



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

## February Program

"The Wonderful Wild of Texas -Birds!" – Romey Swanson.



The speaker at the Bastrop County Audubon Society general meeting on Feb. 18, 2020, will be Romey Swanson, Director of Conservation Strategy for Audubon Texas. He will speak to us about "The Wonderful Wild of Texas -Birds!", based upon his years of experience with Central Texas wildlife and conservation projects. His specialty is working with large landowners to preserve the wildlife in their working properties. In his free time, he birds, "herps", hikes, and writes about Texas ecology. And takes great photos! Swanson came to Audubon Texas from the Hill Country Conservancy, where he was Conservation Projects Manager, and before that he spent 7 years with Plateau Land and Wildlife, working with landowners across 14 South Hill

Country counties to manage their working lands for wildlife conservation. He has served as President of the Board of Directors for the 19-county Hill Country Land Trust, and is active in the Texas Ornithological Society, the Texas Herpetological Society, Travis Audubon, and Capital Area Master Naturalists. He earned a Master's Degree in Wildlife Ecology from Texas State University, and writes for a number of wildlife publications.

Come join us for an entertaining and enlightening evening with Romey Swanson, at 7:00 pm, February 18, in the upstairs meeting room of the main First National Bank building in Bastrop.

## Field Trip Reports

### Milton Reimer's Ranch Park

On Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, I rose early and made the 60-odd mile drive to Western Travis County to visit Reimer's Ranch. This Travis County Park is near Hamilton Pool.

A monthly bird walk is hosted there on the first Saturday of each month from October through April. Current admission is \$10 per car, but it is free for those of us aged 62 and over. (see note on Park Admissions later in this newsletter.)

Contrary to my first visit two years ago, the weather was beautiful. It was clear and sunny when I arrived, although decidedly "crisp". The attendees gathered at the main pavilion in the park to start at 7:30 am. A good-sized group of 8 individuals was led by park employee Jeff Jackson, who is very knowledgeable about the birds to be found in the park.

The walk usually lasts for two hours, but because we were having quite good luck, it was extended to three and a half hours!

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

The ranch's western Travis county location means that it promises quite a different set of bird species to those we commonly see in Bastrop County. On this walk the variety was quite evident. Non-Bastrop species found included Black-crested Titmouse (as opposed to our usual hybrids), Canyon Wren, Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow and Rufous-throated Sparrow. We were also delighted to find a large (40+) flock of particularly verbal Western Meadowlark. Not seen on the walk were Pyrrhuloxia and Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, although they can be found in the backcountry of the park. Overall, we listed 33 species.

This is a great park to visit as it gives access to a wide variety of species in the winter. The trails in the bird area are ADA approved and flat, and as such do not pose too much of a challenge. Total distance I walked was 2.25 miles.

### In The News

#### FIRST EVER WHITE WAGTAIL FOR TRAVIS COUNTY!

On Saturday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, a White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) was found in the rocky areas below Longhorn Dam at Roy Guerrero Park in Austin. This is a first sighting for Travis County and, I think, for the state!

It was re-found on Sunday and observed by many people. It continued on Monday, but I have not seen any reports since then. Our own Mike and Jan Goebel managed to see this marvelous bird.



### Upcoming Events

#### GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT – FEBRUARY 14-FEBRUARY 17

Just a reminder that the Great Backyard Bird Count returns this weekend. For more information on the GBBC, how to participate and instructions, follow this link

<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>



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### Park Admission Changes

#### TRAVIS COUNTY PARKS

Effective March 1, 2020 Travis County Parks are adopting a new fee schedule. The main change will be going from a "Per Vehicle" model to "Per Person" pricing. You can find more at

### [New FY2020 Park Fee Schedule](#)

#### TEXAS STATE PARKS

As birders, we are used to making impulse visits to various birding locations. This may be as a result of an unusual sighting being reported, a change in the weather during migration that may cause a “fall out”, or just because we have time and the weather is good. A recent change in policy at Texas Parks and Wildlife may cause you to plan ahead before your next visit to your local state park.

Due to increased demand on park usage (a good thing!) TPWD has introduced a policy (“Save The Day”) whereby admission may be limited at more popular parks. This includes “day use”. It is now possible to reserve day use admission at any state park. This appears to only really cause problems at the more popular state parks (e.g. Enchanted Rock) but has a potential to affect access at ALL of them. Some parks have designated entry times, and you must choose when you will arrive.

Basically, if you turn up “unplanned” at any state park wanting day use access, you may be turned away if the park is considered “full”. This may be due to physically being full at the time or being full due to prior reservations. At this point you will be directed to a website where you can reserve, and pay for, admission later that day or for a future date. If you have a Texas State Park Pass you can make the reservations at no cost. You can make these reservations up to 30 days in advance.

More information at

[Save The Day Pass FAQs](#)

### [Your Bastrop County Audubon Membership for 2020 – Reminder!](#)

This birding year has flown by and it's time to renew your BCAS annual membership for 2020.

You may renew on our website [bastropcountyaudubon.org/join-us](http://bastropcountyaudubon.org/join-us)

or pay by check via U.S. mail (address below) or pay directly at one of our monthly meetings with cash, check or credit card.

Our annual dues structure remains the same as years past:

Individual	\$20
Family	\$35
Youth	\$5
Sponsor	\$75

Thank you for your support of Audubon and the programs, education and conservation projects we bring to Bastrop County about birds and other wildlife.

### [New BCAS Resources](#)

#### [EBIRD FOR BCAS](#)

If you use eBird, you already know what a great tool it is for tracking your sightings. Now you can share those sightings with BCAS. These will be used to help us know where members are birding in the county, what they are seeing and get better information on what birds are being seen.

From eBird, (with the website or the app) share your eBird lists that occur WITHIN the county, with eBird user ID BCASTX (email address [bastropcountyaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:bastropcountyaudubon@gmail.com)). We will accept these into our account to help with the above data gathering. The FIRST TIME you share a list please send an email to the same email address with your eBird USERID (not password). This will allow us to “friend” you within eBird so future “shares” will be added automatically.

#### [BIRDING RESOURCE DOCUMENT](#)

Some of you may have been participating in the excellent “Intro to Birding for Adults” classes that we have been co-leading over the last few months. Out of this wonderful class, leader Louise Ridlon has published a very useful Birding Resources summary document. It has been uploaded to the website and is available for download at

["Birding Resources"](#)

#### [BIRD CITY DESIGNATION](#)

From [TPWD News](#):

***Communities Rise to the Challenge in the Name of Conservation***

AUSTIN – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Audubon Texas, partners in the Bird City Texas Initiative, are proud to announce that four communities have received certification during the inaugural application cycle. Bastrop, Dallas, Houston, and Port Aransas have been recognized as the leaders in community action and bird conservation. These certified communities took action in three categories: community engagement, habitat management, and threat reduction for birds. The Bird City Texas certification lasts through 2022.

*“We’re excited to join Audubon Texas in recognizing these four communities for the incredible work that they’ve done for birds, wildlife habitat, and connecting people with nature,” said TPWD Urban Wildlife Program Leader Richard Heilbrun. “It’s not easy to become a Bird City Texas community; it takes dedication and vision. We are confident that their accomplishments will lead to stronger, more resilient communities for people and birds.”*

*The sponsors would like to recognize some accomplishments and commitments these communities have made.*

*After the Bastrop County Complex Fire of 2011, Bastrop has been committed to restoring their rare Lost Pines ecosystem for birds and other wildlife that dependent on it. They have also chosen to address light pollution by being a Dark Sky Community, specifically choosing not to light a prominent bridge in town for the benefit of migratory birds.*

*Dallas has restored hundreds of acres of native prairies throughout their city, benefitting many grassland bird species. They have worked to reduce to the amount of pesticides used to remove invasive plants during these restoration projects. They’ve also created an innovative outreach program that provides birding backpacks for urban youth.*

*Houston has done a fantastic job of creating nature centers throughout their entire community, providing outreach and bird-friendly resources for a wide range of demographics. This includes providing substantial resources about bird-friendly buildings. They have also promised to increase the number of prairies that are restored within their city limits.*

*After Hurricane Harvey, Port Aransas committed significant resources to restore coastal ecosystems and fix damages to birding amenities caused by the storm. They clearly understand the link between bird habitat and eco-tourism, and have a brilliant nature preserve system that is managed to provide excellent bird habitat for coastal and migratory birds. They are continuing to acquire surrounding land to buffer these preserves.*

*By undertaking these actions, these newly certified communities help their residents and their birdlife. Bird City Texas communities can use their bird-friendly designation to attract more of Texas’ 2.2 million birdwatchers who are major drivers in the state’s \$1.8 billion wildlife-viewing industry.*

*In the coming months, certified communities will host a variety of events to continue promoting the importance of birds and healthy habitats. We encourage interested participants to visit each community’s Chamber of Commerce website, as well as TPWD and Audubon Texas’ websites for updates.*

*For communities interested in applying for certification, the 2020 Bird City Texas application cycle begins in early summer. Please visit [www.birdcitytexas.org](http://www.birdcitytexas.org) for more information on how to apply for certification.*

Our congratulations go out to the entire city as we achieve this goal and especially thanks to the members of the Bastrop Bird City Coalition members for all their hard work in navigating the whole process and achieving this goal.

Here are names and titles from left to right looking at photo:

- Barbara Wolanski-City Parks Board
- Ashton LaFuente-Visit Bastrop
- Adena Lewis-Bastrop County Tourism and Development
- Fran Hunter-Bastrop County Tourism and Development
- Kathryn Lang-Visit Bastrop
- Connie Schroeder-Mayor-City of Bastrop



- David Junek-Superintendent-Bastrop Parks and Recreation
- Dorothy Skarnulis-Chair-Bastrop Bird City Coalition
- Madalyn Miller-TPWD-Bastrop State Park Interpreter
- Marcia Karr-Board Member-Lost Pines Master Naturalist
- Louise Ridlon-Lost Pines Master Naturalist
- Kelly Simon-TPWD-Urban Biologist
- Susan Leslie-Bastrop County Audubon-President



### Upcoming Events

Feb 14-17 Great Backyard Bird Count (see article)

Feb 18, Tuesday: -

5p - Pre-meeting Dinner, Cedars Mediterranean Grill

7p – BCAS Meeting & program. 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank, Bastrop, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room (doors open @ 6:30p)

March 5, Thursday – BCAS Committee meeting. Bastrop Library 6p

### This is YOUR Newsletter!

If you have enjoyed a recent trip that including birding, we would love to publish a report of your trip. Please make submissions to the newsletter through the BCAS email address published at the end of this newsletter. We are also always on the lookout for pictures of birds that have been taken in Bastrop County, especially rarities or “lifers”.

Title your email “Newsletter Submission”.

Bird Calls is published online and in paper copy 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. Material should be submitted to the Editor at [Bastropcountyaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:Bastropcountyaudubon@gmail.com)