



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

Return to Port A: Paradise & More

April Program

Norman Sachnik's Views on Birds of the Gulf Coast

BCAS Board Member Norman Sachnik will be our speaker for the General Meeting on Tuesday, April 21 concerning various birds we will encounter on the Gulf Coast. He plans a departure from the focus on the physical identification, focusing more on fascinating behaviors and often overlooked facts about the birds, and including his own experiences and observations. The presentation will include slides.

He believes "being informed on more behaviors and fascinating facts about a bird species makes identifying that bird more interesting and memorable."

Sachnik lived in Houston many years and then Galveston for 15 years before moving to Bastrop two years ago. He and Margie Sachnik built their "dream house," which they still own, on the Bay side of Galveston Island. He was an active member of Houston Audubon Society and the Galveston Audubon Group. Both Sachniks are enthusiastic birders and have traveled widely, for example, numerous times to the Virgin Islands.

Norman is a professional mechanical engineer with an added specialty of forensic engineer. Norman "the Voice" Sachnik recorded the voice-overs for the BCAS "Making a Difference" slide-show/movie which aired on Bastrop's Community Access TV in 2008.

BCAS, Dureka, Mesrobian, Rogers Honored at Bastrop Chamber 71st Annual Awards Banquet

BCAS nominated BCAS member Tom Dureka as a "Point of Light" for the Bastrop Chamber of Commerce award night held at the Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort on February 14. At the banquet, however, the C of C announced a new category of award: "Friends of the Environment," and honored BCAS, Pines & Prairies Land Trust, NatureFest, Environmental Stewardship, the Paddling Trails Project, and as individuals Tom Dureka, Ann Mesrobian, Denise Rogers (all BCAS members), John Cline, and Steve Box. The Chamber noted "two emerging issues that are gaining momentum in Bastrop are environmental issues and the conservation of our natural beauty and resources" (*C of C Newsletter*, March, 2009).



April, 2007: From l., Carole O'Toole, Maggie Lambert, Mary Branan, Judy Ing, Alan Jaeger, Stan Wellso.

"The trip to Port Aransas is still on schedule for the week end of April 25-26," announced Field Trips Chair Stan Wellso recently.

"We will meet both Saturday and Sunday mornings at the Port Aransas Birding Center on Ross Avenue promptly at 7:30 a.m. On Saturday, we'll head for Paradise Pond, the Wetland Park, and the South Jetty." Friends and family are welcome.

"On Saturday, we'll all gather at Coral Cay Condominium for a wine and cheese party similar to the one we had two years ago." Afterward, everyone will go to local seafood restaurant for dinner.

On Sunday, April 26, Wellso will lead a field trip from 8:00 a.m. to noon. The Port Aransas sites for birding include the Birding Center, Paradise Pond, certain subdivisions, and the jetty and beach area. "Hopefully we will see about 100 species as we did last time," Wellso said

All those planning to go are arrange their own transportation and lodging. Wellso will bring helpful handouts re lodging and sites to the Audubon Meeting on April 21. Call him at 321-0122 if you have questions.



Join or Renew Annual Membership

Benefits include Bird Calls, field trips, social events, continuing education, public influence, good feelings and fun. Membership Chair: Priscilla Jarvis at (512) 281-2762.

Dues are used to support local conservation and education concerning bird and other wild life, habitats, and ecology. You may join at our web site or use the form below. Please consider the Supporting Membership category. www.bastropcountyaudubon.org

BCAS Membership Application

- Individual \$20
- Family \$35
- Supporting \$75

Name _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

Please make checks payable to: Bastrop County Audubon Society. Send to:

Alan Jaeger, Treasurer
117 Kaelepulu Dr.
Bastrop TX 78602

Winter Field Trips



Town Hot Spots & Lake Bastrop Cruise

January 24, Linda Presto, Mary Ellen Branan, and Judy Turner met with Stan Wellso, Field Chair, for an interesting morning, visiting Lover's Lane area, Colorado River

Sanctuary, Riverside Drive, and Fisherman's Park. High points included seeing four Greater Road Runners in four different places within a half hour, several Red Shouldered Hawks, flying or perching, and a flock of White-throated Sparrows. Weather was clear and temperature pleasant.

February 21, an intrepid group met at Lake Bastrop South Shore boat launch and climbed aboard Norm and Margie Sachnik's boat in the teeth of a norther including a brief cold rain. Birders included Michelle Belden, Linda Presto, Mary Ellen Branan, Pam Hohman, and Margie and Norm. Favorite species spotted was the Buffle Head duck. We noted huge flocks of Double Crested Cormorants flying about together, an Eared Grebe, plus all the usual suspects: Northern Shovelers, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, American Coots, Mallards, Black Vultures, and Yellow-rumped Warblers in trees along the shore.



Photo: P. Hohman



Earth Share

One Environment

One Simple Way to care for it.

In 1996, the environmental fund became a state partner of Earth Share, the nation's oldest and largest environmental workplace fundraising organization. Now, thanks to this partnership, Earth Share of Texas represents not only the best of Texas' environmental organizations, but the most reputable in the nation, as well.

March Refreshments by Pam Hohman



April Refreshments by Margie Sachnik & Betty Dunkerley

Margaret Campbell Bamberger 1938 - 2009

Margaret was a great friend of Bastrop County. She was a founding member of several environmental groups and more importantly, a worker in the field. In the seventies she worked with Central Texas Lignite Watch to fight LCRA's unstoppable attempt to strip mine in Bastrop County for soft brown lignite. Later, Neighbors for Neighbors took Margaret's notes, found promises that ALCOA made to clean up its smokestacks and won a settlement from them, which was used to start Pines and Prairies Land Trust.

Margaret was also a founding member of Bastrop County Audubon Society. She held many board positions as well as president until she moved out of the county. She was a wonderful artist, giving Audubon, BCEN and later Pines and Prairies Land Trust permission to use her art work and field notes.

In 1998 she married David Bamberger and helped him with his work at Selah, a ranch near Johnson City, which educates young people and ranchers about green land management. With her winning smile, ready wit, and raucous laugh, she charmed all who met her. Margaret worked hard to keep Bastrop County a beautiful and healthy place for plants, animals and people. She leaves behind her daughter, Margie Crisp and her son-in-law, Bill Montgomery, to carry on her good works.



Gleaning in the Field

“On the Move” -- “There is something dreadfully wrong,” says duck hunter and Arkansas Wildlife Federation board member David Carruth, noting that many mallards stopped migrating along the Mississippi Flyway. . . . What’s happening to the birds?

“Two new Audubon reports provide some answers. Examining the distribution of 305 North American species since 1966, a national report, “Birds & Climate Change,” found that nearly 60% of species’ ranges have shifted north significantly, and that there is an ‘undeniable link’ to climate change. . . .

“The national report used data from the Christmas Bird Count, a nationwide tally conducted by volunteers, which allowed researchers to map shifts in ranges during the past 40 years. Over that same period, average January temperatures have risen 0.5 degrees in the continental United States. . . . As inland areas warm, these birds are moving away from the coasts. Birds migrate to escape cold winters, says Butcher. In mild winters, they stay put.

“Climate is just one factor that affects bird movement. Food supply is another. People are planting ornamental fruit trees farther north, now that the trees can survive warmer winters. Feeders also keep birds such as the Carolina wren from leaving higher latitudes. Grassland species like meadowlarks, which have suffered in recent decades due to nationwide declines in the pastures and hay fields they prefer, are not wintering as far north because there simply isn’t available habitat, says Butcher. The lesson is chilling: Some birds can adapt to warming; others can’t.”-- Justin Nobel, *Audubon Magazine*, Mar-Apr, 2009.

MEXICO CITY -- “Beneath the tourist gondolas in the remains of a great Aztec lake lives a creature that resembles a monster -- and a Muppet --with its slimy tail, plumage-like gills and mouth that curls into an odd smile.

“The **axolotl**, also known as the “water monster” and the ‘Mexican walking fish,’ was a key part of Aztec legend and diet. Against all odds, it survived until now amid Mexico City’s urban sprawl in the polluted canals of Lake Xochimilco, now a Venice-style destination for revelers poled along by Mexican gondoliers, or trajineros, in brightly painted party boats. But scientists are racing to save the **foot-long salamander** from extinction, a victim of the draining of its lake habitat and deteriorating water quality. In what may be the final blow, non-native fish introduced into the canals are eating its lunch -- and its babies.

“The long-standing International Union for Conservation of Nature includes the axolotl on its annual Red List of threatened species, while researchers say it could disappear in just five years. . . .

“If the axolotl disappears, it would not only be a great loss to biodiversity but to Mexican culture, and would reflect the degeneration of a once-great lake system,” says Luis Zambrano, a biologist at the Autonomous University of Mexico, or UNAM. It has been a steep fall from grace for the salamander with a feathery mane of gills and a visage reminiscent of a 1970s Smiley Face that inspired American poet Ogden



Nash to pen the witticism: ‘I’ve never met an axolotl, But Harvard has one in a bottle.’

Millions once lived in the giant lakes of Xochimilco and Chalco on which Mexico City was built. Using four stubby legs to drag themselves along lake bottoms or their thick tails to swim like mini-alligators, they hunted plentiful aquatic insects, small fish and crustaceans. *Gleanings*, continued on p. 4.

Calendar

April 11, Saturday: Trail Work Workshop, by Friends of the Parks and TP&W, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Meet at Refectory. For info call 321-3740.

April 11: Monthly Bird Survey at Hornsby Bend, teams at both 7 a.m. & at 4 p.m. Coffee/donuts at 6:30 a.m.

April 18, Saturday: Earth Day Festival, McKinney Roughs, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free, for all ages.

April 18 Monthly Field Trip at Hornsby Bend 7:30 - 11 a.m., with expert leader.

April 19, Sunday: BCAS Board Meeting, 4:00 p.m., Judy Walker’s, 157 Murchison Dr., Cedar Creek, 308 1162.

April 21, Tuesday: BCAS General Meeting, doors open at 7:00 p.m., 1st Natl Bank Bldg, Hasler @ 71W, Bastrop.

April 22, Wednesday, Earth Day Celebrations@ Lost Pines Nature Trail in Tahitian Village: by Environmental Stewardship, 3-7 p.m. Ribbon-cutting 5:30 p.m. And also at Pines & Prairies Land Trust Colorado River Sanctuary, adjacent.

April 25-26, Friday & Saturday: Port Aransas Field Trip

May 9, Saturday: Yegua Knobbs Bird Census & Field Day. See or call Priscilla Jarvis for info:(512) 281-2762.

B.C.A.S
 c/o Priscilla Jarvis
 783 Lower Elgin Road
 Elgin TX 78621



Gleaning, continued

“About 20 years ago, African tilapia were introduced into Xochimilco in a misguided effort to create fisheries. They joined with Asian carp to dominate the ecosystem and eat the axolotl's eggs and compete with it for food. The axolotl is also threatened by agrochemical runoff from nearby farms and treated wastewater from a Mexico City sewage plant. . . .”--David Koop, *The Houston Chronicle*, Nov. 08.

Milestones: Texas

“In November, The Nature Conservancy purchased 7,000 acres of Chihuahuan Desert to add to Big Bend Ranch, the largest state park in Texas. The Conservancy has been working for 20 years to acquire the largest remaining private property inside the rugged state park in far West Texas. The property is located in Fresno Canyon, a natural corridor rife with cottonwood trees, desert springs and rare species such as the peregrine falcon, the Texas horned lizard and the reticulated gecko. With 8.5 miles of contiguous river frontage on the Rio Grande, the property boasts abundant water sources that nurture the flora and fauna of this arid region year-round. The Conservancy will transfer the land to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, which will expand public access to the park and ensure protection for this critical piece of arid habitat in the heart of North America's most biologically diverse desert. --*Nature Conservancy Magazine*, Spring, 2009.



A Diving Duck, The Bufflehead, among the Coots: Lake Bastrop, February 21. -- Photo by Pam Hohman



Learners' Corner

We'll continue the DVD on Warblers. 7:00 p.m., just before the General Meeting, April 21st.