

ANNUAL DINNER:

The annual dinner of the TPAS was held on Jan. 15 at the Colonial Cafeteria with 13 members present along with 9 guests. We regret we were unable to show the scheduled film on the Grand Canyon. Upon receiving at the last minute notice that it could not be supplied, we put in a hurried call to Chicago and had flown to us the film on the Life Zones of the Central Rockies.

The newly elected officers are:

President - Kenneth Seyffert
 Vice-President - Jim Jokerst
 Secretary - Esther Waddill
 Treasurer - Armon Mays
 Recorder - Peggy Acord
 Board Members - Lucille Fiedler
 - Tol Settle

The new President and the officers wish to thank the members for the confidence you have placed in them. The degree of enthusiasm and assistance that have been offered since election night is keenly appreciated and we look forward to a productive year.

MORE PAPER WORK:

Attached to this newsletter is a form we are sending to each of you asking that you keep thereon a yearly list of each species of bird you have seen in Potter-Randall counties, showing the dates each was first and last seen during the period January through June, and the dates first and last seen during the period July through December. After the end of the year this completed form should be given to our recorder, Peggy Acord, from which she can compile a master list. This information will be of great value to this Society, particularly in connection with the migratory birds. Do you know when to expect the return to this area of the Mississippi Kite in the spring, or when the first Orange-crowned Warbler will be back with us in the fall? Just how early do the shorebirds come back in the summer? We all have a pretty good idea insofar as our own observations go but it is impossible for one person to accumulate all the necessary information to make such a list of arrival and departure dates that will carry a great deal of accuracy. It will take many of us recording this information over an extended period of time to enable us some day to publish a new checklist which will incorporate this much needed data. It will also make the job of your Recorder easier.

If any of you have past records that you would care to submit, please ask for additional forms from Peggy or myself. If you have the old records but feel you haven't the time or inclination to transfer them to these forms I, for one, will be glad to do it for you, and your records will be returned to you.

For those of you who live in the Texas Panhandle and who are willing to share your hard won findings with us, please do so. Just scratch out the Potter-Randall County heading and insert the name of your own area. All records will be returned to their owners upon request.

PROGRAM FOR FEBRUARY MEETING:

Mr. Michael Becker, Superintendent of the Sanford Recreation Area, or a member of his staff, will present the program for our February meeting. The subject to be presented has been left open to him and I am sure that whatever his choice is will be of great interest to each of us.

Thelma Fox has volunteered to precede this program by giving a short talk on an explosive subject - The Hunter and the Wildlife Refuge System. Be prepared to contribute to this potentially lively discussion.

BIRDING IN THE NEW YEAR:

Among Thelma Fox, Rena Ross, Peggy Acord, Esther Waddill and Katherine Whipple, a goodly number of interesting birds have been seen since the beginning of the new year.

On 1/16 Thelma and her sister, Mrs. T. A. Holler, found in the Palo Duro the first Western Bluebirds that have been seen in this area since early in 1967. They also found 3 Verdins in the general area of the riding stables which is encouraging news as it was in this area that the first nest of this species was found last spring and which produced 3 young. On 1/24 a group of them saw 2 Carolina Wrens at the Palo Duro Club. Since this species has been recorded a number of times in recent years at that location, it would appear that it is establishing itself as a resident. At the same time and place a Red-headed Woodpecker was seen which is an extremely early observation of it for this area. Meanwhile, back in town, two very large flocks of Cedar Waxwings were seen, primarily in Memorial Park, where a Gray-headed Junco was also present. On 1/26 they reported 4 Greater Yellowlegs on a plays off S. Washington St. which is one of the earliest dates that it has been seen here. It has been noted by several of them that the Harris' Sparrows are rapidly coming into full plumage. Date not known but a group of them saw an immature Northern Shrike at the first water crossing in the Palo Duro.

Kenneth Seyffert reported 2 Brown Towhees in the area of the first water crossing in the Palo Duro Canyon, where they have been all winter, and on 1/14 he saw a Curve-billed Thrasher in the campground there. On the same date he observed a male Rufous-sided Towhee which lacked the white spots which are characteristic of the western race. On 1/20 he saw a Gray-headed Junco in the Canyon and on 1/27 a Prairie Falcon near the Tradewinds plays. On the week-end of 1/20-21, when the rains came, a drive by Buffalo Lake turned up one pair of Mallards and no Canada Geese. Others reported the same reduced numbers or absence of waterfowl there in the last few weeks; so, it would seem the big flocks have moved out. A sizable number of them can still be seen on the Elysian Fields plays south of town.

Peggy Acord made the "Blue Goose" tour led by Gordon Hansen and the refuge personnel at Buffalo Lake on 1/28 and Kenneth Seyffert made it with them on 2/4. These tours, which are open to the public, are

made on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, afternoons at 2:00, and allow one to observe and participate in the waterfowl banding program being carried out by the refuge people. Both observers report it to be an extremely interesting and rewarding trip and encourage everyone who can to make it. Peggy conveyed to the refuge staff the TPAS's sincere appreciation of what they are doing to increase understanding between the government and the public on the importance of the work being done there. The refuge people have always been kind to our organization in allowing us onto the refuge during the season when it is closed so that we could continue our observations on the birds present. It is interesting to note that during this season's banding program a Hooded Merganser was caught, a Redhead was trapped as early as 2/4, and on the same date a partial albino Mallard drake was caught. As Mr. Hansen stated, "This bird is one-in-a-million and will be sent to the taxidermist for mounting and it will be displayed at refuge headquarters." This is no doubt the same bird that Kenneth Seyffert saw flying over the lake last December. Gordon also stated that results of the banding program show so far that the Canada Geese which winter here do their nesting primarily in the prairie provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in Canada; furthermore, as an indication of the wide ranging capabilities of this species, one goose was recovered along the Bering Straits, some 2700 miles from Buffalo Lake, and one from Midway Island in the Pacific, 4000 or more miles away! The refuge supported the greatest number of Canada Geese in its history this year, 40,000, while the duck population peaked out at approximately 550,000.

A VACATION SURPRISE:

Along the nature lover's trail there's many a surprise. Who knows what's around the next bend? Take that Saturday evening walk, late in August, for instance. The children were turning sunflowers into necklaces and blowing dandelion heads to the breeze as we meandered along the road. We noticed the bluebirds on the wires and hummingbirds gathering their sweet supper. Often a flock of goldfinches would scallop along through the sky. Then they would settle down by the roadside and chatter and tweet between beakfuls of sunflower and weed seeds. What a thrill to be out in the Colorado Rockies enjoying it all! Then it happened! One little bird was so interested in his meal, we approached closer and closer, yet he continued eating ravenously. Was he a finch? We were so close we didn't need binoculars. Gradually we edged nearer and nearer. Still he kept his attention on his delectable tidbits oblivious of our threesome. Now we were so close we could see the fine detail of his feathery cloak. The tiny fellow was heavily streaked. There was a touch of yellow in his wings. It was a Pine Siskin! A car went by. Still he stayed. Other siskins and goldfinches flew overhead, calling. That didn't matter to him. There he was, upside down, getting another morsel. Dianna knelt down - her knee was within 5 inches of the birdlet - but it had no fear.

We could have reached out and touched him, but we dared not betray his trust. How long could we enjoy its company?

We scrutinized its every marking, and once in a while the siskin would stop to scrutinize back and say "t...-i-tit". Another finch fluttered by, but yet the bird lingered. We waited and watched spellbound. After about 10-12 minutes, we relaxed a bit, talked freely, and moved about more, but it didn't seem to mind our increased activity. Then, in a flash, he rose on his feathered wings, gave his buzzy "shreeeee", and was off.

Farewell, friend siskin. Thank you for the personal visit. When will you come again?

.....Lucile Fiedler

WHITE ELEPHANT SALE:

The 14th annual White Elephant sale has been set for March 7, 8 & 9, place to be announced. Thelma Fox has kindly volunteered to represent this Society on the department which has been designated to handle the sale of clothing, including household linens. A White Elephant has been defined as "any piece of good, salable merchandise. It may be new or used". Please call Thelma at 373-1276 if you have items to give.

WHEN WIP-POOR-WILLS CALL:

It has been reported by one of our lady birders that on a recent field trip to the Palo Duro Canyon a group of them were serenaded by the call of a Whip-poor-will. Now I know the day of the birdwatcher has arrived; when wolf calls are replaced by whip-poor-will calls then the influence of the birder has become tremendous.

NEW GARDEN CENTER BUILDING PROGRESS REPORT:

The shakes have been nailed in place on the auditorium roof. The bands of stucco have been painted white, and in general the building exterior is looking very handsome. The wood fiber panels are in place on the walls of the auditorium and the texture of the material adds interest to the big expanse of wall and from a practical standpoint should prove most helpful with acoustics.

Terraza floor of lobby has been poured. Some of the glass has been installed and it is now possible to lock up when the workmen leave. Partitions are in and give shape and feeling to rooms. The kitchen cabinets, library, office and gift shop shelving is in and the priming coats have been sanded.

The entire space under the lobby was excavated to make room for heating and air conditioning equipment which is now in place and looking highly efficient. Also on the lower level the walk-in cooler box is installed. It will soon be possible to hold flowers over for exhibits and shows! Cabinets and sinks are in place in the Garden Therapy workshops and in classrooms.

All kinds of interesting information is appearing on walls; one reads "putty canary"; another, 'horizon blue'; while another is marked 'coral'. These are exciting days!"

.....Vera Deason

ARIZONA WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES NON-GAME PROJECT (from the Defenders of Wildlife):

The first state in the West and possibly in the nation to start an action program

for managing non-game birds and mammals is the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The state agency has hired a trained person to fill a new position of non-game biologist, the Wildlife Management Institute reports.

The non-game biologist will have broad responsibility to investigate and make management recommendations for all kinds of birds and mammals not generally regarded as game species. The position directive also makes clear that planning and coordination of other department work will be done to benefit non-game species. The new activity will help the department to carry out its legal responsibilities to care for all wildlife in the state.

Costs of the new program are to be paid from hunting license fees and from Arizona's share of the 11 percent excise tax on sporting firearms and ammunition, the same as other department programs are financed.

THE PRESIDENT APPOINTS:

The following were appointed by the President as chairmen of our committees:

- Membership Committee: Thelma Fox
- Conservation Committee: Rev. Charles Pedersen
- Field Trip Committee: Peggy Acord
- Publicity Committee: Vera Deason
- Program Committee: Jim Jokerst

TWO BY NANCY RICHEY RANSOM:

Grasses

As strong as blades of tempered steel,
As delicate as lace,
The fragile grasses interweave
And hold the hills in place.

Pattering across the shore,
Leaving lacy tracks galore,
Nervous, tiny, daring sprite
Darting about with all its might -
Sandpiper.

A REPORT FROM FALCON LAKE, TEXAS:

"In mid-January as Joe and I approached the town of Zapata, Texas, from Laredo, we saw a Belted Kingfisher on a wire, plus a pair of Cattle Egrets and a Great Blue Heron in treetops of a deep gulch on the right side of the road. We turned around and parked on the bridge where we were able to observe the Egrets preening for several minutes, and feel there could be no mistake in their identity. Our reservations were at Lake Front Lodge on Falcon Lake. Managed by Mr. & Mrs. Gloyd Shockley, this place is owned by Morgan & Son, earth moving contractors of Borger. A landing strip on the property makes it convenient for the owners to keep in close touch and is also an inducement to fishermen who fly.

A short walk from our cabin down a little used truck road brought us close to one arm of the lake, quite away from all of the activity at the lodge, and through almost a thicket of cactus, mesquite, retama, huisache, and other shrubs and trees, all abounding with birds. Many weeds were quite full of seeds while other blooming shrubs filled the air with fragrance. Though the lake water was cold and people fishing from boats were rather miserable, the sun was warm and on the sheltered truck road we were most comfortable. Sunflowers at roadside showed frost damage but insects were flying everywhere as was

evidenced by the presence of the Vermillion Flycatcher, Say's Phoebe and Cassin's Kingbird. The following are those birds I had opportunity to see well and to study:

Loggerhead Shrike, Mockingbird and Townsend's Solitaire in abundance; Curve-billed Thrasher, Sage Thrasher, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Cardinal (pair) and many Phrrhuloxia; the beautiful dusky, brown form of the Fox Sparrow, in flocks: Sparrows, Savannah, Baird's, Black-throated, White-crowned, Clay-colored, Lark. The hunting season was just over and though quail could be heard calling they were especially quick to get out of sight; flocks of Am. Goldfinch; Cactus Wren; plus flocks of small seed eaters that I simply could not identify. Observed at length was a Hermit Warbler as he flitted about a mesquite tree; again observed him the following day for a shorter time in another tree.

Coming home we saw many Sparrow Hawks, Harris' and Rough-legged Hawks, as well as an abundance of Shrikes, a super-abundance of Grackles, Crows and Ravens. Saw one Bobwhite quail at roadside, several Roadrunners, a Scrub Jay at Garner State Park, one Golden Eagle, a flock of Mountain Bluebirds, one Eastern Bluebird, and many Mourning Doves. There were Coots, Great Blue Herons, and Grebes to be seen on Falcon Lake. There is much water in Mexico so no real concentration of ducks and geese on any one lake."
.....Vera Deason

DID YOU KNOW?:

The Golden Plover fattens itself on Labrador bayberries in the autumn and then strikes off across the open Atlantic on a nonstop flight of some 2400 miles to South America. It arrives there weighing about 2 ounces less than it did on its departure. This is the equivalent of flying a small airplane 150 miles on a gallon of gasoline rather than the usual 20 miles.

The smoothly streamlined Peregrine Falcon is reported to dive on its prey at speeds up to 180 m.p.h., while an antarctic Gentoo Penguin was once timed as swimming under water at about 22.5 m.p.h.

Many birds carry more feathers in winter than in summer. A Carolina Chickadee, taken on Fe. 19, had 1704 contour feathers, while one taken on June 4 had only 1140. An American Goldfinch had 2107 feathers on Feb. 26, and another individual only 1901 on April 1.

CALENDAR:

- Feb. 19: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
- March 3: Field trip to Buffalo Lake. Meet at the bait house at Umbarger at 8:30 a.m.
- March 18: Monthly society meeting.

"The highway is laid as smooth as glass
For miles and miles and the cars can pass,
But the ant and the bee and the bush and
the tree
Whose home it was are now exiles.
And the cars rush by for miles and miles,
To find a place where they can see
A plant, a bush, and a blade of grass,
And a ladybug, and a bee."

.....Malvina Reynolds