

PROGRAM FOR SEPTEMBER:

To get our new Audubon season going in the right direction we will follow our tradition of letting members show their homemade color slides at our Sept. meeting. We particularly solicit slides dealing with the various aspects of nature but we earnestly ask that you refrain from showing us slides of yourselves, family, friends, dogs, cats, horses and cows. Our meeting, as is customary, will be quite informal; so, come prepared to enjoy yourselves and swap stories with one another concerning the exciting birding adventures you may have had this summer.

MID-SUMMER FREEZE THAWS:

From Audubon House: "With reference to the effect of the current wage-price controls on National Audubon Society's previously announced dues increase, we have received a written opinion from the Society's legal counsel which concludes, 'You may go ahead with the contemplated increase of Audubon dues as of Sept. 1st.' We understand that this opinion is based on the concept of dues being essentially contributions to a voluntary membership organization."

This dues increase means that individual membership goes up to \$12 a year and family to \$15. If any of you have the old membership cards lying about, please destroy them.

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM SEASON BEGINS:

Sunday, October 10, at 2:30 p.m. Robert W. Davison will present "Journey in Time", reflections on the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. Via film the viewer accompanies Mr. Davison down into Grand Canyon, then on a boat trip from Lee's Ferry to Lake Meade, and finally makes the return trip by air with a bush pilot for perhaps the most thrilling eye-ful of all.

If you have friends or acquaintances who may be interested in the purchase of season tickets, please give their names and addresses to Vera Deason, 1400 Striot Drive, 79106.

BIRD NOTES:

Because our members are seldom still during the summer months, scattering far and wide, communication with them, as a consequence, has not been too good and we do not have a great deal to offer in this column.

Local birding was hampered during early and mid-summer by the lack of water but with the coming of the rains in August many of the playas were filled and, best of all, Buffalo Lake received a substantial amount. Though far from being full it does have water in it, in sufficient amounts to attract and hold the wildfowl that will be coming there this fall and winter. Presently, the mud flats are excellent for birding and have already attracted an abundance of shorebirds. On any day you go down there now you will have little or no trouble in finding American Avocets and Wilsons Phalaropes, Least, Semi-palmated, Western, Baird's and Stilt Sandpipers, the Long-billed Dowitchers and Snowy and Semi-palmated Plover, Marbled Godwit, Willet, and Common Snipe, the Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and flying overhead, the Upland Plover. There are Killdeer galore and, right now, Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Shovelers, Pintails, Blue and Green-winged Teal are there in large numbers, as well as some Mallards and American

Widgeons. On 8/28 KS observed 4 Mountain Plover there. Many of these shorebirds can be found on the playas near town, particularly southeast in the direction of Lake Tanglewood. Peggy Acord and Rona Ross surveyed the area on 8/26 and found most of what I have named above plus the Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers, along with a good flight of Swainson's Hawks. If you want to learn your shorebirds, or brush up on some of those hard to identify ones in non-breeding plumage, now is the time to do so. Warning! If you are going to tromp around Buffalo Lake take plenty of mosquito repellent along.

Some of the more interesting summer birds we had were the Black-chinned Hummingbirds in the Ross's yard, the late August presence of a Great-crested Flycatcher that lingered for several days in the Acord's yard, the increased number of pairs of the Verdin in the Palo Duro Canyon (KS), and at least 3 singing House Wrens that were observed at Lake Marvin on 7/5 by KS.

Our first big push of Fall migrants occurred on the Labor Day week-end. On 9/5 KS saw 28 White-faced Ibis and 4 Black-necked Stilts at Buffalo Lake and on the following day Peggy Acord, along with her mother and daughter, observed 2 Buff-breasted Sandpipers and a Ruddy Turnstone in non-brooding plumage at Elysian Fields. They also saw a flock of 70 Swainson's Hawks migrating south. For those of you who were watching you no doubt observed that with the arrival of this cold front the Mississippi Kites departed from our area.

A TRIP TO A BIRDER'S PARADISE:

Vera Deason and I had been away from Amarillo a week when we found the Massachusetts Audubon group at Winnipeg where we toured the Delta area. We had such a wonderful time in North and South Dakota, particularly at Konmare, N.D., that the Delta area was disappointing to me. We had seen dozens of nesting grebes at Konmare, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds galore. In fact, every pot-hole in North Dakota was teeming with birds. But Churchill was not disappointing! We arrived there about ten-thirty P.M. By eleven-thirty we were out birding at the Granary Ponds and Cape Merry. We went birding at six o'clock in the morning, came in by nine, had breakfast and birded until lunch, birded after lunch and after dinner both because I never saw the sun go down or come up, for that matter. We usually went to Cape Merry either before breakfast or after dinner where we watched for Beluga whales and Harbor seals as well as Jaegers, and other sea birds. The ice was still in so much that the ships were still not able to come into the harbor. The icebergs took strange shapes and were aquamarine blue and green in color. But most of the time we spent on the tundra. To quote Richard Forster, our leader for the trip:

"The tundra contains three distinct types of microhabitat. There are small glacial potholes scattered all about. Invariably one section of these potholes is very shallow with grasses and grassy clumps occupying about one-half the surface. The next microhabitat is the wet grassy areas that were separated from the potholes. These

areas proved to be the best for shorebirds. The third area was moss/lichen knolls that varied in diameter and shape. Most of these knolls were half an acre or less in size. The three areas exist as separate and important entities that serve distinct functions for the birds inhabiting the tundra."

The last area that Richard describes was unbelievably beautiful. It was like a Persian carpet with the gray of the lichen, the bright green of the moss and the flowering shrubs that grew against the ground in miniature form. We were fortunate to have Blanche A. Smith, who lived in Churchill, to identify all the plants for us. Also, we had Gerald McKeating, naturalist, as a leader. His special interest was Botany. We learned to appreciate how the plants adapted to the harsh winter life of that area. We saw many nesting birds and some young. We grew accustomed to seeing yellowlegs in trees and they were so noisy! We learned to recognize the sound of the snipe "winnowing" and were "divo-bombed" by Arctic Terns. We had seen most of the birds before but only in their winter plumage. The Arctic Loon and the Dunlin are completely different in the Spring plumages. And I'll never forget the Golden Plover that entertained the group for at least thirty minutes as he seemed to pose in the Rhododendron. It was a very rewarding trip.

....Rena Ross....

BIRDS IN THE NEWS: SOME OF IT GOOD; SOME REPULSIVE:

"Nothing has preoccupied the National Audubon Society in recent weeks more than the sickening revelations of illegal poisoning and shooting of bald and golden eagles and other wildlife in Wyoming. The nation-wide publicity has brought us a flood of letters from concerned citizens, and I regret that it has become necessary to resort to this kind of form letter to respond to all of them.

"We do indeed appreciate your concern, and I want you to know how we have been involved in the investigation from the beginning, and also how you can help.

"Through the alertness of our chapter at Casper, Wyoming, the Murie Audubon Society, and of a member of our field staff, the NAS was able to secure a prompt federal investigation of the outrageous poisoning case. This led directly to the even more shocking revelation of the wholesale slaughter of eagles and other wildlife by gunners in aircraft paid for by sheep ranchers.

"We applaud and give credit to Ass't. Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel P. Reed and the enforcement branch of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife for the vigorous way the investigation has been pursued.

"This is not a new problem or a new concern of the NAS. We have been working for years to reform and cut back the government's own predator control program which uses poisons and other illegal devices indiscriminately. Through exposure of the bounty hunting of eagles from airplanes in western Texas and New Mexico a decade ago, and through Audubon-sponsored studies, we were largely responsible for an amendment to the bald eagle act in 1962 that extended federal protection to the golden eagle.

"When our field research director testified early in June before the McGee Subcommittee, he pointed out to a skeptical Wyoming Senator that the disclosure of eagle poisoning was

but the 'tip of an iceberg'. We have reason to believe that aerial shooting of eagles is still going on in other western states. Coyotes, bobcats and other carnivorous mammals, including some endangered species, are being needlessly destroyed in programs sponsored by federal, state and county agencies.

"We plan now to take advantage of the justifiable public outrage by launching a rounded and vigorous educational campaign concerning predator-prey relationships in the West. We shall utilize radio and TV spots, exhibits, and other media.

"We have also joined sister environmental organizations in filing a legal petition with the Environmental Protection Agency calling for suspension of the registration of thallium, compound 1080, cyanide and strychnine for predator control purposes.

"Several who have written us have offered contributions. Such assistance is indeed needed and welcome to help us finance the educational campaign and to meet the legal costs. If IPA rejects our legal petition, we probably will take the issue to the courts. Checks should be made payable to the National Audubon Society and designated for the 'Eagle Fund.'"

....Elvis J. Stahr/President....

"....A definitive photograph of a male Ivory-billed Woodpecker was taken in Louisiana during the past year! It hardly needs to be explained why no details will be forthcoming on the location...but coupled with recent Florida records, it gives some hope that the species may be able to survive."

....Louisiana Ornithological Society News....

"Years ago Roseate Spoonbills nested in what is now National Audubon's Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary, in Louisiana, but the numbers decreased and the last successful nesting there was in 1924. But in the past few years the numbers started to increase again and last spring the spoonbills started nesting again: a total of 37 birds produced five nests and hatched 11 young.

"Apparently all the young made it through the year, for this spring there were 50 adult spoonbills at Rainey. They produced 11 nests and, at latest count, 24 young---and there were 11 more eggs still expected to hatch. So a new colony of these rare and beautiful birds appears to be solidly under way."

....Audubon Leader....

"The nearly extinct California Condor may be alive and well in Mexico. In a joint announcement, representatives of the Mexican Govt and the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology reported the findings of the expedition, which was prompted by earlier sightings of the giant vulture in the mountains of north-central Baja California, Mexico. David Siddon, a freelance writer and nature enthusiast, led the 4-man expedition into the western slopes of the mountains. He reported seeing one of the birds perched on a pine tree from a distance of about 250 yds. Although no photographs of the bird were taken, more tangible proof of the presence of the condor in Mexico rests on 4 authenticated feathers found near the spot of the sightings."

....New York Times....

CALENDAR:

Sept. 20: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.