



# SIGNAL SMOKE

*The Newsletter of Travis Audubon Society*

VOLUME 53, NO. 6

JUNE 2004

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## The Owl Show

When we got married, we registered for and received a screech-owl box as a gift. We mounted the box 15 feet up in a large cedar elm in our backyard last November. We had to chase a few squirrels out of the box during the winter. Then, to our surprise, on March 5 we woke up to a new face: a red-morph Eastern Screech-Owl!

She sat in the entrance hole most of the day, even in the bright sunlight. We couldn't believe our luck, and we told all our friends. At least three nonbirding friends instantly wanted owl boxes for their yards. Mrs. Owl sat prominently for long periods for a few more days, but then her behavior changed. She stayed down in the box all day, except to take a long gander at the world just before dusk. At this time she flew for her evening constitutional. We changed our behavior too, settling in around sunset for the Owl Show every night. Over these days, Mrs. Owl became much more accustomed to our presence. At first she would watch us often and would pay attention every time we moved on the back porch. Now she barely looks at us, provided we stay on the porch.

On March 14, we witnessed for the first time a visit from Mr. Owl, who is a gray morph. We began research, using Gehlbach's book on the Eastern Screech-Owl, and learned that the males bring all the food during incubation and brooding. Only when the owlets are able to thermoregulate at 10 days old does the female begin leaving the nest to hunt. A mobbing flock of small birds helped us find Mr. Owl's daytime roost in the bush behind the nest tree. We subsequently found him there regularly in the daytime.

At this writing in late April, both parents appear to be hunting. We frequently see food deliveries from Mr. Owl, and Mrs. Owl spends much time perched in the entryway by day. Thus we conclude that brooding is over, and the owlets must be growing. We have also learned a great deal of information from a wonderful Web site that documents an owl box in Austin with a Web camera. Chris Johnson's page,

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**REMINDER:**  
No TAS general meeting  
in June, July, or August

**HAPPY SUMMER!**



## Travis Audubon Society

P.O. Box 40787, Austin TX 78704

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

Phone numbers without a prefix are  
local numbers in the 512 area.

### Officers and Directors

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Austin TX 78734

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Bryan Hale (state treasurer) 474-5599

#### Signal Smoke Editor

Rosemary Wetherold 892-1606

#### TAS Hotline

The TAS hotline at 926-8751 provides 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



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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 NEW TAS PRESIDENT

Hello, Travis Audubon Society! I'd like to start off by thanking all of you who supported me and encouraged me to step up as president. Your support and encouragement meant a great deal to me. I'd also like to thank all who voted for me as president. I appreciate your vote of confidence. I'm very excited about what we will accomplish in the coming years. I'm honored to help lead TAS forward.

As your new president, I'd like to discuss some of my philosophies and how I plan to operate during my presidency. For those of you who attended the annual meeting in April, some of this will be a repeat of what I said during the election, but I have more time to elaborate now.

First, Travis Audubon Society belongs to its members. It doesn't belong to the president or to the board of directors. It belongs to you, our members. With that said, I encourage you to get involved in your organization. We have many tasks before us requiring many different skills, so let me know how you'd like to contribute.

High on my list of priorities is to improve the communication between the board and the membership. I think the membership is unaware of a lot that goes on at the board meetings and the decisions the board makes. This is because we

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## COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

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

<b>TAS Rare Bird Alert</b>	Isaac Sanchez	899-9414
	Alert number	926-8751
<b>Bird Records</b>	Lawrence Buford	452-6344
	Ethel Kutac	346-7659
<b>Conservation</b>	John Kelly	331-8693
<b>Education—Adult</b>	Vacant	
<b>Education—Youth</b>	Julia Balinsky	926-7312
<b>Field Trips (interim chair)</b>	Kathy McCormack	895-7268
<b>Hornsby Bend</b>	Kevin Anderson	972-1960
<b>Hospitality</b>	Vacant	
<b>Latin America</b>	Bob Warneke	443-5488
<b>Membership</b>	Chris Doggett	512-898-5500
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Shirley Doggett	512-898-5500
<b>Programs</b>	Howie Richey	444-4550
<b>Property and Finance</b>	Pat Dillon	347-0452
<b>Publications</b>	Rosemary Wetherold	892-1606
<b>Publicity</b>	Vacant	
<b>Sales</b>	Marcie Wilcox	219-8425
<b>Sanctuary</b>	John Wilcox	219-8425
<b>Urban Habitat Development</b>	Jane Tillman	794-0058
<b>Webmaster</b>	Chris Doggett	512-898-5500

## 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 Shirley 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, August 1 for the September 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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# TAS FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

**About TAS Field Trips** 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. For complete, up-to-date information on field trips, including cancellations due to weather or other circumstances, please check the **TAS Field Trips webpage** at [www.travisaudubon.org](http://www.travisaudubon.org) (click on "Field Trips") or the **TAS hotline** (926-8751). Because of the publication schedule of the newsletter, things can change. If you do not have Internet access, contact phone numbers are provided below.

**About Hornsby Bend** Maps and other information about the Hornsby Bend facility may be found on the Hornsby Bend website at [www.sbs.utexas.edu/hornsby](http://www.sbs.utexas.edu/hornsby).

## Saturday, June 12, 7 am & 4 pm

### Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

Meet at the Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend. For more information, contact Kevin Anderson, 972-1960, [kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us).

## Saturday, June 19, 7:30 am–noon

### Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Richard Kaskan, 748-8660, [kaskan@ieec.org](mailto:kaskan@ieec.org).



## Saturday, June 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, 328-9453, [charles\\_stephens@yahoo.com](mailto:charles_stephens@yahoo.com); or Rob Fergus, 347-7572, [fergus@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:fergus@mail.utexas.edu).



## Saturday, June 26, 7–10 am

### Field Trip to Williamson County Regional Park

One additional co-leader is needed. For details (or to volunteer), see the

Field Trips webpage, or contact Kathy McCormack, 895-7268, [kathy.mccormack@motorola.com](mailto:kathy.mccormack@motorola.com).

## Saturday, June 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, [kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us); or Tim Hissam, [tphissam1@yahoo.com](mailto:tphissam1@yahoo.com).

## Saturday, July 10, 7 am & 4 pm

### Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

Meet at the Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend. For more information, contact Kevin Anderson, 972-1960, [kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us).

## Saturday, July 17, 7:30 am–noon

### Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

For details, see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Richard Kaskan, 748-8660, [kaskan@ieec.org](mailto:kaskan@ieec.org).

## Saturday, July 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, 328-9453, [charles\\_stephens@yahoo.com](mailto:charles_stephens@yahoo.com); or Rob Fergus, 347-7572, [fergus@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:fergus@mail.utexas.edu).

## Saturday, July 24, 6–8 pm

### Bird Walk at Meadow Lake

Two co-leaders are needed. For details (or to volunteer), see the Field Trips webpage, or contact Kathy McCormack, [kathy.mccormack@motorola.com](mailto:kathy.mccormack@motorola.com), 895-7268.

## Saturday, July 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, [kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us); or Tim Hissam, [tphissam1@yahoo.com](mailto:tphissam1@yahoo.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.



## **Wednesday, June 16, noon–1 pm Lunchtime Lecture, Room 104, Waller Center, 625 E. 10th Street**

"Austin-Bastrop River Corridor: Past, Present, Future?" presented by Kevin M. Anderson of the Center for Environmental Research. Sponsored by the Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend.

## **Friday and Saturday, June 18 and 19 Texas Nature Tracker Workshops, Center for Environmental Research, Hornsby Bend**

The Austin Water Utility's Center for Environmental Research hosts two Texas Parks & Wildlife Department training workshops for Texas Nature Trackers. Sponsored by the Capital Area Master Naturalists, the workshops also provide advanced training for Texas Master Naturalists, and SBEC credit is available for teachers. These workshops will prepare you to monitor and contribute data to TPWD conservation efforts. Both workshops will utilize the riparian habitat along the Colorado River at Hornsby Bend. **Friday, June 18, 5–10 p.m.**—Amphibian Watch; learn to identify and monitor Austin-area frog species. **Saturday, June 19, 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.**—Mussel Watch; learn to identify and monitor freshwater mussel species. Each workshop costs \$10. Preregistration is required. Contact Roger Myers at [rw.myers@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rw.myers@sbcglobal.net) or Melissa McDougall at 445-4406 for more information and to register.

## **Late June–mid-July**

### **Annual Fourth of July Butterfly Counts**

Sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association. For information, visit [www.naba.org/counts/tx.html](http://www.naba.org/counts/tx.html).

## **Thursday–Saturday, July 8–10**

### **Soil Food Web Workshop, Center for Environmental Research, Hornsby Bend**

Presented by Dr. Elaine Ingham, sponsored by the Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association. To register, contact Louise Placek, [louise@texasorganicgrowers.org](mailto:louise@texasorganicgrowers.org), 877-326-5175.

## **Thursday– Sunday, July 15–18 Brownsville International Bird Festival, Brownsville, Texas**

Pelagic trips, Laguna Madre, thornscrub and butterfly trips, as well as a field trip into Mexico. Daily seminars, marketplace, and evening activities. For information, contact Brownsville Convention & Visitor's Bureau, P.O. Box 4697, Brownsville TX 78523; 800-626-2639; [visinfo@brownsville.org](mailto:visinfo@brownsville.org); or visit the festival Web site at [www.audubonbrownsvilleinternationalbirdingfestival.org](http://www.audubonbrownsvilleinternationalbirdingfestival.org).



## **Friday, July 16**

### **BioBlitz, Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, Fort Davis, Texas**

Join regional experts, students, and amateur naturalists in a survey of the biological diversity of the CDRI during a single 24-hour period. For information: 432-364-2499, [education\\_cdri@overland.net](mailto:education_cdri@overland.net), or [www.cdri.org/index.html](http://www.cdri.org/index.html).

## **Thursday–Sunday, August 12–15**

### **Davis Mountains Hummingbird Festival, Fort Davis, Texas**

Seminars, workshops, field trips of local birding spots, with as many as nine species of hummingbird possible. General birding and bird banding too. Contact Mark Klym, 179 Indian Oak Drive, Bastrop TX 78602; 512-321-1256.

## **Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, August 13–15**

### **A Swift Night Out**

This event is a national effort to raise awareness about Chimney and Vaux's Swifts by drawing attention to the spectacle of fall roosts. In 2003, swift watchers from 20 states and several Canadian provinces participated in locating and monitoring communal roosts. The event will be held again on September

Continued on page 5

# TAS MEETINGS

**Monday, June 7, 7–9 pm**

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

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

**Thursday, June 10, 6:45 pm**

**TAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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

**Thursday, June 17**

No TAS regular monthly meeting in June, July, or August.

**Monday, June 21, 7 pm**

**URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

North Village Branch Library, 2139 West Anderson Lane. Contact Jane Tillman, 794-0058, mljt@mail.utexas.edu.

**Thursday, June 22, 7 pm**

**BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE MEETING**

Contact Ethel Kutac, 346-7659.

**Monday, July 5, 7–9 pm**

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

See June 7 calendar item for details.

**Tuesday, July 6, 6:30–9 pm**

**SANCTUARY COMMITTEE**

Contact John Wilcox, <jmwozo@earthlink.net>, 219-8425. See page 16 for more details.

**Thursday, July 8, 6:45 pm**

**TAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

See June 10 calendar item for details.

**Thursday, July 15**

No TAS regular monthly meeting in July or August.

**Monday, July 19, 7 pm**

**URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

See June 21 calendar item for details.

**Thursday, July 22, 7 pm**

**BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE MEETING**

Contact Ethel Kutac, 346-7659.

## OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST (CONTINUED)

Continued from page 4

10–12. For past years' results and more information, visit [www.chimneyswifts.org](http://www.chimneyswifts.org).

**Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, September 10–12**

**A Swift Night Out**

See August 13–15 calendar item for details.

**Saturday, September 11**

**Horned Lizard Conservation Workshop, Center for Environmental Research, Hornsby Bend**

Sponsored by the Texas chapter of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society. For more information, contact Kevin M. Anderson, 972-1960, kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us.

**Saturday, September 11**

**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 event with other hummingbird enthusiasts while enjoying related activities. Contact Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, 979-480-0999.

**Thursday–Sunday, September 16–19**

**Annual Hummer/Bird Celebration, Rockport, Texas**

Speakers, programs, outdoor exhibits, 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; 800-242-0071.



**Saturday–Sunday, September 18–19**

**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](http://www.heardmuseum.org).

**Thursday–Sunday, September 23–26**

**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 else in the United States. The weekend includes live raptor programs, mini-talks on raptor identification and migration, and surveys of raptor roosting spots. Contact Joel Simon, 361-241-2617, [jsimon@electrotex.com](mailto:jsimon@electrotex.com).

# KIDS' SECTION

## Spring Migration Youth Walk

Five young people who participated in the Fall Youth Birding Camp met on Saturday, April 17, to check for spring arrivals and migrants at Hornsby Bend. The group was led by Julia Balinsky and her husband, Andy, who were assisted by several parents and grandparents and by volunteers Barbara Anderson and Anne Donovan.

At the Center for Environmental Research parking lot the group heard and saw many Purple Martins and Barn and Cliff Swallows. On the road to the ponds, we spotted Pectoral, Baird's, and Least Sandpipers, as well as Lark Sparrows. When we arrived at the ponds, the group looked excitedly through scopes and binoculars at an American Golden-Plover, a Wilson's Snipe, a Wilson's Phalarope, a Spotted Sandpiper, and many other shorebirds. The young birders used their field guides to check for correct field marks and noted their sightings in their journals. Near the birding shelter on the south side of the ponds, young Sam Fason spotted a Palm Warbler!

We ended the morning with a walk along the river trail, where we heard White-eyed Vireos, saw three species of



hawks, and witnessed many cardinals flashing through the trees.

It was a successful morning, with more than 26 species seen. Everyone also enjoyed the snacks provided by Anne Donovan. **Barbara Anderson**

## Have to Have a Habitat

April 14 was a big day for Brentwood Elementary School children, who were treated to a fun-filled concert featuring Mr. Habitat himself. Art teacher Linda Anderson arranged for his performance and decorated the cafeteria stage with giant origami cranes that the children had made. A "river" with the children's drawings of fish swimming in it flowed across the stage.



Bill Oliver is famous for his theme song, "Have to Have a Habitat." He also sang a song about John James Audubon, and another song's lyrics went, "Take an Audubon Adventure into the world of nature. Get to know the world from nature's point of view."

When asked how she liked the concert, fifth-grader Lillian replied, "I loved it! I love nature, art, horses . . ." First-grader Dylan said that he liked the boat song the best: "Any friend of the river is a friend of mine."

Brentwood has recently completed an incredible bird mosaic mural on an outside wall (facing the giant Chimney Swift tower out back). Please go and see it when you are in the neighborhood. Audra Roach, who teaches second and third grades, used our Audubon Adventures Classroom Kit with her class this past school year. She said that her class began its study of birds in the spring and was very excited about it.

Travis Audubon Society helped fund this concert. If you'd like to make a donation to get an Audubon Adventures Classroom Kit into schools for the next school year or to invite Bill Oliver to an elementary school near you, please contact me at [jwaxwing@employees.org](mailto:jwaxwing@employees.org).

**Julia Balinsky**

# RARE BIRD ALERT

**F**ollowing is the Austin-area rare bird alert for April 30, 2004. Rare species for the area are in uppercase letters. A “rare species” for the area is defined as a bird that historically is recorded fewer than five times a season in any season of the year. The 2003 Travis Audubon Society Austin-area checklist is used to determine these rarities. A 60-mile-radius circle centered in Austin defines the reporting area.

First-of-the-season reports include Gray Catbird (4/29), White-rumped Sandpiper (4/27), Dickcissel (4/26), Buff-breasted Sandpiper (4/26), Magnolia Warbler (4/25), Ovenbird (4/25), Yellow-breasted Chat (4/25), Eastern Wood Pewee (4/25), Yellow-throated Vireo (4/25), Baltimore Oriole (4/25), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (4/24), Common Nighthawk (4/24), Tree Swallow (4/22), Western Sandpiper (4/21), Wilson’s Phalarope (4/21), Swainson’s Thrush (4/21), Franklin’s Gull (4/20), Tennessee

Warbler (4/20), Blue Grosbeak (4/20), Red-eyed Vireo (4/16), Black-necked Stilt (4/16), Orchard Oriole (4/16), Painted Bunting (4/16), Canada Warbler (4/16), Common Poorwill (4/16), Ash-throated Flycatcher (4/13), Clay-colored Sparrow (4/13), American Avocet (4/11), Prothonotary Warbler (4/10), Western Kingbird (4/10), Semipalmated Plover (4/8), Cattle Egret (4/8), Baird’s Sandpiper (4/8), Indigo Bunting (4/7), and Summer Tanager (4/7).



Other birds seen include the following: On April 26th, Scott Young reported a CASPIAN TERN over the Kizer Golf Course in Austin. He also saw a Green Kingfisher at McKinney Falls State Park, which is adjacent to the golf course. On the same day, Julia Balinsky and Ingrid Husky relocated the Cinnamon Teal at Hornsby Bend in Travis Co. They also reported a hybrid Cinnamon/Blue-winged Teal at Hornsby, a bird reported by others too. Julia also saw a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in her backyard in Austin.

On April 25th, Tim Fennell reported BLACK-HEADED



GROSBEAK on RR 690 in Burnet Co. He also relocated at least 5 calling PACIFIC LOONS on Lake Buchanan. In addition he had a Northern Waterthrush at Johnson Park in Marble Falls, also in Burnet Co. Also on the

25th, William Reiner reported a Green Kingfisher on Onion Creek in Richard Moya Park in southeast Austin.

On April 24th, Scott Young reported a late Harris’s Sparrow at the Kizer Golf Course. Also on the 24th, David Bryant reported a Bronzed Cowbird at his feeders in Kingsland, Burnet Co.



On April 23rd, Rob Fergus reported a Grasshopper Sparrow at the state capitol grounds, and Lester Jensen reported 3 WHOOPING CRANES flying over Hornsby Bend in Travis Co.

On April 22nd, Mollie Kloepper saw a Northern Waterthrush on Waller Creek in Austin. That same day, this compiler and his wife relocated a MOTTLED DUCK pair at the Lake Austin inlet to Commons Ford Park in Travis Co. Three days earlier, 5 flycatcher species were seen in the park; the most notable was a Vermilion Flycatcher. Also on April 22nd, Stu Wilson saw a Grasshopper Sparrow and a Brown Thrasher in Northwest Park in Austin.

On April 20th, Rob Fergus spotted a BLUE-WINGED WARBLER on the state capitol grounds.

On April 16th, Susan Schaezler reported a PALM WARBLER on her property near the Comal-Guadalupe county line. On the 19th, she also had a Northern Waterthrush, an Eastern Towhee, and a Grasshopper Sparrow.

On April 15th, Terry Banks reported a SWALLOW-TAILED KITE flying over her home in Austin.

On April 13th, Stu Wilson saw a Merlin in Northwest Park in Austin.

On April 11th, Eric Isley reported a Whip-poor-will in Del Valle in Travis Co.

On April 9th, Mollie Kloepper spotted a Pileated Woodpecker in Webberville Park in Travis Co.

On April 7th, Susan Schaezler reported a YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER on her property near the Comal-Guadalupe county line. Also on that day, David Bryant photographed a hummingbird at his feeders in Kingsland in Burnet Co. that looks very much like an ALLEN’S HUMMINGBIRD. He can provide photos by email to those interested (mr\_b37@hotmail.com). Also on April 7th, Homer Rushing and Ethyl Kutac reported a BROWN PELICAN over Hornsby Bend.

*Additional notes:* There were several reports of nesting activity of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in and around Austin.

To report a rare bird sighting, please either telephone 926-8751 or email me at IsaacS@austin.rr.com. In either case, please supply the species of bird, the date and location of the sighting, and a way of contacting you. Thanks to all who contributed to this report.

Isaac Sanchez

## Environmental Defense Programs for Landowners

Environmental Defense is a leading national nonprofit organization representing more than 400,000 members. Since 1967 we have linked science, economics, and law to create innovative, equitable, and cost-effective solutions to society's most urgent environmental problems.

A generation ago, Environmental Defense helped launch the modern environmental movement by winning a ban on the pesticide DDT, thus showing how a handful of individuals can use science and the law to bring about national reform. Since then, we have grown into one of America's most influential environmental advocacy groups, with more PhD scientists and economists on staff than at any other such organization. Guided by science, Environmental Defense evaluates environmental problems and works to create and advocate solutions that win lasting political, economic, and social support because they are nonpartisan, cost-efficient, and fair.

My name is David Wolfe, and I am a senior scientist in the Austin office of Environmental Defense. This article is based on a presentation about our programs related to the enhancement and restoration of wildlife habitats. In Texas we are currently focused on habitat enhancement and restoration for two endangered songbirds: the Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCW) and the Black-capped Vireo (BCV). We have two incentive-type programs for landowners who may be interested in habitat restoration, enhancement, and maintenance.

The first of these programs is called the Landowner Conservation Assistance Program, or LCAP. This program was initiated in the spring of last year and involves providing landowners with both technical expertise and cost sharing of a variety of management activities for enhancing or restoring habitat. In other words, Environmental Defense will help share the cost of activities such as brush management, controlled burns, and cowbird trapping. Our grants generally range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. For large projects, we will assist landowners with applications for additional grants from other funding sources.

Ashe juniper, commonly referred to as cedar, has been and continues to be aggressively removed from many Hill Country landscapes. There is little doubt about the ability of Ashe juniper to invade over-

grazed range, clearings, and other "disturbed" sites. But there are many misconceptions regarding



Ashe juniper. These range from the notion that it is a non-native to the myth that it has an ability beyond all other tree species to take up water. These misconceptions mask the many positive roles that Ashe juniper fills in Hill Country ecosystems. In addition to serving as the sole nesting material for the Golden-cheeked Warbler, Ashe juniper protects bare soil areas from the further erosive impacts of intense rains, it both stabilizes soil (with its root system) and creates soil (through litter fall and trapping of silt and organic matter), and it serves as a nursery tree for many other plant species. Thoughtful "control" of Ashe juniper will balance these many benefits with the benefits that one might expect to achieve through its removal. In most cases this forethought will lead to management for a mosaic of habitats (rather than habitat simplification), buffer zones (rather than abrupt "edges"), and structural diversity with (in most cases) Ashe juniper as an integral component.

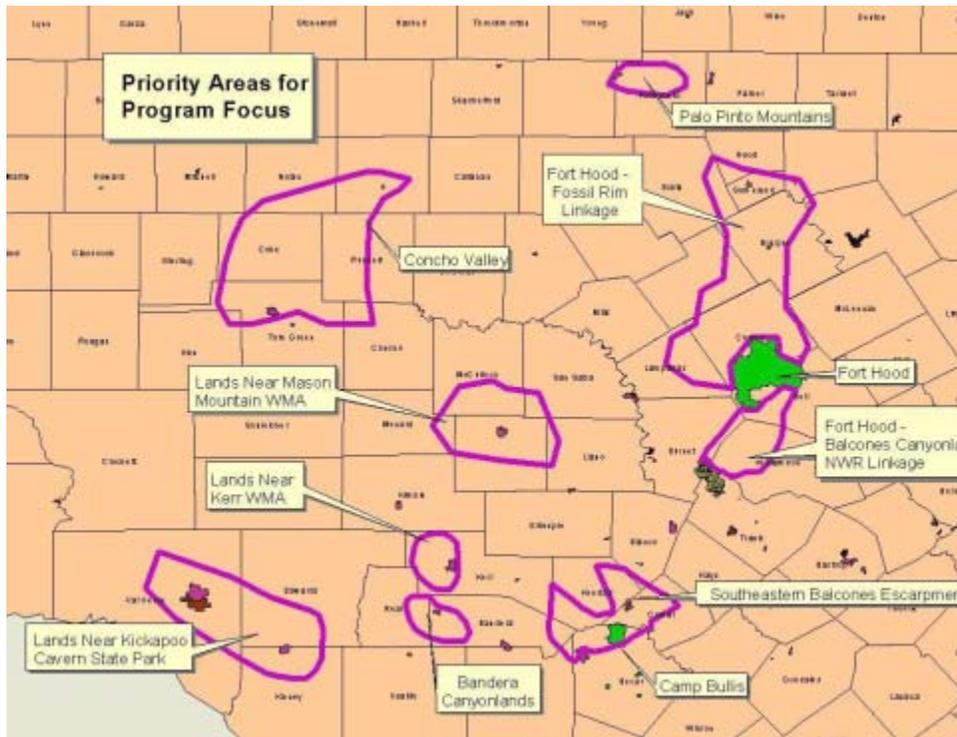
Environmental Defense is currently working with about 50 landowners representing nearly 100,000 acres on a variety of habitat restoration and enhancement projects. Our program is focused on landscapes that we believe to be important for the recovery of both the Golden-cheeked Warbler and the Black-capped Vireo.

Now, you may be wondering why someone would be willing to create habitat for one or both of these birds. There are a variety of reasons why, including the following:

- Habitats for these two birds are good for a variety of wildlife. For example, the open shrublands preferred by Black-capped Vireos are also excellent habitat for quail, turkey, and deer.
- Creation and management of these habitats can satisfy one or more requirements for obtaining a wildlife property tax valuation.
- Having populations of these two birds may provide an opportunity for income from nature tourism.
- You would have the satisfaction of knowing that you are playing an important role in restoring and protecting a rare species.

Now, since both the GCW and the BCV are endangered species, their habitats are protected under the Endangered Species Act. This means that their habitat cannot be removed without a permit from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. So you may be wondering why a landowner would be willing to create a bunch of endangered species habitat if it is going to be subject to the regulatory burden of the Endangered Species Act. Obviously, this has been, and continues to be, a point of concern for many landowners. Because of this concern, Environmental Defense has developed a second strategy to significantly reduce this potential regulatory liability. This approach is known as Safe Harbor. In regulatory terms, Safe Harbor is a permit from the USFWS to Environmental Defense that allows cooperating landowners to limit their responsibility for protecting endan-

## CONSERVATION (CONTINUED)



variety of other wildlife. Let's say that three years after the burn you have a thriving oak shinnery and indeed Black-capped Vireos have started to use the habitat. If you have entered into a Safe Harbor agreement with Environmental Defense, then you are required to maintain that habitat only for four consecutive breeding seasons. In other words, if you decide you need to use that land for some other purpose, you may return the habitat to the original "baseline" conditions after the fourth year of use by the birds. Without Safe Harbor, you may not eliminate this habitat at any time unless you acquire a permit directly from the Fish & Wildlife Service, and you potentially would have to mitigate for the habitat elimination. Of course, there are a number of restrictions related to taking the habitat back to baseline, the most important being that this

gered species habitat that has been created on their property to four consecutive breeding seasons. Let me give you an example of how it works.

Let's say that you have received a grant from Environmental Defense to pay for a controlled burn on a 50-acre patch of young cedars, the intent being to create an oak shinnery that is suitable for habitation by Black-capped Vireos as well as a

can occur only outside of the breeding season. I must emphasize that Safe Harbor applies only to newly created habitat. It is not applicable to already existing habitat.

If you would like more information about these programs, please contact me at Environmental Defense, 44 East Avenue, Suite 304, Austin TX 78701; 478-5161; or [dwolfe@environmentaldefense.org](mailto:dwolfe@environmentaldefense.org).

David Wolfe



### **Donations Needed for Audubon Adventures Classroom Kits**

Seventy Audubon Adventures Classroom Kits for grades 3-6 were distributed to area schools this past school year. For 2003-2004 this nature curriculum highlighted 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.

A third-grade teacher at Cook Elementary in Austin writes, "Just wanted to let you know that I have used the Audubon Adventures Kit in my classroom recently. The students in my class, as well as the entire school, get little to no exposure for developing a

knowledge and love of the outdoors. My students enjoyed the learning so much and have become very interested in the birds we see around our school. Most of them knew little to nothing at all about common urban wildlife. The kit fit in very well with the life science curriculum that I am currently teaching in third grade. Thank you so much for the Audubon Adventures Kit, and I want to remain in touch to get this kit again next year."

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 at [jwaxwing@employees.org](mailto:jwaxwing@employees.org) if you know of an area teacher who would like to receive a classroom kit.

Many thanks.

Julia Balinsky