

San Antonio Audubon Society

AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

Volume 62, Number 6

November/December 2016

White-tailed Hawk By Mike Scully

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One of my regrets after nearly 30 years in San Antonio is that it took me so long to attend the Corpus Christi HawkWatch at Hazel Bazemore Park, an annual event that runs from August 1st through November 15th. Somehow I had imagined unending heat and sun, and distant hawks up in the cumulus. Actually, my preconceived notions were accurate, but not the whole story. The park has a spacious, shaded podium from which to observe, a remarkable variety of migrating birds—some of which pass close by—and following fronts in late September/first half of October, you can see raptors by the thousands and tens of thousands. Paradoxically, one of the more easily observed species during the hours spent at the count is the non-migratory White-tailed Hawk (*Geranoaetus albicaudatus*), resident in the Corpus Christi area.



White-tailed Hawk by Lora Render

The Red-tailed Hawk is the most widely distributed hawk in North America, able to occupy a wide variety of habitats. However, it's limited in open areas by a requirement for elevated perches from which to hunt. The similarly sized Swainson's Hawk is more lightly built than a Red-tailed, and with its longer wings and tail, the species can hunt on the wing over a wider range of weather conditions and so occupy more open areas than Red-tailed Hawks. Like the Swainson's, the White-tailed Hawk is a resident of open habitats and grasslands, occupying a discontinuous range stretching from the Coastal Plain of Texas south across the Tropics to Northern Argentina. Averaging heavier than a Swainson's and approximating the size and weight of a Red-tailed, adult White-tailed

Hawks present a distinctive appearance. The long wings extend beyond the tail at rest. In flight, White-tailed Hawks fly with a slow wing beat. The plain white throat, underparts, wing linings and white tail positively gleam in the sunlight, in strong contrast to the dark flight feathers, grey back, chestnut shoulders and single bold black tail band.

As in the Swainson's Hawk, White-tailed Hawks commonly soar with the wings slanting upwards, and also like the Swainson's, the long wings are rather pointed at the tips. In the adult White-tailed, however, the secondaries are relatively longer, and the tail relatively shorter. While flying, the outline of the broad bases of the wings almost merge with that of the short tail.

Although Swainson's and White-tailed Hawks are both characteristic of open plains, there exists only a limited area of breeding range overlap, suggesting a degree of competitive exclusion. Prior to the settlement of Texas, both of these savannah species were more widespread, yet the historic range of the White-tailed Hawk never extended far north of Central Texas. It may be that the broad-winged, short-tailed profile so common among tropical hawk species is in some way less suited to temperate climates.

Relatively longer legged than a Red-tailed, the White-tailed Hawk typically captures its prey on or near the ground, hunting from the air as the day warms up. Small mammals, large insects, snakes and lizards constitute the bulk of the prey. A variety of birds are also taken, including ground-dwelling species such as quail and prairie chickens. White-tailed Hawks, even more so than other raptors, are drawn in numbers to grass and brush fires to prey upon creatures displaced by the flames.

(Continued on p. 5)

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON CALENDAR: NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

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. Starting times are given, but please arrive early.

Wednesday, November 2, 8:30 AM

Walker Ranch Park

Meet leaders Barbara Gore (210/378-7448) and Margie Zumbahl at the Walker Ranch Park on West Avenue for a walk around a new trail by Coker Methodist Church. Additional parking is available in the park's south lot off of West Rhapsody if you find the main lot full. If there is time, we will also walk around Walker Ranch Park.

Saturday, November 5, 8:00 AM

Medina River Greenway/Pleasanton Road

Meet leader Christian Fernandez (210/415-0843) in the parking lot at the Pleasanton Road Trailhead located 2.9 miles south of the entrance to Mitchell Lake Audubon Center. Bring scopes to look at ducks from the SE side of the lake.

Saturday, November 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.

Sunday, November 13, 8:00 AM

Choke Canyon State Park

Meet leader Mike Creese (210/479-5552) at entrance parking lot of Calliham Unit. Go south on I-37 and take the exit to Three Rivers. In town turn west on FM 72 and go past the South Shore Unit for about 10 miles. The road to the park is on the right. \$5 entrance fee or use State Parks Pass. Bring water, lunch, bug spray.

Tuesday, November 15, 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.

Saturday, November 19, 8:00 AM

Jackson Nature Park

Meet leader Christine Turnbull (cbsturnbull@hotmail.com) at the parking lot of the park. From San Antonio on US 87 toward Victoria, go past TX 97 to Floresville. Look for CR 401 on the right before Stockdale and the brown sign for Jackson Nature Trails. Turn right and drive to the park on the left after crossing the Cibolo Creek. Entrance fee \$1.00.

Saturday, December 10, 8:00 AM

SAAS Beginners' Bird Walk

Please see directions for Nov. 12 walk.

Sunday, December 11, 8:00 AM

Crescent Bend Nature Park

Meet leader Alyssia Church (hawksaucebirding@gmail.com) in the main parking lot of the park. Please see directions for Nov. 15 walk.

Sunday, December 11, 8:00 AM

Maverick Ranch/Fromme Farm

Meet Mary and Bebe Fenstermaker (956/236-3779) at the gate to the ranch on Boerne Stage Road for the winter bird survey. Exit IH-10 West in Leon Springs. Turn left on Boerne Stage Road, drive 3 miles to stop sign, turn right on Boerne Stage Road. Go 1.4 miles to the gate on the left. The gate will be locked after we meet, so please be on time. Wear suitable footwear for hiking. Bring water and snacks. Also bring lunch and a side to share. Will do the countdown at lunch.

Sunday, December 18

Christmas Bird Count

Please see article on page 5.

Wednesday, December 28, 8:00 AM

Southwest High School

Meet leader Helen Rejzek (hmr78253@gmail.com). Take the main entrance to the high school on Loop 1604. Go right and then take a left under the school arch. Continue to where road ends, turn right. Follow to end of the road and you'll see the parking lot to the sports office on your left. Please use bathroom facilities before arriving, as the bathrooms at the stadium won't be open. A convenience store is nearby.





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, 9/10

Led by Karen Moulder. Message #24306. Species: 24. Highlights: Mississippi Kite, Red-tailed Hawk.

Hornsby Bend, 9/17

Christine Turnbull reported in Message #24315. Four people joined us at Hornsby Bend in Austin this morning. We had a great Travis Audubon leader and a nice quantity of shorebirds. We saw 43 species at Hornsby and added a couple of Yellow-billed Cuckoos down the street at another brief outing. There were close to 400 shorebirds and water birds in one of the drying ponds, with the most numerous being the Least Sandpipers, nearing 300 or so. There was a Wilson's Snipe foraging out in the open water. Others included White-faced Ibis, American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Killdeer, Stilt Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpipers, Western Sandpipers, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs and a small assemblage of egrets and herons. I tried to find other species, but lighting was a bit tough and I had to pay attention to participants and help them out. There was an Eared Grebe among some Blue-winged Teal and shovelers out on one of the ponds. It was really fantastic and I highly recommend the trip. Visit <http://travisaudubon.org/> for info on additional tours.

Ave. A and SA Botanical Garden, 9/22

Led by Lora Reynolds. Message #24323. Species: 24. Highlights: Orange-crowned Warbler at Ave. A; Yellow Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Summer Tanager at SABG.

HawkWatch, Port Aransas, 9/24-25

Led by Karen Moulder and Christine Turnbull. Message #24325. Eleven enthusiastic SAAS birders viewed birds at the hotspots in Port Aransas and at the HawkWatch. We also stopped at Indian Point and Tule Lake. On the scouting day, we checked Pollywog Pond, Oso Bay, Hans and Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge, Packery Channel County Park, and the Willows. Ninety seven species were seen. We saw seven warbler species and 17 shorebird species. A few hawks came through the Hazel Bazemore area while we were at the platform on Sunday.

The best bird of the trip was an American Bittern near the picnic table at Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center. We watched it eat fish and a snake. The eating process was fascinating. The snake was wrapped around the bill with the head dangling. The bittern repositioned the snake several times and finally started eating it. The cameras were clicking rapidly.

Unfortunately, we did not see the flamingos that were reported Saturday morning. Christine's birding network in the area reported the news quickly. We talked to people who saw the birds and several other people who were trying to find the birds. The people in our group were troopers, taking a "brutal hike" (high temperatures, humidity, and little shade) in Charlie's Pasture trying to find the birds.

We had a successful and fun trip. Two of the participants are new SAAS members.

Panther Springs Park, 9/20

Led by Barbara Gore. Message #24322. Species: 17. Highlights: Greater Roadrunner, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Common Raven.

Castroville Regional Park, 10/1

Led by Georgina Schwartz. Message #24336. Species: 40. Highlights: Belted Kingfisher, Great Kiskadee, Couch's Kingbird, Tree Swallow, Yellow Warbler.

Judson Nature Trails, 10/8

Led By Georgina Schwartz. Message #24338. Species: 16. Highlights: Loggerhead Shrike.

Mitchell Lake Monthly Birding Tours

No reservation necessary

1st Sunday: Nov. 6 & Dec. 4, 8:00 AM

2nd Sunday: Nov. 13 & Dec. 11, 8:00 AM

2nd Tuesday: Nov. 8 & Dec. 13, 8:00 AM

3rd Sunday: Nov. 20 & Dec. 18, 8:00 AM

4th Sunday: Nov. 27, 8:00 AM (Closed 12/25)

\$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

SAAS MEETINGS CALENDAR

Thursday, November 3 • 7:00 PM
Polo Field Golf Center/The First Tee
915 E. Mulberry
AMAZON RIVER CRUISE: PERU
CHRISTINE TURNBULL
PRESIDENT, SAAS

SAAS President Christine Turnbull has lived a most adventurous life. She has done field work in Alaska, joined the Peace Corps to volunteer in Central America, led non-profits in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and finally Massachusetts, where she spent 12 years with Mass Audubon. She led natural history tours locally and internationally for them, including three Amazon riverboat cruises in Peru. Learn about the fantastic birds she encountered on these trips, such as Macaws, King Vulture, Horned Screamer, Hoatzin, Paradise Tanager, Turquoise Tanager, Oropendola, Yellow-rumped Cacique and Toucan, as well as other wildlife. Don't miss this exciting evening!



Thursday, December 1 • 7:00 PM
Polo Field Golf Center/The First Tee
915 E. Mulberry
SAAS HOLIDAY PARTY/PHOTOS

Join us for holiday cheer! Bring food to share and photos to show! Members are invited to present up to 15 favorite photos of wild birds in digital format as we gather for our annual year-end celebration. Please bring an appetizer, finger food or dessert. SAAS will supply punch and paper goods.

We will also hold our Board Member elections. The nominating committee of Debra Engler and Alan Kuentz present the following for election:

President, Christine Turnbull
 Vice President, Alex Antram
 Secretary, Mariann Golden
 Treasurer, Betty Walters
 Board Member (1 yr term), Georgina Schwartz
 Board Member (2 yr term), Javier Montoya
 Board Member, Christian Fernandez retains his position

We extend our gratitude to Chris Bailey, who has served six years, and Desi D'Orsogna, who completed three years. We appreciate all that they did as Board members. Now we welcome Javier to the Board for the first time and are happy that Mariann has returned after a two-year absence.

SAN ANTONIO BOTANICAL GARDEN

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

Bird Walks: Sat., Nov. 19 & Sat., Dec. 17
 Free to SABG members; \$10 non-members

CIBOLO NATURE CENTER

Visit www.cibolo.org to view the calendar of events or call 830/249-4614. Located at 140 City Park Rd., Boerne, TX 78006

GOVERNMENT CANYON HIKES

Visit the website for more info about the many hikes and programs offered monthly at Government Canyon. Natural Area fees apply.
 Reservations are required for most activities:
www.friendsofsgc.org or 210/688-9055
 Sat., Nov. 12, 8:30 AM—Noon: Hike the Canyon
 Sat., Nov. 19, 8:30 AM to Noon: Explore the Canyon
 Sat., Dec. 10, 8:30 AM to Noon: Hike the Canyon

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Sharon Carraway
 1750 Eagle Point
 San Antonio, TX 78248
 210/479-3115

Philip LeStrange
 1111 Morning Spring
 San Antonio, TX 78260
 210/867-8120

Stephanie Debossu
 335 E Rosewood, # 2
 San Antonio, TX 78212
 303/358-8443

Jake Stush
 4227 Parkwood Dr
 San Antonio, TX 78218
 814/449-8298

David Hiller
 13550 Donop Rd., #N15
 Elmendorf, TX 78112
 281/732-0215



White-tailed Hawks (Continued from p. 1)

White-tailed Hawks are sedentary in nature throughout their range. The pair bond between sexes is presumably a permanent one. In Texas, breeding begins in December. In the absence of tall trees, the bulky nest of twigs is placed in the crown of a low tree or large bush, often only about 10 feet above the ground. As is common among tropical species, their reproductive rate is relatively low, with two eggs in a clutch being the norm.

In most respects, the parental behavior is typical of the Family. Nests are commonly reused each year and grow in size as new materials are added. The female incubates the eggs and broods the nestlings, fed at the nest by her mate. Juvenile

White-tailed Hawks are primarily dark in color and have longer tails than the adults; adult plumage is attained by the third year. Young birds may remain on their parents' territory until being chased away when breeding commences the following year.



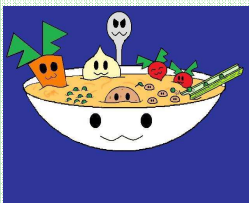
White-tailed Hawk
By *Snowmanradio*

2016 San Antonio Christmas Bird Count Sunday, December 18, 2016

Dahn Windhorn (naturenut7@hotmail.com or 210-382-5968) is your contact for the Christmas Bird Count. If you are not already on a count team and are interested in participating, please let her know. Team leader information packets will be available at the December SAAS general meeting.



The countdown dinner will take place at Somerset United Methodist Church, 8175 W. 7th Street (just off Somerset road). The \$7 soup and salad buffet includes beverage and dessert. Come as early as 5:00 PM to do your paperwork in the brightly lit space with available restroom. We will eat around 6:00 and do the countdown at 6:30.



Support Christmas Bird Count with Your Donation

Thank you for participating in Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Each time you record a bird sighting you are contributing to more than one hundred years of data on bird populations that directly inform Audubon's conservation decisions. We couldn't do our work without you.

We hope you will be able to take that support even further and donate to help keep this important work alive and make sure that the CBC, one of the longest running animal censuses on the planet (2016 marks the 117th year), will continue to inform ornithologists and conservation biologists about how the birds of the Americas are faring today—and far into the future.

The Christmas Bird Count relies 100% on donations to manage the historic database and to fund the technology needed to make this vital and historic data available to researchers. There has never been a larger, more passionate or diverse community of citizen scientists working under Audubon's umbrella.

Sincerely,
Gary Langham
Chief Scientist, National Audubon Society

You can donate online by visiting the Audubon website: https://secure.audubon.org/site/Donation2?df_id=8304&8304.donation=form1

SAAS Makes Mitchell Lake Contribution at October Meeting



SAAS Treasurer Betty Walters, left, presented Mitchell Lake Audubon Center Director Sara Beesley with a \$500 check to help sponsor MLAC's Hoot & Harvest Festival on Saturday, October 29.

Annual Budgets for 2017

The SAAS Board of Directors approved the 2017 budgets for both the General Operating Fund and the Special Projects Fund at the September Board Meeting.

This will be the second year in a row that the General Operating Fund is in the black. Since 2015, no purchases have been made for Office and Picnic Supplies. These items were donated by the different board members. Also, no expenses have been taken out of the General Operating Fund for Equipment Purchases.

Donations are made from the Special Projects Fund with the approval of the Board of Directors. This fund has a deficit so SAAS can fund important conservation projects. SAAS makes regular donations every year to the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, Land Heritage Institute, and Warbler Woods.

If you have any questions please contact treasurer Betty Walters at birdingbetty@sbcglobal.net

Budget 2017 - General Operating Fund		Budget 2017- Special Projects Fund	
Income		Income	
Membership Dues	\$3,800	CD and MM Interest	\$500
Tax Exempt Sales	\$200	Donations	\$100
Taxable Sales	\$100	Donations to JNT	\$25
General Donations	\$500	Carbon Offset Donations	<u>\$500</u>
Miscellaneous	<u>\$100</u>	Total Income	\$1,125
Total Income	\$4,700		
Expenses		Expenses	
Paypal Fees	\$40	MLAC Donation	\$1,000
Rent	\$500	LHI Donation	\$250
Newsletter	\$300	Special Requests	\$1,500
Postage	\$250	JNT	\$100
Mail Box	\$188	Carbon Offset	<u>\$500</u>
Office Supplies	\$100	Total Expenses	\$3,350
Web site Support	\$49		
Sales Tax	\$20	Income - Expenses	-\$2,225
Treasurer's Bond	\$109		
Picnic Supplies	\$30		
Gifts/Awards/Honorariums	\$700		
Equipment Purchases	\$300		
Education Outreach	\$1,400		
Field Trips	\$200		
Miscellaneous	<u>\$200</u>		
Total Expenses	\$4,366		
Income - Expenses	+\$334		
Duck Stamp (Net)	\$0		
Annual Dinner (Net)	\$0		
Pass Through (Net)	\$0		
2016 Year End Estimate	\$5,443	2016 Year End Estimate	\$26,054
Annual Change	+\$334	Annual Change	-\$2,225
2017 Year End Estimate	\$5,777	2017 Year End Estimate	\$23,829

SAAS-Y NOTES

IN MEMORY

Longtime SAAS member Mary Alice Lavender passed away in San Antonio on September 6 at the age of 88. We extend our condolences to her family and friends.



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When you do your holiday gift buying this year, make sure to use smile.amazon.com. When you purchase goods through smile.amazon.com, 0.5% of the purchase price is donated to the organization of your choice, and of course you want to choose San Antonio Audubon Society when you set up your account! Everything looks the same as on amazon.com. Be sure to go to smile.amazon.com each time you shop throughout the year.



CARBON OFFSET BIRD PROJECT

Consider how much you travel for birdwatching and make a donation to our COBP Program to help remove CO₂ from the atmosphere by conserving and increasing habitat with plants that benefit local bird populations. Please mail your check to SAAS, 5150 Broadway #257, San Antonio, TX 78209 and let us know that your contribution is for COBP.

SAAS Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday • Dec. 29 • 6:00 PM

(No Board meeting in November)

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

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

Editor: Lora Reynolds

Contributing Editor and Mailing: Georgina Schwartz

Mailing Labels: Tom Inglet

The newsletter is published bimonthly. Send submissions to editor@saaudubon.org.

Permission is granted to other nonprofit groups to reprint articles, unless otherwise noted. Reprints must refer to the originating issue and give credit to San Antonio Audubon News and the specific author.

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San Antonio Audubon Society

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Officers

Christine Turnbull, President

Georgina Schwartz, Vice President

Desi D'Orsogna, Secretary

Betty Walters, Treasurer



Directors at Large

Chris Bailey

Christian Fernandez

Alex Antram

**SAAS NEEDS YOU
TO VOLUNTEER!**
info@saaudubon.org

Committee Chairs

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Education/Outreach

Patsy Inglet-----info@saaudubon.org

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Helen Rejzek-----fieldtrips@saaudubon.org

Historian, Betty Walters

Membership

Database, Tom Inglet-----members@saaudubon.org

Judson Nature Trails, Georgina Schwartz--gbird@att.net

Publicity, Shirley Bartels

Newsletter, Lora Reynolds-----editor@saaudubon.org

Website, Bill Collins-----web@saaudubon.org

SAAS Membership

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

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC
5150 BROADWAY #257
SAN ANTONIO, TX 78209-5710

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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>

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR SAAS EVENTS! (See p. 4)
7 PM, Thursday, Nov. 3, Amazon River Adventure
Thursday, Dec. 1, Holiday Party; Bring food & photos