September 2019

Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society Invites You

Welcome! While many of you are familiar with our organization, some of you may be new. The Audubon name is synonymous with birds, and Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society (PTAS) is no different. We are an independent 501(c)(3) organization centered in Collin County that is affiliated with National Audubon, and we are focused on birding and bird-related activities, including conservation, preservation, and education.

We are starting our 2019-2020 year and have been busy planning a variety of interesting field trips and programs, the details of which you will find in this newsletter. Membership in our organization is free, and participation in our meetings and field trips is open to everyone. I want to personally invite you to our next meeting on Sept 24th at 6:30pm at the Heard Museum in McKinney, TX - Jerri Kerr, long time PTAS member, headlines with a program on the birds of Hawaii.

We will also have our popular “Bird ID Class” led by Gailon Brehm and Rodney Thomas, our audience sourced “Bird Sightings”, and updates on our upcoming activities. I hope to see you there!

Mike Cameron
President, PTAS

LEARN MORE: prairieandtimbers.org or www.facebook.com/PTAudubon
### MEETINGS START AT 6:30

- 6:30 Sign-in, Social time
- 6:45 Bird Identification Class
- 7:10 General Meeting
- 7:30 Presentation
- 8:30 Adjourn

All meetings are at the
Science Resource Center
Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary
1 Nature Place,
McKinney, TX 75069

**September 24, 2019**
**Bird ID:** Raptors – Hawks, Owls, Falcons, Kites
**Presenter:** Jerri Kerr, PTAS Member
**Title:** An Eye-Opening Birding Trip to the Hawaiian Islands

**October 22, 2019**
**Bird ID:** Shorebirds – Plovers, Sandpipers, Phalaropes, etc
**Presenters:** Stephanie Varnum, Texas Master Naturalist
**Title:** Orchid Treasures of Texas

**November 26, 2019**
**Bird ID:** Teachers Choice: maybe Woodland Birds – Vir- eos, Wrens, Nuthatches, Creepers, Chickadees, and Kinglets
**Presenter:** Byron Stone, Past President TOS
**Title:** The Great Adventure of Birding Alaska in Early Summer
**Special Short Program Presenter:** Kacy Metcalf, Heard Volunteer
**Special Program Title:** Prothonotary Warblers at the Heard

**January 28, 2020**
**Bird ID:** Buntings and Grosbeaks: Cardinals, Rose-breasted & Blue Grosbeaks, Indigo & Painted Buntings, finches
**Presenter:** Ann Hoover, Program Chair, FWAS
**Title:** Vultures

**February 25, 2020**
**Bird ID:** Teachers Choice: maybe Corvids & cuckoos
**Presenter:** Suzanne Langley, Executive Director of Audubon Texas
**Title:** TBD

**March 24, 2020**
**Bird ID:** Winter Sparrows
**Presenter:** Title: TBD

**April 28, 2020**
**Bird ID:** Warblers
**Presenters:** Doug Wood, Professor, Southeastern Oklahoma State University
**Title:** TBD

**May 26, 2020**
**Bird ID:** No class
**Picnic/Potluck**

---

### Presentation Highlights

Our program committee of Candy Anandagoda, Kristen Carlson, Denise Dengler, Jerri Kerr and Carolyn Oldham have worked hard to put together an outstanding set of diverse programs for our new year.

For our first program, Jerri Kerr presents her talk, “An Eye-Opening Birding Trip to the Hawaiian Islands”. Jerri has been a member of PTAS for 21 years. She lived on Oahu as a child and wishes she had been taken to look for birds; some of the endemics that lived then are now extinct. She had long dreamed of returning to bird in the islands and knew how hard it can be to find some of the endemic species. When the American Birding Association offered their first-ever tour to Hawaii in 2018, Jerri lucked out with a spot on the trip. She learned much about the current status of Hawaii’s endemic birds. It was a profound, eye-opening education that she will share with us.

For our second program, “Hexalectris Orchids in Texas” Stephanie Varnum explores Hexalectris orchids which are uncommon to extremely rare and only found in limited ecological areas. In 2004 Stephanie with several other Texas Master Naturalists from the Dallas Chapter began assisting a University of Dallas biology professor in her summer field work of observing, counting and measuring these special plants. The observed and collected data is the basis for this talk. She explains the field work project and presents five species (out of the 6 found in Texas) and explains the geology that underlies their habitat.

Stephanie is a native of Pennsylvania, who has lived in Texas for almost 50 years. She became a Texas Master Naturalist in 2002 and discovered her passion for Citizen Science and ecological studies. Since 2005 she has done field research on native orchids in Texas with the focus on non-photosynthetic, myco-heterotrophic orchids. Her
other nature passion is bird watching which she has enjoyed on five continents.

The November program will be presented by Byron Stone past president of the Texas Ornithological Society (TOS). TOS has sponsored over 12 birding expeditions to Alaska developing the "Trip-of-a-Lifetime" itinerary pioneered by another TOS Past-President, Jim Hailey. Birding destinations include Anchorage, Barrow, Nome, Denali Park, and a boat trip for near-shore pelagic birds out of Seward. Participants encountered about 180 bird species, including 20 species that are very hard to find anywhere in North America other than Alaska. A partial list of such specialty birds includes Arctic and Aleutian Terns, Harlequin Duck, Pacific Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Arctic Warbler, 10 species of alcids, Eastern Yellow Wagtail and the amazing Blue-throat! And then there is the scenery - there is nothing like it in the lower 48. And mammals, including musk oxen and caribou. And the incomparable polygon tundra of Barrow.

These are rigorous adventures with long birding days and lots of travel. Much of the travel is in isolated backcountry with no facilities. Although much of the birding is along gravel roads or improved trails, a few locations require hiking over uneven ground on steep hillsides in order to maximize finding the birds

Also during the November meeting, Kacy Metcalf will give a short program on Prothonotary Warblers based on her work on their nesting and nest boxes while volunteering at the Heard

January’s presentation will be by Ann Hoover, current Program chair of the Fort Worth Audubon Society. Her subject is Vultures. Ann writes “Even Darwin called them disgusting. But vultures are more vital than vile because they use special adaptations to clean up things that could stick around for a long, long time. With their numbers plummeting, we’re finding out how much we really need them. Learn more that will truly have you appreciating this ‘trash bird’.”

Special Invitation From Fort Worth Audubon

PTAS members are invited to attend a Special Saturday Meeting of the Fort Worth Audubon Society. The meeting will be held on October 5th, 2019, at 10 am and will feature speaker Katie Fallon. It will be in Everett Hall, Room 100, in the Research and Education (RES) building at the University of North Texas Health Science Center on 3500 Camp Bowie Boulevard (at Montgomery Street) Fort Worth, TX, 76107. Use Parking Lot 6 on Clifton Street.

Katie Fallon has had nonfiction pieces in a variety of magazines and journals, including Appalachian Heritage, Isotope: A Journal of Literary Nature and Science Writing, and River Teeth: A Journal of Nonfiction Narrative. Her essay “Lost,” published in The Fourth River, was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2008. She teaches creative writing at West Virginia University. She lives in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Katie will have her books for sale (cash or check) and will be happy to sign them for you. Also on sale will be FWAS shirts, hats and patches, and tickets for a raffle. A light continental breakfast will be served.

Cerulean Blues:

A Personal Search for a Vanishing Songbird

Taking the reader from the mountains of Appalachia to a coffee plantation near Bogotá, Colombia, this investigation into the plight of the Cerulean Warbler — a tiny migratory songbird — describes its struggle to survive in ever-shrinking bands of suitable habitat. This elusive creature — a favorite among bird watchers and the fastest-declining warbler species in the United States — has lost three percent of its total population each year since 1966. This precipitous decline means that today there are 80 percent fewer Ceruleans than 40 years ago, and their numbers continue to drop because of threats including deforestation, global warming, and mountaintop-removal coal mining. With scientific rigor and a sense of wonder, Fallon charts their path across more than 2000 miles and shows how the fate of a creature weighing less than an ounce is vitally linked to that of our own.

Katie Fallon’s book, Cerulean Blues: A Personal Search for a Vanishing Songbird, is available at bookstores and online. Katie Fallon and her co-editor, Davina C. Elder, are both University of North Carolina Press authors. Katie Fallon’s book, Cerulean Blues: A Personal Search for a Vanishing Songbird, is available at bookstores and online. Katie Fallon and her co-editor, Davina C. Elder, are both University of North Carolina Press authors.
PTAS Field Trips

Our trips are designed to take birders to a variety of habitat environments and find a variety of bird species in our area and other locations in Texas. Thanks to Chuck Carlson, our field trip chair for planning these adventures. The public is encouraged to participate. Please remember to bring binoculars, sun screen, water and snacks.

To participate, monitor the website field trip page (http://prairieandtimbers.org/fieldtrips.htm). Tom Heath maintains a field trip email list to inform members of field trip plans and changes. Send Tom (heathwtom@netscape.net) your name and email address if you want to be on the list.

It is important to RSVP to the person noted for trips you plan to attend because plans may change due to weather, or birds spotted at a different location. If you RSVP, you will be emailed of any change in plans. Also, it is important for leaders to know how many will attend to organize the group.

For most field trips, carpooling is available and encouraged as it makes coordination simpler and reduces pollution. The typical meet-up point for carpools is in the northeast corner of the Walmart’s parking lot at the intersection of Central Expressway and Spring Creek in Plano. If you are carpooling let the coordinator know when you RSVP.

Field Trip Schedule

Saturday, September 21st, 7:00 am
Location: Joppa Preserve/Lower Chain of Wetlands on Great Trinity Forest Way—SE Dallas
Leader: Ben Sandifer
Target Birds: Migrant Passerines, Raptors, Wading birds, Waterfowl. Scopes not necessary. We will be walking 3+ miles, on hard surface trail. If you choose to tote your scope, there will be opportunities to use it. No restrooms at the start or on the trail.
Meeting Place: Joppa/Little Lemmon Lk parking lot on south side of Loop 12 highway east of I-45.
Length: 4 hours
RSVP: by Sep. 16: To Chuck Carlson, carchuck@gmail.com, and indicate if interested in carpooling.

Sunday October 20, 7:30 am
Location: Red Slough NWR, OK
Leader: David Arbour
Target Birds: Fall migrants, winter residents, shorebirds, etc.
Meeting Place: North Parking Lot on Red Slough Rd (formerly Mudline Rd). From that parking lot, we will enter through a locked gate, so RSVP and arrive by 7:30 to avoid being locked out. Red Slough is an approx. 3-hour drive NE from Plano. Directions provided upon RSVP.
Length: 4 to 5 hours
RSVP: Chuck Carlson, carchuck@gmail.com, and indicate if interested in carpooling.

Sat-Sun, November 16-17 Houston Exotics Search
Location: Kleb Woods Nature Preserve in Hockley, Ecclesia Church/Elder Street area in Houston, W.G. Jones State Forest in Conroe
Leaders: Jerry Kerr and Carolyn Oldham
Target Birds: Exotics: Scaly-breasted Munia, and Red-vented Bulbul; Also Eastern Bluebird, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Red-headed and possibly Red-cockaded woodpecker; other wintering deciduous and pine wood species.
Meeting Place: Details when you RSVP
Length: 2 days
RSVP: By Nov 2nd to Jerri Kerr, jerrikerr@verizon.net

Saturday November 23, 7:30 am
Location: Hagerman NWR
Leader: Jack Chiles & Gailon Brehm
Target Birds: Geese and other waterfowl, Winter migrants including raptors and passerines.
Meeting Place: HNWR Visitor Center
Length: 4 hours
RSVP: Chuck Carlson, carchuck@gmail.com, and indicate if interested in carpooling

Finding Exotics In Houston

On November 16,17 2019, PTAS is coordinating a Field trip to the Houston area targeting two exotic/invasive species, the Red-vented Bulbul and the Scaly-breasted Munia. If you keep a U.S. Life-List or a Texas-List, here is a chance to add these couple of exotic birds. If you are not a “lister”, you might just enjoy seeing something new and different. The Scaly-breasted Munia is already “countable” on the American Bird Association (ABA) check-list, and the Red-vented Bulbul will most likely be accepted eventually. These are released/escaped pet-trade (or ship assisted?) species that are native to Asia, and both have well-established populations in/near Houston.

While invasive species are a ‘hot-button’ in contemporary conservation biology, assessing which introduced species are actually harmful invasive species is a vital first-step to create sound management decisions. Citizen science projects by Houston Audubon help assess whether any of the species targeted are potentially harmful to native species and/or the environment. At the same time detailed natural and life history studies are accomplished to see whether introduced/invasive birds live their lives in a similar fashion to their ancestors in their native lands.
The trip leaders, Jerri Kerr and Carolyn Oldham will also search for Eastern Bluebirds, Brown-headed Nut-hatches, Red-headed and possibly Red-cockaded woodpeckers as well as other wintering deciduous and pine woods species.

Itinerary:

Sat, 11/16: We will caravan to Kleb Woods Nature Preserve in Hockley, via I-45 (4 hours). We will search for Scaly-breasted Munia and other birds, and hike one/more of the trails. We will then drive to a hotel in northwest Houston and have supper nearby.

Sun, 11/17: We will go to the Ecclesia Church/Elder Street area in Houston and search for Red-vented Bulbul. We will then drive to W.G Jones State Forest for a short hike into the pine woods. We will depart for home from here.

The Red-vented Bulbul, which has become established in the Heights area of Houston, is a species native to the Indian sub-continent from Pakistan east to Bangladesh, Assam and Myanmar, and south to Sri Lanka. This species has become established on South Pacific Islands including New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa. It is also now found at various ports in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. How it arrived in Houston is unknown, but in other places it is thought to have arrived via ships. It could have been introduced via escaped or released birds from the pet trade. It was first reported in Houston in 1958. However, the birds are not particularly noticeable and were not shown in any North American field guide until Sibley’s Second Edition in 2014.

The Scaly-breasted Munia is also known as Nutmeg Mannikin or Spice Finch. They are native to Southeast Asia and have been a popular cage bird for likely 100s of years. They are well established in many places around the world. They were introduced into Hawaii in 1865. It is widespread on the east coast of Australia where in was introduced around 1930. It has also been introduced to Japan, the United States, Jamaica and into many islands in Polynesia. Currently these finches are imported in large numbers and retail for $10 or less in the Houston pet market. They likely wholesale from importers for $2-3 per bird. Among some cultures that are well represented in the Houston area, it is common practice to release finches at weddings and other significant family events. Such activity and the low price these birds command is likely the source of the birds we see. However, it is possible that the source is more natural and may represent immigration from locally established populations or even from Florida populations as was the case for the Eurasian Collared-Dove and the Cattle Egret. It seems to have a propensity for urban and agricultural environments and seems to prefer flood ways and detention ponds.

### Red Slough Field Trip

On October 20, (a Sunday), PTAS is visiting Red Slough National Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma. We are very happy we were able to arrange this trip since seeing birds and other fauna/flora at Red Slough with David Arbour was such a treat in 2017!

Red Slough WMA is a marvelous convergence of migratory routes of the Mississippi and Central avian flyways. Also, gulf coast species such as Yellow Rail, Purple Gallinule, Roseate Spoonbills, etc., travel north by way of the Red River to it. RSWMA touts 312 species on it’s 5814 acres.

The manager and our guide, David Arbour, surveys the area weekly and knows all the birds, plants, animals and dragonflies (56 species recorded). Red Slough is a 3 hour drive from Plano.

A group will drive on Saturday and stay in Idabel at the Comfort Sites OK, if you want to caravan, carpool or stay with them.

The meeting spot is the North Parking Lot on Red Slough Rd (formerly Mudline Rd). From that parking lot, we will enter through a locked gate, so RSVP and arrive by 7:30 to avoid being locked out.

### Second Saturday Bird Walks

**When:** 8:00 am, the Second Saturday of each month – September through June

**Where:** The Heard Museum in McKinney, main entrance

Continuing our long-standing tradition, PTAS volunteers will lead monthly bird walks in cooperation with the Heard. These field trips explore the trails of the Heard Sanctuary and provide a unique opportunity to observe birds in a natural North Texas environment surrounded by an area of continuing urbanization. These walks are quite popular with beginners, families, and experienced birders. Three leaders, Gailon Brehm, Rodney Thomas, and Mike Cameron, often accompanied by Chuck Carlson, intersperse within large groups to allow each participant to interact with a leader. The walks start promptly
There is a Texas constitutional amendment, Proposition 5, on the ballot this Nov 5 which all birders and outdoor enthusiasts should support. The constitutional amendment dedicates the revenue received from the existing state sales and use taxes that are imposed on sporting goods to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Historical Commission to protect Texas’ natural areas, water quality, and history by acquiring, managing, and improving state and local parks and historic sites while not increasing the rate of the state sales and use taxes.

If you have been birding any length of time or active in outdoor recreation, you know the TPWD is the agency that is dedicated to conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and manages it to provide hunting, fishing, birding and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. If you are a birder you read "conserve natural resources" to mean preserve birds and their habitat.

Since this off-year election in which turnout is historically low, any extra turnout generated by outdoor enthusiasts will have a greater effect. We need to solicit the support of our friends and neighbors by taking every opportunity to explain why this is beneficial to the birds in the Texas environment and encourage them to vote in November.

Avian Features For An Outdoor Learning Center

PTAS is working with Out-Teach to implement avian features into an Outdoor Learning Lab for the use of grade school students. Out-Teach is a Fort Worth based non-profit which works with schools to help turn under-used outdoor spaces into engaging Outdoor Learning Labs. PTAS received an Audubon-In-Action grant to fund avian outdoor features and learning materials.

During August the Santa Clara of Assisi Catholic Academy was chosen as the learning center site. Santa Clara Academy is a Diocesan Pre-K3 through 8th grade school located in South Dallas (West Oak Cliff Area). The Academy targets a traditionally underserved population.

The design of the outdoor learning center started with a contest for students to design a learning space. The winners of the contest met after school for a Design and Dine activity. PTAS created a handout of tips to attract birds to outdoor spaces. The goals and features enumerated along with new designs at this event are to be combined into an overall plan for the learning center.

A "Big Dig" event is Oct 12, when the outdoor learning center is to be installed. Out-Teach and PTAS will be requesting volunteers to help.

A dedication event is planned in November which will feature a live raptor program by the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center.

Help Birds, Start Talking about Texas Proposition 5

There is a Texas constitutional amendment, Proposition 5, on the ballot this Nov 5 which all birders and outdoor enthusiasts should support. The constitutional amendment dedicates the revenue received from the existing state sales and use taxes that are imposed on sporting goods to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Historical Commission to protect Texas’ natural areas, water quality, and history by acquiring, managing, and improving state and local parks and historic sites while not increasing the rate of the state sales and use taxes.

If you have been birding any length of time or active in outdoor recreation, you know the TPWD is the agency that is dedicated to conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and manages it to provide hunting, fishing, birding and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. If you are a birder you read "conserve natural resources" to mean preserve birds and their habitat.

Since this off-year election in which turnout is historically low, any extra turnout generated by outdoor enthusiasts will have a greater effect. We need to solicit the support of our friends and neighbors by taking every opportunity to explain why this is beneficial to the birds in the Texas environment and encourage them to vote in November.

Avian Features For An Outdoor Learning Center

PTAS is working with Out-Teach to implement avian features into an Outdoor Learning Lab for the use of grade school students. Out-Teach is a Fort Worth based non-profit which works with schools to help turn under-used outdoor spaces into engaging Outdoor Learning Labs. PTAS received an Audubon-In-Action grant to fund avian outdoor features and learning materials.

During August the Santa Clara of Assisi Catholic Academy was chosen as the learning center site. Santa Clara Academy is a Diocesan Pre-K3 through 8th grade school located in South Dallas (West Oak Cliff Area). The Academy targets a traditionally underserved population.

The design of the outdoor learning center started with a contest for students to design a learning space. The winners of the contest met after school for a Design and Dine activity. PTAS created a handout of tips to attract birds to outdoor spaces. The goals and features enumerated along with new designs at this event are to be combined into an overall plan for the learning center.

A "Big Dig" event is Oct 12, when the outdoor learning center is to be installed. Out-Teach and PTAS will be requesting volunteers to help.

A dedication event is planned in November which will feature a live raptor program by the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center.
Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society’s Support for North Texas

Each year Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society contributes to projects across North Texas that support birds, the environment, and nature-related education. Thanks to our Supporting Members and partners, we sponsored grants totaling $18,130 in the 2018-2019 year.

- $1000 - Sycamore Trail Bridge at the Heard Museum
- $3100 - MOTUS tracking of breeding Painted Buntings at the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area
- $2000 - Trail and prairie maintenance, native grass seeding, and Bobwhite quail re-introduction at Connemara Meadow
- $1500 - Aviary at Rogers Wildlife Center
- $500—Lark Sparrow Nesting Field Work to Torie Cowell at Southeastern Oklahoma State.
- $2000 - Raptor support, educational materials, medical supplies, and deck improvements at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center
- $200 - Hummingbird Banding at West Texas Avian Research
- $1000 - Water Tank Installation to Christmas Mountain Oasis
- $4830 - Audubon-In-Action Grant for Avian Features in an Outdoor Learning Center with Out-Teach and the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center
- $1000 - Audubon Foundation of Texas grant for Heard Bird Banding
- $1000 - Audubon Foundation of Texas grant for Blackland Prairie Raptor Center trail signage

Support the Partners of Prairie and Timbers

PTAS works with a number of organizations that support strong community-based charitable efforts. Our focus is on the health of the North Texas environment essential for avian diversity and human well-being. We would like to acknowledge the following organizations and encourage you to support them.

- **PTAS Supporting Members**: Our own members supporting North Texas birding, environmental efforts, education, and scholarships.
- **The Heard Museum** for providing the facilities we use for our meetings as well as the sanctuary for birding.
- **Audubon Texas and National Audubon** for supporting PTAS via its baseline funding and supporting collaborative grants. Please consider joining National Audubon and support the Avian Community at a national level.
- **Audubon Foundation of Texas (AFT)** for funding PTAS’s collaborative grants and providing funds to PTAS. AFT’s mission is to support Texas Audubon organizations

**EarthShare of Texas** for supporting environmental organizations state wide. AFT is a member of EarthShare and receives a majority of its funding from EarthShare.

**Texas Instruments** for matching PTAS TI volunteers’ time with matching funds.

**Kroger** for providing funds to PTAS through its Community Awards program. Consider signing up PTAS as your designated charity.

**Tom Thumb** for providing funds to PTAS through its Good Neighbor program. Consider signing up PTAS as your designated charity.

**Central Market (HEB)** for supporting Earthshare through its tear-pad campaign in April.

**Reliant Energy** for supporting Earthshare thorough its EcoShare program. Consider signing a Reliant’s EcoShare plan to supply your energy needs.

**Amazon** for providing funds to PTAS through its AmazonSmile program. Consider signing up PTAS as your designated charity.
## Membership

PTAS charges no participation fees and everyone is welcomed at our activities thanks to our Supporting Members. Come and join in.

Please consider becoming a Supporting Member by contributing $15 or more to PTAS. All money goes towards our programs, activities, and conservation efforts. Contribute by:

- Using PayPal:
  
  Click Donate on prairieandtimbers.org/join.htm

- Check: Send check with name, email address, and postal address to our treasurer:
  
  John Lingenfelder
  2220 Chadbourne Dr
  Plano, TX 75023-1628

## Notifications

To keep up with PTAS’ activities:

- Check our website at prairieandtimbers.org
- Check our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/PTAudubon
- Subscribe to General Email List (notification of our meetings and general announcements once a month)
- Subscribe to Field Trip List (Notification of our field trips including last minute changes once or twice a month plus emails of changes)

To subscribe (or unsubscribe) send an email to:

ptas president@prairieandtimbers.org

specifying the lists you wish to join. Addresses are not given/sold to any other organizations.