



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society



## January Program

### Texas Naturalists in Australia's Northern Territory -- Bill Montgomery & Margie Crisp

At the cusp of the 2011 rainy season, naturalists and artists Bill Montgomery and Margie Crisp spent two weeks in Australia's Northern Territory. Braving swarms of mosquitos, hungry "Salties," heat and humidity, they encountered and photographed an extraordinary selection of wildlife including birds, fruit bats, crocodiles and roos while exploring Kakadu National Park, the Territory Wildlife Park, Mary River area, and Alice Springs.

With Margie narrating the images, they'll share their adventures with members of Bastrop County Audubon Society on January 15, 2013, at its regular third-Tuesday meeting at the First National Bank, Hwy. 71w at Hasler Blvd., second floor. The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m.

Bill's excellent photographs portray a landscape of extremes and the animals and plants adapted to life in the Australian bush.

William B. Montgomery is an artist, naturalist and herpetologist. His paintings and etchings of Texas landscapes and creatures are in collections and museums throughout the United States, Europe and Japan.

Margie Crisp, writer and artist, spoke to us in June, 2012, about her book *River of Contrasts: The Texas Colorado* (Texas A&M University Press, 2012). They live outside of Elgin and both are former BCAS board members and presidents.

## February Program

"Bird Gardening": Jane Tillman, Former Chair of the Travis Audubon Urban Habitat Committee and National Wildlife Federation Habitat Steward Host since 2003, will speak on gardening for wildlife. She will highlight top bird plants for Bastrop County.



Australian Fruit Bat



Wild Cockatoo

New Year Resolution: Sign up to bring a snack.



## Field Notes

December 19, 2012

Four intrepid Bastrop County Audubon Society members braved the fierce winds and visited Granger Lake in search of Whooping Cranes. WE SAW TWO. The winds really did limit our sightings overall especially at Granger, but we added more by also touring Steiner Ranch back in Bastrop. Here is a list of what we saw:

Mallard  
American Wigeon  
Green-winged Teal  
Northern Shoveler  
Lesser Scaup  
American Coot  
Cormorant sp.  
Herring Gull  
Tern, sp.  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Zone-tailed Hawk  
Crested Caracara  
Northern Harrier (4, at least 2 males which are rare to see)  
Turkey Vulture  
Black Vulture  
American Kestrel  
Whooping Crane (2 adults west of Friendship Park)  
Killdeer  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Rock Pigeon  
Mourning Dove  
Northern Mockingbird  
Loggerhead Shrike  
European Starling  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Meadowlark, Eastern  
Great-tailed Grackle  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Northern Cardinal  
Sparrow sp. (unusually sparse in numbers)

Participants: Priscilla Jarvis, Roy Smallwood, Mary Ellen Branan, and Alan Jaeger, Trip Reporter.

**BirdCalls** is published a minimum of six times per year September through June by the Bastrop County Audubon Society. It is edited and produced by Mary Ellen Branan, PhD. We invite letters, articles, poems, news tips, calendar items, reviews, and photos by mail or email. Deadline for submissions is by noon the last of the preceding month.

Ph.: (512) 303-2734. Email: [editor@bastropaudubon.org](mailto:editor@bastropaudubon.org)

**Note:** The editor is seeking an assistant interested in desktop publishing, photography, etc., to help in the production of Bird Calls and other media.

### President's Letter

## Goals for 2013 and The Christmas Goose

Like most of us, I spent the last days of 2012 thinking about 2013. What do I want to accomplish? What behaviors, attitudes or memories can I finally drop? What do I want to learn and what new fun is out there? How can I spend more time outdoors and share it with others? And what can I do to protect our outdoors?

Ooops. I thought to myself just what you are thinking: heavy-duty, intimidating questions, Susan. Never make it past the thinking stage. And then I thought, Oh, yes, I know what to do about these questions! The Christmas Goose showed me!

I guess I need to tell you about The Christmas Goose, a truly mysterious Christmas visitor. On the night of the 25th, by the glow of holiday lights, I wheeled my little dumpster out to the road. It was very cold with a stiff north wind. My attention was caught by a steady "plop,plop" sound, and as I looked, a very large white domestic goose emerged into the light. It held its wings akimbo, was ignoring the local canine bully behind it, and after one glance ignored me. It went very quickly, in a straight line, and gave the impression of white sails driven by the wind. As it disappeared down the road, all I could think of was its determined appearance.

Was it a Christmas dinner escapee? A feral bird, headed to the river? Not domestic at all, but a snow goose driven south on the Norther'? Whatever its nature, its behavior was purposed and confident.

The message that goose sent me was "Just do it. Don't fight the wind, ignore the dogs, and keep those feet moving." Put that way, life is not complicated and goals are approachable.

Our current BCAS goals are to increase our membership and member participation, within the context of habitat, community, and education. Please make these part of your goals for 2013, and look elsewhere in this newsletter for ways to "just do it!".

- Susan Leslie

Resolved: Go on a BCAS field trip.

Red-tailed Hawk snapped via his phone by Roy Smallwood during the 12/19 field trip





## Conservation Project: State Park Blue-bird Boxes

Every year, BCAS has monitored nest boxes for bluebird and other small cavity-nesters and for Eastern Screech Owls, which we built and installed in Bastrop and Buescher State Parks about 12 years ago. This year, the job has entailed an overhaul of locations, with many tree sites affected first by the drought and then, for some, by the fires. Last spring we also removed a number of boxes which were too damaged to repair. Alan Jaeger, Stan Wellso, and Judy Turner have managed this phase.

Currently, BCAS member and Master Naturalist Audrey Ambrose is chairing an effort to build and mount 15 new boxes. Julia Aikin, Joan Estes, Julie Eron, and Holly Hallmark met to assemble the boxes. These should be ready to hang in late January or early February. At the meeting January 14, Ambrose will seek volunteers for a work day to mount the boxes and keep a master map of all new and extant locations.

Resolved: I will volunteer for a work project.

## A Texas Angle on Shade-grown Coffee

Forests are not cleared and crucial habitats lost when coffee-producers opt to grow shade-grown coffee. For her own small business and support of the environment, Janet Goings of Wharton, Texas, imports shade-grown coffee from various south-of-the border businesses and roasts the whole beans every day as orders come in to her web site. You get your fresh-roasted coffee in a day or two.

She has monthly specials for a featured coffee. In November, she offered Guatemalan coffee and in December, Chiapas, Mexico, coffee for \$10 a pound. She has various gifts and coffees and concoctions, available for order at the web site [treefrogcoffees.com](http://treefrogcoffees.com).

## “Birds of Texas” New Site on Facebook

To join this recently formed group of friends, search for “birds of Texas” at the Facebook search site.

The site is predominately for posting your photos, with room for comments between members. View some educational and inspiring photography from participants far and wide.



**Earth Share**  
One environment  
One simple way to care for it.

[www.earthshare-texas.org](http://www.earthshare-texas.org)

Resolved: Do the GBBC this year!

## Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) Coming in February's Presidents' Day Week End

In the second major national and international **citizen science opportunity**, following the Christmas Bird Counts, the GBBC takes place on the Friday through Monday holiday week end, February 15 through 18.

The GBBC is jointly sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, and Bird Studies Canada.

Participants can watch and count for a minimum of 15 minutes a day on one or all four days and report interactively online at the web site [birdsource.org](http://birdsource.org). Not limited to your backyard, you can get out to various sites if you prefer. If you limit yourself to Bastrop County, your numbers will increase our county totals. You can report promptly or for several days after the count days. Shortly afterwards, you can study the resulting illuminating data when it is final. If you don't have access to the internet at home, borrow a computer elsewhere to make your report. You'll be asked your level of expertise (any category is fine) and the type of habitat in the survey.

Counting birds can be a challenge when there are huge flocks, either of the same species, or a mix of species. There are some tricks to getting a good estimate of a flock size. You can learn how with "Bird Counting 101" at [eBird](http://eBird).

Winter is a great time for watching birds—the deciduous trees are free of leaves and a scarcity of natural food makes them more likely to visit feeders. Providing high-energy foods such as suet, peanut butter, and black oil sunflower seed could entice new and more visitors to your yard for the count. These foods are all high in fat and are packed with calories to help birds keep warm.

A third invaluable citizen science endeavor, the only way for scientists to get such wide data, is “Project Feeder-watch.” Go to [cornellbirds@cornell.edu](mailto:cornellbirds@cornell.edu) to become a feeder-watcher.

***The Movie “Chasing Ice,”*** playing in select theaters, has won at least 25 major awards, including that from SXSW, for best documentary film. *Variety* says it is “visually breathtaking. You can read one review--there are many elsewhere also--at [earthshare.org](http://earthshare.org).

The photographer-producers sought direct video evidence of climate change and global warming by using time-lapse photography. Besides the amazing scenes of treacherous snow fields and crevasses melting away, how the strategies for setting up the cameras is amazing.

***A Plug for Feather Fest:*** It's not too early to register for Galveston's Feather Fest if you want to reserve a place for yourself on Kevin Karlson's “Bolivar Birding” field trip. He calls the site “one of the finest migratory locations in North America.” The speaker at Friday night's reception is Mark Obmsacik, author of *The Big Year*. Feather Fest runs April 12, 13, and 14.

B.C.A.S  
c/o Priscilla Jarvis  
783 Lower Elgin Road  
Elgin TX 78621

*Return Service Requested*



White-crowned Sparrow

## January Calendar

**January 3, Thursday (regular first Thursday), BCAS Board Meeting, Bastrop City Library, 6:30 p.m.**

**January 15, Tuesday, BCAS General Meeting & Program, Meeting Room of First National Bank Hwy. 71 W at Hasler Blvd., 7:00 p.m.**

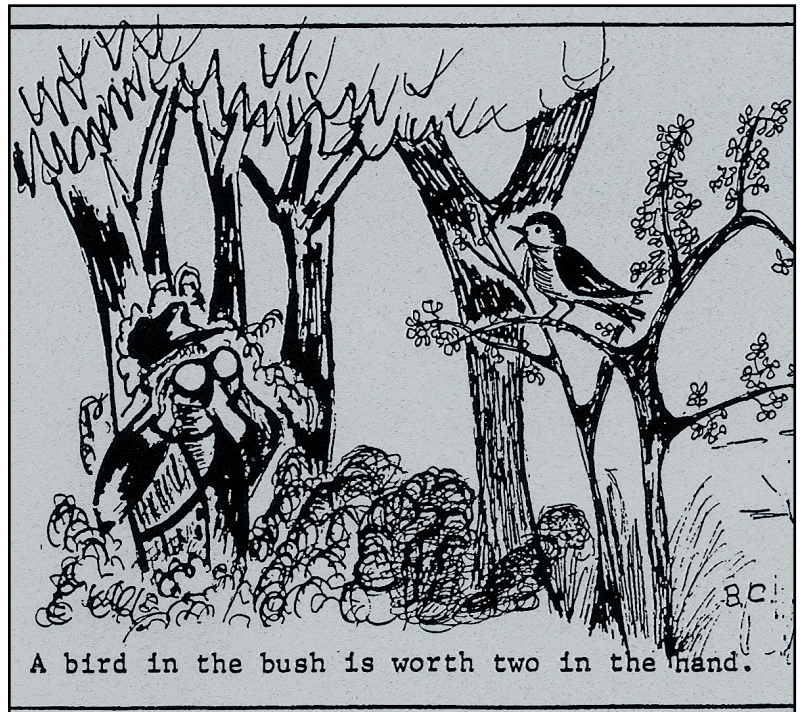
**February 7, BCAS Board Meeting**

**February 15-18, Great Backyard Bird Count.**

**February 19, Tuesday, BCAS Meeting.**

**April 12-14, Feather Fest, Galveston.**

**[Resolved: Attend a BCAS Board Meeting.]**



Cartoon by  
Barbara Carson.

