



President's Message



Jim Hailey, TOS President.

I am into my second year as President of TOS and this past year was one of accomplishment. I organized and carried out a new program dedicated to providing our membership the opportunity to attend educational oriented events called "Weekenders". Their purpose was to provide those who participated an opportunity to have classroom instruction on bird

identification by knowledgeable individuals and then apply those lessons with actual field experience. Three programs were offered, the first on shorebirds in Corpus Christi, a second on sparrows in Georgetown and the final one focused on Hill Country specialties in Uvalde. All were awarded high praise from those who attended. This coming year, I intend to continue these educational opportunities. Back by popular demand will be another "Shorebird Weekender" in Corpus Christi with Mel Cooksey and Larry Jordan heading up the program scheduled for August 15-16. Others will be forth coming so stay tuned. In addition, we will hold our regular meetings in the winter and spring, so save the dates January 15-18, and May 7-10, 2014—locations to be announced soon.

With this issue our newsletter will be delivered to our membership electronically* for the first time. This change will benefit TOS members in several ways. With the elimination of the need to print and mail the newsletters, they can be provided in a timely manner to each of you. Besides saving the added cost of printing and postage, the newsletter will have the advantage of using color pictures and providing expanded content. This will also eliminated the issue that some members get a head start on field trip choice by virtue of our lack of control of delivery time by the U. S. Postal Service. Now everyone will have the same opportunity to get their registration to the appropriate person, thus providing equal opportunity to choose from the field trip selection to all. Only life members can request hard copy at no charge; others can purchase a copy for \$10.00. So it is imperative that you provide the membership secretary with your correct current email address. And on that matter I want to introduce our new membership secretary, Judy Kestner. Judy is one of our members and will do a great job for TOS in her new position. You can contact Judy by email at tosmember@yahoo.com.

—Jim Hailey, President T.O.S.

*This issue is being sent both electronically and as a hardcopy (via US Mail). If you do not receive the electronic copy contact Judy (Email: tosmember@yahoo.com) as you need to either provide a working email address or pay the fee for the hardcopy to receive the next issue of TOSNEWS.

Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC) Report

(Reports reviewed with a decision since 1 December 2013)



White-cheeked Pintail, observed during a recent TOS meeting, is current under review by the TBRC.

Photo Greg Lavaty

Accepted Records (28):

- 2013-53 Sooty Shearwater (1) 9/6/2013, 1 m. offshore Port Aransas jetty, Nueces County
- 2013-41 Brown Booby (1) 5/31/2013, San Luis Pass, Galveston County
- 2013-50 Short-tailed Hawk (1) 8/3/2013 - 8/9/2013, NABA/Bentsen area, Hidalgo County
- 2013-37 Eurasian Whimbrel (1) 4/29/2013 - 5/19/2013, Bob's Road, Crystal Beach, Galveston County
- 2013-57 Red Phalarope (1) 9/1/2013, Lake Wichita, Wichita County
- 2013-58 Red Phalarope (1) 10/6/2013, McNary Reservoir, Hudspeth County
- 2013-02 Black-legged Kittiwake (1) 12/31/2012 - 3/10/2013, Mustang Island SP and Port Aransas, Nueces County
- 2013-18 Great Black-backed Gull (1) 11/25/2012 - 12/24/2012, Surfside/Quintana, Brazoria County
- 2012-75 Great Black-backed Gull (1) 12/5/2012 - 3/28/2013, Texas City Dike, San Luis Pass, Quintana, Galveston/Brazoria County
- 2012-79 Black Noddy (1) 12,13,14 or 15 May 2003, East or West Flower Garden Bank, Galveston County
- 2013-59 Elegant Tern (1) 9/14/2013, near Bolivar Flats, Galveston County
- 2013-40 Green Violetear (1) 5/23/2013 - 5/26/2013, Wimberley, Hays County

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- 2013-47 White-eared Hummingbird (1) 6/27/2013 - 6/28/2013, Tobe Canyon, Davis Mts Preserve, Jeff Davis County
- 2013-42 Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (1) 6/15/2013, Christmas Mountains, Brewster County
- 2013-38 Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (1) 5/18/2013, Quintana, Brazoria County
- 2013-56 Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (1) 9/29/2013, Paradise Pond, Port Aransas, Nueces County
- 2013-48 Gray Kingbird (1) 7/2/2013 - 7/3/2013, Palacios, Matagorda County
- 2013-65 Fork-tailed Flycatcher (1) 11/3/2013 - 11/5/2013, near Boca Chica Unit, Las Palomas WMA, Cameron County
- 2013-46 Rose-throated Becard (1) 5/16/2009, Salineno, Starr County
- 2013-52 Pinyon Jay (1) 8/15/2013, El Paso, El Paso County
- 2013-34 American Dipper (1) 2/16/2010, Guadalupe R., just w. of Hunt, Kerr County
- 2013-62 Rufous-backed Robin (1) 10/13/2013, Old Hidalgo Pumphouse, Hidalgo County
- 2013-67 Rufous-backed Robin (1) 10/21/2013, Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall County
- 2013-60 Golden-crowned Warbler (1) 10/12/2013 - 11/6/2013, Frontera Audubon Thicket, Hidalgo County
- 2013-36 Golden-crowned Sparrow (1) 5/17/2013 - 5/21/2013, Convention Center, South Padre Island, Cameron County
- 2013-35 Flame-colored Tanager (1) 5/6/2013 - 7/1/2013, Boot Springs, Big Bend N.P., Brewster County
- 2013-19 Crimson-collared Grosbeak (1) 2/12/2013 - 5/19/2013, Sabal Palm, Cameron County
- 2013-05 Evening Grosbeak (1) 1/10/2013 - 3/14/2013, Dog Canyon, GMNP, Culberson County

Not Accepted Records (9):

- 2013-22 Trumpeter Swan (2) 12/16/2011 - 1/21/2012, Georgetown, Williamson County
- 2013-12 Masked Duck (1) 1/12/2013, Donna Reservoir, Hidalgo County
- 2013-25 Northern Goshawk (1) 12/27/2012, Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area, Denton County
- 2013-63 Roadside Hawk (1) 10/29/2013, Bentsen SP, Hidalgo County
- 2013-39 Mew Gull (1) 3/1/2013, Texas City Dike, Galveston County
- 2013-51 Brown Noddy (1) 8/10/2013, offshore, 7 miles se. of Port Aransas, Nueces County
- 2013-61 Vaux's Swift (1) 10/15/2013, Austin, Travis County
- 2013-54 Crescent-chested Warbler (1) 9/24/2013, near top of Pinnacles Trail, BBNP, Brewster County
- 2013-55 Black-vented Oriole (1) 8/10/2013, Pine Canyon, BBNP, 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.

—Sincerely, Eric Carpenter

Publicity Committee Members Wanted

The TOS Publicity Committee is starting up and we are looking for TOS members who would like to join us in the fun! The committee's objectives are:

- Publicize the vision/mission and goals of TOS
- Publicize TOS programs to members and non-members
- Highlight the amazing birds of Texas
- Publicize bird-related events
- Publicize ways to connect with other TOS members

We especially need people who are computer savvy and experienced with social media. So if you are interested in helping spread the word about birds and TOS, contact Shelia Hargis at shelia.hargis@gmail.com. Thank you!

TOSNEWS Staff

Jack Eitniece Editor

Bron Rorex Copy Editor

Contributors Jim Hailey, Eric Carpenter, Rachel Smith, and Jim Perterson.

TOS MEETS IN LAKE JACKSON

Being a big fan of Texas state parks and national wildlife refuges, the Lake Jackson area had been on my list of places to go birding for a long time. I had only been to the area once when Laurie Foss and I made a quick trip to see the Black-tailed Godwit at Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) a couple years ago. And for many years I've heard about the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO) but really had no clue where they were headquartered. So it was a fantastic April TOS meeting for me! Not only did I get to bird some of the many cool birding destinations (Brazoria NWR, San Bernard NWR, Quintana, and Brazos Bend State Park), I got to go with great, knowledgeable leaders and fellow TOS'ers, and I got to visit the GCBO grounds.

Here are a few of the meeting highlights for me:

Along a trail at Brazoria NWR, we found a male Indigo Bunting that was sleeping on the ground. He was obviously exhausted from his trip over the Gulf since he allowed us great looks and didn't move as we walked around him. This was a great reminder to me of the amazing journey our migratory birds make and the importance of protecting habitat for them. I hope he is raising babies now! We briefly saw a Pied-billed Grebe with babies. Baby birds get me every time. I love seeing them! Possibly the best part of this field trip was getting to spend the day with Alvin Stoll and his young family members from Tennessee. They were awesome birders, and their enthusiasm was so inspiring. And you've got to love those young eyes and ears. It's also especially nice to be along when someone gets a life bird. Our young birders got several!

Saturday was San Bernard NWR. Although warblers were in short supply, Dickcissels were not. They seemed to be singing from all around us (surround sound), and several small trees were occupied by numerous, gorgeous individuals. We were rewarded during a very long walk with a cooperative American Bittern "hiding" in some grass nearby. Lunch was at a picnic table above which Barn Swallows were constructing a nest. They patiently perched nearby with mud in beak waiting for us to leave before continuing their construction.

Brazos Bend State Park was Sunday's birding location. Even though Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are a common bird for me, I still love seeing them and hearing them "whistle" as they fly by. We also saw Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, not a common bird for me, so these were a special treat. Again, we had the opportunity to help a couple of the participants get a life bird, Pileated Woodpecker. To end our time at Brazos Bend, Laurie and I were eating lunch in the parking lot when I spotted a Swallow-tailed Kite.

What a great way to end our TOS April 2014 meeting!

All three of these locations provided numerous opportunities to see alligators up close. Even though they are not birds, they are still pretty cool, especially when you get to see and hear them bellow. We were treated to quite a show by one at Brazos Bend SP. I'm wondering if one of us Austin birders inadvertently brought one back with us. There is now one being reported in a neighborhood pond in the Austin area! Oh, I'm sure the timing is just a coincidence, right?

In addition to the field trips, we had numerous very interesting presentations. Lee Hoy presented on bird photography. For some reason, I had never considering belly crawling through wet sand to get a bird photo! Well, now it is something to consider. Maybe. Felipe Chavez-Ramirez, GCBO staff member, presented on the natural history and conservation efforts of Whooping Cranes. I was very surprised by the extent of their historical range but encouraged by the ongoing conservation efforts. Sky Kings Falconry presented a birds of prey demonstration at GCBO's grounds. It is always an amazing experience to see birds in the hand. Their Great Horned Owl was obviously suffering from an earlier traumatic experience, so when a resident Red-shoulder Hawk spotted the owl and started sounding the alarm, you could see the concern in the owl's behavior. It was very interesting to watch this interaction. Laurie loves vultures, so the antics of the two Black Vultures was icing on the cake! Mark Lockwood presented on some changes in Texas' birds. Drawing on his experience as a member of the Texas Bird Records Committee and his vast knowledge of Texas birds in general, Mark highlighted how our birds are changing – new species appearing, other species disappearing, and range expansions or shifts.

Fascinating! Unfortunately I was not able to attend Chris Eberly's presentation on the Full Life Cycle Conservation of Land Birds or Sue Heath's presentation on the American Oystercatcher due to the TOS Board meeting. I'm sure both were interesting and informative. I did attend Dr. Drew Lanham's presentation at the Saturday night banquet. He was very inspiring. The take-away for me was how something as simple as giving a kid a pair of binoculars and a field guide can make a difference for that kid and for our birds.

Now back to that TOS Board meeting. It was held at the outdoor pavilion on the GCBO's grounds. Do you know how hard it is for birders to concentrate on business when there are birds around? Most of us tried very hard to concentrate on what was being discussed or at least tried to hide our distraction. Not Dr. Byron Stone! If there was a bird to look at, his binoculars were up and I'm sure he caught every bird that vocalized during the meeting. I was sitting across from him so I witnessed the whole thing. Betty Vermeire was trying very hard to focus on the business at hand, but several times she just couldn't resist following Byron's lead and up went her binoculars. What blows my mind is that even with his apparent distractions, Byron would pipe in regularly with thoughtful comments or questions on whatever topic was being discussed. This highlights for me just how cool birders are. We can be walking to work, talking to people, just going about our normal daily activities and still be very present to the birds around us.

How cool is that?!?

These are just a few of the fun memories I have of the April meeting. I'm confident everyone who attended has some of their own. I look forward to our next meeting and to the memories that will be created there. I hope to see you there!

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For those of you who like stats (you're my kind of people!): 127 attendees, 26 field trips, and 225 species seen. The White-cheeked Pintail found at the TPWD Mad Island Wildlife Management Area was the rarest species. Thank you to Cecilia Riley and Carol Jones and the other GCBO staff

members for hosting the meeting and for taking such good care of our birds. Thank you to all the TOS volunteers who volunteered their time and effort in various ways. You make a difference for TOS, your fellow birders, and the birds! We could not run this organization without you.

—Shelia Hargis



Meeting photos compliments of Sandi Wheeler and Marie Jordan.

Alaska: A Grand Birding Adventure

Alaska, the last frontier, was the setting for a birding trip of a lifetime. On June 7th, eleven participants arrived in Anchorage to meet up with our leader Jim Hailey for a whirlwind two week trip. Temperatures ranged from the moderate summer climate of Anchorage in the 60s, to the always frozen Barrow where our highs averaged around 35. The group saw between 150 and 160 species (depending on where you were looking), along with a host of other Alaskan wildlife.

We began our journey by exploring several local parks in the Anchorage area, including the Chugach Mountains, Hillside and Kincaid Parks. These yielded breathtaking scenery and local specialties. It was uncharted birding territory for the majority of the group, and we were ceaselessly entertained by the Varied Thrushes and Boreal Chickadees singing around us. A stop at Potter's Marsh allowed us close looks at the nesting Arctic Terns which nearly attacked our heads when we accidentally approached their nests too closely.

Our next stop was Barrow, AK, the most northern city in the U.S., and host of many Arctic specialties. Our hotel was cozy but adequate and we spent most of the days cruising up and down the 12 miles of muddy, snow banked roads in the area. Here, Snow Buntings are the equivalent of House Sparrows and Red Phalaropes and Hoary Redpolls are yard birds. Other highlights included King, Spectacled, and Steller's Eiders, Long-tailed, Pomarine, and Parasitic Jaegers, Yelllow-billed Loons, Tundra Swans, and my personal favorite: Snowy Owls!

We made a quick stop back in Anchorage to repack our bags before flying out to Nome, AK. The weather was surprisingly pleasant with temperatures in the 40s and 50s usually accompanied by sunshine. Jim remarked that this was his favorite place, and immediately saw why. There was such a variety of habitat, from the harsh tundra and frigid Bering Sea to the snowcapped mountains. On our first afternoon alone we were able to see Harlequin Ducks, Arctic Loons, Eurasian Wigeon, Black-legged Kittiwakes, and Common Eiders (completing the Eider group for the trip!). The next morning we were up before the sun (except not really since it never sets) and Jim led us up the infamous hill to search for the Bristle-thighed Curlew. Our efforts were rewarded when we finally heard it call and fly overhead allowing for some quick glimpses. In addition, Jim skillfully delivered Arctic Warblers, Willow and Rock Ptarmigans, and Goshawk, in addition to encounters with the resident Musk Ox herd and three Grizzly Bears (which were a safe distance away). The next day we went down the Nome-Teller Highway, making a stop for a lovely picnic at Woolley Lagoon where we found Northern Wheatears and a Pacific Golden Plover. However, the true bird of the day was a displaying male Bluethroat, which was kind enough to allow everyone great views! Other Nome findings included nesting Gyrfalcons, Eastern-yellow Wagtails, Bohemian Waxwings, and Bar-tailed Godwit.

The Seward Pelagic allowed for some of the most breathtaking views I have ever seen, though for me they came with a side of nausea. However, the rocky islands protruding from the pristine waters covered in Sea Lions and Common Murres were worth a little sickness. Our boat was the *Steller Explorer*, manned by a knowledgeable two man crew and a local bird expert, Joe, who ensured we knew where to look and how to identify tricky species. We saw Tufted and Horned Puffins, Marbled Murrelets, Kittlitz's Murrelets, Black Oystercatcher, Pigeon Guillemots, Surf and White-winged Scoters, Rhinoceros and Parakeet Auklets, and a group of male Barrow's Goldeneye. Our captain skillfully guided our ship within yards of the Aialik Glacier, where we enjoyed eating brownies (provided by our crew) and watching as it crashed into the icy waters in front of us. My favorite pelagic experience was the plethora of mammals we encountered. Orcas, Fin Whales, Dall's Porpoises, Harbor Seals, Sea Otters, and River Otters all in easy view!

Coming out of Seward the next day we were able to pick up American Dipper, Chesnut-backed Chickadee, Pine Grosbeaks, and Townsend's Warblers. Our final days were spent going up to the Denali Highway. We stopped at Sheep Mountain Lodge to see if we could get a glimpse at the nesting Boreal Owls, but the male didn't want to play so we had to settle for hearing the chicks calling from inside the box. It was a long drive to our next stop, but we did have entertainment keeping our eyes out for Northern-Hawk Owls, which we soon found sitting atop a telephone wire. Upon arriving at Tangle River Inn, we found our cabins simple but comfortable. The weather which had been generally pleasant, decided to change it up on us and treat us with a snow storm on the first day of summer! We were able to get nice views of a pair of Trumpeter Swans and an 'uncommon' Common Loon to complete the Loons for our trip! Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we missed the elusive Smith's Longspur. Even though the birds were few and far between, we saw gorgeous glacier carved valleys and some of Alaska's highest peaks. As the group made preparations for the final departure, it was bittersweet. This was an unforgettable two weeks, as we not only saw fantastic birds, but were privileged to explore places that many would never imagine visiting. TOS Alaska was truly a grand adventure!

—Rachel Smith





Status of the Texas Bird Image Project

Texas Bird Photo-Images

A Project of the Texas Ornithological Society and the TBRC

TEXAS
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Cover image by Mark Lockwood

The Photo-Documentation of Texas Birds by Geographic Region

The Texas Bird Image Project (TBI Project) was created as an online image archive of photo-documented Texas bird species. The archive hosts photo-documented bird images from contributing photographers and include images from each bio-geographic region of Texas as outlined by the Texas Ornithological Society. Special attention is given to birds of rare-to-uncommon status,

birds outside of their typical geographic range, or birds outside their expected time frame. Photo-documentation will be sought by the TBI Project on an ongoing basis to aid in discussions of status and distribution, field identification, range movements, and geographical variations. The TBI Project was adopted by the Texas Ornithological Society in 2012, and partners with the Texas Bird Records Committee for consultation and oversight.

As of May of 2014, the TBI Project has archived over 7000 Texas bird images and over 100 bird videos by almost 400 photographers. Photographic contributions to the project now average about 25 per week although this varies considerably by season. As might be expected, contributions are heaviest in those geographical areas that are well-known birding locations, i.e., the Lower Rio Grande Valley or the Upper Texas Coast. Contributions are least likely in remote areas of the Texas Panhandle or counties with small populations in central Texas.

At present, several photographic gaps exist and are too many to mention here. Interested photographers are encouraged to look over the web site for photographic gaps or areas with low representation. The TBI project will continue to encourage submission of bird photo-documentation as outlined on the website.

—Jim Peterson

Webmaster, Texas Bird Image Project

<http://www.texasbirdimages.com>

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2014 TOS SPONSORED BIRDING CLASSIC TEAMS!!

TOS-SAYBC Senior Chickadees

Sponsor: Texas Ornithological Society

Chaperone: Tom Inglet

Madeleine McDonald

Esther Yoon

Hannah Franklin

Naomi Flores

Antonio Flores

Date: April 25

Number of species: 57

TOS Mockingbirders

Sponsor: Texas Ornithology Society

Chaperone: Karina Murga

Viviana Murga

Emiliano Murga

Andrea Murga

Date: May 11

Number of species: 38

TOS-SAYBC Junior Chickadees

Sponsor: Texas Ornithological Society

Chaperone: Patsy Inglet and Michelle Flores

Samuel Flores

Elias Flores

Noah Franklin

Grace Franklin

Faith Franklin

Date: April 25

Number of species: 29

TOS Precious Plovers

Sponsor: Texas Ornithological Society

Chaperones: Martha McLeod, Bron Rorex,

Ora Wilshire

Maddie Huggins

Kaylee Howell

Karlee Friebele

Samantha Wright

Dr. Robert Edwards

Date: April 30

Number of species: 121

TOS Heroic Hawks

Sponsor: Texas Ornithological Society

Chaperones: Martha McLeod, Bron Rorex,

Brian Rabroker

Kyler Friebele

Ben Groseclose

Brandon Cruz

Jaby Tarkington

Dr. Robert Edwards

Date: April 24

Number of species: 107

See photos on top right of next page

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Great Texas Birding Classic 2014!

Thanks to the generous support of Monte Mucho Audubon Society, Texas Ornithological Society, and a private donor, Glenda Campos Barrera, Daniel Perales, and Holly Reinhard were able to lead three teams of teenage birders, all from Glenda's local United High School Birding Club, on the Great Texas Birding Classic! We participated in a regional "Gliders" (age 14-18) category, and birded our way from Laredo to San Antonio. "Glenda's Grackle Groupies" placed first place in our category, and Danny's tied with a group from San Antonio for 2nd place! The teenagers all enjoyed a full day of birding. thanks so much to MMAS for helping to fund this!



The TOS Handbook of Texas Birds, Second Edition



Mark W. Lockwood and Brush Freeman

This new edition of the essential Texas birding reference features updated species accounts, all new photographs, and the first complete subspecies listing for Texas birds since 1995.

Range maps with each species helpful appendices documenting presumptive, non-accepted, exotic, and review species; and a comprehensive reference section round out the offerings in this invaluable guide.

"... includes some stunning images of Mexican and less-well-known Texas species ... the authors have provided a unique and elegant publication that is truly an important contribution to Texas ornithology."—Great Plains Research



554 pp. 150 color photos, 641 maps, 8 figs. Table 4 appendices. Bib. Index. \$60.00 cloth; \$30.00 paper with flaps

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