



SIGNAL SMOKE

The Newsletter of Travis Audubon Society

VOLUME 53, NO. 1

JANUARY 2004

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Learning Is Fun at Birding Camp



Amy Sugeno helps Youth Birding Campers identify ducks at Hornsby Bend.

On Saturday, November 8, the third annual Youth Birding Camp was held. Thanks to the able and enthusiastic leadership of Amy Sugeno and her hardworking volunteers, it was a grand success. Nine new campers and two mentors, who had been campers in previous years, attended. They all seemed pleased to be given their very own field guides (Ken Kaufman's), birding journals, and new Austin bird checklists. Kathy and Robert

Reeves gave the campers a great introduction to birding, including how to use field guides and binoculars, what characteristics to look for, and so on. With a PowerPoint presentation and several stuffed birds to examine, the campers were soon well equipped for going out into the field.

Despite a little drizzle and cold weather, the campers and their adult guides ventured forth to search for ducks, grebes, egrets, raptors, and more. They found 31 species and were quite proud of their accomplishments.

After a lunch of pizza and soda, the afternoon activities proved to be entertaining and educational as well. Meg Goodman of Bat Conservation International talked to the campers about birds, bats, and migration. Amber Ahrns and Paul Fushille, who are biologists with Travis County, played ecological games with the children, all the while teaching them about endangered species and bird identification. Elisabeth Welsh of Austin Youth River Watch helped the campers gain a new awareness of water quality issues. Carlo Abbruzzese of the City of Austin taught them about some good places to see birds near Austin. Last, and probably most exciting, were Bob and Rozeen LeSeur with Wildlife Rescue Inc., who taught everyone about bird rehabilitation.

Campers, mentors, and adults leaders all agreed that the camp was a terrific opportunity to learn more about birds and have a fun-filled day as well. —Anne Donovan

TAS REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING Thursday, January 15, 7 p.m.

Program: Ecotourism and Birds in Panama

Presenter: Brian Gourley

**Highland Park Baptist Church,
5206 Balcones Drive**

(See page 8 for details.)



Travis Audubon Society

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

Officers and Directors

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John Wilcox 219-8425

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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



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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

If you came to the TAS Christmas Party, you helped us honor Marjorie Adams on her 90th birthday. I thought about the changes she has seen in her lifetime, and that caused me to think how long 90 years is. Few of us may live that long. Many of us don't possess anything that will last that long. Think about your house—will it last 90 years? Your career, though it may seem longer, will not last that long. Your marriage? What do you have that you expect to last 90 years?

One of the few things I could think of was a tree. Think about a tree with 90 rings and how much happiness and good it can produce in 90 years. A place for children to play, a shady shelter in the summer, a respite from a rain, a memory preserved in carved initials. What a shame if that tree that grows so old and so magnificent is not used. And there my thoughts turned to what a responsibility it is to have such longevity. How bad would you feel if you took the gift of 90 years and spent it in front of the TV? None of us knows how long he or she will have, and none of us knows what opportunities await us. Take advantage of every day that you do have.

It is common to respect our elders for their age, but Marjorie deserves our respect for what she has accomplished. A friend of the environment all of her life, she was instrumental in having Wild Basin become a preserve. As recently as the October TAS membership meeting, she stood up and admonished us to contact

(Continued on page 7)

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 Conservation	Bob Barth	327-1173
Cyberspace Education	John Kelly	331-8693
Field Trips	Chris Doggett	512-898-5500
Hornsby Bend Hospitality	Vacant	
Membership Secretary Programs	Georgia Harper	467-9700
Property and Finance Publications	Kevin Anderson	972-1960
Publicity Sales	Vacant	
Sanctuary Urban Habitat Development	Chris Doggett	512-898-5500
	BJ Dertien	
	Pat Dillon	347-0452
	Rosemary Wetherold	892-1606
	Vacant	
	Marcie Wilcox	219-8425
	Bryan Hale	474-5599
	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; <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, February 1 for the March issue). Submit uncopyrighted articles, announcements, and 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.






















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January 2004 Calendar of Travis Audubon Society Events

 Field Trip—See pages 4–5

 Meeting—See page 8

 Birding Class—See page 8

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 Deadline for February <i>Signal Smoke</i> (see p. 2)	2	3  Field trip, Barton Creek Habitat Preserve, 7:30 am  Field trip, Mitchell Lake, 9 am
4  Field trip, McKinney Falls State Park, 8 am	5  Education Committee Meeting, 7 pm	6  Sanctuary Committee Meeting & Potluck, 6:30 pm	7	8  TAS Board of Directors Meeting, 6:45 pm	9	10  Monthly Bird Count, Hornsby Bend, 7 am & 4 pm  Field trip, Shield Ranch, 8 am
11  Winter bird walk, Riata Pond/Yett Creek Park, 8 am	12	13	14	15 TAS Regular Monthly Meeting with program, 7 pm (see page 8)	16	17  Bird walk, Hornsby Bend, 7:30 am  Children's nature walk, Colorado River, 8 am  Bird walk, St. Edward's District Park, 8 am  Waterfowl ID Class begins, 8 am
18  Field trip, Williamson Country Regional Park, 8 am  Bird walk, Meadow Lake, 4 pm	19  Urban Habitat Development Group Meeting, 7 pm	20	21	22  Bird Records Committee Meeting, 7 pm	23	24  Winter bird survey, "Acacia," 7 am  Field trip, Lake Buchanan, Canyon of the Eagles, 10 am Baker Sanctuary reopens
25  Field trip, Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, 2 pm	26	27	28	29	30	31  Ecological Literacy Day, Hornsby Bend (workday/nature walk), 9 am
FEBRUARY 1 Deadline for March <i>Signal Smoke</i> (see 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; click on "Field Trips") 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.**

Hornsby Bend Information

The Hornsby Bend website www.sbs.utexas.edu/hornsby contains maps and other information about the facility.

Through January 23

TAS Baker Sanctuary is closed.

Saturday, January 3, 7:30–11:30 am

Field Trip to Barton Creek Habitat Preserve

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



Saturday, January 3, 9 am–noon(+?)

Field Trip to Mitchell Lake, San Antonio

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

Cormack, 895-7268 (w), kathy.mccormack@motorola.com.

Sunday, January 4, 8–11 am

Field Trip to McKinney Falls State Park

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Georgia Harper, gharper@utsystem.edu, 467-9700.

Saturday, January 10, 7 am & 4 pm

Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

Meet at the Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend. Contact Russ Nelson, russelln@concentric.net, 431-1420.

Saturday, January 10, 8–11:30 am

Field Trip to Shield Ranch

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Georgia Harper, gharper@utsystem.edu, 467-9700.

Sunday, January 11, 8–11 am

Winter Bird Walk at Riata Pond/Yett Creek Park

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

Saturday, January 17, 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, January 17, 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 Ferguson, 478-8486, fergus@mail.utexas.edu.

Saturday, January 17, 8–11 am

Bird Walk at St. Edward's District Park

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



Sunday, January 18, 8–11 am

Field Trip to Williamson County Regional Park

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

Sunday, January 18, 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, January 24, 7 am–3 pm

Winter Bird Survey on Nancy Moore's Property, "Acacia" (near Pedernales River)

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Anne Donovan, 472-3030, ajdonovan@austin.rr.com.

Saturday, January 24, 10 am–1:30 pm

Field Trip to Lake Buchanan, Canyon of the Eagles



Advance payment required by no later than Saturday, January 17. For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Mark Bentley, 301-2675, 461-5375 (cell), meb-law@swbell.net.

TAS TRIPS AND EVENTS (CONTINUED)

**Sunday,
January 25,
2–7:30 pm**

**Field Trip to
Balcones
Canyonlands
National
Wildlife Refuge**

Led by Bill Reiner.

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



**Saturday, January 31, 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>.

**Saturday, February 7
Field Trip to Colorado Bend**

For details, see the Field Trips webpage.

**Saturday, February 7, 7:30–11:30 am
Field Trip to Barton Creek Habitat Preserve**

For details, see January 3 calendar item.



**Sunday, February
8, 7:30 am–noon
Field Trip, Granger
Lake (Williamson
County)**

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact

Kathy McCormack, 895-7268 (w), <kathy.mccormack@motorola.com>.

**Saturday, February 14, 7 am & 4 pm
Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend**

For details, see January 10 calendar item.

**Sunday, February 15, noon–2 pm
Austin/Travis Big-Hour Team Bird-Spot,
Commons Ford Ranch Metropolitan Park**

See page 12 for details.

**Sunday, February 15, 4–5:30 pm
Bird Walk at Meadow Lake**

For details, see January 18 calendar item.

**Saturday, February 21, 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, February 21, 8–11 am
Children's Nature Walk,
Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park**

For details, see January 17 calendar item.

**Sunday, February 22, 8 am–noon
Balcones Wildlife Refuge and Jean Nance's
Property, "Serendipity"**

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Georgia Harper, <gharper@utsystem.edu>, 467-9700.

**Sunday, February 22, 8:30–10:30 am
Sparrow Walk in Mary Moore Seawright
Metropolitan Park**

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

**Friday–Tuesday, February 27–March 2
Rio Grande Valley Birding Trip**

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Georgia Harper, <gharper@utsystem.edu>, 467-9700.

**Saturday, February 28
Camp Tejas/Lake Georgetown**

Details forthcoming; see the Field Trips webpage.

**Saturday, February 28, 8:30 am
TAS Baker Sanctuary
Workday**

We are going to line-trim the tall grass in all three trail systems in preparation for our annual open house on March 20. We'll meet at the parking lot at 12221 Lime Creek Road. For more information, see page 14; or contact John Wilcox, 219-4825, <jmwoso@earthlink.net>.



**Saturday, March 20,
9 am–noon
Annual TAS Baker Sanctuary
Open House**

Mark your calendar now for this special event! See page 14 if you'd like to help with this event.

EDUCATION NEWS & CLASSES

NEWS

Thank-you to Shelia Hargis

Shelia served a chairperson for the Education Committee from November 2000 to November 2003. She continued to build on the example of past chairpersons of the Education Committee. With Shelia's leadership, creative thinking, and amazing

organizational skills, the Education Committee has been able to reach even more people through an increased number of classes and through cooperation and coordination with other groups such as National Wildlife Federation, Wild Basin, and Texas Parks & Wildlife. Thanks, Shelia, for all your hard work!

UPCOMING CLASSES

Waterfowl Identification Class



The Waterfowl Identification Class will again be offered in January. It will be co-taught by Martha Renfroe and Jean Martin. Martha has taught the Back-yard Birding

Class with Kathy and Robert Reeves for several years and will be responsible for the lecture portion of the waterfowl class. Jean, who teaches the excellent Beginning Birding Class twice each year, will lead the field trip part. Both instructors are members of the TAS Education Committee and have birded for several years. The lectures will be from 8 to 10 a.m. on Saturdays, January 17 and 31, at the Center for Environmental Research auditorium, Hornsby Bend. Field trips will follow classes and will last until about 2 p.m. Locations will be announced at class time. Participation in field trips is considered part of the class.

The class will focus on ducks and other waterfowl found in Texas, especially during the winter months. This class is well suited for birders who have completed the Beginning Birding Class or for those who have ignored ducks because "all those females look alike." Plan to bring a lunch to both classes. Tuition is \$30 for TAS members and \$40 for nonmembers. The class will be limited to 12 participants. To sign up, contact Robert Reeves at <rreeves1@austin.rr.com> or 779-9038.

Beginning Birding Class

The spring 2004 Beginning Birding Class will start in mid-February. 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 on Wednesday evenings, February 18, March 3 and 24, and April 14, 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. 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 as well as the lectures.

Class members will receive a beginning birding booklet, plus many other handouts. Topics will include identifying local birds, buying and using binoculars, and using birding resources. The class will be taught by Education Committee member Jean Martin, who has been a birder for more than 12 years and has taught this class numerous times, with excellent reviews each time. The class fee is \$40, and the class size will be limited to 12 people. This class fills quickly. To sign up, contact Jean Martin, <jeanmartin@austin.rr.com> or 343-7053 to sign up.

Sparrow Identification Class

The winter 2004 Sparrow Identification Class will be taught by Byron Stone. According to participants in the spring and fall classes in 2003, this course is awesome! Byron has been an avid birder and lister since the early 1970s. He became interested in sparrows when he found his first Fox Sparrow in a mixed flock near Luling 25 years ago. He spent much of the intervening two decades trying to figure out how to tell all those "little brown birds" apart. He has traveled all parts of Texas to listen and watch for birds and has seen all of the sparrows that occur naturally in Texas. Byron enjoys many other activities, including fishing, hiking, and playing classical guitar.



This class will focus on the two dozen members of the family Emberizidae that occur regularly in Central Texas—everything on your checklist between Spotted Towhee and White-crowned Sparrow. There will be four Wednesday-night lectures and four Saturday-morning field trips, two in February and two in March. Exact dates will appear in the February *Signal Smoke*. Field trips will focus on nearby areas that provide excellent opportunities to observe many of our native sparrow species. In February and March, sparrows in Central Texas are preparing for migration or local breeding, and they become more vocal, so

(Continued on page 10)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank You!

A big thank-you to our friend Wildlife Rescue Inc. for the generous donation of a computer for use by the Travis Audubon newsletter editor! This issue is the first newsletter produced with it, and now that the transition to the new machine has been made (whew!), it will greatly aid in the production process. A special thank-you goes to TAS board member Richard Manson for his role in making this possible.



the degree to which the project will involve people who have not previously been involved with species and habitat conservation.

The deadline for submission of grant applications is February 16, 2004. Notification of the awards will be provided in April 2004; grants must be spent, and final reports submitted, one year after the grants

are awarded. For more information about the SRF, including complete guidelines, visit the SRF webpage at <www.nwf.org/keepthewildalive/speciesrecoveryfund.cfm>. Questions may be directed to Colleen Fahey (202-797-6621; fahey@nwf.org) or Ron Ohrel (202-797-6639; ohrel@nwf.org).



Would You Like to Receive TAS Notices by Email?

If you'd like to receive occasional reminders of TAS field trips and other events, notices of new events such as field trips and classes not listed in the newsletter, and announcements such as when the online version of *Signal Smoke* becomes available each month (usually a week or two before the printed version

arrives in the mail), send an email to Bob Warneke <warneke@austin.rr.com> and let him know that you'd like to be added to his TAS mailing list.

Species Recovery Fund Grants Available

The National Wildlife Federation's Species Recovery Fund (SRF) seeks to encourage habitat restorations, species reintroductions, private land conservation activities, and other creative endeavors that directly improve conditions for species listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. During the past four years, National Wildlife Federation has awarded more than 40 grants to support innovative species conservation efforts.

The SRF invites applications from any organization, agency, tribe, university, or individual working to improve on-the-ground conditions for imperiled species. Preference will be given to local grassroots organizations.

Grant awards will range from \$3,000 to \$7,000. Key criteria are the degree to which the project will improve on-the-ground conditions of listed species and



PRESIDENT'S LETTER (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 2)

our elected officials and voice our displeasure with the (inappropriately named) Healthy Forests Restoration Act. She is still leading the fight and has certainly put to use the 90 years she has been given thus far.

And now, the challenge to you and me: Can we live our lives as well as she? Will we make a difference? I once heard that the best time to plant a tree was 50 years ago. The second best time is today. All of us hope that when people review our life, they will see a difference that we made. The best time to plant that difference is today. Get involved!

—Pat Dillon



Audubon Adventures Classroom Kits Need Donations

Audubon Adventures Classroom Kits for grades 3–6 have been ordered for this 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. Mail your donations to Travis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 40787, Austin TX 78704. Please note on the check that it is for *Audubon Adventures*. You may contact me if you know of an area teacher who would like to receive a Classroom Kit. Many thanks.

—Julia Balinsky, <jwaxwing@employees.org>

TAS MEETINGS

Monday, January 5, 7–9 pm

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

North Village Branch Library, 2139 West Anderson Lane.
Contact Shelia Hargis, 291-1861, <shargis@austin.rr.com>.

**Tuesday, January 6,
6:30 pm**

SANCTUARY COMMITTEE MEETING & POTLUCK

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



Thursday, January 8, 6:45 pm

TAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

Thursday, January 15, 7 pm

TAS REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

For details, see box below.

Monday, January 19, 7 pm

URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT GROUP

North Village Branch Library, 2139 West Anderson Lane.
Contact Chuck Simms, 331-9630, <charlesvi@aol.com>.

Thursday, January 22, 7 pm

BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Contact Ethel Kutac, 346-7659.

Monday, February 2, 7–9 pm

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

See January 5 calendar item for details.

Thursday, February 12, 6:45 pm

TAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

See January 8 calendar item for details.

Monday, February 16, 7 pm

URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT GROUP

See January 19 item for details.

Thursday, February 19, 7 pm

TAS REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

Details in next *Signal Smoke*.

Thursday, February 26, 7 pm

BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Contact Ethel Kutac, 346-7659.



Thursday, January 15, 7 pm TAS REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

Program: Ecotourism and Birds in Panama

Presenter: Brian Gourley

Did you know that Panama has 940 species of birds, more than the entire continent of North America? Among the birds of Panama are Quetzals, Golden-collared Manakins, White-bellied

Antbirds, Black-bellied Wrens, Collared Aracaris, Keel-billed Toucans, Buff-throated Woodcreepers, and the rare Harpy Eagle. Brian Gourley, owner and head guide of the Austin-based ecotourism company No Mondays, will share his experiences of traveling and birding in the amazing country of Panama.

Brian has lived with locals in 30 countries and enjoys nothing more than sharing his experiences with fellow nature lovers. His ecotourism company is a continuation of the journey unearthed in his 463-day trip around the world—that of enjoying nature and learning about foreign cultures, species, and landscapes. No Mondays' program Global Change donates 75% of the profits from selected birding and nature trips in Panama to nonprofit foundations.

Program begins at 7:30 p.m. **Location:** Highland Park Baptist Church, 5206 Balcones Dr. (Exit MoPac at 2222, go west on 2222, turn left on Balcones Drive, stay to the left at the fork, then turn right into church parking lot.) **Bus routes:** <www.capmetro.austin.tx.us>; 474-1200. **Bicycle routes:** <www.ci.austin.tx.us/bicycle/bikemap.htm>; 974-7240. Refreshments provided.

