

THE PRAIRIE HORNED LARK  
Newsletter of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society

March, 1983

2206 Lipscomb, Amarillo, TX 79109

Vol. X, No. 3

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The annual Conservation Dinner Meeting of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society will be held on Monday, March 21, 1983, at 6:30 P.M. in the Garden Center. Rhea Copening, Regional Director of National Audubon Society, will present the Society's annual conservation award to a deserving conservationist, and a National's Meretorious Service Award to one of the local Society members. The program for the evening will deal with water conservation in the High Plains and will be presented by Dr. Robert Stewart.

The meal is being catered this year, making reservations necessary. Please call and make your reservations before noon Friday the 18th. Call Virginia Wood at 352-7100 or Vera Deason at 374-6390. The charge for the meal will be \$7.00 per person.

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It is with sorrow that we report the deaths of two of our loyal and founding members, Thelma Fox and B. W. VanNoy. Both contributed much to our knowledge of the birdlife of the Texas Panhandle and we all cherish fond memories of pleasant days afield in their company.

Rough-leggeds have moved out. Another noteworthy sighting was a very light-colored Merlin at Buffalo Lake NWR 2/13 (PA,KS).

QUAIL - WOODPECKERS:

The Sandhill Cranes are on the move with many reported in Gray Co. (FE,JE), and the Killdeers have returned. Long-billed Dowitchers are not normally reported in our area until late March or early April but this year 2 were found on a playa lake south of Umbarger, Randall Co. on 3/6 (PA,KS). This sighting beats by one day the previous earliest sighting made in 1974.

BIRD NOTES:

Late winter can be an uneventful time for birders, what they call the "doldrums" but close attention to birdlife will in fact prove there is really no time that does not contain its own interest:

LOONS - FALCONS:

The movement of waterfowl presents an interesting mix at this time of year. Observers were quite excited over the 3 Tundra Swans seen on the Lake Meredith (west) Christmas Bird Count. Even more exciting were the 7 found on a playa lake north of Bushland, Potter Co., 2/27-3/2 (PA, VG, WG, RS). The Canada Goose pulled out early and the Snow Goose began arriving. The latter species is quite scarce in fall and winter but often passes through in considerable numbers on its way north in spring. First reports of it began on 2/13 at Buffalo Lake NWR (KS) and there have been continued sightings (PA, KS, RS). One flock contained the very rare blue mopp of the Snow - a "Blue" goose (KS). It is interesting to note the changing composition of ducks as winter ends and spring begins. In mid and late January most ducks seen were Mallards. By mid-February Pintails become dominant and by early March American Wigeons are everywhere, along with an increasing number of Green-winged Teals. The first Ruddy Ducks were seen in Castro Co. 3/16 (PA, KS) along with an increasing number of diving ducks.

PASSERINES:

A sure sign of spring is a swallow and a very early sighting this year was of a Tree Swallow at Buffalo Lake NWR 2/27 (KS). The earliest sighting of this species was on 2/26/56. Has anyone seen any Mountain Bluebirds? A drive across the plains at this time of year usually produces many perched on high lines and fences, but not this year. The Pyrrhuloxia has turned up at yet another location. Two males were found at Buffalo Lake NWR 2/13 (PA, KS) and one again on 2/27 (KS). After moving south during our heavy snowfalls, the longspurs are back. Large numbers of McCown's have been seen and most unusual, Chestnut-collareds were observed perched on fence lines on 2/13 (PA, KS). Rarely or ever do you see a longspur perched on anything except the ground. The wintering flock of Great-tailed Grackles has not busted up yet and its members gone their paired ways. The flock continues moving mornings and evenings between its southwestern Amarillo roost and its feeding grounds around the stockyards.

The raptor story continued of great interest. The last Bald Eagles reported were two north of Pampa in Gray Co. 3/5 (FE, JE). Of greatest interest and excitement was a Goshawk found near Wheeler, Wheeler Co. on 3/9 (RDA). The bird was flushed in a shelterbolt from a rabbit kill it had made. Reports from other areas indicate there was a southern invasion of this species this winter. Ferruginous Hawks continue in good numbers but most

- PA - Peggy Acord
- FE - Fred Ellston
- JE - Jan Ellston
- VG - Virginia Gill
- RS - Rosemary Scott
- KS - Ken Seyffert
- RDA - Richard DeArment
- WG - Waymon Gill

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

TEXAS PANHANDLE AUDUBON SOCIETY - 1983

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- March 27 (Sunday) - Buffalo Lake NWR - 8:00 A.M.
- April 17 (Sunday) - Palo Duro Canyon SP - 8:00 A.M.
- April 24 (Sunday) - Wheeler County - Lesser Prairie Chickens - Wheeler, TX - 5:30 A.M.
- May 7 (Saturday) - Big Day Count
- May 15 (Sunday) - Palo Duro Club - 8:30 A.M.

SUMMER BREAK

- September 11 (Sunday) - Christian Church Camp - Ceta Glen
- September 24 (Saturday) - Canadian River Breaks
- October 8 (Saturday) - Duncan Ranch - Hutchinson County
- October 23 (Sunday) - Currie Ranch - Randall County
- November 6 (Sunday) - Oldham County
- December 17 - January 1 - Annual Christmas Bird Counts

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This schedule is tentative and subject to change. See details in the monthly Newsletter.