



Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

October/November 2009

PTAS funds Restoration of Grasslands at Hagerman

Working with the Hagerman Wildlife Refuge PTAS is making a significant contribution to restore degraded grasslands. Over 99% of our native grasslands here on the Blackland prairie have been lost since the start of Anglo settlement and the loss of this habitat has accelerated with the tremendous human influx into north central Texas in recent years. Numerous studies have suggested that due to severe degradation of grassland ecosystems in the United States and Canada that over the last twenty five years “grassland birds have experienced steeper, more consistent and more widespread population declines than any other avian guild in North America.” This decline might be particularly marked in our area.

As a child visiting grandparents in Dallas every summer I would hear Bobwhite quail most mornings from the porch of their apartment off of Lemmon and Inwood. As a farm owner in Allen I would hear them on occasion in the early 80s but probably never after 1985. I've yet to hear the call of a Bobwhite quail in the 10 years I have owned a farm just 10 miles north of the Heard. Rodney Thomas recalls that in the 80s one of the best locations for seeing Horned Larks and Longspurs was right behind where Presbyterian Allen Hospital now stands. Who has seen them in that location recently?

To help repair this problem in north central Texas PTAS is playing a major role in the efforts led by Kathy Whaley, the Refuge Manager at the Hagerman, to restore native grasses to large areas formerly under cultivation and now usually in a monoculture of intro-

duced grasses. The hope is to restore, over a matter of at least several years, a mosaic of grassland habitat that will prove attractive to various species of grassland birds that may breed or winter in this area.

The PTAS board sees this as one of the most constructive contributions we can make in our conservation efforts. I hope that any member wishing to learn more will contact me to discuss the project or to visit the sites.

Bill Woodfin, Conservation Committee

Hagerman Next Field Trip

Join us Saturday, November 21, on one of our most popular field trips to Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. This field trip will be led by PTAS board members Jerri Kerr and Carolyn Oldham. The refuge encompasses approximately 12,000 acres of water, marsh and upland habitat for birds and wildlife. It sits on the border of Texas and Oklahoma on the Red River at Lake Texoma. This prime habitat attracts many wintering birds such as geese (Canada – most years over 7,500 are seen, Snow, Greater White-fronted, and Ross's), a variety of ducks (Pintail, Bufflehead, Teal, Merganser, Wood among others) and various times of the year you will find deer, turkeys, bobcats, hawks, and songbirds. Thousands of American White Pelicans also use the refuge as their stopping grounds during their spring and fall migrations.

If you plan on carpooling with us, please meet by 6:30am at the Kohl's on the east side of north 75 (Central Expwy) just south of the Parker exit. Heading north on 75, take the Park exit & stay on the access road & you'll see it on your right. Park in the area of the parking lot closest to the service road. You must

RSVP if you want to carpool! If you'd like, you can meet us at the refuge at 8:00. Don't forget to bring water and snacks. Also bring lunch if you want to stay for afternoon birding. The refuge headquarters does have a restroom.

Also please try and remember to sign in at the headquarters – it's what helps keep them in business!

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

Directions:

Take US75 north to Sherman US82, exit 63,
Go to the second red light and turn left.
Go west on US 82, 1.5 miles to FM 1417, exit 640,
Go north on FM1417 ~4.1 miles,
Turn left onto Refuge Road ,
Go ~6.4 miles to Visitor Center
Karen Carbeiner, Field Trip Chair

Field Trip Schedule

Sat, Nov 21: See above

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, 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

Chapter Meeting Schedule

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

Birdzilla.com

Over 4000 pages of information.

10,000 images of wild birds

Fun and Games

Bird Identification Tips

Raptors

To help with quick identification of raptors, this article will discuss structure, the overall size of the bird and the size and shape of its major parts relative to its body. We want to pay attention to the size and shape of raptors as they fly and when perched. That's what we mean by structure. The bill shape, width of the shoulders, size of the head, and length of the tail and wings are unique to each species and can be very helpful in identification.

Raptors as a class are muscular -- broad at the shoulder with heavy feet and necks. Within raptors, in addition, there are differences, for example: owls have very large heads, large eyes and small bills. They have short tails and relatively long, very broad, and rounded wings. Overall size and shape of the feather pattern on the facial disk are other owl features to note.

Hawks, eagles, falcons, and kites are separated by wing shape and tail length. Look for the length of the tail relative to the body when perched or when in flight. Buteos, like Red-tailed, Red-shouldered and Swainson's Hawks, and eagles have short tails. Their wings are medium in length and broad. The primary feathers at the wing tips are at times held open as "fingers" for flight control. The red-tailed hawk has particularly broad wings so that its flight shape is distinctive. This shape coupled with the red-tail's chunky body is a very important key to its ID. Color variation is large for the red-tail; so we must always make note of the flight shape or body shape when perched.

Coopers and Sharp-shinned Hawks have much longer tails and their wings are relatively short and rounded at the tip.

Falcons and kites have much longer tails and pointed wings -- wings that taper from the body to the tip. The wings are typically quite long as well; so that when perched, the wings lie on top of the tail feathers and reach well beyond the bird's body. The kites are very slender and light, the exception to the muscular description given above. Their prey is correspondingly small -- insects mostly.

So look for structure as you identify raptors, and come to our classes to ask questions about the fine points of each species as your skills grow.

Gailon Brehm and Rodney Thomas, Education Committee

September 2nd-Saturday Walk

at the Heard

Rodney Thomas led a group of twelve brave souls to fight through the elements to find a fair number of birds, 35 species. The temperature was 71F, cloudy with light to moderate rain; wind S 3-5 mph. Notable birds were Swainson's Hawk, Red-headed Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, and Olive-sided Flycatcher. As with all of our second-Saturday walks, the list of species and number of birds of each species were reported on the Cornell University Ebird system to provide a record for our usage and to allow researchers to make use of our data.

Gailon Brehm

Number of species: 35

| | |
|---|---|
| Double-crested Cormorant - <i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i> | 1 |
| Great Egret - <i>Ardea alba</i> | 1 |
| Snowy Egret - <i>Egretta thula</i> | 1 |
| Little Blue Heron - <i>Egretta caerulea</i> | 1 |
| Red-shouldered Hawk - <i>Buteo lineatus</i> | 1 |
| Swainson's Hawk - <i>Buteo swainsoni</i> | 1 |
| Killdeer - <i>Charadrius vociferus</i> | 3 |
| Solitary Sandpiper - <i>Tringa solitaria</i> | 1 |
| Lesser Yellowlegs - <i>Tringa flavipes</i> | 1 |
| Least Sandpiper - <i>Calidris minutilla</i> | 3 |
| Mourning Dove - <i>Zenaidura macroura</i> | 7 |
| Chimney Swift - <i>Chaetura pelagica</i> | 2 |
| Belted Kingfisher - <i>Megasceryle alcyon</i> | 1 |
| Red-headed Woodpecker - <i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i> | 4 |
| Hairy Woodpecker - <i>Picoides villosus</i> | 1 |
| Olive-sided Flycatcher - <i>Contopus cooperi</i> | 1 |
| Least Flycatcher - <i>Empidonax minimus</i> | 1 |
| Eastern Phoebe - <i>Sayornis phoebe</i> | 1 |
| Eastern Kingbird - <i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i> | 1 |
| Scissor-tailed Flycatcher - <i>Tyrannus forficatus</i> | 3 |
| Blue Jay - <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i> | 6 |
| American Crow - <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i> | 3 |
| Northern Rough-winged Swallow - <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i> | 5 |
| Barn Swallow - <i>Hirundo rustica</i> | 4 |
| Carolina Chickadee - <i>Poecile carolinensis</i> | 3 |
| Tufted Titmouse - <i>Baeolophus bicolor</i> | 2 |
| Carolina Wren - <i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i> | 3 |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - <i>Poliophtila caerulea</i> | 2 |
| Eastern Bluebird - <i>Sialia sialis</i> | 1 |
| Northern Mockingbird - <i>Mimus polyglottos</i> | 2 |
| European Starling - <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> | 6 |
| Wilson's Warbler - <i>Wilsonia pusilla</i> | 1 |
| Northern Cardinal - <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i> | 8 |
| Great-tailed Grackle - <i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i> | 3 |
| House Finch - <i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i> | 2 |

PTAS Board Adopts Grant Process

At its September meeting, the PTAS board defined the process to review and award grants for 2009/10 year. Board members will gather grant suggestions in October and the first two weeks of November. PTAS members are encourage to make suggestions to any board member during this time. Board members are listed on the last page of this newsletter. The suggestions will be reviewed by the board members at their November meeting (3rd Thursday of November). Viable suggestions will be selected for presentation to the general membership at the November meeting (4th Tuesday of November). Comments and feedback will be solicited at the meeting. At the January board meeting the suggestions and feedback will be review and budgeting and awards will be determined by the board. Grants will be distributed shortly there after. The board reserved the right to award additional grants on an ad hoc basis if circumstances warrant it.

PTAS Board Meetings

The PTAS board in an effort to standardize its meeting times, elected to have its board meetings for this year 2009/10 on the third Thursday of Sept, Nov, Jan, and March. Its initial meeting of the year was held on Aug 18. The board is required to have 5 meetings a year according to the PTAS constitution. Special meetings will be called upon the request of a majority of the board. Any member wishing to be active in the leadership of PTAS is welcome to attend. PTAS members attending a meeting can fully participate in the discussions but only board members are constitutionally permitted to vote. All meetings unless otherwise notified are at Merrick Darley's house, 3713 Wood Rail Dr. Plano, Tx. All Meetings start at 7:00pm. The three remaining meetings are:

November 19, 2009

January 21, 2010

March 18, 2010

Any member wanting to attend should give Merrick a call at 972-422-5355 and he will brew a cup of coffee for you.

October 2nd-Saturday Walk at the Heard

About 17 people joined me for a nice walk on the Heard Sanctuary. Temperature was 51F with an overcast sky. As usual we started out back of the main building and proceeded east and north. We then crossed to the SRC building parking lot and walked to the wetlands via the road west of there because of mud along our normal trail beside the slough. That gave us a nice view of a first-year female Baltimore Oriole high in a tree near the SRC parking lot. Migration movement was noted with the sighting of vees of southward flying Canada Geese and lots of Scissortail Flycatchers.

Gailon Brehm

Number of species: 43

| | |
|---|----|
| Canada Goose - <i>Branta canadensis</i> | 40 |
| Wood Duck - <i>Aix sponsa</i> | 6 |
| Mallard - <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | 5 |
| Double-crested Cormorant - <i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i> | 2 |
| Great Blue Heron - <i>Ardea herodias</i> | 2 |
| Great Egret - <i>Ardea alba</i> | 1 |
| Turkey Vulture - <i>Cathartes aura</i> | 2 |
| Cooper's Hawk - <i>Accipiter cooperii</i> | 1 |
| Red-shouldered Hawk - <i>Buteo lineatus</i> | 1 |
| Rock Pigeon - <i>Columba livia</i> | 12 |
| Mourning Dove - <i>Zenaida macroura</i> | 10 |
| Chimney Swift - <i>Chaetura pelagica</i> | 2 |
| Belted Kingfisher - <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i> | 1 |
| Red-headed Woodpecker - <i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i> | 2 |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker - <i>Melanerpes carolinus</i> | 5 |
| Downy Woodpecker - <i>Picoides pubescens</i> | 2 |
| Northern Flicker - <i>Colaptes auratus</i> | 2 |
| Pileated Woodpecker - <i>Dryocopus pileatus</i> | 1 |
| Eastern Phoebe - <i>Sayornis phoebe</i> | 3 |
| Scissor-tailed Flycatcher - <i>Tyrannus forficatus</i> | 30 |
| Blue Jay - <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i> | 3 |
| American Crow - <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i> | 5 |
| Northern Rough-winged Swallow - <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i> | 15 |
| Barn Swallow - <i>Hirundo rustica</i> | 50 |
| Carolina Chickadee - <i>Poecile carolinensis</i> | 5 |
| Tufted Titmouse - <i>Baeolophus bicolor</i> | 3 |
| Carolina Wren - <i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i> | 2 |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet - <i>Regulus calendula</i> | 2 |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - <i>Poliophtila caerulea</i> | 1 |
| Eastern Bluebird - <i>Sialia sialis</i> | 15 |
| American Robin - <i>Turdus migratorius</i> | 5 |
| Gray Catbird - <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i> | 1 |
| Northern Mockingbird - <i>Mimus polyglottos</i> | 5 |
| Brown Thrasher - <i>Toxostoma rufum</i> | 1 |
| European Starling - <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> | 30 |
| Orange-crowned Warbler - <i>Vermivora celata</i> | 2 |
| Nashville Warbler - <i>Vermivora ruficapilla</i> | 1 |

Audubon Christmas Birdcount 2009

Well, it's about that time again! We NEED your help in our annual Christmas Bird Count, which we always do the day after Christmas. So, please put it on your calendar! This year it falls on a Saturday, so I'm expecting an even better turnout. The more participants, the more eyes looking, and the more accurate the count.

We will meet at the Heard Natural Science Museum, McKinney, Tx at 7:00am on Dec 26.

The McKinney area is divided up into 9 zones including the Heard Sanctuary. If you would like to lead one of these zones, please let me know. If you're not familiar with the zones or are new to the count, just e-mail or call in the number in your party and you will be assigned a zone. Maps of the count areas and a listing of birds observed on previous counts will be available.

And don't worry if you're not an expert birder, this is a FUN activity where you can learn identification skills!

There is a \$5 registration fee to National Audubon. Lunch will be provided.

If you would like to volunteer feeder watch information, please let me know, or just e-mail me the results. Your feeder must be within the count area (7.5 miles from the Heard Sanctuary).

Roger Sanderson
Count Coordinator
rsanderson@heardmuseum.org
972-562-5566 ext. 273
Cell: 972-333-5671

Great Backyard Bird Count

The GBBC is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited. In 2010 it will be held Friday through Monday Feb 12-15.

How to Participate:

1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count – Friday to Monday, February 12-15. You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day. You can also submit more than one checklist per day if you count in other locations on that day.

2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time. You may find it helpful to print out your [regional bird checklist](http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/checklist) (<http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/checklist>) to get an idea of the kinds of birds you're likely to see in your area in February. You could take note of the highest number of each species you see on this checklist.

3. When you're finished, enter your results [through the web page](http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/input) (<http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/input>). You'll see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists!" on the website home page beginning on the first day of the count. It will remain active until the deadline for data submission on March 1st.

Why Count Birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Your counts can help answer many questions:

- How will this winter's snow and cold temperatures influence bird populations?
- Where are winter finches and other “irruptive” species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?
- Are any birds undergoing worrisome declines that point to the need for conservation attention?

Scientists use the counts, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project Feeder Watch, and eBird to give us an immense picture of our winter birds. Each year that these data are collected makes them more meaningful and allows scientists to investigate far-reaching questions.



Miki, a Mississippi Kite



Hunter, a Great Horned Owl

PTAS Sponsors Two Raptors

Last year the PTAS board elected to sponsor, two of the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center's raptors. During August the board members voted on which of the available raptors to officially sponsor. The winners were Miki, a Mississippi kite, and Hunter, a great horned owl.

Miki was transferred to BPRC this summer from an educator who was retiring and needed to find a good home. This bird is a year old and is a human imprint. We do not know if it is male or female (yet). Miki is currently going through a molt and is growing in adult feathers which are gray.

Hunter is also human imprint that had been doing programs at another raptor education facility. He was found as a baby in 2003 and was transferred to BPRC in the fall of 2007.


Like all of BPRC's raptor ambassadors they have come to BPRC with circumstances that make them non-

releasable. These two raptors, being imprints, would not be able to survive on their own in the wild. Instead they have become the ambassadors for all wild birds of prey by educating the public about the issues concerning their future.

Becoming a sponsor supports the feeding, care and any medical treatments of one of the raptor ambassadors for one year.

Blackland Prairie Raptor Center's education birds of prey are the highlight of their outreach programming. Their purpose is to inspire their audiences to think about and actively participate in helping preserve raptors and the environment for generations to come.

Though these education ambassadors have been given names, we must respect them as wild animals. It must be stressed that the birds of Blackland Prairie Raptor Center are and always will remain wild birds of prey, not pets.



Earth Share
OF TEXAS

Earth Share of Texas represents the Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society in payroll deduction plans for charitable giving. For information, E-mail estx@earthshare-texas.org or call 1-800-GREENTX



The morning shift from left to right, Tom Heath,
Merrick Darley and Nina Tucker



The afternoon shift from left to right,
Merrick Darley and Mike Mizell

Building Cages for Our Sponsored Birds

Having adopted the birds PTAS members set about helping build their new homes. The Blackland Prairie Raptor Center is moving to Brockdale and constructing a new building to house its educational birds. Volunteers from PTAS worked extensively on the interior walls for two of the cages. The slats like fencing slats were screwed to supporting studs. The portable drills went through several recharges of the batteries as hundreds of screws went in.

PTAS Donation Drive

PTAS is currently conducting its fundraising drive to help the birds and environment of north Texas. There are many outstanding organizations working the national environmental issues including the National Audubon Society of which we are a local chapter. Our effort is focused on the local north Texas area and we work at the grass roots level.

We depend on your generosity to carry out our conservation activities as the funding we receive from National Audubon is less than \$3 a member. Being an all volunteer organization and having a meeting place generously supplied by the Heard Science Mu-

seum we have extremely low overhead. Thus all the funds you donate plus a substantial amount of local and national dues are used directly in charitable projects.

If you can help us, checks should be made to the Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society and mailed to our Treasurer:

Mike Mizell
800 Edgewood Place
Denton, TX 76209

PTAS is a 501 c(3) organization, which means that contributions to it are fully tax deductible.

The Modern Way—Bird Banding

Early ornithologists studied birds by "collecting" them. In other words, they shot or snared the birds and studied their dead bodies. (This includes John James Audubon, by the way. It was not uncommon for him to dine on songbirds after he finished drawing them.)

Modern bird study no longer requires sacrificing the bird. Now birds are captured in mist nets, banded, weighed, measured, studied for various research projects and then released.

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**972-423-4344

Treasurer: *Mike Mizell**.....940-382-8551

Conservation/Armchair Activist:

*Roger Sanderson** 972-562-5566

Newsletter: *Merrick Darley** 972-422-5355

Field Trips: *Karen Carbiener**..... 972-824-2878

*Tom Heath**..... 972-867-8646

Education

*Rodney Thomas**214-533-8756

Gailon Brehm..... 972-517-2542

Hospitality: *Paula Brehm*972-517-2542

Membership: *Jerri Kerr**..... 972-578-3146

CBC: *Roger Sanderson** 972-516-2297

Website/Electronic Communications:

*Tom Heath**..... 972-867-8646

Programs: *Carolyn Oldham**..... 972-517-8987

Publicity: *Bobette Mauck**..... 972-540-5646

** 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