

October, 1969

2709 S. Fairfield, Amarillo, Texas 79103

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PROGRAM FOR OCTOBER:

Mr. Jim Hays of Clarendon will present the program for October. Mr. Hays is a member of the committee which is attempting to sell to the landowners involved, as well as the public and the State officials, the idea of establishing a scenic road into the Palo Duro Canyon from the east. Mr. Hays will present his argument and support it with a 10 minute slide of the area. Though little public information of a specific nature has been printed, all members should acquaint themselves with the issues involved and be prepared to ask pertinent questions that can clarify what is being proposed. Mr. Hays stated that if he was not able to attend the meeting then a public relations man from Amarillo would be present.

NEW MEMBER:

We are happy to welcome Miss Ruth Cross as a new member in the TPAS. Miss Cross lives at 2504 6th Ave. in Canyon, Texas.

FROM OUR FALCONER MEMBER:

Not only will we remember the program Douglas Grayson presented in February on the art of falconry but we will never forget the Prairie Falcon he had with him. Douglas writes that she has completed her moult and that she is entered in her first international hawking meet near Vienna, Austria, on Oct. 15th. We all wish her the best of luck for she is truly a splendid bird.

Douglas has been doing some Peregrine searching in the Houston area and writes, "All I can say so far is, who let the dam break? There were a great many sightings of Peregrines. I saw more Peregrines than I see of Red-tails, Prairies, etc. combined up in the Panhandle." Douglas has promised to write us a more detailed report on what he has found on the Peregrine in the coastal area.

BIRD NOTES:

In some respects the Fall migration has been concentrated within a few days period, viz., Sept. 7 thru 12. Peggy Acord is of the opinion, based on many years of observations, that one of the biggest waves of Fall migrants passed through at that time. These were the days in which a cold front moved into the area bringing wind, cloudy weather, and rain. She and Thelma Fox and Mary Griffith covered the city cemeteries where they reported seeing an extraordinary number of Baltimore Orioles. This species is seldom seen this far west. Reports we get are usually of "funny looking Bullocks" but not often do we hear of cut-and-cut Baltimores. Also seen were an unusual number of Empidonax to flycatchers. At times there seemed to be one for each mosquito, and there were many, many mosquitoes. A Wood Thrush, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 3 Northern Waterthrushes, a Broad-winged Hawk, adult Cedar Waxwings, 2 Green Herons, 3 Yellow-crowned Night Herons, a Solitary Vireo, Black-headed Grosbeaks, large numbers of Yellow and Wilson's Warblers, one Canada Warbler, and a scattering of Am Redstarts, Nashville and MacGillivrays.

During the same period the shorebirds were plentiful at Buffalo Lake and the playas, what few playas, that is, that still contain water. Peggy Acord saw one White-faced Ibis

on Gouldy Plaza on Sept. 6 while Ken Seyffert saw 4 the next day at Buffalo. Also on the 7th a first Osprey was seen at Buffalo. Ospreys do not usually remain in the area for long but this bird persisted and by Oct. 4 there were 3 at the lake. Another one was seen by KS Oct. 11 off I-40 near the Helium Monument.

A sighting of an extraordinary bird at Buffalo Lake was made by Ken Seyffert on Sept. 14, one which he would have given his left arm to have had confirmed. While scanning the lake shore through his scope, counting Great Blue Herons, he heard a commotion to his left and lifted his binoculars to see what was going on. His first thought was, "God-Almighty-whats-that?" He saw a large, dark, Ring-billed sized, hawk-like bird in pursuit of a Franklin's Gull. The pursued bird went into violent evasive action, screaming loudly all the while, with the pursuer close behind. All the other gulls and shorebirds in the area, as well as 10 Shovelers, cleared out and only two impeturbable Great Blues remained. The big bird soon gave up the chase, which was taking place along the water's edge about 200 yards away, and flew toward where the observer was standing, flying 4 or 5 feet above the water and following the shoreline closely. By this time the observer's mind was streaking through page after page of bird guides trying to fit this typical and notable feature with that. His mind kept playing on the idea that it was a hawk; however, no hawk he had ever seen fitted what he was looking at, except, maybe, a Harris' Hawk. It was of a uniform, dark color, brown, like a Harris', but not as deep colored a brown -- an even brown and not mottled like immature birds. It had, however, conspicuous and light wing patches at the base of the primaries. These patches were not white but cream or light tan. As the bird neared, the observer's confusion somewhat lessened as it became obvious it was some kind of gull. The bird passed in front of him about 50 yards out, not flying swiftly, so that a good look could be had of it. All the points checked out for it to be a Parasitic Jaeger, dark phase, except that no elongated tail feathers were discernable. As stated before, no confirmation of this sighting was made. The next day Peggy Acord and Rena Ross looked for it but all they could report was a large, dark gull that remained far out on the lake and that was seen through a scope but in bad light. Including the day seen, the two previous days and nights were notable for high southwesterly and westerly winds.

On Sept. 27 Charles and Sharon Pedersen reported seeing 30 Swainson's Hawks circling slowly near the stadium at Canyon just prior to the beginning of the WTSU football game. Near the same date, Armon Mays observed 24 Mississippi Kites roosting in one tree in Elwood Park. Also on Sept. 27, Ken Seyffert saw 7 Sandhill Cranes at Buffalo, 6 matures and 1 young, along with 14 White-fronted Geese. These geese were still there on Oct. 5, which time he also saw a Harlan's Hawk and a Double-crested Cormorant.

An area report from Leo Galloway states that he and Ruth parked about 150 feet from 4 Cattle Egrets and watched them as they picked insects off cows' tails and from around their feet. This was at Littlefield, Lamb Co., on the edge of town. The last reported sighting

of this species in our area was in 1966.

ANOTHER WANDERER:

When Ken Seyffert saw a Parasitic Jaeger at Buffalo Lake on Sept. 14 he thought he had seen everything. The next week-end, however, brought an equally interesting visitor. Jimmy Stigh of Molndal, Sweden, was encountered on the mud flats of Buffalo looking at the shorebirds. There followed one of the most interesting afternoons this birder has experienced. Jimmy proved to be a highly articulate and knowledgeable birder whose English was beautiful and whose interest in birds was world wide. This was his first trip to this country and it was amazing how accurate his identification of birds was, even when only seen briefly, which probably means many hours of homework. It was informative to listen to him correlate the shorebirds we were looking at with the same or quite similar species to be seen in Sweden. Jimmy and his wife and mother-in-law had landed in New York during the last week in August and while the two ladies took in the scenic delights of the country, he concentrated on the birds. They had birded through the Blue Ridge country on down to the Keys in Florida where he had picked up such rarities as the Everglades Kite, Black-whiskered Vireo and Thick-billed Kingbird. The best new bird I was able to show him was a Great Horned Owl. He was astounded when I told him of the number of geese and ducks that wintered at Buffalo; only in very few places can geese be seen in Sweden. Jimmy lives at Seldonsgatan 4C, S 431 32 Molndal, Sweden and if any of you are ever in Sweden he would welcome, I am sure, a "visit" from you. Molndal is near Gotenbergl where Jimmy has spent most of his life and where he is a geologist.

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN:

"As part of a study of the ecology and population dynamics of the Mississippi Kite, adult and juvenile birds are being color-tagged, banded with standard U. S. Fish and Wildlife bands, and released in areas of southwestern Kansas, western Oklahoma, and northcentral Texas. Marked birds carry a large plastic oval on the humeral area of each wing; and colors used have been white, red, orange, yellow, dark green, dark blue, and light blue. Information desired includes: color of plastic oval on each wing; date, time and location of sighting; activity of the bird; and name of the observer.

Please send information to: James W. Parker, A Peregrine falcon found dead on Padre Island Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66044."

(from the "Scissortail" - Oklahoma Ornithological Society)

"During May through June of each year for a five year period, Ring-billed Gulls from three Great Lakes colonies will be wing-marked with 1.5 inch-diameter 'Saflag' tags. Each colony is represented by a specific color. An attempt is being made to determine the dispersal pattern, migration route, and winter range for each population. Anyone observing such wing-marked gulls is asked to notify Dr. William E. Southern, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Northern Illinois Univ., DeKalb, Ill. 60115. Please report each observation of marked individuals even though the same bird may be sighted on different days. The following information is desired:

date, exact location, marker color, and the observer's name. Your assistance in this aspect of the project will be greatly appreciated. Respondents will receive information pertaining to colony locations and the date of marking."

(from "The Wilson Bulletin")

ROCK AND HAWK:

"Here is a symbol in which
Many high tragic thoughts
Watch their own eyes.

This grey rock, standing tall
On the headland, where the seawind
Lets no tree grow,

Earthquake-proved, and signastured
By ages of storms; on its peak
A falcon has perched.

I think, here is your emblem
To hang in the future sky;
Not the cross, not the hive,

But this; bright power, dark peace;
Fierce consciousness joined with final
Disinterestedness;

Life with calm death; the falcon's
Realist eyes and act
Married to the massive

Mysticism of stone,
Which failure cannot cast down
Nor success make proud."

...Robinson Jeffers

COASTAL PESTICIDE STUDIES:

"Concentrations of persistent pesticides from studies conducted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. cause much concern for some marine species and some bay areas.

In order to more fully investigate the danger ...several species of fish and birds have been examined. This examination has sometimes consisted of whole body analysis. Animals are frequently dissected and the various body organs analyzed separately. When body organs are separately analyzed a whole new picture emerges. One sample of mullet contained 1,149 ppm of DDT and its metabolites in the liver, 76 ppm in the gonads, 16 ppm in the brain, and .346 ppm in the body flesh. Had this been prepared as a whole body sample, the residue level would have been misleading. Another bird, a White Pelican, found dead near Corpus Christi, contained 84 ppm of DDT in the body flesh; 120 ppm in the liver; 18 ppm in the brain; 31 ppm in the heart; and 16 ppm in the kidney."

(from the Texas Parks & Wildlife NEWS)

CALENDAR:

Oct. 20: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p. m.
Topic: New Road to the Palo Duro Canyon.

Oct. 26: Audubon Wildlife Film at the Garden Center - 2:30 p. m.
Topic: "The Real Yellowstone"

Nov. 17: Monthly society meeting.