

Dec., 1974

2709 S. Fairfield, Amarillo, Texas 79103

Vol. XI., No. 9

## SCHEDULE OF CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS:

- Dec. 15 - Palo Duro Canyon: meet at Park entrance at 8:00 a.m.
- Dec. 17 - Black Mesa, Okla.: meet at the Longhorn Motel in Boise City the evening before count day. The count area is about 30 miles from town, so we will have to leave early in order to begin the count by 7:30. Bring your lunch.
- Dec. 20 - Arnett, Okla.: meet at restaurant next to Circle C Motor Lodge (east end of town) at 7:00 a.m.
- Dec. 22 - Lake Meredith (east): meet at Park headquarters in Fritch (419 Broadway) at 7:00 a.m. NOTE: Park headquarters have moved to Fritch.
- Dec. 29 - Lake Meredith (west): meet at Park headquarters in Fritch at 7:00 a.m.
- Dec. 30 - Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge: meet at refuge headquarters at 8:00 a.m.

## THE RED FLAG IS UP!:

The following poem by our Poet Laureate, the Lady Galloway (Ruth) of St. Joseph (Mo.) requires a few words of explanation. Those of you who received the Christmas Bird Count issue of American Birds noted, perhaps, that many species submitted by the compilers of the counts in Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma were disallowed by the regional editor, Mr. Jeter. The Arnett count, in particular, was roughly handled when two of its hard-earned species, the Virginia Rail and the Long-billed Marsh Wren, were deleted because of the lack of supporting details, this despite the fact that both species had been reported on several of the previous counts and had been accepted without question. In his introduction to the counts, Mr. Arbib, Editor of American Birds, commended Mr. Jeter on being "tough" in the editing of his counts. This seems a rather peculiar attribute to encourage in an editor: we would prefer to see it replaced with "good judgement". Anyone can be "tough". Let this be a warning, however, for future counts. Be prepared to submit copious notes on any species for which the compiler may request them, even those species your field experiences have shown to be not uncommon in your area. We want every species we see to go into the records. Erroneous counts are published as well by deleting authentic species as by allowing inauthentic ones to appear.

A BIRDWATCHER'S SPOUSE TAKES ON THE EDITOR OF AMERICAN BIRDS

Mr. Jeter, you're a fink,  
We really saw those birds---we think,  
So put right back into your book  
The wren and rail you cruelly took,

Sir, you must know we do our best  
To count the birds here in the West.  
We go afar into the field  
To see what lakes and pastures yield.

Our birders are the best of men,  
No doubtful species get by them,  
If now and then we give surprise.  
It's not the fault of faulty eyes

But simply means we're wide awake,  
And much of this is for your sake!  
So come one, Sir, admit your error,  
Retract your charge---or live in terror  
of a birdwatcher's spouse.

## BALD EAGLE WATCH:

The following request for assistance in gaining knowledge of the movements of Bald Eagles should be of interest to birders in the northern Panhandle. It is quite possible for some of these marked birds to appear in our area, and we need to be on the alert for them. Remember, however, that since nestlings were color-marked, the birds you will be looking for will be immatures; they will not yet have attained their white heads and tails:

"We have put red, green and yellow vinyl wing markers on nestling Bald Eagles in northern Saskatchewan. Each eagle has a different color combination so that it can be recognized individually. Some wings have only one marker while others have two.

"We expect these birds to migrate south in late October or early November, moving through the Canadian prairie provinces and then into the United States. They may go as far south as Texas or may winter in more northern states. In the spring they will move northward again, reaching the southern Canadian prairie provinces in late March or early April. Our knowledge of this movement is at present sketchy but we hope to be able to learn much more about it.

"If you see any of these birds please write to either: Jon Gerrard, 954 15th Ave., S.E., Minneapolis, Minn, 55424, or Doug Whitfield, Botany Dept., University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, or call collect to Jon Gerrard at 1-612-331-6736.

"Thanks to enthusiastic reporting last fall and winter, we were able to learn a substantial amount about the movements of Saskatchewan Bald Eagles after they leave their nests. Our wing marked eagles were seen in southern Saskatchewan, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Missouri and Wyoming. In addition, one of the eagles was seen this summer near where it had been marked the previous year.

"We hope this year will be as successful. When reporting sightings, please include the date, time of day, location, and the sequence of the markers on the wings. Use right or left wing, referring to the eagle's right or left wing. If you noted specific details of the plumage or the behaviour of the wing-marked eagles, we would also be interested in this information."

## VOLUNTEERS ON COAST SEE MORE PEREGRINES THIS YEAR:

"Volunteers for a Peregrine Falcon survey organized by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department reported a significant increase in falcon sightings this year. The 73 volunteers logged almost 2,000 miles on Texas beaches between Sept. 25 and Oct. 25 and saw approximately 540 birds compared to 380 birds for the same period last year. Purpose of the survey is to determine the status of the peregrine. Each year's sightings will be compared with the last to see if peregrine numbers are declining, increasing or remaining the same.

"Parks and Wildlife Department biologists said approximately 400 of the birds spotted this year were on Padre Island. Matagorda Island observers saw 120 birds, and the rest of the falcons were spotted on High Island. Last year most of the birds were seen on Matagorda Island. Biologists also banded and color-marked 47 peregrines including one adult male on the Texas coast. They say this is the first time they've been able to trap an adult male there. The majority of birds trapped and banded each year are immature females.

"One of the nation's foremost authorities on peregrines, Dr. James Enderson of Colorado College in Colorado Springs, cooperated with department biologists in attaching radio transmitters to four peregrines. They were able to follow the birds with airplanes to determine how they spent their time on the Texas coast. Three of the peregrines seemed in no hurry to continue their trip south. It is believed that since the transmitters were attached to peregrines toward the end of their migratory season, the birds being tracked were some which spend their winters on the Texas coast instead of South America. Department biologists say the tiny transmitters were attached to the center tail feathers of the peregrines. The birds will shed these feathers in a few weeks during molting and will lose the transmitters.

"Concern over the status of the peregrine has risen tremendously in recent years because of evidence of population declines. These declines may be at least partially attributable to concentrations of pesticide residues and/or metabolites in body tissues of falcons.

"Information compiled so far indicates no drastic changes in falcon numbers since 1964."

#### BIRD NOTES:

Hooded Merganser - Two at Duniven Lake in Amarillo, Potter Co., 12/2 (Rena Ross).

Shorebirds - several hundred on a playa south of Amarillo, Randall Co., 11/22 (Peggy Acord and Rena Ross - very late date for such a large concentration of "peeps").

Hummingbirds - Two at the Joe Ross residence, 2600 Travis St., Amarillo, Potter Co., 11/12 & 13 (file Rena Ross - very late dates). The birds were coming in to hummingbird feeders.

Red-headed Woodpecker - One immature in Amarillo, Randall Co., 11/9 (George and Rena Ross - one of the few November sightings of this species in our area).

Lesser Goldfinch - One male in the Palo Duro Canyon, Randall Co., 12/8 (KS - calling bird observed at 10 yards distance - first reported winter sighting).

Fox Sparrow - Two in the Palo Duro Canyon, Randall Co., 12/1 and 8 (KS).

#### CALENDAR:

Jan. 20 - Annual dinner of the TPAS at the Garden Center, 6:30 a.m. Election of officers.