



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

Christmas Bird Counts Reports

David Mitchell shared the compiled data he reported to National Audubon from the Bastrop State Parks Christmas Bird Count for 2012. On January 1, 2013, a cloudy and sometimes rainy day, with the temperature ranging 39 - 56 degrees, 27 participants in 13 parties covered the traditional map of the area, by foot and car and by boat on Lake Bastrop.

Here's a sampling of some of the more numerous, representative, or more unexpected species counted: Black Vulture 521, Turkey Vulture 275, Kestrel 75, Pied-billed Grebe 87, Coot 3,063, Great Blue Heron 50, Cattle Egret 5, Black-bellied Whistling Duck 40, Gadwall 283, White-winged Dove 392, Mourning Dove 246, Ruby-throat Hummingbird 1, Rufous Hummingbird 2, Pileated Woodpecker 45, Eastern Phoebe 91, Red-breasted Nuthatch 8, Eastern Bluebird 271, American Robin 368, Hermit Thrush 15, Loggerhead Shrike 25, Pine Warbler 316, Dark-eyed Junco 30, Northern Cardinals 572, Red-winged Blackbird 1,956, American Goldfinch 693.

Among the sparrows: Chipping 1,469, Savannah 655, Harris' 7.

Species rare for this time of year in our area, confirmed with documentation, were a Tri-colored Heron and a Black-crowned Heron.

Total species: 131. Total individuals: 21,915. *Thanks, David.*

The 2nd Annual Lost Pines CBC: Marianna Hobbs, McKinney Roughs Naturalist, sent the following article:

It was such a treat participating in the Lost Pines Bird Count on December 28, 2012. There were a total of 74 participants and that was up from 37 in 2011. There were four programs to attend and a Birding 101 class. The dinner on Friday night at the Hyatt was completely delightful with the night Owl Prowl immediately following.

Saturday was a great birding day with a total of 9,193 birds counted. There were 128 species and some of the highlights were a Vermillion Flycatcher, a male Painted Bunting, and the six Bald Eagle sightings.

We are optimistic that this event will keep growing as more birders are made aware of it. We want to thank all of you for participating in this necessary area count and hope to see everyone next year and the years to follow. *Thanks, Marianna*

Program for March



Be Inspired for a Texas Spring: "Portraits of Wildflowers"

In a timely presentation, photographer Steve Schwartzman will share his collection of the beauties of central Texas at the Bastrop County Audubon Society's meeting on the third Tuesday, March 19, at 7:00 p.m., at the First National Bank location in Bastrop, Hasler Blvd. at H71W.

Schwartzman, who moved to Austin in 1976, says he was fascinated by native plants by 1999 when he was putting together a photographic CD of central Texas. "In addition to pictures from the human world (famous buildings, folk art, landmarks, etc.) I wanted to show something of nature as well. The nature part soon took on a life of its own as I became acquainted with some of the many native species that grow here."

"I photograph primarily native plants, but in the process of doing that I've accumulated pictures of insects, spiders," and some small animals, including a few birds.

He eventually published three books of 3-D infrared photos. One, *Bodies of Light*, won an award in 1981. In 2009 he was commissioned to provide the photographs and text for three laminated wildflower guides: North Texas, Central Texas, and Southeast Texas. Other publications include several issues of *Texas Highways* and 200 photos in the native plant database of [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#).

"I grew up on Long Island and went to college at Columbia University, where I majored in French." As a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras in 1968 and 1969 he chanced to learn "the rudiments of photography and got my first 'real' camera, a Pentax Spotmatic."

Texas Audubon News:

Audubon Texas recently announced that Brian Trusty will be their new Executive Director. Trusty comes with a diverse and successful track record of innovative management in conservation lands and programs over the last 20 years, and is a familiar friend to many public agency partners of Audubon Texas, having worked in parks management and consulting throughout his career.

“It is tremendously exciting to have Brian take the reins of Audubon Texas,” said George Bristol, the organization’s State Advisory Board Chair. “With his passion for conservation, his dedication, and his genuine approach to building relationships across the State of Texas, I can think of no person better suited to lead this outstanding organization.”

Growing up in Wimberley, his childhood experiences conditioned him for a lifetime of commitment to Texas landscapes and wildlife.

“Texas is one of the most ecologically important states in the country, particularly to bird life and continental flyways, and it is critical that the work of Audubon Texas continue with our partners and stakeholders to protect the integrity of our diverse and fragile ecology,” commented Trusty.

As Executive Director, Trusty will lead the Texas team in implementing their conservation program including the Audubon Centers at Dogwood Canyon, Trinity River and Mitchell Lake; the Texas Coastal Stewardship Program; and the growing Important Bird Areas Program. Additionally, Trusty will work with Audubon Texas staff to support and enrich the efforts of the 20 local Audubon chapters in Texas, and the multiple public agency partners that are a major part of the organization’s success in conservation.



At Bastrop State Park: Audrey Ambrose & Carroll Miller, members of both BCAS and Master Naturalists, unload 15 new state-of-the-art bluebird boxes. About ten members of both organizations made up a work party for the joint project of the two organizations. More boxes were installed later at Buescher S. P.. *Photo by Judy Turner*

Is a Brighter Red Cardinal Healthier?

Excerpted from *Living Bird*,
Winter, 2013 , p. 6

For a lot of birds, their color comes from what they eat. In the case of the cardinals, it’s the carotenoids in their diet. We found that in rural areas, the brightness of cardinal color was a good indicator of their condition.



Brighter cardinals were better quality for breeding. But in urban areas, that wasn’t true.

In urban areas, there’s a lot of honeysuckle. Birds that eat a large amount of honey-suckle get a lot of pigment, but they’re not in good condition because honey suckle doesn’t have much fat and protein in it.

Urban cardinals also have access to birdseed, which is nutrient-rich, but carotenoid-poor. Birds that eat seed are duller, yet they’re in better condition. So that disconnects the signal of color to condition.

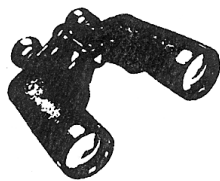
BirdCalls is published a minimum of six times per year September through June by the Bastrop County Audubon Society. It is edited and produced by Mary Ellen Branan, PhD. We invite letters, articles, poems, news tips, calendar items, reviews, and photos by mail or email. Deadline for submissions is by noon the last day of the preceding month. Ph.: (512) 303-2734. Email: editor@bastropaudubon.org

Two Nearby Nature Fests in Mid-April

The El Camino Master Naturalists in Rockdale plan a Friday/Saturday, April 12/13, festival especially featuring snakes, but also bats, butterflies, native grasses, bee-keeping, crawdads and more. Friday night at 7:00 they will show the film “Endangered Species: Don’t Say Goodbye.”

Wildlife Management Associations in Caldwell and Bastrop Counties join for their ninth annual Extravaganza April 13 at Riverbend Park, Smithville, with a raffle, auction, demonstrations, exhibits, food, and music.

Both are family-friendly and free at the gate.



Field Trip

January 19, 2013. It was a beautiful day with full sun and almost no wind. We visited Earhardt Road, North Shore of Lake Bastrop, and XS Ranch. Fewer ducks were noted than expected, small winter birds have returned in good numbers. The best finds for the day were: early Cattle Egret and Purple Martins, House and Bewick's Wrens, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Forester's Terns. Total species + 51

BCAS members observing were: Mary Ellen Branan, Alan Jaeger, Priscilla Jarvis, Roy Smallwood, and Stanley Wellso, Field trip leader.

Double crested Cormorant	1
Great Egret	1
Cattle Egret	1
Great blue Heron	1
Gadwall	8
Northern Shoveler	5
Redhead	10
Lesser Scaup	11
Turkey Vulture	19
Black Vulture	8
Red-shouldered Hawk	4
Red-tailed Hawk	9
Crested Caracara	8
American Kestrel	12
American Coot	20
Killdeer	2
Forester's Tern	5
Rock Pigeon	5
Eurasian Collared-Dove	8
Mourning Dove	14
Red-bellied Woodpecker	4
Yellow bellied Sapsucker	1
Eastern Phoebe	3
Loggerhead Shrike	3
American Crow	35
Tree Swallow	2
Purple Martin	12
Tufted Titmouse	1
Carolina Chickadee	8
House Wren	1
Carolina Wren	2
Bewick's Wren	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4
Eastern Bluebird	6
American Robin	2
Northern Mockingbird	8
Pine Warbler	8
Yellow-rumped Warbler	30

European Starling	8
Cedar Waxwing	45
Field Sparrow	5
White-crowned Sparrow	3
Northern Cardinal	32
Eastern Meadowlarks	1
Meadowlarks	34
Brewer's Blackbird	1
Great-tailed Grackle	30
House Finch	5
Eastern Meadowlarks	1
White-crowned Sparrow	3
Northern Cardinal	32
Eastern Meadowlarks	1
Meadowlarks	34
Brewer's Blackbird	1
Great-tailed Grackle	30
House Finch	5
House Sparrow	12



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A P O E M

The (Un)common Redpoll

Daring all my doubt
You gregarious little strangers,
Bouncing on the feeder.
Ragged feathers fluffed out
To hold rubies in the sunlight,
The definition of a super-flight.

--Susan Leslie, 2/22/13

Super-flight: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Winter, 2013:

"It's only once a decade or so that climatological patterns and bird numbers combine for a super-flight that sends six, seven, or eight northern species deep into the central and southern United States."

Letter from the President

Happy March, birders! I hope each of you can take a few minutes every day, wherever you are, to enjoy our spring migrants.

I am sad to announce, for my own selfish sake, that Stan and Carol Wellso are moving to not greener but maroon pastures: to Bryan - College Station. They have been active and supportive members of BCAS for many years, and will be missed greatly. Stan has resigned his role as intrepid Field Trip Chair and Board member.



excursion.

Now BCAS needs another member (or members) to organize our birding trips. Field trips can be as flexible as you wish - weekday or weekend, morning or late afternoon, to a member's property or to a public site...as part of another event or a one-time stand-alone

You DO NOT need to be an excellent birder! Or even have good eyesight! The idea is for one person to do the planning and then get out the information in our various ways to me and the membership. In the field, you can pool the skills of the participants to spot and enjoy wildlife.

If you would like to plan an outing for March or April, please contact me or any of the officers. If you can only commit to one trip and not as a permanent leader, that works! We just don't want to miss any of our precious Texas springtime!

Susan Leslie, President, BCAS

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

Return Service Requested



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

March-April Calendar

March 7, Thursday: BCAS Board meets 6:30 p.m. at Bastrop City Library.

March 16, Saturday: Monthly birding field trip, Hornsby Bend 7:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

March 19, Tuesday: BCAS General Meeting & Program, Doors open 6:30 p.m.

April 4, Thursday : BCAS Board Meeting 6:30.

April 6, Saturday: Yegua Knobbs Spring Field Day and Bird Census. 8:00 a.m. Call Melanie at 308-1911, Pines & Prairies Land Trust, for info.

April 11-14 , Galveston Feather Fest

April 12-13: Nature Fest, Rockdale Fair Park, 7:00 p.m. Friday, 9-2 Saturday.

April 13 Saturday: 9th Annual Extravaganza, Wildlife Management Assn., Riverbend Park, Smithville/Hwy 71 at river.

April 16 Tuesday , BCAS Meeting & Program

April 26-29 Annual Balcones Canyonlands Songbird Festival, with tours of the NWR.

BCAS Membership Application/Renewal

- Individual \$20
- Family \$35
- Supporting \$75
- Youth \$10

Please make checks payable to:
Bastrop County Audubon Society
Send to: Alan Jaeger, Treasurer
117 Kaelepulu Dr.
Bastrop TX 78602

Or join with PayPal at: bastropcountyaudubon.org

