



# The Prairie Horned Lark

## Newsletter of the Panhandle Bird Club

Vol. IX No. 12

December 10, 2008

**Panhandle Rare Bird Alert**  
**Connie Fordham (806 655-7034)**  
**cfbirder52@yahoo.com**

Please call or e-mail Connie, with information on any unusual birds or first seasonal arrivals you see in the Panhandle.

**Officers of the Panhandle Bird Club**

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**Christmas Bird Counts 2009!!!**

**Hello Birders,**

**Here are all the dates and compiler contact info. for the upcoming Texas Panhandle area Christmas Bird Counts. Let's have a good time collecting some great data!!**

**--Susan Thompson**

- Amarillo (includes Tanglewood, Boy Scout Camp & Palo Duro State Park )
  - December 20, 2008 (Saturday)
  - Tom Johnson is the primary compiler and the contact person: 806-622-2656, 806-236-9614. Tom will lead a group in Lake Tanglewood.
  -

- Peggy Trosper (655-9342) will lead a group in Palo Duro Canyon, leaving very early to try to get some owls on the way. Additional field parties for good coverage of Palo Duro Canyon and Camp Don Harrington would be very helpful.
- Lake Meredith West
  - December 21, 2008 (Sunday)
  - Michael Ryan is the compiler and contact person: 806-359-3987.
- Buffalo Lake NWR (includes roads north of Umbarger and SW of Canyon)
  - December 27, 2008 (Saturday)
  - Joe Cepeda is the compiler and contact person: 806-651-2584, [Jcepeda@mail.wtamu.edu](mailto:Jcepeda@mail.wtamu.edu)
- Lake Meredith East
  - January 1, 2009 – New Year's Day (Thursday)
  - Susan Thompson is the compiler and contact person: 806-352-7463, 806-517-0772. (Barrett Pierce is leading.)
- Quitaque (includes Caprock Canyon State Park )
  - January 3, 2009 (Saturday)
  - Joel Reese is the compiler and contact person: 806-684-2395, [jdreasetexas@yahoo.com](mailto:jdreasetexas@yahoo.com)

The **Christmas Bird Count (CBC)** is a census of birds in the Western Hemisphere, performed annually in the early Northern-hemisphere winter by volunteer birders. The purpose is to provide population data for use in science, especially conservation\_biology, though many people participate for recreation. Please join us for as many of these important and entertaining days as you can! *Ed.*

## Greenbelt Lake - Field Trip Report

November 8, 2008

Participants: Carolyn Boyd, Judith Evans, Robert & Carrie King, Stephen Spillman, Susan Thompson (leader)

We had a special guest along on this field trip – Stephen Spillman, Photographer with the Amarillo Globe News.

At Greenbelt, our first stop was at a wooded, sandy picnic area near the lake. Song Sparrows and Northern Cardinals were active in the brush. Up in the treetops we had a Bewick's Wren and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. We heard, then saw some of the first Dark-eyed Juncos of the season. Stephen snapped away with his camera, and at first it seemed a little odd to be looking so intently at birds while a human was looking so intently at us - and recording our every move. Turned the tables in a sense, I suppose. I did spend a moment or two hoping I looked "okay" as opposed to "goofy" in whatever shots I ended up in. Of course, any time you tell yourself to *just act normal*, that is about the last thing you are able to do, and I felt lucky I didn't just burst out laughing at the whole thing. Before long, I had forgotten all about it though, because the birding got fantastic.

We were headed toward the lake at a snail's pace, slowed down by our ears which were informing us of birds all around – American Goldfinches, a Belted Kingfisher, Canada Geese, Killdeer, American Robins, and yep – those were the clear musical notes of *Eastern Meadowlarks*, not Westerns. Along the shore of the lake, a covey of Northern Bobwhites stopped our hearts momentarily, flushing in a startling whoosh. We saw loads of American Coots out on the water, and gradually picked out a male Hooded Merganser, some Gadwall, and then a group of Canvasback flying in. There were a number of Pied-billed Grebe diving, plus a Great Blue Heron. Birds were everywhere and as I am now trying to "Ebird" all my birding outings, I was doing my best to put numbers on everything - my pencil just couldn't keep up! Am I the only birder who sometimes catches myself insanely wishing for there to be *fewer birds just for a minute* so I won't worry I'm missing something? Well, I did miss something – Robert and Carrie called me over to see "something different" that was drinking along the edge of the water, but no dice for me. Robert shot a very clear

photo of it, though, and it showed an American Pipit. Nice!!

We barely got our scopes up in this location before a small boat putt-putted right into the ducky thick of the action, and goodbye waterfowl! I tried not to get huffy – I mean, I guess people do other things at lakes besides bird – for example this particular probably very nice couple had gotten all geared up for a few hours of fishing, but *really!!* (I got kinda huffy anyway.)

We relocated to an area below the dam which is full of sand dunes and little ponds. White-crowned Sparrows were singing all over the place in stand after stand of shrubby growth just inches from our vehicles. At the first pond we saw, there were many Song Sparrows and at least one Marsh Wren and Field Sparrow, the latter two species sighted by Joel. We all got to watch a woodpecker for quite some time before it finally showed us the unbroken white patch on its back – that and its stout bill allowed us to be sure it was a Hairy Woodpecker. At another pond in this area was a single Common Merganser.

Over in this vicinity we ran into a photography-buff acquaintance of mine, Sherry Atkins, who was out for the morning to see what she could see. She told us that on the far side of the lake earlier that morning, she believed she had seen a Bald Eagle perched on a tree. She was some distance away from the tree and had initially dismissed the spot as a white trash sack hung up in the tree, but a minute later when she had a chance to examine the area more attentively, no white spot anymore. She told us to keep our eyes peeled...and we did...but no eagle luck for us on that day. Such "misses" are not really discouragements at all, are they? Instead, these are the things that whisper to birders, *come back to this place and look some more on another occasion*. At least that's how it is for me.

Back on the twisty-turny roads around the lake, we stopped for a couple of suspicious-looking brown bumps side-by-side on a horizontal cottonwood branch. The bumps were Great Horned Owls. Stephen seemed unbelieving at first – owls will do that to people – and then got pretty animated, getting out his long lens and snapping away with a smile on his face.

By this time our stomachs were getting rather insistent, so we went to a spot where I had seen many shorebirds when I scouted the place two days before. Uh, not a single shorebird here! But

as we ate our sandwiches, we got to watch a Double-crested Cormorant, some American Wigeon, and an Osprey. Also, 45 Sandhill Cranes flew overhead, croaking.



Sandhill Crane and Chick Photo by Jim Stevenson

Driving those appealingly curvy roads again, we happened upon a lovely, forested, soggy spot full of bird activity. I think I saw only about half of what was there, but in just a couple of minutes, we had added Carolina Chickadee, Tufted and Black-crested Titmouse, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, and White-breasted Nuthatch to our day's list. We also finally saw some of the American Goldfinches we had been hearing throughout the day.

We drove all the way up to an overlook, and finally found a lively group of shorebirds: Long-billed Dowitchers, Western Sandpipers, and Greater Yellowlegs. Also a few Ruddy Ducks and what we eventually agreed were some distant Eared Grebes, giving us only 2-second-long glimpses between much longer dives.



American Wigeon Photo by Judith Evans

Half of the group called it a day at this point, but Judith, Carolyn, and I wanted to drive to a magical spot east of Clarendon: I knew about the spot because Peggy Trosper took us there the last time the club had a Clarendon trip in April, and Judith knew about the spot because it's on the route for the Breeding Bird Survey she conducts. It's not that far as the crow flies, but it takes a goodly amount of low-speed driving on very sandy roads to get there. Tall trees arch completely over the road

from either side and there is softly trickling water which crosses the road – and lots of bird-friendly brushy cover near it. While we didn't add to our species count, we did enjoy watching Song Sparrows, Northern Cardinals, Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, Dark-eyed Juncos, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet near the water.

We picked up one new species for the day – a Greater Roadrunner, on the drive back to Clarendon. And even though we heard it was dry, we checked out the blind at Taylor Lakes Unit because we were so close; notable absence of birds there. It was quite late in the day by this point, and we all agreed it was time to head back toward Amarillo.

## SPECIES LIST

Canada Goose  
Gadwall  
American Wigeon  
Mallard  
Canvasback  
Hooded Merganser  
Common Merganser  
Ruddy Duck  
Northern Bobwhite  
Pied-billed Grebe  
Eared Grebe  
American White Pelican  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Great Blue Heron  
Osprey  
Red-tailed Hawk  
American Coot  
Sandhill Crane  
Killdeer  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Western Sandpiper  
Long-billed Dowitcher

Ring-billed Gull  
 Eurasian Collared-Dove  
 Mourning Dove  
 Greater Roadrunner  
 Great Horned Owl  
 Belted Kingfisher  
 Golden-fronted Woodpecker  
 Ladder-backed Woodpecker  
 Hairy Woodpecker  
 Northern Flicker  
 Carolina Chickadee  
 Tufted Titmouse



Bewick's Wren Photo by Jim Stevenson

Marsh Wren  
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
 American Robin  
 American Pipit  
 Field Sparrow  
 Song Sparrow  
 White-crowned Sparrow  
 Dark-eyed Junco  
 Northern Cardinal  
 Eastern Meadowlark  
 American Goldfinch

(48 Species)

## November Rare Bird Report By Connie Fordham

### Eared Grebe

6-11/30/2008, Lk Rita Blanca, Hartley Co.,  
 Carolyn Stallwitz

### Bald Eagle

2-11/30/2008, Etter Playa, Moore Co., Carolyn  
 Stallwitz

### Rough-legged Hawk

1 on 11/13/2008, Hutchinson Co., Rudy Cadra

### Whooping Crane

1 on 11/20/2008, Kritser Ranch, Potter Co., Linda  
 Seaton

### Red-bellied Woodpecker

11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David  
 Rankin

### Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David  
 Rankin

### Downy Woodpecker

11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David  
 Rankin

### Hairy Woodpecker

4 on 11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David  
 Rankin

### Ruby-crowned Kinglet

several-11/12/2008, WTAMU, Randall Co., Ray  
 Matlack

1 on 11/23/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty  
 Schoenhals

### Bewick's Wren

11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David  
 Rankin

### Winter Wren

1 on 11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David  
 Rankin

### Sage Thrasher

1 on 11/7/2008, BuffaloLkNWR, Randall Co.,  
 Craig Miller

### Mountain Bluebird

11/7/2008, BuffaloLk NWR, Randall Co., Craig  
 Miller

2-11/13/2008, TTU Research, Carson Co, Monty  
 Schoenhals

### Tufted Titmouse

1 on 11/13/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Glen  
 McCain

### Red-breasted Nuthatch

1 on 11/23/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty  
 Schoenhals



**White-breasted Nuthatch**

many on 11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David Rankin

1 on 11/12/2008, WTAMU, Randall Co., Ray Matlack



WB Nuthatch Photo by Jim Stevenson

**Brown Creeper**

2 on 11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David Rankin

**Yellow-rumped Warbler**

several-11/12/2008, WTAMU, Randall Co., Ray Matlack

**Le Conte's Sparrow**

1 on 11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David Rankin

**Fox Sparrow**

6 on 11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David Rankin

**Song Sparrow**

11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David Rankin

**Lincoln's Sparrow**

11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David Rankin



White-crowned Sparrow Photo by Dennis Garrison

**White-crowned Sparrow**

many- 11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David Rankin

**White-throated Sparrow**

many-11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray co., David Rankin

**Dark-eyed Junco**

2 on 11/9/2008, Dumas, Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz

11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David Rankin

**Pine Siskin**

5 on 11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray co., David Rankin

**American Goldfinch**

many-11/11/2008, Lk McClellan, Gray Co., David Rankin

1 on 11/14/2008, Amarillo, Potter Co., Ruth Starr

3 on 11/23/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

50-11/30/2008, LkRita Blanca- Hartley Co., Carolyn Stallwitz



American Goldfinch Photo by Randy Roberts

*The Prairie Horned Lark*  
**Panhandle Bird Club**  
**1213 S Bryan St**  
**Amarillo, TX 79102**

**Application for membership in the Panhandle Bird Club \$15.00 Annually September 1 to August 31**  
**Make checks payable to Panhandle Bird Club, Mail to: Connie Fordham, 2404 11<sup>th</sup> Ave., Canyon, TX 79015**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ New: \_\_\_ Renew: \_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Field Trip Calendar for December, 2008**

**Christmas Bird Counts: please see the Page 1 of the newsletter for complete contact information.**

December 20, 2008 Amarillo, Contact and Compiler Tom Johnson

December 21, 2008 Lake Meredith West, Contact and Compiler Mike Ryan

December 27, 2008 Buffalo Lake NWR, Contact and Compiler Joe Cepeda

January 1, 2009 Lake Meredith East, Contact and Compiler Susan Thompson, Leader Barrett Pierce

January 3, 2009 Quitaque, Contact and Compiler Joel Reese