

The Prairie Horned Lark

Newsletter of the Panhandle Bird Club

Vol. X No. 1

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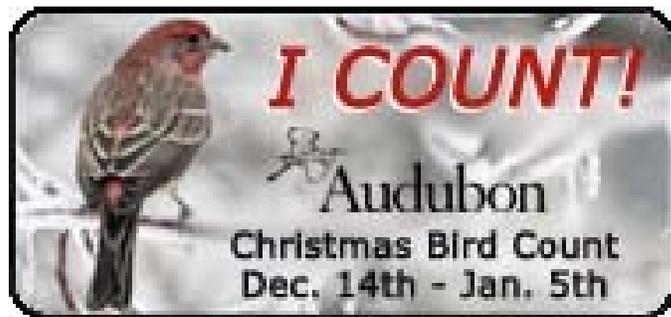
Panhandle Rare Bird Alert

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.

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2008 Christmas Bird Count Results

Five Christmas Bird Count Circles were counted this year in the Panhandle. The counts include the Amarillo Circle that includes Lake Tanglewood and Palo Duro Canyon State Park, the Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge Circle, the West Lake Meredith Circle that includes the Kritser Ranch, Plum Creek, and McBride Canyon, East Lake Meredith Circle that includes the rest of Lake Meredith, and the Quitique Circle.

Tom Johnson, Joe Cepeda, Michael Ryan, Susan Thompson, and Joel Reese were the compilers. Twenty-eight people took part in the counts. The participants were **Pam Allison, Adam Bergstrom, Bernice Blasingame, Carolyn Boyd, David Bradford, Steve Donaldson, Judith Evans, Connie Forham, Tyler Fordham, Hap Hamous, Mark Hassell, Jennifer Hinkle, Susan Johnson, Jim Luce, Holly Mitchell, Candy Myers, Brandon Percival, Barrett Pierce, Ken Seyffert, Jerry Stein, Robert Taylor, and Peggy Trosper.** Susan, Peggy, Barrett, Pam, and Judith took part in more than one! All the counts have been summarized on a table on the next page. You may also go to <http://www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/> to look at results from the current year and historical records from the past.



Michael Ryan and Jim Luce may be smiling, but they were COLD on December 21, 2008 while counting birds on the East Lake Meredith CBC. They were wearing orange vests because it was an open hunting season in some of the areas of the count.

Species	Numbers					Species	Numbers				
	Am	ME	MW	Q	BL		Am	ME	MW	Q	BL
Circles						Circles					
Canada Goose	205	51			7	American Crow			3		
Gadwall	-	0			29	Chihuahuan Raven	7	4	1	2	
American Wigeon	11		24	20	2	Common Raven			1		
Mallard	31	281	2	76		Horned Lark	157			22	925
Blue-winged Teal				6		Carolina Chickadee	1		4		
Northern Shoveler	51	1		13	15	Tufted Titmouse				2	1
Northern Pintail	1	15		2	43	Black-crested Titmouse	12			6	
Green-winged Teal	11	34		120	74	White-breasted Nuthatch	1				
Canvasback	1	2		4	1	Brown Creeper	2			1	
Ring-necked Duck	25		12		2	Rock Wren	4		1	1	
Lesser Scaup	8	1		6	3	Canyon Wren	3				
Bufflehead	9				1	Carolina Wren	1				
Common Goldeneye		13				Bewick's Wren	6			2	
Common Merganser		100	1	4		Marsh Wren	3	9			1
Ruddy Duck				1		Golden-crowned Kinglet	2				
Pied-billed Grebe	23	12		4		Ruby-crowned Kinglet	18		2	6	2
Horned Grebe		8				Eastern Bluebird	10				
Double-crested Cormorant		4				Mountain Bluebird	592				35
Ring-necked Pheasant					1	Townsend's Solitaire				2	
Wild Turkey	38		76		67	Hermit Thrush	2				
Scaled Quail	1					American Robin	924	39	2	15	95
Northern Bobwhite	22			1		Northern Mockingbird	7			5	1
Common Loon		11				Brown Thrasher	2			1	
Great Blue Heron	16	9		1		Curve-billed Thrasher	5	4			1
Bald Eagle		2	1			European Starling	68	92		90	54
Northern Harrier	7	12	4	12	4	American Pipit	1				4
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2					Cedar Waxwing	82	6			
Cooper's Hawk		1				Yellow-rumped Warbler	13				
Red-tailed Hawk	12	13	5	4	10	Spotted Towhee	8			4	6
Ferruginous Hawk	2		1	1	2	Canyon Towhee	9			1	
Golden Eagle		1				Rufous-crowned Sparrow	3	1		2	1
American Kestrel	36	16	3	8	5	American Tree Sparrow		1	7		
Prairie Falcon	1					Chipping Sparrow				20	4
Virginia Rail		6				Field Sparrow	5	1	1	1	
American Coot	23	104		6	25	Savannah Sparrow	21			1	2
Sandhill Crane	10					Fox Sparrow	1				1
Killdeer	6	4			10	Song Sparrow	11	11	1	7	
Greater Yellowlegs	3					Lincoln's Sparrow	2		1		
Lesser Yellowlegs					4	White-throated Sparrow	3				
Wilson's Snipe	1					Harris's Sparrow	1	1			
Bonapart's Gull		15				White-crowned Sparrow	115	64	51	38	62
Ring-billed Gull	35	543				Dark-eyed Junco	181	20	8	75	86
Herring Gull		15				McCown's Longspur	200				1
Rock Pigeon	20	6		13	23	Lapland Longspur	3				
Eurasian Collared-Dove	33	13		4	83	longspur sp.	1600				
White-winged Dove	17	5		3	14	Northern Cardinal	39	4	3	25	3
Mourning Dove	14	4	1	5	29	Red-winged Blackbird	2500	333	850	420	27
Greater Roadrunner	1	1			1	Eastern Meadowlark		28			2
Barn Owl				1		Western Meadowlark	181	25	51	150	78
Great Horned Owl	2	1				Brewer's Blackbird			2		20
Belted Kingfisher	4	1				Common Grackle		2		7	7
Golden-fronted Woodpecker	31			3		Great-tailed Grackle					52
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1		4			Brown-headed Cowbird	4				10
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1					Blackbird sp					10
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	6	7	1	3	1	House Finch	58	58		1	50
Downy Woodpecker	2		2			Pine Siskin	41	13		1	
Northern Flicker	13	5	5	5	2	American Goldfinch	49	11		18	
Loggerhead Shrike		9	1	2		House Sparrow	29	17		35	34
Blue Jay	3	2		3		TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	7726	2011	1126	1187	2034
						TOTAL SPECIES	87	58	33	58	55

**Lake Meredith West Christmas
Bird Count December 21, 2008
By Michael Ryan**

Candy, Jim and I awaited our bird count day with some apprehension because the weather reports promised a high for that day of less than 20. It did turn out to be a cold day but thankfully the temperature high was a little closer to 30 than to 20 so the day was manageable. We began at the Krister ranch and this area provided the best birding of the day. The ranch people were friendly and gave us helpful directions as to how to make a loop transit through the ranch. Candy started the count by spotting several Carolina Chickadees and then Candy and Jim together identified a Red-bellied Woodpecker while still in the neighborhood of the ranch house. We then began to drive back into the ranch and soon came to a small lake in which we saw a large number of American Wigeon, a good number of Ring-necked Ducks, a couple of Mallards and a single Common Merganser. We got the Luce's scope out to help with the identification. Shortly thereafter, we stopped at a small clump of trees and saw several birds including a couple of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, one of whom showed its ruby crown to me. We also saw a variety of sparrows throughout our transit through the ranch and also a variety of raptors including one

this time, I got lucky and spotted a male and female Downy Woodpecker and a single Ladder-backed Woodpecker. We then headed out to Plum Creek at Lake Meredith. When we arrived at the Plum Creek area of Lake Meredith, we parked our car near the boat ramp area at a spot where in times past we could look out over an expanse of lake-water with many ducks in it. However, this year, there was little lake and no ducks. Since it was so cold, we decided to have lunch in the warm car. We did though keep on birding. Candy spotted a bird that she had been anticipating all day - a Loggerhead Shrike. We then saw a Northern Harrier flying over



Common Mergansers Jim Stevenson



Bald Eagle Jim Stevenson

magnificent Bald Eagle that floated gracefully in the sky high above us. We made slow progress through the ranch because of the many productive stops that we made but we eventually got back to the ranch house and took a brief rest break. During

what is now more marsh than lake; and, after lunch, when we were again outside the car, another two Northern Harriers and a very large number of Red-winged Blackbirds. We then went to one neighboring area at Plum Creek and saw several Sparrows and Juncos, two Cardinals and again another large flock of Red-winged Blackbirds. We then made a long drive to McBride Canyon on the other side of Lake Meredith; but, by the time we got there, it was turning dark and we could not really see well enough to identify any specific birds. McBride Canyon did though look like it might be an interesting area to bird so we would consider a return visit at an earlier hour in the day sometime in the future to see what it might show.

The Panhandle Bird Club's Newsletter editors are always pleased to receive submissions from members and other interested birders. We welcome any trip reports, photos, or news about birding

December Rare Bird Report

By Connie Fordham

Please report all your COOL sightings to Connie. Contact information is on the first page of the newsletter.

Common Loon

11-12/21/2008, Lk Meredith Hutchinson Co., Barrett Pierce

Horned Grebe

8-12/21/2008, Lk Meredith, Hutchinson Co., Barrett Pierce

Common Goldeneye

7-12/21/2008, Lk Meredith, Hutchinson Co., Barrett Pierce

Common Merganser

365-12/21/2008, Lk Meredith Hutchinson Co., Barrett Pierce

Bald Eagle

2 on 12/25/2008, Greenbelt Lk, Donley Co., Irene Oatman

12/29/2008, Greenbelt Lake, Donley Co., Irene Oatman

Golden Eagle

2 on 12/7/2008, Pampa, Gray Co., David Rankin

Bonaparte's Gull

2 -12/21/2008, Lk Meredith Hutchinson Co., Barrett Pierce

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

12/3/2008, Amarillo, Potter Co., Don McColl

12/20-21/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Bewick's Wren

12/13/2008, Amarillo, Potter Co., Don McColl

Tufted Titmouse

1 on 12/20/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Red-breasted Nuthatch

2 on 12/20-21/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty

Northern Shrike

1-12/21/2008, Sanford, Hutchinson Co., Barrett Pierce

1- 12/28/2008, Lk Meredith, Hutchinson Co., Janet Rathjen

Yellow-rumped Warbler

1 on 12/20/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Fox Sparrow

12/22/2008, Amarillo, Potter Co., Don McColl

Texas Bird Records Committee Accepted 18 Records

Eighteen more records have completed circulation and these are the final records to be circulated in 2008. Below are the results. Place names below are counties, if you need more location detail on any particular record, let me know.

Records ACCEPTED on 1st circulation:

2008-72 Olive Warbler, 9 August 2008, Culberson

2008-75 Jabiru, 10-22 August 2008, Willacy

2008-76 Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, 1 July 2008, Cameron

2008-77 Northern Saw-whet Owl, 5 May 1987, El Paso

2008-78 Greater Pewee, 13 June 2007, Jeff Davis

2008-79 Fork-tailed Flycatcher, 28-30 August 2008, Reeves

2008-80 Ruff, 31 August-1 September 2008, Galveston

2008-81 Green Violet-ear, 1-8 June, Bexar

2008-82 Long-tailed Jaeger, 6 September 2008, Cameron

2008-84 Ruff, 24 August-14 September 2008, Willacy

2008-87 Red Phalarope, 18 October 2008, Kaufman

2008-88 Clark's Nutcracker, 18 October 2008, Randall

2008-90 Costa's Hummingbird, 26 October 2008, Brewster

2008-91 Red

Phalarope, 19 October

2008, Bexar

Mark Lockwood
Secretary, Texas Bird
Records Committee
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Laredo Birding Festival

Join us for the 2nd annual Laredo Birding Festival which begins with check-in on February 4th. The festival runs from the 5th thru the 7th. As many of you have noted from the CBC results posted on TEXBIRDS, we had some exciting birds this year. Besides the usual White-collared Seedeater (the signature bird of Laredo) we found Yellow-lored Parrots, Green Parakeets, away out of range Glaucous Gull and other exciting species. With what seems to be an eruptive year along the Rio Grande (Purple Sandpiper at SPI, Blue Bunting & Crimson Collared-Grosbeak at Frontera, etc.), who knows what we will uncover in Laredo with our large effort of field trips. Many of our trips are to private ranches normally not available to the general public.

February 5-7, 2009

Our speakers are Gene Blacklock, Mark Lockwood, and Larry Ditto. In addition, Larry will hold a nature photography seminar on Friday and a nature photography field trip on Saturday as well as be our featured speaker at the Saturday night banquet. Larry was recently honored by the Valley Nature Center for his work as a nature photographer. And I am sure everyone knows our other two guest speakers as their reputations in the Texas birding community precede them. You can find information and registration information for the festival at:

<http://www.visitlaredo.com/page.asp?page=laredo+birding+festival>

Please join us as we open up this previously undiscovered region that is rich in avian species.

T E X A S



Texas Master Naturalist Training Starts Soon!

Open House on February 7, 2009!

*Are you interested in nature?
Do you care about the environment?
Do you enjoy volunteering?*

Then the Texas Master Naturalist Program
is for **YOU!**

Centered in Amarillo, our chapter covers all 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle. We were chartered in 2003 to develop knowledgeable volunteers to increase public awareness, understanding and appreciation of our natural resources and promote stewardship of those natural resources through education and active citizen participation.

Through this program you will receive training in all aspects of our native ecosystems from recognized experts in their field and you will have opportunities for advanced training in subjects that may be of special interest to you.

In return you will join fellow members as we partner and work with organizations such as Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Wildcat Bluff Nature Center, and many more to provide volunteer service to our community in the form of education activities, projects or demonstrations. You might make a presentation to community organizations or introduce children to local plants, insects, and animals. You might serve as a trail guide or interpreter, or build trails or exhibits at a local park. You might track populations of Texas horned lizards, ornate box turtles, or black-tailed prairie dogs. Perhaps the most satisfying of all, you will have a chance to build friendships and work with others who share your love of the outdoors. The

possibilities are endless, limited only by your personal interests and imagination!

To graduate from the Texas Master Naturalist program, a trainee must complete our training programs which includes classroom instruction and field studies in topics such as:

- TX Naturalists, TX Eco-Regions, Taxonomy
- Playas, Ornithology, Urban Systems
- Entomology, Archeology
- Geology, Paleontology
- Plants, Range Management
- Ecology, Ecosystems Management
- Wildlife Monitoring Techniques
- Prescribed Fire, Riparian Restoration
- Ichthyology, Herpetology
- Mammalogy

Email Ginger Frazier for an application form:
gin_fra@yahoo.com

Copies of Old Prairie Horn Lark Editions Available

By Susan Thompson

Some time back I heard Janelle Hutchinson mention she had some of the club's newsletters dating back to the beginning, so I asked if I could possibly get a copy of whatever she had so I could check out ALL the field trips that the club went on in the past.

Well, she delivered 10 or 12 copies of each and every newsletter (into 2005) to my doorstep!

Needless to say, I now have met my goal of getting a single copy of every available PBC newsletter. but at this point I'm not sure what to do with the remaining copies. I think it would be great if whoever is interested is able to get their own historical collection of newsletters. Maybe we can pass around the boxes until all who are interested have their own copies. If you are interested call Jim Luce at 353-2525 and you can arrange to stop by and pick up your copy.

Panhandle Visitors Reported their Trip on TexBirds

Panhandle Birding Highlights

December 19-22, 2008 by Steve Gross

Howard Smith and I spent some wonderful, albeit cold, days in the Panhandle this weekend. With great assistance and hospitality from Carolyn Stallwitz and her friend, Shelly, we knocked off a number of our targets the first morning. The next two days proved very fruitful as well.

Here are some of the Panhandle specialties and where we found them:



Ferruginous Hawk Jim Stevenson

Rough-legged Hawk: present in numbers in most every county we visited.

Ferruginous Hawk: in open country, a bird was found every few miles, it seemed. Great looks at beautiful birds.

Prairie Falcon: 2 - one in Hartley County on TX 281, just west of the Moore County line; one in Hutchinson County, north of the Blue West access of Lake Meredith on RR 1319.

Merlin: one bird in Sherman County along RR 1573, just west of the intersection with RR 1060..

Golden Eagle: 3 - one in Moore County on Road 6, south of TX 281; one in Hutchinson County north of Stinnett; one in Randall County at Buffalo Lake NWR.



Western Bluebird Jim Stevenson

Short-eared Owl: one in Moore County at Cactus Playa, 6 p.m. 12/21. There were so many harriers working the playa during the day that we figured to have a good shot, and we were correct.

Glaucous Gull: one first-winter bird at Cactus Playa, Moore County 12/20. This bird was not seen during subsequent visits to the playa, but it was a very pleasant surprise.

Western Bluebird: three birds seen in Hansford County, just south of Palo Duro Reservoir.

Mountain Bluebird: ~100 birds total between two sightings: 25 birds in Hansford County in the Hansford Cemetery, which was very birdy; 75 birds in Randall County at Buffalo Lake NWR near the pay station.



Lapland Longspur Jim Stevenson

Northern Shrike: 2 - one in Hutchinson County, on RR 1319, .5 miles south of RR 3395; one across TX 15 from the Hansford Cemetery (I told you it was birdy!).

Longspurs: No huge flocks, but plenty of birds. We had the usual difficulty coming across birds that would give us the time of day, but we were able to pin down enough of them to ID Laplands on Road 6 in Moore County and a few other places. We only got definitive looks at McCown's along Arnot Rd. in Randall County, just a block or two north of US 60. This is just east of Umbarger.



McCown's Longspur Jim Stevenson

All told, we had 77 species over two-plus days of birding. It was great birding if one was prepared for the weather and the lack of wall-to-wall birds. The species not usually seen in other parts of the state made it worth the trip.

Steve Gross from NW Houston

Have You Got an Idea for a Field Trip?

If you have access to a private ranch or other birding spot or have a favorite place to bird that you would like to suggest for a Panhandle Bird Club Field Trip, please contact Susan Thompson at 517-0772 or suthomps@sbcglobal.net.



Jimmy Walker holding a Chihuahuan Raven's nest made of barbed wire.

Raven's Nest

Jimmy Walker, a falconer, and Susan Thompson's coworker, periodically conducts wildlife surveys in several areas of New Mexico. For the past year he has been going to the same areas every couple of weeks. He noticed some time ago that the ravens in the area construct their nests from pieces of barbed wire and other wire. Recently he discovered that a cottonwood tree that formerly held one of these nests had toppled over and the nest was on the ground. He gathered it up and brought it back to show off.

The nest was composed of many different strands of wire (at least 2 different kinds of barbed wire as well as various gauges of smooth wire). The longest strand appeared to be about 30 inches long. The wire nest weighed about 7 pounds.



Happy New Year, Birders!

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 11th Ave., Canyon, TX 79015

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

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

Field Trip Calendar for November and December, 2008

30 JAN Sandhills at Sunset: a Friday evening outing to Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge: Meet at 3:00 p.m. at the west side of the Southwest Branch Amarillo Public Library parking lot (nearest to McDonald Lake). **(NOTE UNUSUAL MEETING TIME AND DAY OF THE WEEK!)** Alternate meeting spot will be at the refuge headquarters at 5:15 p.m. To reach the refuge from Muleshoe, take Highway 214 south 20 miles. Go west on Caliche Road for 2.25 miles to refuge headquarters. There is (sometimes) an entrance fee. Sandhill Cranes winter in massive numbers (record was 250,000) at Muleshoe NWR, the population usually reaching its peak in late January. Around sunset, the cranes return to the refuge from their day of foraging at scattered locations. Bring warm clothing or a blanket, a scope if you have one, and perhaps a lawn chair and snacks to last you until supper. Sunset will be 6:20 p.m. with civil twilight ending at 6:46. When it's too dark to see more, we'll head to Muleshoe to eat supper at Leale's Mexican Restaurant. **Leader: Susan Thompson**

14 FEB 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 at the front gate of the refuge at 8:15 a.m. There is an entrance fee. Bring lunch. **Leader: Judith Evans**

21 FEB Lake Rita Blanca, Dalhart, & vicinity (might include Thompson Grove or Texline): We're hoping to sight some Rocky Mountain species like Mountain Chickadee and Juniper Titmouse and others, which have been sited in this part of the state in late winter. 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**