



Saturday, January 17th

Field Experiences (Pre-registration sign up required)

7:00-8:00am	Bird Banding Session 1	Birding Outing (entire 7-9am period)
8:00-9:00am	Bird Banding Session 2	
9:00-9:30am	Coffee Break	

Morning Presentations

9:30-9:45am	<i>Opening address</i> - Mark McDermott, RBAS President
9:45-10:30am	<i>The Audubon Flight Plan</i> - Chloe Crumley, Audubon Texas
10:30-10:50am	<u>Student Oral Presentation</u> : <i>Migratory Ecology of Wilson's Snipe</i> - Kevin Perozeni, Texas A&M University
10:50-11:05am	Coffee Break
11:05-12:00pm	<i>RBAS Conservation Award Lecture</i> - Skyler Nix
12:00-12:45pm	<i>Who Shoots Bee-eaters? Social-psychological Predictors of Lethal Control</i> - Danial Nayeri, Texas A&M University

Lunch and Poster Session

12:45-1:45pm	Poster presenters will be present to discuss their work; poster judging will be conducted at this time
--------------	--

Afternoon Presentations

1:45-2:30pm	<i>The Biodiversity Research and Teaching Collections</i> -
2:30-3:15pm	<i>Eyes to the Sky: An in-flight identification workshop</i> -Gautam Apte, Black Swamp Bird Observatory
3:15-3:30pm	<u>Student Oral Presentation</u> : <i>Patterns in migratory and wintering behavior of three Texas colonial waterbird species</i> - Presley Griffin, Texas A&M University

Conclusion of Event & Closing Address (3:35pm)



Beyond the Backyard!

2026

RBAS Conference

Main Speakers



The Audubon Flight Plan

Guest Speaker: Chloe Crumley (Texas Audubon)

9:45am-10:30pm

With over 3 billion North American birds lost since 1970, Audubon remains committed to a future where birds can thrive. Join us for a presentation on The Audubon Flight Plan, the 2023-2028 plan intended to halt, and ultimately reverse, the decline of birds across the Americas. What's good for birds is good for the Earth!



Who Shoots Bee-eaters? Social-psychological Predictors of Lethal Control

Guest Speaker: Danial Nayeri (Texas A&M University)

12:00pm-12:45pm

As human land use intensifies, managing conservation conflict is becoming more difficult as attention remains fixed on charismatic megafauna. We instead shift the focus to a smaller species: native bee-eater birds and beekeepers in Iran. Using a web-based survey distributed through beekeeper social networks, we identify practical leverage points for coexistence, including targeted support for less-experienced producers, better access to non-lethal deterrents and bee-eater-resistant equipment, and community engagement that normalizes non-lethal solutions.



The Biodiversity Research and Teaching Collections

Guest Speaker: Heather Prestridge (Curator BRTC,)

1:45pm-2:30pm

With over two million specimens, the Biodiversity Research and Teaching Collections remains a pivotal resource for researchers globally. Join us as Heather discusses the role the BRTC has played recently in ensuring Texas A&M University becomes a bird-safe campus and the support the BRTC provides for statewide Lights Out initiatives.



Eyes To The Sky: An in-flight identification workshop

Guest Speaker: Gautam Apte (Black Swamp Bird Observatory)

2:30pm-3:15pm

From eagles to sparrows, birds in flight are an ID challenge that can be found on just about any birding outing. Gautam Apte will share some tips on learning to ID birds of the Brazos Valley as they wing overhead, accompanied by visual and audio aids. Join us to get a jump start on improving your birding skills this winter!





Student Abstracts

Oral Presentations:

Title	Abstract
<p><i>Migratory Ecology of Wilson's Snipe</i> - Kevin J. Perozeni, Ashley M. Long</p> <p>10:30-10:50am</p>	<p>Migratory shorebirds are experiencing global population declines, driven primarily by habitat loss, habitat degradation, and climate change. Despite these threats, the movement ecology of many shorebird species remains poorly understood, limiting our ability to develop effective conservation strategies for these taxa. Wilson's Snipe (<i>Gallinago delicata</i>; hereafter snipe), is a widespread and legally hunted North American migratory shorebird that faces multiple threats across its broad range and are understudied everywhere they occur. Our objective was to examine the movement ecology of snipe that overwinter in Texas and Louisiana. Between December 2024 and March 2025, we used nocturnal spotlighting to capture 67 overwintering snipe at five sites and attached GPS transmitters to 35 individuals to quantify the timing, duration, and location of their movements within and across seasons. Our data revealed novel insights into flight speeds during migration (55–128 kmh); nightly (150–1,200 km) and cumulative distance traveled (>6,000 km); and altitude during migration (50–4,000 m). We also documented their migratory pathways and found evidence of site fidelity to stopover locations for some individuals. Our research provides data to inform management for this unique migratory game bird and information to help predict how snipe may respond to future changes in land use or environmental conditions. Moreover, our project offers a unique opportunity to engage landowners, hunters, and birders in shorebird conservation.</p>
<p><i>Patterns in migratory and wintering behavior of three Texas colonial waterbird species</i> -Presley S. Griffin, Joseph M. McGovern, and Jordan C. Giese</p> <p>3:15-3:30pm</p>	<p>The Texas coast is home to over 300 islands that provide crucial nesting habitat for colonial waterbirds. However, non-breeding ecology of these species remains largely understudied. To better understand this part of their annual cycle, we identified important migratory stopover locations and described migratory and wintering movements of three colonial waterbird species. During the 2023-2025 breeding seasons, we deployed backpack-style GPS transmitters on 12 Great Egrets (<i>Ardea alba</i>), 24 Reddish Egrets (<i>Egretta rufescens</i>), and 46 Tricolored Herons (<i>Egretta tricolor</i>) from colony islands along the Texas coast. Devices recorded locations every 30 minutes throughout the annual cycle. We evaluated patterns in migratory movements, stopover use, and wintering behavior. Migratory patterns varied among species and breeding location. Birds breeding from the upper Texas coast tended to take non-stop trans-Gulf flights, whereas middle- and lower- coast breeders tended to travel along the western Gulf Coast. Heavily used stopover and wintering areas included Southern Texas, Northeastern Mexico, and Central America. All three study species relied heavily on stopover locations near Arroyo City, Texas, Tampico, Mexico, and Veracruz, Mexico. Tricolored Herons tended to use 1-2 primary stopovers during their southward migration with important locations including near Port Mansfield, TX, Tampico, Mexico, and Veracruz, Mexico. Although conservation of nesting habitat is crucial to maintain Texas' waterbird populations, our results emphasize the need for international, collaborative efforts to protect waterbird species throughout their annual cycle.</p>

Poster Presentations:

Title	Abstract
<p><i>Texas A&M Campus Bird-Collision Monitoring: Using Citizen Science to Inform Conservation Action</i> - J. Saxon Hickman, Safa Warsi, Skyler W. Nix</p>	<p>In March 2023, Texas Conservation Alliance (TCA) partnered with Texas A&M University’s Biodiversity Research and Teaching Collections (BRTC) to initiate a student-led bird-building collision monitoring study on Texas A&M’s sprawling campus. In the months leading up to the Spring 2025 season, a letter was drafted and sent to former Texas A&M president Gen. Mark Welsh highlighting the preventable issue of bird collisions on our campus. Since this letter has been received, a Bird-Friendly Campus Working Group was established between university architects, administrators, city partners, and student representatives to discuss solutions for mitigating window strikes and develop long-term conservation initiatives. This year, our team has documented over 395 collisions across 66 species and 60 buildings on campus. Through partnerships with University Facilities Management, increased student awareness, and round-the-clock collision monitoring efforts, we have been able to expand our data collection capabilities and create a more cohesive framework for mapping and identifying on-campus collision hotspots. In 2025, the Bird-Friendly Campus Working group was able to formalize a Bird Collision Deterrence Design Guideline within the Texas A&M Master Plan, establishing bird-safe design requirements for all future campus developments. Additionally, a floor-to-ceiling retrofit of the north facade of the AgriLife Center, one of our top collision offenders, has been approved and is awaiting installation. Moving forward, ongoing monitoring and cross-campus collaboration will continue to strengthen the Bird-Friendly Campus initiative here at Texas A&M and can serve as a model for other universities looking to foster a similar student culture of environmental stewardship and protection for all wildlife.</p>
<p><i>The Night Shift: Nocturnal Acoustic Behavior in Western Kingbirds</i> - Amelia Loveland, Tabitha W. Olsen, Chris J. Butler</p>	<p>Many North American passerines migrate at night, often producing brief vocalizations known as nocturnal flight calls. Flycatchers are not known to vocalize outside of the diurnal (day) period, nor to emit nocturnal flight calls during the migratory periods. However, we documented Western Kingbird (<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>, WEKI) vocalizing nocturnally on multiple occasions in 2024. This study seeks to further explore the nocturnal song behavior of Western Kingbirds in Brazos County, Texas. From April-July 2025 we monitored WEKI at three sites in College Station, Texas using passive acoustic recording units (Song Meter Micro 2). We successfully detected WEKI at two sites and documented over 101,000 vocalizations. Most recordings occurred within the first two hours of sunrise, with multiple detections recorded as early as 12:00AM-3:00AM on several dates. Our Negative Binomial Generalized Additive Mixed Model (GAMM) and Binomial GAMM both showed a positive relationship of the number of calls and the probability of detecting at least one WEKI vocalization as a function of date and with increasing cloud coverage. Peak nocturnal activity appeared to be in May on nights with clear skies. These observations display that nocturnal vocalization behavior may be more common than previously understood. Understanding nocturnal vocal activity in WEKI contributes to the broader knowledge of avian behavior, highlighting the nighttime activity during migratory and breeding periods. We hope that this study promotes community awareness of local bird ecology and encourages curiosity about bird behavior during hours when we may not typically expect to hear them. By sharing these findings, we aim to spark greater interest in local wildlife observation and highlight the importance of continued monitoring and conservation in our local communities.</p>

<p><i>Spatial Demography of Wintering Rufous Hummingbirds in the Eastern United States</i> - Aeris Clarkson, B. Schwab</p>	<p>Rufous Hummingbirds (<i>Selasphorus rufus</i>) are encountered wintering throughout the eastern United States, yet the demographic structure of these winter populations remains poorly understood. The majority of Rufous Hummingbirds overwinter in Mexico and Central America, but in the past few decades, have increasingly wintered in the eastern United States. To investigate whether demographic composition varies geographically, we used the complete Bird Banding Lab (BBL) dataset, incorporating all <i>S. rufus</i> individuals banded or encountered since 1960 across the eastern United States. Preliminary analysis of the dataset revealed clear spatial and demographic patterns. Females outnumbered males overall, but their distribution was not uniform across the region, with females disproportionately represented at higher latitudes. Immatures were consistently more abundant than adults at all latitudes, yet their relative proportion also varied geographically. Together, these patterns indicated that both sex and age structure shifted with spatial location. To formally quantify these trends, we fit logistic regression models evaluating sex and age as functions of spatial coordinates. Together, these results suggest that eastern wintering populations of Rufous Hummingbirds exhibit organized spatial demography, potentially driven by differences in migratory timing, dominance behavior, competitive ability, or energetic requirements between sexes and age groups. Understanding these demographic patterns is essential for interpreting the ecology of these expanding winter populations and for forecasting how Rufous Hummingbirds may respond to continued changes in climate, habitat availability, and overwintering opportunities in the eastern United States.</p>
<p><i>Sustaining Psittacine Research in Aviculture through Digital Preservation of Physical Media</i> - Ella Rydell, E.V. Voltura</p>	<p>Led by supervising researcher Dr. EV Voltura, The Parrots' Project is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary research initiative exploring topics related to birds in the order Psittaciformes, also known as parrots. The project's focus lies on utilizing both primary and secondary research methods to form a nexus of the ever-growing body of knowledge about parrot cognition, diet, health/disease, and behavior. The outcome of this will have real-world implications in parrot conservation, thereby helping to remedy the direct and indirect negative impacts that dwindling parrot populations have on human well-being. The Parrots' Project contributes to the sustainability of Psittacine aviculture through the compilation of existing physical media regarding parrot research and, accordingly, the restoration, digitization, and preservation of this physical media, thereby preserving knowledge that may have otherwise been lost to time for future aviculturists and establishing a central repository for this body of knowledge. Specifically, the project focuses on digitizing a collection of Avicultural Society of America bulletins, both for the organization's use and for aviculturists and the public. Furthermore, the digitization of this collection will enable exploration of changes over decades in species representation and in information on parrot diet, cognition, health, and behavior. The project addresses the combating of archival bias and technological obsolescence, which contribute to accessibility issues within this field. This poster will present a workflow for collection digitization and preliminary observations on the historical representation of species themes across decades. I will approach the care and management of this collection with its future use by aviculturists and conservation scientists in mind, prioritizing accessibility, organization, and digital longevity. The collection will also require provenance research and its respective recordkeeping.</p>
<p><i>A Synthesis of Wild and Captive Cockatoo Diets: Integrating Historical and Contemporary Data Sources</i></p>	<p>Despite nearly a century of keeping parrots, such as Cockatoos, in captivity, knowledge of their wild dietary habits remains limited. This has limited our understanding of their actual nutritional requirements, which is likely a reason why malnutrition in captive Cockatoos and other parrots remains a common and persistent malady. Existing information on Psittacine diets is scattered across languages and sources (i.e., peer-reviewed literature, avicultural reports, citizen-science observations, photographic</p>

-Jenna Henry, Ella Rydell, EV Voltura

records, and other disparate sources). As noted in “Parrot Dietary Habits and Consumption of Alternate Foodstuffs,” only 38.1% of Cockatoo species’ wild dietary habits are relatively “well-resolved,” and none of the five IUCN-listed endangered Cockatoo species fall into this category. The present project seeks to address this gap by identifying, collecting, and integrating global sources of information relevant to Cockatoo diets both in the wild and in captivity. In doing so, it aims to both expand our understanding of the existing body of research to improve the management of Cockatoos in the wild and in captivity and to highlight areas where sufficient research is lacking. The Cockatoo Diet Project is an extension of The Parrots Project and shares the same foundation in The Parrots Project Library. This hybrid physical and digital archive aims to gather and preserve a variety of sources of information related to parrots, including avicultural journals dating back to the early 1900s, veterinary case reports, peer-reviewed literature, citizen science records (e.g., eBird and iNaturalist), and photographic collections. The project began by systematically reviewing this library for all references pertaining to the diets of the 22 species of the family Cacatuidae and digitizing materials not otherwise available online. Undergraduate students at Texas A&M and St. Xavier’s Universities spent the past semester extracting data from various sources on what wild and captive Cockatoos have been reported to consume. To organize the collected data, we used a structured spreadsheet to document what Cockatoos have reportedly consumed, including factors such as Cockatoo species, observation type (i.e., captive diet, experimental data, or wild observation), geographic location, seasonality, and specific food items consumed. To date (i.e., prior to end-of-semester assignment due dates), 13 students have compiled 1,548 rows worth of data from 720 captive and 828 wild Cockatoos. Of the foods identified, 86.63% were from plant sources, 6.72% were from animal sources, and 6.65% were from other sources (i.e. fungi or minerals). By consolidating these diverse data streams into a single, accessible location, the project aims both to preserve valuable information and to make reliable dietary data for Cockatoos more readily available to researchers, conservationists, and aviculturists.



Beyond the Backyard!

2026

RBAS Conference