



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society



John Prager, (1926-2011), was interviewed as a prominent Texas conservationist by the Texas Legacy Project on October 16, 2003. The audio interview is available online. Here is what they wrote:

"Mr. Prager worked during his career for the Air Force and the University of Texas. As a volunteer and retiree, however, his focus has been on protecting the lands and waters near his home in Elgin, Texas, east of Austin. Known for

his careful and insightful research, Mr. Prager has been particularly active in working with the Central Texas Lignite Watch, Fayette County Resource Watch, and the [Bastrop County Environmental Network](#), in challenging a variety of lignite stripmining proposals for Powell's Bend, Cummins Creek, and Camp Swift. He has also been involved in opposition to central Texas projects to reuse the Longhorn oil pipeline as a gasoline conduit, to construct bullet trains, dams, incinerators and power plants, and to receive sewage from Austin and sell water to San Antonio. More recently, he's been on the track of state-record-size trees in his beloved Bastrop County, having already found immense, record-breaking black locust and American elm."

For our 25th anniversary *Bird Calls* issue in June, 2007,, Judy Ing profiled him: "John began camping and canoeing in West Virginia as a boy. Now he's a retired Air Force with a Master's in English Literature. John is a fountain of wisdom about water, aquifers, local water ordinances, and federal guidelines for water. He wrote position papers on keeping the Colorado River clean and healthy. He is clever and knows his way to the courthouse." He served as Conservation Chair and science committee member for BCAS.

We honor Prager's contribution to BCAS and his legacy in Bastrop County and the State of Texas. He was a hands-on naturalist, trekking the county to find the big trees and canoeing on Lake Bastrop. He knew birds and botany as well and wrote an occasional poem.

The Editor



Chimney
Swift Towers
at Chaetura
Canyon

April Program

The Kyles: At Home with the Mysteries of Chimney Swifts

Paul and Georgean Kyle, join BCAS April 19 to tell the whole story about Chimney Swifts and update their own story of conservation for these birds at Chaetura Canyon, their home for 39 years. The Kyles last spoke to BCAS around 10 years ago, before their property became officially a Travis Audubon Sanctuary in late 2006. They remain as the sanctuary stewards at the 15-acre site within a residential subdivision.

For 19 years the Kyles were wildlife rehabilitators in the canyon and for 17 years banded over 5,800 birds in 92 species. They also founded an all-wooden toy store, Rootin' Ridge Toymakers, their "day job."

They soon became experts about the common but little-known Chimney Swift, scientific name: *chaetura pelagica*. They experimented and constructed towers to accommodate the birds as uncapped chimneys and hollow trees have become scarce. The cigar-shaped aerial acrobats have long, curved wings, extremely short legs, and their family name, *Apodidae*, means *without feet*. The birds spend most of their lives on the wing, even spending the night in the air. The Kyles write: "And the good news for us: they eat nearly one-third of their own weight daily in insects and spiders, which includes mosquitoes and termites."

The General Meeting and program begin at 7:00 p.m. in the meeting room of the First National Bank, Hasler Blvd. at H 71W, in Bastrop. The meeting is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.



Field Trip Report: Hornsby Bend, Feb. 21, 2011

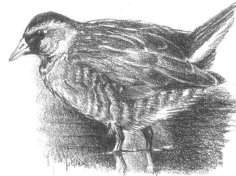
For the Presidents' Day Holiday as well as the Great Backyard Bird Count, we began birding at 8:00 a.m. in front of the First National Bank, and drove to Hornsby Bend. It was warm and cloudy till 11:00 when the sun started to shine brightly. The most notable birds of the count were: White Pelican, Sora, Semipalmated Plover, and Swamp Sparrow. A count of 57 species were observed by : Mary Ellen Branan, Sue Brubaker, Betty Dunkerley, Gef and Jackie Fisher, Priscilla Jarvis, Roy Smallwood, and **Stan Wellso, Field Trips Chair.**

Species	Number
Pied-Billed Grebe	1
Eared Grebe	4
American White Pelican	3
Great Blue Heron	1
Great Egret	2
Snowy Egret	2
Green-winged Teal	50
Blue-winged Teal	8
Northern Shoveler	90
American Wigeon	1
Lesser Scaup	1
Bufflehead	2
Ruddy Duck	110
Black Vulture	11
Turkey Vulture	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	2
Swainson's Hawk	1
Red-tailed Hawk	1
American Kestrel	1
Soar	1
American Coot	180
Semi-palmated Plover	1
Killdeer	3
Greater Yellowlegs	2
Spotted Sandpiper	2
Least Sandpiper	33
Common Snipe	11
Ring-billed Gull	3
Rock Pigeon	4
Mourning Dove	8
Eur. Collared Dove	4
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1
Eastern Phoebe	1

Purple Martin	5
Tree Swallow	2
Cliff Swallow	7
American Crow	9
Carolina Chickadee	1
Carolina Wren	1
Easter Bluebird	1
Northern Mockingbird	1
American Pipet	2
European Starling	11
Orange-crowned Warbler	5
Yellow-rumped Warbler	15
Common Yellowthroat	1
Northern Cardinal	17
Savannah Sparrow	22
Swamp Sparrow	5
Red-winged Blackbird	40
Eastern Meadowlark	1
Western Meadowlark	1
Species Meadowlark	55
Brewer's Blackbird	9
Great-tailed Grackle	75
Brown-headed Cowbird	30
House Sparrow	8

Sora

by Daniel S. Kilby



Gleaning in the Field

Feb. 22, 2011 -White Lake:

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) welcomed project partners today to White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area (WCA) to celebrate the return of the **whooping crane** to the marshes of southwest Louisiana.



"Species restoration successes will signal coastal restoration successes as we rebuild our wetlands, and we must make the coordinated effort to restore species that have been decimated by man-made or natural changes to wildlife habitat," said

Robert Barham, LDWF Secretary. "We applaud the efforts of the biologists who have worked to bring this magnificent bird back to Louisiana."

Ten whooping cranes received this month from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Research Facility in Laurel, Md., have been placed in the coastal marsh of Vermilion Parish within LDWF's White Lake Wetlands WCA. This re-introduced population, which will be annually supplemented with future cohorts, marks the first presence of whooping cranes in the wild in Louisiana since 1950.

-----wlf.louisiana.gov

Top 10 Most Endangered Habitat Ecosystems:

1. Arctic Sea Ice
2. Shallow Water Coral Reefs
3. Hawaiian Islands
4. Southwestern (U.S.) Deserts
5. San Francisco Bay-Delta
6. California Sierra Nevada Mountains
7. The Snake River Basin
8. Greater Yellowstone
9. Gulf Coast Flatlands & Wetlands
10. The Greater Everglades

-----itsgettinghotoutthere.org

Bird Calls is published 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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The tear-pad program returns to H-E-B stores in Central Texas for April/Earth Day month. In 2010, over \$60,000 was raised, and BCAS received a share.



Earth Share
OF TEXAS

April Calendar

(with Spring Nature Festivals)

Apr. 4-7, 9th Annual Galveston Feather Fest. Field trips & workshops. 210 species spotted last year.

Apr. 9, Katy Prairie Discovery Tours, Waller. Registration required. (713) 523-6135.

Apr. 9-10, Atwater's Prairie Chicken NWR, Eagle Lake. Rare viewing of booming behavior.

Apr. 15-17, Migration Celebration, San Bernard NWR, Lake Jackson, Brazoria County. Family events.

Apr. 16, Earth Day Celebration, McKinney Roughs. Free admission. Highway 71W.

Apr. 17, BCAS Board Meeting. 4:00 p.m. Alan Jaeger, host, 117 Kaelepulu, Bastrop. With pot-luck supper.

Apr. 19, BCAS General Meeting. 7:00 p.m., First National Bank, Bastrop

Apr. 22-24, Bird Migration Weekend, Brazos Bend State Park. Guided hikes free with park admission.

Apr. 29-May 1, Wings Over the Hills Nature Festival, Fredericksburg. Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park. Field trips and workshops, birds, photography.

Apr. 30, Yegua Knobbs Wildlife Preserve Field Day & Bird Census, McDade. 8:00 a.m.. Contact Priscilla Jarvis at. (512) 281-2762 for directions and car pool, etc.

BCAS News Updates

Norm and Margie Sachnik are in the process of leaving Bastrop and moving back to their Bay house in Galveston. They were general directors on the Board for the past three years. Margie was our representative to the Bastrop Chamber of Commerce. Norm was a leader and expert in our efforts concerning ground water.

Stan Wellso is leading a field trip in Bastrop for San Antonio Audubon members on April 16. BCAS members are welcome, to make it a joint field trip. Call Stan at 321-0122 for details. The SA group hopes to view birds which are not expected in the south Texas area.

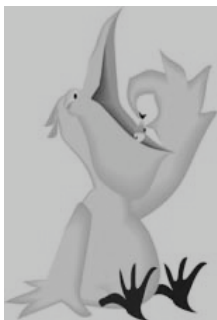
Steve and Denise Ligon inspected the bird boxes we installed about 10 years ago and annually maintain in Bastrop State Park. They examined 34 bird boxes mounted among the golf course greens. Apparently, two-thirds of the boxes were not utilized by the small cavity nesters targeted (bluebirds, chickadees) or by squirrels, who chew out the opening to enlarge it. At least five were successfully occupied by birds. The inspection was the start for additional work to be done after nesting season, refurbishing, removing, or relocating nest boxes. We will need work party volunteers.

Earth Day Participation

Sue Brubaker has arranged for BCAS participation again at the free-admission Earth Day Celebration, a family-oriented event at McKinney Roughs on Saturday, April 16. A continuous slide show of birds, appropriate brochures, posters, hands-on activities, and friendly conversations about Audubon, conservation, bird migration, etc., will be featured at our booth. BCAS members will be there to help throughout the 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. celebration day. You can sign up for a scheduled stint at the April General Meeting.

Water Meeting Held March 19

Conservation Chair **Steve Ligon** attended the Texas Water Wars Conference in Cedar Creek, sponsored by Independent Texans. More than 200 met, including representatives of groups such as Neighbors for Neighbors and the Sierra Club. Basic information on water management, state law, and diverse opinions on the rights of individuals to groundwater were expressed during panel discussions. Opinions varied greatly, but everyone agreed that groundwater resources are limited and will be outstripped by the very near future demand. Everyone was also agreed that there should be a moratorium on the issuance of any additional groundwater permits until deficiencies and obscurities in the current State Water Code are resolved. Permitting should not be continued until we may ensure both equity and protection in the use of this limited resource. Reported by **Steve Ligon**

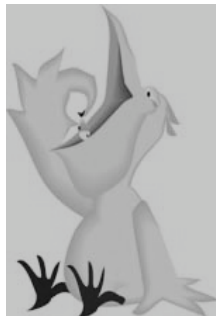


April Refreshments by

Priscilla Jarvis

&

Vera Jaeger



March Refreshments by

Sue Brubaker

&

Betty Dunkerley

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



Chimney Swift

Join or Renew Membership in BCAS

Benefits include Bird Calls, field trips, social events, continuing education, and more clout in protecting the environment. Membership Chair: Priscilla Jarvis at (512) 281-2762.

Dues are used to support local conservation and education. You may join at our web site www.bastropcountyaudubon.org or at any meeting.



A field trip lunch at Attwater's Prairie Chicken Wildlife Refuge last year. l to r: Mary Ellen Branan, Bill Montgomery, Stan Wellso, Norm Sachnik, Margie Sachnik, and Margie Crisp.
Priscilla Jarvis, photographer

From the President

Spring Forward!

In case you did not like the cold February weather, all you had to do was wait for March. The unusually warm spring weather should have intrepid bird watchers raring to go. I have already seen my first scissor-tailed flycatchers and four different warblers. This is the time of year that demands that we get up, grab our binoculars and get outdoors.

I invite our readers to go to the internet and choose one of the numerous bird/nature festivals that are upcoming in April and early May. Find one that looks fun and invite some fellow birders.

But if trekking off somewhere in a car does not sound like such a good idea, simply walk around in a local park or just in your backyard. You will be amazed at the burgeoning number of feathered friends that are beginning to arrive already.

Happy birding!

Sue Brubaker