

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Monday, Feb. 20: Regular meeting of the TPAS at 7:30 p.m. at the Garden Center. The program will be given by Mr. Jim Jordan whose topic will be "Amarillo Water Pollution Control and Water Conservation". The talk will be accompanied by slides, and Mr. Jordan will spend some time talking of our local water quality in the light of recent national publicity Amarillo has received. The speaker will be open to questions after his presentation.

## NEW OFFICERS ELECTED:

At our Annual meeting on January 17, the following people were elected to serve as officers of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society for the coming year:

President - Vera Doason	Board of Directors - Lynn Spiller
Vice-President - Mary Moyer	Nancy Elliott
Secretary - Rosemary Scott	Lowell Lindsay
Treasurer - Armon Mays	Bryan Donson
Recorder - Peggy Acord	Bill Holliday
Garden Council Representative - Dorothy Harrison	Blanco Pollock

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF OUR ANNUAL MEETING COMMITTEE:

"I would like to express my appreciation to all the members for their instant and enthusiastic response when asked for food and help. Such assistance makes the difference between a job and an ordeal. Those of you who have been in the same or similar spot will know exactly what I mean! A big 'Thank you' to every one of you." - Marguerette Empie

## RETURN TO BOSQUE:

For years I had tried to get to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge near Socorro, New Mexico. In late January of 1977, I got there, briefly, and was entranced. It was with great pleasure I made a return visit in January of 1978 with Rena Ross, Fern Cain and Esthor Waddill.

All the way there was snow along the roadsides and on the mountains. It was so cold when we left home that, in spite of a bright sun, our breaths froze on the inside of the windows and stayed there most of the morning.

We had many raptors along the whole trip. Marsh Hawks and Red-tailed Hawks were the most common, but we also had Sharp-shins, Ferruginous, Rough-legs, Kestrels, Prairie Falcon, and both Bald and Golden Eagles.

We arrived at the refuge rather late Friday morning - just in time for the "late show". We tried to hurry around to the big pond, but there were too many exciting things to see, hawks, eagles, cranes, geese, ducks and deer. There were only two other cars and the refuge was quiet, so the deer came out early. They paid little attention to us as they wandered out into the croplands, sometimes even walking through the feed Snow Goose and cranes. We must have seen fifty milo deer.

Finally, we worked our way to the big pond and parked. Rena-of-the-Sharp-eye said, "I see a Whooping Crane!", and she did. This was a white bird that surprised us, and once spotted, could be found at a glance as its large size stood out like a sore thumb. We watched the incredible tableau before us until we were afraid we would be locked in for the night. Hundreds of birds were moving with geese and cranes and blackbirds, these coming in and ducks going out. The stirring cries of the big birds and the color and movement almost mesmerized us.

Saturday morning was cold, but not as cold as Friday. We were later than we meant to be reaching the refuge. As we hurried across to the east side to get the light behind us, I saw the Whooper again. He was dancing - just about where he had been the night before. A buffy young Whooper flew low across the grasses. Cranes and geese were beginning to move about and we once more tried to hurry around to the big pond. We kept stopping for various wonders - the early light on the cranes as they landed or flew over us, the deer wandering in through the feeding geese and cranes, the white Whooper dancing and feeding and chasing the Sandhills and the geese. We stopped to see eagles and hawks and the 10 coldest Killdeers in 42 counties. The flights of geese and cranes and the beauty of the birds as they landed in the feeding areas, all so close, fascinated us.

We finally reached the big pond and argued (pardon me, discussed) the Ross' Goose problem - to which we never reached a satisfying conclusion.

The wintering sparrows we hoped to find just were not at Bosque, so after watching some Crissal's Thrashers and some more hawks, we decided to see if we could find the Whoopers at Caballo Reservoir. We started south on I25, enjoying the desert, the snow-frosted mountains, and the blue sky. At Elephant Butte Lake, where we lunched, the weather had moderated and we shed a layer. One small island was covered with gulls, and a Great Blue Heron crouched on one end like a dour old man. We enjoyed the white-crowns, a flirtatious Cardinal, and even a couple of jackrabbits.

Let me issue a word of caution. New Mexico state road signs are more absent than present, so memorize the names of the towns in your chosen path. We meant to take NM 51 to Caballo - we never did know what happened to it - but we got on NM 52 which did not have a road sign in the 10 miles to Engle. The road was through wonderful desert country, even crossing a little stream, but it ran out at Engle, a town of about 6 people, a few rundown buildings, and 1 school bus. To the right, a rather rough trench led eventually and supposedly to Rincon, while to the left it forked - one said Poligro (danger), the other said Navajó Spring Range 26 miles - and here were our sparrows, all the ones we had missed at Bosque.

Here were Brewer's, Black-throated, Savannah, Sage Sparrows, and lots of Lark Buntings.

After enjoying the warmth (Rena and Fern said it was hot, I said it was comfortable), and the desert with its birds, we hurried back to Bosque for the evening show. This time there were 50 cars and 2 deer, but at the big pond Rena said "I see the Whooper". There he was, big as life, about where he had been the night before. Once again we sat savoring the incredible sights and sounds around us, the beautiful colors of water birds, grasses, mountains and sky, wondering at the miracles of nature, thanking the refuge people for the wonderful way they handle the management, and praying it will thus be so. When the geese were caught in the golden afterglow, we reluctantly left filled with exaltation over our experience.

....Poggy Acord....

#### BIRD NOTES:

Jan. 4 - Rena Ross had a Grey-headed Junco in her yard.

Jan. 8 - Just east of the old concession building at Buffalo Lake, Ken Seyffert saw 2 female Pharrhuloxias. This species had rarely been reported in our area, but with the appearance of a male bird in Rena Ross' yard in January of last year, several more have been seen. Several Savannah Sparrows were also seen on this date. This species has been unusually plentiful in the northern Panhandle this winter. Heretofore, winter records have been scarce.

Jan. 9 - The birds of the year, so far, were the 5 Pine Grosbeaks Vera Deason had in her yard. They were observed during the morning, but no one has reported seeing any since. The last time this rare species was seen in our area was during the winter of 1969/70.

Jan. 12 - On a birding trip along country roads west of Hollywood Road, Randall Co., Vera Deason, Esther Waddill and Rena Ross observed a Short-eared Owl sitting on the ground in an open field. Also on their excursion, they saw many Savannah Sparrows and Lark Buntings, and a Prairie Falcon.

Jan. 15 - Ken Seyffert had a great day on the Hugh Currie ranch and Lake Tanglwood. 54 species were observed in a half-mile square area, including 8 Bald Eagles (6 immatures and 2 adults) perched in trees on the lake, 2 Hooded Mergansers, 300 Common Mergansers, 6 Common Snipe, a Greater Yellowlegs, a Northern Shrike, and 4 Savannah Sparrows.

Jan. 29 - South Cita Canyon in the Palo Duro, Randall Co., held some good birds for Ken Seyffert, including a Winter Wren, 2 Hermit Thrushes, and 2 female Pharrhuloxias. On the plains, he observed 30 Lark Buntings, another species that has been unusually plentiful this winter. On this same date, in town, he saw a Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Feb. 5 - Fern Cain observed a Common Gallinule on the stilling basin below the dam at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co. This is the first reported observation of this species in the winter for the Panhandle. Fern reports a large shad die-off around the lake that has attracted the Bald Eagles. At Bugbee Canyon on this date, she observed 2 adults and 5 immature birds, one of the latter being "brown and white-speckled rather than black and white like your regular immature."

#### FROM THE BRAZILLIAN INTERIOR:

Dear Audubon Friends,

I surely appreciate receiving the paper. Our P. O. box has changed here so I should let you know - just change these no's, and the rest of the address is the same: Caixa Postal 12-2600, 70000 Brasilia, D.F., Brazil, South America.

I have seen several birds that are in the North American book, such as: Kiskadee and Tropical Flycatchers, Ani, English Sparrow and Pigeon, and caracara. There's a sweet little scissortail flycatcher in black and white here. Still looking for hummingbirds! Have seen a number of birds besides! And the flowering trees! ...Lucile Fiedler...

TO: AUDUBON MEMBERS FROM: DEDE ARMENTROUT - National Audubon Society, Southwest Regional Office, Brownwood, Texas RE: GOLDEN EAGLE ATTACK:

The Golden Eagle is (or soon will be) undergoing the greatest political attack since the hearings regarding its inclusion in the Eagle Protection Act in the 1960's.

In addition, there is a concerted effort to attack the Golden Eagle, nation-wide, in the news media, an organized strategic attack, orchestrated by the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association. The media-oriented attack on Golden Eagles has come in the form of a 16-page supplement to the Sunday edition of a San Angelo, Texas, newspaper (San Angelo is the headquarters of the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association).

Since the National Audubon Society figured prominently in publicity on the recent eagle-killers' trial in Texas, and since we are quoted and cited several times within the aforementioned San Angelo news supplement (which is now being circulated nationwide) it is likely that Audubon staff quite remote to the southwest may be asked to comment on the issue or on the validity of ranchers' claims. Consequently, this alert has been prepared to advise you of the situation.

In the center of the supplement are two pages with photographic documentation of a Golden Eagle killing a lamb. These photographs are hailed by the publisher, journalist and ranchers as monumentally significant, offering undisputed proof of depredation.

Here's the catch: the lamb was tethered to a stake! The ranchers apparently have misunderstood conservationists and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's claims regarding eagle kills. They think we have categorically denied the possibility of an eagle over taking a

Lamb, when in fact, we have claimed that eagle predation on livestock is generally not significant---that sheep in areas having eagles and in areas lacking eagles show essentially the same rates of lamb mortality. In other words, if eagles are taking lambs, they are taking losers; stillborns, sick, injured, abandoned or otherwise in trouble---lambs that are destined to die anyway. A lamb, tethered to a stake, alone and probably struggling and bleating, would likely appear to an eagle to be in trouble.

Further, throughout the supplement the ranchers claimed that eagle problems, when they occurred, were highly localized. At several points, throughout the article, their "experts" recommended live-trapping eagles in such localized problem areas. Nonetheless, the publisher recommended in his summary that

"all of us who share in the economy of ranch country should act now to demand action by the Department of the Interior. We would suggest blanket authority be issued on the request of the governor for the killing of eagles on ranches that have young lambs. The Department of Interior should then watch the eagle population closely and suspend such killing should it prove a threat to the survival of the eagle."

Copies of the above described newspaper have just been sent to Congress, governors, all agencies in Washington which are remotely related to the ranching industry, and all major news media organs in all states in which sheep production and Golden Eagles are symmetric.

The strategically circulated supplements are accompanied by a letter from the publisher in which he notes that the "real problem is in congress" and that "this is a fine start." There can be little doubt that, beyond pressuring Secretary Andrus for kill permits, the ranchers intend to cultivate public sympathy, then attack the legislative protection now offered to Golden Eagles.

Audubon personnel should be aware of several counters to the ranchers' claims and the publisher's recommendations:

1. An attack upon a tethered lamb is not representative of eagle depredation. This animal, if struggling would likely appear to the eagle to be injured, sick or otherwise in trouble. If still, it would appear abandoned. At best, the ranchers have documented an eagle taking an apparently injured or abandoned lamb. In a real situation, rather than a set-up such as this, such a lamb would die anyway. This is not significant eagle depredation.
2. Upon checking with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special enforcement agents in Texas, and confirming their claims through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regional office in Albuquerque, New Mexico, I have learned that only one claim of eagle depredation had been filed with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1977. That claim was investigated and determined to be unfounded. No claim of eagle depredation was ever filed by the ranchers involved in the recent eagle-killers' trial. The ranch on which the so-called depredation photos were taken, ironically enough, is the same ranch (the Dan Auld Ranch) over which most of the 109 eagles were killed as testified to by the helicopter pilot in the aforementioned trial. At the time of this writing (11 January 1978), no claim or complaint has yet been filed with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service by Dan Auld or his foreman (or anyone else in the county) regarding any eagle depredation on his ranch (or any other) even though the photographs were taken on the 23rd of December, 1977. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a mechanism for helping ranchers with depredation claims. The ranchers have chosen to ignore the law and to widely criticize the system rather than attempt to work within it.
3. Repeatedly, rancher character witnesses in the recent eagle-killers' trial took the stand and testified under oath (under cross-examination) that eagles were not a problem in their county. Even the rancher/defendant Lanny Leinweber testified that eagles were not enough of a problem to talk about.
4. Real County, Texas, four men who knew an investigation was already underway regarding their involvement in illegal eagle-killings, nonetheless conspired to continue breaking the law. Three of them, along with other unindicted co-conspirators were subsequently responsible for killing 109 eagles, both Golden and Bald. These men, now convicted, ...returned home as heroes. What will happen to the eagles if the law is relaxed, or if kill permits are reinitiated? How many eagles would have been killed if these men had not found it necessary to be secretive and careful? The helicopter pilot says "at least twice what we got." How many eagles will be killed by ranchers who have hated eagles but respected the law? If the eagle protection is relaxed, the Golden Eagle will soon become an endangered species. Some ranchers will see to it.

This series of pictures of a Golden Eagle killing a tethered lamb appeared on the front page of the Amarillo Globe-Times on Jan. 9. The overall reaction of the public in our area is not known but I suspect it is not too far off from my own, which is one of indignation at the perpetrators of this event that supposedly proves what Golden Eagles do with lambs under natural conditions. The Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association has set out to cloak with doves' feathers a magnificent creature that is struggling to maintain its very existence in this world against the unsurpassed and number one predator in all creation, man himself. The basic arrogance of the campaign is vivid testimony of man's moral stance to the life around him.

In the Amarillo Sunday News-Globe of Jan. 22, a letter to the editor appeared from Alan Johnson of Sunday Canyon. Sunday Canyon is, as you know, a small cluster of homes built on the rim overlooking the Palo Duro Canyon and where Golden Eagles can often be seen as they hunt, loaf and frolic in the sky overhead. No doubt Alan has seen these birds and knows whereof he speaks:

Dear Editor:

Having read the article in the afternoon paper on Monday, Jan. 9 entitled: "Pictures Prove Rancher's Claims that Eagles Kill Lambs", I would like to express my opinion.

I write not as a rancher of many years and not as a teacher with three PhDs, but simply as a 16-year-old American who is going to be affected by the choice people take on the question.

I really can't see any importance in the pictures that were put in the paper. To me, all they really meant was that if a lamb was tied up and staked out, an eagle would surely land on it, kill it, and eat it. Indians used once the same method to catch eagles so they could pluck their feathers.

Eagles may not be the smartest birds, but their hunting tactics are unsurpassed. If an eagle sees that a lamb is staked down and can't free itself, why wouldn't an eagle, fox, coyote or even a weasel take advantage of the situation and have a free meal? But how many lambs are staked out and left completely helpless when they pasture?

When sheep ranchers first came to this land, I feel sure that there were more eagles and fewer lambs and sheep than there are today. It also seems to me that the ranchers got along with the eagles when raising sheep, and it was possibly a means for survival and not just a way of making a living.

Since eagles are such a rare sight, and there is no photographic proof that they actually kill lambs in the wild, I think it is important people realize that the photographs Mr. Campbell took prove a minor and perhaps misleading point. Eagles have always been predators; lambs have always been preyed upon. Nature does not always act the way we want it to. Eagles ate lambs in the past, eat lambs now, and will hopefully live long enough to eat lambs in the future. Why do we want to destroy this animal as if it has done something wrong?

Every American has been able to see eagles, or at least to know that they exist. I'm going to feel pretty sorry if my grandchildren never get to see an eagle. What's going to make me feel more sorrowful is when they ask me what happened to them, and I have to say I helped destroy them.

I believe that I have fairly looked at both sides. Hopefully the readers of the article will also look at both sides and form their own opinions carefully. The choice is simple: eagles or no eagles.

In the Amarillo Globe-Times of Jan. 23, an editorial appeared "Eagle Depredation Claim Still Unproven." In the Amarillo Daily News of Feb. 2, an article appeared by the director of the Raptor Preservation Fund in Round Rock, Texas, J. Shawn Ogburn. Among other things, he stated: "There are alternatives to killing raptors. They can be trapped and relocated or ranchers can be given tax credits for stock losses." He criticized Gov. Dolph Briscoe for ignoring these alternatives. "The highest estimate number of Golden Eagles in Texas is 40,000, but there may be as few as 4,000. This compares with nine million sheep and goats. The whole problem has been blown out of proportion."...."Rabbits make up 80 to 90 per cent of an eagle's diet. Documented livestock kills by eagles are very rare.".... "All raptors are protected by federal law, and Texas law protects all of them except Golden Eagles."