



San Antonio Audubon Society

# AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

Volume 55 Number 7

July 2009

## NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS

### Inside this issue:

Calendar	2
Judson Nature Trail	3
Birding Scene	4
Other Events	5
Field Trip Reports	6
Birding Bits	7

I was feeling quite guilty this past November because I had cut down a ligustrum in our back yard that had rapidly grown to more than twenty feet tall and which, despite the record drought, bore heavy clusters of berries drooping from every branch. Unfortunately, the cause of this rampant growth was its location directly above our sewer line. About that same time the needs of the security cameras near our school garden dictated the cutting back of most of our flourishing antique roses and vines. The sources of my guilt were the resident Northern Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottis*) at each site for whom the loss at that season might well have signaled a catastrophe.

Since at least 1731, when Catesby's illustration of the "Mock-bird" was published, the mockingbird has occupied a cherished place in our culture. The State Bird of five States (including Texas), the mockingbird's preference for edge habitats and open areas on the ground upon which to forage has allowed it to flourish in close contact with humanity.

The sedentary, territorial nature of this

species and its habit of persistent, loud singing from a prominent perch draw attention to the bird wherever it occurs. The common and scientific names are both well chosen; mockingbirds are talented mimics and quite often their vocal repertoire can alert bird watchers to the presence of other, less common bird species.

In many mockingbird populations males outnumber females. In the springtime, males advertising for a mate frequently leap into the air above the song perch, slowly and conspicuously flapping their wings so as to prominently display the white wing patches while singing vigorously. Unmated males also frequently sing late at night, not infrequently drawing the ire of nearby humans. Females prefer those males with the greatest song diversity. New sounds and songs are continually incorporated as the bird ages.

One male mockingbird proved to have a "playlist" of more than two hundred different song types.

Mockingbirds form monogamous pairs, these pair bonds sometimes lasting for years. Both sexes are aggressively territorial, for the most part confronting intruders of their same sex. Females generally do not sing in the breeding season, but may sing in the fall if establishing separate winter territories. One common and conspicuous territorial display is the "boundary dance" wherein neighbors confront each other on the ground while making short lateral hops along their common territorial boundary.

In South Texas, breeding commences in the late winter. Existing pairs engage in long and acrobatic courtship chases. Unmated males escort prospective mates around their territory while singing profusely. Both sexes help construct the cup-shaped nest, usually placed less than ten feet off of the ground in the branches of a dense shrub or tree. The female alone incubates the two to six eggs; both sexes feed the young. Fledging occurs at around twelve days of age at which time the young disperse into the surrounding cover. Three broods a year may be raised in the



*Northern Mockingbird by Marcin Kojtka*

(Continued on page 3)

## SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR

### SAAS ANNUAL PICNIC

July 4, Saturday, 5:30 PM

Join us for our annual potluck picnic. SAAS will provide beverages, ice and paper goods (plates, cups, etc.). Bring a potluck dish to share, along with chairs and folding tables. Don't forget the bug spray. Members are encouraged to bring the entire family and friends. Come and check out the trails during the picnic. The picnic is in lieu of the Monthly Meeting.

Judson Nature Trail House  
See Beginner's Bird Walk (below)  
for directions.

**\*\*Note early starting times for the summer\*\***

July 11, 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.

July 18, Saturday, 7:30 AM

#### SAAS field trip to Crescent Bend Park

Join Leader Bill Skinner at the parking lot of Crescent Bend Nature Park. From IH-10 East, take the FM-1518 Exit and go north toward Schertz. Look for brown Crescent Bend sign at Schaefer Rd., turn right and go about 3 miles to Cibolo Creek. Bring insect repellent. This is land that was condemned by FEMA after the last big flood. It is 115 acres bordered on the east and northeast by Cibolo Creek. There is a mixture of native and non-native trees (lots of both). We should enjoy birding on this new place. Call Bill at (830) 914-2564.

July 26, Sunday, 8:00 AM

#### SAAS field trip Choke Canyon State Park

Meet leader Mike Creese at the entrance to the Calliham Unit of Choke Canyon State Park. The Park is

located about 75 miles south of San Antonio off IH-37. Exit IH-37 at Three Rivers (Exit 72) and continue on US-281 into Three Rivers. Take State Highway 72 west from Three Rivers. The Calliham Unit is about 12 miles west of town (past the South Shore Unit). Bring plenty of water, insect repellent, and lunch. It is a 2-hour drive from San Antonio. Be careful of the speed limit signs in Three Rivers. Contact Mike Creese at (210) 479-5552.

### Other Birding Events

July 11 - July 12, Saturday-Sunday

#### TOS Trip - Rocksprings, Junction, Real County

For details see: <http://texasbirds.org>. Cost: \$30.00. To register contact leader Steve Gross at [sgross77@comcast.net](mailto:sgross77@comcast.net); home phone: (281) 440-6364; or (281) 787-3888.

July 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](http://www.sabot.org).

July 25, Saturday, 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM

#### Texas Pelagic Trip

The World Birding Center on South Padre Island. Cost: \$150.00. See: [www.texaspelagics.com](http://www.texaspelagics.com).

### Mitchell Lake Audubon Center

Regular hours for the general public 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:

July 12, 2nd Sunday

July 14, 2nd Tuesday

July 19, 3rd Sunday

July 25, 4th Saturday (8:00 AM)

(Continued from page 1)

South. A new nest is ordinarily constructed for each brood and construction often begins while the parents are still feeding recently fledged young.

Once primarily a Southern species, the range of the mockingbird now encompasses all of the lower 48 States, extending from the Mexican state of Oaxaca in the south to just north of the Canadian border. The greatest U.S. population densities occur in South Texas.



About half the diet of adult mockingbirds consists of fruit, this component becoming especially critical in the winter months; at that season Mockingbirds commonly defend the fruiting trees and shrubs within their territory against all competitors. Much of the northern range expansion of the mockingbird has been tied to the widespread planting of fruit-bearing ornamentals, and in particular the widespread escape of the multi-flora rose from cultivated to invasive status.

The removal of that fruit-laden ligustrum and those antique roses likely struck a severe blow to those affected mockingbirds. Both males reverted to unmated status the following spring. The male at school seemed especially hard-up, singing doggedly for two months from among the stumps of his denuded territory. Fortunately, antique roses grow back with remarkable speed. He and his new mate are currently raising a brood in a rapidly expanding rose bush. ❁

~Mike Scully

### Judson Nature Trail Report

I met with the Boy Scouts from Troop #31 on Saturday, May 23, 2009 about the five Eagle Scout projects that have been done at the JNT. Adults on the Eagle Project Committee that were present were Jim Hoffman, Jim Bulgrin, Dale Trompler and Jack Eitniear. Jack Eitniear's son John will be doing a drainage project at the JNT this summer for his Eagle Scout project.

Dylan Feuerbacher is looking into making a bat house as his project. Five other scouts are looking for projects to do also. Before the meeting John, Troy Bulgrin and Dylan planted agaves (Spanish Daggers)

given to Jack by the Laredo Environmental Center. After the scouts' meeting, these energetic young men spread some road base on the trail where needed.

Jack Eitniear has been spending a few hours each week refurbishing the gardens and the trail. He has hung a hummingbird feeder on the front porch of the trail house and has volunteered to keep it clean and filled with fresh sugar water. Hummingbirds have come to it already. Jack has spent a lot of time doing big and little chores at the trail and that has been a great help. I'm happy to say that he is now a trail committee member. Many of the other committee members have had extra time for birding this spring because I have not had a workday since my back surgery .

Our thanks to the scouts and especially to Jack. See you at the picnic on Saturday, July 4th at 5:30 PM.

Shirley Bartels, JNT chairman

### PHOTO OF THE MONTH



*Mountain Plover*  
By Martin Reid

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

## The Birding Scene May 2009

The month of May got off to a great start with birders scrambling for sightings for America's Birdiest City competition. Karen Moulder found a Blackburnian Warbler at Tobin Park. Carolyn Cuthberston had a Chestnut-sided Warbler and two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in her yard. Lora Render contributed a female Scarlet Tanager. Andy Garcia found a Mourning Warbler at Tobin Park. Roel Loera had a Wood Thrush at the Alamo KOA Campground. The weekend ended with seventeen species of warblers, four species of buntings, including Lazuli, Black-headed Grosbeak, four species of orioles, including a Scott's and seventeen species of shorebirds.



Blackburnian Warbler - Marcin Kojtko

Migration certainly does not end the first weekend of May. Brad Weir had some good sightings at the Botanical Gardens, including an Eastern Kingbird and Mourning Warbler on May 10, a Great Kiskadee on May 14, multiple Traill's Flycatchers, Magnolias, American Redstarts and a Blackburnian on May 17. Janice McClintock had a Varied Bunting in her yard in Medina County.

Mitchell Lake was productive as always. Curt McCamy heard Common Parakeets calling from four different locations on May 10. Throughout the month, White-rumped and Baird's Sandpipers were seen. Georgina Schwartz's group found a Semipalmated Plover and a Groove-billed Ani on May 12. Wilson's Phalaropes were in very large numbers this spring. Georgina's group on May 17 found seventeen Black Terns and two Eastern Kingbirds.

Not surprisingly, many reports were received from Warbler Woods. All of the expected warblers and thrushes were seen throughout the month, with Mourning, MacGillivray's, Canada, Magnolia, Blackburnian and Gray-cheeked Thrush being highlights. ❀

~Sheridan Coffey

## What Birds to Expect in July

It is hard to imagine, as we sit sweltering under the July sun, that fall migration is already underway. But it is true. The first southbound shorebirds will be at Mitchell Lake soon after the 4th. Golden-cheeked Warbler will largely depart by mid-month, and other warblers, such as Northern Parula and Louisiana Waterthrush will begin migrating. Hummingbirds of several species will start showing up at feeders with Ruby-throated, Rufous, and Broad-tailed expected as migrants and others are possible. Watch the local lakes for dispersing water birds from the coast; terns, skimmers, gulls, herons. And of course, any landfalling tropical system offers lots of possibilities. ❀

~Bob Doe

## Birdiest City/County Results

I just got the word from the National compiler that San Antonio won Birdiest Large Inland City. Additionally, Bexar County won Birdiest Inland County (by 5 species) in the Central Flyway division. Los Angeles won most species in a County and Corpus Christi won America's Birdiest City for the 7<sup>th</sup> year in a row. Thanks to all who helped this year. All your hard work is appreciated and I hope to have your help next year.

~Mike Creese

**WAY TO GO, BIRDERS!!**



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

### 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@saaudubon.org](mailto:editor@saaudubon.org).

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## Welcome New Members!



Jack Eitnrear----- (210) 828-5306  
218 Conway Dr, San Antonio, TX 78209-1716

D. Frances Knight ----- (830) 569-2360  
301 Chaparral, Pleasanton, TX 78064-3905

## Other Events

July 11, Saturday, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

### Eisenhower Park Second Saturday Program

Our fossil P.A.S.T. Clayton Nye, President of the Paleontological Association of South Texas, will present an introduction to paleontology and local fossils. 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).

July 18, Saturday

### Sierra Club Comal River Float Trip

Only tubes and swimmers are allowed on the river. The entry point is located across the street from the tube rental in Landa Park (New Braunfels, TX). Shuttle service is provided from the last public river exit back to the tube rental. Donation to Sierra Club is suggested. Tube rental fee is \$10.00. Contact Terry Platt, [ta-platt@earthlink.net](mailto:ta-platt@earthlink.net) for reservations. See: <http://texas.sierraclub.org/alamo/Outings.html>.

## SAAS Education and Outreach

This is an update on recent and upcoming SAAS education and outreach activities. Since March, we've been gathering and creating material for two education rolling file carts which will store and transport our material and resources for events and activities. We now have a small collection of stuffed toy Audubon birds, the Bexar County Urban bird photo pages, bird field guides, local bird photos, and a broad range of birding and nature hand-out information. The committee is continuing to expand educational aspects and activities for children (such as Bird Bingo and Kid Banding).

During the spring, we participated in the Zoo's Earth

Day event (Party for the Planet) on April 18; San Antonio College's Earth Day event on April 22; and at the Zoo again for their International Migratory Bird Day Celebration on May 9.

Several organizations have been contacted to add SAAS as a participant with our educational programs. These include: the S.A. River Authority for the "Get Outdoors" event in January at Mission San Jose; the San Antonio Botanical Garden for their two major events: *Walk Across Texas*, a Fiesta event held in April and the *Botanica and Fall Garden Fair* scheduled for Sunday, October 25; and at the Mitchell Lake *Fall Festival* on Saturday, October 24. Within the near future, both SAWS and CPS will be contacted regarding our interest in their future events, such as the SAWS Jazz festival in April and the CPS event in Olmos Park last October. If you hear of other nature-related events, please let us know.

The Education and Outreach Committee will be involved with promoting the American Bird Conservancy's "Cats Indoors" project. The Conservancy is reformatting and editing their "Cats Indoors" brochures and educational kits ordered in March with an anticipated early summer shipping date. Cornell Lab of Ornithology is in the process of reprinting their "Celebrate Urban Birds" kit, but did ship us their remaining inventory. Both kits and brochures will be incorporated into future educational/community outreach activities. At a recent retreat for the new Brackenridge Park Conservancy, numerous participants (ranging from the surrounding neighborhoods to the Zoo to the Japanese Sunken Garden to the birders) expressed extreme concern regarding the feral cat population throughout the park. Who knows? The Park Conservancy might be the answer to addressing the Park's cat problem, so we will be sharing the American Bird Conservancy information with their Board.

While our Educational and Community Outreach programs are gradually expanding and evolving, our traditional activities will not change as they are as integral to our goals as any new activity. Georgina is continuing to make presentations at schools and other community groups throughout the area. On June 9th, she gave her Birds of Bexar County program and distributed copies of the Birds of Bexar County Checklist to a

(Continued on page 7)

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS



### Field Trip to South Llano State Park, May 16

Eighteen of us joined Rhandy Helton, Ann Lemon, and Elaine Council at the South Llano River State Park for a tour of birding sites around Junction. Starting off with a Green Kingfisher and a Black Phoebe at the entrance to the park, our other highlights included a displaying Vermilion Flycatcher, singing Chipping and Lark Sparrows, a pair of Blue Grosbeaks, and a Ringed Kingfisher seen over the Cedar Creek while we were looking for the Black-capped Vireo. Other Vireos seen were White-eyed, Red-eyed, Yellow-throated, and Bell's. Golden-cheeked Warblers and Canyon Wren were heard but not seen. A stop at the tennis center north of town gave us Bullock's and Orchard Orioles, Cassin's Sparrows, and 7 late Cedar Waxwings. A total of 70 species were seen. Special thanks to Rhandy who spent the whole day with us until the last departed for home.

~Georgina Schwartz

### Field Trip to Max Starcke Park, May 27

Four hard core birders joined Dana Green and me for a productive and entertaining morning at Max Starcke Park in Seguin (Guadalupe County). Because of thunderstorms, four of us decided to eat breakfast to wait out the storm, while two others, recognizing Georgina's car (don't we all?), decided to wait for us to come back. The weather was moving off when we got back together. The birds apparently were also waiting for the weather to clear because we had several species in the parking lot including the Bullock's Oriole and the Western Kingbird. Other highlights included a Couch's Kingbird and three different warblers. We all enjoyed watching a recently fledged Downy Woodpecker being fed by its mother. We ended the morning with 42 species.

~Sandi Wheeler

### Field Trip to Concan, May 30

A group of 32 enthusiastic birders got up early and met at Neal's Lodges in Concan this morning at 7:30 AM. After we birded around Neal's, we walked up the Buchanan Trail and viewed probably around 15 Golden-cheeked Warblers, including many fledglings

and adults singing. Also in the mix singing was a Hutton's Vireo. I took more than half the group up the rocky steep hill to try to find the Black-capped Vireo. Two or Three Black-caps were singing but too far down in the brushy terrain to chase. I also took them to El Starvo

Ranch and got to see a Canyon Wren on top of a structure. After lunch, we went down to



Concan birders

the Pecan Grove and chased some Indigo Buntings and Yellow-throated Warblers. I then took half the group to Cook's Slough Nature Park in Uvalde where we got good looks at Ash-throated and Brown-crested Flycatchers. Towards the end of our walk we saw four Groove-billed Anis. Oh, yes, we also got to see a Black Vulture fledgling just lying around in a structure up on the hill. Total species: 79.

~Bob Rasa

### Field Trip to Castroville Regional Park, May 31

Four hardy birders joined me for a morning birding at Castroville Regional Park. Highlights included Black-bellied Whistling-ducks, Least Grebes, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, and Ash-throated, Great-crested, and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers. Total species: 49.

~Georgina Schwartz

### Field Trip to Stone Oak Park, June 6

A group of 16 experienced birders joined me and a friend I drafted to come along this morning for the Stone Oak Park field trip sponsored by SAAS. We walked to the dam and behind the dam. Most prevalent species were Cliff Swallows, Cave Swallows, House Finches, and Lesser Goldfinches. The field in front of the dam yielded a male and female Painted Bunting and an Eastern Phoebe. We also saw three Yellow-billed Cuckoos in trees near the dam and 7 Rufous-crowned Sparrows. We had no luck finding the Rock Wren, even though James Middleton said he had seen it a few weeks earlier. Thank you to everybody who attended and for your efforts helping me compile the list.

~Lora Reynolds

(Continued from page 5)

group of nearly 40 people at the OASIS meeting. We have a list of ideas for the future, but won't be undertaking more than we can handle as we are dependent on our members to volunteer and commit their time. For community events, we will be scheduling two members per shift for information tables and three or more when we combine the information table with an education activity. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please come to a committee meeting or contact us. Also, if you know other SAAS members who might be interested in assisting us with these fun and rewarding activities, please let us know. There will be a volunteer sign-up sheet at our general meetings. ❁

~Barbara Kyse

## SAAS Board of Directors Meeting

**July 28, Tuesday, 6:30 PM**

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

## MEMORIALS

### Jean Snyder

Jean Snyder, Betty Walters' mother, died on May 6. She had lived with Betty for a while and many of us knew her. We offer our condolences to Betty

### Ed Kutac

Ed Kutac died in Amarillo on June 3rd at age 87. He was the author of the original "Birder's Guide to Texas." It has been a long time since Ed took us on a field trip but I am sure there are SAAS members who remember him. Once we met Ed at Jim's at I-35 and 71 in Austin amid a pouring rain. He suggested we just follow him. He headed for Granger Lake where it was not raining and we had a grand day. Another time we followed him around the South Shore Unit at Choke Canyon State Park looking for Audubon's Oriole. Some SAAS members also followed him to Amarillo after he moved there and enjoyed a Texas Ornithological Society meeting and field trips. We offer our condolences to his sister Ethel Kutac who continues to inspire us at TOS meetings.

~Georgina Schwartz

## Birding Bits

TAS/TOS Towhees won first place in the Great Texas Birding Classic in the Gliders (14-18 years of age) Division. SAAS member Caleb Dye was part of this five-person team of dynamic young birders.

Support important conservation programs by purchasing a Bluebonnet or Horned Lizard license plate. Each plate costs just \$30, and \$22 of every purchase goes directly to Texas Parks and Wildlife. Learn more and order your plates online at [conservationplate.org](http://conservationplate.org).

Rancher Lou Waters transferred more than 600 acres of his neighboring ranch to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to be added to Lost Maples. Another 100 acres will be transferred this fall.

### San Antonio Audubon Society

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[www.saaudubon.org](http://www.saaudubon.org)

### Officers

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Sandi Wheeler, Vice President  
Gail Nickel, Secretary  
Patsy Inglet, Treasurer

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Mariann Golden  
Sheridan Coffey  
Jerry Coleman  
Tim Katafias  
Mike Sims

### Committee Chairmen

Bird Records,  
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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  
Member Database,  
Carol McCasland ----- [members@saaudubon.org](mailto:members@saaudubon.org)  
Nature Trail, Shirley Bartels  
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Check one:

- Individual (\$15 per year)  Junior, under 18 (\$7 per year)  
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 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>

## SAAS ANNUAL PICNIC

July 4, Saturday, 5:30 PM

Join us for our annual potluck picnic. SAAS will provide beverages, ice and paper goods (plates, cups, etc.). Bring a potluck dish to share, along with chairs and folding tables. Don't forget the bug spray. Members are encouraged to bring the entire family and friends. Come and check out the trails during the picnic. **There is no regular Thursday night Monthly Meeting in July.**



Judson Nature Trail House

See: Beginner's Bird Walk directions