



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

Report: BCAS Donation for Port Aransas Hurricane Losses

In September the BCAS Board voted for a \$500 donation to aid a suitable bird sanctuary organization in Port Aransas in its recovery from the hurricane which struck at the Rockport-Fulton area on Friday, August 25. In October, the Board approved additional matching for member contributions to the amount up to another \$500.

The Board has approved Conservation Chair Jan Goebel's suggestion that the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center and Paradise Pond, either or both, should be recipients.

The damage to the Center is described on the Center's web site: "The board walk is effectively 'gone' after the first 50 feet. The trees and foliage to the right of the parking lot and in the entry area is less than 10 % of what it was. Most of the tall grass near the boardwalk is flattened or gone. The tower is still there but 'listing' and inaccessible. I imagine it will be years before this is repaired, if ever."

Paradise Pond is the treasured haven for migratory warblers. There is no comparable write-up describing Paradise Pond on the internet at present except that it is closed.

Treasurer Jackie Fisher reported membership donations by mid-December reached approximately \$250. Members may donate now at our web site

January Meeting & Program— "The Peopling of the Americas"

Archaeologist Dr. D. Clark Wernecke, Director of the Gault School of Archaeological Research, asks us to unlearn the old Ice Age land-bridge explanation we all learned as children.

For the Bastrop County Audubon Society meeting on January 16 at 7:00 p.m., Dr. Wernecke plans to "explore the old and new hypotheses and talk about how Texas (especially the Gault Site) is shedding light on the new ideas." Doors open for the meeting at First National Bank Building in Bastrop, Hasler at H. 71W at 6:30 pm.

"New data is proving that people were in the New World earlier than previously expected and could not have walked here."

The Gault Archaeological site in Williamson County, variously explored over the years, is now a dedicated 80-acre site. Its 2.6 million artifacts so far have revealed evidence of a continuous pre-historic human occupation for over 13,500 years, including a mammoth kill site. For visitors, the non-profit organization has a mission to provide tours, archaeological, botanical, and birding trails, and programs for general public education.

Wernecke is also an adjunct faculty member of Texas State University.

Meet for dinner together at Cedar's Mediterranean, College @ Pecan, at 5:00 p.m. RSVP ssimon1221@yahoo.com.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

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



The current BCAS Board for serving through June, 2018, l to r: Jan Goebel, Alan Jaeger, Susan Leslie, Jackie Fisher, Dru Gabrysch, Mike Goebel, Sandy Simon, Mary Ellen Branan, David Mitchell, and Priscilla Jarvis.



bastropcountyaudubon.org:

Updates to the Web Site

You'll find photos of more Bastrop birds added to the slide show featured under Home, all taken by members.

Information about the annual Christmas Bird Counts was enlarged and updated under Local Birding.

We've added another video by Michelle Belden about Smith Oaks in High Island, under Visual Resources.

The latest *Bird Calls* is regularly archived under Newsletters, where you can look up several years of *Bird Calls*.

And, as usual, you'll find the latest news under Home soon after the first of every month. *Editor*

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 third 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.

President's Perch→

by Mike Goebel→

By the time our January *Bird Calls* reaches you, our 2017 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season will almost be over. Started in 1900 by ornithologist Frank Chapman, the CBC is the longest running citizen science program in the world. Massachusetts founded the first Audubon chapter in 1896, and the National Audubon Society was formed in 1905, so birders were out in the woods with binoculars and notebooks from the beginning. The CBC treasure trove of data, when combined with information from Breeding Bird Surveys, and Cornell's eBird were the basis for Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report published in 2014. And, almost all of this data was gathered by volunteers like you and me, citizen scientists.

Want to read something fun? Just Google "annual summaries Christmas bird counts" and follow the link to Audubon's page. You can read the results from every CBC all the way back to the first one in 1900 (found in the digitized 1901 magazine). In those early days, the data was published in the annual *Bird Lore* magazine, which was huge at over 400 pages. The data for the 1900 count starts on page 29, and covers the sightings of 27 birders holding 25 counts. Oh, and in 1900 and for a few years after, the event was called the Christmas Bird Census (that's why it's found in the index under "bird census"). The magazine is fun too, with stories, poetry, and technical *articles about bird stuff*.

Now that you know how cool the CBC is, you wish you would have participated, don't you? The citizen scientist in you raring to go, isn't it? Well, I'm glad to hear that because you have a second chance to perform some citizen science this February. From February 16th through the 19th you have the opportunity to participate in the 21st Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). Just go to birdcount.org for all the details. Under the GBBC format you can bird for as little as 15 minutes and your data will count. You can bird longer, and you can bird places besides your yard. You can even have an outing with family or friends, like a field trip, to add to the fun. And best of all, you are contributing data to science which will help us learn more about what is happening to our birds and how we can help them.

A New Year's Resolution for Coffee Drinkers

Is hanging out at Starbucks condoned with a New Year's resolution?

A resolution this year for the conscientious environmentalist is suggested by Cornell Lab of Ornithology: **"Drink great coffee."**

"Your choice of coffee is vital to habitat for migratory songbirds! By choosing shade-grown coffee or better yet Bird-Friendly certified coffee (which combines organic and Fair Trade Credentials with high-quality shade habitat), you can make a direct contribution to maintaining bird habitat in the tropics.

"Many of our most colorful songbirds, including warblers, tanagers, orioles, and grosbeaks, spend five months of the year in and around shade coffee plantations in Mexico and Central and South America—but only if the birds can find them. Shade-coffee plantations—particularly ones that grow coffee under a natural forest canopy—are increasingly being deforested."

The term "Bird Friendly" is not always easy to determine while shopping nor is such coffee cheap or available in commercial abundance. The original idea for a certification was promoted by scientists from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center for coffee which was organic and met strict requirements for both the amount of shade and the type of forest in which the coffee is grown.

Beware the unregulated marketing phrase "shadegrown," when you shop because this label by itself does not certify organic methods or the density and nature of the shade. "Bird Friendly coffee farms are unique places where forest canopy and working farm merge into a single habitat. By paying a little extra and insisting on Bird Friendly coffee, you can help farmers hold out against economic pressures and continue preserving these valuable lands."

A quick search for local availability of the coffee acceptable as bird-friendly gives us both Starbucks in Bastrop and Whole Foods in Austin.

Searching further, you'll find Tree Frog Coffee Roasters located in Wharton and Bayview, Texas. Tree Frog is seriously committed to being bird friendly. They are certified by the Rainforest Alliance and Fairtrade International. Furthermore, their locations are certified as National Wildlife Federation Habitats and they have taken the "Audubon Healthy Yard Pledge." Coffee-drinkers shop online at treefrogcoffees.com or buy from the shelf at a store on Main Street in Schulenburg.

M.E.B., Editor

John James Audubon, Illegal Immigrant

In 1803, Audubon's father obtained a false passport so that his 18-year-old son could leave France and go to the United States to avoid conscription in the Napoleonic Wars. Upon arriving in New York City, young Audubon caught yellow fever. The ship's captain placed him in a boarding house run by Quaker women who nursed him to recovery and taught him English,



Building interior As of September, 2017

Rehab & Rescue Center Soon Available in Area

Wildlife Rescue of Austin reports the near-completion of their new facility in Bastrop County.

The 6.7 acre site near Elgin until 2014 was formerly the home and property of BCAS founder Maggie Lambert, who passed away in January, 2016. (See March, 2017, issue of *Bird Calls* on the BCAS web site for a profile.) Lambert initiated contact with Wildlife Rescue about acquiring the site.

Founded in 1977, the non-profit wild animal rescue and rehabilitation organization has met the huge need for their work in central Texas out of a small house off MLK since 2003. They routinely care for over 6,000 injured and orphaned birds, mammals each year.

The large facility will house a surgery suite, food prep area, quarantine space, and multiple rooms for different species. Outside, there will be space for small mammal cages, a 100-foot long raptor flight cage, deer pens, and a tortoise habitat.

Wildlife Rescue has presented programs for us in the past, bringing live rescues to exhibit.. If you rescue a bird or rabbit—Who ya-gonna-call? 512-472-9453.

Enjoying the Day: Dec. 30

The Lost Pines CBC took place on Saturday, December 30. We gathered at McKinney Roughs in the early morning and were assigned sections to cover for the day. The day was relatively mild (45°-65°F) and overcast which made the day of bird-spotting easier than usual.

We circled back together at 5pm for the Countdown. The Lost Pines Circle came in with 105 species for the day. The Sora, White-eyed Vireo, White-tailed Kite, and Least Grebe were the special spots of the day. Yes, we got the Roadrunner this year! Surprisingly no Blue-gray gnatcatchers or Pyrrhuloxia. For the unusual, a leucistic Red-bellied Woodpecker was photographed and shared.

Oh, the Eagles are nesting again! Look across the river from the scenic overlook trail at McKinney Roughs for the pair.

A special thanks to LCRA Nick Cowey and Erin Holley for coordinating the event - yummy breakfast tacos and cool Wilson's Warbler tee-shirt!

Jan Goebel

Luncheon With Hawk

by Priscilla Jarvis

In early December, Carol and I went to Aquarena Springs in San Marcos. After we strolled along the boardwalk between two ponds, we drove to the other side of the San Marcos River. We had lunch outside on the covered patio of the Salt Grass Restaurant beside the river. We watched an elegant Cooper's Hawk sitting on the railing. The hawk was very tolerant of humans, letting them get within about eight feet. The waiter said it had been eating cheesy fries. After about an hour, it flew off down the river. Hopefully in search of a proper hawk meal.

Priscilla Jarvis

Calendar

January 16, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., BCAS General Meeting with program. Doors open 6:30. First National Bank Meeting Room. Hasler Blvd. @ Hwy. 71W, in Bastrop. Dinner at Cedar's Mediterranean/Italian 5:00. rsvp ssimon1221@yahoo.com

January 20, Saturday, Bastrop State Park: Explore the historic achievements of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's. Time tba at Bastrop S.P. web site.

January 20, Saturday, Monthly Birding Field Trip, Hornsby Bend, 7:30-11:00 a.m., all levels, led by Travis Audubon. Meet at the parking lot, no charge. 50 species promised. Kevin Anderson: 512 972-1960

Fishing Closed During Our Freezing Weather in Early January

"The high mortality that a freeze can cause may deplete fish stocks for years," said Robin Riechers, director of TPWD's Coastal Fisheries Division. "Protection of the surviving fish during the few days when they are especially vulnerable to capture would likely shorten the time period for overall recovery of coastal species, especially spotted sea trout."

Freezes can kill game fish in shallow bay waters and cause fish to group together in deeper, warmer areas. When fish coalesce to escape the cold, they can become "sluggish and prone to capture." It is these areas that TPWD has closed to fishing.

According to a statement from the department, Texas has about 2 million acres of bays and estuaries prone to freezing. One freeze near Brownsville in 1989 killed an estimated 11 million fish.

from mysanantoio.com

2018: Year of the Bird

National Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, BirdLife International, and National Geographic Society have partnered for multi-platform explorations about birds to celebrate the Centennial Year of the federal Migratory Bird Act. More about this in our March issue of *Bird Calls*.