



Bexar Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Its primary goals are to promote species and habitat conservation and environmental education in the community.

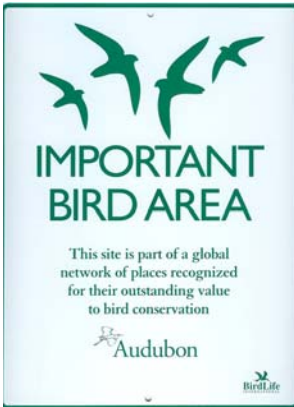
For the latest news and updates, see www.bexaraudubon.org.

January Program

ALERT!!!! Our January meeting will be a JOINT gathering of Bexar Audubon and San Antonio Audubon Societies! Meeting date is **Thursday, January 5th, 7 PM** at First Tee (915 E. Mulberry in Brackenridge Park). Our speaker will be Iliana Peña; see below for program details. *Bexar Audubon will not meet the 3rd Thursday this month. February 16th we'll be back at TriPoint with Peggy Darr speaking on "Protecting our Riparian Areas"*.

Important Bird Areas

With Iliana Peña, Director of Conservation, Audubon Texas
January 5, 7 PM at First Tee, 915 E. Mulberry



The Important Bird Areas Program (IBA) is a global effort to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and other biodiversity. Bexar Audubon Society, in partnership with Texas Parks & Wildlife, the City of San Antonio Natural Areas, and private landowners, has nominated several areas in northern Bexar County as Important Bird Areas. Iliana's program will focus on these efforts.

Program Description: The Texas Hill Country is well known for its unique ecosystems supporting two federally endangered summer breeding residents; the Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCW) and Black-capped Vireo (BCV). The City of San Antonio has seen unprecedented growth in the last 15 years encroaching into critical GCW and BCV breeding habitat. For this reason, partners joined together to nominate a 5,090 hectare site as an Important Bird Area. Come hear how partnership and shared effort helped make this happen and how volunteers will be needed to provide stewardship.

Iliana was the first Director of the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center in San Antonio. Today she manages the state Audubon Conservation program which includes Coastal Stewardship of 13,000 acres, the Quail and Grassland Birds Program, and the Important Birds Area program. Iliana has a BS in Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences from Texas A&M, and her MS in Range and Wildlife Management. Iliana is an avid hiker who also enjoys paddling, fishing, reading and traveling to new places.



Golden-cheeked Warbler

February Program

Protecting Our Riparian Areas

with Peggy Darr
Nature Preserve Officer at Medina River Natural Area
Thursday, February 16, 6:30 PM at TriPoint
(map on page 4)

Check the website & our spring newsletter for a follow-up field trip to Medina River Natural Area in April

Healthy Riparian Areas Mean More Water for Everyone!

There is more to a river than flowing water. A riparian area is the dense band of vegetation hugging the sides of a river. It covers the entire floodplain and can extend for miles. Riparian areas provide important wildlife habitat and are an important water source for the ever growing human population. Unfortunately, riparian areas are often misunderstood and abused. People allow cattle to graze at the river's edge, they mow the "weedy" plants surrounding a river, and they clear trees for a "better view." All of these actions reduce a river's capacity to retain water. The dense vegetation found in riparian areas acts like a sponge; when rivers flood, the plants slow the rushing water allowing more to soak into underground aquifers. During this time of severe drought, healthy, functioning riparian areas are more important than ever! Learn more about riparian areas and what makes them function properly from Peggy Darr, Nature Preserve Officer at the City of San Antonio's Medina River Natural Area.



Medina River

Peggy Darr has a Master of Science Degree in Wildlife Biology from Louisiana State University and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Vermont (her home state). As an undergraduate student, she also studied wildlife ecology and conservation while abroad in Tanzania and Belize. She is currently the manager of the Medina River Natural Area, a 511 acre preserve owned by the City of San Antonio. Peggy is primarily an ornithologist and has done field research with a variety of bird species including spotted owls in Washington, piping plovers in Massachusetts, Attwater's prairie chickens in Texas, and ducks in North Dakota. She has also given a variety of wildlife-related presentations including one on Texas shorebirds at the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival in Homer, Alaska.



MARCH PROGRAM — Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week at Hog Island Joint Program With San Antonio & Bexar Audubon Societies at First Tee!

Put Thursday, **March 1st, 2012** on your calendar for another joint meeting at **First Tee! Michelle Eckman**, Education Director at Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, will present on "**Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week at Hog Island Audubon Camp**" in Maine. Both Audubon organizations assisted with funding for Michelle's trip in July 2011. Michelle will share her gratitude and describe her experience from puffins to quaking bogs! The natural world of coastal Maine is remarkable and Michelle is eager to share it all. Join us as San Antonio Audubon and Bexar Audubon come together again to hear her presentation on Thursday, March 1st, at First Tee at 7 PM, 915 E. Mulberry in Brackenridge Park.

Michelle hails from Massachusetts, and received her BS in Wildlife Biology from UMass Amherst. After years working as an avian field biologist, Michelle turned her research efforts to education. She received her MS in Biology from New Mexico State University where her thesis research focused on environmental education evaluation. Upon completing her MS, she was hired as the Education Manager at the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center. Now the Director of Education, Michelle is responsible for the school education programs, bi-annual docent training programs, and is a member of the Texas Sustainability Education Advisory Committee and three statewide steering committees of the Texas Children in Nature Network.

From National Wildlife Federation Online

Setting a Winter Table for Wildlife

*Rather than cutting down the native flowers in your garden,
leave the seed heads and stalks standing
until spring for birds to feast on
11-15-2011 // Janet Marinelli*

Many people think that once the last goldenrod has bloomed in fall, the wildflower spectacle is over for the year. However, the spent stalks and pods that are the remnants of summer's blossoms have a stark, sculptural beauty—and even when the riot of floral color has settled into a winter palette of muted browns and grays, many plants continue to serve wildlife.

Seed-eating birds such as juncos and goldfinches flock to the dried flower heads of asters, coneflowers and other native plants at a time when other food is scarce. Winter wildflower stalks also provide wildlife with places to seek refuge from storms and predators, and insects pass the winter in the dead stalks.

That's why gardeners should ignore the conventional horticultural wisdom and hold off on the ritual known as fall garden cleanup. Do not deadhead wildflowers growing on your property. Instead, leave spent flower stalks until spring so that birds can feast on the seeds and insects can complete their life cycles and emerge when the weather warms. If you're fanatical about removing the stalks after the first frost, you'll not only be depriving birds of a source of winter sustenance but also disposing of some of next year's pollinators and other beneficial insects that fertilize native plants and food crops and help keep garden pests in check.

A few of the native wildflowers with seeds that birds will gobble up in winter include coneflowers, sennas, and round-head bush clover, asters, black-eyed Susans and any late-blooming sunflowers. Read the full article at <http://www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/National-Wildlife/Gardening/Archives/2012/Winter-Table-for-Wildlife.aspx>

*From the San Antonio Water System's
Water Saver Newsletter*

Monday, December 5, 2011

Leave the Leaves and Leave Raking Behind

By Mark A. Peterson

By now, leaves are falling and we ponder whether to rake, mow or just ignore them. Although options vary, leaves do provide multiple benefits. Perhaps the path least traveled is the one to pursue. Leaves supply an almost endless supply of essential nutrients like nitrogen, potassium, magnesium and manganese. Moreover, they supply simple and complex carbon chains to the soil, which provide food and energy to a variety of macro and micro organisms. Without leaves, trees would soon run out of the building blocks to make their own food.

This is not to say that leaves don't have some downsides. For those enamored with large expanses of turf, a steady supply of leaves on top of the grass will be detrimental. Live oak leaves decompose at a rate similar to the proverbial "molasses in January" and can quickly smother a lawn.

Here are some options to maximize leaf benefits and minimize leaf detriments:

Rake up repeatedly and dispose in the proper receptacle. This option benefits only those who require outdoor exercise.

Rake up and dispose in a compost bin. Exercise, reducing landfill input, and creating organic fertilizer are the chief benefits. You may have to speed up decomposition with small amounts of fertilizer and moisture.

Mow and mow often. Mow over the leaves and then mow again. You have all of the above benefits plus added nutrients for the tree *and* the lawn, and most importantly for some folks, reduced winter weed population.

So keep the mower out of storage for just a bit longer. Sharpen the blades and mow, mow, mow those leaves.



Excerpted from Hill Country Alliance online news
hillcountryalliance.org

Check links to these excerpted HCA articles at their website, hillcountryalliance.org, or check out mysa.com for articles on the whooping crane and Texas drought.

Drought leaving rivers, lakes with more bacteria

Increased bacteria levels in rivers and streams due to decreased flow that typically dilutes runoff pollution is an expected yet overlooked toll of the drought, said Andrew Sansom, executive director of the River Systems Institute at Texas State University. Read the full Statesman.com article at <http://www.statesman.com/news/local/drought-leaving-rivers-lakes-with-more-bacteria-2009431.html>.

It could take years for state's aquifers to fill

A historic drought has depleted Texas aquifers to lows rarely seen since 1948, and it could take months—or even years—for the groundwater supplies to fully recharge, scientists who study NASA satellite data said Wednesday. Read more from SA Express-News: http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local_news/article/It-could-take-years-for-state-s-aquifers-to-fill-2336849.php#ixzz1fTT1VWVL

Whooping cranes spark a water war

The whooping crane, the majestic bird slowly making its way back from the brink of extinction, is returning to the Texas coast in record numbers, with as many as 300 expected. This could be a hard winter for the endangered species, however, because a severe drought has left the marshes saltier than usual and without the abundance of plump blue crabs they like to eat. Texas water regulators, petrochemical plants and lawyers for the last wild flock of whooping cranes have faced off in court over who has first rights to dwindling water from a drought-starved river. The heart of the case is a river system stretching from near San Antonio to a marshy bay favored by both petrochemical plants and waterfowl. Environmentalists sued water regulators on claims they let industrial facilities, farms and cities suck the river so dry that not enough fresh water reaches the coastline. Their suit seeks a court-ordered plan to rebalance upstream and downstream usage regardless of pre-existing water contracts. *Several good links to keep up with this case and find out more, including* <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-12-05/texas-water-trial-pits-chemical-companies-cities-against-whooping-cranes.html> and <http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/environment/article/Water-for-whooping-cranes-2342852.php#ixzz1gGcTPwCd>. Or go to mysa.com and enter “whooping crane”—stay informed!

Should Water Be a Commodity?

The League of Women Voters has produced an excellent report on Texas water issues, ***Should Water Be a Commodity?*** Look for this study linked on the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance web (aquiferalliance.org) under Resources, Library, Resources for Member Groups. Check out GEAA's wonderful resources on their web: www.aquiferalliance.org.

Texas Climate News

November 3, 2011 |

A magazine about climate & sustainability

SNAPSHOTS OF THE DROUGHT

It hasn't been this dry in Texas since 1789

There was only one other year in almost five centuries when Texas' summer drought was as severe as it was in 2011, federal climate experts have concluded. Instrumental weather records used to measure drought severity don't go back much before the 20th century. (In Texas, they date to 1895.) And it appears no relief is in sight, the federal Climate Prediction Center said in its Winter Outlook for December through February: With La Niña in place Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and parts of surrounding states are unlikely to get enough rain to alleviate the ongoing drought. Texas, the epicenter of the drought, experienced its driest 12-month period on record from October 2010 through September 2011. Read the full story at <http://www.texasclimatenews.org:80/wp/?p=3355>.

Keep Flying WILD!

Audubon Adventures Award Recipients

Bexar Audubon Society recently purchased eight sets of *Audubon Adventures* teacher resource packs to award to teachers who are making a serious effort to educate their students about nature conservation and to get their students outdoors for some of their science education. We previously reported that Cynthia Vasquez was one of the teachers chosen; joining her is Jaynelle Reed, also a 5th grade teacher at Castroville Elementary in the Medina Valley ISD.



Cynthia first invited Audubon/Flying WILD Bird Educators Tom and Patsy Inglet to present the “Bird Detective” program to her classes in the fall of 2009; Jaynelle wanted to include her classes in the effort, so the entire 5th grade learned how to identify birds using the scientific method and to use binoculars effectively for birding (*one of Mrs. Reed's classes is shown practicing with the binoculars*). The following spring all the 5th grade students participated in a bird identification walk in which they spotted, identified, and reported the birds around the Castroville Elementary campus. Keep Flying Wild!

Bastrop State Park Recovery Effort

Volunteers are needed at the Bastrop State Park to help restore the habitat of the Houston toad and to do erosion control caused by the damage from the recent wildfires. Event dates are January 14 & 28 and February 12, 9 AM—3 PM. Volunteers should bring work gloves, lunch and water; wear close-toed shoes, long pants and long shirts. **Volunteer space is limited!** Contact Katie Rainey to see when your help could best be used, 512.237.2241 x 225 or 512.718.0211; Katie.raney@tpwd.state.tx.us.



Back to Nature

Check the Nature Calendar at bexaraudubon.org for more listings.

Government Canyon State Natural Area

Information/reservations for any GCSNA programs, 210.688.9055 x 291, reservations@friendsofbc.org. January & February programs include *Guided Hike to Protected Habitat*, *Haiku Hikes*, *Winter Brrrds*, and *Explore the Canyon* with knowledgeable guides to discuss the flora, fauna, natural and cultural history of this gem of a natural area.

More info: www.friendsofbc.org

First Saturday Nature Walks and Second Saturday Programs

(Co-sponsored by City of San Antonio and Bexar Audubon Society)

Reservations suggested; walks occasionally change. Donations suggested. More info: 210.372.9124 or 210.564.6400, or peggy.spring@sanantonio.gov.

Nature Walk — Eisenhower Park: Jan. 7, 10 AM–Noon

Tough Trees! — Eisenhower Park: Jan. 14, 10 AM–Noon

Nature Walk — Friedrich Park: Feb. 4, 10 AM–Noon

Birding 101 — Friedrich Park: Feb. 11, 10 AM–Noon

Sponsored by San Antonio Natural Areas, www.sanaturalareas.org

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center

10750 Pleasanton Rd., San Antonio TX 78221
210.628.1639, www.mitchelllakeaudubon.org

Connecting People with Nature

About Mitchell Lake

Just south of downtown San Antonio, Mitchell Lake Audubon Center is located on a 1200-acre natural area. This unique and beautiful bird haven consists of the 600-acre Mitchell Lake, 215 acres of wetlands and ponds and 385 acres of upland habitat. Audubon Texas has partnered with the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) to showcase this wonderful natural area.

Coming Soon at MLAC:

Learning from Historic Texas Landscape Designs

Saturday, Feb. 18, 10 AM—12 Noon

Explore the idea of creating contemporary, conservation conscious landscapes guided by the lessons and successes of the past. After a brief survey of historic regional landscapes and styles, discussion will include heritage plants and their uses in landscape design, as well as invasive plants introduced by our ancestors. Indoor/outdoor class led by award-winning landscape designer Mike Pecen. Limited space, program fee, RSVP required. Check online for more upcoming programs!

Medina River Natural Area

210.207.3111, www.sanaturalareas.org

Phil Hardberger Park

Education Program information/reservations: 210.207.3111 or 210.207.3284. More info at www.sanaturalareas.org, www.philhardbergerpark.org or www.sanantonio.gov.

San Antonio Audubon Society Programs

San Antonio Audubon Society meets the first Thursday of each month; check www.saaudubon.org for more information on SAAS programs and outings. And don't forget to join SAAS birders for the **Second Saturday Beginners' Walks** starting at 8 AM; meet at the Judson Nature Trails next to the Alamo Heights swimming pool, on Viesca street. More information, call 210.342.2073. *Everyone welcome!*

Audubon Flying WILD Young Birders

Young Birders Club (YBC) is for children between the ages of 7—12 and meets monthly on Saturdays, 8-10 AM. Parents with children under 7 are welcome to bring them and stay with them apart from the birding group; only children 7+ are allowed to go on the bird walks since having too many people disturbs the birds. We meet at a variety of parks/venues throughout the San Antonio area (to give the kids a chance to see a bigger variety of habitats and birds). We do not charge a fee, but some of the parks/venues do, and each family is responsible for those charges. New members are asked to attend the next training on Feb. 11. Kids will learn **Basic Birding** and binocular skills (we have binoculars to loan), and this will also help you determine whether the kids are truly interested in pursuing birding as members of the club.



Basic Birding: Feb. 11, 10 AM—Noon
Friedrich Wilderness Park. Donations accepted \$3/person, \$5/family.

Feb. 18, 8—10 AM, Cibolo Nature Center
YBC Meeting & Great Backyard Bird Count. We will do our part in Cornell University's annual Great Backyard Bird Count off the back porch of the nature center, then explore as many of the other habitats (Woodland, Prairie, Marsh, and Creek) as time allows. All sightings will be sent to the GBBC.

March 17, 8—10 AM, Warbler Woods Bird Sanctuary
YBC Meeting. Spring Migration.

February BAS Program
at TriPoint, 3233 N. St. Mary's St.





From texasbutterflyranch.wordpress.com

SA River Walk Boasts Vibrant "Butterfly City" Along Museum Reach

Posted on December 9, 2011 by Monika Maeckle

Like butterflies? Want to know how to attract more of them? Check out Monika Maeckle's blog at texasbutterflyranch.wordpress.com, with such articles as these recent posts:

- San Antonio River Walk Boasts Vibrant "Butterfly City" Along Museum Reach as Butterfly Wildscape Matures
- A Year in the Life of A Butterfly Garden: From Turf to a Butterfly Host and Nectar Garden, with Edible Landscape In Between
- Monarch Butterflies Arrive in Michoacan, Mexico, Just in Time for Thanksgiving

Grasses of South Central Texas

with Floyd Waller, Ph.D., grass taxonomist

This 4 part workshop is taught by Dr. Floyd Waller, PhD in Grass Systems, Texas A&M. Learn the parts and functions of grasses in our ecosystems and the technical terms necessary for using the I.D. Manual. Learn basic structure and morphology of grass plants & how to I.D. grasses found in our area. Four Fridays: March 23 & 30 and April 13 & 20. Classes fill up quickly! 210.732.9927, upcsa@upcsa.org.

Bexar Audubon Society Contacts

President: Greg Pasztor—210.824.1235, gpsztor@ix.netcom.com
 Vice President: Anita Anderson—210.533.8726; ajandrns@sbcglobal.net
 Treasurer: Caryl Swann—210.653.2860; c.swann@att.net
 Secretary: Susan Hughes—210.532.2032; susan@wordwright.com
 At-Large: Anne Parrish—parrishes@att.net
 At-Large: Jessica Leslie—jleslie01@hotmail.com
 Webmaster: Greg Pasztor—210.824.1235, gpsztor@ix.netcom.com
 Programs/Outings: Patty Pasztor—210.824.1235; pasztor@ix.netcom.com
 Education Chairperson: Mary Kennedy—mbkenned@sbcglobal.net
 Editor: Michele Wood—210.492.4684, editor@bexaraudubon.org

One Environment.
One Simple Way
To Care For It.

Earth Share of Texas
represents leading environmental and
conservation organizations in payroll
deduction plans across the state.

Earth Share
OF TEXAS

Photo J. Griffis Smith/TxDOT

1-800-GREENTX ♦ www.earthshare-texas.org ♦ ESTX@earthshare-texas.org

Earth Share of Texas raises money for environmental and conservation organizations through workplace giving. If your employer participates in such programs, please ask them to add Earth Share to your giving options. By designating the Audubon Foundation of Texas (AFT), Bexar Audubon Society can benefit. BAS receives credit for our support and receives funding annually from AFT. For more information, call, email or log on: 800.GREENTX, ESTX@earthshare-texas.org, or www.earthshare-texas.org.

Cibolo Nature Center

140 City Park Dr., Boerne. Information:

www.cibolo.org/calendar

830.249.4616 or nature@cibolo.org

Lots of great programs & events for the whole family at CNC. Be part of the Winter Prairie Bird Survey or the Great Back Yard Bird Count in January and February at CNC! Call/email for information or reservations, Ben@cibolo.org. CNC offers a full calendar of programs during the winter months, covering these topics and much more: Heron Rookery Monitoring, Volunteer Service Workday, Wildlife Tax Valuation Workshop, Kid's Club, Vegetable Gardening & Seed Planting, Bird Box Monitor Training, Attracting Birds: Creating Bird Habitats, Harvesting Rainwater & Solar Energy. Check out the CNC at www.cibolo.org. Get out there and enjoy nature!

Invasive Plants Training Workshop

Saturday, Feb. 25, 8:45 AM — 4:30 PM at CNC

The Texas Invaders Program and Cibolo Nature Center are sponsoring a Citizen Scientist invasive plants training session. Training includes classroom instruction on identification of invasive species and field experience to include plant identification, reporting, and recording findings in the Txinvasives.org database. At the completion of this session participants will be certified as Texas Invaders Citizen Scientists. Ongoing I.D. and eradication opportunities will be available in Bexar County and the Hill Country region. Advanced registration required. *Details/more information, contact Lonnie Shockley at lonnie-shockley@satx.rr.com.*

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology Cornell Lab eNews, October 2011

Video: How Nature Works: Birds of Louisiana's Barrier Islands

Each year, birds from across the continent converge on Louisiana's barrier islands. Birds from the high arctic, western prairies, boreal forest, and coastal Alaska join Louisiana's resident birds in a feast fit for birds of all shapes and sizes. From birds that herd fish to those that probe deep into the mud with sensitive bills, see the diversity of birds and fascinating foraging strategies that reveal the underlying richness of these unique habitats.

Check out this video on YouTube—the link is too long to print here, so just input "Louisiana barrier islands, Cornell Lab," and you'll have a good selection of beautiful, informative Cornell Lab videos worth watching!

Bexar Audubon on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Audubon-Education-San-Antonio/153862271318580>



Bexar Audubon Society
PO Box 6084
San Antonio TX 78209-0084

Non-Profit
 Organization
 US Postage Paid
 San Antonio TX
 Permit #167

Bexar Tracks

Jan-Feb 2012

Bexar Tracks is the official newsletter of the Bexar Audubon Society, a Chapter of the National Audubon Society. The Chapter's primary goals are to promote species and habitat conservation and environmental education in the community.

Your membership includes National Audubon and Bexar Audubon and subscriptions to both Audubon and Bexar Tracks.



For the latest information on environmental events and happenings throughout the San Antonio community and surrounding areas, check out www.bexaraudubon.org.



Wingspan: Have you signed up for Audubon's *Wingspan* newsletter yet? Get more Audubon news from across the country through this new national e-newsletter. *Audubon Wingspan* offers the latest insights into our conservation work and new ways you can make a difference. *Wingspan* is delivered to your e-mailbox monthly and features beautiful photographs, news about our conservation initiatives, special enhancements to Audubon magazine coverage, and new opportunities for helping birds and their habitats. Find out more at www.audubon.org.

Photo courtesy of Greg Dimijian

Membership and Support for Your Environmental Voice in Our Community

Bexar Audubon welcomes new members to join Audubon through the chapter. This brings 100 percent of the first year's dues directly back to support local work. The same applies to gift memberships placed through the chapter. Your additional tax deductible donation is greatly appreciated. Bexar Audubon receives only a few thousand dollars each year from National Audubon Society as dues share. The rest we must raise ourselves. Your help is needed, and your donations will be put to good use right here in South Central Texas to provide environmental news and education to the community, including the newsletter, programs, San Antonio Environmental Network Issues Forum, Second Saturday programs, and other activities you may or may not hear about. Individual introductory memberships are \$20; seniors and students join for \$15. Please provide the following information for each personal subscription or gift:

Name: _____

Mailing Address with Zip Code: _____

Phone w/Area Code: _____ e-mail _____

Do you wish to opt out of other mailings by Audubon or those with whom it shares lists? yes no

Make checks payable to "Bexar Audubon Society" and mail to the address at the top of this page.

Enclosed: \$_____ for subscription(s) \$_____ additional donation

NOTE: Renewals should be sent directly to National Audubon Society.

NOTE: If you change address or cancel membership, you do NOT need to contact Bexar Audubon but MUST contact National Audubon (and we will automatically get that change when we download labels). Save time and energy by mailing your change of address information to National Audubon Society Membership Data Center, PO Box 52529, Boulder CO 80322-2529; phoning 800.274.4201; or e-mailing CHADD@audubon.org.