



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

February Program

Jeff Parker from Explore in Focus

"The Birds of Colombia"

Jeff Parker is equal parts pro photographer and naturalist. He really enjoys encouraging others to photograph and marvel over nature's wonders.

Jeff believes that nature photography has the power to bring deeper awareness to issues of conservation. "Such images make people care more," he says.

His work has appeared in many publications, including: Audubon, Outdoor Photographer, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Texas Wildlife, American Profile and Texas Journey, as well as the books Borderlands of Laredo, Texas and Wildlife in Focus. With his wife, writer Mary O. Parker, he published the award-winning nature travel guide, Explore Texas: A Nature Travel Guide (Texas A&M University Press; 2016).

Jeff leads photo tours throughout in the western U.S., Europe, South and Central America, and parts of Europe. He and Mary O also hold one-day workshops at their central-Texas nature preserve, Red Belly Ranch.

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

Welcome to fabulous February! There will be many opportunities for outdoor birding this month as bird counts and festivals come back to life. But before I get to those, as we all know, COVID in the form of Omicron is still with us. It is demonstrating an ability to break through previous infections and vaccinations, and is wickedly easy to catch, almost on par with measles. Vaccination and a booster still protect against hospitalization and death, but we can still catch it and spread it to each other. So, at our January board meeting, after some discussion, your board has decided that our regular Society meetings and board meetings through March will continue to be via Zoom.

First up a long time favorite, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), to be held February 18-21. Sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society and Birds Canada, this is fun and citizen science at its finest. You can bird anywhere, your yard, a park or a country road. But you have to bird a minimum of 15 minutes at each location. Submit your data via Merlin if you are using it, or eBird and you are a citizen scientist. This data is important and is used by researchers around the world. These data along with Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) and Breeding Bird Surveys (BBS) were used to create the 2019 National Audubon Society report "Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink". The link below will take you to everything you need to know about the count. Oh, and this year they have sweetened the pot. Every person (over 18) who

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

submits a count using Merlin or eBird will be entered into a drawing for a pair of Zeiss Terra 8x42 binoculars. Find the GBBC at

<https://www.birdcount.org/>.



Next up is the Whooping Crane Festival at Port Aransas February 24-27. After being dark for two years during COVID, they are back “Whoopier” than ever. Whooping Crane boats tours, you bet. Field trips for rare birds, got 'em. Lectures by noted speakers on birds, nature, conservation and more, check. Photography workshops, yep. Sunset wine, bird and Dolphin cruise, count me in. There is also a Trade Show at the Port A Civic Center where you can find more bird stuff than you ever knew existed. Usually there are several optics vendors and manufacturer's reps from companies like Zeiss and Swarovski to show you their latest products. Learn more here <https://www.portaransas.org/whooping-crane-festival/>.

So, one of the things we love about Bastrop is the Colorado River and the Bald Eagles we can find nesting along it. There are a number of pairs nesting in Bastrop County, and they are not too hard to find. Just locate a stretch of river you can see, then scan the trees along the banks looking for a nest you can park your car in. That's it! One pair (we believe it's the same pair) has been in roughly same location since

2009, that's 14 years. Eagles typically live 15-30 years in the wild, with the oldest known bird 38 years old. The eagles I am talking about are the Smithville Loop Road pair. We were out birding Loop Road a few days back and had 41 White Pelican, Belted Kingfisher, Anhinga and a good number of other birds. We re-found the eagle's nest, but there were not any birds in or around it. We watched the nest for a while, and in flew one of the birds with what looked like a 4 to 5 foot-long branch. Big birds use big sticks. As they worked the branch into the nest a second eagle flew past, so our pair is back. We will be watching for small heads over the next several months. Digi-scoped photo below. Not super sharp, heavily cropped as the nest is over 500 yards out.



That's all for this month – stay birdy,

Mike Goebel

President Bastrop County Audubon Society

PUMA Colony Training

As a follow up to the successful install by your Audubon Chapter of a Purple Martin (PUMA) house in Bob Bryant Park (see last month's newsletter), we are pleased to announce the following learning opportunity.

Please join us for a Purple Martin Colony Maintenance Training given by Julia and Andy

Balinsky. The Balinsky's have been maintaining the PUMA colony at Hornby Bend for years.

Hopefully, we will see Purple Martins on site during the training.

The Balinsky's have also invited us to bring binoculars and do some birding around the ponds after the training session.

Bring a lunch or snack and a drink if desired. This will be very educational and a lot of fun!

WHAT: BCAS - Purple Martin Colony
Maintenance Training

WHERE: Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory
2210 S. FM 973
Austin, TX. 78725

WHEN: February 26, 2022 at 12:00 noon
(weather permitting)

Miscellaneous News

A Rio Grande Valley Woman Breaks the U.S. Record for Most Birds Spotted in a Year

Tiffany Kersten from Mission Texas, saw 726 species in 48 states in one calendar year as part of a Contiguous States Big Year attempt. For the full story see the Texas Monthly at

[A New Big Year Record](#)

Wings Over Water – Bob Bullock Museum

January 2, 2022 - December 31, 2022

Wings Over Water, narrated by Michael Keaton, tells the compelling story of three amazing bird species—the Sandhill Crane, the Yellow Warbler, and the Mallard Duck—with extraordinary footage of their fascinating behaviors. All of them depend on the wetlands for their survival.

For more information and tickets visit:

["Wings over Water" - Bob Bullock Museum](#)

Trip Reports

From Laszlo & Lexi Perlaky

Hi All,

We left our house on January 10 and photographed in Big Bend NP and Big Bend Ranch State Park and Davis Mountains State Park, drove on and explored many challenging dirt roads. The fire was a scary news for us when we were in Davis Mountains State Park and on the top of the mountain, we got some emergency messages phone signal and heard about the fire. At the Big Bend area, we were without phone and internet communication. From Davis Mountains State Park, we drove to Fort Davis, and in the Public Library we had Wi-Fi and we were able to call our neighbor, who informed us, and we were able to connect to other services and saw the fire location map. We planned to come home early, but there was no danger at our area, so we stayed as we planned. However, the cold front hit us, and we got 2 inches snow there, so we had to extend our stay at Davis Mountains State Park and came home on Saturday, January 22.

I placed my trip notes to my website news, check it out:

<http://www.naturalperlart.com/news/>

Best, Laszlo

The Beginnings of Birding

PART 3: MEDIA TURNS NATURE OBSERVATION INTO A POPULAR PHENOMENON

After insiders and professionals organized more and more into associations, and scientific ornithology got more importance at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, there was a kind of switch after the two world wars. It was about bringing the fascination of nature observation out to everybody. After the terrible political experiences people looked for more harmless and peaceful experiences. A number of zoologists in different countries discovered the potential of film showing nature in all its facets to a broad audience.

Significant for this development was the progression in the camera and optical techniques. In 1954 the first

binoculars were produced by ZEISS, now in the west in Oberkochen, which allowed a more compact design with teleobjective lenses. In 1964 ZEISS launched the first Dyalyt with roof prisms, which meant a new dimension of image quality, enabled observation in dawn and meant an even better and more compact design. In 1969 the first high-quality pocket binoculars followed, which became interesting for those, who wanted to observe on walks in their spare time and were not so fond of the bigger binoculars of the professional observer's.

In Germany, Heinz Sielmann explained nature to the general public on a regular basis. As a child he observed mainly birds. While a time in England the zoologist and biologist was able to work for BBC and learn the important tools for film-making. His close contact to the Austrian behavioral scientist and zoologist Konrad Lorenz helped him in the research on his expeditions. With the zoologist and long-time director of the zoo in Frankfurt am Main, Bernhard Grzimek, he worked on several documentaries. Grzimek's motion picture film "Serengeti must not die" of 1959 was the first German movie ever to win an Oscar.

In UK the BBC Natural History Unit was one of the internationally most successful and professional documentaries transporting the fascination of nature to the general public since 1957 and especially in the 60s and 70s. BBC annually produces 100 hours of nature documentaries and 50 hours of radio programs. It is most well-known representative was and still is Sir David Frederick Attenborough, who regularly raises his voice for nature conservation. In the beginning his focus was on the wonders of nature, but he focused more and more on biodiversity, a changing consumer behavior and environmental protection.

The BBC documentaries gained high popularity also in the USA. There, nature associations were very successful winning people for direct nature observations on nature tours. With Robert J. Flaherty's "Nanook of the North" about Namibia's nature from 1922 the tradition of nature documentaries had started quite early. A totally different approach started there in the 1940s. Walt Disney, today mainly known for the financially

successful films, had the vision of giving pupils an understanding of animals' lives. He used a kind of humanization as an instrument to get the kid's attention and let animals speak in his animated films. Decisive for him was that the animals behaved like their real species. He organized a travel to the New York Zoological Society for his people to study a realistic simulation. Between 1948 and 1960 Walt Disney Production also released the "True-life adventures" with popular real nature documentaries.

From today's perspective with a wider variety of channels and better optics some of the nature documentaries of the post-war period may seem unusual. However, they were significant to make nature and its effects on humans popular.

Courtesy Carl Zeiss AG

[A Summary of the 2022 Bastrop CBC](#)

Hi everyone,

Thank you so much for participating in the Bastrop CBC! It was a tough year with many species missing or in low numbers, but your efforts count even in years like this.

Here are some interesting points from the count:

- Total species: 108 + one count week species
 - Range over the previous 10 years (2011 - 2020): 112 - 126
 - Average for the previous 10 years: 118
- Number of individuals: 11,950
 - Range over the previous 10 years: 14,451 - 53,787
 - Average for the previous 10 years: 22,488
 - Every bird really did count this year!
- Rare birds (seen two or fewer times over the last ten years):
 - Say's Phoebe (1) - seen on count day by Area 1 team (Mike, Jan, Ian, Cindy, Ron, Susan) at Droemer Lake (private property). Good job team!
 - Clay-colored Sparrow (1) - seen on January 4 by Luke at his residence. It counts as a

count week species since it was seen within three days of the count day. Good job Luke!

- Obvious misses:
 - Blue-winged Teal
 - Green-winged Teal
 - Ruddy Duck
 - Wild Turkey
 - Sharp-shinned Hawk
 - Brewer's Blackbird
 - Common Grackle
- Low/high counts:
 - Carolina Wren - highest count ever with 244 (next closest was 182 in 1998; average over the previous 10 years: 112)
 - Eastern Bluebird - second lowest count ever with 46 (lowest was 0 in 1978; average over the previous 10 years: 207)
 - Hermit Thrush - second lowest count ever with three (lowest was 1 in 1978; average over the previous 10 years: 20)

It seems thrushes were especially hard hit by the February winter storm. These low numbers seem to support that.
- Species only one team saw/heard (excluding domestics and the rare birds):
 - Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (10) - Area 1 Team (Mike, Jan, Ian, Cindy, Ron, Susan)
 - Northern Shoveler (5) - Area 1 Team (Mike, Jan, Ian, Cindy, Ron, Susan)
 - American Wigeon (62) - Area 1 Team (Mike, Jan, Ian, Cindy, Ron, Susan)
 - Mallard (1) - Area 6D (Emily and Flo)
 - Canvasback (35) - Area 6A (Shelia, Shannon, Viki)
 - Bufflehead (4) - Area 8C (Pam)
 - Hooded Merganser (4) - Area 3 (Tyler, Haley, Janey)
 - Rock Pigeon (7) - Colorado River (Luke and Trent) SERIOUSLY???
 - Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird (1) - Kathy's feeder watch (Kathy and Anita)

- Sandhill Crane (2 but heard only) - Colorado River (Luke and Trent)
- Least Sandpiper (15) - Area 2 (Louise, Anna, Debby, Liz, Wendy, Susan)
- Lesser Yellowlegs (1) - Colorado River (Luke and Trent)
- Anhinga (1) - Area 7 (Jean and Cinda)
- Northern Harrier (1) - Area 3 (Tyler, Haley, Janey)
- Eastern Screech Owl (2) - Area 6A (Shelia, Shannon, Viki)
- Hairy Woodpecker (1) - Area 6A (Shelia, Shannon, Viki)
- Merlin (1) - Area 1 (Mike, Jan, Ian, Cindy, Ron, Susan)
- Blue-headed Vireo (1) - Area 3 (Tyler, Haley, Janey)
- Winter Wren (2) - Area 6A Lake Bastrop Trail (Michael and Jeffrey)
- Pine Siskin (1) - Area 5 (Carlos and Cathy)
- Grasshopper Sparrow (1) - Area 5 (Carlos and Cathy)
- Lark Sparrow (3) - Area 3 (Tyler, Haley, Janey)
- Fox Sparrow (1) - Area 5 (Carlos and Cathy)
- Dark-eyed Junco (4) - Area 6D (Emily and Flo)
- Swamp Sparrow (2) - Area 6A Lake Bastrop Trail (Michael and Jeffrey)
- Eastern Towhee (1) - Area 6A Lake Bastrop Trail (Michael and Jeffrey)

Whew! I didn't know the list would be this long when I started this section! Again every bird really did count!

- Total participants: 45 (This is the most participants we have had since 2010!)

And after much cussing, pulling of hair, more cussing, begging for technical assistance, reading the instruction manual, and more cussing, the website is once again linked to

bastropcbc.com

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Thanks again everyone. Mark January 1, 2023 on your calendars and plan to join us for the next Bastrop CBC.

Shelia Hargis
Bastrop CBC Compiler

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>Upcoming Events</p> <p>Feb 1st , Tue, 7:00pm: - BCAS meeting - ZOOM.</p> <p>Feb 18th-21st :- Great Backyard Birdcount</p> <p>Feb 26th NOON: PUMA Colony Training – Hornsby Bend</p>
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<p>Bird Calls is published online and in paper copy by Bastrop County Audubon Society monthly except during July and August. We invite letters, articles, news tips, reviews of books and events, poems, cartoons and photos appropriate to the mission. Material should be submitted to the Editor at Bastropcountyaudubon@gmail.com</p>
