Staff & Board Listing

Officers
Frances Cerbins
President
Mark Wilson
Vice-President
Julia Marsden
Secretary
Carol Ray
Treasurer

Directors
Karen Bartoletti
Cullen Hanks
Shelia Hargis
Clif Ladd
Jeff Patterson
Susan Rieff
Jean Warneke
Jo Wilson

Advisors
David Bamberger
Valarie Bristol
Victor Emanuel
Sam Fason
Bryan Hale
Karen Huber
Mary Kelly
Andrew Sansom
Carter Smith

Committee Chairs
Byron Stone & Frances Cerbins
Education
Ronnie Kramer & Terry Banks
Field Trips
Jane Tillman
Monthly Programs
Terry Siegenthaler
Sanctuary
Jane Tillman
Speaker's Bureau
Sue Anderson
Urban Habitat

Staff
Joan Marshall
Executive Director
Janet Reed
Director of Administration & Membership
Chris Murray
Land Steward & Educator
Georgean Kyle & Paul Kyle
Chaetura Canyon Stewards
Arman Moreno
Rare Bird Alert Compiler
Nora Chovanec
Design Director & Website Producer
Betsy Pfeil
Signal Smoke Editor
Sirena Lao
Program Assistant

Travis Audubon
3710 Cedar Street, Box 5
Austin, TX 78705
512-300-BIRD (2473)
www.travisaudubon.org
info@travisaudubon.org

Cover Image:
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
JanetandPhil, Creative Commons
In This Issue

Message From the Director .......................................................... Pg 3
Naturalist’s Calendar ................................................................. Pg 4
Travis Audubon News: Board Updates ........................................ Pg 7
Conservation Hero of 2016: Valarie Bristol ................................ Pg 8
Review: Adventures of a Chimney Swift Family ......................... Pg 10
Sanctuary News: Blair Woods Sanctuary .................................... Pg 13
Sanctuary News: Chaetura Canyon ............................................. Pg 16
Events ..................................................................................... Pg 18
Young Birders Club ................................................................... Pg 21
Classes ..................................................................................... Pg 22
Field Trips ................................................................................ Pg 24
Member/Donor List ..................................................................... Pg 26
I’m happy to announce that Travis Audubon will launch a Master Birder Program in the fall of this year! We will be joining a small group of other Audubon Chapters around the country that offer this special training. Master Birder participants will have an incredible opportunity to learn about the natural history of Central Texas and the diversity of its birds and other wildlife. Classes will include the identification, evolution and specialization, migration, and habitat requirements of area birds, as well as the importance of biodiversity and conservation of native flora and fauna.

The course will include 30 to 40 hours of lectures and workshops in addition to field trips and will prepare participants to share their knowledge with the community by serving as educators and Audubon ambassadors. On graduating from the program, Master Birders will maintain their status by contributing 30 volunteer hours annually with a variety of Travis Audubon programs, events, and outreach activities.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Shield-Ayres Foundation, we have brought Cindy Sperry on board to help develop the Master Birder program. Many of you may already know Cindy. She has worked as a seasonal biologist for the City of Austin, has participated in our Golden-cheeked Warbler surveys at Baker Sanctuary, and frequently speaks on behalf of Travis Audubon at area libraries.

We are finalizing the details of the program now and will have more information on our website starting in June. Applications will be accepted over the summer for the inaugural class in September. We hope you’re as excited about the program as we are—stay tuned!

JOAN MARSHALL
Executive Director, Travis Audubon
May and June are the greenest months of the Austin year, when plants respond with vigorous growth to increased sunlight and normally abundant rainfall, and before summer dries things out. But not all plants growing now are green. Some have no chlorophyll, and depend upon sources other than photosynthesis to obtain their food. Some are parasitic upon other plants; others have more intricate means of obtaining the nutrients they need to survive.

Here in central Texas, dodders (*Cuscuta* species) are the most frequently encountered plants that lack chlorophyll. Dodders are parasites, and look like tangles of bright yellow-orange “spaghetti” sprawled over other low, herbaceous plants. Dodder vines are sensitive to contact, and quickly wrap around any plant they encounter, though not all plants are suitable hosts. Some dodders can parasitize a wide variety of herbaceous plants, while others are more host-specific—requiring, for instance, a host in the aster family.

Though it sprouts from a seed, a dodder grows no roots in the soil. Before it exhausts the nutrients contained within the seed, the new vine must attach itself to a host plant, which will then provide it sustenance. Once the dodder vine attaches itself to a host plant, the lower stem withers, and the dodder no longer maintains contact with the ground. Root-like tissues called “haustoria” grow into the tissue of the host plant, allowing the dodder to siphon off sugars and other nutrients.

These parasitic vines can stunt or even kill host plants. In natural environments, the extent of the infestation is often limited by hosts being separated by plant species that are inappropriate host plants (such as grasses). Still, a single dodder vine can infest an area up to 10 feet in diameter.

Dodders are a greater problem in agricultural settings where one crop covers several acres. There, an infestation may seriously reduce crop yields. Alfalfa,
soybeans, and other pea family plants are suitable host plants for dodders, as are tomatoes, potatoes, and flax. Garden plants such as chrysanthemums and other asters are also susceptible. Farmers’ battles with dodders may have led to such colorful names as “strangleweed,” “hellbine,” and “devil’s-gut.”

Several species of dodder occur in Texas, and they are hard to tell apart. Intricate details of the tiny, white, clustered flowers distinguish them. Almost all grow low to the ground over the herbaceous plants that serve as their hosts, but one species native to Texas parasitizes trees, shrubs, and woody vines.

Tree Dodder (*Cuscuta exaltata*) has stems that are much thicker (about 3 millimeters in diameter) than those of the other dodders, and parasitizes such woody plants as oaks, elms, grapes, and sumacs. There is little reason to fear an epidemic of this plant, however; it is quite rare.

Unfortunately, a similar exotic dodder has been found in the United States, in particular in Houston neighborhoods. Seed of Giant Asian Dodder (*Cuscuta japonica*) may have been transported there in nursery soil. The plant is much more prolific than Tree Dodder, and quickly covers entire trees. See this website (http://new.forestencyclopedia.net/p/p26/p39) for more information, and contact the Texas Forest Service office in Austin if you have seen this noxious weed.

Not all plants that lack chlorophyll are parasitic—at least not directly. Some depend upon an intricate relationship with fungi that, in turn, have a symbiotic (mutually-beneficial) partnership with tree roots. Among these are a group of rare and fascinating orchids. One, Wister’s Coralroot (*Corallorhiza wisteriana*) grows to 6 or 8 inches tall in oak forests and blooms early in spring.

However, another group of non-photosynthesizing orchids called the crested-coralroots (*Hexalectris* sp.) blooms from May through July. Dwarfing the early spring species, these plants usually grow up to 18 inches tall, but can be as tall as 32 inches. They look like brown, pinkish, or purplish asparagus stalks rising from the floor of oak/juniper forests and woodlands.

You might think a group of asparagus-sized stalks would be easy to find, but their color makes them difficult to spot against the brown leaf litter of the forest floor where they typically grow. Even the flowers, though stunningly-colored and -patterned, can be difficult to see if you are not looking

Dodder flowers, City of Austin staff

Flowers and remaining stem of Tree Dodder, Bill Reiner
for them. Some species or varieties have flowers that are self-pollinating (cleistogamous), so the flowers rarely open, making them even harder to spot.

None of the crested-coralroots that have been found in central Texas are common, but the most frequently encountered is Spiked Crested-Coralroot (*Hexalectris spicata*), which has golden-brown or pinkish stalks. The flowers, which measure more than an inch across, are similarly-colored, but striped with brown or purple. The background color of the lower lip is white, but the stripes there are so dense that the petal usually looks almost entirely magenta.

Once considered to be completely saprophytic (drawing sustenance from dead organic material, as do fungi), *Hexalectris* orchids are now believed to be also mycotrophic, meaning that they have a symbiotic relationship with fungi that are adapted to grow on and within the root tissues of plants. These types of fungi are called “mycorrhizal,” and they apparently are responsible for breaking down dead organic material into forms that can then be used by the orchids, as well as other plants with which they grow.

Botanists now believe that most higher plants depend upon mycorrhizal fungi to assist them with obtaining water and nutrients. In return, the plants share some of the sugars that they have produced through photosynthesis. Since the coralroot orchids do not photosynthesize, it appears that they merely “tap into” the fungi that are growing on and within the roots of nearby trees. The relationship is still not very well known, so it is difficult to say whether the orchids are parasites on the fungi, or if they offer the fungi something in return.

The requirements of these peculiar plants do teach us, however, just how intricately the web of life in central Texas woodlands is woven. Mycorrhizal fungi need moist, acidic conditions in which to thrive—which can be difficult to find where limestone (alkaline) soils are baked by the sun. They do best, and are more likely to be able to support these rare orchids, primarily in areas shaded by oaks and junipers that have built up a thick layer of acidic leaf litter. So if you are hiking in May or June through a shady oak/juniper forest that is old enough to have accumulated a blanket of duff, look closely. You may see one of these unique plants.

Welcome New Board Members

**Mark Wilson** joined the Board last November filling the unexpired term of Caroline Jones. Mark brings a great deal of experience as a naturalist and Travis Audubon member to his new service on the Board. Mark is a Master Naturalist, coordinator of the brick campaign at Chaetura Canyon, and field trip leader to Balcones Canyonlands. Mark is a Family Nurse Practitioner with Emergency Service Partners.

At the Annual Members meeting on March 17, Karen Bartoletti and Susan Rieff were elected to the Travis Audubon Board, replacing Barry Lyon and Ruth Pelphrey.

**Karen Bartoletti** is an attorney with Hughes Vanderburg Williams & Bartoletti and received her law degree from the University of Texas. She has been an avid birder for a number of years and is a graduate of Birding 101! She is active in the community and serves on the Boards of SafePlace and Lift: An Alliance to End Abuse.

Before joining the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center in 2004 as Executive Director, **Susan Rieff** served as policy director for land stewardship for the National Wildlife Federation. From 1995 to 1998, she was deputy chief of staff at the U.S. Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C. Rieff was also director of environmental policy for Texas Governor Ann Richards and held positions with the Texas Department of Agriculture and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. She received her undergraduate degree at Texas Christian University and her Masters from the LBJ School of Public Affairs.

The Board and staff want to thank Barry Lyon for his leadership and service as Board President over the past year and Ruth Pelphrey for her work as Treasurer. Both Barry and Ruth will remain active with Travis Audubon as members and advisors.
Conservation Hero of 2016
Valarie Bristol

by Joan Marshall

Few have done more to shape the environmental agenda in Central Texas than Valarie Bristol. Valarie was born in Bryan, Texas, raised in Nacogdoches and is a University of Texas alumna. She received her law degree from the University and practiced law with Bickerstaff Heath and Smiley before being elected Travis County Commissioner in 1991. She was instrumental in establishing the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP).

The creation of the BCP is now recognized as a truly visionary plan that has been pivotal in protecting our water quality, conserving endangered species, and providing open spaces for passive public use. The BCP’s over 30,000 acres preserves not only wildlife but also a way of life for Austin and Travis County residents. The plan represents a creative community-based solution that allows for land development to occur in western Travis County while protecting endangered species habitat through mitigation measures.

Valarie went on to become the Director for Texas, Trust for Public Land from 2001 to 2004 and served as Director for External Affairs for The Nature Conservancy of Texas from 2004 to 2008. Valarie’s community involvement also sets her apart. She has been active in a number of non-profits and served on the Board of Trustees for the Eanes ISD from 1985 to 1987 and served as President, Texas Land Trust Council from 2004 to 2006. Most recently she was President of the Board of Travis Audubon from 2008 to 2012.
The Victor Emanuel Conservation Award will be added to a long list of career honors Valarie has received including:

- Texas Open Space Award 1993
  Trust for Public Land
- Peacemaker Award, Environment 1996
  Dispute Resolution Center-Austin
- Leadership and Service Award
  The Clean Air Force 1996
- Conservation Leadership Award
  The Nature Conservancy 1997
- Conservation Champion Award
  Save Barton Creek Association 2008

We hope you will join us in October for this wonderful tribute celebration to Valarie. Valarie has shown by example how we can all make a difference through our passion, involvement and dedication to a cause.

---

**Ask a Birder**

*There are about four birds flying around the Arbor Trails shopping center at William Cannon Drive in Austin. Their wings are like swifts and have a black stripe down the underside of each wing. They are either light gray or white in color and fairly large birds. The tail looks a little bit like a “V”, but not as pronounced as a swallow’s. They might be swifts or kites or something similar. All of the photos I’ve seen on the internet of swifts and kites don’t match, however. Problem is, I’ve ONLY seen them from below! They’re so fast, always in flight and up high that I haven’t been able to get a good look. They make a noise as if hunting flying insects by sonar or something (no, they aren’t bats — I’m sure! : - ) ) Please help! ~ Katherine*

The most likely candidate to your question is the Common Nighthawk given how you have described its characteristics and vocalization. Check out this YouTube link to confirm what you saw/heard: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uk6z61zbSmg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uk6z61zbSmg)

~ TAS Bird Expert, Charles J. Stephens
Review: The Adventures of a Chimney Swift Family

By Betsy Pfeil

In case you haven’t yet, consider getting a copy of The Adventures of a Chimney Swift Family by Kay Hart and Anne Donovan, with illustrations by Georgean Kyle (co-steward of Chaetura Canyon Sanctuary).

Read it to yourself. Read it to your child, to your niece, your nephew. Read it to your grandkids. My copy will soon fly across the country to my grandnephew in Washington, D.C. where Chimney Swifts nest in his apartment building’s chimney!

Adventures of a Chimney Swift Family is an entertaining, charming, and informative read. This family’s adventures begin in the forest along the Amazon River and travel to Central Texas. The characters are all Chimney Swifts and they talk much the way we do. They have concerns not unlike our own except that we don’t have to fly from South to North America every year to raise a family. As we follow the swifts, we learn about the joys and perils of migration, nesting, raising young, and roosting as a community. Turning the pages, I imagined parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents reading to their little loved ones. This family story has it all: empathy, curiosity, suspense, and a love of learning!

I met recently with co-author, Anne Donovan, to ask a few questions about the creators of this book and her experience as a birder.

BP: Adventures of a Chimney Swift Family was a collaboration. How did the three of you come to work together?

AD: I have known Georgean Kyle for many years through Travis Audubon and especially through the conservation and education work at Chaetura Canyon. I
taught with Kay Hart at St. Andrew’s Middle School for 17 years. She taught English and creative writing and I taught science, mostly biology and ecology. We collaborated on a variety of classroom projects and became very good friends. The three of us worked together on all aspects of the book, and considered it very much a joint effort. We had so much fun devising adventures for our swifts and guiding them through the many trials of raising a family.

BP: What is your background? Does it include writing children’s books? If not, how did your previous experience lend to this project?

AD: I taught middle school science and made respect and love of nature and conservation a focus of my work. Along with Kay and several other teachers at St. Andrew’s, I joined Travis Audubon Society. We all became avid birdwatchers and traveled together on many bird-watching adventures.

I have always enjoyed writing and encouraging my students to write, but Kay is the most skilled at creative writing.

BP: I know about Georgean Kyle’s role with Chaetura Canyon Sanctuary. We featured a history of the sanctuary, Paul and Georgean Kyle, and their Rootin’ Ridge Toy Store in last December’s Signal Smoke. Can you tell me about the other author, Kay Hart?

AD: Kay and her husband Joe Hart have always been enthusiastic about many outdoor activities. Observing nature and especially birds are a big part of this. She has taught English in both high school and middle school. Joe grew up in Austin, and they have lived here almost all of their married life.

BP: Why did you all decide to write this book?

AD: Georgean and Paul Kyle constructed a chimney swift tower at an elementary school that had an especially good science program. At a ceremony to dedicate the tower, several children told the audience why chimney swifts are important. One student said that swifts were important because they are a food source for Peregrine Falcons. Immediately we knew that a factual and fascinating children’s book about Chimney Swifts was needed.

BP: Who was your imagined audience for this book?

AD: We targeted children ages 3 to 8 with this exciting story and delightful illustrations. We imagined a child curled up in a parent’s lap, listening to the adventures of Clarence and Clarissa, while the parent and older siblings were also learning about the conservation of these fascinating birds.

BP: Are Clarence, Clarissa, and their young based on anyone in particular? Did you borrow from your own families a bit?

AD: We envisioned a family in which the parents were totally involved in caring for their offspring, keeping them safe and well-fed and teaching them the life skills they will need. We would like to think this reflects our own families also.

BP: Where did you grow up?

AD: I was born in Austin and lived here all of my life, except for our first 3 years of marriage when we lived in Beaumont.

BP: How long have you been a Travis Audubon Society member? Why did you join?
AD: I’ve been a member for about 35 years. Several of my teaching friends encouraged me to join.

BP: In your opinion, what is the most important role of Travis Audubon Society?

AD: I think that educating both children and adults about the importance of birds and other wildlife in all ecosystems is crucial. The image of the “canary in the coal mine” is essential to appreciating the value of our natural flora and fauna.

BP: What is your favorite way to bird?

AD: I like to bird with friends, especially with some who are more skilled than I am. I also love field trips and classes with Travis Audubon Society as well as Victor Emanuel Nature Tours.

BP: Do you have a favorite bird?

AD: I love birds that I can identify with absolute certainty, such as the Black-necked Stilt and American Avocet. I also enjoy the challenge of learning to identify those that are more difficult, such as many of the sparrows and hawks.

BP: Why do you think it’s important to inspire young birders?

AD: They grow up to be voters and hopefully conservationists. Their lives will also be greatly enriched by developing a love of nature and of being outdoors.

BP: How do birds and birding play a part in your role as mother and grandmother?

AD: I can’t seem to turn off my “teacher genes” when I’m with my family, as my husband will testify. I hope I’ve conveyed a love of birds and nature to my family.

BP: In your experience, what are the best ways to help young children cultivate an interest in birds and their natural environment?

AD: I’m very hopeful that *The Adventures of a Chimney Swift Family* is helping to cultivate this interest. This is what pushes me to find many avenues for distributing our book.

*The Adventures of a Chimney Swift Family*
By Kay Hart & Anne Donovan
Illustrated by Georgean Kyle
Chimney Swift Books / Austin, Texas
ISBN 978-0-692-34828-4

You can purchase books at:
• travisaubon.org/feature/online-store
• www.chimneyswifts.org/page29.html
• BookPeople in Austin, Texas
• Monthly meetings of Travis Audubon

Clarence and Clarissa search for possible nesting sites in Austin, Texas. Illustration by Georgean Kyle.
For this issue of the Signal Smoke, the Baker Sanctuary News visits one of the least known sanctuaries owned by Travis Audubon Society, Blair Woods. Consider visiting Blair Woods in the future to see the sanctuary for yourself. Blair Woods is located at 5401 East MLK Boulevard. Look for a small parking lot marked with a Travis Audubon Society sign prior to the Wildlife Rescue parking area.

Much of the following content was excerpted and condensed from the 2013 Blair Woods Sanctuary Preliminary Master Plan. The Baker Sanctuary News will return next edition.

Blair Woods is a ten-acre urban sanctuary which Travis Audubon Society acquired in 1985. The land was bequeathed to Travis Audubon Society through the Last Will and Testament of Dr. Frank Blair, a noted zoologist and University of Texas professor. During his life, Dr. Blair and his wife Fern actively managed the property as a living laboratory for his personal research as well as that of his many zoology students. He also encouraged neighbor children to come and play and learn on his property. They tended the land and had walking trails and landscaped areas near their home—although, in their later years, active land management declined.

Upon Dr. Blair’s passing and the donation of his property to Travis Audubon Society, efforts were made in the eighties and early nineties to restore the Blair home, including significant restoration to the roof and the foundation. Subsequently, a couple
lived in the home as caretakers for a brief period followed by another couple with children. During this period the Travis Audubon Society Sanctuary Committee scheduled work days, family picnics, and at least one Open House to engage Travis Audubon Society members and the local community. Eventually the caretaker position was left vacant and interest in maintaining the property faded. As a result, invasive, non-native vegetation went unchecked and quickly spread throughout the sanctuary.

In 2003, after Blair Woods had been left unattended for the better part of a decade, a 25-year lease agreement was made with Wildlife Rescue, Inc. which allowed them exclusive use of the Blair Woods facilities for their wildlife intake and rehabilitation programs. Wildlife Rescue completed major restoration on the Blair home and moved in shortly thereafter. Managing the remaining nine acres of the preserve was not in the scope of their mission and was left untouched.

In the spring of 2006, a tour of the sanctuaries was given for new Travis Audubon Society Board members and those present expressed alarm at the condition of the habitat at Blair Woods, invasive plants were taking over most of the property. This visit spurred the formation of the Blair Woods Core Team, a group of impassioned ecologists whose goal was to study the condition of Blair Woods and develop a plan to remove the invasive plants and restore native flora. Over the next two years many hours were spent crawling under and through dense stands of privet (*Ligustrum* species) to survey the plants, animals, hydrology, and general condition of the sanctuary. Negotiations ensued with Wildlife Rescue and a new lease was drawn up which restricted their use to the two acres surrounding the Blair home. Management could now begin in earnest on the remaining acres.

Through the study of the land and with some guidance from Dr. Blair’s 1960 book featuring the property, *The Rusty Lizard*, three conservation targets were identified for restoration: an upland savanna, a riparian area centered on the pond and creek, and surrounding woodland (pretty much everything else). While various challenges would need to be overcome, by far the most obvious and time-consuming would be the removal of invasive plants in all three areas. The bulk of the biomass on the property was
composed of invasives such as privet, Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), Chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*), Chinese Tallow (*Triadica sebifera*), Heavenly Bamboo (*Nandina domestica*), Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), and Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*). These species most likely were deliberately planted, inadvertently introduced, and dispersed by wildlife. They would need to be removed and monitored to allow space for native plants to grow and, as a result, native wildlife to flourish.

Beginning in 2008 and continuing to the present, the Blair Woods Core Team has scheduled and led many work days to achieve their management goals. In that time approximately 2,000 volunteers have spent countless hours removing over 20,000 invasive plants, clearing over 2,000 cubic yards of other invasive plant material, planting 842 native plants, broadcasting 16 pounds of native seeds, and building several loop trails for the public. Most recently, Eagle Scout candidate Paul Sennyey and his Troop cleared three-quarters of an acre of possibly the densest privet stand found on the property. Eight years after management was resumed the sanctuary is just now beginning to emerge from under the shadow of the invasives, hinting at what it could become—given that the will to conserve and manage persists.

To accomplish our goals at Blair Woods, we need volunteers. Come lend a hand, we still have much to accomplish.

**Sanctuary Work Days**

Travis Audubon Sanctuary Work Days are held at least every other month. We greatly appreciate our Sanctuary Work Day volunteers! Please join Travis Audubon Land Steward and Educator, Chris Murray, to help us improve and maintain our special sanctuaries.

**Baker Sanctuary Work Day**

Saturday, June 11, 8 to 11 am
Register at: travisaudubon.org/audubon-event/baker-sanctuary-volunteer-work-day-4

**Blair Woods Sanctuary Work Day**

Saturday, July 23, 9 am to noon
Register at: https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=1041

Banded Golden-cheeked Warbler at Baker Sanctuary, Dana Spontak

Volunteers at the recent Blair Woods Work Day, with youngest volunteer Connor Murray in front, Christopher Murray
The promised rains from El Nino never really materialized, and February was drier than normal with less than 1.5” of rain recorded. Temperatures were higher than normal with only one night below freezing at 30 degrees all winter—not even enough to burst the Frost Weed. These warmer and drier conditions were actually ideal for the work we had planned for the residence before events began this spring at the Canyon.

With generous grants from the Anderson and Hershey Foundations, we were able to completely replace the aging and dangerous wooden decking with all new composite material. We also replaced the clear polycarbonate roof over the covered section of the deck with an insulated metal roof. This will help keep the deck cooler and more comfortable for visitors. A new half-bath was installed inside the residence to cut down on wait times for the single restroom. Finally, a new video system was donated by the Chimney Swift Conservation Association, which should add to the enjoyment of events.

The mild weather also helped with maintenance out on the property. Work was begun on fencing around the recently acquired additions to the Sanctuary. It is expected to be completed this summer. A Stewardship Day was held on February 7th, when 8 volunteers helped haul several large brush piles up out of the canyon for chipping. After we chipped the piles the following week, a group from the Capital Area Master Naturists joined us on the 14th to haul the new mulch to the trails. Over 260 buckets of mulch were hauled to cover 200’ of the upper trail system. Both events were preceded with breakfast and followed by lunch for the volunteers.

Rains finally did arrive beginning in mid-March dropping 5” of much needed moisture by the end of the month. Because
of the mild temperatures, many of the perennials never lost their leaves. This gave them a jump on the growing and blooming season. Coupled with the expected explosion of wildflowers from the rains, it was as pretty a spring as we have ever seen at Chaetura Canyon.

Lesser Goldfinches had their first fledglings out and about by early March, followed shortly by Carolina Chickadees. Chimney Swifts arrived on March 19 (two days earlier than ever recorded), and were roosting in at least one of the towers by the dozens a week later. The month was rounded out nicely by a Golden-cheeked Warbler beginning his annual patrol of the Canyon on March 30th. We hope you will check the online calendar at www.TravisAudubon.org for upcoming events. See you in the Canyon!

Texas Audubon Chapter Summit

Thanks to all who attended the Audubon Chapter Summit at beautiful McKinney Roughs Park on Saturday, April 2. Members and staff of Travis Audubon met with representatives from National Audubon, the Texas Audubon office, and other Chapter members from across Texas.

A key topic of discussion was National Audubon’s new strategic plan and its focus on five major areas:

- Building Bird Friendly Communities
- Water for Birds and People
- Sharing our Seas and Shores
- Building Climate Resiliency
- Conserving Birds on Working Lands

Carter Smith, Director of Texas Parks and Wildlife, presented the keynote address. He noted that the department faces a generational opportunity as funds totaling $1 billion from the Deep Horizon Oil spill will be shared over the next 16 years between Parks and Wildlife, the General Land Office, and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Smith hopes to continue to acquire new lands for parks and mentioned the recent acquisition of Powderhorn Ranch, which totals 17,000 pristine acres along the Texas Coast. Other areas of focus continue to be sustaining grassland birds and monarch butterflies.
Small Mountain Owls of Colorado with Scott Rashid
Thursday, May 19
6:30 doors open, 7 – 8 pm presentation
Hyde Park Christian Church
610 E. 45th Street, Austin, TX 78751
Free for Members and One Guest; $10 Non-Members

Our last monthly meeting of spring features Scott Rashid. Scott will speak about his wide-ranging research interests concerning the tiny owls that inhabit the area in and around Rocky Mountain National Park. There have been many unanswered questions about the Northern Saw-whet, Northern Pygmy, Flammulated, and Boreal Owls such as preferred nesting habitat, longevity, favored prey, and site fidelity. With his dedicated volunteers, banding station data and hands-on rehabilitation experience, Scott is increasing our understanding of these charismatic creatures. Learn more about Scott’s passion for all things avian at http://www.carriep.org/

Special thanks to longtime Travis Audubon members John and Anne Donovan who have made Scott’s visit possible.

Second Saturday Swift Watch
Chaetura Canyon Sanctuary
Saturday, June 11, July 9 & August 13
7 – 9 pm
$10 Donation

Each evening will begin with an orientation and short, guided walk of the upper trails. Guests then socialize on the deck and observe the Chimney Swifts as they cavort over the Canyon and then go to roost at dusk. Bird feeders, note cards, limited edition prints, and Travis Audubon merchandise will be available for purchase.

All donations and purchases benefit maintenance and projects at Chaetura Canyon. Contact Sanctuary Stewards Georgean and Paul Kyle to make your reservations ASAP: kyle@ChimneySwifts.org
Explore Nature with Travis Audubon!

Baker Sanctuary Open House
Saturday May 7, 9AM - 1PM
Baker Sanctuary, 12308 Lime Creek Rd., Leander TX 78641

Join us for a day of outdoor fun and discovery. Enjoy a rare glimpse of our beautiful wildlife sanctuary at this fun event for the whole family!

Take a guided nature tour with master naturalists and identify native birds, plants, butterflies and insects. Catch a glimpse of the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler, see live snakes and pet a tortoise, build a nest box, make a native seed ball or – dissect bones from an owl pellet! Trail snacks, water and Gatorade will be available.

Don’t Miss These Cool Events:
9:30 am — Nature Hike
10:00 am — Spider Walk
10:30 am — Nature Hike
11:00 am — Sky Kings Falconry Raptors
11:30 am — Have your picture taken with the birds....
11:30 am — Bird Calling Demonstration
12:00 pm — Nature Hike

For more info visit www.TravisAudubon.org
Birdathon Continues through May 21!
Join us for these great events:

**Commons Ford with Ed Fair**
**Sunday May 1**
7:30 am — 11:30 am
Register here: https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=416&

**Sneak Peek of Powderhorn Ranch**
**Sunday May 1**
8 am — 4 pm
Register here: https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=517

**Spring Birding in Hays County with Mark Wilson and Steve Janda**
**Friday May 6**
7 am — 1 pm
Register here: https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=466&

**Dawn Chorus Breakfast with the Birds and Terry Banks and the Wheelers**
**Saturday May 7**
6:15 am — 9 am
Register here: https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=476&

**Cherry Springers with Chuck Sexton**
**Tuesday May 10**
6:30 am — 1 pm
Register here: https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=471&

**Baker Sanctuary Walk with Cindy Sperry and Chris Murray**
**Saturday May 21 (Rescheduled)**
8 am — 11 am
Register here: https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=451
Young Birders Club:
Spring Bird Migrants
Sunday, June 5
8 – 9:30 am

Join us at Brushy Creek Lake Park to learn about spring migrant birds with award-winning Travis Audubon Youth member Sebastian Casarez. Limited to 12 participants, ages 14 years and younger. Register at:
http://travisaudubon.org/audubonevent/young-birders-club-spring-bird-migrants

Bioblitz at Commons Ford Park

Photos by Heather Valey
Owl Workshop
Instructor: Scott Rashid
Classroom: Saturday May 21,
9:30 – 11:30 am
Optional field trip: 7 – 8:45 am

We are fortunate that Scott Rashid, the guest speaker at our May monthly membership meeting, has agreed to offer a workshop on Great Horned and Barn Owls—two permanent residents in Travis County. In 2015, Scott published *The Great Horned Owl: An In-depth Study* detailing the natural history of this “Tiger of the Night.” He is conducting fascinating research on Barn Owls’ use of nest boxes, with encouraging results. If you love owls, this workshop is for you. In addition to learning about their life history, you will be captivated by Scott’s experiences rehabilitating them.

A portion of the registration fee helps support Scott’s work at the Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute. Learn more about the institute at [http://www.carrie.org/](http://www.carrie.org/)

Prior to the Owl Workshop, 15 lucky people can accompany Scott to look for signs of owls along the Colorado River. Scott will give pointers on how to find owls in appropriate habitat. Meeting location will be sent to registrants.

Tuition: $25 for TAS members, $30 for non-members, $10 for optional field trip (15 people limit)
Questions: Jane Tillman at jtillman@utexas.edu
Register at: [https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=512&](https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=512&)

Barn Owl at the Desert Museum, Tuscon Arizona, Katie Moore, Creative Commons
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.

June Birding 102 – Berry Springs Breeding Birds

Sunday, June 19, 6:30 am – 2 pm

Summer is a great time to focus on the breeding birds in our area. It is also a good time to observe interesting behavior such as territorial defense, mating behavior, nesting behavior, and care of young. The goals of this field trip are to see as many of the park’s birds as possible and attempt to interpret their behavior. Some of the likely species include: nearly all the herons and egrets, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Western and Eastern Kingbird, Great Kiskadee, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Painted Bunting, and Orchard Oriole.

We will meet in north Austin at 6:30 am and carpool to Georgetown. We will eat our picnic lunches at the park and discuss our morning’s finds and the homework. We will be back in Austin no later than 2 pm.

The field trip is only open to graduates of Travis Audubon’s Intro to Birds classes who are members of Travis Audubon. Feel free to join now if you’re not already a member!

Tuition: $25 for Travis Audubon members only. 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/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=832&
# May & June 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, May 3,</td>
<td>Super Tuesday at Roy Guerrero Metropolitan Park, by Ken</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ken Zaslow at <a href="mailto:khz@att.net">khz@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 11 am</td>
<td>Zaslowski</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, May 7,</td>
<td>Beginner’s Bird Walk at Lake Creek, by Virginia Rose and</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Virginia Rose at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 to 9:30 am</td>
<td>Judith Bailey</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:virginia.rose@att.net">virginia.rose@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, May 14,</td>
<td>Camp Mabry Field Trip, by Dennis Palafox</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dennis Palafox at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:45 am to early</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:dennis_palafox@hotmail.com">dennis_palafox@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afternoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, May 14,</td>
<td>Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Count</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Carpenter at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 11 am</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, May 15,</td>
<td>Commons Ford Monthly Field Trip, by Diane Sherrill</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Diane Sherrill at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 to 11 am</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:nativeearthscapes@gmail.com">nativeearthscapes@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 17,</td>
<td>Super Tuesday at Commons Ford, by Deb and Lee Wallace</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Deb Wallace at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 to 9:30 am</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:apeld@austin.rr.com">apeld@austin.rr.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, May 21,</td>
<td>Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Walk</td>
<td>No</td>
<td><a href="mailto:coordinator@hornsbybend.org">coordinator@hornsbybend.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 to 11 am</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 24,</td>
<td>Two-hour Tuesday at Big Webberville Park, by Ken Zaslowski</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Jane Tillman at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 to 9:30 am</td>
<td>and Jane Tillman</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:jtilman@utexas.edu">jtilman@utexas.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To register go to [www.TravisAudubon.org](http://www.TravisAudubon.org)

Key: Trip size limit noted by ( ); $ indicates fee required
<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>Saturday, May 28, 8 to 10 am</td>
<td>Baker Sanctuary Saturday Hike</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=371">https://travis.z2systems.com/np/clients/travis/event.jsp?event=371</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 31, 7 to 9 am</td>
<td>Two-hour Tuesday at East Metropolitan Park, by Dan Callaway</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Dan Callaway at <a href="mailto:morriscallaway@sbcglobal.net">morriscallaway@sbcglobal.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, June 4, 8 to 10 am</td>
<td>Beginner’s Bird Walk at Zilker Botanical Garden, by Virginia Rose</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, June 11, 7 to 11:30 am</td>
<td>Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Count</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Eric Carpenter at <a href="mailto:ecarpe@gmail.com">ecarpe@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, June 18, 7:30 to 11 am</td>
<td>Commons Ford Monthly Bird Walk, by Shelia Hargis</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Shelia Hargis at <a href="mailto:shelia.hargis@gmail.com">shelia.hargis@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, June 18, 7:30 to 11 am</td>
<td>Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Walk</td>
<td>No</td>
<td><a href="mailto:coordinator@hornsbybend.org">coordinator@hornsbybend.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Members & Donors

Travis Audubon Wishes to Thank its Members and Donors
(February 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016)

Grants & Contributions
Julia Marsden
Carol Edwards

Birdathon
Claudia Anderson
Robert & Cynthia Anderson
Sue Anderson
Anonymous
Elizabeth Arnold
Terry Banks
Theresa Bayoud
Jon Beall
Sandy Behrman
Marc Bernat
Aimee Beveridge
John Bigley
Ann Bishop
Joan Bohls
Valarie Bristol
Hilma Brooks
Cummings
Nancy Buford
Jimma Byrd
Cindy Cannon
Claire Caudill
Frances Cerbins
Nancy Collins
Cinda Crosley
Louise Daffron
Denise Dailey
Jackie Davis
Leola Decker
Carol Delatorre
Anne Donovan
John & Jacy Donovan
Dena Dupuie
Carol Edwards
Joe Bob Edwards
Robbie Edwards
Elizabeth Eicher
Jo Ann Ellis
Maydelle Fason
Ellen Filtness
Vella Fink
Carl Gamble
Elaine Gleason
Michael Goebel
Marianne Gonta
Alice Hammer
Robert Hardgrave
Sheila Hargis
Kay Hart
Edith Harte
Wendy Harte
Lynette Heckmann
Geoffrey Hoese
Margaret Hoffman
Deborah Holle
Ron Huebner
Joseph B Hunt
Meta Hunt
Judith Hyder
Michael Jewell
Caroline Jones
George Kerr
Shari Kolding
Dana Kuykendall
David Liang
Paul Lice
Hope Lochridge
Barbara Machin
Jan Manning
Joan Marshall
Luther Marshall
Jean Martin
Suzie McCann
Jessica McFaddin
Cheryl McGrath
Frances McMath
Valencia Mills
Alison Miniter
Carrie Mittra
Nancy Powell Moore
Shane Moore
Laura Morse
Louise Morse
Lindsey Mumy
Jean & Seay Nance
Nicole Netherton
Carolyn Nichols
Janel Nye
Dennis Palafox
Mary Thorpe Parker
Gary Pelprey
Emily Prosise
Andrea Pully
Marilyn Davis Rabkin
Nancy Radding
Manda Rash
Carol Ray
Amy Reynolds
Sharon Richardson
Ann Riddel
Susan Rieff
Alan Roddy
Terri Rose
Walter Eugene Rudzinski
David Rust
Judi Sawyer
Caroline Scott
Matt & Albie Sears
Suzanne Sears
Robert Seidenberg
Deborah Sharp
Tess Sherman
Michael Sims
Bea Ann Smith
Ellen Blair Smith
Kim Soechting
Michael Sporer
Eric Stager
Judith Tasch
Layla Thames
Camilla Thomason
Saralee Tiede
Jane Tillman
Eleanor Tittle
William Thomson
Gayla Thorpe
Pauline Tom
Nancy Townsend
Celeste Treadway
Melanie Truesdell
Debbie Volker
David Wahlberg
Deb Wallace
Lee Wallace
Joni Wallace
Nancy Webber
Ceilidh Welsh
Suzanne Whatley
Birdie White
Jo Wilson
Lauren Wojcik
Jane Womack
Walter Wright
Julia Youngblood
Ken Zaslow

Amplify Austin

Several Anonymous Donors
Dariel Baker
David Baker
Ilene Barr
Holly Brandt
Jerrold Buttrey
Janine Child
Rhea Copening
Carol Dawson
Julia Dewette
Victor Emanuel
Susan Engelking
Carijane Etter
Lucy Flanagan
Members & Donors

Susan Fouilloud-Buyat
Michael Gagarin
Carrell Grigsby
Bryan Hale
Emma Hampton
Judith C. Harrison
Donna Herschleb
John Hoverman
Susan Johnson
Diane Jones
Kent Jones
Melissa Keller
Barbara Kyse
Jerry Levenson
Roy Mann
Joan Marshall
Elizabeth Netherton
Janel Nye
Sarah Pratt
Katharyn Reiser
Sharon Richardson
Lisa Roe
Lonnie Samford
Roger Shaw
Brian Sheehan
Stephen Sigman
Dan Smith
Ellen Smith
Kim Soechting
Barrett Sonntag
Cynthia Sperry
Mary Vance
Deb Wallace
Evelyn Wilson
Julie Zess

Mark Stoetzer
Jean & Bob Warneke
Jo Wilson
Mark Wilson & Dana Kuykendall
Julie & Mitch Zess

Lifetime Members
Margaret & Heinz Aeschbach
Ross Bee
Carol Bennett
Donna K. Brasher
Valarie Bristol
Sam Burns
Frances & Oskar Cerbins
Karen & Michael Collins
Kelley Cunny & Gregg Sporar
Jackie Davis
Stacia & Walt DeBill
Jim & Karol deVries
Joe Doherty
Carol Edwards
Michael Gagarin
Ann Gardner
Chris Gunter
Bryan Hale
Julie Hallmark
Patrick Hotze
Russell Hoverman
Burgess Jackson
Caroline Jones
Ronnie Kramer
Tasso Leventis
Jane & William Lowrimore
Julia Marsden
Cheryl McGrath & Robert Miller
Sally Means
Jodie & Julie Moore
Jeff & Katherine Mundy
Michael Portman
Jorjanna Price
Marilyn Davis Rabkin
Deborah Robertson
Beth Roddin
Alan Roddy
Theodore C. Rogers
Stephen Rumsey
Ryan Runkle
Mary Sanger
Andrew & Nona Sansom
Susan & Don Schaezler
Jonathan & Marika Schoolar
Chuck & Mary Kay Sexton
Vince Shouba
Chula Sims
Ellen Smith
Bryan & Cindy Sperry
Byron Stone
Timothy L. Stuart
Stan VanSandt
Karen Verser
Paul Wade
Jo Wilson
John Wilson
Ira & Roxanne Yates
Julia Youngblood

Chimney Swift Conservation Association

Chaetura Canyon Bricks
Laura Legett

In Honor of Jane Tillman
Friends of the Parks of Lakeway

In Honor of Evonne Morgan
Al Morgan

Bird & Business

Sustaining Members
Barbara Anderson
Frances Cerbins
Trent Miller & Meta Hunt
Jeff Patterson
Carol Ray
Robyn Seiferth

Chimney Swift Conservation Association

Chaetura Canyon Bricks
Laura Legett

In Honor of Jane Tillman
Friends of the Parks of Lakeway

In Honor of Evonne Morgan
Al Morgan

Bird & Business

Sustaining Members
Barbara Anderson
Frances Cerbins
Trent Miller & Meta Hunt
Jeff Patterson
Carol Ray
Robyn Seiferth

Chimney Swift Conservation Association

Chaetura Canyon Bricks
Laura Legett

In Honor of Jane Tillman
Friends of the Parks of Lakeway

In Honor of Evonne Morgan
Al Morgan

Bird & Business