

It is with deep regret that we note the passing of one of our valued and long-time members, Maud Settle. Maud and Tol have contributed to and participated in many of our activities over the years and our sympathies go out to Tol during this trying time.

#### PROGRAM FOR MARCH:

Have you ever wished for the opportunity to examine some study skins of birds? Join us on Monday night, March 19, at 7:30 p.m. in the Science Building at West Texas State University in Canyon when Dr. Charles Smith will conduct a program wherein we will be able to view some of the skins in the University's collection.

#### WINTER INTERLUDE:

Every student of the outdoors knows that water attracts wildlife, especially in arid country.

Several years ago two of us discovered a metal stock tank with its guardian windmill in the bottom of the canyon just inside the fence. It was a raw winter day with blowing snow, unfriendly to man and beast, yet the tank was ringed with a marvelous variety of birds.

We have talked of returning a number of times, and finally did on a cloudy, cold, windy day in February. We parked on the shoulder across the road from the tank and for about an hour watched a parade of beautiful birds.

Mountain Bluebirds and Robins by the flock were constantly moving. The metal tank was blue with birds. Robins and Cedar Waxwings, Cardinals and Mockingbirds crowded the rim. The Golden-fronted Woodpeckers and flickers, unable to sit on the rim, clung to the side of the rim and stretched their necks to the utmost for a drink. The birds crowded so thickly that once a Cedar Waxwing lit on the back of a bluebird briefly, still partially hovering.

Beyond the tank a seepage with bright green grass was a mass of bathing bluebirds. The junipers and mesquite were dotted with these birds and a small flock of goldfinches, House Finches, juncos and a few White-crowns.

One male House Finch was almost completely white. He had a small amount of rose on head and breast and a little brownish-gray on wings and tail. Two female Mountain Bluebirds stood out particularly. One had only the outer tail feathers white, while the second was really startling with white cap and neck spots and pure white primaries and outer tail feathers. It makes you wonder about things.

Beyond the first stretch of vegetation, 5 Turkeys launched from one side of the canyon and lit in the grass and junipers across the canyon. They didn't come in to drink as we hoped they would, but a small flock of Western Bluebirds did.

Reluctantly we left this wealth of bird activity and drove up onto the plains. Wherever we crossed a small draw we would see more Robins and bluebirds. A large concentration was at Burson Lakes. But the real treat was a large flock of Pinon Jays, close to a hundred of them, in a deep draw out of the wind east of Silverton, trooping from juniper to juniper down the draw, calling as they flew.

Some of our best days over the years have been on outwardly unappealing days. This was no exception. ....Peggy Acord.....

#### A PAMPA EVENT:

By the time this newsletter reaches you the event we speak of will have occurred, yet we think it deserves recognition as an example of what birders can do in interesting their communities in birdlife.

Last Tuesday night in Pampa Explorer Post 86 sponsored an "Information Program on Purple Martins" as a Community Service Project. The program involved a movie on the Purple Martin, a presentation of the results of a Purple Martin survey made in the Texas Panhandle last summer, and a question and discussion session conducted by Pampa's dean of Purple Martin promoters, Vernon Hall. Post 86 is sponsored by the Gray County Soil and Water Conservation District under the leadership of Jack C. Williams, an avid birder who has participated in several of our area Christmas Counts and study projects. Jack and his youngsters are to be congratulated in their endeavors.

#### RESULTS OF WINTER POPULATION STUDY:

On Feb. 25 Ken Seyffert completed his sixth consecutive winter population study in the Palo Duro Canyon. The final results show an average density per visit of 216 birds on the 31 acre study plot, or 697 birds per 100 acres. This exceeds the previous high of last winter when 205 birds per visit, or 663 per 100 acres, was recorded. The greater than average density is attributable to the large numbers of Robins present throughout the winter. The average of 101 Robins per visit is twice as high as the previous high and five times greater than the average of the preceding years. The large influx of Mountain Bluebirds during the last few weeks of the study period also helped in boosting upward the final total. It is to be noted that only birds that have lit on the study area are counted as being present. Otherwise, the Robin count would have been considerably higher as four or five times the recorded number flew over the area on numerous occasions. An exception to this requirement is in the case of birds of prey. An eagle circling overhead or a Marsh Hawk quartering the area is counted as being present for these are the methods by which they utilize the study plot. Also, only the ducks that are swimming on the creek or that obviously would alight save for the presence of the observer, are counted.

Another unusual feature of this winter's count was the presence of seven species never before recorded during the study period. These were the Pintail, Bald Eagle, Long-billed Marsh Wren, Bohemian Waxwing, Evening Grosbeak, Black-throated Sparrow, and Fox Sparrow. Over the six year period of counts, 79 species have now been recorded.

Without the large increases in Robins and Mountain Bluebirds, the count would have been close to average. There were marked decreases in several species that usually occupy the top five positions in high numbers, viz., the Slate-colored and Oregon Juncos, and the White-crowned and Song Sparrows. It is interesting to note that 22 birds per 100 acres was recorded for each of the juncos. Over the past years the Oregon has out-numbered the Slate-colored by 4 to 1. This same relationship in numbers has been noted by other birders in various areas of the Panhandle this winter.

## HOW TO ACQUIRE A LIFE LIST;

For the person who is interested in Birds (Birds are always spelt or spoken with a Capital B by sincere Birders) and wishes to become a Birder with a LIFE LIST, but is slightly hazy about the proper procedure, the following may prove of some value. Having spent many days in the field observing Birders, the writer is convinced the following items are indispensable:

First: A greater interest in Birds than the average person who notes the passage of a Bird only if nothing more interesting such as a cloud, a dog, or a girl in a mini-skirt is in view. This increased interest will lead the novice to note that the Bird is either bigger than a crow or smaller than a sparrow and is red all over. This will cause the beginner to wonder about the name of the Bird and so buy a Bird Book.

Second: A Bird Field Guide. This is not a book to guide the Bird from house to house, but is supposed to guide the Birder from an identification that is wrong to a correct identification that can then be entered on one's LIFE LIST. Bird Field Guides all seem to be about the same size but are different colors and are signed by different authors, each of whom is supposed to be the leading Bird authority in the country. Likewise, each book is supposed to have the simplest method of identification and/or the prettiest pictures ever made. The writer has not opened any of these so cannot recommend the best one, but he can testify that all Birders carry one or more, the number apparently depending on whom they want to impress. I have been unable to determine whether it is more impressive to carry many books or just one - - or none!

Third: A pair of binoculars to hang around the neck at all times. Possibly Birders take off their binoculars when they go to bed or the bathroom (this I do not know at the present time, but I am working on the problem). The Birder looks at Birds through binoculars to learn the color of the Bird's eye or tail or other details which must be checked in the Bird Book.

Fourth: Advanced Birders also carry a telescope that is used when the Birder is looking at shorebirds or ducks or hawks. These are even more impressive than binoculars. Formerly they were always mounted on tripods, but in recent years the way-out crowd carry them on gun mounts and sight through them like guns -- which has led to embarrassing questions by suspicious game wardens.

Fifth: A good supply of Birds is useful. These are harder to come by than formerly because of lack of place to look for them. And just driving up and down streets looking in trees have led owners of the trees to call the police who always arrive at the wrong time (just when a rare Bird is sighted) and never act as though the Birder's story is convincing.

The item the writer has noticed to be most effective and that provides the easiest means of running up a good LIFE LIST is an EXPERT BIRDER. The beginner or advanced Birder who is able to go into the field with an EXPERT BIRDER can add numerous Birds to his LIFE LIST easily and quickly. The E. B. knows at a glance that the Bird flying into a bush a quarter mile away is a green-backed house

finch, or some-such, and quickly names it. The Beginner or advanced Birder immediately agrees with the E. B. and adds the Bird's name on his LIFE LIST without the trouble of opening his book or doing more than raising his binoculars to his eyes. This saves wear and tear on both book and telescope and is much less confusing. Several days with the EXPERT and the beginner can begin to talk proudly of the 150 to 250 Birds on his LIFE LIST.

The beginner should not think that a LIFE LIST is the only list of importance. The advanced lister has a LIFE LIST of all the Birds seen in each State and in each Country. The EXPERT BIRDER has LISTS seen in one day, or one month, or each morning between 5 and 6 a.m. on cloudy days, or any other division of time or place that he can think of to make the game more interesting.

....HIW from the "PHALAROPE"....!

## AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM:

March 18th we see "New Zealand Spring" brought to us by Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. In 1953 Dr. and Mrs. Pettingill were sent to the Falkland Islands by Walt Disney to produce films. More recently they have traveled to Iceland and New Zealand to film the wildlife and other natural attractions of these countries. New Zealand is favored by a uniformly mild climate conducive to plant life of remarkable variety and luxuriance. The film will be a fitting climax to the Fourth Season series.

## P&W ESTABLISHES SCIENTIFIC AREA;

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission set precedent in its recent meeting when it authorized the state's first scientific area on the confluence of the Angelina and Neches Rivers near B. A. Steinhagen Dam. The Parks and Wildlife Department will manage 4,042 acres for 25 years. The area was set aside because of its regional uniqueness as a southern, river-bottom swamp. Mixed hardwood species in an isolated setting make it some of the best wilderness in East Texas.

The purpose of the area is to preserve its unique natural features and to promote advanced research, formal education and public interest and awareness in its ecology. Graduate level research will be encouraged on the scientific area. Plants include beech, magnolia, palmetto, hickory and elm. Some trees such as hickory have never been logged. The first limb on several large species is 50' from the ground. The Neches-Angelina Area was one of the last ranges of the native eastern turkey. It is also the wintering ground for large flights of waterfowl. The area is closed to hunting. No physical developments such as roads and camping facilities will be made. Livestock will be excluded and the entry of vehicles will be limited with locked gates.

## CALENDAR:

- March 18 - Audubon Wildlife Film at the Garden Center, 2:30 p.m.  
Program: "New Zealand Spring" with Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr.
- March 19 - Monthly society meeting at the Science Building, WTSU, Canyon, 7:30 p.m.
- March 25: Field trip to Lake Meredith. Meet at the Nat'l Parks HW at 2:30 p.m.
- April 16 - Monthly society meeting.