

NOTES FROM A BIRD JUNKIE:

Welcome back to Audubon. We hope your summer vacation was as great as ours. We had several trips to the mountains and to the beach and saw many new birds along the way - twenty-eight, in fact; a real bonanza for us. I'm a bird junkie now, can only go so long without a fix. It takes quite a while to get somewhere when you stop at every stream, doesn't it?

The best birding we found was at the National Audubon Convention in Estes Park. The field trip leaders were excellent guides who located the birds by sight and sound before we were all off the bus. Some of the birds we saw were: White-tailed Ptarmigan, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Violet-green Swallow, Tree Swallow, Gray Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, Dipper, Water Pipit, Warbling Vireo, Brown-capped Rosy Finch, and Clark's Nutcracker.

In July, we went to Taos Ski Valley and Durango for more good mountain birding. The wild flowers were so beautiful we bought a field guide and almost overlooked the birds. It has been very dry in southwest Colorado this summer, but high in the San Juan mountains it rains almost every afternoon. Interspersed with Aspen groves are spring-fed streams lined with willows and fields carpeted with almost every wildflower in our new book. Rufous Hummingbirds were sipping the nectar and empidonax flycatchers were enjoying the insects. We identified the Alder flycatcher from his song, but the others are still unknown to us. In addition to some of the birds of Estes Park, we also saw Lewis' Woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadee, Grace's Warbler, White-throated Swift, Band-tailed Pigeon, Western Tanager, and Lesser Goldfinch on this trip. As is usually the case with inexperienced birders, the really big birds got away. That's part of the plot to keep you coming back to try your luck again - and that's how you get hooked on birding.

... Nancy Elliott....

N.A.S. CONVENTION AND AUDUBON CONCERNS -
Nancy Elliott, President, TEXAS:

The National Audubon Society Convention in Estes Park, Colorado, June 9-12, was delightful. The speakers were interesting, the field trips were productive, the participants were friendly and marvelously diverse in their environmental interests. Would you believe we met a couple from Nebraska who have no birdwatchers in their chapter? The chapter won \$1000 for the largest increase in membership a few years ago. They bought six canoes and have their field trips on the Platt River. I learned so many interesting things at the convention it would be impossible to write them all here. I thought I would concentrate on conservation ideas in this letter and try to cover new ideas in education next month.

The opening speaker was Dr. Elvis Stahr, President of NAS since 1968. Dr. Stahr said that membership in NAS has grown to 397 chapters and 377,000 people. This is more than a 100,000 member increase since 1973. The increase is greater than the total membership of the Audubon Society during its first 70 years. "NAS is the most diversified environmental organization in the country."

he said. This diversity impressed me throughout the conference. The speeches, the Workshops, the people I talked with had so many different concerns for environmental quality and different goals and approaches to solve the problems of their areas.

"What are our purposes? Education for what? Action to what end?" Dr. Stahr emphasized that concerns and goals of the National Audubon Society have changed very little since 1972. Much has been accomplished on them, but much more needs to be done.

Perhaps some of you are unaware of these goals, as I was. So, they are listed here in an abbreviated fashion. LET'S THINK ABOUT THESE GOALS IN RELATION TO OUR CHAPTER'S WORK. At the September meeting, we will discuss them more fully and try to determine how we might contribute more to these efforts.

AUDUBON CONCERNS AND ACTION GOALS:

1. Promote the conservation of wildlife and the natural environment.
 - * Protect endangered species. Preserve essential habitats.
 - * Educate public on value of predators. Enforcement of laws protecting birds of prey.
 - * Encourage federal and state wildlife programs for non-game species.
 - * Preserve natural stream ecosystems.
 - * Encourage native plant communities, wildlife refuges, nature centers, etc.
 - * Conservation of marine mammals, seabirds, fisheries, and threatened ecosystems of the world.
2. Work for a comprehensive national energy policy.
 - * Conserve energy.
 - * Support solar and other nonpolluting energy sources.
 - * Insist on solutions to safety and waste disposal prior to expanded nuclear energy.
 - * Protect air and water quality.
 - * Sound environmental control over strip-mining.
 - * Improved railroads and mass transit.
3. Support public and private measures for abatement and prevention of pollution.
 - * Encourage recycling of waste.
 - * Control harmful pesticides.
4. Work for a coherent national land-use policy and support land-use planning at state, regional, and local levels.
 - * Support Coastal Zone Management, preserve wetlands.
 - * Work for open spaces in urban areas.
 - * Support flood-plain and watershed management.
 - * Support incentives for conservation and sound use of agricultural and forest land.
 - * Urge an agriculture that is nondestructive of soil, water, and wildlife resources.
5. Protect the public interest in our public lands.
6. Support the purposes of the United Nations Environmental Secretariat and cooperate in international conservation efforts.
7. Advocate the stabilization of human populations as basic to the preservation of environmental quality.

CHAPTER ACTION ON NAS CONCERNS:

The Texas Panhandle Chapter has addressed it

self to a number of these concerns this year. Fern Cain, our able Conservation Chairman, and Orwin Rush, Alaska Wilderness Chairman, have led us to take the following actions:

Goal 1. Asked the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to print a notice in the 1977-78 Hunting and Fishing Guide to the effect that non-game species of birds were protected by law.

Passed a resolution encouraging federal support of non-gamefish and wildlife conservation, which was sent to our elected representatives. (Replies from Senator Tower and Congressman Hightower were received.)

While attending the NAS conference, we responded to an urgent plea to support the President's cutback in water projects by sending a wire to Congressman Hightower. He voted against the Conte-Derrick Amendment to the Public Works Appropriations Bill, which would have eliminated some of the dams and canals which are opposed by Audubon Chapters around the country. While supporting the President in his efforts to balance the budget, he stated his reasons for not voting for the amendment, as follows: "...as representative of an area in which the people cannot depend upon natural rainfall for agriculture and an area that has been searching for several years for a way to import water from other areas, I am acutely aware of the value of water projects. I also know that the lead time from planning to completion of a project can span more than 30 years. Each of the projects that would have been denied funding by the amendment had been subjected to many years of study and had passed the stern economic benefits cost criteria established by law. I simply do not believe that the Administration could determine in a few months to eliminate projects that had undergone intense analysis and scrutiny for many years. I voted against the amendment." Eventually the Senate did eliminate some of these projects which is quite a victory for conservationists.

Goal 2. I attended the public hearing on the proposal to dispose of nuclear waste in the Panhandle area. Most of the people who attended were opposed to the idea of committing future generations for a million years to guard this waste. The Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas is doing a thorough geologic survey of the Palo Duro and the Dalhart Basins. The study will take from 2 to 5 years. Some of the people present felt that the study would yield valuable information about the geology of the Panhandle; but most did not think the Bureau would find a suitable location for safe storage of nuclear waste material here. (More about this at the Sept. meeting.)

Goal 3. Our chapter passed a resolution to support returnable bottle legislation

in Texas, which would eliminate throw-away bottles and help control pollution of highways and parks.

Goal 4. Our chapter has been active in its support of the Alaska public lands acquisition. We adopted a resolution which was sent to a public hearing on Alaska Lands in Denver.

Goal 5. We have endorsed the efforts of NAS to protect the world whale population from extermination.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE OUR CHAPTER TO DO ABOUT CONSERVATION?

Please study the goals and bring your ideas for our active participation in conservation to the September meeting. We need to act on those issues that are important to the members of the chapter.

Some present concerns of National Audubon Society which we are asked to support with letters and wires to our representatives in Washington are:

1. Alaska Lands Protection Bills- H.R. 39 and S.1500.
2. Expansion of Redwood National Park in California. Burton bill, H.R. 3813.
3. Protection of Boundary Waters Wilderness in Minnesota. Fraser bill, H.R. 2820.

Proposed acquisition of wildlife habitat in Matagorda and Jefferson Counties, Texas, by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This had to be done by August 19; so I took the liberty of writing to Gov. Briscoe to urge him to approve the voluntary sale of this land to the Fish and Wildlife Service. The governor has to approve this sale; because it would remove private land from the tax rolls.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS:

Sept. 18(Sunday) - Tom Green Ranch. Meet at the Vega offramp on I40 at 2:00 p.m. Contact Peggy Acord, group leader, for details at 352-6372.

Oct. 1 & 2(Saturday & Sunday) - Vermijo Park in northeastern New Mexico. The latest information I have no longer lists day use of this area, but if we have a group seriously desirous of making this trip we will try to set up one. Please let us know immediately if you wish to make this trip. The ranch is reached from Stonewall, Colorado. If the ranch trip is now unavailable, we can offer a trip into the Cuchara area just north of Stonewall. This is a beautiful fall trip. There are accommodations at Stonewall, Cuchara and La Vita. Monument Lake is also in this area and is an interesting place. There is usually nice color about this time of year.Peggy Acord....

PANTEX AND CHILDRESS BBS:

We made the two trips back to back this year and Don says, "Please. Not again!"

Pantex was only muddy in spots; it can be impassable, easily. We had many meadowlarks, horned larks, Cassin's and Grasshopper Sparrows. As there was quite a bit of water in the playas, we had more ducks than usual as well as avocets and killdeers.

Childress means so early to rise. It is interesting to note the changes in the area from year to year. The mesquites and willows around the ponds and in the pastures have grown a lot in the five years we have made

the count. I wish this area was closer so we could check it out often. There are more doves and both quails than one usually sees. We had fewer Blue Grosbeaks and Painted Buntings this year, but the first Bell's Vireos I had seen in two years near the southern limit of the count near the Peace River.

On the way home, we took a farm-to-market road off the Turkey highway which led us along the river valley. At midday, the birds were scarce but the scenery lovely and the first long-tailed weasel we've seen in years was a bonus, to be sure.

....Peggy Acord....

REPORTING LOCAL BIRD OBSERVATIONS:

Recently we have several times received local bird records from Sam Spiller. We thank Mr. Spiller. All such records are welcome, indeed, and we encourage all of our members to send in such reports.

....Peggy Acord....

PROGRAM FOR SEPTEMBER:

The Texas Panhandle Audubon Society will begin its fall meetings on Monday night, September 19 at 7:30, at the Garden Center. Guests are welcome to attend.

"Interesting Experiences with Summer Birds" will be the subject for the program featuring Mrs. George Ross and Mrs. Grady Fox who spent part of the summer in the Northeast and in Canada. Mrs. Ross will compare the pelagic birds of the northeast with her findings off the coast of So. America last spring. Other members of the society will add their summer experiences, and some of them are unusual.

In the business session, President Nancy Elliott will lead a discussion on the goals of National Audubon Society and how they relate to this chapter (see articles above).

P.S. - summer experiences will be welcomed from all the members and guests, even though you may not have been contacted. Some folks just don't spend much time at home.

BIRD NOTES ON THE NESTING SEASON IN THE TEXAS PANHANDLE, ALONG WITH REPORTS ON LATE SPRING MIGRANTS AND EARLY FALL MIGRANTS:

Great Blue Heron - Fern Cain and Ken Seyffert first visited a heronry of this species along the Canadian River in northern Potter Co. on 5/7. After wading the river on a very hot day to reach the heronry, they counted 14 nests of which 9 appeared to contain young, judging by the calls of young birds. KS revisited the site on 5/30 at which time he counted 14 young in 8 nests. All the young were well grown and not far from fledging, except for 2 in one nest that were considerably younger. It is interesting to note that a pair of Red-tailed Hawks had a nest with one young in it in the middle of the heronry. KS found another heronry consisting of two nests with 7 young almost as large as adults along Northrup Creek near Wolf Creek Park in Ochiltree Co. 6/8.

Little Blue Heron - 2 immature birds were seen by KS on a playa near Umbarger, Randall Co. on 9/4.

Least Bittern - KS observed one adult at its nest at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. on 6/14. This is the first reported nesting of this species in the Panhandle.

American Bittern - one seen at Buffalo Lake

NWR, Randall Co. by KS on 7/31.

White-faced Ibis - KS observed 28 on a playa in Briscoe Co. on 8/28. On 8/30 Rena Ross and Esthor Waddill saw 20 in Randall Co., and Joel Reese saw 1 in Swisher Co. on 9/8.

Wood Duck - KS observed one fly over at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. 6/14. This species nests in the area but usually on small private lakes above Lake Marvin where they are relatively undisturbed.

Mississippi Kite - it appeared to be a good year for this species. Roberta Currie reported 12 in a tree at one time in late summer at her home near Lake Tanglowood, Randall Co. Peggy Acord reported seeing 12 over town on 9/7.

Broad-winged Hawk - Rena Ross reported an early migrant in her yard in town on 9/7.

Rough-legged Hawk - the first returning bird was seen by Rena Ross in Roger Mills Co., Okla. on 9/4. This is an early date.

Ferruginous Hawk - KS observed 16 birds this summer from 6/5 thru 6/12, as follows: 4 in Hartley Co.; 3 in Sherman Co.; 2 in Ochiltree Co.; 7 in Dallam Co. (including 3 well grown young still in the nest); 1 in Hansford Co. (a recently fledged young bird). The first fall bird was seen by Esther Waddill at the Palo Duro Club, Randall Co. on 9/4.

Marsh Hawk - a female was seen by KS at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. on 7/4 and 7/31.

Prairie Falcon - KS saw one in Dallam Co. on 6/11; Bill Holliday observed one in the Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall Co., on 7/17; Rena Ross and Esther Waddill saw one in Randall Co. on 8/30.

Virginia Rail - KS saw 2 and heard 2 others calling below the dam at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co. on 6/15.

Mountain Plover - KS observed one at a playa in Dallam Co. on 6/11.

Long-billed Curlew - KS counted 13 in Hartley Co. on 6/9; 56 in Dallam Co. on 6/11; 8 in Hansford Co. on 7/3. Almost all of these birds were singles or pairs and they gave every indication of being nesting birds.

Spotted Sandpiper - KS saw 2 together below the dam at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co. on 6/15, in the very same locality in which they have been observed for the past two years. Fern Cain observed the species at Weatherly Lake near Borger, Hutchinson Co., during the summer.

Sanderling - Esthor Waddill, Rena Ross and Thelma Fox saw one on a playa in Randall Co. on 8/27.

Black-necked Stilt - a pair remained at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. throughout the summer and if you were in their area you were no doubt attacked by the highly aggressive couple. Larry Wynn of the refuge reported seeing two little ones in mid-July. This is the first reported nesting of the species in the county and only the second reported nest.

ing of it in the Panhandle. KS observed one on a playa in Hansford Co. on 7/3, and 5 on a playa in Briscoe Co. on 8/28.

Least Tern - KS observed 20 adults and 10 nests on a sandbar in the Canadian River, Hemphill Co. on 6/14. One nest contained 1 egg, three nests contained 2 eggs each, and six nests contained 3 eggs each.

OWL (a very, very small one) - Larry Wynn observed what he thought was a Saw-whet Owl at the Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. on 6/13 and 6/15. It was "first seen in a wooded canyon perched in a cottonwood tree; it then flew deeper into the trees and I could not locate it again, until two days later when it was seen about 5 miles southwest of the first location and near a waterhole in open prairie. I could get about 100 feet from it before it would fly. It was a small brownish-colored owl with white patches between the eyes."

Eastern Kingbird - an unusually high number passed through Amarillo on 9/9 as the first significant cold front hit us. Rena Ross observed many passing through her yard at that time and she and Esther Waddill reported seeing many in the cometeries ("in every tree"). This is the first report of a major migration of this species in our area. Strangely, they did not see a single Western Kingbird that day.

Western Wood Pewee - all observers have commented on the scarcity of this species during the last few years. The last week of August and first week of September have brought unusually large numbers throughout our area and indicates that the species has been doing well somewhere.

Olive-sided Flycatcher - almost ditto the above.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher - extremely scarce in our area this summer.

Violet-green Swallow - Rena Ross and Esther Waddill observed 2 in Randall Co. on 8/30. This is the first reported sighting of this species in our area in several years.

Howe Wren - extremely common in the Lake Marvin/Cono Howe Management Area of Hemphill Co. as reported by KS. Peggy Acord, the Orwin Rushes and KS heard them singing at Lake McClellan, Gray Co. on 7/17, and KS reported one singing in Wolf Creek Park, Ochiltree Co. on 6/8.

Cactus Wren - KS observed what appeared to be 3 nests of this species on Oldham Co. between Boys Ranch and Vega on 8/7. They were typically large, bulky nests with their entrance on the upper side and were built in cholla cactus. A few miles south of where the nest were, he saw one wren. This places the summer range in Texas significantly north of where it has previously been reported.

Catbird - KS observed one at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. on 6/25. This species is seldom seen here in the summer. He saw and heard one singing at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. on 7/24, and one along the Punta de Agua Creek in Hartley Co. on 9/5. Our first cold front brought several to the yard of Rena Ross in

Amarillo on 9/9 and 9/10.

Curve-billed Thrasher - KS reported one south of Sanford, Hutchinson Co. on 6/15. He also observed one in the valley of the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River, south-central Armstrong Co., and 2 further south in Lake MacKenzic State Park, Briscoe Co. on 8/28. This is further evidence of the expanding range of this species.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet - Peggy Acord observed the very early return of this migrant on 8/28 in town.

Golden-winged Warbler - Ed and Nancy Elliott had a very unusual visitor at their home near Canyon, Randall Co., on 6/1. A Golden-winged Warbler spent the morning there and was closely observed by them. They also heard it singing its distinctive buzzing song. This is only the third reported sighting of the species in our area.

Yellow Warbler - KS observed two males as they sang at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. 6/14. Peggy Acord heard one singing at Lake Tanglewood, Randall Co. on 7/3.

Magnolia Warbler - KS saw one along Rita Bianca Creek in central Hartley Co. on 9/5.

Townsend's Warbler - KS saw one at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. on 9/4.

Black-throated Gray Warbler - KS saw one at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. on 9/4.

American Redstart - KS saw one female at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. 6/14. It had been bathing in the creek and was preening itself. This is the first summer sighting of the species in the Panhandle. Peggy Acord reported the first returning migrant in our area on 8/28.

Red-eyed Vireo - KS observed one as it sang almost constantly at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. 6/14. This is the first reported summer record for the Panhandle. Rena Ross saw several in her yard in town on 9/9 and 9/10.

Summer Tanager - KS reported a young male bird singing in his yard, Potter Co. on 6/7. The bird looked very much like a female except that its upper breast was slightly rose colored. It sang in the neighborhood for several days.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak - KS saw a female in his yard, Potter Co. on 7/30. This species has rarely been reported here in the summer.

Indigo Bunting - KS reported them common at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. on 6/14 and 7/24. KS, Peggy Acord and the Orwin Rushes saw several at Lake McClellan, Gray Co. on 7/17. KS observed a pair together in the Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall Co. on 6/26. He saw two different males on two occasions at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. on 7/4 and 7/31. This is the first time they have been reported summering on the refuge.

American Goldfinch - males on territories and pairs were observed by KS at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. on 6/14 and 7/24.

White-crowned Sparrow - one adult seen by KS in Dallas Co. on 6/9.