



Volume 31 Issue 2

## Upcoming Events...



### April 4, 2013

Regular meeting at Rose Park Senior Center, 7:00 PM. Program by John English, "Nesting Cavities."

### May 2, 2013

Dinner meeting at Oakwood Trails Building, east side of Abilene State Living Center, 6:00 PM. Come early if you want to bird. Meat and drinks will be furnished. Bring a dish to accompany brisket.

#### **NOTE: Rules for using this facility are**

1. No alcohol. No smoking.
2. No outdoor photography anywhere on the campus, including Oakwood Trails.
3. Strict enforcement of 15 MPH speed limit.

*Bring your best birding experiences during the past year to share with everyone!*

### May 14, 2013

Board meeting at Jay Packer's home, 6:30 pm.

### May 18, 2013

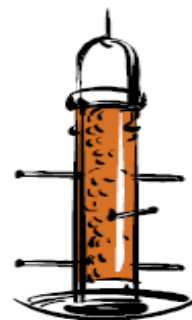
Field trip to Possum Kingdom Lake. We will depart McDonald's on Judge Ely promptly at 6:30 a.m. Come early if you wish to eat breakfast. Bring water and snacks. We will stop for lunch at a restaurant near the lake. Please email [fieldtrips@bigcountryaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@bigcountryaudubon.org) by May 17 if you plan to attend.

### July 9, 2013

Board meeting at Jay Packer's home, 6:30 pm.

## Laura's Blind Feeder Patrol

Apr 6 Steve and Dolores Owens	May 11 ???
Apr 13 John English	May 18 W.K. and Carolyn Wiggins
Apr 20 W.K. and Carolyn Wiggins	May 25 ???
Apr 27 Larry Millar	June 1 John English
May 4 Jay and Amy Packer	



We fill the feeder and maintain the bird blind at the Abilene State Park. Linda Beyer, Harry Dhans, and Bera Johnson take care of the blind on week days. It should be cared for often. Please consider filling some of the weekend dates. If you would like for someone to accompany you the first time, call Bera—325-690-6355.

# Dan Symonds

November 15, 1959—March 24, 2013

*Dan Symonds, former president and board member of the Big Country Audubon Society passed away suddenly Sunday, March 24, 2013. At the time of his passing, Dan was serving as the field trip leader for the club. His death leaves a big hole in the club as well as in our hearts. This month's newsletter is dedicated to his memory and includes stories and memories from several of our members.*

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Unfortunately, I don't recall the first time I met Dan. I do, however, vaguely recall the first time I heard of Dan. I had moved away to San Angelo for graduate school. My mother was president of our local chapter of the Audubon Society. It was during this time that I began to hear about Dan Symonds. He was "a good birder", my mom said. It seemed that as the months went by, I heard about him more and more. My mother had poured her time and energy into the Audubon Society, and after her passing, the club faced a real challenge. Dan jumped right in and did the job with gusto. I began to hear more and more about him from my father.

Flash forward a few years and I had now moved back to Abilene and gotten involved as an officer in the club myself. Dan took a much needed break and let Larry Millar and then myself take our turns serving as president. Dan could still be counted on to pick up the slack though. Just recently he did a fantastic job as our field trip coordinator. I liked that he was ambitious, planning trips to places a little further away from home than just our usual favorites. (Not that there's anything wrong with the local favorites, but it is nice to visit new places too.) Dan was also a very talented birder and one you could trust when he reported birds. I didn't catch him in a mistake that I can remember. As the years have gone by, my Taylor County list has grown very respectable. It's up to 274 at present, and I've started to wonder if I can get it to 300 with some serious effort. Since last fall, Dan found a handful birds that I still haven't seen in the county. In November, Amy and I joined Dan to see a California Gull he found at Lake Kirby and even got good pictures of what is likely the first documented record for the county. Then last January, we got to see a Common Gallinule that Dan found at the Wildlife Trails Pond. Dan also had a Ferruginous Hawk and a White-breasted Nuthatch that I was not able to chase but still need for Taylor



Dan Symonds (left) and other BCAS birders  
Photo by JoAn Wilkes

## Dan Symonds, Cont.

County. Because Dan was so talented and birded so often, I viewed him as one of my best tools for finding new birds in the county.

Dan will be terribly missed in our club. I used to console myself after the loss of my mom by reflecting on how many people she touched in her role within our birding club. Dan too touched all those he came into contact with. He loved sharing his knowledge and his passion for birds, and in a somewhat grim way, I couldn't help but think he would have enjoyed his own funeral. I counted around a dozen or so species during the service, including Killdeer, Pyrrhuloxia, and some very aggressive and outrageous Northern Mockingbirds that showed no respect for the solemn occasion. I even felt a little sad that most of the people gathered seemed to be giving their undivided attention to the service which spoke of Dan's passion for birding but didn't notice the birds all around us. I could even imagine Dan pointing out what was singing and quietly explaining how one could tell from ear alone. The best bird though? A Red-tailed Hawk soared high overhead and made three or four appearances during the service. Like Dan, the hawk was quiet but watchful. And like spending a morning birding with Dan, it was an experience that made you glad for your time on Earth and the simple beauty that each day holds.

*-Jay Packer*

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I met Dan, March 30, 2012, on BCAS's field trip to San Angelo. My birding friend and mentor, Kathy Hampton, had birded with Dan for years. We rode with Dan on that, my first of several field trips he led. I say this with sincerity, "I am blessed to have known Dan". He was a phenomenal birder and just what I the "newby" BCAS birder needed to begin the adventure of birding. Not only was he a great birder to go with, he had the gentle spirit of the encourager. My favorite BCAS field trip was October 27, 2012, to Oak Creek Lake. That Saturday morning only two birders showed up in the dark at 7:00



am. - Kathy and I. Secretly, I feared the trip would be cancelled. Dan said we are going and..... we went to Oak Creek Lake. He had just gotten his beautiful new and shining pick-up truck. At the lake, a Northern Cardinal took a liking to it also. Dan and Kathy spotted the Cardinal, well..... here he came, flew right up to the right rear view mirror. It was so fun to watch! We got out of the truck, stood back and just watched his antics. He then flew through the cab of the truck, and to the shining chrome grill to further express his vanity. As we got back into

## Dan Symonds, Cont.

the truck to leave, he went back to his nearby perch and kept watching that shiny truck drive slowly away. I know he missed us! Dan, the outdoorsman, could spot wildlife so quickly. Near the edge of the lake, Dan spotted a large bobcat going through reeds down to the water. Just then he spotted a Northern Harrier who also spotted the bobcat. We watched several minutes as the Northern Harrier soared low over the area where the bobcat had gone into the reeds. That was probably just a normal day of birding for Dan; but it was a new birding adventure for me that I will always remember. Thanks again Dan. I will miss you.

*-JoAn Wilks*

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I had the good fortune to do the CBC at Dyess for the past 3 years with Dan. I always knew I could rely on him to know where the birds were, how to maneuver the pastures and trails, and how to spot and ID them. It always amazed me to hear his knowledge of birding spew forth when he had been so quiet prior!

To me, Dan was one of the mainstays for our Audubon group. If there were questions about what or how we did things, he provided the answer. It is memorable the way he agreed to be president after Laura died and stepped up to learn the responsibility of leadership we needed.

Could anyone count the miles he traveled or hours he spent birding in this area? Would it be possible to measure the amount of birding knowledge he had?? His death has left a big void in our group, in our hearts, and in the world of birding in the Big Country! I will miss him greatly!!

*-Bera Johnson*

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If Big Country Audubon Society had a job that needed to be done, Dan Symonds did his best to help do it or to do the job. He stepped up from Vice-President to acting president when Laura Packer became critically ill, then at her passing he served as President. He worked with the BCAS computer site, helped with and gave programs, and helped put out or put out the Penfeathers. Regularly, he signed up and did Laura's Bird Blind care. When Texas Bluebird Society sent a plaque honoring Laura, he helped put it on a Bluebird house at Wildlife Trails. (This house now has baby Bluebirds in it.) Before the Abilene State Park secured an official sign for the location of this bird blind, Dan helped put up a temporary sign and he hung a letter and picture inside the blind. He drove his vehicle on many BCAS birding trips.

## Dan Symonds, Cont.



This picture shows one of the many field trips that Dan led. Pictured with him at Seabee Park are Edna Ross, Joan Howard, Linda Beyer, and JoAn Wilks. I was behind the camera. He did not show embarrassment at being with a group of lady senior citizens. Sometimes he would quietly hand us a card and say, "I'd appreciate your vote," or "He's a good man," but he did not push his political views on birding trips. There was never any doubt that he loved America with all his being. When someone questioned his having an Air Force sticker

AND an Army sticker on his bumper at the same time, he proudly replied, "I'm retired Air Force and my son is in the Army." Dan was truly a gentle man and loyal friend. How I miss him!

Dan's family planned an honorable memorial service for him at Texas State Veteran's Cemetery. Seems a higher being helped with beautiful music from the very first of the service until the gun salute. A fitting musical tribute for a birder was provided by a Northern Mockingbird. So Beautiful!

*-Kathy Hampton*

## **BIG COUNTRY AUDUBON SOCIETY**

*President* Jay Packer  
*Vice President* Amy Packer  
*Treasurer/Membership* Dolores Owens  
*Secretary* Bera Johnson  
*Education* John English  
*Member-at-Large* John Kirk

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.

Web Page: [www.bigcountryaudubon.org](http://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: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Individual Membership:**

One year—\$20.00

If you join in Sep, Oct, Nov

Prorated Dues

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

Prorated Dues

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

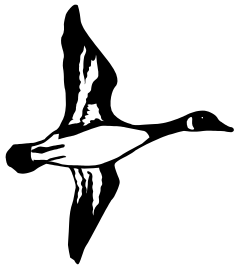
Prorated Dues

Dec, Jan, Feb \$7.50

Mar, Apr, May \$5.00

Jun, Jul, Aug \$2.50

All dues renew on September 1st.



**Big Country Audubon Society**

**P.O. Box 569**

**Abilene, TX 79604**