



Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

Volume XXIII

Number 7

November/December 2003

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Is your life list accurate?

Many birders keep a list of all species of birds they have seen. That sounds simple enough, but what if I saw a bird I'd never seen before but was only 90% sure which one it was, or 80%? Do I put that one on the list? That's the dilemma.

I've maintained my personal life list since 2000, and in reviewing the early entries; I realized that some were doubtful. Almost all of those early sightings have been duplicated with surety, so they stay on the list. One or two, like the ladder-backed woodpecker, had to come off. I'm still looking for that ladderback I thought I saw; so if you have one in your back yard, let me know. Or maybe I'll just get motivated to do some birding further west.

More recently the challenge of accuracy has increased. Deciding which of the empidonax flycatchers and shorebirds I have seen with complete certainty is not possible at my current level of skill; so my list is hopelessly inaccurate. (Well, only a handful of entries are in doubt; so it's not that bad!)

Okay, picky, picky. I'm sure nobody really cares but me. But the list helps me to enjoy and appreciate nature -- something I think we all do in our own way.

Gailon Brehm, President

October 28: Batty about Bats. October wouldn't right without bats so Verajean (Vicki) Hatfield will come and speak about "Bats, A Mammal Like Us!"

November 25: The Deep Freeze - Antarctic. Alton Biggs, a high school biology teacher in Allen and an author of textbooks, will be sharing his journey to the Antarctic. Come see his fantastic photos.

December 26: Christmas Bird Count. The regular monthly meeting will be replaced by the MCKINNEY - HEARD MUSEUM/PRAIRIE and TIMBERS Audubon Society CBC (*Christmas Bird Count*) at 7:00 am. Anyone wishing to participate is welcome. Inexperienced birders will be assigned to teams with experienced leaders. For further information contact Dan Smith at 972-516-2297 or 214-208-6073 or at asmithfamily@attbi.com.

January 27, 2004 Peruvian Amazon. Come listen to Mike Mizelle, Sally Evans and Mary Lou Cole tell of their adventures of birding the depths of the Peruvian Amazon. In total they saw 153 species!

February 24, 2004 Bluebirds in my Backyard?

Doug Rhodes of the Bluebird Society will speak on how to attract bluebirds to urban areas.

March 23, 2004 - Warbler Warm-Up.

Carolyn Oldham will present a slide presentation on warblers.

PTAS Meetings are the fourth Tuesday

7:00 p.m. at the Heard Museum Call 972-562-5566 for directions



LEARN THE BIRDS AT THE HEARD

Collin County is rich with opportunities to observe birds. Again this year your Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society is offering an outstanding opportunity to birders of all levels of experience and knowledge. This birding class meets at 7:00 p.m. just prior to the chapter meetings which are at 7:30 p.m. Come in through the back door off the parking lot and you will be directed to the basement amphitheater where the class will be taught. Teachers are experienced members of the local chapter. The class format is an informal discussion teaching keys to identification of a small number of local birds each month. All you need to bring is your favorite field guide. Upcoming classes include:

Tuesday October 28 7:00 PM winter sparrows - House Sparrow (not a true sparrow), White-Throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Harris s Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Field Sparrow

Tuesday November 25 7:00 PM waterfowl - Mallard (wild and domestic), Lesser Scaup, Moscovy (domestic), Wood Duck, American Coot, Ruddy Duck, Pied-Billed Grebe

Spring Schedule

Tuesday, January 27, 7:00 PM

raptors - Red-Tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-Shinned Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Eastern Screech Owl

Tuesday, February 24, 7:00 PM

woodland birds - American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Brown Thrasher, Brown Creeper, White-Breasted Nuthatch, Hermit Thrush

Tuesday, March 23, 7:00 PM

backyard friends - Mourning Dove, White-Winged Dove, Rock Dove (Pigeon), Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, American Goldfinch, Eastern Bluebird

Tuesday, April 27, 7:00 PM

warm-weather birds - Green Heron, Yellow-Crowned Night Heron, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike



Are You Ready for Field Trips? RSVPing is most important!

One of the most satisfying experiences of the Audubon member is the successful field trip. As you consider joining a field trip, be sure to keep in mind these following tips:

First rule of field tripping is to RSVP the week of the trip to one of the co-chairmen:

Carolyn Oldham at 972-517-8987 or
email Carolyn.Oldham@verizon.net

OR

Tom Heath, 972-867-8646 or
email heathwtom@netscape.net

Second rule is to be on time. When it says the trip will meet, that means **DEPART!** So be at the location noted. **Don't be late!**

Third Rule is to bring water and snacks for yourself.

Our carpooling site is the parking lot of the Kelly-Moore Paint Store at the northwest corner of Spring Creek Pkwy and Hwy 75 in Plano, referred to as the Paint Store.



2003 Field Trip Schedule

Saturday, October 25

Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge

Leader: Carolyn Oldham

Depart: Kelly More Paint Store at 7:00 a.m.

Trip Length: ¾ day

We will look for early winter migrants—ducks, geese, shorebirds, sparrows, etc.

Bring lunch and drinks.

Saturday, November 22

Spring Creek Preserve, Garland

Meet at the Preserve parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

The Preserve is on Holford Road, which runs north and south from Arapaho to 190.

Leader: Carolyn and Dave Oldham

Length: ½ day

Expect to see winter migrants and sparrows

Saturday, December 6

Benbrook Lake Area

Depart Kelly More Paint Store in Plano at 6:00 a.m.
Meet leader D. D. Currie at Benbrook Antique Mall at 7:30 a.m.

Length: all day (maybe into the evening if we look for short-eared owls)

Bring lunch, water and snacks

Expect to see winter migrants, ducks and other water birds, raptors (Merlin, prairie falcon, short-eared owls, etc.)

Other field trips during the year will include:

111 Ranch Park in Garland, Caddo Grasslands near Bonham, Meridian State Park, Prairie Creek Park in Richardson, Spring Creek Preserve in Richardson, Connemara Conservancy in Plano. Dates are to be determined and will be posted on the website. Contact Carolyn Oldham or Tom Heath with questions.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AUDUBON TEXAS VISITS PTAS AND THE HEARD MUSEUM

Responding to an off-hand invitation last spring, Terry Austin, Executive Director of Audubon Texas (a division of the National Audubon Society) attended the September 23rd chapter meeting. Martha Snyderman and KC Rudy of the north Texas region of Audubon Texas attended as well. Prior to the meeting Liz Bleiberg and Ken Steigman of the Heard Museum hosted them along with Gailon Brehm and Sally Evans of our chapter to a tour of the Heard Museum facilities. Afterwards, Terry was complimentary regarding the activities of our chapter and the strong cooperative relationship we have with the Heard.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Village Creek Drying Beds 9/6 - Thirty birders from Ft. Worth, Dallas and Prairie and Timbers Audubons plus one woman from Kenya visited Village Creek Drying Beds in Arlington. We also were introduced to the Forbidden Zone, a wonderful multi-mile paved trail (not yet officially opened) with ponds, meadows and woods. This trail will eventually link up with River Legacy Park. Sixty-eight species were seen. Highlights were wood storks, roseate spoonbills, tri-colored heron, black-bellied whistling duck, many sandpipers, Mississippi kite, several warblers (blue-winged, yellow, black-throated, green, black and white, and Wilson s) red-shouldered hawk, and Baltimore orioles.

Many thanks to Ft. Worth Audubon Society and Charley Amos for leading us.

OTHER BIRD SIGHTINGS

Spring Creek Nature Area 9/6/03 - My anticipation for a good mornings' bird walk this Saturday was buoyed by the forecasted change in the weather and all of the recent reports of migrants passing through the area. The fact that I heard a screech owl calling from my neighbor's yard just before dawn that day was a good omen too.

To be sure, the weather was very mild, almost even cool, and there were lots of birds...mostly resident titmice, chickadees, wrens, and a few calling White-eyed Vireos tossed in for good measure...just not the number of migrants I had hoped to see. We were not shut out though, as we did find a small group of Baltimore Orioles and one Black-and-white Warbler. Another warbler or two were seen but not identified. They were just too quick. A few Blue-gray Gnatcatchers flitted here and there and a Belted Kingfisher made an appearance. **Mike Moore**

Connemara Conservancy 9/27/03 - It was a good day to stay home and do yard work. We had quite a few yellow, Wilson s, Nashville, and orange-crowned warblers flitting around along with one oriole (probably a female Orchard Oriole), but the best sightings were first-of-season winter birds -- a ruby-crowned kinglet and a Lincoln s sparrow.

By the way, the reason I did not get a better look at the oriole was that a cooper's hawk stopped in the tree about that time and flushed all the birds. **Gailon Brehm**



PTAS ASSISTS SCOUT PROJECT

Billy Collins, an Eagle Scout with Troop 285, will build a boardwalk at the Heard Museum as his project thanks to the members of PTAS. The boardwalk is in support of the Heard's plans to extend the walking trails back into the wetlands. The museum has won a grant for the heavy construction part of the project and is utilizing scouts to build sections for walkway to be put in place later. Billy's project is approved and enthusiastically supported by Ken Steigman and Roger Sanderson of the Heard Museum. PTAS members donations totaled \$375, which were enough to buy materials and supplies for this project. He hopes to complete it within two months. Thank you, Billy, for the boardwalk!



GET MEETING AND FIELD TRIP INFORMATION AT THE SPEED OF THE INTERNET

Did you ever want the news before anyone else? Well, now here is your chance. If you would like to receive an email letting you know the latest and greatest version of the newsletter is available on the website, just let us know! Contact Membership Chairman Jerri Kerr by email at Jerri.Kerr@mci.com, by phone 972-578-3146 or by snail mail at 1719 Mimosa Avenue, Plano, TX 75074 and she will put your email on the P&TAS distribution list. Once you receive the email you can check the website www.prairieandtimbers.com for all the happenings.

Won t you help us better the habitats for our birds by using the Internet for your newsletter? By doing so, we can work together to fulfill the Audubon mission of conserving native plants and animals and their habitats, using land and water wisely, seeking solutions for global problems involving the interaction of population, resources, and the environment, promoting rational strategies for energy development and use, and stressing conservation and renewable sources.

PTAS SPONSORS BIRD WALKS AT THE HEARD MUSEUM

The Heard Museum and Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society is now offering guided bird walks on the Heard Museum and Sanctuary on the second Saturday of each month, September - May. Sign-in for these walks will be at the Heard store at 9:00, rain or shine! The bird walks are for beginning and intermediate birders and will last 1.5 hours with plenty of opportunity for questions and tips on birding techniques. Attendees who have binoculars and field guides should bring them.

BOOK REPORT by Sid Dunkle

The Visitor's Guide to the Birds of the Central National Parks, United States and Canada, by Roland H. Wauer 1994, John Muir Publications, Santa Fe, NM, 387 pp., paperback, cover price \$15.95.

What I like about this book is that the author takes you vicariously with him on birding excursions in 29 park areas, scattered from Alberta to Ohio, and south to Louisiana and Texas. I especially like the realism of these adventures, because although the author is a good and knowledgeable birder, he does not see many more birds (says I in the armchair) than I would have seen, had I been along with him. For one thing, he does not see a Connecticut Warbler either!

The book includes 22 pages of introduction, and discussions of the birds found in 8 parks in the Northern Forest, 6 in the Eastern Deciduous Forest, 7 in the Great Plains, and 8 Southern Parks. Park areas Wauer visited in Texas, for this book, include the Amistad Reservoir, Padre Island, and the Big Thicket, along with the Buffalo River and Hot Springs in Arkansas, and the Chickasaw National Recreation Area in Oklahoma. There are nice black and white drawings scattered through the text, 16 pages of color photos of various habitats, a checklist of the birds of central North America, and a list of the plant names mentioned.

Wauer's mnemonics for remembering bird songs are useful. Of course, my favorite was the Ovenbird's teach, teach, teach, TEACH, TEACH ... The author comments that spishing near the edge of a flock may draw the birds to you, but spishing in the middle of the flock may frighten some species away, or cause the flock to move along more rapidly. He also states that Padre Island is the only known locale in the Western Hemisphere where Peregrine Falcons are concentrated in the spring, with sightings of an average of 2/hr, mostly over the tidal flats. Lots of other interesting tidbits are scattered throughout the book. In books of this type, I have become somewhat concerned by the fact that Bank Swallows are seldom mentioned - Wauer saw them at only 2 parks, and I have not seen one for many years.

Two pages of maps show the locations of the parks Wauer visited, but there are no site maps. The author does tell us though which trails he took on his walks. You will enjoy this book.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE HEARD MUSEUM NEST BOX TRAIL PROGRAM

Cavity nesting species on the sanctuary include: Bluebirds, Prothonotary Warblers, Titmice, Chickadees, Wrens, Wood Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Screech Owls, Great-crested Flycatchers and American Kestrels

Duties: Install nest boxes, monitor boxes, enter and retrieve data, assist with Prothonotary study, and educate others.

Prerequisite: Attend the February meeting of PTAS for more information.

Contact Jennifer Maxwell if you have questions or want to help now! Her number is (903) 454-3358

Do your part for local bird conservation!

BIRDING INFORMATION

For detailed information about birds by species, check out Patuxent Bird Identification InfoCenter, at www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/id/framlst/infocenter.html

A companion site with even more information on birds is Patuxent-Migratory Bird Research at www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov

Heard Museum www.heardmuseum.org

Hot Birding Spots In our Area
www.geocities.com/kinglet32.nctx.htm

Audubon Society www.audubon.org

TexBirds
www.moonmountaingroup.com/texbirds/index.html

TexBirds Archive
www.listserv.uh.edu/archives/texbirds.html

Cornell University (Heard Museum) Nestbox Cameras,
www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse/nextboxcam/index.html

Bird Watching When You Travel

How many of you are familiar with Birding Pals? This is a neat international group of folks that have made themselves available as informal hosts for visiting bird watchers. The next time you travel and plan to do some bird watching along the way, check out www.birdingpal.org. As any golfer knows, local knowledge is invaluable.

A BlueJay applied for the receptionists job at the new AT&T headquarters. The interviewer, a bit non-plussed, told the Jay that the candidate had to be able to type at least 80 words per minute. The Jay demonstrated a 100 wpm talent! Not wanting to hire a BIRD for the job, the interviewer told the Jay that the candidate had to be able to take dictation. The Jay surpassed



all other candidates. Finally the interviewer thought he'd be able to get rid of the Jay with "the candidate must be bilingual!" The Jay replied "Meow!!!"

THE HOW-TO, WHERE-TO, AND WHEN TO OF BIRDING

A Presentation by Premier Birder
and Author Pete Dunne

Saturday, November 15, 2003
2:00 p.m. Whitehurst Auditorium
Texas A&M Dallas

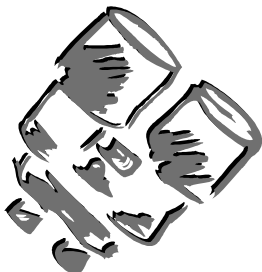
Who - There is no better ambassador for birding than the knowledgeable and affable Pete Dunne. Experienced and novice birders alike flock to the Cape May Bird Observatory in New Jersey to join Pete on his popular bird walks and programs. His new book, *Pete Dunne on Bird Watching: The How-to, Where-to, and When-to of Birding*, is the perfect introduction to this fast-growing hobby. Dunne is the author of seven books, including *Hawks in Flight*, *The Wind Masters*, *The Feather Quest*, and *Tales of a Low-Rent Birder*. He is vice president of the New Jersey Audubon Society and director of its Cape May Bird Observatory, and he has written columns and articles for virtually every birding magazine as well as the *New York Times*. The *Wall Street Journal* described him, in a personality profile, as "the bard of birding."

What - Audubon Dallas is proud to bring Pete Dunne to Dallas for the organization's annual Audubon Naturalist Lecture Series. Dunne will discuss the *The How-to, Where-to, and When-to of Birding*. Aimed at nature lovers, the presentation, based on his recently published book of the same title, will outline what you need to enjoy a lifetime of birding pleasure - basic tips on how to get started, how and where to locate birds, and what skills and equipment every birder will want to acquire. Dunne's lecture will include personal anecdotes and recommendations gathered from his distinguished career. The Audubon Naturalist Lecture Series benefits Audubon Dallas expanding programs to educate North Texans about the natural world.

When - *The How-to, Where-to, and When-to of Birding* will be presented on Saturday, November 15, 2003 at 2:00 p.m. A silent auction, featuring a wide variety of nature-inspired items, will begin at 1:00 p.m., followed by a bird call contest at 1:45 p.m. Pete's book will be for sale during the entire event to benefit Audubon Dallas. After the lecture there will be a reception and book-signing for all to attend in the lobby of the auditorium.

Where

Audubon Dallas 2003 Naturalist Lecture Series will take place in the Whitehurst Auditorium of Texas A&M Dallas, 17360 Coit Road, Dallas, TX 75252.



Bird DNA Lecture

Friday, Oct 24, 2003, at 2 PM.

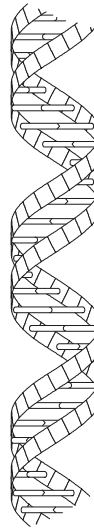
Collin County Community College District
Room C103

2800 E. Spring Creek Pkwy Plano, TX 75074

Dr. Robert Benjamin, University of North Texas Biology Professor, will talk on "Applications of DNA Profiling to the Management of Wild and Captive Avian Populations"

For any questions contact: **Sid Dunkle**,
sdunkle@cccd.edu 972-881-5989.

Room C103 is located in the atrium of the campus. If you enter the building on the east at the flagpole or the west at the water fountain, you will be in the atrium.



Whooping Crane Notice

The 2003 fall flight will mark the 57th migration monitored through the cooperative efforts of many people from central Canada and the United States.

This notice is a request to all conservation agencies along the migration route to assist again with the tracking program. Anytime a Whooping Crane is sighted or a report of a crane is verified, participants are asked to immediately notify the appropriate agency contact person in the state. The Texas contacts are: Lee Ann Johnson Linam (512) 448-4311 and Mark Klym (512) 389-4644.

Approximately 184 (169 adult-subadult and 15 young) Whooping Cranes began the 2003 spring migration. A record 61 nests were confirmed on the breeding grounds, and 28 chicks were accounted for during the August survey. A maximum of 212 Whooping Cranes in the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population are expected to begin fall migration.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact the state representatives listed above.

FIELD GUIDES TO BE REFORMATTED

Mike Moore says it looks like we can expect about every field guide to be reformatted and reprinted within the coming months. Apparently, the American Ornithologists' Union has just reordered the entire taxonomic list of birds as well as making some changes to the English and scientific name of some of the birds. For example, the Rock Dove is now the Rock Pigeon and the Eastern Screech-Owl is *Megascops asio*.

Mike's "new" fourth edition National Geographic Society guide starts with the loons and ends with the old world sparrows and finches. The new AOU list, the 44th Supplement, starts with the ducks. He will be reformatting the Wild Bird Center's bird list to follow the AOU order, but it will take awhile to change. He suggests that if you are up to the challenge, visit www.aou.org for more details.

**PRAIRIE & TIMBERS AUBUBON SOCIETY
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Vice President & Programs:

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Secretary: *Paula Brehm** 972-517-2542

Treasurer: *Mike Mizell** 940-382-8551

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Co-chair OPEN

Newsletter *Ann Reynolds* 972-596-1833

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Synne Magar Ferguson 214-345-5063

Regional Delegate

Mary Dickerson 972-896-5177

Board Member At Large

*Mike Moore** 972-509-5773

* = Board Members

Membership Application 

NOTE: Existing members should respond directly to National Audubon when they receive renewal notice.

___ Please enroll me as a NEW member of National Audubon Society and Prairie & Timbers Chapter at the special introductory price of \$20.00. Enclosed is my check made out to: National Audubon Society

___ I do not wish to be a member of National Audubon Society. However, I would like to receive Prairie & Timbers Rustlin s Newsletter. Enclosed is my check for \$8.00 made out to: P&T Audubon Society

Name: _____

Address _____

City _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

Email: _____

How did you hear about Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society?

___ From a member of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society.

___ From the Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society web site.

___ From the National Audubon Society.

___ Other

**Mail to P&T Audubon Society
c/o Mike Mizell 800 Edgewood Denton, TX 76201**

Audubon Code 7XCH PTAS Chapter Code W15

Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society
c/o Heard Natural Science Museum
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McKinney, Texas 75069

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