



## President's Message



Byron "Doc" Stone,  
TOS President

Hello TOS Members,

I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself to those of you who may not know me well, and share some ideas with you about what we might do in TOS over the next two years.

I am a lifelong Texas resident and grew up in Austin. I have had a keen interest in nature since earliest childhood. I recall catching horny toads in

my yard when I was a kid, keeping them in a cardboard box. I started fishing with my grandfather when I was about 4 years old and I still get enthusiastic about fishing if there is a bite on. My mother graduated with a degree in biology from Texas Tech, and she eagerly shared her interest in nature with all children, including my brothers and me. She knew most of the prominent birders in Austin back then, including Fred and Marie Webster and Edgar Kincaid. She introduced me to birding, and I recall her pointing out a Vermilion Flycatcher to me in west Austin when I was about 13 years old, but I didn't really get the birding bug until a few years later, when I realized that birding gave me some of the same thrill as hunting, except that I didn't have to kill, clean or gut the "catch." Plus, it was mostly free, after the cost of binoculars, field guides and gas. I took Fred Webster's non-credit "Introduction to Birding" class at UT during my freshman or sophomore year, and then I caught the bug.

During the college winter break of December 1975 to January 1976, a story circulated on AM Radio stations in Austin about a huge prehistoric-looking bird that had been spotted by and frightened one or more people in the lower Rio Grande Valley. One of the local radio stations offered a cash reward to anyone who could capture "Big Bird." I figured that someone's imagination must have gotten carried away on the wings of too much tequila, but one of my housemates became convinced that he and I could drive down to the valley and capture Big Bird and collect the cash reward. He asked my opinion and I said that if there was a Big Bird in the valley, it would almost certainly be hanging out in a refuge like Santa Ana. So we agreed to split the gas and drove his car down for the first of many trips to the valley. On my first morning at Santa Ana NWR, a friendly, more experienced birder allowed me to accompany him and his wife on a walk around Willow Lake, which was very wet and full of ducks that winter. He helped me identify the bewildering variety of ducks, and pointed out the difference between the Masked Ducks (I believe there were two at Santa Ana that winter) and the nearby basic-plumage Ruddy Ducks. Oh, what a trip that was! We never got a chance to lasso Big Bird, but I came home with about 40 lifers, including Masked Duck and the pair of Hook-

billed Kites that had recently appeared for only the second time ever in Texas or the US. I was definitely hooked then.

In 1977, I moved to Houston for medical school, and didn't have much time for birding for most of the next 3 years. Late in my third year, however, I met a surgery resident who was an avid birder and who suggested that I join the OG (Ornithology Group), the birding "wing," if you will, of the Outdoor Nature Club of Houston. That was really helpful. I joined up, got their newsletter and their very handy birding map of the upper Texas coast, and was able to go on several outings, including a field trip to Attwater's Prairie Chicken NWR led by Ben Feltner. I met Tony Galucci then, as he was almost always banding small passerines at Mrs. Johnson's place on Bolivar Peninsula when I would check there for spring migrants. I also got to know Victor Emanuel during those last couple of years in Houston, as he would often approach me in the field to ask what I had seen and to share helpful birding information with me. My last spring in Houston was filled with birding activity, including multiple trips to Anahuac NWR to ride the swamp buggy looking for rails, a couple of spectacular days at High Island in late April, and my lifer Henslow's Sparrow while volunteering to help young Dr. Keith Arnold mist-net and band the birds in a relict, vanishing breeding population at the Santa Fe Railroad yard.

I married and moved to San Antonio in the summer of 1981. San Antonio, at the junction of the blackland prairie, the Edwards Plateau, and the south Texas brush country, was great for birding. It was not far from the coast, and not far from the valley, and it had quite a few good, publicly-accessible birding spots like Judson Nature Trails for spring migrants, Friedrich Park for hill country breeders, and Mitchell Lake for shorebirds and waterfowl. And there were lots of friendly birders and an outing-oriented birding group in San Antonio Audubon Society. I met and went birding with lots of good birders there including Georgina Schwartz, Steve Hawkins, Willie Sekula and the late Steve Hanselmann.

In 1987, I moved back to Austin to be closer to my family of origin and to start my practice in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

It took awhile for me to get back into birding, as I was preoccupied with work and fatherhood. Then for a time in the 90's and early 2000's, it seemed as though I did more birding out of state during vacations or work-related travel than I did in Texas. Finally, though, I realized that I needed to do more local birding. I recalled how helpful it had been for me to participate in the Christmas Bird Count after moving to San Antonio, as it allowed me to meet local birders and learn about local birding spots, so I called Tom McCuller, I believe, to volunteer for the Austin CBC. He paired me with the late Jack Sunder, and Jack's long-time birding pal E.B. Ellis, and we birded that area of the Austin CBC together until Jack became too infirm to do it any more a couple of years before he died.

Several things happened about 2002 that changed my birding somewhat. I started birding with my now good friend

*Continued on page 2*

Tim Fennell, and he introduced me to digiscoping. And for reasons I don't fully comprehend, Shelia Hargis ( your new TOS President-Elect), on behalf of the Travis Audubon Society Education Committee, asked me if I would like to teach the sparrow class for Travis Audubon. It was a happy coincidence, as I had a long-standing (though never publicly-avowed) interest in sparrows; and digiscoping offered me a relatively inexpensive way to develop a collection of study slides. I said "yes," to Shelia and the Education Committee, and the rest, as they say, is history. I have taught the Sparrow ID class every year but one since then.

Another development for me in the early 2000's was that I made a deliberate decision to try to make my birding more meaningful. Birding, fishing, hiking and other outdoor activities had always been enjoyable for me, and had provided a way for me to connect with a higher power. But it sometimes seemed that listing, a part of birding that I still very much enjoy, was a bit too self-absorbed, especially if it only amounted to making a personal list of birds seen on any given trip, day, etc. Other birders may not experience it that way, but I wondered if perhaps I could find a way to turn my birding and bird-listing into an activity that could have more than just personal relevance. Teaching the sparrow class was one way to do that, but I began to look for other outlets and contacted my friend Chuck Sexton, who was then the chief biologist at Balcones Canyonlands NWR, and got involved with education and public outreach activities at the refuge, which is not far from my home. I participated in another CBC, the Balcones Canyonlands CBC, this time with Chuck, and noted how much of the refuge provided outstanding habitat for native sparrows, and the idea of SparrowFest was born. Eventually I taught other classes for Travis Audubon, including gulls, then shorebirds, then a raptor identification class last fall. Participating in eBird is another natural extension of this desire for my own birding to have more than just personal relevance.

I still enjoy birding by myself or with a good birding friend, with no class or group of participants to worry about, but I find that leading field trips and teaching classes and workshops have enhanced my enjoyment and understanding of birds and birding. And, judging by the willingness of many of the state's top birders to lead field trips for TOS, I must not be the only one who feels that way.

I came to TOS relatively late, and I'm not really sure why. The first TOS meeting that I recall attending with certainty was the Port Lavaca meeting in April of 2003. And I'm not sure exactly why or how I signed up for that meeting, although it seems like maybe Brush Freeman had something to do with it. In any event, it was a fun meeting, with field trips to Magic Ridge and to Calhoun County rice fields for shorebirds, and the following year I found myself leading a field trip to the Granger area for the TOS meeting in Austin in October 2004. After that I started attending and leading field trips at TOS meetings pretty regularly.

I think TOS is a fine organization populated by a fine bunch of folks. I think the sanctuaries are great and one of our most important tasks is to maintain them properly. I think the meetings are great and I am not inclined to change them in any significant way. I think our meetings offer a wonderful opportunity twice a year to connect with birders and birding locations all across the state. We live in one of the greatest birding states in the country,

and we have an almost endless list of potential birding locales to choose from. I do wonder, though, whether the meetings can grow if TOS continues to grow. Planning these meetings is already pretty complicated, and it is hard to imagine what a task it would be if the membership were much larger. I wonder if it is time for the board to consider hiring a professional meeting planner for assistance, as that might help take some pressure off the president and other officers and allow them to focus on other organizational concerns and planning.

And speaking of organizational planning, I think the board needs to take a look at the bylaws and bring them up to date. This is a task which I hope to get under way this summer.

I would like to see a way to get more young birders more involved with TOS. There are some logistical problems involved, and it might even explain why I did not get involved with TOS earlier in my birding career. It is harder for young birders (whom I define as under 30 years of age) to take time off from high school and college, especially for our spring meetings, which typically occur before college final exams or the summer break. And it is probably harder for them to take time off from work, as it represents more of a financial hardship, and they may have less control over their work hours. I have spoken with a number of young birders about obstacles to attending TOS meetings, and recurrent concerns are the cost of travel and lodging and the inability to take time off during or just before final exams.

There is not much we can do about the timing of spring migration and final exams, but I wonder if there might be some way to mitigate the expense of travel, perhaps by arranging for volunteer hosts to lodge young TOS members attending a meeting?

I think TOS publications are wonderful and our publisher, Jack Eitnear, is doing a great job. I hope we can keep them both going. We have an updated web page, but I wonder if we might do even more with our website, connecting more of the images curated by Jim Peterson in the Texas Bird Image Archive. And my positive experience with the online registration for our meeting in Winnie this May has me wondering how best to integrate such registrations with the membership database.

I think TOS is great, but it may need to change some to adapt to changes in birders and birding.

I know there are more birds in our future, but we must also face the fact that bird populations have been plummeting for decades. Ornithologist Peter English asserted during his presentation for the April 2015 Travis Audubon Society meeting that research indicates that bird populations in North America have declined by 50% since the late 1970's. If true, that is remarkable and does not bode well for future birders. Walk into the natural history section of almost any bookstore in the country and you will see titles about the Mass Extinction that is taking place right now, right here on planet Earth. It is imperative that we consider conservation when we consider our beloved birds, and I hope that TOS can do even more for conservation in the future than we already have.

I was honored to be invited to join the board 4 years ago, and humbled to have been elected President-Elect two years ago. I hope that my service over the next two years will honor the legacy of previous TOS presidents.

—Byron "Doc" Stone, TOS President



*White-eared Hummingbird photographed on 10 August 2014 by Kelly Bryan. For additional information on the breeding status of this species consult "The Breeding Status of Broad-billed and White-eared Hummingbirds in Texas" by Kelly Bryan, Maryann and Marc Eastman (Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society 47(1-2) 2014:45-50.*

## Report of the Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC)

Below is a summary of the records that the Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC) has reviewed and come to a decision on since November 3rd 2014. The major highlights of this update are TWO new additions to the state list: BAR-TAILED GODWIT and GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH. The addition of these two brings the state list to 641 in good standing.

### Accepted Records (32):

- 2013-30 Rufous-capped Warbler (1) 4/20/2013–5/28/2013, Chalk Bluff Park, Uvalde County
- 2013-69 Rose-throated Becard (1) 11/11/2013–11/19/2013, Santa Ana NWR, Hidalgo County
- 2013-79 Brown Booby (1-5) 12/15/2013–7/30/2014, Corpus Christi & Nueces Bay, Nueces/San Patricio County
- 2014-28 Rufous-capped Warbler (1) 4/21/2014–6/1/2014, Chalk Bluff Park, Uvalde County
- 2014-31 Crimson-collared Grosbeak (1) 5/10/2014–5/11/2014, Frontera Audubon Sanc., Hidalgo County
- 2014-32 Green Violetear (1) 5/27/2014–5/29/2014, nw. Austin, Travis County
- 2014-33 Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (1) 5/5/2014–5/13/2014, w. Galveston Island, Galveston County
- 2014-34 Red Phalarope (1) 6/15/2014–6/16/2014, Marathon sewage ponds, Brewster County
- 2014-35 Brown Booby (1) 6/17/2014, Espiritu Santo Bay, Calhoun County
- 2014-36 Slate-throated Redstart (1) 4/19/2014, Stanford Park, Plains, Yoakum County
- 2014-37 White-eared Hummingbird (1-3) 5/25/2014–9/4/2014, Davis Mountains Resort, Jeff Davis County
- 2014-38 Green Violetear (1) 6/27/2014–7/1/2014, La Vernia, Wilson County
- 2014-40 Northern Goshawk (1) 3/19/2014, Utopia, Uvalde County
- 2014-41 Collared Plover (1) 8/2/2014–8/17/2014, Hargill playa, Hidalgo County
- 2014-42 Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (1) 5/22/2011, Port Aransas–Paradise Pond, Nueces County
- 2014-43 Jabiru (1) 8/6/2014, private ranch, Victoria County
- 2014-44 Bar-tailed Godwit (1) 8/9/2014–10/26/2014, Oso Bay, Nueces County
- 2014-46 Brown Booby (1) 8/27/2014 Matagorda Bay, Calhoun/Matagorda County

- 2014-48 Brown Booby (1) 9/6/2014–1/8/2015 Lake Travis/Windy Point, Travis County
- 2014-50 Long-tailed Jaeger (1) 9/8/2014, Lake Belton, Bell County
- 2014-52 Long-tailed Jaeger (1) 9/20/2014, offshore, SPI Pelagic, Cameron County
- 2014-53 Evening Grosbeak (4) 4/26/2014–4/27/2014, Wellington, Collingsworth County
- 2014-54 Fork-tailed Flycatcher (1) 9/22/2014, Sabine Woods, Jefferson County
- 2014-56 Red-billed Tropicbird (1) 10/25/2014
- 2014-59 Gray-crowned Rosy Finch (1) 11/20/2014–11/21/2014 se. of Texline, Dallam County
- 2014-62 Fork-tailed Flycatcher (1) 11/27/2014–11/28/2014
- 2014-64 American Dipper (1) 11/29/2014 McKittrick Canyon, Guadalupe Mts NP, Culberson County
- 2014-66 Trumpeter Swan (1) 12/9/2014–12/22/2014 The Woodlands, Montgomery County
- 2014-68 Brown Booby (1) 12/15/2014 Matagorda jetties, Matagorda County
- 2014-70 Black-legged Kittiwake (1) 12/14/2014 Texas City Dike, Galveston County
- 2014-72 Elegant Tern (1) 11/1/2014 Texas City Dike, Galveston County
- 2014-73 Fork-tailed Flycatcher (1) 12/22/2014 w. Galveston Island, Galveston County

### Not Accepted Records (1):

- 2014-18 Brown Booby (1) 3/1/2014, Brazoria Co.–Quintana Jetty

**[[Note: The number in parenthesis following the species name is the number of individuals of that species involved in the record.]]**

A number of factors may contribute to a record being denied acceptance. It is quite uncommon for a record to not be accepted due to a bird being obviously misidentified. More commonly, a record is not accepted because the material submitted was incomplete, insufficient, superficial, or just too vague to properly document the reported occurrence while eliminating all other similar species. Also, written documentation or descriptions prepared entirely from memory weeks, months, or years after a sighting are seldom voted on favorably. It is important that the simple act of not accepting a particular record should by no means indicate that the TBRC or any of its members feel the record did not occur as reported. The non-acceptance of any record simply reflects the opinion of the TBRC that the documentation, as submitted, did not meet the rigorous standards appropriate for adding data to the formal historical record.

The TBRC makes every effort to be as fair and objective as possible regarding each record. If the committee is unsure about any particular record, it prefers to err on the conservative side and not accept a good record rather than validate a bad one. All records whether accepted or not, remain on file and can be re-submitted to the committee if additional substantive material is presented.

If you have any questions on any of these results, please don't hesitate to ask.

Thanks to all of you who have taken the time to submit documentation to the TBRC—it is very much appreciated.

—Eric Carpenter

## TOS Annual Meeting in Winnie

Hello TOS Members,

I bring you good news from the recent TOS Annual Meeting in Winnie.

The best news is that I don't have cancer!

I wasn't even aware that it was in the differential, but I recently learned that some in attendance had noted my continuing weight loss, "and worried that you might have cancer... there was talk, dude."

I am here to tell you that the weight loss has been intentional and deliberate, and is the result of continued efforts to exercise regularly and to moderate oral intake. Even though, like many guys, I wish my abs were toned better and my "guns" were bigger, I do think I am at a reasonable weight now, so I hope to maintain it for the foreseeable future.

So, no cancer here.

In other good news, after months of intrigue, innuendo and at least some finger-pointing, your board members convened for a meeting and actually got along. That was nice. We discussed a number of issues, including how best to conduct and plan meetings in the future, whether we have grown enough to benefit from some professional meeting planning assistance, how much the organization is likely to grow in the future and how to respond to such growth, the importance of maintenance of our TOS sanctuaries, and the possibility of a designated, probably non-voting board position for a young birder (18 to 29 years of age). We also discussed our extra-meeting field trip programs, and how best to continue them, and we reviewed reports from your Regional Directors. The board also discussed the need to convene more regularly, as we have plenty of business to attend to, and 2 meetings a year don't provide enough time for deliberation and problem-solving.

We will probably try to conduct some of these meetings remotely, either by phone or online.

We also formally agreed to hold the January 2016 meeting in McKinney, Texas, where the Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society will serve as co-hosts. Think waterfowl, sparrows, hawks and lots of other great winter birds.

And, as you should have heard by now, we concluded an election and the following persons were elected to officer positions:

Shelia Hargis—President-Elect

D.D. Currie—Vice-President

Sandi Wheeler—Treasurer

Susan Foster—Secretary

The 7 Regional Directors running for office were all re-elected. We should have a new director in place soon for Region 3.

We had three great evening speakers. On Thursday, Richard Gibbons gave an excellent talk about spring migration, with an emphasis on the role that TOS and Houston Audubon sanctuaries play for migrant birds, and the even greater importance of large tracts of intact forest like the Columbia Bottomlands. Friday evening, Glenn Olsen gave another talk about spring migration, but with an emphasis different from that of the Thursday talk. On Saturday, Winnie Burkett gave a fascinating presentation on the history of Bolivar Flats—the place and the sanctuary. Jim Hailey, our Ex-President, was given a plaque honoring his 2 years of service as TOS President and honoring his passion for birds, birding and for TOS.

### TOS Field Trip Snapshots



*Friday's Trip to Anahuac*



*At the Trinity River*



*TOS Birders at Sea Rim*

And finally, there were birds.

There was a big fallout of warblers and other small passerines Sunday and Monday before our meeting with the passage of a rainy front with strong north winds. Unfortunately, the winds turned back to the southeast by mid-week, and by Friday many of the smaller passerines had departed once more. But there were lots of other birds to see, and the shore birding was really dynamite! Whimbrels were seemingly everywhere in good numbers, and most of the smaller shorebirds put in a good showing, too, along the beach, the bay fronts and in the flooded rice fields. And we had resident coastal birds like terns, waders and rails, like the Black Rails that many trip participants

heard calling at Anahuac NWR. And there were resident forest birds like Hooded and Prairie Warblers, and a few trips even got Red-cockaded Woodpecker and even one or two Bachman's Sparrows. And there were still migrant birds besides shorebirds, like Dickcissels and the flock of Bobolinks that flew over the heads of my Sunday trip participants, singing that weird, fantastic song that only Bobolinks can sing.

I neglected to arrange for a Big Board of Bird Sightings, so I don't know how many species were seen collectively by all field trips, but I suspect the number was well over 250. Just for my three days of field trips, participants recorded 184 species. Heck, on the Jefferson County Big Day Trip alone we saw 148 species, which must be one of the highest single day species totals ever for a TOS meeting trip.

In any event, I heard very few complaints about field trips, and most of those had to do with the fickle inclinations of birds. But that's the way birding can be, especially along the upper Texas coast in spring migration - when the weather turns favorable for migrant birds to move again, that's what they do, because that's what they have to do to survive.

Speaking of which, I wouldn't have survived this meeting without lots of help.

Many people approached me to let me know how much they enjoyed the meeting, which is a testament to all the TOS members who volunteered to help the meeting run smoothly, so I want to acknowledge as many of those volunteers as possible.

First, I want to thank Jim Haley for conceiving the idea for this meeting and for arranging for the evening speakers. Jim participated in all parts of the meeting except the board meeting, and he also helped each morning getting people to the right place for their field trips. I also want to thank Georgina Schwarz for staffing the TOS sales table. She does this year after year, and sometimes gets help from Sandi Wheeler and others, but Georgina is the Iron Woman of TOS sales. If you have purchased a TOS hat, T-shirt or pin at a TOS meeting sometime in the last 20 years, there is a good chance you bought it from Georgina. I also want to thank David Sarkozi, who has a special interest in birding Chambers County (where Winnie is located). David helped me locate suitable field trip leaders early in the planning process, which was a big help. I also want to thank all of our field trip leaders, some of whom are TOS members, but some of whom are not. It is a big chore to organize and coordinate successful field trips for a meeting this large (110 registrants for this meeting), and it requires dedicated, dependable trip leaders. The fact that there were so few complaints about field trips is a testament to the dedication and professionalism of our cadre of volunteer trip leaders.

I also want to thank our Election Tally Committee of Steve Reisinger and Glenn Olsen. They had the thankless task of organizing, compiling, validating and counting the 160+ ballots mailed in by TOS members for the recent election, and they did it efficiently and authoritatively.

And I want to thank our sponsors - Eagle Optics, Swarovski Optik and Thomas Moore Feed. Our sponsors provide financial support, but they also have a presence at our meetings, and I think our members really appreciate that.

Finally, I want to give special thanks to TOS member Laurie Foss and TOS board member Chuck Davis. Laurie organized and supervised the online registration process for the Winnie meeting, the very first time that TOS has done online

registration. It went very smoothly and really was the only way we could do registration for this meeting with the timeline that we had to work with. Laurie also helped with several other meeting tasks, but the online registration saved our collective hide. Chuck Davis was basically the local birding society host for the meeting. Chuck helped me conceive and organize plans for field trips, he contacted or helped put me in touch with local field trip leaders, he ran errands, he answered or found answers to various logistical questions, he helped Jim set up tables at the Community Center and he helped with cleanup, he helped direct people to field trips each morning, and he led a field trip each morning of the meeting. I really mean it when I say that this meeting would not have come off very well without the help of both Chuck and Laurie. Many thanks to both.

I think that's about it for now.

Spring migration is winding down, but now it's time for Breeding Bird Surveys and before you know it the fall shorebird season will begin.

Keep in mind the MLK weekend of January 2016 for the McKinney meeting.

I will be in touch.

Good birding ya'll,

—Byron "Doc" Stone, TOS President

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## **Texas Ornithological Society Spring Meeting 2015 A New Member's Perspective By Aimee Beveridge**

My Husband Geoff Hoese and I are new birders and with encouragement from fellow Travis Audubon members, Denise Daily and Cheryl McGrath, we decided it was a must do trip. After all, we couldn't miss a spring visit to High Island! On Friday night we did Boy Scout's Woods and sure enough, we made friends with a Chestnut Sided Warbler (A lifebird for us). On Saturday, we chose to attend Kim Risen's Leader's Choice trip which started at Anahuac National Wildlife Preserve. The group wanted to focus on finding Rails. Kim has done much research on this group in summer range in Minnesota. Our leader and other members of the trip were very knowledgeable and it didn't take long for our group to identify Black Rails by call. Clapper and Virginia Rails, or maybe a hybrid of these calls were also heard by some members of the group. We looped around Shoveler Pond. The weather was glorious, cool and slightly windy, with no pesky mosquitos to distract us. Although I don't have access to the total counts, my husband and I counted 51 species, with RWBLs in greatest abundance and some interesting close ups of an AMBI that was not shy. Following a stop at the visitor's center for some purchases we followed up on a tip from a certain TOS president elect, and headed toward Smith Point in search of Bobolinks. Sure enough, along Hawkins Camp Road we saw in the distance the distinctive look of male bobolinks. Soon we trained our eyes on more and more of this species, settling into the acacias with the final tally of 75 seen. I enjoyed seeing the serene Common Nighthawks at rest on the fenceposts and the occasional Orchard Oriole. We swung by some coastal spots to pick up some shorebirds and rice fields along I-10 to add to our daily total of over 100 species. Saturday night we were inspired by the story

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*Continued on page 6*

of the acquisition of the Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary by the Houston Audubon Society.

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**Denise Dailey:**

Winnie was the perfect location for my first TOS meeting. In 3 days of field trips, I was able to observe birds while exploring many different habitats: beaches, bays, mudflats, marshes, forests, rice fields, rivers, and piney woods. Plus, I was able to chalk up 20 lifers in the process! Got to love being a beginner!

The weekend was full of highlights, but a few stand out above the rest. When we arrived in Winnie late on Thursday afternoon, we immediately headed down to High Island to check out the rookery at Smith Oaks. While there, we were able to see (and ID) my lifer (!!!) Bay-breasted Warbler. We also saw and photographed what we thought was another warbler, but turned out to be my lifer (!!!) Philadelphia Vireo. No wonder that fancy Warbler App was no help. We were finally able to ID the bird by photo with the help of an unknown birder at the restaurant where we ate dinner. Thank you, kind stranger.

Friday morning began with the Searching for Shorebirds field trip to the Bolivar Peninsula led by the awesome leader/teacher Glenn Olsen. During a brief lull in the birding at Fort Travis Seashore Park, I aimed my binoculars at one of the bunker-like fort structures, when all of a sudden, my lifer (!!!) Yellow-headed Blackbird flew smack dab into the middle of my binocular view! It was flying straight at our group and ended

up landing in a nearby tree straddling palm fronds as if it were impersonating a bittern straddling reeds in a marsh. What a perfect birding moment, a sweet gift from the birding cosmos!

My next perfect birding moment happened on that same field trip when we were birding the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Jetty. Miraculously, we were able to see both Eared and lifer (!!!) Horned Grebe in breeding plumage, not just at the same time, but side-by-side in the same binocular view! Bam!

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**Cheryl McGrath:**

Our fantastic TOS weekend in Winnie started on a high note at Smith Oaks, with a gorgeous male Chestnut-sided Warbler almost landing on our bins, and a Swainson's Thrush blocking our path through the woods! Once we arrived at the Rookery, our time was full of beauty, color and loud, loud Heron-Egret-Spoonbill-Coot-Moorhen chattering. I can't pick a highlight from our Searching for Shorebirds or Migrant Hotspots trips, because they were filled from early morning to evening with fantastic birds and much fun. Although if I had to choose, I guess a highlight might be the Rail (sp) that we had been searching for at length in Anahuac late Saturday afternoon, that was finally spotted wandering under a nearby car, while 10 of us were all looking the other way! Our final trip-Montgomery County Hotspots-on Sunday, provided the perfect closure to the weekend, with a lengthy spot of three, very-busy Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. Thanks TOS for hosting and organizing such a terrific event. I look forward to future meetings!

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## Regional Director Reports

**Region 1, Panhandle—Anthony Hewetson**

So far as I know there are no formal TOS activities being conducted in my region though I do make the effort, at every possible opportunity—generally during field trips led by myself for a variety of organizations, to draw attention to both TOS and the Llano Estacado Audubon Society (LEAS) of Lubbock.

Despite heroic efforts by both long-time and new members the two remaining Audubon chapters in the region continue to struggle. Attempts are being made by the LEAS to forge alliances with Master Naturalists of Lubbock, The Native Plant Society, and Master Gardeners of Lubbock but it is slow going. The basic problem is that the organizations seem to share a core group of 3–5 active members—who are all, as they say, overcommitted. Another problem is, that, with one group the missions of the organizations have repeatedly come into opposition.

Overtures have been made to the seven most active members of the LEAS regarding a spring 2016 TOS meeting in Lubbock. Two of these members do not actually live in the region and they may or may not, depending on jobs/school, be of assistance. Of the people who still live in the region, I have relatively solid commitments from two folk to help organize the meeting. I have absolutely solid statements from the other three active members of the chapter that they will not help—nothing against TOS they are just, here is that word again, overcommitted. I suspect I will be able to get a fair number of field trip leaders but will need considerable help from TOS to pull the actual organization of a meeting together.

**Region 2, North Central—Gailon Brehm**

TOS Meeting Winter 2016 to be held in McKinney. The  
Page 6

Prairie and a Timbers Audubon Society has agreed to host that meeting. Hotels in McKinney and Allen are being considered and field trips to Hagerman NWR Lake Tawakoni and local DFW hot spots will be featured along with adjacent county trips.

Ongoing activities in the North Texas region include monthly public field trip/bird surveys by TOS members Rodney Thomas and Gailon Brehm, weekly bird surveys at Hagerman NWR by TOS Member Jack Chiles, and various regular field trips by Fort Worth Audubon Society and Audubon Dallas. Dallas's White Rock Lake and Nearby Lake Ray Hubbard continue to be winter sites for rare gulls. Outside the DFW area activity seems minimal.

**Region 3, East Texas Timberlands—D D Currie**

1. East Texas Adventure Feb 27–28 co-sponsored by TOS and Tyler Audubon 32 participants \$2400

2. Interviewed by Bill Hanna reporter with Fort Worth Star Telegram regarding Richland Creek WMA. Article published 3/9/15.

3. Sponsored Century Club weekend March 14–15 to Camp, Titus, Franklin and Morris counties. Twelve participants. Hosted by Pittsburg Chamber of Commerce and Barefoot Bay Marina.

4. Interviewed by Annette White reporter for Mount Pleasant Daily Tribune regarding birding in Camp county. Article published March 26, 2015.

5. Asked to lead field trip to Richland Creek WMA for Fort Worth Audubon Society—date TBD.

6. Interest expressed by San Antonio Audubon in field trip to Richland Creek WMA. Confirmation TBD.

7. Two USGS Breeding Bird Surveys planned for Region 3—dates TBD.

**Region 4, Trans-Pecos—Melanie Hoffman**

Began announcing TOS trip and meeting information at local Audubon chapter meetings.

Guiding two different Boy Scout groups to earn their birding badges.

Trying to coordinate with parents of home-schooled children to take them birding.

**Region 5, Edwards Plateau—Russell Nelson**

TOS had a table and membership information at the Wings over the Hill Country festival in Fredericksburg April 24–25, as approved at the El Paso board meeting.

There was no other official TOS activity since the El Paso TOS meeting.

There are numerous Audubon Societies and other birding and natural history organizations in Region 5 and they have been very active in the period since the El Paso meeting.

**Region 6, Central Prairie—Betty Vermeire**

No report

**Region 7, Rio Grande Brushland—Bron Rorex**

February—Laredo Birding Festival This has developed into a very successful birding event which I would recommend for all birders. February- Port Aransas Whooping Crane Festival This year we did not participate as a vendor as we had no shirts to sell. TOS plans to have a vendor booth again in 2016.

Mid-September—HummerBird Celebration in Rockport we plan to have a vendor booth during this event.

November—Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival in Harlingen we plan to have a vendor booth during this event.

**Birding Activities:**

Rockport continues to improve its Green Corridor concept by developing birding sites and trails with drippers.

To date no official word regarding future appeal regarding the Whooping Crane legal case.

2015 has been a wonderful spring migration season on the central & south Texas coast.

**Region 8, Coastal Prairie—Chuck Davis**

Galveston Featherfest—(April 9 to April 12) Considered a big success by the organizers with over 670 registered participants. One of the field trips visited TOS Sabine Woods. The entrance fee for field trip participants was waived by prior arrangement with the TOS Board in exchange for a for a table for TOS to distribute information and sell tee shirts, hats, etc. We did not use our table because we had no shirts to sell, but we did distribute flyers to interested participants.

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory—Hosted “Spring Fling” the entire month of April at Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary. Sponsored the Raptor Rodeo birding competition in January and February. Monthly bird banding at the GCBO headquarters.

Friends of Anahuac NWR—Birding Workshop led by TOS member David Sarkozi, Yellow Rail Walks, collaborating with Houston Audubon on Texas Estuarine Resource Network (TERN) Citizen Science Projects (bird surveys, etc.).

Baytown Nature Center—TOS members David Hanson and Chuck Davis lead monthly bird counts on the 3rd Thursday of the month.

Two the best of my knowledge, there are two active Audubon Societies in the region, Houston Audubon and Golden Triangle Audubon. Both have an active schedule of field trips and and other activities.

**Rare Waterfowl in Texas**  
Consult TOS Handbook of Texas Birds (2nd edition)

**Horizontal**

3. A nas penelope
4. One of two records was a bird that was captured then perished during rehabilitation
10. Separating them from Texas subspecies of Mottled Duck a challenge
11. One record for this species for the state

**Vertical**

1. Nehrling reported large numbers in Galveston Bay
2. Accidental species from the Caribbean
5. First record for the state was a male taken by a hunter near Greenville, Hunt co.
6. Rare and local resident along the Rio Grande
7. Histrionicus histrionicus
8. Nearly an annual visitor to Texas over the past 20 years
9. Four documented records for the state

Created on TheTeachersCorner.net Crossword Maker

## Sanctuary Reports

*Sabine Woods*—The Golden Triangle Audubon Society held a work day on March 28. There were 16 participants on the work day, or on the days before. Another work day is planned for May 16

*Mary Edna Crawford Sanctuary*—TOS collaborated with the Houston Audubon Society to apply for and receive a grant from the Great Texas Birding Classic for invasive plant removal at TOS Crawford Sanctuary and HAS Smith Oaks. The contractor removed a substantial amount of Chinese Privet, Chinese Tallow, and Chinaberry at Crawford Sanctuary in the area closest to the road.

*Hooks Woods*—While there was no organized work day this spring, TOS volunteers mowed trails, maintained drips, and scattered several seed balls of native grasses.

*William Henry Schroeder Island Sanctuary*—No activity that I am aware of.

*Magic Ridge*—Wildlife Management Annual Report to be submitted to the Calhoun County Tax Appraiser to continue to qualify for Open Space Agricultural Valuation.

## REPORT ON SABINE WOODS WORK DAY

Despite the inability of some of our regular workers to join us today, we accomplished almost all of what we needed in the way of essential maintenance and we should be in good shape for the critical weeks of spring migration. We were favored by just about the most comfortable weather we could have asked for. In addition to mowing all the trails and the meadow areas that we keep cleared, trimming the bushes along the sides of the trails and treating the numerous fire ant mounds, we were able to remove over 40 of the T-posts that had supported the new trees in their earlier years. There are still a few left (eight to ten) that resisted our efforts, or where removal will possibly threaten the root system of the tree. There are also some that are in areas under water at present, for the ponds are full to overflowing. We had worked on removal of some water hyacinth from the main pond a few days earlier, and on the work day, we mopped up a couple of pieces that had been hiding on that occasion.

Like most of the eastern half of the country, we had one of the colder winters in recent memory, and a very wet March, but spring is now here, and the first migrants are beginning to trickle through. Some of the underbrush was “knocked down” by the several freezes this winter, but we believe that occasional winters like that are good for the habitat, helping keep it composed mainly of native species. However, all the rain caused a lot of growth in the meadow areas, although not particularly thick. Almost all the newer mulberry trees are budding out, and there has been plenty of moisture for the newer oaks. There are still three medium sized alligators in the main pond but we wonder when they are going to run out of food there and move on.

Those who birded after we completed the work did find some migrants. There were Louisiana Waterthrushes, Black-and-White Warblers, bright male Prothonotary Warblers, nice male Hooded Warblers, more than one Yellow-throated Warbler, some Parula Warblers, a rather elusive Worm-eating Warbler, and at least three Palm Warblers including one all yellow Eastern form. Wintering warblers were represented by

Yellow-rumped, Orange-crowned and Common Yellowthroat. Other species noted included Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Winter Wren and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

On behalf of *Texas Ornithological Society* and *Golden Triangle Audubon Society* we thank everyone who helped either on the day or in the days before: Lori Baker, Jessica Barry, Michael Cooper, Howard Davis, John Haynes, Sheila Hebert, Thomas Hellweg, Gary Kelley, Steve Kuritz, Randy Lewis, Steve Mayes, Wendy Mires, Daniel Reed, Sherrie Roden, and Jana Whittle. Thanks again to each and everyone.

—John A. Whittle  
March 28, 2015

### Update

Late April/Early May brought unprecedented amounts of rain, such that all the trails became very muddy. They have now (mid-May) dried up considerably, but the growth of vegetation has been quite extensive. We had hoped to hold a work day on May 16, but a combination of circumstances (more rain, schedule conflicts for several of our key volunteers) have forced us to cancel it. Conditions permitting, we plan to have many areas outside the Woods themselves brushhogged as soon as it is dry enough.

We had a good migration season, with day after day when the list showed the number of warbler species in the very high teens or low twenties. Noteworthy were much higher numbers of Blackpoll Warblers this year, after a near absence last spring. There were more Golden-winged Warblers this year than any of us can remember in past years, and at least one Brewster's Warbler. Good numbers of Cerulean Warblers were also seen, and the number of Blackburnian Warblers, especially several days into May, was outstanding. Only one Cape May Warbler was detected, and it only stayed a few hours on May 4. Perhaps the rarest sighting was that of a Yellow-green Vireo on May 9 for less than a minute by three or four lucky observers. Among other groups, it was a very good year for thrushes.

## Field Trip to Sabine Woods—18 April 2015

The March field trip of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society was drenched in a heavy rain. The forecast for the April field trip? Heavy rain. This could be a bad trend. On the other hand, rain in April can also bring down the much hoped for “fallout” of birds at coastal locations. So, despite the forecast of rain, the April trip to Sabine Woods would go on as planned. That turned out to be a good idea.

Despite the forecast, a respectable number of birders turned up early on the morning of the trip to brave the weather and look for birds and they were well rewarded. So with the appropriate rain gear on, the group headed into the woods. White-eyed Vireos were evident right away. They called from high and low and some even showed themselves for all to see. White-eyed Vireos proved to be one of the more common species on the day but other vireos including Yellow-throated, Blue-headed, Warbling, Philadelphia and Red-eyed were seen on the day. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were also numerous in the woods buzzing around the lantana thickets and patches of honeysuckle.

Flycatchers are among the more numerous neotropical migrants and they were evident on the day. Eastern Wood Pewees were probably the most conspicuous, sitting on open perches and giving their familiar calls. An Eastern Kingbird was perched outside of the woods while Great Crested Flycatcher gave their “weep” calls from inside the woods. Some of the difficult Empidonax species were present and a few were actually identified to species. Most of these were Acadian Flycatcher (our familiar breeding Empid) but a Least Flycatcher was also sighted on the day. Swallows zoomed around the woods with Northern Rough-winged Swallows flying low and Tree Swallows flying high. Purple Martins and Barn Swallows were also seen in the mix. A couple of Common Nighthawks fluttered around above the woods while our resident Golden-fronted Woodpecker was seen with his newest mate, a female Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Rusty colored Orchard Orioles sang from the tree tops while brilliant orange and black Baltimore Orioles worked the mulberry trees for ripe fruit. Red Summer Tanagers staked out the large beehive in the woods (bees are a favorite food) while a couple of neon male Scarlet Tanagers were also located. But not all migrant birds are brilliantly colored. Swainson’s Thrush was very common in the woods as were spotted Wood Thrushes. A Gray-checked Thrush was located by some and an American Robin (an unusual species for Sabine Woods in spring) was located by many. Gray Catbirds were everywhere as often happens in the spring, mewing from low (especially) and high (occasionally) while Brown Thrashers worked the forest floor. But back to the colorful species, Indigo Buntings were common in electric blue while darker Blue Grosbeaks and black and pink Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were seen but less common.

Warblers are the main focus of spring birding on the Texas coast, so the group sought out this group and they came through. Northern Waterthrushes worked the pond edges with a single Louisiana Waterthrush. Worm-eating Warblers probed clusters of dead leaves while Black-and-White Warblers probed crevices in the bark. A yellow Prothonotary Warbler was found by the group along with a couple of brilliant Yellow T.O.S. NEWS—Summer 2015

Warblers. Elusive Kentucky Warblers proved common on the day and almost as easy to see as the bold Hooded Warblers. Gray and green Tennessee Warblers worked the tree tops while Blue-winged Warblers worked the middle areas of the trees and Ovenbirds foraged on the ground. Multi-colored Chestnut-sided Warbler and Black throated Green Warblers were seen by the group as were a couple of beautiful Northern Parulas.

All warblers are great but some are more prized by birders than others. Luckily, a number of these species were seen by the group on this trip. At least two Canada Warblers (uncommon in the spring) were located displaying their dark necklaces. A single Blackpoll Warbler was seen which has not been easy to do in recent years along with sky blue Cerulean Warblers. Several brilliant orange Blackburnian Warblers were spotted by the birders as were black and orange American Redstarts. A brilliant male Golden-winged Warbler, always a treat, was seen by most of the group and pretty much everyone was able to get a look at a Swainson’s Warbler. Swainson’s are highly prized by birders because they can be so difficult to see. Luckily, this spring has been the best in recent memory for viewing of these sought after birds and several were located on this trip.

The only thing missing from this field trip? Rain! The predicted heavy rain did not materialize during the day and everyone got to enjoy a full day of bird watching in the heart of spring migration. With more than twenty species of warbler seen along with vireos, tanagers, orioles and more, it is no wonder that many birders consider Sabine Woods to be the best migrant trap on the upper Texas coast. I think the birders who “braved” the weather for the Golden Triangle Audubon’s April field trip would heartily agree with this statement!

The following species were recorded by the trip leaders:

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (2); Neotropic Cormorant (2); Tricolored Heron (1); Cattle Egret (14); Green Heron (1); Turkey Vulture (3); Clapper Rail (1); White-winged Dove (5); Mourning Dove (4); Yellow-billed Cuckoo (2); Common Nighthawk (3); Chimney Swift (3); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (25); Golden fronted Woodpecker (1); Red-bellied Woodpecker (1); Yellow bellied Sapsucker (2); Downy Woodpecker (2); Eastern Wood-Pewee (2); Acadian Flycatcher (4); least Flycatcher (1); Empidonax species (2); Great Crested flycatcher (2); Eastern Kingbird (4); Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (1); Loggerhead Shrike (2); White-eyed Vireo (35); Yellow-throated Vireo (3); Blue-beaded Vireo(!); Warbling Vireo (6); Philadelphia Vireo (2); Red-eyed Vireo (5); Blue Jay (6); Purple Martin (2); Tree Swallow (20); Northern Rough-winged Swallow (30); Barn Swallow (2); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (2); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (3); Gray-cheeked Thrush (3); Swainson’s Thrush (15); Wood Thrush (20); American Robin (2); Gray Catbird (50); Northern Mockingbird (2); Brown Thrasher (6); Ovenbird (4); Worm-eating Warbler (10); Louisiana Waterthrush (1); Northern Waterthrush (6); Golden-winged Warbler (1); Blue-winged Warbler (10); Black-and-White Warbler (6); Prothonotary Warbler (1); Swainson’s Warbler (6); Tennessee Warbler (6); Kentucky Warbler (10);

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*Continued on page 9*

*Continued from page 8*

Common Yellowthroat (3); Hooded Warbler (25); American Redstart (1); Cerulean Warbler (4); Northern Parula (2); Blackburnian Warbler (4); Yellow Warbler (2); Chestnut-sided Warbler (2); Blackpoll Warbler (2); Black-throated Green Warbler (6); Canada Warbler (2); Swamp Sparrow (2); White-

throated Sparrow (2); Summer Tanager (9); Scarlet Tanager (2); Northern Cardinal (4); Rose-breasted Grosbeak (6); Blue Grosbeak (2); Indigo Bunting (10); Painted Bunting (1); Red-winged Blackbird (15); Common Grackle (3); Great-tailed Grackle (10); Brown-headed Cowbird (4); Orchard Oriole (20); Baltimore Oriole (12)

—Steve Mayes





## **TOS SPONSORED TEAMS FINISH 1ST & 2ND PLACE STATEWIDE IN TPWD GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CLASSIC**

The results are in from the 19th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic sponsored by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) which was held April 15–May 15, 2015.

I am proud to let you all know that our 5th grade team took 1st place in our region AND 1st place in the state out of almost 20 teams competing!!! Woohoo!!! Our young 4th grade team took 2nd place in the region and 2nd place in the state! Amazing!!!!

They even beat out secondary teams comprised of high school and middle school students. Wow wow wow!!!! I am tremendously proud of these students!!!

The Birding Classic has been called the world’s biggest, longest and wildest birdwatching tournament and it is now held statewide! A total of over 100 teams competed this year in various categories of the Birding Classic. Throughout the years, the Birding Classic has donated over \$800,000 in conservation funding to nature tourism and avian habitat restoration, enhancement, and acquisition projects throughout the state! The number of grants awarded (and their amounts) are determined based on team registration fees (independent and sponsored) and corporate sponsorship dollars collected each year. The Birding Classic is a cost-recovery event, so once minimal event costs are covered all remaining funds go to conservation grants in Texas.

Fulton 4-5 Learning Center (FLC) entered 2 youth teams this year in the Roughwings category and was provided mentorship by Steve Reisinger, Bron Rorex, and me. Approximately 500 species of birds can be found migrating through Texas or as resident species so working with students to teach them to identify birds is quite a challenge. We practiced with the students every Wednesday morning before school and once a month on weekend field trips. Funding for travel costs, team shirts, and trophies was made possible by Bob & Nela Wilems of Boerne, TX. The Texas Ornithological Society paid sponsorship fees for both teams in the Birding Classic. Student field guides and binoculars were donated by the Aransas Bird & Nature Club. Thank you all for your support! We truly appreciate all of you!

Alternates for the teams were Kaylie Skinner and Audra Jones.

Video of the Classic: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U42CSWznE7k>

—Martha McLeod



*5th Grade Birding Team is #1 in Texas Finishing 1st in our Region and 1st in the state for their division was our 5th grade team named “TOS 4 Wandering Willets and 1 Tenacious Titmouse”. They are shown left to right in the attached photo—(Top) Bron Rorex, Martha McLeod, Steve Reisinger (bottom) Cole Chapman, Jaby Tarkington, Jami Bleiker, Kaylee Howell, and Karlee Friebele. This team logged down 119 species of birds and was sponsored by the Texas Ornithological Society.*



*FLC 4th Grade Team is #2 in the State Finishing 2nd in our Region and 2nd in the state was our 4th grade team named “TOS Powerful Peregrines”. They are shown left to right in the photo—(Top) Bron Rorex, Martha McLeod, Steve Reisinger (bottom) Kyleigh Karl, Kate Hill, Lucas Wilshire, Sam Holden, and Taylor Hoover. This team was excited to find and correctly identify 107 species and was sponsored by the Texas Ornithological Society.*



*Team Alternates were Kaylie Skinner and Audra Jones.*



## TOS-SAYBC Senior Chickadees take Divisional 1st prize in Great Texas Birding Classic 2015



*TOS-SAYBC Senior Chickadees: Antonio Flores, Naomi Flores, Madeleine McDonald, Hannah Franklin, Delaney Kempf.*

**Interview Video:** <https://youtu.be/9YulCqoj6qM>

### **Madeleine McDonald (Senior Team Captain)**

This is the second year I've led the Senior Young Birders for the Great Texas Birding Classic, and I have to say it was also twice as fun! Overall, our team was much more interactive with one another and much more involved, and this made the experience that much more enjoyable! I gathered three new species to add to my personal list: Ash-throated Flycatcher, Swainson's Hawk, and Northern Bobwhite. The bobwhite was a treat because it has been a long overdue life bird, and when our group heard one call in the distance, everybody was thrilled! This was a memorable birding experience for me. When in the company of good people and good birds, you'd expect nothing less. Thank you again for this opportunity.

### **Hannah Franklin**

Our family woke up early to get ready for the Great Texas Birding Classic. We were meeting our teams at the Land Heritage Institute at 8am and planned to bird there for 3 hours before heading over to Mitchell Lake Audubon Center for lunch and another few hours. This was my second year to participate in the Great Texas Birding Classic, and all of us really wanted to beat our record from last year.

At the Land Heritage Institute we started off with a bang, spotting an Ash-throated Flycatcher on the wire near the

entrance to LHI. That was just the beginning, and before we knew it, we had over 40 birds from trekking all through the property. The weather was great considering how much rain had been predicted, but the ground was really muddy from all the precipitation that had come the day before. When we tried to go near the river, there was a moment of excitement when a few of us almost slid down the bank, so we found some rocks and waited out the birds, enjoying the river view.

We had a "birder's lunch" at Mitchell Lake Audubon Center where we scarfed down our food while walking along the trails to make sure we didn't miss anything. Then, we hopped into the Mitchell Lake van and we were off to the polders. Birding didn't stop as we drove along, and a few times we pulled over to see what was flitting around. We didn't find as many species at the water's edge as we had hoped, but a quick tally of the species we sighted throughout the day proved good news, and a total of 74 species, blowing our record from last year out of the water.

Overall, it was an amazing day with wonderful friends, fantastic birds, and great leaders. I can't wait for next year!

### **Delaney Kempf**

This was my first time participating in the GTBC, and I can honestly say it was an enjoyable and informative experience. Being able to bird with a small group of knowledgeable birders

my same age was an adventure I can't wait to repeat. I would definitely suggest this event to any and all birders, whether young or old. Of the 70+ bird species we saw this day, my favorite was, as always, the spunky Spotted Sandpiper and my lifer of the day was a Swainson's Hawk soaring with a Red-Tailed Hawk and Black Vultures.

I can't wait to join the GTBC next year and can't say enough praises about it.

**Antonio Flores**

This was my second time on the senior team participating in the GTBC, and I enjoyed it so much. We were able to see so many birds on this trip, and we really worked as a team to reach our goals. My two favorite birds that we saw were the Northern Bobwhites and the Orchard Orioles. I'd seen Orchard Orioles before, but not this close, and the detail we were able to see on them was awesome. The bobwhites were a life birds for some of us, and I was really excited to see them because I'd been searching for them for a long time and was finally able to see them.

I really had a great time and I can't wait till next year.

**Naomi Flores**

This year's Birding Classic was the best I've participated in! I had a lot of fun. I really enjoyed all the many birds we were able to see. I thought it was it so amazing that we saw so many Orchard Orioles all at once! I also liked seeing the Ruby-throated Hummingbird nest. It's so cool that a hummingbird could make so delicate a nest and it still holds together. But I'd have to say that my favorite bird that we saw was the Bobwhite. It was pretty funny how we found it. We'd heard the call, but we hadn't actually seen it. Then all of a sudden, BOOM! The Bobwhite came fluttering up from the tall grass, scaring us all half to death! My favorite part about the whole tournament was being out in God's Creation with my friends. We had so much just being together, joking around and, of course, spotting and hearing amazing birds. I feel like that I not only learned to bird better, but I really got to know our team.

The Birding Classic really motivated me to start birding again. I can't wait till the next one comes!



*Senior Team Warming Up for Action*



*We LOVE Mud!*



*Mr. Tom the Official Recorder*



*Hitting the Birding Trail with a Mascot*



*A break at the Medina River*

## Laguna Atascosa increases with Acquisition of 1,778 Acres

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) recently met in Washington DC to make decisions on the acquisition of National Wildlife Refuge properties through the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF). The MBCF is best known as the fund where “Duck Stamp” (officially called the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp) dollars are held while awaiting investment.

The commission approved acquisitions for nine NWR properties, with over \$8,825,000 committed. The nine NWRs are as follows:

- A combined project for two refuges—Felsenthal NWR in Arkansas, and Upper Ouachita NWR in Louisiana—was approved, securing 1,383 acres at Felsenthal and 861 acres at Upper Ouachita.
- A 909-acre tract at Cache River NWR in Arkansas that was approved for acquisition.
- Cat Island NWR in Louisiana received approval to acquire 383 acres.
- A bargain acquisition of 1,778 acres to increase the size of Laguna Atascosa NWR in Texas was approved.
- Another Texas acquisition was for 360 acres at San Bernard NWR.
- There were 288 acres added to Mackay Island NWR in North Carolina.
- And finally, two refuges had lease renewals approved: 10-year leases on 9,580 acres at Red Rock Lakes NWR in Montana, and a five-year lease of 502 acres at St. Catherine Creek NWR in Mississippi.

We could describe in detail the wisdom behind making these particular acquisitions, including the specific bird-conservation value of each, but suffice it to say that of the nine refuges, five are considered globally Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and three are considered state IBAs. Only one does not have a current IBA designation.

You can get details on these refuges here, from the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp: <http://www.friendsofthestamp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Wingtips-8-May-2015.pdf>

For additional information about worldwide IBA programs, including those in the U.S., check the National Audubon Society’s Important Bird Area program web site at: [www.audubon.org/bird/iba/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/)

## PROPOSED MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT (MBTA) EXPANSION

Last month, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced its intent to strengthen implementation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), one of the country’s oldest and most important wildlife conservation laws. This proposed rulemaking is intended to ensure that MBTA protections are extended to address various approaches to “incidental take,” specifically, threats to migratory birds from oil pits, power lines, communications towers, and other pervasive hazards.

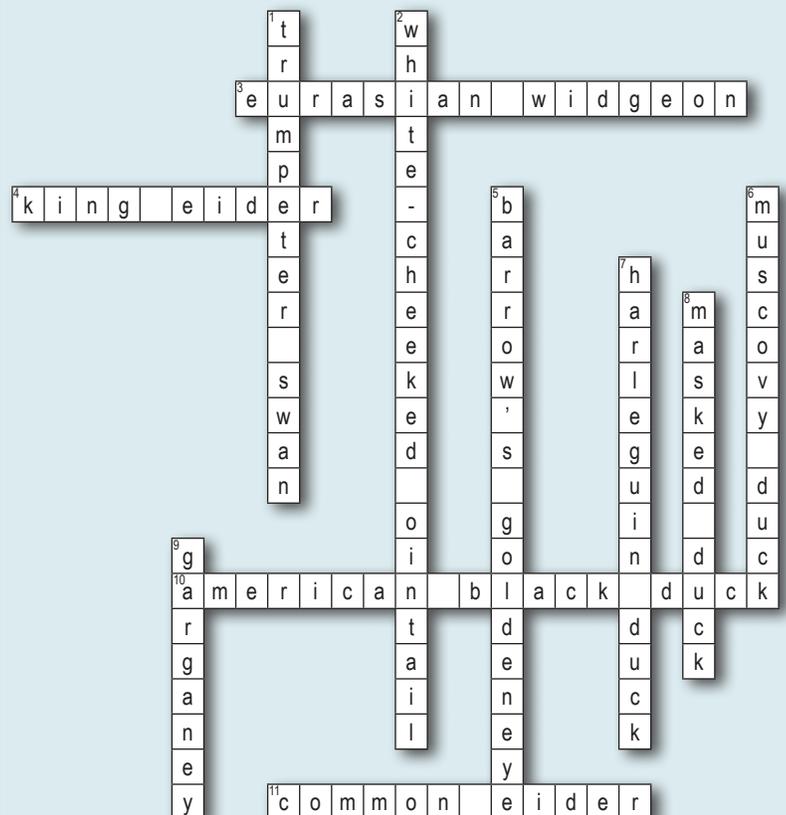
Today, uncovered oil waste pits trap and kill birds, gas flares lure and incinerate birds, and unprotected communication towers and power lines kill and electrocute birds by the tens of millions annually.

The official Notice of Intent was published in the *Federal Register* on Tuesday, May 26, which initiates a 60-day public comment period. There should be many opportunities to weigh in, including scoping meetings this month and next. Final comments are due by 27 July. Details on the proposed rulemaking and the ways to make comments are available from the *Federal Register*, reproduced here: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-05-26/pdf/2015-12666.pdf>

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, ratified by Congress in 1918, helped bring an end to a number of major threats to birds in the early 20th century, such as uncontrolled market hunting and the devastating plume trade. Today, the MBTA is awaiting appropriate legislative improvements to address some of the 21st century’s bird protection problems.

## Rare Waterfowl in Texas

Crossword Puzzle Answers



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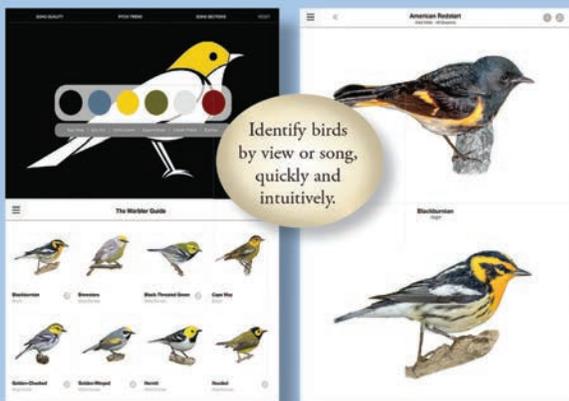


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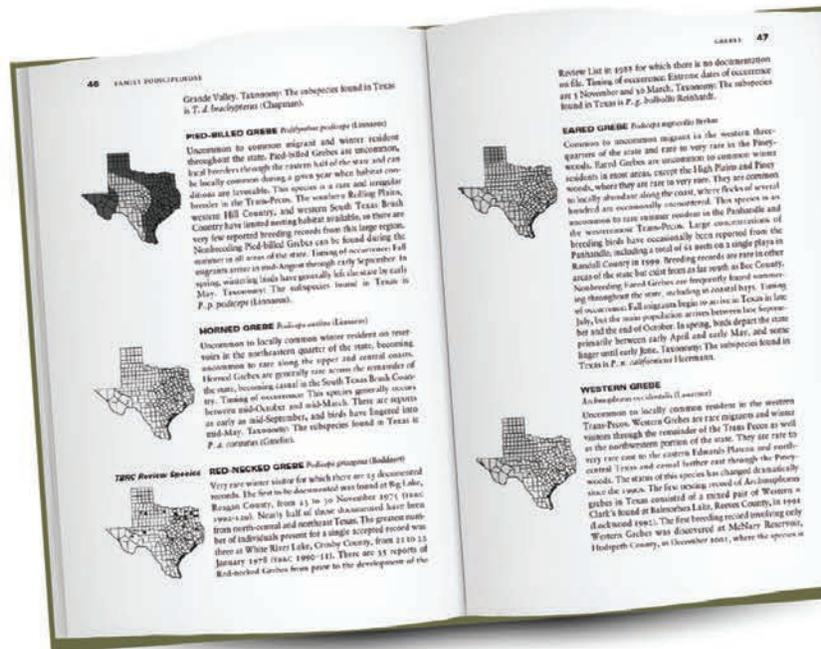
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Mark W. Lockwood and Brush Freeman

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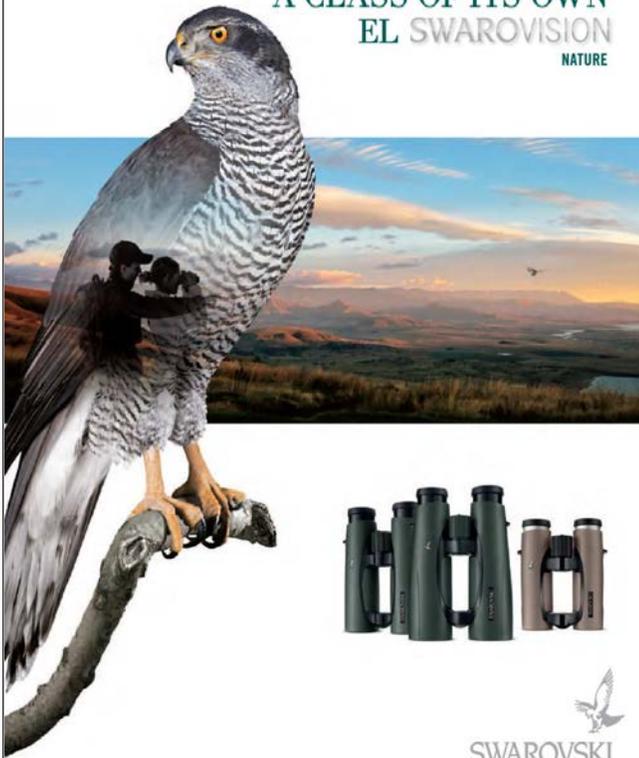
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