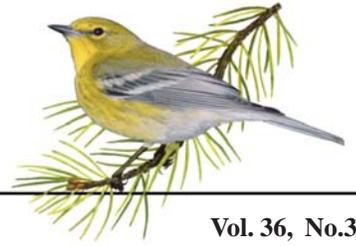


The Pine Warbler



March 2016

Vol. 36, No.3

March Presentation The Neotropical Migrants Presented by Paul Gregg



Chestnut-sided Warbler



Painted Bunting



Blackburnian Warbler



Yellow Warbler

Beginning in March millions of birds called Neotropical Migrants will reach the Texas Coast after wintering in Central and South America. We are fortunate to have such a biological spectacle within a short drive from our homes.

Thanks to our speaker Paul Gregg we will have information about places to visit to watch this migration. Paul and his wife Carol, year after year, have documented with their outstanding photography many of the species arriving on the way to spring nesting locations.

Paul is retired from the Harris County adult probation department as well as the U.S. Air Force. He gives photography classes at the Lone Star College Academy for Lifelong Learning (ALL) as well as being an adjunct instructor at the Kingwood Lone Star College. Paul has given presentations to five photography camera clubs in the greater Houston and Liberty County area.

Please join us on Wednesday March 16 at the Big Stone Lodge in Dennis Johnston Park, 709 Riley Fuzzel Road, Spring, TX, for a wonderful evening!



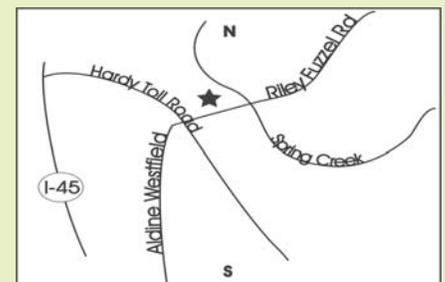
Big Stone Lodge - Dennis Johnston Park 709 Riley Fuzzel Road

PWWS meetings are held at the Big Stone Lodge at the new Dennis Johnston County Park at 709 Riley Fuzzel Road.

**March 16
Social 6:30pm**

The directions to get there are much the same as to the Nature Center. Aldine-Westfield turns into Riley Fuzzel Road just northeast of Spring so there are several ways to get there.

1. Take the Rayford/Sawdust exit and go East (right) on Rayford Rd. It dead ends at Riley Fuzzel, then turn South (right) and drive to the Dennis Johnston Park past Spring Creek and on the right. or, 2. take Spring-Cypress east to Aldine Westfield through Olde Town Spring, turn left and then on to Riley Fuzzel for a short distance and turn left; or, 3. Take Aldine Westfield north from Mercer Arboretum until it turns into Riley Fuzzel. Turn right and watch for the Dennis Johnston Park on the left.



Heart Happenings



For some 14 years, the HEART program has been relatively quiet, but that is now changing. Thanks to PWWS, HEART was a major player in the recovery of the Kemp's ridley sea turtles for many years, before I decided to work for the Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN) based in California. The news is now that I am resigning my position with TIRN, the which is a growing organization involved in many projects. I am interested in many other endangered creatures but prefer to concentrate on the Kemp's ridleys.

I wrote a column for their online publication in January which you might enjoy:

Reflections on the Kemp's ridley Sea Turtle

The small sea turtle that calls the Gulf of Mexico its home, is known to many as the Heartbreak Turtle. The Kemp's Ridley sea turtle continues to break our hearts because just as soon as its population starts to grow and start to leave the threat of extinction behind, it is set back again.

Trouble for the Kemp's ridley sea turtle started when people in Mexico discovered their nesting beach on the Gulf side of their country. Scores of people waited for nesting season and then stole their eggs from the beaches for food and for income. When the shrimp fleet grew in both Mexican and U.S. waters, thousands of sea turtles were caught in trawls and drowned.

The population of the Heartbreak Turtle just couldn't take it. Years passed and the number of nesting Kemp's ridley sea turtles declined, but was not totally overlooked. Sea turtle pioneer Ila Loetscher of Port Isabel, Texas, and her friends tried to move eggs to the U.S. before they were all taken. Both U.S. and Mexican scientists became aware of their efforts. Although many people in both countries can be proud of their work to save the turtles from extinction, two people come to my mind first - Dr. Rene Marquez of Mexico and Jack Woody, retired from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (and founding Board member of Turtle Island Restoration Network).

With their networks in both governments, a daring plan came about. Each year, at least 2,000 ridley eggs were carefully moved from Mexico to the Padre Island National Seashore in Texas. Here the eggs were carefully hatched and then raised or headstarted² in Galveston, Texas, for about a year. The result was thousands of healthy ridleys hatchlings protected from crabs on the beaches and seagulls swooping in for lunch.

Although the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the U.S. was supposed to protect sea turtles, it took years to force the shrimp industry to implement Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs), an interesting device that allows sea turtles to escape drowning when caught in shrimp trawls. Even today, shrimpers are al-



(photos from the NPS Internet)



lowed to use skimmer trawls without TEDs in a system allowing them to time the tow, and give any captured sea turtles a chance to escape. This system, seen as tragically comical to many of us, assumes that shrimpers keep an eye on their watches to make sure a net with a turtle caught in it doesn't stay in the water too long. We are still pushing the National Marine Fisheries Service for needed changes.

Eventually, the Kemp's ridley population began to grow, and scientists and conservationist were encouraged. Government agencies were even talking about down-listing the species from ESA protection. Then came April 2010 with the most tragic blow to the environment of the Gulf of Mexico ever recorded.

An oil well owned by British Petroleum (BP) blew up, killing 11 workers, and poured millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf (coating beaches, marshes, estuaries and unknown numbers of creatures). Pelicans and seagulls coated with oil were shown on television channels around the world. Volunteers and government workers rushed to do what they could to save animals. Meanwhile in the Gulf, sea turtles were being coated with oil, and caught in the middle of efforts to collect and burn oil. Turtle Island Restoration Network immediately filed a lawsuit with animal welfare groups to stop the burning, and look for sea turtles that could be helped. Meanwhile unethical shrimpers took advantage of the chaotic situation to go shrimping without TEDs since they knew law enforcement was pre-occupied. Hundreds of Kemp's ridleys with no signs of oil washed up on Mississippi beaches before fishing was stopped.

Government agencies have scrambled to come up with numbers of dead sea turtles or possible effects to future generations, but it has been mostly a guess. Now, the Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School has come up with new and shocking numbers.

An estimate released to the media in December 2015 calculates that as many as 320,000 turtles including Kemp's ridleys, greens, and loggerheads have been impacted by the oil spill, not just in the Gulf but also where turtles migrate to South America and Western Africa.

For a few days the 3rd whooper hung around the area and was heard calling out for the others. My Louisiana contact told me it has since thankfully returned to Louisiana and is with another whooper in a very rural area.

I'm so glad and blessed to have recorded them on photos and video on a very beautiful day before they were removed from our enjoyment forever. Maybe we all will be more appreciative of nature when we are out and about. Whether it be bald eagles or migrating warblers and anything in between, I believe I will view nature with much more appreciation this coming spring.

Enjoy nature while you can. What you see today might not exist tomorrow!

March Planting

By Kathy Dodge

March is one of the busiest gardening months of the year. March weather can be very fickle - it could still freeze since average last freeze is around March 12, and yet it still could be very balmy and pleasant most of the month.

PLANTING - March is a great month to plant almost every kind of landscape plant. The sooner you plant, the quicker the plant will start getting established. This is important if the plants are to do well through the hot, stressful summer. Nurseries are receiving weekly shipments of fresh nursery stock, and this is prime to buy and plant!

LAWNS - Control winter weeds by starting your regular mowing regime. If you missed applying a pre-emergent weed preventer in February and you had a summer weed problem in your lawn last year (such as grass burs), then go ahead and make an application now. You may have missed a portion of the weeds that germinate in early spring (like crabgrass), but will still control the many other types that can germinate anytime during the warm part of the year.

Wait to fertilize your St. Augustine or Bermuda lawn until April, or after you have mowed actively growing grass (not weeds) twice.

PRUNING - Pruning of evergreen and summer flowering trees and shrubs should be completed this month. But, prune spring flowering shrubs (forsythia, quince, azaleas, spirea, etc) only after they finish blooming, if needed. Hydrangeas also bloom on prior year's growth, so prune after they bloom.

FERTILIZING - After camellias and azaleas finish blooming, fertilize them with 2 to 3 pounds of azalea-camellia fertilizer per 100 square feet of bed area.

Begin fertilizing roses every 4 to 6 weeks from now until September. You also need to begin a spray program for controlling blackspot on roses. Uncontrolled blackspot will defoliate most hybrid tea, grandiflora and floribunda roses, causing them to decline in vigor.

Happy Gardening and Enjoy Yourself in Your Gardens!

Texas Superstars

By Kathy Dodge

It's time to start thinking about what to plant in your gardens. Spring is just around the corner. Texas gardeners need plants that tolerate extremes. Searing summer heat, drought, and winters that can alter the landscape.

Thanks to research led by Texas A&M University researchers and extension horticulturists, we have great options. For 21 years, they've tested plants in search of top performers — types that tolerate our extremes with minimal soil preparation and watering and no pesticides.

They've deemed more than 50 plants — including trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials and vegetables — Texas Superstars. The list includes plants that scoffed at our hot, dry, miserable summers and return from their hardy roots after winter's big freezes.

Here are 10 that are showing their resilience after a hard winter. For more, see www.texassuperstar.com.

1. Firebush or Hummingbird bush (*Hamelia patens*)
2. "Gold Star" Esperanza
3. Plumbago
4. Texas Lilac Vitex (*Lilac Chaste Tree*)
5. "Texas Gold" Columbine
6. Thryallis or Rain of Gold
7. New Gold Lantana
8. John Fanick Phlox
9. 'Blue Princess' Verbena
10. Pride of Barbados

What's the most common bird in the U.S.?

Birders always like to find the oddity, but people often ask birders, "What's the most common U.S. bird?" Of course, it depends on what is meant by 'common'; the highest in number or the one you're most likely to see in a given area or the one that occurs in the most states? Arguably, the most numerous bird in North America is the non-native house (English) sparrow, with numbers estimated to be as high as 8 billion (yes, billion). This bird is also common throughout most of the world, so worldwide numbers must be staggering. Though high in number, it's not necessarily the most common bird you will find in an area, because they're typically in urban settings; on many wild-area birding trips you will not see a house sparrow.

Starlings (non-native), rock dove (feral pigeon, non-native), and red-winged blackbirds (native) are probably close behind the house sparrow in quantity with starlings and pigeons being fairly ubiquitous in urban and wild areas, whereas red-wings are most common in wetland areas. Starlings and red-wings form massive flocks at certain times of the year, possibly 100,000+ birds in a flock, as do many waterfowl. Other competitors for most numerous native bird are Canada goose, mallard, mourning dove, yellow-rumped warbler, robin, and dark-eyed junco. Interestingly, some species you might not immediately think of are actually fairly common and well-distributed in the U.S., and becoming a usual entry on many birding trip



human housing and trees. They eat mosquitos, beetles, wasps, dragonflies and other day-flying insects.

House Sparrows and Starlings can take over your Purple Martin house. They can prevent Martins from nesting, destroy their eggs, and kill nestlings. Do some research on the internet and find out how you can become a successful Purple Martin landlord.

TWRC Wildlife Center is a Houston-based wildlife rehabilitation and education center available to anyone needing assistance with wildlife. Check our website at www.twrcwildlifecenter.org or call 713-468-TWRC and don't forget to donate so we can continue to help wildlife as we've done for 36 years.



Board of Directors

- President.....KathyCoward
- 1st Vice President.....Roy Woodward
- 2nd Vice President.....Claire Moore
- 3rd Vice President.....Carlos Hernandez
- Secretary.....Carole Frascella
- Treasurer.....Jim Lacey
- Director.....Terry Wilson
- DirectorJudy Springer
- DirectorFarrar Stockton
- Past President.....Al Barr

Numbers of Interest

Heart Hotline..... 281 444-6204

The Pine Warbler is published monthly, September through May, by The Piney Woods Wildlife Society, Inc. and Copperhead Publishing.

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



Publisher: Copperhead Publishing
Publish1@copperheadfarms.net or jdfagm@swbell.net.
 P.O. Box 131776, The Woodlands, TX 77393

Please submit any articles you'd like considered for the PWWS Newsletter, The Pine Warbler, to Roy Woodward (rawoodwa@bechtel.com).

Please send all new address changes and any corrections to cdmoore3@gmail.com (Claire Moore) and add PWWS to the subject line. Thank you.

Visit: <http://pineywoodswildlifesociety.org>