



San Antonio Audubon Society

AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

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WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS

by Mike Scully

Spring has arrived; the days are rapidly growing longer and soon the full force of spring migration will be upon us. Our own breeding birds have been in song for a month or more, joined in the chorus by restless winter residents and early migrants. So it is that from somewhere inside brushy woodland undergrowth and streamside cover the clear and sweet notes of the White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) may occasionally be heard. Sometimes one gets to hear the whole "Oh...My... Sweet Canada, Canada, Canada;" at other times just the introductory notes are sung. In any version the song falls like a joy upon the ears.

The song also tells the tale of the singer's probable origin: Most of the breeding range of the White-throated Sparrow lies north of our border. It consists of a broad swath of mixed and coniferous woodlands stretching across Canada from the Yukon east to Labrador and Newfoundland. In the United States the species breeds north of a line extending from central Minnesota to northern New Jersey, being restricted to higher altitudes at the southern extremity of its range.



White-throated Sparrow

Like many songbirds, White-throated Sparrows defend breeding territories and form monogamous pairs, yet in one aspect their breeding behavior is like no other species. Two distinct color phases exist in the adults--a brightly marked phase with white crown stripes, and a more subdued version with olive crown stripes. Both color morphs possess the characteristic white throat. The crown color trait is not sex-linked, as both males and females may come in either form, but the trait does correspond with their breeding behavior.

Individuals with white crown stripes are more aggressive, better able to defend a territory, but less likely to tend the young. Females with white crown stripes sing

actively and assist in territory defense. Individuals with olive crown stripes are less aggressive and more attentive to their young. Males with olive crown stripes sing and defend territories to some degree, females with olive crown stripes do not.

Females of either color phase prefer males with olive crown stripes, while males of either color phase prefer females with white crown stripes. The result is that most olive-striped males pair with white-striped females, an arrangement where both sexes share the duties of defending the territory and feeding the young.

The majority of white-striped males end up with olive-striped females, the male actively defending the territory while the female assumes most of the burden of rearing the young. Pairs composed of two white-striped birds are much less common and less successful at raising young. There appear to be no observations of paired olive-striped birds in the wild; perhaps such pairs would be unable to defend a territory.

Whatever the pair type, the female alone builds the carefully concealed cup-shaped nest on the ground amid vegetation and incubates the three to five eggs. Both sexes feed the young, white-striped males being the least diligent in that regard. Losses of eggs and young to predators are frequent, and the still-flightless young depart from the nest at around nine days of age, separating from their siblings and concealing themselves in the surrounding vegetation, typically on a low perch. The young can fly well enough to follow a parent by about 16 days of age, and may be fed by one or both parents for a further two weeks. Some pairs may succeed in raising a second brood.

White-throated Sparrows return in numbers to our local wooded thickets late in the fall, their quiet "seep" call giving notice of their presence.

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SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR

Please call the trip leaders if you have questions. Last-minute changes to field trips will be posted at saaudubon.org, sent by email through SATX Birds, and announced on the recorded message at 308-6788.

Saturday, April 3, 8:00 AM

Medina River Natural Area

Meet leader Helen Rejzek in the parking lot of Medina River Natural Area. From South Loop 410 take the SH16/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. We will also bird the Applewhite portion of the park. Bring water and insect repellent. For information, call Helen (679-7437).

Tuesday, April 6, 8:00 AM

Mud Creek

Meet leader Bill Zwartjes in the Mud Creek Park parking lot, 16675 Jones Maltsberger, 1.2 miles inside (or south of) Loop 1604. From 1604, take the Bulverde exit and turn south on Bulverde Road. Continue right on Bulverde, then right on Jones Maltsberger. The park can also be reached by traveling north on Jones Maltsberger. For information, call Bill (495-5123).

Saturday, April 10, 8:00 AM

SAAS Beginners' Bird Walk

Join leader Georgina Schwartz at the Judson Nature Trails next to Alamo Heights swimming pool. At the 5900 block of Broadway in Alamo Heights, turn west on Ogden and go to the first stop sign at Greeley Street. Turn left on Greeley and then after one block, turn right on Viesca to the small parking lot on the left before the swimming pool. Binoculars are available; everyone is welcome. For information, call Georgina (342-2073).

Sunday, April 11, 7:30 AM

Maverick Ranch/Fromme Farm

Meet Mary and Bebe Fenstermaker at the gate to their ranch on Boerne Stage Road in NW Bexar County. Exit I-10 West at Leon Springs. Turn left on Boerne Stage Road, drive 3 miles to stop sign, turn right on Boerne Stage Road. Go 1.4 miles to their gate on the left. The gate will be locked once everyone is there. Bring lunch and water. For information, call Bebe (830-981-4477).

Sunday, April 18, 8:00 AM

San Antonio Missions

Meet leaders Andy and Wendy Garcia in the parking lot of Mission San Juan. From Loop 410 in SE San

Antonio, take S. Presa Street northwest about 2 miles to Graf Road. Turn left on Graf and proceed past Ashley Road to the mission complex. Bring water. Call the Garcias (344-4162) if you have questions.

Tuesday, April 20, 8:00 AM

Leon Creek Greenway

Meet leader Helen Rejzek in the parking lot to the Leon Creek Greenway. From Loop 1604 exit Babcock and drive south about 2 miles to the Greenway, 12160 Babcock Road. Coming from IH-10, exit at Dezavala and drive west about 1.75 miles to light at Babcock. Turn right on Babcock. The greenway is about 0.7 mile on the left. Bring water and insect repellent. For information, call Helen (679-7437).

Sunday, April 25, 8:00 AM

Jackson Nature Park

Meet leader Eva Fromme at the parking lot of the park in Wilson County. From San Antonio take US 87 toward Victoria and La Vernia. Just before Stockdale, turn south on CR 104 and go to the park on the left just after it crosses Cibolo Creek. There is a fee of \$1.00. Bring water and insect repellent. For information, call Eva (771-5831).

Tuesday, April 27, 8:00 AM

James Kiehl River Bend Park

Meet leader Sandi Wheeler at the park, 118 River Bend Road in Comfort. From I-10 W, take Exit 524; stay on Business 87 N (at the Chevron, the road will fork, so stay to the right). Continue on Business 87N until you come to FM 473 (from Exit 524 to FM 473 is 1.5 miles). Turn right onto FM 473; stay on FM 473 until you come to North Bend Road (approximately 3.5 miles). Turn right onto North Bend Road and stay on it for 1.3 miles. The park will be on your right. Please contact Sandi (659-8168 or Wheels5683@satx.rr.com) if you plan to attend.

LOOKING AHEAD



The Birdiest City/County competition for San Antonio will begin on Friday, April 30 and end on Sunday, May 2. More details later.

If members have ideas or suggestions for future field trip destinations, please send the information to Helen Rejzek at fieldtrips@saaudubon.org.

White-throated Sparrows (Continued from p. 1)

Secretive in habits yet at the same time seemingly tame and confiding, they almost always occur in company with numbers of their own kind. Studies have shown that adult birds coming back south return to the same location where they previously wintered.

Stable dominance hierarchies form within flocks on the wintering grounds. High-ranking birds enjoy the privilege of foraging closest to protective cover, and these individuals are most likely to sing in the wintertime. No behavioral differences have been noted between the two plumage phases on the winter range, and crown stripe color has no apparent bearing on rank within these winter flocks.

OTHER BIRDING EVENTS

Kids Birding 101 • Saturday • 4/3 • 9:00 - 11:00 AM • Mitchell Lake Audubon Center

Great program for kids to learn about bird identification and habitat. We'll learn how to use binoculars and take a hike to see which winter residents we can identify! Free, but space is limited; RSVP is required. Email mlac@audubon.org or call 628-1639.

Bexar Audubon Meeting • Thursday • 4/8 • 6:45 PM • Trinity University

Learn about Warbler Woods from Susan and Don Schaezler. Meeting will be held on the Trinity campus in the Cowles Life Science Building, Room 149. Announcements - 6:45 PM, Program - 7 PM. All are welcome! Call 837-0577 for directions or visit www.bexaraudubon.org/

Young Birders Club • Saturday • 4/10 • 8:00 - 10:00 AM • Friedrich Park



SAAS members Tom and Patsy Inglet lead this monthly class for ages 9 to 14. For directions to the park, go to www.sanaturalareas.org. Donation: \$2. Please bring binoculars if you have them.

Attracting Birds Workshop • Saturday • 4/10 • 9:00 AM - Noon • Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium and Park

Rufus Stephens, Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist, will begin with a talk on how to manage different habitats to provide food, cover and space needed by Hill

Country birds. This is a systematic approach to bird species diversity. Program includes use of Kendall County Bird Checklist for easy record keeping and time outside examining native plants important to wildlife. Per session cost: CNC Members \$20/person; non-members \$25/person. Limited to 30. Pre-registration required. Call 830-249-4616. More info at www.cibolo.org

Birdathon 2010 • Saturday • 4/10 • Mitchell Lake Audubon Center

If you enjoy birding and want to support MLAC you can do both! Our annual birding fundraiser is open to birders of all levels and is a great way to learn more about our unique refuge. A fun way to support MLAC! For more information call: 628-2639 or email mlac@audubon.org

Beginning Bird Walk • Saturday • 4/17 • 9:00 - 10:30 AM • SA Botanical Garden

Enjoy birds in native habitats at the Garden. Visit our "[birding list](#)" at www.sabot.org. Meet at the Carriage House. Free for SA Botanical Garden members; non-members \$7/adult. 555 Funston. 207-3250.

Birding by Ear Workshop • Saturday • 4/24 • 7:00 - 10:00 AM • Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium

Our able bird teachers Tom and Patsy Inglet play bird songs and explain how to use them to locate and identify our Hill Country breeding birds. Program also includes outdoor practice listening for and identifying birds by their songs. For beginning and intermediate birders. CNC Members \$20/person; non-members \$25/person. For more information, call 830-230-5551 or 210-710-3981.

Mitchell Lake Birding Trips
Regular hours are from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Saturdays and Sundays; call Center at 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 11, 2nd Sunday with Curt McCamy
April 13, 2nd Tuesday with Helen Rejzek, Georgina Schwartz
April 18, 3rd Sunday with Helen Rejzek
April 24, 4th Saturday with Steve Hawkins

THE BIRDING SCENE
February 2010
by Sheridan Coffey

Some of the first reports in February involved a lot of longspurs! Bob Doe estimated 1,000 McCown's Longspurs in the fields off of Barbarosa in New Braunfels on February 5. He also had two Lapland Longspurs along Peiper Road. Bob reported Common and Pacific Loons and Greater Scaup from Canyon Lake on February 6.

Brad Wier observed a red-shafted Northern Flicker at Southside Lions Park East on February 12. He also had several Golden-crowned Kinglets in the woods along Salado Creek in the far south part of the park. On February 14 Brad saw an Anhinga off of Loop 1604 where the Medina River crosses. There was also a striking dark morph Red-tailed Hawk by the Color Spot Nursery on Cagnon Road. A handful of Purple Martins had also arrived.

Adam Wood brought a group of birders from the Houston Ornithological Society to the area on February 13 and 14. Georgina Schwartz and Helen Rejzek guided them at Mitchell Lake and on the west side of the county at Mechler Road. They found a Greater Scaup on Basin 1 at Mitchell Lake, along with a good assortment of other ducks. The only shorebirds seen were a Greater Yellowlegs, two Spotted Sandpipers and five Killdeer. The Burrowing Owl on Mechler Road gave everyone stellar views. There were also a few McCown's Longspurs in the fields and Horned Larks.

A report from the Schaezlers' Warbler Woods on February 14 included a Black-and-white Warbler, Brown Thrasher, two Le Conte's Sparrows and three Harris's Sparrows. An Eastern Towhee was found there on February 21. On February 23 Susan Schaezler saw a Brown Creeper.

Mike Sims reported a flock of Green Jays on private property off of Cibolo Creek between I-35 and US 281, present since November. The landowner does not want birders visiting. On February 24 Helen Rejzek found two Golden-crowned Kinglets at Crownridge Canyon Natural Area.

Bob Doe had a flock of about 25 Mountain Plovers near New Braunfels on Dauer Ranch on February 25. He also photographed a Prairie Falcon on February 27 in the same general area. Robin Nowak ended the month with a great sign of spring, a group of Barn Swallows flying over her house on February 28.

SAAS TREASURER'S REPORT 2009
by Patsy Inglet

As of December 31, 2009
(All figures rounded to the nearest dollar)

Sanctuary Fund

Opening Balance \$29,985
Ending balance **\$31,503**

Operating Fund

Opening Balance \$4,290
Income \$5,488
Expenses \$5,364
Ending Balance **\$4,414**

Interest rates were down all year, so interest earnings from the Sanctuary Fund were only about half those in 2008 (~ \$425 vs. \$950); however, donations more than doubled (from \$425 to \$1,082). In 2009 we continued our support of conservation through donations from the Sanctuary Fund totaling \$1,098 for Operation Migration, a youth group participating in the Great Texas Birding Classic, and the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center Birdathon.

Seventy-three percent (\$4,007) of income in 2009 was in the form of membership dues. Sales and general donations made up the remainder. Producing and mailing the newsletter made up 37 percent (\$1,985) of the club's expenses and another 13 percent (\$700) went to pay the rent for Lion's Field Senior Center. Other costs to SAAS include telephone, website support, mailbox rental, gifts and awards, the costs associated with the annual dinner and picnic, and a few additional miscellaneous costs.

If members would like a more detailed accounting for 2009, please see me at the meetings or contact me at tpinglet@satx.rr.com.

SAAS MONTHLY MEETING
THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 7:00 PM

Join us at Lion's Field, 2809 Broadway, for "A Walk in the Woods" presentation by members Shirley Bartels and Georgina Schwartz, along with Alamo Heights Community Development Director Brian Chandler. We will be taking a historical look at the Judson Nature Trails (JNT) project and a forward look at how the natural area fits into the future development plans for Alamo Heights. Mr. Chandler will also reveal some developing plans for the surrounding community adjacent to the JNT. Special guests joining us are Mr. and Mrs. Jack Judson, Jr.

Welcome New SAAS Member!

Calvin T. Smith-----210-273-7015
8013 Dry Canyon Trail
Live Oak, TX 78233-2908

OTHER EVENTS

Brackenridge Park Clean-up • Monday • 4/5 • 7:30 AM

Help the Brackenridge Park Conservancy pick up litter at Brackenridge Park. Meet at the Joske Pavilion on Brackenridge Drive between the Witte Museum and the Zoo. Trash bags and gloves will be furnished. SAAS members will start along Avenue A.

Nature Quest • Thurs. - Sat. • 4/22-24 • Uvalde County

Learn from experts about birds, bats, butterflies, insects, trees, natural history, plants, wildflowers, reptiles and making your own backyard a wildlife habitat--through field trips, workshops, and programs. www.hillcountryrivers.com/

JUDSON NATURE TRAILS REPORT by Shirley Bartels

The Judson Nature Trails are looking good this spring after all the drought and then rains of 2009, with wildflowers popping up all over.

There are a few chores to be done, as there are every spring, but with the help of the Trail Committee, the Boy and Girl Scouts, Alamo Heights and other community groups and individuals, it will be in top shape again.

Please note that the Judson Nature Trails will be the topic for our April 1 SAAS monthly meeting presentation. Georgina Schwartz will be helping me by doing the history and Dahn Windhorn will put together a PowerPoint presentation with photos. I'd like to thank Betty Walters, SAAS Historian, for the use of her files, and might I add that she has done and is doing a marvelous job of keeping our history in order and easy to peruse. During the flood of 1998, all historical documents were soaked; Betty and Georgina Schwartz were able to restore them.

Hope to see you on April Fool's Day at 7:00 PM, no kidding!

SAAS EDUCATION/OUTREACH

Announcing New Opportunities for SAAS Members: Flying WILD Facilitator or Teacher Training

Flying WILD, a program of the Council for Environmental Education, is designed to help middle school students excel academically by engaging them in real inquiry through the use of interactive, interdisciplinary, standards-based activities focusing on the importance of migratory birds and their conservation. The SAAS Board of Directors has endowed the start-up of Flying WILD workshops for facilitators and educators, and any SAAS member who is interested can take part in these programs.



The **facilitator training session** will be held on May 25 from 9 AM to 4 PM and on May 26 from 9 AM to noon at the Cibolo Nature Center Pavilion. The cost is \$15. Following training, facilitators will be certified to teach educators how to incorporate the Flying WILD information into their teaching materials. The goal is for hundreds of teachers in the San Antonio region to be trained in the Flying WILD curriculum that engages children in bird conservation and gets kids outdoors.

If you are currently a middle school teacher or know someone who would be interested in the workshop for educators, the dates are June 9 and 10 from 9 AM to noon at Eisenhower Park or July 7 and 8 from 9 AM to noon at Cibolo Nature Center Pavilion.

For more information or to register for a workshop, please contact Patsy Inglet at 698-8445 or email her at tpinglet@satx.rr.com.

Read more about Flying WILD at www.flyingwild.org

Support Student Birding Competition

Caleb Dye, a young San Antonio birder, spoke at the SAAS March monthly meeting asking members to support his team, Travis Audubon Society Towhees, competing in the Great Texas Birding Classic. To make your donation, go to the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory website <http://gcbo.org> and click on the Great Texas Birding Classic link, then click on the link to the GTBC/Team Donation Form. The SAAS Board has decided to help sponsor the Towhee team again this year.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS



Canyon Lake, 2/20

Georgina Schwartz and ten others gathered at the headquarters for Canyon Lake amid fog thick enough to cut. The only birds there were two Lesser Goldfinches feeding at their "sock." At the first lookout place, boat ramp #17, just before Jacob's Creek Park several Common Loons were seen spending more time underwater than out in the open. At the Causeway to Canyon Park a large group of scaup and coot swam speedily away. However, thanks to all the scopes, they finally tallied a Pacific and four Common Loons. On Hancock Trail some woodland birds were added to the list. Other highlights were Spotted Towhees, Bonaparte's Gulls, Osprey, Northern Pintails, Ring-necked Ducks, American Robin, and some Blue Jays. Special thanks to Lee Pasquali and Bill Holliday for their help with the loons. They totaled 50 species plus a great lunch at the Windmill on 306.

Palmetto State Park, 2/28

The 12 birders and leader Bill Zwartjes had a very enjoyable trip east of San Antonio to Palmetto State Park in Gonzales County. The weather was extremely cooperative with clear skies and pleasant temperatures. They explored a good bit of the park initially from the campground around the oxbow lake, then walked the Palmetto swamp trail and returned to the river trail. A new 5-mile perimeter trail has been recently completed and they followed part of it through the wooded section. Highlights of the 44 species seen were Swamp Sparrow, Golden-crowned Kinglet and a Pileated Woodpecker. A good number of eastern species including Tufted Titmouse, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker were also found. A very pleasant morning was topped off with lunch at Luling Barbecue!

Stone Oak Park, 3/6

Gail Nickel led a group of 12 for a great time conquering Stone Oak Park, Phase 1. They saw seven sparrow species, the highlight being four Rufous-crowned Sparrows bouncing around on the rocks behind the dam. They also saw two Greater Roadrunners and an estimated 150 Cedar Waxwings. After birding, the group enjoyed lunch at Leticia's Mexican Restaurant.



Rufous-crowned Sparrow
by Ruben Ayala

Judson Nature Trails, 3/13

Georgina Schwartz was joined by five others for a walk at the Judson Nature Trails and Olmos Park Picnic area. Golden-fronted and Downy Woodpeckers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers put on a great show. The group saw a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks calling and flying around. A flock of Cedar Waxwings fed on the tree buds. On the way home, Georgina passed by the Olmos Creek crossing on McCullough and found the Red-tailed Hawk sitting in the same tree as last year and found two Gadwalls in the golf course creek.

BOOK REVIEW by Jan McClintock

A Supremely Bad Idea: Three Mad Birders and Their Quest to See It All by Luke Dempsey
Paperback, Aug. 2009; ISBN: 9781596916340

This is an entertaining memoir of an ex-pat Brit who lives in New York City and discovers birding as an adult. "Aww, you say, sounds like a nice story," and it is. All is not rosy and cozy, however, so prepare for some brutal truths along with hilarious antics and moving meditations from this marvelous writer and editor.

From the beginning, I was hooked, just like the author became enthralled by birds after friends pointed out a few birds on a weekend visit. Through the next few years, he becomes more and more involved in the hobby and starts to travel to see birds with his kooky birding buddies. On their trip to Texas, they visit San Antonio and stop at Schaezlers' Warbler Woods, and they go on to Guadalupe State Park to see Golden-cheeked Warblers. Throughout his travels, the author's good humor is challenged over and over by unfortunate circumstances, both natural and manmade.

SAAS Member Recommends Oakley Plantation

Marie Banta, SAAS member, recently visited the Oakley Plantation in the Audubon State Historic Park in the St. Francisville area of Louisiana. J. J. Audubon stayed at the 1806 cotton plantation, owned by the Pirrie family, for a few months in 1821 and painted 32 of his "Birds of America." For more info, visit <http://habs.lsu.edu/oakley/html/>

GEAA NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, an organization dedicated to protecting our water source, is in desperate need of funding. Visit their website to see how you can help: www.aquiferalliance.org

SAAS-Y NOTES

Remembering Dick Cudworth

Longtime SAAS member and past-president Richard (Dick) Cudworth passed away on February 22 at the age of 90. Dick was a charter member of the Mitchell Lake Wetlands Society and a founding member of radio station KPAC. He is survived by his devoted wife of 67 years, Rita. Donations may be made to Radio Station KPAC, San Antonio Audubon Society or Mitchell Lake Wetlands Society. You may sign the online guestbook at www.missionparks.com. If you would like to send Rita a card, the address is 175 Harrigan Court, Apt 4, San Antonio, TX 78209.

SAAS Membership Roster Available as PDF

As SAAS is no longer printing a membership directory, the membership database manager will furnish any member requesting it a PDF electronic directory updated in February and September. Email your request to Tom Inglet at members@saaudubon.org

Thanks for the Tubes

The Education/Outreach Committee thanks members for collecting cardboard tubes to convert into "binoculars" to use for future community activities, and we're happy to report we now have enough.

SAAS Board of Directors Meeting Tuesday, April 27, 6:30 PM

Meet at the Carlyle Condominium, 7887 Broadway.
Info: Barbara Kyse, 824-8884, bckyse@msn.com

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

Editor: Lora Reynolds
Contributing Editor and Mailing: Georgina Schwartz
Mailing Labels: Tom Inglet

The newsletter deadline is the 10th for the following month's issue. Send submissions to editor@saaudubon.org.

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USE OF PHOTOS

The individuals who provide photographs of birds for SAAS newsletter articles may or may not have taken these photos on the specific field trips or at the events described in the articles. Thank you to the SAAS members and others who allow use of your photos to illustrate this publication. To submit photos for possible use, please email: editor@saaudubon.org

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TO VOLUNTEER!
info@saaudubon.org**

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