

San Antonio Audubon Society

# AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

Volume 55 Number 6

June 2009

## SHORT-TAILED HAWKS

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Watch birds long enough and it becomes a habit; every bird you see or hear is catalogued and compared without conscious effort. So it was for me recently while I was driving near Pipe Creek. Out of the corner of my eye I glimpsed a small hawk soaring over a field. To my eye the silhouette was subtly different from the norm, the broad wings making the tail appear short by comparison, wings slightly pointed and raised at the tips. Though I had never seen one before, I immediately thought “Short-tailed Hawk”.

The Short-tailed Hawk (*Buteo brachyurus*) is a rare vagrant to Texas. It is not yet mentioned on the San Antonio Audubon checklist although I believe an experienced birder reported one over Crown Ridge Park a few years ago.

Short-tails are small hawks, slightly larger than a Broad-winged Hawk. The

long secondary feathers give the outstretched wing a wide aspect. Relative to the wings, the tail appears somewhat short and broad. Overall, the shape of the soaring hawk is said to suggest a small Red-tailed Hawk.

The hawks of the genus *Buteo* for the most part take flightless prey, often captured on the ground. As a rule such prey are heavier and more stoutly built than are comparably-sized birds, and the physical design of most buteos emphasizes strength and lifting ability over outright aerial speed. Short-tailed hawks, however, prey primarily upon birds.

Cooper’s Hawks catch birds by virtue of surprise, rapid acceleration and maneuverability. Falcons intercept birds in open areas by sheer speed, either in level flight or in a dive. Endowed with neither the maneuverability of an Accipiter nor the level flight speed of a falcon, Short-tailed Hawks resort to an improbable-sounding technique: they dive steeply from a high soaring flight, seek to snatch birds perched on the tops or outer branches of trees and bushes and occasionally capture birds on the ground. Adaptations to this unusual mode of hunting include proportionately larger feet and talons than most other buteos.

Short-tailed Hawks spend the majority of each day on the wing, typically becoming airborne in mid-morning only after strong thermals have developed. When hunting, Short-tailed Hawks soar slowly, methodically scanning the trees and bushes down below, occasionally pausing to hang motionless against the breeze. In much the same way that Zone-tailed Hawks mimic Turkey Vultures, it may be that the Red-tailed-like silhouette of this species lulls potential prey into a false sense of security. Whatever the case, the actual hunting success rate of Short-tailed Hawks is quite low, about one attempt in ten succeeding. Perhaps because of this failure rate, they have the ability to abruptly check their steep dives, hanging in the air for some moments before either continuing the attack or soaring back up again to a considerable height.



**Short-tailed Hawk**  
photo courtesy of Larry Manfredi,  
[www.southfloridabirding.com](http://www.southfloridabirding.com)

## SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR

### MONTHLY MEETING

June 4th, Thursday, 7:00 PM

Presenter: DR. M. CLAY GREEN

**“The Reddish Egret: Insights into the ecology and behavior of North America’s rarest heron”**

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

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE EARLIER START TIMES\*\***

*May 30, Saturday, 7:30 AM*

#### **SAAS Field Trip to Concan**

Meet leader Bob Rasa at Neal’s Cafe parking lot in Concan for a trip to his favorite birding spots and lunch at Neal’s Cafe. Bring snacks, water and money for lunch. Take US 90 towards Uvalde. At Sabinal, turn north on FM 187, then left on TX 127 across the Sabinal River. When you cross the Frio River, look to the right for Neal’s parking lot. Travel time about 2 hours from San Antonio. Contact Georgina at 210-342-2073.

*June 6, Saturday, 7:30 AM*

#### **SAAS Field Trip to Stone Oak Park**

Meet leader Lora Reynolds in the parking lot at Stone Oak Park. This is a really neat place early in the morning. From US-281 North, go west on Stone Oak Parkway to the Park on the right side (north) of the street at 20395 Stone Oak Pkwy. Contact Georgina at 210-342-2073.

*June 13, Saturday, 7:30 AM*

#### **SAAS Beginner’s Bird Walk**

Meet leader Georgina Schwartz 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 the first stop sign at Greeley Street. Turn left on Greeley and after one block take a right on Viesca to a small parking lot on the left before the swimming pool. All are welcome; binoculars available. Contact Georgina at (210) 342-2073.

*June 20, Saturday, 7:30 AM*

#### **Field Trip to Tobin Park**

Meet leader Mariann Golden 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. Contact Mariann at (210) 650-4312.

*June 28, Sunday, 7:30 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. Bring water. Contact Helen at (210) 679-7437.

### Birding Links

#### **Texas State Parks “Birds, Bats & More” Calendar**

See: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/calendar/?calpage=a0200](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/calendar/?calpage=a0200)

#### **Travis Audubon June Field Trips**

See: [www.travisaudubon.org/fieldtrips.html](http://www.travisaudubon.org/fieldtrips.html).

For a sobering look at widespread declines in U.S. bird populations, see “The State of the Birds 2009” report at [www.stateofthebirds.org](http://www.stateofthebirds.org).

### MEMORIAL

Gary Waggerman died May 7, 2007 in Austin, Texas. Gary led many SAAS field trips, being especially good with beginners. He also was instrumental in establishing two Christmas Bird Counts in Mexico. Gary was involved in the Canyon Lake Count established by the Comal County Birders that includes a number of SAAS members. He retired after 35 years with Texas Parks and Wildlife as a wildlife conservationist. Throughout Gary’s career and retirement he was active in aiding the recovery of the White-winged Dove. Our deepest condolences go out to the Waggerman family.

(Continued from page 1)

This specialized mode of hunting may contribute to the low reproductive rate and sparse and uneven population densities of this species throughout its range. Nowhere common, Short-tailed Hawks are primarily tropical in distribution, their range extending north along the slopes of the Andes from Argentina and Chile, across northern South America, and north to the Mexican states of Sinaloa and Tamaulipas. A small population also breeds in Florida, retreating to the southern third of that state in winter.

Two-egg clutches are the norm and often only one nestling survives. Relative to other hawk species, the adults return infrequently to the nest with kills, perhaps as a result of their difficult hunting style. Though their hunting methodology may be limiting, the technique apparently lends itself equally well to a variety of habitats. While the nest is preferentially placed near the top of a tall tree amid extensive woodlands, the species is otherwise able to forage over a variety of habitats including agricultural areas, thorn scrub, the edges of various types of forest, and even mangrove swamps.

The range of this fascinating species has been extending northwards in recent decades and scattered sightings have been reported with increasing frequency across South and South-central Texas. Circumstance did not permit me to stop and confirm the identity of that hawk I encountered while driving, but it may be that the Short-tailed Hawk will one day occur regularly in our area. ❁



~Mike Scully

## Other Birding Events

June 6, Saturday, 9:00 – 11:00 AM

### Mitchell Lake Kid's Birding

A class for children to learn more about this fun activity. They will learn how to use binoculars and how to identify the birds they see. They'll also get a chance to explore the habitat at Mitchell Lake. Space is limited. Admission: Free, but RSVP is required at (210) 628-1639 or [mlac@audubon.org](mailto:mlac@audubon.org).

June 20, Saturday, 9:00 - 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](http://www.sabot.org).

## 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 **7:30 AM** on:

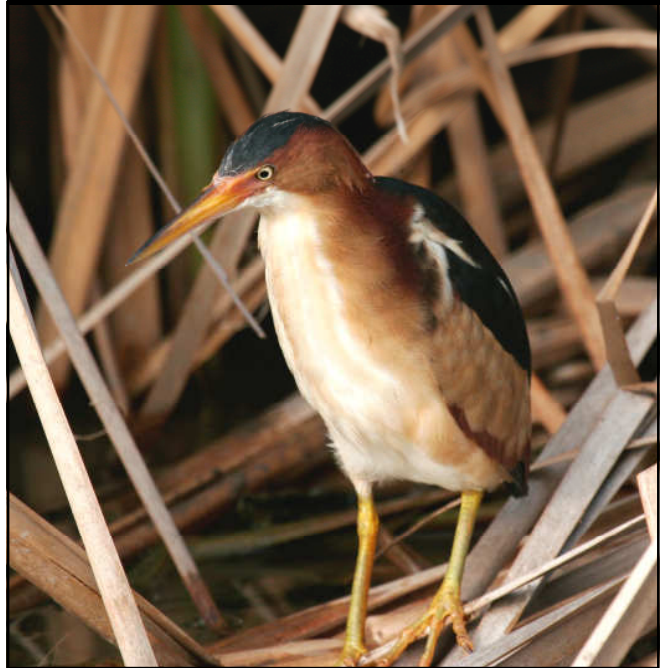
June 9, 2nd Tuesday

June 14, 2nd Sunday

June 21, 3rd Sunday

June 27, 4th Saturday (8:00 AM)

## PHOTO OF THE MONTH



*Least Bittern*  
By Teresa Hillstromb

Please send your favorite birding photos to:  
[editor@saudubon.org](mailto:editor@saudubon.org)

## The Birding Scene April 2009

April means warblers, and this month did not disappoint. Northern Parulas were seen by both Helen Rejzek at Medina River Park and Susan Schaezler at the beginning of April. Helen also had a Great Kiskadee. Susan had an early Ovenbird on April 4. A Painted Bunting was also seen in the same area. A Tennessee Warbler joined the mix later in the day. A Black-throated Green Warbler was found at the Botanical Garden on April 5. A Blue-winged Warbler and a Hooded Warbler were reported from Warbler Woods on April 10.

Greg Lisciandro had an early Bay-breasted Warbler at the Botanical Garden on April 13. April 14 brought a Kentucky Warbler to the Schaezler's. Keith Bartels added Blackburnian to the warbler list on April 18 at Tobin Park. Marcin Kojtko had a Prothonotary Warbler on Ave A on April 18. A Worm-eating Warbler was at Warbler Woods, also on April 18. A Magnolia Warbler was banded at Warbler Woods on April 23. A Swainson's Warbler was found at Tobin Park by Mary Ann Golden on April 25. Susan Schaezler also reported a Swainson's Warbler on April 27, along with a Golden-winged Warbler. Georgina Schwartz had both Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes on Ave A, also on April 27. Keith Bartels had a Cerulean Warbler at Tobin Park on April 28. A Chestnut-sided Warbler was found by Linda McMahon in her Shavano Park yard on April 29.

Shorebirds were still moving through with Helen Rejzek reporting both yellowlegs, Baird's Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers and Wilson's Phalaropes on April 5 at Mitchell Lake. Helen also found a Dunlin at Mitchell Lake on April 7. April 11 at Mitchell Lake was very productive with Western, Semipalmated and Stilt Sandpipers reported by Martin Reid and the writer.

Other interesting migrants included a Plumbeous Vireo at Medina River Park found by Helen Rejzek. Leslie Linehan had a male Lazuli Bunting in her yard on April 12. Clay-colored Sparrows were reported from multiple locations throughout the month. A Yellow-

throated Vireo was seen at Warbler Woods. Brad Weir found a Baltimore Oriole at the Botanical Garden on April 14, along with a Lesser Nighthawk and Swainson's Thrush. Marcin Kojtko found some great flycatchers on Ave A on April 18, including an unidentified Empidonax, an Eastern Wood-pewee and an Ash-throated Flycatcher. He also saw a Red-eyed Vireo. Both Grey-cheeked Thrush and Veery were seen at the Schaezler's on April 18. Lee Pasquali found a flock of ten Yellow-headed Blackbirds and a Bullock's Oriole at Braunig Lake on April 20. An out-of-range Varied Bunting was videotaped in Janice McClintock's yard in Medina County on April 23. Lora Render had a Scarlet Tanager in her yard on April 25. ❁

~Sheridan Coffey

## What Birds to Expect in June

June can be a difficult month locally for birders. The excitement of spring migration has worn off and the summer heat arrives in earnest. But there are still birds to find. Spring passerine migration dwindles to a trickle, but migrants continue through mid-June, and often it is the late "lost" birds which are the most unusual. Post breeding dispersal starts for local breeders, and species such as Black-and-white Warbler and Golden-cheeked Warbler can be expected away from breeding areas by the end of the month. Southern breeding water birds also disperse so Wood Stork and Roseate Spoonbill are expected at Mitchell Lake (and other wetlands) by the end of the month, as are juvenile Laughing Gull and Black Skimmer. June also officially starts hurricane season and the Gulf is a likely spot for early season storms. A land-falling storm may push pelagic birds into our area. Many Mexican species enter the desert southwest and west Texas in response to summer rains and there is always the possibility one may stray to our area. ❁

~Bob Doe

### SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

Editor: Marilyn Williams

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The newsletter deadline is the 15th for the following month's issue. Please send submissions via email to [editor@saudubon.org](mailto:editor@saudubon.org).

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## Welcome New Members!

Julia E Connor -----(830) 438-5762  
30315 Deerfield Terrace, Bulverde, TX 78163-2154

Danelle Crowley  
430 Black Oak Dr, Canyon Lake, TX 78133-5174

Billie Dorries  
6859 Crested Quail, San Antonio, TX 78250-7204

Jim Kearney -----(210) 946-2179  
314 Harmony Court, San Antonio, TX 78217-2136

Stuart Ross -----(210) 479-9414  
P.O. Box 781486, San Antonio, TX 78278

Bill & Georgia Zwartjes----- (210) 495-5123  
14638 Mountainwood St, San Antonio, TX 78232-4506

## Other Events

*June 6, Saturday, 9:00 - 11:00 AM*

### **Crownridge Canyon Interpretive Walk**

7222 Luskey Blvd. Reservations: (210) 564-6400.  
Hike is limited to 15 participants and may be canceled if there are no reservations. Bring water. Meet near restrooms, \$2 donation. Call: 210-564-6402 or email [peggy.spring@sanantonio.gov](mailto:peggy.spring@sanantonio.gov). See: [www.sanaturalareas.org](http://www.sanaturalareas.org).

*June 7, Sunday, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM*

### **Government Canyon State Natural Area**

Butterflies & the Plants They Love. Join Terry Doyle and Patty Leslie Pasztor for a look at the special connections between plants, butterflies and people. Wear sturdy shoes, hats, sunscreen and carry at least one liter of water per person. No pets please. Reservations required, starting at noon on May 7 at [reservations@friendsofgc.org](mailto:reservations@friendsofgc.org) or (210) 688-9055, ext. 291. [www.friendsofgc.org/schedule.html](http://www.friendsofgc.org/schedule.html)

*June 13, Saturday, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM*

### **Mitchell Lake Audubon Center**

Wet Workshop: Clean Dirt with Malcolm Beck.  
Healthy soil means healthy plants, healthy wetlands, and a healthy planet. Malcolm will discuss the

importance of soil conservation in water conservation. Space is limited. Admission: Free, but RSVP is required at (210) 628-1639 or [mlac@audubon.org](mailto:mlac@audubon.org).

*June 13, Saturday, 10:00 - 11:30 AM*

### **Eisenhower Park Second Saturday Program**

Meeting Snakes. South Texas Herpetological Association. 19399 NW Military Hwy. Reservations recommended. Program is in large gated pavilion. \$3.00/individual; \$5/family. Call (210) 564-6402 or See: [www.sanaturalareas.org](http://www.sanaturalareas.org).

*June 8 - 12, Monday - Friday, 8:30 - 11:30 AM*

### **Medina River Natural Area**

Summer Nature Camp. Ages 7 - 12 years old. Campers will learn about trees, plants, ethno-botany, mammals, geology, birds and insects. 15890 Highway 16 South (Hwy 16 South, 4 ½ miles south of Loop 410). See: [www.sanaturalareas.org/wildweek/mrcamp.html](http://www.sanaturalareas.org/wildweek/mrcamp.html)

*June 13, Saturday, 9:00 - 11:00 AM*

### **Medina River Natural Area**

Stepping Out Across Texas (with a compass!) Learn to follow a treasure hunt using a compass and measuring your pace. Call (210) 624-2575 for reservations. Walk-ins will be accepted on a limited basis. Suggested donation: \$3.00 per individual or \$5.00 per family.

*June 15 - 19 & June 22 - 26, Monday - Friday, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM*

### **Friedrich Wilderness Park**

“What’s the Point?” Ages 7 - 12 years. Come watch a fish dissection, make your own arrow point, hike, build a wasp house, learn how tough plant fibers can become yarn and deer antlers can become buttons, hike, examine all those plant spines and thorns, and learn “What’s the point?” in caring about our environment. 21395 Milsa. Cost: \$75 per session. For information or request a packet, call: 210-564-6402, See [www.sanaturalareas.org/wildweek/mrcamp.html](http://www.sanaturalareas.org/wildweek/mrcamp.html)

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.saudubon.org/membership.html](http://www.saudubon.org/membership.html) to renew or change your info. Members who get the pdf newsletter will receive a renewal reminder via email.

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## FIELD TRIP REPORTS



### **Beginner's Bird Walk, April 11**

Seven people joined Jerry and me on an overcast day for the Beginner's Bird Walk. We saw twenty-five bird species. The Yellow-crowned Night-Herons and a Long-billed Thrasher were the highlights of the day.

~Karen Moulder

### **Field Trip to San Antonio Mission, April 18**

Wendy and I were joined by one lone birder on a gray and rainy day. Though we had light rain for a 15 - 20 minute period, the storm had passed. We had 45 species today. Highlights included: Little Blue Herons (7), Nashville Warblers (10), Black-and-white Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat (2), Cedar Waxwings (5), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and an American Crow.

~Andy Garcia

### **Field Trip to Live Oak Park, April 22**

Fifteen of us had a very productive morning birding Live Oak City Park. Highlights included: a Sora, a Swainson's Thrush, and a Worm-eating Warbler. We ended the morning with 45 species.

~Sandi Wheeler

### **Field Trip to Warbler Woods, April 26**

Don and Susan Schaezler and I were joined by thirteen others for San Antonio Audubon Society's Warbler Woods field trip. We had a few other folks that arrived later to watch the show in the backyard. With the exception of its being a little windy, we had good weather. Our best birds of the day were a cooperative Bay-breasted Warbler and a not so cooperative Swainson's Warbler. Mississippi kites flew over several times. Number of species: 50.

~Sandi Wheeler

### **Field Trip to Leon Creek Greenway, April 28**

Six others joined me for a very nice field trip to Leon Creek Greenway. Most of the activity was in the willow trees around the pond area. A real treat was seeing two Mississippi Kites sitting atop some small trees in the dry creek bed. Usually we only see them flying overhead—got great looks! A fun morning. Thanks to all who came. Number of species: 54.

~Helen Rejzek

### **Field Trip to Maverick Ranch, May 3**

There were plenty of birds, visible & audible, for those ready for them at Maverick Ranch. We immediately got good long looks at a male Golden-cheeked Warbler while he ate a breakfast caterpillar. His mate was nearby but not nearly as accommodating. Our jaunt took us along a hillside, through woods, alongside a dry streambed then up to the top of a hill. Species total was 37, including a Chuck-will's-widow, small kettle of Mississippi Kites, Ash-throated Flycatcher, a Hutton's Vireo and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Another Golden-cheeked Warbler serenaded us as we ate lunch and enjoyed Mary Fenstermaker's famous brownies on the porch.

~Bebe Fenstermaker

### **Field Trip to Ave A & Botan. Garden, May 5**

Eleven birders met me at Ave A for a few hours of birding. Most birds were resident birds, no warblers, orioles or tanagers. Total species: 22. Eight of the birders joined me later at the Botanical Garden where we added Long-billed Thrasher, Green Heron and Lincoln's Sparrow to our list.

~Mike Creese

### **Beginner's Bird Walk, May 9**

Thirteen people joined me on this trip around our usual route. We were glad to get back to the trailhouse to add up our 29 species while we drank our lemonade. Highlights included 2 traveling birders, 9 beginners, 4 experienced birders, a nestful of Western Kingbirds, 4 Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, a Great-crested Flycatcher that we never did see, 2 Yellow Warblers and 3 Hummingbirds. Join us next month at 7:30 AM due to the heat.

~Georgina Schwartz

### **Field Trip to Tobin Park, May 10**

On Mother's Day, fifteen people birded with Jerry and me. We observed two Red-shouldered Hawks' nests. A chick was visible in one nest. A hummingbird was sitting on a nest close to the creek. Forty one species were seen by the group. The highlights were Mourning and Nashville Warblers, Barred Owl, Little Blue Heron, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and a singing Painted Bunting.

~Karen Moulder

## Judson Nature Trail Report Spring 2009

Thank all of you for your concern and support after my recent back surgery. I'm doing very well and should be back to full time hard labor by the fall.

The trail is looking good, being used and kept pretty clean. Alamo Heights Chief of Police Rick Pruitt with the assistance of Public Works is looking into better signage near the trailheads.

Our picturesque willow by the pool outlet had to have the limb that arched over the trail cut off as it had died and was a hazard. Invasive Ligustrum and Chinaberry trees were cut out of the area to the left of the trail house making room for a Huisache and Mulberry tree to grow. Warning: the Poison Ivy is very thick and prevalent. The parking lot has been recoated and freshly striped which gives a nice new look.

Our flower beds are looking great thanks to Jack Eitnien. Jack will be having the boy scouts (Eagle Scout age) that he leads put more road base on the trails. We have found this material to be long lasting compared to using mulch on the trails.

I will soon be talking to these scouts about Eagle Scout projects that have already been done at the JNT and we'll discuss new projects they might be interested in doing. Jack's son is in this troop and he is going to work on fixing a couple of drainage areas that wash out in hard rains. ❁

~Shirley Bartels, JNT Chairman



Judson Nature Trail  
by Dick Bartels

### SAAS Board of Directors Meeting

**June 30, Tuesday, 6:30 PM**

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

## America's Birdiest City/County

On May 1st, 2nd and 3rd, San Antonio birders competed in the Birdiest City/County Event. We did pretty well with 170 birds for the city and 198 for the county. This is the second best county count, just short of the 205 found in 2006. City birds were down from other years, being the lowest in the four years we had been a part of this event. Since the competition lasts until May 31st, we won't know until mid June how we did against the nation. Thanks to all the birders that helped in this event. I hope you will help next year when we hope to exceed 200 birds in the county. ❁

~Mike Creese

### San Antonio Audubon Society

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Patsy Inglet, Treasurer

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Mariann Golden  
Sheridan Coffey  
Jerry Coleman  
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Conservation, Harry Noyes  
Education ----- [info@saaudubon.org](mailto:info@saaudubon.org)  
Field Trips,  
Helen Rejzek ----- [fieldtrips@saaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@saaudubon.org)  
Historian, Betty Walters  
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 Couple (\$20 per year)  Family (\$25 per year)  
 Life: Individual (\$200)  Life: Couple (\$300)  
 Contributing (minimum of \$30 per year)

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](http://www.saaudubon.org/membership.html). Email contact: <members@saaudubon.org>

## MONTHLY MEETING

June 4th, Thursday, 7:00 PM

**Presenter: Dr. M. Clay Green**

**“The Reddish Egret:  
Insights into the ecology and behavior of  
North America’s rarest heron”**

Dr. M. Clay Green, Assistant Professor, Department of Biology, Texas State University is studying the evolutionary and ecological significance of sociality in birds and the effects of sociality in foraging, territoriality and reproductive behavior.

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