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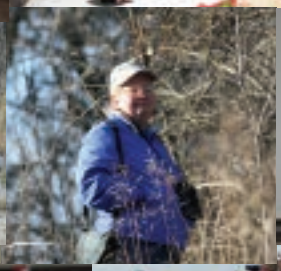
10th Anniversary Issue



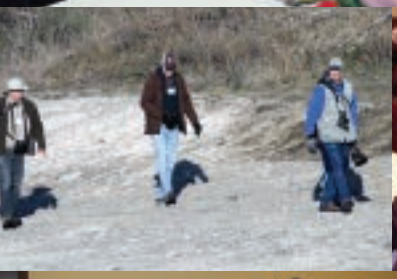






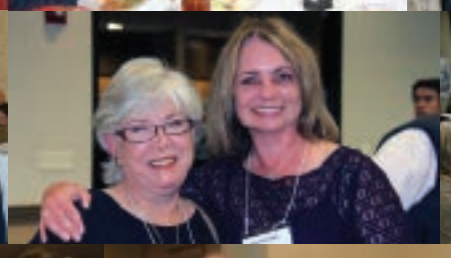














Editor's Introduction

Ten years ago I made a presentation to the TOS Board of Directors during their meeting at Hornsby Bend near Austin. The topic to be discussed was my concern that the popular *Texas Birds* magazine had not been published for over a year. While the members would enjoy a quarterly magazine, procuring the material and producing a publication at that frequency was just not realistic. My proposal was therefore to replace it with an annual publication. After a brief discussion, the Board approved my offer… *Texas Birds Annual* was born!

Members of the Texas Ornithological Society receive not only the popular, full color, *Texas Birds Annual* magazine, but also our annual scientific journal *Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society* as well as three issues of *TOSNEWS*. Production and mailing these five publications to the members is expensive. In fact nearly 90% of your dues goes now to cover such costs. As the price of paper, ink and postage rises, TOS will be forced to either decrease the number of publications produced or to increase dues. Actually a third alternative exist—increase membership. Printing is a numbers game….the more you print the lower the unit cost. Doubling our press run would result in a significant decrease in the unit cost. Of course doubling the press run requires a doubling of the membership. To achieve this, if every member got JUST ONE INDIVIDUAL TO JOIN we would double our membership. Birding is a social activity so I suspect all birders know at least one individual who is not a member of the TOS. Perhaps it's your birding companion—or someone who is always "borrowing" your copy of *Texas Birds Annual*! Help us keep our publication cost low…so we can devote more of your dues to further the remainder of TOS causes…

Please make it a personal goal to convince at least one individual to become a member of the TOS before the next issue of *Texas Birds Annual* reaches your mailbox! In the meantime enjoy the issue before you….your continued support will guarantee that in another ten years time I am able to write the introduction to the 20th Anniversary issue….

Jack Clinton Eitniear
Editor/*Texas Birds Annual*
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Striped Owl painting by Lynn Delvin

President's Message

President Jim Hailey.

This will be my last note in the TBA, as my term as President ends next spring. It has been a great experience serving on the TOS Board these past 5 years. Thanks for giving me the opportunity. I think this past year and a half have been fruitful. The Weekender programs have been a great success with well over 100 TOS members participating. There have been two shorebird classes, a sparrow session, and one in the Texas Hill Country and Fort Davis. Thanks to Mel Cooksey, Larry Jordan, Byron Stone, Tripp Davenport, David Sarkozi and Lee Hoy for taking the time to make these events so successful. Be sure and check the TOS website for other Weekender opportunities which will be announced soon. And the two meetings since the last TBA was printed have been extremely successful. I had many compliments on the Georgetown meeting attended by over 250 people and likewise the Lake Jackson meeting held in conjunction with the GCBO.

I am also excited to announce the dates and locations for the last two meeting which will occur under my term—El Paso and Winnie. I am pleased to announce that we will hold our winter meeting in El Paso this coming January 15-19, 2015. This will be only the second meeting there (I believe there was an earlier one) and will give TOS members the opportunity to experience birding this remote region of our State. Please make plans to attend—the local Audubon is preparing an awesome field trip offering. Then our spring meeting will be held in Winnie April 30-May 2. There we will have the opportunity to explore the three fine TOS sanctuaries in the area—Hooks, Crawford and Sabine Woods—as well as all the other hotspots on the upper Texas Coast in the very heart of spring migration. So make your preparations to attend both meetings for some great birding opportunities.

At this time I want to announce my last TOS trip to Alaska which will take place June 7-17, 2015. These trips have been an amazing experience for me. This will the 10th one and my 12th time to Alaska. What an amazing place! But more importantly, what a fantastic opportunity I have had to meet and spend time with so many TOS members. I have developed lasting friendships with many and we have had people from many other states join our organization as a result. So thanks for allowing me this great experience.

Finally I want to wish your incoming President Byron Stone great success. I know Byron will do a fantastic job as he does in everything he tackles.

Jim Hailey
TOS President
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ANNUAL

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A Selection of Art from the Laredo Children's Art Contest.

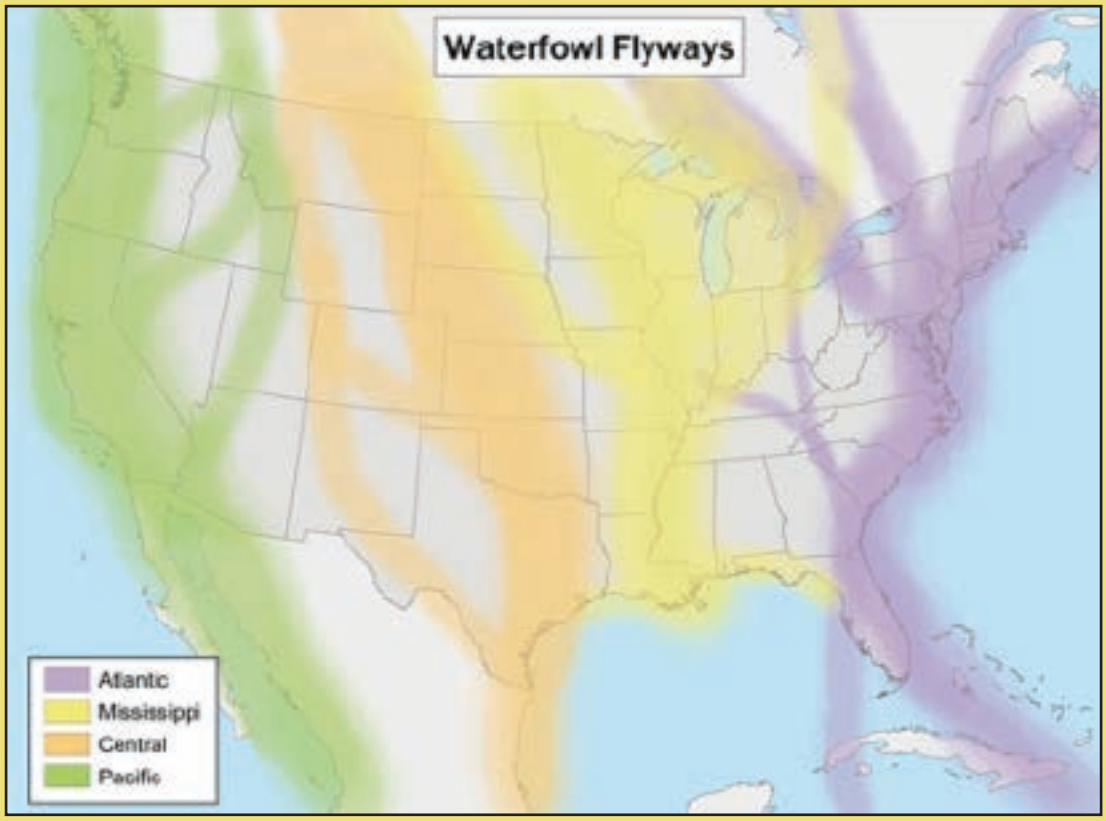
Good Birding in El Paso

By Lois Balin,

Many folks from the great state of Texas think the El Paso area is a dusty and drab desert, devoid of wildlife species. They would be wrong: El Paso in far western Texas has a unique blend of New Mexico, Mexico, and Texas cultures, with a rich history, and amazing variety of birds. Over 400 bird species have been found here.

The key to the richness of El Paso's birdlife is its geographical location and variety of habitats. El Paso is in the northern part of the Chihuahuan Desert along the Rio Grande. Desert sky islands abound in the region. The Franklin Mountains separate the western, eastern, and northeastern parts of the city. The Trans-Mountain Highway across the park is 5,120 feet while the peak of the North Franklin reaches up to 7,192 feet high. El Paso is uniquely located in the Central Migratory Flyway situated between the Pacific and Mississippi Flyways where eastern birds from the edge of their range and western birds may be found here. The river and north-south trending mountains guide many migrating birds through the El Paso area.

There are numerous mountain ranges found to the south and east of El Paso in western Texas. Within 100 to 200 miles are the Guadalupe and Davis Mountains, respectively. A mere 89 miles northeast of El Paso is the 500,000 acre Lincoln National Forest in New Mexico. Elevations range from 4,000 to 11, 500 feet and habitats include mountain meadows, mixed oak forests, and mixed aspen and coniferous pine and fir tree forests found at higher elevations. In some years, montane birds like Steller's Jay, Acorn Woodpecker, Red Crossbill, and Townsend's Solitaire invade the lower elevations of the El Paso region. Surprise visits from birds that are normally found only in Mexico often enrich the



North American Bird Migration—The 4 Flyways |www.perkypetwildbirdjournal...

lives of El Paso birders. And, of course, birds unique to the arid Southwest reside here.

Habitat, including desert scrub, desert grasslands, arroyos, canyons, and mountain islands, are the other key to El Paso's rich birdlife. Today, the Bosque habitat along the Rio Grande is virtually gone and most of the wetlands in the El Paso area are artificial, but they are still powerful lures to birds in this arid land. Places like the Rio Bosque Wetlands, Keystone Heritage, and Ascarate Parks, plus the McNary and Tornillo irrigation reservoirs provide desert oases that attract different birds year round.

I know the changing of the seasons by the bird species that disappear or arrive in the winter, spring, fall, and summer. When the Western Kingbirds appear, I know that spring is in the air. The birds come and go with the seasons and change from one month, one week or one day to the next. Each season offers a different, rich variety of birds.

From November 2013 throughout January 2014. El Paso was visited by at least 36

Franklin Mountains. Photo by B. Poll.

Davis Mountains. Photo by L. Balin.

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park. Photo by M. Parra.

rare bird species. Some birds were rare for the time of year, others were birds not normally found in the region. Water birds dropping in were Bonaparte's Gulls (migrant), Franklin's Gulls (migrant), Mew Gull (breeds throughout Alaska, Northwest Territories, and southwestern Canada, winters along the Pacific Coast), California Gulls (winter on West Coast), Greater Scaup (breeds on the tundra at the edge of the boreal forest, winters in coastal waters), Black-legged Kittiwake (a small cliff-nesting gull that breeds along

Greater Scaup. Photo by B. Zimmer.

Black-legged Kittiwake. Photo by B. Zimmer.

Long-tailed Duck. Photo by B. Zimmer.

Stellar's Jay. Photo by B. Zimmer.

Red-headed Woodpecker. Photo by J Kiseda.

Townsend's solitaire. Photo by B. Zimmer.

the northern coasts and winters out at sea), Hooded Merganser (migrant), Horned Grebe (migrant) and the Long-tailed Duck, formerly known as Oldsquaw, (breeds in the Arctic and winters along both coasts of North America).

Birds dropped in from the high elevation forests, some staying for a week or more. There was an abundance of Steller's and Scrub-Jays, and Acorn Woodpeckers. Red

Rufous Hummingbird. Photo by B. Zimmer.

Scott's Oriole. Photo by B. Zimmer.

Crossbills, Pygmy Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebirds, and an immature Pine Warbler paid a visit.

A special treat was the occurrence of a Red-headed Woodpecker (rare to Western Texas) and a Lewis's Woodpecker (not normally found in Texas). Other rare winter bird visitors were Hooded Orioles, Scott's Orioles, Hermit Thrush, Blue-headed Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and House Wrens.

There were appearances of rare sparrows including the White-throated, Fox, Cassin's, Harris's, and Lincoln's Sparrow. And of special note is that six species of hummingbirds, rare in the winter, visited El Paso for varying lengths of time. Between December 2013 and January 2014 the Broad-billed, Anna's, Rufous, Allen's, Broad-tailed, and Calliope Hummingbirds were all here in El Paso at once.

El Paso, Texas may be dry and dusty, but it can also be a bird bonanza.

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Allen's Hummingbirds Galore in West Houston

By Susan Heath

When Stephen and Ann Williams and their two daughters moved into their home in west Houston in 1984, hummingbirds weren't on the agenda. The daughters wanted a pool but Ann envisioned a garden bordering the yard with all the plants she always wanted to grow. If you've ever been to their house, you know who won that argument. There's no pool and the yard is fabulously landscaped with all sorts of blooming plants. Ann was especially enamored with salvias and the yard shows it. Two of the first trees they planted were a Fireman's Cap Tree and a Bottlebrush. Both trees have red blooms from spring until fall and are now between 18 and 20 feet tall. As often happens, it was an "if you build it, they will come" situation and though they can't remember exactly when they started noticing hummingbirds in their yard, they think it was in the early 1990's.

The first birds were the expected Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, but then they noticed an adult male Rufous Hummingbird, a bird they had never seen before. At about this same time, they enlarged the flowerbeds and because of the hummingbirds, put in more flowering plants and increased the number of feeders. For several years they noticed adult male Rufous Hummingbirds in their yard and then in 1997 they saw what they believed to be an adult male Allen's Hummingbird. At the time Allen's Hummingbird was a Texas Rare Bird Committee (TBRC) review species and Ann contacted Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and told them of the sighting. The TPWD folks figured it was a young Rufous that would get the brown color on its back as the winter progressed. The winter hummingbird phenomena that we know today was just beginning to be documented in the 1990's and since female and young hummingbirds are so hard to identify in the field, there was little precedent for an Allen's Hummingbird to be present in a yard in Houston during the winter.

In 1999 Ann submitted documentation to the TBRC for the adult male present in their yard from February 15-23 and this record was accepted in 2002 (TBRC 1999-123). In February 2004 Sumita Prasad captured and banded an adult male Allen's Hummingbird in the Williams yard and this record was also accepted by the TBRC (2004-17). In June of 2004, the TBRC removed Allen's Hummingbird from the review list as their occurrence during was winter was well documented by that time. The Williams' feel they have had at least one Allen's Hummingbird in their yard every winter since 1997. Their yard also attracts between three and twelve Rufous Hummingbirds each winter and they have also documented Anna's, Black-chinned, Broad-tailed, and Buff-bellied Hummingbirds. One winter they had six species of hummingbirds!

In September 2007 I also banded an adult male Allen's Hummingbird in their yard but the Williams felt that perhaps some of the non-adult male birds might be Allen's Hummingbirds too. In 2011 I was finally able to begin regular banding at their house. Table one lists all the hummingbirds with age that I have banded in winter at the Williams house. To understand the table you need to know that a hatch year bird is a bird that was hatched in the current calendar year. A second year bird is a bird that was hatched the previous calendar year. Second year birds can only be identified in the first few months of the year because as spring approaches second year birds begin to look just like the older birds. Any bird not aged as hatch year or second

Winter hummingbirds banded at Stephen and Ann Williams' house

	9/16/07	1/29/11	2/11/12	12/8/12	1/27/13	1/26/14
Allen's HY male	1			1		
Allen's SY male		1			2	3
Allen's adult male			1			
Allen's adult female				1		
Rufous HY male				3		
Rufous HY female				1		
Rufous SY male		1	3		3	2
Rufous adult male		1				1
Rufous adult female		4	1	1		1

year is called an after hatch year bird or in laymen's terms, an adult.

As the table shows, I've captured 10 Allen's and 22 Rufous Hummingbirds in six banding sessions. Of those 32 birds, 11 were adults and 21 were non-adults. It is hard to tell how many hummingbirds are actually present in their yard at any given time because there are so many and we never capture them all. The species totals may be representative of the proportion of Rufous to Allen's but the age totals are not. Young birds are much more likely to be caught than older birds who are more experienced. In addition, birds that have been caught before are less likely to be caught again so adults that were banded as young birds and returned in following winters are even less likely to be caught than non-banded adult birds. I have had three recaptures though. In December 2012, I caught a male Rufous that I banded as a second year bird in February of 2012. In January 2013, I caught a female Rufous that I originally banded as an adult in January 2011 and a male Rufous that I originally banded as a hatch year bird in December 2012. I haven't recaught any Allen's, but we have documented banded adult males that we weren't able to catch so we know they are coming back; we just don't know which ones. It's frustrating when the birds are smarter than I am!

I band hummingbirds at many houses in the Houston area during winter and though there are other houses where I catch multiple Rufous (up to 10), an Allen's Hummingbird is still a notable event everywhere except at the Williams' house in West Houston. I've pondered this for a while and haven't come up with any answers as to why their yard is such an Allen's Hummingbird attractant, but I hope to be able to continue documenting their occurrence.

I am a firm believer that in the eastern half of Texas, if you leave out a couple of hummingbird feeders in winter and add a few blooming plants, your chances of attracting a winter hummingbird are very high. If you want to try to emulate the Williams' success, here are some statistics for you. The Williams' house is located in the Copperfield Southdown Village subdivision off of FM 1960 just south of SH 290. The entire lot is 11,929 square feet with 3934 square feet covered with concrete. The flower beds represent 3800 square feet including the front, side, and back yards. They keep 19 hummingbird feeders out in the winter and host 10 to 15 hummingbirds every winter!

Ann's Plant List

Scientific Name	Common Name	Color(s)
Erythrina crista galli	Fireman's cap tree	coral
Erythrina x bidwillii		dark red
Callistemon	Bottlebrush tree	red
Cestrum aurantiacum		yellow-orange
Abutilon pictum	Flowering maple	orange
*Tecomaria capensis**	Cape honeysuckle	orange, red, yellow
Duranta erecta	Golden dewdrop	purple, blue, white
Hibiscus hamabo	Yellow tree hibiscus	yellow
Hibiscus species	Shirley Temple	pink
Iochroma cyanea		purple or orange
Stachytarpheta cayennensis	Porter weed	purple, orange-pink
Aesculus pavia	Red buckeye	red
Malvaviscus arboreus	Turk's cap	red
Vitex agnus castus	Chaste tree	montrose purple
Lonicera fragrantissima	Winter honeysuckle	white
*Canna lily**		red
Platanus mexicana	Mexican sycamore tree	green
Cuphea ignea	Cigar plant	orange
Galphimia gracilis (thryallis)		yellow
Lantana sp.	Trailing lantana	lavender, purple, white
Justicia brandegeana	Shrimp plant	salmon
Anisacanthus wrightii	Flame acanthus	red
Odontonema strictum	Firespike	red
Senna corymbosa		yellow
*Antigonon leptopus**	Coral vine	dark pink, light pink, white
*Lonicera sempervirens**	Coral honeysuckle	coral

* may become invasive

Ann's Salvia List

Scientific Name	Variety	Color(s)
S. mexicana		purple
S. mexicana	Limelight	chartreuse green calyces, violet blue flower
S. mexicana	Lollie Jackson	purple blue
S. greggii		many colors
Saliva sp.	Indigo spires	violet
S. miniata		red
S. madrensis		yellow
S. involucrata	Rosebud salvia	rose magenta
S. guaranitica	Argentina skies	blue
S. gauranticia	Black and blue	very dark violet blue
S. splendens	Van houttei	dark red
S. leucantha	Santa Barbara	purple
S. pulchella x involucrata		cherry
S. elegans	Pineapple sage	scarlet

SY male ALHU perched—A second year male Allen's Hummingbird perched in the Williams' yard. Photo by Greg Page

SY male ALHU tail in hand—The author showing the tail feathers of a second year male Allen's Hummingbird at the William's house in January 2011. Photo by Greg Page

Honduran Ornithological Society

By Sherry (Pilar)Thorn

The Honduran Ornithological Society (HOS), locally known as ASHO (Asociacion Hondurena de Ornitologia) started in July of 2010. It obtained its legal status as a Non-Governmental Organization in November of 2011. There were thirty-two founding members. Several of the founders were foreigners and among the Hondurans, there were students, birdwatchers, nature photographers and others.

During the first three years of operation, HOS/ASHO was involved in leading a variety of birding trips, in training of local bird guides, in producing a couple of guides to birds of some local tourist spots, and in starting a birding magazine, the *Esmeralda*, on-line.

HOS received a considerable amount of money from different organizations, both in Honduras (USAID) as well as in the United States (Missouri). This money was used to

Teenagers on the north coast around La Ceiba at a birding spot called los Pinos. Photo taken by the director of the Cotinga Bird Club, Jafeth Zablah.

study the endangered Harpy Eagle and the endemic Honduran Emerald hummingbird, to obtain the legal status of the association, to carry out bird studies in some local protected areas, to train bird guides and to elaborate field guides for birds in some of the most-visited protected areas among other things.

During the last year, three bird watching groups were formed by active ASHO members: Cotingas from around la Ceiba on the north (Atlantic) coast, Alzacuanes (Broad-winged hawks) from around the capital and the south (Pacific) coast and Los Zorzales (Clay-colored thrushes) from around San Pedro Sula, also on the north coast. These local groups have been involved in leading bird watching trips with local school groups and giving classes on bird observation and conservation to local residents.

The Cotingas are mostly young people interested in becoming bird guides to work with the tourists visiting la Ceiba, the Bay Islands and Cayos Cochinnos; in the Alzacuanes group, there are mostly biology students interested in learning more about birds and ornithology and doing bird studies in protected areas; and finally, los Zorzales has members who are mostly bird watchers who love to observe birds, make life lists, put their observations on eBird and take photos of birds.

These clubs have shown interest in becoming local transmitters of the importance of birds as a natural resource in their communities, by executing bird-walks and bird-talks including the general public. Some of these activities were carried out within the International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) scheme in 2013, promoted by Environment for the Americas. This initiative of the regional clubs, to participate in this international event, showcases a positive feature for the NGO when local people act as representatives to get involved in environmental outreach!

Fabiola Rodriguez, a biologist who is very involved in bird conservation and who has worked in different protected areas in Honduras and in the United States banding birds and working with local residents, especially children, on bird conservation, was the person in charge of celebrating IMBD in

Board of Directors of the Honduran Ornithological Society in San Pedro Sula. Photo by Juan Ramon Collart.

2013. There were 10 events organized in 5 of the 18 departments of the country and 370 people were reached.

ASHO has also been in charge of the Christmas bird counts, at Lancetilla Botanical Gardens near Tela on the north coast, for the last four years. Usually bird guides, bird photographers, biologists, high school students, tour operators, school teachers and other people participate in these bird counts and the results can be seen in the online magazine El Esmeralda.

The new Board of Directors was voted for and installed in January of this year to start their two-year term. The new president, Carlos Alexander Alberto, has been active in the Bird Club Zorzales, giving courses to a local animal welfare group on bird watching and the importance of birds in local ecosystems and also about bird migration and threats to birds in local natural areas. Vice-president Alex Alexander is the only bird guide who took the ASHO course and continues to lead birding groups around the country, including people like Kaufman and other well- known birders from the United States.

Oliver Komar, a well-known ornithologist who worked for years with SalvaNatura in El Salvador, is currently working with biodiversity at the Panamerican Agricultural School, Zamorano, near Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. Since arriving in the country, Oliver has increased considerably the number of bird species previously seen in and around the school. He, his students, and several of his friends bird around Zamorano several times a month. His observations have been uploaded to the Cornell University eBird site. Oliver has given several workshops to university students and other interested parties on how to use eBird.

At the present time, ASHO is working on a Strategic Plan with large and small projects to be carried out around the country to raise awareness about birds: all Honduran birds, migratory birds, endangered birds, rare birds, and also birds characteristic of different ecosystems around the country. A study to confirm the presence in Honduras of Yellow-headed Amazon parrots close to the Guatemalan border is currently being planned.

Sherry (Pilar) Thorn
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Murphy Park Rookery—Taylor, Texas

By Lee Hoy

One day last April, when heading back home from Lake Somerville State Park photographing dragonflies, I wanted to stop by Murphy Park in Taylor and see what, if any, birds were present. Much to my delight, I was blown away to discover a wonderful rookery less than twenty miles from my home in Georgetown. I had heard some mention of a rookery but had never really investigated the location because I was inevitably drawn to the Granger Lake area whenever I headed east. The real irony is that this park is just a short distance from downtown Taylor and only a couple of blocks off of SH 95!

That same evening, I spent about four hours photographing the many herons and egrets that call the park home for the breeding season. Little Blue Herons, Snowy, Cattle, and Great Egrets all nest on the large island in the middle of the lake. In the evenings, Double-crested and Neotropic Cormorants often come in to roost and, on occasion, they are joined by numbers of White-faced Ibis. At virtually any time of day, the observant birder will find Green Herons, an occasional night heron of either variety or a Tricolored Heron, and plenty of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks flying around the lake. Migration can also bring some interesting species to the park. I have had migrant Franklin's Gulls, Willets, raptors, and post-breeding dispersal Roseate Spoonbills. Finally, as evident by its frequent flights up and down the lake, a very healthy Snow Goose has taken up residency and often accompanies the many domestic geese.

The island is covered with bamboo that provides the support structure the birds use to construct their nests. A few Cypress Trees dot the island and the Great Egrets easily claim the best nesting sites in these. Snowy Egrets and Little Blue Herons then seem to take the second best nesting locations. Finally, Cattle Egrets literally walk over each other to fight for the last bit of real estate upon which to raise their brood.

The only real media attention this rookery has received was a few years ago when the city decided to cut down the bamboo on the island. Once the bamboo was removed, the birds then began to nest in local neighborhoods and the quantity and quality of the guano apparently was not appealing to the residents. Noisemakers and many other types of deterrents were used in an attempt to drive the birds away, but almost all efforts proved fruitless. Needless to say, for many residents the birds were simply seen as a nuisance and not as a possible eco-tourist destination.

I am very excited to share that while out photographing the birds one evening, a local councilman approached my wife and me to find out more about our activities. He was very interested in promoting the park as an eco-tourist destination. After our visit, we agreed to meet with the city manager and other community leaders. Our first meeting was a success and the city would like to expand the amount of habitat for the birds and consider putting in some blinds for photographers. Early attempts at reaching Texas Parks & Wildlife for expert advice on building additional habitat haven't been so successful, but we were able to include the site on the next edition of the Heart of Texas—East Wildlife Trail map!

Things to know before you go are that the park is a public park with ball fields on the east side of the lake, so weekends during baseball season can get pretty busy and a swimming pool on the west side can eat up a lot of parking during summer days. For best viewing and photographing, I recommend the east side of the lake in the morning and the west side of the lake in early evening. The edges of the lake are concrete and erosion has made some parts of the bank steep so attention to footing (and tripods) can be critical—so prepare to be swimming with the domestic and wild ducks/geese that frequent the lake.

Early in the season it is fun to watch the birds of the rookery bringing nesting material and stealing it from each other. Squabbles can

make for an interesting photo! As the eggs begin to hatch, chicks pop up from all over the rookery and the smell and noise can be quite overpowering. Nevertheless, the rookery is sure to delight the most seasoned of birders and provide endless photographic opportunities for those patient enough. While a long lens helps, even those with moderate telephoto lenses can stand along the southernmost bank and get some close flight shots as the birds return from gathering nesting material or feeding.

For those wishing to photograph birds in flight, learning to use manual exposure will help in achieving proper exposure because the birds are flying against constantly changing backgrounds and any use of aperture priority mode and exposure compensation is sure to leave you with a highly overexposed Great Egret when it is flying against a dark background and a very underexposed Great Egret when flying against a bright sky. This is an outstanding location for practicing your birds in flight photography because the birds tend to fly low and slow, often pulling up when coming in to land at the nests or on perches around the island. Watch your background though, particularly in the evening, as city signs, poles, and utility lines can easily ruin a nice background.

Both the Williamson Audubon Group and Travis Audubon Society have hosted field trips to the rookery and the Central Texas Chapter of the North American Nature Photographer's Association hosted a photography field trip on site.

To my knowledge, this is the only large rookery in Central Texas that is in a public park and easily accessible. Furthermore, the fact we have a group of leaders in a community that are interested in expanding bird habitat should be wonderful news to us all! If you haven't yet ventured out to Murphy Park in Taylor, I highly recommend your next visit to Central Texas include a stop. And if you wish to go a step further, please let the city leaders know how much you appreciate their willingness to not only protect the birds, but also expand the habitat.

Lee Hoy
leehoy@suddenlink.net

Have you seen me?

During the summer of 2014, about 300 young pelicans were fitted with green plastic bands at breeding colonies near Galveston, Port O'Connor and Port Aransas, TX.

Color bands make it easier to observe and follow individual birds over time, which helps scientists to study their migratory movements.

Like TED's band shown below, all pelican bands have three letters or numbers. Texas birds have green bands with white letters but birds from other Gulf states may have bands with different colors.

If you have seen a banded pelican, you can help by providing us with:

- **band code,**
- **band color,**
- **date and**
- **location of your observation.**

While the information you can provide is very valuable, keep in mind that **pelicans are wild birds that should not be disturbed.**

If you have observed a banded pelican, please report your observation online at **projectpelican.weebly.com**

To learn more about the project, visit: sites.google.com/a/g.clemson.edu/lamb

A Red-tailed Hawk Story

By Donna Boykin

Hawk and nest outside Old Gibraltar Hotel in downtown Paris, Texas

This hawk was first spotted by the ladies I was with after we had finished taking photos across the road on April 20, 2013. We, at first, thought the bird was admiring itself in the window.

Upon further review on my camera, we could see the nesting material.

A few days after first spotting the hawk, a friend of mine had access through a friend of hers to get inside the building and the rest of

the hawk shots were taken through the dirty window.

This was when we first set foot on the seventh floor. Once this bird got a good look at us, it only landed once again at the top of the fire escape ladder. We did see both parents flying, circling and calling to each other, which was a treat!

Checking us out from the top of the fire escape.

One of two chicks in the nest.

If you look closely, you can spot their supper. There is a half-eaten rat lying in the nest. I'm sure they were being fed when we spooked the adults.

Keep in mind these photos were taken through the window.

Each floor of this building has been gutted, quite a shame for it once was a grand hotel back in its day. The nest is just outside the unseen window to your right. I'm against the wall taking this shot.

The nest on the fire escape platform is just outside this window.

This is the church where the ladies were when they first saw the hawk and nest. This shot was taken from the roof of the old hotel.

I'm certainly glad they were paying attention! I was busy reviewing photos of the lovely prom attendee on my camera.

I didn't mind going up on the roof and I briefly looked over, but I sure couldn't use my viewfinder and take the shot. That made me dizzy and nervous! I did aim blindly by holding my camera over the side of the building.

A once in a lifetime chance to see these chicks up close and personal?

It definitely was....until the nest was spotted occupied again this year!

On May 5, 2014, we were once again given the opportunity to view the chicks in the nest and were happily surprised to see three chicks this spring. I took several photos

through the dirty window again this visit and was thrilled to see them all healthy and certainly alert, but not alarmed.

When we first arrived, all three were asleep. The parent was calling and about to arrive with a meal, although we didn't know it at the time, and the reason for all three to be up and looking around. They really did not mind us viewing them through the window.

We stepped away hoping to see one of the parents land and actually missed the parent flying in from below, By this time, we decided we better leave them alone so started back to the window to check on them one last time. We were very surprised to see the parent fly away and as we hurried over to see, we discovered their meal this particular evening would be a baby squirrel.

Being animal lovers, we were a little saddened by the loss of the squirrel, but understood it was the circle of life and the chicks have to eat too.

A few weeks later on May 22, 2014, these last two photos were taken from the ground and the hawk chicks look ready to make their first flights.

Another amazing opportunity and ones I will never forget!

Donna Boykin
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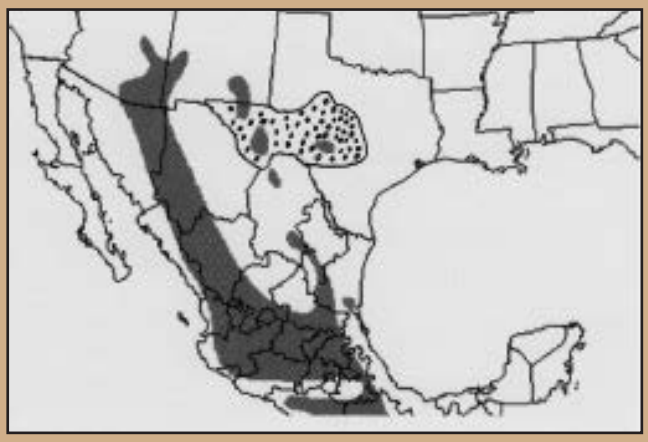
Returning the Montezuma Quail to the Eastern Edwards Plateau

By Jack Eitniear

Prior to 1940 much of the Edwards Plateau was covered with lush native grasses. Back then as a hawk soared by Montezuma Quail could dive into the meter high grasses to escape. With the arrival of Europeans those same grasses were used to support dense herds of livestock. Unfortunately the grazing continued until those grasses were so short the quail could no longer hide in them. You know the rest of the story.



Range of Montezuma Quail. Current range solid color, pre-1940 range dotted.

Due to the lack of familiarity with Montezuma Quail by many ranchers no precise current population estimate exists but historical records documented its presence in 18 counties. Unfortunately in 2014 it can be found in less than half that many, although new localities are continually being added as field biologists get into previously unvisited areas. Despite this it's been gone from the eastern counties of the Edwards Plateau for over half a century.

In recent years many hill country ranches have replaced livestock grazing with intensive white-tailed deer management. This new management emphasis resulted in grasses florishing and becoming suitable again for Montezuma Quail. Quail populations would naturally re-colonize such areas, in time, but given the extent of its range retraction such an expansion could take many decades. To facilitate the process we are attempting to establish a small population of Montezuma Quail at a ranch near Camp Verde (Kerr County) over 100 miles from the nearest natural population in Rocksprings.

Male Montezuma "Mearns" Quail in captivity

While "put n take" releases of Northern Bobwhite Quail are popular for hunting, the success rate at establishing quail populations from such releases are dismal. Annual mortality rates of released quail often exceed 90%. Such releases did not seem a good option for establishing Montezuma Quail. Instead of this "hard" release technique the literature indicated that a "soft" release technique would likely be more successful. During such a release, instead of simply opening the crate and liberating the quail they would be allowed to come and go from their enclosure. The birds are also provided food and water while they are making the transition to the wild.

Before such an effort could be considered we would need to secure the birds for the release. While most game birds are produced in large numbers this is not the case with this quail. Breeders of Montezuma Quail reported low production and sex ratios skewed towards males. Due to the difficulty in breeding this species Montezuma Quail often sell for as

4 week old Montezuma Quail raised in captivity

Quail breeding cages

much as $300.00 per pair! Working with an experienced quail breeder in Pennsylvania we evaluated current practices with breeding this species. Modifications were made in their captive diet[1] as well as genetics with the introduction of a wild male from an animal rehabilitation center in Arizona. Such changes resulted in the production of over 100 birds from our 12 pairs which is more than a doubling of the normal production numbers.

After securing the quail for the release we searched for some proven methods. A great place to start was the World Pheasant Association's recently published "Guidelines for the reintroduction of Galliformes". We wanted to steer away from hunting "put n take" techniques and go more with what the conservation community was advising for establishing endangered Galliformes.

The publication suggested we consider the following:

- Soft vs hard release
- Acclimatization of release stock to release area
- Numbers of birds per release
- Group size of birds and composition
- Predator control
- Supplementary feeding and
- Set criteria for supplementary releases to avoid open-ended release programs with not set end-point.

We based our release site decisions on floral inventories and a review of species habitat preference as described in the literature. However, we had no baseline as to the diversity and density of predators many of which were nocturnal. To gather this information we placed two quail in the release enclosure and positioned an infrared motion sensor camera along one side. For 3 weeks the quail were maintained in the enclosure and photos downloaded and analyzed.

Results from the infrared motion cameras....

As the collage on the following page illustrates the release site was visited by a number of species not likely viewed during daylight hours. Most of these would have an impact on the quail's ability to re-establish itself in the area. Surprisingly the camera did not document a number of species including Coyotes, Red Fox and Gray Fox, all are found in the area. Due to this we concluded they would not be a major threat to the quail. But these species have large ranges and young that are known for wandering widely so we would have to continue to look for signs of their presence.

Two groups that have the potential to create problems included snakes and raptors. Snakes are a major predator of adult quail as well as chicks and eggs. Two snakes were encountered at the release enclosure (both Baird's Rat Snakes) but neither were photographed by the camera. One was even discovered inside the enclosure

[1]Dietary considerations when breeding Montezuma Quail *Cyrtonyx montezumae*. Jack C. Eitniear, Terry Becherer. Avicultural Magazine. 01/2012; 118:6-11.

Vertebrates captured with the infrared motion camera.

Inside the release enclosure a small cage housed the lure birds. Their purpose was to encourage the released birds to return for food and roosting- in a predator free environment.

having killed one of the lure birds. The second was captured in a live trap set for bobcats along the perimeter. Further testing is needed to determine if a new, more sensitive, camera will capture snakes. The second group of concern were the raptors. Researchers studying Montezuma Quail consider the Cooper's Hawks a significant predator of adult quail. According to the "TOS Handbook of Texas Birds" Cooper's Hawks are not only summer residents, but also winter residents and migrants, being present from August to April.

After intensive removal and translocation, of fur bearing animals (during the trapping season) it was determined that the release could proceed. To monitor the success rate of such releases banded quail were followed using radio telemetry. Seven males were placed in a small cage within the larger enclosure to lure the release birds back for food and roosting. Square grates, later circles cut into sheet metal, were attached to the door so that seven additional males released in the larger enclosure could leave and return at will. Food and water was placed in the larger enclosure. Preliminary results are encouraging, as one male returned to the enclosure 3 months after being released. With unpredictable weather patterns resulting in long periods of drought and/or protracted cold during winter we may have to supplemental feed birds during certain times of the year. Further west natural plants with tubers are more abundant, providing the quail with nutrition during dry times of the year-when even insects are scarce! Though additional experimentation is needed, we're hopeful that a small remnant population of Montezuma Quail will soon inhabit the eastern portions of the Edwards Plateau…

According to the literature the Cooper's Hawk is the most significant predator of adult Montezuma Quail.

Released male taking flight after leaving the release enclosure. A recently released bird returned after being in the wild for 3 months

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A Field Guide for Exotic Birds in Texas

By Fred Collins and Kendra Kocab

Introduced species are, as the name implies, introduced into a novel environment through direct intervention by *Homo sapiens*. The introduction may or may not be intentional. Non-native species introduced onto the North American continent have found their way to Texas since almost the beginnings of civilization. The vast majority of introductions have failed. Some may date back to long before recorded history and could have had more success than we realize. It has been speculated that Inca Doves were brought to the Southwest by early settlers and traders long before the Navaho took residence there. Perhaps it was Texas' first successful exotic introduction. However, since we do not know its origin and it was present when history was first recorded, it is considered a native species.

Most of the additions to Texas avifauna are related to climate change. The climate of the Texas coast has varied from tropical forest to boreal forest repeatedly in the last 20 million years. During Texas' 400 years of recorded history, many tropical species have moved north into the state, some so long ago that few realize they have not always been present. Two examples are Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and Great-tailed Grackles. They were not even found in the Rio Grande Valley until after 1800.

Which exotic species are firmly established or might become established is something only history can judge. One must also consider the time frame to evaluate introductions. In our world of instant gratification, many people think that if a species persists for 10 or 20 years it is well established. Yet, many species that proliferate for 20 years may become rare and on their way out in 50. Peterson's *Texas Field Guide* included both Chukar and Coturnix in the regular bird list under the assumption that these introductions would be successful; 50 years later we know they were not. Other species seem to languish for 50 years before they suddenly expand, as was perhaps the case with introduced White-winged Doves in Galveston. Because of this fact, even tiny populations can have significant repercussions. Mother Nature considers 1000 years to be but the blink of an eye. Final judgment should really be at least a wink and a nod.

However, that doesn't mean we should not have an interest in these introduced birds. They can have significant impacts in many ways. They may compete with native species. They may be hosts for diseases affecting native wildlife. They can be vectors for tropical diseases transmitted by exotic mosquitoes. They are a good measure of how our environment supports novel versus native wildlife and thereby reflect the health of habitats, both native and man-made.

Finally, if we do not document exotic species, we will not know the health of our environment and when it may be threatened by an exotic invader. We believe it is paramount for records to be made available to all that would like to study and examine the influence these exotic species have on our Texas avifauna.

The following list represents our personal opinions of the current status on some more prominent and obvious exotic birds found in the state. It is incomplete. We encourage you to report any non-native species you observe.

We would like to thank the many people with whom we have discussed various exotic species and all of those who have reported them to e-bird and gone the extra mile to send us personal notes. Special thanks to Dan Brooks of the Houston Museum of Natural Science for the bulbul and other records. Dennis Shepler also provided signifi-

cant help in producing the bulbul map. We would also like to thank the many photographers who contributed the images that make this article such a pleasure to look at.

Emu. Seems to coexist with cattle both in Australia and Texas. Photo by Rita Clements.

EMU
Dromaius novaehollandiae

- Native Range: Australia
- Salient features: Large flightless bird up to six feet in height.; distinguished from larger female ostrich by height, shorter and more feathered neck, shorter and slimmer legs with three toes (Ostrich has 2 toes); sexes similar
- Origin: Emu farming was considered an economic boom in the 1980s and many were raised. They are now often pets of large land holders. They can be difficult to manage and handle. Consequently, they are often found roaming rural lands and roads, unrestrained by their former keepers.
- Status: This species might be observed on country roads in most of the eastern 2/3rds of the state. They can live 20 years or more, so feral individuals may be seen for many years. Although this species seems equipped to cope with Texas predators, we are not aware of any reproduction under feral conditions. It seems unlikely that Emus have potential for establishing a sustaining population.

Domestic Swan Goose. Often defiant with photographers. Photos by BeaAnn Kelly (top) and Jerry Chen (bottom).

SWAN GOOSE
Anser cygnoides

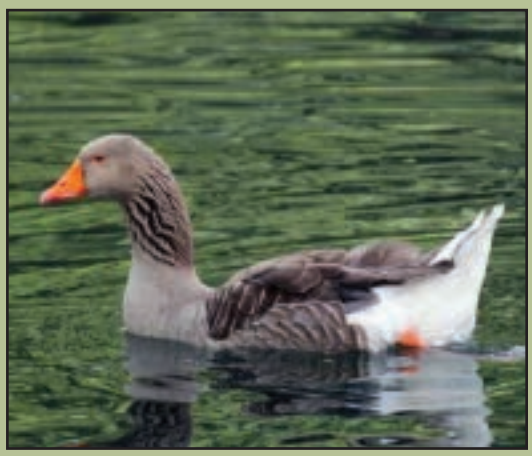
- Native Range: Breeds in Mongolia, northern China, and southeast Russia; winters in North Korea, South Korea, and central China; sexes similar
- Salient features: Pale cheeks and foreneck that contrast sharply with dark cap, nape, and hindneck, bill is black. Note: The large body, upright posture, and head knob of domesticated birds give them a very different profile than their wild counterparts.
- Origin: Released domestic birds
- Status: Domestic/feral birds are often referred to as Chinese Goose or China Brown. These heavy, highly domesticated geese are not likely to be seen flying and are seldom found away from the pond where they were released.

While they are often present in park lakes, they are probably not going to become more widespread since they lack sufficient ability to avoid predation by canines.

Black Swans in Sydney, Australia. Photos by Kendra Kocab.

BLACK SWAN
Cygnus atratus

- Native Range: Australia
- Salient features: Smaller swan, all black with white primaries and secondaries, red bill; sexes similar
- Origin: Kept birds that escaped or were intentionally released to be free-ranging
- A smallish, black swan that is somewhat cryptic. It rarely escapes captivity but exhibits a remarkable tendency to find large open marshes away from people. This behavior suggests it does have potential for expansion and establishment. Swans are long-lived birds and a few pairs could make significant contributions to their establishment. The bird has not been domesticated, so all released birds retain basic survival skills.



Graylag Goose, domestic form in Landa Park, New Braunfels. Photo by Harry Forbes.

GRAYLAG GOOSE
Anser anser

- Native Range: Eurasia and North Africa
- Salient features: Distinguished from similar Greater White-fronted Goose by lack of strongly defined white patch at the base of the bill; domestic Graylag Geese can have varying amounts white from none to completely white, but any white near the base of the bill will not be clearly defined like the Greater White-fronted Goose; sexes similar
- Origin: Domestic birds that escaped or were intentionally released to be free-ranging

- Status: Most birds found in Texas are domestic forms of this native Eurasian species. Consequently, they have poor flight capabilities and fewer survival skills than the native form. They are found in urban parks, and it is not likely that any free-living exotic populations exist in native wetlands.

These Canada Geese are in a subdivision lake and park in Harris County. Photos by Betty Granhold.

CANADA GOOSE
Branta canadensis

- Native Range: Breeds in Canada and the northern United States; winters in the United States and parts of northern Mexico
- Salient features: Black head and neck with a white chinstrap; distinguished from smaller Cackling Goose by size, bill shape, and call; sexes similar
- Origin: Domestic birds that escaped or were intentionally released to be free-ranging
- Status: The local breeding populations of Canada Geese in much of south and east Texas are introduced semi-domesticated birds. However, since they are native to North America and migrate in winter to Texas naturally, these resident birds are not considered exotic. In our opinion, their status is exactly the same as Egyptian Geese in their mode of introduction and living. They prefer more natural wetlands and pastures than urban duck ponds, but otherwise subsist in the same manner.

These are "kept" Mute Swans in a business park in Harris County. Photo by BeaAnn Kelly.

MUTE SWAN
Cygnus olor

- Native Range: Temperate Eurasia
- Salient features: Huge white swan, orange bill distinct; sexes similar
- Origin: Escapees from private waterfowl collections
- Status: In Texas, all birds are either

released free-ranging birds of waterfowl collectors or offspring of pairs that were originally kept birds. Because of their high monetary value, low reproductive rate, and being an easy target for indiscriminate shooters, they have not increased significantly in numbers in Texas. Also, their cygnets may be unable to cope with alligator predation. They are occasionally reported on the outskirts of the Houston metropolitan area and also in the Hill Country. At present, it seems unlikely that this species will gain a genuine foothold. Unlike populations along the Atlantic seaboard, the birds in Texas have not exhibited any inclination to take up residence in Texas bays.

This Egyptian Goose is part of a flock that is nomadic in the vicinity of Lake Houston in Harris County. Photo by Cindy Rubens.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE
Alopochen aegyptiaca

- Native Range: Sub-Saharan Africa and along the Nile River Valley
- Salient features: Pale brown, goose-like bird actually related to shelducks; chocolate brown patch around the eye, dark ring around the base of the neck, rufous wing coverts, and pinkish-red legs; usually seen in pairs; sexes similar
- Origin: Kept birds that escaped or were intentionally released to be free-ranging
- Status: This species favors parks and often associates with domestic ducks at urban park ponds. It is also common in the Hill Country on private lakes. This unusual and colorful goose-like duck is popular among waterfowl collectors. It is inexpensive and breeds readily. Unfortunately, it is pugnacious and many waterfowl breeders release unwanted birds. They wander widely between lakes and seem to readily adapt to an urban lifestyle, commuting between lakes many miles apart. They are sometimes shot by hunters during goose season, indicating their use of natural habitat well away from urban areas where they breed. They seem as adaptable as Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks in their ability to use urban and natural habitats. Egyptian Geese are well on their way to becoming firmly established in the Texas avifauna.

At top, domestic Muscovy Ducks in Harris County. Photo by BeaAnn Kelly.
At bottom, a wild Muscovy Duck. Photo by Greg Lavaty.

MUSCOVY DUCK
Cairina moschata

- Native Range: Eastern and western Mexico, Central America, and South America south to northern Argentina.

Wild native-stock birds are found along the Rio Grande below Falcon Dam and may be spreading into the central Valley.

- Salient features: Large duck, blackish with large white wing patches; feral birds have more white plumage and red caruncles around the face; sexes similar
- Origin: Most domestic forms were Easter ducklings that became big messy ugly ducks and were released on the nearest park with a pond. Most are killed, but some parks offer favorable conditions. Often these situations allow successful reproduction, and the resulting population damages the lake habitat. Overpopulation of lakes by these and domestic Mallard ducks is a continual management problem for park officials.
- Status: Easter ducklings of this species are released annually into the environment. This, coupled with the continual northward movement of the native population in tropical America, would suggest that this species will reach an explosion point like the White-winged Dove did circa 1980. Once wild birds enter urban habitats where these pockets of domestic feral ducks are so well adapted, the combination of the gene pools may cause this species to catapult across the southern U.S.

This photo is an excellent example of the extremes one finds in domestic Mallards and Muscovy Ducks. The photo was by taken by Betty Granhold in a subdivision lake and park in Harris County.

These photos by BeaAnn Kelly illustrate some of the diversity and productivity of domestic Mallards in Texas parks.

MALLARD

Anas platyrhynchos domestic varieties

- Native Range: North America and Eurasia
- Salient features: All varieties of domestic ducks from natural Mallard plumage to all-white barnyard ducks and all combinations in between; the Pekin Duck and Runner Duck are domestic forms of the Mallard. The variety in size, posture and plumage is often greater than the imagination.
- Origin: Easter ducklings or escapees from waterfowl collections
- Status: The development of detention ponds in urban neighborhoods has been a boon for all domestic ducks as well as Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks. There are few urban lakes today without Mallards and Muscovy Ducks. These ducks have a potential to cross with Mottled Ducks and their spread is a potential detriment to Mottled Ducks.

Cock Ring-necked Pheasants are seen more often than hens because they are released for hunters. Photo by Kendra Kocab.

RING-NECKED PHEASANT
Phasianus colchicus

- Native Range: Central and eastern Asia
- Salient features: Large pheasant with long, pointed tail; females are uniformly warm brown and patterned with darks spots; males have large red wattles that cover most of the face, a dark blue-green head with a small crest, and (in some subspecies) a white neck-ring
- Origin: Escapees from release-and-shoot hunting operations and intentional introduction by government wildlife officials
- Status: Considered to be established in the Texas Panhandle. Sporadic birds turn up on many coastal prairies, likely the result of hunting releases rather than remnants of failed establishment programs. We are uncertain that this species will maintain itself in the future in Texas without continued support from government wildlife officials and further releases of captive bred stock. Of course, the same could be said of the Attwater's Prairie Chicken!

Helmeted Guineafowl in a Harris County Park. Photo by Sarah Kuzio.

HELMETED GUINEAFOWL
Numida meleagris

- Native Range: Sub-Saharan Africa
- Salient features: Large bird with round body; black with white speckling; head is small and featherless with pale blue face, red wattles, and a head knob; sexes similar; white or partially white individuals are also common
- Origin: Texas birds all seem to be free-ranging domestic flocks maintained by

a keeper. Occasional single stray birds were likely dumped by an owner or possibly a pen escapee.

- Status: These birds have always been popular with people who keep poultry. They are said to be good watch-dogs and also kill snakes. However, when allowed to roam, they always prefer their own company to that of chickens. Despite seemingly high survival skills, flocks rarely prosper without active care by human keepers. This bird seems unlikely to become established in Texas.

A stunning sunning Peacock. Photo by Jim Pulliam in a west Houston neighborhood.

A Peahen with young in a west Houston neighborhood. Photo by BeaAnn Kelly.

Peacock Portrait. Photo by Jerry Chen in a west Houston neighborhood.

INDIAN PEAFOWL
Pavo cristatus

- Native Range: India
- Salient features: Size, color, and shape of crest make them unmistakable; females smaller, lacking metallic colors and with unremarkable tail
- Origin: All known flocks have had long-term keepers who allowed the birds to range freely. Eventually, the keeper dies or leaves the area and is unable or unwilling to try to catch the birds and remove them.
- Status: This species is widespread in Texas, particularly in metropolitan areas. Keepers often allow the birds to range as free-flying birds so trapping and veterinary care becomes problematic. All known flocks receive some supplemental food from casual admirers or dedicated keepers. It is difficult to determine if some are in fact independent, such as the flock in West Houston. Breeding of free-ranging birds is often regular and has allowed the west Houston flock of 4 founders to grow to at least 60, and perhaps up to 200, birds. Several flocks across the state are said to have been founded 30, 40, and 50 plus years ago. Peacocks

seem well adapted to avoid predation. It would take a major effort and major public awareness campaign for the birds to be removed. Many people and groups would strenuously object to any removal efforts. As odd as it may seem, we believe this species to be firmly established as an urban bird in Texas.

Typical wild form feral Rock Pigeon. Photo by Wayne Wendel.

ROCK PIGEON
Columba livia

- Native Range: Southern Europe, northern Africa, and southwestern Asia
- Salient features: Large pigeon; wild birds are gray overall with darker head and 2 dark wing bars, white cere, and red feet; feral birds can vary widely in plumage coloration and often have more white than native individuals; sexes similar
- Origin: Domestic birds that escaped or were intentionally released to be free-ranging
- Status: This species was introduced into North America as escaped or released domestic varieties. The escaped birds have taken up residence in cities near their core release area. From these beginnings, they have become a self-sustaining feral bird population that is found throughout North America (and the world, for that matter). During the last 50 years, pigeon keeping has declined in popularity and there has been a corresponding loss of variety in the feral populations. Today, the majority of Rock Pigeons look rather similar to the native form found on the cliffs of Europe. Architecture has designed to exclude them from buildings and over-passes, but a healthy population remains in all Texas metropolitan areas. Pigeons also utilize remote structures along highways and industrial sites throughout the countryside. This species is an example of how an exotic species can contribute to the well being of a native species. The Peregrine was once an endangered species, but the pigeon is one key to the urbanization of the Peregrine and part of the reason for its increased abundance.

Eurasian Collared-Dove. Photo by George Valdez.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE
Streptopelia decaocto

- Native Range: Turkey east through the Indian subcontinent
- Salient features: Large dove, grey-buff overall, nape marked with a black half-collar edged with white, square tail with large white tail band; sexes similar
- Origin: It is considered an introduced species based on a population of escaped birds in Florida and/or the

Caribbean. However, the speed with which the population expanded suggests that, in our opinion, the birds moved across the Atlantic from Africa to the Caribbean, which fueled the expansion.

- Status: When a species invades a new range, it is subjected to many factors, both favorable and unfavorable. Continental species are usually at an advantage when invading an island, but invading a highly diverse continent is usually a difficult undertaking. In our view, the Eurasian Collared-Dove has been adapted to urban environments for millennia (Constantinople was the largest city in the world about 400 AD) which are still novel habitats in the New World (no large cities until about 1700). Hence, Eurasian Collared-Dove was pre-adapted for an empty urban niche in America. It has filled that niche spectacularly. This species will surely continue to expand for some time before it is subjected to pressures that will cause it to stabilize, or perhaps decline, as the urban niches in America are refined.

Blue-mutation Budgerigar at back-yard feeder in Harris County. Photo by BeaAnn Kelly.

BUDGERIGAR
Melopsittacus undulatus

- Native Range: Australia
- Salient Features: Small long-tailed parrot. Natural plumage is green with a black and yellow mantle. Domestic varieties may range from all yellow to all blue or all white and any combination of these basic forms.
- Origin: Escaped cage birds
- Status: This is probably the most common cage bird and most domesticated member of the parrot family. Tens of thousands are raised annually in Texas, most by commercial breeders. It is also likely that 1000 or more individuals escape annually in every metropolitan area in the state. In spite of these facts, they are observed less frequently than other regularly-occurring exotic parrots. There are almost no reports of breeding pairs. When they do escape they are usually found in the company of House Sparrows instead of other parrots. Their lack of ability to survive must be related to their high degree of domestication. Unless someone made a concerted effort to establish a free flying flock, this species will not become naturalized.

This photo is from Florida. So far mostly single birds are reported in Texas. Photo by Mark Lockwood.

NANDAY PARAKEET
Aratinga nenday

- Native Range: Southeast Bolivia to southwest Brazil, south to Paraguay and northern Argentina
- Salient features: Black head and face, black bill, dark blue-black wing tips; sexes similar

- Origin: Escaped cage birds
- Status: This parakeet has been found in many Texas towns and has sometimes bred in rural natural environments. It has not been introduced in sufficient numbers to become established. Recent escapees are often seen accompanying Monk Parakeet flocks and occasionally roosting with them. Although much of south Texas and the coastal plain seems suitable for the species, it does not seem to have a core population to gain a foothold.

Yellow-headed Parrot in a Cameron County park. Photo by Charles Lorenz.

YELLOW-HEADED PARROT
Amazona oratrix

- Native Range: Eastern and western Mexico, eastern Guatemala, Belize, and northern Honduras
- Salient features: Yellow head, red at the bend in the wing, pale bill; sexes similar
- Origin: Escaped cage birds but perhaps augmented with wild birds wandering north to the Rio Grande River.
- Status: This species and the Green Parakeet were the two closest parrot inhabitants of the Tamaulipan scrub-forest and have the highest potential to naturally expand their range north to the Rio Grande Valley. The Yellow-headed Parrot is one of the most desirable of all parrots for the pet trade and still holds high value in both Texas and Mexico bird markets. Birds that escape are more likely to be recaptured and nests are more likely to be robbed than any other Mexican parrot. Yellow-headed Parrots were recorded on the San Fernando River of Mexico, only 90 miles south of Brownsville, during several winters in the 1950-70 period. The construction of Lake Guerrero about 160 miles south of Brownsville caused a boom in the population, further fueling the potential for natural expansion to Texas. However, extensive brush clearing and the pet trade likely short-stopped that natural expansion. This species escapes captivity in the Valley on both sides of the border on a regular and continual basis. Given the human-like life-span and intelligence of these birds, it is not surprising they are so regularly seen in the valley in mixed parrot flocks. Reproduction is stymied by delayed maturity and nest robbers, so the population has not expanded like Green Parakeets and Red-crowned Parrots. This species has a strong potential to establish in Texas. If Yellow-headed Parrots moved into the ranch county north of the Valley, where they might escape nest robbers, they could proliferate.

Red-lored Parrot in a Cameron County park. Photos by Greg Lavaty.

of suitable habitat, and competition from better adapted Yellow-headed and Red-crowned Parrots, this species is an unlikely candidate for establishment in Texas.

White-fronted Parrot in a gum tree in a Cameron County park. Photo by David Hanson.

RED-LORED PARROT
Amazona autumnalis

- Native Range: From eastern Mexico south to western Columbia and Ecuador; there is a disjunct population in northwest Brazil
- Salient features: Red forehead and lores, light blue crown, yellow cheeks; sexes similar
- Origin: Escaped cage birds.
- Status: This species in northern Mexico seems more adapted to the foothills of the Sierra Oriental in southern Tamaulipas than the coastal plain. In the pet trade it is less popular than either the Yellow-headed or Red-crowned Parrots and is less frequently seen in the parrot markets. Therefore, it is less numerous in the Rio Grande Valley's mixed parrot flocks. Given its low frequency, lack

\WHITE-FRONTED PARROT
Amazona albifrons

- Native Range: Southern Mexico to Costa Rica; there is a disjunct population on the Pacific slope of western Mexico
- Salient features: Small size, white forecrown, red lores; sexes similar
- Origin: Escaped cage birds.
- Status: This small Amazon is frequently seen in some mixed parrot flocks in the Rio Grande Valley. Its native range includes most of the Yucatan, so birds might be somewhat adapted to the Valley's similar habitat. It is a regular parrot in the pet trade, which accounts for its presence in Texas. These birds are frequently observed in pairs, and small groups often stay distinct from the flocks of larger Amazon species. They appear

to have adapted well to life in Brownsville parks and urban environments, and consequently have some potential for establishment. They mature earlier than the larger Amazons and are much less raucous and obvious. They do not command a high price in the pet trade. All of these qualities suggest a potential for establishment in Texas. At present, there seem to be enough pairs for a founding population in Brownsville.

Orange-winged Parrot. Photo by Greg Lavaty.

ORANGE-WINGED PARROT
Amazona amazonica

- Native Range: Trinidad and Tobago and northern South America
- Salient features: Orange in the wing and tail, variable amounts of blue and yellow on the head, yellow cheeks; sexes similar
- Origin: Escaped cage birds
- Status: This is one of the most abundant Amazons in the pet trade. Thousands are exported from Guyana annually and are frequently found in Mexico and Texas bird markets. They are long-lived and intelligent birds. It is no surprise that a few are found in the mixed parrot flocks in the Rio Grande Valley and occasionally in metropolitan areas. They are from the Llanos and similar environs in South America, so they will not find natural habitat in Texas. However, they adapt well and are easily bred in captivity. Over time, the addition of escaped individuals to feral populations could result in the establishment of this species in metropolitan environments.

At top, a Lilac-crowned Parrot in a gum tree in Cameron County. Photo by David Hanson. At bottom, a Lilac-crowned Parrot. Photo by Isaac Sanchez.

LILAC-CROWNED PARROT
Amazona finschi

- Native Range: Pacific slope of Mexico
- Salient features: Pale lilac crown, dull maroon forehead, long tail for an Amazon; sexes similar

- Origin: Escaped cage birds
- Status: This species is a west coast counterpart of the Red-crowned Parrot and is exploited heavily by the Mexican pet trade. It is found in bird markets throughout Mexico. As a result, a few individuals are found in the mixed parrot flocks in the Rio Grande Valley. Competition with Red-crowned Parrots will probably prohibit establishment in the Valley. There is also a sizeable flock in El Paso across the border from Ciudad Juarez. This flock results from imports supplied by the west coast Mexican bird markets. The El Paso flock appears to be breeding and has high potential for establishment in the metropolitan area.

At top, Rose-ringed Parakeet visits a feeder in Tarrant County. Photo by Ervin Fleming. At bottom, Rose-ringed Parakeet in a mesquite tree in Bexar County. Photo by Brad Weir.

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET
Psittacula krameri

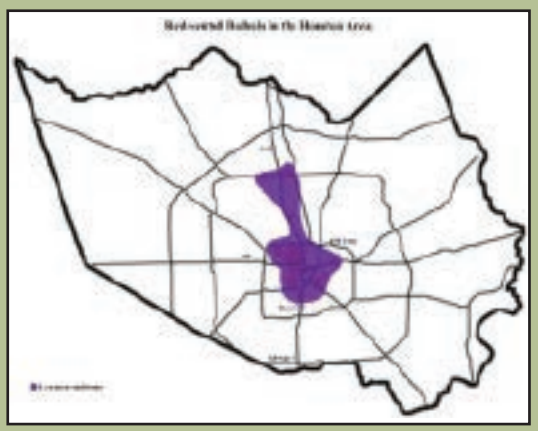
- Native Range: Most widespread parrot in the world with a native range stretching across Saharan Africa from Senegal to northern Ethiopia; there is also a population in southern Asia
- Salient features: Both male and female are almost entirely green above and yellow-green below with a very long thin tail, red bill, and black loral line; males also have a black chinstrap, pale blue neck and back of head, and pinkish collar
- Origin: Escaped cage birds
- Status: This species has been kept as pets at least from the time of Ancient Rome. It, like the Budgerigar, is highly domesticated and comes in a variety of colors. Individuals that escape are prone to gather with other parakeets and are regularly reported in the company of Monk Parakeets. They can be fairly long-lived, easily reaching 30 years in captivity. Because of its high domesticity, this species has poor survival skills and is not likely to become established in Texas.

Monk Parakeet. Photo by Brad Weir.

MONK PARAKEET
Myiopsitta monachus

- Native Range: Southern Brazil and Bolivia south to central Argentina
- Salient features: Almost entirely green with pale gray breast and forehead, pale orange bill, and long tail; sexes similar
- Origin: Escaped cage birds. These birds were once imported by the thousands in boxes of 100 parrots each. On more than one occasion entire crates were broken, releasing an entire flock of wild birds into the U.S. This may well have happened in Texas. A flock of Monk Parakeets has a much greater survival rate than single released pets. Once a flock is established, it attracts single birds and the flock synergy increases the likelihood of future survival. These factors contribute to the widespread establishment of this species in the state. Most flocks were founded in the late 60s and early 70s when parrot imports were at their peak.
- Status: Monk Parakeets are one of the few parrots that make their own nests. They learn from their parents what constitutes a suitable nest site. Some towns have parrot cultures that utilize water towers and cell towers. Worldwide, palm trees are a common nesting culture. In Texas however, this behavior is limited to a few palm-nesting Monk Parakeets in Freeport, San Leon and Corpus Christi. We are unaware of more widespread palm-nesting in Texas. The culture in most Texas cities is to build nests in power transmission towers and power substations. In the Houston area, communal nests are built almost exclusively in power facilities and can be very large. Power companies have made every effort to dissuade the parrots with only limited success. These birds have so far shown limited expansion but are productive within the small clusters. We believe this bird is firmly entrenched in the urban environment and will likely be a permanent member of the Texas avifauna.

An adult Red-vented Bulbul (top) and a Red-vented Bulbul on a nest (center). Photos by BeaAnn Kelly.
At bottom, two Red-vented Bulbuls. Photo by Tom Kilty.



RED-VENTED BULBUL
Pycnonotus cafer

- Native Range: Indian subcontinent
- Salient features: Mockingbird-sized with dark face, upper breast and crest, white rump, black tail tipped with white, and crimson red vent; sexes similar.
- Origin: This species has exhibited invasive tendencies around the globe. While it is possible that the founders were escaped cage birds, there are several documented cases where the founders were ship-assisted vagrants. In Texas, the species was first reported in the Houston area in 1958.
- Status: This species occurs in north central Houston. Its core population is in the Heights area just west and north of downtown Houston. (See Map) The population seems to be expanding, but increased records may be more related to observer awareness and interest. Until recently, Red-vented Bulbuls were not included in any North American field guide. The birds can be cryptic and hard to detect. They breed readily and appear to be productive and well adapted to the inner city neighborhood utilizing a mixed forest of exotic vegetation. Southwest Houston seems well suited for the species, but as yet it has not spread into that area. Whether or not it does so will be a good indicator of how well the species has naturalized and if it is likely to spread to other areas.

Breeding plumage European Starling. Photo by Mark Lockwood.

Fresh winter plumage European Starling. Photo by Joseph Kennedy.

EUROPEAN STARLING
Sturnus vulgaris

- Native Range: Europe to southwest Asia and northern Africa
- Salient features: Blackbird-sized but with short tail, iridescent with buff & white spots, yellow bill in breeding season; in flight, wings appear short and pointed; sexes similar
- Origin: In 1890, about 60 birds were released in New York City's Central Park as part of an attempt by the American Acclimatization Society to introduce into the U.S. every bird species mentioned by William Shakespeare.
- Status: The North American population has grown from 60 birds in 1890 to approximately 60 million today, according to Partners in Flight.

Female House Sparrow. Photo by Joseph Kennedy.

Male House Sparrow. Photo by Sarah Kuzio.

HOUSE SPARROW
Passer domesticus

- Native Range: Eurasia
- Salient features: Not a sparrow, actually a weaver finch; females and immature males are a drab brown with streaking on the back and an overall plain face with a pale, broad supercilium and pale bill; breeding males have a black bill, face, throat, and breast, silvery cheek, gray crown, warm brown upperparts, and pale gray underparts
- Origin: The North American invasion of this species began in 1850, when birds from England were introduced in Brooklyn, New York. According to the Texas Breeding Bird Atlas, House Sparrows were introduced to Galveston, TX in 1867 with subsequent releases at intervals until 1872. Between 1880 and 1905 the species spread rapidly throughout the state.
- Status: This species exploded across the North American continent in a fashion similar to that observed for Eurasian Collared-Dove. They are probably more numerous than European Starlings. However, recent survey data suggest that the species has declined in abundance in the last 20-30 years. The senior author's impression is they are not nearly as numerous as they were in the 1955-70 era but are still widespread and common.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill in a Harris County backyard. Photos by Candy McNamee.

ORANGE-CHEEKED WAXBILL
Estrilda melpoda

- Native Range: Western and central Africa
- Salient features: Gray head, brown back, pale gray underparts, orange cheek patches, red-orange bill, red rump, and dark tail; sexes similar
- Origin: Escaped cage birds. One of the Puerto Rico finches (see Scaly-breasted Munia below).
- Status: This bird was starting to be reported at a number of Houston area sites, but few if any have been seen since the cold winter of 2013-14. All

exotic finch numbers appear to be depressed following that severe winter. This species would be a potential brood host for the Pin-tailed Whydah.

Female Northern Red Bishop Photo by Jerry Chen.

Male Northern Red Bishop. Photo by Jim Kelly.

Female and transition male Northern Red Bishop in Harris County Park. Photo by BeaAnn Kelly.

NORTHERN RED BISHOP
Euplectes franciscanus;
formerly Orange Bishop

- Native Range: Sub-Saharan Africa north of the Equator
- Salient features: Small weaver finch with abnormally short tail; breeding males are bright orange-red with black head and belly; adult males only exhibit breeding plumage for a very short period during the summer; females, non-breeding males, and immatures most often misidentified as Grasshopper Sparrow, but unlike bishops, Grasshopper Sparrows never come to your feeder
- Origin: Escaped cage birds. One of the Puerto Rico finches (see Scaly-breasted Munia below).
- Status: This bird utilizes the marshy grass in detention ponds around the Greater Houston area. Courtship displays by males in breeding plumage have only been observed in suitable habitat around southwest Houston. As many as 60 birds were observed in the detention areas adjacent to Arthur Storey Park in the summers of 2012 and 2013. They can be abundant in many detention areas to the west and south of this park. While most reports are from the Greater Houston Area, there have been a few sightings from other parts of Texas, but those reported only to eBird are not available for analysis. Since regional reviewers do not want Northern Red Bishop on the county list, these records are hidden from eBird users. This species, though possibly reduced in numbers due to the severe 2013-14 winter, is still widespread and regularly reported. Commercial, residential and infrastructure developments are required to construct detention areas, further increasing suitable habitat for this species. Consequently, we see nothing to inhibit the continued expansion of

the Northern Red Bishop population in the Houston area. We believe this species is well on its way to naturalization and becoming a permanent member of the Texas avifauna.

Adult Bronze Mannikin in a west Harris County Park. Photo by Sarah Kuzio.

BRONZE MANNIKIN
Spermestes cucullata

- Native Range: Sub-Saharan Africa
- Salient features: Very small, seed-eating birds; adults have dark brown upperparts, pale underparts, an iridescent green shoulder patch, and they lack the scaly breast of Scaly-breasted Munias; juveniles are entirely grey-brown with underparts paler than upperparts; sexes similar
- Origin: Escaped cage birds. One of the Puerto Rico finches (see Scaly-breasted Munia below). The most recent addition to the exotic finches reported in the Houston area.
- Status: Prior to the cold winter of 2013-14, Bronze Mannikins were starting to be reported at a number of Houston area locations, often with Scaly-breasted Munias. There have been fewer subsequent reports from feeders since that winter. This is a tiny finch, much smaller than the Scaly-breasted Munia. It is unclear if the species has a foothold in the Houston metro area or any other area in Texas.

At top, an adult Scaly-breasted Munia. At bottom, immature Scaly-breasted Munias. Photos by Frank Farese taken at Kleb Woods Nature Preserve in Harris County.

SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA
Lonchura punctulata;
formerly Nutmeg Mannikin

- Native Range: India to southern China and southeast Asia
- Salient features: Adults have a nutmeg-brown head and back with black-and-white-scalloped breast and flanks, and a white belly; juveniles are a plain tan all over; sexes similar (Most individuals you see are juvenile-plumaged birds. Any little, plain brown bird you see at a feeder is probably a Scaly-breasted Munia.)
- Origin: Escaped cage birds. From the late 1990s through about 2012 this species was heavily imported. A high percentage of imported birds originated from Puerto Rico. The trapping of exotic feral finches there was of such a magnitude it has apparently depleted those feral populations, and shipments from Puerto Rico have dwindled. In addition to Scaly-breasted Munias, all the other exotic finches in this report were shipped in quantity from Puerto Rico. Because it is a U.S. protectorate, birds shipped to the U.S. do not have to be quarantined. They can even be shipped by Express Mail through the USPS. These Puerto Rican finches were so cheap that they were bought for weddings so guests could release birds instead of throwing rice. This led to apparently hundreds of finches being released, many in southwest Houston where there is a sizable East and Southeast Asian population that favors this wedding tradition.
- Status: This bird has been common and regular in the greater Houston area since the late 1990s. It is sometimes present in flocks of 50 or more at feeders. In recent years, it has become cyclical in its occurrence. Reports are infrequent in late spring and summer, and begin to increase in August and September. Flocks often consist of about a dozen birds, most of which are immature. They become less widespread in winter, congregating at a few sites and relying on feeders to supplement them through the winter. In spring they apparently disperse in pairs to breed widely across their range. Following breeding, they congregate in flocks and reports again increase. This pattern mirrors what is observed in their native range. This bird exhibits all the behavior of a well-established species.

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An adult male Pin-tailed Whydah in Utopia, Texas. Photos by Judy Bailey.
A female plumaged bird in a west Harris County park. Photo by Greg Lavaty.

PIN-TAILED WHYDAH
Vidua macroura

- Native Range: Sub-Saharan Africa
- Salient features: Breeding males are black and white with very long tails and orange bills; females and non-breeding males are sparrow-like with a bold black-and-buff face pattern and red-orange bill
- Origin: Escaped cage birds. One of the Puerto Rico finches (see Scaly-breasted Munia above). This bird formerly commanded high prices of $125 or more in the pet trade. However, they are established on Puerto Rico.
- Status: This strikingly beautiful finch is a brood parasite, requiring particular other finch species to raise its young. In the United States none of its known hosts are established, so it seems unlikely that it would become established. However, it is reported more often, is more widespread, and occurs in larger numbers than one could predict based on escaped birds alone. The presence of fairly large flocks of twenty individuals in summer suggest breeding success. During the breeding season, males are territorial and a female may lay more than 20 eggs. This species has the capability to be highly productive. In Texas and California they are often in the company of Scaly-breasted Munias, suggesting munias could be the whydah's host species. However, in their native Africa, none of the 20 species of *Vidua* parasitic finches are known to utilize a *Lonchura* munia species as a host. Additionally, one of the remarkable adaptations of whydahs is that the chicks have the gape pattern of their host, none of which are found in the United States. All of this makes the use of munias seem unlikely. However, that is what our observations suggest and observers in California have suggested it as well. Equally unlikely is that they could be using some native species as a host in Texas and California. Close and extended observation of this exotic will be required to determine its status in Texas. Because it is a brood parasite and is adapting to our Texas environment, the need for observations of this exotic species may be more important than any other.

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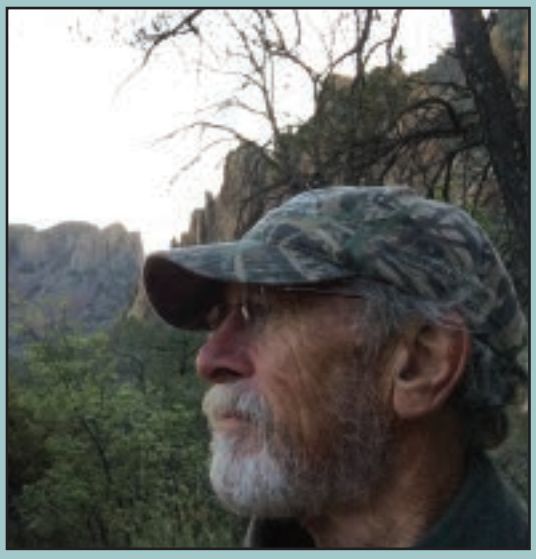
W. Dennis Shepler
Profile of a Texas Bird Artist

By Fred Collins



I have known W. Dennis Shepler for a lifetime. We met in the Wildlife Science Department at Texas A&M University in the fall of 1968. I was a sophomore and Dennis was a senior. We both were employed on Dr. Keith Arnold's snipe crew and therefore began being in the field before dawn to well after dusk together. We soon realized we were both energetic and enthusiastic bird watchers who were up for any quest for birds at any hour of the day regardless the weather or those picky class schedules and professors that took roll call. It is something of a miracle we passed any classes during the spring of 69 and 70. Could anyone really expect us to be in class during a fall out? Of course, three warblers in the oaks in front of the Academic Building constituted a fall out and required a trip to better environs. Yet, somehow we both managed to graduate from that great university.

The best I can recall, I took my first birding road trip with Dennis. We drove from College Station to Aransas during the night and pitched our tent by the side of the road at the entrance gate in a nice grassy swale. Not long before dawn it rained and we discovered the swell was a ditch. It was easy to get up and be on a marshy wetland about sunrise and enjoy a family of Whooping Cranes come and land very close to us. I still recall the scene vividly and remember the joy I felt and the excitement Dennis exuded.

We cut our tropical birding teeth along with Victor Emanuel in Mexico. We were musketeers. I like to tell the story of how I saved Dennis' life on one of those trips by preventing him from killing one of our companions because this un-named companion was about to shoot a Double-tooth Kite for a specimen. Dennis tells the story a different way however.

Without question, Dennis is a Texas original. His roots are deep. His matrilineal great great grandfather, Captain John Fitch, was foreman of the King Ranch. His matrilineal great grandmother, Laura Fitch Morrison, was born on the Laurales Division of the ranch. He is also related to James Butler Bonham, who died at the Alamo and has some relations in the Burleson family. Even his late wife was deeply rooted in Texas. Her maternal grandfather, June LaGrone was a cotton farmer in the Brazos bottoms up near Hearne, Texas in the early 1900s.

She too was an artist and Dennis spent more than 30 years promoting and assisting her art. Having lost his wife of 35 years, Dennis had to find new focus for his life. He has been successful in that effort and retains his enthusiasm I found so infectious 46 years ago. In the last few years, Dennis has applied himself to capturing the essence of the birds he loves and knows so well. He has been inspired by fellow artists and friends John O'Neill and F.P. "Tony" Bennett. Other inspiration has come from the works of Louis Agassiz Fuertes, Don Eckelberry and Allan Brooks.

Dennis' artwork exudes the enthusiasm he has for birds. Each portrait has an expression that is unique to Dennis' deep and abiding love of the bird's beauty and his knowledge

of the bird's habits and movements. While he has traveled widely and has painted birds of Costa Rica and Maine, most of his artwork reflects his Texas heritage. He has painted many of the Matagorda CBC's rarest birds for their annual T-shirt. The Magnificent Frigatebird graced one of these shirts. The original is far more beautiful than the print on the shirt.

Dennis spent much of his life as a school teacher. For 35 years, he taught Biology, Environmental Science, Marine Sciences, Chemistry, and Computer Language at private schools. He has taught at The Branson School in California, Saint Mary's Hall in San Antonio, Houston's The Awty International School, where he also served as Department Chairman and finally for 12 years at The Kinkaid School in Houston.

Since retirement he has pursued birding and painting full time but has found time to volunteer for many worthy endeavors. He has taught art classes at Kleb Woods Nature Center, led tours for Featherfest, and in Costa Rica volunteered at the non-profit Abriendo Mentes teaching English to children in Potrero, Guanacaste. While in Costa Rico he also set up a computer and science lab for the local school in the town of Pinilla, Guanacaste with equipment donated by the Kinkaid School. The time he has spent in Costa Rica has led him into the realm of tropical bird painting and he has demonstrated a special talent for the subject.

Dennis sells his works privately. Most of his sales are commissions. His originals grace the home of several prominent Texas ornithologists and birders. A good sampling of his work can be viewed at: https://www.facebook.com/BirdArtistNA and he can be contacted through that site. He has donated originals and prints to the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and the Texas Ornithological Society for their fund raisers.

He has painted several Texas rarities he has seen in the last few years, Band-rumped Storm Petrel (which appeared in a previous Texas Bird Annual) and Rufous-capped Warbler, which was a private commission. But my favorite is the Flame-colored Tanager in Boot Springs. The painting brings together all of the great aspects of the place and bird into a memory that one can rarely get outside a dream. It accurately depicts the bird we saw but also gives the bird a sense of place, depicting the famous boot in the background. It's hard to get more Texan than that.

Last fall he was one of the volunteer education interns at Acadia National Park, Maine. Again, time spent in fresh environs has stimulated his bird art and the picture of a Spruce Grouse is one of the results.

For many years Dennis covered the beach area on the Freeport CBC. One of the birds they were responsible for procuring for the count was the Black Skimmer. Most years it was an easy find but sometime an extremely difficult one. It therefore is no surprise to me that I find his portrait of a Black Skimmer so appealing. He truly appreciates this common Texas bird.

Dennis and his wife named one of their children Wren. He and I had frequently worked hard catching Marsh Wrens, and Sedge Wrens while we were banding snipe. He also taught me how to find Winter Wrens. His Winter Wren portrait has all the charm of his beautiful daughter.

Vic Emanuel, Ben Feltner, John and Rose-Ann Rowlet, Suzanne Winkler were among our first friends and they all had bird names bestowed by the Cassowary himself, Edgar Kincaid. Dennis was christened Denden Kingfisher. Inspired by the words of Simon and Garfunkel I am happy to say that Dennis is "still crazy after all these years".

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My Lifer Varied Thrush

By Carolyn Ohl-Johnson

Perhaps it all began with the horrendous westerly wind we had in the middle of October of 2012. I had been away from my Christmas Mountains Oasis during that time and when I returned several days later, I observed that I had a few different birds. Most notable was a Buff-bellied Hummingbird that I first saw Oct 19th. It was a first county record for Brewster County, Texas, where my oasis is located, as well as the first Trans-Pecos record.

No sooner had a couple of bird experts (Kelly Bryan and Mark Lockwood) departed after having captured and banded the hummer on Oct 20th than I caught a brief glimpse of orange and black on a bird in some underbrush, as it disappeared deeper into the dense brush. I called it a Spotted Towhee, even though that identification niggled at my mind afterwards. There was something different from a Spotted Towhee (which I hadn't seen or heard all fall at the oasis), that I couldn't put my finger on, undoubtedly due to the short and ever so partial glimpse I'd gotten. I kept telling myself it had to have been a towhee… there were no other options. But towhees weren't that secretive, and I usually heard them before I saw them. Something wasn't right. And while the gizz and coloration seemed a bit off, it always came back to the fact that it had to be a towhee, because there were no other options available to me. Or so I thought.

First photo of the thrush

Thrush eating grapes

Two or so hours later, with the "towhee" relegated to the back of my mind, I was still watering my trees. That's really the only time I watch birds, unless birders are there, so it's a treasured time for me to de-stress and bond with my habitat.

As I was rushing around, trying to finish before dark, I saw a thrush-like bird flush nearby. I raised my binoculars as it lit atop a brush pile, and immediately knew what it was, even though I'd never seen one before. It's a pretty distinctively marked bird. Almost reflexively, I understood that I had to get a photo, and that "here and now" might be my only chance. I dashed to my pickup not far away, all the while imploring under my breath, "Please still be here." Fresh in my mind was a brief spring encounter with a Slate-throated Redstart that understandably didn't get accepted by the Texas Birds Records Committee. By the time I got to my camera, it was gone, never to be relocated.

But this time I was lucky. As I approached for the second time, the bird flew a short distance to the other side of the huge brush pile. I was able to snap a few frames before it disappeared. Having no idea what my camera settings were, in the heat of the moment, I could only hope that I had been able to get something diagnostic from them.

Watering ended for the day, as I rushed to the house to share my discovery with the

Thrush foraging in the snow

birding world, and see what my camera had captured. Miraculously, a few minutes later, that was accomplished.

With brightening by photoshop, the photo was unmistakably of a male Varied Thrush.

A few days later, Kelly came to do a routine hummingbird banding session and right away spotted a Costa's Hummingbird, which would be the 33nd record for Texas. The thrush would be the 42nd record for the state. Things had been crazy since that wild California wind. I theorized that both the Costa's and the Varied Thrush were blown in from there, but we'll never know.

Meanwhile, Kelly noticed the thrush eating some native Ivy Grapes (*Cissus incisa*), or Possum Grapes, and casually commented that he bet the thrush would leave when they were gone. That started the wheels turning in my head, and a day or two later I began putting out various fruits to see if the bird would eat any of them. I tried apple, blueberries, cranberries, and other items. It shunned them all except grapes, so grapes it was.

I impaled the grapes on toothpicks glued into a stick, keeping careful count of what was consumed every day. The tallies varied from 2 to 22. One day, after I discovered it loved sunflower seeds, it didn't touch the grapes, but that only happened once. Normally, it consumed about a dozen.

As soon as birders realized there was a good chance it would be present if they visited, I was hosting many visitors. Some came for their

First seed feeder for thrush

Mockingbird stealing grapes

lifer Varied Thrush, others just for a new Texas, or Brewster County, tick. Some came just because it had been years since they'd seen one, and it was a good excuse to bird a new location. All were welcomed and many brought grapes or birdseed. In fact, I got so overloaded with grapes that I had to insist they didn't bring any more. Birders are the best!

Soon the New Year was upon us and still the thrush was present. By then it had been in Texas longer than any previous thrush had been documented. The prior record was 70 days for one in Lubbock, Texas.

It was certainly an extra burden, to my already overloaded life, to make sure it had grapes every day. If it didn't eat them all, the surplus would disappear during the night, though nothing else ever touched them during the day, to my amazement. So when I was at the oasis overnight, I removed them at dusk and replaced them at daylight.

One time the bird came in, grabbed a couple of grapes before a professional photographer arrived at 9 AM from about 700 miles away. After the photographer got set up, the bird didn't show. I had to leave, but con-

Thrush eating cracked corn

vinced him to stay until dark if need be. The bird had never, not shown up, for that long a time. The poor man waited to no avail. This bothered me so much that I convinced him to come back a couple of weeks later. He did eventually get his photos and left feeling it was worth all the effort, but that was the one time I was beside myself with frustration.

I enlisted my sisters to rise early and go put out grapes on the two or three mornings a week that I couldn't be there. The new wore off that real quick, but they were real troupers about doing it, even though they aren't birders.

With January we got a big snowstorm to where my one sister and I couldn't get up the big hill on the road in. So if it was our day to feed, we walked in. My husband, who lives 70 miles away in Alpine, was very unhappy about the whole situation. Winter was the time of year he usually got to see the most of me. Spring, summer, and fall I was too busy with hummingbird banding, watering trees,

birding, birders, etc. Now, he was seeing me no more often. I didn't ask for this wonderful life bird, but nothing was going to prevent me from doing my best to see that it survived its impromptu arrival in Texas.

The thrush even started eating cracked corn. Because I never knew which photo op would be my last with him, I took hundreds of photos. A friend and I may have gotten the first photos ever taken of a Varied Thrush in Texas snow.

I even resorted to the unthinkable, raising mealworms. The sight of a worm (larva, whatever) turns my stomach. I definitely have a phobia about them. But if it would keep the thrush healthy and happy, I would do it.

Meanwhile, I rigged up a sunflower seed feeder that I hoped would meet its needs. On the ground where it liked to forage, and hopefully, protected from javelina, I punched holes along the base of an old metal trash can, weighted and staked. I filled the can with sunflower seeds, and later, cracked corn, so it would always have a reliable supply. A friend thought maybe as the weather got colder the seeds gave it more calories for keeping warm than grapes did. That may be so, because in October when I put out a tray of sunflower seeds on the ground it didn't touch them. I think in hindsight though, he just hadn't found them.

As the days started lengthening, one day I noticed a white feather on his back that hadn't been there the day before. And he seemed to crave sunflower seeds more than grapes. As long as observers were reasonably still, he didn't appear to be bothered by them. I made a mini-brush pile closer to the grape feeder, hoping he'd feel, and be safer, with it handy. There were plenty of predators around, not to mention a mockingbird that harassed him mercilessly.

He never did touch the mealworms so I eventually quit offering them. And about the time he started totally ignoring the grapes, a mockingbird discovered them as a yummy food source.

Nighttime roost in middle of cottonwood tree

Finally, when all I saw the thrush eat was cracked corn, I quit offering grapes altogether. By mid- January, cracked corn became his diet of choice. Whereas, in the previous several months he could be seen all over the oasis, by late January the bird only made appearances at the corn feeder. I was concerned that I was fattening him up too much. Surprisingly, there were always weekly visitors, people that hadn't been able to come sooner, for whatever reason.

On Feb 17, 2013, I was monitoring the feeding area early in the morning when I heard what I was sure was one of his vocalizations. It was a rather short, buzzy trill. Later, listening to a tape of its various calls, I recognized that as one of them. So I figured the time was nearing for his departure.

Final photo of thrush

Shortly after vocalizing, he came in and did his normal feeding routine. By then he lacked 3 days of his 4 month anniversary.

Early the following morning, I took my place at the viewing bench near the feeder and waited for over two hours. He didn't show up….silence. I felt sure he was gone so dismantled the temporary feeder and left for Alpine, as I had been scheduled to do. It was a feeling akin to having been pregnant for many months, and while I was glad to have nurtured the bird in the womb of the oasis, I was relieved when it was born back to its breeding ground. I wished him a safe journey. Here is the last photo I took of him, eating corn, the mysterious white back feather long gone.

Was I ever surprised to get an email from birders several days later saying they had

visited the oasis and seen the thrush! What! You gotta be kidding! was my first reaction. I rushed down the next day and rigged up a different feeder that I thought would be more photographer friendly and easier to fill. The previous version required a ladder stile to get over the fence. Here's the new version. It seemed to be impervious to javelina, too.

Meanwhile, another male Varied Thrush had started being seen in a yard in Kress, TX (beginning in early February). I actually had visitors who saw both birds. I bet that doesn't happen often. My thrush vocalized a little bit more in late February. It usually happened around 8:00 AM and didn't last more than a few seconds at intervals within less than a fifteen minute time span, but was priceless to hear, nevertheless.

From the perspective of having the thrush around for such a long time, I could actually notice a difference in his behavior from when he first arrived. Initially, he seemed nervous, skittish, and prone to show up anywhere in the oasis. As the days turned into months, it appeared that he had settled in comfortably, and was at ease in his new home. Of course, he stayed very secretive. That was his nature. That would never change, but there were subtle differences. He was probably more reliably seen at the corn feeder than he had been to locate earlier in his visit. He favored a nightly roost in the middle of a large cottonwood tree, long since barren of leaves.

One thing that stood out to me was that only once or twice in the hundreds of sightings by countless people was he ever seen drinking water. Since his normal environment is a wet one, that just didn't make sense. He was either finding lots of juicy bugs to eat, or more likely, had a favorite very well hidden drinking spot that he visited at dawn before anyone arrived.

By mid-March his singing had become louder, longer, and more insistent. On the evening of Mar 19, I may have witnessed the bird's final moments at my oasis. It flew to the top of the big cottonwood tree, the same tree it usually roosts in, at around the same time it usually went to roost, right after sunset. The tree was starting to put on new leaves. This time the thrush was not part way up the tree as usual, but higher than I had ever seen it before. And instead of seeming to settle in for the night, he kept looking this way and that. When I tired of photographing it, I backed slowly away through brush in a roundabout route so as not to flush it. As I did so, I glanced up to where the bird had been perched seconds before. It was gone.

I thought, "Darn, I didn't mean to flush it. I had stayed so far away." (Previously, when I got closer for photos, it flushed.) At that time there was no wind. Not long afterward the wind built up and continued raging from the northeast all night long and well into the first day of spring. At 5:00 AM the vernal spring equinox would officially begin. Did the thrush know that it was time he had to leave?

The next morning, enduring the wind, I sat watching the feeder and listening for the bird. Nothing. No song, no feeder visits. I had thought other times it was gone when it wasn't, so I didn't take this as proof positive. It had been here five full months. Many people, and especially I, have wonderful memories of his visit. He left me with many unanswered questions too.

For one, why did I only once observe him drinking or bathing, when for months the grapes were right at the water feature? And why did he suddenly stop eating grapes and only eat at the feeder? Even when I moved the grapes to the feeder, he would gobble up the corn right beside the grapes and totally ignore the grapes. And the biggest unanswered question of all, where did he come from? And where did he go? Wherever that place is, I hope he's safe.

Carolyn Ohl-Johnson
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Drought! Native Plant Recommendations for Critter Food

by Christina Mild

With the restrictions, moral and legal, on irrigating during extended drought, one considers various strategies to help the hungry birds. In general, native plant species will provide more food and shelter than non-natives with a given amount of water.

Of course, many native species occur only in places which were periodically flooded down through history. Most of these all but disappear during dry times.

So, selection of species which persist and perform during drought is one strategy to consider. In my yard, Turk's Cap, *Malvaviscus drummondii*, was doing well during our droughty summer, with no irrigation. If this plant is already established in your landscape, a bit of additional watering will bring on more blooms, fruit and resistance to pests.

Turks Cap Bloom Fruit

To establish a new species, even during drought, there are several methods to consider. One is to start the plant in a large container with good potting soil, especially the "moisture-retaining" mixes. This limits competition from weeds and allows focused watering on a small area. Birds will continue to plant whatever they enjoy eating under their favorite perches, so your "new" native species will spread to other areas in your landscape and neighborhood. Frugivorous birds enjoy Turk's Cap, and many butterflies utilize it for nectar and as a larval host plant. Thus, insectivorous birds can capitalize on this plant, also. One of my south Texas friends was thrilled to show me this "exotic" species which he'd gone to great pains to bring in from California! Somehow he failed to notice it growing beneath the Live Oak canopy at the Falfurrias checkpoint anytime he drove north to leave "the valley."

I've also had great success with Scarlet Sage, *Salvia coccinea*. It's a great nectar plant for hummingbirds and butterflies, and I've heard reports of small birds eating the prolific seeds. This is an easy plant to establish from seed and it will quickly spread to new areas. I recommend starting this in a large pot with good soil. Once established, Scarlet Sage will spread into a wide range of habitat, from well-drained to heavy clay and from shade to full sun.

Scarlet Sage

Besides the use of containers, I also use

Containers and Barricades

bricks and other barriers to establish a small "best growth" zone along fences or in crevices. Adding soil with high humus content to these cordoned-off areas gives plants an extra energy boost, allows focused watering, and retains moisture longer. Sometimes I seed directly into these areas; other times I place a potted specimen in the area and allow it to "seed out." In other cases, it's important to provide enough water to keep the newly-introduced plants from drying out.

Your local chapter of NPSOT (Native Plant Society of Texas) probably has some listings of plants they recommend in your area for drought, as well as lists of plants especially attractive to birds.

Native American Seed <info@seedsource.com> provides excellent quality Texas-provenance seed for many species. Their "Hummers & Singers Mix" is a good place to start in adding herbaceous natives to your landscape. Using a mix will result in proliferation of the species best-matched to the growing conditions available to you.

Behind my back fence is a farmer's field which is irrigated. There's a 6' strip between my fence and the plowed area of the field. I've used RoundUp to kill off the Johnson and Guinea grasses which tend to proliferate there. And I've cut seedheads of native sunflowers and mallows and various vines, which I spread in that zone behind my fence. Now I have a variety of natives which provide a diversity of wildlife food, instead of pesky exotic grasses which would infiltrate my yard.

Thrasher in Huisache

You may border an alleyway where natives can be encouraged if invasive species such as tall, weedy grasses are eliminated. If you have any control over whether that area is mown, you can utilize it for adding diversity to the neighborhood.

You may have a chain-link fence, which is a wonderful place to grow a variety of native vines beloved by birds. In all likelihood, these will already be sprouting. If you can eliminate competition from weedy grasses, a vine-covered fence will be far more attractive and well-used by the birds. I especially like snail-seed vine, *Cocculus diversifolius,* various Milkweed

Snailseed Vine

Common Sunflower, Mirasol

Passiflora seberosa fruit

Gulf Fritillary Caterpillar on Passionvine

Vines, and a variety of native Passionflower Vines, especially *Passiflora suberosa*.

Fall is also a good time to consider planting bird-friendly shrubs and trees. While you may not see rapid growth during cooler weather, you'll have a better chance of keeping the new transplant sufficiently watered to encourage strong roots. Try to select a native species which isn't already over-planted in your neighborhood. Anacua, *Ehretia anacua*, is an excellent tree for wildlife, and you won't find it in abundance except where natives have been allowed to remain intact. We often think of thorny Huisache as a pest species, but if you want visiting warblers, Huisache is a number one choice!

Anacua laden with unripe fruit

I recently visited a friend who is attempting to establish butterfly gardens during the current drought. He wanted recommendations on new species to add. Much of his "yard" was not grass, but closely-mown groundcovers which were the original vegetation before the area became a subdivision. I lost count of how many native species were attempting to overcome the constant mowing. "Water this wild area" was the best advice I think I gave him that day. The plants which would provide for wildlife had already been selected over the centuries and were attempting to persist, despite man's best efforts to keep them in control. "I will definitely stop mowing this," he remarked, when I pointed out about a dozen of probably one hundred natives already well-rooted in his yard.

Even a square foot of dirt is large enough to add something of use to our wonderful friends, the birds.

Christina Mild
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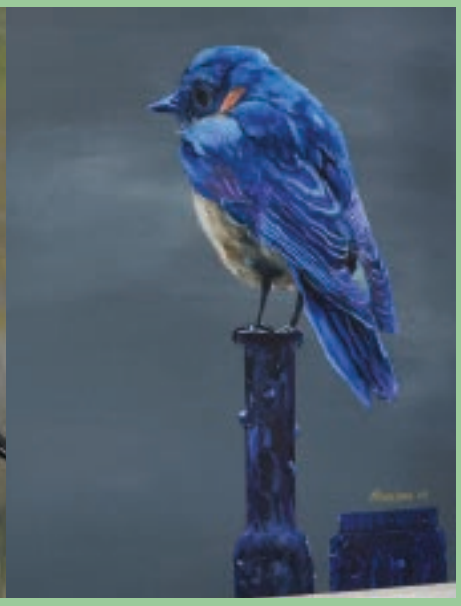
Children's Art Contest at Laredo Birding Festival



Kudos to the staff at the Rio Grande International Study Center, especially to Tricia Cortez, Executive Director, for a great festival this past weekend. Held at the historic La Posada Hotel overlooking the Rio Grande in downtown Laredo, I found the event well organized and run with almost unlimited birding opportunities up and down the river, many on private ranches. I was particularly impressed with the opening night mixer at the Arts Center where over 300 bird art entries from area school kids were shown. I was happy to be a part of the event as a program presenter and field trip leader.

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Artwork provided by Julie Castillo

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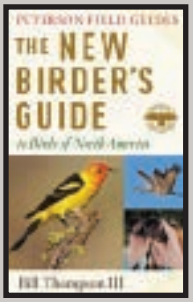
The Double-Crested Cormorant: Plight of a Feathered Pariah
Linda Wires
Yale University Press 349 pp $30.00 Hardcover

The Double-crested Cormorant, found only in North America, is an iridescent black waterbird superbly adapted to catch fish. It belongs to a family of birds vilified since biblical times and persecuted around the world. Thus it was perhaps to be expected that the first European settlers in North America quickly deemed the Double-crested Cormorant a competitor for fishing stock and undertook a relentless drive to destroy the birds. This enormously important book explores the roots of human-cormorant conflicts, dispels myths about the birds, and offers the first comprehensive assessment of the policies that have been developed to manage the Double-crested Cormorant in the twenty-first century.

Conservation biologist Linda Wires provides a unique synthesis of the cultural, historical, scientific, and political elements of the cormorant's story. She discusses the amazing late-twentieth-century population recovery, aided by protection policies and environment conservation, but also the subsequent U.S. federal policies under which hundreds of thousands of the birds have been killed. In a critique of the science, management, and ethics underlying the Double-crested Cormorant's treatment today, Wires exposes "management" as a euphemism for persecution and shows that the current strategies of aggressive predator control are outdated and unsupported by science.

With Original Illustrations by Barry Kent MacKay

Linda Wires is a conservation biologist who focuses on monitoring and issues involving waterbirds. She lives in Minneapolis. Barry Kent MacKay is a bird artist, illustrator, and activist who lives in Markham, Ontario, Canada.



The New Birder's Guide to Birds of North America
Bill Thompson III 2014. Houghton Mifflin 368 pp $16.95 Hardcover

What a new birder needs is a field guide that shows most of the birds he or she is going to see but doesn't overwhelm with rarities unlikely to be seen. This is that book. Covering 300 of the most common birds in the United States and Canada, this guide has just the right amount of information about how to identify birds, where and when to look for them, what they sound like, and how they behave.

The New Birder's Guide includes easy-to-understand descriptions and maps, clear photos, drawings of common and interesting behaviors, and fun "Wow!" facts for each bird, plus expert advice on identification basics, how to get started, and how to improve your birding skills.

Includes easy-to-understand descriptions and maps, clear photos, drawings of common and interesting behaviors of North American birds.

Birds in the Yard Month by Month: What's There and Why, and How to Attract Those That Aren't
Sharon Sorenson 2014. Stackpole Books 416pp $24.95 Paperback

This book provides tips and advice for creating a bird-friendly yard; includes hundreds of color photos which aid in identifying common backyard visitors.

Media Reviews

Hummingbirds: A Life-Size Guide to Every Species
Fogden, Michael; Marianne Taylor, Sheri L Williamson
2014. Harper Design 400 pp. $29.99n Hardcover

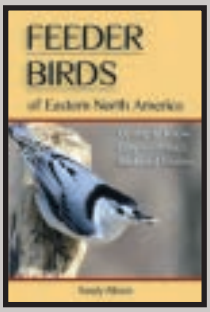
Written by a slate of true experts, scheduled for publication in April 2014. Presents every species, arranged taxonomically, with over 300 birds shown in life-size photographs. Concise descriptions, written by two of the worlds leading experts, are accompanied by links to movie footage of flight, sound, and behavior. Presented in a compact format.

The Book of Eggs: A Life-Size Guide to the Eggs of Six Hundred of The World's Bird Species
Hauber, Mark E.; Edited by John Bates and Barbara Becker
2014. University of Chicago Press 656 pp. $55.00 Hardcover

From the brilliantly green and glossy eggs of the Elegant Crested Tinamou-said to be among the most beautiful in the world-to the small brown eggs of the house sparrow that makes its nest in a lamppost and the uniformly brown or white chickens' eggs found by the dozen in any corner grocery, birds' eggs have inspired countless biologists, ecologists, and ornithologists, as well as artists, from John James Audubon to the contemporary photographer Rosamond Purcell. For scientists, these vibrant vessels are the source of an array of interesting topics, from the factors responsible for egg coloration to the curious practice of "brood parasitism," in which the eggs of cuckoos mimic those of other bird species in order to be cunningly concealed among the clutches of unsuspecting foster parents.

The Book of Eggs introduces readers to eggs from six hundred species—some endangered or extinct—from around the world and housed mostly at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. Organized by habitat and taxonomy, the entries include newly commissioned photographs that reproduce each egg in full color and at actual size, as well as distribution maps and drawings and descriptions of the birds and their nests where the eggs are kept warm. Birds' eggs are some of the most colorful and variable natural products in the wild, and each entry is also accompanied by a brief description that includes evolutionary explanations for the wide variety of colors and patterns, from camouflage designed to protect against predation, to thermoregulatory adaptations, to adjustments for the circumstances of a particular habitat or season. Throughout the book are fascinating facts to pique the curiosity of binocular-toting birdwatchers and budding amateurs alike. Female mallards, for instance, invest more energy to produce larger eggs when faced with the genetic windfall of an attractive mate. Some seabirds, like the cliff-dwelling guillemot, have adapted to produce long, pointed eggs, whose uneven weight distribution prevents them from rolling off rocky ledges into the sea.

A visually stunning and scientifically engaging guide to six hundred of the most intriguing eggs, from the pea-sized progeny of the smallest of hummingbirds to the eggs of the largest living bird, the ostrich, which can weigh up to five pounds, The Book of Eggs offers readers a rare, up-close look at these remarkable forms of animal life.



Feeder Birds of Eastern North America: Getting to Know Easy-to-Attract Backyard Visitors
Sandy Allison
2014. Stackpole Books 73pp $14.95 Paperback

Beautiful color photos and drawings and concise text introduce the 30 North American birds most likely to appear at a backyard feeder. Includes identification tips and fascinating facts about the birds' lives in the wild.

Featured e-book…..

The Scarlet Kingfisher

By Robert Benson

File Size: 378 KB Print Length: 211 pages Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited Publisher: Supermoon Press; 1 edition (August 25, 2014) Sold by: Amazon Digital Services, Inc.

In The Scarlet Kingfisher our friend Robert Benson gives the reader an unusual glimpse into the world of academia and birding, the only novel I've read dealing with those topics. This first novel is a fun read, a real page-turner, and I especially enjoyed the South Texas brush country setting I know so well.

I'm a novice birder, still learning from Robert and his ornithologist wife Karen to identify less common local birds. But I now know enough to recognize that every minute birding detail in The Scarlet Kingfisher is accurate and the issues raised in the book are very important to ornithologists.

The story begins when young Texas A&M professor Beach O'Neal arrives at the gate to the Lazy Z Ranch, where his research on Painted Buntings is almost complete, but finds that his combination won't work on the lock. Furthermore, when the ranch foreman drives up, Beach learns that his access to the ranch—and the data collecting needed for his promotion to associate professor—has been abruptly cancelled. The quality of his research is in jeopardy, as are his chances of getting it published in a scientific journal, a requirement for earning tenure.

We meet Leon Butts, an aging n'er-do-well hippie, illegally capturing a couple of endangered Aplomado Falcons on Padre Island Seashore to sell to a shady character named Tsang—accompanied, for some reason, by Beach's unpleasant department chair, Philip Boyle-- for a lot of desperately needed cash.

Enter a rare bird—a Scarlet Kingfisher—sighted on the Lazy Z Ranch, whose owner, a big contributor to A&M, doesn't want the federal laws protecting such species to affect his control of the property. He demands that Beach sign a non-disclosure statement, promising not to write anything about the new species, in exchange for permission to return to the ranch.

And there's Beach's pretty blonde colleague and girlfriend Dr. Rebecca Schroeder, who occasionally accompanies him on birding expeditions.

The plot thickens with a brutal murder—and an unfair accusation. It's a tangled web, and when you get that far in the story, you'd better have time to keep reading!

I highly recommend this book to all birders, but also to everyone who likes a good suspenseful murder mystery. Just don't expect your fingernails to survive!

Kay Cude Past
842 Gill Ranch Road
Beeville TX 78102

Attention TOS Members!!!

The full color newsletter of the Texas Ornithological Society (TOSNEWS) is now electronic unless arrangements are made to obtain a black & white hardcopy. To obtain the newsletter members are sent an email with the password allowing them to view the newsletter on the TOS webpage.

TO RECEIVE THE NEWSLETTER THE MEMBERSHIP OFFICE MUST HAVE A WORKING E-MAIL ADDRESS!

For hardcopy delivery or to provide your e-mail address contact Judy Kestner at TOSMEMBER@yahoo.com

Important people and their link to Texas…….

Konrad Lorenz (1903-1989): Pioneer in Animal Behavior

by Kent Rylander

Prof. Dr. Konrad Lorenz (1903-1989). Photo Angelika Schlager

That Konrad Lorenz would someday be perhaps the best-known ethologist (animal behaviorist) in the world, eventually being awarded the Nobel Prize, could hardly have been predicted when he was young. The son of a well-known Viennese surgeon, he was expected to follow in his father's footsteps; and in fact he pursued that career at first, but only as far as completing his M.D. Instead of practicing medicine he earned another doctorate, this time a Ph.D. in Anatomy.

His six years as a medical anatomist were pivotal for developing his future studies in animal behavior. Anatomy, and comparative anatomy in particular, suggested to him a comparative approach to animal behavior, much like an anatomist compares bones and muscles to gain clues about an animal's evolution.

In 1982 Lorenz had just turned seventy-nine—my age at the time of this writing—when I made the first of four annual, two-month trips to his institute in Austria. My project was a longitudinal study of the social behavior of Barnacle Geese. Lorenz mentored me during these visits, and my contact with him at this time formed the basis of the impressions described here.

Lorenz was a very large person with an enormous intellect. He could have easily intimated people with his massive physical features and outstanding mind were it not for his gentle, non-violent character, a gentleness manifest in the way he ran his animal behavior institute, and indeed the way he lived his life.

This institute (Konrad Lorenz Forschungsstelle) is in a relatively isolated Austrian

Konrad Lorenz Forschungsstelle. Photo Angelika Schlager

valley nestled between heavily forested hills and mountains. It was formerly a lumber mill. An icy creek runs the length of the valley.

The three-story house, built in 1776, has an office, lab, kitchen, dining room, and library, as well as bedrooms for Lorenz, two staff members, two doctoral students, and a visiting scientist.

When I was at the institute almost a hundred geese roamed freely on the grassy meadow by the creek. These included about fifty Greylag Geese, the wild ancestor of our domestic goose, common in parks in the U.S. and the flock of about thirty Barnacle Geese that I studied. The Barnacle Goose is fairly common in Europe and was so-named because centuries ago it was claimed they hatched from barnacles rather than from eggs. Barnacles, being relatives of crabs, did not qualify as meat, so Barnacle Geese could be eaten on Fridays!

The institute also maintained several swans and ducks that were studied at various times during the institute's history. All birds were free to leave the area but they remained throughout the year because they were fed every day, year round.

The investigators knew each bird by name. Many names were based on famous characters in Germanic folklore, such as Sieglinde, Wotan, Fricka, and Brünnhilde—hardly descriptive of the personalities of any of the geese! When one of us had a slip of memory we could always identify the birds from bands on their legs that were color coded for sex, age, and parent. Because the geese had been banded like this for many years, the institute had an accurate genealogical record for each goose.

A number of these geese had been raised by "goose mothers" to reduce their fear of people, specifically the investigators, who were the only persons regularly allowed on the grounds.

Lorenz insisted that the goose mother—a new one was chosen each year—be a female university student, as he didn't think men were temperamentally suited for this job. The student needn't be trained in animal behavior; indeed, one of the most successful goose mothers was a Russian major at the University of Salzburg.

To be chosen for this coveted, non-paid position, the girl must have a notably gentle character as well as extraordinary patience and a genuine, parental devotion to the geese.

And for good reason. In early spring several eggs were taken from the nests and incubated indoors. On the day the goslings hatched the goose mother had to be in the room. At that time the goslings would imprint on her. That is, they would accept her as their mother, following her during all their waking hours and sleeping by her side at night.

A few days after hatching they followed their surrogate mother to an area by the creek. Here she lived in a shelter just large enough for a cot, a chair, and a small table. Every day we visited her and brought her food and water.

The goslings were always at her side. When she bathed in the creek, they swam next to her; when she rested on the grass, they nestled up beside her. At night they cuddled up under her cot. They never left her during those weeks.

Lorenz' idea behind this was that after the goslings matured to the point they were ready to fly away from the (usually crying) goose mother and join the other geese, they would be less wary around people and would have a calming effect on the other geese. Thus, we could observe the wild geese more closely, even though none of us, including the goose mother, were able to approach either the wild or the hand-raised geese closer than a few feet.

The geese reigned at the institute. Lorenz allowed them to be handled by humans only once, when the staff placed the colored bands on their legs. They roamed freely in the grassy valley, swam in the cold mountain stream, and nested in the meadow undisturbed.

If we were sitting in a goose's path, we were required to get up and give it free passage. We never approached a goose close enough to cause it to move from its resting area.

Niko Tinbergen (left) with friend Konrad Lorenz. Photo Wikimedia.

While I was there, four people were engaged in long-term research projects: a man and a woman with doctorates in ethology, and a young man and a young woman who were graduate students. The young man, after receiving his Masters degree under Lorenz, came to Texas Tech University to earn his doctorate.

The six or seven of us at the institute became a family. We usually ate dinner together in the dining room, took turns cooking and washing dishes, and chatted for a while after dinner. We often described what we observed the geese doing that day. It is difficult to imagine a more congenial and intellectually stimulating environment for ethologists to do research—away from the distractions of the city and university!

Adjacent to the dining room was the library, where most of the important ethological books and journals were shelved in dark, wall-to-wall hardwood bookshelves. Here one could sit comfortably in large, leather chairs at a long, heavy table and study or analyze data. There was no T.V., traffic noise, or any other sound in this relatively remote house surrounded by forests.

Research projects at the institute varied considerably. One graduate student documented and interpreted homosexual behavior in Greylag Geese. Another studied reproductive behavior in swans. Over the years considerable research was focused on rank order (or "pecking order") in the two species of geese.

One of the institute's advantages was that the birds were free to mate with whomever they chose, and to leave if they wished. However, very few left.

Since their genealogies were known for several decades—data non-existent for birds studied in the wild—Lorenz was able to focus on how certain behaviors were inherited. Predictably, his views were questioned by some ethologists who claimed the birds' behavior was influenced by being pampered like this. However, there seems to be no other practical way to obtain genealogical data from free-roaming birds.

When I arrived at the institute Lorenz was no longer engaged in specific research projects. He spent much of the year at his home near Vienna. When at the institute, which was most of the time I was there, he would lie in the grass near the geese, watch them, and

discuss their behavior with those of us working at the institute. Sometimes he expressed puzzlement by the geese's behavior, as when a small flock suddenly would fly off together without giving a clue (at least to him) as to which goose initiated the exodus.

It often rained in this cool Austrian valley, and as the water poured down Lorenz, like the rest of us, put on a raincoat and sat between the tiny streams of water winding their way through the grass to the creek. The rain brought out the inescapable stench of goose droppings but we became accustomed to the odor and ignored it. When the sun came out and warmed us, Lorenz would often take off his shirt and lie on the wet grass for his afternoon nap.

Once he remarked that, compared to Niko Tinbergen, with whom he shared the Nobel Prize, he was like a farmer and Tinbergen was like a hunter. This meant he was content to stay in one place and watch and try to understand animals at close range. In contrast, Tinbergen was on the go, travelling to avian breeding grounds to test hypotheses with field experiments.

One of Lorenz' favorite diversions from fieldwork was for all of us to swim together, *au naturel*, in the ice-cold creek, which was almost too cold to bear. Several of the tamer geese would usually swim up to investigate. Lorenz claimed that swimming in the cold water made him feel "heroic."

Although Lorenz had been part of the Viennese upper class all his life—readily evident to German speakers by his accent—he was unassuming and down to earth with all of us. On my second day at the institute he offered me a beer and said, "Call me Konrad." He didn't seem impressed by being a Nobel laureate and when the subject came up one day, he said simply that it gave him an opportunity to meet a number of very intelligent people. He regularly referred to his liking for "regular guys," and he disliked the arrogant, pretentious scientists—including some prominent ethologists—who frequently came into his life because of his position.

He did, however, say that he wished he had received the prize before his father died, as he never seemed to be able to achieve enough to please his father. I think he was not alone among the many high performing persons who wish for parental approval for their achievements.

Peter Scott, a well-known waterfowl artist, was one of Lorenz' good friends. Lorenz once said, "I'm too proud to envy people, but I'll have to admit that I envy Peter's artistic abilities."

That statement, in particular the part about being too proud to envy people, intrigued me, as I wasn't sure how he was using the word, "proud." He certainly didn't project a sense of pride in the everyday sense of the word. On the contrary, he appeared to be a person so closely in touch with his feelings and his mortality that he came across, at least to me, as possessing a sense of humility.

He also said he envied a student of his whose insight about play behavior he wished he had come up with before she did. His student observed that play differs from non-play behavior because play can be immediately terminated. For example, when puppies are "fighting" and the owner approaches with food, they stop playing. "Real" fighting can't turn off that quickly.

Do Nobel laureates experience the intellectual insecurity that the rest of us know so well? Maybe so. Once he pointed to the sonograms of bird songs that some field guides published for each species and said, "My next project is to learn how to interpret these."

I wasn't convinced he meant this or would ever take time from loftier thinking to worry about these sonograms. It seemed to me he might be experiencing the same insecurity as we all did when we felt we were lagging behind certain students in class.

During World War II Lorenz was captured by the Russians and returned speaking Russian. Typical of many European intellectuals, he was fluent in English, and in fact studied a year at Columbia University in New York. He also knew French. Once, when he took all of us out

Barnacle Goose (upper left); all others Greylag Geese. Photographed at Konrad Lorenz Forschungsstelle. Photos Angelika Schlager

to eat at a restaurant, he conversed with the staff and graduate students in French and Russian. He was not showing off, just enjoying the linguistic variety that the occasion offered.

Lorenz lived most of the year in the house where he grew up, in a town outside of Vienna. He disliked Vienna and other cities, and rarely went anywhere other than the institute unless he was to receive an award. His two "comfort zones" appeared to be the institute, where he was surrounded by nature, and his house, the large, elegant mansion he grew up in.

Once he invited us for dinner at his house, about a two-hour drive from the institute. In an adjacent house he had constructed an enormous saltwater aquarium, the size of a small room, where he observed the interactions of a number of marine fishes occupying an artificial coral reef.

Dinner was informal but ample. The maid served soup, salad, the main dish, and a pint of beer if we wanted it.

One story Lorenz told at dinner made me wonder if I really understood him as well as I thought I did. It went like this.

"When my wife and I were young, we were relaxing in a meadow by a monastery. My wife was lying on the grass naked and enjoying the warmth of the sun when a monk came out of the monastery and saw her. He gasped loudly, quickly turned around, picked up a stick, and started flogging himself and cursing at himself as he ran back into the monastery."

As soon as Lorenz finished this story, which I assume he had related to friends more than once during the sixty or so years since the incident, he burst out laughing. Those of us at the table thought the incident was interesting

but not particularly funny—most of us smiled politely—and I have often wondered why he was so amused by the monk's reaction.

I was also puzzled by his fascination with a small male duck that stuck closely by the side of a large female goose and drove her away when anyone approached them. Certainly an attachment like this was intriguing—he called it "jealousy"—but probably not of the magnitude that would require so much of his attention and commentary.

Lorenz insistence on honesty seemed almost compulsive. A particularly bothersome event occurred when a Life Magazine photographer visited the institute and photographed Lorenz walking down a path followed by a line of goslings. He told me, as he must have told everyone during the twenty or so years following the incident, that the photograph was phony. Unknown to Lorenz, the photographer's assistant was driving the goslings behind him to suggest that the goslings loved Lorenz so much that they followed him everywhere. What bothered Lorenz was that this particular photograph "went viral" as we say nowadays and was reproduced in numerous books and magazines.

Lorenz lived three years after my last study period at the institute, so I don't know about his final years. I heard he had been working on his autobiography, and that it was mostly about the geese he had known. My last impression of him was of a gentle, good-natured, concerned grandfather—like the one all grandchildren would wish for! His most productive years were in the past, and it seemed to me that he wanted to spend his final days enjoying his simple pleasures: chatting with a few friends and colleagues, swimming in the cold mountain stream, and chuckling at the antics of his geese.

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T.O.S. sponsored Roughwing Teams from Rockport-Fulton Compete in Great Texas Birding Classic

By Bron Rorex, Photos by Martha McLeod

T.O.S. sponsored two Roughwing Teams from Aransas County in the 2014 Great Texas Birding Classic. Both teams were mentored by Rockport Birders Robert Edwards and Bron Rorex and their science teacher Martha McLeod. Both teams successfully located and identified over 100 bird species during the competition.

T.O.S. Precious Plovers – 121 species

Team photo during GTBC competition:
Front Row: Samantha Wright, Kaylee Howell, Karlee Friebele, Maddie Huggins, Ora Wilshire
Back Row: Martha McLeod, Robert Edwards, Bron Rorex

Searching for the Black-billed Cuckoo

Left to Right: Karlee Friebele, Maddie Huggins, Kaylee Howell, Samantha Wright, Ora Wilshire, Robert Edwards and Bron Rorex

Updating the bird list:

Karlee Friebele (left) and Kaylee Howell (right)

Celebrating lifer bird for all at Corpus Christi shoreline

Competition day team photo:
Front Row Left to Right: Brian Rabroker, Brandon Cruz, Jaby Tarkington, Ben Groseclose, Kyler Friebele.
Back Row Left to Right: Bron Rorex, Robert Edwards, Martha McLeod

Jaby Tarkington (left) and Brandon Cruz (right) update chalkboard at Paradise Pond

Searching for Painted Buntings at Blucher Park.

Finishing 1st in their region and 2nd in the state in the Roughwing division during the 2014 Great Texas Birding Classic was the Precious Plovers all girls team composed of Karlee Friebele, Kaylee Howell, Maddie Huggins, Ora Wilshire and Samantha Wright. Their team, which logged 121 bird species, was sponsored by the Texas Ornithological Society. Team members attended the TWPD sponsored Great Texas Birding Classic Awards Ceremony in San Antonio, where they received their awards.

Placing 2nd in their region and 3rd in the state during Great Texas Birding Classic Roughwing competition was the TOS sponsored Heroic Hawks team. Brandon Cruz, Kyler Friebele, Ben Groseclose, Brian Rabroker and Jaby Tarkington correctly identified 107 bird species.

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Texas Vagrants

by Eric Carpenter

As New Years Day came in 2013, Texas chasers could go to opposite sides of the state to catch up on a couple of long-staying rarities. Carolyn Ohl-Johnson graciously allowed birders to her desert oasis in the Christmas Mountains (Brewster County) 20 October 2012 through 19 March 2013 to see a rather reliable **Varied Thrush,** while at Houston's Bear Creek Park, a **Greater Pewee** required a little more effort but could be found 5 October 2012 to 23 March 2013. Some of those that chased the Varied Thrush were also able to check out a **Costa's Hummingbird** that visited Study Butte 14 – 20 January. Another cooperative **Varied Thrush** visited a backyard in Kress (Swisher County) 3-24 February while 2 different **Evening Grosbeaks** – one in the Guadalupe Mountains' Dog Canyon 10 January – 14 March and another in the Pineywoods at a backyard in San Augustine from 9 – 17 February – were highlights of the winter season. Additional finds of the winter included a **Common Redpoll** that irregularly visited feeders in Trophy Club (Denton County) 10 February – 13 March plus a handsome male **Barrow's Goldeneye** at Possum Kingdom Lake 17 – 24 February, just the tenth record for the state and the first in over eight years.

The spring season would be exceptional for rarities and it started with a well-described **Razorbill** seen far offshore near the Flower Gardens Banks National Marine Sanctuary. Razorbills staged an unprecedented invasion all along the eastern seaboard of the United States, and records were documented offshore into the Gulf of Mexico from the Florida Panhandle west into Louisiana. A lone Razorbill was seen in Texas waters on 16 March during a scuba diving trip to the Flower Gardens. Though there were no photos (which are required to appear on the "main" Texas list), the observer submitted his writ-

Eurasian Whimbrel – photo by Michael Lindsey, 6 May 2013. If you've birded along the Texas coast in the spring, you have likely seen Whimbrels and lots of them - perhaps you don't even pay attention to them. Lucky for Texas birders, Cameron Cox does and his keen eyes & ears found this "Eurasian" Whimbrel near Crystal Beach on 29 April, where it remained for three weeks. This subspecies group has been split by the BOU and may in the future be split by the AOU so that it becomes ABA countable and a full species in its own right. Its distinctively whitish underparts and dowitcher-like back side and tail make this stand out from the expected Whimbrels.

ten description which proved to be enough to add this species to the Texas Presumptive List. Just a couple days later on 19 March, 5 adult **Brown Boobies** were photographed (in the same photo no less!) flying past Indian Point Park on Corpus Christi Bay. Four different Brown Boobies were recorded in Texas in the year prior (2012), but to have 5 all in one field of view and well in-shore was certainly unexpected.

Late April would bring the return of sightings of the **Rufous-capped Warbler** that had spent the past spring at Park Chalk Bluff (Uvalde County). In the spring of 2013, there were 2 birds at this location; one of them would often sing a Common Yellowthroat song and had plumage traits that were not quite textbook and brought the question of hybridization to mind. A great needle-in-a-haystack find was a **"Eurasian" Whimbrel** discovered 29 April near Crystal Beach that would be faithful to the same general area through 19 May. A first for Texas, the "Eurasian" Whimbrel is a subspecies group that the British Ornithologists' Union recently split (though the AOU has not yet done so) that is visually different than the typical/expected Whimbrels found in Texas. A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** was a nice treat in El Paso's Franklin Mountains 29 April – 9 May while one at the South Padre Island Convention Center from 17 – 21 May was much more out of place. Surprising for the spring season, a **Red Phalarope** paused at Balmorhea Lake on 7 May.

A stunning male **Flame-colored Tanager** first found in Big Bend's Boot Canyon on 6 May hung around until at least 1 July when it was seen near recently fledged young and a female Hepatic, suggesting possible hybridization. Two different **Green Violetears** paid brief visits to backyard feeders – one from 12 – 15 May in San Benito and another near Wimberley 23 – 26 May. Closing out the month of May and the spring season, yet another **Brown Booby** was photographed on the beach near San Luis Pass on 31 May. A **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** at Quintana on 18 May fit the pattern of recent years where individuals are found along the coast during spring and fall migration, but one in the Christmas Mountains on 15 June was only the second record for west Texas. The real highlight of the summer though was a **Gray Kingbird** discovered on 2 July along the coast in Palacios. It was just the eleventh record for the state and it would only linger through the following day.

Flame-colored Tanager – photo by Bryon Stone, 9 May 2013. Of the 10 previously accepted records of Flame-colored Tanager, five of them are from Big Bend National Park with 3 being in Boot Canyon. Thus, it was not all that surprising that the 11th record would also come from Boot Canyon, with a stunning male present from 6 May until at least 1 July.

Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher – photo by Mark Lockwood, 16 Jun 2013. Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers have appeared on a number of occasions in the lower Rio Grande Valley and at various woodlots along the length of the Texas coast, but until 2013, there had only been one record from the Trans-Pecos. The summer of 2013 brought the 2nd Trans-Pecos record with a one-day wonder visiting Carolyn Ohl-Johnson's incredible oasis in the Christmas Mountains.

nearby at the Old Hidalgo Pumphouse, a **Rufous-backed Robin** was a one-day wonder on 13 October. Quite puzzling was another **Rufous-backed Robin** photographed all the way up in the Panhandle at Palo Duro Canyon State Park on 21 October.

Early November brought the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival and the many extra sets of eyes that comes with that. As a result, the lower valley had a **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** near the Boca Chica Unit of the Los Palomas W.M.A. on 3 – 5 November, plus single **Rose-throated Becards** at Santa Ana N.W.R. 11 – 19 November and at Sabal Palm Sanctuary 12 November. But the clear highlight was the second US and Texas record of an **Amazon Kingfisher**, with a

Early fall was relatively quiet but things picked up in September with a **Red Phalarope** on Lake Wichita on 1 September and a **Sooty Shearwater** about a mile offshore from Port Aransas on 6 September. Just the fourth record for the state, an **Elegant Tern** was photographed near Bolivar Flats on 14 September. Another **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** was a one-day wonder at Port Aransas' Paradise Pond on 29 September, while the third **Red Phalarope** of the year stopped at McNary Reservoir in far west Texas on 6 October. The **Brown Booby** invasion slowly continued with an immature on South Padre Island, 12 miles south of the Mansfield Cut on 12 October followed by another sighting (perhaps the same bird) at the South Padre Island jetty on 8 November. A **Golden-crowned Warbler** eluded many during its stay at Frontera Audubon Thicket (Hidalgo County) 12 October to 6 November, while

Gray Kingbird – photo by Bob Friedrichs, 2 July 2013. Birding in Texas in the middle of summer can certainly be hot enough to make you retreat to the couch, but it can also be quite rewarding. This Gray Kingbird in Palacios July 2nd & 3rd was certainly one of those mid-summer finds that got several folks out of the house.

Rufous-backed Robin – photo by Ricky Cosby, 21 Oct 2013. The influence of social media on "uncovering" rarities that might have otherwise not been noticed by the Texas birding community has certainly been noticed the past few years. One such example was a completely out-of-place Rufous-backed Robin at Palo Duro Canyon on 21 Ocober 2013 that made news when photos of it were posted to Facebook.

bird that frequented the resaca outside Los Ebanos Preserve 9 November to 5 December. An mild **Evening Grosbeak** invasion took place with at least 3 different birds recorded in far nw. Texas between late October and the end of the year. Likewise, **Black-legged Kittiwakes** showed up with perhaps as many as 5 birds being seen at different locations from 17 November until the beginning of 2014. Early winter highlights would include a **Costa's Hummingbird** out in west Texas at Terlingua from 22 November to 4 December, plus two different **Red-necked Grebes;** one at Balmorhea Lake 10 December to 1 January and another on White Rock Lake (Dallas County) from 24 December until 23 January. Serving as a bookend on the year, the Bear Creek Park **Greater Pewee** would return for its second winter on 24 December and would stay until early spring.

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Amazon Kingfisher – photo by Arman Moreno, 9 Nov 2013. The Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival has a history of uncovering rarities with the hundreds of extra eyes and ears that canvas the area for a week or so in early November. The festival highlight for 2013 was certainly one of the all-time best – an Amazon Kingfisher that was discovered at a Resaca near Los Ebanos Preserve on November 9th. Only the 2nd US and Texas record, it would be enjoyed by hundreds of birders over the next month or so.



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TOS Members receive awards

by Randy Pinkston, TBRC Chair

This note is written as a follow-up to a similar note at the bottom of page 72 in volume 9 of the *Texas Birds Annual* (2013) to recognize Dr. Keith Arnold for 40 (now 42!) years of continuous service on the Texas Bird Records Committee. Dr. Arnold founded the TBRC in 1972 with members Richard Albert, Ben Feltner, Dean Fisher, Warren Pulich, Rodney Rylander, James Scudday, Kenneth Seyffert, James Tucker, Ro Wauer, Fred Webster, Geth White, Frances Williams, and L. R. Wolfe. Since then Dr. Arnold has served in continuous volunteer capacity as a regular voting member and the committee's Academician. Most recently he has also graciously hosted our annual meetings at the Biodiversity Research & Teaching Collections in College Station.

Two years ago at our annual meeting Dr. Arnold was presented with a nice plaque commemorating his 40th year on the TBRC (top left). To complete that award, this year Dr. Arnold was presented with a wonderful original watercolor painting of a singing Rufous-capped Warbler by his friend and former student, Dennis Shepler. This species was chosen because Dr. Arnold and his students documented the first (and possibly the only) U.S. specimens of Rufous-capped Warbler from Webb County in 1980. Dennis presented his painting to Dr. Arnold in person at our annual meeting on September 6th (top right). Likewise, TOS members are encouraged to thank and congratulate Keith at an upcoming TOS meeting.

The TOS Board of Directors voted unanimously to honor Ro Wauer with an Honorary Life Membership in our organization. Ro is the author of 25 books and over two hundred articles focused on birds, butterflies and the naturalist world. Ro served 32 years with the National Park Service and was Chief Naturalist at Big Bend for a number of years. Ro was honored for his many contributions to Texas birding. A plaque was presented to him at his home by President Jim Hailey.

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The winning entry will be selected by the T.O.S. members attending the El Paso meeting January 15-18, 2015. TOS meeting registrants will be provided a ballot in their registration packet at the meeting. A printed copy of each submitted entry will be displayed at the voting site. Votes will be placed into the provided ballot box during the meeting near the registration desk or T.O.S. sales booth during meeting hours.

The newly designed T.O.S. T-shirts will be available for purchase at our Spring TOS meeting.

Taxonomic Update*....

Multiples splits within the Clapper/ King Rail complex (*Rallus longirostris*/*Rallus elegans*)

Clapper and King rails occur in marshes and mangroves from the northern United States south, locally, to southern Brazil. Both species are geographically variable. In many areas Clapper and King rails are completely allopatric, or have distributions that are parapatric, meeting narrowly along an environmental gradient. Locally, in the eastern United States, Clapper and King rails hybridize where they come into contact with one another. Consequently some authors considered these to represent a single widespread but highly variable species (e.g. Ripley, 1977, Rails of the world, Godine Publishing, Boston, Massachusetts). Most authors continued to recognize two species, however, partitioned by habitat: King Rails are restricted to fresh water marshes, with Clapper Rails in salt water marshes and in mangroves. This solution seems logical on the face of it, but never was completely satisfactory either. To cite just one apparent problem, populations of California and northwestern Mexico, that are "Clapper" Rails because they occur in salt water marshes, more closely resemble King Rails than they do many other subspecies of Clapper Rails.

Early surveys of the Clapper/King rail complex with molecular approaches were inconclusive. More recently Maley and Brumfield (2013, Mitochondrial and next-generation sequence data used to infer phylogenetic relationships and species limits in the Clapper/King rail complex, Condor 115: 316-329) undertook a more comprehensive approach with more powerful DNA sequencing techniques, and emerged with a well resolved phylogeny for these rails. Among the results of this phylogeny are that "King" Rails of fresh water marshes of the highlands of central Mexico are more closely related to the "Clapper" Rails of salt water marshes of California and northwestern Mexico than they are to "true" King Rails of eastern North America; and that King Rails of eastern North America are more closely related to Clapper Rails of eastern North America and the Caribbean, than these Clapper Rails are to "Clapper" Rails of mangroves of South America.

The resulting taxonomy leaves us with a split of King Rail into two species (Chesser et al., 2014, Fifty-fifth supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union *Check-list of North American Birds*, Auk: in press):King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) of eastern North America, and Aztec Rail (*Rallus tenuirostris*) of central Mexico; and a split of Clapper Rail into three species: Clapper Rail (*Rallus crepitans*) of eastern North America and the Caribbean; Ridgway's Rail (*Rallus obsoletus*) of California and northwestern Mexico); and Mangrove Rail (*Rallus longirostris*) of coastal South America. Note that the scientific name *Rallus longirostris*, which formerly was associated with Clapper Rail, now is assigned to Mangrove Rail; and that Clapper Rail now has a different scientific name. The English name of *Rallus obsoletus* honors Robert Ridgway (1850-1929), an ornithologist who was a founder of the American Ornithologists' Union, who described dozens of new species and subspecies of birds (including both *Rallus obsoletus* and *Rallus tenuirostris*), and whose monumental Birds of North and Middle America continues to be a valuable reference on bird plumages, morphometrics, molts, and taxonomy. **From: http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu**

Nutmeg Mannikin Changed to Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*, added to the ABA Checklist just last year, has had its English name changed from Nutmeg Mannikin to Scaly-breasted Munia. It has long been known in the pet trade as "Spice Finch" or "Nutmeg Mannikin", but neither name is now widely used by ornithological authorities. The species has no particular association with nutmeg (or other spices), or even Indonesia's Banda Islands whence nutmeg originates. For largely extralimital species, the NACC generally follows regional authorities on issues of common name usage. Almost all other taxonomic authorities call this species Scaly-breasted Munia, and thus, the AOU has followed suit. This change also has the benefit of eliminating some potential confusion among birders. Another Texas exotic the Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata* is now *Spermestes cucullata*.

The genus *Aratinga* was found to be paraphyletic and was split into four genera. Additionally, the genus *Nandaya* was absorbed into the "new" *Aratinga*. The new scientific names (if applicable) and the new checklist sequence are as follows.

Olive-throated Parakeet (*Aratinga nana – Eupsittula nana*) Orange-fronted Parakeet (*Aratinga canicularis – Eupsittula canicularis*) Brown-throated Parakeet (*Aratinga pertinax – Eupsittula pertinax*) Dusky-headed Parakeet (remains *Aratinga weddellii*) Nanday Parakeet (*Nandayus nenday – Aratinga nendaya*) Chestnut-fronted Macaw Military Macaw Great Green Macaw Red-and-green Macaw Scarlet Macaw Cuban Macaw Blue-and-yellow Macaw Blue-crowned Parakeet (*Aratinga acticaudata – Thectocercus acuticaudatus*) **Green Parakeet (*Aratinga holochlora – Psittacara holochlorus*)** Pacific Parakeet (*Aratinga strenua – Psittacarastrenuous*) Crimson-fronted Parakeet (*Aratinga finschi – Psittacara finschi*) Cuban Parakeet (*Aratinga euops – Psittacara euops*)

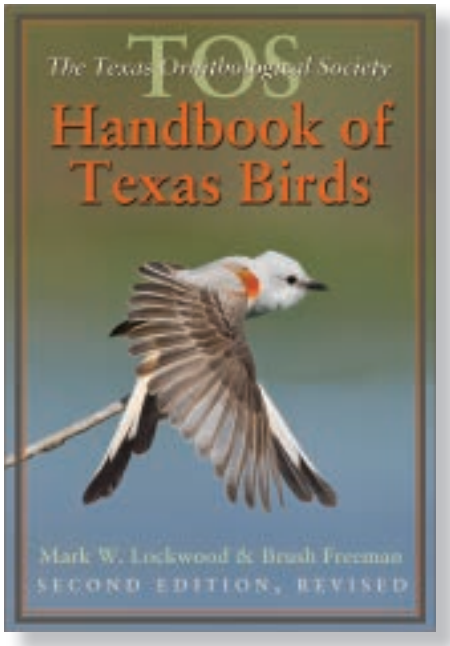
Hispaniolan Parakeet (*Aratinga chloropterus – Psittacara chloroperus*) Mitred Parakeet (*Aratinga mitrata – Psittacara miratus*)

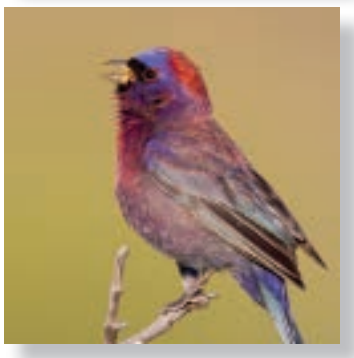
Red-masked Parakeet (*Aratinga erythrogenys – Psittacara erythrogenys*) White-eyed Parakeet (*Aratinga leucophthalma – Psittacara leucophthalmus*)

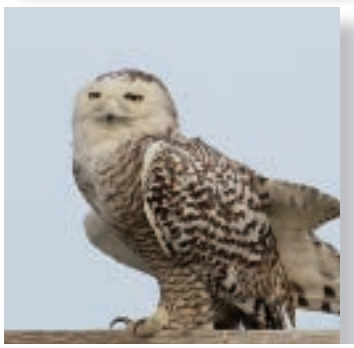
For additional changes and comments from ABA readers visit

http://blog.aba.org/2014/07/2014-aou-check-list-supplement-is-out.html

***from Cornell's Neotropical Birds-Online and the American Birding Association.**







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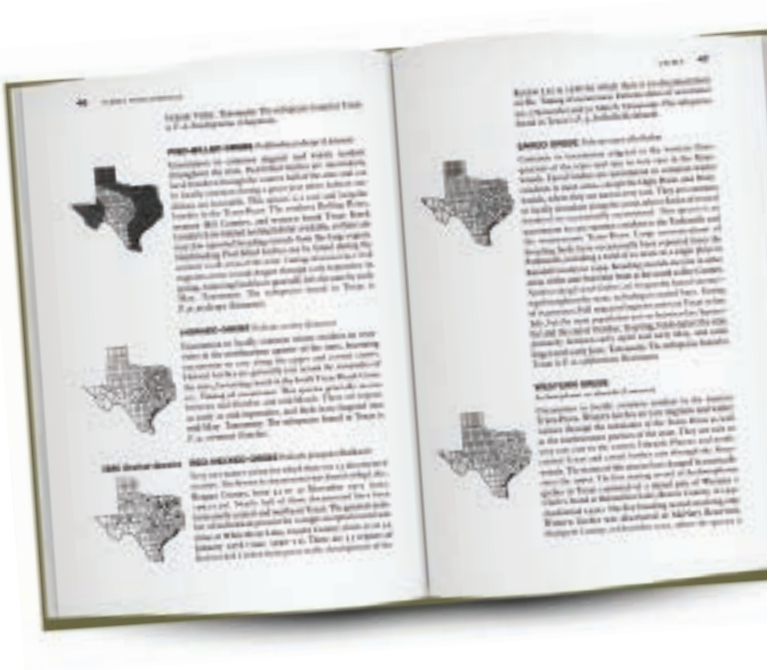

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Long-eared Owl. Artist Lynn Delvin (Third place winner in the recent TOS art contest)

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