



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

## *The President's Perch: Mike Goebel*

September begins a new year for the Bastrop County Audubon Society, our 35th as an Audubon chapter. We have many of our programs already lined up for this year, with presentations covering topics from bird identification to local history and archeology. Fall migration is underway, so that means hummingbirds and warblers passing through. Hurricane Harvey has left its mark, and now we move forward into recovery, a process that will be long in accomplishing and long in our memory.

We kick off our year in September with Dr. Stan Wellso, a former BCAS member and entomologist. Stan will be talking about insects, their identification, and what they do. Sort of "A Bugs Life," but with real bugs. In October Dr. Byron Stone will start tuning us up for Fall birding and the Christmas Bird Counts. Yes, it will be an evening of LBBs (little brown birds) as Byron leads us through the challenges of identifying those Fall sparrows. November will find us "sent to the corner" as Chuck Sexton will lead us into little birded corners of the state.

Fall migration is underway so that means hummingbirds, warblers, sandpipers, and more headed South. Fall birds are generally better fed than the Spring migrants, so they tend not to stay very long. The good news is that every day is a clean slate and anything could show up in your yard. If they aren't in place already, get those hummingbird feeders up. Studies show that hummingbirds tend to remember where they had a meal in the past, and will revisit those spots within the same short span of days each year. One reason why people that have been faithful about keeping their feeders up and full for many years tend to get swarms of hummers. Warbler Woods just North of San Antonio already reports good numbers and variety of warblers.

Hurricane Harvey was a devastating presence in late August. Amidst the destruction there were some ahh moments for Central Texas birders. Magnificent Frigate birds were blown into the region by Harvey (60-70 estimated), and were seen on lakes Walter Long, Travis, Fayette, Granger, and several others. Six species of tern,

**continued, p. 4, President's Perch**

## September Program

### Insects: The Most Abundant Creatures on Earth

Dr. Stan Wellso, Entymologist, joins us for the September meeting to talk about humanity's interaction with insects, both good and bad, and how insects' amazing instincts guide them in problem-solving.

Stan is a former resident of Bastrop in Tahitian Village, recently moved with wife Carol to Bryan. He is a retired professor of Texas A&M University and a wonderful teacher, an aspect we enjoyed when he was our Field Trip Chair for several years and our expert especially on beetles. He gathered a substantial collection of the world's beetles and traded exhibits and research with world institutions, such as the British Museum.



*Stan Wellso, leading a field trip*

His presentation will cover insect biology and behavior. He plans to tell us why love bugs end up on the front of his car, how Honey Bees find food sources, why ants stridulate (yes?), and what is the most dangerous animal on Earth to man.

BCAS meets at the First National Bank in Bastrop on Hasler Blvd. Doors open at 6:30. The public is welcome. We'll dine with Stan and Carol at Cedar's Mediterranean at 5:00. RSVP to [ssimon1221@yahoo.com](mailto:ssimon1221@yahoo.com).

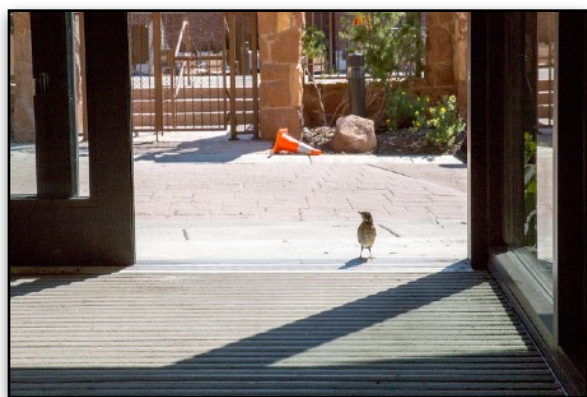
September: Month of Bedraggled Grackles

## Jan Goebel Reports on the 2017 National Audubon Convention



David Yarnold  
Photo: Camilla Cerea/Audubon

**Mike and I** attended the National Audubon Society biannual convention in Park City, Utah on July 14-16 this summer. It was a relief to leave the central Texas heat for the 7000 ft cool of the Wasatch Mountains. There were some 300 attendees from across the country representing +80 chapters plus 150 Audubon staff. Everyone loved to talk about birds!

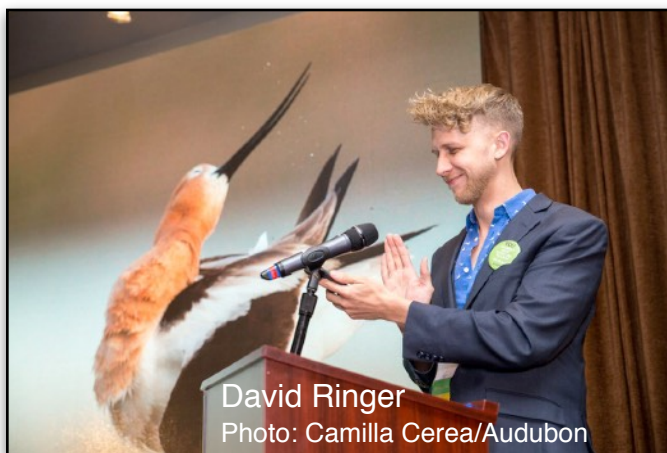


*Our network gatherings were held in a big tent outside the hotel. One lunch break this juvenile robin came hopping in to check things out!*  
Photo: Camilla Cerea/Audubon

The theme of the convention was “Elevating Audubon: America’s Most Effective Conservation Network,” which was emphasized by the speakers, round table discussions, workshops, and networking events like the flyways meetings and poster sessions. David Ringer, Chief Network Officer, was ovation applauded for his great work on the Audubon.org website over the past 2 years. David Yarnold, Pres and CEO, is, indeed, a great speaker and is passionate about conservation for the birds in America. His leadership, vision and strategy of partnerships and collaborations with corporations and other conservation organizations is assuring that Audubon is on the bird mission for the future.

Some of the Audubon programs discussed were Plants for Birds, Citizen Science (Christmas Bird Count, Great Backyard Bird Count), the new Climate Watch, Important Bird Areas, Bird-Friendly Cities, Coastal Stewardship, the new Conservation Ranching, Education for Youth and Communities, and Grassland Conservation. Please go to [audubon.org](http://audubon.org) for details. We hope to highlight most of these initiatives during our BCAS meetings this year.

YOU are what hope looks like to a bird. Jan



David Ringer  
Photo: Camilla Cerea/Audubon

### Earth Share

**The Chapter** has received a \$75 share via Audubon Foundation of Texas from Earth Share as an eligible environmental organization.



### Calendar

Tuesday, September 19, BCAS General Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

TBA Field Trip: coming soon.

Thursday, October 5, BCAS Board Meeting, 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, October 17, BCAS General Meeting, 7:00 Program: Byron Stone, Sparrow identification.



Reports from the FieldJoan Russell's 20-Year Report  
on a Screech Owl Box

Our Eastern Screech-owl nest box is a time share with the squirrels using it for a nest in the fall/winter and the owls in the spring/summer. Sometimes the squirrels refuse to leave in time for the owls to start nesting. That is sad, but this year the owls snuck in there.

The site is off our front porch about 50 or 60 feet from the front door. It is in a pine tree about 20 feet off the ground and faces west. This is in Circle D on Old Firetower Rd. We have had the nest box for almost 20 years, and for about 15 years the owls have used the box and been successful in raising a brood.

Screech Owls are very used to us coming and going.

One year a female Wood Duck tried to nest in the box, but every time the front door opened or closed she flew out squealing. Nobody had a successful season that year. So we put a wood duck nest box down by the little pond away from the house. This is the first year they have used it, but I don't know if they had any ducklings or not.

When the baby owls get too big for the mother owl to stay in the nest box, she sits in a tree nearby and calls to them all day long on and off. The male is also around somewhere but they are so well camouflaged I can't find them. Both the male and the female feed the owlets starting just before it gets pitch dark.

One year I watched a baby owl fledge. It fell out of the nest box and then climbed up the nearest tree trunk with its claws and beak until it got to a branch. It walked out to the end of the branch and then it flew. The next morning it was gone.

**Joan Russell**

**Jackie Fisher and Steve Pyrczak** have remounted a number of the BCAS blue bird boxes we had to remove last year from the abandoned golf course in Bastrop State Park. They are now located in Colovista (a Bastrop golf course and residential area) and nearby river bank areas. Pyrczak last year replaced rusted fittings and repainted baffles, and Fisher stored the next boxes for several months.

**Mike Goebel** reports a huge mature male bobcat appeared face to face with him recently at Hornsby Bend, with his mouth full of a luckless squirrel. Goebel also has posted the photo of him on the BCAS Facebook page.



**Judy Turner** reports dozens of hummingbirds arrived to her two feeders beginning September 2, not long after Hurricane Harvey's rains subsided in the Bastrop area. They continue to swarm around every day. (BTW: The annual Rockport Hummingbird Festival was canceled.)

**Priscilla Jarvis and Red-shouldered Hawks:**

In Spring 2016, a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks built a huge nest in a tall oak tree close to my house on Lower Elgin Road. I watched them from my kitchen window as the female sat on the nest. Tragically, something (owl?) killed the female. But this Spring, I was delighted when a pair decided to use the nest for their brood and hatched three baby hawks. I watched them every day as the very attentive female and male took turns feeding them. They were almost as large as the parents when they fledged. All three juveniles and the parents constantly returned to the nest. On one occasion, all five arrived at once and there was a great kerfuffle with much hopping up and down, wing-flapping, and screeching. They don't seem to come to the nest any more now, but I hear them calling to each other and see them flying about. I really hope they return to the nest this next spring!

**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](http://bastropcountyaudubon.org) or by mail, to the Editor, 216 Schaefer Blvd., Bastrop TX 78602, ph. (512) 303-2734, or [mbranan@austin.rr.com](mailto: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*

Our Mission:

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

**President's Perch, continued from p. 1**

including Sooty Tern, and one Brown Booby were also spotted. When safe to do so, the day after a storm can be a rewarding time to go out and see what is out and about. Not just hurricanes, but thunder storms as well, especially during migration.

It's too early to know the full extent of the damage to the many birding sites and habitats along the Texas coast. Early reports are that some are largely unaffected, while others have significant damage. Bastrop Audubon will be contributing to the restoration of one or more of these sites. Details to come, but we focused on helping. If you would like to make a gift to help with this work please let us know.

*Mike Gogbel, President*



After Hurricane Harvey: Victoria Vasquez, Audubon Texas Conservation Manager, and Warren Dennis Jones assess damage to narrow islands used by nesting birds.