



SHREVEPORT SOCIETY FOR NATURE STUDY

NEWSLETTER
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May 1988

Operating a Bird Alert Service: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings after 5:00 PM, 226-7174; also selling thistle, sunflower and mixed bird seeds as well as bird feeders at the L.S.U. Museum of Life Sciences.

MEETINGS:

Tuesday
May 10
7:00 PM

The monthly meeting of the Shreveport Society for Nature Study--Bird Group will be held at the L.S.U.

Museum of Life Sciences, 8015 St. Vincent Avenue, Shreveport. The program will be given by Pat Lonacker: "Birding the Galapagos Islands".

Tuesday
June 14

The program will be given by Marilyn Kircus on the wildlife of the Ouachitas. These will be videotapes.

FIELD TRIPS:

May 14

Spring migration "Big Day" field trip at Paul Dickson's farm. Call the Bird Alert Service, 226-7174 for particulars.

BIRD NOTES (April 1988)

Numerous observers reported returning migrants throughout the month. (The earliest reported date only is recorded.) AE reports Cattle Egrets, 4-3, Little Blue Heron, 4-1 at Elm Grove; 4 Black-crowned Night Herons at WLD and a Snowy Egret 4-2 at BDP (SK,HJ); 32 White Ibis 4-23 at WLD (LR); Green-backed Heron 4-16 and American Bittern 4-21 at George Rd. (JMcb); Osprey was reported by PD at Loggy Bayou 3-31; a pair of nesting Bald Eagles at Toledo Bend (HH); Swainsons Hawk 4-27 (JMcb); 2 Mississippi Kite 4-17 (AE); Solitary Sandpiper 4-4 at George Rd, Pectoral Sandpiper 4-17 at Old Dixie Rd, (JMcb); Golder Plover and Upland Sandpiper 4-23 at LSUS campus (HJ); Spotted Sandpiper were seen 4-23 at Clyde Fant (SK); Whip-poor-wills were heard by PD first week of April and C. Night-hawk was seen 4-21 (JMcb); Red-Cockaded Woodpecker was seen at Kepler Lake (PD) on 4-9; Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were reported 4-16 by AE and Great Crested, 4-16, and E. Wood Pewee 4-2, (SK); Rough-winged Swallows were seen 4-7 (SK) with a fledgling 4-20; large groups of Tree Swallows were seen 4-1 (SK) at the VA Hospital; a late Red-breasted Nuthatch was seen at WLD 4-2 (HJ,SK); a Veery was reported 4-23 by JMcb and Swainson's Thrush in the Broadmoor area 4-27 (SK); CF reports both Prothonotary and Yellow-throated Warbler at her home; Black-throated Green and Hooded Warbler were seen at WLD 4-2 (HJ,SK); Yellow-breasted Chat were present at the home of VLG on 4-19 and the earliest report of Tennessee Warbler was 4-16 by JMcb who also had Orchard Oriole at George Rd. on 4-21; VLG had Northern Oriole in her yard on 4-18.

Reporting: Paul Dickson, Anne Elston, Carole Foster, Vera Lee Grubbs,
Horace Jeter, Steve Klotz, John McBride, Larry Raymond.
WLD=Wallace Lake Dam; BDP=Bickham Dickson Park.

THE BEGINNING BIRDER

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo (YbCu) is a common breeder in the Ark-La-Tex from April to October. The Black-billed Cuckoo (BbCu), an uncommon and elusive transient, often passes through the area unnoticed in April and again in September and October. The field guides describe these birds well, but misidentifications occur because of a common variation of the YbCu's song. The descriptions below come from the Golden, Peterson, and National Geographic guides.

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo, like the Black-billed, is a slim, long-tailed bird with a fairly long bill (similar to that of the Brown Thrasher). It shows a rufous patch on the primaries, contrasting with the olive-brown upperparts. The belly, breast, and throat are immaculate white. The inner tail feather is the color of the back above and mostly black below. The outer ones are black (above and below) with large round white tips. (Remember: if the tail is folded, you see the innermost from above and the outermost from below.) The white bands formed by the tips are at least as wide as the dark areas between them. A yellow eye-ring stands out against the brown cheek. The lower mandible is yellow, as is the lower edge (basal section) of the black upper mandible. The immature plumage, held "well into the fall" (Nat'l Geog.), features a slate and white tail, but the pattern is the same.

The Black-billed Cuckoo sometimes shows a small light area at the base of the black lower mandible. The eyering is red in the adult, and the primaries lack the rufous coloration. The outer tail feathers are olive-brown above with small white half-moons at their tips. A black line highlights the spots, setting them off from the pale gray bands below. The immature BbCu has a buffy eyering; the undertail is paler (almost white, but same pattern). The wing shows a little rufous but never as much as the YbCu.

The call of the YbCu is a series of hollow "toks"; it begins with a short acceleration and then slows dramatically toward the end. Often the notes are doubled or tripled. An alternate call is a slow series of long high-pitched "coo's", never doubled or tripled. These occur at about $\frac{1}{2}$ -second intervals or more. (I have been assured of BbCus breeding on the Texas Coast near High Island on the basis of this call!) This call is often tacked on to the end of the typical call, or more rarely, at the beginning. The call of the BbCu is a series of three or four short high pitched "coo's" in a fast series (about 1/8 second in-

tervals; $\frac{1}{2}$ second to complete the entire series). The two confusing songs are well-illustrated in the sonagrams of the Golden guide. Until next time, good birding!

John McBride

IMPORTANT CORRECTION

Spring Migration "Big Day" at Paul Dickson's farm is this coming Saturday, MAY 7, not on the 14th.

Car Poolers can meet at the Museum at 5 AM to depart at 5:15 AM. We are to meet Paul at 6 AM. Maps are available at the Museum.