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*Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society*

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Volume XXIII

Number 4

March/April 2003

## ***3rd Annual Birding Day March 29th Dogwood Canyon Program March 25th Highlights of PTAS Calendar***

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

### **Icy Weather Forces Cancellation of PTAS Feb. 25 Meeting, Election**

FEB. 26, 2003--Ice, snow and sleet forced closing of most activities in the Metroplex Feb. 24 and 25. It also caused closing of Heard Museum and cancellation of the regular Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society meeting Tuesday evening Feb. 25. The elections scheduled for the meeting were postponed until further notice.

(Ed. Note: Be advised to watch your email and take note of phone messages. These are our only methods of reaching members as we go to press.)

Notification of the cancellation was made through email and phone calls to as many members as possible. Board members agreed the risk too great to travel on roads considered highly hazardous by officials, especially with a second wave of the storm expected the evening of the meeting.

President Tom Gruss added that the board hoped that the decision to cancel the meeting caused no inconvenience or hardship to any members.

#### **March 9: PTAS Board Meeting**

Call Gailon Brehm(972-517-3542) for more information.

#### **March 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.

#### **March 29: Third Annual Birding Day.**

All-day program including lunch, speaker, birding the Heard Museum grounds, banding demonstration and more. See story inside.

#### **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. (See preview story inside!)

#### **May 27: Owling.**

Back to the Plano Outdoor Learning Center for an evening seeing the variety of animals in the Learning Center and a walk through the woods for nighttime owling.

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

**CHECK OUT OUR NEW PRAIRIE & TIMBERS  
WEBSITE: [www.prairieandtimbers.com](http://www.prairieandtimbers.com)**

**Volunteers Needed**

**For Birding Day Mar. 29**

Volunteers are needed for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Birding Day event Mar. 29 at Heard Science and Technology Center. Call Sally Evans (972-248-6283) if you can help with clean up, hospitality, or have items for the drawings or donations for the door prizes (birding related items).

**PTAS t-shirts, sweatshirts available**

Those who've ordered PTAS t-shirts, sweatshirts, or caps can pick them up from Sally Gruss at the Mar. 25 meeting. Additional orders will be taken at the meeting.

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**Spring Field Trip  
Schedule 2003**

**Mar. 22: Caddo Grasslands** (North of Bonham)

Leader: David Oldham  
Depart Paint Store 6:45 a.m.  
Trip length: ¾ day  
Expect to see winter birds: Pine and Yellow throated Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker

**Mar. 29: Birding Day, Heard Museum**

See story this newsletter

**April 13: Meridian State Park** (Sunday trip)

Leader: Carol & David Oldham  
(We will possibly join a group from Central Texas Audubon Society, Waco)  
Depart Kelly-Moor Paint Store 6 a.m.  
Target bird: Golden-cheeked Warbler

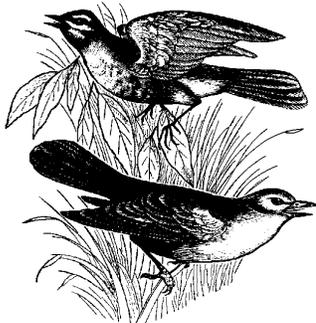
**May 3: Prairie Creek Park** (Richardson)

Meet at Park at 8 a.m.  
Expect spring migration in Full swing-warbler city, we hope

**May 10: TBD** Where ever the warblers are, we will go to a local park which is hot at the moment; probably check out more than just one

**May 24: Eisenhower State Park/  
Hagerman NWR** (Lake Texoma)

Depart Kelley-Moore Paint store 7 a.m.  
Targets: nesting Orioles, Tanagers  
Warblers. Buntings, other summer birds



**The Bird Song Grammys  
Featured Speaker s Topic  
at 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Birding Day**

The following is the agenda for the Third Annual Birding Day, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Mar. 29, sponsored by Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society and the Heard Natural Science Museum:

**8:00 a.m.**

Registration starts at the Heard Museum s Science and Technology Center (\$12 per person includes lunch)

**8:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

Birding on the Sanctuary with several guides who know the sanctuary and its birds

**11:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.**

LUNCH

**12:20 p.m. to 12:45 p.m.**

Introductions, accolades and prizes

**12:45 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.**

**Guest Speaker JEFF GORDON**

Field Editor of Bird Watcher s Digest  
His Topic:

The Bird Song Grammys  
A tongue-in-cheek awards show for outstanding vocal efforts by North American Birds. (with slides)

**1:45 p.m. to 2 p.m.**

Raffle Winners

**2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

A visit to the Heard Raptor Center where injured birds are rehabilitated and returned to the wild

**RSVP by March 25**

Include number attending and contact phone number or email.

Sally Evans or Karen White  
972-248-6283 972-424-9786  
sevans@sbcglobal.net kawwhite@att.net

or

Mail: Sally Evans  
7032 Creek Bend Dallas, TX 75252



## Our Roving Reporter/Birder

### ***Mike Mizell recommends a look at *The Great Land* --A Preview for the April PTAS Regular Meeting***

(Editors Note: The following is written by PTAS Treasurer, **Mike Mizell**, and is offered as a preview of the program he will offer to PTAS members at the regular meeting, April 22 at Heard Museum. Public invited.)

The name, Alaska (Or Alyeska), given to the land by the ancient Aleuts, means The Great Land, and it is a very fitting name for a land of immense size, with North America's tallest mountain, spectacular beauty and amazing wildlife. It is a land of superlatives.

Alaska's land mass is one-fifth that of the lower 48. There are several mountain ranges and many rivers, so practically everywhere you go the view is of a very broad glaciated river valley surrounded or backed by mountains. The glaciers left behind depressions in the land that form kettle ponds that provide vital nesting and feeding habitat for many birds—ducks, geese, loons, grebes, terns, gulls and many shorebirds. Mild temperatures and 24 hours of sunlight make for an explosion of plant, insect and animal life/activity for a few months each summer.

#### **By Van from Anchorage to Prudhoe Bay to Valdez to the Kenai Peninsula**

I was part of a group of 10 avid birders from Texas. We traveled by van from Anchorage to Prudhoe Bay (on the Arctic Ocean) back down toward Valdez (on the southern coast) and down both sides of the Kenai Peninsula. We covered lots of territory and lots of habitats, camping out each night under the midnight sun. Our trip leader was Jim Stevenson, Director of the Galveston Ornithological Society. He has made numerous trips to Alaska, is very familiar with the birds there and has an incredible eye and ear for finding them. The official trip was 10 days, but several of us stayed a few days more to make it a two-week trip (July 8-20).

The beauty and unique character of the tundra amazed and captivated everyone in our group. Walking on it is like walking on a sponge, as the ground is mushy from the permafrost being melted a few inches deep in the summer, out across a carpet of amazingly diverse diminutive plant life.

Another particularly memorable experience was our boat trip out of Seward heading out to islands near the tip of the Kenai Peninsula. We saw one Sea otter, Dall porpoise, Steller's sea lions, Humpback whales, puffins, murrelets, and murrelets and then stopped next to a glacier to listen to it snap, crackle, pop and creak as chunks of ice broke off into the ocean.

#### **And then the Birds! 120 species with 40 Life Birds**

And then there are the birds! I got a total of 120 species, 40 of these being life species (first sightings) for me. Highlights for me were: all five species of loon that occur in North America, several species of scoter, eider and jaeger, Tundra and Trumpeter Swans, Harlequin duck, the sea birds mentioned above plus Pigeon guillemot, several gulls, Arctic tern, Bald and Golden eagles, Gyrfalcon, Short-eared owl, one completely white Snowy owl, Willow ptarmigan, numerous shorebirds, Bar-tailed godwit, one male Ruff, Varied thrush, Yellow wagtail, N. wheatear, Arctic warbler, Lapland Longspur, Snow bunting, Common and Hoary redpolls, and Bohemian waxwing.

Not only was the birding great, but there were also lots of wildflowers in bloom. Many of them were species I was familiar with from hiking in the Colorado Rockies.

We also saw a wide variety of mammals, including Moose, Musk ox, Dall sheep, Grey Wolf, Arctic fox, Grizzly bear, Hoary Marmots, Arctic ground squirrel and the afore-mentioned sea mammals.

As you can see, it was an amazing experience. I recommend a trip to The Great Land to everyone.

## Notes from the Field .

### 111 Ranch Park Feb. 15

Species seen at the park included Hairy Woodpecker (male and female), Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, one Oregon Junco, large flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, large flocks of Cedar Waxwings, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Eastern Phoebe, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, American Crow and Ring-billed gull. **Tom Heath**

### Spring Creek Forest Preserve



Species reported: Eastern Bluebird, lots of Harris Sparrows, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Dark-eyed Junco, Mourning Dove, Ring-billed Gull.

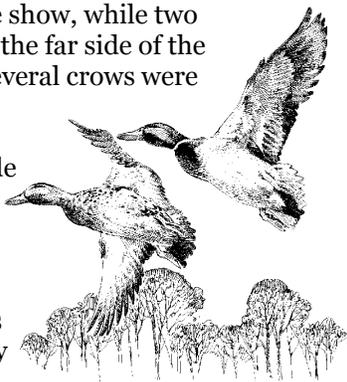
**Tom Heath**

### Hagerman NWR, Jan. 25

A cold foggy morning was a good birding day at Hagerman. The Rough-legged Hawk still on P pad. The adult Bald Eagle at the west end of O pad. Between O and P pads were six Hooded Mergansers, two Common Golden Eyes, one female Bufflehead. Just south of O pad were two Dowitchers, five Snipe, more Snipe on L pad, and at least eight Greater Yellow Legs. At Loy Lake we found Wigeons, Ruddys, Gadwalls, Lesser Scaup. Lots of birds around my house: White-breasted Nuthatch, Cedar Wax-wings, Field Sparrow, Cardinals, Carolina wren, lots of Mourning Doves and of course Robins. Good birding. **Lee Lemmons**

### Elm Fork Nature Preserve Feb. 1

Once at the preserve we totaled 38 species between the shallow slough, the deeper pond and the trail through the woods. Several ducks were found: Gadwall, Northern Shoveler and Green-winged Teal. Double crested Cormorants flew about in twos and threes and two were seen perched on dead trees absorbing the warmth of the morning sun. Seven Snow Geese, always beautiful in flight, treated us to a nice show, while two Canada Geese fed calmly at the far side of the pond. Once in the woods, several crows were mobbing a Red-shouldered Hawk that we finally got a glimpse of as it tried to evade the crows. We also got a pretty good look at both Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. And our day in the field was made all the more special by the attendance of so many folks, including four first timers. **Mike Moore**



## 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:

**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 [Carolyn.Oldham@verizon.net](mailto:Carolyn.Oldham@verizon.net)

OR

Tom Heath, 972-867-8646 or  
email [heathwtom@netscape.net](mailto:heathwtom@netscape.net)

**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.



## **Learn the Birds at Heard** **Bring your Field Guide!**

Collin County is rich with opportunities to observe birds. This year your Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society is offering 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, 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.

### ***The following is the Spring Schedule for the birding class.***

#### **Tuesday Mar. 25:**

7 p.m. Carolyn Oldham and Gailon Brehm. Birds to be studied: Mourning Dove, White-winged Dove, Rock Dove (Pigeon), Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren.

#### **Tuesday, April 22,**

7 p.m. Gailon Brehm and Sally Evans. Birds to be studied: Ring-billed Gull, Franklin's Gull, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Western Kingbird.

#### **Tuesday May 27,**

No bird identification class, as the meeting will be at the Plano Outdoor Learning Center.

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

### **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

**PRAIRIE & TIMBERS  
OFFICERS, CHAIRPERSONS**

- President** *Tom Gruss* ..... 972-596-9525  
**Vice President-Programs**  
  **Chairman** *Sally Evans* ..... 972-248-6283  
**Secretary** *Paula Brehm*.....972-517-2542  
**Treasurer** *Mike Mizell* .....940-382-8551  
**Birdathon** ..... OPEN  
**Conservation/Armchair Activist**  
  *Veronica Merenda* .....972-519-4735  
**Field Trips**  
  *Carolyn Oldham*..... 972-517-8987  
  *Tom Heath* ..... 972-867-8646  
**Membership** *Jerri Kerr* ..... 972-578-3146  
**Newsletter** *Sally Gruss* ..... 972-596-9525  
**Education** *Gailon Brehm*.....972-517-2542  
**Mailing** *Karen White* .....972-424-9786  
**Regional Delegate**  
  *Mary Dickerson*..... 972-896-5177  
**Hospitality** *Bonnie Campion* ..... 972-745-5375  
**Co-chair** ..... OPEN  
**Publicity**  
  *Barbara Pollak* .....972-509-5773  
  *Bobette Mauck*..... 972-562-6561  
  *Synne Magar Ferguson*.....214-345-5063  
**Board Member At Large**  
  *Mike Moore*.....972-509-5773

**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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c/o Heard Natural Science Museum  
One Nature Place  
McKinney, Texas 75069

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