



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society



***Brian Trusty,
Executive
Director of
Audubon Texas,***

was the engaging host and chief organizer of the March 1-2 Chapter Assembly, "Rising Together," which gathered members from the 20 chapters in Texas at McKinney Roughs.

On Sunday morning, he outlined the always-complicated issues for Audubon Texas' strategy positions. Examples: about wind farms, fracking, feral cats, West Nile threats, global warming, water, and climate change. The overall guiding concept is that Audubon positions must always be science-based, not simply putting the health of birds over humans or the national need for the energy production, etc.

National Audubon should constantly define itself as an environmental organization, not a conservation organization, which label often results in deaf ears.

While down-river cities need water, the rice farmers above must irrigate, and birds like rice fields: how do we stand? And, yes, natural gas is the best choice and has brought area prosperity, so we approve and say private landowners should require land clean up and restoration in leases with the production companies.



April Meeting: One of our usual excellent programs:

At press time, the program for April 15, 2014, had not been confirmed. Rest assured, we will have a **program**. Doors will open at 6:30, and the meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. on the second floor of the First National Bank in Bastrop.

The meeting is open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Annual Meeting in May—Elections for two-year terms of BCAS officers and board directors will be the most essential business of this year's annual meeting May 20. We will hear financial reports and a review of the year's accomplishments. We also would like to discuss suggestions for projects and goals for next year.

The nominating committee, headed by Mary Ellen Branan and Alan Jaeger, is in the process of completing a slate of proposed nominees. Others may be nominated from the floor at the May meeting.

Following the Annual Meeting, we will have a full program as usual.

Interim Board Changes —

Director Toni Schweitzer, who has admirably prepared refreshments last year and this fall, and who formally joined the board last fall, is tendering her resignation from the board due to personal demands. Her service was much appreciated by all.

Jackie Fisher is taking her place in responsibility for coordinating the refreshments.

Travis Audubon and BCAS members enjoy a break in front of the McKinney Roughs meeting hall.



Field Trip

February 22, 2014, BCAS Field Trip to Shipp Lake, Loop Road, and Buescher State Park 8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m..

The conditions were perfect, 43°F-73°F, Sunny. We had several choices for best bird of the trip: the Bald Eagles and their active nest along Loop Road with both adults present and one eaglet. Also, the Harris's Sparrows on Loop Road and the Double Crested Cormorants on the lake at Buescher and a good number of Red Tailed Hawks. We glimpsed a partially albino female Northern Cardinal. The group spent some time observing a kestrel hover hunting. A total of 39 species were identified. Participating were Michelle Belden, Mary Ellen Branan, Jackie Fisher, Priscilla Jarvis and **Roy Smallwood, Field Trips Chair.**

1. Gadwall 21
2. Pied Billed Grebe 2
3. Double Crested Cormorant 2
4. Great Egret 1
5. Turkey Vulture 12
6. Black Vulture 6
7. Bald Eagle 3
8. Red Tailed Hawk 9
9. Red Shouldered Hawk 4
10. American Kestrel 3
11. Crested Caracara 1
12. American Coots 5
13. Killdeer 8
14. Rock Pigeon 2
15. Mourning Dove 8
16. Inca Dove 4
17. Eurasian Collard Dove 2
18. Red Bellied Woodpecker 2
19. Downy Woodpecker 3
20. Pileated Woodpecker 1
21. Eastern Phoebe 6
22. Loggerhead Shrike 1
23. American Crow 8
24. Carolina Chickadee 6
25. Tufted Titmouse 4
26. Carolina Wren 3
27. Eastern Bluebird 4
28. Northern Mockingbird 3
29. Vesper Sparrow 7
30. Song Sparrow 6
31. Harris's Sparrow 15
32. White Crowned Sparrow 1
33. Northern Cardinal 15; 1 partially albino at Shipp Lake
34. Meadowlark sp. 135
35. Red Winged Blackbird 2
36. Great Tailed Grackle 15
37. American Goldfinch 12

2013 Bastrop Christmas Bird Count(CBC) January 1, 2014:

By Jan Goebel

This was the 114th year for the Audubon CBC and the 37th year for the Bastrop CBC. The unofficial count was 117 species! Noteworthy was the Vermillion Flycatcher(just inside the Bastrop State Park entrance), White Pelicans, Summer Tanager, Ferruginous Hawk, and Bald Eagle. For rare bird reporting there was an Anhinga and a Least Flycatcher.

A special thanks to our organizers and new compilers, Shelia Hogan and Laurie Foss. The countdown dinner at Nancy's steak House was a lot of fun for about 40 folks including David Mitchell and his family. David looked relaxed after a day of birding and being retired from compiling after 30+ years. Thank you for your service to Audubon, David!

Many of the birders come every year and others come for the fun of a new CBC. One man from Bandera was doing 11 counts this year. Some of the life lists are long, but it is a treat for new birders to be teamed up with an expert.

Consider scheduling this CBC on your calendar for Jan 1, 2015 or the Lost Pines CBC earlier in Dec 2014.

38. House Finch 2
39. House Sparrow 8

[A video of this field trip produced by Michelle Belden is available on YouTube, search "Michelle Belden," and is also linked at BCAS Face Book.]

March 15, 2014, BCAS Field Trip to Roy Guerrero Park below the dam, 8:00 AM-10:00 AM, 63F.

It was an overcast, foggy and cool morning shortened by rain. The most unusual birds were the Northern Rough Winged Swallows. We had a sandpiper whose identity eluded us. On a good day for ducks, we were able to observe a good variety, and 22 species over all. Participants were Alan Jaeger, Mary Ellen Branan, Priscilla Jarvis, Wil Casey, Mike and Jan Goebel, and R. S.

1. Gadwall 20
2. Bufflehead 22
3. Green Winged Teal 23
4. Blue Winged Teal 2
5. Lesser Scaup 22
7. Great Blue Heron 1

Continued on p. 3

Crisis and Audubon Clean-up: Oil Spill in Galveston Bay

Press Release— March 24's collision between two vessels in Galveston Bay has placed critical coastal habitat and wildlife under serious threat. With authorities working to contain and mitigate the damage created by up to 168,000 gallons of thick oil spilling into the bay, environmental experts are quick to point out the terrible timing of these events as we are approaching the peak of spring bird migration.

Brian Trusty, Executive Director of Audubon Texas and a Vice President of National Audubon Society commented, "Galveston Bay is not only one of the world's busiest seaports, but it also home to some of the most bio-diverse and ecologically sensitive areas on the Gulf coast. With the height of spring migration fast approaching, hundreds of thousands of birds are arriving in these waters and the surrounding environs to nest and breed. Managing healthy habitats in such close proximity to major commercial hubs and shipping traffic is incredibly challenging and requires constant vigilance."

Audubon is responding at all levels to the oil spill catastrophe in the Galveston ship channel, with local efforts being led by the Houston Audubon Society chapter.

Conservation staff of Houston Audubon report that over 200 oiled birds have been found on Galveston Bay and are being rehabilitated by the wildlife response team.

Another press release by Audubon Texas on March 27 reveals that the wind that pushed much oil out into the Gulf, now results in a threat as far as Matagorda, where Audubon manages more critical islands. "The most significant of the rookery islands in the immediate area have been protected by boom systems put in place late yesterday and this morning," Iliana Peña reported. "So far, these islands have remained unaffected, but we are ready to respond."

Field Trip Continued from p. 2

- 8. Snowy Egret 9
- 9. Great Egret 6

Next field trip: May 10 to the Boy Scout camp reservation. Roy Smallwood, Field Trips Chair

- 10. Black Vulture 3
- 11. Osprey 1
- 12. Red Tailed Hawk 3
- 13. American Coot 10
- 14. Sandpiper sp. 1
- 15. Franklin Gull 1
- 16. Rock Pigeon 7
- 17. Mourning Dove 25
- 18. Northern Rough Winged Swallow 20
- 19. Carolina Wren 1

President's Letter

Change is in the air!

Well, so is spring...and I was reflecting on that truism "change or die". Those were fighting words 150 years ago, yet most of us today recognize that Darwin's insights apply not only to species development, but to the "social lives" of persons, corporations, and voluntary organizations such as BCAS. I believe BCAS has continued as an active and rewarding entity for nearly 33 years because of our personal and collective abilities to adjust to change and embrace new members, new priorities, and new partners.

First, we will hear from our nominating committee at the April meeting, preparatory to our bi-annual election. I will be stepping down as President (I'm willing to serve once a century), and that clears the way for a different style and experience set to lead us. Change is good.

Second, I watched last week as two sets of change intersected and may have implications for BCAS. Long-time environmentalist and BCAS member Maggie Lambert sold her rural home and acreage to Wildlife Rescue, Inc. (This is the same group that provided our November program about raptors.) Maggie now lives in a Elgin nursing home, and wanted her property to support her love of wildlife. Her change came at a time when the wildlife rehabilitation group was looking for secluded, wooded rural land within a reasonable distance of Austin. Although their East Austin lease has ten years left, the group will begin moving their rehabilitation facilities to our county in the next few years. This relocation will offer BCAS a potential partner for education, community service, and wildlife protection. They are happy, Maggie is happy, and change is good.

Susan Leslie-Guinn, President

- 20. Northern Cardinal 3
- 21. Great-tailed Grackle 200
- 22. Common Grackle ?

Bird Calls is published September through June by the Bastrop County Audubon Society, edited by Mary Ellen Branan, PhD. We invite letters, articles, news tips, book and event reviews, and photos. Deadline for the pending issue is noon the last day of the preceding month. Send to mbranana@austin.rr.com. Ph. (512) 303 2734. [Special Note: The font of copy on page 1 is Garamond instead of Times New Roman. Do we like it?]

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Return Service Requested

The lasting pleasures of contact with the natural world are not reserved for scientists but are available to anyone who will place himself under the influence of earth, sea, and sky and their amazing life—RACHEL CARSON.

Calendar for April

Thursday, April 3, 6:30 p.m., BCAS Board Meeting at the Bastrop Public Library.

Saturday, April 3, 8:00 a.m. to noon, BCAS Field Trip with Roy Smallwood. Meet at Bank parking lot in Bastrop.

April 10-13 Weekend: Galveston FeatherFest and Nature Photo Contest

Tuesday, April 15, 7:00 p.m. BCAS General Meeting & Program, 1st Nat'l Bank Bldg. in Bastrop.

Saturday, Apr 19, 7:30-11:00 a.m. at the CER: Hornsby Bend Monthly field trip. FREE! No registration needed. All levels of birders welcome.

April 25-27 Weekend: Birdathon 2014 at Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, San Antonio. Sign up at mlac@audubon.org or call at (210) 628-1639.

A Birdathon for All

For the 2014 three-day event, the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center off 410 West in San Antonio is adding two guided birding trips at South Llano State Park and at Cibola Nature Preserve for \$25 each and a Pro/Am birding day on Friday, pairing an expert birder with a youth or novice birder to compete for the most bird species sighted at Mitchell Lake.

To sign up for the "Classic" birdathon competition on either Saturday or Sunday, go to mitchelllake.audubon.org or call (210) 628 1639. You can compete against yourself for a "big day" and see how many species you can sight.

The April 25-27 events, a fund-raiser, requires a sign-up and pledge.

Membership Secy. Priscilla Jarvis Announces Newest Members

Since January 1, the following have joined Bastrop County Audubon Society:

Ronald Martin
Susan Martin
Linda Salerno
Anna Stalcap

Welcome!