

PROGRAM FOR APRIL:

Because of the lack of a commitment at the time this goes to press, we are unable to announce the program for the April meeting. However, details of our field trip to Oklahoma on the week-end of 4/20-21 will be discussed at this meeting so be sure and be there. You will want to find out the directions for getting there and what the food and lodgings situations will be. Board members are urged to make the field trip if at all possible as several important matters will be taken up at that time.

TEMPO OF BIRDING INCREASES:

Beginning during the middle of March of each year, local birders anticipate the imminent return of the migrants and this year has been no exception in fulfilling their expectations. On 3/13 Peggy Acord reported 1 Blue Goose among 20-30 Snow Geese at Elysian Fields while on 3/24 K. Seyffert saw 4 of the former there along with 125 of the latter plus 1 White-fronted Goose, and on 3/30 1 Blue with 145 Snows at Buffalo Lake. Reports of Curve-billed Thrashers continue coming in - from within the city limits, Palo Duro Canyon, and Buffalo Lake - which indicates an unusual abundance of them for this area. One would like to list the return of each species but space does not permit. Some unusual sightings were the 24+ Eared Grebes at Elysian Fields on 4/2 made by Rena Ross and Peggy Acord, and some of the sightings of K. Seyffert at Buffalo Lake who saw a Ruddy Turnstone and 21 Long-billed Curlew there on 3/30 and 7 White Pelicans on both 3/30 and 31. On 4/6 he saw 3 Long-eared Owls together in the same tree at Buffalo Lake.

NEW MEMBERS:

We are happy to announce the enrollment of two new members in our Society, Mr. and Mrs. Harold B. Shile of 1213 S. Fannin.

IMPORTANT:

The scheduled bird walk at Llano Cemetery on April 20 has been cancelled in favor of the field trip to the Prairie Chicken grounds.

MORE CONCERNING THE BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE:

As reported by John Newell in the Spring issue of The Scissortail (bulletin of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society), an immature Black-legged Kittiwake was seen by him on Lake Overholser in Oklahoma City on 12/30/67, and subsequently by him and others through 1/28/68. This is of particular importance to us as Peggy Acord and Rena Ross also observed a lone immature of this species at Buffalo Lake on 11/28/67. It is extremely rare to see this bird this far inland.

PROGRESS OF SPRING:

Rena Ross and Vera Deason, along with two other garden clubbers, recently went to Corpus Christi to a meeting. Rena reveled in the numbers of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers (they were up as far as Pos) and took great pleasure in seeing how the flowers had come along. Last month there were only spring beauties along the coast. Now, flowers were beautiful as far up as San Antonio. The numbers of Little Blue Herons which were

around on the first trip were totally absent this time. The most exciting bird? The Sandwich Tern, always nice to us inlanders.

TWO BY EMILY DICKINSON:

"The robin is the one
That interrupts the morn
With hurried, few, express reports
When March is scarcely on.

The robin is the one
That overflows the noon
With her cherubic quantity,
And April but begun.

The robin is the one
That speechless from her nest
Submits that home and certainty
And sanctity are best."

"To hear an oriole sing
May be a common thing,
Or only a divine.

So whether it be rune,
Or whether it be none,
Is of within;

The 'tune is in the tree',
The skeptic showeth me;
'No, sir! In thee!'"

As Joseph Wood Krutch observed: "Emily could hear in a bird song the same sounds as another listener, though only Emily seems aware of the fact that the sweetness of a song, like the wit of a jest, lies in the ear of him who hears it."

UNITED STATE SENATE, MARCH 5, 1968:

"Dear Mrs. McDermott: Yes, we are working on the Big Thicket constantly. Every resolution passed by an Audubon Society, conservation society, or any other society should be forwarded to us. We need constant work by certain interests in Texas. Indifference and a desire to see this bill fail by certain interest in East Texas are the greatest enemies of progress here, but the more interest stirred up among your clubs and the more interest they show in it, the better my chances will be in getting action. In the case of the Padre Island National Seashore Recreation Area, it took me approximately four and one-half years to get the bill passed. I had much opposition in that area, though I also had the active help of many conservation societies in Texas.

...We have more fine literature on the Big Thicket than on any of the other parks proposed in Texas before the parks bills were passed but we need fighting action as well as literature. Letters to the Secretary of the Interior and to George Hartzog, Director of the National Park Service, should both be helpful.

Congratulations to you for all that you are doing, for all that the Audubon Society is doing, and for all of the publicity that you might give this desired Big Thicket Park."

....Ralph W. Yarborough

(taken from the Signal Snake, newsletter of the Travis Audubon Society, Austin, Tex.)

LAKE? (Charles Pedersen) - The logical conclusion to man's contamination of his environment is vividly presented in the Special Report of Barry Commoner, Ph.D., Chairman, Dept. of Botany, Washington University. The report, appearing in the 1968 World Book Annual, describes the results of human pollution in Lake Erie as "a tragic example of how man's lack of knowledge of his natural environment can rob him of the precious resources on which human survival depends."

Because our large Panhandle lakes - Buffalo and Meredith - already are in varying stages of human pollution, the report on Lake Erie gives us a warning.

It calls our attention to the credibility gap between the capabilities of science and the expectations of society. Increasing numbers of people look to the future with the hope that science and technology will provide solutions to all environmental problems we create through mismanagement of our natural resources. In the case of Lake Erie, science has pinpointed the causes of pollution, but the author adds, "if we are to survive, we must remake our urban, industrial, and agricultural technologies so that they will conform to the unconquerable demands of the natural environment on which human welfare and survival depend."

Lake Erie's source of pollution is 10 million people living on its southern and western shores. The urban centers, Detroit, Erie, Cleveland, Toledo, and Buffalo, pour industrial wastes from steel, automotive, petroleum, flour mill, chemical, glass, cement, and paper plants, into its waters.

From surrounding farmlands, fertilizers, insecticides, and weed-killers are carried in runoff water to creeks and rivers which transport the pollutants into the lake.

While we might imagine an accompanying lack of treated sewerage from human wastes, this is not the case. All but 5% of human wastes are processed in primary or primary-secondary treatment plants.

The treatment plants, while removing 90% of the organic matter from the sewerage water, return the treated water with its inorganic pollutants into an "over-fertilized" lake. The large amounts of algae already present, convert these inorganic wastes back into organic pollutants. This process of over-fertilization is further stimulated by the chemical fertilizers that drain off the farmlands into the lake. The BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand) of the algae is "27 times greater than the annual BOD of the organic wastes". It is the lack of oxygen in the water that has destroyed desirable fish production as well as their food supply.

The severe reduction of the oxygen level of the lake has affected the mud on the lake bottom. This mud has collected organic wastes for 100 years instead of their being carried out to sea as many believed. These organic wastes produced by the human settlement, now 30 to 125 feet in depth, have been contained naturally under a "skin" of ferric iron. With the reduction of the oxygen in the lower water levels, especially in the warm months, this protective layer now dissolves releasing accumulated human wastes which both contribute to a further reduction of the oxygen in the lake, and, assist in reconvertng the inorganic waste released from the treatment plants, to organic pollutants. Needless to say, swimming and other water recreation become restricted.

Even if our best methods of pollution control are employed on a massive scale, there is no assurance that Lake Erie will survive. Dr. Commoner suggests that it may become America's Dead Sea. There is no lake that is exempt from this judgment when subjected to excessive human pollution.

JAMAICAN IDYLL (Thelma Fox) - On our trip to Jamaica we found a lovely place for a family vacation or for any group interested in natural history. Our family group, seven adults and six children, occupied two of the three houses owned by Dr. and Mrs. Wickham Garcia at San San Bay near Port Antonio, Jamaica. The houses are on a hillside overlooking the bay and about a three minutes drive from the beach. On the three acres of gardens surrounding the houses 25 or more species of tropical trees are growing and on all sides are dense woods in which you can watch birds, explore the ruins of an old plantation house, hunt coconuts or just walk.

The most noticeable things the traveler from the temperate zone finds on the northeastern side of Jamaica are the trees and foliage. Nature seems to have endowed the tropical regions with a more lushness of foliage and more brilliant colors than the temperate zone. It was a strange new botanical world for me. Dr. Garcia identified for us the trees near the houses. As we drove around the countryside I was soon able to separate from the forest a few of the very distinctive trees - the Lignum Vitae, the Mango now in full bloom, the Breadfruit, the Banyan, the Pimiento, the Ackee, and the very beautiful African Tulip Tree. We were told that May and June are the months that the hillsides really burst into color.

The flowers, shrubs and vines were almost as amazing as the trees. Philodendron looks like a shrub at one place, climbs trees thirty or forty feet tall at others, and is dense enough to give shelter from a thunderstorm at another. Red Ginger, Shell Ginger, Wild Banana, Orchids, Chenille Plant, Anthurium and several species of Begonias are blooming now. A dozen shades of Crotons and Coleus add color to the landscape. A plant called "Moses in the Bull Rushes" was abundant and interesting.

Most of my birding was done from the three terraces, in the woods near the houses, or on the raft trip down the Rio Grand River. I found 63 species. 31 were West Indian and 32 are found in the United States. Anyone wishing to work harder could have found more. There were no sparrows but the little Grassquits took their place. The common bird was the Bananaquit. All three Jamaican, the Vervain, Jamaican Mango, and the National bird of Jamaica, the Streamertail (called Doctor Bird because early Jamaican doctors wore frock-tailed coats) were among the flowers. The Loggerhead Kingbird, looking and acting like the Eastern Kingbird, was everywhere. Turkey Vultures were very abundant. They

me in the yard often and I noticed that they were eating fruit. The tiny Jamaican Tody is an almost unbelievable sight. It is a beautiful green color with a red throat and a funny upturned bill. There were no parrots or parakeets in the lower mountains although they were abundant in this region at one time. Like our extinct Carolina Parakeet, they destroy crops, especially bananas. What others called a parrot I identified as a cuckoo and looking into the West Indies bird guide proved me to be right. The large size of the bird is what confused us as the bird was about 24" long.

In the evening we sat on the terrace and watched the pigeons and doves in the trees in the valley. In the shrubs around us were warblers, vireos, orioles and the White-chinned Thrush. In the sky above soared a familiar sight - the Red-tailed Hawk.

You are welcome in Jamaica. The government has one uniformed force whose primary duty is to aid, assist and welcome visitors."

VIGNETTE. (Peggy Acord) - "The water below was cool and clear and green. Submerged tree limbs showed clearly. Suddenly a grebe popped up and sat, or lay, floating on the surface, one eye upon me on the cliff. He alternately swam and sunk and rested, each lazy paddle of lobed feet propelling him lazily forward. The feet looked like short broad paddles at the rear of the body and I could see the lobes fan out or come together as the bird moved. Sometimes he raised his front out of the water to dive - at others he merely sunk. I stood there for some time with the sun warm on my back and spring birdsong around me watching a small creature of God's universe, and marveled."

DID YOU KNOW?:

In a typical molt a bird loses a few feathers at a time, usually the corresponding feathers on opposite sides of the body. The feathers do not fall out at random, but usually in a regular sequence, and of course they are replaced in the same sequence. Often, however, the large wing and tail feathers molt first, followed by a progressive molt of body feathers from rump to head. In most passerines and in many other groups there is a very precise order of molting the remiges (large wing feathers). In the hand, for example, the first feather to molt is at the wrist, the last at the wing-tip; in the arm, the first feathers to fall out are at the two ends, the last in the center. Tail feathers commonly molt from the center outwards, the outer feathers falling when the innermost are completely replaced. In some species the order is reversed.

Penquins, in their wholesale molt of feathers, require from about two to six weeks to complete it. Some indication of the enormous energy required to grow a new coat of feathers is seen in the weight loss of the Adelic Penguin. This species fattens up just before its post-breeding molt and then refrains from eating for from 9 to 17 days while it sheds its old coat and loses about 40% of its weight. During this period the bird may stand on a cake of ice in one spot so long that it produces a melted depression embroidered with a ring of its castoff feathers.

The color of a feather may change even though a feather once formed has no living traffic with the body. This is because of abrasion from physical wear and the bleaching effects of sunlight. If the tips of feathers are colored differently from their remaining portions, their wearing away will expose different colors to the viewer. Thus, the nuptial black bib of the House Sparrow is the result of winter-time erosion of the lighter-colored tips of the breast feathers.

NORTH AMERICAN COOPERATIVE BREEDING BIRD SURVEY:

For the second year the U. S. Department of the Interior has asked the help of all interested birders in running their selected routes for the purpose of establishing the population densities of breeding birds. These routes usually avoid the main traveled U.S. and State highways and are conducted during the last week in May and the first few weeks in June. Last year K. Seyffert ran the Channing route and this year the Department has asked if anyone in this area would be interested in running a route near Clarendon and one near Circle. The necessary material will be forwarded to us soon; so, if anyone is interested, please contact the Editor.

CALENDAR:

- April 15: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
- April 20/21: Prairie Chicken field trip to the Ross' farm, Roger Mills County, Oklahoma.
- 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 the April meeting.
- May 18 : Bird walk at Llano Cemetery at 8:30 a.m. led by the Pedersens.
- May 20 : Monthly society meeting.