



Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

Volume XXIII

Number 3

January/February 2003

Election of Officers Tops Winter Program Schedule

FROM THE PRESIDENT

With the New Year comes new hope. Most of us start a year by making what we call resolutions but in reality many are wishes/hopes. I will loose weight in 2003 is a resolution but the reason is that I wish I weren't so fat. I will telephone family members weekly in 2003 is of course wishing that you could be closer with parents, sisters, brothers etc. I will add five new birds to my life list in 2003, is probably, I wish I had more time to spend birding. If your wishes are realistic and truly what you want then resolve to attain them and make the effort.

If your goal is to add birds to your life list, then Prairie and Timbers offers a real opportunity for success in this year. Many, well planned and organized field trips are available through our chapter almost weekly. Regular trips are scheduled to nearly all of the good birding areas of north Texas, at some time during the year (some sites you may not be aware exist). Outstanding birders are regularly on these outings as well as beginners. And, as you know, seasoned birders are always ready to help and work with the novice or inexperienced, so there is no reason to feel intimidated. Nothing is more important to a good birder than to turn a new person on to birding by mentoring.

Look for a list of field trips elsewhere in this issue or contact Carolyn Oldham or Tom Heath for more information.

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For information on programs, or to suggest a program or speaker, contact Sally Evans, vice president & program chair, 972-248-6283.

Jan. 12. Board Meeting 3 p.m. Sally & Tom Gruss, hosts.
Meeting open. Call hosts if attending.

Jan. 28: Northern Australia. Ron Chenault, speaker, with highlights of the endemic and exotic birds of that area, using video that was being made while he was with this tour.

Feb. 25: Election of officers, Annual meeting.
Program: Bluebird Society speaker to tell you all you need to know about bluebirds, setting up bluebird boxes and enticing those birds to your territory.

Mar. 9: PTAS Board Meeting 3 p.m.
location to be announced.

Mar. 25: Dogwood Canyon. Mike Perkins and David Hurt will offer exciting details of the Dogwood Canyon project; an update on what is there (just south of Dallas), why it is so special and when tours will be available. A terrific treat in our own backyard.

Mar. 29: Third Annual Birding Day. All-day program including lunch, speaker, birding the Heard Museum grounds, banding demonstration and more.
Details in March/April newsletter.

April 22. Alaska. Our own Mike Mizell will be speaker. He traveled last summer to Alaska and will share with us his exciting journey and the birds he saw there.

May 27. Owling. Final plans for the owling program will be announced in the next newsletter.

PTAS Meetings are the fourth Tuesday
at 7 P.M at Heard Museum
Call 972-562-5566 for directions.

Continued from page 1 From The President

We especially want to thank Theresa Hilving for all of the backroom sweat and toil she has donated in the process of putting together a new web site for Prairie & Timbers. Look for a new P&TAS web site which should be up and running sometime in January at PrairieandTimbers.com. **Thank you, Theresa.**

For the last time.

Tom Gruss, President



Winter Field Trips 2003

Jan. 11. Breckenridge Park (Richardson)

Leader: Mike Moore

Meet at the park at 8 a.m. for 1/2 day trip

Expect to see winter birds

Call Carolyn Oldham for directions (972-517-8987)

Jan. 25: Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge

Leader: Terry Ferguson

Depart Kelly-Moore Paint Store at 7 a.m.

Trip length: 3/4 day

Expect to see bald eagles, geese, ducks, winter Sparrows, etc.

Feb. 15: 111 Ranch Park (Garland)

Leader: Carolyn Oldham

Meet at park at 8 a.m.

Trip length: 1/2 day

Expect to see winter birds



Mar. 1: White Rock Lake

Leader: To be announced

Meet at parking lot on Winsted Dr. at 8 .m.

Trip length 1/2 day

Expect to see winter birds

Mar. 22: Caddo Grasslands (North of Bonham)

Leader: David Oldham

Depart Paint Store 6:45 a.m.

Trip length: 3/4 day

Expect to see winter birds, Pine and Yellow throated Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker etc.

Website News: Our new Prairie&Timbers website is

www.prairieandtimbers.com, now under development by Theresa Hilving.

Completion is expected by the end of January 2003.

Our old website is still available.

PTAS to Elect Officers February 25, 2003

Officers will be elected at the Feb. 25th meeting of the Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society at Heard Museum. The presidency and three board slots are open. A slate of officers will be announced at the January meeting; election will be Feb. 25.

Are You Ready for Field Trips?

RSVPing is most important!

One of the most satisfying experiences of the Audubon member is the successful field trip. As you consider joining a field trip, be sure to keep in mind these following tips:

The **first** rule of field tripping is to RSVP the week of the trip to one of the co-chairmen:

Carolyn Oldham at 972-517-8987 or
email at Carolyn.Oldham@verizon.net.

OR

Tom Heath, 972-867-8646 or
email at heathwtom@netscape.net.

The **second** rule is to be on time. When it says the trip will meet, that means DEPART! So be at the location noted. Don't be late!

Third rule is to bring water and snacks for yourself.

Our carpooling site is the parking lot of the Kelly-Moore Paint Store at the northwest corner of Spring Creek Pkwy and Hwy 75 in Plano, referred to as the Paint Store.



Many Thanks to the Media Covering our CBC

PTAS is most gratified for the coverage given the annual Christmas Bird Count by local media, especially the Dallas Morning News. It printed pre-event coverage as well as follow up with photos. Additionally there was front page coverage in the Plano Star Courier. The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a nation-wide, 102 year old event.

Learn the Birds at Heard

Seeing Birds vs. Knowing Birds You See!

Collin County is rich with opportunities to observe birds. The Heard sanctuary is host to over 200 species during the year—some resident year-round, some nesting during spring and summer, some wintering in our (relatively) warm climate, and others merely stopping for a few days during spring and fall migrations.

This year your Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society has offered an outstanding opportunity to birders of all levels of experience and knowledge. It is a birding class that meets just prior to the Chapter's regular meeting. Its focus is to teach identifying marks of a few birds at each session, so all who wish may learn just a bit more about the birds that they're seeing.

Great thanks go to Heard Museum for use of its facilities as well as use of actual bird pelts. With these specialty items, you can really see the bird feathers and markings. Then during the short lesson, members of the chapter point out the field marks to be used in your identifying process.

Where and When

The Collin County Bird Identification classes start at 7 p.m., just prior to the regular 7:30 p.m. meetings. Come in through the back door off the parking lot and you will be directed to the basement amphitheater where the class will be taught. Teachers are experienced members of the local chapter. (Don't worry; you'll still have a chance to grab a cup of coffee, a soft drink or a snack prior to the meeting and program.)

The class format is an informal discussion teaching keys to identification of a small number of local birds each month. All you need to bring is your favorite field guide.

Spring Schedule

The following is the Spring Schedule for the birding class.

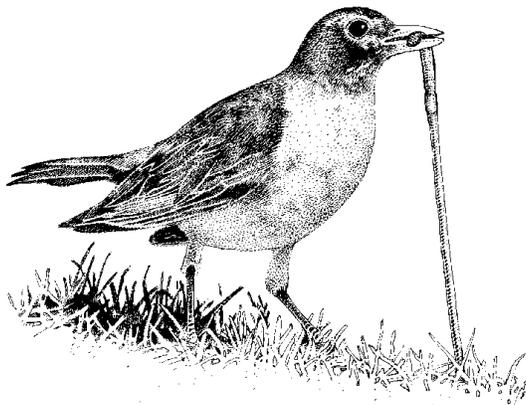
Tuesday, Jan. 28, 7 p.m. Karen White and Gailon Brehm, instructors. Birds to be studied: Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Eastern Screech Owl.

Tuesday, Feb. 25, 7 p.m. Jerri Kerr and Gailon Brehm, instructors. Birds to be studied: American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Brown Thrasher, Brown Creeper, White-breasted Nuthatch, Hermit Thrush.

Tuesday, April 22, 7 p.m. Gailon Brehm and a second instructor to be announced. Birds to be studied: Mourning Dove, White-winged Dove, Rock Dove (Pigeon), Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren.

Tuesday, May 27, 7 p.m. Gailon Brehm, instructor and a second instructor to be announced. Birds to be studied include Ring-billed Gull, Franklin's Gull, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Western Kingbird.

**For more information about these short-course classes,
call Gailon Brehn, PTAS Education Chairman, at 972-517-2542.**

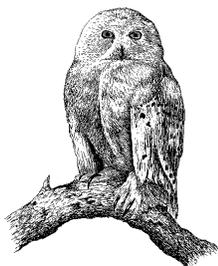


Field Notes from Near & Far

Breckinridge Park 11/2/02

When I awoke early and took a peek outside, it was not raining. After waiting for a pot of coffee to brew, I went outside to enjoy the dawn and it was raining. To bird or not to bird was the question, for sure. I decided to bird, or at least try, and by the time I made it to the shop, I knew I had made the right decision, as had eight others. Although there were a few light drizzles early on, it turned out to be a great morning for birds. As it turns out, I have found a new, all-time favorite place to bird. So much so, in fact, that I'd like to go no place else but there, however impractical that might be. Breckinridge Park, the undeveloped west side, is truly a birding jewel here in the Metroplex. In the three hours or so we spent afield, we tallied 42 species of birds, including two Great Horned Owls and a nice skein of about 400 Snow Geese overhead. Other estimates put the number of geese at 257 and 359, quite a spectacle regardless. The other highlight was a lone Blue-headed Vireo, bird no. 179 on our tick list. Several of the winter sparrows were about, but not in the variety that I had encountered earlier in the week. Nonetheless, we will surely return to Breckinridge again very soon.

Mike Moore



Spring Creek Preserve and 111 Ranch Park 11/23/02

Twenty Audubon members birded both Spring Creek Preserve and the 111 Ranch Park on Nov. 23. In beautiful, sunny weather 53 species were seen! Highlights were



both Spotted and Eastern Towhee, White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatch, lots of Golden-crowned and Ruby Crowned Kinglets, lots of Brown Creepers and LeConte's Sparrow. Everyone left smiling!

Carolyn Oldham

Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge 10/2/02

The gray, cold wind did not stop a good number of PTAS members and others from the surrounding area from meeting at the Refuge Headquarters. It turned out to be an excellent day of birding! We started the morning at the low water crossing to seek out a wayward Roseate Spoonbill. It took a few minutes to locate it, but then we were all rewarded with good long looks of him feeding and flying. At the same time we enjoyed watching many American White Pelicans, both swimming and gliding through the sky. We then hurried on down the road, to hike down the trail before the threatening skies

opened up. The walk down the trail gave us excellent views of several Red shouldered Hawks, beautiful Eastern Bluebirds and several species of woodpeckers. A few caught a glimpse of some sparrows and a towhee, but the wind must have kept most of the songbirds buried in the grass, as we could hear them, but had difficulty locating them. We did have a small flock of Chipping Sparrows grace us with their presence. Thankfully the threatening skies never did more than sprinkle on us. After leaving the hiking trail, we then began the return journey taking our time scanning the areas of water out from the oil ads. We found several species of ducks including American Wigeons, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teals, Northern fronted Geese and some Common Snipe. As we were touring the last pad, the cars in the back saw a Brown Pelican, the lead car missed it. But luckily for those of us in that vehicle, the others saw where it went down, so we backtracked to that area and easily found the Brown Pelican sitting on a mudflat with five American White Pelicans. To end the trip we decided to drive to the area known as Crow Hill. As we were leaving the area we ran across a small flock of American Goldfinches, the first of the season for most of those present. In all we had 71 species seen by the group. Other highlights were five species of hawks: Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed; six species of woodpeckers:

Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, Pileated and Northern Flicker; and seven species of sparrows, Chipping, Vesper, Savannah, Song, Lincoln's, White-throated and White-crowned.

Terry Ferguson



One Eleven Ranch 12/14/02

It was a marvelous day, even though it began with a bit of frustration and disappointment. On our way out to One Eleven Ranch, we took a small detour to try for the Rock Wren that had been hanging around near an office complex at the back end of the Spring Creek Nature Area. I had seen it there about two weeks before but had lost track of it in the meantime. Sadly, we failed to find the wren. Once at One Eleven, the Barred Owl flew almost immediately, hotly pursued by several mobbing crows. Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creepers and a Yellow-rumped Warbler were mixed in with the chickadees and titmice. Woodpeckers of several species abounded. Juncos were feeding and bathing around one brush pile and another concealed a number of White-throated Sparrows along with a lone



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Eastern Towhee. We also flushed a Hermit Thrush for all to get a good look. We also heard a few American Goldfinches fly overhead. And the wren? I was fortunate to find it bouncing around the parking lot at the office complex on my way home after the walk. I was pleased, then, to add the Rock Wren as species No. 184 to our tick list of birds a happy ending to a great day.

Mike Moore

Lake Benbrook & Surrounding Area 12/7/02

A group of 10 birders from PTAS and other birding groupies (myself included) birded for 11 hours at Benbrook Lake, Lake Worth, Cement Creek Lake, Mosque Point, Stubbs Ranch and Winscott Plover Road. A total of 86 species were seen. Highlights included 12 species of raptors, including an adult Bald Eagle at Lake Worth and a Ferruginus Hawk and Merlin off Winscott Plover Road; Herring Gull at Lake Worth, Short Eared Owls off Aledo Road, Sprague's Pipit at Stubbs Ranch and LeConte's Sparrow near Benbrook Lake. (A complete list can be had by contacting Tom Heath.)

D.D. Curie



TWAS The Day After Christmas and All Through The Year



All of the birds were stirring, and just waiting to be counted. If you were not one of the 59 participating, in this year's Christmas Bird Counting (CBC), we'll tell you what you missed.

The weather turned out to be some of the best in years cool in the morning and sunny and bright for the day, rising into the 60s before we finished in cheers.

And even jolly old Ken Steigman opened his bag of tricks, and brought forth owls for the interested participants to hear and for pix (pictures).

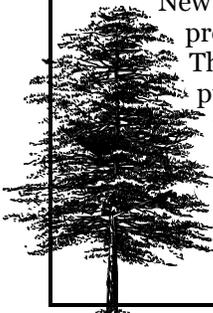
The number of species gave encouragement to all, as the count tabulated to 112 before the last call.

The best turnout in the 20 plus year history, produced the highest species count to date including a Cinnamon Teal(y).

Great donuts and Sloppy Joes were left for all of Santa's helpers to enjoy now LOOKING FORWARD TO DEC 26, 2003 oye! (And a wink to Clement Moore.)

New Years Day at Lewisville Lake Park

New Years Day birding at Lewisville Lake Park produced a Merlin and a Peregrine Falcon. The Merlin was in the trees between the public restrooms and the point of land just to the east. The Peregrine was seen close to the dam at the south end of the park. Also present was the Snowy Plover that has been there since Nov. 9 and Franklin Gulls are still around. (Keith Lockhart via *TEXBIRDS*.)



Electronic Newsletter

Your Board of Directors has been struggling with the concept of offering an option to the printed *Rustlin's* Newsletter by providing an **electronic** version of the newsletter. The electronic version could possibly be as a selection available on the new P&TAS web site or as an automatic electronic mailing to your e-mail address. Generally to receive such files, the member would have to have use of a reader program (i.e. Adobe, etc). With revenues from National Audubon approaching zero, we need to look for aggressive ways to avoid operating costs with the printed newsletter being by far our largest annual cost. If you have any thoughts or feelings on this issue, please contact one of your board members listed on the back of this issue.



Great Black-backed Gull Seen At Brownsville Beach

On a WBC Kiskadee Tour to the Brownsville area, we found a first winter Great Black-backed Gull on the beach at Boca Chica. It was a classic, unambiguous bird. It flushed twice and both times flew well south before alighting on the beach again. There were also about 30 Bonaparte's Gulls feeding in the river mouth, some within feet of us and a large roost of Black-crowned Night Herons in mangroves at the mouth of the river. (Excerpted from *TEXBIRDS* report, John C.Arvin, Mission.)

E-MAIL COMMUNICATIONS

If you have a computer and e-mail address and wish to automatically receive the various communications coming from Audubon Texas, National Audubon, and from your Prairie & Timbers Audubon Chapter, please let us know your e-mail address and we'll include you in the mailings. We try to screen the material forwarded so that you are not inundated with massive amounts of unessential material. If interested, send your e-mail address to tsgruss@AOL.com.

**PRAIRIE & TIMBERS
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Secretary *Paula Brehm*..... 972-517-2542
Treasurer *Mike Mizell*..... 940-382-8551
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 Bobette Mauck972-562-6561
 Synne Magar Ferguson214-345-5063
Board Member At Large
 Mike Moore972-509-5773

Membership Application



NOTE: Existing members should respond directly to National Audubon when they receive renewal notice.

_____ Please enroll me as a NEW member of National Audubon Society and Prairie & Timbers Chapter at the special introductory price of \$20.00. Enclosed is my check made out to: National Audubon Society

_____ I do not wish to be a member of National Audubon Society. However, I would like to receive Prairie & Timbers Rustlin's Newsletter. Enclosed is my check for \$8.00 made out to: P&T Audubon Society

Name: _____
Address _____
City _____
Zip _____ Phone _____

**Mail to P&T Audubon Society
c/o Mike Mizell 800 Edgewood Denton, TX 76201**

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