



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

February Program



Mike Goebel, Susan Leslie, Alan Jaeger, Carly Blankenship (Acting CEO), Roy Smallwood, Dan Pacatte (Reforestation Coordinator), and Bill Brooks.

A Force for Good: Boy Scouts's Conservation Badge in Bastrop County

For the Bastrop County Audubon meeting on February 18, 2014, **field ornithologist and Boy Scout leader E.G. White-Swift** will present a program on the Boy Scouts' Hornaday Weekends held at Lake Bastrop twice a year. The week end outdoor pursuit for over 200 scouts results in the Hornaday Merit Badge in Conservation for the scouts and in environmental benefits for the various sites, schools, and conservation organizations which get involved.

The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. at the First National Bank second-floor meeting room, Hasler Blvd. at H. 71W in Bastrop, free of charge. Doors open at 6:30.

White-Swift considers the Bastrop area ideal for this far-ranging conservation training. He has been studying bird identification, behavior, and distribution since 1976. He has observed more than 600 species of birds in the continental United States. He has assisted at bird banding and breeding bird counts. He has served as president of Dallas County Audubon Society. He helps manage the Eastern McLennan County (Waco) CBC each year. He co-founded the TexBirds email bird list with Ted Eubanks in 1994 and served as the list coordinator for its first five years. He serves on the McLennan County Bird Records Committee that publishes the checklist of birds of McLennan County.

The badge honors William Temple Hornaday, (December 1, 1854 – March 6, 1937), an American zoologist, and conservationist. Hornaday revolutionized museum exhibits by displaying wildlife in their natural settings and is credited with first identifying the American crocodile and saving the American bison and the Alaskan fur seal from extinction.

During the weekend the scouts work on one of 21 conservation merit badges from bird study to forestry to gardening. They typically work on a conservation project similar to an Eagle project to earn the Hornaday badge.

White-Swift continues as an assistant scoutmaster in Troop 456 (Waco) and assistant district commissioner for the Indian Nations District of the Longhorn Council organization and a member of the Capitol Area Council's Hornaday Weekend steering committee

Tree Folks & Binoculars

BCAS thanks all participants in its fundraiser. George Fisher was the winner of the Vortex 8x32 Crossfire Binocular announced at the December 17 General Meeting. BCAS matched the amount raised and delivered it to Tree Folks on January 16. The effort has produced enough funds to purchase and plant over 2000 more drought resistant loblolly pine seedlings on private land in Bastrop County.

State Chapter Assembly March 1-2: Details on Page 3.

Be Counted

Sponsored each year by National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab for Ornithology, the Great Backyard Bird Count for 2014 occurs Feb. 15-17, the Presidents' Day holiday week end. A major citizen-science event, the count in 2013 involved participants from all seven continents, including 111 countries and independent territories. Cedar Creek also—and your house as well. It's easy, important, and fun. See birdsource.org.

Find Us on Facebook

At Facebook, search using our full name with spaces and caps: Bastrop County Audubon Society; click "friend." Post bird-sightings, photos, or questions on your timeline.



Field trippers: Mike Goebel, Jan Goebel, Steve Pyrczak, and Jackie Fisher at Hornsby Bend (photo by Mary Branan)



Field Report

—by Jan Goebel

The BCAS field trip to Hornsby Bend, January 25 began as cold (30°F) and overcast morning of birding, but ended at 68° by 1:00 p.m.. The five birders identified 55 species. There were crowds of Least Sandpipers. Noteworthy were the Rusty Blackbirds and a Ladder-backed Woodpecker . Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 11

Gadwall	54
American Widgeon	8
Northern Shoveler	45
Northern Pintail	3
Green Winged Teal	45
Ring-necked Duck	5
Ruddy Duck	3
Pied-billed Grebe	2
Double-crested Cormorant	3
Great Blue Heron	3
Great Egret	3
Snowy Egret	1
Black Vulture	4
Turkey Vulture	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	2
Red-tailed Hawk	3
American Coot	64
Killdeer	13
Spotted Sandpiper	3
Greater Yellowlegs	1
Least Sandpiper	149
Wilson's Snipe	1
Rock Pigeon	2
Mourning Dove	3

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Letter from the President

Hello, all!

One aspect of the recent roller-coaster weather has been the amazing variety of birds. Of course, our viewing pleasure comes with responsibility, as we keep water de-iced and high-calorie food refilled. But what a reward! I am seeing sassy blue jays, raggedy purple finches, and four kinds of woodpeckers, in addition to my habitués. Two roadrunners come for water, and I've seen various little olive green guys too quick to identify. Other members are reporting goldfinches, cedar waxwings, owls, and lots of waterfowl. I hope your yard is bustling, too.

On another note, your BCAS board has been discussing possible new community partnerships. The reason is simple: we are a small group and can best do our part to improve bird and wildlife habitat by partnering with others with similar missions. We support Tree Folks with volunteers and dollars, maintain the Swift Tower we built in a City park, and work with Scouts and Master Naturalists to put up bird houses in parks and reserves.

We also support habitat preservation through youth education, using the Audubon Adventures materials. After all, these youngsters will be in charge of preserving habitat, or not, in a few years. But we can reach even more youth by partnering with outdoor education and projects offered by other organizations.

To this end we are following through on January's "Wildlife Habitat Education Program for 4-H" with a presentation about a wonderful and little-known Scouting activity called the Hornaday Program. Like the 4-H program, this involves hands-on outdoor projects and needs knowledgeable volunteers. These programs also need potential projects. For example, if your property has everything owls want except good nest trees, then you may want to let a young person study, build, and monitor nesting boxes. Or go out and help them bird, using the binoculars we purchased for community group use. Our partnership for these is Pines and Prairies Land Trust, who provide storage and check-out.

I hope that what you take away from these speakers are volunteer opportunities for yourself, or support opportunities for us as a group. What else can we do to provide wildlife and habitat education in 2014? And who would be a good partner for us? Look around for possibilities, and share your ideas with rest of us. Think "birding for fun, birding for the future!"

Susan Leslie, President



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Spotting Humpback Whales in the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, Sept 24 2013

By Michelle Belden

From Boston, Massachusetts Long Wharf harbor, we boarded the New England Aquarium whale-watch catamaran. The ship had outside viewing decks and inside cabin space for seating. We left the bustling harbor and headed out to the Atlantic Sea going east for 25 miles. We traveled at 24 knots, to visit the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

The marine sanctuary is an underwater plateau comprised of 842 square miles and was declared a marine preserve in 1992. It is located between Cape Cod and Cape Ann in the mouth of the Massachusetts Bay. This marine habitat attracts humpback, finback, minke and pilot whales. The humpback whales are in major ocean areas such as the North Atlantic, North Pacific and the Southern hemisphere waters. The humpback whales migrate to breed in tropical and subtropical waters. The feeding area in the Eastern North Atlantic Ocean ranges from North America, Eastern Canada, West Greenland, and Iceland to Norway.

After traveling an hour at sea, we finally arrived to the marine preserve. Our Captain, crew, and passengers were scanning the surface of the ocean looking for evidence of whales. We spotted spray from a whale's blowhole at a distance. The catamaran moved swiftly through the ocean, focusing in on the sighted area. When we arrived, the engines were silenced, and we all saw the dorsal fin of a humpback whale. When whales surfaced, we could see and hear them breathe, and the entire boatload was jammed in the bow of the boat, all of stunned at seeing these remarkable big mammals.

We all watched them as they thrashed their pectoral whale flippers against the ocean surface, splashing water, spraying through their blowhole, swimming and then taking a dive to expose their massive fin tails protruding out of the water. The prominent flukes that were revealed were black and white in coloring. We all saw this for the first time, our minds inquisitive and in a state of discovery, sharing this moment together. The panoramic vistas of ocean, whales and azure skies saturated our senses with endless treasure of beauty.

In 1972, congress passed the Marine Protection Act preserving underwater marine sanctuaries. There are 13 national marine sanctuaries in the United States. What a remarkable planet we have, with conservation in place to protect these endangered species.

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'Rising Together' - Texas Audubon Chapter Assembly: March 1-2

If you plan to go and have not yet registered for the event, register right away at audubon-texas.ticketleap.com/texas-audubon-chapter-assembly. The registration fee, which has been "purposely kept at \$45," includes four meals.

You can find the program schedule and full information at tx.audubon.org.

Nearby for us in Bastrop County at McKinney Roughs Nature Park, the event is organized for Audubon chapter leaders, members, and volunteers, as well as friends and stakeholders in the conservation field. Members from the 20 chapters all over the state will be attending.

Chris Canfield, Audubon Vice President of Mississippi Flyway / Gulf Coast, will be the keynote speaker at 1:45 on Saturday, March 1. BCAS is co-host of the Assembly, along with Travis Audubon.

On Friday, February 28, BCAS will provide a field trip to the South shore of Lake Bastrop at 3:00 pm—6:00 pm. All BCAS members and friends are welcome. More details at the meeting Feb. 18."

The program opens on Saturday with a hike at 7:00 a.m., then breakfast, and a plenary session at 9:00, "Audubon Texas—Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow." Participants then divide into smaller 50-minute sessions for the rest of the morning.

More sessions will be available following the keynote speech until dinner at 6:00. The plenary session on Sunday morning is entitled "A Controversial Issues Briefing: Fracking, Water Conservation and Development, West Nile Virus, Wind Farms and More."

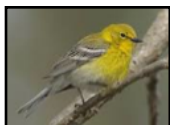
Bird Calls, published September through June by the Bastrop County Audubon Society, is edited and produced by Mary Ellen Branan, PhD. We invite letters, articles, poems, news tips, calendar items, book or event reviews, and photos by mail or email. Deadline for submissions is by noon the last day of the preceding month. Ph.: (512) 303-2734. Email: mbran@austin.rr.com.



photo: by Pam Hohman

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Return Service Requested



Pine Warbler

Calendar: February-March

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

Feb. 8: Tree Folks Planting: See Treefolks.org and sign up.

Feb. 8, Saturday: Hornsby Bend Monthly Bird Survey. 7-11:00 and 4:00 till dark.

Feb. 18, Tuesday: BCAS Meeting: 7:00 p.m. First Nat'l Bank. Doors open 6:30. Refreshments. Program details, page 1.

Feb. 15-17, Great Backyard Bird Count.

Feb. 20-23, Thursday thru Sunday: 2014 Whooping Crane Festival, Port Aransas, Boat Tours, whoopingcranefestival.org.

Feb. 22, Saturday: BCAS Field Trip to both State Parks, Shipp Lake, and Loop Road areas. 8:00 a.m., car-pooling from bank parking lot, Bastrop. Roy Smallwood, Trip Leader (254) 722-9993.

Feb. 28, Friday: BCAS Hosting Assembly field trip, 3:00 p.m..

March 6, Thursday: 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting.

March 18, Tuesday: BCAS General Meeting 7:00 p.m..

Field Report, continued

Belted Kingfisher	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	5
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	1
Downy Woodpecker	2
Crested Caracara	4
American Kestrel	2
Eastern Phoebe	8
Blue Jay	2
American Crow	5
Carolina Chickadee	4
Tufted Titmouse	3
House Wren	1
Carolina Wren	3
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3
Eastern Bluebird	8
Northern Mockingbird	3
European Starling	4
Cedar Waxwing	90
Yellow-rumped Warbler	10
Vesper Sparrow	3
Savannah Sparrow	27
Song Sparrow	2
Northern Cardinal	16
Red-winged Blackbird	82
Rusty Blackbird	6
Common Grackle	1
Great-tailed Grackle	12
Brown-headed Cowbird	2
House Sparrow	12

The next BCAS field trip scheduled by Roy Smallwood, Field Trips Chairman, is February 22, for State Parks, Shipp Lake, and more.