



Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

May/June 2007

FROM THE PRESIDENT

A GOOD YEAR

PTAS is finishing another great season. Our volunteers and members have accomplished some important things, supporting our mission of preserving birds, other wildlife, and their habitat. These accomplishments have involved direct habitat restoration, education, and just getting out there!

PTAS donated significant funding for restoration and maintenance of one of the Heard's prairies plus we donated sufficient funds for the Heard bird banders to replace mist nets. These activities are important to understand bird population trends and to improve their habitat. Along with these activities, generously supported by our members' donations, we have provided monthly bird walks and have sponsored the annual Christmas Bird Count, centered at the Heard. In addition, individual chapter members have volunteered countless additional hours to Heard projects. Given these accomplishments, I was extremely gratified that the Heard presented their "Birds of a Feather" award for our support. This award is a marvelous sculpture that will be on display at the meetings.

What else have we done this year? Great talks at the monthly meetings, monthly birding education, field trips to local birding hot spots, and just lots of opportunities to meet and visit with people of like interests. We provided support to the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center. We maintained a top-notch website, and we published newsletters (some of the time.)

I'd like to give my special thanks to all the board and committee members – you have made these accomplishments possible.

All in all, it's another year I'm proud of – I'd like each of you to get involved and make it even better next year.

Gailon Brehm, President

Upcoming PTAS Programs

May 22, 2007: Candace Fountoulakis

The development of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program at Pecan Hollow Golf Course in Plano.

LEARN BIRDS FROM THE EXPERTS

Collin County is rich with opportunities to observe birds. Again this year your Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society is offering an outstanding opportunity to birders of all levels of experience and knowledge. "Learn the birds" is a birding class that meets at 7:00pm just prior to the chapter meetings which are at 7:30pm. Gailon Brehm will be offering these identification classes. The class format is an informal discussion tailored mostly for beginning birders, but a few rare species will be mixed in to pique the interest of more experienced folks. Featured during each class are bird specimens provided by the Heard Museum and a few recordings of bird sounds. All you need to bring is your favorite field guide.

May Field Trips

Sat, May 5

**Prairie Creek & Arapaho Parks, 7:30am Leader: Carolyn Oldham
Length: 1/2 day
Expected Birds: Spring migration warblers.**

Sat, May 12

**2nd Saturday at the Heard Museum, 9:00am
Leader: Gailon Brehm
Please register with the Heard in advance.**

PTAS Receives Birds of a Feather Award

At the recent Volunteer Recognition Ceremony held at the Heard's Science Resource Center, the Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society was honored with the prestigious **Birds of a Feather Award**. PTAS was given the award for generously providing the Museum with monthly Bird Walks on the second Saturday of every month except during the summer. For many years the Prairie & Timbers Audubon has faithfully provided these educational and fun Bird Walks to the public. Additionally, PTAS as an organization provided the Heard with much needed support by giving a \$2000 grant to sponsor a prairie on the Heard Sanctuary. This has enabled the museum to purchase expensive native seeds and critical equipment for continued prairie restoration. The Heard Museum is keenly appreciative of the continued support provided by PTAS!



Birds of a Feather Award

SEND US YOUR UPDATED E-MAIL ADDRESS

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@prairieandtimbers.org

Concern for Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge

The Friends of Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge, a group of volunteers supporting the refuge, are concerned that the refuge is a possible target for staff cuts in the next few years. They will be mounting a letter writing campaign to our Federal officials to make the case for classifying Hagerman NWR as a Tier 1 refuge.

Hagerman is the closest refuge to the Dallas-Ft Worth area which is the 5th largest population center in the US. It is located on an arm of Lake Texoma, the 2nd most visited lake in the US. Hence the Friends are optimistic that they can make the case that Hagerman is making a major impact on the North Texas area and should be considered a Tier 1 refuge. You can help them by stopping at the Visitor Center and signing the visitor book whenever you visit. Please encourage your friends to do likewise. Also please consider joining in their letter writing campaign when specifics are developed.

Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge has long been a favorite of North Texas birders with birds in every season, from flocks of waterfowl in winter to an amazing diversity of sparrows and, in mid-fall, huge flocks of scissor-tailed flycatchers preparing for migration. This is also an excellent location for birding from the auto as close up views of waterfowl and shore birds can be seen from the car. A 4-mile, self-guided auto tour route proceeds through the heart of Hagerman NWR.

For thousands of years, our nation's waterfowl flew north and south along a lifeline of jeweled lakes, marshes, prairies, and forests known as the Central Flyway. Texas and New Mexico are at the southern end of this flyway. Dramatic changes in the landscape have vastly reduced the wetlands and open spaces used by the migrating birds. For today's waterfowl Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge is one of the few remaining rest areas in North Texas. To make up for the losses of places for food, rest, and shelter, the Fish and Wildlife Service actively manages this refuge for healthy habitat. In fact, managers actually farm for waterfowl at Hagerman NWR—600 acres worth of grains. Milo and corn provide high energy foods during cold snaps. Wintering geese browse on wheat and small grains daily. Refuge farming helps out the neighbors, too, by enticing the geese to stay away from private land crops. It takes both farming and a bit of engineering for wildlife health. The earthen dikes you see create shallow marshes for waterfowl. The marshes are drained in spring and summer to promote growth of wild millet, sedges, and smartweeds and then flooded in the fall for duck's easy access to food. (source Hagerman NWR brochure)

PTAS Supports Blackland Prairie Raptor Center

Continuing its support of north central Texas organizations emphasizing local area birds, PTAS voted funding to help feed the raptors housed at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center (BPRC). BPRC has a stable of eight raptor ambassadors that visit schools, community groups, and organizations that are interested in learning more about the importance of birds of prey and their role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. These birds require a highly specialized diet, varied as much as possible, with detailed monitoring of intake. BPRC purchases mice, rats, chicks, quail, and when available rabbit and duck, to provide a diversity of food. Birds are fed six days a week, as in the wild meals every day are uncommon.

Erich Neupert of BPRC presented the February PTAS program. He gave a very informative and interesting talk featuring some of their hawks and owls. He presented information on identification, bird traits and habits, conservation issues and preservation issues. Remarkably the birds seem to perform on cue.

Blackland Prairie Raptor Center is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization whose mission is to educate the public about birds of prey and their importance in the environment of north Texas. This is done through the exciting experience of outreach programming with live raptors. BPRC is run by a group of dedicated volunteers who have a combined total of over 30 years experience presenting raptor outreach programs and over 70 years of raptor rehabilitation experience. They have the necessary federal and state wildlife permits to house and maintain the raptors. It is unlawful to kill, capture, collect, possess, buy, sell, trade, ship, import or export any migratory birds, including their feathers, eggs, and all other parts. Permits are granted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the state in which the permittee resides. Permits are granted for research, rehabilitation, education, religious purposes, and falconry. All of BPRC raptors have circumstances that make them non-releasable back into the wild. Due to their injuries or conditions, they would not be able to survive on their own. They have become the ambassadors for all wild birds of prey by educating the public about the issues concerning their future.

The Center's birds of prey have many years of experience introducing children and adults to the

world of raptors. These hawks, owls and falcons are well trained, and with the assistance of BPRC education specialists create an informative program. More than 15,000 students in north Texas have seen Blackland Prairie Raptor Center's programs since its inception in 2004. BPRC's programs provide opportunities for children of all ages to learn about the vital interdependence between humans and the natural world. This shapes attitudes and behaviors that positively impact the health of individual participants, our society as a whole and the planet on which we live.

At this time, BPRC is continuing its expansion of education programming and searching for an appropriate location to build a permanent facility for both education and rehabilitation in North Texas. PTAS is proud to help them.

For further information, their website is <http://www.bpraptorcenter.org>.



Willie, a barn owl, one of the raptors PTAS helps feed.

WILD BIRD CENTER

1601 Brinker Rd., at Loop 288 (by Wal-Mart),
Denton

940 / 484-BIRD [2473]

www.WildBird.com/Denton

Outdoor Learning Center

The Plano Independent School District's Outdoor Learning Center used Earth Day weekend to celebrate its thirtieth anniversary. The idea of an outdoor classroom was started as an extension of the Armstrong Middle School campus. Students were taught about the outdoors by using the prairie and creek behind their school. They shared this knowledge by taking younger students from a nearby elementary school on the 'trails'. The idea became very popular but too large in concept for the students to do it for all of the elementary schools. So when Bob Woodruff of the Plano Parks Department offered a piece of land for an outdoor learning center, the school administrators created a plan and got it implemented. The first classes began in 1975 and '76. A coordinator was hired in 1977 and classes began scheduling their trips during the spring and fall sessions. A building was completed in 1989 and housed a classroom, several offices, an auditorium, and a large room of animals from the Living Materials Center, another program that had been in place for several years.

Today all the K, First, Second, and Fourth graders go to the Center as part of their classroom curriculum. Fifth graders

usually attend a resident camp as part of their environmental program. Often upper level grades come for a special program such as the environmental classes from the senior high schools.

During the mid eighties Al Valentine did an extensive bird banding program in the lower prairie area. Often the school children were able to get to the site in time to see the birds banded and released. One year so many birds were caught in the nets that the sun was getting too hot for them. Those in the lower nets were being attacked by fire ants. Third graders had come to the center and they were able to help the banders by shading the birds and holding the nets up so the ants could not reach the lower birds. The experience that they had was worth far more than any classroom lesson could have given.

For several years the Prairie and Timbers Audubon Chapter had their final May meeting at the Center. The highlight was seeing all the animals and going for a night walk and hoping to see or hear the owls that lived in the woods.

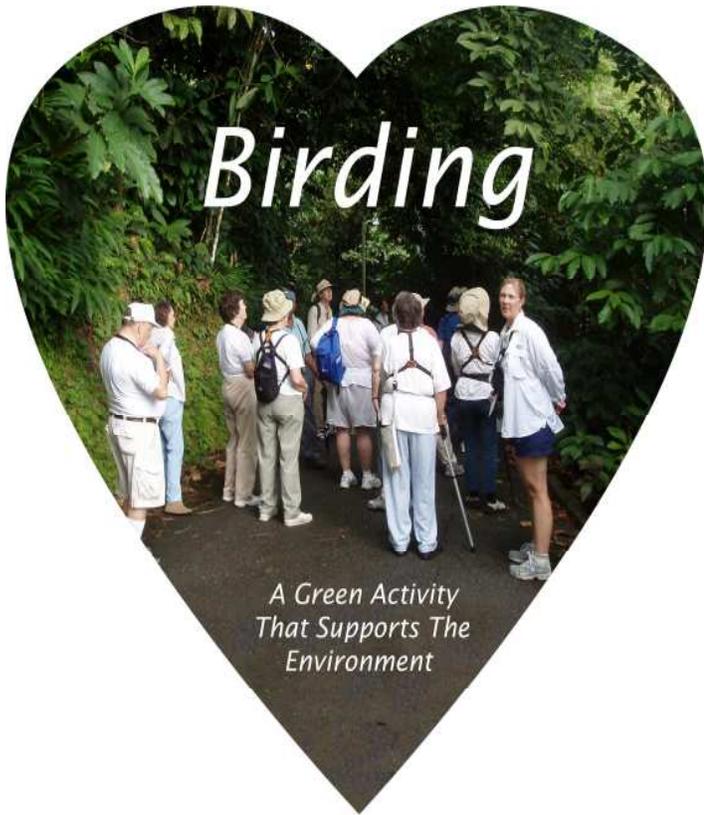
Happy Anniversary Outdoor Center! May you have thirty more years of wonderful experiences for children and adults.

Sally Evans



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An Altamia Oriole photographed by Sam Crowe in the Rio Grande valley. Sam, a member of PTAS, has written a photo-article for All About Birds titled "A Texas Valley birding hotspot". Check it out at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/vb/texas> to find out where he finds a "little piece of birding heaven" every winter in Texas.



The Green Living Family Festival

PTAS celebrated the start of spring and Earth Day by participating in the Green Living Family Festival at the Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary. With a theme developed around discovering practical tips to “live green” everyday, the event featured a collection of over 30 exhibitors, lots of kids’ activities, a blood drive, Goodwill collection Center, and ice cream. KLAK promoted the event on air with a live remote.

The PTAS exhibit focused on birding as a green activity that promotes a healthy environment. Birding is a recreational activity that increases the awareness of biodiversity and environmental habitat. It promotes the understanding of the need to protect the global ecosystem so it will function for the benefit of all species. In addition, birding truly functions as the proverbial “canary in the coal mine” to indicate the health of our world wide ecosystems. PTAS exhibits emphasized the efforts of national Audubon and PTAS in advocacy for the environment, monitoring the environment through citizen science, and habitat protection/restoration.

In addition bird related kid activities were featured. There were bird coloring activities and contests for kids to spot the bird in the tree (a stuffed woodpecker). Prizes of rings and stuffed birds were given.



PTAS Volunteers Jerri Kerr, Karen White, and Merrick Darley at the Heard Museum’s Green Living Family Festival

BIRD BANDING CODES **MADE SIMPLE(R)**

Do bird banding codes look like ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics to you? They sure do to me sometimes!

However, with some reading up on how to decipher them, they aren't quite as terrifying as I once thought.

I guess my curiosity was peaked last Labor Day weekend while birding in Tennessee with a nice gentleman who was showing me the ropes in White County. (Also many pastures, ponds, cows, horses, sheep and pigs, fences we climbed over, and oh, yeah, also 58 species of the avian type including 3 lifers for me!)

Every time we would see a Mourning Dove, he would shout out "another MODO"! I knew what it stood for and after seeing banding codes mentioned often on TexBirds, I decided to try to educate myself on them.

2 people at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center came up with the idea back in 1978 to help organize records and make them less complex. There were many additions, deletions and revisions in the following years and it continues to be updated periodically.

So, just how did the MODO get its code? Almost all names of birds are the descriptors (e.g., Common, Northern) and/or a possessive (e.g., Mourning, Nashville) followed by a group name (e.g., Dove, Warbler, Nighthawk, etc.)

Single-word names are simply the first 4 letters of their names. Ex: Killdeer = KILL

As the MODO is, most birds have 2 words with no hyphens – these codes are simple – they are just the first 2 letters of each word. Ex: NOMO=Northern Mockingbird.

If there is a hyphen, such as Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, simply ignore the hyphens and treat each word as an individual word. (BBWD)

Here's another: Chestnut-sided Warbler = CSWA

Did I see a light bulb come on?! Before it shines too brightly, let me throw a kink in it. How would you write Sage Sparrow? How about Savannah Sparrow?

Unfortunately, there are quite a few like these. In most cases, you will take the first 3 letters of the first word and only the first letter of the second.

So, SAGS = Sage Sparrow and SAVS = Savannah Sparrow.

Sometimes, however, even this simple logic doesn't work – for example Northern Shoveler and Northern Shrike. In

this case, the first letter of the first word is used and the first 3 letters of the second word are used. Northern Shoveler = NSHO and Northern Shrike = NSHR

There are still a few other nuances in banding codes, but this is the gist of it.

If you get stuck, just do like I do and cheat by looking it up here: <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/MANUAL/sname.htm>

Try it – I'm sure you'll find it not to be as intimidating as you maybe once thought and after all, it's fun learning something new!

Karen Carbiener

Field Trip Coordinator (with Tom Heath)

PTAS

Peregrine Falcon CAM

If you have broadband access to the Internet, you might be interested in the link given below. It shows a Peregrine Falcon nest in downtown San Jose, CA. I believe 2 nestlings were born on Saturday 4/28, and 1 on Sunday 4/29.

The link is: http://sanjose.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=91/nest

Bill Hunter

Help Needed

If you are interested in becoming more active in supporting PTAS activities to help the birds of North Central Texas, there are numerous opportunities available. Additional chairpersons are needed for birdathon, fundraising, newsletter, membership, and hospitality. Chairpersons attend and participate in board meetings. Please contact our President Gailon Brehm, 972-517-2542, g-brehm@msn.com

PTAS WEBSITE

<http://prairieandtimbers.org>

Check It Out!

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@prairieandtimbers.org.

PRAIRIE & TIMBERS AUDUBON SOCIETY

Officers, Chairpersons and Board Members

- President:** *Gailon Brehm**.....972-517-2542
- Vice President:** *Merrick Darley**.....972-422-5355
- Secretary:** *Paula Brehm**972-517-2542
- Treasurer:** *Mike Mizell**.....940-382-8551
- Birdathon:** *Open*.....
- Conservation/Armchair Activist:**
 - Roger Sanderson** 469-767-7242
- Newsletter:** *Merrick Darley** 972-422-5355
- Field Trips:** *Karen Carbiener**..... 972-824-2878
 - Tom Heath**..... 972-867-8646
- Education:** *Gailon Brehm**..... 972-517-2542
 - Roger Sanderson**..... 972-333-5671
- Hospitality:** *Carolyn Oldham**..... 972-517-8987
- Membership:** *Jerri Kerr* 972-578-3146
 - Merrick Darley**..... 972-422-5355
- CBC:** *Dan Smith* 972-516-2297
- Website/Electronic Communications:**
 - Tom Heath**..... 972-867-8646
 - Merrick Darley**..... 972-422-5355
- Programs:** *Joan Snider** 903-583-5099
- Publicity:** *Bobette Mauck**..... 972-540-5646
- Regional Delegate:** *Reba Collins, Merrick Darley**

* Board Members

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 Mike Mizell, 800 Edgewood, Denton, TX 76201

When shopping at our advertiser's stores please let them know you saw their ad in the PTAS newsletter.

WILD BIRD CENTER

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