

PROGRAM FOR MARCH:

Our program for March will be presented by Jim Jokerst and is entitled "Panhandle Mammals". This promises to be a very interesting review and we urge all our members to attend.

MAY TREAT: GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS MAY 6-7:

Arrangements have been made for up to 12 TPAS members to have a field trip into McKittrick Canyon in the Guadalupe National Park near Carlsbad Caverns.

Members should meet at the restaurant in White City, N. M. at a time to be set later, on May 6 to go together to the Canyon. Room accommodations are available at White City or Carlsbad.

Sun, May 7 - the group will go to Rattlesnake Springs where spring birding is very good.

Other areas between Amarillo and Carlsbad of interest: Bitter Lakes National Wildlife Refuge at Roswell; McMillan and Avalon reservoirs between Artesia and Carlsbad; Sitting Bulls Fall southwest of Artesia. Anyone interested can contact Peggy Acord at 352-6372.

AWARD FOR 'EAGLE':

A Christopher Award has been presented to Robert Riger, director/writer of the Nat'l Audubon TV show, "Eagle and the Hawk." The Christophers honor directors and writers of outstanding TV shows, movies and books.

FOUNDER OF BSA HONORED:

It is with considerable happiness that we report on the recent honor bestowed upon the founder of that world-wide organization of renown, the BSA. Ruth Galloway, former member of the TPAS and now a doctoral candidate at Texas Tech University, had her essay "The Birder's Spouse" published in the Nov/Dec issue of BIRDING, the distinguished journal of the American Birding Association. This article originally appeared in our own PRAIRIE HORNED LARK and it has afforded all who have read it a great deal of pleasure - some more than others. In case you are new to the birding fraternity, BSA stands for Birder's Spouses Association, a somewhat sardonic group of malcontents who have banded together in the hopes that a collective approach will turn up answers to the peculiar problems that BSA'ers have. Having now hit the national scene, one has the feeling that this group is only beginning to be heard from.

HIGH COUNTRY NEWS:

A publication of high caliber that will interest members of the TPAS is HIGH COUNTRY NEWS, an outdoor and environmental bi-weekly newspaper published by Tom Bell of Lander, Wyoming. Though primarily concerned with the environmental problems of the mountainous west, its underlying attitudes and philosophy have worldwide applicability. The yearly subscription rate is \$10.00 and the address is Box k, Lander, Wyoming 82520.

SPRING MEETING OF THE TOS:

The Big Bend National Park and the Davis Mountains will be the sights of the spring meeting of the Texas Ornithological Society. The meetings on April 26 & 27 will be at the former location and on the 28th & 29th they will shift to the latter. You must make your

own room reservations and at this time it appears that the Chisos Mountains Lodge in the Big Bend is full up and that your best bet for a night's lodging is to bring it yourself. Indian Lodge in the Davis Mountains is also full but on last report it is still possible to find good rooms at other places in town. For more information call the Editor of this newsletter. The banquet speaker will be Roland Clement, Vice President of NAS.

BIRD NOTES:

2/23: Rona Ross, Rita Kenney, Peg Acord at Lake McClellan. They saw Eastern Bluebirds and Bewick's Wrens fighting over nesting sites. Observed a pair of Golden-fronted Woodpeckers and some Chipping Sparrows (early for this species). On the way found the playas covered with ducks, mostly Pintails, with many Redheads and Canvasbacks on Lake McClellan. On 3/5 Ken Seyffert and Arnold Moorhouse made the same trip. Found many ducks on the lake, including 600 Redheads, 100 Canvasbacks, 30 Ring-necked Ducks, plus a fair showing of several other species. This is definitely the winter for Redheads in our area. The Green-winged Teals were busily engaged in courtship rituals. Birding at the lake was almost impossible. The two spent about 4 hours there and not for one second was the roar of motorcycles abated. They were on the roads around the lake, they were on the woodland trails, they were going up and down the escarpments surrounding the lake, they were present where there were no trails and where you would expect to see the walker only. Go not to Lake McClellan on the week-end if you are seeking surcease from uproar. On the way back they observed a flock of 40 Killdeers at a playa and a Bald Eagle. Near Conway they picked up a Short-eared Owl dead along the roadside.

3/26: Barbara Lund reports many rails calling below the dam at Lake Meredith and that the Am. Bitterns have returned. On the same date Ken Seyffert saw a Screech Owl at the campground at the first water crossing in the Palo Duro Canyon.

3/2: While in the Palo Duro, Rita Kenney and Peg Acord observed approximately 1,000 Sandhill Cranes going over. Ken Seyffert first saw them returning north on 2/26. The ladies also observed Golden-fronted Woodpeckers carrying nesting material.

3/5: Peg and Bruce Acord were the first to report returning shorebirds - a Lesser Yellowlegs and a Long-billed Dowitcher at Elysian Fields.

3/9: Rita Kenney & Peg Acord found a Whistling Swan on a playa southwest of town. They also reported an unusual number of Ferruginous Hawks. Arnold Moorhouse noted the same frequent sightings of this species of hawk on his trips around the Panhandle the same week. On three separate occasions during the last week or so he has picked up Barn Owls that were roadkills and all were found a few miles SW of Panhandle on Highway 60. He speculates as to whether or not they could be nesting in the old bomb bunkers nearby.

SCHEDULE OF FIELD TRIPS:

Sunday, March 19 - Jim Jokerst ranch on South Washington just south of bridge near Camp Don Harrington and on west side of road - 2:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 8 - Buffalo Lake - meet at refuge entrance at 8:30 a.m.

Saturday, April 22 - Llano Cometary - meet by pond at 8:00 a.m.

Call Peggy Acord for further information.

CITIZENS ALERT:

You have a unique opportunity to prevent unnecessary dam building, canal digging and channelization in the years to come and to promote the establishment of parks and the preservation of wild and scenic rivers and valuable wildlife habitat.

The Water Resources Council (WRC) has just published proposed new Standards governing the water development projects of the Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Soil Conservation Service, and the Tennessee Valley Authority. The Standards will determine which projects can go forward and which cannot in the years to come.

The public has been invited to comment on the proposed Standards. Developers and construction interests which support agencies like the Corps will be trying to force the WRC to rewrite sections of the Standards which they don't like. Concerned citizens have until March 31, 1972, to express their views. Your letter is crucial in making the public's voice heard.

Your letter should stress the following points:

1) that you want the "discount rate" set at a realistic level of 10%, the "opportunity cost of capital". A high discount rate will make economic evaluations more realistic and will eliminate many destructive water projects which are economically unsound.

2) that you want the new Standards with a high discount rate to apply to all uncompleted water resource projects no matter when they were authorized in the past.

3) that you want priority given to preserving environmental quality. Mention particular rivers and streams of concern to you and ask that they be preserved.

4) that you want the regional development account dropped because it will lead to more environmentally destructive projects.

5) that you as a citizen want to have a voice in planning water projects in your area.

6) that you want local beneficiaries of water resource projects to pay a far greater share of the costs of these water projects.

7) that you want your comments to be made part of the official record on the proposed Standards.

Add any other concerns you wish the WRC to consider in drafting the final version of the Standards. Address your letter to: Director, Water Resources Council, 2120 L St., N. W., Washington, D. C. 20037.

GOOSE MORTALITY:

Misuse of pesticides by rice farmers in Texas coastal areas has caused mortality of waterfowl and is a possible threat to fish and humans as well, according to a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department investigation.

Department biologists during 1971 joined with scientists from Texas A&M and the U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife in collecting dead and dying geese from fields in five coastal counties for post mortem examinations. The resulting tests confirmed that the birds -- which included snow, blue and white-fronted geese -- were killed by high concentrations of dieldrin and/or mercury. Dieldrin is a chlorinated hydrocarbon

pesticide which, along with a similar compound named aldrin, is reportedly used widely as a seed-rice preservative.

Dr. R. M. Robinson of the Texas A&M Department of Veterinary Pathology said in a report to the Parks and Wildlife Department that brain samples taken from the dead geese contained 40 parts per million (ppm) of dieldrin. This is, in Dr. Robinson's words, "exceedingly high," as only .1 ppm is considered lethal. These findings are not news to many biologists who have suspected that pesticides are responsible for the decline of several waterfowl species. The fulvous tree duck is a notable example of a species which has all but disappeared from its ricefield habitat in Texas.

Dr. Robinson pointed out that the manner in which the dieldrin-treated seed is planted determines its potential hazard to life forms. "The usual practice in rice planting is to drill the seed in dry fields and then flood them for germination. However, some planters flood the fields first and then scatter the seed by airplane which makes this highly toxic seed readily available to the birds," Dr. Robinson said. He also warned of another dangerous practice. "The treated seed is sometimes soaked in open canals for a day before planting. During the soaking process, the toxic substances diffuse into the water and contaminate the area downstream, posing a definite threat not only to waterfowl but to fish and humans as well." This threat could be removed by drilling the seed and careful clean-up of the spillage and by burning the leftover seed, two practices which a number of farmers are maintaining at present.

Department biologists said the geese which were still alive showed the symptoms of pesticide poisoning -- loss of muscular coordination, spasms, wing beat convulsions, and falling backward. Examinations revealed the geese showed no signs of disease, parasitism, hydrogen cyanide or nitrate poisoning. Also, none had died of gunshot wounds and none had eaten lead shot.

Don B. Frels, a regional assistant for wildlife who participated in the investigation, said the discovery of goose mortality is serious, but what may prove even more serious are the long-term effects of geese carrying less-than-lethal dosages of pesticides. Dieldrin, he pointed out, possesses many of the physical properties of DDT, which already has been blamed for serious declines in bird species such as the peregrine falcon and brown pelican.

"Further monitoring of pesticides in waterfowl is necessary," Frels said. "The eight months between migrations may be sufficient time for the contaminated birds to purge these substances from their systems. If not, then it is possible that eating the flesh of these geese could transfer the pesticides residues to sportsmen."

We all profit from the proper use of insecticides," Frels concluded, "but we also may suffer from their abuse."

...Texas Parks & Wildlife NEWS...

CALENDAR:

March 20: Monthly Society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.

March 19: Field trip - Jim Jokerst ranch - 2:30 p.m.

April 8: Field trip - Buffalo Lake - 8:30 a.m.