



# Rustlin's

*Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society*

April/May 2009

## May Program: Hummingbirds

## Help Us Plan

Interested in getting hummingbirds into your backyard, then come hear our fellow member Carolyn Oldham in May. She will be presenting the main program "The Top Ten Tips To Attract Hummingbirds". The talk will primarily focus on plants that will draw hummingbirds to the backyard garden. She currently has her own landscape business called "Natural Habitats" and focuses on natives, perennials and habitat gardens. So get some expert advice on how to go native and at the same time attract hummingbirds. The May meeting is

May 26, 2009

7:00 p.m. – Social/snack time (No Bird ID class)

Monthly Meeting – 7:30 p.m.--

Main Program- Carolyn Oldham "The Top Ten Tips To Attract Hummingbirds".

PTAS operates on a fiscal year that starts July 1 and runs through June 30. With the May program and field trips our current year draws to a close and we begin to plan for the next year. So now is the time to let us know what you would like in the next year. Even if you have just vague ideas let us know. The board members will be putting their plans together and be meeting in August to tie them together in a fun and exciting new year.

Next year's meetings will start Tuesday Sept 29 and will continue to be on the 4th Tuesday of each month Sept thru Mays except December due to the Christmas Bird Count. If there are topics or speakers you want to hear forward your suggestions to Carolyn Oldham (972-517-8987 or carolyn.oldham@verizon.net)

Field trips will be starting in September and are typically scheduled on Saturday. If there are places you want to visit or leaders you want as guides send suggestions to Karen Carbiener (972-824-2878, karen.carbiener@prairieandtimbers.org) or Tom Heath (972-867-8646, heathwtom@netscape.net).

If you have suggestions for or want to work with advocacy or conservation causes contact Roger Sanderson (972-516-2297, rsanderson@heardmuseum.org). We are open for suggestions on projects that need funding or labor.

Our general meetings are open to the public. Our board meetings are open to any who wants to actively contribute. There are numerous committees where you can contribute. If you want to participate in some way but are not sure where, contact Merrick Darley (972-422-5355) (hmdarley@gmail.com).



Ruby Throated Hummingbird

## Fort Hood Trip Field Report



Fort Hood Birding Party

Yet another fantastic trip to Fort Hood this year but oh boy, did we ever have to work for the Golden-cheeked warblers! Rich Kostecke, our field trip leader, likes for everyone to see the 2 target species, the Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo right off the bat. Then the pressure is off and we can get on to birding the area and finding other species. We got the Black-capped Vireo pretty quickly but it took 5 or 6 locations to find the Golden-cheek. Once we found one, multiple birds soon followed! 4 people came away with lifers which makes me happy.

Notes: The following species were heard only: Roadrunner, Canyon Wren (not counted on life list), Great-crested Flycatcher, Black & White Warbler, and heard the majority of the White-eyed Vireo count.

Number of species: 34  
Great Blue Heron 3  
Black Vulture 6  
Turkey Vulture 10  
Osprey 1  
Cooper's Hawk 1  
Mourning Dove 15  
Greater Roadrunner 1  
Great Crested Flycatcher 1  
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 1  
White-eyed Vireo 30  
Black-capped Vireo 2  
Cliff Swallow 15  
Carolina Chickadee 6  
Tufted/Black-crested Titmouse 5  
Canyon Wren 1  
Carolina Wren 4  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 25  
Eastern Bluebird 1  
Golden-cheeked Warbler 5  
Black-and-white Warbler 1  
American Redstart 1  
Northern Waterthrush 1  
Summer Tanager 2  
Chipping Sparrow 4  
Lark Sparrow 4  
Grasshopper Sparrow 1  
White-crowned Sparrow 3  
Northern Cardinal 10  
Indigo Bunting 2  
Painted Bunting 5  
Red-winged Blackbird 1  
Orchard Oriole 1  
Baltimore Oriole 2  
Dickcissel 1

— Karen Carbiener



Golden-cheeked Warbler



Dickcissel

Photos by Tom Heath

## *Plants in to Finish Native Garden*

Prairie and Timbers Audubon was given a \$1000 grant in 2008 from Texas Audubon to support bird habitat improvement at the future site of Blackland Prairie Raptor Center in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Brockdale Park near Lucas on Lake Lavon. Since last summer, we have been working with BPRC to "naturescape" five beds along a trail.

On April 4, Jerri Kerr, David Griffith and Marget Jesness met with three Master Naturalists at Brockdale Park to plant various shrubs. Last January 31, five beds had been prepared with compost, dry molasses and mulch. The beds looked really great with only a few weeds in the largest bed. And, there were worms!

In all, we planted 32 perennials in one gallon containers and 9 plants in larger containers. David and Marget had spent the afternoon of Friday, April 3, at Shades of Green purchasing the stock. As luck would have it, they did not have some of the plants on our list as they needed warmer weather.

Jerri Kerr laid out the location of the various plants in the five beds, three of which get mostly full sun and two which are mostly shaded. We were joined by three other volunteers, all Master Naturalists of which two were on the BPRC Committee.

The nine big plants included two Yaupon Hollies and two Wax Myrtles in 15 gallon containers. Missing were two Possumhaw Hollies as they were budget busters that were only available in 30 gallon containers. Later, on April 29, we were able to purchase two Possumhaws in 15 gallon containers which had been left over from the Native Plant sale the previous week-end at the Heard Museum. They cost only 1/5th what we would have spent on the 30 gallon Possumhaws.

Besides the Yaupons, Possumhaws and Wax Myrtles, we also purchased five Red Yuccas. The perennials included Black and Blue Salvias, Chili Pequines, Flame Acanthus, White Garra, Greg's Blue Mist, Pigeonberry, Pink Autumn Sages, Red Autumn Sages, Texas Lantanas, Turk's Caps and Zexmanias.

Most of the planting went very quickly. The size of the hole for the perennials in their 1 gallon containers did not require much digging in the beds which had been roto-tilled at the end of January.

We just shoved the mulch to the side, used a hand trowel to dig a hole about 5 inches in diameter and 4 inches deep, then stuck the plant in the hole after

roughing up the roots. The object was to plant the shrub on the high side and fill the volume around the roots with the dirt which had been dug out. That fill dirt was brought up level to the top of the roots. Finally, the mulch was then replaced. In all, it took less than 2 minutes per plant with the biggest amount of time being spent on removing the plant from the container.

Of course, the large plants required a lot more work digging a bigger hole. It took as long to plant them as all of the perennials.

The good news is that all of the plants have survived and are doing well. We did have some of the plants eaten by most likely rabbits, but they are still going.

With any luck, most of the plants will be in bloom by the time you read this article. The Turk's Caps and the Flame Acanthus won't bloom until early and mid-July, though

— David Giffith



David Planting the last Possumhaw

## *PTAS Awards Six Grants*

The PTAS Board reviewed various proposals for projects supporting the North Texas ecosystems and funded six different local projects. The projects the board was looking for "prairie root efforts" meaning we wanted to understand the details of the material and labor we funded and insure they impacted the local ecosystem and/or awareness of it.

The board funded 3 projects at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center located in Brockdale Park on Lake Lavon near Lucas. The first was to finish purchasing plants for the native garden project being support by PTAS and the Blackland Prairie Master Naturalists Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist. This project was originally funded by a \$1000 grant from Texas Audubon. This grant was for \$150 to cover the small cost overrun. For more details see the article in on the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center native garden by David Griffith in this newsletter.

For the second project, we are adopting (sponsoring) two of the Blackland Prairie Raptor Centers raptors. Becoming a sponsor supports the feeding, care and any medical treatments of one of the raptor ambassadors for one year. These raptors have become the ambassadors for all wild birds of prey by educating the public about the issues concerning their future. The birds routinely star in education presentations at schools, youth organizations and other community groups. These hawks, owls, and falcons are well trained and with the assistance of BPRC education specialists, introduce children and adults to the world of raptors and birds. The total of the grant is \$500.

For the third project having adopted two of the Blackland Prairie Raptors, PTAS decided to provide new homes for them. Blackland Prairie Raptor Center is constructing a new building to house it's educational birds. With help from many private donors, Collin County Open Space, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Pinnacle Excavation, work is under way for Phase One which is to build the driveway, parking lot, pad sites for administration buildings and education bird cages. Erich Neupert, executive director of BPRC, asked PTAS to consider funding the materials for the two cages for our adopted birds at the cost of \$1000/cage. The board was able to fund \$1800 of this. Hopefully some individual(s) out there will help us with the

additional \$200 to house our birds.

The board also funded two projects at the Heard. The first project is an irrigation system for the new Butterfly Garden at the Heard. The beds and walk-ways have already been completed by the McKinney Make A Difference Day, supplying both the materials and the labor. Various plants, boulders, and retaining wall blocks are expected to be donated by local companies. However the Heard needs help with the materials for the irrigation system. The exhibit will feature native Texas Butterflies and allow the visitor to enjoy such species as monarchs, julia longwings and question marks. The board elected to contribute \$500 towards the irrigation system.

The second project at the Heard funds new nets for the Bird Banding group. Bird-banding contributes vital knowledge of our ecosystem. For an example, see the bird flu monitoring article by Judy Wood in this newsletter. Bird banding has been active at the Heard since the station's establishment in 1978 and over 500 birds a year have been banded in recent years. Unfortunately the mist nets used to capture the birds are fragile and need to be replaced frequently. Judy Wood of the bird banding group asked PTAS for funds for new nets and related equipment. PTAS approved a grant of \$480 to provide those supplies.

The final project funded by PTAS is at the Hagerman Natural Wildlife Refuge, our local national refuge which lies on the Big Mineral Arm of Lake Texoma. Established in 1946, the refuge includes 3,000 acres of marsh and water and 8,000 acres of upland and farmland. During fall, winter, and spring, the marshes and waters are in constant use by migrating and wintering waterfowl. The upland prairies are managed and restored by periodic burning, controlled grazing, and replanting of native grasses and forbs. Prairies protect the soil and supply food and cover for many species of native and migrating wildlife. Kathy Whaley, Refuge Manager, has asked for assistance with the purchase of native grass/flower seeds that will be used to restore the uplands. PTAS approved a grant of \$1000.

For all projects the board will interact with project directors over the next year and monitor how the funding is spent. The board will consider additional funding in the 2009/2010 fiscal year.

-- Merrick Darley

## Heard Banders Assist in Flu Study

The Heard Bird Banding Team is participating in a 4-year study designed to track the spread of avian influenza viruses. The research, spearheaded by the Center for Tropical Research at UCLA in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University and field coordinated by The Institute for Bird Populations (IBP), collects samples from all over North America.

There are more than 100 sub-types of flu viruses that can be carried by birds. Most are classified as “low pathogenic” viruses, causing only mild (if any) infections in the birds that carry them. Others, such as the H5N1 avian flu that has been in the news, are of more concern to both birds and humans. (Note: None of the avian flu cases in humans were caused by contact with wild birds. The highly pathogenic H5N1 avian flu virus has not been detected in the Western Hemisphere.)

The study uses cloacal swabs and feather sampling to determine the geographical distribution of flu sub-types in Neotropical migrants.

Knowledge about the dispersal of viruses within and between bird species will help epidemiologists predict the spread of new, possibly lethal, sub-types if they are introduced into North America.

To participate in the study, Heard banders record the usual data for each banded bird (species, weight, wing chord, tail length, fat levels, age, and gender) then swab the cloacal area, placing the swabs in vials of preservative provided by the researchers. One outer tail feather and one central tail feather are pulled and submitted with the swab sample for each bird.



A Mist Net is used to capture birds for banding. This is a recaptured Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

The feather samples provide DNA information that can identify genetic relationships between sampled birds, as well as stable isotope analysis that can determine where the bird has been feeding. Feather sampling is also being used to track West Nile Virus in birds.

— Judy Woods

## Tyler State Park Field Trip Report

Birders of all levels met at lovely Tyler State Park for a field trip led by Boyd Sanders, Interpreter/Exhibit Tech for the park.

32 species were seen and/or heard with some fantastic views of Painted Buntings, White-eyed Vireos and a Pied-billed Grebe with 3 cute young. Trip list is noted below.

One of the highlights was a young boy who joined us who was camping at the park. He was very interested in birds and birding – asking lots of questions and trying to learn field marks of the birds we saw. It was thrilling to us all to see his enthusiasm!

Wood Duck 4  
Pied-billed Grebe 4  
Mississippi Kite 2  
Red-shouldered Hawk 1  
Mourning Dove 2  
Belted Kingfisher 1  
Red-headed Woodpecker 4  
Red-bellied Woodpecker 3  
Downy Woodpecker 2  
Eastern Phoebe 3  
Great Crested Flycatcher 2  
Eastern Kingbird 3  
White-eyed Vireo 4  
Red-eyed Vireo 1  
Blue Jay 2  
American Crow 2  
Purple Martin 6  
Carolina Chickadee 4  
Tufted Titmouse 1  
White-breasted Nuthatch 1  
Carolina Wren 3  
Eastern Bluebird 1  
Cedar Waxwing 15  
Pine Warbler 6  
American Redstart 1  
Common Yellowthroat 1  
Summer Tanager 1  
Chipping Sparrow 1  
Northern Cardinal 5  
Indigo Bunting 2  
Painted Bunting 5  
Orchard Oriole 1

— Karen Carbiener

## *Of Interest to Birders*

Interested in learning more about birds and citizen science, here are four articles on the web that Mike Mizell found interesting and sent to me. I agree with Mike maybe you want to check them out to.

For years, birdwatchers counted by sight during the daytime. The night — when most migratory birds travel — was literally hidden to them. But that's changing. Anyone can attach a microphone to a computer running birdcall-identifying software and track birds passing overhead in the darkness. With an old computer and 30 dollars worth of off-the-shelf components, you build a cutting edge avian monitoring technology and help save the birds. Interested? See Night Tracking: <http://blog.wired.com/wiredscience/2009/03/birdmonitors.html>

Wonder if all the information that citizen scientists contribute is significant? The first federal State of the Birds report was recently released, marking the beginning of an unprecedented collaboration between government researchers and conservation groups — and the underlying data comes from citizen scientists (that is us). "The data that goes into this report is by and large not collected by a few tin-head scientists or conservation organizations, but by millions of individuals," said John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology. "We can begin to put together spectacularly massive databases that show us, in great detail with fine-grained scope, what the trends are."


That collaboration, said Cornell University ornithologist Andrew Farnsworth, will magnify the utility of bird data that's already being gathered by thousands of Americans every year. More than 93,000 people participated in this year's annual Great Backyard Bird Count, counting 11 million birds over four days in February. Tens of thousands of other people contribute millions of sighting records year-round to efforts like the Avian Knowledge Network, eBird, the Landbird Monitoring

Network, HawkCount and Project Feederwatch. All that's needed are binoculars, a bird book and a notepad. Interested? See State of the Birds Report: <http://blog.wired.com/wiredscience/2009/03/stateofthebirds.html>

Do you want to be part historian, part citizen scientist and help the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center understand the impact of global warming? Avian migration is an increasingly important source of proxy information about climate change. Migratory species make their move when it gets too cold or too hot, so if they begin to arrive earlier or leave later, you can back out inferences — over long time periods — about changes in temperature. The Patuxent data, because it stretches back so far (1880s), can provide scientists with a baseline for their more recent measurements of bird behavior, so they can see how things have changed over the last century. The only complete dataset of bird migration patterns in North America is trapped in a basement — and it's going to take the power of crowdsourcing to free it. Stored on 6 million note cards stretching back to the 1880s, the records of migratory birds were created by a network of thousands of volunteers who recorded birds' comings and goings, then carefully shipped their observations to the government. But on paper that data cannot easily be analyzed so the scientist are looking to ordinary citizens to help transcribe the old data to digital. Interested? See Help transcribe old data to digital: <http://blog.wired.com/wiredscience/2009/03/birddata.html>

And finally the last article may explain why we see so many starlings and it is because of our own pollutants. Endocrine disruptor pollutants — chemicals that mimic estrogen, a potent female sex hormone, found in sewage plants are consumed by earthworms that Starlings feed on. They cause the guys to sing sweet songs that lady starlings find irresistible. Interested? See Starling's Love Song Affected by Pollution: <http://blog.wired.com/wiredscience/2008/02/sex-changing-ch.html>

— Merrick Darley



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Earth Share of Texas represents the Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society in payroll deduction plans for charitable giving. For information, E-mail [estx@earthshare-texas.org](mailto:estx@earthshare-texas.org) or call 1-800-GREENTX

## May Second Saturday Walk Report

We had a big group for the PTAS second Saturday bird walk -- about 35. Lots of birds and wildlife, listed below. Thanks to the banders for some great birds in hand.

Gailon

Observation date: 5/9/09

Notes: Second Saturday bird walk. Yellow-bellied water snake, diamond-backed water snake, red-eared pond slider, American bullfrog, eastern fox squirrel, eastern cottontail rabbit.

Number of species: 65

Canada Goose - *Branta canadensis* 2  
Wood Duck - *Aix sponsa* 2  
Double-crested Cormorant - *Phalacrocorax auritus* 1  
Great Blue Heron - *Ardea herodias* 15  
Great Egret - *Ardea alba* 10  
Snowy Egret - *Egretta thula* 2  
Little Blue Heron - *Egretta caerulea* 2  
Cattle Egret - *Bubulcus ibis* 15  
Green Heron - *Butorides virescens* 2  
Black-crowned Night-Heron - *Nycticorax nycticorax* 3  
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron - *Nyctanassa violacea* 2  
Turkey Vulture - *Cathartes aura* 1  
Mississippi Kite - *Ictinia mississippiensis* 1  
Red-shouldered Hawk - *Buteo lineatus* 1  
Swainson's Hawk - *Buteo swainsoni* 1  
Red-tailed Hawk - *Buteo jamaicensis* 1  
American Coot - *Fulica americana* 2  
Killdeer - *Charadrius vociferus* 1  
Spotted Sandpiper - *Actitis macularius* 2  
Rock Pigeon - *Columba livia* 6  
Mourning Dove - *Zenaida macroura* 3  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo - *Coccyzus americanus* 2  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird - *Archilochus colubris* 2  
Red-headed Woodpecker - *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* 2  
Red-bellied Woodpecker - *Melanerpes carolinus* 3

Downy Woodpecker - *Picoides pubescens* 3  
Eastern Wood-Pewee - *Contopus virens* 3  
Empidonax sp. - *Empidonax sp.* 2  
Eastern Phoebe - *Sayornis phoebe* 1  
Great Crested Flycatcher - *Myiarchus crinitus* 3  
White-eyed Vireo - *Vireo griseus* 3  
Blue Jay - *Cyanocitta cristata* 2  
American Crow - *Corvus brachyrhynchos* 5  
Purple Martin - *Progne subis* 3  
Northern Rough-winged Swallow - *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* 2  
Barn Swallow - *Hirundo rustica* 1  
Carolina Chickadee - *Poecile carolinensis* 3  
Tufted Titmouse - *Baeolophus bicolor* 3  
Carolina Wren - *Thryothorus ludovicianus* 2  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - *Poliopitila caerulea* 2  
Eastern Bluebird - *Sialia sialis* 5  
Swainson's Thrush - *Catharus ustulatus* 1  
Gray Catbird - *Dumetella carolinensis* 1  
Northern Mockingbird - *Mimus polyglottos* 2  
European Starling - *Sturnus vulgaris* 2  
Cedar Waxwing - *Bombycilla cedrorum* 10  
Nashville Warbler - *Vermivora ruficapilla* 2  
Yellow Warbler - *Dendroica petechia* 8  
Chestnut-sided Warbler - *Dendroica pensylvanica* 1  
Yellow-throated Warbler - *Dendroica dominica* 1  
Black-and-white Warbler - *Mniotilta varia* 2  
American Redstart - *Setophaga ruticilla* 1  
Prothonotary Warbler - *Protonotaria citrea* 4  
Common Yellowthroat - *Geothlypis trichas* 2  
Wilson's Warbler - *Wilsonia pusilla* 1  
Northern Cardinal - *Cardinalis cardinalis* 10  
Indigo Bunting - *Passerina cyanea* 3  
Painted Bunting - *Passerina ciris* 2  
Dickcissel - *Spiza americana* 8  
Red-winged Blackbird - *Agelaius phoeniceus* 2  
Common Grackle - *Quiscalus quiscula* 2  
Brown-headed Cowbird - *Molothrus ater* 5  
Orchard Oriole - *Icterus spurius* 2  
Baltimore Oriole - *Icterus galbula* 1  
American Goldfinch - *Carduelis tristis* 3

# WILD BIRD CENTER

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

940 / 484-BIRD [2473]

[www.WildBird.com/Denton](http://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](mailto:hmdarley@prairieandtimbers.org).**

**PRAIRIE & TIMBERS AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**Officers, Chairpersons and Board Members**

**President:** *Position open*.....

**Vice President:** *Merrick Darley\**.....972-422-5355

**Secretary:** *David Griffith\** .....972-423-4344

**Treasurer:** *Mike Mizell\**.....940-382-8551

**Conservation/Armchair Activist:**

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**Newsletter:** *Merrick Darley\** ..... 972-422-5355

**Field Trips:** *Karen Carbiener\**..... 972-824-2878

*Tom Heath\**..... 972-867-8646

**Education**

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*Gailon Brehm*..... 972-517-2542

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**Membership:** *Jerri Kerr\**..... 972-578-3146

**CBC:** *Roger Sanderson\** ..... 972-516-2297

**Website/Electronic Communications:**

*Tom Heath\**..... 972-867-8646

**Programs:** *Carolyn Oldham\**..... 972-517-8987

**Publicity:** *Bobette Mauck\**..... 972-540-5646

*\* 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

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