



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

December 2002

## Winter Solstice Party

December 15<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 PM at the home  
of Gary Grief & Dorothy Wells 303-2372

The Winter Solstice Party will be at the home of Gary Grief & Dorothy Wells on Sunday, December 15 starting at 5 p.m. Our hosts will provide a ham and a brisket, as well as coffee and tea for drinks. Guests should bring a pot luck dish and a gift from nature for each person who would like to participate in the gift exchange. Please bring folding chairs if you have them.

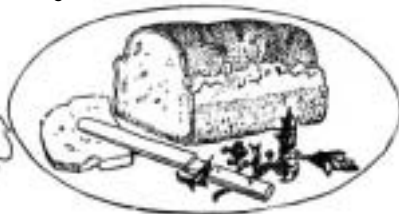
### ***Directions:***

A map is reproduced in Bird Calls (and is also available on the web site). The address is 201 Pine Valley Drive. From the intersection of Hwy 21 and Hwy 95, it is approximately 7 miles to the left turn onto Pine Valley Drive. Pine Valley Drive is the first left after Cardinal Lane. Coming from the 290 and Hwy 21 intersection, it is approximately 4 1/2 miles to the right turn onto Pine Valley Drive. Once on Pine Valley Drive, it is approximately 1/2 mile to the turn into our gate. The road from the gate to our house is narrow, rough, and winding. **Please park on the road.** Please leave the limited parking by the house for those who may need it.

### ***About the gift exchange:***

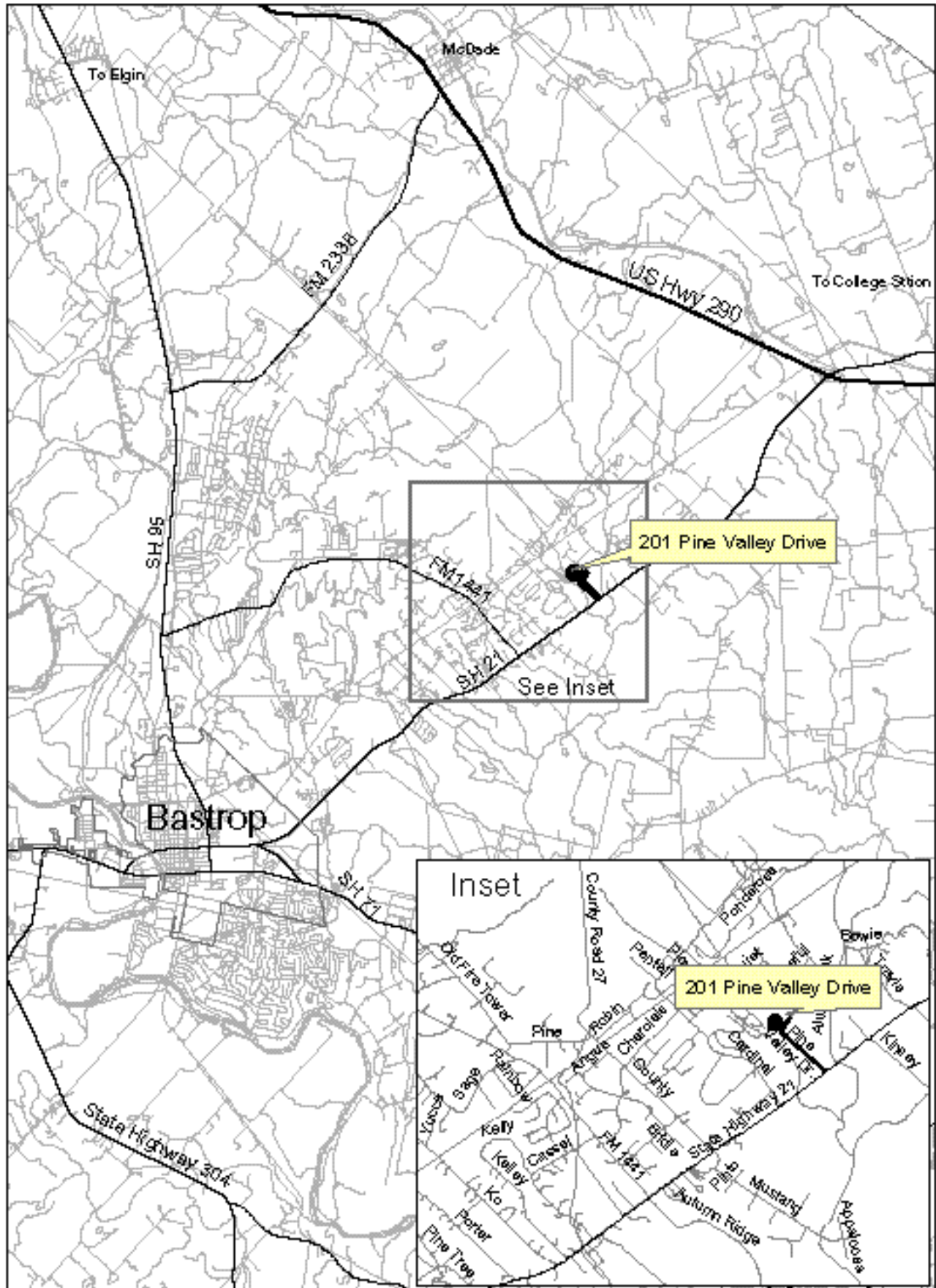
For all who want to participate, there will be a gift exchange following the meal. The gifts should be from nature; for example, a bouquet of dried grasses, a pine cone decoration or a rock, skull or object with an interesting story. No money should be spent on the gift. Please wrap or disguise your gift. Favorite wrappings for gifts include recycled wrapping paper, newspaper comics, brown paper bags and boxes. The youngest person in attendance will pick the first gift, then the person who brought the gift will have the opportunity to explain what the gift is, where it was found or its story. Then the person whose gift was selected will choose a gift, and the process will continue until all the gifts are gone.

Please join us!



# Winter Solstice Party

December 15th at 5:00 PM at the home of Gary Grief & Dorothy Wells 303-2372



# BCAS CALENDAR OF EVENTS



## JANUARY 2003

January 19– Board Meeting, Jim & Mary Anne Casey's in Smithville (237-2731)

January 21– Chapter Meeting Lee Stone, Native Grasses & Texas Prairies

Saturday, January 25 – FIELD TRIP McKinney Falls State Park. Contact Loretta Hennard (321-3818) for more information.

### 2003 PROGRAMS TO COME

BCAS Science Committee member David Musgrave will present his much-anticipated program on the dynamics of bird flight from an engineer's point of view and the March program will be about Aquatic Fauna.

## [www.BastropCountyAudubon.org](http://www.BastropCountyAudubon.org)

Visit our website for information on field trips, birding events, calendar updates and programs. Don't forget you can also visit the Members' Gallery, buy BCAS t-shirts, read about the history of the Society and get contact information for board members, committee chairs and event coordinators plus find links to other Audubon chapters.

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 • *Bird Calls* is published 6 or more times a year by  
 • Bastrop County Audubon Society. It is edited and  
 • produced by Margie Crisp, Maggie Lambert &  
 • Priscilla Jarvis. Contributors for this issue include  
 • Dorothy Wells, Gary Grief, Marcia Hermann, Mary  
 • Beth Gradziel, Alan Jaeger, & Loretta Hennard.  
 • Deadline for next issue: Wednesday January 29  
 • PO Box 656, Elgin, TX 78621  
 • Margie (512) 281-5667 or Maggie (512) 321- 2569  
 • e-mail: Tiliqua2@earthlink.net  
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## January Program: NATIVE GRASSES & TEXAS PRAIRIES

Lee Stone

Tuesday January 21, 2003 7:30PM

Our very own **Lee Stone** (BCAS Science Committee) will repeat her informative program on Native Prairies--but this time with her fabulous slides!

Lee will explain what defines a prairie, where they are found and give us background on what has happened to the prairies. In addition to showing us the animals, birds, grasses, flowers and other plants found in prairies, she will cover restoration and management from developing a small Prairie Garden to large multi-acres projects.



### 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 website <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.

# Message from the President



## **BCAS Annual Appeal Continues**

*Bastrop County Audubon Society's* first Annual Appeal is progressing well. Donations are already being received, but more contributions will be appreciated. If you did not receive a letter (or if you "lost" the one you did receive), and would like to contribute, visit our website and follow the links to open a printable donation form.

## **Annual Appeal Contributors**

Our heartfelt thanks go out to the following generous folks and businesses who responded to our President's appeal letter with contributions. Their gifts will go a long way to helping us fulfill our mission in the upcoming year.

**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 (Bastrop/Elgin/  
Smithville)**  
**Bob & Lee Graham**  
**Gary Rassner, D.D.S.**

Bill Montgomery, President BCAS

# FIELD TRIPS

## For the Birds

At our regular meeting in January, you may sign up for our trip to McKinney Falls State Park, south of Austin, on Saturday, January 25, 2003, weather permitting.

Even though the soil and vegetation are a combination of the Edwards Plateau and the Blackland Prairie, according to *Birders' Guide to Texas*, the birds are more representative of eastern Texas. As we explore the 4-1/2-mile trail and the woods along the creek, we can expect to see quite a variety of nesting birds, including, but not limited to, Canyon and Carolina wrens, Great Crested Flycatchers, and Chuckwill's-widows. At this time of year, we should spy winter visitors, such as Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets and several species of sparrows. Those who attended the Learner's Corner session on sparrows should be well prepared to identify Harris', Chipping, Lincoln's, and Vesper sparrows.

I'm hoping that the Green-tailed Towhee will make one of its rare appearances because I'm familiar with only the Rufous-sided Towhee.

As you calendar this field trip, remember to plan to bring insect repellent, water, and field guides. We'll meet in the HEB parking lot behind Jalisco's at 8 a.m. so that we can carpool.

Looking forward to exciting adventures—  
***Loretta Hennard, Field Trip Chair***

## **Bird Houses for the Parks**

Who were those club-less people with binoculars walking around the golf course at Bastrop State Park Saturday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>? Why, they were Bastrop Audubon Society members who were cleaning bird houses to ready them for next spring's breeding season.

The Bird Houses for the Parks project, originated by birdhouse-builder Richard Hulsey in 2000, seems to be a success. At least 8 nests from last spring's breeding season (several of which were believed to be from Bluebirds) were found in the boxes. The boxes are all sponsored by community citizens who made a generous donation for the boxes and for Bastrop Audubon to maintain the nest boxes. Some commemorate loved ones. Next time you play a round of golf, or drive past the course, notice that the golf course is also habitat for our beautiful bluebirds who like edges of forests for their nests.

The volunteers from Bastrop Audubon who joined in the fun cleaning the houses were: Mary Beth Gradziel, Marcia Hermann, Dan Ricks, Loretta and Wayne Hennard, Gary Grief, Priscilla and Jeremiah Jarvis, Alan Jaeger, Barbara and Jerry Harp, Arnie and Marlis Maurer, Mary Ellen Branan, Maggie Lambert and Bill Montgomery.

***Marcia Hermann, Conservation Chair***

# TOP 10 FOODS FOR WINTER BIRD FEEDING

## 10. Black-oil sunflower seed.

Almost any bird that will visit a bird feeder will eat black-oil sunflower. The outer shell is thinner and easier to crack and the kernel is larger than a white-or gray-striped sunflower seed's kernel.

## 9. Peanuts.

Peanuts de-shelled, dry-roasted, and unsalted are bird feeding's hot new trend. Woodpeckers, jays, nuthatches, chickadees, and titmice will readily visit a feeder for this high-protein, high-energy food.

## 8. Suet.

For birds in winter, fat is an excellent source of energy. Rendered suet (fat melted down to liquid, strained and then allowed to harden) lasts longer in hot weather. Other ingredients can also be added to it (see #1, below).

## 7. Good mixed seed.

Good mixed seed has a large amount of sunflower seed, cracked corn, white proso millet, and perhaps some peanut hearts. Bad mixed seed has lots of filler in it-junk seeds that most birds won't eat.

## 6. Niger/thistle seed.

Niger, or thistle, seed is eagerly consumed by all the small finches-goldfinches, house, purple, and Cassin's finches, pine siskins, and redpolls. You need a specialty feeder, either a tube feeder with small thistle-seed-sized holes or a fine-mesh thistle sock. All thistle seed is imported and is supposed to be sterilized prior to entry into this country.

## 5. Safflower.

This white, thin-shelled, conical seed is eaten by many birds. Feed safflower in any feeder that can accommodate sunflower seed.

## 4. Cracked corn.

You can expect sparrows, blackbirds, jays, doves, quail, and SQUIRRELS if you feed cracked corn. Used in moderation, cracked corn will attract almost any feeder species.

## 3. Mealworms.

Most feeder birds, especially bluebirds and wrens, will eat mealworms if you offer them. Mealworms are available in bait stores, or by mail order.

## 2. Fruit.

Fruit is an important dietary element for birds. Set out grapes, slices of citrus fruits, apple or banana slices, and even melon rinds, and watch your birds chow down.

## 1. Homemade bird treats.

Mix peanut butter with cornmeal and smear on a tree trunk. Melt suet in the microwave and pour into an ice-cube tray to harden. Before it solidifies, add peanut bits, raisins, or apple bits.

*Adapted from the article by Bill Thompson, III, editor, in Bird Watcher's Digest.*

# The Sixth Annual Great Backyard Bird Count Needs ALL Birdwatchers to Help Protect America's Birds and Habitats

## Pioneer Web-based Count Spotlights Birds of Special Concern

All across North America, our birds face survival challenges ranging from loss of habitat to introduced predators and diseases such as West Nile Virus. The Sixth Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (February 14-17) – promises to add important new information to our understanding of birds' movement and overall health by focusing our common birds as well as on birds of special concern.

Once again, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society call on birders of every age and skill level to make the count possible. "We need every birder to join us," said Audubon Senior Vice President of Science Frank Gill. "The Great Backyard Bird Count has become a vitally important means of gathering data to help birds, but it can't happen unless people take part. Whether you're a novice or an expert, we need you to take part and help us help birds."

A project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited, the GBBC combines high-tech web tools with an army of citizen-scientist bird observers. The GBBC asks families, individuals, classrooms, and community groups to count the numbers and kinds of birds that visit their feeders, local parks, schoolyards, and other areas during any or all of the four count days. Participants enter their sightings at BirdSource, [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc).

The site invites beginners and experts alike to participate, providing useful information to make participation easy and enjoyable. There is a vocabulary section, bird-watching and bird-feeding tips, bird vocalizations, and more, including information about House Finch eye disease. Educators will find the bibliography and geography sections especially handy; as well as suggestions on how to conduct the count with groups of kids.

Instructions for participating can be found at [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org). There's no fee or registration. Those who would like to participate but aren't online can try their local library. Many Wild Birds Unlimited locations also accept reports. Libraries, businesses, nature clubs, Scout troops and other community organizations interested in promoting the GBBC or getting involved can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 800/ 843-2473 (outside the U.S., call 607/254-2473); 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850, or the National Audubon Society at 212/979-3083; 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003.

## Duck Tape

I sleep with duck tape  
Coiled tightly  
Slammed against its core  
By some machine  
Somewhere

I sleep  
Encircled by papers  
Bills Letters Catalogs  
Magazines  
of Dreams and Hopes

I wake  
Surrounded by birds  
of every size and color  
Chirping  
on the feeder  
at the head of my bed

Mary Beth Gradziel



## BCAS Christmas Bird Count Planned

The *Bastrop County Audubon Society* Christmas Bird Count will be held on Wednesday, January 1, 2003 (as usual). The counters will meet at 6:30 AM in the Texas Grill, 101 Highway 71 West, in Bastrop.

### **ALL LEVELS OF BIRDERS ARE WELCOME.**

Over one hundred years ago, a handful of Christmas Bird Counters began a tradition by recording the species and their numbers in 25 circles around the continent. This year you can be among the tens of thousands who gather data in some of those same circles and in over 1900 additional sites. But now, rather than waiting months to enjoy or study those data, you'll be able to see the results as soon as they are entered into the on-line database. And right now 102 years of reports are available for many uses, but especially conservation. Using this immense vault of CBC data (found at <http://audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html>), you can now conduct your own local, regional, or national study with relative ease. Be a citizen scientist!



**Bastrop County Audubon Society**  
c/o Jarvis  
783 Lower Elgin Rd.  
Elgin, TX 78621

**Return Service Requested**