

THE PRAIRIE HORNED LARK

May, 1977

2206 S. Lipscomb, Amarillo, Texas 79109

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May PROGRAM:

The Texas Panhandle Audubon Society will meet at the Amarillo Garden Center on Monday night, May 16, at 7:30. Following the suggestion at the April meeting that cover is the most important item to attract birds, the program this month will be on "Shrubs to Plant to Attract Birds"; the discussion will be led by Mr. Walter Hill, recently retired from many years as Manager of Sears' Garden Shop. Each member is asked to bring a branch from any shrub in their yard which seems to attract birds. There will be a time for "show and tell" from the members of their experiences with the shrubs.

In addition, there will be reports from the members who recently attended the Spring meeting of the Texas Ornithological Society at McAllen, and which honored the illustrious bird artist, Roger Tory Peterson.

President Nancy Elliott invites anyone who is interested in attracting birds to their yard to attend the meeting.

NEW CHECK LIST IS OUT;

Our latest (3rd Edition) of the Field Check List of the Birds of Potter and Randall Counties, Texas, is now back from the printer and is available to members and other interested parties. At the Board Meeting of the TPAS, it was voted to charge 25¢ for each card. Copies may be purchased at the May meeting or can be obtained from Kenneth Seyffert, 2206 S. Lipscomb, Amarillo, Texas 79109. Please send a self-addressed stamped envelope along with your money.

The Check List is a 10-page folder printed on stout paper and is 4" x 7 1/4". It names 355 species that have been observed in the two county area, including 16 hypotheticals. Abundance during each of the four seasons, along with nesting status, are shown. We think you will find this as handsome a check list as any put out as well as one that is packed with information on the birds of our area.

We ask everyone to be sure and report species you have seen that fall under the "5", "6" and "H" categories. These cover species that are Irregular in occurrence (not seen every year but may occur in numbers), Accidental (5 records or less), and Hypothetical (neither documented nor seen at any one time by 2 or more competent observers). It is hoped further that careful documentation will be made by the observer of species in the Accidental and Hypothetical categories. These documentations can be kept on file for those who come after us to review and consider. If enough people will keep records of the species they see, either daily or when they go on field trips, then when it comes time to issue the 4th edition of the Check List it will set forth more accurately the status of the birds of our area.

BIRD NOTES:

Osprey - one at Lake Tanglewood as reported by Roberta Currie on April 9, 10, and 11.

Green-tailed Towhee - one reported near the Elliotts home near Canyon on April 27 and May 4. Ken Seyffert saw one at Buffalo Lake NWR on April 30.

White-faced Ibis - one seen at Weatherly Lake near Borger on April 29 by Fern Cain.

Ovenbird - one seen at Weatherly Lake near Borger on April 29 by Fern Cain. One found dead on her driveway in town by Esther Waddill on May 1.

Indigo Bunting - Nancy Elliott observed one at her home near Canyon on May 1.

Rock Wren - a pair were observed nest-building at Bugbee, Lake Meredith, by Fern Cain on May 1. The birds were seen bringing nesting materials, including red shale, and placing them in front of a crevice.

Grey-checked Thrush - Esther Waddill and two former members of the SPAS who now live in Aurora, Colorado, Ken and Katherine Whipple, saw one at the Palo Duro Club on May 1.

White-eyed Vireo - one was heard singing and observed by Peggy Acord at Lake Tanglewood on May 1. Our new Check List is no sooner issued than a new species needs to be added! It is such a sighting as this that needs to be documented.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak - one female seen in town by Peggy Acord on May 2.

Purple Martin - Fern Cain observed three pairs at a martin house in Opportunity Center, Borger, on May 3. This is possibly as far west in the Panhandle that this species has been seen nesting.

Blackpoll Warbler - one at Weatherly Lake near Borger on May 5 by Fern Cain.

A JOURNEY DOWN SOUTH:

This was a sight-seeing trip and all the birds I saw were just "gravy". We had planned to join the Prudential Line's "Santa Marianna" at Rio de Janeiro on April 2nd. The "Santa Marianna" is a cargo ship which can accommodate one hundred passengers. We decided to visit Trinidad and Tobago and Brasilia before we joined the ship. It was the dry season in Trinidad. We could see fires burning on the mountain side from our hotel. It was one of the driest "dry seasons" on record. Still, the birding was good on the hotel grounds and our trips around the two islands. I saw 49 species - 9 Lifers. I also saw a group of happy birders which gave me a pang of envy.

Brasilia, the new capital city of Brazil, was our next stop. It is a planned city only 20 years old but already it has a population of over 600,000 people. It is situated on a plateau with an altitude about like Amarillo's. The native trees are scrubby about the size of post oak. But the city has been planted in African Tulip trees, which were a mass of red flowers, and all the government buildings are beautifully landscaped. A bird note from Brasilia - in their main park was a Pigeon tower about 30 feet high with nesting or roosting areas all the way up it.

The harbor of Rio de Janeiro, and the city itself, are as beautiful as the travel posters claim. Our hotel was on Copacabana beach. Our rooms overlooked the beach and the bay

where the ships came and went to the port area. I counted one hundred Magnificent Frigatebirds at one time wheeling over the water - a lovely sight. In the opposite direction the statue of Christ with his arm stretched in blessing over the city, lighted at night. It is on Corcovado Mountain 2400 feet high and the monument 120 feet high. On April 2nd we were having breakfast in our room when I saw our ship coming in - and we were on board the same morning.

Santos, the port city of Sao Paulo, was our first stop. I had pictured it as being small and drab but it is a city of 400,000. Sao Paulo, with its suburbs, has 12 million inhabitants. We went to Sao Paulo airport for an 1½ hour ride on a large jet plane to Iguacu Falls. The huge plane circled the falls twice for the right hand people and twice for the left, then landed at the airport. We took a bus to the Hotel Das Cataratas. From there we walked along by the Falls 2 and 6/10 miles - the highest fall 264 feet. The Falls are on the Argentine side, the hotel on the Brazil side. So we were told that the stage is in Argentine and the seats in Brazil.

On April 5th I saw my first Albatross - Black-browed. We went up the Rio de la Plata for half a day to Buenas Aires, called the Paris of South America. We went shopping on a street closed to car traffic. Many nice shops but inflation is bad and no real bargains in leather as we had supposed.

After we left Buenas Aires I began to see many more birds - and a Wandering Albatross at last. Also the Great Petrel.

On the 12th of April, about dark, we entered the Straits of Magellan and as Magellan did, we saw flares along the shores - not Indian flares but gas flares from oil fields on Tierra del Fuego. We had two Chilean pilots who came aboard at Buenas Aires to take us through the Strait. All but a small bit at the entrance is within Chilean lands. It was in 1519 the Magellan undertook to find a westward passage to the Orient. He had over 200 men in five ships - one ship was lost in a storm near Rio where he wintered. From Rio it took his ships five months to reach the Strait which he entered on Oct. 21, 1520. He spent several months exploring the Strait. Magellan and most of his men would never see Spain again. Only one ship and 19 men finished the first journey around the world. Our trip was only supposed to take 38 hours.

Everyone was excited and staying on deck bundled up because of the cold. There was a flurry of picture taking and plenty to take - glaciers, waterfalls, a rainbow, lighthouse, islands, fresh snow - the first of the autumn season. I saw, among other things, Magellanic Pinguins, Magellanic Diving Petrels, Blue-eyed Shags.

Oh, yes! Some of us took time off from looking in order to win our Penguin awards by staying in the swimming pool 30 minutes. The staying in wasn't so bad...it was the getting out that was. Our Captain announced that we would stay inside the Strait and go north through the English Narrows to be sheltered from an 80 knot wind. So we came out on the 13th to 60 knot wind. We were buffeted about all night and awoke the next morning to find that a cargo door had been taken off by a high wave and the hold was full of water. The Captain announced that

our greatest danger had been at 4 a.m. and that we were headed for Puerto Mont for repairs. We were until the middle of the afternoon getting there. The ship had to anchor out in the bay and a pump was brought out to help the ships pump. We all went ashore to explore the lake country of Chile. It was beautiful with prosperous farms - dairy cattle, sheep, apple orchards, most of the apples had been gathered. There were mountains and a waterfall. I saw Andean Geese.

I thought the bay at Valparaiso and the view of the city from the bay the prettiest that we saw. Our charming Chilean pilots brought their pretty wives on board for a party and to enjoy with us the Chilean Folklorico which consisted of costumes, songs and dances of their country. We saw the Argentinean Folklorico group and also the Peruvian. We went to Santiago, a trip of about 80 miles. We saw the bombed out shell of a government building, the result of the last change in government. All of the Chileans are proud of the fact that the Communists were out of the government. We heard it mentioned many times. The snow capped Andes are a backdrop for the city. On our way home, George and I saw an Andean Condor soaring by a mountain peak.

We were at sea three days before reaching Callao, Peru, port city for Lima. Some Prions landed on deck during the night and had to be tossed into the air so they could fly off. A Rufous-collared Sparrow got on board in Chile and rode to Peru.

At Callao I left the "Santa Marianna" with a small group but George stayed on board for Guayaquil, Ecuador, and Buenaventura, Columbia. We were to meet in Cali, Columbia, and take the plane home from there. I went to Lima, Cuzco and the ruins of Machu Picchu. Cuzco is an hour by air from Lima but two days and night by car through the Andes. Pizarro was the first European to see this old Inca city. The altitude is 12,000 feet which is too high for most people to feel comfortable. As soon as we arrived, we were given Coca tea and told to lie down for two hours. Many Indians still wear their native costumes which for the women consists of fancy hats, many petticoats, and a shawl of bright colors. They have a roly-poly appearance. The women spin wool as they walk along the road or mind their llamas and alpacas. Their woven goods were beautiful. We visited a cathedral with many altars of gold and silver. There were oil paintings, two by Rubens - and elaborately carved choir stalls. We visited the ruins of an Inca bath and a fort outside the city. Early the next morning we got on the train for Machu Picchu. It takes 3½ hours to go and 4 hours to come back. The train was filled with people from many lands. We had five switchbacks to climb the mountain above Cuzco and kept seeing the city from higher and higher viewpoints. On the other side of the mountain we were in the Urubamba River valley. The Urubamba is a fast rushing stream with many huge boulders. I saw a Torrent Duck. From the Machu Picchi station it is a bus ride up the mountain by switchbacks. The ruins are so inaccessible that the Spanish never found them. A Yale professor, Hiram Bingham, found them in 1911. The setting of rugged peaks is awe inspiring. The sun was shining when we first arrived, then the clouds came down and made it even more mysterious. No one knows what happened to the people who built the rock houses and

terraced the side of the mountain and even carried fertile soil up from the valley to fill their terraces. They were very good stone masons because their buildings are standing today. My trip was made complete when one of the guides called "Condor". I looked down on the top of a Condor as it flew across the valley and disappeared behind a peak.

We left very early the next day from Cuzco for Lima where we had a very pleasant time visiting a hacienda where bulls were raised and trained for the bull ring. We ended the day by visiting a museum containing articles of gold and semi-precious stones made in pre-Columbian times.

On our way to Cali we landed in Quito, Ecuador, a lovely sight from the air. I hurried into the airport to buy a hat for Ecuador is the place where the best "Panama" hats are made. At Cali, Columbia, we were greeted with the news that heavy downpours had caused rockslides and two deaths on the road to Buenaventura. I began to worry that George could not get through but not for long for he arrived about dark after a two hour taxi ride. Cali was just a taste of Columbia. I saw enough birds there to make me want to plan a birding trip there another year....

....Rena Ross....