



BIG COUNTRY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Penfeathers

Volume 28, Issue 3
February / March 2010

Upcoming Events

Saturday, Jan. 23, 2010 - Field trip to Waste Water Treatment Plant. We will depart from McDonald's at 1201 N. Judge Ely at 8:00am. Come earlier if you would like to buy breakfast. Target birds are Black-necked Stilt, Wilson's Phalarope and sandpipers. Bring water and a snack.

Thursday, Feb. 4, 2010 - Membership meeting 7:00pm at the Rose Park Senior Center. John English, Nature photographer and Big Country Audubon member will present, "Wildlife, Nature & Scenic Photography". Will cover techniques and equipment used as well as photographs shown as examples.

Saturday, Feb. 27, 2010 - Colorado City State Park. We will depart at 7:00am from Whataburger 4241 South 1st St. Come early if you would like to buy breakfast. Target birds are Bushtits, Verdin and Pyrrhuloxia. Bring water and snacks. We plan to eat lunch in Colorado City.

Thursday, Mar. 4, 2010 - Membership meeting 7:00pm at the Rose Park Senior Center. Dan Symonds, member of Big Country Audubon will present, "Birding Central Spain".

Sat., Mar. 20, 2010 - Field Trip to Dyess Air Force Base. We will meet at the main gate visitors center for passes at 0730. You should have a picture ID. This will be a half day trip. Wild Turkey and Swainson's Hawk will be the target birds. Please email BigCountryAudubon@live.com or call the hotline by March 18th, if you plan to attend.

Fri & Sat, April 9- 10, 2010 - Field trip to Ft. Hood. This will be an overnight trip, please RSVP by April 1st in order to reserve a room. We will expect to depart by 5pm on the 9th. Look forward to this good trip! Target birds will be the Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo.

Laura's Blind Feeder Patrol...

Here's the schedule for those who have volunteered to clean and fill the feeders at the bird blind at Abilene State Park. If you want to help, contact one of the board members.

Jan. 16 - Bera Fay	Feb. 13 - Larry
Jan. 23 - Dan	Feb. 20 - Dan
Jan 30 - The Wiggins	Feb. 27 - Larry
Feb. 6 - Kathy & Esta	Mar. 6 - Dan



Do you want to receive your newsletter by email? Email Lorie at

lorie.black@suddenlink.net.

2010 GBBC News Release

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count
February 12-15, 2010

New York, NY and Ithaca, NY—Bird watchers coast to coast are invited to take part in the 13th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2010. Participants in the free event will join tens of thousands of volunteers counting birds in their own backyards, local parks or wildlife refuges.

Each checklist submitted by these “citizen scientists” helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how the birds are doing—and how to protect them. Last year, participants turned in more than 93,600 checklists online, creating the continent’s largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded.

“Taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way to get outside with family and friends, have fun, and help birds—all at the same time,” said Audubon Education Vice President, Judy Braus. “Even if you can only identify a few species you can provide important information that enables scientists to learn more about how the environment is changing and how that affects our conservation priorities.”

Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from novice bird watchers to experts. Participants count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. One 2009 participant said, “Thank you for the opportunity to participate in citizen science. I have had my eyes opened to a whole new interest and I love it!”

“The GBBC is a perfect first step towards the sort of intensive monitoring needed to discover how birds are responding to environmental change,” said Janis Dickinson, the director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab. “Winter is such a vulnerable period for birds, so winter bird distributions are likely to be very sensitive to change. There is only one way—citizen science—to gather data on private lands where people live and GBBC has been doing this across the continent for many years. GBBC has enormous potential both as an early warning system and in capturing and engaging people in more intensive sampling of birds across the landscape.”

Bird populations are always shifting and changing. For example, 2009 GBBC data highlighted a huge southern invasion of Pine Siskins across much of the eastern United States. Participants counted 279,469 Pine Siskins on 18,528 checklists, as compared to the previous high of 38,977 birds on 4,069 checklists in 2005. Failure of seed crops farther north caused the siskins to move south to find their favorite food.

On the www.birdcount.org website, participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during the count. The site has tips to help identify birds and special materials for educators. Participants may also enter the GBBC photo contest by uploading images taken during the count. Many images will be featured in the GBBC website’s photo gallery. All participants are entered in a drawing for prizes that include bird feeders, binoculars, books, CDs, and many other great birding products.

For more information about the GBBC, visit the website at www.birdcount.org. Or contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473 or (outside the U.S., call (607) 254-2473) or gbbc@cornell.edu, or Audubon at citizenscience@audubon.org or 202-861-2242 ext 3050.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by generous support from Wild Birds Unlimited.

John James Audubon is coming to The Grace Museum!



The Grace Museum is pleased to present *John James Audubon: Artist and Naturalist*, a traveling exhibition that presents many of Audubon's famous images of birds and mammals and conjures issues of conservation from the 19th century to the present. John James Audubon (1785 - 1851) is considered the foremost American scientific naturalist of the 19th century and a major artist in the history of American art. Organized by Art Services 2000 of Florida, the exhibition features original Audubon paintings and sixty-three hand colored engravings from Audubon's *The Birds of North America* folio. The exhibition presents many of the personal belongings of the Audubon family, and includes artifacts, notebooks, letters, photographs, rare books, and historical documents from the John James Audubon Museum of Henderson, Kentucky.

The exhibition presents the story of Audubon and his efforts to document the rapidly changing natural environment of his own day. Born in Haiti to French parents, Audubon came to America as a young man and traveled extensively through the North American continent, from Pennsylvania, to Kentucky, Louisiana, South Carolina, New York, Florida, and he also ventured to the Republic of Texas and the Yellowstone region. During his travels Audubon engaged in a scientific and artistic quest to conserve and preserve wildlife of the Americas. He documented every known bird and mammal of his day. Some of his animal studies are the only record of lost species such as the passenger pigeon and the great auk.

He pioneered a new artistic formula in presenting animals in their natural environments, a departure from the staid and lifeless images of animals by his naturalist contemporaries. Working primarily in watercolor, pastels, and colored chalk, Audubon used composition, drama and active poses to achieve aesthetic and scientific effects. The influence of John James Audubon on the study of birds, and mammals was and is far reaching. His field notes and observations became a guideline of the understanding of bird and animal anatomy and behavior. Through this exhibition, Audubon's artist visions of the natural world and his prophetic concerns for the environment continue to speak to new generations.

In conjunction with the exhibition, The Grace will offer a series of educational activities including special presentations by Brian "Fox" Ellis, an internationally-known author and educator from Illinois who has dedicated his career to exciting and engaging audiences to connect art, storytelling and natural science. Ellis will appear in costume and perform in the galleries as Audubon speaking about the artist's travels, passion for the environment, and concerns for changes in the natural world. We will also offer a "Forth Friday Lecture Series" which will include a talk by a leading authority on Audubon, Dr. Ron Tyler, director of the Amon Carter Museum of Art. Other programs offered in conjunction with the Audubon exhibition include a birding hike and photography safari for families with Abilene artist and birder, Larry Millar and photographer Bill Wright at the Buffalo Gap State Park. The exhibition and programs for students, families and adults focused on the art and natural science of Audubon will be fascinating and timely.

This important exhibition at The Grace is made possible by generous grants from the Greathouse Foundation, Humanities Texas, and Texas Commission on the Arts, as well as sponsorships from Jack and Ruth Bargainer, Cathey and Rick Weatherl, and The Center for Curriculum, Integration, and Support at the Region 14 Education Service Center.



Continued on next page....

Mark your calendars for these wonderful events!!!

Feb. 3 - Audubon Exhibition opens in main gallery

Feb. 9 - 10:00 - "Bird is the Word" workshop for Big Country Home Educators

1:00 - Docent training for Audubon with Brian "Fox" Ellis

6pm - 8pm - Opening reception for members/donors and Audubon Society members with a special performance by Brian "Fox" Ellis, storyteller and performer

Feb. 11 - 9am - 3pm - All day teacher workshop "Bird is the Word: Science Inquiry and Literacy through Poetry, Storytelling and Art" teacher workshop sponsor by Region 14 Education Service Center

Feb. 11 - 5-8pm - "Birding in the Gallery" with John James Audubon, public performance by Brian "Fox" Ellis and he will also go and work with families in the education center for make-n-take projects

Feb. 18 - 6pm - Audubon Lecture Series - Dr. Ron Tyler, Executive Director of the Amon Carter Museum and renowned Audubon scholar will speak.

March 25 - 6pm - Audubon Lecture Series featuring Larry Millar and Scott Clark, local birders and Audubon enthusiasts

April 15 - 6pm - Audubon Lecture Series - Dr. Tom Lee, Biology Professor at ACU

"Storytelling as an Interpretive Tool" with a tour of the gallery that gives docents background on Audubon, his art and teaches them skills they can use for any upcoming exhibit. His storytelling techniques will equip docents to be able to give wonderful tours of any kind.

I hope you will join us for an exciting week of activities that will kick off the opening of the John James Audubon: Artist and Naturalist exhibition. There will also be free Artwalk performances and school visits that you will want to be a part of. Please contact Jana Bailey at The Grace for more information, 673-4587 or educator@thegracemuseum.org.

If you plan on attending the docent workshop please RSVP by February 5, 2010.

Brian "Fox" Ellis is an internationally renowned storyteller, author and naturalist who has been touring the world since 1982. For more information please visit www.foxtalesint.com.

This program is made possible in part by a grant from Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, **Big Country Audubon Society**, Community Foundation of Abilene, Greathouse Foundation, Region 14 ESC, Texas Commission on the Arts, Jack and Ruth Bargainer, Jean K. Hays, Eleanor and Robert Hoppe and Cathey and Rick Weatherl

Board Meeting Notes Jan. 12, 2010...

The Weavers sent a note indicating new residence at the Westley Court, Room 320, and an invitation to visit and see birds on their pond.

Membership presently is 42.

We are going to start a Young Birders club with the help of people from ACU and local elementary schools

John English assisted the art teacher from Ortiz Elementary School prepare her class for the Audubon exhibit at The Grace Museum.

BCAS is one of the sponsors of the Audubon exhibit at the Grace.

BCAS donated to Ben Richey Boys Ranch as they had not charged us for the use of train depot for our Christmas Party.

Submitted by Carolyn Wiggins

Species Spotlight: Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*)



Photo by Joe Thompson

Cinnamon Teal are dabbling ducks, 14" to 17" long, that are commonly found in western North America, esp. in areas of California, New Mexico, Texas and Mexico. They are easily recognized by plumage. Males have cinnamon-red coloring over their belly, flanks, head and neck with a bluish shoulder patch. Their backs are mostly dark brown, and they have long, dark bills, yellow legs and feet and red eyes. The females have brown eyes, gray bills, with pale coloring over their heads. Their body feathers are mottled with brown tones and they have a dark back. Females have a light blue patch of plumage on the upper part of their wings. They have a pale eye ring. Juvenile males are similar in color to the females.

Cinnamon Teals are usually found in small flocks of male and female pairs. Often, they associate with Blue or Green-winged Teal. They need water areas that have reeds or plants around the edges, since they feed in shallow waters and live off seeds, plants and occasionally eat insects.

During breeding season a female will find a partner and swim in front of him to attract his attention. Males preen themselves to perfection and take quick little flights to impress her. Cinnamon Teal generally select new mates each year. The female takes care of building the nest, and uses plant stems, grass and other grass materials for construction. She builds the nest with a tunnel that leads to it through the plants. The tunnel is needed to obstruct the nest from view where it is located under reeds. She will lay between 4-16 creamy white eggs, and takes care of the eggs and nest during the 3 week incubation period. When the chicks hatch, they are covered with down. This enables them to leave the nest within 34 hours of hatching. The female Cinnamon Teal will stay with her chicks until they fledge her protection, at approximately one and half months of age.

(Information gathered from several web sites.)

Katharine Hampton

Several BCAS members enjoyed seeing Cinnamon Teals on the West side of Lake Kirby recently.

Photos by members....



Snowbirds - by Harry Dhans



Female Northern Cardinal - by Harry Dhans



Snowy path to Laura's Blind - by Harry Dhans



Blind in a Winter Wonderland - by Harry Dhans



Llano's Eagles - by John English



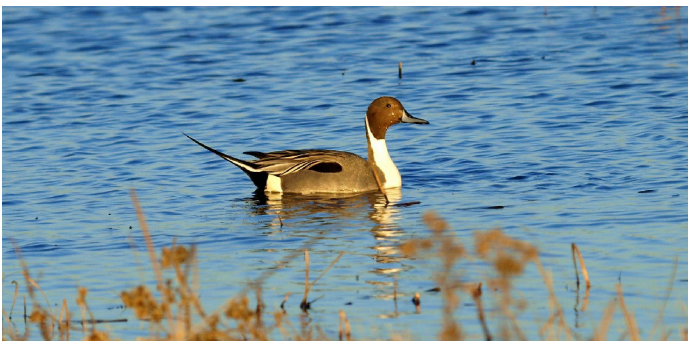
by John English



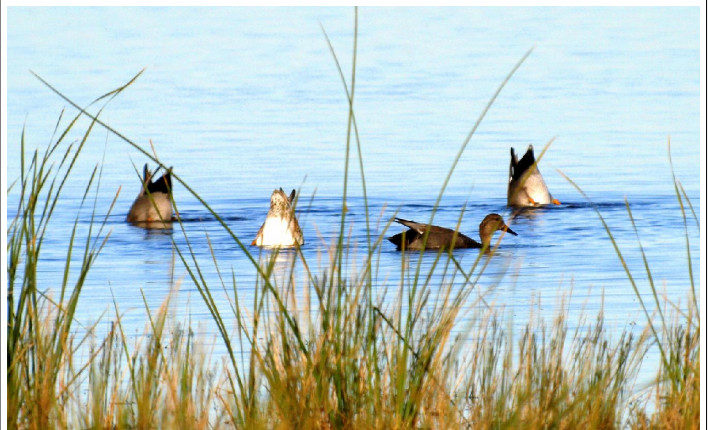
Cedar Waxwings - by Joe Thompson



Sandhill Crane - by Joe Thompson



Northern Pintail - by Joe Thompson



Bottoms Up! - Joe Thompson



Wilson's Snipe - by Joe Thompson



Red-winged Blackbird - by Joe Thompson

Dues are due!!

It's time to renew! You can pay your dues at the February meeting or you can mail your check to:

Big Country Audubon, PO Box 569, Abilene, TX 79604

Big Country Audubon's Christmas Bird Count Results

The Least Sighted

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD	1
GREAT EGRET	1
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	1
BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON	1
GR ROADRUNNER	1
SPOTTED SANDPIPER	1
GRASSHOPPER SPARROW	1
HARRIS'S SPARROW	1
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	1
BROWN THRASHER	1
BLACK VULTURE	1
N FLICKER	1
SPRAGUE PIPIT	1
FOSTER'S TERN	1
RED HEADED WOODPECKER	1
VERMILLION FLYCATCHER	1
BREWER'S BLACKBIRD	2
BLUE-WINGED TEAL	2
COOPER'S HAWK	2

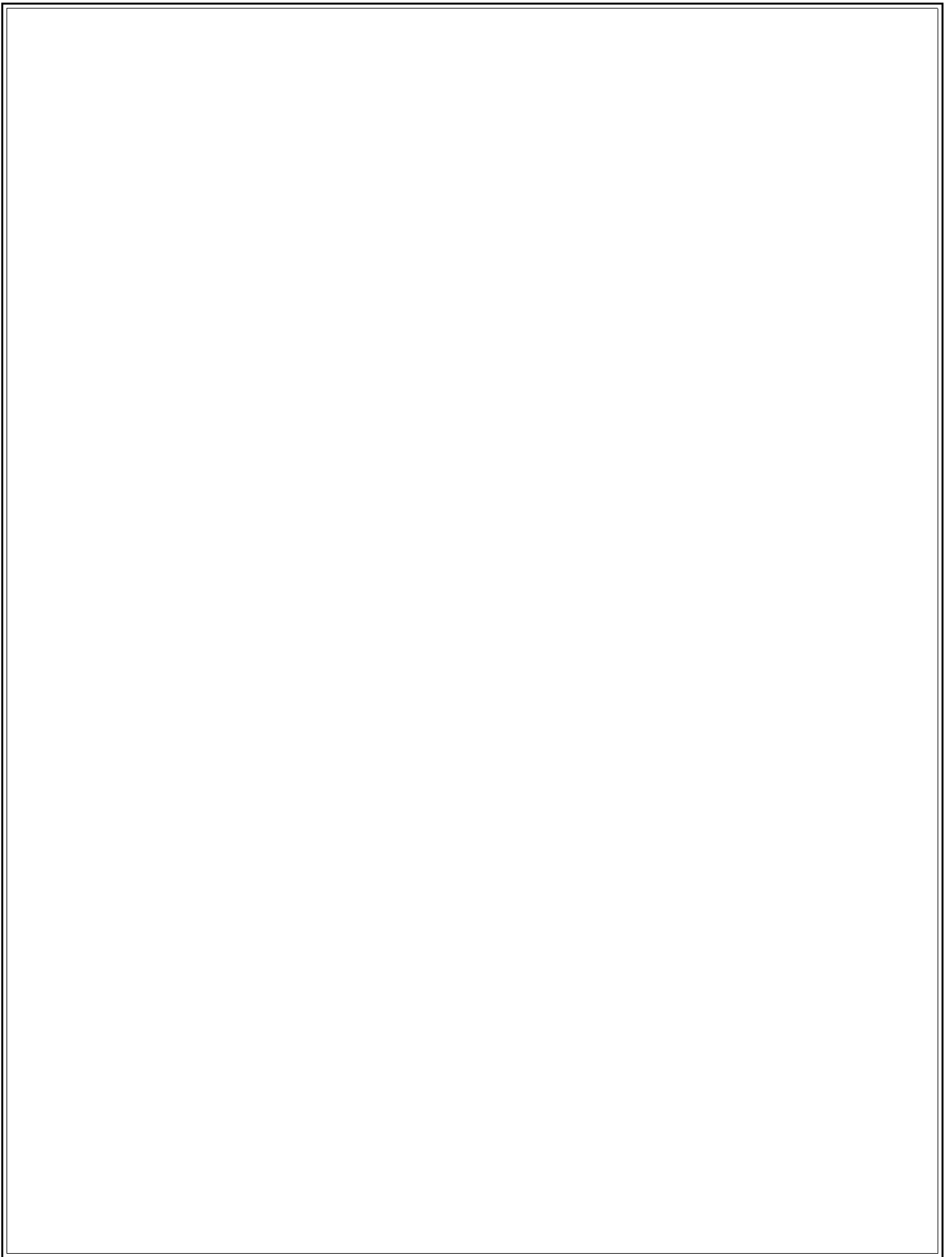
The Most Sighted

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE	2,654
EUROPEAN STARLING	1,836
DOUBLE CRESTED CORMORANT	913
MOURNING DOVE	659
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	642
MEADOWLARK SP	636
RING-BILLED GULL	603
LARK BUNTING	416
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW	397
COMMON GRACKLE	377
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	339
AM ROBIN	307
AM COOT	274
BLACKBIRD SP	250
DARK-EYED JUNCO	202
MALLARD	185
ROCK PIGEON	177
GADWALL	164
WHITE-WINGED DOVE	161

Total Species

HAMPTON	MILLAR	ESTES	WIGGINS	SYMONDS	BLACK	PACKER	OWENS	TOTALS
48	39	44	23	51	73	66	22	116

This year's Christmas bird count was an unexpected success. We were able to record the over 100 species and have a good time doing so. Special thanks to Kathy Hampton who was the key to it's success. Thanks to ALL who participated and joined us for a wonderful meal afterwards.





BIG COUNTRY AUDUBON SOCIETY
PO BOX 5694
ABILENE, TX 79604

BIG COUNTRY AUDUBON SOCIETY

President – Dan Symonds
Vice-President – Larry Millar
Treasurer – Kathy Hampton
Secretary – Carolyn Wiggins
Membership – Charline Wheeler
Education – John English
Field Trips – June Estes
Publicity – Esta Wigginton
Recycling – Joan Howard
Member-at-large – Bera Johnson
Newsletter Editor: Lorie Black

Big Country Audubon Society meetings are held at Rose Park Senior Activity Center on the first Thursday of October, November, December, February, March and April. Meetings are free and open to the public.

Hotline: 325-691-8981

Web Page: www.bigcountryaudubon.org



Big Country Audubon Society

Chapter Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the Big Country Audubon Society

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Individual membership:

One year—\$20.00

Prorated Dues:

If you join in Sep, Oct, Nov	Dec, Jan, Feb	\$15.00
	Mar, Apr, May	\$10.00
	Jun, Jul, Aug	\$ 5.00

Family Membership:

One year—\$30.00

If you join in Sep, Oct, Nov	Dec, Jan, Feb	\$22.50
	Mar, Apr, May	\$15.00
	Jun, Jul, Aug	\$ 7.50

Student Membership:

One year—\$10.00

If you join in Sep, Oct, Nov	Dec, Jan, Feb	\$ 7.50
	Mar, Apr, May	\$ 5.00
	Jun, Jul, Aug	\$ 2.50

All dues renew on September 1st

Mail to: Big Country Audubon Society, P O Box 569, Abilene, TX 79604