

THE PRAIRIE HORNED LARK
Newsletter of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society

October, 1981

2206 Lipscomb, Amarillo, TX 79109

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The Texas Panhandle Audubon Society will meet on Monday evening, October 19, at 7:30 in the Garden Center. Fern Cain, Program Chairman, announces that Richard DeArment, biologist with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department stationed in Wheeler will give a program on "Habitat Improvement". Richard is an old friend of the TPAS and has not only put on many enjoyable and informative programs for us over the years but he has also conducted a number of our field trips in the Wheeler area. A field trip lead by Richard DeArment has a special quality. He is the authority on the life history of the Lesser Prairie Chicken and had the opportunity this past spring to show Roger Tory Peterson his first chickens ever.

There will be a meeting of the Board at 7:00 a.m. prior to the regular meeting. Hostess for the social hour after the meeting will be Rosemary Scott.

**EXAMPLES OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S ATTACK
ON OUR ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS:**

Below is a partial rundown of the Administration's environmental record, based on the fact sheet being prepared by National Audubon for members to use when they are collecting signatures for the Audubon Campaign (coming in November) - facts and figures to back our stand.

Bad Appointments. Most Administration appointees to high environmental protection posts have been, like James Watt, leaders in the fight to undermine environmental laws. An example is the Environmental Protection Agency, where top jobs have been filled by lawyers who formerly represented polluting corporations against EPA.

ENDANGERED SPECIES. The program's budget has been cut 40% and its essential research function nearly eliminated. Not a single new species has been proposed for protection, even though increasing numbers of animals and plants are imperiled by human activity.

National Forests. Overriding advice from the Forest Service's professional staff, the Administration plans to double and perhaps eventually triple the timber cut in our national forest - a step that would wipe out remaining virgin stands along with many of the birds and other creatures that depend on old-growth habitat.

Wilderness. The Administration is trying to open up federally protected wilderness to mining and oil drilling -- a move that could destroy the wilderness character of these areas.

Clean Air. In collaboration with pollution industries, the Administration seeks to lower air quality standards and reduce enforcement of clean air regulations. Acid rain is sterilizing lakes, destroying aquatic life, and harming birds and other creatures on up the food chain. Yet the Administration proposes to permit more sulfur and nitrogen oxide emissions -- the principal contributors to

acid rain.

Energy. The Administration proposed chopping 70 percent off the budget for solar energy and conservation while seeking to increase subsidies to the nuclear power industry by 35 percent -- at a time when the market continues to reject nuclear power as an investment.

Predator Poisoning. The EPA is attempting to lift the ban on Compound 1080 for poisoning coyotes on public lands. This would revive the discredited practice that indiscriminately kills eagles, hawks, foxes, badgers, marten, dogs, and a host of other non-target animals, including non-offending coyotes.

Strip Mining. Strip mining controls have curbed the ravaging of our landscapes and the poisoning of our streams. Yet the already hard-pressed inspection and enforcement staffs of the Office of Surface Mining have been cut by almost 70 percent, and all five of OSM's regional offices have been closed.

RARE FIND IN TEXAS:

A Jabiru Stork, sighted this month in a salt marsh near Corpus Christi, attracted an audience of birders from across the country. The species is normally found in South American and Africa, and this was the first seen in the United States since 1973. Two of our TPAS birders made the trip to Corpus Christi to see the Jabiru - Fern Cain and Rena Ross - and were able to see it several times.

***** DUNCAN RANCH FIELD TRIP *****

Our fall outing on the Duncan Ranch along White Deer Creek in southeastern Hutchinson Co. on 9/20 was highly successful and most enjoyable and all the lucky participants wish to thank our gracious hosts, Estelle and Frank Duncan. The participants were: Peggy Acord, Audrey Adams, Fern Cain, Frank & Estelle Duncan, Fred & Jan Ellston, Marguerite Empie, Waymond & Virginia Gill, Mary Glenn, Mary Moyer, Betty Newby, George Newby, George & Rena Ross, Rosemary Scott, Kenneth Seyffert, Frank Smith, Winnie Wester. The following birds were recorded on the trip:

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|---|-----|
| Great Blue Heron..... | 3 | Scissor-tailed Flycatcher..... | 2 |
| Green Heron..... | 1 | Say's Phoebe..... | 1 |
| <u>Wood Duck</u> | 2 | empidonax sp..... | 1 |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk..... | 2 | Blue Jay..... | 75+ |
| Cooper's Hawk..... | 3 | Common Crow..... | 3 |
| Red-tailed Hawk..... | 2 | Carolina Chickadee..... | 4 |
| <u>Broad-winged Hawk</u> | 1 | Bewick's Wren..... | 2 |
| Swainson's Hawk..... | 1 | Eastern Bluebird..... | 2 |
| <u>Osprey</u> | 1 | Ruby-crowned Kinglet..... | 3 |
| Marsh Hawk..... | 1 | Starling..... | 4 |
| American Kestrel..... | 3 | Orange-crowned Warbler..... | 1 |
| Fobwhite..... | 20 | Yellow Warbler..... | 1 |
| Turkey..... | heard | <u>Black-throated Green Warbler</u> | 1 |
| Mourning Dove..... | 500+ | Wilson's Warbler..... | 6 |
| Great Horned Owl..... | 1 | Red-winged Blackbird..... | 10 |
| Common Nighthawk..... | 1 | Common Grackle..... | 1 |
| Belted Kingfisher..... | 1 | Cardinal..... | 4 |
| Yellow-shafted Flicker..... | 4 | American Goldfinch..... | 2 |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker..... | 2 | Savannah Sparrow..... | 3 |
| Downy Woodpecker..... | 2 | | |

***** FIELD TRIP TO CETA GLEN *****

The field trip to the Christian Church Camp in Ceta Glen, Randall Co. was not a big success when it came to the variety of birds seen, but was most successful in its fellowship. Several members of the Llano Estacado Audubon Society of Lubbock joined us and helped make it an enjoyable outing. The Lubbock participants were Helen Brightwell, Darlene Stevens, and Cliff & Dixie Stogner. The TPAS members were Peggy Acord, Waymond & Virginia Gill, Mary Moyer, Harold & Madeleine Read, George & Rena Ross, Rosemary Scott, Kenneth Seyffert, and Winnie Wester. The birds seen (or heard) were: - 10/3 -

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---------|
| Great Blue Heron..... | 1 | Horned Lark..... | several |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk..... | 1 | Blue Jay..... | 2 |
| large falcon (probably a Prairie..) | 1 | Canyon Wren..... | 2 |
| American Kestrel..... | 4 | Starling..... | 20 |
| Turkey..... | 2 | Yellow-rumped Warbler..... | 1 |
| Mourning Dove..... | 3 | Western Meadowlark..... | common |
| Common Flicker..... | 8 | Cardinal..... | 6 |
| Golden-fronted Woodpecker... | 6 | Blue Grosbeak..... | 1 |
| Ladder-backed Woodpecker.... | 2 | Rufous-sided Towhee..... | 1 |
| Western Wood Pewee..... | 1 | Rufous-crowned Sparrow..... | 1 |
| | | spizella sp..... | 1 |

BIRD NOTES:

LITTLE BLUE HERON - one at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. 9/26 (FE,JE).

GREAT EGRET - four at Lake Marvin 9/26 (FE,JE).

WHITE-FACED IRIS - three at Lake Marvin 9/26 (FE,JE); two in central Castro Co. 10/9 (KS) - a late sighting.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE - three on a playa lake southeast of Canyon, Randall Co. 10/2 (HF,DS).

BROAD-WINGED HAWK - one in the Ross' yard in Amarillo, Randall Co. 9/28 - 10/2 (GR,RR) - same bird?; one at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall Co. 10/4 (KS).

SWAINSON'S HAWK - a good movement took place in early October. 25 were recorded between Ceta Glen and Amarillo 10/3 (FA,KS); 40 between Umbarger and Amarillo 10/4 (KS); 51 in one field east of Amarillo in Carson Co. 10/7 (KS).

OSPREY - four at Lake Tanglewood, Randall Co. for most of the period (PA,RC,RS).

PRAIRIE FALCON - one in northeast Castro Co. 10/9 (KS).

VIRGINIA RAIL - one at Lake McClellan, Gray Co. 10/7 (KS).

SORA - seven at Lake McClellan 10/7 (KS).

BLACK-BELLIED FLOVER - one in northeast Castro Co. 10/9 (KS).

LONG-BILLED CURLEW - an estimated 3000 were found in one flock in westcentral Castro Co. 10/9 (KS). There was a veritable cloud of curlews as they milled about before landing in a field near a playa lake.

LONG-EARED OWL - one at Buffalo Lake NWR 9/27 (KS).

CASSIN'S KINGBIRD - one in northeastern Castro Co. 10/9 (KS) - a late sighting.

GRAY CATBIRD - one in the Ross' yard in Amarillo 10/1 (GR,RR).

GREY-CHEEKED THRUSH - one at Buffalo Lake NWR 10/4 (KS).

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET - one at Lake McClellan 10/7 (KS) - an early date.
 RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET - unusually plentiful this fall. 37 were counted at Lake McClellan 10/7 (KS).
 CEDAR WAXWING - one in Wolf Creek Park, Ochiltree Co. 9/13 (KS) - an early sighting.
 RED-EYED VIREO - three bathing under the sprinklers in the George Ross' yard in Amarillo 9/20 (GR,RR).
 ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER - the heaviest movement in the memory of area birders. The first wave came in with the cold front and rain on 10/1. The Ross' yard in Amarillo was "full of them" throughout the day - "one could hardly keep up with them" (GR,RR). They were still moving through 10/7 when 45 were recorded at Lake McClellan (KS).
 BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER - one in the Palo Duro SP, Randall Co. 10/6 (KS); one at Lake McClellan 10/7 (KS).
 BLACKBURNIA WARBLER - a female in Canyon 9/15 (WW) - this is only the third fall sighting in the Panhandle.
 PRAIRIE WARBLER - an immature in Pampa, Gray Co. 9/21 (FE,JE). - "watched all afternoon". There is only one documented record of this warbler in the Texas Panhandle, a photo taken of one in Moore Co. 4 and 9 May 1975 by Carolyn Stallwitz. There is a sight record of one near Canyon on 5/3/55. Sight records must be supported with detailed documentation to be acceptable, particularly of birds in fall plumage. Contrary to its name, Prairie Warblers rarely visit the prairies of the West.
 BLUE GROUSE - one in Palo Duro Canyon SP 10/7 (KS) - latest date on record.
 LAZULI FUNTING - a male at Buffalo Lake NWR 9/27 (KS).
 GREY-HEADED JUNCO - one at Buffalo Lake NWR 10/4 (KS).
 LESSER GOLDFINCH - a female along Chicken Creek northcentral Roberts Co. 9/13 (KS) - this is the first reported from the northeast Panhandle.
 LINCOLN'S SPARROW - it is unusually common this fall - 10 were counted at Lake McClellan 10/7 (KS).

(PA) Peggy Acord; (HD) Helen Frighwell;
 (RC) Roberta Currie; (FE) Fred Ellston;
 (JE) Jan Ellston; (GR) George Ross; (RR) Rena Ross; (RS) Rosemary Scott; (KS) Ken Seyffert; (DS) Darlene Stevens; (WW) Winnie Wester.

WHOOPING CRANE ALERT:

Once again, Audubon chapters are being asked to participate in monitoring the fall migration of Whooping Cranes. These birds will be heading south soon and we need your help. As you may have heard, this was not a good year for young Whoopers. Only three hatchlings survived to make the trip back to Texas. The perils along the route are many. While Whooping Cranes are not often reported in the Texas Panhandle, they do occur here. If sighted, gather as many details as possible on location, description of site, age of birds (adult or young), color-markings

(young birds have been marked with colored leg bands since 1977), behavior, and any other details. Should they be sighted, please contact Peggy Acord at 352-6372, Fern Cain at 857-3151, or Kenneth Seyffert at 373-9580 or 374-1641.

NOVEL SANCTUARY PROJECT:

Almost 20,000 acres of private lands in the Louisville area - in Kentucky and across the Ohio River in Indiana - are posted with signs reading: "LOUISVILLE AUDUBON WILDLIFE SANCTUARY: Do not enter with gun, ax, trap, etc. No fires allowed. Your cooperation is appreciated." The signs are the result of a program that owes its success to the benefits it brings to both sides - the Audubon shap-ter and the landowners.

The chapter's sanctuary chairman explains: "Time after time the landowners who have joined our program tell us our signs give them better protection from trespassers and property damage than they formerly had with their conventional 'Posted' and 'No Trespassing' signs." The chapter, in return for the use of its name, gets the right to hold bird walks and other field trips on the sanctuary property.

In 1968, when the program was begun, the green-and-white metal signs cost 30¢ each and the chapter gave them away, one for every ten acres of land to be protected by the landowner. Now the signs cost \$2 and the chapter has to charge for them. The posted tracts range from one to 1,700 acres.

....Audubon LEADER.....

FIELD TRIPS:

Oct. 18 (Sunday) - Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co. - a combined birding and Fall foliage tour. Meet at the concessionaire building at 8:30 a.m. Bring your lunch.

Nov. 7 (Saturday) - Hugh Currie Ranch near Lake Tanglewood - a morning birdwalk in a lovely setting. Meet at 8:00 a.m.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS:

Plan ahead for the upcoming Christmas Bird Counts in December and January. We need all the help we can get. The following is a list of dates for each count and its compiler. These dates are subject to change and the final dates and meeting times will appear in the November newsletter:

Dec. 20 (Sunday) - Amarillo (Palo Duro Canyon) - Peggy Acord
 Dec. 24 (Thursday) - Buffalo Lake NWR - Larry Wann
 Dec. 27 (Sunday) - Lake Meredith (west) - Fern Cain
 Dec. 30 (Wednesday) - Arnett, OK - Ken Seyffert
 Jan. 1 (Friday) - Quitaque (Caprocks Canyon SP) - Ken Seyffert
 Jan. 3 (Sunday) - Lake Meredith (east) - Ken Seyffert.