Greetings friends,

Happy New Year! I hope y’all had a happy holiday season. First, let’s briefly look back on the old year. We had interesting and productive field trips and many good speakers. Financially, we are doing well. We successfully won a grant to buy an LCD projector for the Chapter. This past December we had another successful Christmas Bird Count (hopefully everyone who wanted to participate found a spot in one of the quadrants despite any confusion that may have resulted during the planning meeting). It was a good year. I thank you all for your continued interest and support of the Chapter!

Now, to look ahead, we have another slate of interesting speakers and field trips lined up for spring 2007. For more info, check the TLAS website and the Presentations and Field Trips section of the newsletter. Info on 2007 events will be posted soon. Please note that we will not have a meeting in March, but will have a field trip. On a serious note, we still need volunteers for Secretary, Treasurer, and a board member position for terms beginning in fall 2007. Because I do not necessarily expect people to jump at these opportunities, that means my goon squad (Tom Robbins and Gil Eckrich) and I will likely begin to do some serious arm-twisting come January. I beseech you to save us, yourself, and others the pain and please volunteer now!

This may be an opportune time to talk a little about bird identification. Many species may look similar at a glance. Sparrows, for example, are often the bane of new birders because they all appear to be LBBs (little brown birds). No need to worry, though. Identification of tough species groups, like the sparrows, can be mastered. So, here are a few tips and personal observations regarding bird identification that might be helpful.

1) Use field guides with caution. Most field guides depict the idealized image of the bird. In the field, birds may not look quite so dull or vibrantly colored as pictured dependent on diet, molt, etc.

2) Color and plumage pattern may be misleading (i.e., birds from different families may look similar at a glance based only on color or plumage). Info on behavior, habitat, morphology (e.g., hooked versus point bill), natural history, posture, and/or vocalizations may be needed to clinch an ID. For example, you would not expect an insectivorous bird to be eating seed at your feeders or, usually, a neotropical migrant warbler or vireo to winter in your central Texas backyard (it should be frolicking in the neotropics instead).

3) Use local, regional, or state-level resources to determine the probability of a bird being present during a particular time of year. Resources that provide monthly abundances (like the Fort Hood bird checklist that can be found on the TLAS website) are most useful (national-level field guides provide very little info on whether you would truly expect to see a particular species during a particular month).

4) Do not be offended when more experienced birders question your ID. Even the best of us make bad calls from time to time. Instead, use it as a learning opportunity. Of course, birds are quite mobile and surprises do show up. That is part of what we all love about birding. However, some sightings are more probable than others. If you are absolutely convinced of your ID and no one believes you, the best way to convert the doubters is to provide a photo of the bird in question or to show the doubters the bird in person.

Good birding! I hope to see you at the meeting on Tuesday 9 January and the field trip on Saturday 13 January!

Rich Kosteka
PRESENTATIONS AND FIELD TRIPS

Talks and Events (see http://www.twinlakesaudubon.org for maps of meeting and trip sites)

09 January 2007: Marcus Schimank, Lake Ranger at Stillhouse Hollow, on Corps of Engineers operations concerning wildlife at the lake.

13 February 2007: Marty Irwin, Senior Environmental Specialist with Alcoa, on wildlife habitat restoration following mining.

13 March 2007: No meeting

9 April 2007: TBD

13 January 2007: Fort Hood Owls (now 3 Burrowing Owls and a Short-eared Owl) and sparrows...

17 February 2007: Rockdale, reclaimed coal mine that now has nesting Bald Eagles and also has Wood Stork.

17 March 2007: TBD

14 April 2007: TBD

Late April or Early May: Spring bird count, date TBD

12 May 2007: TBD

30 June 2007: Fort Hood 4th of July Butterfly Count

7 July 2007: Stillhouse Hollow 4th of July Butterfly Count

Snack and Drink Sign-up

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<td>Chrissy &amp; Scott</td>
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Twin Lakes Audubon

3415 Whispering Oaks

Temple TX 76504

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