

THE PRAIRIE HORNED LARK
Newsletter of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society

September, 1981

2206 Lipscomb, Amarillo, TX 79109

Vol. XIII, No. 6

The Texas Panhandle Audubon Society begins its fall meetings on Monday evening, September 21 at the Amarillo Garden Center at 7:30. Fern Cain, Program Chairman, announces that Dr. Derl Brooks of the West Texas State University Science Department will bring a discussion on the Behaviorial Patterns of Birds. Dr. Brooks taught ornithology at West Texas, though his principle interest is in parasitology. He received his PhD from Iowa State University and has been at WT for 16 years. He has worked with us before on programs and field trips, and the Society is delighted to have him back with us.

There will be some surprises at the business meeting, so be present. Fern Cain will be the hostess for the social hour at the end of the meeting.

BIRDATHON: SURPRISE - SURPRISE - SURPRISE: AUDUBON COUNCIL OF TEXAS:

In mid-July, a personal letter from National Audubon President, Russell Peterson was a great surprise, but when he congratulated us on receiving the Outstanding Chapter Award in our region for doing best in the Birdathon, it was a still greater surprise. He said: "By setting the pace for Birdathon results for your region, you set an example of leadership for chapters of every size across the country". We later learned that the award was based on the highest per capita giving.

So now all of you inactive members take a bow, along with the active members, as it took all of us working together to make this effort work. We had a total of \$816.65 of which our local part was \$272.22. Proper awards will be made at the September meeting.

We especially thank everyone who had any part in this endeavor - the National office added over \$80,000 to their needy treasury. This is going to become an on-going thing. SHALL WE PARTICIPATE AGAIN NEXT YEAR? LET US KNOW....Mary Moyer....

FIELD TRIPS:

Sunday, September 20: Duncan Ranch in southeastern Hutchinson Co. - meet at the ranch at 8:00 a.m. This will be a walking field trip along White Deer Creek. To reach the ranch, go to Skellytown and turn west on the Borger/Fampa highway approximately 1.5 miles. Turn north on a paved road and go 10.2 miles at which point the road becomes a dirt one. Continue on one mile until a cattle guard is reached. Turn east until another cattle guard is reached and continue northeast for about 6 miles until you reach the ranch. Bring your lunch.

Saturday, October 3: Cota Glen, So. Cota Canyon, Randall Co. Meet at entrance to the church camps at 8:00 a.m. Field trip will be over by noon - unless you wish to stay longer.

Sunday, October 18: Lako Marvin, Hemphill Co. - a combined birding and fall foliage tour. Meet at concessionaire building at 8:00 a.m. This will be an all day trip, so bring your lunch - unless you want to eat in Canadian.

Announcement has been received that the semi-annual meeting of the Audubon Council of Texas will be in El Paso on Saturday, October 31 in the Garden Center at Memorial Park. We need to be represented; so, if anyone can attend, let us know. We have two elected delegates. This is for building up a cooperative effort for the environmental needs sponsored by Audubon in Texas.

NATIONAL AUDUBON ANNUAL MEETING:

Audubon's Annual Dinner in New York City will be held on Thursday, November 5 at the New York Hilton. The dinner is a very important event in the environmental field, bringing together leaders, deers, and concerned citizens from all parts of the country. Russ Peterson is eager to have representation from every chapter. It is a rather "black tie" occasion and individual tickets are \$50. There will also be a forum that afternoon at 2:30.

If any of our members plan to be in New York City at this time, we would be glad for you to be our representative. For further information, contact Mary Moyer. This is an interesting and important meeting which you will enjoy. I was privileged to attend in 1960 - when the price was a bit cheaper! ..mm..

BOARD MEETING: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Mary Moyer. All Board Members are urged to attend.

WATT MUST GO, SAYS NWF:

The four-and-one-half-million-member National Wildlife Federation has "reluctantly" called on Presiden Reagen to fire his Secretary of the Interior, James Watt. The action followed a poll which showed that although the federation's members supported Ronald Reagan by a two-to-one margin last fall, they reject Watt's stand on ten out of eleven environmental issues. For six months, the federation tried to maintain a dialogue with Watt while other conservation organizations were calling for his ouster, said Jay D. Hair, the federations president, "but our patience was not rewarded." Watt has been "inflexible and unresponsive to ideas and

entreaties from leaders of the conservation movement," and the poll of the federation's membership shows he is "out of the mainstream of American thought on conservation issues," he said.

At this point "removal is the only option we see open to the President," Hair concluded.

PUFFINS NESTING ON EGG ROCK:

Five pairs of puffins nested on Eastern Egg Rock in Maine this summer. Reestablished on the island through a transplant program the National Audubon Society undertook in 1976, they were the first puffins to breed there in a century. Puffins spend most of their lives at sea and some to land only to nest. In the Audubon project, young from a healthy colony in Newfoundland have been brought each year to the island - recently designated the society's Allan D. Cruickshank Sanctuary - and hand-raised in man-made burrows. The hope was that some of the birds would remain as adults and start a new puffin colony. The population was wiped out in the 1800's by hunters.

Puffins nest in burrows or rock crevices and a pair of puffins normally produces a single chick. The Audubon scientists observed the adult puffins of all five pairs entering their nests with food, so presumably five young were successfully hatched. At least two of them already have fledged and gone off to sea.

FALCON COMEBACK:

A pair of peregrine falcons nested this spring on a cliff in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and fledged two young, reports the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It was the first known nesting of peregrines there in 28 years. DDT was a major factor in wiping out this species as a breeding bird in the eastern United States, but now that the insecticide has been banned and its long-lasting effects are washing out of the environment, efforts are being made to reintroduce falcons. The female of the New Hampshire pair is believed to be a falcon released in the recovery program, but is not known where the male came from.

PETERSON: "IT IS TIME FOR US TO FIGHT":

The Reagan administration is trying "to circumvent the environmental laws of the land" and turn the nation's air, water, land, and wildlife "back to the modern-day plume-hunters," Audubon President Russ Peterson charged in his major address at the Audubon convention. He called on members to mobilize in support of those laws. "It is time for us to fight", he declared.

The Audubon Society was founded 76 years ago to stop the commercial slaughter that then threatened to wipe out the plumed birds, Peterson said. The slaughter was stopped, but the plume-hunter mentality remained: "Overgrazing, overcutting, overhunting, overdraining, overfilling, overdumping - combined with increased poisoning of the air, water, and land - so antagonized the American people that they

the environmental revolution of the 1970's.

Then, last November, a new administration was elected, he continued. The quality of the environment was not an issue in the election campaign, he said, but the new government, "under the false pretense that it has a 'mandate' to do so", has set out to scuttle the environmental laws of the 1970's by administrative actions: "It is hard to believe the stream of radical actions and pronouncements now emanating from the anti-environmentalists chosen to head the agencies that were set up during the past ten years to protect the environment."

**Not one upper-echelon environmental post in the Reagan administration has been filled by a recognized environmentalist. Of eight key posts in the highly technical Environmental Protection Agency, all have been filled by lawyers, none by scientists or engineers. Seven came from jobs in which they actively fought EPA regulations, and the eighth worked for the Business Roundtable.

**At the Council on Environmental Quality, which Russ Peterson headed under the previous Republican administration, virtually the entire staff was fired. The new staff and budget are less than one-third the size of the old.

**The Department of Energy is cutting its budget for energy conservation and solar energy development by 77%. "While they are gutting the modest research program on using free energy from the sun, they spend a billion dollars a year on research on nuclear fission - that is, trying to create a sun on Earth."

**Interior Secretary James Watt advocates drilling in marine sanctuaries, turning our national parks over to the concessionaires, opening up wilderness areas to mining, hamstringing controls on strip-mining, and starving the endangered species program.

**It is not true that environmental regulations are stifling economic growth. In the long run, we cannot have a healthy economy without a healthy environment.

"James Watt is making much of his contention that people don't matter to environmentalists", Peterson said. "Of course people matter to environmentalists. The quality of human life is deeply and directly dependent on the quality of the natural environment. Our long-term, and in many cases short-term, physical and economic health are dependent on it. And so is our security.

"That's what the Audubon Cause is all about. The lack of understanding of these principles by the current administration in Washington is at the heart of the problem."

.....Audubon LEADER.....

BIRD NOTES - SUMMER SIGHTINGS:

Pied-billed Grebe: an adult on a nest with two young on a playa lake north of Panhandle, Carson Co. 20 August (FC) - late date for nesting.

Cattle Egret: one along the Canadian River, Lake Meredith, Potter Co. 12 July (KS); six on a playa lake between Amarillo and Canyon, Randall Co. 16 August (DA,PA) - these are the first summer sightings reported from the Panhandle.

Snowy Egret: several off Sandy Point, Lake Meredith, 14 August (FC).

Mexican Duck: one on a playa lake north of Panhandle, Carson Co. 1 August (FC) - first one reported from the Panhandle.

Wood Duck: two females on White Deer Creek, se Hutchinson Co. (Duncan Ranch) 19 June (KS); a male in eclipse plumage on a foodlot lake west of Hereford, Deaf Smith Co. 19 July (KS).

Ferruginous Hawk: one near Channing, Hartley Co. 7 June (KS); nest with two young near Toxline, Dallam Co. 11 June (KS).

Marsh Hawk: a male along the Canadian River, ne Potter Co. 12 July (KS); a female west of Hereford, Deaf Smith Co. 19 July (KS).

Virginia Rail: three were heard calling from the cattail marsh below the dam at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co. 5 July (KS).

Sora: one on a playa lake in Carson Co. 9 August (PA,KS).

Common Gallinule: four family groups (adults with chicks) observed along the outflow stream below the dam at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co. 5 July (KS).

American Coot: a nest with two eggs on a playa lake north of Panhandle, Carson Co. 20 August (FC) - late date for nesting.

Long-billed Curlew: one on the Channing BBS 7 June (KS) & 40 on the Toxline BBS 11 June (KS) - Hartley and Dallam Cos.; 517 west of Hereford, Deaf Smith Co. 19 July (KS) - over 400 flew in while the observer was counting others scattered about a large prairie dog town.

Upland Sandpiper: common from mid-July on - 60 were counted in Carson Co. 9 August (PA,KS).

Black-necked Stilt: two adults with three juveniles on a foodlot lake west of Hereford, Deaf Smith Co. 19 July (KS).

Least Tern: five adults along the Canadian River near Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. 16 June (KS).

Black Tern: common on playa lake throughout much of the Panhandle from 3 July on (KS).

Rufous Hummingbird: one at the Ross' residence, Potter Co. 25 July (RR) - earliest date on record. The Rufous, Black-chinned and Broad-tailed were all visiting the yard at one time from late July on.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: the female that wintered at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. was still there 28 June (KS).

Golden-fronted Woodpecker: one at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. 23 August (KS).

Western Kingbird: two families of newly fledged birds at 1911 Cherry 12/13 August (PA) - late dates.

Cassin's Kingbird: one heard calling in Toxline, Dallam Co. 11 June (KS). This is the first one reported in the summer in the Panhandle. In recent years there have been an increasing number reported in the nearby Clayton, NM area.

Great Crested Flycatcher: found summering as far west as along White Deer Creek in se Hutchinson Co. (Duncan Ranch) 19 June (KS).

Black Phoebe: one at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. 26 July (KS) - first reported summer sighting for the Panhandle.

empidonax sp.: one in the Palo Duro Canyon SP (Sunday Canyon), Randall Co. 2 August (KS).

Black-crested Titmouse: two in a shelter-belt ne of Quail, Collingsworth Co. 7 September (KS).

House Wren: found summering as far west as along White Deer Creek in se Hutchinson Co. (Duncan Ranch) 19 June (KS) - eleven were found singing.

Bell's Vireo: found summering at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. 16 June (KS); one singing at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. 23 August (KS).

Warbling Vireo: found summering at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. 16 June (KS); along White Deer Creek in se Hutchinson Co. (Duncan Ranch) 19 June (KS); at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. 26 July (KS).

Black & White Warbler: a female at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. 23 August (KS).

Northern Waterthrush: one at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. 23 August (KS) - earliest date on record.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: found summering on a playa lake in sw Swisher Co. 3 July (KS); in the cattail marsh below the dam at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co. 5 July (KS).

Indigo Bunting: two singing males along the Canadian River, ne Potter Co. 12 July (KS).

Fine Siskin: one at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. 26 July (KS).

American Goldfinch: a singing male with a female at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. 16 June (KS).

Cassin's Sparrow: the lowest number in anyone's memory. This is reflected in the area Breeding Bird Surveys (BES); Channing average 82.7 per count - this year 33; Pantex average 40.4 - this year 0; Toxline average 64.0 - this year 16; Booker average 14, this year 1.

Field Sparrow: found summering as far west as along White Deer Creek in se Hutchinson Co. (Duncan Ranch) 19 June (KS); two singing downstream from the dam at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co. 5 July (KS).

DA - Don Acord
 PA - Peggy Acord
 KS - Ken Seyffert
 FC - Fern Cain
 RR - Rena Ross