



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

Exploring the Web Site—

Helpful under the “Miscellaneous” items at bastropcountyaudubon.org are the governing documents: the constitution and by-laws, the duties of officers and directors, and a current copy of the informational trifold that we distribute. Also under Miscellaneous you can view several impressive newspaper articles featuring BCAS in recent years.

President's Letter

Counting Counts

Perhaps you participated in one or both of the local Christmas Bird Counts. Since I don't get around as easily as I used to, I decided to do the Lost Pines Christmas Bird Count on my land. Mary Ellen Branan came over and we had a fine time slowly birding about 14 acres of woods, pasture, brush, ponds and feeders. Mary Ellen is a great birder and helped me identify birds I'd not have known had not it been for her. We saw and/or heard 18 species and submitted our information to Nick Cowey with LCRA.

Another splendid way to participate in counting birds is the 18th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count from Feb. 13-16. The GBBC is a four-day event that engages birders of all ages in counting birds. Hint: Invite children to count birds with you. You may count birds for as little as 15 minutes or as long as you wish on one or more days. Report your sightings at www.birdcount.org.

And of course, coming along on one of our field trips is always educational and enjoyable. We look forward to hearing about your latest unusual bird observations at our January 20 meeting.

HAPPY NEW YEAR! Priscilla Jarvis, President

January Program

Astronomer to Speak on Helping with Light Pollution

William (Bill) Wren, M.Ed., veteran astronomer at the McDonald Observatory and statewide spokesman for “Dark Skies” programs, will speak to the Bastrop County Audubon Society on January 20, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.. He will present an overview of light pollution and discuss the solutions now available.

Wildlife, especially birds, beneficial insects, and the plant life they require, are stressed by escaped light both directly and indirectly. For humans, light pollution ranks as a major cause of auto accidents and of neighborhood quarrels, right behind excessive noise!



While not mentioned as often as air or water pollution, light pollution is now documented as a serious and expensive problem. Light pollution costs billions annually in environmental damage and wasted energy.

Fortunately, light pollution can be reduced, and the changes quickly pay for themselves in lowered energy costs. These changes also improve safety in yards and public places. Wren will describe a number of state, city and business programs now in place in Texas and applicable to the Bastrop area.

He will explain the technology available to homeowners and business owners and the actions we can request of our city and county governments. All attendees will receive a list of helpful websites and local resources.

Bastrop, situated on a major river, is an important area on the Central Flyway for bird migration. Any reduction in local light pollution will improve the success rate of bird and insect migration. Many of these creatures are critical to pest control and for pollination of food crops, and agriculturalists are concerned with the negative effects of escaped light on these species.

BCAS meets at the First National Bank Meeting Room, Hasler @ Hwy 71, Bastrop.

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

Barbara Carson, BCAS Member Since 1984, Passed Away Dec. 7

In June, 2007, a special *Bird Calls* issue dedicated to the 25th anniversary, published interviews and profiles of nine prominent "historic heroes" of the chapter. Here we republish the interview for Barbara Carson at that time as well as the profile of David C. Carson, with additions, in appreciation of their legacy:

Barbara Carson

moved with husband David to a tree farm near McDade in 1984. They immediately became vital members of fledgling BCAS. Previously in Austin, besides Travis Audubon endeavors, and because of her skill and love of ballet, they had founded the Austin Ballet Company. They transferred all that vitality to BCAS in its establishment and regularly hosted parties, teas, and breakfasts.



Wherever there was a void in BCAS well-being, she created something to fill it. Wherever there was a problem to be solved, she fostered new ideas and strategies to solve it—always in her gracious, logical, straightforward manner.

In 1985, she was membership chair, as she was again when I came in '99 and joined her committee. We created "Learners' Corner" because we wanted a free birding course for members. In 1989 she was special events chair and in 1990, president.

She was also *Bird Calls* editor for several years, producing it with a word processor, eight pages, printed on quality paper stock. The array of wonderful drawings and cartoons which peppered her newsletters she "collected from everywhere."

The drawings were applied through paste-ups, then copied: hey, the way it was done without computers. But she says, "The achievement most satisfying to me was bringing the annual State Audubon meetings to Bastrop two different years. All the delegates loved the Bastrop locale."

She has slowed in her BCAS activities since David's death in 2001. But whenever she shows up, she adds her spark.

Mary Ellen Branan

David Carson was a large man slow of speech, confident in his beliefs, interested in nature. He presided over the Audubon Council of Texas and served as regional representative in National Audubon. He served on the Bastrop County Water Council as well as other boards and committees. David was fearless in standing by his views and having his say.

At one meeting, the opposition gave the enviros three minutes each to state our position with an intimidating red traffic light to signal your time was up. David had barely gotten through his first point when the red light lit up. He ignored it. Someone signaled him to wrap it up, he ignored him. Someone else stood to ask David to sit. He ignored them all, cranked the volume of his speech and finished with the same slow deliberate speech with which he started. The enviros went wild, clapping, whistling and patting him on the back. We tended to give him the admiration and love a warrior deserves from his people.

Professionally, David was a rehabilitation counselor, reaching levels of prominence before they moved to Texas. Personally, he was a loving father of three. The Carsons tragically lost one son in a mountain climbing accident.

David sold the canoe he and Barbara paddled in Wisconsin, and it has been used in at least eight volunteer river cleanups. "The Carson" will continue life in the fleet used by Pines and Prairies Land Trust.

The Carsons hosted the BCAS crowd every December for the Solstice Party, as he named it. He donated time, money, set up funding and foundations for educating children in the ways of nature and came to protest every time someone tried to mess with his beautiful county. We will never forget David Carson.

When we lost our meeting place this year, the bank president, Reid Sharp, came and offered the new bank's training room. "I always admired David Carson," Reid said. "I would never leave his group out in the cold."

Judy Ing

From the obituary: Carson was elected to the board of directors of the National Audubon Society representing the states of the southwest, Mexico and parts of Central America, served as a member of the state Sierra Club, served on the joint Sierra/Audubon Textbook Review Committee and testified before the Texas State Board of Education about the environmental content of textbooks used in public schools. In 1988 he received a National Environmental Achievement Award from Renew America.

After his retirement to his ranch near McDade, he served on the Bastrop County Citizens Advisory Board of Health, Bastrop County Audubon Society, Bastrop Water District and became a citizen scientist through the Audubon Society collecting and testing rainwater for acid content. He also served on the McDade school board. His ranch was one of the first to be designated a wildlife sanctuary under a newly-passed state law.

January Refreshments
provided by
Denise Ligon and
Priscilla Jarvis



Book Review*Noah Strycker's A Thing with Feathers*, Riverhead Books, 2014

Jacket blurb: "Noah Strycker explores the increasing likelihood that birds enjoy a vastly richer, intellectual, emotional, and even artistic life than we smug humans have ever suspected" (by Scott Weidensaul, author of *Living on the Wind*).

Some chapter titles: "Fly Away Home: How Pigeons Get Around"; "Spontaneous Order: The Curious Magnetism of Starling Flocks"; "The Buzzard's Nostril: Sniffing out a Turkey Vulture's Talents"; "Hummingbird Wars: Implications of Flight in the Fast Lane"; "Magpie in the Mirror: Reflections on Avian Self-awareness," five others.

Picking up the book, I turned immediately to the chapter on starlings because I was blown away by YouTube shows on the mysterious and perfect flock behavior of thousands of starlings each evening as they prepare to roost for the night. (We saw "Dylan Winter and a Starling Murmuration" last year at a BCAS meeting and listed it on our web site.) The mysteries are why do they do it and how do the thousands in spontaneous motion, swooping and shifting, never collide with one another. Writes Strycker: "they seem to be inscribing some sort of language in the air, if only we could read it." The chapter explores the physics, the scientific theories that attempt to explain collective behavior as a force which tends to oppose the Second Law of thermodynamics which states that physical systems tend to move from order to chaos.

Each chapter delves into cutting-edge science, often the controversies among scientists behind the phenomenon under scrutiny, such as whether vultures can smell or, if so, use their sense of smell that much, etc. The reader learns a lot more science and a lot of new information about the specific bird examined in the chapter, and, as was author Strycker's wish, astonishing insights into the human species as well.

Noah Strycker is associate editor of the American Birding Association's magazine, *Birding*. See noahstrycker.com and facebook.com/noahstrycker

263 text pages, plus references and index.

Mary Ellen Branan

Bird Calls is published by Bastrop County Audubon Society six times a year. We invite letters, articles, news tips, event reviews, book reviews, poems, cartoons, and photos appropriate to our mission. The deadline for a pending issue is noon on the last day of the preceding month. Submit to editor@bastropcountyaudubon.org.

Or by mail: 216 Schaefer Blvd.
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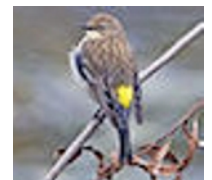
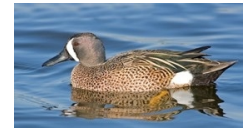
Field Trip Report

Lake Bastrop November 22, 2014:

We met at the First National Bank at 7:45am with the threat of rain (perfect duck weather!). We went over to the

South Shore and then the North Shore of Lake Bastrop. We also made a short stop at Sanders Pond off FM 1441 and saw 20 Red-head Ducks. The sky was overcast with a light wind and 66° F. We identified 43 species. Birders attending were Mary Ellen Branan, Sandy Simon, Mike and Jan Goebel. The warning signs about the Vultures at the North Shore is creepy but true.

Gadwall	7
Blue-winged Teal	1
Northern Shoveler	7
Redhead	20
Ring-necked Duck	2
Ruddy Duck	1
Pied-billed Grebe	25
Double-crested Cormorant	3
Great Blue Heron	8
Great Egret	6
Black Vulture	239
Turkey Vulture	1
Osprey	3
Red-shouldered Hawk	1
Red-tailed Hawk	2
American Coot	150
Killdeer	2
Spotted Sandpiper	4
Least Sandpiper	6
Rock Pigeon	17
White-winged Dove	9
Mourning Dove	3
Belted Kingfisher	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	2
Downy Woodpecker	1
Pileated Woodpecker	2
Eastern Phoebe	1
Blue Jay	3
American Crow	12
Carolina Chickadee	3
Tufted Titmouse	4
Carolina Wren	1
Eastern Bluebird	10
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1
Northern Mockingbird	2
American Pipit	9
Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	20
Pine Warbler	1
Chipping Sparrow	9
Northern Cardinal	2
Red-winged Blackbird	1



—Jan Goebel, Compiler

Watch the BCAS website for the date of the January Field Trip. —Mike Goebel, Field Trips Chair.

BCAS
c/o Dru Gabrysch
206 Lois Lane
Paige TX 78659

Return Service Requested



Monarch

January - February Calendar



January 1, Thursday: Bastrop/Parks Christmas Bird Count, all day.

January 8, Thursday: BCAS Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m. Host, Jackie Fisher.

January 20, Tuesday: BCAS General Meeting, 1st Nat'l Bank Meeting Room, 7:00 p.m.

February 4-7, 2015 Laredo Birding Festival, registering now. "In late January and early February, Laredo and Webb County witness a higher concentration of bird species, a potential list of nearly 240."

February 5, Thursday: BCAS Board Meeting, Bastrop Public Library, 6:30 p.m.

February 17, Tuesday, BCAS General Meeting, 7:00 p.m.



Cookies and Apple Juice and Bird Talk:

Hosting Bastrop Chamber of Commerce and City of Bastrop's annual Christmas Trail of Lights along the Fisherman's Park River Walk on December 18: Mary Ellen Branan, Sandy Simon, Linda Salerno, Jackie Fisher (with earmuffs), Bill Brooks, Priscilla Jarvis, and Mike Goebel. Also serving: Susan Leslie and Michelle Belden, photographer.