



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

April Program

Craig Hensley

"Pollinators and Native Plants: Making Connections That Matter"

Pollinators provide ecological services that allow the natural world, including us, to thrive. You can help pollinators in many ways including thoughtful planting of native plants from wildflowers to shrubs and trees. Join us for a presentation by Texas Nature Trackers Biologist Craig Hensley to explore the world of pollinators and native plants, as well as learning how you can document them through iNaturalist.

Craig Hensley has worked for TPWD nearly 12 years, first as Interpreter and Resource Specialist at Guadalupe River State Park, as a Wildlife Biologist, and for the past nearly three years, in his current role as one of two Texas Nature Trackers Biologists. For nearly 40 years, Craig has shared his passion for the outdoors through engaging programs for all ages from Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas and, of course, Texas. A native of Iowa, Craig holds a B.S. degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Management from Arkansas Tech University and a M.S. in Zoology from the University of Arkansas. He has two adult children, four beautiful granddaughters with a grandson on the way.

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

April is here, and with it the beginning of peak migration. Jan and I have already seen Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and we have a Black-chinned Hummingbird visiting our feeders. In case you missed the Facebook posts for Bastrop County Audubon and Bird City Bastrop Texas, the Purple Martin house at Bob Bryant Park, which was donated by Bastrop County Audubon to the city of Bastrop, now has residents. As many as fourteen have been counted so far, and more birds could arrive for several months. For reference, this house has twenty-four gourds, so we could have forty eight martins at full capacity (not likely the first year), pre-fledge. PUMA clutch sizes range from three to six eggs, so by May or June we could have around 100-150 martins, fingers crossed.

As I mentioned in March, it's time to start spending more time in the yard and in the field. This time of year in Texas almost anything can be in your yard or flying over. Trips to the coastal birding hotspots like High Island, Port Aransas and Corpus Christi will be well rewarded, and are only a few hours away.

With so many birds in town what do we do? In Texas, we throw a party! In fact the April 2022 calendar shows five bird festivals in Texas. From Featherfest in Galveston to Birding the Border in Del Rio there are plenty of opportunities to see and learn more about birds. The following link

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

(<https://birdinglocations.com/texas-birding-festivals-guide/>) will take you to a list of Texas birding festivals.

In the March newsletter I told you about a place (Buescher State Park) to see a certain warbler, well that is a great place to see a beautiful warbler, just not the one I mentioned. It appears I was confounding my P-warblers last month. Here is the straight scoop. The picnic and camping area on the west side of the lake is a normally dependable place to see Parula, Northern Parula. They love Spanish moss, which they use for their nests, and they seem to like to be near water. So, other places for Northern Parula in the area are the west end of the Riverside Trail in McKinney roughs. Along the river, in the areas with...Spanish moss. If you travel to LaGrange, cross the Colorado River on highway 77 and go up the hill to the remains of the historic Kreische Brewery. In the park are large live oak trees with...Spanish moss. Most years Northern Parula will sing there in the spring. They have a buzzy trill that ends on a sharp up-note, or a series of buzzy trills with pauses. Here is a photo of a male Northern Parula. Yes, I know, you want one!



So Prothonotary Warbler, the warbler I mentioned last month, can be seen at the same locations, it's just that Parula is more likely. The best spots for Prothonotary Warbler seem to be the Colorado River corridor. So, McKinney Roughs along the river in the riparian zone, Colorado River Refuge and Big Webberville Park. Bob Bryant Park is also possible, but basically, just try to get into the Colorado riparian

woods and you have a chance. Listen for the “sweet-sweet-sweet” call. Photo below.

Our April 5th program will be “Pollinators and Native Plants” by Craig Hensley. This meeting will be another Zoom virtual event, as will the May meeting. Your board’s current plan to try for an in-person meeting for our season ending June 7th session, which we would hold at the Bastrop Library. This is contingent, of course, on what happens with COVID between now and then.



That’s all for this month – stay birdy,

Mike Goebel

President Bastrop County Audubon Society

PUMA Colony Maintenance Training Update

February 26, 2022 at Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory, a group of BCAS Board members met Julia and Andy Balinsky for a basic Purple Martin colony maintenance training. Topics discussed were, PUMA identification from chick to adult, breeding cycle, predator guards, managing nest invaders such as squirrels, European Starlings, and House sparrows, and mite infestation. The Balinsky’s described how they fed and watered chicks, when necessary, during times of drought. No Purple Martins were on sight during our training, but we were able to see inside the empty gourds. We provided the Balinsky’s with some Bastrop County pine straw for use in their PUMA colony sights in Austin. The session was very fun and informative. The Balinsky’s shared multiple

PUMA resource websites and offered to help BCAS with our new PUMA colony. And now that our Bob Bryant Park PUMA colony is occupied, (Purple Martins were spotted on March 25th) we look forward to working with the Balinsky's. We could not have asked for more knowledgeable, enthusiastic, or generous trainers.

Thank you Julia and Andy!
Susan Schroeder

Field Trips

BCAS Friends Flock to First Field Trip of 2022.



The early bird may get the worm, but the early birder doesn't always get the bird—although we have fun trying!! So on the morning of March 19, 15 BCAS members and friends left Bastrop at 6:00 AM and trekked to the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge in hopes of seeing, or at least hearing, some of the lesser prairie chickens sheltered there. On our arrival a pair of helpful interns filled us in on the details of the refuge and their work to preserve the prairie chickens and gave us hints on where to listen for their booming.

The 5-mile Auto Loop, alas, yielded no chickens, but the group was happily distracted by views of a pair of White-tailed Hawks, a number of Northern Harriers, Crested Caracaras, and a cooperative Greater Yellowlegs, all accompanied by the music of Eastern Meadowlarks. Flocks of Upland Sandpipers sliced through the clear blue sky over our heads. The chilly temperatures of early morning warmed in the sunshine, blessing us with a perfect day for birding.



Our next target was the short trail to Horseshoe Lake, which featured an observation deck. Rafts of Ring-necked Ducks and Black-bellied Whistling Ducks gave us good looks, while a Common Gallinule guided her chicks in and out of the reeds across the lake. A huge alligator dozed on the bank, well away from us. One of the best sightings was an Anhinga circling overhead.



After a satisfying morning of birding, lunch beckoned. Those who packed their meals were treated to views of a Northern Harrier and a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher flying over. This is truly a place worth visiting. Please join us for our next field trip on Saturday, April 16, to Mitchell Lake in San Antonio. Check our website for upcoming details!

Louise Ridlon – Field Trip Coordinator



Bird List:

- Black-bellied Whistling Duck
- Ring-necked Duck
- Pied-billed Grebe
- White-winged Dove
- Mourning Dove
- Common Gallinule
- American Coot
- Sandhill Crane
- Killdeer
- Upland Sandpiper
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Anhinga
- Double-crested Cormorant
- American White Pelican
- Great Egret
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture
- Northern Harrier
- White-tailed Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Crested Caracara
- American Kestrel
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
- White-eyed Vireo
- Blue Jay
- Tufted Titmouse
- Barn Swallow
- Carolina Wren
- European Starling
- Northern Mockingbird
- American Pipit
- Vesper Sparrow

- Savannah Sparrow
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Western/Eastern Meadowlark
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- Northern Cardinal

Miscellaneous News

Field Trips

Next field trip is to Mitchell Lake in San Antonio. It is 1 hr 45 mins from Bastrop. Open 8am-3pm, but COVID restrictions in place. We will be emailing information about how to participate in this field trip soon.

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 |

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”.

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

Upcoming Events

Tue Apr 5th, Tue, 7:00pm: - BCAS meeting - ZOOM.

Fri April 8th : Little Hike: Birding for Beginners – Riverbend Trail at Pecan Park.

Meet at El Nuevo Mexico – 201 Childers at 8:15 am. We will carpool together.

Sat Apr 16: Mitchell Lake Audubon, San Antonio - 1 hr 45 mins from Bastrop. Open 8am-3pm, but COVID restrictions in place. Purchase tickets ahead online, staggered entrance times (Adults \$5, Natl Audubon members \$3). No indoor restrooms open at this time. Walking trails. DETAILS TO FOLLOW

Sat Apr 23: Big Sit: Colorado River Refuge – Keyhole Garden. “Birding for Beginners” Park in the BIG parking lot. (See map below)

