Travis Audubon Board, Staff, and Committees:

**Officers:**
President: Frances Cerbins  
President-Elect: Eric Stager  
Treasurer: Carol Ray  
Secretary: Julia Marsden

**Directors:**
Karen Bartoletti  
Clif Ladd  
Suzanne Kho  
Dennis Palafox  
Sharon Richardson  
Virginia Rose  
Mark Wilson  
Jo Wilson

**Advisory Council:**
J. David Bamberger  
Valarie Bristol  
Victor Emanuel  
Sam Fason  
Bryan Hale  
Karen Huber  
Mary Kelly  
Susan Rieff  
Andrew Sansom  
Carter Smith

**Office Staff:**
Executive Director: Nicole Netherton  
Land Manager and Educator: Christopher Murray  
Education and Program Coordinator: Caley Zuzula  
Operations Coordinator: Allison Long  
Design Director and Website Producer: Nora Chovanec

**Committees:**
Baker Team: Clif Ladd and Chris Murray  
Blair Woods Management: Mark Wilson  
Commons Ford: Shelia Hargis and Ellen Filtness  
Chaetura Canyon Management: Paul and Georgean Kyle  
Education: Cindy Cannon  
Field Trip: Dennis Palafox  
Hornsby Bend: Eric Stager  
Outreach/Member Meetings: Jane Tillman and Cindy Sperry  
Youth: Virginia Rose and Mary Kay Sexton
Commons Ford Classic Highlights

The Inaugural Commons Ford Birding Classic was a great event! Money raised will help support Commons Ford and future projects for the prairie.

Some amazing birds seen and counted were Couch’s Kingbird, Merlin, Sedge Wren and Peregrine Falcon! Each team won great celebrity led fieldtrip prizes. First place went to Team Hargis (pictured above), second place was Team Moreno and third place was Team Stager, but all teams were winners!

- Team Hargis = 45 species
- Team Moreno = 40 species
- Team Stager = 35 species
- The Plastic Slackers = 34 species
- Team Hawkward = 31 species

George Cofer Honored This Weekend at Ninth Annual Victor Emanuel Conservation Award Luncheon

George Cofer once said that conservation has been his life’s path since he first stepped outside at the old St. David’s Hospital in Austin; that couldn’t be clearer as hundreds of people piled into the Austin Country Club on October 13th to honor his dedication to conservation at the 9th Annual Victor Emanuel Conservation Award Luncheon. Without a doubt, he has touched more lives than he has met: throughout his career, he has helped preserve 45,000 acres in central Texas, many of which are accessible to all Texans.

Honoree George Cofer with his daughter, Hanna, and wife, Mary Elizabeth.

Friends and family across all facets of his life, including his leadership at the Hill Country Conservancy and Earth Share of Texas, were present to honor the positive mark he has left on Texas lands (and people). Austin Mayor Steve Adler, a friend of George, even presented a proclamation declaring October 13, 2018 as George Cofer Day. Former VECAL Honorees Victor Emanuel, Valarie Bristol, and Andy Sansom also spoke of George’s fearless leadership.
Previous VECAL Honorees gather to celebrate George Cofer. Left to right: Bob Ayres, Andrew Sansom, Mickey Burleson, Georgean Kyle, Paul Kyle, George Cofer, David Bamberger, Victor Emanuel, Valarie Bristol.

Thank you to everyone, near and far, who supported this year’s Victor Emanuel Conservation Award Luncheon. With your help, we set a fundraising record of more than $120,000 to support Travis Audubon! We are proud to partner with great conservationists to protect birds and their habitats, now and in the future.

Mayor Adler and George Cofer shaking hands upon declaring October 13th, 2018 George Cofer Day

Bird of the Week: Downy Woodpecker

Weighing in at just under an ounce, the Downy Woodpecker is the smallest woodpecker in North America. Despite their diminutive stature, these bluebird-sized woodpeckers are capable of superhuman feats of strength: the force with which they drill into trees is over a thousand times the force of gravity. By comparison, jet fighter pilots are subjected to g-forces of only 8 or 9 times the force of gravity, and even then must wear special pressurized suits to keep from fainting from the shock!

Woodpeckers are uniquely adapted to smacking their heads against hard surfaces repeatedly. For one thing, their skulls contain very little fluid, which keeps their brains from sloshing around. Their posture, with the tail feathers firmly pressed against the tree, also helps redirect the force of each peck throughout the woodpecker’s body and back into the tree. Woodpeckers also have extremely unusual tongues: barbed and sticky to help them pry insects out of bark, they also wrap all the way around the skull by means of a cartilaginous organ called the hyoid apparatus. This allows the woodpecker to extend its tongue up to three times the length of its bill, and helps absorb the shock of being a living jackhammer!

Compiled by Owen Moorhead. Sources include the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society.
Call to Action: Why the Proposed Border Wall is Bad for Birders

By Christy Esmahan and Mark Wilson

If you haven’t gone down to bird at Bentsen State Park World Birding Center, get there fast! According to Texas Parks and Wildlife, those 570 acres of subtropical resaca woodlands "support 370 species of birds, many of which are subtropical species typical of eastern Mexico and not found north of the border beyond extreme southern Texas."

After February, 2019, TPWD will have to chop off the last four words of that sentence. Current plans call for a border wall to be built next year that will cut off most of the park’s property from the Visitor Center and the public. According to a memo by Carter Smith, TPWD Director, to the TPWD Commission, this border project will negate the agreement between the State of Texas and the family that donated the land, and result in park closure. In addition, the same construction will cut off access to over 75% of the land owned by the National Butterfly Center and all of Anzalduas Park, frequent destinations for birders and naturalists in the LRGV.

In response, the Travis Audubon Advocacy Committee is working to bring our concerns on this pressing issue to the attention of Rep. Mike McCaul, Congressional District 10, who also serves as the Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee. His committee has an important role in oversight of border issues. Our group, mostly made up of District 10 constituents, presented Rep. McCaul’s staff with over 45 signed letters from Travis Audubon members opposing the proposed wall project. In addition, a representative of Texas Audubon offered his organization’s concerns. We hope to continue meeting with McCaul’s office–nine Travis Audubon members have met with him to date.

Altamira Orioles can only be found in the United States along the southern tip of the Texas/Mexico border.
Travis Audubon members met with Rep. McCaul’s office on August 30 to discuss the environmental impacts of the proposed border wall.

What is at stake? The land that is now visited by birders like you and me, from all over Texas, the U.S. and the world, thrilled to see their first Plain Chachalaca or admire the brightly colored Altamira Oriole and Great Kiskadee, or maybe thrill at the sight of a Common Pauraque, cleverly hidden in plain sight at the edge of a path, may find bulldozed tracts south of the proposed wall.

The Advocacy Committee welcomes participation of Travis Audubon members of every political persuasion in this effort to find solutions to border security that do not involve extensive destruction of critical habitat in the LRGV or closure of the wonderful parks and preserves that have been enjoyed by us all. Republican Congressman Will Hurd, from the West Texas region, has advocated for ‘Smart Wall’ solutions that avoid seizure of private lands and closure of public parks. These are the kind of ideas we are bringing to Congressman McCaul. Opposition to the border wall last year stopped plans to close Santa Anna NWR – your voice can be heard and have a powerful effect!

You can join us at one of our meetings at Rep. McCaul’s office. We also welcome letters, postcards and personal stories from birders and naturalists who share our love of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. We will be glad to take these with us to the meetings. There are many ways to be involved.

Contact Mark Wilson at kuykenwil@gmail.com if you would like more information.

September Bird Forecast: High-flyers

By: Jim Spencer

What to watch for in September: High-flyers

Here’s the Central Texas bird forecast for the month, courtesy of Travis Audubon. Learn more about Central Texas birds and bird-related events for all ages at travisaudubon.org or by calling 512-300-BIRD. Follow us at www.facebook.com/travisaudubon

The Days Shorten and Birds Head South

Texas is a thoroughfare for birds moving to warmer regions for the winter months. Its position on the avian central flyway guarantees that a remarkable diversity of species, from tiny warblers to large raptors, will pass through. According to a Texas Parks and Wildlife publication 333 species (over half of the birds that occur in Texas) are long-distance migrants that move from Canada and the U.S. south to Central and South America. Migrants can easily escape notice. Listen for the contact calls of warblers as they forage in your trees. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, small, slim birds, have a characteristic wheeze that might cause you to look. Upland Sandpipers, a shorebird of the prairie states, have a bubbly three-note call as they fly over. Raptors are usually quiet, gliding fairly high in the sky, coming down only to roost before nightfall.
Two raptors to watch for are the aerial Mississippi Kite and the Broad-winged Hawk. Both are very uncommon local nesters that seem to be expanding their breeding ranges into Travis County, particularly finding the habitat to their liking in Northwest Hills off Far West and Mopac.

The Broad-winged Hawk is rather noisy, issuing a shrill "peteeet" whistle in flight and perched. This small chunky-bodied hawk likes to perch in woods where it hunts small prey, including insects, small mammals, frogs, reptiles, and the occasional bird. Birds like to mob Broad-winged Hawks and other birds of prey, with several species joining in to broadcast the raptors' presence as they try to drive them off. When you hear a bunch of noisy scolding wrens, chickadees and titmice follow the sound to its source. You might be surprised to see a hawk take off or continue to pretend it is camouflaged.

One of the most amazing things about Broad-winged Hawks is their sheer numbers during fall migration. One of the best known places to witness this is at the hawk watch at Hazel Bazemore County Park in Corpus Christi. At Hazel Bazemore the peak concentration of raptors occurs between September 23 and 30, depending on the weather. If you are lucky, you might see a hundred thousand birds pass by in one day. Most of the birds are Broad-winged Hawks on their way to northern South America. Sharp-eyed observers will also see falcons, vultures, other hawk species, and even a few eagles and osprey. If you don't feel confident in your identification skills, visit during the Celebration of Flight the last weekend in September. Hawk counters will help with identification and impress you with their dedication. An even more remarkable place to watch Broad-winged Hawk migration is in the Mexican state of Veracruz, where a peak one day flight of more than 500,000 birds has been recorded!
Mississippi Kites are elegant falcon-like birds with almost effortless, buoyant flight. The adult is a sleek gray with a white head, dark wings and a distinctive wedge-shaped dark tail. The wingspan is about 31 inches. Juvenile birds have reddish leading edges to their underwings and banded black and white tails. These Kites have a somewhat similar call to the Broad-winged Hawks, but sound more plaintive, with a descending whistled “pee-pheew” sometimes given in flight. Flocks exceeding 1000 individuals have been recorded in south Texas in late August to early October, according to Birds of North America Online. Most will be south of the border by October 15. The Hazel Bazemore Hawk Watch is a good place to see them. In Austin the more you go out birding the more likely you are to come across them soaring overhead as they hunt a variety of prey like grasshoppers, beetles and small birds. A recent August sighting of nineteen birds occurred over Ledge Mountain in Northwest Hills.

Hawk identification can be challenging so take a photo and study features like wing shape, breast and belly color, and tail length to figure out the species. Merlin, a free app from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is a good tool to use, as is posting your photo on What’s This Bird? Upcoming Travis Audubon Events — Check the events calendar. Monthly Meeting — Jérémie Royer, the French illustrator of Audubon, On the Wings of the World, a graphic novel, will speak about the book and his craft. 7:00 p.m. Thursday, September 20, 2018 Location: Hyde Park Christian Church, 610 E 45th St., Austin, TX 78751 Travis Audubon Field Trips — Beginners welcome. There is no better way to learn more about our central Texas birds than to go on a field trip. Check the Travis Audubon calendar for details. Some require registration and most are free.

World Shorebirds Day on September 6 at 6:00 p.m. Shorebirds are amazing long-distance migrants, and the best place to enjoy them in Austin is at fabled Hornsby Bend. Last year participants saw American Avocets, Spotted, Least and Pectoral Sandpipers and a couple of plover species. You won’t have to get up early to see these birds!

Hornsby Monthly Bird Walk on September 15 at 7:30 a.m.: Get acquainted with the birds of the city’s Wastewater Sludge Treatment Facility! This is a good field trip for beginners who want to get oriented to the wonders of Hornsby.

Two Hour Tuesday at Champion Park on September 18 at 7:30 a.m. Join us at this excellent 90 acre lakefront park for a bird walk. We will look for the early arrival of over-wintering birds as well as hold-over summer residents and year-round birds.

**COMPILED BY JANE TILLMAN, TRAVIS AUDUBON VOLUNTEER REPOSTED WITH PERMISSION FROM KXAN’S WEATHER BLOG**
See the Winners of Avian Ink 2018

Thanks to everyone who joined us last Friday for our Third Annual Avian Ink Celebration! Blue Owl Brewing was serving up “Greater Good for the Black-Caffed Beerio,” a seriously delicious coffee-infused sour cherry stout, as well as their other excellent brews. We had some fresh faces join us, including this year’s Avian Ink winners! Check out their bird-inspired tattoos:

1st Place: Zandra Dolan
“I got this done in the Fall/Winter of 2016. It’s a Great Horned Owl flying into a window during a full moon. There is a white candle (representing protection) lit on the sill.”

2nd Place: Kelsey Pritchett
“My tattoo is of my pet Sun Conure named Sunny. It was done by Hannah Skalsky at 512 Tattoo up North.”
3rd Place: Tam Tran
“I got this tattoo in August 2018 at True Blue tattoo (Airport Blvd) from artist Tank Girl. It is of Greater Sage-grouse feathers and sprigs of sage that I collected in Nevada. I had worked as a biologist in Nevada for two years from 2013-2014, where I caught and tracked sage grouse for research for the USGS.”

Come Say Hello! Sign-In Box Installed at Blair Woods

If you have visited Blair Woods the past week, you may have noticed a new addition to the trail. At the entrance to the trails, near the sign that directs you to the pond, stands a beautiful new sign-in box constructed by Travis Audubon member and volunteer Al Morgan.

Blair Woods, located in East Austin, is home base for our family outreach initiative in partnership with Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center and supported by Dell Medical School. Our goal is to create a welcoming green space for the community to enjoy while restoring and maintaining native wildlife habitat. The preserve was gifted to Travis Audubon in 1985 by the Last Will and Testament of Dr. Frank Blair, a highly-esteemed zoologist and UT professor. Blair often brought students to the property for research, and many of his studies there focused on the Texas Spiny Lizard. As you walk the trails of Blair Woods, you will find educational signage featuring Rusty the Lizard, the preserve’s mascot, which is modeled off of the species that Blair studied.

Next time you’re at Blair Woods, be sure to sign in at the box! We hope to use the number of sign-ins as a metric for tracking use of the preserve. If you have any questions about Blair Woods or want to share your thoughts about a recent experience there, feel free to call the Travis Audubon office and ask for Program and Education Coordinator Caley Zuzula.

Blair Woods is free to the public and open daily 10 am – 4 pm. If you’re looking for a natural oasis in East Austin, this is a place you must see for yourself! Learn more [here].
TAS Events in November and December

**Migratory Birds in the Landscape**
Thursday, November 1, 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM

**Birding by Ear with Mikael Behrens**
Saturday, November 3, 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

**Beginner Bird Walk at North East Metro Park**
Saturday, November 3, 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM

**Super Tuesday at Pedernales Falls State Park; led by Terry Banks**
Tuesday, November 6, 7:00 AM – Early Afternoon

**Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Count**
Saturday, November 10, 7:00 AM – 11:30 AM; 4:00 PM – Dusk

**Commons Ford Monthly Walk**
Saturday, November 10, 7:30 AM

**Blair Woods Restoration Day**
Saturday, November 10, 9:00 AM

**Winter Birding at Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary**
Sunday, 11/11/2018; Sunday, 12/9/2018; Sunday, 1/13/2019; Sunday, 2/10/2019
Time: 7:30 AM to 11:30 AM

**Ruffled Feathers Book Club Meeting**
Sunday, November 11, 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

**Two-hour Tuesday at Devine Lake with Ray and Ginny Steelman**
Tuesday, November 13, 7:30 AM – 9:30 AM

**Sparrow Identification with Byron Stone**
Tuesday, November 13, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

**Speaker Series: Adventures of a Wildlife Rehabber with Ed Sones**
Thursday, November 15, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

**Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Walk**
Saturday, November 17, 7:30 AM

**Young Birders Club: Bird Walk at the Wildflower Center**
Saturday, November 17, 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM

**McKinney Falls State Park Field Trip**
Saturday, November 17, 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

**Saving Central Park with Elizabeth Barlow Rogers**
Monday, November 19, 4:00 PM

**Two-hour-Plus Tuesday at Commons Ford with Lee and Deb Wallace**
Tuesday, November 20, 7:15 AM – 10:30 AM

**Two-hour Tuesday at Cedar Breaks Park with Dan Callaway**
Tuesday, November 27, 7:30 AM – 9:30 AM

**Super Tuesday at Doeskin Ranch with Deb and Lee Wallace**
Tuesday, December 4, 7:30 AM – 12:00 PM

**Old Tunnel and LBJ State Park Field Trip Led by Amy Sugeno**
Saturday, December 8, 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM

**Baker Sanctuary Restoration Day**
Saturday, December 8, 9:00 AM
Thank You to Our Members and Sponsors

**Leadership Circle**
- Bob & Margaret Ayres
- Judith Bailey
- Karen Bartoletti
- Carol Bennett
- Carolyn Betz
- Ann Bishop & Penny Potter
- Vera Bowen
- Judith Boyce
- Holly and Tom Brandt
- David Braun
- The Cerbins Family
- Ann & Don Connell
- Caitlyn Connor
- Colin Corgan
- The Davies Family
- Jackie Davis
- Lee Decker & Faye Harris
- Dawn M Dickson
- The Donovan Family
- Michele A. Dunkerley
- Sam and Maydelle Fason
- Michael Gagarin
- Patricia Gallagher
- William Gammon III
- Bryan Hale
- Stephen Hannington
- Faye Harris
- The Harte Family
- George Hixon
- Trent Miller and Meta Hunt
- Caroline Jones
- Bob Kerr
- Diedra Kerr
- Paul and Georgean Kyle
- Laura Legett
- Carolyn Long
- Meagan Anderson Longley
- The Lyon & Smith Household
- The Marsden Family
- Christy Muse
- Patrick Oles
- Dennis Palafox
- Nancy Radding
- Carol Ray
- Anne & David Reynolds
- Alan Roddy
- Theodore C Rogers
- Caroline Saban
- Mary Sanger
- Paula & Ernest Smith
- Kim Soechting
- The Sperry Family
- Molly Stevens
- Timothy L. Stuart
- Virginia Sudela
- Lorna Terhune
- John Umphress
- Bill Volk
- Jean Warneke
- Robert Welch
- Julia Wilkinson
- Jo Wilson
- Warren Wilson-Reiner
- Peggy Winkler
- Peggy Winkler
- Jeff Zubia

**Lifetime Members**
- The Aeschbach Family
- Ross Bee
- Carol Bennett
- Holly & Tom Brandt
- Donna Brasher
- Valarie Bristol
- Sam Burnes
- The Cerbins Family
- The Collins Family
- Kelly Cunny & Gregg Sporar
- Colin Corgan
- Jackie Davis
- Stacia & Walt DeBill
- The deVries Family
- Carol Edwards
- Sharon and Don Flournoy
- The Gagarin Family
- Ann Gardner
- Chris Gunter
- The Hale Family
- Julie Hallmark
- Shelia Hargis
- The Harte Family
- Patrick Hotze
- The Hoverman Family
- Burgess Jackson
- Caroline Jones
- Diedra Kerr
- Ronnie Kramer
- Laura Legett and Joe Doherty
- Tasso Leventis
- The Lowrimore Family
- The Marsden Family
- Sally Means
- Cheryl McGrath and Robert Miller
- The Moore Family
- The Mundy Family
- Michael Portman
- Jorjanna Price
- Marilyn Rabkin
- Deborah Robertson
- The Roddin Family
- Alan Roddy
- Theodore C Rogers
- Stephen Rumsey
- Ryan Runkle
- Mary Sanger
- The Sansom Family
- The Schaezler Family
- The Schoolar Family
- The Sexton Family
- Vince Shouba
- Catherine Sims
- Ellen Smith
- Lindsey Spadier
- The Sperry Family
- Byron Stone
- Patsy Turner & Tim Stuart
- Stan VanSandt
- Karen Verser
- Paul Wade
- Isabel Welland
- The Wheeler Family
- Jo Wilson
- John Wilson
- The Yates Family
- The Youngblood Family

**Sustaining Members**
- Joseph, Katharine & Ruby Ahlquist
- Barbara Anderson
Michael Apperley
Katrina Baecht
Judith Bailey
Will Boettner
Dawn Bowes
The Bergman Carton Family
Fred Dalbey & Sonia Ralls
Elaine Davenport & Blaine Williams
The Elliott Family
Vella Fink
Joel Fisher
Susan Galbreath
Eugene Garver
Kimberly Gruber
Donna Joan Herschleb
The Hunt Lemieux Family
Mary Jo Kennard
Janet Krueger
Stephen Livingston
Ann McGinley
Trent Miller & Meta Hunt
Owen Moorhead & Erica Mendoza
Laura O'Toole
Geruza Paiva
Jeff Patterson
Betsy Pfefi and Stephen Williams
Carol Ray
Sharon and Jeff Richardson
Veronica Roberts
Robyn Seiferth
The Sheehan Family
Ellen Smith and Alan Campion
Eric Stager
Mark Stoetzer
Karen Tarlow
Nancy Townsend
The Treadway Family
Carl Trovall
The Warneke Family
Mark Wilson & Dana Kuykendall
Michael Wolf
The Zess Family

**Warbler Members**
Karen Bartoletti
The Bridson-Swisher Family
Michelle Cutrer and Richard Whittington
Genevieve Duncan
Kent Ellington
Christal Erickson-Collins
The Fason Family
Mary Ann & David Gray
The Harris Family
Sarah Heather
The Jones Family
Margaret Kenty
Carla Kenyon
The Kerr Family
Caroline Leggette
Suzy Maclay
Joan Marshall
Debbie Martin & Robert Sullivan
William McAbee
The McCann Family
Laurence Miller & Judy Willcott
Mary and Lynn Moak
The Morrison Family
Barry Newberger & Betsy Polbanz
J. P. Patterson
Allen Peck & Lidia Agraz
The Race Family
Rose Ann Reeser
The Rizzo Family
Kim Soechting
The Swisher Family
The Vinson Family
Deb & Lee Wallace
Michelle Cutrer and Richard Whittington
Judy Willcott & Laurence Miller
Pat Yingst & Tony Parchman
Nikki & Charli Zern
Thank You to our 2018 Victor Emanuel Luncheon Sponsors!