



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

November Program

Birding the Corners with Chuck Sexton

We welcome Dr. Chuck Sexton for the November BCAS General Meeting Tuesday, November 21, at 7:00 p.m. Looking at the map shape of Texas, you'll find eight actual corners. Exploring each corner gave Sexton his presentation entitled "Birding the Far-flung Corners of Texas."

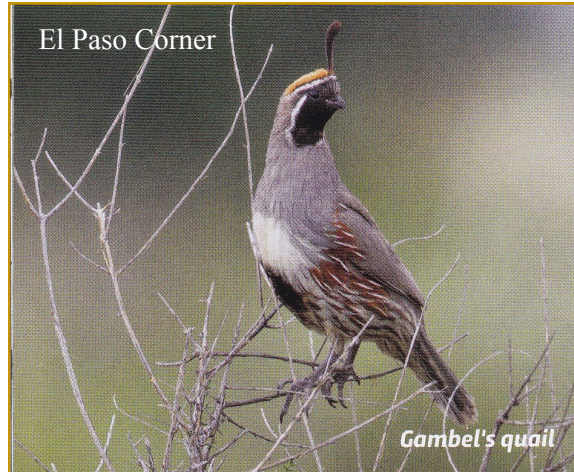
The eight corners include "Panhandle NW Corner," for the Golden Eagle and Prairie Falcon; the "Garden Valley Corner," a wilderness "blend zone" at the northern border; the "Southeast Corner" where the Sabine meets the Gulf; the "El Paso Corner," boasting 362 species, etc., and they all reveal wonders.

Dr. Sexton has been active in environmental issues for over 25 years in Texas. He grew up in southern California and migrated to Austin in the mid-1970's to attend graduate school at the University of Texas. He received his doctorate in 1987 for a study on the impact of urbanization on birds.

An accomplished botanist and butterfly enthusiast, he has presented programs on Texas natural history to a wide range of groups. He and the corners are featured in a recent issue of *TP&W Magazine*.

He previously gave us a program in March, 2014, on the origin and discovery of the Golden-cheeked Warbler. He is an expert on the biology of both the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo as the staff biologist for the Balcones Canyonlands NWR since 1994.

Since Thanksgiving is only two days away, please join us for another feast before the meeting, at 5:00 p.m., at Cedar's Mediterranean along H. 71W just east of the bridge in Bastrop RSVP: ssimon1221@yahoo.com



Donation for Port Aransas

The chapter is gathering member donations throughout November in order to help with the recovery for birding sites in Port Aransas following the devastation of Hurricane Harvey's visit August 25.

The Board already has pledged \$500 and committed to matching member donations up to \$500, so the total could reach \$1,500. Donate at the meeting or via the web site:

November: Month of the Constantly Cawing Crows



BCAS Field Trip Report

September 30, 2017
Pace Bend Travis County Park

8:46 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Conditions: 72°, sunny and clear.

Birders: Sandy Simon, Steve Pyrczak, Anna Stalcup, Judith Reader, Rita Clements, Helen Mastrangelo, Linda Williams, Debra Stewart, Jan and Mike Goebel, leaders..

The count was 33 species for the morning. Although we didn't see a great number of birds, we were pleased with the mix. One of the first spots was a pair of Vermilion Flycatchers on the lakeshore reeds,. Another one was spotted in an oak tree on the north end. The Canyon Towhee and Verdin were found by Helen in the same tree. We finally heard the Woodhouse's Scrub-jay calling for the spot at our last stop.

Great Blue Heron	1
Great Egret	1
Black Vulture	8
Turkey Vulture	14
Osprey	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	1
Killdeer	2
Eurasian Collared Dove	3
Mourning Dove	6
Greater Roadrunner	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1
Eastern Phoebe	1
Vermilion Flycatcher	3
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	6
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	2
Fish Crow	1
Common Raven	1
Black-crested Titmouse	2
Verdin	1
Carolina Wren	1
Bewick's Wren	4
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	2
Northern Mockingbird	7
European Starling	12
Wilson's Warbler	1
Canyon Towhee	1
Northern Cardinal	3
Common Grackle	11
Great-tailed Grackle	2
Lesser Goldfinch	4
American Goldfinch	1
House Sparrow	7

Jan Goebel, Recorder

Visit to Cape May

— by *Judy Turner*

Cape May City, Cape May County, Cape May Peninsula, New Jersey are all known as major summer vacation destinations. But in the Fall and Spring, it is especially a birders' paradise. Both birds and butterflies, including the Monarchs, migrate through the peninsula starting about mid-October, lasting through November. We were there at the start, September 13-16, and did not see the multitudes of birds and butterflies that were reported later. What we did see were pretty impressive.

The **New Jersey Audubon** is organized for Cape May birding. They have reasonably priced field trips two - three times a day with at least two experienced guides. Our guided excursions took us to The Meadows (owned by the Nature Conservancy), Higbee Beach, Rea Farm, Cape May Point Lighthouse and State Park, and a "morning flight" at Higbee Beach. On our own we revisited the Cape May Point State Park walking the two-mile board walk, hanging out on the hawk watch platform, and birding around the New Jersey Audubon Cape May Bird Observatory Center.

Over the three and a half days we saw 100 different species which added up to at least 2500 birds. Needless to say, it was a little overwhelming at times! There were eleven species of warblers: American Redstart, Bay-breasted, Black-and-white, Blackpoll, Common Yellowthroat, Magnolia, Northern Parula, Northern Waterthrush, Palm, Prairie, and Yellow. Most of the twenty species of raptors and related large birds we had seen other places.

Same for most of the thirty or so water, wading-, and shore-type birds. Except in that group were some life birds and unfamiliar. Those included Forster's Tern, Great Black-backed gull, Lesser Black-backed gull, Black Scoter, American Bittern, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Ruddy Turnstone. Other unusual birds to us were the Bobolink, Veery, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Grosbeak, Eastern Towhee, Eastern Wood Pewee, and Fish Crow.

We were amused by the excitement of the New Jersey folks for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, cardinals, Carolina Wrens, Carolina Chickadees, and other birds we see at home on a regular basis. Their biggest news was a Roseate Spoonbill that had wandered up from Florida.

The high numbers for a couple of species were due to a feeding frenzy of Greater Black-backed and Laughing Gulls in Delaware Bay, where the fresh water and the ocean waters collided. There were also dolphins swimming along side a boat in the Bay.

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The President's Perch

With Fall migration upon us, and our sparrows, thrushes, and Cedar Waxwings returning to the fields, it's a good time to ask, "what's your spark bird"? A "spark bird" is a bird that triggers a lifelong passion perhaps even an obsession for birds and birding.

How do you know if you've been bitten? Well, there's no sure fire test, but here are a few things to consider. From where you are sitting, can you see more than six books about birds? Have you purchased so many bird books that you get emails from Amazon telling you about more bird books? Is your backyard festooned with bird feeders? And can you talk knowledgeably about black oil sunflower, safflower, and nyger seeds, and do you have your own favorite blend? Do you now carry a spare set of binoculars in your car in case you spot a bird? Do you take trips just to see birds? If you answered yes to any of these, yep, you're a birder.

Your spark bird could be a prehistoric looking Magnificent Frigate Bird you spotted sailing overhead at the beach. It might be the first time you hear a thrush singing in the morning. Seeing your first Vermillion Flycatcher, Cedar Waxwing, or Roseate Spoonbill might do it. Or it could be something as common as a Bluebird or White-crowned Sparrow that you see really well for the first time. You might find a photo of a beautiful bird you've never seen before, and you decide you are going to go find it. When you see your spark bird, you'll know it.

I found my own spark bird during a family vacation to West Virginia. We were staying along the Greenbrier River, a wonderful riparian habitat. Jan and I had been looking at birds for a few years, but were not yet really birders. After a morning of canoeing, everyone else was taking a nap, and I decided to check out the birds swarming the trees in a nearby field. There must have been hundreds of American Goldfinch, not all pale yellow and washed-out like we see them during

our Bastrop winters, but glowing bright yellow in the afternoon sun. Working along the tree line, I spotted a red bird high in a tree. I stood still for a few moments, and he popped out onto a branch where I could get a good look: a male Scarlet Tanager. Sweet! A beautiful bird, bright red all over, with black wings and tail. I walked a bit more, and paused under a shade tree watching some goldfinches when suddenly a piece of the sky fell to earth and landed in a nearby tree. It was sky blue and white, with what looked like black wings and tail. I had an idea this bird was some

kind of warbler, but I had never seen anything like it. After a few moments, it flew away, and I hiked back to the house for my field guide. After ten minutes of searching I had it, Cerulean Warbler. I was hooked. Jan and I headed back out, but could not refind the Cerulean. We did find another new and very cool bird in with a flock of goldfinches, a Hooded Warbler.



It was several years before I sighted another Cerulean Warbler for Jan to see. It was at High Island during Spring migration. Within a few months, our old Peterson's was keeping company with about a half dozen new field guides, and there was a new pair of binoculars in the house. Our collection of bird books and optics continues to grow. Yep, we're birders.

So, what's your spark bird? Don't have one yet? Get out there and find it, it's waiting for you.

Mike Goebel, President,
Bastrop County Audubon Society

Bird Calls is published 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. The deadline for the next issue is noon on the fourth day of the month. Material is submittable at Contact, bastropcountyaudubon.org or by mail, to the Editor, 216 Schaefer Blvd., Bastrop TX 78602, ph. (512) 303-2734, or mbranan@austin.rr.com.

Editor, Mary Ellen Branan, PhD.

Notice: Bird Calls is seeking an editorial talent. Anyone interested in desk top publishing, writing, and/or photography, please call or email as above.

Our Mission:

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

BCAS
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Return Service Requested

Cape May, *continued from p. 2*

I think the most excitement for the group at the hawk watch platform was the release of a rescued turtle into the bay. It was a Kemp's Ridley! It had washed ashore some ways up the New Jersey coast and had been kept for about three weeks to make sure it was healthy. The Fish and Wildlife person releasing it told us that it was young, about seven to nine years old, so they could not permanently place an identifying code on its shell. He also said it would be headed to Virginia. Who knew? I had always thought the Ridelys were only in the Gulf of Mexico.



Note: The Kemp's Ridley sea turtle is the rarest species of sea turtle and is critically endangered. Their range includes the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.
—Wikipedia

Calendar

November 8-12, 24th annual Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, Harlingen, TX. Field trips to Audubon-maintained Islands of Laguna Madre, King Ranch;, Laguna Atascosa NWF, and other sites. Go to rgvbf.org to register.

November 18, Saturday, Free third Saturday birding field trip at Hornsby Bend Environmental Research Center, 7:30-11:00 a.m. Expert leader. Meet at the parking lot.

November 21, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., BCAS General Meeting. Doors open at 6:30. See page 1 story. Dinner at Cedar's at 5:00.

November 26, Sunday, Mitchell Lake Audubon Center (San Antonio), 9:00 a.m.-12 noon. "A Walk Through the Wetlands," a guided three-mile hike.

Every Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday in November, Volunteer Workdays, Katy Prairie Conservancy, Waller, TX. Go to: katyprairie.org