



# Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

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## October Program

## A Costa Rica Birding Tour: Finlay, Hohman, and Walker

For the October 18th program, birder-photographers Sharon Finlay, Judy Walker, Pam Hohman, and Barbara Davis combine their images from their birding trip to Costa Rica in March, 2011.

They visited three major birding sites, all remote locales, viewing at least 100 species daily.

The Savegre Mountain Hotel, in a high-altitude valley at 7,000 ft., yielded the Resplendent Quetzal as their first bird sighting. The Rancho Naturalista in the Central foothills (3,000 elev.) has recorded 450 species and features many specialty birds in its 125 acre preserve. The hotel offered views of two volcanoes.



**Rancho Naturalista specialty,  
the Snowcap Hummingbird,**

## NAS President Visits Texas Site

The president of the National Audubon Society recently traveled to Texas to visit the vital nesting site of Green Island in the Lower Laguna Madre.

David Yarnold, President National Audubon Society, says, "I figure in my first year the most important thing to do is to see the ten most important places in all of Audubon's world, and Green Island is definitely in that must see list."

Green Island is home to some 18 species of colonial-nesting waterbirds, and the 114-acre refuge was first leased by Audubon from the state of Texas in 1923.

Audubon leases and protects 80 nesting islands on the Texas coast thru their Coastal Sanctuary Program, and a handful of Audubon wardens like Leroy Overstreet of Green Island patrol the sensitive nesting areas.

*Audubon Newswire 5/18/11*



**Costa Rican Pygmy Owl**

Finally, Hohman and Walker extended their trip in order to include La Selva, a Biological Research Station, HQ of the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS). La Selva in the Caribbean lowlands offered wet forest and marsh habitats. La Selva staff claims it has the best birding in Costa Rica.

Walker's favorite sighting was the pygmy owl, which came down daily to play in a nearby mud puddle.

Finlay, Hohman and Walker are BCAS members; Davis is Finlay's sister. Finlay, who organized the Power Point slide show, says all four women contributed some excellent photos for us to enjoy.

The Bastrop County Audubon Society's general meetings and programs takes place at the First National Bank's meeting room in Bastrop at Hasler Blvd. and H. 71W. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.. Refreshments will be served. The meeting is open to the public.

This meeting resumes BCAS regular third Tuesday schedule of meetings through June each year.



## Out Here in the Field

9/01/11: We are setting new records daily (100 and +). This has been going too long and is accompanied by our lack of rain. Many water features in the area have dried-up, and the birds associated with them have gone elsewhere. Insects in the area are noticeably absent, and thus, birds that depend on them have left the area or adjusted their diets. Resident flycatchers numbers are very low. Grasses have not been producing many seeds, and the rodent reproduction cycle is diminished due to a poor diet, and the resident hawks have left for better hunting grounds elsewhere.

Yes, migration to the South is in full swing. Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Yellow Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Empids, and overhead Mississippi Kites, Upland Sandpipers and other shorebirds are in Bastrop County. Brush Freeman, whose eyes and ears are always attuned to birds, has been reporting on Texbirds that Couch's Kingbirds have been seen often in Webberville Park. He also reported a large alligator and bobcat on the same day there.

**Stan Wellso, Field Trips Chair**

**[The above field notes were composed prior to the Labor Day fires. The next result of heat and drought--and wind--was wildfire. Editor]**



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## Members Lead Teen Program in Elgin

On June 16, BCAS led the program for the Elgin Library's summer activities for teens, called "There They Fly." Sue Brubaker, Mary Ellen Branan, and Pricilla Jarvis participated, each leading a group to a park nearby for field experience applying what was presented in the orientation segment.

There was a good turn-out of about two dozen teens. At least two were already experts about binoculars and birding and helped out in the sessions.



## Gleaning in the field

### Ecological Dominoes

Without water, animals struggle with thirst. Few plants grow.

Without plants, there are fewer insects. No insects result in low seed production. The animals that rely on seeds and plants for nutrition--from birds to deer and antelope--have low reproduction. Predators that rely on those animals as a food source remain hungry as well, and they reproduce less.

"So there's a domino effect that goes out in however many more branches than you can actually ever keep count of," Bonner said.

The long-term impact from the drought will cross state lines and country borders because Texas is so large and its ecosystems diverse.

For example, birds that migrate south in the winter will find little food and water this year in Texas so they will have to fly even farther south and expend more energy. As a result, they could reproduce less. Some of those birds, such as the colorful painted bunting, often fly to Central America for part of the year where there has been a lot of rain and more insects than usual. But because of the drought in Texas and the Plains, there may not be enough birds to consume the insects, Bonner said.

"Now, what happens?" Bonner said. "Continentially speaking, this big of an area not getting enough water can impact places far and wide."

The impact on species also could last for years after the drought officially ends. For example, quail normally nest in grass grown a year earlier, but because of the drought, there has been almost no grass growth this year. That means many quail won't be able to nest next year and the impact of the drought on the birds won't be seen until 2012, Bonner said.

*from AP News, 8/8/11, by R. Plushnik-Mesti*

## *The Big Year*

The big movie about obsessed birders opens October 14, starring Steve Martin, Owen Wilson, and Jack Black. The poster has all three peering through their binoculars. The movie is based on Mark Obmasick's book *The Big Year* published in 2004, which has a tern and a pair of binoculars as cover art. The three men compete to see the most birds in North America in one year.

## Progress on Ing Project

The Judy Ing Memorial Committee has made good progress towards achieving the memorial before spring 2012. President Sue Brubaker reports she has received an informal positive nod for a Chimney Swift Tower from Bastrop Mayor Terry Orr.



Earlier, in mid-July heat, Ing Memorial Committee members Sharon Finlay, Sue Brubaker, and Mary Ellen Branan went about the Bastrop central city area to assess possible sites for the tower and selected several, preferring two. Both are subject to Bastrop City Hall approval.

Jarvis reports contractor Don Chapman has consented to supervise construction, probably in November, at no charge. The swifts should return in February, looking for a home.

They had selected the Tower project as meeting the criteria of visibility, accessibility, public education, and importance to conservation. BCAS will apply \$600 in donations already received in Judy Ing's memory.

## Refreshments for October



By  
Lila Lewis &  
Priscilla Jarvis

## Mail Changes?

### HAS YOUR MAILING ADDRESS CHANGED?

If so, please contact Priscilla Jarvis and give her your current address so you may continue to get your Bird Calls.

Also, members of BCAS may now receive Bird Calls by email instead of by postal mail. If you would like to use this environmentally-friendly alternative, please let me know by emailing me, Priscilla Jarvis, with the subject "Email Bird Calls" to: [pjflamingo@flash.net](mailto:pjflamingo@flash.net). Or call me at 512-281-2762.

Thanks ever so much!

P.J., Membership Chair



### Letter from the President

## What Might Be Possible?

It is time to kick off a new year with Bastrop County Audubon Society. Hopefully, we can get our minds wrapped around issues other than the devastating fire that rocked our County and the unrelenting drought we have endured for the past 120 days. There will be excellent program presentations offered throughout the year. We also will work hard to keep members apprised of environmental topics of local interest through Bird Calls and our regular meetings.

In addition to the general administrative duties required of the President, I would like to focus on one main goal; increasing participation of our members in the various scheduled events and activities of BCAS. So what do I mean? Let's start with an easy one--Birding trips. These are fun short trips around the area. If you have not walked along side Stan Wellso as he calls birds out into view, you are missing a treat. Mary Ellen Branan needs contributors to the newsletter. Most of you have had exciting or interesting experiences. Jot down and email a story to her for Bird Calls. Volunteers are needed for hospitality, manning our booth at one of the nature fests, and serving as a Board Member.

The more members who participate, the more we learn about each other and what might be possible to achieve. I welcome you all to join in and share the work and fun ahead.

You may currently be seeing some spectacular migrants. Bring your bird story along to share. And d'on't forget to keep water available for the birds and wild critters.

**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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Baltimore Oriole

## September Calendar

**10/08, Saturday: Annual Picnic of Friends of Lost Pines State Parks,** 12 noon, Buescher S. P. picnic pavilion, hotdogs, etc., everyone welcome. Park updates. Donations welcome.

**10/14/, Friday: "The Big Movie" opening.**

**10/15, Saturday: Hornsby Bend Field Trip,** 7:30 a.m. all levels of birders, an easy morning of walking and learning the birds of Hornsby Bend. Bring binoculars and water.

**10/16, Sunday: Board Meeting,** 4:00 p.m. Host Priscilla Jarvis, 783 Lower Elgin Rd, followed by pot-luck dinner.

**10/18, Tuesday: General Meeting,** 7:00 p.m. First National Bank Bldg., Bastrop.



## Baby Black Vulture

peeked out and smiled at photographer  
Stephen Pyrczak in Bastrop State  
Park, 8/10/11.