



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

October 2005

The Miller Ranch Expeditions: Portraits of Chihuahuan Desert Biodiversity

Dr. Travis LaDuc
Texas Memorial Museum

Tuesday, October 18
7:30 P.M.

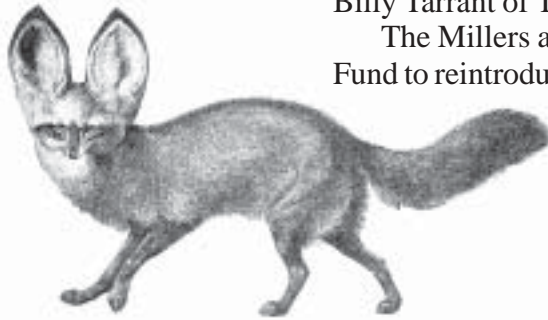
Join Bastrop County Audubon Society for a presentation about the unique animals and plants of the C.E. Miller Ranch in far West Texas.

Over the last two years, Dr. Travis LaDuc, Assistant Curator of Herpetology at the Texas Memorial Museum, has conducted multiple expeditions to the 33,000 acre Miller Ranch to survey the plants and animals of this extraordinary West Texas jewel. His work continues the survey and collection started by UT professor Dr. Frank Blair in 1948.

The C.E. Miller Ranch, established in 1925, encompasses 33,000-plus acres of Chihuahuan Desert grassland and oak-juniper-piñon woodland in Jeff Davis and Presidio counties, 160 miles southeast of El Paso. Five generations of Millers have ranched this arid land between Valentine and the Sierra Vieja Mountains.

In June 2003, the TPWD named Clay and Jody Miller as Texas' Lone Star Land Stewards for 2003 for their continuing effort to maintain a successful cattle operation while enhancing the landscape for wildlife and preserving its cultural resources.

“What you see with the Millers is a genuine effort



at sustainability of natural resources. You have to be a true steward of the land to survive here. And the Millers are some of the best stewards I've ever seen,” Billy Tarrant of TPWD says.

The Millers are involved in efforts by the Peregrine Fund to reintroduce the endangered northern Aplomado falcon to the Big Bend region. For several years they have sponsored falcon releases on their property, which has been designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as a Safe Harbor for the birds.

In addition to the diverse flora and fauna, a historic U.S. Calvary fort built in 1918 during the Mexican Revolution is preserved on the property.

Dr. LaDuc's presentation will cover the historical side of the area as well as the unique flora and fauna.

Dr. Travis LaDuc, a native of Tucson, Arizona, has been interested in reptiles since a young age, with a particular affinity for snakes. He received degrees from the University of Arizona (B.S.) and The University of Texas at El Paso (M.S.), and in 2003 he completed his Ph.D. at The University of Texas at Austin. Currently he is the assistant curator of herpetology at Texas Memorial Museum. His research interests are focused upon understanding the distribution and ecology of Texas reptiles and amphibians. Travis is married, and he and his wife share their north Austin home with two yellow labrador retrievers and a menagerie of nonvenomous snakes, lizards, turtles, and salamanders.



Everyone is invited to join BCAS board members and Dr. LaDuc for dinner before the meeting. We will meet at 6 PM at El Nuevo Mexico restaurant on Old Austin Highway, behind the HEB.

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, 1020 Main Street, Bastrop. Everyone is invited to stay for refreshments after the program.

President's Message

by Priscilla Jarvis
BCAS President



And now for something completely different. Well, sort of.

Bastrop County Audubon Society will be participating in the Hogeye Festival in Elgin on Saturday, Oct.

22. But this time, our focus will be on teaching children about birds, what they eat, where they live, and how to identify common species.

You are invited, yea encouraged, to participate in the BCAS children's activity table which will be lots of fun! We will help children make pine cone bird feeders. On each pine cone will be tied a colorful string or yarn. Children will have a grand time rolling the pine cones in peanut butter and seeds. So, bring your pine cones to the next board or regular meeting.

We will also have the Audubon Texas bi-lingual "A Day at the Beach" or "Un Dia en la Playa" coloring books and a Audubon Adventures newspaper for the children. On display will be pictures of common birds and printed information about birds will be available. If you have nifty ideas for additional activities, let us know.

As usual, we will have bird feeders and birdhouses, t-shirts and 2006 song bird calendars for sale. Especially, we hope to educate children and their parents. And attract new members to BCAS.

Volunteer to help with this special event at the October meeting or contact Sue Brubaker at 303-0440.

The Hogeye Festival is in Elgin on Saturday, Oct. 22 from 10 am - 6 pm. Booth setup is from 6:30 - 9:30 am on Oct. 22 (not the night before). This will be fun and rewarding. Please volunteer to help out.

BCAS CALENDAR OF EVENTS



OCTOBER 2005

October 16 – Board Meeting at the Bastrop home of Alan & Vera Jaeger, 4 PM with potluck dinner following. 308-1991

October 18 – Chapter Meeting: The Miller Ranch Expeditions: Portraits of Chihuahuan Desert Biodiversity, Dr. Travis LaDuc, Texas Memorial Museum, University of Texas at Austin.

October 22– BCAS children's booth at the Elgin Hogeye Festival. Please volunteer!

NOVEMBER 2005

November 13 – Board Meeting at the Bastrop home of Sharon Finlay, 303-3369.

November 15 – Chapter Meeting: Distribution of Dragonflies and Damselflies (Odonata) in Texas with Emphasis on the Bastrop Area. John C. Abbott, Section of Integrative Biology, University of Texas at Austin.

DECEMBER 2005

There will not be a Chapter Meeting in December. Instead look forward to the annual BCAS SOLSTICE PARTY. Time & location TBA.

JANUARY 2006

January 2 – **Bastrop County Christmas Bird Count.** Meet at 7AM at the Texas Grill on Hwy 71 in Bastrop.

January 15 – Board Meeting TBA

January 17 – Chapter Meeting: Cavity Nesters, Mark Klym, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

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

www.bastropcountyaudubon.org

Bird Calls is published by the Bastrop County Audubon Society. Submit information to: Margie Crisp, PO Box 656, Elgin, TX 78621, E-mail: Tiliqua2@earthlink.net Margie (512) 281-5667 or Maggie (512) 321- 2569



The Eurasian Collared Dove

Mary Ellen Braman

Some readers may remember that two years ago I wrote about the Yellow-billed Cuckoo as my summer discovery. The bird of my casual summer learning for 2005 is the Eurasian Collared Dove.

I'm alert to the Eurasian Collared Dove because of their size and coloring, their habit of traveling in twosomes, and their strange sounds.

As before with the cuckoo, my observations occur easily from my backyard from the same former vantage point of my hammock. Due to an unduly hot summer, however, hammock-reclining has been further restricted than usual, so observations might come from indoors through the French doors, when I'd see a large, heavy-breasted pair whizzing by, or, if I'm edging the front yard, floating to the neighbor's roof and strolling about.

Over morning coffee on the back porch, I might hear their loud and windy call, like that of pneumatic brakes, and count them securely among the day's bird-count sight unseen. Another song is koo-KOO-koo. They may sing as they fly or as they walk about. They also flap down into my grass in the afternoons to feed below the seed-feeder, or sit for a while along the fence. Occasionally there are three together.

They appear relatively chunky and heavy-keeled. They are light gray in color with white in the tail, otherwise unmarked but for the narrow broken black necklace or collar along the sides and back of the neck. Their wing-spread is 22 inches.

I have a Texas Parks and Wildlife issue of "Flyway," one of their newsletters, with the article titled "Recent

Spread of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in Texas" (Spring, 2003, V. 10). Flocks of more than 200 had been counted on the coastal prairies around grain elevators, according to the article by Brush Freeman (Elgin) and Jim Peterson (Dallas), and in fewer than the eight years since first noted, the bird had colonized all but three of Texas's 254 counties. They surpassed the state colonizing speed records of the Cattle Egret, White-winged Dove, and Great-tailed Grackle.

The authors did not mention any consequences of their colonization to the other doves.

The consequence for birders is to be dissatisfied with, "Oh, there's a dove.," since now there are five. The others are the Mourning Dove (slimmer than the Eurasian, rosy gray, arrow-pointed tail), the White-winged Dove (a clearly visible white border all along the folded wing, white rim on the wedge-shaped tail), the Inca Dove (smallish, marked with scaly design, flashing orange under the wings, longish rectangle tail), and the Common Ground Dove (small, dull gray in color, but likewise possessing rufus under the wings, tending to be on the ground, and having a stubby neck and tail).

A comparison of weights is interesting, since I have described the Eurasian as imposing. Mourning dove: 4.2 oz.; White-winged: 5 oz.; Inca: 1.6 oz.; Common Ground: 1.1 oz., and Eurasian: 7 oz.

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 _____

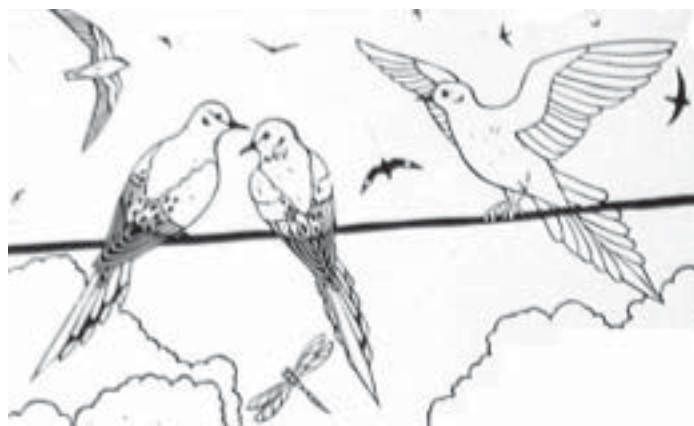
City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____

Please make checks payable to :

Bastrop County Audubon Society

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



Mourning Doves, M. Crisp (c) 2005

THE LEARNERS' CORNER

Please join us Tuesday, October 18th at 7:00—before the regular meeting. Mary Ellen Branan will define a revolutionary new approach to identification of shore birds, which she learned about at a workshop taught by famed birder Kevin Karlson.



BCAS CLASSIFIEDS

HELP WANTED

Imaginative self-starter with unlimited enthusiasm for bird watching, snacking and touring the countryside with fabulous, interesting friends needed to design & implement field trips for BCAS. Destinations up to individual. Perks include travel and great potluck dinners with the Board. Please apply forthwith to President Priscilla Jarvis, 281-2762.

THE CALENDARS ARE HERE!

The 2006 Audubon Songbirds Calendars have arrived and will be available for purchase at the October meeting. Each gorgeous wall calendar sells for \$14 (including Texas sales tax) and supports local BCAS community projects. A great gift!



M. Crisp (c) 2006



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Return Service Requested