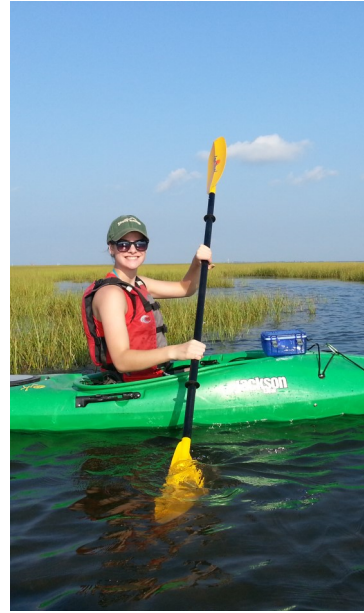


A FIELD GUIDE TO THE
BIRDS
OF LAKE RAY HUBBARD

PADDLE POINT PARK
KAYAK TRAIL

Anna Rigodanzo
Girl Scout Gold Award Project
2013



Anna Rigodanzo is a high school senior in Richardson, TX. After graduation, she plans to major in biology at a 4 year university in Texas. She has been an active member of Girl Scouts for over 12 years. She has had a passion for camping and the outdoors all her life. She hopes this field guide will encourage others to enjoy nature right in their own backyards. Happy paddling!

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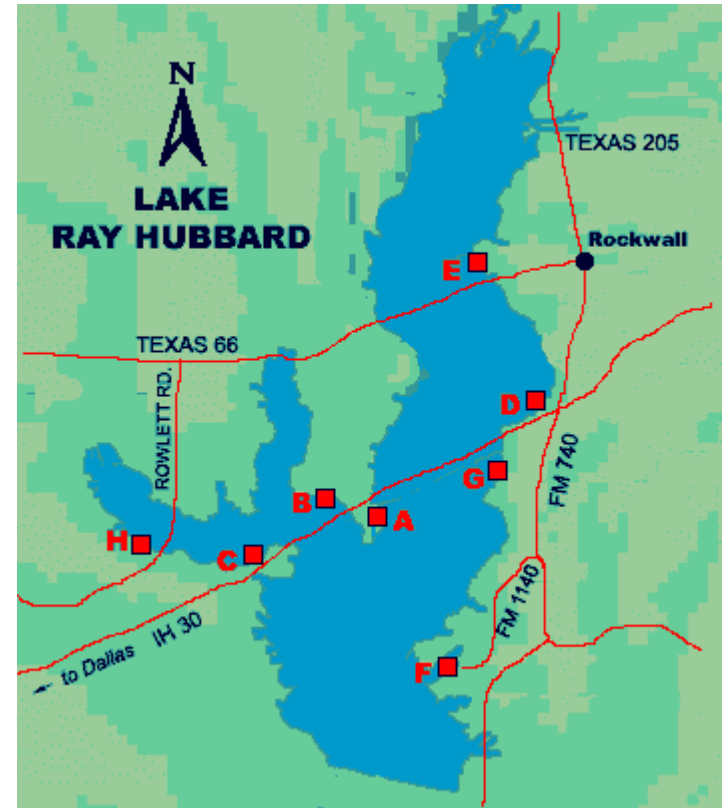
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1. Herons—General
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Lake Ray Hubbard Information

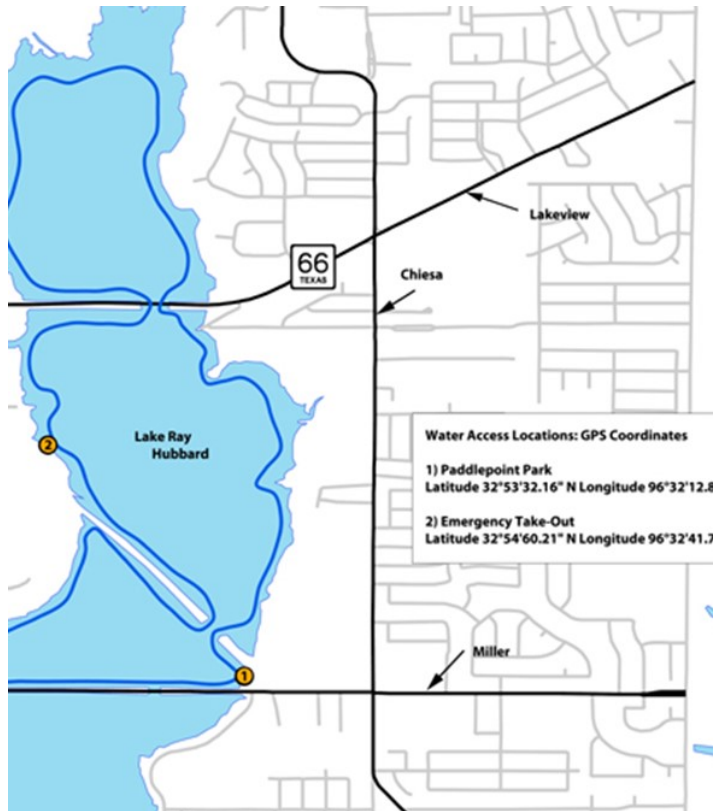
- ⇒ formerly known as Forney Lake
- ⇒ impounded in 1968
- ⇒ located in the counties of Dallas, Kaufman, Collin, and Rockwall



Area: 35.54 square miles (92.05 sq km)
 Surface Elevation: 433 feet (132 m)

Paddle Point Creek Paddling Trail Information

- ⇒ Trail Length: total of 6.4 miles
- ⇒ Float Time: 2-8 hours (depending on route)



- ⇒ Paddle Point Park $32^{\circ} 53' 32.16''$ N, $96^{\circ} 32' 12.85''$ W
- ⇒ Emergency Take-Out $32^{\circ} 54' 60.21''$ N, $96^{\circ} 32' 41.74''$ W

Hérons—General



Description: Herons are wading birds known for their long necks and long legs. They have slender pointed bills for spearing fish in the water. In flight, herons fly with their necks tucked into their shoulders with their legs trailing behind.

Fun Facts: There are 13 different species of herons commonly found in Texas.

Heron, Little Blue

Egretta caerulea



Description: A medium sized, dark blue heron with a dark maroon neck. It also has a dark bill. Juvenile Little Blue Herons have all white bodies. After their first year, their feathers gradually turn blue.

Fun Fact: One advantage that immature Little Blue Herons have is blending in with mixed species flocks of white herons due to their white coloring. Being in a group provides protection against predators.

Heron, Great Blue

Ardea herodias



Description: A very large, blue-grey heron with a white face and black head feathers. They stand approximately 4 feet tall and have a 6 foot wing span in flight.

Fun Fact: Great Blue Herons have what is called a “powder down”. It is a cluster of specialized feathers on their chest. They wipe their feet on the powder down in order to remove fish slime. It also protects their skin from oils in the swamps where they live.



Great Blue Heron



Great Blue Heron

Heron, Green
Egretta caerulea



Description: A short and stocky heron with small legs and a thick neck. While hunting at the water's edge, it curls its neck inward and appears hunched over in order to surprise prey.

Fun Fact: Green Herons are great fishers. They use a variety of tools to draw in prey. They fashion bread crusts, insects, feathers, twigs, and many other things into hooks, which they dangle in the water to entice fish.



Green Heron



Yellow Crowned Night Heron

Egret, Common (Heron)

Ardea alba



Description: A large, white heron with a yellow bill and dark legs.

Fun Fact: The Common Egret is smaller than the Great White Heron which has a yellow bill and yellow legs. The Great White Heron, although previously accepted as its own species, is now considered a subspecies of the Great Blue Heron.



Common Egrets



Red-tailed Hawk

Egret, Snowy (Heron)

Egretta thula



Description: A medium sized, white heron with a black bill, black legs, and yellow feet. The area in front of its eyes on its upper bill is yellow.

Fun Fact: While feeding in shallow areas, a Snowy Egret will use its feet to stir up the water, sending bottom-dwelling prey to the surface.

Pelican, American White
Pelecanus erythrorhynchos



Description: A very large, white water bird with an unmistakable pouched bill. It has an all white body and huge wings, edged in black. It dips its head underwater to scoop up fish.

Fun Fact: It has been known for White Pelicans to fish cooperatively in groups by moving in a circle to concentrate fish. They dip their heads underwater simultaneously to catch their prey.

Gull, Bonaparte's
Chroicocephalus philadelphia



Description: A small gull with a pale gray back and white under parts. It has white triangles on the outer part of its wings. It has a black head during mating season.

Fun Fact: Bonaparte's Gull is one of the smallest gull species. Adults are only 28-38 cm long with a 76-84 cm wingspan and body mass of 162-270 grams.

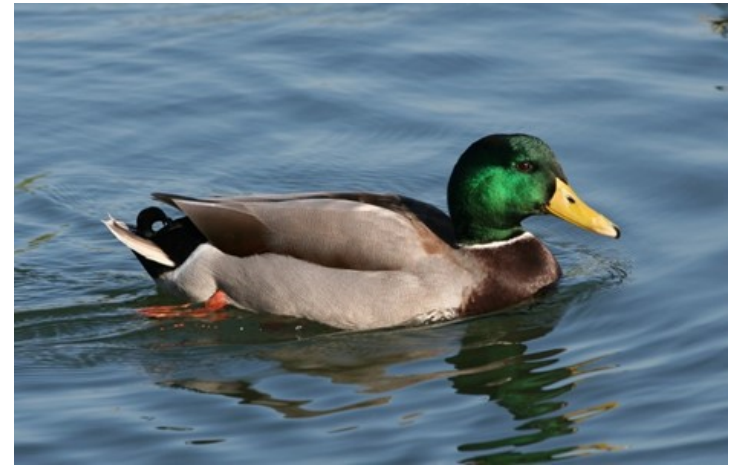
Gull, Ring-billed
Larus delawarensis



Description: A medium sized gull with a fairly short, slim, yellow bill that has a black ring near the tip. It is mostly grey with a white head, body and tail. Its black wingtips are also spotted with white. When perched, its long, slender wings extend well past its square-tipped tail.

Fun Fact: The Ring-billed Gull is the species that many people commonly refer to as the “seagull”. These gulls will eat almost anything, from eggs and insects to small rodents and seeds. They often congregate in large flocks and patrol landfills and fast food restaurants for a meal.

Duck, Mallard
Anas platyrhynchos



Description: Males have green heads, gray bodies, and curled black tails. Mallards, in general, are large ducks with rounded heads and wide, flat bills. They can often be seen head dipping or upending in the water. However, they rarely dive completely submerged. Instead, they spend their time near the surface, dabbling for invertebrates, fish, amphibians, and a variety of plants.

Fun Fact: Mallards generally mate for life. However, once mated, male Mallards will pursue other females. These so-called “extra-pair copulation” is often non-consensual and results in several males chasing after a single female in the hopes of mating.



Male & Female Mallard



Female Mallards

Teal, Green-winged

Anas carolinensis



Description: A small duck with an iridescent green patch on its wings. It has a white stripe in front and a yellowish stripe on its tail. Males have a dark reddish and green head with a white stripe up their shoulders. Look for them hunting for the seeds and stems of water plants. These ducks are very noisy!

Fun Fact: Green-winged Teals have one of the most elaborate mating dances of all *Anas* species.



Green-winged Teals and Other Ducks



American Geese

Coot, American

Fulica americana



Description: A duck-like bird that has a completely black body. It has a white bill with a black mark near the tip. Look for it swimming and diving while it searches for plants to eat.

Fun Fact: Even though it may look like a duck, the American Coot belongs to a different class known as the Rallidae family. It doesn't have webbed feet like a duck. Instead, it uses flexible lobes of skin on its feet to help paddle through water.



American Coot



Roadrunner

Snipe, Wilson's
Gallinago delicata



Description: A small, brown shorebird with stripes on its back and head. Look for it probing in the mud with its very long bill.

Fun Fact: The long bill of the Wilson's Snipe is flexible. The tip can be opened and closed with no movement at the base of the bill. Sensory pits at the tip of the bill allow the snipe to feel its prey deep in the mud.

Sandpiper, Least

Calidris minutilla



Description: A common small shorebird with yellow legs. It has a moderately long bill. Look for it working the high shoreline.

Fun Fact: A group of sandpipers can be called many names. Some of these collective nouns include a “bind”, “contradiction”, “fling”, “hill”, or “time-step” of sandpipers.

Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed

Tyrannus forficatus



Description: A small bird with an extremely long, forked tail that distinguishes it from other birds of its size. Look for flycatchers perched upright on a branch or stem, watching for flying insects.

Fun Fact: Scissor-tailed Flycatchers like to gather all sorts of materials to build their nests. One study in Texas showed that artificial products, such as paper, carpet fuzz, and cigarette filters, accounted for 30% of a flycatcher’s nest.

Swallow, Barn

Hirundo rustica



Description: A slim, small bird with long, pointed wings and a forked tail. It has a dark upper body with a lighter underbelly. It flies quickly and gracefully through the air, scooping up flying insects.

Fun Fact: Barn Swallows sometimes act like home wreckers. An unmated male will kill the offspring of a rival in order to break up the nesting pair. After running off the competition, he will mate with the newly available female.



Hummingbird



Cormorant, Double-crested

Phalacrocorax auritus



Description: A large, dark and slender water bird. It has a long body and neck with a hook at the tip of its bill. It dives underwater for its prey. It can often be seen perching upright in a spread-eagle position.

Fun Fact: In China and Japan, it is an ancient tradition for fishermen to use cormorants to catch fish.

The men tie a string, line, or collar of some sort around the bird's neck to keep it from swallowing what it catches. While holding a pole that is attached to the other end of the line, they cast the bird into the water. The cormorant catches the fish and hauls them back onto the boat. This relationship between man and bird is somewhat mutualistic because the cormorant is often fed leftover scraps as a reward.

Grackle, Great-tailed

Quiscalus mexicanus



Description: Males are slender, iridescent black birds. They are long-legged with yellow eyes, a flat-headed profile, and a stout, straight bill. The male's tail is nearly as long as its body and has a distinctive V-shape. Females are dark brown with long, slender tails and are about half the size of males.

Fun Fact: Female Great-tailed Grackle chicks require less food to survive. As a result, female chicks are more likely to reach adolescence. Similarly, adult female Great-tailed Grackles often outlive males. This causes what is called a "sex-biased" population meaning there are more females than males in an ecosystem.

Starling, European

Sturnus vulgaris



Description: A stocky, black bird with a short tail, triangular wings, and a long, pointed bill. They usually flock in large groups.

Fun Fact: Like mockingbirds, European Starlings are good at mimicking other birds' vocal calls. Individuals can learn the calls of up to 20 different species.

Blackbird, Red-winged

Agelaius phoeniceus



Description: A stocky bird with a glossy black body. It has distinctive red and yellow shoulder patches. It can be seen foraging in marshy areas for insects, snails and seeds.

Fun Fact: Red-winged Blackbirds live in large flocks year round. They sometimes travel as far as 50 miles away to feed, yet always rejoin the flock at the end of the day.



Red-winged Blackbird



Red-winged Blackbird

Dove, Mourning

Zenaida macroura



Description: A graceful, slender-tailed dove. It has a plump body and long tail, with short legs and a small bill. Its head looks particularly small in comparison to its body. Its coloring is mostly brown to buffy-tan, with black spots on the wings and black-bordered white tips on the tail feathers.

Fun Fact: One way that Mourning Doves are able to survive in the desert is by drinking brackish water, which has up to half the amount of salt as sea water. Unlike humans, Mourning Doves don't become dehydrated by consuming this much salt.

Pigeon, Rock

Columba livia



Description: A tubby bird with a small head and short legs. It is larger and plumper than the Mourning Dove. It has broad but pointed wings and a wide, rounded tail. They vary in color, but most are bluish grey with two black bands on both wings and a black tip on the tail.

Fun Fact: Rock Pigeons, also known as Rock Doves, can carry many different diseases. However, they are rarely transferable to humans. For example, Rock Pigeons can contract West Nile virus but are unable to transmit it to people.

Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus



Description: A large bird of prey with white feathers on its head and a dark body. It has a yellow, severely curved beak. Look for a large dark bird soaring over the water with a flash of white on its head and tail.

Fun Fact: Bald Eagles can live a very long time. The current record is 28 years in the wild and 36 years in captivity.

References

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Kayak Instruction Foundation, Inc.

The National Audubon Society

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology