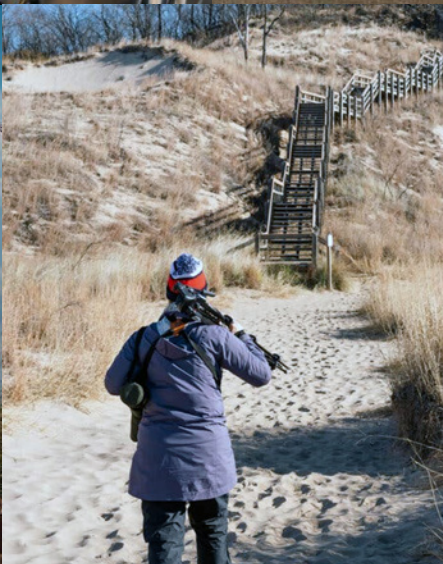


TEXAS *Birds*
ANNUAL



A Publication of the
TEXAS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

www.texasbirds.org



TEXAS

Birds

ANNUAL

Volume 19 2023

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Since the publication of the last *Texas Birds Annual* TOS mourned the loss of three pillars of the Texas birding community. (L to R) Lily Engles, John Arvin and Mary Gustafson. Their obits can be found on page XX.

Front Cover: art by Delvan

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear TOS Members,



elcome to another issue of Texas Birds Annual.

It has been an interesting year for TOS, as we were able to have two in-person meetings again for the first time since the start of the pandemic three years ago. We decided for the first time ever, as far as I can tell, to have the spring meeting in the same locale, Abilene, as the January meeting, and the resulting two meetings seemed to be enthusiastically received by participants and by the local community. We were able to explore the avian winter residents, spring migrants and many breeding birds in one region of Texas in a single year. The board decided to try this arrangement in order to capitalize on local expertise (in this case, Jay and Amy Packer), to improve planning efficiency, and to more fully explore the avifauna of a given region.

We're going to do it again in Weslaco in January and early May of 2024. Every part of Texas has interesting birding to offer. If you would like to help TOS visit your part of the state, please write me or your Regional Director <https://texasbirds.org/about-tos/officers-directors/> to let us know, and maybe we can make it happen.

The board also approved more trips, including a second trip to Panama, which Susan Foster is just wrapping up as I write this, and upcoming trips to Belize, Colombia and Clay Taylor's TOS trip to Costa Rica in January (details on website) other exotic locales and Alaska again next year (sorry, the trip is full with an alternate list, but maybe we can do it again in 2025 or 2026). And more weekenders, with Sabine Woods in October and Rockport in November. If you have a suggestion for a good time and place for a weekender (trips for 12 to 18 people on a Saturday +/- Sunday) please let us know.

Lots of good news about sanctuaries. Shelia Hargis and the Hooks Woods committee have improved the boardwalk and water feature with a redesign by Glenn Olsen and his GO Native Landscaping. I think you will really like the changes that they have made at Hooks Woods. The improvements will be good for birds and for birders, too!

And John Berner and John Whittle have teamed up to help us lease a few additional acres at Sabine Woods for the foreseeable future. We will plant trees and add some parking and maybe another drip and the results will be more good news for birds and birders.

And Magic Ridge will probably have a cleanup and birding day sometime early next spring. Watch your email for details.

The board is also making an effort to limit single-use plastic at our meetings. We decided to no longer purchase water in single-use plastic bottles, and Dan Hodges, our Master Merchandizing Member, helped us arrange for reusable water bottles with the TOS logo to be offered for sale online <https://texasbirds.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/texasbirds/product.jsp?product=14&> and at meetings. So, be sure to bring a reusable water bottle to your next TOS event. Link here to purchase our bottle with TOS logo. We're also going to work with vendors to limit single-use plastic utensils with lunches and other meals. If you attend a TOS event and see that we are falling short, please let us know how we can do better.

We have other projects in the works, all dedicated to make things better for birds and for birders in this great state. If you have an idea about how to help, please contact us.

I know you will enjoy the rest of what this issue of Texas Birds Annual has to offer.

Good birding ya'll.

Sincerely,

Byron "Doc" Stone, *TOS President*

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Publishing *Texas Birds Annual* and three issues of the *TOS NEWS* newsletter requires a lot of material. Being uncertain as to the readership of the newsletter (viewable only on the TOS webpage) I decided to include a few of the articles from the past year's newsletters in this issue of *Texas Birds Annual*. The vast majority of the publication will continue to be original material.

This year we can read about Sheridan Coffey's recent trip to Mongolia (see *A Texas Birder in Mongolia*) which is not a place we often think of as a birding hotspot but adding the cultural aspects it appeared to be a fantastic trip!

This past year was no exception when it comes to unusual sightings. With no observations for some time Brown Jays started making an appearance at the Santa Margarita Ranch. But don't wait long to add it to your life list as they frequently disappear for periods of up to a decade!

On June 2023 Becky Dehmer Marsalia photographed what turned out to be a Blue-gray Tanager in a backyard crepe myrtle near Eagle Lake (se. Colorado County). Eagle Lake is 66 miles (106 km) east of Houston. Whether it is a cagebird "that flew the coop" or a vagrant from Mexico is yet to be determined but it was an exciting observation with some outstanding photos!

We round out the issue with our usual coverage of the *Great Texts Birding Challenge* which TOS is a major sponsor and the *Birds of the Brush* art contest part of the Laredo Birding Festival. Both events seem to get bigger and better every year.

As a final note please keep the birdbaths full of fresh water. As the Texas heat evaporates all the natural sources our feathered friends have few options for staying hydrated. Scientific studies have shown that many resident species move to riparian areas during the summer months. If you want them in your yard, consider installing and maintaining a birdbath.

Now grab an ice cold beverage and enjoy this issue of *Texas Birds Annual*.



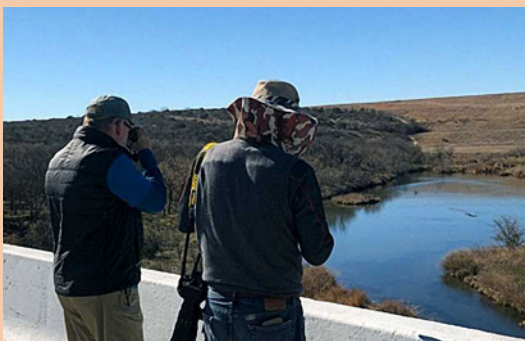
Songbirds escaping the Texas heat at Betty Hickman's birdbath.

Jack Clinton Eitniet
Editor/*Texas Ornithological Society Publications*
Email/ jclintoneitniet@gmail.com

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TOS ABILENE MEETING



Trip to Lake Fort Phantom and Abilene WWTP. Led by Ken Hartman and Susan Foster



Trip to OH Ivie parks and spillway and Coleman City Park. Led by Chuck Davis and Susan Foster



We had a female *Phainopepla* at the Texas Ornithological Society winter meeting. Anchor Marina on Lake Stamford in Haskell County. Coordinates and location in the bird description. Someone tried to find it yesterday with no luck. Talk about a surprise bird!





Prof. Brant spoke on Friday evening about the natural history of the area



Hotel staff made the lovely sign



* Amy Packer was our keynote speaker, encouraging membership in the Century Club



Chris Butler looking down the O.H. Ivie spillway



NEW CENTURY CLUB MEMBERS



Century Club pin recipients. Our Abilene meeting hosts, Jay and Amy Packer, earned their 100 county pins. (Left to right) Fred Collins, Bob Friedrichs, Gary Yoder, Annika Lindqvist, Catherine Winans,, Dina Perry, Angela Bailey, Chris Bailey, Nina Rach, Jay Packer, Amy Packer.

2022 TRIP TO PANAMA WITH TIFFANY KERSTEN A SUCCESS

By Heidi Belinsky

The TOS Panama trip was a trip to remember. The Canopy family took care of every detail from great accommodations to all of the transportation to going above-and-beyond in accommodating my long list of food allergies. Carlos and his team even welcomed me back for an additional night at the Tower when my flight was cancelled, including arranging transportation from and back to the airport a second time and a extra couple of allergy-free meals. The staff at the Lodge and Tower were friendly and attentive and the guides were very knowledgeable and

patient—even when I needed a little extra time to get the perfect shot or when I had questions about lizards or butterflies. It goes without saying that finding over 300 species of birds in a 10-day trip was mind-blowing!

The thing that I will remember most about the trip was the compatibility and camaraderie of the group. From sunrise at the Canopy feeders or Tower observation deck to laughing at stories at dinner and everything in between, we got along as if we were all old friends. I am thrilled to have made new birding friends from other states and look forward to birding with them in the future.

PANAMA PHOTO COLLAGE



Bi-colored Antbird



Crowned Woodnymph



Whooping Motmot



Blue Dacnis



Barred Antshrike

NEWS FROM THE TEXAS BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE (TBRC)



Smooth-billed Ani, photo Dan Jones

Below is a summary of the records that the Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC) has reviewed and come to a decision on since December 31st, 2022.

The MAJOR highlight of this batch is the first state record of SMOOTH-BILLED ANI.

During this same time period, Cordilleran and Pacific-slope Flycatchers were lumped into Western Flycatcher. Thus, the addition of the ani offset by the loss of one species due to the Western Flycatcher lump keep the state list at **664**.

Accepted (52):

2023-10 - Brant (1) 15 Jan 2023, west of Holliday, Archer County

2023-01 - Trumpeter Swan (8) 25 Dec 2022 - 3 Feb 2023, north of Stinnett and Lake Meredith, Hutchinson/Moore County

2023-54 - Eurasian Wigeon (1) 13 Nov - 14 Dec 2022, Balmorhea Lake, Reeves County

2023-08 - Eurasian Wigeon (1) 28 Dec 2022 - 5 Feb 2023, Lewis Lake, Burnet County

2023-13 - Barrow's Goldeneye (1) 15 Jan 2023, Lake Meredith, Hutchinson County

2022-91 - Red-necked Grebe (1) 21-27 Nov 2022, White Rock Lake, Dallas County

2023-16 - Red-necked Grebe (1) 27 Dec 2022, Lake O'The Pines, Marion County

2023-56 - Ruddy Ground Dove (1) 27 Feb - 4 Mar 2023, Lajitas, Brewster County

2022-85 - Smooth-billed Ani (1) 9-17 Nov 2022, South Padre Is., Cameron County

2022-95 - Costa's Hummingbird (1) 20 Nov - 7 Dec 2022, El Paso, El Paso County
2023-18 - Common Crane (1) 25-26 Jan 2023, northwest of Wolfforth, Lubbock County

2022-88 - Bar-tailed Godwit (1) 20 Nov 2022 - 23 Jan 2023, Portland & Oso Bay, San Patricio/Nueces County

2022-99 - Red Phalarope (1) 9 Oct 2022, Horizon City, El Paso County

2022-100 - Red Phalarope (1) 24 Oct 2022, Fort Clark Springs, Brackettville, Kinney County

2023-05 - Red Phalarope (1) 7-8 Jan 2023, Mitchell Lake, Bexar County

2023-17 - Short-billed Gull (1) 25 Jan 2023, Amarillo, Randall County

2023-12 - Slaty-backed Gull (1) 7 Feb

2023, Windy Point, Lake Travis, Travis County

2022-69 - Elegant Tern (1-3) 10 Sep - 10 Nov 2022, Port Aransas jetty, Nueces County

2022-92 - Elegant Tern (1) 21 Oct 2022, beach near McFaddin NWR, Jefferson County

2023-02 - Sooty Shearwater (1) 1 Jan 2023, South Padre Is. jetty, Cameron County

2022-86 - Manx Shearwater (1) 10 Nov 2022, ~91 miles east-northeast of the Mansfield cut on Padre Island, Willacy County

2021-112 - Social Flycatcher (1) 10 Nov 2021 - 7 Jan 2023, UT RGV campus, Brownsville, Cameron County

2022-101 - Greater Pewee (1) 9-19 Nov 2022, Alpine, Brewster County

2023-23 - Pinyon Jay (2) 1 Oct 2022, Indio Mountains, Hudspeth County

2022-93 - Pinyon Jay (1-200) 11 Oct 2022 - 4 Jan 2023, east slope of the Guadalupe Mountains, Culberson County

2022-76 - Pinyon Jay (1-5) 25-30 Oct 2022, west-central El Paso, El Paso County

2023-24 - Pinyon Jay (40) 3 Nov 2022, ssw. of Alpine, Brewster County

2023-06 - Pinyon Jay (1-200) 7 Dec 2022 - 16 May 2023, Limpia Creek, nw. of Fort Davis, Jeff Davis County

2023-11 - Pinyon Jay (1) 3 Feb 2023, Redford, Presidio County

2023-55 - Clark's Nutcracker (1) 28 Jan 2023, El Paso, El Paso County

2022-77 - Varied Thrush (1) 24-26 Oct 2022, El Paso, El Paso County

2022-96 - Varied Thrush (1) 8 Dec 2022, nw. San Antonio, Bexar County

2023-09 - Varied Thrush (1) 16 Jan 2023, Fisk Canyon, Big Bend NP, Brewster County

2022-75 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 23-26 Oct 2022, Lubbock, Lubbock County

2023-25 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 30 Oct - 6 Nov 2022, wnw. of Alpine, Brewster County

2023-39 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 5-6 Nov 2022, w. of Plains, Yoakum County

2023-44 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 5-6 Nov 2022, west of Fort Davis, Jeff Davis County

2023-43 - Evening Grosbeak (1-16) 6 Nov - 29 Dec 2022, east slope of the Guadalupe Mountains, Culberson County

2023-26 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 7 Nov 2022, south of Ozona, Crockett County

2023-27 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 12 Nov 2022, Cherokee, San Saba County

2023-40 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 16-19 Nov 2022, sw. of Lake Abilene, Taylor County

2022-87 - Evening Grosbeak (23) 21 Nov 2022 - 16 Apr 2023, Amarillo, Randall County

2023-41 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 22-23 Nov 2022, Alpine, Brewster County

2023-42 - Evening Grosbeak (2) 7 Dec 2022, Limpia Creek, nw. of Fort Davis, Jeff Davis County

2023-04 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 2 Jan 2023, Marfa, Presidio County

2023-47 - Evening Grosbeak (1-3) 13 Jan - 7 May 2023, Midland, Midland County

2023-07 - Evening Grosbeak (2) 22 Jan - 7 Apr 2023, south of Lorenzo, Crosby County

2023-46 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 25-27 Feb 2023, Shafter, Presidio County

2023-52 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 5-6 Mar 2023, Graham, Young County

2023-48 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 1 Apr 2023, Davis Mountains SP, Jeff Davis County

2023-49 - Evening Grosbeak (1) 2-13 Apr 2023, Limpia Creek, nw. of Fort Davis, Jeff Davis County

2022-74 - Red-legged Honeycreeper (1) 16-27 Oct 2022, Sabine Woods, Jefferson County Not Accepted (3):

2021-90 - Sooty/Short-tailed Shearwater (1) 19 Aug 2021, 4 miles southeast of San Jose Is., Aransas County

2022-27 - Sooty/Short-tailed Shearwater (1) 12 Feb 2022, surf near High Island, Galveston County

2022-84 - (Slate-colored) Fox Sparrow (1-2) 28 Oct 2022, Davis Mts SP, Jeff Davis County

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

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

simply reflects the opinion of the TBRC that the documentation, as submitted, did not meet the rigorous standards appropriate for adding data to the formal historical record.

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

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

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



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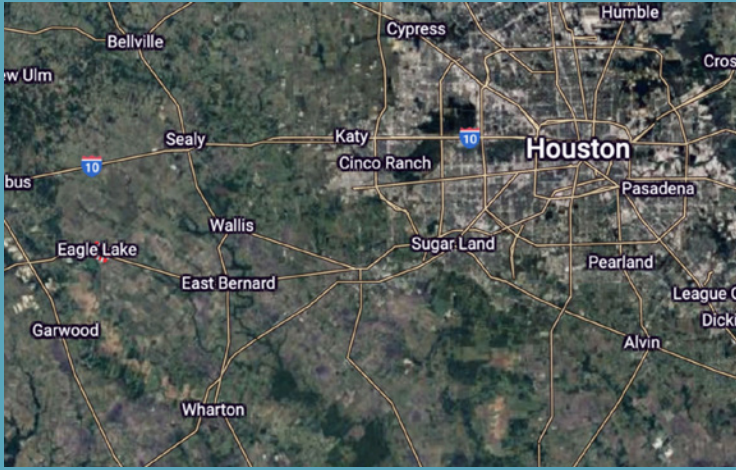
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TANAGER MYSTIFIES BIRDERS

On June 24, 2023 Becky Dehmer Marsalia photographed what turned out to be a Blue-gray Tanager in a backyard crepe myrtle near

Eagle Lake (se. Colorado County). Eagle Lake is 66 miles (106 km) west of Houston



Eagle Lake where tanager was photographed.



Blue-gray Tanager photographed by Becky Dehmer Marsalia on June 24th.

The issue before the *Texas Birds Record Committee* would likely be what is the origin (provenance) of the bird? A vagrant? An escapee from captivity? Let's explore both possibilities. Is the tanager held by bird keepers? Searching the web we discovered that Lee's Exotics, among others, is a well know seller of softbills and offers Blue-gray Tanager on their webpage (www.leesexoticbirds.com).



Blue-gray Tanager from Lee's Exotics

Being available as a cagebird we have to consider that there are 13 races of Blue-gray Tanagers so determining the race of the Texas bird may provide a clue as to its providence. Birds imported to the United States come from one of a few South American countries

that still allow their native birds to be exported. Often this is Peru. A vagrant, of course, would be of the Mexican race. Except for the races that contain some white most appear remarkably similar in appearance (see photo of plate below).



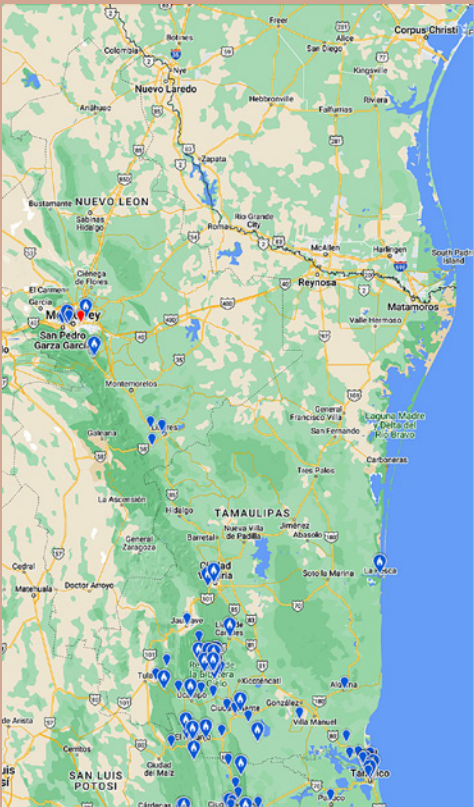
Various races (13 in total) of Blue-gray tanager. From *Handbook of the Birds of the World* vol 16 Tanagers to New World Blackbirds. Lynx Edicions; 1st edition (November 1, 2011)

If the bird was a captive specimen that escaped determining the race would be important. This is being investigated with assistance from the LSU Museum of Natural History personnel.

Could the tanager be a vagrant?

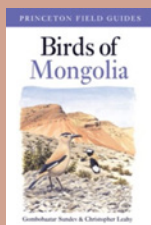
Assuming it is of the Mexican (cana) race the nearest naturally occurring populations (according to ebird) of Blue-gray Tanagers appear to be near Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Monterrey is 141 miles or 227 kilometers from Laredo, Texas. While not known for being long distance migrants even adding the additional miles to Houston is not a difficult task for a passerine.

Depending on the possible determination of the race it seems possible that the tanager could be either a vagrant or an escapee. Anyone with ideas or additional information on this issue is encouraged to contact a member of the Texas Bird Records Committee. Contact information can be found at <https://www.texasbirdrecordscommittee.org>



Observations on Blue-gray Tanagers on ebird.

A TEXAS BIRDER IN MONGOLIA



By Sheridan Coffrey *Photos by author*

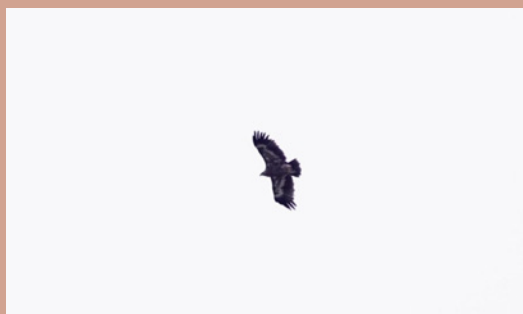
When I was a young kid, I would spend hours looking at the large world map on the wall of my older brothers' room. I was captivated by the idea of traveling to exotic destinations like Borneo, Brazil, India and any place in Africa. But one place in particular grabbed me, the country labeled as Outer Mongolia on this old map. I looked at pictures of the Gobi Desert, Bactrian Camels, yurts, and true wild horses in books. Unfortunately, it seemed totally impossible. Mongolia was communist at the time, and so far away. How would I ever get there?

It is no surprise with my wanderlust starting at such a young age that I ended up in the travel industry. I work in the corporate end of the business, but still get some travel opportunities. This past January I got an email from Travel All Mongolia, a tour company that does high-end travel, offering group trips at a very heavily discounted rate to travel professionals. It was eleven days of almost constant driving, seeing Ulaanbaatar (the capital), Hustai National Park, and south to the Gobi, stopping at various places along the way. Here was my chance. It wasn't a birding trip, but I figured I would see at least a few birds.

Mongolia has the lowest population density of any country in the world. Outside of the capital, Ulaanbaatar, I have never been anywhere that felt as remote. It can be a bit unnerving to go outside in the morning and hear absolutely nothing, other than your own breathing. Many places we visited reminded me of Texas. I thought several times as we drove through grasslands and desert that Texas probably looked like that a couple of hundred years ago. Our tour covered the central part of the country from the steppes in the north to the massive sand dunes in the Gobi Desert.

As I said, this was not a birding trip, but almost all the spots we visited had birds, even in Ulaanbaatar, where large flocks of Common and Alpine Swifts continuously whirled around the office buildings and high-rise hotels. Everywhere we drove outside of the city there were raptors. Black Kites and Cinereous Vultures were most common. We saw Sakar Falcons, Upland Buzzards, and Golden Eagles from the car. A gorgeous Steppe Eagle soared over the hills at Hustai National Park, as well as Himalayan Griffons. As we drove through the grasslands it wasn't surprising that there were so many, as the ground in places was crawling with different rodents, including wild gerbils. Our guide told us that herders would put up posts for the raptors to help them hunt all the rodents.

Steppe Eagle



West of Ulaanbaatar was Hustai National Park. This is main site for the reintroduction of Przewalski's Horse, the last truly wild horse, which became extinct in the wild in the mid 20th century. Luckily, zoos around the world had some of these small dun-colored horses and the breeding program has been very successful. This was also where I saw my first Demoiselle Cranes. The ger camp (better known as yurts in the United States) we stayed in had many Red-billed Choughs, a type of corvid. I was grateful to be able to purchase a Mongolian field guide at the gift shop, as I left mine on the plane while connecting in Istanbul. Unfortunately, it was not nearly as good as the one I lost, but it helped.

Przewalski's Horse



After we left the park we passed a small lake with Bar-headed Geese, Whooper Swans, and a few shore birds. There were Herring (Mongolian) and Black-headed Gulls, despite it being a very long way to the sea. Ruddy Shelducks provided a nice splash of color. These were by far the most common ducks, being found almost anywhere there was even a puddle of water.

Passerine birding was very challenging. Old world warblers are notoriously dull-colored birds. I was hoping since it was June they would be singing. Wrong. They were all dead silent and skulky little so-and-sos. We stayed in a ger camp on the banks of the Ongi River. I had a good bit of the afternoon and next morning to explore. I was able to figure out a few, warblers including an unfortunate Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler I saw being taken by a Japanese Sparrowhawk

Ruddy Shelducks



Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler I saw being taken by a Japanese Sparrowhawk



Yellow-breasted Bunting



I was thrilled to see a critically endangered, Yellow-breasted Bunting. An Isabelline Shrike

was making a good living off the smaller songbirds.

Isabelline Shrike



We spent over half of our time in the Gobi desert. We drove miles and miles through flat gravelly desert with sparse green vegetation that looked like very short grass.

Gobi Desert with chives



It was actually chives. There are herds of sheep, goats, horses, and camels that eke out their existence on these chives. All the livestock was free-ranging, kept by nomad herders, who were getting ready to go to their summer pastures. Flocks of Daurian Partridges and Pallas's Sandgrouse flushed off the dirt roads as we drove. Once a plover chick, on its own, ran in front of the car. It was most likely one of the sand plovers, though I badly wanted it to be an Oriental Plover.

There are some very interesting places to visit in the Gobi. We stopped at the Flaming Cliffs, where the first dinosaur eggs were found in the 1920s, as well as Protoceratops and Velociraptors. The Khongoryn Els, also called the singing sand dunes, was stunning, with one dune rising almost 1,000 feet. We rode Bactrian camels from a nomad family's camp to the dunes.

Flaming Cliffs



We spent a morning in the Yol Valley, one of the best places to see Lammergeiers, which soar over a steep gorge that still had a frozen river in mid-June. White-winged Snowfinches were thick there. A herd of yaks entertained us on the way out of the valley, particularly a young calf, frolicking through the herd.

White-winged Snowfinch



I loved Mongolia and would go back in a heartbeat. The people I traveled with all thought I was crazy since I was so obsessed with birds, but in the end, they were pointing them out to me. Our guide knew a bit which helped. We spent a lot of time visiting museums, Buddhist temples, and ruins. I still ended up seeing 73 species of birds, 23 of which were life birds. I identified 11 species of mammals, including two gazelles, a Corsac fox, Argali Sheep, and an Asiatic Wild Ass. (If you want to get some priceless reactions try yelling out WILD ASS in a car full of non-birders.) The gers we stayed in were beautiful, though the beds were, shall we say, firm. The food was excellent at all the camps. The Mongolian people were the friendliest I have ever met. We were invited into their gers, given snacks, tea, and goat milk yogurt.

Inside our Mongolian Ger

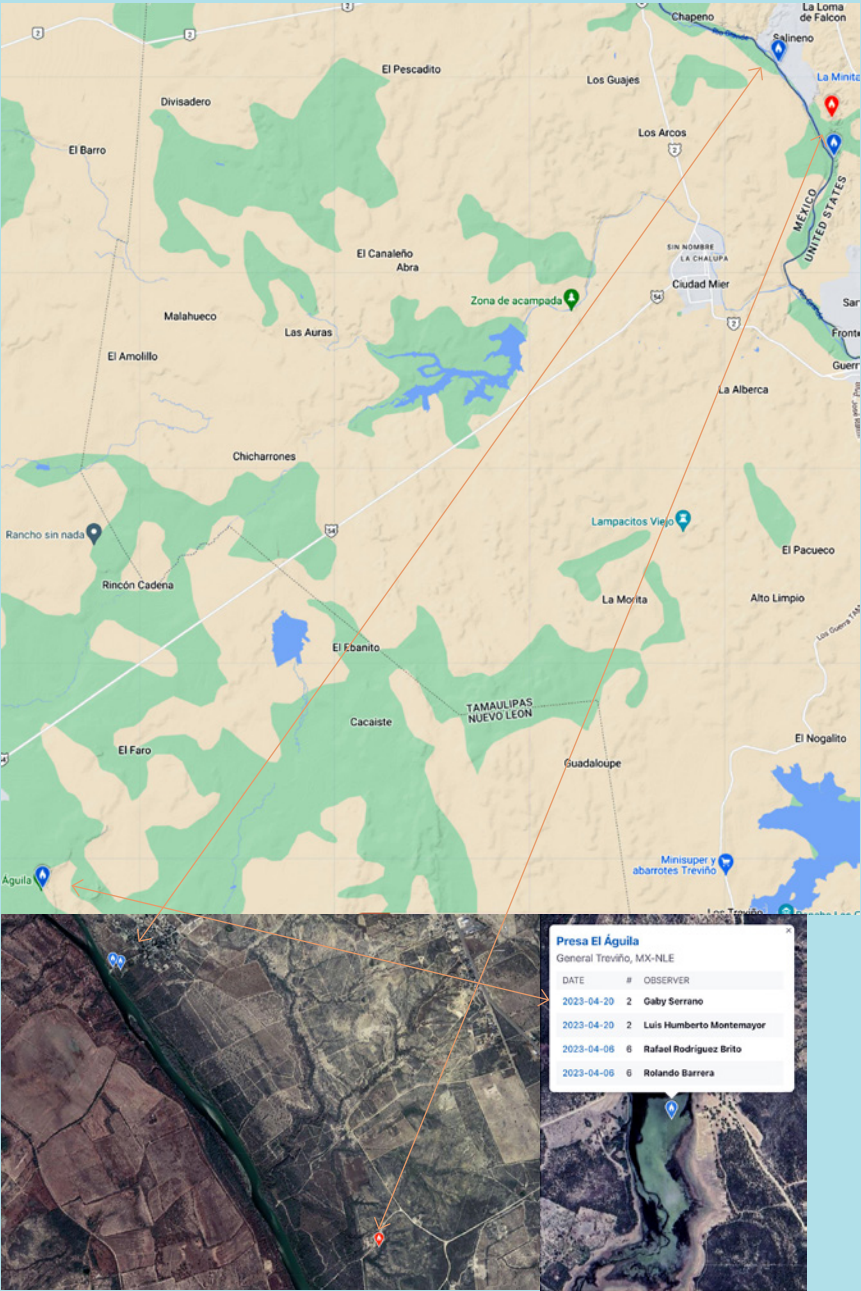


Mongolia still is not an easy place to get to. I flew Turkish Air, which allowed me a stayover in Istanbul. The first flight was 13 hours, the second was eight. Going the opposite direction through Seoul Korea is a bit shorter, but the fare was better on Turkish Airlines, and I loved Istanbul. I arrived June 1 and the weather was beautiful. If you go later in summer, you could have the opportunity to attend a Naadam festival, a spectacle that includes the Mongolian sports of wrestling, archery, and horse racing. I would

strongly advise not visiting in winter, as it is brutal. Ulaanbaatar is the coldest national capital in the world, with temperatures far below zero. Several birding companies offer tours, which cover even more territory using internal flights and would give the opportunity to see a lot more species of both birds and mammals, including Pallas's Cat and Snow Leopard. I would highly recommend visiting Mongolia. It more than lived up to my childhood dreams.

Camel Herder





BROWN JAYS RETURN TO SALINEÑO AND SANTA MARGARITA RANCH

By Carlos M. Escamilla

The Brown Jay (*Psilorhynchus morio*) is a common and vocal resident of Central America

occurring from the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas south to northwestern Panama. Brown Jays are relatively large, and

predominately are dark brown with a pale buff brown or pale white vent and belly. Two color morphs, plain-tailed and white-tipped, primarily differ in color of retrices: plain-tailed morphs possess an entirely brown tail while white-tipped morphs possess white tips on outer retrices. This corvid prefers lowland disturbed forest and edge habitat, generally avoiding forest interior. As a result, many populations are increasing due to deforestation, which increases open area and edge habitat. These Jays are extremely aggressive and have been observed fending off and even attacking large predators. They travel in small flocks that consist of one or two breeding pairs, as well as nonbreeding immatures. Brown Jays are highly social and cooperative breeders. The ‘helper birds’ are key to the

reproductive success of the group, increasing the survival of juveniles, and reducing the likelihood of predation. Unique among corvids, Brown Jays possess a bare skin furcular pouch, which is normally hidden by breast and throat feathers but becomes visible when inflated with air during vocalizations. The first Brown Jay specimen in the United States was collected in 1987 in southern Texas and suggests Brown Jays previously bred in more northern latitudes in Texas. Recent sightings in Texas include a one-day record from Salineno in mid-December 2022 . There have been regular sightings there and at Santa Margarita since early March 2023. Prior to that the last record we had two birds at Salineno/Chapeno from Dec 2011 to April 2012. So...they had been MIA for over 10 years!

2023 SIGHTINGS

Visited the Santa Margarita Ranch in Starr county on 1 March 2023 to photograph Brown Jays on a tour led by Tiffany Kersten

and Ryan Rodriguez. The birds made their presence and allowed for some photos. Enjoy.



ADDITIONAL 2023 PHOTOS



Photos Gary Graves

RECENT SIGHTING
COMMENTARY.....

I spent a full hour birding the trail between the parking lot and the island overlook (08:30-09:30; 12 Dec 2022) and then spent another half hour watching the feeders and talking with the volunteers east of the entrance road. When I returned to my car at the riverside parking lot (10:00), I was more than surprised to hear a long series of unmistakable Brown Jay calls coming from upriver (in the direction of the island overlook). I grabbed my camera and intercepted a flock of 5 jays about 100 m up the trail. I got good looks at the bills of three birds---all immatures with varying amounts of yellow at gape and/or base of bill. I followed them for several minutes until they moved out of range to the west on the arroyo (adjacent to the island overlook). They were definitely not in the area from 08:30 to 09:30. I lingered in the area for another hour with the hope of getting better photos but they never reappeared. I suspect this was a wandering family group travel-

ing along the north bank of the river toward Falcon Dam.

Gary Graves

BROWN JAYS AND ACCESSING SANTA MARGARITA RANCH

Tiffany Kersten, Ryan Rodriguez, and Chris Borg birded Santa Margarita Ranch, Starr County, TX on March 3rd, 2023 finding four **BROWN JAYS**, including two adults and two second year birds. The location is at the end of a 1.5 mile hike down a bluff trail that is rough enough in parts to make the area inaccessible to some. The birds have been seen on almost every subsequent visit to the location since that date, through at least June 2023. **After being quite reliable from March through June, a few visits in July did not include any Brown Jay sightings.**

This ranch is private property and therefore RESTRICTED ACCESS. The owners are only permitting groups that enter and stay together for the duration of the trip with a guide who knows the property. All birders will need to meet their guide at the entrance

gate at a pre-determined time and walk in together.

The admission rates are as follows:

\$40 per person walk-in; \$50 per person with access via ATV (limited dates). Please note that beginning sometime in August, the property will be located south of the border wall, and the gate will be opened for you, and then closed, and then re-opened prior to leaving the site.

Please bring exact change if at all possible.

Please note once again, the rough terrain mentioned above in your consideration of

whether to join in the search for these birds. The hike up and out can be tough, especially with the afternoon heat. Bring plenty of water. Other considerations: There are no restrooms, benches, water, etc. Come prepared.

If you would like to book a tour to Santa Margarita Ranch, email me and I'll send the info to all of the other local guides (I am currently unavailable for the summer and early fall), and whoever is available will be in touch with you with more information, including their guiding fees.

Tiffany Kersten
E-mail: tiffanykersten@gmail.com)

Previous sightings on Facebook....

BROWN JAYS AT SALINEÑO IN JAN 2007



I was blessed to see the Brown Jays there near the Rio Grande River in 2007 when I was first beginning to try to photograph birds! Since then I had heard that they hadn't been seen for a while, so I was glad to see a post this week from someone who had seen them there. Here are some photos that I took then. The ones with the yellow bills and yel-

low eye rings are immature Brown Jays. The dark bird with the dark bill is a mature one (Males and females look alike with the female being smaller.) So, I think that the one with the two-toned bill and dark eye ring must be approaching adulthood?

Florence Haupt King

BROWN JAY OBSERVATION IN 2011



This was the only Brown Jay that I saw that day Dec, 14, 2011. The hosts at Salineno Birding Station said that over the years -

maybe 12 of these birds had come in from Mexico. I was very lucky to be in the right place at the right time.

2022 TBRC ANNUAL MEETING

By Eric Carpenter

The 2022 Annual Meeting of the Texas Bird Records Committee (hereafter committee or TBRC) was held at 11:00 AM on 17 September 2022. Carpenter hosted the meeting at his house in Dripping Springs with Cook, Frank and Glover showing up in person; all other members were able to attend online via video conference (Zoom).

Members/Attendees:

- Tony Frank, Chair
- Eric Carpenter, Secretary
- Keith Arnold, Academician
- Sheridan Coffey
- Greg Cook
- Mel Cooksey
- Steve Glover
- Mary Gustafson
- Arman Moreno
- Chris Runk
- Willie Sekula

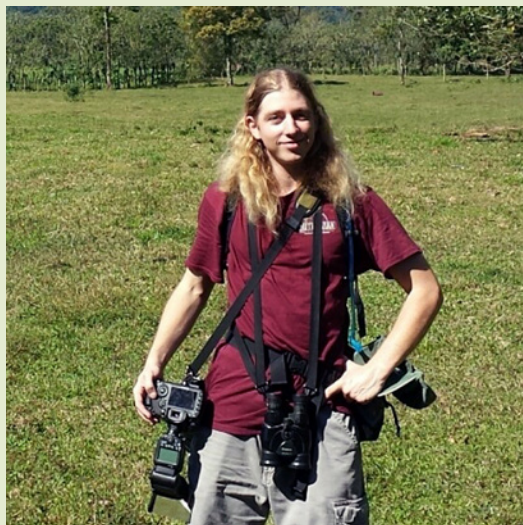
The meeting was convened at 11:06 AM.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS

Carpenter and Arnold were the only nominees respectively for the Secretary and Academician positions. Both were unanimously (re) elected to their respective position.

Cooksey had his first term expire at the meeting and was elected to serve a second term.

Runk had his second term expire at the Annual Meeting so there was 1 open Voting Member position. There were 3 nominees - Blaine Carnes (nominated by Runk), Jesse Huth (nominated by Gustafson), and John Muldrow (nominated by Sekula). The background/merits of each candidate were discussed with Huth being elected to the sole open position.



Jesse Huth newly elected member of the TBRC.

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

- Tony Frank, Chair – term expires in 2023, can be re-elected
- Eric Carpenter, Secretary (not a Voting Member) – term expires in 2023, can be re-elected
- Keith Arnold, Academician (not a Voting Member) – term is as listed for Secretary, can be re-elected
- Jesse Huth – 1st term expires in 2025, can be re-elected
- Steve Glover – 1st term expires in 2024, can be re-elected
- Arman Moreno – 1st term expires in 2024, can be re-elected
- Sheridan Coffey – 1st term expires in 2023, can be re-elected
- Greg Cook – 1st term expires in 2023, can be re-elected
- Mel Cooksey – 2nd term expires in 2025
- Mary Gustafson – 2nd term expires in 2024
- Willie Sekula – 2nd term expires in 2024

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

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

FOURTH ROUND RECORDS

Five fourth-round records were discussed and voted on:

- 2021-90 - Sooty Shearwater (1) 19 Aug 2021, 4 miles southeast of San Jose Is., Aransas County

NOT ACCEPTED, 1-8

Follow up: All members felt like this record would be better dealt with as a “Sooty/Short-tailed Shearwater” and an oral first-round vote was undertaken which went 7-2. This record will now be dealt with as “Sooty/Short-tailed Shearwater” for a second round of voting as part of the normal voting process.

- 2021-75 - Leach’s Storm-Petrel (1) 27 Jun 2021, 18 miles southeast of San Jose Is., Aransas County

NOT ACCEPTED, 6-3

- 2022-15 - Ruddy Ground Dove (2) 29 May 2021, El Paso, El Paso County
- NOT ACCEPTED, 5-4
- 2021-102 - Limpkin (1) 1 Oct 2021, North Padre Is., Kleberg County
- NOT ACCEPTED, 0-9
- 2021-68 - Rose-throated Becard (1) 11 Apr 2021, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, Hidalgo County

NOT ACCEPTED, 0-9



Limpkin photo. Nan Perkins/Facebook/texbirds

REMOVAL OF LIMPKIN FROM THE REVIEW LIST (CARPENTER)

Carpenter led the discussion to remove Limpkin from the review list. The first state record of Limpkin came only on May 6th, 2021 (at Brazos Bend where birds are still present) and there are already 10 ACCEPTED records as well as 19 additional records with identifiable photographs currently in review. Limpkins seem to be regular breeders at two locations (Brazos Bend State Park, Fort Bend County and Sheldon Reservoir, Harris County) and birds found at other Upper Texas Coast locations are perhaps dispersing birds from these areas. Sheldon Reservoir has at least 23 birds; Brazos Bend’s high count is 8 though perhaps a thorough census would reveal more. The species is expanding in Texas – several sightings in disparate locations including several in the Dallas/Fort Worth area and one as far north/west as the Panhandle. With this species seemingly here to stay, the TBRC voted unanimously to remove Limpkin from the review list.

ACCEPTANCE OF OUTSTANDING LIMPKIN RECORDS (CARPENTER)

Carpenter had prepared online folders/records of the currently outstanding 19 Limpkin records that are each supported by at least one photograph. With the TBRC Members having reviewed these records before hand and in conjunction with Limpkin being removed from the Review List, the TBRC agreed by acclamation to accept all 19 records.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSIONS

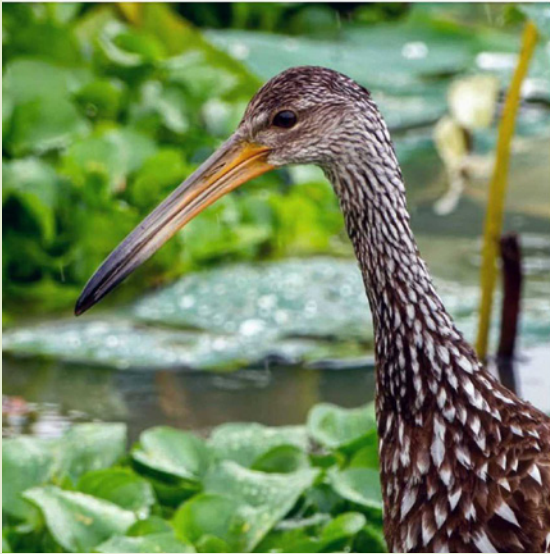
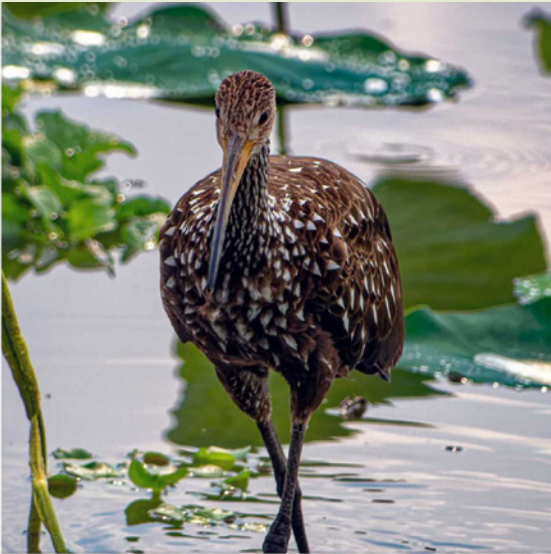
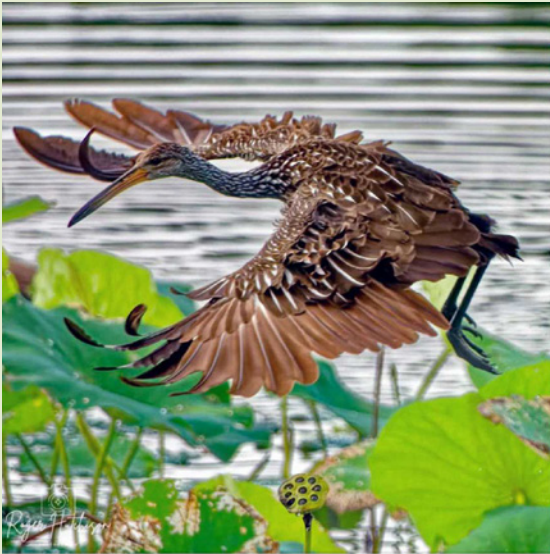
Gustafson mentioned that she has been thinking about finding ways to get younger birders involved with the TBRC/record submission/record review process. One such method would be an online (eg. zoom call) meeting where selected records (already reviewed by the TBRC) could be used as examples to show birders interested in documentation/review the types/levels of docu-

mentation that are desired on some records as well as what level of review/decisioning is done by TBRC members based on this documentation. Other members thought that this was a great idea worth pursuing so Gustafson will take the lead on this.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other formal business on the agenda and no additional Any Other Business items raised, the meeting was adjourned at 12:05PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Limpkin photos by Roger Hutchinson/Facebook/Texbirds

FIRST STATE RECORD SMOOTH-BILLED ANI

By Sheridan Chattin Coffey

A first state record Smooth-billed Ani along with a Groove-billed Ani have been present for

at least the past two days at the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center.



Photo DanHun Jones

I do not even know where to begin with explaining our day. A few days ago I saw an eBird report of Groove-billed Anis on South Padre Island at the birding center. Anis are a type of cuckoo for those who are not birders, who I assume have already quit reading this post. There are two species found in the United States, Groove-billed, which is found in south Texas, more commonly in summer, and Smooth-billed which is found in south Florida, though pretty rare even there. To make a long story short, one of the two anis on South Padre Island was actually a Smooth-billed, a first for Texas. It was hanging out with a Grooved-billed.

We have seen numerous Smooth-billed in Central and South America, but never in the United States. We tried when we were in Florida several years ago, but couldn't find one. Yesterday we talked about going down to see it, but the weather was supposed to be

horrific, with literally gale force winds and much colder temperatures. We decided to not go today, thinking it would probably move south with the front. We talked about maybe going down Sunday. It is a five hour drive, so we can do it in a day.

So this morning the bird was seen again. We decided to jump in the car and go. We grabbed an extra pair of undies in case we needed to spend the night. We left home at 10AM and got to the birding center just before 3PM. We heard the bird was seen several times, but it was still nerve-wracking. We got there and paid our admission fee and did a LONG walk on the boardwalk to the area where they had been. There was a group of about 30 people there looking through binoculars, a very good sign. We walked up and there were the birds, sitting out in the open! We were incredibly lucky. Just a few

minutes later they flew down into the reeds and grasses and were much harder to see.

We were thrilled to say the least, and because the Rio Grande bird festival is going on we got to see a number of people we haven't seen in ages. We discussed staying the night, but decided we would just go home. We made a stop at the festival trade show and saw

a few more friends, which was great! I think of myself as being anti-social sometimes, but I really enjoyed seeing people. We got home right before 10PM, almost exactly 12 hours from when we left.

Sheridan Chattin Coffey
E-mail: sngcanary@yahoo.com



Smooth-billed Ani, a Texas first, on the left. A Groove-billed Ani on the right. South Padre Island.



Collage by Mike Twilly/Facebook/Texbirds

US PROPOSES REMOVING WOOD STORK FROM ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST



FILE - A wood stork calls out from treetop on Oct. 29, 2019, near Fort Myers, Fla. The ungainly yet graceful wood stork, which was on the brink of extinction in 1984, has recovered sufficiently in Florida and other Southern states that U.S. wildlife officials on Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023, proposed removing the wading bird from the endangered species list. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty, File) (ASSOCIATED PRESS)

By CURT ANDERSON

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP)—The ungainly yet graceful wood stork, which was on the brink of extinction in 1984, has recovered sufficiently in Florida and other Southern states that U.S. wildlife officials on Tuesday proposed removing the wading bird from the endangered species list.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said in a news release that restoration of the wood stork's habitat, especially in the Florida Everglades and adjacent Big Cypress National Preserve, led to a sharp increase in breeding pairs. Those numbers had shrunk to just 5,000 pairs in 1984, whereas there are more than 10,000 pairs today.

"This iconic species has rebounded because dedicated partners in the southeast have worked tirelessly to restore ecosystems, such as the Everglades, that support it," said Shannon Estenoz, assistant Interior secretary for fish, wildlife and parks.

In addition, the wood stork has increased its range in coastal areas of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and the Carolinas, officials said. The birds have adapted to new nesting areas in those states, tripling the number of colonies across their range from 29 to 99 in recent years.

Credit goes mainly to the wildlife protections provided by the Endangered Species Act, which marks its 50th anniversary this year, said Stephanie Kurose, a senior policy specialist at environmental group the Center for Biological Diversity. The act can impose restrictions on a variety of activities in areas where such species are located, such as development, mining and oil drilling.

"The act saved the wood stork and it helped preserve and rebuild vital habitats throughout the southeast, which has improved water quality and benefited countless other species who call the area home," Kurose said by email.

Wood storks have a distinctive scaly, featherless gray head and a bright white feathered body with long skinny legs. They are fairly large, standing up to four feet (1.2 meters) tall and with a wingspan of up to 5 feet (1.5 meters). The nesting pairs lay three to five eggs per year, although the eggs are frequently targeted by predators such as raccoons and other birds.

Their bald heads give wood storks an almost prehistoric appearance, leading to nicknames such as “stonehead” and “flinthead.” Wood storks feed in shallow waters on fish, insects, frogs and crabs depending on whether it’s wet or dry season. They are the only stork native to North America.

In Florida, federal and state governments are spending tens of billions of dollars for ongoing projects to restore natural water flows in the Everglades and Big Cypress and reduce harmful nutrients from fertilizer runoff and other sources that promote unhealthy plant growth.

The Endangered Species Act has saved 99% of the species that have been on the

list since 1973, with 100 types of plants and animals delisted because they have recovered or are at least stable, according to the Interior Department.

“The proposed delisting of the wood stork is a significant milestone and a testament to the hard work by federal agencies, state and local governments, tribes, conservation organizations, and private citizens in protecting and restoring our most at-risk species,” Interior Secretary Deb Haaland said.

The Fish and Wildlife Service will take comments on the proposal through April 17 from other government agencies, scientists, environmental groups and anyone else interested in the welfare of the wood stork. After that, the service will publish a final decision on whether to remove the bird from the endangered species list.

If the wood stork is delisted, officials said it would remain protected by other laws including the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Clean Water Act. A monitoring plan would be put in place for at least five years to ensure the stork population remains stable.

SPECIES LUMP FOR THE WESTERN FLYCATCHER AND SPECIES STATUS FOR THE GOSHAWK OF NORTH AMERICA AMONG 2023 CHECK-LIST CHANGES

The 64th Supplement to the American Ornithological Society's (AOS) *Check-list of North American Birds*, was published on 1866 in Ornithology, includes numerous updates to the classification of North American bird species.

A few highlights from this year's supplement, detailed below, include a species lump for the Western Flycatcher, species status for the goshawk of North America, and species splits in several Caribbean birds leading to five additional species.

The *Check-list*, published since 1886, is updated annually by the AOS's North American Classification Committee (NACC), the official authority on the names and classification of the region's birds, and is consulted by birders and professional ornithologists alike.

The full *Check-list* supplement is available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ornithology/ukad023>. (Please note: This link has been updated.)

SPECIES LUMPS AND SPLITS

(Re)lumping of Cordilleran Flycatcher and Pacific-slope Flycatcher as Western Flycatcher

In 1989, the Western Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*) was split into the Pacific-slope Flycatcher (*E. difficilis*) and the Cordilleran Flycatcher (*E. occidentalis*), based mainly on research that identified differences in vocalizations and allozyme frequencies, differences maintained across a small contact zone in California. "These flycatchers are subsocial birds, so vocalizations are extremely important in determining species limits," NACC chair R. Terry Chesser of the U.S. Geological Survey explains. Researchers W. Alexander Hopping, Ethan Linck, and others recently studied a separate contact zone in a large region of the northern Rockies, which was not known when the previous research led to the species split.

This region includes parts of the U.S. states of Washington, Idaho, and Montana, as well as the Canadian provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. Hopping and Linck (in **Proposal 2023-D-7**) noted that the morphology, vocalizations, and genetics of the Cordilleran Flycatcher and Pacific-slope Flycatcher are not consistently distinguishable in this broad region. "According to the proposal, bird record committees in this area list only a single default species rather than expecting people to identify individual birds as Cordilleran or Pacific-slope," Chesser says. Thus, although the lump will result in the loss of a species for North America, bird identification should be more straightforward for regional checklists.

SPECIES SPLIT FOR NORTHERN GOSHAWK

The Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) is being split into two species. A proposal (**Proposal 2023-B-11**) from NACC member Shawn M. Billerman of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology highlights key vocal and genetic differences between what had been treated as two subspecies groups within Northern Goshawk, the Palearctic *gentilis* and Nearctic *atricapillus* groups. Because the newly recognized Eurasian Goshawk (*A. gentilis*) has occasionally been recorded from North America, a few lucky bird enthusiasts might be able to include both Eurasian Goshawk and American Goshawk (*A. atricapillus*) on their North American lists. "This is an interesting split not only because both species are known from North America, one as a resident and the other as an accidental, but because two different subspecies of the Eurasian Goshawk are known from North America," Chesser says. "Two individuals of the Asian subspecies *albidus* have turned up in Alaska, and there's an old specimen of the European subspecies *gentilis* from Labrador."

LAREDO 11TH BIRDS OF THE BRUSH A SUCCESS!

On 2 February 2023 , we welcomed hundreds of local and out-of-town artists, instructors, and their families to the 11th Birds of the Brush Award Ceremony and Exhibit. We recognized over 30 talented artists and photographers of all ages and experience levels.

This year, our Best of Show winner won the paid opportunity to paint a 4'x8' mural at the Max Mandel Municipal Golf Course with

a \$500 budget for materials and supplies and a \$500 payment courtesy of Max Mandel Municipal Golf Course and Monte Mucho Audubon Society!!!

HUGE Thank you to *Laredo Center for the Arts* and our prize sponsors *Jett Bowl North*, *Marble Slab*, *Mall del Norte*, and *Cinemark Mall del Norte* for making this possible!

Congratulations to all the winners!!!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2023 WINNERS!

BEST OF SHOW Anastasia Galvan

PHOTOGRAPHY

1st - Alejandro Salazar
2nd - Luis A. Gutierrez
3rd - Cesar Gabriel Gomez
HM - Olmeda Soledad
HM - Debanhile Bisuet

HIGH SCHOOL

1st - Yahir Pena
2nd - Christian Castro
3rd - Anthony Aguirre
HM - Andrea Santiago
HM - Sara Santos

PROFESSIONAL

1st - Sandra Silva
2nd - Clarissa Visarra
3rd - Gerardo Martinez
HM - Katherine Jaimez
HM - Andrea Montalvo

MIDDLE SCHOOL

1st - Sophia Medina
2nd - Vivian Pedraza
3rd - Rene Reyes
HM - Angie Garza
HM - Mitchell Morgan

AMATEUR

1st - Sylvia A. Rodriguez
2nd - Vanessa Castillo
3rd - Patricia Najera
HM - Beache Palazuelos
HM - Edna Romo

ELEMENTARY

1st - Matthew Ramos
2nd - Margarito Flores
3rd - Madeleine Boswell
HM - Mariano Gutierrez
HM - Sabrina Perez

*HM = Honorable Mention



Best of Show



1st Place Highschool Category



1st Place Professional Category



1st Place Amateur Category



1st Place Photography



1st Place Middle School Category

It's a wrap! We're happy to announce Anastasia Galvan has completed her mural on the winning piece from *The Birds of the Brush* art contest!

Earlier this year, Anastasia won the Best of Show award showcasing the male Eastern Bluebird, a migratory species found in Laredo during the winter months. This year, the winner received the paid opportunity to create a small mural courtesy of Max A Mandel Municipal Golf Course and Monte Mucho Audubon Society!

You can visit her beautiful creation at the Max Mandel Municipal Golf Course located on 27700 FM 1472.

Thank you to Anastasia for accepting this award and participating in the Birds of the Brush art contest and to the folks at @themaxgolf and @montemuchoaudubon for

creating opportunities for talented artists like Anastasia to share their gift with the world.

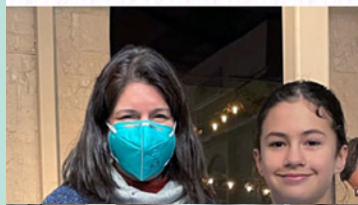
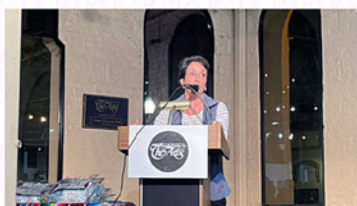


BIRDS OF THE BRUSH 2021



2022 BEST OF SHOW WINNER

By Anastasia Galvan





ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CLASSIC

By Martha McLeod

Youth birdwatching team 4 of 8 competed today in the Great Texas Birding Classic.

This was my last team of elementary students to compete. My other 4 teams have middle school and high school aged students. This team was sponsored by the Texas Ornithological Society for their entry fees and they chose the name “TOS Biggest and Boldest Bluebirds, Blackbirds, and Buntings”.

With a north wind slowing the migrating birds' northward movements today, this allowed the kids to find over 100 species of birds! 🤔 wow! These 4 boys were focused

and determined and worked hard together to get over 100 species. I believe they ended at 109 total species!

We started at Linda Castro Nature Sanctuary and found Painted Buntings, Indigo Buntings, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Baltimore Orioles. In Lamar we got both Black-crowned Night-Herons and Yellow-crowned Night Herons. Port Aransas was loaded with many species of warblers and vireos. We ended our day at Blucher Park with a Chuck-will's-widow, kingbirds, thrashers, and a Yellow-breasted Chat. A celebration with ice cream was definitely deserved again.





2023 Awards Ceremony brought to you by Audubon Texas and TPWD

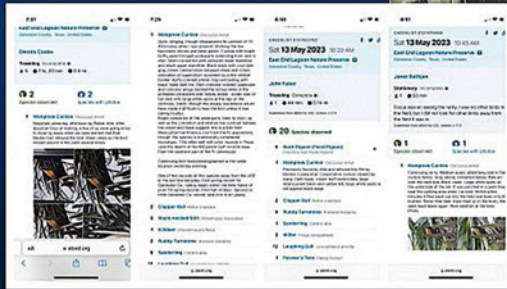


27th Annual Birding Classic

- What a success:
 - **202 teams** registered!
 - **1,100 participants** statewide!
 - **79 Big Sit teams**, including 20 Heart of Texas East and 15 Upper Texas Coast
 - **41 Adult Regional Big Day teams**
 - A record **31 Sunrise to Noon teams**
 - A record **28 youth teams** – topping our record of 27 from 2003!

27th Annual Birding Classic

- **Mangrove Cuckoo** spotted by a GTBC team – first time seen in Galveston in over 40 years



27th Annual Birding Classic

- Also had some misses: Montezuma Quail, Attwater's Prairie Chicken, Yellow-green Vireo, and Lucy's Warbler
- One last thing: Per the rules, judges cannot accept:
 - hybrids (e.g., Tufted Titmouse x Black-crested Titmouse)
 - domesticated individuals (e.g., Muscovy Duck)
 - species not on our state's official bird list per the TBRC (e.g., Egyptian Goose)

27th Annual Birding Classic

- The real winners: Conservation Projects!
 - \$47,000 in Conservation Grants this year
 - \$1,163,000 conservation grants donated over the past 27 years!!



Make Me Smile Award

- The Cuckoo Cachoos
- Owners of a Lonely Lark
- Wine-oculars
- Inglorious Bustards
- Beasts of Bird'n
- Bird to your mother
- Alice in Birderland
- Fellowship of the Wing
- No Kolaches for Old Crows



Beep-Beep!

- **July 2022:** launched the brand new **Greater Roadrunner Conservation License Plate!**
- Funds raised will **benefit nature tourism** programs like the Birding Classic!
- Two \$1,000 grants made possible this year!



Most Valuable Birder

8 Teams!

Martha
McLeod



Most Valuable Birder 11 Teams!

Clay Taylor



Roughwings – Central Coast

- 3rd Place: 87 species
- **TOS Novice**
Nighthawks, Texas
Ornithological Society
- 2nd Place: 89 species
- **Griffith & Brundrett**
Chaotic Kiskadees,
Griffith & Brundrett



Roughwings – Central Coast

- 1st Place: 110 species
- **TOS Biggest & Boldest Bluebirds, Blackbirds, & Buntings, Texas Ornithological Society**



Roughwings – Lower Coast

- 3rd Place: 38 species
- **TOS Black and White Warblers, Texas Ornithological Society**
- 2nd Place: 52 species
- **TOS Outgoing Orioles, Texas Ornithological Society**
- 1st Place: 88 species
- **The TOS Shorebirdies, Texas Ornithological Society**



Roughwings – Upper Coast

- 3rd Place: 10 species
- **Fly By**
- 2nd Place: 23 species
- **TOS Junior Hawks**, Texas Ornithological Society
- 1st Place: 78 species
- **TOS Happy Hawks**, Texas Ornithological Society



Gliders – Far West Texas

- 1st Place: 23 species
- **TOS City Flickers**, Texas Ornithological Society



Gliders – Heart of Texas East

- 3rd Place: 17 species
- **TOS Cuckoos and Allies**, Texas Ornithological Society
- 2nd Place: 22 species
- **TOS Hawks and Allies**, Texas Ornithological Society
- 1st Place: 56 species
- **Kettle of Cousins**

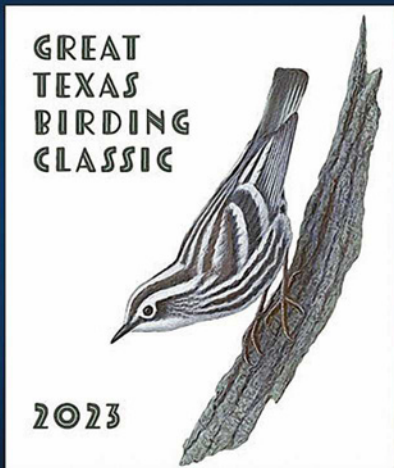


Human-Powered Tournament

- 3rd Place: 77 species
- **Roseate Sustainabills**
- 2nd Place: 91 species
- **TOS Biking Buntings**, Texas Ornithological Society
- 1st Place: 105 species
- **The Hornsby HERons**



See You Next Year for the 28th Annual Birding Classic!





**A DIGITAL COPY (PDF) OF TEXAS BIRDS ANNUAL IS AVAILABLE BY
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BIRDING COMMUNITY MOURNS THE LOSS OF MARY GUSTAFSON



Photo Teresa Cigarroa



Photo Fred Collins/
Facebook post



"I am very sad this evening to hear of the death of my friend Mary Gustafson. I first met Mary on a South Padre Island Texas Pelagic trip in the early 2000's when she was one of the leaders and I was a very frequent participant. We became better friends when I took over organizing the trips in 2015. She was the best leader I've worked with, very knowledgeable about pelagic birds and with superb identification skills. I valued her opinion very highly and especially appreciated

when she would get on the P/A system and talk about the life history of just about any pelagic bird or marine mammal. She was one of leaders I could most depend on to be on almost every trip I ran even when she wasn't feeling too good in the last couple of years as she battle this dreadful cancer. Mary's last trip with me on a Texas Pelagic was this past June on a 48 hour trip. She had a lot of fortitude to go in her condition and I admired her strength.

Mary was one of my ‘go to’ people to ask for recommendations about who in the Texas birding community would make a good pelagic leader. She had a good eye for young and talented birders. Mary was recognized as one of the best pelagic leaders in North America. She was a leader on trips on the California Coast for Debi Shearwater and the East Coast for Paul Guris. And probably others that I am unaware of. I remember she told me once that a trip organizer publicly announced on a pelagic trip that she was as good a pelagic leader as any man. So that struck me as a little off and I couldn’t tell if she was proud of that or more than a little miffed that a woman leader must strive to be as good as a man? I think it was probably some of both. But I think there are a lot of men leaders that should strive to be as good a pelagic leader as Mary, I certainly do!

The birding community has lost a true leader. Mary truly lived-for-birds. I hope now Mary that you are free to fly like a bird. Bless your soul and rest in peace”.

“Just as Thanksgiving 2014 was the “Thanksgiving of the Red-legged Honeycreeper,” and Thanksgiving 2016 was the “Thanksgiving of the Perching Elaenia,” and Thanksgiving 2020 was the “Thanksgiving of the Elegant Trogon,” Thanksgiving 2022 has unfortunately become the Thanksgiving we lost Mary Gustafson, not only a Birding Giant, not only our area eBird reviewer, not only the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival’s field trip organizer, a great bird guide, and legendary teacher, but also a wonderful friend of Estero from the very beginning. We’ll miss you forever. May you rest in peace.” **Estero Llano Grande State Park**

Garett ‘Gary’ Hodne

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PAST TOS PRESIDENT DIES AFTER SUDDEN ILLNESS

Lily Lore Engles

May 15, 1955 - May 20, 2023



Lily Lore Engles, 68, died after a sudden illness on May 20, 2023, in San Antonio, Texas

Lily was President of TOS from the late 90's to about 2000 when Brent Ortego became President. [The series of presidents during that period was Sue Wiedenfeld, David Dauphin (deceased), Lily Engles, Brent Ortego, Lytle Blankenship (deceased) and Ron Weeks]. Lily was president in 1999 when the 1st issue of Texas Birds (not to be confused Texas Birds Annual) came out. While Shannon Davies, Ro Wauer and Brush Freeman were major drivers of Texas Birds, President Lily Engles provided strong support. Lily was also instrumental in adding an 8.4 acre tract to the original 70 acres of Magic Ridge. She was the primary person dealing with the acquisition. TOS received assistance from Carter Smith who was with TNC at the time handling the purchase negotiations with the Realtor. A number of TOS Board Members used their local contacts to approach

industry and various conservation groups to raise funds for the acquisition of several tracts over the years. Lily was the president when it started and her support was invaluable in its inception. According to Brent Ortego "Lily always stepped up to tasks with energy and desire when asked."

On a personal note I met with Lily, and a few additional individuals in 1999 as part of an Ad Hoc committee on Membership Promotion. We met at her home and discussed numerous possibilities for promoting TOS. She was a gracious host and ambitious President. In addition to membership promotion we often discussed birding in Laredo since I was involved with field studies near Laredo and she was birding the region as time allowed during her frequent visits to the hospital. Having started editing TOS Publications (first the bulletin) in 1997 I have worked with many TOS Presidents. Lily was certainly one of the most productive Presidents.

From the San Antonio Audubon Society "Audubon News" July/August 2023.

"It is with great sadness that we learn of the passing of Lily Engles, MD on May 20, 2023. Lily was a Life member who joined SAAS in 1988. Lily was on the SAAS Board from 1991-1994 and recently became a Director at Large in 2023. Lily recently took on the role of Publicity Director as well as proofreading the SAAS Newsletter. Lily also served as President of TOS. We will miss Lily's leadership, kindness, and compassion."

Texas Ornithological Society

NEWS

Farewell from the Outgoing President

My term as president was over at the end of the spring meeting in Corpus Christi. The last two years seem like a blur. In retrospect, it seems a bit funny to me now how my presidency started. I had only one goal at the beginning, which was to keep a positive balance in the treasury.

Right after the banquet at the end of the spring meeting of 1999, Cecilia Riley, who is executive director of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, asked me if I thought TOS would be interested in acquiring any more wildlife sanctuaries. I replied, "No, I don't think so. We've just now gotten the Sabine Woods debt retired after ten long years." She didn't pursue the topic any further, but later I learned that she was very interested in having Magic Ridge "adopted." A few months later, I was told about "this property close to Port Lavaca" by our outgoing vice president, Brush Freeman. You all know what has happened since then—TOS has adopted Magic Ridge and now owns the lion's share of the desired area. I am proud to have been part of this tremendous accomplishment.

We have also seen our membership almost double, which is deeply gratifying to me. I attribute much of the growth to this magazine. *Texas Birds* was a Brush Freeman dream, which has been realized beautifully and artfully by editor Shannon Davies and the editorial board.

The field trips (another Brush Freeman idea) that Bert Frenz has so adroitly organized have been received with enormous favor. They fill up shortly after they are announced.

We have had four semi-annual meetings that were financial and birding successes. Our treasury has a healthy bottom line, which was the one goal I had from the start. Thankfully, I have had two good treasurers to help with the accounting, which is a much bigger job than it has ever been in the past due to our Magic Ridge acquisition project, our increased membership, and our overall increased expenditures. The number of entries in our books has more than doubled, and our income has increased so much that we have been filing reports with the IRS for two years now, as required by law.

As my term ends, I reflect on the challenges and opportunities that came to me during my presidency, and I recognize what a fabulous period of personal growth it has been. My life has been enriched by this experience. I have learned much about many unexpected things—like membership data bases, graphics, and the mysterious ways of the post office. What I realized after I took office, to my great surprise, was that I was running a business, not for profit, but a business nevertheless. I have also learned more about my own limits. Unfortunately, there hasn't been and there won't be enough time in the day for all the things that I would have liked to accomplish for TOS.

My appreciation for volunteers has grown immensely from my own work as president and from my contacts with the volunteers of TOS. They are an extremely hard working and dedicated group. Thank you TOS for giving me this opportunity to lead and for supporting me through my term of office. —Lily Engles

JOHN ARVIN (GREAT TINAMOU)*

September 13, 1943 – May 5th 2023.



“The Great Tinamou” John Clark Arvin passed away peacefully in his sleep on May 5, 2023. Tinamou was born in Harlingen, TX in 1943 and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and studied Biology at Pan American University, University of Houston and his beloved UT Austin. Birds were his life’s passion. From 30 years of leading birding tours to research and archiving to conservation efforts to becoming an author, birds and birding were the heart, soul and body of Tinamou’s career. He specialized in birds of the Western Hemisphere with a heavy emphasis

on Latin America, particularly Ecuador and Peru. Before retiring he spent many years as an avian biologist for Texas Parks & Wildlife and the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. He was the author of “Hummingbirds: Volume 1” for the Gorgas Science Foundation.

Tinamou is survived by his cherished daughter, Bianca Arvin, and a lifetime of dear friends in the birding community all over the world. A celebration of his life will be held May 24 at 9a at Turkey Creek Trailhead and will consist of birdwatching and storytelling—Tinamou’s two favorite pastimes. If you’d like to celebrate John Arvin’s life on your own, pause and appreciate the people others may take for granted, get lost watching a bird fly across the sky, seek out the wildflowers while they’re still around, and cheer for the Longhorns no matter how they play every football season.

In lieu of flowers, please support The Nature Conservancy.

***Great Tinamou is a name given to John by Edgar Kincaid (Co-author of Birdlife of Texas). Edgar gave all of his birding friends bird names.**



These are of John holding a Yellow-breasted Chat when we were doing passerine banding at the Candy Abshier WMA where the Smith Point Hawk Watch is. I believe they were taken in April 2009.

Susan A. Heath, Director of Conservation Research, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.

IMPRESSIONS OF JOHN ARVIN.....

SHELLY PLANTE

Oh I'm heartbroken. I loved every moment I ever had with John. He was always one of my favorites, a great birding friend, and a wonderful, patient guide in the field.

MARTIN HAGNE

Very sad news indeed. Was always a special time spent with John!

He did some awesome work at GCBO also, and radar migration work! And as far as I know ... the last person to see a live Eskimo Curlew! Although not sure that ever made it into the records.

Rest well my friend! I'm sure your walking the slopes of El Cielo!

SHERIDAN CHATTIN COFFEY

I am so sorry to hear this. John truly contributed an amazing amount to Texas birding.

LORI CONRAD

We had the privilege of having him as our guide twice in Tamaulipas, Mexico, about 20 years ago. He took us to his aunt's house along the Rio Frio, where we gorged on platters of crayfish fresh from the farm next door, along with cold beer and bottles of chilled local wines. I'll never forget the tree on her property that was FILLED with Crackers, a large butterfly, that were all flying around me "cracking" at each other, the only time I've ever experienced that. A boat ride along the river produced so many Muskovy Ducks that we practically had to beat them off with sticks! He indeed had so many great stories to tell, we feel lucky to have been in his circle. His ex-wife is still a friend and lives here in Portal, AZ. He will be missed. Soar on, old friend

WILLIE SEKULA

The first time I met John was at Oakwood Cemetery looking for a Williamson's Sapsucker that Mary Ann McClendon found. We didn't see it but had a great time just talking about birds! I rode with him in his truck as we headed to Santa Margarita Ranch for a TOS Meeting field trip. We had such a great time together. He was brilliant. I contributed sightings to his Mexican Birds Newsletter. He was a bit skeptical of my report of a Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird that I saw feeding in a Mexican Orchidtree on the Rio Corona in 1974!! Thank you, John for the fantastic memories!!

SUSAN HEATH

I had the honor of working with John at GCBO for three or four years. He was a great mentor and taught me many things. I'll never forget the irony of being with him in Veracruz and having our flight home delayed because of a bird strike.

CECILIA M. RILEY

I have been so honored to know and work with John. A walking encyclopedia of bird distribution. Sadly, I have missed him for a long time. Soar free dear friend.

BRAD MCKINNEY

I feel privileged to have known the Great Tinamou. He was so knowledgeable about Texas birding, and birds south of the border. What a great sense of humor. Rest in Peace John

BRUSH FREEMAN

John was such a great guy. He was one of my favorite mentors and I know so many others feel the same.. His contributions to ornithology were too many to mention here. I think of his contributions to BLOT among many others. I will never forget him. God speed John..

Nature: John Arvin's mission is to dispense knowledge and save birds

BACK TO NATURE

Gary Clark, *For the Chronicle*

Native Texan John Arvin is among the most influential and knowledgeable birders in the country. People speak of him in almost reverential terms, although he demurs at such praise.

Raised in McAllen, Arvin began his career as a teacher and then went on to spend 25 years as a tour guide for some of the most prestigious bird-watching tour companies in America. He also worked as an avian biologist with Manu National Park in Peru and chaired the *Texas Ornithological Society's* Texas Bird Records Committee.

I spoke with Arvin at the newly opened World Birding Center in 2004 at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park near Mission, where he now worked as the avian biologist

Q: How did you get interested in birds

A: I can't ever remember not being interested in birds. I know I was interested in them before I could read because I can remember looking at pictures in a bird book I had as a small boy. My family tolerated my interest by getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning and taking me out to the countryside and then picking me up at 5 in the afternoon.

Q: How did you acquire your renowned knowledge of bird song?

A: I started when I was very young. Bird songs and bird calls have always been one of my major interests. I have hours and hours, and miles and miles, of tape recordings of bird songs in 15 to 18 countries.

Q: Why did you get involved in the *Texas Bird Records Committee*?

A: I was on the committee from its formation in 1972 until I retired from it recently. If it weren't for the committee, there would be no history of the bird life in Texas, and we wouldn't know if birds were becoming more common or less common.

Q: What is the purpose of the World Birding Center?

A: The idea is to create a center where knowledge and enjoyment of birds is disseminated to the public. We stand on three legs: recreational birding, education about birds and conservation of birds. We're trying to promote an interest in birds and in the habitats that support them.

Q: What worries you about birds?

A: All indicators are that bird populations are on a downward spiral. Some of the causes are obvious, like loss of habitat, but other causes aren't so obvious. By the time we find the causes, it may be too late.

That's happened before in our history with birds like the passenger pigeon that were so numerous that no one could conceive that they could become extinct. If we could lose birds counted in the tens of millions and not even be aware that they were in trouble until it was too late, that's pretty scary.

Gary Clark is at Lone Star College—North Harris in Houston. Contact him at texasbirder@comcast.net.

SABINE WOODS IS EXPANDING!



The Texas Ornithological Society's Sabine Woods Sanctuary has long been considered one of the most productive migrant stop-overs along the entire Texas Coast for spring and fall migration. Spring brings warblers, thrushes, tanagers, vireos, orioles, flycatchers, etc. Large oaks, mulberry trees, ponds and areas of thick undergrowth provide a protected stopping point on the Gulf coast for neotropical migrants. The fall brings hundreds of hummingbirds, mostly Ruby-throated, flocking to the lantana thickets, as well as warblers, thrushes, tanagers, vireos, orioles, flycatchers, though most are in lesser numbers than the Spring. Birders from all over make Sabine Woods Sanctuary a destination hot spot to see a large variety of birds.

TOS has secured a lease to expand the site adding an additional 14 acres. Together

with the Golden Triangle Audubon Society, we intend to expand the protected habitat for migrating birds and make it more accessible to the birding community. With the help of donations and volunteers, the facility improvements are expected to include a safe parking area, additional drips and blinds, benches, trails, invasive plant removal and the planting of native trees and bushes. Special thanks to John Whittle from Golden Triangle Audubon, the Doornbos family trust and Port Arthur Convention and Visitors Bureau who all helped move this expansion from a concept to reality.

Make Sabine Woods Sanctuary a part of your birding adventure. Click the link below to donate to the TOS Sanctuary Fund to help fund the improvements! To donate: <https://texasbirds.app.neoncrm.com/donation.jsp?campaign=8&>

Excerpt from the forthcoming...

HISTORICAL CHANGES IN THE BIRD POPULATIONS OF TEXAS—WITH EMPHASIS ON THE CENTRAL OAKS AND PRAIRIES.

By Bert Frenz



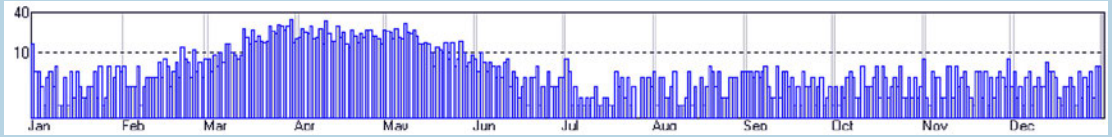
Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* (Linnaeus)

Occasional resident (2521 records), unevenly distributed in the Oaks and Prairies Region. Counts: 90% 1-7, 9% 8-22, 1% 23-61. Almost all higher counts were in colder months Nov to mid-Mar, a period of flocking. The highest counts were 31 at Airport Beach Park on Lake Waco 15 Nov 2007

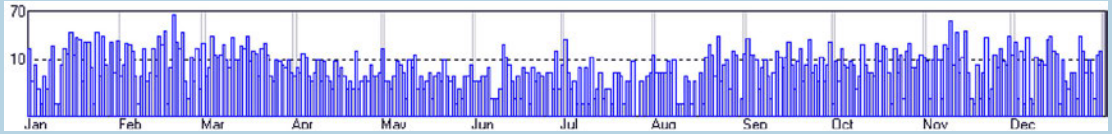
(EHa), 31 near Flatonia in Fayette County 16 Feb 2019 (VGr), 47 at Snowden Ranch in Travis County 10 Nov 2017 (SHn), and 61 at Bastrop State Park 19 Feb 2015 (BrF). Highest Christmas Bird Count tallies were 66 at Crawford in 2001, 38 at Waco in 1991, 36 at Bastrop-Buescher State Park in 2015,

31 at Austin in 1974, 30 at Southern Travis County in 1966, 28 at Western Travis County in 1963, 25 at Lost Pines in 2015, four at Granger in 2016, one at Gibbons Creek in

1993, one at College Station in 1966 and 1971, and one at Bell in 1991, 1992, and 2012.



Wild Turkey (all reports)



Wild Turkey (high counts)

Occurrence: Turkeys were most often reported in the western counties of Bastrop, Bell, McLennan, Williamson, and especially Travis. Within those counties, turkeys were more common west than east. For example, in McLennan County, turkeys were counted on 68% of Crawford Christmas Bird Counts, but only 32% of Waco Christmas Bird Counts, 1985–2013. Contrastingly, oft-birded Brazos County has only 30 records, sometimes of unknown origin, almost always reported singly, and with a high count of eight turkeys 29 Nov 2001 (BAF).

Turkeys favor riparian habitats especially mature hardwood stands in bottomlands. Hence they have been found regularly along the Colorado River (downstream from Lake Travis, Commons Ford Ranch, Hornsby Bend, and Colorado River Refuge), Barton Creek (Greenbelt and Wilderness Park), Onion Creek (McKinney Falls State Park), Williamson Creek (Waste Treatment Plant and Roy Kizer Golf Course), Alum Creek (Bastrop-Buescher State Park), tributaries and shoreline of Belton Lake (Cowhouse Creek, Fort Hood 13B, and Outdoor Recreation Area), Stillhouse Hollow Lake (Chalk Ridge Falls Park and Union Grove WMA), Bosque and Brazos River in McLennan County (Air-

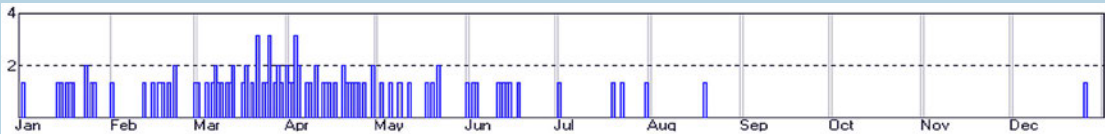
port Beach Park and Lake Waco), and San Gabriel Unit (Granger Lake). At Granger Lake they were found especially at the dam spillway where they have been released by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

Since Wild Turkeys are non-migratory, one might expect a report chart of similar-height bars, modified only by the number of observers in the field. Instead, the chart shows a preponderance of spring sightings that coincide with the breeding season. Turkeys were more easily detected in springtime. Of the heard-only reports, 85% were 10 Feb—14 Jun, a timeframe closely aligning with the bulge in the graph of all reports.

Breeding: The date range of gobbling turkeys also aligns with breeding data. Quiet, mixed flocks of females and young adults have been reported 8 Jan—2 Feb without indications of breeding. Thereafter, flocks break up and turkeys were found in more open areas. Displaying males with fully erect fanned tail feathers and strutting in front of females, rivalry, and courtship have been observed 12 Feb—3 May. Poults have been reported beginning 11 Apr 2010 (DSI) in Fayette County. Nesting was mentioned on checklists: Brazos Ornithological Society

(1977), Arnold and Benson (1985) for the Central Brazos Valley, Central Texas Audubon Society (1984, 1997) for McLennan, and Travis Audubon Society (1972, 1978, 1994, 2003) for Travis. Other lists marked them as year-round residents, implying breeding. One to three turkeys have been counted on each of eleven Breeding Bird Survey routes during the years 1967-2003. Reported breeding characteristics were courtship 12 Feb—9

May (m=26 Mar, n=31), gobbling turkeys 2 Jan—14 Jun (m=29 Mar, n=41), calling turkeys 4 Jan—29 Dec (m=17 Apr, n=211), eggs collected historically 20 Apr (n=1), occupied nest 18 Jun—31 Jul (n=2), nest with young 18 May (n=1), poults and jakes 11 Apr—20 Aug (m=11 Jun, n=12), hens with hatch-year juveniles 9 Aug—28 Oct (n=2), flocks with near adults 16 Dec—1 Feb (m=19 Jan, n=10).



Wild Turkey (all breeding reports except calling and juveniles)

Historical: A fossil of a bird identified to the family Phasianidae was found 1982-1984 by the Texas Department of Transportation at the Wilson-Leonard Site Bone Bed Component, an archaeological site on Brushy Creek in Williamson County (Baker et al. 2002). The site was occupied during the pre-Clovis through late-Prehistoric age and is considered one of the best preserved. The Bone Bed Component dates to about 11 400 – 11 000 years B.P. Along with the bird remains were stone tools, a late-Pleistocene horse, two bison, a snake, musk turtle, woodrat, gopher, muskrat, rabbit, canid, and deer.

Until the arrival of Europeans, Wild Turkeys were plentiful. The turkey was likely the most hunted bird by Native Americans as it was widely distributed and available year-round. Occupational sites showed turkey bones present, second only to white-tailed deer, at almost half of those excavated (Casto 2002). Specifically, Wild Turkey was identified in Navarro County at the Adams Ranch Site (Bruseth and Martin 1987). In addition, the bones were used for beads and tools, and the feathers for ornamentation. Turkeys being raised as poultry was reported when Fray Gaspar Jose de Solis visited a Native American village in East Texas 30 Apr 1768 (Casto 2002). Whether they

“I suffer to think that having come so far the undoing of our struggle will be o’r a bird. What comes over Franklin that he should favor turkey as a proper symbol for our fledgling nation? My regard for the bird, proper trussed and done to a turn, is surpassed by no man - not even Franklin, whose love of victuals surpasses legend, but to elevate a common table fowl to the stature of the National Bird goes beyond reason.” George Washington, 15 June 1782, quoted from Pete Dunne, 1988. The Secret Birding Journal of G. Washington from Virginia, Amer. Birds 42(3):356.

were wild caught as eggs or pullets was not clear, but elsewhere, the Mexican Turkey had been domesticated by natives and brought to Europe early in the sixteenth century (Ogilvie-Grant 1897).

In Feb 1687 Henri Joutel, a French explorer and soldier participating in France’s attempt to establish a Louisiana territory, was at the Colorado River near La Grange when he wrote, “We killed several bison, turkeys, and some deer, ducks, doves, and other kinds of game” (Ray 2015). Also in Fayette County,

Gideon Lincecum wrote in 1834 (Lincecum et al. 1994),

As we passed over the Navidad and La Vaca, there was a vast, greatly undulating plain looking South, and ... presenting to our view a shade of darker green engraved in the face of the boundless plain of grass ... and when I came there a large flock of turkeys flushed up from a fine pool of clear water where they were taking their evening drink, preparatory to flying up to roost. ... They were not apprised of my approach until I was quite near, so they were much frightened. And fluttering up in great confusion, they pitched on the first tree they came to. I soon secured a brace of them.

In 1840 John Lockhart observed turkeys on the prairie between Houston and Washington-on-the-Brazos (Wallis 1930), writing,

This slow traveling would have been unendurable had it not been for the abundance of game on the prairie. Geese and ducks were innumerable, deer by the thousands,—sometimes we could count from 100 to 150 in a bunch,—large covies of partridges, wild turkeys, and occasionally a drove of wolves were seen.

In the 1830s and 1840s buffalo and deer were abundant and native Americans preferred these for game food over turkeys and other birds (Strecker 1927). He added, “The Wild Turkey and other species of large birds were ‘much good’ when larger game was not in evidence.” In 1856, the Anderson Hotel in Grimes County advertised a cuisine that included turkey and plover (*Anderson Central Texian* 10 Dec 1856). Strecker noted,

The Wild Turkey was very abundant in central Texas in early times and several persons relate that no one ever ate any part of a turkey but its breast, that the balance of the bird’s body was thrown to the dogs ... The early white settlers paid little attention

to small game like doves and partridges, for Wild Turkeys could be shot in almost any wooded stream bottom or prairie motte.

By 1850 over a quarter million immigrants had pushed into Texas, and they readily took advantage of the food source. In Navarro County 1879-1880, Ogilby wrote,

The wild turkey is still a common resident in the county, frequenting the wooded districts, but owing to its naturally shy disposition, and the incessant persecution to which it is subjected, it is very difficult to get a sight of the birds, even where they are numerous. The reprehensible practice of calling up the gobblers, and shooting them, which can only be done during the spring of the year when they are breeding, makes them, by killing off all the male birds, much scarcer than they would otherwise be, and must, if persisted in, ultimately cause the disappearance of this noble species from the district.

In fact, Pulich (1988) said no Wild Turkeys were seen in Navarro County since the 1880s. Turkeys were exterminated in McLennan County by the early 1880s (Strecker 1927). In 1892 J. A. Singley found a nest in Lee County and wrote a letter to Charles Bendire at the Smithsonian Institution about his experience, saying,

The hen leaves and approaches the nest invariably by the same route, and remembering this I trailed one to its nest. There really was no nest. A dead blackjack-oak top had fallen, the wind had drifted the leaves up against it, and the eggs were laid on the leaves. I found this nest in a thicket, inside of an enclosure, on April 20. It contained eight eggs.

Although Schutze (1902) listed *Rio Grande Turkey* as a summer bird of central Texas, Singley (1893) wrote it was “rare, now, although it has been common within my recollection.” Writing about the *Rio Grande Turkey* (M.

g. intermedia) in Travis County, Simmons (1925) remarked, "The Wild Turkey is on the verge of extermination." In *Lloyd's Natural History*, Ogilvie-Grant listed the *Mexican Turkey* as reaching western Texas but not eastern Texas; nor did the *Elliot's Turkey* reach beyond southwestern Texas (Ogilvie-Grant 1897).

Kincaid and Webster (1954) listed it as a rare resident in Travis County and in their 1959 list they reduced it to "rare to extremely rare." Davis (1940) does not mention turkeys in Brazos, but later (Petrides and Davis 1951) he noted, "The Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) is reported by old-timers to have occurred in the county and restocked birds (*M. g. intermedia*) now are found within a few miles of the northern boundary." In 1966 Purrington considered them common residents, "seen regularly by local landowners and hunters, especially in Navasota bottoms." Nevertheless, that did not last long, as the restocking effort failed. Among the few records in the 1970s were a female 3 Jul 1973 (TMO) near Benchley in Robertson County and two males 5 Dec 1976 (RSi) on a branch of the Wickson Creek in Brazos County. By 1977, the BOS checklist reduced the status to rare, and they disappeared from the Central Brazos Valley shortly thereafter.

Unusual for the Southern Travis County Christmas Bird Count was a flock of 30 turkeys stalked by Jack Albright at the convergence of Onion and Williamson creeks 23 Dec 1966, the windiest and coldest day of Dec that year. One was seen 24 Jul 1968 (MAM) at Walnut Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. Oberholser (1974) ruled it "formerly common over most of eastern three-quarters ... now largely extirpated from much of original range."

Since 1924, TPWD tried restoring the Eastern subspecies but failed and in 1979 there were none of that subspecies left in Texas (U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service). About that time, the tide turned when "block stocking" was tried, a method where about

15 wild-trapped turkeys were released at one time (Anonymous 2005). This succeeded but was hampered by an inability to secure turkeys from other states. When the state switched to paying other states a trapping fee at about \$500 per turkey, they were able to get large quantities and released about 500 birds annually. In 1992 a record 1000 birds were released.

By the start of the twentieth century, Eastern Wild Turkeys were recovering, and limited hunting was allowed in 40 of the 57 counties they originally inhabited (U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service). Turkey hunting is a big sport in Texas, where 66 000 hunting licenses were sold in 2003, providing an economic impact of more than \$100 million annually.

Specifically, within the Central Brazos Valley turkeys were reintroduced again in the mid-1990s by TPWD. Restocked or locally breeding turkeys were seen periodically near the Brazos River in Brazos County (BAF) and at Wellborn (JDz). Turkeys were also released in the Brazos River bottoms east of Chappell Hill and at New Year's Creek, both in Washington County (fide DVo). Limestone, Falls and Burleson counties had a few turkeys, but "not enough to determine population status" (MWa). Turkeys were seen in Freestone County in the early to mid-1990s (Thorne 2002) after restocking but like other Post Oak Savannah areas the effort was not successful. More recently, Wild Turkeys were reported in small numbers at Richland Creek WMA on the Navarro County side since 2013 and on the Freestone County side since 2016, as well as Fairfield Lake since 2018.

Listed as rare on Neill's 1976 checklist for the state parks, turkeys were restocked in Bastrop and the county had enough for TPWD to open a spring hunting season, although turkeys were still marked as rare by Freeman (1996) for the Bastrop-Buescher State Park and Lake Bastrop area. McLennan County had more success. In 1982 turkeys spread into the county from stock released by TPWD in

nearby Bosque County (JOs) and were said to be increasing in 1986 (American Birds 1986). The 1984 and 1997 Central Texas Audubon Society checklists state they were common in McLennan County, breeding and increasing since the 1969 checklist. Turkeys were released by Alcoa at their property in Milam County and from 1987-1989 Hugh Brown, at his land in Lee County, saw a few of them in spring, but not after 1989 until a few sightings 2010-2013. Alcoa still had a sizeable turkey population (fide MWA), and one seen 22 Jul 2001 (TiF) off FM 1786 in western Milam County was probably from that population. In the late 1990s, TPWD released turkeys along the Colorado River and three were reported in Fayette County 13 Dec 2001 (GGi) and at McKinney Roughs Park 29 Oct 2002 (BrF). Alum Creek is within the Colorado watershed and 17 were seen there at Bastrop-Buescher State Park on 5 Nov 2003 (BrF, RGi). Sightings 2003-2005 (SYo) at Roy Kizer Golf Course were along Onion Creek, a tributary of the Colorado. Turkeys were more common in the Edwards Plateau, and sightings in Travis County were more often on that side of the county, especially at Cow Creek Road.

Historically, likely found in all counties; more recently reported in all counties except Falls and Leon counties. Two specimens identified as subspecies *intermedia* (2). Specimens at Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection 4103 and 24232 Robertson County 29 Mar 1943. Oberholser (1974) mentioned eggs from Lee County, probably those collected by J. A. Singly in 1892 and sent to the Smithsonian Institute but no longer listed. Photo-documented in Bastrop, Bell, Brazos, Burleson, Fayette, McLennan, Navarro, Travis, Washington, and Williamson counties.

Observers: BAF Bert A. Frenz, BrF Brush Freeman, DSI D. Stall, DVo Darrell Volpert, EHa Eric Haskell, GGi Graham Gips, JDz Joan Dziezyc, JOs June Osborne, MAM Mary Anne McClendon, MWA Matt Wagner, RGi Ron Giles, RSi Randy Simpson, SHn Stephen Hannington, SYo Scott Young, TiF Tim Fennell, TMO T. M. O'Neil, and VGr Vicky Greene.

Literature cited available by requesting it at jclintoneitnrear@gmail.com

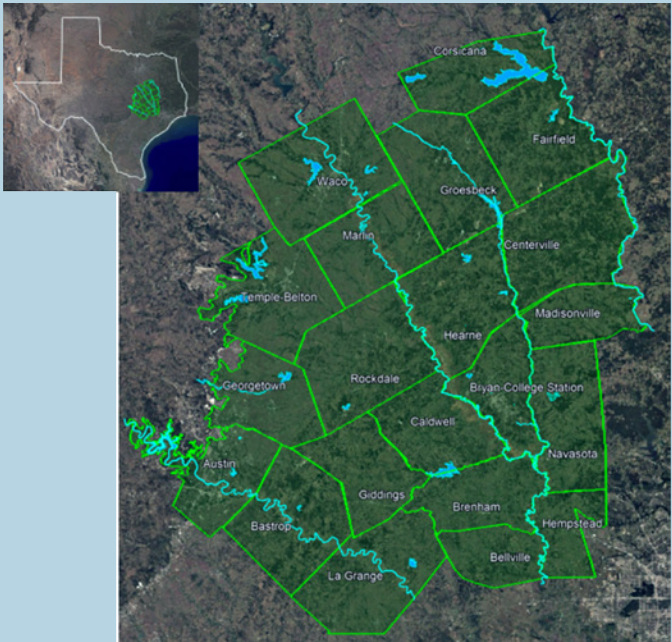


Figure 1. The Region and its proinent cities.

CHANGES IN OFFICERS AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Vice President-Romey Swanson (Previously Director at Large)

Newly elected positions

Treasurer-Director/ Region 2 (North Central) Lorrie Mathers



I'm a Texan by choice and a bird enthusiast by nature. I grew up in a small farm-

ing community in South-Western Ontario (Canada not California) not far from Pelee Island spending much of my time outdoors, developing a deep appreciation of nature and I still derive a sense of inner peace from birds, forests and streams.

My career was largely spent in the telecommunications industry in finance and accounting roles which took me and my family from Toronto (Canada) to Paris (France) to Singapore and finally to Allen (Texas). We have made Allen our home for about 20 years; I now for NetScout as VP Finance/CFO of business units.

A few years ago, I started thinking about retirement and looked for places where I could dedicate time to feed the soul, finally selecting the Texas Ornithological Society,

Prairie and Timbers Audubon and Blackland Prairie Master Naturalists.

While I haven't retired yet, I have ramped up my volunteering with the Master Naturalists (Class of 2021), prairie restoration at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center and Instagram coordinator/board member for Prairie and Timbers Audubon.

When I was approached to put my CPA/finance skills to work with the Texas Ornithological Society while having a great opportunity to help the Texas birding community, I was quick to jump at the opportunity.

Director Region 4 (Trans Pecos)-Pamela Pipes



I studied biology at UT Permian Basin, earning both bachelor's and master's degrees. A

plant collection required for a college botany course introduced me to the incredible diversity of flowering plants in Texas. It also led me to the field guide section of the bookstore in search of a guide to flowering plants, where I discovered Roger Tory Peterson's Birds of Texas. With a cheap pair of binoculars and Birds of Texas in hand, I was a birder! Ten years later, my husband Chris joined me and we've been birding together ever since.

Chris and I relocated to Alpine in 2008 and to Fort Davis in 2010. I retired from Sul Ross State University in 2021 as University Registrar, concluding a career in higher education begun at UTPB thirty-two years prior. I have since returned to the role of Registrar part-time.

Chris and I are Texas Master Naturalists in the Tierra Grande Chapter, leading interpre-

tive nature hikes and guided bird walks at the Davis Mountains State Park, and devoting time and resources to the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, the Big Bend chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas, the Davis Mountains Preserve (a Nature Conservancy property), the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society, and the Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration. I look forward to adding the Texas Ornithological Society to this list as Director for Region 4!

Director at large- Lyn Thompson



I have been a member of TOS since 2001, attending my first meeting in Ft. Davis. I have been

birding for 30 years, intrigued by the remarkable accomplishments of the late Ted Parker. For me, it was a “spark person,” rather than a spark bird. I curate the Comal Birds Facebook page, plan field trips for the 24-year old group, and facilitate the New Braunfels CBC. In 2021 I retired from the New Braunfels Public Library, working the last few years of my career as the assistant manager. When not birding, I am a member of the New Braunfels Cemetery Committee, researching and writing scripts for their annual cemetery “Soul Searching” tour.

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- ◆ LECTURES
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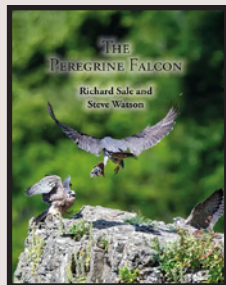
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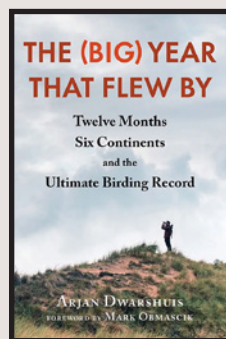
The Peregrine Falcon

Snowfinch Publishing, 2022. Hardcover.

'Short listed for the TWS authored book of the year 2023'

The *Peregrine Falcon* is a comprehensive 528-page book on this most iconic raptor which is richly illustrated with 150 color images and 235 figures, aimed at bringing our scientific knowledge of the species bang up to date under one cover. The book investigates all aspects of Peregrine life, from plumage, through diet, population dynamics, breeding and survival. Falcons are iconic aerial apex predators sometimes held in mystical regard, occasionally elevated to the status of myth and legend. The book starts with consideration of ancient history of birds when dinosaurs ruled the Earth and traces the relationship of Man and Falcon as seen in painted images from ancient Egypt and stone carvings on abandoned Hittite stone walls. Peregrines breed on all continents apart from Antarctica and the authors have collected data from across that vast range; providing information on each of the 17 subspecies (18 if the Australian *F.p. submelanogenys* is separate from *F.p. macropus*, and 19 if the Barbary Falcon is really a Peregrine form), as to diet, distribution and physical characteristics. Modern technology (inertial measurement units built by RS) and analyses of breathing, bone structure and eyesight has been used to study the flights, particularly the stooping hunts which have made Peregrines famous as arguably the fastest creature on the planet. The physics of flight and stooping speed is rigorously assessed using basic scientific principles, and a detailed analysis of eye biology, together with observational empirical evidence, allows the authors to suggest greater Peregrine visual acuity than has previously been claimed by the scientific community. In the second half of the last century the need to increase food production led to the widescale application of chemicals on farmland. But the chemicals had a disastrous effect on Peregrine Falcons, causing both the breaking of eggshells and the killing of adult birds. Everywhere the chemicals were used the Peregrine population fell sharply. Alerted by both amateur and professional ornithologists to an impending catastrophe, governments banned the chemicals. Slowly the Peregrine population began to rise, in part prompted by the bird's remarkable ability to adapt. In parts of its range the falcon realized that buildings could be utilized as make-shift cliffs for breeding. And where humans congregated, pigeons flourished. That combination of potential breeding sites and high densities of a preferred prey meant an increase in urban living for the resourceful Peregrine, and numbers climbed steadily. The falcons' arrival in town increased human interest. Nest boxes were provided and video cameras were installed to watch Peregrine family life. Added to its fabulous flying abilities and renowned speed, the falcon that had once been seen only by those who sought it out in remote, wild places, has become a star of local CCTV. This book includes data and photographs from several UK nest sites, both urban (a medieval bell tower and a modern, London hospital) and a Scottish wild country eyrie studied in detail in 2022.

See Kate Davis' [Book review of The Peregrine Falcon](#). 526 pages. ISBN: 9780957173262



The (Big) Year that Flew By: Twelve Months, Six Continents, and the Ultimate Birding Record

Arjan Dwarshuis

Chelsea Green Publishing, 2023. Paperback. An epic tale of one passionate birder's record-breaking adventure through 40 countries over 6 continents - in just one year - to see 6,852 bird species, rare and common, before many go extinct.

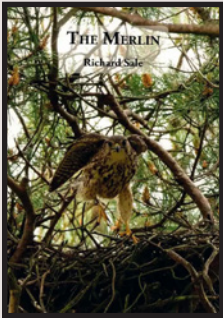
When Arjan Dwarshuis first heard of the 'Big Year' - the legendary record for birdwatching - he was twenty years old, it was midnight, and he was sitting on the roof of a truck in the Andean Mountains. In that moment he promised himself that, someday, somehow, he would become a world-record-holding birder.

Ten years later, he embarked on an incredible, arduous, and perilous journey that took him around the globe; over uninhabited islands, through dense unforgiving rainforests, across snowy mountain peaks and unrelenting deserts - in just a single year. Would he survive? Would he be able to break the 'Big Year' record, navigating through a world filled with shifting climate and geopolitical challenges?

The (Big) Year that Flew By is an unforgettable, personal exploration of the limits of human potential when engaging with the natural world. It is a book about birds and birding and Arjan's attempts to raise awareness for critically endangered species, but it is also a book about overcoming mental challenges,

extreme physical danger; and human competition and fully realizing your passions through nature, adventure, and conservation.

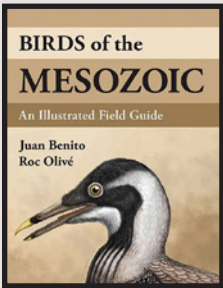
‘Dutch birders take their pursuit to a higher plane of skill and intensity, as exemplified in this global trek by Arjan Dwarshuis. A fast-paced page-turner and a unique adventure story, *The (Big) Year that Flew By* is also filled with insights about landscapes, people, and a world of wonderful birds.’ - Kenn Kaufman, author of *Kingbird Highway*. 256 pages. ISBN: 9781645021919



The Merlin- Updated Edition

Richard Sale

Snowfinch Publishing, 2019. Updated. Hardcover: 2019. Updated and extended edition. The Merlin is a very special bird. One of the smallest ‘True Falcons’, it stands outside the usually assumed grouping of the others, and also prefers a habitat which differs markedly from them. While most falcons are found in warmer climes, the Merlin is a northern dweller, occupying a circumpolar range at the fringes of the Arctic. This book draws together what is currently known about this elusive, but beautiful and enchanting species. 352 pages. ISBN: 9780957173224



Birds of the Mesozoic: An Illustrated Field Guide

Juan Benito and Roc Olive

Lynx Edicions, 2022.

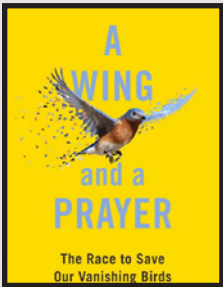
Guide Type: Field Guide

Paperback. This comprehensive illustrated field guide, by paleontologist Juan Benito and palaeoartist Roc Olive, aims to illustrate in unprecedented detail the staggering diversity of avialans (modern birds and their closest fossil relatives) that lived from the origin of the group until the Mass Extinction that ended the reign of the non-avian dinosaurs 66 million years ago: the Birds of the Mesozoic.

Birds are the most diverse tetrapod group today, but they have a rich and complex evolutionary history beyond that of their modern radiation. Appearing during the Jurassic, more than 160 million years ago, birds took to the skies and evolved into a plethora of forms during the Age of the Dinosaurs.

This beautifully illustrated field guide includes over 250 full-color illustrations covering more than 200 types of bird that populated the world during the Mesozoic Era. In addition to detailed fact files on the diverse avifauna of the Mesozoic, including a description of each species, with information on its name, location, size, period, habitat, and general characteristics, this guide also seeks to explain the origins of the group and their evolution from other feathered dinosaurs up to the origins of modern birds in the Late Cretaceous. It also covers in detail multiple facets of their phylogenetic, morphological, and ecological diversity, and provides an introduction to bird skeletal anatomy and several of the most recent and cutting-edge methods palaeontologists use to reconstruct fossil bird color, diet, and biology.

Easy-to-use and pleasant to contemplate, this book is a must for both bird and paleontology enthusiasts! 272 pages. ISBN: 9788416728527



A Wing and a Prayer: The Race to Save Our Vanishing Birds

Anders Gyllenhaal

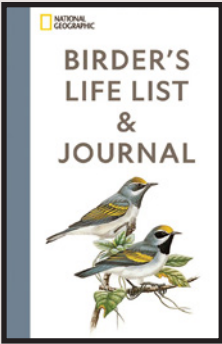
Simon & Schuster, 2023. Hardcover: A captivating drama from the frontlines of the race to save birds set against the devastating loss of one third of the avian population.

Three years ago, headlines delivered shocking news: nearly three billion birds in North America have vanished over the past fifty years. No species has been spared, from the most delicate jeweled hummingbirds to scrappy black crows, from a rainbow of warblers to common birds such as owls and sparrows.

In a desperate race against time, scientists, conservationists, birders, wildlife officers, and philanthropists are scrambling to halt the collapse of species with bold, experimental, and sometimes risky rescue missions. High in the mountains of Hawaii, biologists are about to release clouds

of laboratory-bred mosquitos in a last-ditch attempt to save Hawaii's remaining native forest birds. In Central Florida, researchers have found a way to hatch Florida Grasshopper Sparrows in captivity to rebuild a species down to its last two dozen birds. In the Sierra Nevada Mountains, a team is using artificial intelligence to save the California Spotted Owl. In North Carolina, a scientist is experimenting with genomics borrowed from human medicine to bring the long-extinct Passenger Pigeon back to life.

For the past year, veteran journalists Anders and Beverly Gyllenhaal traveled more than 25,000 miles across the Americas, chronicling costly experiments, contentious politics, and new technologies to save our beloved birds from the brink of extinction. Through this compelling drama, *A Wing and a Prayer* offers hope and an urgent call to action: Birds are dying at an unprecedented pace. But there are encouraging breakthroughs across the hemisphere and still time to change course, if we act quickly. 320 pages. ISBN: 9781982184551

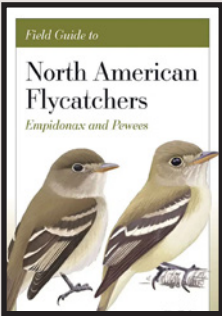


National Geographic
National Geographic Birder's Life List and Journal

National Geographic, 2023. Spiralbound. Every birder keeps a life list - a personal record of each new species as it is observed - and this beautiful blank book offers the perfect way to do so, with room for dates, locations, and personal notes, encompassing a lifetime of bird-watching adventures. Organized to match ornithological taxonomy, with graceful illustrations of common species, occasional text by renowned birding expert Noah Strycker, and an index for easy navigation, this journal makes the mission of keeping a life list all the more convenient and rewarding.

Complementing National Geographic's best-selling birding field guides, National Geographic Birder's Life List & Journal is the ideal accessory and gift for birders of all ages and at all levels of experience.

This handsome keepsake and record book for dedicated birders of the U.S. and Canada, organized by bird taxonomy, offers blanks for dates, locations, and details of species sightings. 256 pages. ISBN: 9781426223167



Field Guide to North American Flycatchers: Empidonax and Pewees

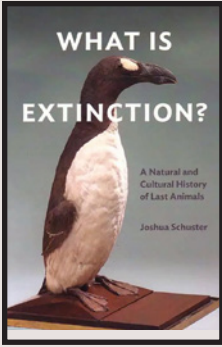
Lee, Cin-Ty and Andrew Birch
Princeton University Press, 2023.

Guide Type: Field Guide

Flexi-binding. A richly illustrated, portable field guide to flycatcher identification.

The identification of Empidonax flycatchers and pewees can be a daunting challenge for even the most seasoned birder. Field Guide to North American Flycatchers takes bird identification to an entirely new level by training you how to observe subtle differences in structure, color patterns, and vocalizations before delving into the finer details of a particular species. Because the plumages of flycatchers are so similar, this one-of-a-kind guide uses illustrations that highlight slight variances among species that photos often miss. One of the last frontiers of bird identification is now accessible to everyone—once one knows what to look for:

- Uses a holistic approach that makes flycatcher identification possible even for beginners.
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- Includes detailed audio spectrograms and seasonal distribution maps for each species.
- Shares invaluable tips for successful identification in all kinds of field settings.
- Its compact size and field-friendly layout make it the ideal travel companion for any birder. 157 pages. ISBN: 9780691240626



What Is Extinction?: A Natural and Cultural History of Last Animals

Joshua Schuster

Fordham University Press, 2023. Paperback. Life on Earth is facing a mass extinction event of our own making. Human activity is changing the biology and the meaning of extinction. *What Is Extinction?* examines several key moments that have come to define the terms of extinction over the past two centuries, exploring instances of animal and human finitude and the cultural forms used to document and interpret these events.

Offering a critical theory for the critically endangered, Joshua Schuster proposes that different discourses of limits and lastness appear in specific extinction events over time as a response to changing attitudes towards species frailty. Understanding these extinction events also involves examining what happens when the conceptual and cultural forms used to account for species finitude are pressed to their limits as well. Schuster provides close readings of several case studies of extinction that bring together environmental humanities and multispecies methods with media-specific analyses at the terminus of life.

What Is Extinction? delves into the development of last animal photography, the anthropological and psychoanalytic fascination with human origins and ends, the invention of new literary genres of last fictions, the rise of new extreme biopolitics in the Third Reich that attempted to change the meaning of extinction, and the current pursuit of de-extinction technologies. Schuster offers timely interpretations of how definitions and visions of extinction have changed in the past and continue to change in the present. 304 pages. ISBN: 9781531501655

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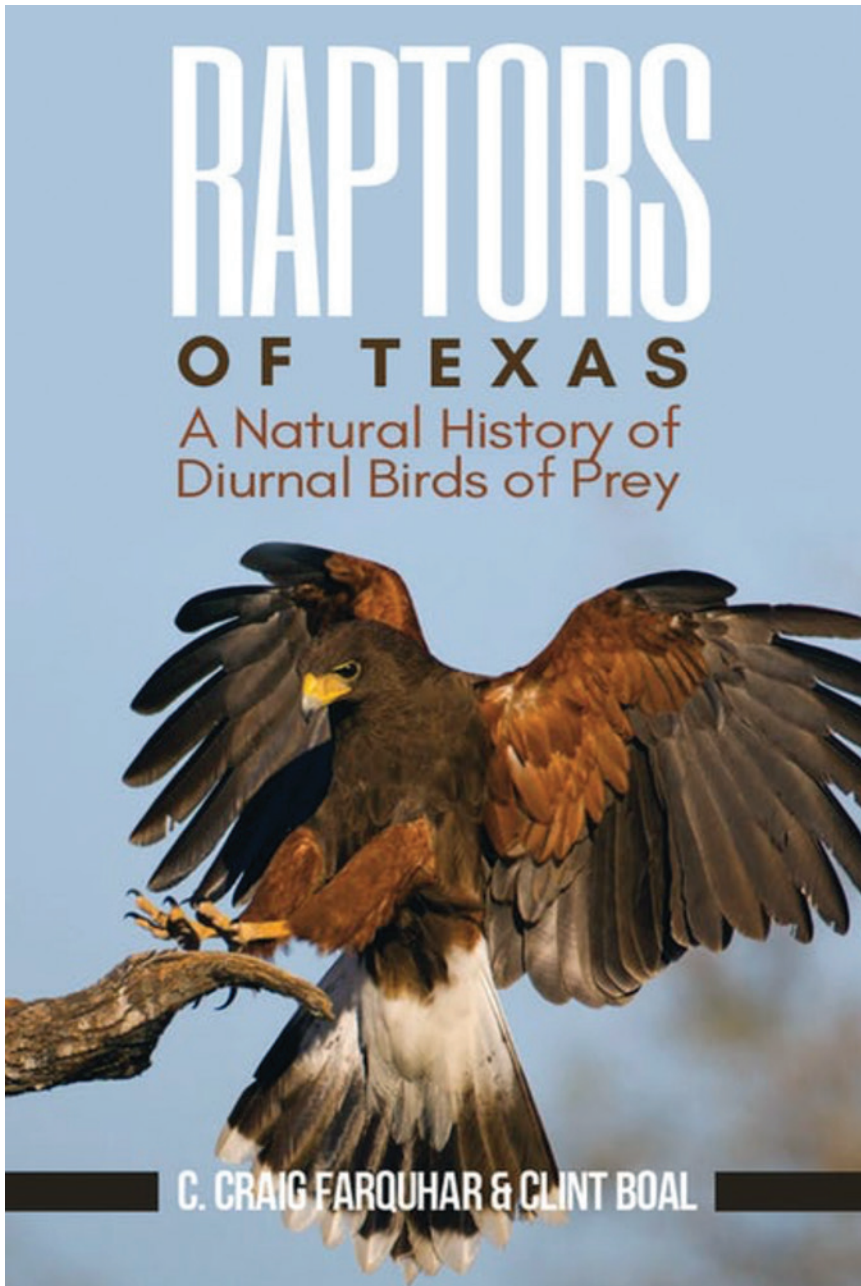
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A Natural History of Diurnal Birds of Prey

By C. Craig Farquhar and Clint W. Boal

978-1-62349-920-4 Hardcover (Printed Case)

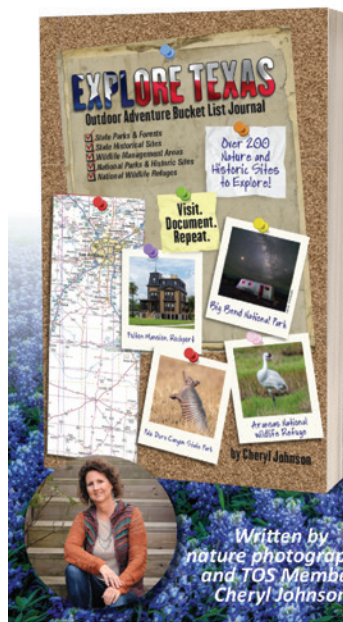
8 x 11 x 0 in

348 pp. 91 color, 1 b&w photos. 30 drawings. 3 appendixes. Bib. Index.

Pub Date: 02/15/2022

<https://www.tamupress.com/book/9781623499204/raptors-of-texas/>

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Halloween — Thanksgiving — Christmas — New Year's — THE TOS WINTER MEETING!

Businesses are already decorating for Halloween, so the TOS meeting planning committee thought we'd join the crowd and start building anticipation for our 2024 winter meeting.

The dates are January 11-14, 2024, and the location is Weslaco in the Rio Grande Valley.

The average high temperature is 72 degrees, and the average low is 52, with five days of rain expected for the whole month. How perfect is that?

So mark your calendar and make plans to join us there. Details will appear in the fall newsletter, which will be published toward the end of November.

Vamos pa' Weslaco!

- Your TOS Planning Committee

TEXAS BIRDS ANNUAL

VOLUME 19 (2023)