

THE PRAIRIE HORNED LARK
Newsletter of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society

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CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SCHEDULE;

Dec. 19 (Sun): Amarillo (Palo Duro Canyon)
- meet at entrance to State Park at
8:00 a.m. Count compiler - Peggy
Acord.

Dec. 24 (Fri): Buffalo Lake NWR - meet at
refuge headquarters at 8:00 a.m.
Count compiler - Larry Wynn.

Dec. 26 (Sun): Lake Meredith (east) - meet
at Sarah's Restaurant in east Fritch
(near Nat'l Parks building) at 7:30
a.m. Count compiler - Ken Seyffert.

Dec. 29 (Wed): Quitaque - meet at the
entrance to Caprock Canyons SP at
8:00 a.m. Count compiler - Ken Seyffert.

Jan. 2 (sun): Lake Meredith (west) - meet
at Sarah's Restaurant in east Fritch
(near Nat'l Parks building) at 7:30
a.m. Count compiler - Fern Cain.

CONSERVATION... Helen Coleman Madsen

Today, tropical forest is being cleared at the rate of 50,000 to 100,000 hectares annually (a hectare is about 2.5 acres) and this could affect the long-term survival of many species of migrant birds. The trend shown in microcosm in an eight-year study of wintering birds at a six hectare site in Veracruz, Mexico, forested in 1973, illustrates this. In 1980 only about 25% of it remained relatively undisturbed forest. Among the bird species that had disappeared altogether in the interval were the Black-and-white Warbler and Worm-eating Warbler, as well as the Swainson's Thrush.

Recent breeding-bird censuses taken in undisturbed forests around Washington D.C. have shown an annual decrease in the number of pairs of those birds that winter in the tropics as compared with the numbers recorded on censuses of the same plots 20 or 30 years ago. The decreases correlate very neatly with the rate at which wintering habitat for these species is being destroyed, with territorial winter inhabitants of mature forest suffering the most. In Mexico, for example, where in certain areas migrants constitute 50% of the total birdlife during winter, the birds are so concentrated that to remove one hectare of forest has the same effect as removing five to eight hectares in northeastern North America. With more than half the natural vegetation of Central America and the Greater Antilles already converted to cropland and pasture and the remainder disappearing at a rapid rate, we face the prospect that suitable habitat will no longer be available for many migrants by the end of the century. The system of parks and reserves now being established in many Latin American countries will be of some help, but the most

that could be hoped for would be 10 to 20% of the land under some kind of protected status. Because migrant birds are already crowded in their wintering grounds, this amounts to little more than a token solution.

Some broadly dispersed species may be able to shift the focus of their wintering range to less disturbed areas of the tropics, but this is unlikely for the many species with more constricted ranges. While no birds seem under the imminent threat of extinction owing to winter habitat loss, the chances are that many will become less common.

The prospect of fewer of our most colorful, musical and endearing birds coming north each year is a sad one to contemplate late.

...October, 1982 SMITHSONIAN...

On the event of the Bald Eagle's 200th Anniversary as our National symbol, a study has been released indicating that it is making a comeback. Dr. James Grier, Associate Professor of Zoology at North Dakota State University, has found that since the ban of DDT in 1972, Bald Eagle reproduction rates have improved tremendously, and at a much faster rate than had been expected.

A National Wildlife Federation Census found 13,709 Bald Eagles in 1981, as compared to about 3,000 in 1976. Dr. Grier has found that since the presence of DDT in eggs dropped, the number of young hatching has more than doubled.

The threat of extinction is still present from other factors, however, such as habitat destruction, intentional shooting, accidental trapping, and acid rain damage to food sources. Another factor that could reverse the progress the Bald Eagle has made in the last decade is the possible reintroduction of the use of Compound 1080, a poison used as a predator control, primarily against coyotes. Compound 1080 was banned by executive order of President Nixon when evidence showed substantial numbers of non-target wildlife, such as bobcats, badgers, and eagles, were being killed by the poison. Early this year, President Reagan rescinded that executive order, and the decision of whether to reregister 1080, at the request of the powerful wool-grower's Association, is now in the hands of the Environmental Protection Agency.

... Fall, 1982 GREENPEACE EXAMINER...

BIRD NOTES: Eight people turned out for the Lake McClellan, Gray Co., field trip on Nov. 7 (PA, VG, WG, GR, RR, RS, KS, DA) It was a very pleasant day and 37 species of birds were recorded on or in the immediate vicinity of the lake:

Pied-billed Grebe	Common Crow
Great Blue Heron	Carolina Chickadee
American Bittern	Tufted Titmouse
Mallard	Bewick's Wren
Gadwall	Marsh Wren
Pintail	Eastern Bluebird
Bufflohead	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Red-tailed Hawk	Starling
Marsh Hawk	Yellow-rumped Warbler
American Kestrel	House Sparrow
Bobwhite	Eastern Meadowlark
rail sp.	Western Meadowlark
American Coot	Red-winged Blackbird
Killdeer	Common Grackle
Common Flicker	Cardinal
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Dark-eyed Junco
Golden-fronted Woodpecker	White-crowned Sparrow
Hairy Woodpecker	Song Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	

There are two noteworthy things to this list. Lake McClellan is an area where both the Red-bellied and Golden-fronted Woodpecker, and the Eastern and Western Meadowlarks can be found intermingled. Also, the titmouse seen was not the more common race found in the Panhandle, the Black-crested, but the nominate race, the Tufted.

Birding reports since that time have been almost nonexistent. The one exception was that of Raymond Bryant in Miami, Roberts Co., who has had several interesting birds in his yard this fall. On Nov. 2 he had White-throated Sparrow and Red-bellied Woodpecker; on Nov. 23 a Fox Sparrow, the only one reported so far this season; on Nov. 24 a Roadrunner and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; on Dec. 2 a Red-breasted Nuthatch; on Dec. 4 a Merlin, a noteworthy visitor, indeed.

On Nov. 10 a Gray-headed Junco was seen in Amarillo (KS), and on Nov. 21 three late Say's Phoebe migrants were at Buffalo Lake NWR (PA, KS). On Nov. 6 sixteen Great Blue Herons were all in a row at Lake Tanglewood (RC). Week-ends of bad wather have kept most birders from doing much exploring. We can only hope that the north wind has brought us some good birds for the Christmas Counts. By the way, there is one important change this year in the counts. The participation fee will be \$2.00 per person instead of the usual \$1.50.

See you on a count!

Bird observers:

DA - Don Acord	GR - George Ross
PA - Peggy Acord	RR - Rena Ross
RC - Roberta Currie	RS - Rosemary Scott
VG - Virginia Gill	KS - Kenneth Seyffert
WG - Waymon Gill	