

January, 1970

2709 S. Fairfield, Amarillo, Texas 79103

Vol. VII, No. 1

PROGRAM FOR JANUARY:

Again this year, our members elected to have a covered dish affair for the Annual Dinner to be held at 6:30 p. m., instead of the usual 7:30, at the Garden Center. Peggy Acord will present the program and it will be on the Wildlife of the Texas Panhandle. All members who can are urged to attend and to bring their guests. This occasion will also be the time we will elect our officers for the coming year.

CHRISTMAS COUNT:

8 intrepid birders showed up for the annual Christmas bird count in the Palo Duro Canyon. Though this is the fewest number to participate in this event for many years, a record-breaking 78 species were tallied. Peggy and Bruce Acord, Mary Griffith, Ruth Kenney, Carroll Littlefield, Charles and Sharon Pedersen, and Kenneth Seyffert each dispersed to their respective areas soon after 8:00 a. m. and began counting. KS had arrived on the count area at 6:30 for the purpose of listening to the owls hoot. This is the surest way of getting the Great Horned Owl on the day's list but this year all straining of the ears to catch even the faintest hoot proved futile. Failure to find this species seemed a portent to a bad day ahead but within a few minutes this gloomy picture changed. A Sharp-shin was jumped from a cedar tree bordering a playa, a Prairie Falcon flew from its roosting place on a fence post, and two Great Horned Owls were seen silhouetted against the reddening of the dawn sky as they sat silently perched on telephone poles. Confidence returned and the birders went about their businesses.

At the noon gathering, however, things again looked bad for any chance of breaking the record. Only 56 species had been recorded and that is not enough for that time of day. The party headed topside to begin running the rim roads and spirits took a further nose dive when a likely looking playa proved barren of birds save one Killdeer. One section line west, however, and bonanza! We picked up seven species of ducks plus two immature and one adult Bald Eagle as well as 35 Ring-billed Gulls. The next playa produced two unlikely species, one extraordinarily so. Nine Least Sandpipers and one Stilt Sandpiper were wholly unexpected. While the Least is often recorded on the Lubbock count, it had never been recorded on ours, and the Stilt Sandpiper should not be anywhere near this part of the country at this time of the year. A few are recorded on the Coast in the winter but most go on to South America. As an example, the most seen on any one count in the nation last year were nine at Corpus Christi. We anxiously await Mr. Cruickshank's editorial comments when this report reaches his hands. He is not usually gentle with people who see things they shouldn't be seeing, and rightly so as otherwise the reliability of these reports would soon diminish. Notwithstanding, Carroll and I swear by all that's holy --- 30 yards away --- good light --- scopes --- familiar with species --- all markings --- reasonably sober judges.

The following is a list of the birds seen on our count. The Swamp Sparrow was another

rare find. It was seen about a mile upstream from the riding stables and was "pissed" out of a high and dense growth of grass that grew extensively along much of this section of the stream this year. This same section of canyon bottomland produced 65 Song Sparrows which is a very high number to see. High numbers of this latter species can be seen in suitable habitat throughout the canyon this year. Also, Purple Finch again!

Pied-billed Grebe; Canada Goose; Mallard; Gadwall; Pintail; Green-winged Teal; American Widgeon; Shoveler; Redhead; Sharp-shinned Hawk; Red-tailed Hawk; Rough-legged Hawk; Golden Eagle; Bald Eagle; Marsh Hawk; Prairie Falcon; Sparrow Hawk; Bobwhite; Scaled Quail; Turkey; American Coot; Killdeer; Common Snipe; Least Sandpiper; Stilt Sandpiper; Ring-billed Gull; Mourning Dove; Roadrunner; Great Horned Owl; Belted Kingfisher; Yellow-shafted Flicker; Red-shafted Flicker; Golden-fronted Woodpecker; Ladder-backed Woodpecker; Horned Lark; Scrub Jay; Common Crow; Black-crested Titmouse; Common Bushtit; Brown Creeper; Bewicks Wren; Canyon Wren; Rock Wren; Mockingbird; Brown Thrasher; Robin; Hermit Thrush; Eastern Bluebird; Mountain Bluebird; Townsend's Solitaire; Golden-crowned Kinglet; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Cedar Waxwing; Loggerhead Shrike; Starling; House Sparrow; Western Meadowlark; Red-winged Blackbird; Brewer's Blackbird; Brown-headed Cowbird; Cardinal; Purple Finch; House Finch; Pine Siskin; American Goldfinch; Rufous-sided Towhee; Rufous-crowned Sparrow; Slate-colored Junco; Oregon Junco; Gray-headed Junco; Field Sparrow; Harris' Sparrow; White-crowned Sparrow; White-throated Sparrow; Lincoln's Sparrow; Swamp Sparrow; Song Sparrow; McCown's Longspur.

Seen in count period but not on count day: Common Loon, Whistling Swan, Common Golden-eye, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Common Merganser, Great Blue Heron; Cooper's Hawk

OKLAHOMA BIRD COUNTS: OR 'T WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS (BIRD COUNT):

"Let's go birding!" The three simple words, too seldom heard since botany replaced all else, still have the old magic, and we depart on Christmas morning for our Oklahoma bird counts. In Amarillo we accept with alacrity the Seyfferts' kind invitation to share their delicious holiday dinner, then head northeast, white Volkswagen following green Volkswagen, to survey the first day's count area. With Arnett's lone restaurant closed, we sup on cold turkey sandwiches and turn in early, just before the arrival of the final birder, Professor Marvin Davis of University, Mississippi.

The next morning Leo refuses to admit it's bitterly cold -- claims he must have dropped and broken the thermometer. But when an owl hoots at dawn, the first bird of the count, the blood of even the most sluggish birder quickens.

As we compare lists at lunch time, there is the usual coyness about the morning's results: "O, just so-so. How was your area?" Finally, we get down to business, and even the "good-bies" are revealed. No House Sparrows are reported, so a special mission is deployed.

For the afternoon, I am assigned to help Kenneth count the huge numbers of Prairie

chickens expected in his territory. I helpfully point out large groups of "chickens", which he courteously reclassifies as meadowlarks, "the same ones we counted a few minutes ago." Finally, at sundown, we tally the 20 Prairie Chickens that are to be our joint contribution.

At supper, however, our compiler is beaming through a two-day's growth of red whiskers and eyes made watery by wind and binocular strain. We have set a new species high for the count. Life, for the moment, is complete.

We agree that because of the late hour of our probable arrival in Boise City in preparation for the next day's count, Dr. Davis in his swift American car will notify the motel keeper of the imminence of our arrival. Thus, it is with some chagrin that, about half way to our destination, we notice parked along the highway the familiar white Dodge with Mississippi license plates and recognize our fellow birder conversing earnestly with an Oklahoma patrolman. We tell the desk clerk to save one more room.

Next morning, somewhere in the Black Mesa country, we report to our stations, then rendezvous at Kenton's country store to munch crackers and old time crackerbarrel cheese. We do not meet, ever; for an adventure like ours, it is more seemly that we rendezvous.

By now, the sun has disappeared again and snowflakes are falling, so instead of stripping to only one jacket over sweatshirt, wool shirt, and the rman underwear as we did yesterday noon, all add at least one more parka. We cherish the coffee remaining in the thermos jug.

Over supper, we again compare lists. Upon hearing that everyone has missed an especially coveted species, our professor-compiler soundlessly forms two syllables that look shockingly like "oh, damn." We sympathize. But here, too, we have surpassed the previous species record, and the three accredited birders agree they have had two excellent counts. Not a word about the frozen fingers, the chattering teeth, the runny noses, the chillblains. The only questions seem to be, when shall we get together in 1970? In which area shall we count first? How can we get those elusive birds we missed this time?

Wearily, happily, we turn homeward. Let's go birding again next year!

.....Ruth Galloway (count historian),

Here are the two compilers versions of the Arentt and Black Mesa counts, respectively:

Pied-billed Grebe (36); Mallard (27); Am. Widgeon (2); Redhead (3); Ring-necked Duck (8); Canvasback (45); Lesser Scaup (2); Com Goldeneye (6); Ruddy Duck (5); Com. Merganser (2); Red-tailed Hawk (11); Ferruginous Hawk (1); Marsh Hawk (14); Prairie Falcon (1); Sparrow Hawk (9); Lesser Prairie Chicken (149); Bobwhite (41); Turkey (23); Virginia Rail (1); Am. Coot (331); Killdeer (1); Com Snipe (1); Mourning Dove (145); Roadrunner (2); Screech Owl (1); Great Horned Owl (8); Belted Kingfisher (1); Yellow-shafted Flicker (7); Red-shafted Flicker (17); Red-bellied Woodpecker (10); Hairy Woodpecker (2); Down Woodpecker (6); Horned Lark (10); Blue Jay (1); Common Crow (67); Carolina Chickadee (41); Red-breasted Nuthatch (1); Brown Creeper (1); Bewick's Wren (14); Long-billed Marsh Wren

(3); Robin (166); Eastern Bluebird (23); Golden-crowned Kinglet (1); Loggerhead Shrike (16); Starling (4000); House Sparrow (6); W. Meadowlark (187); Red-winged Blackbird (42,000); Brewer's Blackbird (2000); Brown-headed Cowbird (2000); Cardinal (19); Pine Siskin (3); Am. Goldfinch (157); Rufous-sided Towhee (2); Slate-colored Junco (31); Oregon Junco (1); Tree Sparrow (141); Field Sparrow (10); Harris' Sparrow (37); White-crowned Sparrow (2); White-throated Sparrow (1); Song Sparrow (23); Chestnut-collared Longspur (7). Total: 63 species. Seen in area count periods but not on count day: Green-winged Teal.

Pied-billed Grebe; Great Blue Heron; Canada Goose; Mallard; Gadwall; Pintail; Am. Widgeon; Shoveler; Canvasback; Com. Goldeneye; Bufflehead; Hooded Merganser; Com. Merganser; Red-tailed Hawk; Golden Eagle; Bald Eagle; Marsh Hawk; Sparrow Hawk; Scaled Quail; Turkey; Am. Coot; Ring-billed Gull; Roadrunner; Great Horned Owl; Belted Kingfisher; Red-shafted Flicker; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Hairy Woodpecker; Downy Woodpecker; Ladder-backed Woodpecker; Horned Lark; Blue Jay; Scrub Jay; Common Raven; Common Crow; Black-billed Magpie; Com. Bushtit; Bewick's Wren; Canyon Wren; Rock Wren; Mockingbird; Brown Thrasher; Sage Thrasher; Robin; E. Bluebird; Mountain Bluebird; Townsend's Solitaire; Golden-crowned Kinglet; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Loggerhead Shrike; Starling; Myrtle Warbler; House Sparrow; W. Meadowlark; Red-winged Blackbird; House Finch; Pine Siskin; Am. Goldfinch; Rufous-sided Towhee; Brown Towhee; Rufous-crowned Sparrow; Black-throated Sparrow; Slate-colored Junco; Oregon Junco; Gray-headed Junco; Tree Sparrow; Harris' Sparrow; White-crowned Sparrow; White-throated Sparrow; Song Sparrow.
Total: 70 species.

Carroll Littlefield made his Friona count and participated in the Muleshoe Refuge count but the results of them are not known. Also, Lubbock tallied 73 species on their count.

BIRD NOTES:

The TPAS got off to a very good start with Peggy Acord finding an immature Whistling Swan and a Common Loon at Lake Tanglewood on New Year's day. Thelma Fox followed this up the very next day with an even rarer find. A female Pine Grosbeak was seen by her and Peggy as it came in to the feeder in her yard. The Pine Grosbeak had not been recorded in our two-county area since 1954. Ken Seyffert reported a Northern Shrike about 2 miles upriver from Boys' Ranch on 12/14.

TOP BIRDERS:

Rena Ross - 406 and Thelma Fox 404 for the number of species seen on the NA continent. Kenneth Seyffert 224 for Potter-Randall Clys.

CALENDAR:

Jan. 19: Monthly society meeting and Annual Dinner at the Garden Center - 6:30.
Feb. 8: Audubon Wildlife Film at the Garden Center - 2:30 p. m.
Topic - "Island Treasures"
Speaker - Walter J. Breckenridge
Feb. 16: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p. m.

TEXAS PANHANDLE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Annual Report
January 19, 1970

OFFICERS:

President - Mr. Kenneth Seyffert
Vice-President - Rev. Charles Pederson
Secretary - Mrs. Alvin Fiedler
Treasurer - Mr. Armon Mays
Recorder - Mrs. I. D. Acord

BOARD MEMBERS:

Term Expires 1970: Mrs. Joe Deason
Mr. Leo Galloway
Term expires 1971: Mrs. Alvin Fiedler
Mr. Toll Settle
Term expires 1972: Mrs. George Waddill
Mr. Jim Jokerst

MEMBERSHIP: 55

MEETINGS:

The Society has met monthly January through May, and September through December. Programs have included talks by the new Southwest Regional Director of the National Audubon Society, John Spinks, Jr. of Austin, by Douglas Grayson on falconry, by Dr. Gerald Schultz on the fossils of the Panhandle, by Dr. Derl Brooks on birds and their parasites, by Dr. John Denko on the wild flowers of the Rocky Mountains, by Mr. Jim Hays on the proposed road through the lower Palo Duro Canyon, and by Mr. Paul Ferguson, superintendent of the Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

CONSERVATION:

Talks before various groups by several members.
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. Contributed to the Rachel Carson Fund of the NAS to aid in the battle being fought by the Environmental Defense Fund to outlaw the use of DDT in Wisconsin. Initiated a letter-writing campaign to the local newspaper in opposition to the Texas Water Plan.

FIELD ACTIVITIES:

252 species of birds sighted in Potter and Randall Counties. Recorded for the first time in the two-county area: Parasitic Jaeger, Sabine's Gull, and White-winged Junco.

BIG DAY: 11 participants, 107 species.

Amarillo Christmas Count: 8 participants, 78⁹ species.

Other Christmas counts participated in: Friona and Muleshoe, Texas; Arnett and Black Mesa, Oklahoma.

PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES OF THE AMARILLO COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS:

Audubon Wildlife Screen Tour,
Festival of Trees
White Elephant Sale

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES:

Participation in North American Nest Record Card Program for fifth consecutive year.
Participation in three routes of the Cooperative Breeding Bird Survey of North America.
Conducted a Wintering Bird Population study for publication in the Audubon Field Notes.
Participation in Blackbird Roost Survey for the Department of the Interior.
Volume VI of the Prairie Horned Lark printed, consisting of ten issues.