



Surf Scoter in California by Jim Edwards, February, 2015. Below, Orange-crowned Warbler by Ann Gordon at her Harris Creek Property, February, 2015.

# THE ROADRUNNER

MARCH 2015



Observations from one of our readers: *Just noting some of the reports, and maybe a difference in geographic areas but wanted to input some data I've collected in the last few months and weeks. Regarding the preliminary data in your newsletter, in the Mustang area near Cranfills Gap, during the September through October season, I noticed a definite increase in Cardinals, and from reports of my neighbors still out there (we moved into Clifton in November) the Cardinals are more than plentiful, as are the American Goldfinches at present. I was still seeing mourning doves and hybrids with white winged. The Northern Harrier and Red Tailed Hawks are plentiful in that area.*

*Now that I have moved into town (ugh) and was worried that I would get no birds, I am now having trouble keeping 4 feeders filled! The goldfinches are taking over, house finches a close second. I am seeing Carolina Wrens and Chickadees and even have a Red Bellied Woodpecker. I have few sparrows because I refuse to put out any seed with millet, but put out hen scratch for the doves – every last one white winged! And, I even saw an Eastern Bluebird at the water pan. So now, I feel I have a future here and am planning on “birdifying” my new yard with native plants and berry-type bushes, of which there are absolutely none! However, there is definitely a cat problem, but so far they have been run off empty pawed!*

*But, one species NOT declining in this area are the black vultures. In the country they are outnumbering the turkey vultures, and here where I live, there must be a hundred or more roosting in the trees in a nearby park. One reason the turkey vultures may be declining is because the blacks are much more aggressive. It appears the caracara are multiplying since I am seeing them on the outskirts of town.*

*Abby Birdwell, town of Clifton, Bosque County.*

*PS: in all the years of feeding birds, I've heard and read of how much the goldfinches loved thistle and Nijer, but I've got it out in a sock feeder, and they bypass it for the black oiled sunflower seed. Tried it off and on for years, but always go back to the sunflower seed. Have it hanging alone, and then moved it to above the sunflower seed feeder and now at least they peck at it. The sock works better than the thistle feeders I think.*



Harris's Sparrow by Ann Gordon at her Harris Creek property. If you were in attendance at Joe Yelder's sparrow talk, you know one distinguishing feature of this sparrow is its black bib.



Cedar Waxwing (left)  
and Chipping Sparrow  
(below) by Ann  
Gordon, Harris Creek  
puddle, February,  
2015.



The Chipping sparrow  
usually has a visible  
rufous cap.



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## Central Texas Audubon Society

March 2015  
Issue 288

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### Upcoming Events

**3/17 - CTAS meeting at the Carleen Bright Arboretum at 6:30 PM-program begins at 7:00 PM. The evening's program will be Ann Gordon talking about her drip puddle at her property in Harris Creek.**

**3/21 – March of the Mammoths at Waco Mammoth site**

**4/12 – Gardener's Gathering at Woodway Arboretum**

**4/21 – CTAS meeting**

**4/25 – Party for the Planet at Cameron Park Zoo**

## President's Message

Happy almost Spring!

After the weather of the last few days, I know we will all appreciate some warm sunny weather. I think our feathered friends will agree.

We had a wonderful field trip to Reynolds Creek on Valentine's Day. The weather that day was cooperative eleven birders enjoyed spotting approximately 40 species including the Bald Eagles guarding and tending the nest. We should have chicks pretty soon.

Our new checklist is available. If you have not seen one, please pick up one at our next meeting. We had a grant to fund the newsletters this time, so there is no charge for your copy! Thanks to Frank, EG, Nada and Joe for making this happen for us.

Our program this month will be given by one of our resident experts, Ann Gordon. She has a wonderful drip puddle in her backyard that she uses for photographing the many species that visit. You will truly enjoy her photos and talk on her visitors.

Spring will be a busy time for everyone. If you are out or going to a different area to bird, please be sure to share your sightings with us. We love to hear about everyone's sightings.

See you on the 17th,  
Janet

**Our next meeting is on Tuesday, March 17 at the Carleen Bright Arboretum at 6:30 PM-program begins at 7:00 PM. The evening's program will be Ann Gordon talking about her drip puddle and showing us photos from her property in Harris Creek. From that location, she is able to take many fabulous bird and moth photos. You can go to her website anytime to see what she has photographed on her property. Go to [annmgordon.com](http://annmgordon.com). There is a section on birds, and other critters as well as everything in between. Ann is a long-time birder and member of CTAS. All who are interested are invited to attend. Please be sure and plan to be there!**

Friendly reminder:  
**Earth Share's Mission**

To engage individuals and organizations in creating a healthy and sustainable environment

[www.earthshare.org/index.html](http://www.earthshare.org/index.html)

**NOTICE!!** We want to encourage EVERYONE to receive our expanded Newsletter via e-mail and save a tree (as well as the cost of printing and postage)!! By receiving the newsletter electronically you will also see more photos and more information! Contact Anna at [dunbaranna56@gmail.com](mailto:dunbaranna56@gmail.com) to receive future newsletters via e-mail!

From Jim Edwards, February, 2015: Varied Thrush; photo taken in California.



From Ann Gordon: American Goldfinch seen at her puddle in Harris Creek, February, 2015



The following are some ideas from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to help support birds in the early spring:

1. **DELAY SPRING CLEANUP** Often the first migrants to arrive are seed eaters. They are looking for remnant seeds in trees, on dead flowers, and beneath the leaf litter around your garden beds. Leave your gardens messy until late spring to help provide optimal foraging conditions. Explore [YardMap](#) for more ideas on growing seed-producing flowers for birds.
2. **BIRDHOUSES** Birds begin scouting optimal nesting areas the minute they arrive in their mating territory. And for year-round residents, this process can begin as early as January or February. Put up your nest boxes as soon as possible so birds know their options for mating season. For more information on appropriate birdhouses to use, visit [Nestwatch](#).
3. **MUD PUDDLES** These are not just for kids, but birds too! Mud puddles are a great way to provide both water and nesting material for birds. Robins, phoebes and swallows all use mud to build their nests. So, find a wet area in your yard, dig down about six inches, let the water fill in, and watch the birds celebrate!
4. **DON'T USE PESTICIDES OR HERBICIDES** As spring gets underway and soil temperatures reach 40 degrees Fahrenheit, earthworms, beetles, and insects become active. These organisms feed a multitude of birds and applying pesticides or herbicides to your lawn, gardens, shrubs, or trees will often kill these insects, leaving less food for the birds. Once birds are nesting, they rely heavily on insects--even seed eaters such as chickadees and nuthatches--for protein-packed snacks for their offspring. To learn more, explore this article: [Freedom from Danger](#).

Following these simple strategies will help provide a welcoming and nourishing backyard for avian migrants in early spring. To learn more about how to prepare your property, explore our [Learn](#) pages. The birds are coming, are you ready?

E-mail:

[contactus@centexaudubon.org](mailto:contactus@centexaudubon.org)

#### NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

#### CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

YES I'd like to join! Please enroll me as a member of National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send Audubon magazine and my membership card to the address below. My check for \$20, the introductory fee, is enclosed

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**National Audubon Society**

P. O. Box 422250  
Palm Coast, FL 32142-  
2250

Include chapter code of **W06 7XCH**

*Renewal is \$35. Seniors 62 & older and students are \$15.*

#### SIGHTINGS

**Ann Gordon:** I have the same mix of birds coming in to the yard, but their numbers greatly increased during February due to the cold, wet, icy conditions. I had several dozen American Goldfinches, and about that many Chipping Sparrows. Pine Siskins are still showing up at the thistle feeders. There were more Harris's Sparrows than usual, maybe up to 10 at a time. There were also White-crowned Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows and a few Juncos. The Cedar Waxwings were slow to come in large numbers until February when I had about 2 dozen at one time. I still have a lot of Yellow-rumped Warblers and only 1 Orange-crowned Warbler. There was a lot of activity from the Red-shouldered Hawks early in February, but they have gotten quiet now. I had a chance to observe some of their courting behavior. There seemed to be an interest in the Live Oak next door to me to for a nesting sight, but I am not sure that was the final decision. Due to the weather conditions I have not been able to be out where I need to observe. These are the birds I am seeing, but I am not seeing a Lincoln Sparrow this season! Yet!

**Jim and Carolyn Edwards:** Martin Kemper and I took a trip about a week ago searching for the Striped Sparrow that has been reported below Granger lake near the San Gabriel River. We saw lots of sparrows but did not see the Striped Sparrow. We did enjoy the day however and did see a nice Red-headed Woodpecker. Carolyn and I recently took a 2 week trip to California to visit our daughter and took in a little birding while we were there. We picked up a few lifers while we were there including, 2 species of Cormorants, 2 new gulls and some other locals to that area including Oak Titmouse, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Varied Thrush and California Towhee. Great place to visit and we want to go back to see more. It was our first time to visit California.

Not much on the local scene. Lots of activity around feeders during this cold weather but it is just the usuals. Looking forward to warmer weather.

#### EG White-Swift: 2014 Waco (Eastern) Christmas Bird Count

First, the stats:

- 110 species identified,
- 33,507 individual,
- 30 Birders on 9 Teams
- 87 Party Hours
- 407 Party Miles
- Low temp: 40 High Temp: 46

We had a great turnout of birders, both from our area and one of the largest groups of birding carpet baggers we've ever had. For as bad as the sky and temps were there were times there were a lot of birds moving about. However, the winds may have caused low numbers of some species. To some extent that was made up by the fact we had 30 observers, a high number for the Waco - Eastern McLennan County CBC. Access to some of larger lakes was limited and the two warm water lakes are now cold water lakes. The wind was not our friend. On the lakes it kept the ducks, gulls, terns and pelicans on the farthest reaches of the lake - just outside the comfort area for even the best scopes.

Some highlights:

The following species set new records for the count:  
167 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks  
4 Bald Eagles  
56 Greater yellowlegs  
677 Mourning Doves  
34 Downy Woodpeckers  
115 Chipping Sparrows  
615 Northern Cardinals  
261 House Finch

We missed a few species we normally count. The ducks and the sparrows are still affected by the drought. Overall, having more teams and experienced birders helped offset the wind, the rain and the cold temps. See you all next year.