



San Antonio Audubon Society

AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

Volume 55 Number 4

April 2009

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EASTERN PHOEBES

As our local sort of “winter” blends into our summer-like spring, my thoughts at this season often turn to points further north. The weather this time of year is often cold and wintry up there. Red-winged Blackbirds and Spring Peepers call out warmer times are coming despite all appearances to the contrary. Among these characteristic harbingers of spring, Eastern Phoebes (*Sayornis phoebe*) sing from riparian woodland edges and farm yards, it stretching credulity that a flycatcher could sustain itself in those latitudes at that season.

The genus *Sayornis* contains but two other species: the Black Phoebe (*S. nigricans*) and Say’s Phoebe (*S. saya*), all three phoebes being native wholly or in part to North America. All are relatively cold hardy, especially in comparison to most of our flycatchers,

several of which are late-spring migrants. In the Southwest, both Black and Say’s Phoebes winter as far north as Northern Arizona. Across the East, individual Eastern Phoebes may winter north of the Ohio River Valley; most of the population, however, winters in our southern states or in the northern half of Mexico. The species is a common winter resident here in Bexar County.

The relative cold-hardiness of the genus may be attributed to a propensity to forage on or near the ground, exploiting warmer microclimates occurring in sheltered hollows, behaviors which allow the Say’s Phoebe in particular to breed even on Arctic Tundra. Black and Eastern Phoebes are commonly associated with water at all seasons, and may take berries during the harshest weather. All three species, however, may suffer severe winter or early-spring mortality in exceptionally cold years.



Eastern Phoebe by Marcin Kojtko

Except when breeding, phoebes are solitary in habit. The common vocalization of the Eastern Phoebe is a distinctive “chip” which often gives away the location of this otherwise inconspicuous bird. Closer inspection will reveal a dull-colored, medium-sized flycatcher, flipping its tail downward in a characteristic manner. Male Eastern Phoebes may commence to sing their simple song in late winter and while on migration, the alternating phrases of “fee-bee” and a slightly more trilled version of the same giving all three species in the genus their common name.

The breeding range of the Eastern Phoebe extends from the Great Slave Lake region of Canada, east to Nova Scotia and south across southern states to Central Texas. This breeding range expanded onto the Plains following settlement and at present appears to be expanding in the South.

The mud nest of the Eastern Phoebe is generally similar in form to that of the Barn Swallow and like that bird, the species has benefited enormously from the provision of man-made structures such as porches, drainage culverts and bridges that offer sheltered locations in which to place the nest. Presumably, phoebes were once limited to nesting in crevices on cliff faces and rocky outcrops, as they still are in areas without human habitation. The scarcity of such sites limits their abundance in remote areas.

(Continued on page 3)

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR

MONTHLY MEETING

April 2nd, Thursday, 7:00 PM

Presenter: Lacey Halstead,
Executive Director, Headwaters Coalition

**“A Virtual Tour of the Headwaters Sanctuary:
11,000 Years of Natural History”**

Lion's Field, 2809 Broadway
(Mulberry at Broadway)

April 4, Saturday, 8:00 AM

SAAS Field Trip to Medina River Natural Area

Meet leader Helen Rejzek in the parking lot of the Medina River Natural Area. From South Loop 410 take the SH-16 /Palo Alto exit. Go south on SH-16 for about 4.2 miles to the entrance, which will be on the left just before the Medina River bridge. After birding the park we will bird the new area nearby. We encourage carpooling to the new area due to very limited parking there. Bring water. Contact Helen at (210) 679-7437.

April 5, Sunday, 8:00 AM

SAAS Field Trip to Ave. A and Botanical Garden

Meet leader Georgina Schwartz at the parking lot on Red Oak. Turn north on Red Oak from Mulberry in Brackenridge Park. From there we will walk south to Avenue A. After birding Avenue A, we will continue birding at the San Antonio Botanical Gardens, located at 555 Funston Place. Fee at Gardens is \$7.00/adult; \$5.00/senior. Contact Georgina at (210) 342-2073.

April 11, Saturday, 8:00 AM

SAAS Beginner's Bird Walk

Meet leader Karen Moulder at the Judson Nature Trail next to the Alamo Heights swimming pool. At the 5900 block of Broadway in Alamo Heights, turn west on Ogden to stop sign at Greeley Street. Turn left one block, then right on Viesca to small parking lot on the left before the swimming pool. All are welcome; binoculars available. Contact Karen at (210) 824-2547.

April 18, Saturday, 8:00 AM

SAAS Field Trip to San Antonio Mission

Meet leaders Andy and Wendy Garcia at the Mission

San Juan parking lot. From Loop 410 in SE San Antonio, take South Presa Street northwest about 2 miles to Graf Road. Turn left on Graf and proceed past Ashley Road to the mission complex. Includes the Mission's boardwalk and the surrounding area. Bring water. Contact Andy or Wendy at (210) 344-4162.

April 22, Wednesday, 8:00 AM

SAAS Field Trip to Live Oak Park

Meet leader Sandi Wheeler in the main parking lot of Live Oak Park. From Loop 410 northeast, take IH-35 north towards Austin. Take exit to Judson Road and turn right at the first stop sign after you get off of IH-35. Judson Road becomes Toepperwein Road toward Randolph AFB. At the traffic light at Leafy Hollow Street turn left. Go to the end of the street which then turns right and becomes the park road. Go to the end of the parking lot. Contact Sandi at (210) 659-8168.

April 26, Sunday, 8:00 AM

SAAS Field Trip to Warbler Woods

Meet Susan and Don Schaezler at their wonderful sanctuary near Cibolo. Take IH 35 north toward Austin. Take Exit #176, Wiederstein. Turn right on Wiederstein Road at the overpass. Turn left at the next road, Old Wiederstein. After you pass Dean Road, the Schaezler property begins on the right. Look for the green mailbox, address: 19349 Old Wiederstein. Enjoy a walk around the property or just sit in the yard and watch the birds come to the feeders. Contact Don or Susan at (210) 602-8621.

April 28, Tuesday, 8:00 AM

SAAS Field Trip to Leon Creek Greenway

Meet Helen Rejzek in the parking lot of the Leon Creek Greenway. Driving from Loop 1604 exit Babcock and drive south about 2 miles to the Leon Creek Greenway (12160 Babcock). Coming from IH 10 exit at DeZavala and drive west about 1.75 miles to the light at Babcock. Turn right on Babcock. The Greenway is about 0.7 mile on the left. Bring water. At this time there are new trails being constructed in the park. Will have a backup plan to bird other areas near the park depending on the status of the construction. Contact Helen at (210) 679-7437.

(Continued from page 1)

Eastern Phoebes are early-spring migrants in the north and commence breeding shortly after arrival, most pairs attempting two broods each year. They display a high degree of nest-site fidelity, a fact first proven by the still-teenage John James Audubon when he placed silver threads around the legs of phoebes on his Pennsylvania family farm. Old nests from previous years are readily reused. The construction of new nests, or the refurbishment of old ones, is a task performed exclusively by the female.

The male does not feed the incubating female nor does he incubate the eggs in her absence, somewhat surprising given the early season at which these birds commence to nest. Certainly the five eggs typical of most clutches must be resistant to exposure, even given the thick layer of dead moss characteristically lining the nest. Development is typically songbird-rapid: the eggs hatch at around sixteen days and both sexes feed the young which are able to fly fairly well by the fifteenth day.

It has been my experience that Eastern Phoebes are becoming increasingly common as breeding birds here in Bexar County, perhaps consistent with their reported range-wide southern expansion. In particular, two pairs in my immediate neighborhood on the far West Side come to mind, both nesting under highway bridges over intermittent streams. ❁

~Mike Scully



OTHER BIRDING EVENTS

April 9, Thursday, 6:30 PM

Bexar Audubon Society's March Meeting

"Just Passing Through! Songbirds in Spring Migration," by Martin Reid. See: www.bexaraudubon.org.

April 11, Saturday, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Friedrich Wilderness Park

Neighborhood Birds, by Tom and Patsy Inglet. 21395 Milsa. Reservations recommended. \$3.00/individual; \$5/family. Call: (210) 564-6400 or see:

www.sanaturalareas.org.

April 18, Saturday, 8:00 AM

Bexar Audubon Society Trip to Warbler Woods

Contact Patty Pasztor for reservations at (210) 824-

1235 or e-mail pasztor@ix.netcom.com. [see p. 2 for directions]

April 18, Saturday, 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

S.A. Botanical Garden Beginner's Bird Walk

San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place. Meet at Carriage House. Fees: adults - \$7.00; seniors - \$5.00; children (under 12) \$4.00. Free for SABG members. See: www.sabot.org.

April 23-25, Thursday - Saturday.

Texas Ornithological Society Spring Meeting

The meeting will be held in Austin; includes bird banding at Warbler Woods on April 24 (all day) - April 25 (until noon). See: www.texasbirds.org.

April 25, Saturday, 7:00 AM – 9:00 AM

Boerne Birders

Birding by Ear, by Tom & Patsy Inglet. Cibolo Nature Center. Free. For more information, call 830-230-5551 or 210-710-3981.

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center

Regular hours are from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Saturdays and Sundays; call Center at (210) 628-1639 for other times. Directions: Exit South Loop 410 at Moursund Blvd (Exit-46); go south 0.7 mile to gate on left and ring buzzer for entry. Docent-led birding trips, \$3.00 for MLAC members, \$5.00 for non-members, are scheduled at 8:00 AM on:

April 12, 2nd Sunday

April 14, 2nd Tuesday

April 19, 3rd Sunday

April 25, 4th Saturday

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

*Burrowing Owl
by Sheridan Coffey*



*Please send your favorite birding photos to:
editor@saudubon.org*

The Birding Scene February 2009

February began with a little glimpse of Spring. Purple Martin reports came in from Brad Weir at the Botanical Gardens and Curt Harwerth from "Hidden Lake" at 1604 and Bandera. A female Summer Tanager was seen by John and Diane Fey on Ave A on February 5, along with a male Wilson's Warbler.

Helen Rejzek found a Brown Thrasher at O.P Schnabel Park on February 8. Helen and Mike Creese found a Hutton's Vireo at Friedrich Park on February 9. This species is becoming fairly regular, though still a very good find. They also found a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron on the riverbank at Ave. A.



One of the more unusual sightings at Mitchell Lake Audubon Center was an albino Red-tailed Hawk, reported by Barbara Kyse, from the second Tuesday field trip on February 10. The bird was seen north of Bird Pond perched in a tree. It then flew east towards the Police Academy. Georgina Schwartz led that field trip and also reported a Solitary Sandpiper on Bird Pond, eight Cinnamon Teal, a White-faced Ibis and many of the expected winter birds.



Bob Doe had a good day on February 13 on Cagnon and Mechlar Roads. Despite a lot of clearing, Bob was able to find a group of Olive Sparrows on the west side

of Cagnon, north of Spurs Ranch Road. A briefly-seen hawk on Mechlar Road was possibly a Ferruginous. There was a flock of Horned Larks on Mechlar Road. Bob also had a female/winter plumaged male Indigo Bunting on February 19 at his yard feeder in Spring Branch.

Dodge Engleman found a Red-shafted Northern Flicker on Ave. A February 16. A Winter Wren, a Downy Woodpecker and White-throated Sparrows were also found along the river. Caleb Dye photographed a female Black-headed Grosbeak in his yard

on February 22. Lora Render reported the first Black-chinned Hummingbird of Spring on February 26.

~Sheridan Coffey

SAAS Members: Please check your mailing label for the membership **renewal date!** Use the form on the back page or the online form at: www.saadubon.org/membership.html to renew or change your info. Members who get the pdf newsletter will receive a renewal reminder via email.

Annual Treasurer's Report

Balance Sheet as of December 2008

Sanctuary Fund

Opening Balance -----\$29,651
Ending balance -----\$29,984

Equity

Opening Balance ----- \$9,398
Income ----- \$5,592
Expenses ----- \$6,663
Ending Balance ----- \$8,327

2008 brought an increase in SAAS' conservation efforts through donations totaling \$2,358 in support of various wildlife conservation efforts including Operation Migration and the purchase of additional land at Welder Flats for Whooping Crane conservation. We also made a donation to support a youth group participating in the Great Texas Birding Classic and continued our support in 2009. Sixty-three percent (\$3,797) of 2008's income was in the form of dues. Savings, and CD interest, sales, and general donations make up the remainder. Producing and mailing the newsletter made up 29% (\$1,789) of the club's expenses and another 8% (\$529) went to pay the rent for Lion's Field Senior Citizen's Center. Overall rent costs have gone down since we moved to Lion's Field. Other costs to the SAAS include the telephone, website support, mailbox rental, gifts and awards, and the costs associated with the annual dinner, and picnic plus a few other miscellaneous costs.

If members would like a more detailed accounting for 2008, please see Sandi Wheeler at the meetings or contact her at Wheels5683@satx.rr.com. ❁

~Sandi Wheeler

Welcome New Members!

Daviss, David ----- (210) 930-8657
95 Haverhill Way, San Antonio, TX 78209-8316
McCasland, Carol ----- (830) 537-4226
116 Roundup Dr, Boerne, TX 78006-5953

Member Update

Aldridge, Ann
8524 Woodcliff Blvd, Selma, TX 78154-3362
Nicholson, A. G. ----- (210)655-9202
5119 Village Row, San Antonio, TX 78218-3828



Judson Nature Trail Report

On Friday, February 28th, Cub Scouts from Pack #59, Dens 4 and 6 were present at the trails to clean along Olmos Creek. There were at least a dozen boys, along with that many adults, who picked up trash.

Patty Leslie Pasztor, naturalist, botanical consultant, and ethnobotanist gave a four foot tall Hop Tree to replace the small one that



died during the drought. The replacement tree was planted in a new location on March 2nd during a trail work day. Fourteen committee members and two Alamo Heights residents, Patty Pasztor and David Middleton, helped that day. David moved the marker for the Hop Tree from the old location to where the tree is planted now near the trail house. Other hummingbird/butterfly plants were put in.

The trails were raked of winter debris and a small amount of trash was collected. Georgina Schwartz cleaned all the benches and stained the graffiti. Earlier in February I refinished a bench that had been marked up and one that had been burned. I painted the back door of the trail house where we had our first graffiti initials in blue marker. I reported this to the Alamo Heights Chief of Police, Rick Pruitt. He informed me that the bike patrol was back and our committee met Officer Jordan Hosey when he came by on our work day. We told him how grateful we are that he will try

to keep the bicyclists off the trails, meet the trail users, and keep his eyes open for any trouble makers, especially in the evening and on weekends.

We were able to make a sizable dent in removing the Macfadyena (“catclaw”) vine, a very invasive plant that will take time to eradicate. The Publics Works crew from Alamo Heights came and cut down and hauled away unwanted Ligustrum and Chinaberry trees near the trail house. They also cut branches overhanging various parts of the trail. We are so lucky to have them work with us to keep the trail in good order. ❁

~Shirley Bartels, JNT Chairman

Community Events

April 4, Saturday, 9:00 AM—11:00 AM

Eisenhower Park Walk

19399 NW Military Hwy. Reservations recommended. Call to verify walk will be conducted. \$3.00/individual; \$5/family. Call: (210) 564-6400 or see: www.naturalareas.org.

April 4, Saturday, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Mostly Native Plant Sale and Green Living Fair

Located at Kendall County Fairgrounds, Boerne. Cibolo Nature Center. See: www.cibolo.org

April 11, Saturday, 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Monarch Madness

Mysterious Life Cycle of the Monarch Butterfly, by Monika Maeckle, Medina River Natural Area. Call (210) 624-2575 for reservations. Suggested donation: \$3.00/individual; \$5.00/family. [see p. 2 for directions]

April 17-19, Friday - Sunday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Art and Conservation Exhibit

Exhibit of art created from nature and wildlife from artists spending a year on Texas Hill Country properties. Free. Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium, Boerne.

April 24, Friday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Spring Wildflower Walk

Meet at Cibolo Nature Center parking lot and carpool to field trip site in northern Bexar County. Members \$15/person; non-members \$20/person. Pre-registration required. Call: (830) 249-4616. Limited to 20. See: www.cibolo.org.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS



Field Trip to Choke Canyon, Feb. 21

On February 21st, seven birders met me for four hours of birding at Choke Canyon State Park. We had a good day finding over 80 species of birds. Highlights were several Olive Sparrows, Audubon Orioles, Green Jays, Vermilion Flycatchers, and Verdin. After leaving the park, we stopped at the feedlot and found several hundred Snow Geese and 9 Sandhill Cranes.

~Mike Creese

Mitchell Lake 4th Saturday Trip, Feb 28

Ernie Roney guided nine birders, including two from Ohio on their first trip to south Texas, on his monthly bird count of Mitchell Lake. 38 species were found, including Verdin, Vermilion Flycatcher, American Avocet, and White-faced Ibis.

~Ron Hillstromb

Field Trip to Stone Oak Park, March 7

Fifteen energetic and wind-swept San Antonio Audubon Society members joined leader Mariann Golden for a lovely morning of birding. The bird of the day was the Rock Wren that has been present in the rocks at the base of the retention dam over the past few months. It was a life and/or county bird for many in the group. He allowed us long, lingering looks at his distinctive behavior. The wind and lack of rain kept the numbers down but it didn't spoil the fun. Not counting the three plastic, bobble-headed Great Horned Owls found on a home balcony, we saw 24 species.

~Gail Nickel



Leader Mariann Golden (in center wearing white hat) leads the charge up the hill at the Stone Oak Parkway field trip.

Beginners' Bird Walk, March 14

A wet and cold day brought out some beginners and

some visitors from out of town. One from San Diego and two from New Jersey. Our day was brightened by the sight of a Vermilion Flycatcher near the bridge at the south end of the Olmos Park. Other highlights included Great Egret, a Great Blue Heron, a Caracara, a large flock of American Goldfinches, and another of Red-winged Blackbirds. We totaled 26 species and were glad to have cocoa and cookies back at the trail-house. Thanks to Dave Edwards for help in finding the birds and Gayle for her cookies, and thanks to all who came on this cold day.

~Georgina Schwartz

SAAS-Y NOTES

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Maverick Ranch - May 3, Sunday.

Tobin Park - May 10, Sunday.

SAAS AT THE ZOO

The San Antonio Zoo is hosting a Party for the Planet (Biodiversity in Your Backyard) event on Saturday, April 18th from 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM inside the Zoo. SAAS will have a table at the party. If you are interested in volunteering at the table for a portion of the day, please contact Barbara Kyse at bckyse@msn.com. After the event, SAAS participants could then tour the zoo to check out the exhibits and zoo residents.

~Barbara Kyse

KLRN VOLUNTEERS

Thanks to all who responded to our one "break" at KLRN during the Lehrer News Hour on March 6, 2009. We didn't get much warning. They don't use much local talent on the air these days as it is cheaper to just hook into the national pledge drive. We were glad to get together again and we all got a chance to answer the phones. It was a good evening. Thanks to Jerry Coleman, Lorna Engleman, Debbie Engler, April and Ari Grunspan, Mariann Golden, Metha Haggard, Margaret Rote, Nelson Seffel, and Betty Walters.

~Georgina Schwartz

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

Editor: Marilyn Williams

Contributing Editor and Mailing: Georgina Schwartz

Mailing Labels: Carol McCasland

The newsletter deadline is the 15th for the following month's issue. Please send submissions via email to editor@saadubon.org.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The San Antonio Audubon Society needs your assistance. We are in the process of reenergizing our committees to involve more members and respond better to our members and community. We welcome your thoughts and input, but we especially need some of your time.

In February the Field Trip committee met at the Judson Nature Trail House to discuss possible future field trip destinations and options that might interest an even broader range of our members. Yes, we will continue sponsoring field trips to the traditional favorite destinations, but we are also planning more out-of-town and a few overnight field trips to great birding spots around the state. Our schedule will include more weekday trips for members with limited free weekend time. Helen Rejzek will continue as the committee chair. Currently other committee members are Georgina Schwartz, Sandi Wheeler, Karen Moulder and Barbara Kyse. Right now field trips are scheduled through May, but in the future we will probably only meet quarterly. If you have field trip suggestion or are interested in volunteering, please contact any member or send a message to fieldtrips@saaudubon.org.

SAAS needs a Newsletter Editor starting with the September issue. If you are interested in volunteering to pull together the SAAS newsletter, please contact me at bcbc@saaudubon.org or Marilyn Williams at editor@saaudubon.org if you have any questions. Technically, the editor is the chair of the newsletter committee, and other SAAS members contribute and assist with the overall process of publishing the newsletter.

Other areas that we are currently addressing and that need more volunteers are: Education, Community Outreach, Membership and Conservation. Our goal is to implement more birding oriented programs and events to serve both our members and the community. If you have a few hours a month or even just a few hours throughout the year to contribute to SAAS, please contact me or any board member.

The Birding Challenge report will be missing from this month's newsletter. Only one participant sent in their count (as of February Mike Creese had

132 species for Bexar County and 163 for Texas). While the Birding Challenge might not appear monthly in the newsletter, please consider sending us updates or information on your personal challenges such as Big Days or the "Two Bit, Four Bit" birding challenge featured in the March newsletter to me at bcbc@saaudubon.org. One way or another, hopefully everyone is birding as frequently as possible. ☘

~Barbara Kyse

San Antonio Audubon Society

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www.saaudubon.org

Officers

Barbara Kyse, President

Sandi Wheeler, Vice President

Gail Nickel, Secretary

Patsy Inglet, Treasurer

Directors-at-Large

Mariann Golden

Sheridan Coffey

Jerry Coleman

Tim Katafias

Mike Sims

Committee Chairmen

Bexar Co. Bird Challenge ----- bcbc@saaudubon.org

Bird Records,

Sheridan Coffey ----- birdreports@saaudubon.org

Conservation, Harry Noyes

Education, Georgina Schwarz

Field Trips,

Helen Rejzek ----- fieldtrips@saaudubon.org

Historian, Betty Walters

Member Database,

Carol McCasland ----- members@saaudubon.org

Nature Trail, Shirley Bartels

Newsletter,

Marilyn Williams ----- editor@saaudubon.org

Publicity, Shirley Bartels

Website, Bill Collins ----- web@saaudubon.org

SAAS Board of Directors Meeting

April 28, Tuesday, 6:30 PM

Meet at the Carlyle Condominium, 7887 Broadway.

Info: Barbara Kyse, 824-8884, bckyse@msn.com

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC
5150 BROADWAY #257
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Would you like to save money for the club and receive your newsletter via e-mail each month (faster and in color)?

Yes No

Donations: Sanctuary Fund _____

Judson Nature Trail _____

How did you find out about us? _____

Please make checks payable to: **San Antonio Audubon Society**. Send dues and address changes to: ATTN MEMBERSHIP, SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON SOCIETY, 5150 BROADWAY #257, SAN ANTONIO TX 78209-5710; or **join online** using a credit card or PayPal by going to: www.saaudubon.org/membership.html. Email contact: <members@saaudubon.org>

MONTHLY MEETING

April 2nd, Thursday, 7:00 PM

Presenter: Lacey Halstead,
Executive Director, Headwaters Coalition

“A Virtual Tour of the
Headwaters Sanctuary:
11,000 Years of Natural History”

The Coalition, a sponsored ministry of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, is protecting one of the last undeveloped forests in San Antonio, the 53 acres adjoining the University of the Incarnate Word.

For more information see:
www.headwaterscoalition.org

Lion's Field, 2809 Broadway
(Mulberry at Broadway)