

BIRD NOTES:

With the advent of spring migration one wonders just how many of the returning birds to report and one finally concludes that the only possible thing to do is to urge everyone to go afield and record them as they arrive. Over the years, as individual records accumulate, early and late dates can be determined and published; then, as each successive season follows, it becomes a matter of interest to see whether or not a particular species has shown up either earlier or later than previously. While it may seem trivial to get excited over the fact that the first Western Kingbird seen this year was on April 11 whereas the previous early date of arrival was April 12, the cumulative picture that develops showing the average date of first arrival can be of considerable value in determining trends in bird movements. This is why it is of benefit to your society to keep records of the birds you see, channeling this information in to the Recorder so that a more comprehensive picture of bird activity can be secured.

Some noteworthy observations have been turned in by Arnold Moorhouse. At Buffalo Lake on 4/2 he found an Horned Grebe in breeding plumage as it swam downstream from the dam. On 4/6 he reported a Double-crested Cormorant on the lake. Two birds that have greatly disturbed their observers and have caused them to delve deeply into the bird books for enlightenment were seen by Peggy Acord and Esther Waddill, and by Ken Seyffert and Arnold Moorhouse. At Lake Tanglewood in mid-March the former two observed what they believe to have been a Mexican Jay. This bird was kept under observation for quite some time and it exhibited some of the important field points that set the Mexican Jay apart from the Scrub Jay. The absence of a white throat with "necklace", and the lack of a white eye-line and brown back appear to be negative evidence of its being a Scrub Jay. Some banding records of the early 1950's in our area include a few Mexican Jays. The latter team of observers found a "flycatcher" sitting on a high line across the road west of the railroad station in the Palo Duro Canyon. This was on 4/2. The bird was of a uniform gray with no discernible wing bars. It was noticeably larger than a wood pewee and it did have a slight head crest. It was of a size and configuration much like the Olive-sided Flycatcher but lacked white on its breast and sides. The observers were not close enough to determine the bill color satisfactorily. These characteristics point to its being a Coues' Flycatcher which is a bird of central and southwestern Arizona, and southwestern New Mexico. Adolph Krehel of Clayton, N. M., however, who has birded that area for the last 20 years or more, lists it as a "rare visitor" to northeastern New Mexico. In any case, this latter bird will have to remain on our "hypothetical" list and is reported in this newsletter only with the hope that others will keep an eye out for it while birding in the canyon.

RECOMMENDED READING:

Once in a while a book comes along that one feels compelled to recommend that our members read. One such is The Water Hustlers published by the Sierra Club (\$7.95). It is a three-part exploration of the water plans

proposed or being implemented in Texas, New York and California. Of all the articles I have read on the subject, these three are the clearest expositions of what the ultimate effects of such plans will be on the environment, particularly the one on the Texas Water Plan. Written by John Graves, author of another excellent book, Good-bye to a River, it is written from the first-hand experience of a farmer wise in the ways of water. As he says, and brings out clearly, "you ain't seen nothing yet."

BIRDS OF THE PALO DURO CANYON:

Thinking it might be helpful to new birders and those who have not birded in this area before, the following is a list of those birds that may be encountered in the big Canyon:

Year-around residents (may be seen at any time of the year) - Golden Eagle; Sparrow Hawk; Bobwhite; Scaled Quail; Turkey; Mourning Dove; Roadrunner; Screech Owl; Great Horned Owl; Belted Kingfisher; Golden-fronted Woodpecker; Ladder-backed Woodpecker; Scrub Jay; Common Crow; Black-crested Titmouse; Verdin; Common Bushtit; Bewick's Wren; Canyon Wren; Rock Wren; Mockingbird; Starling; House Sparrow; Western Meadowlark; Cardinal; House Finch; Rufous-crowned Sparrow; Black-throated Sparrow.

Summer residents (to be seen in the summer only) - Turkey Vulture; Mississippi Kite; Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Common Nighthawk; Red-headed Woodpecker; Ash-throated Flycatcher; Rough-winged Swallow; Cliff Swallow; Blue Jay; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher; Orchard Oriole; Bullock's Oriole; Brown-headed Cowbird; Blue Grosbeak; Painted Bunting; Lesser Goldfinch; Lark Sparrow; Cassin's Sparrow.

Winter residents or visitors (birds that winter in the Canyon or occasionally pass through during that season) - Canada Goose; Mallard; Cackall; Gogswinged Teal; American Widgeon; Common Goldeneye; Sharp-shinned Hawk; Cooper's Hawk; Red-tailed Hawk; Ferruginous Hawk; Bald Eagle; Marsh Hawk; Prairie Falcon; Pigeon Hawk; Killdeer; Yellow-shafted Flicker; Red-shafted Flicker; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Williamson's Sapsucker; White-breasted Nuthatch; Red-breasted Nuthatch; Brown Creeper; Winter Wren; Brown Thrasher; Curve-billed Thrasher; Sage Thrasher; Robin; Hermit Thrush; Eastern, Western and Mountain Bluebirds; Townsend's Solitaire; Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets; Cedar Waxwing; Northern and Loggerhead Shrikes; Myrtle and Audubon's Warblers; Red-winged Blackbird; Pine Siskin; Am. Goldfinch; Green-tailed, Rufous-sided, and Brown Towhees; Baird's Sparrow; Slate-colored, Oregon and Gray-headed Juncos; Tree, Chipping, Field, Harris', White-crowned, White-throated, Lincoln's, Swamp, and Song Sparrows.

Transients (primarily migrants) - Pied-billed Grebe; Great-blue Heron; Sandhill Crane; Am. Coot; Common Snipe; Ring-billed Gull; Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers; Western Kingbird; Scissor-tailed and Great-crested Flycatchers; Eastern and Say's Phoebe; Empidonax flycatchers; Western Wood Pewee; Olive-sided Flycatcher; Tree, Bank and Barn Swallows; House and Long-billed Marsh Wrens; Catbird; Swainson's Thrush; Solitary and Warbling Vireos; Black and White, Orange-crowned, Nashville, Virginia,

follow; Townsend's; Black-throated Green; Bay-breasted and MacGillivray's Warblers; Yellow-throat; Yellow-breasted Chat; Wilson's Warbler; American Redstart; Western and Summer Tanagers; Rose-breasted and Black-headed Grosbeaks; Indigo and Lazuli Buntings; Red Crossbill; Lark Bunting; Savannah; Grasshopper, Vesper, Clay-colored, and Brewer's Sparrows.

TOO MANY ORGANIZATIONS?:

You may have often thought, as I have, that there are too many conservation organizations with a resulting dissipation of efforts. This point is brought out well in the following letter to the editor:

Dear Sir:

Are you sure that conservationists have their priorities straight? I once took the trouble to count the number of conservationist organizations, or elements of organizations, in this nation. There were over 700 of them. Too many kooks spoil the truth?

I am urged, persuaded, advised, and reminded (not yet implored, beseeched, or exhorted) to write to my representatives to: slow up population growth, save Alaska, stop stripmining, arrest pollution, rescue the redwoods, defeat the highwaymen, chasten the Army Engineers, subdue the auto autocrats, condemn the poison lobby, redeem the Indians, block the snowmobiles, punish the eagle slayers, smash the seal killers, etc., etc.

How many years do you think I've got left? Moreover, for all practical purposes my representatives are illiterate. If they could read, they would know about these problems without my telling them. And they would, if they were at all human, wish to save their wives and children from that fate worse than death -- seeing the land you stand on bleed to death.

My representatives, like the conservationists, are of many minds. Some say fight, some say curse, one or two have been heard to say "Think". None yet, with Franklin, has grumbled, "If we don't hang together, we'll hang separately." We're hanging separately just the same -- because "their" priorities are not "our" priorities. Why is it impossible for "us" to select one overriding "cause", really bear down on it all together, and see if Congress can actually be awakened? Just for the hell of it! Just to see if Hegel's dictum can be reversed! Said Hegel, "We learn from history only that we learn nothing from history."

I will give the Editor's (Friends of the Earth) reply in the next newsletter.

SOME FACTS ABOUT CHANNELIZATION:

In the not-so-distant future Texans may not have to worry about pollution of their natural streams, according to William C. Provine, biologist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

"I think you will all agree that there will be no problem with the pollution of our natural streams, if these streams are entirely eliminated as we know them now," Provine told biologists and other department inland fisheries personnel at a recent conference in Austin. The problem, said Provine, is channelization, the practice of straightening the stream and removing vegetation from its banks for flood control purposes. According to Provine, one of the main government agencies responsible for promoting channelization

completed 273 watershed projects, including channelization, nationwide during the 16 years between 1954 and 1970. Planning was authorized for another 1561 watersheds, and construction was in progress on 1001 more. By the year 2000, this same government agency, one of several involved in channelization projects, reports that 8964 more watersheds need channelization.

The grave magnitude of fish and wildlife losses due to channelization projects has been extensively documented in several states, said Provine. A study in California showed that channelization resulted in six conditions which were detrimental to fish and wildlife: (1) the adjoining backwater lakes and sloughs were drained, (2) riparian vegetation cover was eliminated, (3) the eddies and holes along the river littoral zone were eliminated, (4) water turbidity was increased, (5) bank erosion was increased, and (6) amounts of spawning area were reduced.

A comparison of 23 channeled and 36 unchanneled streams in North Carolina showed a 90% reduction in the number of fish and an 85% reduction in weight with limited recovery even after 40 years. Lack of recovery after long periods was reported by the Idaho Fish and Game Department which said there was an 80% to 90% reduction in game fish 30 to 75 years following channelization. Data on channeled sections of the Blackwater River in Missouri indicate that after 40 years unchanneled portions yielded 565 pounds of fish per acre in comparison to 131 pounds per acre in channeled areas. Other states report comparable reductions.

Provine cited a study which indicated that alteration by dredging and draining is probably of greater significance than pollution per se in producing long-term change in the populations of stream fishes.

"Pollution can be abated and its damage reversed," said Provine. "The damage of streams by channelization is by all indications permanent."

...Texas Parks & Wildlife News....

The inner voice has whispered too many different things to too many different men for me to have any conviction that it is always right or that it comes from anywhere except merely from within. But some voices one must listen to, and when this voice speaks to me its authority, however little it may be, is at least as great as the authority of the latest editorial in the latest weekly or monthly review. The hardest facts, as Havelock Ellis once remarked, are the facts of emotion. Joy and love, for example, cannot be doubted when one feels them. I know that they existed in me and for me when I heard the first peepers of spring and when I watched spring turn to summer. I cannot regret that I did so. I hope that whether the rest of the world is headed toward success or failure in its largest enterprises, I shall be permitted to watch with equal satisfaction at least one spring come again.

...Joseph Wood Krutch....

CALENDAR:

- April 17: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
- April 22: Field trip - Llano Cemetery - meet by pond at 8:00 a.m.
- May 6-7: Field trip to the Guadalupe.