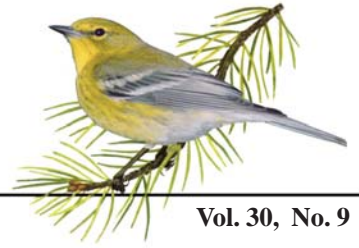


The Pine Warbler



December 2010

Vol. 30, No. 9

Spring Creek Christmas Bird Count!

Join us on Saturday, December 18, 2010 for the Spring Creek Christmas Bird Count. This count, sponsored by the Piney Woods Wildlife Society, covers a 15-mile diameter circle that is roughly centered in The Woodlands at I- 45 and Rayford-Sawdust road. Our count circle is divided into four count areas meeting places as follows:

The Woodlands count area, led by David Henderson, will meet at Starbucks at 7:00 a.m. (about three traffic lights west of I-45 on Sawdust Road at 25111 Grogan's Mill Road - on the left at the intersection of Sawdust and Grogan's Mill Road).

Al Barr leads the Mercer count area. The owling group will meet at 4:30 a.m. at the Kroger parking lot beside the McDonald's at I-45 and FM 2920. For the non-owling portion, meet in the Mercer Arboretum parking lot (west side) at 8:00 a.m.

Stephanie Prosser will lead the Hooks Airport Section. Meet her at 7:30 a.m. at the Hooks airport parking lot at Stuebner Airline and FM 2920.

Debbie Layer, master naturalist and fine birder will lead the Jones State Forest group. They meet at 7:00 AM to look for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker or at 8:00 AM to start for all other birds. Meet at the Jones Forest headquarters, which is about 1 mile west of I-45 on Highway 1488. Since the office parking lot is closed on the weekends, birders are to meet inside the employee entrance to the headquarters, which is about 100 yards west of the office entrance on Highway 1488.

There is a \$5.00 fee per count participant that goes to the National Audubon Society. Persons 18 years and under participate free. If you have any questions please contact Al Barr at 281 443-6629 or via email at Albarr@comcast.net

After a full day of counting birds, we will have our countdown dinner at 5:30 p.m. at the El Palenque Mexican Restaurant at 1485 Spring Cypress Road - (281) 353 - 4055. The restaurant is located in the Kroger's Parking lot near Splash Town. You are welcome to attend the dinner whether or not you went birding.



December Presentation PWWS MEETING MOVING UP ONE WEEK!



*Mark your calendars now!
The PWWS meeting
will be held on
December 14
(one week earlier than usual)
to avoid all the
activities of Christmas week.*



The meeting will be an informal time to eat, visit and hear the details about the upcoming bird counts. Everyone is invited to bring cookies, cakes, chips and dips, fruit, cheese, Texas caviar, cold cuts, deviled eggs, veggies, apple pies or whatever you would like to share. Drinks, cups, paper plates, utensils and napkins will be furnished. Bring your appetites and if you have any photos you would like to show, please let All know and bring your CD.

Come join us for a social time followed by a brief meeting at 7:30 p.m. and then some really serious over-eating!

Joy to the world
All the boys and girls
Joy to the fishes in the deep blue sea
Joy to you and me.
- Hoyt Axton





Heart Happenings

Thanks to everyone who came to the November program and the viewing of the new documentary, "The Heartbreak Turtle Today." It was a small group but one that I appreciated very much!

A sea turtle's Christmas list might include some tasty morsels to munch on, no shrimp boats in sight and certainly no oil spills. Although Texas waters seemed to have been spared, many parts of the Gulf were not. We will be waiting to see what happens when nesting season arrives not only on Texas beaches but at Rancho Nuevo, Mexico, and nearby beaches where the Kemp's ridley population has been growing. We hope that many of the hatchlings released there and also from the Padre Island National Seashore decided to go south this spring instead of north into the Gulf. Right now, only the turtles know.

The Houston Chronicle Editorial Page of November 21 published "5 Myths about the ecological impact of the BP spill" by Steven Pennings. If you're handy on the internet, you can find this article in the archives of the Houston Chronicle by searching for the date, the author and/or the title of the piece. He explored the following myths: Myth 1, Now that the well is capped, we no longer need to worry about oil on our Gulf shores; Myth 2, Dead animals reflect the most significant negative impacts from oil contamination; Myth 3, Attributing changes in the environment to the oil should be easy; Myth 4, Since scientists have learned much from studying other oil spills, nothing new is to be learned from studying the BP spill; and Myth 5, All oil cleanup activities are beneficial. (He discounts all of the myths in the article and provides solid information.) Pennings is a member of the Gulf Coast Ecology Working Group, 26 ecologists who conduct research in a variety of ecosystems in the Gulf of Mexico. His last comment was "This disaster demands our continued attention and careful research."

Happy Holidays to everyone! May 2011 brings health and happiness to everyone and we certainly hope that Farrar Stockton will be out birding and looking for butterflies in the spring. In case you aren't aware, he and Carlos Hernandez were involved in a serious accident on their way to the Houston Zoo on October 28 to see the premier of the new documentary. Carlos suffered minor injuries but was not kept in the hospital.



EAST TEXAS NATURE

Southern Plant Pest by Diane Cabiness, Texas Master Naturalist

Conservation Pledge: I give my pledge as an American to save and faithfully to defend from waste the natural resources of my country—its soil and minerals, its forests, waters, and wildlife. (Louisiana, Trees as Poets See Them, Circular 32 by the Texas Forest Service, 1952)

My sister lives east of Baytown. Her one lane subdivision sits in the middle of an open field that has a forest on one side. During my first visit to my sisters' new home several years ago I decided to explore the small forest that was behind my sisters place. On closer inspection and to my horror I saw that the majority of the trees were Chinese Tallow, Triadica sebifera. My sister tries to keep the tallow trees from sprouting everywhere by mowing. Tallow trees can produce about 100,000 seed each year. Herbicides work but you have to keep after it. Some suggest burning the sprouts as the seed germinates. For most neighborhoods that is understandably a no-no. If you are into roasting hot dogs, roasting tallow tree sprouts could be fun, just not tasty. If you ingest the plant material it can cause gastrointestinal upset with nausea and vomiting. Some folks wind up with dermatitis when they come into contact with this plant. Sheep and goats can eat this plant with no problem, not so with cattle.



There is a big concern that Chinese tallow tree or Popcorn tree which was introduced from China is rapidly becoming the new southern plant pest. A professor from Rice University is suggesting that Triadica sebifera is dominating forest understories and becoming single species forests in parts of Texas. It is most likely due to this plant having developed a resistance to insects without the loss in its rapid growth. Grasslands are being hit the heaviest (<http://forums.about.com/ab-forestry>). Bottomlands are also at risk. The ability of this species to drastically reshape natural landscapes has earned it a spot on The Nature Conservancy's list of "America's Least Wanted-The Dirty Dozen" (Flack & Furlow 1996)

We have had this exotic growing for years on our easement. When we found out the hard way that cutting them down does little good in getting rid of this pest...it will only resprout from the roots, we started using Round Up and this year when some of the trees came back we used Round Up again. My husband cut the 6 foot trees off at the base than he painted full strength with the herbicide on the wound. It is recommended that you apply the herbicide within 30 minutes after cutting into the tree. Next year I will start monitoring the easement for seedlings sprouting up from any seeds left behind in the cleanup.

The Chinese tallow tree was purposely introduced into the southeastern US as early as the 1700s some say Ben Franklin introduced it back East in 1776. It has been cultivated for about 1,500 years as a seed-oil crop. In the US, it is associated with ornamental landscapes as it makes a small tree very quickly and vivid red fall color. This tree may reach reproductive age in 3 years and continue producing seedlings for 100 years (Duke 1983). A mature tree may annually produce an average of 100,000 seeds that are spread mainly by birds and water (Duke 1983; Jubinsky & Anderson 1996).

Animal species that are normally seen in prairies are dramatically affected by such habitat modifications. Attwater's prairie chicken once abundant in the coastal prairie of Texas and Louisiana is near extinction due to loss of habitat. Other bird species dependent on coastal prairie habitat are dickcissels, mottled ducks, and a large number of neotropical migratory songbirds including 5 critically imperiled species. A dramatic decline has occurred over the past 25 years in grassland bird species (Knopf 1994).

Tallow tree growth will not decline in shade and certainly will do well in full sun whether it is dry or wet soil. This deciduous

tree which can reach heights of 60 feet has alternately whorled, heart-shaped leaves with pointed tip. The bark is a light gray and fissured bark. The drooping spikes are up to 8 inches long will appear from April to June. There are no petals but the sepals are yellowish-green. Three lobed capsules appear from August to January and release 3 white, wax-coated seeds resembling popcorn.

At Sacred Heart Church in Conroe, one of the parishioners got together a group of men from the church and using a chainsaw cut the tallow trees down, and informed me that a tree grinder will grind down the stumps this week. Several of these trees were about 30 feet in height. The trees and the seeds that we were able to sweep up were hauled away to a burnsite. I have offered to see that any sprouts that come back in the years to come are done away with using my trusty loppers or clippers. The least I could do was to see that this odorous plant does not reproduce in that area.

*"Come forth into the light of things,
Let nature be your teacher."* William Wordsworth

Please share your nature experiences with me at dianecabinessplants@consolidated.net

Remember that PWWS dues are due January 1! Just complete the renewal form in the newsletter and bring it with you!

Piney Woods Wildlife Society Membership Form

Last Name(s):		First Name of Members(s):	
Street Address:		City:	State and Zip:
Home Phone No:	Work Phone No:	Email Address(s):	
<i>Please deliver my Pine Warbler via</i> <i>E-mail</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Post</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Both</i> <input type="checkbox"/>			
Annual Membership Fee \$15.00* Additional Contribution \$ _____ Total \$ _____		Mail this form and check made payable to PWWS to: Piney Woods Wildlife Society P.O. Box 189 Spring, TX 77383-0189	
*Per Household - Includes <i>The Pine Warbler</i> newsletter New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Rejoining <input type="checkbox"/>			



Piney Woods Wildlife Society
P.O. Box 189
Spring, Texas 77383-0189

Spring Creek Christmas Bird Count December 18



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Heart Hotline.....281444-6204



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For membership information write to us at P.O. Box 189, Spring Texas 77383-0189. Annual Dues: \$15.00 per household.

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The deadline for submissions is the 25th of the previous month, earlier if possible. Always add "PWWS" in the subject line. All emails will be resonded to with in 3 days. If you do not recieve a response please call 832 717-3276. All articles are subject to approval by the PWWS Board.

Please send new address changes and corrections to Mike Drummond at drummond@thedrummonds.com and add PWWS to the subject line. Thank you.

Visit: <http://pineywoodswildlifesociety.org>