



San Antonio Audubon Society

AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

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July/August 2021

Acadian Flycatchers

By Mike Scully

Five species of *Empidonax* flycatchers regularly pass through our area during migration. These five similar species are easiest to identify on the breeding grounds, where calls, range and habitat give them away. The only Empid likely to breed in our area is the Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*). The emphatic “peetaKEET!” song of this species is a characteristic sound of East Texas woodlands. At other times and locations, the subtleties helping to separate the Acadian Flycatcher include the flat-appearing forehead and peaked crown, slightly longer primaries, slightly larger bill, and the narrow eye ring.



Acadian Flycatcher [by Tnolley](#)

Acadian Flycatchers breed in mixed and deciduous woodlands across a range extending east from the Texas Hill Country, Oklahoma and Kansas across the Eastern United States to Southern New England and south to Central Florida. Over much of this range, the Acadian Flycatcher is the only breeding *Empidonax*. Alder (*E. alnorum*) and Yellow-bellied (*E. flaviventris*) Flycatchers breed in wet thickets and spruce bogs, respectively. Least Flycatchers (*E. minimus*) occupy clustered groups of territories in mixed woodlands and, as with the previous two species, breed mostly to the north of the Acadian’s range. A broad area of sympatry does exist across the northern two-thirds of the breeding range with the Willow Flycatcher (*E. traillii*), although that species prefers brushy areas and forest edges.

Eastern Wood-Pewees occur throughout the Acadian’s range, with this somewhat larger species inhabiting forest edges and clearings and typically foraging higher in the canopy. Great Crested

Flycatchers are larger still, and typically forage near the top and edges of the canopy, also adjacent to forest clearings.

As a group, *Empidonax* flycatchers are classified as “enclosed perch hawkers,” meaning they capture the majority of their insect prey by sallying relatively short distances from a perch within surrounding vegetation or beneath a woodland canopy. Acadian Flycatchers prefer unbroken tracts of mature woodlands, often close to water and in shaded ravines, foraging from relatively exposed perches beneath the canopy. Most of their prey is taken from the surface of leaves and twigs in a foraging strategy known as “sally strikes,” often launched upwards into the canopy. Other insects are captured by “aerial hawking” in classic flycatcher style or captured on the ground.

Male Acadian Flycatchers arrive on the breeding grounds first and establish territories, with pairs forming rapidly upon the arrival of the females. The female constructs a flimsy-appearing cup of twigs and plant fibers woven together with caterpillar and spider silk, and the nest materials are sparse enough that eggs and young may be visible through the floor of the nest from below. Typically, the nest is placed in the fork of a twig some distance out on a branch, preferably shaded from above but with an open space below to allow the adults easy access and egress. Characteristic of this species is the inclusion of long pieces of vegetation, such as strands of Spanish moss or cattail hanging below the nest, resulting in an untidy appearance that may help disguise the relatively exposed location.

Losses to predators are frequent, followed by as many as five subsequent nesting attempts in a season. Most often only three eggs comprise a clutch, less than the four-egg clutches most typical of other *Empidonax* flycatchers. Interestingly, three eggs are also the norm for Eastern Wood-Pewees, which construct similarly exposed nests. Females Acadians alone incubate the eggs, but both sexes feed the young. Development of the young is rapid; fledging occurs as early as nine days after hatching if disturbed by a predator. Fledged young may be fed by the parents for another two weeks. Second broods are more common among Acadian Flycatchers than their congeners, perhaps not surprising given the more southerly distribution of this species.

While still common across much of their range, Acadian Flycatchers have been negatively affected in many areas by habitat fragmentation, and pairs closest to forest margins suffer high rates of cowbird parasitism and predation. On the winter range, this species is also vulnerable, dependent as it is upon a variety of forest types across a range extending from Nicaragua to Ecuador. Although this species does appear to benefit from shade-grown coffee plantations, widespread deforestation is continuing apace. Significant declines among Acadian Flycatcher populations are likely to occur in the future.

To contact the author: mike.scully@nisd.net

July 1 Monthly Meeting Online

Thursday, July 1, 7:00 PM | Zoom

Presenter: Dr. Evgenia Spears, Texas A&M AgriLife

Protecting Texas through Responsible Stewardship: The Watershed Approach

This presentation will focus on water quality issues in Texas. We will discuss watershed systems in Texas, watershed functions, impacts of nonpoint source pollution on water quality, and best management practices to protect our state's water resources.



About Dr. Spears



Dr. Evgenia Spears joined Texas A&M AgriLife Extension last fall as the Watershed Coordinator for the Geronimo and Alligator Creeks Watershed and the Mill Creek Watershed. Prior to this appointment, Dr. Spears received her Ph.D. degree from the Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences

at Texas A&M University, where she studied interactions between humans and nature, with a particular emphasis on private land management and conservation. Dr. Spears has collaborated with faculty members, landowners, and practitioners on multiple projects focusing on private land stewardship, which allowed her to develop a unique in-depth understanding of stakeholder-driven approaches to conservation. Driven by her passion to balance nature and human needs, Dr. Spears is dedicated to advancing public awareness and education in the field of natural resource management.

To Join the Zoom Meeting

Click [here](#) to access Zoom July 1 @ 7 PM.

Meeting ID: 890 6596 7722

Passcode: 472364

To dial in: 1 (346) 248-7799

August 5 Monthly Meeting Online

Thursday, August 5, 7:00 PM | Zoom

Presenter: Dr. Evgenia Spears, Texas A&M AgriLife

Program: Landownership Is More than Just a Land Title: Understanding Emotional Attachment of Texas Landowners to Their Land

This presentation will revolve around the discussion of the human-nature relationship and its impacts on land management practices. Specifically, we will talk about landownership dynamics in Texas, threats to the integrity of Texas landscapes, psychological owner-land connection and its importance for advancing private land stewardship. See July 1 meeting information for Dr. Spears's bio.



To Join the Zoom Meeting:

Click [here](#) to access Zoom on August 5 @ 7 PM.

Meeting ID: 825 6316 3568

Passcode: 691410

To dial in: 1 (346) 248-7799

July and August Field Trips

Saturday, July 3, 7:30am

Medina River Natural Area

Meet leader Christian Fernandez (210/415-0843, bctercaa@yahoo.com) in the parking lot for the natural area off State Highway 16, 4 miles south of Loop 410. Bring water and snacks. Text or email Christian with any questions.

Sunday, July 18, 7:30 AM

Crescent Bend Nature Park

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

Tuesday, July 27, 7:30 AM

Tobin Park

Meet Mariann Golden (210/415-4661 or marianng9350@juno.com) at Tobin Park on Ira Lee Road and Austin Highway. The entrance is accessible only 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 insect repellent.

Thursday Aug. 12, 7:30 AM

Salado Creek Greenway - North

Zachary Tonzetich (210/232-3670, zachary.tonzetich@gmail.com) will lead a walk along the new extension of the Salado Creek Greenway north of 1604. Those interested should contact Zach for more information about meeting location. Bring water and bug spray.

Thursday, August 19, 7:30 AM

Crescent Bend Nature Park

Meet Sandi Wheeler (wheels5683@gmail.com) in the parking lot of the park. See July 18 walk for directions.

Saturday, August 28, 8:00 AM

John James Park

Meet leader Christian Fernandez (210/415-0843, bctercaa@yahoo.com) at 3910 Rittiman Road. We will meet in the parking lot and walk dirt paths along Salado Creek. Bring water and bug spray.

Welcome New Members!

Justin Wallace

Buy Your 2021-2022 Duck Stamps

The 2021-22 Federal Duck Stamp featuring a **Lesser Scaup** drake is available for purchase from June 25 through December 31, 2021, or as long as supplies last. Duck Stamps still cost only \$25 (the face value) each. This year, because we are not meeting in person, you can buy your Duck Stamp by mail by adding just \$1 extra *per order* for as many stamps as you want to purchase at one time.



To purchase your stamps, send your order with the following information:

- Your Name
- Your Mailing Address
- Check made payable to San Antonio Audubon Society for the total number of stamps in your order, plus \$1 postage and handling per order.

Mail your information and check to:

Georgina Schwartz
3006 Belvoir Drive
San Antonio, TX 78230

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service produces the Stamp, which raises approximately \$40 MILLION in sales each year. These crucial dollars are deposited into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, and they go toward the acquisition or lease of habitat in the National Refuge System from willing sellers. Eighty-five years after the Stamp was established, sales of the Duck Stamp to hunters, bird watchers, outdoor enthusiasts, and collectors have raised more than \$1 BILLION. This amount has gone to conserve SIX MILLION acres of wetland and grassland habitat for birds and other wildlife, providing meaningful opportunities to enjoy our National Wildlife Refuge System.

Your Duck Stamp shows that you support Migratory Birds and their Habitats AND it will admit you to any National Wildlife Refuge that charges an entry fee.

Send Us Your Bird Photos and Stories for SAAS Facebook Page

SAAS would love to share your bird photos and stories on our Facebook page. Whether you have been birding in your backyard, around the county, or places beyond, we are eager to hear from you. Share your story on our [Facebook page](#) by sending info and photos to Christine at cbsturnbull@hotmail.com.

Judson Nature Trail Birding Activities with Girl Scouts Daisy Troop

By Barbara Sykes, Chair of JNT

In late April, I had the pleasure of leading a small group of six-year-old Girl Scouts through several “nature activities” at the Judson Nature Trail. I had been contacted by the leader of Daisy Troop 2285 who said the girls were working on their nature badge and, as such, needed some quality time spent in a natural setting. All the girls live in the neighborhoods surrounding JNT, so the trails seemed an



ideal place for them to explore and get to know. After an initial meet and greet in the outdoor classroom at JNT, we hit the trails for a Nature Scavenger Hunt. Each scout had a sheet of 16 pictured objects commonly found in nature that they checked off when observed. This provided a focus for the girls as we walked and prompted questions from them as well. They were quite a curious group, which was great! Bird stickers were awarded to all completed sheets. Our second activity required the girls to read 10 info-posters on birds, which provided facts such as what birds eat, what is the biggest/smallest bird, why do birds migrate, or what makes a bird a bird. Following the gathering of information, the girls broke into teams and competed in Bird Jeopardy, answering questions from the information they just learned. They were a pretty sharp group and, of course, the game ended in a tie! (Although the information on birds seemed to be interesting to the scouts, their favorite part of this activity was ringing the dinger to signal that they knew the answer...) The final activity was Bird Bingo. Each scout had the sheet of common urban birds which they marked off as a bird was described and named. Each scout took a fresh sheet home to look for birds in their yards with family members.

It was a fun afternoon and hopefully sparked interest for future naturalists and birders.

Issues in Birding Today

San Antonio Audubon Society has gathered a list of online articles you might be interested in reading concerning birds and birding.

[Toward Inclusivity in Birding: Forum Discusses Renaming Eponymous Birds](#)

By Gustave Axelson (The Cornell Lab, allaboutbirds.org)

April 23, 2021

[Head of AOS commits to “changing exclusionary or harmful bird names”](#)

By Matt Mendenhall (Birdwatchingdaily.com)

May 12, 2021

[Feds propose relisting the Lesser Prairie-Chicken](#)

Birdwatchingdaily.com

June 3, 2021

[Audubon Report Shows that Important Bird Habitats are Key Natural Solutions to Climate Change](#)

By National Audubon Society

June 3, 2021

[Biden Administration Moves One Step Closer to Reinstating Migratory Bird Protections](#)

By National Audubon Society

May 6, 2021

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center



The Mitchell Lake Audubon Center (MLAC) is open with summer operating hours June 10 – September 12 (Friday - Sunday, 7am - 1pm). Please review the new COVID-19 guidelines at our [Plan Your Visit webpage](#). Purchase your tickets today [HERE](#).

Please note, due to a long-term SAWS wetland project, the majority of ponds are dry at this time. However, the lake has a considerable amount of water.

[Click Here](#) for additional information. [Check eBird for up-to-date bird sightings](#). Guided Bird Tours are held on Sundays at 8:00 AM. Beginner Bird Walks are held the fourth Saturday at 8:00 AM. See the calendar [here](#).

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 saasforbirds@gmail.com

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

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San Antonio Audubon Society Membership/Renewal Form

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Renewal

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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:

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Payments can also be made online at: <www.saaudubon.org/membership.html>