

The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Coastal Bend Audubon Society

On the Web at <http://www.coastalbendaudubon.org>

Notable birds in the area

An adult male **White-winged Scoter** was seen in Ayres Bay (Aransas County) relaxing on a geotextile tube on May 10.

The white form of the Great Blue Heron (aka **Great White Heron**) is the predominant form around the reefs of Florida, and throughout the Caribbean. It is distinguished from the Great Egret by substantially heavier and bi-colored bill, yellowish to grayish (not black) legs. This is the third year that a young Great White Heron has fledged from a



Great White Heron, photo by Patty Nelson

Another wanderer, a **Jabiru**, found its way to the Nueces Delta Preserve in San Patricio County. It was seen on June 10 by Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program staff Gene W. Blacklock and Jake Herring, accompanied by volunteer June Leibfarth, while conducting an annual Territorial Male Count in the area. The bird was accompanied by Wood Storks which looked puny by comparison. The Jabiru ranges from southern Mexico to northern Argentina. It has not been seen at the site since that date. This is the first record for the species in San Patricio County, and probably the northernmost for the state. The last time a Jabiru was seen in this area was in Oso Bay in 1982. Another bird was present in flooded pastures in the Raymondville area of Willacy County last year.

Jabiru, photo by Charlie Spiekerman



White Winged Scoter, photo by Patty Nelson

nest on Second Chain of Islands in Ayres Bay, though no adult white bird has been reported in the area. The islands, which separate San Antonio Bay from Ayres Bay, have been an Audubon managed rookery for over 50 years. Though they have experienced some erosion, they remain a critical waterbird rookery in the central coast.

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CBAS Monthly Meetings

Tuesday, September 1 at 7 pm

Speaker: Michele Horine, Vice President of Nature Tourism & Communications for the Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau

Topic: The Natural Side of Corpus Christi

Location: Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History 1900 N. Chaparral Corpus Christi, Texas

Time: 7:00 p.m.

All members and the public are invited!



Earth Share OF TEXAS

One environment. One simple way to care for it.

WHAT'S UP AROUND TEXAS

XTREME HUMMINGBIRD XTRAVAGANZA

Saturdays in September, 9 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Lake Jackson
Hundreds of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds make the migratory journey along the Texas coast and across the Gulf. Witness this with other hummingbird enthusiasts while enjoying related activities. Contact the observatory for more information.

Contact: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Lake Jackson, TX

Phone: (979) 480-0999

Web site: www.gcbo.org

HUMMER/BIRD CELEBRATION

September 17-20, 2009 Rockport

Over 14 speakers and programs, outdoor exhibits, a banding site, nature related vendor booths, Hummer Home visits, birding boat excursions, guided field trips and so much more highlight this annual festival along the Central Texas coast.

Contact: Rockport/Fulton Chamber of Commerce 404 Broadway, Rockport, TX 78382

Phone: (800) 242-0071

Web site: www.rockporthummingbird.com

E-mail: visitor@rockport.org

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE EXPO

October 3-4, 2009 Austin

Presented by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Expo gives visitors an opportunity to try and learn about a wide range of outdoor sports and pastimes including angling, rock climbing, mountain biking, camping, shooting and much more. The birding area offers information about birding in Texas. Whether you're an old hand or a new backyard birder, you'll love Expo's birding area.

Contact: Texas Parks & Wildlife Expo 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744

Phone: (800) 792-1112

Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/expo/

WILDLIFE REFUGE WEEK

October 5-11, 2009 Your favorite national wildlife refuge

Visit your favorite national wildlife refuge this week to learn more about your local natural heritage and what is being done to protect the wildlife around us.

14th ANNUAL TEXAS BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL

October 22-24, 2009 Mission

Join us in Mission, Texas as we celebrate the Valley's 280+ species of butterflies. Learn from internationally renowned speakers, explore the area's natural habitats on expert guided field trips. Other activities include the Butterfly Bonanza South Texas BBQ Dinner and the Nature and Butterfly Expo.

Contact: Greater Mission Chamber of Commerce

Phone: (800) 580-2700

Web site: www.texasbutterfly.com

WILD IN WILLACY

October 22-24, 2009 Raymondville & Port Mansfield

A four-day festival celebrating the natural bio-diversity of Willacy County, Texas, one of the four counties which make up the Rio Grande Valley. Birding field trips include airboat rides into the otherwise inaccessibly sloughs of the Laguna Madre Bay, boating safari across the Laguna Madre to the northern tip of South Padre Island and access to private ranches. Special two-day free children's program featuring participation by USFWS, Gladys Porter Zoo and others. Other events feature butterflies, native Texas plants and history of the area.

Contact: Raymondville Chamber of Commerce

Phone: (888) 603-6994

Web site: www.wildinwillacy.com

E-mail: chamber@granderiver.net

16th ANNUAL RIO GRANDE VALLEY BIRDING FESTIVAL

November 9-15, 2009 Harlingen

Celebrate the wonder that is South Texas. This festival will focus on field trips, a trade show and special presentations by internationally renowned birders and authors of wildlife biology. Field trips offer glimpses of parrots, Chachalaca, Great Kiskadee, Altamira Oriole and Green Jay among many other birds found in this region.

Contact: Harlingen Chamber of Commerce 311 East Tyler, Harlingen, TX 78550

Phone: (800) 531-7346, (956) 423-5440

Web site: www.rgvbirdfest.com

WHEN DOES MY MEMBERSHIP EXPIRE?

Now you can easily keep up as to when your membership is due. Check the label on your newsletter and you will see the expiration date on the first line of your mailing label as shown below.

Any questions about your membership should be directed to the Membership Director, Laura Cooper, at lgcooper@earthlink.net

MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION DATE 01-JUL-08

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SALLY BICKLEY

325 CANTERBURY DR

CORPUS CHRISTI TX 78412-2877



LOOK FOR COLOR VERSION OF NEWSLETTER ON THE WEB AT
WWW.COASTALBENDAUDUBON.ORG

WATERFOWL USE ON LITTLE BAY

Historically, Little Bay in Rockport has always been a hot spot for wintering waterfowl. That is, until recently. A few years ago local residents began noticing considerably fewer ducks using Little Bay in the winter. This precipitated John Huckabee to initiate a survey of waterfowl in Little Bay in addition to two reference sites. For the 2008-9 winter, John conducted the third year of this survey in hopes that these data, in conjunction with other studies on seagrass and water quality, can be helpful in improving ecological function in this small bay.

Little Bay Migratory Waterfowl Survey, December 13, 2008 – March 10, 2009

By John Huckabee

The unusual near-absence of over-wintering migratory waterfowl from Little Bay in Rockport, Texas in the winter of 2006-2007 precipitated a survey in the winter of 2007-2008 with the objectives of documenting migratory waterfowl occurrence and identifying factors limiting and controlling migratory waterfowl usage of Little Bay. That work was extended with a comparable survey in the winter of 2008 – 2009, the results of which are reported here.

Counts of all ducks present by species were taken at least once a week (weather dependent) December 13, 2008 through March 10, 2009 starting about 10:00 AM at Little Bay and two control sites, including the Aransas Bay waterfront along Shell Ridge Road in Rockport and Port Bay at Cape Velero in the vicinity of The Villas.

There are apparently no previous data on numbers of waterfowl using Little Bay. Ducks returned to Little Bay in 2007-2008, with flocks (“rafts”) of Redheads or Lesser Scaup numbering up to 680 birds usually present. Northern Pintails were usually present numbering up to 50 or so birds. Small numbers (four to ten) of Bufflehead were nearly always present. Canvasback, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers and Gadwalls were often present numbering one or two to 15 to 18 birds.

Total waterfowl numbers were lower during the survey in '08 – '09 than in '07 – '08 by approximately 56% in Little Bay and along Shell Ridge Road, and 76% at Cape Velero. In 2008 – 2009, Redheads were consistently present on Little Bay with numbers around 30 or 40 in December 2008 linearly increasing to around 200 by late February 2009. Four to six Canvasbacks were present almost every count. No more than 16 of any other species were ever present during the survey until March, when 30 – 40 Lesser Scaup appeared.

In contrast to Little Bay the two control sites showed large percentage variation in number of waterfowl present at different counts during '08 – '09, for example ranging from zero to 830 Redheads along Shell Ridge Road and from 0 to 850 (all species) at Cape Velero.

It is clear that the Little Bay ecosystem can support over-wintering populations of migratory waterfowl, but several more

BLUCHER PARK

The Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) has been working on improvements to Blucher Park that will enhance its safety, access to birders, as well as habitat value. One of the proposed projects is a Chimney Swift kiosk, featuring two swift towers that have been designed by local architect Doug Wade with input from Audubon Outdoor Club, Coastal Bend Audubon Society, and Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program. Thanks to Paul and Georgean Kyle of Driftwood Wildlife Association, the final design integrates practical considerations that will make them usable by nesting and roosting chimney swifts with aesthetic considerations that will make it an attractive and educational addition to the park. CBAS looks forward to continuing to work with the CVB to improve habitat and promote education on conservation in the area.

BYRD AND BEA HARRIS MEMORIAL GARDEN

Progress continues on the Byrd and Beatrice Harris Memorial Garden behind the Blucher House. The paths have been laid out, the planting beds mulched, and recently a comfortable bench was purchased and placed in a location with a good view of the water feature and the future bird and butterfly garden. We will be planning the layout of the plants, and in the future we will be looking for green thumbs to help with putting the plants in the ground.

CORRECTION

This photo was incorrectly labeled by the editor as an Indigo Bunting in the last newsletter (May 2009). It is a **Lazuli Bunting** and the photograph was taken and submitted by Sandy and Blair Sterba-Boatwright. The web version of the newsletter was corrected soon after the error was noticed.



LITTLE BAY (CON'T)

seasons of data will be required before a quantitative assessment of migratory waterfowl usage of Little Bay can be drawn. A significant factor that will have to be understood in some detail before conclusions about waterfowl usage can be made is the status of sea grass in Little Bay. In addition, perhaps primarily, an assessment of waterbird problems in Little Bay must include measuring the direct disturbance of the birds by park visitors and by construction and development along the shore and in the watershed.

NEST BOXES FOR SANCTUARY

The Coastal Bend Audubon Society recently acquired three nesting boxes to be installed at North Bay Sanctuary for Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. **Wes Higgins** donated his time and expertise in building the boxes. Mr. Higgins is self-employed in general carpentry work and painting. He can be contacted at 361-939-8749 if you need any work done at your home or business. The society would also like to recognize **Travis Taylor**, manager of **McCoy's Building Supply**, 5909 Holly Road, for donating the lumber used in building the nesting boxes. CBAS appreciates their contributions.



Leatrice Koch, CBAS Treasurer in front of new next boxes for Black Bellied Whistling Ducks to be installed at the North Bay Sanctuary. Photo by George Gongora.

SANCTUARY WATER FEATURE



The Sanctuary Committee recently added a shallow water feature for resident and migratory songbirds in need of a bath or a drink at the North Bay Sanctuary, with Supplemental Environmental Project funds provided through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

The new water feature is powered by a solar unit which runs a pump and four integrated "baths". The water flows across and over three artfully sculpted leaves before "disappearing" into a rock bed and re-circulated.

The feature is surrounded by a fence consisting of rough-hewn cedar (juniper) posts and hog panels. The posts will allow feeders to be mounted in various locations. The overall fenced area, approximately 20' x 30', will be planted with wildflowers and small shrubs which will provide some cover for small birds and

PAST AND FUTURE SPEAKERS

May Speaker

The May meeting featured Dr. Bart Ballard of Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, TAMU-Kingsville. Dr. Ballard's topic, Conservation Strategies for Wintering Redheads in the Laguna Madre of Texas demonstrated the depth and breadth of current wildlife research methods. Compiling satellite images and ground-based data to provide an estimate of the numbers and locations of Redhead Ducks in the Laguna Madre, Dr. Ballard's team also researched fresh water ponds adjacent to the wintering sites.



September Speaker

Michele Horine, Vice President of Nature Tourism & Communications for the Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau will speak on "The Natural Side of Corpus Christi", and "Promoting America's Birdiest City through Conservation". Michele will present an update on the Blucher Park Enhancement Project: Chimney Swift Tower Kiosk, identify future



conservation park enhancement projects, and provide an update on the growing trend using technology to enhance and promote outdoor recreation.

WATER FEATURE (CON'T.)

food for birds and butterflies. In the future we hope to add a small viewing blind so that visitors can watch as the vital water source draws in wildlife from all around.

The feature was designed and built by Aquaria Services, who graciously donated their labor at no cost. David Price took the lead on design and installation of the project, and created the concrete "leaves" in the feature. Aquaria Services designs, constructs, services and repairs aquariums, ponds, water features and fountains. If you are in need of such services, please contact: Denise Housler, Aquaria Services, Inc., 361-854-3961, or email them at aquariaservices@sbcglobal.net, or visit their web site at www.aquariaservicesinc.com.

If you'd like to volunteer to be on the Sanctuary Committee, or help with a donation of labor or cash for the next phase of sanctuary enhancements such as feeders and a viewing blind, please contact Dick Dubois at papadubois@yahoo.com.

PURPLE MARTIN GEO-LOCATOR PROJECT

By David Newstead

Over Memorial Day weekend, CBAS partnered with Purple Martin Conservation Association and renowned bird researchers to initiate a project to track Purple Martins from south Texas on their migratory routes to their wintering grounds and back. Dr Bridget Stutchbury (of York University in Toronto, Ontario) has been pioneering the use of small geo-locator devices on songbirds over the



Purple Martin at John Barrow's "condo". Photo by Pete Holzer.



Linda Fuiman holding purple martin.
Photo by: David Newstead

last three years. The geo-locators were designed by British Antarctic Survey and track latitude and longitude by recording available daylight, once per hour. The units are carried on the back of the songbird throughout its migration, and the bird has to be recaptured the following year to download the unit's data. Advanced technology has enabled the construction of a geo-locator that weighs about 1.6 grams. The units are harnessed to the martins, which weigh about 55 grams, by thin polyester string.

Twenty geo-locators were attached to Purple Martins from two well-managed colonies in the Corpus Christi area, one at PMCA's 2008 Landlord of the Year, John Barrow's home, and one located at the home of Jeff Webster. David Newstead and Linda Fuiman of CBAS assisted the team with the capture, banding, and placement of geo-locators. All birds have since been seen actively tending nests and young without problems. Hopefully most of these birds will return to the same colonies and be re-sighted next year so they can be captured and the data downloaded. The data will be used to calculate migration speeds, and approximate migratory and wintering locations. This information could highlight the need for more focused conservation strategies in particular areas for the species. Additionally, the model can be applied to other songbirds and shorebirds in the future to help shed light on poorly understood aspects of the life histories of neo-tropical migrant birds.

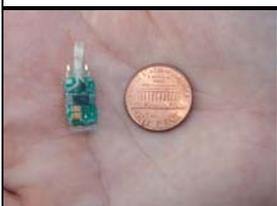
The project was funded by National Audubon Society through an Important Bird Area grant. Remaining funds not used this season will be used to purchase geo-locators for use next year. Stay tuned as next year rolls around and some of these birds return. Hopefully they'll tell us where they've been.

Many thanks to Louise Chambers and Dr. Gene Morton for their work with the project, and Dr. Juan Bahamon and Pete Holzer who participated and photo-documented the project. A special thanks to John Barrow and Louise Chambers for developing the project and orchestrating the whole kaboodle. I have rarely if ever seen field work go that smoothly, so John's attention to detail is credited for a successful project.

Below: Dr. Stutchbury and David Newstead fit Purple Martin with geo-locator. Photo by Linda Fuiman.



Above: Purple Martin with geo-locator attached. Photo by Juan Bahamon.



Left: Geo-locator device size comparison with a penny.
Right: Group of scientists and volunteers on the Purple Martin Geo-locator Project. Both photos by Juan Bahamon.

KIDS' BIRDING 101—SUMMER 2009

Story and photos by Linda Fuiman

Summer is here, and so is our *Birding101 for Kids*. Four classes were scheduled for June. The first class was held at Hans Suter Park on June 4th and 14 students aged 7-12 yrs participated. The second class at Indian Point, Portland had 9 students aged 7-12yrs.

The class included how to use binoculars, and bird identification instruction using field marks. Some of the birds sighted include Mallards, Black-necked Stilts, Roseate Spoonbills, Gt. Blue Herons, Brown and White Pelicans, Snowy Egrets, Rudy Turnstones, Least Tern, Black Skimmer and lots more.

Marshes and mudflats support countless numbers of shorebirds feeding in the same area yet rarely compete for the same food. Students participated in an activity where they pretended to be a bird, called *Bird Beak Buffet*. Students were given a paper cup which acted as their stomach, and they selected different types of implements to act like the birds beak including chopsticks, tongue depressors and clothespins. Make-believe food items such as rubber bands, marbles, pennies and toothpicks were distributed on the ground. The birds (students) then had to pick-up the food using their beak and put the food in their stomach (paper cup). At the end of the activity the students counted the food items in their stomach and told the story and compared how a specific bill shape, or size, is suited to eating a particular food allowing many birds of different species to utilize the same feeding area.

The classes ended with all the students making a bagel bird feeder which they took home to hang in their yard and watch the birds come in to feed. I asked 11-year-old Hannah B. if she had a special place in mind for her feeder, and she told me that she was going to take it to her Grandma who was in a nursing home. She said that her Grandma would enjoy that as she likes to look at birds. Hannah also told me that she would make more feeders and take them to the nursing home for other people to enjoy watching the birds at the feeder. What a special little girl with a big heart.

It's been a great start to the summer classes and I could not do it without the help of my right-hand woman, Leatrice Koch. The kids have been great, they are excited and willing to learn and have signed up for more...which means we must be doing something right!! But most of all...it's fun!



Kids play the Bird Beak Buffet at Hans Suter Park, learning about ecological niches and adaptations.



Hans Suter Birding 101 for Kids participants.



Indian Point birders zero in on some target birds.



Indian Point participants with their Bagel Bird Feeders.

TREASURER'S REPORT

By Leatrice Koch

April 1 - May 31, 2009

Beginning balance..... \$17,091.93
 Income..... \$ 1,300.88
 Expenses 4,652.93
 (3,352.05)

Ending balance..... \$13,739.88
 Less reserved fund. 691.64
 Less sanctuary improvement donation.... 2,000.00

Operating fund \$11,048.24



Jim Kern (founder of the FloridaTrail) and **Rich Kern** (wildlife film-maker) are looking for additional conservation-minded partners to buy 486 acres of virgin cloud forest in the Savegre Valley adjacent to the new Los Quetzales National Park.

Prime nesting habitat for the quetzal. 170 bird species. Botanical paradise. Hiking, fishing, horseback riding in the valley. Elevation 8,000 ft.

A house for use by the 22 partners will be built on a small, cleared portion.

Total Cost: \$27.5K per partner

For more info contact:
JimKern@thekernco.com

NEW OR RENEWING MEMBERSHIP

<input type="checkbox"/> New Member		<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal		Chapter: C9ZW130Z	
Name: _____		Address: _____			
City _____		State _____		ZIP _____	
Phone (optional) _____		Email (optional) _____			
Indicate Membership Preference: I would like to become a					
<input type="checkbox"/>	member of National Audubon Society and Coastal Bend Audubon Society (local W-13). Your membership includes the National Audubon Magazine, chapter membership and other benefits. Your chapter receives part of your dues. Dues: One year \$20 Make checks payable to National Audubon Society				
<input type="checkbox"/>	member of Coastal Bend Audubon Society (local W-13) ONLY . No NAS membership and no National Audubon magazine. Your chapter only membership includes all other Audubon membership benefits. Your chapter receives all of your dues. Dues: One year \$15 Make checks payable to Coastal Bend Audubon Society				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Additional Tax Deductible Contribution Please consider making a tax deductible contribution to the local chapter, Coastal Bend Audubon Society. You may designate the category you would like your contribution applied to. Designate category of support.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tern	One year	\$50		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Osprey	One year	\$100		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pelican	One year	\$500		
Designate specific area of support (Optional).					
General Fund <input type="checkbox"/>		Education Program <input type="checkbox"/>		Sanctuary Maintenance <input type="checkbox"/>	
				Newsletter Fund <input type="checkbox"/>	
AMOUNT Enclosed: _____ Date: _____					
MAIL TO: COASTAL BEND AUDUBON SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 3604, Corpus Christi, TX 78463					

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Corpus Christi, TX

Regular CBAS meetings:

First Tuesday of the month, September through May, 7 p.m. at the CC Museum of Science and History



The Brown Pelican

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The Coastal Bend Audubon Society is a non-profit 501c(3) organization dedicated to the conservation of birds, and bird habitat, and to conservation education in the Coastal Bend.

The organization is supported by contributions from local memberships and from the National Audubon Society.

Your CHAPTER needs you! You can help steer the course of growth and change in our community by working together. Please contact us at 361-885-6203 about getting involved!

DIRECTORS

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This newsletter is compiled/written and published every other month. Articles of interest are gathered from various sources and compiled by the editor, volunteers, and/or contributing authors. All contributions and comments are welcomed.

