

## PRAIRIE PROGRAM:

The Texas Panhandle Audubon Society will meet at the Amarillo Garden Center on Monday, April 18 at 7:30 in the evening.

President Nancy Elliott will preside at the business meeting.

The program will be given by a member of the Field Trip Committee, Peggy Acord, and will be entitled, "All You Need to Know about Bird Identification in One Evening". It will concern the fundamentals of bird identification and will be directed to the beginning birder.

Peggy Acord has been the Recorder for the TPAS chapter of the Audubon Society since its organization in the early 1950's, and also so that she was an active member of the Tulsa Audubon Society. It will be a rare treat for now "birders" to hear Peggy, for she knows whose she speaks, and all interested people in the community are invited to attend.

## BIRDBALK CANCELLED:

The bird walk for beginning birders scheduled for April 24 at Llano Cemetery has been cancelled because of its conflict with the bird walk in McAllen. We will try to arrange another date for the walk.

## ACTION ON OUR REQUEST TO BE TAKEN:

At the suggestion of Fern Cain at our board meeting in February, Nancy Elliott, President of the TPAS, wrote the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department in Austin with the suggestion that the portion of the state laws pertaining to the illegality of killing nongame bird species be placed at the beginning of the Hunting & Fishing Guide and that it be further blocked with a bold, black border. It was our belief that such an important recommendation should not be buried in small print and countless other laws that many do not go that far to read anyway. The following is the reply received from the Department:

Dear Ms. Elliott:

Your letter of March 21, 1977 to Mr. Clayton Garrison has been referred to me for review.

In response to your suggestion for a blocked section in our Hunting and Fishing Guide for 1977/78, we are planning to revise the section you referred to in order to cover all nongame species. We intend to screen that through a different color, which should draw considerable attention to it.

Thank you very much for your suggestion.

Sincerely,

John Jefferson, Director  
Information & Education Division

## THE DOCUMENTATION OF SIGHTINGS OF UNUSUAL BIRD SPECIES:

Attached to this Newsletter is the form recently adopted by the Texas Bird Records Committee of the Texas Ornithological Society for the reporting of unusual species of birds sighted in Texas. This form is being distributed in the hope that it will be used in reporting not only the unusual

or rare species seen in Texas, but also the unusual species seen in the Texas Panhandle and our immediate area of interest, Potter and Randall Counties.

As pointed out in a previous issue of this Newsletter, before the advent of the binocular and field guides, the only acceptable supporting evidence of an unusual sighting was that of the collected bird itself. The only sure way of knowing whether or not a correct identification had been made was to have the dead bird in hand, and the specimen made of it deposited in a museum collection where future verification could be made should the veracity of the identification be questioned.

With the coming of the binocular, the camera, the tape recorder, and the field guides, and with the field experience accumulated by a large number of active and skilled birders, it has become easier to correctly identify birds without having to collect them. Even with these tools, however, it is at times necessary to have the bird in hand to be sure of its identification, e.g., female hummingbirds and silent empidonax flycatchers. Often a good photograph is all that is needed to support an identification, and likewise, a sound recording. Most birders, however, go afield without a collecting permit and unencumbered with camera and tape recorder. Encountering a rare and unusual species for them is a happenstance unforeseen and unplanned, and they must rely on eyesight alone in making an identification. Without these tools of technology, it has become increasingly important that sight observations be based on careful observation and documentation.

The observations of amateur birders have expanded our knowledge of the distribution of birds. Twenty-five years ago many of the unusual species we observe fairly regularly in the Texas Panhandle would have been scoffed at by the "experts" as being impossible of having been seen. We must not make a similar mistake today and turn our scorn on them for their disbelief of what we see. Their skepticism was, and is, well-grounded, and the burden is on us to make our observations credible. In the compilation of check lists of species of birds that have been seen in an area, either a continent, a state, a county, or a backyard, it is necessary that certain standards be followed in order for the list to be believed, and the more rigorous the standards the better. We must accept the burden of proving our observations if we want our peers to believe them.

This form can be of use to everyone. It can be used to hone our observations to keen edges. The beginning birder can use it to particular advantage. He or she can use it in documenting an observation of however common a species, and through its repeated use, ingrain habits of observation that will be of invaluable help as time goes by. Document observations that you think are of unusual interest for our area and bring them to our meeting. We can then discuss them and make a judgement of your conclusions. Our own Potter/Randall Counties check list would benefit if we demanded better documentation for unusual observations. As it is now, we require that two or more competent birders see the rare species before we recognize it as a valid one to be included on the list. If only one competent birder sees the bird, it

APRIL PROGRAM:

The Texas Panhandle Audubon Society will meet at the Amarillo Game Center on Monday, April 18 at 7:30 in the evening.

President Nancy Elliott will preside at the business meeting.

The program will be given by a member of the Field Trip Committee, Peggy Acord, and it is entitled, "Wild Bird Identification in One Evening." It will concern the fundamentals of bird identification and will be directed to the beginning birder.

Peggy Acord has been the recorder for the TPAS chapter of the Audubon Society since its organization in the early 1970's. Prior to that she was an active member of the Tulsa Audubon Society. It will be a great treat for new "birders" to hear Peggy, for she knows whereof she speaks, and all interested people in the community are invited to attend.

BIRDMARK CANCELLED:

The bird walk for beginning birders scheduled for April 24 at 10:00 AM has been cancelled because of the date of the TOS meeting in McAllen. We will have to forge another date for the walk.

ACTION ON OUR REQUEST TO BE TAKEN:

At the suggestion of Fern Collins, our recorder in February, Nancy Elliott, President of the TPAS, wrote the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department in Austin with our suggestion that the portion of the state laws pertaining to the illegality of hunting certain bird species be placed within the Texas Game & Fish Hunting & Fishing Code. This would further blocked with a bold, black bar. It was our belief that such an insertion restriction should not be buried in small print amid countless other laws that one would not go that far to read anyway. The following is the reply received from the Department:

Dear Ms. Elliott:

Your letter of March 21, 1977 to Mr. Clayton T. Garrison has been referred to me for reply.

In response to your suggestion for a bolded notice in our Hunting and Fishing Code for 1977-78, we are planning to do as you suggested in the code. The suggestion you referred to in your letter regarding non-game species, we intend to print in a paragraph a different color, which should draw considerable attention.

Thank you very much for your suggestion.

Sincerely,

John Jefferson, Director  
Information & Education Division

THE DOCUMENTATION OF UNUSUAL BIRD SPECIES:

Attached to this Newsletter is the form recently adopted by the Texas Bird Records Committee of the Texas Ornithological Society for the reporting of unusual species of birds sighted in Texas. This form is being distributed in the hope that it will be used in reporting not only the unusual

species of birds seen in Texas, but also the unusual species seen in the Texas Panhandle. It is our hope that you will report any unusual sightings.

The only acceptable supporting evidence for unusual sightings was that of a competent bird birder. The only way to be sure of a correct identification is to have the bird seen by the recorder and the recorder must be a competent birder. The recorder should be questioned, the recorder of the binocular, the camera, the tape recorder, and the field guides, and with the field experience accumulated by a large number of active and skilled birders, it has become easier to correctly identify birds without having to collect them. Even with these tools, however, it is at times necessary to have the bird in hand to be sure of the identification.

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is placed on a "hypothetical" list. But who is to say who is a "competent" birder and who is not? Do we have a board to rule on such qualifications, or do we go by hearsay and reputation? It would be much better if we went by supporting evidence, viz., either a photograph, a tape recording, or detailed documentation (none of us is likely to collect the bird, unless it falls dead at our feet). None of us, however, experienced, should be offended when this documentation is required, and if we have seen a rare species we should be more than willing to support the observation with good evidence. There are many birders in the state that are interested in our observations and each of us should be willing to give evidence of their validity.

In the revised Potter/Randall Counties check list that is now in the hands of the printer, there are three categories of the incidence of observations to which particular attention should be paid. They are the categories "H", "6" and "5". As stated before, the "h", or Hypothetical, species represents an unsupported observation made by a single competent birder. The "6" represents a species seen at the same time by two or more competent birders but one which has been seen in the two-county area 5 times or less, or during a particular season 5 times or less. The "5" represents a species that has been observed on more than five occasions but that occurs irregularly, that is, not every year. It is for these three categories that we most need documentation of observations. When such documentation is completed, please file the report with our Recorder, Peggy Acord, so that when it comes time to revise our check list, we will be in a position to publish a more accurate and credible picture of the birdlife in Potter and Randall Counties. If it is an unusual observation for the Panhandle, or for the entire state, then send the completed form to Ken Seyffert who will present it to the Texas Bird Records Committee for its consideration.

#### HOW HAVE THEY FARED?

At one time, Bald Eagles occupied 41 nesting sites in New York State. Now, only a single pair is known to nest in the state, and they have successfully fledged but one young over a ten-year period. This summer (1976) an effort was made to establish a pair of young eagles at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. Atop a 35-foot tower built for the, a stick nest was prepared to receive two nine-week-old eaglets sent from Wisconsin on June 27. After a month both young were on the wing, spending a portion of each day perched on dead snags overlooking the marsh, but returning to the tower to receive food. Tom Cade and Jim Weaver, who supervised the project, hope the eagles can be enticed to remain through the winter with food conveniently placed in the tower and vicinity.

Each year an annual census is taken of the Kirtland Warbler, whose breeding range encompasses a few counties in northern Michigan. A decade ago more than 1,000 breeding pairs were recorded. In spite of a well managed habitat program to ensure ample breeding sites for the warblers, the past several years have shown a decline.

Mayfield reported that nest parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird was the main cause of the population decrease. A program to trap and remove cowbirds from the warbler's nesting ground has met with considerable success, and probably is the reason for the gains made this year (1976) by the warbler: 199 singing males; 179 in 1975. The breeding population stands at about 400 birds.

#### BIRD NOTES:

- March 22 - the male Pyrrhuloxia seen again in the George Ross' yard.
- March 23 - 2 immature Bald Eagles at Lake Tanglewood as reported by Roberta Currie. This a a lato date.
- March 19 - first House Wren of the year - in Ken Seyffert's yard.
- March 26 - three 'firsts of the year at Lake Tanglewood as reported by Peggy Acord - 16 Turkey Vultures, a Chipping Sparrow, and 2 Myrtle Warblers.
- March 27 - 3 Long-eared Owls at Buffalo Lake NWR seen by Ken Seyffert.
- March 26 - the first Greater Yellowlegs of the year seen by Ed and Nancy Elliott near Canyon.

#### CALENDAR:

- April 18 - Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center, 7:30 p.m.
- May 1 - A bird walk for beginning birders at Memorial Park Cemetery - 8:00 a.m.
- May 8 - Big Day Count - Potter And Randall Counties to be birded from sun up to sundown to record as many species as possible.
- May 14 & 15 - Backpacking trip from Lake Tanglewood to the Palo Duro Canyon State Park - contact group leader Lowell Lindsay at least 10 days ahead of time (phone 622-1515).

TEXAS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN UNUSUAL RECORD

1. Species: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. A. O. U. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name) Number
3. Location: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Time bird seen: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern. (Describe in great detail all parts of the plumage including beak and feet coloration in addition to the diagnostic characteristics; however, include only what actually was seen in the field):
7. Description of voice, if heard:
8. Description of behavior:
9. Habitat -- general:  
                  specific:
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated 6, 7 and 8 above: Explain:
11. Distance: Close, Middle, Far (estimate).
12. Optical equipment:
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and observer):
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
15. What made you think this species was unusual or rare?
16. Other observers:
17. Did others agree with your identification?:
18. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
19. Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation:
20. If bird was photographed, please attach pictures and describe equipment used:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date prepared \_\_\_\_\_ City and State: \_\_\_\_\_

(USE REVERSE SIDE OR ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NECESSARY)