



Volume 29 Issue 1

Oct/Nov 2010

BIG COUNTRY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Penfeathers

Upcoming Events...

Thursday, Oct. 7, 2010 - Regular meeting 7:00 PM at Rose Park Senior Center

Program: John English Photographer will show some his work and stories behind them.

Saturday, Oct. 9, 2010 - Bird Walk at Abilene State Park. Meet at Laura's Blind at 8:00AM.

Saturday, Oct. 30, 2010 - BCAS Wild Goose Chase west of Weinert. We will depart What-A-Burger on North 1st & Pioneer at 7:00AM. We will stop for lunch before heading back.

Thursday, Nov. 4, 2010 - Hike at Oakwood Trails with Burr Williams to observe flora and fauna. Meet at Oakwood Trails at 3:45 PM.

Thursday, Nov. 4, 2010 - Regular meeting 7:00 PM at Rose Park Senior Center. Program: Burr Williams, Executive Director of Sibley Nature Center in Midland. Topic: "Modern Technology and Its Use by Naturalists"

Tuesday, Nov. 9, 2010 - Board Meeting 7:00PM at Mezamiz Coffee House. Come early if you wish to eat.

Saturday, Nov. 13, 2010 - Lake O.H. Ivy field trip. We will depart the Shell Station/Burger King on Antilley Road at promptly at 7:00am. Come earlier if you wish to get breakfast. This will be an all day trip, expect to return 5:00pm or later.

PLEASE, DON'T FORGET TO SEND IN YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES



Laura's Blind Feeder Patrol...

Oct 2 - Joe

Oct 9 - Kim Berry

Oct 16 - Larry

Oct 23 - Stephanie & Bera

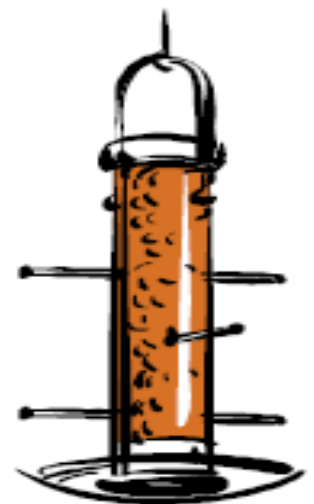
Oct 30 - Dan

Nov 6 - John

Nov 13 - Dan

Nov 20 - Kim Berry

Nov 27 - Larry



If you wish to accompany us on a scheduled day, call the hotline and leave your number or contact the member who is covering that day.

Trail to Nowhere

By Bill Hughes

In August, 2009 John and June Estes, John English and I traveled to south eastern Arizona to go birding. John English and I stayed in a cabin that was very close to the Audubon preserve in Ramsey Canyon. Since we were so close to the preserve, John E. and I decided to go there to see what birds we could find. We went about halfway up the trail when John decided to go back to take some photographs - I traveled on. After a little while I met two ladies coming back down the trail and they told me that someone had all the way to the top and had seen Golden Eagles.

That caused me to hike up to the top where several trails met; I looked carefully to be sure I could return by taking the same trail back to where I started. After sitting on a big rock for about 30 minutes the eagle began sailing down below and off to one side - there were three of them. Since John was probably waiting for me, I started back down that same trail (a good one). About 15-20 minutes later I could see that ahead wasn't good enough to be the main trail. However, I had noted that there was another trail down below close to the start of the main trail that was closed. Well, I supposed this trail I was on was that closed trail, and although it may not be as good as the main trail, it would still bring me back to where I began.

Then the trail became more difficult and soon started curving upward. I thought about going back but I had spent so much time on this trail that I decided to travel onward. Many trails go temporarily up, then back downward as it had been going, so I was not alarmed. However the trail kept going up and up, then almost straight up so I was crawling on my belly hoping to find where it went downward. Then I came to a sandy area on an exceedingly steep slope which had a few large rocks for footholds, making for very difficult crawling. Should I give up and go back? No, not me, "the explorer". About ten minutes of rest was required before I went to the next rock foothold, the finally I reached a place where I could not find a foothold rock. Each time I tried going up, I slid back down. Then I decided to rest for twenty minutes, then try again. This time I managed to crawl up just far enough to reach up with my right hand to grab a large rock which was embedded in the side of the mountain. I just lay on the side of the mountain for quite a while with my right hand extended until I felt that I could drag myself up. After all, wasn't the trail about to go downward? Very soon after leaving that embedded rock I reached a place where I could stand up while holding on to two very small trees. I was too tired to travel on and there were leaves settled against the two trees, creating a cushion on which I could lie down - which I did.

For at least twenty minutes, I slept, then arose to find the trail going upward again, this time showing bear scat on it. What to do? If I stayed there, surely the rescue team would find me tomorrow to help me get down the mountain. But what about the bear scat showing bear presence in that area of the mountain? The decision was obvious - I had to get down the mountain. How could I do that other than crawling back down the same path - which would be very difficult. If I stood up I was almost certain to fall because the leaves covered so many rocks, sticks, etc. for me to trip on.

Continued on next page...

The decision was made to slide down. To check the steepness I found a heavy mid-sized rock and threw it sideways. If it stayed where it landed I may be able to walk part of the way; it went bounding down the mountain. My gloves were with me so I sat down and started sliding down the mountain feet - first, using my gloved hands to steer myself away from the rocks, fallen trees, etc. At first I had to lie on my back, then able to sit up as I slid down and down, seeing and hearing a single bird on the way (a Common Raven). Almost no energy on my part was required because of the steepness. Finally, I reached a place where I could walk down - carefully, then after what seemed like forever I could see the main trail. There were two men down there, close to a lived (a park ranger, perhaps?) and I yelled and waved at the closest one. He looked at me, then went back to whatever he was doing.

The closing time was 5pm, about two minutes from the time I reached the main trail. Then I still had to walk to the building and go through it to get to the parking lot where John was waiting for me, I hoped. Luck was with me as the employees were still helping the last customers as I went through and John was still waiting for me, wondering why I was so late.

There was a minor scratch on my left arm and one on my right wrist if my memory is correct. However, there were holes in my gloves, a nick in one of my boots, and when we got back to the cabin I found the seat of my trousers and even the underwear were stained badly, very dark. They had to be thrown away.

Afterwards, I decided that I had made a good decision because, on my way down, I crossed many bear trails and each one of them had bear scat on it. Would I have been food for the bears? What I have learned from this excursion is to slide down the mountain when lost.

AUDUBON BOARD MINUTES - SEPTEMBER 14, 2010

Brief Report – Main items of Business

- Treasurers report: \$2998.46
- Expenses of the group: bank charges, post office box, seed and supplies for Laura's blind, use of buildings for special meetings, postage, miscellaneous.
- Members who have extra binoculars are asked to donate them to student birding groups being organized by Larry Millar and Stephanie Martinez.
- John English has given educational programs to civic groups and Master Naturalists.
- Laura Holbrook, Program Director at Rose Park Senior Center, wants to have area to attract birds in back of the center with views from the dining area. The group agreed to work with her on those plans.
- Labels with Big Country Audubon information have been ordered and will be attached to bags of bird seed sold at local businesses.
- BCAS will man a booth for Hendrick Hospice on December 5 from 1 – 6 PM to take donations for the dove tree in the Mall of Abilene.

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON
AMERICAN ARTIST AND NATURALIST

The Grace Museum

February 3 – May 8, 2010

Sponsored partially by **Big Country Audubon Society**

The John James Audubon exhibit at The Grace Museum during the Spring was an extremely well-loved exhibit by many school children and the general public. With the exhibit came “Mr. Audubon” himself in the person of Brian “Fox” Ellis. Mr. Ellis was well-versed in the life of Audubon and portrayed him to 1147 teachers and students as he went into the schools to perform. He and other Audubon experts served well over 150 adults with lectures and the opening reception performance. Having these persons here to interpret the life of Audubon made the art come alive, the birds more real, and the love of nature emerge. It also created an appreciation of Audubon’s impact on man’s knowledge of and responsibility to conserve the natural world. Supporting an educational endeavor such as this is what our society is all about. Seeds were planted in youngsters which will grow and sprout as they become the protectors of our planet in future years.

Other interesting facts about the exhibit in the museum itself:

Total attendance: 18,273

Children served: 5,072

Tour Children: 1,885

Tour Adults: 420

And, our own Kathy Hampton served 13 hours and Bera Johnson served 4 hours of volunteer time.

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION?

**If you have information to be included in the newsletter, please
email it to Bera Johnson or Dan Symonds.**

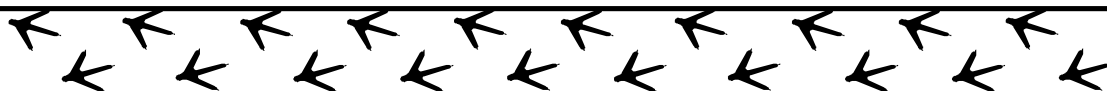
pl3bf24193@suddenlink.net or BigCountryAudubon@live.com

**Watch for a GREEN ARTICLE in the next issue of
Penfeathers.**

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Hendrick Hospice Care will sponsor the "Light up a Life" tree in front of the men's Dillard's in the Mall of Abilene during the Christmas season. Big Country Audubon has volunteered to assist them on Sunday afternoon, December 5, 2010, from 2:00 to 6:00 PM. Anyone who is interested in volunteering for a 2 hour shift during that time, please let Joan Howard know, 695-6352.

Bird Tracks...



Keep a list of good birds you have seen recently in your back yard, neighborhood, or at some of the areas which are good for birding. We'll feature them in Penfeathers!

Who	What	Where
Joe Thompson	Multiple hatchings of Barn Swallows (Spring and Summer), Upland Sandpipers in fields.	Ruby-Throated Hummingbird – South Taylor Co., Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets – Lake Kirby
Bera Johnson	Juvenile Mississippi Kites (fledging process), Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (pair), Inca Doves, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, American robins	South Abilene
Lorie Black	Rufous hummingbird	South Abilene
Kathy Hampton (Sept.)	Osprey, Great Blue Heron, Killdeer, Snowy egret, Greater yellowlegs, Green Heron	Lake Kirby. Lesser goldfinch, Mourning dove, Inca dove - Northeast Abilene.
Kathy H. and Kim Berry	Great Blue Heron	Seabee Park. Yellow Warblers, Lark Sparrow, Mourning Dove, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Killdeer - Veterans Cemetery
Larry Millar	Wilson's Warbler	His backyard, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - Elm Creek

AUDUBON MEMBERS,

Since many of you go birding on your own or with a small group in our local area or have interesting visitors to your feeders, we would like to know what birds (perhaps unique to the area, have returned for the season, or a lifer for you, etc.) you have seen. A brief feature will be added to Penfeathers which shares that information with the others who are interested. Please document what you saw, its real name, location sighted, and date seen and send that to me (pl3bf24193@suddenlink.net or to BigCountryAudubon@live.com). If you are able to get photos or if you have good bird photos, we would also welcome those! We will include it as space allows for everyone to know.

Also, if you go or have gone on a special birding trip or have an interesting or unusual story to share about birds you've seen, please write those in a paragraph and send to either of us. This newsletter is for us to share our birding experiences, so let's all participate!

For this month, we need the information by Sunday, Sept. 19. You can send information anytime, though, and we can use it for a future newsletter.

FYI: I am writing many of the articles and Dan is publishing and mailing. If you do not get it prior to the October 7 meeting, please let Dan know. He may not have a correct e-mail address for you. BUT, he always puts Penfeathers on the Big Country Audubon Society website and you can see it there.

Thanks!

Bera

Member Photos...



Blue Jays like Peanuts



Magpie in Colorado by Bera Johnson



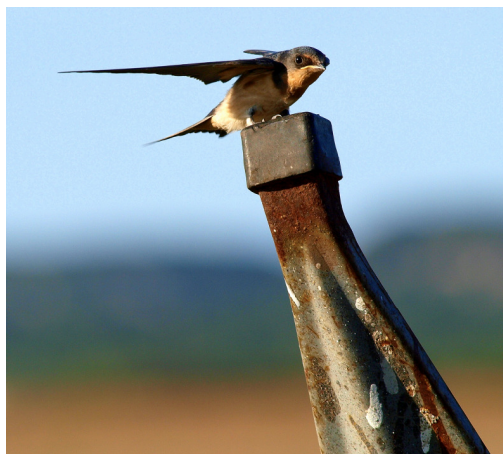
White-eyed Vireo by Joe Thompson



Great Egret at Lake Kirby by Joe Thompson



Nashville Warbler at Oakwood Trails by Joe Thompson



Barn Swallow by Joe Thompson

Member Photos ...continued



Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Joe Thompson



Great Blue Heron at Lake Kirby by Joe Thompson



Yellow-headed Blackbirds by Joe Thompson



Snowy Egrets by Joe Thompson



Cattle Egrets at Sea Bee Park by Joe Thompson



Snowy Egret and White-faced Ibis by Joe Thompson

Trip to SE Arizona 2010

August 10-18 was a great time for Dr. John and June Estes and I to visit Southeast Arizona. Prior to that date, this area had had two weeks of rain. The mountains and the valleys were lush beautiful green. The flowers were blooming everywhere. The disadvantage was that the hummingbirds did not need to come to feeders for food. In spite of this we saw eleven species of hummingbirds including the Berylline and Blue-throat on nests. In Ash Canyon at Ana's, the Lucifer's made its quick appearance.

June drove us to Rustler Park where Dr. John kept saying, "Oh, isn't that beautiful!" (referring to the scenery on the way up and down). The Yellow-eyed Junco made an appearance there at 8,000 feet.

Carr Canyon with the help of bird guide, Mark Pretti, provided several beautiful birds including a lifer for June, the Virginia's Warbler. When one has more than 500 birds, a lifer is a big deal! Kathy got 9 lifers there: Painted Redstart, Grace's Warbler, Hermit Warbler, Pygmy Nuthatch, Arizona Woodpecker, Greater Pewee, Hutton's Vireo, Plumbeous Vireo, and Hepatic Tanager. It was a good morning!

While Mark, June and Kathy chased birds from tree to tree, Dr. John stayed in the car and watched 5 Gila Woodpeckers drink from a hummingbird feeder at the San Pedro Inn.

The most interesting person we met was Maya who lived near Portal, AZ. We meet her at the Portal Store and she invited us to come to her Cathedral Rock home to see the birds from her back yard. What a view she has from her back yard! There we saw Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Violet-crowned, Broad-billed, Black-chinned, Broad-tailed, and Blue-throated Hummingbirds, Canyon Towhee, and Phainopepla.

The front porch at Cave Creek Ranch House was the funniest place to sit and absorb the beautiful mountains, wild life and many birds. The Acorn Woodpeckers were two arms lengths away, and the Bridled Titmouse were in the shrub right by the porch, as were the Blue-throated Hummers. Many American and Lesser Goldfinch were at the feeders. Gambel's Quail were quiet as they came through the yard, but the Mexican Jays were very noisy. The White-breasted Nuthatch was a regular on the large oak tree searching for insects.

We saw many Border Patrol pickups, usually two at a time. We were circled and checked out by a Border Patrol helicopter near Animas. Dr. John grieved that he did not have his camera out for a picture of that event, because he said that no one would believe that the helicopter hovered so that the Border Patrol was level with us, eye to eye, when they checked us out. The BP were so numerous that we felt safe. Have to admit that that was our most exciting moment!

There is so much more to tell. We hope you can visit SE AZ and have the wonderful experiences that we enjoyed!

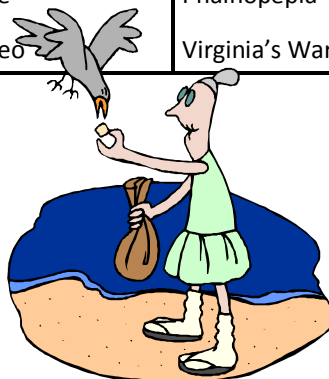
Katharine Hampton



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SE Arizona Trip - 108 Species

Mallard	Berylline Hummingbird	Hutton's Vireo	Hermit Warbler
Greater Yellowlegs	Violet-crowned Hummingbird	Stellar Jay	Grace's Warbler
Chukar	Blue-throated Hummingbird	Blue Jay	Painted Redstart
Ring-necked Pheasant	Magnificent Hummingbird	Western Scrub-Jay	Canyon Towhee
Wild Turkey	Lucifer Hummingbird	Mexican Jay	Botteri's Sparrow
Scaled Quail	Black-chinned Hummingbird	American Crow	Lark Sparrow
Gambel's Quail	Anna's Hummingbird	Chihuahuan Raven	Black-throated Sparrow
Northern Bobwhite	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	Common Raven	Yellow-eyed Junco
Great Blue Heron	Rufous Hummingbird	Cliff Swallow	Northern Cardinal
Green Heron	Elegant Trogon	Barn Swallow	Pyrrhuloxia
Turkey Vulture	Acorn Woodpecker	Bridled Titmouse	Black-headed Grosbeak
Mississippi Kite	Gila Woodpecker	Black-crested Titmouse	Blue Grosbeak
Gray Hawk	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	Crested Titmouse	Lazuli Bunting
Short-tailed Hawk	Downy Woodpecker	Verdin	Western Tanager
Swainson's Hawk	Arizona Woodpecker	White-breasted Nuthatch	Heptic Tanager
Cooper's Hawk	Greater Pewee	Pygmy Nuthatch	Summer Tanager
American Kestrel	Black Phoebe	Cactus Wren	Red-winged Blackbird
Red-tailed Hawk	Buff-breasted Flycatcher	Bewick's Wren	Western Meadowlark
Rock Pigeon	Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher	Rock Wren	Common Grackle
Eurasian-collared Dove	Vermillion Flycatcher	Canyon Wren	Great-tailed Grackle
White-winged Dove	Cassin's Kingbird	Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	Brown-headed Cowbird
Mourning Dove	Western Kingbird	American Robin	Hooded Oriole
Greater Roadrunner	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Northern Mockingbird	House Finch
Whiskered Screech-owl	Loggerhead Shrike	Curve-billed Thrasher	Pine Siskin
Common Nighthawk	Say's Phoebe	European Starling	Lesser Goldfinch
Broad-billed Hummingbird	Eastern Phoebe	Phainopepla	American Goldfinch
White-eared Hummingbird	Plumbeous Vireo	Virginia's Warbler	House Sparrow



Big Country Audubon Society

PO Box 569

Abilene, TX 79604

Big Country Audubon Society

President - Larry Millar

Vice President - Joe Thompson

Treasurer - Randy Packer

Secretary - Carolyn Wiggins

Environment - Kathy Hampton

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

Hotline: 325-691-8981

Website: www.bigcountryaudubon.org

Email: BigCountryAudubon@live.com

Big Country Audubon Society

Chapter Membership Application

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Annual Membership

Individual - \$20 Family - \$30 Student - \$10

Prorated Membership

Dec., Jan. or Feb - Individual - \$15 Family - \$22.50 Student - \$7.50

Mar., Apr. or May - Individual - \$10 Family - \$15 Student - \$5

Jun., Jul. or Aug - Individual - \$5 Family - \$7.50 Student - \$2.50

All dues renew on September 1st

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