



Volume 31 Issue 1

BIG COUNTRY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Penfeathers

Upcoming Events...



February 7, 2013

Regular meeting at Rose Park Senior Center, 7:00 pm. Program by Larry Millar — "Archaeological Digs in Texas."

February 16, 2013

Field trip to Llano, TX to see the Llano Eagles Nest. The young eagles should be preparing to fledge. We will meet at the Burger King on Antilley Road and depart promptly at 7:00am. Come early if you wish to eat breakfast. Bring snacks and drinks since this will be a long trip. We will probably stop for lunch on the way back. Please email fieldtrips@bigcountryaudubon.org by Feb. 15th, if you plan to attend.

February 23, 2013

Field trip to Lake Stamford. We will depart What-a-Burger on North 1st and Pioneer at 7:30am. Come early if you wish to eat breakfast. Please email fieldtrips@bigcountryaudubon.org by Feb. 22nd, if you plan to attend.

March 5, 2013

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

March 7, 2013

Regular meeting at Rose Park Senior Center, 7:00 pm. John Kirk will share his experiences and birding in Mongolia.

March 16, 2013

Field trip to Lake Stamford. We will depart What-a-Burger on North 1st and Pioneer at 7:30am. Come early if you wish to eat breakfast. Please email fieldtrips@bigcountryaudubon.org by Feb. 22nd, if you plan to attend.

March 23, 2013

Field Trip around Abilene. Meet at Will Hair Park at 7:30 am. Go by Oakwood Trails and then to Lake Kirby. Bring water and snacks. Please email fieldtrips@bigcountryaudubon.org by March 22nd, if you plan to attend.

April 4, 2013

Regular meeting at Rose Park Senior Center, 7:00 pm.

April 12, 2013

Overnight field trip TBA. Expect to depart Abilene as early as noon depending on our destination.

Laura's Blind Feeder Patrol

Feb 9 – Dan Symonds

Mar 9—John Kirk

Feb 16 – Dan Symonds

Mar 16—W.K. and Carolyn Wiggins

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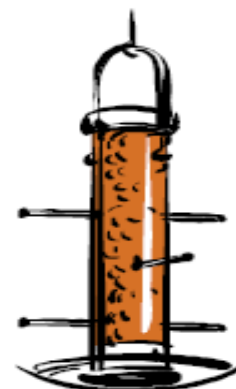
Mar 23—Jay and Amy Packer

Feb 23 – John and Susie English

Mar 30—???

Mar 2 – Dan Symonds

Apr 6—Steve and Dolores Owens



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

Christmas Bird Count

January 5, 2013

This year's Christmas Bird Count was a big success. Temperatures were a little chilly in the morning, starting off in the 30s, but it warmed up nicely, reaching 60 degrees by the afternoon. As a group, we recorded 101 species, including a number of unexpected species. Some of the best birds included a White-faced Ibis, Bald Eagle, Herring Gull, Prairie and Peregrine Falcons, and McCown's Longspur. Included in this total were good diversity of ducks and sparrows, with 15 and 10 species respectively. The most numerous species by a wide margin was Great-tailed Grackle with 5,213 individuals. Perhaps the most surprising species to post a low number was Mourning Dove. Across all the groups, only 19 individuals were observed.

We had twenty-two people participate in the count, including JoAnn Wilks, Kathy Hampton, Joe Thompson, Kim Berry, John Kirk, Larry and Donna Barnett, Vance McCracken, Larry Millar, Joan Howard, Edna Ross, Jay and Amy Packer, Michael and Sarah Speegle, Steve and Dolores Owens, Dan Symonds, Bera Johnson, Gerald McAnally, and Carolyn and W. K. Wiggins.

From Kathy Hampton:

Group 6 went past the closed Bird House to Homer and Earlene Hutto's Home. We saw several species of birds from Black-crested Titmouse to Wild Turkey. Most were up close and personal at their window feeders. The fireplace was warm and cozy. The best part was seeing the sparkle in Earlene's eyes as she 'shared her birds.' So great to see her at home and feeling much better. Her positive attitude is infectious. Homer and Mark beamed with joy watching her tell about birds she has had at her feeders--especially the Ruby-crowned Kinglet who looks at himself in the mirror as he eats. What a wonderful threesome the Hutto family is! How they love and care for their birds AND their birder friends.

From John Kirk:

The four members of Group 7 (Vance McCracken, Larry and Donna Barnett and John Kirk) counted birds in the Potosi area. Our northeast boundary was roughly the entrance to Kirby Park. Our eastern border was Highway 36. And we went all the way up to the hills on the south via the Old Coleman Highway. We covered about 40 miles crisscrossing our area.

CBC, Cont.

The morning started slowly as we headed east from Kirby Park towards Highway 36. For a while the only birds we saw were Great-tailed Grackles. Along the way, we did see a Mockingbird to two. Larry was particularly glad to see a Shrike as he had not seen one in some time. Our first real treat was when Donna shouted "Stop, there is a roadrunner". Needless to say, it hurried off in the brush. Her next special find was an owl. Sure enough, just off the road in an exposed branch of a mesquite tree was a large owl with big ears. We watched each other for about 5 minutes before the owl sailed off into the deep brush. After discussion, we decided it was a Great Horned Owl and got a picture to prove it.

Continuing down Oldham Road south, we stopped a couple of small ponds (tanks in Texan). We were able to see several ducks including Gadwalls, Pintails, Buffleheads, and Wigeons in varying numbers. Nearing the noon hour, we stopped off at JoJo's for a good lunch. After lunch we again headed south on the Old Coleman Highway. We climbed out of the winter wheat fields with the Meadowlarks and went up on the cedar bluffs to the top of the hill. We had a very nice view up there as we looked back toward Abilene but few birds.

Our next sighting was a group of bluebirds. We decided they were probably Western Bluebirds due to the amount of blue and lack of white coloring. Shortly thereafter, we spotted a hawk on a bare isolated tree. It appeared to be eating something. With the aid of Larry's scope, we determined it was a Peregrine Falcon. Through the scope, the black mustache was very evident. Having covered the majority of our area, we wandered back toward the park to end the day.

From Edna Ross:

I birded with Joan Howard and Larry Millar in group 4. We were amused by a group of Northern Shovelers forming a circle and swimming around together at the pond at Abilene Regional Hospital. We had been inside for a warm-up and a cup of cocoa and returned to see the ducks having fun. Birding Canyon Rock Lake, we found a large group of wood ducks that were a delight to see as well as a pair of hooded mergansers and a lonely bufflehead. All of the above were a change from the ducks we usually see, so they were enjoyed very much!

From Jay and Amy Packer:

Group 2, which included Jay and Amy Packer and Michael and Sarah Speegle, began our day birding Lake Kirby. We had 7 species of duck, including about 450 Northern Shovelers and some beautiful Buffleheads. We also enjoyed looking at a good number of Eared Grebes. The star of the morning was definitely a gull, although at the

CBC, Cont.

time we were unsure of which kind. Initially, we wanted to call it the California Gull that Dan Symonds had found back in November. However, after careful study and some help from expert birders around the state, we determined that it was in fact a Herring Gull. While not as rare as a California would have been, it was a fun bird nonetheless.

After leaving Kirby, we headed to Oakwood Trails for some woodland birding. Not very long after arriving, as birders are oft to do, we began creating a wishlist of birds that we wanted to see that day. First up on the list was a Brown Creeper. Sure enough, two began calling from the tops of the trees. Next, someone jokingly asked for a Bald Eagle. We all laughed and carried on, knowing this was impossible. Imagine our surprise when we looked up and there he was, in all his glory - a soaring adult Bald Eagle. We watched in shock and awe as he made slow circles up and out of sight. After this spectacular view, we wondered what else we could wish for. While none of our other crazy dreams came true, we got to see some other good birds including a Hermit Thrush and some Fox Sparrows.

After a much needed break for lunch, we spent the afternoon driving around trying to cover as much of our area as possible. During our travels, we were treated to a lovely Prairie Falcon sitting on a telephone pole near the Ben Richey Boy's Ranch, a White-faced Ibis on the Saddle Creek Pond, and some Western Bluebirds on Ave de Baca, south of Lake Kirby. All in all, it was a great day and a successful Christmas Bird Count.

Death of a Rock Pigeon

By Jay Packer



Predation is one of the great spectacles of nature. No one likes to see the gazelle bite the dust, but everyone appreciates the cheetah. So it was for Amy and I this past weekend, when we visited Snyder in Scurry County. As we drove down one of its main streets, I glanced out my window and was shocked to see a young Cooper's Hawk sitting in a vacant lot at the side of the road. In its talons was a freshly killed Rock Pigeon. We were too late to witness the actual kill, but the feast had not yet begun.

We pulled into the lot, and I snapped a few photographs from the car window, but the angle of the sun was not ideal. So we drove around the back edge of the lot and repositioned ourselves with the sun at our backs. I snapped a few more pictures, and then decided that getting closer was the key to getting what I wanted. So I got out of the car and crawled on my belly like a commando through the dirt, rocks, and thorns towards the bird. The Hawk would not budge from its kill.

In the end, I found myself a mere ten feet away or so from the bird. In 30 minutes, I had filled up two memory cards and taken over 2000 pictures. It's an experience I'll never forget. Here are some of my best photos.



Bird Tracks...



Notable Sightings for December 2012 and January 2013:

Species	Date	Location	Observers	# of Birds
White-faced Ibis	1/5/13	Saddle Creek Pond	AP, JP, MS, SS	1
Bald Eagle	1/5/13	Oakwood Trails	AP, JP, MS, SS	1
Common Gallinule	1/4/13; 1/16/13	Wildlife Trails	DS; AP, JP	1
Long-billed Dowitcher	2/2/13	Sandy Beach Park, Lake JB Thomas	AP, JP	20
Bonaparte's Gull	2/2/13	Sandy Beach Park, Lake JB Thomas	AP, JP	12
Herring Gull	12/8/12; 1/5/13	Lake Fort Phantom; Lake Kirby,	DS; AP, JP, MS, SS	1
Short-eared Owl	2/2/13	Sandy Beach Park, Lake JB Thomas	AP, JP	1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	12/9/12	Abilene State Park	DS	1
Downy Woodpecker	1/20/13	Countryside Neighborhood	DS	1
Peregrine Falcon	1/5/13	CBC Group 7 Area	VM, LB, DB, JK	1
Prairie Falcon	1/5/13	Ben Richey Road	AP, JP, MS, SS	1
House Wren	2/2/13	CR 321, Stonewall County	AP, JP	1
Marsh Wren	2/2/13	CR 321, Stonewall County	AP, JP	1
Western Bluebird	2/2/13	Hwy 83, Stonewall County	AP, JP	10
McCown's Longspur	1/5/13	Dyess AFB	DS	50
Fox Sparrow	2/2/13	CR 321, Stonewall County	AP, JP	1
Swamp Sparrow	2/2/13	CR 321, Stonewall County	AP, JP	1
White-throated Sparrow	2/2/13	Snyder WWTP, Scurry County	AP, JP	1

Observers: AP—Amy Packer, JP—Jay Packer, MS—Michael Speegle, SS—Sarah Speegle, DS—Dan Symonds, VM—Vance McCracken, LB—Larry Barnett, DB—Donna Barnett, JK—John Kirk

Editor's Note: Bird Tracks will be limited to those species that occur rarely, sporadically, migrate through the area at low densities, or whose distribution is not fully understood. Species that occur regularly and are expected in the area will no longer be reported. Sightings are generated from eBird data and reports from local members.

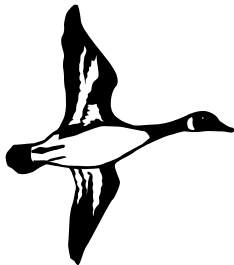
BIG COUNTRY AUDUBON SOCIETY

President Jay Packer
Vice President Amy Packer
Treasurer/Membership Dolores Owens
Secretary Bera Johnson
Education John English
Field Trips Dan Symonds
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.

Hotline: 325-480-1089

Web Page: www.bigcountryaudubon.org



Big Country Audubon Society

P.O. Box 569

Abilene, TX 79604

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	Dec, Jan, Feb	\$22.50
If you join in Sep, Oct, Nov	Mar, Apr, May	\$15.00
	Jun, Jul, Aug	\$ 7.50
Student Membership:		
One year—\$10.00	Dec, Jan, Feb	\$ 7.50
If you join in Sep, Oct, Nov	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		