

President's Message



Shelia Hargis TOS President.

Hello TOS friends. I am writing this shortly after our very successful Galveston winter meeting. For those of you who attended, it was good to have you there. Thank you for joining us! Not only did you get to see some great birds, visit some very cool locations, and meet old friends and make new friends, but you also helped us raise money for TOS and our host, Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council. That's a very good thing! We promise to do really good

things with that money—things that benefit birds and birders. If you didn't join us, don't worry, we'll give you another chance at the spring meeting in San Antonio. All the meeting details and field trips are in this issue. Keep reading.



Artistic rendering of some of our Galveston birds by my friend Wendy Harte.

Having three meetings “under my belt” now, I'm starting to see a pattern. I really like the ones in which we have a host organization. There is the obvious reason—our hosts handle a lot of the work for us! (And these meetings take a lot of work to pull off!) But the best reason to have a host organization in my opinion is the opportunity to work closely with the leaders of the host organization and to get to know these amazing people a little better. These folks become part of my birding tribe, and I care deeply about them. During all of the planning for this year's winter meeting, I thought fondly of my winter 2018 Nacogdoches friends—Susie Lower, Cliff Shackelford, Vicki McCarley, and Dave Wallace. I'm confident the same thing will happen with Galveston, that I will think frequently of my new Galveston friends—Julie Ann Brown, Alice Anne O'Donnell, and Greg Whitaker. Big hugs to all of you! I am honored to have you as part of my birding family.

I try very hard to not keep all the good stuff to myself, so if you want to experience this for yourself, I will be happy to help you do that. All you have to do is get involved with the TOS Meeting Committee and/or talk your local organization into hosting one of our meetings. Yes, we'll work you very hard, but you will be rewarded many times over!

In addition to having a great Galveston meeting, we also got, or will get, some great exposure for TOS. Julie Ann posted many times to the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council Facebook page about our activities and the cool birds we were seeing. The Galveston Daily News and the Galveston Convention and Visitors Bureau took photos of us in the field and interviewed participants. And Jim Stevenson gave a shout-out to TOS in an email to the Galveston Ornithological Society members. I am anticipating some new members as more people learn about TOS and see us in action.

Speaking of our Nacogdoches meeting, I heard from Vicki recently about how Pineywoods Audubon Society used some of their profit from the TOS meeting. They set up a website, and it looks great! Check it out at www.pineywoodsaudubonsocietytx.org If you attended the meeting, you helped make this happen. Thank you! If you want to know more about East Texas birds and birding, you have a new resource with information from those who know the area and its birds best.

In the fall newsletter, I announced the exciting news of our acquisition of land for our Magic Ridge Sanctuary. We have closed on the land, and it now officially belongs to TOS and the birds. Hopefully you saw our annual appeal letter in which I asked for your help to replenish the funds we spent on this purchase. Many of you responded immediately with generous donations. We are so thankful for your support! If you haven't donated yet, there is still time. Please take this opportunity right now to show your support for TOS by making a donation. You may donate by visiting our website at www.texasbirds.org and donating online or you can mail us a check. The address is **TOS 1248 Austin Hwy, Suite 106-189, San Antonio, TX 78209.**

Thank you to all who contributed to this newsletter. Enjoy reading it and have a great spring. May the birding gods smile on you during this spring migration season. See you soon in San Antonio!



My new TOS cap with my new Century Club 25 County pin.

—Shelia Hargis, TOS President

The Texas Century Club...14 years later!

Back about 2005 I posed the question on **TEXBIRDS**¹ “How many counties in Texas have you recorded 100 species of birds in?” At the time eBird was just getting started and this question was harder to answer. One very active birder has all his records computerized in a form where he could answer the question. He had 50,000 lifetime observations in Texas in his database and yet had only 11 counties.

We compared notes and found a pattern. Birders in many cases had 100 species recorded in their home counties, plus the counties with major birding hotspots: Jefferson, Galveston, Chambers, Brazoria, Nueces, Cameron, Hidalgo, and Brewster counties.

It revealed a pattern of where we really birded and what we really knew about the distribution of the birdlife of Texas. If only there were a way to continually monitor the bird life of Texas. There are thousands of Texas birders, but we are very clustered in the big population centers.² We just couldn't bird everywhere could we?

I took some inspiration from another nerdy hobby I participated in. I had been a ham radio contester for many years. There was a group of ham radio operators whose goal was to talk to someone in every county in the United States. These guys were nuts. They would mount radios in their cars and take long road trips driving and talking to other County Hunters to put counties on the air.

There was another award, the DX Century Club where the goal was to talk to someone in 100 countries. I bet you can see where this is going. Combine them together and convert them to birding. Let's try to record 100 species of bird in Texas in 100 counties and call it the Texas Century Club.

I made my proposal on **TEXBIRDS**. You could almost hear the crash of chairs being knocked over, the splash of morning coffee being spit at the screen. Negative responses flooded in; “that's impossible,” “some counties might not have 100 birds,” “I live too far from the coast.” “Won't someone think of the gasoline consumption.”

After the roar died down, another group of voices could be heard. “You know, I think this is doable.” “I have 90 in 3 counties already.” “I want to be the first to record 100 birds in Loving County³ and most importantly “I wonder what birds I can find in Glasscock County.”

I worked with Bert Frenz and Russell Nelson and wrote a set of rules for the Texas Century Club. They were simple:

- A. The bird must be in the county for which it is counted, but the observer need not be in the same county.
- B. Count only those species recognized by the TOS Checklist of Texas Birds at the time of application for the award.
- C. Do not count groups such as hummingbird species or meadowlark species.
- D. Species on the TOS TBRC Review List at the time of observation must be accepted by the TBRC, although the accepted report does not have to be made by the observer.
- E. An observer may count any observation made in their lifetime.

In 2006 at one of my last board meetings as president of the Texas Ornithological Society I convinced the board this would be good for Texas birders and fit within the mission of the society to increase the knowledge of the birdlife of Texas. The Texas Century Club became a thing.

At first, we all kept records in spreadsheets or notebooks, but eBird continued to grow and added a feature that showed your county totals. There was an incentive to use it now and those reports were going into a database, your birding records were building a bigger picture of the birdlife in Texas.

In 2007 there were 47 counties in Texas with no records in eBird. As of March 2018 no county had fewer than 129 species recorded (Lipscomb in the east corner of the panhandle had only 129) and my poster child county of the most out of the way county in Texas and no records in 2007, had 152 species.

Originally, we required submission of your lists to a committee to certify your 100 counties. We've abandoned that because of eBird. Your lists of birds are vetted through the eBird review process now.

Every TOS meeting now has Century Club field trips where the goal is to get you to or at least close to 100 species in a county. These are some of the most popular field trips. It's an excellent way to play the game.

We have an active group on Facebook. Just search for “Texas Century Club”⁴ to join. There is also a Texas Century Club website www.texascenturyclub.org where we list your milestones. If you are active you can even have an account to update your standings yourself, or just post them in the Facebook group and one of the active editors will update them for you.

We have given awards at TOS meetings for achieving 100 in 100 counties, but I always envisioned milestone awards for those in the journey to 100 counties. Now we have given out pins marking milestones in increments of 25 all the way up to 254 counties (yes we have given one of those out!). There is a catch: you must be a TOS member to get one.

I don't think crowd sourcing was even a concept when I started, but that's what the game is now, we are crowd sourcing a baseline of the bird life of every county in Texas. You should join us and find out what's out there!

David Sarkozi

Endnotes

1 **TEXBIRDS** is an email list for Texas birdwatchers. Its been around since 1995 and is still there today with more than 1,800 subscribers, see <https://www.freelists.org/list/texbirds>

2 At the time I did an analysis of the membership of the Texas Ornithological Society. I found fully one third of the 1200 members at the time had Harris County as their address, and the top four counties, Harris, Bexar, Travis, and Kerr accounted for about 75% of the membership.

3 Loving County Texas is the least populated county in the lower 48 states, having only 134 residents in 2017, up from 67 residents in the 2000 census.

4 See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/texascenturyclub/>

Texas Century Club Milestone Pins Awards

At the Galveston meeting, we awarded the first Texas Century Club milestone pins to a great group of county listers. Here's what it looked like.



It only seemed right to award David Sarkozi his pins first, since the whole Texas Century Club was his idea. He received his 25 County and 50 County pins. Photo credit: Wendy Harte



Then it only seemed right to award Anthony Hewetson his pins next. Anthony is the only person who has seen at least 100 species in all 254 counties! He received his 25, 50, 75, 100, 150, 200 and 254 County pins! I hope he has a big hat for all those pins. Photo credit: Wendy Harte



Recipients of the 25 County pin: (left to right) Drew Harvey, Cinda Crossley, Jean Martin, Bill Wright, Catherine Winans, Chuck Sexton, Shelia Hargis, John Berner, Tad Finnell, Sue Heath, Bill Sain, Susan Foster, Richard Redmond, and Daniel Hodges. Photo credit: Cheryl McGrath



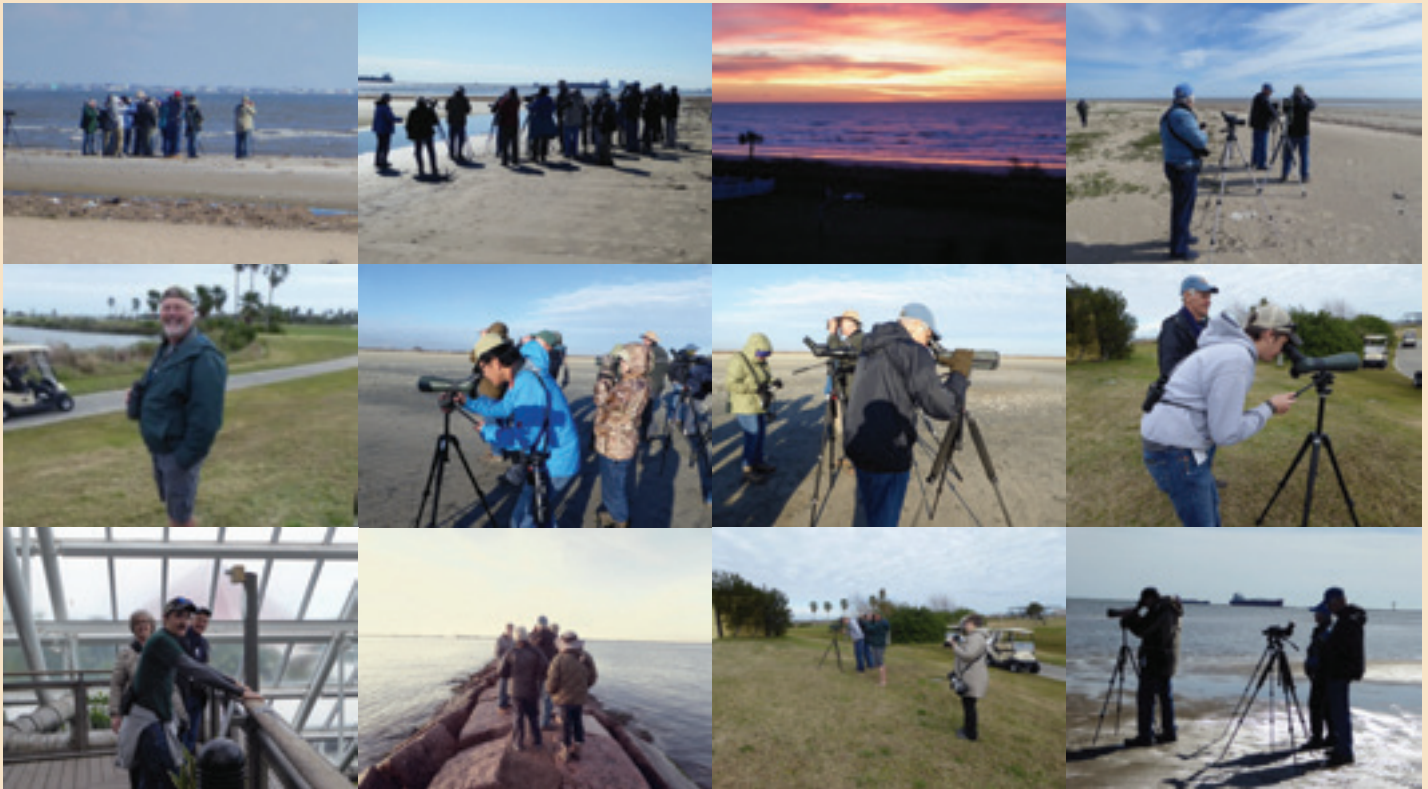
Recipients of the 50 County pin: (left to right) Jean Martin, Bill Wright, Catherine Winans, Chuck Sexton, and John Berner. Photo credit: Linda Belssner



Recipients of the 100 County pins: Bill Wright and Chuck Sexton. Photo credit: Cheryl McGrath

Recipients of the 75 County pins: Bill Wright, Catherine Winans, Chuck Sexton, and John Berner. (Some how we didn't get a photo of this group. Sorry!)

Birding during the Galveston TOS Meeting.



TOS Meeting – Galveston was Wonderful!

In his keynote address at the Texas Ornithological Society winter meeting in Galveston, Richard Gibbons encouraged the audience to look up the word biophilia. Edward O. Wilson introduced the term in 1984 and his definition “the urge to affiliate with other forms of life” is more generally defined by the notion that humans are innately driven to seek connections with nature and other forms of life. In considering my fantastic experience at the winter TOS meeting, I’m certain that each person I interacted with exemplifies the very best qualities of a biophilic!

Greg Mason’s field trip “Greet the Dawn at Virginia Point” demonstrated what the passion, dedication and hard work he, members of Scenic Galveston, and countless volunteers have achieved in creating “the living shoreline,” as part of a significant coastal restoration project. The rich diversity of bird life encountered at a variety of stops throughout the day, including the elusive, clacky King and Clapper Rails (heard only), the beautiful Nelson’s Sparrow, the mighty White-tailed Hawk interacting with Red-tailed Hawks, ducks, shorebirds and the many other species suggested the considerable conservation success in this largely industrial area on Galveston Island. Quintessential biophiliacs in action.

Joining Richard Gibbons on his Bolivar Big Day, a group of enthusiastic biophiliacs soaked up every bird Richard, along with Kristin Vale, pointed out along the way. The ongoing restoration work Houston Audubon is involved with, including at Smith Oaks Sanctuary and Boy Scout Woods, along with TOS’s own sanctuary, Hooks Woods, was impressive. The impact passionate humans connecting with nature and working to improve the environment for birds

and humans alike was on display throughout the day. While checking off more than 100 species along the route was great, for me, it was a day shared with like-minded biophiliacs that made it so special.

Visiting the Sweetwater Preserve roost with Alice Anne O’Donnell on Sunday at dawn was truly magical. Watching the Sandhill Cranes and the Roseate Spoonbills wake up, “stretch” and lift off was a wonder. Listening as Alice Anne shared her extensive knowledge and experience about these and other birds in this beautiful place, our group of avid participants could really see and better understand what was happening with the birds in their habitat. Other birdy stops during the day brought shorebirds, passerines, raptors and so much more, all greedily viewed by this group of...you guessed it-biophiliacs!

The presentations I attended included Fred Collins and Bob Honig’s *Birding Then and Now in Galveston*, Glenn Olsen’s *Winged Winter Wonders: Who Are They*, Richard Gibbon’s *How Birds and Citizen Scientists Can Save the World*, and Cin-Ty Lee’s *Know Your Gulls*.

For me, it was exciting to soak up the information shared at these talks. While each speaker acknowledged the current challenges facing bird populations around the world, I felt hopeful that there are still so many like-minded people passionate about nature, and birds in particular. Perhaps that passion will, in the end, help preserve it.

I’m grateful to all the TOS board members, Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council volunteers and field trip leaders, volunteers with Scenic Galveston, and all who made this meeting such a wonderful experience. Many, many thanks!

—Cheryl McGrath

Galveston Meeting Highlights



Birding Results from the Winter 2019 TOS Meeting, Galveston, Texas.

This is, as promised, the checkerboard report from our winter meeting in Galveston. The field trip organizers did a fantastic job, especially in dealing with a few closures related to the federal shut-down and a few more due to recent, localized flooding. As a few of the trips went to rarely birded areas or counties, we made a solid contribution to eBird despite our proximity to the well-birded hotspots immediately along the Gulf Coast.

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 (Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Hardin, Liberty). This yielded a list of 328 species. From this list I removed species that the ABA 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 260 species and field trip participants with the task of competing with every eBirder who had spent time, during January, in those counties from 2009 through 2018.

How did we do?

We saw, as a group, 206 species of the 260 that seemed reasonable. That works out to about 79% and, given that this region has benefited from an awful lot of rarely-detected vagrants, I think that is respectable. We also had four write-ins – all species that had not been reported to eBird, from the counties surveyed, more than three times during the last ten Januaries: Groove-billed Ani, Least Tern, Prairie Falcon, White-breasted Nuthatch. If you add those in, as bonus species, we could call it 81%!

Birders are a competitive bunch so a few highlights are in order and, as would be expected – given the protocol followed – the TCC trips excelled. The Brazoria County TCC group prevailed on Friday with 121 species, the Fort Bend County TCC group prevailed on Saturday with 110 species, and the Anahuac NWR group prevailed on Sunday with 88 species.

Numerous teams contributed species uniquely to the list: the Brazoria NWR group found Surf Scoter on Friday, the Brazoria County TCC group found Least Grebe on Friday, the Wintering Gulls group found Horned Grebe on Sunday, the Hardin County TCC group found Inca Dove on Friday, the Galveston Island/Lafitte's Cove group found Groove-billed Ani on Friday and Saturday, the Texas City Dike group found Black-chinned Hummingbird on Friday and Saturday, the Texas City Dike found Calliope Hummingbird on Texas City Dike, the Brazoria NWR group found Stilt Sandpiper on Saturday and Sunday, the Boliver Sampler group found Parasitic Jaeger on Friday, the Fort Bend County TCC group found Franklin's Gull on Saturday, the Galveston West End Sampler group found Least Tern on Saturday, the Brazoria County TCC group found Gull-billed Tern on Friday, the Sweetwater Preserve group found Ladder-backed Woodpecker on Sunday, the Virginia Point group found Prairie Falcon on Sunday, the Brazoria County TCC group found Ash-throated Flycatcher on Friday, the Fort Bend County TCC group found Couch's Kingbird on Saturday, the Fort Bend County TCC group found Northern

Rough-winged Swallow on Saturday, the Hardin County TCC group found White-breasted Nuthatch on Friday, the Hardin County TCC group found Brown-headed Nuthatch on Friday, the Liberty County TCC group found Brown Creeper on Saturday, the Galveston West End Sampler group found Brown Thrasher on Saturday, the Texas City Prairie Preserve group found Sprague's Pipit on Saturday, the Texas City Dike group found House Finch on Saturday, the Hardin County TCC group found Eastern Towhee on Friday, the Hardin County TCC group found Vesper Sparrow on Friday, the Liberty County TCC group found Harris's Sparrow on Saturday, the Fort Bend County TCC group found Yellow-headed Blackbird on Saturday, the Fort Bend County TCC group found Wilson's Warbler on Saturday, and the impromptu Galveston Island/Lafitte's Cove group found Indigo Bunting on Sunday.

For what it's worth we, as a finely-gearred and well-oiled birding combine, racked up 183 species on Friday, 183 species on Saturday, and 155 species on Sunday – this is a great region to bird at any time of the year!

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 Galveston, Texas: Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Fulvous Whistling Duck, Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Mottled Duck, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Black Scoter, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Least Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Eared Grebe, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared Dove, Inca Dove, Common Ground Dove, White-winged Dove, Mourning Dove, Groove-billed Ani, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Calliope Hummingbird, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, King Rail, Clapper Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Gallinule, Sandhill Crane, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, American Oystercatcher, Black-bellied Plover, Snowy Plover, Wilson's Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Piping Plover, Killdeer, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Stilt Sandpiper, Sanderling, Dunlin, Least Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, American Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, Lesser Yellowlegs, Parasitic Jaeger, Bonaparte's Gull, Laughing Gull, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Least Tern, Caspian Tern, Forster's Tern, Royal Tern, Sandwich Tern, Black Skimmer, Common Loon, Northern Gannet, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Brown Pelican, American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Reddish Egret, Cattle Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, White Ibis, White-faced Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, White-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Swainson's Hawk,

Red-tailed Hawk, Eastern Screech Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Crested Caracara, American Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Monk Parakeet, Eastern Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Couch's Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, White-eyed Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, House Wren, Winter Wren, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird,

European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, House Sparrow, American Pipit, Sprague's Pipit, House Finch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, Boat-tailed Grackle, Great-tailed Grackle, Orange-crowned Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Palm Warbler, Pine Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting.

—Anthony Hewetson

Regional Reports

Region 1—Panhandle

—Vacant

Region 2—North Central

—Galen Brehm, Director

Region 3—Piney Woods

The Galveston Winter Meeting was a great success. I've heard nothing but good reports from People who attended the meeting. Century Club Pins were hand out for the first time.

Birding in East Texas has been very mixed this winter.

—Linda Beissner, Director

Region 4—Trans Pecos

October provided some most interesting sightings around the Trans Pecos with a report of Lawrence Goldfinches and Evening Grosbeaks at Frijole Ranch in the Guadalupe Mountains NP (GM), a Crested Caracara in Fort Davis, and Black-chinned Sparrows on the Smith Spring Trail at GM.

In early November, a curious wren was caught in a banding net high in the Davis Mountains and measurements seem to indicate it was a Pacific Wren. Hopefully, DNA tests will be run to confirm the ID.

As winter fully began, birders reported seeing large numbers of Townsend's Solitaire's, Sage Thrashers, Red-naped Sapsuckers, and a few Williamson's Sapsuckers. A Long-eared Owl was seen on private property in the Davis Mountains Resort where Black Bears have been wreaking havoc with bird feeders, we will see what the overall impact of their presence does to bird feeding stations as the population of bears is sure to increase. Several flocks of Mountain Bluebirds were seen around the Davis Mountains Loop with one flock having between 30 to 40 birds. Cassin's Finches have been much fewer and spottier this winter with just occasional reports.

Juniper Titmice have been seen many times along Smith Spring Trail by several observers, and I had 29 different Sage Thrashers along the trail in early January. A Lewis' Woodpecker has been keeping shop in downtown Fort Davis. Balmorhea has hosted many Sagebrush Sparrows

and a Burrowing Owl in the flats just north of the dam was a surprise find on the CBC; however, the biggest surprise in Balmorhea was a Northern Goshawk.

Raptors in the Davis Mountains continue to be impressive with up to 8 different Golden Eagles, at least two Prairie Falcons, several Red-tailed Hawk morphs including several Rufous Morphs, Merlin, Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, American Kestrels, a single White-tailed Kite, and multiple Ferruginous Hawks. Alpine had 3 Harris' Hawks hanging out near the Alpine Cemetery.

Water bodies added some nice sightings with Martin Reid and Sheridan Coffey finding a male Wood Duck, Black-bellied Plover and Franklin's Gulls at Imperial Reservoir in mid-October and several sandpiper species at a Playa below the lake. They also found a Long-tailed Duck at Fort Hancock and Fort Whitman, a Surf Scoter at Fort Hancock, all three species of merganser at Lake Balmorhea, and 6 California Gulls at Dell City Water Treatment Facility, all of these in late November.

Dusky Flycatchers have been wintering in the area with Justin Bosler finding one in Musquiz Canyon and I had one at Daniels Ranch in Big Bend National Park. D.D Currie and Dell Little had a Vermilion Flycatcher and Red-breasted Nuthatch in Fort Davis.

Big Bend National Park provided some curious sightings even during the government shutdown. In late November, a Green Kingfisher was seen at the Rio Grande Nature Trail boardwalk and several Sora and a Virginia Rail have been there most of the winter. In early January, I had an adult male Scott's Oriole in the basin campground which was a nice wintry surprise and a gorgeous adult male Black-throated Grey Warbler right near the RGV Nature Trailhead was a nice find. Christmas Mountains Oasis still had a lingering Anna's Hummingbird on January 2nd.

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 8th-14th. For more info, join the Trans-Pecos Birds & Birding Facebook group.

Regional Reports (continued)

FYI, the next open dates for the Davis Mountain's Preserve will be March 15th – 17th, April 13th, and May 18th. The Independence Creek Preserve will be open to the public on March 22nd - 24th and May 11th.

—*Lee Hoy, Director*

Region 5—Edwards Plateau

The Edwards Plateau had two exciting Texas Review Species within the last few months. A Rufous-backed Robin was found in Uvalde County and hung around long enough for many to see. Yellow Grosbeak was an unexpected find in Uvalde County on private property.

Region 5 offers a choice of two birding festivals the weekend of April 26-28, 2019. The Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge was created to protect 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 second annual South Llano River State Park Birding Festival. Events will include: guided Golden-cheeked Warbler walks, riparian walks, bird photography programs, a Big Sit!, family activities and more. Registration is open for both festivals with more information available online.

San Antonio Audubon and Bexar Audubon are the host groups for the TOS Spring meeting May 2-5. It promises to be lots of fun exploring the Texas Hill Country and the San Antonio area during spring migration and while the wildflowers are at their peak!

—*Jimma Byrd, Director*

Region 6 Report

The grand opening of the new bird and wildlife viewing blind at Garey Park in Georgetown, Texas was held on Saturday, January 26, 2019. The blind is a large structure on the bluff overlooking the South Fork of the San Gabriel River, similar in design to the blind at Inks Lake State Park. It offers an unobstructed panoramic view of the park.



The Good Water Master naturalist chapter was responsible for the development of the blind, which will be used to educate the public about the wildlife of the park. The blind offers views of multiple bird feeders and a manmade water feature, in addition to overlooks of the river. Several photography windows are available. The Good Water Master Naturalists have also built a one-and-a-half mile nature trail below the bluff, adjacent to the river.



Regional Reports (continued)



Daniel Hodges, TOS Region 6 director, hands Jim Hailey of the Good Water Master Naturalists a donation for the wildlife viewing and photography blind at Garey Park

TOS was proud to contribute to the development of this asset to birding in Texas.

— Daniel Hodges, Director

Region 7— Brushlands

Activities in the region since the last report include

The South Laredo Nature and Birding Center is situated on a bluff overlooking the Rio Grande River. It offers the disadvantaged youth of Laredo programs in Environmental Studies such as birding, nature art, science studies and outdoor adventures. The City of Laredo, the Rio Grande International Study Center and the Monte Mucho Audubon Society partnered to put on a ground-breaking ceremony on December 21, 2018. This river frontage birding hotspot is ideal for finding birds such as the Morelet's Seedeaters, Audubon Orioles and many other bird species. It is open to the public. Check out the Google Map weblink: <https://goo.gl/xdn2f8>

The recent Laredo Christmas Bird Count produced three Neotropical rarities, the Blue Mockingbird, Golden-crowned Warbler and the Blue Buntings, for a tally of 130 plus species. TOS members, Susan Foster, Judy Kestner and Teresa Keck reported the sightings of the two female Blue Buntings and also the Golden-crowned Warbler. Tom Langschie, King Ranch Nature Tour coordinator, reported the Blue Mockingbird near downtown Laredo. Also on that day, other prized birds such as the Red-billed Pigeon, Gray Hawk, Altamira Oriole, Green Jays, Plain Chachalaca, Pine Warbler, and the Morelet's Seedeater (formerly the White-collared Seedeater) were also reported.

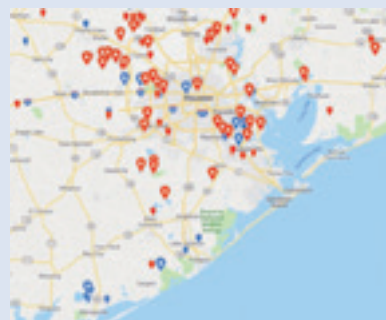
The Laredo Riverbend Ecosystem Restoration Project is near the Laredo College campus. It includes 77 acres once known as the Lost Lakes. The U.S. Corps of Engineer erected two Least Tern nesting boxes at this site. Birders have seen Morelet's Seedeaters and the Blue Mockingbird at this location. Open to the public. Google Map weblink: <https://goo.gl/gKjtsC>

—Raul Delgado, Director

Region 8— Coastal Prairie

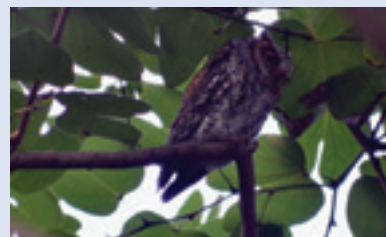
Winter Irruptions – Three species have had notable irruptions in Region 8 this winter. On November 18, Dennis Cooke reported 29 Black Scoters near the seawall in Galveston.

The scoters continued to be seen through January in small groups around Galveston, Bolivar, and Texas City Dike. Red-breasted Nuthatches are widespread this winter, sometimes in larger numbers. On November 17, Cin-Ty Lee reported 10 Red-breasted Nuthatches at Hogg Bird Sanctuary in Houston. The most significant irruption is that of Purple Finches. This map from eBird shows reports of Purple Finch from October 2018 through January 2019. Compare this to last year, when there were only 2 eBird reports total in Region 8, both in Katy. The Cypress Creek CBC tallied a high count of 28 Purple Finches. The Matagorda County CBC (which will again be the number 1 count in the nation!) voted Purple Finch “Best Bird of the Count.” Several other CBCs reported both Red-breasted Nuthatch and Purple Finch.



Purple Finch sightings. Source ebird

Flammulated Owl in Houston: On October 29, Sue Orwig heard birds mobbing something in her backyard. Figuring it would be an owl, she searched until she found what she expected to be an Eastern Screech-Owl. After getting better looks and photos, the bird was determined to be a Flammulated Owl...what a yard bird! The owl was only seen that day, despite Sue's efforts to relocate it the next morning.



Other notable species:

Western Grebe – near Hog Island during the Houston CBC

White-tipped Dove (continuing from August) – heard at San Bernard NWR on 10/17

Black-legged Kittiwake – Ash Lake on 12/29

Harlan's Hawk – more than a dozen reports in our region this winter

Aplomado Falcon – near Matagorda Island State Park and Aransas NWR in November and December

Fork-tailed Flycatcher – in Fort Bend Co. on 11/17 and 11/18

Golden-winged Warbler – Sabine Woods on 11/12

Blackpoll Warbler – Edith L Moore on 12/18

—Kendra Kocab, Director

TOS Spring Meeting 2019 – San Antonio, TX

Our spring meeting will be in San Antonio on May 2–5, 2019. We have partnered with Bexar Audubon and San Antonio Audubon, and they have put together many exciting field trips and interesting speakers. This location and timing should work well for seeing and hearing both resident breeding species, including Golden-cheeked Warblers and Black-capped Vireos, and migrating shorebirds, buntings, orioles and warblers. Your biggest challenge will likely be choosing between all the great field trips.

Field trips will provide opportunities to bird well-known locations such as Avenue A Brackenridge Park, Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, and Warbler Woods, as well as less well-known locations around San Antonio and nearby counties and properties that you can't visit without special arrangements. Some participants will get to witness one of the largest concentrations of mammals in the world at Bat Conservation International's Bracken Cave Preserve. The bats are spectacular as they come home from feeding, but don't worry, we'll still be watching the birds, especially the ones trying to catch a bat for breakfast! Our county listers can choose from two Century Club trips on Friday and Saturday. In all, the field trips will cover eleven counties and many different habitats! I believe you will be pleased with your options.

The counties that we'll be visiting are Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Comal, Gonzalez, Guadalupe, Kendall, Kerr, Kimble, Medina and Wilson. A checklist showing the species for these counties in May is available at <https://tinyurl.com/TOSSanAntonioChecklist>.

Our headquarters will be the Hilton Garden Inn San Antonio At The Rim. All of our activities will take place there. Field trips will leave from this location.

We have afternoon presentations scheduled in addition to the evening presentations. On Friday afternoon, you'll get to hear about interesting bird research being done in the area. Your presence will show your support for students and researchers doing important research on our birds. On Saturday afternoon, you will learn about restoration efforts along the San Antonio River. Please try to work it into your schedule to attend both days! The evening presentations cover a variety of interesting topics from climate to creating habitat for birds to migration. You definitely will want to attend all of these!

Some field trips involve a lot of driving to get to the location, so expect early departure times for those trips. Be prepared to carpool to minimize the number of vehicles and maximize the likelihood of spotting birds along the way. Bring walkie-talkies if you have them. Be prepared for hot weather and the challenges that poses in the form of mosquitos, chiggers, and poison ivy. Bring extra water, sunscreen, hat, and insect repellent.

Online registration will open in early 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 18, and registration will close on April 25. Don't wait!

I look forward to seeing you in San Antonio in May!

—Shelia Hargis

Hotel Information

Hilton Garden Inn San Antonio At The Rim



The Hilton Garden Inn San Antonio At The Rim will be headquarters for the Spring Meeting. All TOS events will be held at the hotel and field trips will depart from its parking areas. The hotel is located at 5730 Rim Pass, San Antonio, TX. Every room includes a microwave, Keurig coffee maker, and mini fridge. The property has a restaurant and lounge open from 5-10 PM and is within easy driving distance to a wide variety of dining options. Free shuttle service is available for shopping and eateries within a five-mile radius.

The hotel is holding a block of 50 rooms for TOS guests. The blended group rate for a three-night stay beginning Thursday, May 2 is \$119 per night. Call the Reservation Department at 800-774-1500 and identify yourself as being with Texas Ornithological Society to make your reservation. **These rooms will be held only until April 18, 2019.** Any cancellations must be made 48 hours prior to arrival date to avoid a one-night room charge.

Breakfast will be available at the Hilton for participants staying at the Hilton from 5:00 AM until 7:00 AM on Friday, Saturday and Sunday mornings. Breakfast will include the following: scrambled eggs, meat option, oatmeal, yogurts, assorted juices, fresh fruit and salad, assorted breakfast breads, pastries, and freshly brewed coffee. *If you are staying at another location, you will be responsible for finding your own breakfast.*

Meeting Agenda

All meeting events will be held at The Hilton Garden Inn San Antonio At The Rim, 5730 Rim Pass, San Antonio, TX.

Thursday, May 2

- 3:30-5:30 PM Board Meeting
4:00-7:00 PM Registration Check-in/TOS merchandise sales/Silent Auction
6:30-7:00 PM Welcome/ Introductions/Announcements (Lots of useful information is given during this time, so please attend.)
7:00-8:00 PM Speaker: Jon Zeitler – *Phenology and Climate Change: Canaries and Canards*

Friday, May 3

- 5:00-7:00 AM Breakfast, includes eggs and meat (only for Hilton guests)
4:30-7:30 AM Box Lunch Pick-up and Field Trip Departures
4:45 AM-5:00 PM Field Trips
4:00-7:00 PM Registration Check-in
4:00-5:00 PM Speaker: Josef San Miguel – *Bird Conservation at the San Antonio Zoo*
5:00-5:45 PM Speakers: Dr Jennifer Smith, Amanda M. Lamberson, Laura M. Robichaux – *A multi-step approach to evaluate the potential effects of backyard bird feeding on birds in San Antonio, Texas*
6:30-7:00 PM Announcements/Field Trip Reports
7:00-8:00 PM Speaker: Rufus Stephens – *Taking Your Love of Birds to That Next Level!* (book sale/signing to follow presentation)

Saturday, May 4

- 5:00-7:00 AM Breakfast, includes eggs and meat (only for Hilton guests)
5:30-8:30 AM Box Lunch Pick-up and Field Trip Departures
5:45 AM-5:00 PM Field Trips
4:00-5:00 PM Speaker: Lee Marlowe – *Restoring Life to the San Antonio River*
5:00-6:00 PM Social Time (cash bar will be available)
6:00-7:00 PM Dinner/Banquet
6:45-7:00 PM TOS Annual Meeting
7:00-7:30 PM Announcements/Field Trip Reports
7:30-8:30 PM Keynote Speaker: Bruce M. Beehler – *North on the Wing: Travels with the Songbird Migration of Spring* (book sale/signing to follow presentation)

Sunday, May 5

- 5:00-7:00 AM Breakfast, includes eggs and meat (only for Hilton guests)
4:30-7:30 AM Box Lunch Pick-up and Field Trip Departures
4:45 AM-3:00PM Field Trips

Registration Information

Registration is online at the Texas Ornithological Society's website, www.texasbirds.org. Registration will open in early March. To receive an email with the exact date, be sure your email address is included in your TOS account information. Once registration opens, there will be directions on the website to assist you. If you do not have access to the internet, you may call Judy Kestner at 361-387-7329 or Frances Cerbins at 512-372-9039 for assistance with registration. If you don't get an answer, leave a message and Judy or Frances will call you back when they are available. The registration fee increases on April 18, and registration closes on April 25. (Refunds will be given if cancellation occurs before April 25 and no cost has been incurred by TOS. No refunds will be given if cancellation occurs on or after April 25. If you have to cancel your registration, contact Catherine Winans at catherinewinans@yahoo.com.)

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Registration Fee: | \$75 TOS members \$110 Non-TOS members (includes a one-year membership) \$20 late fee after April 18 |
| Box lunches: | \$15 |
| Saturday Banquet: | \$35 |

Box Lunches Available Friday, Saturday, and Sunday Mornings

- Box lunch selections for each day:
- Smoked Turkey Sandwich/wheat bread, whole fruit, chips, cookie, bottled water
 - Ham Sandwich/wheat bread, whole fruit, chips, cookie, bottled water
 - Roast Beef Sandwich/white bread, whole fruit, chips, cookie, bottled water
 - Veggie Sandwich/wheat bread, whole fruit, chips, cookie, bottled water

Saturday Cash Bar

There will be a cash bar available in the banquet room beginning at 5:00 PM on Saturday night. The cash bar will include two choices of domestic beers, two choices of imported beers, house wine, soft drinks, and bottled waters. Guests will purchase their own drinks on an individual basis.

Saturday Banquet Menu

- The sit-down dinner entrée choices:
- Fresh Baked Beef *Lasagna served with Caesar salad, seasonal vegetables, and garlic bread, chef's choice dessert, iced tea, coffee, and water
 - Fresh Baked Vegetable *Lasagna served with Caesar salad, seasonal vegetables, and garlic bread, chef's choice dessert, iced tea, coffee, and water

*Gluten-free pasta option available

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

Speakers

Thursday Eve

Title: *Phenology and Climate Change: Canaries and Canards*

Presenter: Jon Zeitler, Science & Operations Officer, National Weather Service, New Braunfels

Description: Global climate change (warming) continues at the forefront of the news, with increasingly expensive natural disasters and political upheaval. The reality is less dramatic, but brings increasing confidence in future ecological and societal shifts for humans, animals, and plants. This presentation will cover the current understanding of climate change, show evidence of interest to TOS attendees in terms of phenological (plant and bird) impacts from changing climate, and practical suggestions for paths forward. Note: A Canard is an unfounded rumor or story; it is also French for a duck.



Jon W. Zeitler

Bio: Jon W. Zeitler serves as the Science and Operations Officer for the National Weather Service, Austin-San Antonio Forecast Office, in New Braunfels, Texas. He previously served in NWS positions at: Houston-Galveston, Texas, Rapid City, South Dakota, and College Station, Texas. Before joining the NWS, Jon was a climatologist at: The Southeast Regional Climate Center in Columbia, South Carolina; the Texas State Climatologist's Office at Texas A&M University; and the Agricultural Extension Service at Iowa State University. Jon holds a Bachelor of Science degree in meteorology from Iowa State University and a Master of Science degree in meteorology from Texas A&M University. His professional interests are weather safety and preparedness, severe storms, and flash flooding. He has authored research papers on these and other topics. Jon is a member of the National Weather Association, American Meteorological Society, and the Texas Floodplain Management Association; he has served on committees, boards, and as a journal editor and reviewer. He is a Certified Floodplain Manager.

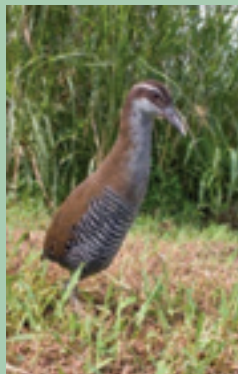
Friday Afternoon

Presentation #1

Title: *Bird Conservation at the San Antonio Zoo*

Presenter: Josef San Miguel, Director of Aviculture, San Antonio Zoo

Description: The San Antonio Zoo has a long-standing conservation history and to date continues to support conservation efforts with all species through a variety of approaches, including fieldwork and captive husbandry of rare and threatened species. Much of their work is collaborative, involving partners from state and federal



agencies and the private sector.

The Aviculture Department at the San Antonio zoo continues to be a leader, consistently breeding many species of birds with over two hundred thirty species, eighty species of these listed as rare or Endangered. In this presentation Josef will touch on a few significant species, such as the Whooping Crane, Micronesian Kingfisher, and the Guam Rail.

Bio: I started my career in 1982 as a keeper in the aviculture department with a few years experience working for the private sector. My first assigned area was the Hixon Birdhouse where I trained for seven years and later transferred to the outdoor bird section to finish my training. April of 1998 I was promoted to Supervisor of Birds, and in 2001 promoted to Director of Aviculture.



Josef San Miguel

The San Antonio Zoo's Aviculture Department has a remarkable population of avian species; it has been awarded many accolades for being the first to breed a number of species and recognition for consistent reproduction of the Caribbean flamingo.

I am fortunate to work for the San Antonio Zoo and to be a member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums--an exceptional organization dedicated to the conservation and preservation of all species.

Presentation #2

Title: *A multi-step approach to evaluate the potential effects of backyard bird feeding on birds in San Antonio, Texas*

Presenters: Dr. Jennifer Smith, Amanda M. Lamberson, Laura M. Robichaux of UTSA

Description: Supplementary feeding (i.e., the intentional feeding of wild birds) is a widespread activity throughout much of Europe and North America, with estimates suggesting that US\$4 billion is spent on birdseed and an additional US\$10 billion on related hardware in the United States alone, annually. While supplementary feeding can promote learning, social engagement, and psychological well-being through interactions with nature, the potential for supplementary feeding to affect the ecology of birds in towns and cities is of increasing concern. Previous studies have linked supplementary feeding to changes in bird behavior, breeding success, disease transmission, predator-prey dynamics, and community structure. Yet, most of these studies have been couched in non-urban settings (e.g., woodlands), partly due to the logistical constraints of conducting studies in urban areas, and partly because of the complexities of controlling for existing supplementary food in urban areas when using experimental approaches.

Here, we aim to evaluate the effects of supplementary feeding on birds in urban backyards in San Antonio, Texas, by taking a multi-step approach. First, we will conduct surveys of retailers of wild bird food in San Antonio to better understand when and where bird food is being sold, and what types of bird food are popular. Second, we will use the survey results to inform a broader study that will evaluate the effects of supplementary feeding on the abundance, diversity, and movements of birds in San Antonio. These efforts will integrate citizen scientists, surveys, and on-the-ground experimental field methods. By coupling these approaches, our objective is to better understand the effects of urbanization on birds living in urban landscapes. Ultimately, results from our study will inform feeding guidelines that promote the well-being of birds in our cities and towns.

Bio: I am an applied avian ecologist and my research



Dr. Jennifer Smith

aims to evaluate the effects of global change on the spatial ecology, demography, and behavior of birds and, on occasion, other taxa. My research often takes a mechanistic approach using various techniques, including field observations, experiments, and statistical and geospatial analyses. I am interested

in both basic questions concerning life-history trade-offs and species distributions as well as applied questions pertaining to land-use and management scenarios. Overall, my objective is to conduct research that informs policy and promotes sustainable land uses that consider the conservation of wildlife and human well-being. I grew up in the UK where I completed my undergraduate at Cardiff University, Wales, and PhD at the University of Birmingham, UK in which I focused on the effects of backyard bird feeding on the behavior of woodland birds. More recently, my research has focused on a wide range of topics including the effects of land conversion on Crested Caracaras, the effects of wind energy development on Greater Prairie-Chickens, and the habitat selection of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. I am currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Environmental Science and Ecology at The University of Texas at San Antonio.

Friday Eve

Title: *Taking Your Love of Birds to That Next Level!*

Presenter: Rufus Stephens, Bird Habitat Consultant

Description: You can think of it as a new way to enjoy birds and birding. When you see a bird, take note of the habitat it is using and the health of that habitat. Then learn about improving the condition of that habitat so you can do something positive for the bird. Migrant, resident, and breeding birds need healthy habitat to flourish. *Attracting Birds in the Texas Hill Country* authored by Rufus Stephens and Jan Wrede is a first of its kind book on improving bird habitat and is a huge resource packed with information.



Rufus Stephens

Rufus will review select habitats and talk about what birds need to live there and how you can improve their habitat on your own property.

Copies of Rufus and Jan's book will be available for purchase at the presentation for \$40, cash or check only.

Bio: Rufus Stephens is a Certified Wildlife Biologist and coauthor with Jan Wrede of the recently published book *Attracting Birds in the Texas Hill Country: A Guide to Land Stewardship* by TAMU Press. He has worked as a wildlife biologist for 30 years, 23 years with TPWD, from which he retired in 2017. He is one of the founders of the Texas Master Naturalist program and in recognition

for this accomplishment was a co-recipient of the Wildlife Management Institute's award for Innovation. Rufus is currently a wildlife consultant assisting landowners and communities with the development of wildlife management plans with special emphasis on the management of birds.

Saturday Afternoon

Title: *Restoring Life to the San Antonio River*

Presenter: Lee Marlowe, San Antonio River Authority (SARA)



Description: The urban environment has historically been built without consideration for ecosystems that support birds, pollinators, and other wildlife. Fortunately, development practices are

now being implemented that reverse the negative impacts of traditional development techniques by integrating ecosystems into the built environment. Native plant restoration is a key element that results in habitat for birds and pollinators as well as water quality improvements among other benefits. A variety of projects along the San Antonio River serve to demonstrate that it is possible to transform uninviting, degraded sites into attractive spaces where people enjoy spending time and nature is allowed to thrive. The findings of a recent study of the birds benefiting from river habitat restoration just south of downtown San Antonio will be highlighted.

Bio: Lee Marlowe is a restoration ecologist with over 19 years of professional experience working in the field of



Lee Marlowe

ecological restoration and natural resource management including sustainable landscape practices and applications for improved ecological functions. Her expertise includes the use of native plants to provide wildlife habitat, water quality benefits, bank/site stabilization, and aesthetic beauty in landscapes of all sizes. She currently serves as the Sustainable Landscape Ecologist for the San Antonio River Authority and is the project manager for the Mission Reach Avian Study.

Saturday Night Keynote

Title: *North on the Wing: Travels with the Songbird Migration of Spring*

Presenter: Dr. Bruce M. Beehler, Research Associate, Division of Birds, Smithsonian Institution



Description: In this illustrated lecture, naturalist and ornithologist, Bruce Beehler, will recount his hundred-day-long 2015 field trip following the spring migration of songbirds from the coast of southeastern Texas up the Mississippi and thence into the boreal forests of northern Ontario—breeding ground of many of the beautiful and vocal North American wood-warblers. Along the way, Beehler visited various

migratory bird field projects as well as scores of local, state, and national parks and refuges critical for the preservation of the migration phenomenon. He also spent time in an array of eclectic and beautiful rural communities from southern Louisiana and Mississippi through the Heartland and to the northern limit of roads in Ontario, land of the Cree and Ojibwe First Nations peoples. Beehler’s informal goal was to spend time with all thirty-seven eastern wood-warblers on their prime breeding habitat. In pursuing this objective, he saw a lot of deeply rural North America. His presentation touches on wildlife, nature conservation, migration research, American history, and rural culture.

Beehler will be signing his popular book, *North on the Wing* (Smithsonian: 2018), after the lecture. The book will be available for purchase for \$25.00 cash or check.



Bruce Beehler

Bio: Bruce Beehler, PhD, is a naturalist, ornithologist, and conservationist—currently a Research Associate in the Division of Birds at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. He conducts research and writing about nature and natural history.

Beehler has spent much of his scientific career studying and working to conserve birds and their forest habitats. After conducting doctoral fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, Beehler worked for ten years at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, followed by stints at the Wildlife Conservation Society, U.S. Department of State, Counterpart International, Conservation International, and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation.

Beehler is an elective Fellow of the American Ornithologists Union and has served on the boards of the American Bird Conservancy, RARE, and the Livingston-Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy. Currently, Beehler serves on the Scientific Advisory Board of the Rainforest Trust and is a Research Associate of the American Bird Conservancy.

Beehler has published thirteen books and authored more than a hundred technical and popular articles about birds and nature. In 2007, he was featured in a *60-Minutes* piece highlighting an expedition he led to the Foja Mountains in the interior of western New Guinea in which scores of new species of plants and animals were discovered. In 2016 Beehler received the Bicentennial Medal from Williams College for his conservation work in the Pacific. In 2017 Beehler received the Scientific Achievement Award from the National Museum of Natural History.

Today, Beehler carries out natural history studies and writing focused on wildlife and natural places in North America.

Beehler blog: <https://birdsandnaturenorthamerica.blogspot.com>
Beehler website: [brucembeeher.wixsite.com/brucembeeher](https://www.brucembeeher.com)

Field Trips

NOTE: Participants must meet their field trip group at the Hilton Garden Inn. Due to logistical complications, it is not possible to meet the group at any other location. Please plan accordingly.

| Number | Field Trip & Description | County | Difficulty | Departure/Return Times | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|--------|---|-----------------|------------------|------------------------|--------|----------|--------|
| 1 | <p>Avenue A Brackenridge Park/San Antonio Botanical Garden—Avenue A intersects the south side of Mulberry Avenue in Brackenridge Park and is bordered by Brackenridge Park Golf Course and the wooded banks of the San Antonio River. The 1.5-mile walk on paved streets takes us down Avenue A, across the river and back on River Road. Afterward, we'll drive a short distance to the San Antonio Botanical Garden, a 38-acre scenic area with trails, a pond and a wide variety of flower gardens and native plants. Possible sightings at these locations include Wood Duck, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Barred Owl, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Green Heron, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Great Crested Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, and Baltimore Oriole. The Botanical Garden charges a \$5 admission fee.</p> | Bexar | Easy | 7:30am–2:00pm | X | X | X |
| 2 | <p>Acequia Park/Mission Reach—This park is nestled between Mission San Jose and Mission San Juan Capistrano along the San Antonio River. Hike and bike trails cross through this park connecting the Missions and passing the historic Espada Acequia. The San Antonio River Authority has done extensive habitat restoration along the river and conducted bird surveys along the Mission Reach. Habitats include river, fields, restored river banks, and woods. Possible sightings include herons, egrets, both species of night-heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, White-eyed Vireo, and spring migrants.</p> | Bexar | Easy | 7:00am–2:00pm | X | X | X |
| 3 | <p>Crescent Bend Nature Park/Warbler Woods—The woodland habitat of Crescent Bend consisting of mostly pecans and hackberry trees covers more than half of the 180-acre park. The remainder of the park is open savanna bordered by Cibolo Creek. Level, crushed gravel trails lead through a variety of habitats. The park attracts a wide variety of migrants in the spring. Potential sightings include Common & Lesser Nighthawks, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Barred Owl, Golden-fronted, Downy, and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Summer Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting. Twenty-six species of warblers have been reported at the park including Golden-winged Warbler, Mourning Warbler, American Redstart, Magnolia Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Blackburnian Warbler.</p> <p>Warbler Woods is a privately-owned wildlife sanctuary in the NW corner of Guadalupe County. Trip will cover both wooded areas and open fields with a variety of bird blinds and water features. The sanctuary serves as a migrant trap in the spring with possible sightings including Great Horned Owl, Alder and Willow Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Hutton's Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Gray Catbird, and Lark Sparrow. Potential warblers include MacGillivray's Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, and Canada Warbler.</p> | Bexar/Guadalupe | Easy to Moderate | 5:45am–Mid-afternoon | X | X | |
| 4 | <p>Honey Creek State Natural Area—This area is operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, State Parks Division. The area covers about 2,760 acres and is bisected by about 2 miles of Honey Creek, a near pristine spring-fed permanent flowing creek. Due to the fragile and near pristine nature of the area, access is limited to research activities or special guided tours. Over 160 bird species have been recorded in the area and species vary by season. In May we expect to see various flycatchers (such as Vermilion and Ash-throated), thrushes (such as Hermit and Robin), Cedar Waxwing, some sparrows, Dickcissel, Indigo and Painted Buntings, two stars of the area—Golden-cheeked Warbler and Zone-tailed Hawk—and others.</p> <p>Most of the day will be birding by vehicle with short walks along the road, but in some areas we will leave the roadway for short walks. Due to the property being maintained in an undeveloped state, there are very few trails and some portions of short walks during the day will be on unmarked trails in uncut grasses with uneven surfaces. Anyone not wishing to venture into an unmarked trail spot will be able to stay near the vehicle (birds are likely anywhere). Wear sturdy walking shoes, a hat, and if you wish, snake guards. There are no restroom facilities on the property. Park entry fee has been waived for this field trip.</p> | Comal | Easy to Moderate | 5:30am–1:00pm | X | X | X |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------|---|---|--|
| 5 | <p>Medina River Natural Area/Mays Family Scout Ranch—The Medina River Natural Area is located on Hwy 16 in southern San Antonio about 4.5 miles south of Loop 410. The park offers several miles of well-kept trails through riparian habitat and south Texas scrub habitats. In early May, the park is an excellent location to find migrant songbirds. Some south Texas specialties like Least Grebe, Great Kiskadee, and Green Kingfisher have been seen in recent years. A Prothonotary Warbler was found nesting here recently. Indigo Bunting, Summer Tanager, and Northern Parula should be easy to find. In the scrub habitat, we expect birds such as Painted Bunting, Verdin, and Lark Sparrow. Expect a 2-3 mile walk along well-kept trails with moderate difficulty due to elevation changes.</p> <p>The Mays Family Scout Ranch is just a short distance away and on the south side of the Medina River, which forms one of its boundaries. This 135-acre property is about half South Texas Brush Country habitat and half recovering farmland that is managed for doves and which attracts a variety of grassland birds. The trails are easy to moderate, and there are some beautiful overlooks of the Medina River. There is also a nice pavilion to enjoy a picnic lunch with multiple restrooms and ample parking.</p> | Bexar | Easy to Moderate | 7:15am–3:00pm | X | X | |
| 6 | <p>James Kiehl River Bend Park/Joshua Springs Park and Preserve—James Kiehl River Bend Park is a serene 25-acre recovering ranch land natural area with grassland, woodland, and riparian habitats, including 1,634 feet of Guadalupe River frontage. Walk along the 1.5 miles of multi-use trails: The Pecan Loop, The Prairie Loop, and the River Loop, which leads down to the lower terrace and along the river’s edge where awesome bald cypress trees shade the path. Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Painted and Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-chinned Hummingbird, and Belted Kingfisher are possible. No potable water is available but portajohns are present.</p> <p>Joshua Springs Park and Preserve is 365 acres of recovering ranchland. A native garden has been installed in the front area with the remainder being rolling grasslands and juniper breaks and a small pond and stream. Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Painted and Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-chinned Hummingbird, and Ash-throated Flycatcher are expected. No potable water is available but conventional restrooms are available.</p> | Kendall | Easy to Moderate | 7:30am–2:00pm | X | X | |
| 7 | <p>Castroville Regional Park—The walk around the Castroville Regional Park includes sewer ponds, some open fields, the Medina River with its many cypress trees and an overlook, and some wooded hillsides. The Northern Parulas have nested here and sometimes we have Green or Belted Kingfishers. The common species here include Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Black-crested Titmouse, Bullock’s Oriole, Red-shouldered Hawk, Western and Couch’s Kingbirds, Barn Swallow, Purple Martin, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. A lovely hummingbird garden will probably give us some Black-chinned Hummingbirds and butterflies. Audubon’s Oriole has been seen here but are quite rare. We will have lunch at Bill Miller’s where their chocolate brownies and pies are a hit as well as the local BBQ, fried chicken, and good salads. No box lunches allowed in the restaurant. If we get through in time, we may do an extension to the Hondo Nature Park or the Landmark Inn before returning to the hotel.</p> | Medina | Easy to Moderate | 7:00am–2:00pm | X | X | |
| 8 | <p>Friedrich Wilderness Park/McGimsy Scout Ranch—Friedrich Wilderness Park’s steep hills and deep canyons covered with “cedar” breaks and oak mottes are perfect habitat for our target species: the Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) - a federally listed endangered species which breeds in the park each spring. While it is possible to spot the GCWA on the flatter trails near the entrance, we anticipate hiking to the higher elevations of the park. Be prepared for strenuous hiking and uneven terrain; hiking boots and plenty of water are recommended as well as trekking poles if you like to use them. In addition to the GCWA, we routinely see Black-and-white Warbler, Painted Bunting, Summer Tanager, Black-crested Titmouse, Hutton’s Vireo, assorted migrating warblers, and occasionally migrating orioles.</p> <p>After Friedrich Park, and as time allows, we will stop at the McGimsey Scout Park, a beautiful combination of woods and fields in the north-central part of the city of San Antonio. Relatively under-birded, our observations will add to the property’s bird list being generated as part of the Bird Study Merit Badge. Easy trails and wide roads wind through deciduous woods, cactus clumps, brushy thickets, and along rocky creek beds. Extensive grassy fields offer the possibility for sparrows and other grass-loving migrants. Warblers, vireos, thrushes, wrens, and woodpeckers are all to be expected in this large island gem of habitat.</p> | Bexar | Easy to Difficult | 6:30am–3:00pm | X | | |
| 9 | <p>Albert & Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area (ABK)—Albert and Bessie Kronkosky began buying property in this area in 1946. By 1973, they were hunting, taking photos, and entertaining guests on their 3,814-acre ranch. The couple willed their beloved land to the state of Texas to protect it from development. Texas Parks & Wildlife Department accepted the donation of the ranch in March 2011. It is not yet open to the public, so this field trip is an excellent opportunity to get a preview of its natural riches: nesting Golden-cheeked Warblers and other Hill Country species, such as Ash-throated Flycatcher, Hutton’s Vireo, Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow. The bird walk goes through typical Hill Country juniper/oak woodlands and consists of a 3-mile round trip hike over hilly, rocky terrain using old ranch roads to Bessie’s Pond. There are also possible stream/creek crossings. Participants will need to sign a one-day liability waiver for ABK SNA before the hike.</p> | Kendall/Bandera | Moderate to Difficult | 7:00am–11:30am | X | | |

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| 10 | <p>Mitchell Lake Audubon Center (MLAC)—Mitchell Lake is a critical wetland habitat with a natural lake and man-made wetlands. There are 7 miles of trails, accessible by both foot and driving. More than 340 species have been recorded throughout the year, and during early May MLAC is home to hundreds of breeding individuals singing their hearts out for a mate. Expected birds include Painted Buntings, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Black-necked Stilts, Verdin, and a variety of shorebirds passing through. We'll walk the education trail around Bird Pond and then we'll carpool back to the polders for a different type of wetland experience. The walk is easy, with a slight uphill area, but we expect to do between 2-3 miles of walking, possibly more. Depending on recent rains, the paths can be quite muddy, so wearing appropriate shoes is important. We'll end around 1 pm or whenever the birds start to thin out. Mitchell Lake closes at 2pm and charges a \$5 entrance fee per person. Mitchell Lake can be heavy with mosquitos depending on how much rain we've received.</p> | Bexar | Easy to Moderate | 7:00am–1:00pm | X | | X |
| 11 | <p>Bat Conservation International's Bracken Cave Preserve is home to Bracken Cave, the summer home of more than 15 million Mexican free-tailed bats (<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>), making it the world's largest bat colony and one of the largest concentrations of mammals on earth. The emergence of these millions of bats, as they spiral out of the cave at dusk for their nightly insect hunt, is an unforgettable sight. But as amazing as it is, the morning return is even more amazing. Bats raining out of the sky after a night of foraging makes a morning return at Bracken a rare and beautiful sight. Owls, hawks and falcons enjoy a bat breakfast. We will join our guide at the gate of the property to be escorted to the parking area approximately 2 miles away. We will view the bats returning until about 7:00-7:30 am and then bird the area until 11am. Painted Bunting and Golden-cheeked Warbler nest here, and spring migrants of all kinds are found on the 1500-acre property. The hike is moderate-to-rough with a lot of rocky terrain and brush on the Golden-cheeked Warbler transects. Other paths are more open and mowed and not as rocky. Guides will be available for both route levels as you prefer. <i>Note: You will need to make your own arrangements for breakfast due to the early departure time.</i> \$5 entry fee; cash and checks made out to Bat Conservation International accepted. Liability release form required.</p> | Comal | Moderate to Difficult | 4:45am–1:00pm | X | | X |
| 12 | <p>Cibolo Nature Center & Farm (CNC&F)/Kreutzberg Canyon Natural Area—The 100-acre Cibolo Nature Center (CNC), open since Earth Day 1990, offers a multitude of educational and recreational opportunities to the community. The field trip group will explore the restored prairie, adjacent woodland, the Wrede Marsh, and the riparian area along Cibolo Creek along fairly level, even paths. Kreutzberg Canyon Natural Area consists of 117 scenic acres along the Guadalupe River containing six habitats. Paths are natural surface and unimproved and can be rugged and strenuous, so hiking boots are recommended. The North and South Woodland Loops are wide, open routes following utility easements through diverse oak tree species, old-growth juniper, and massive cedar elms. The River Loop leads to shady picnic spots and pleasing views of the Guadalupe. There are three wildlife observation blinds. Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Painted and Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Golden-cheeked and migrant warblers, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher are possible. No potable water is available but conventional and ADA accessible latrines are provided.</p> | Kendall | Easy to Moderate | 7:30am–3:00pm | X | | X |
| 13 | <p>Kerr Wildlife Management Area—The Kerr Wildlife Management Area is owned and operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This 6,493-acre property was selected as a land base for the Edwards Plateau ecological area to develop and manage wildlife habitats and populations of indigenous wildlife species. The Area's primary mission is to function as a wildlife management, research, and demonstration site to conduct wildlife related studies and provide resultant information to resource managers, landowners, and other interested groups or individuals. Ongoing habitat restoration and management at Kerr provide nesting for two of Texas' most threatened birds: the Black-capped Vireo and Golden-cheeked Warbler. These two birds will be spotted along with the following potential species: Northern Bobwhite, Greater Roadrunner, Zone-tailed Hawk, Vermilion Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Common Raven, Canyon Wren, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Yellow-breasted Chat, Scott's Oriole, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, and Painted Bunting. This trip will include a combination of driving and walking off-trail on uneven ground.</p> | Kerr | Easy to Moderate | 5:45am–3:00pm | | X | X |
| 14 | <p>Bexar County Highlights—This trip will visit some of the more productive and reliable Bexar County hotspots during migration periods. Crescent Bend Nature Park: Crescent Bend is an old housing development in NE Bexar County that was flooded in the 1990's. FEMA bought the land and transferred it to the City of Schertz for use as a park. The surrounding area is largely farmland, so the park represents an island of trees, attractive to migrants. About 25-30 species of warblers are recorded during most Spring migration periods, as well as other migrant passerines.</p> <p>Robert Tobin Park/Salado Creek Greenway: Salado Creek flooded in the same floods that flooded Crescent Bend. The Salado Creek floodplain has been designated as parkland to prevent future development, and represents a continuous linear riparian area accessible by paved trails.</p> <p>Avenue A/Brackenridge Park: Avenue A is a short, dead end road situated between a golf course and the San Antonio River. It has long been a standard Bexar County migrant trap. We will not have a designated lunch stop, so be prepared to eat in the car on the run. Expect to walk about 4-5 miles total; all trails are level and paved or crushed granite. For photographers or persons of reduced mobility, there are 2 blinds at Crescent Bend which frequently offer great observations of birds.</p> | Bexar | Easy | 6:45am–3:00pm | | X | |

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| 15 | <p>Birding at the San Antonio Zoo!—This is the field trip for birders who don't want to get up early! The San Antonio Zoo is not only famous for their extensive bird collection, but it is also a haven for local and migratory species that want a safe place to rest (and the occasional free meal). The first zoo to successfully breed flamingos, and a producer of numerous Whooping Crane young, the SA Zoo is a great place to see many species you have rarely, if ever, seen in any other zoo. Bring your binoculars and your camera – you will want good views and excellent photos of the many toucans, barbets, mynas, robin-chats, screamers, turacos, storks and seriemas, as well as dozens and dozens more. We can hand feed a flock of lorikeets, and maybe even a Kookaburra! If time allows, we can check out the colony of wild egrets, herons, and night-herons, and the many Great Crested Flycatchers and other woodland birds migrating through or nesting along the San Antonio River and in the woods of neighboring Brackenridge Park. A \$5 entrance fee will be payable as we enter the Zoo through the Education Center.</p> | Bexar | Easy | 8:30am–2:30pm | | X | |
| 16 | <p>Haggard Ranch—The Haggard Ranch is a privately owned 250-acre property located in southwest Bexar county. The habitats vary from marsh and ponds to south Texas brush. Pauraque have been seen in the last few years. Painted Bunting, Verdin, Osprey, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-shouldered Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Great Blue Heron, Snowy, Great and Cattle Egret are common sightings. You may take a 3-4 mile hike around the property that is moderate/difficult walking, or if you want an easy trip, sit on the porch overlooking the large lake and walk around the yard. If it has rained, waterproof boots will be needed. There will be a \$5 fee per person.</p> | Bexar | Easy to Moderate | 7:15am–1:00pm | | X | |
| 17 | <p>A Taste of the Texas Hill Country—Explore two properties on the southern end of the Texas Hill Country, where the Balcones Escarpment separates the Hill Country from the flat south Texas Region. The trip will start out at the Frank Madla Natural Area, exploring the rich Juniper/Oak habitat. After lunch the trip moves to the private Maverick Ranch-Fromme Farm where the owners will greet the group and facilitate exploration of their ranch. Maverick Ranch-Fromme Farm is a National Register of Historic Places District, part of the Southernmost Edwards Plateau Important Bird Area, and maintained by its owners as a preserve and refuge for native Texas wildlife. The family has owned the Maverick Ranch for over 100 years and the Fromme Farm for nearly 65 years. There are pristine springs, seeps, a creek, recharge features, drainages and wetlands. Potential sightings at these locations include Golden-cheeked Warbler, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Common Raven, Greater Roadrunner, Bewick's Wren, Black-capped Vireo, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Hutton's Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Summer Tanager, Painted Bunting, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and spring migrants. Everyone must sign a liability waiver before we start.</p> | Bexar | Moderate | 7:30am–3:00pm | | X | |
| 18 | <p>Land Heritage Institute/Mitchell Lake Audubon Center—This trip includes two great birding sites on the south side of San Antonio. The 1200-acre Land Heritage Institute (LHI) site is a wonderful place to kick off the morning birding in the typical South Texas scrubland with many heritage live oaks and old cypress trees, especially along the Medina River that forms its northern border. The easy walk will be mostly flat with an optional short but more difficult trail down to the Medina River. Expected birds are those typical of South Texas in May including Crested Caracara, Common Ground-Dove, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Less often seen are Olive Sparrow, Greater Roadrunner, and Green Kingfisher. The 143 species seen at LHI also include a variety of migrants. Mixed flocks can be comprised of Black-and-white, Nashville, Orange-crowned, Yellow-throated, Black-throated Green, and, on more than one occasion, Golden-cheeked Warbler. Both Wild Turkey and Northern Bobwhite are heard often. A \$5 per person donation to support LHI is suggested.</p> <p>After a lunch break we will head over to Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, where we should arrive right in the midst of shorebird migration! Driving alongside the basins and the lake itself, we will get out and scan with spotting scopes to sort through what is likely to be multitudes of Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope, Long-billed Dowitcher, Stilt, Spotted, Solitary, Least, Western, and Baird's Sandpipers, White-faced Ibis, and American White Pelican. Less common species such as Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit, Glossy Ibis, Groove-billed Ani, Common Pauraque, and Olive Sparrow are possible but not guaranteed. Other areas of the property should have Verdin, Long-billed Thrasher, Dickcissel, Pyrrhuloxia, and nesting Green Heron, Least Grebe, and Black-bellied Whistling-Duck. \$5 entrance fee at MLAC.</p> | Bexar | Easy to Moderate | 7:15am–3:00pm | | X | |
| 19 | <p>Junction Hotspots—Situated in the Texas Hill Country at the fork of the North and South Llano Rivers, Junction is rich in bird life. We will explore various hotspots throughout the area in search of resident and migratory birds. Habitats will be varied including wetlands, riparian areas, Oak-Juniper uplands, and fields. You can expect a large variety of birds on this trip. Potential sightings include lingering ducks and migrating shorebirds, Bell's Vireo, Black-throated Sparrow, Canyon Wren, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Vermilion Flycatcher, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Black-capped Vireo, Cassin's Sparrow, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Varied Bunting, Canyon Towhee, 3 kingfisher species, Scott's Oriole, and spring migrants. This trip will not focus on Golden-cheeked Warbler, but participants can stay and view them on their own in South Llano State Park. Note: Cell Service is almost non-existent in Junction.</p> | Kimble | Easy to Moderate | 6:30am–4:00pm | | X | |

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| 20 | <p>Medina River Natural Area—The Medina River Natural Area is located on Hwy 16 in southern San Antonio about 4.5 miles south of Loop 410. The park offers several miles of well kept trails through riparian habitat and south Texas scrub habitats. In early May, the park is an excellent location to find migrant song birds. Some south Texas specialties like Least Greenlet, Great Kiskadee, and Green-winged Teal have been seen here in recent years. Prothonotary Warbler was found nesting here recently. Indigo Bunting, Summer Tanager, and Northern Parula should be easy to find. In the scrub habitat, we expect to find birds such as Painted Bunting, Verdin, and Lark Sparrow. Expect a 2-3 mile walk along well kept trails with moderate difficulty due to elevation changes.</p> | Bexar | Easy to Moderate | 7:15am-12:00pm | | | X |
| 21 | <p>Friedrich Wilderness Park/Crownridge Canyon Park—Friedrich Wilderness Park's steep hills and deep canyons covered with "cedar" breaks and oak mottes are perfect habitat for our target species: the Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) - a federally listed endangered species which breeds in the park each spring. While it is possible to spot the GCWA on the flatter trails near the entrance, we anticipate hiking to the higher elevations of the park. Please be prepared for strenuous hiking and uneven terrain; hiking boots and plenty of water are recommended as well as trekking poles if you like to use them. In addition to the Golden-cheeked Warbler, we routinely see Black-and-white Warbler, Painted Bunting, Summer Tanager, Black-crested Titmouse, Hutton's Vireo, assorted migrating warblers, and occasionally migrating orioles. We will take a break for lunch, then continue to nearby Crownridge Canyon Park for an additional Hill Country hike in Golden-cheeked Warbler territory.</p> | Bexar | Moderate to Difficult | 6:30am-3:00pm | | | X |
| 22 | <p>Government Canyon State Natural Area—This beautiful State Natural Area of 12,000 acres is made up primarily of Edwards Plateau habitat with grassland and open woodland components. There are 40 miles of trails, of which we will follow the Joe Johnston Route trail to the Zizelmann House built in the 1880's and used for a time as a Pony Express Station. The trail follows Government Canyon Creek, which is used by Common Ravens and Canyon Wrens, and passes by 110,000,000 year old dinosaur footprints. Upon return from Joe Johnston Trail between 11:30 and 1:00 we can cover other trails depending on group interest. The Front Country aspect of the park is typically very good for transiting migrants and returning summer residents. Proximity of this area to the parking lot frees people up to leave whenever they choose. An entry fee is required; State Park passes are honored.</p> | Bexar | Moderate to Difficult | 7:00am-3:00pm | | | X |
| 23 | <p>Southwest Bexar County River Properties—We have special permission to access two sites that we visit for the Bexar County Christmas Bird Count. Southwest High School has a unique and amazing riparian woodland that grants us special access for bird walks. We will spend the morning exploring this woodland along the San Antonio River and adding to the bird list for the school. Kingfishers, Greater Kiskadee, lingering ducks, and spring migrants are possible. We will later travel to the Alamo River Campground that allows us access to their riverfront woodlands on the San Antonio River. There may be a small fee for accessing the campground (no more than \$5).</p> | Bexar | Easy | 7:00am-3:00pm | | | X |
| 24 | <p>Palmetto State Park—This park is named for the dwarf palmetto (<i>Sabal minor</i>), which grows abundantly in the park. The San Marcos River runs through the park, and the spring-fed 4-acre Oxbow Lake and the many bogs surrounded by dense vegetation give the park a jungle-like atmosphere. We will be on the lookout for eastern birds like Pileated and Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-eyed Vireo, Tufted Titmouse, Acadian Flycatcher, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird, with a few of the more western species mixed in. We will also be on the lookout for nesting Northern Parula and Prothonotary Warbler, as well as northbound migrants. The trip will involve walking 2+ miles on relatively flat trails in two different parts of the park. We expect to take about 3 hours to enjoy the birding. Palmetto State park charges a \$3 entrance fee per adult (persons over 12); Texas Park Passes accepted.</p> | Gonzalez | Easy to Moderate | 5:30am-12:00pm | | | X |
| 25 | <p>YMCA-Roberts Ranch, Comfort—Five lucky field trip participants will get to explore the Roberts Ranch - 1700 acres of recovering ranchland, old fields, riparian area, and hills donated to the YMCA in the late 1990s by the late Bob Roberts of Comfort. The birding areas are only accessible by 4W-Drive vehicle (driven by leader). Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Painted and Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Golden-cheeked Warbler, and Greater Roadrunner are expected. Black-capped Vireo was present historically, and we will search for it. Restrooms are available.</p> | Kerr | Moderate | 7:30am-3:00pm | | | X |
| 26 | <p>Warbler Woods—Warbler Woods is a privately-owned wildlife sanctuary in the NW corner of Guadalupe County. Trip will cover both wooded areas and open fields with a variety of bird blinds and water features. The sanctuary serves as a migrant trap in the spring with possible sightings including Great Horned Owl, Alder and Willow Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Hutton's Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Gray Catbird, and Lark Sparrow. Potential warblers include MacGillivray's Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, and Canada Warbler.</p> | Guadalupe | Easy | 7:00am-12:00pm | | | X |
| 27 | <p>Comal County Century Club—Century Club trips are fast paced outings trying to maximize the number of species within the county. Not much time for lingering looks so prepare to move briskly from spot to spot. Extensive driving to/from sites and roadside birding. We will look for typical Edwards Plateau breeding birds, gulls and terns, shorebirds, and migrants at such places as Landa Park in New Braunfels, Canyon Lake (including the dam and Overlook Park), and Guadalupe River.</p> | Comal | Easy | 7:15am-5:00pm | X | | |

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| 28 | Wilson County Century Club —Century Club trips are fast paced outings trying to maximize the number of species within the county. Not much time for lingering looks so prepare to move briskly from spot to spot. Extensive driving to/from sites and roadside birding. The tour will feature as wide a variety of habitats as available with an emphasis on maximizing the day's species list. Possible species include Mottled Duck, Northern Bobwhite, Wild Turkey, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby Hummingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, herons and egrets, flycatchers, sparrows, Bullock's Oriole, migrating warblers, and Pyrrhuloxia. | Wilson | Easy | 5:45am–5:00pm | X | |
| 29 | Atascosa County Century Club —Century Club trips are fast paced outings trying to maximize the number of species within the county. Not much time for lingering looks so prepare to move briskly from spot to spot. Extensive driving to/from sites and roadside birding. The tour will feature as wide a variety of habitats as available with an emphasis on maximizing the day's species list. Possible species include Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Least Grebe, shorebirds, herons and egrets, Roseate Spoonbill, Harris's Hwk, Swainson's Hawk, flycatchers, Green Jay, sparrows, Bullock's Oriole, Audubon's Oriole, Pyrrhuloxia, Blue Grosbeak, and Painted Bunting. | Atascosa | Easy | 5:30am–5:00pm | | X |
| 30 | Kendall County Century Club —Century Club trips are fast paced outings trying to maximize the number of species within the county. Not much time for lingering looks so prepare to move briskly from spot to spot. Extensive driving to/from sites and roadside birding. Starting on River Road in Boerne, we will then survey Cibolo Nature Center & Farm area, Boerne Lake, Joshua Springs, and Kiehl County Parks looking for a wide variety of spring residents and visitors, including Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Vermilion Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Summer Tanager, Painted Bunting, Lesser Goldfinch, Yellow-throated Vireo, Yellow-throated Warbler, and migrating warblers. | Kendall | Easy | 6:30am–mid-afternoon | | X |



Balcones Songbird Festival
Keeping the Hill Country Wild

19th Annual Event
April 26-28, 2019

*The only nesting place of the
 Endangered Species Golden-cheeked Warbler*

Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge
in the Texas Hill Country

BalconesSongbirdFestival.org

Habitat added to Magic Ridge Sanctuary

It is reason to celebrate that after a long, patient negotiation a big, prime piece of habitat has been added to our Magic Ridge Sanctuary. While to most TOS members this parcel is completely new and has never been personally birded, I connect with it some bitter-sweet memories of excursions with my earliest birding mentor on the Central Texas Coast, the late Mrs. Doris Wyman.

Long before Magic Ridge even was on the TOS's radar as a sanctuary Mrs. Wyman knew about the area's great potential and rich diversity. It was her favorite birding location close to her home in Port Lavaca. When I moved to Port O'Connor in November 1991 and shortly after made contact with the Golden Crescent Nature Club in Victoria—of which Doris Wyman was a founding member—it did not take long for her to take me “under her wing” and show me the local hotspots.

Zimmerman Road—the road following the oystershell ridge through unusual vegetation—which I later learned to be one of the north- and easternmost extensions of Tamaulipas scrub habitat in Texas—had two permanent residents at the time, both ladies of about Doris's age and well acquainted with her. The first house, Mrs. Nash's, now belongs to somebody else but most of the surrounding property became a key part of Magic Ridge many years ago. The second house, Mrs. Paul's, was much further down the ridge, beyond where the county maintained the road and on the other side of an always locked gate with intimidating “No Trespassing” signs at the fence post. But Doris had access to the “forbidden land” and I was more than glad to jump out of the car and open that gate for our occasional excursions into the back area of this special place.

I remember Mrs. Paul's dog barking ferociously inside the house when we pulled up, Mrs. Paul looking out of her front door in a flowery house coat and the two old ladies (my idea of “old” has since changed because they were about the age I am now) chatting for a bit while I scanned the area for birds. Across the road from her house I could see parts of Town Lake with lots of ducks in the background but up closer and in reach of my binoculars were some I had never seen before. The crest of one of them went up and down repeatedly, looking all black when down but revealed a bold white spot when up. Then and there the Hooded Merganser became a new bird of my growing life list and my favorite duck to this day. On another occasion we delivered a sack of bird seed, two new hummingbird feeders

and a big bag of sugar. It was fall and the hummingbirds numerous on the ridge, fattening up in preparation for their migration south. One of them looked very orange and that evening I proudly entered it into my Texas list as my first Rufous Hummingbird. It seems that every time we visited Mrs. Paul something new caught my attention. There was a Roadrunner that lived around her house, almost a pet Doris said, that stalked the area in the front yard where bird seed was thrown on the ground for the doves and sparrows. I saw it hiding under a bush and darting out to grab a sparrow. The horror stuck with me for a long time. A happier occasion was during my very first Texas spring migration. Waves of colorful migrants from Central and South America stopped along the ridge to refuel and rest. The two mulberry trees in Mrs. Paul's yard were festooned with Indigo and Painted Buntings, orioles and tanagers. We sat in Doris's jeep for a very long time using it as a blind, noting down the species and numbers. I decided then and there that the first trees I would plant on my own property would be mulberries. They are tall and strong by now.

When Mrs. Paul moved out due to health problems and after TOS had already acquired the first properties that formed the Magic Ridge Sanctuary I helped Mark Elwonger track down the owners of parcels and inholdings that would make excellent additions to the core refuge. I talked to Mrs. Paul's relatives in Victoria and asked if they were willing to sell their property to TOS or even grant us the right of first refusal but was informed that they wanted to keep it in the family and had no interest in the TOS proposition. So we did not pursue it further. Who could know at the time that the tides would change in TOS's favor many years later?!

The mulberry trees on Mrs. Paul's property have since died and she, too, passed away. But the habitat on the ridge where she lived a simple life and enjoyed her birds lives on and couldn't be in better hands now that the TOS added it to the already sizable holdings on the ridge. And, who knows, maybe, hopefully before long we can have a work day and make sure that mulberry trees will again grow there.

—Petra Hockey
—Port O'Connor

P.S.: Please consider joining my husband Ladd and me in donating to the TOS Sanctuary Fund to replenish what has been spent so that in the future we will have the means to conserve additional properties if the opportunity arises.



Milestones

Welcome to the first Milestones column. This will hopefully be a regular feature of the TOS newsletter. I want to feature your birding milestones. Texas totals, ABA/USA totals, county totals, and Century Club totals will be featured. Please send your milestones to David Sarkozi at David@sarkozi.net

Texas

Your column editor, David Sarkozi, reached the “triple nickel” or 555 species in Texas with Rufous-backed Robin in Uvalde County. Yellow Grosbeak was Texas Bird 535 for Lamont Brown Nina Rach reached the 500 club in Texas with Brown Noddy on the August pelagic trip. Jeff Patterson made 500 birds in Texas with the Golden-crowned Sparrow at Warbler Woods in 2018. Kelly Miller with the help of Chris Runk and Noah Stryker found Little Gull for her 350th Texas bird. Frank Bumgardner is now at 535 Texas birds.

USA/ABA Area

One June 5, 2018 of the Amlia Island in Alaska Short-nosed Albatross was Mike Austin’s 850th ABA Continental bird, he is currently at 853 species. The Roadside Hawk in Hidalgo County was Bill Sain’s 700’s ABA Bird. Manx Shearwater was Bob Friedrich’s 700th ABA Birding while on a Brian Patteson Atlantic pelagic trip. Tricolored Blackbird was ABA bird number 600 for Sheryll Barker. Rufous-backed Robin made 613 Lower 48 Birds for David Sarkozi

County

In December during the Christmas Bird Count Susan Foster found a Golden-crowned Warbler on a private ranch for her 300th bird in Webb County. Hooded Merganser made 300 species in Galveston County for David Sarkozi. Blue-winged Teal made 213 in Gonzales County for Flo King where she is the eBird leader. Drew Dickert has completed 10 consecutive years of reaching 250 species in Harris County.

Fifteen-year-old Sebastian Casarez was the number on eBirder in Williamson County with 269 species in 2018. A remarkable total for someone not old enough for a regular driver’s license yet!

Century Club

On February 9, 2019 Harris Sparrow was Byron Stone’s 100th bird in Collin County and completed his 100th county with 100 or more species in the Texas Century Club. On February 6, Catherine Winans reached 100 species in Taylor County for her 80th county completed. Refugio County was Bill Sain’s 25th County at 100 species or more and earned him a Century Club Milestone pin. Kelly Miller has now completed three counties. Frank Bumgardner is now at 21 counties with 100 or more. Lamont Brown is now at 147 counties completed for the Century Club.



TOS returns to Alaska in 2019!

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