



# THE SPOONBILL

VOLUME XVIII, NO. 2  
June, 1969

If a man could really get a "bird's eye view" of the world around him, he would be amazing - and amazed!

A bird's eyes are so keen that they can see a grain of seed from a distance of 100 yards, whereas man can barely see the seed from a distance of five feet or less.

from The Houston Chronicle, May 9, 1969

---

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

---

## BROWN PELICANS MAKE COMEBACK

The brown pelican, rare in recent years along the Texas Coast, is presently showing signs of making a comeback. Coastal Fisheries biologist of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department report sightings of about 50 of these salty fishing birds this spring, about twice the number seen last year.

What is more encouraging is that the birds are scattered in groups along the coast. Biologists sighted 16 in the Lower Laguna Madre, 24 in Corpus Christi Bay, nine near Pass Cavallo and one in Galveston Bay.

The disappearance of this handsome and friendly bird in recent years caused considerable concern among naturalists because they are not certain of the reason for the sudden decline along the Gulf Coast west of Florida.

The increasing presence of pesticides in the marine environment is one of the suspected causes since the birds feed almost entirely on fish and would likely accumulate large, poisonous doses over extended periods. One of the effects of pesticides inhibits reproduction in some birds and causes the species to die out without replacement.

In past years brown pelicans could be found in abundant numbers along the coast perched on waterfront pilings, begging a handout from fishermen or plunging bill first from the air into the water after a fish.

These large brown birds have considerable white on their heads and necks and a wing span of over six feet. It is the state bird of Louisiana and is protected by Texas law.

The above article was published in the June 2 bulletin of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

## NOTES ON PLUMAGE OF MALE MASKED DUCKS - by CHARLOTTE JOHNSON

January 10, 1969 at Freeport, Texas on highway to West Jetty I saw a male Masked Duck in "splotchy coloration". Within several days of this date Tommy Schulenberg saw a male Masked Duck in a similar "splotchy coloration", at a pond on Carribbean St. in Corpus Christi where the Masked Ducks had spent some months prior to this time. Neither of us knew of the other's sighting. I told Doris McGuire of Rockport of mine, and she then told me of Tommy's and added that no one else had seen this in Corpus Christi. The only Masked Ducks seen after this time on the Corpus pond appeared to be in female plumage. It is possible that these two drakes were going into "eclipse plumage".

All following sightings, except one were at same pond at Rockport, Texas.

May 24, 1969 at Rockport, Texas two Masked Ducks napping on brush in pond. One was apparently coming into male colorful plumage from a plumage similar to the female's.

Between the dark cheek stripes the coloring was deep buffy. On back of neck and head this duck had a little showing of rusty coloring and some on the top back. The sides were beginning to show some bright buffy coloring. The second Masked Duck was the perfect picture of the female plumage. I studied these ducks for an hour in good light.

May 27 I again saw a Masked Duck which I felt could be the possible male of May 24. This Masked Duck was definitely coming into male colorful plumage. The dark stripes on face were still quite visible. Rusty color between black face lines had appeared and deepened markedly since May 24. Neck and back of head had more and deeper coloration. Back was also more rusty. Sides were beige brown. There had been a big change since May 24. Bill was beige gray rather than blue gray as in another male Masked Duck in good colorful plumage which I saw some hours later at another place.

May 28 two Masked Ducks in male and female coloration about 9:40 in morning. I observed them for an hour. Male definitely gaining more rusty color rapidly. Comparison of male and female color interesting. Color of female's cheek between black lines was a light whitish gray. Eye of male very prominent in dark face stripe. Duck in female plumage was napping with tail erected. Coot pushed this duck off of perch. The Masked Duck in female plumage moved down to water. The male then swam around the one in female plumage erecting his tail and shaking his tail and stretching his neck. His bill was still beige gray, large and long.

June 4 Masked Duck in deep dark drake plumage. Seen in poor light. No hint of face stripes. Bill light whitish blue gray. During past few days these ducks have become very shy and elusive.

I told Doris McGuire of my sightings and after several attempts she finally sighted two Masked Ducks on May 29 near noon. The dark face stripes were still visible on the Masked Duck in drake coloration, and in all probability all above sightings at the Rockport Pond were the same male Masked Duck.

At Rockport, Texas look for Masked Ducks at Modesett's Pond at intersection of F.R. 1781 and F.R. 3036 - also nesting Purple Gallinules.

Ten dead SOOTY TERNS found in Rockport-Corpus Area during May. Some are being examined at a lab in Corpus Christi. - More on this later.

#### CLEARING HOUSE, MAY, 1969

Grebe, Eared: (50) 11, (20) 14, (2) 16, (2) 19, NB, Baytown  
Pied-billed: (4) 9, Cove, AKM  
Cormorant, Olivaceous: (1) 4 days, 3d to 20th, Cove, AKM  
Heron, Green: (2) 3, 9, 16, (1) 18, Cove, AKM  
Night Heron, Black-crowned: (1) 18, 21, Cove, AKM  
Yellow-crowned: (2) 16, Cove, AKM  
Bittern, Least: (1) 9, 11, 16, 17, Cove AKM  
Ibis, White-faced: (3) 13, (85) 15, Cove AKM  
White: (11) 9, Cove AKM  
Spoonbill, Roseate: (2) 3, 14, (1) 9, (16-21) 8, 16, 18, Cove, AKM  
Goose, Snow: (1 - crippled) 18, Cove, AKM  
Treeduck, Fulvous: Damon McKay saw about 50 before mid-month, Cove, AKM,  
(15) 24, Longenbaugh Ranch, NW Harris Co., JF  
MALLARD: (2) 8, 9, 18, (1 - crippled ?) 21-30, Cove, AKM  
Duck, Mottled: (1 - 5) 10 days, (15) 3, (7) 8, (26 or less) 9, Cove, AKM  
PINTAIL: (1 - crippled ?) 18 - 30, Cove, AKM  
TEAL, GREEN-WINGED: (2 drakes) 16 - 30, Cove, AKM  
Blue-winged: (2) 2, (7) 3, (4) 9, Cove, AKM  
Shoveler: (1) 9, Cove, AKM  
Duck, Wood: (2) 14, Cove, AKM  
MERGANSER, RED-BREASTED: (1) 15, female, seen behind dunes at Bryan Beach, Freeport, PR  
Vulture, Black: (2) 2, (1) 4, (10-15) most days, Lost Lake Oil Field, Cove, AKM  
Hawk, Sharp-shinned: (1) 6, Cove, AKM  
Red-shouldered: (1) 9, Cove, AKM  
Swainson's: (1) 17, 10215 Chatterton, DHH  
Osprey: (1) 9, 16, (2) 14, Cove AKM  
Caracara: (1) 9, first since March, 1963, Cove, AKM  
Rail, King: (1) 8, Cove, AKM  
Clapper: (1) 3, Cove, AKM

- Gallinule, Purple: (1) 11, Baytown, NB  
 Common: (1 - 3) 9 - 17, 4 days, Cove, AKM
- Coot, American: (1) 2 - 21, (10) 9, Cove, AKM
- Plover, Semipalmated: (2) 9, Cove, AKM  
 Snowy: (1) 9, my first ever in the Trinity tidal lands, Cove, AKM
- Killdeer: (least ever) Cove, AKM
- Flover, Black-bellied: (1) 2, 3, (10) 19, Cove, AKM
- Turnstone, Ruddy: (1) 20, Cove, AKM
- Sandpiper, Spotted: (2) 3, (7+) 9, (1) 14, Cove, AKM  
 Solitary: (1) 3, Cove, AKM
- Willet: (2) 3, (5) 9, (1) 16, Cove, AKM
- Yellowlegs, Greater: (3-5) 8, 9, Cove, AKM  
 Lesser: (1-4) 6, 13, (15-35) 2, 3 8, 9, Least ever - never before  
 failed to see them in last half of May, Cove, AKM
- Sandpiper, Pectoral: (5) 2, (2) 3, Cove, AKM  
 White-rumped: (1) 3, (25) 9, (1) 16, Cove, AKM  
 Least: (NC) 2, 3, 9, Cove, AKM
- Dunlin: (1) 15, Bryan Beach, Freeport, PR
- Sandpiper, Stilt: (8) 9, Cove, AKM  
 Semipalmated: (NC) 2, 3, Cove, AKM  
 Buff-breasted: (8) 6, Barber's Hill, DL
- Godwit, Marbled: (1) 11, Baytown, NB  
 Hudsonian: (3) 16, Cove, AKM
- Stilt, Black-necked: (1-9) 11 days, Cove, AKM
- Gull, Ring-billed: (3+) 3, Cove, AKM  
 Laughing: (NC) 3, Cove, AKM
- Tern, Forster's: (1-5) 9 days, Cove, AKM  
 Common: (1) 18, 20, don't recall having ever recorded them in the Trinity  
 marshes; only the third year seen in May, Cove, AKM  
 Least: (1-4) 6 days, least ever, Cove, AKM  
 Caspian: (1) 2, 3, Cove, AKM  
 Black: (1-3) 4 days, (15-22) 4 days, (50) 3, 20, Cove, AKM
- Skimmer, Black: (2) 16, 20, Cove, AKM
- Dove, Inca: (2) 10, Bear Creek Park, PR & DHH, (1) 7 days, Baytown, NB
- Cuckoo, Yellow-billed: (1) 3, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, Baytown, NB
- Owl, Barn: (1) 17, 1304 Sherwood, West Houston, DHH  
 Screech: (1) 6, 24, Cove, AKM  
 Great Horned: (1) 9, Cove, AKM  
 Barred: (1) 26, 27, Baytown, NB
- Chuck-will's-widow: (1) 16, Cove, AKM
- Nighthawk, Common: (1) 7, (4) 11, Baytown, NB
- Swift, Chimney: (1-10) 7 days, Cove, AKM
- Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: (1) 8 days, (2) 17, 26, (3) 15, 17, 20, Cove, AKM,  
 (1) 18, Bear Creek Park, DHH
- Kingfisher, Belted: (1) 1, 2, Baytown, DL, (1) 8, Baytown, NB
- Woodpecker, Pileated: (2) 9, Cove, AKM  
 Red-bellied: (1) 9, 12, 24, Cove, AKM  
 Red-headed: (4) 9, Cove, AKM, (1-3) most days, Baytown, NB
- Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: (1) 9, Cove, AKM
- Woodpecker, Hairy: (1) 9, first since 1958, Cove, AKM  
 Downy: (1) 15, Baytown, DL, (1) 4, Baytown, NB
- Kingbird, Eastern: (1-5) 10 days, (6) 6, (10) 9, Cove, AKM
- Flycatcher, Great Crested: (1) 18, Cove, AKM, (1) 14, Baytown, DL  
 Empidonax: (2) 9, (1) 16, Cove, AKM, (1) 5, (2) 18, 10215 Chatterton,  
 (1) 18, Bear Creek Park, DHH
- Wood Pewee, Eastern: (1-3) 8 days, (12) 9, (10) 16, Cove, AKM, (1) 6, 7, 16,  
 Baytown, DL
- Flycatcher, Olive-sided: (1) 16, Cove, AKM, (1) 18, Bear Creek Park, DHH
- Swallow, Tree: (NC) 9, 16, scarce in poor swallow year, Cove, AKM  
 Bank: (NC) 14 days, Cove, AKM  
 Rough-winged: (NC) 1, 2, Cove, AKM  
 Barn: (NC) 16 days, Cove, AKM  
 Cliff: (NC) 3, 9, 16, 18, Cove, AKM
- Chickadee, Carolina: (NC) 3, 4, 14, 16, Cove, AKM
- Titmouse, Tufted: (2) 9, (1) 16, Cove, AKM
- Wren, Carolina: (1-4) 8 days, (6) 9, Cove, AKM
- Catbird: (2-4) 3, 4, 6, 10, (10) 9, Cove, AKM, (1) 1, 2, 3, 11, Baytown, NB
- Thrasher, Brown: (2) 9, (1) 3, 29, equal to latest ever for me, Cove, AKM,  
 (1) 19, Baytown, NB

- Thrush, Wood: (2) 3, Cove, AKM  
 Swainson's: (1) 12, Baytown, NB  
 Gray-cheeked: (1) 1, 11, (10) 3, 16, (15) 9, Cove, AKM
- Veery: (2) 3, 14, 16, (1) 23, latest ever before was on the 4th, Cove, AKM,  
 (1) 2, Baytown, DL
- Waxwing, Cedar: (2) 16, (1) 29, latest ever before May 23 and 30, Cove, AKM,  
 (10+ or -) 18, last ones, Bear Creek Park, DHH
- Vireo, Yellow-throated: (3) 16, Cove, AKM, (1) 10, Baytown, DL  
 Red-eyed: (1) 3, 6, 16, 20, 21, (2) 9, Cove, AKM  
 Philadelphia: (3) 9, Cove, AKM, (3+) 10, Bear Creek Park, PR & DHH  
 Warbling: (1) 3, Cove, AKM
- Warbler, Black-and-White: (1) 6, 9, 23, latest previous dates May 14 & 20, Cove, AKM,  
 (1) 5, 10215 Chatterton, DHH
- Swainson's: (1) 7, Baytown, DL  
Golden-winged: (1) 9, Cove, AKM  
Blue-winged: (1) 1, 10215 Chatterton, DHH  
Tennessee: (3+) 9, (2+) 16, Cove, AKM  
Parula: (2) 9, Cove, AKM  
Yellow: (2) 6, 9, (1) 16, Cove, AKM  
Magnolia: (2) 6, (8) 9, Cove, AKM  
Black-throated Green: (2) 6, 16, Cove, AKM  
Blackburnian: (1) 6, (5) 9, (4) 16, Cove, AKM, (1) 18, 10215 Chatterton, DHH  
Chestnut-sided: (1) 9, 16, Cove, AKM  
Bay-breasted: (2) 3, 6, Cove, AKM, (2) 7, 9, Baytown, DL
- Ovenbird: (1) 9, 16, Cove, AKM
- Waterthrush, Northern: (1) 2, (2) 16, Cove, AKM
- Warbler, Kentucky: (1) 16, Cove, AKM
- Yellowthroat: (1) 9, 18, Cove, AKM
- Chat, Yellow-breasted: (1) 9, Cove, AKM
- Warbler, Hooded: (1) 9, Cove, AKM  
 Wilson's: (1) 9, Cove, AKM, (1) 10, Bear Creek Park, PR & DHH  
 Canada: (1) 9, 16, Cove, AKM, (1) 9, 14, 16, 17, 18, Baytown, NB
- Redstart, American: (4) 6, 9, (2) 16, Cove, AKM, (1) 18, 19, Baytown, NB
- Oriole, Orchard: (3) 9, (2) 16, 21, (1) 29, Cove, AKM  
Baltimore: (1) 31, singing male, at Smith-Barrow Nursery, Thompson Rd.,  
 Highlands, AKM
- Tanager, Scarlet: (2) 2, (5) 3, (2) 6, Cove, AKM, (1) 1, 6, 7, Baytown, DL  
 Summer: (1) 2, 16, (2) 6, (3) 9, Cove, AKM
- Grosbeak, Rose-breasted: (4+) 2, (2) 3, (1) 9, 13, only one later date, 5-20-63,  
 Cove, AKM  
 Blue: (4) 2, (1) 3, Cove, AKM, (1) 18, Baytown, NB
- Bunting, Indigo: (3) 6, (25+) 9, Cove, AKM  
 Painted: (1-3) 9 days, (7+) 9, Cove, AKM
- Dickcissel: (2) 3, 16, 30, 31, (1) 27, Cove, AKM
- Sparrow, Savannah: (2) 9, Cove, AKM  
 Lincoln's: (1) 8, Cove, AKM, (1) 10, Bear Creek Park, DHH

Contributors to Clearing House:

AKM	Arlie McKay
PR	Pat Ridge
DHH	Dan H. Hardy
JF	Joe Farrell
DL	Dorothy Lefkovits
NB	Nettie Busby

Clearing House Notes

Late in April a Cardinal built a nest in a small cedar elm on my brother Arnold's lawn, about a stone's throw from my place. He watched from the beginning. After three eggs were laid and the Cardinal was incubating, a Mockingbird dispossessed her and began incubating the three eggs. One egg disappeared May 17, another the 18th. Mr. Siler and I found it empty on the 21st, at which time the Mockingbird flew from the tree in which the empty nest was. Arnold and I were much disappointed that she failed to hatch and fledge three Cardinals. I have never known of such robbery among song birds, nor can I remember having read of such.

DUNLIN, none, the first time not common.  
 DOWITCHER, none, never uncommon before in May.

BANK AND BARN SWALLOWS are not so much more common than the other swallows as may appear from the Clearing House records, just easier to identify by flight.

The YELLOW -THROATED VIREO was, I think, two days later than ever before. On May 24, 1938, and another May 24, 1941, they were, I think, in their breeding habitat. To be sure I would have to look in my 1938 and 1941 notes.

WARBLERS: 18 species of warblers, about 75 total birds; 19 of one species, 10 each of two more, and only a total of 36 of the other 15 species.

The above comments are those of Arlie McKay about birding in the Cove area.

Of interest also is a note from Noel Pettingell reporting that he and Joe Heiser saw 6 Brown-headed Nuthatches at the Little Thicket Sanctuary in San Jacinto County May 13.

Dove, White-winged: (1) April 26, Menard House (N $\frac{1}{2}$  & 34th), Galveston, party consisting of Joe Farrell, Dan Hardy, Harvey Patten and Mark and Noel Pettingell (omitted from the list turned for the April Clearing House).

#### CORRECTION

On Page 6 of the April SPOONBILL the April 19 one-day count was by Party "D" instead of Party "A" and the April 26 one-day count was by Party "E" rather than Party "B" as shown.

#### LETTER FROM EIRIC N. McHENRY CONCERNING GULL AT TEXAS CITY DIKE

I would like to pass on to the SPOONBILL readers some of the observations and notes that I have garnered on the dark-backed gull reported from the Texas City dike in March.

First I wish to note that from my observations of this bird and from examining photographs taken by Ben Feltner I can state that the gull had no yellow tinge to its legs; the legs were a pinkish flesh color. Ben points out that the Handbook of British Birds makes no mention of pink legs occurring in the Lesser Black-backed Gull; however, Peterson's European field guide does state that flesh leg color occurs in some Lesser Black-backed Gulls in the winter.

The Texas City gull had light eyes. I wrote to Wes Hetrick in San Francisco asking about the incidence of light eyes in Western Gulls. Here is his answer, in part:

"Lots of W. G. have light eyes. California birders always have one eye peeled for the Slaty-backed Gull which winters from Siberia to Japan and looks like a Western Gull except for reddish legs and white eye. I would estimate that 10% of all Western Gulls have light eyes."

Because the leg color of the gull was pink and because the occurrence of light eyes in Western Gulls is not uncommon, I think that the original identification of the gull as a Western Gull was correct.

#### REPORT FROM BRAZORIA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Mr. Raymond J Fleetwood, Brazoria Refuge Manager, has done us the favor of sending a further report on migrants observed on the Refuge. He corrected the date the Great Crested Flycatcher was seen to April 13, instead of April 10, as reported in the May Spoonbill. He also informed us that the Jacana was still present on the Brazoria Refuge May 9, when it was seen by Mr. Russel Clapper, Anahuac Refuge Manager.

<u>BIRDS</u>	<u>QUANTITY</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Blue Grosbeak	1	4/16
Indigo Bunting	4	4/17
Baltimore Oriole	7	4/17
Ovenbird	1	4/17
Northern Water Thrush	2	4/17
Swainson's Thrush	1	4/17
Scarlet Tanager	1	4/17
Wilson's Plover	1	4/17
Common Nighthawk	1	4/17

Black Skimmer	1	4/17
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	4/18
Golden-winged Warbler	1	4/18
Blue-winged Warbler	4	4/18
Warbling Vireo	2	4/18
Chestnut-sided Warbler	1	4/18
Blackburnian Warbler	1	4/18
Red-eyed Vireo	1	4/21
Gray-cheeked Thrush	1	4/21
Wilson's Phalarope	15	4/25
Bank Swallow	3	4/25
Swainson's Hawk	1	4/25
Catbird	5	4/29
Magnolia Warbler	1	4/29
Bay-breasted Warbler	1	4/29
Ruddy Turnstone	1	4/29
Black Tern	1	4/29
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2	4/30
Dickcissel	3	5/5
White-rumped Sandpiper	2	5/7
Cliff Swallow	1	5/5
Western Kingbird	1	5/12
Magnificent Frigatebird	2	5/12

JUNIOR CO-EDITOR'S COMMENTS

We failed to give credit last month to the Chief Assistant Co-editor, Nettie Busby, who gave very freely of her time and typing ability to help organize and assemble the May Spoonbill. Even more credit is due her this month, as the Boss Co-editor is vacationing in Alaska (we hope to have a birding report from her in July), and there just might not have been a Spoonbill in June without Nettie's work.

OFFICERS:

Chairman:	Mr. Wallace C. Mebane, Jr., 7106 Mobud, Houston, Texas 77036
Vice-chairman:	Dr. John Tveton, 512 Inwood Drive, Baytown, Texas 77520
Secretary:	Mrs. Bill (Katrina) Ladwig, 3303 Sunset Blvd., Houston, Tex. 77005
Treasurer:	Miss Sarah Gordon, 1746 Wroxtton Court, Houston, Texas 77005
Field Trip Chairmans:	Dr. David Marrack, 420 Mulberry Lane, Bellaire, Texas 77401
Program Chairman:	Mrs. Daniel T. (Marian) Washburn, 2101 59th St., Galveston, Texas
Co-editors of The Spoonbills:	Mr. and Mrs. David (Dorothy) Lefkovits, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, Texas 77520



JUNE  
69

Outdoor Nature Club  
(Ornithology Group)  
1746 Wroxton Court  
Houston, Texas 77005

Return Postage Guaranteed

