



San Antonio Audubon Society

AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

March/April 2022

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Steller's Sea Eagles by Mike Scully



Steller's Sea Eagle in Maine. Photo is from a video found [here](#).

Beginning in June of last year, the unprecedented sightings of an adult Steller's Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus pelagicus*) along the St. Lawrence River and subsequently around the coasts of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and New England created a wave of excitement. Incredible as it may seem, it is possible this same eagle passed through our area last March. Three weeks after the Arctic vortex that wrought so much chaos here in February of 2021, an adult Steller's Sea Eagle was photographed on the Coletto Creek Reservoir near Victoria in Goliad County, about 100 miles southeast of San Antonio. The previous August (2020) there had been a sighting of an adult of this species unusually far inland in Alaska's Denali National Park. One theory was that this Alaskan bird had come south with the Arctic front; however, it could not be determined from the single Texas photograph if this indeed was the same eagle.

Three months later, the adult Steller's Sea Eagle was found on the St. Lawrence River. Distinctive plumage markings identified it as the same eagle sighted in Denali the previous summer. Given the rarity of this species in North America and the wandering habits of this particular eagle, the one seen in Texas could possibly have been the same bird. As of this writing, the Steller's Sea Eagle in the Northeast was last seen on the Maine Coast on February 13 and 14 after nearly three weeks without sightings. Maine Audubon has updates [here](#).

The most distinctive feature of the Steller's Sea Eagle is its enormous size, about one third again larger than the related Bald Eagle (*H. leucocephalus*) with a proportionately more massive bill. A large female Steller's Sea Eagle may approach 20 pounds in weight, on a rough parity with the Harpy and Philippine Eagles, but with a greater wingspan than those two tropical forest species. The Steller's Sea Eagle

ordinarily occupies a limited breeding range in Eastern Siberia centered around the Sea of Okhotsk and the Kamchatka Peninsula, breeding close to water along the coast, estuaries and rivers. This breeding range previously extended further south to include Hokkaido and Korea, but that range has since contracted from these more populated areas due to habitat loss and persecution.

Eagles in the genus *Haliaeetus* possess spicules on the soles of the feet and relatively short, recurved talons as adaptations for catching fish. The nearest Palearctic equivalent to our Bald Eagle in terms of size and more widespread range is the White-tailed Eagle (*H. albicilla*). Like the great bears of Kodiak and Kamchatka, the Steller's Sea Eagle is primarily a salmon specialist. The seasonally abundant runs of salmon support its larger mass through the demands of the breeding season. In the winter, Steller's Sea Eagles overwinter as far south as Japan, Korea and China. In addition to fish, waterfowl, gulls, grouse and mammals as large as seal pups, Steller's Sea Eagles may also go after foxes and hares when the opportunity presents. Carrion also forms part of the diet and the large bill may be an adaptation for feeding upon whale and seal carcasses, although those carcasses would have been much more numerous in the past.

As with the White-tailed and Bald Eagles, the Steller's does not attain full adult plumage until its fourth year and may not breed until age five or more. The large stick nest is typically placed in a tree or rock ledge near water and grows in size over the years as material is added. The usual clutch consists of two eggs and most often only one chick survives, although as many as three may be successfully raised depending on food availability.

The usual points of entry into North America by wandering Steller's Sea Eagles are the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands and Coastal Alaska where the species is a rare visitor. In 2004, a probable Steller's/Bald Eagle hybrid, a brown-plumaged immature, was seen near Juneau. The majority of birds of any species that wander far from their usual range do not survive for long away from the particular habitats to which they are adapted. Even if it was a different eagle in Texas, the stray individual last seen in Maine has shown a remarkable ability to survive and adapt, especially given its large size and accompanying food requirements.

(mike.scully@nisd.net)

SAAS Monthly Meeting
Thursday, March 3 | 7:00 PM | Zoom
Preparing a State Natural Area for Public Opening

**Presenter: James Rice, Superintendent of Albert & Bessie Kronkosky
State Natural Area**



James Rice, Superintendent of Albert & Bessie Kronkosky State Natural Area (ABK), will discuss the steps involved in opening a state-owned property to the public, including natural resource baseline work and volunteer involvement. ABK is located near Pipe Creek in Kendall County. Opening a park requires multiple steps and takes several years. Many factors impact the length of this process, including funding. Baseline surveys are the first step. These surveys determine sensitive areas as well as areas to be developed. The surveys also identify the scenic and interesting places at the site. James and the volunteers of ABK are continuing to gather flora and fauna data, preparing it for the planning of responsible development and public opening at a date to be determined. Several rare and unique species have been documented by the volunteers and are included in ABK's first three-year report. Read more about ABK [here](#).

About James Rice

James received a BS degree in Forestry from Stephen F. Austin State University and joined the Wildlife Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) as an Interpretive Specialist/Biologist in 2004. In 2011, he moved to the Parks Division in TPWD as a biologist at Government Canyon State Natural Area and in 2013 became ABK's first Superintendent. James and his wife, Laura, reside at ABK.

Join the Zoom Meeting

Topic: SAAS March 3 ABK State Natural Area

Time: Mar 3, 2022, 7:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Click [HERE](#) to Join the Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 825 0314 1233

Passcode: 781952

Find your local number [here](#)

SAAS Monthly Meeting

Thursday, April 7 | 7:00 PM | Zoom

Birds in Urban Settings and the Mission of Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation (WR&R)

Presenter: Leon Ruttley, Rescue Coordinator, WR&R



Leon Ruttley, Rescue Coordinator for Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation (WR&R), a non-profit organization based in Kendalia, TX, will talk to us about urban birds and the challenges they face. We will also learn about WR&R's efforts to rescue, rehabilitate, and release native wildlife, and to provide sanctuary, individualized care, and a voice for other animals in need.

Join the Zoom Meeting

Topic: SAAS April 7 Monthly Meeting

Time: Apr 7, 2022, 7:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Click [HERE](#) to Join the Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 873 7301 7470

Passcode: 005015

Find your local number [here](#)

SAAS Field Trips for March and April

Saturday, March 12, 8:00 AM

Beginners Bird Walk at Judson Nature Trails

Meet leader Barbara Sykes at the Judson Nature Trails, 246 Viesca Street. From the 5900 block of Broadway, turn west on Ogden Street and drive to the stop sign at Greeley Street. You'll see a sign to Judson Nature Trails. Turn left, go one block and turn right on Viesca, then into parking lot on left. Bring water. Please RSVP to Barbara at jntbirding@gmail.com to let her know you'll be attending.

Monday, March 14 @ 8:00 AM

Government Canyon State Natural Area

Meet leader Zach Tonzetich (zachary.tonzetich@gmail.com or 210/232-3670) at 8 AM in the parking lot near the [Government Canyon](#) visitor's center. Attendees are encouraged to purchase Day Passes ahead of time [here](#). If you have a Texas State Parks Pass valid on your arrival date, [Texas State Park Pass](#) holders can make Save the Day reservations at no cost. The park is located in Western Bexar County at 12861 Galm Rd. If traveling from Loop 1604, exit Shaenfield Rd. and continue west until you see the entrance to the park (Shaenfield will become Galm Rd. as it crosses FM 1560). Bring water and dress appropriately (especially footwear) for rugged trails. We will hike the back country trails looking for Golden-cheeked Warblers and other early migrants.

Saturday, March 19, 8:30 AM

Land Heritage Institute

Meet Patsy and Alan Kuentz (210/493-2673 or 210/749-7196) at 8:30 AM at the LHI Headquarters Building. Take Exit 46 off Loop 410 on the south side and turn south on Moursund Blvd., which turns into Pleasanton Road. Turn right onto Neal Road about 5 miles south of 410. Follow Neal Road 2.3 miles to the open gate on the right. Follow the road through LHI to the first right turn to the HQ building. A \$3 donation is requested. Bring snacks and water.

Sunday, March 20, 8:00 AM

Crescent Bend Nature Park

Meet Sandi Wheeler (wheels5683@gmail.com) in the parking lot of the park. From San Antonio, take IH-10 east to the FM 1518 exit and go north toward Schertz. Look for a brown park sign at Schaefer Road. Turn right and go 3 miles to the park. Entrance on left before Cibolo Creek. Bring water. The park address is 12780 W Schaefer Rd, Cibolo, TX 78108. Participation requirements will be based on CDC guidelines at the time of the field trip.

Saturday, March 26, 7:45 AM

Kirchoff Prairie, Wilson County

Join Derrick Mims for a morning bird walk on Kirchoff Prairie in Wilson County. Dress for the field and the weather, bring your binoculars and water, and come on out for great birding. The bird walk is limited to 15 people. Contact Derrick Mims (derricklmims@gmail.com) to sign up.

Getting There: If you put the address for the Kirchoff Prairie Restoration Site (1444 C.R. 210, Floresville, TX 78114) into [Google Maps](#) or other navigation software, those directions will take you right to the gate, which will be open for your access by 7:00 AM. Please plan to arrive by 7:45 AM so we can complete sign-in and some general instructions before 8:00 AM. It takes a little over an hour to drive from Central San Antonio.

Saturday, April 2, 8:00 AM

Junction Hotspots

We will be joining Rhandy Helton for a trip to Junction. For directions and other information, contact Christian Fernandez (christian1253@yahoo.com). Sign up early, as this trip will have a limited number of participants. SAAS members have first priority.

Saturday, April 9, 8:00 AM

Beginners Bird Walk at Judson Nature Trails

Meet leader Barbara Sykes at the Judson Nature Trails, 246 Viesca Street. From the 5900 block of Broadway, turn west on Ogden Street and drive to the stop sign at Greeley Street. You'll see a sign to Judson Nature Trails. Turn left, go one block and turn right on Viesca, then into parking lot on left. Bring water. Please RSVP to Barbara at jntbirding@gmail.com to let her know you'll be attending.

Thursday, April 21, 8:00 AM

Crescent Bend Nature Park

Meet Sandi Wheeler (wheels5683@gmail.com) in the parking lot of the park. From San Antonio, take IH-10 east to the FM 1518 exit and go north toward Schertz. Look for a brown park sign at Schaefer Road. Turn right and go 3 miles to the park. Entrance on left before Cibolo Creek. Bring water. The park address is 12780 W Schaefer Rd, Cibolo, TX 78108. Participation requirements will be based on CDC guidelines at the time of the field trip.

Friday, April 22, 8:00 AM

Warbler Woods Bird Sanctuary

Meet leader Sandi Wheeler (wheels5683@gmail.com) at Don and Susan Schaezler's sanctuary in Cibolo. Take I-35 north toward Austin. Take Exit 176, Wiederstein Road. Turn right on Wiederstein at the overpass. Turn left at the next road, Old Wiederstein. After you pass Dean Road, the Schaezler property begins on the right. Look for the green mailbox, 19349 Old Wiederstein.

Sunday, April 24, 7:45 AM

Maverick Ranch

Meet Mary and Bebe Fenstermaker (956/236-3779) at the gate to their ranch on Boerne Stage Road. Exit I-10 West in Leon Springs. Turn left on Boerne Stage Road and drive 3 miles to the stop sign and turn right on Boerne Stage Road. Drive 1.4 miles to the gate on the left. The gate will be locked after we meet, so please note the start time and arrive early. Wear suitable footwear for hiking. Bring snacks and water. If you are interested in attending, please email Christian Fernandez to RSVP (christian1253@yahoo.com).

Great Backyard Bird Count February 18-21



Carolina Wren by Gary Mueller, Macaulay Library

Participating in the annual [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) (February 18-21) is easy, fun to do alone, or with others, and can be done anywhere you find birds.

Step 1 – Decide where you will watch birds.

Step 2 – Watch birds for **15 minutes or more, at least once over the four days**, February 18-21.

Step 3 – Count all the birds you **see or hear** within your planned time/location and use the best tool for sharing your bird sightings:

- If you are **new to birding**, try using the [Merlin Bird ID app](#).
- If you have **participated** in the count **before**, use the [eBird Mobile app](#) or enter your bird list on the [eBird website](#) (desktop/laptop).
- If you are **participating as a group**, see instructions for [Group Counting](#).

Read more [here](#).

Birds in Hardberger Park Online Program



On Saturday, February 26, from 9:00-10:00 AM, SAAS members Alan and Patsy Kuentz will give a Zoom presentation about birds and birding in Phil Hardberger Park as part of the Fourth Saturday programming for the park. New birders as well as more experienced birders will likely find this program quite informative.

David Jimenez, Phil Hardberger Park Educator, will host the event for the Alamo Area Master Naturalists on behalf of the Phil Hardberger Park Conservancy.

This event's general sponsors are San Antonio Parks & Recreation Department's Natural Areas Office, Alamo Area Master Naturalists, and Alamo Group of the Sierra Club. Special sponsors include Bexar Audubon and San Antonio Audubon Societies.

Click [here](#) to register and to obtain the link to the program. *Red-shouldered Hawk photo above by Patsy Kuentz.*

Welcome New SAAS Members

Daniel Gomez
Kim Shaw
Cynthia Stacy

Take Part in the City Nature Challenge April 29 – May 2



Join Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Master Naturalists, the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, and many others in a fun challenge to see which city can document the most species during April 29 - May 2. It is easy to participate by joining an event or making observations on your own using the iNaturalist app. With the iNaturalist app, you just take a picture of a plant or animal, and the community will help identify which species it is. Any observation in the greater metropolitan area of San Antonio will count during the four-day challenge. You can participate by exploring the life in your backyard, in your local park, or on a field trip with your local naturalist group. You can also help with IDs for other people's observations to increase our species count, come to a bioblitz, or even hold your own event!

Click [here](#) to join the City Nature Challenge for our area. For answers to your questions or for more information, contact Texas Nature Tracker biologists at tracker@tpwd.texas.gov. If you're new to iNaturalist, learn more with the [iNaturalist Getting Started Guide](#).

SAAS Presentation Recording for Butterflies in Bexar County



If you missed Zachary Tonzetich's February 3 talk for SAAS on Bexar County Butterflies, you can access the program recording [here](#). Due to Zoom file size limits, the recording ends at 60 minutes, but captures most of Zach's informative presentation. Above: Yellow-angled Sulphur butterfly (rare for our area) photo taken by Zach at San Antonio Botanical Garden on January 17, 2022.

Issues in Birding Today

- [The Song Sparrow Might be Nature's Best DJ](#) from National Public Radio.
 - *Bird Watcher's Digest* ends publication. Read the last issue [here](#), which includes an article on searching for the Colima Warbler in Big Bend.
 - Endangered status of Texas' golden-cheeked warbler in question amid decade-long legal battle. Listen to the recent Texas Public Radio program [here](#).
 - Creating a Garden for Birds. [Brochure](#) from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology.
 - [Best Cameras for Bird Photography](#) from *Birdwatching Daily*.
 - Hummingbird ID Help: [Rufous vs Allen's](#): Field Guide to Hummingbirds: Life, Birds and Everything Blog (Sheri L. Williamson).
 - [Avian Flu Cases Raise Concern](#): Texas A&M AgriLife Today.
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Upcoming Birding Festivals

[The Birdiest Festival in America](#). Corpus Christi, TX, April 20-24, 2022.

[FeatherFest Birding & Nature Photography Festival](#). Galveston, TX. April 21-24, 2022.

Send Us Your Bird Photos and Stories for SAAS Facebook Page

SAAS would love to share your bird photos and stories on our Facebook page. Whether you have been birding in your backyard, around the county, or places beyond, we are eager to hear from you. Share your story on our [Facebook page](#) by sending info and photos to Christine at cbsturnbull@hotmail.com.

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center

[Mitchell Lake Audubon Center](#) is open Tuesday through Sunday, 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Birding tours take place every Sunday (except the fifth Sunday of the month or when the Center is closed for holidays) at 8:00 AM. [REGISTER HERE](#) for bird tours. Find more events [here](#).

Birding for Beginners Webinar

Thursday, March 24 | 6:00 – 7:00 PM | Zoom

[Registration Required](#) | Free

Learn about the skills, gear and resources to become a better birder. Includes tips to attract birds to your yard, such as using native plants in your garden.

SAAS Annual Budgets for 2022 (02/16/22)

The SAAS Board of Directors approved the 2022 budgets for both the General Operating Fund and the Special Projects Fund.

In 2022, we will operate the General Operating Fund in the red. Expenses are showing an increase in Mail Box, Website Support, Honorariums, and Miscellaneous from 2021. By year end we anticipate a net gain of \$21.

Donations are made from the Special Projects Fund with the approval of the Board of Directors. This fund has a deficit of **\$2,675** so SAAS can fund important conservation projects. The Special Project Fund received \$5,000 in 2017 from the estate of Sue Bayley and there was a \$500 withdrawal from this fund in 2021 for a Pollinator Garden at Mission San Juan under the auspices of the SALSA Squad. No funds were withdrawn from the Judson Nature Trail Fund in 2021. The Carbon Offset Program monies (\$4,333.40) were disbursed on December 19, 2020 to Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, Warbler Woods Bird Sanctuary, Cibolo Center for Conservation and Kirchoff Prairie Restoration. The dedicated accounts will be monitored and approved by the SAAS Board of Directors.

If you have any questions, please contact Treasurer Debra Engler at denglernb@yahoo.com.

Budget 2022 - General Operating Fund	Budget 2022- Special Projects Fund
Income	Income
Membership Dues \$3,000	CD and MM Interest \$125
Tax Exempt Sales \$0	Donations \$200
Taxable Sales \$0	Donations to JNT \$100
General Donations \$350	Carbon Offset Donations \$0
Bexar Audubon \$0	
Miscellaneous \$100	Total Income \$425
Total Income \$3,450	
 Expenses	 Expenses
Paypal Expenses \$75	Donation Requests \$1,000
Newsletter \$1,200	Carbon Offset \$0
Postage \$20	MLAC Donation \$1,000
Mail Box \$225	LHI Donation \$250
Office Supplies \$50	Warbler Woods Donation \$500
Website Support \$500	JNT \$150
Sales Tax \$20	GEAA \$200
	Total Expenses \$3,100
Treasurer Bond \$109	Income – Expenses -\$2,675
Picnic Supplies \$30	
Gifts/Awards/Honorarium \$600	Dedicated Accounts in Special Projects Fund
Equipment Purchases \$100	Sue Bayley’s Estate \$1,171.95
Education Outreach \$200	Judson Nature Trail Fund \$585.68
Miscellaneous \$300	

Total Expenses	\$3,429	Carbon Offset Bird Program	\$0
Income – Expenses	\$21	Total Dedicated Accounts	\$1,757.63
Duck Stamp (Net)	\$78	Money Market Account	\$6,937.57
Annual Dinner (Net)	\$0	Less Dedicated Accounts	\$1,757.63
Pass Through (Net)	\$0	Money Available for SPF in MM	\$5,179.94
		Credit Human FCU CD (11/27/23)	\$8,042.04
		Security Service FCU CD (09/07/23)	\$7,000.00

Local Birding Locations

MITCHELL LAKE AUDUBON CENTER

10750 Pleasanton Road

San Antonio, TX 78221

Visit the [MLAC website](http://mlac.audubon.org) or email mlac@audubon.org or call 210/628-1639

SAN ANTONIO BOTANICAL GARDEN

555 Funston, San Antonio, TX 78209

Visit www.sabot.org or call 210/207-3250

GOVERNMENT CANYON

12861 Galm Rd, San Antonio, TX 78254

Visit www.friendsofsgc.org or call 210/688-9055

CIBOLO NATURE CENTER

140 City Park Rd., Boerne, TX 78006

Visit www.cibolo.org or call 830/249-4614

JUDSON NATURE TRAILS

246 Viesca Street, San Antonio, TX 78209

WARBLER WOODS BIRD SANCTUARY

19349 Old Wiederstein Rd, Cibolo, TX 78108

Visit www.warblerwoods.org to request permission for birding

SAAS Membership Form

San Antonio Audubon Society Membership/Renewal Form		
NEW	___	RENEWAL ___
		GIFT ___
Name(s) _____		
Address _____		
City/State/Zip _____		
Phone _____		
Email (required to receive SAAS newsletters and announcements) _____		

Please check type of membership you'd like:		
	___	Individual/\$20 year
	___	Household/\$30 year
If you'd like to donate, please indicate amount:		
	\$ ___	Special Projects Fund
	\$ ___	Judson Nature Trails Fund
	\$ ___	General Operating Fund
Please make check payable to: San Antonio Audubon Society.		
Send check to:	ATTN: Membership San Antonio Audubon Society 5150 Broadway San Antonio, TX 78209-5710	
Payments can also be made at saaudubon.org by clicking Donate or Membership at top of home page.		

SAN ANTONIO AUDUBON NEWS

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SAAS Membership

The SAAS newsletter is sent by email only to all members who have provided an email address. You will also receive a membership renewal notice by email. We no longer mail a printed membership directory to everyone, but a PDF copy is available by email from the Membership Chair at saasforbirds@gmail.com.

San Antonio Audubon Society

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