

AUDUBON

T ★ E ★ X ★ A ★ S

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One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

—William Shakespeare

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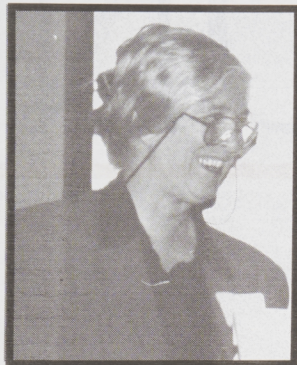
Merlins

By Stuart and Scott Gentling

Conservation Works!

From the Chair

By Lynne Aldrich



Bio - "a combining form"
Diversity - "turn in a different direction"

Bio-diversity - "variety"
Thus, Webster Dictionary defines the above terms.

Texas - one of the most biologically diverse states in the nation.

Texas Audubon Society - an organization "... dedicated to the conservation of birds and other wildlife, protecting habitat and natural diversity"

Audubon in Texas will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary. This January will mark the beginning of the third year of Texas Audubon Society (TxAS). We have come a very long way and have accomplished much. Many steps led up to the inauguration of our state office. In June 1995, the National Audubon Society (NAS) launched the rejuvenation of our organization through the adoption of a

strategic plan that not only revitalized the organization but also clearly focused Audubon on birds. It also began the development of a strengthened field operations structure that will help in leading Audubon into the new millennium.

In July 1996, the Audubon Council of Texas adopted the State Conceptual Plan that was to be the foundation for the strategic plan of the new Texas state office. In January 1997, Catriona Glazebrook arrived in Texas to take the helm as Executive Director. She quickly developed a Board that met for the first time in August 1997. In a very short time TxAS has paved the way for an environmental future throughout Texas.

Our own organization has become bio-diverse. We have joined together like never before. By turning in a different direction, the board reflects the diversity of Texas. We are a combined group of individuals who are committed to the future of Texas and its birds and wildlife—to its diversity and to its perpetuity.

In October a new board will be seated. The new Board of Directors will assume a legacy of Audubon in Texas that is rich in accomplishments.

BUT there is more work yet to be done. Forward movement can only be accomplished by working together—by continuing our own biodiversity. Our strategic plan is committed to three major forces that will take us into the new millennium: A commitment to teaching others

Cover Story

Merlins, by Scott and Stuart Gentling, is another one of the 53 paintings that make up their book, *Of Birds and Texas*, 40 of which are bird portraits. The brothers have generously offered to allow Texas Audubon to use these beautiful images to enhance the cover of its newsletter.

MERLIN

A sleek, dark, fearless falcon, the Merlin, formerly called the

"pigeon hawk," is a consummate predator of small to medium-sized grassland birds. The cover illustration by the Gentling brothers shows a dark brown, boldly streaked female, top left, and an elegant gray-backed mature male, or tercel, below. Unlike the smaller, more rufous American Kestrel, Merlins are observed far less often in Texas. In fact, anytime you see a Merlin, it is a cause for excitement.

nowhere with lightning speed, terrorizing a field full of blackbirds or robins during migration. Unlike the Sharp-shinned or Cooper's Hawk, Merlins do not as readily follow their quarry into thick wooded areas, preferring to ambush their prey from behind or above in relatively open areas. In Texas, Merlins are most often seen during winter or especially during spring and fall migration, as most nest



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From the Executive Director

By Catriona Glazebrook



Sometimes, conservationists rally support by pointing to one "impending disaster" or another. Loss of habitat, chemical pollution, increasing population, and global warming, are serious environmental problems that are changing the face of the world that we know and love.

There is, however, another equally compelling and far more positive reason for supporting conservation. The reason is simple. Conservation works!

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service is considering delisting the Brown Pelican from the endangered species list in Texas. This is due to the fact that the pelican population has significantly increased from the record lows of the 1960s and 1970s. The removal of DDT from use was the immediate remedy to stop the impending loss of these unique birds. It was also an indication that people cared about the natural world and were beginning to pay closer attention to its vulnerabilities.

In the case of Brown Pelicans, Bald Eagles, Ospreys and Peregrine Falcons, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was a successful tool. It drew attention to the plight of these birds and brought them back from the brink of extinction. Creating the ESA, which focuses on the importance of individual species and their habitat, was a crowning achievement. It is an achievement that reflects society's understanding and knowledge that other species are important—important enough to track and protect.

It was more, however, than simply the ESA that returned the populations of Brown Pelicans to Texas. It was the concerted effort of many people: scientists, policy makers, conservation organizations and private individuals that cared enough to commit their time and money to this cause. Audubon, primarily through its dedicated wardens, played a key role. Protection of the coastal island habitats was and remains crucial to the Brown Pelican's success. Although Brown Pelicans will most likely be delisted this year, it is important to remember that to insure lasting success, habitat protection and a watchful eye must continue.

While DDT is a thing of the past, habitat loss, competing uses for coastal resources, and Texas' ever burgeoning population are challenges to be faced in the present and foreseeable future. We need to continue to work together to conserve species and their habitat and can do so now with the knowledge that conservation works. We have a goal to work towards—no more loss of species and, we have a track record—along with the losses, we have some wins.★

OF BIRDS AND TEXAS: SELECTED PAINTINGS FROM THE GENTLING COLLECTION TO TOUR THE STATE

The Texas Audubon Society in collaboration with the Fort Worth Museum of Science, and Scott and Stuart Gentling are pleased to announce a statewide tour of the exhibition *Of Birds and Texas: Selected Paintings from The Gentling Collection*.

The exhibition features twenty-two original watercolor paintings. The birds are depicted life-size and are set against landscape backgrounds showing most of Texas' geographical regions.

These paintings are the result of an unusual collaboration by Fort Worth artists Scott and Stuart Gentling, twin brothers who spent more than eight years creating them for their book *Of Birds and Texas*. The Gentlings maintain that they are artists today due to their early interest in Audubon's life and work. This interest was sparked by the discovery of a book on Audubon's paintings in the library of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and are rather stylized and formally arranged, recalling the paintings of Audubon.

Of Birds and Texas will travel throughout the state from March, 1999 through March, 2000. To date, the tour has been booked at the following venues: The Contemporary Art Center in Fort Worth from March 6-March 28, 1999
The Texas Memorial Museum in Austin during the month of June, 1999
Brownsville Museum of Fine Arts from November 14-December 15, 1999
The Bush Library in September, 2000

The tour is being partially funded by the Sid Richardson Foundation. Audubon Chapters are encouraged to create a fundraising event in conjunction with hosting the tour in their area. For booking information, please call Elisabeth Flesher, 100th Anniversary Events Coordinator, at 512-306-0225.



Texas Audubon Society and Austin Metro Trails and Greenways present

1st Annual Native Wildlife Photography Contest

The competition is open to professional and novice photographers across Texas. There are also two divisions for junior photographers as well. So, dust off that old camera lens and prepare to photograph birds, wildlife and habitat!

The categories are as follows:

Grassland Birds
Woodland/Forest Birds
Raptors/Owls
Coastal/Water Birds (shorebirds, waders, marsh birds, colonial waterbirds, etc.)
Upland Gamebirds and Waterfowl

Scenic Regional Landscape/Habitat
Quintessential Texas Bird (Humorous)
Abstract/Artistic/Fantasy Nature Photo
Photo That Tells a Story
Austin Trails

Hey Kids - You Can Enter Too!

The categories are the same, but it will cost you only \$5 to enter up to three pictures. There are two divisions for Junior Photographers:

Division I: Ages 14 and younger
Division II: Ages 15 through 18

Deadline for entries is February 15, 1999 so send for your entry form today!

Winners for each category will be selected. From those winners a "Best of Show" will be chosen for Professional Photographer, Novice Photographer and Junior Photographers (Division I and Division II).

The four grand prize winners will be special guests at the 100th Anniversary Gala on March 5th, 1999 at Bass Performance Hall in Ft. Worth where they will receive awards. All winning photographs will be displayed at GSD&M advertising firm in June, 1999. Winners will also have their photographs (with photo credit) highlighted in the Spring Edition of the Texas Audubon Newsletter that reaches 26,000 households statewide.

Entry Fee: \$25 (limit of 3 entries per entry fee)

Junior Photographer's Fee: \$5 (limit of 3 entries per entry fee)

Interested photographers, contact: Pamela McCroskery, Director of Communications (512)306-0225 or e-mail: pmccroskery@audubon.org