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Cover Image:
Barred Owl (Strix varia). Photo by Tim Lumley, Creative Commons
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Travis Audubon has had a terrific year, thanks to the support of members and friends like you. Membership is up and we also presented a record number of programs, classes and fieldtrips — introducing children, families and adults — many for the first time — to the wonders of nature through birding.

Last year we established an endowment for our Chaetura Canyon Sanctuary that we hope to add to and grow over time. In addition, we purchased two key properties that extend the protected area of the canyon and ensure the safety of its watershed. This was a wonderful achievement!

As you may know, we also signed an agreement with Travis County, placing a conservation easement on our Baker Sanctuary — officially making it part of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve. Funds from the easement will help us manage and care for critical habitat for the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler and other threatened species, in perpetuity. We owe a great debt of thanks to Board Member Clif Ladd and Advisory Board Member Valarie Bristol, as well as our legal counsel Burgess Jackson, whose hard work made this happen!

Our Victor Emanuel Conservation Award Luncheon recognized Bob Ayres on October 17 at the Austin Country Club. This is Travis Audubon’s largest fundraiser of the year and I’m happy to report that the event set a new record — generating over $100,000! We were honored to pay tribute to the leadership of Bob and his family and the inspiration they have shown to others for environmental stewardship and education.
While this has been a year of many accomplishments, we continue to face challenges. What we have seen in Texas and across the country is a relentless campaign to undermine protections that safeguard wildlife. This isn’t new. What is new is the unprecedented scale of it.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has yet to respond to the petition filed last June to delist the Golden-cheeked Warbler from the Endangered Species list. But this summer, it was gratifying to know that close to 13,000 people all across Texas and around the country signed our Change.Org petition in support of the warbler.

Going forward, our challenge is to reach and educate a new generation of young people who don’t know what you and I know; a generation born after 1973 when the Endangered Species Act was passed; a generation that doesn’t know the vital importance of that history and legacy or the name Rachel Carson.

Travis Audubon is working hard to reach this younger generation through new partnerships and programs and through education and advocacy. Thank you for your support — and thank you for making a difference as a member of Travis Audubon!

JOAN MARSHALL
Executive Director, *Travis Audubon*

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Travis Audubon is pleased to welcome our newest staff member, Sirena Lao.

Sirena graduated from UCLA in 2012 with a degree in Environmental Science. During her undergraduate studies, she took an ornithology class and has been involved with birds ever since. After graduating, she worked as a research assistant in a lab where she worked on migratory bird conservation using molecular genetics techniques. She hopes to attend graduate school to continue with avian conservation research.

Sirena says she is excited to be a part of Travis Audubon and support its mission to protect birds and their habitat.
Few birds of the United States are as beloved as the Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*). The male’s vivid scarlet plumage dazzles the most jaded of observers. His likeness may well appear on more calendars and holiday cards than that of any other North American bird species — especially when perched on a snow-covered evergreen tree or shrub. The female often appears with him, and they make a handsome couple. Her colors are more subtle — mostly grayish and yellowish tans — though she shows traces of her mate’s red. She also shares the characteristic showy crest and big, red-orange, conical bill set off by a blackish face mask.

Cardinals win points, too, for their apparent devotion to each other. They mate for life (though recent DNA studies of parents and offspring tell that at least some are not monogamous). Their willingness to live in close proximity to humans as common yard birds, and their eagerness to partake of our feeder offerings, endear them to us even more. The bright, cheery notes of their songs enliven even a grim late-winter day.

More states (seven) have chosen the Northern Cardinal to be their state bird than any other species. It has been selected as the mascot for many school sports teams and even professional teams (with comical
attempts to make the bird look fierce, showing teeth and a scowl). John James Audubon himself declared “in richness of plumage, elegance of motion, and strength of song, this species surpasses all its kindred in the United States.”

Though other bright-plumaged birds that were with us during the summer — tanagers and buntings and orioles — have long disappeared by November, the Northern Cardinals stay, and continue to dazzle us year-round. We in central Texas may also get a bonus cardinal about now.

During the winter, Austin’s environs will often host individuals of the “Desert Cardinal” wandering away from their breeding habitat in western and southern Texas.

**Known to us more commonly as the Pyrrhuloxia — a spelling-bee name if ever there was one — the first wanderers may appear as early as the first of November.**

They have been recorded year-round in Austin, but most reports come in winter.

Pyrrhuloxia (pronounced “peer-oo-LOCKS-ee-uh”) is a merging of two Greek words, for “fiery” and “crooked.” If that sounds like a strange combination, it is. “Fiery” describes some of the male’s plumage, and “crooked” refers to the bill — in particular the upper mandible, which curves over the lower mandible.

Though not quite as fiery as a male Northern Cardinal, a male Pyrrhuloxia is also quite stunning. The overall silvery-gray body plumage is set off by rosy-red wing linings, tail, narrow crest, and a broad stripe running down the throat and breast onto the belly. He also has a face mask, but unlike those of the Northern Cardinals, it, too, is rosy red. The “crooked” bill is at least as stout as that of his more widely-known kin, but yellow in color, and more rounded in profile.

The female Pyrrhuloxia also has a pale bill, whitish to grayish yellow, which is a key character to help distinguish her from a female Northern Cardinal. Otherwise, the two species look very similar — the female Pyrrhuloxia resembling a washed-out female Northern Cardinal, lacking the face mask, grayer, and having little red in the plumage.

A Pyrrhuloxia’s crest often appears longer and narrower than that of its cousin. For both species, though, the crest can be very...
Female Northern Cardinal demonstrates sunflower seed technique, Jim DeVries

expressive: raised in alertness or agitation, or, when the bird seems more subdued, flattened against the head. In the latter “mood,” the ornithologist Florence Merriam Bailey wrote of the Pyrrhuloxia:

“the short curved bill and round head suggest a bored parrot in a cage, but when the crest is raised to its full height and thrown forward, the beautiful bird is the picture of alert interest and vivacity.”

Both cardinal species are well adapted to eating seeds and hard-shelled insects. Northern Cardinals eat more fruit than Pyrrhuloxias, who consume proportionally more seeds. Fruit is especially important to Northern Cardinals (and probably also Pyrrhuloxias) during molt periods, since the carotenoid pigments they ingest at these times play a role in how bright their incoming plumage will be. When feeding young, both species shift to a diet of grasshoppers, caterpillars, beetles, and other invertebrates.

But in the winter, both species consume large numbers of seeds, especially bristle-grasses (*Setaria* spp.), panic grasses (*Panicum* sp.), and Doveweed (*Croton monanthogynous*). Pyrrhuloxias will even eat quantities of the spiny seeds of Sandbur (*Cenchrus spinifex*).

At a birdfeeder, both cardinal species are partial to sunflower seeds, which they easily slice open to extract the kernels. You can watch a cardinal deftly maneuver the seed until it is on edge between the bird’s mandibles, then quickly wedge the sharp edge of its lower mandible between the two halves of the shell to shuck it. Other seeds it will simply split or crush by contracting its strong jaw muscles.

Bird-banders soon learn to be wary of those sharp-edged, powerful bills when extracting Northern Cardinals from mist nets. The birds are adept at clamping their bill on any thin fold of tissue — such as between the fingers — and using the same slicing technique. They can frequently draw blood, and the nip is painful enough to earn many a cardinal an early release. On the other hand, sometimes a cardinal becomes so focused that it continues to cling to its captor even after being released from the net. Fortunately, a cardinal’s ire can often be re-directed to a small twig, rather than the bander’s finger.

If you do not see its head, a Pyrrhuloxia of either sex can easily be mistaken for a
female Northern Cardinal. A glimpse of long, reddish tail on a medium-sized bird disappearing into a thicket could be either species. Both favor dense brushy patches and can be secretive. Pyrrhuloxias, in particular, can skulk stubbornly in the depths of a thicket. A metallic “chink” call coming from the depths could be from either species, though, with experience, the calls of Pyrrhuloxias are recognizably thinner and less rich than those of their more familiar cousins.

Northern Cardinals can be found in a wide variety of brushy habitats, but Pyrrhuloxias tend to avoid more extensive thickets and taller shrubs. If you found a White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) there in summer, it’s a good bet you won’t find a Pyrrhuloxia there in winter. Brushy fencerows and edges of pasture or farm land are much better places to look. Pyrrhuloxias often associate with White-crowned (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) and Harris’s Sparrows (*Z. querula*), possibly because they favor similar habitats when they are here in winter.

Pyrrhuloxias will often hide out in patches of big, sprawling prickly-pears in open country. Mesquite thickets are also good places to look for them, especially where there is a lot of cactus. They are also partial to thickets overgrown with the thin-stemmed Pencil Cactus (also known as Tasajillo or Desert Christmas Cactus; *Cylindropuntia leptocaulis*), whose red fruits are a favorite food.

Not everyone will be lucky enough to spot a shy Pyrrhuloxia around Austin. But we can all marvel with Audubon at the colors and character of the familiar Northern Cardinals in our own back yard or neighborhood park. (And, if you manage to film one snarling at a passing bird-bander, with non-existent teeth bared, you might inquire what that shot is worth to a certain pro sports team’s publicity department.)

References for this column included *Song and Garden Birds of North America* by Alexander Wetmore and *American Wildlife & Plants* by Alexander C. Martin, Herbert S. Zim, and Arnold L. Nelson.
Field trips are one of the notable rewards Travis Audubon members enjoy throughout the year. We browse the field trip list, show up at the crack of dawn, and enjoy the luxury of informed guides who help us spot birds we wouldn’t find or identify on our own. In addition, we meet and learn from our fellow birders. But what goes on behind the scenes before the field trip begins? Here’s a story about some of our skilled volunteers as they scout for future adventures in the field. You’ll find that the birds, landowners, and Travis Audubon members all benefit from the field trips in many ways. ~ the editor

From time to time Travis Audubon Society (TAS) receives requests from individuals, landowners, and businesses for assistance in learning about birds on their property. These requests come in many varieties. Someone may have seen a bird they’ve never seen before or don’t recognize. Other folks want to share the beauty of their property with like-minded individuals. More complex requests include people who want to conserve their property for future generations, reduce taxes by applying for wildlife exemptions, or generate revenue to sustain their property or provide income.

Although TAS is not in the business of performing bird surveys for individuals or consulting in general, TAS welcomes the chance to promote the enjoyment, understanding, and conservation of native birds and their habitats. Responding to requests for information can also be a mutually-beneficial way to share information and even scout future field trip locations! This is a story of how several members of the TAS Field Trip Committee (FTC) responded to two requests this summer.
Exploring the Upper Nueces River Valley

Bruce Moring, a part-time professor at Southwestern University in Georgetown with a natural resources background, invited TAS members to visit his property in exchange for a trip report and suggestions on how to improve their birding experience. Bruce owns 282 acres in the upper Nueces River Valley, about 20 miles south of Rocksprings. He is in the process of developing his property for birding, nature photography, and primitive camping.

Jeff Patterson, Coordinator of the TAS FTC, forwarded the request to FTC members to see who might be interested in responding to Bruce’s invitation. Several of us jumped at the chance to help Bruce out and go birding in a beautiful area of the State on some property we’d never seen!

One morning in late August, Judith Bailey, Deb and Lee Wallace, and I met Bruce at 7 am at the post office in Barksdale, Texas. We introduced ourselves and met Bruce’s trusty sidekick Callie, a friendly Catahoula mix (Canis lupus familiaris). To reach Bruce’s property, we crossed a couple of dry creek beds, wound through the beautiful Hill Country landscape until we crossed perennially-flowing Pulliam Creek, and ascended to the house. Bruce described how he found the place and his vision for the property. He used an aerial photo to show us various landmarks and the 2.5 miles of dirt roads and Jeep trails we could access, then he cut us loose to scout for birds.

Bruce had a pretty good idea of what birds have been found on the property thanks to a previous visit by the Williamson County Audubon Society. Notable finds at that time included both Golden-cheeked Warbler (Setophaga chrysoparia) and Black-capped Vireo (Vireo atricapilla).

Judith, Deb, Lee and I walked a rocky road for about 1.5 miles looking for birds in the oak-juniper woodlands. Bruce then picked us up in his 4-wheel-drive truck and took us up a very steep Jeep trail to see his windmill-powered water drip and a rain-harvesting device. We continued on the Jeep trail to some of the highest elevations on the property (elevations range from about 1,500 to 2,000 feet).
The trip highlight for us was coming across a covey of Montezuma Quail (*Cyrtonyx montezumae*)! After a hearty round of back slaps and high-fives we made our way back to the house to eat our packed lunches along with lemonade and snacks provided by Meg and Bruce. Before we left, Bruce took us to the pecan bottom along Pulliam Creek where we picked up more birds.

By the end of our visit, we had covered about 5 miles in a little over 4 hours with a total of 30 species. In addition to the Montezuma Quail, other notable species were Ringed Kingfisher (*Megaceryle torquata*), Hutton’s Vireo (*Vireo huttoni*), Canyon Towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*), and Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*).

We provided Bruce with our ideas about how to improve the property for birds and birders. Lee, being the great photographer that he is, provided recommendations to improve an observation platform for photography. We also suggested ways for Bruce to promote his property for birding and discussed possible TAS trips to this beautiful Hill Country paradise within the next few months.

Scouting Around the Cowboy Capital of the World

After leaving the Camp Wood area, our scouting team headed to Bandera, the “Cowboy Capital of the World,” to visit the Twin Elm Guest Ranch at the request of the manager, Kathlyn Cunningham. A previous visitor to the Ranch had suggested that Kathlyn should host a Bird-Watching Weekend. As a result, Kathlyn contacted Jeff Patterson to invite TAS folks to the ranch.

Twin Elms is located a couple of miles west of Bandera along the Medina River. The ranch offers several quaint cabins (I stayed in the Lone Ranger room), RV and trailer hookups, and an outdoor community gathering spot. The main office includes a nice gift shop with a kitchen and dining room. The busy season for the ranch is the summertime when visitors come from all over the world to ride horses and experience ranch life. That could leave fall, winter, and spring available for birders. One of our scouts, Judith, even stayed at the ranch when she was a child!

Soon after our arrival, Kathlyn led us on a walking tour of the undeveloped portions of the property, consisting of some grassy-shrubby fields and riparian woodlands along a dry creek bed that is a
tributary to the Medina River. Kathlyn also invited us to the ranch’s final rodeo of the season in which many visitors participate. Our spirits were willing, but our flesh was weak. After our early start in Camp Wood and drive to Bandera, we opted for bed instead. The early bird gets the worm, and we were excited about getting an early start the next day.

The next morning, we birded for an hour and a half and returned to the dining room where Kathlyn had cooked up a ranch breakfast consisting of the best biscuits and gravy I’ve had in a long time, scrambled eggs, bacon, and coffee.

After breakfast, Kathlyn joined us for a hike along the Medina River. We saw 28 species in a little over 3 hours. Highlights included Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*), House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) (an early migrant that Lee correctly identified by song), a female Black-capped Vireo seen by Deb, Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), and Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*).

We talked with Kathlyn about promoting birding on the property. She said she was interested in increasing visitation to the ranch outside of peak summer visitation. We mentioned that starting off with a bird festival would be a huge undertaking. Instead, we suggested that she get her feet wet by promoting the Ranch as a birding destination. The cabins, horses, and dining area would provide for a birding experience of a different kind. The property is located along the scenic Medina River, providing fishing and tubing alternatives for the entire family. We also discussed the possibility of future TAS trips to this very exciting destination. In fact, Judith hopes to arrange for a birding by horseback trip.

Look for future trips to this area.
Every year Baker Sanctuary closes down to the public for the annual white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) hunt which runs from the first of November to mid-January. There is no gate code available.

For a variety of reasons, the white-tailed deer population in Travis County and elsewhere is at an elevated level, which has effects that cascade through the ecosystem (see the September/October 2014 Signal Smoke for more details). To keep the deer population in check, Baker Sanctuary as well as other Balcones Canyonlands Preserve partners, cull deer on an annual basis. The direct benefits Baker Sanctuary receives from the hunt can be documented by increased oak seedling survivorship, as well as reduced browsing pressure on a variety of other native species. However, sometimes the hunting program can produce unexpected yet welcome surprises.

The 2011 – 2012 hunt season was an unusual one due to the high turn-over in hunters. Typically, out of the seven leases available at Baker, an average of one lease will open up when a hunter from the previous season does not return. For the 2011 – 2012 season, five sites needed to be filled. As a result, I put out a call for hunters and had the good fortune to meet Bruce Layman. It can be tricky filling leases at Baker because the preferred hunter is one who will abide by all the regulations, which are lengthy, and is more interested in filling the freezer with meat rather than bagging a trophy buck. Bruce was offered a lease and during the orientation process I discovered that he was very active in Boy Scout Troop 202. Not only was he active, which many parents of scouts are by necessity, it did not take long to discern he was also very passionate about it. We discussed the possibility of service projects at Baker with Troop 202. Four years later I am glad to report that Troop 202 has been quite active at Baker. In that time, they have logged an impressive 538 service hours on grounds & trails maintenance, invasive plant removal,
habitat restoration, a riparian clean-up, and two Eagle Scout projects. The first Eagle Scout project, led by Will Smith, saw the removal of the dilapidated chain-link fence around the historic Baker cemetery and its replacement with a split-log Ashe juniper fence (see the November/December 2012 *Signal Smoke* for more details). The second Eagle Scout project, led by Tyler Kunze, took place this September and involved the installation of a foot bridge over one of the North Trail Loop drainage crossings.

The installation of the foot bridge was challenging in a variety of ways. First, it was a structure which people would be traversing so the top priority was to make it structurally sound and built to last many years. Tyler had to perform research on foot bridges, talk to experts, and finally, draft the plans for the bridge. He even built a model of the bridge to help conceptualize the project, a model which he utilized on the day of construction to teach his fellow scouts the various parts of the bridge, i.e., stringers, blocking, sill, etc. The second hurdle was one of logistics. The bridge site was a third of a mile into the valley and all materials and tools would need to be lugged down narrow, steep switch-backs and through various smaller drainages. Everything had to be planned and accounted for or the project could be delayed for hours or days as the needed or forgotten items were secured and transported to the site.

The scouts and their parents turned out in force with 25 participants, greatly reducing the number of trips to the top of the valley and back as the heavy lumber and unwieldy wagons full of tools were carefully transported down the switch-backs to the construction site. When all the materials were assembled, the volunteers quickly got to work, led by Tyler, and the project unfolded smoothly and without any serious hiccups. The workload was shared equitably among the scouts and the few minor problems that surfaced were discussed as a group and dealt with efficiently. Six hours later the celebratory photographs were taken, the tools re-packed, and the crew filed out of the valley, tired but in high spirits.

Aesthetically, the bridge alone is worth a trip to the North Valley. It is located on the east trail of the valley, near the north end of the trail. The bridge features the 12 points of the Scout Law beautifully inlaid into the planks of the bridge, one set for each direction of travel. Many thanks again to Troop 202 and all the wonderful work they do!
Travis Audubon wishes to thank our members and sponsors who made the event such a success, especially our Honorary Co-Chairs Victor Emanuel and Judge Sarah Eckhardt, as well as Jean Warneke. This year’s Conservation Award honored Bob Ayres and his family for their extraordinary work related to conservation and the environment. For more photos see our Facebook page.
Victor Emanuel Conservation
Award Luncheon

The Ayres Family, PC: Brenda Ladd

Auction Bid Spotters, PC: Brenda Ladd

Valarie Bristol & Julia Marsden, PC: Brenda Ladd

Lee Soto & her mother, PC: Brenda Ladd

Oskar & Frances Cerbins, PC: Vincent O’Brien

Birdhouse, PC: Vincent O’Brien

Victor Emanuel, PC: Brenda Ladd
Hawks of Central Texas with Byron Stone
Thursday, November 19, 7 – 8 pm
Hyde Park Christian Church
610 E. 45th Street, Austin, TX
Free for Members and One Guest;
$10 Non-Members

Dr. Stone will show his photographs of the regularly expected migrant and winter species of hawks, falcons, vultures, and other diurnal raptors that can be seen regularly in the Austin area, with tips on identification and when and where to observe them.

Byron “Doc” Stone is an Austin physician and naturalist with a lifelong love of the outdoors. He has been an avid birder for over three decades and has traveled all parts of Texas to observe birds and wildlife. Doc has taught bird-identification classes for Travis Audubon Society for over a decade, including a popular class on sparrows and a relatively new class on raptors. He is the president of the Texas Ornithological Society and co-chair of the Travis Audubon Education Committee.

Annual Holiday Potluck
Sunday, December 13, 5:30 – 8:30 pm
Saengerrunde Hall
1607 San Jacinto, Austin, TX 78701

This year we will celebrate the holidays on Sunday, December 13. We’ll party at Austin’s Saengerrunde Hall next door to Scholz Garten. TAS will supply plates, cups and serve ware, as well as beer, wine, and soft drinks, but feel free to bring your favorite beverage. Street parking is available.

If you would like to help with the event, please call the office: 512/300-2473.
Dorian Anderson
Modern-day Adventurer
Thursday, December 17, 7 pm
Cirrus Logic, 800 W 6th St, Austin, TX
Reception to follow at The Grove

Dorian Anderson is a modern-day adventurer who embarked on a yearlong cross-country Biking for Birds project in 2014. Biking for Birds was his twist on the traditional North American Big Year, an informal birding competition to observe the largest number of species in a single year. In his case, he traveled only by bike, foot, and kayak, unaided by petroleum. His take on the Big Year added an unprecedented level of adventure to the endeavor and set a new standard for environmentally sustainable travel. His goals were to find as many bird species as possible; heighten interest in birds and conservation; showcase the bicycle as a healthy and sustainable form of transportation; and raise funds to support land conservation efforts. Overall he cycled 17,830 miles through 28 states, observed 617 species, and raised nearly $50,000 for bird conservation!

This event is presented in partnership with Shoal Creek Conservancy.

The event will be held at Cirrus Logic located at the corner of Sixth Street and West Avenue. Enter on West Avenue directly across from 707 West Avenue. Street parking available.
We’ve enjoyed watching a screech-owl family bathing during the summer at our bird bath for the past five years. We wondered if the storms damaged their nest this spring because they didn’t show up for 2015. I’m crossing my fingers and considering putting up an owl box. I think they’ve used a tree in the neighborhood before this. We’ve hesitated to put up a box — not wanting to interfere with the neighborhood nesting pair. Any opinions? I’ve heard Screech Owls look for their nests in winter. Can you advise me on the best time to install an owl box? ~ Betsy

The species accounts that I’ve read indicate that Eastern Screech-Owls breed between March and June, but this varies depending on geographic area. In central Texas they generally breed a month or so earlier. Courtship probably begins a month before that. Screech-owls actually roost in cavities and nest boxes much earlier than when they begin to breed. Between October and December, they may begin to select boxes or cavities in which to roost during winter and they may or may not be the same places where they will decide to nest. Although there is no “optimal time” for installing owl boxes (since there is so much variation as to when screech-owls begin to court and breed, and they do use boxes for daytime roosts) I recommend that people put up boxes between October and December. People should be aware that not all boxes are used immediately. Probably much depends on the availability of other nest boxes or natural cavities in one’s own neighborhood. I’ve heard of owl boxes being occupied within a week or two of having been installed and other cases where the boxes were up for several years before screech-owls decided to use them. So, one shouldn’t be discouraged if an owl box isn’t occupied the first year it is installed. ~ Jean Martin, TAS Ask-a-Birder Expert

Jean uses multiple sources for her expert responses. She highly recommends the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology website allaboutbirds.org as a source for birders to explore information about various species of birds.
Classes

Sparrow Identification
Instructor: Byron Stone
Classroom: Wednesdays, 11/11, 11/18, 12/2 & 12/9, 7 – 9 pm
Field trips: Saturday mornings, 11/14, 11/21, 12/5, 12/12

Byron Stone’s class on sparrow identification is popular each fall. Learn why Byron refers to Central Texas as Sparrow Heaven as we review the two dozen species of native sparrows that occur regularly in the Austin area each year. The class is designed for Intermediate Birders.

Tuition: $75 for TAS members, $90 for non-members.
Limit: 20 participants
Location: North Austin
Questions: Frances Cerbins at fcerbins@yahoo.com or 512-372-9039
Register at: https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=208&

Tree Drawing
Instructor: Linda Anderson
Saturday, 11/14, 1 – 4 pm

Learn to identify and draw Texas Native trees. By the end of the workshop you will have a sketchbook collection of tree drawings, including leaf and seed sketches. Linda Anderson has taught bird drawing sessions at our Youth Birding Camps and workshops for adults. Both levels of audience were very enthusiastic about her presentations.

Tuition: $25 for TAS members and $30 for non-members. Supply fee is $10.
Location: Central Austin
Questions: Frances Cerbins at fcerbins@yahoo.com or 512-372-9039
Register at: https://travis.z2systems.com/eventReg.jsp?event=309&
Birding 102
Instructor: Shelia Hargis

After many requests from Introduction to Birds and Birding graduates, Birding 102 is a reality. The goals of Birding 102 are to continue the intensive instruction and practice in the field that we had during Intro to Birds; to visit more interesting birding locations; to see more great birds; and to experience and discuss aspects of bird behavior, such as migration, breeding, behavior, and conservation.

The course consists of six to eight field trips throughout the year and is open to graduates of the Introduction to Birds classes. Each field trip will be listed as a stand-alone session and registration will be required for each field trip.

Shelia loves teaching and looks for any reason to go birding with her students after they have graduated.

December Birding 102
Roy Guerrero Park
Field trip: Saturday, 12/10, 7:30 – 11:30am

Roy Guerrero Park is located in east Austin. In December, our year-round residents will be here and most of our winter residents will have arrived. The goal of this field trip is to introduce participants to another very birdy park in Austin and continue to practice our ID skills. Some of our target families include: ducks, herons and egrets, raptors, kingfishers, woodpeckers, wrens, warblers and sparrows. Weather permitting, we will picnic in the park and discuss our morning’s finds.

Tuition: $25 for TAS members, $30 for non-members. Prerequisites: Introduction to Birds and Birding
Registration required.
Questions: Shelia Hargis at intro2birds@gmail.com or 512-294-0272
Register at: https://travis.z2systems.com/eventReg.jsp?event=319&

Holiday Shopping

December means the Christmas Bird Count! Oh, and the holidays! Surprise your family and friends with a thoughtful gift while supporting bird conservation, education, and outreach. TAS has a wide variety of high-quality photographic prints available by James Turner, priced from $15 to $45 plus shipping. See the available prints here. Or, click Buy Stuff on the www.TravisAudubon.org homepage to see a full list of merchandise. We also have gift memberships and t-shirts that make wonderful gifts!
Waterfowl

Instructors: Laurie Foss and Eric Stager
Classroom: Saturdays, 1/9, 8 – 10 am; 1/23, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
Field trips: Saturdays, 1/9, 10 am – 2 pm; 1/23, 12:30 – 2 pm; 1/30, 10 am – 2 pm (times are approximate)

It’s time to learn how to identify those ducks! Travis Audubon is pleased to announce that Laurie Foss and Eric Stager will be taking the baton from Jean Martin to teach the Waterfowl Identification Class. Laurie helped teach the Intro to Birds and Birding class for five years and has taught other classes for TAS. Eric has helped teach the Shorebirds class for TAS. Both Laurie and Eric have extensive experience leading field trips.

This course will focus on ducks, grebes, geese, and other waterfowl found in Texas, especially during the winter months. It is well suited for birders who have completed an introductory class or for those who just need to brush up their skills.

Tuition: $55 for TAS members, $70 for non-members.
Limit: 14 participants
Questions: Paul Wheeler at paul.wheeler@alumni.utexas.net
Register at: https://travis.z2systems.com/eventReg.jsp?event=314&

In Memory of Priscilla Murr

April 7, 1942 – September 21, 2015

It is with a heavy heart that we share that Priscilla Murr, a Travis Audubon member for a number of years, recently passed away from cancer.

A celebration of Priscilla’s life will be held on Sunday, November 1, from 4 – 6 pm at the Acton Center, 1404 E. Riverside Drive, Austin, TX 78741. In lieu of flowers, Priscilla asked that memorial contributions be made to the Travis Audubon Society.
# November & December Field Trips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Location &amp; Description</th>
<th>Registration Required?</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Nov. 3, 5:00am to afternoon</td>
<td>Super Tuesday at Colorado Bend State Park with Terry Banks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:55bluebirds@att.net">55bluebirds@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, Nov. 7, 8am – 10am</td>
<td>Beginner’s Bird Walk @ Dick Nichols</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Virginia Rose at <a href="mailto:virginia.rose@att.net">virginia.rose@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, Nov. 7, 7:30am – 11:00am</td>
<td>Laguna Gloria Field Trip led by Dennis Palafox</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dennis_palafox@hotmail.com">dennis_palafox@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Nov. 10, 6:30am to afternoon</td>
<td>Super Tuesday at Mitchell Lake Audubon Center w/ Ken Zaslow &amp; Jane Tillman</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:khz@att.net">khz@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, Nov. 14, 8am – 11 am</td>
<td>Copperfield Nature Trails with Ronnie Kramer</td>
<td>Yes, (12)</td>
<td>Ronnie Kramer at <a href="mailto:ronniekramer1964@gmail.com">ronniekramer1964@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, Nov. 14, 7am &amp; 4pm</td>
<td>Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Carpenter at <a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, Nov. 15, 7am – 11am</td>
<td>Commons Ford Monthly Walk</td>
<td>Yes (15)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:apeld@austin.rr.com">apeld@austin.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Nov. 17, 7:30am – 9:30am</td>
<td>Two-hour Tuesday at Lake Creek Trail w/ Ray &amp; Ginny Steelman</td>
<td>No</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rgsteel@comcast.net">rgsteel@comcast.net</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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To register go to [www.TravisAudubon.org](http://www.TravisAudubon.org)

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<tr>
<td>Thursday, Nov. 19, 8am – 12noon</td>
<td>Balcones Canyonlands/Water Quality Preserves</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="http://www.eventbrite.com/e/birding-the-balcones-canyonlands-water-quality-preserves-part-3-tickets-18758368786">www.eventbrite.com/e/birding-the-balcones-canyonlands-water-quality-preserves-part-3-tickets-18758368786</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, Nov. 21, 7:30am – 11:00am</td>
<td>Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Walk</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Stager at <a href="mailto:estager@gmail.com">estager@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, Nov. 22, 7:30am – 11:30am</td>
<td>Balcones Canyonlands NWR with Deb and Lee Wallace</td>
<td>Yes (15)</td>
<td>Deb Wallace at <a href="mailto:apeld@austin.rr.com">apeld@austin.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Nov. 24, 7:30am – 10:30am</td>
<td>Super Tuesday at Barkley Meadows Park w/Dan Callaway</td>
<td>No</td>
<td><a href="mailto:khz@att.net">khz@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Dec. 1, 7am – 12noon</td>
<td>Super Tuesday at Doeskin Ranch, led by Deb &amp; Lee Wallace</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:apeld@austin.rr.com">apeld@austin.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, Dec. 5, 8am – 10am</td>
<td>Beginner’s Bird Walk @ Walnut Creek Trail</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Virginia Rose at <a href="mailto:virginia.rose@att.net">virginia.rose@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Dec. 8, 7:30am – 10:30am</td>
<td>Super Tuesday at the Slaughter Creek Greenbelt at Bauerle Ranch led by Ken Zaslow</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:khz@att.net">khz@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, Dec. 12, 8am – 11am</td>
<td>Booty’s Road Park with Ronnie Kramer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ronnie Kramer at <a href="mailto:ronniekramer1964@gmail.com">ronniekramer1964@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, Dec. 12, 7am &amp; 4pm</td>
<td>Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Carpenter at <a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, Dec. 18, 8am – Noon</td>
<td>Balcones Canyonlands/Water Quality Preserves</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/birding-the-balcones-canyonlands-water-quality-preserves-part-4-tickets-18758585434">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/birding-the-balcones-canyonlands-water-quality-preserves-part-4-tickets-18758585434</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, Dec. 19, all day</td>
<td>Austin Christmas Bird Count Circle</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Shelia Hargis at <a href="mailto:austincbc@gmail.com">austincbc@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, January 1, all day</td>
<td>Bastrop Christmas Bird Count Circle</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Shelia Hargis at <a href="mailto:bastroptxcbc@gmail.com">bastroptxcbc@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
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Life of the Skies by Jonathan Rosen
Picador; Reprint edition (December 23, 2008)

Jonathan Rosen has written the birding book for the birder who ponders philosophy and theology while quietly sitting by a pond at dusk. If Peterson and Sibley provided checklists — birding as scratching off answers on multiple-choice tests — then “The Life of the Skies” is the essay question, the question being: Does bird-watching offer a bird-watcher an avenue toward greater meaning, like prayer or yoga? For his part, Rosen, a novelist and the author of “The Talmud and the Internet,” has a lot of faith in it as a meditative act. “I can’t think of any activity that more fully captures what it means to be human in the modern world than watching birds,” he writes.

~ Robert Sullivan for the New York Times

Selected Reading
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Travis Audubon Wishes to Thank Its Members and Donors
(August 13 to September 30, 2015)

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Paul Wade
Jo Wilson
John Wilson
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Julia Youngblood

Intro to Birds
Swift Watch
Sep/Oct
Shelia Hargis
Debra McNeill
Donnelle Robinson
Laura Danysh
Milton Bolgiano
Mary Hoch
Michael Sims
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Alison Miner
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Tom & Judy Taylor
Robby & Debbie Vickery
Jean & Bob Warneke

Live Auction Winners
Joe Doherty
Chisos Mountain Lodge at Big Bend
Don and Ann Connell
Moody Gardens Hotel
Heather Cooke
High Hope Ranch in Glen Rose
Caroline LeGette
Birding in Ecuador
Lee Decker
A Day on Shield Ranch

Silent Auction Winners
Gary Pelphrey
Fennessey Ranch Birding Tour
Faye Harris
9E Ranch in Bastrop County
Bob Kerr
Alamo Inn B&B
Caroline Jones
Bolivar Beach House
Frances Cerbins
Framed Photo of Black-necked Stilts
Clifton Ladd
Framed Poem by Bob Ayres
Margaret Hoffman
Amber-colored Bowl
Chris Marks
Ceramic Bird Bath
Frances Cerbins
Green Glass Platter
Mary Lou Rizzo
Original Print of Yellow-Crowned Night Heron
Chris Marks
Whooping Crane Festival Passes

Birdhouse Winners
Barbara Anderson
Margy Ayres
Rosemarie Brennan
Joe Bruno
Don Connell
Kisha Conroy
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Peggy Corkran
Beth Cris
Craig Damuth
Joe Doherty
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Sarah Eckhardt
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