

Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

November / December 2005

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Christmas Bird Counts

As we approach the end of 2005, I'm again looking forward to participating in at least two Christmas Bird Counts, the McKinney CBC and the Caddo CBC. These, like all CBCs, are a complete one-day survey of all birds within a specific 15-mile diameter circle. Counts are conducted by teams of volunteers and results are submitted to the National Audubon Society. As a result valuable data is obtained during a time when birds have settled in for the winter.

As participants, we each are assigned to a team with responsibility to survey a segment of the count circle. Each team typically spends 6 hours or so observing and recording species totals. The experience is similar to a recreational bird walk, but it differs in the responsibility to count, as accurately as possible, the number of each species that is seen. This count is confined to a specific geographical area and the entire area is surveyed.

In north Texas, a typical count circle reports approximately 100 species, from 1 to 10,000 or more of each. A typical team, surveying a segment of the count circle, may see 60 species. Counts are conducted independent of weather conditions; so bad weather offers another challenge to participants. All in all, I find the experience to be extremely satisfying and would encourage any of you, whatever your level of skill, to participate.

Gailon Brehm, President

PTAS WEBSITE
http://prairieandtimbers.org
Check It Out!

November and December Field Trips

Our November 19 field trip will be to Greenville. We will look for sparrows and other birds behind Jennifer Maxwell's home and then go to the Greenville Lake to look for arriving ducks. We will carpool from Kohl's parking lot at 7:00, spend 3 hours birding, and then return to Kohl's by 12:00pm.

Lewisville Dam (LLELA) will be our destination on December 3rd. Ken Steigman will be our leader. There will be a \$3.00 admission fee per person. Expected birds are Short-eared Owls, Woodcocks, LeConte's Sparrows, and other wintering birds. Expect to spend most of the time walking both below the dam and on it. We will leave Kohl's parking lot at 5:00 am and return by 11:00am. The trip is limited to the 15 people.

Both trips are half day events.

Georgette Guernsey

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

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

PTAS Programs for the 2005-2006 year

November 22, 2005

Identification and aging of North American wading birds – The key to identification and aging a bird is in the

birds – The key to identification and aging a bird is in th pattern of the feathers. It is easy, says Mr. Carlson!

Mr. Steve Carlson 4208 Pecan Orchard Lane Parker, Texas 75002 972 423 7856

December 17, 2005

Christmas Bird Count - Caddo Grasslands

Contact Doug Woods – dwood@sosu.edu 580 745 2272

December 26, 2005

Christmas Bird Count - Heard Museum

Contact Dan Smith – asmithfamily@comcast.net 972 516 2297

January 24, 2006

Dr. Jeanette Boylan - Least Terns Colonies

The Dallas Zoo and the North Texas Tollway System have sponsored monitoring of the Least Tern colonies in Dallas and Denton Counties. We have no 'sand bars' in these areas, so where are they nesting? How does the George Bush "Turnpike" fit into this scenario?

Dr. Jeanette Boylan Zoologist from the Dallas Zoo 650 South R.l. Thornton Freeway Dallas, Texas 75203 214 671 0774 jboylan@mail.ci.dallas.tx.us

February 28, 2006

Dr. Marcy Brown - Callison Medal Winner

Dr. Brown Marsden was awarded the Callison Medal in Environmental Policy at the meeting of the national board of the Audubon Society in Park City, Utah, in May of 2004. The Callison Medal is a national-level award given to only two exemplary volunteers every other year. The award is in recognition of her work on endangered species research and restoration at Cedar Ridge Preserve, her committee service to identify and restore areas necessary to preserve bird diversity in both Texas and on a global scale, and her initiation of Conservation-In-Action workdays to involve individuals in conservation projects at the Cedar Ridge Preserve, which is located in the southwest quadrant of Dallas. The Black-capped vireo was one of the beneficiaries of her study.

Dr. Marcy Brown University of Dallas 1845 E. Northgate Drive Irving, Texas 75062 972 721 5245

March 28, 2006

Bonnie Bradshaw - Backyard Wildlife: The Dos and Don'ts of Sharing your Habitat

Learn what to do if you find an orphaned or injured bird or other wild animal. Find out ways to prevent some of the most common wildlife conflict situations, such as squirrels in attics, ducks in swimming pools, and skunks under decks.

Ms. Bradshaw is a wildlife rehabilitator and member of the DFW Wildlife Coalition, a native Texan, a certified Texas Master Naturalist, and the public relations coordinator at Texas Discovery Gardens in Fair Park.

Bonnie Bradshaw of the Texas Discovery Gardens 3717 Atrium Dr. Plano, Texas 75075 972 743 7737

April 25, 2006 "A work in Progress"

May 23, 2006

"Indoors and Outdoors"

We have once again been invited to the Plano Independent School District's Outdoor Learning Center to visit with the many animals housed there for instructional purposes and to walk the woods in the dark listening to sounds and feeling the peaceful quiet of night.

Heard Bird Census Report

Heard Museum Birding Census

Mid-August thru Mid-October

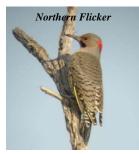
During the two month period 103 different species were seen at Heard Museum. The birds associated with water have dropped out considerably due to the continued drought and the almost total evaporation of the Woodduck Lagoon and Mallard Marsh. Hawks began migrating through about the middle of September. Kestrels, Broadwinged Hawks, Northern Harriers and Turkey Vultures were the most common. A few sandpipers visited, but the habit wasn't available for a great number. The doves have begun to congregate in flocks. On September 25 twenty-five White-winged Doves were seen on the grounds. Northern Flickers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are arriving now. Early in September Olivesided Flycatcher, Willow, Alder, and Least Flycatchers visited for a short period of time while the Eastern and Western Kingbirds, and Great Crested Flycatchers left for

the season. A Blue-headed Vireo, Brown Thrashers, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet were seen on September 29th. The FOS Winter Wren appeared on October 13th. The warblers have been trickling through the area for most of the time. On September 8th the banders netted a Wormeating Warbler which is a very rare bird for north central Texas. Other warblers seen have been Yellow, Prothonotary, Black and White, Black-throated Green, Mourning, Nashville, Wilson's, Common Yellowthroat Yellow-breasted Chat, and American Redstart. On October 13th the FOS Spotted Towhee, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and Song Sparrow were seen on the grounds.

On the second Saturday of each month members of our organization lead a 3 hour tour of the grounds. Join us and see these wonderful birds for yourself.

The following is the bird list from Heard: Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Cattle Egret, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-heron, Canada Geese, Wood Duck, Turkey Vulture, Black Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Redtailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, Broad-winged Hawk, American Kestrel, Lesser Yellowlegs, Upland Sandpiper, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Mourning Dove, White-winged Dove, Rock Pigeon, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Barred Owl, Eastern Screech Owl, Chimney Swift, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied

Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Yellowbellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Great crested



Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Western Kingbird, Scissortail Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Warbling Vireo, White-eyed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Purple Martin, Cliff Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, White-



breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Winter Wren, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Gray Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, American

Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Starling, Yellow Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Black

and White Warbler, Black-throated Green, Mourning Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, American Redstart, Worm-eating Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Painted Bunting, Dickcissel, Spotted Towhee, Lark Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird, Redwinged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Great-tailed Grackle, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, House Finch, House Sparrow

Georgette Guernsey

Connemara Meadow Field Trip - October 15, 2005

Gailon Brehm - Leader

22 birders spent 3 hours walking on a beautiful October day at the Connemara Meadow and nearby Plano and Allen city parks along Rowlett Creek. 42 species were seen including a very large flock of Robins. Other wintering species of note were Northern Flickers, Yellow-Bellied Sapsuckers, and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Migrants were Nashville Warblers, Tennessee Warbler,

Black-throated Green Warbler, Brewer's Blackbird (likely), and Chimney Swift. The Monarch butterflies were in abundance as were the Buckeyes and Red Admirals. I would like to give a special



thank you to Gailon and Paula for allowing us to take a short break at their beautiful home next to the conservation area. The following is the trip list: Double-crested Cormorant, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Rock Pigeon (Rock Dove), Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Chimney Swift, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Scissortail Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Blue-headed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren (heard only), House Wren (heard only), Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird (heard only), American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher

(heard only), European Starling, Nashville Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Blue Grosbeak, Eastern Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, Great-tailed Grackle,



Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch, House Sparrow

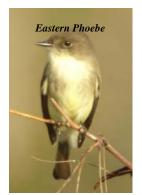
Lake Lavon Field Trip - September 17, 2005

Confusion reigned on our first outing of the 2005-2006 season. As we arrived at the Kohl's parking lot so did approximately 700 parents and children for a charity event at Kohl's. Despite the traffic we were able to locate each other and leave for the lake almost on time. I have birded the area near the old Blue Ridge Park for close to 2 months and not seen a single soul. However, on Saturday I was surprised to walk out unto the mudflats and find decoys and duck hunters. We stayed long enough for everyone to get a good look at the White-faced Ibises and then retreated to a safer location on the other side of FM559. Though the day was hot and the wind was from the south, we managed to see a few migrants. As we drove up, a Broad-winged Hawk flew in for a brief stop on his way south. An early arriving Brown Thrasher popped up and gave us an opportunity to view this beautiful reddish-brown bird. The water in Lavon is 6 feet below average so there are extensive mudflats along all the shorelines. In total we saw 8 species of shorebirds. One stood out looking like a Baird's Sandpiper that had sat in an oil patch. American Kestrels were plentiful as were Tree Swallows, Barn Swallows, and Chimney Swifts. At Brockdale Park we were treated to a good look at an Osprey. In all, we saw 44 species of birds. A special thanks goes to Bonnie Campion who was the unexpected hostess of the group during our mid morning break. 15 people attended the field trip.

Trip List

American White Pelican, Stilt Sandpiper, Double-crested

Cormorant, Forster's Tern, Great Blue Heron, Mourning Dove, Great Egret, Chimney Swift, Snowy Egret, Hummingbird, White Ibis, Downy Woodpecker, Whitefaced Ibis, Eastern Phoebe, Wood Duck, Scissortail Flycatcher, Turkey Vulture, White-eyed Vireo, Black Vulture, Blue Jay, Redshouldered Hawk, American Crow, Broad-winged Hawk,



Tree Swallow, Red-tailed Hawk, Barn Swallow, Osprey, Tufted Titmouse, American Kestrel, Carolina Chickadee, Killdeer, Carolina Wren, Lesser Yellowlegs, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Solitary Sandpiper, Brown Thrasher, Pectoral Sandpiper, Starling, Baird's Sandpiper, Indigo Bunting, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Common Grackle, Least Sandpiper, Great-tailed Grackle

Georgette Guernsey

Stories About Birds And Birdwatchers, Edited by Mary Beacon Bowers, 1981, Atheneum, NY, 234 pages.

This is a collection of 38 stories from Bird Watchers Digest, most reprinted from other sources. The stories are divided into 6 Sections: 1) Miscellaneous Species, including one about a Saw-whet Owl called the "Unkindest Cut of Owl," and one on Penguins by Roger Tory Peterson, 2) Discovering the World of Birds, including "It Happened One Night" which changed two women's lives when on a whim they exchanged bird books at Xmas, 3) In Pursuit of Birds-Almost Anywhere, including two raptor stories by Pete Dunne, always a treat, 4) Stop, Look and List – 7 stories, 5) The Flip Side – 5 stories about birders, including "Common Varieties of Wild Bird Watchers I Have Known" such as Disdainful Dan, Alibi Al, Wally Wandersoff, Presto the Magician, Vigilant Virgie, and Stationary Harry, 6) Reflections – 6 stories about humans' effect on birds. The book includes some black-and-white drawings, and a short sketch about each author. If you have gathered from the above that there is something in here for everyone, you'd be right.

Sid Dunkle

Raptors Of Western North America, And Raptors Of Eastern North America, by Brian K. Wheeler, 2003, Princeton Univ. Press.

This magnificent set of books constitute the textbooks on North American raptors. These books are a little too large and heavy to be carried as field guides, but they would make a good reference in the car. The western guide contains 603 color photos in 544 pages, the eastern guide contains 540 photos in 439 pages. Only about 10 of the photos were re-used from "A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors" by Wheeler and Clark 1995, itself a very good book. The western guide includes North America west of the Mississippi River, and thus includes all of Texas. The Range Maps are exceptionally detailed and complete. Lots of good information can be garnered from the extensive captions for each photo. The reader should realize, as it took me a while to realize, that each caption refers to its specific photo, not to all birds in that category. The photos were not computer enhanced, as the author wanted to show as exactly as possible what he saw in the field. My opinion is that the photos should have had the exposures adjusted to show field marks that were in shadow. The book chapters include: Introduction, General Glossary, Anatomy Glossary, Molt Glossary, Displays Glossary, Perching and Flying Attitudes, and Photography (all of these the same for the 2 books), followed by the Species Accounts, 33 for the Western, 26 for the Eastern. The species accounts may be very similar for some species in the two books, but differ slightly, such as in the selection of photos for West and East. For example, the Western book for the Red-tailed Hawk

includes 82 photos of the various subspecies, morphs, and age variations, while the Eastern has 81 photos, with a few different photos between the two books. One thing I especially liked was the author's extensive definition of terms, in particular his definition on page 4 of Tame (human can approach to 100 feet), Fairly Tame (vehicle to less than 100 ft.), Moderately Tame (vehicle to about 100 ft.), Wary (vehicle to several 100 ft.), and Very Wary (raptor leaves when vehicle is sighted). Wheeler said that Buteos and Eagles are much warier in the East than in the West – I would put most North Texas Buteos in the Wary category. Also of particular interest for photo buffs was Wheeler's discussion of Photography – he uses Provia F film pushed to 200 ISO, and an Autofocus 300 mm lens with a 1.4 or 2.0X Tele-extender. He tries to arrange to photograph flying raptors over a pale ground surface that reflects light up onto the shadowed underside. He said that he has not yet gone digital (but I bet he will!). Of particular interest is that Mr. Wheeler is a Truck Driver! I highly recommend these books to anyone with a particular interest in raptors, even though they have to be studied like textbooks and will not give instant expertise.

Sid Dunkle

Hawks From Every Angle, by Jerry Liguori, 2005, Princeton, paperback, 132 pp.

This book is designed to aid the identification of migrating raptors at North American hawkwatch sites. As such, it does not include photos of perched raptors, or of species that are not usually seen at such sites. A useful 10-page introductory section includes a Glossary, Anatomy, Flight Shapes, Light Conditions, Molt, Aberrant Plumages, Migration Sites, Weather, Optics, and Photography. The author points out that raptors showing feather molt during fall migration cannot be juveniles. Very useful features are maps of spring and fall hawkwatching sites, a table of when each species' numbers peak during migration, and tables of high counts for each species at a selection of sites. The species accounts are lumped into 5 Sections: Accipiters, Northern Harrier, Buteos, Falcons, and Vultures, Osprey, Eagles. Each of these sections has a general account for the group, including "Pitfalls" or common mistakes in identification, and a page or two showing comparative shapes of the species in the group during soaring, gliding, head-on, wing-on, going-away, etc. The numerous color photos and their captions are great. The text is not so great, because it has field marks of similar species intertwined into a mishmash of facts that takes lots of work to untangle. In short, although this book is definitely worth buying, if you are looking for easy answers to raptor identification, you won't find them here. An "Idiot's Guide to Raptor Identification" has yet to be written!

Sid Dunkle

A Guide To Birding, by Joseph Forshaw, Steve Howell, Terence Lindsey, and Rich Stallcup, Fog City Press, 1994.

I had seen this book in past years, but only recently did I finally have a chance to read through it. It was copyrighted in 1994, but the copy I looked at stated that it was the "2002 edition." However, it appears to be a reprint, not a new edition, because the taxonomy is out of date. It is too large and incomplete to be a field guide, but it would be worthwhile for a beginning birder to read, if they had a good field guide to go with it. For example, the Sharp-shinned Hawk is illustrated, and the Cooper's Hawk mentioned, but (shudder) the authors state that "you may find it easier to write 'accipiter species' in your notebook." Chapters include 1) Understanding Birds (including mythology, fossil history, naming, anatomy, molting, flight, habitats, life cycle, behavior, songs, nests, and migration), 2) Birding at Home (including feeders and nest boxes), 3) Going Birding (including choosing binos and spotting scopes, ethics, field marks, birding by ear, taking notes, photography with film cameras, conservation, and 10 top birding sites - McKinney is not listed ...), and 4) The Habitat Birdfinder, (including identification to Family, Urban Areas, Woodlands, Grasslands, Wetlands, Seashores, and Deserts). Appendices include Further Reading, Birding Hotlines, and Organizations and Observatories. This book could be worthwhile acquiring for its multitude of good color photos and paintings. The photos, however, do not always illustrate the field marks that the text says are important. Captions for some unlabeled photos are buried in the back of the book after the index. To sum up, this actually is a beautiful book, just more aesthetic than useful for most birders.

Sid Dunkle

Cooper's Versus Sharp-Shinned Hawk Identification, extracted from Raptors of Western North American by Brian K. Wheeler.

Although the species accounts in this book are nicely divided into numerous uniform headings, I still found it difficult to compare point for point, as in my test case, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Here is what I gathered about these 2 species: **Tail:** Cooper's are larger overall, with a proportionately longer tail that is always rounded. Sharpies often have a square-tipped tail, but it may be just as rounded as a Cooper's. Head: Cooper's have a longer head, and when cold or alarmed, they raise the hackles on the back of the head which makes them look square-headed, whereas the Sharpie's head is always round. Adult Cooper's always have a black or dark brown cap, separated from the back by a rufous or gray nape. Sharpies always have the crown coloration continuous with the back. Adult Sharpies often (always?) have a black mask that loops around the bottom of the eye. Juvenile Cooper's eyes may be pale gray, Sharpie's eyes are never gray. Wings: When soaring (not gliding) Cooper's holds the front edge of the wings perpendicular to the body, whereas in Sharpies the wings are slanted forward of perpendicular. When soaring, Cooper's may make several circles before flapping, whereas Sharp-shins usually flap before each circle is complete. Some Cooper's have minimal barring on the inner primaries and secondaries, most Cooper's and all Sharpies have prominent barring there. Some adult female Cooper's are brown above, adult Sharp-shins always have grayish blue upperparts. Legs: Cooper's legs are about the diameter of a pencil, whereas Sharpie's legs are thin and spindly. Cooper's may perch on telephone poles, Sharpies apparently never do. Voice: Cooper's has nasal kek-kek notes, Sharp-shins have high clear kee-kee notes. Other: Differences that I had always thought were significant, like the amount of white at the tip of the tail, the way the wings are flapped, and in juveniles the width of the breast streaking, are apparently not reliable ways to tell Cooper's from Sharp-shinned. By the way, Sharpies have been found nesting in Red-cockaded Woodpecker pine forest habitat in east Texas, and in the Davis Mts. of west Texas. Also interesting is the fact that Cooper's has no subspecies, while Sharp-shins have 3 subspecies in North America.

Sid Dunkle

Owls By Day And Night, by Hamilton Tyler and Don Phillips, 1978, Naturegraph, 208 pp.

I found this paperback book on North American owls for a few dollars at Half Price Books. I thought I would quickly read it, then pass it on to a friend. However, I liked it so much that I'm going to keep it. Introductory chapters include: 1) How to Identify Owls, including distribution maps, 2) Raptors, including pellet formation and mobbing, 3) Finding Owls both Day and Night, including data on their sight and hearing, 4) Voices, 5) Nesting, and 6) Owls and Indians. Species accounts for all the North American Owls (Western Screech Owl lumped with Eastern) include much good information, plus many personal experiences and anecdotes. An afterword section includes a list of Alternative Common Names for Owls, and the meanings of their Scientific Names. Nice color paintings on 16 Plates depict all the North American Owls, and many line drawings and tables show various features of owl biology. Altogether a nice little book, and although somewhat dated, if you can find it, buy it.

Sid Dunkle

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

Membership Application

I would like to be a member of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society (PTAS), knowing that my annual membership dues will be used to support local bird-related projects and habitats. Enclosed is my check for \$12 (includes all family members at a single address) made out to: **PTAS**. PTAS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization; your membership fee and any donations made to PTAS are tax deductible. I would also like to support the National Audubon Society, where my annual membership dues will be used nationally and globally. Enclosed is my check for the special new-member introductory price of \$20, made out to: National **Audubon Society** Name Address City_____State / Zip_____ Phone Email (E-mail addresses are used to notify members of updated website newsletters, upcoming field trips, and important local bird-related issues. E-mail addresses are NOT shared with, or forwarded to, any other source.) How did you hear about Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society? _From a member of PTAS ____From the PTAS website _Other (please specify)_

c/o Mike Mizell, 800 Edgewood, Denton, TX 76201 Audubon code: 7XCH PTAS Chapter Code: W15

Mail to: Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

PRAIRIE & TIMBERS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Regional Delegate: Reba Collins

^{*} Board Members