

# The Pine Warbler



December 2009

Vol.29, No.9

## Spring Creek Christmas Bird Count!



Join us on Saturday, December 19, 2009 for the Spring Creek CBC. 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 will meet at Starbucks at 7:00 am, (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 8:15 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.

Bill Saulmon is the leader for Jones State Forest. The group can meet him 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.

After a full day of counting birds, we will have our countdown dinner at 5:30 p.m. in a private room at the Spring Creek Barbecue, at 4220 FM 1960 Rd W, Houston - (281) 444-8683. The restaurant is located on FM 1960 West just south of Oak Creek Village, Home Depot and Walmart.

You are welcome to attend the dinner whether you participate in the count or not. They have delicious barbecue, salads, freshly baked bread, and a cobbler with Blue Bell Ice Cream!



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

## DECEMBER 15 IS PARTY TIME!

The PWWS meeting on December 15 will be an informal time to eat, visit and talk about the upcoming bird counts. Everyone is invited to bring cookies, cakes, chips and dips, fruit, cheese, cold cuts, deviled eggs, veggies, apple pies or whatever you would like to share.

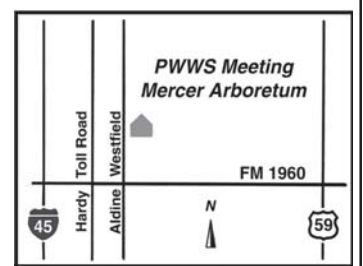


Drinks, cups, paper plates, utensils and napkins will be furnished. Bring your appetites and if you have any slides you would like to show, let Al know and bring a CD.

***Come join us for fun and good things to eat!***

**Date: December 15**  
**Time: Social 7:00 p.m.**  
**Meeting: 7:30 p.m.**

**Mercer Arboretum**  
**22307 Aldine-Westfield**



Everything is beautiful in its own way  
Like a starry summer night or a snow-covered winter's day  
And everybody's beautiful, in their own way  
Under God's Heaven, The world's gonna find a way.

-R. Stevens





## Heart Happenings

Thanks to our president, Al Barr, for assisting at the 2009 Conference for the Advancement of Science Teaching at Galveston on November 5, 6 and 7. Almost 6000 science teachers from across the state came to hear the lectures, take field trips and visit hundreds of booths packed with new books, technology and information. Al was an expert at convincing teachers they needed one of our Teacher Stimulus Packages. For only \$10, teachers received our educational DVD, a teacher guide, a color poster and either a T-shirt or a plastic sea turtle. Teachers knew it was a good deal and they trusted Al's judgment, too. Dr. Bernard Harris, former astronaut and Grand Marshall of this year's Thanksgiving Parade dropped by.



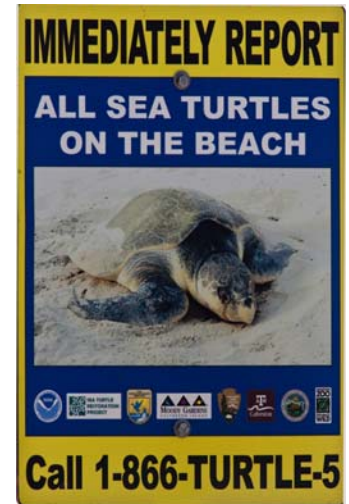
Dr. Harris, Carole, Sharla Knoll of League City and Al

Donations were also given to replace signs on the beaches bearing the 866-TURTLE-5 toll free phone line. All signs were washed or blown away by Hurricane Ike. Although work began immediately to find the funds to make more signs, only about half of the number needed were made and installed by nesting time for the turtles. The signs are made by Moody Gardens with the help of National Marine Fisheries Service and Texas A&M University at Galveston. Farrah Stockton has made a generous gift to the sign replacement fund to honor Karen. As you know, she passed away suddenly last spring. Karen was a strong conservationist and produced a musical program to educate about the Kemp's ridleys. When you see one of the new signs on the upper Texas coast, please think of Karen.

Carole Frascella and I attended the November 4 luncheon of the Citizens Environmental Coalition representing PWWS and HEART. Some of the area's most enthusiastic and respected leaders of environmental causes were recognized. Ann Hamilton, having just retired as a grant associate with Houston Endowment Inc. for 18 years, was given the President's Award. Channel 2's weatherman, Frank Billingsley, did a great job introducing Ann and winners of other awards also.

The Sea Turtle Restoration Project (STRP) is celebrating its 20th year. I went to Oakland, California, on November 14 for the big event which was held in the Brower Center of the University of California at Berkley. I first met Todd Steiner, the

Executive Director, in 1990 when I went to Mexico City to hear President Salinas declare his country's intention to protect sea turtles. In 1994 when hundreds of dead sea turtles were being found on Texas beaches as the shrimp boats moved along the coast, I called him and asked him to help. Other groups that had helped with the Turtle Excluder Device battle were now busy with other projects. Todd agreed to help HEART. He had started STRP in 1989 under the guidance of David Brower at Earth Island Institute. Todd founded the project after learning that sea turtles he worked to protect in Central America were being legally slaughtered after they migrated into Mexican waters.



STRP's many victories have included compelling Mexico to end its then-legal harvest of sea turtles and closing a sea turtle slaughterhouse; compelling 20 nations to use turtle-saving gear in their shrimping practices; creating policy reform that instituted a 200,000 square mile time-area closure, the Leatherback Conservation Area (LCA) on the west coast drift gillnet fishery in 2001, and preventing the reopening of drift gillnet fishing in the LCA; and using California's Prop 65 to require posting of mercury-in-seafood warning signage in California supermarkets and restaurants. STRP with offices in California, Texas, Costa Rica, and Papua New Guinea, is the largest project of Turtle Island Restoration Network, a 501c3 organization.

The STRP office is located well north of the Golden Gate Bridge amid rolling hills, worn mountains and redwoods. Although the visit was only for a few days, it was great!

### East Texas Nature

#### A Cold Weather Activity

By Diane Cabiness,  
Texas Master Naturalist

*"Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle."*—unknown

When you finish planting or getting an established garden ready for winter be sure to add mulch to the area. Mulches cover the soil and minimize evaporation, as well as cooling the soil, reducing weed growth and slowing erosion. Mulches provide landscape interest and protect plants as they mature. Organic mulches, including bark chips, decomposed hardwood mulch, pinestraw to name a few of the popular selections that are available in our area. Please avoid using plastic underneath mulches. Plastic prevents the soil from breathing and discourages deep root growth.

With fallen leaves and garden waste, start a compost bin to let it “cook” over the winter. This creates a great mulch to use in the spring, helping the soil retain moisture and warmth.

Tuck in a bin in the backyard, whether it is enclosed or open to the heavens by spring it should provide you with some free mulch or compost for your garden that will convert to free fertilizer when it decays. I periodically will add several shovels of soil. You can either leave the pile till it decomposes or for quicker results turn it weekly. Add water if needed to the pile.

John Alcott, an overzealous compost meister, in his book, In a Desert Garden relates how he came close to being cast into exile.

“As I dumped the future compost onto the pile, it did strike me that the three monster bags may have been too much of a good thing. The resulting pyramid of woud-be compost also impressed my wife, who took the time to relay some of her misgivings to me.”

“But since I wasn’t about to put the mouse droppings back in the plastic bags, I decided to persevere, confident that nature would work miracles in due course...Prior to even one small miracle, however, something else occurred. The mound heated and stewed away producing a ghastly organic stench. The smell of fermenting mouse dung and urine filled the backyard, overflowed the fence, and swept down the dirt alley like a wave of ammonia from a wrecked freight train. I have no doubt that you will believe me when I say it was a most unpleasant experience for me, my loved ones, and my neighbors.”

“My loved ones knew the culprit’s identity. My neighbors did not. I overheard two of them talking, wondering why on earth

the Dumpster in the back alley had become so horribly smelly of late. I left them in ignorance.”

A valuable lesson learned — Do not include feces or urine in the compost pile (no meat either). Do add vegetable and fruit peelings, the leaves that are raked up in the fall and grass clippings. A proper compost pile will not stink, but will produce an earthy odor especially when combined with the heat of the heap, which warms the gardener’s soul with the heavenly thought of the soil to be. A gardener’s well turned compost is their future black gold.

“To what purpose is this waste?”—Matthew 26:8

Please share your nature experiences with me at [dianecabinessplants@consolidated.net](mailto:dianecabinessplants@consolidated.net)

## 2010 PWWS Dues are Due January 1 Please renew your membership today

Membership dues for 2010 are due on January 1 so please take a few moments to fill out the enclosed renewal form, write your check, and return them to:

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

Also, donations to the Piney Woods Wildlife Society are always welcomed and appreciated.

Members who joined in the last quarter of 2009 are paid up through 2010.

# 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):	
Annual Membership Fee \$15.00*		Mail this form and check made payable to PWWS to:  Piney Woods Wildlife Society P.O. Box 189 Spring, TX 77383-0189	
Additional Contribution \$ _____			
Total \$ _____			
*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

## Piney Woods Wildlife Society Field Trips

### Spring Creek Christmas Bird Count! December 19



### 2008 Board of Directors

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### Numbers of Interest

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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P.O. Box 131776 Spring, TX 77393

**The deadline for submissions is the 25<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:drummond@thedrummonds.com) and add PWWS to the subject line. Thank you.**

**Visit: <http://pineywoodswildlifesociety.org>**