

PROGRAM FOR OCTOBER:

The Texas Panhandle Audubon Society will have a rare treat this month in hearing of some of the work being done by one branch of the Society. Mr. Tom Wood, a former Amarilloan and now Chief Naturalist with the Ft. Worth Nature Center and Refuge, attended the Western Audubon Nature Camp this past summer and will present the program. The camp is located in the rugged hills of Wyoming and is composed of two week sessions during the summer and is principally for people working with environmental programs. Mr. Wood is the son of Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Wood of Amarillo.

Wade Chewing will give the bird talk on some new bird observation helps.

Mrs. Joe Deason will preside at the business session, which will also include reports from various committees.

The meeting will be held at the Amarillo Garden Center on Monday, October 16 at 7:30 in the evening, and is open to any interested people in the area.

NANCY AND ED'S PERU TRIP - A GLIMPSE OF ONE OF THE DAYS:

Tuesday, July 25: We took a large motor cruiser to the Ballestas Islands off the coast of Peru. These islands are in the cold Humbolt current in which anchovies live, which bring thousands of sea birds to feed, nest, and leave guano, which the Peruvians have gathered for centuries for fertilizer. In the early 60's there were an estimated 25 million guano birds on these islands. Later in the 60's, a warm current called El Nino dropped down into this area from the equator. The fish went somewhere else and so did the birds. The bird population went down to approximately 2 million. The cold currents are returning and they believe the fish and birds will too. On the way to the islands, we went by the Candelabra which was etched into the cliffs by some ancient civilization. On the islands we saw colonies of sea lions, the Humbolt penguin, brown pelicans, Peruvian booby, neotropic, Guanay, and red-legged cormorants, Osprey, band-tailed, kelp, and gray gulls, and terns. The morning was warm and sunny for this enjoyable excursion. We returned to the hotel happy and a little sunburned.

In the afternoon we took the bus to the Paracas National Park. This is mostly enormous barren hills surrounding the coast and some very pretty lakes. We saw the blackish oystercatcher and finally, the Andian Condor. All of the southwest of Peru is in the great Atacama Desert--one of the driest places on the globe. On Paracas peninsula no rain has ever been recorded. There isn't any vegetation except in the valleys where rivers flow from the Andes. All of these valleys are farmed intensively using ancient irrigation systems. Occasionally there is a spring or well in the desert and the area around it is an oasis in the midst of barren land. The cold Humbolt current wrings the moisture from the clouds on the west coast. More clouds are formed in the high andes which run down the center of the country, and rain falls on the eastern third and makes jungles. I heard the word incredible a dozen times and we haven't been to incredible yet. After the Condor, we drove to the Pisco marsh--a drainage basin for one of the river valleys. Very good birding here. The most spectacular bird we saw was the Greater Red-breasted Meadowlark--a beautiful sight. Also saw the yellowish pippit, plovers, teals, white-cheeked pintain, and many others.

...Nandy and Ed Elliott...

A SPECIAL PLACE - PART II:

The unexpected nocks and crannies of the Panhandle no longer surprise me, but they still delight me.

If you look at the upper tiers of Panhandle counties, about from I-40 north, you see alot of open spaces. Even on a more detailed county map, there are few roads shown. From the highways we see mostly rolling hills, either of sand or gravel, dotted with yucca and mesquite and with a few cattle grazing on the prairie grasses. Such an area supports the 14 sections of the Duncan Ranch in Hutchinson and Roberts Counties about 16 miles north of Skellytown. Back from the road in a cluster of large cottonwoods are the houses and barns. Behind the yard is a stabilized dune covered with wild plums and grapevines.

In the forty years the Duncans have owned the ranch, many changes have taken place, and the telling is fascinating. To see a working ranch where no poisons are used on a land that is used strictly for grazing, is a treat.

White Deer Creek runs through the valley which is filled with grassy areas, a small lake, high cottonwoods, low boggy areas, large sunflowers, fields, and clumps of hackberry trees. Low masses of skunk bush and safebrush fill some areas, and over every thing grow grapevines.

Birds were abundant and varied. We saw 50 species, many common and expected. Many birds were migrating, such as the tree full of Yellow-rumped Warblers. We saw jays and chickadees, kinglets and bluebirds, flickers and hawks. Astonishing indeed was the Whmp-poor-will we heard singing near the house at dusk Saturday evening, just as the Screech Owl announced nightfall. Amazing were the 30 Pinon Jays, Scrub Jays, immature male Scarlet Tanager, and the Spragues' Pipit. This bird which we found near a grassy, boggy area, is rarely seen but probably greatly overlooked bird.

We had a walk at dusk, and after dusk walk, a sunrise walk, a rain walk, and a Grand Canyon walk.

We played with the puppies, shared lunch with the dogs, patted the horses, exclaimed over the goats, and admired the bulls. We were sorry to miss Petunia, the pig who thinks she's a dog.

How can we forget Dr. Duncan sharing his discovery of a scarab beetle with lice, or chasing "Freddie" frogs from the roadway before they got run over -- or discussing art and

atmospheric phenoma with Estelle.

It's a pleasure to visit people who care about the land and are interested in the whole environment. With genial hosts, stimulating conversation, and superb surroundings, it was a fine week-end.

Don't you wish you had been there?

Thank you Dr. and Mrs. Duncan!

....Peggy Acord....

BIRD NOTES:

August 26 - Barry Zimmer found a dead immature Virginia's Warbler in his back yard in town. It is interesting to note that all previous reported sightings of this species in the Fall have been in August.

Sept. 10 - on a trip to Buffalo Lake NWR, Peggy Acord and Ken Seyffert found 62 species of birds, including 15 Cattle Egrets, 2 White Pelicans, 4 Green Herons, 50 Swainson's Hawks, 16 Black-necked Stilts, and 1000+ Tree Swallows.

Sept. 16 - hearing unusual bird calls, Barry Zimmer stopped into his backyard and found 150 Pinon Jays circling high overhead. He watched them for nearly five minutes as they continued circling and calling loudly before moving out of sight to the southwest.

Sept. 17 - some interesting observations were made this day at Buffalo Lake NWR by Ken Seyffert -- 2 White Pelicans, a Sora, 7 Black-necked Stilts, 700+ Yellow-headed Blackbirds, a Dickcissel, and a Bobcat that came charging out of a clump of smartweed near the water's edge.

Sept. 18 - on this day Barry Zimmer had some good observations at Buffalo Lake NWR, including a Cattle Egret, 2 Townsend's Warblers, a Northern Waterthrush, a Bell's Vireo, a Green-tailed Towhee, a Western Tanager, and 55 Wilson's Warblers.

Sept. 21, 23 & 24 - Orilla Bryant reported a female Western Tanager in her yard in Miami, Roberts County.

Sept. 23 - the Elliots are evidently on the interstate flyway of the Golden-winged Warbler as Nancy and Ed once again reported one near their home southwest of Canyon. This is the first reported Fall sighting of this species. Mary Moyer made the first reported sighting of the Gedar Waxwing; two were at her home in town. This is an early date.

Sept. 23 - this was a memorable day for Ken Seyffert at Buffalo Lake NWR. For 30 minutes or more he watched a male Scott's Oriole as it perched in the trees near the old duck banding pens on the southwest side of the lake. This is the first reported sighting of the species in the Panhandle. Also seen this day - a Double-crested Cormorant, 2 Cattle Egrets, the first Ferruginous Hawk of the season, 5 Black-necked Stilts, and a Green-tailed Towhee.

Sept. 24 - in the above article entitled "A Special Place", Peggy Acord reports on the unusual observations made on the Duncan ranch in southeastern Hutchinson Co. The group of observers were Dr. Frank and Estelle Duncan, Peggy Acord, Rosemary Scott, and Ken Seyffert. The good birds seen were the 5 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 1 Cooper's Hawk, Whip-poor-will (heard), 30 Pinon Jays, 1 Sprague's Pipit, and immature male Scarlet Tanager.

Oct. 1 - Barry Zimmer and Ken Seyffert spent the morning at Buffalo Lake NWR and found some interesting birds, including 2 White Pelicans, a Double-crested Cormorant, an American Bittern, 6 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 2 Cooper's Hawks, 5 Semi-palmated Plover, 24 Northern Phalaropes, a Barn Owl, and a single, very lonesome looking Pinon Jay.

Oct. 5 - on this date Larry Wynn reported a very unusual congregation of 40 Cattle Egrets at Buffalo Lake NWR. This is the largest number reported at one time in our area. During the last week of September, he observed a Peregrine Falcon on the refuge. It has been several years since this species has been reported.

FIELD TRIP:

Wheeler County - Sunday, Oct. 22, 2:30 p.m. - meet at the Courthouse Square in Wheeler. Dick DeArment will be the group leader.