



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

February Program

## Water: Century's Greatest Natural Resource Challenge



Susan Roberts, PhD, Groundwater Scientist at Texas State University's prestigious River Systems Institute, will be the Bastrop County Audubon Society's program speaker on Tuesday, February 15. The River Institute in San Marcos has become since its founding in 2002 a vibrant center for research, volunteerism, and education about rivers and aquifers in Texas.

Each year, Bastrop County Audubon Society includes a program on water, and this year's program is especially timely because of the chapter's recent informational-position-paper on the subject of competing interests for the water of the aquifers underlying Bastrop and Lee Counties.

Roberts will bring us specific information about current systems and policies and the priority groundwater issues and the proposed solutions at play in the present politically-charged environment concerning water. She will share an overview of typical groundwater models.

Dr. Roberts says her experience includes research on the interaction and management of surface water and groundwater; consultation about aquifers typified by underground limestone caverns; soil and water investigations, and remediation using innovative technologies. She is a Registered Professional Geoscientist.

The General Meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the First National Bank in Bastrop, Hasler Boulevard at S.H. 71 w, second floor. Doors open at 6:30. BCAS programs are open to the public at no charge each third Tuesday of the months September through June.

In December and January BCAS sent the BCAS "white paper" on community concerns about the future viability of the Simsboro and associated aquifers to all State legislators, local elected officials, and water boards.

The River Systems Institute was founded in order to address the most significant natural resource challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: water. The San Marcos Springs, fed by the Edwards Aquifer, forms the headwaters of the cool, clear San Marcos River, home of several endangered species. Interestingly, many archaeologists consider the Springs area to be the oldest, continuously inhabited site in North America.

## Conservation Chair Filled

Steve Ligon has accepted appointment to the Conservation Chair, which had not been filled at election time last June. The BCAS Board moved in January to vacate the Special Events position, which Steve and Denise Ligon held. Events involving the BCAS booth activity will be handled on an ad hoc basis, as can be also the Hospitality Chair responsibilities. The President and Board deemed the Conservation post is a greater priority and had been underserved too long. Ligon's knowledge on issues makes him well-qualified for the conservation post.

## GBBC and Our Next Field Trip

*How will this winter's snow and cold temperatures influence bird populations? What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?*

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages birders in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. From Friday through Monday, Feb. 18-21,

Continued on p. 3

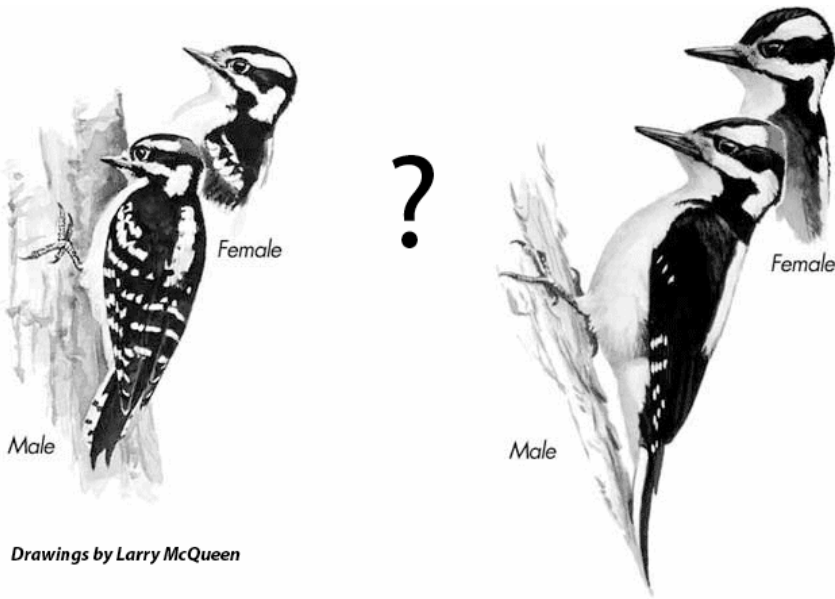


## Gleaning in the Field

### Arkansas Blackbird Deaths Cause Media Flurry

On New Year's Eve, about 5,000 blackbirds died in Arkansas after fireworks scared them from their roost and they collided with houses, mailboxes, and possibly each other as they flew about disoriented in the dark. The incident sparked a flurry of media coverage. But it's the constant, chronic loss of bird life because of habitat destruction and other causes that should really be headline news.

An estimated 100 million birds die from window collisions in the United States alone each year. That's more than 270,000 per day on average! Outdoor cats are estimated to kill another 100 million per year. GBBC/Cornell eNewsletter, 1/20/11.



Drawings by Larry McQueen

The Great Backyard Bird Count eletter also includes this little test for identifying a **Downy** or a **Hairy Woodpecker** since they are sometimes misidentified. (Imagine the gray patch is a red patch on the heads of both.) Can you tell which one is which? One's beak is somewhat longer and overall size a little larger than the other. Don't forget to participate in this important citizen-based research event on **Presidents' Week End, Feb. 18 through 21.**



## Field Trip Report

Bastrop Audubon members were out in full force (we had the rest of you in our minds) leaving from the First National Bank and visiting Tahitian Village, North Shore of Lake Bastrop, and Steiner Ranch. We Departed at 8:00 a.m. (45 degrees ) and finished at 1:30 p.m. (66 degrees ). The more interesting finds of the day were Red Head Duck, Green-winged Teal, Cooper's Hawk, Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk, both kinglets, Loggerhead Shrike, and Spotted Towhee. A total of 52 species were observed by Alan Jaeger, Mary Ellen Branan, and **Stan Wellso, Field Trips Chair.**

### Species January 8, 2011

Great Egret	1
Green-winged Teal	1
Redhead	2
Black Vulture	24
Turkey Vulture	18
Osprey	1
Northern Harrier	1
Cooper's Hawk	1
Red-shouldered Hawk	2
Red-tailed Hawk	8
Crested Caracara	5
American Kestrel	14
American Coot	55
Killdeer	7
Greater Yellowlegs	1
Least Sandpiper	17
Rock Pigeon	7
Mourning Dove	5
Eurasian Collared Dove	5
Red-bellied Woodpecker	5
Downy Woodpecker	1
Eastern Phoebe	6
Blue Jay	17
American Crow	40
Carolina Chickadee	4
Tufted Titmouse	2
Carolina Wren	4
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	9
Eastern Bluebird	7
Northern Mockingbird	21
American Pipit	2
Cedar Waxwing	2
Loggerhead Shrike	2
European Starling	5
Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	2
Pine Warbler	7
Spotted Towhee	1
Chipping Sparrow	1
Field Sparrow	23
Vesper Sparrow	4
Savannah Sparrow	13
Lincoln's Sparrow	16
Red-winged Blackbird	1
Eastern Meadowlark	1
Western Meadowlark	1
Meadowlark species	100
Great-tailed Grackle	25
Common Grackle	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	22
Blackbird species	500
American Goldfinch	4
House Sparrow	9



## Gulf Oil Spill News

"As potential science experiments go, a massive oil spill resulting in severe environmental and economic damage isn't anyone's idea of a good field test. But while the more than 4 million bbl. of oil spilled into the Gulf of Mexico after the sinking of BP's Deepwater Horizon rig last

April mucked up coastlines and caused tens of billions of dollars' worth of damage to the Gulf Coast economy, it also gave scientists an unprecedented chance to examine how a major water system would respond to all those hydrocarbons.

"While the jury is still out, the early evidence shows something surprising: the Gulf proved to be much more resilient to the oil spill than scientists might have expected. The vast majority of the oil and other hydrocarbons seem to be gone, less than six months after the crude stopped flowing. And the biggest heroes of the cleanup turned out to be not the thousands of workers who scoured oil from the beaches or the shrimp-boat captains who turned their vessels into oil skimmers. They were actually the microscopic bacteria in the Gulf that digested much of the hydrocarbons while they were still deep under the surface.

"This has really helped us understand the capacity of a natural system to handle this kind of event by itself," says John Kessler, a chemical oceanographer at Texas A&M University." And it sort of does handle it."

---excerpt from *Time Magazine*, 1/10/11

**Bird Calls** is published six/seven times per year September through June by the Bastrop County Audubon Society (BCAS). 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 the first of the month. *Birds Calls* is a membership benefit.

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## Letter from the President

### Waiting for Ideas for Ing Memorial

I am enlisting assistance from people who knew Judy Ing to help BCAS honor her memory for the endless time, talent and enthusiasm she contributed, not only to Audubon, but to the County. We have received donations in her memory, and set them aside for a yet to be determined memorial.

Judy was results-oriented in a nice, unpretentious manner. She accomplished goals that last---the Alcoa battle, the Harvest Arts Festival, and BCEN, for example. Her enthusiasm and humor filled the room. She did not know what "no" meant, so regardless of what level of proficiency she might possess on a topic, Judy jumped in with equal enthusiasm. Since Judy's creativity matched her enthusiasm, she was often called upon to take the lead in planning and implementing new activities.

Judy's interests were not limited to nature, although she took much pleasure in field trips and outdoor photography. She and Mary Ellen Branan conceived the BCAS calendar project. This sent them out into the back roads in 2009, cameras in hand, which eventually resulted in the beautiful 2011 BCAS calendar dedicated to her. Judy was the quintessential volunteer. She is missed by many of us.

What is the best way to remember Judy? Should we install a visible object somewhere? Should each of us choose to volunteer for some BCAS activity? Or should we contribute to some special cause? Bring your ideas to the next meeting or email them to me at [Stewandsue@att.net](mailto:Stewandsue@att.net).

**Sue Brubaker President**



**Earth Share**  
OF TEXAS

*Lead, mercury and cadmium, even when present in small amounts, can release dangerous toxins into our air and water when disposed of improperly – like in a landfill. What's worse is that all that waste could be put to much better use. If Americans recycled the more than 100 million cell phones no longer in use, enough energy would be saved to power nearly 200,000 households for one year! [earthshare.org](http://earthshare.org)*

### *GBBC & Field Trip, continued from p. 1*

participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time and report their counts on an online checklist at the website [birdsource.org/gbbc](http://birdsource.org/gbbc). Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event.

Since you can count also during an outing to a major birding site, Stan Wellso, Field Trips Chair, has set the BCAS February field trip featuring winter ducks for the Monday holiday. We'll meet at 8:00 a.m. at the bank parking lot in Bastrop if you wish to car pool, and head for Hornsby Bend. Or meet us at the parking lot at Hornsby Bend by 8:30.

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



Green-winged Teal  
by Steven D'Amato

February Refreshments by

Denise Ligon &  
Jan Goebel



Photo by Roy Smallwood

Red-  
Bellied  
Wood-  
pecker

## February Calendar

**Feb. 12, Saturday: Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Survey,** 6-11:00 a.m. and 4-till dark. See [hornsbybend.org](http://hornsbybend.org) for more info.

**Feb. 13, Sunday: BCAS Board Meeting,** 4:00 p.m., 783 Lower Elgin Rd., Priscilla Jarvis. With pot-luck supper. 512-281-2762.

**Feb. 15, Tuesday: BCAS General Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank, Hasler Blvd. @ H. 71W in Bastrop.

**Feb. 18-21, Friday thru Monday: Great Backyard Bird Count.**

**Feb. 19, Saturday: Day on the Colorado River,** for ABRCP monthly monitoring. Email [joallakug@hotmail.com](mailto:joallakug@hotmail.com) for info. Allan Kugler, leader.

**Feb. 21, Monday: BCAS Field Trip to Hornsby Bend,** 8:00 a.m. See story on page 1/3. Wells ph. 512-321-0122.

**Feb. 24-27, Thursday-Sunday: Whooping Crane Festival,** Port Aransas. 316-749-5919.