

September 25, 2001

# The *Brown Pelican*



The Newsletter of the Coastal Bend Audubon Society

## El Cielo Biosphere Reserve, Tamaulipas, Mexico Fall Bird Count Scheduled for Oct. 12-14, 2001

For many people, the term "cloud forest" evokes images of exotic and distant places. In fact, most Texans don't realize there is a forest in the clouds within a one-day drive from Corpus Christi. This place is the El Cielo Biosphere Reserve, located only 300 miles south of Brownsville in the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico. The El Cielo Biosphere Reserve, designated by the United Nations in 1987 under the Man and the Biosphere program, is a 356,872-acre site stretching from the eastern to the western slopes of the Sierra Madre Oriental mountain range. The biodiversity of the Reserve is among the highest in the world because it lies on the climate transitional zone between North and Central America. Elevations within the Reserve range from 650 to 7,500 feet above sea level. El Cielo includes four distinct eco-systems: tropical jungle, mountain forest, pine-oak forest, and dwarf oak and heath forest. A backpacking trek transecting the four eco-systems is a naturalist's delight.

El Cielo Biosphere Reserve is south of Ciudad Victoria. This city of 195,000 people, 225 miles south of Brownsville, is the capital of the Mexican state of Tamaulipas. Ciudad Victoria lies at the foot of the Sierra Madre Mountains. The small village of Gomez Farias is another 75 miles south of Ciudad Victoria and lies within the boundary of the Reserve. The Reserve is a paradise for birdwatchers with species such as the warbling vireo, amethyst-throated hummingbird and least pygmy-owl. Contributing to the scenic beauty are mountain rivers and "El Nacimiento," (the birthplace) the headwaters of the river. The Canindo Research Station is adjacent to a village approximately 7 miles from Gomez Farias near a tiny village of about 12 families called San Jose. Lumber operations in the area ceased approximately 40 years ago when El Cielo's topography and inaccessibility triumphed over forestry exploitation. But during the 30-year period of large-scale commercial lumber operations, San Jose had a hotel, a movie theater and a gas station. Current conditions at San Jose are totally different. Now every family has gardens and orchards to grow food for themselves and their domestic animals.

The Coastal Bend Audubon Society has directed or assisted with the direction of a quarterly bird count within the El Cielo Biosphere Reserve since the Christmas Bird Count of 2000. This fall bird count, to be conducted from October 12-14, 2001, will include the inaugural BIG SIT! The BIG SIT! is a bird count where observers are confined to a seventeen-foot diameter circle. See BIG SIT! article below and <http://members.aol.com/nhbirdclub/bigsit.htm>. The CBAS will also be participating in both the El Cielo Biosphere Reserve Christmas Bird Count and the Rio Corona Christmas Bird Count during 2001. Please contact Richard Gibbons at [rgibbons@cbbep.org](mailto:rgibbons@cbbep.org) or 885-6248 for information regarding the El Cielo Biosphere Reserve Christmas Bird Count or Gene Blacklock at [geneb@cbbep.org](mailto:geneb@cbbep.org) or 885-6247 for information regarding the Rio Corona Christmas Bird Count.

Portions of this article are modified from **Texas Parks and Wildlife** magazine.

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**Next Month:**  
**Craig Farquhar,**  
Ornithologist TPWD  
Ecology of the  
White-tailed Hawk

### This Month's Speaker:

**John Metz**  
**NOAA Meteorologist**

**Subject:**  
Short-term Climate  
Predictions

**Location:**  
Corpus Christi Museum of  
Science and History  
1900 N. Chaparral

**Time:**  
1st Tuesday of the month  
6:45 pm.  
Business meeting to follow  
speaker.  
Refreshments available.

**All members and the  
general public are invited!**

## Set Aside October 14, 2001 for The BIG SIT!

Since 1993, 27 states, 2 sites in England, 2 sites in the Netherlands and one in British Columbia have participated. 434 bird species have been listed by over 70 circles and over 250 people. These people have sat through searing heat, gale force winds, snow, pouring rain, oh, and some bee-utiful weather. But every one of those people at any point during their sit, could imagine a circle of like-minded lunatics doing the same in another part of the world. The BIG SIT! is like a Big Day, or a Bird-a-thon in that the object is to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard within 24 hours. The difference lies in the area limitation (17 foot circle) from which you'll be allowed to observe. **THIS FREE EVENT IS OPEN TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL & EVERY CLUB IN EVERY STATE IN EVERY COUNTRY!** Get a team together or go it alone - add to your state's (or country's) total!

### 3 categories:

- 1) Best Overall Count: Most species seen by a single circle wins our commemorative T-shirt. The reigning champs are from California with 122 species.
- 2) Best State Count: Highest combined total from circles within a state - wins state pride! Once again California is the defending state winner.
- 3) The Big Prize!: Swarovski Optik is offering \$500 to the circle who finds the "Golden Bird". A bird species will be randomly selected and the circles with the Golden Bird are then put into a run-off drawing.

### RULES:

- 1) Observations can be made from any area within the state/country you live, or wish to represent.

## One day count - 443,230 Broad-wings!!

### Hawk Watch 2001 Continues through November 15, 2001

The Hazel Bazemore Hawkwatch has the highest number of species observed and the highest number of individuals of any hawkwatch in the country. It is not uncommon for 1,000,000, that's no misprint folks, ONE MILLION raptors to pass by this river bluff. Often pushed by the first Fall Northers, hundreds of thousands of Broad-winged Hawks can be witnessed within hours taking advantage of favorable tail-winds. To give an example of this phenomenon, Wednesday, September 26th, 2001, 443,230 Broad-wings were counted in a single day.

2) Observations can only be made from within a 17-foot (diameter) circle.

3) There's no limit to how many people can occupy one area (other than the obvious spatial limitations). Bring some chairs. Have a picnic or barbecue. Welcome passers-by and their contributions to your list.

4) If a bird is seen or heard from within the circle but is too distant to identify, the circle can be left to get a closer look for confirmation. However, any new bird seen or heard while confirming the original, can't be counted unless it's seen from an "anchor" who stayed behind in your circle, or when you return to your spot.

5) The participants can work in shifts. No one person needs to be there throughout the whole Big Sit! The area can be left and returned to as frequently as desired, but you must be sure to return to the exact spot each time.

6) The same circle must be used for the entire Big Sit!

7) The Big Sit! will begin at 12:00am midnight on October 14 and end 24 hours later.

### BEFORE THE SIT!:

Every circle (not person) must be registered before the event. A phone call or email will do! Please contact John Triana to register your circle (by October 13th). John can be reached at (203) 758-7203, Email - jtriana@connix.com, US mail - John Triana, 2 Coer Rd., Prospect, CT 06712. Make sure you send the following information: (1) Your name (Circle Captain) (2) Full mailing address (3) Phone number (and email if applicable) (4) Brief description of your area. **THIS EVENT IS FREE!**

## *What's Up Around Texas*

**October 8, 2001 - Coastal Bend Bays Foundation monthly meeting, 6:00pm, Texas A&M University-CC NRC #1003**

**October 9, 2001 - Audubon Outdoor Club meeting**  
7:00pm, Corpus Christi Science Museum.  
Speaker: Tom Langscheid, King Ranch Ornithologist

**October 13, 2001 - Walk and Talk Xeriscape Tour**  
Corpus Christi Xeriscape Gardens at the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History, 9:00 am. For more information call 885-6209.

**October 13, 2001 - Water for People and the Environment, a Regional Water Conference for South Texas**  
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi - University Center 8:00-8:30 Registration/Check-in. Luncheon Speaker: The

Honorable Carlos Truan, Texas Senate. The meeting is presented jointly by the National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Defense, Texas Center for Policy Studies, and the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club.

**October 18-21, 2001 - Texas Butterfly Festival**  
Mission, Texas 800-580-2700

**October 20, 2001 - Aunt Flora's Gigantic Fall Plant Sale.**  
10:00 am to 5:00 pm Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens behind the Visitors Center. Members presale from 8:30 - 10 am. Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens 361-852-2100

**November 3, 2001 - You too can grow orchids.**  
Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens 361-852-2100

## Bird Notes — Texas Central Coast

A **GRAY FLYCATCHER** was found feeding around a small pond by Mel Cooksey near Padre Isles in Corpus Christi.

A **RINGED KINGFISHER** was a noteworthy find on the Coleto Creek Reservoir near Victoria on Sept. 22.

Jimmy Swartz had a **NUTMEG MANAKIN** and an **ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD** visit his bountiful largesse of a feeding station near Hazel Bazemore County Park.

Kent Taylor had three **AMERICAN SWALLOW-TAILED KITES** over his yard in Corpus Christi on Sept. 22.



Broad-winged Hawk  
Photo by Jimmy Jackson

## Changes to the 2002 Texas Coastal Birding Classic

The longest and wildest birding competition is making a few changes for next year to increase participation. For teams competing for the conservation cash prize along the entire coast scouting days will be eliminated and teams will be free to spend there five days however they wish. This should result in even higher total species lists. In addition, conservation cash prizes will be available for sectionals this year offering incentive for more local involvement.

## CBAS Focus

During the business portion of our next meeting we would like to discuss our goals for the future of the Coastal Bend Audubon Society. What is the chapter product? What is our social niche? What is this chapter to be? Begin thinking about ideas for development of the program and fundraising and what would you like to do to assist our common goals. We will discuss all ideas during the business portion of our next meeting.

### *Local Workshops, Classes, and Tours*

For more information about events listed contact Cynthia Womack at 361 729-6887 or e-mail her at [kstrl@interconnect.net](mailto:kstrl@interconnect.net)

#### **Bird Identification 101**

Sept. 10-Dec. 08, 2001, Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens

#### **Bird Identification 101**

Sept. 12-Dec. 19, 2001, Fulton Elementary School, Fulton/Rockport

**Intro. to Birds of Chihauhuan, Tamualipan, and Balconian Habitats**

Nov. 7-11, 2001, Del Rio and Fort Clark Springs

## Notes from North Bay Sanctuary

by Bill Schmidt

**August 16, 2001 9:00am—12:30pm**

David and I walked along the main fence to the south east side of the sanctuary. We noticed damage to several strands of the wire. It appeared that somebody had started to repair it from the other side so we decided to check it out again in about a month. We trimmed the mesquite around the three signs at the entrance area. Many branches including some of the stronger ones were removed. This trimming should be good for about a year. Our resident hawk circled above the tower and got upset because we worked there for a little over an hour, trimming and edging under and around the tower. I also found our friend, the hawk, had been eating well. Rodent skin and bones as well as two sets of fish bones have been regurgitated. I did not notice any ducks on the Copano Ranch Pond but surprise, surprise, two groups of Wood Storks about 300 feet to the left of us: five storks in the first group, a few more in the second group that was a little too far away to count. The water level in the large pond was down somewhat but no comparison with that from our pond. In our pond it is down between 5-7 ft. from its normal level in winter time. I noticed two Snowy Egrets taking off from the large tree cluster in the rear of the pond. As I have seen other egrets there before, it is possible a small rookery may be hidden among the tree tops. With the exception of a few Great-tail Grackles there was no other bird activity.

## Audubon Texas Hires New Chapter Relations Associate

Audubon Texas is pleased to announce the hiring of Monica L. Naples as the Chapter Relations Associate. In this capacity, Monica will serve as the key link with Audubon's 21 chapters across Texas. Terry Austin, Audubon Texas Executive Director, said, "We are very excited about having a front-line staffer to work closely with our chapter leaders across the state. The chapters will enjoy working with Monica and should look forward to having a point person in the state office." She will focus on enhancing communications among the Audubon Texas community-based grassroots constituents, while serving as the key link on chapter activities between the national office and the chapters.

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Corpus Christi, Texas 78469

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*Regular meetings:*  
1st Tuesday of the month at 6:45 pm at the  
Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History



*The Brown Pelican*

## Coastal Bend Audubon Society Board of Directors

### PRESIDENT:

Terri Nicolau  
(361) 939-9964

### VICE PRESIDENT:

Gene Blacklock  
(361) 882-7232

### SECRETARY:

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### TREASURER:

Bill Schmidt  
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### DIRECTORS:

Kendal Keyes  
(361) 885-6245

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(361) 885-6245

The Coastal Bend Audubon Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of birds and bird habitat and to education in the Coastal Bend. The organization is supported by contributions from local memberships and from the national Audubon Society.

### ***We are actively seeking new members.***

We can help steer the course of growth and change in our community if we work together towards education. Please contact us at (361) 885-6209 about getting involved!

### NEWSLETTER EDITORS:

Gene Blacklock (361) 882-7232

This newsletter is compiled/written and published monthly. Articles of interest are gathered from various sources and compiled by the editor, volunteers, and/or contributing authors. All contributions and comments are welcomed.

I would like to become a member of to the National Audubon Society,  
Coastal Bend Chapter W-13.

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

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If you are already a member and would like to make a tax deductible contribution, please circle the category you would like your contribution applied to:

1. general fund - to be used as needed
2. education activities
3. sanctuary maintenance

The membership dues schedule is as follows:

Student/Senior	\$15
Introductory/1 year	\$20
2 year	\$30
Basic	\$35
Lifetime Individual	\$1000
Lifetime Dual	\$1500

Your membership entitles you to the National Audubon Magazine, local chapter membership, and other benefits. To join the National Audubon Society, Coastal Bend Chapter, please send this completed form and your check, payable to "National Audubon Society Chapter W-13" to Coastal Bend Audubon Society, P.O. Box 4793, Corpus Christi, TX 78469.