



SIGNAL SMOKE

The Newsletter of Travis Audubon Society

VOLUME 54, NO. 5

May 2005

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A Rail Tale

by *Stu Wilson*

Check any North American field guide and the entries for Yellow and Black Rail are bound to include phrases like “seldom seen,” “secretive,” “furtive,” “more often heard only,” “shy,” and “never willingly allows itself to be viewed in the open.” Such testimony doesn’t exactly engender optimism but this glutton for punishment nevertheless readily accepted when Dodge said he could get us both aboard a slog through a coastal marsh with a rail banding crew.

So we met Southeast Missouri State graduate student Aaron Given, his advisor, and a half-dozen fellow Redhawks at San Bernard National Wildlife near Freeport in Brazoria County on a mild March Sunday evening as the sun set. That these youngsters had dedicated their Spring Break to the advancement of avian science rather than the advancement of Jell-O shots down their throats at Padre Island down-coast was a testament to the team’s dedication and a refreshing demonstration that our youth are not all lost.

Me, I was completely OK with the prospect of not seeing a Black Rail after trudging relentlessly across a wet muddy prairie on a rather warm evening in knee-high rubber boots that may or may not have been capable of repelling the strike of a lurking Western Diamondback Rattlesnake while frantically clawing my way through dense clouds of mosquitoes. Personal comfort and achievement are secondary to the advancement of avian science, thanks.

Beyond just tagging along, my assignment was to be a spotter. As such, I was handed a spotlight of impressive candlepower. When a rail flushed, I would hit it with the beam whereupon one of the net lads would descend for the capture. Morphological data (sex, wing chord length, weight, etc.) would be taken from all birds but the Yellow Rails would suffer the additional delight of having a blood sample drawn. My favorite part of this phase was, of course, seeing the birds safely released.

We set out across the wet spartina-grass prairie with two of the hands dragging a 50-foot long rope affixed to which were pebble-filled plastic Chlorox® bottles. The resulting commotion startled light sleepers in Waco but it had the additional local effect of occasionally inducing a rail to take flight. This is what happened not 30 seconds into our march.

Continued on page 8

*TAS Regular Monthly Meeting
Thursday, May 19, 7:00 p.m.
Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for social time*

*Program: Balcones Canyonlands NWR
Speaker: Deborah Holle, US Fish and Wildlife Service
see page 11 for more details*

**Location: Lower Colorado River Authority Board Room
3700 Lake Austin Blvd, Austin.**

The board room is located in the **Hancock Building**, the middle building in the courtyard. We’ll be in the room on your left upon entering the building. Parking available in garage and surrounding lots.

Travis Audubon Society

General Address

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Call 926-8751 for information on rare birds in our area (press 5), TAS events (press 6), or field trip status (press 7). To report sightings of rare or unusual birds, press 1. To ask a question, press 2. No touch-tone phone? Call 331-8693.

TAS WEB SITE

www.travisaudubon.org

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Mission Statement

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

LETTER FROM THE TAS PRESIDENT

One of the perks of being President is that I have a forum for telling my cool bird stories. On March 26, I was sitting in my recliner, taking it easy (this doesn't happen very often!), and I noticed movement at my birdbath. The birdbath was full of Cedar Waxwings! It was an amazing sight.

On March 22, I gave a presentation on common Austin birds at the Kiwanis meeting in my neighborhood, Shady Hollow. Twenty to thirty of my neighbors attended and were very enthusiastic about birds. It was a wonderful experience being able to share my love of birds with my neighbors.

If you would like to give a presentation to your neighborhood association or similar organization, let me know. We have a presentation available. All you have to do is present it. You'll get to talk about birds and make some new friends in the process.

March 19 was our annual open house at Baker Sanctuary. Earlier that week,



Shelia Hargis,
photo by Robert Baumgardner

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COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

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

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Subscription Information

Signal Smoke, published 11 months of the year 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 422, Thrall, TX 76578-0422; 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, September 1 for the October issue). Submit uncopyrighted articles, announcements, and art to Tess Sherman, ts Sherman1@austin.rr.com; or mail to 210 E. Walnut Dr. Austin, TX 78753. Submissions by email or on a floppy are preferred but not required. Call Tess at 974-8582 if you have questions.

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Habitat Lost: The Suburban Front Yard

Take a drive through many of Austin's neighborhoods and you will see vast areas of lawn punctuated by Oaks and Cedar Elms. Standing lonely vigil over suburban landscapes that have little semblance to natural habitat, these trees endure all sorts of indignities: overwatering, application of chemical lawn fertilizers and chemical treatments for disease and weeds, and frequent doses of phosphorus-rich plant foods for doughnut shaped flowerbeds around their bases. It's a miracle that these trees are still alive! Stripped long ago of their understory, if we were to assess these front yards for wildlife habitat characteristics of food, cover, shelter and places to raise young, they would come up short on all counts. By their very nature front yards in Austin's suburbs represent a lost opportunity to provide habitat for animals and seasonal beauty for humans as well.

Why are front yard landscapes so sterile? While Americans usually create backyard landscapes that are more natural in design, when it comes to the front yard folks want the maintenance to be "easy," and for most that means having lots of grass. Suburbanites feel social pressure to fit in with their neighborhood, and that too means a large lawn. And of course fear of failure in the front yard is a deterrent; if a landscape project fails then it is out there for all the world to see. And a failed landscape sticks out like a sore thumb. And perhaps the most compelling reason folks give up on landscaping in the front yard is damage caused by deer. It is ironic that one species of wildlife often stands in the way of making a landscape more attractive to all wildlife.

Even though there are plenty of reasons people don't landscape extensively in the front yard, it's not for lack of trying. Maybe the motivation was not necessarily to create wildlife habitat, but over the past 25 years many Austinites learned about natural landscaping for conservation purposes. In the early eighties when Xeriscaping emerged as an answer to conserving water for landscape use, some people in Austin reduced their lawns and tried new plants (many that attracted wildlife); the results were mixed. While a few folks ended up with coherent landscapes, most failed because they did not understand the importance of soil type and plant placement by zone, and most importantly, they did not know how to maintain their xeric landscapes. Despite the best of intentions, most Xeriscape landscapes

devolved into eyesores. Recall that since fitting into the neighborhood is important to suburbanites, the failing Xeriscape plants were usually replaced by more traditional plants. Worse yet, lawn grass continued to dominate the suburban landscape.

As luck would have it, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and we are learning to view landscapes with a new eye toward natural beauty. In the nineties the Native Plant Movement taught us about the importance of native plants, and that knowledge was layered onto the seven tenets of Xeriscaping. In addition, information about soils and plant care moved into the mainstream, and more native plants were available to the average homeowner. Fortunate to have the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in our midst, as well as local chapters of the Native Plant Society, Austinites are learning the importance of using native plants. They are learning to appreciate their seasonal beauty as well. In recent years groups such as the Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Federation moved on to the next step of integrating native plants into the landscape for the benefit of wildlife and people. With success stories all around, now the era of fine-tuning begins.

Granted, the progress we've seen is wonderful but we must do more to help homeowners implement the concepts we promote. Somewhere along the line we hope folks will venture out into their yards, shovels in hand, confident in what they are doing. Reducing a lawn area is not rocket science. With just a little effort and self-education homeowners can transform their static front yards into thriving habitats. Add just one understory tree and one shrub under an existing tall tree increases the odds that birds will visit and perhaps raise their young. Each homeowner decides the level of "wildness" and that will make our neighborhoods more unique, more sustainable, and more beautiful as well. Next month we will explore some of the front-yard advantages to wildlife and to people followed by an article in June with tips on how to reduce the lawn gradually. If readers research the many native trees and shrubs that do well in Austin, by Fall they will be ready to bring a little bit of Central Texas beauty to their front yards. Stay tuned!





NATURALIST'S CALENDAR

by Bill Reiner

photo by Robert Baumgardner

Green is the hue of choice in May. This is prime time for plant growth, when conditions are the best of the entire year. The leaves of woody and herbaceous plants alike are busily absorbing sunlight. Photosynthesis is in high gear.

Photosynthesis is a chemical process powered by sunlight that takes place in the green tissues of plants. It converts carbon dioxide and water into glucose and other carbohydrates. These carbs serve as metabolic fuel and as the basic building blocks for a plant's cell growth.

For that matter, the photosynthetic products of plants, all those carbohydrates, ultimately feed all higher life forms on the planet. (Some bacteria can also photosynthesize their own food.) Animals – including humans – cannot create their own carbohydrates, so they must consume plants (or other animals that eat plants) to obtain them. If plants were to disappear from Earth we would soon starve, for humans, despite our ingenuity, have not learned how to manufacture the basic fuels our bodies need.

Since photosynthesis requires sunlight, plants can only photosynthesize in daylight hours. Even then, the reactions do not proceed at a constant rate. Intense light can actually impede the process. Carbon dioxide and water, the principle materials, must be present in sufficient quantities. Temperature, too, plays a major role. For most plants an air temperature of 50 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit is necessary for photosynthesis. A temperature around 77 degrees F is ideal; the process slows down when the air is hotter or cooler.

Given these parameters, the weather in central Texas during May is nearly perfect for photosynthesis. This is normally our wettest month, averaging about 5 inches of precipitation, so water is often plentiful, and the average May temperature is 75 degrees. Later in the summer, photosynthesis may be impeded by high temperatures, intense sunlight, and drought.

The green color in plants signals the presence of chlorophyll – in particular one kind, called chlorophyll A, which is the primary photosynthesizing chemical. However, green light is not what powers photosynthesis. Though it may seem paradoxical, the red and blue wavelengths of sunlight are the ones used by plants. These wavelengths are absorbed by chlorophyll A, which subtracts them from the white light that strikes the leaves. Green light is not absorbed but is, instead, reflected, which is why we see leaves as green. (Chlorophyll also reflects infrared light. This is why living vegetation is light-colored in infrared photography, while objects painted green are not.)

Animals cannot photosynthesize, but some have evolved a green pigmentation as camouflage. Female and immature male Painted Buntings, for instance, can be difficult to see as they search for seeds and insects in green grass. Perched above a shady pool along a clear Hill Country stream, a Green Kingfisher is quite inconspicuous, even when a stray sunbeam glints off its emerald back. The iridescent green of a hummingbird's back may also help to conceal it, especially as it rests on an exposed branch between feeding bouts. All five of the vireos that breed in central Texas have greenish backs, which helps to hide them from overhead predators. (It also gives them their name, from the Latin *virere*, meaning "to be green.")

For their part, many caterpillars are green to conceal *them* from the

vireos prowling the thickets and forest canopy. Grasshoppers, mantids, and katydids likewise avoid predators by blending into the vegetation. Katydid are particularly leaflike, but they need all the camouflage they can get. The males' stridulations, made by rubbing their forewings together, seem loud enough at times now to wake the dead.

Green coloration isn't always enough protection. The mere twitch of a leg or antenna is all that is necessary to betray a katydid to the keen eyesight of a Rough Green Snake. Only 22 to 32 inches long, this lithe serpent of the branches primarily eats insects. Its slender body, lime green with a yellowish belly, is extremely difficult to spot when it is draped among green leaves. When it stretches its head and neck, a Rough Green Snake will even sway to match the movements of branches in the breeze.

Another reptile that is green – at least sometimes – is the Green Anole. Sometimes mistakenly called a chameleon, a Green Anole can change the pigment of its skin. A Green Anole's color change may have less to do with camouflage and more to do with temperature. In the cooler morning, it is usually brown to absorb more heat; as the day warms, its color changes to brilliant green. Of course, both of these colors can be concealing – until a male anole pumps out his bright rosy dewlap to display to a female or to confront a rival male.

If you keep your cat indoors, you might see a Green Anole in your own back yard, where it will hunt for crickets, cockroaches, and other insects, as well as spiders. Unlike the true chameleons that are native to the eastern hemisphere, this 5- to 8-inch lizard has a slender body and a long snout. It also has toes equipped with pads of hairlike bristles that help it to climb vertical surfaces, so you might even find one clinging to an outside wall.

Speaking of green backyard wildlife, you might see a big, green moth fluttering around your outside lights one May evening. Pale green with purple or yellow borders, the wings of a Luna Moth span 4 or 5 inches. Each wing is marked with a large eyespot, and the hind wings have long tails. Its body is quite stout with food that the moth ingested during the three or four weeks that it was a green caterpillar. (One that the vireos missed.) The adult moth relies entirely upon that stored food, since it has no mouth, and cannot eat.

Luna Moths live for only a week, with the sole purpose of reproducing. Females release pheromones that the males detect with their broad, feathery antennae. When a male finds a female, they mate, often remaining joined for the remainder of the night.

Since Luna Moths are attracted to artificial lights, you will have better luck seeing one of these beauties at night than during the day. As it hangs, wings closed, from a branch, it appears to be just another leaf. Even if you don't find a Luna Moth or a Rough Green Snake, by looking carefully among the May leaves, you might spot some other hidden creature. Just remember: for all you actually find, many more have escaped your notice.

Among the many references the author consulted for this article were: *Botany : A Brief Introduction to Plant Biology*, Thomas L Rost et al.; *Texas Snakes*, John E. Werler and James R. Dixon; and websites such as: Moths of North America <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/moths/mothsusa.htm> & Texas A & M entomology <http://insects.tamu.edu/fieldguide/index.html>

THE DAN CALLAWAY REPORT

Dan's report will return next month

TRAVIS AUDUBON SOCIETY, Inc Annual Appeals Donations 2004

Many thanks go out to the following donors to the 2004 Annual Appeal who have contributed a total of \$9,130 to help Travis Audubon fund its numerous programs, maintain and improve Baker Sanctuary and the Apache Shores/Chaetura Canyon land, and continue its overall operations. Annual Appeal donations continue to trickle in. Anyone wishing to contribute can send a check to: Travis Audubon, P O Box 40787, Austin, TX 70784. Checks should be written to Travis Audubon and clearly marked "Annual Appeal." *Jane Wilson*

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Thank you also to Lynn Fahlquist and John McCulloch for their memorial donation for Maggie Burnet's mother and Hyman Penn and Lynn Gordon for their Fred Donaldson memorial donation.

The cumulative memorial donations for this fiscal year exceed \$1,000. The Travis Audubon Society is very appreciative of those who choose to have their dedication to Audubon's purposes remembered in this way, as well as those who choose to memorialize or honor others with their donations.

Additional Donation News on page 13

Central Texas birders get around...

Journey to the Frozen North

Andy and Julia Balinsky braved below freezing temperatures and traveled to Duluth, Minnesota during President's Day weekend to see the great owl irruption of 2004/5. The first one they spotted on day 1 was a Great Gray Owl perched on top of a telephone pole. In the distance they also spotted a Northern Hawk Owl. That day brought 19 GGO's, a nice flock of Common Redpolls at a feeder and six Snow Buntings at dusk.

On day 2 they hired a local guide. The weather couldn't have been worse, but they saw 26 GGO's as well as a small flock of Pine Grosbeaks. On day 3, freezing Lake Superior yielded a pair of Harlequin Ducks. The travelers also had good looks at two Gray Jays and the elusive Boreal Chickadee. The last day was sunny and warm (20 degrees!). After searching the neighborhoods of Duluth for an hour, they found a flock of 1200+ Bohemian Waxwings flying over the treetops. Did they land? If so, where? A couple of visiting birders from Kansas gave directions



photo credits: Andy Balinsky

to the spot. Sure enough, the waxwings were in the trees at a wooded lot, amazingly drinking and bathing from an open fire hydrant in the slushy road. A few Cedar Waxwings were among them, and the size and color differences were striking. With just a few hours until the airplane for home, they raced out to Sax-Zim Bog to see the Black-backed



Woodpecker. The directions to a snowshoe trail into the woods proved excellent. In less than 1/8 mile of tramping through the snow, there he was: a magnificent male with a golden yarmulke who never once glanced at these two crazy Texans who had come to meet him. You can visit www.balinsky.com/gallery and see some of the photos we've taken on this and many other adventures.

Lion in Africa (an excerpt)

There's something unsettling about looking into the implacable yellow eyes of a large male lion lying in the grass about twelve feet from where you sit in an open vehicle. You realize that to him you're not a superior species, but simply a big chunk of meat.

This particular lion, a sleek, robust fellow who displayed a long, pink tongue and dagger-sharp teeth when he yawned, was one of several seen on a recent African safari put together for the Wimberley Birding Society by Overseas Adventure Travel. Fifteen people made the 18-day trip. We visited Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe, saw mile-wide, awe-inspiring Victoria Falls, rode in dugout canoes on the Okavango Delta, and generally saw more animals and birds than I ever thought possible.



photo credit: Galen R Frysjinger

We learned that impalas come in herds, but you see a dazzle of zebras, a sounder of warthogs, a troop of baboons, a journey of giraffes and a parliament of owls. And we saw crocodiles, steenbok, red lechwe, waterbuck, sables, topi, wildebeest, eland, genet, mongoose, hyena, bat-eared foxes, jackal, Vervet monkeys -- well, you get the idea. It was like a zoo without bars, a wildlife park that ran on for mile after mile.

And the birds. Oh my.

January and February is summer in Africa and many migrant species had arrived from Europe and points north. Birds were in their bright, breeding plumages and there were lots of newly-hatched babies running around. Almost every bird was a life bird and I've never seen such a wild variety of shapes, sizes and colors. Happily, I saw my target bird, the beautiful, multi-colored carmine bee-eater. In fact, I saw hundreds of them. Also, many, many lilac-breasted rollers, one of the most colorful birds in the world and the national bird of Botswana.

Charles Wilkerson of San Marcos spotted a large bird which turned out to be a Pel's fishing owl, a rare, endangered species with golden brown feathers that is much sought after but seldom seen. "That owl is a bird people come from all over hoping to see," said the manager of our lodge. "It's really more rare than a leopard."

We were also treated to the four-foot-tall secretary bird, that long-legged creature often shown in dictionaries and quite a sight with its crest resembling quill pens stuck over the ear.

The fish eagle, with a brilliant white head and white back cape, was one of eight eagles encountered. Also, there was the majestic crowned crane, the red-throated ground-hornbill, striking black-and-white magpie shrike, brilliant red bishop, and several kingfishers, including pied, Malachite, giant and pygmy. Other personal favorites were tawny eagle, pygmy geese, red-billed oxpeckers, blacksmith plover, pearl-spotted owl, helmeted guineafowl, Marabou stork, kori bustard, martial eagle, ostrich and Goliath heron. In truth, there were just so many birds and such a variety that it was hard to keep up -- I gave up counting and just enjoyed the show.

Jerry Hall, February, 2005

DASTARDLY DUOS

Reprinted with permission from Tucson Audubon Society (www.tucsonaudubon.org). (First appearing in the September 2003 *Vermilion Flycatcher* newsletter).

Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes

by Larry Liese

Remember that song about the red-red-Robin going bob-bob-bobbin' along? That's what I think of when I see either of this month's duos. Both the **Northern Waterthrush** (*Seiurus noveboracensis*) and its congener, the **Louisiana Waterthrush** (*Seiurus motacilla*) are tail-waggers extraordinaire. As a matter of fact, their genus name is from the Classic Greek *seio* "to wave" and *oura* "tail." If that wasn't enough, *motacilla* is Latin for "moving tail." Though we don't get to see either very often here in southeast Arizona, when we do that wiggling is usually the first thing noticed.

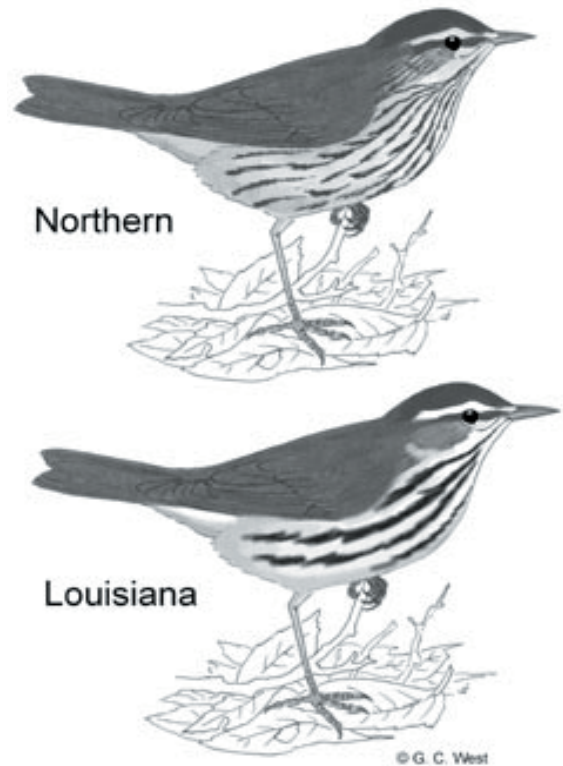
Both are nearly always found close to water. The Northern is listed as a rare transient, with most records in May and August/September. Its normal migration range includes most of New Mexico, so it is one of our more common 'eastern' warblers. The Louisiana is listed as casual in fall and winter and one is found here nearly annually as a winter resident. The northern tip of its wintering range ends not far south of our area, and when one does visit, it is usually near permanent streams at mid-elevation ranges along the Mexican border.

These two birds are very similar in markings and habits. Both are largish warblers that are brown above, light with dark streaking below, have pinkish legs and a strong white supercilium. Differences are subtle, but observable. The infamous bobbing is more up and down in the Northern, and faster. The two clearly diagnostic differences are in the supercilium shape and flank color. The Louisiana's supercilium is always white and broadens behind the eye, ending abruptly at the nape. That of the Northern is attenuated behind the eye and narrows to a point. It can be white to buff. Louisianas almost always have pale pinkish-buff flanks, contrasting with the background white of their underparts. The background color of the Northern's underparts can range from white to sulphur yellow, but will not show differences in the flank area.

Other useful clues are that the throat of the Louisiana is white while the Northern usually has dark spotting or streaks. The streaking of the underparts is blacker on the Northern and more brownish on the Louisiana. Look for the white crescent underneath the eye. It is much bolder on the Louisiana.

Bill size differences are tricky. The Louisiana generally has a much larger bill, but Northern Waterthrushes breeding in their western range have longer (though not as heavy) bills and are of the whiter variety, compounding the problem for our area. Leg color can help a bit. Though both are pink, the Louisiana has the oft-noted "bubble-gum pink" legs while those of the Northern are browner.

Both have a sharp "chink" call note. The literature is somewhat confusing on telling them apart. They state that the Northern's is not as loud and penetrating, and slightly sharper. The Louisiana's is supposed to be higher pitched, richer, and not as hard as the Northern. Since either of these birds are a good find, my suggestion is to use the 'chink' note as a locator for the one you've gone to find after hearing about it on the hotline! Hope this helps. Good luck!



In the Austin area, the Travis Audubon Society Checklist indicates that Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes can be found together during April and May. You can find them along quiet creeks. The Louisiana Waterthrush breeds here in central Texas, but the Northern Waterthrush is generally only seen during spring migration.

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I began getting reports that “the birds” (Golden-cheeked Warblers) were late. Scouts (the human kind) had not heard a bird! I’m sure this was what I deserved since I had GUARANTEED that visitors would see Golden-cheeked Warblers. Famous last words, right? Luckily, the birds cooperated on Saturday, and most visitors at least heard the birds. Some saw them too. In addition to looking for birds, we were able to show people plants, butterflies, and spiders. I had numerous visitors tell me that they had a wonderful time. Thank you John and Marcie for coordinating the open house, and thank you to everyone else who helped out and made our open house a success!

Rail - continued from front page

But first a word or two about Listing Ethics... Black Rail is arguably the toughest regularly-occurring North American bird to “get.” But what would compound the difficulty of getting a Black Rail out on the wet prairie at San Bernard NWR is the embraced stipulation that, in so many words, you can’t count a bird whose behavior has been influenced by the banding process. Put another way, we had to see and identify a 6-inch, surreptitious gnome in the dark of night during the sometimes infinitesimal interval of time between initial flush and net capture.

Aaron was on top of that first bird, a Yellow Rail, before I had even figured out the on-off switch on my spotlight. A talented and aggressive net man, that Aaron. Not only could his young eyes track the moth-like flight of the flushed rail through the dark night, but he had perfected the rampaging, galloping, high-stepping pursuit style that ensured success in the bunched-grass obstacle course of the spartina marsh (visualize a somewhat frantic butterfly collector). On more than one occasion, I watched the chases of lesser netman end in undignified muddy plunges as Aaron surged ahead to make the capture.

It took only 2-3 personnel to process the bird so the rest of us contented ourselves with catching our breaths and contemplating the rather amazing number of mosquitoes our party had attracted. We were all fairly well-plastered with repellent so there was little lighting or biting, but there was plenty of hovering. Before I figured out that turning off my headlamp would lessen their interest in me significantly, I likened the sensation of that many fluttering bugs to a very soft, fluffy blanket being lightly swept across my face.

Our next captures were a pair of Black Rails. The first thing you notice about these birds is how tiny they are. Then you notice the blood red eyes, not unlike those of an Eared Grebe or Spotted Towhee. I didn’t get to count these birds, so quickly did the flush and capture occur, but I was getting my “marsh legs” and confident I would be right on top of things when next we flushed a Black.

But we hit a bit of a dead patch, with no birds flushed for the better part of an hour. More rest periods were called for and some of the troops were perhaps discouraged, as negotiating this marsh terrain was hard, sweaty work. On the positive side, a light breeze had picked up and chased off much of the mosquito horde.

On the subsequent birds, I started to come into my own as a light man. Aaron had set off in pursuit of flushed quarry and I had followed. Now three of us had the spot where the bird had dove for cover surrounded. We patiently waited until I saw the Yellow Rail poke its head out of the thatch like a Red-eared Slider through the surface of a stock tank, and Aaron netted successfully.

By the time you read this, we will have started advertising for an Executive Director. Managing TAS is a full-time job, and I’m looking forward to having a professional manager on board! We’ll still need lots of volunteers, so please consider giving some of your time to TAS. Check out our Volunteer Ops sections for ideas on how you can contribute. Thank you.

I hope to see you at our International Migratory Bird Day celebration and at the May meeting.

Shelia

The next action was a non-rail, a Sedge Wren, and second to the small rails in the furtive-and-secretive category. Not of interest to the crew, I nevertheless tracked this little fellow down and had him in the light from a distance of five feet for a full minute. A Sedge Wren, in the open, five feet away... ho, hum.

Presently, we managed to flush up another pair of Black Rails. To the great fortune of ol’ Dodge, the man who rarely gets a lifer anymore because he’s seen most birds, these kicked up at our right flank, the one he was holding, and he got on them before the net did. For Dodge, a near lifetime’s worth of seriously applied birding came down to this one spectacular moment on a dark wet prairie on the upper Texas Coast- he had his lifer Black Rail!

It was now close to 10:00pm, the generally agreed-upon cut-off time, so we dragged the rope toward the vehicles to see if we might scare up one last bird. The home stretch transitioned to a patch of terrain with some ground level shrubbery that made dragging the rope difficult, so we began to make up the short distance between us and the vehicles with just our booted legs as flushing mechanisms. I had already seen three Black Rails and two other likely that we failed to capture, but the rules would not allow me to add the species to my list as none had been natural and identifiable. I felt good for Dodge’s success- he’d been at it a lot longer than I had- and reflective about my own fortunes. After all, it was the thrill of the chase that attracted me, as well as the opportunity to learn and visit new habitats, and not being lucky enough to have an eligible Black Rail sighting on this trip just meant I could continue to go on adventures like this one with the full anticipation of a neophyte.

Just as I was getting the whole thing pretty well rationalized out, I noted a small dark object near my left boot that hopped up into a short bare bush. Hitting it with my spotlight, I hesitated. It was certainly impossible that, at the final hour, a Black Rail, the most-wanted of birders everywhere, would pose for me in the open a foot off the ground for as long as I desired as I bathed it in strong light... but that’s just what was happening.

When I had had my fill, I called in the others and all had lingering looks at an unrestrained spectacle of nature. Then came the net men who did their thing and our fourth Black Rail of the evening, to go with four Yellow Rails, was processed and safely released... as was I.

Unfortunately, Yellow and Black Rails do not grace us with their presence in the Austin Region. However, Soras are fairly regular in small numbers at Hornsby Bend during the non-summer months and a spring or fall hip-wader reconnaissance of the marsh below the Granger Dam spillway in Williamson County just might turn up Virginia, and possibly even a King, Rail.

Baker Sanctuary News

This year is the first year since 2002 that the weather cooperated with our March 19th open house! Hugh Brown was our first visitor and, in all, 102 people signed the registration sheets that Marcie and Lois Kantor passed around. Both Lois and Fred Helms showed our visitors where to park. This was most helpful when the parking lot filled up and our visitors had to park outside the fence on the Lime Creek Road right-of-way. Chris Doggett, Membership Chair, was a big help again this year handling the parking of our volunteers at the Baker Cabin. Membership Secretary Shirley Doggett, joined later by Chris, manned the membership table. TAS Board Members Marcie Wilcox and Barbara Anderson, along with TAS Secretary Ann Donovan and Harrison (Ann's grandson) greeted our visitors. My special thanks goes to TAS President Shelia Hargis for coordinating our thirteen bird guides.

Our guides this year were Stu Wilson, Robert Reeves, Jackie Davis, Mark and Selena Kiser, Kathy McKormack, Garry Waggener, Norman Ford, Jean Martin, Roxie Rochat and TAS Board Members Theresa Bayoud, Bill Reiner and Robert Bates. I want to thank Dan Hardy for leading butterfly walks and Joe Lapp for showing our visitors Sanctuary arachnids. In addition, I want to thank Kirsti and Sirpa Harms and Dale and Pat Bulla for leading plant walks. Also, I want to thank Ann Gardener to taking some great photographs again this year and Tess Sherman for putting together a great flyer advertising our open house. And finally, I want to thank Jan Fulkerson with the Texas Forest Service for setting up an urban/wild land interface display.



John & Marcie Wilcox

More Golden-cheeked Warblers (GCWA) were heard than seen this year, though some of our visitors got a close-up look at a male GCWA on the Blue Trail around marker 12 and Pat Bulla got her first ever look at a male Golden-cheeked Warbler. Also, Bob, Kirsti and Sirpa Harms found a Spring Coral Root beside the Blue Trail on a scouting trip to the Sanctuary on March 12th. This perennial, saprophytic Orchid (*Corallorhiza wisteriana*) is one of the few plants that have no chlorophyll at any time, yet it supports itself on the dead remains of other plants in the soil (Texas Wildflowers by Campbell and Lynn Loughmiller, 1984, page 177). Spring Coral Root has been found on the Sanctuary before (Lyter, 1986) and fortunately, it was still around for our open house. Hopefully, everyone had a chance to see it. Another treat for our guests, the first since 2003, was a look at a Great-horned Owl chick sitting in a nest up high in a tree along Baker Creek.

Two of our excellent guides, Mark and Selena Kiser, saw twenty five bird species including a Red-shouldered Hawk, Whit-throated Sparrow and Ash-throated Flycatcher. Other sightings by Mark and Selena were a Blotched Water Snake (dark phase), Goatweed Leafwing, Cloudless Sulfur, and Red Admiral butterflies.

I am very grateful for the help we received from all of our volunteers who generously contributed their time to guide walks, greet visitors, direct traffic and answer questions. I thank each and every one of you for your cooperation in helping make this open house at the Baker Sanctuary such a success!

John Wilcox, TAS-Baker Sanctuary Chair and Steward

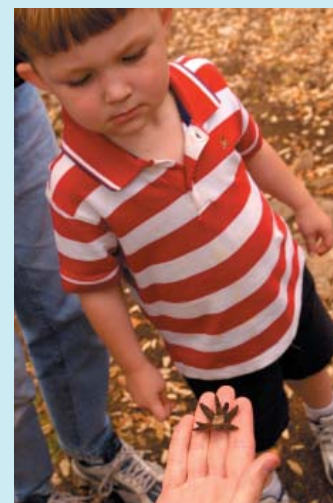


(l-r) Dorothy and Kermit Cummings, Jean Martin (volunteer) and Carolyn Peterson look for bird along Baker Springs Trail.

Sanctuary Open House photos courtesy of Robert Baumgardner



Stephanie Barko with death camas (*Zigadenus nuttallii*).



Harrison Donovan (3 years old) examines star fungus.

TAS Events - May 2005

Saturday, May 7, Webberville Park Field Trip.

7:30 to 11:30am
field trip

Located in far eastern Travis County on the Colorado River, this park is usually a productive spot for migrating warblers and vireos, as well as for nesting Wood-Pewees and Great-crested Flycatchers. Owls, Osprey, and many other birds can often be found here. Contact Charles Stevens (charles_stevens@yahoo.com, (w) 328-9453) for more information.

Saturday, May 14, Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend.

7am and 4pm.

Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend

Led by Russ Nelson. Contact Kevin Anderson (972-1960) for more information.

Saturday, May 14, Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day -- Bird Walk on Capitol Grounds.

8:00 to 10:00am.

IMBD Bird Walk

Contact Charles Stevens (charles_stevens@yahoo.com, (w) 328-9453) for more information.

Saturday, May 14, Richard Moya Park

8:00 - 10:00 AM

IMBD Bird Walk

Led by Shelia Hargis. Wheelchair accessible. Meet in the parking lot at the east end of the park. From the intersection of Hwy. 71 and Hwy. 183, take Hwy. 183 south 2.6 miles to Burleson Road. Turn left on Burleson Road and travel 1.2 miles. The park entrance is on your right. Water bottle and bug repellent are recommended. Contact Shelia Hargis, shargis@austin.rr.com or call (hm) 291-1861 for further details.

Saturday, May 21, Monthly Bird Walk at Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park

8:00 to 10:30am.

Monthly Bird Walk

Contact Richard Kaskan (kaskan@ieee.org, (c) 748-8660) for more information.

Saturday, May 21, Monthly Bird Walk at Hornsby Bend

7:30 to noon.

Monthly Bird Walk

Contact Richard Kaskan (kaskan@ieee.org, (c) 748-8660) for more information.

Saturday, May 28, Field Trip to the Schaezler's property near New Braunfels.

8:00 to 11:00am

field trip

A bit late in the month, but Susan says there will still be some warbler action. Take 35 S towards San Antonio, then take exit # 178 and turn left over the freeway. Go .6 mile and take Old Wiederstein, which will angle off on your right. Go .6 mile to green mailbox, drive in and park in the circle drive: the parking area is across from the house. Bathroom in the garage-- bring your lunch and spend the day, if you wish. Contact Stan VanSandt (sjziv@juno.com, 707-7438) for more information.

Saturday, May 28, Meadow Lake Field Trip.

6:00 to 8:00pm.

field trip

Contact Kathy McCormack (VEFL21@yahoo.com, VMailBox 512-698-9880) for more information.

Saturday-Sunday, Bamberger Ranch (Johnson City)

May 7-8

Spring Bird Count

Registration required. Email Marsha Reimer at marsha.reimer@tpwd.state.tx.us if you need more details

July 14-19, 2005 - Rocky Mountain National Park and Pawnee National Grassland.

Registration required. Join us for six days of very beautiful mountain scenery with easy access to birds that are rare in Texas (and/or rarely seen here in breeding plumage). White-tailed Ptarmigan, Black Swift, American Dipper, and Three-toed Woodpecker are among the many birds we hope to see. Limited to 12 participants (and the hotels are filling up fast) so make reservations early. Long hikes, rough trails, early departure times and high altitude will make this a somewhat strenuous trip, though all excursions are optional and there will probably be long afternoon thunderstorm breaks. Contact Stan VanSandt at sjziv@juno.com, or call (512) 707-7438, for more information and an itinerary.

TAS Events - June 2005

Additional event details always available at www.travisaudubon.org

- Saturday, June 4, Birds and Butterflies of Zilker Park.**
7:30 to 11:00am. *field trip* From 7:30 to 9:00 bird Austin Nature center and adjacent areas, including a visit to the rehabilitated raptor area, then from 9:30 to 11:00 study butterflies with local expert John Kelly in the botanical gardens. Contact Charles Stevens (charles_stevens@yahoo.com, (w) 328-9453) for more information.
- Saturday, June 11, Monthly Bird Count at Hornsby Bend.**
7am and 4pm. *monthly bird count* Led by Russ Nelson. Contact Kevin Anderson (972-1960) for more information.
- Saturday, June 18, Monthly Bird Walk at Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park**
8:00 to 10:30am. *monthly bird walk* Contact Charles Stephens (charles_stephens@yahoo.com, (w) 328-9453) for more information.
- Saturday, June 18, Monthly Bird Walk at Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park**
7:30 to noon. *monthly bird walk* Contact Richard Kaskan (kaskan@ieee.org, (c) 748-8660) for more information.
- Saturday/Sunday, June 25-26 Field Trip to Port Aransas and Corpus Christi.**
field trip. Meet at 7:30 on Saturday at the Port Aransas Birding center. We will bird the wetlands, jetties, and beaches of Port Aransas and Mustang Island in the morning. After a long afternoon break in the heat of the day (enough time for a nap and/or a swim) we will continue to bird the area. On Sunday morning we will check out the action at various hotspots in the Corpus area such as Blucher and Hazel Bazemore Parks before driving back to Austin in the afternoon. Contact Charles Stevens (charles_stevens@yahoo.com, (w) 328-9453), or Stan VanSandt (sjziv@juno.com, 707-7438) for more information.

Thursday, May 19, 7:00 pm (doors open at 6:30 pm for social time)

TAS Regular Monthly Meeting

Program topic: Balcones Canyonlands NWR

Speaker: Deborah Holle, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Deborah will be presenting an old fashioned slide show on the Refuge. It will include a little history of the NWRS, Balcones establishment, a little bit about the birds which you all already know, and other work done at the refuge.

Deborah has been working in Refuges since 1978. She started out in Georgia at Piedmont NWR working with Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, at St. Marks NWR near Tallahassee, Florida where she worked with waterfowl, wading and shore birds, and Red-cockaded's and eagles. In 1984 she went to the Florida Keys and worked with 15-20 threatened and endangered plants and animals. She transferred to Balcones in 1991.

Deborah was born and raised in NW Oklahoma, and received her Masters in Wildlife Ecology at Oklahoma State University.

Program begins at 7:00 p.m. **Location:** LCRA Board Room 3700 Lake Austin Blvd. The board room is in the Hancock Building, the middle building in the courtyard. We'll be in the room on the left upon entering. Parking available in garage. **Bus Routes** available at www.capmetro.austin.tx.us. **Bicycle routes** at www.ci.austin.x.us/bicycle/bikemap.htm; 974-7240. Refreshments provided.

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 gas-line 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 (click on "Activities" and then "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, please contact the person(s) listed with the event description.

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.

Education Committee News - Classes

Butterfly Identification Class

John Kelly will teach a two-part class on butterfly identification, designed to help beginners learn to identify the more common species of butterflies found in the Austin area. Each of the two lecture/slide presentations will be followed by a field trip. The fee will be \$30. John has recently served as president of the Austin Butterfly Forum and has been studying butterflies for many years. He has given numerous presentations to various civic and conservation groups. The class will meet the mornings of Sat., May 14, and Sat., May 21. To register and receive further details about the class, contact Paul or Anne Wheeler at butterflyclass@swbell.net or call 338-1131.

Cool-season Grass Identification

Learn about common spring-blooming grasses by attending this half-day workshop to be taught by Bill Reiner. Participants will gain hands-on experience in identification techniques at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge. Although most prairie grasses bloom from late summer to fall, there are cool-season species that are easier to identify when they set seed in the spring. The plan is for this workshop to be a precursor to a more intensive workshop in the fall.

Bill is a biological technician at Balcones Canyonlands NWR, where his primary responsibility has been monitoring and controlling the Oak Wilt fungus. He has led short grass-identification walks for National Refuge Week in October and for a Prairies and Savannas Conference in July.

The workshop will take place on Sunday, May 15, from 1-5pm at the Balcones Canyonlands NWR near Liberty Hill. The fee is \$10 per person. To register, contact Martha Renfro at marthar@academicplanet.com or 418-8334. Participants will be provided with additional information about the class and directions to the meeting place when they register.

Odonate Identification (Dragonflies, Damselflies)

Dr. John Abbot will teach this new class on identification of Odonates—dragonflies and damselflies. Lectures will be held at the Brackenridge Field Laboratory on Lake Austin Blvd. the evenings of the June 9 and 16 from 7-9pm and field trips will be held June 11 and 18 from 9am-2pm. Dr. Abbott is an Entomologist and Lecturer in the Section of Integrative Biology at the University of Texas, Austin and a Research Associate of the Texas Natural History Collections (Texas Memorial Museum). He has authored many papers on aquatic insects with several specifically on dragonflies and damselflies and has written a book on the Dragonflies and Damselflies of the South Central United States which will be published by Princeton University Press in April. Dr. Abbott also sits on the IUCN (The World Conservation Union) Odonata Specialists Group and is a member of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas Executive Council. He is an avid nature photographer whose photographs have appeared in numerous calendars, magazines and books.

The fee for the Odonates class is \$30. To register and receive further information about the class, contact Kathy McCormack at vefl21@yahoo.com or leave a message at 698-9880.

Membership Committee News

Our Spring was complete when on March 30th our hummingbirds returned. The purple martins and the barn swallows were all busy building nests, and we had wondered where the hummingbirds had gone. Everything seems a little late this year.



Chris Doggett

photo credit: Robert Baumgardner

By the time you are reading this, the newly created website should be fully functional, and we apologize for any inconvenience as we built it page by page. Field Trips and our various meetings can be found under “Activities”, “Education” covers our classes, Audubon Adventures, and Youth Birding Camp, while grouped under “Conservation” you can find Urban Habitat and the Latin America committee. “Birds” will host Shelia’s hummingbird page, a picture gallery

from our members, and more new bird related pages as we create them. If any of you have contributions you can make to these pages, we’d be delighted to hear from you – just email me at ckdoggett@mindspring.com.



photo credit: Ann Gardner

Speaking of pictures, we were fortunate to have some great pictures of the Baker Sanctuary Open House taken by Robert Baumgardner, and Ann Gardner has found a Great-horned owl chick, and taken a terrific photograph. Again, any of our members who have any bird photographs they’d like us to use, please let me or our Signal Smoke editor have them – we’d really appreciate them

Chris Doggett

TAS Board Minutes

please note - this is only an excerpt of the TAS board meeting minutes - full details are available at the TAS website.

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING MARCH 10, 2005

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:11 PM. Present at the meeting were: Shelia Hargis, Barbara Anderson, Marcie Wilcox, Jane Tillman, Jane Wilson, Richard Manson, Mark Bentley, Theresa Bayoud, Marsha Reimer, John Kelly, Bill Reiner and Sam Fason.

Treasurer's Report: There was discussion about separating the restricted funds from the financial reports to give a clearer view of our finances. There was also discussion about what effect if any the new bylaws have on the restricted accounts. The report was corrected to note that the chimney swift tower is at Dripping Springs Elementary School (note 4a) and the "Roughwings" was changed to "Gliders" (note 4b). The report was accepted as amended (Richard/Mark).

Amendment to the Lease with Wildlife Rescue: An amendment to the lease of Blair Woods to Wildlife Rescue was presented to the board for consideration. The amendment also included the "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) referred to in the lease. The MOU was changed to delete one sentence and to change the word "partnership" to "relationship". A motion was made (Sam/Marcie) and approved to accept the amendment as revised.

Announcements: Mark discussed a possible bequest to TAS. Mark will continue to follow this as it goes through probate.

John showed a clay Golden-cheeked Warbler that can be purchased by TAS for resale or as gifts for volunteers.

The meeting adjourned at 9:23 PM.

Additional Donations News

Travis Audubon has recently received a total of \$425 from IBM and Texas Instruments as a result of employees and retirees who have asked their employers to match their tax-deductible contributions (dues, Annual Appeal contributions, and other donations). Additional matching gift applications are pending with Sun Microsystems. Many thanks to the following donors for sending us the paperwork to apply for those matching gifts: Jean Martin, Charles Michalik, Jean M. Ramzel, Paul Roush, Robert F. Sechler, and Jim Thatcher. If you are an employee of, or a retiree from, a corporation that has a matching gifts program, please consider obtaining the necessary forms and including them with any tax-deductible amount you give to Travis Audubon. If you have questions, contact our Treasurer, Jane Wilson, at 512/663-5552 or e-mail her at janew458@earthlink.net. We also appreciate those who have instructed Randalls to donate a percentage of their grocery bills to Travis Audubon. Safeway, Randalls parent company, recently sent a check for \$42.75 as a result of those shoppers.

Kenn Kaufman at the Wildflower Center for National Trails Day Saturday, June 4

Join us in celebration of National Trails Day with noted avian author Kenn Kaufman. Mr. Kaufman will be providing a lecture in the Wildflower Center Auditorium, followed by a book signing at *Wild Ideas: The Store*. Enjoy birding walks by Travis Audubon during the day, and activities for the little ones in the Little House.

9am - Birding Walk with Travis Audubon

10am - Presentation with Kenn Kaufman

11am to 1 pm - Book signing with Kenn Kaufman

1pm - Habitat Walk with Travis Audubon

See the Wildflower Center's website, www.wildflower.org, for more details on this event and many other interesting and educational activities. Stephen Brueggerhoff, Adult Programs Manager, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Ongoing TAS Meetings

Meeting Schedules

Education Committee: meets on the 1st Monday of each month, contact: Jean Martin, jeanmartin@austin.rr.com or 343-7053

Sanctuary Committee: meets quarterly, contact: John Wilcox, jmwoso@earthlink.net or 219-8425

TAS Board of Directors: meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month (except for December), contact: Shelia Hargis, 291-1861

Urban Habitat Development Group: meets on the 3rd Monday of each month, contact: Jane Tillman, 794-0058

Bird Records Committee: meets on the 4th Thursday of the month, contact: Ethel Kutac, 346-7659

TAS Regular Monthly Meeting: meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month except for June, July & August.

Latin America Committe Meeting: meets most 3rd Wednesdays, contact Bob Warneke at warneke@austin.rr.com for details

TAS Nature Book Club Meeting: the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00pm at Book People, contact: tessiebanks@msn.com

Other events & news.....

TAS Nature Book Club

We invite you to join the Travis Audubon Society Nature Book Club the 4th Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm at Book People (6th and Lamar). The group is informal and fun, and you can choose to go to all the meetings and discuss all the books, or you can pick and choose the meetings featuring books you would like to discuss. Below is a list of books we will read for the next few months:

May: The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach Cape Cod by Henry Beston

June: The Road to El Cielo - Mexico's Forest in the Clouds by Fred and Marie S. Webster

July: On the Wing - To the Edge of the Earth With the Peregrine Falcon by Alan Tennant

August: A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There by Aldo Leopold

September: Of Men and Mountains by William O. Douglas (United States Supreme Court Justice from 1939 to 1975)

Please note that this list is tentative! Before you commit to reading a book for a particular month, you may want to call Terry Banks @451-6302 or e-mail tessiebanks@msn.com to find out if the book is still current. We are also planning to read Kingbird Highway by Kenn Kaufman, but have not set a date for that book yet.

So...Come and join us. Bring your suggestions about future books and be prepared to have a good time. Hope to see you soon!

International Migratory Bird Day

International Migratory Bird Day: A Celebration

Saturday, May 14

Join us as we celebrate IMBD! Here's what we have in store for you:

Field trips – see Calendar of Events for details

1. Hornsby Bend Survey
2. Capitol Grounds
3. Richard Moya Park

Evening activities - starting at 5:00 pm, at the LCRA board room (3700 Lake Austin Blvd):

Potluck dinner - Bring your favorite dish to share. Bring your own plate, cup, and utensils (we're trying to be gentle on the environment.) TAS will supply drinks.



Bird Jeopardy - Play Jeopardy with a bird theme, hosted by our very own Jeopardy champion, John Kelly.

Book signing - Paul and Georgan Kyle will be signing their new books: *Chimney Swifts*, *America's Mysterious Birds above the Fireplace* and *Chimney Swift Towers*.

Naturally Curious - Shop for books, binoculars, shade-grown coffee, etc.

Displays - Learn about IMBD and the obstacles birds may encounter in flight and the many ways we can minimize their impacts. Learn about Chimney Swifts and Driftwood Wildlife Association.

Raffle - Buy raffle tickets to win cool prizes.

Species Countdown - Whether you attend one of our scheduled walks or go birding on your own, keep track of the species you see. We'll count them down.

Social time - Visit with old friends, make new friends.

Shelia Hargis

Austin Butterfly Forum

The Austin Butterfly Forum meets the 4th Monday of the month at 7pm at the Zilker Botanical Gardens - 2220 Barton Springs Rd.

Upcoming speakers and topics include:

- ☛ May 23, 2005, The Wonder of Caterpillars - author Jim Brock (book signing at 6:00pm)
- ☛ June 27, 2005, Butterflies of the Rio Grande Valley - David and Jan Dauphin



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

TAS Volunteer Opportunities

Travis Audubon Society depends on the generous donation of time and effort from our volunteers to accomplish our mission. No matter how much time you have available to donate, we would love your help. Below are a variety of volunteer opportunities. You will notice that we have a lot of repeat postings each month, this is where we need you the most. Find something that interests you and get involved! You can help as little or much as you want. Not only will you make a contribution to the society, you'll also meet some great new friends and birding buddies. Check our website for updates. If by chance you don't see anything that interests you on the list, contact our Volunteer Opportunities coordinator, Rob Bates, at robertkbates@hotmail.com or 528-9317 to discuss specific interests and talents that you'd like to put to work for TAS. **Thank you!**

Sales Chair, TAS is in need of someone to take the role of Sales Chair over immediately. Please contact Shelia Hargis if you are interested at shargis@austin.rr.com.

Volunteer Coordinator, TAS is in need of a Temporary (or permanent, if you want) Coordinator of Volunteer Opportunities to fill in for myself (Rob Bates) during the summer, for I will be in Arizona. If you are interested, please contact Rob Bates at robertkbates@hotmail.com or (512) 528-9317.

Latin America Committee, TAS's Latin America Committee needs someone to man their table at the Migratory Bird Day "after party" on May 14th. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Bob Warneke at warneke@austin.rr.com.

Birders to Survey Private Land: Occasionally we get requests from individuals for a birder or birders to visit their property and survey the birds. If interested, contact myself, Rob Bates at 528-9317 or robertkbates@hotmail.com. I'll maintain a list of volunteers for future requests.

Translators; English to Spanish: The Latin America Committee is looking for anyone that may be interested in helping us translate publications from English into Spanish. Anyone interested should contact Rob Bates at robertkbates@hotmail.com or 512-528-9317.

Membership Committee Members: help maintain & increase our membership. Contact Chris Doggett at ckdoggett@mindspring.com or 512-898-5500.

Adult Education Committee Members: In addition to the need for committee members to help coordinate adult educational opportunities, we are seeking a chair, who would be willing to assume the responsibility by summer 2005. This is a committee for which teamwork is very important, with

committee members alternating in handling class registration, coordination with instructors, as well as developing new classes. Some committee members serve as volunteer presenters to organizations, such as nature clubs, classrooms, etc. The chair prepares the meeting agenda and chairs meetings, assuring that the classes are announced and held on schedule in accordance with guidelines. Contact Jean Martin at jeanmartin@austin.rr.com.

Youth Education Committee Members: help coordinate youth educational opportunities, assist with our fall youth camp, conduct speaking programs to local organizations. Contact Julia Balinsky at AudubonAdventures@balinsky.com or 926-7312.

Field Trip Committee Members: help coordinate field trips. Contact charles_stephens@yahoo.com or 328-9453.

Field Trip Leaders: lead a field trip to your favorite birding location. Contact charles_stephens@yahoo.com or 328-9453.

Property & Finance Committee Member someone that is interested in the basic financial running of the society can contact Pat Dillon at (512) 453-7555.

Help needed with collection inventory

Marjorie Adams is requesting a volunteer to help inventory her bird books, files, art, and assorted items collected over a forty year period. Her collection is located in the South Lamar area. Please contact Marjorie at 899-9304 for more information.

Birdathon Info

Help TAS raise money for Chimney Swift towers and Audubon Adventures and Audubon Texas raise money for their Colonial Water Bird management. Do a birdathon! Contact Shari Kolding, Birdathon Coordinator, at 512-306-0225 x.14 or skolding@audubon.org for general information, help, and "how-to" materials. Thank you!

Correction to March 2005 Signal Smoke
The memorial article about Fred Donaldson was written by Lolita Slagle.

Visit the TAS Web site:
www.travisaudubon.org



Local and National Audubon Membership

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

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

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

To join Travis Audubon Society:

Make your check payable to Travis Audubon Society and send with this form to TAS Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 422, Thrall, TX 76578-0422.

Travis Audubon Society

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

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

T-shirt size _____

This is a gift membership from _____

I would like to save TAS money and natural resources. Please send me an email each month when the newsletter is posted online instead of mailing me a hard copy.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____