

San Antonio Audubon Society

AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

Volume 62, Number 1

March/April 2016

OSPREY By Mike Scully

I can recall a time when seeing an Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) was an event. When I was young, Osprey, Brown Pelican, Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle populations had been suffering steep declines due in a large part to the use of DDT. Happily, in the decades since, populations of all these species have rebounded and the majestic and graceful Osprey has now become an increasingly common species.

Here in Bexar County, I have been surprised on occasion to hear the clear, whistled calls of this bird in association with even modest bodies of open water and have looked around to find this distinctively long-winged raptor perched on a high snag or soaring overhead.

Many species of raptors and owls may opportunistically prey upon fish. For a few, including the sea eagles, fish eagles and fishing owls, fish may make up the greater portion of their diet. However, in terms of its physical adaptations, mobility and commitment to a piscivorous diet, the Osprey is in a league of its own.

Most "fish eating" raptors possess bare tarsi, large feet, long curved claws and pointed spicules on the underside of the toes to assist them in grabbing their slippery prey. The Osprey, however, is unusual in that it also possesses the ability to reverse the direction of the third toe and can grasp fish with two toes on either side if needed. The talons, too, are rounded in profile instead of concave on the underside and possess fine, backward-pointing scales designed to enhance their purchase in the body of a fish.



Osprey
by Chris Bailey

Unlike most birds of prey, Ospreys lack the projecting supraorbital ridges over their eyes, a feature that commonly lends hawks, eagle and falcons their fierce expressions. All these unique traits give the Osprey its own Family (Pandionidae) within the Order Acciptridae.

A habitat generalist, the one absolute requirement the Osprey has is the availability of fish prey close to the surface. In practice, this most often means the Osprey is limited to shallow coastal and inland waters. However, in some coastal locations and larger lakes where schools of fish can be found close to the surface, Ospreys may forage as far as three miles offshore. At the other extreme, Ospreys have been known to forage even in sewage treatment facilities where fish are present. Unfortunately, wintering Ospreys in the tropics are often drawn to fish farming operations where they are liable to be shot to prevent depredations.

The breeding range of the Osprey encompasses the Northern Temperate and Sub-Arctic Zones of the New and Old Worlds, extending south along coastlines to tropical regions. A divergent population breeds from Australia and Caledonia north to Indonesia. Tropical and Sub-Tropical Osprey populations tend to be sedentary in habit. In Temperate Zone locations, even in the absence of ice, fish generally withdraw to deeper waters in the winter months and are by necessity migratory.

Most North American Ospreys winter in Central and South America. Young Osprey may remain on the wintering grounds for up to three years before returning to breed.

Ospreys most often begin breeding at three to five years of age. In many areas, the scarcity of nesting sites capable of supporting the large nests of

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SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR: MARCH

Please call the trip leaders if you have questions. Last-minute changes to field trips will be posted at saaudubon.org, www.facebook.com/saaudubon/ or sent by email through SATX Birds,.

Saturday, March 5, 8:00 AM

Castroville Regional Park

Meet leader Georgina Schwartz (210/342-2073) in the upper parking lot of the park. Take US 90 west to Castroville. At the end of the Medina River Bridge as you enter Castroville, turn left in front of Landmark Inn onto Florence Street. Follow the signs to the park. Bring water and snacks; lunch at a local restaurant.

Saturday, March 12, 8:00 AM

SAAS Beginners' Bird Walk

Meet leader Georgina Schwartz (210/342-2073) at the Judson Nature Trails, 246 Viesca Street. From the 5900 block of Broadway, turn west on Ogden Street and drive to the stop sign at Greeley Street. You'll see sign to Judson Nature Trails. Turn left, go one block and turn right on Viesca, then into parking lot on left.

Monday, March 14, 10:00 AM—Note start time

Materials Recovery Facility Tour

We will visit the Materials Recovery Facility (or MRF) which processes and sends individual recycling commodities, bales those commodities and then sells them on the open market. The MRF processes several thousand tons of recyclables for the city of San Antonio. We will meet at the ReCommunity MRF at 10:00 am, located at 1949 Hormel Drive off the Splashtown exit of IH-35. Please wear sturdy shoes (no open-toed shoes or sandals). If you have a hard hat, safety glasses and ear protection, please bring those items. This tour will be limited to 15 people. If you plan to attend, please call Georgina Schwartz (210/342-2073).

Tuesday, March 22 8:00 AM

Crescent Bend Nature Park

Meet leader Sandi Wheeler (wheels5683@gmail.com) in the parking lot of the park. From San Antonio, take IH-10 east to the FM 1518 exit and go north toward Schertz. Look for a brown park sign at Schafer Road. Turn right and go 3 miles to the park. Entrance will be on your left before Cibolo Creek. Bring water and snacks.

Saturday, March 26, 8:30 AM—Note start time

Land Heritage Institute

Meet leaders Patsy and Alan Kuentz (210/422-3218 or apkuentz@aol.com) at the LHI gate on Neal Road. Take Exit 46 off Loop 410 on the south side and turn south on Moursand Blvd., which turns into Pleasanton Road. Turn right on Neal Road, about 5 miles south of Loop 410. Follow Neal Road 2.3 miles to the road on the right where there is a gated entrance. A \$3 per person donation is requested. Bring water and snacks.

Thursday, March 31, 8:00 AM

Helton Nature Park—Wilson County

Leaders Sandi Wheeler (wheels5683@gmail.com) and Bill Zwartjes will meet you in the upper parking lot of the Helton Nature Center in Wilson County. To reach the park, drive south on I-37 and take US 181 toward Floresville. After passing Loop 1604, continue to FM 775. Turn right on FM 775 and continue west for about 1.2 miles. Turn right at the gate.

Mitchell Lake

Monthly Birding Tours

No reservation necessary

1st Sunday: March 6 & April 3, 8:00 AM

2nd Sunday: March 13 & April 10, 8:00 AM

2nd Tuesday: March 8 & April 12, 8:00 AM

3rd Sunday: March 20 & April 17, 8:00 AM

4th Sunday: March 27 & April 24, 8:00 AM

\$8 for non-members; Free for members

Visit <http://mitchelllake.audubon.org/events> for info about additional activities scheduled.

For more info: mlac@audubon.org or 210/628-1639

San Antonio Botanic Garden

Upcoming Events

555 Funston Place, SATX 78209

210/536-1400

Plant Sale: March 14-18. 10 AM to 2 PM

Dog Days: March 19-20. 9 AM to 5 PM.

Bring your dog on a leash and enjoy the Garden. \$5/dog donation requested.

Viva Botánica! April 16. 9 AM to 3 PM.

Fiesta event with kids' activities. \$10 adults, \$7 children.

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR: APRIL

Saturday, April 2, 7:45 AM—Note earlier start time

South Llano State Park & Junction

We will meet Rhandy Helton at the Shell gas station at the IH-10/Martinez Street Exit in Junction. Trip will include sewer ponds, state park, and other hot spots around Junction. Please contact Helen Rejzek (hmr78253@gmail.com) if you plan to attend and if you are going to eat lunch with the group. Bring water and snacks; lunch at a local restaurant.

Saturday, April 9, 8:00 AM

SAAS Beginners Bird Walk

See March 12 walk on page 2 for details and directions to the Judson Nature Trails.

Sunday, April 10, 7:45 AM—Note earlier start time

Maverick Ranch/Fromme Farm

We will meet Mary and Bebe Fenstermaker (956/236-3779) at the gate to the ranch on Boerne Stage Road. Directions: Exit IH-10 West in Leon Springs. Turn left on Boerne Stage Road, drive 3 miles to the stop sign, turn right on Boerne Stage Road. Go 1.4 miles to their gate on the left. The gate will be locked after we meet, so please be on time. Wear suitable footwear for hiking. Bring water, snacks, and lunch.

Thursday, April 14, 8:00 AM

Warbler Woods

Meet Sandi Wheeler (wheels5683@gmail.com) at Don and Susan Schaezler's sanctuary in Cibolo. Take IH-35 north toward Austin. Take Exit 176, Wiederstein Road. Turn right on Wiederstein at the overpass. Turn left at the next road, Old Wiederstein. After you pass Dean Road, the Schaezler's property begins on the right. Look for the green mailbox, 19349 Old Wiederstein and the gate to the property.

Sunday, April 17, 8:00 AM

Crescent Bend Nature Park

See March 22 walk on page 2 for details and directions to the park.

Friday, April 22

Port Aransas

SAAS will bird the hotspots in Port Aransas. The trip is limited to 12 people. Contact Karen Moulder for more information (210/824-2547 or moulderkf@gmail.com).

Wednesday, April 27, 8:00 AM

Avenue A and SA Botanical Garden

Meet leader Lora Reynolds (210/414-0792) in the parking lot on Red Oak, which intersects Mulberry in Brackenridge Park. Time permitting, we will go to the San Antonio Botanical Garden afterward. The SABG fee is \$10 for non-members; free for members.



SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON FIELD TRIP RECAPS

View in-depth field trip reports at

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SATXbirds/> and search for them using the message numbers below.

Judson Nature Trails, 1/9

Led by Georgina Schwartz. Message #23735. Species: 30. Highlights: Common Nighthawk, Pine Warbler.

Frank L. Madla Natural Area, 1/10

Led by Zach Tonzetich. Species: 19. Highlights: Blue-headed Vireo, Hutton's Vireo, American Robin, Song Sparrow.

Ranch Blanco, 1/24

Led by Helen Rejzek and hosted by Myfe Moore. Message #23774. Species: 40. Highlights: Chipping Sparrow, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Western Scrub-Jay.

Calaveras Lake, 1/31

Led by Chris Bailey. Message #23797. Species: 53. Highlights: Osprey, Marsh Wren, Eared Grebe.

Southwest High School, 2/7

Led by Helen Rejzek. Message #23817. Species: 47. Highlights: Belted Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Hermit Thrush, Harris's Sparrow.

Medina River Natural Area, 2/12

Led by Helen Rejzek. Message #23834. Species: 49. Highlights: Green Kingfisher, Pyrrhuloxia, Gray Catbird.

Judson Nature Trails, 2/13

Led by Georgina Schwartz. Message #23837. Species: 30. Highlights: Long-billed Thrasher, Dark-eyed Junco.

SAAS MEETINGS CALENDAR

Thursday, March 3 • 7:00 PM
Polo Field Golf Center/The First Tee
915 E. Mulberry

SA Audubon & Bexar Audubon Present:
GENETICS OF GOLDEN-CHEEKED
WARBLER POPULATIONS: A NOTE OF
CAUTION ON RECOVERY
Featuring Giri Athrey, Ph.D

Dr. Giri Athrey, Assistant Professor of Avian Genetics and Functional Genomics at Texas A&M University, will present evidence from genetic data showing



GCWA
 Lora Render

that damage done to Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) populations far exceeded the visible, demographic level impacts. The genetic data used by Dr. Athrey and colleagues was spread across 100 years of the same GCWA populations to provide a historical context for recent GCWA populations. Using this approach, they documented one of the worst declines in metrics of genetic diversity and inter-population movement (gene flow) for any species. The study shows the importance of long-term genetic monitoring and also cautions against the hazards of basing management and delisting decisions on shorter-term demographic recovery.

Bexar Audubon Plans Natural Areas
Field Trip

If you're interested in Golden-cheeked Warblers, join the Bexar Audubon field trip on Saturday, April 23, at 8 AM (location to be determined). Hike to look and listen for Golden-cheeked Warblers and other birds in one of the City of San Antonio Natural Areas. Call 210/837-0577 or email: agarita@me.com for details!

SAN ANTONIO BOTANICAL GARDEN

Visit www.sabot.org or call 210/207-3250. Located at 555 Funston, San Antonio, TX 78209.

Bird Walk: 9:00 AM on March 19; no walk in April but Bexar Audubon will lead walks from their booth during the April 16 Viva Botánica event.

Free to SABG members; \$10 non-members

CIBOLO NATURE CENTER

Visit www.cibolo.org to view the calendar of events

Thursday, April 7 • 7:00 PM
Polo Field Golf Center/The First Tee
915 E. Mulberry

SA Audubon & Bexar Audubon Present:
2016 STATE OF NATURE UPDATE
Featuring Richard Heilbrun

Richard Heilbrun is the Conservation Outreach Program Leader for Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD). He will present a 2016 State of Nature update concerning a grassroots movement to manage more than 1,000 Species of Greatest Conservation Need and an update to Teaming With Wildlife's progress in creating a statewide Coalition. The Coalition currently has 10,000 members from more than 60 organizations.



Richard Heilbrun

Richard will share recent developments in wildlife support at the state and national levels, and he will spend some time asking attendees, "What do you want to happen in Texas for birds?" He will also share recent advances in how TPWD is using Citizen Science to advance bird conservation in San Antonio and throughout the state.

SAAS Presents Brown Grant Funds to
Hondondo Creek Trails Organization

Sally Ann Smith, left, president of the Friends of Hondondo Creek Trails (FHCT) in Alamo Heights, accepts a check from Shirley Bartels, former chair of the SAAS Judson Nature Trails Committee. The \$750.00 check from the Brown Grant funds for the Judson Nature Trails (JNT) was given by SAAS and approved by the Brown Grant Foundation in Houston. The funds will be used for helping extend the "stay-lock" that is being put on the trails that are used by both organizations. To view the trail that has been started, go to the east side of the JNT near Greely Street.



Osprey (Continued from p. 1)

sticks is the main population-limiting factor. Consequently, the species has benefited from the availability of suitable manmade structures, including platforms put up expressly for nesting Ospreys. Males deliver most of the material to the nest site where the female arranges the nest; old nests, reused and new materials are added each year.

On some islands where both trees and mammalian predators are absent, nests may be built directly on the ground. In some such locations along the coasts where prey abundance permits, several pairs of Osprey may nest in close proximity.



Osprey Nest
commons.wikimedia.org

Two to four eggs are the norm; hatching is asynchronous and in times of prey scarcity the smallest young frequently perish. The young leave the nest around 55 days of age and often the adult females depart on fall migration shortly after. The young are then fed by the remaining male parent for up to ten weeks after fledging.

~To contact Mike: Mike.Scully@nisd.net

Treasurer's Report for 2015 As of December 31, 2015 (All figures rounded to nearest dollar)

The end of the year balance for the General Operating Fund was \$8,085 compared to the 2014 balance of \$6,453. Membership income was slightly less (-\$105.00) than 2014. There was an increase of \$726.00 in donations compared to the previous year. The expenses for the gifts, awards, and honorariums were \$90.00 over 2014. In 2015, no purchases were made from the office supplies or picnic supplies expense accounts. Board members donated what was needed. The miscellaneous expenses were down \$500.00 from the previous year. This year the Education Outreach Committee spent \$1,056 for the Hog Island Camp and Bexar County Bird Day.

The Special Projects Fund had an end of the year balance of \$31,564, which was (-\$153) less than 2014. Donations increased from 2014 by \$325. SAAS continued to contribute to MLAC (\$1,000), Warbler Woods (\$500), Land Heritage Institute (\$500) and donated \$405 to help build the bird blind at Hardberger Park. In October, SAAS donated \$200 to Last Chance Forever for their presentation at our annual picnic. The Carbon Offset Bird Program bought in \$1,159 for 2015. The CD and money market interest brought in \$31 less than 2014. In November, the \$13,000 CD was changed to \$10,000 for 13 months, with the remaining \$3000.00 going into the money market account.

~submitted by Betty Walters, SAAS Treasurer

GOVERNMENT CANYON HIKES

Visit the website for more info about the many hikes and programs offered each month at Government Canyon. Reservations are required for most activities: www.friendsofgc.org or 210/688-9055

March 12—Hike the Canyon

Join the Friends of Government Canyon and the Sierra Club for a jointly led guided hike on one of the many trails at Government Canyon State Natural Area. 8:30AM – Noon.

March 20—Wildflower Walk: Spring Has Sprung!

Celebrate the Vernal Equinox and come see early bloomers and other coming attractions of Spring! Moderate intensity hike; participants must be able to walk over rocky, uneven ground. 1:30 PM – 4:00 PM. Ages 8 and up.

TENTATIVE: March 27—4th Sunday Bird Hike: Golden-cheeked Warbler Hike

Join Steve Hawkins for a hike to find birds of Government Canyon and the Edwards Plateau. 8:30 AM – Noon.

April 10 Wildflower Walk—Come with us in search of Texas wildflowers and other native plants. Moderate intensity hike; must be able to walk over rocky, uneven ground. 1:30 PM – 4:00 PM. Ages 8 and up.

TENTATIVE: April 24—4th Sunday Bird Hike: Golden-cheeked Warbler Hike

Join Steve Hawkins for a hike to find birds of Government Canyon and the Edwards Plateau. 8:30 AM – Noon.

A CELEBRATORY BIRDING BIG YEAR BY BILL ZWARTJES

In celebration of my 70th year in 2015, I undertook a modified Big Year to find as many new “lifers” as possible in all the geographic areas of the United States. My journey took me to 35 states starting with Colorado and Hawai’i in January. On the big island of Hawai’i, my wife, Georgia, and I were privileged to visit the Hakalau Forest NWR where we saw the endangered Elepaio, Akepa and l’iwi. I left the islands with 28 new life species, including quite a few introduced ones. Stopping in San Francisco on our return, we found the rare Rustic Bunting at Golden Gate Park, as well as the Surfbird.

February was spent in Texas. Highlights were the White-collared Seed-eater and Wild Muscovy Duck, Gray-crowned Yellowthroat and dark morph Hook-billed Kite.

By the end of the month I had seen 261 total birds in the North America ABA area as well as the 28 in Hawai’i.

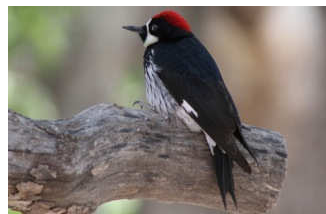
I went to the San Diego Birding Festival in March and picked up six more lifers, including Ridgeway’s Rail, California Gnatcatcher and Scripp’s Murrelet. In late March a frigid trip to Maine yielded Purple Sandpiper, Common Redpoll and Great Cormorant, but no new lifers. The month ended with 328 N.A. species.

In April I drove to Arizona, where I finally found the Mexican Chickadee and Olive Warbler in Rustler’s Park and the Black-capped Gnatcatcher in Florida Canyon. Stopping in Big Bend, I hiked with the SAAS group to find the Colima Warbler. After four days at home, I was on the road again heading to East Texas and Louisiana, then to the King Ranch and South Padre Island. By the end of that swing, I had added 45 year birds to reach 460 species and one lifer, the Golden-winged Warbler.

On May 16, I drove to Magee Marsh in Ohio, followed by a stop in Michigan to see the Kirtland’s Warbler, then through the Midwest back home. In June, I drove to South Dakota to attend an ABA Birding rally in the Black Hills and rolling plains in the NW part of the state which yielded the Black-backed Woodpecker, Sharp-tailed Grouse and Baird’s Sparrow. A visit to the



Nene, HI



Acorn Woodpecker, AZ

Colorado National Monument was where I found the Gray Vireo. June finished with 507 species.

In late July, I began another long road trip to Portland, Oregon to meet Georgia for a trip to Alaska. Along the way, I saw nesting Black Swifts at the Box Canyon Falls in Ouray, CO and Greater Sage-grouse in Wyoming. Alaska yielded seven new lifers including Marbled, Ancient and Kittlitz’s Murrelets, Horned Puffin, and Willow Ptarmigan.

Returning to Oregon, at the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument’s Painted Hills Unit, I saw my first Chukar. Back in Seattle, granddaughter Winnie was born on August 22nd and we stayed for several days to visit. I began the return through California and Arizona, where I found the Sinoloa Wren and White-Eared Hummingbird. I arrived home on Sept 3rd with 554 N.A. species for the year.

In September, I began another long road trip that culminated in Miami and the Fairchild Tropical Gardens Birding Festival. En route I saw the Snail Kite in St. Cloud before finding ten more lifers in Florida.

In October, I visited the Yellow Rails and Rice Festival in Thornwell, LA. The Yellow Rail was a lifer but we also saw plenty of Virginia and King Rails as well as Soras. In November, I found the Northern Jacana at Choke Canyon S.P. and the Greater Pewee wintering at Anzualduas Park in the RGV. My final trip of the year took me back to Seattle, where I found Thayer’s Gull and Tundra Swan, as well as visiting baby Winnie, now four months old. I found the final new lifer of the year, the Rock Sandpiper, at Ocean Shores on the coast. After having lots of family here for Christmas, I rode up to Hornsby Bend to find the Rusty Blackbird, the last bird of my Big Year on Dec. 29th.

In total, I saw 586 N.A. species and 613 species total for the U.S. including Hawai’i. For my specific goal of new “lifers”, I found 49 in N.A. and 28 in Hawai’i for a total of 77. In doing so, I visited 28 National Parks, monuments, recreation areas, etc.; 11 National Forests; 20 National Wildlife Refuges; 39 State Parks and 158 City or State Parks and Nature Areas. I had a great year with lots of fun, new places and visits with old friends and family.



Yellow-billed Magpie, CA

~ Editor’s Note: Bill Zwartjes is a San Antonio Audubon member. We thank him for sharing his story and photos.

SAAS-Y NOTES

NEW! FIND US ON FACEBOOK

The San Antonio Audubon Society has officially opened a Facebook page for the organization.



This helps replace our now-disconnected phone number as a way people can reach us easily.

Facebook is also a strong social media platform where we can advertise our upcoming events, share photos from field trips, recruit members, and more. This does not replace our website or the newsletter, so if you do not use Facebook, you can still keep up with SAAS.

To get SAAS'y on Facebook, go to www.facebook.com/saaudubon/ and click the Like button! You can also search for "San Antonio Audubon Society" in the search bar on Facebook. You need to have a Facebook account to access all of the SAAS content on Facebook.

~submitted by Alex Antram

SAAS Board of Directors Meetings

Thursday • March 24 • 6:00 PM

Thursday • April 28 • 6:00 PM

Meet at The Polo Field Golf Center,
915 E. Mulberry. All are invited.

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

Editor: Lora Reynolds
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The newsletter is published bimonthly. Send submissions to editor@saaudubon.org.

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San Antonio Audubon Society

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TO VOLUNTEER!
info@saaudubon.org

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For those few of you still receiving your SAAS newsletter by U.S. Postal Service, the first line of your mailing label includes your membership type and the date your current membership expires. The date on the label is the only "notice" you will receive; if your membership expires, we must stop sending you the newsletter. Therefore, please pay attention to the expiry data on the label and renew when appropriate. We want you to continue participating in and supporting SAAS efforts.

If you receive the SAAS newsletter by email, you will receive a membership renewal notice by email. We hope you enjoy receiving the newsletter in color; thank you for helping contain costs.

Although we no longer mail out a printed membership roster to everyone, a PDF copy is available by email from the membership secretary at members@saaudubon.org

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or Online at: <www.saaudubon.org/membership.html>

or E-mail <members@saaudubon.org>

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR SAAS EVENTS! (See p. 4)
7 PM, Thursday, March 3: Golden-cheeked Warbler Genetics
7 PM, Thursday, April 7: TPWD State of Nature Update