



Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Bastrop County Audubon Society

November Program

From the President - - - -

I was pleased with the turn out for BCAS' first meeting. The program, "Birding Costa Rica," was informative, interesting, and well-presented.

Hopefully, there will be much interest in the next two programs about the fire damage and expectations of recovery of the plants and animals affected in Bastrop County. The more informed we are the more we'll be able to plan actions that will assist our community and the natural environment's recovery from the devastating fire damage. I urge you to attend these meetings and bring along a friend.

Finally, I invite you to consider serving on our BCAS board. We need more faces and lots of enthusiasm. It is fun and rewarding.

---Sue Brubaker

Best & Latest Info for the Post-wildfires Environment

Two Bastrop conservationists will speak to us on November 15, reporting the latest information, restoration projects, and ecological outlook after the Labor Day or Bastrop Complex fires. They plan to summarize the latest assessments by the various governmental agencies involved.

Meredith Longoria of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has served as Wildlife Biologist for Bastrop and Caldwell Counties for six years. She is is-known to many for her successful campaign introducing Houston Toad conservation to landowners in the pines habitat. She gave a previous program for BCAS on the toad.

She acquired the additional title of Private Lands Biologist for the western portion of the Oak-Prairies Wildlife District in 2010, and currently also serves as lead for the Wildlife Subgroup of the Lost Pines Recovery Team.

Roxanne Hernandez has been Administrator of Bastrop County's Lost Pines Habitat Conservation Plan, a program designed to help the county and its citizens comply with the Endangered Species Act and further Houston toad conservation, since November of 2008.

Hernandez is also currently serving as lead for the Lost Pines Recovery Team, helping to address habitat recovery in the Lost Pines ecosystem following the Bastrop County Complex Fire. In January, they will return for a program focused especially on consequences for the wildlife.

Excerpts **Todd McClanahan** email, 9/13/11.

"The outpouring of support is simply mind-blowing and I know there are so many out there who are just wanting to do something to help. Thus far, all buildings within Bastrop State Park, including CCC cabins, refectory, bathhouse, swimming pool, pro shop, picnic shelter, warehouse and sign shop along with the headquarters, group barracks, residences and restrooms have been saved. . . . Our Regional Office which is also located within Bastrop State Park suffered losses including a Law Enforcement building, Texas Outdoor Family building, residence and 12 vehicles, seven of which were new vehicles yet to be delivered to other state parks. . . . Many have asked about tree planting and this is a great idea, however, we must first assess the erosion problem that lies before us. Also, unfortunately, there are not many sources for the drought tolerant loblolly pine trees, and thirdly, given the continued drought conditions, we want to maximize the chance for survival for any planted trees. We are assessing all needs for the park including infrastructure, resource restoration, etc." --



Smoky sign at Sharon Finlay's property in Circle D. The Finlays had been planning to move to Georgetown, and so they have. She served BCAS as Corresponding Secretary and all around good birder and friend.

National Audubon's Annual Rachel Carson Award for Women in Conservation

Actress Sigourney Weaver and artist/architect Maya Lin were named as the 2011 recipients of the Rachel Carson Award for a woman conservationist at the eighth annual Women in Conservation Luncheon at The Plaza in New York City.

Also this year a special recognition was given the "Women of the Gulf," for their spectacular contributions during and after the BP oil spill, especially recognizing [Melanie Driscoll](#), Audubon's director of bird conservation for the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi Flyway.

Previous honorees include Bette Midler, founder of the New York Restoration Project; Dr. Sylvia Earle, oceanographer; Majora Carter, Founder and Executive Director of Sustainable South Bronx, and Laurie David, producer of "An Inconvenient Truth." The award is named in honor of the author of *Silent Spring*.



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November

Refreshments by

Susan Leslie,

Russell Cole &

Judy Turner

Report of the 111th Christmas Bird Count Arrived in Our Mail Boxes

The full magazine-sized 127-page compilation of last year's Christmas Bird Count arrived in late October. The fascinating report, published each year by the National Audubon Society, is mailed to each participant in a sanctioned CBC circle, such as ours in Bastrop County, which traditionally occurs on New Year's Day. It is the more tangible reward for participating.

As usual, looking at the North American reports, the occasion adds to our file of "Texas brags." Texas circle Matagorda County-Mad Island Marsh leads the count of species (236) again. Twenty-three of the 94 counts of 150 or more species are Texas locales. Five of the top 15 are Texas counts, including besides Matagorda, already named, Guadalupe River Delta-McFadden Ranch (222), 2nd, Freeport (206), 5th, San Bernard NWR (193) 9th, and 15th Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR 184). Attwater had the highest tally for an inland site.



American Bittern silhouette

The section on Texas, well-written by TP&WL's Brent Ortega reports that 2,756 birders participated in 106 CBCs in Texas, producing 392 species, with a wide array of rarities as well. "Half of the hawks/falcons had increasing populations. Record numbers of Ospreys and Bald Eagles were particularly pleasing."

The report features a chapter on "Status and Trends of Wintering Coastal Species," covering, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida Gulf coasts because of concerns of deteriorating environmental conditions along the US Gulf coast. For relative abundance, the Red-winged Blackbird was the most numerous. Following to make up the "top 10" is the Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, American Coot, Lesser Scaup, Snow Goose, Killdeer, Brown Pelican, and Tree Swallow.

From the perspective of sheer numbers, adding all the five coastal states, the top ten are Red-winged Blackbird, Tree Swallow, Snow Goose, Boat-tailed Grackle, Redhead Duck, Green-winged Teal, Laughing Gull, Northern Pintail, American Coot, and Lesser Scaup.

Results of the coastal species analysis indicated "we are immediately concerned about the declines of the following seven species: Eared Grebe, Wilson's Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Western Sandpiper, Red Knot, Black Skimmer, and American Bittern."

Bastrop County Audubon Society has paid the \$5 per participant the past several years as everyone checked in at 7 a.m. with David Mitchell at the Texas Grill Restaurant in Bastrop on January 1. Each enjoyed a great New Year's Day and this report.

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 Phone: (512) 303-2734. Email: editor@bastropaudubon.org



Ring-billed Gull



Field Trip Report



**Black-headed
Grosbeak**

Oct. 8, 2011. 8:00 a.m. till 12:00 noon. BCAS mustered the troops and went to a trio of the usual places: west Tahitian Village, North shore of Lake Bastrop, and Steiner Ranch. The weather was perfect.

Best finds were **24 Crested Caracaras, 16 Scissor tailed flycatchers, and 1 Black headed Grosbeak.** Total species: 34.

Details: Great Blue Heron 5, Snowy Egret 4, Little Blue Heron 1, Turkey Vulture 25, Black Vulture 70, Red-shouldered Hawk 2, Crested Caracara 24, American Kestrel 5, Killdeer 2, Rock Pigeon 13, Mourning Dove 5, Eurasian-collared Dove 7, Red-bellied Woodpecker 5, Downy Woodpecker 1, Pileated Woodpecker 1, Eastern Phoebe 1, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 16, Loggerhead Shrike 4, Blue Jay 2, American Crow 62, Barn Swallow 9, Tufted Titmouse 3, Carolina Chickadee 3, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 2, Eastern Bluebird, 11, American Robin 7, Northern Mockingbird 25, Great-railed Grackle 25, European Starling 6, Black-headed Grosbeak 1, Northern Cardinal 45, House Sparrow 2.

Alan Jaeger and Stan Wellso

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

Some Actions That Will Protect Birds Where Ever You Live

Backyards and other private lands provide essential habitat for many species of birds. Ensuring that birds have good sources of food, nesting sites, clear water, and protective cover becomes more important every day, as more habitat is lost to development, degradation and fragmentation

Reduce or or eliminate pesticide and herbicide use. By using fewer chemicals in and around your home, you will help keep birds, pets, and your family healthy.



Lithograph by Margie Crisp

Help keep ALL water clean: patch bare areas in your yard with native grasses to prevent, erosion, sweep sidewalks and driveways instead of hosing them down, and use a funnel when you fill your lawn mower. The pollution that flows from your yard into local streams can have a harmful impact on the environment.

Let your yard get a little messy! Leave snags for nesting places an stack downed tree limbs to create a brush pile, which is a great source of cover for birds during bad weather.

Make your windows visible to birds to prevent collisions. Put up screens, close drapes and blinds when you leave the house, or stick multiple decals on the glass.

Attract hummingbirds with sugar water, made by combining four parts hot water to one part white sugar, boiled for one to two minutes. Never use honey, artificial sweeteners, or food coloring. Clean hummingbird feeders with a solution of one prt white vinegar to four parts water once a week. -- from AudubonAtHome.org

Movie Review

The Big Year Is a Must-see -- by Priscilla Jarvis

The Big Year is a delightful, entertaining, humorous and touching movie. Jeremiah and I thoroughly enjoyed the interactions among the three main birders played by Jack Black (Brad Harris, computer-code writer), Steve Martin (Stu Preissler, wealthy industrialist) and Owen Wilson (Kenny Bostick, successful contractor) as they competed in seeing and documenting the most species of birds in a calendar year. Their relationships with each other, their families, associates, and other birders added to the charm of the movie. The photography of the birds and scenery is spectacular.

The trips, including those to frigid and inhospitable climes, shows what the birders endure to get that elusive bird as they try to outwit each other in their quest to be the World's Greatest Birder. There were many humorous scenes such as the communal bunkhouse during a freak blizzard where they birded using decrepit bicycles. The dash to **High Island** on the Texas Coast for a major fallout was particularly intriguing with great photography as the storm and birds start to arrive.

I highly recommend this movie. You and your non-birding friends will enjoy the movie and maybe it will inspire them to take up birding.

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

Return Service Requested



Hummingbird eats while fires burn.

Early September is peak time for migration and stowing up energy for the flight across the Gulf of Mexico. Board member and BCAS web master Judy Turner's house was saved, but the flames came near. "This picture was from before the house was trenched on Tuesday and before the rest of the area to the west burned." The photo was taken 9/05/11 via a set wild game camera.

November Calendar

11/12, Saturday: BCAS Field Trip to Lake Granger with Stan Wellso. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Bank or call him at 321-0122. Small gate fee involved. Winter sparrows arriving.

11/13, Sunday: BCAS Board Meeting, 4:00 p.m., with potluck supper, Brubaker host, 417 Akaloa, in Bastrop.

11/15, Tuesday: General Meeting, 7:00 p.m. First Nat'l Bank, Hwy. 71 w. @ Hasler Blvd. in Bastrop. Doors open at 6:30. Refreshments served.

11/26: Saturday, Ecological Literacy Day, at Hornsby Bend: 3 hours work; pot luck lunch and lecture. Meet at 9:00 a.m.