

June-July, 1969

2709 S. Fairfield, Amarillo, Texas 79103

Vol. VI, No. 6

## TPAS &amp; DDT:

As reported in the May Horned Lark, the Board of Directors recommended to the membership that \$50 be contributed to the Rachel Carson Fund to aid the Environmental Defense Fund in its fight to ban the use of DDT in Wisconsin. At our May meeting the membership unanimously supported this recommendation and a check was sent to National. A letter has been received from Charles A. Callison, Exec. Vice President of the NAS, acknowledging and thanking us for this assistance.

## A NATURE GUIDE FOR THE PALO DURO:

A recently published guide of great interest is "PALO DURO CANYON...A Nature Guide" by B. James Jokerst. This 41 page booklet is a handy reference to the more common mammals, plants and birds of the region. Included are the author's illustrations of 17 mammals, 26 plants, and 31 birds. There are many out-of-town visitors to the Park who are curious to know what they are likely to see while visiting it and this booklet will answer many of their questions. It can be bought for \$1.55 per copy at the concession building on the floor of the canyon, at the Garden Center and bookstores around town, or from Jim himself at Box 159, Route 2, Canyon, Texas 79015.

## BUFFALO LAKE IN THE SUMMERTIME:

Because of the fish kill in May, the odor at Buffalo Lake this summer has outrivalled the aroma of the Elysian Fields. People have not been a conspicuous part of the environment as a consequence and the lake has been left pretty much to itself. The bird life there, however, has been interesting. On 5/18 a Philadelphia Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, and 3 Sanderlings were seen, while on 5/25 a magnificent male Magnolia Warbler was present, and the Dicksissels had returned. On 5/31 a male Blackpoll Warbler had arrived and 4 Empidonax flycatchers were heard singing. Petersen's record album on the songs of the Western birds was invaluable in running these songs down and determining they were those of the Traill's Flycatcher. While most of the wood peckers that migrate through here are the Western species, one singing on 6/7 proved itself to be the Eastern kind. On this same date a male Vermilion Flycatcher was seen and a Lincoln's Sparrow that had been around for several weeks was last observed. On 6/1 a young Snowy Plover about half grown was found. Jumping to the last of June, a Yellow-crowned Night Heron and a male Redhead were seen 6/29. On this date there were 2 Black Terns, 25 Franklin's Gulls, and 23 Ring-billed Gulls still present. On 7/4 the lake had taken on some aspects of Fall, insofar as the birds were concerned. On that date there were 200+ Wilson's Phalaropes present along with 2 Marbled Godwits, 6 Greater Yellowlegs, 5 Lesser Yellowlegs, 40+ Killdeer in a loose flock, 50+ Mallards (including 7 young not yet able to fly), 50+ Blue-winged Teal, 14 Cinamon Teal (males), 2 Green-winged Teal (males), 2 Pintail, 2 American Widgeon, 60 American Avocet, and 4 Coots. 11 Canada Geese had

thus far survived the summer. On 7/13 the number of Lesser Yellowlegs had jumped to 110+, the Black Terns to 8, while 100+ Semipalmated Sandpipers had joined the shorebirds, along with a Spotted Sandpiper, and 3 Gadwalls, 6 more Green-winged Teal, a female Shoveler, 18 more Pintail and 3 male Redheads had joined the ducks. A Catbird was seen on the same date raising a speculation of whether or not it may nest here in some years. All of these observations were by KS. Communication with members is almost nil during the summer months and the only other observation of note that has come to the Editor's attention is Peggy Acord's observation of a pair of nesting Eastern Bluebirds at Lake Tanglewood.

Evidently, members have not done much exploring of the Palo Duro Canyon this summer - possibly because of the extreme heat that prevails there. It has been noted, however, that the Mississippi Kites are very scarce, the number of Red-headed Woodpeckers continues to increase, while Peggy Acord observed a singing male Indigo Bunting in mid-June and KS another on 7/6.

## NA BREEDING BIRD SURVEY:

Once again, TPAS members participated in the annual North American Breeding Bird Survey with four roadside counts being made in widely separated localities.

Charles Pedersen, Peggy Acord and Jim Jokerst made the Clarendon count, tallying 48 species, including a Least Tern. Kenneth Seyffert made the Channing count again, chalking up 3 Long-billed Curlew but no Mississippi Kites. The following week-end he made the Greenville count in Union County, N. M., finding the most interesting bird to be a Prairie Falcon. The day was rainy and foggy, very windy, with early morning temperatures in the forties. On one stop a female Mallard rose noisily from a fence row and investigation revealed her nest with seven eggs. Interestingly, no water was seen within a mile or more of the nest site. For the first time, a count was made this year at Childress. Don Gage reported 24 species seen.

## A SUMMER TRIP TO BLACK MESA COUNTRY:

So many times we visit good birding spots only in the spring or only during migration. It is fun to visit some of the spots at other times of the year. So Bruce and I discovered when we joined two friends from Oklahoma on a brief trip around the Boise City-Kenton, Oklahoma area the last day of June.

Monday morning early was cool with rosy shafts of light stabbing thru the clouds left from the Sunday night rain. The pastures rolled away like green velvet. Lark Buntings and Cassin's Sparrows sang all along the way. Quail were abundant in the roadside ditches - the ditches also held a variety of rabbits of all sizes and shapes. Once, a Long-billed Curlew called and landed on the short grass on a rise.

At Lake Carl Etling, Cliff Swallows lined the fences and swooped over the lake in swarms. Against a rocky cliff a Blue Grosbeak sounded unusually loud.

Along Carrizzo Creek north of Kenton we

And an abundance of Western Kingbirds, n Bulloch's Orioles, Lesser Goldfinch and Doves - with a singing Yellow Warbler, a Brown Towhee and several Red-shafted Flickers. The many Magpie nest were empty - we were too late for nesting and we saw only one pair briefly downcreek. Once a Lewis' Woodpecker flew over, looking for all the world like a very small crow.

Up the slope to the Mosa, Cassin's, Lark, and Rufous-crowned Sparrows sang continuously.

After lunch we went back to the Cimmaron Crossing just north of the dinosaur pit. The large grove of mostly cottonwoods was alive with birds - even in the afternoon with high winds.

One interesting group of birds was a swarm of kingbirds which included several pairs of Westerns, 1 pair of Cassin's, and 1 Eastern. Red-headed Woodpeckers were common but a Hairy Woodpecker was a surprise. Once a Great Horned Owl pounced on something on the ground thru the trees, harried by a band of vociferous kingbirds. Nighthawks swept over us and cuckoos "tooked" from down the grove - an interesting afternoon.

Later we visited the sewage ponds near Boise City. Here we found 3 pairs of Mallards, a pair of Blue-winged Teal, a pair of Killdeer and 2 pairs of Avocets. The Mallards had young and the injury-feigning display was very interesting indeed.

Thursday morning Bruce and I left the others to a tour of ranches and other odd corners, and took off on the backroad for Capulin Mountain. The extinct volcano with its crater was just what a 9 year old boy would like - a great adventure.

It was good to see the green pastures all the way - the wheat in and fine looking stock - but best of all uncluttered sweeps of beautiful country - God's bounty of beauty - there for us to see if we but look.

....Peggy Acord

#### BIRD NEWS FROM THE TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT:

"The Brown Pelican, rare in recent years along the Texas Coast, is presently showing signs of making a comeback. Coastal Fisheries biologists of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department report sightings of about 50 of these salty fishing birds this spring, about twice the number seen last year.

What is encouraging is that the birds are scattered in groups along the coast. Biologists sighted 16 in the Lower Laguna Madre, 24 in Corpus Christi Bay, 9 near Pass Cavallo and 1 in Galveston Bay."

"A rather elderly, gray-bearded fallacy about the ability of Bobwhite quail to subsist on large quantities of grass seed alone should be a candidate for the graveyard of myths and misconceptions....

An examination of thousands of quail crops, at various times of the year, over a 15-year period in the West Texas Rolling Plains shows grass seed alone on a par with a lettuce salad in the feed bowl of a mountain lion.

In West Texas, investigations prove that weed seeds are the first choice on the menu. Grass seeds are strictly on the minus side of the ledger.

During fall and winter months weeds make up about 60% of the diet. A maximum inclusion of 10% and usually less than 6% of grass seeds of seven species are taken, making

grasses almost incidental to a quail's pantry preference."

"Before you take a potshot at that bird flitting from tree to tree, think about it. You may be shooting at a protected bird, and it may cost you up to \$200.

Texas protects its birds through three general laws which classify birds either as game, non-game, or unprotected varieties.

Each of the more than 500 species in the State falls into one of these categories by definition of the law.

Game birds are listed in Article 872 of the Penal Code as "Wild turkey, wild ducks of all varieties, wild geese of all varieties, wild brant, wild grouse, wild prairie chickens or pinnated grouse, wild pheasants of all varieties, wild partridge and wild quail of all varieties, wild pigeons of all varieties, wild mourning doves and wild white-winged doves, wild snipe of all varieties, wild shore birds of all varieties, wild Mexican pheasants or chachalacas, wild plover of all varieties". Game birds are protected during closed season.

Birds not included in the game bird list may be found under an overall non-game bird statute established in Article 874 of the Penal Code which was recently amended to read: "No person may catch, kill, injure, pursue, or have in his possession, either dead or alive, or purchase, sell, expose for sale, transport, or ship to a point within or without the State, or receive or deliver for transportation, any bird other than a game bird, or have in his possession any part of the plumage, skin, or body of any bird other than a game bird...or disturb or destroy the eggs, nest, or young of such a bird."

Violation of this law is a misdemeanor with a fine from \$10 to \$200.

Recent legislation effective September 1, 1969 drastically shortened the list of unprotected birds under this statute.

Previously, unprotected birds were listed as 'English sparrows, crows, ravens, vultures, or buzzards, ricebirds identified as harmful, blackbirds, roadrunners and the goshawk, the Cooper's hawk or blue darter, the sharp-shinned hawk, jaybirds, sapsuckers, woodpeckers, butcher-birds of shrike, the great horned owl, the starling...'

Now, only 'English sparrows, grackles, ravens, red-winged blackbirds, cowbirds, and crows...' remain on the unprotected list, though grackles are protected by Federal law.

Although owls, hawks, and eagles of all types are not protected under the amendment a provision has been made so that, 'Nothing in this Act shall prevent a person from defending and protecting his domestic animals from predators.'

DEAR MEMBER:

I have been directed by the Board of Directors of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society, meeting July 17, 1969, to write and apprise you of its position concerning the upcoming vote on August 5th in which the voters of Texas will approve or disapprove a \$3.5 billion state water project bond issue.

You may have read in the newspapers that "the Audubon society" is against the Texas Water Plan. This is part of the further ridiculous statement, made by a State official, that we, along with the Sierra Club, are members of that undefined but sinister crowd that "have long hair and wear tennis shoes", and are opposed to everyhing. I wish to advise you that the National Audubon Society has taken no such position; further, the various Chapters within the State have not. The restrictions of the Society prevent such an official position.

As private citizens, however, and as conservationists we can express our viewpoint, and it is as private citizens that we ask you to participate in a letter writing campaign to get more facts before the public concerning the issues involved. The Board of Directors feels that the public is being misinformed or uninformed on the fessability of the proposed Texas Water Plan. It believes that many questions need to be asked and answered before approving a bond issue of such magnitude and before approving a plan whose irreversible ecological consequences are of such a nture that the face of Texas will be changed for all time. It believes the public is being subjected to fear tactics in order to secure a favorable vote.

What can we do? The time within which to act is short, our avenues of approach and accessibility to the public news media are limited, we are a small group with little influence. It is the Board's opinion, however, that your letters to Sound Off or the Editors of the newspaper can be effective in determining how some votes will be cast. The pros for Amendment #2 have been amply covered by the press; it is up to us to present the cons. Background information concerning the issues involved is available from Peggy Acord, the Rev. Charles Pedersen, or myself.

Thank you.

Kenneth D. Seyffert, President  
The Texas Panhandle Audubon Society  
July 20, 1969