

San Antonio welcomes fall migration *with contractors banging two by four boards at birds!*

By Alesia Garlock

As fall migration is happening in real time the harassment of migratory birds continues...

Sunrise with the birds. I watched as the sun rose one morning in late August at Woodlawn Lake Park in San Antonio. I could hear the call of a Belted Kingfisher. The Kingfisher was flying up and down the channel leading to the lake. I had not heard him in the park until today. The bird most likely was searching for a place to rest, eat and drink water on his way to other destinations.



Belted Kingfisher—Dwayne Flores



Belted Kingfisher frightened by banging two by fours—A.Garlock

Bang! Bang! Bang! I didn't even have time to enjoy the moment when just a few minutes later, I heard the disturbing sound of two by four boards banging together just across from where I stood close to the footbridge crossing the murky green channel that leads to the lake.



Egrets on branch along waterway August 2024 - Woodlawn Lake Park—A.Garlock

The extremely loud “nuisance noise” is meant to scare migratory birds away from the lake—Egrets, Herons and Cormorants out of trees, and apparently to keep them away from the water—water that the birds need to drink, rest and find food.

That poor Kingfisher took off like a Bat out of Hell! My opportunity to photograph the bird was lost—leaving nothing but a blur on my digital screen as Kingfishers can fly at speeds of over 70 MPH!

The Kingfisher needs to eat between 50 and 60 percent of their body mass daily, which is an estimated 13 to 21 fish. Hard to do, when the bird is harassed along with every other feathered relative that may stop at three of the city's biggest parks, which includes Brackenridge Park and Elmendorf Lake Park.

The Young'uns and adults: The young Egrets and Herons and adults perched on branches nearby foraging for food or trying to drink water soon took flight away from their peaceful perch. The juvenile Egrets and Herons unlucky enough to be in the path of the contractor must have suffered from the extremely loud noise as much as I did. The birds flew off in fright!

About the lake: Woodlawn Lake Park was originally built as a flood retention pond across from Alazan Creek, constructed in 1889. The mostly stagnant water is green in color with a sheen looking much like algae. Most residents know that the water is no contact.

The migratory waterbirds found a home at Woodlawn: The Egrets and Herons arrived at Woodlawn Lake Park in early May after being harassed away from Brackenridge Park and Elmendorf Lake Park. The birds found their way to a group of Huisache and Retama trees at the back of Woodlawn Lake Park in an act of desperation to nest. The Egrets, Herons and Cormorants nested in the trees with thorny branches anyway.

The Migratory birds would have to suffer through the harassment of loud explosive cartridges shot towards trees only a few hundred feet away from their nests beginning in the middle of June. With contractors banging two by four boards close to the nesting trees while the Egrets, Herons and Cormorants sat incubating their eggs and with chicks in the nest with all the noise.



Great Egret preening along waterway—A.Garlock



Great Egret chicks in nest waiting to be fed 8/31—A. Garlock

As fall migration brings more bird through this area in the Central Flyway, why the continued harassment for birds needing a water source, resting place and source to find food.

Migration: San Antonio is in the Central Flyway. As fall migration brings more birds through the Central Flyway Zone, why the continued harassment of birds needing a water source, a resting place and a space to find food? **November 1, 2024**-Bird-cast-live bird migration map showed 15.4 million birds in flight at 18:00ET. See migration in real time here: bit.ly/fall-migrate-live-bird-map

According to Bird Life International, the “Central Americas Flyway extends over 14,000km from the Canadian Arctic to the southern tip of Argentina. From its northern limit, the flyway stretches south through the North American Interior Plains and the Mississippi Valley to the marshes and prairies of the Gulf Coast. At this point some migrants head straight across the Gulf of Mexico towards the Yucatán Peninsula and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.” Find out more here: <https://bit.ly/fall-migrate-flyways>



August-Juvenile Egrets & Heron in on a dead limb at Woodlawn as they ready to migrate—A. Garlock

Why do Birds migrate?: Birds migrate to move from areas of low or decreasing resources to areas of high or increasing resources. The two primary resources being sought are food and nesting locations. Learn more: bit.ly/migrate-evolution.



Snowy Egret Woodlawn Lake Park—A.Garlock



Snowy Egret feeding chick late August 2024—A. Garlock

Just follow the birds: “Wildlife watching proves to be immensely popular; 146.5 million people viewed wildlife at home while 73 million traveled to watch wildlife,” according to Martha Williams Director, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. bit.ly/migrate-fhwar ,

All the way from Jersey: Ned Walthall, a photographer from New Jersey would make the thousand plus mile journey each year to photograph the Egrets and Herons in San Antonio. He was deeply angered and saddened by the harassment and removal of the birds from Brackenridge Park in 2022.

Ned shared with me how he experienced the hostile environment at Brackenridge Park as contractors shot explosive cartridges over visitors, while contractors banged two by four boards at the birds.



Cattle Egret by Ned Walthall from New Jersey—Brackenridge Park

Egrets and Herons are the only species Ned has photographed on his many trips to Brackenridge Park. His passion for traveling to see the birds began in 2013. His memories of the birds can be glimpsed **online here: bit.ly/walthall-herons**

Have camera will travel: I drove to Corpus Christi, in Texas in September with a fellow “Bird Watcher” and photographer looking for Wood Storks. It used to be a yearly thing tracking down birds with my camouflage gear and zoom lens ready for some action. These days in our current drought conditions, you never know what you will see! The Wood Storks we located are not strictly migratory but have a regular northward dispersal after nesting. The challenge of getting a photograph urged us on.



9/7-We spotted around sixty plus Wood Storks along the Joe Fulton Corridor in Corpus Christi, Texas—A.Garlock



Wood Storks along the Joe Fulton Corridor in Corpus Christi Texas on September 7, 2024—A.Garlock

A Return to Brackenridge Park: I visited Brackenridge Park in early September after staying away from the hostile environment that made me sick along with many other residents adversely impacted by the violent noise assault against the migratory waterbirds. I smiled inwardly when I spotted one Great Egret perched in a Live Oak Tree. **Then I saw “him!”**—The contractor carrying two by four boards was walking along the riverbank banging two by four boards together, ignoring his proximity to families gathered at picnic tables where families now glared at him! The contractor walked towards the pedestrian bridge close to where the solitary Great Egret perched and proceeded to bang the two by four boards together making the bird fly away in fright. The hazardous level of noise I had to suffer along with the bird for what? —to scare one bird?



Great Egret Preening Brackenridge Park



Great Egret Chicks Waiting to be fed-9/8 Woodlawn—A. Garlock

Woodlawn Lake Park-Innocence lost: When I first visited the park, what stood out to me was the laughter and sounds of children playing. What caused me the most concern with the violence against waterbirds and waterfowl now happening at Woodlawn, was the loss of another peaceful green space where the walkers could enjoy trails, families could gather, and children could play on a playground without the sound of gunshots or banging boards that are now the norm at Brackenridge Park and Elmendorf Lake Park.

The Sound of Shotguns in another park space: A local Bird Watcher and resident, Chris Belcher of *Explorist Media* reported hearing an explosive shot over the water at Woodlawn Lake Park on a Sunday in August. He informed me that it sounded like a 12-gauge shotgun blast!

Chris went on to say, “I absolutely loved seeing the birds when I first retired from the Army and started doing wildlife photography. The fact that they’re still being harassed this late in the year seems unnecessary and a waste of resources that could be used to address other important issues.”

Migration and threats to birds: Valerie Fellows of the *US Fish & Wildlife Services* reports that, “Migration: It’s a risky journey. Imagine a landscape that was full of trees, grasslands, wetlands, and mountains. Today, many of those natural habitats on the landscape have been replaced with human-made structures, like buildings and homes. This loss of habitat alone is a threat to birds as they must expend more energy looking for safe areas to rest, eat, and carry out their journey.” bit.ly/migrate-risky

Migrating birds face many threats. You can read more here: *Threats to Birds Collisions:* bit.ly/birds-collisions

Threats to Birds: Habitat Impacts: bit.ly/habitat-impacts

As part of this article, I asked the *US Fish and Wildlife Service* this question:

Should cities be more cognizant of the needs of migrating birds besides just turning lights out?

Response: “Migratory birds face numerous threats throughout their annual cycles from human-caused sources. In addition to turning out lights during spring and fall migration, cities can help reduce urban hazards to migratory birds through bird-friendly building programs, reducing mortality related to predators, implementing preventive measures to manage disease, and identifying, conserving and protecting important bird habitats.” Aubry Buzek-Public Affairs Specialist—*Texas* USFWS

Fall at Woodlawn: It’s now November and the Egrets, Herons and Cormorants left behind are not allowed to roost for the night in San Antonio parks as the city continues to harass the waterbirds.

Migratory waterfowl are now the target of harassment by contractors with unknown training of species identification, conservation, or even public safety. Migratory waterfowl that winter throughout the south travel from as far away as Canada and face the loss of water sources as Texas continues in extreme drought conditions. Find out about our current drought conditions here: bit.ly/texas-drought

As waterfowl make their way south you can follow their progress here for places to view some of the most beautiful birds you can set your eyes on: bit.ly/duck-migration-map



Male Hooded Merganser



Male Hooded Merganser



Woodlawn-June 16, 2024,

The sound of contractors banging two by four boards can be heard blocks away!

As fall migration brings more birds into city parks that are critical water sources—will migratory birds continue to be met by contractors banging two by four boards year-round now in our so-called Bird City San Antonio?

About the Nuisance Noise: Noise is unwanted and/or harmful sounds, first recognized as a public health hazard in 1968. The Noise Control Act of 1972 declared that “it is the policy of the United States to promote an environment for all Americans free from noise that jeopardizes their health or welfare.”

Loud noise causes hearing loss and tinnitus and can contribute to non-auditory health problems. Chronic noise, even at low levels, can cause annoyance, sleep disruption and stress that contribute to cardiovascular disease, cerebrovascular disease, metabolic disturbances, exacerbation of psychological disorders, and premature mortality. Noise interferes with cognition and learning, contributes to behavior problems, and reduces achievement and productivity. bit.ly/noise-hazard

The nuisance noise not only affects the birds, but the noise also affects all wildlife, including pets and humans. If you are tired of the noise and are willing to learn more about learning to coexist with our migratory birds, consider being a voice for the birds and say **Stop the Noise!**



Cattle Egret at Sunset-Woodlawn Lake Park August 2024—
A.Garlock

Yo Soy Katrina, the Cat Lady

Hey it’s me, Katrina. I’m back—

summoned by Latinas for Kamala--Yes, that Squad from San Anto...



I’m back as a Cat Lady for Kamala’s campaign pues, too, I’m with the Uncommitted folks who say, we don’t yet have an Admin caring enough to vote for but we got something existential to vote against.

I came for the birds to commemorate the five years since the December assault on the egrets at Elmendorf Lake.

Bird island, Aztlán, lives on and I’m here to get to work—wanna help?
¡Kamalamos!

We shall not, we shall not be moved.
From all the rivers to all the seas, a confluence of truths flow, again--we are free, we are free
to love, to live, to choose our children, our faiths, our identities.

From Yanaguana to Palestine—
The diablo “discovery doctrine” dominators try to wall us off from our lands
our kin, our waters, our avian ancestors...our wildflowers and our bones beneath.

Pues, Yo Soy Katrina, here to sing y/our songs, drone y/our chants I’m down for the struggle walkin’ in the park with La Bird Lady at Brackenridge,
watching Woodlawn’s baby birds fledge and fly off despite Board Bangers & Pyromania

I’m Katrina, here for my Indigenous Gente, First Peoples of the Planet
who have led La Lucha for the Climate since before Genesis... Yanaguana’s Lucha led by the Cormorant, is in the courts, headed to La Suprema
where we have that new judge Ketanji to help Sonia make things right, again.

Our Lucha is in the UN’s tribunals-- from Africa to Australia, Asia to the Americas,
We/they come to call out the genocide, to rebuke the ecocide,
We stand with those who truly represent us, who demand our country ships bread and poppies, not bombs, and offers to help rebuild and heal people and land.

Our Lucha is with the people en los streets,
Is with the students and profes campin’ and teachin’ in, on campus

Yo Soy Katrina, here for a confluence of truths across lands.
from tributaries to rivers to seas, For all the Peoples, traveling life with the birds of Aztlán.

—Kamala Platt