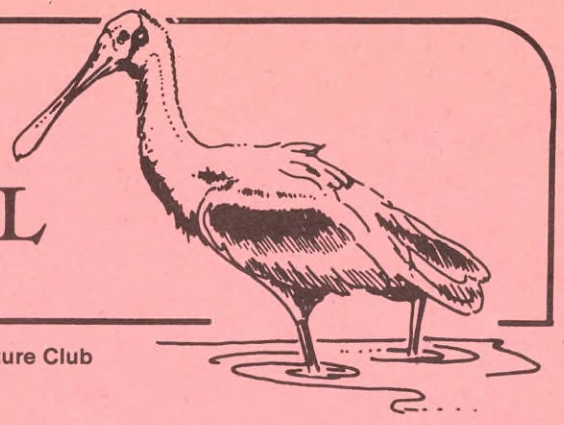
The SPOONBILL



Published by the Ornithology Group, Outdoor Nature Club
Houston, Texas Wanda Smith, editor

Volume XXV, No. 12
December, 1986

Coming Events

Saturday, Jan. 3: Deadline for Spoonbill articles, announcements and Clearing House reports.

Tuesday, Jan. 6: Ornithology Group meeting at Bayou Manor, 4141 S. Braeswood at 7:30 PM. The program will permit the bird photographers among us to show favorite slides. If you would like to participate, choose up to five of your slides and call Carol Sloan at (h) 681-2088 or (w) 781-0700.

OUTDOOR NATURE CLUB MEETING: There will not be a meeting in January. A new meeting place for February will be announced.

Saturday, Jan. 24: OG field trip to west Harris and southeast Waller Counties. Meet at the playground area near the west-most Clay Rd. entrance of Bear Creek Park. Bring lunch and prepare for cold weather and wet ground. Hoped-for species are: Purple Finch, Rusty Blackbird, Bewick's Wren, Harlan's Hawk, dark-phased Red-tailed Hawk, bittern, rails, longspurs, Grasshopper, Field Harris, Fox and LeConte's Sparrows, eagles, White-tailed Hawk, Black-shouldered Kite, Ferruginous Hawk, Crested Caracara, ducks and geese, possibly even Ross' Goose. Leaders will be Ron and Marcia Braun.

BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY

by Libby Price

On a recent trip to Miami my friends and I were lucky enough to see two Snail Kites hunting snails behind the Miccosukee Restaurant. They were still quite close as we started to leave. Just then, a man dove into his car for his camera, adjusted it, and carefully photographed a Boat-tailed Grackle in the parking lot.

BIRDER'S LIFE LIST AND DIARY (Updated)

For new birders who do not have this book, it is a must. For the birders who already have one, take note of this new 1986 version. The Dieterts, who for 26 years had published and updated this book, have passed along the duty to Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology. The new edition has just been printed and it looks terrific. One of the best new features is that it contains all 920 bird species that are known to occur in North America north of Mexico, in accordance with the 6th edition of the A.O.U. checklist (including all of those nice South Texas specialties). Another new feature is the numerical life list which goes up to #828 (certainly adequate for most birders). There are a few other improvements but why don't you check them out for yourself? Copies are available for $6.95 at "The Chickadee" or by mail order to Crow's Nest Bookshop, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Rd. Ithaca NY 14850.

Editor

Noel's Niche Looking Back

by Noel Pettingell

.....TEN YEARS AGO THIS MONTH
FROM DECEMBER 1976 SPOONBILL

"RESPONSIBILITIES AND ENJOYMENT OF BIRDING...an editorial

An interesting essay, written about 1953, and printed in the March-April, 1976 issue of Birding, by Ludlow Griscom, traced the historical development of sight recognition of birds. In this essay, he said that prior to 1900 all ornithologists were trained in recognition of species by handling specimens, therefore collecting was done on a large scale...[Even after collecting was restricted, the criteria for sight records were] very severe, and to us today, almost unreasonable. For instance, a sight record of a rare bird relatively easy to identify was accepted, provided the observer was known to be experienced, and had previous acquaintance in life with that rare bird!...With the advent of the automobile, better field glasses, spotting scopes, birding manuals such as Peterson's guides, colored plates, sight recognition became more readily accepted. Mr. Griscom pointed out that sight recognition had moved into 'an era of superficiality'...He cites the case of a young man who saw...thousands of Franklin's Gulls for the first time and properly put it on his life list, yet a few weeks later, neither recognized, identified nor spotted, a Franklin's Gull standing on a beach between two Laughing Gulls. (How many of us have 'lifers' on our list which we didn't recognize the second time we saw it?)

"Birdwatching as a hobby has grown enormously within the past decade, yet over twenty years ago, Mr. Griscom was worried because 'we now have hordes of incompetent and inexperienced observers, whose activities in birding consist primarily in an increasingly frantic effort to secure the credence of so-called higher authorities for rarities which they say they see'...[and] he felt there was a desperate need for severe, careful and competent screening and censoring.

"Many people deplore collecting of any sort, and heap anathema on the heads of ornithologists with collecting permits. Yet those of us who attended the two seminars this fall know how different a view we get from skins than from photographs when studying birds of similar characteristics. Quoting from a TOS newsletter:'...if birders want to halt collecting then they must carry their share of the responsibility for recording rarities.' Recognizing this, the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collections, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, Texas A&M University established...the Texas Photo-Record File...What does this have to do with us, 'weekend birders', who are reading this?...Do we study each 'lifer' and learn its habitat, behavior, plumage changes, etc.? And here I'm not talking about serious scientific ornithological study, but facts that are available to us from various manuals that are the results of such study...When we add a 'lifer' have we seen the diagnostic field marks for ourselves, or have we relied on the word of fellow birders...?

As your list grows, do you feel that you haven't had an enjoyable birding trip if you haven't added a 'lifer'? If so, perhaps you should come to a screeching halt and ask yourself what birding means to you: are you just a lister...? Or are you enjoying the birds you see, whether it is a Blue Jay,...or the newest bird on your list...?

"I'm not advocating that we rush around studying in depth House Sparrows (though a male in breeding season is a beautiful bird!), or cardinals, etc. But I am suggesting that all of us, for our own enjoyment, need to learn all we can about the birds we see. As well as enhancing our enjoyment of our favorite hobby, such knowledge will help to ensure responsible identifications. Adding a new bird is a thrill, but a good knowledge plus (and that's a big plus) experience, will make a good birder."

(Margaret [Mrs. T. Paul] Jones was editor of the Spoonbill 1974-81...Ed.)

Send bird records for Clearing House before 3rd of month to:
Ron Braun, 1302 Berrywood Ln.
Houston 77077, 496-3108

Rare Bird Alert Tape, sponsored by The Piney Woods Wildlife Society:
821-2846

Send announcements, articles, etc. for The Spoonbill to editor:
Wanda Smith
2811 Stanton, Houston 77025
(h) 661-3572

Send dues, subscriptions and changes of address to:
Peter Vennema, 2120 Tangley
Houston 77005, 520-6803
Annual Dues: $11.00
(ONC $5.00, OG $6.00)
Annual Subscriptions: $9.00

TEXAS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

The following letter was sent by Dr. Keith Arnold of Texas A & M:

"With an avifauna of over 560 species and no less than 275 species breeding in the Lone Star State a program to document the breeding birds in Texas seems past due. The Texas Ornithological Research Endowment, a program of the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collections at Texas A & M University, has initiated planning for a Texas Breeding Bird Atlas...The program is designed for five breeding seasons, with the ultimate goal of a volume similar to that recently published for the Vermont program.

"The program will not flourish without the cooperation of many volunteers to carry out the field work: we will need at least 300 and perhaps as many as 500 to search the countryside for breeding birds over the five seasons...Although the field work may prove difficult, we believe all cooperators will find it a great deal of fun.

"Equally important to the success of the atlas will be financial support. We estimate that it will take $25,000 a year for the five-year program, or a total of $125,000. These funds will allow the hiring of two half-time coordinators, one to coordinate the cooperators and one to handle the data. These funds include the costs of printing materials for the cooperators, communications between College Station, the regional coordinators and the field cooperatives, computerization of the data and analyses, and ultimate publication of the Atlas. To fund the project, we seek 1000 individuals to donate $25 for each of the five years, including an immediate donation of at least $25 before January 10, 1987. All donations are tax deductible of course.

"The Texas Ornithological Society has joined as a co-sponsor of this project. Numerous birding groups and Audubon chapters around the state have also been invited to join as co-sponsors.

"Persons wishing further information on the Texas Breeding Bird Atlas, or desiring to participate and/or donate to the program, may contact Dr. Keith Arnold, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, Texas A & M University, College Station, Texas 77843-2258. Donations should be made payable to the TAMU Development Foundation and mailed to the foundation, P.O. Box J-7, College Station Texas 77844.

(The OG has voted to be a co-sponsor of the program and to contribute $250. However individuals are encouraged to participate in whatever way they can...Ed.)

OG FIELD TRIP TO BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK

by Bob Honig

Brazos Bend State Park produced its normally splendid assortment of birds for the OG as Doug Williams and I led them through the park on November 29. The afternoon began with close views of Ring-necked Ducks from the pier at 40-Acre Lake. The sky was overcast but fairly bright. As we reached the observation tower the sun was trying to break through; patches of sunlight highlighted the plumage of the multitude of waterfowl, mostly widgeons, shovelers and gadwalls, in the marsh of Pilant Lake. Some of us had an especially close view of a male Gadwall, whose subtle beauty can only be appreciated at close range; at a distance it merely looks plain gray. In the woodland near the lake were Golden-crowned Kinglets, a female Black-throated Green Warbler and a male Wilson's Warbler.

By the time we reached Elm Lake the clouds had disappeared. The warmth and improved light inspired us in the search for Vermilion Flycatchers: four brilliant males and a streaked female with a deep pink blush on her belly were sighted. Elm Lake also yielded a Caspian Tern, numerous Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, and an Osprey soaring lazily overhead.

Just after sunset we leisurely observed a pair of Great Horned Owls, clearly lit by the afterglow, calling and flying amidst the foliage near the treetops. We all noted that the owls moved their bodies into an almost horizontal posture when calling, then sat back in the more typical vertical position between calls. Several barred owls were seen and many others heard. One pair, attracted to a recorded call, mated as we observed from the roadside. (This is the third time I have observed this species mating after being attracted to a recording.) Throughout the day Brazos Bend Park gave us great views of a variety of species.

The Spoonbill Staff

Editor.....Wanda Smith
Art Editor.....Linda Feltner
Layout Artist.....Connie Clark
Typists.....Libby Price
Labels.....Peggy Milstead
Mailing Committee.....Connie Schimbor
Checklist Committee.....Ron Braun
Noel Pettingell
Jim Morgan

Send requests for OG information, checklists, maps to:
Maxine Davis, 10602 Cedarhurst
Houston 77096, 723-8559

A DAY IN THE FIELD IN SOUTHERN PERU

by Bob Behrstock

The city of Arequipa lies in the Western Andes of extreme southern Peru at just over 16° South. The climate is dry and its altitude of about 7660 feet places it on the edge of the Arid Subtropical and Arid Temperate life zones. Its proximity to the coastal town of Mollendo, about 50 miles to the southeast ensures the likelihood of a fresh seafood dinner and its closeness to Bolivia and Chile guarantees a political tirade from your driver long before lunch. The monastery, nearby Inca ruins and attractive town center are all draws for tourists. Furthermore, it is a rich agricultural center, the perimeter of town being densely planted in onions, garlic, potatoes, celery, parsley and chard, a verdant contrast to the surrounding dry, scrubby desert. Coming into its airport from any direction you're rewarded with spectacular panoramas of snow-covered Andes. One of the first sights you see as you land is the llamas placidly clipping the lawn and wandering among the baggage carts.

Originally we'd planned two days to bird the area, but AeroPeru's schedule reduced our stay to one full day in the field following a late afternoon arrival. With only one day, neither George, Jane or Gloria winced too hard when our guide and driver Zenobio Alegre (alegre means "happy" in Spanish) suggested a 4:30 AM departure. The next morning, October 5, Zenobio rang our rooms long before the fluffy white alpacas tethered in the garden were showing any obvious signs of life. After zigging and zagging through a maze of narrow streets we were out of town, headed northeast on a dirt road with hardly enough light to distinguish it. Our first bird of the day was a Burrowing Owl, perched on a low stone wall built by Inca farmers a thousand years ago. The first low rays of dawn were lighting the snow-covered massif of Chanchani and the smaller mountain Misti to its east. A few miles later the broad snowy set of peaks known as Pichu Pichu ("many peaks" in Quechua) appeared further to the east, standing out in stark whiteness against the surrounding dry slopes.

Because we had more than two hours to drive, we tried not to stop much at first, but the long trill of a Canyon Canastero, glimpses of Yellow-finches and Inca Finches, and the mixed herds of alpacas and llamas all served to slow our ascent. On the way up we passed through a zone of shrubs, including some of the genus Polylepis (Fam. Rosaceae), an important habitat for mountain birds. Climbing higher to just over 14,000 feet, we reached the puna, a dry grassland typical of the high Andean valleys. Along the hillside to the north a large black and white raptor soared by. This was our first of several Mountain Caracaras. We also saw the Andean Condor, Puna Hawk, three short-tailed Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles and a very close Aplomado Falcon.

Our main goal on the puna was Laguna Salinas, a shallow salt lake which supports, at times, upwards of 80,000 flamingos of three species during the non-breeding season. As we neared the edge of the lake we could see a small spot of pink on its far shore, surely a promise of avian riches awaiting us.

I should mention at this point that the term "chasing birds" has little meaning at 14,000 feet. You use your telescope a lot, you stand by the car waiting for birds to walk over to you, or you slowly approach a bird, hoping that the sound of your breathing doesn't scare it away. Fortunately we found the birds quite tame, even around a small village of Quechua herders. In small marshy pools near the lake edge, we found beautiful little Andean Geese, their white plumage, short bills and necks reminiscent of Ross' Geese. Some of the pools were frozen, but the larger ones connected by streams all had open water. As we continued along the lake edge searching for the glut of flamingos, we encountered many ground birds. Rufous-backed Negritos, small, black, ground-dwelling flycatchers with rufous backs, foraged in small groups. On and beside the road were several species of miners and ground-tyrants.

A distant whistling thought to be a tinamou was the Gray-breasted Seedsnipe, a dumpling of a shorebird, looking much more like a small partridge. This was a new family for the four of us. (I'm not sure about Zenobio; he remained stoic.) Had we been at a lower altitude we would have jumped for joy.

When we reached the end of the lake we realized that the flamingo extravaganza was not in store for us; the birds had moved farther south to nest. We decided to beat it back to the other end of the lake and scope out the patch of pink we had seen. En route we glassed several acres of snorebirds, virtually all Baird's Sandpipers, a standard item in the high country. Among them were a few Wilson's Phalaropes and yellowlegs. We could not get very close to the flamingos. To get a little closer I left my companions at the car and slowly walked out across the salt crust that overlay the sometimes dry, sometimes sticky mud. Around me, embedded in the salt layer were thousands of flamingo footprints and tiny pink feathers, evidence of the spectacle we had missed.

I could then see that the 16 flamingos, the only ones on the lake, were Chilean Flamingos, which we had seen on the coast. I did, however, score two more lifers during the brief stroll. We all got on a small flock of Andean Avocets, one of the most restricted members of their small family, showing outrageously upturned bills. I also saw a small herd of Vicuna, our third New World camel of the day.

Until mid-afternoon we slowly worked our way back to Arequipa, adding three species of siskins, ovenbirds and other ground birds. Each stop at plowed field, Inca terrace or stream bed produced new birds. Fortunately we were spared rain or cloud cover, police incident or starvation (our hotel provided lunch). Zenobio only had to change one tire on his VW bus. Complaints ranged from numb hands and low-grade headaches caused by altitude to "Where are all the damn flamingos?" We ended the day feeling fortunate to have seen an interesting cross section of species, including some local specialties, in a rather stark but nonetheless majestic setting. On to the jungle!

MINUTES OF THE ORNITHOLOGY GROUP MEETING on November 6, 1986

The Ornithology Group met Thursday, November 6, 1986 in the Bayou Manor Auditorium at 7:30 PM. Chairman Robert Thacker opened the meeting with comments in response to Ted Eubanks' letter in the October Spoonbill. Rob reiterated pleas for our individual letters to the Mayor and City Council, asking for an end to the City of Houston's sponsorship of the Wallisville Dam proposal, and urged that we support the Sierra Club and other organizations in conservation efforts.

Rob also asked for volunteers willing to help with a UTC breeding-bird census to call him; and again asked for a co-compiler for the Houston C.B.C. on December 27.

An announcement was made that participants in the OG field trip to Welder Wildlife Refuge sighted an immature Northern Jacana.

Carol Sloan then introduced the speaker, Kathy Adams. Her background as a successful professional bird photographer was evident in Ms. Adams informative presentation of helpful tips for different types of bird photography, which she illustrated with educational and beautiful slides. A lively question and answer period followed her talk, after which the meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Caroline Callery, Secretary

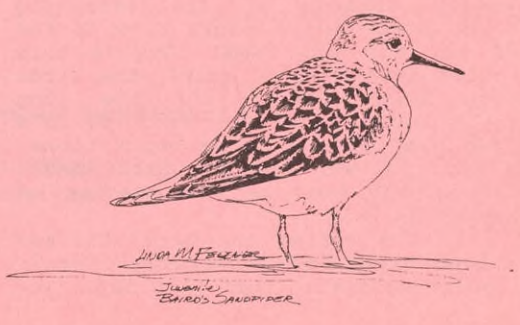
BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (Calidris bairdii) STATUS ON THE UPPER TEXAS COAST, PART I

by Ted L. Eubanks, Jr.

The Baird's Sandpiper is among the more enigmatic waders to occur with regularity on the upper Texas coast (UTC). The reasons are threefold: difficulty in identification, the low relative numbers that are present at any given time, and the diversity and inconsistency of habitats utilized. This article will attempt to answer a few of the questions which surround this fascinating species.

Baird's Sandpiper is a high arctic, tundra-nesting species, whose breeding range extends from extreme NE Siberia to NW Greenland (Hayman, et al., 1986). Baird's winters in the grasslands of South America, venturing as far south as Tierra Del Fuego. The Baird's migration route between these extreme latitudes is a direct, straight-line affair, and it is identical in both spring and fall (unlike the routes of many calidrids, which are elliptical, different in spring and fall). Baird's Sandpiper migrates through the central United States, primarily west of the Mississipi River, in extensive flights with few pauses.

In fall, for example, this sandpiper migrates directly from the arctic to staging areas in the central United States prairies; Cheyenne Bottoms, Kansas has hosted as many as 60,000 individuals in a single season. From these staging areas Baird's then makes a single direct flight to South America. A similar strategy is employed in the spring, with a direct flight from South America to staging areas in the central United States, and then a final long-distance jaunt to the breeding grounds. Females migrate in autumn earlier than males, and adults migrate before the juveniles. Juveniles also frequently deviate from the above route in fall, and most of the individuals collected east of the Mississippi are of this age class.



We see the effects of this migratory strategy in the low number and irregular appearance of migrant Baird's in either season. This species primarily overflies the Texas coast, leaving us with only occasional stragglers to observe. The few Baird's that we are blessed with appear with seasonal regularity, however, so the status of the species still requires a more extensive discussion.

Baird's Sandpiper occurs on the UTC in spring from mid-April through mid-May. My earliest spring observation is April 12, 1980; the latest is May 18, 1978. Fall observantions span a longer time period. Adult Baird's arrive as early as the first of August (early fall date is August 3, 1986), and juveniles straggle through as late as the end of October (late fall date is October 20, 1985). There are no specimen records of adult Baird's Sandpiper from North America later than August 30, and there are also no Baird's specimens from the United States later than December (Jehl, 1979). Therefore, any Baird's on the UTC in September and October would probably be a juvenile, and we should not expect the bird in winter (even though for some inexplicable reason the species has been reported with regularity on Texas Christmas counts). Counts of 2 or 3 individuals on a single day are the norm, and any single day observation of more than 10 Baird's is an exceptional event. My personal high count of 14 happened recently, on August 23, 1986, at San Luis Pass.

The UTC habitats preferred by Baird's Sandpiper fall into three distinct types: coastal beaches, riverine and lacustrine shorelines, and grasslands. Because of the unpredictable appearances of the species it is impossible to pinpoint a specific location that it is guaranteed to frequent. However, broad seasonal patterns do exist. For instance, Baird's are more common on the coastal beaches in fall than in spring; in fact the species is limited almost exclusively to this habitat in fall. I believe that these coastal Baird's, upon reaching a major obstacle such as the Gulf of Mexico, anticipate the energy demands of the remaining flight and stage for a short time on the beaches to rest and feed. During this time, often less than 24 hours, the birds replenish their energy for the long flight to South America. Fall Baird's are often seen at the large depositional sand flats (Boliver and San Luis Pass), but I regularly observe the species on the beaches as well.

In the spring the bird utilizes both inland grasslands (overgrazed prairies, golf courses, turf fields), and inland shorelines, paricularly paddyfields. Beach occurrences are less common in spring than in fall. I find Baird's regularly in spring in the ricefields of west Harris and east Chambers Counties, often associated with American Golden Plovers, Pectoral Sandpipers and Buff-breasted Sandpipers. There is an interesting correlation between the migrations of the Baird's and the White-rumped Sandpipers, and the techniques and timing of rice farming on the UTC. When the Baird's arrive in spring, the rice season has just begun and the fields are either freshly plowed or recently planted and flooded. This habitat is ideal for species such as Baird's which are surface feeders and prefer a dry or damp habitat for feeding. By the time the White-rumped arrives in large numbers in mid-May the ricefields have progressed and are now deeply flooded and vegetated. This habitat appeals to many of the late species such as Hudsonian Godwit, Stilt Sandpiper and White-rumped Sandpiper which can feed in deep water and are substrate probers. In many years the municipal golf course on Galveston Island hosts a number of Baird's. Other spring sites are the shores of Warren Lake and Blackie Tyler's Pond, any overgrazed field in west Harris County, and freshly-plowed paddyfields of inland counties.

References

REFERENCES

Hayman, P., J. Marchant and T. Prater. 1986. Shorebirds: An Identification Guide to the Waders of the World. Houghton Mifflin, Boston. Pp. 198, 374.

Jehl, J.R., Jr. 1979. The autumn migration of Baird's Sandpiper. "Shorebirds in Marine Environments." Studies in Avian Biology. Cooper Ornithological Society. 2:55-68.

Put after Ted Eubanks "Baird's Sandpiper" Article

1987 O.G. DUES ARE DUE

We very much need your continuing financial support. Recent and ongoing enhancements to the Spoonbill are making it one of the finest local level publications available. Programs presented at our monthly meetings have been excellent partly because funds have been available to bring some speakers from out of town. Both of these require funding and, by far, our primary revenue comes from dues and subscriptions.

Single Membership.....$11.00 (incl. Spoonbill)
Double Membership..... 22.00
Spoonbill Subscription only
(for non-members)..... 9.00

Each membership includes dues of $5.00 for the Outdoor Nature Club. Your promptness in paying your dues is greatly appreciated. Please mail them to our Treasurer along with a completed Membership/Subscription Form.

Checks Made Out To:	Mail To:
Ornithology Group	Peter Vennema 2120 Tangley Houston, TX 77005

Be sure to include items such as your phone and apartment number as the information on the form will be used to update our roster.

1987 Membership/Subscription

Name_____ Phone_____

Address_____ Zip_____ Apt._____

Amount Enclosed_____

( ) single membership ( ) double membership

( ) Spoonbill subscription only
(for non-members)

Clearing House NOVEMBER, 1986

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made on the Upper Texas Coast. How to read the CH: Location--(how many) date, observers. Common, widely distributed species on the UTC during the reported month are listed as follows: number of reports, (lowest # - highest #; total # of individuals seen), e.g. 8 reports (1-20;82). Noteworthy sightings will be underlined, capitalized, or both, according to their status. Birds with very rare, vagrant, accidental, or no status on the Checklist at the date of sighting require details. Sightings needing details but submitted without them will not be included in the regular Clearing House. All observations affecting the species' status on the current UTC Checklist must be accepted by the Checklist Committee. Documentation is a must for consideration by the Committee.

ABBREVIATION CODES

ANWR = Anahuac NWR
BBCR = Bob's Bait Camp Rd
BBSP = Brazos Bend SP
BC = Brazoria Co.
BCP = Bear Creek Park
BF = Bolivar Flats
BNWR = Brazoria NWR
Bolv = Bolivar Pen.
CC = Chambers Co.
CSP = Challenger 7 Pk
EG = E. Galveston
FBC = Ft. Bend Co.
Ferry = Bolivar Ferry Landing
Free = Freeport
GC = Galveston Co.
GISP = Galveston Is. SP
H = Houston
HA = Houston Arboretum
HI = High Island
King = Kingwood
LH=Lake Houston
NWH = NW Houston
RP = Rollover Pass
SBNWR = San Bernard NWR
SJSP = San Jacinto SP
SLP = San Luis Pass
SO = Sun Oil
SWH = SW Houston
TCD = Texas City Dike
WGI = W. Galveston Is.
WH = W. Houston
WHC = W. Harris Co.
WL = Warren Lake
WMP = White Memorial Pk
WOB = White Oak Bayou

200 Species reported this month

Loon,Common: TCD-(5)16,DM
Grebe,Pied-billed: 20 reports (1-50;174)
Grebe,Horned: WHC-(4)20,HH
Grebe,Eared: 11 reports (1-64;127)
Pelican,American White: 33 reports (1-500;3105)
Pelican,Brown: Quitana Jetty-(2)13,JF (Notes, ed.); Free-(1)23,RU
Cormorant,Double-crested: 29 reports (3-230;1057)
Cormorant,Olivaceous: 11 reports (1-30;112)
cormorant,sp.: BNWR-(3)1,BEW
Anhinga: 6 reports (1-20;36)
Bittern,American: CC-(1)8,TOS
Heron,Great Blue: 43 reports (1-30;213)
Egret,Great: 37 reports (1-60;395)
Egret,Snowy: 29 reports (1-120;330)
Heron,Little Blue: 10 reports (2-20;58)
Heron,Tricolored: 16 reports (1-12;55)
Egret,Reddish: 18 reports (1-10;52)
Egret,Cattle: 20 reports (1-150;749)
Heron,Green-backed: FBC-(1)30,BG
Night-Heron,Black-crowned: 16 reports (1-150;433)
Night-Heron,Yellow-crowned: WGI-(4)8,SG; GISP-(1)9,SG
Ibis,White: 17 reports (1-60;271)
Ibis,White-faced: 14 reports (5-200;841)
Spoonbill,Roseate: 14 reports (1-90;261)
Whistling-Duck,Black-bellied: 11 reports (2-230;695) (Status changing, ed.)
Goose,Greater White-fronted: 20 reports (1-5000;19254)
Goose,Snow: 24 reports (4-60000;139551)
(Goose,Blue): 8 reports (2-4000;6967)
Goose,Ross': WGI-(1)9,MEL
Goose,Canada: 9 reports (2-1000;1711)
Duck,Wood: WHC-(2)15,RMB; BCP-(1)15,RMB
Teal,Green-winged: 15 reports (1-3000;4225)
Duck,Mottled: 12 reports (2-30;94)
Mallard: 9 reports (3-200;344)
Pintail,Northern: 14 reports (2-500;1591)
Teal,Blue-winged: 11 reports (1-12;55)
Teal,Cinnamon: 7 reports (1-12;28)
SBNWR-(4)8,MEL; WL-(2)16,SW;(3)23,BG; WHC-(2)20,HH;(4)23,HWH;(12)30,ME; Free-(1)23,RU
Shoveler,Northern: 24 reports (1-550;2015)
Gadwall: 22 reports (2-650;2245)
Wigeon,American: 15 reports (1-480;1176)
Canvasback: 8 reports 15-30 (1-30;52)
Redhead: WL-(10)15,(6)16,SW; FBC-(2 male)22,HA
Duck,Ring-necked: 9 reports (10-350;940)
Scaup,Lesser: 12 reports (2-80;255)
Scoter,Surf: Bolv-(1 female)15,BS (Notes, ed.)
Goldeneye,Common: ANWR-(2)15,WCS (No notes, ed.); WL-(4)23,BG
Bufflehead: 8 reports (1-26;79)
WL-(3)11,RU;(10)15,16,SW; TCD-(26)16,DM; WGI-(1)16,DM; FBC-(15)22,HA;(10)28,HW; WHC-(4)30,ME
Merganser,Hooded: SJSP-(37)13,DM (Notes, ed.)
MERGANSER,COMMON: NW Harris Co-(1 female)17,GC (Notes, ed.)
Merganser,Red-breasted: 6 reports (1-6;21)
BF-(2)7,TOS (No notes, ed.); SLP-(3)8,MEL; Bolv-(6)15,WCS;(5)29,RU; GC-(4 females)15,RU; TCD-(1)16,DM
Duck,Ruddy: 15 reports (1-250;988)
Vulture,Black: 12 reports (1-40;132)
Vulture,Turkey: 24 reports (1-50;335)
Osprey: Bolv-(1)7,TOS; WGI-(1)8,SG; Trinity R.-(1)28,WC; BBSP-(1)29,OG
Kite,Black-shouldered: 14 reports (1-5;26)
Eagle,Bald: 9 reports (1-5;22)
WL-(1 ad)11,RU;(4 inc 2 imm)23,HWH;(1 ad)27,RU; (4 inc 1 imm)30,RU; WHC-(1 imm)15,RMB;(5)20,HH; (3 imm)23,HWH;(1)30,ME; FBC-(2 inc 1 imm)30,BG
Harrier,Northern: 32 reports (1-40;233)
Hawk,Sharp-shinned: 10 reports (1-2;11)
Hawk,Cooper's: 7 reports (1-2;8)
CC-(1)7,TOS; ANWR-(1)8,TOS; BBSP-(2)8,SW; WGI-(1)16,DM; H-(1)17,WC; WHC-(1)23,SG; FBC-(1)28,HW
Hawk,Red-shouldered: 9 reports (1-2;13)
Hawk,White-tailed: Stubblefield Lake-(1 imm)8,MEL (Notes, ed.); SBNWR-(1)9,SW (resident birds, ed.)
Hawk,Red-tailed: 27 reports (1-25;165)
Hawk,Harlan's: WHC-(1)30,ME (No notes, ed.)
(Hawk,Krider's): ANWR-(1)15,WCS (Notes, ed.)
Eagle,Golden: CC-(1 imm)15,BS (Notes, ed.); FBC-(2 ad)30,BG (Notes, ed.)
Caracara,Crested: SBNWR-(2)8,MEL
Kestrel,American: 41 reports (1-30;387)
Merlin: WHC-(1)15,RMB; CC-(1 female)15,BS
Falcon,Peregrine: BF-(1)15,WCS; NWH-(1)20,SW
Bobwhite,Northern: Tomball-(22)16,SW; BBSP-(5)22,HA; FBC-(12)22,HA; WHC-(9)23,BG
Rail,Clapper: BF-(1)7,TOS; SO-(3)7,JM; SJSP-(1)24,DM
Rail,King: FBC-(1)22,HA; WHC-(1)30,ME
Sora: SBNWR-(1)8,MEL
Gallinule,Purple: ANWR-(1)7,TOS (Notes, ed.)
Moorhen,Common: 11 reports (1-80;298)
Coot,American: 24 reports (2-500;2978)
Crane,Sandhill: 6 reports (4-120;168)
WGI-(12)8,MEL;(15)9,MEL;(7)16,DM; WHC-(10)20,HH; BBSP-(120)22,HA; FBC-(4)30,BG
Plover,Black-bellied: 17 reports (1-60;137)
Plover,Snowy: 5 reports (2-15;34)
BF-(15)7,TOS;(5)7,JM;(10)8,TOS; Bolv-(2)15,WCS;(2)15,RU
Plover,Wilson's: BF-(1)2,JB;(1)7,JM; Bolv-(3)29,RU
Plover,Semipalmated: 9 reports (1-20;95)
Plover,Piping: 9 reports (1-30;81)
Killdeer: 34 reports (1-100;615)
Oystercatcher,American: 15 reports (1-16;54)
Stilt,Black-necked: 6 reports (1-8;21)
EG-(8)1,RMB; BBCR-(1)7,JM; BC-(4)8,MEL; SJSP-(2)13,DM; ANWR-(4)15,WCS; Bolv-(2)29,RU
Avocet,American: 19 reports (3-6000;13439)
Yellowlegs,Greater: 23 reports (1-30;104)
Yellowlegs,Lesser: 9 reports (1-150;247)
Willet: 21 reports (1-100;398)
Sandpiper,Spotted: ANWR-(1)7,TOS; WGI-(1)8,SG; TCD-(1)16,DM; SJSP-(1)24,DM
Curlew,Long-billed: 14 reports (1-50;195)
Godwit,Marbled: 15 reports (1-180;421)
Turnstone,Ruddy: 12 reports (1-50;161)
Knot,Red: BF-(1)7,TOS; SLP-(30)8,MEL; WGI-(40)9,MEL
Sanderling: 18 reports (1-200;674)
Sandpiper,Western: 14 reports (2-250;1513)
Sandpiper,Least: 11 reports (1-50;99)
Dunlin: 14 reports (1-400;1073)
Dowitcher,Short-billed: 10 reports (1-400;848)
Dowitcher,Long-billed: 6 reports (1-75;131)
dowitcher,sp.: 7 reports (4-60;179)
Snipe,Common: 9 reports (1-35;56)
PHALAROPE,WILSON'S: EG-(1)15,BS (Notes, ed.)
Gull,Laughing: 18 reports (5-500;3371)
Gull,Franklin's: WL-(1)30,ME (No notes, ed.)
Gull,Ring-billed: 22 reports (2-1000;1822)
Gull,Herring: 10 reports (1-50;160)
GULL,THAYER'S: SLP-(1)8,MEL (Notes, ed.); WGI-(1)9,MEL
Tern,Gull-billed: HI-(4)2,JB; ANWR-(1)8,TOS; BC-(35 inc 25 in 1 field)8,MEL
Tern,Caspian: 18 reports (1-80;307)
Tern,Royal: 16 reports (5-300;968)
Tern,Sandwich: 9 reports (1-40;133)
BF-(20)1,RMB;(1)2,JB;(15)7,TOS;(40)7,JM; EG-(1)1,RMB; SLP-(10)8,MEL; WGI-(10)9,MEL; TCD-(28)16,DM; Bolv-(8)29,RU
Tern,Common: 7 reports 1-15 (2-15;43)
Tern,Forster's: 27 reports (1-200;795)
Skimmer,Black: 15 reports (4-300;2367)
Dove,Rock: 13 reports (1-200;317)
Turtle-Dove,Ringed: NWH-(3-6)1-30,VL; SWH-(2)30,SW
Dove,Mourning: 34 reports (1-100;694)
Dove,Inca: NWH-(2-10)1-30,VL; SWH-(4)1-30,PM; GC-(2)15,RU
Ground-Dove,Common: WHC-(1)15,RMB
Ani,Groove-billed: WGI-(15)9,MEL; WHC-(1)23,BG
Barn-Owl,Common: WGI-(1)9,MEL; Tomball-(1)13,24,(2)22,SW
Owl,Great Horned: Tomball-(1)17,SW; BBSP-(2)29,OG; WHC-(1)30,ME
Owl,Barred: Tomball-(1)8,SW; King-(1)10,JB; BBSP-(15)29,OG
Owl,Short-eared: WHC-(6)8,SW
Hummingbird,Buff-bellied: WH-(1)9,MBM (Notes, ed.)
Hummingbird,Ruby-throated: H-(1 ad male)1-30,GC; WHC-(1 male)8,SW
hummingbird,sp.: H-(1 Archilochus)1-17,WC; WH-(1)15-18,RMB; H-(1 Selasphorus)1-30,GC
Kingfisher,Belted: 34 reports (1-8;74)
Woodpecker,Red-headed: King-(1)2,(4)22,SG
Woodpecker,Red-bellied: 14 reports (1-10;44)
Sapsucker,Yellow-bellied: 10 reports (1-3;15)
Woodpecker,Downy: 10 reports (1-6;28)
Flicker,Northern: 17 reports (1-10;51)
Woodpecker,Pileated: 9 reports (1-6;22)
Phoebe,Eastern: 22 reports (1-20;122)
Phoebe,Say's: SBNWR-(1)8,MEL (Notes, ed.)
Flycatcher,Vermilion: 6 reports (1-5;16)
BNWR-(2)1,BEW; ANWR-(1)9,DM; BBSP-(3 males - 2 ad; 1 imm)16,RU;(5)22,HA;(4 - 3 males: 1 female)29,OG; WHC-(1)30,ME
Flycatcher,Ash-throated: HI-(1)1,RMB (Notes, ed.)
Kingbird,Western: CC-(1)9,DM (Notes, ed.)
Flycatcher,Scissor-tailed: 9 reports (1-10;29) including WHC-(1)15,SW;(10)20,HH (Notes for both, ed.) WGI-(1)16,DM (No notes, ed.)
Lark,Horned: 8 reports (2-30;81)
Swallow,Tree: 9 reports (1-75;225)
Swallow,Northern Rough-winged: SLP-(1)8,MEL
Swallow,Barn: CC-(50)1,RMB; NWH-(3)6,SW; WGI-(1)8,SG
Jay,Blue: 17 reports (1-12;74)
Crow,American: 23 reports (1-400;709)
Chickadee,Carolina: 15 reports (2-35;139)
Titmouse,Tufted: 9 reports (1-25;69)
Nuthatch,Red-breasted: GISP-(1)9,MEL;(1)16,DM
Nuthatch,Brown-headed: King-(1)2,SG; Tomball-(4)8,SW; WMP-(3)9,DM
Creeper,Brown: 6 reports (1-2;9)
SO-(2)7,JM; Tomball-(2)8,SW; WMP-(1)9,DM; WHC-(2)23,BG; WOB-(1)23,29,WC

Wren,Carolina: 15 reports (1-10;53)
Wren,House: 11 reports (1-20;73)
Wren,Winter: WOB-(4)1-30,WC; WGI-(1)16,DM
Wren,Sedge: GC/BC-(2)8,MEL; ANWR-(1)15,WCS; WOB-(1)29,WC

Wren,Marsh: CC-(1)9,DM; SJSP-(1)13,DM; ANWR-(1)15,WCS; GISP-(1)16,DM
Kinglet,Golden-crowned: 15 reports (1-14;67)
Kinglet,Ruby-crowned: 27 reports (1-40;391)
Gnatcatcher,Blue-gray: 21 reports (1-35;154)
Bluebird,Eastern: 5 reports (2-6;17)
Tomball-(2)8,SW; WMP-(2)9,DM;
BBSP-(4)16,RU;(6)22,HA;(3)29,OG
Thrush,Hermit: 5 reports (1-2;7)
WOB-(2)1-30,WC; WMP-(1)9,DM; HA-(2)20,WH;(1)21,WMJ;
SJSP-(1)24,DM
Robin,American: 9 reports (1-300;481)
Catbird,Gray: HI-(1)8,TOS; GISP-(1)9,SG; WGI-(3)16,DM
Mockingbird,Northern: 33 reports (1-20;195)
Thrasher,Brown: 11 reports (1-3;14)
Pipit,Water: 5 reports (10-150;220)
WHC-(30)20,HH;(10)23,HWH;(20)23,SG;
FBC-(150)22,HA;(10)28,HW
Shrike,Loggerhead: 34 reports (1-40;330)
Starling,European: 29 reports (2-5000;7535)
Vireo,White-eyed: SBNWR-(2)8,MEL; WGI-(1)16,DM
Vireo,Solitary: WGI-(3)16,DM; WOB-(1)29-30,WC
Warbler,Tennessee: WMP-(1)9,DM; HI-(4)9,DM;
GISP-(1)9,SG; WGI-(3)16,DM (Notes, ed.)
Warbler,Orange-crowned: 18 reports (1-4;33)
Warbler,Magnolia: SO-(1)7,JM; SBNWR-(1)8,MEL;
HI-(1)9,DM; WGI-(1)16,DM (Notes, ed.)
Warbler,Yellow-rumped: 20 reports (1-50;317)
Warbler,Black-throated Green: HI-(1)7,TOS;(6)9,DM;
SLP-(1)8,MEL; BBSP-(1)29,OG
Warbler,Pine: 12 reports (1-50;156)
Warbler,Palm: 7 reports (1-30;57)
NWH-(1)5,VL; SO-(3)7,JM; SBNWR-(30)8,MEL;
GISP-(1)9,SG;(12)9,MEL; WGI-(8)9,MEL;(2)16,DM
WARBLER,BLACKPOLL: WGI-(1)16,DM (Notes, ed.)
Yellowthroat,Common: 11 reports (1-12;41)
Warbler,Wilson's: SBNWR-(1)8,MEL; WGI-(1)9,MEL;
BBSP-(1)29,OG
Cardinal,Northern: 18 reports (1-30;176)
Grosbeak,Blue: WGI-(1)9,MEL (Notes, ed.)
Bunting,Indigo: Bolv-(1)7,JM; WGI-(2)9,MEL;(1)16,DM
Towhee,Rufous-sided: HA-(1)20,WH;(1)21,WMJ;
WOB-(1)23,WC; BBSP-(1)29,OG
Sparrow,Chipping: Tomball-(5)8,SW; WOB-(1)29,WC
Sparrow,Field: WHC-(3)16,SW; HA-(8)21,WMJ; WOB-(1)22,WC
Sparrow,Vesper: ANWR-(1)9,DM; WHC-(2)16,SW;(2)23,BG
Sparrow,Savannah: 18 reports (2-200;650)
Sparrow,Sharp-tailed: BF-(2)7,TOS;(22)7,JM;(3)8,TOS;
SO-(2)7,JM
Sparrow,Seaside: BF-(2)7,JM; ANWR-(1)9,DM;(2)15,WCS;
GISP-(1)16,DM
Sparrow,Song: 7 reports (1-10;30)
Sparrow,Lincoln's: 7 reports (1-10;26)
Sparrow,Swamp: 11 reports (1-15;55)
Sparrow,White-throated: 13 reports (2-12;74)
Blackbird,Red-winged: 24 reports (4-10000;14185)
Meadowlark,Eastern: 24 reports (1-60;436)
Blackbird,Yellow-headed: FBC-(2)22,HA (Notes, ed.)
Blackbird,Brewer's: WHC-(8)23,HWH; WL-(55)27,RU
Grackle,Great-tailed: 15 reports (5-500;1339)
Grackle,Boat-tailed: 5 reports (10-200;357)
Grackle,Common: 12 reports (1-3000;3648)
Cowbird,Brown-headed: 17 reports (1-2000;6987)
blackbird,sp.: 6 reports (300-300000;372800)
Goldfinch,American: 9 reports (1-20;85)
Sparrow,House: 7 reports (1-350;478)

CONTRIBUTORS - November, 1986

BEW=Bob & Edith Willman; **BG**=Bernd Gravenstein; **BG**=JB, SG; **BS**=Bob Behrstock, Gloria Saylor; **DM**=Derek Muschalek; **GC**=Gary Clark; **GC**=Glenn Cureton; **HA**=Houston Audubon field trip reported by Bob Honig; **HH**=Martha Henschen, ? Hoover; **HW**=Bob Honig, Doug Williams; **HWH**=HW, Martha Henschen; **JB**=John Buckman; **JF**=Joe Farrell; **JM**=Jim Morgan; **MBM**=Mary Ann & Bob Moore; **ME**=JM, Ted Eubanks, Jr.; **MEL**=ME, Greg Lasley; **OG**=OG field trip reported by HW; **PM**=Peggy Milstead; **RMB**=Ron & Marcia Braun; **RU**=Richard Uzar; **SG**=Steve Gast; **SW**=Steve Williams; **TOS**=Tex. Ornithological Soc. field trip, reported by RMB; **VL**=Vanessa Luce; **WC**=Wesley Cureton; **WCS**=Wanda & Charlie Smith; **WH**=Doug Williams, Martha Henschen; **WMJ**=Doug Williams, Pat Marks, Phyllis Jackson

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES - November, 1986

Brown Pelican: 11/13/86 by Joe Farrell
On Nov. 13 I saw 2 Brown Pelicans at Quintana Jetty, Freeport. I watched them for about 30 min at 200 to 500 ft with & without binoculars. They were swimming, flying, & diving from the air for fish. They were still there whien I left.

Surf Scoter: 11/15/86 by Bob Behrstock
One female three miles west of High Island on beach (Galveston Co.), Bolivar Peninsular.

Hooded Merganser: 11/13/86 by Derek Muschalek
(20 males, 17 females) Located at traditional winter areas at San Jacinto S.P. The males displayed glossy black heads with conspicuous white head patches that were often raised and flattened dramatically. The breasts were white with two black bars running vertically, and the sides were rusty colored. The females were dark with grayish brown heads and rusty orange crests. Observed with 10x50 binocs under cloudy, cold conditions.

COMMON MERGANSER: VAGRANT - 4 accepted UTC records
11/17/86 by Gary Clark
This female winter plumaged bird was seen in Northwest Harris County on a medium sized woodland pond off Kuykendahl Road 4/10 of a mile south of Spring Creek. I observed the bird between 4:30pm & 5:30pm under a heavily overcast sky with a pair of 10X40 binoc. & a 15-60X spotting scope at a distance of 75 to 150 yds. I photographed the bird with a 300mm lens plus a 1.4X extender. The bird had the typical merganser profile, bill held horizontal to the water line. The bird had a cinnamon colored head, crown, & neck. There was only a faint crest. The cinnamon neck contrasted abruptly with the cotton white breast. The bird also had brilliant white cheek patches dramatically set off from the russet face. There was a narrow white line extending from the base of the bill to just under the eye. A distinct white chin patch was separated from the rust throat & neck. One rather puzzling feature was a hair-thin vertical white line bisecting the cinnamon foreneck. The bill was reddish orange. The upperparts were ash gray, the sides slightly lighter gray. When first observed, the bird floated placidly in the water only 10 to 15 ft from the shoreline. During the time that I went to get the camera, the bird had moved farther to the back of the pond but still fairly close to the shoreline, I did not see the bird fly or dive. I ruled out Red-breasted Merganser due to the sharp distinction between the cinnamon neck & white breast, the prominent white cheek patches & the white chin patch, & the very faint crest. The juvenal male Common Merganser in winter plumage resembles the female winter bird but has distinctive white lores & has white extending from the chin to the throat area.

(The last UTC record for Common Merganser was 1/15/72)

White-tailed Hawk: 11/8/86 Jim Morgan
Immature bird seen in flight for about 20-30 sec. by all 3 observers in excellent light with 10X40 binocs. Mainly a black broad-winged buteo with a large white patch in the middle of the chest. Relatively short tail but not as short as full adult bird. Dark underwing lining & lighter flight feathers. Considerable white at base of upper side of tail. Flew with a noticeable dihedral. Lack of mottling or very fine barring in tail & the extent & shape of white chest patch, plus flight profile eliminates Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk. All observers are very familiar with this immature plummage of White-tailed Hawk.

Krider's Red-tailed Hawk: 11/15/86 by Wanda Smith
This buteo was mostly white on its face, brast & belly, bearing a faint but distinct belly band of a few dark brown spots. The bird's head was white with medium-brown spots patterned in streaks & had a white patch just above the nape. The back was medium-brown but the feathers were edged with white, giving a scaled look. The wings had an overall dappled effect with brown & white; the primaries & secondaries were distinctly barred with brown & white. Eye color was a pale yellow, almost off-white. Because of the way the bird was standing on the utility pole, I could only see the lower half of its tail, & it was dingy beige color with a faint rufous tinge, & marked with narrow medium-brown barring. Seen near the entrance to Anahuac NWR; viewed at 50 to 70 ft with 10X40 binocs & 20X scope for 15 minutes. Conditions were overcast but bright.

Golden Eagle: 11/15/86 by Bob Behrstock
1 imm. 4 miles W. of HY 124 on Hy 1985 (Chambers Co.) Observed ca. 0945 for about 2 minutes, first as it circled fairly low over road, then as it gained height and soared to the west. Generally large size, long and broad wings at once obvious. Except as noted, entire bird was chocolate brown. Base of tail, perhaps basal 40% snow white. Sharply demarcated from brown distal portion. White on wings was restricted to about five or six smudges at bases of inner primaries which formed a pale line where primaries emerged from under wing coverts. Closest distance to observers ca. 150 feet; furtherest about 1/3 mile. Light cloudy bright; high uniform overcast. Optics 10x40 and 8 1/2 x 42. Both observers have previous familiarity with this species in juvenile plumage.

Golden Eagle: 11/30/86 by Bernd Gravenstein
Observed on Stella Ranch near Fulshear. Large, brown raptor, faintly barred tail, feathered tarsi, no white in wings. Seen in direct comparison with harriers, Red-tailed Hawks & Bald Eagles. Size eliminates large buteos, brown color with lack of white eliminates Bald Eagle, feathered tarsi & smooth flight eliminates vultures. Observed first bird for about 30 min, constantly soaring & flapping. Was joined by second bird for about 15 min, at one time engaging in playful acrobatics; one bird folded its wings & dived on the second bird which rolled on its back & extended its claws. Just before touching they both veered, circled, & repeated the act, about six times. Seen at 200 yds plus with 7X50 & 40X scope in good light.

Purple Gallinule: 11/7/86 by Ron Braun
Seen in full sunlight by 4 observers as it stood on the vegetation protuding from the water about 10 yds from the dike road around Shoveler Pond. Purplish-blue head, neck, & upper breast; irrediscent greenish-olive remainer of body; bright yellow legs; red bill with a yellow tip; bluish-white frontal shield. Disappeared slowly into vegetation as car we were riding in stop opposite where the bird was standing.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE: 11/15/86 by Bob Behrstock
This bird was observed at ca. 3:30 pm at the Corps of Engineers dredge fill lake, East Galveston Island, near the west corner of the lake. The bird was foraging with 2 American Avocets along shore just below where we stood on the drive-up seawall/dike; so the distance was about 60 feet. When first seen, the bird was swimming in tight circles in typical phalarope fashion. It and the avocets moved to shore, so we observed the phalarope walking along shore. General appearence extremely pale; gray above including back of neck, white below including front of neck. Bill extremely thin, long; ca 1 1/2 x head length. Legs dark. Eye dark. Long needle-like bill, leg color, and swimming habits would eliminate similar species including Stilt Sandpiper and Lesser Yellowlegs. Optics 10x40 and 8 1/2 x 42 binocs. Light, cloudy bright, high overcast.

(There is only 1 record for this species on the UTC during November & that is a bird seen Nov. 29, 1980 by Tony Gallucci & Steve Sylestine, ed.)

THAYER'S GULL: VAGRANT - 3 accepted UTC records
11/8 & 9/86 by Jim Morgan
Seen at 1500-1540 and again briefly at 0730 in flight, for 30-40 minutes total. Clear to ptly cloudy, 75-80 degrees, light wind. 8-100 meters. Smaller than adjacent Herring and larger than adjacent Ring-billed. Feeding on shark bladder remains with 3-4 other gulls. Rounded, "dove-headed" bird with dark eye and all black, relatively small and slim bill. Bill lenght ca 1/2 - 3/4 the length of head. Overall coloration was a plumbeous brown. Detail on upperparts was finely detailed (vermiculated) scalloping becoming somewhat bolder approaching the vent. Legs were relatively bright pink. Underparts also very uniform with fine vermiculation. Undertail coverts were relatively boldly barred. In flight, the upper wing surface was basically concolor (with back) with darker primary tips (outer 3-4). Underwing surface was silvery-white except for a very fine dark edging on primaries. Tail was darker than back and shaded lighter at base. We feel Herring Gull is eliminated due to this bird's size and much smaller, slimmer bill. Also, the head shape and underwing coloration support the identification. Approximately, 75 photos were taken and will be submitted for confirmation. Further observation by all three observers on 9 Nov 86 allowed additional underwing views and inflight photographs. Photos will be sent to recognized experts on gull identification. While photos show a combination of field marks which fit Thayer's Gull (first winter plumage) very well, it is necessary to eliminate the Smithsonianus race of Herring Gull and the Kumlien's race of Iceland Gull.

Buff-bellied Hummingbird: 11/9/86 by Mary Ann Moore
Bird was feeding on shrimp plants & remained in our yard (in Bunker Hill Village) for about 20 min. Green throat, buffy belly & brownish tail seen very well at 25 ft with 9X36 binoculars.

Say's Phoebe: 11/8/86 by Jim Morgan
Seen at 0930 -0945 and 1300 for ca 10-15 minutes total. Very good light, at 15-60 meters with 10x40 binocs. Flycatching off fence wires and fence posts. Approximately 7" in length. Greyish brown to greyish upperparts, mostly darker about head; greyish wings with two faint wingbars; whitish chin, throat and upper breast; orangish buff (ochre) flanks, lower belly and undertail coverts; all black tail; black bill.

Ash-throated Flycatcher: 11/01/86 by Ron & Marcia Braun
This bird was first noted sallying forth from a small stand of salt cedars in the sand dunes next to the beach about 1/4 mile SW of the fishing pier near High Island. It was immediately recognized as a flycatcher, but because of a rather brief, poor quality look & a quite dark upper-surfaced, squarish-appearing tail, was at first thought to be a kingbird. Detailed study revealed the following characteristics: a grayish-brown, erect-feathered crown separated from a similar, concolored back by a paler, more grayish band at the nape; a somewhat jerked-appearing, all black bill (no hint of paleness at the base of the lower mandible), proportionately sized for the head; a pale grayish-white chin & throat becoming slightly darker gray on the upper breast; abdomen to vent & flanks softly suffused with a pale yellow; underside of softly double rounded tail cinnamon-rufous with fuscous surrounding the feather shaft, outer distal corners fuscous; upper surface of tail fuscous when folded; folded wing color somewhat darker than back with lesser and median coverts tipped in white to form two rather well-defined wingbars, secondaries & tertials with considerable white edging, bottom edge of the folded wing showed a somewhat retangular area of bright cinnamon-rufous formed from the primaries. Clearly the bird was a Myiarchus species in fresh fall plumage. Juveniles should have molted to near-adult plumage by this date. Great Crested Flycatcher can be eliminated because of the pale, not lead gray, throat and all dark bill. Brown-crested Flycatcher can be eliminated by the smaller bill size and the expanded fuscous at the distal end of the rectrices. Cinnamon-rufous/fuscous contrast of the tail feathers and extensive white edging of the secondaries & tertials rules out Dusky-capped Flycatcher. No vocalizations were heard.

Western Kingbird: 11/9/86 by Derek Muschalek
Observed perched on telephone lines on F.M. 1985 in Chamber's Co. Field Marks: Black tail with white edges; greenish back; ashy gray head and upper breast; lemon yellow belly and undertail coverts. Used 10x50 binocs from 15' to 40' for 10 minutes.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: 11/15/86 by Steve Williams
Whitish body, pinkish underwings, and extremely long forked tail; seen from 25 yards with 10x50 binocs.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: 11/20/86 by Martha Henschen
Five observed on the Katy-Hockley Cut-off near salt dome at 3:45pm. The birds were spaced over a section of several hundred ft of the fence wires. One observed earlier on a high wire very close to 529. Turned around to verify identification. Returned again on Sunday & saw none.

Tennessee Warbler: 11/16/86 by Derek Muschalek
During November I have recorded this migrant on 5 out of 6 coastal trips. Can always be found along the coast during the first three weeks of November! Field Marks: Yellowish-green upperparts; white superciliary; yellowish wash to underparts, more appent in some birds but less so in others; white undertail coverts; long thin bills; high soft chip call.

Magnolia Warbler: 11/16/86 by Derek Muschalek
This late migrant can almost always be found along the coast during November. I have recorded it on 4 out of 6 trips! Field Marks: Yellow rumps; grayish heads; olive green back; yellow faintly streaked underparts; two white wingbars; broad white tail patches.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER: No November records for UTC
11/16/86 by Derek Muschalek
Very dull warbler feeding in "salt cedars" on West Galveston Island. Apparently a fall immature, although I have never seen this species during the fall migration. At first glimpse this bird appeared to be a Bay-breasted Warbler, but I relocated the bird and observed it for two minutes. The pale pinkish legs and the yellowish green underparts with faint streaking on the sides eliminated the Bay-breasted Warbler. Overall the bird appeared mostly yellowish below with no buff coloration. Field marks: brown back with black streakng; yellow superciliary; two bold white wingbars; yellowish underparts with faint side streaks; dull white undertail coverts; pale legs. Used 10x50 binocs from 15' to 30' for two minutes.

Blue Grosbeak: 11/9/86 by Jim Morgan
About 7-7.5" in length; warm brownish coloration with two bold light tan wing-bars; huge bill; distinctive "chip" call note. Seen by TE & JM at a distance of 30 ft. with 10X40 binocs in excellent light.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: 11/22/86 by Bob Honig
Two males. Both birds were black with bright yellow head & breast & were slightly larger than the Red-winged Blackbirds in the flock in which they were seen. The first bird, at FM 762 & Smithers Lake, showed white in the bend of the wing while perched; wing pattern not visible as it flew off due to backlighting. The second bird, along FM 1994, showed white patches at the wrist on the upper wing surface in flight. Both birds in good light while perched; the first at 100-25 ft viewed by all members of the field trip with binocs & scope; the second at 100 ft by Doug Williams & Bob Honig with 10X40 & 8X30 Zeiss.

CH EDITOR'S NOTES - November, 1986

Notes for October, 1986 Sightings

Steve Williams sent the following notes for two species which required notes for the October Clearing House. I had noted the absence of notes but included both sightings in CH even though both had very rare status on the date they were seen. Thanks for sending the notes, Steve.

Dickcissel: 10/25/86 by Steve Williams
I heard a "chip" note which I recognized to be the call of a dickcissel, looked up overhead, and saw a sparrow-sized bird with yellow on the breast & a black spot near the throat. The bird was 10-15 yds. up. Size, shape, color & call note eliminate all other species. (no binocs).

Savannah Sparrow: 10/10/86 by Steve Williams
These 2 small sparrows showed pale yellowish head striping, & much brown streaking on the breast with a central spot. The short, high "chip" note was heard for both birds. They also sat on barbed wire fences, allowing leisurely observation from 50 ft., with 10x50 binocs, rather than hiding in the grass in the manner of most other sparrows. The call note & head pattern elminate song sparrow & these factors, plus lack of buffy on breast eliminate Lincoln's sparrow. They also became abundant within a few weeks.

Notes for August, 1986 Sightings

Steve must really be repenting for past sins! These are notes for several species he reported to the August CH. The sightings were not included in the CH because they needed notes & none were supplied. I appreciate receiving them, especially since the Wilson's Warbler can now be considered for the late fall date record by the Checklist Committee. To others who have not supplied details when needed: Hope you see the light!

Gadwall: 8/28/86 by Steve Williams
These were in extreme w. Ft. Bend Co. near the Wallis community in a large pond about 200 yds. off a county road. There were an equal number of males & females present, which were watched for about 5 minutes thru a 25x scope in good light. Black rear sections were visible on the males; white bellies, and white wing patches were seen well as some of the birds flew in. The heads were unmarked (eliminating Am. Wigeon), the black rear sections were not separated from the rest of the plumage with white, and plumage was plain pale grayish-brown (not scaled or darkish like female Mallards or Mottled Ducks). White trailing-edge wing patches eliminate female Pintail, Am. Wigeon, & Blue-winged Teal, and bill sizes in addition eliminate female No. Shoveler.

Common Tern: 8/2/86 by Steve Williams
Two fork-tailed terns flew past at close range as Bev & I stood on the ferry deck looking out at birds. The lower San Jacinto-Lynchburg crossing area is the only place on the UTC where this species can often be seen in summer, which is a major source of summer records for it. The black primaries above and vermilion bill with black tip separate it from the very similar Forster's Tern, and size from other terns of somewhat similar coloration. I have often wondered if the Common Tern is a scarce, local breeder somewhere in the vicinity reported here.

WILSON'S WARBLER: 8/12/86 by Steve Williams
The bird sighted was an adult male with a dark black cap, olive back, and yellow underparts which gave a diagnostic call note. It stayed in my yard in SWH, where I lived at the time, all day long and was observed repeatedly with the naked eye at .5 feet and with binocs at 75 or more feet away.

(Current early fall date is Aug. 21, 1977, seen by Paul & Margaret Jones, and Norma Oates, ed.)

BOOK REVIEW: The Dictionary of American Bird Names

by Barbara Bartholomew

Did you know that the common name "Dunlin" comes from Anglo-Saxon word roots meaning "little dark one"? That the genus name Empidonax is Greek, meaning "king of the gnats"? That the specific name for the Black-bellied Plover is squatarola, a word from a Venetian dialect so old that no one ventures to say what it means? A book to instruct you in such lively information is The Dictionary of American Bird Names by Ernest A. Choate, (paperback, revised edition, 1983).

Writing with directness and humor, Choate has produced a reference book useful to different levels of knowledge. The book explains the origin and development of binomial nomenclature, the construction of scientific names, and the role of the AOU. But the best parts are the dictionary entries. One section deals with common names, another with scientific names. There is even a biographical appendix giving thumbnail sketches of people involved in naming birds or having birds named for them.

Here is a sampling of Choate. The "Common Names" section includes local and popular names for various birds, such as "Accentor" (Ovenbird), "Wake Up" (Flicker), "Log-Cock" (Pileated Woodpecker) and "Flinthead" (Wood Stork). This section also gives details on the naming process--for example a two-page geneology of the naming of LeConte's Sparrow. Choate's humor also adds some spice to the "Scientific Names" section: at the end of one entry Choate observes, "While it is debatable as to whether the botanists or the ornithologists are the worse spellers, the ornithologists go way ahead on this one." Finally, for anyone who ever wanted to know when and where Dr. Elliot Coues or Dr. John LeConte (or his cousin Dr. Lawrence LeConte) lived and what they did besides having birds named for them, they're right there in the Biographical Appendix.

Time spent with this book will leave readers instructed and with a real feeling for the linguistics, the science, the traditions and mythology that go into the naming of birds. And the next time we see a squatarola we can wonder what those old Venetians had in mind.

ORNITHOLOGY GROUP (Outdoor Nature Club)
c/o Peggy Milstead
10810 Burdine
Houston, Texas 77096
(RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED)