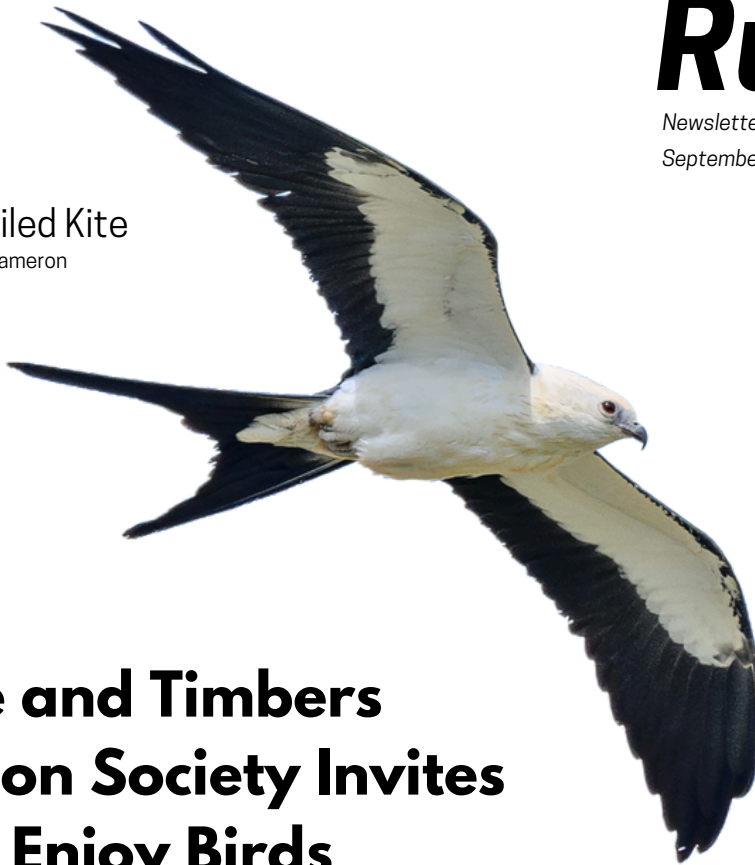


Rustlin's

Newsletter of the Prairie Timbers Audubon Society
September 2024

Swallow-tailed Kite

Photo: Mike Cameron



Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society Invites You to Enjoy Birds

Birding Activities

- Bird ID Walks
- Local Field Trips
- Multi-day Field Trips

Environmental Education

- Monthly Presentations
- Bird Identification Classes
- Scholarships

Support for our North Texas Habitat

- Bird Banding
- Prairie Restoration/
Landscaping
- College Student Avian
Research
- Raptor Education
- Butterfly/Native Gardens
- Bird Rehabilitation
- Advocacy

Cooler weather has finally made it down to Texas, reminding us of the changing seasons and fall migration. Many birds on the North Texas checklist are transients, passing through only in the spring and fall, and they are currently making their appearances at many of our local birding hotspots. Along with these changes, Prairie and Timbers Audubon is pleased to bring a new slate of activities and presentations to start our 2024-2025 season. For those of you new to our organization, PTAS is a local 501(c)(3) organization affiliated with National Audubon and dedicated to birding, conservation, and education. Our committees have arranged new speakers for our monthly meetings, new bird identification classes, and many field trips both local and across the state. Although our first field trip to Richland Creek WMA is already in the books, our next one is on Sept 21 at Hagerman NWR. Our kickoff meeting on Sept 24 will feature a presentation on "Prairies of North Texas" by Amy Martin (author of DFW Wild) and a Bird ID class featuring our lesser-known waders, the ibises.

Our programs and events are free and open to anyone with an interest in birds and the natural world, but we do encourage you to become Supporting Members of PTAS with a donation of \$15 or more. This can be done in person at our meetings or online on our website (<https://www.prairieandtimbers.org>). All funds raised by PTAS go to support our conservation activities, educational programs, and our grant programs for nature-related organizations.

I hope you enjoy the activities that have been planned for this year. Please let us know how we are doing, and consider volunteering to help make this a great organization.

Mike Cameron
President, PTAS

Monthly Meetings

With Presentations and Bird ID Session



Agenda

- 6:45 Meetup - Check in and chat
- 7:00 Bird ID Class
- 7:25 General Meeting
- 7:45 Presentation
- 8:30 Adjourn

Fall Bird ID Classes

A Focus On North Texas Birds

- Sept: Ibises and Lesser Know Waders
- Oct: Winter Sparrows
- Nov: What's This Bird Quiz / Tricky ID's

All in person meetings are at the

Science Resource Center
Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary
1 Nature Place,
McKinney, TX 75069

Some meetings are Zoom only. Zoom option always available. If you are not on the invitation list send a request to ptaszoom@gmail.com

Schedule: Mark your calendars for the exciting events we have planned! Join us for engaging talks from experts in their fields, with topics ranging from local prairies to winter sparrows and beyond.

***Note** that the meeting in November is on the third Tuesday of the month instead of the traditional fourth.

September 24, 2024

Speaker: Amy Martin
Topic: Prairies of North Texas

February 25, 2025

Speaker: Monica Morrison
Topic: Native Texas Wildcats

October 22, 2024

Speaker: Jacob Poinsett
Topic: Winter Sparrows

March 25, 2025

Speaker: Jim Bednarz, Brooke Poplin
Topic: Harris Hawks

November 19, 2024*

Speaker: Ben Sandifer
Topic: Habitat and Birds of the Great Trinity Forest

April 22, 2025

Speaker: Linda Ergonis
Topic: PTAS Field Trip to Arizona

January 28, 2025

Speaker: David Hartgrove (via Zoom)
Topic: Birding the Dry Tortugas

May 20 or 27, 2025

Speaker: TBD
Topic: TBD

September's Presentation

Prairies of North Texas



Amy Martin

We are pleased to welcome journalist and environmentalist Amy Martin to our September meeting. Amy will be sharing her knowledge of North Texas prairies. Mark your calendars for Tuesday, September 24. Our meeting begins at 6:45 p.m. at the Heard Museum's Science Resource Center.

Amy (Moonlady.com), a lifelong Texan, has forged a varied career in journalism, laced with activism and leadership, and infused with a deep spirituality. A journalist and writer for over 40 years, she is the author of *Wild DFW: Explore the Amazing Nature Around Dallas-Fort Worth* (Wild-DFW.com) for Timber Press. Currently the senior features writer for Green Source DFW (GreenSourceDFW.org), she is also writing the biography of Ned Fritz (NedFritz.com), Texas' most important environmentalist. Her other books include *Itchy Business: How to Treat the Poison Ivy and Poison Oak Rash, Prevent Exposure, and Eradicate the Plant* (Itchy.Biz), *Holy Smokes*, and co-author of *Speaking of Mother Earth*. Martin sits on the Trails and Preserves Program board of Dallas County Open Space (DallasCounty.org/parks) and is the state social media director for the Native Prairies Association of Texas (TexasPrairie.org). Martin managed a private nature preserve in Northeast Texas for 12 years, where she converted 15 acres into tallgrass prairie and rehabilitated wildlife habitat.



Loggerhead Shrike



Lark Sparrow



Northern Bobwhite



Barn Owl



Dickcissel

October's Presentation

Winter Sparrows



Jake Poinsett

We are excited to welcome birder and educator Jake Poinsett from the Trinity River Audubon Center as our speaker for October. Jake will be speaking to us about one of his favorite birds, winter sparrows.

Jake Poinsett is the Program Manager at the Trinity River Audubon Center. His work focuses on environmental education for all ages, habitat management, and volunteer coordination. Before joining Audubon, he worked for Texas Parks and Wildlife, the South Carolina Park Service, and the National Park Service. He is an avid birder and loves to share his passion with others. His love of birds began in childhood when he saw his spark bird, a downy woodpecker. His mom, a fellow bird lover, always kept suet feeders to bring them in.



Fox Sparrow



White-crowned Sparrow



White-throated Sparrow



Harris Sparrow

November's Presentation

Habitat and Birds of the Great Trinity Forest



Ben Sandifer

We are excited to welcome Master Birder Ben Sandifer to our November meeting. Join us as we listen to Ben's enlightening talk on the remarkable Great Trinity Forest, with a focus on birds. This presentation will delve into the ecological significance and natural wonders of Texas' largest urban hardwood forest. Discover the lush beauty of this expansive forest, home to a diverse array of avian species, flora, and fauna, including towering trees and vibrant wildflowers. Gain insights into ongoing conservation efforts and community initiatives aimed at preserving this invaluable natural gem.

Ben Sandifer is an author, photographer, and environmental advocate for parks and open spaces, where he can often be found with a camera in hand. His award-winning nature photographs have been featured in local, state, and national publications. He is a Certified Master Birder through the Audubon Dallas-sponsored North Central Texas Master Birder Program. In 2016, he was named an Honorary Lifetime Texas Master Naturalist for his substantial contributions to the furtherance of the organization's activities. In addition to his professional life as an accountant, Ben serves as the naturalist for the historic Dallas Hunting and Fishing Club.



Trinity River Audubon Center

Monitoring Birds

Continuing our tradition, PTAS volunteers will lead monthly bird walks at Connemara Meadows on the first Saturday or the first Sunday of each month, and at the Heard Science Museum on the second Saturday. These walks offer a special opportunity to observe birds in North Texas's natural environment, even as urbanization continues to expand.

Each walk lasts about three hours, though participants are free to adjust their time as needed. These outings are designed for both beginner and intermediate birders, offering tips along the way while allowing birders of all levels to appreciate the seasonal diversity. The routes cover a variety of habitats, with birding techniques explained throughout. Questions are always welcome.

Typically, we spot 40-60 bird species, focusing on both visual and auditory identification. Our observations are logged into the eBird database, contributing to global research efforts. Join us as we look forward to spotting southbound migrants in fall, northern nesting species in winter, and the return of spring migrants.



PTAS Field Trips

September 21, 2024

Destination: Hagerman NWR

Leader: Jack Chiles

Target Species: Shore birds

October 26, 2024

Destination: Chalk Hill Farm

Leader/Host: Bill Woodfin

Target Species: Late Migrants and Early Wintering Birds

November 23, 2024

Destination: Lake Lewisville Environmental Learning Area

Leader: Alan Gann

Target Species: Winter Residents

January 25, 2025

Destination: Lake Tawakoni

Leader: TBD

Target Species: Longspurs and Winter Residents

Our trips are designed to take birders to a variety of habitats, allowing them to observe a wide range of bird species both in our local area and across Texas. Special thanks to Linda Ergonis, our field trip chair, for organizing these outings. The public is welcome to join. Please remember to bring binoculars, sunscreen, water, and snacks.

To participate, regularly check the field trip page on our website (prairieandtimbers.org). Tom Heath maintains an email list to keep members updated on field trip details and any changes. If you'd like to be added, please send your name and email address to Tom at heathwtom@netscape.net.

February 22, 2025

Destination: Hagerman NWR

Leader: Jack Chiles or TBD

Target Species: Ducks

March 15, 2025

Destination: Lake Lavon

Leader: Mike Cameron

Target Species: Gulls

April 23-27, 2025

Destination: High Island, Crystal Beach

Target Species: Migratory Birds

RSVP: Linda Ergonis (gclindae@aol.com)

May 2025

Destination: Red Slough, OK

Leader: David Arbour

Target Species: Nesting and Migratory Birds

Help PTAS Fund North Texas Avian and Environmental Activities



Support PTAS And North Texas Birds During North Texas Giving Day

PTAS charges no participation fees, and everyone is welcome at our activities, thanks to our Supporting Members. Come and join us! Please consider becoming a Supporting Member by contributing \$15 or more to PTAS. All donations go directly toward our programs, activities, and conservation efforts. You can contribute by:

- Using a credit card or PayPal account:
- Click the Donate button at prairieandtimbers.org/join.htm.

As part of the North Texas nonprofit community, PTAS also participates in **North Texas Giving Day**. This platform offers a user-friendly way for donors to support their favorite causes. Visit <https://www.northtexasgivingday.org>.

Advocating for the Birds We Love

PTAS is deeply engaged in advocacy and outreach efforts to promote bird-friendly initiatives and conservation practices across North Texas. One of our key projects is working with Audubon Texas to support the creation of a bird-friendly convention center in South Padre Island, a crucial stopover for migratory birds crossing the Gulf of Mexico. We are also advocating for the relocation of the McKinney fireworks display, which could disrupt nesting birds, even with current regulations in place.

In addition, PTAS is striving to expand the "Lights Out" initiative, which reduces light pollution during peak bird migration, to areas north of Dallas where development has surged. We're also exploring ways to promote bird-friendly building designs in North Texas, following successful initiatives in Austin, with guidance from the American Bird Conservancy. Lastly, we are actively supporting legislation that protects wildlife and the environment.

These collective efforts reflect our commitment to safeguarding wildlife and ensuring their protection in both urban and natural spaces. Volunteers and community support are essential to achieving these goals.

Let's Make South Padre Bird Friendly

Prothonotary Warbler
in Bottlebrush, South Padre Island



William Burns/Audubon Photography Awards

South Padre Island is a gem for bird enthusiasts and a vital stopover for migratory birds, particularly during the spring and fall migrations when thousands of birds pass through. The island's convention center, while a hub of community activity, also contains a small but crucial habitat for these birds.

Audubon Texas is calling on all of us to support efforts to make the convention center expansion safer for birds by urging the South Padre Island City Council and Convention Center Director to implement bird-safe practices such as collision-deterrent glass and down-lighting. Additionally, it is essential to protect the existing old-growth habitat on the property that birds rely on.

You can help by sending an email to city leaders (SHill@MySPI.org), encouraging them to include these bird-friendly measures in their plans. Together, we can ensure South Padre Island remains a haven for birds and birdwatchers alike.

Take action now:

- Learn more here: <https://www.valleycentral.com/video/richard-moore-special-report-critical-island-habitat-to-be-protected/9631210/>
- Sign the petition at: <https://www.change.org/p/preserve-the-migratory-birding-habitat-at-south-padre-island-convention-center> to protect this critical habitat!

PTAS Supports Local Environmental Education, Restoration, and Student Research Through 8 Grants in 2024



Heard Bird Banders: Allocated \$1,390 for the purchase of eight new banding nets and essential supplies to support their ongoing bird banding efforts.



Connemara Meadow: Receives a total of \$2,000, allocated to three initiatives: Trail Maintenance (\$400), Native Grass Restoration (\$1,200), and Bobwhite Restoration (\$400). This funding will help maintain trails, restore native grasslands, and stabilize the Bobwhite quail population in the Meadow.



Blackland Prairie Raptor Center: Awarded \$2,000 for the care and rehabilitation of Charlotte, a young ambassador Great Horned Owl. This grant supports Charlotte's role in educational programs focused on wildlife conservation, covering expenses such as veterinary care, habitat enhancement, and training for public outreach.



Lake Lewisville Environmental Learning Area (LELA): Awarded \$1,000 to cover the cost of approximately six bird banding nets, which will support ongoing research and conservation efforts.



Rogers Wildlife Rehabilitation Center: Granted funding for essential clinic equipment, helping to support their veterinary care and rehabilitation services for injured, sick, and orphaned birds of all species.



Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SEOSU): Receives \$500 for a project led by Doug Wood. The grant will fund travel and equipment for two students conducting bird surveys using automated recording units, with a focus on studying rails and bitterns in marsh habitats.



University of North Texas: Granted \$2,500 for a student research project titled "Sociality and Cooperative Hunting of Harris's Hawks in South Texas," led by Brooke Poplin and James Bednarz. This study investigates the social behaviors and hunting strategies of Harris's Hawks.



Whooping Crane Center of Texas: Granted \$1000 to help fund the concluding phase of the center's construction. . As part of its long-term objectives, the WTCC aims to release offspring into the wild in due course.

PTAS does Bird and Environmental Monitoring

eBird

The Cornell Lab

Audubon

Christmas Bird Count



Climate Watch



Bird watching and monitoring offer significant environmental benefits by fostering a deeper connection with nature and promoting conservation efforts. As bird watchers observe and document avian species in publicly available databases like eBird, they contribute valuable data that tracks bird populations, migration patterns, and habitat health. U.S. agencies and public groups have used eBird data on a local scale for various projects, such as siting communication towers away from sensitive species and migration routes, planning wind farms in Tennessee to avoid potential conflicts with eagles, safeguarding power poles in Colorado to reduce electrocution risks for raptors, and adjusting mowing practices in New York to help grassland birds. PTAS members also participate in community science projects throughout the year, submitting checklists to the eBird database maintained by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to support environmental monitoring and contribute to conservation actions.

PTAS sponsors the McKinney Christmas Bird Count, with the circle centered on the Heard Museum. PTAS also supports a second count centered around Lake Ray Hubbard. As part of the National Audubon Society's hemispheric effort, this annual event engages bird enthusiasts in counting and identifying birds within a designated circle around Christmas time. The collected data helps researchers study long-term bird population trends, contributing valuable insights into species conservation and environmental changes.



PTAS participates in Audubon's Climate Watch program and the Audubon Foundation of Texas Bird Squares activity, monitoring 10 designated squares. These programs focus on tracking how climate change affects bird populations across North America. Since birds are highly sensitive to temperature and habitat changes, shifts in their migration patterns, breeding behaviors, and distributions provide valuable insights into the broader effects of climate change on ecosystems.

Communicating with PTAS



<https://prairieandtimbers.org/>



<https://www.facebook.com/PTAudubon/>



<https://www.instagram.com/prairieandtimbersaudubon/>



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