

San Antonio Audubon Society

AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

Volume 55 Number 9

September 2009

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BIRD DIVERSITY ABOUNDS IN COSTA RICA

By Mike Scully

This past July I was able to spend 12 days traveling in Costa Rica while chaperoning a school group. Costa Rica is a bit smaller than West Virginia, and like that state has winding mountain roads, many small communities and much beautiful scenery. With regard to the climate, the "Ticos" (Costa Ricans) claim there are two kinds of weather; rain and less rain. It didn't rain all day, but it was pleasantly overcast most of the time. The afternoon highs were only in the low 80's. The countryside is lush and green; most of Costa Rica originally supported rain and cloud forests and several pre-serves exist. Compared to my experiences in Africa, the Tropics there are a biologically

friendly place. While a small risk of malaria and dengue fever exists, mosquito repellent helps prevent both. I slept outside some nights, listening to the chorusing frogs and insects.

First light comes about 5 AM. Every morning a few teens, our guide and I were able to put in a couple of hours birding. There might not be more total birds in Costa Rica, but certainly there are more *different* birds. Some were easy to identify: Numerous species of mostly green parrots and parakeets, gaudy toucans and aracarís, and crow-sized Montezuma Oropendolas.

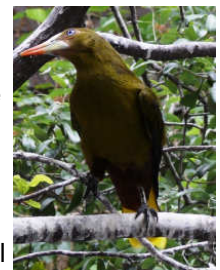
The less spectacular birds were often more difficult. A few were familiar, like the red-winged blackbirds and great-tailed grackles. Some were similar to the familiar: Tropical Pewees, Tropical Kingbirds, Clay-colored Thrushes (formerly, Robins), assorted tanagers and a bewildering array of hummingbirds. Many were entirely new, such as Euphonias, which are like goldfinches that eat fruit, and Saltators, vaguely reminiscent of catbirds. The little toady flycatchers looked like prehistoric gnatcatchers. Not to be overlooked either were the sloths and monkeys. The hollow roar of howler monkeys is a common sound, and the locals pay them no more mind than we do squirrels.

Singing wrens of various species were frequent, some clearly related to our own Carolina Wren, but the most commonly seen was the familiar House Wren. Rufous-collared Sparrows, an unlikely-seeming congener of our own White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, were common around houses and in the towns.



Scarlet Macaw

Over both coasts the frigatebirds were spectacular. Over the rain forests we saw Swallow-tailed Kites, and on one occasion a King Vulture. Without question, however, the most spectacular birds of all were the macaws. Most large parrots have a swift, direct flight, rather like that of wild ducks. Macaws are different. Their slender, rounded wings and graceful wing beat called to mind an egret or heron, but their large size, long tail and brilliant colors gave them a look all their own. Scarlet Macaws can be found on the Pacific side; we saw several pairs around the coastal town of Jaco. Great Green Macaws are far rarer, with only about 35 pairs remaining in the country. It was our great good fortune to see an adult pair with a young bird flying majestically over the Sarapiquí River.



Oropendola
By Lora Render

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR

MONTHLY MEETING

September 3, Thursday, 7:00 PM

Presenter: John Berner
“Texas eBird: What’s in it for You?
What’s in it for Science?”

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

Please call the trip leaders for more information concerning any of the following field trips. Last-minute changes to field trips will be posted at saaudubon.org or on the recorded message at 308-6788.

Saturday, September 12, 8:00 AM

SAAS Beginner’s Bird Walk

Meet leader Georgina Schwartz (342-2073) 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. Everyone is welcome. Binoculars are available.

Wednesday, September 23, 8:00 AM

Hawk Watch at Hazel Bazemore County Park

Meet Georgina Schwartz (342-2073) any time after 8:00 at the hawk watch. The park is located in the NW corner of Corpus Christi in the community of Calallen. From I-37 take Exit 14, which is Highway 77 south to Kingsville. Less than one-half mile south of Highway 77 is FM 624 (Up River Road). Turn west (right) on 624 for 0.7 mile to a traffic light. The entrance to the park is on the right. Follow this road to the entrance, then bear left and follow the signs to the hawk watch. Bring lunch, water, sunscreen, insect repellent, and a chair.

Sunday, September 27, 8:00 AM

Avenue A and Botanical Gardens

Meet Tim Katafias (557-7915) at the parking lot on Red Oak in Brackenridge Park. Turn north on Red Oak from Mulberry. It will be the first parking lot on your left. Depending on time spent at Avenue A, we can continue to bird at the SA Botanical Garden. Admission there is \$7.00 adults, \$5.00 seniors.

Tuesday, September 29, 8:00 AM

Leon Creek Greenway

Meet leader Helen Rejzek (679-7437) in the parking lot of the Leon Creek Greenway. From Loop 1604, exit Babcock Road and drive south for about 2 miles to the greenway at 12160 Babcock. Coming from IH 10, exit at DeZavala and drive west for about 1.75 miles to the light at Babcock. Turn right on Babcock and the greenway is about 0.7 mile on the left. We will be looking for fall migrants.



LOOKING AHEAD

- Oct. 17: Magic Ridge
(TOS Sanctuary)
- Oct. 25: Butterflies at Choke
Canyon SP
- Oct.31: Warbler Woods
- Nov.1: Castroville Regional
Park
- Nov.7: Beeville
- Nov.22: Calaveras and

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 to renew or change your info. Members who get the pdf newsletter will receive a renewal reminder via email.

(Continued from page 1)

I was struck by the high level of ecological awareness apparent among Costa Ricans. Contrary to my prior expectations, I saw few old vehicles on the road; those that fail emissions tests are heavily taxed. Ecotourism is a major industry, and the many guides are strictly trained and licensed. As measure of their professionalism, I saw more expensive Swarovski scopes and binoculars in the hands of Costa Rican guides than I have ever seen anywhere. Our own guide carried 10 x 50s, superior to my 7 x 42 Bruntons for reaching up into the tall canopy.

My mild paranoia felt on the first day quickly dissipated. While I'm sure tourists can find trouble there, trouble does not ordinarily come looking for reasonably careful tourists. The locals were proud of the fact that in Costa Rica, teachers outnumber policemen.

Return air fare from San Antonio currently costs about \$350. I do believe I could do a whole two-week trip for well under \$2,000. Much of the time on this trip I was busy chaperoning but I still saw 103 new species, leaving only about another 450 potential life birds as yet unseen. During migration and in winter very many of our own birds can be found in Costa Rica, too. I want to go back.



Mike Scully

OTHER BIRDING EVENTS

Rockport 9/17-20

The Rockport Hummer/bird Celebration is scheduled for September 17-20, headquartered at the High School. Basic registration is \$40 and includes all the speakers. Bus and boat tours extra. Visit their website at www.Rockporthummingbird.com for more info. This is the best festival around, so save the date.

San Antonio Botanical Garden 9/19 Beginning Bird Walk

Enjoy birds in native habitats, and bask in the relaxing atmosphere found in the Garden during a morning bird walk led by an experienced guide every third Saturday of the month. Featured birds include hummingbirds, Long-billed Thrashers, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Green Heron, and the Common Moorhen. For a list of other birds spotted in the garden visit our

"[birding list](#)". Meet at the Carriage House. Free for SA Botanical Garden members; non-members \$7/adult.

Cibolo Nature Center 9/26

Family Birding Day—CNC

Boerne Birders

Saturday, September 26, 8-10 am

Meet at CNC pavilion. This free outing is especially for families with children, who have an interest in birding. Bring your favorite bird identification book and binoculars. If you are just getting started and need to borrow, we will have some to share. The group will check out the Visitor Center bird feeders, look for birds along Cibolo Nature Center trails and talk about the fall migration. For more information, call 830-230-5551 or 210-710-3981.

Sign Up Now for Project FeederWatch

Project FeederWatch, a joint effort sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in New York and Bird Studies Canada in Ontario, gives anyone with an interest in backyard birdwatching the opportunity to contribute their observations toward the study, protection, and preservation of North American feeder birds.

The annual survey officially kicks off on the second Saturday in November and runs through early April. Participants decide on a schedule for regularly counting birds at their feeders during that period, and then either submit the data online or using paper forms.

A \$15 annual participation fee covers the cost of the research kit you will receive. To register, visit www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/ or call toll-free (877) 741-3077. This is a great way to get family, friends and neighbors interested in birdwatching!

Mitchell Lake Birding Trips

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

September 8, 2nd Tuesday with Helen Rejzek,
Georgina Schwartz

September 13, 2nd Sunday with Curt McCamy

September 20, 3rd Sunday with Helen Rejzek,
Georgina Schwartz, Mariann Golden

September 26, 4th Saturday with Ernie Roney

The Birding Scene July 2009

July 2009 was one of the hottest in recorded history. Despite the brutal temperatures some birders still got out in the field. Helen Rejzek birded Friedrich Wilderness Park on July 3 and was able to observe a pair of Hutton's Vireos. Unheard of in summer just a few years ago, this species has become a regular at Friedrich, with evidence of breeding. Helen also saw a pair of Golden-cheeked Warblers the same day. A female Black-and-white Warbler was seen at Schaezler's Warbler Woods on July 6.

July marks the beginning of shorebird migration. The first reported southbound migrants were two Western Sandpipers found by Martin Reid on July 5. Other shorebirds seen by Reid on July 18 included both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper and Pectoral Sandpiper. Georgina Schwartz led a group to Mitchell Lake on July 19, where they saw most of the species listed above and added a Roseate Spoonbill.

A few more warblers rounded out the month. Susan Schaezler found a male Black-and-white Warbler on July 19 at Warbler Woods. Marcin Kojtko found a Louisiana Waterthrush, one of the earliest passerine migrants in Fall, at Leon Creek Greenbelt on July 24. Susan Schaezler ended the month with another Louisiana Waterthrush at Warbler Woods.

~Sheridan Coffey



Louisiana Waterthrush
by LA Fuertes

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Nesting White-eyed Vireos
by Nancy Norman



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

SAAS 2009 ANNUAL DINNER

Join us on Thursday, October 1, at 6 PM for our annual dinner at La Fonda Oak Hills, 350 Northhaven St.

Dr. Brent Ortego will be our guest speaker, presenting a talk on "Texas Ornithological Society Sanctuaries."

Dr. Ortego is a Wildlife Diversity Biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He also serves as the Sanctuaries Manager for the Texas Ornithological Society. In addition, he and his wife, Sue, own and manage a bird banding station with nearly six acres of habitat intensively managed for birds. Up to 75 hummingbird feeders are maintained year-round and birds are mist-netted 100 times per year to study hummingbird biology and avian migration.

Dinner will include a fajita buffet and beverages at the cost of \$20 per person. Paid reservations must be received by Friday, September 25, 2009.

Please mail your checks (indicating the number attending) to:

San Antonio Audubon Society
5150 Broadway #257
San Antonio, TX 78209-5710

Contact info@saudubon.org or Sandi Wheeler Wheels5683@satx.rr.com or (210) 659-8168.

Welcome New Members!

Steven Kerley

210-679-7883

3118 Limestone Trail
San Antonio, TX 78253-5693

Maeve Reddin

210-633-2104

3122 McDonald Oak
San Antonio, TX 78223-4843

Nancy Shearer

210-897-7010

1615 Lockhill Selma Rd
San Antonio, TX 78213-1963

Janet Thompson

210-654-8641

9122 Autumn Leaf St
San Antonio, TX 78217-3402

Patricia Zimbicki

210-568-9112

13103 Babbling Brook
San Antonio, TX 78232-5150

Other Events

FRIEDRICH PARK NATURE WALK 9/5

Come see who's been getting a drink at the windmill and the overflow puddle while you enjoy this late summer nature hike from 9-11 AM. Bring at least two filled water bottles per person. Reservations are suggested; hikes occasionally change. Call: 564-6402 or 372-9124 or email peggy.spring@sanantonio.gov Limited to 15 people per hike. Meet near the restrooms. A donation of \$2 per person is suggested. Drive past the Camp Bullis exit heading west on IH 10 and take the Dominion Drive exit. Make the turn-around at the intersection and proceed back east on the access road to turn right at Oak and right on Milsa. Sponsored by SA Natural Areas: sanaturalareas.org

EISENHOWER PARK ETHNOBOTANY TALK 9/12

Second Saturday Program. 10 a.m. – 12 noon. Tunas, nopales and more. Join Patty Pasztor, native plant expert, in a fun exploration of natural fibers, foods and other uses of local plants. Eisenhower Park, 19399 N.W. Military Drive. Reservations recommended. Donation: \$3 per person or \$5 per family. 564-6400.

MEDINA RIVER NATURAL AREA TALK 9/12

Come join us from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM as Charlie McCarl, Master Naturalist and National Certified Interpreter gives a presentation entitled: "CIBOLO! Where Have they Gone?" She asks the question, "Where are the thunder of hooves and that unending sea of large shaggy bodies?" and leads an excursion into the life of the buffalo and what happened to them. Reservations are requested for all events. For more information or to RSVP call Medina River Natural Area at (210) 624-2575. Suggested donation for all events is \$3.00 per person or \$5.00 per family. www.sanaturalareas.org

JUDSON NATURE TRAILS AND NPLD 9/26

September 26th is National Public Lands Day, which is the nation's largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance the public lands Americans enjoy. In 2008, 120,000 volunteers built trails and bridges, removed trash and invasive plants, and planted over 1.6 million trees. Lissa Martinez, who has coordinated the annual Basura Bash at the Olmos Basin Park since 2003, is organizing a NPLD workday in Alamo Heights with plans to include the Judson Nature Trails. Meet at 9:00 AM at the Judson Nature Trail House parking lot and bring your gloves and bug spray; they will be furnishing any needed gear. For more information contact Lissa at olmosbasin@satx.rr.com.

GIVE A WHOOP! for Operation Migration

This year Operation Migration will chalk up the 10,000th mile flown while leading Whooping Cranes in their first migration from Wisconsin to Florida. In order to celebrate this achievement, they have issued invitations to their **Give a WHOOP!** campaign with the goal of collecting 10,000 Whoops, one for each migration mile flown with the endangered Whooping Cranes following ultralights. For just **\$10**, you can **Give a WHOOP!** To support the OM program and show concern for the future of this endangered species, visit the OM website: www.operationmigration.org/GAWlandingpage.html.

When you **Give a WHOOP!**, you will receive OM's e-bulletins, an invitation to the online **WHOOP! It Up** celebration, and will be entered in drawings for "I Give a Whoop!" T-shirts and other items.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS



Guadalupe River State Park, 7/16

Georgina Schwartz and the 10 people who joined her for this trip observed 32 species, with the highlights being 5 Northern Bobwhites, 15 White-eyed Vireos, a Yellow-throated Vireo, 6 Golden-cheeked Warblers, a Greater Roadrunner, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, a Canyon Wren, an Eastern Wood Pewee, a Barred Owl, 5 Painted Buntings and 2 Lark Sparrows.

Crescent Bend Park, Bexar County, 7/18

Bill Skinner led seven others on a field trip to this former trailer park site along the Cibolo Creek in NE Bexar County near Schertz. The area was cleared by FEMA and Bexar County after being inundated by flood



Great Egrets
by Lee Pasquali

waters, and now it's a wonderful place. Among the 37 species identified, the stand-outs were 3 Great Blue Herons, a Great Egret and a Snowy Egret, 2 Green Herons, 8 Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, an American Crow and 12 Barn Swallows.

Choke Canyon, Calliham Unit, 7/26

With Mike Creese leading the way for four birders accompanying him, a bountiful number of species was observed—60 in all. Most notable were the Great Blue, Little Blue and Tri-colored Herons; White-faced Ibis; Harris's Hawk; Wild Turkey; Northern Bobwhite; Common Moorhen; Black-necked Stilt; Lesser Yellowlegs; Spotted Sandpiper; Laughing Gull; Forster's Tern; Vermilion, Ash-throated, Scissor-tailed and Brown-crested Flycatchers; Bell's Vireo; Verdin; Long-billed Thrasher; Olive Sparrow; Lark Sparrow and Bullock's Oriole.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
by Joan Lasswell

Hornsby Bend, Austin, 8/1

Bob Doe led seven birders on a trip to Hornsby Bend Sewage Ponds in east Austin on August 1. Billed as a shorebird trip, they tabulated 13 species of shorebirds before they left the ponds and went into the woods along the Colorado River. Species of interest include: Semipalmated, Least, Baird's, Pectoral, and Stilt Sandpipers; Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers; Eastern Wood Pewee; Yellow-bellied and Vermilion Flycatchers; Northern Parula; 4 Yellow-billed Cuckoos and 4 Orchard Orioles. The group tallied 61 species as they ate lunch in a nearby air-conditioned Mexican restaurant.

Rancho Diana, 8/2

Jayne Neal, Gail Dugelby and Jesse from the San Antonio Parks and Recreation staff hosted Mike Creese, Tim Katafias, Chris Bailey, Helen Rejzek, Gerald Hewitt, and Georgina Schwartz on the field trip to Rancho Diana, where 27 species were observed. Among them were a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Greater Roadrunner, 8 Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, 12 White-eyed Vireos, 2 Black-capped Vireos, 4 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, 3 Black-and-white Warblers, 2 Summer Tanagers, and 3 Rufous-crowned Sparrows.

Beginners' Bird Walk at Judson Nature Trails, 8/8

Dick Bartels began the walk at 7:30 AM with eight others and ended about 10:30 AM with half the group still on the trail. A total of 18 species was seen or heard. While in the swimming pool parking lot, a Crested Caracara flew by overhead but it passed behind trees before many of the participants got a chance to see it. There were two brief appearances of a Green Heron, one by the creek behind the trailhouse and another by the creek in the picnic grounds. One good sighting toward the end of the walk was a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in the picnic grounds. Dick reports that the usual chickadee, titmouse and Red-shouldered Hawk were neither seen nor heard.

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

Editor: Lora Reynolds

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.

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SAAS-Y NOTES

BIRDER'S WORLD FEATURES PHOTO TAKEN BY SAAS MEMBER

The photo Lora Render took of this Northern Cardinal when she found him bathing at the San Antonio Botanical Garden in February was chosen as Photo of the Week by Birder's World online magazine, and was featured at birdersworld.com beginning on July 27.



Northern Cardinal by Lora Render

CHECKLISTS FOR MISSION SAN JUAN

Georgina Schwartz has delivered checklists to the new bookstore at Mission San Juan. She reports that the new Visitor's Center offers many fine books for sale in addition to the checklists. Remember that they have a very nice, paved, heavily shaded nature trail as well.



2009 Fall Festival Raffle

All proceeds benefit MLAC's education and conservation programs. Prizes include: landscaping package, battery powered mower, TV, garden bench, Spurs tickets, binoculars and more.

Tickets can be purchased at the
September 3rd SAAS meeting
or call 210-628-1639 for more info

RAFFLE TICKETS: 6 FOR \$10 OR \$2 EACH
Drawing Oct. 24; need not be present to win.



San Antonio Audubon Society

5150 Broadway #257
San Antonio TX 78209-5710
info@saaudubon.org
www.saaudubon.org

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Member Database,
Carol McCasland ----- members@saaudubon.org
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Newsletter,
Lora Reynolds ----- editor@saaudubon.org



**SAAS
NEEDS
YOU TO
VOLUNTEER!**

SAAS Board of Directors Meeting

September 28, Tuesday, 6:30 PM

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

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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? _____

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MONTHLY MEETING

September 3, Thursday, 7:00 PM

Presenter: John Berner

“Texas eBird: What’s in it for You?
What’s in it for Science?”

An avid birder, John Berner volunteers his time to help maintain both the Texas eBird website and the Texas Ornithological Society’s Texas Century Club (TCC) website. John is solely responsible for setting up all Texas hotspots for Texas eBird and serves as an ambassador for this important program. John also helped to establish the TCC with the purpose of stimulating the exploration of the birdlife in under-birded Texas counties.

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