



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

January Program

Conservation: How are the birds faring in Texas?

Our speaker on Jan 19 is Dr. Rich Kostecke, Assoc. Director of Conservation for the Nature Conservancy (TNC). He will discuss TNC's conservation efforts and how they impact birds, as well as the avian monitoring and science it facilitates.

Originally from Missouri, Kostecke received his doctorate from Texas Tech in Wildlife Biology in 2002 and has been in Texas ever since. Kostecke's current research projects include assessing the status of Black-capped Vireos in the Devils River Basin and southern Edwards Plateau, assessing the impacts of large-scale wildfires on the birdlife of the Davis Mountains, and the winter ecology of Sprague's Pipits on the middle to upper Texas Gulf Coast.

Rich is famous for spotting the Striped Sparrow outside of Thrall, TX last year.

The BCAS meeting and program are held in the second floor meeting room in the First National Bank Building, Hasler Blvd., in Bastrop. Doors open at 6:30.

The Two Christmas Bird Counts

Bastrop County CBCs are two among 50 counts in Texas each year between December 14 and Jan 5. Full data will be available for reporting in a later Bird Calls. The fifth Lost Pines CBC, associated with Hyatt Resort and McKinney Roughs, took place on December 20. The State Parks CBC came on a cold overcast New Year's Day. The wrap-up meeting at Southside BBQ in Bastrop revealed 24 participants, reporting 108 species. For the Lost Pines count in 2014, 44 participants reported 120 species. This year's was the 116th count for the National Audubon Society.

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

from National Audubon

Celebrate: Global Leaders Reach "Paris Accord"

The tone of CEO David Yarnold's 12/17/15 email to chapter leaders was ecstatic. Though he admits an initial accord may be just a starting place, the fact that "195 world leaders approved the global agreement to meet a science-based target for reducing greenhouse gases,... may well be **the most significant environmental agreement in history.**"

He recognizes that Audubon efforts did much to bring about this outcome: "Across America, Audubon's members and leaders helped create demand for this agreement.... We brought the impact on birds into the public conversation."

The Audubon and BirdLife International report, *The Messengers*, which summarized studies from across BirdLife's 119 member countries, showed that more than one-fifth of all bird species across the globe are threatened by climate change. "We saw more than 220,000 visits online, and hard copies of the report made their way into the hands of negotiators – including France's President Hollande."

Edward Perry of BirdLife stated: "For the first time in history we have a global climate change agreement that recognizes the critical role of forests, oceans, and other ecosystems in combating climate change and helping communities adapt. Importantly, the Agreement also stresses the need to ensure the integrity of ecosystems and the protection of biodiversity when taking action to address climate change. This is critical for safeguarding ecosystems and ensuring that climate change actions are truly sustainable."

COP21, also known as the Sustainable Innovation Forum, or the Conference of the Parties (COP), or the Paris Climate Conference, a United Nations entity, was held in Paris November 30 to Dec. 12, 2015.

Fresh & New on the Web Site

bastropcountyaudubon.org:

A BCAS policy for our web site that it be kept fresh, so that viewers shouldn't feel they've seen it already, so why visit again—except for the latest news always found on the Home page.

When you navigate under Local Birding, you will find several of the birding hot spots of the county fully described by Mike Goebel on the Hot Spots page. He plans to gradually elucidate other sites on the list of hot spots which appears below the articles.

The photos in the slide show of "Bastrop County Birds" on the Home page will be freshened periodically with new ones. These are photos taken by members within the county, so the birds were here, however rarely or commonly.

Under Visual Resources, some Birds of the Month slide shows have been incorporated on their own page. These are Mike's power point presentations he gave at regular BCAS meetings. You can review the Pine Warbler, Great Horned Owl, Summer Tanager, and Inca Dove, and watch for new additions.

Add your bird photos to Visual Resources/ Gallery, by mailing photos with identifying info to webmaster@bastropcountyaudubon.org.

A Few Highlights of Iliana Pena's Talk at December Meeting

Iliana Pena, Director of Conservation of Audubon Texas, outlined the impressive list of our state's action targets during her address at the December 15 BCAS meeting. In each instance from Important Bird Areas (Golden-cheeked Warbler) to help for grasslands, or the protection of coastal island sanctuaries, the efforts are strictly science-based.

How do you change the 100% mowing habits of public park managers which destroys acres of habitat for grassland birds? Suggest the alternative of mowing along walkways only, so there are sweeps of taller grasses in a natural state. Be aware that different species of birds prefer different heights of grasses so the area could be managed to help a variety of birds.

Ranchers are learning rotational grazing instead of turning the cattle out to graze freely on the owner's entire acreage. Grass areas have time to recover between times when the cattle are fenced out.

She stressed the rigor of citizen science, reminding us our counts aren't just casual outings in the field.

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.

BCAS at Bastrop's Trail of Christmas Lights

Susan Leslie, Michelle Belden, Jackie Fisher, Bill Brooks, Mary Ellen Branan, and Mike Goebel, manned the gingerbread house along the Riverwalk in Fisherman's Park, City of Bastrop, on Monday, December 19. A large crowd of walkers visited the house for apple juice, cookies, and educational materials. Non-profit organizations sign up with the City Parks and Recreation Department to host an evening between Thanksgiving and New Year's.



Iliana Pena: Photo by Dru Gabrysch

Appreciation: For the festivities at the December meeting, Jackie Fisher emceed the generous bestowing of door prizes. She made several valuable items herself. Others contributed as well to prizes, and BCAS offered a tee shirt and a Bastrop landscapes slideshow DVD.

Paradise Pond: To Be Improved or Destroyed?



HAPPY DAYS—A BCAS visit to Paradise Pond in January, 2007.

The Joan and Scott Holt Paradise Pond in Port Aransas is a favorite hot spot for birders and photographers. The two-acre site is the only freshwater wetland on the island. Especially in spring and fall it has been filled with a variety of colorful migratory song birds.

In September, 2015, a large swath of trees were bulldozed away along one boundary of the pond by a real estate developer. The event appeared by cursory observation and photos devastating to the pond habitat, and locals and birders are upset.

Here are some blogger comments (KRISTV web site):
 “The birds don’t have much place to go, and if we keep destroying it, they’re not going to have anywhere.”

“This is not about the ‘health’ of the pond. It’s about developer Nick Lorette’s pockets and the development he is building there. It is now December 16th, and not one thing has been done.”

A reassuring web site news report stated, “Joan Holt observed the cutting last week and said it looked like the contractor was removing nothing more than Brazilian pepper trees – an invasive plant species that the city has been battling for years. . . . Developer Lorette said he has met with the Holts and will plant new vegetation on the side of his property adjacent to Paradise Pond property, basing the tree choices on the Holts’ advice.”

Be Amazed: Bird Egg Exhibit

In Mt. Vernon, Texas, the Franklin County Historical Association holds the invaluable Nations bird egg collection at its Fire Station Museum. The eggs are also antique because by 1914 the popular hobby of egg-collecting was outlawed. The 150+ eggs include those of the extinct Passenger Pigeon, the Heath Hen, and the Carolina Paroquet or Parokeet.

Much of the collecting was done by a taxidermist in Ohio who sold them to a Georgetown, Texas, collector, A W. Nations, from whom they passed to the Museum, along with a similarly invaluable butterfly exhibit, of mostly Texas specimens. The exhibits are expertly protected from uv fading and other perils. The Museum is one of only 13 museums which hold eggs of the three extinct birds.

(News tip by Sandy Simon.)

Whooping Cranes: Texas

This year’s census of the Aransas wild Whooping Cranes will not be determined by U.S. Fish & Wildlife for some weeks yet. The last official total is for February, 2015: **310 birds.**

Official observers report dated 12/22/15 noted excellent habitat conditions due to rains. The area from north to south of the birds’ range at present is 63 miles. No birds this year have been found beyond the traditional area because of the improved habitat conditions. Larger than average groups sizes observed is 8 individuals. No twins have been observed.

The national Whooping Crane numbers was reported last at 603. In 1941, there were 16 birds.



*Intrepid CBC Team: New Year’s Day:
 Nella and Bernd Gravenstein, Mike and Jan
 Goebel, Rita Clements, and Mary Ellen
 Branan. (photo by Rita Clements)*

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c/o Dru Gabrysch
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Return Service Requested

letter from President Priscilla Jarvis

Wins for the Birds in 2015

The National Audubon Society Advisory has reported our Wins for the Birds in 2015: “Despite some tough challenges, 2015 has a lot to celebrate when it comes to birds and conservation.” NAS, with the support and efforts of Audubon members, has achieved these successes. For details, see audubon.org, search for “Celebrate our wins for the birds in 2015,” and click on the link.

“Gulf Coast Gets Restoration Help.” This success is most significant to me because important advances will be made in restoring the Texas coast damaged by the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010. A settlement of \$18.7 billion was announced between BP, the Department of Justice, and the five states along the Gulf. This funding will help to restore the marshes, coastline, and other habitat.

Other wins for the birds include: “Migratory Bird Treaty Act Survives Attack,” “Greater Sage-Grouse Gets Its Second Chance,” “Arctic Sea Still Pristine,” “Arctic Refuge Gets Wilderness Recommendation,” “Clean Power Plan Goes Final,” and “Keystone Pipeline Denied.”

I encourage each of you to respond to requests from NAS to take action to help birds. You can make a difference! I hope you have a fantastic 2016 and see some new birds and lots of old favorites.

Calendar

January 14-18, Everglades Birding Festival, Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Snail Kite, Limpkin, 170 Everglades species. evergladesbirdingfestival.com

January 19, Tuesday, General Meeting, First National Bank, Hasler Blvd., Bastrop, doors open 6:30 p.m.

January 13-17, Wings Over Willcox festival. Arizona’s birding mecca. wingsoverwillcox.com

Feb. 3-6: 2016: Wednesday - Saturday: Laredo Birding Festival. Features 12 varied field trips, more. Register: rgisc@rgisc.org

February 4, Thursday, BCAS Board Meeting, Bastrop City Library, 6:00 p.m.

February 15, Tuesday, General Meeting, First National Bank.

February 25-28, Whooping Crane Festival, Aransas. Renowned speakers, exhibits, trade show, photog. workshops, trips. whoopingcranefestival.org