

April, 1986

2206 S. Lipscomb, Amarillo, TX 79109

Vol. XIII, No. 4

PROGRAM FOR APRIL:

April is Conservation Month with the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society and the April 21 meeting will honor one person in the Panhandle for their good conservation practices. In the past we have honored two ranchers and two professional people; so, we invite all members and friends of Audubon to come to help honor this year's recipient, says Tommy Rosson, Conservation Chairman.

Murray Walton, the new Regional Representative of National Audubon, will be the speaker and will bring us up to date on the "Conservation Issues in Texas". Mr. Walton was introduced in the March Newsletter and was recognized as the Professional Conservationist of the Year by the Texas Outdoor Writers Association. He is not new to the Panhandle, but this will be his first visit to our Chapter.

We give our artist members an opportunity to show their work at the meeting; so, if you would like to exhibit some of your work, please notify us when you make your reservation. Tell us the approximate amount of space you will need.

The dinner meeting will be Monday, April 21, at 6:30 p.m. in the Amarillo Garden Center. It will be catered by Sutphens and reservations must be made by April 17 by calling either 372-8934 or 353-2684. The cost of the dinner will be \$4.75. NOTE: There will be a board meeting at 5:30 prior to the meeting.

SCHEDULE OF FIELD TRIPS:

April 19 - Saturday - "The Great Amarillo Bird Chase" - meet at 8:00 a.m. at the McDonald's restaurant on Teckla (near 45th & Teckla).

April 27 - Sunday - Buffalo Lake NWR - meet at entrance at 8:00 a.m.

May 10 - Saturday - Annual "Big Day" count.

THE GREAT SAGE GROUSE SAGA:

North Park in Colorado has a resident Sage Grouse population: EVERY ONE KNOWS THAT: JIM LANE SAYS SO! Sage Grouse are big birds with black bellies and conspicuous white ruffs. The "mature" sage in which they live is only about 8-12 inches high and far from dense. So WHY ARE THEY SO HARD TO FIND, for goodness sake? The Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge near Walden, Colorado has a resident population - the bird list says so. If you drive the gravel road north of Lake John in June and are the first to drive there in the morning, one may cross the road in front of you. - Jim Lane says so. After two or three trips to Arapaho NWR, never a hardship because of the many nice birds and animals there, and a trip up the road past Lake John, we changed our strategy. Hiding the county roads and haunting the refuge proved negative, so we decided to sneak up on the situation. We checked with local game officials and found that in periods of heavy snow ranchers bulldoze snow away from some areas so the cattle can feed. The Sage Grouse take advantage of the situation and are sometimes seen feeding there - as many as over a hundred at a time. Now, this seemed more like it! But if you don't live in the area reaching it can be very difficult. SO, we looked for another solution.

Now, anytime from early March to early May, depending on the year and the snow, the birds gather in groups on leks or courting grounds on a hill top. Now was our chance. After a false start or so we finally converged on the area the first week-end in May, checked in at the motel, and waited for a visit from the local personnel to give us a map. We arose in a decidedly chilly atmosphere, ate a quick breakfast, and started off in the dark to find an obscure road near a defunct town-site. At last, bumping over the pasture, we found the parking area marked off by the State. As we sat there in the dark, straining our eyes to see what we knew were there, we could see white ruffs in all directions, and as it got a little lighter, we could count over 50 large birds - an almost unbelievable sight as they danced. By the time it was good and light these showy birds simply tucked in all their flamboyant showiness and melted away into the stunted sage as if they had never been there.

Now this was a definite victory (I'm sorry you couldn't have seen three grown women changing places in a pick-up cab so each could have a turn at the scope mounted on the window).

....Peggy Acord....(Part 2 of the Sage Grouse Saga will continue).

BIRD NOTES, FIRST REPORTED SIGHTINGS:

- 2/22 - Cinnamon Teal - Randall Co. (KS).
- 3/2 - Burrowing Owl - Randall Co. (KS).
- 3/8 - Eastern Phoebe - Palo Duro Canyon SP (DM).
- 3/9 - American Avocet - Randall Co. (PA,KS).
- Long-billed Curlew - Armstrong Co. (PA,KS).
- Baird's Sandpiper - Armstrong Co. (PA,KS).
- Long-billed Dowitcher - Armstrong Co. (PA,KS).
- 3/11 - Tree Swallow - Randall Co. (DM).
- 3/15 - Vermilion Flycatcher - Wheeler Co. (fide PD).
- 3/22 - Sprague's Pipit - Carson Co. (PR,RS).
- 3/23 - Turkey Vulture - Wheeler Co. (RS, et al.).
- Swainson's Hawk - Carson Co. (PR,RS).
- Willet - Wheeler Co. (FC - early date by 7 days).
- 3/26 - Wilson's Phalarope - Randall Co. (DM).

- 3/27 - Say's Phoebe - Palo Duro Canyon SP (KS).
 - Ash-throated Flycatcher - Palo Duro Canyon SP (KS).
 - Chipping Sparrow - Palo Duro Canyon SP (KS).
 3/30 - Vesper Sparrow - Buffalo Lake NWP (PA,KS).
 4/1 - Wilson's Warbler - Potter Co. (NW).
 4/5 - White Pelican - Elysian Fields (KS).
 - Double-crested Cormorant - Elysian Fields (KS).
 - Yellow-headed Blackbird - Randall Co. (KS).
 4/6 - Lesser Yellowlegs - Briscoe Co. (KS).
 - Common Snipe - Randall Co. (DM)
 Caprock Canyons SP, Briscoe Co. (KS).
 - Cliff Swallow - Caprock Canyons SP (KS).
 - Barn Swallow - Briscoe Co. (KS).
 - Cassins' Sparrow - Caprock Canyons SP (KS).
 - Lark Sparrow - Caprock Canyons SP (KS).

PA - Peggy Acord
 KS - Kenneth Seyffert
 DM - Don Myers

RR - Rena Ross RD - Richard DeArment
 RS - Rosemary Scott NW - Nancy Willingham
 FC - Fern Cain

Evening Grosbeaks continue in plenty in the Palo Duro Canyon SP. The last reported sighting was of seven in Amarillo on 4/2 by Dot Turner. A noteworthy observation was that of a group of 200+ Ring-billed Gulls south of Amarillo moving northward on 3/31 as reported by Rena Ross. The Lesser Prairie Chicken field trip to Wheeler on 3/23 was a great success due to the leadership of Dick DeArment and the gracious hospitality of the Britt's who once again allowed us to view these magnificent birds on their ranch. On the particular lek we visited there must have been 20-30 birds, and the viewers were able to get very close looks of some as they displayed. Fourteen people were in the group, including two from as far away as Beaumont and Houston. The Lesser Prairie Chicken is a species keenly sought by many avid birders across North America and there are those who will travel great distances to see it.

FIRST REPORTED SIGHTINGS OF OUT-OF-RANGE SPECIES IN THE TEXAS PANHANDLE IN THE LAST 50 YEARS (1936-1985):

We thought it might be of interest to our readers to publish a list of the one-hundred most unusual bird sightings in the Texas Panhandle in the last fifty years, who discovered them, where, and on what dates. This information was gleaned from many sources and we must emphasize that it is based on our available data only. You may know of sightings previous to these and if so, we would appreciate hearing from you. A number of these sightings are undocumented (lack of specimen, photograph, or written documentation) but were made by reliable observers and we think stand a more than 50/50 chance of being correct. Such sightings many classifiers would place on a "hypothetical" list:

1. Red-throated Loon - Kenneth Seyffert - 24 November 1977 - Lake Theo, Caprock Canyons SP, Briscoe County.
2. Pacific Loon - Barry and Kevin Zimmer - 19 May 1979 - Buffalo Lake NWP, Randall County.
3. Red-necked Grebe - Harold Saunders and J.D. Thompson, Jr. - 26 September 1954 - Lake McClellan, Gray County.
4. Brown Pelican - Harold Saunders - June 1955 - Hemphill County.
5. Anhinga - Harold Saunders - May 1939 - Deaf Smith County.
6. Tricolored Heron - Kenneth Seyffert - 12 September 1980 - Lake McClellan, Gray County.
7. Cattle Egret - Leo and Ruth Galloway - 21 September 1966 - Amarillo, Potter County.
8. Roseate Spoonbill - Peggy and Donald Acord - 1 September 1958 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
9. Fulvous Whistling-Duck - Richard Gritman - 5 July 1969 - Buffalo Lake NWP, Randall County.
10. Ross' Goose - Leo Galloway and Kenneth Seyffert - 28 December 1966 - Buffalo Lake NWP, Randall County.
11. Brant - Don Krebiel - 10 March 1969 - near Hereford, Deaf Smith County.
12. Black Duck - Gene Howe - 1943 - near Canadian, Hemphill County.
13. Garganey - Fern Cain - 22 November 1985 - Lake Meredith, Hutchinson County.
14. Eurasian Wigeon - Barbara Lund - 18 January 1972 - Lake Meredith, Hutchinson County.
15. Greater Scaup - Arthur Hawkins - winter 1944/45 - unnamed location in Panhandle.

Jdsquaw - Peggy Acord, Joe Browder, L. E. Moyer - 12 January 1958 - Thompson Park Lake, Amarillo, Potter County.

17. Black Scoter - Harold Saunders - December 1939 - Deaf Smith County.
18. Surf Scoter - Lloyd Triplet - 19 November 1943 - Fryer Lake, Ochiltree County.
19. White-winged Scoter - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - 26 January 1963 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
20. Barrow's Goldeneye - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - 22 December 1962 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
21. Black Vulture - Peggy Acord, Doyle and Maxinne Foreman, Mary Moyer - 5 October 1958, Canadian River "breaks", Potter County.
22. Harris' Hawk - J. O. Stevenson - 30 September 1937 - Palo Duro Canyon SP, Randall County.
23. Red-shouldered Hawk - Kathryn Whipple - 27 May 1965 - Amarillo.
24. Crested Caracara - J. Knight - 19 April 1953 - near Amarillo.
25. Black Rail - Richard Bryant - 1 July 1979 - Jim's Lake, Hutchinson County.
26. Purple Gallinule - Peggy Acord - 5 July 1963 - Lake Tanglewood, Randall County.
27. Whooping Crane - D. L. Pratt - 9 November 1965 - Carson County.
28. Piping Plover - Fern Cain - 11 May 1975 - Lake Meredith, Potter County.
29. Whimbrel - Kenneth Seyffert - 18 May 1965 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
30. Hudsonian Godwit - Arthur Hawkins - 6 May 1945 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
31. Ruddy Turnstone - Leo Galloway and H. P. Langridge - 1 August 1964 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
32. Red Knot - Peggy Acord and Thelma Fox - 5 September 1966 - near Amarillo, Randall County.
33. Dunlin - Carroll Littlefield - 12 May 1961 - Parmer County.
34. Buff-breasted Sandpiper - Carroll Littlefield - 31 August 1963 - near Friona, Parmer County.
35. Short-billed Dowitcher - Kenneth Seyffert - 4 September 1972 - Elysian Fields, Randall County.
36. American Woodcock - Joyce Oelze - 14 November 1983 - Amarillo, Randall County.
37. Parasitic Jaeger - Kenneth Seyffert - 1⁴ September 1969 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
38. Laughing Gull - Carroll Littlefield - late May 1963 - near Friona, Parmer County.
39. Thayer's Gull - Leo Galloway - 26 February 1967 - near Amarillo, Randall County.
40. Western Gull - Peggy Acord and Thelma Fox - 28 December 1967 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
41. Glaucous Gull - Peggy Acord - 10 March 1957 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
42. Black-legged Kittiwake - Peggy Acord, Marie Mayfield, Rena Ross - 28 November 1967 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
43. Sabine's Gull - Kenneth Seyffert - 12 October 1969 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
44. Caspian Tern - Kenneth Seyffert - 31 May 1964 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
45. Band-tailed Pigeon - Richard DeArment and A.S. Jackson - 13 July 1954 - near Lake Marvin, Hemphill County.
46. White-winged Dove - J. D. Thompson, Jr. - 2 June 1956 - Amarillo.
47. Inca Dove - Doyle and Maxinne Foreman - 12 October 1954 - Vigo Park, Swisher County.
48. Common Ground Dove - Paul Ferguson - 15 May 1974 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
49. Chuck-will's-widow - Kenneth Seyffert - 12 May 1970 - Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County.
50. Whip-poor-will - Peggy Acord and Rosemary Scott - 23 September 1978 - Duncan Ranch, Hutchinson County.

NOTE - The other fifty will follow in the next Newsletter.