

President's Message



Christine Turnbull TOS President.

Hello everyone. I hope you are well and enjoying the start of this December. I wanted to take a few minutes to thank you for your support during this last year which enables us to carry out our mission on so many levels. Because of you we continue to fund scholarships that support youth birding (one of the amazing teachers that promotes and guides youth birding will be speaking at our January Meeting), fund

research projects and offer meetings (virtually recently) and classes and maintain our important sanctuaries. We have amazing volunteers and partners who oversee Sabine Woods, Hook Woods and Magic Ridge. If any of you have visited those sites during migration, you know how important they are for migrants. The mowed trails, the drips, the entrance kiosks are all maintained by excellent crews. We have had a few interesting happenings at our Magic Ridge Sanctuary and we will update you in our next newsletter.

In the coming year, the board plans to work on setting up a framework to define our priorities, vision and plans for the future. As with all things, we welcome your input, your ideas and your assistance. Our Meetings Committee can always use assistance in planning (the spring meeting will be in Lake Jackson) our Sanctuary Committees can always use assistance with their work days or serving to plan and oversee them. We are a volunteer run organization and can always use your assistance.

And on the birding side of things

A Social Flycatcher was discovered during the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival in November at the UT Brownsville Campus caused quite the chase. Though common south of our border, CHECK FACTS: Apparently the 4th record of this bird in the US – first recorded in Texas 15 February 1895 and 1990 in Anzalduas and first photographed in 2005. A pretty amazing find. The bird which superficially resembles our Great Kiskadee has been observed by many and has been heard vocalizing along the resacas at UT Brownsville.

—Christine Turnbull



The female Ruddy Ground-Dove is continuing in El Paso. I am pretty sure this is both the longest-staying and latest record in El Paso. The male that was always seen with her has gone AWOL and hasn't been seen in about 3 weeks. *TEXBIRDS Photo John Groves*

Texas Birds records Committee Update

Below is a summary of the records that the Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC) has reviewed and come to a decision on since June 24th, 2021. (submitted 6 October) Accepted (47):

- 2020-123 - Ruddy Ground Dove (2) 29 Nov 2020 - 10 May 2021, west El Paso, El Paso County
- 2021-58 - Mexican Violetear (1) 22-24 May 2021, southeast of Calaveras Lake, Bexar County
- 2021-80 - Mexican Violetear (1) 17-18 Jun 2021, northeast of Leakey, Real County
- 2021-70 - Costa's Hummingbird (1) 27-28 Mar 2021, west El Paso, El Paso County
- 2020-140 - Purple Sandpiper (1) 14 Dec 2020, Surfside Jetty, Brazoria County
- 2021-40 - Great Black-backed Gull (1) 23 Mar - 5 Apr 2021, San Luis Pass, Galveston County
- 2021-54 - Elegant Tern (1) 15 Apr 2021, Bolivar Ferry landing, Galveston County
- 2021-55 - Yellow-billed Loon (1) 8-18 May 2021, Ascarate Lake, El Paso, El Paso County
- 2021-50 - Short-tailed Hawk (1) 24 Apr 2021, Estero Llano Grande S.P., Hidalgo County
- 2020-127 - Elegant Trogon (1) 23 Nov 2020 - 5 May 2021, Estero Llano Grande S.P., Hidalgo County
- 2020-133 - Rose-throated Becard (1) 28 Nov 2020 - 13 Feb 2021, Salineno, Starr County
- 2021-71 - Rose-throated Becard (1) 26 Jan - 9 Mar 2021, Quinta Mazatlan S.P., Hidalgo County

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2021-34 - Rose-throated Becard (1) 24-26 Mar 2021, Santa Ana N.W.R., Hidalgo County

2021-60 - Rose-throated Becard (1) 22 May 2021, Mission, Hidalgo County

2020-146 - Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*lawrenceii*) (1) 12 Nov 2020 - 9 Feb 2021, Estero Llano Grande S.P., Hidalgo County

2020-157 - Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*lawrenceii*) (1) 16 Nov 2020 - 7 Feb 2021, National Butterfly Center near Mission, Hidalgo County

2020-147 - Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*lawrenceii*) (1) 27 Nov 2020 - 16 Mar 2021, Quinta Mazatlan S.P., Hidalgo County

2020-120 - Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*lawrenceii*) (1+) 29 Nov 2020 - 17 Feb 2021, Bentsen-Rio Grande S.P., Hidalgo County

2020-131 - Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*lawrenceii*) (1) 3 Dec 2020 - 9 Mar 2021, Santa Ana N.W.R., Hidalgo County

2020-148 - Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*lawrenceii*) (1) 10 Dec 2020 - 15 Jan 2021, McAllen Nature Center, Hidalgo County

2020-149 - Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*lawrenceii*) (1) 16 Dec 2020 - 16 Mar 2021, Resaca de la Palma S.P., Cameron County

2021-76 - Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*lawrenceii*) (1) 4 Jan 2021, San Juan Wetlands, Hidalgo County

2021-56 - Gray Kingbird (1) 20-23 May 2021, South Padre Island, Cameron County

2020-114 - Pacific-slope Flycatcher (1-2) 16 Oct 2020 - 9 Jan 2021, Southside Lions Park, San Antonio, Bexar County

2020-156 - Pacific-slope Flycatcher (1) 28 Nov 2020 - 13 Feb 2021, Quinta Mazatlan S.P., Hidalgo County

2020-139 - Pacific-slope Flycatcher (1) 3 Dec 2020 - 17 Jan 2021, Santa Ana N.W.R., Hidalgo County

2021-72 - Pacific-slope Flycatcher (1) 8-21 Dec 2020, west Houston, Harris County

2020-135 - Pacific-slope Flycatcher (1) 19 Dec 2020 - 4 Jan 2021, Brazos Bend S.P., Fort Bend County

2021-73 - Pacific-slope Flycatcher (2-3) 2 Jan - 13 Feb 2021, near Eagles Nest Lake, Brazoria County

2021-51 - Black-whiskered Vireo (1) 5-7 May 2021, South Padre Island, Cameron County

2021-66 - Black-whiskered Vireo (1) 5 May 2021, near Jamaica Beach, Galveston County

2021-38 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 1-8 Apr 2021, White River Lake, Crosby County

2021-69 - Yellow-eyed Junco (1) 30 Mar 2021, Boot Canyon, Big Bend N.P., Brewster County

2021-63 - Rufous-capped Warbler (2) 29 May 2021, southeast of San Ygnacio, Zapata County

2021-52 - Flame-colored Tanager (1) 2-8 May 2021, South Padre Island, Cameron County

2020-152 - Crimson-collared Grosbeak (1-2) 25 Nov 2020 - 25 Mar 2021, Estero Llano Grande S.P., Hidalgo County

2020-154 - Crimson-collared Grosbeak (1-3) 27 Nov 2020 - 17 Feb 2021, Quinta Mazatlan S.P., Hidalgo County

2020-153 - Crimson-collared Grosbeak (1) 17 Dec 2020 - 8 Jan 2021, Frontera, Weslaco, Hidalgo County

2021-77 - Crimson-collared Grosbeak (1) 28 Dec 2020 - 1 Feb 2021, Alamo, Hidalgo County

2021-06 - Crimson-collared Grosbeak (1) 17 Jan - 12 Apr 2021, Santa Ana N.W.R., Hidalgo County

2021-18 - Crimson-collared Grosbeak (1) 21 Feb - 19 Mar 2021, Resaca de la Palma S.P., Cameron County

2020-151 - Blue Bunting (1) 9 Dec 2020 - 9 Jan 2021, Quinta Mazatlan S.P., Hidalgo County

2021-17 - Blue Bunting (1) 22 Feb - 18 Apr 2021, Resaca de la Palma S.P., Cameron County

2021-19 - Blue Bunting (1) 24 Feb - 26 Mar 2021, San Antonio, Bexar County

2021-37 - Blue Bunting (1) 31 Mar 2021, Estero Llano Grande S.P., Hidalgo County

2021-49 - Blue Bunting (1) 30 Apr 2021, Laguna Vista, Cameron County

2021-31 - Yellow-faced Grassquit (1) 8-29 Mar 2021, Estero Llano Grande S.P., Hidalgo County

Not Accepted (3):

2020-160 - Garganey (1) 15 Dec 1988, Bolivar Peninsula, Galveston County

2021-47 - Purple Sandpiper (1) 17 Apr 2021, Mustang Island, Nueces County

2021-46 - Eastern Yellow Wagtail (1) 13 Apr 2021, Santa Elena Canyon, Brewster County

[Note: The number in parenthesis following the species name is the number of individuals of that species involved in the record.]

A number of factors may contribute to a record being denied acceptance. It is quite uncommon for a record to not be accepted due to a bird being obviously misidentified. More commonly, a record is not accepted because the material submitted was incomplete, insufficient, superficial, or just too vague to properly document the reported occurrence while eliminating all other similar species. Also, written documentation or descriptions prepared entirely from memory weeks, months, or years after a sighting are seldom voted on favorably. It is important that the simple act of not accepting a particular record should by no means indicate that the TBRC or any of its members feel the record did not occur as reported. The non-acceptance of any record simply reflects the opinion of the TBRC that the documentation, as submitted, did not meet the rigorous standards appropriate for adding data to the formal historical record.

The TBRC makes every effort to be as fair and objective as possible regarding each record. If the committee is unsure about any particular record, it prefers to err on the conservative side and not accept a good record rather than validate a bad one. All records whether accepted or not, remain on file and can be re-submitted to the committee if additional substantive material is presented.

If you have any questions on any of these results, please don't hesitate to ask.

Thanks to all of you who have taken the time to submit documentation to the TBRC - it is very much appreciated.

2021 TBRC Annual Meeting

2021 TBRC Annual Meeting

The 2021 Annual Meeting of the Texas Bird Records Committee (hereafter committee or TBRC) was held at 11:00 AM on 11 September 2021. Carpenter hosted the meeting at his house in Dripping Springs with both Frank and Cook showing up in person; all other members were able to attend online via video conference (Zoom).

Members/Attendees:

- Tony Frank, Chair
- Eric Carpenter, Secretary
- Keith Arnold, Academician
- Sheridan Coffey
- Greg Cook
- Mel Cooksey
- Mary Gustafson
- Dan Jones
- Stephan Lorenz
- Chris Runk
- Willie Sekula

The meeting was convened at 11:03 AM.

Election of Members

Frank, Carpenter and Arnold were the only nominees respectively for the Chairman, Secretary and Academician positions. All three were unanimously (re)elected to their respective position.

Gustafson and Sekula both had their first term expire at the meeting and both were elected to serve a second term.

Lorenz and Jones had their second term expire at the Annual Meeting so there were 2 open Voting Member positions. There were 3 nominees—Steve Glover (nominated by Cook), Arman Moreno (nominated by Coffey), and John Muldrow (nominated by Sekula). The background/merits of each candidate were discussed with Glover and Moreno being elected to the open positions.

Thus, effective at the end of the Annual Meeting, current membership and term of service are as follows:

- Tony Frank, Chair - term expires in 2023, can be re-elected
- Eric Carpenter, Secretary (not a Voting Member) - term expires in 2022, can be re-elected
- Keith Arnold, Academician (not a Voting Member) - term is as listed for Secretary, can be re-elected
- Steve Glover – 1st term expires in 2024, can be re-elected
- Arman Moreno – 1st term expires in 2024, can be re-elected
- Sheridan Coffey – 1st term expires in 2023, can be re-elected
- Greg Cook – 1st term expires in 2023, can be re-elected
- Mel Cooksey – 1st term expires in 2022, can be re-elected
- Mary Gustafson - 2nd term expires in 2024
- Willie Sekula - 2nd term expires in 2024

- Chris Runk – 2nd term expires in 2022

The sequence (used primarily for order for oral/4th round records) of members for voting becomes:

Glover, Moreno, Coffey, Cook, Cooksey, Gustafson, Sekula, Runk, Frank

Bylaw review

A requisite review of the Bylaws was in order this year. Gustafson pointed out that the American Ornithologists' Union is now the American Ornithological Society so Carpenter will revise that reference immediately. In addition, there are minor mentions of things from years gone by such as reimbursement for postage, etc that need to be brought into a modern day/electronic way of communicating. Carpenter will go through a review and come up with more “modernized” version/wordage for outdated processes/concepts to be ready for next year's meeting. Likewise, it seems like the heading/number/lettering scheme of the published Bylaws on the website has gone astray (with the move to the new website) with roman numerals, numbers and letters not necessarily used consistently by references within the Bylaws; Carpenter will also come up with corrected references for next year's meeting.

Fourth Round Records

One fourth-round record was discussed and voted on: 2020-160 - Garganey (1)

15 Dec 1988, Bolivar Peninsula, Galveston County not accepted, 4-5

This record was a frustrating decision for all as it was an old, only recently-(re)discovered slide of a clearly identifiable male Garganey in alternate plumage shot by a hunter. The photographer is unknown and the birders holding the bird in the photo are both deceased. Thus, while the date written on the slide and the deduced location are presumed to be correct, there is room for uncertainty. In addition, it is rare (though possible) for male Garganeys to be in alternate plumage in December, which adds a bit more uncertainty. All members would agree that it was “probably” a good record but there were unfortunately enough unknowns to prevent it from being accepted.

Removal of Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*lawrenceii*) from Review List B

Cook led a discussion to see if there was interest in removing Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*lawrenceii*) from Review List B. A record number (9) were accepted by the TBRC in south Texas this past fall/winter with likely additional individuals seen or heard that were not identified to subspecies. Gustafson pointed out that this fall/winter was clearly exceptional and there have been recent fall/winter periods where none have been reported; plus, at least one Dusky-capped Flycatcher found in the Lower Rio Grande Valley has been determined to NOT be of the *lawrenceii*

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group. Others agreed that it is a situation worth watching and if there are repeats of what happened last fall/winter the next couple of years that this topic could be revisited. Thus, no vote to remove it from Review List B was made.

Adding Exotics to the State List

Stemming from last year's meeting, Lorenz had drafted a proposal to add Red-vented Bulbul to the state list that he then shared with Frank. Frank had asked Mike Austin and David Bradford to come up with similar drafts for both the bulbul (which they merged with what Lorenz had done) and Scaly-breasted Munia based on the criteria for established exotics as shown on our website, see:

<https://www.texasbirdrecordscommittee.org/home/criteria-for-determining-establishment-of-exotics>

As the TBRC has yet to review these 2 proposals or any other exotics based on this criteria, Frank went through the eight requirements to make sure that all members agreed they were worthy requirements. There was agreement that all eight were solid criteria with only some minor concerns around whether a peer-reviewed published article was required. It was thought that a peer-reviewed article should be strongly encouraged, especially for species that are not yet on the ABA list since the ABA requirement will be for a peer-reviewed published article.

There was also some discussion on the review process that the committee should take as it may not be exactly the same path as regular sighting records. Carpenter offered that proposals for adding exotics based on this criteria might be better served to go through a single round of voting and then,

if not accepted, have the TBRC comments on where the proposal fell short of the criteria sent back to the submitters. In cases where the short-comings could be corrected, the submitters would be able to edit their proposal and resubmit it. Carpenter will start out with circulating one of the two proposals in the coming months to see how this approach works.

Additional discussions

Cook asked about the resubmission process and what constitutes (in the bylaws) "new and substantial documentary evidence". His specific interest was the (not accepted) 2016 Ector County Vaux's Swift record as he had heard from someone who had run many of the photos from the record through Merlin (a photo ID program) and most of them had been ID'ed by the program as Vaux's. Carpenter stated that he interpreted the by-laws such that the "new [...] evidence" meant that there needed to be unsubmitted photos, unsubmitted field notes and/or new knowledge in bird identification to be a candidate for resubmission. Different and new subjective opinions whether by experts or via photo ID programs such as Merlins did not qualify; other members agreed with that.

Adjournment

With no other formal business on the agenda and no additional Any Other Business items raised, the meeting was adjourned at 12:20PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Eric Carpenter
Secretary, Texas Bird Records Committee

The 62nd supplement to the AOS's Checklist of North American Birds

The 62nd supplement to the AOS's Checklist of North American Birds is out and its effect on the Texas State List is described below.

- Due to a split, Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) has become Short-billed Gull (*Larus brachyrhynchus*).
- Double-crested and Neotropic Cormorant are now in the new genus *Nannopterum*.
- The scientific name of Crested Caracara is now *Caracara plancus*.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet has been moved to a new genus *Corthylio* and is now placed in front of Golden-crowned Kinglet.
- Sedge Wren has a new scientific name - *Cistothorus stellaris*.
- The Passerine (Passeriformes) families have been reshuffled. The new order as it pertains to the Texas State List follows:
 - Tityridae (Tityras and Allies)
 - Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)
 - Thamnophilidae (Typical Antbirds)
 - Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)
 - Laniidae (Shrikes)
 - Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

- Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)
- Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)
- Alaudidae (Larks)
- Hirundinidae (Swallows)
- Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)
- Regulidae (Kinglets)
- Bombycillidae (Waxwings)
- Ptilionotidae (Silky-flycatchers)
- Sittidae (Nuthatches)
- Certhiidae (Treecreepers)
- Poliotilidae (Gnatcatchers)
- Troglodytidae (Wrens)
- Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)
- Sturnidae (Starlings)
- Cinclidae (Dippers)
- Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)
- Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)
- Peucedramidae (Olive Warbler)
- Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)
- Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)
- Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)
- Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)
- Passerellidae (New World Sparrows)
- Icteriidae (Yellow-breasted Chat)

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)
Parulidae (New World Warblers)
Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)
Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

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The TBRC website has been updated to account for these changes and you can find the current State List here:

<https://www.texasbirdrecordscommittee.org/texas-state-list>

The 62nd supplement to the AOS Checklist can be found here:

<https://academic.oup.com/.../ornithology/ukab037/6309332>

A nice summary of its overall impact on the ABA checklist can be found here:

<https://www.aba.org/the-2021-aos-supplement-is-out/>



Yellow-billed Loon at Ascarate, El Paso. First County record. TEXBIRDS Photo John Groves

Texas Ornithological Society Board Meeting, Conference Call April 29, 2020

Present: Frances Cerbins, D.D. Currie, Susan Foster, Byron Stone, Gailon Brehm, Raul Delgado, Christine Turnbull, Shelia Hargis, Daniel Hodges, John Berner, Clay Taylor, and Laura Wilson.

Minutes: Daniel Hodges moved that we accept the minutes from the last meeting as written. Motion seconded by Byron Stone. All in favor. Motion passed.

President Christine Turnbull recognized outgoing board members Daniel Hodges and Raul Delgado and thanked them for their contributions and service to TOS. She has plaques for each of them as well as for Catherine Winans. Shelia Hargis asked if we can follow tonight's agenda or if the bylaws dictate our direction.

Election Results: Gailon Brehm reported the results of the election committee. 828 ballots were mailed out based on eligible voters. Approximately 200 were returned, which satisfies the 10% required. Elected were Byron Stone (At-large), Randy Pinkston (Region 6), Susan Foster (Region 7), and Kendra Kocab (Region 8). Randy Pinkston will resign from his current At-large position to take over the Region 6 position. Clay Taylor was nominated by the committee to replace Randy Pinkston as an At-large board member. Gailon Brehm moved that the board approve the appointment of Clay Taylor to the At-large position. The motion was seconded by Daniel Hodges. All in favor. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned 3:48 p.m.

The new board convened at 3:49 p.m. and elected officers for the next year. Kendra Kocab agreed to continue as secretary, Gailon Brehm nominated Christine Turnbull to continue as president, Kendra Kocab to continue as secretary, John Berner to continue as Treasurer, and Frances Cerbins as Vice-president. John Berner moved to accept this slate and Byron Stone seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed.

Financial Report: Treasurer John Berner reported that due to the coronavirus, numbers were down last year and all categories of income are up across the board this year. Contributions from The Birding Classic paid for the Bleachers at Hooks Woods. Our inventory income was zero due to no in-person meetings. John is trying to avoid bank fees by not exceeding allowed deposits each month. Meeting expenses were lower since we are meeting virtually. Expenses included postage, Bill Clark's fee, and plaques for outgoing directors.

Assets and Investments Committee: Gailon Brehm explained the Operations Account and Endowment Account which are managed by a paid financial advisor who provides professional financial decisions. The numbers provided for the sanctuaries have not been actively evaluated.

TOS Mourns loss of Ethel Kutac



Photo of Ethel Kutac courtesy of Terrv Banks.

Ethel Kutac, a birder, environmentalist, and member of Travis Audubon for over 40 years, passed away on September 25th of this year. Described as a “force of nature,” she touched so many within the Austin birding

community alone. We have compiled stories celebrating her wit, strength, and sense of humor from friends she made throughout her life on our Signal Smoke Blog; read them now: <http://ow.ly/KcAV50GBi49>



Leucistic Great-tailed Grackle found in Surfside, Brazoria County. *TEXBIRDS* Photo by Susan Schliep Kosoris

Research Update for: Who’s bugging who? Interactions between blood parasites and potential invertebrate vectors for avian malaria in west Texas*

Avian malaria is a wide-spread disease that can devastate naïve populations by causing anemia, weight loss, decreased fecundity and in some cases death. Mountainous avian species have historically been protected from disease by so-called “elevational refugia” created by low temperatures that prevent or inhibit disease transmission. However, we know little about elevational refugia from diseases in temperate, desert ecosystems like those of the Trans-Pecos region of Texas. Is avian malaria a disease of concern for this region? Do elevational refugia from disease exist? In Spring of 2020, PhD student Viridiana Martinez and Dr. Jacquelyn Grace (Texas A&M University, Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology) were awarded a TOS grant to aid research and investigate these questions for passerine birds in west Texas.



The majority of this research was conducted at the Davis Mountains Preserve (Nature Conservancy) in Fort Davis, Texas; a pristine natural area with limited visitation

by the public. Due to emergency COVID-19 protocols, field work had to be cancelled in summer of 2020, but was completed in the summer of 2021. Viridiana Martinez, along with several TAMU undergraduate interns, using mist nets were able to collect blood samples and body measurements from 147 breeding birds in the area, including: Black-headed Grosbeak, Hepatic Tanager, Spotted Towhee, Western Tanager, Bushtit, and others.

Those blood samples are currently being analyzed genetically for three different genera of avian malaria parasites through polymerase chain reactions in the



laboratory. Preliminary results have determined that in this understudied region, all three genera of avian malaria parasites are present, suggesting that no elevational refugia exists in this region of west Texas.

The researchers also investigated whether malaria was transmitted by vectors at these high altitudes, or if birds were contracting avian malaria during migration at lower altitudes. At the Davis Mountains Preserve, Viridiana Martinez used both CDC light traps (left) and Gravid Aedes traps (right) to target *Culex sp.* and *Aedes sp.* mosquitoes, two species that

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could be potential vectors of avian malaria. Unfortunately, due to the timing of rain, no mosquitos were able to be

have since moved on to pursue careers and graduate studies in wildlife sciences, ornithology, and veterinary medicine.



collected, despite trapping events in May, June, and July. Thus, this question remains unanswered. The researchers hope to return in a later year to collect insect samples.

The TOS grant funded a significant portion of this research, including travel to and from the Davis Mountains Preserve, and assisting undergraduate interns in contributing to this research. For many of these undergraduates this was their first research, camping, and birding experience. They

*TOS dedicates money to research Texas Birds. Dr. Grace at Texas A&M is requesting funding for her research on blood parasites and potential invertebrate vectors for avian malaria in west Texas. TOS has budgeted \$5000 for research. Motion was made and board unanimously approved funding of the research for \$4994.67.

Welcome to the TOS 2022 Winter Meeting in Abilene

TOS is excited to announce our Winter Meeting, taking place Thursday January 14 through Sunday January 16, 2022.

While the format of this meeting is still modified due to the pandemic, we are excited to have an array of field trips in the Abilene area. Birds we will search for include winter sparrows and waterfowl, plus we will have two trips to look for Short-eared Owls. Field trips will offer excellent birding on private ranches and state parks, with the opportunity to jump-start your Century Club lists in the eleven counties surrounding Abilene.

What is different? Our speakers will offer their presentations virtually, and we will not have a wrap-up banquet, silent auction, or in-person check-in. There is no hotel headquarters but two hotels near the staging area where we will meet for field trips have offered a special price.

Our afternoon and evening speakers will present a variety of exciting and interesting topics such as youth birding in Texas, waterfowl ID, Century Club tactics and much more. Please make an effort to attend! For those who cannot attend in person, you can purchase a Speaker Package and enjoy the presentations from the comfort of your home.

At the end of each day, we will share via Zoom our stories and interesting sightings from that day's birding efforts.

The Abilene area offers interesting birding opportunities. We eagerly look forward to seeing you during the meeting, whether in person or via digital and social media platforms.

—Christine Turnbull, TOS President

Recorded speaker presentations will be available to anyone who purchases either the Meeting Package or the Speaker Package, whether you attend in person or not.

Online registration is required so that we can share instructions, resources, and details with you. **Online registration will open on December 13 and close on January 9, 2022.**

The fee for the event will be \$60 per TOS member, and \$95 for non-members, which covers their annual membership dues. There will be no fee for student attendees. For the speaker package only, the cost is \$25, or \$60 for non-members, which includes a one-year membership.

COVID Safety During the 2022 Winter Meeting

For the health and safety of everyone, TOS asks that participants adhere to the following guidelines, which have been modified to be in compliance with Gov. Greg Abbott's **Executive Order GA-34**:

1. Comply with guidelines set by private businesses and municipal entities.
2. For in-person attendees, an image of your

vaccination card showing that you are completely vaccinated will need to be submitted at the time you register.

3. Carpooling will be discouraged other than with your own "flock," and COVID-19 protocols such as wearing masks and social distancing will be strongly advocated.



Hotels and Meals

Two hotels that are close to our field trip staging area have offered discounted room prices.

The **Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Abilene** is located at 3902 Turner Plaza Dr., Abilene 79606. They have offered a \$94 + tax room price and the phone number is 325-695-2448. If there is no answer, try again as there is only one clerk on duty. Ask for Rate Program TOSS for birdwatchers.

The **Hampton Inn Abilene** at 3917 Ridgemont Drive, Abilene 79606 offers a \$104 + tax price. The phone number is 325-695-0044. **BE SURE TO BOOK AT THE RIDGEMONT DRIVE ADDRESS, AS THERE IS ANOTHER HAMPTON INN MUCH FARTHER AWAY.**

You must call the individual hotel to make reservations and **MUST** mention the group name at the time of reservation to get the special group rate.

No cancellations can be made after Jan. 11, 2022.

No box lunches will be provided this year, nor will there be any provisions for breakfast or Saturday banquet, so all meals will be the responsibility of attendees.

Meeting Agenda

Thursday, January 14, 2022

- 6:30-7:00 PM Welcome/Introductions/Announcements via Zoom (Lots of useful information is given during this time, so please attend.)
- 7:00-8:00 PM Speaker: Jay Packer - *Welcome to the Big Country*

Friday, January 15

- All Day Birding
- 3:30-4:30 PM Speaker: Martha McLeod - *A Peek Into the Most Successful Youth Birding Program in Texas*

- 4:45-5:45 PM Speaker: Drew Harvey - *A Naturalist's Perspective: the Past, Present, and Future of the Lesser Prairie Chicken*
- 6:30-7:00 PM Announcements/Birding Reports
- 7:00-8:00 PM Speaker: Professor Joel Brant - *Abilene Area Flora and Fauna*

Saturday, January 16

- All Day Birding
- 3:30-4:30 PM Speaker: Rhandy Helton - *Birding in Kimble County*
- 4:45-5:45 PM Speaker: Laurie Foss - *Waterfowl ID*
- 6:30-7:00 PM Announcements/Birding Reports

Saturday, January 16 (Continued)

- 7:00-8:00 PM Speaker: Amy Packer - *Why Everyone Should Join the Texas Century Club*

Sunday, January 17

- All Day Birding and depart for home

Registration Information

An email containing the link to registration will be sent soon, so be sure your email address and membership dues payments are up-to-date. (Visit www.texasbirds.org and click Member Information to log in to your account and confirm.) Once you make your event fee payment, you will receive a confirmation email showing the trips you have selected.

An email containing the Zoom links to each day's speakers will be sent to you a few days before the start of the meeting. Please look for it, and feel free to reach out if you have not received it by January 13. Since there is no in-person check-in, field trip attendees will also find further instructions in that email about confirming their attendance.

For any questions, or if you do not have access to the internet, you may call Judy Kestner at 361-701-1962 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.

Event Prices

Winter Meeting Package

- \$60 for TOS members
- \$95 for Non-TOS members (includes a one-year membership)
- FREE for all students

Speaker Package Only

- \$25 for TOS members
- \$60 for Non-TOS members (includes a one-year membership)

Registration cost will increase by \$10 on Jan. 5, 2022.

**** All presentations will be recorded so that anyone who purchases the Meeting or Speaker Package can watch later at their convenience. ****

Meeting Presentations

Thursday Evening

7:00 PM

Title: *Welcome to the Big Country*

Presenter: Jay Packer

Description: In this introductory presentation, long-time Texas birder and Abilene native Jay Packer explains why the Big Country is a great place to go birding. You'll learn about the region's habitats, both in Taylor County where Abilene is located, and the surrounding counties. Jay will explain what makes the region special from a birding perspective, as well as cover some of the region's avian highlights over the years. Join us for Jay's talk and get excited about the birding at our winter meeting!



Jay Packer

Bio: Born and raised in Abilene, TX, Jay Packer started birding at the age of 12 after an extended family road trip to the great national parks of the Western U.S. He quickly began traveling across Texas, then the U.S. and, at 20 years old, took his first trip to the tropics in Costa Rica. Epic road trips to Mexico ensued,

where he and friends subsisted on peanut butter and tortillas for days as they looked for Mexico's rarest birds, pulling the car into the woods to camp and getting a hotel once a week for the shower. More recently, Jay and his wife Amy have traveled for birds to Europe, then Ecuador, Australia, Brazil, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, India, and Southeast Asia. Closer to home, Jay is passionate about the Texas Century Club (seeing over 100 species in each county of Texas) and finding new county records. Jay loves sharing and talking about his passion for birding and photography.

Friday Afternoon

3:30 PM

Title: *A Naturalist's Perspective: the Past, Present, and Future of the Lesser Prairie Chicken*

Presenter: Drew Harvey

Description: Though the population of the Lesser Prairie Chicken has increased over the past years, it is still far from where it should be. In 2021 U.S. Fish & Wildlife proposed that the birds be granted federal protection. The process is ongoing, but the Southern distinct population segment is in danger of extinction and it is hoped that the bid will be accepted soon. Drew will fill us in on what's happening with this species.

Bio: Drew has worn many hats over his short tenure in the field of conservation, from environmental technician to wildlife biologist to professional critter finder. As a youngster with Brazos Bend State Park a stone's throw from his front door, a love for nature and the outdoors has



Drew Harvey

been deeply ingrained in him. Several years ago he got his B.S. in Wildlife Biology at Texas State University and has been fortunate to have a career that involves the outdoors and wildlife. Drew has worked with multiple taxa, with a focus on avian and reptile/amphibians communities. Having a fairly broad focus at times

has benefited him as he crisscrossed the state and lived in all but one of the major ecoregions of Texas.

4:45 PM

Title: *A Peek into the Most Successful Youth Birding Program in Texas*

Presenter: Martha McLeod

Description: This program will highlight how McLeod begins her program yearly and maintains the excitement and interest of her students. Each year approximately 20 – 25 elementary students try out for the team and participate in weekly study sessions and monthly field trips. The year of birding culminates in competition in the TPWD Great Texas Birding Classic as students compete in both the Roughwings and Gliders categories. McLeod will share highlights from her years of birding with students and pointers on making a successful program with kids.



Martha McLeod

Bio: Martha McLeod was born and raised in the Brush Country of South Texas. Growing up on a farm/ranch, she learned at an early age the value of wildlife and habitat education, conservation, and stewardship. She has been an educator for 30 years teaching primarily science to elementary students. She has also

sponsored a youth birdwatching program for 13 years. Her former students that are now in middle school and high school continue to participate in her birding program by serving as mentors and tutors to her younger elementary students. Her teams of youth birders usually take top honors in the TPWD Great Texas Birding Classic in their respective categories.

Among the honors and awards Martha has earned are her 2013 induction into the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia, KS, being named in 2017 as “top individual in the state” by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality’s Texas Environmental Excellence Awards, which led to an appearance in a TPWD television film titled “Flocking with Friends” about her school youth birding team, and in 2018 being honored as National Birder of the Year as named by Bird Watcher’s Digest magazine and Swarovski Optik.

Friday Evening

7:00 PM

Title: *Local Flora and Fauna*

Presenter: Joel Brant, Professor of Biology, McMurry University

Description: Lace Hedgehog Cactus, Hispid Cotton Rat, Blanchard’s Cricket Frog - are they mammal, amphibian, vegetation, insect? Professor Brant will sort it all out for us so we can understand how each helps to sustain the other.



Joel Brant

Bio: Joel Brant began his professional journey as a naturalist while studying at Abilene Christian University. After graduating in 1998, Joel pursued a Masters’ degree at Angelo State University followed by a PhD from Texas Tech University. While interested in all aspects of the natural world, Dr. Brant

specializes in small mammal ecology. He has published 15 journal articles and directed several undergraduate research projects. His research interests are primarily concerned with the natural history of mammals, particularly in the Southern Rolling Plains and Chihuahuan Desert of Texas.

Working with his undergraduate students, Dr. Brant is currently conducting an inventory of the vertebrates of Firebase Libby, a 160-acre research property owned by McMurry University in central Callahan County, Texas. Most weekends you can find him and his students on the property catching mice, chasing lizards, attempting to catch frogs, or photographing birds. Joel is a member of the Big Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists and an officer for the Texas Society of Mammalogists. While not a very good birder, Joel is learning and getting better. You can follow him on iNaturalist (joelbrant).

Saturday Afternoon

3:30 PM

Title: *Birding in Kimble County, Texas*

Presenter: Rhandy Helton

Description: This presentation focuses on some Hill Country birds, their habitat and birding locations around Junction, TX. Rhandy will provide some information that most visitors don’t have about birding opportunities in the area. Be sure to have a pen and paper to take notes!



Rhandy Helton

Bio: Rhandy is a native Texan born in San Antonio. He attended Texas A&M and graduated with a degree in Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences. For 31 years he was a

Fisheries/Aquatic Habitat Biologist with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. He retired from state service in 2002 and that same year moved from southeast Texas (Jasper) to Junction, where he still resides. Rhandy has been birding for over 35 years and served as a TOS Regional Editor in the early 90's.

Rhandy has birded throughout Texas and in most of the western states. The Texas Hill Country is dear to him but he has fond memories of trips to the Trans-Pecos and the upper Texas coast, where he honed his birding skills.

He is currently employed part-time as an instructor with the Texas Tech University Outdoor School in Junction where he teaches school-age children courses in Aquatic Biology, Geology, Soil Science, Watershed Enhancement and Field Ornithology (a course he helped design). Rhandy is the author of the publication "A Field Checklist to the Birds of Kimble County, Texas" and recently updated the South Llano River State Park checklist. He has also prepared, not for publication, a seasonal bird-finding guide to Kimble County, Texas.

4:45 PM

Presenter: Laurie Foss

Title: *Waterfowl ID*

Description: Waterfowl, who doesn't love waterfowl? You don't have to get up early to see them, they are big and easy to see, you won't get warbler-neck while watching them, and you can see them all winter in Texas! This presentation will touch on the distinctions that will help you sort out the waterfowl that you can expect to encounter in Texas in most winters.



Laurie Foss

As a member of Texas Ornithological Society, Travis Audubon, as well as other local, state and national birding organizations, Laurie is active leading field trips, teaching birding classes, making presentations to various types of groups as well as working and advocating for habitat conservation.

Bio: Laurie Foss started birding in 1971 at the urging of her high school science teacher in Wisconsin. Since moving to Austin in 2003 she has discovered the joys of Hill Country birds and birding. As a member of Texas Ornithological Society, Travis Audubon, as well as other local, state and national birding

Laurie has led international birding tours for JB Journeys, teaches classes and leads field trips for Travis Audubon in Austin, Texas. She is a tour leader for the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival and the Laredo Birding Festival.

Saturday Evening

7:00 PM

Title: *Why Everyone Should Join the Texas Century Club*

Presenter: Amy Packer

Description: The Texas Century Club is an attempt to find 100 species in 100 or more counties in Texas. What started as a game to increase the regional coverage of birding in Texas has blossomed over the last decade into a way of birding and a community of friends that share a special bond.

In her presentation, Amy will share why you should pursue the Texas Century Club, how it will impact your birding for the better, and the unexpected ways in which it will enrich your life. She'll also share a few stories along the way that range from the sublime to the absurd.

Whether you're a current CC'er looking for tips or a skeptical holdout wondering what all the fuss is about, be sure to join Amy's talk to learn why county birding is all the rage in Texas.



Amy Packer

Bio: Amy Packer has been birding for 17 years and has been fortunate to travel the world (and some of the U.S.) in search of all things feathered and beautiful. Closer to home, Amy is passionate about the Texas Century Club – finding 100 species in every county of Texas, which she and her husband have greatly enjoyed over

the last 10 years.

In the summer of 2020, during the pandemic doldrums, she logged her 100th county with more than 100 birds. This fall, she visited Dimmit County, the last of the 254 counties in Texas to visit. Amy has been an elementary educator for 16 years, both as a classroom teacher and an administrator. She holds a Bachelor's of Science in Education from Abilene Christian University and a Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction from Angelo State University.

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TOS Field Trips - Abilene, Winter 2022

NOTE: Participants must meet their field trip group at the Abilene Mall. Due to logistical complications, it is not possible to meet the group at any other location. Please plan accordingly. Also, there will be entrance fees at some locations. Exact amounts are being determined and will be communicated before you arrive.


Please have small bills available as well as bringing your state park pass.

NUMBER	FIELD TRIP AND DESCRIPTION	COUNTY	DIFFICULTY	DEPARTURE/HOTEL RETURN TIMES	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	<p>Madden Prairie/Lake Colorado City State Park – Owned and managed by the Native Prairies Association of Texas, Madden Prairie boasts remnant and restored native prairie. Access is limited to special events and scientific research. The bird list includes LeConte’s Sparrow, Sprague’s Pipit, and Short-eared Owl, a rich diversity of winter sparrows including Vesper, Field, Lark Bunting, and the potential for interesting riparian birds along the tributary of Champion Creek. We’ll make the short drive to Lake Colorado City State Park where desert species are more common. Expect Pyrrhuloxia, Scaled Quail, Black-throated Sparrow, Cactus Wren, and waterfowl, wading birds, and gulls/terns. We will also stop in town and along back roads for county birds like Sandhill Cranes, raptors, and possibly longspurs.</p> <p>Several miles of walking, the most demanding of which will be walking the prairie for grassland birds, which anyone is free to abstain or take a break from.</p>	MITCHELL	EASY TO MODERATE	6:15 a.m.–4:30 p.m.	X		
2	<p>Kirby Lake/Private Ranches/Water Treatment Plant/Brown Ranch – With over 250 species recorded, Kirby Lake is the top hotspot for the whole region. We’ll look for waterfowl, gulls, and terns, and it’s one of our best chances at uncommon species like Common Goldeneye and Common or Red-breasted Merganser. We’ll explore the brushy habitat around the lake margins where winter passerines are rich. From Kirby, we’ll drive south to an 800- acre private ranch in the limestone mesas of the Callahan Divide for our best chance of finding regional rarities such as Townsend’s Solitaire and Western Bluebird, and local species such as Rufous- crowned Sparrow, Canyon Towhee, Bushtit, and Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay. Up next is a quick trip to the ponds of the Hargesheimer Water Treatment Plant. Here we should have Virginia Rail, Sora, Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, and Marsh Wren. Finally we’ll visit the Brown Ranch, a 3,200-acre private ranch. Target species include winter sparrows (including Lark Bunting and Black- throated Sparrow), raptors (Prairie Falcon and Merlin have been seen before and we’re just waiting for a Golden Eagle to show up on the ranch one day), Green-tailed Towhee, and Mountain Bluebird. Rock Wren and Canyon Towhee are possible. The ranch also has several ponds with wetlands around the margins. (We will pass through Abilene as we head to the ranch, and you’re welcome to break off from the group for this part of the trip if needed.) Visiting the Brown Ranch will require a vehicle with a little higher clearance and a willingness to drive on rougher roads. The two private ranches will involve walking on uneven roads, including some elevation gain that may be tiring. Signed release forms will be required to visit private property.</p>	TAYLOR	EASY TO MODERATE	7:15 a.m.-3:30 p.m.		X	
3	<p>Kirby Lake/Water Treatment Plant – With over 250 species recorded, Kirby Lake is the top hotspot for the whole region. We’ll look for waterfowl, gulls, and terns, and it’s one of our best chances at uncommon species like Common Goldeneye and Common or Red-breasted Merganser. We’ll explore the brushy habitat around the lake margins where winter passerines are rich. Up next is a quick trip to the ponds of the Hargesheimer Water Treatment Plant. Here we should have Virginia Rail, Sora, Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, and Marsh Wren. On to County Road 131 where a large stand of oaks attracts wintering songbirds, and red- bellied Woodpecker is often found. If time permits we may stop at a field on private property where Sprague’s Pipits are often found.</p> <p>All birding will be done with short walks from the car.</p>	TAYLOR	EASY	7:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m.			X
4	<p>Abilene State Park/Graham Lake/Mountain Pass Rd. – Abilene State Park features some of the best riparian woodland in Taylor County with tall cottonwood trees and trails that follow Elm Creek. Species that are common in the Eastern US like White-throated Sparrow, Winter Wren, Brown Creeper, Brown Thrasher – which are by and large scarce in our region – can be found here. Winter rarities have included Rusty Blackbird, Purple Finch, and Pine Warbler. Next we will visit Graham Lake, a small body of water on private property that’s often filled to the brim with waterfowl. Rarities for the region like Greater Scaup, American Bittern, and Sage Thrasher have turned up. The roads leading to the lake are one of the better places for Harris’s Sparrow in the county. After the lake, we’ll cruise Mountain Pass Rd., an empty region of western Taylor County. Targets include Bushtit, both Western and Mountain Bluebird, Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay, Canyon Towhee, and raptors.</p> <p>There will be short walks on trails at the state park. Graham Lake will involve mostly scanning with scopes. Mountain Pass Rd will be done from the car, with short walks after pulling over.</p>	TAYLOR	EASY	7:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	X	X	X

5	<p>Short-eared Owls in the Evening – Do you love standing in the cold as night falls for the thrilling ecstasy of seeing – or the crushing defeat of missing – owls? This 600-acre CRP grassland on private property is one of the only known places in Taylor County with Short-eared Owls in the winter. Barn Owls also frequently come out to hunt the grasslands, and Great Horned Owls sometimes appear on distant telephone poles. We'll just line up along the edge of the field and wait to see what shows up as night falls. Unlike other field trips, this trip can accommodate up to 40 people since we'll just be spaced out along the edge of a very large field. This trip is subject to cancelation if the owls are not present or reliable this winter. Alternatively, this trip may be changed to Jones County if owls are present there.</p>	TAYLOR	EASY	5:00 P.M.-7:00 P.M.	X	X
6	<p>Lake Fort Phantom/Abilene Water Treatment Plant/County Roads – Basically Abilene but in a whole 'nother county lies Lake Fort Phantom. We'll start at Seabee Park along the lake and then work our way to the north side where the dam produces deeper water. Expect lots of water birds and if we're lucky, more uncommon fowl such as Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Common Loon, or Western Grebe. A rare gull could turn up. Next is the nearby Abilene Water Treatment Plant where a series of shallower ponds holds a different mix of ducks including Ruddy Ducks. The "fab five" of the marsh can also be found at this location: Virginia Rail, Sora, Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, and Marsh Wren. On a good day, the number of waterfowl has been estimated to be in the thousands. We'll close out the day by birding county roads in Shackelford and Callahan Counties. We should be able to find a good diversity of winter sparrows and we can check for bluebirds, raptors, and agricultural riff-raff like longspurs and Horned Larks. This should give a nice assortment of winter species to birders working on the Century Club.</p> <p>Most of the walks will be short and there will be lots of time working with scopes to scan bodies of water. We might do a little more walking at the water treatment plant, depending on what birds we're looking for.</p>	JONES, SHACKELFORD, CALLAHAN	EASY TO MODERATE	7:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.	X	X
7	<p>Lake Hamlin/Anson Lake/Lake Stamford/Winchester Lake – Before reaching Haskell County, we'll drive through Jones County where we'll make quick stops at Lake Hamlin and Anson Lake. We'll stop accordingly based on the latest scouting reports before our trip. Ducks and wintering species are always present and some of the wooded habitats around the lakes are likely to yield more "eastern" species like White-throated Sparrow that are hard to find in Jones County. The main attraction on this trip is Lake Stamford, a large lake in Haskell County. The lower eBird species totals compared to other lakes reveals a serious lack of birding. Your trip will contribute to our knowledge of the region and no doubt yield an assortment of waterfowl and wintering passerines. Maybe you'll even find a new county record! After that, you'll visit the shallow, ephemeral playas around Winchester and Rochester in northern Haskell County. There's usually water in at least some of them. Geese become more common here and then mysteriously become scarce as they trickle farther south. As we drive through both counties, we'll stop along county roads for winter sparrows and hope to run into species like longspurs and Horned Larks that favor agricultural areas.</p> <p>Lots of birding will be done with scopes and the walking distances will generally be short.</p>	JONES AND HASKELL	EASY	6:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	X	X
8	<p>Oak Creek Reservoir/EV Spence Reservoir/Sanco Loop/Silver Loop – At Oak Creek Reservoir, just outside the Taylor County line in Coke County, we'll scan the lake for waterfowl and hope for a rare gull. One of our main targets here is Carolina Chickadee, a species that seems to become harder to find outside the oak woodlands of far northeast Coke County. From there we'll carry on to EV Spence Reservoir. This large body of water in an arid county seems to be the most reliable spot for Western Grebe and, when lucky, Clark's Grebe too. The margins of the lake have lately proven to be reliable for Green-tailed Towhee. Expect a high species diversity of both water birds and passerines around the lake, as well as a real potential to find a rarity at this under-birded hotspot. Next up, we'll cruise the Sanco and Silver Loops, two county roads that traverse arid scrub habitat. Here the potential for desert species is high including Black-throated Sparrow, Scaled Quail, Cactus Wren, Vermilion Flycatcher, Brewer's Sparrow, and more. Rufous-crowned Sparrow and Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay are also possible.</p> <p>All the birding will be done with short walks from the car.</p>	COKE	EASY	6:45 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	X	X

9	<p>Lake Ballinger/Ballinger City Park – One of the region’s best hotspots is Lake Ballinger. Its mixture of freshwater, large deciduous forest and arid mesquite scrub yield a high level of species diversity. The lake is often covered in ducks and geese more than at other hotspots in the region. The woods attract “eastern” species like Winter Wren, Brown Thrasher, Fox Sparrow and more. It’s not uncommon to get more than 50 species in a morning of birding around the lake. As we leave the lake, we’ll look for Long-eared Owl. There’s no guarantee, but we have connections with the landowner to be able to scout inside the property. If they’re present, you’ll have the opportunity to see them. At Ballinger City Park, we’ll look for wintering woodland birds that we might have missed at the lake. The park seems to be especially good for woodpeckers and one winter, an obvious hybrid Downy/Ladder- backed Woodpecker was photographed, one of only three hybrids ever recorded in eBird. Fox Sparrows are also often found in the vegetation along Elm Creek. On the way back, we’ll stop along county roads where Horned Larks and all three of the region’s longspurs have been sighted – Chestnut-collared, Thick-billed, and Lapland – as well as recent sightings of Mountain Plover.</p> <p>We’ll be scanning lakes and fields with scopes and any walking will be limited to short trips from the car.</p>	RUNNELS	EASY	6:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.	X	X	X
10	<p>Coleman City Park/Hord’s Creek Lake/O.H. Ivie Reservoir – We’ll begin our day at Hord’s Creek Lake. While waterfowl and other lake birds are certainly expected, the real attraction is the large trees where “eastern” forest species are possible, including Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and more. The county’s only record of American Woodcock comes from the lake. From there, we’ll make a brief stop at Coleman City Park where we look for similar woodland birds in the large trees along Hord’s Creek. Like other open areas with giant tress, the park is good for woodpeckers. Our next destination is the real star of the day. Lying along the Colorado River between Coleman and Concho Counties is the region’s largest body of water, O.H. Ivie Reservoir. Visiting this destination is a natural way to visit two counties in the same day. Ivie has produced a number of rarities including a Eurasian Wigeon, Glaucous Gull, Pacific Loon, and Western Grebe. If more birders visited, the lake would probably have the highest species count for the entire region.</p> <p>We’ll be scanning lakes with scopes and walking will be limited to short distances along the lake and brief trips from the car.</p>	COLEMAN & CONCHO	EASY	6:15 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	X	X	
11	<p>O.H. Ivie Reservoir – Lying along the Colorado River between Coleman and Concho Counties is the region’s largest body of water, O.H. Ivie Reservoir. Visiting this destination is a natural way to visit two counties in the same day. Ivie has produced a number of rarities including a Eurasian Wigeon, Glaucous Gull, Pacific Loon, and Western Grebe. If more birders visited, the lake would probably have the highest species count for the entire region.</p> <p>We’ll be scanning lakes with scopes and walking will be limited to short distances along the lake and brief trips from the car.</p> <p><i>This is a shortened version of trip 9.</i></p>	COLEMAN & CONCHO	EASY	6:15 a.m.-12:00 a.m.			X
12	<p>Lake Sweetwater/Santa Fe Lake - This trip will explore the hotspots and backroads of Nolan County, to the west of Abilene. We’ll start our day at Santa Fe Lake, a shallow lake in the town of Sweetwater that holds a rich diversity of waterfowl and often has American White Pelicans. From here, we’ll visit Lake Sweetwater, the largest body of water in this arid county. Not only is the lake good for waterfowl (and possibly loons, and gulls), it has a large forest with classic eastern species like Virginia Rail and Sora found in the marsh around its edges. After the lake we’ll explore county roads in search of all three bluebirds, winter sparrows, and “hill country” species like Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay in the mesas. While scarce, Townsend’s Solitaire is always a possibility in this habitat.</p> <p>Our time will be spent scoping bodies of water and short walks anticipated along county roads.</p>	NOLAN	EASY	6:45 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	X	X	
13	<p>Clyde Lake/T & P Lake/Spring Gap Road – Our first stop in this county to the east of Abilene is Clyde Lake. In addition to boasting a large list of waterfowl, the scrub habitat around the lake has often produced Vermilion Flycatcher and Curve-billed Thrasher. A short drive farther east, T & P Lake is more forested around the edges. Expect waterfowl and a different mix of woodland species like Downy Woodpecker, Hermit Thrush, and White-throated and Fox Sparrows. Next is a hidden gem known as Spring Gap Road. If you were transported here, you might swear you were in the hill country and indeed, there are breeding species like Black-capped Vireo and Black-and-white Warblers in the summer. During this time of year, you’ll look for Western Bluebirds, Townsend’s Solitaire, Golden- crowned Kinglet, Bushtit, and more. It’s a beautiful place that’s barely had its potential scratched as a birding hotspot. On the way home, we’ll take the back roads to look for duck ponds, winter sparrows, and Red-bellied Woodpecker, which seems to be about on the western edge of its range in Callahan County.</p> <p>Again, time will be spent scoping bodies of water with short walks anticipated along county roads.</p>	CALLAHAN	EASY	7:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	X	X	X

14	<p>Fisher County – Are you disappointed by the list of field trips above with their promises of good birding and high species diversity? Do you feel like we’ve been holding out on you, the hardcore Century Club birder craving something a little more off the beaten path? Do you love driving long distances only to learn that the pond you’re visiting is actually devoid of all bird life? Then we have just the trip for you, led by the very best. Welcome to the Wild, Wild West of Fisher County.</p> <p>The thing that makes Fisher County so difficult is that much of the county is agricultural fields planted in cotton. Even the agricultural scraps aren’t much good for wildlife. But over the last decade, a series of intrepid birders from Abilene and beyond have scoured the county in search of birds. This has led to knowledge of which little ponds are likely to turn up ducks, which county roads have amazing canyons and vistas that get into the mesas, and which landowners have granted access to their slice of Fisher County heaven.</p> <p>While we can’t promise huge bird lists, we can promise a very strong start (or finish) to your goal of finding 100 species in this county, one of the most challenging in the region. We’ll target waterfowl, winter sparrows, “eastern” forest birds, “hill country” birds like Rock Wren, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and bluebirds, and any rarities we can find along the way.</p> <p>More time will be spent walking than on some other trips. There will also be longer periods of time driving between birding locations.</p>	FISHER	MODERATE	6:45 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	X	X
15	<p>Abilene Birding for New Birders – This field trip will focus on new or newer birders. We’ll go slow, talk about field marks, point out similar species, and try to answer all questions. We’ll visit several different habitats. Some habitats will have birds that are very easy to see such as ducks. Other habitats will be more challenging with birds that like to move quickly through trees or skulk in shrubby areas. Although challenging and sometimes frustrating, woodland birding allows participants to practice using binoculars and following directions to find the birds. Over lunch, we’ll talk about binoculars, field guides, birding resources, and any other bird-related topics that come to mind. No matter how long you have been birding, if you’d like to work on your identification skills and talk basics, join us for this field trip!</p> <p>Maximum of 12 attendees.</p>	TAYLOR	EASY	7:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.		X



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USFWS finalizes revocation of MBTA incidental take rule, asks for comments on new permit system

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published the final rule officially revoking the Trump administration's regulation that interpreted the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as only applying to intentional killing of birds



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published the final rule officially revoking the Trump administration's regulation that interpreted the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as only applying to intentional killing of birds. The agency published a proposed rule in May, indicating their intention to revoke the rule.

The Trump administration's final rule limiting the reach of the MBTA was published January. It codified an interpretation first put forth by the Department of the Interior's Solicitor's Office in 2017, limiting the scope of the MBTA to intentional killing of birds.

The Biden administration has already rescinded that Solicitor's opinion. The final MBTA revocation rule announced this week will go into effect 60 days after it publishes in the Federal Register on October 4.

The USFWS is also soliciting feedback on the development of a new permitting scheme for incidental take under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. "We [intend] to gather information necessary to develop a proposed rule to authorize the incidental taking or killing of migratory birds, including determining when, to what extent, and by what means it is consistent with the MBTA," the agency said in the Federal Register notice.

The USFWS is interested in comments regarding whether and how it could authorize incidental take and under what conditions or circumstances. It is considering implementing a permitting system with (1) exceptions to the MBTA's prohibition on incidental take; (2) general permits for certain activity types; and (3) specific or individual permits. The agency is seeking public comment on the appropriate criteria, such as infrastructure design, beneficial practices, and geographic features, that it could use to apply these authorizations to various activities.

The agency is also considering implementing a conservation fee structure to fund programs to benefit birds, and is soliciting input on whether it should consider a compensatory mitigation approach or a general conservation fee structure, where fees go to a specific, dedicated fund.

Any new rule will likely be challenged in court, as previous rules have been. Currently, the federal appellate

courts are split on the appropriate interpretation of the MBTA and whether it should apply to incidental take. That uncertainty has led some supporters of an interpretation that prohibits incidental take to pursue a legislative fix. In July, Reps. Alan Lowenthal (D-Cal.) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) reintroduced The Migratory Bird Protection Act, which affirms that coverage of the MBTA extends to incidental take, and also aims to create more certainty for business and incentives for innovation to protect birds.

The Ornithological Council has commented extensively on the issue of incidental take under the MBTA and has encouraged the development of a permit system for incidental take, as have other scientific societies and conservation organizations.

The ANPR requesting public comment will be published in the Federal Register on October 4, opening a 60-day public comment period (to read the notice and comment, go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for Docket No. FWS-HQ-MB-2021-0105).

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Regional Reports

Region 1—Panhandle

—John Berner

Region 2—North Central Texas

Many of us remember the extreme cold spell that hit North Central Texas this past February with a week or more of sub-freezing high temperatures, strong wind, sunless skies, and snow covering the ground. Afterward, we were hearing observations of birds found dead in nest boxes. Over the next few months we often commented on the lack of sightings of some common birds, like Eastern Phoebes or Eastern Bluebirds. So how do we actually measure the impact? It's not so easy, it seems to me, but we look for data. Some friends of mine who do routine nest boxes surveys for Bluebirds in Collin county, told me that at the end of June that the nesting success was about the same in 2021 as in prior years. And, now that it's fall, Eastern Phoebe observations are common again. So what to make of these observations? Long term data will tell, but most likely we will conclude that that weather event, as extreme as it appeared to us, will have had little impact on bird populations.



Eastern Bluebird

Thanks for reading and good birding

—Galon Brehm

Region 3—East Texas Timberlands (Pineywoods)

Hello from East Texas. We are currently ramping up for a fantastic time with the Christmas Bird Counts !

From Texarkana to Orange. 14 total

Most dates are set. Stay tuned.

Our very own Cliff Shackelford (Pineywoods Audubon Nacogdoches) a non-game field Ornithologist from TPWD is the host on "Bird Talk" Red River Radio on November 9.

Currently, this Director has been busy, networking with a few of the college students that are taking ornithology classes, looking forward to potential new members and some feedback.

—Laura Wilson

Region 4—Trans-Pecos

General Comments for Trans Pecos Region: Weather this year.....extremely dry, hell froze over, extremely wet, extremely dry. A year of extremes, even for birds. At the beginning of the year when it was so dry, birding was

fabulous. Since then, birding has been rather sparse. Some long-time Trans Pecos residents have shared that this has been the worst year for birds in 20+ years.

Bird sightings cover August 2021 – November 2021

Eurasian Wigeon, Balmorhea Lake 11/14/2021; **Costa's Hummingbird**, private residence DMR, Jeff Davis County 8/20/2021; Allen's Hummingbird, private residence Limpia Crossing, Jeff Davis County 10/17/2021; Purple Gallinule; La Estancia, El Paso 9/27/2021; **Red Phalarope**, Horizon City RO Ponds, 9/22/2021; **Black-legged Kittiwake**, Ascarate Lake, El Paso 11/5/2021 and Balmorhea Lake 11/17/2021; American Bittern, Lajitas, Brewster County 10/16/2021 and Candelaria Wetlands, Presidio County 11/13/2021; Spotted Owl, Location Unknown August 2021; Green Kingfisher, Lajitas, Brewster County 10/16/2021; Lewis Woodpecker, Guadalupe Mountains – Dog Canyon, Culberson County 10/14/2021, private residence El Paso, 10/23/2021, Red Bluff Reservoir, Reeves County 10/23/2021, and Christmas Mountains Oasis, Brewster County 11/4/2021; Eastern Kingbird, Davis Mountains State Park 9/8/2021; **Varied Thrush**, Guadalupe Mountains – Pine Springs, Culberson County 11/3/2021; **Rufous-backed Robin**, private residence, El Paso 10/10/2021; Red Crossbill, Holmsley Trail Ditch, El Paso County 11/17/2021; Louisiana Waterthrush, Independence Creek, Terrell County 8/22/2021; Black-throated Blue Warbler, private residence El Paso 10/3/2021; Black-throated Green Warbler, Davis Mountains State Park 8/28/2021; Scott's Oriole, private residence Limpia Crossing, Jeff Davis County 11/13/2021.

—DD Currie

Region 5—Edwards Plateau Report

For those of you looking to increase your county numbers, there are 2 hotspots in Medina County that are not far off of the highway and small enough to visit while en route to somewhere else. Castroville Regional Park in Castroville encompasses 126 acres along the Medina River. Green and Belted Kingfishers, Audubon's, Hooded and other orioles. Its variety of habitats are good for warblers, flycatchers, buntings and sparrows and Eastern, Say's and Black Phoebes have all been part of the 228 species observed there. Heading west, the city of Hondo has a small nature trail and park. If there has been rain and the pond is full, it can host grebes, kingfishers and other water birds. The .8 mile trail loops through the woods and brush providing good habitat for Thrashers, vireos and more. They have been working on a native butterfly garden near the entrance and worth a look. Have fun exploring.

—Christine Turnbull

Region 6—Central Prairie

Summer highlights in Bell County included confirmed nesting by Cassin's Sparrow on west Fort Hood—not unexpected but difficult to prove due to low density and restricted access. West Bell County is at the extreme eastern periphery of the species' range. Also expected but never easy to

Regional Reports (continued)

locate in central Texas were White-breasted Nuthatches at two Bell locations from late July into the autumn season, including Temple Lions Park for the first time in more than a decade. Williamson County produced multiple exciting discoveries, including an unprecedented summer influx of Wood Storks and an adult Common Tern at Granger Lake on 12 August. Not far away on Granger Lake a first-cycle Iceland Gull was a one-day wonder on 26 October. Disappointingly, Mountain Plovers proved elusive and went totally unreported from the entire region for the autumn season at the time of this writing.

On 17 November a Northern Shrike was discovered at Granger Lake and was enjoyed by countless birders residing south of the DFW metropolx. This bird represented a southmost straggler of what appeared to be a southward irruption of the species during autumn 2021. An immature dark-morph Reddish Egret at Stillhouse Hollow Lake first discovered 21 October was still present through at least 30 November.



Granger Lake Northern Shrike by Tim Fennell.

Autumn 2021 was pretty remarkable for rare hummers in central Texas. Up to 3 Rufous—though mostly 1 or 2—were “fixtures” at a private Salado residence from late August through the time of this writing. A female Anna’s was a one-day wonder at a Belton private residence on 6 November. A young male Allen’s in Georgetown delighted birders from 9 November through the time of this writing.

Bell & Williamson counties lie “smack dab” in the flyway of migrating Whooping Cranes in both autumn and spring. This year the date to be looking was 12 November when an adult pair was documented over Salado in the morning and another adult pair with a juvenile were observed taking a brief rest at Stillhouse Hollow Lake that afternoon. A well-described imm Golden Eagle from Fort Hood on 30 November represented a first Bell County record.



Bell County Whooping Crane family by Doug

— Randy Pinkston

Region 7—Rio Grande Brushlands

Though migration has wound down, rare bird sightings have been in abundance. In the LRGV, one way to find out about rare birds is to attend the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival and then follow rare bird sightings on the LRGV Rare Bird Alert. The festival attracts many excellent birders from around the United States, and all of those extra sets of eyes are able to pick out rarities. I attended the festival this November to meet up with a Plymouth, Massachusetts, birder friend. She had a life needs list and we were able to find almost all of them. Besides finding what was on her list, some rarities were found and we were able to get those too. We were able to see and hear the Golden-crowned Warbler at the Valley Nature Center and found a Rose-throated Becard at Bentsen State Park while waiting for the tram to take us to the Hawk Tower to look for the Hook-billed Kite. We saw a Muscovy Duck and Morelet’s Seedeaters in Salineno, and we watched the nightly parrot show at Oliveira Park in Brownsville where we had Red-crowned, Red-lore and White-fronted Parrots. If you have not visited Oliveira Park, I highly recommend it. There were hundreds of squawking birds flying around the park and landing in the trees. Though seeing all of these birds was fabulous, even better was catching up with birder friends at these locations as well as at the convention center.

The Coastal Bend had a Red-footed Booby this week at the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center. Though I missed the bird (it would have been a lifer), I did get to catch up with birding friends who were also looking to see it, and I had a tasty lunch at Iries (which I also recommend). The weather is beautiful, so get out there are bird! And if you see anything good, please let me know.

—Susan Foster

Region 8—Central Prairie



Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher pic to Debbie McMullen

Regional Reports (continued)

It was a great fall for birders in Region 8, and especially in our Sabine Woods Sanctuary. Since September, the park has had 31 warbler species, including Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Gray. A one-day wonder Pacific Slope Flycatcher was reported in September, and a very popular Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher hung around for 12 days in October! We are most grateful to Golden Triangle Audubon for their continued efforts in maintaining the sanctuary for TOS members and visitors from around the world.

Sabine Woods also had a Cassin's Vireo in September, the first of THREE Cassin's rarities in our region this fall. In October, a Cassin's Kingbird was found in Chambers County, and Cassin's Sparrow was seen in both Brazoria and Galveston counties. Another trend this fall was rare gulls and pelagic birds, with Sabine's, Glaucous, and Great Black-backed Gulls all reported between June and October. A masked Booby was photographed onshore in Galveston on June 26, and a Great Shearwater was photographed at the Galveston jetties on July 19. Finally, a Red-footed Booby was found in the waters of Galveston County during a pelagic trip in June.

Late October saw the return of Greater Pewee to Bear Creek Park. This species was found every winter from October 2012 through March 2018, and then there was no sign of one until now. Since its original sighting on October 20 this year, the bird has been reported on eBird by nearly 150 people, making Bear Creek one of the most popular birding destinations in Harris County this fall. The park will no doubt become even more popular with the late November sighting of a Hepatic Tanager, an incredibly rare bird for the county.

Other notable sightings include Buff-bellied Hummingbird in Waller Co, Red-necked Phalarope in Brazoria Co, Short-tailed Hawk in Victoria Co, Red-naped Sapsucker in Harris Co, Aplomado Falcon in Calhoun Co, and Chihuahuan Raven in Calhoun Co. Hopefully the trend of exciting birds will continue throughout the winter!

—Kendra Kocab, Director

Fall Happenings at Hooks Woods

Hooks Woods is one of Texas Ornithological Society's sanctuaries located in High Island. It is managed and maintained by the TOS High Island Management Team with generous help and advice from Houston Audubon's sanctuary experts. We are actively working to improve the habitat for the birds and the birders. In March of 2021, we installed new bleachers so that birders could sit back, relax, and watch the newly arrived migrants drink and bath in the "new" pond and stream that we installed in the spring of 2020. Many birders took advantage of the bleachers this past spring and were treated to a spectacular migration season.

Our focus for the workday on November 13 was to plant five hackberry trees, two cedar elm trees and five mulberry trees in the area where the bamboo stand was. The bamboo eradication effort is an ongoing, long-term project, but we think we can improve the habitat with new bird-friendly trees at the same time we are continuing to attack the bamboo. The twelve trees were lovingly grown from seedlings and graciously donated by TOS members David and Jan Hanson. Chuck Davis, James Giroux, David, Jan and I planted the new trees as well as discovered quite a few other plant species coming up on their own now that the bamboo has been somewhat removed.



James Giroux digging.
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis



David Hanson digging with his amazing Root Slayer.
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis



David's Root Slayer made it much easier to cut through the bamboo!
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis



Jan Hanson mulching.
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis



Chuck Davis tagging a non-bamboo plant we want to keep.
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis

Chuck, James, and I finished the day by installing a mulched trail to one set of bleachers. We will eventually plant native wildflowers and grasses in the prairie area, so we want to minimize foot traffic in that area. Having a defined walkway to the bleachers will help. Lastly, James and Chuck performed various maintenance on the pond. Our fish are doing well (we're happy about this), as is the algae (we're not so happy about this).

Being good naturalists, we were on the alert for any critters we came across as we worked. Chuck clued in to a Red-breasted Nuthatch vocalizing in the woods, and I slacked off occasionally to photograph butterflies and even found my first ever Southern Black Widow spider!



Male Red-breasted Nuthatch visiting Hooks. See <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/101141828> to hear the vocalization.
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis



Long-tailed Skipper visiting Hooks.
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis



Southern Black Widow visiting Hooks, a lifer for Shelia. Photo credit: Shelia Hargis

Check out many more observations from Hooks Woods in iNaturalist, https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?place_id=155165. Add your observations next time you visit!

The Hooks Woods Management Team meets every two months via Zoom to discuss the various projects we have underway as well as future plans and has multiple workdays

throughout the year, but usually not in the summer! We could use more team members, so if improving the sanctuary sounds like rewarding work to you, please contact Shelia to join the team, Shelia.hargis@gmail.com. Thank you!

--Shelia Hargis

MEET THE TOS MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

'mem-bər-ship: the state or status of being a member; the body of members.

Synonyms: enrollment, participation, association, alliance, affiliation

As with many organizations, your Texas Ornithological Society has seen a decline in membership over the past few years.* The reasons stretch from competition with other (free) resources to struggles to connect with younger demographics, and the challenge of engaging with existing members.

Accordingly, the TOS board created a committee to address these issues and work on turning the tide. Committee members Laura Wilson, Frances Cerbins, Shelia Hargis and Judy Kestner have put their heads together and agreed on four target areas:

1. Retaining current members
2. Increasing the number of college student memberships
3. Gaining more members
4. Securing more funding for TOS

To kick off the committee's efforts, a survey has been created to get a feel for how current members perceive their enrollment, participation, association, alliance, and affiliation with TOS. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey—your input will be valuable in the direction taken by the committee, and very much appreciated. Click the link and let us know your opinions.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/16qeFy1_7TBowZn_EtF1h6H2b-Rk7iZCfxtM_u8X9ukM/edit

Next, there are plans to address the interests of specifically college students, and to define their expectations of being part of TOS. Opportunities such as mentoring

programs, partnering with students on citizen science or college projects, student groups within TOS, and special projects created by the students are some ideas that have been considered. (These are opportunities for the students, and also for current members to work with the next generation of TOSsers.)

Thus, with Christmas Bird Counts starting next month, the committee would like to challenge everyone who participates in these activities to invite at least one young person who is not currently a TOS member to accompany you on a CBC, and to sponsor their membership in our group. Think how that could swell our numbers!

Last, there will be three membership-focused newsletters published online annually where news, ideas and challenges will be presented. The goal is to involve all members in the drive to build our membership and share the wonderful experience of being a birder in the best birding state in the country.

Remember that while you are birding there will often be people around you who might be motivated to pick up this awesome addiction of ours. Tell them why you love it, and ask if they'd be interested in flocking together with you as a TOS member. Be sure to let the committee know of your successful recruiting efforts: there will be recognition in the newsletter!

* At present we have 849 individual memberships. That is 56 fewer than in December of last year.

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Fall 2021 Newsletter

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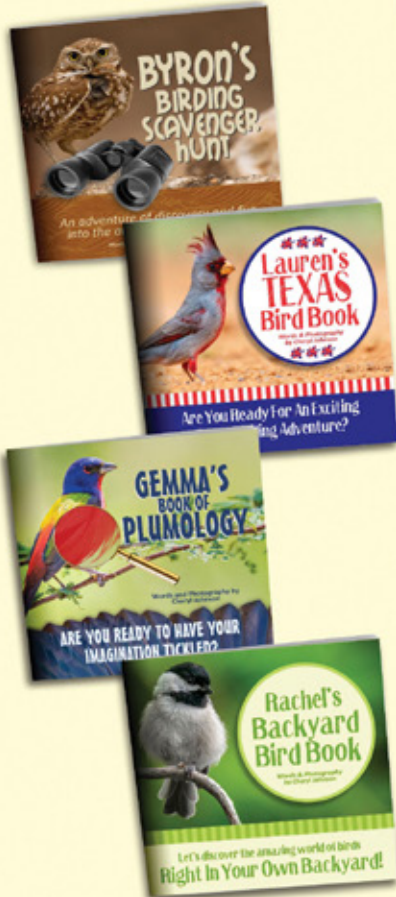
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