

San Antonio Audubon Society

AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

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HOUSE WRENS

By Mike Scully

Cold weather arrived early this year in the form of a series of fronts around mid-October. These north winds carried waves of migrants; if my little quarter-acre plot on the West Side is any indication, the two Orange-crowned Warblers and two House Wrens found foraging amid my dense front yard shrubbery one chilly morning were likely representative of an influx of hordes of migrants into our area. What drew my attention that morning was the two wrens chasing and scolding each other, one breaking out into a brief bout of singing.

Many species of "little brown birds" migrate to or through our area each fall, with each species occupying its own particular niche. Whatever specific niche the House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) occupies has enabled the species to



House Wren
By Lora Render

breed across a broader range of latitudes than any other native New World bird. While one author's subspecies often eventually becomes another author's species, the AOU at this writing still classifies as House Wrens a total of 31 different subspecies. So, the breeding range of the House Wren still officially extends from just south of the Northwest Territories in Canada clear to Tierra del Fuego in Argentina and Chile. This situation occurs despite the elevation of several former House Wren subspecies to full species status, including the Cobb's Wren of the Falkland Islands.

I have been disappointed when finding House Wrens in the Sacramento Mountains of New Mexico, in Oaxaca in Southern Mexico and again in Costa Rica. In each case,

a wren was patiently stalked until it could be identified. When one travels to such far-flung locales one usually goes looking for "lifers," not familiar species from our own area. Wherever it occurs, from moist ravines

high in the mountains of our own Southwest and the Andes to the Wet Tropics of Brazil, the House Wren is a denizen of dense low cover, often in damp situations.

Within North America the breeding range extends from Central Canada south to encompass most of the northern two-thirds of our Lower 48 States. While the specific temperature parameters governing the northern limits of the breeding range have been identified, exactly why this otherwise widespread species should be absent as a breeding bird across much of the American South remains unclear. Competition with the larger Carolina Wren may be a factor, but broad areas of sympatry do exist between the two species in the Northeast.

On the breeding grounds the availability of nesting cavities is a limiting factor. House Wrens readily accept artificial nest boxes. The competition for both these and natural cavities can be fierce. Males are territorial and mate selection by the females hinges upon the number and quality of the potential nesting sites within a male's territory. House Wrens sometimes draw the ire of those who maintain Purple Martin or bluebird houses due to the wrens' practice of piercing the eggs of both their own species and those of other cavity-nesting species so as to eliminate competitors.

Hostility between competing wrens over nesting cavities may continue all season long. Successful usurpers then eject any eggs and young of the loser, while the former mate of the defeated wren most often pairs with the victor. Females generally defend a single nesting cavity, whereas males will attempt to control several. Males

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SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR: JANUARY/FEBRUARY

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

Saturday, January 12, 8:00 AM

SAAS Beginners' Bird Walk

Meet leader Georgina Schwartz (210/342-2073) at the Judson Nature Trails, 246 Viesca Street. We have some binocs to lend out and you don't have to be a beginner to come on this walk. 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.

Sunday, January 13, 8:00 AM

Bulverde Oaks Nature Preserve

Meet leader Christian Fernandez (210/415-0843) at the Preserve, which is located just outside of Loop 1604 on Judson Road on the northeast side of town. Parking is located a quarter mile north of 1604 on the left side of Judson Rd. We will meet with director Tyler Sanderson and learn about the Preserve. Please RSVP. No restroom facilities onsite.

Tuesday, January 15, 8:00 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 Schafer Road. Turn right and go 3 miles to the park. Entrance on left before Cibolo Creek. Bring water.

Saturday, January 19, 8:00 AM

Hondo Nature Trail

Meet leader Christian Fernandez (210/415-0843) in the parking lot for the Nature Trail. Go west on Highway 90 toward the City of Hondo. In Hondo, turn right on FM 462 (Avenue M). Go 3 miles to Castro Ave. Turn left and the trailhead is on your right. Lunch will be in Hondo.

Saturday, January 26, 8:00 AM

Stone Oak Park, 20395 Stone Oak Parkway

Meet leader Zachary Tonzetich (210/232-3670 or zachary.tonzetich@gmail.com) in the parking lot of the park. If arriving from the west on Stone Oak Parkway, there is a turnaround after the entrance to the park, which is only accessible from the eastbound direction. We will hike the paved trails and several

areas off of the main paths in search of sparrows, so sturdy shoes are recommended. Bring water.

Saturday, February 2, 8:30 AM

Mother Neff State Park, Coryell County

Meet leader Chris Bailey at Mother Neff State Park north of Temple, Texas. Contact Chris for more details at chris_bailey64@yahoo.com.

Saturday, February 9, 8:00 AM

SAAS Beginners' Bird Walk

See directions for January 12.

Sunday, February 10, 8:00 AM

Crescent Bend Nature Park

See directions for January 15.

Saturday, February 23, 8:00 AM

Haggard Ranch

We will meet Metha at her ranch in south Bexar County. Go south on I-35 about 4 miles south of Loop 1604. Take Exit 137 (Shepherd Road). Go left across the bridge and then left on the access road. Drive 0.5 mile to the gate and cattle guard. Please make sure the gate is closed once you drive through. Go over second cattle guard and go left at fork to the house. For info, call Metha 210/622-3886.

Wednesday, February 27, 9:00 AM

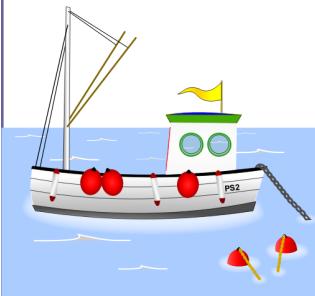
Live Oak City Park

Meet leader Holly Marshall (210/215-3392) in the parking lot. Take I-35 north from Loop 410 and exit at Judson Road. Follow it around until it joins Toepperwein Road. At the traffic light at Leafy Hollow Street, turn left and follow this road to the end as it winds around and becomes the park road. Go to the end of this road to the parking lot. Restrooms available; please obey the speed limits.

Saturday, March 2, Afternoon

Rockport Whooping Crane Boat Tour

We will meet Captain Tommy Moore for the afternoon boat tour. To attend, please contact Karen Moulder (210-824-2547, moulderkf@gmail.com) to RSVP and obtain other information. Limit 28 people.



TOP LOCAL BIRDING LOCATIONS

MITCHELL LAKE AUDUBON CENTER

10750 Pleasonton Road
San Antonio, TX 78221

Visit <http://mitchelllake.audubon.org> or email mlac@audubon.org or call 210/628-1639

SAN ANTONIO BOTANICAL GARDEN

555 Funston, San Antonio, TX 78209
Visit www.sabot.org or call 210/207-3250

GOVERNMENT CANYON

12861 Galm Rd, San Antonio, TX 78254
Visit www.friendsofgc.org or call 210/688-9055

CIBOLO NATURE CENTER

140 City Park Rd., Boerne, TX 78006
Visit www.cibolo.org or call 830/249-4614

OTHER BIRDING EVENTS

TOS, Galveston, Jan. 24-27

Click [here](#) for more info.

Laredo Birding Festival, Feb. 6-9

Click [here](#) for more info.

Choke Canyon Bird Festival, Feb. 9, 8 AM—2 PM

Click [here](#) for more info.

SARA Bird Walk, Saturday, March 2, 8 AM

Christian Fernandez and Georgina Schwartz will lead a birdwalk for the San Antonio River Authority starting at Acequia Park across the river from Espada Park.

BIRDING IS GREAT FOR YOUR HEALTH

A short video recently posted by CNN's "Staying Well" department describes the relaxing aspects of watching birds. "Nature is absolutely essential to human health," says Dr. Nooshin Razani, at the University of California San Francisco's Center for Nature and Health. "Over the course of an hour to an hour and a half, you're walking through natural settings, symptoms of depression or anxiety improve," she continues.

The video claims that observing birds can calm the mind and bring the moment into focus.

See for yourself:

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/health/2018/10/30/sw-birding-for-health.cnn>

House Wren (continued from page 1)

already paired with a female on a nest may still attempt to usurp other cavities, presumably to acquire a second mate. Most of these conflicts occur between wrens of the same gender, but females will also attempt to protect their broods by physically blocking invading males from entering the nest. Despite all this conflict, two broods each year are the norm across most of the North American breeding range. The female alone incubates the four to seven eggs and both sexes help to raise the young.



House Wren by Lora Render

Unlike the sedentary and partially frugivorous Carolina Wren, the diet of the House Wren consists almost entirely of insects and other invertebrates. Their dietary habits may explain why North American House Wrens vacate almost the whole of their breeding range in the fall, spending the winter across the southern United States from Central California in the west to the Chesapeake Bay Region in the east, and also south through Mexico to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

REPORT FROM ARIZONA BIRDING TRIP

SAAS Member Margie Zumbehl wanted to share information about an October trip to Sedona, AZ, where she said she had a great time at the upgraded Sedona Wetlands Preserve and the Page Springs Fish Hatchery. Both sites are good for birding year-round. At right is a photo she sent of the Sedona Wetlands.



SAAS/BAS MEETINGS CALENDAR

Thursday, January 3 • 7:00 PM
San Antonio Zoo Education Center
Texas Nature Trackers
Presenter: Dr. Tania Homayoun

Texas Parks & Wildlife's Texas Nature Trackers (TNT), part of the Wildlife Diversity Program, tracks the status of wild populations of plants and animals throughout the state. Dr. Homayoun's presentation will introduce the TNT program and explain how it uses iNaturalist to support the Wildlife Diversity Program's conservation work on Species of Greatest Conservation Need across the state. We'll discuss some TNT projects and data needs and how this framework enables iNaturalist users and bioblitz participants to be active partners in conservation.

iNaturalist Workshop on Friday, January 4

The presentation Thursday night January 3rd will give an overview of the program. The workshop the following day will provide hands-on training about how to use the iNaturalist app for the TNT Program.

Please RSVP for the January 4th workshop from 9:00 AM to noon in Brackenridge Park by emailing

sasforbirds@gmail.com



Photo by Tania Homayoun via iNaturalist, CC BY-NC-ND

About Dr. Homayoun

Dr. Tania Homayoun is a Texas Nature Tracker Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife. Through Texas Nature Trackers, she engages naturalists of all interests and ability levels in collecting citizen science and crowd-sourced data on Texas' unique flora and fauna with a particular focus on species of greatest conservation need. Previously, Tania worked for Audubon Texas, with the Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center and later the Conservation Science Team as its Urban Conservation Program Manager where she worked to develop and deliver conservation plans, educational programs/trainings, and activities supporting biodiversity and sustainable communities. Tania holds bachelor's degrees in Ecology/Evolution/Conservation Biology and Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin and a PhD in Conservation Biology from the University of Minnesota. She is an avid birder.

Thursday, February 7 • 7:00 PM
San Antonio Zoo Education Center
Birding in South Texas State Parks
Presenter: Ben Horstmann

Think you know the best places in South Texas to bird? Maybe so. But Ben Horstmann, Texas Parks & Wildlife Regional Interpretive Specialist for South Texas State Parks, will add some great places to your list. His presentation will be a wonderful preview to the events at the Choke Canyon Birding Festival on Feb. 9. After Ben's talk, you will definitely want to explore the places he recommends.

Ben's addiction to birding was a direct result of moving to the coastal bend and birding with the park staff and volunteers at the parks. His favorite pastime is obviously birding in the parks and natural places of Texas.



BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

Elections for the SAAS Board of Directors took place during the December monthly meeting of the general membership and the following members were elected:

Officers

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

Directors at Large

Christian Fernandez
Christine Turnbull
Lorna Engleman

Many thanks to Karen Moulder for her past service to the Board as Secretary.

Thursday, February 21 • 7:00 PM
San Antonio Zoo Education Center

Special Meeting
Tongues, Toes & Tales of Texas Woodpeckers:
Anatomy & Adaptation
Presenter: Woodpecker Expert Steve Shunk

Imagine, for a moment, slamming your face into a brick wall going 16 miles per hour. This self-destructive (and foolish) act would require you to exert about 1,200 g of force. Yet, a woodpecker exerts the same force up to 20 times per second, and as many as 12,000 times per day, pounding its head into trees! How does it do this without getting concussions or retinal hemorrhages?!

Woodpeckers possess a suite of adaptations that makes them one of the most specialized bird families in the world. Each species' anatomy perfectly suits its unique lifestyle, with different woodpeckers possessing adaptations for aerial acrobatics, for drilling sap wells, or for extracting ants from underground burrows. Join North American woodpecker specialist Steve Shunk as we dive into the amazing world of woodpecker specialization.

About Steve Shunk

Stephen Shunk graduated from Lamar High School in Arlington, Texas, but he didn't begin birding until 1989 in the San Francisco Bay Area. He started teaching about birds and their habitats in 1991, and he conducted his first field work in 1995. Tired of living in the urban jungle, Steve left California in 1997, eventually landing in the forests of central Oregon's "Woodpecker Wonderland"—where 11 woodpecker species breed annually. He has spent the last 20 years studying woodpeckers in his backyard and beyond, and his long-awaited Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America hit the shelves in May 2016.



Through his company, Paradise Birding, Steve led his first birding tours to Texas in 2009. As an accomplished professional naturalist, he now leads birding and natural history trips on four continents, and he has lectured from North America to Southeastern Asia. Learn more about Steve at his websites www.ParadiseBirding.com and www.WoodpeckerWonderland.com.

SAAS Board of Directors Meeting
AREA Real Estate, 1221 Broadway #104
Thursday • January 31 • 6:00 PM
Thursday • February 28 • 6:00 PM
All are invited. Contact Mariann Golden for more info: MariannG9350@juno.com

SAAS Membership

The SAAS newsletter is sent by email only to all members who have provided an email address. (If you would like a paper copy of the newsletter, please call Georgina Schwartz at 210/342-2073.) You will also receive a membership renewal notice by email. Although we no longer mail out a printed SAAS membership roster to everyone, a PDF copy is available by email from the membership secretary at members@saaudubon.org.

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

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ATTENTION ALL SAAS MEMBERS!

San Antonio Audubon Society and Bexar Audubon Society are jointly sponsoring and helping to organize the Spring TOS (Texas Ornithological Society) meeting May 2-5, 2019, in greater San Antonio. The organizing committee needs help from members to make this event successful for TOS, local Audubon, and everyone who will attend. If you would like to volunteer your help—as a field trip leader or assistant, a logistical facilitator, an administrative aide, or a general helping hand—please contact Patsy Inglet: forbirds@satx.rr.com. OR, if we contact you, please be willing to pitch in so that many hands can make light work of an event that will require good planning and good execution.

You know you want to help. Registration for the May TOS meeting will begin in March on the TOS website: www.texasbirds.org. Not a member? You can join on the same website.



San Antonio Audubon Society

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Robin Stevens, Treasurer



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Christine Turnbull

SAAS NEEDS YOU TO VOLUNTEER!
info@saaudubon.org

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SAAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

To renew your SAAS membership or apply as a new member, please visit our [website](#). You can use PayPal or print a form and pay by check.

