

## San Antonio Audubon Society

# AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

Volume 65, Number 6

November/December 2019

## NORTHERN HARRIERS By Mike Scully

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The season is turning at last, and the cold fronts of October and November often deliver a slender, long-tailed hawk seen gliding low over open spaces with long wings held in a shallow "V"; thus the Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) returns. Harriers comprise a cosmopolitan Genus of at least 15 species, most inhabiting a variety of open habitats. They hunt by flying low above the vegetation to surprise small vertebrate prey. At least one of these 15 harrier species can be found on every continent except Antarctica, and on several Islands in the Southern Pacific and Indian Oceans.

so long as they do not grow into brush, may have a limited effect on harrier populations. Likewise, a variety of prey may be captured by means of the usual harrier foraging strategy—in some locations around the world native harriers prey heavily upon introduced rodents and rabbits.

Unique among hawks, harriers have owl-like facial disks of feathers which, as they do in owls, serve to enhance

Western Europe is blessed with no less than three different harriers, but in North America we have only the Northern Harrier, which may or may not be conspecific with the Hen Harrier of Eurasia. At least one author has suggested that these two harriers and the similar Cinereous Harrier of South America should be considered conspecific.



Northern Harrier  
By Lora Render

The breeding range of the Northern Harrier extends from the tundra of Alaska and Canada south to our Northeastern States and Great Lakes region, then down through the west as far as Northern New Mexico, the Texas Panhandle, and Oklahoma. Within this large range, the species breeds in open habitats as diverse as tundra, marshes, croplands and reclaimed mining lands.

the hearing of these birds while hunting. Sexual dimorphism is pronounced. Males are smaller than their mates and as adults the two genders have different plumages. Most species of harriers nest on the ground and in some species polygyny can occur, with a single male pairing with more than one female.

Full adult plumage is not attained until the third year. Male Northern Harriers, averaging only two-thirds the mass of their mates, are pale grey above, shading to white below, with prominent black tips to the wings. Adult females are brownish above, paler below, barred and streaked in typical raptor pattern. Juveniles of both sexes are darker than the females. All ages and both genders have a bright white rump.

Some harrier species have benefitted from human alterations of the landscape and only two island species and one South African species are presently considered endangered. The foraging strategy of harriers depends more upon the configuration of the vegetation present rather than the species of plant. Invasive plant species,

Upon arrival on the breeding grounds, males advertise for mates with a steeply undulating display flight. Most Northern Harriers form monogamous pairs, but a small number of males may attract additional females; up to five have been observed paired with a single male. The nest consists of a mound of

(Continued on p. 3)

## SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR: NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

Please call the trip leaders if you have questions. Last-minute changes to field trips will be posted at [saaudubon.org](http://saaudubon.org), [www.facebook.com/saaudubon/](http://www.facebook.com/saaudubon/) or sent by email via SATXBirds. Please arrive early.

Saturday, November 2, 8:00 AM

### Rancho Blanco

Space is limited for this trip to a private ranch in Northwest Bexar County. Email Christian Fernandez at [christian1253@yahoo.com](mailto:christian1253@yahoo.com) for info.

Tuesday, November 5, 8:00 AM

### Tobin Park

Meet leader Mariann Golden (210/415-4661) at Tobin Park on Ira Lee Road and Austin Highway. The entrance is only accessible from Austin Highway and Ira Lee. From the north on Austin Hwy, turn immediately right after crossing Salado Creek Bridge, turn left on Ira Lee, enter park on right. From south on Austin Highway, turn left before crossing the Salado Creek bridge and continue on Ira Lee to the park entrance. Please bring water, snacks and bug spray.

Saturday, November 9, 8:00 AM

### SAAS Beginners' Bird Walk

Meet leader Georgina Schwartz (210/342-2073) at the Judson Nature Trails, 246 Viesca Street. From the 5900 block of Broadway, turn west on Ogden Street and drive to the stop sign at Greeley Street. You'll see a sign to Judson Nature Trails. Turn left, go one block and turn right on Viesca, then into parking lot on left. We have binoculars to lend.

Tuesday, November 12, 8:00 AM

### Crescent Bend Nature Park

Meet Sandi Wheeler ([wheels5683@gmail.com](mailto:wheels5683@gmail.com)) in the parking lot of the park. From San Antonio, take I-10 east to the FM 1518 exit and go north toward Schertz. Look for a brown park sign at Schafer Road. Turn right and go 3 miles to the park. Entrance on left before Cibolo Creek. Bring water.

Saturday, November 16, 8:00 AM

### Culebra Creek Park

Meet leader Christian Fernandez (210/415-0843) in the parking lot at 10919 Westwood Loop near Culebra and 1604. From Loop 1604, exit Culebra Road and head west. Westwood Loop is the first signal outside Loop 1604. Take a right and the park will be on your left after the businesses.

Wednesday, November 20, 8:00 AM

### Eisenhower Park, 19399 NW Military Hwy

Meet leaders Damian and Nancy Martinez (210/744-9330) in the parking lot. Park is located on NW Military Hwy approximately 1.6 miles north of Loop 1604 on the north side of San Antonio.

Sunday, November 24, 8:00 AM

### Medina Greenway at Pleasanton Road

Meet leader Helen Rejzek ([hmr78253@gmail.com](mailto:hmr78253@gmail.com)) in the parking area. From Loop 410, take Exit 46 (Moursund/Pleasanton Road). Turn south and drive past Mitchell Lake Audubon Center. Continue for about 3 miles and the park will be on your left at the blinking light.

Sunday, December 1, 8:00 AM

### Warbler Woods, 19349 Old Wiederstein

Meet Sandi Wheeler at Don and Susan Schaezler's sanctuary in Cibolo. Take I-35 north toward Austin. Take Exit 176, Wiederstein Road. Turn right onto Wiederstein at the overpass. Turn left at the next road, Old Wiederstein Road. After you pass Dean Road, the Schaezler property begins on the right.

Tuesday, December 3, 8:00 AM

### Tobin Park

See November 5 walk for info.

Saturday, December 7, 8:00 AM

### Uvalde

We will meet Tripp Davenport and visit several Uvalde hotspots. RSVP to Christian Fernandez for details ([christian1253@yahoo.com](mailto:christian1253@yahoo.com)).

Sunday, December 8, 8:00 AM

### Crescent Bend Nature Park

See Nov. 12 field trip for directions.

Saturday, December 14, 8:00 AM

### SAAS Beginners' Bird Walk

Meet leader Barbara Sykes (210/573-0535) at the Judson Nature Trails parking lot. See directions for November 9 walk.

Sunday, December 15

### San Antonio Christmas Bird Count

Contact Dahn Windhorn to participate ([naturenut7@hotmail.com](mailto:naturenut7@hotmail.com)). See page 4 for more information.

## SAAS FIELD TRIPS CONTINUED

(Continued from p. 2)

Saturday, December 28, 8:00 to 11:00 AM

### Helton Nature Park

Meet leader Zachary Tonzetich (210/232-3670 or [zachary.tonzetich@utsa.edu](mailto:zachary.tonzetich@utsa.edu)) at 8:00 AM in the parking lot. Helton Nature Park is located on TX-775 north of Floresville. Take I-37 S. to US-181, then turn right onto TX-775. The park will be on the right 1.4 miles from the 181 turn-off. Bring water.

Monday, December 30, 8:00 AM

### Government Canyon State Natural Area

Meet leader Christian Fernandez (210/415-0843) for a hike at the Frontcountry Trailhead parking lot in the natural area at 12861 Galm Road. Take Loop 1604 to the Shaenfield Rd exit and head outside the loop for 3.5 miles. The natural area entrance is at the traffic circle. State park fee is \$6 or use a State Parks pass.

### PELAGIC CRUISE AUGUST 2020

Join SAAS on a cruise, Los Angeles to Vancouver, BC, August 22-26, 2020 onboard the Golden Princess. If interested, make reservations with



Princess Cruises directly at [Princess.com](http://Princess.com) or 800/774-6237. We recommend making at least a deposit early, because the ship is already nearly full. Contact Bob Doe for more info: [doefamily@aol.com](mailto:doefamily@aol.com).

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Dr. James & Jamie Bynum  
128 Legacy View  
La Vernia, TX 78121  
210/421-6906

Dianna Johnston  
404 Redbird Lane  
Fredericksburg, TX 78624  
303/746-9869

Richard & Miranda Gill  
120 E. Agarita  
San Antonio, TX 78212  
210/602-3564

Lisa Townsend  
211 Sharon Dr.  
San Antonio, TX 78216  
619/857-0489

Beth Hawkins  
920 Merwin Road  
Raleigh, NC 27606  
919/835-2650



Northern Harriers continued from page 1

vegetation built upon the ground and four or five eggs comprise the usual clutch. The female alone incubates the eggs. During this month-long period, the female is dependent upon her mate for food. Females in polygynous pairings often suffer accordingly. This dependency on the male continues for at least the first 10 days after the eggs hatch, and the female guards the young before resuming hunting to help feed them.

Male harriers are more agile than the females and often bring in birds as well as rodents. Hatching is asynchronous and in times of hardship smaller nestlings often starve. Even given the ability of harriers to use a variety of open habitats, nesting success is most often tied to the abundance of rodent populations. Consequently, Northern Harriers display little breeding site fidelity between years and territory selection is determined largely by the available supply of prey in any given year.



Female Northern Harrier  
By [Len Blumin](#)

The winter range of the Northern Harrier encompasses most of our lower 48 states, the Caribbean and Mexico south locally to Panama. In winter, females defend hunting territories against conspecifics, aggressively excluding the smaller males. Consequently, male Northern Harriers do not attempt to defend territories in winter and wander widely in search of prey.

To contact the author: [Mike.scully@nisd.net](mailto:Mike.scully@nisd.net)

### SAAS Benefits When you Shop with Smile.Amazon.com

SAAS receives a contribution from Smile.Amazon.com every time you shop at the online retailer. Simply register at Smile.Amazon.com and designate SAAS as your non-profit of choice.

# SAAS/BAS MEETINGS CALENDAR

**Thursday, November 7 • 7:00 PM**  
**San Antonio Zoo Education Center**  
**Birds of Cuba Through My Lens**  
**Presenter: Ken Butler,**  
**SAAS Member**

Ken Butler will present a photo summary of a very successful birding tour of Cuba covering April 4-13, 2018, in which several members of the San Antonio



Cuban Trogon

Audubon Society participated. The group observed 155 bird species during the tour; the highlight being the 21 endemic birds of Cuba.

Ken's presentation will review a portion of the total species recorded, with a particular focus on endemic species including such notable birds as the Bee Hummingbird, Cuban Trogon (Ken's photo is at left), Cuban Pygmy-Owl (Ken's photo is

below), Fernandina's Flicker, Oriente Warbler, Zapata Wren, and Zapata Sparrow.

Ken earned BS and MS degrees in Geophysics from Texas A&M University. He is currently retired from a career in international and domestic oil and gas exploration and operations.

Ken is an avid photographer, Texas Master Naturalist, and member of the San Antonio Audubon Society. He has an obsession with observing, understanding, and identifying anything that flies, particularly birds.



Cuban Pygmy-Owl

**Thursday, December 5 • 7:00 PM**  
**San Antonio Zoo Education Center**  
**Holiday Potluck and**  
**Members' Bird Photos**

Share your food and photos at our annual gathering.

SAAS will supply beverages, plates and utensils. Members are asked to bring an appetizer or dessert to share. If you'd like to do a show and tell presentation of birds you've seen during the past year, please bring up to 15 photos on a memory stick to accompany your talk.



**San Antonio Christmas Bird Count**  
**Sunday, December 15, 2019**

Last year, 44 birders counted 142 different species including a Common Goldeneye, Long-billed Curlew, Dark-eyed Junco and a Summer Tanager. To join in this year's fun, contact Dahn Windhorn (naturenut7@hotmail.com or 210/382-5968) if you are not already on a count team and are interested in participating.

Groups start as early as 7:00 AM. The countdown dinner will take place at Somerset United Methodist Church, 8175 W. 7th Street (just off Somerset road). The \$7 soup and salad buffet includes homemade bread, beverage and dessert. Come as early as 5:00 PM to do your paperwork in the brightly lit space with available restroom. We will eat around 6:00 PM and start the countdown at 6:30 PM.

**SAAS Board Elections to be Held at**  
**November 7 General Meeting**

SAAS still needs nominees for President and Treasurer for the November 7 Board of Directors election. The slate of nominees currently includes Mariann Golden as Vice President, Georgina Schwartz as Secretary and Lorna Engleman and Christine Turnbull as Directors at Large. Contact Mariann at marianng9350@juno.com if interested.

# SAAS NEWS

## Remembrance: Mike Creese

With great sadness, SAAS announces the passing of Michael F. Creese, 74, a longtime SAAS member. He died suddenly in a tragic accident on Friday, October 4 along I-35 between San Antonio and Laredo, his daughter, Carla Wayda, said.



Mike Creese birding on Avenue A.

Mike was born and raised in Syracuse, NY. He served in the Army and was stationed in Germany. He moved to San Antonio in 1968 and worked for the US Postal Service. Mike played football in high school and remained active the rest of his life, birding in the mornings and then working out every weekday afternoon at the Jewish Community Center. He began birding in the 1990s and volunteered at Mitchell Lake Audubon Center and San Antonio Botanical Garden. He logged over 500 hours annually leading

bird tours and surveys at Mitchell Lake, seeing over 273 species there during his lifetime and submitting 2,125 Bexar County checklists to eBird.

In early adulthood, Mike became interested in folk art and painted in his spare time. A brief bio of Mike is included in the book, "Self-Taught, Outsider and Folk Art" by Betty-Carol Sellen. An excerpt reads, "He says about himself, 'As a self-taught artist, I work with acrylics because of its quick drying and its bright colors. I create happy scenes of life as I see it.'" Mike won several awards for his art, including



one at a Black Heritage Show in 1988. Two of Mike's paintings are shown here. He also painted a mural of a Golden-fronted Woodpecker on the exterior of the Audubon trailhouse at Judson Nature Trails.



Mike is survived by his daughters, Carla and Erin, and a grandson, Evan.

## Area Christmas Bird Counts

Uvalde: Saturday, Dec. 14  
Contact: Maureen Frank ([mgfrank@tamu.edu](mailto:mgfrank@tamu.edu))

San Antonio: Sunday, December 15  
Contact: Dahn Windhorn ([naturenut7@hotmail.com](mailto:naturenut7@hotmail.com))  
Countdown: Somerset United Methodist Church

Comstock: Sunday, Dec 22  
Location: Seminole Canyon State Park  
Contact: Mike Gleason ([mgleason@stx.rr.com](mailto:mgleason@stx.rr.com))

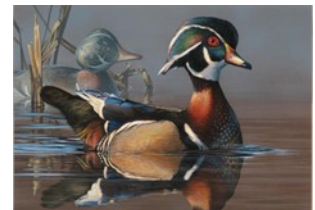
Del Rio: Monday, Dec 23  
Contact: Mike Gleason ([mgleason@stx.rr.com](mailto:mgleason@stx.rr.com)) or Karen Gleason ([delriomagnoliafan@gmail.com](mailto:delriomagnoliafan@gmail.com))

New Braunfels: Sunday, Dec 29  
Contact: Lynn Thompson ([lthompson54@satx.rr.com](mailto:lthompson54@satx.rr.com))

Boerne: Thursday, Jan 2  
Contact: Betty Dunn ([bebsd@hotmail.com](mailto:bebsd@hotmail.com))

## November and December SAAS Meetings are Your Last Chance to Buy 2019 Duck Stamps

Support bird habitat conservation by buying a Federal Duck Stamp, among the most successful conservation tools ever created to protect habitat for birds and other wildlife. This latest stamp features a Wood Duck with a background decoy, painted by Scot Storm, a native of Freeport, Minnesota. Bring \$25 cash or check to purchase your stamp at our September 5 Audubon meeting.



For \$2 more, you'll receive a plastic holder to display your Duck Stamp proudly on your binoculars or backpack to show you support bird habitat! The stamp also guarantees you free admission into any National Wildlife Refuge in the United States. The new stamp is good through June of 2020.

## LOCAL BIRDING LOCATIONS

### MITCHELL LAKE AUDUBON CENTER

10750 Pleasanton Road  
San Antonio, TX 78221

Visit the [MLAC website](#) or email [mlac@audubon.org](mailto:mlac@audubon.org)  
or call 210/628-1639

### SAN ANTONIO BOTANICAL GARDEN

555 Funston, San Antonio, TX 78209

Visit [www.sabot.org](http://www.sabot.org) or call 210/207-3250

### GOVERNMENT CANYON

12861 Galm Rd, San Antonio, TX 78254  
Visit [www.friendsofsgc.org](http://www.friendsofsgc.org) or call 210/688-9055

### CIBOLO NATURE CENTER

140 City Park Rd., Boerne, TX 78006  
Visit [www.cibolo.org](http://www.cibolo.org) or call 830/249-4614

## MITCHELL LAKE MONTHLY BIRDING TOURS

### Pre-register online at MLAC website

1st Sunday: Nov. 3 & Dec. 1, 8:00 AM  
2nd Sunday: Nov. 10 & Dec. 8, 8:00 AM  
2nd Tuesday: Nov. 12 & Oct. 8, 8:00 AM  
3rd Sunday: Nov. 17 & Dec. 15, 8:00 AM  
4th Sunday: Nov. 24 & Dec. 22, 8:00 AM  
4th Saturday (Beginning Birders Tour): Nov. 23 &  
Dec. 28, 8:00 AM

**\$8 for non-members; Free for members**

Visit the [MLAC website](#) or email  
[mlac@audubon.org](mailto:mlac@audubon.org) or call 210/628-1639 .

## SAAS Membership

The SAAS newsletter is sent by email only to all members who have provided an email address. You will also receive a membership renewal notice by email. We no longer mail a printed membership directory to everyone, but a PDF copy is available by email from the membership secretary at [members@saadubon.org](mailto:members@saadubon.org)

## SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

Editor: Lora Reynolds

Contributing Editor: Georgina Schwartz

Newsletter Distribution: Tom Inglet

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## SAAS-Y NOTES

From SAAS Vice President Georgina Schwartz:

Thanks to all the can smashers, I recycled 65 pounds of aluminum cans and made \$22.75 for the club.

It's roundup time for San Antonio Audubon properties. As Vice President, one of my duties is to inventory our assets. If you have any items that belong to SAAS, please notify me at [gbird@att.net](mailto:gbird@att.net) or 210/342-2073.

## SAAS Board of Directors Meeting Donkey Barn at the SA Zoo

Wednesday • November 13 • 6:00 PM

Thursday • December 19 • 6:00 PM

All are invited. Contact Mariann Golden for more info: [MariannG9350@juno.com](mailto:MariannG9350@juno.com)

## San Antonio Audubon Society

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San Antonio TX 78209-5710

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

### Officers

Mariann Golden, President  
Georgina Schwartz, Vice President  
Mariana Outlaw, Secretary  
Robin Stevens, Treasurer



### Directors at Large

Lorna Engleman  
Christian Fernandez  
Christine Turnbull

### Committee Chairs

Bird Records  
Dodge Engleman-----[birdreports@saadubon.org](mailto:birdreports@saadubon.org)  
Education/Outreach  
Patsy Inglet-----[info@saadubon.org](mailto:info@saadubon.org)  
Field Trips  
Christian Fernandez-----[christian1253@yahoo.com](mailto:christian1253@yahoo.com)  
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Membership  
Database, Tom Inglet-----[members@saadubon.org](mailto:members@saadubon.org)  
Judson Nature Trails  
Barbara Sykes-----[btsykes@sbcglobal.net](mailto:btsykes@sbcglobal.net)  
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Newsletter, Lora Reynolds-----[editor@saadubon.org](mailto:editor@saadubon.org)  
Website, Christine Turnbull-----[web@saadubon.org](mailto:web@saadubon.org)

## San Antonio Audubon Society Membership/Renewal Form

New

Renewal

Gift

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

Please be sure your e-mail address is correct.

Your newsletters will be sent via e-mail unless other special arrangements have been made.

Please check box(s):  Individual (\$20 per year)  
 Household (\$30 per year)

We need and appreciate your financial support. Please indicate additional donations below.

Donation: Special Projects Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Donation: Judson Trails Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Donation: General Operating Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Payments can also be made online at: <[www.saadubon.org/membership.html](http://www.saadubon.org/membership.html)>

## ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

### Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds

This list is an excerpt from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Read the article in its entirety [here](#).

1. Make windows safer, day and night.
2. Keep cats indoors.
3. Reduce your lawn size and install native plants.
4. Avoid using pesticides.
5. Drink shade-grown coffee. Look for Bird Friendly coffee, a certification from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center that also includes organic standards.
6. Use less plastic.
7. Watch birds and report your sightings in eBird; join citizen science projects such as Project FeederWatch or participate in a Christmas Bird Count.



### Why doom and gloom won't help us fight climate change

By Bruce Beehler

*Dr. Beehler's op-ed piece appeared in the Washington Post on August 16, 2019. An excerpt appears below. Read the complete article [here](#).*

"Are bad things happening to our environment today? Yes, of course. Is climate change a substantial and growing threat? Certainly. Will the Earth's biosphere as we know it survive? One thing is for sure: We need to believe so to be able to function at full capacity as concerned citizens.

Only smart collective action, led by courageous people working with intelligent and well-funded organizations and agencies, can mount the necessary effort to keep our Earth from peril. We have won these sorts of battles before, and we can win them again, even if the threats seem larger than ever. With an inoculation of the magic elixir of bountiful nature, we can engage with spirit on behalf of our wildlife and forests, our bays and seas, and our one and only atmosphere."

## SAAS Field Trip to Bracken Bat Cave Delivers Thrilling Sight...and More

From Georgina Schwartz,  
SAAS Vice President:

“On August 24, 34 of us went to the Bracken Bat Cave to watch the bats come out. And that they did! Most exciting. The only bird I saw was one Red-tailed Hawk. But the bats came out in large plumes of “smoke” and trailed off into the distance. We did see one albino bat. The trip ended abruptly when a heavy rain shower suddenly appeared, drenching all of us.

Thanks to John and Edith and Lois from Bat Conservation International for a great evening.”



Sergio Gamero, Georgina Schwartz, Sue Wiedenfeld and Desi D'Orsogna pose at Big Joshua Creek during their birding field trip to Sue Weidenfeld's ranch in Kendall County on September 21.

## Excursion to Wiedenfeld Ranch Included Birding at Big Joshua Creek

SAAS Member Desi D'Orsogna reports that the group on the September 21 field trip saw 27 species of birds, with the highlight being an American Kestrel.