

THE PRAIRIE HORNED LARK
Newsletter of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society

May, 1983

2206 Lipscomb, Amarillo, TX 79109

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MAY MEETING:

The next meeting of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society will be on Monday night, May 16, at 7:30 in the Garden Center. This will be the final meeting until we meet again in September.

The speaker for the meeting will be Mr. Tom Wood, Director of the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge. He is past president of the Fort Worth Audubon Society and a member of the Association of Interpretive Naturalists, Nature Conservancy, and the Wilderness Society. He will present a program on National Wildlife Refuges in the Southwest.

Prior to the meeting there will be a meeting of the Board of Directors at 8 o'clock.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN TRIP:

Those of you who were unable to make the Wheeler trip missed a day of bonuses. It's always nice to be out in the spring, to rejoice in each returning bird, leafing tree and spring flower. But this week-end a bounded in extras.

The weather was perfect - cool early - warming, with a clear sky and light breeze. If you haven't walked across the sandhills at dawn savoring the sights, sounds and fragrances you are missing something wonderful.

We saw at least 100 chickens. The 18% increase in birds on the north pasture of the Britt Ranch was noticeable. We sat in the truck and watched 18 males displaying.

A day spent with Dick DoArment is a bonus in itself. Dick knows Wheeler County and loves the land and everything connected with it. We always get a lift of spirit from Dick as well as a wealth of information and a good laugh.

We met a new friend - that's always a bonus. Wyman Moynor is a young free lance photographer. He had a fantastic morning with the Lesser Prairie Chickens and was glowing. He has had articles and photographs in the recent issues of Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine. We will all watch for his Roadrunner pictures in the upcoming National Geographic bird book.

Last bonus, but certainly not least, was the wonderful brunch served to us by Claudia Britt at the ranch house. She saved the lives of 6 starving birders, for which we thank her.

The next time we head for Wheeler you'd better plan to come; to welcome the returning scissor-tails, to rejoice in the beauty of the prairie chickens, to bounce over the sandhills with our good friend Dick.

.... Peggy Accord....

BIRD NOTES.

As reported in the last Newsletter, several species of birds that normally would have already been reported in the area had not yet arrived. During the last week in March and in early April this began changing.

The first Swainson's Hawk was spotted near Canyon on 3/30 (RR), and on the same date a male Purple Martin in Borger (FC). On 4/9 18 Long-billed Curlew were seen in Armstrong Co. (PA,RR) and on 4/10 the first Vesper Sparrows at Buffalo Lake NWR (KS) and the first Yellow-headed Blackbirds (all males) in Randall Co. (KS). On the same date a female Fyrhuloxia was seen at Buffalo Lake NWR near the same area where males were seen earlier (KS). It was on 4/11 before returning Turkey Vultures were spotted, at both Lake Tanglewood and Amarillo (PA,RR); also at the lake were Rough-winged Swallows and an Osprey (PA). The first Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was in town on 4/13 (RR) and on the next day a Western Kingbird (PA). 4/16 was a good day for birding in Memorial Park Cemetery in Amarillo as two Black-throated Gray Warblers were found along with the first Lark Sparrows of the season (RR); in the Ross' yard there was an early Black-chinned Hummingbird (RR). There was a good movement of Swainson's Hawks on this date; 50+ were observed in one "kettle" between Canyon and the State Park (DA,PA).

The T.P.A.S. field trip to the Palo Duro Canyon SP on 4/17 was a pleasant outing with 34 species of birds found in the park itself. The best bird was a male Wood Duck that everyone got to see from a near distance as it swam on the creek. The first Chipping Sparrows were seen earlier that day (PA,FC), a species normally reported much earlier, and the first Scissor-tailed Flycatcher on the way back from the park (PA). Thirteen White-faced Ibis were in the marsh downstream from the dam at Lake Meredith on 4/16 (WP) and several were found near Pampa (FE,JE). Also near Pampa were the Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, and Semi-palmated Plover (FE, JE), the latter species the only one reported so far this spring. An early Bullock's Oriole was seen in Pampa in mid-April (FE,JE). To add to the increasing number of Wood Ducks being reported in the area were 2 male birds on the Llano Cemetery pond in Amarillo on 4/19 (DD). The first Nashville Warbler was seen in Amarillo on 4/23 (PA).

The eventful day of 4/24 spent on the Britt Ranch near Wheeler in search of the Lesser Prairie Chicken is well reported elsewhere in this Newsletter (PA, VG, WG, KS). Altogether 55 species were observed on the ranch in what proved to be one of the most rewarding and pleasant field trips we have ever had. One could not ask for better looks of "dancing" chickens. The first Wilson's Warbler showed up in Amarillo on 4/30 (KS). 5/1 was a very productive day at Buffalo Lake NWR (PA,KS). The best bird was the Virginia Warbler (2), but quite unusual was the large number of Green-tailed Towhees (12+) and Hermit Warblers (22+). Other firsts were empidonax flycatchers, a Cassin's Kingbird,

House Wren, a Yellowthroat, a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Brown-headed Grosbeak, Cassin's, Clay-colored and Brewer's Sparrows, and an Orchard Oriole (male). On the same date 2 Double-crested Cormorants were seen on the Hollywood Road sewage disposal pond (PA).

On 5/2 the first Forster's Terns were at Lake Tanglewood (FA), and the next day the first Yellow Warbler and a late Harris' Sparrow were seen in town (PA,RR,EW). Good birds were seen in the Palo Duro Club near Canyon on 5/4 (FA,RR,EW): a Snowy Egret, a Carolina Chickadee (unusual for that site), a Catbird, a male Blackpoll Warbler (a species usually seen later in the spring), a male American Redstart, and a female Indigo Bunting. Worthy of note was a juvenile Black-crested Titmouse. The party also reported the first Mississippi Kite and another was seen over town (KS). Most unusual was a flock of 6-8 of the green-backed form of the Lesser Goldfinch in Vega, Oldham County on 5/6 (PA,RS).

The annual Big Day Count for Potter/Randall counties on 5/7 was a windy, gusty, cool day. The tentative total is 126 species, about 20 less than normal, but all parties have not reported as of this writing. The good birds seen were: Osprey, Sora, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Cassin's Kingbird, Bell's Vireo, Black & White Warbler, Virginia's Warbler, Black poll Warbler, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, and Gray-headed Junco (PA,MM,RS,KS,WW). Most unusual, again, were the 12 Green-tailed Towhees!

DA - Don Acord	WG - Waymon Gill
PA - Peggy Acord	MM - Mary Moyer
FC - Fern Cain	WP - Wes Phillips
DD - Dan Deupree	RR - Rena Ross
FE - Frank Elston	RS - Rosemary Scott
JE - Jan Elston	KS - Ken Seyffert
VG - Virginia Gill	EW - Esther Waddill
	WW - Winnie Wester

TEXAS AGGIE, PLEASE RALLY -- THE MACAWS NEED YOUR HELP!

Texas Aggies have a reputation for rallying around and helping one another. Now 3,000 macaws need your help. Texas A&M University, School of Veterinary Medicine is processing permits to import 3,000 macaws from Bolivia for research. Bolivia is not one of the countries which has signed the International Treaty for Endangered Species, so the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has no jurisdiction in the permitting process. All of the permits have cleared the U. S. Department of Agriculture (which should come as no surprise). But it is possible to prevent this unnecessary and heavy harvest of macaws by applying pressure to the President of Texas A&M University.

A number of respected biologists have looked at the A&M proposal and have challenged any claim of necessity or effectiveness. Ostensibly, the research is to study diseases in captive birds. I am told by parrot experts that macaws are not necessary for such research. Any diseases affecting macaws also affect other species of parrots, many of which may be captive bred and researched without significant

impact to the wild populations. While A&M President Frank E. Vandiver, in a recent letter to David Mack of the World Wildlife Fund, claimed that the proposed research would contribute to prevention of diseases in captive birds and thus reduce pressure for replacement birds, Mack has pointed out that the major cause of mortality occurs during capture and holding prior to shipping. In order that A&M receive 3,000 macaws, many more will die.

The A&M project has been protested by National Audubon Society, the International Society for Bird Protection, the New York Zoological Society and TRAFFIC (U.S.A.), a scientific, information-gathering organization monitoring the international wildlife and plant trade for the World Wildlife Fund, not to mention a number of respected ornithologists. It is our understanding that a third party, interested in the importation of these birds, has made A&M a very substantial funding offer if it carries through with the research. It is not difficult to understand the appeal of several hundred thousand dollars at a time when grant money is falling off all across the United States.

Texas A&M President Vandiver must get the message that a lot of people care about the wild populations of macaws in South America and don't support a research project that puts such harsh pressure on populations, especially in countries which are not protecting their endangered species from export. (Incidentally, one of the species A&M is seeking is endangered.) It would be especially useful for Aggie Exxes to write to Vandiver.

Please do what you can to help....and if you know influential Aggies, please enlist their help. Write to:

Dr. Frank E. Vandiver, President
Texas A & M University
College Station, Texas 77843

or phone: (713) 845 2217.

.... Dede Armentrout

MORE BIG DAY COUNT DATA:

From the Kritser Ranch/Lake Meredith areas:

Twenty additional species were tallied by this group, bringing the total for the day to 146 species. Most interesting were the number of unusually late winter residents still in the area: Rough-legged Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Harris', White-throated and Fox Sparrows. A rare spring sighting was the Cattle Egret (3). The group consisted of Fern Cain, Tom Patterson, and Frank Smith

FLASH! FLASH! - LAST FLASH?

The last Big Day report is in from Esther Waddill who covered the Palo Duro Club. Three more species were added to the count bringing the total number of species to 149 - a very good count!