



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

November Program

Letter from the President

My Mid-western Birding

Last week, I had a splendid time staying with John and Maribeth, my brother and sister-in-law, in Inverness, northwest of Chicago. I saw wonderful birds and a few critters in their yard and on the pond in back. They have various feeders which can be seen from the big bay window in the kitchen. John has numerous field guides and has become quite good at identifying birds. We had fun looking at the birds in *Sibley's*.....I've got to get that guide! I saw these birds: Northern Cardinal, Black-capped Chickadee, Dark-eyed Junco, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Blue Jay, House Finch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, American Goldfinch, Mourning Dove, American Robin, Mallard Duck, and Great Blue Heron. We also saw Fox squirrels and Grey squirrels and some sort of chipmunks. One cloudy afternoon, I may have heard Sandhill Cranes flying overhead. Okay, who is ready for a field trip there?

Watching and identifying our feathered friends with our non-feathered friends is so delightful.
Join us on the next field trip. We have such a good time!
Priscilla Jarvis, BCAS President

Award-winning FREE App Now Available for Bird Id

The Audubon Bird Guide App promises to turn your mobile device into "the most trusted field guide in North America." It's available for download at the App Store or for Android phones at Google play.

Features include:

- 821 in-depth species profiles
- More than 3,200 bird photos
- Quick bird IDs with filters by shape, region and color
- Thousands of bird calls, differentiated by region and season
- Seasonal and migratory range maps
- Recent local bird sightings through eBird

Ribbit, ribbit: Get to Know What You Are Listening to in Nature

Just as birds have calls so do the frogs. Sometimes the frogs even sound like birds and vice versa. That's confusing! Marsha May, biologist from the Texas Parks and Wildlife(TPWD), will clear up this confusion with her program on "Frog Calls Made Easy" for our November 17 meeting. Marsha is a coordinator for the Texas Nature Trackers which part of the Conservation Outreach of the Wildlife Diversity Program in TPWD.

Then, with Christmas Bird Counts

coming up next month, Jan Goebel has lined up Nicholas Cowey to give us the historical logistics and latest plans for the Lost Pines CBC. Cowey represents the McKinney Roughs Nature Center (LCRA) and the Lost Pines Hyatt Resort which administer the CBC each year. This will be the sixth year of this newer CBC which covers western parts of the Bastrop County. BCAS sponsors this CBC and the BastropStateParks CBC each year. (See Calendar, p. 4.)

Also, Mike Goebel will present his next "Mystery Bird of the Month" power-point show.

The meeting begins at 7:00, in the second floor meeting room of the First National Bank in Bastrop, Hasler @ H 71. Doors open at 6:30 for socializing.

Of Fortunate Note: Long-time members and former board members Mary Anne and Jim Casey live in the middle of the recent Hidden Pines forest fire area near-Smithville. We have learned that their home escaped destruction. (The homes of several BCAS members were destroyed in the 2011 Lost Pines fire.)

The fires began October 12, burned 4,582 acres, and destroyed 64 homes. It was 100% extinguished by rains which began October 24.

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



Clout in State Environmental Politics

Sometimes it's helpful to view how environmental politics were managed in other states than Texas. Alabama is not Texas, however, Alabama news this summer heartens us that citizens through conservation organizations can cancel destructive legislation even in an advanced stage of becoming law.

When Governor Hogan of Alabama was inundated in April, 2015, with a campaign in support of a moratorium on fracking in the state, the governor announced he would not after all veto the moratorium and let it go through.

Then a few months later, the Birmingham Audubon Society sent out the alert regarding a bill that would have stopped additional funding to Forever Wild, Alabama's respected land trust program. The bill already had passed the Alabama Senate and was moving through the House. A coalition of conservation organizations was able to mobilize public opposition, stopping the bill in its tracks.

Oil Pit from Above

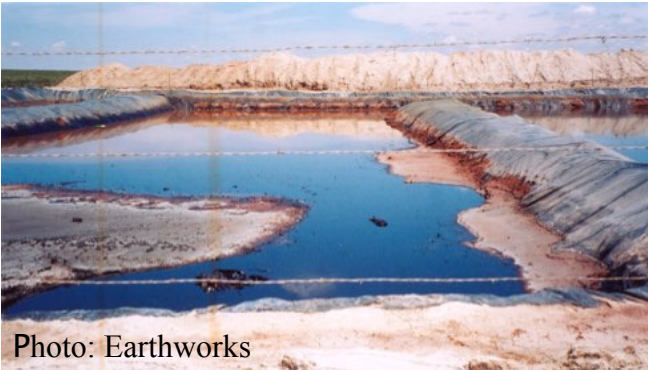


Photo: Earthworks

Today's Threats to Birds and the Migratory Bird Act

This year National Audubon, working closely with U.S Fish and Wildlife, has launched a campaign, to address 21st century threats to migratory birds. The venerable Migratory Bird Act when first in effect in 1918 did not conceive of threats such as oil pits, cell phone towers, wind generators, or the lights of huge mostly glass structures.

For example, as many as a million birds a year die when they mistake toxic oil pits for fresh water. They either drown immediately or die later attempting to preen, or after ingesting an insect trapped in the oil. Carrying a little oil on their feathers back to the nest kills the embryo in the egg. Some regulations on oil companies have been proposed to help, such as requiring netting over the oil pool. Cooperation by oil companies is a mixed bag.

Field Notes

Because our September field trip was cancelled due to another weather event, leaving me with no report from the field, *per se*, I'm featuring in its place excerpts from my article on one of the birding hot spots in the County. This and similar articles appear in the BCAS web site under Local Birding / Hot Spots. Next field trip Nov. 21. See Calendar.

Mike Goebel, Field Trips Chair

Earhardt Road

Description: Perhaps one of the best kept secrets in Bastrop County, this unassuming 0.8 mile dead end country road changes with the seasons, and during Fall-Winter months, can be a source of continual surprise as waterfowl and shorebirds utilize the shallow wet season marshes.

By October, sparrows, meadowlarks, and raptors have returned to the fields and roadside brush to join the year round residents. Savannah, Vesper, Chipping, Song, White-crowned, White-throated, Grasshopper, and Lincoln's Sparrows are all along the roadside. Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks can be seen year round, and during the Winter, we can spot American Kestrel, Merlin, and Northern Harrier. Being so close to the Colorado River, Bald Eagles are always possible.

If the wet season marshes are full, November signals the arrival of waterfowl and shore birds. Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal are common, as well as Northern Shoveler. Other waterfowl include Ruddy Duck, Redhead, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, and Gadwall. Shorebirds observed include Greater and Lesser Yellow-legs, Solitary Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Black Tern, and Wilson's Phalarope. And, just recently, White-faced Ibis was added to this road's life list. Great Blue, Little Blue, and Green Herons are not uncommon, as well as Great Egrets.

The roadside Hackberry trees are normally loaded with red berries in the Fall, and so are very attractive to Cedar Waxwings, Robins, and the resident Mockingbirds.

Spring migration heralds a changing of the guard. Water birds are leaving, Spring-Summer residents are returning, and migrants are passing through. Flycatchers begin returning during March and April. If you're lucky, a five-flycatcher day is possible; Eastern and Western Kingbird, Great Crested and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, and Eastern Phoebe. Dickcissel return, and are most active in the April-May timeframe. When you hear their song for the first time, you will know how they got their name. Purple Martins return, and Cliff, Cave and Barn Swallows can be seen chasing down insects, along with the occasional Northern Rough-winged Swallow. The roadside fields are mostly pasture, so there are no woody areas to serve as a migrant trap. However, further down the road the fence lines include some tall Hackberry trees, and if there is still some water in the marshes,

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Heading South — by Judy Turner

Corpus Christi Hawk Watch and Port Aransas, October, 2015

I'd wanted to go for the Hawk Watch at Hazel Bazemore Park near Corpus Christi for years, but something else always came up - like going to the 20th Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, that fantastic adventure, where I saw the rare (to the U.S.) Amazon Kingfisher!. This year I vowed to go to Corpus during the heavier migration days. I didn't quite make the best September days, but arrived the first week in October.

The September Hawk Count totals showed 353,040 migrants with 4,837 of those Mississippi Kites and 345,976 Broad-winged Hawks

I thought, surely, I would see some of these birds. Well, little did I know. First of all, one needs a very powerful, i.e., expensive pair of binoculars. Mine are 10 X 50 and cost less than \$300. Also, I can't discount that I no longer have 20/20 eyesight. Secondly, one has to be able to recognize the silhouettes of birds flying 2,000-5,000 feet above you. Last, but not least, one has to accurately count those tiny specks, which most of the time were against the blue sky. The ones I did see were only about 2,000 ft away against a nice white cloud. There were 80 broad-wing hawks in that group. While it was disappointing to not be able to see all the other hawks and raptors the "real" hawk watchers saw that day, I did see other closer birds.

The other Hawk Watch migrants that I saw were Turkey Vultures, kestrels, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's hawk, and Peregrine Falcon. Other closer -in birds I noted were White wing Doves, Ruby-throated and Rufus Hummingbirds, White Pelicans, Red-winged Blackbirds, White-faced Ibis, Black-necked Stilts, cardinals, grackles, Snowy Egrets, House Sparrows, meadow larks, vVermillion Fly-catcher, Nashville Warbler, titmouse, vireo, Northern Parula, and Common Ground Dove.

Last, but not least were several groups of Gulf Coast toads and javelininas with little ones that came to the small water ponds near the hawk watch platform.

For the second part of my trip, I traveled to Port Aransas to see what some local birding spots had to offer. I started with an area I had not previously visited, the Port Aransas Nature Preserve Charlie's Pasture (new since 2007). The first (and last) trail I took was the Salt Island Trail. I say last trail because it took me over three hours to walk and observe the birds along the three-mile boardwalk trail. The city has done a wonderful job of preserving over 1,200 acres on the bay side near the ferry landing. It has vegetation and mud flats with multiple bodies of water. While there was not the large variety of birds along the boardwalk, I enjoyed watching and photographing Black-necked Stilts, Reddish Egrets, and Roseate Spoonbills. Look for some far-off spoonbills in the upper left of the photo of the Reddish Egret fishing.



BCAS
c/o Dru Gabrysch
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Paige TX 78659

Return Service Requested

Earhardt Road, continued:

Common Yellowthroat, as well as Yellow-rumped, Orange-crowned, and Yellow Warblers have been seen. Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Painted Bunting and Indigo Buntings are sometimes found during Spring and Summer. (For more, see web site article.)

Travel Directions: Earhardt Road is located off FM 969, about 1.3 miles east of the Colorado River bridge. From Highway 71, take County Road (CR) 1209 north until it dead ends into FM 969, about 3.6 miles. Turn right onto FM 969, and in about 0.9 miles you will find Earhardt Road on your right side. It will be just past the large white ranch house with white fencing. You will see a sign for Hope Valley Tree Farm.

Bird Calls is published by Bastrop County Audubon Society six times a year. We invite letters, articles, news tips, event reviews, book reviews, poems, cartoons, and photos appropriate to the mission.

The deadline for the next issue is noon on the last day of the preceding month.

Submit material to mbranan@austin.rr.com.

Or send by mail: to 216 Schaefer Blvd., Bastrop TX 78602, ph. (512) 303-2734.

Editor, Mary Ellen Branan, PhD.

Calendar

Nov. 17, Tuesday, General Meeting, 1st National Bank, Bastrop, 7 p.m.

Nov. 21, Saturday, BCAS Field Trip with Mike Goebel to Barkley Meadows and more. Meet at 8:a.m. at the Bank parking lot.

Dec. 15, Tuesday, BCAS General Meeting. Speaker Iliana Pena, Director of Conservation, Audubon Texas.

Dec. 20, Sunday, Lost Pines Christmas Bird Count 7 a.m. - 5 p.m. Other events Dec. 19. Register: visitlostpines.com

Dec. 21, Monday, 6 - 9 p.m. BCAS volunteers host visitors to City of Bastrop's Trail of Christmas Lights, Fisherman's Park.

Jan 1, 2016: Friday, State Park CBC. Info at: bastropcb.com.

Feb. 3-6: 2016 Laredo Birding Festival. Register: rgisc@rgisc.org