



The Prairie Horned Lark

Newsletter of the Panhandle Bird Club

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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.

Officers of the Panhandle Bird Club

President: Jim Luce 353-2525
 Secretary: Connie Fordham 655-7034
 Records: Connie Fordham 655-7034
 Advisor: Barrett Pierce 356-8033
 Field Trips: Susan Thompson 517-0772
 Newsletter: Judith Evans 373-6740
 judith.evans@suddenlink.net
 Candy Myers 353-252
 camjkl@aol.com
 Webmaster: Ray Matlack 655-2469
 rmatlack@mail.wtamu.edu
 Web Site: <http://homedirs.wtamu.edu/~rmatlack/panhandlebirdclub>

Field Trip to Buffalo Lake NWR **June 8, 2008** **By Judith Evans**

It promised to be a hot and windy day so I was not too surprised to find that no one was waiting for me at the Lake McDonald overlook except a couple of enormous jackrabbits.. I was pleased to note a fairly good collection of birds, though, in spite of all the construction going on there. There were red-winged blackbirds, European Starlings, Killdeer, Western Meadowlarks, an American Kestrel and 15 black crowned night herons in and around the lake.

I drove on to the rendezvous at the entrance to the Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge where I found Steve Donaldson. We waited for a while then headed for the nature trail, scattering Lark Sparrows as we drove. Western Kingbirds and Turkey Vultures were the most observable birds along the trail but we also saw Mourning Doves, Mockingbirds and a Northern Flicker. We kept hearing a Bobwhite call but never saw the bird.

After the nature trail we drove the Auto Tour around to the dam. There were plenty of Red-winged Blackbirds at the little pond fed by the windmill and Barn Swallows as well. We also saw Wild Turkeys and a rather large herd of deer crossing the road. The Bullock's Orioles were the treat we enjoyed on this leg of the trip, one even making trips to his nest hanging over the road. Steve spotted a Common Nighthawk and an Eastern Kingbird on the drive back to the picnic grounds.

The hot wind seemed to be discouraging the birds as well as the humans at this point so we sat in the shade, ate lunch and then decided to call it a day.

Bird List:
 Wild Turkey
 Northern Bobwhite (heard)
 Black-crowned Night Heron

PBC Extended Field Trip **Coming Up! –Aug. 30 – Sept. 1**

Mark your calendars now for the trip to Red Slough Wildlife Management Area !!!



(See details on page 7.)

Turkey Vulture
 Mississippi Kite
 Red-tailed Hawk
 American Kestrel
 Killdeer
 Rock Pigeon
 Mourning Dove
 Common Nighthawk
 Northern Flicker
 Western Kingbird
 Eastern Kingbird
 Barn Swallow
 Northern Mockingbird
 European Starling
 Lark Sparrow
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Western Meadowlark
 Great-tailed Grackle
 Bullock's Oriole
 House Sparrow

Field Trip to Amarillo Sites – June 21, 2008

Participants: Rudy Cadra, Steve Donaldson, Tim Stroud, Georgia & Leon Swift, Susan Thompson
 Written by Susan Thompson

Six of us met at Cliffside Gas Plant in hopes that roads would be in good enough shape to bird Cross Bar Cooperative Management Area, but alas, it was not to be. The previous night's heavy rains had been good for the land, but bad for dirt road driving. One of the main roads into the Cross Bar had both my and the Swift's 4WD vehicles slipping, sliding, and threatening to bog down, so we backed up the half mile we had gone (we couldn't even find a safe place to turn around), and hatched a Plan B.

Back on pavement once again, we headed out along Brick Plant Road. We saw and heard a Chihuahuan Raven perched high on a metal utility support structure. Its throat feathers were wet, which allowed us to see the white skin underneath – so the i.d. was easy. We also watched a good number of Scaled Quail foraging on the damp ground, and saw a couple of Northern Bobwhite. Cassin's Sparrows sang, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers swooped up and dove down, and I got to have a unique "head-on" look (as opposed to profile view) at a close-by Loggerhead Shrike which was perched on a line looking hard at me.

We drove over to the prairie dog town along Helium road and watched burrowing owls for a bit. Then we stopped at Medi-Park to see if the Mute Swans we had heard about (from Jim and Candy) were still there. They were – I counted 6 of them. We also saw a Blue-winged Teal there.



Mute Swans Photo by Robert King

Our next stop was Wild Horse Lake (Martin Luther King, Jr. Park) where we had a fantastic time watching nest-building, courtship, and chick-rearing activities of 4 different species: Cattle Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Great Egrets, and Snowy Egrets. This spot is a well-known rookery. The male Great Egrets were sporting their extra-fine breeding plumage, and the Cattle Egrets had their vivid orange/brown accents. We saw chicks at several stages of growth, from downy-headed, to almost-adult. We tried to guess how many nests were present at this site – we decided at least a hundred.

Finally, we went to Thompson Park, where we ate our lunches. The highlights there include a tree with about twenty Mississippi Kites perched in it, spreading their wings in the sun, a Belted Kingfisher, and a family group of Wood Ducks. The final opinion was that we had had an enjoyable morning of birding, despite the change from our original plans.

Species List

Canada Goose
 Mute Swan
 Wood Duck
 Mallard
 Blue-winged Teal
 Ruddy Duck
 Scaled Quail
 Northern Bobwhite
 Great Blue Heron
 Great Egret

Snowy Egret
Cattle Egret
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Mississippi Kite
American Coot
Killdeer
Rock Pigeon
Belted Kingfisher
Ash-throated Flycatcher
Western Kingbird
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Loggerhead Shrike
Chihuahuan Raven
Horned Lark
Barn Swallow
Northern Mockingbird
Cassin's Sparrow
Lark Sparrow
Red-winged Blackbird
Western Meadowlark
Great-tailed Grackle

June Bird Report

By Connie Fordham

(repeated in this issue because of birds and birders left out in the June issue of newsletter. Apologies to all who submitted. *Editor*)

American White Pelican

13 on 5/10/2008, Hutchinson County, Rudy Cadra

Green Heron

1 on 5/18/2008, Lk.Marvin, Hemphill Co., Jan Elston/Kathryn Green

Black-crowned Night-Heron

5/7/2008, Gray County, Rudy Cadra
5/18/2008, Lk.Marvin,Hemphill Co., Jan Elston/Kathryn Green

Green-winged Teal

5/18/2008, Lk.Marvin,Hemphill Co., Jan Elston/Kathryn Green

Mississippi Kite

5/1/2008, Potter Co., Don McColl
5/2/2008, Potter County, Judith Evans
1 on 5/6/2008, Hutchinson County, Rudy Cadra
5/8/2008, Dumas, Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz

Swainson's Hawk

5/18/2008, Lk.Marvin, Hemphill Co., Jan Elston/Kathryn Green

Scaled Quail

5/5,6/2008, Potter Co., Don McColl

Northern Bobwhite

5/18/2008, Lk.Marvin, Hemphill Co., Jan Elston/Kathryn Green

American Avocet

5/18/2008, Lk.Marvin,Hemphill Co., Jan Elston

Stilt Sandpiper

5/18/2008, Lk.Marvin,Hemphill Co., Jan Elston/Kathryn Green

Great Horned Owl

5/3,22/2008, Potter Co., Don McColl

Common Nighthawk

5/27/2008, Carson County, Rudy Cadra

Chimney Swift

5 on 5/10/2008, Potter Co., Don McColl

Black-chinned Hummingbird

2 on 5/1/2008, Potter Co., Don McColl
2 on 5/3/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Broad-tailed Hummingbird

1 on 5/21/2008, Amarillo, Potter Co., Susan Thompson

Hairy Woodpecker

1 on 5/10/2008, Potter Co., Don McColl

Eastern Phoebe

1 on 5/18/2008, Lk.Marvin, Hemphill Co., Jan Elston/Kathryn Green

Vermilion Flycatcher

2- 5/29/2008, PaloDuroCanyon, Randall Co, Kenneth Seyffert

Cassin's Kingbird

5/6/2008, BuffaloLk NWR,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Purple Martin

5/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Bill McKinney

Cedar Waxwing

6 on 5/26/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Connie Fordham

Gray Catbird

5/14/2008, PaloDuroCanyon,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert



Mountain Bluebird

Photo by Dave Herr

Mountain Bluebird

2 on 5/7/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Nell Stephenson

Swainson's Thrush

1 on 5/16/2008, Amarillo, Potter Co., Susan Thompson

Hermit Thrush

1 on 5/3/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

5/8/2008, Dumas, Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz

Tufted Titmouse

1 on 5/13/2008, Hutchinson County, Rudy Cadra

Bell's Vireo

5/14/2008, PaloDuroCanyon,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Yellow-throated Vireo

5/14/2008, PaloDuroCanyon,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Plumbeous Vireo

5/6/2008, BuffaloLk.NWR,RandallCo., Kenneth Seyffert

Warbling Vireo

5/14/2008, PaloDuroCanyon,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Red-eyed Vireo

5/17/2008, BuffaloLk NWR,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Nashville Warbler

5/21/2008, SE Park,Amarillo, Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Chestnut-sided Warbler

5/23/2008, SE Park,Amarillo, Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Yellow-rumped Warbler

5/3/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals
5/16/2008, Pampa, Gray County, Kathryn Green

Black-throated Green Warbler

5/20/2008, PaloDuroCanyon, Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Blackpoll Warbler

5/23/2008, SE Park,Amarillo,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

American Redstart

5/21/2008, SE Park,Amarillo,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

MacGillivray's Warbler

1 on 5/1/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

5/17/2008, BuffaloLk NWR,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

5/23/2008, SE Park,Amarillo,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Wilson's Warbler

1 on 5/3/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Green-tailed Towhee

5/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Bill McKinney

1 on 5/3/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

2 on 5/6/2008, BuffaloLkNWR,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Spotted Towhee

1 on 5/3/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Chipping Sparrow

5/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Bill McKinney

5/18/2008, Lk.Marvin, Hemphill Co., Jan Elston/Kathryn Green

Clay-colored Sparrow

5/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Bill McKinney
1 on 5/3/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Lark Sparrow

5/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Bill McKinney
5/4/2008, Potter Co., Don McColl

Lark Bunting

5/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Bill McKinney

Lincoln's Sparrow

5/2008, Amarillo,Randall Co., Bill McKinney

White-crowned Sparrow

5/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Bill McKinney
5/3/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

5/6/2008, Buffalo Lk NWR, Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

Black-headed Grosbeak

5/7/2008, SE Pk,Amarillo,Randall Co., Kenneth Seyffert

2- 5/14/2008, PaloDuro Canyon,Randall Co, Kenneth Seyffert

Blue Grosbeak

1 on 5/16/2008, Pampa, Gray County, Kathryn Green

Lazuli Bunting

2 on 5/6/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Nell Stephenson

1 on 5/10/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Mark McKinney

2- 5/23/2008, SE Park,Amarillo Randall Co, Kenneth Seyffert

Indigo Bunting

5/2008, Amarillo, Randall Co., Bill McKinney

1 on 5/4/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals



Painted Bunting

1 on 5/23/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

1 on 5/25/2008, Lk. Tanglewd, Randall Co., Marilyn Hill

Hooded Oriole

2- 5/14/2008, PaloDuroCanyon, Randall Co, Kenneth Seyffert

Bullock's Oriole

1 on 5/4/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Connie Fordham

5/8/2008, Dumas, Moore Co., Carolyn Stallwitz

5/9/2008, Hutchinson County, Rudy Cadra

2 on 5/9/2008, Potter Co., Don McColl

July Bird Report

By Connie Fordham

Mute Swan

6 on 6/14/2008, MediPrk, Amarillo, Potter Co., Jim Luce

Black-chinned Hummingbird

1 on 6/11/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Eastern Wood-Pewee

1 on 6/8/2008, Pampa, Grey Co., Dennis Palmitier

Curve-billed Thrasher

1 on 6/12/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals

Bullock's Oriole

1 on 6/11/2008, Canyon, Randall Co., Monty Schoenhals



Breeding Bird Surveys

By Judith Evans



Susan Thompson listening and looking on one of the stops on her first Breeding Bird Survey

Susan Thompson and I each picked up our first routes in the Breeding Bird Survey this year and ran them in June. Each route is 25 miles long and the observer stops every half mile to listen and look for 3 minutes, recording the number of each species seen and heard. What an experience! Standing there in the pre-dawn light at our first stop, hearing the myriad of sounds around us. Who would have thought there was so much life going on in these seemingly empty fields!

As noted on the website of the Patuxent Wildlife Center of the United States Geological Survey (<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/index.html>): "The North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is a cooperative effort between the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and the Canadian Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Research Centre to monitor the status and trends of North American bird populations. Following a rigorous protocol, BBS data are collected by thousands of dedicated participants along thousands of randomly established roadside routes throughout the continent. Professional BBS coordinators and data managers work closely with researchers and statisticians to compile and deliver these population data and population trend analyses on more than 400 bird species, for use by conservation managers, scientists, and the general public." This survey, which will expand into northern Mexico in 2010 is the primary source of large-scale, long-term population data for over 400 species. It is a highly respected survey that is relied upon in planning

conservation efforts and in other areas of interest. We can be proud here in the Panhandle. There was only one vacant route north of Plainview this year.

Twenty-five miles and 50 stops is a daunting prospect. The “birding” is definitely on the fly, quite different from our normal way of going about it. You put down the ones you were able to see or hear well enough to identify and let go of any which might have been out there. (“Let go” is not in the vocabulary of most birders I know!) We were each tired at the end of our routes but agreed that it was rewarding to add to the knowledge base in this way and we both felt that we had greatly increased our identification skills, having studied for months before the run. We are both eager to run those surveys again next year!



Rudy Cadra snapped these adorable Great Horned Owllets!! They must have been ready to fledge because the next time he went by their tree they were gone!

Wind Farms vs. Birds

Many people are interested in the effect that the huge windmills on wind farms will have on bird populations. In a recent article in the Amarillo Globe News Kevin Welch reported some of the efforts a local conservation group is involved in. The Playa Lakes Joint Venture mapping project shows the few remaining acres of habitat for the Lesser Prairie Chicken. Maps have been drawn that show breeding grounds and the locations of playa lakes that attract large numbers of birds. These maps are offered in order to get information out before locations of wind farms are decided. They are not meant to be restrictive but to inform.

The Lesser Prairie Chicken is a candidate for listing as threatened or endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. However, even if the species were to be listed current laws and/or rules have not been enacted regarding the placement of wind farms. Wind developers make their own rules on how to choose sites if a state or local government hasn't set up policies. Currently there are no requirements in Texas or on the national level on choosing sites. Even in the absence of laws governing these matters conservation groups have already taken their concerns to court in Texas. It will be an issue for many years to come.



Wind Farm in the northern Panhandle picture by Judith Evans

Advanced Announcement of an Extended Field Trip:

30 AUG–1 SEP Red Slough Wildlife Management Area (SE Oklahoma): This area, part of the Ouachita National Forest, is one of Jim & Candy's favorite birding spots. We will leave Amarillo on Saturday morning, bird in Oklahoma City (Lakes Hefner and Overholser) Saturday afternoon, and then drive the 2 ½ hours to Idabel. We will bird Red Slough all day Sunday (guided by local birder Dave Arbour) and drive back to Amarillo on Monday. The best motel in Idabel is Comfort Suites (580-286-9393). There is also a Quality Inn and Microtel. For more details as date approaches, contact Susan Thompson, Jim Luce, or Candy Myers.

Leaders: Jim Luce & Candy Myers

Red Slough official site: www.fs.fed.us/r8/ouachita/natural-resources/redslough/index.shtml

Dave Arbour's personal photo gallery: www.pbase.com/sloughbirder

This will be an outstanding field trip. Be sure to check out the two websites above for information on what we might be looking forward to in the way of birds!

Field Trip Calendar for July and August 2008

12 JUL 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 – trying to “beat the heat!”**) Alternate meeting spot will be at the McDonald's in Dalhart on US 87 at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch. **Leader: Jody McKenzie**

26 JUL Redux: Cross Bar Cooperative Management Area (Formerly “Cross Bar Ranch”): *Last trip was cancelled due to impassably muddy roads – we're going to try again and hope the cactus wrens will still be there.* This site, about 15 miles north of Amarillo, is 12,000 acres owned by the Bureau of Land Management and managed in cooperation with West Texas A&M. Meet at 6:50 a.m. at the west side of the Southwest Branch Amarillo Public Library parking lot (nearest to McDonald Lake). (Note early meeting time to “beat the heat.”) Alternate meeting spot will be at Cliffside Gas Plant at 7:35 a.m. Directions to the gas plant: from Western, turn west on Brick Plant Road. (Brick Plant Road is roughly a mile north of the north side of Loop 335.) Stay on Brick Plant Road for roughly 9 miles – the road will twist and turn and cross over a few cattle guards and one water crossing. The pavement ends at Cliffside Gas Plant. **IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL NOTES:** High clearance vehicles are needed to travel inside the Cross Bar and we will need to minimize the number of vehicles we take in – other vehicles may be left at the gas plant. Also, this is not one of those trips where folks can leave at any time (since someone with a key would have to make a 30 or 40 minute round trip through several locked gates to escort the person out). Therefore, we will plan on being finished (back at the gas plant) by 1:30 p.m. Bring lunch. **Leader: Susan Thompson**

2 AUG Palo Duro Canyon 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 entrance to PDC at 8:00a.m. We will bird the Canyon as usual, possibly meeting up with Judy Jones and her Bird Walks and Talks Tour for a short time. Bring lunch. **Leader: Judith Evans**