

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

The following events are not Travis Audubon Society events but may be of interest.

Mondays–Thursdays, 1:58 pm; Fridays, 12:58 pm **"Passport to Texas"**

90-second radio program on KUT (90.5-FM) from Texas Parks & Wildlife Department.

Thursdays, 6:04 pm

Howie Richey's Eco-Calendar

Spot during *All Things Considered* on KUT, 90.5-FM.



Saturday–Sunday, October 4–5 **Texas Wildlife Expo, Austin**

An opportunity to try out and learn about a wide range of outdoor sports and pastimes, including angling, rock climbing, mountain biking, camping, shooting, and much more.

The birding area offers tours, workshops, the Junior Audubon Birdathon for youngsters, and information about birding in Texas. Contact Texas Wildlife Expo: 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744; 800-792-1112; <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/expo/>.

Saturday–Sunday, October 4–5

Fall Bird Count, Bamberger Ranch, Johnson City

The count is on Sunday, but you are welcome to arrive on Saturday evening after 6 p.m. and spend the night at the center (bring your own linens/sleeping bag and towels). Potluck dinner at 7:00 that night (bring food that is ready to eat or takes little preparation). We may take a walk to search for night birds that evening. Coffee will be available Sunday morning; bring your own "no cook" breakfast and lunch in your own cooler. The count will be from 7 a.m. until noon, when we'll meet for the tally. The terrain is rugged, so wear sturdy shoes and field clothes. Registration required. Contact Marsha Reimer <marsha.reimer@tpwd.state.tx.us>, 912-7062 (w) to let her know whether you will arrive on Saturday evening or Sunday morning (at/before 6:30 a.m.) or to be placed on an email list for future bird counts. Ranch map at <www.bambergerranch.org/map.htm>; Marsha can provide additional directions.

Thursday–Sunday, October 9–12

Annual Meeting of Audubon Texas, Y.O. Ranch, Kerrville

This second annual statewide meeting is open to all Audubon members and chapters, birding clubs, conservation organizations, and individuals interested in birds, wildlife, and the environment. For registration and lodging information, visit <<http://tx.audubon.org/annualmtg2003.htm>> or call Lk Loflin, 306-0225.

Friday–Sunday, October 10–12, 9 am–5 pm



Fall Plant Sale and Gardening Festival, **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center**

For more information: <www.wildflower.org>, 292-4100. (October 10 is for Wildflower Center members only.)

Saturday–Sunday, October 11–12 and **October 18–19, 8 am–5 pm**

National Wildlife Refuge Week, Doeskin Ranch, **Balcones Canyonlands NWR**

A hummingbird plant demonstration and a pond and stream life demonstration are two new activities the general public can enjoy during this celebration at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge. Other activities are bird and nature walks and Monarch butterfly tagging. The guided nature and bird walks help visitors enjoy and learn about birds, butterflies, flowers, grasses, trees, geology, and resource management practices conducted on this refuge. Folks should bring their binoculars if they are taking a guided walk or want to get a better look at migrating hawks. Doeskin Ranch public use area is northwest of Lago Vista on RR 1174, 4.5 miles north of the intersection between FM 1431 and RR 1174. Public use areas on the refuge are open daily with few exceptions, from sunrise to sunset. For more information about Refuge Week or the refuge, contact Rob Iski at 512-339-9432 ext. 42.

Guided Nature Walks

October 11 and 18, 2–4 p.m.

October 19, 2–4 p.m. (grass identification, led by Bill Reiner)

Guided Bird and Nature Walks

October 12, 9–11 a.m., 2–4 p.m.

October 18 and 19, 9–11 a.m.

Monarch Butterfly Activities

October 11–12. Kids and adults may catch, tag, and release Monarch butterflies as part of the Monarch Watch research project at any time during these days.

Pond and Prairie Trail Open

October 11, 12, 18, and 19, 11 a.m.–4 p.m. At your leisure, you will be able to observe up close many interesting and bizarre water creatures along this trail.

Hummingbird Plant Demonstration

October 18 and 19, 1–4 p.m. Learn which nectar, common insect-attracting, and shelter plants you need to entice hummingbirds to your property.

Unguided Nature Trail Hikes

Everyone is welcome to hike and enjoy four nature trails on their own on any day. Walking the trails ranges from easy to difficult. Bring water and outdoor footwear.



Saturday–Sunday, October 11–12

Austin Green Festival, Austin Convention Center

200 socially and environmentally responsible enterprises; community groups; more than 50 leading speakers; organic food court; movement and dance workshops; local music; networking center. The Green Festival is a project of Global Exchange and Co-op America working in collaboration with a

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST (CONTINUED)

host of committed Austinites. Questions? Contact Brandi Clark, <brandi_clark@yahoo.com> or visit <www.greenfestivals.com>. To volunteer and get in free, visit <www.greenfestivals.com/volunteers.html>

Tuesday, October 14

Twin Lakes Audubon Society (TLAS) Meeting

Rich Kostecke (Ph.D., TLAS, publications specialist for the Nature Conservancy at Fort Hood) will speak on Cheyenne Bottoms, a wetland of international importance located in central Kansas that is rich in birdlife and a vital stopover for migratory birds in the Central Flyway. Rich conducted his dissertation research at Cheyenne Bottoms. Hosted by the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton. From I-35, take the 6th Street exit in Belton. Head west on 6th Street, then turn left onto 9th Avenue. The York Science Building is at the intersection of 9th Avenue and Moore (on the right); meetings are on the first floor. For more information, contact Rich Kostecke, <rkostecke@tnc.org>, 254-547-2047.



Thursday–Sunday, October 16–19 Texas Butterfly Festival, Mission, Texas

Celebration of the Rio Grande Valley's 280+ species of butterflies.

Internationally renowned speakers, expert-guided field trips, Butterfly Bonanza South Texas barbecue dinner, and the Nature and Butterfly Expo. Contact Greater Mission Chamber of Commerce: 800-580-2700; <www.texasbutterfly.com>.

Saturday, October 18

Grapevine Butterfly Festival, Grapevine, Texas

Educational programs, activities, and entertainment for all ages. Contact Grapevine Convention and Visitors Bureau: 817-410-3185.

Saturday, October 18, 7:30 am–about 2 to 3 pm Field Trip to Fort Hood (Bell County)

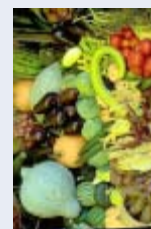
Conducted by Twin Lakes Audubon Society (TLAS). The focus will be on searching the willow woodlands bordering Cowhouse Creek and Belton Reservoir for migrant songbirds. Belton Reservoir and its shoreline may also produce a variety of water birds. Grassy fields bordering the reservoir will be searched for pipits and sparrows. We will meet at the Clear Creek entrance to Fort Hood, which is off Hwy. 190 on the west side of Killeen. Everyone will go through an access control point. If the guards ask you about your business on base, you will state that you are a visitor attending a field trip sponsored by the Army Natural Resources Management Branch, which works cooperatively with the Nature Conservancy (TNC). You must have a valid picture ID (e.g., driver's license) to show to the guards. The guards will point you over to a parking area where your vehicle will be inspected. To make things easier on yourself, please make sure that you do not have any guns in your vehicle, shotgun shells on the floorboards, etc. All drivers will need to show proof of registration and of insurance for their

vehicles in order to get a vehicle pass. After everyone has a permit (about 8 a.m.), we will caravan over to a nearby parking lot and carpool from there. High-clearance/4WD should not be needed, but if you have one, please bring it. Participants are encouraged to bring spotting scopes. Bring plenty of water and a lunch. Dress appropriately for the weather conditions (probably cool mornings and warmer afternoons). Contact Rich Kostecke, <rkostecke@tnc.org>, 254-547-2047 (on the day of the field trip, 314-346-0658), so that he will know that you're coming.

Saturday, October 18, 9 am–5 pm

Festival de las Plantas, Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park

This major outdoor nature and environmental event also serves as the inauguration of Austin's new, major park of this decade. There will be activities, nature tours, short demonstrations and workshops, great music, and opening ceremonies. The themes will include plants as food, joy/relaxation, beauty, utility, art, medicine, and crafts. The park is a major piece of land south of the Colorado River between Pleasant Valley (Longhorn Dam) and Montopolis Drive. Access is via Grove Boulevard off of Riverside and north of ACC-Riverside. To help out as a TAS volunteer, see page 10.



Saturday–Sunday, October 18–19, 8:30 am–4 pm Creating Schoolyard Habitats Workshop, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Use your school grounds as a wildlife habitat and teaching tool by learning how to create a schoolyard habitat, including site inventory, design, and native plant selection; understand the importance of creating a habitat team; explore how to integrate outdoor classroom activities with required curriculum content; and participate in fun, hands-on activities (K–8). Workshop participants receive how-to manual, up to 14 hours SBEC, and more. Fee. Space is limited; registration deadline is October 10. For additional information and registration form, contact Marya Fowler at 476-9805 or <fowler@nwf.org>.



Friday–Sunday, October 31–November 2 Balmorhea Birdfest, Balmorhea

Explore private ranches and nearby Davis Mountains in search of Montezuma Quail, Mountain Chickadee, and Crissal Thrasher, as well as other desert, montane, water, and wetland species of the Trans-Pecos region. Well-known Texas birders who are experts on birds of the area will speak; chuck wagon-style suppers; cowboy breakfast on Sunday morning. Contact Ellen Weinacht: P.O. Box 21, Balmorhea, TX 79718; 915-375-2325; <birdingbalmorhea@hotmail.com>.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST (CONTINUED)

Wednesday–Sunday, November 5–9 10th Annual Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, Harlingen

Field trips, trade show, special presentations by internationally renowned birders and authors of wildlife biology. Field trips offer glimpses of parrots, Chachalaca, Great Kiskadee, Altamira Oriole, and Green Jay, among many other birds found in this region. Contact Harlingen Chamber of Commerce: 311 East Tyler, Harlingen TX 78550; 800-531-7346; 956-423-5440; <www.harlingen.com>.



Tuesday, November 11 Twin Lakes Audubon Society (TLAS) Meeting

Brandon Crawford (the Nature Conservancy's Texas City Prairie Preserve) will speak on conservation and monitoring of the endangered Attwater's Prairie Chickens. See October 14 listing for location and contact.

Saturday–Sunday, November 15–23 2nd Annual Yucatán Bird Festival



Speakers include Victor Emanuel, Kenn Kaufman, and John Porter from Dauphin Island. Guided bird tours, birding tour of Maya ruins, birding marathon, workshops, roundtable discussions, conferences, video showings (motmot, Yucatán Wren), presentation of new Yucatán bird checklist, inauguration of photographic study of Yucatán birds and ecosystems by Mexico's finest naturalist photographers, inauguration of permanent bird exhibit in Merida. Assorted packages and date ranges available. Contact Ecoturismo Yucatán: 011-(52-999)-920-2772 (phone); 011-(52-999)-925-9047 (fax); <toh@ecoyuc.com>; <www.ecoyuc.com/toh.html> and <www.yucatanbirds.org.mx>.

Friday–Sunday, November 21–23 South Texas Wildlife and Birding Festival, Kingsville

Workshops, seminars, birding tours, vendors, exhibitors. Contact Kingsville Convention and Visitors Bureau: 1501 N. Highway 77, Kingsville TX 78363; 800-333-5032; <www.kingsvilletexas.com>.

Saturday, December 6 Field Trip to River's Bend Park and Union Grove WMA, Stillhouse Hollow Reservoir (Bell County)

Twin Lakes Audubon Society (TLAS) will conduct this late afternoon and evening field trip. Prior to sunset, participants will look for loons, grebes, ducks, gulls, etc., out on the lake. The grassy fields at Union Grove contain a variety of wintering sparrows, including LeConte's. Just after sunset, participants will watch for the Short-eared Owls that have traditionally wintered at the WMA. For more information, contact Rich

Kostecke, <rkostecke@tnc.org>, 254-547-2047 (on the day of the field trip, 314-346-0658).

Sunday–Friday, May 16–21, 2004 Trip to Orcas Island

Wimberley Birding Society trip to Orcas Island in the San Juans, where majestic forests rise above deep bays and rocky coastline and outdoor activities abound. Lodge in luxury at Rosario Resort, enjoy daily birding in prime coastal and inland habitats (murre, Pigeon Guillemots, Tufted Puffins, Mute Swans, Red-necked Grebes, Yellow-billed Loons, American Dippers, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Horned Larks, etc.). Boat trip for killer whales and seabirds; visit to salmon restoration facility; lectures by local naturalists. Airfare from Austin, lodging, transfers, all meals, guides included. Contact Joe Sigg in Austin, 454-8363; or Jerry Hall in Wimberley, 512-847-3730.

Saturday–Saturday, June 5–12, 2004 Trip to Panama

Dallas County Audubon Society is sponsoring this trip. For details, visit <www.audubondallas.org>.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Help Needed at Festival de las Plantas

Volunteers are needed to make sure that TAS is well represented at the Festival de las Plantas at Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park on October 18. If you can help, contact Pat Dillon at <helloworldillon@hotmail.com>. For festival details, see page 9.

TAS Volunteer of the Month October Al Green

Our thanks to Al Green, who served on the TAS board of directors for about four years and was chair of the Programs Committee for three years. Al shared many skills, talents, and interests with TAS. Now retired, he was with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department for 25 years, serving as branch chief of aquatic studies and as senior research analyst for coastal fisheries. He holds a bachelor's degree in zoology and chemistry from the University of Texas, as well as a master's degree in population biology and community ecology from the University of Houston. Al says he learned what he knows about birds because he taught bird identification as a lab assistant for Dr. Aumann at the University of Houston. Al and his wife have retired to Martindale, where Al has planted a pecan orchard and hopes to have enough pecans soon to make a pie. Thanks, Al, for all your contributions to Travis Audubon!

URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT

(Continued from page 1)

Get some untreated scrap lumber and use a 5/16th-inch bit to drill holes 3 to 5 inches deep and separated from one another by an inch. Place the block of wood under the eaves and watch for bright blue bees to move in. For more suggestions, visit the National Wildlife Federation website, <www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/attractbees.cfm>. An excellent book on bees and other pollinators, *The Forgotten Pollinators*, by Stephen Buchmann and Gary Nabhan, is available in local libraries.

By providing food, water, and nesting sites in a pesticide-free environment, how many of the nearly 200 Travis County bee species will you find in your backyard? Maybe it's time to add bee watching to your "to do" list. —Jane Tillman

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be a Block Leader and Change Your World!

The City of Austin Green Garden program is looking for neighborhood volunteers to distribute door haners with environmentally friendly advice in the form of door hangers. This will be an ongoing occasional task that will allow you to promote

good stewardship at the grassroots level. To sign up, contact Karen Stewart, water conservation specialist, at 974-2978 or <karen.stewart@ci.austin.tx.us>.

Master Naturalist Training on the Horizon

Would you like to broaden your strong interest in birds to include other nature topics—like ecology, geology, botany, wildlife, soil and water, and habitat management, all tailored to the Central Texas area? The Capital Area Master Naturalist program is now taking applications for its spring 2004 class. The 40-hour volunteer commitment per year can easily be fulfilled with TAS activities like bird surveys, leading field trips and other interpretive activities, and urban habitat development. Most TAS classes and monthly meeting topics will fulfill the yearly 8-hour advanced training requirement. For more information, visit <www.camn.org>. Space is limited, so don't delay!

Plant Sale Coming Up!

Now is the time to plant your fall flower beds. Mark your calendars for the Lady Bird Johnson semiannual plant sale on October 10–12 (October 10 is for members only).

The Big Sit 2003

The Big Sit is an annual nationwide "big day" event where the object is for teams to identify as many species of birds as possible from a fixed location, actually from within the confines of a 17-foot-diameter circle. This year's Big Sit takes place on Sunday, October 12, and we're looking for those interested in participating on the Travis Audubon team.

Some comments from a past Texas participant: "A Big Sit is a chance to watch birds as they are doing their thing as opposed to actively searching them out and seeing their tail end as they flee from us. The Big Sit is also about community, patience, competition, and, of course, enjoying nature. It is a different thing to pick one spot, a good spot mind you, and watch the day unfold."

In 2001, Travis Audubon fielded a Big Sit team at Hornsby Bend that recorded 53 species, good for sixth place among 25 teams in Texas. The first- through fifth-place teams were all located along the coast and had species totals in the 70s and 80s. It would be great to surpass our total for 2001 and even give the coastal teams a run for their money (though there's no fee to participate). The event is sponsored by *Bird Watcher's Digest* and more information can be found at <www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bigsit.html>.



We plan to set up our circle at the Hornsby Bend Biosolids Management Facility, about 7 miles (as the Anhinga flies) southeast of downtown Austin off FM 973. A final location for the circle has not been set, but it

will almost certainly be somewhere along the perimeter of Pond 1E or 1W. We plan three shifts, starting at dawn when the Hornsby gates open, to dark, when they close (we'll have to sacrifice the nighttime hours). Participants can come and go as they please, but setting up shifts helps to assign list-keeping responsibilities and ensure that enough viewing scopes are present at all times. Besides those who enjoy bird identification (both by sight and sound), we'll need good spotters as well as "proofers"—those willing to venture out from the circle to verify a tentative identification. We plan to have the sun shade set up so we don't bake or get drizzled on, and all participants are free to eat cookies, play cards, etc.

The shifts:

1. Gate Opening (about 6 a.m.)–11 a.m.
2. 11 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
3. 3:30 p.m.–Gate Closing (about 7:30 p.m.)

If you're interested in participating, please send me an email message at <stu@bga.com> and include the following:

1. Your shift in order of preference (if you can't make a particular shift, don't list it)
2. Whether you have a spotting scope that you can bring
3. A telephone number, in case we need to reach you at the last minute.

Ideally, each shift should be covered by a minimum of 4 and a maximum of about 8 birders. Once we have our team in place, I'll send out more details on the ground rules, the exact location of the circle, and other logistics. —Stu Wilson



SANCTUARY NEWS

We finished August with 2 inches of rain, most which fell by the 14th. A cool front headed toward Central Texas over the Labor Day weekend, and tropical depression Grace came ashore near Port O'Connor on Sunday, August 31, setting the stage for much-needed rainfall in the Hill Country. And by Sunday, some areas to our north and west had already accumulated a couple or more inches of rain. As of this writing, only a trace of rain had fallen at the Baker Sanctuary; however, temperatures on the 31st remained in the low 80s, thanks to rain in our area and clouds. This gave us a break from our usual highs of the mid- to upper 90s and allowed us a preview of cooler temperatures ahead.

As we leave August behind, we see indicators all around us that point to fall. Our frostweed is beginning to bloom in anticipation of the southern migration of Monarch butterflies. The overwintering population resulting from last fall's migration was much larger than expected. Unlike the previous two winters, there were no winter storms to create havoc with the population. In fact, the butterflies appeared to survive the winter in excellent numbers and condition. The spring conditions in Texas, while not uniformly favorable, were moderately good, leading to a strong migration northward of the first generation of Monarchs in May and early June. Indications are that this



will be a better year for Monarch tagging than last year. (Portions of this paragraph came from the August 2003 issue of *Monarch Watch Pre-migration Newsletter*.)

On August 23, a male Rufous Hummingbird

showed up at our feeder and remained through the end of the month. He is resplendent in his breeding plumage, his dark gorget flashing red in good light. This past year, we overwintered from September to April what turned out to be a male Rufous Hummingbird. During our brief early spring cold snaps, we kept a supply of nectar thawed for him to drink. When temperatures hovered around 25°, a feeder would freeze solid in about an hour and a half. We would then bring that feeder inside to thaw and hang a warmed-up feeder in its place. He would constantly buzz the feeder and drink, his plumage all fluffed, and he consumed what seemed like a pint of nectar a day until the thaw. What we do for the birds!



Sanctuary Meeting Scheduled

The next TAS-BS Sanctuary Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 7. We will meet at the Baker Cabin, 12308 Lime Creek Road. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a potluck dinner.

Sanctuary Closure Dates

The sanctuary will close on October 26 and will reopen again on January 24, 2004.

—John Wilcox, TAS-BS Steward

Editor's note: TAS extends its condolences to John Wilcox, whose father died in September.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 2)

their schools? Can your local park be an environmental project for an Eagle Scout? Do you like to write? *Signal Smoke* and the TAS website appreciate contributions. Can you draw for a brochure? Do you take photographs? Can you build your Internet skills while helping our webmaster? I began helping the society as a financial planner when help with our investments was requested. Can you fundraise, hang sheet rock, organize, bake cookies, be part of a birdathon, encourage new membership, or find speakers? The list goes on virtually forever.

The bottom line is this: If you would like to help, we would appreciate your help. At each upcoming general meeting, I plan to have a TAS committee display what it does. Go to this display and see where you have common interest. I am in the process of asking the committees to create volunteer opportunities—small jobs (like moving boxes on a Saturday morning) to tasks of greater responsibility (such as leading a field trip) to positions of leadership (such as starting a project near and dear to your heart). But these are all “top-down”—we are telling you

what we need. As a general rule, that is a hard sell. If we can go “bottom-up”—that is, you tell us what you would like to do—I think we can get a lot done, better the world, and enjoy ourselves in the process.

And of course this leads to a bigger picture. If we have people who are willing to share their talents, how do we keep track of them? We really need a person to be a volunteer coordinator. This person would help us find, catalog, and thank volunteers, as well as interface with the committees to develop projects and get people doing what they enjoy. The other night Shelia Hargis (soon to be your president, and she will be a good one) and I were discussing the committees and what we envision. She said, “In my crazier moments, I think about giving up my president job and becoming our volunteer coordinator. It is that important.” It is that important! We can't afford to give up Shelia's leadership, so will you be, or can you help us find a volunteer coordinator? It is a position that can make a difference. Please consider it.

—Pat Dillon

NATURALIST'S CALENDAR

A small, dull-brown bird darts furtively among the tall stalks of goldenrods, asters, and blue mistflowers beside the stream. You flushed it when you wandered over for a closer look at the colorful butterflies fluttering around the showy October blooms. The bird is anything but colorful or showy. As a matter of fact, from a glance, it could be any of several little brown birds that your bird book says will spend the winter here in Central Texas. Sigh. Is it hopeless?

Not necessarily. It's true that you've seen very little in the way of field marks, but you do have the clues of habitat, behavior, and season.

For instance, Savannah, Vesper, and Grasshopper Sparrows are confusingly plain birds that have been migrating into Central Texas since at least late September. (See the new Travis Audubon Society bird checklist for seasonal distribution.) Your bird could



be one of these, except that they all prefer shorter grass in open fields. Carolina and Bewick's Wrens, on the other hand, are here year-round, but they usually frequent wooded or shrubby places.

Chipping Sparrows have been migrating into our area, as well, along with a few Clay-colored Sparrows. They may feed in or near a weedy patch, mingling with the resident Field Sparrows, but all three of these sparrows usually fly *up* as a flock when disturbed, into the tops of the vegetation, rather than dodging singly down into clumps of ragweed, goldenrod, or switchgrass. Female House Finches—often mistaken for sparrows—may also feed on or near the ground but will fly up to trees when disturbed.



Song and Swamp Sparrows like weedy places—especially where there is standing water—but these two migrant species are still scarce in Central Texas until late October or November. LeConte's Sparrows and Sedge Wrens are also possibilities, especially in wet meadows of bushy bluestem or other tall grasses, but they, too, are fairly scarce in October.

Your bird was probably a House Wren or a Lincoln's Sparrow. Both prefer to hide in tall weeds, especially in low, damp places. They tend to be solitary, chasing off others of their kind that come too close, but they tolerate each other. Lincoln's Sparrows, like other sparrows, eat mostly seeds, which they crack



with their stout, conical bills. House Wrens eat small invertebrates such as beetles, bugs, and spiders; like



other wrens, they have longer, forceps-like bills for extracting insects from crevices. The difference in diet allows the two species to live together in the same patch of weeds without competition.

House Wrens and Lincoln's Sparrows are usually the earliest of the winter birds to occupy these habitats. The first House Wrens show up by the middle of September, and the first Lincoln's Sparrows late in the month. Both are fairly common by mid-October.



As a matter of fact, October is a particularly good time to see both species in Central Texas. In this observer's experience, they are more numerous in October than they are later in the fall, when they seem to disperse. Lincoln's Sparrow numbers begin to decrease not long after their cousins the Song Sparrows arrive. Perhaps competition for seeds with the larger birds drives them away, or maybe Lincoln's Sparrows simply continue their migration southward. That appears to be the case with House Wrens, which have no obvious competitors in their ecological niche—although the onset of colder weather could limit the numbers of small insects they can find.

An identification based only on habitat, behavior, and seasonal range is pretty shaky, of course. The bird could, after all, be an early Song Sparrow, a solitary Field Sparrow that chose a lower perch, or a Carolina Wren wandering outside its usual haunts. (In the Hill Country it could also be a Rufous-crowned Sparrow, which acts very similar to Lincoln's.) The circumstantial evidence may not be enough for a conviction, but knowing the most likely species in a given place at a given time, acting a certain way, can help you narrow your investigation into an unknown bird's identity. —Bill Reiner



Earth Share
OF TEXAS

Earth Share of Texas represents the Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society in payroll deduction plans for charitable giving. For information, call 1-800-GREENTX or email <estx@earthshare-texas.org>.

Visit the TAS Web site!
www.travisaudubon.org



Local and National Audubon Membership

Join the Travis Audubon Society using the form at the right, and all of your dues will be put to use supporting local conservation, education, and research projects. You may also join both Travis Audubon and the National Audubon Society through the Travis Audubon website <www.travisaudubon.org>. As a member of National Audubon, you will enjoy Travis Audubon chapter membership and receive the quarterly *Audubon* magazine, and a portion of your dues will support national programs.

**Join Travis Audubon now and support
local birds, wildlife, and their habitats.**

Travis Audubon Society members receive 11 issues of the *Signal Smoke* newsletter, priority sign-up on local field trips, and educational classes. All of their annual dues support local projects and programs.

To join Travis Audubon Society:

Make your check payable to Travis Audubon Society and send with this form to TAS Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 1132, Round Rock, TX 78680-1132.

Travis Audubon Society

YES! I want to enjoy the benefits of Travis Audubon Society membership. Enroll me as a member of Travis Audubon Society. Enclosed is my check for:

- \$10 **Youth Membership** (up to age 18)
- \$20 **Individual Membership**
- \$30 **Family Membership**
- \$60 **Painted Bunting Membership** (bonus Travis Audubon T-shirt)
- \$100 **Vireo Membership** (bonus T-shirt and book)
- \$250 **Warbler Membership** (bonus T-shirt, book, and free workshop)
- \$1,000 **Lifetime Membership** (bonus T-shirt, book, workshop, and listing in annual report)

T-shirt size _____

This is a gift membership from _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Email _____