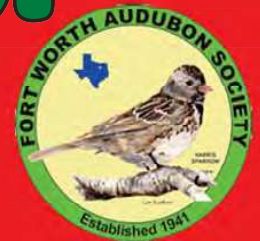




Southwestern Flyer

NEWSLETTER OF THE FORT WORTH AUDUBON SOCIETY



D E C E M B E R 2 0 1 5

Check out the FWAS
Website at www.fwas.org
for a full color online version of the
Southwestern Flyer.

GENERAL MEETINGS

The second Thursday
of each month
(except June, July, August)

Birding ID Workshop
at 6:45 PM

Regular Meeting
at 7:30 PM

FIELD TRIPS

Many birding field trips are
offered each year. We welcome
members and non-members, beginner
to advanced birders.

MISSION and MEMBERSHIP

We encourage you to join us in our
efforts to promote awareness,
appreciation and understanding of birds
and other wildlife while preserving and
protecting their natural habitat.

Yearly Chapter-Only Memberships
are \$20 for one person
and \$30 for a family.

More details inside

Gail Morris and

Glenda Keilstrup, Co-Editors

Photo credits as listed

The History of our Christmas Bird Count

by Jim Jones

For 56 years, Fort Worth Audubon Society members have taken part in the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), one of the longest running citizen science programs in the U.S. The nation's first CBC was held in December, 1900. Frank Chapman, ornithologist and founder of Bird-Lore (which became Audubon Magazine) introduced the idea with hopes that hunting enthusiasts would willingly 'count birds' instead of shooting them at their annual Christmas Day game hunts. In that first year, 27 folks took part in 25 individual bird counts. Since that first year, CBC participation has grown to include over 71,000 participants at 2,369 locations around the world!

The primary goal of the CBC is to provide a census of birds and species inside a count area. Rules have been set forth that all local CBC organizers must follow: a 'count circle' with a diameter of 15 miles is mapped out; the count is held on one day between the dates of December 15 and January 5; at least 10 volunteers must take part in a designated circle. Once a circle is established its 'center' is never moved. GPS coordinates are used to identify each count circle.

FWAS held the first Fort Worth CBC on December 27, 1958. The center of the circle is located northwest of downtown in White Settlement, specifically near the intersection of Clifford St. and Comal Ave. Choosing this location created a circle which allows us to look for birds on the south shore of Eagle Mountain Lake, the north shore of Lake Benbrook, the grassland prairie on ranches near the Parker county line, and the many city parks in downtown Fort Worth.

I was recently asked to digitize the Fort Worth CBC and the data from the Spring Bird Count (SBC). The SBC was started in 1967 and is held around the first week of May. The SBC data was kept locally but now with the advent of eBird, FWAS Board felt we should submit the SBC data for historical tracking. After we review my spreadsheet, FWAS will share the data with interested parties.



Continued on page 6

2015 Membership Drive

Join our efforts by signing up for your 2015 FWAS Chapter-Only Memberships.

Chapter dues help support the Audubon Adventures program, environmental projects, habitat preservation, scholarships for students, and other educational areas.

Memberships are \$20 for one person and \$30 for a family. They are for the 2015 calendar year.

You are able to pay online at fwas.org without having to mail in a form; however, you may still mail in your dues if you prefer.

Mail membership dues to
Cindy Compton
FWAS Membership Chair
2101 W. Lotus Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76111

Club News and Events Oct General Meeting

Thursday, Dec. 10, 2015
Bird Games Bonanza

Birding ID Session
Galapagos Islands Birds
Diane and Jerry Turner
6:45 PM

General Meeting - 7:30 PM

When:

The Fort Worth Audubon Society meets on the second Thursday of each month, September through May. All meetings are free and open to the public.

Where:

UNT Health Science Center, 3500 Camp Bowie Blvd., Room 114 (down the hall from our previous years' room - on the lower floor of Everett Hall, Medical Education Building 2)

Easiest entrance is from parking lots A or C off Clifton Street. Doors are on west end of building, lowest level, down the stairs

Dec. 10th Program

BIRD BINGO BONANZA

First up, a birding ID session south of the border style! Diane and Jerry Turner will discuss their recent tour of the Galapagos Islands and additional birdwatching in the highlands of Ecuador. As part of the program on December 10, they'll share their impressions of the various island birds and other wildlife, including Blue-footed and Nazca boobies, Waved Albatross, Swallow-tailed Gulls, Red-billed Tropicbirds, Penguins, Flamingos, flightless Cormorants, and, of course, the Darwin finches. Other wildlife will include marine and land Iguanas and the famous Galapagos tortoises. Notable birds in the highlands will include the Cock of the Rock among other beautiful tropical species.

We'll finish off the evening with rousing rounds of Bird Bingo, Birding Hangman, and Trivia. Prizes include gift cards, books, jewelry, bird accessories, bird feeding things and gifts. Merry Christmas to you or maybe you will win something for someone on your list!

Upcoming Programs for the General Meeting in the 2015-2016 Season

January 14, 2016 -WIND ENERGY, BIRDS AND BATS

Presented by Dr. Amanda Hale, associate professor at TCU and ecologist with interests in behavioral ecology, evolutionary biology, genetics, and conservation.

She will share her latest research that focuses on the indirect and direct effects of wind turbines on birds and bats. In partnership with NextEra Energy resources, they've worked at Wolf Ride Wind, a utility-scale wind farm located in north-central Texas since 2009. With colleague Dr. Victoria (Tory) Bennett in the School of Geology, Energy and the Environment at TCU, they have been testing strategies to reduce bat mortality at wind turbines and are investigating several hypotheses to explain why bats may be attracted to wind turbines.

No Meeting on Thursday March 10th.

Meet Saturday March 19th instead.

- **February** – Black Rails with Jeff Tibbits, Biologist at University at Central Oklahoma
- **March** - Special Joint Saturday (March 19, 2016) 10 a.m-1 p.m Meeting with Audubon Dallas and Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society celebrating Fort Worth Audubon's 75th Birthday! Warbler ID: Visual and Vocal with Scott Whittle and Tom Stephenson, authors of *The Warbler Guide*
- **April** – Texas' Big Thicket with Glenn Olsen with GO Ecotours
- **May** - Annual Member Slide Show

Please join the Fort Worth Audubon Society (FWAS) on field trips to local destinations, birding hotspots adjacent to the Metroplex and out-of-town trips both in state and out of state. Membership to FWAS is not required to attend the field trips but is encouraged. FWAS Chapter-Only members will get first priority on all trips when a limit on participation has been set. More information can be found on our Website at www.fwas.org. For all trips please be prepared for current weather conditions. Always bring water and snacks and lunch on the trips that last 3/4 - full day as lunch is usually in the field. Additional suggested items: sun protection, insect repellent, hat, sturdy shoes. Please note that some trips require an RSVP.

FIELD TRIPS



Recurring Field Trips

Birding at the Beds - Village Creek Drying Beds (VCDB)

Beginning with October 14th, the monthly walk will return to an 8:30 a.m. start.

Where: Meet in the parking lot of the Dunlop Sports Center on the south side of Green Oaks Blvd. between Davis Dr. and Fielder Rd. in Arlington, across from the entrance to Village Creek Drying Beds.

When: Recurring the 2nd Wednesday of every month

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. September - May

Leader: Jim Sipiora

Description: After meeting in the Dunlop Sports Center parking lot** we will walk across the street to the drying beds. This field trip will be great for beginning birders to observe and document what birds are visiting the beds during each season. Birding will be done by foot, but it will be easy walking. Please be prepared for the current weather conditions. Potential hazards include mud, fallen trees, mosquitoes, and poison ivy.

Next three Birding at the Beds will be on Dec. 9, Jan. 13, Feb. 10.

Birding in the Park (Jean Ferguson's Park Walk) Fort Worth

First Saturday of each month September – April

Where: Foster Park on Trail Lake Drive @ South Dr. 1 mile north of I-20 in Fort Worth

When: The first Saturday of every month (September - April) 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM

Leader: Jean Ferguson

Description: This is a great field trip for beginner birders. Binoculars will be available if needed. Easy walking. Please come prepared for current weather conditions.

Jean Ferguson's next two walks will be Dec. 5, Jan. 2, Feb. 6

For both trips:

Make sure all valuables in your vehicle are placed out of sight PRIOR to arriving at the parking lot. Water is always good to have with you, and possibly insect repellent and sunscreen depending on conditions.

SAVE THE DATES!

FWAS Annual Christmas Bird Count December 19, 2015

Village Creek Drying Bed Annual Christmas Bird Count December 26, 2015

ECUADOR CLOUD FOREST

July 28-Aug 5, 2016

Stay at three lodges on private reserves each with its own unique set of birds as we travel from 8000 to 4000 feet in elevation. We will have a local bilingual birding guide. Visit an active Andean Cock of the Rock lek. Total bird species recorded in the area is 405 which includes 40 species of hummingbirds and 56 tanagers. Experience weather unlike DFW in summer-cool, cloudy, damp, and possibly rainy. Expect rustic accommodations and lots of walking—you won't even see a car for 4 days. Trails can be steep and muddy. Estimated cost from Quito, Ecuador \$1700. For more information please contact Jim Sipiora [817-860-5984](tel:817-860-5984) or email at sipiora.1@netzero.net



The President's Pen *by Michael Francis*

We Make a Difference for the Birds

I recently attended a meeting of the board of the national Audubon Society in Dallas. This meeting included not only the leaders of our national organization, but also of the Texas Audubon Society and other local chapters from around the state of Texas such as El Paso, Bexar County (San Antonio), Travis County (Austin), Prairies and Timbers (McKinney), and Houston. This meeting was very uplifting in that presentations from the various organizations helped me learn first-hand how our national, state, and local entities were implementing programs that advance conservation, strategies they use for public outreach, and most important, education.

National and Texas Audubon, of course, have great resources, paid staffs, and are very politically active. Houston Audubon has a paid staff and works on lots of projects like land acquisition since they have major corporate donors in the big oil and chemical companies that surround the area they serve. Most local chapters, like FWAS, have more limited resources and depend on all-volunteer staff. No matter what the resources, it became clearer to me how each of us is committed to doing what we can with what we have available.

Success stories abound. For instance, El Paso has successfully devoted much time and effort working with civic authorities to making sure a wetlands area (Rio Bosque Wetlands Park) stays viable, providing habitat for birds and other species while providing a nature area for all to enjoy in the middle of a desert. A real win came in 2013 when the local water board unanimously voted to design and build a pipeline from the wastewater treatment plant to the park, ensuring a stable water supply.

We also heard from Bexar County, who continues to support and help manage the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center. Like an older version of the Trinity Audubon Center in Dallas (which was built on the site of an illegal dump site), Mitchell Lake was a sewage dump until 1987. Now it's a magnet for birds and people, as well as a wonderful place for the many children's education programs put on there.

Most recently, Travis County started an initiative we announced on the FWAS Website to marshal a public campaign to keep the Golden-cheeked Warbler from being removed from the Endangered Species List. This is important to help preserve limited habitat that would otherwise be developed out of existence in the fast growing areas between Austin and San Antonio, including the Hill Country itself.

David Yarnold, President and CEO of the National Audubon Society, gave a talk that highlighted one of our biggest success stories of the year, and one that we can all give ourselves a pat on the back for. Some of you might remember a posting we put on the FWAS Website and our Facebook page regarding a bill that passed in the U. S. House of Representatives in early June which contained a provision to de-fund all efforts to enforce the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Had this gone further and been passed by the U. S. Senate, it would have effectively taken away one of the most effective tools we have in this country to protect our bird species. National Audubon swung into action, and got a tip that the Congressional Representative from Oklahoma who had introduced that provision might have been prompted to do so by a lobbyist for Duke Energy. This made sense because Duke Energy had previously been given the largest fine ever levied against any person or entity for MBTA violations. Before long, investigative reporting and Audubon sources obtained the very E-mail correspondence that linked Duke Energy lobbyists with Congressional members, and a writing and E-mail campaign was started to bring pressure to make sure funding would continue for the MTBA. From people like your selves all over the country, that pressure came on Congress members to such an extent that within a few short weeks the offending provision was removed from further legislative efforts and the MBTA was saved.

We are only as good as our volunteers

If you are reading this, it tells me that you love and support FWAS, which is what motivates me and the rest of our Board of Directors to keep our organization a viable part of the community. Due to the generous support of corporate but largely private donations, we've been fortunate to not have to beg too much for money, though we always find good uses for what we receive. Our overhead is very low and we spend all we can on education first, then conservation second.

What we often lack, however, are the human resources that would allow us to do so much more. From the positions of our Field Trip Chair that needs to be filled, to a Christmas Bird Count Coordinator for the River Legacy/Village Creek area we need, to a wish list that includes re-establishing the board position of Volunteer Coordinator, as well as having additional hospitality members on hand who can call upon to be greeters and keepers of our name tags at our general meetings and special events. In fact, we may have as many as three special events next year that the extra help will come in handy.

We know many of you lead very busy lives and would rather be out birding or some other activity in your spare time. Just know that our board is very supportive of each other and make ourselves just as available to volunteers. We train and can work to customize duties and responsibilities, and will always be flexible.

You can E-mail me at take5bider@charter.net or call me at 817-965-7284. Please let me hear from you!

FWAS May 2016 NM Field Trip

Saturday, 5/14/2016 – Thursday, 5/19/2016

Come experience birdwatching in New Mexico's premier birding locations at the height of western migration and enjoy a three-night's stay at the fabulous Bear Mountain Guest Lodge resort. The Bear Mountain lodge is located in Silver City New Mexico in the southwestern part of the state, which encompasses the Gila River region that extends into Southeastern Arizona. This part of New Mexico shares much the same eco system, including bird species, as the more famous birding locations in SE Arizona, but has not been as well marketed to nature lovers. I'd like to try to share my love and experiences of these areas by having this field trip.

We'll start out by flying into El Paso the morning of the 14th, then driving from there to the famous Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), also known as "the jewel of the national wildlife system." We'll stay the next two nights in Socorro New Mexico, a great home base for birding excursions, including local migrant traps, and it works well for trying to cover the NWR itself. Monday afternoon will be spent driving to Silver City, with stops at campgrounds for great birds along the way. I hope to get to the lodge before dark so you can experience what a beautiful place it is, and you can walk the grounds looking for nesting Montezuma Quail. Other western species such as Virginia's Warbler also nest there. Tuesday and Wednesday will be spent traveling to all the SW New Mexico birding hot spots, with time to get some good meals in the evening at the fabulous restaurants in the Silver City area. Depending on flight times we pick to return home on Thursday, we can bird a bit more before leaving the lodge that morning since it only takes two and a half hours to get to the El Paso airport from there.

I'm not kidding when I say how great dining can be in Silver City, though it's not a place you'd normally hear about. Speaking of great meals, the breakfast (included in the room charge) at the lodge is fantastic, and they can provide a box lunch for a fee if you like. Some of you might even be tempted to stay on the grounds of the lodge instead of going out birding during the day. It really is a great place to hang out and relax at, and I would not surprise me if many of you went back sometime for just that reason. Did I happen to mention that the lodge keeps a great big cookie jar with huge homemade cookies around for guests, and that they'll make tea and coffee during the day for you if you like?

I hope to make this a pleasant, somewhat leisurely experience for all to enjoy. I've already reserved 7 guest rooms (6 inside and one cabin just outside the lodge), so we can handle up to 14 participants total for this excursion, based upon having two people per room. Rooms at the lodge run approximately \$180 a night, but you can't beat the amenities or the scenery. Check out <http://www.bearmountainlodge.com/> for more information.

What follows is a sample of the great birds we can encounter on our journey, and none of these is extremely rare: Ring-necked Pheasant; Gambel's, Scaled and Montezuma Quail; Western and Clarke's Grebes; Northern Goshawk; American Black Hawk; breeding-plumage American Avocets; Band-tailed Pigeon; Lesser Nighthawk; Broad-tailed Hummingbird; Acorn Woodpecker; Greater Pewee; Cordilleran and Gray Flycatchers; Black and Say's Phoebe; Cassin's Kingbird; Plumbeous and Hutton's Vireos; Western Scrub-Jay; Mexican, Steller's and Pinyon Jays; Chihuahuan and Common Ravens; Violet Green Swallow; Mountain Chickadee; Juniper and Bridled Titmouse; Pygmy Nuthatch; Black-tailed Gnatcatcher; Western Bluebird; Crissal and Curve-Billed Thrashers; Olive, Virginia's, Lucy's, Black-throated Gray, Grace's, MacGillivray's and Red-faced Warblers; Hepatic Tanager; Cassin's, Black-throated and Black-chinned Sparrows; Pyrrhuloxia; Bullock's and Scott's Orioles.

For those of you who'd like to get a primer on just how great birding in SW New Mexico can be, check out the birding trail maps on the following Website: <http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/recreation/birding/>

All those interested please E-mail me at take5birder@charter.net or call me on my cell at 817-965-7284. I'll expect a \$60.00 per person deposit which will be refundable, but you can wait for more information from me before sending and I'll give you my address to send it to when you are ready. Also, we'll need at least one other person to drive a van that I'll reserve at the El Paso airport. I can only drive one vehicle at a time and I like to use those 7 passenger mini-vans on trips like this. As such, I would also encourage those who'd like to drive out west in their own vehicles (or rent their own) to meet up with us in El Paso or somewhere else along the way. Many of my trips have had participants do this, and the caravanning has worked out well.

SAVE YOUR STAMPS FOR ALBATROSSES!

By Thomas Haase

Help us stamp out albatross deaths by giving us your used postage stamps - stamps can be converted to cash. In 2014/15 used stamps helped the Royal Society for the protection of Birds (RSPB) raise £15,000 (\$23,000) Please help me and the RSPB raise even more money this year.



Each year up to 10,000 albatrosses drown because of being caught on the billion baited hooks used by long-line fishing boats in the southern oceans. Long-line fishing is having a devastating impact on albatross populations across the world - 21 out of 23 species of albatross are threatened with extinction. The RSPB and Birdlife International have set up Operation Ocean Task Force to train people to work with fishermen at sea. They show crews simple ways to avoid catching albatrosses on their fishing lines. This work can make a huge difference, but it is expensive. For example, £50 (\$76) will buy a tori-line (bird scaring device) for one long-line fishing vessel. A streamer line (also called a tori or bird scaring line) is a line with streamers that is towed when fishing.

Not many people will be fortunate enough to see an albatross, but everyone can take a role in trying to help these magnificent ocean wanderers. If everyone could be encouraged to send in their stamps to the appeal, these birds would have a brighter future.

Stamp Collecting is still a popular hobby in many countries. The RSPB sells the stamps to dealers and to an auction house and money can be raised from ALL types of stamps - You can help us to raise money for the Albatross Appeal by sending us the used stamps from YOUR mail. Please cut/tear the stamps from the envelope, leaving approximately ½ inch or more of paper around the stamp.

Please bring your stamps to the next Fort Worth Audubon meeting

Christmas Bird Count History - continued from page 1

After I filtered and sorted the data, I discovered several interesting bits...

1. 23 volunteers took part in the first 1958 CBC and counted 5,717 birds and 80 species.
2. The highest species count was observed on 12/16/2000. 62 volunteers counted 152 species.
3. The highest individual bird count was in 1984. Over 600,000 birds were counted. Several other count-years also had incredibly high totals due to large flocks of black bird species. Volunteers counted over 500,000 black birds in 1984, and the other high-count years also had 6-digit numbers of black birds.
4. The count data revealed new species movement for North Texas. House Finches were first reported in 1991; White-winged Dove arrived in 1998; and Eurasian-collared Dove in 2002. The SBC count data also shows that Black-bellied Whistling-Duck were first reported in 1981. I also noted the decline of several species such as Inca Dove, Northern Bobwhite, Whip-poor-will, Wild Turkey and Black Vulture. These declines are due to loss of habitat and also stress such as the Inca Dove being bullied by the larger White-winged Dove.

The Forum of www.fwas.org presents the list of area leaders and general information on terrain, times and distances covered within each area. Please contact Chuck Baskin, our CBC Compiler, or one of the area leaders for details. I encourage all of our members to take part. Some of our teams need additional sets of 'eyes' more than we need experts. It may sound intimidating but most of our leaders will also take the time to explain their identification of a species.



BIG YEAR ADVENTURE BEGINS JANUARY 1st

FWAS is hosting a BIG YEAR! What's a Big Year? It's when something inside of you snaps and you decide to try to find as many bird species a year within a designated area.

To celebrate FWAS' 75th anniversary year, we want everyone to tally your species in Tarrant County during 2016.

To participate: Register with Ann Hoover at ahoov@sbcglobal.net or call at [817-798-6888](tel:817-798-6888). Even if you don't start until after January 1, it's never too late to register. After all, Neal Hayward (current holder of US big year record) decided to try a 2013 big year but didn't start until late January.

The start: Breakfast for all participants at IHOP (8640 West Freeway in Fort Worth at Eastchase Blvd) at 4:30 am on January 1, 2016. Breakfast is covered by FWAS.

Who: Free and open to all ages with a category for adults (ages 16 and over) and a category for young birders (15 and under).

The Rules:

- Bird species recorded must be seen or heard between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016.
- Each species recorded must be inside the Tarrant County border only.
- Each species counted by the participant must have been encountered in accordance with the ABA Recording Rules (see <http://listing.aba.org/aba-recording-rules/>) current at the time the species was encountered. • Each species counted must have been on the ABA Checklist (see <http://listing.aba.org/aba-checklist/>) – if it's already on the Tarrant County Checklist, it's countable.
- Please register with Ann Hoover via E-mail (ahoov@sbcglobal.net).
- Record species and checklists via eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>) as eBird will ask for verification/details during submission process for rare species and species not normally recorded during a particular time period. Species not entered on eBird cannot be counted. Birders who lack access to a computer will need to find some means of having their records entered (local library, family, friend, fellow FWAS member, etc.).
- After you log your species/checklists to eBird, share all lists with fwasbigyear@gmail.com. Participants also must type their name in checklist comments, so when the checklists are downloaded, they will be associated with each bird on our spreadsheet-this helps with our tracking.
- While we recommend you input your records weekly, we definitely need your records updated monthly since we'll be sharing everyone's progress with FWAS membership on a monthly basis.
- While in the field counting birds, pishing or whistling to attract a bird is acceptable. However, using recordings or any other artificial means of attraction is **NOT** acceptable.
- Listing of species that are rare, accidental, or out of season will be challenged by the eBird reviewer for Tarrant County (Steve Glover). So photo, audio and/or video documentation is crucial to prove such sightings.

The goal of this contest is to track who can see or hear the most bird species in 2016 within Tarrant County. Please contact a Board member if you need clarification, advice, or technical assistance.

FWAS Community Civic Grant Program Application for 2015-2016 Now Available

FWAS has posted the 2015-2016 FWAS Community Civic Grant application on its website. See the link on the FWAS home page <http://www.fwas.org/> for the application and details. This \$400 grant opportunity is for Tarrant, Denton, Parker or Johnson county organizations involved with birding or bird habitat conservation projects. The deadline for receipt of applications is Feb 15, 2016. FWAS was able to fund Community Civic grants through the donations obtained during the North Texas Giving Day campaign.