



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

Welcome New Members this Year

Membership Chair Priscilla Jarvis reports the following new members for this fiscal year:

Rick Breare III
Wil Casey
Lisa Dawn-Fisher
Chris DuCharme
Jackie Fisher
Lindi Parobek
Steve Pyrczak
Roy Smallwood 3rd

BCAS, entering its 29th year, welcomes everyone's support and enthusiasm.



For a summer swim, Bastrop style: steps down to the water, a rope to swing out on. **Where are we?** Answer page 3.

June Program, Annual Meeting, & Election

Traveling with Finlay & Jarvis: Europe & British Columbia

On Tuesday evening, June 21, Bastrop County Audubon Society members Sharon Finlay and Priscilla Jarvis will each share their best moments on their respective travels last year for a program of two slides shows.

The Bastrop County Audubon Society's Annual Meeting begins the evening. Business includes the final fiscal year treasurer's report and "state of the Society" remarks by President Sue Brusker and others. Also the membership will be asked to vote on the nomination of two new Board members, Lila Lewis, as Hospitality Chair, and Roy Smallwood, Director. The new appointments are necessary to address the loss to the board of Norm and Margie Sachnik and Steve Ligon

Finlay birded in Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and France. Most of the excellent bird photography is her own, with a few borrowed shots of birds she saw but for which she may not have a good photo.

"Nothing adds to a life list like visiting a foreign country where you see birds that you'll never find at home." Finlay recalls the European Green Finch, Wood Pigeon, Chaffinch, and Red-crested Pochard.

Priscilla Jarvis bases her show on the Road Scholar trip "The Enchanted Wilderness of Coastal British Columbia" which she and Jeremiah took in September 2010. The trip by bus and boat went up the east side of Vancouver Island from Victoria to Campbell River and back with explorations in Inner Harbor, Chamainus, Bute Inlet and Northern Gulf Island archipelago, Cortenay, Comox, Coombs, Duncan, and more. The show features photos by fellow traveler Don Lorenz of grizzly bears, sea lions, whales, birds, masks, totem poles, forests, and islands. "Although we expected to see grizzly bears, we were thrilled to see a mother grizzly with her two cubs at the Orford River Estuary."

Finlay with her sister Barbara Davis traveled by bus. "Our trip was not taken as a birding trip but we birded wherever we went."

The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. in the First National Bank meeting room on the second floor, Hasler Blvd. at H. 71w in Bastrop. As always, the meeting is free and the public is invited..

For the refreshments which end all BCAS meetings, all members are invited to bring a "pot-luck" food item for the June table as part of a special celebration of another year of accomplishment.

BCAS fiscal year extends from July to July. The June meeting is the final meeting of the fiscal year, with a hiatus for July and August. Meetings resume in September.





Field Trip Reports

Saturday, May 14: In and near the City of Bastrop, including Bob Bryant Park, Fisherman's Park south of the boat launch, Colorado River Refuge, Highway 1441, and North Shore LCRA Park. As we started from the Bank parking lot shortly after 8:00 a.m., the temperature was 65 and ranged to around 75 at our return at noon, i.e., perfect. At Fisherman's, a fast current and high water level submerged the usual sandbars. The field trip yielded only one duck and not a single Coot. A second factor depressing our results except at 1441 was the huge numbers of other people enjoying week end events. Nevertheless the field trip was special for sightings such as a first-year Bald Eagle and three species of flycatchers on a fence all in a row at 1441. Lila Lewis had spotted a male Magnolia Warbler earlier in the morning at Bob Bryant Park. We didn't find it again for our count, but did spot two Prothonotary Warblers there. The outing was also unusual for not spotting several of the usual suspects, such as Blue Jays, titmice, Cattle Egrets, etc. We had a total of 37 species, including:

Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Mallard, Mississippi Kite, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Rock Dove, Eurasian Collared Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker (nest), W. Kingbird, E. Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, American Crow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Marsh Wren, E. Bluebird, N. Mockingbird, European Starling, Pine Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Summer Tanager, N. Cardinal, Painted Bunting, Great-tailed Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, and House Sparrow.

Participants were Lila Lewis, Jackie Fisher, and Roy Smallwood and Mary Ellen Branan, co-leaders.

Checking Texbirds and various Bastrop contacts, I have found this spring has been somewhat unusual for sightings. At the Colorado River: Green and Ringed Kingfisher and Little Blue Heron. At Shipp Lake: Wilson's Phalarope, White-rumped Sandpiper, White-faced and White Ibis, Least Bittern, Grasshopper Sparrow, Ring-necked and Redhead Ducks, Cave Swallow, and Little Blue Heron.

At Steiner Ranch (XS): Yellow-headed Blackbird (244) and Upland Sandpipers (30+).

At feeders: Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Varied Bunting (first noted this far east). Brush Freeman reports two Zone-tailed Hawks, possibly nesting, Marbled Godwit, and Cassin's Sparrow in the southwestern part of the county.

At Alum Creek: Wood Thrush, Hairy Woodpecker, and Hooded Warbler. In the City of Bastrop: Barn Owls reportedly nesting again at a residence we visited last year.

Stan Wellso, Field Trips Chair

President's Letter

Six Months Later--What We Have Learned

Recently, National Audubon Society released a six month assessment of the effects of the BP oil spill on Louisiana's coastal ecosystem. It is not all gloom and doom, nor is it all roses. There was extensive damage to the fragile wetlands and many of the birds and wildlife that inhabit the region. Remarkably, the September count found only three birds with detectable oil.

Immediately after the spill, Audubon volunteers from throughout the region jumped into action. They cleaned oil from birds, logged evidence, built cages, and fed young captured birds during the disaster. Volunteers amassed thousands of hours gathering information from their observations of nesting sites, bird types and fragile areas in need of long term monitoring.

Although Audubon partnered with LSU and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to conduct its Coastal Bird Survey, they acknowledge it is "citizen science" that forms the backbone of the recommendations for understanding the long term effects of the oil spill and what it will take to bring the wetlands back to a healthy ecosystem.

Citizens have been counting birds in the area for 111 years. Their continued observations will provide scientists insight into the resilience of the bird population: which seem most impacted, what areas exhibit notable changes.

In the meantime, some species have been severely impacted, especially the brown pelican. Concerns also remain for the health of the food chain. As residual oil oozes and washes up on the beach and into marsh areas, unsuspecting birds will ingest harmful toxic materials. It is just too soon to know the full extent of the spill's damage.

However, Audubon is deeply committed to turning tragedy into opportunity. Through education, advocacy, and hands-on conservation efforts, changes are under way that may ultimately lead to the broader restoration of the entire Gulf ecosystem. We should all learn as much as we can and advocate for the resources it will take to complete this vital goal.

Sue Brubaker, BCAS President



Earth Share

One environment

One simple way to care for it.

www.earthshare-texas.org

Thanks to the thousands of H-E-B customers who purchased \$1, \$3 and \$5 coupons at EarthShare of Texas boards at check stands at over 220 H-E-B Store locations during the month of April to celebrate Earth Day. We just learned that a total of \$49,890, compared to \$46,115 raised in 2010. This donation will be split among the many participating organizations that make up the EarthShare of Texas federation for the fifth year in a row.



Would you ever think these two birds are related?

They are! They are both Cuculids. Such different lifestyles: so different looking, but still of the same family.

Birds of the same family are typically easy to categorize. After all, a Carolina Wren looks like a Bewick's Wren looks like a Marsh Wren. Similarly, a Carolina Chickadee looks like a Black Capped looks like a Chestnut Back Chickadee. Similarly, the Jays resemble each other. However, there is no such similarity between the cuckoo and the roadrunner.

All wrens tend to be insectivorous. Chickadees eat mainly insects, are fond of spider eggs but will eat sunflower seeds. Yet, when it comes to cuculids, the Yellow Billed Cuckoo enjoys a meal of caterpillars, and the Greater Roadrunner likes to dine on small lizards and snakes.



Further, if you want to see a cuckoo you would want to be looking up and generally in dense foliage. But the roadrunner is a ground dweller, flying only when absolutely necessary.

And if you want to be further thrown for a loop, consider the Ani. It, too, is a cuculid.

Roy Smallwood

Announcing Western Field Ornithologists Conference: Sierra Vista, AZ August 17-21, 2011:

If you've never been to southeast Arizona during the late summer season (or even if you have), this is an opportunity you won't want to miss. Besides a program of speakers and workshops, we will offer field trips to all the southeast Arizona hotspots looking for local

specialties like Scaled and Montezuma quail, Gray, Short-tailed, and Zone-tailed hawks, a dazzling variety of hummingbirds and flycatchers, Elegant Trogon, Red-faced Warbler, Cassin's, Botteri's, Rufous-winged, and Five-striped sparrows and much more.

To register and see full details go to www.westernfieldornithologists.org and click on the 'Annual Conference' banner in the middle of the page. You will probably want to download the Conference Details document and review before you begin registration.

*from Ed Pandolfino, Ph.D.
vice president, Western Field Ornithologists*

Turkey Vultures, Others Expanding Northward

"Not so long ago--a blink of an eye on the geological time scale--Turkey Vultures soared only over southern landscapes. Today, you can spot them from Maine and Ontario to Montana, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and even north and west to Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

"They are part of a cluster of "southern species"--Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal, Northern Mockingbird, and Carolina Wren--that have pushed their ranges hundreds of miles north in recent decades. . . . Today, all are common throughout most of New England and other northern states west to the Great Lakes, and three of them--Turkey Vulture, cardinal, and mockingbird--now nest regularly in Canada."

Besides simply citing global warming as the cause, researchers cite "declines in both persecution and pesticides have also contributed" and "farming practices have changed in the southern states, in a general trend away from family animal-based operations toward larger cash-crop farms with better disposal of dead livestock. Different forestry practices have led to the loss of nesting habitat in the south as well."

from Living Bird, Cornell Lab, Spring, 2011, p. 36.

Answer: Where are we? Fisherman's Park, South, downtown Bastrop.

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.

Editorial office: 216 Schaefer, Blvd, Bastrop 78602 (512) 303-2734. Email: editor@bastropaudubon.org

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



June Calendar

June 4, Saturday, Austin-Bastrop River Corridor Partnership Monthly River Monitoring Trip Fuller Ranch to Bastrop. Meet at CER parking lot at 8:00 a.m. Contact Claude Morris at cgmorris@flash.net to participate.

June 18, Saturday, 7:30-11:00 a.m., Hornsby Bend/Travis Audubon Monthly Birding Field Trip. Meet at Center for Environmental Research Bldg. (CER). All levels welcome.

June 19, Sunday, 4:00 p.m. BCAS Board Meeting & Potluck supper. At Jarvis's: 783 Lower Elgin Rd., 281-2762.

June 21, Tuesday, BCAS Membership Meeting (see p. 1). Doors open 6:30 p.m.. First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Hasler @ H. 71 W.

Sept. 20, Tuesday, BCAS Membership/General Meeting & Program, same time, same place.

At Shipp Lake--Stan Wellso and Roy Smallwood found excellent birding recently at Smithville area's shallow lake which ranges on both sides of H. 71. The railroad track is the best place accessible to view the birds. The lake has been drying up the past few years but now has made a small comeback which may not continue into the County's present highest drought rating: exceptional. See Field Reports for birds they saw.