

**TEXAS** *Birds*  
**ANNUAL**



*Delvin*

A Publication of the  
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# TEXAS *Birds* ANNUAL

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Artwork from the “Birds of the Brush” exhibit. Held during the Laredo Birding Festival. See article on page 44.

Front Cover: Red-crowned Parrot (*Amazona viridigenalis*). Art by Lynn Delvin

# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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 In April 4th of this year the Federal Register<sup>1</sup> published the final finding on the petition to list the Red-crowned Parrot, *Amazona viridigenalis*, as threatened or endangered. The USFWS concluded “ that listing the Red-crowned Parrot as an endangered or threatened species was not warranted”. I had been following this process since it began as in the late 1990s I was part of a major research and education program involving this species in Mexico. Two doctoral programs focused on the species, the first by Ernesto Enkerlin (TAMU), and the second by Michael Schindlinger (Harvard). As a team member I coordinated an EARTH-WATCH venture to not only facilitate their research by incorporating several teams of volunteers but to organize an educational event titled “Dia de los Loros” in the nearby city of Aldama. Twenty years later attention was directed again towards this species but this time it was due to interest in the population that inhabits the Rio Grande Valley. In this issue Tony Henehen of Texas Parks and Wildlife further discusses the plight of this species.

Given all the negative news on the environment, it was a pleasure to once again feature two ever popular volunteer efforts involving birds in Texas. The first is the annual *Birds of the Brush* art contest held in conjunction with the Laredo Birding Festival. The second is the ever growing *Texas Birding Challenge*. If these events are any indication of the interest future generation will have on protecting the birdlife of Texas, we are in good hands....

Sparrow research, two new TOS awards, the UK Photographer of the Year, book reviews and the TOS Alaska Tour review top off the issue. So as I conclude all my introductions... grab a cool beverage, find a shady spot, and enjoy this issue of *Texas Birds Annual*.

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Register/Vol. 84, No. 65/Thursday, April 4, 2019/Proposed rules



Red-crowned Parrot *Amazona viridigenalis*



Editor at “Dia de Los Loros” event in Aldama, Tamaulipas, Mexico

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.....

*H*i fellow TOS members. I am writing this in early summer. I was driving to work one morning recently and NPR aired a segment about their haiku contest. They described what a haiku is—a poem with three lines. The first and third lines have five syllables and the second line has seven syllables. Kids were encouraged to work with their parents to write a haiku about a summer scene or experience. For some unknown reason, I thought, “I should give it a try!” I’m not big on poems, but I knew immediately the summer experience I would write about. Austin’s Purple Martin roost! So, here’s my first ever haiku.

*Black bodies swirling*

*Swooping, banking, chattering*

*Migrating martins*

I haven’t learned how to evaluate a haiku, so I have no clue if my first is any good or not. I like it and maybe that is all that matters. I hope all of you have had the extreme pleasure of seeing a Purple Martin roost. It is truly amazing and will possibly bring out the poet in you too!

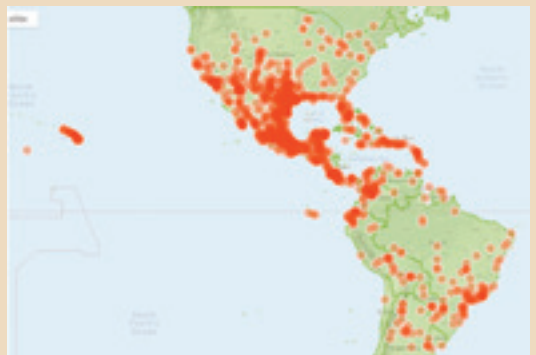
I recently completed the application to renew my Global Entry. Part of the application involved listing the foreign countries I have visited since 2014. For me, those countries were Costa Rica, Cuba and Ecuador. And why did I go to those countries? To see birds of course! Being a birder is a fantastic reason to see the world, don’t you agree?

In late May I visited Hooks Woods to pick up the last bit of entry fee money from spring migration. I like to get the money before it becomes too moldy. It’s kind of embarrassing to deposit moldy money at the bank. Anyway, it seems every trip to Hooks Woods provides some treat. This time was no exception. I was wiping away a cobweb from the money box when all of a sudden, a big black thing flew out toward me. After I recovered my compo-

sure, I tried to follow the big black thing as it flew through the understory but was unable to get a good look at it. (Where were my binoculars? Still in my car. Do I know better than to go anywhere without my binoculars handy? Absolutely!) I thought it was a Black Witch moth but was bummed that it didn’t land so I could get a better look. I collected the money and continued with my round of the trails. I returned to the pavilion and just happened to look up. What did I see? A Black Witch! Further scrutiny revealed FOUR male Black Witch moths perched on the underside of the roof! According to Mike Quinn’s Texas Entomology website, the “Black Witch is the largest moth, if not the largest insect, north of Mexico. It has a wingspan up to seven inches. It is very common across Texas following the start of the rainy season in Mexico each June.” Common or not, I was very pleased to see these guys hanging out at Hooks Woods. Moths obviously aren’t birds but they are still pretty darn cool in my opinion. I’m so happy we provide sanctuaries for all kinds of wildlife, aren’t you?



**One of four Black Witch moths at Hooks Woods on June 8, 2019.** Photo credit: Shelia Hargis



**Black Witch distribution in iNaturalist.**

Speaking of Hooks Woods, our newly formed High Island Sanctuary Management team had our first conference call. We're off to an interesting and fun start so watch for good things coming from us.

Back to my summer theme. I always think summer is for reading. As a kid, I read voraciously (still do) and especially during the summer. I'm currently reading Rachel Carson's *Under the Sea-Wind*. Here is one paragraph that I especially love. She's talking about migrating birds.

"Some, perhaps, would fall by the way. Some, old or sick, would drop out of the caravan and creep away into a solitary place to die; others would be picked off by gunners, defying the law for the fancied pleasure of stopping in full flight a brave and fiercely burning life; still others, perhaps, would fall

in exhaustion into the sea. But no awareness of possible failure or disaster dwelt in the moving host, flying with sweet pipings through the northern sky. In them burned once more the fever of migration, consuming with its fires all other desires and passions."

I love Rachel Carson. I love birds. I love birders and conservationists. How blessed we are to have this connection to birds and nature. It makes life so sweet!

By the time you read this, summer will be past. I hope your summer was full of all the things you love as mine was. Enjoy reading this edition of the TBA. Thank you to all who contributed articles.

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**Shelia Hargis**  
**TOS President**  
**Shelia.hargis@gmail.com**

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# THE 23RD ANNUAL GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CLASSIC

## **By Martha McLeod and Bron Rorex Carrier**

The 23rd annual Great Texas Birding Classic, sponsored by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department was held April 15-May 15, 2019.

The 2019 GTBC itself broke several records:

A total of 236 teams registered—a tournament record

There were 850 participants—another tournament record

A total of 19 youth teams entered state-wide

Texas Ornithological Society has teamed up with TPWD for several years to sponsor entry fees for young birders' teams on a statewide basis, thus encouraging their participation. Those young birding team have been mentored by dedicated birders who have introduced their birding students to bird identification, discovery of nature's wonders and the love of the outdoors while preparing them to compete as team members during TGBC competition.

Most of them compete in the Roughwing category for birders up to the age of 13. A few register for the Glider category for those 14 years to 18 years of age. Some of the more seasoned young birders have chosen to compete in the Sunrise to Noon category (dawn to 12 noon) or in the Human-powered classification (without benefit of motorized vehicles between birding locations). Or even in the State Park classification (choosing one TPWD park in which to compete all day).

## **FULTON LEARNING CENTER, ROCKPORT**

Four of the seven teams from Rockport-Fulton competing in this year's Great Texas Birding Classic were sponsored by TOS this year. Our other teams were sponsored by our local bird club, and a local business stepped in to sponsor our last team. We send out a

HUGE thank you to Texas Ornithological Society for sponsoring our 4 teams' entry fees so this group of young adults were able to participate in the Birding Classic this year.

## **TOS SOUTHERN SANDPIPERS**

### **A Roughwing Team**

The TOS Southern Sandpipers had an incredibly windy day of traveling around the Coastal Bend area in search of migrating birds. This team was comprised of 4 fourth graders: Ty Blankenship, Lauren Holden, Kathryn Jones and Jake Self. The eight hours of competition was very tough on this younger team which logged 81 species of birds.

Some of the beautiful birds seen included: Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Indigo Buntings, an Aplomado Falcon, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak and a late migrating Common Goldeneye. A moment of excitement was when an alligator began bellowing its territorial call beneath the boardwalk upon which they were standing—way cool to hear and see!



**Front row left to right Kathryn Jones, Lauren Holden, Ty Blankenship, Jake Self. Back row left to right Birding Mentors Bron Rorex Carrier and Martha McLeod.**



Left to right: Lauren Holden, Ty Blankenship, Jake Self, Kathryn Jones, Bron Rorex Carrier

## TOS SENIOR SORAS

### A Gliders Team

Bron and I were so delighted to have former students, graduates from our 3rd through 5th grade classes, eager to compete again in the Great Texas Birding Classic. This group of students competed in the older youth division called The Gliders division of the competition, a first for Rockport. Students participating included Rockport-Fulton Middle School student Michael Jones and Rockport-Fulton High School students Brandon Cruz, Mad-

eleine Huggins, and Brian Rabroker who correctly identified 106 bird species.

We had not seen Brian, Madeleine and Brandon since they left the 5th grade. It was a joyous reunion this morning to go birding with them again along with Michael Jones, who has been helping us as a junior birding teacher during weekly birding classes with our 3rd, 4th and 5th graders. We truly enjoyed the camaraderie and birding knowledge these young adults had to offer. We are so proud of their maturity and initiative to further their understanding of the outdoors.



Madeleine and Cruz check a distant bird with the telescope



Left to right: Madeleine Huggins, Brandon Cruz, Brian Rabroker, Michael Jones, Martha McLeod, Bron Rorex Carrier.



## TOS PEDAL PUSHIN' PETRELS

### Human Powered Team

Three students from Rockport-Fulton Middle School competed with Science Teacher Martha McLeod in the Great Texas Birding Classic in the “human powered” division of the competition. This meant that we could only walk or ride bicycles between birding sites. We competed in the Port Aransas area because of the proximity of birding hot spots and the variety of habitats found within biking distance.

We had an amazing day of finding beautiful birds although the weather definitely did not cooperate at all with the rain and chilly winds. I am impressed that three middle school students were willing to get up early on a weekend morning and forego playing video games to bike ride and look for birds, and hang out for 7 hours with a former teacher in the rain and mosquitoes of the island. These students were truly outstanding! Eighth grader Sam Holden, 7th grader Beau Blankenship and 6th grader Talon Kenfield went bike riding for 11 miles with me and located and identified 96 species while taking



Left to right: Martha McLeod, Sam Holden, Beau Blankenship, Talon Kenfield.

shelter periodically from downpours of rain and mosquitoes. It was definitely an experience we will not forget---extreme birding at its finest! The birds we did find were absolutely beautiful, especially the orioles and warblers in their breeding plumage.



Pedal Pushers safe from the rain—or not?



Time for a nutritious break, Left to right: Martha, Talon, Sam and Beau.

## TOS 5 FINCHTASTIC FEMALES

### **Sunrise to Noon Team**

Three Rockport-Fulton Middle School students competed along with their mentors in the Great Texas Birding Classic. The group of five competed in the Sunrise to Noon category. Migration was amazing today. Lots of great migrants! We logged 107 species of birds by noon. Wow, wow, wow! One of the rare treats was a great view of an Aplomado

Falcon, plus beautiful birds such as Painted Buntings and Baltimore Orioles.

It was truly an honor to compete alongside former students who are academically talented, kind and caring. Kyleigh Karl, Kate Hill and Laila Flowers - we thank you for continuing to share your joy of the outdoors with us and for always wanting to maintain and extend your knowledge of the avian world. Bron and I are incredibly proud of you three.



Left to right: Martha, Laila, Bron, Kate, Kyleigh

## SAN ANTONIO ZOO TEAM BIRDING EXPERIENCES

### -JARRETT DEAN-VON STULTZ, AGE 15

Birding has impacted my life in regards to my views upon birds. Prior to my birding experience, I had never studied birds intently because I believed they were simple creatures and benign in importance. However, viewing birds and examining them through binoculars helped me realize that each species has discernible distinctions that aid them in performing their habitual activities. This experience made me fascinated with the inner-workings of birds and how they have impacted the ecosystem, thus prompting my desire to be an ornithologist.

### -ALEXANDER HOXIE, AGE 18

I love going birding. It's a great way to experience nature. Being able to travel and see new birds is a lot of fun. I've been to many places to bird and have made many friends along the way. Appreciation for nature and birds transcends cultures. I've been birding

since I was 10 and I get excited every time I add a new bird to my life list. It's a really fun hobby and it's nice to be able to share my appreciation for birds with others.

### -ISABELLE ZENTIL, AGE 18

Over the last year birding has become super important and influential in my life. I was introduced to birding last year through this competition and loved it so much I started to go birding with my dad over the summer and was thrilled when I got the opportunity to do it again this year. My love for birding has even infected my siblings as my littlest brother, 7, now loves birding and my older sister has changed her major from history to aquatic science so that she can work with animals and nature too. I now am about to attend college to major in biology and participate in even more field work thanks to birding and the passion that it inspired in me.



## TOS DALLAS ZOOM TEAMS 1 AND 2



Thank you so much for your support for our young birders. Over several weeks of practice, we learned to tune our ears and focus our binoculars to identify some of the incredible birds that call the Dallas area home. Competition day was beautiful and the weather was perfect for us! One highlight from the day was when a juvenile Cooper's hawk flew low right over the group! Everyone was thrilled to see it so close. Another fun moment was when we finally spotted a vireo! The group

had heard it all morning, but finally seeing it was spectacular. We cannot thank TOS enough for their support and assisting us in providing this magnificent opportunity for kids in our area.

**Courtney Jonescu**

Education Supervisor-Youth Learning  
Dallas Zoo Management, Inc. & Children's  
Aquarium at Fair Park





## TOS CRESTED COMORANTS, TOS RED-TAILED HAWKS, AND TOS GREAT BLUE HERONS—ROUGHWINGS TEAMS

Thanks to TOS, The Flour Bluff Bird Club was fortunate to compete in The Great Texas Birding Classic. This year was my first year as the club sponsor and I had no idea what I was in for. My principal knew I loved being outdoors and asked me to take over. I have found a new love in not only being outside in nature but also in birding, and even more important sharing that love with kids that aren't my own three. I am just amazed at our group of students who took this journey with me! We all learned and gained so much.

Our club consisted of 13 students and the local Master Naturalist Volunteers. We worked so hard all school year studying birds features, habits and classifications. Each

Friday after school we would walk outdoors to either our outdoor classroom or the pond nearby to practice identifying birds.

As the Classic drew closer, I, being new to this whole thing, was getting so nervous for our kids and this competition. On April 27th





the students and I boarded a bus and set out on our birding adventure. I was immediately set at ease when the kids' conversations were so focused on the competition and identifying birds! I was beyond impressed by these young naturalists. We drove along the shoreline and the kids were on the look-out with their binoculars, bird books and field notes. We made it to our first stop, Hazel Bazemore Park, where the three teams split up and were



amazing to watch. Then we headed over to the Nueces Delta Preserve. There we saw many more species of birds and the students even found egg shells from Purple Martins, a Pauraque sitting on her nest and a nesting Killdeer.

The best part of the day was when one of my students who is very reserved and mostly serious told me that out of all his life experiences this day was in his top 10 best days! My heart melted and at that moment I realized this club is so important to not only the kids but me as well!

We arrived back to the school tired but extremely proud of our epic, fun and successful day. We couldn't have made our year of studying nature more rewarding without the help from TOS! The lives of these kids have been forever impacted in such a positive way! Thank you!

**Nicole Biggerstaff**  
**Flour Bluff Elementary Bird Club**

## TOS-PREYS ROUGHWINGS CONTEST



The TOSpreys were originally named the Olsen (our school name) Ospreys, but when we found out that TOS would sponsor us, we renamed our team the TOSpreys! The team competed on Sunday, May 5. Team members were fifth-graders Tyler Hofhiens, Colton Taylor, and Maddox Alexander. Team Mentors were Dr. Joan Holt and Julie Findley.

We spent the day in the Port Aransas area, from the beach to the Birding Center, Community Park, and Paradise Pond. At the Birding Center, we were graced with the sights of a Black-necked Stilt and her three fluffy youngsters, and the big gator resting below the gazebo. Near the Community Park, we found a group of beautiful Yellow-headed

Blackbirds, a Loggerhead Shrike, and a pair of Killdeer with two babies.

After lunch (at Subway, of course), we continued down Highway 361, where we found the Aplomado Falcon, and got to see him hunt down an unfortunate small creature! On the way back into town, we made a quick stop at the Wetlands Overlook and were rewarded with the sight of a mother Mottled Duck followed by nine small ducklings. As the young members began to wear down, we urged them to one more stop back at Paradise Pond, where we were rewarded with our favorite bird of the day—a male Scarlet Tanager, right up close!

It was a day of mommas and babies, and









a very fun experience. The boys got tired out, but they were proud of their accomplishments at the end of the day. Hopefully, they will be back next year. Thank you, TOS, for your support. We were proud to have your sponsorship for our team!

Sincerely,  
Julie Findley, Joan Holt, Colton Taylor, Tyler Hofhiens, and Maddox Alexander  
juliefindley@utexas.edu

### TOS-SAYBC CHICKADEES GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CLASSIC TEAM

LAND HERITAGE INSTITUTE (LHI), MEDINA RIVER GREENWAY PLEASANTON ROAD TRAILHEAD, AND MITCHELL LAKE AUDUBON CENTER (MLAC)



Birding the banks of the Medina River at Land Heritage Institute, carefully avoiding the lush poison ivy.

**The Team:** Nicolas Siller, Team Captain (in red hat); Craig Davis (behind Niko); Jordan Rochlitz (with hand on cap); Andres Flores (with camera); Eric Buhler (foreground) with Adult Sponsor “Mr. Tom” Inglet.

Because of the dates Easter Holidays fell for some of the San Antonio Young Birders Club members, some members were not able to participate in the Great Texas Birding Classic this year. Therefore, we fielded only one team—three Senior Chickadees (Niko, Craig, Jordan) helped by two Junior Chickadees (Andres and Eric). They worked together

beautifully to rack up a total of 93 species at LHI and Mitchell Lake Audubon Center (MLAC) and the points in between.

Here’s what the team members had to say about their experiences:

#### NICO SILLER (CAPTAIN)

This year’s Great Texas Birding Classic was a great experience for me as it was my first year to be captain of our team. Everyone contributed and I was especially impressed at the spotting and ear identifications of the younger members. Even though we missed a good number of shorebirds, we were able to



Jordan and Nico also photographed many of the birds they were able to spot and identify.

snag a few surprises including a female Black-throated Green Warbler at Mitchell Lake.

My favorite experience of the count was probably seeing the Peregrine Falcon swoop and soar over Neal Rd. and watching the Swainson's Hawks soar around with the Turkey Vultures. In fact, this year I learned how to distinguish between a Western and Couch's Kingbird by the white on the tail. Overall, the day was great as always and it was a great reminder that birds aren't always predictable.

### CRAIG DAVIS

This year's Great Texas Birding Classic was a big success. Of course, there were ups and downs, but overall, it was a great day! Our time at the Land Heritage Institute was very successful, as we saw birds from a Northern Parula, to a Swainson's Hawk. While we walked down along the river, we heard the Parula's call as plain as day. This was a great experience because that was one of the clearest life birds I've ever heard.

While we were relocating to Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, we saw my favorite birds of the day, a Peregrine Falcon and White-faced Ibis. The Peregrine Falcon was in the wide-open sky searching for its next meal as we stood and stared at it on the side of the road.

The White-faced Ibises were in a flock of about 30 in a marshy area by the road posing for us—another life bird for me, and I got to see 30 of them show off for us for the first time. These two species were definitely crazy and unexpected sightings and I will remember those moments for a long time.

At Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, we didn't see as many shorebirds as we wanted, but we did see some cool and uncommon birds. Some interesting highlights at Mitchell Lake for me were a Green Heron and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron that flew right into the open for us, a Nashville Warbler that was perched 10 feet away us, and a Long-billed Thrasher that hung out with us while we ate lunch.



Over all, it was a great day and experience that I got to spend with my incredible teammates! The day wouldn't have been the same if one of the teammates wasn't there. Each person brought their own special skills that the team needed in order to have a successful day of birding. Our team is very thankful for the mentors that Tom and Patsy Inglet have been to us. Personally, I have learned so much from them, and I am appreciative that they continue to invest in the lives of young birders.

### JORDAN ROCHLITZ

This year's Great Texas Birding Classic was unforgettable. I was a part of an amazing team, saw many incredible birds, and improved my skills as a birder.



We started off the day at the Land Heritage Institute, where we began birding before we had even entered through the gate. We then collected the team and drove in together, spotting a Pyrrhuloxia along the way. The Land Heritage Institute was beautiful, filled with wildflowers and hopping with birds. During our time at LHI, we were able to catch a glimpse of a Yellow-breasted Chat, which was a lifer for me. We were also able to see several Summer Tanagers, Northern Parula, and a Yellow-throated Warbler down by the river. After the Land Heritage Institute, we began the journey to the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center. The drive to Mitchell Lake is always one of my favorite parts, as you never know what you will spot along the way,

such as the Peregrine Falcon and White-faced Ibises we saw. Once at Mitchell Lake, we had a quick lunch, then hit the pond, lake, and polders.

This year, I learned several new bird sounds, including that of the Northern Parula and the Painted Bunting. I also improved on focusing on a bird's field marks before attempting to identify it. Our team worked well together, with everyone bringing something to the plate. Though we missed out on several species that we were able to count last year, we were able to make up for our loss with different, more unusual species. We saw a significant amount of warblers and raptors, which was interesting to me.

This GTBC, I loved working together with other birders and being able to connect with nature. I had an awesome experience this year, and can't wait until next year.



### ANDRES FLORES

On April 20th, 2019, I was a part of a team of 5 members that competed in spotting bird species in a specific location within a time limit for the 2019 Texas Birding Classic. We went to two different locations: The Land Heritage Institute and Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, both located on the south

side of San Antonio. This year I was glad to have some of the best weather in comparison to the last two years I competed. We saw 93 amazing birds. Additionally to the birds we saw, we were able to spot a bobcat, coyote, and two deer.

My favorite bird that I saw was at the Medina River. While walking quietly along the river trail, we heard the Northern Parula call, and after much searching, we finally saw it. On the way from LHI to Mitchell Lake we were surprised to see 2 uncommon bird species: 25 White-faced Ibis in a large field, eating with their long beaks. Then they suddenly took flight when a Red-shouldered Hawk came flying behind the nearby trees. While traveling we also spotted a Peregrine Falcon in flight. Its curved wings made it easy to identify. Overall, we saw lots of birds and had a good time.



### ERIC BUHLER

Early in the morning we drove to Land Heritage Institute. There we walked down to the river and saw tanagers with their red bodies and Northern Parulas. Then we went to a place that was more cleared out, and while we

were walking to the cars we saw a turkey and a Painted Bunting taking a bath.

We also saw a ton of cattle egrets and ibises. We then drove to Mitchell Lake. I was excited to see a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and the pelicans are always fun to see. Later we found out we had seen 93 species of birds. I was excited and it was a nice day!



### TOM & PATSY INGLET, SAYBC FLOCK LEADERS

It is always such a pleasure to work with this wonderful group of young birders. We look forward to the 2020 Great Texas Birding Classic

when we can again field two teams: the Senior and the Junior Chickadees.

Thanks to Land Heritage Institute and Mitchell Lake Audubon Center for preserving the wonderful bird habitat that we explore during the Great Texas Birding Classic. We thank the team parents who provide transportation, snacks, lunch, and lots of encouragement. We are very grateful to our team sponsor, Texas Ornithological Society, for their support. And, of course, we thank Texas Parks & Wildlife for hosting the Birding Classic and giving us all the chance to pursue the birds we love.

We look forward to the Award Ceremony on June 1 to hear all the great bird stories and to congratulate the winners in each category.

Best and Birds!  
**San Antonio Young Birders Club (SAYBC) Chickadees**

## OF BIRDING CLUBS AND MARCHING BANDS

After losing all but one of our birding club members to graduation last year, we were back to recruiting new members. Luckily, our sole returnee, Frank De Hoyos, had intrigued several of his friends about the world of birding during their morning marching band practices. That quickly had 6 new members on our team! The new birders were very excited to be learning new species and identification skills and my co-sponsor and I were envisioning having at least two teams for the GTBC again this year: after all, they were used to getting up early (be at band practices by 6:30 am) and they were used to long hours (2 or more hours of practice after school in the hot sun). Two of the biggest deterrents for would-be birders already crossed off. Band members were a perfect fit for birding.



had no choice but to give the members a list of target birds to review that we regularly see and expect during our GTBC big day, urging them to go out in the field together or individually when they had a chance or to log-in to our “go to” site ([allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org)) to study the birds and listen to their calls.



As the year progressed, some of the new recruits were freshmen and the heavy school-work-load, band practices and birding excursions were too much for them, unfortunately, they had to drop out. We were left with four members, so we carried on. Meanwhile, our band had started their competition season and available free time was limited: they were practicing more days before and after school and going to competition every weekend. We



Our bad luck continued: two of the members not only participated in the marching band, they also competed in solo and ensemble competition and if they advanced in future contests they were set to compete during our big day. I was thankful that they gave me a heads up. It was a scramble to find at least one standby student, but we were successful. A young birder had attended our local birding festival and I had asked him for his phone number so that I could contact him





next year when he got to high school. The call came much earlier! I spoke to his parents and he joined our club. He had been birding several years with his father and already knew many of the targeted birds. The two band members advanced to state competition and our young birder filled their slot without skipping a beat.

We had fewer members on our team and our final count was lower from previous years. But the band marched on and the early birders got their worm.

Glenda C. Barrera, United High School, Laredo, Texas

### TOS AND HUTH AVIAN CHATTY CHICKADEES (ROUGHWINGS TEAM)



What a fun, fun day we had! The TOS and Huth Avian Chatty Chickadees spent a whole day in the field looking for birds. From Cattail Marsh in Beaumont to Sabine Woods in Sabine Pass to the beaches of Sea Rim State Park, we made it to three different ecosystems and brought along seasoned and new birders alike.

We had five kids on the team; however, we

also had two teenagers join us just for fun! The kids (and adults) loved it. A huge *Thank You* to TOS and Huth Avian Services for generously sponsoring us. Their sponsorship touched many young lives and made an impact on some likely lifelong birders. These kids had a blast!!!

Michele Brooke, parent









## TOS FEATHER FINDERS SUNRISE TO NOON CONTEST



The TOS Feather Finders competed on Saturday, May 3. Team members were Cherrie Stunz, Julie Findley (adults), Madeline Stunz, Emma Hofhiens, and Gabe Littleton (youth). Emma's mom, Christina Hofhiens, joined us as team photographer.

We had beautiful weather, nice and cool,

and we started at the beach, where we spied lots of terns and a flock of Franklin's Gulls. We wound through town and stopped for a restroom break at CVS. We saw a pond behind CVS, and were lucky to spot a flock of Wilson's Phalaropes there!

We spent the morning around Port Aran-







sas, at the Birding Center, Paradise Pond, and along Highway 361. Our high point was observing a male Aplomado Falcon near the Mustang Island State Park. We also were surprised to find a lone Lesser Scaup in a pond behind Gabe's father's warehouse (Island Construction) on the highway.

It was a wonderful experience for all of us, and our only regret was that the time passed too quickly! We finished off the morning

with lunch at Subway, and had cupcakes to celebrate Emma's tenth birthday.

Thank you, TOS, for supporting these budding naturalists. We greatly appreciate your sponsorship, and we were proud to have your name in our team name!

Sincerely,

Julie Findley, Cherrie Stunz, Madeline Stunz,  
Emma Hofhiens, and Gabe Littleton  
[juliefindley@utexas.edu](mailto:juliefindley@utexas.edu)



## DEAR TEXAS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Thank you for your financial assistance with our youth birding team, Focus on the Birds. This team of four 10 year olds is brand new to birding. One started with me a year ago. Then we added one in January and two more in March. Their Saturday birding excursions culminated with their Great Texas Birding Classic tournament day on May 11.



Our group became accustomed to breakfast and birding on Saturday mornings. So it was disappointing on tournament morning to find the skies dark and raining. It was hard to wait, but at 3:30 in the afternoon the rain took a break and the team finally went out with one little brother in tow. In two hours of birding the kids were able to see and identify 24 species of birds in our city park. Other locations were so waterlogged that we decided to conclude our tournament and went to supper.

Our team did perform well and had a good time doing it. In fact, at the conclusion of the day they felt sad that they would not meet again the next Saturday and asked if they could get together again some time to have some fun going birding. They were promised that we would meet again. We will go birding on the way to the Great Texas Birding Classic awards program.





Thank you for the opportunity to represent your group. We had a fun time saying “ornithological” and discovering birds we never knew were hiding in our own back yards.  
Sincerely,  
Wade Phelps



# THE ALASKA JOURNAL...

“EXCERPTS FROM FACEBOOK ON THE TOS ALASKA TRIP”

**By Byron Stone and Randy Pinkston**



**GREETINGS FROM ALASKA  
(NOTES ON THE TOS TRIP FROM  
BYRON STONE)  
FRIDAY, MAY 31**

Greetings from Alaska ya'll!

Randy Pinkston and I scouted the Anchorage area today (Friday May 31, 2019) with early-arriving participant Jeff Patterson, who is also a SparrowFest co-leader.

We started at Lake Hood / Spenard a 2 minute walk from the hotel for Red-necked Grebe and both goldeneyes. We got Common Goldeneye, but dipped on Barrow's, but will try again each of the next two days, as Barrow's Goldeneye is regular here. We next headed down to Potter's Marsh where Arctic Terns and Mew Gulls were zipping about

everywhere. We watched and hoped for the Falcated Duck that has been seen here periodically for the past 3 weeks, but had no luck this morning. We watched the gulls and waterfowl get stirred up as an adult Bald Eagle soared overhead, while 3 species of swallows fluttered by, unconcerned.

Then on to Westchester Lagoon where we studied Mew Gulls literally at our feet. Jeff found a single Bonaparte's Gull on the far side of the lake. We had great looks at a muskrat swimming by and at Greater Scaup, including comparison studies with nearby Lesser Scaup. This location has been excellent for very close approach for Greater Scaup for study and photos. No Hudsonian Godwits today, but we will try again tomorrow and Sunday.

Then off to Arctic Valley for the awesome spectacle of singing Golden-crowned Sparrows. A few were already on territory, as were a few Wilson's Warbler's. Fantastic views of the Chugach Mountains! Then a frustrating search for Campbell Tract, where American Dippers are known to breed. We are pretty sure we now know the way when we plan to take the whole group later.

Dinner at Gwennie's Old Alaska Restaurant.

More participants arrive Saturday for a even more Anchorage birding.

Doc Stone, Anchorage Alaska



**GREETINGS FROM ALASKA  
(NOTES ON THE TOS TRIP FROM  
BYRON STONE)  
SATURDAY, JUNE 1**

Hi All,

Six of our ten participants were with me and Randy today, the remaining 4 will arrive in Anchorage by early afternoon tomorrow. So, 8 of us headed first to Spenard Lake where we found a scopable pair of Barrow's Golden-eyes, and Jeff found a Red-breasted Nuthatch vocalizing at the top of a tall snag. Then over to Potter Marsh for more views of nesting and foraging Arctic Terns and Mew Gulls. Two adult moose were out in the marsh today, and we could still see them through bins at the first pull-off near the south end of the marsh. We hoped for the Falcated Duck which was reported again late yesterday, but never saw it. Lots of other ducks, though, and two adult Trumpeter Swans provided great scope views for everyone. We had a fly-by of a small group of Short-billed Dowitchers that obliged us by vocalizing, so that we could identify them to species. Nice views of Tree and Violet-green Swallows and a few Bank Swallows and a single Cliff Swallow foraging over the marsh.

Then to WeeB's (a TOS Alaska tradition) for a quick lunch. Randy and I both sampled the Elk burger, which was tasty, and then had

our picture taken outside WeeB's (another TOS Alaska tradition).

Then on to Kincaid Park, which started slow but finished with a bang as we found multiple singing Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers, several Swainson's Thrushes, a pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets and a single Fox Sparrow which sang for us and then afforded everyone great views atop an alder tree. Down by the lake we found a lusty pair of Lincoln's Sparrows, and then the creme-de-la-creme, a vocalizing and foraging adult female American Three-toed Woodpecker. Awesome!

Buoyed by the euphoric aftermath of the three-toed woodpecker, we headed over to Westchester Lagoon, where we viewed Mew Gulls at arm's length, debated the identities of the small geese there (Lesser Canadas), compared Lesser and Greater Scaup again, and finally had our first Hudsonian Godwits of the trip. We finished the day with a Downy Woodpecker at a nesthole, and then a great seafood dinner at Humpie's in downtown Anchorage.

Another great day in Alaska!

Good birding ya'll,

Doc Stone, Austin, TX by way Anchorage,  
AK



Photo by Byron Stone

**GREETINGS FROM ALASKA  
(NOTES ON THE TOS TRIP FROM  
BYRON STONE)  
SUNDAY, JUNE 2**

Hi All,

Randy and I had all but two participants with us this morning for the first official day of the 2019 TOS Alaska Trip.

We headed out a little after 8 a.m. for Eagle River Preserve in Chugach Mountain State Park because Randy thinks it is pretty great, and boy did it come through today. Half the group spied a male Pine Grosbeak while some of the others of us were chasing an unknown noise on the other side of the visitor's center. Jeff Patterson found a Golden-crowned Sparrow tapping at one of the windows of the visitor's center, and all were able to see it well. And we had an adult and a couple of Canada Jays feeding in conifers near the visitor's center. We later found a couple more singing GC Sparrows down the trail. Then we heard that a moose was being seen down the trail, so we headed down there and sure enough a young bull moose was browsing contentedly in tall grass about 40 yards away as we oohed and ahed and shot lots of photos. Then we followed up on one of the several Varied Thrush that we could hear singing like invisible forest sprites. We finally tracked down several of these often-elusive birds and all in the group had great views and we even treated several other park visitors to scope views of this great bird. Then we found a Hairy Woodpecker pair interacting down the trail and got great views and more photos. We walked some of the boardwalk and found a few more good birds including a vocalizing Wilson's Snipe and our first Alder Flycatcher of the trip. Then, on the way out, we cautiously and breathlessly watched a sow black bear and her two cubs feeding in thick vegetation a mere thirty yards away. Wow! A quick stop at the visitor's center, and then a few more in the group got to hear the Pine Grosbeak singing before we had to leave for lunch.

After a not-so-quick lunch at the Lucky Wishbone (chicken was good though), we

headed back to the hotel for chores, and to pick up our final two participants, Gus and Cindy from Austin, then headed out shortly after 5 p.m. to the Campbell Tract, where we reveled in the antics of a pair of American Dippers foraging in the creek and feeding young at a nest.

Then on to Potter's Marsh for Arctic Terns, Mew Gulls, and a slim chance to see the mega-rare Falcated Duck. No problem with the terns and gulls, but the rare duck proved more elusive. Jeff learned that another birder scoping from the shoulder of the very busy highway had been able to get fleeting distant glimpses of the bird, so most of our group shuffled along the shoulder to to that vantage point to try their luck. Randy was able to get a brief scope view of identifiable duck body-parts, but it seemed unlikely that we would be able to put others on the bird and I was really concerned about safety on this busy highway shoulder, so we shuffled back to the van and relocated to a road on the other side of the lagoon. Even though Randy, Jeff and I had tried this vantage point before and found most of the view blocked by roadside vegetation, we were able to find a narrow window through which to view the patch of water where we thought the bird was foraging. Jeff Patterson finally spotted the bird and we were able to get everyone some brief views of this mega-rarity. Then Laura Darley and Mike Anderson noticed another slim window further up the road, so we relocated there and had closer, more continuous views, so that we were finally able to get all 12 members of our party to have satisfying views of this rarity that so many have recently looked for and failed to see well or at all. No photos, though, as it was so distant, and none of us are capable digiscopers.

Then it was off to Gwennie's Old Alaska Restaurant for a late meal and then to bed.

Tomorrow we are off to Nome for 5 days and 4 nites.

Good birding ya'll,

Byron "Doc" Stone, Austin, TX by way of Anchorage, AK

**GREETINGS FROM ALASKA  
(NOTES FROM THE TOS TRIP BY  
RANDY PINKSTON)  
MONDAY, JUNE 3**

All went well this morning with getting everyone to the Anchorage airport and checking in for our flight to Nome. We enjoyed a nice flight with beautiful views of Denali Peak, arriving in Nome in the early afternoon with bluebird skies and pleasantly cool temps. Check-in at the Nugget Inn and rental vehicle pickup were quick and uneventful. We then spent the afternoon birding the Bering Sea coastal road eastward from Nome. The short version of this report is that lifers were had by multiple participants at every stop, including a minimum of ten Long-tailed Jaegers that appeared at intervals along our drive. A tundra pond on the town outskirts produced a pair each of Long-tailed Ducks and Red-throated Loons, the latter attending a nest. At the Nome River mouth we were delighted to discover numerous Aleutian Terns (50-60 birds by conservative estimate) foraging on the river and loafing on the tundra, many of them paired up and nesting nearby. Everyone had great looks at these birds with sun at our backs. As we continued along the coastal road a yellow-bellied songbird with long straight tail flew directly overhead—Eastern Yellow Wagtail, no doubt about it! We stopped and everyone enjoyed great views of the wagtail in courtship display and teed-up in roadside willows. Next along our drive Alaska's state bird—a stunning male Willow Ptarmigan—sat motionless in plain view to our left, followed by a vocalizing Pacific Golden-Plover in display fight over the surrounding tundra. Additional roadside delights included a cooperative American Tree Sparrow and Gray-cheeked Thrush pair. We made our turnaround at the large roadside quarry east of Nome where we stopped to scope several pairs of Common Eiders. It was a very exciting first afternoon in the Nome area. We returned to town for dinner and getting a good night's

rest before more great birding around Nome on Tuesday.

Randy Pinkston, 2019 TOS Alaska Trip Co-leader

**GREETINGS FROM ALASKA (NOTES  
ON THE TOS TRIP FROM RANDY  
PINKSTON)  
TUESDAY, JUNE 4**

Nome birding revolves around three gravel roads leading from town into the surrounding tundra of the Seward peninsula. Tuesday was our day for the easternmost of these—Council road—which follows the coast several miles east of town. Along the way we encountered more Long-tailed Jaegers, a couple Brant flocks, and great looks at another Aleutian Tern. We were frequently entertained by the aerial displays of Semipalmated Sandpipers, each suggesting a tiny “tundra drone” and sounding like an idling Model T Ford—indeed, so very different from how we experience these peeps as migrants through Texas. At one tundra lake we encountered over 200 Tundra Swans in one spot. While enjoying the swan spectacle, we spotted first one and then two bright cinnamon Bar-tailed Godwits. We studied these and noticed a third godwit—larger, paler, and longer-billed than the other two. After some group deliberation we realized this third bird was a Marbled Godwit. Photos were obtained. As it turns out, our bird was a first-ever record for the Seward peninsula. Just beyond this location we stopped for lunch at the “train to nowhere” landmark near the historic Solomon community. There we enjoyed displaying Lapland Longspurs and discovered a Semipalmated Sandpiper nest and four eggs. At this point the Council road turns inland in a northeastward direction. A tundra pond near this junction produced a stunning pair of nesting Pacific Loons and plenty of excitement (and camera activity) by trip participants. Our inland drive climbed in elevation and crossed numerous stunted willow thickets—the only “trees” on the



Seward peninsula—within which we observed numerous singing Gray-cheeked Thrushes, Fox and American Tree Sparrows, Northern Waterthrushes, both Yellow and Wilson’s Warblers, and one stunning male Blackpoll Warbler. River crossings along our ascending drive yielded a cooperative Wandering Tattler and numerous handsome Harlequin Ducks. Though we hoped in vain for a Gyrfalcon along Council road, a tundrius Peregrine Falcon and pair of majestic Rough-legged Hawks—both on nests—were adequate consolation prizes. It was a great day and a full day for everyone.

**GREETINGS FROM ALASKA  
(NOTES ON THE TOS TRIP FROM  
BYRON STONE)  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5**

Hi All,

We had a truly Amazing Day in Alaska today, June 5, on the Kougarok Road, one of the great birding venues in North America. The end of Kougarok Road is almost 80 miles from Nome, and the site for one of its most desired birds is at mile 72, so we had

a very early departure in order to reach the fabled Coffee Dome early enough to have a decent chance of encountering Bristle-thighed Curlew. We did stop a couple of times en route, finding Arctic Warbler about 20 miles out of town. Everyone had great looks at this bird, which was a lifer for all 10 participants. We then proceeded as fast as dense fog would allow, slowing down once for a herd of 20 or so Musk Oxen with at least 2 calves. We arrived at Coffee Dome about 0730, where we met our friend Jon Dunn of Wings, who invited us to join him and his associate Gavin Bieber on their hike up the hill to seek the elusive curlew. After a brief, informative talk by Jon about the bird’s biology, we hiked up the muddy trail and thence onto the tundra, eventually finding at least 3 adult curlews. We were able to watch them foraging and in flight, and to hear their eery, evocative vocalization several times. We also great looks at an adult American Golden Plover, and heard at least 1 Whimbrel. Bristle-thighed Curlew was a lifer for all participants. Success like this would be plenty for most normal birding days, but we weren’t done yet. After a short

lunch stop, we followed the Wings group down the road a bit to try for Bluethroat. After we stepped out of our vehicles, sharp-eared participant Jeff Patterson confirmed that he could hear a Bluethroat vocalizing before he exited his vehicle. Sure enough, we were soon treated to what is surely one of the most remarkable bird song / displays on the continent. Watching a male Bluethroat skylarking display is like having a ringside seat at a ballet with fireworks. Randy and I believe the official name of the bird should be changed to The Amazing Bluethroat.

Incredible as it sounds, there was more. We drove down the road a bit to where we were able to watch an adult Golden Eagle tending to a nest, either building or adding to the nest on a distant cliff face. I mentioned at one point that “it would sure be nice if the bird’s mate would fly in so that we could see an eagle in flight.” Shortly thereafter, someone reported “a large bird flew in near the nest” and soon after that an adult Golden Eagle lifted off from behind a large rock at the top of the distant cliff, soared to the other end of the cliff face, and settled down again out of view. High fives all around!

We then proceeded down the road to another distant cliff, where we watched an adult male light-morph Rough-legged Hawk en-

gage in aerial combat with a Common Raven. After the Rough-leg sent the raven packing, while we watched the hawk soar above the cliff face, a large falcon swooped in - an adult gray-morph Gyrfalcon! Randy and I dipped on this bird in Alaska 2 years ago, so we were overjoyed to have a chance to observe this supreme raptor engaging the Rough-legged Hawk, and then watch it soar on broad wings high above the cliff face and to study the bird in flight for many minutes. All were happy on the way back to Nome with an early dinner in mind and grand memories of lifers dancing in their heads.

And I haven’t even mentioned the explosion of singing passerines. Every patch of willows seemed to feature one or more singing Gray-cheeked Thrush, Fox Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Northern Waterthrush, Wilson’s and Yellow Warblers. And a few Willow Ptarmigan.

We had 58 species for the day.

It was a great day to be birding in Alaska.

Good birding ya’ll.

Byron “Doc” Stone, Austin, TX by way of Anchorage, AK

Randy Pinkston, 2019 TOS Alaska Trip Co-leader





**GREETINGS FROM ALASKA  
(NOTES ON THE TOS TRIP FROM  
RANDY PINKSTON)  
THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 2019**

Thursday was our Teller road day, the third and most westerly of Nome's gravel roads to nowhere. It was also a relative down day by unanimous vote—leaders included—so we started early (-7 am) and ended early (3:30 pm) to allow for naps, walks around town, and early dinner. We made it roughly 40 miles along the Teller road before turning around due to dense fog that, unfortunately, precluded our efforts to find target birds like Rock Ptarmigan and Northern Wheatear. Nevertheless, there were some birding highlights along the way. We observed more Willow Ptarmigans than we could keep track of, including numerous pairs and displaying males. Their wacky quacking “go-back, go-back” calls are a must hear for anyone visiting the Arctic tundra. Remarkably, we encountered four different Bluethroats evenly spread out during our drive. Short-eared Owls were regular along the way and everyone had great looks at these. Both Pacific and American Golden-Plovers provided excellent opportunities for everyone to study and compare these gorgeous tundra breeders in full alternate plumage. Winnowing Wilson's Snipe in display flights high overhead were frequently heard and observed along Teller road. From a river bridge we observed a copulating pair of Wandering Tattlers. We saw multiple Long-tailed Jaegers, including a pair standing on the road and wolfing down lemmings. Besides the four Bluethroats, other passerines included good numbers of the usual dwarf willow thicket inhabitants—Gray-cheeked Thrush, robin, both redpolls, American Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, White-crowned & Golden-crowned Sparrows, Northern Waterthrush, and Orange-crowned, Yellow, and Wilson's Warblers. And early on we were again treated to a singing male Blackpoll Warbler. We returned at a good time and everyone had

ample opportunity for relaxation before dinner. Friday will be another full day of birding along the Nome coastal road to Safety Sound before our return to Anchorage in the evening.

Randy Pinkston, 2019 TOS Alaska Trip Co-leader

**GREETINGS FROM ALASKA (NOTES  
ON THE TOS TRIP FROM RANDY  
PINKSTON)  
SUNDAY, JUNE 9**

Good morning all. It's midnight in Barrow and I just want to send a quick note that our first day in Barrow was pretty amazing. We arrived around midday and got all 3 key eider species before 10 pm. All 10 participants had great looks at King & Steller's by the time we finished dinner. Six folks stayed with us for a late eider prowl and we found a handsome pair of Spectacled before 10 pm. Our flight up here was great and everyone is now comfortable (and warm) at the Barrow Airport Inn. Other highlights today included all three jaegers, two Snowy Owls, three beautiful Sabine's Gulls, countless phalaropes of two species, displaying Pectoral Sandpipers, plentiful Long-tailed Ducks, and many others. The TOS trip is going very nicely. Tomorrow morning we meet for breakfast at 7 and then make a Spectacled Eider search for those who missed it this evening.

Cheers,  
Randy



Photo by Byron Stone

# BAIRD'S AND GRASSHOPPER SPARROW BANDING IN MARFA

**By T. Jay Adams**

In December I had the pleasure to join the Borderlands Research Institute of Sul Ross University (BRI) Study on the beautiful Mimms Ranch just outside of Marfa for their first banding day of the 2018-2019 winter. The ranch is owned and operated by the Dixon Water Foundation and has been home to this study of wintering sparrows. Now in the third winter, the study is led by BRI research scientist Mieke Titulaer, PhD, and graduate research assistants Denis Perez and Fabby Baeza. After learning about the ongoing research project through TOS at its spring meeting held in Alpine back in May, I jumped at the chance to participate.

vast grasslands on the ranch to setup at various predetermined sites for our first round attempt to capture and tag Baird's and Grasshopper Sparrows. After setting up the first mist net location and seeing our first birds, I soon forgot about the cold air as we had both a Baird's and Grasshopper sparrow in the first attempt of the day.

Our first look was at a Grasshopper Sparrow with its large, flat head and bill. Seeing this bird "in the hand" is a much more satisfying experience than what is often a quick glance through bins or a scope. What a good looking bird with its warm, buffy wash and more distinctive yellow on the wing edges than I had noticed before. Next up



I had wanted the hands on experience with this type of banding project, but also was excited for the opportunity to add a "lifer" Baird's Sparrow to my list. Our day started



out an hour later than expected as temperatures were a crisp 24 degrees that Friday morning. After allowing temps to warm up some in order

to protect the birds from exposure, fourteen researchers and volunteers headed out to the



was the Baird's Sparrow. It is slightly larger in size, really only noticeable when they are side by side in this manner. The narrow band of streaks across the breast, buffy color to the face, and somewhat scaly back are what were most memorable here.



After the quick looks, the birds were banded and fitted with radio transmitters before being released to the same area where captured. Ideally, birds are

then able to be tracked daily for the next 40-55 days to learn more about behavior, range, core area (where most of their time is spent), as well as corresponding habitats and food availability.

Throughout the day, nets were run in four locations and were able to capture, tag and release 4 Baird's and 5 Grasshopper sparrows, along with several Savannah sparrows. Having the three sparrows in hand was a great way to compare characteristics of each species side-by-side. Along the way, we were able to observe many Chestnut-colored Longspurs, flush a Short-eared Owl, and have a flyover Golden Eagle during our lunch break. What a great way to reinforce and practice ID's!

While the birds we were able to see up close were fantastic, I was also quite impressed with the work that was being done by Mieke, Denis and Fabby. The time and effort they spend throughout the winter conducting



research (with the help of many very knowledgeable and talented volunteers) is formidable. I really enjoyed walking alongside such a young and enthusiastic group of people who have put in so much time on this and other studies. Being able to bounce questions off each of them, while learning more about the banding process and their experiences, was definitely a highlight of the entire west Texas trip.

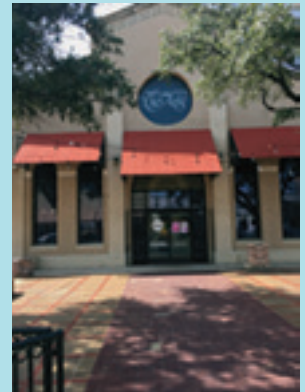
Their work, combined along with that of three other wintering sites in Mexico and summer sites on the Northern Great Plains, are helping put together knowledge to form conservation strategies to turn around the population declines that have been identified. After my experience, I am all the more grateful for their work and hospitality. Additionally, I'm proud of the TOS financial support of this study. I'd highly recommend anyone wanting to have a great volunteer experience (and perhaps pickup a new "life" bird along the way) to join in as the project continues this winter!

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**T. Jay Adams**  
**tjay\_13@yahoo.com**

# VISITING THE "BIRDS OF THE BRUSH" ART EXHIBITION

By Jack Eitnrear



In previous issues of *Texas Birds Annual* I included coverage of the Birds of the Brush art exhibition held in conjunction with the *Laredo Birding Festival*. Past coverage was always compliments of material submitted by the exhibition coordinators. This year was different as one afternoon I took a break from the festival and walked a couple blocks to the *Laredo Center for the Arts* and viewed the exhibition myself. These are just a few of the 365 outstanding art pieces received for this year's art contest. The *Birds of the Brush* Art contest is now the largest art contest in Laredo and largest bird art contest in South Texas!! Congratulations to the winners!!

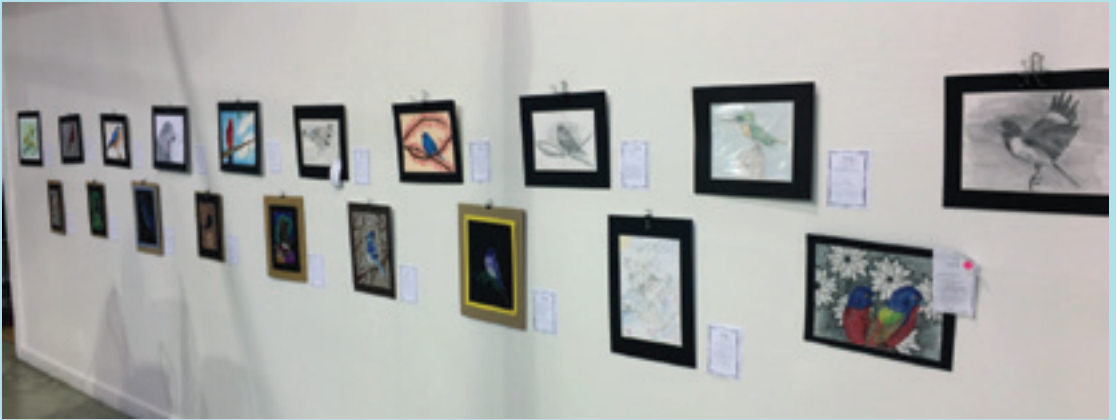


Best of Show: Abraham Moreno (United South MS)

## ADDITIONAL WINNERS

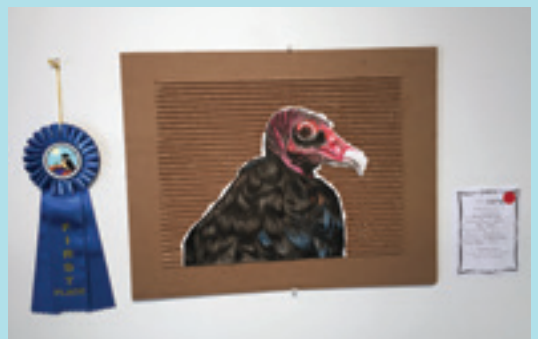
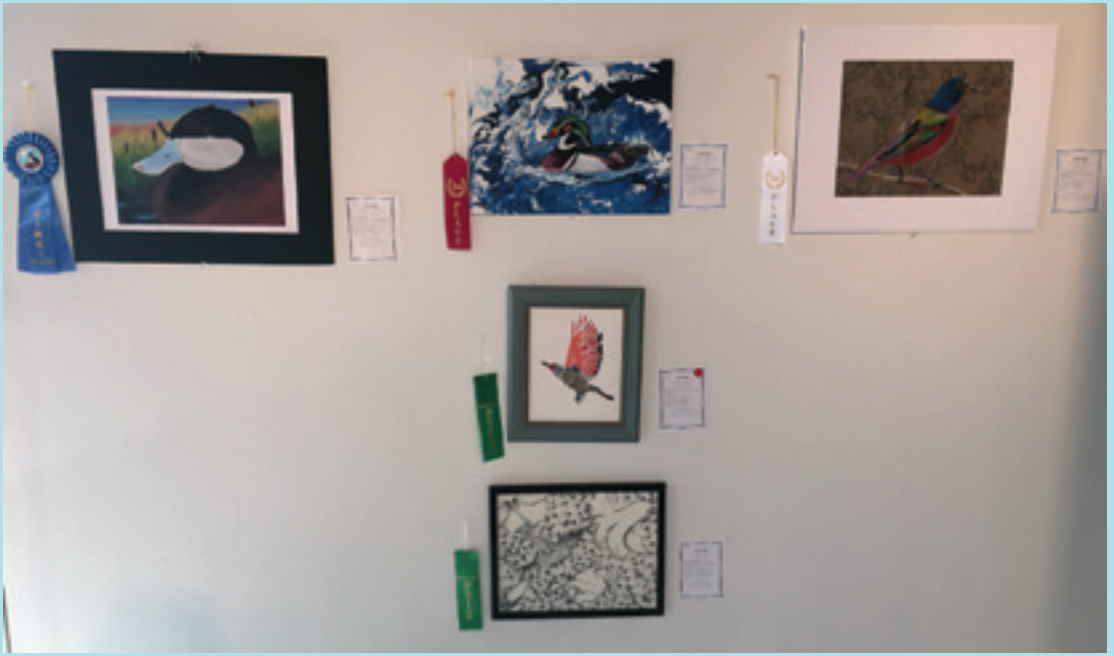
- **Elementary Category:** Carla Morales (1st), Leslie Rodriguez (2nd), Ashley Rodriguez (3rd), Ricky Paredes and Hailey Needham (Honorable Mention)
- **Middle School Category:** Anahi Estrada (1st), Asael Garcia (2nd), Ailyn Contreras (3rd), Sonia Saldivar and Leslie Rodriguez (Honorable Mention)
- **High School Category:** Ashley Maldonado (1st), Giselle Perez (2nd), Christian Gutierrez (3rd), Lorenzo Maldonado and Devanie Contreras (Honorable Mention)
- **Community - Amateur:** Virginia Garza Shuey (1st), Elisa Gutierrez (2nd), Melissa Rendon (3rd), Regina Portillo and Rebecca Diaz (Honorable Mention)
- **Community - Professional:** Samuel Bowers (1st), Pancho Farias (2nd), Ricardo Castillon (3rd), Raquel Morales and Ana Torres (Honorable Mention)

## THE ART....



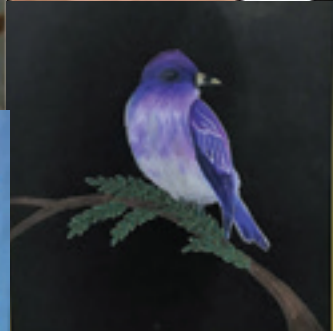
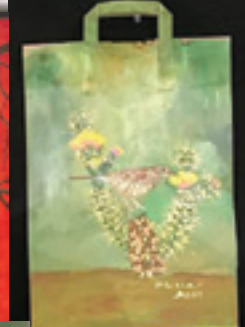














THE VIEWERS....



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*Jack Clinton Eitniew*  
[jclintoneitniew@gmail.com](mailto:jclintoneitniew@gmail.com)



# TOS PRESENTS TWO NEW AWARDS



Cecilia Riley



## CHARLES MCNEESE AWARD

In 1952, Charles McNeese contacted a few friends and placed an “advertisement” in *The Spoonbill* of the Ornithology Group, Houston Outdoor Nature Club. On February 14, 1953, McNeese and a group that responded to his ad met in Austin and formed the Texas Ornithological Society. McNeese and his efforts established TOS so it seems fitting that we name our new award after him “*For significantly furthering the goals of birding through leadership in a Texas non-profit organization*”.

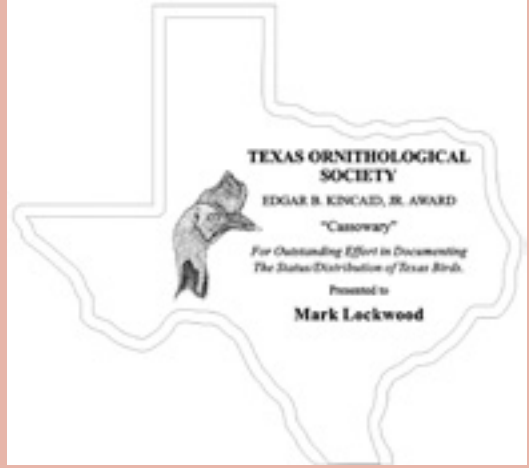
TOS is proud to present the first Charles McNeese Award to Cecilia Riley, Director Emeritus, of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO)

A native Texan, biologist and avid bird watcher, Cecilia has committed her life’s work to avian research and natural history in both North America and Latin America. Cecilia’s educational background includes a B.S. in Ecology from the University of Texas at Arlington and an M.S. in Zoology from the University of Arkansas. Prior to her position at the GCBO, she spent 2 years as the state coordinator for *Texas Partners in Flight* and 8 years as a research associate of marine studies at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas.

Cecilia led GCBO for nearly 20 years before retiring in 2015. Through her leadership GCBO established its 71 member Site Partner Network, established permanent endowments for land acquisition, assisted partners throughout the Americas in protecting more than 17,000 acres of tropical forests in 10 countries as well as thousands of acres in the U.S., conducted many avian field studies, spearheaded the completion of the new Avian Conservation Science Center, and of course much more.



Mark W Lockwood



### EDGAR B. KINCAID, JR. AWARD

Without Kincaid's herculean effort editing Oberholser's *The Bird Life of Texas* the tome would never have seen the light of day. Edgar kept meticulous records of species expansions and retractions and continually expressed concern over the future of these feathered friends. Birds were so much of this native Texan's life he often gave his friends "bird names". As an early editor of the *TOS Newsletter* and *Bird life of Texas* it is only fitting that we honor Edgar by naming an award after him. ***Given to individuals or organizations that document, and/or act to conserve birdlife in Texas.***

It is with great pleasure that TOS presents the first Edgar B Kincaid, Jr Award to Mark W. Lockwood. Mark is a conservation biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He is a member of the Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC; involvement 1995-2011, 2012-2018) and a former member of the American Birding Association's Checklist Committee. He is the regional editor of the quarterly Texas column that appears in *North American Birds* and was awarded the Ludlow Griscom Award for Outstanding Contributions in Regional Ornithology from the American Birding Association in 2012. He is the author of eight books, including *The TOS Handbook of Texas Birds*. He lives in Alpine, Texas.

Mark's contributions are summed up well by Greg Lasley:

"I participated in the TBRC from 1986 until 2000 or 2001. Certainly many of those years Mark was also a member and his tenure lasted well into the time after I left. Mark's contributions to the TBRC are too numerous to mention. His well-reasoned evaluations of rarity records were an important contribution to that body for many years. In the 34 years I have known Mark he has been an enthusiastic supporter of the TBRC and of Texas birds and Texas birding. His knowledge and dedication to the knowledge of the birdlife of Texas is monumental. Mark has been such an incredible ambassador for Texas birds through his books and other writings over the years. He has few equals in this regard."

# THE RED-CROWNED PARROT (*AMAZONA VIRIDIGENALIS*): STATUS, CONSERVATION, AND MANAGEMENT

By Tony Henehan



Red-crowned Parrot in flight, Brownsville, TX. Credit: Cullen Hanks

The Red-crowned Parrot (also known as the Mexican Red-headed Parrot and Mexican Green-cheeked Parrot) is a medium sized Psittacid found naturally occurring in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties of the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, as well as the states of Tamaulipas, Veracruz, and San Luis Potosi in North-east Mexico (Figure 1). This species is found in lowland forests in Mexico and the urban sprawl of the Rio Grande Valley. Parrots, pre-

sumably Red-crowneds, have been recorded in Texas as early as 1885 after major drought events (Figure 2). These scattered sightings are natural movements for birds who are in search of food after severe climate events; however, parrots were not documented consistently in the United States until the early 1980s. Christmas Bird Count data shows a sharp increase in Red-crowned Parrots since this time (Figure 3). What happened?



Figure 1. Range of Red-crowned Parrots. The dots outside of the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and Northeast Mexico are non-native populations. Credit: the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (<https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/species/repar/introduction>).

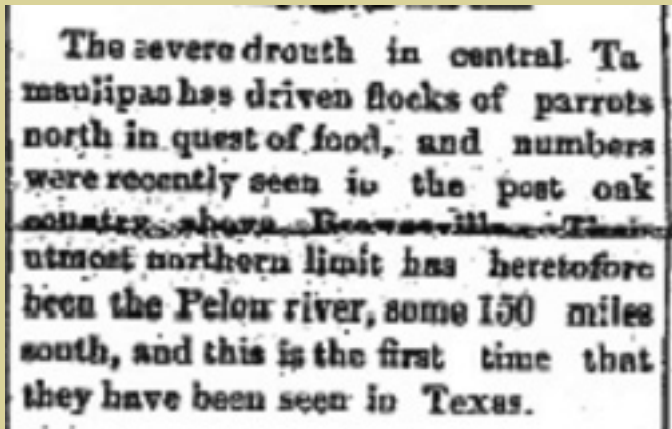
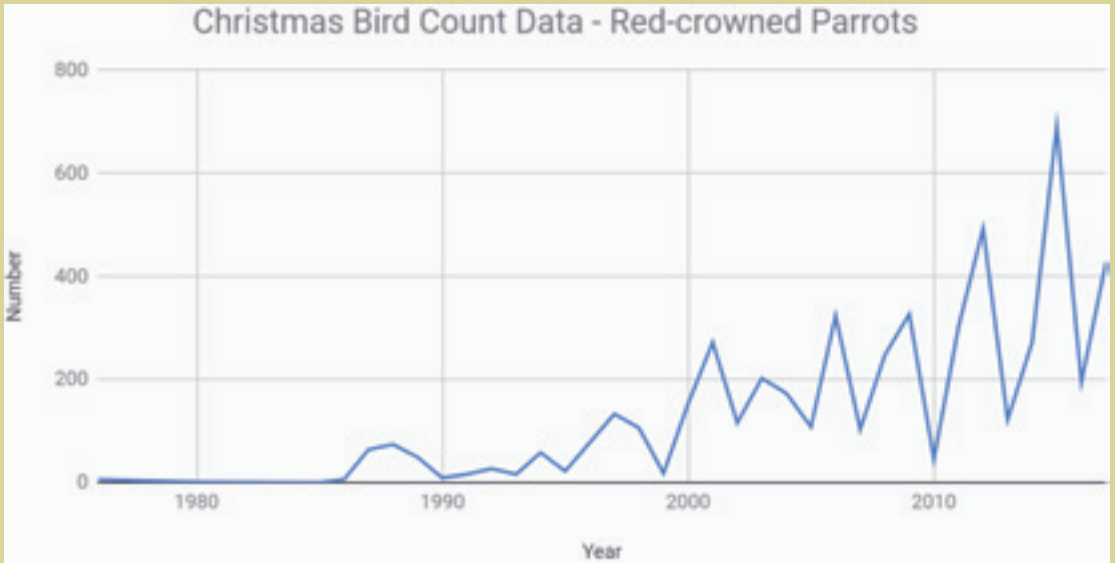


Figure 2. Cutout of the Laredo Times Newspaper from October 4, 1885 documenting parrots, presumably Red-crowns, in Texas.

Evidence suggests Red-crowned Parrots moved north due to two contributing factors. First, major development was occurring throughout the parrot's range in Mexico in the mid-20th century, leading to large amounts of habitat destruction. This forced the birds to find new areas to settle in. They could not move south as that area was already inhabited by parrots with little available room for newcomers. They could not move west as

the Sierra Madre Oriental mountains made movement impossible. They could not move east due to the Gulf of Mexico. That left north as the only place they could go. In conjunction with this movement, the Rio Grande Valley experienced a serious freezing event in the early 1980s. This killed many trees, creating an ideal scenario for parrots looking for a home. Parrot numbers have continued to grow over the past few decades.





**Figure 3. Audubon Christmas Bird Count data for Red-crowned Parrots in Texas.**

Like most parrot species, Red-crowns appear to live a somewhat nomadic lifestyle. This means they exhibit regular movements throughout their range looking for food year round. This trend is driven by the fact that food can be sporadic in a tropical and sub-tropical environment. Red-crowned Parrots eat seeds (Figure 4); thus, they are dependent on fruiting vegetation to be “in season” and must cover large distances to find food at

any time of year. However, these movements are restricted to the urban centers of the Rio Grande Valley, which helps alleviate a little bit of this stress as humans tend to plant a variety of vegetation that produce fruits and seeds throughout the year. Despite these movements, the parrots are permanent residents in the Rio Grande Valley and can be regularly found at communal roost sites year round.



**Figure 4. Red-crowned Parrots foraging on chinaberry fruits in Brownsville, TX. Credit: Cullen Hanks.**

Red-crowned Parrots are cavity nesters (Figure 5) laying 2 – 5 eggs per nest; however, they do not create their own cavities and require woodpeckers to excavate a dead tree before being able to nest. Cavities with diameters of 8 cm appear to be desirable for parrots while Sabal and Washingtonia Palms seem to be favored locations of parrot nests. They will nest in a variety of trees if: the cavity is the right size; no one else is currently living in the cavity; and conditions are right. Red-crowned Parrots will also use nest boxes if appropriately made. This dependency on dead trees is one of the main factors contributing to the parrot's decline. A common practice in the Rio Grande Valley is to cut down trees once they show signs of dying. Even though other trees are planted, this eliminates possibly

nesting habitat and limits where the birds are found. They also face stiff competition from Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, woodpeckers, and bees for cavities. This practice combined with large amounts of habitat loss for agricultural use has severely restricted the parrot's wild range and contributed to distressing amounts of decline in the population.

The global population of Red-crowned Parrots was estimated to be over 100,000 prior to 1970. Since 1970, the parrot's global population has decreased between 3,000 – 5,000 individuals left in the wild. Due to this population decline and contributing factors such as a restricted range and continuing threats, the Red-crowned Parrot is considered Endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).



Figure 5. Adult and Young Red-crowned Parrots in Brownsville, TX. Credit: Karl Berg.

Another major threat the parrot faces is poaching for the pet trade. Red-crowned Parrots are a popular pet trade species and regularly sell for \$800 - \$1200 apiece with some going for as much as \$2600. Many species of parrots can be found at flea markets in the Rio Grande Valley, some of which are Red-crowns. Poaching of this parrot occurs in the Rio Grande Valley and Mexico, with documented cases in Brownsville, TX from as recent as July 2019. Continued pressure combined with high sale prices will remain incentives for poachers to collect Red-crowned Parrots from the wild.

The species does benefit from several protections. Major cities in the Rio Grande Valley have passed ordinances protecting all species of parrots, native and non-native alike, within city limits. The parrot is also considered a native species by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and falls under state protections for native birds. However, like any law, proper reporting of crimes and enforcement are key. If you live in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and see suspicious behavior regarding Red-crowned Parrots, call the local city police department as well as a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Game Warden. Important note: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department does not protect non-native species, so make sure it is a Red-crowned Parrot before calling a Game Warden.

The Red-crowned Parrot was petitioned for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2008 by Friends of Animals. This action prompted the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (“the Service”) to conduct a 90-day finding, which concluded that Friends of Animals presented “substantial scientific and commercial information to indicate that listing the Red-crowned Parrot may be warranted.” On October 6, 2011, the Service published a 12-month finding stating that due to habitat loss and pressure from the pet trade, as well as a lack of regulatory mechanisms, the parrot warranted listing on

the ESA. However, this decision was precluded by other decisions at the time, and the Red-crowned was listed as a Candidate Species. This opened up federal money to conduct further research. Being the regulatory entity for the state on wildlife, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department received this money and used it to fund two research projects: one investigating nesting ecology and the efficacy of nest boxes, and the other investigating population dynamics of the bird in Texas (Figure 6). Both projects are wrapping up and their findings should be published in the next couple of years. In addition to this, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has funded a project in Mexico to educate the public about Red-crowned Parrots and document their range and population size. Texas Parks and Wildlife also coordinates valley-wide counts every quarter in Brownsville, Harlingen, Weslaco, and McAllen at known roosting locations.



**Figure 6. A radio-collared Red-crowned Parrot in the Rio Grande Valley. Radio telemetry is being used to better understand the parrot’s movements. Credit: Alicia Cavazos.**

Beginning in January 2016, the Parrot People group (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Arroyo Colorado Audubon Society, Texas Master Naturalists [Rio Grande Valley and South Texas Border Chapters], University of Texas- Rio Grande Valley, Texas A&M University, and the Rio Grande Joint Venture), along with numerous volunteers and citizen scientists, began counting roosting parrots throughout the Rio Grande Valley. Counts were conducted one hour before sunset until dark simultaneously in all cities in the valley with major roost sites to eliminate the possibility of a parrot being counted in one city and flying to another and being counted again. Counts are still ongoing and occur on a Friday night in January, April, July, and October each year. Every January, Parrot People meets at Estero Llano Grande State Park for summaries of ongoing research, ideas for future work, and collaboration with colleagues in Mexico. To date, Parrot People have documented a population of Red-crowned Parrots in the Rio Grande Valley around 650 birds (Figure 7). The up and down trend over

time is expected for the Red-crowned Parrot; females break away from the roosts to incubate eggs and raise young from April – July. All this data has gone to the US Fish and Wildlife Service to inform their listing decision for the parrot.

In addition to the data collected by Parrot People, the Service also reviewed as much information as available on the parrot in regards to threats, population size, and risk of extinction. In their 12-month finding, published on April 4, 2019, the US Fish and Wildlife Service determined the Red-crowned Parrot did not meet the criteria to be listed as a threatened or endangered species under the ESA. The main factors informing this decision were: a decrease in logging and habitat destruction techniques in conjunction with forest regeneration in Mexico; an increase in parrot populations in the Rio Grande Valley and ranchlands in Mexico; and the passing of laws in Mexico decreasing the number of birds collected for the pet trade.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes the Red-crowned Parrot

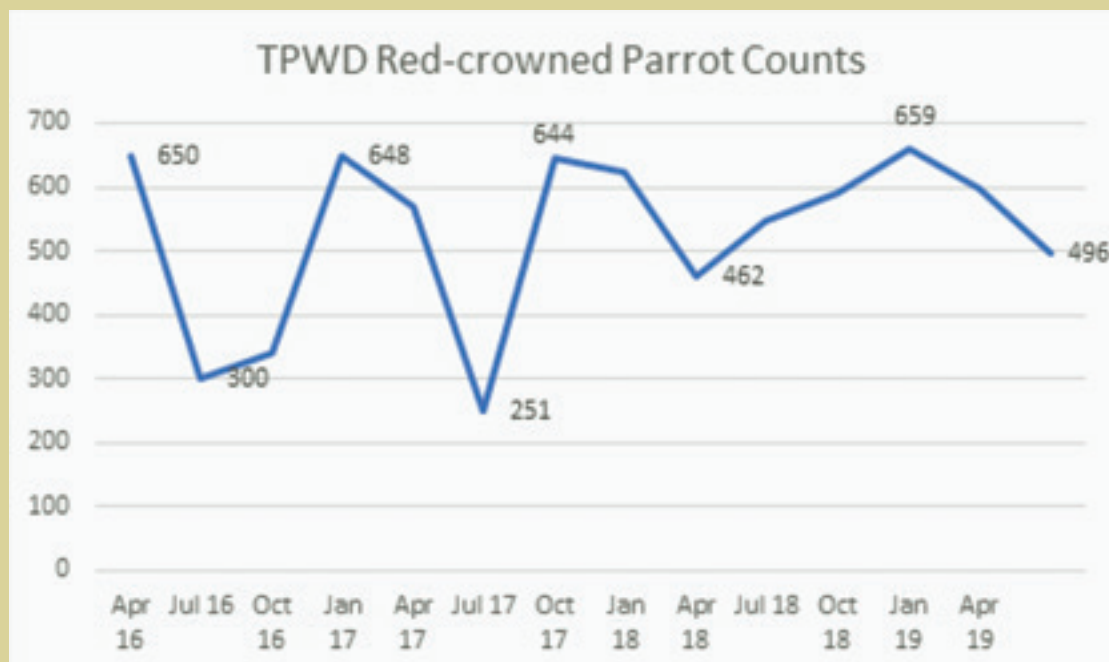


Figure 7. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department roost counts for Red-crowned Parrots January 2016 – April 2019.



**Red-crowned Parrots in Brownsville, TX. Credit: Larry Johnson.**

as native to the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. However, the entire family for parrots (Psittacidae) is not listed under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This precludes the species from any protections under that law. The bird does fall under state law protecting native birds, however the issue can get tricky due to the bird being a legal pet trade species. Wild Red-crowned Parrots in Texas cannot be harassed or collected, and their nests cannot be destroyed or hampered with during breeding season (late January – mid July). There are many things one can do to help wild parrots in the Rio Grande Valley.

If you live in an area in the Rio Grande Valley that has wild parrots, consider planting native vegetation that produce seeds, such as Texas Ebony (*Ebenopsis ebano*) or Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia spp.*). If you want to provide a quick snack for parrots, peanuts are a fine choice. However, supplemental food like this should not replace adequate habitat. Food sources like bird seed, sunflower seed, or peanuts should be used to provide wildlife

with a snack, not replace the food that native vegetation provides. If you don't have any vegetation in your yard, plant some before providing supplemental food.

Install a water feature in your yard in the shade for birds to bathe and drink from (it helps to have this feature next to bushes or trees, so birds have a quick escape from potential predators)(Figure 8). If you have a dead or dying tree in your yard that does not endanger your house, keep it up! Also encourage your neighbors to do the same. Educate your friends and family about the parrots; many people in the valley have seen parrots but don't realize they are a native bird and in need of habitat and nesting areas. And finally, get involved! Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is always looking for more volunteers to help count parrots in the Rio Grande Valley. Contact me at [tony.henehan@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:tony.henehan@tpwd.texas.gov) to see how you can get involved.

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Figure 8. Red-crowned Parrots using a bird bath feature in the Rio Grande Valley. Credit: Tamie Bulow.



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# GOLDEN-CHEEKED WARBLER CONSERVATION UPDATE

**By James M. Mueller**

The Golden-cheeked Warbler was listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1990, nearly 30 years ago, and it remains so today. Frequently missing from the news is the tremendous work focused on recovering this species. To ensure ornithologists and birders alike are aware, here I describe a few of these notable conservation activities.

Several Habitat Conservation Plans have been developed to offset Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat losses in the Texas Hill Country (Figure 1). These plans are modeled on the highly successful Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan. That plan, approved in 1996, allowed development of areas with

endangered species habitat in Travis County and the City of Austin, provided that specific terms and conditions were followed. An example of a more recent Habitat Conservation Plan is the Southern Edwards Plateau Habitat Conservation Plan (approved in 2016-2017). It allows development within Golden-cheeked Warbler and other endangered species habitats in Bexar County, San Antonio, and the San Antonio Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. To offset these habitat losses, either land with suitable habitat must be acquired and protected in preserves or credits must be purchased from established conservation banks within a designated service area. If fully implemented, this plan would protect up to 23,430 acres of Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat in pepe-



**Figure 1. Losses of Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat from urban development are permitted as “incidental take” under specific terms and conditions in several regional Habitat Conservation Plans. These plans contribute to the long-term conservation of the species by mitigating losses of habitat and permanently protecting tens of thousands of acres of habitat.** (Photo by James Mueller, USFWS).

tuity. Similar plans have been established in Williamson, Hays, and Comal counties. Habitat Conservation Plans have provided a means of protecting thousands of acres of Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat and facilitated development in rapidly growing urban areas. They are an important tool that allows otherwise lawful activities to proceed in a manner that ensures species conservation.

Once a preserve has been established, it should be managed to provide high quality habitat for the target species. For example, one threat to vegetative diversity of woodlands in the Texas Hill Country is from herbivory by white-tailed deer which prevents recruitment of Texas red oaks (Russell and Fowler 2004). At Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, research has furthered our understanding of the role of fire

in promoting woody species diversity (Yao et al. 2012, Murray et al. 2013), the combined effects of deer herbivory and fire on oak recruitment (Andruk et al. 2014, Andruk and Fowler 2015, Figure 2), and short-term consequences to Golden-cheeked Warbler abundance associated with fire effects (Reidy et al. 2016). To identify conditions associated with high quality habitat, we developed a site-specific habitat model of Golden-cheeked Warbler density (Sesnie et al 2016). This model revealed that Golden-cheeked Warbler density on the refuge was explained primarily by the amount of woody canopy cover, the proportion of the canopy that was juniper, and the combination of slope and aspect that results in the amount of solar radiation that a site receives. Golden-cheeked Warbler densities on the refuge were highest in closed can-



Figure 2. Research at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge has focused on management of woodland characteristics associated with high quality Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat. Throughout the Texas Hill Country, regeneration of Texas red oaks is suppressed due to herbivory by white-tailed deer and fire suppression. Here, Christina Andruk, University of Texas, works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct research on how prescribed fire can be used to increase oak recruitment and improve Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat quality.

(Photo by James Mueller, USFWS)



opy woodlands with about 70% juniper and 30% non-juniper (primarily Texas red oak and Plateau live oak) on north-facing slopes with low exposure to solar radiation. We thus developed management objectives to increase woody canopy cover and increase woody species diversity where necessary to improve the quality of Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat. We are using the knowledge gained from these studies to develop effective management techniques for creating and maintaining high quality Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat.

Across the range of the Golden-cheeked Warbler, a number of research projects are underway that will further our understanding of the species and assist with completion of a Species Status Assessment (SSA). The SSA is a framework developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to improve consistency and transparency in status assessments for listed

and candidate species. It is a compendium of scientific knowledge about a species, an analysis of a species' current condition, and a forecast of potential future conditions. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is using SSAs to organize the best available science and improve transparency in Endangered Species Act decisions, separating the scientific analysis from the process of making a policy decision. Some of the projects that may provide important information about the status of the Golden-cheeked Warbler include an estimate of population size and habitat model based on surveys across the breeding range in 2018 (PI = Mueller, USFWS), a description of migratory connectivity between breeding and wintering areas and rates of habitat loss on the winter range (PI = Long, Louisiana State University, Figure 3), and an assessment of genetic structure and gene flow among breeding populations (PI



**Figure 3.** A study led by Dr. Ashley Long, Louisiana State University, and John Macey, Fort Hood, is mapping migratory routes and wintering ranges of Golden-cheeked Warblers using miniaturized light-level geolocators. These devices, barely detectable on the lower back in the photo, collect solar data to approximate the latitude and longitude of an animal's location. Biologists must recapture the birds to download the data. (Photo by USFWS)



Figure 4. Golden-cheeked Warblers may be seen at many public locations from early March through June including Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge; many state parks and state natural areas including Cleburne, Colorado Bend, Dinosaur Valley, Garner, Government Canyon, Guadalupe River, Hill Country, Honey Creek, Longhorn Cavern, Lost Maples, Meridian, Palo Pinto, Pedernales Falls, and South Llano River; many city/county parks including Friedrich Wilderness Park, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, Hamilton Pool Preserve, Reimers Ranch Park, Sandy Creek Park, Barton Creek Greenbelt, Emma Long Metropolitan Park, Commons Ford Ranch Metropolitan Park, St. Edward's Park, and Westcave Preserve; and Lake Georgetown. (Photo by Melissa Cheatwood)

= Athrey, Texas A&M University). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is planning to initiate an SSA for the Golden-cheeked Warbler in 2022, and the analysis will include these and other studies.

The work of biologists, land managers, consultants, and urban planners to conserve the Golden-cheeked Warbler has been and continues to be effective. Throughout the Texas Hill Country, the public can observe the Golden-cheeked Warbler at more than 20

city, state, county, and federal parks/refuges (Figure 4). I encourage you to take a friend or neighbor to one of these locations and introduce them to this iconic Texas species.

*The findings and conclusions in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

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# BLACK SWIFT INCREASED STATE LIST TO 650



## By John Groves

On May 26, 2018 I was in my yard with my wife and looked up to see my “First of Season” Lesser Nighthawks coming over. Suddenly I noticed a large all-black swift flying above them. I ran into the house and grabbed my Nikon D7200 (with 150-600 zoom Tamron lens) then returned to the street for better view. The bird made several passes overhead and along the street. My guess is that it saw the nighthawks feeding and decided to come down and feed on whatever was attracting them. We have suspected that Black Swift *Cypseloides niger* had to come over west Texas in order to get to a known nesting site in northern New Mexico. My house is probably due south of the Jemez Falls nesting site. Barry Zimmer (my eBird reviewer and a professional guide for VENT) pointed out that the May 26 date was perfect for migrating Black Swift to fly over El Paso in route to New Mexico or Colorado (see maps below).

Even with the naked eye I could tell this was no White-throated Swift because of the lack of white. Through the camera I could also clearly tell that this bird had no sepia

tones either. After observing the bird and photos, I eliminated the White-throated Swift and both *chaetura* species (Chimney and Vaux’s) by coloration and the fact that the bird has an obviously forked tail.

**John Groves**  
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Distribution of Black Swift (source BNA)

Jemez Falls, New Mexico Nesting Colony



First Texas sighting of Black Swift

# BIRD PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR ACROSS THE POND

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*By Rob Read*

## BIRD PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR (BPOTY): AN OVERVIEW

Based in the UK, Bird Photographer of the Year (BPOTY) is a global photographic competition, now entering its fifth year. It works in partnership with a growing web-based community that caters for not only photographers, but also ornithologists generally and conservationists too. In short anyone who cares about birds and the environment is welcome. The ambitions of BPOTY are straightforward: to celebrate the artistry of bird photography, promote and help bird photographers, and assist conservation - in part financially but also by using imagery to generate support and inspire people to care.

## ABOUT THE BPOTY COMPETITION

As a competition, Bird Photographer of the Year appeals to a wide range of people. Whether you are a hardened pro, a keen amateur with the latest kit, or simply a hobbyist with a camera phone or small compact camera, there is an opportunity for you. The advent of digital technology has revolutionized photography in recent years and leveled the playing field. As everyone knows there are some fantastic images out there on the web, of a quality that wouldn't have been possible in the days of film. Rather than being simply 'liked' in the virtual world, BPOTY provides a more tangible way of getting recognition: who knows, if you enter you could be a Category prize winner, receive our Portfolio award or even be our next 'Bird Photographer of the Year' and win £5,000\*.

The BPOTY Competition cycle begins and ends at the British Bird Watching Fair (or Birdfair for short) in August. Now entering its third decade Birdfair is sometimes described as a "birdwatchers' 'Glastonbury'" although 'Woodstock' might be a better analogy for

US readers. Anyway, it caters to the whole spectrum of the birdwatching interests and BPOTY hosts and exhibition of winning images and awards ceremony for winners, and launches the next completion cycle. Categories for the 2020 cycle are still being discussed, but in past competitions they have included: Best Portrait; Birds in Flight; Birds in the Environment; Creative Imagery; Bird Behavior; and Garden and Urban Birds.

From an overall prize fund in excess of £20,000 (GB Pounds Sterling) some fantastic prizes are on offer including our top prize of £5,000, plus other prizes of camera equipment from Olympus, binoculars from Swarovski Optik, outdoor clothing from Country Innovation, Gitzo tripod head equipment and a £1,500 travel voucher from Wildlife Worldwide.

Competition winners and shortlisted images are feature in the annual Bird Photographer of the Year Book. Published by HarperCollins it includes nearly 250 images from the competition accompanied by informative and entertaining text written by the photographers themselves, with comments and praise from the judging panel. In the past the book has included images from wide range of North American photographers including Alan Murphy, a luminary in world of US bird photography. Our judging panel includes the legendary Brian E. Small (with whom BPOTY Founder Paul Sterry) has written a couple of field guides to North American Birds. And from our media panel, Matt Mendenhall, editor of Bird Watching Magazine casts a strong editorial eye over entries in his capacity as a judge.

## ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

The team behind Bird Photographer of the Year is committed to engaging the next generation: future bird enthusiasts and conservationists in whose hands the salvation of the planet rests. Run in parallel to the main

competition by up-and-coming photographer and conservation campaigner Megan McCubbin, the Young Bird Photographer of the Year Awards are designed to achieve this goal. Young BPOTY is specifically for those under 18 and is free to enter.

## BIRD PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR AND CONSERVATION

As naturalists, photographers and conservationists, the BPOTY team sees firsthand the mounting pressures on bird populations around the World. If bird photography is going to thrive and not become metaphorically speaking a dying art we must all do our bit to reverse the decline of bird species and support conservation efforts. Donating money is one thing, but World class imagery has the potential to inspire people around the globe to care, and maybe shame some into action.

Over the course of BPOTY's history it has given over £7,000 to the British Trust for Ornithology to help with conservation research. We all know that environmental problems are global so this year, through the generosity of Wildlife Worldwide, a specially created Competition Category has enabled a donation of £1,500 to be made to the British Birdwatching Fair's Conservation Fund. Bird-fair's fund-raising potential is vast: during the 2018 event it raised £322,000 for conservation, the money going to help create a haven for flamingos at Mar Chiquita in Argentina. This took the total raised over the years to more than £5 million.

## BPOTY—RAREST OF THE RARE CONSERVATION STORIES ILLUSTRATED

With every passing year the BPOTY team continues to be amazed by both the range of talent and the number of new species that are submitted. This year we were thrilled to see images of threatened and iconic species appearing and two in particular depict birds with stories to tell about the effect that we, as humans, have had and continue to have on the

environment. Birdlife International, the organisation charged with monitoring the fate of the world's bird species, is the source of much of the information underpinning these tales.

### Gurney's Pitta—Lost and found?

Pittas are a group of stunningly beautiful birds associated with tropical Africa and Asia and their fate is inextricably linked to the forests they inhabit and the deforestation that blights them. With no confirmed sightings between 1952 and 1985 the south-east Asian species Gurney's Pitta *Hydrornis gurneyi* was presumed extinct. Then in 1986 it was rediscovered in Thailand and at last there seemed a glimmer of hope. Sadly, numbers dwindled to just nine known pairs and then, in phoenix-like fashion, the species was found in neighbouring Myanmar in 2003. But it seems that Gurney's Pitta's catastrophic decline continues there. Let's hope this image helps to galvanise interest in tropical forest destruction and serves as more than a visual footnote in history.



Gurney's Pitta *Hydrornis gurneyi*, Lenya, Myanmar.  
Photographer: Wang Bin/BPOTY 2019 shortlist.

### Bristle-thighed Curlew—Going, going, gone?

Curlew species (genus *Numenius*) are under threat and in decline and two species—Eskimo Curlew *N. borealis* and Slender-billed Curlew *N. tenuirostris*—have almost certainly become extinct in our lifetimes; the former because of industrial-scale hunting in North

America, the latter due to habitat loss in Eurasia. Although still extant, the Bristle-thighed Curlew *N. tabitiensis* remains one of the most vulnerable members of the group, with a world population of around 7,000 birds. It breeds in Alaska and flies non-stop to wintering grounds on tropical islands in the Pacific. Here it is vulnerable to hunting and predation, its plight made worse because during autumn moult adults are flightless.



**Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tabitiensis*, Nome, Alaska.** Photographer Tony Davison/BPOTY 2019 shortlist.



**Emperor Penguin *Aptenodytes forsteri*, Weddell Sea, Antarctica.** This endearing image speaks to the reliance of the chick on its parent, at a time when the entire species faces the risk of potential extinction. Entirely dependent on frozen sea ice for nesting, and shunning land altogether, this iconic bird is supremely vulnerable to the impact of global warming. Photographer Philip Marazzi, United Kingdom/BPOTY 2019 shortlist.

## BPOTY CONSERVATION-INSPIRED IMAGES



**Puffin *Fratercula arctica*, Unst, Shetland Isles, Scotland.** Marc's image, entered into the BPOTY Creative Imagery category, sends an environmental message and conveys a sense of the illusory nature of abundance. At nesting colonies Puffins appear plentiful but in reality the species is in decline globally. Photographer Marc Weber/BPOTY 2019 shortlist.



Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Liminka, Finland. According to Birdlife International the Ruff may be locally common but its populations are decreasing globally and it is a Red List category species. Climate change and habitat degradation may contribute to the decline, but hunting in its African wintering grounds may be a factor too. Photographer Jari Peltomaki, Finland/BPOTY 2019 shortlist.

## BPOTY AND HOOKPOD

BPOTY is trying to do its own modest bit to help bird conservation. In 2019 we are proud to be supporting Hookpod. For those readers who don't know, Hookpod is an innovative solution that has the potential to eliminate the unnecessary deaths of albatrosses and other seabirds killed as a result of longline fishing. Currently an estimated 320,000 seabirds are reckoned to be unintentionally hooked and killed each year by fishing activities, of which 100,000 are albatrosses. This chimes well with the team at BPOTY because we love seabirds, in part because photographing them at sea is the ultimate challenge. To kickstart the BPOTY Conservation Fund endeavour, BPOTY Directors have given £500 to buy Hookpods, and donations from photographers are encouraged via our website.

To find out more about the work of Hookpod and how to 'Sponsor a Hookpod and save an Albatross', visit [www.hookpod.com](http://www.hookpod.com) But don't just take our word for the value of this creation, here's what Sir David Attenborough

has to say on the subject: 'Every day, hundreds of albatross die in longline fisheries. But there is a unique and exciting new solution to halt this. It's called a Hookpod. Hookpods stop birds getting caught as they dive for baits. They are effective, easy to use, safe and economic for fishermen. If every pelagic longline fishing fleet used Hookpods, I believe we can stop the accidental death of these magnificent ocean wanderers.'



Light-mantled Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata*, South Atlantic Ocean. As luck would have it, during the judging process for the latest competition the BPOTY team was struck by John Holmes' stunning image of a Light-mantled Albatross, a quintessential southern ocean seabird whose plumage has an understated elegance. Photographer John Holmes/BPOTY 2019 shortlist.

## SARUS CRANES AND THE WORLD LAND TRUST

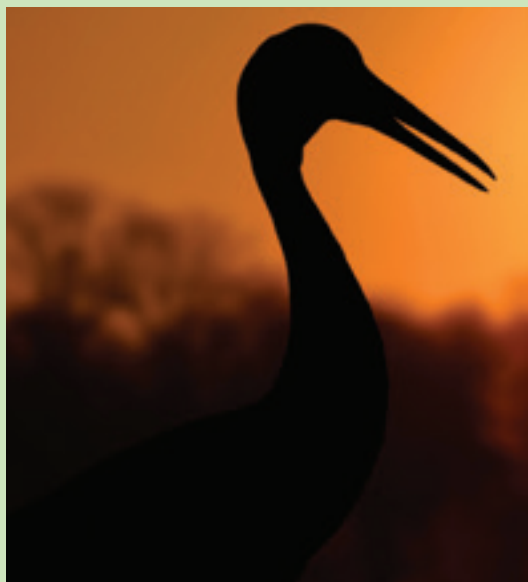
We at BPOTY are also fans of the World Land Trust (WLT), an international conservation charity that protects the world's most biologically significant and threatened habitats acre by acre. Through a network of partner organisations around the world, WLT funds the creation of reserves and provides permanent protection for habitats and wildlife. Partnerships are developed with established and highly respected local organisations who engage support and commitment among the local community. WLT's aims are simple: to protect and sustainably manage natural ecosystems of the world; and to conserve their biodiversity, with emphasis on threatened habitats and endangered species. This year, BPOTY will



be supporting WLT's collaboration with their long-term Indian partner, the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), specifically with a new project that will protect critical wetland areas in Uttar Pradesh State in northern India. From the start of the competition cycle BPOTY funds will help the project, and photographers will be able to donate via the website.

### SAVING THE BERMUDA PETREL

Closer to the US, we are also keen to help the **Cahow** (or **Bermuda Petrel**), Bermuda's national bird. Over the years this exquisite



**Sarus Crane *Antigone antigone*, Rajasthan, India.**  
Photographer Andrew Cleave/BPOTY

grey *Pterodroma* petrel has acquired almost mythical status, thanks to its remarkable story. Thought to be extinct for over three centuries, it was rediscovered and then brought back from the brink by the efforts of a few dedicated people; its recovery is one of conservation's most heart-warming success stories. You can read more about it on the BPOTY website Conservation Pages. But in short the most development with the involvement of the Cahow's current guardian angel, Jeremy Madeiros, Senior Terrestrial Conservation Officer for Bermuda's Department of Environment and Natural Resources. In 2001 he began translocating chicks just prior to

fledging, from the vulnerable islets to artificial burrows on Nonsuch Island. The chicks were hand-fed in their new homes for a couple of weeks, the idea being that they would imprint on the burrows from which they fledged.

Guess what? The project has been a resounding success and in the 2018 nesting season 125 pairs were identified. Step forward the Bermuda Audubon Society, a non-profit charity that brings together people interested in both birding and environmental conservation. It owns 16 nature reserves in Bermuda - approximately 60 acres of open space - and restores wetlands and other wildlife habitats. In addition to being advocates for Bermuda's natural environment the Bermuda Audubon Society promotes public awareness of environmental issues and supports a range of conservation projects. This includes the Cahow nest-site programme and Bird Photographer of the Year is proud to be working alongside the organisation, to help raise funds for, and awareness of, such a vital project helping this highly endangered species.



**Bermuda Petrel or Cahow *Pterodroma cahow*, at sea off Bermuda.** Photographer Paul Sterry/BPOTY.

\*One Pound Sterling is equal to 1.25 US Dollars as of 9 July 2010

**Rob Read**  
[rob@birdpoty.co.uk](mailto:rob@birdpoty.co.uk)

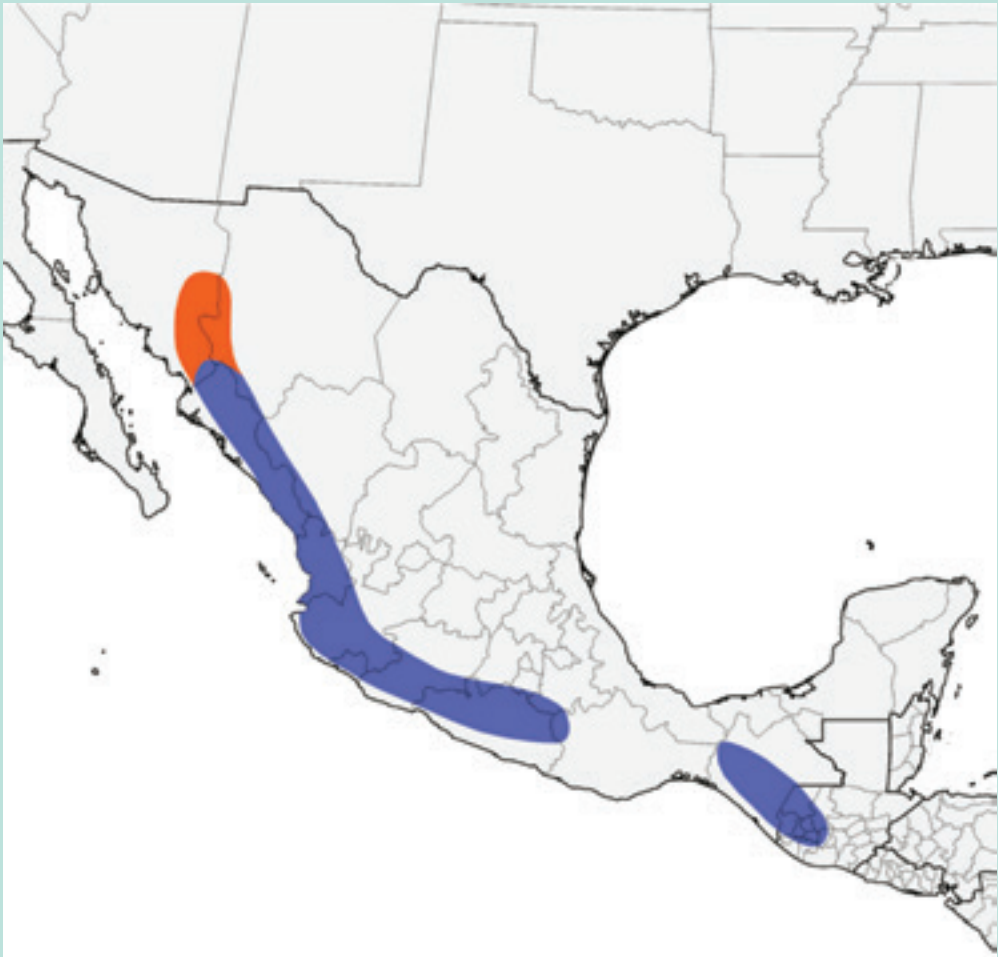
# TEXBIRD HIGHLIGHT.....YELLOW GROSBEAK (*PHEUCTICUS CHRYSOPEPLUS*)

The 7,177 members (and those who were shared the posts) of the Facebook group *Texbirds* were treated to a series of posts and images in 2018 of what might be the next addition to the Texas list. It was not that long ago when noteworthy sightings were communicated by telephone. Now with the use of the internet and Facebook, sightings can be communicated immediately and contain photos. Such posting do not automatically add the species to the Texas list.

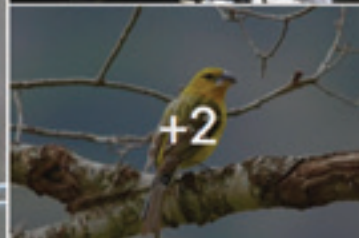
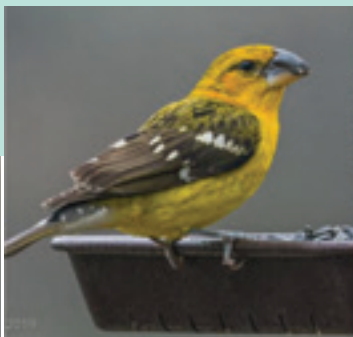
In order to accept the species it has to be reviewed by the Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC). This activity is initiated with a

formal application being sent to the committee. In some situations, when no one submits an application, members of the TBRC will solicit observers that have observed the species to provide information. This has been a challenge since the beginning of the committee. Many birders simply feel reluctant to submit the paperwork necessary to get the sighting properly reviewed.

The Yellow Grosbeak has moved on but the lively discussion about its presence can still be enjoyed on Facebook while the TBRC reviews the case and makes its decision.



Distribution of the Yellow Grosbeak  
Map from <https://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu>



Bob Shackleford is with Pam Garner. April 13

We were all sad to say goodbye to Pedro, the Yellow Grosbeak, this week. He gave us about three months of excitement, anxiety and a chance to meet some great people who just happen to be birders and bird enthusiasts, not to mention our amazing, wonderful, awesome hosts who allowed us into their home and lives and put up with us all that time. This bird brought in people from, literally all over the US and Canada and points beyond. Everyone who had the privilege of seeing the bird was stricken by his beauty and uniqueness. I know I will not soon forget the experience. From all us who were fortunate enough to experience your hospitality and genuine interest in each of us, thank you seems inadequate.

Steve and Pam you made it all so pleasant and fun. You have shown everyone what real southern hospitality means. I had forgotten to mention that the last picture here was the original photo that Pam sent me for ID purposes. I was so shocked I had to get a second opinion for verification. Thanks again, Pam and Steve.



## **We're Moving!!**

**TOS Membership Services  
11101-9 Leopard Sq.  
PMB 1039  
Corpus Christi, TX 78410**



Gil Eckrich is with Bob Shackleford. February 25

Yellow Grosbeak—likely first record for Texas. Photographed thanks to Bob Shackleford’s facilitation and the kindness of the homeowners who so generously opened their home to delirious birders! First pic is of only “Pedro”, the second shows size relative to Lesser Goldfinch, the third shows an American Goldfinch flying in, about to actually land on “Pedro”, chasing him away; but, not until all birders had gotten excellent looks at this great visitor!

# 37 FLEDGLINGS COUNTED DURING WHOOPING CRANE SURVEY ON WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK



Photo of one of the 2019 fledglings. Photo Parks Canada

Parks Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service have completed their joint whooping crane fledgling surveys on Wood Buffalo National Park and surrounding area. A total of 37 fledged chicks from 36 sets of parents were observed. An increase from last year's 24 fledglings. It appears that conditions at the park were better than last year. May rainfall was only 84% of normal; however, in June rainfall was 141% above normal, with most (22mm) of that falling on June 2 just as some of the chicks were hatching.

**The fledgling survey** is done in between the end of July and mid-August. Fledglings are birds that have reached an age where they can fly. The technique for this survey is very similar to the breeding pair survey. The nest locations are known so that the staff can fly directly to the nest. If the Whooping Cranes have not been successful in raising a chick they may still be in their territory or they could be kilometers away. If a pair does have a chick, they are generally found fairly close to their nest.



Looking for fledgling. Photo Parks Canada

## IMPORTANCE OF SURVEYS

Both the Nest and the Fledgling Surveys are part of the world-class restoration plan that has made the endangered Whooping Crane an international success story and symbol of species recovery and conservation. By counting the number of fledgling chicks, Parks Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and others gain important insights into the health of the world's last remaining natural nesting flock of Whooping Cranes that contribute greatly to our ongoing stewardship of these magnificent birds.

WBNP and nearby areas provide the last natural nesting habitat for the endangered Whooping Cranes. The birds are hatched in and near WBNP each spring. After they fledge they migrate 2,500 miles to their winter habitat on, or near the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas coast. During their 2,500 mile migration they stopover 20 to 30 times to rest, forage for food and roost during the nights. Then, the following April the total population returns to WBNP to repeat the reproduction cycle again.

Article compliments of Friends of the Wild Whoopers



Whooping Crane conservation.

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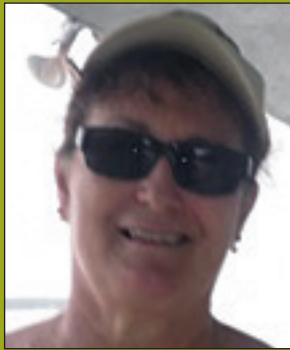
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## BOOK REVIEWS



### **The Handbook of Bird Families**

by *Elphick, Jonathan*

ISBN: 9780228101192

Publisher: Firefly Books

Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 415

This ultimate handbook contains a comprehensive survey of the world's birds, reflecting the latest classification changes to the Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World. It includes an introduction to each of the bird orders and a detailed account and concise fact panel for every one of the 234 families. It details the appearance, behavior and lifestyle of the family members, while a glossary, further reading list and an index ensure easy reference.

Readers can learn more about each bird species. What's the difference between a crow and a jay? How many species of sparrow are there? What song do cuckoos really sing? All the key facts about the world's orders and families of birds are in *The Handbook of Bird Families*. Reformatted, resized and fully updated, it is the ideal up-to-date companion to the highly acclaimed reference *The World of Birds* published in 2014.

With clear, lively text, informative fact boxes and special photography from award-winning wildlife photographer David Tipling and other top photographers, *The Handbook of Bird Families* belongs on the shelf of everyone interested in birds.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) is the global authority on the status of the natural world. It oversees the IUCN Red List, which catalogues those plants and animals facing a higher risk of global extinction (Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable). BirdLife is dedicated to the survival of bird species in the wild.

In 2014, Firefly Books published the beautiful and comprehensive reference, *World of Birds* by Jonathan Elphick. *The World of Birds* had two parts, the first, 'Birds,' provided in-depth coverage of birds in general, such as anatomy, behavior, reproduction, range and more. The second part was a species directory. Since then, however, many changes have occurred in the classification of species, an expected outcome of the increasing use of DNA analysis, and this is the updated second part as a stand-alone book.



### **Bringing Back the Birds: Exploring Migration and Preserving Birdscapes throughout the Americas**

by *American Bird Conservancy, Peter P. Marra, Kimberly and Kenn*

*Kaufman, John W. Fitzpatrick, Mike Parr, EJ Williams, and Clare Nielsen*

ISBN: 9781680512113

Publisher: Mountaineers Books

Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 208

With species ranging from tiny iridescent-green hummingbirds to giant, gangly flightless rheas, the Americas feature an astonishing array of birds that rely upon the region's tremendous diversity of habitats. That reliance may be very localized or it may reach across continents: Swainson's Thrushes travel from South America all the way to Alaska, while certain grebes spend their entire lives on a single lake. Treasured songbirds feed at northern backyard feeders yet often arrive from points far to the south.

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) works across the Americas with a goal to have birds routinely prioritized in all land-use and policy decision-making. *Bringing Back the Birds* showcases these efforts, alongside the stunning photography of Owen Deutsch and eloquent essays from renowned experts in the field: Peter P. Marra, Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center; researchers Kimberly and Kenn Kaufman; John W. Fitzpatrick, Cornell Lab of Ornithology; and Mike Parr, EJ Williams, and Clare Nielsen of ABC. Foreword by Jonathan Franzen.



**The Meaning of Birds**

by Barnes, Simon

ISBN: 9781643131399

Publisher: Pegasus Books

Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 323

A gorgeously illustrated and enchanting examination of the lives of birds, illuminating their wondrous world and our connection with them. a passionate and informative celebration of birds and their ability to help us understand the world we live in. From the mocking-birds of the Galapagos who guided Charles Darwin toward his evolutionary theory to the changing patterns of migration that alert us to the reality of contemporary climate change, Simon Barnes explores both the intrinsic wonder of what it is to be a bird - and the myriad ways in which birds can help us understand the meaning of life.



**Wildlife and Wind Farms, Conflicts and Solutions. Volume 3. Offshore: Potential Effects**

by Perrow, Martin; [Editor]

ISBN: 9781784271275

Publisher: Pelagic Publishing

Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 291

Wind farms are an essential component of global renewable energy policy and the action to limit the effects of climate change. There is, however, considerable concern over the impacts of wind farms on wildlife, leading to a wide range of research and monitoring studies, a growing body of literature and several international conferences on the topic.

This unique multi-volume work provides a comprehensive overview of the interactions between wind farms and wildlife.

Volume 3 documents the current knowledge of the potential effects upon wildlife during both construction and operation of offshore wind farms. An introductory chapter on the nature of wind farms and the legislation surrounding them is followed by a series of in-depth chapters documenting effects on physical processes, atmosphere and ocean dynamics, seabed communities, fish, marine mammals, migratory birds and bats and seabirds. A synopsis of the known and potential effects of wind farms upon wildlife concludes the volume.

The authors have been carefully selected from across the globe from the large number of academics, consultants and practitioners now engaged in wind farm studies, for their influential contribution to the science. Edited by Martin Perrow and with contributions by 30 leading researchers. The authors represent a wide range of organizations and institutions and several leading consultancies.

Each chapter includes informative figures, tables, color photographs and detailed case studies, including some from invited authors to showcase exciting new research.



**Mastering Bird Photography: The Art, Craft, and Technique of Photographing Birds and Their Behavior**

by Read, Marie

ISBN: 9781681983622

Publisher: Rocky Nook

Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 333

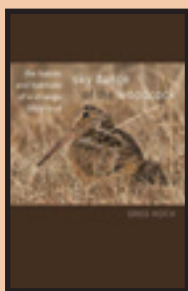
In Mastering Bird Photography: The Art, Craft, and Technique of Photographing Birds and Their Behavior, acclaimed bird photographer and author Marie Read shares techniques and stories behind her compelling images, offering fresh insights into making successful bird photographs, whether you're out in the field or in the comfort of your own backyard.



In this richly illustrated book, you'll learn how to be in the right place at the right time and how to obtain tack sharp portraits. Marie then teaches you to take your skills to the next level in order to capture action shots, illustrate birds in their habitats, and portray birds in evocative and artistic ways. Take your skills to the next level and capture action shots, portray birds in evocative or artistic ways, and illustrate birds in their habitat. Throughout the book are bird behavior vignettes, which provide bird photographers of all skill levels with a wealth of essential insider information that will help your images stand out from the crowd.

Building on basic technical topics such as camera choice, lens choice, and camera settings, Marie reveals how fieldcraft, compositional decisions, and knowledge of bird behavior contribute greatly to a successful bird photograph. Captions for the over 400 images contained in the book provide details on the equipment used, as well as camera settings. Throughout the book, bird behavior insights provide bird photographers of all skill levels a wealth of essential insider information that will help you produce images that stand out from the crowd.

Topics include: Equipment and accessories, Focus, exposure, and light, Composition and creativity, Bird photography ethics, Capturing bird behavior; Storytelling images, Action and in-flight shots, Backyard photo studio, Weather, water, and mood, Top bird photo sites in North America, Basic image editing...and much more. Foreword by Tim Gallagher, Editor-in-Chief Emeritus, Living Bird magazine.



### **Sky Dance of the Woodcock: The Habits and Habitats of a Strange Little Bird**

*by Hoch, Greg*

ISBN: 9781609386276

Publisher: Bur Oak Books

Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 175

Woodcock are one of the oddest birds in North America. They are a shorebird that got lost and ended up in the scrubby parts of the forest, and look like they were put together with the leftover parts of other birds. Oddities aside, each spring they rise to great beauty with their sky dance at dusk.

Greg Hoch combines natural history, land management, scientific knowledge, and personal observation to examine this little game bird. Woodcock have a complex life history and the management of their habitat is also complex. The health of this bird can be considered a key indicator of what good forests look like.



### **Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Western North America**

*by Pieplow, Nathan*

ISBN: 9780547905570

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin

Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 632

**Field Guide**—A guide with illustrations or photographs for identification

A comprehensive field guide that uses an innovative Sound Index to allow readers to quickly identify unfamiliar songs and calls of birds in western North America.

Bird songs and calls are at least as important as visual field marks in identifying birds. Yet short of memorizing each bird's repertoire, it's difficult to sort through them all. Now, with the western edition of this groundbreaking book, it's possible to visually distinguish bird sounds and identify birds using a field-guide format.

At the core of this guide is the spectrogram, a visual graph of sound. With a brief introduction to five key aspects speed, repetition, pauses, pitch pattern, and tone quality readers can translate what they hear into visual recognition, without any musical training or auditory memorization.

The Sound Index groups similar songs together, narrowing the identification choices quickly to a brief list of birds that are likely to be confused because of the similarity of their songs. Readers can then turn to the species account for more information and/or listen to the accompanying audio tracks available online.

Identifying birds by sound is arguably the most challenging and important skill in birding. This book makes it vastly easier to master than ever before.



## **A Season on the Wind: Inside the World of Spring Migration**

by *Kaufman, Kenn*

ISBN: 9781328566423

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin

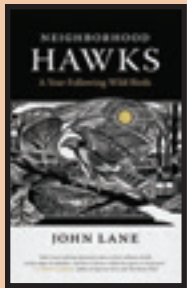
Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 282

A close look at one season in one key site that reveals the amazing science and magic of spring bird migration, and the perils of human encroachment.

Every spring, billions of birds sweep north, driven by ancient instincts to return to their breeding grounds. This vast parade often goes unnoticed, except in a few places where these small travelers concentrate in large numbers. One such place is along Lake Erie in northwestern Ohio. There, the peak of spring migration is so spectacular that it attracts bird watchers from around the globe, culminating in one of the world's biggest birding festivals.

Millions of winged migrants pass through the region, some traveling thousands of miles, performing epic feats of endurance and navigating with stunning accuracy. Now climate change threatens to disrupt patterns of migration and the delicate balance between birds, seasons, and habitats. But wind farms - popular as green energy sources - can be disastrous for birds if built in the wrong places. This is a fascinating and urgent study of the complex issues that affect bird migration.



## **Neighborhood Hawks: A Year Following Wild Birds**

by *Lane, John*

ISBN: 9780820354934

Publisher: University of Georgia Press

Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 146

After reading J. A. Baker's fifty-year-old British nature classic *The Peregrine*, John Lane found himself an ocean away, stalking resident red-shouldered hawks in his neighborhood in Spartanburg, South Carolina. What he observed was very different from what Baker deduced from a decade of chronicling the lives of those brooding migratory raptors. Baker imagined a species on the brink of extinction because of the use of agricultural chemicals on European farms. A half century later in America, Lane found the red-shouldered hawks to be a stable Anthropocene species adapted to life along the waterways of a suburban nation.

Lane watched the hawks for a full year and along the way made a pledge to himself: Anytime he heard or saw the noisy, nonmigratory hawks in his neighborhood, he would drop whatever he was doing and follow them on foot, on bike, or in his truck. The almanac that results from this discipline considers many questions any practiced amateur naturalist would ask, such as where and when will the hawks nest, what do they eat, what are their greatest threats, and what exactly are they communicating through those constant multinoted cries? Lane's year following the hawks also led him to try to answer what would become the most complex question of all: why his heart, like Baker's, goes out so fully to wild things. 'John Lane's adoring obsessions show us how wildness dwells on the edges of suburbia-and how it thrives within the spirit of a feral poet.' -Drew Lanham, author of *Sparrow Envy* and *The Home Place*



## **Peterson Reference Guide to Sparrows of North America**

by *Wright, Rick*

ISBN: 9780547973166

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin

Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 434

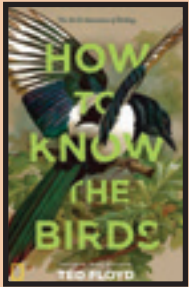
Sparrows are as complicated as they are common. This is an essential guide to identifying 76 kinds, along with a fascinating history of human interactions with them.

What, exactly, is a sparrow? All birders (and many non-birders) have essentially the same mental image of a pelican, a duck, or a flamingo, and a guide dedicated to waxwings or kingfishers would need nothing more than a sketch and a single sentence to satisfactorily

identify its subject. Sparrows are harder to pin down. This book covers one family (Passerellidae), which includes towhees and juncos, and 76 members of the sparrow clan.

Birds have a human history, too, beginning with their significance to native cultures and continuing through their discovery by science, their taxonomic fortunes and misfortunes, and their prospects for survival in a world with ever less space for wild creatures. This book includes not just facts and measurements, but stories - of how birds got their names and how they were discovered - of their entanglement with human history.

RICK WRIGHT leads 'Birds and Art' tours in Europe and the Americas for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. A native of southeast Nebraska, he studied French, German, philosophy, and life sciences at the University of Nebraska. After a detour to Harvard Law School, Rick took the M.A. and Ph.D. in German at Princeton University. His years as an academic included appointments as assistant professor of German at the University of Illinois, reader/scholar at Princeton University's Index of Christian Art, and associate professor of medieval studies at Fordham University. Rick lives with his wife, Alison Beringer, and their chocolate lab, Gellert, in Bloomfield, New Jersey.



### **How to Know the Birds: The Art and Adventure of Birding**

*by Floyd, Ted*

ISBN: 9781426220036

Publisher: National Geographic

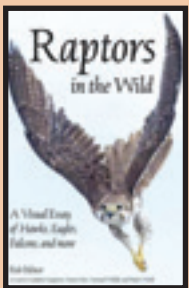
Year of Publication: 2019

Page Count: 304

Become a better birder with brief portraits of 200 top North American birds. This friendly, relatable book is a celebration of the art, science, and delights of bird-watching.

How to Know the Birds introduces a new, holistic approach to bird-watching, by noting how behaviors, settings, and seasonal cycles connect with shape, song, color, gender, age distinctions, and other features traditionally used to identify species. With short essays on 200 observable species, expert author Ted Floyd guides us through a year of becoming a better birder, each species representing another useful lesson: from explaining scientific nomenclature to noting how plumage changes with age, from chronicling migration patterns to noting hatching habits. Dozens of endearing pencil sketches accompany Floyd's charming prose, making this book a unique blend of narrative and field guide. A pleasure for birders of all ages, this witty book promises solid lessons for the beginner and smiles of recognition for the seasoned nature lover.

**Our Opinion:** Roger Tory Peterson's 1949 book of the same name offered those who never had a bird guide before a pocket-sized introduction to the art of bird identification. Expert Ted Floyd still offers a greater understanding of birds and birding, but in a very different package. Short, sweet, witty, and wise, 200 different species spark short chapters which sharpen readers' observation skills and deepen their understanding of the species, birds, birdwatching, and ornithology.



### **Raptors in the Wild: A Visual Essay of Hawks, Eagles, Falcons and More**

*by Palmer, Rob*

ISBN: 9781682033623

Publisher: Amherst Media

Year of Publication: 2018

Page Count: 128

Explore the amazing world of raptors, including hawks, eagles, falcons, and more as they fly, hunt, rest, and care for their young. Rob Palmer has been involved with animals since he was very young and has pursued his particular passion for birds of prey throughout his adult life. In college, he spent numerous hours studying the nesting territories of prairie falcons in Northeastern Colorado, and additional time researching screech owls nesting along the Boulder Creek trail in the center of Boulder, Colorado. Rob taught life science and biology for several years before devoting himself to studying raptors and refining his photography techniques.



### **Warblers and Woodpeckers: A Father-Son Big Year of Birding**

by *Collard, Sneed B. III.*

ISBN: 9781680511369

Publisher: Mountaineers Books

Year of Publication: 2018

Page Count: 252

From the killer bee-infested border region of southeast Arizona to the sultry islands of the Galapagos, *Warblers & Woodpeckers* recounts the quest of a father and his thirteen-year-old son to see as many birds as possible in a single year. With a measured blend of humor, natural history, and adventure, this tale takes readers to great birding hotspots of America and beyond, both to experience their incredible avian wealth and to experience the focused, often eccentric, world of ornithological travel. Along the way, readers share the ups and downs of the relationship between a father and his teenage son.

Writer Sneed Collard and his son Braden set out to establish their own personal Big Year bird species count record. In *Warblers & Woodpeckers*, Sneed shares the excitement, challenges, perils, and insights that come with crisscrossing the country in search of some of Earth's most remarkable creatures. It's a father-and-son tale, in which the adventure is in the journey and the surprising discoveries and encounters with our wondrous feathered friends. Sneed brings a fast-paced yet generous voice to the attempt, and readers of all stripes will appreciate the way backyard birders can create their own Big Year.



### **The Cooper's Hawk: Breeding Ecology & Natural History of a Winged Huntsman**

by *Rosenfield, Robert N*

ISBN: 9780888390820

Publisher: Hancock House

Year of Publication: 2018

Page Count: 164

*The Cooper's Hawk* presents the general reader and professional biologists interested in birds and nature, with an authoritative account of the breeding biology of what is perhaps the most abundant, backyard breeding raptor in North America. This urban status exists despite cross-generational human persecution through shooting of individuals and indirect felling of forests, their apparent preferred nesting habitat. Using conversational prose, the natural history of the bird's diet, including bird feeder use and disease concerns, courtship behavior, and the ecological themes of breeding density, reproductive success, and adult survivorship are described. There too is a focus on how and why fieldwork is conducted on this ubiquitous city dweller who preys mostly on birds, or 'urban fast food.' How urban birds may differ from their rural counterparts is addressed, and especially highlighted is the novel aspect of reproductive deceit in this red-eyed, blue-backed predator; as, unlike all other birds of prey studied to date, it is highly promiscuous. The text is complemented with original art and especially crisp photographs that demonstrate this bird's natural history. Foreword by Dr. David Bird.



### **Gulls Simplified: A Comparative Approach to Identification**

by *Dunne, Pete and Kevin T. Karlson*

ISBN: 9780691156941

Publisher: Princeton University Press

Year of Publication: 2018

Page Count: 208

**Field Guide**—A guide with illustrations or photographs for identification

A simpler and more user-friendly visual approach to gull identification

This unique photographic field guide to North America's gulls provides a comparative approach to identification that concentrates on the size, structure, and basic plumage features of gulls - gone are the often-confusing array of plumage details found in traditional guides.

Featuring hundreds of color photos throughout, *Gulls Simplified* illustrates the variations of gull plumages for a variety of ages, giving readers strong visual reference points for each species. Extensive captions accompany the photos, which include comparative photo arrays, digitized photo arrays for each age group,

and numerous images of each species a wealth of visual information at your fingertips. This one-of-a-kind guide includes detailed species accounts and a distribution map for each gull.

An essential field companion for North American birders, *Gulls Simplified* reduces the confusion commonly associated with gull identification, offering a more user-friendly way of observing these marvelous birds.

- Provides a simpler approach to gull identification
- Features a wealth of color photos for easy comparison among species
- Includes detailed captions that explain identification criteria and aging, with direct visual reinforcement above the captions
- Combines plumage details with a focus on size, body shape, and structural features for easy identification in the field
- Highlights important field marks and physical features for each gull

**Our Opinion:** Is it possible to simplify gull identification, really? Well, if anyone can do it, Pete Dunne is the man! And Kevin Karlson has provided photos to make their comparative approach work. While each species is covered in detail in the text with a species profile plus status and distribution (with range maps), the color photographs illustrate the keys to identification. And, the introduction provides valuable lessons with photos of multiple gull species to hone your comparative skills.



### **The Delightful Horror of Family Birding: Sharing Nature with the Next Generation**

by *Knapp, Eli J.*

ISBN: 9781937226916

Publisher: Torrey House

Year of Publication: 2018

Page Count: 275

Weight: 0.8 lb

Eli Knapp takes readers from a leaky dugout canoe in Tanzania to a juniper titmouse's perch at the Grand Canyon, exploring life's deepest questions all along the way. In this collection of essays, Knapp intentionally flies away from the flock, reveling in insights gleaned from birds, his students, and the wide-eyed wonder his children experience.

*The Delightful Horror of Family Birding* navigates the world in hopes that appreciation of nature will burn intensely for generations to come, not peter out in a flicker. Whether traveling solo or with his students or children, Knapp levels his gaze on the birds that share our skies, showing that birds can be a portal to deeper relationships, ecological understanding, and newfound joy.



### **The Empire of the Eagle: An Illustrated Natural History**

by *Unwin, Mike and David Tipling*

ISBN: 9780300232899

Publisher: Yale University Press

Year of Publication: 2018

Page Count: 288

Weight: 3.8 lb

Eagles hold a unique allure among birds for their combination of power, grace, and predatory prowess. Captivating the human imagination, these raptors have symbolized pride, freedom, and independence of spirit since humankind's earliest times. This book, unlike any previous volume, encompasses each of the world's sixty-eight currently recognized eagle species, from the huge Steller's Sea Eagle that soars above Japan's winter ice floes to the diminutive Little Eagle that hunts over the Australian outback. Mike Unwin's vivid and authoritative descriptions combined with stunning photographs taken or curated by David Tipling deliver a fascinating and awe-inspiring volume.

Featuring chapters organized by habitat, the book investigates the lifestyle and unique adaptations of each eagle species, as well as the significance of eagles in world cultures and the threats they face from humans. A gorgeous appreciation of eagles, this book will dazzle both eye and imagination.

Mike Unwin is a celebrated wildlife and travel writer, known for his books and journalism. Also a photographer, illustrator, and popular speaker, he lives in Brighton, UK. David Tipling is renowned for his wildlife photographs and writings and is coauthor of the critically acclaimed *Birds & People*. He lives in Norfolk, UK.



## Learning to Fly

by Lee Jones

Available Website: [www.booksbyleejones.com/feeltf/](http://www.booksbyleejones.com/feeltf/)

Amazon: [www.amazon.com/learning-fly-lee-jones-ebook/dp/B07TYMR7QS/](http://www.amazon.com/learning-fly-lee-jones-ebook/dp/B07TYMR7QS/)

Although birds (birding and bird science) play a major role in the book, the central theme is the story of a young girl who, given a new lease on life, finds herself struggling to overcome the debilitating effects of early childhood abuse while navigating the often treacherous waters of adolescence. LTF has its light moments, but at its core, it is an expose on how ill-equipped we are as a society to deal with a very serious issue no one wants to talk about. But it is not all doom and gloom. Far from it. To keep the reader engaged, LTF is full of adventure, intrigue, and mystery with a shocking ending. I hope you enjoy it!

### From Chapter 9: Choctaw Bridge

Chrissie Soderquist couldn't get the young girl she had just met out of her head. She looked familiar, yet she said she had just moved into the neighborhood. With little conscious thought she pulled Tuesday's Daily Oklahoman from a pile of recently read papers by the back door. She stared at the headline: ENTIRE FAMILY AMONG 176 VICTIMS IN PLANE CRASH. Beneath the headline was a half-page picture of the Morrison family standing in front of their white stucco house in Dallas. The girl standing next to her mother was the spitting image of the girl she had just met. No doubt about it. She must be losing her mind.

### From Chapter 28: Break Up, Break Down

Dr. Pederson tried repeatedly to break through the wall Fee had built around her soul to protect her deepest, darkest secrets, but each time she tried, Fee resisted. And each time she tried and failed Fee added another brick to that wall.

### From Chapter 29: Breakthrough

Dr. Pederson's unorthodox treatment appeared to have worked. At their next session, Fee for the first time began openly discussing the sexual abuse, as well as other abusive treatment, she had received at the hands of her father. It was a gut-wrenching nightmare. Dr. Pederson had heard the story many times. Only this time it was personal. It was not Patient X; it was Fee.

### Chapter 62: Missing in Action

Lieutenant Cooper asked for someone to bring him all the topographic maps of east Texas. After jotting down a few letters and numbers on a piece of scrap paper and spending a few minutes pouring over the maps, he pointed to a spot on one of the maps and said, "She's here."

Captain Wilson was immediately on the phone to the Beaumont police station. "Line up three squad cars and have them ready to dispatch on a moment's notice. We will have a chopper there in half an hour with our top hostage negotiator and the Harris County Swat Team on board."

### About the Author

Lee Jones received his Ph.D. from UCLA back when fish still ruled the sea. A career environmental scientist with a lifelong passion for all things Darwinian, Dr. Jones decided mid-career to test-drive his other passion—writing fiction. Yes, like dear Uncle Bob and half his bowling league, he dreamed of someday writing a novel. *Learning to Fly*, his first novel, proved far more ambitious and personally rewarding than he could have ever imagined back when "someday" seemed as elusive as a Himalayan snowcock.

Dr. Jones lives in Belize with his wife and two adolescent children. He is the author of several books and scholarly papers on birds, including the highly acclaimed *Birds of Belize*, the country's definitive reference and field guide for tourists, locals, and professional bird brains.



## UNNATURAL TEXAS? THE INVASIVE SPECIES DILEMMA

Doughty, Robin W. & Turner, Matt Warnoch; Texas A&M University Press, 2019, 255 pages

*Unnatural Texas* represents a comprehensive and thorough examination of the cultural, economic, and environmental issues surrounding "the invasive species dilemma" as it affects Texas. With scientists becoming increasingly alarmed at the loss of biodiversity on Earth and its disastrous effects, this book significantly contributes to that continuing discussion. It effectively highlights not only the apparent contributory impacts of invasive

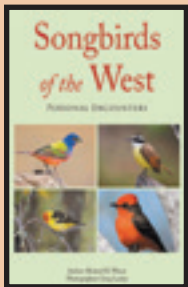
species to diversity loss, but also emphasizes mankind's central role in creating the problem by continually disseminating our favorite species around the world with the misguided intent of "improving" the natural world for our benefit. The book additionally explores in a balanced fashion the complicated and multi-faceted viewpoints on how we might respond to this human created dilemma.

The Introduction section does a yeoman effort at delving into the complex issues involved with invasive species such as what constitutes an invasive species (i.e. a non-native species that does harm), the subjectivity that measures its potential harm, and what if an invasive species eventually provides some benefit (ex. Tamarisk is great habitat for endangered Willow Flycatchers). Indeed, our current Western diet depends heavily on the "Columbian Exchange" whereby edible plants were exchanged between the Americas, Africa, and Europe during the period of colonial exploration. The authors further explore the various viewpoints on how to respond to the invasive species dilemma – 1) return the biome to a pure pre-Columbian state; 2) accept those species and their impacts that have adapted; or 3) find some pragmatic solutions between the extremes. These are just a few of the in-depth issues analyzed in the 21 page Introduction which is packed with material in an attempt to set-up a complicated problem.

The next chapters are the "guidebook" sections that examine the major invasive species including Sparrows and Starlings, Chinese Tallow and Tamarisk, to Hogs and Cats. Each chapter helpfully begins with a summary and includes the origins of the species and their invasions, their impacts, and current efforts at controlling them. For the Birders, the book provides plenty of content with the inclusion of invasive avian species, invasive plants that negatively affect native bird habitats, and discussion of Feral Cats that are major predators of birds. The Feral Cat chapter in particular exemplifies the complexities of the impacts of invasive species and the sometimes controversial debate around how to respond.

The Conclusion chapter deals with how we might respond in general to invasive species as individual citizen scientists and discusses the differences in potential rural vs. urban solutions. The need to recognize and respond quickly to new invasives is also emphasized. Finally, the authors also posit that sometimes a "wait and see" approach may be warranted. Interestingly, the book begins with an examination of the Monk Parakeet as an example invasive that has adapted and is here to stay probably. The authors end with the notion that having exterminated our native Carolina Parakeet, perhaps acceptance of the mostly innocuous but attractive Monk is a fair and pragmatic response that recognizes the "resilience and mutability of the natural world."

Book review by Lonnie Childs



### **Songbirds of the West: Personal Encounters**

by *Roland H. Wauer (Author), Greg Lasley (Photographer)*

ISBN-10: 1796046981

ISBN-13: 978-1796046984

Publisher: Xlibris Corp (July 24, 2019)

Language: English

Paperback: 150 pages

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.4 x 11 inches

Paperback \$65.00

Kindle \$3.99

Songbirds of the West includes more than four dozen songbirds that occur within the western United States. The majority are found in America's western National Parks, especially in parks where the author worked for more than a quarter of a century. Big Bend National Park is where he encountered Black-capped and Gray Vireos, Vermilion Flycatchers, Curve-billed and Crissal Thrashers, Hepatic and Summer Tanagers, and Black-vented, Hooded and Scott's Orioles. Black-billed Magpies were encountered at Great Sand Dunes, Clark's Nutcrackers at Crater Lake, Cave Swallows at Carlsbad Caverns, Cactus Wrens at Saguaro, Phainopeplas at Organ Pipe, Steller's and Gray Jays at Yellowstone, Black-throated Gray Warblers at Mesa Verde, Townsend's Solitaires at Timpanogos Cave, and Canyon and Rock Wrens at Zion. Great Kiskadees, Green Jays, and Altamira Orioles were encountered in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The discussion of each bird is based on the author's personal encounters. These range from casual observations to scientific studies which were undertaken in both the U.S. and Mexico; still others involved visits to the West Indies. The bird's life history, behavior and status are included.

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