



# SIGNAL SMOKE

The Newsletter of Travis Audubon Society

VOLUME 52, NO. 9

SEPTEMBER 2003

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## Gambell Gambit

"I've got a Brambling in the Circular Boneyard," the radio crackled.

Immediately every visiting birder whose life list lacked Brambling, and many whose didn't, dropped what they were doing and struck out for the Circular Boneyard. The arrivals had no trouble finding the female bird, since the initial observers had their pointing fingers well-oiled, but getting a *good look* at the rare migrant was another matter entirely. The bird was too skittish to stay in a scope view for long and had an annoying tendency to seek out the boneyard's hollows and depressions rather than the peaks of its dirt piles.



Nevertheless, most had had satisfactory views of the Asian migrant, and many had already trickled away when what sounded like small arms fire rang out. Sure enough, puffs of dust appeared on the ground where the ammo found its mark. Incongruously, a young Eskimo boy had arrived at the boneyard with a rifle and was stalking and taking shots at . . . the Brambling! A woman next to me, noting my dropping jaw, reported witnessing a similar scene the day before over at the Boatyard, involving a visiting pair of Mongolian Plovers.

Such was my introduction to the Eskimo community of Gambell on the northwest tip of St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea, an hour southwest of Nome by small plane. Few uninterested in birds and in their right mind would be inclined to pay a visit here. Although it has its own stark beauty—much as a walrus might be considered pretty, I suppose—St. Lawrence is basically a frozen, treeless, and windswept hunk of volcanic rock (for three months out of the year, it's only half-frozen). That the mountains of the Chukotsk Peninsula can frequently be seen 40 miles to the northwest while the west coast of Alaska's Seward Peninsula is never visible 200 miles to the east gives the distinct impression that Gambell is more part of Siberia than America.

The native Yu'piks gladly welcome visiting birders, but this is no mint-on-the-pillow resort. Accommodations are "rustic" and frequently improvised, food must be brought along or shipped in ahead of time, and—of considerable interest to some—no alcohol is allowed. Milt, the one nonserious birder in our group, discovered this

*(Continued on page 12)*



### TAS REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING Thursday, September 18, 7 p.m.

Program: Natural History and Distribution of Striated Caracaras

Presenter: Jonathan Meiburg

Highland Park Baptist Church, 5206 Balcones Drive

*(See page 5 for details.)*

## Travis Audubon Society

Email addresses are at "About Us,"  
<[www.travisaudubon.org](http://www.travisaudubon.org)>.

### Officers and Directors

#### President

Pat Dillon 347-0452

#### First Vice President

Shelia Hargis 291-1861

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P.O. Box 40787  
Austin TX 78704-0014

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#### Past President

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Mark Bentley 301-2675  
Lois Burks 261-9923  
Sam Fason 474-1185  
Marcie Wilcox 219-8425  
John Kelly 331-8693  
Richard Manson 347-8192

### Baker Sanctuary Steward

John Wilcox 219-8425

### 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](http://www.travisaudubon.org)

### TAS Email

[info@travisaudubon.org](mailto:info@travisaudubon.org)

### TAS Fax

892-2026



Signal Smoke is printed  
on recycled paper.

## 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

In my last column, I hinted that I may not be the best birder in the organization and offered my organizational skills as the reason you voted me into office. This month I want to update you as to what your board is attempting to do for you.

One of our first concerns is communication to the members. We plan to publish in *Signal Smoke* an annual report consisting of a balance sheet and the annual budget. We plan to make a list of the motions passed by the board each month. At this time we are undecided as to whether *Signal Smoke*, the website, or announcements at the general meetings are the best way to disseminate this information. But we want you to know what we are doing. In this vein, I remind you that the board meetings are open to the public. We meet the second Thursday of each month except December, at 6:45 in the same building as our general meetings.

A while back the board attempted to amend the bylaws. That is a project that still needs to be done. We have formed a bylaws committee and plan to allow for plenty of membership understanding, input, and communication before presenting it for vote. We expect to have an open meeting for discussion of the revisions previous to the usual *Signal Smoke* insertion. We have also discussed a Travis Audubon "101" class so members can meet and question their board members and committee chairs. We would offer this on an alternate Thursday to the regular

(Continued on page 13)

## COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

Email addresses are available at <[www.travisaudubon.org](http://www.travisaudubon.org)> under "About Us."

### TAS Rare Bird Alert

Isaac Sanchez 899-9414

Alert number 926-8751

Bob Barth 327-1173

John Kelly 331-8693

### Bird Records

Chris Doggett 512-898-5500

### Conservation

Vacant

### Cyberspace

Georgia Harper 467-9700

### Education

Tim Hissam 251-6067

### Field Trips

Vacant

### Hornsby Bend

Chris Doggett 512-898-5500

### Hospitality

BJ Dertien

### Membership Secretary

Pat Dillon 347-0452

### Programs

Rosemary Wetherold 892-1606

### Property and Finance

Vacant

### Publications

Marcie Wilcox 219-8425

### Publicity

Bryan Hale 474-5599

### Sales

Jane Tillman 794-0058

### Sanctuary

### Urban Habitat Development

## 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; <[membership@travisaudubon.org](mailto:membership@travisaudubon.org)>; 512-898-5500. The post office will not forward *Signal Smoke*.


### Newsletter Deadline


The submissions deadline is the first day of the preceding month (for example, October 1 for November issue). Submit uncopyrighted articles, announcements, and art to Rosemary Wetherold, <[rosemaryw@austin.rr.com](mailto: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.

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# September 2003 Calendar of Travis Audubon Society Events

 Field Trip—See page 4

 Meeting—See page 5

 Birding Class—See page 8

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Deadline for October <i>Signal Smoke</i> (p. 2)	2  Education Committee Meeting, 7 pm	3	4	5	6  Field trip, Barton Creek Habitat Pre- serve, 7:30 am
7	8	9	10	11  TAS Board of Directors Meeting, 6:45 pm	12	13  Field trip, Shield Ranch, 7 am  Monthly Bird Count, Hornsby Bend, 7 am  Field trip, McKin- ney Roughs, 8 am  HBBO Meeting & Potluck, 11:30 am
14	15	16	17  Raptor Identification Class begins, 7 pm	18 TAS Regular Monthly Meeting with program, 7 pm (see page 5)	19	20  Bird walk, Hornsby Bend, 7:30 am  Children's nature walk, Colorado River, 8 am  "Serendipity" & Jonestown Swift Roost, 3 pm
21  Bird walk, Meadow Lake, 4 pm	22	23	24	25  Bird Records Committee Meeting, 7 pm	26	27  Bird walk, Southeast Metro- politan Park, 8 am  Ecological Literacy Day, Hornsby Bend (workday/nature walk), 9 am
28  Bird walk, TAS Baker Sanctuary, 7:30 am	29	30	OCTOBER 1 Deadline for November <i>Signal Smoke</i> (p. 2)			

# 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 Field Trips webpage** <[www.travisaudubon.org/fieldtrips.html](http://www.travisaudubon.org/fieldtrips.html)> or the TAS hotline (926-8751) for complete, 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! If you do not have Internet access, contact phone numbers are provided below.

## 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](mailto:mburnett@austin.rr.com)> or call 899-0390.



## Saturday, September 13, 8–11 am

### Field Trip to McKinney Roughts

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Mark Bentley, 301-2675, <[meb-law@swbell.net](mailto:meb-law@swbell.net)>.

## 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, <[tphissam1@yahoo.com](mailto:tphissam1@yahoo.com)>.

## Saturday, September 13, 7–11 am

### Field Trip to Shield Ranch

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Georgia Harper, 467-9700, <[gharper@utsystem.edu](mailto:gharper@utsystem.edu)>.

## 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@ieeeg.org](mailto:kaskan@ieeeg.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](mailto:charles_stephens@yahoo.com)>; or Rob Fergus, 478-8486, <[fergus@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:fergus@mail.utexas.edu)>.



## Saturday, September 20, 3–8 pm

### "Serendipity" (3–6 pm) and Jonestown Chimney Swift Roost (7–8 pm)

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

## 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](mailto:roadrunner1@mindspring.com)>.

## Saturday, September 27, 8–11 am

### Bird Walk at Southeast Metropolitan Park

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Mark Bentley, 301-2675, <[meb-law@swbell.net](mailto:meb-law@swbell.net)>.

## Saturday, September 27, 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](mailto:Kevin.Anderson@ci.austin.tx.us)>; or Tim Hissam, <[tphissam1@yahoo.com](mailto:tphissam1@yahoo.com)>.

## Sunday, September 28, 7:30–11:30 am

### Bird Walk at TAS Baker Sanctuary

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

## Saturday, October 11, 7 am

### Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

For details, see September 13 listing.

## Saturday, October 11, 7:30 am

### Field Trip to Choke Canyon State Park

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



## October 26–January 23

TAS Baker Sanctuary is closed.

## Saturday–Sunday, November 22–23

### Birding and Camping at Pedernales Falls State Park

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Andy or Julia Balinsky, 512-926-7312, <[jwaxwing@employees.org](mailto:jwaxwing@employees.org)>.



# TAS MEETINGS

**Tuesday, September 2, 7–9 pm**

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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

**Thursday, September 11, 6:45 pm**

## TAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

**Saturday, September 13, 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, September 18, 7 pm**

## TAS REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

For details, see box below.

**Thursday, September 25, 7 pm**

## BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Contact Ethel Kutac: 346-7659.



**Wednesday, October 1, 7 pm**

## URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT GROUP

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



**Monday, October 6, 7–9 pm**

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

See September 2 calendar items for details.

**Tuesday, October 7, 6:30 pm**

## SANCTUARY COMMITTEE MEETING & POTLUCK

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

**Thursday, October 9, 6:45 pm**

## TAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

See September 11 calendar item for details.

**Saturday, October 11, 11:30 am**

## HORNSBY BEND BIRD OBSERVATORY MEETING & POTLUCK LUNCH

See September 13 calendar item for details.



## Thursday, September 18, 7 pm TAS REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

**Program: Natural History and Distribution  
of Striated Caracaras**

**Presenter: Jonathan Meiburg**



Jonathan Meiburg, an Austin resident, is finishing his master's degree in geography at the University of Texas at Austin. A Thomas J. Watson Fellowship recipient, he received his undergraduate degree in English from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. Jonathan's presentation covers the main focus of his research, the natural history and distribution of the Striated Caracara, which is the largest of the caracaras. Jonathan is especially interested in the behavioral patterns of this species. Travis Audubon Society provided a donation in support of Jonathan's research, of which a trip to the United Kingdom was a part. Jonathan has also studied the flora and fauna of sub-Antarctica. He has traveled to the Falkland Islands and Tierra del Fuego in South America to conduct his research. This will be an excellent program to start off our new regular meetings season. Come and join your friends and meet some new ones, maybe even from your own neighborhood. Program begins at 7:30 p.m. **Location:** Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, in a field adjacent to the headquarters building. **Refreshments provided.**

*Note: I would like to welcome all of our members and friends of the society to our first program of the new season. My name is BJ Dertien, second vice president of Travis Audubon and the new Programs Committee chairperson. I look forward to meeting more of our members and guest over the coming months. I would appreciate your comments and suggestions for future guest speakers. Please send specific names, interests, and a contact number to me at <jshank@austin.rr.com>.*

# 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.

**Friday–Sunday, September 5–7**

## **A Swift Night Out**

To participate, locate a Chimney Swift or Vaux's Swift roost in your area. A roost is a location where swifts gather at dusk to spend the night. Then on one night over the weekend of September 5–7, observe the roost at dusk and estimate the number of swifts that enter. Send your results (number of swifts counted and city, state, and date of observation) to the Driftwood Wildlife Association, <dwa@austin.rr.com>; 266-3861; or 1206 West 38th, Suite 1105, Austin TX 78705. The results will be compiled as they come in through mid-September and may be viewed at <www.concentric.net/~Dwa/page68.html>. If you provide the exact location of the roost that you monitor, that information will be included in the results.



**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 markets, 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, 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 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, and conservation organizations, as well as individuals interested in birds, wildlife, and the environment. For registration form and lodging information, visit <http://tx.audubon.org/annualmtg2003.htm> or call Lk Loflin at 512-306-0225.

**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.)



# OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST (CONTINUED)

**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.

**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–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>.

**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 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>.





# EDUCATION NEWS & CLASSES

## NEWS

### **Birds of North America Donation**

Thanks to the generosity of Julie Hallmark, Travis Audubon Society is now the proud owner of *Birds of North America*. This reference set was given to us because of Julie's desire to share the material with fellow bird lovers. We eagerly accepted the donation. Since we don't have library space at this time, the Education Committee is investigating options so that members can have access to the wonderful reference material.

*Birds of North America, Life Histories for the 21st Century*, is the standard reference on North American birds. The set contains a scientific account for each of more than 700 species and covers such topics as distinguishing characteristics, distribution, migration, habitat, sounds, behavior, breeding, conservation, and management. To learn more, visit <[www.birdsofna.org](http://www.birdsofna.org)>.

Thank you, Julie!

## UPCOMING CLASSES



### **Raptor Identification Class**

Robert Reeves, TAS member and long-time birder, will teach Introduction to Raptor Identification this September. The

class will cover identification of diurnal raptors (hawks, kites, falcons, eagles, and vultures) that occur in Central Texas and along the coast during migration. Lectures will include general physical characteristics of raptors, migratory behavior, and slides of birds perched and in flight. Lectures will take place on Wednesdays, September 17 and 24, 7–9 p.m., at the Center for Environmental Research auditorium at Hornsby Bend. There will be a field trip to Hornsby on Saturday, September 20. An additional field trip will be held on Saturday and Sunday, September 27–28, to the annual "Celebration of Flight" hawk watch at Hazel Bazemore County Park near Corpus Christi, where participants will have an opportunity to observe thousands of Broad-winged Hawks and other species during their southward migration. Tuition is \$45 for TAS members and \$55 for nonmembers, plus the participants will be expected to cover the instructor's travel expenses (approximately \$15 per participant). Contact Robert Reeves at <[rreeves1@austin.rr.com](mailto:rreeves1@austin.rr.com)> or 779-9038 to sign up. The class is limited to 12 participants.

### **Fall 2003 Beginning Birding Class**

The Education Committee will offer a Beginning Birding Class starting in late October. This class is designed to provide new birders with the techniques and skills to help them identify unfamiliar birds. Lecture/slide presentations will be held Thursday evenings, October 23, November 6 and 13, and December 4 from 7 to 9:30 p.m. in a meeting room at First Presbyterian Church, 8001 Mesa Drive, in northwest Austin. Field trips will be on Saturdays following each class—October 25, November 8 and 15, and December 6. Trips will begin at 7 a.m. and end between noon and 2 p.m. Because field trips provide the opportunity to put into practice the skills taught in the classroom, preference will be given to registrants who are willing to make a commitment to attend the field trips for this class.

Class members will receive a beginning birding booklet plus many handouts. Topics will include identifying local birds, buying and using binoculars, and birding resources (books,

websites, multimedia, etc.). The class will be taught by Education Committee member Jean Martin, who has been a birder for more than 15 years and has taught this class many times with excellent reviews each time.

The class fee is \$45, and class size will be limited to 12 people. So if you really want to begin learning about birds, don't delay. This class fills up quickly! As with all our classes, you don't have to be a TAS member to attend. To sign up, contact Jean Martin at <[jeanmartin@austin.rr.com](mailto:jeanmartin@austin.rr.com)> or 343-7053.



### **Fall Sparrow Class**

This past winter Byron Stone taught our Sparrow Identification Class for the first time. According to class participants, he was awesome! Because of the popularity of the class and the small class size, Byron has graciously agreed to teach a fall class as well as a winter class. The fall class starts in November.

Byron has been an avid birder and lister since the early 1970s. He became enamored of sparrows when he found his first Fox Sparrow in a mixed-species flock in a small woodland near Luling 25 years ago. He spent most of the next two decades trying to figure out how to tell all those "Little Brown Birds" apart. He has traveled all parts of Texas to watch and listen to birds and has seen all of the sparrows that occur naturally in Texas. He has a special interest in birdsong and bird vocalizations. When he is not birding or at work in his private medical practice, he plays blues on one of his 12 harmonicas.

The class will focus on species that occur in Central Texas, and there will be four lectures and four field trips. Lectures will take place on Wednesdays, November 5 and 12 and December 3 and 10, from 7 to 9 p.m. in a meeting room at First Presbyterian Church, 8001 Mesa Drive, in northwest Austin. The field trips will be on Saturdays, November 8 and 15 and December 6 and 13. Tuition is \$60 for TAS members and \$70 for nonmembers. The class is limited to 12 participants. Contact Robert Reeves at 779-9038 or <[rreeves1@austin.rr.com](mailto:rreeves1@austin.rr.com)> to sign up.



# KIDS' SECTION



## My Trip Report

The 2003 Birding Classic was FUN! We had a great day for our eight-hour birding period. A most special

moment was seeing Clapper Rails with about 10 chicks! I saw lots of birds, including at least 10 lifers! We saw a colony of nesting Black Skimmers and a Mute Swan! I would love to go back next year with our great mentor, Amy Sugeno!

—Jesse Huth, TAS Towhees, Great Texas Birding Class Competition, Roughwings Division



## My Birding Trip

I had a great time being part of the Towhees team this year. My favorite bird was at Port Lavaca and was seen at the bird sanctuary. I was on the boardwalk when I spotted a Tricolored Heron off in the reeds. My favorite experience was at the same place and was when my group and I spotted a rail and about seven of its babies running along the shoreline.

—Josh Winkler, TAS Towhees, Great Texas Birding Class Competition, Roughwings Division



Members of the TAS Towhees (left to right) are Amy Sugeno, team mentor; Jesse Huth; Valyo Calvert; Vitalik Nelson (future birder); and Josh Winkler.



The TAS Towhees work on identifying a flying tern at the Port Lavaca Birding Center.

## Uh-oh...

My sincere apology to **Marsha Reimer**, who created the “Audubon Jumble” in the June *Signal Smoke* issue. Though my name is listed as the creator, I cannot take credit. Thanks to Marsha for all of her hard work in creating this wonderful kids’ activity and for helping with the TAS Youth Birding Camp too!

—Amy Sugeno



## Audubon Adventures Classroom Kits Need Donations

Audubon Adventures Classroom Kits for grades 3–6 are being ordered for the new school year. For 2003–2004 this nature curriculum highlights Grasslands, Nature in Your Neighborhood, Coniferous

Forests and Water, and Wildlife and People. 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 sponsoring a classroom by donating to the TAS Audubon Adventures program. Please mail donations to Travis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 40787, Austin TX 78704. Please note on the check that it is for Audubon Adventures. Also please contact me if you know of an area teacher who would like to receive a Classroom Kit. Many thanks.

—Julia Balinsky, <jwaxwing@employees.org>