



President's Message



Shelia Hargis TOS President.

I am honored and excited to be your new President! I know I have some big shoes to fill and I'm looking forward to that challenge. I am also looking forward to the fun we will have together and the things we will accomplish over the next year. I have about a bazillion ideas running through my mind at any given time, but I would also love to hear from you about what you would like to see us accomplish. Feel free to email me (Shelia.hargis@gmail.com—note the unusual

spelling of my first name) or call me (512-294-0272).

Thank you to Past President Dr Byron Stone (Dr Birdie) for his six years of commitment on the TOS Board, for the great meetings we had during his Presidency and for the various ways he moved TOS forward. With all of his free time now, he should probably lead a weekender field trip or two teaching us about sparrows or hawks or gulls. Right? It was also a pleasure for me to get to serve on the Board with Chuck Davis, Melanie Hoffmann and Kelly Smith. Thank you Chuck, Melanie and Kelly for your contributions to TOS.

If you missed the Rockport meeting, you missed a good one. Byron made sure everyone saw the Sooty Tern nearby and for many of us, it was a life bird! I hope this is not the new normal for our meetings – a life bird for all in the parking lot! The tern was one of the highlights for me. Another very special moment for me was when we ran into two Great Texas Birding Classic teams from Flour Bluff Elementary School that we sponsored, the Terns Over Spoonbills and the Tenacious Osprey Seekers (see how they incorporated "TOS" in their name?). The kids and their teacher, Blyth Swartsfager, were so appreciative of our sponsorship and insisted that we have a photo op. It was very cool and inspiring!

One of my priorities is to establish several committees and to get more members involved in the work of the organization. There is much more work to do than the Board can handle alone. Two committees that are being formed is the Meeting Committee (it takes a lot of work to put together our meetings!) and the Sanctuary Committee (our sanctuaries need attention and work!). I'm also interested in exploring the idea of creating an Education/Outreach Committee and an Advocacy Committee. If you are interested in knowing more about these committees or serving on one of them, please let me know!

In reading *A History of the Origin and First Decade of the Texas Ornithological Society, 1953 – 1963* by Stanley D. Casto (copies were provided at the Rockport meeting and it is also available on our website in the About TOS section), I



Adult participants on the TOS Port Aransas Hot Spots field trip met the Great Texas Birding Classic teams, Terns Over Spoonbills and Tenacious Osprey Seekers, at Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center. Hopefully this is the current generation of TOS members with the future generation of TOS members!

was struck with how much TOS played a part in advocating for wildlife protection in Texas. We definitely have some big challenges facing our wildlife now—assaults on the Endangered Species Act and the lawsuit to delist the Golden-cheeked Warbler to name a few. I would like us to play as big a part in safeguarding our birds now as our forefathers and foremothers did in the 1950's and 1960's. If you have experience in advocacy or are interested in getting involved in this, let me know.

Summer is upon us and some birders think it is too hot to get out and look for birds. I am not one of those birders! I love watching our breeding birds raising the next generation. I especially love watching their behavior. I encourage you to find a shady spot, slow down and watch the action. And as an Austinite, I am fortunate to live in a city that has an amazing Purple Martin migratory roost. Travis Audubon is my local bird conservation organization, and we have been hosting Purple Martin Parties at the roost during July for the last several years. The Purple Martins put on an amazing aerial show and then pack into the roost trees shoulder to shoulder. Photos and videos do not do it justice. It is something that you must see in person. So, I am inviting you to join us for one or more Purple Martin Parties this summer. Bring your family and friends. It doesn't matter if they are birders or not. They will still think it is very impressive. You can find out the details (location, dates and times) on Travis Audubon's website at travisaudubon.org or you can email or call me. This is a spectacle of nature that is worth the drive to Austin. You will be blown away, I promise! I will be there working the crowd, so please find me and say hi.

—Shelia Hargis, TOS President

Another successful “Wings Over the Hills” Festival



venue on Main Street. Saturday was more field trips, speakers, banding, and then a reception before our keynote speaker, Dorian Anderson. The audience was captivated while Dorian shared his Biking for Birds eco-adventure with us. In 2014, he bicycled over 17,800 miles through 28 states. If he wasn't riding, he was kayaking or hiking. He saw an incredible 617 species, while raising \$50,000 for bird conservation. His story was truly inspiring, and a bit funny! Sunday was our last day of field trips.

Field trips this year went to great locations such as Pedernales Falls State Park, Love Creek Preserve, Junction Hotspots, and more, with fantastic guides who specialize in Hill Country birds. Some of our speakers were Bill Lindemann, Dr. Brent Ortego, Dr. Tania Homayoun, and Dr. Maureen Frank. The hummingbird banding is held on a private ranch outside of Fredericksburg. Master banders Robert and Kay Lookingbill banded around 200 Blackchinned and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds over the course of the weekend, participants in this event have described it as “superb,” and I would have to concur! Ruth Hoyt leads the photography workshop. We look forward to seeing you next year, April 27-29, 2018!

—Crystal Ledezma



Wings Over the Hills held our 7th festival in Fredericksburg this April. Attendees came from all over Texas, as well as 10 other states. We are growing, slowly but surely! If you haven't joined us before, make plans to visit next year, we will have a great time.

Friday started with field trips leaving bright and early. During the day we had speakers, vendors, and hummingbird banding. Friday evening, Last Chance Forever, The Birds of Prey Conservancy, gave an educational program and flight demonstration of some of their raptors at a beautiful outdoor

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Spring Meeting in Rockport

The meeting was headquartered at the Saltwater Pavilion at Rockport Beach Park, which was convenient as that's where a Sooty Tern has been seen since April 15. President Byron Stone's goal was to get all meeting participants on the tern. However, by meeting time on Thursday afternoon, it was nowhere to be found. Luckily, it was back in view by 6:30 the next morning and slowly but surely everyone eventually saw it.



The weather was fabulous and so were the birds and the field trips. Speakers included on Thursday night Dr. Brent Ortego, Editor of the Texas Christmas Bird Count and

also Coordinator of the Texas Breeding Bird Survey. talking about Texas avian population trends apparent from the 2016 Breeding Bird Survey and Christmas Bird Counts results, thus showing that citizen science contributions are very important. Friday night's speaker was Owen Fitzsimmon, Senior Biologist of Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program's Coastal Bird Program, who discussed research and conservation for our coastal birds. The Saturday night speaker was Dr. Elizabeth Smith, Senior Whooping Crane Scientist, Texas Program of International Crane Foundation, who talked about the comeback of the Whooping Crane and their future needs. Special thanks goes to Bron Rorex for spearheading the meeting as well as to the Aransas Bird and Nature Club for hosting the event.

During Saturday night's banquet, Anthony Hewetson was recognized for his amazing accomplishment of seeing at least 100 species in all 254 Texas counties. Also, Jack Eitnrear was recognized for his twenty years of service editing the publications of the Texas Ornithological Society. Jack, in turn, recognized first editor Kent Rylander who spoke about the history of the TOS publications. Jack Eitnrear also recognized Stan Casto and gave a short presentation about the Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society and TOS's 50th anniversary, talking about the evolution of the bulletin through the years, including adding color and becoming digital.

—Susan Foster



Impromptu Big Sit during the Sunday field trip to Refugio Lion's Park

Spring Meeting Awards



As part of the celebration of the Bulletin's 50th anniversary a special award was given to Stanley D. Casto, by Editor Jack Eitniear, for his continued support of the Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society.



President Stone presented Jack Eitniear with an award for 20 years of editing the Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society.



(L) Kent Rylander, 1st editor of the BTOS address the banquet. Jack Eitniear, current editor, is at the podium. (M) Byron Stone, TOS President addressing the Saturday night banquet attendees. (R) Dr. Stan Casto discusses the early bulletin and his first contribution in 1963.



Rockport Saturday night banquet attendees.



(L) Stan Casto and (R) Kent Rylander.

2017 Officers and Directors of the Texas Ornithological Society

We are pleased to announce that your votes have been counted, and the members of the 2017 Board of Directors of the Texas Ornithological Society have been selected. As of the March cutoff date we had 867 voting members. We received and counted 228 validated ballots, well above the 10% required by our bylaws.

¹New officers:

President	Sheila Hargis
Vice President	Jimma Byrd
Secretary	Susan Foster
Treasurer	Catherine Winans

Those directors elected follow:

Byron Stone	At-Large Director
Catherine Winans	At-Large Director
Susan Foster	At-Large Director
Shelia Hargis	At-Large Director
Anthony Hewetson	Region 1 Director
Gailon Brehm	Region 2 Director
Linda Belssner	Region 3 Director
Lee Hoy	Region 4 Director
Jimma Byrd	Region 5 Director
Betty Vermeire	Region 6 Director
Kelly Smith	Region 7 Director
Glenn Olsen	Region 8 Director

We wish to give special thanks to those candidates who were competing for positions and were not elected, as follows:

Melanie Hoffman, Candidate for Region 4 Director

Rick Taylor, Candidate for Region 5 Director

Daniel Hodges, Candidate for Region 6 Director

We wish to thank Steve Reisinger and Judy Kestner for counting the votes and verifying the accuracy of this election. Finally, special thanks go to Ron Weeks for serving on the Nominating Committee.

Regards,

Gailon Brehm and Shelia Hargis TOS Nominating Committee

¹ Elected by the Board during the Rockport Meeting.



Birding Results from the Spring 2017 TOS Meeting, Rockport, Texas.

This is, as promised, the checkerboard report from our spring meeting in Rockport. The field trip organizers went to town; coming up with 28-30 field trips (28 official trips and 2 unofficial regional big day trips) spread across three days and, thanks to the preparation of our trip leaders and the skills of our participants, we did a great job of birding an already well-birded region. I know, from my submissions alone, that the regional eBird reviewers have their hands full.

Before I get into our results I want to explain how the checkerboard was built this time around. I used eBird to generate a list of every species that had been seen during the last ten Mays in every county we were to explore (Aransas, Calhoun, Goliad, Live Oak, McMullen, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, and Victoria). This yielded a list of 363 species. From this list I removed species that the ABA does not consider countable (such as Lilac-crowned Parrot). I then removed those that had been reported to eBird four times or less from the period surveyed. This left me with a list of 284 species and field trip participants with the task of competing with every eBirder who had spent May time in those counties from 2007 through 2016.

How did we do?

We saw, as a group, 247 species of the 278 that seemed reasonable. That works out to about 87% and given that we were, in effect, competing against every hard-core county birder and rarity chaser that had worked this well-birded region during the last ten years of Mays, I think that is pretty respectable. We also had five write-ins – all species that had not been reported to eBird, from the counties surveyed, more than four times during the last ten Januaries: Greater Scaup, Black Rail, Sooty Tern, Red-throated Loon, and Tropical Kingbird. If you add those in, we could call it 89%!

Birders are a competitive bunch so a few highlights are in order. By the numbers, the Regional Big Day group prevailed on Friday with 151 species, the Guadalupe Delta Preserve group prevailed on Saturday with 123 species, and the Corpus Christi Hotspots group prevailed on Sunday with 96 species.

It is testimony to the widespread nature of birds in the region during spring migration and to the tenacity of the field groups that relatively few groups contributed uniquely to the list. In most cases, this seemed to occur when a particular group got further east, north, or west than any other group, moving them into habitat that got covered by only one group during the weekend.

The Magic Ridge team found the only Gadwall on Saturday; the Powderhorn Ranch team found the only American Wigeon on Saturday; the Magic Ridge team found the only Greater Scaup (the first of five write-ins) on Saturday; the Leader's Choice #2 team found the only Lesser Nighthawk on Sunday; the Magic Ridge team found the only Virginia Rail on Saturday; the Magic Ridge team found the only Black Rail (the second of five write-ins) on Friday; the Regional Big Day team found the only Piping Plover on Friday; the Rookery Island Boat team found the only Marbled Godwit on Sunday; the Rookery Island Boat team found the only Herring Gull on Sunday; the Regional Big Day team found

the only Red-throated Loon (the fourth of five write-ins) on Friday; the Regional Big Day team found the only White-tailed Kite on Friday; the Refugio Lion's Park team found the only Northern Harrier on Saturday; the Magic Ridge team found the only Barn Owl on Friday; the Regional Big Day team found the only Belted Kingfisher on Friday; the Refugio Lion's Park team found the only Peregrine Falcon on Saturday; the Regional Big Day team found the only Eastern Phoebe on Friday; the Goose Island State Park team found the only Tropical Kingbird (the fifth of five write-ins) on Friday; the Regional Big Day team found the only House Wren on Saturday; the Jim Wells County team found the only Cactus Wren on Friday; the Regional Big Day team found the only Ruby-crowned Kinglet on Friday; the Port Aransas Hotspots team found the only Wood Thrush on Saturday; the Regional Big Day team found the only Brown Thrasher on Friday; the Port Aransas Hotspots team scored a nice double with the only Ovenbird and the only Worm-eating Warbler on Saturday; the Regional Big Day team found the only Prothonotary Warbler on Saturday; the Corpus Christi Hotspots team found the only Chipping Sparrow on Sunday; the Jim Wells County team found the only Black-throated Sparrow on Saturday; the Regional Big Day team found the only Seaside Sparrow on Friday; the Magic Ridge team found the only Yellow-headed Blackbird on Friday.

What happened to the third of five write-ins? Well that was the Sooty Tern and thanks to the tireless efforts of several birders (Byron Stone and Drew Harvey were the two I most noticed) almost everybody who attended the meeting got to see that particular bird☺ Is there anybody else out there who thinks that a TOS t-shirt featuring this critter would be a good idea?

For what it's worth we, as a birding horde, racked up 226 species on Friday, 223 species on Saturday, and 163 species on Sunday.

Most of you have seen more than a few lists from me over the years ... so here comes another one. Without further ado, the list from the Spring TOS meeting in Rockport, Texas: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Fulvous Whistling Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mottled Duck, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Redhead, Greater Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Northern Bobwhite, Wild Turkey, Least Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared Dove, Inca Dove, Common Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, White-winged Dove, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Greater Roadrunner, Groove-billed Ani, Lesser Nighthawk, Common Nighthawk, Chuck-will's-widow, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, King Rail, Clapper Rail, Virginia Rail, Black Rail, Sora, Purple Gallinule, Common Gallinule, American Coot, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, American Oystercatcher, Black-bellied Plover, Snowy Plover, Wilson's Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Piping Plover, Killdeer, Upland Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Stilt Sandpiper, Sanderling, Dunlin, Baird's Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Buff-

breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, Lesser Yellowlegs, Wilson's Phalarope, Laughing Gull, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Sooty Tern, Least Tern, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Common Tern, Forster's Tern, Royal Tern, Sandwich Tern, Black Skimmer, Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Neotropic Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, Anhinga, American White Pelican, Brown Pelican, Least Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Reddish Egret, Cattle Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, White Ibis, White-faced Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, White-tailed Kite, Mississippi Kite, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Harris's Hawk, White-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Crested Caracara, Peregrine Falcon, Monk Parakeet, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Eastern Wood Pewee, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Acadian Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Couch's Kingbird, Tropical Kingbird, Western Kingbird, Eastern Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Green Jay, Blue Jay,

American Crow, Horned Lark, Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Cave Swallow, Barn Swallow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Black-crested Titmouse, Verdin, House Wren, Marsh Wren, Carolina Wren, Bewick's Wren, Cactus Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, Gray Catbird, Curve-billed Thrasher, Brown Thrasher, Long-billed Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, House Sparrow, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch, Ovenbird, Worm-eating Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Waterthrush, Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Canada Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Olive Sparrow, Cassin's Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Pyrrhuloxia, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Painted Bunting, Dickcissel, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Common Grackle, Boat-tailed Grackle, Great-tailed Grackle, Bronzed Cowbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole, Bullock's Oriole, Audubon's Oriole, and Baltimore Oriole.

—Anthony 'Fat Tony' Hewetson



Skimmer Promotes TOS at Rockport Meeting



Captain Tommy Moore of Rockport Adventures.com donated a percentage of all participant's fees for the Skimmer field trip to TOS. Captain Moore has been an ardent supporter of TOS. "Kudos" for your continued support!

Regional Reports

Region 3—Piney Woods

Looking for some great birding in East Texas? Have you tried one of the many great State Parks in East Texas? Texas has a great State Park system and birding is excellent in almost all of the parks. Here are just 3 of some of the really great parks in East Texas.

Tyler State Park offers camping, hiking, nature study and birding. Leader lead walks are held about once a month. Over 200 bird species have been identified in the park. Tyler State Park is in the Sabine River Basin.

Caddo Lake State Park is a Cypress swamp which offers camping, boating and fishing, amid a diversified birding trail system. The park has a list of 190 plus bird species.

Lake Tawakoni State Park is set amongst prairie and woodland, with a lake tossed in. The park has 5 miles of shoreline trails with 376 acres of Oak Forest, a bird list of 200 species.

If you missed the Rockport TOS meeting-you missed a lot of great birding. Most trips had a 100 plus birds reported each day. Thank you Rockport for a great meeting.

Thank you TOS members for getting out the vote for your new board of Directors.

—Linda Belssner, Director

Region 4 Report:

It seems quite a few birders have been moving out to and retiring out in the Big Bend region which has already added quite a bit to our knowledge of the birds of the Trans-Pecos. This past winter, County Road 505 became quite the raptor hotspot with Golden and Bald Eagles, White-tailed Kites, and many buteos being seen quite regularly. A dark-morph Ferruginous Hawk was regularly seen along US 90 east of Marathon and the prairie dog town regularly turned up Burrowing Owls, a normal morph Ferruginous Hawk, and Badgers as well.

With my own move to Sanderson and working in Langtry, I am learning some interesting bird distributions in and around these two areas. Sanderson produced one sighting of a Band-tailed Pigeon and the same made two separate appearances at the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center (both documented with photos). A male Lucifer's Hummingbird was seen in Sanderson for a couple of days at my feeder's, hoping they will become regular like at Christmas Mountain Oasis and speaking of the Oasis, a migrant Burrowing Owl made a stop on April 20th which was a great "yard" bird for Carolyn.

Surprisingly, hummers are few and far between in Langtry. To add to general bird distribution, I set a recent record with a Crested Caracara 30 miles west of Langtry, which is the furthest west I have had one to date.

Phainopeplas were regular this winter in Sanderson and Langtry with males and females present before dispersing for breeding. Birding at the center in Langtry is excellent, but so is walking around town where you are more likely to see wintering Lark Buntings, Cassin's Sparrows, the local flock

of Rio Grande Wild Turkey's and, like me, a Harris's Hawk soaring over the Rio Grande down by the historical markers. Pump Canyon, a privately owned location near Langtry and only accessible by high clearance vehicles, produced White-throated Swifts, a singing Olive Sparrow this month which is the furthest west I have had one singing, and a pair of Great Kiskadees spends time down there and up at the center.

Further west, the Davis Mountains and Big Bend have had some nice sightings with a recent Tufted Flycatcher (May 7) being reported by Mark Flippo on Boot Canyon Trail. Subsequent searches for the bird were not successful but did lead to a heard Dusky-capped Flycatcher the following day near Boot Springs. The Nature Conservancy's David Mountains Preserve provided a likely Tropical Parula found by Rich Kostecke, as well as, Stellar's Jays, Mountain Chickadee, Painted Redstarts, Dusky Flycatcher, Green-tailed Towhees, and much more. Of course, Kelly Bryan likes to share images of his "yard" Painted Redstarts in the Davis Mountains!

Lake Balmorhea/Sandia Springs area had a Whimbrel, an American Golden Plover, a Glossy Ibis among a flock of White-faced, and a juvenile Aplomado Falcon was seen by the dam.

If you haven't made it out to west Texas at any time of year, get it on your calendar!

—Lee Hoy, Director

Region 5—Edwards Plateau

It's good to hear the calls of summer in the backyard. Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Summer Tanager, Eastern Wood-Pee-wee, and Painted Bunting just to name a few. That means it will soon be time for Breeding Bird Surveys. I'm excited to be adding a new route this year and look forward to scouting.

Another fun thing about this time of year is watching the antics of fledglings. Recently, while walking in our pecan orchard, we heard a different owl-type sound. Upon closer inspection, we spotted two Great Horned Owl chicks. They were side-by-side on a horizontal limb and high in a pecan tree. As we drew closer, the parent owl flew away with what looked like the remains of a squirrel. In spite of the distraction flight, the chicks made their presence known by loudly clamoring for more.

We've had a couple of great festivals in the Edwards Plateau region this season. Balcones Songbird Festival was April 21-23. This annual event is always popular and field trips can fill quickly. TOS is a partner, and several of our members helped by helping organize and leading trips.

Wings Over the Hills, in Fredericksburg, was the following weekend April 28-30. TOS was represented with a table selling t-shirts, caps, etc. and providing promotional materials. A good number of our members assisted with organization, lead field trips, registration, and staffing the TOS table.

Thanks to all who give of their time to help others learn about birds and the natural world we share

—Jimma Byrd, Regional Director

Rockport Meeting Field Trips



TOS Meeting Bird Quiz





Results and Participant's Articles will be Included in the 2017 Issue Of "Texas Birds Annual"



Senior author Peter P. Marra, Ph.D. stopped in San Antonio to promote his new book. His talk was well attended and highlighted the many difficult choices that need to be made in order to humanely deal with the feral cat populations.

Cat Wars: The Devastating Consequences of a Cuddly Killer

Peter P. Marra, Chris Santella

216 pages

Princeton University Press (September 20, 2016)

ISBN-10: 0691167419

This compelling book traces the historical and cultural ties between humans and cats from early domestication to the current boom in pet ownership, along the way accessibly explaining the science of extinction, population modeling, and feline diseases. It charts the developments that have led to our present impasse--from Stan Temple's breakthrough studies on cat predation in Wisconsin to cat-eradication programs underway in Australia today. It describes how a small but vocal minority of cat advocates has campaigned successfully for no action in much the same way that special interest groups have stymied attempts to curtail smoking and climate change.

Cat Wars paints a revealing picture of a complex global problem--and proposes solutions that foresee a time when wildlife and humans are no longer vulnerable to the impacts of free-ranging cats.

Pacific-slope Flycatcher

On November 6th, 2015, Ian Davies and others birding Sabal Palm Sanctuary (Cameron County) as part of the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival identified a yellowish Empidonax flycatcher as a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. The following day (November 7th), Doug Gochfeld was able to make an audio recording of this bird as it seemed to match up to vocalizations of Pacific-slope Flycatcher.



Photo by Dan Jones. November 9, 2015

This bird remained quite faithful to the location where it was discovered and was seen by many until at least April 7th, 2016.

The TBRC carefully considered this record and unanimously (9-0) voted to accept it as the first documented state record. The audio recordings served as the key artifacts in the documentation of this record.

As many certainly know, Pacific-slope Flycatcher and Cordilleran Flycatcher were once considered the same species—Western Flycatcher—until studies of the complex led to the species being split into 2 recognized species in 1989. This split has been considered problematic since that time, and more recent studies have shown that intergrades between the two exist in areas where their breeding ranges come in close contact. Additionally, there is no diagnostic way to reliably identify species visually in the field nor in the hand as there are overlapping field marks.

Identification of either species by vocalization(s) is also rather difficult, especially by ear without a good recording. There is some overlap of vocals between Cordilleran and Pacific-slope and some birds seem to make sounds that are intermediate between the two. The one vocalization that can be used to make an identification is a bird's position note call. With a high quality recording, the difference between the 2 species' calls should readily show up on a spectrogram. Both recordings submitted with this first state record showed the "classic" signature of a Pacific-slope Flycatcher.

The TBRC acknowledges that this split is considered problematic by many but feels that this Sabal Palm bird is a good match for the birds that the AOU currently reorganizes as a full species—Pacific-slope Flycatcher. We are also aware that this record is probably not the first time that Pacific-slope Flycatcher has been found in Texas. Other candidate birds, including a couple in low-elevation areas in the fall & winter seasons, have been studied in Texas but none previously have had solid audio-recordings of the bird's position note included in any documentation submitted to the TBRC. The TBRC encourages observers who see out-of-range "Western" Flycatcher to make efforts to obtain audio recordings when possible to establish a pattern of vagrancy for this species in Texas.

—Eric Carpenter, Secretary, Texas Bird Records Committee

San Angelo naturalist Terry Maxwell



Terry C. Maxwell, Ph.D., San Angelo Naturalist, a retired professor of biology at Angelo State University, died Wednesday, April 26.

Maxwell, 72, was a regular contributor to the San Angelo Standard Times and wrote a weekly nature column with illustrations he drew by hand.

He joined the ASU faculty in 1976 in the biology department and spent 38 years at the school until he retired in 2014. He continued teaching as the curator emeritus of ornithology for the Angelo State Natural History Collections and through his writing. In addition to his weekly columns that featured wildlife found in the Concho Valley, Maxwell also wrote books about his adventures as a naturalist.

Maxwell said he was interested in birds since he was 12 and learned how to draw them and other animals from a young age. He delighted in telling stories from his explorations as a naturalist and sharing his knowledge and wonder about animals through his columns.

"My career life has been like a dream," Maxwell wrote in "Tales of a Journeyman Naturalist." "I fear that I will wake up some morning and realize that I really did not see a condor high in the Andes ... show an armadillo to the son of Nikita Khrushchev, or survey breeding birds on the North Slope tundra of Alaska. It has been the glad life of a journeyman naturalist.

TOS Weekender to Colorado City, Mitchell County March 24-26, 2017

Twenty birders (18 women and 2 men) enjoyed Colorado City hospitality courtesy of our local birding guide Kyle O'Haver. Kyle is now the Park Superintendent at Lake Colorado City State Park but you probably remember him from his time at Estero Llano Grande where he was an active birder. Many of the group saw at least 100 species for Mitchell County, which was pretty darn good for the transition period between winter and spring. We had several crowd-pleasing birds.

When we arrived Friday for a couple of hours of afternoon birding at the park we had winds of 27 mph gusting even higher, but still got to see six to eight Rock Wrens all in one group, Western Bluebirds, and Cassin's Sparrows singing at the park entrance – a lifer for some. That evening, we were treated to Texas Sheet Cake and other desserts provided by the Friends of Lake Colorado City State Park, at a talk given by Kyle on birds of the area.

Fortunately Saturday was much less windy and our visit to the Native Prairie Association of Texas' 1100 acre restricted access Maddin Prairie was fantastic, with Common Poorwills calling, Cassin's Sparrows singing, both Northern Bobwhite and Scaled Quail and the highlight - Burrowing Owls. After that we checked out Lake Champion which has a new lessee who is making park improvements. There we had snipe, cormorants, a Common Loon and a few ducks. We stopped

by Ruddick Park in town to get the Cackling Goose that has been there for a couple of years, Eastern Bluebird, and no Inca Doves. Part of the afternoon was spent over at Big Spring State Park where we began our Howard County lists.

Sunday back at the park Kyle made coffee for the group at sunrise. (How often do you get fresh coffee made on site by your leader?) We scanned the lake for egrets, herons and flyovers. A Yellow-headed Blackbird perched up for nice views. Then it was off to a pond that held eight Cinnamon Teal, Mallards and a lone Ring-necked Duck. On FM 2836 over Cherry Creek northwest of the park an American Golden-Plover, a rare bird for the county, was the icing on the cake.

Maddin Prairie is a jewel. In the land of cotton it is a welcome island of habitat that is being restored to its short-grass prairie roots. While you can't get on the property on your own, the Native Prairie Association has several work days and a breeding bird survey each May. Contact NPAT volunteer Kirsti Harms, kmharms3(at)gmail.com, for more information.

Bottom Line: If you ever are travelling IH 20 West between Sweetwater and Big Spring take time to check out Colorado City hotspots. By the way, the locals say Coloraydo City.

—Submitted by Jane Tillman, TOS Field Trip Coordinator



A History of the Origin and First Decade of the Texas Ornithological Society, 1953–1963

Abstract

The Texas Ornithological Society was organized on February 14, 1953, at Austin, Texas, as a result of the promotional efforts of Charles McNeese and his fellow enthusiasts in the Outdoor Nature Club of Houston. The original purposes of the society included the observation, study and conservation of the birds of Texas and the stimulation of fellowship among ornithologists of Texas and the Southwest.

The society is administered by an executive board consisting of the officers and eight regional directors. The scissor-tailed flycatcher was chosen in 1956 as the official bird, with the emblem of the society being a flying scissor-tail superimposed on a map of the state of Texas. Field trips have been an important part of the activities of the society since its origination.

The official publication of the society during its first decade was a monthly newsletter providing news of members, the results of Christmas bird counts, migration reports and other information regarding birds. In 1955, the Charles H. McNeese Library of Ornithology was established as a memorial to the first president of the society. Conservation was also a major emphasis of the early society with support given for protection of the white-winged dove, golden eagle and Harris' hawk, as well as other wildlife species.

Charles Harold McNeese

The formation and successful management of an organization is often due to the vision and leadership of a single person and a few dedicated coworkers. Indeed, this was particularly true for the Texas Ornithological Society, which was first conceived and promoted by Charles McNeese and his fellow enthusiasts.

Charles McNeese was born on August 22, 1892, in Bellaire, Ohio. He was the youngest of the five children of John and Maggie McNeese. The family lived in Bellaire until their move in 1914 to Oklahoma City, where Charles enlisted in the Oklahoma National Guard. In 1916, his unit was mobilized and sent to the Mexican Border near San Benito, Texas. In early 1917, he was discharged at Fort Sill, only to be recalled and sent to Texas for officer training at Leon Springs. Following this training, he was sent to France where he saw eight months of combat duty and was promoted to captain before returning home in 1918.

McNeese graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1920 with a major in geology, and soon afterward he was employed by Continental Oil Company. He married Hazel

Steele, and in 1925, they moved to Ponca City, Oklahoma. With the outbreak of World War II, McNeese was appointed to the Fuel Section of the Office of Price Administration. In March 1942, he was called to active duty and, in the summer of 1943, was sent to Guadalcanal. In October, he returned to Temple, Texas, for medical treatment before being transferred to Camp Wolters near Mineral Wells. In May 1944, following his discharge as a lieutenant-colonel, McNeese resumed his position as a valuation engineer with Continental Oil Company. In 1950, his wife died, and in the following year he was transferred to Houston.¹



*Charles H. McNeese
Initiator and First President
of Texas Ornithological Society*

How and when McNeese became interested in birds is unknown. It is known only that by the late 1940s he had become an avid birder and was active in the Oklahoma Ornithological Society, which was founded in 1950. In 1953, he became a member of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU).

Shortly after his transfer to Houston in 1951, McNeese joined the Outdoor Nature Club. Finding here a number of other persons interested in birds, he and his new friends set out to organize an "Ornithology Group" within the club. On April 11, 1952, the group was finally organized with

the election of McNeese as chairman; Francis MacMahon, vice-chairman for projects; Noel Pettingell, vice-chairman for field trips; Frank Graham Watson, editor-recorder; and Carrie Holcomb, secretary-treasurer.²

Laying the Groundwork

The Ornithology Group became immediately active through local field trips that served to unify the members. In an effort to make contact with birders from other parts of the state, a field trip was conducted to Del Rio where the Houston contingent was joined by a party from Midland that included John and Margret Galley, Harold and Frances Williams and Don Curry. The success of this excursion led to another extended trip where the Houstonians made the acquaintance of Luther Goldman, manager of the Laguna Atascosa and Santa Ana refuges in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.³ Although the discussions on these field trips are unknown, it is probable that a state bird organization was often the topic of conversation.

During late September, it was decided to test the sentiment concerning the formation of a state society and, accordingly, on October 4, 1952, Charles McNeese sent a letter to 120 ornithologists and birders throughout the state inviting them to express their thoughts on the subject. Twenty-eight persons responded to this letter with expressions of support and specific suggestions.⁴ Marshal

Johnston counseled that conservation efforts should not be restricted to birds, but should include animals as well as plants. Johnston also suggested that the state should be divided into faunal and floristic regions with each region having a chairman or director. In contrast, Kent Rylander focused attention on the need for a bulletin and the advisability of having regular meetings. Several persons also sent the names of additional birders who they thought should be contacted. One respondent noted that Connie Hagar had not been informed and that if this eminent birder had heard nothing then many others did not yet know of the proposed society.⁵ During October 20-25, Charles McNeese and Frank Watson attended the AOU convention at Baton Rouge where they met with other Texans in attendance. At this time, it was agreed to meet in conjunction with the Texas Academy of Science, which was to convene in Fort Worth in December. However, when it was later learned that the agenda of the Academy was full, the decision was made to hold an informal planning session.⁶

On November 25, 1952, McNeese mailed a second letter to the birders and ornithologists informing them of the planning session that was to be held on the evening of December 5 at the Colonial Cafeteria near the campus of Texas Christian University. This meeting, chaired by Everett T. Dawson of the Texas Game and Fish Commission, was attended by 24 people who engaged in lively discussion. Pauline James reported that Texas was one of the few states without a state bird organization. As a historical aside, Joe Heiser noted that a year or two earlier he had discussed the idea of a state society or perhaps a branch of the AOU with Leonard Wing, George Petrides, George Williams and Charles Hamilton, but no action had been taken. Several of the people present felt that they could not commit their local groups but expressed their individual willingness to participate. The meeting ended with general support for the proposed society, but no additional plans were made.⁷

Organization of the Society

On December 16, 1952, Everett Dawson notified Charles McNeese that he had made arrangements for a meeting room at the Commodore Perry Hotel in Austin. Very little took place after this time until January 17, 1953, when McNeese mailed a letter "To All Interested Ornithologists" informing them that the long-awaited organizational meeting would take place in Austin during the afternoon of Saturday, April 14, 1953. Recipients of the letter were requested to be thinking of potential officers for the society, particularly the president whom McNeese thought should be someone "connected with ornithology in a professional way."

Fifty-eight persons attended the organizational meeting. E.T. Dawson hosted the group and officiated until Charles McNeese was selected as temporary chairman. The first business undertaken was the adoption of a constitution followed by the election of officers. The constitution of the new society declared that its objective was to promote the discovery and dissemination of knowledge of birds; to encourage the observation, study and conservation of the birds of Texas; and to stimulate fellowship among ornithologists of Texas and the Southwest by an annual meeting and field trip.

All persons engaged in the observation of birds or interested in their study and protection were eligible for membership. Individuals who became members prior to May 14, 1953, were considered charter members. Forty-five of those present on February 14 became members at that time.⁸

Time was to prove that the constitution that had been adopted would not serve the best interests of the society. The amendment procedure was difficult, and since the document contained no by-laws section, even minor changes required the full amendment process. In addition, the yearly election of officers did not provide the continuity of leadership necessary to carry out long-range objectives. The ongoing correction of these deficiencies occupied the attention of the society for the next five years.

Slate of Officers

The original leadership of TOS consisted entirely of lay people. Charles McNeese was elected president Supporting McNeese was a slate of officers, two of whom, Frank Watson and Carrie Holcomb, would later serve as presidents of the society.

Vice-President William Deans Anderson had been a country schoolteacher in Alberta, Canada, before moving to Austin where he owned a general contracting firm. Anderson had no special interest in birds until he began construction of the Texas Game and Fish marine laboratory at Rockport. While working on this project, he often stayed at the cottages owned by Jack and Connie Hagar. On one occasion, Jack Bowman, a marine biologist, asked him to go on a field trip to the second chain of islands. While the rest of the party searched for invertebrates, he and the captain looked at birds. One bird that particularly interested Anderson was identified by the captain as a flamingo. When this information was shared with Connie Hagar, she told him that the bird was actually a reddish egret, and she then proceeded to give him some instruction on how to identify birds. As the year progressed, Anderson became more interested in ornithology and often went birding with Connie, building a friendship that he and his wife, Agatha, continued for many years. Anderson was a member of both the Wilson Ornithological Society (1950) and the AOU (1952). Because of the demands of his work, he was reluctant to become an officer, but was encouraged by Magnolia Greene, of Austin, who was very enthusiastic about the organization of the society.⁹

Secretary-Treasurer Bascom Bryan Watson was born on September 17, 1896, in Tatum, Rusk County, Texas, the third son of William and Johnnie Murphy Watson. About 1914, Watson moved to Tyler where he later worked for the Cotton Belt Railroad and as a private accountant. In March 1950, Watson and six other men successfully petitioned the city commission of Tyler to designate Langley Island in Lake Tyler as a wildlife and bird sanctuary. This decision was contested with the result that the Tyler Audubon Society was formed to develop and preserve the sanctuary. Watson's dedication to conservation and his skill as an accountant were undoubtedly the major factors leading to his election as secretary-treasurer. He died on February 16, 1977, and was buried in Tyler.¹⁰

Corresponding Secretary Carrie Holcomb brought to the society a deep love of birds and well-developed clerical

and management skills. She was born near Frankston in Anderson County, Texas, on October 11, 1897, the sixth child of John Cass and Ella Morgan Holcomb. Her father had a peach orchard near Frankston, and it was there that Carrie was first exposed to birds. In later years, she often admonished the local children not to shoot birds with their BB guns and slingshots. Carrie began her career in 1917 as a clerk for the General Claims Agent of International and Great Northern Railroad in Palestine. The I&GN was later purchased by the Missouri Pacific, and Carrie moved to their new headquarters in Houston where she joined the Outdoor Nature Club and later became a member of the AOU. In 1962, after 45 years of service, she retired and returned to Frankston where she lived until her death on August 18, 1972. Carrie often observed that birding was a great leveler of mankind since all people were equal in their enjoyment of birds.¹¹

Editor-Recorder Frank Graham Watson had been involved in ornithology for many years. In 1934, he became a member of the Cooper Ornithological Society and in later years joined the AOU (1936) and the Wilson Ornithological Society (1937). In 1940, he published extensive observations on the behavior of the white-tailed kite in the San Joaquin delta of California. After arriving in Texas, he served as the compiler of the 1952 Houston Christmas Bird Count and was the reporter for Audubon Field Notes from the South Texas Region. Watson served as the second president of TOS until his transfer to the New York office of Shell Oil Company. His last known address was at North Pecos Station in Denver, Colorado, in 1979.¹²

Activities During the First Year

Efforts during the first year were directed toward perfecting the administrative structure of the society. McNeese first enlarged the executive committee by appointing John Galley of Midland, Irby Davis from Harlingen and Jessie Maye Smith from Fort Worth as members-at-large.¹³ McNeese then moved to appoint E. T. Dawson to chair the committee to divide the state into regions. In making his recommendations, Dawson relied heavily on a map prepared by B. B. Watson that divided the state into 10 regions. McNeese complimented Dawson's work but offered his personal opinion that the number of regions should be reduced from 10 to six. John Galley was even more conservative, believing that the state should be divided only into southern, eastern, central and western regions.¹⁴ The final decision was for eight regions, and a map showing their limits was published in the December newsletter.

Revision of the constitution was delegated to Jessie Maye Smith who organized a committee in the Fort

Worth area consisting of Eula W. Adams, chairman, Katie Casstevens and R E. Hardwicke. Proposed revisions included division of the state into regions and the appointment of a director from each region who would also serve on the executive committee. Membership and Publicity, Field Trip, and Conservation Committees were also proposed with the president having authority to appoint chairmen.¹⁵

Membership increased dramatically, and by May 14 the charter membership roll listed 325 members, of which 307 resided in Texas and 17 in 14 other states. One member lived in Canada Richard O. Albert, who later served as president of the society, learned of TOS while living in Florida. Included as charter members were such eminent ornithologists and naturalists as Alexander Sprunt IV, William B. Stallcup, George H. Lowrey, Roger Tory Peterson, Harry C. Oberholser, George M. Sutton, James H. Zimmerman and Roy Bedichek.¹⁶

Twelve issues of the newsletter were published during 1953. Major articles included summaries of Texas and Mexican Christmas Counts, as well as the Audubon Field Notes from South Texas. The activities of various bird and nature clubs were regular features. Results of field trips were published as was the news of members, particularly those on vacation who sent reports of their bird sightings. Research notes included a nesting record for

the zone-tailed hawk, observations on the peregrine falcon and a summer record for the white-throated sparrow. Noel Pettingell and Frank Watson also published an informative note on the "History of Christmas Counts in Texas."

On February 20-21, 1954, the society held its first annual meeting at the Fort Worth Children's Museum where Frank Watson was elected vice-president, Eula W. Adams secretary-treasurer and Edgar Kincaid editor-recorder. McNeese and Holcomb were reelected to their original offices. The number of votes required to approve the proposed constitutional revisions had not been received at the time of the annual meeting, and therefore, no action was taken to appoint regional directors or committee chairmen. However, by April 1, the revisions had been approved, and McNeese named Peggy Acord, W. D. Anderson, Keith L. Dixon, John Galley, Janice B. Lacey, Frances A Wier, Eula Whitehouse and Irby Davis as regional directors. Manuel Armand Yramategui was appointed as chairman of the conservation committee.

Involvement in Conservation Issues

Edgar Kincaid enthusiastically used his position as editor to set the tone for TOS involvement in conservation issues. According to Kincaid the "observation and study of birds are the greatest of all possible joys, but the plain truth is that there must be some birds before observation and



*Carrie Holcomb
Corresponding Secretary and Sixth President
of Texas Ornithological Society*

Officers of the Texas Ornithological Society, February 1953–April 1963

TERM	POSITION	OFFICER
1953–1954	President	Charles McNeese
	Vice-President	W. D. Anderson
	Secretary-Treasurer	B. B. Watson
	Corresponding Secretary	Carrie Holcomb
	Editor-Recorder	Frank Watson
	<i>Organizational Meeting: Austin (1953)</i>	
1954–1955	President	Charles McNeese
	Vice-President	Frank Watson
	Secretary-Treasurer	Eula W. Adams
	Corresponding Secretary	Carrie Holcomb
	Editor-Recorder	Edgar Kincaid
	<i>Annual Meeting: Fort Worth (1954)</i>	
1955–1956	President	Frank Watson*
	Vice-President	John Galley
	Secretary-Treasurer	Eula W. Adams
	Corresponding Secretary	Carrie Holcomb
	Editor-Recorder	Edgar Kincaid
	<i>Annual Meeting: Texas A&M (1955)</i>	
1956–1957	President	John Galley
	Vice-President	Bert W. Lindsay
	Secretary-Treasurer	Carrie Holcomb
	Corresponding Secretary	Frances Williams
	Editor-Recorder	Edgar Kincaid
	<i>Annual Meeting: MO-Ranch (1956)</i>	
1957–1958	President	Clarence Cottam
	Vice-President	Warren Pulich
	Secretary-Treasurer	Carrie Holcomb
	Corresponding Secretary	M. K. Rylander
	Editor-Recorder	Anne LeSassier
	<i>Annual Meeting: Austin (1957)</i>	
1958–1959	President	A. Earle Jourde
	Vice-President	Carrie Holcomb
	Secretary-Treasurer	Norah O'Neil
	Corresponding Secretary	Dorothy Kerr
	Editor	Anne LeSassier
	<i>Annual Meeting: Corpus Christi (1958)</i>	
1959–1961	President	Carrie Holcomb
	Vice-President	Edgar Kincaid
	Secretary	Ruth Moorman
	Treasurer	George S. Adams
	Editor	Anne LeSassier
	<i>Annual Meetings: Tyler (1959), San Benito (1960)</i>	
1961–1963	President	M. A. Yramategui
	Vice-President	Edgar Kincaid
	Secretary	Ruth Moorman
	Treasurer	George S. Adams,**
	Editor	Carroll E. Kiblinger
		Anne LeSassier,***
<i>Annual Meetings: San Antonio (1961), MO-Ranch (1962)</i>		

* Frank Watson resigned as president on September 30, 1955, and John Galley became acting president.

** George S. Adams resigned September 1961 and was replaced by C. E. Kiblinger.

*** Anne LeSassier resigned November 1961 and was replaced by Norma Oates.

also addressed this issue through letters to the Texas Game and Fish Commission and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

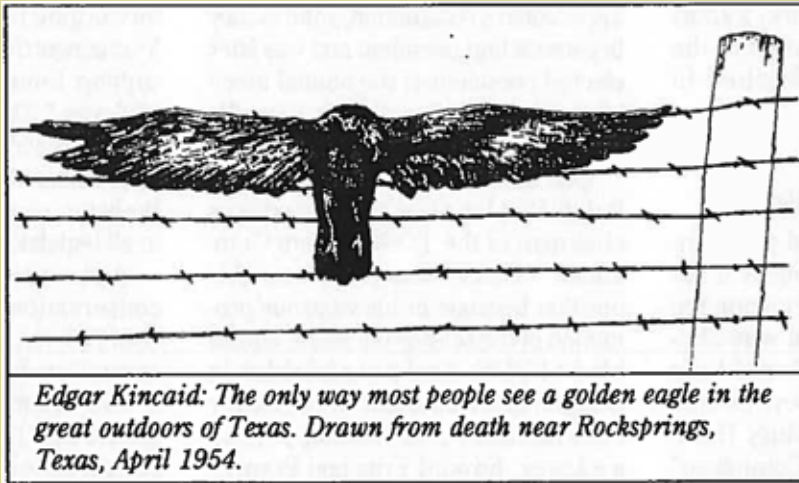
Responding to the recommendations of its field biologists and the concerns of conservationists, the Game and Fish Commission approved a closed season on white-wings. Kincaid was elated but philosophical about this decision, observing that “the season might have been closed even if the TOS had taken no action.” In defense of the actions of the society, he further noted that “conservation, like war, is far too important a matter to leave strictly to the professionals.” McNeese, however, recognized the political value of the situation and immediately penned a letter to the commissioners congratulating them on their decision and offering the cooperation and expertise of the society on future issues.¹⁸

The establishment of a working relationship with the Fish and Game Commission was soon to bear fruit. For some months, the commissioners had considered sponsoring the publication of Roger Tory Peterson’s proposed Field Guide to the Birds of Texas, but the prospects for approval were not favorable. McNeese, Yramategui and other TOS members actively promoted the guide, maintaining that it would be of great value in spreading knowledge and appreciation of birds. In October 1954, the commission approved the project, the consensus of insiders being that the recommendations by TOS had been the deciding factor.¹⁹ Even so, a contract was not signed until March 1957 with final publication in 1960. The extent of TOS involvement in production of the field guide may be judged by the fact that two-thirds of the 62 persons acknowledged in its preface for technical assistance were members of the society. Peterson was particularly complimentary of Edgar Kincaid for his advice on which records were “unsanitary,” a term coined by Kincaid to describe their questionable nature. In November 1954, Kincaid featured the plight of the golden eagle, illustrating his editorial with a field sketch of a dead eagle hung from a fence. A special Golden Eagle Committee composed of TOS members Edward Fritz, chairman, Charles McNeese, Peggy Acord, Magnolia Greene, LG. Huey, W.W. Wunberly and several other conservationists was also formed at this time. Efforts by TOS to obtain protection for the golden eagle continued for

study can proceed.”¹⁷ A significant portion of the July 1954 newsletter was devoted to the need for a closed season to allow recovery of the white-winged dove. M. A. Yramategui

several years. An important ally in the cause was West Texas rancher and TOS member Clay Miller, who gave favorable

testimony before a senate subcommittee on June 26, 1962.²⁰ On October 24, 1962, the Golden Eagle Act was passed to provide protection for this misunderstood and persecuted species. Even so, TOS then found itself engaged in a struggle to ensure that the regulatory aspects of the law would properly protect the eagles.



Death of Charles McNeese

The second annual meeting of the society, held on February 26-27, 1955, featured Roger Tory Peterson as the banquet speaker. McNeese had met earlier with Peterson at the Audubon Convention in New York City and had personally encouraged him to come to Texas.²¹ Peterson needed assistance with his field guide, and McNeese felt that the membership would be inspired by his presence. McNeese did not, however, live to experience this event for he succumbed to a heart attack while preparing to attend the meeting.

McNeese considered conservation to be the principal purpose of the society. His last advice was that “controversial projects should be shunned or approached through an educational program. [TOS] should build a reputation in [its] action that will foster the confidence of the public.”²² McNeese was eulogized at the business session as being “the principal initiator of the Texas Ornithological Society.” The loss of his leadership was a heavy blow, for, as Kincaid later noted, McNeese’s activities had ranged “all the way from rescuing one of the officers from jail to obtaining the most famous birder in the known universe to provide the program for the second annual meeting.”²³

Edward Fritz’s proposal for a permanent memorial to McNeese was realized in May 1955 with the formation of the “McNeese Library of Ornithology.” The nucleus of the library consisted of books donated by McNeese’s son, Charles Richard, with Ruth Stamm of Houston serving as the first administrator of the collection. Stamm later moved to Oklahoma, and in June 1956, Norma Oates agreed to serve as librarian-historian for the society. Through Norma’s work, a short history of TOS was included in the Yearbook that was published in November 1956.²⁴

Selection of Official Bird and Emblem

Frank Watson was elected president and John Galley vice-president at the second annual meeting. A committee to select an official bird was also formed with chairman Edward Fritz assisted by Margret Galley, Connie Hagar, Bess Reid and Mary Belle Keefer. The “Official Bird Committee” wasted no time in generating interest in the bird-selection contest, but the final rules were not published until August 1955. There were two categories of participation: an essay

contest and a simple nomination. For the essay contest, a 100-word essay in support of the nominated species was required; a simple nomination required only the submission of the name of a bird. J. Frank Dobie, Peter Koch, General Ralph Meyer and Hubert Mewhinney served as judges of the essay contest that featured binoculars as first prize and a Peterson

field guide as second prize. The scissor-tailed flycatcher was finally chosen as the official bird although it was also the official bird of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society. Murray Marshall of Dallas won first place for his essay on the whooping crane, and Victor Emanuel won second for his essay on Sennett’s white-tailed hawk.²⁵

In June 1955, a second constitutional review committee proposed that the purposes of the society be expanded to include establishment of a “library and wildlife sanctuaries as the society’s means permit” Wildlife sanctuaries were an immediate concern for on August 22, 1955, Frank Watson informed the executive committee of his contact with an individual who wished to donate his farm for use in conservation and education. The executive committee favored this acquisition, but during September 1955, Watson was transferred to New York and the project died on the vine.²⁶ Following Watson’s resignation, John Galley became acting-president and was later elected president at the annual meeting held at MO Ranch near Kenville on March 17-18, 1956.

One of Galley’s first acts was to ask Ralph Bickler of Austin to serve as chairman of the TOS Emblem Committee.²⁷ Bickler was chosen for this position because of his vigorous promotion of the scissor-tail as the official bird of TOS. Assisting Bickler in designing the emblem were Johnny Faye Barnette, C. E. Hudson, Jr., Janice Lacey, Edward Fritz and Frances Williams.

Bickler’s basic design was a flying scissor-tail over an outline map of Texas. The figure of the scissor-tail was adapted from a painting made for the Texas Game and Fish Commission by artist Orville O. Rice.²⁸ The proposed design appeared first on the outside cover of the 1956 yearbook and was approved by the membership at the April 1957 meeting. Beginning with the June 1957 newsletter, the “scissortail over Texas” appeared regularly in the upper left corner of the title page.

Protection of the Harris’ hawk

Efforts to remove the Harris’ hawk from the list of protected species first came to the attention of conservationists on March 18, 1957, when a public hearing was held on H.B. 723. Speaking in support of the bill was its sponsor, Eligio De La Garza, and J.W. Jackson, a bird importer and quail

raiser from the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The arguments of opponents were to no avail and the bill was reported to the full house.²⁹

Conservationists and birders throughout the state were quick to respond to this affront to their sensibilities. On March 21, Armand Yramategui circulated a TOS position paper outlining the history of the bill, the facts relating to the feeding habits of the Harris' hawk, and suggested substitute legislation. The following day, Yramategui mailed a second letter to all members of the Texas legislature urging them to oppose H.B. 723. Yramategui then solicited and received support from the Sportsmen's Clubs of Texas.³⁰ The Travis Audubon Society also joined the fray on April 1 when its president and TOS member, Fred Webster, circulated a position paper to all legislators.

An emergency meeting of the TOS conservation committee to discuss H.B. 723 was held during the society's annual meeting at Austin on April 5-7. At this meeting, a resolution was passed that Travis Audubon Society's conservation chairman (Margaret Louise Hill) be appointed to represent TOS on the Harris' hawk issue and other conservation matters. This recommendation was later modified by the board to allow the president to appoint any Austin TOS member of his choosing to act as the society's representative.

By mid-April, De La Garza had rewritten his bill, but it was still considered unacceptable. Influential support came from Roy Bedichek, who contributed a sensitive and persuasive essay favoring the continued protection of the Harris' hawk. The result of this sustained opposition was that De La Garza finally relented and withdrew his bill. The defeat of H.B. 723 was a clear victory for TOS through the leadership of Armand Yramategui, Fred Webster, Margaret Louise Hill and Roy Bedichek.

Dissatisfaction within the Ranks

The fourth annual meeting, held in Austin on April 5-7, 1957, promised to be an exciting event since the guest of honor was the venerable Harry Oberholser. However, at the board meeting preceding the banquet, two board members unexpectedly expressed their dissatisfaction with the functioning of the society, particularly at the regional level. It was then proposed that the regions be abolished and that the regional directors should not be included in the executive committee.

The proposal to abolish the regions was rejected by the executive committee. However, seeking to resolve this crisis, John Galley was appointed to chair a committee on constitutional revision. Recommendations of this committee included the separation of the constitution and by-laws, listing the duties of regional directors in the constitution and giving the president power to appoint directors in the event of a vacancy. It was further recommended that the offices of secretary-treasurer and corresponding secretary be replaced with the offices of secretary and treasurer, and that the office of editor-recorder be separated with the position of recorder being appointive.³¹ Approval of these revisions was given at the next annual meeting, and the new constitution was published in the 1958 Yearbook. At the November 1958

meeting of the executive committee, it was further proposed and accepted that the term of office for officers and regional directors be extended to two years instead of one. Thus, after five years of ongoing revision, the constitution and by-laws finally assumed a form similar to the present-day document.

Field trips

The original constitution states that one purpose of the society is to "stimulate fellowship ... by an annual meeting and field trip." The society's first field trip was held on May 9-10, 1953, to various areas, including Bandera, the Ney Bat Cave at Rocksprings and the Devil's Sinkhole. Fifty-two persons participated at various stages of the trip which was led by Edgar Kincaid. Among the species seen on this trip were the golden-cheeked warbler, black-capped vireo and cave swallow.³² A project to promote appreciation of an endangered species resulted from the society's trip to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in November 1953. The difficulty in seeing the whooping cranes from the newly constructed observation tower prompted McNeese to write to Joe Taylor of the Bausch & Lomb Company describing the need for a scope for use by visitors. Responding to this need, Taylor donated a 30-power scope to TOS for permanent use at the refuge.³³

Rockport was a favorite location for field trips. The first trip to this area was held in the fall of 1953, and by the third trip in 1955, a total of 155 persons were in attendance. In 1958, at the annual meeting in Corpus Christi, there were five different trips to locations within a few hours driving distance. Regional trips were also occasionally held (e.g., during October 1959, Region I sponsored a trip to Black Mesa, Oklahoma, and Region V conducted a field trip to Somerset).

Field trips often combined both entertainment and education. The Thanksgiving trip to Galveston in 1959 featured day-long excursions to four different locations. On the first evening the entertainment was provided by members who showed their personal slides of birds and birds' nests. The second evening consisted of a lecture and movie by Dr. Ernest P. Edwards on the "Great Lakes and North Woods."

By 1961, many members were eager for adventures further afield. To satisfy this need, a trip to El Saito, San Louis Potosi, Mexico, was conducted on December 26-28. Twenty-eight persons participated, and the results were published in the March and April 1962 newsletters. Not to neglect the oceanic habitat, a pelagic trip jointly sponsored with the Ornithology Group of the Outdoor Nature Club was taken in February 1963.

Publications of the society

The monthly newsletter served as the major organ of communication during the first decade. In the first newsletter published in March 1953, editor Frank Watson promised to "publish whatever will further the objectives of the society." This was further detailed as news of members and local societies, as well as observations on the distribution, nesting and behavior of birds. The first Christmas counts were included in the June 1953 newsletter and published thereafter as space allowed. The first migration report was

included in the 1954 newsletter, and in 1957, 1958 and 1959, the spring and fall migration data were published as separate issues.

The newsletter often included reports of special interest (e.g., the issues of November and December 1960 were devoted entirely to Virgilio Biaggi's thesis on the birds of Culberson County). The newsletter of April 1961 consisted of a condensed version of Frank Fitch's thesis on the life history and ecology of the scissor-tailed flycatcher. David J. Slavik's breeding bird data were published as the "TOS Texas Breeding Bird Survey, 1962, Parts I, II, and III." In March 1963, the newsletter included an article by John Liefertinck on "The Birds of Frandolig Island."

Short articles were often published on a particular species: the golden eagle (Feb. 1958), whooping crane (Feb.-March 1959), common nighthawk (Nov. 1959), Cassin's sparrow (Dec. 1960), golden-cheeked warbler (May 1962), black-capped vireo (Sept. 1962), fulvous tree duck (Nov. 1962) and the buff-bellied hummingbird Jan.. 1963). Birding reports from new locations, particularly state parks and recreation areas, were also published on a regular basis.

Two "Occasional Papers" were published during the early years of the society. Occasional Paper Number 1, "Checklist of Bird Species of the Rio Grande Delta of Texas" by Irby Davis, was published as a separate issue in March 1955. Occasional Paper Number 2, "Automobile Predation" by Clarence Brown, was included in the November 1955 newsletter.

Yearbooks also provided a means for supplying information to members. The first yearbook published in 1956 included a list of officers, a short history of the society, a membership roll, fold-out map showing the state regions, a copy of the constitution, annual financial report, and the names and addresses of Texas nature clubs. Subsequent yearbooks published in 1958 and 1962 contained basically the same information.

In mid-1955, TOS member Col. L. R Wolfe, who was then in the final stages of preparing his "Checklist of the Birds of Texas," requested permission from Edgar Kincaid and Frank Watson to use the TOS state map to show the distribution of species.³⁴ Wolfe originally planned to publish his checklist privately, but in November 1955, he again wrote to Kincaid asking if the society might be interested in publishing the checklist as an "Occasional Paper." Wolfe also suggested that he would even finance the project, wishing only to recover his expenses. This offer was later rejected by the executive board on the basis that the society could not furnish financial aid.³⁵ Wolfe proceeded with his original plan, and the checklist was published in 1956.

In late 1956, E.T. Dawson of the Game and Fish Commission requested that TOS prepare a reference checklist of Texas birds for the use of schoolchildren and the general public. This request was approved in January 1957, and Clarence Cottam was appointed chairman of the committee to prepare the list. However, when Cottam was elected president in April 1957, he appointed John Galley to head the committee. The checklist was finally completed in the spring of 1959 and was turned over to Dawson with the anticipation that it would soon be published.³⁶ Dawson,

however, retired later in the year, and during this transition the checklist was downgraded in priority, perhaps because of the availability of Wolfe's checklist and the publication in 1960 of Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds of Texas*. In any event, the checklist was never published.

TOS members were also involved in the publication of Oberholser's *The Bird Life of Texas*. Oberholser was a charter member of the society, and in 1956 he was elected as its first honorary member. In November 1961, Verna Hooks McLean donated \$50,000 to the University of Texas Press to help finance publication of Oberholser's manuscript. This gift was given in honor of her mother, Corrie Herring [Mrs. Joseph Lamar] Hooks, of Beaumont, who was a charter member of TOS.³⁷ The original plan was that Oberholser, who was then 92 years old, would have general supervision over the publication process, but that an editor would do most of the work. Edgar Kincaid was later chosen as the editor of a committee composed of Clarence Cottam, Robert Selander and John W. Aldrich.³⁸ In April 1962, less than a year before her death, Carrie Hooks was elected an honorary member of the society. Oberholser died in December 1963, and his book was finally published in 1974. During the later years that Oberholser spent in updating the manuscript and in the 12 years spent in editing, TOS members provided both natural history data and technical assistance.

Conservation Platform

During its first five years, the society dealt with conservation issues without benefit of an overall plan of action. Even so, effective support was given for protection of the white-winged dove, golden eagle, Harris' hawk and the American alligator. Other issues supported included leasing the bird islands on the Texas coast to the National Audubon Society, the acquisition of land on Padre Island for a national park, regulatory authority for the Game and Fish Commission, and protection for nongame species and all birds of prey. Actions opposed included military use of the Wichita National Wildlife Refuge, establishment of a photoflash bombing range near Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and the diversion of Game and Fish funds to other state programs.

By mid-1958, the conservation committee was reorganized with Margaret Louise Hill as chairman assisted by Robert Darnall, Edward Fritz, W. C. Royall, Jr., Floyd Davidson, Mrs. Teal Adkins and Roy Middleton. This committee immediately set to work composing a "Nature Conservation Platform," which it presented to the executive committee. This document, which consisted of eight approved objectives and five positions that were opposed, set the general course for future actions.³⁹ Other activities during 1958 included efforts to acquire a sanctuary on Copano Bay and renewed support for regulatory authority to the Game and Fish Commission. The prospect of acquiring a sanctuary prompted the society to consider incorporation, a goal that was finally achieved in 1964.

Opposition to the disposal of radioactive waste in the Gulf of Mexico was expressed at the 1959 annual meeting in Tyler. At the local level, individual property owners were encouraged to preserve areas used by threatened birds and

to promote the designation of cemeteries, parks and entire towns as bird sanctuaries. To achieve this objective, a model ordinance showing how to declare a city a bird sanctuary was published in the June 1961 newsletter. Carrie Holcomb pioneered this effort by having her hometown of Frankston designated as a sanctuary. In September 1960, a special Sanctuary Committee was formed as the result of a donation for that purpose.

Legislation prohibiting shell dredging near live oyster reefs and bird nesting islands was supported during 1961. In that same year, Governor Price Daniel appointed TOS members Mrs. Teal Adkins and Armand Yramategui to a special committee to study the Padre Island issue. At that time Adkins was serving as the chairman of the Conservation Department of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs and Yramategui as president of the Texas Conservation Council.⁴⁰

In April 1963, the executive committee resolved to recommend of the society, and Robert Benson provided the encouragement to complete the research. This study was supported first decade of involvement in protecting the flora and fauna of the Lone Star State.⁴²

Acknowledgments

Many different people influenced the writing of this history. Kent Rylander first introduced me to TOS while I was a graduate student. W. D. and Agatha Anderson shared their remembrances and provided a set of early newsletters and other archival materials. Noel Pettingell, Ted Eubanks, Jr., John Tveten and Maxine Davis provided suggestions and background information. John S. Tomer, historian of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society, helped make contact with the descendants of Charles McNeese. James A McNeese, Jr., Sara C. Lutz and Daniel L. McNeese provided biographical information and photographs. I am indebted to Lt Col. Horrell H. Smith for biographical information and the photograph of Carrie Holcomb. Steve Runnels made available the archives of the society, and Robert Benson provided the encouragement to complete the research. This study was supported by a Summer Development Leave provided by the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.

Notes

1 Biographical information for C. H. McNeese was obtained from the following sources: Census of Belmont County, Ohio, Bellaire City, ED 16, sheet 19, line 79; Notes on McNeese's military record provided by J. A. McNeese, Jr.; Letter from C. H. McNeese to James A. McNeese dated in France, Feb. 15, 1918; Records of the University of Oklahoma Alumni Association; "McNeese is Named to Position in OPA," *Ponca City News*, Sept. 1, 1941; "Japs Will Fall Quickly After Nazi Defeat, McNeese Says," *Ponca City News*, Dec. 30, 1943; "McNeese Returns to Job at Conoco," *Ponca City News*, May 7, 1944; C. H. McNeese, "There's Plenty of Oil," *Red Triangle*, Continental Oil Company, Sept. 1944; "Charles McNeese Dies at Houston," *Ponca City News*, Feb. 27, 1955, p. 10- A.; "Charles McNeese's Services Are Held," *Ponca City News*, Feb 28, 1955, p. 5; "McNeese Rites Scheduled Today," unidentified newspaper clipping, Feb. 28, 1955; "Charles H. McNeese," unidentified newspaper clipping, Feb. 28, 1955.

2 *The Spoonbill*, July 1952.

- 3 These field trips are described in *The Spoonbill*, July 1952 and Sept. 1952.
- 4 The number of persons for the first mailing is found in a letter from McNeese to Carl Buchheister, Feb. 24, 1954. A manuscript with the names of the respondents to this letter is found in the TOS archives.
- 5 Johnston to McNeese, Oct. 16, 1952; Rylander to McNeese, undated; Edith Winford to McNeese, Oct. 30, 1952.
- 6 *The Spoonbill*, Nov. 1952. Also, see "State Bird Organization Letter," No. 2, Nov. 25, 1952.
- 7 The minutes of the meeting found in the TOS archives were prepared by J.M. Heiser.
- 8 Details of this organizational meeting may be found in "Bird Watchers Here to Form Society," *Austin American-Statesman*, Feb. 15, 1953, p. A-9, col 3, and in the TOS newsletters for March and April 1953.
- 9 Interview with W. D. and Agatha Anderson, June 21, 1988.
- 10 Biographical information for B. B. Watson from "B. B. Watson Services Set," *Tyler Courier-Times*, Feb. 16, 1977, p. 7, col 2; 1900 Census of Rusk County, Texas, ED 83, sheet 19, line 49; Texas Death Certificate #1108; and letters from Watson to Charles McNeese dated Oct 17, 1952, and Feb. 28, 1953.
- 11 Biographical information for Carrie Holcomb from "Carrie Holcomb," *Palestine Herald-Press*, Aug. 20, 1972; Interview with Lt. Col. Horrell H. Smith, Sept. 19, 1988; 1900 Census of Anderson County, Texas, ED 17, sheet 3; and Texas Death Certificate #62466.
- 12 Watson's observations on the white-tailed kite were published in *The Condor*, 42:295-304.
- 13 These members-at-large are first listed in the newsletter of July 29, 1953, where they are erroneously described as "regional directors."
- 14 Correspondence regarding the division of the state into regions includes the following: McNeese to Dawson, May 14, 1953; Dawson to McNeese, Aug. 20, 1953; McNeese to Executive Board, Sept. 3, 1953; and Galley to Dawson, Sept. 7, 1953.
- 15 Proposed revisions of the constitution are given in the newsletter of Dec. 1953.
- 16 The charter membership roll is given in the newsletter of July 29, 1953.
- 17 TOS newsletter, July 1954.
- 18 Letter from McNeese to Walter W. Lecher of the Texas Game and Fish Commission dated July 20, 1954, and reprinted in the TOS newsletter of Aug. 1954.
- 19 Undated manuscript of McNeese's "President's Report for 1954."
- 20 TOS newsletter, July 1962.
- 21 Letters from McNeese to Peterson, Nov. 24, 1954, and Dec. 28, 1954.
- 22 Undated manuscript of McNeese's "President's Report for 1954."
- 23 TOS newsletter, March 1955.
- 24 Oates to John Galley, June 8, 1956, and Sept. 25, 1956.
- 25 The official bird and essay winners were decided at the Annual Meeting in March, and the results published in the TOS newsletter for April 1956.
- 26 Letters from Watson to Officers and Regional Directors, Aug. 22, 1955, and Watson to John Galley, Oct. 1, 1955.
- 27 Galley to Bickler, May 17, 1956, and Bickler to Galley, May 24, 1956.
- 28 Rice offered several suggestions on the design of the emblem, one of which was the use of the slogan "For the Growth of Knowledge" (Rice to Bickler, July 19, 1956).

- 29 The details of this bill were reported to the society as an addendum to the newsletter of March 18, 1957.
- 30 Letter from Yramategui to Cecil Reid of the Sportsmen's Clubs of Texas dated March 23, 1957, and Bert Lindsay to Reid, March 29, 1957.
- 31 These constitutional revisions were reported to the Executive Committee in a mimeographed document dated Nov. 9, 1957.
- 32 A description of this field trip is included in the newsletter of June 1953.
- 33 McNeese to Taylor, Dec. 17, 1954, and Jan. 6, 1955.
- 34 Wolfe to E.T. Dawson, July 23, 1955, and Wolfe to Watson, August 31, 1955.

- 35 Minutes of the Executive Committee for March 17, 1956.
- 36 TOS newsletter, June 1959.
- 37 TOS newsletter, January 1962.
- 38 Preface to *The Bird Life of Texas*, p. xii.
- 39 TOS newsletter, November 1958.
- 40 TOS newsletter, November 1961.
- 41 Hill to Connally, July 29, 1963.
- 42 TOS was not successful in getting Governor Connally to appoint Cottam to the Commission.

—Stanley D. Casto

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