

## **Monthly Meeting March 3, 2013**

**Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX**

6:30 pm Learning Corner: Talk not yet scheduled; click the link and refresh it to see latest information

7:00 pm [Ornithology Group](#) (OG) Business Meeting

7:30 pm [Program](#): Warbler Woods Bird Sanctuary: Habitat, Birds, and People by Susan and/or Don Schaezler

[Field Trip](#): San Jacinto Monument (March 1, 9:00 am), led by Debbie Valdez

[Rio Grande Valley OG Birding Trip | 2014 Dues are Due!](#)

## **Warbler Woods Bird Sanctuary: Habitat, Birds and People**

**By Susan and/or Don Schaezler**

Warbler Woods Bird Sanctuary (WWBS) is 124 acres of mostly wild land that is being surrounded by suburban sprawl between San Antonio and New Braunfels. Its natural habitat is the product of the intersection of five ecological regions and the South Central Texas weather patterns. The natural habitat has been enhanced to attract, feed, and protect birds that naturally reside there and those that merely visit during migrations. Situated on the Central Flyway and down-dip of the Balcones Escarpment, WWBS appears as an island of green along the Town Creek watershed, a tributary of Cibolo Creek, a sanctuary that beckons tired birds before they hit the escarpment.

But WWBS is more than a good place for birds to visit, to rest, and to live. It is a place for people to visit, to feel welcome, and to roam the land in search of birds, plants, bugs, mammals. It is a place for photographers to wait for the next perfect picture. It is a place for children to step into nature. It is a place for us all to learn more about our role in nature and its importance to us all.



Don is a native San Antonian and a graduate of Rice University where he earned a B.A., B.S. in Chemical Engineering, and Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering. He has spent his career in teaching and consulting and designing systems to control water, air, and soil contamination. He specializes in evaluation of toxic exposures in indoor and outdoor environments from such materials as industrial chemicals, hazardous wastes, mold, smoke, formaldehyde, and silica.

Sue is a native of Houston, attended San Jacinto JC and U of H, raised four sons, and has always specialized in information services. She founded ETC Information Services, LLC, where she and Don both work, and the 501 (c)(3) charitable foundation Warbler Woods Bird Sanctuary that manages the sanctuary.

Sue and Don met in 1966 when Sue's father hired Don as a tutor in Chemistry for his daughter. The chemistry tutoring was not successful, but the biochemistry was successful, and they married in 1967.

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## **San Jacinto Monument Field Trip (March 1, 9:00 am)**

**Led by Debbie Valdez**

The San Jacinto Monument has a diverse assortment of birds, including (last weekend) golden crowned kinglets, slate colored juncos, Harris's, song, vesper, savannah, white-crowned, white-throated, swamp and the ever elusive LeConte's sparrows, and many other species. We will meet at the parking lot that surrounds the monument at 9 am--park on the side near the nature trail. We can bird the trail, then hit some of the other hot spots in the park. We should be finished by

lunch time. Bring a snack, water, hat, bug spray. For those who are interested, we can eat lunch together at a well-known local restaurant just outside the park.

For a printable pdf map:

[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/park\\_maps/pwd\\_mp\\_p4504\\_088e.pdf](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/park_maps/pwd_mp_p4504_088e.pdf)

For directions to the monument, 3523 Independence Parkway South, LaPorte, TX, see:

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/san-jacinto-battleground/map>

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## **Rio Grande Valley OG Birding Trip (Jan. 30–Feb. 2: 111 species seen)**

**By Stephan Lorenz [photos by Nina Rach (Hook-billed Kite) and Gary Olson (others)]**

### **Day 1**

The trip started off with a bang when by 8:30 am we had logged five Hook-billed Kites! The kites flew over the dike we had been waiting on at Mission Nature Park Hike and Bike Trail. We only waited an hour until Janet spotted one barreling across the dike trail, diving into the dense thorn scrub. A patient wait was rewarded with distant views of



two birds moving about low to the ground, even landing on the ground, and finally the spectacular all dark male flew up. Most of us had distant, but great views of it perched a few feet off the ground. Then two birds started to circle and to our delight drifted in our direction. These were quickly followed by a third, fourth, and unbelievably a fifth. All five individuals were in the air at the same time right over our heads. I heard the camera shutters click and could sense that everyone had a big smile on their face. This species has been difficult to see over the past 10 years and it was a lifer for most of us. These were definitely the best views I had ever had in no less than 25 trips to the valley. This was undisputed the highlight of the trip.

Continuing to Bentsen State Park, we caught up with many valley regulars, including great views of Clay-colored Thrush that obligingly moved in to snatch up a bit of peanut butter. A group favorite was a roosting Eastern Screech-Owl studied in detail, thanks to Michelle's great spot. The bird sat up all fluffed up with ear tufts straightened to the maximum, looking quite big for a screech-owl. The feeders at the entrance station were swamped with birds, including tame Plain Chachalacas, gaudy Altamira Orioles, brash Great Kiskadees, and colorful Green Jays. A juvenile Gray Hawk flew by all too fast as we walked through the picnic area. Short vigils at



nearby feeding station gave us more views of the valley specialties, but the small oxbow lake was kingfisher free.

It was time for lunch and we made our way to the Riverside Club, where we had food right by the Rio Grande. A few Caspian Terns passed by in lazy flight. We tracked over to Anzalduas County Park where an adult Gray Hawk made a brief flyby and a group of Caspian Terns rested out on a sandbar. There were no Sprague's Pipits in the field. Feeding flock activity was low, but Blue-gray Gnatcatchers,



Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Yellow-rumped Warblers were all present. In the evening, we added Houses Finches, Eastern Phoebe, another Vermillion Flycatcher, pleasantly common throughout, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. We were happy to retreat to Rio Grande City for dinner and some rest.

## Day 2

We found ourselves in the fog, not only because the coffee was weak, in the early morning waiting by the river and after some of it cleared finally saw a perched adult Gray Hawk after it had chased off a Red-shouldered Hawk. The Rio Grande flowed sluggish past the earthen banks and only the kiskadees were up in that kind of weather. As the fog thinned and we could see the other side a beaver was spotted, swimming leisurely upstream, one for the mammal list. Ospreys showed in numbers and very close. A black bird perched on the river island in the distance turned out to be a Groove-billed Ani, a great bird for this time of year.



We eventually wandered to the feeders where a comfortable one and a half hour wait resulted in awesome views of robust Altamira, slender Hooded, including a stunning male, and subtle Audubon's Orioles, the latter a pair. At one point all three oriole species were in the same view! Sneaky Olive Sparrows made furtive appearances and fiery-eyed Long-billed Thrasher came out in the open, allowing us to study the differences with our familiar Brown Thrashers. We drove

along the Chapeno shortcut and stopped in the shrubby desert for flaming Pyrrhuloxia, the world's most reluctant Verdin, and a surprise Lark Sparrow.

A leisurely lunch at Falcon State Park was just perfect and even added a few birds, including a bold Curve-billed Thrasher. Scoping the lake added some water birds, American White Pelicans, Gadwalls, Greater White-fronted Geese, and Buffleheads. A pleasant evening at Chapeno finally netted us the kingfishers with flybys and fishing of no less than three Ringed and a single Green Kingfisher that finally perched on rocks close to us. We met back at the hotel lobby for the list and were getting close to our goal, 100 species.



### Day 3

After packing up at the hotel, we headed north towards the upper reaches of the valley. Along the way some of us spotted a Great-horned Owl at 60 mph birding. The owl was in the middle of a balancing act of the telephone wire in broad daylight. Our first stop for the day was the north end of Falcon Reservoir where Cactus Wrens obliged and plenty of ducks kept us busy. The only Herring Gull of the trip flew past on languid wings. Zapata Library Pond was fairly quiet, but a few Lesser Goldfinches fed in the park's trees and a single Common Gallinule emerged from the reeds fringing the pond. The wind was picking up and the weather was changing. By the time we reached San Ygancio Sanctuary it was pretty quiet and it got colder. We still spotted Plain Chachalacas, Olive Sparrows, and even caught a glimpse of another Audubon's Oriole. The White-collared Seedeaters will have to wait for another trip. Overall we had a great time, with great company, and some great birds.

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### 2014 Dues are Due!

Don't forget to renew your ONC/OG dues if you haven't already done so. ONC/OG dues are paid yearly on a calendar basis beginning January 1st. Ornithology Group dues are used to pay honorariums and travel expenses for speakers at OG meetings, to make OG donations to other organizations, and for a few other OG expenses. Life Members of ONC still need to pay yearly OG dues. Pay by check at the next OG meeting or use the form below (it specifies the proper dues amounts) to submit updated information for the ONC database, and mail along with your check to the ONC post office box.

We need your dues to keep the Ornithology Group running!

If you have questions about your membership status, contact Margret Simmons at [msimmons@compassnet.com](mailto:msimmons@compassnet.com) or 713-776-2511.

Thank you for your renewal!

## TO START OR RENEW A MEMBERSHIP:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

ONC Annual Dues: \$ 8.00 for individuals; \$ 15.00 for families

OG Annual Dues: \$ 12.00 for individuals; \$ 15.00 for families

**Total: \$ 20.00 for individuals; \$ 30.00 for families**

Additional contributions are welcome in any amount.

Send to:

Outdoor Nature Club

PO Box 270894

Houston, Texas 77277-0894

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## About the Ornithology Group

**Chair: Nina Rach | 281-433-0651 | NRach@autrevie.com**

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**Secretary | needed**

**Treasurer: Harlan Evans | 713-797-6468 | harlanj42@sbcglobal.net**

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**OG website: <http://www.ornithologygroup.org/>**

**ONC website: <http://www.outdoornatureclub.org/>**

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