



THE SPOONBILL

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PUBLISHED BY THE ORNITHOLOGY GROUP, OUTDOOR NATURE CLUB, HOUSTON, TEXAS

THIS IS YOUR LAST SPOONBILL!!!!

Sad words, aren't they? But, for some of you, true ones. If you have not paid your membership dues, or, as a non-member subscriber, you have not renewed your subscription, this is your last issue. If you are in doubt as to whether you have paid this year, look at the address label on this month's issue. If there is a red check, you have not paid.

Herewith is the information contained in the March and April issues:

"In the Outdoor Nature Club and its study groups, officers' terms and dues begin May 1 of each year. So, it is "dues time" once again.

ONC dues are \$3.50 per person per year, and OG dues are \$2.00 per person per year. (You must be a member of ONC to be a member of OG). If you have not already paid your ONC dues this year, as a convenience to you, you may send one check for \$5.50, covering both dues (made payable to Ornithology Group), to Mrs. J.M. Gillette, 5027 Longmont, Houston, Texas 77056. Mrs. Gillette will then forward your ONC dues to the ONC treasurer. (Do not send OG dues to ONC).

Non-member subscribers to THE SPOONBILL should send their check for \$3.00 per subscription (made payable to Ornithology Group) to Mrs. Gillette at the above address."

COMING EVENTS

There are no OG field trips scheduled for June or July.

- Aug. 4-14 Merlin Birding Tour to Arizona, led by Ben Feltner. Exciting birding, with a small group, led by a top-notch, experienced birder, who goes all out to see that you get to see the specialties of the area. For further information you may write MERLIN BIRDING TOURS, PO Box 19687, Houston, Texas 77024.
- Aug. 13-29 West Coast Trip, led by Paul Nimmons, reviewed last month. A good opportunity to go with friends, and bird the west coast, by land and by sea. Paul Nimmons can tell you more about it, write him at 7702 Westview, Houston, Texas 77055.

PAST EVENTS

The OG June meeting, a picnic in May by custom, is usually a good time for all. This year the meeting at the Little Thicket Sanctuary was outstanding. In addition to having people doing all the right things Harry managed to get the weather man to cooperate. The night before the meeting was delightful and cool enough to make Barney Barnett's campfire a real success. Mary Tigner's finger food got the evening meal started right and her greens on Sunday perked up the otherwise drab picnic sandwiches. In addition to all those good things, Harry provided the Swainson's warbler, a life bird for us.

I am sure the membership joins me in saying thanks to Harry Brister and his committees for jobs extremely well done.

The committees for the new year are listed in the meeting minutes. Please add to that list the name of Sue McConnell as Rare Bird Alert chairman; however, until the new list is published in August, please continue sending news of rare birds to Margaret Anderson. This issue of the SPOONBILL contains a form that needs to be sent in if you want to be included on the Rare Bird List for the coming year. (see last page --Ed.)

I am looking forward to the year since I think the people who have agreed to work as chairmen are good - some experienced and some new - but all good. I am sure they will work to maintain the high standards set by the preceding group. --Jack Gillette

MINUTES, REGULAR MEETING, ORNITHOLOGY GROUP, May 23, 1976

At the ONC Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary, the meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Harry Brister. He presented certificates of appreciation to the following members for their work done in the past year:

Jerry Baker--Aluminum chairman
Marilyn Crane--Bird seminars
Paul Nimmons--Christmas bird Count
Mary Gillette--Treasurer
Avis Brister--Librarian
Gladys Galbraith--Publicity
Maxine Davis--Mailing
Louise Rogers--Secretary
Margaret Jones--SPOONBILL editor

The new chairman, Jack Gillette, was introduced and he then introduced his slate of officers and workers for the coming year:

Suzi Campbell, Secretary
Mary Gillette, Treasurer
Margaret Jones, SPOONBILL Editor
Maxine Davis, SPOONBILL mailing
Bob Moulton, Programs
David Dauphin, Field trips
Jerry Baker, Aluminum
Avis Brister, Librarian
Paul Jones, Clearing House
Gladys Galbraith, Publicity
Paul Nimmons, Christmas Bird Count
Marilyn Crane, Bird Seminars

Still needed are replacements for Margaret Anderson on the Rare Bird Alert, and for Frank Hsu--slide librarian.

A unanimous vote of appreciation for Harry Brister was made.

The new chairmen made their announcements: August meeting program will be on California birds; September field trip: Anahuac Refuge to look for rails; September Seminar: "Shore Birds" with Ben feltner.

Louise Rogers announced the coming programs and field trips for the ONC.

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Gillette for Suzi Campbell, Secretary

MORE MEXICO by T. Ben Feltner

Hundreds of Magnificent Frigatebirds floating overhead, Brown Pelicans sailing above the surf, Blue-footed and Brown Boobies diving for fish just offshore, this is the way this year's (February, 1976) trip to Western Mexico began in Mazatlan. Next day our avid group left the beaches and headed for the hills, making our way to cool heights. We made frequent stops for such birds as Military Macaws, Orange-fronted Parakeets, White-fronted Parrots, White-naped Swifts, Cinnamon Hummingbirds, Mangrove Swallows, spectacular Magpie Jays, Happy Wren, colorful Slaty Redstarts, and many others. Our destination and base for 3 nights was Villa Blanca high in the Sierra Madre Occidentals. From here we explored the surrounding barrancas for Mexican rarities. It took us two days to locate the fantastically beautiful and rare Tufted Jays. Houston's own Marilyn Crane spotted them first, high up on the canyon side. With some judicious squeaks and owl calls they were lured down to our level and viewed at leisure. This year we found nine birds. Tufted Jays are not only rare, they are exquisite. Patterned in steel-blue and white with a permanently erected frontal crest, these birds are among the most tastefully attired corvids in the world.

Besides the jays, we found a variety of other birds in the highlands, including a number of warblers. In addition to the wintering species from the Western United States (Townsend's, Hermit, Grace's, Black-throated Gray, and Audubon's), such Mexican birds as Crescent-chested, Slate-throated Redstart, Rufous-capped Warbler and the breath-taking Red Warbler graced our list. Several Russet Nightingale-Thrushes were found. Two Red-headed Tanagers put in an appearance and Mexican Trogons were usually in the canyon.

The trip back down to the jungles around San Blas was equally as rewarding as the trip up had been. Lilac-crowned Parrots were spotted, more White-naped Swifts, White-eared Hummingbirds, Fork-tailed Emerald, Broad-billed and Berylline Hummingbirds were added to the list. Scarlet-headed Orioles were everywhere. The dry hillsides held great numbers of birds that were active early in the morning. A flock of Gray-silky Flycatchers was located in one canyon along with Five-striped Sparrows, Varied Buntings and Yellow Grosbeaks. Perhaps the nicest find of all was near the village of Panucho where we stopped to look for the Golden Vireo and found instead a resplendent male Red-breasted Chat, a bird that had eluded me for a number of years.

Around the village of San Blas birding was great. We saw thousands of Yellow-winged Caciques and scores of Blue-rumped Parrotlets every day. Citroline Trogons vied for attention with Coppery-tailed Trogons. A Russet-crowned Motmot perched on the roadside telephone lines. In the deep shade of the jungle several pairs of Red-crowned Ant-Tanagers were found and at least one Fan-tailed Warbler was present decked in pumpkin and slate. It acted out the role of a redstart disporting over fallen logs and tangled vines.

A jungle boat trip was the highlight of our stay in San Blas. We left an hour or so before sunset so that we could search for Potoos after dark. One minute from the dock we found a Bare-throated Tiger Heron sitting in a riverside tree. "El Tigre", whispered the boatman. The heron stoically ignored us and was still standing on his perch when we departed. Under a bridge and around a bend, the people in boat number one were yelling frantically and their boatman was backing up. Apparently someone had glimpsed the rare and very elusive Rufous-necked Wood-Rail. The two boats pulled abreast of the mangroves where the bird was seen. Out stalked the rail and, before the assembled birders, methodically began to bathe - no more than 3 yards from the boats. A bird it had taken me years to find was putting on a command performance for the entire group! Up the river we continued, adding more familiar birds to our growing list...White Ibis and Cattle Egrets were going in squadrons to roost. A little before sunset we arrived at a roosting colony of Boat-billed Herons and were treated to a variety of chuckles and grunts from the objecting birds. Boat-bills are forlorn looking individuals, with large soft brown eyes and broad Daffy-Duck-like bills. After sunset the boats began to descend the river back to town. With flashlights we examined every snag and very quickly picked up our first Common Potoo. Its large red eyes glowed in the beam as it sat unperturbed by the birders milling around beneath it. Eight more Potoos were found before the trip ended.

The final day was taken up with our return to Mazatlan with a side-trip to see the Rose-breasted Thrush-Tanagers and Purplish-backed Jay. The jays were very co-operative, permitting all to see them well. In the thorn forest several lucky people saw the Thrush-Tanager. Mazatlan was still under a pall of Frigatebirds, and Boobies were still enjoying the surf. A last morning's birding around town netted us sixty or so species making the total for the tour about 300 birds.

BIRD LIST FOR THE LITTLE THICKET SANCTUARY

At the OG picnic in May, there was a discussion about compiling a list of birds seen in the Sanctuary. Barney Barnette said there had been various attempts at this in the past, with Eva Gilman most recently working at combining some of these attempts. With the OG taking this on as a project, Paul Jones volunteered to compile past and future sightings, so that at the end of a year, we could present the ONC with a Checklist of Birds of the Little Thicket Sanctuary. This could in no way be as comprehensive as our Checklist of the Upper Texas Coast, for we do not have the detailed records to draw from, but it is planned as simply a record of birds seen within the boundaries of the Sanctuary, or flying over. (and speaking of flying over, Johnny Fay and Barney Barnette have a dilly of an accidental sighting: in September of 1974, while working on the shed roof at the Sanctuary, they looked up and spotted Whooping Cranes headed south!)

Paul and Phyllis Nimmons, who have birded in the Sanctuary, are very enthusiastic about the possibilities there (see July 1975 SPOONBILL for their account of a few hours spent there), and indicate they will be birding there fairly regularly, as did several others.

So, when any OG'er goes to the Sanctuary, make a list of sightings, with month seen (and any nesting evidence noted), and send to T. Paul Jones, 4902 Fern, Bellaire, Texas 77401. Let's see, in the year to come, what we can add to the 83 species Eva Gilman gave us to start with.

Any OG'er, as a member of ONC, is eligible to enter the Sanctuary. Because of vandalism in the past, the gate must be kept locked, but a key may be procured from the Barnettes - 668-4200, or the Taylors - 665-8809, for 50¢. They will at that time review the rules governing the Sanctuary, and, if you are unfamiliar with the location, give you directions. As members of the Outdoor Nature Club, we should become familiar with the Sanctuary and enjoy it!

OG
Sanctuary

PLACES TO GO

** June on the upper Texas coast seems to be a very dull month. (Maybe we need it after a spring migration?) Sherry Collins says people are still enjoying the Dow Nature Trail at Freeport (directions on map in March SPOONBILL), and you could start working on our OG project at the Sanctuary. Your editor depends on you, the readers, for items for this part of the SPOONBILL, so please share your summer birding spots, and send them to me by July 1 for the next issue.

** If you are heading north up Hwy 59, there is a rookery north of Cleveland some 20 miles, just north of the Trinity River, and south of Goodrich, that is on the east side of the road. When we saw it the latter part of May, it was full of Cattle Egrets, Little Blues, and goodness knows what. We heard Orioles singing, but this was a business trip, and we had no time to tarry.

** If you are heading south on Hwy 77, stop at the first rest area south of Sarita, for Vermilion Flycatchers, Say's Phoebes, Lesser Goldfinch, and Ruddy Ground Doves, as well as Buff-bellied Hummingbirds, have been seen very recently. At the rest stop north of Norias, Randy Korotev, the latter part of May, found the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl so many have seen, plus White-tailed Hawks, and at the rest stop mentioned above, the Tropical Parula. (Incidentally, when Randy was at Santa Ana at the beginning of the fourth week of May, he was told the Hook-billed Kites had not been seen for a week. He also found a bird in Big Bend listed as "accidental": a Black-throated Blue Warbler, which he reported to the Park Naturalist).

** David Dauphin reports that the White-tailed Kite and Mississippi Kite can be seen in the Rabb's Prairie Road and Smither's Lake Road area south of Richmond (map in September 1974 SPOONBILL). Incidentally, David deserves an award for being a hospitable birder: last Saturday he took Bruce Barrett, a visiting birder from Ontario, Canada, on a dawn-to-dusk, over 600 miles trip, criss-crossing Ft. Bend, Harris, Chambers and Galveston counties. Mr. Barrett got every bird on his wanted list (went over 500) except the Swallow-tail Kite. David says it was "kinda fun, but it was a long day".

** Remember Miller Road at Juliff (directions in April SPOONBILL) for painted buntings and late spring and early summer roadside birds. Also the Henslow Sparrow field off Mykawa Road, directions in the same issue.

FROM THE LIBRARY

The library of the OG has been increased by the addition of three books this past year.

"The Gulf of Mexico", by Bern Keating, with photographs by Dan Guravich, describes the varied landscape of the Gulf shore from the Fry Tortugas to the Delta of the Rio Grande, and reviews the prospects for the future of many of the area's now rare on-shore and off-shore species. This beautiful book was a gift from the Exxon Company to Sarah Gordon, who passed it on to the OG.

An updated copy of Dr. George Lowry's excellent book "Louisiana Birds" has been donated to our group by Louise Rogers. Added to this edition is a picture and text giving the history and introduction of the Black Francolin to Louisiana. (We now also have a "Summary of Seasonal Occurrences of Louisiana Birds" by Dr. Lowry to add to our inventory of checklists, a gift from Kathleen Zinn, of Baton Rouge.

The third book will be of interest to all who regularly bird the Smith Woods and High Island area. It is a copy of Michael Hoke's thesis: "A Census of the Avian Fauna of Smith Woods (Brannon's Woods), High Island, Galveston County, Texas". A note from Mike advises us that a limited number of plastic-bound copies of this thesis are available for purchase, the funds to be used to continue ornithological research. The price is \$3.40, including postage, and you may obtain your copy by writing Michael Hoke, 1802 West Rein, Orange, Texas 77630.

DAN HARDY RETIRES AS CLEARING HOUSE EDITOR

Four years ago, the OG Board felt that editing the SPOONBILL and the Clearing House was becoming too much for one person, and Dan Hardy accepted the newly-created post of Editor of the Clearing House. In these four years, Dan has worked tirelessly to make the C-H a responsible report of birds seen in our Checklist area. He worked up rules for submitted sightings, occasionally made some people a bit unhappy when he rejected a sighting sent in without necessary substantiating details, but, in insisting that people follow the rules, made the C-H a report to be relied upon.

He has done magnificent job of adding to and maintaining the fine reputation the SPOONBILL enjoys among birders. We all owe him a great deal, and wish him well in his pursuit of a PhD at Princeton University.

CLEARING HOUSE, May, 1976

(We have a great many new readers since the C-H rules were last published in January, 1975, so there will be an updated list prepared by Dan and Paul Jones, the new editor, in next month's issue. In the future, send all sightings to T. Paul Jones, 4902 Fern, Bellaire, Texas 77401).

(How to read the C-H: Name of bird: (how many), date, location, observers)

- Loon, Common: (9)1, Texas City Dike, D&JD; (1)9, 16, 18, Seabrook Shipyard, Joyce Brannon; (7)1, Texas City Dike, W&GC; (2)13, Galveston, TBF&JG; (1)27, E. Jetties, Galveston, MA, VC --see notes.
- Grebe, Eared: (35+)2, 13, (25+)18, 27, Baytown Tunnel (observed building nest), D&JD; (4)2, (13)10, (5)23, Freeport Marsh, TC.
- Pelican, White: (63)10, Freeport Marsh, TC; (70)2, Baytown Tunnel, (1)28, Maner Lake, D&JD.
- Cormorant, Double-crested: (10+)13, 22, Baytown Tunnel, (10+)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
- " , Olivaceous: (250+)all month, E. Harris-W. Chambers Co., D&JD; (4)13, Galveston, TBF&JG.
- Anhinga: (3)28, Maner Lake, D&JD.
- Frigatebird, Magnificent: (1)23, Bryan Beach, S&TC; (1)27, Bolivar Flats, MA, VC; (1)18, Anahuac, MK.
- Nightheron, Yellow-crowned: (1)28, Maner Lake, D&JD; (1)30, Flag Lake, S&TC; (7)10 days, Westheimer-Memorial & Wilcrest, DDeK; (1)9, 29, (3)30, Memorial Park, W&GC.
- Bittern, Lease: (1)13, Galveston, TBF, JG; (1)28, Freeport Marsh, TC.
- Ibis, White-faced: (35+)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
- " , White: (6)1, (30+)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
- Spoonbill, Roseate: (2)4, Baytown Tunnel, (30+)1, 15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (50)13, Galveston, TBF, JG.
- Treeduck, Black-bellied: (2)31, Smither's Lake, D&CDeK; (2)16, 2 1/2 miles north of Brookshire, Waller Co., C&SC--see notes.
- " , Fulvous: (2)28, Ft. Bend Co., D&JD.
- Mallard: (2)4, (3)18, (1)27, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD--see notes.
- Teal, Blue-winged: (250+)all month, E. Harris-W. Chambers Co., D&JD.
- Shoveler, Northern: (3)2, (10)4, (2)13, 18, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD.
- Duck, Wood: (2)15, Brazoria Co., W&GC; (4)8, Hwy 521, Brazoria Co., P&MJ
- Canvasback: (3)2, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD--see notes.
- Scaup, Lesser: (1)1, Texas City Dike, (10+)2, 4, 18, (6)27, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD; (4)18, Freeport Marsh, TC; (5)1, Texas City Dike, W&GC.
- Scoter, Surf: (1 female)15, 5 miles east of High Island, A--see notes.
- Duck, Ruddy: (50+)2, (25+)4, 13, 18, 27, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD.
- Merganser, Red-breasted: (3)15, W. Galveston, D&JD--see notes.
- Kite, White-tailed: (1)28, Rabbs Prairie Rd., Ft. Bend Co., D&JD; (1)16, 17, Hwy 288 & Hwy 6, SC.
- " , Swallow-tailed: (1)April 10, Rice University, MK--see notes; (1)May 19, Loop 610 & Hwy 288, SC.
- " , Mississippi: (1)all month, Lake Jackson, SC; (1)28, Cow Creek Road, Ft. Bend Co., D&JD; (1)31, Lake Jackson, MB.
- Hawk, Sharp-shinned: (1)28, Rabbs Prairie Rd., Ft. Bend Co., D&JD--see notes
- " , Cooper's: (1)28, FM 762 & FM 1462, Ft. Bend Co., D&JD; (1)1, Smith Woods, W&GC.
- Accipiter Species: (2)1, Bolivar Peninsula, W&GC.
- Hawk, Red-tailed: (1)15, Brazoria Co., W&GC.
- " , Swainson's: (1)4, Baytown, (1)28, Rabbs Prairie Rd., Ft. Bend Co., D&JD; (1)4, 7, 8, 9, Gulf Freeway at FM 2351, RK; (1)28, Flag Lake, Brazoria Co., TC; (8)4, 6, 15, 26, 27, Westheimer-Wilcrest, DDeK.
- Caracara: (1)11, 12, 13, Wilcrest Rd., DDeK.
- Rail, Sora: (2)2, Freeport Marsh, S&TC.
- Gallinule, Purple: (10+)28, Maner Lake, D&JF; (1)9, Galveston Is. State Park, S&TC; (1)13, Galveston, TBF, JG.
- Curlew, Long-billed: (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
- Whimbrel: (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (2)1, Bolivar Flats, (1)1, W. Galveston, W&GC.
- Sandpiper, Spotted: (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
- " , White-rumped: (300)13, Galveston, TBF, JG.
- " , Least: (10+)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
- Dunlin: (100+)14, W. Galveston, D&JD.
- Dowitcher, Short-billed: (20+)1, W. Galveston, D&JD.
- Godwit, Marbled: (3)1, Bolivar Flats, W&GC.
- " , Hudsonian: (1)18, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD.
- Avocet, American: (100+)23, Bryan Beach Pond, TC.
- Phalarope, Wilson's: (50+)7, (300+)10, (200+)15, (100+)18, (50+)23, (0)28, Bryan Beach Pond, TC; (2)2, Sportsman's Rd. W. Galveston, RK, BL.
- Gull, Glaucous: (1)1, Bolivar Flats-Dump Ground, D&JD; (1)15, same, A; (1)1, Bolivar Flats, W&GC; (1)27, Bolivar, MA, VC--see notes
- " , Franklin's: (1)April 10, Pelagic trip, TBF et al.

- Dove, White-winged: (1)1, W. Galveston, W&GC.
 " , Inca: (1)15, salt Cedars about 5 miles east of High Island, A.
 " , RINGED TURTLE: (3 - 2 a & 1 imm), 11, 16, 31, Bellaire, P&MJ
 Cuckoo, Black-billed: (3)1, W. Galveston, D&JD; (1)1, Johnson Space Center, RK; (1)1, Dow Nature Trail, S&TC; (1)15, High Island, A; (1)1, Nottingham Ranch Rd., W. Galveston, W&GC.
 Chuck-Will's-Widow: (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD;
 Woodpecker, Pileated: (1)28, Memorial, DDeK.
 " , Red-headed: (2)28, Memorial, DDeK; (1)15, White Memorial Park, A.
 KINGBIRD, TROPICAL: (1)4, near Hwy 6, Ted L. Eubanks--see notes.
 " , Western: (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (1)2, Bryan Beach, S&TC.
 Flycatcher, Empidonax species: (6)15, salt cedars about 5 miles east of High Is., A.
 " , Yellow-bellied: (10)15, High Island, (3)15, Salt Cedars about 5 miles east of High Island, A; (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
 Wood Pewee, Eastern: (2)15, High Island, (4)15, salt cedars east of High Island, A; (1)23, 24, Memorial Park, W&GC; (2)13, Bolivar, TBF, JG.
 Flycatcher, Olive-sided: (2)15, High Island, A; (1)2, White Oak Bayou, W&GC; (10)13, Bolivar, TBF, JG.
 Swallow, Tree: (25+)4, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD.
 " , Bank: (2)1, Texas City Dike, W&TC.
 " , Rough-winged: (100+)2, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD.
 " , Barn: (100+)4, (50+)13, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD.
 " , Cliff: (20+)28, US59 at Oyster Creek, D&JD.
 Nuthatch, Brown-headed: (1)3, Memorial, DDeK.
 WREN, BEWICK'S: (1)26, Memorial, DDeK; (1)29, near Pilot's Station, Sabine, Joy Sims, Marie Boyd--see notes.
 " , Long-billed Marsh: (1)18, Anahuac, MK.
 Catbird, Gray: (10+)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
 Thrasher, Brown: (1)3, White Oak Bayou, W&GC.
 " , Curve-billed: (1)1, W. Galveston, D&JD.
 Robin: (10)8, White Oak Bayou, W&GC; (6-8) daily, yard, TBF, JG.
 Thrush, Swainson's: (3)15, High Island, A; (1)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 " , Gray-cheeked: (4)13, High Island, TBF, JG; (1)1, Bolivar Flats, W&GC.
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: (1)1, Smith Woods, W&GC.
 Waxwing, Cedar: (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (20)15, High Island, A; (25+)13, Keegan's Rd., Alief, DDeK; (2)2, (8)3, (3)8, White Oak Bayou; (60)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 Vireo, Solitary: (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD--see notes.
 " , Red-eyed: (2)15, High Island, A; (1)29, Memorial Park, W&GC; (70)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 " , Philadelphia: (4)7, High Island, TBF, JG.
 Warbler, Black-and-White: (2)13, High Island, TBF, JG; (2)15, High Island, A.
 " , Golden-winged: (3)1, JSC, RK; (5)1, Dow Nature Trail, Freeport, S&TC; (1)1, Smith's Woods, W. &TC; (1)8, Dow Nature Trail, P&MJ
 " , Blue-winged: (1)1, Johnson Space Center, RK, BL; (4)1, Dow Nature Trail, S&TC
 " , Tennessee: (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (1)1, Johnson Space Center, RK; (30)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 " , Nashville: (2)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
 " , Northern Parula: (1)1, Johnson Space Center, RK; (1-2)23-30, Memorial Park, W&GC.
 " , Yellow: (1)1, Johnson Space Center, RK; (3)2, W. Galveston, RK, BL; (8)15, salt cedars east of High Island, A; (525)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 " , Magnolia: (1)1, Johnson Space Center, RK, BL; (20)15, High Island, (5)15, salt cedars east of High Island, A; (340)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 " , Cape May: (1)13, High Island, TBF, JG; (1)1, Lake Jackson, Dow Trail, LB.
 " , Black-throated Green: (2)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (8)15, High Island, (2)15, salt cedars east of High Island, A; (64)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 " , Cerulean: (2)1, Johnson Space Center, RK; (3)1, Dow Nature Trail, S&TC; (2)1, Lake Jackson, Dow Trail, LB.
 " , Blackburnian: (10+)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (6)1, Johnson Space Center, RK, BL; (4)15, High Island, A; (20)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 " , Yellow-throated: (1)8, High Island, D&JD.
 " , Chestnut-sided: (6)1, Johnson Space Center, RK, BL; (1)15, salt cedars east of High Island, A; (260)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 " , Bay-breasted: (1,700)13, High Island, TBF, JG; (10)15, High Island, A; (12)1, Johnson Space Center, (2)2, W. Galveston, RK, BL.
 " , Blackpoll: (5)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (1 male)15, salt cedars east of High Is., A; (6)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 Ovenbird: (32)13, High Island, TBF, JG; (2)1, Johnson Space Center, RK, BL; (25+)1, 8, High Island, D&JD.
 Waterthrush, Northern: (5)8, High Island, D&JD; (1)1, Johnson Space Center, BL, RK; (4)7, High Island, TBF, JG.
 Warbler, Mourning: (2)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (1 male)15, High Island, (1 male)15, salt cedars east of High Island, A; (1 male)10, yard, Bellaire, (2 males)16, Clay Road, P&MJ.
 Warbler, Hooded: (1)23-30, Memorial Park, W&GC.
 " , Wilson's: (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (2)16, Clay Road, P&MJ.

Warbler, Canada: (2)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (30)15, High Island, (1)15, salt cedars east of High Island, A; (1)16, Memorial Park, W&GC; (8)13, High Island, TBF, JG.
 Redstart, American: (3)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (1)1, Johnson Space Center, RK, BL; (4)15, High Island, (5)15, salt cedars east of High Island, A; (60)13, High Is., TBF, JG.
 Bobolink: (25 male) April 26-27, field between APS and Shell, 3000 Pawnee, east Houston, Jay Emrie.
 Oriole, Northern: (5)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (3)2, Sportsman's Rd., RK, BL; (10+)1, Dow Nature Trail, S&TC.
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: (25+) all month, E. Harris-W. Chambers Co., D&JD.
 Tanager, Scarlet: (1)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
 Grosbeak, Rose-breasted: (2)15, W. Galveston, D&JD; (12)1, Dow Nature Trail, S&TC; (1)24, Memorial, DDeK.
 Bunting, Indigo: (1)15, Brazoria Co., W&GC.
 " , Painted: (5)29, Lake Jackson, S&TC.
 Sparrow, Savannah: (20+)15, W. Galveston, D&JD.
 " , Sharp-tailed: (2)1, Bolivar Flats, W&TC.
 " , CHIPPING: (2)16, W. Harris Co., C&SC--see notes.

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS

MA - Margaret Anderson; LB - Larry Ballard; MB - Martha Ballard; C&SC - Chuck and Suzi Campbell; SC - Sherry Collins; TC - Tom Collins; VC - Virginia Courtenay; GC - Glenn Cureton; WC - Wesley Cureton; D&JD - David & Jan Dauphin; D&CD - Debbie & Cindy DeKeyzer; TBF - T. Ben Felner; JG - Jim Grootemaat; P&MJ - Paul & Margaret Jones; RK - Randy Korotev; MK - Mark Kulstad; BL - Betty Lobos; A - Victor L. Emanuel, John L. Rowlett, Abbie Rowlett, Monica Jones.

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES

Common Loon: (Joyce Brannon's sighting) These sightings were relayed to me by Joyce Brannon, who described the bird and its behavior to me: white belly, black webbed feet, top of head dark; bird was beginning to moult; light collar and checkered back beginning to show. --Randy Korotev

Common Loon: East Jetties, Galveston; still in complete winter plumage--large size; straight, thick bill; good light at 100' distance. --Margaret Anderson and Virginia Courteney

Black-bellied Treeduck: Two ducks were observed in flight between Smithers and Worthington Lakes. Above, overall dark with broad white stripe extending the length of wings; underneath, black belly and black underwings; bright pinkish-red bill also very noticeable. Light; fair--cloudy late afternoon; distance: 150 yards.--50' directly overhead; 10x50 glasses.--Debbie and Cindy DeKeyzer

Black-bellied Treeduck: Observed May 16, 1976 2 1/2 miles north of Brookshire, Waller Co. Description: pair of long-necked ducks standing upright on levee between two flooded fields; bright orange bills; buffy gray cheeks and upper neck, slightly darker on crown; black eye slightly elongated by apparent short eyeline; lower neck and breast reddish brown; black belly dark brown back; white wing stripe partially obscured in standing bird, but bird raised wing exposing stripe; could not see feet, and birds did not fly; after ten minutes of observation, birds then squatted, leaving only their heads above the grass; conditions of observation: bright sunlight from left, cloudless sky, distances between 50 and 75 yards; observed 1:30-1:45 PM. --Chuck and Suzi Campbell

Mallard: All birds seen were males. Birds had green heads, white collars, yellowish bills and brown breasts, black curled tail-feathers. Excellent light. 15 to 100 yds. with 15-60x teles. and 10x50 binocs. --David and Jan Dauphin

Canvasback: All males seen at 100 yds., in good light with 15-60x teles.; flat, rusty heads, wedged shaped bills, blackish fronts, white-to-gray backs. --David and Jan Dauphin

Surf Scoter: One female or immature in the surf in Jefferson County just east of High Island. Observed for 10-15 minutes at distances of 75-100 yards through 8x40 binoculars and a 20x telescope. Marks: bird dove frequently and flapped its wings twice; all dark, large duck, with dim white markings on the side of the face in the form of two large indistinct spots; through binoculars the spots seemed to merge into one large white area on the lower cheek of the bird, such that at first we thought the bird was a female Black Scoter, but further observation through the telescope revealed that there were actually two white spots on the side of the face; the bill was black; there was no white in the wings. --Victor L. Emanuel

Red-breasted Merganser: Two males and a female seen at 50 yds. in excellent light with 15-60x teles. Males had green, crested heads, grayish body. --David & Jan Dauphin

Swallow-tailed Kite: (April 10) Seen at about 3:00 PM with 10x50 binoculars. Other falconiformes were with it, though higher up (the kite was fairly high--I did not realize what it was until I used the binoculars). Marks noted: obviously forked tail, white underparts and wing linings, contrasting with black on the rest of the wing. The bird seemed fairly large, soared gracefully, and had crooked wings, pointed at the tip. --Mark Kulstad

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Bird seen perched at 25 yards in excellent light with 10x50 binocs. Rusty-barred breast; long, finely barred tail. Tail was squared with black band on tip. --David & Jan Dauphin

Cooper's Hawk: Bird seen perched on fence at 30 yds., and in flight with 10x50 binocs. In excellent light. Bird had a rounded tail, stubby wings, rusty breast. --David & Jan Dauphin

Glaucous Gull: This very large (larger than Herrings), all white bird was seen at 100 yds. with 15-60x teles. and at 25 yds. with 10x50 binocs. in good light. Bird had slight, dark tip on bill. It had very ragged primaries and ragged tail with several tail feathers missing and some primaries missing on left wing. Same bird seen at this location in April. --David & Jan Dauphin

Glaucous Gull: One bird, presumed second winter bird, observed at the Bollivar flats by VLE and JLR. Seen as close as 50 feet through 8x40 binoculars in excellent evening light. Observed for 1-2 minutes. Marks noted: all white plumage, pink legs, bill was massive, pink base to bill, dark tip; size: compared to nearby Herry Gulls it was slightly larger. --Victor L. Emanuel

Glaucous Gull: Apparently the same gull that has been seen all Spring. All white plumage; size of Herry Gull; pink bill with black tip; pink legs. --Margaret Anderson and Virginia Courtenay

TROPICAL KINGBIRD:

Date: 5/4/76

Time: 9:30-10:15 AM

Location: Take 59 West to Highway 6, turn south (left) on Highway 6, go until Gulf Coast Feeds appears on the left, turn left at Gulf Coast Feeds, take gravel road until it dead-ends, turn left on gravel road at dead-end, bird appeared at the immediate left among a group of Eastern Kingbirds in the trees along the barbwire fence.

Weather: Partly cloudy, wind from the southeast, 75 degrees.

Species: Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)

Field Description: Despite typical *Tyrannus* description, note the following diagnostic traits seen in this particular bird:

- A. Distinct black eye-line region, extending from the rear of the beak into the postocular region.
- B. Olive-green back, becoming somewhat more noticeable in direct light.
- C. Bright yellow crissum, flank, abdomen, and jugulum, a far brighter yellow than displayed in either Cassin's or Western.
- D. The yellow extends into the beginning of the throat.
- E. All of the times the bird was viewed perched (approx. 50+ times) the tail was always notched.
- F. The color of the tail was a dull, earthy brown, becoming a somewhat light brown in strong light.
- G. The tail was observed fanned several times, as well as one instance where the bird hovered with the tail fanned for approx. 30 seconds. White was never seen in the tail at any of these instances.

Viewing conditions: Bird was observed from the front, side, and rear; at rest, in flight, and hovering; good light from several angles (mainly from the upper rear), with 7x35 binoculars for approx. 45 minutes. --Ted L. Eubanks, Jr.

BEWICK'S WREN: Picked this bird up in thicket of tangle and tall bushes in Memorial; perched 3-5 feet from me hopping from bush to bush fussing; size: smaller than Carolina Wren--same size as Kentucky Warbler that was with it; above--bold white eye-stripe, brown above, barred tail (could not see white outer tail feathers); the tail was proportionately longer than that of a Carolina Wren (the comparisons to a Carolina are because I also saw a Carolina Wren in the same area a couple of minutes after the Bewick's and they were definitely different birds. Underneath: entirely white! Light: partly cloudy-sunny; too close for glasses. --Debbie DeKeyzer

BEWICK'S WREN: The bird was reported to me by Joy Sims, a reliable birder; it was singing in the salt cedars along the road leading to the Pilot's Station at Sabine and was a perfect picture of the one in Birds of North America with its long, white-notched tail, plain back and prominent eye stripe. They went home and played the tape of the song and it matched perfectly. --Bessie Cornelius

Solitary Vireo: Grayish head, olive back, white throat, heavy bill, white spectacles; In excellent flight with 10x50 binoculars at 15 yds. --David & Jan Dauphin

CHIPPING SPARROW: Observed May 16, 1976 on Eldridge Rd., West Harris County. Description: Sparrow bill, bird slighter than House Sparrow; marked white eyebrow line over black eyestripe; rusty red crown; streaked brownish back and wings; grayish clear (unmarked) breast and belly. --Chuck and Suzi Campbell

SPECIAL REPORT

COTINGIDAE?: Sarita area. On May 8 we went to Sarita area to check out reports of several birds reported from that area; south of Sarita at first roadside park to left we found the birds that we had primarily traveled to check out--Tropical Parula (2)--located by crossing stile and walking at a 45° angle to edge of the wooded area; these birds bred here last year and apparently have returned; we also found another bird that we had seen a great deal between April 27 and May 2--Rufous Mourner--rufous head, back and tail; yellowish beak; similar to beak of Tropical Kingbird; tawny throat; golden belly; tawny crissum, black feet; length 8 inches--based on comparison with Ladder-backed Woodpecker in same tree--I couldn't believe my eyes, but there it was. Was it the bird we had seen at Lake Jackson? or was it the bird seen at Galveston by John Tveten, Carl Aiken et al or was it a third bird? I suppose we'll never know. It looked identical to the bird we had seen at Lake Jackson on April 27, 28, May 1 and 2. --Larry and Martha Ballard

Editor's Comment: John Tveten, who saw one of those mysterious birds as reported in last month's SPOONBILL, had an excellent article in his "Nature Trails" column, in the June 5th Houston Chronicle. He reviewed the history of the sightings, light conditions, etc., and agrees with most observers that the bird that fits most of the descriptions is called a "Rufous Mourner". "But a Rufous Mourner in Texas is unprecedented. Unthinkable is a better word. It is a bird found in lowland forests from southern Mexico to northwest Ecuador.....but mourners do not migrate and there is no reason they should venture out of the forest 900 miles away". (When John O'Neill, curator of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at L.S.U. and an expert on tropical birds, brought specimens fitting the general description to the Houston Museum of Natural Science, they were examined by several people who had seen either one or the other of the Texas birds. Each agreed, independently, that two rufous mourner skins best fit what he had seen). John ended his article thus: "Were those birds the first North American mourners? Some think so, but no one knows for sure. One such bird would be unlikely--two seems impossible. I agree it is impossible, but I'm still unable to find a more plausible candidate".

RARE BIRD ALERT by Jack Gillette

The rare bird alert system was set up so that ardent birders in the OG could easily tell other ardent birders the particulars about rare sightings in the area. Each birder on the list is both a caller - you are responsible for calling two other birders - and a callee - someone is responsible for calling you. Since each birder has only two numbers to call, the system should function with minimum burden for all.

THE CURRENT LIST IS OUT OF DATE

A NEW LIST WILL GO INTO EFFECT IN AUGUST

If you want to be included on the list, send this form to: J.M. Gillette, 5027 Longmont, Houston, Texas 77056.

NAME _____

HOME TELEPHONE _____

BUS. TELEPHONE NUMBER _____

I am interested in being a part of the rare bird alert system, and agree to call assigned birders. I realize the system will work only if everyone on the list does his share.

SIGNED _____

DATE _____

NOTE WELL: This form is necessary to get on or to continue on the rare bird list.

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