

The Prairie Horned Lark

Newsletter of the Panhandle Bird Club

Vol. IX No. 9

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Panhandle Rare Bird Alert

Connie Fordham (806 655-7034)

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

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Panhandle Bird Club Annual Meeting September 18, 2008 SW Library 6:30 PM

When the Panhandle Bird Club was formed our main purpose was to gather for field trips and SEE BIRDS. We have not wandered far afield. We still just hold one meeting per year. It might be nice to spend an evening a month learning about a bird, a site, an issue with like-minded friends but then I think about how much work it takes to get a program together for a monthly meeting and I am grateful for the person in our club (Susan Thompson) who calls around to get field-trip leaders and to the birds that provide a 'program' on every field trip.

This year we have a real treat. Ruth Beasley from High Plains Public Radio will present a program on *Birding by Ear*.

Ruth Beasley

According to the High Plains Public Radio Web site. Ruth was born and raised in Canadian, Texas. She lived in Boston, but in 1999 she returned to Texas to live on a ranch fifteen cattle-guards from town. Surrounded by wildlife, Ruth realized that like many people, she knew very little about birds, so she began reading, watching, and learning about the birds. This soon led to the newspaper columns and radio features called **Learning the Birds**. The varied habitat on the High Plains and its location on the Central Flyway guarantee a wealth of birds and a rich field for study. Doing her homework and reporting what she learns, Ruth takes on a variety of bird world topics — from particular birds to phenomena like anting, molting, and mobbing. In **Learning the Birds**, Ruth celebrates the High Plains and shares an abiding appreciation for the natural world.

Learning the Birds began as a newspaper column in The Canadian Record, an award-winning newspaper in Canadian, Texas. The bird column continues to appear every other week and sometimes includes a BirdWords Crossword Puzzle. The Canadian Record appears on newsstands in Canadian every Thursday, and is now available online at www.canadianrecord.com.

Learning the Birds is also a feature of regional programming on the local NPR affiliate, High Plains Public Radio. The five-minute module airs every Tuesday morning at 10:30, and Saturday during Western Swing & Other Things. Podcasts of recent shows are available on the HPPR website.

We will have a brief business meeting followed by Ruth Beasley's program.



Palo Duro Canyon State Park Field Trip

August 2, 2008 by Judith Evans

Participants: Susan Thompson, Leon and Georgia Swift, Michael Ryan, and Carolyn Boyd

Arriving at the gate to Palo Duro Canyon promptly at their 8:00 o'clock opening time we found ourselves at the end of a long line of cars, evidence of the "closer-to-home" tourist boom experienced by the park this summer. After parking we explored the area around the offices and watched the busy Barn Swallow parents feeding their young in the nest under the eaves. In addition to the swallows there was a Curve-billed Thrasher, Lark Sparrow and a good collection of the usual "suspects" – House Sparrows, Grackles, Doves, and more.

We went on down to the Texas parking lot and were in luck with Canyon Towhees, Bewick's and Canyon Wrens, an Eastern Phoebe and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers. The stables nearby provided some Painted Buntings (females and juveniles but no males) and then it was on to the Sunflower Trail where Susan had marked some good spots to see Indigo Buntings. We did see some of these beautiful birds plus a Green Heron and Blue Grosbeaks. At the turnaround area near Crossing 6 we saw Ladderback Woodpeckers in the trees and Mississippi Kites wheeling in the sky.

As the day was heating up we decided to make our way back to the Trading Post and to eat our lunch under the trees in back. The nature watch blind afforded us a good place to observe some cardinals coming in to the feeders and pond. After lunch we all decided to call it a day.

Bird List: 25 species	Bewick's Wren
Northern Bobwhite	American Robin
Green Heron	Curve-billed Thrasher
Mississippi Kite	European Starling
Swainson's Hawk	Canyon Towhee
Eurasian Collared Dove	Lark Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Northern Cardinal
Golden-fronted Woodpecker	Blue Grosbeak
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	Indigo Bunting
Eastern Phoebe	Painted Bunting
Bank Swallow	Great-tailed Grackle
Barn Swallow	House Finch
Canyon Wren	House Sparrow



Red Slough OK Field Trip August 30, 31, and September 1

Leaders: Candy Myers and Jim Luce.
Floyd & Kathy Back, Rosemary Scott, Judith Evans, Susan Thompson, Nancy Rock, Carolyn Boyd, Georgia & Leon Swift, & Rodney Thomas.

Except for Rosemary, Nancy, and Rodney the rest of us met at Rose Lake in Yukon, Oklahoma, a town just west of Oklahoma City. The Rose Lake site consists of an intermittent shallow lake on one side of Sarah Rd and three long narrow ditches plus another shallow lake on the other side of the road. Due to unusually high rainfall the lakes and ditches were full of water. This was good for waders such as Little Blue and Great Blue Herons and Great and Snowy Egrets but not for shorebirds.

We then drove to the Comfort Suites in Idabel, located near the southeast corner of Oklahoma. The following morning we met in the breakfast room at the motel for a quick breakfast. The motel did not serve breakfast early enough for our schedule (5:30), so we brought in some nourishment for the troops.

David Arbour who works for the USDA Forest Service, which manages Red Slough Wildlife Management Area, was waiting for us at the refuge. David is an outstanding birder and birds Red Slough daily. He runs a count weekly and reports his findings on the Oklahoma and Arkansas List Serves. He is a great guide and made a concerted effort to find birds for us. Red Slough is an old rice farm and consists of numerous shallow water plots, mud flats, copses of trees, and lakes. In the summer, spring, and fall it is good for water birds, waders, and shore birds. In the winter it is excellent for sparrows and water birds.



David helped Susan get into the waders

We were running a little late to meet David at 6:30 AM but were fortunate enough to see the birds he hoped to show us before they left their roosts later in the day. One of the holdups was a magnificent flock of Woodstorks low overhead as we were approaching our rendezvous spot.



Cathy Back doing her best to hold on in the bed of the pickup truck.

Woodstork was a life bird for many on the trip, so a stop was mandatory – little did we know how many we would see in good light later in the day. Candy and I flew past one perched bird we would have normally stopped to investigate that we decided with the aid of Floyd Back (in the vehicle behind us) to be a Coopers Hawk. Rosemary's SUV had gotten separated (because of the Woodstorks) so she

missed the turn to the parking lot where we met David. Floyd was thinking fast and shot out of there after her. I guess he caught her, because he led her back a short time later.

We piled into David's pickup truck and Rosemary's Suburban to travel the levees in the refuge. I was glad I wasn't driving. Rosemary is intrepid in her SUV and maneuvered the sometimes rutty, usually overgrown terrain with apparent ease. I got to ride in the cab with David but Susan, Nancy, Cathy, Floyd, Judith, and Candy rumbled around in the back of the truck. The "roads" were bumpy and they always seemed glad to get to a stopping point.

Our most exciting bird was probably the Wood Stork. Flocks of them flew overhead or landed in nearby trees. We saw young and mature birds. Other great birds we saw were Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Common Moorhen, and Tricolored Heron. David took us to one area where he expected to see Roseate Spoonbill. He knew that although most had already left for the season, two had been around the previous day. They were not at this location by a body of water. He left us there with instructions to watch the flyspace between two islands and then drove along the dikes, well out of our view and, sure enough, he made two Roseate Spoonbills fly out right in front of us! We heard King Rails and Least Bittern but were unable to get them to make their appearance.



Susan Thompson scrambling around in the reeds in search of the Purple Gallinule.

We got a peek at a juvenile Purple Gallinule. Thanks to Susan. David said that thought they were deep in a clump of bushes growing in the water in a fairly wide ditch but we couldn't see anything from the shore. David said he had waders and if we had

a volunteer they could muck around and search the area. Susan agreed in a heartbeat! She put them on and crashed through the bushes in the water. Sure enough, the Gallinule flew out and most of us got a quick look. She also found a nest which probably was used by the Gallinule. What a girl!

Wildlife Management personnel have constructed viewing platforms about 20 feet high throughout Red Slough. From one platform we were able to see egrets, Tricolored Heron, Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, and Least Tern (which was diving for fish). Another time he told us to check a kettle of Turkey Vultures for a solitary Black Vulture. We were looking for one that would appear to be tail-less next to the TVs. A short time later a Black Vulture gave us a good view

At one point David led us on a lengthy trek to see a SURPRISE. Of course, Candy and I were speculating about what wild and wonderful bird he might have staked out for us. He was very proud to show us an alligator nest. The alligator did not seem to be home. We had previously seen one out swimming. Some of us were more thrilled than others to share his passion for herps. David is also an avid Dragonfly-watcher. He delighted in showing and testing Susan on the fabulous variety of dragon and damsel flies (odonts). We have noticed across the country that a lot of birders are

interested in odonts and butterflies. I guess when the birding is slow it is nice to have another family to identify.

After about five hours roaming the dikes of the refuge we were quite warm so we took a lunch break. After lunch David led us to the Tiak Work Center. They store and repair refuge equipment on this land, some distance from Red Slough. The buildings are surrounded by a beautiful lawn covered with towering pine trees. It was in the treetops that we first heard the squeaky calls of the Brown Headed Nuthatch. We all got to see at least three of them fairly low in the trees. That was another life bird for many on the trip.

We had a couple of hours left in the afternoon so David suggested that we visit Beavers Bend Resort Park, which is located north of Broken Bow. He was heading that way in route home to De Queen. Broken Bow is about 20 miles northeast of Idabel. We took a hike looking especially for the Pine Warbler and Piliated Woodpecker, which live year round in this area. The hiking trail we took went through mostly woods and we saw NOTHING! Susan found some nice specimens of walnut shells eaten by flying squirrels, they gnaw a hole in one side to get to the nut. Interesting, but no warbler or woodpecker.

On our return to Amarillo we stopped at



L-R The group learned a lot from David Arbour, Susan, Judith, Carolyn, Floyd, Rosemary, Nancy, Jim, Leon, Cathy (hidden), and Georgia at Tiak Work Area.

Route-66 Park on the west side of Lake Overholser in Oklahoma City. The only new birds we picked up in the park were Ring-billed Gull, and Common Grackle. We drove west from Lake Overholser on 23rd Street and scanned a playa. There were no shorebirds we could identify but we did see a small flock of Blue-winged Teal and a splotchy second-year Little Blue Heron. We had

seen an all white first-year Little Blue earlier in the trip.

Except for being warm the weather was good. Some of our club members added several new bird species to their life lists. We all got to know one-another a little better and that is always fun. We were delighted that Rosemary Scott could come down from Conway, Arkansas. We miss her on our field trips. Rodney Thomas is a Master Naturalist friend of Susan's who drove to Red Slough from Dallas. Nancy Rock is Susan's mother from Shiloh, OK. She made a delightful, inquisitive addition to our good time. Kathy and Floyd are fairly new to the Panhandle and new to our club and are a real asset with sharp eyes. Jody McKenzie had planned to accompany us, but last minute car trouble prevented her from joining us.

It was a long drive, to bird one refuge, but I think everyone was glad they had made the trip. David invited us back anytime.

Trip List (62 Species)

Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Pied-billed Grebe
Neotropic Cormorant
Double-crested Cormorant
Anhinga
Least Bittern (heard)
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored heron
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
White Ibis
Roseate Spoonbill
Wood Stork
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Mississippi Kite
Northern Harrier
Red-tailed Hawk
King Rail (heard)
Purple Gallinule
Common Moorhen
American Coot
Killdeer
Black-necked Stilt

Solitary Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Least Sandpiper
Ring-billed Gull
Least Tern
Mourning Dove
Great Horned Owl
Common Nighthawk
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher (heard)
Pileated Woodpecker
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
White-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
Red-winged Blackbird



Wood Stork

Post-script

While we were in Idabel our motel filled up with refugees from the coast who had fled ahead of Hurricane Gustov. We thought we were lucky to get out of the area before the remnants hit. That is until we saw David's report on the Internet.

Apparently the hurricane pushed some unexpected birds to Red Slough right after we left. Here is his report:

Wow! Don't even know how to begin to describe today. 71 species were found today on the Red Slough bird survey. 7 new species for the Red Slough list were found and 2 species not on the Oklahoma list were seen. The eye of hurricane Gustov passed over Red Slough and brought a horde of birds from the gulf. I arrived around 10 a.m. (wished I had gotten there earlier!) and went to Otter Lake. Immediately I encountered terns of several species. Over the next 6+ hours all kinds of birds fed on and flew by Otter, Pintail, and Lotus Lakes. Otter Lake was the hotspot for the rare terns. The best finds of the day were a Cory's Shearwater flying west to east over Otter Lake,

Sooty Terns feeding on Otter Lake, Royal Tern landing on the water of Otter Lake, and a frigatebird flying over Pintail Lake. Also nice were 3 adult Sabine's Gulls in alternate plumage and two Red-necked Phalaropes. I called Berlin and like to never got him away from Broken Bow lake were he was having some luck, but he finally came down and was able to get some of the good birds photographed. Steve Metz came running down also and just managed to get to see the last 4 Sooty Terns that flew by. Things slowed way down after 4 p.m. Other notable observations were about a total of 1000 unidentified shorebirds that kept flying over and a mass migration of Eastern Kingbirds that went from horizon to horizon. I stopped counting them after 5,000 birds. Too much other stuff going on. Here is a complete are some of the most interesting birds found today:

Cory's Shearwater - 1

American White Pelican - 1

Neotropic Cormorant - 1

Double-crested Cormorant - 2

Anhinga - 13

Magnificent Frigatebird - 1 adult male

American Bittern - 2

Least Bittern - 2

Little Blue Heron - 15

Tricolored Heron - 3

Cattle Egret - 2

Green Heron - 4

White Ibis - 48

Dark Ibis sp. - 37

Roseate Spoonbill - 2

Wood Stork - 21

Black Vulture - 4

Osprey - 1

Mississippi Kite - 1

Northern Harrier - 1

Common Moorhen - 5

Semipalmated Plover - 1

Black-necked Stilt 14

Spotted Sandpiper - 4

Solitary Sandpiper - 10

Greater Yellowlegs - 15

Lesser Yellowlegs - 41

Upland Sandpiper - 5

Long-billed Curlew - 1

Ruddy Turnstone - 30

Western Sandpiper - 4

Pectoral Sandpiper - 7

Stilt Sandpiper - 2

Short-billed Dowitcher - 8

Long-billed Dowitcher - 3

Wilson's Phalarope - 3

Red-necked Phalarope - 2

Laughing Gull - 4 juv.

Sabine's Gull - 3

Least Tern - 8

Caspian Tern - 2

Black Tern - 51

Common Tern - 1

Forster's Tern - 7

Royal Tern - 1 juv.

Sooty Tern - 10 (8 adults & 2 juv.)

Parasitic Jaeger - 1 juv.

Eurasian Collared-Dove - 1

Ruby-throated Hummingbird - 6

Eastern Kingbird - **5,000+**

Good birding! David Arbour

De Queen, AR

We still need a few people to help with refreshments for the annual meeting. If you are willing to bring something please call Candy at 353-2525 ASAP.

August Rare Bird Report

By Connie Fordham

Great Egret

7 on 8/27/2008, Moore Co., Rudy Cadra

Tricolored Heron

1 on 8/8/2008, Amarillo, Potter Co., Ed Kutac, Lucy Jalbert

Mississippi Kite

10 on 8/14/2008, Dumas, Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz

Cooper's Hawk

1 on 8/31/2008, Hutchinson Co., Rudy Cadra

Upland Sandpiper

several on 8/24/2008, Collingsworth Co., Leon/Georgia Swift

Wilson's Phalarope

100 +on 8/25/08, SW Gray Co., Manual DeLeon

Black Tern

8 on 8/25/08, SW Gray County, Manual DeLeon

Great Horned Owl

2 on 8/22/2008, Potter Co., Don McColl

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

1 on 8/2/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

1 on 8/11/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Black-chinned Hummingbird

1 on 8/2/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

1 on 8/11/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Calliope Hummingbird

1 on 8/2/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

1 on 8/11/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Rufous Hummingbird

1 on 8/2/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

1 on 8/11/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Painted Bunting

1 on 8/11/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Bullock's Oriole

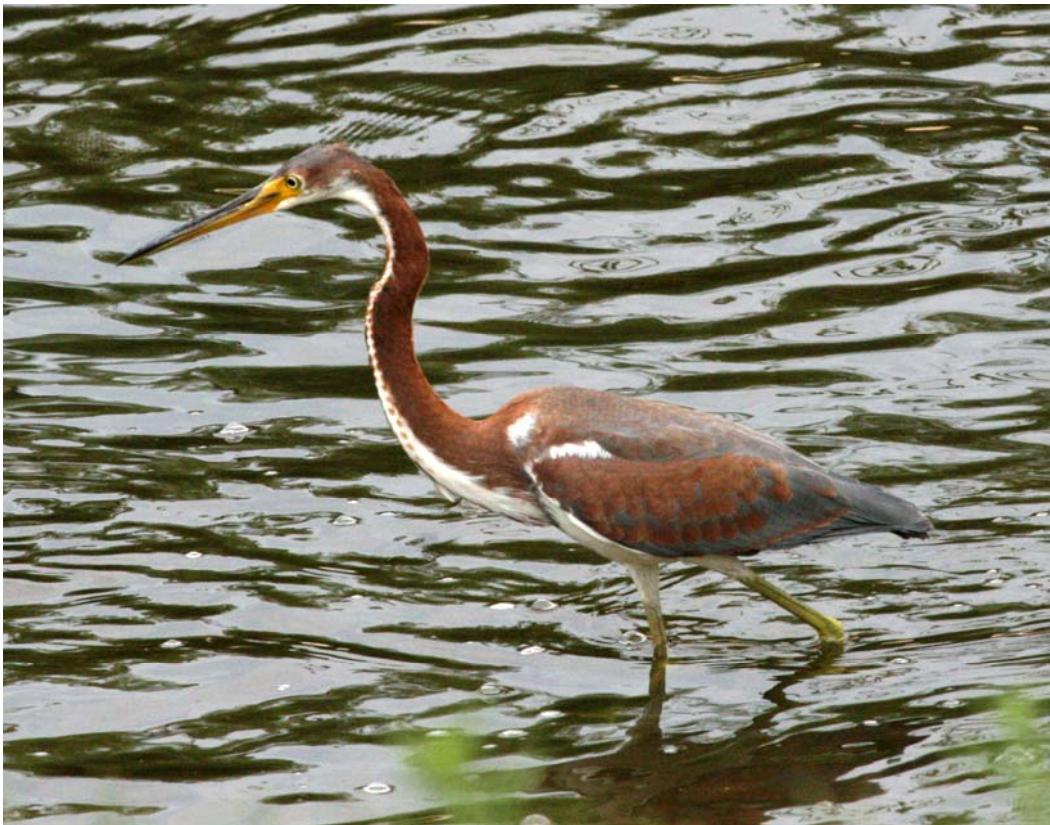
1 on 8/29/2008, Potter Co., Don McColl



Jim Dearman got this great shot of a Black-headed Grosbeak on his backyard feeder

Tricolored Heron at Thompson Park

Ed Kutac and his daughter, Lucy Jalbert, were birding at Thompson Park on August 8, 2008, when they found this juvenile Tricolored Heron. There have only been a few previous sightings of the heron in the Panhandle. Congratulations to Ed and Lucy for a terrific find! Barrett Pierce took the photo below.



Tricolored Heron at Thompson Park

TOS BENEFIT Brad Lirette

We have developed a partnership with Texas A&M University Press. Texas Ornithological Society members will be given a 30% discount on books published by Texas A&M Press and ordered by either phone (800-826-8911) or fax (800-617-2421), or on the web (www.tamu.edu/upress). Note: the website allows one to browse the books published by many Texas Universities, but this offer is only for those published by Texas A&M Press.

To obtain the discount, simply send me an email, and I will provide you with the discount code. This offer is for current TOS members only.

A few of the titles that I have in my library from Texas A&M University Press includes:

The TOS Handbook of Texas Birds by Mark W. Lockwood and Brush Freeman

Birdlife of Houston, Galveston, and the Upper Texas Coast by *Ted L. Eubanks, Jr., Robert A. Behrstock, and Ron J. Weeks*

Birds of the Texas Panhandle: Their Status, Distribution, and History by Kenneth D. Seyffert
Illustrations by Carolyn Stallwitz

A few that I would like to add to my library includes:

Greg Lasley's Texas Wildlife Portraits by Greg Lasley

Finding Birds on the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail - Houston, Galveston, and the Upper Texas Coast by Ted Lee Eubanks, Jr., Robert A. Behrstock, and Seth Davidson
Maps by Cindy Lippincott

Let me know if there are any questions. I would like to thank Jack Eitniet for his suggestion to contact Texas A&M Press. If anyone else has an idea to improve TOS membership benefits, let me know.

The Prairie Horned Lark

Panhandle Bird Club
1213 S Bryan St
Amarillo, TX 79102

Application for membership in the Panhandle Bird Club \$12.00 Annually September 1 to August 31
Make checks payable to Panhandle Bird Club, Mail to: Connie Fordham, 2404 11th Ave., Canyon, TX 79015

Name: _____ New: _____ Renew: _____ Telephone: _____ email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Field Trip Calendar for Sept and Oct 2008

20 SEP Lake Rita Blanca and Thompson Grove: Meet at 6:20 a.m. at the west side of the Southwest Branch Amarillo Public Library parking lot (nearest to McDonald Lake). **(NOTE EARLY MEETING TIME)** Alternate meeting spot will be at the McDonald's in Dalhart on US 87 at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch. **Leader: Jody McKenzie**

6 OCT Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge: Meet at 7:20 a.m. at the west side of the Southwest Branch Amarillo Public Library parking lot (nearest to McDonald Lake). Alternate meeting spot will be entrance to NWR in Umbarger at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch. **Leader: Susan Thompson THE LAKE IS FULL!**

11 OCT Lake Tanglewood: Meet at 7:20 a.m. at the west side of the Southwest Branch Amarillo Public Library parking lot (nearest to McDonald Lake). Alternate meeting spot will be at Lake Tanglewood front gate at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch. **Leader: Tom Johnson**

PBC Annual Meeting
6:30 p.m. Sept 18
SW Library
Ruth Beasley