



SIGNAL SMOKE

The Newsletter of Travis Audubon Society

VOLUME 52, NO. 7-8

JULY-AUGUST 2003

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Water Conservation Helps Wildlife

In a drought, more than just our St. Augustine grass is stressed. Wildlife is adversely affected. Plants go dormant or reduce flowering, which leads to less nectar and seed availability for our feathered friends. Natural water sources dry up. With habitat fragmentation and loss, wildlife has fewer options for moving to greener pastures.

All birdwatchers would agree that one of the best places to birdwatch is a riparian area. We rarely make the connection between our water use and reduced riparian habitat. This is exactly what happens, though, when a city creates a new reservoir to meet its customers' demands. An artificial lake may be wonderful for boaters, but the amazing diversity of streamside plant life is lost, along with specialist bird species that depend on it.

To learn about ways you can conserve water, visit the City of Austin's webpage <www.ci.austin.tx.us/watercon>. Or request the excellent new booklet "Facts about Texas Water" from the Sierra Club by emailing <lonestar.chapter@sierraclub.org> or calling 477-1729. It is a publication of the Texas Living Waters Project, a collaborative effort of the National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Defense, and the Lone Star Sierra Club. More information about water issues is at <www.texaswatermatters.org>.



It may seem contradictory to now recommend providing water for your neighborhood wildlife. However, a birdbath requires less than a gallon of water daily. One flush of the toilet takes more! Keep water fresh—different sources say it should be changed every 2 to 4 days to prevent mosquito larvae from hatching. If you find that you are breeding mosquitoes, try putting out a shallow pan of water each day that will evaporate quickly. Your amphibian friends will appreciate it too, as long as it is not too deep and has gently sloping sides. Butterflies and dragonflies come to water too. A flattened rock that holds a small amount of water will be a big hit with these winged friends.



Birds love moving water. If you do use your birdbath, install a dripper adjusted to the slowest drip, or hang a bottle above the birdbath that has a pinprick to allow a slow drip. Drippers and misters can be put on a timer to conserve water. That way you are running them only when the birds are likely to use them.—*Jane Tillman*



**NO GENERAL MEETING
IN JULY OR AUGUST**

**Next general meeting
September 18**

HAPPY SUMMER!



Travis Audubon Society

Email addresses are at "About Us,"
<www.travisaudubon.org>.

Officers and Directors

President

Pat Dillon 347-0452

First Vice President

Shelia Hargis 291-1861

Second Vice President

BJ Dertien

Treasurer

Wayne Bartholomew 507-3553
P.O. Box 40787
Austin TX 78704-0014

Recording Secretary

Anne Donovan 472-3030

Past President

Bob Warneke 443-5488

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Mark Bentley 301-2675
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Sam Fason 474-1185
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Marcie Wilcox 219-8425
John Kelly 331-8693
Richard Manson 347-8192
Russ Nelson 431-1420

Sanctuary Caretakers

TAS Wildlife Sanctuary

John Wilcox 219-8425

Blair Woods

Stennie Meadours 443-8152

ACT Representatives

John Kelly (state president) 331-8693
Bryan Hale (state treasurer) 474-5599

Signal Smoke Editor

Rosemary Wetherold 892-1606

TAS Hotline: 926-8751

The hotline has information on TAS events (press 6) and rare birds in our area (press 5). To report sightings, press 1. To ask about birds, environmental issues, or TAS, press 2. No touch-tone phone? Call 474-5599.

TAS Web Site

www.travisaudubon.org

TAS Email

info@travisaudubon.org

TAS Fax

892-2026

Mission Statement

The Travis Audubon Society promotes the enjoyment, understanding, and preservation of birds, wildlife, and their habitats in Central Texas.

LETTER FROM THE TAS PRESIDENT

On the way to visit my mother, who lived in Houston at the time, I passed a street sign announcing the next intersection as BobWhite. I bet I drove past that sign a hundred times, always assuming that Bob White must be Ben White's brother.

You can probably guess that I did not become president of TAS based on the strength of my birding ability. My strengths are organizational and finding good people. I have a pretty good sense of when I should run with my ideas and when I should get out of the way. My presidency will attempt to define the roles and interplay of the TAS Board, our committees, our volunteers, our employees, and the members. Right now we are having a lot of good work done for us. But I fear that it is in spite of our management structure and not because of it. I have found that if you give good people the right tools, a little direction, and the appropriate authority, the results generally will please. My vision is of all our efforts pulling in unison, to help each other and leverage our natural talents. We should each live the TAS mission statement—to promote the enjoyment, understanding, and preservation of birds, wildlife, and their habitat in Central Texas—and leave behind a machine that can pass this joy on to generations. Please volunteer and help us.

A critical aspect of the Bob White story is how birding has and continues to broaden my horizons. Without ever talking to me, birding showed me that there is

(Continued on page 6)

COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

Email addresses are available at <www.travisaudubon.org> under "About Us."

TAS Rare Bird Alert

Isaac Sanchez 899-9414

Alert number 926-8751

Bird Records

Bob Barth 327-1173

Conservation

John Kelly 331-8693

Cyberspace

Jenny Rasmussen 218-1580

Education

Shelia Hargis 291-1861

Field Trips

Georgia Harper 467-9700

Hornsby Bend

Tim Hissam 251-6067

Hospitality

Vacant

Membership Secretary

Chris Doggett 512-898-5500

Programs

Al Green 512-357-1427

Property and Finance

Pat Dillon 347-0452

Publications

Rosemary Wetherold 892-1606

Publicity

Vacant

Sales

Vacant

Sanctuary

Bryan Hale 474-5599

Urban Habitat Development

Jane Tillman 794-0058

ABOUT SIGNAL SMOKE

Subscription Information

Signal Smoke, published monthly or bi-monthly by Travis Audubon Society, is a TAS membership benefit. To join TAS, see the back page of this newsletter. For address or subscription changes, notify Chris Doggett (TAS Membership Secretary), P.O. Box 1132, Round Rock TX 78680-1132; 512-898-5500; <membership@travisaudubon.org>. The post office will not forward *Signal Smoke*.

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Newsletter Deadline


The submissions deadline is the first day of the preceding month (June 1 for combined July–August issue). Submit articles, announcements, and uncopyrighted art to Rosemary Wetherold, <rosemaryw@austin.rr.com>; 4507 Cliffstone Cove, Austin TX 78735-6610; 892-2026 (fax). Submissions by email or on a floppy are preferred but not required. Call Rosemary at 892-1606 if you have questions.


Signal Smoke is printed on recycled paper.



July 2003 Calendar of Travis Audubon Society Events


 Field Trip—See page 5


 Meeting—See page 7


 Birding Class

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2  Urban Habitat Development Group Meeting, 7 pm	3	4	5  Field trip, Barton Creek Habitat Preserve, 7:30 am
6	7  Education Committee Meeting, 7 pm	8  Sanctuary Committee Meeting & Potluck, 6:30 pm  TAS Youth Camp Planning Group Meeting, 6:30 pm	9	10  TAS Board of Directors Meeting, 6:45 pm	11	12  Monthly Bird Count, Hornsby Bend, 7 a.m.  HBBO Meeting & Potluck, 11:30 a.m.
13	14	15	16	17	18	19  Bird walk, Hornsby Bend, 7:30 am  Children's nature walk, Colorado River, 8 am
20  Bird walk, Meadow Lake, 4 pm	21	22	23	24  Bird Records Committee Meeting, 7 pm	25	26  Ecological Literacy Day at Hornsby Bend (work-day & nature walk), 9 am
27  Field trip to Murphy Ranch and swimming at Hamilton Pool, 7:30 am	29	30	31			

August 2003 Calendar of Travis Audubon Society Events

 Field Trip—See pages 5–6

 Meeting—See page 7

 Birding Class—See page 10

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Deadline for September <i>Signal Smoke</i> (p. 2)	2  Field trip, Barton Creek Habitat Pre- serve, 7:30 am
3	4  Education Committee Meeting, 7 pm	5	6  Urban Habitat Development Group Meet- ing, 7 pm	7	8	9  Bird count, Hornsby Bend, 7 a.m.  HBBO Meeting & Potluck, 11:30 a.m.
10	11	12  TAS Youth Camp Plan- ning Group Meeting, 6:30 pm	13	14  TAS Board of Directors Meeting, 6:45 pm	15	16  Bird walk, Hornsby Bend, 7:30 am  Children's nature walk, Colorado River, 8 am
17  Bird walk, Meadow Lake, 4 pm	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28  Bird Records Committee Meeting, 7 pm	29	30  Bird walk, Riata Pond/ Yett Creek Park, 7 am  Ecological Literacy Day, Hornsby Bend (workday/nature walk), 9 am
31						

TAS FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

All TAS field trips are open to members and nonmembers and to experienced and inexperienced birders. Wear appropriate clothing and walking shoes, and bring binoculars and water. Unless otherwise noted, field trips are free. Carpoolers should expect to pay a share of the gasoline expense. **Please check the TAS website** <www.travisaudubon.org> **or the TAS hotline (926-8751) for up-to-date information on field trips, including cancellations due to weather or other circumstances.** Because of the publication schedule of the newsletter, things can change!

Note: To provide more timely and updated information on field trips organized by the TAS Field Trip Committee, we are experimenting with providing complete details about those field trips only on the **Field Trips page** of the TAS website <www.travisaudubon.org/fieldtrips.html>. From there, you may print out directions and other details about specific trips. For those of you who do not have Internet access, contact phone numbers are provided below.

Saturday, July 5, 7:30–11:30 am

Field Trip to Barton Creek Habitat Preserve

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Maggie Burnett at <mburnett@austin.rr.com> or call 899-0390.



atory meeting and potluck lunch will be held at 11:30 a.m. after the morning survey. Contact Tim Hissam, 251-6067, <tphissam1@yahoo.com>.

Saturday, July 19, 7:30 am–noon

Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Richard Kaskan, 748-8660, <kaskan@ieee.org>.

Saturday, July 19, 8–11 am

Children's Nature Walk, Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park

Tailored for children ages 5–10 and their parents, but all are welcome. For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Charles Stephens, 600-1700, <charles_stephens@yahoo.com>; or Rob Fergus, 478-8486, <fergus@mail.utexas.edu>.

Sunday, July 20, 4–5:30 pm

Bird Walk at Meadow Lake

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Jenny Rasmussen, 218-1580, <roadrunner1@mindspring.com>.

Saturday, July 26, 9 am–1 pm

Ecological Literacy Day at Hornsby Bend

Several hours of outdoor work, such as trail maintenance, habitat restoration, or work in the native plant nursery, are followed by at least an hour of learning about local ecology. Wear boots and work clothing, and bring binoculars. For more information, contact Kevin Anderson, 972-1960 or <Kevin.Anderson@ci.austin.tx.us>; or Tim Hissam, <tphissam1@yahoo.com>.



Sunday, July 27, 7:30 am–noon (or longer if desired)

Field Trip to Murphy Ranch and Swimming at Hamilton Pool

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Georgia Harper at 499-4508, <gharper@utsystem.edu>, or Maggie Burnett at 899-0930, <mburnett@austin.rr.com>.

Saturday, August 2, 7:30–11:30 am

Field Trip to Barton Creek Habitat Preserve

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Maggie Burnett at <mburnett@austin.rr.com> or call 899-0390.

Saturday, August 9, 7 am

Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

Meet at the Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend. The Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory meeting and potluck lunch will be held at **11:30 a.m.** after the morning survey. Contact Tim Hissam, 251-6067, <tphissam1@yahoo.com>.

Saturday, August 16, 7:30 am–noon

Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Richard Kaskan, 748-8660, <kaskan@ieee.org>.

Saturday, August 16, 8–11 am

Children's Nature Walk, Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park

Tailored for children ages 5–10 and their parents, but all are welcome. For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact



TAS FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS (CONTINUED)

Charles Stephens, 600-1700, <charles_stephens@yahoo.com>;
or Rob Fergus, 478-8486, <fergus@mail.utexas.edu>.



Photo by Jenny Rasmussen

Sunday, August 17, 4–5:30 pm Bird Walk at Meadow Lake

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Jenny Rasmussen, 218-1580, <roadrunner1@mindspring.com>.

Saturday, August 30, 7–10 am Summer Bird Walk at Riata Pond/ Yett Creek Park

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Kathy McCormack at <kathy.mccormack@motorola.com>, 895-7268 (w).

Saturday, August 30, 9 am–1 pm

Ecological Literacy Day at Hornsby Bend

Several hours of outdoor work, such as trail maintenance, habitat restoration, or work in the native plant nursery, are followed by at least an hour of learning about local ecology. Wear boots and work clothing, and bring binoculars. For more information, contact Kevin Anderson, 972-1960 or <Kevin.Anderson@ci.austin.tx.us>; or Tim Hissam, <tp_hissam1@yahoo.com>.

Saturday, September 6, 7:30–11:30 am

Field Trip to Barton Creek Habitat Preserve

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Maggie Burnett at <mburnett@austin.rr.com> or call 899-0390.

Saturday, September 13, 7 am

Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

Meet at the Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend. The Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory meeting and pot-luck lunch will be held at 11:30 a.m. after the morning survey. Contact Tim Hissam, 251-6067, <tp_hissam1@yahoo.com>.



How to Order the New TAS Checklist!

To order the TAS checklist of Austin-area birds, mail your check (payable to Travis Audubon Society) for \$2.50 per checklist to Chris Doggett, P.O. Box 1132, Round Rock TX 78680-1132. Be sure to include your own mailing address with your order.

Saturday, September 20, 7:30 am–noon Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Richard Kaskan, 748-8660, <kaskan@ieee.org>.

Saturday, September 20, 8–11 am Children's Nature Walk, Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park

Tailored for children ages 5–10 and their parents, but all are welcome. For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Charles Stephens, 600-1700, <charles_stephens@yahoo.com>; or Rob Fergus, 478-8486, <fergus@mail.utexas.edu>.

Sunday, September 21, 4–5:30 pm Bird Walk at Meadow Lake

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Jenny Rasmussen, 218-1580, <roadrunner1@mindspring.com>.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 2)

so much more than initially meets the eye. A love of nature is to coexist with your surroundings. The organization and interdependence of such a wildly complex organism is beautiful. To degrade the environment, especially through ignorance or by neglect, is so wasteful and so wrong. We all need to advocate our mission statement for two reasons. First, we are in a wonderful universe—enjoy yourself. The simple elegance of Louis Armstrong (among others) singing “What a wonderful world” captures and demonstrates my point with a beauty and simplicity I can never capture. Second, light a candle for those who have not yet seen—they are desperate for your help and will appreciate it. There is very little as intoxicating as success. I truly thank you for giving me this opportunity.



Best Wishes to Rob Fergus

Rob Fergus and TAS severed ties on June 13. I just want to take a second to thank him for what he did for us as TAS executive director. He was instrumental in developing our mission statement and did many other wonderful things for the society. Join me in wishing him the best of luck in his future endeavors. Your board and I will be reviewing and refining the executive director position in the vision of our mission statement and our experiences of the past. Please feel free to give us your input as we move forward.

—Pat Dillon

TAS MEETINGS

Wednesday, July 2, 7 pm

URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT GROUP

1925 Rutland Dr., in Root Cause Project office. Contact Chuck Simms: 331-9630; <charlesvsi@aol.com>

Monday, July 7, 7–9 pm

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

North Village Branch Library. For more information, contact Shelia Hargis: 291-1861; <shargis@austin.rr.com>.

Tuesday, July 8, 6:30 pm

SANCTUARY COMMITTEE MEETING & POTLUCK



Baker Cabin, TAS Baker Sanctuary, at 12308 Lime Creek Road. Contact John Wilcox: <jmwoso@earthlink.net>; 219-8425.

Tuesday, July 8, 6:30–7:30 pm

TAS YOUTH CAMP PLANNING GROUP

Schlotsky's, 218 South Lamar. Contact Amy Sugeno: 512-396-3642 (San Marcos) or <amydave@thrifty.net>.

Thursday, July 10, 6:45 pm

TAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Highland Park Baptist Church, 5206 Balcones Drive. Contact Pat Dillon: 347-0452.

Saturday, July 12, 11:30 am

HORNSBY BEND BIRD OBSERVATORY MEETING & POTLUCK LUNCH

Following the monthly Hornsby Bend bird count (see page 4). Center for Environmental Research (building near entrance to Hornsby bend complex). Contact Rob Fergus: 478-8486, <fergus@mail.utexas.edu>.

Thursday, July 19, 7 pm

No TAS regular monthly meeting in July or August.

Thursday, July 24, 7 pm

BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Contact Ethel Kutac: 346-7659.

Monday, August 4, 7–9 pm

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

See July 7 calendar items for details.

Wednesday, August 6, 7 pm

URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT GROUP

See July 2 calendar item for details.

Saturday, August 9, 11:30 am

HORNSBY BEND BIRD OBSERVATORY MEETING & POTLUCK LUNCH

See July 12 calendar item for details.

Tuesday, August 12, 6:30–7:30 pm

TAS YOUTH CAMP PLANNING GROUP

See July 8 calendar item for details..

Thursday, August 14, 6:45 pm

TAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

See July 10 calendar item for details.

Thursday, August 21, 7 pm

No TAS regular monthly meeting in August.

Thursday, August 28, 7 pm

BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Contact Ethel Kutac: 346-7659.

Wednesday, September 3, 7 pm

URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT GROUP

See July 2 calendar item for details.



VOLUNTEERS

TAS Volunteer of the Month

July

Jackie Davis

Jackie joined the TAS Board in 1994 and served as Field Trip Committee chair from 1995 till 1997. She also served on the Bird Records Committee for several years and lately stepped down from the board after nine years. Most recently, she worked with the TAS Baker Sanctuary stewards by organizing the volunteer effort to clear 9,300 feet of fence line right-of-way, securing fencing bids, and finalizing the contract under Phase 1 of the sanctuary's high-fencing project. Jackie has a master's degree in science and has been employed by the City of Austin's Wildland Conservation Division as a wildlife biologist since 1993, where she manages the city's Balcones Canyonlands Preserve lands.

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.

Wednesday–Sunday, July 23–27

Brownsville International Bird Festival

Pelagic trips, Laguna Madre, thorn scrub and butterfly trips, field trip into Mexico. Daily seminars, a marketplace, and evening activities. Contact David Lee, Brownsville Convention and Visitors Bureau: <www.brownsville.org>, <dlee@brownsville.org>.



Friday, August 1, 8:30–10 pm
Stargazing, Wild Basin Preserve

Learn about the planets, stars, and constellations as you peer into the fabulous night sky with Harriet Strieber. Bring drinking water, a flashlight, and a cushion to sit on. Leave valuables at home. Fee; children under 5 free. Weather

permitting. Reservations required. Contact: 327-7622; <hike@wildbasin.org>.

Saturday, August 2, 10 am–noon

Basic Flintknapping, Wild Basin Preserve

Make an arrowhead with Jewel Pollard and Jim Overcash. Tools, safety glasses, and materials provided. Fee; ages 13+ only. Reservations required. Contact: 327-7622; <hike@wildbasin.org>.

Saturday, August 9, 9 am–noon

Trail Maintenance, Wild Basin Preserve

Begins promptly at 9 a.m. with a brief orientation and safety talk; then participants break up into teams to work on the trails. Safety with minimal impact is the main focus of the trail work. Trail workers resolve hazards, repair erosion barriers, install water bars, reroute trails, maintain the signage, discourage trail blazers, repair vandalism, remove exotic species, and generally make the trails safe and useful for educational programs. Bring work gloves that fit, or borrow some of the preserve's. Carry water with you, and dress for the weather. Trail work is rain or shine. Bring friends. Carpool to reduce parking congestion.

Monday, August 11, 8–9:30 pm

Moonlighting, Wild Basin Preserve

Enjoy a spectacular view of the moon and learn about the natural history of Wild Basin. Bring water, a flashlight, and a cushion to sit on. Weather permitting. Reservations required. Fee;

children under 5 free. Contact: 327-7622; <hike@wildbasin.org>. Call Inside Line 416-5700, category 3560 for updated information, particularly if the weather is threatening.

Friday–Monday, August 15–18

Davis Mountains Hummingbird Festival, Fort Davis

Seminars, workshops, field trips of local birding sights, general birding, and bird banding. As many as nine species of hummingbird seen in this area at this time. Contact Prude Ranch: Box 1431, Fort Davis TX 79734; 915-426-3202.

Friday, August 29, 7:45–9:15 pm

Stargazing, Wild Basin Preserve

See August 1 calendar item for details.

Saturday, September 6

Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza, Lake Jackson, Texas

Hundreds of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds make the migratory journey along the Texas coast and across the Gulf. Witness this with other hummingbird enthusiasts while enjoying related activities. Contact Gulf Coast Bird Observatory: 979-480-0999.

Thursday–Sunday, September 11–14

10th Annual Hummer/Bird Celebration, Rockport, Texas

Over 14 speakers and programs, outdoor exhibits, a banding site, nature-related vendor booths, Hummer Home visits, birding boat excursions, guided field trips, and more.

Contact Rockport/Fulton Chamber of Commerce, 404 Broadway, Rockport TX 78382; 800-826-6441; <chamber@dbstech.com>.



Saturday–Sunday, September 13–14

Birds of Prey Festival, McKinney, Texas

Birds of prey programs by Heard Raptor Center of Texas, Texas Hawking Association, and On the Wing Again. Flighted raptor programs by Last Chance Forever. Guided nature walks on the grounds of the Heard Nature Center. The Eagles Nest nature center will be available for children. Contact Heard Natural Science Museum: 972-562-5566; <www.heardmuseum.org>.

Thursday–Monday, September 18–29

Ecuador–Galapagos Islands

Birding and natural history tour sponsored by Wimberley Birding Society. Home base in Galapagos will be Finch Bay Hotel, on the nature-rich island of Santa Cruz. Twin beds, private baths, hot showers, yet close to wildlife, beach, tidal lagoons, cliffs, and cactus forests. Day trips on small, modern cruiser to other islands to see marine iguanas, sea lions, boobies, albatrosses, etc. Stay in Quito will include birding trips to Andean cloud forest reserves and other great birding sites. 390+ species, 38 endemics. Also included: Folkloric Ballet performance, shopping at Otavalo and other ancient Indian mar-

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST (CONTINUED)

kets, city tour. Contact: Joe Sigg in Austin, 454-8363; Jerry Hall in Wimberley, 512-847-3730.

Thursday–Sunday, September 25–28

A Celebration of Flight, Corpus Christi

At the peak of raptor migration at Hazel Bazemore Park in Corpus Christi, this event promises thousands of migrating birds of prey—a spectacle unmatched anywhere in the United States. Live raptor programs, mini-talks on raptor identification and migration, and surveys of raptor roosting spots. Contact Joel Simon: 361-241-2617; <www.electrotex.com/AOC>; <jsimon@electrotex.com>.

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/>.

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.

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>.

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 Yucatan bird checklist, inauguration of photographic study Yucatan 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>.

Programs at McKinney Roughs and San Marcos River

To make reservations for one of the dates listed, call Jana or Gwen at McKinney Roughs Nature Park at 303-5073. To plan a date for a private group trip, contact Scott Hickman at 303-5073. Participants must be able to swim. McKinney Roughs Nature Park, owned and operated by the Lower Colorado River Authority, is 13 miles east of Austin Bergstrom International Airport on Highway 71. The TAS Field Trip Committee would love to hear from TAS members who are interested in these kinds of trips—especially if you go on one of them this summer! Based on your feedback, TAS may schedule a Daybreak Bird/Float Trip in September or October. Submit feedback to Georgia Harper, 467-9700, <gharper@utsystem.edu>.

Saturdays, July 19 & August 9, 8 am–1 pm Canoe the Colorado

This trip covers 5 miles of calm water, with scenic views and abundant wildlife. A great trip for amateur or professional canoeist with an interest in birding, boating, and nature. Canoes, equipment, instruction, and transportation are provided. Fee.



Saturdays, July 12, 7 pm–11 pm, & August 9, 6:30–10:30 pm Light o' the Moon

Eight-man rafts with an LCRA guide at the helm float down a section of the Colorado River on the brightest night of the month. Enjoy a sunset from the water as the day winds down and the moon rises. Watch as the night sky takes over and the nightlife begins. Excellent venue for nocturnal wildlife and peaceful appreciation of the outdoors. Fee.

No dates currently selected Daybreak Float–Birding by Boat

As the world awakens at dawn, our feathered friends come to life! Come join us for an enjoyable float on the Colorado River, and see the early morning stirrings of some of Central Texas' waterfowl. Birding by boat at the crack of dawn is a great opportunity to relax in the river water. This program is for the early birds, and our start times coordinate around sunrise. Fee.



EDUCATION NEWS & CLASSES

UPCOMING CLASSES



Shorebird Identification Class

Our 2003 Shorebird Identification Class is fast approaching and is a great way for intermediate birders to learn to distinguish Least, Semipalmated, and Western sandpipers; Lesser and Greater yellow-legs; and other shorebird ID challenges. After completing the class, there are numerous ways of putting your new knowledge to good use. The Shorebird

Monitoring Program at Hornsby is a citizen science project in which you can help keep track of the species and numbers of shorebirds moving through our area. If you're participating in the listing challenge, the ability to ID shorebirds will help you reach 200+ species. And there is the personal satisfaction of being able to ID that difficult group of birds we call shorebirds.

Tim Fennell returns again this year to teach the class. Tim teaches science at the LBJ Science Academy and is an expert birder. He is also a wonderful instructor—in the classroom as well as in the field.

The class dates will cover the majority of the fall shorebird migration. As with other groups of birds, different shorebird species come through at different times. And if you are con-

cerned about being at Hornsby in July and August, don't worry. Those field trips will start early and won't last past 11 a.m. If you get too hot, you can leave at any time.

The lectures will be held at the Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend on Thursdays, July 31, August 14, and September 4, from 7 to 9 p.m. The first two field trips will be at Hornsby on Saturdays, August 2 and 16. The third field trip will be a weekend on the coast, September 6 and 7. The cost of the class is \$55 for TAS members and \$65 for nonmembers. Participants will also be responsible for covering Tim's weekend trip expenses—approximately \$15 per participant. Contact Jean Martin at <jeanmartin@austin.rr.com> or 343-7053 to sign up.

Intermediate Birding Class

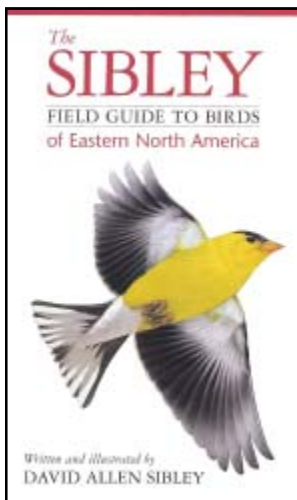
Our Intermediate Birding Class, taught by Cliff Shackelford, will be offered this summer (probably August or September), but the exact dates are not available as of the *Signal Smoke* deadline. As soon as they are available, we'll post them on the website and distribute the information via the TAS email distribution list. Stay tuned!

—Shelia Hargis



BOOK REVIEW

The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America



By David Allen Sibley (Knopf, New York, 2003), 433 pages, \$19.95

Though the first Sibley field guide took the nation by storm two years ago, the latest generation of Sibley guides is arriving with much less fanfare. The latest books, broken into traditional-sized Eastern and Western guides, offer both more and less than the original large-format guide.

The new guides split North America along state and provincial lines. The Eastern guide covers everything east of and

including Saskatchewan, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Only the Trans-Pecos of Texas is separated off for inclusion in the Western guide.

In the latest guides, Sibley does away with the experimental vertical format of each species account, and groups paintings,

map, and text for each species into either full-page or, more often, half-page treatments. In most cases, he has had to reduce the number of illustrations (for instance, Northern Bobwhite goes from 10 illustrations to 4, and Golden-cheeked Warbler is reduced from 7 to 5 illustrations). Happily, Sibley has included most of his flight illustrations, one of the more useful innovations from his first book.

Whereas the first Sibley guide was criticized for its brief text and excessive white space, the new pocket-size guides feature lengthier text accounts and a much more economical use of space. In fact, they might be criticized as almost too compact, for paintings, maps, and text are all squeezed to fit into each half-page species account. For those who like pocketknives and gadgets with lots of features in a small space, this guide is for you.

The text of each species account includes more notes on habits, habitat, and identification than found in the original guide, but the description of voice is of necessity slightly abbreviated—though still more extensive than the voice descriptions in any other American field guide.

The greatest improvement over the original Sibley guide comes in the new distribution maps, which were reviewed by 110 experts from each state and province, including 4 reviewers for Texas (Bob Behrstock, Mark Lockwood, Matt White, and

(Continued on page 13)

KIDS' SECTION



Waiting for May's general meeting program to begin, two fledging members of TAS were spotted enjoying Signal Smoke. At dusk, John Karger of Last Chance Forever arrived with raptors he has rescued and rehabilitated. John, a falconer who presents live demonstrations at Renaissance Fair and other locales to encourage appreciation and support of raptors, delighted the large crowd by flying a Black Vulture, a Peregrine Falcon, a Harris Hawk, a Great Horned Owl, and an eagle (below). Photos by Ann Gardner.



Questions about the Kids' Section?

Do you have questions about the Kids' Section? Email your questions to Amy Sugeno <amydave@thrifty.net>.

A TAS Towhees Adventure: The TAS Roughwings Team

On Saturday, May 5, the Travis Audubon Society Towhees competed in their first Great Texas Birding Classic. They competed in the Roughwings Division, the division for kids 13 years old and under, and all team members came from the TAS Youth Birding Camp. Team members were Josh Winkler, Jesse Huth, and Valyo Calvert, and the team mentor was myself (Amy Sugeno). Chaperones Matt Winkler, Jaci Huth, Alicia Nelson, and Dave Sugeno also helped out, along with hopeful future team member, Vitalik Nelson.

The team started out birding on private land in Victoria County, where they spotted a beautiful **Painted Bunting** and valiantly tried to find the reported **Buff-bellied Hummingbird**, unfortunately to no avail. They then spent the rest of their time birding along the coast in Port Lavaca, where they enjoyed wonderful looks at a **Black-bellied Plover** and admired **Clapper Rail adults and chicks**, and in Rockport, where they finished the day enjoying **Black Skimmers, Sandwich Terns, and Ruddy Turnstones**.

Though our team didn't place this first year, everyone had a really great time. My goal was that each kid have such a good time birding that they finish the day more excited about birds than they were at the beginning of the day. I can truly say that goal was thoroughly realized. Hopefully we will place at next year's competition, but there's no doubt we'll have a really great time!

For more firsthand accounts of what it's like to be a Roughwing in the Great Texas Birding Classic, keep your eyes out when reading future issues of *Signal Smoke*. —Amy Sugeno



Audubon Adventures Classroom Kits Need Donations

Audubon Adventures Classroom Kits for grades 3–6 will start being issued to classroom teachers again for the 2003–2004 school year soon. Last year we reached our quota of 70 classrooms that signed up to use this nature curriculum, which highlighted Freshwater Wetlands, Temperate Deciduous Forests and Woodlands, Coastal Environments, and Deserts. These materials are a gift to Austin-area schoolteachers from Travis Audubon Society. The cost is approximately \$40 per kit, which includes shipping. Please consider donating to the TAS *Audubon Adventures* program. You can send a check payable to Travis Audubon Society, to P.O. Box 40787, Austin TX 78704. Please note on the check that it is for *Audubon Adventures*. Many thanks. —Julia Balinsky

URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT



Habitat Stewards Volunteers Make A Difference for Wildlife!



Is your own backyard already a haven for wildlife? Would you like to help others connect to nature without the need to get in the car and go somewhere to see it? If you answered yes, then take advantage of this upcoming opportunity!

The National Wildlife Federation, Wild Birds Unlimited, and Travis Audubon Society will sponsor a Habitat Stewards volunteer training program in September. Habitat Stewards is a mentoring program of NWF's Backyard Wildlife Habitat program. The goal is for Habitat Stewards to help members of our community create, maintain, and learn about gardening for wildlife at home, at school, at work, and at other community sites.

The Habitat Stewards training will be held in Austin in September, beginning on Wednesday, September 3. The four Wednesday classes (September 3, 10, 17 and 24) are scheduled for 6–9 p.m. Various Austin locations will be used. The sites to be used on Saturdays in September are Wild Basin Wilderness (September 6), Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (September 13) and Hornsby Bend CER (September 20). In total, Habitat Stewards will receive a minimum of 24 hours of training, which will focus on native plants, site inventory and design,

gardening basics for our Austin soils, and butterfly-, bird-, and pollinator-friendly gardening. Participants will get hands-on practice in creating a schoolyard habitat. Trained volunteers will be expected to “pay back” 50 hours of volunteer time to reach out to the community and help transform our landscaping practices to benefit wildlife.

Training is \$35, and volunteers will receive a Habitat Stewards “tool kit” to help them learn—and teach others—about the importance of saving a place for wildlife in our own backyards and communities. Another benefit is that volunteers will get to network with a group of like-minded individuals.

For more information or to request a program application, contact Jane Tillman, 7509 Parkview Circle, Austin TX 78731; phone 794-0058; <mljt@mail.utexas.edu>. Registration is limited. Application deadline is August 1, 2003. For a testimonial about the Habitat Stewards training, ask Shelia Hargis, our TAS first vice president! If your schedule won't permit you to attend this training, but you would like advice on how to make your yard more appealing for wildlife, start learning more at the NWF's website, <www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/>.

SANCTUARY NEWS



We finished May with 2.2 inches of rain, which is better than April's rainfall amount but short of what is average for our area. Both Camp Mabry and Austin Bergstrom International Airport broke previous records with triple-digit temperatures on Friday, May 30. It's not officially summer yet, but already we are experiencing temperatures more typical of July or August.

As you may recall from one of my previous *Signal Smoke* articles, as part of our cleanup here at the sanctuary,

we contracted to have the large trash pile next to the Baker Family Cemetery removed. This was done in January 2001. Then volunteers raked the bare ground where the trash pile was and bagged up the remaining debris during our workday on February 17. The following week, I hauled 48 bags of debris to the transfer station and later that spring, Marcie seeded the bare ground with a native wildflower mix formulated specifically for

the Texas Hill Country. For two years in a row, we observed a few Indian paintbrush and bluebonnets in that area but not much else. Then this spring, in spite of our lack of rainfall, standing cypress (*Ipomopsis rubra*), which was in the wildflower mix, appeared. Each spring, we admired this plant when we saw it blooming from May to June elsewhere in the Hill Country beside roads and railroad tracks. It is a biennial perennial that can tolerate full sun and likes well-drained, fertile soil. The plants seem to like the shallow soil by the cemetery, and with their red spires, they provide nectar for hummingbirds.

The fence project is on schedule. The contractor, Anchor Fence, has completed installing the fence on approximately 3,700 feet of boundary, and I have put up 13 “No Trespassing” signs. This first part of the project included the roughest terrain with the most difficult access to the fence line and included two water gaps over upper Cypress Creek. From the last water gap on, all of the fence work is on more or less level ground and, as of Thursday, May 29, Anchor had set steel posts and T-posts on another 3,500 feet of fence line.

Sanctuary Meeting Scheduled

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

—John Wilcox, TAS Baker Sanctuary Steward

NATURALIST'S CALENDAR

Believe it or not, the seasons are shifting. Though one July or August day seems very much like another, the signs are there, as the sun rises later and sets earlier each day.

New plants are beginning to bloom. Around the edges of ponds and streams, fuzzy rosy-pink heads appear atop 2-to-5-foot-tall stalks of marsh fleabanes (*Pluchea odorata*). Western ironweeds (*Vernonia baldwinii*) display similar flower clusters on equally tall stalks, but their color is a rich violet. Ironweeds are often conspicuous in pastures, since cattle dislike their bitter-tasting foliage.

Livestock also avoid most plants in the spurge family (Euphorbiaceae), either because they have stinging hairs, like the bull-nettle, or because they are distasteful, like the crotons. Two bad-tasting, but showy, members of this family—snow-on-the-prairie and snow-on-the-mountain—begin blooming in July and reach full bloom in August.

Standing as tall as the ironweeds, these two annuals are most noticeable for the white-margined leafy bracts that crowd the flower heads. Snow-on-the-prairie (*Euphorbia bicolor*) grows in pastures and old fields of the former Blackland Prairie and in clearings of the post oak woodlands east of Austin; the bracts of this species are long and narrow—at least five times as long as broad. Snow-on-the-mountain (*Euphorbia marginata*) is common west of Austin, especially in the moister draws of open rangeland; its bracts are ovate, less than four times as long as broad.

From a distance, the plants do indeed look snow-capped, especially to someone longing for relief from summer heat. On a hazy August morning a colony of either of these plants may appear very much like a snow-covered field. The chance of snow is still months away, but snow-on-the-prairie or snow-on-the-mountain in full bloom is a sure sign that summer is on the wane.



Another sign: By the time you read this, fall migration will have begun. First comes a trickle of sandpipers—Least and Western sandpipers, Lesser Yellowlegs—sometimes arriving as early as late June. These may be individuals that didn't breed, or those whose nesting attempts failed. By the end of July there is a regular current of southbound shorebirds, and by mid-August it is a flood. Blue-winged Teal and Black Terns also return in August, and a Bank Swallow may appear among the throngs of Barn, Cliff, and Cave swallows at Hornsby Bend.

Not all visiting water birds are southbound. Late July and August also bring postbreeding wanderers from the Gulf Coast.



Hérons and egrets throng to Hornsby Bend, Granger Lake, and other open wetlands, especially those east of town. Even birds that usually stay near the coast—Tricolored Herons, Reddish Egrets, White Ibises, Wood Storks, Roseate Spoonbills—will frequently wander inland to Central Texas now. A tropical storm or hurricane sweeping up from the Gulf might carry even rarer birds—a Black Skimmer, a Royal Tern, a Magnificent Frigatebird, or, potentially, even an open-ocean bird such as a noddy or a storm-petrel.

Landside, the first sign of migration may be the Purple Martins that gather by the hundreds in communal roosts on July evenings. The first passage migrants appear in the waning days of July or early in August, usually in the form of a Least Flycatcher or one of its enigmatic relatives. The windy, whistling “whit-will-do” calls of Upland Sandpipers again drift down from high-flying migrants. By mid-August more songbirds—especially Yellow Warblers and Orchard Orioles—are southbound. Graceful Mississippi Kites sometimes drift overhead in small flocks, like big pale-headed swallows.

So smile. Summer just seems interminable. Autumn is on the way!

—Bill Reiner



BOOK REVIEW (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 10)

Barry Zimmer). The new maps show breeding, wintering, and migratory distributions, as well as shading to indicate areas of rare but regular occurrence. The green dots showing individual records are now small shaded dots and are now more accurately located to show true records. These maps are up to date and include such recent records as the first Texas record of Gyrfalcon in Lubbock during the winter of 2001–2002. These maps alone, as a carefully reviewed synthesis of current bird distribution, are worth the price of the new guides.

In conclusion, if you already own the monumental Sibley guide, the new-format guides are still worth acquiring for their much improved maps, expanded species accounts, and smaller, more portable size.

—Rob Ferguson



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)

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