



Volume 28 Issue 4

August/Sept 2010

BIG COUNTRY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Penfeathers

Upcoming Events...

Thursday, September 2 - Annual Meeting—6:00 PM at Cedar Gap Farm (Hutto's) If you want to eat, bring your own brown bag. Drinks will be furnished. Anyone with a big heart and warm oven is invited to bring a dessert to share with everyone!!! We will have election of officers for 2010-2011. If you have done any interesting birding since we last met, be ready to share where you went and what you saw.

Tuesday, September 14— Board Meeting—Mezamiz Coffee Shop—7:00 PM. Come earlier if you want to eat.

Saturday, September 18—Field Trip to Oakwood Trails, meet at 7:30AM on east side of Abilene State Living Center campus.

Thursday, October 7—Regular meeting 7:00 PM west side of Rose Park Senior Center
Program: by John English—Nature and Scenic Photographer

Saturday, October 16—(Tentative) Field Trip to Sibley Nature Center in Midland. Meet at What-a-Burger on west South 1st at 7:00 AM. Will return mid-afternoon.

Thursday, November 4—Hike a Oakwood Trails with Burr Williams at 4:00 PM to observe flora and fauna. Meet at Oakwood Trails at 3:45 PM.

Thursday, November 4—Regular meeting at 7:00 PM—West side of Rose Park Senior Center.

Program: Burr Williams, Executive Director of Sibley Nature Center in Midland

Topic: "Modern Technology and Its Use by Naturalists"



Laura's Blind Feeder Patrol

Aug 21 - Larry

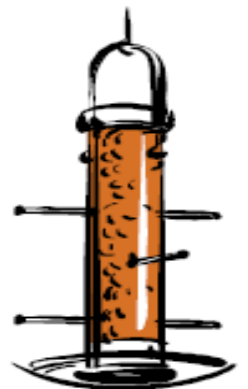
Aug 28 - Bera

Sep 4 - John

Sep 11 - Dan

Sep 18 - John

Sep 25 - Wiggins



We fill the feeder and maintain the bird blind at the Abilene State Park. Wish to volunteer, sign up at any regular meeting. You may wish to accompany someone first.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO



The **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, *Coccyzus americanus*, has common folk-names, **Rain Crow** and **Storm Crow**, in the southern U. S. These likely refer to the bird's habit of calling on hot days, often presaging thunderstorms.

Adults have a long tail, brown above and black-and-white below, and a black curved bill with yellow especially on the lower mandible. The head and upper parts are brown and the under parts are white. There is a yellow ring around the eye. It shows cinnamon on the wings in flight.

Caterpillars, insects, and berries are their primary diet.

This bird has a number of calls; the most common is a rapid *ka ka ka ka ka kow kow kow*. John James Audubon writes that it was often called a Cow Bird because of its unmelodious call “cow, cow” repeated in rapid succession. He also compares its sounds to that of a young Bull Frog!

They are found in open woodlands with clearings and dense scrubby vegetation. A rather elusive bird by nature, they are heard more often than seen. They can be seen in this area at Dyess AFB and Abilene State Park as well as many other places in the Big Country.

Their nests of sticks are crudely built in a tree or shrub, usually up to 2-1/2 feet above the ground. The 3-4 eggs are incubated for 14 days or less. The chicks are able to climb about with agility at 7-9 days of age. At about this same time, the feathers of the chicks burst out of their sheaths and the young are able to fly. The entire time from egg-laying to fledging may be as little as 17 days.

Yellow-billed cuckoos have been known to lay their eggs in the nests of other birds.

FIELD TRIP—WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

By Bera Johnson

Dan, Kathy, and I made a birding trip to the Wastewater Treatment Plant north of Abilene on Saturday, June 19. I'll have to admit I wasn't really excited about the odors emitted by that place, but the birds don't mind---we saw some good ones. On the way there, we spotted..... And, as we neared, there was a pair of Bobwhite Quail feeding around the perimeter of one of the metal tanks. As we left, that little pair was beside the road and gave us good looks.



There was quite a bit of water in the first two ponds, and many, many blackbirds were nesting and thriving in the trees. But, there were also an abundance of Black Necked Stilts and American Avocets. They were busy feeding in the sludge and shallow water and doing quite well. We also spotted wide-open, unprotected nests in the sludge with eggs. They were the nests of these two species. There were adults on the nests most of the time. Once, we saw an adult on the nest and another

approached. As quick as a wink, they exchanged places. That was a pleasant surprise.

In the farthest part of the pond, there was an American Avocet on a nest in the open who did not budge. Another strange thing happened. Another avocet dropped an egg nearby a nest, made an attempt at a beak roll toward the nest, then abandoned her efforts and left the scene. It made us wonder what happened to that orphaned egg!!



BLUEBIRD BOXES AT OAKWOOD TRAIL

By Charline Wheeler

There are eight nest boxes for bluebirds at Oakwood Trails. We began with four. All boxes have been used by other birds as well as the bluebirds. Those that I have seen using them this year besides bluebirds are titmouse and ash throated flycatchers. I try to keep sparrows nests out. The bluebirds nested early this season laying five eggs. All eggs hatched and all five birds fledged. About three weeks later I saw young bluebirds in a tree about 100 yards away from that nest box. After about three weeks another bird began a nest in the box where the bluebirds had fledged. I did not see what kind of bird it was, and the bird never completed the nest. A while later the bluebirds built a nest in the box we call "Laura's" box. It is the box with the plaque on it. Again five eggs, five babies, and five blue-
the box where I saw of it. (Ed. Note: Charline spotted that into the nesting box. courage, and power, piece of asphalt and fore he ate her ba-Texas women out There may have been tators in the past that I birds. With the the boxes safer. We to keep the posts out of the boxes.



birds fledged. This is the snake and got rid Mighty, ingenious big bull snake headed With great agility, she picked up a heavy killed that sucker be-bies!!! Good stock, us here on the prairie!!) problems with preda-thought were other baffles it helps keep do have fire ants. I try treated to keep ants

I enjoy checking the boxes and I get excited when the bluebirds nest.

Nomination of Officers for 2010-2011

President—Larry Millar VP—Joe Thompson Treasurer—Randy Packer

Secretary—Carolyn Wiggins Education—John English

Environmental—Kathy Hampton Member-at-large /Parliamentarian—Joan Howard

Membership/Newsletter/Field Trips—Dan Symonds

Newsletter/Bird blind—Bera Johnson

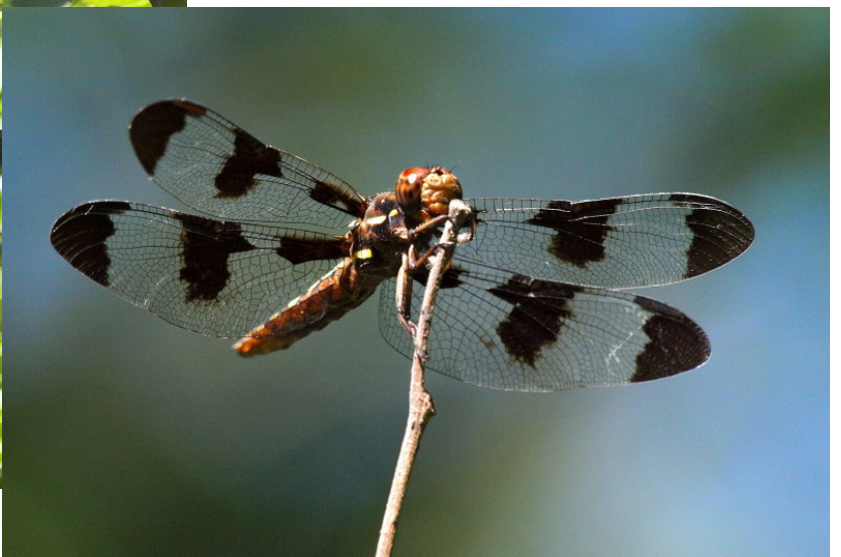
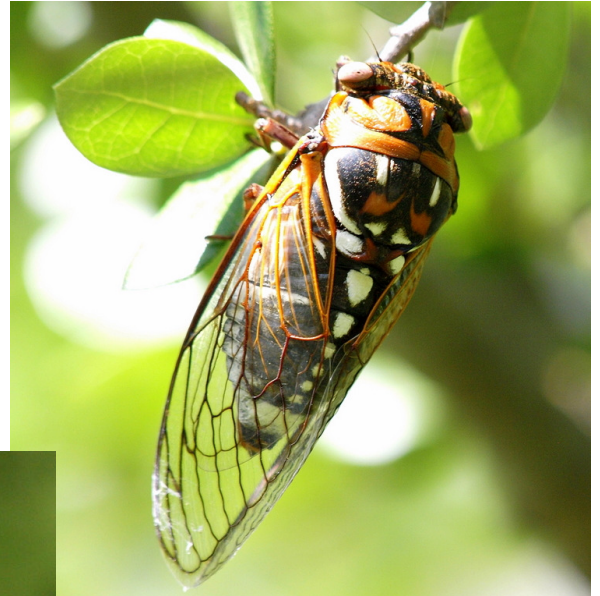
Programs - Open, but we have filled most of the program slots.

Publicity—Open

More Bugs than Birds

Abilene State Park— July 17, 2010

After filling the feeders, cleaning up Laura's Blind and enjoying the bird life nearby, members of BCAS enjoyed a walk through the park. Joe Thompson took a few pictures...





Big Country Audubon Society

P.O. Box 569

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