



# Rustlin's

*Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society*

**September 2009**

## **Introduction to PTAS**

Organized in 1980, Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society serves Collin and surrounding counties with a wide range of nature-oriented activities, programs and field trips. Membership is open to the public. PTAS offers interesting programs and wonderful guest speakers at meetings that bring a great variety of expertise and excitement to the membership. Other sections of this newsletter detail these activities.

### **Membership**

If you are a member of the National Audubon Society and live in Collin County or nearby, you have been automatically enrolled in our membership. Also, if you donate \$12 or more to the chapter annually, you are enrolled as well. Our website and email are primary means of communications. In addition, mailings are done a couple of times year, this newsletter being one of them.

### **Nature Observation Starting With Birds**

Below are shown two beautiful birds often seen at the Heard Museum. Field trips, bird ID classes, and programs provide opportunities for members and guests

to learn and enjoy birds like these.

### **Scholarships**

PTAS offers scholarships to support attendance at an Audubon camp or other educational activity. Interested individuals should attend chapter meetings and discuss a potential scholarship with chapter leaders.

### **Involvement**

Each of you is urged to volunteer to help support nature-oriented activities of PTAS.

### **Audubon's Mission**

- Conserve native plants and animals and their habitats
- Protect life from pollution, radiation, and toxic substances
- Further the wise use of land and water
- Seek solutions for global problems involving the interaction of population, resources, and the environment
- Promote rational strategies for energy development and use, stressing conservation and renewable sources



**White-eyed Vireo**



**Prothonotary Warbler**



***THE  
OWLS ARE  
COMING, THE  
OWLS  
ARE COMING!***

September 22 to our first PTAS meeting

See live owls up close and personal! Brought to you by Erich Neupert and Mary Schoeffel of the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center, owls in attendance will be 2 screech (gray and red), barn and great horned. The program shows species differences, unique features, survival adaptations and how each has its own niche in the wild. Photos are OK!

Don't miss this chance to see these amazing birds! Presentations by BPRC have been some of most popular in the past.

More exciting programs are coming your way! In October, Heard Sanctuary birdbanders, Judy Woods and Karen White, will share experiences from the longest running birdbanding station in the state. Data collected here over the years is very valuable for bird and habitat conservation efforts. In November, Lynn Barber will tell us all about the Texas Ornithological Society. Lynn is the current President of TOS and will inform us about TOS sanctuaries, activities and publications. She will show us pictures of some of the special birds found at the TOS sanctuaries. This is a great organization dedicated to protecting and preserving habitat in Texas. TOS is a great way for Texas birders to help Texas birds.

That sums up our programs for 2009. As always, please contact me with any ideas of programs you'd like to hear. We are always open to suggestions for interesting topics.

Carolyn Oldham - Program Chair

## ***PTAS Programs***

Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society meets the fourth Tuesday of the month, September through November, and January through May at the Heard Natural Science Museum in McKinney. At each meeting Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society features an informative and interesting program with exceptional speakers and slide shows to teach and thrill members and guests. The board diligently pursues a full array of interests to promote better understanding of the birding world and to have entertaining yet educational programs

Programs scheduled this year are:

**Tuesday, Sept 22 – 7:00pm**

**Bird Identification class:** Waders – Egrets, Herons, etc

**Main Program:** “Owls” - Erich Neupert and Mary Schoeffel of Blackland Prairie Raptor Center

**Tuesday, Oct 27 – 7:00pm**

**Bird Identification class:** Raptors – Hawks, Owls, Flacons, and Kites

**Main Program:** “Bird Banding at the Heard” - Karen White and Judy Woods

**Tuesday, Nov 24 – 7:00pm**

**Bird Identification class:** Sparrows

**Main Program:** “Everything You Want to Know About TOS But Were Afraid To Ask” Lynn Barber, President of Texas Ornithological Society

**Tuesday Jan 26 - 7:00pm**

**Bird Identification class:** Woodland Birds -Vireos, Wrens, and Nuthatches, Creepers, Chickadees, and Kinglets

**Main Program:** Purple Martins

**Tuesday Feb 23 - 7:00pm**

**Bird Identification class:** Doves, Quail, Dickcissels, and ground nesters

**Main Program:** “Nature’s Best Pest Controls” - Bonnie Bradshaw

**Tuesday March 23 - 7:00pm**

**Bird Identification class:** Warblers

**Main Program:** Warblers

**Tuesday April 27 - 7:00pm**

**Bird Identification class:** Swallows and Flycatchers

**Main Program:** TBD

**Tuesday May 25 - 7:00pm**

**Bird Identification class:** Optional class -- TBD

**Main Program:** TBD

## *2009 Fall Field Trips*

One of the most satisfying experiences of Audubon members is the successful field trip. The objective is to see many different bird species and develop a familiarity with each learning about its behavior, field marks and physiology. To accomplish this, the pace is slow and relaxed. Anyone that can walk along a nature trail can participate. Field trips allow you to get away from modern life, participate in a green activity and enjoy the world of nature.

Field trips are open to all, members and nonmembers, beginners to world-class birders. We especially want to encourage and welcome first time birders to come on our local trips in the north Texas area. All trips have an experienced leader eager to help beginners see and enjoy new birds. These trips are an excellent way to get started learning the birds and the best locations and seasons to find them.

Field trips are typically scheduled on Saturdays, unless otherwise noted and last half a day. We schedule at least one field trip each month Sept through May.

RSVP the week of the trip by contacting Karen Carbiener at 972-824-2878 or Karen.Carbiener@PrairieandTimbers.org or contacting Tom Heath at 972-867-8646 or heathwtom@netscape.net. Contact them also if you have questions or would like to suggest a location, Send an email to Tom to get on the email distribution list.

### **Scheduled Trips for 2009:**

**Sat, Sept 12** - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum 9:00 am

**Leader:** Gailon Brehm

**Length:** 1.5-2 Hours

**Meeting Place:** Heard Museum

**Notes:** Register in advance at 972-562-5566

**Sunday, Sept 13** - John Bunker Sands Wetland Center 7:00 am

**Leader:** Bob Stone and Chris Runk

**Length:** 1/2 day

**Meeting Place:** Meet at a church located in Kaufman County at US175 at Combine Road Exit

**Notes:** RSVP Mandatory: Bob Stone (214) 351-2940 by 6:00 pm Sept 6

**Sat, Oct 10** - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum 9:00 am

**Leader:** Gailon Brehm

**Length:** 1.5-2 Hours

**Meeting Place:** Heard Museum

**Notes:** Register in advance at 972-562-5566

**Sat, Oct 17** - Southlake Cove Ecosystem 8:30 am

**Leader:** Ray Chancellor

**Length:** 2.5 hours

**Meeting Place:** Trail at end of White Chapel, Southlake

**Notes:** RSVP Karen Carbiener 972-824-2878 or karen.carbiener@prairieandtimbers.org

**Sat, Nov 14** - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum 9:00 am

**Leader:** Gailon Brehm

**Length:** 1.5-2 Hours

**Meeting Place:** Heard Museum

**Notes:** Register in advance at 972-562-5566

**Sat, Nov 21** - Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge 8:00 am

**Leader:** Jerri Kerr, Carolyn Oldham

**Length:** 4 hours (or stay for picnic lunch & afternoon birding)

**Meeting Place:** Visitor Center, Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge

**Notes:** RSVP Karen Carbiener 972-824-2878 or karen.carbiener@prairieandtimbers.org

**Sat, Dec 5** White Rock Lake, Time TBD

**Leader:** Jim Varnum

**Length:** TBD

**Meeting Place:** TBD

**Notes:** RSVP Karen Carbiener 972-824-2878 or karen.carbiener@prairieandtimbers.org

**Sat, Dec 12** - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum 9:00 am

**Leader:** Gailon Brehm

**Length:** 1.5-2 Hours

**Meeting Place:** Heard Museum

**Notes:** Register in advance at 972-562-5566

## *Wildlife Emergency Information*

If you come across orphaned or injured wildlife, here are some resources you can turn to:

DFW Wildlife Hotline  
972-234-WILD (972-234-9453)  
<http://dfwwildlife.org>

Rogers Wildlife  
972-225-4000  
<http://www.rogerswildlife.org>

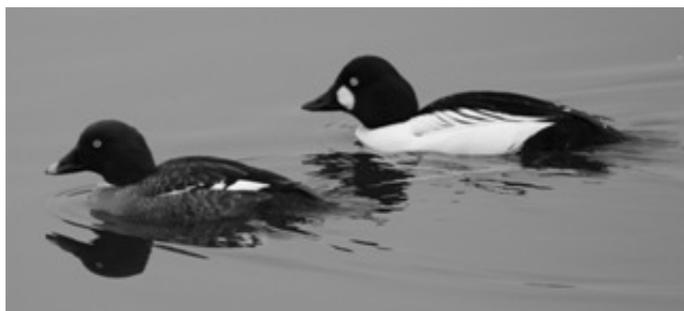
Wildcare  
817-237-8500

Wildlife Rehabilitators by County

## ***WHAT IS A FIELD TRIP?***

Some of our new PTAS members might not have any idea what a field trip involves and some of our current members might just need to be convinced to give one a try -- so I am going to explain exactly what happens on a field trip.

Carolyn Oldham and I led a trip last December, and will lead another one this November 21st, to Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge on Lake Texoma. Details for field trips are posted on the PTAS website, where you would learn that our trip will begin at the Refuge Headquarters parking lot at 8:00am on that Saturday morning. We would also have reminded you to r.s.v.p, to bring binoculars, a birding scope and walkie-talkie, if you have them, and to bring a picnic lunch if you can join us for the entire 3/4-day trip. (Length of PTAS's trips vary from half day to full). If you can't stay with us that long, you can drive your own car and drop out anytime you need to. But we lucked up on a rare-to-Texas Long-tailed Duck towards the end of our trip last year, so if you leave early you might miss out on something really special. We'll have a car-pool meeting



**Common Goldeneye**

location for those that live in the Plano area - in the Kohl's parking lot off the Hwy 75 service road, north of Park Blvd. We have a departure-time from Kohl's of 6:30am, so folks need to arrive a few minutes before to condense down into as few cars as possible. It's fun to spend the day getting to know new birding friends, or renewing old acquaintances. Those of us who ride with someone will always help chip in on the gas for the trip.

Since that is a long drive, we'll stop once at a convenience store with restrooms. If anyone chose not to meet at the car-pool location and instead drove themselves to Hagerman, we would all meet up at the Headquarters. If we can, we'll condense again into as few

cars as possible, and we'll pass out a walkie-talkie to each car. Hagerman is a place where we will do a lot of "car birding" (perfect bird blinds!); and we need to be able to call out birds and directions to each other.

We will spend the day driving the roads of the refuge, including to some of the gas-drilling pads. We will get out several times and scan the wetlands and lake for birds - this is where the scopes are put to good use. That little speck far out on the lake might just be a Red-breasted Merganser! We will probably park and take a short hike along one of the trails. Near noon, we'll go to a picnic area and have a quick lunch; a restroom is available. We end the trip about 2:00 or 3:00, taking our cue from how much birding the group wants to do - Hagerman is a large place and you could easily spend sun-up to sun-down there.

On this field trip, we should see several species of wintering sparrows, along with raptors, woodpeckers, bluebirds and goldfinch. The Refuge is managed for wintering waterfowl, so we'll see many different ducks and, hopefully, thousands of geese.

I can tell you from personal experience that attending field trips is a great way to make birding friends, learn i.d. tips, and perhaps be inspired to become more involved with your Audubon chapter. If you've been wanting to give a field trip a try, this one would be perfect. Not a lot of walking, a great wildlife refuge, and two fun, knowledgeable guides! Carolyn and I will be looking forward to seeing you in November!

Jerri Kerr, Membership Chair



**Ruby-throated Hummingbird**

# ***LEARN BIRDS FROM THE EXPERTS***

## **Monthly Bird Identification Class**

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. At the beginning of our monthly meetings Gailon Brehm and Rodney Thomas, experienced birders, will be teaching bird ID techniques. The class format is an informal discussion utilizing bird specimens provided by the Heard Museum and recordings of bird sounds. The class focuses on structure -- size, shape, and overall appearance -- prior to observations of detailed plumage patterns and colors. All attendees need to bring is a favorite field guide. So check the program schedule to find the schedule for the bird identification class.

## ***SUMMER BIRDING***

I know it's difficult to get outside to bird (or anything else!) this time of year here in north Texas. What with the heat, humidity and sometimes muddy conditions, you might want to just throw up your hands and say forget it.

But summer birding holds some real treats if you're willing to try just a little. Tri-colored Herons have visited Tawakoni and Hagerman NWR this summer (a rarity this far north), Lake Tawakoni also had a Brown Pelican. There have been quite a few sightings of Black Terns (Village Creek Drying Beds, Hagerman NWR) and Mississippi Kites. There are also our usual summer nesters -- Painted and Indigo Buntings, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Purple Martins plus many others. This was a great year for Painted Buntings.

If you absolutely cannot bear getting out in the sauna we call Texas (I'm guilty myself sometimes) during the summer months, watch your backyard feeders while lounging in the air conditioning and sipping a cool drink. Just this week I've seen an influx of American Robins as well as Northern Cardinals still feeding immatures with black bills! Only a few minutes ago I saw a juvenile male Ruby-throated Hummingbird at his feeder. Fall migration has begun so keep your eyes open!

Karen Carbiener



Gailon Brehm Leading the ID Class

## ***Send your email address to get PTAS benefits***

We need your email address to keep you informed of the latest news, chapter meetings, educational programs, field trips, bird sightings, other local birding activities and conservation issues through our newsletter postings. To minimize expenses allowing more money to go directly to the birds, our bimonthly newsletter is only distributed once a year by US mail. (Yes this is the once for 2009) Otherwise the newsletter is posted on the internet and we send an email with the link to our members. We also send emails reminding you of our meetings. We average 1 to 2 emails a month so we will not overload your inbox.

Your email address will only be used by us to keep you informed of the PTAS newsletters and meetings. It will not be sold or given to anyone.

If you were not informed via email when this newsletter was posted to our website, then you are not on our list. Please send your email address to PTAS at [hmdarley@prairieandtimbers.org](mailto:hmdarley@prairieandtimbers.org).

If you want to be reminded of field trips that is a separate email list to minimize email to our members not interested in field trips. Send your request to be included to Tom Heath at [heathwtom@netscape.net](mailto:heathwtom@netscape.net).

If you do not have access to email send Merrick Darley a note at 3713 Wood Rail Dr., Plano, TX 75074 and he will get in touch with you about alternatives.

## *Second Saturday Bird Walks*

**Heard Museum 9:00 – 11:30 am**

These monthly field trips target beginners and intermediate birders who are looking for birding tips and guidance. However, they also provide an opportunity for birders of all levels to see the birds of the Heard Sanctuary throughout the season. Gailon Brehm and Rodney Thomas will co-lead these trips with occasional guest leaders. The route will traverse varied habitats including areas not open to the general public. Birding techniques will be explained on the go and all questions are welcome. Past trips have attracted a mix of people new to birding the Heard and sometimes new to birding entirely mixed with “old-timers”. Typically 40 - 60 species of birds are tallied. All observations are logged into the Cornell ebird database for use by researchers worldwide. Attendees should dress appropriately for the weather with close-toed shoes and long pants and should bring binoculars and a favorite field guide.

PTAS volunteers guide bird walks on the Heard Museum and Sanctuary on the second Saturday of each month, September - May. Sign-in for these walks will be at the Heard store at 9:00, rain or shine! The bird walk is free although the Heard Museum charges an admission fee for non members of the Museum. The Heard Museum website is [www.heardmuseum.org](http://www.heardmuseum.org)

PTAS volunteers also guide walks at the Connemara Meadow Preserve in Collin County. The Connemara Meadow Preserve is 72 acres of north Texas prairie containing native grasses and wildflowers maintained by the Connemara Conservancy, a non-profit land trust. All walks start at the parking lot off Alma and Bethany Roads in Allen. To find the walk schedule visit their website at [www.connemaraconservancy.org](http://www.connemaraconservancy.org)

### ***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 Merrick Darley at [hmdarley@gmail.com](mailto:hmdarley@gmail.com) to place your ad in our next newsletter. Prices start at \$65 for one year of advertising.

## *Be a Backyard Scientist*

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 for as little as 15 minutes per day.

Send in your data via internet or US mail.

The project is over 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](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.

**PTAS WEBSITE**

**<http://prairieandtimbers.org>**

## *Birding Pals*

If you plan on going on a trip to an unfamiliar birding locale, anywhere in the world, you might want to check out [www.birdingpal.org](http://www.birdingpal.org). It lists local professional birding guides and a link to email them in which to get in contact with them.

Even if you are in town for a short business trip, you can rest assured you'll be birding with a guide with many years experience and feel safer since the guide will know the area and where to find the best/target birds. Don't forget to offer your guide some money for gas!

## *The Benefits of Enjoying the Environment*

The active members of PTAS participate because we enjoy being in and learning about nature. However the very nature of our activities have benefits that help keep the world healthy if we take the time to report what we see. By monitoring birds and keeping the environment safe for them, we provide a sustaining environment for ourselves and the rest of the world's flora and fauna. Keeping track of the bird population and changes in it are a critical monitor of the health of our ecosystem. A clear example is the work done by the Heard Museum bird banding group in monitoring for the flu virus as reported in the April/May issue of this newsletter. This is one of the reasons that we report via e-bird to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and other researchers the results of our field trips and participate in the Christmas Bird Count and Backyard Bird Count. We have fun and the world benefits.

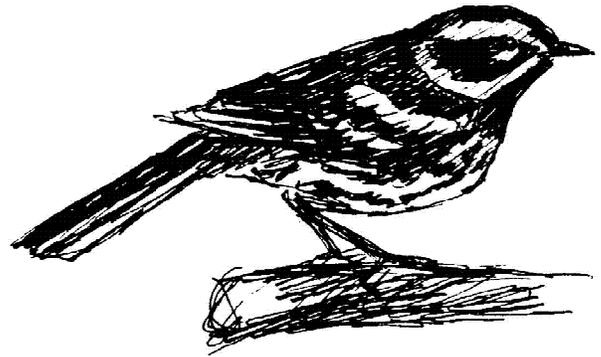
Many member also enjoy providing directly for habitat improvement. We have participated directly in prairie restoration and planting native gardens. We fund conservation projects at the Heard Museum, Blackland Prairie Raptor Center, and Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. We provide scholarships for local college students to help on environmental field studies.

We are looking for volunteers who want to enjoy contributing to the health of north Texas ecology. Please look over the following list of currently open tasks and see if you would enjoy doing one or more. If you find one you would like doing, the active members of PTAS will have a new like minded friend to add to our group. Incidentally, PTAS board meetings are open to

any one who wants to be an active participant.

- Assist on field trips/bird walks
- Help maintain native gardens at Blackland Prairie Raptor Center
- Coordinate Scholarships
- Coordinate Grant Activities
- Advocate green policies
- Contact new members via email/mail
- Contribute newsletter articles
- Edit newsletter
- Organize and operate Birdathon
- Promote/organize Great Backyard Bird Count
- Write fundraising letter
- Mail fundraising letter

If you are interested in helping out contact Merrick Darley at a meeting, by phone at 972-422-5355 or email at [hmdarley@prairieandtimbers.org](mailto:hmdarley@prairieandtimbers.org).



## *Earth Share*

September marks the start of workplace campaigns for Earth Share of Texas and other charitable organizations. If your workplace offers the Earth Share option, that's where we'd like to urge you to direct your contribution.

And specifically, we'd like to encourage you to contribute to the Audubon Foundation of Texas (AFT), one of Earth Share's member organizations. AFT's mission is to support the National Audubon Society's 20 Texas chapters.

Among other things, it provides funding for new chapters just getting off the ground. And it helps established chapters meet their operating expenses.

The AFT also provides grants to support chapters' special projects. PTAS grant for the habitat improvement at Brockdale Park was funded through AFT.

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.

**PRAIRIE & TIMBERS AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**Officers, Chairpersons and Board Members**

- President:** *Position open*\*.....
- Vice President:** *Merrick Darley*\*..... 972-422-5355
- Secretary:** *David Griffith*\* ..... 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:** *Rodney Thomas*\*..... 214-533-8756
- Galion Brehm*..... 972-517-2542
- Hospitality:** *Paula Brehm*..... 972-517-8987
- Membership:** *Jerri Kerr*\* ..... 972-578-3146
- CBC:** *Roger Sanderson*\*..... 972-516-2297
- Website/Electronic Communications:**
  - Tom Heath*\*..... 972-867-8646
- Programs:** *Carol Oldham*\*..... 903-583-5099
- Publicity:** *Bobette Mauck*\*..... 972-540-5646
- Regional Delegate:** *Merrick Darley*\*..... 972-422-5355

\* 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 76209