



Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

March / April 2007

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Twitchers

Many of you travel for pleasure and find that it's not so pleasurable at times. Others travel for work and well, that's work, but there can be side benefits to those business trips. On one such trip this year, I had an extra day to bird near Manchester, UK. Similar to here in the US, a person can find information about birding spots on the Internet. I did that and picked out a well-regarded spot to bird. I was up well before sunup, walked to the bus station in the rain, and walked from the bus to the birding spot in the rain – typical English day! Well, also typically English, the language used is not what the American expects but another version of the same language. Here we have city parks, state parks, national parks, etc. Over there, the spot I birded was called a country park, Pennington Flash Country Park. A flash is a pond, formed by subsidence of the surface as the abandoned coal mines below collapse. Fortunately for me on a rainy day, this park is equipped with several concrete or wood bird blinds, called “hides”. You get the idea; common things are called something else there – like twitching, not birding.

What birds did I see? You guessed it, Rock Pigeons, House Sparrows, and Starlings. However, most of the other very common birds are new to us. The Blue Tit is everywhere, a cute little “chickadee” that move around in flocks and hangs upside down on twigs. Also I saw the Great Tit and the Willow Tit (a rare one, I was told.) Which makes me wonder, how was it that they named those little birds “tits” while very similar birds here were named “chickadees”? The parks are covered with noisy long-tailed Magpies, not grackles. And the Blackbird is an orange-billed thrush!

And finally, I saw an invasive species from the US – the Eastern Gray Squirrel. My English

friend's comment was “You can take that one home!”

Gailon Brehm, President

Upcoming PTAS Programs

March 27, 2007: Dave and Carolyn Oldham – Spring Migration Warbler Warm Up.

A review of when and where to look for the warblers we are most likely to encounter in the DFW area this spring.

April 24, 2007: Doug Wood, SOSU - Where Our Birds Migrate.

A first hand report on Eco Tourism as Mr. wood is returning from a Semester Break in Central America.

May 22, 2007: Candace Fountoulakis

The development of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program at Pecan Hollow Golf Course in Plano.

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 7:00pm just prior to the chapter meetings which are at 7:30pm. Gailon Brehm 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 2007

March: Hawks

April: Warblers

May: TBA

PTAS WEBSITE

<http://prairieandtimbers.org>

Check It Out!

March and April Field Trips

Saturday, March 10th, 2nd Saturday at the Heard, 9:00am

Leader: Galion Brehm

Length: 1.5+ hours

For details go to:

http://prairieandtimbers.org/Heard_Sat.htm

Saturday, March 17th: Clymer Meadow & Parkhill Prairie: 9:00 AM

Leader: Jim Varnum

Length: 1/2 day

Car pool: Kohl's Plaza parking behind Wendy's, McKinney. Depart: 8:00 AM

Directions: From US 75 in McKinney:

1. Take US 380 east 22 miles to FM 36.
2. Turn left (north) and go north 12 miles to Co Rd 1562.
3. Turn right and go 1.5 miles east to Co Rd 1140.
4. Turn left and go 0.6 miles to Clymer Meadow open gate on left.

Saturday, April 14th, 2nd Saturday at the Heard, 9:00am

Leader: Galion Brehm

Length: 1.5+ hours

For details go to:

http://prairieandtimbers.org/Heard_Sat.htm

Field Trip Report – Hagerman NWR, November 18, 2006

A beautiful cool day at Hagerman NWR. Many thanks to Karl Haller for driving 11 of us around for about 6.5 hrs to parts of the refuge not closed to bow hunters to see some great species.

The highlight for a lot of us was the Greater Roadrunner. We had fantastic views as he came to approximately 8 feet of the van modeling for us with his crest raised, even showing us the bright orange/red spot behind his eyes, strutting his long tail across a dead branch and sashaying across the road until he said, "I'm too sexy for this group" and darted into the brush. But not before garnering a well deserved applause from some of us in the van for the performance.

Karen Carbiener

Number of species: 56

Trip List:

Greater White-fronted Goose	Greater Yellowlegs
Snow Goose	Wilson's Snipe
Ross's Goose	Franklin's Gull
Canada Goose	Ring-billed Gull
Gadwall	Greater Roadrunner
Mallard	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Blue-winged Teal	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Northern Shoveler	Northern Flicker
Northern Pintail	Eastern Phoebe
Green-winged Teal	American Crow
Redhead	Carolina Chickadee
Lesser Scaup	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Bufflehead	Eastern Bluebird
Hooded Merganser	American Robin
Ruddy Duck	Northern Mockingbird
Pied-billed Grebe	European Starling
American White Pelican	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Double-crested Cormorant	Eastern Towhee
Great Blue Heron	Chipping Sparrow
Black Vulture	Field Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Lark Sparrow
Northern Harrier	White-throated Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Harris's Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Dark-eyed Junco
American Kestrel	Northern Cardinal
American Coot	Red-winged Blackbird
Killdeer	Eastern Meadowlark
American Avocet	American Goldfinch

Field Trip Report – February 3, 2007, Lake Tawakoni State Park

Nine birders braved the bitter cold this morning on a Prairie and Timbers Audubon field trip to Lake Tawakoni. On the way to the state park, my thermometer registered 15 degrees as I crossed the Caddo Creek bottom land north of Quinlan. I think this is probably the coldest morning I have been out birding for the past couple of years.

At the state park all got a good look at one resident Rock Wren, with some getting a look at the second. Golden Crown Kinglets, Orange Crowned Warblers, and Brown Creepers were in very high numbers, with OC Warblers being trash birds by mid morning. Rusty Blackbirds have been sparse this year and we missed them today.

At the Holiday Marina we had a number of Bufflehead, but only a couple Horned Grebes and not a single Loon for the second week in a row. Absolutely unbelievable, however there were still about 3500+ DC Cormorants and 400+ Pelicans to keep our interest up.

At Tanglewood Marina a Caracara circled overhead giving everyone a great view.

At the Rains Co. beach we had a perched Bald Eagle and the duck numbers were still very high with Northern Shovelers being the dominant species by far. Quite a few Pintails were mixed in along with most of the other puddle ducks, but very few divers.

At the 276 bridge and at the W Tawakoni city park we picked up quite a few Canvasback, L Scaup, Ring-necked, Redheads, Ruddys,

Wigeons, and Green-wing Teal.

I tallied 77 species for the day, but wasn't keeping the official trip list and some of the others picked up birds that I missed. Everyone had a great time in spite of the wind and cold, and as always, Tawakoni provided a great day of birding.

Ron Baltzegar

Greenville TX

Number of species: 45

Trip List:

American Coot	Winter Wren
Killdeer	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Lesser Yellowlegs	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Wilson's Snipe	Eastern Bluebird
Bonaparte's Gull	Hermit Thrush
Ring-billed Gull	American Robin
Herring Gull	Northern Mockingbird
Forster's Tern	European Starling
Rock Pigeon	American Pipit
Mourning Dove	Orange-crowned Warbler
Greater Roadrunner	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Field Sparrow
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Vesper Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	Savannah Sparrow
Eastern Phoebe	Song Sparrow
Loggerhead Shrike	Lincoln's Sparrow
Blue Jay	Dark-eyed Junco
American Crow	Northern Cardinal
Carolina Chickadee	Red-winged Blackbird
Tufted Titmouse	Eastern Meadowlark
Brown Creeper	Great-tailed Grackle
Rock Wren	House Sparrow
Carolina Wren	

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**Herman Baker Park Trail, Sherman
November 18, 2006**

Today, 8 birders birded Herman Baker Park Trail, Sherman; an unnamed lake near fire station on FM1417; and Denison Dam. The weather was unexpectedly pleasant and the birds were good. The number of species seen was 53. A good mix was seen at the varied habitat around Herman Baker Park including nice looks at both male and female Belted Kingfishers. Afterwards we went up FM1417 to the intersection with US62 and saw the White-Winged Scoter and several additional waterfowl. Some of us saw a surprise Roadrunner near the parking lot. Five of us continued on to the park below Denison Dam picking up the Herring Gull and, surprisingly, the first Mourning Dove of the day. Later at the park across the Dam, we saw the Bald Eagle and Eared Grebe.

Good day all in all.

Gailon Brehm

Number of species: 53

Trip List:

Canada Goose	Greater Roadrunner
Gadwall	Belted Kingfisher
American Wigeon	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Mallard	Downy Woodpecker
Northern Shoveler	Northern Flicker
Canvasback	Blue Jay
Ring-necked Duck	American Crow
Lesser Scaup	Carolina Chickadee
White-winged Scoter	Tufted Titmouse
Common Goldeneye	Carolina Wren
Hooded Merganser	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruddy Duck	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Pied-billed Grebe	Eastern Bluebird
Eared Grebe	American Robin
Double-crested	
Cormorant	Northern Mockingbird
Great Blue Heron	Brown Thrasher
Black Vulture	European Starling
Turkey Vulture	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Bald Eagle	Field Sparrow
Northern Harrier	Song Sparrow

Red-shouldered Hawk	Swamp Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	White-throated Sparrow
Least Sandpiper	Dark-eyed Junco
Ring-billed Gull	Northern Cardinal
Herring Gull	Great-tailed Grackle
Rock Pigeon	American Goldfinch
Mourning Dove	

**Birds at the Heard Museum
During September and October**

September brought cooler temperatures and fall migrants. The first fall sightings of **Neotropical Cormorants, Warbling Vireos, White-breasted Nuthatches, Black-throated Green Warblers, Black-and-white Warblers, Mourning and Wilson's Warblers** occurred during the first week of September. An **American Kestrel**, an **Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatchers, American Redstarts** and **Nashville Warblers** were all observed in the second week of September. The ponds continued to be dry. Large flocks of **Rock Pigeons, Mourning Doves** and **White-winged Doves** were present in the early mornings. A **Bell's Vireo**, a **Pileated Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo** and the first **Brown Thrasher** were all seen during the middle of the month. **The Greater Roadrunners** were present in the compound, but rarely seen. A rarely seen in the fall **Ovenbird** visited on September 20th. A **Bewick's Wren** and the first fall banding of a **Swainson's Thrush** also occurred on this date. The banders finished off this red letter day by banding the first **Kentucky Warbler** in seven years. The **House Wren** started arriving then also. The **Hairy Woodpeckers** have been seen more often this fall than in the past years. On the 29th our first sparrow – **Lincoln's** – was banded. The first **Ruby-throated Kinglet** and **Northern Flickers** also arrived. A **Spotted Towhee** was banded on that date. The last of the **Chimney Swifts** departed in late September. The temperatures rose again in October and quieted the bird activity. However, much needed rain did fall and some of the sloughs partially filled with water. The **Wood Ducks** and a lone **American Coot** returned. **Chipping Sparrows** showed up on the 4th. The first of the season **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, White-crowned Sparrow** and **Winter Wren** appeared on October 6th. The last of the **Indigo Buntings** was seen this day. By the midpoint in the month lots of butterflies –

Monarchs, Red Admirals, Hackberries, Buckeyes, and Question Marks were flitting about the sanctuary. **Hummingbird Moths** were also present. The sparrows continued to filter into their winter feeding grounds. The banders had the FOS **White-throated Sparrow** on October 13th. **Double-crested Cormorants** fly over on that day. The first **Orange-crowned Warbler** and **Field Sparrow** were banded on October 18th. A **Golden-crowned Kinglet** and the FOS **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were seen on October 26th. New birds are arriving daily.

Most of the grounds are open to the public now with nicely graveled paths and boardwalks.

To get to the new boardwalk trail from the visitor center walk out the Bluestem Trail to Bullfrog Pond, look for a new trail map at the visitor center. Just before reaching Bullfrog Pond, turn right onto the new trail. It is still under construction in several places. Once you cross the road and are up on the new boardwalk, watch for the PTAS plaque. Through the generosity of a number of our members, PTAS funded part of the building materials and sponsored Eagle Scout Billy Collins, who constructed part of the boardwalk. The wetlands are wet since Wilson Creek has flooded several times beginning in November. There are a couple of places to sit and watch birds or just enjoy the view. After passing through the wetlands, the trail takes you along the edge of the prairie, then bends around to cross the creek that feeds Bullfrog Pond. The trail ends back where you started at the boardwalk leading to Bullfrog Pond. The total round trip distance from the visitor center is about 1 mile

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY FEEDER WATCH PROGRAM

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. Anyone can participate in Project FeederWatch – via internet or US mail. Register for the program (go to <http://birds.cornell.edu/pfw/>). 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 20 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. Most of the data is accessible over the Internet at the click of a button. 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. In addition, your support of this project ensures that someone will always be looking out for our common feeder birds, so that they will remain forever common.

For more information on the project and instruction on how to join, go to

http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/Overview/over_index.html. 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 \$15 fee. FeederWatch's participant fees pay for the maintenance of this web site, data analysis, participant support, printing and shipping project materials, and dissemination of the information learned from the data. The fees also help cover the cost of publishing a newsletter for project participants-BirdScope.

The survey is conducted each winter from November through early April, you can start feeder watching at any time in this period.

You may join at any time of year and start receiving the quarterly issues of the newsletter.



Hooded Merganser by Daniel S. Kilby

Heard Prairie Restoration Project

This year PTAS has started an exciting new cause, sponsoring a prairie habitat at the Heard Museum. Working with the Heard staff, PTAS will be providing for the restoration, improvement and maintenance of East Bullfrog Pond Prairie. In addition, we will be monitoring the bird activity in the prairie. PTAS will provide the funding for purchase of seeds, plants and tools; purchase of supplies for the growth and control of the plants; and the costs of running and maintenance of tools use in the habitat. The PTAS board feels strongly about providing prairie habitat for our native birds not only as it is good for the local environment but it is also our living history as the original European settlers stopped right here because of the farmland potential of the blackland prairie which dominated north central Texas. But now it is estimated that less than one-tenth of one percent of this once vast prairie remains unplowed. One of the most devastated habitats in the world is literally in our backyard. This is one small step to preserving our environment, our history.

Progress report from Chuck Jones, Heard Sanctuary Manager

This year PTAS will be sponsoring what we call East Bullfrog Pond Prairie, approximately 8.2 acres. It is the first prairie section on the left as you turn on our rock road heading to the wetlands from the Science Research Center.



East Bullfrog Pond Prairie

Prior to the donation, the sanctuary department had only enough funds to control woody invasion and other unwanted invasive plants in this prairie section. Now with the donation and the restrictions to use it on the sanctuary, we can jump-start the restoration

process. As of December 18, we have used some of the funds to buy two pieces of necessary land restoration farm equipment. The equipment is a chisel (to break the ground) and the other attachment is a chain harrow to prepare and smooth the seedbed. The plan for the sponsored prairie section is to completely redo the upper section. This involves using the chisel, disk, and harrow. The upper section has been for years a problematic spot for two undesirable species - king ranch bluestem and Johnson grass. This area will be prepared down to bare dirt and then heavily seeded with native grasses and wildflowers.



Using the chisel to remove unwanted vegetation

If you look close at the rest of the area, you will notice that it has minimal prairie grasses.

Other plans are to incorporate grass seed within the prairie. So some of the funds have been used to purchase side oats grama, buffalo grass, Indian grass, eastern gamagrass, switch grass, and some wildflowers. We also are looking for volunteers to hand plant eastern gamagrass. It is one native seed that needs to be planted to a depth of about one-inch. Tom Heath, a member of PTAS and Heard volunteer has already spent many hours doing just that in some of the lower drainage areas.

Thanks so much and with a little rain we will see much success.

Chuck Jones

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@gmail.com.

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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**

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(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
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