

Winter 2012

Woods Wings Water

Dallas County Audubon Society • Local Chapter of the National Audubon Society



Join us for our Chapter/Program Meetings at the Trinity River Audubon Center

Audubon Dallas is proud to partner with the Trinity River Audubon Center (TRAC) to sponsor the 2012 lineup of must-see guest speakers featured during TRAC's Third Thursday monthly events which are free to the general public and offer a variety of activities including crafts and nature walks.

FEBRUARY 16

Whooping Cranes with Lee Ann Linam, Wildlife Biologist of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

MARCH 15

Caribbean Flamingos by Chris Brown, Bird Curator, Dallas Zoo and Ben Jones, Acting Director of Trinity River Audubon Center

APRIL 19

Hummingbirds with Cliff Shackelford, Non-game Ornithologist of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

MAY 17

Trinity Bird Count summary and findings by Karen Walz, Coordinator

Our Chapter/Program meetings are every third Thursday at 6:30 pm. See you there!

Winter Bird Feeding - an Amazing Adventure

With 636 of the 957 species in North America and 98.5% of all North American migratory birds recorded in our state, Texas is for the birds! Feeding birds can be the beginning of an amazing nature adventure. Most people think all little birds are sparrows, but with a little attention, you'll soon recognize dozens of different species present during different seasons. Bird identification can be a fun intellectual exercise and watching birds allows you to enjoy the interesting behaviors, pleasing sounds and beautiful colors in nature.

Around 15 bird species visit the average yard. With a little effort, you'll increase your species count to around 50. Try offering different foods and placing feeders at different levels. Try a good quality seed mix to attract birds such as cardinal, blue jay, dove, chickadee, and titmouse. Add peanuts into the mix and watch for woodpeckers and nuthatch. Try thistle seed this winter to attract finches. You'll need a special feeder for thistle or you can pour it into an inexpensive mesh sock. Suet is available in many varieties and it is a great bird food for winter. Fatty suet provides extra energy for birds during cold months.

Most birds find food by sight so place your feeder in an area where it is easily seen. Birds like to eat at the same level they would get their food in the wild.

Chickadees, nuthatches, titmice, and woodpecker feed at elevated levels so they enjoy eating from raised feeders. Doves, sparrows, and junco feed off the ground so you will most likely see them feeding beneath an elevated feeder. Cardinals and jays feed at different levels so they'll eat just about anywhere.

Some bird species live here year-round. Some are migratory and travel with the seasons. This winter watch for resident species such as blue jay, northern cardinal, mourning dove, white-wing dove, Inca dove, tufted titmouse, and Carolina chickadee. Woodpeckers are resident so watch for red-bellied, hairy, and downy. Take a closer look this winter to see these migratory species: dark-eyed junco, American goldfinch, red-breasted and white-breasted nuthatches. American goldfinch will be in drab winter plumage until March and you'll need thistle to attract them as well as resident house finches (sometimes mistaken for purple finches). Of course, where there is an abundance of bird activity, there could always be bird-eaters. Protect your feeder from cats and watch for cool raptors like Cooper's and Sharp-shinned hawks.

Put out a few feeders. Try some new seed mixes. Get a good field guide. Sip hot chocolate and let the winter bird fun begin!

Field Trips

Waterfowl Identification Class

Saturday January 21 - 7:15 – 10:30 am

Location: Southside Water Treatment Plant & John Bunker Sands Wetland Center

\$5.00 per person for Wetland Center Admission

Join us for a birding adventure beginning at the Southside water treatment plant and ending at the amazing John Bunker Sands Wetland Center. Dr. Bob Stone, naturalist and former Audubon Dallas Board member, will be leading the group through both sites to identify and study waterfowl. Dr. Stone has birded on all continents except Antarctica and is currently at 2030 on his World Bird List.

Please bring a Sibley Guide for reference, binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one.

Directions to Southside:

From the junction of I-20 freeway and highway 175
Head southeast on 175 toward Kaufman
Exit Belt Line and turn right onto S. Belt Line Rd
Go 1.5 miles to the front gate parking lot of Southside
where you will find Dr. Stone waiting to take groups
inside the gate.

Class size is limited to 12 participants and participants must sign a liability waiver. Also, bring a photo ID so that the security guard can check your name against the list of participants attending.

Please RSVP at least 10 days prior to class date to Sahar Sea at ssea@audubon.org with name, address, email address, and a phone number.

PLEASE visit www.wetlandcenter.com to learn about this wonderful wetland!

TWO White Rock Lake & Old Fish Hatchery Walks

Sunday, February 12 - 7:30 am

Sunday, March 11 - 7:30 am

Leader: Chris Runk - no RVSP required for this trip

Meeting Place: Parking lot on Winstead off Garland Road at the Spillway.

Description: Join us for a field trip on foot at one of Dallas' prime birding locations. Beginners welcome! Binoculars are necessary for this outing. Approximately 2 to 3 hours

Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday, February 18 - 9:00 am-2:00 pm

Location: Trinity River Audubon Center

Join our experienced North Texas field ornithologists in this Citizen Science adventure for all ages. A 15-minute bird census will be conducted at various locations on the TRAC property every hour on the hour. All findings will be submitted to GBBC.

Whooping Crane Trip, Rockport/Fulton, Texas area

Saturday and Sunday, February 18 and 19

Travel days: Friday, February 17 and Monday, February 20

Description: On Saturday, a 4-hour boat trip (on the Wharf Cat) is scheduled to see the Whooping Cranes along the Inter-coastal Waterway from Rockport Harbor to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. We will bird on land around the Rockport/Fulton area after the boat trip. On Sunday, we will do a full day of birding at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Individuals are responsible for their own travel to and from the Rockport/Fulton area. Hotel headquarters will be the Best Western Inn by the Bay in Fulton, Texas.

For details, contact Reba Collins, field trip leader, at 972-530-2412 or rcollins20@verizon.net. There is a limit of 12 spaces. RSVPs must be received no later than February 10.

TWO Geoffrey B. Stanford Trout Lily Walks

Sunday, February 26 - 1:00 PM

Saturday, March 3 - 10:00 AM

Location: Cedar Ridge Preserve

Description: Trout lilies, or white dog-toothed violets, are the harbingers of spring in the plant world. These flowers in the lily family bloom from mid-February to mid-March. And there are many interesting facts about trout lilies. Did you know trout lily bulbs produce just one leaf in the first 6 years, then 2 leaves, a scape (stem) and a flower in the 7th year?

Master Naturalist and long-time CRP volunteer Jim Varnum will conduct a short walk to observe trout lilies. The walk lasts approximately 1 hour. Bring your camera. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support. Join Jim for a nature walk afterwards.

For details Contact Jim Varnum at jvarnum@aol.com or 214-543-2055. RSVP is not needed.

Celebrate Birds Festival

Saturday, March 31, 10:00 am-2:00 pm

Location: Trinity River Audubon Center

A free egg-stravaganza for the whole family awaits bird enthusiasts and nature lovers at the Trinity River Audubon Center. As the country looks toward Earth Day, Celebrate Bird Fest will showcase the power and diversity of birds with an opportunity for children and adults to meet birds of prey up close, fly homing pigeons, dissect owl pellets (What?), talk to an ornithologist (Cool!), and take guided birding hikes. There will be craft stations to create bird art and learn about binoculars and spotting scopes! The celebration features an additional earth-friendly element as participants build bird houses and make bird feeders.

Warbler Identification with Jim Peterson

Saturday, May 5 - 8:00 am-11:30 pm

Location: Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center

The Warblers are coming! Are you ready? Warblers are colorful and extremely active birds, which flock in large groups during spring and fall migrations. They can be gray, olive, or green; many are patterned with bright yellow, red, orange, blue or black and white. There are many species of warblers with many names to describe their appearance. Learn to identify these amazing birds with ease and confidence.

Jim Peterson was Curator of Ornithology at the Dallas Museum of Natural History and is now Director of Technology at the Episcopal School of Dallas. He has com-

pleted the Dallas County Christmas Count for the last 21 years, and currently maintains bird records for North-Central Texas at <http://www.nctexasbirds.com>.

NOTE : *It is very important that you RSVP for every trip you plan to attend, unless otherwise noted. Scheduled field trips may be cancelled due to weather or for other reasons, at the discretion of the field trip leader. Notice of last minute changes will be posted, if possible, on the Late-breaking News forum of the Bird Talk page. Be on time because trips will depart at the meeting time. Most field trips are free and open to everyone, beginners to veteran birders, however some may have an associated fee which will be indicated. Be sure to dress for the weather and conditions, bring food and drinks as indicated, and be prepared with insect repellent, sun block, and a hat.*

Check the Field Trips Page on our website often for new posts of upcoming field trips!

This I Believe: Birds Make Life Better.

By Ben Jones

I'm not a manic birder - no life list, no spotting scope, no yard full of bird feeders. What I am, is a believer in birds. Birds make life better. Twelve years ago, I was vacationing in Mexico, lying in the sun watching clouds float and form when a huge bird crossed the sky. As it soared, I made mental notes to help identify it when I returned to Dallas. It's black and bigger than most birds in the sky, its wings are long and sharply angled, forked-tail, long bill. It fights with other birds in mid-air. Soon, I was back in the routine of city life - highways, parking lots, Starbucks - but something wasn't so routine. I thought about that bird in Mexico and paid more attention to birds around me.

That was the start of it all - a life of more beauty, more curiosity, and a deeper connection to nature. Birds are beautiful. Their shapes, colors and sounds are among the most pleasing in nature. Mockingbird and cardinal songs, even pigeon coos soften city clamor. My heart slows watching gulls above White Rock Lake, their wings moving in hypnotic rhythm. Huge white pelicans fish together. As if on cue, they circle-up and scoop their beaks beneath the water in perfect sync. Out over the waving grass, I glimpse Scissor-tailed Flycatchers dancing in blurs of pink and yellow above the prairie, long tails swirling behind.

Ever spot a Red-tailed Hawk perched above traffic? I watched one fly at sunset, its wings pulling it deep into the pink sky. Near Skillman, I snuck up on Wood Ducks floating side-by-side in a shadowy ditch. Radiant red bills and eyes, deep blues and greens, features outlined in bright chalky white. They must be our most beautiful ducks. I've watched the Painted Bunting here, too. The bird looks as if it's just flown through a

wet rainbow. Beauty runs in the family; its cousin, the Indigo Bunting, sports the most brilliant blue I've ever seen. Like good art, birds offer beauty and spark curiosity; they make me think, Why? How? What was that? Mourning Dove, White-winged, Inca? Maybe Rock Dove ... nope, too small.

My first landmark ornithological discovery - all small birds are not sparrows. Chickadees, titmice, kinglets and wrens - true identities revealed at last. Sometimes I think I make new discoveries. When I saw flickers hunting insects on the ground, I thought, flickers don't feed on the ground! Later I read, sure enough they do, in early spring. Ok, so no new discovery for science, but a new discovery for me and discovery is discovery. Birds make me a better observer.

I look more closely now at all nature. Thanks to birds, I now know moon phases, Trinity River levels, day-length, and what's in bloom. Birds connect me to the rhythm of the natural world. Flocks of Cedar Waxwings announce winter in a way no calendar can. The calendar designates autumn's arrival, but I wait for goldfinch and junco to confirm it. Purple Martin scouts arrive, chirping from the telephone wire, their oily feathers shine in the sun - spring is here, again. Since that moment in Mexico, birds have enriched my life.

Now, I carry binoculars behind my driver's seat. They ride on top of a well-worn field guide I picked-up to identify that bird in Mexico. Flipping through it for the first time, I found it! Page 48, big and jet-black; long, sharp wings, forked-tail. That's it - a Magnificent Frigatebird. More beauty and curiosity, more connection and discovery ... magnificent indeed.

Cedar Ridge Preserve

At an elevation of 755 feet, Cedar Ridge Preserve (formerly the Dallas Nature Center) is a slice of the hill country just 20 minutes from downtown Dallas. Cedar Ridge Preserve is a natural habitat of 600 acres featuring about 9 miles of trails, native trees, grasses and wildflowers, butterfly gardens, limited picnic areas and wild mammals, birds, insects and reptiles. CRP has been managed by Audubon Dallas since April 2003 by charter from the Dallas County Park & Open Space Program and the City of Dallas.

7171 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas 75249
972-709-7784

HOURS:

November 1 - March 31 - 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

April 1 - October 31 - 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Closed Mondays

For questions about educational programming, scheduling a visit by a school group, or planning a Scout project, call 972-709-7784.

Conservation in Action (CIA) Work Days

Saturday, February 18, 9 AM - Noon

Saturday, March 17, 9 AM - Noon

Saturday, April 21, 9 AM - Noon

You're always welcome to join us any third Saturday of the month between 9 and Noon on our CIA work days to help restore habitat and maintain trails. You can get some good exercise and meet nice people.

We've had lots of folks involved including Sierra Club members, community service workers, and local regulars all contributing to help maintain the preserve. Several volunteers were trained on how to maintain trails, which at CRP is crucial since our hilly trails suffer erosion over time. Come hike and enjoy wildflowers, cactus, birds, and maybe even a bobcat.

Water and snacks are provided. Wear sturdy boots or shoes with good ankle support and bring gloves if you have them, even though we will also have some available. Bring a friend!

Cedar Ridge Preserve Announces the Second Annual Hike on the Wild Side Hike-a-Thon



On Saturday, May 5, Cedar Ridge Preserve will hold its Second Annual Hike on the Wild Side Hike-a-Thon. This non-competitive event will raise money to mark the Preserve's trails, useful in emergency situations to help locate hikers who need assistance, and to pinpoint trail locations when discussing the trail improvements. The first Hike-a-Thon event in 2011 raised over \$2,500 and had nearly fifty registered participants. Many non-registered hikers also stopped by to enjoy the activities. The Hike-a-Thon included informational

tables hosted by several organizations including Audubon Dallas, The Canterbury Episcopal School, Whole Earth Provisions, The Cake Guys and the Texas Native Plant Society. The Texas Metroplex Institute, which provides sports therapy for the Texas Rangers, was on hand to teach the participants about proper stretching and necessary recovery from a hike.

For more information please contact Robert Rinker at 817-881-2736 or info_CRP@yahoo.com.

Want to show your support and be the best dressed hiker at Cedar Ridge Preserve? Get a CRP T-shirt while there!