

TWIN LAKES AUDUBON SOCIETY

<http://www.twinlakesaudubon.org>

February 2006



President's Letter

Dear Friends,

We have a lot to discuss. First, as many of you likely noticed, the January newsletter was a bit tardy. The tardiness was the result of a mailing label issue that we should now have resolved. I would like to stress, however, that regardless of whether you receive your newsletter on time, you can always obtain information about meetings and field trips from the TLAS website (<http://twinlakesaudubon.org/>) or by contacting me (or any of the TLAS officers and board members) directly. Also, I behoove you to provide us with your current contact information (preferably e-mail). I was able to easily and quickly remind at least some TLAS members of the meeting once I heard that the newsletter was going to be tardy by e-mailing them.

I would also like to reiterate a point that I made in my January newsletter. I am sincerely concerned about what I at least perceive to be declining or sporadic attendance of TLAS meetings and field trips. My January letter failed to elicit much feedback on the issue, though. I really would like to hear from you, the membership, on this issue. Is there anything that we as an organization can do to increase attendance at our meetings and field trips? Does the current set-up for meetings and field trips work for you? Or should we be branching out into activities besides just meetings and field trips? This is your organization, and it should be geared towards meeting your needs. So please let us, your officers and board members, know what you want and what you think.

I need membership input on yet another issue, too. As was pointed out at the January meeting, we are pretty well off financially (approximately \$6,000 in the bank). Particularly because of the institution of local membership dues, we have successfully been able to build our bankroll. We are now able to cover our annual operating expenses and have plenty of money leftover. However, there is no reason for us to be sitting on all of this money. So, I would appreciate feedback on how we might be able to spend some of the surplus to the benefit of TLAS. One idea that has been proffered is to buy a few laser pointers to help field trip leaders point out birds to participants. Another idea is to purchase an LCD projector for TLAS (currently we borrow one and its availability for our meetings is not guaranteed). However, I did submit a grant proposal to Audubon Texas that, if funded, would cover part or all of the approximately \$850 cost of an LCD projector. Anyway, we need ideas (big and small) on how we might be able to spend our money.

I hope to see everyone at our next meeting on Tuesday 14 February! Leroy Williamson will speak to us about Caddo Lake, the only natural lake in Texas. Our February field trip will be on the 25th to the Burlesons' prairie in eastern Bell County (please note that the field trip is NOT scheduled as usual on the Saturday immediately following our meeting). Looking ahead, also note that we do not have a March meeting (UMHB is on spring break and our meeting room will, thus, not be available). However, you will receive a March newsletter and a field trip will be scheduled for March. Finally, please check out the bird quiz that Gil Eckrich has posted on the TLAS website. The current quiz is a test version, but additional quizzes will likely be posted in the future and we may even make a contest out of these quizzes with prizes to be won.

Sincerely,

Rich Kortecke

PRESENTATIONS AND FIELD TRIPS

Unless otherwise noted, the contact for programs is Scott Summers and the contact for field trips is Rich Kostecke Phone: (254) 547-2047; Cell: (314) 346-0658; E-mail: rkostecke@tnc.org or rkost73@yahoo.com.

Talks and Events

14 February – Leroy Williamson on Caddo Lake

14 March – No meeting; UMHB closed for spring break

11 April – Tim Marston (Natural Resource Management Branch, Fort Hood) on Red-cockaded Woodpeckers

9 May – Annual membership slideshow, show-and-tell, plant swap, etc.

Field Trips

25 February – Field trip to Burluson Prairie*---Meet at the Belton Park and Ride at 0830.

18 March – Field Trip TBA

15 April – Field trip TBA

15 May – Field trip TBA

July – Fort Hood and Stillhouse Hollow Reservoir 4th of July Butterfly Counts; dates TBA

Snack and Drink Sign-up

	Snacks	Drinks & Ice
Feb. 14	Golda, Jack Williams	Tom Robbins
Mar. 14	N/a – no meeting	
Apr. 11	Marilyn Miller	Mary Voss
May 9	?????????	???????????

*Bob Burluson's comments regarding our upcoming field trip:

Any of you are always welcome at the prairies. Big Elm Creek is the north boundary, and is permanent water with a timbered bottom. I formerly had trails maintained along the creek, but have allowed them to grow up in recent years, after the kids grew up, married and moved away. Still, there is reasonable access on foot to the creek bottom if one can walk. There are generally a good many of the common resident and winter resident birds to be seen.

In the grasslands, raptors of several species are very common, from American Kestrels on up to Redtails. Normally, there are several Shorteared Owls in the prairies, but this year I've not seen even one, although I have not made a concerted effort. Northern Harriers are there in quantity. If we have an outing, I'll bring a black lab and send her out ahead, and she can often flush an owl that is holding tight. It helps her to walk into the wind, as you would on a quail or pheasant hunt, and it also helps to spread out the group in a line. The drought has clearly affected bird populations, and I'm seeing fewer of everything this year, but there is always some birding and we can show them some raptor nests and how to find them.

February 25 sounds fine for a field trip. Confirm it with me when you all set it up. I'll mark the calendar. 9:00 a.m. will be fine.

BIRDS SEEN/BIRDS HEARD

For up-to-date reports of bird sightings, go to the TLAS website!

<http://twinlakesaudubon.org/>

Rich Kostecke reports: One of my resolutions for this year is to more fully explore some of the counties adjacent (particularly to the west and northwest) to Bell County, which has been my primary local/regional birding focus in previous years. Thus, on 21 January, I looped through Lampasas, Mills, Comanche, Hamilton, and Coryell counties. Most of my birding was roadside birding, but I did bird the city parks in Lampasas, Lometa Reservoir (also Lampasas County), and Proctor Lake (Comanche County). My highlights:

Lampasas County:

Northern Pintail - 94 Lometa Reservoir

Red-shouldered Hawk - 5 in the city of Lampasas along the creeks, all very vocal

Greater Yellowlegs - 2 on the Lampasas River just east of Kempner where US190 crosses the river

Common Raven - 1 seen flying SW from the SW outskirts of Lampasas

Canyon Wren - 1 just east of Kempner under the US190 bridge over the Lampasas River

Pine Warbler - 3 Gavin Garrett Soccer Complex in Lampasas

Pyrrhuloxia - 1 male in creekside woodland just down from Hanna Springs in Lampasas

Comanche County:

Cinnamon Teal - 1 drake and maybe 1-2 hens where Sowell Creek enters Proctor Lake

American White Pelican - 175+ Proctor Lake; most roosting on an exposed bar at the east tip of Promontory Park

Double-crested Cormorant - 1,435+ Proctor Lake; most roosting on an exposed bar at the east tip of Promontory Park

Greater Yellowlegs - 1 where Sowell Creek enters Proctor Lake

Spotted Sandpiper - 1 where Sowell Creek enters Proctor Lake

Least Sandpiper - 65 where Sowell Creek enters Proctor Lake

Ring-billed Gull - 443 Proctor Lake; most roosting on an exposed bar at the east tip of Promontory Park

Herring Gull - 1 Proctor Lake

Bonaparte's Gull - 1+ Proctor Lake

Coryell County:

Ring-necked Duck - 100 approx, all on a single farm pond that was nearly bank to bank Ring-neckeds

Northern Harrier - 3

Crested Caracara - 1

Burrowing Owl - 1 along Elijah Rd, Fort Hood

Short-eared Owl - 1 along Elijah Rd, Fort Hood; observed around 5:15 PM, which is a bit earlier than usual likely because of the overcast

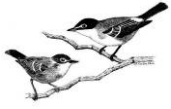
Brewer's Blackbird - 2 flocks, one of 450+ individuals and one of 300+ individuals

Gil saw an interesting sight on Stillhouse Hollow on 16 January. A Bald Eagle was sitting on his usual perch, when a Red-winged Blackbird approached and landed in a nearby tree. The blackbird then progressively landed closer and closer to the eagle until the eagle turned his head towards the blackbird as if to say, "do you realize just HOW much bigger I am?!" Pictures of this event are posted at

<http://twinlakesaudubon.org/galleries.htm>

Website

Our TLAS website, <http://www.twinlakesaudubon.org>, has been up for a couple of months now and I would appreciate any comments/suggestions on how to improve the site. I encourage more submissions of pictures to add to the gallery. Those of you who enjoy watching birds at your various feeders, how about picking up a camera and recording some of your feathered friends?



Twin Lakes Audubon

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Finance: Jack Williams
Directors: Joye Johnson
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Chapter Reps: Joye &
Corky Johnson

Meetings

7:00 p.m., second Tuesday of the month in Room 117, York Science Center, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, Belton (No meetings June, July or August).

