February 2020

Huntsville Audubon

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Our Mission
To increase our community’s awareness of the natural world and the need for its preservation, through education and the active enjoyment of birds and other wildlife.

Upcoming Events

Monthly Club Meeting:
Thursday, February 20th
6:00 pm – snacks and chat
6:30 pm – guest presentation

St. Stephens Episcopal Church
5019 Sam Houston Ave, Huntsville, TX
(map & directions on website)

Speaker
Texas Master Naturalist Erik Wolf

Presentation
An Introduction to Edible Plants
Are you tired of fighting clovers in your yard? Did you know that you can eat the leaves, and make a tea from clover flowers?
Do you want to boost your immune system? You can make an easy tea, rich in Vitamin C, from fresh pine needles.
You may have tasted the sweet nectar of honeysuckle as a child, but you can use the flowers to make honeysuckle jelly!
Come out and learn about these local plants and many others as Erik Wolf introduces you to edible plants of our area.

Visitors Welcome
Please bring a snack to share. Bottled water will be provided.

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Jr. Audubon Event:
Tuesday, March 10th
1:00 – 2:00 pm
Huntsville Public Library – 1219 13th Street

Speaker
Mary Anne Weber of Houston Audubon
spearheaded by Sharyn Pezant. For more information contact Sharyn at:
936-662-5925 or slpezant@sbcglobal.net

See more info about this event on page 3
Christmas Bird Count Results

In case you missed it, the Huntsville Audubon Society participated in the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on January 4, 2020. Skies were clear and the temperature cool as 24 participants, following the National Audubon Guidelines, divided into several teams to count birds in Walker County.

The participants counted 3390 birds, identified 87 different species, and one lucky team spotted a rare bird for this area. The team of Darrell Vollert and John and Tonya Seitz observed a Zone-tailed Hawk in Huntsville State Park.

After the CBC, participants gathered for dinner at City Hall Café to share their experiences.

Congratulations and thank you to everyone who took part in making this year’s count a successful one.

Once the CBC data has been finalized with the National Audubon Society, a link on our HAS website will take you to the summary.

Zone-tailed Hawk Fun Facts

• Zone-tailed Hawks often fly with Turkey Vultures because of an unusual advantage it gives them. These dark hawks look so much like Turkey Vultures that small animals on the ground mistake them for harmless Turkey Vultures, ignore them, and become prey for the hawks. They even mimic the way Turkey Vultures hold their wings in a V-shape and gently rock from side to side.

• Diet consists of reptiles (especially large lizards), mammals (e.g., ground squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits), birds (e.g., quail, woodpeckers, nightjars, passerines), and amphibians.

• They have elaborate courtship displays where the male and female fly together performing loops, rolls and dives. They will often dive up to 1,600 feet together before breaking away from each other.

• They breed in southern Arizona, New Mexico, west Texas, most of Mexico, and northern Central America. Zone-tailed Hawks found in the United States are short-distance migrants and spend their winters in southern Mexico and Central America.

• Nests are built in tall trees along a stream or cliff at least 30 feet off the ground. The clutch is 1-3 eggs; young can fly at 6-7 weeks.

Zone-tailed Hawk – note similarity to a vulture when seen from below
IT’S A JUNGLE OUT THERE

Spring Break Children’s Program

From the highest of canopies to the dark forest floor, rainforests are teaming with life. Meet live birds and reptiles that call the South American rainforest home. Learn about the amazing creatures that share this vanishing habitat and how our Texas birds rely on this special place for their winter home.

Huntsville Audubon is sponsoring an educational program featuring live birds and reptiles in partnership with the Children’s Department at Huntsville Public Library. Mary Anne Weber, Educational Director of Houston Audubon, is the guest speaker. This is an interactive program that includes music and is geared for elementary grades and younger audiences.

Tuesday March 10, 2020 1:00-2:00 pm
Huntsville Public Library (1219 13th St.)
For more info, contact Sharyn at 936-662-5925

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

The 23rd annual GBBC is February 14-17 (Fri-Mon). During this period, you can count birds anytime, anywhere, and for as little as 15 minutes. Count birds in your backyard, city park, wildlife refuge, or as many places as you want. For more info see: gbbc.birdcount.org or Audubon.org.

The Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) Winter Meeting

Tonya Seitz attended the TOS Meeting in Bryan this past January 16-19. She has shared a few details and photos of her experience.

The first day, a Thursday, was kicked off with a presentation on birding in Brazos County by Mark McDermott. The next three days consisted of field trips from 6:30 am to 3 pm, followed by various presentations of ones choosing.

Birding took place in Brazos and surrounding counties. The field trips were led by various knowledgeable birders from college students to professional guides.

Tonya’s group saw several unusual birds including Mountain Plover, Prairie Falcon, Lapland Longspur, and an immature male Indigo Bunting. See pics on next page. More pictures and birding results can be found in the next TOS newsletter.

The TOS Spring Meeting will be in Beaumont April 30-May 3. Be sure to sign up early to get your choice of field trips. Visit texasbirds.org for more information.
Some of the many interesting birds (and several lifers) photographed by Tonya Seitz.