can't list them all here, but I want to mention a few. When I offered Valerie Staats the job as our Executive Director, I thought she was the perfect candidate to help Travis Audubon move forward. Little did I know how much she would teach me about running an effective non-profit organization and being a good President, how much support she would provide, or how good she would make me look. When Jeff Mundy and Valarie Bristol became TAS Board Members, I knew Jeff had a great conservation track record with Houston Audubon Society and Valarie brought extensive Central Texas conservation experience to the table. Little did I know what an honor it would be learning from them and the amount of support, advice, and encouragement they would provide me. I had heard Craig Damuth's name numerous times before I became President. Little did I know how committed he is to conservation and how generous he is with his conservation knowledge and

resources. These four individuals are a few of the heroes of my Presidency. Many others provided support and encouragement during my Presidency, and I am very grateful. Thank you all for the opportunity to serve as your President.

Join us for our March membership meeting on March 15. This is our annual business meeting, and our Chapter members will get to elect four new board members. We promise to keep the business part informative and interesting. It won't be hard given what we have accomplished this past year! Also at the meeting, Mike Leggett, outdoors writer for the Austin American-Statesman, will talk about bird watching in a hunter's world. And, don't miss our Baker Sanctuary open house on March 31. Along with looking for Golden-cheeked Warblers and other wildlife, we'll be dedicating the Jackie Arnold Education Center! I hope to see you at both of these events.

Shelia Hargis

TAS NEWS & NOTES

Thank you to long-time Chapter Members

Many *Signal Smoke* readers know that we actively seek your **Chapter Membership**, for which you join TAS here in Austin and pay your dues directly to us. That way your dues stay local to support our work in Central Texas. (Go to our Web site or use the form on the back page of *Signal Smoke* to join or renew your membership.) I would like to recognize some loyal, long-time chapter members whose support has helped get us where we are today. We sincerely thank the following TAS chapter members who had “chapter membership anniversaries” in January, February or March 2007:

45 years	Fred and Marie Webster
35 years	Jim Arnold, Jr. Sue & Tom Allen Robert & Lorna Terhune
15 years	Dale Jaroszewski Wayne & Martha Rogers Julie & Cliff Shackelford
10 years	Georgia Harper Charles Michalik Elaine Rushing Joan Schenker Tom & Jean Walters

Each one, reach one, please

If every current Travis Audubon chapter member could recruit one new chapter member, we would be a lot closer toward our goal of being financially self-sustaining – that is, bringing in the right amount of revenue to continue offering all our popular programs, services, and outreach.

We send a nice gift card for gift memberships. Please think it over: Is there someone in the Austin area you would like to introduce to the wonderful pastime of birding? You may mail us a check, fill out a membership form at one of our monthly meetings, or go to our Web site at www.travisaudubon.org and do a gift membership on-line. Thank you!

Life membership in Travis Audubon: On to 100!

For a flat \$1,000, you can become a Life Member in Travis Audubon Society. We love this kind of membership because it minimizes the paperwork and bookkeeping for our office. But it benefits you greatly as well – you secure your perpetual membership in Travis Audubon Society in today’s dollars, and, you can write off the \$1,000 as a charitable contribution on your income tax return. Not only that, but since we don’t send you annual renewal reminders, your environmentally sound Life Membership saves paper, envelopes, toner, and postage!

From time to time, we offer special opportunities or “perks” for our Life Members, such as breakfast with David Luneau, coupons to our favorite birding supply store, and so on. We hope you will seriously consider taking advantage of our Life Member program. To become a Life Member, simply use the form on the back page of *Signal Smoke* or go to our on-line Membership page at www.travisaudubon.org (click on Membership). Our goal is to have at least 100 Life Members. This train is rolling – get on board!



Great Texas Birding Classic 2007

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. Travis Audubon supports this important event – which raises funds for habitat conservation in Texas – by sponsoring teams. This year we will again sponsor the Travis Audubon Towhees, a team of teen-aged youth organized by Jesse Huth. We encourage you to participate as well. For more information or to sign up, contact Tournament Coordinator Carol Jones at cjones@gcbo.org, or telephone 979-480-0999, or visit the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Web site at www.gcbo.org.

Correction

Our article by U.S. Congressman Lloyd Doggett (January 2007 *Signal Smoke*, p.1), incorrectly states that millions of acres have been acquired for the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge (wishful thinking, to be sure). In fact, while millions of *dollars* have been spent on acquiring and managing the BCNWR, it currently consists of approximately 21,800 acres.

Thank you to LCRA

Like some other non-profit organizations in Austin, we benefit from the generosity of the Lower Colorado River Authority in being able to hold our membership programs at their beautiful facility on Lake Austin Boulevard, and at no charge. We want to take thank them and their helpful staff for making this possible for Travis Audubon members, guests, and the general public who come to our meetings. The LCRA’s mission is, “To provide reliable, low-cost utility and public services in partnership with our customers and communities and to use our leadership and environmental authority to ensure the protection and constructive use of the area’s natural resources.” Please visit LCRA’s Web site at www.lcra.org to learn more about their work.


TAS Events - Mar 2007

Saturday, March 10 7 am & 4 pm **Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend**
Contact Kevin Anderson at 972-1960 for more information. Sponsored monthly by the Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory.

Saturday, March 17 7:30 am to noon **Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend**
After leading more than forty field trips at Hornsby Bend since January of 2003, Richard Kaskan is moving back to New York! We will sorely miss him but promise to have a qualified leader for this walk every third Saturday, as always. Contact Stan Van Sandt (empidider@yahoo.com, 707-7438) for more information or to volunteer to lead!

Tuesday, March 20 7 am to noon **Field Trip to Reimers Ranch Park**
This newly acquired Travis County Park has not been thoroughly explored in spring migration yet - be among the pioneers! Meet at the "park-and-ride" in Oak Hill to carpool and help defray the \$8 per vehicle cost. Contact Terry Banks at 451-6302 or tessiebanks@msn.com for more information.

Saturday, March 24 7:30 am to early afternoon **Field Trip to Guadalupe River State Park**
Plan on leaving Austin before dawn (be sure to pack a picnic lunch, at least) or camping Friday night at the park. Campers might hear migrating or nesting Common Poorwill. Golden-cheeked Warblers and other hill country birds nest in the area. Limited to 10 participants, please contact Stan Van Sandt (empidider@yahoo.com, 707-7438) to register. *Co-leaders needed.*

Wednesday, March 28 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 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.

Saturday, March 31 7:30 am to early afternoon **Field Trip to Palmetto State Park**
Plan on leaving Austin before dawn (be sure to pack a picnic lunch, at least) or camping Friday night at the park. Campers might hear migrating Whip-poor-will. Singing Northern Parulas should be on territory. Limited to 10 participants, please contact Stan Van Sandt (empidider@yahoo.com, 707-7438) to register. *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 - 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.

Wednesday, April 25
12 noon - 1 pm

Brown Bag and Birds at Central Park Pond

Please see left-hand page (March 28th event) for a full description and sign-up details.

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 website for the date and time announcement.

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.



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

Our Gratitude

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

General

Nancy Cochran
Craig Damuth
Jon Devries
Olive Forbes
Raymond Risk
Paul Roush
Pieter & Frances Schenkkan
Byron Stone

Audubon Adventure Kit

Paxton Williams

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Dudley & Mari Houghton
Allen Jacoby
Michael McClendon
Marianne Mulrey
Penny Potter
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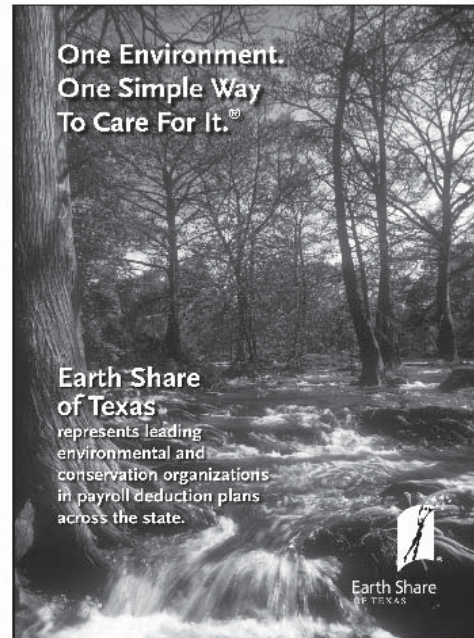
GIFTS TO TRAVIS AUDUBON Society are tax-deductible within the extent allowed by law. To make an on-line contribution, go to www.travisaudubon.org and click on *Support Us*, or mail us a check payable to "Travis Audubon Society" to **Travis Audubon Society, PO Box 40787, Austin, TX 78704**. We rely on gifts to support our programs and activities. Thank you very much!

Earth Share 2007!

Earth Share, a federation of America's leading non-profit environmental and conservation charities, promotes environmental education and charitable giving in workplace employee campaigns. Locally you may support these causes through Earth Share of Texas, our state affiliate for workplace-based giving for the environment.

For more tips or to find out how your workplace can help the earth, visit www.earthshare.org or call 1.800.875.3863

You can also give through Earth Share of Texas on-line, right away. Be sure to select **Audubon Foundation of Texas** as your recipient; they divide the funds among Texas Audubon chapters: www.earthshare-texas.org/howhelp.htm.



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

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:

March 22, 2007 - *A Year in the Maine Woods* by Bernd Heinrich (HarperCollins Publishers, 1995)

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 Marsha May, 965-6714

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

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

Education Committee: meets on the 3rd Monday of each month, contact: 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
P.O. Box 40787
Austin TX 78704

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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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