



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

## Letter from the President

*At NatureFest birds were in trees  
For kids with our binocs to see.  
We showed them how  
To focus and now  
Bird watchers these kids may be.*

Jackie Fisher, Dru Gabrysch, Alan Jaeger, Susan Leslie, Steve Pyrczak, Linda Salerno, Sandy Simon, and I had the pleasure recently of teaching children how to use binoculars at NatureFest at Fisherman's Park in Bastrop. They practiced by identifying the plastic birds we had hung in trees and bushes. We gave out educational materials and BCAS brochures. We saw about 25-30 Sandhill cranes flying in a V.

I'm sitting on my porch this gorgeous Saturday morning watching for the pair of Red-shouldered Hawks to return to their nest in a tall oak nearby. Black-chinned Hummingbirds come to the feeders, buzzing around and chasing each other. A pair of Northern Cardinals land on the same branch of a tree beside the porch and try to stare down a pair of Mourning Doves who totally ignore them.

Watching birds can be so delightful. As a member of BCAS, dedicated birders taught me how to use binoculars to observe and identify birds.

You can teach children to do the same. What a gift to pass on. What a difference you can make in a child's appreciation of birds and nature. Here's an opportunity for you! BCAS will be teaching children at nature events on July 8 and 15, coordinated by the Smithville Library. We will send emails with more information this summer. Hope to see you there!

Priscilla Jarvis

## Meeting Place? Refreshments?

The Board continues to sift ideas of a possible change in a meeting place beginning next year which would equal the convenience and amenities of the First National Bank meeting room, while allowing refreshments to be served. The bank recently disallowed refreshments.

The membership is urgently requested to offer candidate meeting places, albeit with some reasonable charge to our budget, for the Board to consider. The present room is free.

## May Program

### Lewis & Clark: More Than a Mapping Expedition

Nicholas Cowey, LCRA McKinney Roughs Nature Park Program Coordinator, tells a great story—this time concerning the historic Lewis & Clark exploration of the Louisiana Purchase, 1804-06. Cowey will speak at the

Bastrop County Audubon Society's May 19 meeting which begins at 7:00 p.m. at the First National Bank Building meeting room. Doors open at 6:30.



*Lewis's Woodpecker :  
Montana, July 20, 1805*

Both Lewis and Clark were natural scientists and kept meticulous journals describing the plants and animals encountered up the rivers, across the mountains, and on to the Pacific. Of the 182 plants described, 80 were new to science. Among the over 120 animals and birds were the Whooping Crane, Clark's Nutcracker, and Lewis's Woodpecker. They sent a "barking squirrel," now named the Black-tailed Prairie Dog, back to President Jefferson at the White House.

Nicholas Cowey has a Bachelor of Science degree from Texas State University. He is an Eagle Scout and worked ten years at the Lost Pines Scout Reservation in Bastrop beginning as a merit badge counselor, later becoming a Camp Program Director.

Nicholas also worked with the Fort Smith Mountain Men adventure firm developing travel programs for youth throughout the western states and Canada. He has worked at McKinney Roughs Nature Park for 13 years. He is the lead compiler for the Lost Pines Christmas Bird Count. He is well known as a conservation teacher, using hands-on activities that get students involved in nature.



## The May Parks and Wildlife Magazine

features an article "The 12 Most Beautiful Birds in Texas" by Cliff Shackelford. See: [tpwmagazine.com](http://tpwmagazine.com).

Follow these tips  
and recipes for home-made  
additions to your bird feeds:

#### **Peanut butter pudding:**

Peanut butter is a good substitute for suet in the summer. Mix one part peanut butter with five parts corn meal and stuff the mixture into holes drilled in a hanging log or into the crevices of a large pine cone. This all-season mixture attracts woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, and occasionally warblers.

#### **Fruit for berry-eating birds:**

Fruit specialists such as robins, waxwings, bluebirds, and mockingbirds rarely eat birdseed. To attract these birds, soak raisins and currants in water overnight, then place them on a table feeder, or purchase blends with a dried fruit mixture. To attract orioles and tanagers, skewer halved oranges onto a spike near other feeders, or provide nectar feeders.



#### **Nectar for hummingbirds:**

Make a sugar solution of one part white sugar to four parts water. Boil briefly to sterilize and dissolve sugar crystals; no need to add red food coloring. Feeders must be washed every few days with very hot water and kept scrupulously clean to prevent the growth of mold.

### ***Be Inspired—***

The web site at [bastropcountyaudubon.org](http://bastropcountyaudubon.org) preserves six news reports of BCAS events from the past five years. For example:

June 23 and June 28, 2012: “A Towering Dedication” is the Advertiser’s big front page photo of the Judy Ing Chimney Swift Tower with the crowd gathered for the dedication, and the article and two more photos appearing a few days later, “An Environmentalist Remembered,” depicts BCAS at its formal best for leading the public dedication ceremony. A beautiful day.

October 30, 2013: An Austin American-Statesman article features the reforestation efforts by Roy and Pamela Smallwood, Tree Folks, and BCAS, with photo.

June 25, 2014: An Austin American-Statesman article and two photos “Snakes, Lizards and Turtles—Oh, My!” reported that “People got up close and personal with Bastrop County Audubon Society’s last program where herpetologist Bill Brooks presented. . . to a crowd of excited children and intrigued adults.”



**The BCAS Educational Booth** appeared at the Bastrop Library book sale March 28, where (insert) Michelle Belden overcame qualms of Yuan and her daughter Nova to teach them binocular skills. (photos: Michelle Belden and Mary Ellen Branan)



**Fisherman’s Park:** The BCAS booth at the City of Bastrop NatureFest was a popular success despite threats of rain on Saturday, April 18. (Photo: Linda Salerno)



# Field Reports

March 25, 2015  
Mitchell Lake



Seven of us met at the First National Bank at 7 a.m. on a Wednesday morning and drove the two hours to the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center south of San Antonio. It was a beautiful clear and coolish (55°F) morning. We first stopped at the Audubon Center to check in and get trail maps. We were welcomed by the new Center Director, Sara Beesley; the Director of Center Education, Jason St Sauver, and the President of the Board, Anne Parrish. Highlights were the Verdin and it's hanging nest (life bird for many of us) and also the Pyrrhuloxia. There were kettles of American White Pelicans and rafts of Northern Shovelers. We birded for three hours and then had a late lunch at El Mirador before heading back.

**The Birders were Mary Ellen Branan, Jackie Fisher, Priscilla Jarvis, Steve Pyrczak, Linda Williams, Mike Goebel, Field Trip Director, and Jan Goebel, Compiler. Total: 39 species. This was a fun day!**

Gadwall	4
Blue-winged Teal	2
Cinnamon Teal	2
Northern Shoveler	59
Ruddy Duck	1
Pied-billed Grebe	7
Eared Grebe	1
American White Pelican	143
Double-crested Cormorant	22
Great Blue Heron	1
Great Egret	1
Black Vulture	3
Turkey Vulture	8
Osprey	2
Red-tailed Hawk	1
Crested Caracara	2
American Coot	13
Spotted Sandpiper	1
Least Sandpiper	1
White-winged Dove	11
Mourning Dove	7
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	1
Black-chinned Hummingbird	2
Eastern Phoebe	4
Loggerhead Shrike	2
White-eyed Vireo	2
Purple Martin	6
Verdin	2
Pyrrhuloxia	1
Red-winged Blackbird	16
Northern Cardinal	6
House Finch	13
House Sparrow	2



Meadowlark sp.	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	2
Northern Mockingbird	3
Yellow-rumped Warbler	6
Lincoln's Sparrow	1
White-crowned Sparrow	2
Northern Cardinal	6
Pyrrhuloxia	1
Red-winged Blackbird	16
Meadowlark sp.	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	2
House Finch	13
House Sparrow	2

## Update: BP Oil Spill

Five years ago the Deepwater Horizon rig exploded, claiming 11 lives and unleashing the worst marine oil spill in U.S. history. Since that time, the National Audubon Society has built on its 100-year legacy of protecting bird populations throughout the Gulf Coast and has extended its footprint of stewardship across the five Gulf states.

In the immediate aftermath of the spill, Audubon staff and hundreds of volunteers were on the ground, facilitating transport of oiled birds for cleaning and care, protecting critical habitat and nesting grounds and being the voice for birds throughout the disaster.

In the years that followed, Audubon engaged its network of volunteers to help pass the historic RESTORE Act—ensuring that a majority of funds from the Clean Water Act fines BP pays will be allocated towards restoration efforts.

As the ongoing effects continue to be felt, the National Audubon Society is focused on ramping up its important stewardship for birds at more than 200 sites across the Gulf Coast. They empower citizens and communities to protect terns and skimmers in nesting colonies, protect the access of plover chicks to their feeding grounds, and oversee critical waterbird colonies from Florida to Texas. We all still await assessment of full fines to BP and others involved with the catastrophic spill, but Audubon has been successful putting available funds to work on expanded coastal bird protections.

(excerpted from [audubon.org](http://audubon.org))

*Bird Calls* is published by Bastrop County Audubon Society six times a year. We invite letters, articles, news tips, event reviews, book reviews, poems, cartoons, and photos appropriate to our mission. The deadline for a pending issue is noon on the last day of the preceding month. Submit to [editor@bastropcountyaudubon.org](mailto:editor@bastropcountyaudubon.org). Or by mail: 216 Schaefer Blvd., Bastrop TX 78602, ph. (512) 303-2734. Editor, Mary Ellen Branan, PhD.

**BCAS Mission: To promote the conservation, restoration, and enjoyment of natural resources and habitats for birds and other wildlife.**

BCAS  
c/o Dru Gabrysch  
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Paige TX 78659

*Return Service Requested*



Bird of Summer:  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo



## EVENTS CALENDAR

- May 7, Thursday, Bastrop County Audubon Board Meeting, 6:15 p.m., Bastrop Public Library.
- May 9, Saturday, Hornsby Bend, Monthly Bird Count, 7:00 a.m. &/or 4:00 p.m. All levels welcome.
- May 9, Saturday Bastrop SP, CCC Walking Tour,, 2:30-3:30, Josh Crawford.
- May 16, Saturday, Bastrop SP, short hike to learn about this unique forest. 10-11 a.m.
- May 19, Tuesday, BCAS General Meeting.  
Doors open 6:30 p.m., First Nat'l Bank, Hasler Blvd. @ H. 71, Bastrop. See p. 1.
- May ? : BCAS Field Trip, tba by Mike Goebel.
- June 13, Saturday, "Go Fish," with Bill Brooks at Bastrop SP pond. Equipment & bait provided. Prizes. Adult required with children.
- June 16, Tuesday, BCAS Annual Meeting and Program (last meeting until September).
- July 8 and July 15, Smithville Public Library summer program, BCAS to teach birding.
- July 10-13: NAS National Convention, Leesburg, VA.

## From Joy Hester, NAS Director for the Central Flyway (excerpts)

Dear Chapters in the Central Flyway-South Region,

I'm now well into my fifth year on the national board of directors for Audubon representing chapters in the Central Flyway-South.

Many encouraging things have come to pass during my time on the [NAS board](#) a new strategic plan that takes Audubon's focus back to bird conservation, an Audubon Chapter Convention for the first time in 14 years, efforts to work more together on conservation projects of mutual concern to Audubon at all levels, and a large array of resources made available to chapters through the website and Audubon Works. These are all changes that I feel good about and hope you do, too.

*Be sure to check out the beautifully re-done and much easier-to-use **Audubon website** ([www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)) if you haven't done so yet. I think you'll be pleased.*

Finally, it's **Audubon Convention** time again! Coming up on July 10, 11, 12, and 13, 2015, it's happening at the Lansdowne Resort in Leesburg, Virginia. Members of the National Audubon Board have made personal contributions to underwrite a scholarship program for the convention. Details on scholarships, registration and the workshops are forthcoming. [jhester@audubon.org](mailto:jhester@audubon.org)