

Texas Partners In Flight

Flyway



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Partners in Flight was formed to address the conservation needs of declining bird species. Federal and state government agencies, non-governmental conservation organizations, communities and conservation-minded corporations, landowners, and other businesses, have joined together in an international effort to address these declines. Together, we are working to understand the ecology and natural history of all birds in the Western Hemisphere, while also discovering the causes of their vulnerability. Our main goal is to implement actions needed to assure that these valuable species continue to occur in healthy and productive populations into the future.

The Future of Bird Conservation: The North American Bird Conservation Initiative

By David Pashley, U.S. NABCI Coordinator in Virginia
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There are two enduring legacies of bird conservation work in 1999. The first is the completion of Partners in Flight (PIF) plans for almost all of the continental United States, a series of conservation plans of greater scope, magnitude, and detail than anything ever before created. The second is the creation of something entirely new in conservation – the North American Bird Conservation Plan.

In the phase now drawing to a close, PIF concentrated on the hard work of determining priorities for bird conservation, setting a complex series of objectives designed to assure the long-term health of our avifauna, and building the credibility and support necessary for these objectives to be achieved. As in the rest of the country, this arduous process is coming to a close in Texas.

We are now entering a period in which the biological foundation for bird conservation, the resources available for bird conservation, and the cooperative spirit and political will necessary to seriously undertake the daunting tasks ahead of us are aligning in a manner previously unseen in the history of conservation. On international and national scales, these advances are occurring under the auspices of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), the structure for interaction among bird conservation endeavors in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Within the United States, NABCI is a forum for cooperation among PIF, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the United States Shorebird Conservation Plan, the North American Colonial Waterbird Conservation Plan, and efforts to manage upland game birds. Although NABCI does not infringe on the autonomy of these efforts, it creates

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

The Future of Bird Conservation, continued

tremendous synergy that lifts the combined potential for success far in excess of the sum of the promise of each initiative working independently.

The vision of NABCI is to deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation through biologically-driven, landscape-oriented, regionally-based partnerships. The “full spectrum of bird conservation” means that participants are committed to the conservation of all birds in all habitats, rather than of a narrower taxonomic or habitat focus. To be “biologically driven” means relying upon the best science available, strongly supporting continuing research and monitoring, explicitly tying work on the ground with bird population objectives, and being subjected to succeeding rounds of adaptive self-evaluation. A “landscape orientation” reflects the response of bird populations to phenomena at local site, regional, ecosystem, and hemispheric geographic scales, and the need to undertake bird conservation simultaneously at all these levels. It also reflects an understanding that virtually all landscapes are now dominated by human economic activity and that bird conservation objectives and activities must accommodate

the need for sustainability of both the biological needs of birds and the economic and social needs of landowners and land managers. Finally, “regionally-based partnerships” are recognized as the model for delivery of bird conservation. The best existing models of such partnerships are the Joint Ventures of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Joint Ventures have historically been voluntary partnerships of all the stakeholders in waterfowl and wetland conservation within a region. These partners work together to shape a vision and then to raise and apply financial and human resources to achieve that vision. They have established a remarkable track record of success and are now key to implementation of NABCI. Joint Ventures, however, currently cover only a portion of the continent.

One of the early achievements of NABCI has been agreement on a map of North America that delineates 37 Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the United States and Canada, with identification of approximately a dozen more anticipated in Mexico in upcoming months. As everyone knows, Texas is both big and diverse, as evidenced by the fact that all or portions of eight BCRs (or



22% of the BCRs) occur in the state (Alaska and California are next, with five each). Three of these are shared with Mexico, highlighting the need for international cooperation. Each BCR is designed as a bird conservation delivery unit in which integrated planning, implementation, and evaluation will occur. Each BCR will ultimately be the focus of a regionally-based partnership for bird conservation.

BCR development will begin with existing Joint Ventures, each of which will be encouraged to adopt the entire vision of NABCI. Larger Joint Ventures may be subdivided into BCR units, without giving up overarching authority, but in an effort to focus a subunit of the partnership specifically to issues within each and every BCR. Current Joint Venture boundaries are at variance with BCR boundaries, as are current Partners in Flight physiographic area boundaries. Evolution toward common map units will proceed and be encouraged over time. Even when congruence is achieved, there will be many BCRs not covered by existing Joint Ventures. In those areas, new BCR delivery mechanisms will be developed. The vision of NABCI is to completely carpet the continent with Joint Ventures or Joint Venture-like partnerships functioning within every Bird Conservation

Region. New partnerships are already popping up around the country, with funding already in place for the Sonoran Desert, Northern Rockies, and Shortgrass Prairie. With hard work, the next set may be the West Gulf Coastal Plain/Ouachitas, Atlantic Northern Forest, and Central Hardwoods.

What does this mean for the future of PIF? Most importantly, it is a means by which all of the objectives laid out in PIF plans can be achieved. PIF must shift its effort toward nurturing BCR delivery. Within BCRs, however, history and available funding tend to emphasize wetland projects. At local, regional, and national levels, PIF must remain a strong advocate for projects in all habitats, particularly in those uplands of less concern to the other bird initiatives. To date, the development of NABCI has actually strengthened PIF, in that there is explicit commitment to conservation of all birds in all habitats, including non-game landbirds, at ever-increasing levels of authority and increasing breadth in powerful agencies and organizations. The challenge for PIF is to take advantage of increasing influence by fully committing to NABCI while at the same time maintaining the autonomy needed to keep the spirit and science of landbird conservation alive and vibrant.

Results of a Swallow-tailed Kite Watch in Texas and Louisiana

By Clifford E. Shackelford and Gael G. Simons

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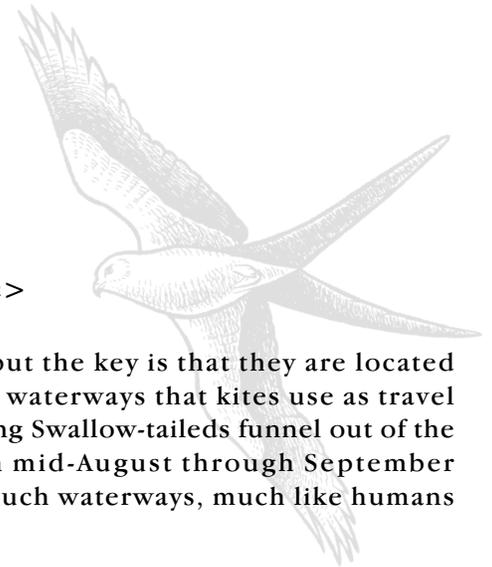
Sixty volunteers from fixed locations watched for birds in the heat on the weekend of August 14-15, 1999 all along the Gulf Coast by participating in the first-ever Swallow-tailed Kite Watch. These 60 folks volunteered their time in hopes of spotting migrating Swallow-tailed Kites. Twelve sites participated from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. both days from Cameron Parish, Louisiana down the coast to two sites in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas; that's a distance of over 625 miles of coastline. Two of the 12 sites included folks that were already counting migrating raptors for other long-term projects, but they have been included here as well. This Watch was a small part of a two-year partnership of Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW), Texas Partners In Flight, Temple-Inland Forest, and the U.S. Forest Service.

A total of eight Swallow-tailed Kites was seen at two of the participating sites—seven at the Smith Point Hawk Watch (HW) Tower on the Candy Abshire Wildlife Management Area and one at Brazos Bend State Park. The other 10 sites tallied only zeroes for the Swallow-tailed Kite. Interestingly, both sites that had Swallow-taileds were

TPW properties, but the key is that they are located adjacent to major waterways that kites use as travel corridors. Breeding Swallow-taileds funnel out of the Pineywoods from mid-August through September navigating along such waterways, much like humans travel on highways.

Other highlight species seen at one or more of the participating sites were Magnificent Frigatebirds, Wood Storks, Anhingas, lots of swallows, 11 other species of raptors, both vultures, and a lot more. The 'other' raptors were: Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Northern Harrier, Mississippi Kite, White-tailed Kite, Swainson's, Red-tailed, Broad-winged, Red-shouldered, Harris's and Cooper's hawks. Obviously some of the above raptors were non-migrants. Not a single Sharp-shinned was reported.

We hope to restructure the game plan for another Watch during fall migration in August, 2000. Please let us know if you would like to be involved.



Tracking Landbird Migration in Texas and Beyond: Partners in Flight Migration Monitoring Program

By Cecilia Riley, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
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Most North American landbirds migrate on a broad geographic front, whether moving nocturnally, diurnally or both. Landing at the end of a flight, birds are often concentrated by coastlines or by a limited supply of suitable stopover habitat. These site-concentrations offer us an opportunity to collect important information about bird populations in a relatively small geographic location.

Using this biological phenomenon as a tool for coastal habitat protection, the Southeastern Working Group of Partners in Flight (PIF) has developed a protocol to monitor landbird migration throughout the Gulf States. This all-volunteer field study was designed to obtain information on nearctic-neotropical migratory landbird populations during spring and fall migration. The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO) has embraced this important survey and is the lead implementation organization for the program administration. The GCBO is also responsible for promotion, data entry, and reports.

To gain a better picture of migration across the Southeast, data gathered are intended to answer the following questions at regional and local levels:

- (1) *What is the relative abundance of each species during spring and fall migrations?*
- (2) *What is the relative abundance of each species from one year/season to the next?*
- (3) *What is the relative abundance of each species, or group of species, to another species, or group of species, among years?*
- (4) *What are the long-term population trends for each species, groups of species, and all migrants?*
- (5) *Where are the most important bird stopover sites for migrants in the Southeast?*
- (6) *What is the relative abundance of each species, group of species, and all species from one place to another across years/seasons?*

How You Can Participate

We would like to encourage all interested individuals, bird clubs, and land managers to adopt their favorite birding areas and organize coverage of standard routes at least once a week during migration. Permanent routes are selected by experienced observers based on where most migrants are expected to be found in an area while walking about one mile, or by observing between 2-to-3 hours after sunrise (except on the immediate Gulf coast during spring when afternoon counts may be more productive). Observers simply walk a standard route and keep total numbers of individuals for each species observed (seen and heard). These seasonal counts of migratory landbirds should be conducted from 20 March to 1 June during spring, and 15 August to 1 November during fall.



Philadelphia Vireo

Photo by Mark Lockwood

By adopting your favorite birding spot and participating in the Migration Monitoring Program, you can greatly assist in developing a regional, local, and ultimately a national, source of data to address migratory bird conservation needs.

Program Progress to Date

This long-term tracking project began in spring 1996 and continues to attract new participants annually. We have successfully recruited 60 volunteers (amateur and professional ornithologists) who are monitoring 38 stopover sites in ten states (FL, GA, KY, LA, MO, MS, NC, SC, TN, and TX), and from Caye Caulker, Belize! In Texas alone, 10 sites are enrolled and we hope to increase promotion of the program throughout coastal counties (see Table 1).

Though we have designed a basic database and entered data for 1997 (over 336 field hours and 26,700 birds from 20 coastal sites), the tremendous amount of field effort in following years has resulted in a huge backlog of data. Those data are currently un-usable in a file cabinet. Thanks to a recent grant awarded by Team Audubon to the GCBO from Texas Parks and Wildlife and Texas Partners in Flight through the Great Texas Birding Classic, all these backlogged data will be computerized, analyzed, and

summarized into a four-year report. With this grant, we will also be creating an 'on-line' data entry system for those observers who are electronic gurus. In addition to making all data publicly available, this system will enable visitors to the web site to obtain current information on bird migration. Once all backlogged data are computerized, PIF researchers and statisticians will analyze these data and the GCBO will publish the results. Reports will be distributed to all participants as well as to participating land managers around the Gulf.

All interested volunteers will be provided with a list of landbird migrants to include in counts, description of the techniques, and a field data sheet for entering birds observed.

For detailed instructions, data forms, and submitting completed data sheets, please contact: Cecilia Riley, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, 103 West Hwy. 332, Lake Jackson, TX 77566 <criley@GCBO.ORG>

Table 1. Texas sites currently participating in the Migration Monitoring Program.

SITE	COUNTY	CITY
Paradise Pond	Nueces	Port Aransas
Armand Bayou Nature Center	Harris	Clear Lake
River Legacy Park	Tarrant	Arlington
Village Creek	Tarrant	Arlington
Laffite's Cove	Galveston	Galveston
urban residence	Nueces	Corpus Christi
Sabine Woods	Jefferson	Sabine Pass
Hynes Bay	Refugio	Tivoli
Caddo Lake	Harrison	Karnack
Coletoville Road	Victoria	Victoria
Wild Woods	Victoria	Nursery
Sea Rim State Park	Jefferson	Sabine Pass
Candy Abshire WMA	Chambers	Smith Point



Flight STAR: Texas Sites Recognized

By Marsha May Reimer, TX PIF Volunteer

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Congratulations to the Nature Discovery Center in Bellaire, Texas, for receiving the first Flight STAR (Securing Tomorrow's Avian Resources) certificate of recognition on May 8, 1999. A level four, Painted Bunting Flight STAR certificate was presented to the Nature Discovery Center during their celebration of International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD). Flight STAR is for facilities that are involved in bird activities that include conservation, survey and monitoring, outreach and education, and research. Through this program, Texas Partners in Flight recognizes and encourages activities that lead to bird conservation in Texas. The Nature Discovery Center achieved recognition by completing 18 elements within four bird conservation categories of the Flight STAR program.

At the IMBD event at the Nature Discovery Center, educational activities were available for both children and adults. These activities included games to demonstrate how and where birds migrate, bird-banding, and birdwatching walks lead by local birding experts through Russ Pittman Park. We could hear the "sweet, sweet, sweet, I'm so sweet" song of the Yellow Warbler in the upper branches of the pecan trees. With the help of a local birder, we viewed an Eastern Screech-Owl quietly roosting in a dense shrub below its nesting box. The Nature Discovery Center, surrounded by the Russ Pittman Park, is a wonderful wildlife haven within a thriving urban setting. This is also site #92 on the upper section of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.

Congratulations also to the following four sites. The Aquarena Center, Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos received a *Level 2 Yellow-billed Cuckoo Flight STAR Certificate of Recognition* on August 1, 1999. The National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center in San Marcos also received a *Level 2* certificate on September 1, 1999. The Houston Arboretum and Nature Center in Houston received a *Level 3 Wood Thrush Flight STAR Certificate of Recognition* on October 1, 1999. Hornsby Bend Biosolids Management Facility in Austin received the first and only of the highest levels at their 40th anniversary event: *Level 5 Swallow-tailed Kite Flight STAR Certificate of Recognition* on November 20, 1999.

Members of Flight STAR receive a certificate of recognition in one of the following 5 levels:

Level 1: *The Kentucky Warbler*, 4 Elements from at least 2 Categories;

Level 2: *The Yellow-billed Cuckoo*, 8 Elements from at least 3 Categories;

Level 3: *The Wood Thrush*, 12 Elements from at least 3 Categories;

Level 4: *The Painted Bunting*, 16 Elements from at least 4 Categories;

Level 5: *The Swallow-tailed Kite*, 20 Elements from at least 4 Categories.



What do you have to do to be a member of Flight STAR? Write us a simple letter detailing the number of elements per category that are appropriate for your facility. Here is the basic outline of a sample application:

Our facility qualifies for 8 Elements from 3 Categories. *Conservation Elements:* We have developed a birdwatching trail that is available to the public. We maintain native berry and fruit-producing shrubs and trees necessary for migratory birds. We have built two information kiosks describing bird migration and nesting behavior in the area.

Survey and Monitoring Elements: We maintain a current bird checklist with relative abundance and habitat associations. We allow the use of our site as a bird-banding station to a licensed bander.

Outreach and Education Elements: We organized an annual celebration associated with International Migratory Bird Day. We developed and maintained a native Wildscapes demonstration garden. We conduct monthly workshops on bird identification for beginning birders.

The complete list of elements within each category can be found in a booklet published by TX PIF. For a free copy of this booklet for your site, and any additional information, please contact Marsha Reimer (e-mail address above). Also, check the TPW Web site soon for this booklet that is about to be uploaded <www.tpwd.state.tx.us>. Go to the Birding page under Nature.

Library Search for Woodpecker Literature

By Bruce Duncan, TX PIF Volunteer

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Ever looked for woodpeckers in a library? Or more precisely, ever looked for information about woodpeckers in the libraries of the University of Texas?

First off, it's not as much fun as looking for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in the Pineywoods of East Texas, but it is warmer than counting hawks on a cold winter day in North Texas.

The U.S. Forest Service's Southern Research Station (SRS) in Nacogdoches, Texas is about to add a web site that includes all citations of the published woodpecker literature for the world's 200+ species. From the tiny South American piculets to the search for the Ivory-billed in Cuba. This project was initiated by three SRS staff members: Clifford E. Shackelford (formerly with the SRS), Nancy E. Koerth, and Dr. Richard N. Conner.

By the time I got involved, the Research Lab still had the titles of about 1100 articles that needed to be reviewed. These remaining articles were published mostly in obscure journals, like *Folia Parasitologica* (Prague), or a long time ago, such as Elliott Coues' 1894 "Birds of the Northwest." The challenge was to find these articles in the University of Texas (UT) library system and review each article.

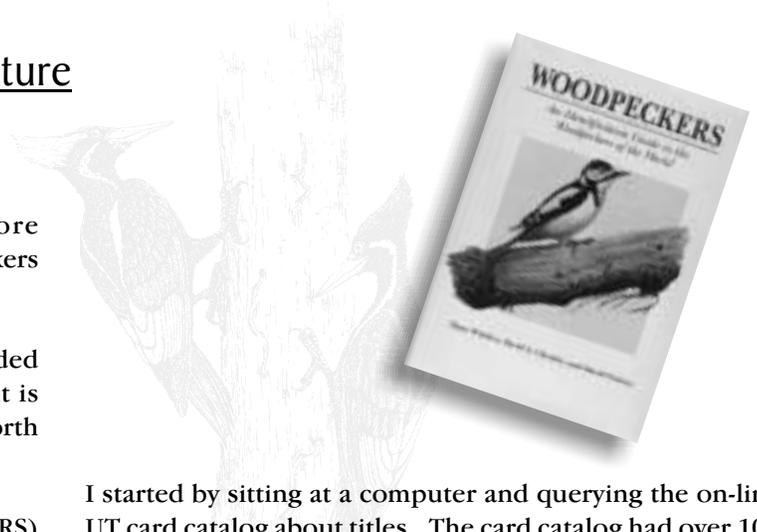
Funding the Wild Bird Trunk

By Judi Williamson, TX PIF Volunteer

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A little over a year ago I was checking my e-mail for messages from the listserv, *TexBirds*, when I came across a message by Cliff Shackelford asking for volunteers for various Texas Partners in Flight (TX PIF) projects. I had some time to spare so I answered Cliff's message. I had no idea what TX PIF was all about, but I did know that I wanted to do something to protect the birds that I enjoy watching so much. Cliff gave me two choices: researching literature on birds or finding money to help fund and continue the Wild Bird Trunk project. The old school teacher in me made a quick decision, so I selected the trunks.

The Wild Bird Trunks are an educational piece for schools. Trunks have already been developed and distributed to the Trans-Pecos region of Texas under the direction of Shelly Scroggs, then a paid intern with TX PIF. Shelly did an outstanding job of selecting the educational materials, developing the curricula, and assembling these trunks. The trunks are chalked full of good information for science classes. They are a treasure trove for fourth and fifth graders, and their teachers. The trunks include lesson plans for the teacher. The purpose of the Wild Bird Trunk is to



I started by sitting at a computer and querying the on-line UT card catalog about titles. The card catalog had over 100 on the shelf in seven different libraries, including the law, geology, and engineering libraries. I found almost all of the articles. I confirmed the information cited for each article. Finally, I forwarded the vetted articles to the woodpecker database.

Why would I want to do this? I learned the UT library system—you can use these libraries freely even if you are not associated with UT—and I reviewed a wide variety of literature. Since the project, I have used what I learned to build lists of birds in places where I travel, for example the birds of Cuernavaca, and to read journals to which I don't subscribe, like *IBIS* from England. Bottom line: the volunteer project was a great opportunity for me to learn a lot and help a little.

educate future generations about the ecological importance of resident and migratory birds. Hopefully, many people will become aware of the birds around them, and they will be encouraged to become involved in preserving native birds and their habitat needs.

Grants, grants, grants, and more grants! It became apparent that the best way to raise money to produce these Wild Bird Trunks was from grant money. I didn't know anything about grant writing, much less where to begin. With a lot of encouragement from Cliff, and a few mini-courses on grant writing, I am in business. It has been a pleasure to work with the folks at TPW and TX PIF. Volunteering for TX PIF has brought me new skills, new friends, and new goals. My goal is to find funding for 25 more trunks: 10 trunks for South Texas including the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and 15 for the Texas Coastal Prairies. The most beneficial aspect of the Wild Bird Trunk is that children are taught about bird biology and native habitat, plus they also learn to identify birds. Most importantly, the children and others who participate in this program will learn what they can do to protect these birds for future generations.

Henslow's Sparrow Sightings by County for Winter 1998-1999:

1. BOWIE: Grassy field behind dam north of viewing blind at Lake Wright-Patman; one seen 11/7 and 12/12 by Mike Dillon.
2. BRAZORIA: one on Freeport CBC, Tom Collins (compiler).
3. BRAZOS: Lick Creek Park during College Station CBC; one bird in semi-wet field on 12/19 by Mark Shavers.
4. CASS: Private property near the community of O'Farrell in the north-central part of the county; two birds on the unusually early date of 10/18 by Ray Berry.
- 5a. CHAMBERS: Smith Oaks Audubon Sanctuary in High Island; one bird in grassy area inside fence west of newest parking lot on 11/15 by Don Verser.
- 5b. West of Boy Scout Woods in High Island; one bird was in a grassy area on 12/13 by Don Verser.
- 5c. East side 'shorebird management unit' of Anahuac NWR; two birds on 12/26 by Greg Cook and friends.
- 5d. One bird on 12/27 during the Bolivar Peninsula CBC, Bill Graber (compiler).
- 5e. Two birds on 12/29 during Old River CBC, P. D. Hulce (compiler).
- 5f. Smith Point; one bird at Candy Abshire WMA on 2/20 by Don Verser. There were possibly as many as 3-4 Henslow's in this seasonally-wet grassland.
6. FORT BEND: Brazos Bend SP; one bird near a meadow above Hoots Hollow near the parking lot of the Prairie Trail on 1/30 by Vicki Crutchfield. Possibly three Henslow's were in this prairie of knee-high grasses and scattered brush, but only one bird was seen well.
7. FREESTONE: Richland Creek WMA; one bird on the late date of 4/11 by Truman Powell.
8. HARRIS: Nelson's Farm of the Katy Prairie; one bird on 1/16 by Phil Jones, Dan Brooks, Dennis Walden, Flo Hannah, and Ginny Hartman.
9. HARRISON: *Unnamed site* mentioned as a *Henslow's Sparrow hotspot* on pp. 187-188 of Ed Kutac's 2nd Edition "Birder's Guide to Texas"; one on 11/14 by Dorothy Metzler, Mike Dillon, and others. Four birds were seen the very next day (11/15) by Tim Fennell.
10. HENDERSON: North of Trinidad; two birds on 1/17 by Truman Powell.
- 11a. LIBERTY: East of Cleveland; immediately north on Hwy. 105 about one mile east of intersection with Hwy. 321; northeast of water tower but south of south-most gravel road; through undeveloped subdivision between CR2234 and CR2235 on 1/16 by John Whittle. Four birds in 4-6" tall grassland with clumps of 12-18" tall grasses; wet from recent rains but otherwise a dry site; also scattered pine trees (30-50' tall).
- 11b. Tarkington Prairie; Trinity River CBC on 12/28 by P.D. Hulce; 7 birds (5 in "bluestem-like" grassland, while other 2 in "fallow field-like" habitat).
- 12a. MARION: Gray Cemetery just south of the tiny community of Gray on the north shore of Caddo Lake (near the Texas/Louisiana state line); the cemetery is located on FM 727 about a mile south of the intersection with Hwy. 49; one bird was seen on 1/13 by Cameron Cox.
- 12b. Near the communities of Smithland and Gethsemane during the Caddo Lake (unofficial) CBC; one bird on 12/5 by Tony Messina.
13. MATAGORDA: Mad Island Marsh CBC, Jim Bergan (compiler); three birds seen in a 'seacoast bluestem grassland' on 12/21 by two observers.
14. MONTGOMERY: W.G. Jones State Forest; one bird seen in a grassy area off FM1488 three miles west of IH45 on 11/28 by Dawn Carrie.
15. NACOGDOCHES: The Lewis Farm (private property); 5.5 miles south of the Nacogdoches Loop on FM 1275; from one to five birds seen in same pasture on at least six visits spanning from 11/18-3/10 by David and Mimi Wolf, Jack Windsor, and others.
16. NAVARRO/FREESTONE County Line: Off Hwy. 287 at the Richland Creek WMA; one bird seen on 1/30 and 2/28 by Truman, Sharon and Roy Powell.
17. NEWTON: Temple-Inland's Scrappin' Valley (private property); one bird on an unknown winter date by Ross Carrie.
- 18a. RAINS: Lake Tawakoni; near dam on east side of Hwy. 47 at county line, but north of Sabine River bridge in grassy habitat lacking forbs and woody plants; one bird seen off-and-on from 2/21-3/17 by Brian Gibbons, Peter Billingham, Ed Wetzell, and many others.
- 18b. Dallas County Audubon Society's sanctuary site (even though this is not Dallas Co.); two birds on 11/7 by Bob Stone and others.
- 19a. SAN JACINTO: Sam Houston National Forest; 4-5 miles south of Cold Spring; one bird seen on 3/21 by Dawn Carrie.
- 19b. Sam Houston National Forest; 2 miles south of Evergreen off Hwy. 945 at the Outdoor Nature Club's Little Thicket Sanctuary, Cullinan Meadow; one bird seen throughout much of Jan. and Feb. by A.K. Stoley. Cullinan Meadow was formerly a poorly farmed peanut monoculture (most of the topsoil eroded, leaving a pebbly yellow clay), though several types of grasses are coming back. The grass is not very thick and varies in height (2-12"). There were a few yaupon bushes, a few hackberries, and junipers in this meadow.
20. SAN PATRICIO: Welder Wildlife Research Foundation (private; 8 miles east of Sinton); one bird was seen on 12/18 on their CBC, Terry Blankenship (compiler); in a very lightly grazed pasture (few bulls only) of little bluestem, *Setaria* spp., love-grass spp., running mesquite (low), etc. (details fide Lytle Blankenship).
21. SMITH: Near the west shore of Lake Tyler; southeast of Tyler off Hwy. 848 and McElry Road at Camp Tyler from 11/29-12/7 by Peter Barnes and Alan Byboth. One bird in wet field with 6-12" high grass and low bushes near a small pond.
22. WALKER: Sam Houston National Forest; two birds east of Huntsville State Fish Hatchery in early Jan. by Dawn Carrie.

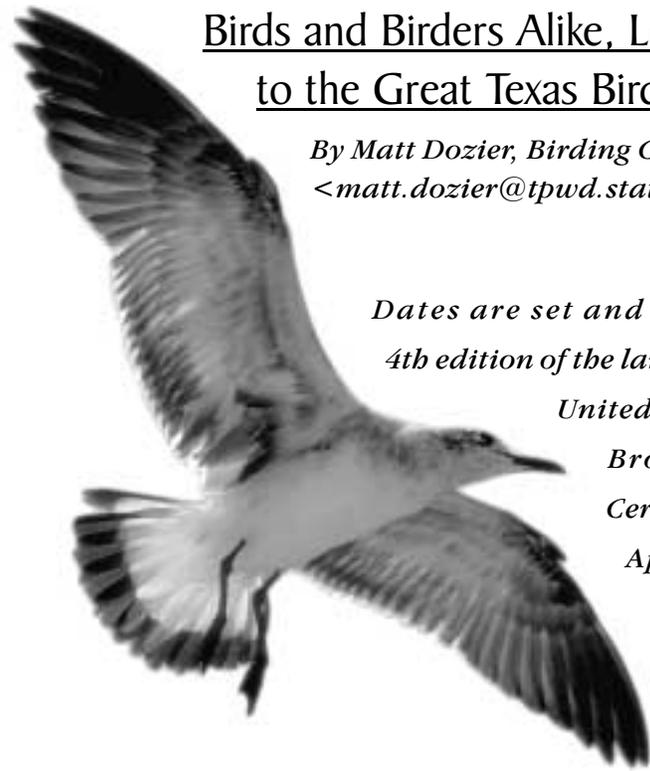
Birds and Birders Alike, Looking Forward to the Great Texas Birding Classic 2000

By Matt Dozier, Birding Classic Co-coordinator, TPW
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*Dates are set and host cities selected for the
4th edition of the largest birdwatching tournament in the*

*United States. The 2000 Birding Classic starts April 7, 2000 in
Brownsville, Texas, with registration and the Opening
Ceremony. The event moves up the coast to Port Aransas on
April 13 with the V.I.P. Birding Tour and Community
Appreciation Cruise. We wrap-up in Texas City with the
Awards Brunch and Closing Ceremony on April 16.*



The Great Texas Birding Classic offers a unique opportunity for birders of every age and skill level to compete in friendly competition. Categories include Roughwing competitors (8-13 years old), Gliders (14-18 years old), Adult (19 and over), and Seniors (65 and over). Teams compete for prizes in the three individual sections of the coast, or in all three sections for the Conservation Cash Grand Prize (CCGP). The real winners each year are the birds, with a combined total of \$150,000 from the first three years (1997-1999) going to habitat conservation or wildlife viewing enhancement projects along the Coastal Birding Trail. The CCGP money goes to the birds not the teams; the teams win the right to choose where the money was awarded.

In 1997, the winning Compaq/Houston Audubon Society team split the \$50,000 1st prize equally among three projects:

- (1) The John M. O'Quinn IH45 Estuarial Corridor Acquisition and Restoration Project. Awarded money went toward the purchase of almost 900 acres of intertidal emergent coastal wetland, and the restoration of nearly 40 badly degraded acres. This area now provides habitat for many species including Piping and Snowy plovers, Peregrine Falcon, Reddish Egret, and Black Rail.
- (2) Colonial Waterbird Sanctuaries Project. Long-term avian monitoring project for high priority bird species including Piping and Snowy plovers. Expansion of the Texas Colonial Waterbird Survey, conducted annually by the Texas Audubon Society on 31 sanctuary islands in Texas.

- (3) Wings Over Weslaco. Money used for construction of a viewing blind on the Frontera Audubon Society Sanctuary. This woodlot is home to many native South Texas avian specialties, as well as Green Parakeets, Red-crowned and Yellow-headed parrots.

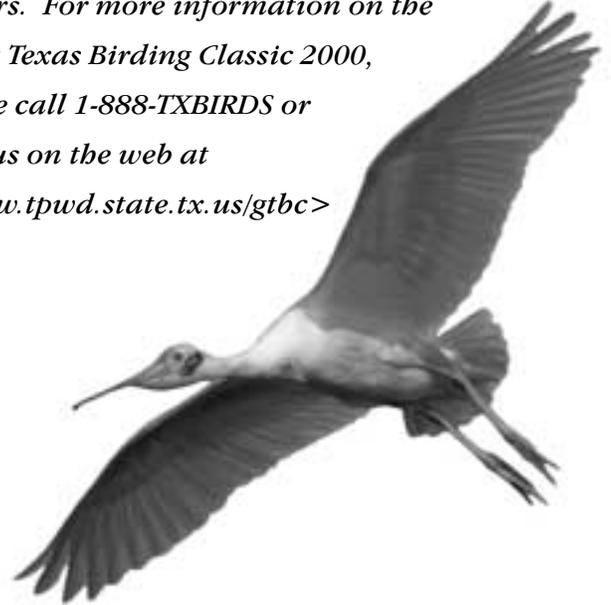
In 1998, the team sponsored by *WildBird* Magazine decided to divide the \$50,000 1st prize unequally among three conservation projects:

- (1) Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary Addition. Money used toward paying for 178-acre tract adjacent to Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary. Wetlands on this tract drain into sanctuary marshes used by 25 species of shorebirds, endangered Brown Pelicans, and wintering Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows.
- (2) South Padre Island Habitat Protection and Restoration. Money used to acquire, revegetate, and protect habitats containing native brush vegetation valuable to such high priority species as Swainson's, Chestnut-sided and Cerulean warblers following trans-Gulf migrations.
- (3) Harlingen Bird Sanctuary. Award used to help pay back loans for the purchase of 40 acres of native thornbrush and riparian habitat, important to breeding, migrating, and wintering birds.

In 1999, the rules changed to allow the top three winning teams to designate a project to receive money. First Place from *WildBird* Magazine was allocated \$25,000, Second Place from Landmark Graphics \$15,000, and Third Place from Phillips Petroleum \$10,000.

- (1) Paradise Pond Sanctuary Acquisition. Site survey and acquisition of 7.83-acre tract with two acres of natural, permanent freshwater depressional wetland (the only one on Mustang Island). This site is used by many high priority species including Swainson's, Worm-eating, and Cerulean Warblers as well as waterthrushes, cuckoos and tanagers. This pond is also used in the winter months by Mottled Ducks, Blue-winged and Green-winged teals, and Sora Rail.
- (2) Native Coastal Prairie Restoration at Anahuac NWR. Money will go to control Chinese tallow, restore natural hydrology, and reintroduce native prairie grass seed on abandoned rice fields. Once restored, the fields could be suitable for Henslow's, Le Conte's, Grasshopper and Nelson's Sharp-tailed sparrows, as well as Black and Yellow rails.
- (3) Partners in Flight Migration Monitoring Program: Tracking Landbird Migration in Texas and Beyond. Long-term monitoring of high priority migratory birds, including Franklin's Gull, Mountain Plover, Buff-breasted Sandpiper as well as 200+ species of nearctic-neotropical migratory landbirds that use stopover habitat along the Gulf Coast (see article on this by Cecilia Riley in this newsletter).

Come join the fun and help preserve the unique opportunity that Texas has to offer birders. For more information on the Great Texas Birding Classic 2000, please call 1-888-TXBIRDS or visit us on the web at <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/gtbc>



New TX PIF Volunteer Projects

The following folks have graciously volunteered their time and effort to help with the following bird projects. Their efforts are much appreciated.

Sandy Birnbaum of Giddings is mapping the location of Monk Parakeet nesting sites in Texas (mostly on tall utility towers), and will be working with the power companies on removal of nests since a fire and weight hazard. Adjacent, non-electric towers could be erected to accommodate these naturalized and popular birds.

Julia Heskett of Austin is helping to gather material to provide guidelines on constructing wetlands at Wastewater Treatment Facilities (e.g., Hornsby Bend, Mitchell Lake, Fort Bliss, etc.) for communities wanting to build this "for the birds" and the birders. She is corresponding with a lot of folks (from engineers to biologists) so that she can compile information that will be produced in a readable "how to" booklet/web site.

Russ Nelson of Austin is working with Mark Klym of TPW as a hummingbird research assistant. He is entering data, and digging through raw Hummingbird Roundup data to answer specific questions for a forthcoming book on hummers of the southern U.S.

Tony Tucci of Austin is helping on the completion of another booklet in the TPW series of bird families (e.g., On the Warblers of Texas). He is working on the waterfowl of Texas.

The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail

By Linda Campbell, Nature Tourism Coordinator, TPW
<linda.campbell@tpwd.state.tx.us>



If you like to combine travel with wildlife watching, the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail is for you. This driving trail has been developed to help birders and other wildlife watchers find great wildlife viewing spots along the Texas coast. Private citizens, land managers, conservation groups, businesses, government agencies, and communities are working together to build a model wildlife viewing trail, the first of its kind in the nation.

Texas is now internationally known as one of the world's premier birding destinations with over 615 bird species reported, more than any other state. The 600+ mile Texas coast is home to most of these species, including year-round residents and migrants that add color to coastal woods and shore each spring and fall.

The \$1.4 million birding trail project is part of broader plans to boost nature tourism in Texas as a way to achieve both economic development and wildlife conservation. Annually, wildlife watching contributes \$1.2 billion to the Texas economy, and more than \$28 billion nationwide, according to the 1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Funding for the trail is coming from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in the form of federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA) grants totaling \$1.4 million.

The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail has spawned interest in other states, including Florida, Maryland, and Virginia, providing an international model for government-sponsored nature tourism. Since the project's inception, requests for maps have come from Canada, England, Australia, the West Indies, Germany, Mexico, Scotland, South Africa, the Netherlands, as well as every state in the U.S.

"When you look at the sheer number and variety of species we have on the Texas coast, there is no richer birdwatching experience in the nation," said Andrew Sansom, Texas Parks and Wildlife's Executive Director. "The problem is that birding destinations in Texas have historically been unorganized, with most sites functioning independently. The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail combines these independent sites into cohesive, marketable units."

The Birding Trail, which winds through 41 Texas counties, is being constructed in three sections: Upper, Central, and Lower coasts. Completed in late 1999, the trail features more than 300 distinct wildlife-viewing sites. Each site is well-marked with the trail logo and with a unique site number. A total of 20 sites are planned for enhancements such as boardwalks, kiosks, observation platforms, and/or landscaping to attract native wildlife.

“When you look at the sheer number and variety of species we have on the Texas coast, there is no richer birdwatching experience in the nation.”

Each section of the trail has a map showing 12-16 separate loops. Each loop encompasses an array of different habitat types and the different birds that frequent each habitat. The color-coded loops on the front and back of each map provide easy access to related information. The trail maps have information about the birds likely to be found at each site, the best season to visit, and food and lodging available in the vicinity.

The new upper coast trail features 125 sites within 15 loops. It begins at Tony Houseman State Park and Wildlife Management Area off IH10 near the Louisiana

State line, and extends to the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge near Brazosport. The lower coast portion of the trail, extending from Sarita through the Lower Rio Grande Valley and up to Laredo, was completed in late 1999.

But the trail is more than new signs and a map. It includes physical “enhancements” ranging from boardwalks and observation platforms to the protection of important bird

Other enhancements for the upper coast include constructing a parking area at Sabine Woods, planting a butterfly/hummingbird garden in Texas City, and completely wildscaping the TxDOT rest stop in High Island for birds. Texas Parks and Wildlife is also working with the City of Galveston, the Army Corps of Engineers, and Galveston residents to enhance the woodlot in Galveston across from the ACOE headquarters. All of this work, including the placement of signs, should be completed by early 2000.

“By creating the birding trail, we are leading people into areas where tourism dollars are extremely important, particularly in smaller communities.”

habitat. The lure of potential tourist bucks from a natural history driving trail has spurred many communities to build facilities, set aside wetlands, or take other action that has the effect of protecting wildlife habitat.

Enhancement examples include a newly completed boardwalk at Sea Rim State Park near Port Arthur. “People will now be able to experience a coastal wetlands ecosystem up close and personal,” said Ted Eubanks, owner of Fermata, Inc. an Austin-based nature tourism company with clients across the U. S. and Latin America. He is a co-creator of the Texas birding trail concept and has logged thousands of miles researching trail sites. “Texas has incredible wealth of natural resources, but many are unknown, tucked away in little corners,” Eubanks said. “For example, when the wild azalea canyons along the Sabine River north of Beaumont bloom in spring, it’s an extraordinary site, but few people know about it. By creating the birding trail, we are leading people into areas where tourism dollars are extremely important, particularly in smaller communities.”

The new upper and lower Texas coast maps are available at no cost. They have been shipped to various chambers of commerce, convention and visitors bureaus, businesses, state parks, and refuges

along the coast. Copies may be obtained from TPW by calling the toll-free phone number 1-888-TXBIRDS and selecting the option for the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. E-mail requests should be directed to <mark.klym@tpwd.state.tx.us>. The maps are also available at TxDOT Travel and Information Centers and District Offices.

Meanwhile, the popular central coast map has been enhanced and reprinted. It has been digitally remastered (the colors are much brighter), and two new sites have been added. Donations are being accepted to offset the cost of future reprints once the initial printings (paid for by the grant) are exhausted. If you would like to help TPW continue to provide these beautiful maps to nature tourists from around the world, send your contribution to the:

Birding Trail Map Fund
Texas Parks and Wildlife
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas, 78744



World Birding Center: Conservation and Community Economic Development

By Madge Lindsay, TPW World Birding Center Project Leader
<tpwdwbc@acnet.net>

Ten (10) Rio Grande Valley communities and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have signed agreements with Texas Parks and Wildlife to launch one of the nation's most innovative regional ecotourism projects. Focused on the rapidly growing recreational pursuit of birdwatching along with habitat conservation and economic sustainability as its main objectives, the World Birding Center is a grand project to launch in the new millennium. The initiative has gained the support of the Texas State Legislature with a commitment of \$7 million in funding and the Lone Star Legacy Campaign conducted by the Parks and Wildlife Foundation of Texas with an additional \$5-8 million. Other state and federal agencies, foundations, industry and conservation organizations are expected to join in the project that includes three main interpretive centers and seven destinations featuring bird diversity, habitat, and natural history.

The largest facility and headquarters is planned for the community of Mission, Texas, near Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park, where a new park conservation plan focused on water needs,

habitat restoration and ecology are being developed. Two additional centers, that are also new birding sites, are in the plans for Brownsville near Resaca de Las Palmas, and at Llano Grande Lake near Weslaco. All ten sites offer new habitat conservation areas and enhanced bird viewing amenities.

Programs, including restoration demonstrations for habitats such as wetlands, brush, grasslands, and backyard gardens will be featured. Bird art, nature photography, and a national butterfly park to compliment the local ecotourism industry are also part of the plan. Each of the ten sites will be uniquely interpreted and will include a natural, regional experience from South Padre Island and the Gulf of Mexico migration corridor to the

dry habitats where east meets west at Roma in Starr County. In between, birders will experience a pre-settlement habitat that is newly protected in Harlingen, and take boat trips to wilderness areas near Rio Hondo. Great birding coupled with the beauty and history of habitat are planned at McAllen and Hidalgo on the lush estate grounds of Quinta Mazatlan and on the Rio Grande at the historic Hidalgo Pumphouse. Urban wetland habitats will be featured in a popular city park in Edinburg. All sites will focus on birds and the need for habitat conservation.

The World Birding Center's location on the Mexico Border makes it a prime location for developing international partnerships and joint ecotourism programs. Working relationships with conservation counterparts in Mexico have begun. Additional habitat conservation

initiatives for declining bird populations are much needed in the Valley and in the Northeastern Mexico region—one of the North America's most rapidly developing corridors.



Avitourism, currently valued at over \$100 million annually in the Valley, will further enhance this new conservation initiative. The project's economic merit has gained the attention and support of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, who are committed to its development. Seven million dollars gathered from the communities of Mission, Brownsville, Weslaco, Harlingen, and Edinburg will match grant dollars provided by the state; the project is expected to cost approximately \$30 million. Program and architectural design with ecotourism experts, conservation planners, and communities are underway. The grand opening for the World Birding Center is planned to open in 2001-2002. Stay tuned for more exciting details.

Birding Is For Family

By David Shackelford, Texas A&M University
<dss8375@ACS.TAMU.EDU>

I knew when I saw my dad's hand waving me toward him, our four-hour drive to the upper Texas coast was well worth the trip. We had been searching for three and half-hours, together, to find a bird that would be a new lifer for both of us. Now I must admit that a rare find such as that is few and far between birding adventures, but our many experiences together again paid off. As we stood along the road near Sea Rim State Park, we watched an exhausted Cape May Warbler preen itself following a long flight across the Gulf of Mexico. Its vibrant mix of a brilliant yellow body, deep black streaking down the breast, white wing patches, and vivid chestnut cheeks made this one of the most rewarding birds we had ever seen together. One woman we spoke with later in the day who had also seen the Cape May Warbler, accurately described it as "the most beautiful thing she had ever seen."

My name is David Shackelford. During the past several years my dad, Bill McDaniels (Park Superintendent at Pedernales Falls State Park [PFSP]), and I have birded extensively. He introduced me to birding at PFSP, my home, and I was weaned on sparrows. In a short time, I learned the Edwards Plateau birds and was ready to "branch out" and improve my birding skills in other regions. My dad and I started taking trips to places like Galveston, where my life list quickly grew due to the large variety of species found in the area. Since then we have traveled all over to share birding experiences in the pursuit of rare finds.

During 1999, even though we had not ventured out of Texas, we saw over two hundred fifty species. Two of the highlights included a trip to the Lower Rio Grande Valley in March, and several visits to the upper Texas coast, especially during migration. Some special moments were during the search, and finally we sighted Burrowing Owl, Clay-colored Robin, Tropical Parula, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and Bobolink.

While the birding is wonderful and gives me a lot to look forward to while I'm in school at Texas A&M University, the best thing about birdwatching with my dad is the time we get to spend together. So many kids grow away from their parents when they leave home. By traveling together, exploring new places, and searching for elusive birds, we get several days to share our thoughts and stay

in touch with one another. We have grown closer because we not only share a common interest, but we also share the memories of unique experiences and great adventures.

The owners of the El Canelo Ranch in South Texas saw the special bond between my father and me and felt it was appropriate to read this poem to us during our stay there to see the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. It was written by a previous guest at the ranch and expresses his feelings about father-and-son relationships while birding together.

*Father and son head south
in search of feathered friends,
sharing excitement of new discoveries
shared discoveries strengthen family ties.
Memories made in the journey
Highlights captured for all time.
Shared together in passionate pursuit.*



The author (right) and his dad

Editor's Note:

David Shackelford is not related to me, Cliff Shackelford

Limpia Canyon Bird Banding Station: The First Seven Years

By Linda K. Hedges and Kelly B. Bryan, Natural Resource Program, TPW
<linda.hedges@tpwd.state.tx.us> and <kelly.bryan@tpwd.state.tx.us>

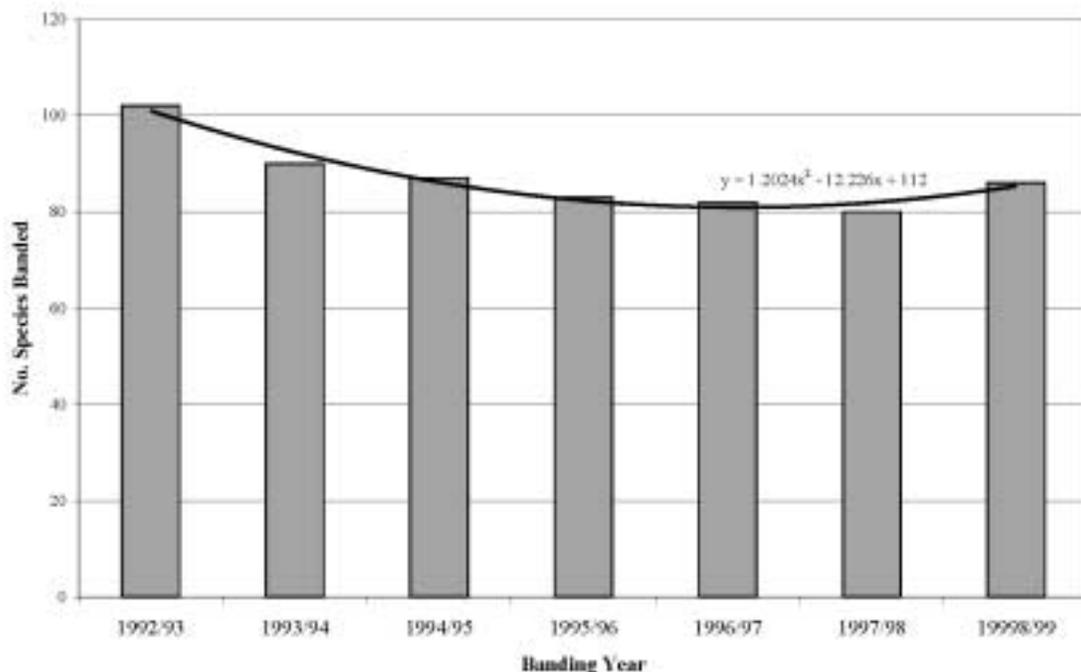
The Limpia Canyon Bird Banding Station (LCBBS) at Davis Mountains State Park (DMSP) was established by Kelly Bryan in August, 1992, to: 1) collect qualitative and quantitative baseline data on bird populations, and 2) provide an educational opportunity for park visitors. DMSP lies between the Central and Pacific migratory flyways in the Trans-Pecos region of Far West Texas. LCBBS is located in the Limpia Canyon Primitive Area of DMSP approximately 3 miles northwest of Fort Davis, Texas. This banding station is positioned in a riparian system on the floodplain and terraces of Limpia Creek, a predominately ephemeral watercourse that drains a large portion of the Davis Mountains. Banding has been conducted during fall and spring migration periods (August-November, and March-May, respectively) since the inception of the program, and operation is being continued by qualified volunteers. During 853 days (37,530 net hours) of operation, 18,800 birds of 143 species have been recorded, including 31 species previously unknown from DMSP. Over 6,000 visitors from 50 states and 22 foreign countries have visited this station.

Nine orders of birds are represented in the 143 species that have been netted at LCBBS, including 121 species

from 23 families in the order Passeriformes (the perching birds). After excluding non-banded species (all hummingbirds and the Montezuma Quail), 134 species have been banded. Of these, 15 (11%) are non-migratory (permanent residents), 60 (45%) are Temperate migrants, and 59 (44%) are Neotropical migrants. Forty-two species (31%) breed at LCBBS or in the immediate vicinity, 29 (22%) breed elsewhere in Jeff Davis County, and 63 (47%) occur only during migration, or as summer or winter visitors.

Species richness (the number of species banded) has been tracked for three distinct seasonal periods: early fall (Aug-Sep), late fall (Oct-Nov), and spring (Mar-May), and for each banding year. On average, the greatest species richness has been recorded in spring, followed by early fall, and finally late fall. The highest number of species (72) was banded in spring 1993, whereas the lowest number (38) was banded in late fall 1993. An average of 87 species was recorded during each banding year (Aug-May), ranging from a high total of 102 during 1992-93 to a low of 80 during 1997-98. To assess the trend from 1992-1999, regression analysis was applied to species richness values (Figure 1).

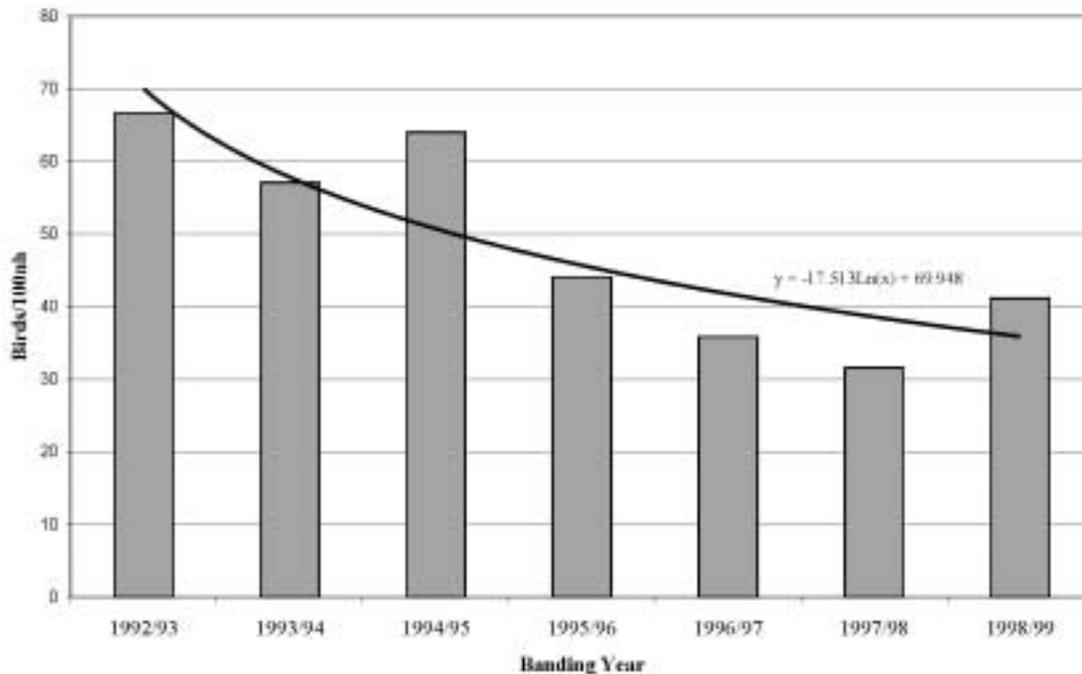
Figure 1
Species Richness



Although there was considerable deviation among years, the average capture rate for each seasonal period was fairly consistent (48/100 net hours in early fall, 51/100 net hour in late fall, and 47/100 net hours in spring). The highest

capture rate occurred in 1992-93 (67 birds/100 net hours), while the lowest occurred in 1997-98 (32 birds/100 net hours). To assess the trend from 1992-1999, regression analysis was applied to quantified capture rates (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Capture Rates



The data indicate a decline in overall abundance and species diversity during the study period. Climatic patterns appear to be the primary factor influencing this trend. A drought persisted during the middle 1990s (1993-1998), which adversely impacted natural resource quality at DMSP and the Limpia Creek riparian area. Creek flow was severely reduced at LCBBS; the stream ceased to flow in spring 1993 and remained dry except during a four-month period following the rains of Hurricane Fausto (a Pacific system) in mid-September, 1996.

In spite of these adverse conditions, these data indicate that the Limpia Creek riparian system represented at LCBBS is extremely important stopover habitat for both Neotropical and Temperate migrants in terms of both abundance and diversity. Thirty-one species documented during the banding study were previously unknown from DMSP, and they included: Magnificent Hummingbird, Lucifer Hummingbird, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Anna's Hummingbird, Calliope Hummingbird, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Hammond's Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Crissal Thrasher, Tennessee Warbler, Northern Parula, Hermit Warbler, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Louisiana Waterthrush, Mourning Warbler, Canada Warbler, Hepatic Tanager, Cassin's Sparrow, Black-chinned Sparrow, Lark Bunting, Grasshopper Sparrow,

Swamp Sparrow, Varied Bunting, Dickcissel, Bronzed Cowbird, Cassin's Finch, and Evening Grosbeak.

A number of significant trends are apparent in the data set as well:

- (1) Several species that were well represented during the first half of the study have been scarce to absent during the last half of the study, including: Cassin's Kingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Lazuli Bunting, Cassin's Sparrow, and Orchard Oriole.
- (2) The timing and extent of early fall migration (primarily involving Neotropical migrants) has occurred later during the second half of the study than during the first. The data show a definite peak in late September, whereas, early in the study these southbound migrants peaked early in the month.
- (3) Habitat quality region-wide affects the abundance of bird communities using the Limpia Creek riparian corridor, especially during late fall when Temperate migrants (mainly sparrows) are passing through. These species tend to be more abundant within the riparian system when environmental conditions are poor in the uplands.
- (4) LCBBS is open to the public on days of operation. For additional information, contact the Davis Mountains State Park at 915/426-3337.

Bird Checklists for Texas State Parks



By Mark W. Lockwood
Natural Resource Program, TPW
<mark.lockwood@tpwd.state.tx.us>

The Natural Resource Program of Texas Parks and Wildlife began producing bird checklists for state parks in 1975. Over the past 25 years, this effort has continued to grow through

the help of a core group of volunteers, the checklist compilers.

These booklets are one of the primary sources of natural resource information on Texas State Parks available to the public.

Currently, bird checklists are available for 54 state parks, including all of the major birding parks in the system. New checklists have been published for Atlanta, Big Bend Ranch, Cooper Lake, Martin Creek Lake, and Possum Kingdom state parks, and Devils River State Natural Area during 1999. During the past year many checklists have been updated, including Garner, Goose Island, McKinney Falls, and Meridian state parks to name a few.

The fifth edition of *A Checklist of Texas Birds*, also a Natural Resource publication, was printed in early 2000.

As with previous editions, the new version includes a listing of all of the birds documented in Texas and follows the nomenclature and classification of the new American Ornithologist's Union Check-list of North American Birds. A copy of this list can also be found on the TPW Web site <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/wild/birds/txchecklist/intro.htm>. As new species are added to the list, updates will be posted regularly to this Web site.

In addition to the continued efforts to provide the public with accurate and up-to-date listing of the birds occurring in these state parks, several avian baseline studies are underway. Quantitative studies are currently in progress at Colorado Bend, Devils River, Davis Mountains, Palo Duro Canyon, and Pedernales Falls state parks. Government Canyon State Natural Area, an undeveloped site in northwestern Bexar County, is being surveyed by San Antonio Audubon in order to collect relative abundance data. One of the products of this work will be a high quality bird checklist for the site when it is open to the public.

You can contribute to State Park checklists by reporting details of new and unusual sightings or changes in status to the Natural Resource Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744. You can also report sightings through e-mail to Mark Lockwood (e-mail address above). Persons interested in conducting point counts or other quantitative studies of the birdlife on state parks can contact the Natural Resource Program at TPW.

Texas Birding Question Help Desk

By David Sarkozi, Chairman Ornithology Group, Outdoor Nature Club, Houston TX
<dsarkozi@flash.net>

The Texas Birding Question Help Desk is now up and running. The Texas Birding Help Desk is a panel of experienced birders and ornithologists that will try their best to answer your questions about birds in Texas. You can ask a question via e-mail by sending your question to:

tex-bird-help@listserv.uh.edu

The Help Desk will answer questions about birds in Texas, but will not answer questions about where to go

birding or birding sites. The panel entertains questions from anyone, especially beginners. Because the Help Desk doesn't want to be a substitute for your own learning and study, answers may contain references to other sources of information that we hope you'll explore. We want to encourage individual study and scholarship about birds.

That said don't be shy about asking a question. Every panel member is a volunteer who wants to help. Your question won't be shared with anyone except the panel.

How to Improve Hummingbird Habitat in Your Area

By Mark Klym, Wildlife Diversity Program, TPW
<mark.klym@tpwd.state.tx.us>

In 1994, Texas Parks and Wildlife initiated a citizen science program known as the Hummingbird Roundup with the goal of improving conservation of hummingbirds by gathering information about their distribution and providing information to the public. By far the most commonly asked question about hummingbirds is “where are they and how can I attract them to my yard?” This is often accompanied by an elaborate description of the hundreds of hummingbirds buzzing about a neighbor’s yard, while the yard in question is ignored.

By far the most common misconception about hummingbirds is “if you hang a feeder, they will come.” While hanging a feeder may attract some birds, simple landscaping techniques that recall the four basic needs of wildlife—food, water, shelter, and space—will greatly enhance your hummingbird watching.

Hanging a “nectar” feeder (sugar water) for hummingbirds has become almost as common as the backyard birdfeeder among homeowners. This will provide energy needs for the hummingbird, but not the protein needs. To supplement the sugar water, and enhance the numbers and varieties of hummingbirds in your yard, an attractive garden of plants known to draw hummingbirds is a must. The birds will feed both on the natural nectar and the numerous insects making use of the plants. Some examples of effective plants include salvias (overwhelmingly #1), hibiscus, honeysuckle, trumpet creeper, lantana, and Turk’s cap. Not only will these plants attract hummingbirds (and butterflies and more), they are pleasant to look at and enhance the property with color.

Another concern is maintaining the quality of hummingbird food. Homemade “nectar” should never be colored. In the hot Texas weather, change the food every 2-3 days if the hungry hummingbirds do not consume it before then.

The hot weather also makes it important to provide a reliable water source for these birds. This may include a birdbath, sprinkler, mister, or dripper—better yet a combination of these forms. A birdbath, to be most effective for hummingbirds, should consist of moving water not more than 1/8” deep, the shallower the better. This could include associating the bath with a dripper, placing a mister or sprinkler close by, or the more costly fountains available in many garden centers. Once

the birds come to rely on the water, it is important to keep it fresh.

Shelter is important to hummingbirds—shelter from predators and shelter from the wind while nesting. Protection from predators (i.e., cats, shrikes, roadrunners, preying mantids, etc.) are provided by placing feeders in open areas, so that the birds can see predators and rivals before it’s too late. The best style of feeder are those that stand out from the edge of the eave, but not in front of a window, or those hanging from a pole in the middle of the yard. Provide a convenient shrub or tree that birds can retreat to, and the birds will welcome it.

Nest protection from the wind is demonstrated by the most frequent location of hummingbird nests—on the second layer of branches (protected by the outer layer) of trees. When we consider the size of these nests, the size of the eggs and chicks in the nest, and the powerful winds that often accompany a spring storm, the need for shelter is obvious. Mature trees offer the most shelter, especially if they are sturdy limbed.

These simple ideas, employed around your home and encouraged among friends, relatives, and others in your community will help to encourage hummingbirds to visit your area. Texas, with 18 different species recorded within its borders and several more within short distances of its borders, has the greatest diversity of hummingbird species in the entire U.S. Providing for the needs of hummingbirds will help you enjoy more of them.



For more information on hummingbirds and the Hummingbird Roundup, please try the TPW Web site <www.tpwd.state.tx.us> Go to the Birding page under Nature.

If you are interested in attracting hummingbirds, butterflies and countless other wildlife species, pick up a copy of the new Wildscapes book by Noreen Damude and Kelly Conrad Bender. This detailed book is almost 400 pages, and it gives tips on how to attract wildlife to your property. A 1999 TPW Press/UT Press publication, it can be ordered by sending a check for \$24.95 made out to “Wildscapes” to: Texas Parks and Wildlife, ATTN. Wildscapes, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744.



Over Forty Useful and Interesting Web Sites on Birds and Bird Conservation

(Listed in no particular order)

- Texas Parks and Wildlife Birding Page (lots of great information; don't miss checking out this site!) <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature>
- Partners In Flight <www.partersinflight.org> and the Colorado Bird Observatory <www.cbobirds.org/pif/index.html>
- American Bird Conservancy <www.abcbirds.org>
- The Great Texas Birding Classic <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/birding/bclass/index.htm>
- International Migratory Bird Day information and so much more, try the American Birding Association's Web site <www.americanbirding.org>
- World Birding Center <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/birding/wbc.htm>
- North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) <http://rfi.on.ca/cec/about_frame.htm>
- Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA; formerly called Teaming With Wildlife where, if approved/passed, millions of dollars in secured funding will go towards nongame conservation and more) <www.teaming.com>
- Physiographic Regional maps for Partners In Flight <www.cast.uark.edu/pif/main/maincont.htm>
- Bird Species Management Abstracts by The Nature Conservancy's "Wings of the America" project <<http://www.tnc.org/wings>>
- Breeding Bird Lab <www.mbr.nbs.gov/bbs/bbs.htm> and <www.mp2-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/>
- Christmas Bird Count data, Project Feeder Watch, and many other great Cornell Lab of Ornithology citizen science projects <<http://birdsource.tc.cornell.edu>> and <www.birds.cornell.edu>
- Migratory songbird conservation <www.fws.gov/r9mbmo/pamphlet/songbrd.html>
- Free-roaming domestic cats and their effect on native wildlife <www.dfg.ca.gov/hcpb/feralcat.html> and <www.abcbirds.org/catindoo.htm>
- Updates on Legislation, Regulation and Policy matters affecting birds <www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET>
- Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) Web site <<http://www.io.com/~pdhulce/tos/tos.html>>
- Archives for the listserv "Texbirds" <www.audubon.org/listserv/TEXBIRDS.html>
- Aplomado Falcon reintroduction in Texas information, try the Peregrine Fund's Web site <www.peregrinefund.org/conserv_aplomado.html>
- Purple Martin Conservation Association <www.purplemartin.org>
- Hawk Watches in Texas <www.electrotex.com/aoc/>
- Information on bird diseases, mortality and health <www.emtc.nbs.gov/nwhhome.html>

Want to join the Southeast Partners in Flight Listserv?

To subscribe, simply send an e-mail message to <listserv@listserv.uark.edu> with the following message in the body: subscribe separt-l *your name* (Example message: subscribe separt-l Cliff Swallow). The character after "separt" is a lower case L, not the number one.

- David Sarkozi's Birds of the Upper Texas Coast (with an amazing amount of great links; be sure and check this one out!) <<http://texasbirding.simplenet.com/>>
- Migration Over the Gulf Project (amazing quantitative data on migratory birds and insects tallied from off-shore oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico) <www.transgulf.org>
- Archives of Passport to Texas <www.passporttotexas.com>
- Shorebirds, wetlands, and more, try Manomet Bird Observatory <www.manomet.org> or <www.mesc.usgs.gov/shorebirds/> for more information on shorebirds
- Whooping Cranes at Aransas NWR <www.electrotex.com/aoc/>
- Attwater's Prairie-Chickens <<http://southwest.fws.gov/refuges/texas/apc.html>>
- Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) bird conservation Web site <www.epa.gov/owow/birds>
- Backyard bird feeding <www.fws.gov/r9mbmo/pamphlet/feed.html>
- Providing homes for birds <www.fws.gov/r9mbmo/pamphlet/house.html>
- Bird Identification Web site that is just like a field guide, try the USGS <www.mbr.nbs.gov/id/framlst/framlst.html>
- Backyard bird problems/nuisances <www.fws.gov/r9mbmo/pamphlet/prob.html>
- Problems with cormorants, try the USFWS home page <www.fws.gov/index.html> or for a more specific fact sheet <www.fws.gov/r9mbmo/issues/cormorant/fish%5Fimpacts.html>
- Problems with an urban heronry/rookery (coming to this Web site in mid-2000) <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/birding>
- Waterfowl and wetland information <www.ducks.org>
- Alpha Codes used by banders and birders <www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/manual/aspeclst.htm#E>
- Gulf Coast Bird Observatory <www.gcbo.org>
- Land Trust Alliance information <www.lta.org>
- Texas Department of Transportation county maps <www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/txdot/TXDOTCounty.html>
- Information on flying birds striking towers, wires, buildings, etc. <www.towerkill.com>
- Information on constructing a wastewater wetland for birds and other wildlife <www.humboldt.edu/~ere_dept/marsh/ownmarsh.html#top>

A Guide to the TX PIF Outreach Pamphlets

The following outreach and education publications have been completed either by or with great assistance from the TX PIF office since 1997. Check for most of these publications on the TPW Web site <www.tpwd.state.tx.us> on the Birding Page under Nature.

To order a hardcopy of any of these publications, please contact Mark Klym, Information Specialist, at <mark.klym@tpwd.state.tx.us> for details. All publications will require a small donation to the Nongame Fund to defray the costs of printing and shipping.

- (1) **Migratory Landbirds of the Southeast: Valuable and Vulnerable.** A Partners In Flight poster by W. C. Hunter, C. E. Shackelford, et al. in 1998. Full-color poster on one side with detailed text on the other; 90,000 printed in March and distributed across the Southeastern U.S. [out-of-stock; no funds to reprint]
- (2) **Woodpeckers of the eastern Texas pineywoods.** A trifold pamphlet by M. M. Parker, C. E. Shackelford and J. Faulk in 1997. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR R3000-015 (8/97).
- (3) **How can you assist migratory landbirds?** A trifold pamphlet by C. E. Shackelford in 1998. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-333 (2/98).
- (4) **A Guide to Austin-area Birding Sites.** A large, fold-out map. S. D. Scroggs and C. E. Shackelford were on the Production Management Team in 1998. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-328 (2/00).
- (5) **Texas Partners In Flight's Flyway Newsletter.** Spring 1997-Spring 1998, Vol. 5. A 16 pp. newsletter by C. E. Shackelford (compiler and author) in 1998. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-233 (3/98).
- (6) **Providing and Maintaining Nesting Habitat for Chimney Swifts: A Guide for Homeowners.** A trifold pamphlet by P. D. Kyle and G. Z. Kyle in 1998. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-246 (6/98).
- (7) **The Flight STAR Program: Securing Tomorrow's Avian Resources.** A 12 pp. booklet by C. E. Shackelford and F. Collins in 1998. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-330 (7/98). [modified from Georgia PIF, thanks to E. J. Williams].
- (8) **Have you seen this bird?** The Swallow-tailed Kite "watchable wildlife" survey trifold pamphlet by C. E. Shackelford and G. G. Simons in 1998. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-315 (3/00).
- (9) **On the warblers of Texas.** A 20 pp. booklet by C. E. Shackelford in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD W7000-534 (2/00).
- (10) **The endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker and modern forestry: Living in harmony.** An 8 pp. booklet by C. E. Shackelford and J. A. Reid in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-361 (6/99).
- (11) **An Annual Report of the Swallow-tailed Kite in Texas: a survey and monitoring project for 1998.** A 12 pp. booklet by C. E. Shackelford and G. G. Simons in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Partners In Flight, Temple-Inland Forest, and U.S. Forest Service (cooperators). Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-496 (3/99).
- (12) **Project Prairie Birds: A citizen science project on wintering grassland birds.** A 24 pp. workbook by C. E. Shackelford, N. R. Carrie, C. M. Riley and D. K. Carrie in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-485 (3/99).
- (13) **Project Prairie Birds: A citizen science project on wintering grassland birds.** A trifold pamphlet (that promotes the above workbook) by C. E. Shackelford, N. R. Carrie, C. M. Riley and D. K. Carrie in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-587 (10/99).
- (14) **Migration and the Migratory Birds of Texas: Who they are and where they are going.** A 36 pp. booklet by C. E. Shackelford, E. R. Rozenburg, W. C. Hunter, and M. W. Lockwood in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-511 (2/00).
- (15) **The annual birding festivals of Texas: Summer 1999 through Spring 2000.** A trifold pamphlet by C. E. Shackelford, S. D. Scroggs, J. T. Williamson, and C. M. Klym in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7100-267 (5/99).
- (16) **The Birder's Directory of Texas: Birding Clubs, Licensed Bird Banders and Reporting Bird Sightings.** A 32 pp. booklet by C. E. Shackelford, S. D. Scroggs, and M. M. Reimer in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BK W7000-331 (7/99).
- (17) **Nuisance Heronries in Texas: Characteristics and Management (Second Edition).** An 8 pp. booklet by R. C. Telfair III, B. C. Thompson, and L. Tschirhart in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-134 (1/00).

- (18) **Rare and declining birds of Texas: Conservation needed.** An 8 pp. booklet by C. E. Shackelford and M. W. Lockwood in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD W7000-588 (2/00).
- (19) **The Purple Martin and Its Management in Texas.** A 28 pp. booklet by J. D. Ray in 2000. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BK W7100-254 (Coming by mid-2000).
- (20) **Woodpecker Damage: A Simple Solution to a Common Problem.** An 8 pp. booklet by C. E. Shackelford in 2000. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD W7000-616 (Coming by mid-2000).
- (21) **A Checklist to the Birds of the Pineywoods of Eastern Texas.** *In prep.* by C. E. Shackelford, D. E. Wolf, and C. D. Fisher [expected completion by mid-2000].
- (2) **An Introduction to Birdwatching.** A 27 pp. booklet by N. Damude and M. S. Pavlas in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BK W7000-476 (7/99).
- (3) **Bluebirds in Texas.** A 40 pp. booklet by N. Damude and M. S. Pavlas in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-512 (9/99).
- (4) **The Great Texas Birding Classic.** A trifold pamphlet by M. D. Dozier and S. D. Scroggs in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-572 (8/99).
- (5) **The Roughwings Birding Competition: A Youth Competition for Ages 8-13.** A trifold pamphlet by M. D. Dozier and S. D. Scroggs in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-578 (10/99).
- (6) **Species Profiles: Black-chinned Hummingbird and Ruby-throated Hummingbird.** A trifold pamphlet by J. N. Phillips and M. M. Lindsay in 1997. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-310 (6/97).
- (7) **A Quick Reference Guide to Texas Hummingbirds.** A 13 pp. booklet by J. N. Phillips and M. M. Lindsay in 1997. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BK W7100-305 (8/97).
- (8) **The Great Texas Birding Classic: Participant.** A 28 pp. booklet by S. D. Scroggs and M. Dozier in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BK W7000-323 (12/99).

The following bird-related publications have been completed by various staff at TPW since 1997. This list does not include bird checklists for state properties. For details on obtaining birding trail maps, please see the article that appears in this issue by Linda Campbell (p. 12).

- (1) **Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife.** A trifold pamphlet by K. C. Bender in 1999. Texas Parks and Wildl. PWD BR W7000-537 (6/99).



Providing Nest Boxes for Cavity-nesting Birds

By Clifford E. Shackelford

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There are over 60 species of secondary cavity-nesting birds (chickadees, titmice, ducks, owls, flycatchers, etc.) in the U.S., and an additional 25+ species of birds (woodpeckers, nuthatches, etc.) that construct these cavities, called primary cavity nesters. This means that 10-15% of all North American breeding bird species require cavities for nesting and/or for roosting (and not to mention all the mammals and invertebrates that use these holes, too). Ten to fifteen percent is a healthy percentage of birds, many of which occur in Texas.

If you are interested in providing an artificial nest box on your property, the best book out is *Woodworking for Wildlife: Homes for Birds and Mammals*. The author is Carrol Henderson with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and his book was published in 1992. Many bird book stores and mail order companies sell it. The price is about \$15.

If you have trouble locating a copy, there's a phone number listed in the front of the book for the Minnesota DNR: 651/296-6157. Ask where you can purchase a copy.

Flyway

Texas Partners in Flight
Texas Parks and Wildlife
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas 78744

