

## CHRISTMAS COUNTS:

The dates for three Christmas Counts in our area have been set. The TPAS count will be on Sunday, January 3. The compiler on this count will be Peggy Acord and if you plan on attending please contact her. We need your help! On Saturday, December 26, a count will be made at Arnett, Oklahoma, Leo Galloway compiler, and on Monday, December 28, Dr. W. Marvin Davis will lead the birders on a count at the Black Mesa near Kenton, Oklahoma. Barbara Lund reports on two other counts in this area further below.

A reminder to all birders who participate. It is as important to count every bird you see as it is to record each species. All of us have a tendency to get real sloppy in our head counts and estimates as the day wears on and we get tired and tired, but we must remember to jot down every W. Meadowlark we see as well as every Golden Eagle. The Audubon Field Notes will publish each species of bird seen on a Christmas Count along with the name of the group reporting the highest number for that species. For instance, in past years our count in the Palo Duro Canyon has, on occasions, turned up the largest number of Mountain Bluebirds, and the count made at the Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge will quite often record a high number for one or more of the duck species. Of course, the Arnett, Okla. count always reports the most Lesser Prairie Chickens, namely because no other count records it at all!

## BIRD REPORT, SANFORD RECREATION AREA:

Do you like to count birds? Lots of birds? Like, say, half a million birds? We don't really know for sure how many black-birds roost in the cattails of the Canadian River below Sanford Dam, but some help is needed to find out. This major roost, although outside of Sanford Recreation Area boundaries, will be included in the Christmas count circle for the area. The count is scheduled for Wednesday, December 30, 1970, and any help would be appreciated. If counting sounds like too much trouble, careful estimates will do! The flocks can be seen from the top of the bluff at the east end of Sanford Dam. They leave the marshes between 7:15 and 8:00 a.m. and return between 4:00 p.m. and dark. Most of the birds are starlings, but redwings, Brewer's blackbirds, and even two Yellow-headed Blackbirds have been seen.

Many Long-billed Marsh Wrens, Common Snipe, and one American Bittern were observed Dec. 3, 1970, in the marshes below Sanford Dam. Elsewhere in the Recreation Area, birding is about average. Some ducks can be found in nearly every side bay, mostly Mallard, Gadwall, and Pintail. On Nov. 27, 1970, a pair of Hooded Mergansers were in Blue Creek, and about 10,000 migrating ducks of various kinds were on the main lake. Typical canyon birds are found in places like McBride Canyon, Bugbee, and Plum Creek.

...Barbara A. Lund  
Park Naturalist  
Sanford Recreation Area

P.S.: James M. Thomsen, Sup't. of the Area states another Christmas count will be held in the west end of Lake Meredith on 12/31/70.

## ANNUAL DINNER:

The annual dinner of the TPAS will be held on Monday, Jan. 19, 1971, at 6:30 p.m. in the Garden Center. This will once again be a covered-dish affair, having proved to be such a big success for the past two years. Peggy Acord is the Food Committee chairman, so please contact her if you plan to attend and let her know what you can bring to eat. We hope to announce the program in next month's Newsletter.

## FROM THE "WANDERING TATTLER":

Date line near Santa Barbara, Calif., Tuesday, Dec. 3: The "Wandering Tattler" reports seeing one Wandering Tattler for Lifer #523. Lifer #524 was added a few days later in the form of a Surf Bird. As of this writing, Leo Galloway is in pursuit of the goal he set himself of seeing 400 birds in the continental USA during 1970 (400 different species, that is). The last word from him stated he stood at 395. "From here on, though, it is going to be rough. About the only one I can be sure of is the Northwestern Crow, if I make the effort and go to Seattle to get it. Will wait and see. One more won't make it. If I can get a couple more in the next 2 days I'll go after the crow." Any bets, anyone?

## BIRD NOTES:

Has anyone seen any birds of unusual interest lately? Since last reporting in this Newsletter very few reports have come in and of them the only noteworthy observation was that made by Leo and Ruth Galloway. On 11/27 they reported several Bonaparte's Gulls at Elysian Fields. For those not in the know,

Elysian Fields is what we christened the Southeast Amarillo Sewage Disposal Plant. Birding there can be very good, particularly during the Spring and Fall migrations, and the personnel there have long since learned to tolerate the rather strange behavior of the people who stop by to observe the birds.

On 12/6 KS reported 5 Western Bluebirds and Curve-billed Thrasher in the Palo Duro Canyon. One to two Verdins were seen at or near the first water crossing on both 12/6 and 12/13.

## FESTIVAL OF TREES:

We are happy to report that the annual Festival of Trees held at the Garden Center enjoyed the best attendance ever. While the prices at which the individual trees were sold was generally low, the one offered by the TPAS brought one of the higher ones. Our success is largely attributable to the work of Peggy Acord, to whom we owe thanks, and we hear that she already has a winning idea for next year's tree!

## POSTSCRIPT ON THE BWSA:

"A reliable observer reports" that one of the members of the Birdwatchers' Spouses Association has resorted to collecting old bottles (as well as balloons, yeast, rhubarb, grapes, and volumes of associated recipes). This "sighting" must remain "hypothetical" as it has not been "confirmed" by any member of the BWSA. The "observer further reports" that though the size of the operation is "amateur", the results are "professional," having, it is feared, sampled to product after a recent cold morning of mountain birding.

...Faithful reader & spouse of a red-nosed EW

the following observations on the Mallard, by A. Starker Leopold, are noteworthy:

"Certain adaptive responses to a changing environment appear to be nongenetic. Some animals seem capable of internal physiological and behavioral adjustments and as a consequence can tolerate wide fluctuations in weather and other environmental factors. A classic example would be the Mourning Dove.

The same can be said for some migratory birds like the Mallard, which breeds from the arctic tundra to northern Baja California and from coast to coast. There are no detectable morphologic differences among North American Mallards, nor is there any hint of local physiologic variation. Not only is the Mallard adaptable in the sense of occupying a variety of breeding situations, but it has shown a remarkable capacity to adjust to the changes wrought in its wintering habitat. In primitive North America the Mallard wintered in the natural marshes, sloughs, and backwaters and ate aquatic foods along with other ducks. Today most of these waterways are drained or otherwise made unattractive, and during the autumn much of the remaining habitat bristles with the guns of eager duck hunters. The Mallard copes successfully with this situation by several adjustments in its habits. First, it feeds at night, spending the day in safety of a waterfowl refuge or on some open bay or sandbar. Secondly, it has learned to feed on the waste grain of stubble fields--wheat and corn in the midwest, rice and kafir in Texas and California. Each day with cessation of legal shooting the birds rise in great masses and fly to the stubbles for the evening repast. For a period in the 1940s shooting closed at 4 P.M. and the flight began at 4:15. When the law was changed to permit shooting till sunset, the birds adjusted their exodus to fifteen minutes after sunset, attesting to their capacity for quick reaction to circumstances. As a result, the Mallard today is by far the most abundant duck in North America."

#### PESTICIDE USER ULTIMATE LOSER:

Man could conceivably lose his war with insects because of his method of doing battle with them, according to J. R. Singleton, executive director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This point was recently illustrated in an article on the garden page of one of Texas' major dailies, said Singleton.

The article reported that grubs seemed to be worse this year than in previous years and were killing off large patches of lawns. Several chemicals, the article said, including Spectracide and Heptachlor, have been used for control in the past, but now these preparations apparently are not as effective as they once were. In fact, landowners were getting results with Heptachlor only by using two to three times as much as previously, and even this heavy dosage does not always work.

The grubs are not the first insecticide-resistant insect, according to Singleton, and most probably will not be the last.

"With the insect's fantastic breeding potential it takes them only a few generations to adapt to adverse situations," said Singleton. "Out of millions of insects in a species, only a few individuals may be resistant to a pesticide, but these few may survive a spraying, reproduce and pass this resistance to their offspring."

...by the process of natural selection, the insects will become almost totally immune to pesticides, necessitating a change in pesticides and larger doses.

Because of this, insects may eventually win out, and man will have dangerously polluted his environment while helping the insects to win, said Singleton. And, since pesticides adversely affect the natural enemies of insects, the predators which have kept insects in check for millions of years may cease to exist.

....Texas Parks & Wildlife NEWS

"Is it merely sentimental delusion, a 'pathetic fallacy,' to think that one sees in the animal a capacity for Joy which man himself is tending to lose? I do not think it is. We have invented exercise, recreation, pleasure, amusement, and the rest. To 'have fun' is a desire often expressed by those who live in this age of anxiety. Most of us have experienced the desire and most of us have at times actually 'had fun.' But recreation, pleasure, amusement, fun, and all the rest are poor substitutes for Joy; and Joy, so I at least am convinced, has its roots in something from which civilization tends to cut us off.

"Are some at least of the animals capable of teaching us this lesson of Joy? Some biologists deny categorically that they feel it. But by no means all and by no means the best. If I listen to a cardinal singing outside my window as I write I am convinced. The gift for real happiness or joy is not always proportionate to intelligence as we understand it, even among the animals. As Professor N. J. Berrill has put it: 'To be a bird is to be alive more intensely than any other living creature, man included. Birds have hotter blood, brighter colors, stronger emotions...They are not very intelligent...but they live in a world that is always the present, mostly full of joy.' Similarly Sir Julian Huxley, certainly no mere sentimental 'nature lover', wrote after watching in Louisiana the love play of herons who, with loud cries of ecstasy, twine their necks into a lover's knot: 'Of this I can only say that it seemed to bring such a pitch of emotion that I could have wished to be a heron that I might experience it.'"

.....Joseph Wood Krutch

#### CALENDAR:

- Dec. 26 : Christmas Bird Count - Arnett, Oklahoma.
- Dec. 28 : Christmas Bird Count - Black Mesa, Oklahoma.
- Dec. 30 : Christmas Bird Count - Lake Meredith, Texas (east end).
- Dec. 31 : Christmas Bird Count - Lake Meredith, Texas (west end).
- Jan. 3 : Christmas Bird Count - Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Texas.
- Jan. 19 : Annual Dinner, Texas Panhandle Audubon Society - 6:30 p.m. at the Garden Center.