



Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

January/February 2010

PTAS Board awards 5 grants

The PTAS Board reviewed various proposals for grants supporting the North Texas ecosystems and funded five different local projects.

The first PTAS grant supports habitat restoration and garden development at the Heard. It provides funds for seed, chemicals, and equipment for ongoing and new restoration at the sanctuary. The native plant seeds will be direct sown in some cases such as prairie grasses as well as used for container grown plants for later planting. Specifically included was funding for restoration around the bird banding nets to improve the habitat with native shrubs and adapt it to needs of the bird banding activity. As an example large non-native trees that have grown up around the nets allowing the birds to fly over the nets and avoid banding. This was attractive to the board as it supports the needs of the Heard Bird Banding group as well.

The grant to the Heard also supports the Native Plant Garden and other gardens by funding tools, plants, and chemicals for use in the gardens. The most desperate need is a new lawnmower. There are several new plant species the Heard would like to add to the garden to increase the number of species on display. The garden areas at the Heard are educational tools to promote habitat that supports native wildlife and plants. The total funding given to the Heard was \$1500.

A second grant was awarded to the Hagerman Natural Wildlife Refuge to continue prairie restoration on refuge lands. This is essentially a continuation of last year's grants. Prior to our board meeting, four members of PTAS visited with Kathy Whaley, refuge manager, to review work being done at the wildlife refuge using funds from last years grant. They were shown the ongoing prairie restoration and were very impressed but also realized that many more acres needed restoration. For more details on the work being done see Kathy's letter in this issue of the newsletter. The additional grant of \$1000 will fund native grass seed.

The third grant to Southeastern Oklahoma State University is to continue funding of the graduate studies of Christina Newman and Ross Anderson under Prof. Woods. Christina's study is titled "Prothonotary Warbler nest composition and microclimate at Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma". Ross's study is titled "Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) range expansion, abundance, reproductive success, and nesting ecology in southeastern Oklahoma". Both students presented their first year results at chapter meetings last fall. The grant is for \$500 and funds travel expenses for the students.

The fourth grant continues our sponsorship of two raptors, Miki a Mississippi kite, and Hunter, a great horned owl. The raptors are program birds at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center. A sponsorship grant provides funding for the feeding, care and medical treatments of the raptor 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. The grant is for \$500.

The fifth grant was to the Blackland Prairie Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist. It provides partial funding (\$100) for the construction of a bird blind at Caddo Park on Lake Lavon. The bird blind is part of a major project at the park to restore it to highlight nature and the local habitat for the public.

In addition the board reserved \$550 dollars of PTAS funds for a scholarship for training of bird banders who are committed to work at the Heard Museum. The scholarship will cover the training cost at Powdermill Nature Reserve, part of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pennsylvania.

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 2010/2011 fiscal year.

- Merrick Darley

Chapter Meeting Schedule

Tuesday Feb 23 - 7:00pm

Bird Identification class: Doves, Quail, Dickcissels, and ground nesters

Main Program: "Nature's Best Pest Controls - barn swallows, barn owls, purple martins, chimney swifts" by Bonnie Bradshaw from 911 Wildlife. Learn how to solve rodent and insect problems by attracting these birds. Find out why these four species are completely dependent on human structures for nesting sites.

Tuesday March 23 - 7:00pm

Bird Identification class: Warblers

Main Program: "Warblers" by Dr. Doug Wood from Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

Tuesday April 27 - 7:00pm

Bird Identification class: Swallows and Flycatchers

Main Program: "Bluebirds in North Texas" by Susan Yost of Wild Birds Unlimited.

Tuesday May 25 - 7:00pm

Bird Identification class: -- TBD

Main Program: "Creating Caterpillar Gardens with Native Plants" by Kathi Saucier an avid native plant society member.

Field Trip Schedule

Sat, Feb 6 - White Rock Lake

Time: 8:00 am

Leader: Chris Ronk

Length: 1.5-2 Hours

Meeting Place: Past Sculling Center at White Rock

Lake. Join us for a field trip on foot at one of Dallas' prime birding locations. Trip with Dallas Audubon

Sunday, Feb 7 - John Bunker Sands Wetland Center,
Time: 7:00 am

Leader: Bob Stone and Chris Ronk

Length: Half day

Meeting Place: You must call or email Bob Stone at rgstone@sbcglobal.net or 214-287-9940 before 6:00 pm January 31, 2010 and provide a telephone number. Bob will confirm your place on the accepted list by e mail or phone. Also if no positions are available, he will confirm by email or phone. Meet in Church parking lot, Highway 175 Combine road exit. Trip with Dallas Audubon

Sat, Feb 13 - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum

Time: 9:00 am

Leader: Gailon Brehm

Length: 1.5-2 Hours

Meeting Place: Heard Museum

Sat, Mar 13 - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum

Time: 9:00 am

Leader: Gailon Brehm

Length: 1.5-2 Hours

Meeting Place: Heard Museum

Sat, Mar 27 - Oak Point Park & Nature Preserve

Time: 8:00am

Leader: Jerri Kerr

Length: 1/2 Day

Meeting Place: Oak Point Park main parking lot off Los Rios Blvd. This will be a first-time exploratory field trip into a new park!

Sat, April 10 - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum 9:00 am

Leader: Gailon Brehm

Length: 1.5-2 Hours

Meeting Place: Heard Museum

Sat, May 1 - Plano Outdoor Learning Center

Time: TBD

Leader: Peter Assman

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Fun and Games

Letter From Kathy to PTAS

Hello,

I wanted to provide an update on the PTAS grant to Hagerman NWR.

Today, we used the \$1,000 you provided to order 174 pounds of native grass seed from Turner Seed Company in Breckenridge, TX. The seed will arrive this week and be planted early next week with our seed drill in the 30 acre restoration project area off Bennett Lane.

The mixture consists of the following seeds: big bluestem, little bluestem, buffalograss, eastern gamagrass, blue grama, sideoats grama, indiagrass, green sprangletop, and switchgrass.

I will try to get a photo of the actual seeding for you, but if not, definitely a photo of post seeding. Later in the winter we will be doing brush work to remove snags in the restoration area with a new Bush Hog forestry cutter we purchased this year.

Thanks again for the grant. We look forward to seeing a tallgrass prairie develop in the restoration area over the next few years as well as the birds it will invite.

Kathy Whaley
Refuge Manager
Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge
6465 Refuge Road

Great Backyard Bird Count

The GBBC is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. This year it is Feb 12-15, Friday-Monday. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited.

How to Participate

1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count – Friday to Mon-

day, February 12-15. You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day. You can also submit more than one checklist per day if you count in other locations on that day.

2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time. You may find it helpful to print out your regional bird checklist (<http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/checklist>) to get an idea of the kinds of birds you're likely to see in your area in February. You could take note of the highest number of each species you see on this checklist.

3. When you're finished, enter your results through the web page (<http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/input>). You'll see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists!" on the website home page beginning on the first day of the count. It will remain active until the deadline for data submission on **March 1st**.

PTAS's Christmas Bird Count Featured in National News

This year the Christmas Bird Count run by PTAS at the Heard Museum was featured in a Reuter news article. The article was published on numerous national news websites. For an example see <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE5BS26D20091229>. Titled "Citizen Scientists Flock to Annual Bird Count", the article quoted a number of participants including our ex-President Gailon Brehm and current Education Chairman Rodney Thomas. The article noted the importance of the data collected to numerous scientific publications which link changes in bird ranges to habitat and climate changes.

2009 Christmas Bird Count Results

This year 30 birders participated in our annual Christmas Bird Count held on Dec 26. They counted a total of 12373 total birds with a total species count of 113. Participants traveled 348 miles by car and 23.85 miles on foot as they scoured the land around the Heard Museum for a radius of 7.5 miles. See their tally on the next page.

Christmas Bird Count Tally

SNOW GOOSE	2	EASTERN PHOEBE	30
CANADA GOOSE	135	LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE	4
WOOD DUCK	3	BLUE JAY	87
GADWALL	170	AMERICAN CROW	386
AMERICAN WIGEON	65	CAROLINA CHICKADEE	134
MALLARD	175	TUFTED TITMOUSE	62
NORTHERN SHOVELER	33	WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	3
GREEN-WINGED TEAL	6	BROWN CREEPER	6
CANVASBACK	42	CAROLINA WREN	50
REDHEAD	9	BEWICK'S WREN	2
RING-NECKED DUCK	88	HOUSE WREN	3
LESSER SCAUP	95	GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET	15
BUFFLEHEAD	14	RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET	84
HOODED MERGANSER	2	EASTERN BLUEBIRD	202
RUDDY DUCK	37	HERMIT THRUSH	7
*DUCK SPECIES	6	AMERICAN ROBIN	462
PIED-BILLED GREBE	25	GRAY CATBIRD	1
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT	340	NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD	161
GREAT BLUE HERON	24	BROWN THRASHER	14
GREAT EGRET	2	EUROPEAN STARLING	820
BLACK VULTURE	34	AMERICAN PIPIT	180
TURKEY VULTURE	76	CEDAR WAXWING	1304
NORTHERN HARRIER	3	ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER	8
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	3	YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE)	318
COOPER'S HAWK	6	WINTER WREN	4
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	9	SPOTTED TOWHEE	2
RED-TAILED HAWK	60	EASTERN TOWHEE	5
*BUTEO SPECIES	2	TOWHEE SPECIES	2
AMERICAN KESTREL	41	CHIPPING SPARROW	41
SORA	1	VESPER SPARROW	10
AMERICAN COOT	204	FIELD SPARROW	51
KILLDEER	123	LARK SPARROW	6
GREATER YELLOWLEGS	1	SAVANNAH SPARROW	79
LEAST SANDPIPER	7	LeCONTE'S SPARROW	1
WILSON'S SNIPE (COMMON)	26	FOX SPARROW	39
BONAPARTE'S GULL	61	SONG SPARROW	102
RING-BILLED GULL	798	LINCOLN'S SPARROW	8
*GULL SPECIES	31	SWAMP SPARROW	3
FORSTER'S TERN	3	WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	135
ROCK PIGEON (ROCK DOVE)	128	HARRIS'S SPARROW	240
EURASIAN COLLARD DOVE	12	WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW	132
WHITE-WINGED DOVE	98	DARK-EYED JUNCO (SLATE-COLORED)	278
MOURNING DOVE	243	JUNCO SPECIES	15
GREATER ROADRUNNER	4	*SPARROW SPECIES	17
EASTERN SCREECH-OWL	3	LAPLAND LONGSPUR	34
GREAT HORNED OWL	3	NORTHERN CARDINAL	244
BARRED OWL	5	RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	903
BELTED KINGFISHER	9	EASTERN MEADOWLARK	342
RED-HEADED WOODPECKER	6	*MEADOWLARK SPECIES	42
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER	69	RUSTY BLACKBIRD	3
YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER	33	COMMON GRACKLE	23
DOWNY WOODPECKER	43	GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE	950
HAIRY WOODPECKER	1	BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	402
NORTHERN FLICKER (Y-SH)	63	*BLACKBIRD SPECIES	53
NORTHERN FLICKER (R-SH)	3	PURPLE FINCH	13
		HOUSE FINCH	124
		AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	121
		HOUSE SPARROW	121

Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip

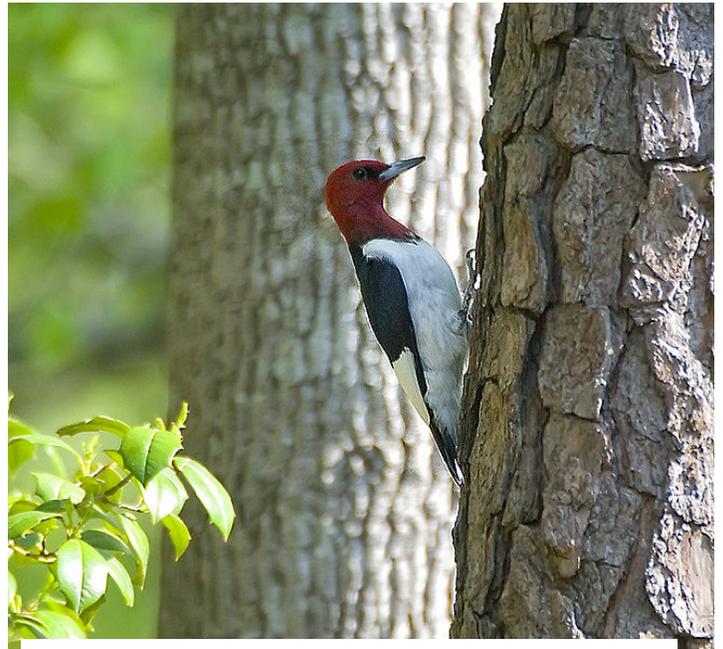
This year's field trip to Hagerman came up short, by two, on the number of species seen compared to last year's trip, but we more than doubled the number of people who attended the outing, so we consider it a great success!

Twenty-two PTAS members and guests enjoyed another perfect Texas Winter birding day; we had ten participants on the trip in 2008. The trip was led by Carolyn Oldham and Jerri Kerr. We had warmer than normal weather and again, almost no wind! Most of us enjoyed a picnic lunch, where we were entertained by several vocal Northern Flickers chasing each other about. The only downside was seeing the devastating affect this year's Fall rain-caused flooding has had on the refuge. Much of the floodplain undergrowth we drove past has been scoured bare. L-Pad, which is usually bustling with sparrow activity, was completely devoid of low vegetation and the birds were not there.

Our total species count for the day was 75, with ten species of sparrows, six species of woodpeckers (including heard-only Pileated!), seven species of raptors (including a fierce-looking Merlin!), and eight species of ducks. The numbers of birds seen seemed low, possibly due to loss of brush-habitat for sparrows and too-high water levels for some ducks. One species we did see in great numbers was Northern Pintail ducks. There were many Snow and Ross's Geese, several Greater White-fronted, and some lucky folks saw a small group of Cackling Geese.



Ross's Goose



Red-headed Woodpecker

The Merlin was seen by the lead car only (sorry about that, folks!), and in studying photos/drawings, I believe it was a female or juvenile, as it had an overall brown look to it, especially a brownish back. We could see it had a thin whitish eyebrow (supercilium) and a dark malar.

The high-light of the day for me were the two lovely Red-headed Woodpeckers that perched practically above our heads, looking down at the many happy humans staring up at them!

Jerri Kerr



Double-crested Cormorants in mist on Lake Tawakoni. Photo by Tom Heath on January Field Trip

October's 2nd-Saturday Walk

18 participants enjoy the walk in 51 °F overcast weather. We encountered high water in the wetlands, running over the trail in places. The Baltimore Oriole was a nice find. Several Vees of southward flying Canada Geese and lots of Scissortails.

Number of species:	43
Canada Goose - <i>Branta canadensis</i>	40
Wood Duck - <i>Aix sponsa</i>	6
Mallard - <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	5
Double-crested Cormorant - <i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	2
Great Blue Heron - <i>Ardea herodias</i>	2
Great Egret - <i>Ardea alba</i>	1
Turkey Vulture - <i>Cathartes aura</i>	2
Cooper's Hawk - <i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	1
Red-shouldered Hawk - <i>Buteo lineatus</i>	1
Rock Pigeon - <i>Columba livia</i>	12
Mourning Dove - <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	10
Chimney Swift - <i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	2
Belted Kingfisher - <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	1
Red-headed Woodpecker - <i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker - <i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>	5
Downy Woodpecker - <i>Picoides pubescens</i>	2
Northern Flicker - <i>Colaptes auratus</i>	2
Pileated Woodpecker - <i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	1
Eastern Phoebe - <i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	3
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher - <i>Tyrannus forficatus</i>	30
Blue Jay - <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	3
American Crow - <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	5
Northern Rough-winged Swallow - <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	15
Barn Swallow - <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	50
Carolina Chickadee - <i>Poecile carolinensis</i>	5
Tufted Titmouse - <i>Baeolophus bicolor</i>	3
Carolina Wren - <i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i>	2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet - <i>Regulus calendula</i>	2
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - <i>Poliophtila caerulea</i>	1
Eastern Bluebird - <i>Sialia sialis</i>	15
American Robin - <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	5
Gray Catbird - <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	1
Northern Mockingbird - <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	5
Brown Thrasher - <i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	1
European Starling - <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	30
Orange-crowned Warbler - <i>Vermivora celata</i>	2
Nashville Warbler - <i>Vermivora ruficapilla</i>	1
Northern Cardinal - <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	3
Indigo Bunting - <i>Passerina cyanea</i>	1
Great-tailed Grackle - <i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	20
Brown-headed Cowbird - <i>Molothrus ater</i>	10
Baltimore Oriole - <i>Icterus galbula</i>	1
House Finch - <i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	10

November's 2nd-Saturday Walk

Eighteen of us enjoyed a nice day with nearly clear sky and temperatures in the 60s. Highlights were Cedar Waxwings, Fox Sparrows, and a Golden-crowned Kinglet. Also seen were Bobcat, Eastern Fox Squirrel, and Red-eared Pond Slider turtles.

Number of species:	46
Canada Goose - <i>Branta canadensis</i>	6
Wood Duck - <i>Aix sponsa</i>	5
Gadwall - <i>Anas strepera</i>	10
Mallard - <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	2
Pied-billed Grebe - <i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	2
Double-crested Cormorant - <i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	140
Great Blue Heron - <i>Ardea herodias</i>	3
Turkey Vulture - <i>Cathartes aura</i>	3
Sharp-shinned Hawk - <i>Accipiter striatus</i>	1
Red-shouldered Hawk - <i>Buteo lineatus</i>	1
Red-tailed Hawk - <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	3
Rock Pigeon - <i>Columba livia</i>	1
Mourning Dove - <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	8
Barred Owl - <i>Strix varia</i>	1
Belted Kingfisher - <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	1
Red-headed Woodpecker - <i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker - <i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>	3
Downy Woodpecker - <i>Picoides pubescens</i>	1
Northern Flicker - <i>Colaptes auratus</i>	3
Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted) - <i>Colaptes auratus</i> [auratus Group]	1
Northern Flicker (Red-shafted) - <i>Colaptes auratus</i> [cafer Group]	1
Eastern Phoebe - <i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	1
Blue Jay - <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	2
American Crow - <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	3
Carolina Chickadee - <i>Poecile carolinensis</i>	4
Tufted Titmouse - <i>Baeolophus bicolor</i>	1
Carolina Wren - <i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i>	3
Winter Wren - <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet - <i>Regulus satrapa</i>	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet - <i>Regulus calendula</i>	3
Eastern Bluebird - <i>Sialia sialis</i>	10
American Robin - <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	5
Northern Mockingbird - <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	3
European Starling - <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	2
Cedar Waxwing - <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	20
Yellow-rumped Warbler - <i>Dendroica coronata</i>	10
Field Sparrow - <i>Spizella pusilla</i>	2
Savannah Sparrow - <i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	5
Fox Sparrow - <i>Passerella iliaca</i>	4
Song Sparrow - <i>Melospiza melodia</i>	3
White-throated Sparrow - <i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	6
Dark-eyed Junco - <i>Junco hyemalis</i>	6
Northern Cardinal - <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	5
Red-winged Blackbird - <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	200
House Finch - <i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	5
American Goldfinch - <i>Carduelis tristis</i>	5

December 2nd-Saturday Walk

We had a good walk in 40° F overcast weather. The group included 11 attendees including 4 children. Sonny Bratz from Victoria joined us as he was in the DFW area. Thanks for joining us, Sonny, and for posting your sightings on Texbirds. It was a good day for sparrows -- 10 species including both towhees. Beautiful fox sparrows were unusually cooperative giving good looks.

Number of species:	48
Wood Duck - Aix sponsa	4
Gadwall - Anas strepera	10
Mallard - Anas platyrhynchos	12
Northern Shoveler - Anas clypeata	8
Redhead - Aythya americana	20
Pied-billed Grebe - Podilymbus podiceps	1
Double-crested Cormorant - Phalacrocorax auritus	30
Great Blue Heron - Ardea herodias	5
Turkey Vulture - Cathartes aura	1
Red-shouldered Hawk - Buteo lineatus	1
Red-tailed Hawk - Buteo jamaicensis	1
American Coot - Fulica americana	5
Ring-billed Gull - Larus delawarensis	10
Rock Pigeon - Columba livia	30
Mourning Dove - Zenaida macroura	5
Red-headed Woodpecker - Melanerpes erythrocephalus	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker - Melanerpes carolinus	3
Downy Woodpecker - Picoides pubescens	2
Northern Flicker - Colaptes auratus	4
Eastern Phoebe - Sayornis phoebe	3
Blue Jay - Cyanocitta cristata	4
American Crow - Corvus brachyrhynchos	5
Carolina Chickadee - Poecile carolinensis	8
Tufted Titmouse - Baeolophus bicolor	4
Carolina Wren - Thryothorus ludovicianus	3
Winter Wren - Troglodytes troglodytes	2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet - Regulus calendula	5
Eastern Bluebird - Sialia sialis	5
Hermit Thrush - Catharus guttatus	1
American Robin - Turdus migratorius	20
Northern Mockingbird - Mimus polyglottos	4
Brown Thrasher - Toxostoma rufum	1
Cedar Waxwing - Bombycilla cedrorum	30
Yellow-rumped Warbler - Dendroica coronata	20
Spotted Towhee - Pipilo maculatus	1
Eastern Towhee - Pipilo erythrophthalmus	1
Field Sparrow - Spizella pusilla	10
Fox Sparrow - Passerella iliaca	10
Song Sparrow - Melospiza melodia	5
Swamp Sparrow - Melospiza georgiana	3
White-throated Sparrow - Zonotrichia albicollis	10
Harris's Sparrow - Zonotrichia querula	6
White-crowned Sparrow - Zonotrichia leucophrys	6
Dark-eyed Junco - Junco hyemalis	5
Northern Cardinal - Cardinalis cardinalis	10
Red-winged Blackbird - Agelaius phoeniceus	10
House Finch - Carpodacus mexicanus	10
American Goldfinch - Carduelis tristis	5

Nominations For Board

The February 23 chapter meeting is the time to elect PTAS officers and board members. This year the following positions are up for election: Treasurer and three Board Members. In addition, the office of president was vacant as of the February 2009 election.

Mike Mizell has decided that he will step down as treasurer after 16 years of dedicated service. Jerri Kerr and Bobette Mauck after serving ably have also declined nomination for new terms as board members. Roger Sanderson is willing to serve another term if elected.

Therefore nominations are being sought for the office of President, office of Treasurer, and three Board Members. The nomination period is now under way and will close just prior to the election at the February 23, 2010 Chapter Meeting which will be held at 7:00 PM at the Heard Museum.

You may nominate as many members for a position as you believe are suitable. You may nominate someone for more than one position. It is not necessary to submit a nomination for all positions. *You should nominate yourself if you'd like your name included on the ballot.*

The nomination committee will contact all nominees. Everyone who accepts a nomination will be placed on the ballot.

If you would like to serve on the board or as an officer, please talk with one of the current officers. Or you may also submit your request or nominate another person by e-mail to David Griffith [tdavidg@verizon.net].

The current PTAS officers and board members are:

Terms expire February 2010:

Treasurer	Mike Mizell
Board Member	Jerri Kerr
Board Member	Bobette Mauck
Board Member	Roger Sanderson

Other Current Officers and Board Members:

President	vacant
Vice-President	Merrick Darley
Secretary	David Griffith
Board Member	Karen Carbeiner
Board Member	Carolyn Oldham
Board Member	Tom Heath
Board Member	Rodney Thomas

PTAS Goes To TOS

Yes, that's a lot of initials! What does it mean? You know who PTAS is. And from their website, <http://www.texasbirds.org/>: "*The Texas Ornithological Society* (TOS) was founded in 1953 as a nonprofit organization. The purpose of the Society is to promote the discovery and dissemination of knowledge of birds; to encourage specifically the observation, study and conservation of birds in Texas; to encourage the formation of local birding clubs; and to stimulate cooperation among professional ornithologists."

I have been a member of TOS for many years, and act as a "TOS representative", having volunteered to encourage fellow Audubon members to join and support this other very worthwhile organization. At our PTAS meetings, I always have TOS brochures on the registration table.



Paula and Gailon Brehm, Jerri Kerr, Carolyn Oldham and Terry Ferguson at Estero Llano Grande State Park in Weslaco.

First, be assured that although many TOS members are ornithologists, biologists and scientists, most of us are folks who simply enjoy watching and studying birds, and who like sharing information, sightings, field trips and meetings. Exactly the same things we enjoy as PTAS and Audubon members, but TOS focuses only on Texas birds and conserving Texas bird habitat. The Society owns and manages several well-known bird sanctuaries, including Sabine Woods, which every warbler-lover must eventually visit! It publishes an annual magazine, *Texas Birds*, and several bulletins and seasonal reports.

TOS usually conducts two meetings each year, working with local birding/nature clubs to host field trips, programs and workshops. A meeting was held over January 15-17 in Weslaco, and PTAS was well repre-



Green Jay (photo by Terry Ferguson)

sented, with eight current and former members (and two spouses) attending: Paula and Gailon Brehm, Betty and Ray Parker, Ron Baltzegar, Georgette and Bill Guernsey, Carolyn Oldham, Terry Ferguson and myself. The hosts of the meeting graciously reserved a table for PTAS at the main banquet, and we traded field trip highlights during our meal.

The Rio Grande Valley, with its many birding locations, is famous worldwide, and Weslaco is centrally located there. There were many field trips to choose from each day, led by some of the best birders in the state. Destinations included the beach, national wildlife refuges, private ranches, and state, county and city parks. Several sites are part of the recently completed string of World Birding Centers.

PTAS members chose to attend eight different field trips among us, and we saw colorful birds like Green Jay, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Parula, and three species of orioles: Altamira, Hooded and Audubon's. Some of us also saw harder-to-find species like Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and Rose-throated Becard.

Registration is done in advance and all you have to do is show up on time! Even if you go alone, you can always catch a ride with someone for the field trips. With all details worked out for you, it couldn't be easier to go visit a new part of Texas, see new birds, or enjoy seeing those that inhabit only certain parts of the state.

At each TOS meeting I've attended, I've made new birding friends. It was great fun this time to meet up with friends from Prairie and Timbers. The next TOS meeting is scheduled for April 15-18, in Rockport. This is, of course, during Spring Migration, and it should be very interesting to see how many neotropical migrants pass through this area.

By Jerri Kerr

Suet Feeder Design

I have received a number of inquiries about suet feeders and what are good recipes for suet. I run a suet feeding station year round.

First the suet feeder. Over the years, I have refined my suet feeders from what is normally offered for sale to better meet my needs with the area birds. The feeder is simple. I go out to the firewood pile and pick a piece about 3 - 3.5 inches in diameter and about 1.5 - 2 feet long. On a drill press, I use a 1.5 - 2 inch Forstner's bit to drill 6-8 holes. (You can use a hand drill. It is not an exact science!) Each hole is about an inch deep. (not quite half way through the log) I put the first two holes opposite each other and then move up several inches and rotate the log 90 degrees and do the next two holes. I continue this process until I have moved the length of the log.

I usually drill holes below the bottom 4 holes and insert and glue a 1/4 inch dowel rod to act as a perch. Most commercial feeders do not do this. The reason is that the perches allow for starlings, House Sparrows, and other birds you might not want to come and clean out all the suet. That is a nuisance I put up with to get as many birds as possible to use the feeder. And actually it has not been a problem. The perches allow Kinglets, Chickadees, Orange-crowned Warblers, Pine Warblers, Wilson Warblers, and many other small birds to feed all winter where they might not have been able to without the perches. I do not put perches on the upper half of the holes. Woodpeckers do not like the perches and do not use them. By leaving some holes open, the woodpeckers come in and can feed while the smaller birds are coming in below them where the perches are. Add a top to prevent water from being absorbed and rotting the log. You could probably spray the very top with polyurethane and do the same thing.

As to the suet...you can take the easy way or the more difficult way. In the past, suet blocks were not sold in our part of the county simply because they melted in the heat. Most meat markets just threw away the fat trimmed from the meat they sell. I could get 3-5 pounds of this free fat just about anytime we were in the grocery. All of this was put into a deep pan and rendered. Rendering is just cooking it until it had all melted. The melted fat was then put into cans like the old fruit cake cans. It was at this point that a decision had to be made. Some would be just left as pure fat (pure suet) and allowed to cool. Then you could cut out blocks to put into the feeders. This process fits right up there with cooking liver and onions--the odor will hang around a few days! Be sure you supervise the whole process. Hot fat is very dangerous! **NEVER leave a child alone with suet being rendered**

The other option was to add yellow corn meal to the hot fat before it cooled. (It needs to cool to a thick slush; otherwise, the corn meal just sinks to the bottom.) This did several things. It extended the amount of suet available, it slowed the melting once in the feeder, it allowed

"cakes" to be more easily molded later, and it added a few more nutrients to the bird's diet. Millet seeds can be added for the same reasons, but I prefer corn meal if I am making suet.

Quite honestly, I no longer make suet. Over the last decade, it is much easier to just go to any bird feed supply store or even grocery stores and buy the suet blocks. Where the price used to be as much as \$2.00 per block, you can now find it from 60 cents - 99 cents per block. Considering all the time and energy used to make suet the old way, you can buy it less expensively than you can make it.

Just remember that most packaging is made to entice your human reactions to food. You get names like "berry melody" or "happy trail mix" suet. Underneath it all, suet is suet. Find the one that has the minimum volume of filler and the most suet. Think about it. If the bird wants seed, it can go to your seed feeder. Take the block of suet and cut it in the plastic container like you were cutting fudge. Take a piece out, and using your thumb push the pieces into the holes you drilled. I use a lot of suet and buy boxes of 10 or 12 blocks for even more discount. I just stick it in the freezer until I need it.

During the winter, you do not have to get what is labeled as "all weather" suet because suet is not going to melt in winter temperatures. If you run suet feeders year round as I do, you must switch to "all weather" or "year round" suet in the warm months which can stand up to the heat without melting. Otherwise, it will all melt away before noon. This prevented homemade suet from being used in the summer months.

A nutritious homemade suet can be made by mixing peanut butter with suet and cornmeal. There is no magic recipe. Just make it with about a quarter of peanut butter by volume and add cornmeal to extend the volume. If you use peanut butter, do not just spread it from the jar. First, mix in yellow corn meal to thicken the peanut butter. This prevents the bird from getting peanut butter in its beak and possibly clogging its windpipe. Remember they do not have tongues like ours to lick it from the roof of the mouth! The cornmeal will extend the volume and cut down on some of the cost for large quantities. My recommendation, if you want to use peanut butter, is to use the peanut butter/cornmeal mixture and force it into the spaces of a pine cone and let your child have their own feeder or just spoon it into a couple of the holes in the log.

Enjoy! — Ray L. Chancellor



Famed Hog Island Reopens

The National Audubon Society will reopen its legendary Hog Island for four adult ornithology sessions and one teen bird studies session during the summer of 2010. Dr. Steve Kress, Audubon's VP for Bird Conservation will direct the sessions. He will be joined by some of the country's top ornithologists who will serve as instructors, including - Kenn Kaufman, Pete Dunne, and Scott Weidensaul. Additionally, said Dr. Kress, there will be two totally new sessions offered in association with Elder Hostel (now Exploritas) where participants will assist Project Puffin biologists to census gulls, eiders and cormorants at several nearby seabird nesting islands. Participants in the September session will learn about land and seabirds through bird banding and presentations and assist with a habitat management project for endangered terns and storm-petrels at Eastern Egg Rock.

Known to thousands as the Audubon Camp in Maine, Hog Island was closed during the summer of 2009 to permit planning for the future. This process led to Project Puffin bringing back the popular ornithology programs for adults and teens. The adult programs are for both beginning and avid birders who would like to learn more about Maine birdlife and the biology of birds. The teen session is for 14-17 year olds with a keen interest in birds. This session is co-sponsored by the American Birding Association. Due to its varied habitats, Hog Island and vicinity are an ideal setting for the program, as more than 100 species frequent the area.

Participants live in authentic, turn of the century housing on the 330 acre spruce-covered island. Here, they

will enjoy three home-cooked meals a day in a historic island farmhouse that overlooks Muscongus Bay. During the five-day sessions, small field groups will go on a variety of trips and boat cruises, and attend workshops and presentations on topics ranging from migration and the identification of warblers to the restoration of Atlantic Puffins and terns on nearby Eastern Egg Rock.

The Hog Island camp first opened in 1936, with Roger Tory Peterson as its first bird instructor. It is well known in America's environmental community as a distinguished and beautiful place of learning and enjoyment. For more information on dates, sessions, costs, instructors, etc. visit www.projectpuffin.org To read testimonials and see photos from previous Hog Island programs, visit www.naturecompass.org/fohi.



Photo by Steve Kress



Earth Share
OF TEXAS

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 or call 1-800-GREENTX

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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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.

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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