



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

## Volunteers Needed for BCAS Booth at McKinney Roughs' Earth Day to Help with Games and Binocular Training

Educational Chair Susan Leslie along with Sue Brubaker and Margie Crisp have organized nature materials and four environmental games for children who will attend the huge LCRA event on April 14, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The annual festival is billed as "Free Fun for the Whole Family Near Bastrop."

Leslie still needs members to sign up on for an hour of guiding the visitors of various ages through our activities. "The volunteers have their choice of the age groups they prefer and if there are enough of us, can be one-on-one instructing a child," Leslie said. Contact her at 512-321-2675 or ssusanupnorth@aol.com.

The games are simple to learn and teach. Some are small group activity. Learning how to use binoculars is an independent activity for ages six to 16, using the good quality child-sized binoculars BCAS recently purchased.

One game teaches about migration, its purpose and its hazards for birds. A different activity provides the concepts and opportunity for scientific observation, collecting, and analysis.

Having binoculars teaches about using a tool to conduct scientific inquiry. A "Treasure Hunt" has participants practice locating items in a natural setting from simple verbal clues.

Cold water, a chair, shade from our canopy, and fun being together and helping others will be provided the BCAS volunteers.

## Pines & Prairie Land Trust Event: Yegua Knobbs Field Day, Saturday, April 28

Come prepared for a hike amid hills, wood, pastures, and ponds with Master Naturalists, BCAS birders, and PPLT as you participate in the bird census which begins at 8:30 a.m.

For full directions to the 300-acre site north of McDade, go to [info@pinesandprairielandtrust.org](mailto:info@pinesandprairielandtrust.org). In the event of heavy rain, please call and confirm at (A.C. 512) 922-2912, 925-2437, or 281-2762. Priscilla and Jeremiah Jarvis suggest you bring a hat, sturdy walking shoes, binoculars, bird field guide, sack lunch, camp chair or stool. There will be drinking water.

## April, 2012, Program

## Inspired by Conservation History

David Todd is uniquely qualified to tell the history of environmental events and protection efforts in Texas. A founder of the Conservation History Association of Texas, he has been compiling oral histories, maps and video documentaries about environmental work in the State since 1997, as viewed through the eyes of more than 60 stewards of the natural resources of the State.

The late John Prager, a former BCAS board member, is among the towering conservation figures featured in the 2010 book (Texas A&M Press), Todd co-edited, *The Texas Legacy Project: Stories of Courage and Conservation*. You can listen to the Prager interview at [texaslegacy.org](http://texaslegacy.org), an online archive of video, audio, and texts, and other materials Todd collected through interviews and correspondence.

Todd worked in hydrology after completing his M.S. in engineering from Rice University. Since, he has worked as an environmental attorney, conservation donor, and cattle rancher. He has served on boards of Audubon Texas, Sierra Club Lone Star Chapter, and the Texas League of Conservation, and others.



Board members enjoy the porch at Priscilla and Jeremiah Jarvis's home March 18: Judy Turner, Margie Crisp, Roy Smallwood, Sue Brubaker, Alan Jaeger, Susan Leslie, and Priscilla. Mary Ellen Branan took the photo.



## In the Field: March 3 Trip Report

--by Stan Wellso, Field Trips Chair

From 8:00 a.m. till 12:45 p.m., we spent time enjoying nature on Earhardt Road, Travis County Webberville Park, and Hornsby Bend areas. It was an enjoyable day, cloudy in the early morning and sunny at noon. Great looks at snipe, yellowlegs, eight species of ducks, and an active bald eagle nest. Temperatures ranged from 49 to 60, and the wind was rather brisk. Birders: Mary Ellen Branan, Brush Freeman, Michael and Jan Goebel, Alan Jaeger, Priscilla Jarvis, Maggie Lambert, Roy Smallwood, and Stan Wellso.

Total: 52 species.

Pied-billed Grebe	1
Great Blue Heron	5
Great Egret	4
Northern Pintail	55
Gadwall	61
Green-winged Teal	70
American Wigeon	20
Northern Shoveler	65
Blue-winged Teal	2
Redhead	48
Lesser Scaup	5
Ruddy Duck	6
Turkey Vulture	20
Black Vulture	16
Red-shouldered Hawk	1
Crested Caracara	2
Bald Eagle	2
American Kestrel	2
American Coot	285
Killdeer	2
Greater Yellowlegs	12
Common Snipe	19
Rock Pigeon	2
Mourning Dove	5
Eurasian Collared Dove	8
Green Kingfisher	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1
Downy Woodpecker	2
Loggerhead Shrike	1
Blue Jay	4
American Crow	26
Purple Martin	20
Barn Swallow	1
Tufted Titmouse	2
Carolina Chickadee	2
Eastern Bluebird	17
American Robin	5
Northern Mockingbird	8
European Starling	8

Yellow-rumped Warbler	35
Chipping Sparrow	35
Vesper Sparrow	9
Savannah Sparrow	12
Song Sparrow	1
Northern Cardinal	8
Eastern Meadowlark	2
Western Meadowlark	1
Red-winged Blackbird	10
Great-tailed Grackle	50
Brown-headed Cowbird	195
House Sparrow	8

## Whooping Cranes: Latest Data Hard to

**Find --** source, Chester McConnell, Whooping Crane Conservation Assn. web site.

"Whooping crane aerial census surveys were completed a second time on Aransas Refuge in February. But analysis of the information is not yet complete. According to refuge officials the February aerial survey has had some challenges due to weather but they are continuing their efforts. The updated census information will be posted on the website as soon as it becomes available. Meanwhile the interested public must rely on the January survey information that indicated the population of cranes to be 245 individuals.

"Aransas officials caution that this number does not reflect whooping cranes outside the survey area, including those that have dispersed. Whooping crane biologist and many thousands of whooper followers have been hoping for a total population count of 300 this year.

"The unusual warm weather and extreme drought conditions in Texas are believed to be a primary cause for the dispersal of whooping cranes this year. Normally the birds remain mostly on Aransas NWR during winter months with a few moving to nearby suitable locations. This year, however, the whoopers are ranging further out from the refuge with some as far north as Nebraska.

"Citizen observation reports made to the Whooping Crane Conservation Association detected whoopers in Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and eight counties in Texas."

Additional note: The six whoopers remained at Granger Lake for the winter. -- editor

## Bastrop City Council Loves Ing Chimney Swift Tower

On February 14, Valentine's Day, the City Council of Bastrop unanimously approved BCAS's proposal to construct the Judy Ing Chimney Swift Tower in Bob Bryant Park.

BCAS will sign a contract agreeing to all costs of construction and access, and responsibility for maintenance of the structure, which will involve at least an annual clean out of the roost. Travis Audubon contacts have said after 10 years experience that the durability of the tower is excellent and its maintenance minimal.

The tower construction by Don Chapman and others will be begin off-premise and be carried to the site for mounting after the City gives the go-head. Ing's long-time friend Jeff Gillam will supervise the concrete work.

Preparation of the kiosk displays, consisting of laminated posters beneath a sheet of clear polycarbonate, is complete. We will have two large posters about Judy Ing, three smaller posters about Chimney Swifts, and two posters about Bastrop County Audubon Society. The posters will be arranged on the kiosk surrounding the tower proper. The City Parks department will use the fourth side panel of the kiosk.

When the tower is completed, the Bastrop Chamber of Commerce will conduct a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The date will be announced on the Chamber calendar, the BCAS web site, at meetings, and via emails to members.



## Make every day Earth Day!

Please join H-E-B and EarthShare of Texas in supporting dozens of environmental and conservation projects protecting Texas.



EarthShare of Texas  
One environment.  
One simple way to care for it.  
[www.earthshare-texas.org](http://www.earthshare-texas.org)



Once again we can help by adding the \$ tear-off at check-out at the grocery store. BCAS gets a share.



**BCAS Membership Application/Renewal**

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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](http://bastropcountyaudubon.org)

*Refreshments for March:***Priscilla Jarvis & Beth Moore***Refreshments for April:***Mary Ellen Branan & Lindi Parobek**

One of the best things about BCAS (or so we're told by members) is our great monthly programs. We need a new **Program Coordinator**. The job involves contacting speakers, scheduling a program, and then working with our Newsletter Editor to write up program information for the newsletter and the local papers. It is easier than it sounds because our membership always has ideas for programs and possible speaker contacts. You do have to have access to email. We'd love to have you join us!

**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 last day of the prior month. Birds Calls is a membership benefit.

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**Editor Seeks Assistant Editor**---If you're interested in news-gathering, photography, desktop publishing, etc., please contact me at [editor@bastropaudubon.org](mailto:editor@bastropaudubon.org). *Mary Ellen*

## Moving Along, Improving Life in Bastrop County:

This month Bastrop County Audubon Society fulfills a long-held dream. With the help of BCAS Board member Roy Smallwood, we have purchased 10 pairs of binoculars. These binoculars, Raptor Vortex 8.5 x 32, are rugged, quality equipment but their design makes them perfect for children (as well as adults). In the past, the unresolved issues of storage and access thwarted our desires. Then Education Chair Susan Leslie suggested that we use the binocular project as a way to partner with other groups. A few phone calls confirmed that Pines and Prairies Land Trust (PPLT) would gladly partner with us. PPLT will store the binoculars at their office (next to the Water District office) and--this is the best part--they will be able to use the binoculars with their children's education program at the Colorado River Refuge.

With a little creative thinking, we have been able to provide a resource for our own education programs and we will be able to encourage and support PPLT's environmental education program. In the future we hope to share the binoculars with other education groups in our area but we have not worked out the details yet. The binoculars will also be available for BCAS education programs, field trips, and workdays.

I hope that you'll have time to volunteer for an hour or two (and see the new binoculars in action) at the LCRA McKinney Roughs Earth Day event on Saturday April 14. Susan Leslie has designed a variety of age-appropriate activities for the kids. I can't wait. That moment when a child makes a connection with nature is a magical one. To be part of the process is a joy.

The Judy Ing Memorial Chimney Swift Tower project is moving along. Because we are partnering with the City of Bastrop to put the tower in Bob Bryant Park, we are working with the city to make sure we've got all "all our swifts in a row" before we begin construction. Board members Mary Ellen Branan, Priscilla Jarvis and Sue Brubaker deserve our thanks for all their hard work. A ribbon-cutting and celebration date and time will be announced.

So why do our board members cheerfully (for the most part--we're only human) devote their time to BCAS? I think most of Board members would agree that it is a way to connect with others who share our interests and passions. Yet it is more. Joining the leadership of BCAS gives each of us an avenue to become actively involved in our community. It provides an opportunity to live with purpose. It is a way to effect a positive change in our life and the lives of others. If you want to improve life in Bastrop County for yourself, your children, birds, and wildlife, please join us. We've got room for you.

*Bastrop County Audubon Society's mission is to promote the conservation, restoration, and enjoyment of natural resources and habitats for birds and other wildlife.*

**Shout out!**

*Bird Calls* does not accept advertising but we want to thank Roy Smallwood and Kingbirdfeeders.com for generously helping BCAS purchase our new binoculars (at a stunning discount). THANKS ROY!

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

*Return Service Requested*



**Getting ready for bluebird nesting:** Judy Turner removes a BCAS bird box from a dead tree in Buescher State Park while Stan Wellso looks on. Alan Jaeger is chairing repair of damaged boxes removed recently from both state parks--this one's entrance is chewed out by a squirrel. Fire did not claim the nest boxes in Bastrop SP because the golf course area went largely undamaged. The removed boxes will be remounted in both state parks.

## April Calendar

**April 14, Saturday: Earth Day, McKinney Roughs,** 10:00 - 3:00; see p. 1.

**April 14-15: Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR Festival,** nr Eagle Lake, virgin coastal prairie habitat, van tours all day, early morning viewing of booming behavior beginning 7:00 a.m.,

**April 16, Federal Taxes** due, midnight.

**April 17, Tuesday: BCAS General Meeting & Program,** 7:00 p.m., doors open 6:30, Bastrop First National Bank Bldg., p. 1.

**April 28, Saturday: Yegua Knobbs Preserve Field Day with Bird Census,** 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., p. 1.