

January, 1969

2709 S. Fairfield, Amarillo, Texas 79103

Vol VI, No. 1

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT:

75 species of birds were recorded on the annual Christmas bird count made by the TPAS on Dec. 28. This is one less than the record-breaking 76 of last year. Ten people turned out for the count, six from out of town. Carroll Littlefield joined us once again, driving in from Friona; Lloyd Foster and his two sons, Roger and Tommy, were here from Townsend, Tenn.; Don Gage of Childress was with us for the first, and we hope not the last, time; Pat Ridge, a veteran of the Freeport, Texas, counts was a welcome addition, driving up from Lubbock where he was visiting over the holidays. To complete the group, we had Charles and Sharon Pedersen, Jim Jokerst, Peggy Acord (compiler), and Kenneth Seyffert. The flu bug kept several of our veteran birders from participating, who, had they been with us, would, I am sure, have pushed us to a new record count.

The following species were seen (you will note that the variety of hawks was down as well as the variety of ducks usually seen on Lake Tanglewood):

Pied-billed Grebe; Canada Goose; Gadwall; Pintail; Green-winged Teal; American Widgeon; Shoveler; Redhead; Sharp-shinned Hawk; Red-tailed Hawk; Golden Eagle; Marsh Hawk; Prairie Falcon; Sparrow Hawk; Bobwhite; Scaled Quail; American Coot; Common Snipe; Mourning Dove; Great Horned Owl; Belted Kingfisher; Yellow-shafted Flicker; Red-shafted Flicker; Golden-fronted Woodpecker; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Downy Woodpecker; Ladder-backed Woodpecker; ~~Horned Lark; Scrub Jay~~; Common Crow; Black-crested Titmouse; Verdin; Common Bushtit; Brown Creeper; Bewick's Wren; Long-billed Marsh Wren; Canyon Wren; Rock Wren; Mockingbird; Brown Thrasher; Curve-billed Thrasher; Robin; Hermit Thrush; Eastern Bluebird; Western Bluebird; Mountain Bluebird; Townsend's Solitaire; Golden-crowned Kinglet; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Cedar Waxwing; Loggerhead Shrike; Starling; Audubon's Warbler; House Sparrow; Western Meadowlark; Red-winged Blackbird; Cardinal; Purple Finch; House Finch; Pine Siskin; American Goldfinch; Green-tailed Towhee; Rufous-sided Towhee; Rufous-crowned Sparrow; Black-throated Sparrow; Slate-colored Junco; Oregon Junco; Gray-headed Junco; Tree Sparrow; Chipping Sparrow; Field Sparrow; Harris' Sparrow; White-crowned Sparrow; Song Sparrow.

OTHER CHRISTMAS COUNTS:

As customary, some of our members participated in bird counts other than our own Palo Duro Canyon count. Leo and Ruth Galloway were joined this year by Dr. Marvin Davis of the University of Mississippi in the Arnett, Oklahoma count (Kenneth Seyffert was unable to join them because of the flu). Leo reported a count made under difficult circumstances as it was cold and snowing quite heavily by noon of count day. Under such conditions the number of species seen was down (51), and particularly so the number of Lesser Prairie Chickens. This Arnett count is the only one in the nation that produces the Lesser Prairie Chicken; so, its participants are always anxious to turn up as many of them as possible. Normally, these birds are counted as they fly into the sorghum maize fields to feed during mid- and

late afternoon. It is an easy job to count them once you have located the fields in which they are feeding. If the day is cloudy, however, and if the ground is covered with snow, as were the conditions last year, the birds will be on their feeding grounds much earlier in the day and their feeding patterns will be more erratic. This year, Leo reports, because it was snowing so heavily, most of the birds were sitting tight and it was necessary to walk across the fields in order to flush them. As a result, the number recorded was somewhat less than 100. Two unusual birds seen on this count were the Winter Wren and Virginia Rail.

The next day this same group made a count in the Black Mesa country of the Oklahoma panhandle near Kenton. This is a country of rugged terrain and varied habitat requiring stamina from its bird counters and, to do it justice, a larger group of people doing the counting. The official count number is unknown as of this writing but will probably be 61.

On Dec. 29 Carroll Littlefield and Ken Seyffert joined the Lubbock group in their count. The final group total is unknown but the two of them together recorded 74 species. Of this number several were real surprises and the two of them were quite pleased over seeing them. These were 2 Le Conte's Sparrows, a Greater Scaup, a Black Phoebe, and 2 Common Gallinules.

In addition to the Amarillo and Lubbock counts, Carroll made his usual one at Friona where he reports a drastic reduction in numbers of McCown's Longspurs. Somewhat less than 300 were seen whereas he usually gets a thousand or two. This low number of McCown's has been noted by our own birders in this area; we usually record them on our own count but none were seen this year. He also participated in the Muleshoe Refuge count but the results of it are not known as of this writing.

BIRD NOTES:

Hooded Merganser - one at Buffalo Lake on 12/31 and a pair at the same place on 1/1 by Peggy Acord and Bruce Acord.

Red-breasted Merganser - one at Buffalo Lake on 12/31 by above party.

Purple Finch - coming in to the feeder at the Grady Fox's.

Rufous-sided Towhee - the eastern variety seen at the Fox's feeder.

Blue Goose - one at Buffalo Lake on 1/8 by Peggy Acord, Esther Waddell, Thelma Fox, and Rena Ross.

Curve-billed Thrasher - reported by several members from around town.

Scrub Jay - several coming in to the feeder at the T. A. Hollars.

White-fronted Goose - reported by the refuge personnel as being at Buffalo Lake.

Whistling Swan - one on a playa near the Palo Duro Canyon by Kenneth Seyffert. 12/15

Golden Eagle - five at Buffalo Lake on 12/15 by the Pedersens and Kenneth Seyffert.

Ring-billed and Herring Gulls - several hundred all winter at Buffalo Lake. These high numbers are being held there by the large die-off of fish occurring at the lake this winter.

OH, VOYAGERS!

Our members are travellers, no doubt about it, and several spent the holidays and the days thereafter in faraway places. The George Ross family gathered at St. Croix in the Virgin Islands where many tropical birds were seen, including many Magnificent Frigate Birds. Rena reported seeing many hummingbirds at one small island at which they stopped, as well as a Bonaparte's Gull which is uncommon for that area. The most interesting sighting was that of a Kirtland's Warbler. A positive identification was not made but it is quite possible as this is the general area in which the small population of Kirtland's is known to winter.

Thelma and Grady Fox were in Pittsburgh, Pa. where Thelma had hoped to participate in their Christmas count but could not because she got the flu. Charles and Sharon Pedersen and family went to the Big Bend country but what they saw has not been reported. As of this writing, Vera and Joe Deason are in Manzanillo, Mexico, which is on the west coast near Acapulco. To be able to know what these members saw in these various places would, in many respects, require a renewed education in birding.

PROGRAM FOR JANUARY:

The annual dinner of the TPAS will be held on January 20th at 6:30 p.m. at the Garden Center, 1400 Streit Drive. This will be a covered-dish affair which we are all looking forward to as our members are known to be as good cooks as they are birders. The principal speaker, as announced previously, will be Mr. John L. Spinks, Jr., newly appointed Southwest Field Representative of the National Audubon Society. This meeting will also be the occasion of our annual elections; so, all members who can are urged to attend.

TOP BIRDERS:

Rena Ross took top plum this year for the most species of birds seen in the U. S. - 363, while Kenneth Seyffert had the most for Potter-Randall counties - 243.

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS RETURNING:

Thanks to the sponsorship of the Garden Center, the Audubon Screen Tours will return to Amarillo this fall. Vera Deason announced in December that the contract had been signed and the first film would be shown in October, 1969.

FORD TO AID IN LAND PURCHASES:

The Ford Foundation has made a major contribution toward halting land speculation in areas being considered for government purchase for wilderness or parks.

Under a \$6 million credit guarantee from the Foundation, the Nature Conservancy will buy up land earmarked for federal purchase and hold it. This will protect the land from speculators during the critical year or 18 months between the time Congress authorizes a project and actually appropriates the money for it.

The government then may purchase the land from the Conservancy at cost. Only lands involved in projects authorized by Congress will be bought and these only at the request of the federal agency involved.

At present, there are 52,284 acres of such lands in 97 tracts in 22 states, to

be temporarily protected by the Conservancy. If the government does not end up buying all of these lands, the Conservancy will try to sell them to another buyer interested in preserving them.

(from the Audubon Leader's Conservation Guide).

WHOOPIING CRANES:

Gordon Hansen, formerly refuge manager at Buffalo Lake and now holding the same job at the Aransas Wildlife Refuge, reports 50 Whooping Cranes present at the refuge. This increase is heartening news.

CALENDAR:

Jan. 20: Annual Society dinner at the Garden Center, 6:30 p. m., 1400 Streit Drive.

Feb. 17: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center, 7:30 p. m.

TEXAS PANHANDLE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Annual Report
January 20, 1969

OFFICERS:

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

BOARD MEMBERS:

Term expires 1969: Mrs. Grady Fox
Mrs. George Ross
Term expires 1970: Mrs. Joe Deason
Mr. Leo Galloway
Term expires 1971: Mrs. Alvin Fiedler
Mr. Toll Settle

MEMBERSHIP: 42

MEETINGS:

The Society has met monthly, January through May, and September through December. Programs have included talks by Park Ranger Richard G. Littlefield on the Sanford Recreation Area, by Jim Jokerst on the ecology and status of the Lesser Prairie Chicken, by Peggy Acord on THE SHORE BIRDS, and the showing of color slides by Steve Fiedler, Dr. George Waddill, Armon Mays, and Peggy Acord.

CONSERVATION:

Talks before various groups by Peggy Acord, Jim Jokerst, and Rena Ross.

Individual letters to senators and representatives urging support of various conservation measures before legislatures, or in protest to proposals detrimental to the cause of conservation. A Society letter to the Texas State Parks and Wildlife Department in opposition to that bodies granting a lease of part of Meridian State Park to a private group for the development of a golf course.

FIELD ACTIVITIES:

264 species of birds sighted in Potter and Randall Counties. Recorded for the first time in the two-county area: Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Tennessee Warbler.

8 field trips: Glenn Ranch, Buffalo Lake, Roger Mills County, Oklahoma, Palo Duro Club, Tom Green Ranch, Texline, and Llano and Memorial Cemeteries.

BIG DAY: 5 participants, 117 species.

Amarillo Christmas Count: 10 participants, 75 species.

Other Christmas Counts participated in: Friona, Muleshoe, and Lubbock, Texas; Argett and Black Mesa, Oklahoma.

PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES OF THE AMARILLO COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS:

White Elephant Sale.

Festival of Trees (donation of gifts made by members to be sold at Festival).

Official opening of new Garden Center.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES:

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

Participation in three routes of the Cooperative Breeding Bird Survey of North America.

Conducted a Breeding Bird Census and a Wintering Bird Population study for publication in the Audubon Field Notes.

Put on an educational display at the opening of the new Civic Center.

Participated in the Spring meeting of the Texas Ornithological Society at McKittrick Canyon in the Guadalupe Mountains, and the Fall meeting at Brownsville, Texas.

Erected a bird feeder for the city, in Ellwood Park.

Volume V of the Prairie Horned Lark printed, consisting of ten issues.