

San Antonio Audubon Society

AUDUBON NEWS

A Conservation and Birding Club since 1954

November/December 2022

Volume 68, Number 6

Bonaparte's Gulls

By Mike Scully

Each winter flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) with their buoyant tern-like flight may descend upon our local lakes. Their dark ear patch in winter plumage and the white leading edge of their primaries remind me of the similar but somewhat larger Black-headed Gulls familiar from my English childhood. Bonaparte's Gulls are our smallest common species of gull, although the smaller and appropriately named Little Gull of Eurasia does occur regularly, but as yet, rarely, in the Northeast.



Two traits common to the world's 51 species of gulls are that they are long-winged and capable in flight and that they primarily feed upon animal prey. Many species employ a wide variety of feeding strategies used to take an equally wide variety of prey. The same is true of Bonaparte's Gulls, though given that their body mass averages only about two-thirds that of a common pigeon, they feed upon correspondingly smaller prey.

Unlike many gulls, Bonaparte's Gulls are not drawn to locales crowded with humans and our discarded foodstuffs. Invertebrates are important in the diet at all seasons and Bonaparte's Gulls will hawk flying insects where available, varying in size from large dragonflies down to flying ants and termites. During the winter, Bonaparte's Gulls congregate into dense flocks and these may follow plows in search of grubs or land to feed on foot where insect populations warrant. Over fresh and saltwater habitats, these gulls may pick insects, crustaceans or small fish from the surface in flight or dive after prey. At other times, they may land on the water, sometimes spinning like a phalarope to stir up the surface. In winter, small fish become increasingly important, captured alive or taken as carrion after die-offs.

The diverse feeding strategies employed by this species allow flocks of these gulls to winter across our southern states and along both coasts north to Washington State and Maine. Along coastlines, Bonaparte's Gulls may forage on foot amid seaweed drifts or feed in coastal wetlands and mudflats. In some areas they forage further out to sea than most gulls, seeking out upwellings containing abundant euphasids (krill).



Bonaparte's Gulls may also hover above feeding cormorants or mergansers, seeking fish driven to the surface. Perhaps the most remarkable observed feeding strategy, however, has been Bonaparte's Gulls landing on the heads of Brown Pelicans to steal fish from their pouch.

Among gulls, Bonaparte's are unique in that they almost always nest in trees. In summer, Bonaparte's Gulls frequent lakes and wetlands amid boreal forests across a range extending from Alaska east to the Canadian Boreal Forest Zone to Quebec. In the springtime their migratory flocks disperse across this taiga breeding range where, again unlike most gulls, they become solitary in habit. It seems incongruous to think of isolated pairs of gulls constructing cup nests woven from twigs and lined with mosses, placed on a branch against the trunk of a conifer and concealed by surrounding branches, but such is the case.

Nest sites are selected near a pond, lake or other wetland. Both sexes help build the nest and incubate the eggs. Clutches of three eggs are most common, corresponding to the adults' three brood patches characteristic of gulls. White birds like gulls can be conspicuous even on concealed nests and consequently Bonaparte's Gulls practice a proactive nest defense against ravens and other predators. In locations such as lakes where a number of dispersed pairs are nesting, these pairs may join in a group defense. Bonaparte's are sensitive to human disturbance when breeding and may mob humans 600 yards or more from the nest site.

The young of gulls are semi-altricial, covered with down and able to see and walk shortly after hatching, but are fed by their parents. For the first week of life Bonaparte's nestlings remain quietly in their forest nests, defecating over the side after the manner of some songbirds. Then begins what must be a perilous journey to the nearest shoreline, presumably guided by their parents, where they conceal themselves among surrounding vegetation. There are few direct observations of parental care in this species, but as in related species presumably the young are fed by the adults at least until capable of flight at four or five weeks of age.

Photos above by David Menke and Dick Daniels.

San Antonio Audubon Society and Bexar Audubon Society present:

Nature's Best Hope by Dr. Doug Tallamy

Thursday, November 3 | 6:30 to 8:00 PM (CDT) | Zoom | \$5



If you are concerned about doing something good for the environment, as we are, *Nature's Best Hope* is the blueprint you need. By acting now, we can all help preserve our precious wildlife, and the planet, for future generations.

Recent headlines about global insect declines and three billion fewer birds in North America are a bleak reality check about how ineffective our current landscape designs have been at sustaining the plants and animals that sustain us. To create landscapes that enhance local ecosystems rather than degrade them, we must add the native plant communities that sustain food webs, sequester carbon, maintain diverse native bee communities, and manage our watersheds. If we do this in half of the area now in lawn, we can create the **Homegrown National Park**, a 20-million-acre network of viable habitats that will provide vital corridors connecting the few natural areas that remain. **This approach to conservation empowers everyone to play a significant role in the future of the natural world. Approved for AAMN AT hours.**

Dr. Doug Tallamy is the T. A. Baker Professor of Agriculture in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, where he has authored 106 research publications and has taught insect-related courses for 41 years. Chief among his research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER \(\\$5\)](#)

Once you have purchased your ticket, you'll be sent the Zoom link for the event. All who purchase tickets will be entered into a raffle to win one of four door prizes, including a \$200 gift card for PolliNatives plant nursery or one of three signed copies of a Doug Tallamy book.

Thursday, December 1, 2022 @ 7:00 PM
SAAS Monthly Meeting | Zoom

Members Share Bird Photos



SAAS will celebrate the end of the year at our Thursday, December 1 online meeting with members taking turns on Zoom sharing photos of birds they've seen this year. Please email Zachary Tonzetich (Zachary.Tonzetich@gmail.com) if you'd like to share up to 10 photos from your computer that night. The fun begins at 7:00 PM.

SAAS 2023 Election

The SAAS nominating committee members, Barbara Sykes and Lora Reynolds, have announced the slate of officers that will be voted on during the December 1 SAAS meeting.

President: Debra Engler
Vice-president: Tom DeKunder
Secretary: Betty Walters
Treasurer: Desi D'Orsogna
Member at Large: Derrick Mims
Member at Large: Zachary Tonzetich
Member at Large: Lily Engles

Join the December 1 Zoom Meeting at 7:00 PM

Click [HERE](#) to Join Zoom Meeting
Meeting ID: 883 9867 5326
Passcode: 079271
Find your local number [here](#)

November and December Field Trips

Beginners Bird Walk at Judson Nature Trails

Saturday, November 12, 8:00 AM

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.

Crescent Bend Nature Park

Sunday, November 13, 8:00 AM

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.

Crownridge Canyon Park

Sunday, November 20, 8:00 AM

Christian Fernandez (210/415-0843 or christian1253@yahoo.com) will lead this walk at Crownridge Canyon, 7222 Luskey Blvd in northwest San Antonio. Trails are mostly paved, but there are some hilly areas. Bring water.

Calaveras Lake Park

Monday, November 21, 8:00 AM

Meet trip leader Zachary Tonzetich (210/232-3670, zachary.tonzetich@gmail.com) in the entrance lot to the lake at 8 AM. There is a day use fee of \$9 for adults and \$7 for seniors (65+) that must be paid at entry. The fee also covers entry to Braunig Lake for the same day. Calaveras Lake Park is located at 12991 Bernhardt Rd. in southeastern Bexar County. If traveling South on I-37, exit onto US Hwy 181 and travel southeast until Hwy 1604. Go left (NE) onto 1604 for a short way and follow the signage for Calaveras, which will involve exiting onto Stuart Rd. Bring water and sturdy shoes.

Warbler Woods Bird Sanctuary

Sunday, December 4, 8:00 AM

All participants must RSVP to Sandi Wheeler (Wheels5683@gmail.com) if you plan to attend.

Friesenhahn Park

Thursday, December 8, 8:00 AM

Meet Mariann Golden (210/415-4661) at this northeast San Antonio park located at 15701 O'Connor Rd. Bring water.

Beginners Bird Walk at Judson Nature Trails

Saturday, December 10, 8:00 AM

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.

Crescent Bend Nature Park

Thursday, December 29, 8:00 AM

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.

Christmas Bird Count

For updates on this year's San Antonio Christmas Bird Count in South Bexar County on Sunday, December 18, contact Dahn Windhorn (naturenut7@hotmail.com or leave a text message at 210/382-5968) if you are not already on a count team and are interested in participating. We anticipate groups starting as early as 7:00 AM and remaining in the field up to 7:00 PM.

Welcome New SAAS Members

Jeff Eoff

Vickie and David Lunden

Rick Moore

David Peden

Scott Stoore

Emilia Westney

SAAS-Y News

After 12 years serving as the SAAS newsletter editor, Lora Reynolds is stepping down. Katie Reseberg will take Lora's place starting with the January/February 2023 issue.

Katie Reseberg Bio

Katie's love of nature began when she was a young girl, as she was often found playing outside, bird-watching with her grandparents, or writing stories about her animal friends. She considered a career in veterinary science or wildlife rehabilitation, but her love of writing won out. She earned her Master's in Media Studies & Journalism from the University of Wisconsin. Her work has appeared in various print and online publications, including The Chicago Tribune, The Business Journal, Tiny Buddha, and The Onion. She currently leads the content and editorial teams at a legal startup. In her free time, she enjoys nature photography, cooking, and walking the nature trails surrounding her home in the Roseheart subdivision in San Antonio where she lives with her husband and two rescue cats.



Judson Nature Trails

Early fall has been a busy time down at the Judson Nature Trails. The City of Alamo Heights, where the trails are located, is celebrating its 100 year anniversary, having been incorporated in 1922. As part of the continuing anniversary celebration, a “Trailgate” party was held at the Judson Nature Preserve on October 1. The party, featuring a band, burgers and drinks, attracted about 150 people who enjoyed listening to the music, visiting with family and friends, and viewing the trails.

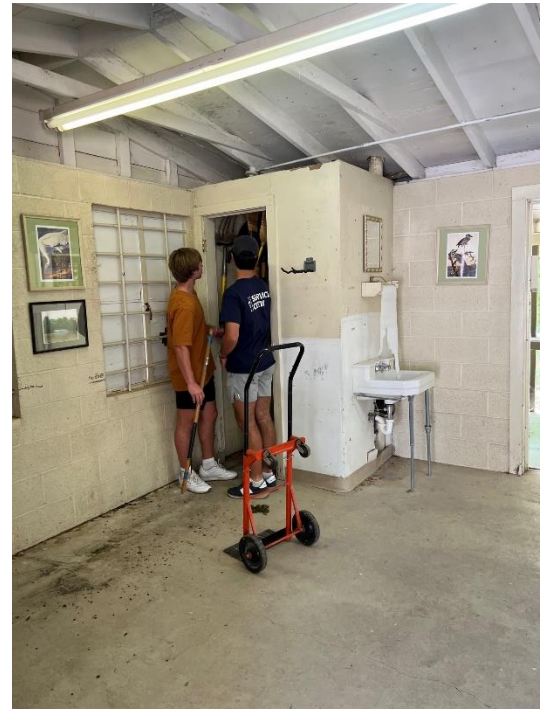


Preparatory to the party, Judson Nature Trail chairperson Barbara Sykes hosted a workday at the Audubon Trail House. She was joined by five volunteers from the Alamo Heights High School’s Young Men’s Service League who did the “heavy lifting” of moving furniture and tools out so the house could be thoroughly cleaned. The boys also trimmed low-hanging branches and filled holes and tunnels dug by various critters around the

house.

The trail house was open during the party, with pamphlets and bird information sheets on display. Audubon members Barbara Sykes and Becca Taylor joined board members of the Friends of Hondo Creek Trails in serving drinks and burgers during the very successful Trailgate party.

The October Beginner’s Bird Walk at JNT, led by Lora Reynolds and Becca Taylor, saw the largest turnout of beginning birders since the COVID pandemic. Ten participants saw 19 species and hopefully felt the “spark” to continue birding. The bird walks are held the second Saturday of each month at the Judson Nature Trails.



Annual Budgets for 2023 (10/10/22)

The SAAS Board of Directors approved the 2023 budgets for both the General Operating Fund and the Special Projects Fund.

In 2023, we will operate the General Operating Fund in the black. Expenses remain approximately the same as 2022. Annual website fees are Web Hosting through Network Solutions and Platform to Host through Square Space. Private Registration is 5 years (2020-2025) and the Domain.org is 5 years (2021-2026) both through Network Solutions. By year end we anticipate a net gain of +\$436.

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 is a balance of \$1,171.95 in the account. There were no withdrawals from this fund in 2022 leaving a balance of \$554.01. Funds in the amount of \$176.67 were withdrawn from the Judson Nature Trail Fund in 2022 for repairs at the Trail House. 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 2023 - General Operating Fund		Budget 2023- 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	\$200	LHI Donation	\$250
Office Supplies	\$30	Warbler Woods Donation	\$500
Website Support	\$350	JNT	\$150
Sales Tax	\$0	GEAA	\$200
		Total Expenses	\$3,100
Treasurer Bond	\$109		
Picnic Supplies	\$30	Income – Expenses	-\$2,675
Gifts/Awards/Honorarium	\$600		
Equipment Purchases	\$100	Dedicated Accounts in Special Projects Fund	
Education Outreach	\$200	Sue Bayley’s Estate	\$1,171.95
Miscellaneous	\$100	Judson Nature Trail Fund	\$554.01
Total Expenses	\$3,014	Carbon Offset Bird Program	\$0
		Total Dedicated Accounts	\$1,725.96

Income – Expenses	+ \$436		
Duck Stamp (Net)	\$0	Money Market Account	\$6,226.93
Annual Dinner (Net)	\$0	Less Dedicated Accounts	\$1,725.96
		Money Available for SPF in MM	\$4,500.97
Pass Through (Net)	\$0		
		Credit Human FCU CD (11/27/23)	\$8,042.04
		Broadway CD (09/07/23)	\$7,000.00
		Credit Human Savings Account	\$1,030.27

Issues in Birding

We've collected an assortment of current articles that may be of interest to you related to birding and environmental issues.

[Ten Fun Facts about the Yellow-rumped Warbler](#)

[2022 Taxonomy Update Coming Soon](#)

[2022 U.S. State of the Birds Report](#)

[American Birding Association Rarities](#)

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center

Hours for Mitchell Lake Audubon Center from now through February 14 are 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM Friday through Sunday. Thursdays are by appointment only, 48 hours in advance. 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](#). Visit the MLAC [website](#) or email mlac@audubon.org or call 210/628-1639.

EVENTS & PROGRAMS

NOVEMBER 2022

[Register at mitchelllake.audubon.org/events](https://mitchelllake.audubon.org/events)

Mitchell Lake
Audubon Center

Fall FREE Admission & Doggy Day
Saturday, November 26
Saturday after Thanksgiving
8:00am - 3:00pm

Sunday Bird Tours
Nov 6 | Nov 13 | Nov 20 | Nov 27
Ages 12+ | 8:00am
\$10 General | FREE for Members

Turkey Talk!
Saturday, November 19
10:00 - 11:30am
FREE with Entry Fee

Local Birding Locations

MITCHELL LAKE AUDUBON CENTER

10750 Pleasanton Road
San Antonio, TX 78221

Visit the [MLAC website](#) 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.friendsofgc.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

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.

SAAS Officers, Directors & Committee Chairs

San Antonio Audubon Society

5150 Broadway #257
San Antonio TX 78209-5710
info@saaudubon.org
www.saaudubon.org

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[Dahn Windhorn](#), President

[Zachary Tonzetich](#), Vice President

[Derrick Mims](#), Secretary

[Debra Engler](#), Treasurer

Directors at Large

Gail Nickel

Sandi Wheeler

Committee Chairs

Bird Records, Dodge Engleman birdreports@saaudubon.org

Education/Outreach info@saaudubon.org

Field Trips

Historian, Betty Walters

Judson Nature Trails, Barbara Sykes jntbirding@gmail.com

Publicity, Debra Engler info@saaudubon.org

Newsletter, Lora Reynolds editor@saaudubon.org

TO JOIN SAAS OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP, CLICK [HERE](#)

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 Newsletter

Editor: Lora Reynolds

Newsletter Distribution: Lora Reynolds

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