

## Piney Woods Wildlife Society FINAL NEWSLETTER

January 2024

## **President's Note**

It is with great sadness I advise you that The Piney Woods Wildlife Society has had to dissolve our group. At our January 9th board meeting, the board voted to dissolve as we have not been able to obtain new leadership. We have had a great run since 1981 but I know the spirit of the group will go on within all of us. The board has decided to divide our remaining funds among two worthy charitable organizations -- 60% to Friends of Texas Wildlife and 40% to Volunteers at Jesse Jones Park.

Here is a list of our Past Presidents... 1982-1983 Gary Clark 1984 Connie Alexander 1985 Tom Olson 1986-1987 Mike Austin 1988-1989 Kathy Adams 1990-1991 Chuck Terpstra 1992-1994 Calvin Blakley 1995-1997 Pat Collins 1998-2000 Michael Beathard 2001-2005 Kathy Coward 2006-2012 Al Barr 2012-2024 Kathy Coward

Thanks goes out to all of them. Also, I want to thank all of you who have given so much of your time, money and energy that made this such a wonderful group. Good Birding and hopes that you can enjoy all of the wonderful natural beauty our great earth has to offer.

Kathy, Your President

# **Various Information**

#### PWWS Website, Facebook, Luncheons, Photos

#### by Claire Moore & Diane Wedgeworth

FYI, the PWWS website will remain in place through May 9, 2024, when our domain expires. Claire will update it with the news of the group disbanding.

Our Facebook page is free, so we hope to update it with the latest changes and keep it around. Claire uses the Facebook page to share interesting articles about nature and about birds and give information about some bird walks in the area... If you wish, you can "follow" us there to see that type of content from within Facebook. You can find us either by searching for "Piney Woods Wildlife Society" or by clicking on this link: https://www.facebook.com/profile.php? id=100057099054320

PWWS does not have a presence on Instagram or Twitter, etc.

Another popular Facebook page associated with PWWS is entitled "Enjoy the Tomball Bald Eagles". On it, we closely follow a pair of nesting Bald Eagles that live behind the Target in Tomball at the northwest corner of FM 2920 and Highway 249. This eagle Facebook page was created by Claire in March 2020 from within the PWWS Facebook page. If you don't already follow that page, you can go to Facebook and search for "Enjoy the Tomball Bald Eagles" or you can click on this link: https://www.facebook.com/groups/EnjoyTomballEagles

FYI, there is another Facebook page for the Woodlands bald eagles that are easily visible from across Lake Front Circle from the western-most parking lot of The Woodlands Methodist Church. You can find that page by searching on Facebook for "The Woodlands Bald Eagles" private group and requesting to join.

#### Occasional Luncheons:

Diane is planning to coordinate the occasional luncheon get together with folks from the board and other interested parties. She plans to organize group lunches (going "dutch", of course) for folks to get together and visit. If you are interested in that, please email Diane Wedgeworth at milanodi@yahoo.com.

How to get nature photos:

Do you think you will miss getting all those beautiful nature and bird photos that Diane has been including in the newsletters each month? If so, you can email any of the authors below and ask to be added to their email distribution list. Of course, you can always ask to be removed at any time in the future if you change your mind.

Paul Gregg (paul.gregg@comcast.net) Paul sends out occasional emails with his bird photos & mostly Texas travel notes. Hank Μ Arnold (hmarnold@msn.com) \_ Hank enjoys sharing his travels, fun stories and nature/bird photos. Wayne Easley's "Creator's Canvas" (easley57@yahoo.com) Wayne loves

sharing beautiful photos from all over the world including Costa Rica

Thank you to all the photo contributors over the years! You are so appreciated!

We both will really miss visiting with everyone and attending the interesting programs. Hope to see you at other Nature Events in the future.



Spring Creek CBC Count Circle

Thanks so much to all the folks who spent some or all of your day on Saturday 12/16/23 helping to find all the birds in the Spring Creek CBC circle. Special thanks goes out to the team leaders! Without all these volunteers, I couldn't

have gotten this accomplished.

The count is "in the books" now. The data has been compiled and submitted to the Audubon Society. All the "rare bird" documents have been submitted to the Texas State CBC Editor, Brent Ortego, and hopefully he will accept them all.

Second, get out your 2024 calendar & put down the next "Spring Creek CBC" on Saturday, Dec 14, 2024. Hope you can join us and help us count all these birds! We can't do it without you.

FYI, last year's official world wide Christmas Bird Count results are available here: https://www.audubon.org/content/summary-123rd-christmas-bird-count-2022-2023

A couple people asked for the link for donating to the (National) Audubon Society which coordinates all these CBCs from around the western hemisphere. Here is that link. https://act.audubon.org/a/donate-onetime

Now down to business: We set a RECORD year for species found in this CBC!! We found 116 species!! Woo hoo! Our previous record was 106 species reported in 2020 -- we had 105 last year (in 2022) -- we usually are in the low 100's or in the 90's. The number of birds found this year (4,240) was slightly under our average over the last 20 years. This year we had 104 birder watchers in the field plus an additional 21 feeder watchers.

We had NINETEEN birds that required a "rare bird" write up. Amazing! Thanks to everyone who took their time to write up these birds. (We'll see if the state CBC editor accepts them all.)

Interestingly, we missed a few fairly common birds, so our species count could have been even HIGHER! Here are some of the commonly occurring birds that we happen to miss this year:

- Ruddy Duck
- Anhinga
- Roseate Spoonbill
- Northern Harrier
- Eurasian Collareddove
- Common Grackle

...and we we really close to missing these birds since only ONE team or feeder watcher saw or heard only ONE single individual:

- Ross's
  Goose
- Sharpshinned Hawk
- Swainson's Hawk
- Broadwinged Hawk
- Merlin
- Clapper Rail
- American Woodcock
- Inca Dove
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Yellowthroated Vireo
- Hermit Thrush
- Common Yellowthroat
- Eastern Towhee
- Henslow's Sparrow
- LeConte's Sparrow
- Vesper Sparrow
- Greattailed
   Grackle

...plus there were **TWENTY-THREE** more species where multiple birds were seen by only one team or feeder watcher! Phew!

If you are interested in looking at all the details, just email Claire at

cdmoore3i@gmail.com and she can send you her working spreadsheet with all the details by team & feeder watcher. (Don't try & print it!!!)

If you might be interested in going birding with groups on occasion, I recommend attending some of the free bird walks offered throughout the greater Houston area throughout the year. You can get information on those bird walks at this site: https://www.pineywoodswildlifesociety.org/home/birding-field-trips/ while our website is still up and running (through May 9, 2024). Let me know if you have any questions. I'm happy to help. Just email me at cdmoore3i@gmail.com



American Kestrel by Paul Gregg



Henslows Sparrow by Adam AJ Johnson



Ross's Goose by JoJo Bradbury



Limpkins by Gene Prejean



Damien Carey at Hooks Airport. Photo by Debbie Lancaster

# **QUIZ TIME**

### By Cheryl Conley, Lake Creek Nature Preserve Board of Directors

It's that time again. Time to test your knowledge. If you read my monthly articles, this should be easy-peasy, right? Not so fast. I think this quiz is a bit more difficult than the last one and will really make you think. Let's see how you do.

1. Name one country that has outlawed glue traps. 2. What disease can you get from the kissing bug? 3. What is the state bird of Texas? 4. If you know the answer to #3, name one other state that has the

same

state bird as Texas.

1. What

caterpillar is often called the Toxic Toupee or puss caterpillar?

2. Can animals

> die from capture myopathy?

3. How

many species of tree frogs live in

Texas?

- 4. Are tree frogs carnivores or omnivores?
- 5. Is

a green anole the same thing as a chameleon? 6. There are fewer

> than 200

of these birds left in the wild. What am I

referring to?

How did you do? To be honest, if I hadn't written the articles I would have gotten most of these wrong so if you missed some, don't feel bad. It's just for fun!

ANSWERS: 1. Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, England, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, two states & one territory in Australia, & four Indian states; 2. Chagas disease; 3. Mockingbird; 4. Tennessee, Florida, Mississippi, & Arkansas; 5. The asp; 6. Yes; 7. 14; 8. Carnivores; 9. No; 10. Attwater's prairie chicken

# From our friends at the National Butterfly Center -Mission, Texas

1-12-2024 - ALERT!!! National Butterfly Center member & Texas Butterfly Festival guide Chris Balboni was the first to spot a Gray Cracker in our back gardens earlier this afternoon. This is the first Cracker of any kind that we have had recorded at the NBC in over a year! Great find, Chris!



Gray Cracker - Photo credit to National Butterfly Center



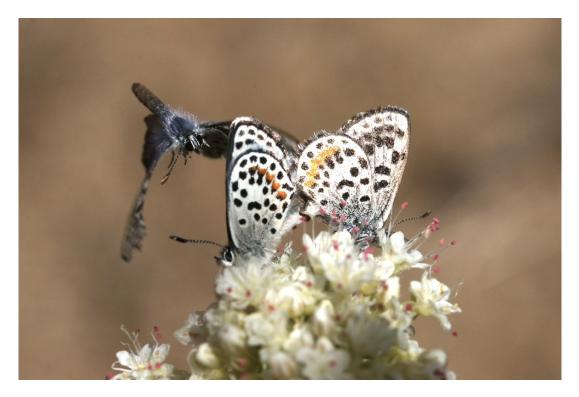
Gray Cracker - Photo credit to National Butterfly Center







Photo Credit to National Butterfly Center



NECTAR: State of the Butterflies Address - You are hereby invited to attend this inaugural, virtual address to learn more about us, butterflies and the state of things on Thursday, January 18 at 7 PM Central Time. Registration is required and the link is in the e-newsletter.

# **Photos by Randy Scott**



Bald Eagle parent exiting area near the nest in The Woodlands. He left the tree to our right. Those talons are super sharp and strong and I might add, dangerous. The bird can pick up and fly with as many as 10 pounds of cargo. This could be a cat, dog, tree limb and many other things. Photo taken yesterday near the nest. How about those talons!! I photographed this yesterday in The Woodlands, when Bettina and I went for a visit to The Woodlands. Photo by Randy Scott



1-5-2024 - I attempted to recreate the pre-dawn Christmas moon setting over the roof-tops of my neighbors to the West by this photo composite. I am trying to do a better job of it, but this is the result of me using the computer product ON1 to do it. It was even more impressive than this photo reveals, so I will try again. The orange surrounding the moon is a cloud formation in an otherwise cloudless sky. - Photo by Randy Scott



This was a surprise in December. I normally look for full moons after sunset. During the night of Christmas day, nature got sneaky. On the 26th at dawn, instead of evening, this moon was up in the western sky SETTING for the day. I watched it fall toward the horizon and decided to take a few quick photos. The air was pristine reminding me of a message from the heavens after Christ was born. Photo by Randy Scott



Fall in Winter in our community last week. I noticed some trees getting to their best colors this past week. 12-29-2023 - Here is one on the main road in the community of Grand Central Park. - Photo by Randy Scott



Not all Egrets are all white. This one was in the company of another pure white like we see all the time, but this one is truly pink except the head. Seen and Photographed in a county park in Spring Tx. Photo by Randy Scott

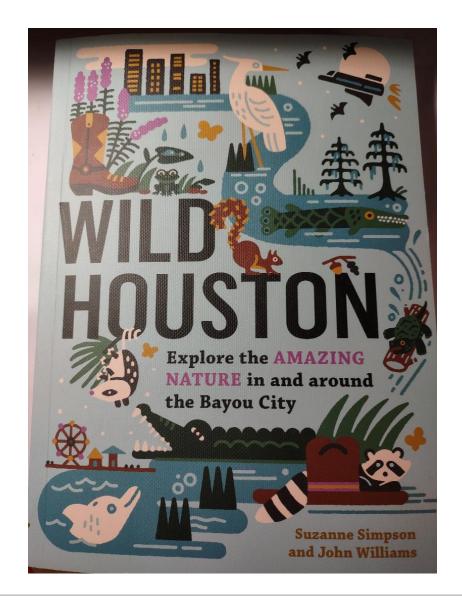


# Wild Houston Explore the Amazing Nature in and around the Bayou City

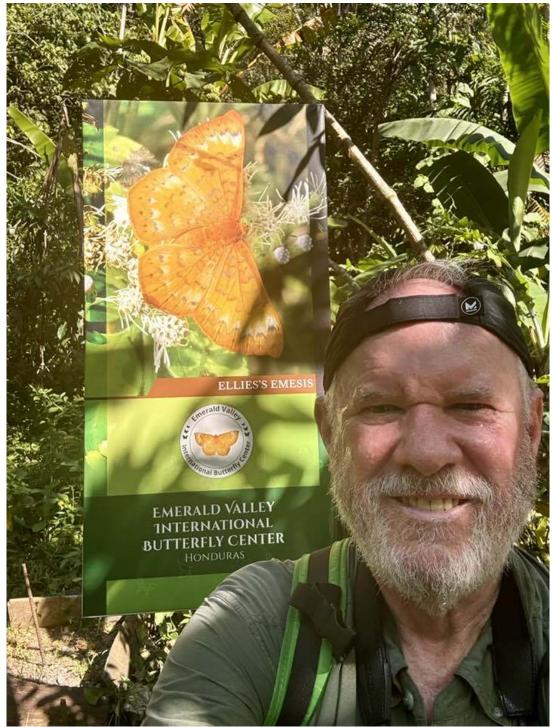
New Book authored by Suzanne Simpson and John Williams

By Diane and Hugh Wedgeworth

The Heartwood Master Naturalist group had Suzanne Simpson as a speaker at their meeting on January 10, 2024. She just published her new book entitled "Wild Houston - Explore the Amazing Nature in and around the Bayou City". This book features 25 field trips in the Greater Houston area. I thought our group would be interested in knowing about this book.



## Photos by Jim Snyder



1-12-2024 - I've made it to the butterfly capital of Honduras: Emerald Valley! - Photo of Jim Snyder



1-11-2024 - Souvenir shop in Peña Blanca, Honduras. - Photo by Jim Snyder

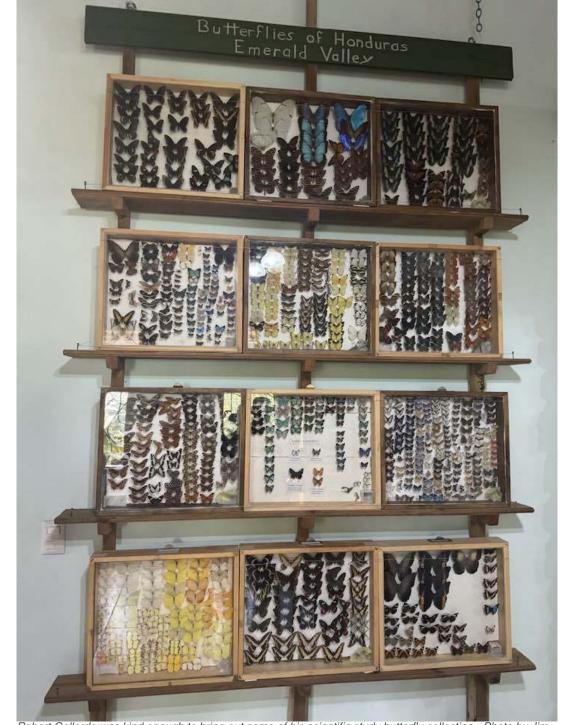


1-9-2024 - Mercado de frutas El Balin. - Photo by Jim Snyder

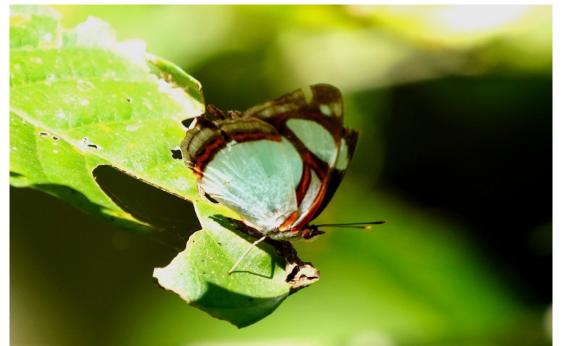


Ellie's Emesis (Emesis eleanorae)-male Emerald Valley Butterfly Festival. Lake Yojoa, Honduras. - Photo by Jim Snyder





Robert Gallardo was kind enough to bring out some of his scientific study butterfly collection.- Photo by Jim Snyder



White-edged Red-ring, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 -Photo by Jim Snyder



Tailed Sulphur, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024- Photo by Jim Snyder



Costa-spotted Mimic-White, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Silverdrop sp., Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Pearly Greatstreak, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Orange Mapwing, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



One-spotted Prepona, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Luna Phantom-Satyr, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Dirce Beauty, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Common, Morpho, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Chiapas Stripe-streak, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Blue and Yellow Beautymark, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Common Melwhite, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Blomfild's Beauty, Emerald Valley National Butterfly Center, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, 12-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Golden Sombermark, Meambar National Park, Honduras, 10-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



White-spotted Ruby-eye, Meamber National Park, Honduras, 10-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Toucan, Meamber National Park, Honduras, 10-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Rusted Phantom-Satyr, Meambar National Park, Honduras, 10-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Little Banner, Meambar National Park, Honduras, 10-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Gold-bordered Owl, Meambar National Park, Honduras, 10-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Rayed Sister, Bio Parque Paradise, Honduras, 11-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Erato Heliconian, Bio Parque Paradise, Honduras, 11-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



White-banded Metalmark (Grayler), Bio Parque Paradise, Honduras, 11-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Cupentus Hairstreak, Bio Parque Paradise, Honduras, 11-Jan-2024 (possibly 3rd country record for Honduras) - Photo by Jim Snyder



Cryptic (White-haired) Skipper, Bio Parque Paradise, Honduras, 11-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Silvered Ruby-eye, Bio Parque Paradise, Honduras, 11-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Pale-edged Owl, Bio Parque Paradise, Honduras, 11-Jan-2024 - Photo by JimSnyder



Larora Metalmark, Bio Parque Paradise, Honduras, 11-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Tailed Cecropian, Meamber National Park, Honduras, 10-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Banded Tigerwing (Aeria eurimedia)-So many years of visiting this park and I had never seen this species there before. Today, we saw at least five. - Photo by Jim Snyder



Gold-edged Owl-Butterfly (Caligo uranus)-the upperside is purple and yellow. A great find. - Photo by Jim Snyder



Decinea Skipper, Bio Parque Paradise, Honduras, 11-Jan-2024 - Photo by Jim Snyder

## **Creator's Canvas/The Resplendent Quetzal**

Photo by Wayne Easley



quetzal, resplendant savegre lodge, cr., R- Photo by Wayne Easley

Thousands of people from around the world come to Costa Rica to see the birds and there is one bird they have to see-the Resplendent Quetzal. Kevin, my son who owns Costa Rica Gateway Travel Agency, says, "If birders fail to see the Quetzal in Costa Rica, the trip is less than successful." That is pretty serious stuff.

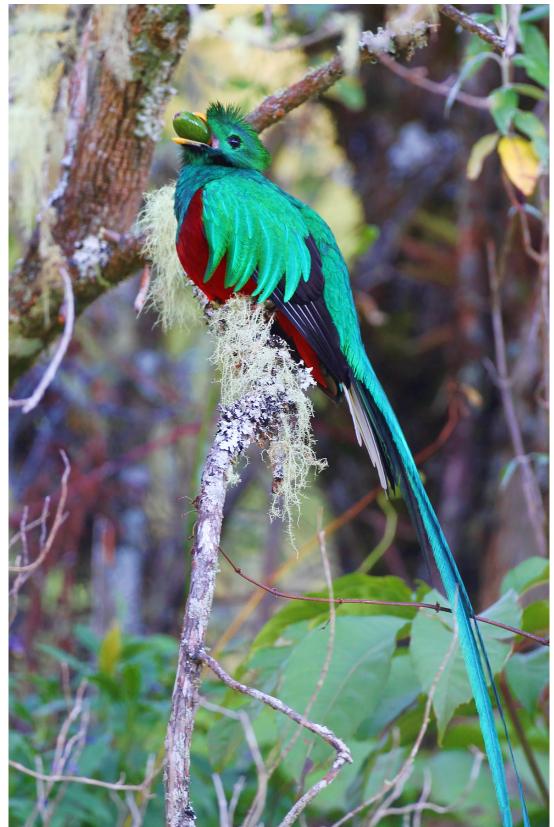
The Quetzal is a member of the trogon family. The plumage of the crested male bird is mostly greens and golds with a red breast and an incredibly long streaming tail that can reach a length of two feet or more. The female lacks the crest and the long tail and is out-fitted in more somber greens and grays. The birds mate for life and are very careful in their selection of a life companion. Once the birds have mated, they seek out a rotting tree that may have an old woodpecker hole that can be used for a nest site. If unable to find a suitable woodpecker site, they often carve out their own hole where two pale blue eggs are deposited and incubated by both parents. A big problem for the quetzals is that dead trees are often hard to find and also dead rotting trees are often cleared by local farmers and ranchers. Undoubtedly, there would be more guetzals if the local people would leave more trees that the birds could use. Once the nest chores are done, the female deposits the eggs and incubation begins with both parents taking turns on the eggs. The male, with that long flowing tail has a big problem; the tail is so long, he has difficulty getting everything inside. What he does is pretty clever; he leaves a good portion of the tail hanging outside the nest. This practice works pretty well, that is, if he doesn't end up damaging the tail, which can happen. Also, there is the matter of montane cloud forest predators, eagles and hawks as well as squirrels and weasels are prone to seek out the eggs or the young. The diet of the quetzal centers around a small wild avacado which is far and away their favorite food. Their food needs may include insects, frogs and lizards as well but when the small avacados are fruiting; the guetzals will be there. They swallow the avacados whole and spit out the seeds. Professional bird guides in the San Gerado de Dota (Savegre) and other mountain areas of Costa Rica are very aware of where these trees are located as the birds return to the same areas year after year. And every guide wants to help the birder or birders achieve that all important goal of seeing a quetzal.

While the tourists who flock to Costa Rica want to see and possibly photograph a quetzal, the Aztecs and Mayans of Mexico and Central America viewed the birds in a different light. Of course, they appreciated their beauty but they saw the birds as being divine. The god of the Aztecs was Quetzalcoatl, the chief god and the Resplendent Quetzal was given almost magical powers. The tail feathers symbolized the spring planting and the growth of important crops such as corn. In the flight of the quetzal, both the Aztecs and the Mayans caught a glimpse of the importance of the wind and air. An ancient Mayan legend suggested that before the Spanish Conquest of Mexico and Central America, the quetzal had a beautiful song but now refuses to sing as it once did. Only when the indian lands are liberated will the quetzal resume its beautiful singing. Because of these beliefs, it was a crime, punishable by death, for any indian to kill a quetzal. Instead, they would capture living birds and pluck out the tail feathers for their head dresses and festivals. The quetzal is the national bird of Guatemala and is featured on its flag, coat-of-arms and is, indeed, the national currency as well.

In reflecting on the divine status given to the bird by the early Indians of Meso-America, I am reminded of what the Apostle Paul said concerning man's attempts to elevate some of the things of nature to the level of God. The quetzal for all its beauty, for all of its long flowing tail, and for all our eagerness to see it, is, in fact, only a bird. In Rom. 1: 19-23, the apostle declares that many people in this world have substituted birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things in the place of the Living God. Let's be careful in our love of the natural world that we go above and beyond that very interesting world to the Great God that created the quetzal and everything else for that matter (see John 1: 3) Wayne Easley at Rancho Naturalista in Costa Rica Pictures; 1-male Resplendent Quetzal, 2-R. Quetzal showing long flowing tail, 3-R. Quetzal feeding on wild avacado near Savegre Mountain Lodge, 4-male and female quetzals investigating possible nest site.



quetzal, resplendant savegre mt., lodge, cr., R 2009 - Photo by Wayne Easley



quetzal, resplendant at savegre mountain lodge., cr., R 18-11 - Photo by Wayne Easley



quetzal, replendant silent mt., cr. R - Photo by Wayne Easley

Liberty Co. (north) Christmas Bird Count - Jan. 4, 2024

Photos by Paul Gregg



Paul and his followers - Photo by Carol Gregg

Happy New Year!

We had a really good day yesterday when we joined the Trinity River NWR Christmas Bird Count group for their 27th Annual Christmas Bird Count. We were assigned a particular area to go to, drive and walk around and count bird species and numbers. Our group of three counted some 44 species and total of over 400 birds. In the subdivision we drove only about 5 miles, but we walked a lot. . .A LOT! My phone indicated we walked about 6 miles, much in lanes and areas where there were no dwellings. The included photos are the "best of" what I was able to get. (The Spotted Sandpiper in the original photo was just a small blip in the shot. I had to drastically crop the photo.)

May we all have a great 2024 in pursuit of birds, enjoying being in nature and being in awe of such diversity of creation.

Enjoy,

Paul Gregg, SMSGT, USAF (Ret.)

(H) 281.441.9083; (Cell) 281.536.2304

Gen. 1:20: And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.



Eastern Phoebe - Photo by Paul Gregg



Great Egret - Photo by Paul Gregg



Anhinga - Photo by Paul Gregg



Great Egret - Photo by Paul Gregg



Great Blue Heron - Photo by Paul Gregg



Goldfinch - Paul Gregg



Eastern Bluebird - Photo by Paul Gregg



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - Photo by Paul Gregg





Spotted Sandpiper - Paul Gregg



Hermit Thrush - Photo by Paul Gregg



Hermit Thrush - Photo by Paul Gregg

# Photos and links by Hank Arnold



Photo by Hank Arnold

https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230427-202-SHW-2

https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20231111-Lamar

https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20240104-Rockport-Beach-Park

https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20240106-Ortego

https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230622-Second-Chain-of-Islands

#### From your friends at PWWS

Wishing Everyone beautiful sunsets and amazing nature be with you always!

### Sunsets from Arizonia

Photos by Durward Philip Hulce



Photos by PD Hulce



Photos by PD Hulce

#### **2023 Board of Directors**

President, Kathy Coward First VP, Diane Wedgeworth, Editor Second VP, Claire Moore, Webmaster Third VP, open, Programs Secretary, Carole Barr Treasurer & Director, Farrar Stockton Director, Debbie Wilson Director, Maryanne DiBiase Carole Allen, **HEART** Committee Chair

Please join us! PWWS web site is www.pineywoodswildlifesociety.org (until May 24, 2024).

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