

March, 1970

2709 S. Fairfield, Amarillo, Texas 79103

Vol. VII, No. 3

PROGRAM FOR MARCH:

Our program for March will have Mr. Charles R. Barden as its speaker. Mr. Barden is head of the Federal Air Pollution Agency in Austin. With air pollution a conspicuous part of our everyday environment, we believe this program will interest many people and will attract a large attendance. Our meeting, therefore, will be held in the auditorium of the Garden Center at 7:30 p. m., March 16.

received over 200 responses to our letter requesting contributions to finance the lawsuit, and over \$3,900 has been collected. Your response has been so far above our expectations that we don't know how to thank you enough. Legal expenses to date have been \$2,599, leaving a balance in the legal fund of \$1,317. Success to this stage would have been impossible without your moral and financial support.

....Edward A. Kutac

Vice-President

Travis Audubon Society - Austin

FIELD TRIP:

Contrary to what you read in the last newsletter, our first field trip of the year will be at Buffalo Lake on Sunday, March 15, at 2:00 p. m. Meet at the entrance to the Refuge and remombor, a Golden Eagle permit will get you in free but without one you will be charged a dollar per car. We have asked the Sierra Club to join us on our "field trip" in anticipation that in the future they will ask us to join them on their "outings".

TOS MEETING IN APRIL:

The Texas Ornithological Society Spring Meeting will be held in Corpus Christi on April 17, 18 and 19. This area of the State is a mecca for birders in the Spring and if a "norther" should blow in and prevent the birds from passing through too rapidly large numbers of a wide variety can be seen during this time.

NEW MEMBERS:

We welcome Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Nicholson and family of White Deer as new members of the TPAS. Dave and Rusty have attended several of our meetings and we hope the entire family can join us in the future.

In our last Newsletter we announced as new members Mr. and Mrs. Norman D. Eckert. We wish to apologize for our defects in spelling as we should have spelled it Ecker.

WE DON'T LOOSE THEM ALL:

Dear Fellow Conservationist:

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I inform you that our lawsuit to prevent the leasing of 78 acres of prime natural habitat in Meridian State Park for a golf course was decided in our favor by Judge Herman Jones on February 9.

"The Judge held that the application for a concession lease on the park made to the parks commission Sept. 27, 1967, was so general in nature as to be meaningless in the sense that the commission did not have before it sufficient facts as to make it possible for it to discharge the power, responsibility, and discretion imposed upon it by statute.

"Therefore, it is the judgment of the court that the agreement of Oct. 1, 1968, has not been authorized by the commission, and, therefore, was executed contrary to the mandate of the applicable statute. . .

"Judge Jones also said the commission must give public notice of any future public meeting held to consider the golf course application.

"Therefore, the defendants will be permanently enjoined from proceeding further under the agreement of Oct. 1968 until the same has been approved by the commission after notice and hearing in accordance with the last-mentioned statute, Judge Jones ruled."

We do not know what will transpire now, but we will keep you informed through the newsletter of the various organizations.

It is also a pleasure to advise that we

AN EYE ON THE ECOSYSTEM:

The quality of our life today is deteriorating. The ecosystem, man within his total environment, is undergoing tremendous strains caused by the size and complexity of our technological society.

E. Bf. White expressed the ecological ethic in his usual, succinct way. Reacting to a newspaper account that the Atomic Energy Commission had "authorized" the dumping of radioactive waste into the ocean, White remarked in THE NEW YORKER of July 27, 1957: "...I sometimes wonder about these cool assumptions of authority in areas of sea and sky. The sea doesn't belong to the Atomic Energy Commission, it belongs to me. I am not ready to authorize dumping radioactive waste into it, and I suspect that a lot of other people to whom the sea belongs are not ready to authorize it, either..."

BIRD NOTES:

The tempo of birding seems to be picking up earlier than usual this year, perhaps because of the unseasonably warm weather we have been having. The following sightings are noteworthy:

Chickadees - in McBride Canyon on 2/12 by Peggy Acord, et al.

A Baird's Sparrow at Buffalo Lake on 2/19 by Marie Mayfield. If more time and patience were used in examining all the sparrows that move through here in the Spring and Fall probably more of this species would be reported than are at present.

On 2/19 Peggy Acord and Mary Griffith found the Palo Duro Club to be highly productive of birds. They reported seeing White-crowned Sparrows (200-300), White-throated Sparrows (2), Lincoln's Sparrows (516), Song Sparrows (40-60), Audubon's Warblers (3), Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers (2 of each), a Long-billed Marsh Wren, and Purple Finchs (2 males and 4 females).

On 2/24 the year's first Greater Yellowlegs (5) were reported by Peggy Acord on a playa west of town.

4 Red-breasted Nuthatches and a Long-eared Owl were seen in Ceta Canyon by the Pedersens. on 3/1. On the same date KS came up with the year's first Savannah Sparrows (3) at Buffalo.

On 3/2 a group consisting of Peggy Acord, Mary Griffith, Thelma Fox, Rena Ross and Esther Waddill journeyed to Buffalo Lake where they saw many interesting birds as well as many along the way. At the lake the hawks were prominent: a Prairie Falcon, 2 Red-tails, several Ferruginous and a good movement of 6 to 10 Rough-legs were seen. The year's first Lesser Yellowlegs was caught in the ridiculous position of walking down the road and another first, a Vesper Sparrow, was seen. On the way back very large flocks of McCown's Longspurs were encountered and the group gave up hopes of seeing any of the other Longspurs until 2 male Chestnut-collareds flew across the road right in front of the car. The day was completed when the first Lark Bunting was seen.

The Pine Grosbeaks continue coming in to Thelma Fox's feeder and during the last week of Feb. they were joined by a female Red Crossbill. It has been several years since the latter species has been reported from here. We are happy to say that the lone female was joined by a male on 3/2. The Pine Siskins have been coming in to her feeder in large numbers and because of the position in which the feeder is located excellent views of the m can be had from looking out of her kitchen window which is only a few inches away.

A Red-bellied Woodpecker at Buffalo Lake on 2/27 by Peggy Acord and Mary Griffith and the year's first Yellow-headed Blackbirds on a playa were reported. While at the lake, Marie Mayfield told them she had recently seen an Osprey and Fox Sparrow there.

Peggy Acord beat us all to the draw again when she spotted the first Myrtle Warbler and Say's Phoebe at Lake Tanglewood on 3/3. A male Eastern Bluebird has returned to the same spot in which a pair nested last year.

NEWS FROM THE NORTH:

Several of our "ladybirders" were in Denver recently where they were joined by Katherine Whipple, formerly a member of the TPAS. Katherine, if our memory serves us correctly, is fond of cold weather birding, as is only natural of one born and raised in the north-land. She was able to show the group the White-winged Junco, a most welcome species to several of the lists. On the way back the group reported seeing several thousand Mountain Bluebirds as well as large numbers of Townsend's Solitaires in the pastures and along the road between Raton and Clayton. Both of these species have been very scarce in our area this winter.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON OUR NAMESAKE:

One of the most familiar Panhandle sights is a stretch of road with wide fields on either side and a myriad of small brown birds flying up from the roadway on the fields.

These birds, Horned Larks, are probably the most abundant bird in the Panhandle. In fact, due to lumbering, plowing and overgrazing these birds are found over great areas of the country for they thrive on poor land. A very versatile bird, they are found from high windswept mountain tops to the seashore and from the Arctic to desert valleys.

Horned Larks are about 7½ inches long, brown, with a distinctive face pattern. Males have white or yellowish foreheads and throats, black cheek patches and a breast patch. Tufts of black feathers behind the eyes form the "horns" from which the name comes. The dark tails have white edges which

are not always obvious. Females and young are paler and they lack the "horns" of the males. These birds don't hop like so many birds, but walk instead.

Horned larks, or "wheatbirds" as they are called, reflect the spirit of the wide plains. Courtship begins in late January or February and nesting is very early, the first nesting often failing because of cold weather. Song may be delivered from a perch such as a stone, clod, cowchip or fence post, or from high overhead as the bird floats gently downwards,, singing their weak but melodious tinkling song.

The nest is of grass placed on the ground in a depression or by a rock or clod. They are often found around the wheat fields in our area. The cup of grass is lined with finer plant material. Three or four eggs of olive green often heavily marked with brownish hatch into almost naked chicks which grow quickly on a diet of insects and weed and grass seeds.

In winter the birds collect in large flocks flying over winter landscapes, foraging among the furrows or along the roadsides and spending the night in groups on the cold winter ground.

...Peggy Acord

A NEW CONTEST PROPOSED:

Having a contest with birds is always a source of great fun and can result in the accumulation of a lot of useful information. When we get our new bird list published showing first and last dates it will be a challenge to everyone to see if the record for each species can be bettered. Something less arduous can be done in the meantime, however. Since KS has a "headstart" for this year, he proposes a contest to see who can hear the first Mourning Dove singing and who can find its first active nest. This year the first Mourning Dove heard singing was in the Palo Duro Canyon on Feb. 8. Can anyone beat that? Last year the first one he heard was on the same date and in the same place. Now please report the first nest you find!

CALENDAR:

- March 15: Field trip to Buffalo Lake.
Meeting time - 2:00 p. m.
Place - entrance to the Refuge.
- March 16: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p. m.
Topic - "Air Pollution"
Speaker - Charles R. Barden
- April 5 :Audubon Wildlife Film at the Garden Center - 2:30 p. m.
Topic - "Wild Rivers of N. A."
Speaker - John D. Bulger
- April 20 :Monthly society meeting.

... "the greatest beauty is organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe. Love that, not man apart from that..."

...Robinson Jeffers