



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

BCAS Election:

On Tuesday, June 15, 2010, members will vote in the new Officers and Board. We are fortunate to have some members of our dedicated Board continuing for another two-year term. New members would be Susan Leslie and Judy Turner. We leave two positions unfilled: Conservation Chair and Hospitality Chair. Further nominations may occur at the meeting.

Proposed Bastrop County Audubon Society Officers & Board for FY 2010-2012:

- President: Sue Brubaker
 - Vice-President: Margie Crisp
 - Recording Secretary: Sharon Finlay
 - Treasurer: Alan Jaeger
 - Membership Secretary: Priscilla Jarvis
 - Editor: Mary Ellen Branam
 - Special Events: Steve & Denise Ligon
 - Field Trips: Stan Wellso
 - Education: Susan Leslie
 - Programs: Judy Ing
 - Texas Audubon Rep: Mary E. Branam
 - Texas Audubon Alt.: Alan Jaeger
 - Directors: David Mitchell, Judy Turner, Margie & Norman Sachnik, & Maggie Lambert
- Margie Crisp, Chair,
Nominations Committee**

Learner's Corner

has been discontinued. In its stead, the Board and the Program Chair plan to feature at least two programs in our year of seven programs as expanded "Learners' Corner"-type programs for birders. One reason for the change is that some members never got the privilege of attending Learners' Corner because of their chores occurring at the same time, such as welcoming visitors, name tags, setting up the projector, preparing refreshments and the door prizes, etc. We hope the change will be good for everyone.



May Program

Presenting Joan Russell's Photos and Teachings on Butterflies



One of our favorite speakers is returning in May to teach us about butterflies.

Joan Russell, our speaker, has been a member of Bastrop County Audubon Society for over twenty years. She has held several board positions, and served a term as president. If you read the *Bastrop Advertiser*, you may recognize her as the garden columnist who writes about birds and plants and trees and other elements of the natural world.

Russell is also on the board of Pines and Prairies Land Trust and has written a tree guide, describing the trees and bushes that are good for planting in our county. As you see, she is a busy woman even finding time to take children to McKinney Roughs and the Colorado River Refuge to introduce them to nature.



For the June BCAS Meeting: Next month is the last general meeting until September. This June meeting is for electing officers for the next two fiscal years (July through June 2012), for doing any other chapter business, for having a party to celebrate the year, and for viewing a short fun video, "Bill and Coo".

The film is a charming, old fashioned, true-blue love story set in a small town, featuring romance, adventure, terror, heroism and even circus performances. All parts are played by birds. It was filmed in a more innocent time, when parents took their pajama-wearing children to the drive-in theater for family entertainment. That's where I first saw it in the early fifties, and yes, I was wearing my pajamas.

To provide the party atmosphere in June, we would like members to bring picnic type finger food to share with the group as a pot luck. BCAS will provide the drinks, a cake, and popcorn for the movie. Come join us, it will be fun.

For both meetings, the doors open at 7 PM and the fun begins at 7:30. We meet in the training room at the First National Bank Building at Hasler and Hwy 71 in Bastrop. Refreshments will be provided for both meetings, which are free and open to the public.

Judy Ing, Program Chair

Raptor Art For Sale on eBay

BCAS Webmaster Alan Jaeger has placed two handsomely-framed prints for sale on eBay as of April 27. Both valuable prints are by the noted Fredericksburg artist Charles Beckendorf. One is of a Harris's Hawk (#6/100), the other of a Red-tailed Hawk (14/100). Visit eBay to view the art and place your bid.

ABRCP Event Held at Webberville County Park

On April 9 a conservation celebration organized by the Austin-Bastrop River Corridor Partnership was held at Webberville County Park.

BCAS members Priscilla and Jeremiah Jarvis, who is Pines & Prairies Land Trust president, were among the 85 persons from all around Travis and Bastrop Counties.

Bastrop County Judge Ronnie McDonald and Bastrop County Commissioner Clara Beckett represented Bastrop County Government, and Bastrop City Mayor Terry Orr and wife Pat Orr, along with City Councilwoman Julie Hart, were also there for the City of Bastrop.

Earth Day at McKinney Roughs

Events Chairs Steve and Denise Ligon manned the BCAS booth at McKinney Roughs Earth Day Festival on April 17. The day's events were focused on activities for children to help them learn about wildlife and ecology. The Lignons were able to give out all kinds of conservation information materials at the booth.

One major fun event was an obstacle course contest designed to indicate the obstacles encountered by birds during the ordeal of migration.

BCAS Welcomes Our New Members

We extend a big welcome to those joining BCAS between June, 2009 and May, 2010:

Sallie Blalock
 Elaine Blodgett
 Russell Cole
 Casey Ferrell
 Tony Hernandez & Kathleen Wolfington
 George and Lila Lewis
 Eve Ma
 Kathy O'Neil
 Bob & Tina Pereboom
 Ellen Prediger & Damir Spanjol
 Roxana Rose



A Trip to Feather Fest

in Galveston was an opportunity for Judy Walker, Pam Hohman, and me to see for ourselves the High Island sanctuaries after Hurricane Ike (9/9/08) and after the destruction to the same area by Hurricane Humberto (9/14/07). We visited Boy Scout Woods and Smith Woods, the Houston Audubon sanctuaries, on April 10.

The most apparent difference to me was at the famous rookery in Smith Woods. In previous years, I looked on at the rookery on its little island almost at eye level, with hundreds of wading birds of several kinds at their nests throughout the large trees there. While the rookery is still teeming, the big trees are gone, and the birds are nesting in bushes and young shrubby trees, or standing around in the skeletal remains of dead trees. It's still impressive though.

Pam thought the two sanctuaries were obviously well-maintained. As a first-time visitor, "I was unaware of what would have been there had the hurricanes not occurred."

Judy felt "blown away" by the Feather Fest experience. "I'm bitten by the birding bug now." She says she learned a lot at the workshop "Birding by Impression" by Kevin Karlson, which conveyed much more than she was exposed to previously in California. Judy even ordered a new pair of binoculars while at the fest. The most impressive bird for her was the Roseate Spoonbill she quietly observed at LaFitte's Cove on Sunday on West Galveston Island.

Field trips, however, are frequently unpredictable adventures. A light and steady rain began while at Smith Woods, so our group had to give it up and return to Galveston. To make up for the unfinished tour and because the weather had begun to clear, the bus made a last stop at Corps Woods just past the Ferry Landing. The brochure says the heavily wooded and swampy site is "a must" during spring migration. There, in fact, I got a life bird, a Palm Warbler.

Here are some late field notes from High Island:

Swainson's Warbler, Boy Scout Woods, 4/26.
 Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Smith Oak, 4/26.
 Golden-winged Warbler, B.S. Woods, 4/27.
 Canada Warbler, both woods, 4/27.
 Lazuli Bunting, Smith Oaks, 4/27.
 29 warbler species noted by 4/26.
 Bullock's Oriole, Smith Oaks, 4/25
 Black-throated Blue Warbler, 4/27.
 Note: "Hundreds of Dickcissles moving on Bolivar Peninsula," 4/24.
 Yellow-headed Blackbirds with a Bronzed Cowbird, 4/24.
 Blackburnian Warbler, B. S. Woods, 4/24.
 White-tailed Hawk near Crystal Beach, 4/23.

Mary Ellen Branan, Editor



Gleaning in the Field

Letter from the President

SOME SPRING MIGRATION FINDINGS: TINY SONGBIRDS ARE FAST MOVERS

Tiny songbirds such as martins and thrushes can travel as far as 311 miles a day in their annual migrations between the Americas, three times as far as researchers had previously believed, biologists found in the first study to track the birds to their wintering grounds and back. **The birds fly two to six times as fast heading north in the spring as they do heading south in the fall**, perhaps in a competition to reach the best breeding sites and attract the fittest mates, ornithologist Bridget Stutchbury of York University in Toronto reports in the journal *Science*. . . . One industrious female martin flew the 4,660 miles from the Amazon basin to Pennsylvania in 13 days with four of them spent on stopovers. --*LA Times*, 2/13/10.

In the past 20 years, scientists have gained a deeper understanding of intelligence in birds, primates.

Monkeys perform mental math, pigeons can select the picture that doesn't belong. Wasserman, a professor of experimental psychology, said that, like people, pigeons and baboons were able to tell which pictures showed similar items, like triangles or dots, and which showed different items.

"This is the definition of a concept," she said, "and the animals passed it with flying colors." The term "birdbrain," is obsolete, she said, and should be replaced by "brainy birds."

Speaking of crow intelligence, Alex Kacelnik, a professor of behavioral ecology at the University of Oxford in England, noted the "master tool user of the avian world": the New Caledonian Crow.

These birds have been shown to not just use tools, but to make their own by twisting and bending pieces of wire to fish food from places they couldn't reach otherwise. --By Randolph E. Schmid, *Assoc. Press*.

A Passion for Spring

Spring has been glorious this year. It's when nature offers us an overwhelming variety of choices: birding on a grand scale during spring migration, a walk in the woods, attending bird festivals, inhaling the sights and fragrances of wild flowers, observing the emerging insect population. The natural world welcomes us as in no other season of the year. If you have not engaged in any Spring activities, I urge you to get out there before the heat becomes too onerous. In case you have not figured it out, I love the Spring time.

I am running for President of the BCAS in the June elections. As you may know, my candidacy is not based on expert birding skills. In fact, I am in awe when in the company of such persons. I am not an endless crusader for the perfect society either. But what I do possess is a passion for facilitating the coming together of people of like minds who want to share their knowledge and experience of the birding world. This includes vigilant attention to bird habitat and commitment to enlist support when situations arise that threaten the environment.

BCAS has had a marvelous year. We want to keep growing, continue birding, and encourage people to come check us out. Our programs are interesting; our refreshments are noteworthy. **Sue Brubaker**

U.S. Supreme Court Denies Request to Hear Neches River Refuge Case

The U.S. Supreme Court announced that the Court will not hear the lawsuit brought by the City of Dallas and Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) against the Neches River National Wildlife Refuge. Dallas and TWDB had sought to block the refuge to keep the site available for a potential future reservoir. "We heartily endorse the Court's decision--the Neches River Refuge will be great for East Texas!" said Dr. Michael Banks, Co-Chair of Friends of the Neches River. "It'll provide recreation, drawn tourists, protect vital habitat for wildlife and waterfowl, and protect the landowners along the river from condemnation."

"There is enough water in existing reservoirs for Dallas to have all the water it needs for future growth," added Janice Bezanson, Executive Director of Texas Conservation Alliance. "Dallas could tap Lake Texoma, Wright Patman Reservoir, or Toledo Bend Reservoir for its future supplies." Dallas' plans were to draw only about 3% of the City's future demand from the proposed Fastrill Reservoir.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified the site of the Neches River National Wildlife Refuge decades ago as a priority site for conserving habitat for wildlife, songbirds, and migratory waterfowl. Plans are in place for the Neches River Refuge to acquire more than 6,000 acres once the case brought by Dallas and TWDB is finalized. In the long term, up to 25,000 acres may be added to the refuge.

"This decision is a win for East Texas and in the long run also a win for Dallas," concluded Banks. "The Refuge will benefit everyone--local residents and folks from Dallas and other urban areas in need of a place to get outdoors."

KTRE.com, Dallas, February, 2010

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



May Calendar

May 7, Friday, Bird Census by BCAS for Carrie Knox's Ranch near Red Rock. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Home Depot parking lot, Hwy 71 @ FM 304 in Bastrop. All levels welcome. A light breakfast will be provided. Priscilla Jarvis, 281-2762, for any questions.

May 15, Saturday, BCAS Field Trip, local county hotspots. Meet at Bank parking lot at 7:30 a.m. for a morning of birding with Stan Wellso.

May 16, Sunday, BCAS Board Meeting, 4 p.m., 783 Lower Elgin Rd, with pot-luck supper at 6:00. 281-2762.

May 18, Tuesday, General Meeting & Program. Doors open 7:00 p.m. 1st Natl Bank Bldg., 71W @ Hasler in Bastrop.

May Refreshments by:

Judy Ing & Judy Turner

High Island Rookery

