



Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

September 2008

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Come to the Meetings –

As you read the rest of this newsletter, I'm sure you'll be impressed by the quality of the programs that have been planned for the chapter meetings this season. Make sure you come and invite your friends and relatives. Our attendance has tended to be modest: so considering how hard the organizers and speakers work, I'd like to see more of you attend.

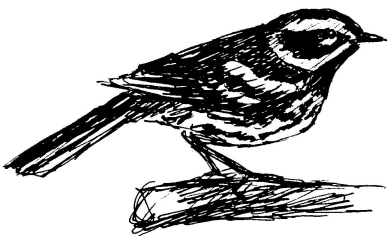
Our program this year focuses on birding, and we have lined up some real experts to speak to us. Lynn Barber, for example, birded all of North America last year. Our own Ron Baltzegar, who birded Alaska this June, will be speaking as well. These folks will be fun to hear, and we'll learn a lot.

The other side of attending the meetings is that you get to be a part of a really great group of people who are trying to make a difference in the environment. You'll learn, you'll get inspired, and you'll watch less TV – can't be all bad, huh?

In addition, please make an effort to get a more diverse group of people involved in our chapter. Younger people and people of different backgrounds can really benefit by gaining the same appreciation of nature and habitat conservation that you have. One way to make that point is to bring them to the meeting.

Go get 'em!

Gailon Brehm, President



All About Conservation and Local Birds

Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society (PTAS) is a local group of people who are passionate about the preservation and enjoyment of the birds of North Texas. By caring about our feathered co-inhabitants we promote the health and sustainability of our north Texas ecosystems. By sponsorship of birding related activities, we not only have an enjoyable time appreciating nature but also contribute to local conservation and the education of the community about the natural environment.

PTAS is a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Collin County and surrounding areas. If you are a member of the National Audubon Society and you live in our area you are automatically assigned membership of PTAS or you can join independent of the National Society.

We mailed you this newsletter so you will be aware of the activities we provide. The articles in this newsletter will describe our plans for the Fall/Winter/Spring of 2008/9. If you are interested in conservation and ecology see our articles on upcoming programs and support for local bird and environmental causes. If you want to learn about birds come to our monthly meetings which feature programs given by bird enthusiasts and experts. See the listing of upcoming programs. If you are interested in birding see the articles on bird identification classes and bird walks as well as our list of upcoming field trips.

We welcome and invite you to participate because with your support we can do more for north Texas. All our activities are run by volunteers and we do not charge for participation.

To learn more about us and keep updated with our activities go to our website at <http://prairieandtimbers.org>

PTAS Programs

Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society meets the fourth Tuesday of the month, September through November, and January through May at the Heard Natural Science Museum in McKinney. At each meeting Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society features an informative and interesting program with exceptional speakers and slide shows to teach and thrill members and guests. The board diligently pursues a full array of interests to promote better understanding of the birding world and to have entertaining yet educational programs. Programs schedule this year are:

September 23, 2008

Bird Identification Class – 7:00 p.m. – Shorebirds

Monthly Meeting – 7:30 p.m.

Main Program: Linda Ergonis - Five hundred birds and that was just Northern India! Bad food, bad accommodations, bad weather, but great birding!

October 28, 2008

Bird Identification Class – 7:00 p.m. – Raptors: Hawks, Owls, Falcons, Kites

Monthly Meeting – 7:30 p.m.

Main Program: Dr. Ray Chancellor, “The Treasure of Ecosystems – Why protect them; The Southlake, Texas, Story”

November 25, 2008

Bird Identification Class – 7:00 p.m. – Ducks

Monthly Meeting – 7:30 p.m.

Main Program: – Charley Amos, “Identifying Ducks”

January 27, 2009

Bird Identification Class – 7:00 p.m. – Sparrows

Monthly Meeting – 7:30 p.m. –

Main Program: Ron and Tal, “In Alaska”

February 24, 2009

Bird Identification Class – 7:00 p.m. – Woodpeckers and Woodland Birds

Monthly Meeting – 7:30 p.m. –

Main Program: Lynn Barber, “A Year of Birding”

March 24, 2009

Bird Identification Class – 7:00 p.m. – Doves, Quail, Dickcissels, ground nesters

Monthly Meeting – 7:30 p.m.

Main Program: TBD

April 28, 2009

Bird Identification Class – 7:00 p.m. – Warblers

Monthly Meeting – 7:30 p.m.--

Main Program: Jan MacLaughlin, “Bats”

May 26, 2009

Monthly Meeting – 7:30 p.m.

A visit to the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center (tentative)

September’s Program

Features PTAS Member

Linda Ergonis

September’s meeting features Linda Ergonis who is a member of PTAS. She will talk about her birding trip to India. Linda is an avid birder and photographer. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology named her featured photographer in 2007 and her work is displayed on their website.

Linda became interested in ornithology 14 years ago when volunteering at the Heard’s bird banding station. With her Nikon 50 camera and a 70-210 zoom lens, she began to photograph the birds being banded and soon became obsessed with photographing birds as a hobby. She has taken many extended birding trips and tries to photograph every bird she sees. She finds photography an excellent tool to learn about birds as well as remember them.

October’s Program

Features Dr. Ray Chancellor

Our October meeting features Dr. Ray Chancellor talking about the Southlake ecosystem, its importance to birds, other wildlife and the environment as well as steps taken to preserve it. The Southlake Cove Ecosystem includes the northern boundary of the town of Southlake and parts of the town of Grapevine and the shoreline on Lake Grapevine. It is the vestige of a once large ecosystem but is still viable with over 285 identified species of birds. It still supports all of the indigenous animals, reptiles, and flora found in north Texas. The area has been noted in the past for its

species of sparrows, and wintering passerines. The mud flats on the shore line are one of the finest shore-bird locations in North Texas. Our October field trip will be to the Southlake Cove Ecosystem.

Dr. Ray Chancellor is a retired chemist and educator and a Southlake resident. Ray began his career as a chemist after graduating from Texas A&M University. He was then cajoled by his former principal to enter teaching by chairing the district's science department and teaching Chemistry and Physics. He fell in love with teaching and moved to make it his profession. His education tenure included serving as Superintendent of the College Station I.S.D. for almost a decade before serving as Executive Director of Education Service Center, Region XI which has responsibility for services provided to the 80 school districts of north Texas.

Ray has been an active birder for over 40 years and was an active bird bander for 25 of those years for both the Federal and Texas wildlife departments. He is an active bird photographer and enjoys painting wildlife using watercolors. He is a past president of both the Central Texas Audubon Society and the Central

Texas Astronomical Society. Ray has given over 500 presentations to schools, civic organizations, and environmental groups. Currently, he is actively involved with the development of the Southlake Cove Ornithological Society, the Bob Jones Nature Center Foundation, and the efforts to preserve Southlake's wonderful natural history, heritage and ecosystem.

LEARN BIRDS FROM THE EXPERTS

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. Featured during each class are bird specimens provided by the Heard Museum and recordings of bird sounds. You can observe the specimens up close and observe the field marks on the real bird. 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. All you need to bring is your favorite field guide.

Send your email address to get PTAS benefits

We need your email address to keep you informed of the latest news, chapter meetings, educational programs, field trips, bird sightings, other local birding activities and conservation issues through our newsletter postings. To minimize expenses allowing more money to go directly to the birds, our bimonthly newsletter is only distributed once a year by US mail. (Yes this is the once for 2008) Otherwise the newsletter is posted on the internet and we send an email with the link to our members. We also send emails reminding you of our meetings. We average 1 to 2 emails a month so we will not overload your inbox.

Your email address will only be used by us to keep you informed of the PTAS newsletters and meetings. It will not be sold or given to anyone.

If you were not informed via email when this newsletter was posted to our website, then you are not on our list. Please send your email address to PTAS at emaillist@prairieandtimbers.org.

If you want to be reminded of field trips that is a separate email list to minimize email to our members not interested in field trips. Send your request to be included to Tom Heath at heathwtom@netscape.net.

If you do not have access to email send Merrick Darley a note at 3713 Wood Rail Dr., Plano, TX 75074 and he will get in touch with you about it.



Gailon Brehm Leading the ID Class

2008/9 Field Trips

One of the most satisfying experiences of Audubon members is the successful field trip. The objective is to see many different bird species and develop a familiarity with each learning about its behavior, field marks and physiology. To accomplish this, the pace is slow and relaxed. Anyone that can walk along a nature trail can participate. Field trips allow you to get away from modern life, participate in a green activity and enjoy the world of nature.

Field trips are open to all, members and nonmembers, beginners to world-class birders. We especially want to encourage and welcome first time birders to come on our local trips in the north Texas area. All trips have an experienced leader eager to help beginners see and enjoy new birds. These trips are an excellent way to get started learning the birds and the best locations and seasons to find them.

Field trips are typically scheduled on Saturdays, unless otherwise noted and last half a day. We scheduled at least one field trip each month Sept through May.

RSVP the week of the trip by contacting Karen Carbeiner at 972-824-2878 or Karen.Carbiener@PrairieandTimbers.org or contacting Tom Heath at 972-867-8646 or heathwtom@netscape.net. Contact them also if you have questions or would like to suggest a location, Send an email to Tom to get on the email distribution list.

Scheduled Trips for 2008:

Sept. 13,, 2008 7:30am to 11:30 Village Creek Drying Beds

Oct 18, 8:30am to noon Southlake Cove Ecosystem

Nov. 8, 2008 2-4:30pm - Private property south of Gainesville which the owners have turned it into a private sanctuary (certified wildscape)

Dec. 6, 2008 8:00am - Hagerman NWR, Sherman (+ possible Lake Texoma dam)

Jan. 17, 2009 Lake Tawakoni

Feb. 21, 2009 Ft Worth Nature Center

March 28, 2009 Caddo Grasslands

April 25, 2009 Ft. Hood

May, 2009 - TBA

Village Creek Drying Beds Field Trip

Time: Sat, Sep 13, 7:30am

Leader: DD Currie

Length: 4 hours

Expected Birds: Fall migrants

Directions: Take Interstate 30 west to N. Fielder Road, exit 27. Go north on N. Fielder Road to Green Oaks. Turn right, east, onto Green Oaks, JW Dunlop Sports Center is on the right. (MapQuest or Google maps: 1692 NW Green Oaks, Arlington, TX) Meet at the Athletic Complex parking lot across the street from the drying beds.

OR car pool from the northwest corner of Central Expressway and Plano Parkway. Park near the south bound Central Expressway access road next to the CompUSA sign. Depart at 6:30am. Please arrive at least 10 minutes early.

The Village Creek Drying Beds is a wastewater treatment plant which hosts hundreds of waterfowl as well as passerines and raptors. There are 46 2-acre ponds or "beds" on the 240-acre property operated by the City of Ft. Worth. The beds hold water collected from recent rains so depending on how much rain we've received, the levels will vary throughout the year. Sometimes the ponds are low enough to draw in shorebirds so frequent visits to the property are suggested. A visit any time of the year produces 25-40 species while during migration 80+ species can be seen.

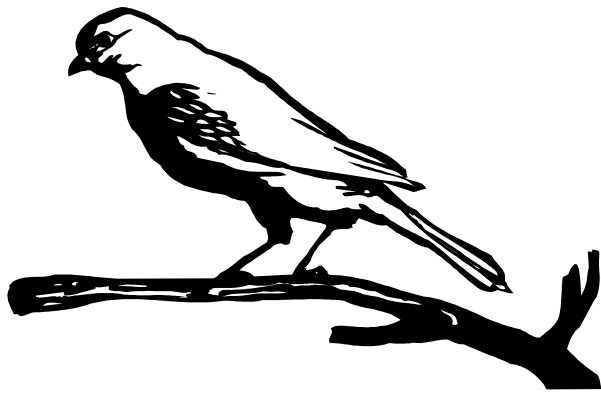
Sometimes rare species drop in, such as Long-tailed Duck and Surf Scoter (winter '07), Black-headed Gull, and Black Skimmer just to name a few.

Regularly seen species throughout different times of the year include Wood Ducks, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Painted Buntings, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts plus many more.

Please join us on Saturday, September 13th in hopes of seeing some migratory shorebirds, raptors, a warbler or two and who knows, we may find a new rarity!

PTAS WEBSITE

<http://prairieandtimbers.org>



Southlake Cove Ecosystem Field Trip

Time: Sat, Oct 18, 8:30am

Leader: Ray Chancellor

Length: 3.5 hours

Directions: Take Hwy 121 south until it intersects with Hwy 114. Take Hwy 114 west through Grapevine and into Southlake. Continue on Hwy 114 past Carroll Ave and then take a right at White Chapel. Continue north on White Chapel until it dead ends at a gravel parking lot.

OR car pool from the northwest corner of Central Expressway and Plano Parkway. Park near the south bound Central Expressway access road next to the CompUSA sign. Depart at 6:30am. Please arrive at least 10 minutes early.

This will be PTAS's first birding trip to Southlake and will be guided by Ray Chancellor who will also be presenting a slide show on the Southlake Cove Ecosystem at the PTAS October 28th, monthly meeting. See the article on the program and you will understand what an outstanding birder Ray is and what a great place the Southlake Ecosystem is to bird.

The walk will begin at 8:30 am at the entrance to the North Walnut Grove Trail parking lot in Southlake, Texas. Approximately 1.5 hours will be spent on this trail that has both lake and lakeside wooded areas. The group will then move to one of the other trails nearby where the second hike of 1-2 hours will be in post oak and riparian habitats. Between the two trails will be a restroom break at Bob Jones Park.

Early to mid October is one of the very best times to visit as a lot of the migrating shorebirds can be seen.

Participants should bring water and insect repellent. Hiking difficulty is fairly easy walking along established trails.

Guided Bird Walks

Here is your chance to enjoy a casual walk in the outdoors in a green environment. Join your PTAS members and birding enthusiasts on a guided walk to see and hear the birds of north Texas. The atmosphere is informal and the pace is slow.

While experienced birders often attend, the walk is targeted to introducing newcomers to birding with experienced guides pointing out and identifying birds. They will point out the field marks, habits, and calls of the birds. Attending the walk is an excellent way for a beginner to learn birding and avoids thumbing through the field guide trying to match the bird to the description. Instead the guide can quickly guide you to the correct page.

The Heard Museum and Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society offer guided bird walks on the Heard Museum and Sanctuary on the second Saturday of each month, September - May. Sign-in for these walks will be at the Heard store at 9:00, rain or shine! The bird walks will last 1.5 hours with plenty of opportunity for questions and tips on birding techniques. Prairie, woodland, and wetland habitats are included. The bird walk is free although the Heard Museum charges an admission fee for non members of the Museum. The Heard Museum website is www.heardmuseum.org

PTAS volunteers also guide walks at the Meadow Preserve in Collin County. The Meadow Preserve is 72 areas of north Texas prairie containing native grasses and wildflowers maintained by the Connemara Conservancy, a non-profit land trust. All walks start at the parking lot off Alma and Bethany Roads in Allen. To find the walk schedule visit their website at www.connemaraconservancy.org

Attendees who have binoculars and field guides should bring them.

SEE YOUR

ADVERTISEMENT HERE!

Do you know someone that would like to advertise in the PTAS newsletter?

Your business card, coupon, or graphic can be seen by fellow birders for a cost much lower than traditional advertising. Please contact Gailon Brehm at g-brehm@msn.com to place your ad in our next newsletter. Prices start at \$65 for one year of advertising



PROTECTING THE BIRDS OF NORTH TEXAS!

PTAS members are birding enthusiasts. They are also enthusiastic about birding habitat and its preservation which is good for all north Texas wildlife and the wildlife that migrates through. Nature provides us with so many resources for free that our very subsistence depends on it. Birds like the proverbial canary in the coal mine are a critical monitor of the health of our ecosystem. By monitoring birds and keeping the environment safe for them, we provide a sustaining environment for ourselves and the rest of the world's flora and fauna. An outstanding example of this was the banning of the pesticide DDT which was poisoning our environment in the mid 20th century. One of the key indicators of the harm being done was the reduction in population of many raptor species including the peregrine falcon and the bald eagle due to widespread spraying of DDT.

The PTAS board views the preservation of the health of north Texas birds and their habitat as the most important part of our mission. Through the monitoring of birds in the wild we contribute to the collection of data maintained by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It is wonderful to have fun birding and at the same time provide monitoring for the health of our environment. We also actively participate and support the education of the general public about birds and their environmental concerns. We know that an educated public is an intelligent public. Finally we work with other non-profits giving both labor and funds to activities that provide for birds.

There are many outstanding organizations working the national environmental issues including the National Audubon Society of which we are a local chapter. PTAS focuses on the local north Texas area and works at the grass roots level. We want to directly impact our local environmental efforts.

If you are interested in having fun and helping the environment we would love to have your help. You will get to know some of the local people working to make north Texas a healthy place to live.

Update on East Bullfrog Pond Prairie Grant

The board of PTAS recognizes the need for appropriate native prairie habitat for grassland birds. The natural habitat of our local area has been devastated first by agriculture development and then by suburban development. Now less than 1% of the original prairie remains and as a result much of our native wildlife has lost their home on the prairie. To help provide more of this habitat the Board has worked with the Heard Museum in restoring and maintaining the prairie habitat at the sanctuary. For the past two years grants of \$2000 per year have been approved to provide for prairie habitat restoration and maintenance.

As of August, the Heard has spent approximately \$1,400.00 of the \$2000.00 donated. Purchases have been for larger ticket items that would have been very difficult to get within the museum's budget. One thousand dollars was used to purchase native grass seed. The planting mix was composed of 11 different species of grasses, legumes, and forbs. With a portion of the mix, they planted two new areas. These areas are in what was called the transplant prairie. The areas planted had been overtaken by Johnson grass. Results look fair to poor. It has been very dry this summer so growing conditions were difficult but the effort continues. Approximately \$400 was used to purchase a landscape rake attachment for the tractor. This has been great to remove thatch before the native seed is dropped on the site. It improves the seed to soil contact. The remainder of the funds is yet to be spent.

Earth Share

September marks the start of workplace campaigns for Earth Share of Texas and other charitable organizations. If your workplace offers the Earth Share option, that's where we'd like to urge you to direct your contribution.

And specifically, we'd like to encourage you to contribute to the Audubon Foundation of Texas (AFT), one of Earth Share's member organizations. AFT's mission is to support the National Audubon Society's 20 Texas chapters.

Among other things, it provides funding for new chapters just getting off the ground. And it helps established chapters meet their operating expenses.

The AFT also provides grants to support chapters' special projects. PTAS grant for the habitat improvement at Brockdale Park was funded through AFT..

For a complete list of workplaces participating in the Earth Share campaign, visit <<http://www.earthshare-texas.org/workplace.htm>>.

New Opportunity to Help North Texas Birds

As reported last May, Audubon Texas awarded our chapter and the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center (BPRC) a grant to conduct a habitat improvement program at the BPRC's Brockdale Park site located on the shores of Lake Lavon in Collin County. This project will prepare the soil and plant native plants to act as food sources for North Texas birds and will build associated trails and interpretive signs to facilitate the educational experience of visitors to the Raptor Center. The requested grant funds will be used to buy materials for this project, and labor will be provided by volunteers from three sources -- PTAS members, BPRC members, and area master naturalists.

David Griffith of the PTAS Conservation Committee is currently on a planning committee with BPRC and Master Naturalists. He is hoping to report in October on the opportunities for PTAS members to be involved in providing native habitat for birds, contribute to environmental education of the community, and get to know the birds and people of the BPRC while enjoying BPRC's beautiful setting on the shores of Lake Lavon. If you would like to participate in this project let Gailon Brehm or David Griffith know.

The habitat improvement is part of phase 1 of BPRC plans to develop Brockdale Park into a raptor rehabilitation center and nature education center. Plans for the educational center emphasize the appreciation of nature through the exploration and preservation of native plants.

Collin county flora and fauna. Bird watching will be emphasized because of available expertise and the tie into the raptor rehabilitation. It is estimated that the Raptor Rehabilitation Center will receive more than 500 sick, injured and orphaned birds of prey within the first few years of its completion..

BPRC has been presenting outreach education to schools, environmental organizations and other groups interested in their message since August, 2004 with the live bird of prey ambassadors making quite an impression on the audience. These hawks, owls and falcons have demonstrated their importance in the endangered Blackland Prairie of this area to more than 30,000 students.

Update on Prothonotary Warbler Study Supported By PTAS

Last spring the PTAS board awarded Michele Diggs a grant of \$400 to partially cover the cost of travel expenses for her proposed study titled "POST FLOOD NEST BOX USE AND REPRODUCTIVE SUCCESS OF THE PROTHONOTARY WARBLER AT TISHOMINGO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, OKLAHOMA" Michele is progressing well on her study reporting: "I am looking into the site fidelity of known females, the number of new birds that I banded and several other aspects. Altogether I banded 178 adults and fledglings this breeding season." We are now trying to schedule a time for her to present the results of her study at one of our fall meetings.

Michele is a student at Southeastern Oklahoma State University and will be working in conjunction with Assistant Professor Dr. Doug Wood. This study is a continuance of previous studies conducted at the Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge on the breeding biology of the Prothonotary warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*).

Along with the investigation into the breeding biology of the Prothonotary warbler, this research is investigating the impacts of a natural flooding event that occurred in the spring and summer of 2007 and dispersal of fledglings into areas surrounding their natal nests. This research will aid in giving a greater understanding of the breeding biology following a natural flood event and dispersal of the young of the Prothonotary warbler.

WILD BIRD CENTER

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

940 / 484-BIRD [2473]

www.WildBird.com/Denton

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

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Vice President: *Merrick Darley**.....972-422-5355
Secretary: *Paula Brehm**972-517-2542
Treasurer: *Mike Mizell**.....940-382-8551
Birdathon: *Open*.....
Conservation/Armchair Activist:
David Griffith's
*Roger Sanderson** 469-767-7242
Newsletter: *Merrick Darley** 972-422-5355
Field Trips: *Karen Carbiener**..... 972-824-2878
*Tom Heath**..... 972-867-8646
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*Roger Sanderson**..... 972-333-5671
Hospitality: *Carolyn Oldham**..... 972-517-8987
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*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: *Carol Oldham* 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