



# Rustlin's

---

---

*Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society*

---

---

*September / October 2005*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### Welcome!

Beginning this fall season Prairie and Timbers is fortunate to have participation by new committee members working to further the organization's legacy for doing good things. In particular, I'd like to welcome Rebecca Hughes, newsletter editor. We can expect great things, including color photos in our new, all electronic, newsletter format. Rebecca's participation is much appreciated.

I'd also like to welcome Georgette Guernsey as Field Trips Chair. Georgette has a good slate of close-to-home birding trips planned this season and some super trip leaders signed up. Expect great things!

In addition, please note the continuing participation of other committee members listed on the last page of this newsletter. Their contributions are essential to our success.

So welcome to another season of good birding, good talks and other activities. You should plan to be involved to the maximum extent possible.

Gailon Brehm, President

### PTAS WEBSITE

<http://prairieandtimbers.org>

**Check It Out!**

## CHANGE IN FIELD TRIP MEETING LOCATION

For several reasons we will now be meeting at the Kohl's Plaza in McKinney instead of the paint store in Plano. Take 75 North to the **Eldorado Parkway** exit. Kohl's Plaza is immediately on the right. Meet behind the Wendy's in the parking lot.

Due to the high cost of gas each individual who will be carpooling with our group will have to give the driver \$5.00 toward the cost of gasoline. At current prices that will only buy 2 gallons of gas. It is certainly cheaper than driving your own car.

Please e-mail Georgette Guernsey ([gguernsey@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gguernsey@sbcglobal.net)) by Friday September 16<sup>th</sup> if you plan on going on the field trip to Lake Lavon. We will be leaving the parking lot at 7:00 AM and returning by 12:00 PM.

## 2005 -2006 Field Trip Information

### September 17, 2005: Parks of Lake Lavon

#### Georgette Guernsey: 1/2 Day

Early fall migrants, shorebirds, gulls, terns, and other waterbirds. We will hike along the northern shoreline of Lake Lavon and down the Trinity Equestrian and Hiking Trail in Brockdale Park. Trip will last till 12:00pm. Meet at Kohl's parking lot in McKinney at 7:00 AM. Take I-75 north and exit in McKinney at Eldorado Parkway. Kohl's is on the immediate right. Meet behind the Wendy's.

### October 15: Connemara Meadow

#### Gailon Brehm: 1/2 Day

Connemara Meadow and nearby Plano/Allen City Parks". Trip length 3 hours. 8 am – 11 am. We will walk several areas of different habitat along Rowlette creek. Meet at gravel parking area on the East side of Alma just south of Bethany. Directions: Either A -- go south on Alma from Bethany, take the first left onto a white rock road that turns back left immediately. Or B – go north on Alma from Hedgecoxe about 1/2 mile, take a right turn immediately after passing a park with a playground onto a white rock road that turns back left immediately. Park along the side of that road toward its far end. Expected birds, riparian woodland birds, grassland birds, songbird migrants.

### November 19: Greenville Area

#### Jennifer Maxwell: 1/2 Day

We will meet at Jennifer's home at 8:00am to check the fields for sparrows and then drive to Greenville Lake to look for ducks and other water fowl. If you wish to car pool, meet at Kohl's parking lot on Eldorado Parkway in McKinney at 7:00 behind Wendy's.

### December 3: Lewisville Lake Environmental

#### Learning Area (LLELA)

#### Ken Steigman: 1/2 Day

Arrive at LLELA 30 - 45 minutes before sunrise in order to see the Short-eared Owls and American Woodcocks. Other wintering birds to see will be LeConte's and other sparrows and woodland passerines. A few ducks will be present. There will be a \$3.00 charge per person to enter the area.

## LEARN BIRDS FROM THE EXPERTS

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. "Learn the birds" is a birding class that meets at 7:00 p.m. just prior to the chapter meetings which are at 7:30 p.m. Gailon Brehm and Sid Dunkle, experienced members of the local chapter, will be offering these identification classes. The class format is an informal discussion tailored mostly for beginning birders but a few rare species will be mixed in to pique the interest of more experienced folks. Featured during each class are bird specimens provided by the Heard Museum and a few recordings of bird sounds. All you need to bring is your favorite field guide.

### Bird Identification Class Schedule 2005/2006

September: Shorebirds

October: Owls

November: Ducks

December: No Class – Christmas Bird Count

January: Sparrows

February: Woodpeckers and Woodland Birds

March: Hawks

April: Warblers

May: No Class – Outdoor Learning Center

### Birding Panama – June 2005

Paula and I spent the week of June 4 – 11 in Panama this year on an Audubon Dallas field trip. The headquarters for this adventure was the Canopy Tower, a small hotel within the Soberania National Park of Panama. We flew to Panama City and, after a 45 minute drive, were deep in the rain forest where our hotel is the only building within miles. The tower is on a hill overlooking the Panama Canal; so that the upper deck provides not only excellent bird viewing but great sight-seeing as well.

OK, speaking of birding, the sign in the lobby when we arrived said "welcome to the boot camp of birding". Our guide met us at check-in and said that birding would start on the top deck at 6 am. That was the **latest** we got started that week! Our guide was skilled and our fellow travelers, from Dallas, Fort Worth, and Twin Lakes Audubon, were a great bunch.

What did we see? Over 210 species of birds, only 30 or so that overlap with North American birds. Since we were there during the summer, there were very few migrants there. Perhaps the most interesting group of birds were the many ant birds and wood creepers that follow the army ants through the forest and forage for insects that pop out to escape the ants. Names like Ocellated Antbird and Northern Barred-Woodcreeper are now on our life list. And so many beautiful tanagers and honeycreepers. And raptors – Savannah Hawk, Great Black Hawk, Pearl Kite, and even the Harpy Eagle! But last, the Blue Cotinga, a specialty bird of Panama, showed itself close enough even for me to photograph (pictured right)! It was fun.

Gailon Brehm

## Heard Bird Census Report

Between July 15 and August 15 I found 64 species of birds (see list below) at Heard Museum while doing the weekly bird census. The weather was hot and dry with little or no rain. The 2 large ponds – Woodduck Lagoon and Mallard Marsh have dried significantly leaving little habitat for those birds that forage for food underwater. A few migrants are now starting to come through the area, such as, Mississippi Kite, Least Flycatcher, and Rufous Hummingbird. Mostly I see juvenile birds in the sanctuary. The White-eyed Vireos are still feeding the young, but the juvenile Cooper's and Red-shouldered Hawks are on their own. From what I can see most of their efforts at feeding themselves are failures, but in time I am sure they will become more efficient hunters. The rookery is now empty. Young Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Herons, Yellow-crowned Night-Herons can be seen along the ponds' edges. The adult birds are looking ragged as they molt. Most are quiet until the process is over. Even the Northern Mockingbirds are silent in August.

Anhinga, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Cattle Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Canada Goose, Mallard, Wood Duck, Turkey Vulture, Black Vulture, Mississippi Kite, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper, Mourning Dove, White-winged Dove, Rock Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Western Kingbird, Scissortail Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, White-eyed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Purple Martin, Barn Swallow, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Prothonotary Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Painted Bunting, Lark Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, Great-tailed Grackle, Orchard Oriole, House Finch, House Sparrow

Georgette Guernsey

Blue Cotinga



### **Birding Field Trip Report Summary**

The Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society (PTAS) conducted 19 birding day trips in and around the Dallas/Ft. Worth area between September 2004 and May 2005. For the most part the trips were lead expert birders from the PTAS. However the leaders for 2 of the trips were from other Audubon chapters that had detailed knowledge of the site. Members of Dallas Audubon and Ft Worth AS attended 4 of the trips. The trip leaders wrote a report along with a species list that was published in the PTAS newsletter and in some cases posted on Texbirds list server.

PTAS in conjunction with the Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary conducted bird walks the second Saturday of the month Sept 2004 to May 2005. The walks are intended to help beginners and immediate birders with bird spotting and identification techniques.

### **Trip to South Texas and Big Bend**

In late April and early May, I participated in a birding trip to south Texas and Big Bend with 11 friends from across the USA. The first part of our trip began in Huntsville, where we visited the Jones Natl. Forest to see the Red Cockaded Woodpeckers and to Huntsville State Park where we saw many birds, including excellent close viewings of a Pileated Woodpecker who posed for us on a stump in bright sunshine for about ten minutes. We drove from Huntsville to Winnie where we stayed while visiting Anahuac, where the usually shy Bitterns seemed to be everywhere, High Island, where warblers, tanagers, and buntings put on their usual great show, Smith Woods, where the rookery is always amazing in the Spring, Bolivar Flats, where the peeps of every variety make identity decisions interesting, Yacht Basin Road, where baby Clapper Rails ran everywhere, much to the dismay of their mothers and a flock of Bobolinks surprised us, and Sabine Woods, which seemed to have most every songbird possible present: thrushes, warblers, buntings and tanagers, not to mention a huge water snake in the small pond which kept the birds drinking at other sites. Members of our group who had never been to Texas before were amazed at the variety of birds and the sight of the chemical plants and refineries lit up like Christmas trees along the highways.

The second part of our trip took us to Big Bend National Park. We flew to Midland and caravanned to the Park. Newcomers were again amazed, this time at the immensity of the landscape. We had an unexpected treat in Marathon, where we stopped to view an Ostrich farm. Once we arrived at the Lodge in the Basin, we planned our trips according to the hiking skills of the members of the group. All of us caravanned down to the Rio Grand Campground and Picnic area to enjoy the Vermillion Flycatchers, the Black Phoebe and the nesting Black Hawk. We stopped on the way to take the Dugout Wells Nature Trail. The blooming cacti were a photographic hit with the Easterners. The next day some of us climbed the Chisos Mountains to see the Colima Warbler and visit Boot Springs, where we saw Bluewinged Hummingbirds. The others took the Windows trail, which is a gentler climb, and were treated with a Scotts Oriole sighting. One evening we drove down to a site where Elf Owls have built a nest in a telephone pole; and while waiting for it to get dark enough for the owls to come out, we found that we were being watched by a Bobcat up in the rocks across the road.

The whole group went to Sam Nail Ranch, Castolon and Cottonwood Campground on the following day. The highlight of that day was ice cream on the way back from viewing Santa Elena Canon. It was hot down in the desert.

Every evening we dined at the Lodge, and we enjoyed watching a Says Phoebe feeding her chicks in a nest on a ledge right outside the dining room. On our last night, she finally got the two chicks to fly out of the nest to the ledge nearby and then back for the night. She had quite an audience of encouraging birders, urging the chicks on. The next morning, we packed up to drive back to Midland for flights back to our various destinations.

The trip lasted ten days, and there wasn't near enough to time to see everything. The total count of species seen was 242. Participants new to Texas each got at least forty life birds and vowed they would be back. I personally got eleven life birds.

Bonnie Campion

### **TOS Field Trip to Southern California**

We arrived on Thursday morning (May26) and immediately drove to Palos Verdes Peninsula. Western birds seen there included Western Scrub Jay, Lesser Goldfinch, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, California Towhee, Black Phoebe, White-throated Swift, Anna's Hummingbird, Costa's Hummingbird, Bushtit, **Allen's Hummingbird**, and the target bird, **California Gnatcatcher**. Along the coast route to the hotel in Santa Paula we also saw a Surf Scoter, Heermann's and Western Gulls.

On Friday we birded along the Sespe River north of Fillmore. This is one of the historic breeding locations of the **California Condor**, which are monitored daily by the park rangers. Also seen were **Mountain Quail**, Lazuli Bunting, Western Wood Pewee, California Quail, **Lawrence's Goldfinch**, Hooded Oriole, **Pacific-coast Flycatcher**, Red-shouldered Hawk (elegans subspecies) and Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon).

In the afternoon we watched the Nuttall's Woodpecker at its nest, Oak Titmouse, Hutton's Vireo, **Wrentit**, and Acron Woodpecker in Sisar Canyon.

On Saturday we went to Santa Cruz Island on the ferry. On the way over Xantus's Murrelet, **Cassin's Auklet**, **Sooty Shearwater**, **Pink-footed Shearwater** and a Pacific Loon were observed from the boat. The **Island Scrub Jays** were plentiful, but the Common Raven was the most enterprising. When we left our lunch in the backpacks on the picnic, he come over and unzipped the packs and then the Jays swarmed removing several bags of food. Fortunately, one of our group was able to rescue our lunch. In the afternoon we were able to see the Pelagic Cormorant, **Pigeon Guillemot**, Black Oystercatcher and Brant's Cormorant.

Wearily on Sunday, we birded the Carrizo Plain and some more of Los Padres National Forest. New birds were the **Cassin's Finch**, **White-headed Woodpecker**, **Tri-colored Blackbird** and the Red-winged Blackbird (bi-colored subspecies), and **Yellow-billed Magpie**. At the Carrizo Plain we all got great looks at the San Andres Fault. Once we crossed over it we were treated to a female Prairie Falcon with 2 fledglings. 2 young Barn Owls were in the area also. The **Sage Sparrow** was the

final bird we saw that day. After dark we returned to watch the endangered **San Joaquin Kit Foxes** and kangaroo rats. When the lights from the van were turned off the sky was so full of stars. I haven't seen that since I was in the Davis Mountains. It was hard to believe we were in California.

Sunday morning we stomped the chaparral for the **Le Conte's Thrasher**. Finally, one individual sat up for us and we were on our way to Mt. Abel (Elev. 8000). Olive-sided Flycatcher, Violet-green Swallows, Stellar Jay, **Fox Sparrow (thick-billed subspecies)** Western Bluebird, Mountain Chickadee, Dusky Flycatcher, **Green-tailed Towhee**, California Thrasher, **Black-chinned Sparrow** and Black-throated Gray Warblers were some of the birds we saw. That night several people went out after dinner to owl in the Santa Paula area.

The next morning we left for the airport. I saw 33 lifebirds and 4 new subspecies of preciously seen species. In total I saw 110 different species.

### **Lake Tawakoni Trip Report, Sat. Sept 25**

Thirteen Audubon members from the Metroplex participated in the Lake Tawakoni field trip lead by Richard Kinney on September 25. Sixty-three species were seen or heard. Probably the best birds of the day were a pair of Pine Siskins. As most of you know they have been absent for the most part from our area for the past two years. Let's hope this very early sighting (a month early) means they will be returning this winter.

First of the season Wilson's Snipe, House Wren, Northern Flicker and American Coot were observed by all.

Due to the partly cloudy conditions Broad-winged and Sharpshinned Hawks were seen kettling overhead in a couple of locations.

Other species worth noting were Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Osprey, Crested Caracara, Pileated Woodpecker, numerous Brown Thrashers, a late Yellow-billed Cuckoo eating a giant caterpillar, a bright red male Summer Tanager, and several types of shorebirds-Avocets, hundreds of Forster's Terns and various Sandpipers including Baird's, Western, Pectoral and Least.

We began birding at the new Lake Tawakoni State Park office. The park is wonderful and very clean. The trails along the shoreline are well laid out taking advantage of the natural habitat. It is well worth the hour plus drive to bird at this location.

Georgette Guernsey

### **Spring Creek Forest Preserve & 111 Ranch Park, Sat. Oct 23.**

Fourteen birders from PTAS and Audubon Dallas joined Jack and Derek Hill for a morning of birding in the fields and trails of Spring Creek Forest followed by a walk around 111 Ranch Park. The morning ended with some nice views of Damselflies in the creek. Thanks to Derek Hill for the species list which totaled 45 bird, 9 butterfly and 3 damselfly species.

Tom Heath

### **BIRDS (45)**

Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Mallard, Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, White-winged Dove, Mourning Dove, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Spotted Towhee, Field Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Common Crackle, House Finch.

### **BUTTERFLIES (9)**

Dainty Sulfur, Orange Sulfur, Cloudless Sulfur, Pearl Crescent, Question Mark, Monarch, Clouded Skipper, Dun Skipper, Roadside-Skipper.

### **DAMSELFLIES (3)**

Smoky Rubyspot, American Rubyspot, Dusky Dancer.

Derek Hill

### **Second Saturday Birdwalk at the Heard, December 11**

The following were seen at the Heard Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary: Wood Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Hooded Merganser, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Redshouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Killdeer, Ring-Billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Loggerhead Shrike, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Blue-bird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal.

Gailon Brehm

### **Lake Benbrook and surrounding area, Sat. Dec 11.**

A group of 13 birded various locations in Tarrant Co. on 12-11-04 including Aledo Rd, David Powell's yard, Mosque Point, Cement Creek Lake, Mustang Park and Longhorn Park at Lake Benbrook, and Winscott Plover Rd. We tried Stubbs Ranch, but the entrance was blocked. A total of 93 species were seen. Highlights included: LAPLAND LONGSPUR (1) at Cement Creek Lake in a group of horned larks; RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS (4) at Lake Worth seen from Mosque Point; HORNED (10) AND EARED GREBES (2) at Benbrook Lake seen from Mustang Park; MERLIN (1) at Mustang Park; SHORT-EARED OWLS (3) on Aledo Rd; BLUE-HEADED VIREO (1) at Mosque Point; and RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (1) - David Powell's yard.

D. D. Currie Arlington, TX

Gadwall American Wigeon Mallard Northern Shoveler Northern Pintail  
 Green-winged Teal Canvasback Redhead Lesser Scaup  
 Bufflehead RED-BREASTED  
 MERGANSER (4) - Lake Worth from Mosque Point Ruddy  
 Duck Northern Bobwhite  
 Pied-billed grebe HORNED GREBE (10) - Benbrook Lake from Mustang Park  
 EARED GREBE (2) - same American White Pelican Double-crested cormorant  
 Great blue Heron Black Vulture Turkey Vulture Northern Harrier  
 Sharp-shinned Hawk Cooper's Hawk Red-Shoulder Hawk Red-Tailed Hawk  
 American Kestrel MERLIN (1) - Mustang Park American Coot Killdeer Spotted Sandpiper Least Sandpiper (8) - Cement Creek Lake Wilson's Snipe  
 Bonaparte's Gull Ring-billed Gull Forster's Tern Rock Pigeon Eurasian  
 Collared Dove White-winged Dove Mourning Dove Eastern Screech Owl (1) - Longhorn Park SHORT-EARED OWL (3) - Aledo Rd. Belted Kingfisher Red-bellied woodpecker Yellow-bellied woodpecker Ladder-backed woodpecker (1) - Winscott Plover Rd (Johnson Co.) Downy woodpecker Northern flicker Eastern phoebe Loggerhead shrike BLUE-HEADED VIREO (1) - Mosque Point Blue jay  
 American crow Carolina chickadee Tufted titmouse Black-crested titmouse  
 RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (1) - David Powell's yard Horned Lark Carolina wren  
 Bewick's wren Rudy-crowned kinglet Eastern bluebird  
 American robin  
 Northern mockingbird Brown thrasher European starling  
 American pipit Cedar waxwing Orange-crowned warbler Yellow-rumped warbler PINE WARBLER (1) - Mosque Point Spotted towhee Field sparrow Vesper sparrow Savannah sparrow  
 LE CONTE'S SPARROW (1) - Longhorn Park Song sparrow Swamp sparrow  
 White-throated sparrow Harris' sparrow White-crowned sparrow LAPLAND  
 LONGSPUR (1) - Cement Creek Lake Northern Cardinal Red-winged blackbird  
 Eastern meadowlark Brewer's blackbird Great-tailed grackle  
 Brown-headed cowbird American goldfinch House sparrow, Dark eyed junco.  
 D. D. Currie Arlington, TX

### Greenville City Lakes - 01/22/05

It seems that regardless of when a trip is scheduled for the Greenville City Lakes, nature throws us a curve ball. Last year on the scheduled trip day we were snowed out with over an inch of snow on Valentine's Day. This year was no exception as we experienced sustained winds of 20 MPH with gusts of over 40 MPH with temperatures in the low 40s. In spite of the adverse conditions, 20 PTAS members and guests braved the weather

and birded the Greenville Lakes and vicinity. We started the day in search of Smith's Longspurs, but in the high winds we were unable to add them to the day list. We flushed numerous Horned Larks, but were unable to positively find and ID the Smith's Longspurs. Although they were heard when we first entered the field, we were not able to locate and flush the flock that had been seen and monitored for a couple of weeks prior to the trip.

We then proceeded to Jennifer Maxwell's well managed backyard habitat where we had a little better luck. Jennifer wasn't able to make the trip, but graciously allowed us to bird her property. We were able to get great looks at male and female Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, lots of American Goldfinches, and Song, Field, Fox, White-throated, Savannah, and LeConte's Sparrows. We had a total of 38 species at Jennifer's place and really appreciated the opportunity to bird her very special property.

We proceeded on to the Greenville City Lakes where despite the extremely high winds; we were able to tally Horned Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Redbreasted Merganser, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Great Blue Heron Forster's Tern, and Ring-billed Gull. Overhead, we had Red-tailed Hawk, Red Shouldered Hawk, Northern Harrier and American Kestrel. We missed the winter resident Bald Eagle, although it was seen the following day and again the following Saturday. We tallied a total of 58 species for the day, which wasn't bad for the conditions in which we were birding. Maybe we'll have better luck with the weather next year.

Ron Baltzegar

### Hagerman NWR, Feb 19, 2005

The field trip to Hagerman NWR proved once again that you should never let the weather forecast dampen your plans to show up for a field trip. Twelve or more brave souls came despite the forecast for rain. The temperature got a bit nippy, but there was very little rain.

Tom Gruss had come in from the western entrance and reported that there was a field full of geese just outside the refuge. So we started by going to check them out. It was mostly Snow geese (with a good many blues mixed in), along with a fair number of White-fronteds, and a few Ross'. Later, inside the refuge we saw a pretty good number of Canadas. So that took care of all the expected geese species.

Pintail ducks were everywhere -- they are a beautiful sight. Also loads of Mallards, some Shovelers and Green-winged teal, a few Gadwalls and Redheads, and 1 pair of Wood ducks. There were also several White pelicans.

A special treat for me was seeing a flock of maybe 15 Purple finches -- the males are so bright! It had been several years since I had seen any.

We had 8 species of sparrows -- White-throated, White-crowned, Harris', Chipping, Field, Swamp, Song, & Savannah.

We had a total of 51 species, with nothing really unexpected, but always fun to see for the "bird-brained" individual.

Mike Mizell

## Arbor Hills Nature Preserve

On Saturday, March 12, 2005 just under a dozen birders took a field trip to Arbor Hills in Plano lead by Perry Ping. The 2 1/2 hour walk took us all over the preserve and yielded 45 species of birds. Many individuals including seasoned birders had not seen the prairie section of the preserve. Cooper's Hawks nest in the preserve and are currently showing signs of repeating this year. A nesting Common Crow treated everyone to a hide-and-seek contest. The nest with the crow sitting on it was in plain sight with its tail sticking out. Only after several minutes of hard looking did the obvious finally appear. It's amazing how something in plain sight can be invisible.

The following are highlights from the walk.

Water Type: Double-crested Cormorant - 5, Great Blue Heron - 2, Mallard - 2.

Raptors: Cooper's Hawk - 2, Red-tailed Hawk - 2, American Kestrel - 1.

Woodpeckers: Red-bellied - 3, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - 2, Ladder-back - 3, Downy - 4, Flicker - 2.

Passerines: Eastern Phoebe - 2, Blue-headed Vireo - 1, Golden-crowned Kinglet - 3, Eastern Bluebird - 3, Orange-crowned Warbler - 1.

Sparrows: Field - 15, Vesper - 2, Savannah - 4, Song - 3, White-throated - 1, DE Junco - 20.

Meadowlark & Finch: Eastern Meadowlark - 3, Western Meadowlark - 1, American Goldfinch - 6.

Perry Ping

## Beginning Bird Walk

Seven enthusiastic birders participated in the Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society Second Saturday Beginning Bird Walk at Heard Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary on April 9. 37 species were seen, many of which were singing on their breeding ground. The following were sighted: Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Double-crested Cormorant, Anhinga, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird and Common Grackle.

Highlights were Prothonotary Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, Redheaded Woodpecker, baby Wood Ducks, and Anhinga. In fields nearby, a flock of 8 – 10 upland sandpipers were seen.

Gailon Brehm

## California Condor Species Recovering

In May of this year, I had the opportunity to see first hand evidence that California Condor numbers are increasing. In mid-May I traveled to northeast Arizona to participate in a week long

national Sierra Club backpack trip down Paria Canyon (this was an awesome trip). Prior to the trip I stopped at the visitor center at Navajo Bridge in Marble Canyon (near Lee's Ferry). There was an unexplained commotion on the bridge. So, I went to see what was going on. There were four California Condors resting on nearby cliffs overlooking the Colorado River. Of course, I did not have my camera with me, so I ran to the car to get it and took pictures of 6, 16, 33, and 50. All Condors have numbers on them to assist in tracking their activities. (I also saw #53 on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon about two weeks later).

So what....right now there are only 61 California Condors in the wild with another 200 in captivity. So, how could this be good news? Well, 20 years ago, there were only 22 birds in the world anywhere. The Peregrine Fund and other environmental groups led the capture of all Condors to save the species and began growing the numbers in captivity.

The California Condor is truly a unique animal, being the largest bird in North America. It weighs 23 pounds and has a wing-span of 9.5 feet. By comparison, the Turkey Vulture weighs only 4 pounds with a wingspan of 5.5 feet and Bald Eagle 9.5 pounds and has a wingspan of 7 feet.

The primary cause for Condor decline is the digestion of lead. Condors are scavengers and eat dead animals, like coyotes. When humans shoot animals with lead bullets and leave any part of the animal in the wild, scavengers will eventually digest some lead and it bio-accumulates in the scavenger. Even if the animal is carefully cleaned, as much as 20% of the lead in a bullet has shattered and distributed throughout the body. The solution to the problem is to use non-lead bullets (copper).

So, what are the lessons learned from this issue....

1. Environmental groups' actions can lead to success in saving species.
2. Stop using lead bullets. Get your friends to stop using lead bullets.
3. Don't eat any animal that has been shot with lead bullets, as you will be digesting lead if you do.
4. Get outdoors, you never know what you might see.

David Van Winkle

## Book Review:

**HOW TO BE A (BAD) BIRDWATCHER**, by Simon Barnes, Pantheon Books, 2005.

By "Bad" Birdwatcher, Barnes means someone who is never not birding. That is, the person is always looking for birds no matter what else they may be doing. This 221 page book is also a bad book, one of the few bird books that I can recall that I felt was a waste of time to read. The beginning birder might get some value from it as the author urges the reader to get out and bird, even with crumby binoculars (I say get good binos to start with). The experienced birder will do a lot of head nodding, as readers say to themselves "yep, that's the way it is." The book has some glimmers of humor here and there, but no illustrations of any kind. Get it from the library if you wish, but don't waste money buying it.

Sid Dunkle

**CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY FEEDER WATCH PROGRAM – Starting November 12**

Join over 16,000 other citizen scientists who periodically count the birds that visit their bird feeders from November to April. Your counts will help scientists track the distribution and abundance of birds in winter. Put up a feeder and count the birds that visit two days a week. Send in your data via internet or US mail. The project is 19 years old and through contributions of thousands of individuals across the US and Canada has resulted in the largest database of North American feeder-bird populations in the world. The data allow scientists to investigate questions relating to population dynamics of feeder birds and to examine the factors, such as House Finch eye disease or weather, which affect these birds.

For more information on the project and instruction on how to join, go to <http://birds.cornell.edu/pfw/>. Click on "Helping birds is as easy as" then click on any FAQ for more information or click on "Join Today/Renew" to receive a research kit in the fall and to start your subscription to BirdScope. There is a \$12 fee to pay for web site maintenance, data analysis, participant support, printing and shipping project materials, dissemination of the information learned from the data, and part of the cost of publishing a newsletter for project participants-BirdScope.

The next FeederWatch season begins November 12.

Note: If there is an error in your mailing information, please contact the Merrick Darley at [hmdarley@comcast.net](mailto:hmdarley@comcast.net).

**Your Help Needed in September to Save Arctic Refuge!**

Audubon is making a big push to save the pristine wilderness in Alaska from destructive oil drilling, and you can help!

After 25 years of fighting, our last best chance to protect the refuge will be in the House of Representatives on a vote quickly approaching in September. The House did not include drilling provisions in their version of the budget, but the Senate did. That means members of both houses have to meet to hammer out the differences between the two bills. Word on the Hill is that it will be included in the final version, with an expected final vote the week of September 26th.

Please call or e-mail your elected officials! Go to <http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/lawmaker.asp?step=1> to find contact information for your U.S. Representative.

U.S. Senators

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (TX-0S1), United States Senate  
284 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0001  
Phone:202-224-5922, Fax: 202-224-0776, TDD: 202-224-5903

Senator John Cornyn (TX-0S1), United States Senate  
517 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0001  
Phone: (202) 224-2934, Fax: (202) 228-2856

Log on to Audubon’s special “Protect the Arctic” website – <http://www.audubon.org/campaign/arcticpolicy/> – or contact Desiree Groves in Audubon’s public policy office in Washington, DC at 202-861-2242, x3038 ([dgroves@audubon.org](mailto:dgroves@audubon.org)) to find out how you can help!

**PRAIRIE & TIMBERS AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**Officers, Chairpersons and Board Members**

**President:** *Gailon Brehm\**..... 972-517-2542

**Vice President:** *Open*

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

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

**Birdathon:** *Mike Bedford\**.....214-692-7137

**Conservation/Armchair Activist:**

*Roger Sanderson*.....469-767-7242

*Georgette Guernsey\**..... 972-542-8089

**Newsletter:** *Rebecca Hughes*..... 972-473-7821

**Field Trips:** *Georgette Guernsey\**..... 972-542-8089

*Tom Heath\**.....972-867-8646

**Education:** *Gailon Brehm\**..... 972-517-2542

*Roger Sanderson*.....469-767-7242

**Hospitality:** *Bonnie Champion*..... 972-754-5375

*Willie Meyers*..... 972-596-3827

**Membership:** *Jerri Kerr* ..... 972-578-3146

*Merrick Darley* ..... 972-422-5355

*Dan Smith*.....972-516-2297

**Website/Electronic Communications:**

*Tom Heath\**.....972-867-8646

*Merrick Darley* ..... 972-422-5355

**Programs:** *Sally Evans\** ..... 972-248-6283

*Willie Meyers*..... 972-596-3827

**Publicity:** *David Van Winkle\**.....972-562-7174

*Bobette Mauck\**..... 972-540-5646

**Regional Delegate:** *Reba Collins*

\* *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.

\_\_\_ Please enroll me as a member of Prairie & Timbers Chapter ONLY. Enclosed is my check for \$12.00 made out to P&T Audubon Society.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: State: Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about Prairie and Timbers Audubon?

\_\_\_ From a member of Prairie and Timbers Audubon.

\_\_\_ From the Prairie and Timbers Audubon 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



## **The Very Best of the Big Bend**

### **The Heard Offers Guided Trip to Big Bend National Park**

**Limited Space Requires Early Reservations**  
**Registration deadline September 12, 2005**

One of the most popular offerings by the Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary is a guided trip to Big Bend National Park. This fall, travelers are invited to join two veteran guides October 5 - 9 for a five-day trip, featuring opportunities for photography, star-gazing and wildlife-watching.

Travelers will leave Dallas via Southwest Airlines early October 5 and return on the evening of October 9. A charter motor coach will take the group from the Midland International Airport to Big Bend National Park, with accommodations at the Chisos Mountains Lodge in the heart of the Big Bend region. Heard Wildlife Biologist Roger Sanderson and Naturalist Lisa Cole will lead the group on hikes to some of the most spectacular locations in the Chihuahuan desert.

For members of The Heard, the cost for this fully escorted tour is \$795 per person based on double occupancy and includes ground transportation, four nights' lodging, park entrance fees and meals except for noon Wednesday (but excludes airfare). The cost for a single traveler with a private room is \$955. Non-members, add \$50 per person. The itinerary and trip cost are subject to change. Travelers will be responsible for the cost of airfare to Midland (round trip airfare to Midland is currently \$120). Flight arrangements will be made by The Heard once all travelers' registrations are received.

A deposit of \$525 per person is required upon reservation, with the balance payable prior to September 21. Refunds will not be available after September 21. Mail deposits to:

The Heard  
One Nature Place  
McKinney, Texas 75069-8840  
Attn: Big Bend Trip,  
or call 972-562-5566, ext. 237