



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

December Program

Dr. Laszlo Perlaky and Alexandra (Lexi) Nemeth. - "Birding through the eyes of an Artist".

Dr. Laszlo Perlaky is a retired research scientist and photographic artist, educator. After 20+ years of monochrome bird and wildlife photography, he has transitioned to the chrome medium, made his multi-projector slide shows, and then he rediscovered the monochrome, combining large format film photography with fine art photographic printing. His wife Alexandra (Lexi) Nemeth is a retired histotech and photographic artist. They won several prestigious awards, published and exhibited their work on art festivals, group and solo exhibitions. Laszlo and Lexi enjoy their outings to the wilderness and love to photograph nature.

Laszlo and his wife Lexi as photographic artists were actively involved in several nature conservancy projects, participated in bird banding camps, and were deeply influenced by European and American nature photographers. Their publications, seminars, workshops, and exhibitions helped Laszlo and Lexi to develop their own style, deepened their understanding and connection to nature, resulting in expressing their feelings in their photographic art. They photographed in many nearby and far away from home State Parks and National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, birding hot spots. Laszlo and Lexi will show their life-long passion for nature photography by presenting their color photographs: "Birding through the eyes of an Artist".

Meeting Details

Due to concerns about the Covid-19, and in particular the virulence of the Delta variant, the BCAS Board voted to conduct the remaining meetings for this year (November and December) and January 4th 2022 by ZOOM.

As a member you should have received a prior email detailing how to join the meeting. If you did not or require a "refresher" please [contact us](#).

The President's Perch

December is here, bringing with it the winter solstice and the first day of astronomical winter, December 21st. This occasion brings with it the shortest day of the year, and the longest night. If you need to set your watch, or are just curious, the exact moment of the solstice is 9:59 am CST, when the sun is at its southern most point in the sky. And, the solstice is not the entire day, it is that one single moment in time. Fun fact, go outside at noon and you will cast the longest shadow you will cast all year. The word solstice comes from Latin *sol* "sun" and *sistere* "to stand still." So, loosely translated, it means "the sun stands still." Why? For a few days before and after the solstice, the Sun's path across the sky appears to freeze. The change in its noontime elevation is so slight that the Sun's path seems to stay the same or stand still.

Some winter folklore. Visits should be short, like a winter's day. Deep snow in winter; tall grain in summer. Summer comes with a bound; winter comes yawning. Onion skins very thin, mild winter coming in. You can't make this stuff up.

Some Audubon members have a tradition of creating a "solstice tree" in their yard. They hang decorations

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

that are edible like apple and orange slices, pinecones filled with peanut butter, seed balls and other treats for birds and wildlife to enjoy. Could be a family project.

As for birds, December continues the migration in of our fall friends. Our winter woodpeckers Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and the stunning Northern Flicker will be arriving. American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Spotted and Eastern Towhees, Purple Finch and the many sparrows are here now or arriving soon. American Goldfinch, Lark Bunting, Dark-eyed Junco as well as Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets will be in our yards and woods. Can't wait.

If you like learning more about birds, and who doesn't, there is a terrific new Peterson's field guide out. This volume is the *Peterson Field Guide to North American Bird Nests*. It has been 50 years since Peterson published their last guide to bird nests. This volume covers 650 bird species, with 750 photos. Do I hear Christmas present? Read more about it here: <https://www.audubon.org/news/a-new-stunning-nest-guide-celebrates-different-aspect-birding>

That's all for this month – stay birdy,

Mike Goebel

President - Bastrop County Audubon Society.

Field Trip Report

Birding Richard Moya Park - November 19th.

Louise Ridlon and Susan Schroeder

On a crisp November morning we headed to Richard Moya Park in Eastern Travis County. Formerly a pecan orchard, this 92-acre county park borders Onion Creek. The park is named for Richard Armand Moya, the first Mexican-American elected to public office in Travis County.

The most prominent feature of the park is the historic Moore's Crossing Bridge. A rare example of a Whipple truss bridge, it was originally constructed in 1884, and crossed the Colorado River at Congress Avenue in downtown Austin. A portion of the original bridge was placed across Onion Creek in 1915 but was destroyed by a flood later that year. In

1922 the remaining portion of the original bridge was reconstructed over Onion Creek as it sits today. A Texas Historic Landmark Marker can be seen at the south end of the bridge.

Birding from the elevated bridge was wonderful. The height of the bridge placed us at middle to canopy tree level. Standing on the bridge facing west with the morning sun behind us, the birds were in beautiful light for photography. A charismatic Eastern Phoebe with a large yellow butterfly in its beak was probably the star bird of the day.

The park has wide paved hike/bike trails circling open fields which are bordered by mature Pecan, Oak, and Cottonwood trees. A mature Bald Cypress tree was a special sight. Many varieties of blooming flowers can be seen along the trails.

The best birding area of our visit was the pecan grove. Eastern Bluebirds foraging for caterpillars and other insects was a very welcomed sight. American Goldfinches bounded from tree to tree and the male Pine Warbler added a splash of color with his bright yellow plumage. The Hermit Thrush sighting was our first of the season. House finches serenaded us throughout the park.

Richard Moya Park is a local gem, easily accessible, and one that we plan to visit again.

Richard Moya Park

10001 Burleson Road

Austin, Texas 78719

Park Hours: Open every day from 8:00am to civil twilight (varies seasonally)

Bird List:

White-winged Dove
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Eastern Phoebe
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted x Black-crested Titmouse (hybrid)
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Carolina Wren

European Starling
Northern Mockingbird
Eastern Bluebird
Hermit Thrush
House Finch
American Goldfinch
Common Grackle
Pine Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Northern Cardinal

The Beginnings of Birding

PART 1: HOW IT ALL BEGAN: THE ROOTS OF BIRD WATCHING

This is the first in a series of articles celebrating birding, the development of optics for birding and optics company Carl Zeiss AG's 175th anniversary. It is obviously a direct translation from the German original, so word choices and sentence structure are occasionally slightly off. Be patient. Part One is a fascinating (if somewhat dense) look back at the evolution of ornithology and optics for nature observation.

In the 13th century the interest in birds was still strongly connected to hunting, when the emperor Friedrich the Second wrote a book with the name "About the art to hunt with birds". This focus already changed during the 16th century. At that time Conrad Gessner tried to describe and categorize all birds. This tradition was intensified by some zoologists in Germany during the 19th century: Johann Friedrich Naumann is regarded to be one of the founders of Europe's ornithologists. In twelve volumes he dealt with the nature history of birds in all details. Christian Ludwig Brehm continued with it and contributed with important descriptions regarding the taxonomy. His well-known son Alfred Brehm inherited his records and added behavioral studies as a further perspective.

In England, George Edwards founded the ornithological history with exact descriptions of the different bird species during the 18th century and delivered with this a decisive basis for Carl von Linné's scientific descriptions. Latest at the end of the 19th century, the scientific ornithology and the protection of birds found its recognition thanks to Hans Freiherr von Berlepsch. He committed himself

to protect their habitats. The time when birds were haunted and examined in a stuff form became slowly history. It was now about watching birds and leave them undisturbed to watch their behavior. Anyway, this was not so easy without the right optics. The German zoologist Oskar Heinroth and his wife Magdalena started a rather unorthodox project, which is very well described in the bird "The bird collective". They brought up 250 bird species of Europe in their apartment in Berlin to describe their behavior.

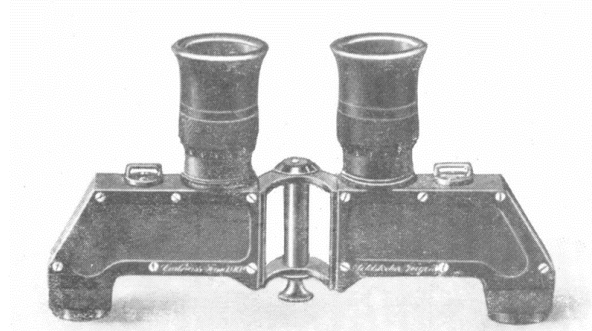
A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker built its hole into their cupboard, a Eurasian Nightjar bred on their carpet and the Brown Owl tried to catch the cuckoo of the Black Forest clock every hour. It is unbelievable regarding animal and species conservation from a today's perspective, but it was not alone a challenge for the birds. The dust of the birds forced Oskar Heinroth to sleep with an oxygen mask every night as he got allergic.

As most of the comprehensive ornithological works were written of European feathers, there developed an own literature about North America's bird life in the beginning of the 19th century thanks to Alexander Wilson. He wrote the "American Ornithology" with intensive studies of the North American birds, which was completed by George Ord later on. For behavioral studies not only of birds but also other species the development of binoculars by the end of the 19th century was pioneering. Carl Zeiss, who was written Carl Zeiß at that time, actually developed microscopes.

He also gave them to the young zoologist, Ernst Jäckel, at very reduced prices as Jäckel was still very young and not as famous as he got later on. Carl Zeiss supported him in his research. Together with the young physicist Ernst Abbe Zeiss not only developed the microscope further. They also checked how to align two telescopes for the zoology in parallel – one telescope for each eye.

They called their first version of binoculars "double telescope with enlarged object lens distance", the porro prisms. They applied this for a patent in 1893. Only three years later they developed the first spotting scope. Although those kinds of optics did not have the

comfort, the light transmission, the image stabilization and the color fastness of today, this was an important foundation stone for long-range optics. Much more important however was that it introduced a new era of bird watching and behavioral studies. Now, zoologists could watch animals in their natural habitat from a distance. An important step for bird conservation.



The Teleplaste

The Teleplaste (former Relieffernrohre) are double telescopes with greatly extended objective distance. They can be adjusted to the eye distance with stretched legs as well as with almost closed legs. In the open position, the teleplastics have the effect, indicated by their name, of deepening the otherwise flat image, e.g., of making distant objects, which appear to be side by side in an ordinary double telescope of the same magnification, recognizable as lying one behind the other at certain distances. Teleplast were manufactured for hand-held use in three sizes, 3x, 5x and 10x magnification.

Courtesy Carl Zeiss AG

Editor's note: We will be continuing this series of articles in future newsletters

Conservation Minute

Conservation today is a huge issue for Audubon and the world. It affects birds and every aspect of nature on our planet. We can each say, "This issue is too big; I give up." Or maybe we can take a look at our lifestyle today and take a few small steps forward.

How many of you are coffee drinkers?

You may not have thought of birds being affected by the coffee you choose to drink. Most of us don't know how coffee is grown today. Much coffee is grown for quantity, so increase production, rain forests are destroyed to make way for more coffee trees. Even so, some coffee is grown beneath the canopy of the rain forest. Much coffee production requires use of dangerous pesticides, but some is organically grown and cultivated. Many coffee plantations destroy the delicate ecosystem, and some promote biodiversity.

You may not have realized that you can purchase bird friendly certified coffee. This category was developed by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and it ensures that tropical agroforests are being preserved and migratory birds have a healthy environment when they travel for our backyards to far away coffee fields.

To help you, I suggest Songbird Coffee, Tomorrow's Coffee, and Chesapeake Bay Roasting Company coffee and Java Coffee. These come from Honduras, Guatemala, Peru and Nicaragua. Even on Amazon you can search for Bird-Friendly Coffee.

Your coffee drinking can help with conservation around the globe. "Be proud of what you pour." You can help make a difference.

Kent Bohls

December Little Hike – Bird City Bastrop

You're invited to our monthly LITTLE HIKE on Friday, December 10th from 8:30am-10:00am. We have a super special invitation to explore 22 beautiful acres affectionately called LITTLE PINEY - a private residence located at 322 Mooney Rd, Unit A, Bastrop, TX 78602.

You are in for a treat. This specific invitation will never be extended again so I recommend you come!

It's at the end of a LONG gorgeous road (keep going, yep, keep going). Gate will be open for you, stay on the path and drive up the driveway to park in the paved area. Long pants and boots recommended. Bring water.

Any questions call Kerry (713) 882-7218

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 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”.

Upcoming Events

Dec 7th, Tue, 7:00pm: - BCAS meeting - ZOOM.

Dec 10th, Fri 8:30am :- Bird City Bastrop Little
Hike – 322 Mooney Rd, Unit A, Bastrop, TX
78602 – See article above for details

Dec 14th, Tue: - Lost Pines CBC – McKinney
Roughs Nature Park

Jan 1st, 2022, Sat :- Bastrop CBC

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