



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

June 2004



*“If even a fraction of America’s 38 million gardeners turned a quarter of their landscape into a wild garden (only one tenth of an acre each) there would be a measurable impact...a tremendously positive gain for America’s, and the world’s, ecology.” Ken Druse, The Natural Habitat Garden*

## **BCAS 2004 Annual Meeting Tuesday June 15, 2004 7:00 P.M.**

The upcoming meeting is very important: we will be electing our new President and Board of Directors. We will also be voting to replace our Constitution and Bylaws. To accommodate the elections, we will forego Learners’ Corner and start the meeting at 7 P.M.

The revised Bylaws and Constitution are available for you to review at our Web site:

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

Simply go to the site, and select “Chapter Documents” in the Miscellaneous section of the Table of Contents. Then select “Constitution” and “Bylaws” to review the respective documents.

If you do not have access to the Internet, please contact Alan Jaeger at 512-308-1991 and we will mail copies of the documents to you for review.

Bastrop County Audubon Society meetings are held the third Tuesday of the month (except July, August & December) in the Long Community Room of the First National Bank of Bastrop, 1019 Main Street, Bastrop. Everyone is invited to stay for refreshments after the program.

## **Backyard Wildlife Habitat Marya Fowler, National Wildlife Federation 7:30 P.M. (after the Annual Meeting)**

Imagine your yard teeming with beautiful birds, colorful butterflies, native wildflowers and many species of local wildlife! Marya Fowler, Manager of Education Programs for the Gulf States Natural Resource Center of the National Wildlife Federation will help you learn the basics of creating such a habitat. Plan to attend the Bastrop County Audubon Society meeting and learn how to have your habitat certified by the National Wildlife Federation and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Join the Board of Directors and our speaker for dinner before the meeting. Plan on meeting at Jalisco’s Mexican Restaurant on Hwy 71 at 6 P.M.

# BCAS CALENDAR



## JUNE 2004

**Sunday, June 13** – Board Meeting: home of Barbara & Jerry Harp, Cedar Creek, 581-0835

**Tuesday, June 15** – Chapter Meeting: Backyard Wildlife Habitat, Marya Fowler, National Wildlife Federation; Officers and Board of Directors ELECTION!

## JULY & AUGUST 2004

**No Chapter Meetings**

## SEPTEMBER 2004

**Sunday, September 19** – Board Meeting

**Tuesday, September 21** – Chapter Meeting

Visit our Web site for updates and additional information on field trips, BCAS events, and other events of interest.

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

## NOMINEES

### Bastrop County Audubon Society Board of Directors

#### Officers

President	Priscilla Jarvis
Vice-President	Sharon Finlay
Secretary	Barbara Harp
Treasurer	Alan Jaeger
Membership	Judy Ing

#### Directors

Field Trips	Mary Ellen Branan
Programs	Dorothy Wells & Gary Grief
Conservation	George Urban & Bill Montgomery
Special Events	Linda Presto
Education	Mary Anne & Jim Casey
Hospitality	Sue Brubaker
Texas Audubon Delegates	Joan Russell, Alan Jaeger, Alternate
Directors at Large	Maggie Lambert, Barbara Carson, Loretta Hennard

## Message from the President



Greetings members and friends!

This June will be my last month as president of BCAS. I would like to take this opportunity to say that it has been a real honor being your president. Serving on the Board of Directors has been a rewarding experience for me, and our board has been one of the best I've ever had the pleasure of working with. I think we accomplished a lot, including a grant from Audubon Texas for a new AV projector. And our newsletter won an award in the National Audubon Society chapter newsletter contest – congratulations to our editor Margie Crisp! We had some excellent speakers thanks to our programs directors, Dorothy and Gary, and thanks to Loretta's careful planning, we had some very exciting field trips. Thanks to all the board members for your hard work!

At our next meeting, we will hold elections for the Board of Directors for the coming year. The nominating committee has picked a list of candidates (included in the newsletter), but there are still some positions open on committees and as board members at large. We are a volunteer organization and rely on the goodwill and good nature of our members to make our group run. With that in mind, I hope you will consider serving on the board. The potluck dinners after the meeting are a well-kept secret and a substantial reward! If you are interested, please contact me at 281-5667 or [montgomery6@earthlink.net](mailto:montgomery6@earthlink.net).

I hope to see you at the next meeting.

Bill Montgomery, President BCAS

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 • *Bird Calls* is published by the Bastrop County Audubon Society. It is edited and produced by Margie Crisp, Maggie Lambert & Priscilla Jarvis. Contributors for this issue include Loretta Hennard, Bill Montgomery, & Dorothy Wells.  
 • Deadline for next issue: **August 15th**  
 • PO Box 656, Elgin, TX 78621  
 • Margie (512) 281-5667 or Maggie (512) 321- 2569  
 • E-mail: [Tiliqua2@earthlink.net](mailto:Tiliqua2@earthlink.net)  
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# BCAS Wins 2004 Audubon Chapter Newsletter Contest!!

Bastrop County Audubon Society's newsletter, *Bird Calls*, won third place in the Very Small Chapters (100-370 members) category of the 2004 Audubon Chapter Newsletter Contest. Thirty-five chapters submitted entries with 17 winners in five chapter size categories (from Very Large Chapters down to our category of Very Small Chapters). BCAS is the only chapter in Texas to win in this year's contest.

## Selected comments from the judges:

"This is one of the best newsletters I have seen in an Audubon contest."

"This is the smallest chapter in the bunch, but their newsletter is quite impressive – I hope they have a wider audience than just 135 . . ."

"The variety and quality of the illustrations really makes this newsletter stand out. They give it a local flair and personal feel that a lot of the larger newsletters don't have."

"The Learners' Corner is not only a great idea, it gives new members something to look forward to as just theirs."

"The articles tell the story of interesting people and an involved chapter that can't wait to welcome you."

"Good stories of field trips, identifying how-tos, and upcoming speakers. Good contributed articles."

"Good evidence of active although small chapter. Bravo for publishing six editions per year."

"Very impressive, nice mix of reading and information dissemination. Love the art! I would devote more paper to that person who watches cuckoos from the lawn hammock." (*Mary Ellen Branan wrote about cuckoos in the September 2003 issue. – Ed.*)

As Editor I am very pleased to have our hard work recognized on a national level. Thanks to everyone who submits articles, poems, ideas and information to the newsletter. Special thanks to Priscilla Jarvis, Alan Jaeger and Dorothy Wells for making sure I get names right and the commas in the right places. I believe our newsletter demonstrates what a dedicated, fun and all around terrific group of folks make up BCAS.

*Margie Crisp, Editor*

## FIELD TRIPS For the Birds

### Pedernales Falls State Park Field Trip

Very, very early Saturday morning, May 22, four dedicated birders (Margie Crisp, Sharon Finlay, Dorothy Wells, and I) found our way to Pedernales Falls State Park for an experience we'll never forget.

We saw the elusive and endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler! In fact, we saw an entire family. And they were not only flitting about the trees but also gathering worms for their hungry babies—yes, we saw their open mouths



*Golden-cheeked Warbler*

in their penthouse nest. We held our collective breaths as one parent landed on the path in front of us—not once, but twice! It was thrilling!

We left those enchanted woods to drive to the Friends of Pedernales Falls Park bird blind. Constructed and maintained as a joint project between the Park and the volunteer group, we immediately decided that we need a blind just like it in Bastrop State Park. Even though we didn't see Mr. Painted Bunting, we became acquainted with Mrs. Bunting, who is quite handsome in her own right. After lingering in that comfortable spot with its view of numerous other species, including a flock of House Finches, and plump squirrels, we moved on to the Falls where I did—fall, that is. Without the immediate aid of Dorothy, Sharon, and Margie, I might still be there—bleeding and bruised. But they proved to be as prepared as Girl Scouts, and I'm mending rapidly.

My souvenir from Pedernales Falls? Black, blue, and purple cheek. Any day now I expect these colors to fade and to be replaced by green and (although not golden, but close) yellow.

Remember Karl Malden's advice about the American Express card? Forget that! You need your medical insurance card. Don't leave home without it!

*Loretta Hennard, Field Trip Chair*

# Listening...

M. Crisp



Northern Waterthrush, M. Crisp.

Other than finding abandoned nests when the leaves have fallen, I've never seen bird nests beyond the Carolina Wren and Northern Cardinal nests in our potted hanging plants. On a

camping and flyfishing trip to the Nueces River I learned that one doesn't necessarily look for nests, one listens.

In late May, we camped under the spreading limbs of a Chinquapin Oak on the banks of Hackberry Creek. The creek gurgled and splashed peacefully next to us on its way to join the Nueces and we could hear the calls and notes of the birds foraging in the canyon. I caught glimpses of Blue-grey Gnatcatchers flitting through the branches above me, gleaning insects. A sudden crescendo of shrill cries erupted as a Gnatcatcher approached a fork in a slender limb in the canopy. By listening and waiting, I was, after a time, able to distinguish the delicate cup of woven grasses and lichens that housed a family of nestling Gnatcatchers. The parents called back and forth, each ferrying beakfuls of caterpillars and insects to their hungry hoard.

In the next tree a buzzing—like a large hummingbird hovering and feeding—sounded again and again. It took me almost 30 minutes of listening and peering through leaves to locate a nest of Chipping Sparrows in a low branch hanging over the stream. Whenever one of the parents approached, the nestlings made the peculiar buzzing sound.

From a nearby clearing, the raucous cries of Golden-fronted Woodpeckers rang out. A few minutes of quiet observation scanning the dead trees and I saw an adult female dive headfirst through the deceptively small entrance into the nest cavity. A few seconds later she popped out and flew off to collect more grasshoppers, moths and other food for their family as the male dove in with his batch of tasty morsels.

I ignored the fishing and spent the days wandering around with my binoculars. After spotting the Gnatcatchers' and the Chipping Sparrows' nests, I paid

more attention to the bird sounds in the trees around me. (Please note that I have a terrible time recognizing bird songs, I just don't have the ear for patterns of notes or sounds.) I stared into a shrub hoping to discover the source of a strange keening sound. While I scanned the dense foliage, a Northern Water Thrush delicately picked its way past me to a mud puddle and hunted for insects. The keening was an unidentified fledgling waiting for a meal. A rather hysterical and shrill series of calls helped me to spot a fledgling Yellow-throated Warbler demanding food from a rather harried parent.

When a pair of Carolina Wrens erupted out of the underbrush near my feet, I froze and waited. They soon returned to their business of collecting insects, stopping occasionally to berate me with threats muffled by beakfuls of insects. They led me to a nest packed with feathered babies in an unused barbecue grill.

A pair of Green Kingfishers worked catching and carrying fish to a nest somewhere upstream. Juvenile Orioles (Northern or Hooded) scrambled through trees after adult females, trembling their wings and pleading for food.

In two days I saw four new species (Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Warbler, Yellow-throated Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat) plus I had the thrill of getting to say, "Oh it's just another Vermilion Flycatcher." It was one of the best birdwatching experiences I've had. Getting the chance to observe this crucial part of the lifecycle of multiple species was, in a word, fabulous. Especially considering I had planned on fishing the entire trip and almost forgot to bring binoculars or field guides!

For more news about birds' nests, read Loretta's report on the Pedernales Falls Field trip.



Chipping Sparrow & nest, M. Crisp after D. Sibley.



# BIRD BOOKS FOR LIBRARIES

Bastrop County Audubon Society is making gifts to Bastrop Public Library, Smithville Public Library and Elgin Public Library to purchase books. The librarians will make the final decisions about which books are best for their library

and arrange for the purchase of the individual volumes. We will supply the librarians with a list of suggested titles. Here is the list of favorite titles we gathered from members at the last meeting:

## FIELD GUIDES:

*A Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern & Central North America* (Peterson Field Guide Series), 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Roger Tory Peterson

*The Sibley Guide to Birds*, David Allen Sibley

*National Geographic Field Guide To The Birds Of North America*, 4th Edition

*Smithsonian Handbook: Birds of Texas*, Fred J. Alsop III

*A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors*, Wheeler & Clark

*A Field Guide to the Reptiles & Amphibians of Eastern & Central North America* (Peterson Field Guide Series), Roger Conant

*Texas Snakes*, Werler and Dixon

*Wildflowers of Texas*, Geyata Ajilvsgi

*A Field Guide to Texas Wildflowers*, Campbell & Lynn Loughmiller

## REFERENCE GUIDES & BOOKS OF INTEREST:

*The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior*, David Allen Sibley

*Birder's Handbook : A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds*, Paul Ehrlich

*The Birds of Texas*, John L. Tveten

*Butterflies of Houston & Southeast Texas*, John & Gloria Tveten

*Lives of North American Birds*, Kenn Kaufman

*Biography of a Texas Birder*, Connie Hagar

## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

*Minn of the Mississippi*, Holling C. Holling

*Stellaluna*, (English or Spanish language edition), Janell Cannon

*Verde*, (English or Spanish language edition), Janell Cannon

Any of the *Peterson First Field Guide* series

*The Giving Tree*, Shel Silverstein

If you have any ideas or suggestions for books, please call or e-mail Margie Crisp (512-281-5667 or [tiliqua2@earthlink.net](mailto:tiliqua2@earthlink.net)).



**BECOME A MEMBER OF BASTROP COUNTY AUDUBON** and all of your dues will be used to support local conservation and education. If you wish, you may join BCAS through our Web site

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

Alternately, you may join National Audubon; simply follow the NAS membership instructions on our Web site. As a member of National Audubon, you enjoy BCAS chapter membership, receive the *Audubon* magazine, and a portion of your dues will be returned to our chapter.

For more information, please contact Priscilla Jarvis at 512-281-2762.

## BCAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

Includes membership in BCAS, a subscription to the newsletter, *Bird Calls*, and invitations to all BCAS programs, events, and field trips.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to :

**Bastrop County Audubon Society**

Send to: Alan Jaeger, Treasurer  
117 Kaelepulu Dr  
Bastrop 78602

# THE LEARNERS' CORNER

Because we are holding our Annual Meeting this month, Learners' Corner will not meet in June.

Please join us in September for another one of our useful segments on birds and birdwatching!



# I have a new favorite bird.



*Yellow-breasted Chat, M. Crisp*

It lurks in shrubbery singing madly. It whistles. It squeaks. It sings at night. With a vivid yellow breast this large wood-warbler seems to act more like a mockingbird than a warbler.



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