



Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

May / June 2006

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Animals

I know Audubon societies are mostly focused on birding and the appreciation of birds and their habitat, but I personally have a strong interest in other vertebrate animals. I find identification of reptiles, amphibians, and mammals to be fascinating and very challenging. One thing that is challenging is to even see them. Think about it; how many bird walks have you taken where you counted 30, 40, 50 species of birds in half a day? During that same time period, in a good habitat for wildlife, how many species of other vertebrates did you see? Maybe two or three is typical. You might see an Eastern Fox Squirrel or an Eastern Cottontail, but it's rare to even see a turtle or lizard (or snake). Of course they're hiding out there, and they don't want us to see them.

So that's the challenge, but I keep looking. On a recent birding trip to the upper Texas coast, we saw over 150 species of birds, but only three species of mammals – Eastern Fox Squirrel, Eastern Gray Squirrel, and Swamp Rabbit. In spite of that challenge, I slowly build up a list of these fascinating, non-bird creatures that I have seen. I'm wearing out my ID books and learning a lot.

In closing, let me express my appreciation for the excellent newsletters published by Rebecca Hughes during this past year. She has decided take a break from editing after her son is born; so we wish all the best for her. Thanks, Rebecca!

Gailon Brehm, President

May and June Activities

May 5-7: LLELA Grand Opening

See article for schedule and more details.

May 6: Prairie Creek and Arapaho Parks

Warblers, warblers, and warblers are expected. Carolyn and Dave Oldham will lead starting at 7:30am at Prairie Creek Park. Carpooling will be available from Kohl's in McKinney at 7am.

May 13: Fox Creek Greenbelt, and Central Park in Lewisville

This trip will be easy walking and handicapped accessible for those who stay on the sidewalk and do not wish to walk on the trails down by the creek. The website has directions to this site and a sampling of sightings from 2005: <http://www.duhons.net/FoxCreek.htm>. Parking is available in three cul-de-sacs at various points along the greenbelt. Georgette Guernsey will lead starting at 7:30am. Carpooling will be available from Kohl's in McKinney at 6:30am.

May 13: 2nd Saturday at the Heard

The bird walks are for beginning / intermediate birders and will last 1.5+ hours with plenty of opportunity for questions and tips on birding techniques. Gailon Brehm will lead this bird walk starting at 9am. Attendees who have binoculars and field guides should bring them. Please register in advance by calling the Heard Museum at 972-562-5566. For details go to: http://prairieandtimbers.org/Heard_Sat.htm.

May 23: PTAS Monthly Meeting

The May meeting will be held at the Plano Outdoor Learning Center.

2006 Nest Box Camera Season

Currently there are ten live cameras using real-time internet technology to observe and interpret the nesting behaviors of cavity-nesting birds and promote understanding of their breeding biology. The main web site is <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse/nestboxcam/>. For the Prothonotary Warbler nest box at the Heard Museum go to http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse/nestboxcam/pro_warb_tx/index_html. There are no night lights in the nest boxes, so visit during daylight hours.

Tom Heath

Grand Opening: Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA)

May 5 - 7 (Friday - Sunday): There is no entrance fee that weekend.

Friday, May 5, 2006

7:00 am – Noon Begin Load in
7:30 am – 9:30 am Bird Walk – Ron Chenault
8:00 am – 10:00 am Wildflower Walk – Ken Steigman
8:30 am – 10:30 am Bird Walk – Keith Lockhart
10:00 am – 11:30 am Butterfly and Dragonfly Walk – Lawrence Duhon
7:00 pm – ‘til Frog Watching (Listening)
8:00 pm – ‘til Stargazing – UNT Astronomy Club

Saturday, May 6, 2006

6:30 am – 9:30 am Bird Walk – Ron Chenault
6:30 am – 10:00 am Fly-Fishing Demonstrations – Dallas Flyfisherman
8:00 am – 10:00 am Wildflower Walk – Ken Steigman
8:30 am – 10:30 am Bird Walk - Keith Lockhart
10:00 am – 11:30 am Butterfly and Dragonfly Walk – Lawrence Duhon
2:00 pm – 3:30 pm Bison Tour
10:00 am – 4:00 pm Blackland Raptor Rehabilitation Center Live Raptor Exhibit
10:00 am – 6 pm Native Plant Society of Texas
10:00 am – 6 pm Aquatic Plants – LAREF
10:00 am – 3 pm Kayak trips on the Elm fork – Kayak Power.com
9:00 am – 6 pm Kayaking competitions and instructions – Wetlands
2:00 pm Crawfish eating contest(s) – Razoo’s
10 am – 6 pm Various family friendly activities
Scheduled activities to include, but not limited to Life of a Lake – hike to top of damn, Riddle of Nature, Log House Tinker, Native vs. Invasive Plants, Cotton Gin, Story Telling, Leave No Trace – Texas Parks and Wildlife, Water Supply Coalition

Sunday, May 7, 2006

7:00 am – 9:00 am Bird Walk – Keith Lockhart
8:00 am – 10:00 am Bird Walk – Ron Chenault
10:00 am – 4:00 pm Blackland Raptor Rehabilitation Center Live Raptor Exhibit
2:00 pm – 3:30 pm Bison Tour
9 am – Noon Boy Scouts
Noon – 5 pm Load out

WE WANT YOUR UPDATED EMAIL ADDRESS!

Email is the most efficient way for us to let you know about events, meetings, and last minute changes or cancellations due to weather. We send only 1 or 2 e-mails per month, and we do not share our mailing list with anyone outside Audubon. If you are not on our email distribution list, or if your email has changed recently, please contact Merrick Darley at hmdarley@comcast.net.

SEE YOUR ADVERTISEMENT HERE!

Do you know someone that would like to advertise in the PTAS newsletter? Your business card, coupon, or graphic can be seen by fellow birders for a cost much lower than traditional advertising. Please contact Rebecca at Rebecca.Hughes@eds.com to place your ad in our next newsletter. Prices start at \$65 for one year of advertising.

PTAS Programs for the 2005-2006 year

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.

Lake Tawakoni Field Trip – March 25

For our field trip on March 25, we were given a beautiful day, no wind, lots of sun, and great birds. A total number of 86 species were seen. The third Cinnamon Teal in Van Zant county history was observed by all. The Horned Grebes were in alternate plumage, which isn’t often seen in Texas. The first of the season American Golden-Plovers, Scissortail Flycatchers, and Snowy Egrets were present. At the marina, the California Gull stood next to the Herring Gulls and gave us a chance to see the differences in the two species. Ron Baltazger later found Cave Swallow and Brown Pelican.

Georgette Guernsey

Trip list:

Common Loon
Wood Ducks
Gadwall
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Cinnamon Teal
Redhead
Northern
Shovelers
Horned Grebe
Pied-billed Grebe



Brown Pelican

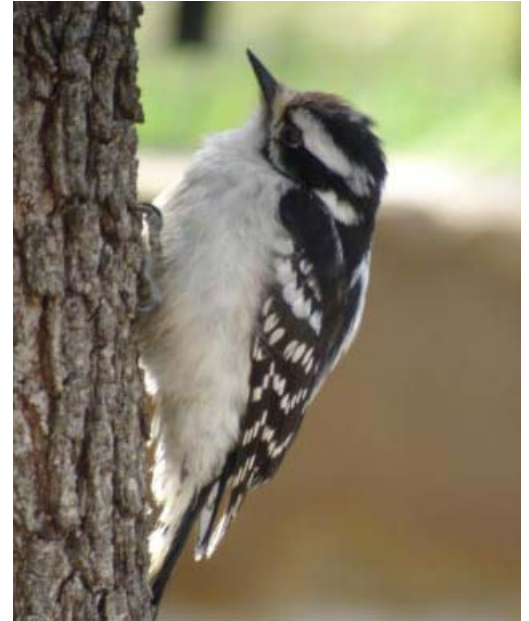


Great Egret

American White Pelican
Double-crested Cormorant (1000’s)
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Cooper’s Hawk
Crested Caracara
Osprey
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel

American Coot
 American Golden-Plover
 Killdeer
 Greater Yellowlegs
 Pectoral Sandpiper
 Least Sandpiper
 Long-billed Dowitcher
 Bonaparte's Gull
 California Gull
 Herring Gull
 Ring-billed Gull
 Forster's Tern
 Rock Pigeons
 Mourning Dove
 Eurasian Collared Dove
 Inca Dove
 Red-bellied Woodpecker
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
 Downy Woodpecker
 Hairy Woodpecker (H)
 Eastern Phoebe
 Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
 White-eyed Vireo
 Blue Jay
 American Crow
 Purple Martin
 Northern Rough-winged
 Swallow
 Cliff Swallow
 Barn Swallow
 Carolina Chickadee
 Tufted Titmouse
 White-breasted Nuthatch (H)
 Carolina Wren

Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
 Eastern Bluebird
 Hermit Thrush (H)
 Northern Mockingbird
 Brown Thrasher
 European Starling
 American Pipit
 Cedar Waxwings
 Orange-crowned Warbler
 Yellow-throated Warbler
 (H)
 Black-and-white Warbler
 (H)
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Common Yellowthroat
 Eastern Towhee
 Chipping Sparrow
 Field Sparrow
 Lark Sparrow (H)
 Savannah Sparrow
 Song Sparrow
 Lincoln's Sparrow
 White-throated
 Sparrow
 Dark-eyed Junco
 Northern Cardinal
 Brewer's Blackbird
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Eastern Meadowlark
 Brown-headed
 Cowbird
 American Goldfinch
 House Sparrow



Downy Woodpecker



Pectoral Sandpiper



Mourning Dove

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

For a list of Fort Worth Audubon Society bird walks go to <http://www.fwas.org/fieldtrips.asp>
 For a list of Audubon Dallas bird walks go to <http://www.audubondallas.org/>

Bird Banding at the Heard

This year's bird banding began in January with Project Prairie Bird to assess the condition of our winter sparrows. Thanks to all the volunteer sparrow herders that came out to help flush sparrows out of the grass and into the nets (well at least toward the nets).

The spring migration banding begins in March. With funds provided by PTAS, the number of nets have been increased from 17 to 23 and some badly worn nets replaced. The persons on net checking duty now have approximately a ¾ mile loop to check every net and collect the netted birds. They often just get back to the banding station with the birds before it is time to make the loop again. On busy days, and there have been a lot of them this spring, the persons banding just finish banding the last collections of birds before the collectors arrive with the next batch of birds. A summary of birds species banded for March and April are shown below. To see the detailed lists for each banding day go to the Texbirds archives, <http://listserv.uh.edu/archives/texbirds.html>, and search "by author" for Sandy Polcyn.

March 11 To March 28: 59 birds banded and 38 birds recaptured.

April 3 To April 13: 131 birds banded and 53 birds recaptured.

A typical day's results: 27 total birds, representing 8 different species:

<u>Birds Banded - 18</u>	<u>Birds Recaptured - 9</u>
Brown Thrasher - 2	White-eyed Vireo - 1
Yellow-rumped Warbler - 1	Swainson's Thrush - 1
Prothonotary Warbler - 1	Fox Sparrow - 1
Lincoln's Sparrow - 11	Lincoln's Sparrow - 5
Northern Cardinal - 3	Northern Cardinal - 1

The Prothonotary Warblers are being heard and seen where ever there is water at the Heard. The wetlands are almost full now that we have had rain. The first-of-the-season Prothonotary was banded on April 12th.



Not all the birds take their banding so calmly like this White-eyed Vireo.



In addition to banding netted birds, the "nest-box babies" are also banded like this Carolina Wren nestling.



Little known fact: a bird's leg is as big around as it will ever be by the time it is ready to leave the nest.

A display showing all of the tools, methods, and steps to bird banding is in the north room at the Heard Museum. And be sure to stop at the live nest-box camera display. A pair of Prothonotary Warblers had built a nest and laid 2 eggs as of April 25th.

Tom Heath

A Blue Costa's??

Hummingbird identification guides describe the crown and throat of Costa's as being "deep violet", "extensive violet", "deep violet", "deep violet-blue", and "purple". As with all hummingbirds, these shades and hues of gorget / crown color change depending on head and light angles, and can even appear all-black. But the "blue" I saw on a male Costa's that visited a private residence in Rockport in late February defied belief! This little guy's crown was sky blue / turquoise / sapphire, and the bottom edges of his gorget were deep sapphire. Only occasionally, at certain angles, did his head show the expected purple color. A friend took digital photos of the bird that showed some of this blue, and I shared them with several hummingbird experts, along with my written descriptions of the color, asking if there was any chance of the bird being a hybrid. The responses I received showed that not many people have seen these colors on a Costa's, but they are not unheard of. A bird-bander was able to capture and band him, and he fit all the size measurements for a Costa's. Open any bird book to Costa's Hummingbird and look at that beautiful purple head – you can



Male Costa's Hummingbird



Photos by Greg Cook, Fort Worth Audubon Society, 2/25/06

understand why I'm thrilled to have seen him! In proper light, this particular male bird has feathers that reflect surprising shades of blue from the color spectrum. Costa's are very rare visitors to Texas, and this one is special within his own species!

Jerri Kerr

Cedar Ridge Preserve Field Trip - April 15

As some field trips occur under ideal situations – great weather, good observers, etc – others have everything working against them. This was unfortunately true of the Cedar Ridge trip. The winds were in the 20-30 MPH range, which made the birds lay low and stay hidden all morning. Instead of the usual 15 participants, about 40 showed up making it difficult for those in the back to see any birds. The preserve's dense oak and cedar trees also conspired against the birders. In all there were only 17 species seen and in most cases they were only heard.

Georgette Guernsey

Trip list:

Carolina Chickadee	White-eyed Vireo
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Hermit Thrush
Tufted Titmouse	Chipping Sparrow
Northern Cardinal	White-throated Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Blue Jay
American Crows	Mourning Dove
Common Grackle	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Red-winged Blackbird	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Carolina Wren	

WILD BIRD CENTER

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940 / 484-BIRD [2473]

www.WildBird.com/Denton

High quality birdseed, feeders, birdhouses, CDs, books, binoculars, idea exchange and local advice

Birdwatching By Chair: The Easy Way To See Birds

“Birding by Chair” is a public, open-air birdwatching place we’ve set up with help from the Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept. at the Isle du Bois unit of Lake Ray Roberts Park. We stock it with plenty of fresh food for all the birds, plus a “water drip” system that seems to attract birds like crazy! Our goal? We just want to foster a love of watching birds!

Birding By Chair is a simple way for novice birdwatchers to sit outside and – from about 50 ft. away – watch lots of north Texas’ birds and ask questions. It’s on the edge of a wooded area at the park. One of us “narrates” in a loud whisper (sort of like a golf announcer) with comments like “there’s a male Cardinal a foot to the right of the feeder”.

You can watch birds while sitting in one of the stacking chairs we provide.

We don’t charge a cent for it. Plus, it’s just twenty feet from parking and a restrooms nearby.

Our web site has some photos taken at a recent outing. If a group of you might want to go “Birding by Chair”, you’re welcome to call the store for information.



Owen Yost & Nancy Collins
 Denton’s Wild Bird Center
 940 / 484-BIRD [2473]
www.WildBird.com/Denton
wbcdenton@charter.net

Note: If you would like to receive email notifications when the newsletters are available, or to update your email address, please contact Merrick Darley at hmdarley@comcast.net.

PRAIRIE & TIMBERS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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- Bobette Mauck**..... 972-540-5646
- Regional Delegate:** *Reba Collins*

* Board Members

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) _____

Mail to: Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society
 c/o Mike Mizell, 800 Edgewood, Denton, TX 76201

Audubon code: 7XCH

PTAS Chapter Code: W15