

PROGRAM FOR SEPTEMBER:

Getting back into the swing of things, our September meeting will open up with the showing of color slides taken by members. If you have taken any pictures of rare or exotic species, or if you have any prize-winning photos, or if you just happen to have some slides that you like, bring them and share them with your fellow members.

BIRD NOTES:

A hot and dry summer has brought the water level at Buffalo Lake to an all-time low which is very disheartening to those of us who love the place. It has proven to be a boon, however, for shorebirds who have swarmed over the extensive mud flats in record numbers since the latter part of June. The American Avocets have been most conspicuous with 1000+ being present from the first week in July on. On 7/12 500+ Lesser Yellowlegs could be seen, on 7/18 47 Long-billed Curlews, on 8/8 2000+ Stilt Sandpipers, on 8/16 3000+ Wilson's Phalaropes, on 8/16 30 Upland Plover, on 9/7 90 Great Blue Herons, plus innumerable "peeps" at all times. One report of a Dickcissel was made by KS at Buffalo Lake on 7/12. On the same day he saw one Whimbrel there and on 7/18 a Prairie Falcon was seen as it stooped at and played among the cloud of shorebirds it had sent in terror into the sky. On 8/1 KS reported a flock of 78 Common Nighthawks moving over Buffalo Lake. At the same place he saw a Barn Owl on both 8/16 and 8/29, a Black-bellied Plover on 8/29, a Parula Warbler on 8/29 and 9/7, and a Lazuli Bunting on 8/29. A cold front that moved through on the previous night made Labor Day (9/7) a good day for birding, particularly for seeing flycatchers. At Buffalo Lake KS reported 35 Western Wood Pewees, 33 Western Kingbirds, 26 Empidonax flycatchers, 2 Eastern Phoebes, 10 Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, a Say's Phoebe, and 3 Olive-sided Flycatchers. Peggy Acord reported Cassin's Kingbirds at Lake Tanglewood on the same date plus a calling Poor-will on 9/5. A good movement of Wilson's Warblers took place, also, with KS reporting 41. The most exciting bird he saw on 9/7, however, was a Peregrine Falcon while he found it hard to be calm after also seeing a Holl's Vireo, a Knot, 2 Black-throated Gray Warblers, a Northern Phalarope, 6 Willetts, a Common Snipe, and 2 Solitary Vireos. All-in-all, some 76 species of birds were seen by KS at Buffalo Lake on that date. On the previous day he saw 3 Verdins in the Palo Duro Canyon. During the previous week, George and Rena Ross' feeder attracted Black-chinned Hummingbirds while Joe and Betsy Ross' feeder had a Rufous Hummingbird. Vera Deason had a Chestnut-sided Warbler on 9/1.

A CANDLE FOR BIRDS:

Place about five pounds of suet (all of it won't melt) in a roaster and place in the oven at 300 degrees for a few hours. Then strain and measure; add about half as much wild bird seed into which has been mixed some extra sunflower seeds. Pour into a quart milk carton and place in the refrigerator.

When you are ready to use it, simply peel off the paper carton, and you will have a smooth suet candle. A heavy soup dish serves as an excellent base. Set the candle in the

dish and fill with melted suet. Let stand outdoors or in the refrigerator until hard.

Crunchy peanut butter makes a tasty topping. Let it spill over the sides of the candle to resemble melting tallow.

Use a toothpick to secure a cherry to the top and add a sprig of holly at the bottom to complete the holiday effect.

While creating this candle, you will probably find that you have enough suet mixture to make several large candles and a few small ones; so have plenty of extra cartons on hand. The half-pint size (using 'half and half' cartons as candle molds) is perfect for making charming Christmas gifts for special friends and neighbors.

Save the aluminum pans from frozen meat pies. They make good bases for the small candles as weight is not needed to prevent these lower units from toppling over.

Place the Christmas candle on a ledge outside your window or in a near-by feeder where you can watch the results of your efforts.

UNUSUAL SUMMER VISITORS:

In Peterson's "A Field Guide to Western Birds" it is noted as being a "small olive-green babbler with a bright orange-red bill", etc. The original range is listed as SE Asia --introduced in the Hawaiian Islands. It's common name is Hill Robin or Pekin Robin, but what was a Red-billed Leiothrix doing in Vera Deason's yard or at Thelma Fox's feeder here in Amarillo?

Vera mentioned this bird and was told it must be an escapee. Then, several weeks after she and Thelma tried to capture the bird in the Deason's garage, it appeared at the Fox's feeder. It took our world traveler, Rena Ross, to name it as she was familiar with the Leiothrix from a recent trip to Hawaii.

The Leiothrix has a handsome song and is quite tame - an addition to any feeding station. After a couple of weeks it disappeared from the Fox's feeder but it may still be at another feeder in the area. An interesting interlude.

Aside from bird visitors during the summer, we also enjoyed birding visitors from time to time. In July Mrs. Ruthie Sonnenburg of Sherman, who has been coming to Canyon for the summer band school with her band director husband, joined Rita Kenney and Peggy Acord and an assortment of children for shorebirding at Buffalo Lake. It's always nice to make new birding friends.

....Peggy Acord

CALENDAR:

Sept. 21: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
Bring your own color slides.

Oct. 19 - Monthly society meeting.