

President's Message



Shelia Hargis TOS President.

As I write this in late February, two major things are on my mind. One is the cool rarities that have visited Texas this winter. Snowy Owls, Elegant Trogon, Purple Sandpiper, and Red Crossbills are the really rare ones that come to mind. I had an Anna's Hummingbird coming to my feeder for two days in January, not as rare as the others but still very cool. It's a great winter to be a birder. Oh, wait! It's always a great time to be a birder, right?!?

The other thing on my mind is that I am a week out from losing my sweet wiener dog, Grey. Even in the midst of the pain, I see clearly how much my connection to her exponentially improved my quality of life. Those were ten wonderful years we shared. Not exactly the same but similar is my connection to birds. That connection also brightens and adds tremendous beauty and excitement to my life. Although they don't sit in my lap and give me wet, sloppy kisses, I still look forward to seeing "my" Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Carolina Chickadees, titmice, Lesser Goldfinches, and Orange-crowned Warbler every day in my backyard. May we all have many more connections to our wonderful animals—tame and wild.

I believe everyone who attended the Nacogdoches meeting had a good time and saw many great birds. You'll see Anthony Hewetson's analysis of the birds later in this newsletter. Pineywoods Audubon did a fantastic job hosting the meeting. They raised the bar in many ways! A special thanks goes to Susie Lower, Cliff Shackelford, Dave Wallace and Vickie Wallace who did the heavy lifting of organizing everything. And thank you to all attendees and silent auction and raffle supporters. After all expenses were paid, we raised \$6,393. This was split 50/50 between TOS and Pineywoods Audubon.

Now we're on to Alpine! I think you will be very pleased with the trips and presenters we have lined up for you. You'll find all the details later in this newsletter. Special thanks to Region 4 Director Lee Hoy, Region 5 Director/Vice President Jimma Byrd, and Chris and Pam Pipes for pulling it all together.

In addition to the great meetings, many other exciting things are happening with TOS. Some of the highlights are listed below with detailed articles included in the newsletter for most of these.

- Partnership with Houston Audubon to improve the High Island experience

- Donation of two lots to our Magic Ridge Sanctuary by Ms. Mary Belle Meitzen
- Board financial support of two research projects by Jim Ray and Rebekah Rylander
- Board financial support of Hurricane Harvey restoration efforts at Paradise Pond in Port Aransas and Bird Demo Garden in Rockport
- Continued financial support of the Great Texas Birding Classic—both sponsorship in general and specific sponsorship for many youth teams
- More and more exciting field trips (I heard the leaders for the Brown County trip were phenomenal!)
- Implementation of two new awards to recognize and honor those making a difference for birds and birders in Texas
- Re-activation of the TOS Century Club and induction of new members at the Alpine meeting

Pretty exciting, huh? And don't forget—if you want to get involved and help us carry out these projects, all you have to do is email or call me. I'll hook you up!

Being the citizen science geek that I am, I'll end with outright bragging. I participated in seven Christmas Bird Counts this past season, with four of them being back-to-back. I am happy to announce that I survived and might even do that again during the 2018 season! Now it's on to North American Breeding Bird Surveys. I can't wait.

Thank you to all who contributed to this newsletter and to Jack Eitnearer, our wonderful editor who puts it all together. See you in Alpine in May!

—*Shelia Hargis, TOS President*

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TOS Spring Meeting 2018–Alpine, TX

Alpine in May—It's Going to be Good!

Wow! It's already time to start thinking about our spring meeting. We're going to be headquartered in Alpine, but we'll be exploring far beyond that. We'll be there at a great time with many winter birds still around, migrants moving through, and breeding birds back and getting down to the business of raising another generation. And with trips to favorite locations such as Davis Mountains, Big Bend National Park, Christmas Mountain Oasis, Lake Balmorhea, and Independence Creek; trips to lesser known locations around Alpine, Marathon and Sanderson; and two Century Club trips to choose from on Friday and Saturday, this promises to be another great meeting. The counties that we'll be visiting are Brewster, Jeff Davis, Pecos, Presidio, Reeves and Terrell. A checklist showing the expected species for these counties in May is available at <https://tinyurl.com/TOSAAlpineChecklist>.

There is no hotel in Alpine that can accommodate all of our meeting activities, so our events will take place at the Alpine Civic Center. Field trips will depart from there. Our banquet will take place there. Presentations will happen there. And speaking of presentations, we have afternoon presentations scheduled in addition to the evening presentations. The afternoon presentations focus on research and are an opportunity for us to support students and researchers. Please try to work it into your schedule to attend! We have hotel rooms reserved at three different hotels, so you can find the one that works best for you.

Some field trips involve a lot of driving to get to the location, so expect really early departure times for those trips. Be prepared to carpool to minimize the number of vehicles and maximize the likelihood of spotting birds along the way. Walkie-talkies are always a good idea, especially for trips that involve movement between locations or long drive times. **And given that we will be in West Texas, extra water in the vehicles is a really good idea.** It can get hot even in May and if something unexpected happens, having water available can save the day.

Online registration will open in mid to late March. Watch for an email from us letting you know exactly when it will open. I highly recommend you register early since field trips are likely going to fill up. If you find that a field trip that you really want is full, go ahead and register for your second choice, but then email Judy Kestner and request to be put on the wait list for your first choice. Judy's email is tosmember@yahoo.com. The registration fee will increase on April 19, and registration will close on April 26. Don't wait!

I hope to see you in Alpine!

—Shelia Hargis, TOS President

Alpine is a small town. No hotel had facilities to accommodate our activities, so all events will be held at the Alpine Civic Center at 100 North 13th St, Alpine, TX. No one hotel was able accommodate all of our expected meeting participants, so we have rooms reserved at three hotels.



TOS has arranged for a block of 27 rooms at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, located at 2004 Hwy 90 East, Alpine TX, 79830. The TOS group rate is \$119. Reservations may be made by calling the hotel at 432-837-9597 and asking for the Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) group rate. These rooms will be held until April 3. Any cancellations must be made 72 hours prior to arrival in order to avoid a one-night room charge. Continental breakfast will be available starting at 4:30 a.m.



Additionally, TOS has arranged for a block of 25 rooms at the Quality Inn, 2401 Hwy 90 East, Alpine, TX, 79830. The TOS group rate is \$99. Reservations may be made by calling the hotel at 432-837-1530 and asking for the Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) group rate. These rooms will also be held until April 3. Any cancellations must be made 72 hours prior to arrival in order to avoid a one-night room charge. Continental breakfast will be available starting at 4:30 a.m.



Hampton Inn is 3 miles west of Holiday Inn.

TOS has arranged for a block of 23 rooms at the Hampton Inn, located at 2607 Hwy 90 West, Alpine, TX, 79830. The TOS group rate is \$119. These rooms may be booked by calling the hotel at 432-837-7344 and asking for the Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) group rate. These rooms will be held only until April 3. Any cancellations must be made 72 hours prior to arrival in order to avoid a one-night room charge. Continental breakfast will be available starting at 4:30 a.m.

Alpine Civic Center is less than 2 miles from all 3 hotels.

Meeting Agenda

All meeting events will be held at the Alpine Civic Center, 100 North 13th St, Alpine, TX.

Thursday, May 3

3:30-5:30 PM Board Meeting—Holiday Inn Express
 4:00-7:00 PM Registration/T-Shirt sales begin
 6:30-7:00 PM Welcome/ Introductions/Announcements
 7:00-8:00 PM Speaker: Cecilia Riley—*Big Sky Country Birds*

Friday, May 4

4:30-6:45 AM Continental Breakfast (at your hotel)
 4:45-6:45 AM Box Lunch Pick-up and Field Trip Departures (from Civic Center)
 5:00 AM-4:00 PM Field Trips
 4:00-7:00 PM Registration
 4:15-5:00 PM Speakers: Mieke Titulaer, PhD & Denis Perez—*Baird's and Grasshopper Sparrows of the Chihuahuan Desert*
 6:15-7:00 PM Announcements/Field Trip Reports
 7:00-8:00 PM Speaker: Kelly Bryan—*Banding Birds on Top of a Mountain*

Saturday, May 5

4:30-6:45 AM Continental Breakfast
 4:45-6:45 AM Box Lunch Pick-up and Field Trip Departures

5:00 AM-4:00 PM Field Trips
 4:15-5:00 PM Speaker: Liz Oaster—*Montezuma Quail Research*
 5:00-6:00 PM Social Time (cash bar will be available, beer only)
 6:00-7:00 PM Dinner/Banquet
 6:45-7:00 PM Annual Meeting
 7:00-7:30 PM Announcements/Field Trip Reports
 7:30-8:30 PM Keynote Speakers: John Karges & Rich Kostecke—*The Davis Mountains: A Bird's Eye View*

Sunday, May 6

4:30-6:45 AM Continental Breakfast
 4:45-6:45 AM Box Lunch Pick-up and Field Trip Departures
 5:00 AM—Mid-afternoon Field Trips

Speakers

Thursday Night:



Cecilia Riley

Cecilia Riley- *Big Sky Country Birds*

In 2015 Cecilia Riley retired from the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory where she served as the organizations Executive Director for almost 19 years. Her foremost accomplishments included the permanent protection of 17,000 acres of tropical forests in 10 countries and construction of the GCBO's permanent home: The Cecilia Riley Avian Conservation Science Center. Since her retirement, Cecilia, along with her photographer husband Mike Gray have continued to pursue land protection and bird conservation. Cecilia serves on the Board of Directors for the Malcolm C. Damuth Foundation; on the Stake Holder committee for Bird City Texas, a collaborative project of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Audubon Texas, and other natural resource agencies to develop a meaningful recognition program for Texas cites; and is co-coordinator for the annual Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration. Cecilia's educational background includes a B.S. in Ecology from the University of Texas at Arlington and an MS in Zoology from the University of Arkansas. Prior to founding the GCBO, she spent by 2 years at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in Austin as the state-wide coordinator for Texas Partners in Flight, and prior to that spent 8 years at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute as a Research Associate where her work focused on the conservation of coral reef fishes.

Speakers *(continued)*

Friday Afternoon:



Denis Perez (Left) and Mieke Titulaer, Ph.D. (Right)
Baird's and Grasshopper Sparrows of the Chihuahuan Desert

Denis Josefina Perez was born and raised in Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico. She earned her bachelor's degree in Ecology from the Universidad Autonoma de Chihuahua and this is where she strengthened her passion for wildlife, especially birds. After graduating, she focused on field work relating to wildlife conservation and environmental education. She has worked as a wildlife technician on several projects related to birds within Mexico and the US including nest monitoring of Burrowing owls, monitoring Thick-billed parrot, survival of Baird's and Grasshopper sparrows, wintering and breeding grassland bird surveys, and surveys of migratory birds. She has also volunteered on different projects related to birds such as Northern Saw-whet owl, Golden eagle, Scaled quail, winter waterfowl counts, and passerine banding. She is currently a graduate assistant for Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University doing research on wintering survival and habitat use of Baird's and Grasshopper sparrows. She also enjoys being outdoors, climbing, camping, bird watching, and photography.

Mieke Titulaer, PhD, is a research scientist with the Borderlands Research Institute. She has a broad interest in behavioral ecology and bird conservation. Her main research focus is on conservation of grassland songbirds that overwinter in the Chihuahuan Desert. Her research interests include grassland bird-habitat relationships and the influence of habitat alterations and disturbances such as invasive exotic grasses, shrub encroachment and grazing management on grassland bird populations. In 2015 Mieke received her Ph.D. in Natural Resource Management from Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua in Mexico. For her dissertation, she studied the winter diet of grassland sparrows in the Chihuahuan Desert of northern Mexico. She investigated seed selection in the field, and looked at possible effects of invasive exotic grasses on wintering grassland sparrows in captive bird experiments. She received a MS in Animal Sciences from Wageningen University, the Netherlands, in 2010. For her Master thesis she performed research on personality and cognition in the great tit (*Parus major*) at the Netherlands Institute of Ecology (NIOO-KNAW). After receiving her MS she performed research at

NIOO-KNAW on the effects of artificial light on reproduction and survival of songbirds. Mieke currently lives in Alpine, TX, with her husband and two sons.

Friday Night:



Kelly Bryan

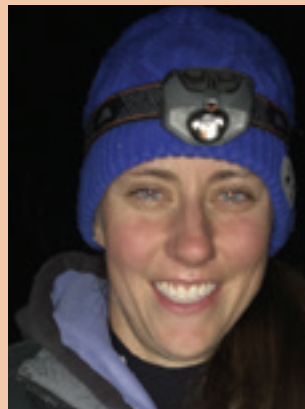
Kelly Bryan-Banding Birds on Top of a Mountain

Kelly Bryan of Fort Davis, Texas was born in Teague, Freestone County, Texas and grew up in Mart, McLennan County, Texas. Kelly received an AA Degree from Temple Junior College, a BS Degree from Sam Houston State University (Biology/Chemistry), and an MS Degree from Sam Houston State University (Field Biology/Ornithology). Over his career

Kelly served as Park Ranger at Huntsville State Park, as Aquatic Biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife, as Park Superintendent for Kickapoo Cavern State Park, Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area, and Davis Mountains State Park, and as Natural Resource Specialist for State Parks Region 1, Fort Davis, Texas.

Mr. Bryan initiated the West Texas Hummingbird Project designed to determine the exact status and distribution of west Texas hummingbirds through capturing and banding individual birds on a systematic basis (almost 19,000 hummingbirds of 15 species have been banded to date). In 2016 he initiated a songbird study in the upper elevations of the Davis Mountains of west Texas systematically netting and banding birds in spring, summer, and fall. He is the author of numerous publications on the Ornithology of Texas.

Saturday Afternoon:



Liz Oaster

Liz Oaster - Ecology of Montezuma Quail

Liz Oaster was born and raised in Hanover, Pennsylvania. A majority of her youth was spent camping, riding horses, and exploring the forests of Pennsylvania. Her passion for wildlife came from her mother. Both would spend countless hours watching squirrels, deer, and birds at the feeders in their backyard.

After graduating high school in 2009, she left Pennsylvania to attend the University of Wyoming. As an undergraduate she worked on a variety of projects including coyote chemical sterilization, wind turbine effects on horned larks and

Speakers *(continued)*

McCown's longspur, and social structure of golden-winged Manakin and club-winged Manakin. In 2013 she graduated with her B.S. in Zoology from the University of Wyoming. Before beginning her Master's she spent a summer working on a pronghorn diet study in Alpine, TX. In the fall of 2014 she began her Master's in Range and Wildlife Management with Sul Ross State University and Borderlands Research Institute. Her research is on the ecology of Montezuma quail in the Capitan Mountains of New Mexico.

Saturday Night Keynote presentation:



John Karges (Left) & Rich Kostecke (right)- *The Davis Mountains: A Bird's Eye View*

One of several mountain ranges rising out of the Chihuahuan Desert of west Texas, the Davis Mountains are the largest mountain range in the state and provide access to the largest extent of montane habitat in the state. The Nature Conservancy's staff biologists, Rich Kostecke and John Karges, will introduce the Davis Mountains in the Sky Island context so well known to birders and biologists to the west in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. John will introduce the ecological and geographic setting of the mountains, and Rich will introduce the birds and birding in the mountains, from the rarities discovered over the past couple of decades to the diversity of hummingbirds to the changes in the bird fauna of the mountains; current research findings and the future.

John Karges is the Associate Director of Field Science with The Nature Conservancy, Texas. As the man in charge of statewide biological inventories, John heads programs that catalog Texas natural history, conduct site assessments and archive biological information in databases for use in conservation planning and land stewardship. John's professional specialties are vertebrate zoology, zoogeography and natural history, and in his role he works to tie those together with the large-scale conservation of special places in Texas. Prior to this role, he served in West Texas for nearly two decades as a land steward, conservation biologist, and regional program manager. A lifelong Texas resident, John grew up in Fort Worth, earned his BS from Texas A&I University in Kingsville and his master's of science in biology from the University of Texas at Arlington. He has worked with the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge, before joining The Nature Conservancy in California in 1990.

Rich Kostecke has a B.S. in Biology from the University of Kansas, M.S. in Zoology from North Dakota State University, and Ph.D. in Wildlife Science from Texas Tech University. His research focuses on avian ecology and habitat management. Rich's first job after completing his Ph.D. in 2002 was with The Nature Conservancy's (TNC's) Fort Hood Program in central Texas, a cooperative effort with the Army to monitor and manage Black-capped Vireos and Golden-cheeked Warblers. In 2011, Rich assumed his current state-wide role as Associate Director of Conservation for TNC in Texas. In this role, he serves as co-lead for science in the state, focusing on research and monitoring, spatial analysis, and conservation planning.

Rich is a Missouri native, but has called Texas home for the past 19 years, where he spends much of his free time traveling, exploring the outdoors, and studying and photographing birds and other critters.

Registration Information

Registration is online at the Texas Ornithological Society's website, texasbirds.org. Registration will open in mid-March. To get an email with the exact date, be sure your email address is included in your TOS account information! Once registration opens, there will be directions on the website to assist you. If you DO NOT have access to the Internet, you may call Judy Kestner at 361-387-7329 or Frances Cerbins at 512-372-9039 for assistance with registration. If you don't get an answer, leave a message and Judy or Frances will call you back when they are available. Registration closes on April 26.

Registration Fee:	\$60 TOS members \$85 Non-TOS members (includes a one-year membership) \$20 late fee after April 19
Box lunches	\$14
Saturday Banquet	\$35

Boxed Lunch choices:

Friday

Whole Wheat Wrap, Roast Beef, Sharp Cheddar, leaf lettuce, red onion
Or Whole Wheat Bread Sandwich, Turkey, Swiss, leaf lettuce, tomato, onion
Or Lettuce Wrap, with Hummus and Cucumber
Or Chicken Salad on croissant

Saturday

Spinach Wrap, Roast Beef, Sharp Cheddar, leaf lettuce, red onion
Or Whole Wheat Bread Sandwich, Turkey, Swiss, leaf lettuce, tomato, onion
Or Lettuce Wrap, Hummus and Cucumber
Or Chicken Salad on croissant

Sunday

Wheat Bread, Ham, Swiss, leaf lettuce, red onion

Registration Information *(continued)*

Sunday *(continued)*

Or Wheat Bread, Turkey, Swiss, leaf lettuce, tomato, onion
 Or Lettuce Wrap, Hummus and Cucumber
 Or Chicken Salad on croissant

Additionally, each boxed lunch includes: Kosher dill pickle spear, mustard and mayo packets, bag of chips, home-baked chocolate chip cookies, apple, bottle of water, plastic fork & knife, napkin, salt & pepper

Saturday Banquet: Traditional Texas BBQ Buffet-Brisket and pulled pork, slow smoked over oak harvested from the Davis Mountains with house made rubs and seasonings. Ranch-style beans, traditional Cole slaw, Spring mix salad with grape tomatoes, grated carrots, homemade

balsamic vinaigrette and ranch dressings, BBQ sauce, spicy chili macho, sliced onion, pickles, white bread, peach & blackberry cobblers with Blue Bell homemade vanilla ice cream, un-sweet iced tea with sugar, sweeteners and sliced lemons available. **Vegetarian / Vegan:** Sweet potato & red bean chili. **Gluten free:** Everything on the BBQ menu is gluten free EXCEPT the cobbler and the bread. Can substitute two scoops of ice cream for dessert.

**If you have dietary restrictions and have questions, email Shelia at Shelia.hargis@gmail.com. Shelia has all sorts of dietary restrictions, so she will be able to relate and get answers to your questions.

Field Trips

Number	Field Trip & Description	County	Difficulty	Hours	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	Marathon/Post Park/Prairie Dog Town/Water Treatment Ponds —This trip will focus on three areas in Brewster County that often produce some wonderful birds. The first is the Gage Gardens in Marathon that provides a great stopover for migrants and breeding location for residents. The second location is Post Park/Post Park Road that traverses wonderful scrub and open habitat with a few livestock watering stations along the road that attract birds. Finally, the Marathon Prairie Dog Town which serves as a wonderful habitat for grassland and open habitat birds. Target Birds: Scaled Quail, Golden Eagle, Greater Roadrunner, Swainson’s Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Horned Lark, Clay-colored, Brewers, and Cassin’s Sparrows, Say’s Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Bronzed Cowbird, and migrants.	Brewster	Easy	6:30am-2:30	X	X	X
2	Alpine: Around Town —This trip will explore Kokernot Park, Alpine Cemetery, Windmill Pond, and the Rest Area west of Alpine on US 90. Kokernot Park on the north side of town has a host of large trees attractive to migrants. Zone-tailed Hawks, Western Wood-Pewees, Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Gray and Dusky Flycatchers have all been found in the park at this time of year. Windmill Pond is one of the few locations that offers regular water feature near Alpine. Target birds include Cassin’s Kingbirds, Painted Bunting, a variety of empids, Bell’s Vireo, Summer and Western Tanagers, a variety of sparrows, migrants and lingering/nesting raptors.	Brewster	Easy	6:45am-2:30		X	X
3	Davis Mountains State Park/McDonald Observatory/Lawrence E. Woods Picnic Area —Three hotspots within a variety of elevations of the Davis Mountains should produce an excellent bird list. Davis Mountains State Park is well known to many birders because of the reliability of seeing some great birds. Montezuma Quail, Wild Turkey, Common Black Hawk, Blue-throated Hummingbird, White-throated Swift, Acorn Woodpecker and migrants will be sought after throughout the park. McDonald Observatory and the Lawrence E Woods Picnic Area are even higher in elevation and the alert birder might see Band-tailed Pigeon, White-breasted Nuthatch, Hepatic Tanager, and more.	Jeff Davis	Easy	6:15am-3:00	X	X	X
4	Davis Mountains Preserve High Country —The higher elevations of The Nature Conservancy’s Davis Mountains Preserve provides habitat for species that are difficult to find in the more accessible lower elevations of the Davis Mountains. This field trip will focus on the mesic pine forest habitat of Tobe Canyon at an elevation of roughly 7,500’. We will drive 5 miles up Madera Canyon (high clearance vehicles required, 4WD recommended if conditions have been rainy) to the gate at Tobe Gap Road. From there, it is a moderately strenuous 1.5 mile (3 mile round trip) hike up to Tobe Spring. While the distance might not sound imposing, we will gain approximately 1,500 feet in elevation during the hike and large portions of the hike are through open habitat with high sun exposure. Target birds: Short-tailed Hawk (rare), Zone-tailed Hawk, Band-tailed Pigeon, Mexican Whip-poor-will, White-throated Swift, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, White-eared Hummingbird (rare), Peregrine Falcon, Dusky Flycatcher (rare), Cordilleran Flycatcher, Dusky-capped Flycatcher (rare), Warbling Vireo, Stellar’s Jay, Mountain Chickadee, House Wren, Hermit Thrush, Virginia’s Warbler, Grace’s Warbler, Painted Redstart, Slate-throated Redstart (very rare); as well as the more widespread breeding species (e.g., Gray Flycatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, Hepatic Tanager, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak) and migrants (e.g., Townsend’s Warbler).	Jeff Davis	Strenuous	5:00am-3:00pm	X	X	X

Field Trips (continued)

Number	Field Trip & Description	County	Difficulty	Hours	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5	Davis Mountains Preserve Mid-elevation —This trip will focus on the pine and pinyon-juniper woodlands along Madera Creek on The Nature Conservancy’s Davis Mountains Preserve. We will drive up Madera Canyon Road (high clearance vehicles required, 4WD recommended if conditions have been rainy) to Wolf Den Canyon or Road Canyon, where we will bird some of the lower elevation pine stands on the preserve. We may also swing by 48 Tank to check for waterbirds. There will be short, relatively easy hikes along the road and trails, all of which are relatively flat. Target birds: ‘Mexican’ Mallard, Montezuma Quail, Common Black-hawk (rare), Zone-tailed Hawk, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker, Gray Flycatcher, Hutton’s Vireo, Plumbeous Vireo, Violet-green Swallow, Mountain Chickadee, Western Bluebird, Tropical Parula (rare), Grace’s Warbler, Hepatic Tanager, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak; as well as numerous other breeding species and migrants (flycatchers, warblers, etc.)	Jeff Davis	Easy/Moderate	5:30am-2:30pm	X	X	
6	Big Bend National Park West —While this trip will have to leave early, the bird list and scenery will more than make up for any time spent traveling. Birding stops will include Sam Nail Ranch, Cottonwood Campground, and Santa Elena Canyon. Depending upon time, a few other locations will be considered. Target birds include Gray Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Varied Bunting, Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, Lucy’s Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, orioles, and migrant warblers, vireos, and empids.	Brewster	Easy	5:00am-4:00	X	X	X
7	Big Bend National Park East —Who knows what birds will be found at Dugout Wells, Rio Grande Village, and the Chisos Basin? Perhaps an Elf Owl or Western Screech Owl peaking out of a nest hole, an Olive-sided Flycatcher perched on top a high tree, a migrant empid working the tree line, Phainopepla searching for mistletoe berries, or the bright yellow of a Scott’s Oriole feeding from an Ocotillo. Perhaps a wonderful view of the nesting Common Black Hawks await.	Brewster	Easy	5:00am-4:00	X	X	X
8	Big Bend National Park Upper Mountains —Here it is, the big walk for the big bird. Romey will take participants up to Boot Canyon and Colima Trail to look for the Colima Warbler. This hike to Boot Spring is steep, rocky and 9 miles round-trip... on foot. You must carry your water, 2 quarts minimum recommended per person. Of course, you might get distracted by Painted Redstarts, Rivoli’s, Lucifer, Broad-tailed, and Blue-throated Hummingbirds, Band-tailed Pigeons, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, and Hepatic Tanager to name a few.	Brewster	Strenuous	5:00am-5:00pm	X	X	
9	Miller Ranch —Drive to the historic C.E. Miller Ranch (52 mi). We are on paved roads from the Chamber to Valentine, TX, then unpaved roads to the ranch Hdqs. (If raining, road is muddy and may be slippery; high clearance is not required). After a short restroom break and birding at the Ranch Hdqs, we transfer to high clearance ranch vehicles for a drive up into canyon for a moderate hike and birding. You will arrive early morning to see Gambel’s and Scaled Quail feeding at the Hdqs. Then the adventure really begins as we traverse the rugged canyon terrain of the Sierra Vieja Mountains in search of Phainopepla, Peregrine Falcon, Rock Wren, Verdin and many more species. A short history and tour of Camp Holland built by the U.S. Army in 1918 in response to Mexican bandit raids is part of the tour. Bring hat, water, snacks.	Jeff Davis/Presidio	Moderate	6:15am-3:00pm	X	X	
10	Lake Balmorhea —One of the few trips with major water and a wonderful spot for those who have never birded it or have birded it many times. Lake Balmorhea should provide a variety of waterfowl, raptors, both Western and Clark’s Grebes, Virginia Rail, Snowy Plover, shorebirds, and who knows what gull(s) may stray to the lake.	Reeves/Jeff Davis	Easy	6:15am-3:00pm	X	X	X
11	Christmas Mountain Oasis —This trip will head to Carolyn Ohl’s place called the Christmas Mountain Oasis in Terlingua Ranch. This location is a guaranteed spot for Lucifer’s Hummingbirds! Birders should also see Varied Bunting, maybe Elf Owl or a Sora, Plumbeous Vireo, White-throated Swift, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, empids, Black Phoebe, Scott’s Orioles, Willow Flycatchers, Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, and migrants.	Brewster	Moderate	5:45am-2:30pm	X	X	
12	Bird Photography Trip —*Limited to four (4) bird photographers per day. This trip will head to private property with a water drip and photography setup. There is an excellent chance of seeing and photographing Montezuma Quail. The site draws a wide variety of Davis Mountain bird species.	Jeff Davis	Easy	6:00am-2:00pm	X	X	X

Field Trips (continued)

Number	Field Trip & Description	County	Difficulty	Hours	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
13	Century Club Trip: Jeff Davis County —After after an early start we will arrive at the Lawrence E Wood picnic area about an hour before sunrise. We'll target Western Screech-Owl, Mexican Whip-poor-will and Common Poorwill before sunrise. After sunrise we'll target Gray Flycatcher, Grace's Warbler, and Hepatic Tanager. We'll make a short hike on part of the Madera Canyon Trail. We'll make a couple of short stops before birding Davis Mountains SP including a private residence in Limpa Crossing for hummingbirds. Cross your fingers for a Montezuma's Quail. Next stop is the Wild Rose Pass Picnic Area where we will target MacGillivray's Warbler and Scaled Quail. We'll take a quick break for lunch supplies and restrooms at the Stone Village Market in Fort Davis then head to Point of Rocks picnic area for lunch and Rock Wren. After lunch we'll cruise CR505 looking for grassland birds. On our way back to Alpine stop at the Musquiz Creek Picnic Area and see what final birds we can add to our count from the Cottonwoods along the creek. Easy except for a moderate hike of about a mile at Madera Canyon. The afternoon will have limited restroom opportunities. Entry fee required at the state park.	Jeff Davis	Moderate	5:30am-4:00pm	X		
14	Century Club Trip: Reeves County —We'll start at sunrise at Lake Balmorhea. Clark's and Western Grebe will steal the show. Lingering waterfowl, migrant gulls, and shorebirds will be the main targets. After the lake we'll look for migrants in the trees at Balmorhea SP. We'll break for lunch before we leave the park. After the park we'll check out the pocket Sandia Wetlands for shorebirds, sparrows, and waterfowl. At this point those who don't want to make the 80 mile drive to Red-bluff Reservoir can return to Alpine. We'll hope to arrive at Red Bluff Reservoir about 2:30 pm and we'll bird until about 3:30 pm. We should arrive back in Alpine about 6 pm. Fee required at Lake Balmorhea and Balmorhea SP. 310 miles	Reeves	Moderate	6:00am-6:00pm		X	
15	Century Club Trip: Pecos County —The tour will feature as wide a variety of habitats as available with an emphasis on maximizing the day's species list.	Brewster	Moderate	5:30am-4:00pm	X		
16	Century Club Trip: Presidio County —The tour will feature as wide a variety of habitats as available with an emphasis on maximizing the day's species list.	Presidio County	Moderate	6:00am-4:00pm		X	
17	Independence Creek Preserve/Sanderson —This field trip will spend most of a morning at the birdiest location in Terrell County - Texas Nature Conservancy's Independence Creek Preserve. Target birds include Zone-tailed and Gray Hawks, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Tropical Parula, 4 species of breeding orioles, and many spring migrants including waterfowl, shorebirds, flycatchers, warblers, and potentially 5 species of Passerina buntings. If time permits, we will briefly check 1 or 2 other Terrell County birding locations in or near Sanderson on our return to Alpine. Each participant should bring lunch and water, and a signed liability waiver (available at the meeting) is required for entry.	Terrell	Moderate	5:15am-4pm	X	X	
18	Sanderson & Papster's Place —Sanderson is a little birded location that has been producing some interesting birds such as Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Band-tailed Pigeons, Phainopepla, and other interesting birds. We will check out Papster's Place, Lee's residence which should have a Lucifer's Hummingbird at this time, Zone-tailed Hawk, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Purple Martins. We will check out some lots around town with native brush, the Cactus Trail, and Sanderson Cemeteries.	Terrell	Easy	5:30am-noon			X

“My” TOS in Nacogdoches

Friday rains did nothing to diminish my enthusiasm at the TOS winter meeting in Nacogdoches. After arriving at the recently re-opened fabulous Fredonia Hotel, I went to the banquet hall to check out the nice selection of silent auction books and other items. *Bird Studies at Old Cape May* by Witmer Stone—you will be mine!

The next morning, the rain had stopped and it was a balmy 24 degrees with 10-15 MPH winds. Good birding weather! My field trip was to Alazan Bayou WMA and it was a Sparrow-palooza. The group had a few more species than me, but my total was 9 species, including some long looks at Harris’s Sparrow. Along with trip leaders David Wolf and Randy Pinkston, we estimated there were around 150 Savannah Sparrows, as well as Vesper, Chipping, Field, Song, Fox (red variety), White-crowned and White-throated. A cooperative Winter Wren perched up near the restrooms and an American Kestrel hung out on a tall snag. The Angelina River bottoms yielded 3 Brown Creepers, a second or third year Bald Eagle, 4 Golden-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, as well as the usual winter warblers. One of our group claimed Brown Creeper as a life bird and got some good photos.

Saturday the winds died down and the sun warmed up some of the frozen ground. We headed to the Nacogdoches Airport with trip leaders Mimi Wolf and Susie Lower, where the group donned fashionable orange vests and marched the length of the runway in the short grass to scare up Sprague’s Pipits, Wilson’s Snipe, and LeConte’s and Henslow’s Sparrows. I was so happy to finally add Sprague’s Pipit to my life list. We had good views of several flying away, singing their flight song, and flashing white tail feathers. Another lifer was Henslow’s Sparrow—I loved seeing the beautiful olive-green head. As a group, we saw a Henslow’s fly up and we steadily walked toward it until it flew into a small shrub, behind a tree, above a tiny stream, and settled in among some

reeds. Once you got on the bird, it was easy to tell where it was with your bare eyes, but it was very well camouflaged. One of the group, Doug Grist, got some excellent photos of the bird by digiscoping; a photo showed the bird’s tongue as it was singing. Doug also gave me a tip for digiscoping—wrap your first finger and thumb around the top of the phone, then use your other three fingers to grip the scope eyepiece. This will let you separate the eyepiece and your phone camera lens about a finger’s width away for focusing. Use your other hand to blowup, focus, and take the photo.

On Sunday, Julie Shackelford led a group “Round and About the Town”. We began at her house with a flock of Dark-eyed Juncos and American Goldfinch at her feeders. Tall trees around her house yielded Downy, Red-bellied, and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and five Northern Flickers were in one tree alone. When we returned to the cars, an Eastern Bluebird was attacking the bluebird in the car’s side mirror. I’ve seen this behavior in cardinals and mockingbirds, but it was a first to see a bluebird do it. We also visited Pecan Park and the Native Plant Center where two cooperative Brown-headed Nuthatches responded to a bird call and gave close-up looks. We stopped by Julie’s house around noon for a quick glimpse of her wintering Rufous Hummingbird.

All in all, it was a great weekend with two lifers, visiting with friends from around the state, great meals and accommodations at the Fredonia, and interesting speakers. TOS biannual meetings are always an excellent value with first rate trip leaders. I select my field trips based on the possibility of adding life birds—looking forward to Alpine in May and the birds I might add—Western and Clark’s Grebe, Montezuma Quail (4th try!), maybe a Golden Eagle. FYI, in addition to my two target birds, I did go home with the Witmer Stone book.

—Submitted by Lynn Thompson



Two of our wonderful registrars.



Dr Brent Burt presenting on “A Sparrow, a Nuthatch and a Woodpecker Fly into a Pine Savanna.”



Our fearless Century Club trip leader, Anthony Hewetson.



A gorgeous day and good company at Kurth Lake.



Deep in the Pineywoods!



Shelia Hargis and Megan Ahlgren checking out the birds on Kurth Lake.



Co-President of Pineywoods Audubon, Dave Wallace.



The amazing Susie Lower – one of the major forces behind our very successful meeting!



David Wolf presenting on “Birds of the Piney Woods—Our Everchanging Avifauna.”



Dave and Vickie Wallace staffing the raffle table.



Mimi Wolf (center) preparing the group for Sprague’s Pipit and Henslow’s Sparrow hunting at the airport.



Long-time TOS member Ethel Kutac with Vickie Wallace checking out the raffle items. Vickie was in charge of the amazing silent auction and the raffle items.



Dr. Dean Fisher presenting on “Roads, Peoples, Birds, Mountaintops, and Billabongs – the Unparalleled 3-Year Adventure Around the World by Two Young Men.”

Holy Crow! What an Irruption



Texas hadn't seen hide nor feather of the Tamaulipas Crow, regularly found year-round along the Gulf Coast of Mexico, in approximately seven years. Its regular hangout prior to that was the Brownsville Dump (a.k.a. landfill). That all changed in November, 2017, with Tamaulipas Crows being seen first as fly-bys, both offshore by Jon McIntyre from a fishing boat and also in the Brownsville area, and then found once again at the Brownsville Landfill. Up to five crows were reported being seen at one time from this location.

I made the trek to the birding mecca during the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival. What an opportune time for the birds to show up. On the day I went, two birds were present. One was perched on a pipe right in front of me

next to a Cattle Egret. The feathers were iridescent, glossy black. It was larger and stockier than the nearby Great-tailed Grackles and smaller than the nearby Chihuahuan Ravens. It had a short, black bill and dark eyes.

Two Tamaulipas Crows were next reported at the Bird and Nature Center on S. Padre Island. Next came reports from Galveston Island! The last reports on ebird from this location were on December 5th.

Then came the Rockport bird. This is the bird I'm most familiar with, as the pasture where the Rockport bird is being seen is part of my regular birding patch. On December 28th at the Rockport CBC count dinner, a non-birding patron at Charlotte Plummer's restaurant overheard the CBC participants talking about birds and announced that he had a small crow that was making a croaking sound on his property in Lamar. Our club president, Deb Corpora, looked at Isaac Sanchez, knowing what this could be.

The bird was re-found the next day and is still being seen in the pasture near the Big Tree with the Whooping Cranes, flying back and forth between fence posts along Lamar Beach Road and two Anacua trees on the North side of the pasture across from the Big Tree. This bird has been very vocal. Any corvid in this area would be a rare occurrence, which makes this sighting even more special.

Two questions that remain are where will they show up next, and will they be seen regularly in Texas in the future.

— Susan Foster and Judy Kestner

Texas Century Club Award

On October 26, 2003 The *Texas Ornithological Society* Executive Board created the **Texas Century Club Award**. I authored the motion to create the award program after a wide ranging discussion on the email list *TEXBIRDS* about how many counties do we really bird in. At the time one participant in the discussion had all his records computerized and had only recorded 100 species in 9 counties in his lifetime. The counties were his "local patch" and the hotspot counties we all find ourselves traveling to. Jefferson, Galveston, Chambers, Nueces, Cameron, Hidalgo, and Brewster.

Texas has 254 counties. There are a lot of counties that rarely, perhaps never have had more than a casual amount of birding. What are the regular birds in Glasscock County? or Knox County? or Yoakum County?

In a previous life I was a very active ham radio operator. It occurred to me that the combination of two popular ham radio awards programs would work very well to encourage birders to investigate remote counties in Texas. The DX Century Club is a ham radio award for talking to 100 counties and the County Hunters strive to talk to someone in every county in the United States. The mash up seemed obvious, The **Texas Century Club Award** would be an award for recording 100 species in 100 Texas Counties.

Many felt it would take a lifetime. Some counties you can find a hundred species in a single day. Many more

counties will take 2-3, perhaps more visits in multiple seasons to record 100 species in the county.

Originally I envisioned awards would be given for recording 100 species in 5, 10, 25, 50, and 75 Counties. The **Texas Century Club Award** would be given for recording 100 species in 100 counties and endorsements would be given in increments of 25 above 100 counties.

Awards were sparsely funded at first, but the fun of pursuing the birds kept a core group of birders chasing. When eBird appeared on the scene in 2006 record keeping became easier, and all those data points we were generating had a repository. At first more than 40 counties in Texas had no records.

Dell Little, an active Century Cluber recently completed a table of how many birds are reported for each county in eBird. Now 11 Counties have recorded 400 or more species. Only 39 Counties out of 254 have recorded fewer than 200! The fewest species recorded are for Lipscomb County with 129 species.

Go to the Texas Century Club Website at www.texascenturyclub.org and see the standings. Anthony Heweston has now recorded 100 species in all 254 Texas Counties. Eleven birders have recorded 100 species in 100 Counties now. Five birders now claim to have birded every county in Texas, thirteen have birded more than 200 counties.

Texas Century Club Award *(continued)*

Originally I envisioned field trips to work on counties being organized by Century Clubbers. That has happened and you will see Century Club field trips at every TOS meeting with the goal of recording as many birds as possible in that county.

Now that you have 400 plus birds in Texas you might find the thrill of a new lifer gets further and further apart. Well you can rekindle that thrill with a new county if you are a Century Clubber. Even some common birds can be hard to find in some counties. As one avid Century Clubber once told me "It's like having a new girlfriend in every county". There is so much to learn, so much to explore while birding Texas.

New Texas Century Club members will be recognized

at the Spring TOS meeting in Alpine. We are also going to be giving out pins for milestones along the way as you pursue your 100 counties.

Sound like fun? If you use eBird you already have your county records organized. Just go to "My eBird" and click on the county tab and see how many counties you have 100 species in. Join our little Facebook Group, just search for "Texas Century Club" You can report your progress towards the Texas Century Club to the group or website administrator, or if you find you are making rapid progress you can request an account to make your own changes. Join us chasing birds everywhere.

—David Sarkosi

David Dauphin Memorial Fund

Jan Dauphin

General Fund

Mary Bridges

Jimma Byrd

Charles Carlson

Nancy Cochran

Mary J Curlee

Frank & Margaret Farese

Michael & Rozanna Francis

Shelia Hargis

Winifred Harte

Steve Hull

Mary Johnson

Judith Kestner

Dorothy King

Bob Meyer

Kelley Miller

Robert Mitchum

Brooke Nicotra

Betty & Ray Parker

John Prentice & Linda Gindler

Herb Smith

Sara Rowe

Lelia Vaughan

Michael Wolfson

Mary Wood

Sanctuaries

Dr. Michael Austin

Stanley Casto

Nancy Cochran

Frank & Teresa Davis

Karol Prinz/Robert Meyer

Karen and Jerry Moulder

Lynn Thompson

Hurricane recovery

Ric Zarwell

Nacogdoches Winter Meeting

Anonymous

Austin Bank

Commercial Bank of Texas

Stan and Paula Sisco

Roddy Willis

Steve Wright

Steve Gross Memorial

Ken & Siew Bee Hartman

"memory of Margaret "Mickey" Robinson"

Barbara Anderson

Regional Reports

Region 2—North Central Texas 2017/8 Winter Birding

TOS Winter Meeting in Nacogdoches- I attended this year's meeting in Nacogdoches, located in the East Texas Pineywoods Region, a region adjacent to my North Central Texas Region. The birds seen on field trips there was fascinating compared to those I have been seeing here a bit farther North and West. Of course, the similarities are much stronger than the differences; because except for Henslow's Sparrows, Brown-headed Nuthatches, and wintering Cave Swallows, the species I saw also occur in my region in winter. However, there were notable differences in abundance; for example, Blue-headed Vireos and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers seem much more common in the Piney Woods.

Notable winter visitors—Pine Siskins occur some years in abundance but not always. This year most of us have seen them frequently, but it is never boring! Mike Cameron photographed this beauty in a typical feeding position.

Rare bird summary—With thanks to Ross Rasmussen, I can share that 32 species of notable rare or unexpected birds were reported in North Central Texas during Fall (August-November) 2017. These birds were either unexpected or were observed in unusually high numbers or at out-of-season times. Of these, the **Best Sightings** were:

- Tundra Swan (*Tarrant County*),
- Acorn Woodpecker (*Hardeman County*)
- Sabine's Gull (*Tarrant County*)
- White-tailed Kite (*Tarrant, Johnson, Parker, Dallas, Ellis, Hunt Counties*)
- Harris's Hawk (*Grayson, Navarro Counties*)
- White-tailed Hawk (*Denton, Van Zandt, Tarrant, Johnson Counties*)
- Cape May Warbler (*Tarrant County*)



Of note is the occurrence of south-Texas raptors in several counties in our region. (And the reports of Harris's Hawk have continued into January.) Ross's full report can be read by subscribing to *North American Birds* (a publication of the American Birding Association). Also watch for his winter report in March 2018.

—Gailon Brehm, TOS Region 2 Director

Regional Report—Region 4 (Trans Pecos)



Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Snowy Owl, California Gull, Long-tailed Duck, Downy Woodpecker, and Red Crossbills galore all define the past few months of birding in the Trans Pecos region. It has indeed turned out to be a great invasive year with Cassin's Finches, Red Crossbills, Stellar's Jay, and the like, all being seen in good numbers. The Violet-crowned Hummingbird, found by Mel Cooksey, in my yard was certainly a wonderful surprise and brings my hummingbird species count to 8 in a mere two years. Will probably never catch Kelly Bryan but I hope to get close! Many birders saw the hummer rather easily for several weeks. Unfortunately, on the second day of 12-degree weather, he apparently succumbed and I later found him in my landscaping. He will find a place in the Texas A&M collection.

A suburban Snowy Owl hanging out in parking lots around Odessa provided stellar views for many but did prove elusive at times. Lots of photos of the bird sitting on a power pole hit the Internet as folks made the trek to see the white wonder. The Balmorhea CBC provided some fun sightings with a California Gull, Long-tailed Duck, and Anhingas. A Downy Woodpecker was photographed at Dell City (west of Guadalupe Mountains National Park) provided a rare record for the region.

The Baird's Sparrow banding project in Marfa continues to draw birders out to see one of the most difficult sparrow species to get a great look at in Texas. The next chance to participate is March 4th-March 9th. For more info, join the Trans-Pecos Birds & Birding Facebook group.

FYI, the next open dates for the Davis Mountain's Preserve will be March 16th—18th, April 14th, and May 19th. The Independence Creek Preserve will be open to the public on March 24th, April 20th-22nd, and May 26th. And last, but not least, the TOS Spring Meeting will be in Alpine with many field trips heading to popular and some lesser known hot spots in the Trans Pecos. So get out of that boring city you are in right now and head to the wide open spaces of West Texas.

—Lee Hoy, Director Region 4

Regional Reports *(continued)*

Region 5—Edwards Plateau

The Edwards Plateau hosted two exciting Texas Review Species within the last few months. An Elegant Trogon was an unexpected sighting near Landa Park in New Braunfels. First reported on 1/27/18 on the Panther Canyon Nature Trail it appeared sporadically until 2/8/18 when it was last reported. A Golden-crowned Sparrow was originally found on 12/12/17. As of 2/22/18, it was still present on private property at Warbler Woods in Guadalupe County. Be sure to visit the website and get the gate code before planning a trip to Warbler Woods.

Region 5 offers a choice of two birding festivals the weekend of April 27-29, 2018. The Balcones Songbird Festival celebrates its 18th year. The Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge was created to protect two endangered species; the Golden-cheeked Warbler and the Black-capped Vireo, it is also a migratory stopover in the Central Flyway. Painted Buntings, Yellow-breasted Chats and the ubiquitous Roadrunner are some of the 106 species seen last year. Further west, the Friends of South Llano River State Park will sponsor the first annual South Llano River State Park Birding Festival. Events will include: guided Golden-cheeked Warbler walks, bird habitat walks, bird photography programs, a Big Sit!, family activities and more. Registration is open for both festivals and more information is available online.

—*Jimma Byrd, Regional Director*

Region 7—Brushlands

1. The Laredo Bird Festival was February 7th to 10th and the registration reached the max capacity of 130 visitors. Each field trip van had 10 birders. We have reduced the number of birders per van to allow for comfort. We are fortunate to be permitted to have access to 18 private ranches. The list of ranches that are willing to participate in the Festival, is growing every year.

2. Zapata County Commissioner, Olga Elizondo,

Precinct 2, has personally taken control of the supervision and maintenance of the San Ygnacio Bird Sanctuary. Her maintenance crew has provided a complete make-over of the roadside Picnic Table and Rest Area. You will have a 180-degree scenic view of the river and of Mexico. In my opinion, this area has the best scenic view of the Rio Grande River of any location within our immediate area. This site was previously a TXDOT Rest Area but is now under full control of Zapata County.

Commissioner Elizondo and Zapata county have given the Monte Mucho Audubon permission to promote their landfill as a birding hot spot. As of January 20th, 2018, this landfill and its staff allow visiting birders complete access. There is a small fee of \$5/per vehicle. These donations will be used to support their San Ygnacio Bird Sanctuary.

Please note, I am asking for T.O.S. Support to help promote the historical city of San Ygnacio as a viable birding hotspot with several locations for birders to visit whilst in this area of South Texas. Ideally, this city location get its own star on the T.O.S. Web page; Birding in Texas BIG MAP. Attached is a Google map web link showing 4 immediate birding locations. <http://goo.gl/maps/WKbq>

Zapata County and one private ranch pond in particular, near San Ygnacio seems to have Muscovy Ducks on a regular basis. Monte Mucho Audubon has approved funds to support the construction of wooden nesting boxes. We anticipate that Commissioner Elizondo will encourage other local ranchers join in on this project, thus allowing us more access to new birding locations. Most likely, these new ranch properties will also be included in future Laredo Bird Festivals.

3. Texas county coverage for Monte Mucho Audubon Society: Webb, Brooks, Duval, Jim Wells, Jim Hogg, Starr and Zapata.

4. Rare book collection title, author and photos have been shared. A lifetime of collection of rare books would enhance any existing library.

—*Raul Delgado, Regional Director*



Family Ties—A common Texas songbird gives insight into urban living!

As I walked through the bustling campus at Texas State University in San Marcos, I was greeted with a familiar sound that came from the oak above me—“peter-peter-peter-peter!” While I am quite used to Black-crested Titmice singing



(Predator_Baffles): Undergraduates from Texas State assist with nestbox installation. (Photo credit: Maya Ressler)

frequently throughout the Texas Hill Country, I am still baffled by their presence in high trafficked areas such as a university that is currently home to over 35,000 students. Yet here this male sang with gusto, his mate at his side, as if our human presence was no concern to them. But is it true that people pose little threat to titmice and other common avian species in rapidly developed Texas towns such as San Marcos? My skeptical mind needed evidence!

During the past five and a half years, I dedicated most of my time and efforts towards Black-crested Titmouse research.

I was fortunate to have received my Master’s degree looking at the social flocking behaviors and dispersal dynamics of titmice out in a fairly rural location called the Freeman Ranch, roughly 5 miles northwest of San Marcos. I, along with other graduate students, placed 71 nestboxes throughout the ranch and monitored them during the breeding season, making note of the species that utilized the boxes, nesting success and failures of each species, and the habitat in which the boxes were placed. Over the years it was delightful to collect and analyze data, finding out how healthy this rural landscape seemed in regards to cavity nesting songbirds.

While monitoring these nestboxes, I was also able to capture and color band titmice, giving entire families (male, female and nestlings) a unique combination of colors that allowed me to identify individuals through focal observation.



(Babies_in_box): Young titmice staying warm in a nestbox. (Photo credit: Rebekah Rylander)

It was in this fashion that I was able to follow and track the social behaviors of related groups of titmice across all seasons for years. My project was simple in design but time consuming to say the least—after thousands of observational hours, I discovered that titmice form kin-structured neighborhoods through the limited dispersal of their heaviest son. In other words, mom and dad provide benefits, and their son knows it! The next year the son sets up his own territory right next to dad’s, and over time this creates clusters

of related titmice all residing in a small area. Pretty neat, huh!

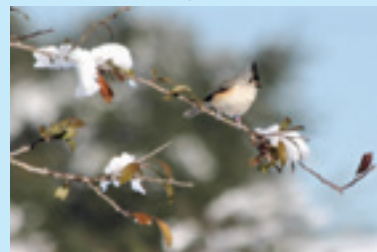
Returning to my campus titmouse encounter: how were these urban birds and their social structures affected by constant anthropogenic disturbance? I understood titmice in a rural

setting, but now I was intrigued with city-dwellers. Thus a PhD project was born! I now needed nestboxes, volunteers to assist me in checking them, and some luck that the titmice would take a fancy to my urban set-up. Thankfully,



(Rebekah_Adult): Rylander and one of her favorite titmice, Lassie. (Photo credit: Sara Harrod)

with the help of Texas State and Trinity Universities, the Community Impact Newspaper, the Texas Bluebird Society, and the Texas Ornithological Society, I now have over 150 nestboxes throughout the San Marcos community, all spaced



(Ursula2): Ursula, one of Rylander’s banded females, checks out the snow. (Photo credit: Rebekah Rylander)

out among varying degrees of urbanization across the landscape. We have also increased the number of nestboxes out at the Freeman Ranch to 146. Therefore our spring 2018 season will be a remarkable feat of over 40 volunteers performing checks on over 300 nestboxes. I cannot wait to see how many titmice

decide to make one of these boxes their home!

Though my dissertation research revolves around a specific target species in an urban setting, I am also interested in the bigger picture of how our presence impacts the local bird community, particularly cavity nesters. Several additional graduate students will be working with this same system of nestboxes, and I am thrilled that our collaborative efforts will result in a better understanding of our co-existence with these avian creatures.



(Sassy_youngster): A nestling prepares to be color-banded. (Photo credit: Mary Jo Bogatto)

As the breeding season approaches once again with warmer weather in central Texas, I am delightfully greeted by the consistent “petering” of sassy-street titmice. Only now do I smile to myself, knowing that in a few years’ time we will hopefully better understand their secrets of family survival

among the sea of people below them. A true testament to a hardy little bird!

—Rebekah Rylander, PhD student, Texas State University

Partnership with Houston Audubon—High Island Birding Just Got Better!

In the fall of 2017, members of the TOS Board began talking with Richard Gibbons, Conservation Director of Houston Audubon, about ways that we could work together to make the birding experience in High Island even better. Houston Audubon has two main sanctuaries in High Island—Boy Scout Woods and Smith Oaks. TOS has Hooks Woods and Mary Crawford Sanctuary. To raise money for maintenance costs at their sanctuaries, Houston Audubon charges birders to visit their sanctuaries. Birders can pay a daily fee or buy a great patch that is good for birding all year long (and is also an amazing piece of artwork). The day pass or the patch gets



birders into the Houston Audubon sanctuaries. TOS charges \$5 per day for non-TOS members to visit our sanctuaries. TOS members get in free. Richard had heard from some birders over the years about their confusion over what their payment to Houston Audubon included. Some were surprised that the fee didn't include entry at TOS sanctuaries. And there was the inconvenience of having to pay two different times if they visited Houston Audubon sanctuaries and TOS sanctuaries.

On the TOS side, our biggest challenge has been maintenance of our sanctuaries given we don't have paid staff nor volunteers living close to High Island who are available to help us coordinate work days and other maintenance issues. Nor do we have the equipment for work days. Our relationship and agreement with Golden Triangle Audubon for care and maintenance at Sabine Woods works well, so we were hoping for a similar arrangement at High Island with Houston Audubon.

Given these issues, Richard suggested that Houston Audubon and TOS work out something that would benefit both organizations. On October 29 as part of the annual TOS Board retreat, we met with Pete Deichmann, Sanctuaries Manager for Houston Audubon, at Hooks Woods. We walked the grounds and discussed details and logistics of a mutually beneficial arrangement. Pete talked about Houston Audubon's established work days with staff and volunteers as well as their equipment for mowing, pruning, cleaning board walks, etc. He also talked about the challenges of maintaining the sanctuaries in High Island and shared his thoughts about ways we might improve Hooks Woods. We all thought that a partnership that streamlined the payment process for entry to all High Island sanctuaries and work days that included all High Island sanctuaries would be wonderful for TOS, Houston Audubon, and visiting birders.

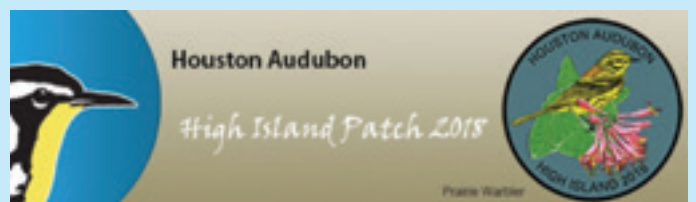


*The group surveying the small prairie at Hooks Woods.
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis*

Over the next several months, we worked out a formal agreement. Now birders buying a day pass or patch from Houston Audubon will also get into Hooks Woods with no extra charge. (TOS members still get into TOS sanctuaries without charge but have to pay for entry into Houston Audubon sanctuaries.) Houston Audubon will include maintenance at Hooks Woods in their work days. Both organizations will advertise this partnership and will solicit volunteers for the work days.

Richard had this to say. "Houston Audubon is humbled and honored to forge this partnership with TOS. The partnership will have two main beneficiaries, birds and birders. Hooks Woods will receive more frequent and thorough management that will provide better bird habitat with fewer low-value invasive plant species and more high-value natives. Birders will benefit from a streamlined transaction permitting access to both TOS and Houston Audubon sanctuaries in High Island."

I see this partnership as an opportunity to partner with a leader in the field of bird conservation in Texas and to learn from Houston Audubon's knowledgeable staff about sanctuary maintenance and improvement. I also see it as a win-win for everyone—TOS, Houston Audubon, birds and birders. Thank you Richard, Pete and Helen Drummond (Houston Audubon Executive Director) for your leadership



Houston Audubon's 2018 Patch

in bird conservation in Texas and for your willingness to partner with TOS to improve the situation for all in High Island. I hope this is just the first step in a long and rewarding relationship as we work together to provide the best habitat possible for the birds and the best migration viewing opportunities for birders.

—Shelia Hargis

A Bigger Magic Ridge Sanctuary—A Family’s Enduring Love for the Land and Its Inhabitants



Mary Belle Meitzen wearing some of her awards for historical preservation.

In December of 2017, Mary Belle Meitzen donated her two lots along Zimmerman Road to Texas Ornithological Society to become part of our Magic Ridge Sanctuary. Wanting to know more about Ms. Meitzen and the history of the lots, I called her hoping she would provide the story behind her donation. She did and the story was better than I imagined!

Ed Melcher, Mary Belle’s grandfather, accepted the lots a long time ago in lieu of rent. His wife, Belle Bierman Melcher, had a deep love for the natural world and shared this love with three generations (her son, J.C. Melcher and his wife, Willie Belle; her granddaughter, Mary Belle; and her great grandchildren, Robert, Margaret and John) through frequent visits to “the Ridge”. Mary Belle remembers spending her whole life riding along Ridge Road looking at birds and bunnies.

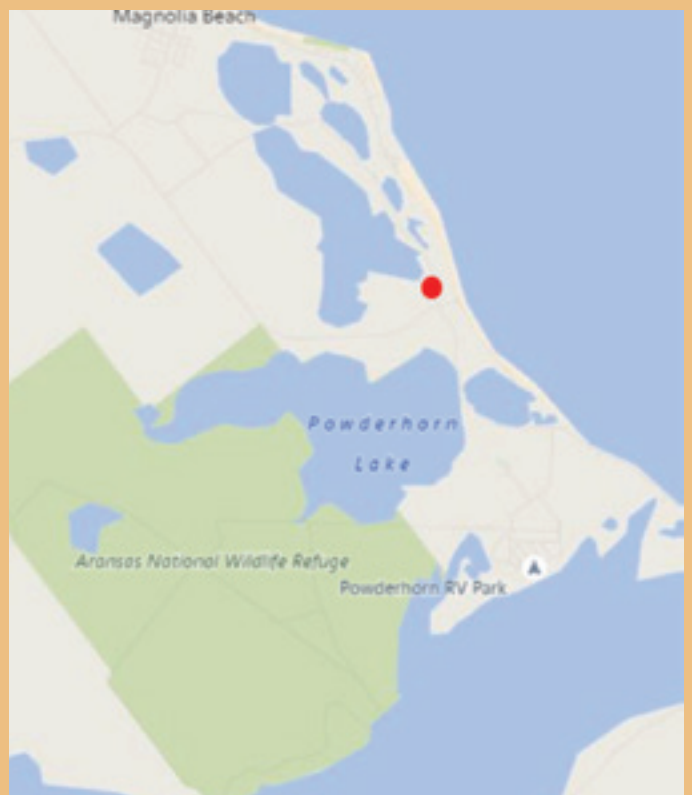
After Hurricane Carla, Mary Belle’s brother, J.C. Melcher III, gathered scattered wood and built what was planned to be an art studio on the lots. Unfortunately for him, his parents and sisters took it over as their base for excursions to watch the birds and other wildlife including rabbits, armadillos, snakes, ants, and bobcats. The lots were kept in their native state except for the area immediately around the “art studio”. After a while, another storm destroyed the studio but the family continued to visit regularly. Snakes took up residence in the debris of the studio. And in a true test of the owners’ love for nature, they were allowed to live there unmolested!

Mary Belle taught kindergarten and first grade with her specialty being gifted and talented students. She would often bring feathers, nests and other items from the Ridge to share with her students. She and her students participated in the first ever Earth Day. Historical preservation is currently Mary Belle’s strongest interest. Researching, writing historical marker stories, and repairing cemeteries including Old Town Cemetery on Zimmerman Road are some of her pastimes. She has served in leadership roles such as the Calhoun County Historical Commission Chair, Port Lavaca Study Club President and Delta Kappa Gamma President. She has received awards for her work including the Daughters of the American Revolution Historic Preservation medal. She and her husband John regularly watch birds in Magic Ridge. Currently, a special treat is getting to watch armadillos along the Ridge too.

Mary Belle donated the two lots to TOS in honor of her parents, J.C. and Willie Belle, who especially loved sitting on the studio porch watching the birds come in. She is very concerned about recent clearing of other lots along the Ridge



The location of the two lots.



Red circle showing the location of the lots and the surrounding area.

A Bigger Magic Ridge Sanctuary *(continued)*

Photos of the lots.



where the owner is planning to build a house. Her hope is that TOS will be able to purchase or preserve the rest of the ridge area before it is erased by man or water. Thank you, Mary Belle for your generous donation to TOS and for carrying on your family's legacy of care and appreciation for our amazing wildlife.

If you would like to see where these lots fit in with the other lots that TOS owns, check out the map that past Board member Chuck Davis put together. It is available at <https://tinyurl.com/TOSMagicRidgeMap>. The new lots are shown in red.

—Shelia Hargis

Save Santa Ana!

Observations from the Rally

Lee and I, along with Ray and Ginny Steelman went down to the Valley to show our support for saving the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge from the destruction of an unnecessary border wall. We birded the area that morning, commenting often how tragic it would be for the Refuge to be destroyed. Make no mistake, this isn't just a wall. All vegetation will be cleared for hundreds of yards on either side of this barrier. The maps and information show that it will affect many of the World Birding sites.

Several organizations sponsored the rally, which was held in a field next to the Refuge. Local estimates placed attendance at over 1000 people. The weather was gloomy and rain threatened, but the folks at the rally didn't seem to notice.

The rally was at once somber and upbeat. The support among the various groups was readily apparent. Many of the participants were young and their enthusiasm was palpable. It was uplifting just to feel their energy. There were kids and dogs, folks carrying cameras or binoculars. And the signs! There were so many signs supporting the resistance. Creativity was on full display. My personal favorite was carried by an elderly veteran, stating that the border wall will cost 1.6 billion dollars and a veteran's hospital would cost 175 million. He wanted to know why won't they build that, since the need is so great?

The rally started with a concert with some very talented performers. The speakers included politicians, DACA recipients, environmentalists and artists. Their message was consistent—a border wall is an attack on the culture of South Texas and by extension, all of us. They are correct. Those of us in the birding community usually think of saving the Santa Ana NWR as a birds and habitat issue, but that is just part of it. All Texans will be poorer for the damage done to the people and land in our beautiful state.

So get out and support saving our land, our wildlife, our shared heritage. Go to the next rally. Send a letter to your representatives. Help win this battle for all of us.

—Lee Wallace



Brown County Weekender Summary

February 16-18, 2018



Briefing for the Brown County weekender.
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis

Fourteen TOS members along with Ed Fair and Shelia Hargis, our two leaders, had a great day and a half in Brown County over the weekend of February 16-18. Most participants did a little county birding on their way to Brownwood on Friday, and Shelia and Ed managed to get some scouting in. At the Friday night get-together at a community center (where Ed used to go to teenage dances back in the day) they tried unsuccessfully to keep their sightings of a Red-headed Woodpecker and Bald Eagle (both flagged as rare in eBird) under wraps, and expectations were raised when the news came out.



Ed Fair doing his screech owl imitation at Fabis Park. Photo credit: Shelia Hargis

We started off a chilly Saturday with Banker's Hours, not having to leave the hotel until 7 a.m. since sunrise was at 7:15. Our first stop en route to Fabis Primitive Park yielded a hooting Great Horned Owl and several duck species. The park was quite "woodpeckery" with interacting Red-bellied and Golden-fronted, and Ladder-backed, Downy and Northern Flicker. And the Red-headed put on a show. Only missed the sapsucker that Shelia and Ed encountered on Friday. Next stop was the Lake Brownwood Dam area which had a fairly cooperative Rock Wren, Least Sandpipers and American Pipits. These first two stops were big highlights for those of us who had never visited the east side of Lake Brownwood—definitely worth revisiting during migration.



Looking at our Brown County Red-headed Woodpecker.
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis



Brown County Red-headed Woodpecker.
Photo credit: Shelia Hargis

Most of the rest of the day was spent at Lake Brownwood State Park and the bridge over State Highway 279 leading to the park (both eBird hotspots). A side by side comparison of an Eared and Horned Grebe was a highlight, and the soaring adult Bald Eagle out over the lake earned Shelia and Ed plaudits. Oddly there were no Osprey to be found anywhere. A wrong turn was fortuitous, yielding a nice look at a Harris's Sparrow and roadrunners. We drove



County listers (the San Antonio four) taking a break at Lake Brownwood State Park. Photo credit: Jane Tillman

Brown County Weekender Summary *(continued)*



Scoping the lake from a great overlook at Lake Brownwood State Park. Photo credit: Shelia Hargis



Seeking shelter from the rain at the Country Club. Photo credit: Shelia Hargis



Brown County weekender participants at the Brownwood Country Club. Photo credit: Jane Tillman

some back roads east and south of Brownwood later in the day looking for needed ducks and sparrows.

Sunday we visited Riverside Park right in town which is adjacent to Pecan Bayou. (The locals pronounce it “bah owe”.) Two treats were four Fox Sparrows together and a couple of Hermit Thrushes. Thanks to Ed we had permission to bird at the Country Club even though there was a golf tournament going on. The Country Club lake had many coots and ducks, a swimming raccoon, and three species of swallows—two Purple Martins, several Cave and two Tree Swallows. A rainstorm loomed and then the skies opened up, putting an end to the trip since it looked like the rain was there to stay. It was unfortunate to miss the birds waiting for us on County Road 229 southwest of Indian Creek, that dead ends at the Colorado River.

The group tallied 93 species seen by some or all members. Thanks to Shelia and Ed who did a great job of getting everyone to and on the birds, and to all the participants for being a congenial group.

—Jane Tillman TOS Field Trip Coordinator



TOS ANNOUNCES NEW T-SHIRT

Another highlight of the Spring meeting in Alpine will be the unveiling of the new TOS t-shirt.

Third place winner in our past t-shirt art contest this little owl was drawn by Lynn Delvin a frequent contributor to TOS publications.

The Joan & Scott Holt Paradise Pond

The Port Aransas Nature Preserve Joan & Scott Holt Paradise Pond is a wooded freshwater pond. This [eBird hotspot](#) can be found on the northern tip of Mustang Island, outside of Corpus Christi, TX. The site draws visitors from all over the world to observe the rainbow of migrating birds that come through each Spring and Fall. Paradise Pond is a hidden gem that lies tucked behind the popular San Juan's Taqueria on Cut Off Road, the main road from the Port Aransas Ferry.

Hurricane Harvey

Hurricane Harvey made landfall on San Jose Island immediately north of Port Aransas, TX around 10 PM on August 25th 2017. The storm filled the freshwater pond with saltwater, blew down fences that smothered plants, downed trees and destroyed important habitat for migrating neotropical birds. The 30ft tall mature black willow trees that grew from the edges of the pond sat in salt water for over a month. They turned brown and to this day many have not shown signs of life. The predominant vegetation remaining at the site is the invasive Brazilian Peppertrees.



Joan & Scott Holt Paradise Pond after Hurricane Harvey.

Post Storm Recovery

Since the storm volunteer crews have helped repair damage from Hurricane Harvey. Firefighters from Cleburne, Abilene and Fort Worth areas repaired the Paradise Pond boardwalk. The FTW saw crew cleared downed trees and fences. The La Palmilla Resort and Golf Club volunteered staff and equipment to pump the salt water out of the pond multiple times. Port Royal Resort paid staff to remove debris and downed fences. Texas A&M Corpus Christi replanted the pollinator garden near the parking area. A team led by former student to Joan Holt, Andy Soto, a professor at Texas A&M Kingsville, created a contracting group to rebuild the fences and construct new raised flower beds. The beds now house a native pollinator garden that runs the length of the driveway to the site. Local volunteers from Port Aransas filled the beds with soil, mulch and native pollinator plants.

In order to restore the wooded area of the site to the

bird friendly habitat it once was, the remaining Brazilian Peppertrees need to be removed. In order to save any remaining live Black Willows and make room to plant native plants and trees the Peppertrees have to go.



The only remaining green foliage is the invasive Brazilian Peppertree.

Invasive Brazilian Peppertrees

This is not the first time Paradise Pond has made headlines, in September 2015 trees were cleared from a powerline easement and a private developer's adjacent land ([see history here](#)). Although the clearing changed the site dramatically the predominant plant that was cut down was the invasive Brazilian Peppertrees. These trees started to appear in a small corner of the site in 2002 and since then have spread to cover nearly 75% of the 2-acre site. These exotic trees were brought to the U.S. for landscaping and ornamental purposes from South America. The trees grow so densely that they choke out any native plants and prevent grasses and other seed and fruit bearing plants from growing in the area. Birds eat the seeds and help the invasive tree



Paradise Pond before clearing work. The native trees are being choked out by Brazilian Peppertrees.

spread even faster. There are native trees and shrubs that can provide more nutritious food. Native alternatives that resemble the Brazilian Peppertree include: Hercules Club, Wax Myrtle and Yaupon Holly. You can find other native plants at www.wildflower.org.



Firefighters helped level the boardwalk by spraying water around each deck piling until it sank back into place.

After the clearing took place the City contracted Native Dave Inc. to replant native species and maintain them for one year. Over 300 plants and 30 different species were planted and Native Dave regularly checked on the progress and removed any invasive species that resprouted. This work was funded through a donation from AEP Texas and existing funds from the Port Aransas Nature Preserve.



Paradise Pond after clearing work begins. The newly opened habitat will provide space for 150 native trees and shrubs.

The Texas Gulf Coast Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA)

The CWMA was established in 2014 by the City of Port Aransas, the Texas A&M Forest Service and Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Other participants include the Nueces County Coastal Parks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Texas Parks and Wildlife, The University of Texas Marine Science Institute, The Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve and the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program. The mission of the collaboration is to address invasive Brazilian peppertree from Port O'Connor to Packery Channel on the Texas Gulf Coast. This group provides volunteer work days and public outreach for the removal of peppertrees at Paradise Pond and other Nature Preserve sites.

Restoration Assistance

\$9500 in funds to remove the remaining peppertrees and replant native trees and plants was graciously provided by Shelia Hargis and the Texas Ornithological Society. Clearing work has begun and plants have been ordered to restore the wooded freshwater pond. Work should complete in the first



week of March. Replanting will take place once clearing is finished. These plants include: Black Willow, Montezuma Cypress, Cottonwood, Coastal Live Oak, Texas Kidneywood, Button Bush, American Beauty Berry, Pigeon Berry, Chili Pequin and others. These natives will help restore a natural canopy and understory for migrating birds with nutritious fruits, seeds and insects to give them the energy they need to continue on their long journeys.

The Nature Preserve sites will continue to need volunteer support and monetary donations as we recover. It's estimated that 3.4 million dollars in damages were accrued from the storm. Volunteers meet regularly every Thursday from 9am-12noon. Anyone interested in helping can contact Colleen Simpson at csimpson@cityofportaransas.org. The Recreation Foundation of Port Aransas is collecting online donations for the Preserves at www.recreationporta.org. Checks made out to the City of Port Aransas with "Nature Preserve" in the memo can be mailed to 701 W. Ave A Port Aransas TX 78373.

—Colleen Simpson, Port Aransas Nature Preserve Manager

Enjoy Spring Migration with the Great Texas Birding Classic!



It's that time of year again—time to start thinking about spring migration, birding with friends, and which trips you'll take to see great birds. Make this the year that you get together with friends and family to put together a Birding Classic team! Join more than 100 teams participating all over the state and enjoy one of the best birding experiences in Texas.

Novice birders, expert listers, and everyone in between are welcome! There are many categories to choose from based on your birding ability and region of the state. From half day or full day to full week tournaments, there's something for everyone.

Find all tournament details online now at www.birdingclassic.org, including information on:

- Participation categories—which is the best fit for you?
- Advice and tips from previous winning teams—tips for youth team mentors, Big Sit! and Big Day teams, and even an EZ-Guide to participation.
- Tournament rules and checklist help.
- Team registration information—how to officially sign your team up!

Registration fees and sponsorship dollars contribute to Conservation Grants for birding, nature tourism, and habitat restoration and enhancement projects throughout Texas. Select winning teams will help choose which projects are funded. The more teams that register, the more funds we can award!

Join us as we celebrate 22 years of great birding and conservation with the Great Texas Birding Classic. All registered participants will receive t-shirts with the official 2018 artwork of a Groove-billed Ani, donated by the talented artist Allie Rowland (www.facebook.com/artistallierowland).

If you need help on how to register your team, how to use eBird for the Birding Classic, or even how to determine which tournament category(ies?) might be the best fit for you and your friends, please contact Shelly Plante (512-389-4500, shelly.plante@tpwd.texas.gov).

Registration Deadline: April 1st

Tournament Days: pick any day from April 15-May 15

Register your team now to raise money for habitat conservation projects throughout the state and enjoy some of the country's best birding!

Quick Explanation of Tournament Categories:

- **The Texas Two-Stop Tournament.** Visit two sites only and see how many species you can tally in a 48-hour period (up to 24 hours per site).
- **The Big Sit!** Bird from a 17-foot diameter circle with your friends, family, or colleagues! This category is great for teams that have one or two

“ringer” birders or large teams.

- **State Park Tournament, Big Sit! or Sunrise-to-Noon Tournaments.** Ideal for teams seeking a more laid-back day without too much traveling around and categories that allow for mixed age teams.
- **Regional Big Day.** Perfect for those who want to test their skills against others in a specific part of the state, while birding for most or all of a 24-hour period. Categories are separated by age groups: Roughwings (13&younger), Gliders (age 14-18), or Adults (19&up).
- **Statewide Tournament.** Take on birders throughout Texas for either the Statewide Big Day Tournament (one day) or the Statewide Weeklong Tournament (six consecutive days).
- **Human-Powered Tournament.** Go birding by canoe, on a bike, walking, or with any other non-motorized transportation and see how many birds you can count in a day!

—Shelly Plante



TOS Assisting the USDOE/NNSA Pantex Plant With Important Purple Martin Research

James D. Ray, Wildlife Biologist
Consolidated Nuclear Security, LLC, Managing Contractor of the Pantex Plant
James.Ray@cns.doe.gov

The Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) will be assisting the U.S. Department of Energy-National Nuclear Security Administration Pantex Plant in implementation of a wildlife outreach program. Among its works, Pantex has an outreach and research program that focuses on Purple Martins. Since 2002 more than 11,000 Purple Martins have been banded in northwest Texas and western Oklahoma. Pantex staff provide technical assistance to “landlords” of Purple Martins during these activities and further promote the species and management through presentations and publications.

Beginning in 2013, Pantex joined an on-going collaboration deploying and studying Purple Martins from a handful of sites located across the range with geolocator data-loggers. This break-through technology, based on determining latitude and longitude by light levels, allowed researchers at Canada’s York University and University of Manitoba, as well as other collaborators like myself, to determine migratory pathways, and stopover and wintering areas of these birds. Geolocators don’t have the best accuracy (~30 kilometers), but they collect lots of data that has led to information on how long they spend at roosts, how quick their spring and fall migrations are, and other previously unknown information.

G.P.S. data-loggers used on birds became small enough to use on Purple Martins in 2014. These have an accuracy of 10 meters or less! However, they are limited on the number of locations they can store. Thus, geolocators remain a very valuable tool and we continue to deploy some each year in addition to around 20 G.P.S. data-loggers. **This is where TOS comes in.** Shelia Hargis of TOS, expressed interest in the possibility that TOS could help. Shelia recently told me that TOS will be purchasing and providing 15 geolocators to allow Pantex to continue to participate in this ground-breaking work on Purple Martins.

The data-loggers will be deployed on adult Purple Martins on a day that I will schedule based on nest checks and when I can predict the maximum number of nests that contain young. Capture of parents with eggs are avoided due to the potential for nest abandonment. Deployment day in the past has usually been during the first 10 days of June. TOS members are welcome to join university students from West Texas A&M and Texas Tech University, and other volunteers, on that day - but, just remember that the date of the deployments will be announced only a week or two in advance. I’ll advise TOS of the date when I determine it.

Down the road I plan to provide updates to TOS on the deployment and retrieval of the geolocators. Also, expect a presentation from me at one of your meetings in the future, as well as an article or two on results in your Bulletin. If data from any of the retrieved units are included in any other papers written by the larger collaboration, TOS will certainly be acknowledged.

An internet search will reveal the Pantex Plant’s independent, collaborative, and contracted work with Texas Tech University and West Texas A&M University that includes research projects on invertebrates, black-tailed prairie dogs, Burrowing Owls, bobcats, grassland birds, monarch butterflies, Swainson’s Hawks, and the impact of wind energy on bats and birds. Pantex has been the USDOE-NNSA’s single-allotted nomination for the Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award in five of the seven years of the annual award’s existence and at this writing Pantex is awaiting an announcement on the 2017 recipient. This donation of geolocators by TOS is appreciated and will help the Pantex Plant carry on a tradition of quality and recognized work on migratory birds of Texas.



An after-second-year male Purple Martin ready to be released with a light-level geolocator data-logger.

Quiz Questions from the Nacogdoches TOS Meeting

1.) What is the common breeding waterfowl of East Texas?

Answer: Wood Duck

2.) If you are lucky, in what habitat would you find Bachman's Sparrow?

Answer: Pine savannah or open grassy woods with lots of dead falls and scrub palmetto

3.) What member of the Sandpiper family (Scolopacidae) is known to breed in the Pineywoods?

Answer: American Woodcock

4.) Can you name at least 15 species of American sparrows that regularly winter in the Pineywoods?

Hints: you can include Junco, but not House Sparrow.

Answer:	Bachman's	Grasshopper	Lark	Song
	Chipping	Harris	LeConte's	Swamp
	Field	Henslow's	Lincoln's	Vesper
	Fox	Junco	Savannah	White-Crowned
				White-throated

5.) What is the most conspicuous resident hawk of East Texas?

Answer: Red-shouldered Hawk

6.) Which 3 species of warbler can be found in the winter in East Texas?

Answer: Pine, Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped

7.) How many species of woodpecker can be found in East Texas in the winter and which one does not breed here? (Pileated, Downy, Hairy, Red-headed, Red-bellied, Flicker, Red-cockaded, Yellow bellied sapsucker)

Answer: 8 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

8.) What widespread member of the cuckoo family seems very out of place in the Pineywoods?

Answer: Greater Roadrunner

9.) Which swallow has become a regular winter resident in East Texas?

Answer: Cave Swallow

10.) How many species of wrens regularly winter in East Texas?

Answer: 6 (House, Winter, Sedge, Marsh, Carolina, Bewick's).

11.) Which breed here?

Answer—only Carolina.

12.) Which Passerine buntings breed widely in the Pineywoods?

Answer: Blue Grosbeak, Indigo and Painted buntings

13.) How many sparrows are only spring or fall migrants to East Texas?

Answer: Two (Sharp-tailed sparrow and Clay-colored sparrow)

14.) What East Texas warbler regularly nests in Spanish moss?

Answer: Northern Parula warbler

15.) How many species of warblers breed in the forests of East Texas?

Answer: 12 (Worm-eating, La Waterthrush, Black-and-white, Prothonotary, Swainson's, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Pine, Yellow-throated and Prairie. Yellow-breasted Chat is no longer considered a warbler.

16.) What is the preferred habitat for Great-tailed Grackle in the region?

Answer Wal-Mart, MacDonald's and Lowe's

Birding Results from the Winter 2018 TOS Meeting, Nacogdoches, Texas.

This is, as promised, the checkerboard report from our winter meeting in Nacogdoches. The field trip organizers did a fantastic job, coming up with thirty field trips scattered across three days in the region. Thanks to the preparation of our field trip leaders and the skills of our participants, we got a mountain of birding done in a region which is not particularly well-reported during winter—the eBird reports must have felt like a deluge to the regional reviewers.

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 Januaries in every county we were to explore (Anderson, Angelina, Houston, Jasper, Nacogdoches, Sabine, San Augustine, Trinity, Tyler). This yielded a list of 167 species. From this list I removed species that the TBRC does not consider countable (such as Egyptian Goose). I then removed those that had been reported to eBird only three times or less from the period surveyed. This left me with a list of 136 species and field trip participants with the task of competing with every eBirder who had spent time in those counties from 2008 through 2017.

How did we do?

We saw, as a group, 117 species of the 136 that seemed reasonable. That works out to about 86% 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 Januaries, I think that is pretty respectable. We also had twelve write-ins—all species that had not been reported to eBird, from the counties surveyed, more than three times during the last ten Januaries: Blue-winged Teal, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Eared Grebe, Rufous Hummingbird, Least Sandpiper, Little Blue Heron, Osprey, Golden Eagle, Cave Swallow, Sprague's Pipit, and Red Crossbill. If you add those in, we could call it 95%! Our most interesting misses were, to my eye, Snowy Egret, Great Horned Owl, White-eyed Vireo, and Common Yellowthroat.

Birders are a competitive bunch so a few highlights are in order and, this time around, the TCC trips excelled. The Sabine County TCC group prevailed on Friday with 73 species, the San Augustine County TCC group prevailed on Saturday with 70 species, and the Anderson County TCC group prevailed on Sunday with 77 species. This probably has to do with the valiant efforts made by leaders to explore every habitat available in each county and excellent suggestions by participants to hit a few spots the leaders were unfamiliar with.

Numerous teams contributed species uniquely to the list: the Kurth Lake group found Blue-winged Teal on Sunday, the Anderson County TCC group found Northern Pintail on Sunday, the Kurth Lake group found Greater Scaup on Saturday, the Alazan Bayou WMA group found Common Goldeneye on Saturday, the Sabine County TCC group found Red-breasted Merganser on Friday, the Kurth Lake group found Wild Turkey on Saturday, the Kurth Lake

group found Horned Grebe on Friday and Sunday, the Kurth Lake group found Eared Grebe on Friday and Sunday, the San Augustine County TCC group found Inca Dove on Saturday, the Round and About Town group found Rufous Hummingbird on Saturday and Sunday, the Nacogdoches Sewage Ponds group found American Woodcock on Friday, the San Augustine County TCC group found Little Blue Heron on Saturday, the Kurth Lake group found Osprey on Friday, the Boggy Slough group found Golden Eagle on Friday, the Sabine County TCC group found Merlin on Friday, the Anderson County TCC group found Loggerhead Shrike on Sunday, the Sabine County TCC group found Fish Crow on Friday, the Kurth Lake group found Cave Swallow on all three days, the Anderson County TCC group found Red-breasted Nuthatch on Sunday, the Nacogdoches Airport group found Sprague's Pipit on Friday and Sunday, the Nacogdoches Airport group found Henslow's Sparrow on all three days, the Alazan Bayou WMA group found Harris's Sparrow on all three days, and the Anderson County TCC group found Great-tailed Grackle on Sunday.

The Kurth Lake group was, in terms of unique contributions, on fire every single day!

Interestingly Red Crossbill was not contributed uniquely by a single group nor at a single site: the species was reported by at least two different groups from at least two sites!

For what it's worth we, as a birding horde, racked up 114 species on Friday, 108 species on Saturday, and 113 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 Winter TOS meeting in Nacogdoches, Texas: Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Wild Turkey, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Eared Grebe, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared Dove, Inca Dove, Mourning Dove, Greater Roadrunner, Rufous Hummingbird, American Coot, Killdeer, Least Sandpiper, American Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Common Loon, Neotropic Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Little Blue Heron, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, Eastern Screech Owl, Barred Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Merlin, Eastern Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike, Blue-headed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, Cave Swallow, Carolina

Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, House Wren, Winter Wren, Sedge Wren, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Brown Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, House Sparrow, American Pipit, Sprague's Pipit, House Finch, Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow,

Savannah Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Rusty Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, Great-tailed Grackle, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Pine Warbler, and Northern Cardinal.

—Anthony Hewetson

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