



San Antonio Audubon Society

AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

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Bay-breasted and Cape May Warblers by Mike Scully

Many of our familiar North American breeding birds actually spend half their lives in the Tropics, where they often fill quite different ecological niches than they do here. The winter range of the Bay-breasted Warbler (*Dendroica castanea*), for example, extends from Costa Rica to Northern South America. There the species is a habitat generalist, found in a variety of forest types and methodically gleaning for insects at all levels of the canopy. During the dry season (in those areas of the winter range where such occurs) the species becomes primarily frugivorous, traveling widely in search of favored fruits.

The Cape May Warbler (*D. tigrina*), by way of contrast, winters primarily in the Caribbean. Although found in a variety of different types of woodlands, this species usually forages at the top of the canopy and often hovers or fly-catches while feeding. Cape May Warblers also visit flowers and puncture soft fruits for the juice. So important are these liquid food sources on the wintering grounds that the species has a semi-tubular tongue specially adapted for the purpose.



Bay-breasted Warbler
by Joan Lasswell

It has been 52 years since Robert MacArthur published his iconic study of resource partitioning between five warblers species in the genus *Dendroica* breeding in northern spruce-fir forests. The Bay-breasted and Cape May Warblers were among these, and each spring these two species, along with the Yellow-rumped, Blackburnian, and Black-throated Green Warblers, return from their divergent winter ranges to converge over much of their respective breeding ranges upon the same areas of spruce-fir woodlands.

The spruce budworm is a small moth whose larvae feed upon the needles of spruce and fir. Endemic to the North Woods, regional populations of this insect

periodically reach epidemic levels in outbreaks that may last a decade or more. While all five warbler species capitalize upon these outbreaks, Cape May and Bay-breasted Warblers are spruce budworm specialists; local breeding populations of these two species closely mirror that of the budworm. Both warbler species are restricted in summer to a broad band of spruce-fir forest extending from Northern Alberta east to Maine and Nova Scotia.

On the breeding grounds, the Cape May Warbler continues to be a denizen of the treetops, while the Bay-breasted becomes a mid-canopy specialist, methodically foraging in the middle elevations of the trees. Both species at this season subsist primarily upon budworm larvae and pupae. Although they occupy distinct foraging niches, both species compete with the Blackburnian Warbler, which occupies an intermediate foraging niche centered upon the upper half of the canopy.

Both Cape May and Bay-breasted Warblers are relatively late spring migrants. Upon arrival on the breeding grounds, the males of both species immediately begin to establish territories. Interestingly, the high-pitched songs of the two species are similar, but while Bay-breasted males may sing almost incessantly, male Cape May Warblers sing less often. What sort of unique interaction may occur between the males of these sympatric budworm specialists has not been investigated. Bay-breasted Warblers are physically larger than Blackburnian Warblers, and Bay-breasted males may aggressively displace this and other warbler species from their breeding territories.

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Cape May Warbler
by Joan Lasswell

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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, May 1, 8:00 AM

Comanche Lookout Park

Meet leader Karen Moulder (824-2547) in the parking lot of Comanche Lookout Park. From the intersection of Judson Road and Nacogdoches Road in north San Antonio, go NE on Nacogdoches for about 200 yds. to the park entrance on the left.

Sunday, May 2, 8:00 AM

Tobin Park

Meet leader Mariann Golden (650-4312) in the parking lot of Tobin Park on Salado Creek, 100 Ira Lee. From Austin Highway, heading northeast from Alamo Heights, exit to the right just before the bridge over Salado Creek. The bridge is about 1/4 mile past the Eisenhower Road traffic light. Before the low water crossing, turn left and go under Austin Highway. Tobin Park is on your right.

Tuesday, May 4, 8:00 AM

Live Oak Park

Meet leader Sandi Wheeler (659-8168) in the main parking lot of Live Oak Park. From Loop 410 Northeast take IH-35 north toward 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 Rd. toward Randolph AFB. At the traffic light at Leafy Hollow, turn left. Go to the end of the street, which then turns right and becomes park road. Go to the end of the parking lot.

Saturday, May 8, 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, May 9, 8:00 AM

Warbler Woods

Meet Don and Susan Schaezler (602-8621) at their sanctuary near Cibolo. Take IH-35 N 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, 19349 Old Wiederstein. Walk the property or just sit in the yard and enjoy the birds. If you like, bring your lunch.

Saturday, May 15, 8:00 AM

South Llano River State Park

Meet leader Georgina Schwartz (342-2073) at the headquarters of the park. Take IH-10 west to Junction. Take Exit 456 and follow the signs to the park south of town. Allow 2 hours driving time. Bring lunch, water, insect repellent, and fee or Park Pass.

Saturday, May 22, 8:00 AM

Guadalupe River State Park

Meet leader Bill Zwartjes (495-5123) in the parking lot of the park. From 281, go west on Hwy 46 toward Boerne, past Honey Creek and then turn right at the sign onto the park road. After birding, we will check out a local restaurant. Fee or state park pass required.

Sunday, May 23, 8:00 AM

Ave A & San Antonio Botanical Garden

Meet leader Tim Katafias (557-9915) at the parking lot on Red Oak. Turn north on Red Oak from Mulberry in Brackenridge Park. From there we will walk to Avenue A. After birding Avenue A, we can continue to the Botanical Garden located at 555 Funston. Fee at SABG.

Tuesday, May 25, 8:00 AM

Crescent Bend Nature Park

Meet leader Sandi Wheeler (659-8168) in the parking lot of Crescent Bend. From IH-10 East, take the FM 1518 exit and go north toward Schertz. Look for the brown park sign at Schaefer Road. Turn right and go about 3 miles to the park.

Phil Hardberger Park Opens to Public

Join in the festivities opening weekend, May 15 & 16, at our new city park on Blanco Rd. near Wurzbach Parkway. Shuttle buses will run from the Churchill H.S. parking lot, 12049 Blanco Rd., to the park.



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

Bay-breasted and Cape May Warblers *(From p. 1)*

Most warblers in the genus *Dendroica* form monogamous pair bonds, wherein the female builds the cup-shaped nest and incubates the eggs, and both sexes feed the young. The exact reproductive behavior of Cape May and Bay-breasted Warblers has been but poorly studied. So far as has been observed, both species may generally conform to the typical warbler pattern. However, the females of these two species commonly produce larger clutches than do other warblers and the effect on breeding behavior of the abundance of prey associated with budworm outbreaks is unknown. One study of the Bay-breasted Warbler suggested the formation of short-lived and unstable pair bonds; however, this behavior has not been confirmed for the species as a whole.

Both species depart the breeding grounds in late August and September. Cape May Warblers sometimes visit hummingbird feeders and have on occasion caused significant damage to grapes in vineyards. While Bay-breasted Warblers pass regularly through our area on migration, the usual migratory pathways of the Cape May Warbler lie far to our east, and the species is considered a rare vagrant here at any season.

OTHER BIRDING EVENTS

Young Birders Club • Saturday • 5/8 • 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, 21395 Milsa, visit: www.sanaturalareas.org. Donation: \$2. Please bring binoculars if you have them.

Neighborhood Birds • Saturday • 5/8 • 10:00 AM - Noon • Friedrich Park

Explore the world of birds with Tom and Patsy Inglet. Learn to use binoculars. Call 564-6400 for reservations and information. Walk-ins will be accepted on a limited basis. Suggested donation: \$3.00 per individual/\$5.00 per family. Park address: 21395 Milsa.

Beginning Bird Walk • Saturday • 5/15 • 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.

Basic Birding for Adults • Saturday • 5/29 • 8:30 - 11:30 AM • Mitchell Lake Audubon Center

MLAC Docents Tom and Patsy Inglet share tools, tips, and techniques to build your birding skills. Free for members, \$5 non-members. RSVP is required. Email mlac@audubon.org or call 628-1639.

JUDSON NATURE TRAILS UPDATE

Jack Eitinear reports that the three hummingbird feeders near the Trailhouse are drawing attention from the hummers. New plants include La Trinidad Sage, Gregg's Mistflower, Mexican Bush Sage, Two Leaf Senna and Yellow Honeysuckle.

FINAL 2010 GBBC RESULTS by Barbara Kyse

According to the Great Backyard Bird Count's April 2010 newsletter, the record was broken for checklists submitted this year. More than 63,000 individuals turned in 97,209 checklists.

San Antonio also broke previous records. San Antonio ranked **fifth** in the nation for the number of species reported (159). Of course it helps to be in Texas, because only one out-of-state location (San Diego) had more species. Our previous record was in 2006, when 156 species were reported. The 215 checklists submitted by San Antonio birders ranked first in Texas.

Interestingly, the Western Scrub-Jay was not reported this year. The nearest location reporting one was New Braunfels/Canyon Lake. For more information on the 2010 count, go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc

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:

- May 9, 2nd Sunday with Curt McCamy
- May 11, 2nd Tuesday with Helen Rejzek, Georgina Schwartz
- May 16, 3rd Sunday with Helen Rejzek
- May 22, 4th Saturday with Curt McCamy

THE BIRDING SCENE March 2010 by Sheridan Coffey

March is a wonderful time for birding in Texas. Winter birds are still around; spring birds start arriving. Bob Doe had a Burrowing Owl and a Prairie Falcon on Dauer Road on the north side of New Braunfels. Later he found a flock of McCown's Longspurs off of Barbarosa, south of Frieden's Church. This area was consistently good for these species all winter.

The coming of spring was noted when Helen Rejzek had a Black-and-white Warbler at OP Schnabel Park on March 2. Jan McClintock had the first Black-chinned Hummingbird in her yard in Medina County on March 3. Barn Swallow reports began with Lora Render's

March 3 sighting. A pair of Hutton's Vireos, seen by Helen Rejzek at Friedrich Park, appeared to be setting up housekeeping. Also on March 3, Georgina Schwartz saw



Barn Swallow by Lora Render

Purple Martins flying over her neighborhood. A Gray Catbird was found at Mitchell Lake on March 9 by the group Georgina Schwartz was leading, along with a Couch's Kingbird, five Cinnamon Teals and three Marsh Wrens.

Marcin Kojtko had a stunning find at Leon Creek Greenbelt, also on March 9. He was able to photograph a gorgeous Chestnut-collared Longspur, in close to breeding plumage in a totally unexpected area. The following day, March 10, Helen Rejzek found a singing Golden-cheeked Warbler at Crown Ridge Natural Area. This was a slightly later than usual first sighting date for this species. Ruben and Andy Ayala had a Wilson's Warbler on Ave. A on March 13, along with three Audubon-form Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Crescent Bend Nature Park, a new area for local birders, is proving to be productive, with Sandi Wheeler and her San Antonio Audubon field trip finding a Rusty Blackbird on March 14. Also on March 14, Warbler Woods had two calling Common Paraques. Tina Gilson reported a Black-throated Green Warbler on Ave. A on March 19. Mike Creese and Helen Rejzek discovered two singing Northern Parulas the same day at

Medina River Natural Area. On March 22, a Scott's Oriole visited Jan McClintock's hummingbird feeder.

Shorebird habitat is almost non-existent at Mitchell Lake so far this spring, but Evans Lake near Somerset had some shorebirds, including American Golden Plovers, found by Helen Rejzek on March 23. There were also Long-billed Dowitchers and Least Sandpipers. This area merits watching this spring. The Schaezlers reported a Whip-poor-will calling on March 30, and an Indigo Bunting on March 31.

SAAS WELCOMES STUDENT SCIENCE FAIR WINNERS

At our April meeting, we heard brief presentations on two of the three student projects that received special awards from SAAS for bird/nature projects at the 2010 Alamo Regional Academy of Science and Engineering (ARASE). The students receiving the awards and their projects were:

Junior Division (Grades 6-8): Trevin Grams for "Best of Butterflies"

Senior Division (Grades 9-12): Austin Martin for "One Martin Helping Another"

Senior Team Division (Grades 9-12): Claudia de la Garza and Christine Chen for "A Fan for Purple Martins"

The ARASE fair is the annual competition for 6th-12th graders in our 32-county region. ARASE aims to impact young minds through exposure to science, as our world is constantly changing with new discoveries in science and engineering. Perhaps through the ARASE endeavor, these young students might pursue a science career.

SAAS MONTHLY MEETING THURSDAY, MAY 6, 7:00 PM

Join us at Lion's Field, 2809 Broadway, to learn how the San Antonio Zoo is helping to save one of North America's most endangered species, Attwater's Prairie-Chicken. Our guest speaker will be Cynthia Gitter, a zookeeper with the San Antonio Zoo. Cynthia works in the zoo's off-exhibit areas, which house birds involved in the Attwater's Prairie-Chicken Recovery Program, Whooping Crane Recovery Program and other aviary conservation programs.



Attwater's
Prairie-Chicken

Welcome New SAAS Member!

Adela Garcia -----210-733-0127
307 W Mistletoe Ave, Apt 131
San Antonio, TX 78212-3376

OTHER EVENTS

Ethnobotany Plant Walk • Saturday • 5/15 • 9:00 - 11:00 AM • Mitchell Lake

Take a walk with Patty Leslie Pasztor to learn the history and uses of many unique plants found at Mitchell Lake. Fee: \$5 for non-members; free for members. Space is limited, RSVP is required. Please RSVP to: mlac@audubon.org

Bexar Audubon Field Trip • Land Heritage Institute • Saturday • 5/29 •

9:00 AM - Noon

Visit this former Applewhite property south of SA on the Medina River. Mark Oppelt, president of the LHI, will give an overview of the property and then we'll explore, looking for birds, butterflies, plants and more. Call 210-837-0577 to sign up. www.bexaraudubon.org/

BIRDS ARE IN THE CARDS by the U.S. Geological Survey

Looking for a birding-related activity for those LONG, HOT summer afternoons in San Antonio? Stay inside, keep cool and contribute to ornithology—all at the same time.

Participate in the U.S. Geological Survey's **North American Bird Phenology Program (NBPP)** by helping to transcribe some of the six MILLION personal observations about bird migrations—some dating back to 1880—from 2x5-inch note cards into a database.

Phenology is the scientific study of the relationship between natural phenomena and climatic or seasonal changes. The **NBPP** houses a unique and largely forgotten collection of Migration Observer Cards that illuminate migration patterns and population status of birds in North America.

These handwritten cards contain almost all of what was known of bird distribution and natural history from WWII back to the later part of the 19th century. The records are the result of a network of observers who recorded migration arrival dates in the spring and fall that, in its heyday, involved 3000 participants.

Today, those records are being processed and placed into a modern database for analysis to show how migration is affected by climate change.

To help with the project from your home computer, visit www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bpp/ and fill in the information requested, then click "Sign Up." You can transcribe as few or as many cards as you wish at any given time.

BIRDIEST CITY/COUNTY by Mike Creese

This year San Antonio will attempt to count the most species on April 30th (Friday), May 1st (Saturday) and May 2nd (Sunday) in the annual Birdiest City/County Event. During these days, San Antonio birders are asked to go to their favorite spots and count birds and turn in their results to me at mfcreease@yahoo.com or call me at 479-5552. My cell phone number is 310-8763 and I will try to remember to turn it on.

In the past years we have come in first in Large Inland City and Large Inland County in the Central Flyway. We hope to get more than 200 birds in the city and 210 in the county.

Some birders watch a few hours on one day. Some bird all day on one, two, or three days, trying to find the most birds they can. Other birders stay close to home and count species for a few hours in their backyard. These birders are just as important as those who bird all day. Last year, 4 to 6 birds turned in by backyard birders were seen no place else.

SAAS EDUCATION/OUTREACH

Georgina Schwartz presented two programs last month on birds of the area.

Boy Scouts from Stone Oak, Pack 501, Den 4, came to the Judson Nature Trails where they saw a slideshow and then went out to find birds along the trails. Tom and Patsy Inglet were a great help for this group of 10 children and 6 adults.

For another program, Georgina presented a similar slideshow to a group at The First Tee next to Brackenridge Park, and then she led a walk along Avenue A, where 12 species of birds were sighted in an hour. Highlights were a Barred Owl, two Red-shouldered Hawks, and a group of 30 Cedar Waxwings bathing in a big puddle.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS



Crescent Bend Nature Park, 3/14

Twenty-four birders ventured to Crescent Bend Nature Park with leader Sandi Wheeler, where they totaled 46 species. They saw Lincoln's and Chipping Sparrows everywhere, along with a very cooperative Spotted Towhee and a few Vesper and Savannah Sparrows. Woodpeckers were also well represented. Most of the group had good looks at a Rusty Blackbird, which was a lifer for a few people. They also had a very interesting partially albino Black-crested Titmouse--a very light bird! During lunch at BJ's in Schertz, the group saw approximately 105 Sandhill Cranes fly overhead. To see wildlife photographs from this new park, go to <http://camallard.zenfolio.com/p1039593370>.

Max Starke Park, 3/23

Leader Sandi Wheeler and five others enjoyed nice weather at Max Starke Park along the Guadalupe River in Seguin. Highlights were two flycatchers, Scissor-tailed and a Couch's Kingbird, and both Red-bellied and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers. The Golden-fronted was seen mainly on the west side of the road dividing the park and the Red-bellied on the east. In total, 33 species were observed.

Southside Lions Park, 3/27

Brad Wier was joined by nine birders for this walk at Southside Lions Park and the adjacent Salado Creek Greenway, where 49 species were found. At the lake, one of the park's resident Eastern Bluebirds was found first up, along with Couch's Kingbirds, Downy Woodpeckers, and a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Chipping Sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers were abundant, and the group saw two Audubon's-type Yellow-rumped Warblers.



Eastern Bluebird
by J.D. Cowsar

A pair of Red-shouldered Hawks was found nest-building in the dark wet slough at the northwest corner of the lake.

Along the Greenway, sparrow numbers were down, but a Cooper's Hawk and a falcon were present and the group had a close-up flyover by the local caracara.

New migrants included a Black-chinned Hummingbird and a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

Choke Canyon State Park, 3/28

Leader Mike Creese and 11 other birders enjoyed the trip to Choke Canyon State Park's Calliham Unit, where 69 species were observed. Highlights were 30 Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, beautiful Wood Ducks and one Common Yellowthroat. Wild Turkeys were seen displaying, too.

Friedrich Wilderness Park, 3/30

Ten people joined leader Helen Rejzek for a bird walk at Friedrich Park on a beautiful day. The highlight was the arrival of a male and female Golden-cheeked Warbler at the windmill around 9 AM. The group also had nice looks at a Black-and-white Warbler and a Nashville Warbler. In several areas, a Hutton's Vireo was heard but not seen, and Bushtits were also vocal but not visible. The group saw a total of 32 species.

Medina River Natural Area, 4/3

Helen Rejzek led 13 people at Medina, where they counted 39 species. The group of birders included visitors from New York and Connecticut in town for the women's Final Four. Though the group saw at least four Northern Parulas, they had to work to find them. They were very vocal but very hard to see, as they like to hide in the ball moss in the cypress trees. Not a lot of migrant activity was noted, but they did manage to see some Swainson's Hawks. After birding the main park, some of the birders went to the Applewhite area for a short time and saw a beautiful Osprey soaring. A special thanks to Susan Blaker for her warm hospitality...the Medina staff is great!

Mud Creek Park, 4/6

On a cloudy cool morning that turned into a pleasant sunny day with a nice breeze, five birders joined Bill Zwartjes to explore Mud Creek Park. The group included Jan, Carol and Irene who were visiting from New York and Massachusetts for the NCAA Women's Final Four. They hiked up the canyon and found several species, including Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Western Scrub-Jay, Black-chinned Hummingbird and Long-billed Thrasher, among others, for our eastern visitors. A total of 32 species was seen, including three brightly plumaged Lark Sparrows.

Judson Nature Trails, 4/10

Georgina Schwartz and Fran Campbell were joined by three others for this walk, with 31 species observed. Highlights were a nesting pair of (feral) Mallards, three male Wood Ducks, two Black-chinned Hummingbirds at the Trailhouse feeders, a flock of Yellow-rumped Warblers getting their spring plumage and Golden-fronted, Ladder-backed, and Downy Woodpeckers.

SAAS-Y NOTES

SAAS Volunteers for KLRN

Georgina Schwartz extends many thanks to the following volunteers who answered phones with her on March 14 at the local PBS affiliate, KLRN-TV, on behalf of SAAS: Jerry Coleman, Debbie Engler, Jack Eitnrear, Lorna Engleman, Tim Katafias, Tom and Patsy Inglet, Patsy Kuentz, Marjorie McFarland, Margaret Rote and Nelson Seffel.

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

If you do not want your contact information published to other members in the PDF electronic directory, please let Tom know.

Smashing Success

Thanks to all of the can smashers... we recycled 124 pounds of aluminum cans and received \$62.25.
--Georgina Schwartz



SAAS Board of Directors Meeting Tuesday, May 25, 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.

Permission is granted to other nonprofit groups to reprint articles, unless otherwise noted. Reprints must refer to the originating issue and give credit to San Antonio Audubon News and the specific author.

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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!
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SAAS Membership Renewal

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Please report bird sightings either online utilizing
the Bird Reporting form at saaudubon.org or by calling 210-308-6788.

JOIN US AT THE NEXT SAAS MEETING • THURSDAY, MAY 6
7:00 PM • LION'S FIELD • 2809 BROADWAY
PRESENTATION: ATTWATER'S PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (See p. 4)