

THE PRAIRIE HORNED LARK
Newsletter of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society

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2206 Lipscomb, Amarillo, TX 79109

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PROGRAM FOR APRIL:

The monthly meeting of the TPAS will be held at the Garden Center on Monday, April 20 at 7:30 p.m. The speaker will be Calvin Tow, District Law Enforcement Supervisor with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department who will show slides and talk about "Shore Birds in the Texas Panhandle".

T.O.S ANNUAL MEETING:

The spring meeting of the Texas Ornithological Society will be held April 30 - May 2 at Collego Station, Texas with the hosting organization the Rio Brazos Audubon Society. Headquarters for the meeting will be the Holliday Inn North in Bryan (2300 Texas Ave., 713/813-8131) and reservations should be made early. Other motels and camping grounds are available in the area.

The banquet speaker will be James Vardaman. Mr. Vardaman is well known to many now. His 1979 whirlwind birding year made headlines nearly everywhere. His goal of seeing 700 different species of birds in North America was not reached, but the 699 he did see will stand as a record not soon equalled. His experiences have been put in book form now and Vardaman is planning a World Big Year as his next major undertaking.

THE PUBLIC LAND GRAB - SAGEBRUSH REBELLION - An Exercise in Greed;

Special economic interests in the West are trying to seize ownership of your public lands. Unwilling to accept the improved management practices that are long overdue and only recently instituted, the mining, grazing, and energy interests seek to hinder sound multiple-use management of the public lands. (Multiple-use management means taking care of these lands so that single purpose uses and objectives do not jeopardize other important uses and values.) The special interests support legislation that would reduce the public domain to unprotected status, preferably under state control. They want to be able to do whatever they want, wherever they want, whenever they want - without regard for the public, future generation, economic implications, or the environment.

We must act quickly and forcefully to prevent what could become the biggest robbery of public resources in history. We must let others know what is happening and what is at stake. Only a public outcry throughout the country - soon and loud - can ~~it~~ prevent this rip-off. Now is the time to act - before this self-serving scheme is perpetrated on an unsuspecting public. As the Governor of Arizona, a Republican, said, "This is the oldest con game there is".

These are our public lands. Citizens in Brooklyn and Anchorage have an equal stake in the resources and beauty of the deserts and geological formations of the

Southwest. Citizens in Tucson and Boise have a stake in the status of national forest lands in North Carolina. People throughout the continental U.S. are concerned about the incomparable natural treasures of Alaska. Americans must be aware that public lands belong to everyone and it would be wrong and irresponsible for it to be otherwise.

We must not allow special interests, concerned primarily with their own profit, to abuse and exploit public resources and values that are common to everyone.

BIRD NOTES:

March 2: a Purple Martin in south Berger, Hutchinson Co. (FC). This is the earliest date on record in the Panhandle.

March 8: 300-500 Sandhill Cranes in a grain field just north of Panhandle, Carson Co. (FS); seven Purple Finches in S. Ceta Canyon, Randall Co. (KB). The birds were quietly feeding on juniper berries high in a tree.

March 12: the most exciting bird of the year (or of any year) was the male White-winged Crossbill that Rena Ross discovered coming to a feeder in her back yard at 2805 S. Travis in Amarillo, Potter Co. The bird was observed during the noon hour (RR, KS, EW) and again on the 15th (DA, PA, RC, VC, RR, RS, VW) at which time photographs were taken of it by Roberta Currie. It was last seen on the 16th (RR). This is the second record of the species in Texas, the first being a male observed in Lubbock from 25 December 1975 to 8 March 1976.

March 13: the first Yellow-rumped Warbler of the season - in Amarillo (PA).

March 15: a female Purple Finch in Amarillo, Potter Co. (PA, m.o.b.); an adult Swainson's Hawk near Lake Tanglewood, Randall Co. (DA, PA), the earliest date on record for the Panhandle; an unidentified swallow at Lake Tanglewood, and three Say's Phoebes (PA); two female Hooded Mergansers and a Swamp Sparrow at Lake Theo, Caprock Canyons SP, Frisco Co. (KS).

March 28: a very early male Black & White Warbler at the Sad Monkey RR station in the Palo Duro Canyon SP. This species is normally first seen 4 to 6 weeks later than this date with only two previous records of it in the 4th week of March. Also of interest was an Eastern Phoebe and several singing Say's Phoebes, and the first Turkey Vulture of the year. A singing Curve-billed Thrasher perched in the open for all to view at their leisure. Altogether, 15 members of the TPAS attended this first

field trip of the year, and 28 species were recorded in the canyon.

- March 29: at the Hollywood Road sewage disposal lake (Elysian Fields); a Snowy Plover, Baird's and Western Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, 2 Tree Swallows, all first for the year (KS); Rough-winged Swallows at Lake Tanglewood (TA).
- April 2: 42 White Pelicans at Blue Creek, Lake Meredith, plus Sanderlings - firsts for the year (FC).
- April 4: a female Black & White Warbler at 2206 S. Lipscomb (KS).
- April 5: a singing Sage Thrasher, a female Wilson's Warbler (earliest date on record for the Panhandle), and singing Vesper Sparrows at Buffalo Lake NWR (KS).
- April 8: first Lark and Chipping Sparrows of the year south of Fritch (FC).
- April 9: first Scissor-tailed Flycatcher of the year at Alibates, Potter Co. (WP); first Black-chinned Hummingbird (a male) of the year at 2805 S. Travis in Amarillo, Potter Co. (RR) - earliest date on record.

AUDUBON BIRD-A-THON:

The Texas Panhandle Audubon Society has decided to sponsor a Birdathon this year on our Big Day Count, May 10. April is National Audubon Month and many chapters are having an "all out" participation on the weekend of April 25-26, which is John James Audubon's birthday.

Our chapter, however, has decided to participate through the sponsoring of 5 of our strongest birders as they take part in the Big Day Count. Peggy Acord, Fern Cain and Rena Ross are international birders having sought birds in several foreign countries as well as North America. Kenneth Seyffert and Rosemary Scott are birders of the United States.

The remainder of our society will be the sponsors who will contribute a specified amount of money for each bird seen by the 5. You can pick whichever of the Birder you wish to sponsor (or more than one); we hope that each national member will enter into the spirit of the project. Any sponsor is welcome to go along with the Birder of his or her choice to help check on their "vision and hearing." If other birders would like to enter the contest and can get some sponsors, just phone a member of our Society and we will be glad to enter your name.

As soon as territories are assigned, we will estimate the number of birds each Birder is likely to see, then you will have a better idea of the amount of money you will probably be paying. The proceeds will be divided among the local chapter, the Regional office, and the National Society. Each will use its share for bird programs and sanctuaries.

Roger Tory Peterson is the Chairman of Birdathon this year and will be participating in the contest somewhere in Texas on April 25-26. He expects to see between

150 and 200 species of birds. Anyone wanting to sponsor him can enroll with the National Audubon Society before this time, indicating the amount you would like to pay for each species of bird seen. Our local group usually tallies 140 to 150 species on the Big Day Count, but a single birder seldom records over 100.

This is an opportunity to have great fun as well as helping out the Audubon Sanctuary Funds. Anyone receiving this newsletter and not a member of the Society is welcome to be a sponsor of one of the Bird Counters. Call the one you want to sponsor and turn in your name. Let's all cooperate and make this a real "Big Day Count." ...Mary Moyer...

PRAIRIE CHICKEN FIELD TRIP:

Our next field trip will be held at Wheeler, Texas, on Sunday, April 26. Our main objective will be to view the Lesser Prairie Chicken on its "booming", our courting, grounds and our party will be led by the person who knows more about the species than anyone else, Richard DeArment of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. We will meet at 6:00 a.m. sharp on the north side of the courthouse square in Wheeler. Please be there on time!

There will be a Board meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the Garden Center on April 20 - thirty minutes before our regular meeting. It will be held in the library.
