



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

February 2003

## Bird Flight, or Why can they, when I can't?

David Musgrave

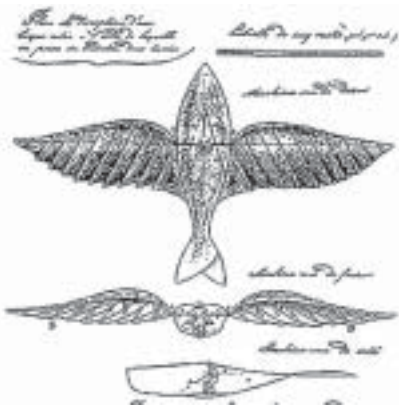
**Tuesday  
February 18, 2003  
7:30 PM**



Otto Lilienthal with small wing-flapping glider 1894. From [www.flyingmachine.org](http://www.flyingmachine.org)

This presentation is a lighthearted, nontechnical look at some of the factors that allow birds to fly while we humans watch them from the ground. It discusses the requirements for flight, and the remarkable ways in which birds meet those requirements. The methods man uses to fly and those of the birds have some significant differences. We will also address some of the “burning questions” that everyone has had about flight, while trying to avoid a boring, equation-based, engineering discussion! Who hasn't asked questions like “Why can't I fly like the birds? Why don't birds crash? Why do birds fly in “V” formations? How do birds navigate thousands of miles? Why do hummingbirds hum? What's the biggest bird to fly? How can that fly land on the ceiling?” For the answers to these and all your long-standing questions on physics, aerodynamics, materials engineering, and other fun stuff, don't miss this discussion.

David Musgrave is an Aeronautical/Industrial engineer from McDade. He spent twenty years in the Air Force, including three years on the flight line maintaining B-52s, KC-135s, and F-4D fighters. For six years he bought engines for F-15s and F-16s from Pratt and Whitney. After leaving the USAF in 1986, he spent twelve years at Southwest Research Institute, San Antonio, as a product development engineer and manager of the Product Design section. Dave left SwRI in 1999 to pursue building his and Kathy's dream home in the piney woods east of McDade. He is a pilot and a homebuilt aircraft hobbyist, as well as a materials engineer and all-around handyman. Please join us for a fun-filled session on some of the more esoteric aspects of the feathered world!



Patent drawing of the Le Bris Artificial Albatross, 1857. From [www.flyingmachines.org](http://www.flyingmachines.org)

**The February chapter meeting will be held the third Tuesday of the month on February 18th at 7:30pm in the Cecil Long Community Room of the First National Bank of Bastrop. The civic room is next to the bank on Main Street. Everyone is invited to stay for refreshments after the program.**

# BCAS CALENDAR OF EVENTS



## FEBRUARY 2003

February 16–Board Meeting at the home of Joan & Horace Russell. 512-321-2718

February 18–Chapter Meeting Dave Musgrave on the mechanics of flight.

February 22–FIELD TRIP to Eagle Lake. Contact Loretta Hennard (321-3818) for more information.

## MARCH

March 16–Board Meeting. Place TBA

March 18– Chapter Meeting Stan Wellso, Aquatic Flora & Fauna.

March 22 FIELD TRIP to Matagorda Island. Contact Loretta Hennard (321-3818) for more information.

## APRIL

April 13–Board Meeting TBA

April 15–Chapter Meeting Speaker TBA

April 26–FIELD TRIP to Palmetto State Park. Contact Loretta Hennard (321-3818) for more information.

## MAY

May 2-4 3rd Annual Texas Songbird Festival, Lago Vista. for more information contact Lago Vista Chamber of Commerce 1-888-328-5246.

**Visit our Web site for updates and additional information on field trips and events.**

**[www.bastropcountyaudubon.org](http://www.bastropcountyaudubon.org)**

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 • Priscilla Jarvis. Contributors for this issue include  
 • Mary Ellen Branan, Michelle Belden Mary Beth  
 • Gradziel, Alan Jaeger, & Loretta Hennard.  
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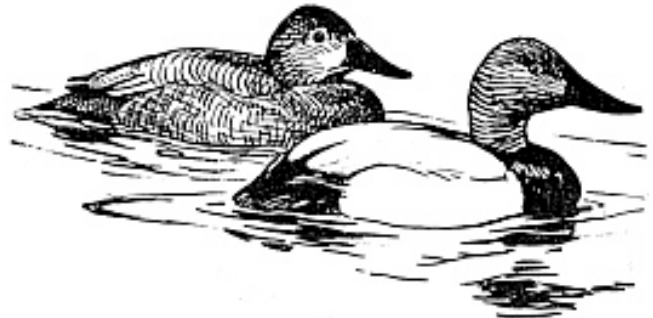
## Excerpts from “*Connie Hagar: The Life History of a Texas Birdwatcher,*” pub. 1986:

“I’ve never regretted taking up the hobby. We have made such marvelous friends from all walks of life. It still amazes me sometimes. I think birdwatchers as a whole are the most congenial people I’ve ever known, and birdwatching certainly must have therapeutic value. I’m convinced.”

Olga Clark to Connie Hagar

[Connie Hagar’s family had a tradition of dying before age 60. Connie had reached her mid-seventies. A friend who “knew the family tradition had asked, half jesting, ‘What keeps you, Connie?’ In the same vein she had replied, ‘It must be the birds. I live for the birds, and they won’t let me go.’”

You can borrow this valuable book from our Learners’ Corner Library. Submitted by Mary Ellen Branan



## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

**Friend of Bastrop County Audubon \$20**

Includes membership in Bastrop County Audubon Society, a subscription to BCAS’s newsletter, Bird Calls, and invitations to all BCAS programs, events, and field trips.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make checks payable to :*

**Bastrop County Audubon Society**

*Send to:* Bastrop County Audubon W17

Alan Jaeger, Treasurer

117 Kaelepulu Dr

Bastrop 78602

Become a Friend of Bastrop County Audubon and all of your dues will be put to use supporting local conservation and education. You may also join both Bastrop County Audubon and the National Audubon Society through the BCAS Web site <[bastropcountyaudubon.org](http://bastropcountyaudubon.org)>. As a member of National Audubon, you will enjoy BCAS chapter membership and receive the *Audubon* magazine, and a portion of your dues will support national programs.

# Journey to San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge

By Michelle Belden

Art and I awoke early on Saturday, my only day off for the week. We packed the truck and headed east to visit a wildlife refuge we have never been to before, the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. It was a particularly stunning Texas winter day where the temperature was going up to the 60's.

We headed East on Hwy 71 to Interstate 10 towards Houston. In the town of Sealy we made our connection to Highway 36 and headed south to the Coast.

As we drove south, we noticed a flock of at least 500 geese in flight. We pulled off the road and walked over the railroad tracks to take a closer look at the flocks. They were Canada Geese. It did my heart good to see them wintering again in Texas. I have fond memories of hand feeding them in Lake Tahoe, Nevada with my husband Art. As we stood up the flock immediately took flight and I photographed the excitement. We proceeded to get back in the truck to head further south. As we were passing farmers' fields of collards and cabbage we noticed more flocks of geese but this time they were Snow Geese, at least 300. Driving this two-lane highway through rural coastal prairie, there were still electric poles being utilized with the aqua glass insulators on the electric lines. This is not a common sight to see, since they have been replaced by ceramic. These old glass insulators filled Highway 36.

Finally, we passed through a small town and stopped at the hardware store to clarify our directions to the park. In front of the store I stopped and sat down on a rocking chair made of oak. It was real comfortable and I rocked a couple of times before finally getting up and proceeding inside the store. The woman storekeeper gave us good directions to the park. Before we left I meandered around the store looking at some of the antiques, old oil lanterns, meat and sausage grinders, and even arrowheads and spearheads artifacts. We left and continued going south.

When we arrived at the park, my husband noticed a Glossy Ibis on the side of the road. What a great surprise. We proceeded down the gravel road, which goes throughout the entire park. This park mostly consists of coastal estuarine habitat of flat prairie, salt marsh and



Photo by Michelle Belden ©2003

saltwater lakes, shallow freshwater lakes and marshes and wooded areas. They have a three mile self-guided auto tour called Moccasin Pond where we saw Snow Geese, American Coot, and various ducks. The big surprise on this road is when we sighted a feral pig with her two piglets crossing the road. We did not see any alligators even though we were looking out for them. We saw Killdeer, Great Blue Herons, Clay-colored Robins, Northern Mockingbirds, Northern Cardinals, Black Vultures, American Crows, Red-winged Blackbird, Belted Kingfisher, Ringed Kingfisher, Snowy Egrets, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Egrets and Snow Geese.

We stopped at another trail where we could walk along the marsh and woodlands looking for Scissor-tails. None were sighted, but we saw wild narcissus, green onions and fan palms along with Spanish moss hanging down as lacy drapes off the oak trees. The sun was beginning to set, and we started seeing mosquito activity, so we decided to head out to Galveston for dinner. We took the coastal route and enjoyed the journey north watching the sunset on the ocean. We found a great place to eat in Galveston at Willie G's Seafood & Steak House. We topped off the evening eating oysters & baked flounder stuffed with crab and crawfish. Excellent meal!! The restaurant had really great creative chefs. I would highly recommend this restaurant if you are up in the neighborhood. The telephone number is (409) 762-3030 or (409) 762-7792. The address is 2100 Water Street North, Galveston, TX 77550. Bon appetit!!

# GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

February 14 - 17

All you need is basic knowledge of bird identification and access to the Internet at home, a friend's house, local library, school, or anywhere you can get access to the web.

Here's what you do:

- **Count the birds in your backyard**, local park, or other natural area on one or all four count days. You can count in as many different locations as you wish, just make sure to keep separate records and fill out a checklist for each area.
- **Watch the birds** for at least 15 minutes on each day that you participate. We recommend watching for a half-hour or more, so that you'll have a good sense of what birds are in your area.
- **How to count:** Your data will be used by scientists to analyze bird populations, so it is very important that everyone count their birds in exactly the same way. On the day(s) that you count, watch your bird feeders, or take a short walk (less than 1 mile) in your neighborhood or park.

For each kind (species) of bird that you see, keep track of the **highest number of individuals** that you observe at any one time. Use a "Tally Sheet" to help keep track of your counts. Your tally sheet should look something like the following:

House Finch - 3, 5, 3, 4    *High Count = 5*  
Blue Jay - 4, 3, 6, 2    *High Count = 6*

Be careful not to count the same bird over and over! Don't add another Blue Jay to your tally every time you see a Blue Jay at the feeder. *You could be seeing the same individual again and again.* If you record only the highest number of individual birds that you see in view at one time, you're sure to never count the same bird more than once!

- **At the end of the day** go to "Submit your bird checklist" on the GBBC site: [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org). Fill out the questions about your location, local habitat, and count duration. Then enter your high counts for each species sited on that day and location. You can submit one bird checklist for each day that you count or for each new area that you count in.

For example:

- If you count 4 days at one location, you'd submit 4 different checklists.
- If you count 4 days at 2 different locations each day, submit 8 checklists. And etc.
- **Problems Getting Access to the Internet? Want to participate but don't have access to a computer? Contact Margie Crisp for help: 512-281-5667**
- **Finally**, after you've submitted your data, explore the GBBC web site. Check our results section to see other reports from your community, and watch as data comes in from other areas. Have a look through our other pages, and find out other ways you can help birds. Enjoy!



## Public Urges Bastrop County Commissioners to Deny Alcoa's Road Relocation Plans

*by Alan Jaeger, BCAS Webmaster*

The Bastrop County Commissioners Court met in a rare evening session on Monday, January 27, to hear public comment regarding Alcoa's request to relocate or close several county and minor state highways as part of their lignite mining plans for northern Bastrop County. More than 100 citizens showed up, many of whom took the podium to speak out against the company's plans. (No one spoke in favor of the plans.) BCAS was well represented: Mary Beth Gradziel, Jeremiah and Priscilla Jarvis were among the speakers. Priscilla presented a petition containing over 1500 signatures, and proceeded to unroll it across the courtroom (and the laps of Alcoa's representatives).

announced that the County would hire an independent engineer to evaluate the safety issues associated with moving or closing the roads.

*Opinion Warning!* We should not assume that it is a foregone conclusion that Alcoa is going to win this contest. Do all you can to oppose their plans. **Write the Commissioners Court (c/o The Honorable Ronnie McDonald, 804 Pecan St., Bastrop, TX 78602).** Let them know that you are opposed to allowing Alcoa to relocate the roads. Remember, the only authority our commissioners have is over the roads. Keep that your focus, but make the point that your concern goes beyond the roads and includes the wellbeing of the entire county.

# FIELD TRIPS For the Birds

**Hundreds of American Robins** spending the winter at McKinney Falls State Park greeted nine of us from Bastrop County Audubon Society on January 25. Chris Pfeil from Travis Audubon Society joined us and quickly became our leader, helping us identify 26 (more or less) species.

We're already anticipating future forays to see our feathered friends. Sharon Finlay, Assistant Field Trip Leader, has made arrangements with the LCRA for us to explore Eagle Lake on Saturday, February 22.

Approximately two miles south of the town of Eagle Lake on FM 102, 1,200 surface acres provide irrigation water for the surrounding rice farms. Edward Kutac, the author of *Birder's Guide to Texas*, considers it one of the finest birding sites in Texas. Please register at our regular meeting on February 18, or call me at 321-3818.

On March 22, we'll be on Matagorda Island, that rare, unspoiled barrier island off the Gulf Coast, where nineteen (19) endangered and threatened species of wildlife, including the famous whooping crane, reside. In Vera and Bob Thornton's book, *Chasing Warblers*, they described the island as "...an important migratory stopover and/or wintering home for a large number of North American shorebirds and waterfowl. There are Skimmers and Gulls and Terns. All of the Herons and Bitterns are represented, Ibises, Storks, and Roseate Spoonbills show up in impressive numbers, and at least 15 species of duck settle in for the season." I can hardly wait!



Lodging is in Port O'Conner; so you'll need to make reservations for Friday and Saturday nights, March 21 and 22. Please call the Sand Dollar Motel [(361) 983-2342] **ASAP** to request rooms. Since they do not take credit cards, you must send a check for the first night. All 14 rooms have 2 double beds for \$53/night, including taxes. Saturday morning, we have reservations on the ferry at 7:30 a.m. (for an 8:00 a.m. departure), arriving on Matagorda by 9:00 for a day of birding, shelling, hiking, etc. We're scheduled to leave the island at 4:00 p.m.

There is no drinking water on the island, so bring plenty to drink. We may purchase soft drinks and ice on the ferry, and we'll take an ice chest and our lunches. As usual, bring insect repellent, sunscreen as well as a hat, binoculars, field guides,

sturdy walking shoes. And, it may be a good idea to include a raincoat. If you're a shell collector, start saving the plastic bags that newspapers come in to stuff into your pockets or backpack. One other preparation suggestion: Read the history of this treasured place—fascinating.

A packet of information, including directions, will be available at the February meeting. If you cannot attend, call me at 321-3818, and I'll send one to you.

On April 26, we're making another attempt to visit Palmetto State Park near Gonzales. And in May, we plan to visit Peckerwood Gardens near Hempstead. Check here for more details later—

**Loretta Henard, Field Trip Chair**



Here's my bird count from our recent field trip to McKinney Falls State Park. A not very impressive 25 species. HOWEVER what was impressive was two or three new life birds for many of us: the Hermit Thrush, the American Pipit, and the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. It was also impressive to see huge skeletal trees full of Double-crested Cormorants roosting and also many Yellow-rumped Warblers of BOTH races. The complete list: Double-crested Cormorants, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blue Jay, Great Egret, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, House Finch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle, American Goldfinch, Mourning Dove, Turkey Vulture and Tufted Titmouse.

**Mary Ellen Branan, Vice-President**

## THE LEARNERS' CORNER

Expert birder Hugh Brown will lead us in a study of "Ducks." A surprising number of species of ducks and their cousins winter in Texas. Can you identify them as well as you'd like?

The Learners' Corner meets at 7:00 PM before the general meeting.



**FEBRUARY REFRESHMENTS:**

**Joan Russell & Linda Lench**

## BCAS Annual Appeal Contributors

Barbara Bailey Bogart

Little Caesar's Pizza (Bastrop)

Megan Lowery

Alan Jaeger & Vera Preston-Jaeger

Tom Dureka & Ann Mesrobian

Bill Montgomery & Margie Crisp

Priscilla & Jeremiah Jarvis

First National Bank

Bob & Lee Graham

Gary Rassner, D.D.S.

David Brock

Ellen Hinds, D.V.M.

Mark McClelland

Joan & Horace Russell

Lee Stone

Belinda Thompson

George Urban

**Thank You!**



Bastrop County Audubon Society

c/o Jarvis

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Return Service Requested