

## Scissor-tailed Flycatchers By Mike Scully

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One of the annual rites of spring in Texas, for bird watchers at least, is the appearance of the first Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*) of the season. Large numbers of these graceful birds move through our area in late March and April, with the males in their fresh plumage trailing their improbably long tails behind them, adding their distinctive beauty to our landscape just as our spring wildflower display is fading.

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is properly called a kingbird, placed in the same Genus as the other 12 kingbird species. While the Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*T. savana*) of Central and South America also has extravagantly long tail feathers, the species most closely related to our familiar Scissor-tailed Flycatcher appears to be the Western Kingbird (*T. verticalis*).



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
By Lora Render

Male Scissor-taileds return some days before the females and establish breeding territories. Outside of the breeding season, they occupy large communal roosts, a phenomenon which may persist for more than a week after their arrival on the breeding grounds. As with other kingbirds, male Scissor-taileds engage in aerial displays. In the Scissor-tailed, this display takes the form of a rapid ascent while calling repeatedly, before descending in a sudden, violent zig-zag flight. The outer primary on both sexes is notched, more so in the male, which may create a whirring sound during aerial displays.

Unusual among kingbirds, male Scissor-taileds also engage in group displays; small aggregations of males perform simultaneous flight displays above a perched female. The length of the tail serves as an indicator of biological fitness; returning one-year old Scissor-tailed Flycatchers of both genders have shorter tail feathers than older birds. Females seek out males with significantly longer tails than their own. Those birds with the longest tails among their respective genders tend to acquire mates sooner, initiate breeding earlier in the season and fledge more young.

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher occupies a breeding range centered upon what was originally tallgrass prairie interspersed with widely-spaced trees—a band of habitat extending from Northeast Mexico to Southern Nebraska. In addition to taking flying insects on the wing, Scissor-taileds prey upon large beetles, grasshoppers and crickets taken directly from grasses and low vegetation or captured on the ground. Presumably, the long tails of these flycatchers impose little penalty in the open habitats they occupy, while at the same time creating a display visible from a distance.

Scissor-taileds have successfully adapted to the conversion of prairie to farmlands, pastures and parks. The clearing of forests in the east, along with the planting of trees in the west, have also allowed the species to expand the breeding range west across Texas and into New Mexico and eastward into Louisiana, Arkansas and Missouri. Isolated cases of breeding having occurred as far east as South Carolina.

Typical of kingbirds, the female builds the cup-shaped nest and incubates the eggs, with clutches of five being the norm. The nest is usually located at a moderate height in a tree in a location open enough to provide access for the long-tailed

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## SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR: MAY/JUNE

Please call the trip leaders if you have questions. Last-minute changes to field trips will be posted at [saaudubon.org](http://saaudubon.org), [www.facebook.com/saaudubon/](https://www.facebook.com/saaudubon/) or sent by email via SATXBirds. Please arrive early.

Tuesday, May 7, 8:00 AM

### Salado Creek East

Meet leader Christian Fernandez (210/415-0843) at Jack White Park (3803 Seguin Rd.). From downtown on I-35, take Exit 160 (Splashtown Dr.). Go past Splashtown and turn left to go under I-35. Go across the access road and take a right onto Seguin Rd. The park will be on your left. If coming from the north on I-35, take Exit 162 to Binz-Engleman Rd. Go past the Binz-Engleman intersection and stay on the access road until you see the Quality Inn and Suites. Take the next right and an immediate right. The park will be on your left.

Thursday, May 9, 8:00 AM

### Judson Nature Trails Warbler Walk

Meet leader Mariann Golden (210/415-4661) at the Judson Nature Trail House. For directions, see the Beginner's Bird Walk for May 11. We will be looking for warblers and spring migrants.

Saturday, May 11, 8:00 AM

### SAAS Beginners' Bird Walk

Meet leader Barbara Sykes (210/826-7275) at the Judson Nature Trails, 246 Viesca Street. We have some binocs to lend out and you don't have to be a beginner to come on this walk. From the 5900 block of Broadway, turn west on Ogden Street and drive to the stop sign at Greeley Street. You'll see a sign to Judson Nature Trails. Turn left, go one block and turn right on Viesca, then into parking lot on left.

Tuesday, May 21, 8:00 AM

### Crescent Bend Nature Park

Meet Sandi Wheeler ([wheels5683@gmail.com](mailto: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 on left before Cibolo Creek. Bring water.

Thursday, May 23, 8:00 AM

### Rodriguez County Park on Leon Creek

Meet leader Christian Fernandez (210/415-0843) in the parking lot for the trailhead, 2123 Rodriguez Ave. The park is located off of Old Hwy 90 (Enrique M. Barrera Pkwy). If coming from the west on US 90, take the exit for Old Hwy 90, which is just past Military Rd. Stay in the left lane to take the overpass to

Old Hwy 90. Take a left when you see the Econo Inn Lackland. If you are coming from downtown on US 90, take the Callaghan Rd. exit. Turn right on Callaghan and take a left at the first light. Go 1.2 miles to Rodriguez Ave and take a right.

Thursday, May 30, 8:00 AM

### Judson Nature Trails

Meet leaders Barbara Sykes (210/826-7275) and Patty Pasztor (210/837-0577) in the parking lot for the Nature Trail. For directions, see the Beginner's Bird Walk for May 11.

Saturday, June 1, 7:30 AM—Note earlier start time

### Castroville Regional Park

Meet 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 onto Florence Street and follow the signs to the park. Bring water and snacks; lunch at a local restaurant.

Sunday, June 2, 8:00 AM

### Blanco State Park

Meet local leader Shirley Winslow at the entrance to Blanco State Park. The entrance is on the left, immediately after crossing the Blanco River in Blanco. Make a sharp left and park in the area. State Parks pass is needed or a \$5 entrance fee. Contact Georgina Schwartz at 210/342-2073 to RSVP for lunch at the Red Bud Café in Blanco.

Saturday, June 8, 7:30 AM—Note earlier start time

### SAAS Beginners' Bird Walk

Leader is Georgina Schwartz (210/342-2073). See directions for May 11.

Saturday, June 15, 7:00 PM—Note evening start time

### Warbler Woods at Night

Join Sandi Wheeler for an evening visit to Don and Susan Schaezlers' sanctuary to look and listen for nightjars, nighthawks, and owls. Bring a flashlight, insect repellent, chairs, and water. Contact Sandi ([wheels5683@gmail.com](mailto:wheels5683@gmail.com)) if you would like to attend dinner at 5:00 PM. For directions to Warbler Woods, visit [warblerwoods.org](http://warblerwoods.org).

Saturday, June 22, 8:00 AM

### Haggard Ranch Birding & Potluck

Meet Metha at her ranch in South Bexar County. Go south on I-35 about 4 miles south of Loop 1604. Take Exit 137, Shepherd Road. Go left across the bridge

## SAAS JUNE FIELD TRIPS CONTINUED

and then left on the access road. Drive 0.5 mile to the gate and cattle guard. It is OK to leave the gate open. Follow the pink streamers. Go over the second cattle guard and go left at the fork to the house. After birding, we will have our potluck on the porch. Bring a sandwich for yourself and a side dish or dessert to share. For more information, call Metha 210/622-3886.

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*Sunday, June 23, 7:30 AM—Note earlier start time*

### **Crescent Bend Nature Park**

See directions for May 21.

### **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!**

Alison Andrews  
219 Box Oak  
Shavano Park, TX 78230  
210/463-9917

Velma & Lou Armijo  
11002 River Stroll Street  
San Antonio, TX 78230  
703/625-0041

Jessica Bergner  
11585 Alamo Ranch Parkway #7107  
San Antonio, TX 78253  
210/287-6557

Joyce Briskin  
919 Arizona Ash  
San Antonio, TX 78232

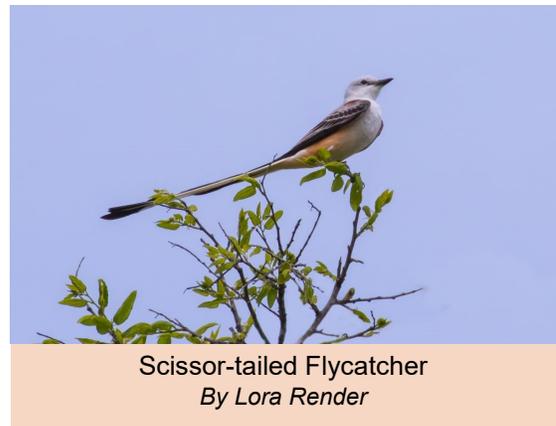
### **REMEMBRANCE**

James. A. Middleton, 94, passed away in San Antonio on March 18, 2019. He was a long time member of the San Antonio Audubon Society and loved birding wherever he traveled, especially at Mitchell Lake, the Texas Hill Country, the Rio Grande Valley and on many Christmas counts. With his fellow Audubon Society members, he was an advocate for conservation of wildlife and loved leading or joining in local birdwatching tours. James enjoyed wood working, making furniture and specialized in carving many types of birds. He sold his work around the country. He was preceded in death by his wife of 69 years, Herminia. James was a meteorologist for the U.S. Weather Service.

*Scissor-tailed Flycatchers* continued from page 1

adults and to permit air circulation around the nest, while at the same time providing a measure of shade. Both sexes help feed the young and one brood per year is usual. Losses of broods to the violent summer storms common across the breeding range may be significant in some years.

Both Eastern and Western Kingbirds also occur over most of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher's breeding range, but Eastern Kingbirds favor habitats near water. A greater degree of habitat overlap may occur with the Western Kingbird, especially in urban areas. In some instances, returning Western Kingbirds have apparently displaced resident pairs of Scissor-taileds.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
*By Lora Render*

The three species do present interesting contrasts in migratory strategies. Eastern Kingbirds gather in large flocks in late summer before crossing the Gulf toward their South American winter range where they become wandering fruit-eaters. Western Kingbirds from our area migrate to Northwest Mexico to molt, and then migrate again to the southwest coasts of Mexico and Central America. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers begin their post-breeding molt on the breeding grounds, lingering to take advantage of our late-season abundance of grasshoppers and other insects before migrating directly across the Gulf to occupy a winter range largely sympatric with that of the Western Kingbird.

### **SAAS Benefits When you Shop with Smile.Amazon.com**

SAAS receives a contribution from Smile.Amazon.com every time you shop at the online retailer. Simply register at Smile.Amazon.com and designate SAAS as your non-profit of choice.

## SAAS/BAS MEETINGS CALENDAR

### Texas Ornithological Society Spring Meeting in San Antonio May 2-5, 2019\*

Golden-cheeked Warblers and Black-capped Vireos are just two of the bird species bringing 150 members of the Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) to San Antonio May 2-5 for the TOS Spring Meeting. Local hosts Bexar Audubon Society and San Antonio Audubon Society have arranged for their members to take TOS participants on field trips to more than 30 parks, natural areas and other birding hotspots in 11 counties, including Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Comal, Gonzalez, Guadalupe, Kendall, Kerr, Kimble, Medina and Wilson.

In addition, attendees will have the opportunity to hear speakers discuss a variety of topics of interest to birders during presentations at The Hilton Garden Inn at the Rim, 5730 Rim Pass, TOS headquarters for the event. Representatives from organizations such as the San Antonio River Authority, San Antonio Zoo and the University of Texas at San Antonio are scheduled to give presentations. TOS registrants who purchase tickets for the Saturday evening banquet will hear keynote speaker Dr. Bruce M. Beehler, Research Associate, Division of Birds, Smithsonian Institution. His presentation is "North on the Wing: Travels with the Songbird Migration of Spring," which is also the title of his recently published book about his 100-day field trip in 2015 following the spring migration of songbirds from Texas to Canada.

### Thursday, June 6 • 7:00 PM San Antonio Zoo Education Center ReWorksSA Recycling Initiatives Presenter: Mikel Brown, City of San Antonio, Solid Waste Management Dept.

ReWorksSA is a community resource for businesses who want to start or improve a recycling program or be recognized for their efforts. During this educational presentation, Mikel Brown, City of San Antonio Solid Waste Management Dept., will present information on ReWorksSA recycling initiatives and programs. Mikel will also discuss challenges you may face in recycling at your work places. Highlights of the presentation will include the elements of a successful recycling program: convenience, employee design, and management support.



#### About Mikel Brown

Mikel works in the ReWorksSA commercial recycling division and acts as a business recycling consultant for the community. He provides education and tools to businesses and organizations to improve recycling opportunities in the workplace. As a San Antonio native, helping San Antonio to be a more sustainable environment is very dear to his heart.

## TOS PRESENTATIONS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC MAY 2-4, 2019\*



Audubon members and the public are invited to attend any of the following free presentations at The Hilton Garden Inn at the Rim, 5730 Rim Pass, during the TOS meeting. Additional information about

the presentations is on the [TOS website](#):

#### Thursday, May 2

7:00 – 8:00 PM

Speaker: Jon Zeitler, Science & Operations officer, National Weather Service, New Braunfels

Title: Phenology and Climate Change: Canaries and Canards

#### Friday, May 3

4:00 – 5:00 PM

Speaker: Josef San Miguel, Director Aviculture, San Antonio Zoo

Title: Bird Conservation at the San Antonio Zoo

#### Friday, May 3

5:00 – 5:45 PM

Speakers: Dr. Jennifer Smith, Amanda M. Lamberson and Eres Gomez of UTSA

Title: A multi-step approach to evaluate the potential effects of backyard bird feeding on birds in San Antonio, Texas

#### Friday, May 3

7:00 – 8:00 PM

Speaker: Rufus Stephens, Bird Habitat Consultant

Title: Taking your Love of Birds to that Next Level!

#### Saturday, May 4

4:00 – 5:00 PM

Speaker: Lee Marlowe, San Antonio River Authority

Title: Restoring Life to the San Antonio River

*\*These presentations take the place of the May monthly SAAS/BAS meeting at the zoo.*

# SAAS NEWS AND NOTES

## PARTICIPATE IN GLOBAL BIG DAY, MAY 4, 2019

From *eBird.org*: Last May, more than 30,000 people took to fields and forests around the world, noting **more than 7,000 species in a single day**—**Global Big Day**. On **May 4**, will you join more than 30,000 others and become a part of Global Big Day? You don't have to commit to birding for 24 hours—an hour or even 10 minutes of watching birds makes you part of the team. Visit your favorite spot or search out someplace new; enjoy a solo walk or get some friends to join in the Global Big Day fun.

### How to participate:

- **Get an eBird account:** eBird is a worldwide bird checklist program used by millions of birders. It's what allows us to compile everyone's sightings into a single massive Global Big Day list—while at the same time collecting the data for scientists to use to better understand birds. [Sign up here](#). It's 100% free.
- **Watch birds on 4 May:** You don't need to be a bird expert or go out all day long. Even 10 minutes in your backyard will help. Global Big Day runs from midnight to midnight in your local time zone. You can report birds from anywhere in the world.
- **Enter what you see and hear on eBird:** You can enter your sightings [via our website](#) or—even easier—download the [free eBird Mobile app](#). You can enter and submit lists while you're still out birding, and the app will even keep track of how far you've walked, so you can focus on watching birds. While you're downloading free apps, try out the Cornell Lab's [Merlin Bird ID](#) app for help with identification. Please enter sightings before 8 May to be included in our initial results announcement.
- **Watch the sightings roll in:** Follow along with sightings from more than 150 countries, including the Cornell Lab's Team Sapsucker in Florida, Alabama, and Texas. Stats will be updated in real-time on our [Global Big Day page](#).

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## MIGRATORY BIRD FEST

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center  
Saturday, May 11, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day with a festival filled with bird-themed games, crafts, nature-based vendors, native plant sale, food trucks, live bird of prey show, and presentations about our feathered friends. Tom and Patsy Inglet will staff an activity booth at the **Mitchell Lake Audubon Center Migratory Bird Fest on Saturday, May 11, from 9am until 2pm**, and they need two-three adult volunteers to help them. The activity is geared to kids of all ages to teach about what bird banding teaches us about birds and their migration. Tom and Patsy will train you in your role and will welcome any time you can volunteer between 9am and 2pm. **If you are available to help, please contact Patsy Inglet at [saasforbirds@gmail.com](mailto:saasforbirds@gmail.com).**

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## FIELD TRIP PHOTOS FROM THE SKIMMER WHOOPING CRANE TOUR MARCH 2

SAAS member Desi D'Orsogna sent photos she took during the Whooping Crane boat tour (SAAS field trip) on March 2. From left to right, Whooping Cranes, Great Blue Heron and former SAAS member Bill Zwartjes, who now lives in Washington State, chatting with SAAS member Gail Nickel aboard the Skimmer.



## LOCAL BIRDING LOCATIONS

### MITCHELL LAKE AUDUBON CENTER

10750 Pleasanton Road  
San Antonio, TX 78221

Visit <http://mitchelllake.audubon.org> or email  
[mlac@audubon.org](mailto:mlac@audubon.org) or call 210/628-1639

### SAN ANTONIO BOTANICAL GARDEN

555 Funston, San Antonio, TX 78209  
Visit [www.sabot.org](http://www.sabot.org) or call 210/207-3250

### GOVERNMENT CANYON

12861 Galm Rd, San Antonio, TX 78254  
Visit [www.friendsofsgc.org](http://www.friendsofsgc.org) or call 210/688-9055

### CIBOLO NATURE CENTER

140 City Park Rd., Boerne, TX 78006  
Visit [www.cibolo.org](http://www.cibolo.org) or call 830/249-4614

## MITCHELL LAKE MONTHLY BIRDING TOURS

### Pre-register online at MLAC website

1st Sunday: May 5, 8:00 AM & June 2, 7:30 AM  
2nd Sunday: May 12, 8:00 AM & June 9, 7:30 AM  
2nd Tuesday: May 14, 8:00 AM & June 11, 7:30 AM  
3rd Sunday: May 19, 8:00 AM & June 16, 7:30 AM  
4th Sunday: May 26, 8:00 AM, & June 23, 7:30 AM  
4th Saturday (Beginning Birders Tour): May 25 & June  
22, 8:00 AM

**\$8 for non-members; Free for members**

Visit <http://mitchelllake.audubon.org> or email  
[mlac@audubon.org](mailto:mlac@audubon.org) or 210/628-1639

## SAAS Membership

The SAAS newsletter is sent by email only to all members who have provided an email address. You will also receive a membership renewal notice by email. We no longer mail a printed membership directory to everyone, but a PDF copy is available by email from the membership secretary at [members@saadubon.org](mailto:members@saadubon.org)

## SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

Editor: Lora Reynolds

Contributing Editor: Georgina Schwartz

Newsletter Distribution: Tom Inglet

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## NEED A NAME BADGE?

### ORDER YOUR SAAS NAME TAG

Patsy Inglet is taking orders for magnetic SAAS name badges. We need 10 individuals to sign up to place the order. Each individual will pay for their own badge. Please contact Patsy at



[saasforbirds@gmail.com](mailto:saasforbirds@gmail.com) to let her know how you want your name to appear. Cost will vary depending on quantity ordered and shipping fees, but expect to pay around \$9-10 for your badge.

## SAAS Board of Directors Meeting AREA Real Estate, 1221 Broadway #104

Thursday • May 23 • 6:00 PM

Thursday • June 27 • 6:00 PM

All are invited. Contact Mariann Golden for more info: [MariannG9350@juno.com](mailto:MariannG9350@juno.com)

## San Antonio Audubon Society

5150 Broadway #257

San Antonio TX 78209-5710

[info@saadubon.org](mailto:info@saadubon.org)

[www.saadubon.org](http://www.saadubon.org)

### Officers

Mariann Golden, President  
Georgina Schwartz, Vice President  
Mariana Outlaw, Secretary  
Robin Stevens, Treasurer



### Directors at Large

Lorna Engleman  
Christian Fernandez  
Christine Turnbull

### Committee Chairs

Bird Records  
Dodge Engleman-----[birdreports@saadubon.org](mailto:birdreports@saadubon.org)  
Education/Outreach  
Patsy Inglet-----[info@saadubon.org](mailto:info@saadubon.org)  
Field Trips  
Christian Fernandez-----[bcfercaa@yahoo.com](mailto:bcfercaa@yahoo.com)  
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Barbara Sykes-----[btsykes@sbcglobal.net](mailto:btsykes@sbcglobal.net)  
Publicity, Shirley Bartels-----[sbartels@satx.rr.com](mailto:sbartels@satx.rr.com)  
Newsletter, Lora Reynolds-----[editor@saadubon.org](mailto:editor@saadubon.org)  
Website, Christine Turnbull-----[web@saadubon.org](mailto:web@saadubon.org)

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## San Antonio Audubon Society Membership/Renewal Form

New

Renewal

Gift

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

Please be sure your e-mail address is correct.

Your newsletters will be sent via e-mail unless other special arrangements have been made.

Please check box(s):  Individual (\$20 per year)  
 Household (\$30 per year)

We need and appreciate your financial support. Please indicate additional donations below.

Donation: Special Projects Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Donation: Judson Trails Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Donation: General Operating Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: **San Antonio Audubon Society**. Send dues and address changes to:

ATTN: MEMBERSHIP  
SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON SOCIETY  
5150 BROADWAY #257  
SAN ANTONIO TX 78209-5710

Payments can also be made online at: <[www.saaudubon.org/membership.html](http://www.saaudubon.org/membership.html)>