

President's Message



Shelia Hargis TOS President.

As if the assaults on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Endangered Species Act, and our public natural lands aren't enough, now we get a number to quantify what we know has been happening for a while—the loss of billions of individual birds across many species. I am frequently teetering on the brink of despair. I know many of you feel the same level of despair. So, what do we do? I don't claim to be a counselor, but here are my thoughts.

First, remember that we are not alone. We are part of an amazing and passionate family of birders and conservationists that care deeply about birds



Graphic from our friends at Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

and who will fight for their future. Lean on, commiserate with, and strategize with your conservation family. None of us can face these trying times alone. We need each other. Second, seek out those places and experiences that restore and rejuvenate you. In other words, go birding more! Even better,

take a new birder with you. Their excitement will energize you! We know that getting out in nature is good for the mind and soul, and it is encouraging to see others start to realize how important a connection to nature is. The more people who get this, the better. Check out the forest bathing and the mindfulness in nature movements. Communing with nature is a critically important respite for the current state of the world. Third, continue to fight the good fight. Contact your political representatives and let them know that you value birds both for their intrinsic value and for the services they provide for our world and that you expect them to be protected. Fourth, check out 3billionbirds.org and allaboutbirds.org for seven simple actions you can take to help birds. Many of you are already taking the actions listed. Thank you! Share this information with your friends and family so that they can make a difference for our birds too. And last but not least, support the organizations that are fighting for a future full of birds. Start by increasing your level of financial support of TOS (our annual appeal is coming up very soon) so that we can continue to conserve and protect critical bird habitat and support bird research in Texas. Then support other like-minded organizations. There are many to choose from. Pick your favorites and donate. Birders and conservationists faced bleak times before and rose to the occasion. It is our turn to rise to the occasion!

Speaking of family and leaning on each other, one of the best aspects of TOS meetings is the opportunity to see birding buddies you haven't seen in a while and to develop new friendships with fellow birders. You'll find all the details of our winter 2020 meeting in Bryan-College Station in this newsletter. As usual, the meeting will be great fun. Join us and



Byron Stone and I had the opportunity to show the TOS Board around Commons Ford Metropolitan Park during our annual Board retreat. If you are in Austin, definitely check out this wonderful park with its 40-acre restored prairie.

Photo credit: Shelia Hargis

invite some of your birding friends who haven't been to a TOS meeting yet.

Another great way to spend quality time with fellow birders is to participate in Christmas Bird Counts. You should know by now that I am a big fan of CBCs. I highly encourage you to participate in as many counts as you can. Not only will you have a great time, you will contribute to the world's longest running wildlife census. Data from CBCs, along with data from other citizen science efforts, help researchers understand what is happening with our birds. Knowing what is happening is an important first step in identifying and addressing the issues. Our friends at Houston Audubon maintain a web page with information on most of the CBCs in Texas. Check it out and sign up!

Cheryl McGrath and I had the pleasure of showing off some of our amazing Austin birds to 12 hardy birders this past August during a TOS Weekender. Our group was wonderful, and we survived the weekend with no instances of heat stroke. You can read more about our adventure a little later in the newsletter.

The TOS Board held our annual Board retreat in Austin this year. Most of Saturday was spent talking with Corky

McReynolds of LeadTeam, LLC. We hired Corky to help us evaluate whether we are ready to hire TOS's first Executive Director or not. There is much more work to be done than we can handle as volunteers, and having an ED would add stability and continuity that can be challenging to establish with a mostly volunteer only organization. When the day was done, we decided we're not quite ready to hire anyone, but we now have a better idea of the things we need to put in place before hiring an ED. It was a very beneficial weekend together.

As I was about to put the finishing touches on my column, I was interviewed by Cela Gonzalez, a University of Texas student studying advertising. She is interviewing several birders for her Communicating Sustainability course. Anyone who lets me talk about birds for nearly 45 minutes is my new best friend, and even better, I think Cela is interested in learning more about birds! She reminded me that there are many young people who understand the importance of a healthy environment and are willing to work towards that end. Being reminded of that does my heart good.

Enjoy reading the newsletter and have a great winter full of many Christmas Bird Counts. Thank you to all who contributed to this newsletter.

—Shelia Hargis, TOS President

TOS Winter Meeting 2020—Bryan-College Station, TX

It has been over 20 years since we've had a TOS meeting in the Bryan-College Station area, so we are overdue to visit this region of Texas. Thanks to our friends with Rio Brazos Audubon, we will be returning in 2020 for our winter meeting! The dates are January 16–19, 2020. Rio Brazos Audubon is our host, and they have put together many exciting field trips and interesting speakers.

Due to relatively small counties around College Station, we will have field trips to 13 different counties. This might be a record! The counties that we'll be visiting are Austin, Brazos, Burleson, Grimes, Lee, Leon, Madison, Milam, Montgomery, Robertson, Walker, Waller and Washington.

Field trips will provide opportunities to bird a variety of habitats on publicly accessible land as well as private property that you can't visit without special arrangements. In addition, you will have the opportunity to attend workshops to help improve your abilities to identify ducks and sparrows. Our county listers can choose from two Century Club trips on Friday and Saturday. You once again have a big challenge ahead of you—trying to decide between all the great field trips.

Our headquarters will be the Best Western Premier Bryan College Station. All of our activities will take place

there. Field trips will leave from this location, and all participants must join their field trip group at the hotel.

The afternoon and evening presentations cover a variety of topics from the birds of the area (both present and historical), to how birds deal with stress (a very applicable topic these days as birds face more and more challenges), to the diseases birds contract (these same diseases potentially impact humans and domestic animals). The presenters are a combination of well-known names in the Texas birding community to researchers that we might not know yet but will definitely want to keep on our radar screen going forward. Please try to work it into your schedule to attend all of the presentations.

Some field trips involve a lot of driving to get to the location, so expect early departure times for those trips. Be prepared to carpool to minimize the number of vehicles and maximize the likelihood of spotting birds along the way. Bring walkie-talkies if you have them. Be prepared for cold and wet weather.

Online registration will open in mid to late November. Watch for an email from us letting you know exactly when it will open. I highly recommend you register early since field trips are likely to fill up. If you find that a field trip that you really want is full, go ahead and register for your second choice, but then email Judy Kestner and request to be put on the wait list for your first choice. Judy's email is tosmember@yahoo.com. The registration fee will increase on January 2, and registration will close on January 9. Don't wait!

I hope to see you in Bryan-College Station in January!

Shelia Hargis

Hotel Information

Best Western Premier Bryan College Station



The Best Western Premier Bryan College Station will be the headquarters for the Winter Meeting. All TOS events will be held at the hotel and field trips will depart from its parking areas. The hotel is located at 1920 Austin's Colony Parkway, Bryan, Texas 77802. Every guest room includes a coffee maker, microwave and mini fridge. The property has a lounge and is in easy driving distance to a wide variety of dining options.

The hotel is holding a block of 50 rooms for TOS guests. The TOS group rate is \$89. Reservations may be made by calling the front desk at 979-731-5300 (Press 1) and referencing the group name (Texas Ornithological Society Winter Meeting 2020) or the group code (TOS20). Reservations may also be made by using the direct booking link listed below:

https://www.bestwestern.com/en_US/book/hotel-rooms.44623.html?groupId=9V5GZ3S7

These rooms will be held only until January 1, 2020. Any cancellations must be made prior to 6:00 p.m. on January 15, 2020 to avoid a one-night room charge.

Complimentary full breakfasts will be available at the hotel from 5:00 a.m. until 7:00 a.m. on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday for participants staying at the Best Western. *Anyone staying at another location will be responsible for finding their own breakfast.*

Meeting Agenda

All meeting events will be held at the Best Western Premier Bryan College Station,
1920 Austin's Colony Parkway, Bryan, TX.

Thursday, January 16

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| 3:30-5:30 PM | TOS Board Meeting |
| 4:00-6:30 PM | Registration Check-in |
| 6:30-7:00 PM | Welcome/ Introductions/Announcements (Lots of useful information is given during this time, so please attend.) |
| 7:00-8:00 PM | Speaker: Dr. Mark McDermott— <i>A Birder's Year in the Brazos Valley</i> |

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| 5:00-7:00 AM | Breakfast, includes eggs and meat (only for Best Western guests) |
| 5:45-7:30 AM | Box Lunch Pick-up |
| 6:00 AM-5:00 PM | Field Trips |
| 4:00-6:30 PM | Registration Check-in |
| 4:00-5:00 PM | Speaker: Dr. Jacquelyn Grace— <i>How Birds Deal with Stress—Highlights from Studies in Texas and Beyond</i> |
| 6:30-7:00 PM | Announcements/Field Trip Reports |
| 7:00-8:00 PM | Speaker: Dr. Keith Arnold— <i>Birding Now and Then</i> |

Saturday, January 18

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| 5:00-7:00 AM | Breakfast, includes eggs and meat (only for Best Western guests) |
| 5:45-7:30 AM | Box Lunch Pick-up |
| 6:00 AM-5:00 PM | Field Trips |
| 4:00-5:00 PM | Speaker: Dr. Sarah Hamer— <i>Disease Ecology of Neotropical Migrants in Texas</i> |
| 5:00-6:00 PM | Social Time (cash bar will be available) |
| 6:00-7:00 PM | Banquet |
| 7:00-7:30 PM | Announcements/Century Club Pin Presentation/Field Trip Reports |
| 7:30-8:30 PM | Keynote Speaker: Dr. Bert Frenz— <i>The Birds of the Oaks and Prairies: 1687 to the Present</i> |

Sunday, January 19

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| 5:00-7:00 AM | Breakfast, includes eggs and meat (only for Best Western guests) |
| 6:30-7:30 AM | Box Lunch Pick-up |
| 6:45 AM-3:00 PM | Field Trips |

Registration Information

Registration is online at the Texas Ornithological Society's website, www.texasbirds.org. Registration will open in mid to late November. To receive an email with the exact date, be sure your email address is included in your TOS account information. Once registration opens, there will be directions on the website to assist you. If you do not have access to the internet, you may call Judy Kestner at 361-387-7329 or Frances Cerbins at 512-372-9039 for assistance with registration. If you don't get an answer, leave a message and Judy or Frances will call you back when they are available. The registration fee will increase on January 2, and registration will close on January 9. (Refunds will be given if cancellation occurs before January 9 and no cost has been incurred by TOS. No refunds will be given if cancellation occurs on or after January 9. If you have to cancel your registration, contact Catherine Winans at catherinewinans@yahoo.com.)

Registration Fee: \$90 for TOS members
 \$125 for Non-TOS members (includes a one-year membership)
 Free registration for students
 \$20 late fee after January 2

Box lunches: \$15

Saturday Banquet: \$30

Box Lunches Available Friday, Saturday, and Sunday Mornings

Box lunch selections for each day:

- Turkey and Cheddar on wheat bread, chips, fruit, cookie, condiments and bottled water
- Ham and Swiss on white bread, chips, fruit, cookie, condiments and bottled water
- Chicken Salad on white bread, fruit, cookie, chips, and bottled water
- Pimento Cheese on white bread, fruit, cookie, chips, and bottled water
- Lettuce Wrap, Hummus and Cucumber, fruit, cookie, chips, and bottled water

Saturday Cash Bar

There will be a cash bar available in the banquet room beginning at 5:00 PM on Saturday night. Guests will purchase their own drinks on an individual basis.

Saturday Banquet Menu

The banquet will be a fajita meal buffet, including beef, chicken, rice, refried beans (vegetarian), grilled onions and peppers, tortillas, pico, guacamole, shredded cheese, queso, sour cream, cake, iced tea, and coffee.

**If you have dietary restrictions and need more specific information, email Shelia at Shelia.hargis@gmail.com with your questions.

Speakers

Thursday Evening

Title: A Birder's Year in the Brazos Valley

Presenter: Dr. Mark McDermott

Description: Brazos County is located in central Texas and offers the birder 591 square miles of post oak savannah, ranchland, urban parks, river bottoms and lakes. At the time of writing, 19,881 eBird checklists have been submitted for the county covering an incredible 329 species. From winter specialties such as Sprague's Pipit and Harris's Sparrow, to productive urban migrant traps, and summer breeders such as Kentucky and Swainson's Warblers, each season brings its own rewards. In this talk Mark will take you through a birder's year in Brazos County, sharing seasonal highlights and perhaps shedding light on why his planned two years of living in the area rapidly turned into seven!

Bio: Dr. Mark McDermott is a British birder who moved to the US 16 years ago, to work as a biochemist and cell



Mark McDermott

biologist. He has watched birds since his childhood in Northern England, and following his move to the US lived and birded in North Carolina and Maryland before arriving in Texas seven years ago. He has birded extensively throughout the state, throughout much of North America, and further afield.

He is currently an eBird

reviewer for 10 Texas counties, has attempted multiple Brazos county 'big years', and runs the Rio Brazos Audubon birding 101 program, a monthly series of beginner's bird walks.

Friday Afternoon

Title: How Birds Deal with Stress—Highlights from Studies in Texas and Beyond

Presenter: Dr. Jacquelyn Grace

Description: Wild birds face many natural and anthropogenic stressors in their lives, such as predators, hurricanes, fires, low food availability, and habitat destruction. They can respond to these stressors with short- and long-term changes to behavior and physiology that can be adaptive in some cases, but not in others. Jacquelyn will discuss results from her research investigating the "cycle of violence" in Nazca Boobies in the Galapagos Islands, early-life stress in sparrows in France, and ongoing projects in Texas.

Bio: Dr. Grace is originally from Ahuimanu, Hawaii. She received her Bachelor's degree from Willamette University (Oregon), and Ph.D. from Wake Forest University (North Carolina), before completing a postdoctoral appointment in France. She joined the faculty at Texas A&M, Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences in 2016.



Jacquelyn Grace

Her research focuses on how animals and their communities respond to stressors in their environment and utilizes techniques from physiology (e.g., hormones, parasites, immune response, body condition, isotopes), ecology (e.g., diversity, abundance, productivity), life history (e.g., reproductive success, survival), and behavior. Her study systems include seabirds, passerines, and waterfowl in Texas, France, and the Galapagos islands.

Friday Evening

Title: Birding Now and Then

Presenter: Dr. Keith Arnold

Description: Although earlier efforts to record lists of birds for Brazos County began in the early 1930's, the mid-1960's saw the area expanded to Brazos and surrounding counties, what we refer to as the Central Brazos Valley. Two factors have affected our knowledge of birds in this

area: changes in habitats and effort by birders. The former is especially affected by urbanization of Bryan-College Station and the construction of Lake Somerville, while the latter relates to the number of active birders and research activities by staff and students of Texas A&M University. Significant changes in the bird fauna of the area have taken place through the decades.



Keith Arnold

Bio: Dr. Arnold received his A.B. from Kalamazoo College, his M.S. from the University of Michigan and his Ph.D. from Louisiana State University. At LSU, he studied under Dr. George Lowery, with research on *Thryothorus* wrens in Costa Rica.

Dr. Arnold began his career at Texas A&M university in the fall of 1966 as an assistant professor and curator of birds. Over his 39 years, Dr. Arnold taught ornithology to over 2800 students and guided over 70 students in their graduate studies. With a co-member of the Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences (WFSC) faculty, he established a Study Abroad program in Dominica. This program is now in its 25th season. Dr. Arnold also headed up the WFSC undergraduate advising program for 15 years.

An advocate of long-term studies, Dr. Arnold and his graduate students were involved in 15-year studies of blackbirds, and Barn and Cliff Swallows, plus seven years on Wilson's Snipe. Other studies included Cave Swallows, shorebirds, Crested Caracaras and White-tailed Hawks.

Dr. Arnold has been a long-time member of TOS and has attended many of the meetings. He served a term as president and as treasurer for many years. Perhaps he is best known for initiating the Texas Breeding Bird Atlas which involved many TOS members. Dr. Arnold is also the author of the book "*Birds of Texas*" along with Gregory Kennedy, published in 2007.

Saturday Afternoon

Title: Disease Ecology of Neotropical Migrants in Texas

Presenter: Dr. Sarah Hamer

Description: The large-scale seasonal movements of migrants provide opportunities for bird-associated parasites to rapidly disperse over large spatial scales, with implications for both human and animal health. Researchers with the Schubot Avian Health Center at Texas A&M University have been collaborating with the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center since 2013 to study northbound neotropical migrants arriving at the Gulf Coast each spring. Using samples collected at a banding station at Mad Island Marsh Preserve, we have found that approximately 3% of arriving birds have ticks attached to them—some infected with diverse *Rickettsia* species- and most are central or South American tick species not known to be established in the US. Nearly half of the birds were found to be infected with blood parasites (*Haemoproteus* and *Plasmodium* species)—these 'avian malaria' parasites are spread by blood-sucking vectors and can be associated with a range of impact on

birds, from asymptomatic infections to chronic infections that reduce survivorship. Ongoing work is aimed at characterizing the virome in birds and their parasites. The ecology of these infections in birds will be presented in the context of migration and a changing environment.



Sarah Hamer

Bio: Sarah is an Associate Professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at Texas A&M University where she runs a research laboratory focused on studying the natural cycles of diseases that impact humans, wildlife, and domestic animals. Her Ph.D. (Fisheries & Wildlife /Ecology & Evolutionary Biology) and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine are from Michigan State University, and her Master of Science (Natural Resources) is from University of Illinois. She is the Director of the Schubot Avian Health Center at Texas A&M.

Saturday Night Keynote

Title: The Birds of the Oaks and Prairies: 1687 to the Present

Presenter: Dr. Bert Frenz

Description: What can you learn from 4 million historical bird sightings from the central Oaks and Prairies region of Texas? Of course, that database can give you detailed abundance charts, arrival and departure records, unexpected occurrences, migration dates, and breeding statistics. Interestingly, it can also tell you a lot about changes in time. What birds were here 100 years ago or 50 years ago or 25 years ago, but now are gone or rare? Which species breed here now that didn't before? How much have common birds increased or decreased? How has climate change affected birds of the Oaks and Prairies?



Bert Frenz

Bio: Bert started watching birds at age eight in Wisconsin, but never met another birder until moving to Texas as a Postdoctoral Fellow in 1971. Birding the new state added immensely to his life list and soon he began attending and then leading birding field trips for the Rio Brazos Audubon Society. Some

200 organized field trips under his belt, he started organizing trips for the Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) and was a Director for the society for nearly a decade.

Currently, he is sub-regional editor for North American Birds and is in the process of writing a book on The Birds of the Texas Oaks and Prairies. His book *A Birder's Guide to Belize* was published in 2013 by the American Birding Association. He also is e-Bird editor for the country of Belize and for the Central Prairies of Texas.

Speakers (continued)

He has birded in all 50 states, all Canadian provinces, almost all Mexico states, plus eastern and western Europe, all Australia states, New Zealand, Moorea, Fiji, South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Bermuda, and throughout Central America. He has organized and led birding RV caravans

throughout Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Manitoba, British Columbia, the Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Labrador, Alaska, New Zealand, and Australia.

Field Trips

<i>NOTE: Participants must meet their field trip group at the Best Western at the departure time. Due to logistical complications, it is not possible to meet the group at any other location. Please plan accordingly.</i>							
Number	Field Trip & Description	County	Difficulty	Start/End Times	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	<p>Washington on the Brazos State Park Located in Washington County, Washington on the Brazos State Park offers a unique birding experience within the birthplace of Texas. The park includes the remnants of 'Washington', the former capital of the Texas Republic, as well as a re-creation of 'Independence Hall', the site where the Republic declared independence from Mexico in 1836. The 293-acre site offers 2.9 miles of trails and multiple habitats including woodland, riparian, parkland and a small pond. The site also features the farmland of the Barrington living history farm, the former home of Anson Jones, the last President of the Texas Republic. The park has been a club favorite for many years as the site of our 12 sparrow species by 12 noon challenge. Locally difficult species have been found here including Bewick's Wren and both White- and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Historically, the site has also hosted locally rare species during the winter months including Couch's Kingbird, Black-headed Grosbeak and Least Grebe. The trip is rated as medium with well-maintained paths and good facilities, with options for the more adventurous to wander off trail.</p>	Washington	medium	6:45 AM - 3:00 PM	X		X
2	<p>Duck ID Workshop This workshop, suitable for all levels, will teach you the skills to confidently identify the multiple duck species found within our local area. The trip will cover a number of locally productive lakes with expected species including Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Blue- and Green-winged Teal, and Bufflehead. Less common species such as Redhead, Canvasback, Northern Pintail and Common Goldeneye are also possible. This trip is rated as being of easy difficulty and will involve driving to sites and short walks from the car on easy well-maintained paths.</p>	Brazos	easy	7:30 AM - 2:30 PM	X		
3	<p>Horizon Turf Farm and Black Lake Located in Burleson County, these two under-explored local sites offer exciting winter birding opportunities. Horizon Turf Farm offers one of the best possibilities for finding locally difficult Lapland- and McCown's Longspurs. Expected species include Horned Lark, multiple sparrow species, large numbers of American Pipit, and multiple raptor species including Northern Harrier and American Kestrel. Peregrine Falcon is also possible and Bald Eagle is frequently seen in this area. The site has also historically produced White-tailed Hawk and White-tailed Kite. Our second site, Black Lake, is located just south of the Brazos River and offers a superb opportunity to increase your Burleson county waterfowl list. Located on private property this site is normally off limits to the public. This trip is rated easy/medium with birding from both vehicles and on foot.</p>	Burleson	medium	7:00 AM - 3:00 PM	X		X
4	<p>Anderson Ranch Located in Robertson county, the Anderson Ranch offers some of the finest local birding our area has to offer, with a superb range of habitat including grassland, woodland and riparian habitat along the Brazos River. The ranch regularly produces local rarities including Short-eared Owl, and Ferruginous Hawk, and offers superb sparrow habitat with multiple species expected including large numbers of wintering Harris's Sparrow. The site also hosts good numbers of Sprague's Pipit. Historically the ranch has produced some real rarities for this area including Prairie Falcon, Whooping Crane, and Burrowing Owl. This trip is rated medium with some birding from vehicles and some birding from foot on uneven terrain.</p>	Robertson	medium	6:30 AM - 3:00 PM	X	X	
5	<p>Lake Somerville Lake Somerville covers 11,456 acres and offers 85 miles of shoreline. We will explore a number of sites around the lake birding numerous habitats including post oak savanna, parkland and ponds, in addition to the main lake and its shoreline. Expect abundant American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant and a wide variety of duck species. Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gull are possible and Herring Gull has also been irregularly reported at the lake. Forster's Tern are possible and occasional Caspian Terns have been recorded at this time of year. Other birds occasionally observed during the winter months include American Bittern, Red-breasted Merganser and Common Loon. This trip is rated medium with some birding from vehicles and some birding from foot on uneven terrain.</p>	Burleson, Washington, Lee	medium	7:15 AM - 3:00 PM	X	X	X

6	<p>TPMA/Gibbons Creek Reservoir Located in Grimes County, the Gibbon’s Creek reservoir and adjacent Carlos Lake, and TPA (Texas Municipal Power Agency) site offer excellent winter birding. Normally off limits to the public, the TPA site is the site of a locally popular Christmas Count which routinely observes over 100 species. It provides excellent opportunities to view sparrows including LeConte’s and Harris’s, as well as hundreds of waterfowl including locally difficult species such as Canvasback, Northern Pintail and Redhead. This trip also provides a great opportunity to find locally more difficult winter species including American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, and potentially Anhinga which have been known to over-winter in the site’s warm water pond. Gulls such as Ring-billed and Bonaparte’s Gulls have also been observed at the reservoir. The TPA site has historically produced a number of spectacular local rarities including Long-tailed Duck, Rough-legged Hawk and Ringed Kingfisher. This trip is rated medium with some birding from vehicles and some birding from foot on uneven terrain.</p>	Grimes	medium	7:00 AM - 3:00 PM	X		X
7	<p>Local Parks Brazos County offers excellent, easily accessible birding in local parks, offering a wide range of birding habitats from post oak savannah and woodland to lakesides. This trip will showcase a good selection of our locally wintering species. Expect multiple woodpecker, sparrow and waterfowl species. We will also attempt to locate some of our locally more difficult species including Pine Siskin, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and some of our trickier wren species including Winter, Sedge and Marsh. Our leaders will also be on the lookout for rare winter visitors including Purple Finch and Lesser Goldfinch. This trip is rated easy with birding on foot on well-maintained trails.</p>	Brazos	easy	7:30 AM - 2:00 PM	X		X
8	<p>Burleson County Birding Burleson County covers 677 square miles including 18 square miles of water. On this trip we will visit a number of habitats including turf farms, post oak savanna, lakesides, woodland, and riparian habitat. We will attempt to get as many species as possible, but will bird at a slower, more relaxed pace than the Century Club trips. Expected species include multiple sparrow and waterfowl species, Horned Lark, and multiple raptor species. Possibilities also include Lapland and McCown’s Longspur, locally rare waterfowl, and locally more difficult raptors such as White-tailed Hawk and White-tailed Kite. This trip is rated medium with some birding from vehicles and some birding from foot on uneven terrain.</p>	Burleson	medium	7:00 AM - 3:00 PM	X	X	
9	<p>Sam Houston National Forest Covering 254 square miles, Sam Houston National Forest offers excellent birding opportunities including the State’s highest concentration of the endangered Red-cockaded woodpeckers. Join us as we search for this species as well as for other piney woods specialists such as Brown-headed nuthatch. This trip is rated medium with birding on foot on uneven terrain.</p>	Montgomery, Walker	medium	6:00 AM - 3:00 PM	X	X	
10	<p>Madison County Birding Join our local Madison County birding guru as he takes you to some of his favorite winter birding sites. Birding at a slower, more relaxed pace than the Century Club trip, participants are still expected to rack up an excellent winter county list as you explore a range of local parks and lakes. This trip is rated as being of easy difficulty and will involve driving to sites, and short walks from the car on easy wellmaintained paths.</p>	Madison	easy	6:30 AM - 3:00 PM		X	
11	<p>Leader’s Choice Allow our local leaders to take you on a birding trip of their choosing focusing on recent exciting finds and known locally productive areas.</p>	TBD	TBD	7:00 AM - 3:00 PM		X	X
12	<p>Brazos County Birding Covering 591 square miles, Brazos County features a wide range of habitat including rangeland, post-oak savanna, woodland, lakes and rivers. Currently 329 species are listed for the county on eBird. On this trip we will cover a wide range of productive local habitats and try to showcase everything winter birding in the county has to offer. We will attempt to rack up a great list of local wintering birds including waterfowl, sparrows and woodland species. We will also try for local specialties such as Harris’s Sparrow, as well as more difficult birds such as Sprague’s Pipit and longspurs. This trip is rated medium with some birding from vehicles and some birding from foot on uneven terrain.</p>	Brazos	medium	6:45 AM - 3:00 PM		X	X
13	<p>Rangelands Ecology Site Just a stone’s throw from Texas A&M University, the Rangelands Ecology site is a limited access site and surprisingly offers some of Brazos County’s wilder birding. The site offers unique off-trail hiking and birding through undulating native grassland. Definitely one of the best sparrow habitats in the county and probably the best local site for locally difficult LeConte’s Sparrow as well large numbers of Sedge Wren. The site also offers one of the best local opportunities to view American Woodcock. This trip is rated hard with almost all of the birding being on foot, with much of it on uneven terrain.</p>	Brazos	hard	6:00 AM - 2:30 PM		X	

14	<p>Local Lakes Brazos County has 5.8 square miles of water and offers a great diversity of over-wintering water birds. As well as attempting to rack up a list of all of our expected species, this trip will attempt to find locally more difficult species such as American White Pelican, Lesser Scaup, Hooded Merganser, Common Goldeneye, Cinnamon Teal, and Eared and Horned Grebes. The lake shores and surrounding habitat should also yield Least Sandpiper, American Pipit, Swamp Sparrow and potentially Marsh and Sedge Wren. Historical accidentals at Brazos lakes include Tundra Swan at Lake Bryan, and Black-legged Kittiwake at Country Club Lake. You never know what might turn up! This trip is rated as being of easy difficulty and will involve driving to sites, and short walks from the car on easy well-maintained paths.</p>	Brazos	easy	7:30 AM - 2:00 PM			X	
15	<p>Salter Research Farm Located in Robertson County, adjacent to the Brazos river, this under-birded former cotton plantation offers excellent opportunities for wintering sparrows, pipits and raptors as we bird farmland and riparian habitat. This trip is rated medium with some birding from vehicles and some birding from foot on uneven terrain.</p>	Robertson	medium	6:45 AM - 3:00 PM			X	
16	<p>Local Parks/ Texas A&M Research Collections This trip features a half day of birding local parks followed by a visit to the Texas A&M Biodiversity Research and Teaching Collections (formerly the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection). This important natural history collection is maintained by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences and houses an incredible array of bird specimens, as well as collections of other organisms including mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish. This trip is rated as being of easy difficulty and will involve driving to sites, and short walks from the car on easy well-maintained paths.</p>	Brazos	easy	7:30 AM - 2:30 PM			X	
17	<p>Navasota River Bottoms The Navasota River bottoms represent some of our wildest local habitat. This trip will focus on birding this riparian habitat visiting multiple sites along the river, as well as stopping at ponds and farmland along the way. Target species will include locally rare White-breasted Nuthatch and Brewer's Blackbird, as well as locally difficult Hairy and Red-headed Woodpecker. A wide variety of more common species are also expected including a good range of local duck and sparrow species. This trip is rated easy-medium with most birding being from vehicles and most but not all birding being on well-maintained even terrain.</p>	Brazos, Grimes	easy	7:15 AM - 3:00 PM			X	
18	<p>Sparrow ID Workshop This workshop, suitable for all levels, will teach you the skills to confidently identify the multiple sparrow species found within our local area. Covering a range of habitats, the group will attempt to identify as many as possible of the expected local species, including local specialty species such as Harris's Sparrow and more difficult species such as LeConte's Sparrow. This trip is rated as being of medium difficulty and will possibly involve walking over uneven terrain through long grass.</p>	Brazos	medium	7:30 AM - 2:30 PM				X
19	<p>Turf Farms and Lakes of Brazos County This trip will focus on some of Brazos County's potentially most exciting birding, looking for locally difficult species such as Lapland and McCown's Longspur, and Sprague's Pipit, as well as visiting local lakes and observing local wintering waterfowl highlights. This trip is rated as being of easy difficulty and will involve driving to sites, and short walks from the car on easy well-maintained paths.</p>	Brazos	easy	7:15 AM - 3:00 PM				X
20	<p>Lick Creek Park and Surrounding Area Lick Creek Park is one of the most popular birding sites in Brazos County. The park covers 515 acres and features over five miles of trails. This trip will feature easy birding through multiple habitats including post oak savanna, woodland, and bottomland. Expect wintering specialties such as Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush and multiple sparrow species. We will also try for more challenging wintering birds including American Woodcock, Pine Siskin, Blue-headed Vireo, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Winter Wren, Fox Sparrow and potentially Purple Finch. This trip is rated as being of easy-medium difficulty. All birding will be on well-maintained paths but participants should be capable of walking around 3-4 miles in order to provide good coverage of the park.</p>	Brazos	easy	6:15 AM - 2:00 PM				X
21	<p>Leon County Century Club Century Club trips are fast paced outings trying to maximize the number of species within the county. Not much time for lingering looks so prepare to move briskly from spot to spot. Extensive driving to/from sites and roadside birding. The tour will feature as wide a variety of habitats as available with an emphasis on maximizing the day's species list. It is safe to say that this is an under-birded county. The top eBirder for the county has 138 species, and only 12 birders have 100 or more species. eBird has four hotspots listed. This field trip will definitely add to the understanding of birds in the area and hopefully add to the list of good birding locations. Ducks, shorebirds, raptors, woodpeckers, sparrows, and blackbirds are some of the family groups likely to be seen.</p>	Leon	easy	6:00 AM - 5:00 PM	X			

22	<p>Milam County Century Club Century Club trips are fast paced outings trying to maximize the number of species within the county. Not much time for lingering looks so prepare to move briskly from spot to spot. Extensive driving to/from sites and roadside birding. The tour will feature as wide a variety of habitats as available with an emphasis on maximizing the day's species list. This is a great area for winter birding with a good assortment of ducks, waders, raptors, woodpeckers, sparrows, and blackbirds.</p>	Milam	easy	6:00 AM - 5:00 PM	X		
23	<p>Austin County Century Club Century Club trips are fast paced outings trying to maximize the number of species within the county. Not much time for lingering looks so prepare to move briskly from spot to spot. Extensive driving to/from sites and roadside birding. The tour will feature as wide a variety of habitats as available with an emphasis on maximizing the day's species list. This is a great area for winter birding with a good assortment of ducks, waders, raptors, woodpeckers, sparrows, and blackbirds.</p>	Austin	easy	6:00 AM - 5:00 PM		X	
24	<p>Waller County Century Club Century Club trips are fast paced outings trying to maximize the number of species within the county. Not much time for lingering looks so prepare to move briskly from spot to spot. Extensive driving to/from sites and roadside birding. The tour will feature as wide a variety of habitats as available with an emphasis on maximizing the day's species list. This is a great area for winter birding with a good assortment of ducks, rails, shorebirds, waders, raptors, woodpeckers, sparrows, and many others.</p>	Waller	easy	6:00 AM - 5:00 PM		X	

Regional Reports

Region 1—Panhandle

Region 2—North Central Texas

—Gailon Brehm

Region 3—East Texas Timberlands (Pineywoods)

T.O.S Board Retreat was held in Austin the weekend of Oct. 4. The board is working hard to make T.O.S. great. Help by supporting T.O.S.

Migration is in full swing in east Texas, get out and bird.

The winter meeting will be held in College Station the weekend of Jan. 17, 2020

Region 4—Trans-Pecos

—Linda Blesner

Region 5—Edwards Plateau Report

As many of you know the Yellow Grosbeak, “Pedro” departed Concan in early April. The bird was first observed and photographed at Steve and Pam Garner’s residence in January and confirmed by Bob Shackelford. Following the initial sighting, Steve, Pam and Bob began organizing visits for birders. Over the course of almost 3 months, Bob organized over 50 visits to the Garner’s house, where Steve and Pam graciously welcomed birders from around the US and Canada. Depending on the day, the Garners hosted 8-16 people in their home at times for up to 6 hours at a time. Their graciousness and hospitality was superb and Bob’s patience and willingness to take reservations and take birders to the Garner’s home each time was amazing. It is a wonderful example of how to organize birders and respect the owners. Many, many people got life looks and photographs of this visitor. Birders were appreciative and respectful and many brought bird seed to the house. I was able to experience their graciousness twice, and be with two friends while they got

great views of this bird. Steve, Pam and Bob’s graciousness are a shining example within the birding community.

We added a few new members to the region since June. Please welcome Janis Bryant, Thomas and Caron Hunt in Bexar County, Hannes Leonard, AJ Yenamandra and Stephanie Bowers in Travis County and the Dvorak family in Uvalde. We are pleased to have you join us!

The region in general is still reporting migrants and seeing various sparrow species, Waterfowl and other wintering birds arriving. A few of the interesting birds seen over the last few months have been Rufous and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds in Blanco County, Red-necked Phalarope and American Golden Plover in Travis County, and a few Brown Thrashers in Bexar County.

San Antonio Audubon Society organized a field trip out to Devil’s Sinkhole SNA (restricted access) in Edwards County in early October, a first visit for most folks. It was quite windy, but the group tallied 24 species. This is a fascinating property. It is most notable for its large colony of Mexican free-tailed bats that utilize the cave from late spring through early fall. The opening is a shaft approximately 50 feet wide and drops 100 feet into the cavern, before it balloons out to 320 feet wide and a depth of over 350 feet. Over 3 million bats inhabit this cave. This 1,860 acre property is fascinating and has a rich cultural history as well. There are trails and bird blinds and a viewing platform over the cave. Visitors can sign up for tours and guided walks. Highly recommended.

—Christine Turnbull

Region 6—Central Prairie

Seasons are changing in Region 6. Our breeding species have for the most part left the area after nesting and fledging. Painted Bunting, Summer Tanager, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and others will be gone (with rare exception) until spring. Southbound migrants such as warblers, orioles, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds wowed us

Regional Reports (continued)

with their colors on their way to their wintering grounds. And it's great to see our wintering friends showing up—ducks, coots, sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, House Wren, Hermit Thrush, etc.

As you no doubt have read elsewhere in this newsletter, big things are going on in the eastern part of Region 6. Our annual winter membership meeting will be held in College Station. The Rio Brazos Audubon Society will be our host organization, and they are deep into preparations for the event, to be held January 16-19, 2020. Check out other sections of this newsletter for details. See you there.

— Daniel Hodges

Region 7—Rio Grande Brushlands

1. The Laredo Birding Festival is an ideal way to start a new birding year February 5-8th, 2020. Morelet's Seedeaters, wild Muscovy Ducks and Red-billed Pigeons are some of the festival's many prized target birds. The 182 species finished tally count is the festival high count to date. Field trip registration is now open, <http://www.laredobirdingfestival.org/>

Keynote Speaker: James Currie
"Birding the Globe--A Video Journey"
Saturday, February 8th -- 7:00 pm

A life-long wildlife enthusiast and native of South Africa, James Currie is fast becoming one of the most recognizable faces in birding and wildlife in North America. James hosts and produces the popular birding TV show, Nikon's Birding Adventures, now in its 9th season and currently airing on Discovery Channel's Destination America. He also hosted the popular action-birding show "Aerial Assassins" on National Geographic WILD, aired worldwide in 2012 and appeared as himself in the reality birding show, "Twitchers" that aired on the National Geographic Channel in 2014.

2. Monte Mucho Audubon Society in Laredo continues with the Wild Muscovy nesting box project. Boy Scout Eagle candidate Jason Alavez is currently mid-way with his contribution and installation of 5 nesting boxes. Existing boxes have been installed at various private ranches in Zapata County and continue with no occupancy.

—Raul Delgado

Region 8—Coastal Prairie



Northern Wheatear

Rarities

Many birders flocked (pun intended!) through our region this September to see a rare bird at Saxet Lakes in Victoria County. The Northern Wheatear, only the third record for the state, was an excellent find by T. Jay Adams. It was seen in an easily accessible location for four days and provided excellent views, often flying within a few yards of the many birders who came to see it. This species is widespread in Europe and Asia, but the North American range only covers Alaska and northwestern Canada as well as Greenland and northeastern Canada. Vagrants show up in New England almost annually, but Texas is a long way from home.

Another very rare bird, a White-crowned Pigeon, was seen in Galveston on September 4. This one-day wonder was found by Kyle O'Haver and seen briefly by a few other lucky birders. This species is normally found in the Caribbean, Florida Keys, and eastern coast of the Yucatan. The bird appeared the same day Hurricane Dorian was approaching Florida, which may have been a factor in its appearance on the Upper Texas Coast.

Volunteering

One great way to give back to the birds and the birding community is to participate in volunteer work parties. Houston Audubon has High Island work parties the second Saturday of every month from now through March. These volunteers keep Boy Scout Woods, Smith Oaks, and TOS's Hooks Woods in top shape so you can enjoy the many migrants that pass through these sanctuaries during migration. Please consider joining them.

Kendra Kocab

TOS Austin Weekender August 9-11, 2019

Photos and captions provided by Shelia Hargis

On one of the hottest weekends of the year, Shelia Hargis and Cheryl McGrath led a group of hardy birders around Austin. Combining morning trips and spectacular evening roosting displays, everyone managed to avoid heat stroke and even build some decent species numbers.



Intrepid Chimney Swift surveyors at Becker Elementary School.

On Friday evening, we met at the hotel and the outside temp was still over 100 degrees. After dinner together, we gathered at the martin roost in Round Rock. Armed with chairs and umbrellas we were joined by other birders and members of the public as the martins slowly built in number. We were able to experience the unique sight, sound, and even odor of that volume of birds gathering so tightly together—an estimated 150,000+ Purple Martins gathered around us. White-winged Doves, Great-tailed Grackles, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and European Starlings joined in smaller numbers. One evasive Common Nighthawk was heard several times. We were also treated to a special sight of the moons of Jupiter next to our own.



A few of the Chimney Swifts swirling around the old incinerator chimney preparing to try to stump the surveyors.

Saturday morning, the group explored the Commons Ford Ranch Metro Park. The late summer blooms, fruit, and insects drew a few hummingbirds, orioles, and four Northern Parula.

The walk along the lake granted us a very cooperative juvenile Eastern Phoebe who allowed the large group of us

unlimited close-range photo opportunities—in full sunlight of course. We scurried along from shade to shade until a stop at the dock for 2 Wood Ducks as well as kingfishers and herons. As we trekked back to the car, a Red-eyed Vireo hid from all but a couple of birders, but all got good looks at four species of woodpeckers. We totaled 40 species—a great showing of birds for this time of year. At this stop, Shelia introduced us to the Chimney Swift tower on site—a great segue to the talk she gave at the hotel after lunch.



Commons Ford and our up close photo op with an obliging Eastern Phoebe.

As temps soared to 102 degrees, we wisely hid out in air conditioning. Shelia gave a presentation about Chimney Swifts and the efforts being made to survey and protect this species. We learned about Swift Night Out events, which occur all over the country, and the Chimney Swift Conservation Association's efforts including the Chimney Swift towers. Shelia also shared a great deal of information on the Purple Martin and some of her favorite migration map animations from eBird which are very cool to watch! After dinner, the group gathered at the Becker Elementary School chimney and we began the exciting and challenging task of counting swifts as they entered their namesake roost. Individual birds would pass and fake us out multiple times until suddenly a group of sometimes ten or more would drop into the opening all at once. The averaged count of 510 birds



And from the other side...



The object of our affection, possibly the cutest little Phoebe ever!

was submitted for the Swift Night Out survey. Cheryl proved to us all that a pen and paper is just as effective as a clicker counter or smartphone app for recording birds. Luddites rejoice!

Sunday morning, we decided as a group to try Hornsby Bend despite some construction blocking many of the roads.



Hot August Birding merit badge candidates with Commons Ford restored prairie as backdrop.

It was a good decision, though the heat was even more oppressive than Saturday. A whopping 8 species of sandpiper kept us scanning the mudflats and ignoring the sweat and sunscreen stinging our eyes. This included really great looks at three Buff-breasted Sandpiper. The path along the river to the bird blind offered shade and netted some distant but clear looks at the Monk Parakeets and their nests for a total of 40 species again for the day! Parched and red-faced, the group parted ways under 104 degree temperatures, happy and satisfied we had truly earned our Hot August Birding merit badges and the 71 unique species for the weekend. For me personally that is double the number of species I have gotten for the whole month of August for the last four years! Many thanks to the wonderful planning effort by Shelia and Cheryl which made the trip a success.

—Berri Moffett

DONATIONS

Aug. 2 to Oct. 24 , 2019

Sanctuary Fund

Johnnie & Sharon Kay

TäV Garvin

Thomas Hunt

David Matson

General Fund

Sue Roberts

Larry & Jane Wilson

Wolfgang Oesterreich

Michael Wolfson

Pam & Mike Goolsby

Gloria Rognlie



The Bird that Didn't Get Away

Photos by Susan Foster

December, 2012, McKinney Falls, Austin, Texas. Judy Kestner and I search for the Fork-tailed Flycatcher one day too late. November 9, 2013, LRGV, Judy and I try again. Skunked, again, but we did get to see the Amazon Kingfisher found that day near the intersection of Hwys. 77 and 100. Several other Fork-taileds have been found. We considered chasing these, but none of those opportunities ever worked out for us.

UNTIL October 2, 2019. I had just gotten out of work and decided to read Texbirds on Facebook. I saw that Skip Cantrell had found a Fork-tailed on a farm-to-market road near Portland, Texas, one hour before I read the message.



I jumped in the car, heart racing the entire way. Portland is only 30 minutes from my house! I tried to call Judy Kestner and also Ben Horstman while I was driving, but the policeman following me made me nervous, so I decided to keep both hands on the wheel.

I found the road Skip described. The farmhouse, the dogs, the Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, the Eastern Kingbirds.

I cruised up and down the road several times and ran into another car of searching birders, Mary King and Kristi Thulin, from Corpus Christi. Good. More eyes looking. The people from the farmhouse waved me over to explain why I was driving up and down the road. I explained and showed them photos of the bird on my phone.

All of a sudden I received a text message from Tom Langschied. He was with two other birders from the King Ranch, Barbara Rapstein and Whitney Lanfranco. Tom told me that the Fork-tailed was literally the first bird they saw on the road, but it had flown off. The rest of us saw it fly off, but did not get a good look. This was a life bird! I needed a good look. Mary and Kristi decided to search further down the road. They texted me that they had it. It ended up back near the farmhouse where Skip originally found it. The six of us had great looks, and we were all able to get photos. I understand that Andrew Orgill also saw the bird after we left, but despite much effort, no other sightings were had.

— Susan Foster



We did it!

Urged to action by a letter-and email-writing campaign by members of the Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi, and long years of interaction with the city police department, the Corpus Christi City Council on Sept. 24 passed an ordinance designating Blucher Park be used only as a bird sanctuary. Prohibited activities include overnight camping, smoking and vaping, and possession of materials that are used to build shelters, among others.

Blucher Park was deeded to the city by the Blucher family specifically as a bird sanctuary, with the provision that should it fall into disrepair, or be used for other purposes, the family would re-appropriate the tract. It has become a world-renowned birding site, a favorite field trip destination for many birding events such as the Birdiest Festival, and a must-visit locale for birders from far and wide.

For many years, AOC volunteers have assisted the city in maintaining this mid-city migrant trap, keeping it accessible for birds and birders, but in recent years their duties have morphed from weeding, planting and trimming overgrown branches to picking up litter, human waste and soggy clothes and blankets.

We have counted on the Police Department to ensure safety in the area, particularly during our club-sponsored April bird walks, but the growing problems prompted us to go a step further. AOC President Karen Smith worked with her contact at the police department, Assistant Police Chief Mark Schauer (who coincidentally has a BS in biology), and he worked with the Parks Dept. to present a proposal to the city council that the park be officially designated for use only as a bird sanctuary, which would give the police more tools to use in keeping the park not only safe, but also compliant with the deed restrictions.

AOC members flooded their city council representatives and the mayor with emails demanding action, several members made impassioned pleas to the council, and finally it happened.

Though some citizens opposed the action, citing inconvenience to the 20 or so homeless people who regularly camp there at night, the city upheld the stipulations of the bequest and unanimously voted to accept and enforce the ordinance. The city has recently appointed a three-person commission to study the homeless issue here, and we hope they are able to mitigate the problem and satisfy the objections.

—Judy Kestner

Peregrine Fund biologists band the 500th Aplomado Falcon in southern Texas.



Paul Juergens, Chris Parish, and Brian Mutch with the 500th Aplomado Falcon nestling banded in South Texas.

In June, a team of The Peregrine Fund’s biologists marked a great conservation success when they banded a young Aplomado Falcon nestling. This nestling was the 500th to be banded in southern Texas since 1995. Prior to 1995, no wild Aplomado Falcons had hatched in the United States since at least the 1950s. The species had been extirpated (extinct from part of its original range) from the U.S. due to habitat loss. In the 1980s and 1990s, The Peregrine Fund began reintroducing the Aplomado Falcon to South Texas by releasing juvenile falcons bred at the conservation organization’s headquarters

in Boise, Idaho. Chris Parish, Director of Global Conservation for the Fund states, “The banding of this 500th nestling demonstrates that persistence and commitment lead to progress in achieving goals, not just our goals, but the shared goals of those who, in the words of The Peregrine Fund’s late founder Tom Cade, “strive to keep the earth fit for life in all its many splendored forms.” Peregrine Fund biologist Brian Mutch adds, “One of the biggest challenges in all conservation is keeping the eye on the prize and keeping that vision clear for all. These efforts take time, and even the smallest steps can seem insurmountable. That’s why we celebrate days like these.” When asked about the future of Aplomado Falcons, Peregrine Fund biologist Paul Juergens responded, “Habitat is key. For this species to succeed, we have to manage the landscapes in a way that gives them the best shot at success in a time of rapid and sometimes devastating change. To do so we use what we learn, the resulting science produced by studying the species, and share that with landowners and land managers who then join us to make the project a success. Tagging this 500th nestling suggests it can work.” The Aplomado Falcon project is a cooperation of many partners and supporters including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Private Stewardship Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Bays and Estuaries Program, U.S. National Park Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge, and Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site.

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The Lost Bird Project at The Bryan Museum

The Bryan Museum, located in Galveston, is pleased to partner with the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council and Houston Audubon to present a special traveling exhibition of five large scale bronzes by artist, Todd McGrain. Each sculpture memorializes a bird driven to extinction in North America in the 20th century, reminding us of what has gone missing.



Ten years in the making, The Lost Bird Project has been the subject of a feature-length documentary film that premiered in New York City in December 2012.

Poignantly, a cast of each sculpture is permanently installed near the last sighting of the bird. Five site-specific sculptures have been placed including the Great Auk in Newfoundland, the Passenger Pigeon in Ohio, the Labrador Duck in New York, the Carolina Parakeet in Florida, and the Heath Hen in Martha’s Vineyard.

The sixth sculpture, commemorating the Eskimo Curlew will be unveiled on Galveston Island, on March 28, 2020 to coincide with the opening of this exhibit. McGrain’s five other Lost Bird bronzes will be placed on the grounds of The Bryan Museum. The exhibit and unveiling will also celebrate the start of Featherfest 2020, one of the largest birding festivals on the Gulf Coast. The exhibit will run through mid-September and will be complimented by a wide range of public programs and talks jointly presented by The Bryan Museum and Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council.

The Lost Bird Project has been ten years in the making and has been the subject of a feature length documentary. McGrain’s work has been exhibited at museums across the country including the Smithsonian and the National Museum of Wildlife in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The exhibition celebrates the beauty of nature and the delicate balance between man and the environment.

The member opening will feature a panel discussion with the artist, Todd McGrain. To join and support the museum and The Lost Bird Project exhibit, visit <https://thebryanamuseum.org/join-and-give-join/>.

As works of site-specific environmental art, the sculptures featured in The Lost Bird Project were placed in the locations where the birds were last seen in the wild and are now permanent public sculpture installations at a wide range of sites, from Newfoundland to Florida, Ohio to Martha's Vineyard.



Membership, Publications and Board Updates

It's time to Level Up! TOS dues have held steady for a number of years, but the Board met recently and decided that it is necessary to raise dues somewhat in order to insure the continued success of our mission, including TOS programs for members, for avian research and for bird conservation. Lifetime dues will be unaffected, but the annual dues for a single member will increase to \$35 per year. Family membership will increase to \$50 per year. For those who want to make an ongoing contribution to the success of TOS's mission, the category of Sustaining Member will be assigned to anyone who commits to a monthly donation to TOS. The monthly amount for Sustaining Member can be as little as \$5 per month or as much as your generosity allows. Thank you in advance for your continued support of TOS.

Starting with this year's edition, the TOS Bulletin (our scientific publication) will be provided as a password protected pdf document on our website. **No hard copies will be produced.** This change is informed by several things. One, online publications are more economical and save natural resources. Printing and mailing hard copies of the *Bulletin* costs TOS nearly \$6,000 per year. Second, the publication appeals to some of our members, not so much to others. We don't want to waste money mailing hard copies to members who aren't interested in this scientific publication. Third, younger birders, students and researchers read nearly everything online. We hope to appeal to more young people by offering the *Bulletin* in this format. Having this amazing publication available online allows our members who are interested in reading it to access it, just like in the past, and allows us to use the money saved for other TOS projects. We believe these are all good reasons to make this change. *Once the next edition is available, members will receive an email with the password for opening the document.*

Due to demands of his "new" job (leading bird and photography trips), Lee Hoy realized that he could not fulfill his duties on the TOS Board as Region 4 Director. He resigned this past summer. Thank you Lee for your contributions to TOS and good luck with your new adventure!

Replacing Lee is D.D. Currie. D.D. served on the Board in the past, and we are excited to have her return, this time as Region 4 Director. You can see her bio in this newsletter. If you live in Region 4, please reach out to D.D. to thank her for stepping up to be your regional director. We should probably give D.D. an award for representing the most regions of Texas. She has served as the Region 1 Director, the Region 3 Director and now the Region 4 Director!

TOS's New Region 4 Director



My name is D. D. Currie and I live in Fort Davis. My husband (Dell Little, also a birder) and I moved to Fort Davis in January of 2019. Prior to Fort Davis, we lived in New Braunfels, and the Dallas/Fort Worth area. I previously served on the TOS board as the Region 1 and Region 3 Director (we also had a house near Athens).

I started birding in 1981 while attending college at the University of Texas, Arlington, and have been hooked ever since. Dell and I do a lot of county birding (we're at 116 counties with over 100 species) and like working on our Texas list. We're also strategizing how to get us to the magic 700 mark on our life lists in the near future. We have led many field trips for TOS as well as other organizations, and have held a number of Big Sits at several different locations.

Over the last couple of years, I have become interested in insects, but they are MUCH harder to identify than birds!

I have retired three times, but find myself still working part time as an environment, safety and health consultant. It's hard to stop doing something you enjoy, although the travel can be a pain at times.

I look forward to serving on the TOS board again and hope to see you out in the Trans Pecos.

The New & Improved TBRC Rare Bird Submission Form

The Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC) is pleased to announce a new & improved Rare Bird Submission form on the TBRC website. Instead of downloading a document, filling it out and then e-mailing it back to us (which you can still do), there are now some online forms where you can enter all your details online and just submit the material right then & there. Inclusion of photos and audio as attachments is highly desired and highly encouraged. The online form(s) can be found on our website at:

<https://www.texasbirdrecordscommittee.org/home/forms>

If you see or have recently seen a review species, even if one that has been seen by many other folks, we would love to have a report/submission from you.

In addition, the TBRC frequently hears from birders that they don't understand the need to submit any details to the committee if/when they have entered the sighting in eBird. The TBRC does use eBird data at times but we would very much like explicit submissions from folks, even when they use eBird. We have a new page on our website that explains why:

<https://www.texasbirdrecordscommittee.org/home/ebird-and-the-tbrc>

For all you TOS eBirders out there that see or have seen Review Species in Texas, we would still very much like a report from you. With our new online submission form, we hope we have made that an easier task!

—Eric Carpenter

Lyme Disease in Texas

You are accustomed to protecting yourself from overexposure to the harmful rays of the sun. You are accustomed to applying insect repellent to ward off the bites of mosquitoes. You are accustomed to wearing proper footwear for the habitat in which you are birding. But do you think about taking steps to prevent Lyme Disease, a bacterial infection that is transmitted by the bite of ticks?

Contrary to what you may have heard, the tick that carries the causative bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, is endemic to Texas. The incidence of the disease is re-emerging. Symptoms include rash, fever, chills, fatigue, headache, neck stiffness, swollen lymph nodes, joint pain and swelling, and more.

The best treatment is prophylaxis. Preventative measures include:

- Wear light colored clothing so that crawling ticks can be seen more easily.
- Tuck pant legs into boots or socks.
- Use insect repellent with DEET or Permethrin.
- Inspect yourself frequently, removing any attached ticks promptly.
- Avoid areas with high grass; stay on trails.
- Don't sit on stone walls.
- Wear shoes/boots and socks, not sandals.

Stay informed. Stay healthy.

To learn more, visit <https://citybugs.tamu.edu/2016/01/27/lyme-disease-ticks-in-texas/> where you will find a photo of the blacklegged tick that carries the bacterium as well as a map showing where the ticks are established.

—Daniel Hodges

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