



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

## January Program

Dr. Tania Homayoun

-Texas Nature Trackers Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife

Dr. Tania Homayoun is a Texas Nature Tracker Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife. Through Texas Nature Trackers, she engages naturalists of all interests and ability levels in collecting citizen science and crowd-sourced data on Texas' unique flora and fauna with a particular focus on species of greatest conservation need. Previously, Tania worked for Audubon Texas, with the Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center and later the Conservation Science Team as its Urban Conservation Program Manager where she worked to develop and deliver conservation plans, educational programs/trainings, and activities supporting biodiversity and sustainable communities. Tania holds a BS in Ecology/Evolution/Conservation Biology and a BA in Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin and a PhD in Conservation Biology from the University of Minnesota, where she studied the impacts of urbanization on landbird communities. She is an avid birder and always has room for one more native plant in her patio garden.

## Mitigating Bird-Building Collisions

Collision with buildings and glass constitutes the number-two human-related cause of death to native birds in the United States. In this presentation Dr. Homayoun will introduce this challenging issue and why it matters to bird conservation, focusing on what we've learned through research and monitoring efforts. We'll discuss the biological and design

factors associated with bird-building collision and some techniques for mitigating collisions in built landscapes.

## Meeting Details

Due to concerns about the Covid-19, and in particular the virulence of the Delta variant, the BCAS Board voted to conduct this meeting by ZOOM. At our next board meeting (and following ones as necessary) this policy will be re-evaluated to ensure the best, safest approach for our members.

As a member you should have received a prior email detailing how to join the meeting. If you did not or require a "refresher" please [contact us](#).

## The President's Perch

Happy New Year from the Bastrop County Audubon Society! It is our hope that at some point soon we will be able to meet in person again. But, with the advent of the Omicron variant it appears that is still a few months off. If you have any thoughts or ideas on the subject, please let us know. Your board has continued to meet monthly (Zoom) working to keep this club operating and relevant, and this subject is on every agenda. Working with the Bird City Coalition we have been able to offer a few outdoor activities during the pandemic, and we expect that to continue in 2022.

Christmas came early to Bastrop last month. On Tuesday December 21st, the Purple Martin House being donated by your Bastrop County Audubon Society to the people of Bastrop was installed at Bob Bryan Park. Several BCAS board members were present, as well as Bird City Coalition members and several Bastrop Parks Department personnel. The new house is a twenty-four gourd model, so we

*Our Mission: To promote the conservation, restoration and enjoyment of natural resources and habitats for birds and other wildlife*

should have a very nice Purple Martin (PUMA) community soon. Go take a look!

Some interesting facts about PUMA. They were originally solitary cavity nesters, but when European Starlings and House Sparrows were introduced to the United States they pushed PUMA out. Fortunately, Native Americans had long found them useful as insect eaters, and lovely to watch. They had been putting up gourd houses for hundreds of years, and this idea of Martin houses was the path to salvation. People began putting up houses of all types to help the Martins and enjoy their beauty. Some believe the PUMA have an ancestral memory of living in gourd houses, and research does show they take to them readily. So, PUMA have evolved to equate people with safety and home. Martin houses installed far from human dwellings tend not to be occupied. PUMA return to the nest area they used the previous year, and older PUMA tend to return first. So, with our new PUMA development we will be looking for new residents, those returning from South America for the first time. These birds will come later, probably March or April, looking for their new home. A small committee has formed to monitor and manage the Purple Martin community. If you would like to join, please let us know.



**1 - SAY'S PHOEBE**

We have just wrapped up the two local Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs), Lost Pines and Bastrop-

Buescher. Bird numbers and species were down slightly, with both counts producing roughly 100 species, where normal is more like 110-120. We are sorry the counts were not more widely advertised, but with COVID resurgent, the counts were kept to small family pods, or very well-known past participants. Count leadership hope 2022 has us back to something more normal so we can welcome everyone to enjoy the experience. We did have a couple of somewhat rare birds during the counts, a Clay-colored Sparrow on the Lost Pines count, and a Say's Phoebe during the Bastrop-Buescher count.

That's all for this month – stay birdy,

Mike Goebel

President Bastrop County Audubon Society



**2 THE NEW PUMA HOUSE!**

## The Beginnings of Birding

### PART 2: THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF BIRDWATCHING AND BIRD PROTECTION

With the invention of the first prismatic binoculars at the end of the 19th century and the first commitment of various zoologists to protect birds and their habitats described in the last article globally more and more organizations and institutions arose, who dedicated themselves to the protection of birds and ornithology as a science.

Moritz Carl Hensoldt founded the optical-precision engineering industry in Wetzlar, Germany, which continues today as an important industry for this city. Like Carl Zeiss, Hensoldt started with microscopes

and a first astronomic telescope and then invented his first binoculars. In 1897 he developed roof prism binoculars glasses and other exclusive as foundation stone for his Dialyt, today known as the “Abbe-König-system”. This so-called reflectance prism turned the picture by 180° so it was no longer back-to-front and prevented all kinds of optical misalignment. This was important for the “Night-Dialyt, which the company launched in 1930. At that time, the former family-owned company of Moritz Hensoldt already had been a stock corporation for the last eight years, after six years though Carl Zeiss Jena took over the majority of shares.

Bird watching became more and more comfortable and more precise. During the same time the first organizations developed that had the protection of birds as sole focus. In Germany the “Federation of Bird Protection“ was founded in 1899 by Lina Hähnle, who was called the German “bird mother”. The annual membership fee was very low, about the value of a loaf of bread, in order to get a broad audience. Lina Hähnle mainly fought against the fashion for hats of her time, where huge bird feathers were used. She had good relations with politicians and managed to get the German national bird protection law to be enacted in the beginning of the 20th century. She was not only interested in changing the conditions for birds in Germany, but also committed herself to France and the US, where she could win US president Woodrow Wilson as a new member for her organization. Today the organization is renamed into the “Federation for Nature Conservation”, but they still work in the tradition of Lina Hähnle and buy land to protect the habitats of birds. Lina Hähnle’s first purchase was a lake called “Federsee”, even today a very important nature conservation area and habitat for birds. The nature conservation center there, sponsored by ZEISS, is an important point of contact for bird watchers and the interested public. She always travelled in the least expensive class of train compartment until the end of her life with the goal to talk to people and win new members for the organization.

In England this tradition already started ten years before with the foundation of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds by three ladies. The British

founders were also against the exploitation of birds for the fashion. In England mainly feathers of the Great Crested Grebe were used, which the RSPB fought against from 1889 onwards. Step by step the RSPB got more and more areas for conservation and today is one of the strongest nature protection organizations with more than one million members.

In the USA, the foundation of the “National Audubon Society” had a more scientific orientation. The zoologist, publisher and natural scientist George Bird Grinnell founded the organization in 1905 after having run different other organizations before. His purpose was to run a scientific expert association for the protection of birds. Grinnell placed his organization consciously against the existing organization “American Ornithologists’ Union”, which at that time endorsed the hunt of birds to collect it for scientific data.

Only ten years later the US-American bird conservationists achieved an enormous step towards studying birds and other wild animals with the foundation of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology an organization within Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Today numerous scientists and students research how to restore biological diversity with the focus on bird protection. Today citizen-science projects have a more important role – especially with the eBird platform, where bird watchers in the whole world register their sightings. With their Macaulay Library, founded in 1929, the Cornell Lab runs the globally most comprehensive archive of voices and video films of animals. In total the collection of the archive sums up to 175,000 animal voices and 9,000 species.

The basis for an international cooperation of all the different organizations meant the formation of BirdLife International in London in 1922, which is today crucial for the international nature and bird conservation. As BirdLife International is the network for all national conservation organizations that focus on the protection of birds. As official partner of the IUCN they together publish the red list of endangered species and BirdLife coordinates the international measures to protect species which are

threatened by extinction. Today ZEISS supports the work around the conservation of birds on the red list.

**Courtesy Carl Zeiss AG**

Your Bastrop County Audubon Membership for 2022- Due January 1

This birding year has flown by and it's time to renew your BCAS annual membership for 2022.

You may renew on our website

<https://www.bastropcountyaudubon.org/join-renew-donate>

or pay by check via U.S. mail (address below) or pay directly at one of our monthly meetings with cash, check or credit card.

Our annual dues structure remains the same as years past:

Individual	\$20
Family	\$35
Youth	\$5
Sponsor	\$75

Due to technical issues we have changed our eCommerce provider for our website. Once you select the Membership level you desire, you will be presented with a page on which to fill in your credit card information.

Thank you for your support of Audubon and the programs, education and conservation projects we bring to Bastrop County about birds and other wildlife.

Mail any checks to

Bastrop County Audubon Society  
c/o Jackie Fisher  
127 Colovista Drive  
Bastrop, TX 78602

This is YOUR Newsletter!

If you have enjoyed a recent trip that including birding, we would love to publish a report of your trip. Please make submissions to the newsletter through BCAS email address published at the end of this newsletter. We are also always on the lookout for pictures of birds that have been taken in Bastrop County, especially rarities or "lifers".

Title your email "Newsletter Submission".

<p><b>Upcoming Events</b></p> <p>Jan 4<sup>th</sup> , Tue, 7:00pm: - BCAS meeting - ZOOM.</p> <p>Jan 14th, Fri 8:30am :- Bird City Bastrop Little Hike</p>
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