



# Rustlin's

*Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society*

**DEC/JAN 2007/8**

## **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Gailon Brehm, President

### **Cold weather birding –**

How many of you have skipped a field trip you'd planned to take because of bad weather? Cold or wet or windy? Well, I have skipped one or two myself for those reasons, but I'll tell you, the birds are still out there even if we're not.

It's really amazing, actually, how they can survive, and even thrive, in some really nasty conditions. They just seem to shake it off and find something to eat to fuel up against the cold.

On the other hand, some of us have spent some enjoyable times outdoors this winter in bad weather. For me, when properly dressed, it's just another fun challenge, and sometimes there are some really fun highlights. Like one morning last spring (remember that rainy spring?) when I went out in the rain to bird near my home and saw the Barred Owl sitting on the telephone pole during the daytime.

Not to say that we don't all wish for those sunny, still mornings when the birds are so active, but I just want to make the point that we can have some very satisfying experiences in poor conditions. When I teach the birding class before our monthly meetings or when I lead the beginners' bird walks at the Heard, I can tell that some of you are really trying to learn but wondering how you can possibly get to the point of easily recognizing birds. I usually say something about time in the field. It's really important to spend time looking at birds and observing them. Those images seem to stick in the memory more firmly than pictures in the book or on the screen.

So – get out there – rain or shine! Check out the PTAS field trips and attend as many as you can.

## ***Upcoming PTAS Programs***

Check the PTAS website for the updates

Tuesday, Feb 26 – **It's For the Birds**

7:00pm Bird Identification class:

7:30 pm Main Program - Marc M. Friedland

One of the long-term members of the Heard Nature Photographers Club since the 1980's, will be presenting his digital slide show at our February 26th meeting. You will not only experience the beauty and artistry of his bird photography, but also Marc will show you the actual equipment setup he uses to capture the images and he will explain how he does what he does.

Tuesday, March 25 – **A Comparison of Raptors**

7:00pm Bird Identification class:

7:30 pm Main Program - Blackland Prairie Raptor Center will use live raptors of the same species to demonstrate up close the many differences between them. Sizes, plumage and behaviors will be discussed while viewing these amazing birds side-by-side.

## ***Join The Board***

At the October board meeting a nomination committee was formed to find candidates for the PTSA board. Four positions will be elected at the February monthly meeting including Treasurer. The nomination committee consists of Gailon Brehm, Paula Brehm, Carolyn Oldham, and Jerri Kerr. If you would like to be on the board, talk to one of the committee members above about the position.

## ***Field Trips***

Check the PTAS website for the updates

Saturday, Feb 9th, 2nd Saturday at the Heard Museum, 9:00am

Leader: Gailon Brehm

Please register with the Heard in advance.

Saturday, February 16th, Hagerman NWR, 8:00am

Leader: Thomas Riecke

Length: 3 to 4 hrs

Expected Birds: wintering visitors

Car pool: TBA

Directions: Meet at Hagerman visitor center

Saturday, February 23rd, Greenville area, 1:30pm

Leader: Jennifer Maxwell

Length: 4 to 5 hrs

Expected Birds: wintering visitors, Woodcocks displaying at sundown (hopefully)

Car pool: TBA

Directions: Meet at Valero Gas Station, 3901 Sockwell, Greenville, TX

Saturday, Mar 8th 2nd Saturday at the Heard Museum, 9:00am

Leader: Gailon Brehm

Please register with the Heard in advance.

Saturday, March 22th, Connemara Conservancy, 8:00am

Leader: Gailon Brehm

Length: 3 to 4 hrs

Expected Birds: residents, wintering sparrows & warblers

Car pool: none

A PTAS field trip e-mail is sent out the Monday before each field trip. The e-mail serves as a reminder and contains detailed directions to the site and any last minute information. If you would like to be added to the field trips e-mail list, send an e-mail to Tom Heath, [heathwtom@netscape.net](mailto:heathwtom@netscape.net). Please include your name since some e-mail addresses are rather cryptic

## ***Spring Creek Park Preserve And 111 Ranch Field Trip***

On Nov. 17th, an energetic (yes, I said energetic!) team of 16 birders scouted both Garland parks from

Titmice in the treetops to Butter-Butts in the tree bottoms and came up with a not-so-shabby 51 species.

Led by our apt and tireless leaders, Jerri Kerr and Carolyn Oldham, we birded for 3-1/2 hours under extreme conditions of 68°, no wind and partially sunny skies. We must all be expert birders since we managed to find a beautiful LeConte's Sparrow – it wasn't easy but was well worth the work when he sat up eye level in direct sunlight. The Fox and Harris' sparrows brought our total sparrow species count to 9.

We saw both of those fall beauties, Eastern and Spotted Towhees, the latter was a male and a female both in the same bino view! There were white and red-breasted nuthatches, 4 species of woodpeckers and the 2 very similar accipiters –Coopers and Sharpshinned. Also a couple of Belted Kingfishers were seen zipping by.

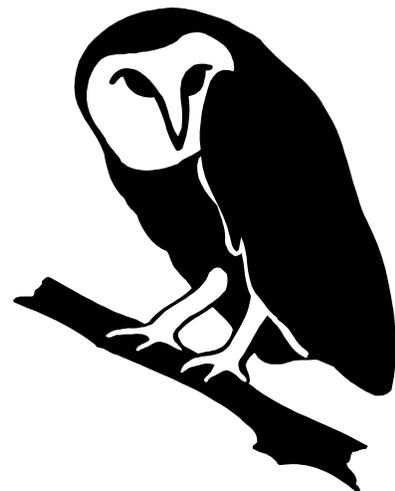
It was a nice fall day to be out birding, but every day is a nice day when you're birding and enjoying nature!

Karen Carbiener

Field Trips

## ***Opportunities to Make a Difference to North Texas Wildlife***

If you are interested in becoming more active in supporting PTAS activities to help the birds of North Central Texas, there are numerous opportunities available. Additional chairpersons are needed for birdathon, fundraising, newsletter, membership, and programs. Chairpersons attend and participate in board meetings. Please contact our President Gailon Brehm, 972-517-2542, [g-brehm@msn.com](mailto:g-brehm@msn.com)



# *The Christmas Bird Count*

The Heard Museum and PTAS conducted its annual Christmas Bird Count on December 26. Unfortunately the day was not pleasant. However 98 species were counted with a total of 24328 birds counted. The two notable sightings are Gailon's Little Gull, and Jim's Sedge Wrens. High species count goes to Georgette and Lynn.

Listed below are the species counted in order of abundance.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	9340
EUROPEAN STARLING	1826
GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE	1613
CEDAR WAXWING	1221
ROCK PIGEON (ROCK DOVE)	1064
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT	786
AMERICAN ROBIN	711
MOURNING DOVE	592
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	479
DARK-EYED JUNCO (SLATE-COLORED)	432
RING-BILLED GULL	427
LAPLAND LONGSPUR	348
EASTERN MEADOWLARK	346
COMMON GRACKLE	331
NORTHERN CARDINAL	324
AMERICAN CROW	320
MALLARD	275
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE)	247
AMERICAN COOT	172
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW	167
EASTERN BLUEBIRD	166
RING-NECKED DUCK	151
BLACK VULTURE	143
GADWALL	140
HARRIS'S SPARROW	131
AMERICAN WIGEON	125
HOUSE SPARROW	124
SEdge WREN	120
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	119
LESSER SCAUP	116
HOUSE FINCH	115
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD	110
CAROLINA CHICKADEE	108
FIELD SPARROW	108
KILLDEER	92
CANADA GOOSE	82
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	79
BLUE JAY	73

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET	61
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER	60
TUFTED TITMOUSE	58
TURKEY VULTURE	54
HORNED LARK	50
BONAPARTE'S GULL	49
RED-TAILED HAWK	48
CHIPPING SPARROW	42
CAROLINA WREN	41
RUDDY DUCK	38
WHITE-WINGED DOVE	33
SAVANNAH SPARROW	33
SONG SPARROW	33
NORTHERN SHOVELER	32
AMERICAN KESTREL	32
DOWNY WOODPECKER	30
PIED-BILLED GREBE	28
BREWER'S BLACKBIRD	26
EURASIAN COLLARD DOVE	25
NORTHERN FLICKER (Y-SH)	25
AMERICAN PIPIT	25
CANVASBACK	24
YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER	23
WOOD DUCK	16
FORSTER'S TERN	15
EASTERN PHOEBE	15
FOX SPARROW	15
GREAT BLUE HERON	14
GREEN-WINGED TEAL	12
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	8
HOODED MERGANSER	6
NORTHERN HARRIER	6
BELTED KINGFISHER	6
BROWN CREEPER	6
ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER	6
RUSTY BLACKBIRD	6
HAIRY WOODPECKER	5
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	5
BROWN THRASHER	5
GREAT EGRET	4
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	4
COOPER'S HAWK	4
LEAST SANDPIPER	4
HERMIT THRUSH	4
VESPER SPARROW	4
BUFFLEHEAD	3
RED-HEADED WOODPECKER	3
LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE	2
LINCOLN'S SPARROW	2
SWAMP SPARROW	2
OSPREY	1
WILSON'S SNIPE (COMMON)	1
GREATER ROADRUNNER	1
NORTHERN FLICKER	1
WINTER WREN	1
LITTLE GULL	1

# ***Blackland Prairie Raptor Center Plans to Develop Brockdale Park***



This past fall, Blackland Prairie Raptor Center received a lease from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop Brockdale Park into a Raptor Rehabilitation Center and a Nature Education Center. This all-volunteer organization has its sights set on developing Brockdale Park into an environmental

education destination for the North Texas area. Additionally, it is estimated that the Raptor Rehabilitation Center will receive more than 500 sick, injured and orphaned birds of prey within the first few years of its completion.

Located on the shore of Lake Lavon near Lucas, Brockdale Park is a community park of 66 acres that was previously managed by the Army Corp of Engineers. Approximately 20 acres has been developed with 12 picnic pavilions, parking and restroom facilities located on a paved trail around a one acre pond. The rest of the acreage is undeveloped and includes a large expanse of native Blackland Prairie habitat with some forested areas. Plans for the educational center emphasize the appreciation of nature through the exploration and preservation of native Collin county flora and fauna. Bird watching will be emphasized because of available expertise and the tie into the raptor rehabilitation.

The currently existing equestrian and light hiking trail, Trinity Trails will continue to go through the park. The trailhead which is located in a separate area at the south end of the park is managed and maintained by the Trinity Trail Preservation Association. In addition the boat ramp giving access to Lake Lavon at the south end of the park will remain

separate and managed by the Corps of Engineers.

Blackland Prairie Raptor Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to environmental preservation through public education and the conservation of birds of prey and wildlife in their natural habitat.

BPRC has been presenting outreach education to schools, environmental organizations and other groups interested in their message since August, 2004 with the live bird of prey ambassadors making quite an impression on the audience. These hawks, owls and falcons have demonstrated their importance in the endangered Blackland Prairie of this area to more than 30,000 students.

To carry out its plans, BPRC is expanding its efforts to raise funds. Donations can be monetary, in-kind or volunteering. They will be looking for specialized help in developing the site, including electricians, plumbers, construction and many other construction-oriented jobs. This is an ideal opportunity to contribute to a local effort to develop our community for all north Texans to enjoy and at the same time contribute to the preservation of our ecosystem.

To learn more about BPRC plans and efforts contact them at (469) 964-7304. You can also visit their website at [www.bpraptorcenter.org](http://www.bpraptorcenter.org).

## ***Learn About Raptors and Blackland Prairie Raptor Center at PTAS's March Meeting***

Last year one of our most popular programs, was presented by Blackland Prairie Raptor Center. They brought a collection of hawks, owls and falcons for a live demonstration of the characteristics and behaviors of birds of prey.

This year at our March meeting they will be presenting their program "A comparison of raptors". You will be introduced to raptors of the same species and see up close the many differences between them. Sizes, plumage and behaviors will be discussed while viewing these amazing birds side-by-side. A great evening for beginner and serious birders as well as anybody interested in having the opportunity to meet some resident raptors.



## ***PTAS Broad Awards Grant For Nesting and Dispersal Study of Prothonotary Warbler***

The board at their last meeting awarded Michele Diggs a grant of \$400 to partially cover the cost of travel expenses for her proposed study titled “POST FLOOD NEST BOX USE AND REPRODUCTIVE SUCCESS OF THE PROTHONOTARY WARBLER AT TISHOMINGO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, OKLAHOMA” Michele is a student at Southeastern Oklahoma State University and will be working in conjunction with Assistant Professor Dr. Doug Wood. This study is a continuance of previous studies conducted at the Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge on the breeding biology of the Prothonotary warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*). The research will be conducted during the spring and summer of 2008 concerning the post flood nesting success of the Prothonotary Warbler. Upon completion of her fieldwork, Michele would present the results of the project to the

Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society. In addition, a copy of any findings will be made available to the Heard and Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge.

Along with the investigation into the breeding biology of the Prothonotary warbler, this research will investigate the impacts of a natural flooding event that occurred in the spring and summer of 2007 and dispersal of fledglings into areas surrounding their natal nests. Nest boxes will be installed in suitable habitat in April of 2008 and monitored from April to July 2008. Adults and nestlings alike will be banded for future studies. Along with the banding of the adults, aging will be done in order to determine the age structure of the population. This research will aid in giving a greater understanding of the breeding biology following a natural flood event and dispersal of the young of the Prothonotary warbler.

The objectives of the study are:

- Re-establish 40 previous nest box sites used by the Prothonotary Warbler at Tishomingo NWR that were damaged by rising flood waters in spring 2007
- Expand previously monitored area of nest sites by 100% with the addition of 40 new nest boxes into additional habitat
- Determine reproductive success parameters of Prothonotary warblers including clutch size, hatching success and fledging success
- Expand the previously established banded population of Prothonotary warblers at Tishomingo NWR to show recruitment and make age and sex-related comparisons of reproductive success.
- Involve SOSU undergraduates in a field research experience

### **WILD BIRD CENTER**

1601 Brinker Rd., at Loop 288 (by Wal-Mart),  
Denton

940 / 484-BIRD [2473]

[www.WildBird.com/Denton](http://www.WildBird.com/Denton)



Photo by Lisa Spangler

rie conservation and restoration, help people keep informed of the latest news and work in prairie conservation and restoration, and help people involved with prairies network with each other.

If you know of some native prairie, savanna, desert grassland, or other native grassland related news, you can submit it by emailing to [blog@texasprairie.org](mailto:blog@texasprairie.org).

## ***PrairieBlog:*** ***A Blog about Native Prairies and Grasslands***

Jason Spangler has created a prairie blog on Wumple.com where he publishes news about native prairie (tallgrass and shortgrass), savanna, desert grassland, and other native grassland related news.

Check out PrairieBlog at <http://prairieblog.wumple.com/> and read current native prairie news!

PrairieBlog publishes and summarizes news daily about native prairies and other grasslands, though it may have slightly more tallgrass prairie news (due to author's preferences) and Texas prairie news (since that is where the author is located and involved in prairie conservation, restoration, and appreciation).

Some example topics include: prairie conservation and restoration, native prairie plants, local ecotype native seed projects, grassland birds, butterflies, ducks, bison, prairie art, culture and history related to native prairie, carbon sequestration, cellulosic ethanol, organizations working on prairie conservation and restoration, etc.

PrairieBlog is designed to help educate more people about native prairies, motivate people to work for prai-



Photo by Lisa Spangler

**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@prairieandtimbers.org](mailto:hmdarley@prairieandtimbers.org).**

**PRAIRIE & TIMBERS AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**Officers, Chairpersons and Board Members**

- President:** *Gailon Brehm\**.....972-517-2542
- Vice President:** *Merrick Darley\**.....972-422-5355
- Secretary:** *Paula Brehm\** .....972-517-2542
- Treasurer:** *Mike Mizell\**.....940-382-8551
- Birdathon:** *Open*.....
- Conservation/Armchair Activist:**
  - Roger Sanderson\** ..... 469-767-7242
- Newsletter:** *Merrick Darley\** ..... 972-422-5355
- Field Trips:** *Karen Carbiener\**..... 972-824-2878
  - Tom Heath\**..... 972-867-8646
- Education:** *Gailon Brehm\**..... 972-517-2542
  - Roger Sanderson\**..... 972-333-5671
- Hospitality:** *Carolyn Oldham\**..... 972-517-8987
- Membership:** *Jerri Kerr* ..... 972-578-3146
  - Merrick Darley\**..... 972-422-5355
- CBC:** *Dan Smith* ..... 972-516-2297
- Website/Electronic Communications:**
  - Tom Heath\**..... 972-867-8646
  - Merrick Darley\**..... 972-422-5355
- Programs:** *Sally Evans* ..... 972-248-6283
- Publicity:** *Bobette Mauck\**..... 972-540-5646
- Regional Delegate:** *Reba Collins, Merrick Darley\**

*\* 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

When shopping at our advertiser's stores please let them know you saw their ad in the PTAS newsletter.

***SEND US YOUR UPDATED E-MAIL ADDRESS***

Email is the most efficient way for us to let you know about events, meetings and last minute changes. We send only 1 or 2 emails per month, and we do not share our mailing list with anyone. If you are not on our email distribution list, or if your email address has changed recently, please contact Merrick Darley at [hmdarley@prairieandtimbers.org](mailto:hmdarley@prairieandtimbers.org)