



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

April Program

Megan Lowery

Our next meeting will take place on April 16 @ 7:00pm at the First National Bank building in Bastrop.

Our speaker will be Megan Lowery and she will be talking to us about "Getting to know Wildflowers through their Families".

Megan says that "I am a plant enthusiast, not an expert, but I am happy to share my plant experiences and plant photos. I have worked at UT MD Anderson Cancer Research Center Science Park and lived in Bastrop County for 30 years. My interest in things natural came from my parents.

I was born in Puerto Rico but only lived there for my first 7 months. My family is from Nebraska. My father loved fishing, canoeing, landscaping and being outdoors. Both my parents loved to travel and learn about history and nature along the way. My family's several years in Puerto Rico strengthened their interest in flowers and plants. During my childhood, we drove to many places traveling through most of the lower 48 states. Our fascination with wildflowers was intensified by my sister's move to Massachusetts in the 1960s. My mother, Margaret Phillips, after raising her 5 children, devoted her time to traveling, both to be with her grandchildren, and to enjoy, photograph and learn about nature. My sister learned and shared her knowledge of New England wildflowers. My brother in California and his wife did the same for the West Coast. We moved to Texas in 1968. Mom and I worked on Texas natives together over the years. My degree in Biology included Botany, Ornithology and several Ecology classes.

Richard, my husband, and I were drawn together by our love for flowers and music. His degree in Horticulture and our experiences working in Garden Centers added to our body of knowledge. Mother and I joined the Bastrop County Audubon Society in its early days. I have also been involved in the Texas Master Naturalist Program and the Native Plant Society, which both give opportunities to learn and to share natural history."

A Message from your President

[Texas Wind Power Energy Under Attack: What Is Audubon Doing?](#)

Wow, fellow BCAS members! Here I am paying my electric bill and consoling myself that at least my money, in part, supports clean energy. And then Asher Price, of the University of Texas Energy Institute, publishes an article "Fight Over Wind Power Ramps Up in Texas" in the April 5, 2019 edition of the (Austin) Statesman.

I urge BCAS members to read this article in its entirety. Download or print. Mailbox or library. He goes into the issues affecting the future of wind power in Texas, and describes the players involved. It's a complicated and very partisan legislative topic, but Price lays it out impartially and succinctly.

In this President's letter I will review National Audubon's stance on Wind Power. Then I will excerpt some paragraphs from Price's article and conclude with a self - introduction to Texas Audubon's very recently hired Director of Policy.

First: "Audubon strongly supports properly sited wind power as a renewable energy source that helps reduce the threats posed to birds and people by climate change." And "... that in order to help prevent

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

species extinctions and other catastrophic effects of climate change, we must significantly reduce pollution from fossil fuels as quickly as possible." (www.audubon.org/conservation/audubons-position-wind-power)

Second: The legislative battle is about withdrawing direct and indirect state subsidies for renewable energy.

Obviously, removing tax incentives and subsidies from wind power projects would slow or stop new growth in this energy. And that result is in opposition to Audubon's stance. To us, clean energy is a no-brainer. So, what is going on?

The paragraphs below, from Price's article, provide some idea of the scope of attack on clean energy:

"When the wind is producing electricity, that does mean that something else isn't, mostly coal and natural gas plants," said Joshua Rhodes, a researcher at the University of Texas' Energy Institute. And that "also means they are not getting paid."

"The Texas Public Policy Foundation, with annual revenue approaching \$20 million, launched a barnstorming effort over the past year and recently has produced videos to criticize the renewable energy industry. This legislative session, according to Texas Ethics Commission filings, the foundation has employed more than 20 of its staffers as lobbyists, paying them as much as \$395,000, to target renewable energy subsidies, among a range of bills that align with the group's small government focus."

"In March, the foundation launched a six-figure ad buy on talk, country, and contemporary Christian radio channels in Austin and other major Texas media markets to criticize "massive corporate property tax breaks for renewable energy projects".

"And the foundation produced a video shown at its events and posted on YouTube — "End Renewable Energy Subsidies" — that makes wind turbines out as a frightening menace looming over rural Texas."

Price goes on to discuss state-level subsidies in detail, explaining the allocations and tax exemptions. He concludes "But folding in tax credits and deductions, preferential tax rates, and other handouts that include

fuel extraction, fossil fuels receive approximately twice as much annual support in Texas as renewable energy overall, according to the analysis."

So, it appears that well-funded fossil fuel interests are trying to limit wind power energy in Texas because that energy cuts into their profits. And the present political climate supports fossil fuels over renewable energy.

Finally, what is Audubon doing about all this? The response seems to be "more boots on the ground" - Audubon Texas has just hired a Director of Policy to reinforce our representation in this legislative boondoggle. He will be working with State Director Suzanne Langley to shape legislation and opinion based on long-term conservation goals. Below is his self-introduction and contact information.

"Scott Moorhead has joined Texas Audubon as Director of Policy. Scott will be developing and strengthening state-wide approaches on policy issues ranging from water quality, availability, and coastal habitat to energy and habitat loss. Scott is excited to build upon existing relationships with local chapters while looking for new ways to foster collaboration across Texas. He is a native Texan and anxious to create and amplify opportunities for healthy bird habitat and stakeholder engagement here in our great state."

Scott Moorhead
Director of Policy
(512) 924-9695
Audubon Texas
7700 W Hwy 71
Suite 330
Austin, TX 78735

<http://tx.audubon.org/>

P. S., If you love birds AND football, look for Asher Price's biography of Earl Campbell, due out this fall.

- Susan

EarthShare of Texas

MAKE EVERY DAY EARTH DAY

During the month of April join HEB and the EarthShare of Texas in supporting dozens of environmental and conservation projects protecting

Texas. At the HEB checkout counters, in the small kiosk with the gift cards (see picture) there are EarthShare tear off donation coupons to choose from for \$1-\$3-\$5. You hand your donation coupon to the checkout person and it is added to your grocery total. Again, this is only for April. Thanks for your support!

BCAS had four HEB locations to check this year, Bastrop, La Grange, Lockhart, and Luling. The Goebels have checked them and the Earthshare pads are in place, and that has been recorded. So, we are in line for an Earthshare distribution later this year.

Further information is available at

EarthShare Texas



Earth Day is Monday, April 22. You can attend a local Earth day event, start your own Earth Day celebration, or join one of the many online Earth Day campaigns. This year, organizers hope to collect a list of “A Billion Acts of Green,” small actions on the part of individuals and groups to help improve and protect the planet. I like to pick up a bag of trash along a roadside or plant something that day.

Local Opportunities

Nicholas Cowey from LCRA has informed us that he will run another Big Sit at McKinney Roughs all day on Saturday, April 27. As you remember the Big Sit is sponsored by Texas Parks & Wildlife as part of the Great Texas Birding Classic. It's the one where you count birds from a 17ft circle and usually receive a free t-shirt for participating.

Location will be at the trailhead area at McKinney Roughs off Hwy 71. He says we will be set up nearby the Zip Line/parking area/restrooms.

The Count Circle starts at daybreak so that would mean getting started before 7:00 am and the option of going until dark. All can come and go as they want during this time. There is a signup sheet for participating in the event.

Nicholas wants to see more participation this year from Audubon and Master Naturalists. LCRA sponsors this for \$500.

Bring your chair and binoculars and count for a while. Invite some friends, too.

Upcoming Events

Apr 16, Tuesday: -

5:00pm Pre-meeting dinner. Cedar's Mediterranean Grill.

7:00pm BCAS meeting and program. First National Bank, Bastrop, 2nd floor meeting room – doors open 6:30pm.

April 22, 2019 – Earth Day (see article)

May 11, 2019 – World Migratory Bird Day

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