



# The Prairie Horned Lark

## Newsletter of the Panhandle Bird Club

Vol. X No. 11

November 10, 2009

### **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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### **Panhandle Bird Club** **Annual Meeting**

October 15, 2009

Our speaker, Trey Barron, gave us an informative presentation on bird photography. He is an experienced birder and bird photographer and a graduate student at WTAMU. In addition, he is a member of a team of consultants on natural resource problems having to do with wildlife, threatened and

endangered species, wetlands and water quality.



Trey showed us dozens of his extraordinary bird photographs and while sharing tricks of the trade for taking bird pictures. Some of these recommendations are as follows.

Photographing a bird should be planned in advance. You should identify the bird and learn how it feeds and what it feeds on. You can then set up a natural looking stick on which it can perch. Be sure the background is uncluttered and will contrast in relation to the bird. Ordinarily the perch will be close to the ground. Because of the bird's position you often have to crawl across the ground to get a good picture. You should shoot at about the same level as the bird. Focus on the eye of the bird as it is usually the most prominent feature and the one you need to be in clear focus. Hopefully your digital camera does not have a loud click when the shutter goes off. With modern digital cameras you can take many pictures to try to get the best view. Trey had several cameras, all of which had excellent lenses. He recommended that you get the best lens you can afford. He mentioned that once he sets himself up to take a picture he often has to wait hours for the bird to appear and sit on his prepared perch. He uses camouflage clothing and often uses a pop-up fabric blind.



Bill McKinney, Bill Murphy, Robert King and Carrie King listen to our speaker at the annual meeting.

# Birding Trip to Lake Tanglewood

By Tom Johnson                      October 17, 2009

Our birding trip in venerable Lake Tanglewood started with wonderful, windless weather. The foliage was near its Autumn peak. The day began with a thin layer of undulating, altocumulus clouds. The group stopped to find our signature bird of the Lake this time of the year, the Osprey. We drove on down to my house and saw a late straggling Black Chinned Hummingbird and a Cedar Waxwing that you could have convinced me fledged about 2 hours before we saw it. It surely came from a very recent nesting somewhere nearby. We then made a fruitless trek up the cliffs in search of the Great Horned Owl which normally lives in the small box canyon across the street from our house and which had been calling earlier in the morning. We found a new, large and unexplained burrow of some type but no owl. Since there were no casualties on the descent, as the day cleared into bright sunshine, we motored on to find some water birds and hike the wilder canyons at the end of the lake, now being encroached upon by new development. The best adjective I could come up with to describe the birding on that hike was "dazzling", both in numbers and species. We saw so many birds that, for a time, it was as dramatic as the only true Fallout I've ever seen on the Gulf Coast. We had warblers in large numbers and so many birds flitting bush to ground to tree that it was really, well, "dazzling"! Best of all was the chance to see Wilson's, MacGillivray's, Nashville, and Orange Crowned warblers all in the same locale, often in the same tree and in quite an array of plumage. After we had OD'd on the bird glut, we retired to my deck to eat a civilized lunch and got to watch the hummingbird feed episodically while we were there. The full list of birds seen follows in the order we found them (or occasionally, in the order in which I remembered to write them down):

1. Curve-billed Thrasher
2. Red-winged Blackbird
3. Eurasian Collared-Dove
4. European Starling
5. American Coot
6. Osprey
7. Common Grackle
8. Great-tailed Grackle
9. American Kestrel
10. Ring-Billed Gull

11. Mallard
12. House Sparrow
13. House Finch
14. Belted Kingfisher
15. Turkey
16. Northern Flicker
17. Yellow-rumped Warbler
18. Black-crested Titmouse
19. Cedar Waxwing
20. Black-chinned Hummingbird
21. Ladder-backed Woodpecker
22. Golden-fronted Woodpecker
23. Northern Shoveler
24. Northern Cardinal
25. Northern Mockingbird
26. Ruby-crowned Kinglet
27. Ruddy Duck
28. Gadwall
29. Black-Crowned Night Heron
30. Canada Goose
31. Bewick's Wren
32. Spotted Towhee
33. Hairy Woodpecker
34. Orange-crowned Warbler
35. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
36. Rufous-crowned Sparrow
37. Wilson's Warbler
38. Nashville Warbler
39. Lincoln's Sparrow
40. American Goldfinch
41. American Crow
42. Little Green Heron
43. Song Sparrow
44. Turkey Vulture
45. Eastern Phoebe
46. MacGillivray's Warbler
47. Dark-eyed Junco
48. Sandhill Crane
49. Rock Wren



## Bird Sightings by Connie Fordham

Please call or e-mail Connie, with information on any unusual birds or first seasonal arrivals you see in the Panhandle. Call 655-7034 or email cfbirder52@yahoo.com.

### Horned Grebe

11 on 10/21/09, Greenbelt Lk, Donley Co., Barrett Pierce

### Eared Grebe

1 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### American White Pelican

1 on 10/21/09, Greenbelt Lk, Donley Co., Barrett Pierce

### Brown Pelican

1 on 10/17/09, Greenbelt Lk, Donley Co., Terry Massey

### Great Egret

3 on 10/21/09, Greenbelt Lk, Donley Co., Barrett Pierce

### Snowy Egret

2 on 10/21/09, Greenbelt Lk, Donley Co., Barrett Pierce

### Cattle Egret

1 on 10/19/09, Dallam Co., Mark McKinney

### Wood Duck

6 on 10/12/09, Thompson Pk, Amarillo, Potter Co., Don McColl

### Canvasback

2 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Bufflehead

2 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Ferruginous Hawk

1 on 10/2/09, Pantex, Carson Co., Monty Schoenhals

1 on 10/31/09, Amarillo, Potter Co., Don McColl

### Rough-legged Hawk

1 on 10/23/09, Hutchinson Co., Rudy Cadra

### Merlin

1 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Lesser Prairie-Chicken

3 on 10/28/09, Clarendon, Donley Co., Mary Neal Risley

### Sandhill Crane

+2000 on 10/30/09, Panhandle, Carson Co., Rudy Cadra

### Sora

1 on 10/10/09, FairPark, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Wilson's Snipe

4 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Long-billed Dowitcher

36 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Long-billed Curlew

24 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Greater Yellowlegs

8 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Lesser Yellowlegs

22 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Spotted Sandpiper

2 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Western Sandpiper

4 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Least Sandpiper

11 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

40 on 10/21/09, Greenbelt Lk, Donley Co., Barrett Pierce

### Baird's Sandpiper

6 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Stilt Sandpiper

14 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Ring-billed Gull

1 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Sabine's Gull

1 on 10/21/09, Greenbelt Lk, Donley Co., Barrett Pierce

### Common Nighthawk

1 on 10/15/09, Amarillo, Randall Co., Jim Luce

### Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

1 on 10/10/09, Hall County, Anthony Hewetson

### Downy Woodpecker

4 on 10/10/09, FairPark, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Hairy Woodpecker

1 on 10/29/09, Amarillo, Potter Co., Don McColl

### Eastern Phoebe

2 on 10/10/09, FairPark, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

4 on 10/10/09, Estelline, Hall Co., Anthony Hewetson

6 on 10/10/09, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Tree Swallow

12 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Northern Rough-winged Swallow

32 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

2 on 10/21/09, Greenbelt Lk, Donley Co., Barrett Pierce

### American Pipit

1 on 10/10/09, Baylor Lk, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

1 on 10/21/09, Greenbelt Lk, Donley Co., Barrett Pierce

### Ruby-crowned Kinglet

1 on 10/6/09, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

### Carolina Wren

1 on 10/10/09, FairPark, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Marsh Wren

2 on 10/10/09, FairPark, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson



Gray Catbird

by Jim Stevenson

### Gray Catbird

1 on 10/1/09, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

1 on 10/10/09, FairPark, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Sage Thrasher

1 on 10/10/09, Hall County, Anthony Hewetson

### Brown Thrasher

1 on 10/10/09, FairPark, Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

### Eastern Bluebird



10/17/09, PaloDuroCanyonSt.Pk,RandallCo., Mark Hassell  
**Western Bluebird**  
1-10/17/09, PaloDuroCanyonSt.Pk.RandallCo., Mark Hassell  
**Mountain Bluebird**  
1on10/17/09, Randall Co., Mark Hassell



Mountain Bluebird by Jim Stevenson

**Hermit Thrush**  
1 on10/10/09, Hall County, Anthony Hewetson  
**Blue-headed Vireo**  
1 on10/10/09, FairPark,Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson  
**Orange-crowned Warbler**  
18 on10/10/09, Fairpark,Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson  
8 on10/10/09, Hall County, Anthony Hewetson  
**Nashville Warbler**  
1 on10/10/09, Hall County, Anthony Hewetson  
2 on10/10/09, FairPark,Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson  
**Yellow-rumped Warbler**  
3 on10/10/09, Hall County, Anthony Hewetson  
4 on10/10/09, FairPark,Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson  
3 on10/18/09, Dumas,Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz  
5 on 10/19/09, WTAMU, Randall Co., Connie Fordham  
**Black-and-white Warbler**  
1 on10/10/09, FairPark,Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson  
**MacGillivray's Warbler**  
1 on10/18/09, Dumas,Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz  
**Common Yellowthroat**  
1 on10/10/09, FairPark,Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson  
**Wilson's Warbler**  
3 on10/10/09, FairPark,Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson  
**Spotted Towhee**  
1 on10/2/09, Amarillo, Randall Co., Bill/Mim Evans  
1on10/10/09, FairPark,Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson  
1 on10/10/09, Hall County, Anthony Hewetson  
**Chipping Sparrow**  
3 on10/18/09, Dumas,Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz  
**Clay-colored Sparrow**  
2on10/10/09, Kirkland,Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson  
2 on10/10/09, Estelline, Hall County, Anthony Hewetson  
5 on10/18/09, Dumas,Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz  
**Brewer's Sparrow**  
2 on10/18/09, Dumas,Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz  
**Song Sparrow**  
1 on10/10/09, FairPark,Childress Co., Anthony Hewetson

15on10/26/09, Dumas,Moore Co., Rudy Cadra  
**White-crowned Sparrow**  
10/07/09, Amarillo, Potter Co., Don McColl  
2on10/10/09, Kirkland,ChildressCo., Anthony Hewetson  
7 on10/18/09, Dumas,Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz  
**Harris's Sparrow**  
1-10/17/09, PaloDuroCany.St.Pk,RandallCo., Mark Hassell  
**Dark-eyed Junco**  
2on10/10/09, Kirkland,ChildressCo., Anthony Hewetson  
1 on10/18/09, Dumas,Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz  
**Pine Siskin**  
4 on10/6/09, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

## Some Member's Sightings

Barrett Pierce:

I flew up to Barrow, Alaska on 7-October, 2009 to join a Zugunruhe Birding (Z-Birding!!) Tour [www.zbirdingtours.com](http://www.zbirdingtours.com) [info@zbirdtours.com](mailto:info@zbirdtours.com) in an effort to see a Ross's Gull. I was met at the airport and taken to our warm and adequate dormitory style accommodations at the NARL (not open to the public). After breakfast the next morning, our group headed to a filling station at 8:30 am when it was just getting light enough to see. My first sighting of a Ross's Gull was from the filling station, small gulls were flying east along the beach! With a full tank of gas we raced to get ahead of a flock of about forty. We stopped and got out to watch the Ross's Gulls stream by, always moving east or from left to right. Winds were high and the gulls were feeding in the frothy surf. From 9:00 am to 10:30 am they just kept coming and I counted 118 gulls per minute, perhaps indicating as many as 10,000 Ross's Gulls during that peak flyby. The weather was terrible and we stayed near and in the car to be comfortable. After lunch we returned to the beach and our timed counts ranged from 2 per minute to 50 per minute. We then took a local three hour tour to Point Barrow (\$105 per person) in a four-wheel-drive van, which is required for the last 3.5 to 4 miles beyond the end of the road. At the northernmost point in the USA we saw 600 to 1000 Ross's Gulls stacked-up at the point. The next morning, the winds were not as high and after we had checked-in at the airport we returned to the beach to find a continuing stream of Ross's Gulls, again flying from west to east but ranging farther offshore in the lower winds. Our timed counts ranged from 40 per minute to 45 per minute indicating huge numbers of the gulls were still migrating past Barrow. We all left on Alaska's morning flight.

This was a great trip and I was very pleased with Z Birding. Even though accommodations and

services are available at Barrow, this is not a trip that should be taken lightly or alone-----you must be prepared and equipped for the arctic conditions----- and I fully recommend John Puschock/Z-Birding.

October 28, 2009 Mary Neal Risley in Clarendon reported that the man that feeds their cattle told her that he saw 3 Prairie Chickens at the spot where he was feeding the cattle. Location is: on FM 1260, 4 miles east of Clarendon and 2 miles south. She has not gone to see them yet.

November 1, 2009 Trey Barron reported two Anhingas in Friona at the same RV park where the White Ibis was seen. He says they have been there since at least October 31 and they were up in the trees when he drove around the circle.



Black Phoebe by Jim Stevenson

November 2, 2009 Barrett Pierce reported a Black Phoebe flycatching on the levee between the two ponds and a Rusty Blackbird in the bare treetops on the west side of the western pond at the Friona RV PARK, Palmer County. I did not find the Anhingas.

### Dalhart Eagle Nest

Internet Report from Clint Boal  
Unit Scientist and Associate Professor  
USGS Texas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife  
Research Unit  
Department of Natural Resources Management  
Texas Tech University

I'm sending this to all of you as you have either been involved in previous discussions about the Bald Eagle nest north of Dalhart, or have indicated interest to me about these birds.

As a brief background, in 2004 I discovered an active Bald Eagle nest in Dallam County that was situated over 35 miles from any large water (and fish) source. My students and I found the eagles were successfully rearing 1 – 2 young each summer on prairie dogs and rabbits. The nest tree came down in 2006. Bo Adkins and I coordinated with Excel Energy, Fort Worth Zoo, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and USGS to put up a man-made nest for the eagles. The eagles took to the new nest and have continued rearing young each summer. In May 2009, I attached a GPS satellite transmitter to the single eaglet produced. The transmitter and funds for the first year of data downloads were provided by Excel Energy.

The eagle remained in the nest area until August 5, when it began a series of rapid moves northward. In a 24 hour period from Aug 5 to Aug 6, it moved 150 miles north into Colorado. In the next 24 hour period, it moved 132 miles north to just outside Boulder, Colorado. Aug 7 to Aug 8, it moved 68 miles north to the Colorado – Wyoming border between Laramie and Cheyenne. In the next 24 hour period, it moved 225 miles north to the Black Hills region of South Dakota. The next day took the eagle 79 miles farther north to the Moreau River in NW South Dakota. The eaglet has remained along the Moreau River near Hwy 79 between US 85 and US 212 since August 10.



Juvenile Bald Eagle by Jim Stevenson



So it appears that even though the eaglet was raised on mammals, it settled into an aquatic system following initial dispersal from its natal site. It is quite interesting that it made such long flights northward over only 5 days, then settled into an area. I expected more exploratory movements, especially eastward toward the Red River in Oklahoma or westward toward the mountains of New Mexico. It will be interesting to see what the eaglet does as winter sets in in the north. He may remain up there, but may also move back this way, down towards the gulf coast, or over toward the Missouri River. It is anyone's guess right now.

This transmitter is solar powered and the locations are within 26 m accuracy. So, given funding, we have the opportunity for 4+ years of monitoring of this particular eagle. Similar transmitters could be attached to young each year to see if similar dispersal patterns are followed. Given the anticipated development of wind energy throughout the Great Plains, and that this eagle moved up the plains, there may be some interest in this.

I will provide monthly updates on the eagles status at the end of each month starting in October. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have about this project.

Clint Boal  
806-742-2851

#### November 5, 2009 UPDATE

As last reported, the eagle had dispersed from the nest site starting on 5 August to the Moreau River in western South Dakota by 10 August. It remained in this area through much of September. In late September it began southward movements, was in Nebraska by 1 October, drifted southward through Nebraska and Kansas and by 18 October was in the panhandle of Oklahoma approximately 152 km from the nest it came from. It then drifted back northward toward the Nebraska – Kansas border region and appears to have settled along and between the Republican River in Nebraska and the Solomon River in Kansas. As of 1 November the eagle was on the Republican River west of Harlan County Lake, Nebraska.

When examining locations on photo imagery, it is apparent the eagle is finding and staying along water courses with few exceptions. It will be interesting to see what the eagle does as winter sets in. He may remain up there, follow waterfowl

south, hang around the plains hunting prairie dogs, move down towards the gulf coast, or over toward the Missouri River. There is a roost area north of Amarillo that was holding over a dozen bald eagles last year; perhaps this eagle will end up there. This could be especially interesting given the extent of wind energy development in the region.

I will provide monthly updates on the eagles status as long as you the collaborators and interested parties wish. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have about this project. Also, please do not hesitate to ask me to remove you from the update list if you do not wish to receive these.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Jim Dearman shot these photos near Amarillo. Can you ID the bird? Cooper's? Sharp-shinned?



## Late Reports from Barrett Pierce

Large numbers of Longspurs are present in the Panhandle. This weekend, 7 & 8-NOV 2009, I found them in Moore, Sherman, Randall, Armstrong and Carson Counties. Some of them still show some of their breeding plumage making them much easier to identify. This weekend, I also had my first of the season McCown's Longspurs in Randall and Armstrong Counties.

Juvenile Harris's Hawk was found, 7-NOV 2009, at the wastewater treatment plant in Stratford, Sherman County. My only other Harris's Hawk in the Panhandle was 7-JAN 2003 near Tulia and it was also a juvenile.

# Dues are Due!

Panhandle Bird Club dues of \$15 are due for the year September 2009-September 2010. Please make checks payable to Panhandle Bird Club and mail them to Connie Fordham, 2404 11<sup>th</sup> Ave., Canyon, TX 79015. Send her your name, telephone number, email address, and mailing address.

## Jim Stevenson's report from Alaska 6/8/09

When I got off the ferry in Juneau, after three days of watching amazing scenery and neat pelagic birds, I dropped into a parking lot and beheld a Common Raven clearly drinking beer from a puddle where someone had run over a container of unopened brew. See for yourself.



This new experience gave me the opportunity to observe an inebriated raven. The first thing was

his uncertain walking pattern, tentative and swaggering. This was not a complimentary behavior on his part, and the normal dull croak turned into a bit of a bird belch.

The second observation was that when he walked away and tried to pick out a female raven, he chose the ugliest hen in the parking lot. It obviously dulled his vision, good sense, and perhaps self-esteem.

Third, I'm pretty sure the already-large beak of the raven grew a bit as he gulped down the alcohol. I could only recall the poem, "Roses are red; violets are blue; he has a bill like a B-52."

Fourth, with fresh garbage being deposited in dumpsters, where the other ravens were finding healthy raven food, he ignored the bounty and continued to sip up small quantities of booze. It couldn't have been very good for him.

Fifth, when other ravens came over and tried to coax him toward the free food, he quickly became irritable and almost violent. Eventually, he lost all those bird-friends.

Sixth he tried to fly home, but was swerving recklessly and made other ravens dart out of his way, until he was pulled over by a Marshall Eagle.

And seventh, while he was being booked, I



went over and suggested he get some help for his alcoholism, and sure enough, he adamantly denied having a substance abuse problem.

## Fieldtrip Leaders Needed

We have not yet set up trips for the months of January through June, 2010. Please give me a call at 353-2525 if you would like to lead a trip to a special location. We will try to plan at least one trip a month or two if we can find leaders. Jim Luce

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 November, 2009

**14 NOV 2009 Kritser Ranch:** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the west side of the Southwest Branch Amarillo Public Library parking lot (nearest to McDonald Lake). **NOTE DIFFERENT MEETING TIME.** Alternate meeting spot will be at the ranch headquarters at about 8:30 a.m. The ranch entrance is on the right off US 287/878 about 20 miles north of Amarillo about 500 yards past the Canadian River crossing. Bring lunch. **Leader: Michael Ryan**

**Christmas Bird Counts will take place between December 14, 2009 and January 5, 2010. Look for more information soon.**

Mark your calendars now for a trip in-the-works for next year (2010) **30 APR through 2 MAY 2010 Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge:** The Wichitas are located in SW Oklahoma and this NWR is one of the oldest in the nation. The largest breeding population of the federally endangered Black-capped Vireo occurs here, and although they are most reliably seen beginning in mid-May, we may see some early arrivals on Elk Mountain Trail. In any case, the whole area is “plenty birdy.” We will bird the refuge and also nearby Hackberry Flats. Onsite accommodations will include a tent-camping group campsite reserved exclusively for our trip participants with picnic area and shelter (shelter has electric) at a shared total cost of \$30 per night. Or you may choose a hotel in Lawton. (4 hotel options are: Baymont Inn, 1203 NW 40th - \$93 + tax - 580-353-5581; Hampton Inn & Suites, 2610 NW Cache Rd - \$124 + tax - 580-355-8200; Springhill Suites, 3 SE Interstate Dr - \$126 + tax - 580-248-8200; Holiday Inn Express, 209 SE Interstate Dr - \$126 + tax - 580-248-4446; All four hotels offer some of the following discounts: AARP, AAA, Seniors, and retired military.) Local birders Kurt and Sharon Meisenzahl will be our guides. **Leader: Billie Shalvey**