

PROGRAM FOR MAY:

The last program before our summer recess should prove to be an interesting one. Mr. A. M. Johnson of Amarillo College will present "Wildlife of Glacier National Park", with color slides to illustrate his talk. Mr. Johnson was seasonal naturalist at Glacier for twenty or more years. Those who have seen his presentation say it is well worth it.

AN INVASION OF HAWKS:

The following report was filed by Jack Williams of Pampa; it is one of the most unusual observations of migrating hawks to come from our area in many years:

Mrs. G. W. Dingus called me about 7:45 P.M. on Tuesday evening, 17 April, to see if I had been watching the concentration of hawks on a field about 6 miles north of Pampa on the Perryton highway. She and her family had been observing them since the previous Friday. They had observed about 93 in the air and about 100 more on the ground at one time.

The irrigated field was in grain sorghum last year. It had previously been disked flat and the farmer was in the process of listing it before planting his crop this year. The hawks were finding something to their liking in the freshly turned earth.

My wife and I went to the field immediately. No hawks were in the air. There were about 6 on fence posts around the field. We could see the field was full of hawks on the ground all facing into a brisk south wind. There were so many that they looked like a flock of geese on the wildlife refuge.

A quick observation indicated that they were Swainson's Hawks. A swing count of the relatively quiescent birds indicated that there were 310 or more. They were so thick in places that I could not see to count the ones in the field beyond those that completely blocked the view. The light began to fade but I could make out about 6 birds that I will call "white-headed".

Under good light conditions the next day there were about 100 on the ground and in the vicinity of the field. Of these, I could clearly make out 2 dark phase birds. With my 8x binocular, I located one of the "white-headed" birds at about 100 yards. This bird was white-headed with a dark eye line from the bill through the eye on to the back part of the head. The breast was almost pure white except for a few dark or brownish spots. The legs were yellow. The wings were a very dark grayish brown color and identical to the nearby adult hawks. I observed no other species of hawks in this field.

On Tuesday, the 17th, I had been working in Hemphill County and had observed several groups of Swainson's Hawks. These groups had from 2 to 7 birds each. My first observations of returning Swainson's this year were on April 2 when one was seen just south of Shamrock and another about 10 miles north of Wellington.

Page 69 in my Peterson's A FIELD GUIDE TO WESTERN BIRDS states that the Swainson's Hawk "often migrates in large flocks". Seeing is believing! Of eleven years of birding, seeing over 300 of these magnificent birds at one time is undoubtedly the most

thrilling sight to this time.

BIRD NOTES:

The BIRD NOTES section of this newsletter always undergoes a dramatic expansion in the May issue. Early migrants begin trickling through our area in mid-March and when the time has come for the newsletter to be written, migration is in full swing. This year has not been lacking in noteworthy and unusual observations:

WHITE PELICAN: 10 on a playa near Buffalo Lake, Randall Co., 3/17 (KS).

WHITE-NECKED RAVEN: 1 squawking loudly at Buffalo Lake, Randall Co., 3/17 (KS).

LONG-EARED OWL: 3 at Buffalo Lake, Randall Co., 4/7 (KS). These were found in Redpoll Cove (known by fishermen as Cottonwood Cove). Two were sitting in the same willow tree, all slicked and slimmed down until they appeared hardly wider than the trunk of the tree near where they sat. They obviously felt sure the intruder would never notice them if they remained still and compressed and never said anything. It almost worked.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK: a very early mid-April sighting at Buffalo Lake, Randall Co. (Milt Suthers). All previous sightings have been in May or after.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW: many in the wheat fields near Dimmitt, Castro Co., mid and late April. (Joel Reese). Up to 100 at a time were seen.

COMMON GALLINULE: 1 at the stilling basin below the dam at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co., 4/11 (Fern Cain). This is only the third sighting of this species in our area, the last one in 1968.

SNOW EGRET: 1 on a playa near Panhandle, Carson Co., 4/15 (Fern Cain), and 1 in the Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall Co., 4/28 (KS). After being jumped from the creek, the latter bird remained perched near the top of a tall cottonwood tree for a long time.

OSPREY: 1 at Lake Tanglewood, Randall Co., third week in April (Roberta Currie).

BROWN TOWHEE - 1 singing in the Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall Co., 4/21 (KS), and another singing at another location in the Park, 4/28 (KS). These areas should be kept under close observation for the possibility of discovering nests. Such a finding would be a first for the Canyon.

BLACK & WHITE WARBLER: 1 in the Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall Co., 4/21 (KS).

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER: 1 at Buffalo Lake, Randall Co., 4/21 (KS).

LITTLE BLUE HERON: 1 adult on their ranch near Lake Tanglewood, Randall Co., 4/25 (Hugh and Roberta Currie). The bird was in the company of a Great Blue.

BLACK-CHINNED SPARROW: this is the bird of the year and the first report of the species from

the Panhandle. About ten minutes until twelve noon on 4/26 your Editor (KS) received an excited phone call from Rena Ross announcing that she and Esther Waddill and Mary Moyer were sitting on the patio in her backyard at 2805 S. Travis (Randall Co.) watching a Black-chinned Sparrow. A few minutes after twelve, KS arrived at the Ross' residence to be greeted with the news that the bird had flown off as soon as the phone had been hung up. Borrowing a binocular and peering into the neighbor's yard produce nothing of interest. A walk down the alley was suggested, and taken. Hardly entering the alley 30 yards, KS heard an unfamiliar "chip" and then observed a small bird fly up from the ground and alight on the top of the fence. The bird was so close that the binocular was not needed to identify the bird as a Black-chinned Sparrow. Rena reported the bird there again the next day.

CHUCK-will's-widow: 1 female at Buffalo Lake, Randall Co., 4/28 (KS). The bird flushed from a cottonwood tree and soon lit in another nearby. The brown throat was closely observed and when the bird flew no white in wings or tail was seen. Rather, there were tan patches near the outer corners of the tail feathers. The bird was observed flying numerous times and was watched from as close as 25 yards through a 6x binocular as it perched on tree limbs. This is the second report of this species from our area.

HOODED WARBLER: a female in her backyard at 1911 Cherry, Potter Co., 4/30 (Peggy Acord), and another female in Llano Cemetery, Randall Co., 5/1 (Peggy Acord).

POOR-WILL: 1 in Llano Cemetery, Randall Co., 5/5 (KS), and 1 in Memorial Park Cemetery, Potter Co., 5/8 (Peggy Acord).

BIG DAY COUNT, MAY 12:

At the time of this writing, all the reports from individuals participating in the annual Big Day Count have not been turned in. It looks as though the count will be down from that of previous years, primarily because of the lack of water at Buffalo Lake and in the playas. This lack reduced the shorebird count drastically. KS was quite excited over two species he observed, both at Buffalo Lake, Randall Co. One was an adult male Scarlet Tanager, and the other was a male Black-throated Blue Warbler. Both species are rarely seen in this area. Other good birds he had were the Northern Water-thrush and the Red-eyed Vireo, the latter sang constantly. Both KS and Peggy Acord reported the Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

CALENDAR:

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

Summer recess

Sept. 16 - Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.