



Rustlin's

Newsletter of Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society

September 2010

A New Season For Friends And Birds

Whether you've have a casual interest in birds or are an obsessed birder, there is always another opportunity for you with Prairie and Timbers Audubon (PTAS). This year participate with us in our activities to reach out to birds, nature and our environment. In the process you will expand your friends and knowledge. Together, we will contribute to healthy environment and spread an appreciation of the natural world. Whether you have been around birding your entire life or this is your first peek into it, PTAS has something for you. Come to one of our programs or field trips and experience birding and nature.

Organized in 1980, Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society serves Collin and surrounding counties with a wide range of nature-oriented activities, programs and field trips. We also promote a healthy habitat for north Texas birds and wildlife. It is only by protecting nature and its gifts – a stable climate, fresh water, healthy oceans and reliable food – that we can ensure a better life for everyone, everywhere.

This newsletter is to inform you of the opportunities to participate. Please look it over to see if there is anything of interest to you. The articles in this newsletter will describe our plans for the Fall/Winter/Spring of 2010/11. 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. 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 do not charge to participate and all activities are open to the public. Entrance fees to certain parks and museums may apply.

PTAS SUPERBOWL IN SEPTEMBER



Falcons vs Hawks

In the first program of the new season, Erich Neupert of The Blackland Prairie Raptor Center (BPRC) will showcase live hawks and falcons as the main characters of our program. We'll learn their contrasting characteristics and adaptations. Bring your camera for this chance to see these beautiful birds up close and personal. Last year we learned about owls from Erich and it was one of the most exciting and popular programs of the year. PTAS sponsors two raptors at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center, Miki, a Mississippi Kite and Hunter, a Great Horned Owl. Last year we helped fund and build their new education mews at Brockdale Park on Lake Lavon.

BPRC is currently developing a permanent raptor center facility for both education and rehabilitation at Brockdale Park in Lucas. This is an excellent chance for us to learn about their activities and where we can help them in the future.

BPRC is dedicated to environmental preservation through public education and the conservation of birds of prey and wildlife in their natural habitat. BPRC's education birds of prey are the highlight of their outreach programming. Their purpose is to inspire audiences to think about and actively participate in helping preserve raptors and the environment for generations to come.

Fall PTAS Programs

Carolyn has lined up a great set of fall programs for us. Erich Neupert and his live raptors come in September (see front page article) followed in October by Lynn Barber our favorite totally obsessed birder and current President of Texas Ornithological Society (TOS). She will present "Everything You Want To Know About TOS" and will inform us about TOS sanctuaries, activities and publications. She will show us pictures of some of the special birds found at the TOS sanctuaries. The society is a very active group that promotes saving our native habitat and preserving areas where both migratory and native birds can thrive. This is a great organization dedicated to protecting and preserving habitat in Texas. TOS is a great way for Texas birders to help Texas birds.

In November, Ross Anderson and Tina Newman, graduate students from Southeastern Oklahoma State University, will present their latest research on tree swallows and prothonotary warblers. They presented preliminary results separately last year on nesting research on these two species during two of our meetings. This year we are bringing them back for the main program as an excellent chance to learn the detail habits of two local bird species. PTAS has sponsored Ross and Tina's research by providing funds for travel expenses. This our chance to learn how we our contributing to research as well as the education of future wildlife professionals.

Our spring programs are still in the planning stage however in April we already have a commitment from Dr. Bruce Beehler to come. He is an authority on New Guinea birds, having authored or co-authored several major works on the avifauna of this island, including *Birds of Paradise* (1998), *The Birds of New Guinea* (1986) and the two-volume *The Birds of Papua New Guinea* (1985).

To the general public, Beehler is best known for having co-lead a widely published survey on biological diversity in 2005 in the Foja Mountains, Papua. He did the survey with an international team of 11 scientists. Beehler and colleagues, however, returned with the first ever photographs of two species of birds, the Berlepsch's Parotia (*Parotia berlepschi*) and the Golden-fronted Bowerbird (*Amblyornis flavifrons*), that previously were known only from a few specimens. Additionally, a previously unknown species of honeyeater was discovered, it being scientifically described in 2007 as the Wattled Smoky Honeyeater (*Melipotes carolae*).

Program Schedule

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. Meetings start at 7:00pm, there is a bird identification class downstairs for those who wish from 7:15 to 7:40. A short general business is held from 7:45 to 8:00. The main programs starts at 8:00.

Programs scheduled this fall are:

Tuesday, Sept 28: – 7:00pm

Bird Identification class: Raptors – Hawks, Owls, Falcons, and Kites

Main Program: "Hawks vs. Falcons" - Erich Neupert of Blackland Prairie Raptor Center

Tuesday, Oct 26 – 7:00pm

Bird Identification class: Waders – Egrets, Herons, etc

Main Program: "Everything You Want to Know About TOS But Were Afraid To Ask" Lynn Barber, President of Texas Ornithological Society

Tuesday, Nov 23 – 7:00pm

Bird Identification class: Sparrows

Main Program: "Nesting Studies of Prothonotary Warblers" Tina Newman and "Nesting Studies of Tree Swallows" Ross Anderson, Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

Wildlife Emergency Information

If you come across orphaned or injured wildlife, here are some resources you can turn to:

DFW Wildlife Hotline
972-234-WILD (972-234-9453)
<http://dfwwildlife.org>

Rogers Wildlife
972-225-4000
<http://www.rogerswildlife.org>

Wildcare
817-237-8500

Wildlife Rehabilitators by County
<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/list/>

2010 Fall 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 schedule at least one field trip each month Sept through May.

RSVP the week of the trip by contacting Karen Carbiener 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 2010:

Sat, Sept 11 - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum 9:00 am
Leader: Gailon Brehm
Length: 1.5-2 Hours
Meeting Place: Heard Museum
Notes: Register in advance at 972-562-5566

Sat, Sept 11 - Lake Lewisville Area Learning Center 7:00 am
Leader: Keith Lockhart
Length: 2-3 hours
Meeting Place: Lake Lewisville Area Learning Center
Notes: \$7 entry fee to LLELA.

Sat, Oct 9 - - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum 9:00 am
Leader: Gailon Brehm
Length: 1.5-2 Hours
Meeting Place: Heard Museum
Notes: Register in advance at 972-562-5566

Sat, Oct 23 - Southlake Cove Ecosystem 8:30 am
Leader: Ray Chancellor
Length: 2.5 hours
Meeting Place: Trail at end of White Chapel, Southlake
Notes: RSVP Karen Carbiener 972-824-2878 or karen.carbiener@prairieandtimbers.org

Sat, Nov 6 - Tyler State Park 8:00 am
Leader: Boyd Sanders
Length:
Meeting Place:
Notes: RSVP Karen Carbiener 972-824-2878 or karen.carbiener@prairieandtimbers.org

Sat, Nov 13 - - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum 9:00 am
Leader: Gailon Brehm
Length: 1.5-2 Hours
Meeting Place: Heard Museum
Notes: Register in advance at 972-562-5566

Sat, Dec 11 - 2nd Sat. at the Heard Museum 9:00 am
Leader: Gailon Brehm
Length: 1.5-2 Hours
Meeting Place: Heard Museum
Notes: Register in advance at 972-562-5566

Birdzilla.com

Over 4000 pages of information.
10,000 images of wild birds

LEARN BIRDS FROM THE EXPERTS

Monthly Bird Identification Class

At the beginning of each monthly meeting, Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society is offering an outstanding opportunity to learn bird ID techniques. Birders of all levels of experience and knowledge will find it easy and enjoyable to sharpen bird identification skills in this informal class format, combining discussion, viewing of bird specimens and bird sound recordings. The birds to be discussed are those commonly seen in season within Collin County. Gailon Brehm and Rodney Thomas, experienced birders, will be teaching. The class focuses on structure -- size, shape, and overall appearance -- prior to observations of detailed plumage patterns and colors. In addition a brief discussion of field guides will be given, showing examples of both print and electronic guides. All attendees are encouraged to bring their own favorite field guide as a reference. For the balance of 2010 we will teach the following: September – Waders – Egrets, Herons, etc, October – Raptors – Hawks, Owls, Flacons, Kites, and November -- Winter Sparrows. And stay tuned for a possible insect id session in 2011 with a guest teacher!

Second Saturday Bird Walks

Heard Museum 9:00 – 11:30 am

These monthly field trips target beginners and intermediate birders who are looking for birding tips and guidance. However, they also provide an opportunity for birders of all levels to see the birds of the Heard Sanctuary throughout the season. Gailon Brehm and Rodney Thomas will co-lead these trips with occasional guest leaders. The route will traverse varied habitats including areas not open to the general public. Birding techniques will be explained on the go and all questions are welcome. Past trips have attracted a mix of people new to birding at the Heard and sometimes new to birding entirely mixed with “old-timers”. Typically 40 - 60 species of birds are tallied. All observations are logged into the Cornell eBird database for use by researchers worldwide. Attendees should dress appropriately for the weather with close-toed shoes and long pants and should bring binoculars and a favorite field guide.

These PTAS-guided bird walks are co-operatively sponsored by the Heard Museum and Wildlife 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 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 Connemara Meadow Preserve at the Allen/Plano border. The Connemara Meadow Preserve is 72 acres of north Texas prairie containing native grasses and wildflowers maintained by the Connemara Conservancy, 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

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>.

SEE YOUR

ADVERTISEMENT HERE!

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

Conservation Circle of Friends

The active members of PTAS participate because we enjoy being in and learning about nature. However the very nature of our activities have benefits that help keep the world healthy if we take the time to report what we see. 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. Keeping track of the bird population and changes in it are a critical monitor of the health of our ecosystem. This is one of the reasons that we report via eBird to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and other researchers the results of our field trips and participate in the Christmas Bird Count and Backyard Bird Count. We have fun and the world benefits.

We also actively evaluate, fund and participate in other local community organizations that promote a healthy earth. In the past year we

- 1) evaluated, funded and monitored prairie habitat restoration and native garden development at Heard Museum.
- 2) evaluated, funded and monitored prairie restoration at the Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge
- 3) sponsored two raptors used for educational programs at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Centers and provided labor for building of new mews.
- 4) provided funds for training of a member of the Heard bird banding team.
- 5) partially funded a bird blind in Corp. of Engineer Park located next to Lake Lavon
- 6) help developed wildlife professionals by the monitoring of two SEOSU student's field work and granted funds for travel expenses.

Many members also enjoy providing directly for habitat improvement. We have participated directly in prairie restoration and planting native gardens. You can read about these activities in our newsletter including this one. These conservation activities are intertwined in the enjoyment of being a birder. If you would like to participate in these activities please attend any of our activities including our board meetings. For more information contact Merrick Darley at hmdarley@gmail.com

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 one for 2010) 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 hmdarley@prairieandtimbers.org.

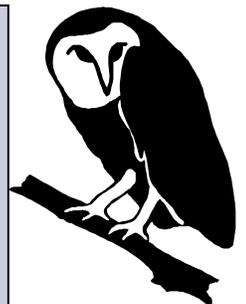
If you want to be reminded of field trips that is a separate email list to minimize email to our members not interested in field trips. Send your request to be included to Tom Heath at heathwtom@netscape.net.

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 other options.

Membership

If you are a member of the National Audubon Society and live in Collin County or nearby, you have been automatically enrolled in our membership. Also, you can join as a local member. Annual local dues are \$12. Our website and email are primary means of communications. In addition, mailings are done a couple of times year, this newsletter being one of them.

PTAS WEBSITE
**[http://
prairieandtimbers.org](http://prairieandtimbers.org)**



eBirds of the Heard

With the eBird database maintained by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology it has become easy for casual birders like me to track birds in their chosen locations. In my case the Heard Museum is a convenient place to bird and has a variety of habitats to attract a wide range of species. Further because of dedicated expert birders many of them PTAS members, the Heard is well represented in the eBird database.

I can use the database to increase my efficiency of birding by reducing the possible number of species to sort through for identification. The basic assumption is that any bird I see will have been seen at the Heard before and reported in the database by some other birder. While highly probable, there is the rare possibility the bird I see will be an unreported bird, but in that case the chances of me identifying while really exciting is remote. In any case I would want to rule out all birds seen before at the Heard before getting excited. Of course reducing the list to a checklist of known birds for a given location has been done the old fashion way by creating a pamphlet checklist. Indeed PTAS created such a checklist for the Heard and it is on sale at the museum gift shop. However with eBird one can create a checklist for a specific time of the year significantly reducing the length of the list. After all no need to sort through all those winter and migratory birds during the middle of summer.

Having the concept of a time specific checklist, then suggested I could use these checklists to know when to visit the Heard to have a good chance of spotting a

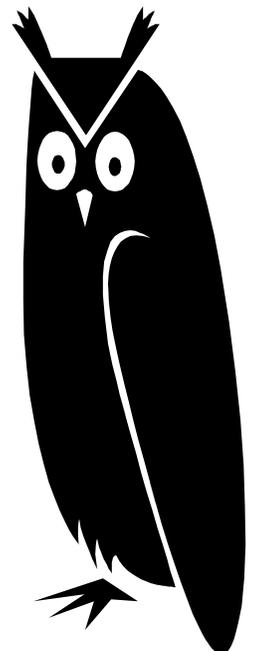
Yellow Warbler	Last 2 weeks of Aug, First 3 weeks of Sept
Black-and-white Warbler	Last 2 weeks of Aug, Sept
Mourning Warbler	Last 2 weeks of Aug, Sept
Wilson's Warbler	Last 2 weeks of Aug, Sept
Yellow Breasted Chat	Last 2 weeks of Aug, Sept
Least Flycatcher	Last 2 weeks of Aug, Sept, First week of Oct
Warbling Vireo	Last 2 weeks of Aug, Sept, First 2 weeks of Oct
Alder Flycatcher	Last Week of Aug, Sept
Baltimore Oriole	Last Week of Aug, Sept
Nashville Warbler	Sept, Oct
Gray Catbird	Last 3 weeks Sept, First 2 weeks of Oct
Blue-headed Vireo	Last 3 weeks Sept, Oct, First 2 weeks of Nov
Common Yellowthroat	Last 2 weeks of Sept, first 3 weeks of Oct
House Wren	Last 2 weeks of Sept, Oct, Nov
Sedge Wren	Oct, Nov, First 2 weeks of Dec
Franklin's Gull	Last 2 weeks of Oct, First 2 weeks of Nov

bird I want to add to my life list or year list. I thought I could study the eBird database and come up with list of migratory bird species for this fall which would show when they arrive and depart. For instance studying the database you can conclude that if you want to see a Yellow Breasted Chat at the Heard in the Fall you need to be looking in the last two weeks of Aug or Sept.

Once you get into birding you learn that for a given region there are year around birds (always in the region), summer birds (in the region during the summer), winter birds (in the region during the winter), and migratory birds (past through the region during migration). Of course one quickly finds out there are bird species which are not that simple for instance they might have a sub-population in a region that are year around and a sub-population that migrates through.

Working with the database I learned that the sighting of some species can vary within the local region. For instance the pied-billed grebe is considered a year around species locally but do not look for them at the Heard during the summer but they will reappear during October. Similarly the Brown Thrasher can be found in the region year around but do not look for them at the Heard during the summer. They will reappear in the latter half of September.

So below is my list of common migratory birds to look out for at the Heard during the fall. In creating this list I experimented with various ways of automating it, but the simplest is to go to the "View and Explore Data" page of the eBird website. Click on Bar charts, select US, Texas, and Hotspots. The Heard museum is one



of the hotspots that can be selected. On the resulting bar chart look for bimodal distributions showing birds coming in the spring and fall. As noted previous this data can be misleading due to local populations moving so you might want to check some range maps to verify the bird is migratory. Even this can be misleading as American Redstart is shown as migratory in this area by at least some range maps but we know they nest right here at the Heard. An additional problem is that for the less common birds the statistics become poor. This is because by the time we parse by location and week the number of checklists in a sample size is small. Hopefully this will improve as more and more checklists get submitted.

Support Biodiversity—Spread the Checklists Around

eBird maintained by Cornell Lab of Ornithology is an on-line database of bird observations providing scientists, researchers and amateur naturalists with real-time data about bird distribution and abundance. eBird has been described as an ambitious example of enlisting amateurs to gather data on biodiversity for use in science.

Data from PTAS's field trips and Saturday morning walks at the Heard are entered into eBird. PTAS has highly encourages its members to enter their observations into eBird to build up the local knowledge of bird biodiversity.

The chart in the next column gives the number of checklists and number of bird species observed by county for local counties from a recent study.

There is a vast difference between the number of checklists submitted ranging from a high of 6479 for Van Zandt to a low of 12 for Hood. PTAS wants to encourage local birders to focus on birding in the under represented local counties. One idea is to have local birders adopt an under birded county for a year. Make plans to go as often as they can to the county whether it is once every season or once a month. Explore new areas to bird and then submit their findings to eBird to help the counties with low counts and improve the accuracy of eBird.

County	Checklists	# of Species
Van Zandt	6479	318
Tarrant	4084	334
Collin	3234	271
Dallas	3028	310
Hunt	2124	304
Grayson	1381	256
Denton	1369	273
Wise	810	199
Ellis	455	226
Johnson	192	193
Parker	145	163
Erath	82	138
Rockwall	70	109
Lamar	57	160
Delta	56	189
Palo Pinto	55	138
Montague	50	97
Fannin	48	131
Cooke	35	111
Jack	33	91
Hood	12	42



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

Vice President: *Carolyn Oldham**. 972-517-8987

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

Treasurer: *Georgette Guernsey*972-542-8089

Conservation/Armchair Activist:

*Roger Sanderson** 972-562-5566

Bill Woodfin.....972-838-9290

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

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

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

Education

*Rodney Thomas**.....214-533-8756

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

Hospitality: *Paula Brehm*.972-517-2542

Membership: *Merrick Darley**972-422-5355

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

Website/Electronic Communications:

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

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

Publicity: *open*

Board Member: *Sara Shaffer*.....972-881-0645

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 Georgette Guernsey, 6405 Oak Hollow Lane
McKinney, TX 75070

Audubon code: 7XCH

PTAS Chapter Code: W15