

The Roadrunner

Central Texas Audubon Society Issue 258 February 2011

President's Message

Looking forward: Happy February. Seems a long time since our last meeting. February is a great month for birding and getting ready for the Spring migrants. Hope you had a wonderful holiday and had time to participate in the Christmas Bird Counts.

The annual Great Backyard Bird Count is 2/18-21. You can take part in this activity with your family or by yourself. Just count for 15 minutes a day the number of species that you see in your backyard and record your information at www.BirdCount.org. It's free and it's a great activity for all ages and all experiences with birding. You do not need to be an expert. There's even a photo contest prizes. I hope that most of you will find the time to participate in this important citizen science program.

Our first meeting of 2011 is on Tuesday, 2/15, at the Carleen Bright Arboretum. Remember that we will have the meet and greet at 6:30 followed by the meeting at 7pm. Eric has a great speaker on the Galapagos Islands, so I know that you'll want to be there.

There are some wonderful birding field trips planned. Spring is always a busy time, but please don't forget to make time to bird and join us at the meetings.

See you on the 15th. Janet



Waco Lake Eagle nest, by Bryan Stone

Feb 15 walk & meeting: Galapagos

Eric Haskell will lead an Arboretum bird walk at 6pm. Afterwards, Dr. Darrell Vodopich from Baylor will give a presentation on his trip to Galapagos with Baylor faculty and grad students. The meeting is on Tuesday at 7pm at Carleen Bright Arboretum on Bosque Blvd in Woodway. Refreshments will be served starting at 6pm. **Note: the meeting is earlier than usual this month due to early darkness. Carleen Bright Arboretum is located in Woodway north of HWY84 at the intersection of Bosque and Estates Drive.**

Social– I invite anyone interested in helping with refreshments to contact me at: anngordon@hotmail.com or if necessary by phone: 848-4135.

EVENTS

Great Backyard Bird Count! Anyone can participate free by counting all birds you see on a given location 2/18-21, then logging them into the website. Tentatively we will have a Field Trip to **Richland Chambers WMA wetlands** on Sat.

2/19, meeting 8am at Luby's parking lot off LakeShore Dr. & I-35.

*Sat 1/29's warm weather field trip to the Landfill and Eastern CBC area did not reveal Gull rarities or Mountain Plovers seen earlier in the month, but we did get views of **Horned Larks** and a mixed Longspur flock including **McCown's Longspurs** on Steiner Rd. Eric Haskell and John Muldrow noted at least 4 **Cinnamon Teal** at Frances Rd. and Eastland Lakes on the return.*

Sightings and Reports

The most significant find in the County is **Mountain Plovers**, documented for the first time ever in the county on New Year's Day on Steiner Rd. during the CBC, and since then by various observers. Observers believed the **nesting Bald Eagles** at Reynolds Creek laid an egg on Superbowl weekend.

Eric Haskell; On 1/23 at sunset I noted flocks totaling over 250 **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** flying over the Brazos near the suspension bridge. At Waco Lake bird numbers continue to reflect CBC observations, with numerous **Buffleheads**, **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, **Pied-billed Grebes**, **Coots**, and **Eastern Phoebes**, while **ducks**, **Robins**, **Waxwings**, **Juncos**, & **Sparrows** are scarce.

Bryan Stone Walked out to the eagles' nest Saturday afternoon. There was an eagle right next to it. Also saw a flock of about 30 cedar waxwings, and a few house finches.

Richard Kostecke, Ph.D.; I was able to get out on Fort Hood (Coryell Co.) on 1/21 & 23 to do grassland bird surveys, and Gil and I led a Travis Audubon Society field trip on 1/22. I have also received a handful of other interesting reports. Highlights are listed below (all Coryell Co.). One interesting sighting for which I don't have all the info on hand was of a swan on the Cowhouse Creek Arm of Belton Lake (Bell) which was observed at length by one of the Fort Hood game wardens around 1/13. As far as I know, no one has yet had time to check to see if the swan is still present. Anyway to the highlights: **Hooded Merganser**- 1 hen Henson Lake (Coryell) on 1/21 **Prairie Falcon**- 1 reported by Jeff Cheney near Elijah and Georgetown Rd intersection on 1/15 Least Sandpiper- 2 Henson Lake on 1/21 **Burrowing Owl**- 1 observed near Elijah and Georgetown Roads intersection on 1/15 by Jeff Cheney and again on 1/22 and 1/23; this owl has been keeping a very low profile, so it is nice to have some reports after nearly 2 months without any. **Say's Phoebe** - 1 Antelope Rd just north of Table Rock Creek crossing on 1/22 Brown Creeper- 1 on 1/22 and 1 on 1/23; about typical winter numbers **Rock Wren** - 1 reported by Catherine Engelman in Live Fire near North Fort Hood on 1/22 **Golden-crowned Kinglet**- 1 on 1/21, 1 on 1/22, 3 on 1/23; the stellar winter for this species continues; widespread and fairly numerous. **Gray Catbird**- 1 below Henson Lake on 1/21; the species has pretty much become annual during winter at this site **Sprague's Pipit**- 5 on 1/22 near Elijah and Georgetown Roads intersection but there have been recent reports from scattered Fort Hood locations; now known to be a regular winter resident on Fort Hood Pine Warbler - 1 on 1/22; it has been a good winter for this species but we

have had few reports from Fort Hood **Eastern Towhee**- 1 on 1/22; very low density winter resident **Lapland Longspur**- 1 probable on 1/22 near Elijah and Georgetown Roads **Chestnut-collared Longspur**- 330 on 1/22 near Elijah and Georgetown Roads; we had only been seeing small numbers <15/flock here and there so it was nice to see a sizable flock. Small numbers of **Grasshopper**, **Le Conte's**, Fox and Harris's Sparrows have been seen in various locales. With the exception of perhaps Grasshopper Sparrow, the others have perhaps been a bit sparser than usual.

Joe Yelderman, Ph.D.; My backyard feeders have at least two orange crowns. All my titmice have been tufted that I have taken the time to ID. I have Carolina and Bewick's wrens, ruby crowned Kinglets, Chickadees, yellow-rumped warbler (myrtle), Bluejays, Cardinals, a Mockingbird that drives off all but the jays, white wings, red-bellied and Downy woodpeckers and unfortunately a pair of House sparrows that show up from time to time. I saw a yellowthroat at the Whitney wastewater plant along with a small flock of **Bonaparte's gulls** a couple of weeks ago. From the most interesting birder in the world, "I don't always bird at wastewater plants but when I do, I prefer the WMARSS ponds, Stay Warm, My Friends."

Nancy and Fred Gehlbach; Winter Birds in the Sugar Creek Nature Preserve: Basically for all winter-resident species, numbers are way down and some usual ones like Hermit Thrushes haven't even shown up. Most others such as **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers**, **Orange-crowned Warblers**, and **Winter Wrens** are only single individuals. Slate-colored Juncos and White-throated Sparrows just came one day and went (where?). Our White-winged, now called pesky Doves are down to one on feeders courtesy of a vigilant Cooper's Hawk, whose dove feather "piles" are up to 11 so far. Miz. Rusty, our **rufous Eastern Screech-Owl**, is still around but quiet, now that the Barred Owl pair is "cookin' fur y'all" (southern song) in preparation for nesting.

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Pine Warbler, by Bill Ravenscroft

Pam Moes; Immature **Common Yellowthroat** at my feeders. Been here at least a week or more. We have at least 3 Wilson's Snipes that have been here for weeks. I have pictures of them together sunning in the grass. They dig in the bushes by the house also and Don has scared at least two from their roosting places next to the house.

The White-throated Sparrow just showed up here for the first time today. I have been looking for it every day but no luck until today. There are at least 7 Great Blue Heron and 8 Great Egrets hanging around the pond. We have lots of Ring-billed gulls that fly over the pond looking for fish. They also rest on the pond in the afternoon. Then later in the day, we can see 150 or more in the sky over the pond going back and forth from here to the lake. We have two Ospreys that hunt the pond also. They fight over their catch. The Great Egrets also fight over who stands where. Makes for great bird watching. Have 3-4 Orange-crowned Warblers who also fight over the whole feeder area. One tries to dominate the others, just like a hummingbird does. It doesn't matter where they try to feed (5 places) he chases the others away. My titmice are all **Black Crested Titmice**, & have **Winter Wren**, **Hairy Woodpecker**, Northern Flicker, Am Coot, Lesser Scaup, DC Cormorants, Mallards, Ring-necked Ducks, Pied-billed Grebes, Belted Kingfisher, Eastern Bluebird, Am Crow, Am Kestrel, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Song Sparrow, Forster's Tern, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Am Robin, Cedar Waxwings, Eastern Phoebe, **both yellow-rumps**, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, meadowlark. Am

disappointed we don't have any other species of ducks. There were 10 **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** on the pond where Ted Getterman is feeding them. He feeds the ducks all year long. The ducks were there on 2/2. Almost forgot Lincoln's Sparrow.

Ann Gordon; 2/1 & 2 were very active days in the backyard bird sanctuary at the feeders and especially on the waterfalls. Since all the water is frozen in all the birdbaths, the birds have really been interested in the waterfalls for this necessity. While they take advantage of the waterfalls and feeders, I take advantage of their visits for photographs. It has been very challenging trying to photograph in the severe cold, but it has been very rewarding. Since we do not have this kind of cold often, I feel the need to not let the opportunity pass by without trying. Tonight I posted the photos of the birdbath at the drip puddle and the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at the waterfalls.

Frank Bumgardner; Jeanette and I have had a male **Red-breasted Nuthatch** and an **Audubon Warbler** since 12/05/2010 that are still coming to the peanut feeders.

Bill Ravenscroft; I had several sightings of Bald Eagles on the eastern side of Lake Waco, on one occasion a pair soaring over Koehne Park. I counted 60+ **American White Pelicans** that particular day in December, in a flock flying over the south end of the Lake. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** has been resident in the yard since early Nov, feeding on peanuts and suet. I have had regular sightings of Brown Creepers, a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** in January and several sightings of **Golden-crowned Kinglets**. Since late December, American Goldfinches, Yellow-rumped Warblers, **Pine Warblers** and Orange-crowned Warblers are regularly seen here. I have seen only one **Pine Siskin** this season so far whereas I usually see many. American Kestrels are plentiful again this year in the parks on the west side of the lake as are White-crowned Sparrows.

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Red-breasted Nuthatch at home, by Bill Ravenscroft

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