



Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

May 2011

April Board Meeting

At the April board meeting the planning process was started for activities for the next fiscal year that starts July 1, 2011 and runs through June 30, 2012. It was decided that the regular member meetings will remain on the 4th Tuesday of Sept-Nov, and Jan-May at the Heard Museum.

The board meetings will be the Aug 18, 2011, Sept 15, 2011, Nov 17, 2011, Jan 19, 2012, and April 19, 2012. Meetings will be held at Dr. Woodfin's office with exception of the Aug 18 meeting which will be held at Merrick Darley's house. Board meetings are open to any PTAS member wanting to actively contribute to PTAS activities. Send Merrick Darley an email at hmdarley@gmail.com to be on the meeting reminder email list and join in the fun.

Board members were assigned to committees to plan the activities for the next year. At the next meeting in August the board will review/approve the plans developed by each committee. The following responsibilities for next year committees were assigned:

- Programs – Carolyn Oldham
- Field Trips – Linda Ergonis
- Education – Rodney Thomas, Gailon Brehm
- Membership – Merrick Darley
- Hospitality – Paula Brehm
- Conservation – Roger Sanderson, Bill Woodfin
- Fundraising – Merrick Darley
- Newsletter – Merrick Darley
- Website – Tom Heath
- CBC – Roger Sanderson
- Advocacy – Open

Publicity – Open

Audubon Adventures -- Open

If you have any inputs in these areas, now is time to talk to the responsible committee chair. For instance, Linda is wanting to not only have local field trips but also look at longer trips to more distant birding sites. She is also wanting to do an international field trip. If you have a trip you always wanted to go on let Linda know your ideas. Do you know any speaker you would like to hear? Carolyn is looking for fresh ideas for programs at the member meetings.

Want to help? Please consider the open positions above as they will not be done unless someone steps up

The board also awarded \$1000 to the Heard Museum to fund the purchase of native plant seeds, tools and machinery for prairie restoration at the Heard.



Snow Geese with moon observed on Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip -- Photo By Tom Heath

Welcome to the New Board Members

PTAS is pleased to announce the election of two new members to the board, Betty Parker and Linda Ergonis. Betty was elected as Secretary of PTAS at our February general meeting. Linda Ergonis was elected as a board member at large and was happy to take on the committee chair for field trips. Both, Linda and Betty volunteer with the Heard's bird banding station. Linda is also an avid photographer and has been featured by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Stepping down from being Secretary was David Griffith who has moved to Matagorda county near Blessing. We thank David for his dedicated service as secretary and for all his effort organizing and contributing to the demonstration native garden at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center.

Also stepping down from the board was Karen Carbienger. We thank Karen for serving as field trip coordinator and all her effort in arranging wonderful field trips since 2006.

Four existing members of the board were re-elected to the board for an additional two years. Merrick Darley will continue to serve as President and Carolyn Oldham as Vice-President and Program Chair. Re-elected at large board member Tom Heath will continue to serve as website coordinator. Re-elected at large board member Rodney Thomas will continue to serve as Education Chairman.



Red-shouldered Hawk observed on Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip -- Photo By Tom Heath



Greater Yellowlegs observed on Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip -- Photo By Tom Heath

Birdzilla.com

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Fun and Games

eCounty Birding Experience

In September eCounty Birding from eBird (www.ebird.org) was introduced to our chapter. Its purpose was to encourage our members to bird new locations and add to the data of the underbirded counties in north central Texas. I chose Fannin County, which at the time, had only 49 checklists on eBird. During the fall and winter I birded two locales that were new to me – Bonham State Park and Lake Fannin County Park. In March I volunteered for a year long project to create a checklist for Bonham State Park for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Since then I have birded the park and areas around it once a week. I have added thirteen checklists to eBird for Fannin County. Over this time I also added fifteen new species to the county checklist, which now stands at 203. Bird species recorded for the first time were Baltimore Oriole, Orchard Oriole, Canada Warbler, Swainson's Thrush, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Warbling Vireo, Least Flycatcher, Chuck-will's-widow, Franklin Gull, Pectoral Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Common Loon, Canvasback, and Spotted Sandpiper. There were nineteen other species where I recorded a second sighting. If the spring weather had cooperated, more migrant species might have been found. The almost constant winds pushed the birds too quickly through our area.

Looking forward to summer birding, there are only three checklists for the June, July, and August time period in the county. Despite the heat of the summer, there are young resident birds that might be exploring alternate areas and migrants returning who have failed to nest or are done nesting. There is still time to help with this project. Just choose a county, bird it, and enter your data on eBird. It's very simple and fun.

Georgette Guernsey



PTAS Birders at Elm Fork Nature Preserve

Elm Fork Nature Preserve and McInnish Sports Complex lakes Field Trip Report

On Saturday, February 19, eight PTAS members and guests were led on a good bird walk by Jim Varnum. For most of us, it was our first introduction to the lakes within the McInnish Sports Complex, and the heavily wooded Elm Fork Nature Preserve. These parks sit side-by-side off Sandy Lake Road and are managed by the City of Carrollton .

We first scoped the lakes, where we were entertained by a lone fisherman in a small boat, who must have surely been made uncomfortable by the group pointing binoculars and scopes "at him". He eventually caught a large fish and yelled happily at us, "now THAT'S how its done!" We all congratulated him - maybe he thought that was what we had been waiting and hoping to see?! But behind him and around him, we were actually enjoying seeing 14 species of geese, waders and ducks, including Gadwall, American Wigeon and Redhead.

We learned that the Elm Fork property had been owned by the same family for 122 years, and was called a "woodright", where trees and the wood were used as a sustainable resource - it has never been clear-cut. There is a plaque noting this history at the park's trailhead.

The Elm Fork of the Trinity River is nearby, and Jim taught us that there is a hiking trail that approaches the river, in case we want to come back for that. We walked the one-mile trail through the preserve; it follows a small creek for part of the way and backs up to a large pond where we found more ducks. There were several nice markers identifying the mostly winter-dormant trees.

Altogether we spotted 44 species at the two parks. We especially enjoyed seeing Brown Creepers and a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. The female fed on some berries in a position that displayed her creamy-yellow belly -- the first time several folks had ever seen that!

Jerri Kerr

March Second Saturday

The March Second Saturday field trip on March 12th was well attended; some 30 folks including several master naturalists. The birding seemed slow in the wind, but we ended up tallying 50 species. In addition to the bird species Eastern fox squirrel, cricket frogs, an unidentified small snake, red eared pond slider, and a river cooter were observed.

Bird species observed:

Canada Goose	3
Wood Duck	3
Gadwall	4
Mallard (Domestic type)	7
Blue-winged Teal	8
Northern Shoveler	2
Ring-necked Duck	2
Pied-billed Grebe	10
Double-crested Cormorant	5
Great Blue Heron	8
Great Egret	4
Black Vulture	3
Turkey Vulture	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	2
Red-tailed Hawk	1
American Coot	4
Killdeer	2
Mourning Dove	2
Belted Kingfisher	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	5
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1
Downy Woodpecker	3
Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted)	5
Eastern Phoebe	1
Blue Jay	5
American Crow	5
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	3
Purple Martin	7
Carolina Chickadee	5
Tufted Titmouse	4
Brown Creeper	1
Carolina Wren	5
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1
Eastern Bluebird	5
Hermit Thrush	1
Northern Mockingbird	3
Cedar Waxwing	50
Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)	25
Song Sparrow	2
White-throated Sparrow	2
Harris's Sparrow	3
White-crowned Sparrow	4
Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored)	3
Northern Cardinal	10
Red-winged Blackbird	50
Eastern Meadowlark	8
Common Grackle	2
Brown-headed Cowbird	1
House Finch	1
American Goldfinch	2

Western Field Ornithologists Conference: Sierra Vista, AZ

If you've never been to southeast Arizona during the late summer season (or even if you have), this is an opportunity you won't want to miss. We will offer field trips to all the southeast Arizona hotspots looking for local specialties like Scaled and Montezuma quail, Gray, Short-tailed, and Zone-tailed hawks, a dazzling variety of hummingbirds and flycatchers, Elegant Trogon, Red-faced Warbler, Cassin's, Botteri's, Rufous-winged, and Five-striped sparrows and much more.

To register and see full details go to www.westernfieldornithologists.org and click on the 'Annual Conference' banner in the middle of the page. You will probably want to download the Conference Details document and review before you begin registration. Non-member registration includes a one-year membership to WFO and a subscription to our publication, *Western Birds*.

The rains that come during late summer to southeast Arizona create breeding conditions for some species and, for others, ideal conditions for molting prior to movement to the wintering grounds. This phenomenon of molt migration will be the subject of a Keynote address by Peter Pyle during the conference, and will make the field trips particularly interesting. As always, we'll have Science Sessions Friday and Saturday afternoons, a wide variety of field trips, and workshops on topics like flycatcher identification, bird banding, study skin preparation, and wilderness first aid. Dan Fischer will give a talk about the first naturalists to visit the southwest. We are offering pre-and post-meeting field trips to the Chiricahua Mountains and California Gulch and a Sunday trip focusing on butterflies and dragonflies. Many local experts will be helping us out with workshops and field trips including Tony Battiste, Bob Behrstock, Homer Hansen, Melody Kehl, Michael Marsden, Ted Mouras, Heather Swanson, Wezil Walraven, Jack Whetstone, Sheri Williamson, and Erika Wilson. In addition, you'll have chances to bird with members of the WFO board like Ken Able, Jon Dunn, Kimball Garrett, Dave Krueper, Kurt Leuschner, Dave Shuford, and Jay Withgott.

As so many discovered last year, you need to register very early to be sure to get your first choice of field trips and workshops, so visit the WFO web site (www.westernfieldornithologists.org) right away to see full details and to register.

April Second Saturday

A guest leader Mike Cameron led the April walk assisted by Rodney Thomas. Highlights included a beautiful male Wood Duck and a brilliant Prothonotary Warbler near the north end of the wetlands, a Yellow-crowned Night Heron along the slough, a noisy but unseen White-eyed Vireo near the beginning of the boardwalk, an Indigo Bunting at the south end of the wetlands, and a few lingering Harris' Sparrows at the feeders. A cottonmouth was observed in the slough at the end of the morning. He paused on a partially submerged log about 4' from shore, allowing several people to take photos without jeopardy.

Bird Species Observed.

Canada Goose
 Wood Duck
 Pied-billed Grebe
 Double-crested Cormorant
 Great Blue Heron
 Great Egret
 Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
 Black Vulture
 Turkey Vulture
 Swainson's Hawk
 Killdeer
 White-winged Dove
 Mourning Dove
 Red-bellied Woodpecker
 Downy Woodpecker
 Hairy Woodpecker
 Eastern Phoebe
 White-eyed Vireo
 Blue Jay
 American Crow
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow
 Purple Martin
 Carolina Chickadee
 Tufted Titmouse
 Carolina Wren
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 Eastern Bluebird
 Hermit Thrush
 Northern Mockingbird
 Brown Thrasher
 European Starling
 Cedar Waxwing
 Prothonotary Warbler
 Lincoln's Sparrow
 White-throated Sparrow
 Harris's Sparrow
 White-crowned Sparrow
 Northern Cardinal
 Indigo Bunting
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Brown-headed Cowbird

May Second Saturday

We had a great group of 25 for a nice cool morning at the Heard on May 5th. In addition to 39 bird species, a Diamond-backed Watersnake, Red-eared Slider turtle, and Eastern Fox Squirrel were observed.

Bird Species observed:

Canada Goose - <i>Branta canadensis</i>	2
Great Blue Heron - <i>Ardea herodias</i>	12
Great Egret - <i>Ardea alba</i>	8
Green Heron - <i>Butorides virescens</i>	2
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron - <i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	1
White Ibis - <i>Eudocimus albus</i>	1
Turkey Vulture - <i>Cathartes aura</i>	3
Red-shouldered Hawk - <i>Buteo lineatus</i>	2
Swainson's Hawk - <i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	2
Red-tailed Hawk - <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	1
Mourning Dove - <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	3
Barred Owl - <i>Strix varia</i>	1
Chimney Swift - <i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	3
Ruby-throated/Black-chinned Hummingbird - <i>Archilochus colubris/alexandri</i>	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker - <i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>	2
Downy Woodpecker - <i>Picoides pubescens</i>	2
Empidonax sp. - <i>Empidonax sp.</i>	1
Great Crested Flycatcher - <i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>	2
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher - <i>Tyrannus forficatus</i>	2
Red-eyed Vireo - <i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	1
American Crow - <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	3
Northern Rough-winged Swallow - <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	8
Purple Martin - <i>Progne subis</i>	6
Cliff Swallow - <i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	2
Carolina Chickadee - <i>Poecile carolinensis</i>	5
Tufted Titmouse - <i>Baeolophus bicolor</i>	5
Carolina Wren - <i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i>	3
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - <i>Poliophtila caerulea</i>	2
Eastern Bluebird - <i>Sialia sialis</i>	8
Northern Mockingbird - <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	3
Cedar Waxwing - <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	6
Yellow Warbler - <i>Dendroica petechia</i>	2
Prothonotary Warbler - <i>Protonotaria citrea</i>	3
Northern Cardinal - <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	15
Indigo Bunting - <i>Passerina cyanea</i>	8
Painted Bunting - <i>Passerina ciris</i>	5
Dickcissel - <i>Spiza americana</i>	1
Red-winged Blackbird - <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	1
Common Grackle - <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	2
Brown-headed Cowbird - <i>Molothrus ater</i>	3
Orchard Oriole - <i>Icterus spurius</i>	3

PTAS Receives Two Grants From The Audubon Foundation of Texas

PTAS applied for two collaborative grants from the Audubon Foundation of Texas (AFT). One grant is to expand and enhance the native plant gardens and trail at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center. The second grant was to help with our work supporting prairie restoration at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. The Audubon Foundation of Texas provides funds to support the Texas Audubon chapters affiliated with the National organization. We are grateful to AFT for awarding us both grants for a total of two thousand dollars.

PTAS has been working with the Blackland Prairie Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist (BPCTMN) and with the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center to establish a native plant garden and trail in Brockdale Park on Lake Lavon. This is the site of the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center (BPRC). The trail was constructed with 4 beds along it and is now opened to the public during educational activities at BPRC. This trail was funded in part by a 2008 grant from the Audubon Foundation of Texas.

The gardens and trail feature plants, shrubs and trees native to Texas and can withstand the rigors of the seasons in this area. The trail winds through sunlit and shaded areas to show the public the possibilities of native plants in their own yard. These plants are also a necessity for the local wildlife producing berries and nectar for birds, bees and other animals.

The gardens and trail serve to educate the public on natural ecosystems and encourages the restoration of native plants.

PTAS, BPCTMN, and BPRC are planning improvements and additions to the trail. The grant will fund the purchase of the additional native plants and shrubs to install along the trail.

We anticipate preparing the bed sites during the fall of 2011 and planting occurring during the winter and early spring of 2012. Work will be done using volunteers from PTAS, BPCTMN, and BPRC.

For two years, PTAS has been working with Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge doing prairie restora-

tion. PTAS monitors the work and site. PTAS also provides funds for the native grass and wildflower seeds. The refuge supplies manpower and machinery to do the restoration. This restoration has proceeded in two areas, one in a 20 acre field area along Bennett lane and a second along the approach to the new visitor's center. For the 2011/12 year PTAS is contributing \$1000 dollars obtained from our individual members to fund the restoration. The grant doubles the funds available for expanding the area of restoration in the Bennett Lane area. It will be used to buy additional native grass and wildflower seed to cover the expanded area.

We plan to have the appropriate areas cleared and seeded within our 2011/12 physical year. Seeds will most likely be purchased in the fall time frame to support winter planting. PTAS expects to support prairie restoration for the foreseeable future at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. As an important nearby location for our birding activities we are very interested in maintaining the variety of healthy habitats at Hagerman which encourage species diversity. In turn PTAS is an important constituency for Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge to support its primary mission to protect and manage 11,320 acres of habitat as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife.

PTAS has been sponsoring prairie restoration because not only is it the native habitat of our region it is also one of the most devastated habitats, first by agriculture development and then by suburban development. Now less than 1% of the original prairie remains and as a result much of our native wildlife has lost their home on the prairie. Prairie restoration will help provide critical habitat for many of the declining grassland species.

If you are interested in helping with the effort at either the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center or Hagerman National Wildlife refuge please let Merrick Darley know at hmdarley@gmail.com.



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

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

PRAIRIE & TIMBERS AUDUBON SOCIETY

Officers, Chairpersons and Board Members

President: *Merrick Darley**.....972-422-5355

Vice President: *Carolyn Oldham**. 972-517-8987

Secretary: *Betty Parker**972-618-1130

Treasurer: *Georgette Guernsey**.....972-542-8089

Conservation/Armchair Activist:

*Roger Sanderson** 972-333-5671

*Bill Woodfin**.....972-838-9290

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

Field Trips: *Linda Ergonis**..... 972-596-6109

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

Education

*Rodney Thomas**.....214-533-8756

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

Hospitality: *Paula Brehm*.972-517-2542

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

CBC: *Roger Sanderson** 972-333-5671

Website/Electronic Communications:

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

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

Publicity: *open*

Board Member: *Sara Shaffer**.....972-881-0645

* Board Member

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 Georgette Guernsey, 6405 Oak Hollow Lane
McKinney, TX 75070

Audubon code: 7XCH

PTAS Chapter Code: W15

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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@gmail.com