

THE PRAIRIE HORNED LARK

January, 1968

2709 S. Fairfield, Amarillo, Texas 79103

Vol. V, No. 1

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT:

A record-breaking 76 species were recorded on Dec. 30 as nine hardy birders made the annual Christmas bird count in the Palo Duro Canyon. The day dawned cloudy and gray which was reflected in the moods of the participants as prospects of a good count were dimmed by the likelihood of snow. By noon, however, the skies had cleared, the hawks were moving, and everyone became jubilant as each birder returned to the first water crossing and the compilation of the numbers of species seen took place. At that time 62 different birds had been tallied, which tied our previous record, and Lake Tanglewood remained to be counted! With hearty appetites and high spirits all devoured their lunches with gusto and your Editor can report one of the most satisfying and enjoyable of counts.

The following people took part: Peggy Acord (compiler), Thelma Fox, Molly Harshman, Mrs. T. A. Hollar, Carroll Littlefield, Rev. & Mrs. Charles Pedersen, Kenneth Seyffert, and Esther Waddill.

The following species were seen (for numbers of each species see the forthcoming April issue of the Audubon Field Notes): Pied-billed Grebe; Canada Goose; Mallard; Gadwall; Pintail; Green-winged Teal; American Widgeon; Shoveler; Redhead; Canvasback; Common Goldeneye; Common Merganser; Red-tailed Hawk; Rough-legged Hawk; Ferruginous Hawk; Golden Eagle; Bald Eagle; Marsh Hawk; Prairie Falcon; Sparrow Hawk; Bobwhite; Scaled Quail; American Coot; Killdeer; Mourning Dove; Roadrunner; Great Horned Owl; Belted Kingfisher; Yellow-shafted Flicker; Red-shafted Flicker; Golden-fronted Woodpecker; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Wilson's Sapsucker; Ladder-backed Woodpecker; Horned Lark; Scrub Jay; Black-crested Titmouse; Common Bushtit; Bewick's Wren; Long-billed Marsh Wren; Canyon Wren; Rock Wren; Mockingbird; Curve-billed Thrasher; Sage Thrasher; Robin; Hermit Thrush; Eastern Bluebird; Mountain Bluebird; Townsend's Solitaire; Golden-crowned Kinglet; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Loggerhead Shrike; Starling; House Sparrow; Western Meadowlark; Red-winged Blackbird; Cardinal; House Finch; American Goldfinch; Green-tailed Towhee; Rufous-sided Towhee; Brown Towhee; Savannah Sparrow; Rufous-crowned Sparrow; Black-throated Sparrow; Slate-colored Junco; Oregon Junco; Tree Sparrow; Field Sparrow; Harris' Sparrow; White-crowned Sparrow; Fox Sparrow; Lincoln's Sparrow; Song Sparrow; McCown's Longspur.

JANUARY MEETING:

It was announced in the December issue of this newsletter that our annual dinner would be held at the Colonial Cafeteria on Jan. 15 at 7:30 p.m. This was in error as the time will be 6:30 p.m. The showing of the film The Grand Canyon will be preceded by our dinner and business session; so, if you cannot make the dinner itself perhaps you can get there in time to see the film. Your guests are welcome!

OTHER CHRISTMAS COUNTS:

Leo Galloway and Kenneth Seyffert attempted to make a bird count at Black Mesa, Okla. but were forced out by high winds, bitter cold, and snow before they could accomplish it. Forced to think of other things, they continued over icy roads to Arnett, Okla. for their second count of the Lesser Prairie Chicken in that location (their third in that general area), and were able to tally 159 of the birds on 12/28. This compares to the record-breaking 433 counted there last year. Although the prairie chicken count was down they did up the total species count from 57 to 59. Hopes are high that respectability in chicked numbers can be regained this coming year with the help of Ruth Galloway who remained home curled up with a dissertation on how to convince college freshmen that the study of English literature is well worth the effort.

Carroll Littlefield once again took part in the Christmas count at the Muleshoe Refuge and reported 55,000 Sandhill Cranes there. Still dealing in high numbers, he counted 2300 or more McCown's Longspurs on his annual Friona, Texas, count. Carroll holds the national record for this species and states he will expand his self-conducted count to include the full 15 mile diameter circle should any other count threaten to surpass his. A very interesting observation of his this winter was the sighting of the Marsh Hawks roosting in a marshy area of land near his home at Friona. He has seen as many as 60 of these birds coming in to this spot and remaining overnight. Subsequent nights produced 42 and 37 birds. Community roosting of Marsh Hawks is not generally known.

NEW MEMBERS:

We are pleased to announce the entrance of two new members into our society since the last notice was made in this newsletter. We welcome Mrs. W. E. Harrison of 1015 Kansas in Amarillo and Mr. James D. Crow of Canadian, Texas. Our total membership now stands at 39.

NEW BIRDS AND OTHERS:

1967 was a phenomenal year for birds in this area. Big Day on May 7 produced 145 species which far exceeded the previous totals for that occasion. Also, on that day a new bird for the two-county area was seen by Peggy Acord, et. al, the Prothonotary Warbler. Returning for a week-end stay, Leo and Ruth Galloway saw the Cactus Wren on July 14 while Vera Deason saw a young Ringed Turtle Dove in her back yard on Sept. 14, Peggy Acord and Rena Ross made a long and detailed study of a Black-legged Kittiwake at Buffalo Lake on Nov. 28, and equally fabulous, Thelma Fox and Peggy observed a Western Gull on the ice at Buffalo Lake on Dec. 28! The grand total of birds for the two-county area for 1967 came to 279 species which sets a record, exceeding 1966's impressive 275. Starting the new year right, Kenneth Seyffert reported a Northern Shrike along the road north of Umbarger, and 20 Boat-tailed Grackles near Llano Cemetery.

BIRD BEHAVIORISTS, BOTH NEW AND OLD:

As reported in a recent issue of The Condor, Dr. Tom J. Cade and Gordon L. Maclean made detailed observations of the Namaqua Sandgrouse which lives in the Kalahari Desert of Africa. "The male sandgrouse flies to a water hole, soaks its under feathers, and then flies back to his hiding brood and stands upright with the same feathers fluffed out. Immediately the chicks come running and 'strip' the water from the feathers with their beaks. This remarkable method of delivering water was reported in captive sandgrouse 70 years ago but scientists doubted its accuracy.

The male's abdominal feathers, they found, have the special capacity to absorb and hold water like a sponge. In order to soak his feathers the male wades into the water until it touches his abdomen, then squats down and rocks his body up and down repeatedly, meanwhile shaking out his feathers so that water is worked into them. The whole soaking process may last more than 25 minutes.

The distance the male can transport water to his brood, which he leaves in charge of his mate, depends on how quickly he can reach them before the water evaporates in the hot, dry desert air. The male flies at a speed conservatively estimated at 40 miles per hour. Considering the amount of the water which the feathers can absorb and the amount sufficient for the young sandgrouse, Cade and Maclean believe that the male can deliver enough water after covering a distance of 20 miles.

In reporting their observations, they remarked: "There is a moral to be read in the literature that has developed about sandgrouse in the last 70 years. We have found it strange --- and a little disconcerting --- that points of fact, such as how sandgrouse drink and transport water to their young, should so long remain in question.... Yet the fact of water transport in the belly feathers, well documented by direct observations on captives and indirectly corroborated by field observations of adult males wetting their feathers, has been labeled a myth and is categorically stated to be 'not so' in A New Dictionary of Birds, the most recent, 'authoritative' compendium of our knowledge about birds'."

In the 15th century John Skelton made several observations on a "velvet-crowned sparrow", to wit one Phillip Sparrow, to whom he sang a dirge for his mistress upon its being got by a cat:

.... "It had a velvet cap,
And would sit upon my lap
And seek after small worms
And sometime white bread crumbs;
And many times and oft
Between my brestes soft
It would lie and rest;
It was proper and prest.

Sometime he would gasp
When he saw a wasp;
A fly or a gnat,
He would fly at that;
And prettily he would pant
When he saw an ant;
Lord, how he would pry
After the butterfly!

Lord, how he would hop
After the grasshop!

And when I said, "Phip! Phip!"
Then he would leap and skip,
And take me by the lip...."

Probably nine hundred and ninety-nine birders out of a thousand would look with skepticism at a bird that would "gasp when he saw a wasp", but let us not be too sure. It would appear far more plausible for a bird to react aghast at an undesirable object than to expect one to carry water in its breast feathers 20 miles to sustain its young.

INCREASE IN DUES SCHEDULED:

Beginning March 31, 1968, individual membership dues will be increased from \$8.50 to \$10.00 per year. Of this amount \$4.00 will be sent to the local branch while \$6.00 goes to the National Society. Of the \$8.50 now being charged, \$3.00 goes to the local and \$5.50 to National. Dues on all other classes of membership will remain the same as at present. Until this date arrives new or renewable individual memberships will be accepted at the old rate.

The changes are part of a master plan that includes appointment of three additional field representatives, one of which will be stationed in Texas. The purpose is to strengthen the Audubon movement at the grass roots.

DID YOU KNOW?:

The skeleton of a frigate bird with a 7 foot wing spread weighs 4 ounces, which is less than the weight of its feathers!

In the foods they select to fuel their engines, birds conserve weight. Just as an airplane cannot be powered by a wood-burning steam engine, so the metabolism of most flying birds is not powered by bulky low calorie foods such as leaves and grass. Birds eat seeds, fruits, worms, insects, rodents, and the like --- foods rich in calories. They burn "high test gasoline".

Fruit fed to young Cedar Waxwings passes through their digestive tracts in as little as 16 minutes. Other perching birds may take from one-half to two hours to pass food through their bodies.

If a Ruffed Grouse is flushed four times in rapid succession, its breast muscles will become so fatigued that it can be picked up by the hand, unable to fly even a few feet. The blood supply is inadequate to bring fuel and oxygen and to carry away waste products fast enough to keep the muscles functioning.

CALENDAR:

- Jan. 15: Annual Society dinner at the Colonial Cafeteria - 6:30 p.m.
Showing of the film The Grand Canyon.
- Feb. 11: Field trip to the Glenn Ranch.
Meet at entrance to Six Gun City, Palo Duro Canyon State Park, at 2:30 p.m.
- Feb. 19: Monthly Society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
Talk by the Superintendent of the Lake Meredith recreation area.

LIST OF BIRDS SEEN IN POTTER-RANDALL COUNTIES, TEXAS,
DURING 1967 BY MEMBERS OF THE TEXAS PANHANDLE AUDUBON SOCIETY

1. Common Loon
2. Horned Grebe
3. Eared Grebe
4. Western Grebe
5. Pied-billed Grebe
6. White Pelican
7. Double-crested Cormorant
8. Great Blue Heron
9. Green Heron
10. Little Blue Heron
11. Common Egret
12. Black-crowned Night Heron
13. Yellow-crowned Night Heron
14. White-faced Ibis
15. Whistling Swan
16. Canada Goose
17. White-fronted Goose
18. Snow Goose
19. Blue Goose
20. Ross' Goose
21. Mallard
22. Gadwall
23. Pintail
24. Green-winged Teal
25. Blue-winged Teal
26. Cinnamon Teal
27. American Widgeon
28. Shoveler
29. Redhead
30. Ring-necked Duck
31. Canvasback
32. Lesser Scaup
33. Common Goldeneye
34. Bufflehead
35. Ruddy Duck
36. Hooded Merganser
37. Common Merganser
38. Red-breasted Merganser
39. Turkey Vulture
40. Mississippi Kite
41. Sharp-shinned Hawk
42. Cooper's Hawk
43. Red-tailed Hawk
44. Broad-winged Hawk
45. Swainson's Hawk
46. Rough-legged Hawk
47. Ferruginous Hawk
48. Golden Eagle
49. Bald Eagle
50. Marsh Hawk
51. ~~To~~ Osprey
52. ~~Prairie~~ Falcon
53. Peregrine Falcon
54. Pigeon Hawk
55. Sparrow Hawk
56. Bobwhite
57. Scaled Quail
58. Ring-necked Pheasant
59. Turkey
60. Sandhill Crane
61. Sora
62. American Coot
63. Semipalmated Plover
64. Snowy Plover
65. Killdeer
66. Black-bellied Plover
67. Common Snipe
68. Long-billed Curlew
69. Upland Plover
70. Spotted Sandpiper
71. Solitary Sandpiper
72. Willett
73. Greater Yellowlegs
74. Lesser Yellowlegs
75. Pectoral Sandpiper
76. White-rumped Sandpiper
77. Baird's Sandpiper
78. Least Sandpiper
79. Dunlin
80. Long-billed Dowitcher
81. Stilt Sandpiper
82. Semipalmated Sandpiper
83. Western Sandpiper
84. Marbled Godwit
85. Sanderling
86. American Avocet
87. Black-necked Stilt
88. Wilson's Phalarope
89. Western Gull
90. Herring Gull
91. Ring-billed Gull
92. Franklin's Gull
93. Bonaparte's Gull
94. Black-legged Kittiwake
95. Forster's Tern
96. Black Tern
97. Rock Dove
98. Mourning Dove
99. Ringed Turtle Dove
100. Yellow-billed Cuckoo
101. Roadrunner
102. Barn Owl
103. Screech Owl
104. Great Horned Owl
105. Burrowing Owl
106. Long-eared Owl
107. Short-eared Owl
108. Poor-will
109. Common Nighthawk
110. Black Swift
111. Chimney Swift
112. White-throated Swift
113. Ruby-throated Hummingbird
114. Black-chinned Hummingbird
115. Broad-tailed Hummingbird
116. Rufous Hummingbird
117. Belted Kingfisher
118. Yellow-shafted Flicker
119. Red-shafted Flicker
120. Golden-fronted Woodpecker
121. Red-headed Woodpecker
122. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
123. Williamson's Sapsucker
124. Hairy Woodpecker
125. Downy Woodpecker
126. Ladder-backed Woodpecker
127. Eastern Kingbird
128. Western Kingbird
129. Cassin's Kingbird
130. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
131. Great Crested Flycatcher
132. Ash-throated Flycatcher
133. Eastern Phoebe
134. Black Phoebe
135. Say's Phoebe
136. Empidonax species
137. Eastern Wood Pewee
138. Western Wood Pewee
139. Olive-sided Flycatcher
140. Horned Lark

141. Violet-green Swallow
142. Tree Swallow
143. Bank Swallow
144. Rough-winged Swallow
145. Barn Swallow
146. Cliff Swallow
147. Blue Jay
148. Stellar's Jay
149. Scrub Jay
150. White-necked Raven
151. Common Crow
152. Black-crested Titmouse
153. Verdin
154. Common Bushtit
155. White-breasted Nuthatch
156. Red-breasted Nuthatch
157. Pygmy Nuthatch
158. Brown Creeper
159. House Wren
160. Winter Wren
161. Bewick's Wren
162. Carolina Wren
163. Cactus Wren
164. Long-billed Marsh Wren
165. Short-billed Marsh Wren
166. Canyon Wren
167. Rock Wren
168. Mockingbird
169. Catbird
170. Brown Thrasher
171. Curve-billed Thrasher
172. Sage Thrasher
173. Robin
174. Wood Thrush
175. Hermit Thrush
176. Swainson's Thrush
177. Gray-cheeked Thrush
178. Veery
179. Eastern Bluebird
180. Western Bluebird
181. Mountain Bluebird
182. Townsend's Solitaire
183. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
184. Golden-crowned Kinglet
185. Ruby-crowned Kinglet
186. Water Pipit
187. Bohemian Waxwing
188. Cedar Waxwing
189. Northern Shrike
190. Loggerhead Shrike
191. Starling
192. Yellow-throated Vireo
193. Solitary Vireo
194. Red-eyed Vireo
195. Philadelphia Vireo
196. Warbling Vireo
197. Black & White Warbler
198. Prothonotary Warbler
199. Orange-crowned Warbler
200. Nashville Warbler
201. Virginia's Warbler
202. Parula Warbler
203. Yellow Warbler
204. Magnolia Warbler
205. Myrtle Warbler
206. Audubon's Warbler
207. Black-throated Gray Warbler
208. Townsend's Warbler
209. Black-throated Green Warbler
210. Blackburnian Warbler
211. Chestnut-sided Warbler
212. Bay-breasted Warbler
213. Blackpoll Warbler
214. Ovenbird
215. Northern Waterthrush
216. Louisiana Waterthrush
217. MacGillivray's Warbler
218. Yellowthroat
219. Yellow-breasted Chat
220. Wilson's Warbler
221. Canada Warbler
222. American Redstart
223. House Sparrow
224. Western Meadowlark
225. Yellow-headed Blackbird
226. Red-winged Blackbird
227. Orchard Oriole
228. Bullock's Oriole
229. Brewer's Blackbird
230. Boat-tailed Grackle
231. Common Grackle
232. Brown-headed Cowbird
233. Western Tanager
234. Cardinal
235. Rose-breasted Grosbeak
236. Black-headed Grosbeak
237. Blue Grosbeak
238. Indigo Bunting
239. Lazuli Bunting
240. Painted Bunting
241. Dicksissel
242. Evening Grosbeak
243. Purple Finch
244. Pine Siskin
245. American Goldfinch
246. Lesser Goldfinch
247. Red Crossbill
248. Green-tailed Towhee
249. Rufous-sided Towhee
250. Brown Towhee
251. House Finch
252. Lark Bunting
253. Savannah Sparrow
254. Grasshopper Sparrow
255. Baird's Sparrow
256. Vesper Sparrow
257. Lark Sparrow
258. Rufous-crowned Sparrow
259. Cassin's Sparrow
260. Black-throated Sparrow
261. Sage Sparrow
262. Slate-colored Junco
263. Oregon Junco
264. Gray-headed Junco
265. Tree Sparrow
266. Chipping Sparrow
267. Clay-colored Sparrow
268. Brewer's Sparrow
269. Field Sparrow
270. Harris' Sparrow
271. White-crowned Sparrow
272. White-throated Sparrow
273. Fox Sparrow
274. Lincoln's Sparrow
275. Swamp Sparrow
276. Song Sparrow
277. McCown's Longspur
278. Lapland Longspur
279. Chestnut-collared Longspur
280. Pyrrhoxia
281. Band-tailed Pigeon

TEXAS PANHANDLE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Annual Report
January 15, 1968

OFFICERS

President - Mr. Jim Jokerst
Vice President - Mr. Kenneth Seyffert
Secretary - Mrs. George Waddill
Treasurer - Mr. Armon T. Mays
Recorder - Mrs. I. D. Acord

BOARD MEMBERS

Term expires 1968: Mrs. H. D. Dolcater
Mr. Tolliver Settle
Term expires 1969: Mrs. Grady Fox
Mrs. George Ross
Term expires 1970: Mrs. Joe Deason
Mr. Leo Galloway

MEMBERSHIP: 39

MEETINGS:

The Society has met monthly, January through May and September through December. Programs have included talks on the butterflies of the Texas Panhandle (illustrated with mounted specimens), the Buffalo Lake Wildlife Refuge, the Palo Duro Canyon State Park, the paintings of John James Audubon, the facilities available at the Amarillo Public Library for students of bird life, and the showing of nature slides and films made by our members.

CONSERVATION:

Talks: Mrs. I. D. Acord, 10 talks to 700 people; Jim Jokerst, 2 talks, 100; Leo Galloway, 1 talk, 40; Thelma Fox, 1 talk 50; Rena Ross, 1 talk, 50; total, 15 talks to 940 people.

Individual letters to senators and representatives urging support of various conservation programs, including the prevention of the building of dams in the Grand Canyon, the establishment of a Big Thicket National Park and a Redwoods National Park.

FIELD ACTIVITIES:

279 species of birds sighted in Potter and Randall Counties. Recorded for the first time in the two-county area: Western Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Ringed Turtle Dove, Cactus Wren, and Prothonotary Warbler.

6 field trips: Buffalo Lake, Palo Duro Canyon, the Currie Ranch, Ellwood Park, and Llano Cemetery.

BIG DAY: 11 participants, 145 species.

Amarillo Christmas Count: 3 participants, 76 species

Arnett, Okla., Christmas Count: 2 participants, 59 species.

PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES OF THE AMARILLO COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS:

White Elephant Sale
Festival of Trees (TPAS entry: "Mariposa").
Support of campaign for construction of a new Garden Center.

*educational display at the opening of the new Garden Center
members donated gifts to the cold at the Fest. of Trees*

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES:

Participation in North American Nest Record Card Program for third consecutive year.

Representation at the TOS Spring meeting @ the Guadalupe Mtns. & Fall meeting at Brownsville.

Participation for the first time in the Cooperative Breeding Bird Survey of North America.

Submission of Breeding Bird Census study for publication in the Audubon Field Notes.

Work begun on Wintering Bird Population study for future publication in the Audubon Field Notes.

Volume IV of the Prairie Horned Lark printed, consisting of nine issues.

Field Trips and Monthly Programs
Scheduled for the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society in
1960*

PROGRAMS:

- January 15: Annual meeting. Showing of the film The Grand Canyon.
- February 19: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
Talk by the Superintendent of the Lake Meredith recreation area.
- March 18: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
Talk by Jim Jokerst on The Lesser Prairie Chicken.
- April 15: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
Talk by Dr. Brooks, entomologist at West Texas State University.
- May 20: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
Wild Flowers - the showing of color slides.
- September 16: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
The showing of slides taken during the summer vacation.
- October 21: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
The Shore Birds - an illustrated talk.
- November 18: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
Film - to be announced.
- December 28: Annual Christmas Bird Count.

FIELD TRIPS:

- February 11: Glenn Ranch - meet at entrance to Six Gun City, Palo Duro Canyon State Park - 2:30 p.m.
- ~~March 3: Buffalo Lake - meet at bait house at Umbarger - 8:30 a.m.~~
- April: Prairie Chicken trip - details to be announced at March meeting.
- April 20: Bird walk at Llano Cemetery at 8:30 a.m. led by Thelma Fox.
- April 28: Bird walk at Ellwood Park at 7:30 a.m. led by Kenneth Seyffert.
- May 5: Bird walk at Memorial Cemetery at 7:00 a.m. led by the Settles.
- May 12: Big Day - details to be announced at April meeting.
- May 18: ; Bird Walk at Memorial Cemetery at 8:30 a.m. led by the Rev. and Mrs. Charles Pedersen.
- July 14: Bird Walk and breakfast at the Palo Duro Club at 7:00 a.m.
- August 3 & 4: Trip to Cloudcroft, New Mexico, for hummingbirds.
- September: Tentative field trip to the Bivins Ranch.
- October: Field trip to the Tom Green Ranch north of Vega, Texas.
- November: Field trip to Lake Tanglewood. Date to be announced.
- December 28: Annual Christmas Bird Count.

*Due to unforeseen circumstances this schedule may have to be altered as the year progresses. Members will be notified when this is necessary.