

A Sign of Things to Come

This week while working on a new pollinator garden in Lady Bird Johnson Park in Fredericksburg, volunteers saw a small yellow bird flying between two groves of trees. That no black was evident in the plumage ruled out a Lesser Goldfinch, made a closer look necessary to identify the species. Contently feeding on insects in the leaves, she seemed not to be in a hurry to move on. The bird was a female Yellow Warbler, the first fall migrant of the year.

It is refreshing to know that fall may just be around the corner and these recent hot days may be numbered, but experience tells me that cool is not an operative word in early fall in the Hill Country. Never-the-less we can take the presence of this small yellow bird as a sign that the migration process has begun. I noticed a sharp drop in the number of hummingbirds around the feeders this week, an indicator that the Black-chinned Hummingbird males are departing for the tropics. We will have females and juveniles until the first few days of September when they too will leave us. As the black chins pack up and leave us, remember the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds will take their places at the feeders. I heard that the Rufus Hummingbirds showed up on schedule in late July, but have not seen one at my feeders. You will likely see a streak of orange taking control of the feeder traffic, if one decides to be your guest for a while. The Purple Martins are mostly gone; more evidence that the fall migration season is at hand.

I have been preparing for a couple of fall nature festivals in which I have had the privilege of participating for more than five years – the Dragonfly Festival in Roswell, New Mexico and the Hummer Bird Celebration in Rockport. I have enjoyed my time and association with both and recommend you consider joining me at one, or both, of these nature related festivals. Both gatherings feature talks and fieldtrips to give you an opportunity to see many species of birds as they pass through these venues to their wintering ranges.

The Dragonfly Festival will be held at the Bitter Lakes National Wildlife Refuge near Roswell on September 7-9. This will be a special 75th anniversary of the wildlife refuge, one of my favorite refuges because of the rich diversity of wildlife found there. The saline lakes support an incredible number of unusual dragonflies as well as birds. In addition, the endangered Puzzle Sunflower puts on a dazzling blanket of yellow cover around the refuge. I hope that you can join me on a field trip and allow me to introduce you to a colorful adventure in the refuge.

A week later I will be at the 24th annual Hummer Bird Celebration in Rockport Fulton on September 13-16. I will be giving two talks during the event, “Who is that Knocking in the Woods” and “Wormy Landscapes: Give Butterflies a Chance.” I am currently putting together the new talk on woodpeckers and learning many interesting aspects of their lives. Many other great speakers will discuss a wide array of nature topics. A number of field trips will include some to local gardens featuring banding of migrating Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and maybe a local Buff-bellied Hummingbird. Great vendors, birds, and seafood are available to enjoy as you experience a weekend on the Texas Gulf Coast.

In addition to these festivals and nature related events, the Native Plant Society of Texas will be holding their annual meeting and symposium in Kerrville on October 4-7 at the Y-O Hotel. I will also be speaking and leading field trips at this event. I recommend you consider attending this

meeting to learn more about our wonderful native plant diversity here in the Hill Country. Many great field trips are scheduled around the area; you might see some good birds as well as flowers. I will look forward to you joining me somewhere along the way this fall to have fun outdoors. The little yellow bird was a sign of many good things to come our way in the coming months.

Article by Bill Lindemann, Fredericksburg

Some San Saba Bird & Nature Club members have already made plans to attend at least one of the aforementioned events. Hope you will consider partaking also.

My neighbor recently had a trifecta at her feeders: black-chinned, ruby-throated and rufous humming birds. What a treat!

Go outside & play!