



THE SPOONBILL

Volume XXVIII, No. 8
December, 1979

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

YOUR DUES ARE DUE!!

The ONC-OG fiscal year runs from January 1 through December 31 each year, and we will soon begin another year. Your membership or subscription expiration date is listed on the label of your SPOONBILL. If the date on your label is 12/79, your dues are due January 1, 1980.

Please send in your membership or subscription dues promptly so that you will have uninterrupted delivery of your SPOONBILL. In the past, when dues were paid late (i.e., after removal of the name from the mailing list), you were supplied with the missed copies. However, we can use the bulk mailing rate of 3.1¢ per piece only when we mail over 200 pieces at once, and the cost of mailing a single SPOONBILL is 20¢. Because the costs of materials for our newsletter are constantly creeping upward, we must watch our expenses carefully. In the future, if your late payment causes you to miss an issue or two, and you want them, we must ask that you send 20¢ postage for each copy desired.

So you see it will be to your advantage to send in your check right now before procrastination causes you to miss even one copy. Members dues are \$7.00 (\$5.00 goes to ONC and \$2.00 to OG), subscribers dues are \$4.00, make checks payable to Ornithology Group and mail to Mrs. J.M. Gillette, 5027 Longmont, Houston, Texas 77056.

[An expense the club can do without is paying for a returned SPOONBILL.....one that is returned because the addressee has moved without notifying us. Do you know that the club has to pay 40¢ for each SPOONBILL that is returned? And another 20¢ to re-mail it when we get the new address? Our mailing chairman had to pay the postman \$2.40 for six returned November SPOONBILLS, subsequently learning that five addressees had apparently moved (phones disconnected). The sixth remains a mysteryover a period of time there have been three of this member's SPOONBILLS returned with the notation "Unknown at this address"....but the address is correct and the member assuredly does live there! If, in the future, you fail to notify us of a change of address in time, we reluctantly must ask that you bear the cost of the extra postage it takes to receive back and re-send your SPOONBILL. --Ed.]

COMING EVENTS

Houston CC, Saturday, Dec. 15 - Compiler, Paul Nimmons, 682-3597

Freeport CC, Sunday, Dec. 16 - Co-Compiler (with Vic Emanuel), Tom Collins, Lake Jackson, 297-3954, and Co-Compiler Jim Morgan, Houston, 461-3080.

Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR CC, Thursday, Dec. 20 - Compiler, Wayne Shifflett, Refuge, 713/234-3021.

Galveston CC, Saturday, Dec. 22, Compiler, David Dauphin, 383-3955

Bolivar CC, Sunday, Dec. 23 - Compiler, Bill Graber, Beaumont, 866-5452

Old River CC, Thursday, Dec. 27 - Compiler, Jonelle Buckels, Dayton, 576-2504 (or call Frankie Daves, 258-2560. From Houston, dial 1 before either number)

Tezuitlan CC, Friday Dec. 28 - Compiler, Mary Ann Chapman, 665-2895

Catemaco CC, Sunday, Dec. 30 - Co-Compiler, David Wolfe, Nacogdoches, 569-6531

El Naranjo CC, Monday, Dec. 31, Co-Compiler, Mary Ann Chapman, 665-2895

Cypress Creek CC, Tuesday, Jan. 1 - Compiler, Ted Eubanks (call Anne Elston, after 6:00 p.m., at 371-9304 to get on list of participants and for further information)

- Wednesday
Jan 2 Photography Group's regular meeting, Bayou Manor auditorium, 4141 So. Braeswood at 7:30 p.m. Dennis Caputo will present the program on Big Bend (this was originally scheduled for November, but had to be moved to the January meeting.)
- Thursday
Jan. 3 OG regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Bayou Manor auditorium. John Eyre, soon to return to his native England, will give the program on "A Birder's Britain", dealing with what we can expect to see where in birds and places of interest, and will draw some comparisons of birding here and there. Remember to bring your aluminum.
- Tuesday
Jan. 8 ONC regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Garden Center in Hermann Park. Dr. Frank Fisher of Rice University, will speak on the Texas Coastal Zone and Gulf of Mexico. This is a rare opportunity to learn more about an area so close and so vital to us.
- Saturday
Jan. 19 OG field trip to W. Harris County. Meet at 8:00 a. m. in front of small white church on Hwy 6 just north of I-10. Bring lunch--car pool!
- Saturday
Jan. 19 ONC field trip: one day bus trip to Texas Coastal Zone and Gulf of Mexico. For reservations, call Barbara Duryea, 668-1979.
- Saturday
Jan. 12 HAS field trip to the Cooling Ponds. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Roadside Rest Area on I-10, just east of San Jacinto River.

MINUTES OF OG MEETING, December 6, 1979

Dauphin Dauphin began the meeting by calling for the following announcements:

Mary Gillette: We have a balance of \$1,879.87

Bill Mealy: The Chickadee is open Tuesday thru Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. during Christmas season.

Cindy Lupe: Birds of the World, an out-of-print book, has been donated to OG library by Eva Gillman. We are in need of someone to donate a tripod for our scope (a resource available for loan to members).

Jerry Baker: Please remember that Coca Cola products cans are not aluminum.

Margaret Jones: Expressed appreciation to Barbara Darr for typing the Clearing House section of the SPOONBILL for November and December. Thanks were given to Ben Feltner for compiling the CH in this issue (substituting for Paul Jones, who is in the hospital recovering from surgery)

Susie Campbell: The Nominating Committee presented the following slate for 1980: Ron Braun-Chairman, Wes Cureton -Vice Chairman, Ellen Red-Secretary, Mary Gillette-Treasurer.

Paul Nimmons moved the slate be accepted by acclamation, the motion was seconded and passed.

David announced he has received a check for \$2,100.00 from Dow Chemical to pay for the new check list.

Marilyn Crane moved that the OG send Dow Chemical Co. a certificate of appreciation, it was seconded by Jim Morgan and Jack Gillette and passed.

Bill Mealy, on behalf of Outdoor Nature Club, presented Ben Feltner and Noel Pettin-gell with checks for \$100.00 each and OG certificates of appreciation for their invaluable service in improving a checklist which many consider is already the best in the country.

David announced that it is time to pay ONC-OG dues. He urged that every family member become members of the club.

David then led an informative program on Christmas Counts, along with the leaders of the various Counts.

Mary Ann Chapman presented Linda Roach's slides showing scenes of last year's Counts in Tezuitlan and El Naranjo.

(Quote of the evening: Paul Nimmons....."I saw a Lark Sparrow driving down the road")
Respectfully submitted, Ellen Red

UPPER TEXAS COAST CHRISTMAS COUNTS - 1978/79 - SUMMARY

Compiled by Noel Peffingell/Source: American Birds, July 1979

Area (Total published counts in parentheses)	Species			Highest-ranked Count totals	
	Count	Indiv.	Total Observers	U.S./Canada	
	Circle	High U.S./Can.		Species	Obs.
Bolivar Peninsula (17)	156		29	28	
Buffalo Bayou (2)	90*		19*		
Cypress Creek (3)	131*	2	19		
Freeport (22)	216	20	123*	1	13
Galveston (18)	162*	2	58*	23	
Houston (44)	177	4	127	14	10
Old River (14)	141		23		

* Denotes new all-time high for area.

Note: All-time high species totals for Bolivar-162 (1977); Freeport-226 (1971); Houston-192 (1963); Old River-156 (1977). Most participants on any UTC count: 130-Houston (1977).

Species with highest individuals totals--U.S./Canada:

(Key: (C) Cypress Creek; (F) Freeport; (G) Galveston; (H) Houston; (I) Other localities sharing record. * Total equals or exceeds previous all-time high for U.S./Canada)

Species & Localities	Ind.Totals	Species & Localities	Ind. Totals
White-faced Ibis (F)	1,776	Rufous Hummingbird (F)	20*
White-fronted Goose (C)	9,628	Pileated Woodpecker (F)	60
Snow Goose/Blue form (C)	27,506	Eastern Phoebe (F)	163
Mottled Duck (F)	1,280*	Mockingbird (F)	408
Green-winged Teal (F)	16,115	Brown Thrasher (F)	192
Red-shouldered Hawk (F)	102	Wood Thrush (H)	3
Marsh Hawk (F)	254*	Swainson's Thrush (F)	2
Piping Plover (G)	65	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (F)	514
Greater Yellowlegs (H)	229	Loggerhead Shrike (F)	368
Lesser Yellowlegs (H)	536	Solitary Vireo (F)	56
Caspian Tern (G)	153	Oporornis Sp. (F) (2)	1
Black Tern (H)	1	Wilson's Warbler (F)	22
Groove-billed Ani (F)	24	Grasshopper Sparrow (F)	31
Broad-tailed Hummingbird (F) (I)	1	Le Conte's Sparrow (F)	36

GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! Ted Eubanks' expected 2-year sojourn in Maryland was shortened to 3 months! He is being promoted once again and is returning to Houston as General Manager of the Houston office of his company. Congratulations! His new (and heavy) responsibilities will cut down on some of his OG time, but he assured the Editor he will find a way to stay as active a birder as ever. Welcome home!

PLACES TO GO

** Any of the Christmas Counts, or as many as you can make. Those who go to the Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge should keep an eye peeled for a Say's Phoebe.... Arch Dillard and his family saw one there in November, perched on fence near Refuge Headquarters.

** You will notice in the Clearing House that two most unusual birds, a Green-tailed Towhee and a Lark Bunting have been seen recently on Sharpe Road, in West Harris County. That is designated No. 7 on your SPOONBILL map of West Harris Co. When going north on Katy-Hockley Road, you come to a T intersection; a right turn takes you to Katy-Hockley Cut-off Road, a left turn puts you on Sharpe Road, which dead-ends within several miles. For the next couple of months West Harris County is the place to go to see hawks, eagles, geese, ducks, etc., don't forget to check Sharpe Road for all of these as well as sparrows, longspurs, and stray visitors.

** As this was being typed (Dec. 8), George Clayton called David Dauphin to report just seeing a Least Grebe in a pond on the north side of the Interpretative Nature Trail in Galveston Island State Park.

** Sheldon Reservoir used to be heavily birded, but fell into disfavor when the water level was lowered to get rid of trash fish. The water level is back up, and the Editor would like some reports on the birding there, viewing areas etc.

SOME GENERAL PROBLEMS OF FIELD IDENTIFICATION by Lawrence G. Balch
(From the Illinois Audubon Bulletin #179, Winter 1976-77--Reprinted with permission)

It seems to me that most, if not all, field identification problems can be related to three factors: lack of knowledge, observational factors, and psychological influences. Any birder can minimize (but never entirely eliminate) his field identification problems. All that is required is work and an awareness of these factors. Let's look at each of them.

Knowing what to look for

The old saying, "If you don't know what you're looking for, you won't find it" doesn't apply in birding. The less that you know about accipiters, for example, the easier it is to find a "Cooper's Hawk." I base this statement on the number of Cooper's Hawks reported by beginning birders as compared to those reported by more knowledgeable and experienced observers. Long-billed Dowitchers are another example; these birds, too, are more easily found by the less knowledgeable. And, more than one author has noted (facetiously, of course) how many more rarities he saw in his early days of birding.

Seriously, though, it's obvious that the more you know, the more accurate your identifications will be, and the fewer birds you'll have to pass over. Nothing is more frustrating than discovering, long after the bird has vanished, that what you thought was your first-ever LeConte's Sparrow might have been a Sharp-tailed Sparrow, because you didn't know enough to look for the color of the median stripe.

I assume that anyone who really wants to improve his identification skills has already gone through the field guides to learn the distinguishing characteristics of the species that he might see, and those of the species with which they might be confused. This is a necessary first step in knowing what to look for, but there will still be problems. I once set out to memorize all the important field marks for all the species in Peterson's guide. I thought that that would be a panacea for all my field problems, and I'd be able to identify every bird from then on. My intentions were good but naive, because field guides are limited out of necessity by their format. Guides do not have the space to illustrate or discuss all of the female, immature, and juvenile plumages, or the range of variation in each species. Furthermore, I know of no guide that is free from errors of fact, of omission, or of emphasis.

Let me give two examples that show why you have to go beyond the field guides in order to become a more expert observer.

1) The Rough-legged Hawks shown in the field guides are typical first-winter birds. But there are adults and young of both light and dark phases, as well as intermediate forms. Furthermore, there is a great deal of variation even within any one of these types. So, many individuals appear appreciably different from the illustrations, and are either left unidentified or are identified as other species. However, if you have access to an ornithological library and a good specimen collection, you can learn enough about this species' plumages to be able to identify correctly almost all the Rough-legged Hawks that you will see.

2) One of the field guides says, in reference to Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes, "In the winter it is not safe to tell females except by the males they are with". In fact, female Barrow's Goldeneyes can be distinguished from female Common Goldeneyes *even in flight*, if you know what to look for and have the necessary experience. Unfortunately, one can't get that experience everywhere.

Before someone gets the impression that I'm knocking the field guides, let me say most emphatically that I'm not. They have to be any birder's primary identification aid. They're adequate for the vast majority of the birds that you see, but other sources will have to be consulted for those few that give you problems. What sources? I've already mentioned other ornithological references and a specimen collection. But most important is your careful observations over a long period of time. If you have learned to take field notes from careful observations, you can always turn later to other references and collections to identify a bird. And if you have the patience to make careful and critical examination of birds that you see in the field, you may even discover new identification marks.

Seeing what is really there

Several winters ago at Illinois Beach State Park, a bird quickly flew by a small group of birders. All called the bird a Goshawk, but some said that its upperparts were brown, and others said that they were gray. How could different observers, all capable and experienced, see different colors on a bright, sunny day? Perhaps

It had something to do with the fact that they had only a very quick look, which always causes problems. But the eye can be fooled even under more leisurely circumstances. A few years ago, a Spotted Redshank was reported in New Jersey. This is a dark Eurasian shorebird with red legs, about the size and shape of a Greater Yellowlegs. The bird was usually seen at a considerable distance through telescopes. Although quite a number of people identified it as a Spotted Redshank, it was finally determined that the dark color was oil, and the bird was a Greater Yellowlegs. But what about the apparently red color? Well, those of you who examine birds carefully may have noticed that the leg color of yellowlegs varies some from yellow to a more orange-yellow, and that late in the day, as the sunlight gets redder, so do other colors. Furthermore, the chromatic aberration in some telescopes can give a red tint to the leg color.

These examples and others show that what you see is not always what is really there. What you see is affected by distance, duration, angle and quality of light, and other factors. It is impossible to discuss all the possibilities, but the following examples should give you an idea of the kinds of observational factors that can cause field problems.

Size: I often hear statements such as, "It was too big to be a crow." We all get impressions of the size of a bird seen at a distance, but those impressions are largely subjective unless the bird is next to a familiar object. Apparent size depends on apparent distance, and that is often difficult to judge. I have been fooled so often on the size of a bird that I believe that the only reliable description of the size of a bird is one that compares it to other nearby birds or objects. Misimpression of size is not limited to instances where the bird is far away either. From a blind, I once watched a Least Bittern only two feet away that I had at first thought must be a pygmy or runt bird because it seemed smaller than an American Robin. Only when the bird returned to its nest, at my accustomed viewing distance, could I see that it was of normal size.

Light: Trying to see colors on a bird against an overcast sky is a frustration known to every birder. But strong, bright sunlight can also cause problems by washing out colors. I find that bright sunlight sometimes makes the black wingtips of adult gulls almost impossible to see at a distance, for example. The angle of the sunlight is often important. I have before me two slides of a pair of Western Gulls standing together. They were taken a few minutes apart, from the same place. During that time the gulls turned slightly but did not move their location. Yet the slight shift in the angle of reflection from their backs changed their apparent mantle color. In one slide, it is the dark gray expected for the particular race involved; in the other slide, however, the mantle color is slaty-black, as in a Greater Black-backed Gull. The angle of light especially affects the sheen of iridescent feathers. Look for a purple-headed Mallard drake when one swims directly away from you, especially when it is backlit. After you find one, you'll be more reluctant to identify scaup based on the head colors given in the field guides.

Finally, reflected light from a bird's surroundings can affect the colors that you see on the bird. In Florida I saw House Sparrows whose underparts were quite noticeably tinged with yellow. Before I could speculate about a possible different race, I realized that they were standing on a yellow translucent plastic feeder tray! In a similar fashion, light filtering through the foliage of a tree can give a greenish or yellowish cast to the plumage of a bird.

Distance: Birds that are too far away certainly can't be identified. But how far is too far depends on what you need to see. An albatross can be identified over two miles away, but to see that the pale rump of a possible Hoary Redpoll is actually unstreaked may require you to be within 30 feet. You may think that you see an unstreaked throat on a fairly close waterthrush, and then put it down as a Louisiana. However, the spots on a Northern Waterthrush's throat often cannot be seen more than 25 feet away (not to mention the fact that a few Northern's throats are unspotted anyway).

Incomplete views: The problem here is in knowing that your view has been incomplete. For example, a rounded-winged accipiter--when flying away--may look more like a pointed-winged falcon if it is viewed from behind. Foreshortening makes the separate primary feathers appear to overlap. Similarly, foreshortening can make the tail of a bird flying directly away seem shorter than it really is. Another example where an apparently adequate view can be misleading is the tail of a Cooper's Hawk. If it is completely folded, it may appear more squared-off, like a Sharp-shinned Hawk's tail; only when it is spread somewhat does the rounded shape become apparent.

If the examples I've cited represent only some of the instances where our observations can be misleading, how can we trust our identifications? The answer, of

course, is that an identification takes several factors into account. Furthermore, it is possible to minimize observational problems, if you make an effort. You must go into the field enough to learn by experience what the problem possibilities are, and you can develop a critical attitude that leads you to consider what the effects of light, distance, and so forth might be at the time of an important observation. The question of attitude brings me to the last factor which gives rise to field identification problems.

Psychological factors

A particularly dangerous psychological phenomenon, and one that I find I have to guard against, is that of "seeing" what you expect to see. If you know that an unusual bird has been seen in a certain area, it somehow becomes much easier to mistake a more common species for the rarity. Such a phenomenon was at work in the case of the Spotted Redshank mentioned previously. It can also manifest itself in other ways. Thus there is a tendency to agree with the judgment of the group one is with. Or sometimes a whole group of birders can be swayed by the pronouncements, right or wrong, of one individual who has a reputation as an expert. I have seen all of these things happen in the field more times than I would like to remember.

Finally, although I am not a psychologist, I would imagine that there are uncommon cases where an individual's personal psychological needs interfere with his field identifications. From desire or need to tick off another species, standards are either consciously or unconsciously relaxed, or in some other way an incorrect identification is accepted by the individual.

Dealing with these psychological factors is part of developing the critical attitude which I mentioned earlier. Set high standards for your own observations, and maintain them. Be prepared to say, "I don't care what others say that that bird is, I want to identify it *myself*, and unless I see everything that I want to, I'm not going to count it." The right attitude toward rarities is also important. Remember by definition a rare bird is one that you are most unlikely to see. So think, "Just a moment--this bird isn't supposed to be here. I'd better see everything that I can and not accept the identification unless everything fits in." By adopting these statements as part of your general attitude toward field identification, you will become a better and more reliable observer. Accepting only those identifications which you can make with certainty, even if you have to let some birds go, is preferable to trying to identify every bird.

The road to success in field observation requires knowledge, experience, and a critical attitude. Only the first of these comes from a book. And the last is the most important. Without it, even a knowledgeable and experienced observer will never be an expert observer.

THE LEARNING CORNER - The Dowitchers

In the preceding article, Larry Balch remarks that Long-billed Dowitchers "are more easily found by the less knowledgeable"! In an effort to help our readers be confident on the I.D., the Editor called Ben Feltner on the eve of his departure for Mexico on a Merlin Birding Tour, and asked him for some help. Following are notes I jotted down as he obligingly took time out from his trip preparations to give some random, off-the-cuff identification tips.

- 1) The dowitchers are most difficult to tell apart in the fall, for you are dealing with several different plumages: immatures, fall adults, changing plumages, etc.
- 2) In spring plumage, you will find the Long-billed has the buffy-red underparts color extending down through the undertail coverts, while the Short-billed has whitish undertail coverts. (Ben does not rely on the barring on sides as an identification aid).
- 3) In any season, the Short-billed's tail has black and white bars equal in width, while the Long-billed's tail shows stronger black bars than white.
- 4) On the UTC, the Long-billed tends to feed in fresh water areas with short grass, while the Short-billed almost invariably is found close to the coast-sand flats and mud flats.
- 5) On the UTC, the Long-billed is noisier, and calls almost constantly when feeding. The calls are the surest identification: Long-billed's is "ki-ki-ik" or "ke-ek", and the Short-billed's voice is similar to Lesser Yellowlegs, and is a "tu-tu-tu".

PAST EVENTS

OG Field Trip to Brazoria County.....On Saturday, November 10, 35 OG members met at Angleton to begin a field trip through Brazoria County. The first stop was at the home of Don and Ruthie Melton to see a sub-adult male Anna's Hummingbird which posed beautifully for all to see. Between Alvin and Angleton on Hwy 35 a White-tailed Hawk was seen by several observers before it landed in the top of a tree beyond sight of a real good look by the others.

During the day we covered Big Slough, Hoskin's Mound Road, the Quintana Jetty, the Freeport Marshes, and connecting roads. In addition to the two best birds mentioned above, we had sightings of 3 Sharp-shinned Hawks, Sandhill Cranes, a late Pectoral Sandpiper, and late Black-necked Stilts. On the day 83 species were observed.

--Jim Morgan

FOLLOW-UPS

From Bruce C. Thompson, Graduate Research Fellow at Texas A & M University:

You may remember me from the letter I sent in April requesting some space in THE SPOONBILL for a notice concerning my Least Tern research. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for publishing the notice and to give you a brief report on the help that I received directly as a result of the notice.

During the 1979 breeding season I placed colored tags on 245 adult and juvenile Least Terns. Through the summer, I received resighting reports from 3 people (6 different terns) that were made aware of my work through THE SPOONBILL article. In addition, the notice resulted in contact between me and several members of the Ornithology Group. This contact was extremely helpful in coordination of a coastwide census of Least Terns on August 4, 1979.

More and more people are becoming aware of my work and much of this awareness results from the preliminary dissemination of information through THE SPOONBILL. Thanks again for your help.

[How satisfying it must be to you who, by your reports of your sightings, assisted Bruce in this significant research project. A suggestion: keep an on-going list of these requests for sightings assistance to carry with you when you go out birding; thus, when you see a tagged bird, you may have at your fingertips the proper place to send your report. Every tagged or marked bird so reported is important to the researcher and eventually, to the birders. --Ed.]

About those aluminum cans.....Jerry Baker, our Aluminum Chairman, in the September SPOONBILL, requested that cans be flattened (mainly for ease in storing and transporting), and gave a list of cans that are not acceptable because they aren't aluminum. Heading the list was Coke, a bright red container easily recognized. During Jerry's absence from the October meeting due to illness, Paul Jones took the sacks of aluminum and a week or so later delivered them to Reynolds (over \$15.00 worth). There was quite a pile of sacks, for very few cans (if any) were flattened, and he was surprised to note many Coke cans. We are repeating here the list of cans not acceptable to the re-cycling center: Coke, Sprite, Tab, Mr. Pibb, RC Cola, A&W Root Beer, Welch's, Lipton, Old Milwaukee, Schlitz Tall Boy, Mellow Yellow. The OG Treasury wants and needs your aluminum, but please do not put non-aluminum cans in with your aluminum, and do try to flatten your cans.

++ We have found that the bird silhouettes, designed to keep birds from flying into windows, have no effect on a hungry Pileated Woodpecker. We mentioned the problem in the October SPOONBILL, and have finally had a report from the besieged house owner. She said that far from being frightened away, the Pileated continued his pecking, and even was observed several times making threatening moves at the silhouette in the window! After a time she hung the silhouettes in close trees, hoping that would discourage woodpecker.....effect was nil. About a month after she hung up the silhouettes, the bird departed of his accord, but is still seen in the neighborhood.

** Another suggestion for a visit to The Chickadee: David Wolfe highly recommends "The Bird Finder's Three-Year Notebook" by Paul S. Eriksson, as a way to keep track of your UTC sightings, first and last dates, migratory movements, etc. Each page has space for observations from the same date on three years, with plenty of room to make notes on species seen, behavior and the weather. The Chickadee has it.

[Presented here is another portion of Bessie Cornelius' saga of birding in Scotland and England in May, 1979 with the guidance of Bryan Bland (we have some international comment from Bryan following this article. --Ed.)

Another fine memory from Speyside was at Loch an Eilein, one of the many National Nature Reserves of Scotland. Iron Age relics found in this area indicate man's early occupation. The picturesque ruins of a small castle on an islet of Loch an Eilein dates from the late 14th or 15th century. It was covered with moss and ivy and as we sat looking at this dreamy scene and listening to Bryan's interesting tale of its beginnings, he suddenly interrupted with "there goes a Grey Wagtail." We sprang to attention and he took off at his characteristic trot to circle the direction it went and bring it back. This he did in a few minutes and we all got an excellent look at another member of this distinctive family, with its long black tail, white outer feathers and blue gray upperparts. It inhabits shallow streams in hill country and lowlands with nests in walls and bridges. The spectacular Yellowhammer was found not far away also. And a thoughtful birdwatcher had put a peanut feeder in a tree and it was here we all had close-ups of the Scottish Siskins, Blue and Great Tits. We were meeting many helpful and friendly birdwatchers. There seems to be an unorganized fraternal society among most, but not all, of the British birders to share their birds; but on the other hand they have a great deal of trouble with egg collectors, a class of birders shunned like the Plague. The location of a nest is rarely revealed. One incident told was how the eggs of a falcon were marked; they were soon found missing; the culprit was suspected and the eggs were found under the man's bed in an incubator; he was heavily fined.....We were loth to leave Speyside, so our first night, after leaving Aviemore Nature Reserve, was at Blair Atholl, still not far from the Cairngorms. Blair Atholl was an interesting and birdy place, especially around the great castle. Not far, and following narrow roads that followed scenic rivers, we stopped at the town of Dunkeld, its famous Cathedral and birded the churchyard. It was there, casually glancing at a tombstone, I was surprised to see an inscription saying "Alexander Gourley died in Houston, Texas, 1898". Like so many places Dunkeld had a small but delightful Nature Preserve. Also here was a hide where nesting Ospreys could be seen through a scope. In a nearby pasture 15 or 20 powder blue Wood Pigeons were feeding in the green spring grass; also in this pastoral scene were black-faced sheep and lambs, making it a picture not to be soon forgotten. Sloe, a wild plum, was still blooming in white profusion here, and along with the pink double cherry blossoms, the countryside became a fairyland of color. We came on down Scotland's coastline, making a quick swing through the great historic city of Edinburgh.

It was our plan to get over the Scottish border into England and arrive at Holy Island (or Lindisfarne) before nightfall. It is a good birding spot and also where Christianity began in Britain around the 6th Century. Lindisfarne Castle is in good condition and lived in. But we were too late to get over the causeway and back before the tides came in. One must pay attention to the tide timetable at the entrance unless you wish to spend more time than anticipated on the island. The causeway is the only exit and not passable at high tide. We spent the night in Belford and went back the next morning to see this fabled island. One could sit on the rocks below the castle and contemplate the life and times in this turbulent part of the world during the middle ages while also enjoying the Shelducks, Common Pochards, European Coots, Redshanks and Avocets that were in the sheltered bay. Farne Islands, another noted place for nesting pelagics and protected by the National Trust had to be passed by as we were due in Cley for dinner. We were now fast approaching Cley-next-the-sea and the time referred to by the Blands as "Flanders Birding Holidays."

We were to spend the next six days exploring an area that has been a mecca for British birders for more than a century and in the last few years many Americans have discovered the wealth of birds that pass through this area. In spring there is the departure of the last winter visitors slipping unobtrusively away to their breeding grounds in Northern Europe and the return of summer migrants flooding into this hunk of land jutting out as it does into the North Sea. About a third of the 80 miles of coastline is now protected as nature reserves, some by the National Trust, by the Norfolk Naturalists Trust, Norfolk Ornithologist's Association, Nature Conservancy and other nature conservation organizations, but all interested in providing sanctuary for those migrants who make that tremendous journey from Africa to Arctic breeding grounds, or for breeding species. Never a spring passes, according to the Guide, "Birdwatching in Norfolk", without some Southern European vagrant turning up, having 'overshot' its destination through its inherent urge to move northwards at this time. For instance, we were just a few days late for the Rose-coloured Starling, which has its usual passage through Greece.

As the Bland's guest house accommodates no more than six or eight we were among the lucky few to stay there and have Bryan for our guide for the next six days and have Betty Bland as the hostess to serve us gourmet meals before and after a hard day's birding. The observation room at Flanders is delightful, made especially for birders, where one can look down on the British garden variety of birds such as Robins, Blackbird (Black Thrush), Spotted Thrush or observe House Martins in a box outside the windows or see a Marsh Harrier over the extensive marshes in front of the observatory. Part of the house dates back to medieval times and the new part to the 17th century. As most of the houses in Cley (pronounced Cligh) it is constructed of the native flintstone. The next-door neighbor is a birder and between the two places it is a hotbed of birding information and one never knows when a call may come that Spoonbills have arrived or a Temminck's Stint is in the marshes.

Cley Marsh of over 400 acres was the first property acquired by the Norfolk Naturalist's Trust in 1926. It is less than a mile from Flanders of easy walking. Bryan takes care of obtaining permits for his guests to visit the hides, which are reached via board walks into the fragile marshland, and the hides themselves are low wooden buildings, comfortable with benches all around the windows that open wide, and there are comfortable arm rests for books and elbows. Once the windows are opened you have a ringside seat for a birding show. The English birders are immediately very polite in relinquishing a seat or pointing out unusual birds (and on your first visit most of them will be). The Trust itself has over 30 properties in Norfolk covering over 5,000 acres. It welcomes visitors and principal preserves are maintained by full or part-time wardens who watch over visitors with a wary but kindly eye. In the 16th century these marshes were saltings covered by the sea at spring tides. Our little group had seen many of the birds in the Cley marshes earlier in Scotland, such as Common and Crested Pochards, Avocets, Teal, Wigeon, Coot, Curlew and Tufted Duck, but many more were seen such as Graylag Goose, Brent (Brant), Ringed Plover, Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits, Kentish Plover (our Snowy), Greenshank, Redshank and Little Stints. Arctic Terns were common. The day before we left two Little Gulls dropped into the water just in front of one of the hides and they stayed to bathe and feed. What a sight, so white, delicate and tern-like! Not all of us got to see the Brent which Betty Ball of our group found early one morning. Spoonbills and Temminck's Stint were indeed discovered by some avid young birders over the weekend. This brought birders in from every point and the narrow little road along Cley Marsh was lined with little British cars by Saturday morning and scope or binocular-slung individuals were trudging down the boardwalks to hides or vantage points. A scope is quite necessary to birding in the Norfolk marshes; the European Bittern was seen quite nicely through one of ours, as was the little Grebe. Ruffs were in fairly good plumage and in fairly good numbers. One day the hot line reported Nightjars coming in on a heath not far from the village; we were out at dusk and encountered many other birders, the Short-eared and Long-eared Owls and Nightjars. A bird of the marshes we kept hearing every day and only catching an occasional glimpse, was the Bearded Tit. They nest in the tall marsh grass and are quite colorful with very long tawny tails, pinkish grey underparts and striking black "moustaches". A distinctive twanging and squeaky voice sets this little sprite of the secluded reed beds apart from other reed-bed birds. However, a very early visit to the marshes was rewarded by a fine look at this unusual bird. The Garden, Blackcap and Whitethroat old-world warblers were easily found around Cley in gardens and thickets. One can hear the Chiffchaff's two-notes repeatedly calling its name in many places. The common but beautiful Chaffinch is found everywhere. The male Bullfinch is a striking bird, but secretive and hard to locate. They are destructive to orchards, eating the buds, so I am sure they have been persecuted in the past, if not now.

[The October SPOONBILL, containing Bessie Cornelius' first part of her birding saga in Scotland and England, was sent to Bryan Bland by Elaine Robinson of Merlin Birding Tours, and he responded with a delightful letter to the SPOONBILL Editor plus his comments on aning. Enjoy with me some excerpts from this letter.]

"For me, on the other side of the Atlantic, it (THE SPOONBILL) effectively bridged the gap between fellow enthusiasts in the Nearctic and Palearctic. I felt I was with you in Texas. How fascinating, for instance, to read of your possible curlew sandpiper. By coincidence there's one here outside my window as I write (unusual at this time of year, though we had scores earlier in the autumn). Incidentally, no one mentioned jizz. Aside from plumage details, the key factor is....does it look like an aristocratic dunlin--better bred, more refined, more elegant? That might sound like old world class-consciousness but its a good test.

"Our birding here at Cley is very much new world orientated at the moment (this letter was written October 31....Ed.), just to redress the balance, with American Wigeon and Bonaparte's Gull as the star attractions. Last week I was in the Isles

of Scilly where, again, the Yanks were the crowd-pullers: Swainson's, Gray-cheeked thrushes, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and bobolink. Wintering species here today include Whooper and Bewick's Swans, Great Gray Shrike, Skylarks, Snow and Lapland Buntings, divers, grebes, and large numbers of wildfowl. Rare Eastern visitors to Britain this week include Isabelline and Pied Wheatears and Desert warbler. And this is supposed to be the slack time. When will I ever catch up on my writing?

"Again, congratulations on a relevant local birding newsletter and best wishes to Bessie and all our other friends in Texas."

ANTING, an international comment from Bryan Bland

This extraordinary behaviour is well documented throughout the world. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Baron d'Aubonne, the French traveler, wrote in the middle of the 17th century of birds of paradise in India so intoxicated by nutmeg odour that they allowed ants to chew their legs off. The anecdote embodies many errors but it is an interesting observation of the use by birds of aromatics and ants. Your own John James Audubon, writing in his Birds of America in 1844, spoke of young eastern turkeys rolling themselves in deserted ants' nests 'to clean their growing feathers of the loose scales and prevent ticks and other vermin from attacking them, these insects being unable to bear the odour of the earth in which ants have been'. For nearly 100 years notes on birds applying themselves with ants and aromatic juices appeared in a variety of journals and were treated by most ornithologists as wholly fictitious. But in 1934 A. H. Chisholm in his Bird Waders of Australia inserted a note on the observations of a Melbourne schoolboy about introduced European starlings tucking ants in their feathers. In 1935 Professor Erwin Stresemann (of the University of Berlin) in his Ornithologisches Monatsbericht asked for other such observations. Letters came from all over Germany describing similar antics. Stresemann called this behaviour einemsen, since anglicized to anting. The word is now in common use to describe all forms of this activity, even when ants are not involved. For although anting is primarily carried out with ants, a wide variety of aromatic or pungent substances afford acceptable substitutes for the formic and citric acids exuded by ants. Limes, lemon pulp, lemon juice, vinegar, beer, mothballs, ashes, smoke, and actual flames have all been recorded as such stimulants. And it is the particular attraction to some birds of smoke and flames which raises one of the most fascinating questions of all. Could this be the origin of the phoenix?

Maurice Burton in Phoenix Re-born (published by Hutchinson & Co. in 1959) argues the case well: 'In May 1957, a tame rook named Niger, living in an aviary in my garden at East Horsley in Surrey (England), disported himself on a heap of burning straw. With flames enveloping the lower part of his body and smoke drifting all around him, he flapped his wings, snatched at the burning embers with his beak and appeared to be trying to put them under his wings....Every now and then he would pose amid the flames with his wings outstretched and his head turned to one side, looking exactly like the traditional picture of the phoenix.'

As to why birds should behave in this manner (and at least 150 species have been recorded anting), theories have ranged from a means used by birds to deal with their parasites, the outcome of frustrated sexual impulse, or just that birds like the feel of the formic acid on their feathers or skin. But Dr. Burton, noting first that there are four natural behaviour patterns to which anting bears some resemblance--mating, bathing, basking and preening--puts forward the hypothesis that 'anting is an intensive form of preening and is sensual, not sensuous'.

Readers who would like a further 200 pages on the topic are referred to Dr. Burton's entertaining detective work in Phoenix Re-born.

SPEAKING OF INTERNATIONAL BIRDING.....!

David Matson and his wife, Chris, had a chance to travel with ten members of his family for a month in the Soviet Union. Although this June trip was definitely not a birding trip, "by early rising and constant nagging of our guides--guards?!-- we were able to identify approximately 150 species, some of which would be hard to find anywhere else." They also had five days in Japan, where the trip started. From Japan they flew to Khabarovsk, the eastern terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railway. "Our trip through the Soviet Union was to be a jam-packed visit to 11 cities, with nine airplane flights and five days on the Trans-Siberian Railway". David managed to bird nearly everywhere he went, and has submitted an account of his trip to Birding, magazine of the ABA.

CLEARING HOUSE, November 1979

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made in the six counties comprising the upper Texas coast: Jefferson, Chambers, Galveston, Harris, Ft. Bend, and Brazoria. How to read the CH: Species: Location--(how many)date, observers. Those common species which can be readily identified and are widely distributed in the UTC will also be listed, followed by number of reports, with lowest and highest numbers seen in parenthesis, i.e. (1-42). If any of these species is reported in unusual habitat or numbers that will be noted separately. You will note some dates underlined, this will denote a late date, or possibly an early date. An underlined location denotes unusual location or habitat.

- Loon, Common: T. C. Dike--(5)24,C & D
 Grebe, Horned: Cooling Ponds--(2)17,A (see notes)
 Grebe, Eared: Cooling Ponds--(20)17,A; Mercury Dr.--(6)17,B; Brazoria Co.--(6)18, (1)26,D&RM; T.C. Dike--(25)24,C
 Grebe, Pied-billed: 12 reports (2-205)
 Pelican, White: 10 reports (1-350)
 Cormorant, Double-crested: 13 reports (3-1,000)
 Cormorant, Olivaceous: Cooling Ponds--(1)17,A; Galv.--(4)24,C
 Anhinga: Maner Lake--(5)2,10,MRO, (9)10,B.C.; Hale Ranch--(15)3,E; Brazoria Co.--(1)4,D & RM
 Heron, Great Blue: 10 reports (1-23)
 Heron, Green: W.Galv.--(1)2,J&JH; Maner Lake--(1)10,B.C.
 Heron, Little Blue: 9 reports (1-3)
 Egret, Cattle: 13 reports (5-800)
 Egret, Reddish: Brazoria Co.--(2)18,D&RM; Bolivar Flats--(5)24,C & D
 Egret, Great: 14 reports (1-30)
 Egret, Snowy: 9 reports (2-25)
 Heron, Louisiana: 9 reports (1-9)
 Night Heron, Black-crowned: Brazoria Co.--(1)4,D&RM; Big Slough--(4)10,B.C.; Cooling Ponds--(1)17,A; Galv. Co.--(6)24,C
 Night Heron, Yellow-crowned: Brazoria Co.--(3)3,D&RM; Hale Ranch--(1)3,E
 Bittern, American: Brazoria Co.--(1)18,D&RM; W. Galv.--(1)21,J&JH
 Stork, Wood: Lake Jackson--(30)7,MRO (see notes)
 Ibis, White-faced: 4 reports (3-800)
 Ibis, White: Brazoria Co.--(1)2,(3)10,MRO, (175)10,OG; Brazoria Co.--(56)18,D&RM, Hale Ranch--(10)3,E; Chambers Co.--(40)4,WC; Maner Lake--(5)10,B.C.; Galv.--(40)24,C.
 Spoonbill, Roseate: Brazoria Co.--(7)3, (8)26,D&RM; Galv.--(6)7,J&JH
 Goose, Canada: Brazoria Co.--(7)10,OG, (8)26,D&RM; W. Harris Co.--(30)24,D
 Goose, White-fronted: High Is.--(30)3,(23)10,S&SC; W. Harris Co.--(350)24,D
 Goose, Snow: 15 reports (21-75,000)
 Goose, Ross': W. Harris Co: (3)24,D
 Mallard: 8 reports (1-700)
 Duck, Mottled: 7 reports (4-51)
 Duck, Gadwall: Cooling Ponds--(2,000)17,A; High Is.--(4)18,S&SC; Brazoria Co.--(22)18,D&RM; Galv. Co.--(30)24
 Pintail: 9 reports (1-1,200)
 Teal, Green-winged: 7 reports (1-80)
 Teal, Blue-winged: Brazoria Co.--(1)10,OG, (5)3, (60)18,D&RM; Mercury Dr.--(8)17,A Galv.--(10)19,J&JH; High Island--(2)24,C
 Wigeon, American: Cooling Ponds--(2,000)17,A; High Is.--(200)24,C; Galveston--(n/c)25,BMa
 Shoveler, Northern: 9 reports (2-200)
 Redhead: Hale Ranch--(2)3,E; Mercury Dr.--(4)9,WC, (4)17,B; Rollover Pass--(5)11, S&SC; Cooling Ponds--(6)17,A; W. Harris Co.--(2)23,P&MJ
 Duck, Ring-necked: Mercury Dr.--(4)9,WC; Cooling Ponds--(10)17,A; Galv.--(2)21, J&JH; Bolivar --(2)24,C
 Canvasback: Mercury Dr.--(25)9,WC; Cooling Ponds--(10)17,A
 Scaup, Greater: Cooling Ponds--(10)17,A (see notes)
 Scaup, Lesser: 7 reports (3-10,000)
 Goldeneye, Common: Cooling Ponds--(3)17,A
 Bufflehead: Mercury Dr.--(2)9,WC; Cooling Ponds--(200)17,A; T.C.Dike--(10)24,C
 Oldsquaw: Jones Bay, Galv.--(1)24,C (see notes)
 Scoter, Surf: Cooling Ponds--(2)17,A (see notes)
 Duck, Ruddy: 6 reports (10-1,000)
 Merganser, Hooded: Mercury Dr.--(4)9,(14)24,WC,(see notes); (24)17,A
 Merganser, Red-breasted: Pelagic--(T)10,L; Cooling Ponds--(2)17,A; Bolivar--(38), T.C. Dike--(2)24,D
 Vulture, Turkey: 16 reports (1-25)
 Vulture, Black: 3 reports (2-40)

Kite, White-tailed: Brazoria Co.--(1)10,MRO, (3)10,OG, (3)18,D&RM; Winnie--(1)14,
 20,26,27,S&SC; Galv. Co.--(2)24,D & C, (1)25,BMa, (3)30,RM & DW
 Hawk, Sharp-shinned: Maner Lake--(1)2,MRO; Hale Ranch--(1)3,E; High Island--(2)3,
 (1)29,S&SC; Houston--(1)5,W; Brazoria Co.--(3)10,OG, (1)12, (1)13,D&RM; Bellaire--
 (1)11,MJ, (1)19,PJ; W. Harris Co.--(1)24,D
 Hawk, Cooper's: Algoa--(1)Oct.30,DW; Ft. Bend Co.--(1)3,E
 Hawk, Red-tailed: Maner Lake--(1-Harlan's)10,MRO (see notes) 26 additional reports
 (1-26)
 Hawk, Red-shouldered: 13 reports (1-25)
 Hawk, Broad-winged: Hale Ranch--(1)3,E
 Hawk, Swainson's: Brazoria Co.--(1)2,MRO
 Hawk, White-tailed: Brazoria Co.--(1)10,OG, (1)26,D&RM (see notes); Ellington--(1)
 24,D (traditional site)
 Eagle, Bald: Brazoria Co.--(1)10,MRO
 Hawk, Marsh: 22 reports (1-25)
 Osprey: Surfside--(1)Oct 27,MRO; Galv. St. Pk.--(1)25,BMa
 Caracara, Crested: Brazoria Co.--(1)30,RM & DW
 Falcon, Peregrine: Anahuac NWR--(1)18,LEB (see notes)
 Merlin: High Island--(1)18,S&SC (see notes); Galveston--(1)24,D
 Kestrel, American: 23 reports (1-35)
 Bobwhite: 33 reports (4-28)
 Crane, Sandhill: Brazoria Co.--(9)14, (400)18, (310)26,D&RM; W. Galv.--(50)25,BMa
 Rail, King: Brazoria Co.--(1)3,D&RM; Winnie--(1)10,S&SC
 Rail, Clapper: 6 reports (1-7)
 Gallinule, Common: 6 reports (1-20)
 Coot, American: 11 reports (1-5,000)
 Oystercatcher, American: Jones Bay--(10)24, Bolivar Flats--(2)24,C; T.C. Dike--
 (2)24,D
 Plover, Semipalmated: Bolivar Flats--(3)24,TB & NP; High Island--(2)18,S&SC; Bra-
 zoria Co.--(1)26,D&RM; Galv. Co.--(15)24,C
 Plover, Piping: Bolivar Flats--(46)24,C & D
 Plover, Snowy: Bolivar Flats--(5)24,C & D
 Plover, Wilson's: Bolivar Flats--(1)24,D
 Killdeer: 47 reports (1-79)
 Plover, Black-bellied: 7 reports (1-192)
 Turnstone, Ruddy: 5 reports (1-23)
 Snipe, Common: 7 reports (1-12)
 Curlew, Long-billed: 8 reports (1-26)
 Sandpiper, Spotted: Hale Ranch--(1)3,E; Brazoria Co.--(1)4,D&RM; T.C. Dike--(2)24,
 C & D; Cooling Ponds--(10)17,A
 Willet: 8 reports (2-115)
 Yellowlegs, Greater: 36 reports (1-10)
 Yellowlegs, Lesser: 7 reports (1-25)
 Knot, Red: Bolivar Peninsula--(1)24,C
 Sandpiper, Pectoral: Freeport--(1)10,OG (see notes)
 Sandpiper, Least: 7 reports (5-35)
 Dunlin: 3 reports (54-200)
 Dowitcher, Short-billed: 3 reports (1-150)
 Dowitcher, Long-billed: 3 reports (6-250)
 Dowitcher, Species: 4 reports (6-50)
 Sandpiper, Stilt: High Island--(6)4,S&SC
 Sandpiper, Western: 3 reports (15-1,000)
 Godwit, Marbled: Galveston Co.--(27)24,C
 Sanderling: 4 reports (17-90)
 Avocet, American: Rollover Pass--(50)10,S&SC; High Is.--(1)18,S&SC; Galveston Co.--
 (75)24,C
 Stilt, Black-necked: Freeport--(2)10,OG (see notes)
 Jaeger, Pomarine: Pelagic--(1)17,L (see notes)
 Gull, Herring: 6 reports (1-90)
 Gull, Ring-billed: 7 reports (2-300)
 Gull, Laughing: 10 reports (1-650)
 Gull, Bonapartes: Rollover Pass--(1)10,S&SC, (1)24,C; Cooling Ponds--(1)17,A
 Gull, Franklin's: High Island--(2)24,C (see notes)
 Tern, Gull-billed: High Island--(2)18,S&SC
 Tern, Forster's: 8 reports (1-90)
 Tern, Common: Galv. Co.--(14)24,C; Bolivar Flats--(90)24,D
 Tern, Royal: 8 reports (1-205)
 Tern, Sandwich: Bolivar Flats--(17)24,D
 Tern, Caspian: 8 reports (1-27)
 Skimmer, Black: Galv.--(20)8,J&JH; Rollover Pass--(400)24,C
 Dove, Rock: 3 reports (10-100)
 Dove, White-winged: Galveston--(3-6 daily)J&JH, (1)24,D; Hale Ranch--(1)3,E;
 Bolivar--(1)24,C

Dove, Mourning: 41 reports (3-20)
 Dove, Inca: 33 reports (8-12)
 Ani, Groove-billed: Galveston--(2)2,J&JH, (3)25,BMa; Kempner Park--(1)24,D;
 High Island--(2)3,S&SC
 Owl, Barn: High Is.--(1)18,S&SC; Brazoria Co.--(1)18,D&RM; Houston--(1)19,J&JH;
 Edgebrook Dr.--(1)23,GC; W. Harris Co.--(1)24,D
 Owl, Screech: Houston--(1 red phase) 11,JMo; W. Harris Co.--(1)23,P&MJ; (2)24,D
 Owl, Great Horned: W. Harris Co.--(2)24,D
 Owl, Short-eared: W. Harris Co.--(1)24,D
 Owl, Barred: Lake Jackson--(1)1,MRO; W. Harris Co.--(1)24,D
 Nighthawk, Common: Astrodome--(1)24,JMo
 Swift, Chimney: Downtown Houston--(Main P.O.)(1)2,NP
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: Brazoria Co.--(1)1,2,3,5,(3)10,(1)11,12,14,15,17,20,
 D&RM
 Hummingbird, Rufous: Houston--(1)all month,BMa; Winnie--(1)2,10,11-14,S&SC;
 Lake Jackson--(1)4,MRO; Brazoria Co.--(4)30,RM et al
 HUMMINGBIRD, ANNA'S: Brazoria Co.--(1)4-30 D&RM, OG on 10, (2)30, DW, MA et al,
 (see notes)
 HUMMINGBIRD, BROAD-TAILED: Lake Jackson--(2)7,J&JH (see notes)
 Kingfisher, Belted: 15 reports (1-8)
 Flicker, Common (Yellow-shafted): 11 reports (1-8)
 Woodpecker, Pileated: 8 reports (1-4)
 Woodpecker, Red-bellied: 12 reports (1-15)
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: Hale Ranch--(3)3,E; Lake Jackson--(5)7,J&JH; Bellaire--
 (1)10,MJ; Brazoria Co.--(1)10,11,13,14,D&RM, (1)30,RM; Houston--(1)22,BMa
 Woodpecker, Downy: Hale Ranch--(2)3,E; Lake Jackson--(2)7,J&JH; High Island--(1)10
 S&SC; Bellaire--(1)19,PJ
 Kingbird, Western: W. Galveston--(1)2,J&JH
 Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed: W. Galv.--(1)2,J&JH; Brazoria Co.--(1)3,D&RM
 Phoebe, Eastern: 22 reports (1-6)
 Flycatcher, Vermillion: Hale Ranch--(6)3,E; Big Slough--(1)7,J&JH
 Lark, Horned: Brazoria Co.--(5)18,D&RM; Bolivar--(6)24,C
 Swallow, Tree: Maner Lake--(2)2,MRO; High Is.--(5)3,(18)10,S&SC; Brazoria Co.--
 (2)15, (1)19,D&RM; White Oak Bayou--(4)24,WC
 Swallow, Bank: Brazoria Co.--(1)4,D&RM
 Swallow, Rough-winged: Maner Lake--(20)2,MRO; Hale Ranch--(10)3,E
 Swallow, Barn: Ft. Bend Co.--(1)3,E; High Is.--(4)3,S&SC, (2)24,C
 Jay, Blue: 10 reports (1-20)
 Crow, Common: 5 reports (1-150)
 Chickadee, Carolina: 6 reports (1-25)
 Titmouse, Tufted: 3 reports (2-20)
 Nuthatch, Red-breasted: Houston--(yard)(1)22,BMa
 Creeper, Brown: Brazoria Co.--(1)10,OG; Galv. Co. Pk.--(1)24,D
 Wren, House: 7 reports (1-5)
 Wren, Bewick's: Lake Jackson--(1)10,LB
 Wren, Carolina: 7 reports (1-8)
 Wren, Marsh: Galveston--(6)24,C
 Wren, Sedge: High Is.--(1)18,S&SC; Galv.--(1)24,C
 Mockingbird: 70 reports (1-20)
 Catbird, Gray: Alcoa--(1)2,3,19,DW; High Island--(1)3,18,S&SC; Bolivar P.--(1)24,C
 Thrasher, Brown: 12 reports (1-31)
 Robin, American: 10 reports (1-65)
 Thrush, Hermit: Hale Ranch--(1)3,E; High Is.--(1)4,11,S&SC; Lake Jackson--(1)24,
 25,L&MB
 Thrush, Swainson's: Hale Ranch--(2)3,E
 Bluebird, Eastern: Maner Lake--(10)2,MRO; Hale Ranch--(8)3,E
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: 10 reports (1-60)
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned: High Is.--(2)10, (1)18,S&SC; Galv. Co. Pk. (1)24,D
 Kinglet, Ruby-crowned: 19 reports (1-100)
 Pipet, Water: Freeport--(20)10,OG; Brazoria Co.--(1)18, (3)26,D&RM; Galv. Co.--
 (1)24,C
 Pipet, Sprague's: Brazoria Co.--(1)26,D&RM
 Shrike, Loggerhead: 15 reports (1-30)
 Starling: 67 reports (1-1,270)
 Vireo, Solitary: Hale Ranch--(2)3,E; Lake Jackson--(1)7,J&JH; Brazoria Co.--(1)10,
 OG; High Is.--(2)10,S&SC; White Oak Bayou--(2)23,WC; Galv.--(1)24,C
 Vireo, Red-eyed: High Island--(1)10,S&SC (see notes)
 Vireo, Philadelphia: High Island--(1)10,S&SC
 Warbler, Black-and-white: Lake Jackson--(1)7,J&JH; White Oak Bayou--(1)23,WC
 Warbler, Tennessee: Maner Lake--(5)2,MRO; White Oak Bayou--(1)10,WC (see notes)
 High Is.--(1)10,S&SC; Galv. Co. Pk. (1)24, D (see notes)

Warbler, Orange-crowned: W. Galv.--(1)2,J&JH, (1)24,C; Maner Lake--(1)2,R; Hale Ranch--(8)3,E; Brazoria Co.--(1)10,OG; Cooling Ponds--(3)17,A; Bellaire--(1)19,PJ
 Warbler, Nashville: Maner Lake--(1)2,R; Hale Ranch--(1)3,E
 Warbler, Yellow: Maner Lake--(1)10,B.C.
 Warbler, Yellow-rumped: 17 reports (1-30)
 Warbler, Black-throated Green: High Island--(3)10,S&SC
 Warbler, Pine: Pelagic--(2)17,,L
 Warbler, Palm: W. Galveston--(3)21,J&JH
 Ovenbird: Hale Ranch--(1)3,E; Galv.--(1)24,C (see notes)
 Oporornis, Species: Pelagic--(1)17, L
 Yellowthroat, Common: 5 reports (1-5)
 Chat, Yellow-breasted: Bolivar P.--(1)24,C (see notes)
 Warbler, Wilson's: White Oak Bayou--(1)2,10,WC; Hale Ranch--(1)3,E; Cooling Ponds--(1)17,A; High Island--(3)18,S&SC; Galveston Co.--(3)24,C
 Redstart, American: High Island--(1)3,S&SC
 Sparrow, House: 34 reports (1-50)
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 14 reports (3-75)
 Blackbird, Red-winged: 11 reports (10-500)
 Blackbird, Brewer's: W. Harris Co.--(2)23,P&MJ, (8)24,D
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: 5 reports (1-1,000)
 Grackle, Great-tailed: 6 reports (3-300)
 Grackle, Common: 3 reports (7-8)
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: 9 reports (10-4,000)
 Tanager, Summer: High Island--(1)18,S&SC
 Cardinal: 11 reports (1-40)
 Grosbeak, Blue: High Is.--(1)10,S&SC
 Bunting, Indigo: High Is.--(1)10,S&SC; W. Harris Co.--(1)24,D
 Finch, Purple: Hale Ranch--(1)3,E (see notes)
 TOWHEE, GREEN-TAILED: W. Harris Co.--(1)1 Dec., J.Ey. et al (see notes)
 BUNTING, LARK: W. Harris Co.--(1)25,J.Ey. (see notes)
 Sparrow, Savannah: 7 reports (1-31)
 Sparrow, LeConte's: Galv.--(6)24,C
 Sparrow, Sharp-tailed: Bolivar Flats--(16)24,C & D
 Sparrow, Seaside: Bolivar Flats--(5)24,C & D
 Sparrow, Vesper: W. Harris Co.--(4)24,D
 Sparrow, Chipping: Hale Ranch--(10)3,E; Algoa--(1)6,8,25,26,28,DW; White Oak Bayou (4)6, (6)7, (20)10, (5)25,WC; Brazoria Co.--(5)7,J&JH
 Sparrow, Clay-colored: High Island--(1)3, (4)4, S&SC (see notes)
 Sparrow, Field: White Oak Bayou--(2)7,10,WC; W. Harris Co.--(1)24,D
 Sparrow, White-crowned: High Is.--(1)3, Winnie--(1)10,S&SC; W. Harris Co.--(45)23, P&MJ, (1)24,D
 Sparrow, White-throated: 9 reports (1-40)
 Sparrow, Fox: Bolivar P.--(1)24,C
 Sparrow, Lincoln's: Maner Lake--(1)2,MRO; Hale Ranch--(1)3,E; High Is.--(1)3,S&SC; W. Harris Co.--(8)23,P&MJ, (3)24,D; Galv. Co.--(25)24,C
 Sparrow, Swamp: High Is.--(1)3, (2)4, Winnie--(16)10,S&SC; Hale Ranch--(2)3,E; Brazoria Co.--(7)10,OG, (3)18,D&RM; Galv. Co.--(25)24,C
 Sparrow, Song: Brazoria Co.--(1)3, (3)11, (4)26,D&RM; Lake Jackson--(1)7,J&JH; W. Harris Co.--(1)23,P&MJ, (1)24,D; Galv.--(1)24,C; Algoa--(1)28,DW

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CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS, November, 1979

LB--Larry Ballard; LEB--Larry E. Brown; S&SC--Steve & Sandra Calver; WC--Wesley Cureton; GC--Glenn Cureton; JEy--John Eyre; J&JH--John & Jane Hamilton; P&MJ--Paul & Margaret Jones; BMA--Betsy Massey; D&RM--Don & Ruthie Melton; RM--Ruth Melton; JMO--Jim Morgan; NP--Noel Pettingell; MRO--Matt Robinson; DW--Diane Wise.
 Parties: A--David Dauphin & m.ob.; B--Alma Barrerra, Ron & Marcia Braun, Jim Morgan; C--Jim Morgan & David Wolfe; D--Ben Felner & Noel Pettingell; E--John Eyre, Jim Morgan & OG; B.C.--Brazoria College Bird I.D. Class, Larry Ballard presiding; L--Les Chamness, Matt Robinson, Larry & Martha Ballard; R--Matt Robinson, Larry & Martha Ballard.

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES, November, 1979

Horned Grebe Dark cap; white cheeks, throat and foreneck; distinct separation between cap and cheeks as well as foreneck and hindneck; relatively thicker and heavier neck compared to Eared Grebes! Seen at 500-1,000 meters with 20-60X scopes by many observers. --Jim Morgan

Wood Stork: There were about 30 birds soaring and circling at about 400 ft.. All the secondaries were black. I have seen this bird before and recognized immediately their habit of soaring & circling in flocks and also flock in the same disorganized formation as ibises. --Matt Robinson

Oldsquaw: This duck was first located by David Wolf at a distance of 900-1,000 yds. out in the bay. The duck appeared dark at this distance but showed a definite upturn of the tail and white underneath when it rolled. When the duck turned, the white face and upper sides of neck was clearly visible, contrasting with dark brown lower neck and upper breast. When the bird took flight the all dark wings, white underparts, dark lower neck and breast and white face, all in bold contrast, were convincing identification marks on this large duck. Seen in excellent light for 3-5 minutes with scopes by both observers. --Jim Morgan

Greater Scaup: All birds showed white beyond bend of wing while in flight. Seen by many observers in good light. --Jim Morgan

Surf Scoter: Dark brown birds with 2 white spots on side of face, one fore and below eye, other aft and below eye. Distinctive sloping forehead and large bill. No white in wing. Second bird had some white on nape of neck. Seen at rest and in flight by many observers with binocs and scopes from 50-200 meters in good light. --Jim Morgan

Hooded Merganser: Female had a gray-brown body and a shaggy, russet-colored head. Males had black head with large white patch partly concealed. Typical merganser beaks. My earliest sighting at Mercury Drive by one day. --Wesley Cureton

Harlan's Hawk: A light phase bird viewed through 10 x 50 binocs at about 20 yds. Very light underneath on belly, breast and underside wing lining with dark band at the end of tail that was only visible on top side of tail because underside of tail was light, no sign of red. --Matt Robinson

White-tailed Hawk: Seen between Alvin and Angleton on North side of Hwy 35. Buteo with noticeably short tail which was white with black terminal band, seen at 500-750 meters with binocs and 30X scope in good light for 20-30 seconds by 4 observers. --Jim Morgan

Large buteo, white underalls, short white tail with black terminal band, rusty shoulders, dark gray head and back. Seen sitting and flying near Amoco Chem. plant on Hwy 2004. Seen a white-tailed Hawk in this area many times. Observed for 10 minutes with 20-45X scope in good light. --Ruthie Melton

Peregrine Falcon: Farm Road 1985 at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Large, fast flying falcon putting up large flocks of blackbirds over coastal prairie. No other field marks noticed. --Larry E. Brown

Merlin: Spotted perched on small bush in oil fields about 40 yds away. Solid brown back. Brown head with two indistinct vertical dark brown bars on light brown face. Brown tail with light brown bands. Flew off low and straight into distance. Had pointed wings of falcon. About the size of female kestrel or a little larger. --Steve & Sandra Calver

Pectoral Sandpiper: Shorebird standing with its back to observers. Size, slightly larger than accompanying dunlins. Back and wings dark brown, streaked with buff, legs yellow-brown. When bird turned its head, short, straight or slightly decurved bill seen, but at no time did it turn to let us see its breast markings. When the bird flew, wings were dark without bars and tail had black center feathers, flanked with white on the rump. Minimum range about 15 yards through 10 x 40 binocs. --John Eyre

Black-necked Stilt: Large, long-legged, black and white shorebirds with bright pink legs; black neck and black spot near eye. Seen by 3 observers at 100 ft. --Jim Morgan

Pomarine Jaeger: Seen through 10 x 50 binocs flying right above the New Buccaneer at about 50 miles out. Falconlike wings were noticed as well as the white flash in the wings. A very large bird with dark breastband and white belly and sides. --Matt Robinson

Franklin's Gull: Both birds seen next to 3 Laughing Gulls. The Franklin's had darker heads, not completely molted, and they were noticeably smaller and seemed shorter of leg. The most striking difference was the smaller, more petite bill of the Franklin's. The birds were at rest, but some difference could be seen in the wing tip pattern between the two species. Seen in fair light at a distance of 50 yds. with scopes for 3 min. by both observers. --Jim Morgan

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD: Immature male. Larger and chunkier than Ruby-throat or Rufous. In the shade he seems very dark all over. His throat is especially dark in a small area under his chin, lighter gray on the sides. In the right light he flashes a light rosy red color in patches on his throat and on his crown and one spot behind the white spot behind his eyes. His crown appears to have an extra layer of feathers that at times sticks up like a crew cut. The back of his head, shoulders and back is very dark green. His tail is all black except for the center feather which is dark green. A light almost white line separates the dark throat from light green belly. Sides are darker green but not as dark as back. Dark bill. In some lights a bit of golden and even copper color shows on the top of his head. His under tail coverts are white with 6-7 green spots (feathers). His lower belly (between his legs) is very white. When he sits he looks like he is sitting on a cotton ball. He likes to fly in the satsuma tree and zap white flies. He also sits on the ham radio antenna and often catches insects in flycatcher fashion. He sings (if you want to call it that) a great deal. Sounds like someone rubbing their feet on a floor with sand on it real fast. He also ticks some, especially when he chases away other hummers. He is at my window feeder (one foot from the kitchen window) at daylight, many, many times during the day and comes the last time about 5:30. He also feeds on red salvia and another trumpet shaped red flower under the feeder. I've also seen him zapping the bark of our willow tree, perhaps getting small insects or maybe sap from the yellow-bellied sapsucker holes. I had seen the Anna's at Diane Wise's house and she has seen mine and have decided the two birds are not the same. Hers was much darker all around the throat and darker on the belly and sides.

--Don & Ruthie Melton

On feeder at twilight - no colors visible - Identification based on large size, husky build and "ruffled crest". Seen twice at distance of 3-4'.

(note: Ordinarily I wouldn't submit something this skimpy, and at the same time I told myself I couldn't be so lucky twice. However, this was Friday evening, and on Sunday morning Ruthie Melton spotted "her" Anna's. We live about two miles apart. We both agree that we had two different birds, mine of October, and hers of November.)

--Diane Wise

Fairly large sub-adult male hummingbird. Rose-red gorget noted as well as red on forehead (diagnostic) and behind and below ear when light was at correct angles. Fairly extensive green on flanks extending onto belly. Seen by all field trip attendees at distances of 20-40 ft. with binocs and scopes for 30 minutes in fair light.

--Jim Morgan

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD: We were within a few feet of the Broadtailed Hummingbirds. The male made a metallic whirring sound in flight, back and head were a black green, throat was red; wide tail even at rest. Female had rufous flanks and dirty gray belly.

--John & Jane Hamilton

Red-eyed Vireo: One seen behind old house in Smith Woods. Bright white eye line edged above and below with black. Clear white breast and no wing bars.

--Steve & Sandra Calver

Tennessee Warbler: Bright sunlight, 8 x 40 binoculars, 40' in leafless oak. Size approximately same as Myrtle Warbler. Warbler bill. Noted soft grey cap, moss green back and wings, stone white underparts including undertail coverts. Whitish superciliary stripe. Excellent plumage of breeding adult, not immature. Both observers well acquainted with both Tennessee and Orange-Crowned Warblers.

--Noel Pettingell & T. Ben Feltner

Not seen to my complete satisfaction, but seemed to have a greener back and more distinct eyeline than an Orange-Crowned Warbler. Crissum seemed white instead of yellow, and call note seemed less sharp than an Orange-Crowned.

--Wesley Cureton

Ovenbird: Warbler size, comparable to nearby Orange-Crowned Warbler. Brownish-olive upperparts, whitish underparts with black streaks/spots on breast; eye-ring and head stripes noted. Seen at a distance of 20 ft. in excellent light for 2 seconds with binocs.

--Jim Morgan

Seen on the ground walking characteristically on its pink legs. Olive back; no wing bars; streaked underparts; white eye-ring; orange crown outlined by black stripes; white undertail coverts. Well seen by both observers as close as 20 ft. with binocs for 30-45 seconds in good/fair light.

--Jim Morgan

Yellow-breasted Chat: Large Warbler; olive back and wings; bright yellow throat and breast; white spectacles and white undertail coverts. Seen by both observers in good light for 20-30 seconds as close as 20 feet with binocs.

--Jim Morgan

Purple Finch: Heavily streaked with burgundy red head and same color washed down on breast; conical bill. Slightly smaller than nearby cowbirds. Seen with binocs and scope at distance of 200 ft. in good light for 30 seconds by both observers.

--Jim Morgan

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE: David Matson took an Audubon field trip to Sharp Rd. and saw the Lark Bunting in a.m. He also glimpsed an olive coloured bird, but did not get a good look. In p.m. I met David and we re-found and identified the bird as a Green-tailed Towhee. Location: Sharp Rd., W. Harris County. Weather: clear, bright and cool. Description: A medium sized passerine, larger than accompanying white-crowned Sparrows, with gray head and olive-green back, wings and long tail. Crown - rust/orange; cheeks - gray with white mark between eye and bill. Chin - white, streaked with dark gray. Chest gray, underparts white. Behavior: Bird spent its time either perched with horizontal short-legged stance on fence posts or wire, or buried in dense undergrowth at the base of the fence. Bird watched for several minutes at about 20 yards range through 10x40 binoculars.

--John Eyre

LARK BUNTING: Whilst watching sparrows from the car at the very end of Sharp Road, I saw a larger, sparrow-like bird with a flock of White-crowned Sparrows. I didn't recognize the bird and took field notes on the spot, thinking that maybe it was a Harris Sparrow. Later when I checked in the field guides I found that several features did not fit that species and I spent a few days worrying about what it could have been. Then I discovered a female or immature Lark Bunting peeking from behind the male in the guides and there was my bird! Description: large sparrow-like bird, larger and bulkier than accompanying white-crowned and savannah sparrows. General coloration--brown, streaked dark on paler ground. Head--crown brown, streaked; paler buff or yellowish supercillium, brown cheek patch with dark malar stripe. Chest off-white heavily streaked dark brown streaks extended down flanks paling and thinning onto belly. Mantle streaked dark brown. Wings--distinctive, pale buff edges to coverts gave double wing-bar and buff bar on front of wing which contrasted with darker ground colour. There was also a distinct dark spot on the leading edge of the wing at the base of the primaries which contrasted with the buff edges of the primary coverts. Tail--brown with square or shallow vee tip. Bill--stubby, fairly heavy and grey/blue colour, paler on cutting edges. Legs--brown. Eye--black. Bird watched for approximately for 1 minute at 5 yards range through 10x40 binoculars.

--John Eyre

Clay-colored Sparrow: Seen in brushy area on west side of Boy Scout Woods. Brown ear patch edged with blackish and set on whitish face. Gray collar evident.

--Steve & Sandra Calver

FROM THE EDITOR: Thanks to everyone who has contributed to THE SPOONBILL during the past year/s. Those who have contributed articles of interest, sent in bird observations each month, assisted in mailing, all your efforts are deeply appreciated. Without each and every one of you THE SPOONBILL would not be the "lively, readable, and, most important, relevant" newsletter it is (and that's a reader's quote the Editor cherishes!) I especially want to thank Barbara Darr for coming to the Editor's aid by typing the Clearing House last month and this. And many thanks are due Ben Feltner for compiling the Clearing House this month.

The Editor is asking for your help in preparing THE SPOONBILL in the future. Maxine Davis has her coterie of Mailers to call on each month, and now the Editor finds she needs help by someone typing the Clearing House each month. We have the Mailers, now we would like to have the Typers*, several volunteers to take turns typing the Clearing House section (and only that section).

What it would entail: some typing ability, residence in or near the Southwest part of town (for ease in picking up and returning the material), an electric typewriter (if you do not have one, you may borrow the Editor's), your time for one or two days (depending on your typing speed!) shortly after the 3rd of each month. You would be typing on stencils, but have no fear, Correction Fluid is here! (The Editor uses it in copious quantities).

If several of you volunteer, you may be called upon only two or three times a year. Just call Margaret Jones, 665-4197, after 5 p.m., and say you would like to be a SPOONBILL Typer.

[* Yes, I know there has been no such word before, but there is now....I just invented it!.....Ed.]

THE SPOONBILL'S WISH

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Send material for THE SPOONBILL by 25th of month to: Margaret Jones, 4902 Fern, Bellaire, Texas 77401	665-4197
Send bird records for Clearing House before 3rd of month to: Paul Jones, 4902 Fern, Bellaire, Texas 77401	665-4197
Send requests for OG information, checklists, maps to: Maxine Davis, 10602 Cedarhurst, Houston 77096	723-8559