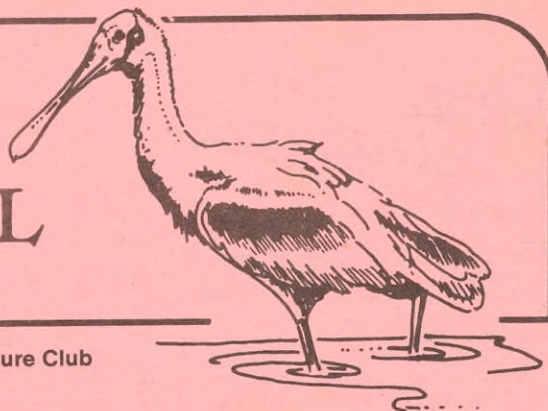


The SPOONBILL



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

Vol. XXXV, No. 9
September, 1986

Coming Events

Thursday, Oct. 2: Ornithology Group meeting at Bayou Manor, 4141 S. Braeswood at 7:30 PM. Mike Austin will present "Arctic Adventure."

Friday, Oct. 3: Deadline for Spoonbill articles, announcements and Clearing House reports.

Saturday, Oct. 4: Outdoor Nature Club/Conservation Group float trip down Buffalo Bayou from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM; bring a lunch. For more information please contact Jack or Mary Gillette at 626-1755.

Tuesday, Oct. 14: Outdoor Nature Club meeting, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, Hermann Park. Patrick Roeder will present "Dream Dive Spots in the Caribbean."

Friday, Oct. 31 - Sunday, Nov. 2: Ornithology Group field trip to Welder Wildlife Refuge, Sinton, Texas. Gene Blacklock, Environmental Education Coordinator for the refuge will be our guide. The trip is limited to 50 people. For reservations call Derek Muschalek at 473-6876 and if your plans change, cancel so that people on the waiting list may go. To get there from Houston take US 59 south to Hwy 175, just before Victoria, then Hwy 77 south to a point 11 miles past Woodsboro. Turn left across the railroad tracks to the refuge. Sinton is 7.4 miles past the refuge. For those who do not want to camp, accommodations are available at the Colonial Motel in Sinton, 512-364-3456.

Campers may stay at the refuge Friday night only. They must arrive as a group before 9 PM, and bring their own food, but water and restrooms are there. NO PETS ARE ALLOWED. Fall is an especially good time for birding the refuge; visitors may see up to 100 species, including some western birds. On Sunday Gene has offered to lead our group on a half-day trip near Lake Corpus Christi. Let Derek know if you plan to be there Sunday as well.

Friday, Oct. 31 - Sunday, Nov. 2: Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary Visitors Days. Camping to begin on Friday evening. Directions to the sanctuary are in the ONC/OG roster.

PWWS ANNUAL SEED SALE

If you missed the order deadline for the seed sale, don't lose heart, because the Piney Woods Wildlife people ordered some extra seed. They will have several wild bird mixes, thistle seed and sunflower seed available on order pickup day, Saturday, October 11, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM at the South Campus of the North Harris County College, 2700 W. W. Thorne Dr. For prices and additional information, please call Lana Delgado at home 354-8029 or at work 875-1101, ext. 448. Proceeds from the sale go toward such worthy projects as wildlife rehabilitation and environmental education programs for young people.

Those of you who got your orders in on time, please make note of the date and time for pickup.

Noel's Niche Looking Back

by Noel Pettingell

.....TEN YEARS AGO THIS MONTH
FROM SEPTEMBER, 1976 SPOONBILL

"AROUND AND ABOUT

A new state park coming our way! According to a recent TP&W newsletter, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission recently approved purchase of 4,158 acres, containing woodlands, lakes, creeks, Brazos River frontage and an abundance of wildlife, in Ft. Bend County, less than one hour's drive from downtown Houston. This property is known as the Hale Ranch, and is on FM 762, several miles south of the Smith-er's Lake area. We will have to be patient though, for it will be several years before the park site is developed and opened for public use.

A LITTLE PLEASURE WITH BUSINESS

by Jim Morgan

On April 26 my employer sent me to Uruguay to participate in some oceanographic work 100 miles off the South American coast. My trip lasted most of the month of May, and two subsequent trips followed in June and July. Though the work demanded most of my time, the many days at sea provided some interesting pelagic birding experiences. Keep in mind that being in the Southern Hemisphere it was fall going into the winter, thus ocean birds were moving north out of the Antarctic.

My biggest thrills were (1) seeing my first albatross and then thousands more, (2) seeing an almost unbelievable one-day concentration of albatross, shearwaters and fulmars in an area of high plankton concentration in choppy seas (I conservatively estimated 3,000+ birds, but I would not be surprised if there were 10,000), (3) having penguins board our ship!

The following species were positively identified: Sooty Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Wandering Albatross (imm.), Greater Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Giant Petrel (a fulmar), Cape Pigeon, Silver-gray Fulmar, Wilson's Petrel, Southern Black-backed Gull and Magellan Penguin. The most beautiful bird was the Cape Pigeon. This fulmar is magnificently marked in black and white, and is aptly named, as my notes finished with 'looks like a sea-going pigeon!' The Black-browed Albatross was a close second in beauty.

Although my observance of the spring migration on the UTC was cut short by this trip, it allowed me to participate in experiences I may never get a chance to repeat."

.....THIRTY YEARS AGO THIS MONTH
FROM SEPTEMBER 1956 SPOONBILL:

"Ruby-throated Hummingbirds Armand Yramategui

The mimosa flowering season was very late this season, commencing on the last few days of April so that hummingbirds had a tendency to tarry, and as the trumpet vines began to bloom in late May, these two important food plants for the hummingbirds overlapped in their bloom and may have caused such a rare nester as the ruby-throat to nest in the coastal area. Throughout the summer (May, June and July) I saw a pair of hummers (male and female) feeding on the mimosas and trumpet vines in my yard. Around the first of July I saw one or two immatures feeding on the trumpet vines. Unfortunately I never had occasion to see them being fed by the parents, but migrant hummers do not usually appear until around the first part of August (at earliest 15th of July)."

BIG BEND IN AUGUST

by Randy Pinkston

Birding trips have been few and far between since I started medical school last year. Before my second year I was fortunate to spend 18-23 August in Big Bend National Park along with my wife Patty and her Aunt Julie, our three-year-old Daniel and my Dad. Except for the Rio Grande area where midday temperatures can exceed 110° the August heat is not a big problem in the park provided ventures are scheduled carefully.

Our first birding stop was not in Big Bend but between Bracketville and Del Rio in Kinney County. Between Mud and Sycamore Creeks, Mud Creek Rd. winds northward from Hwy 90 through sheep ranchland of scattered mesquite and sagebrush. There we found at least 15-20 Cassin's Sparrows singing along a short stretch of roadside. Curiously they were not skylarking, perhaps due to the late date, and this species is extremely secretive outside the breeding season. I felt lucky to get glimpses of two. In the same area we also saw Lark and Black-throated Sparrows, N. Bobwhite, Cactus Wren, Vermilion Flycatcher and Brown Towhee. Upland Sandpipers could be heard overhead, migrating southward.

Though 425 species of birds have been recorded in Big Bend, topping

all other national parks, you are likely to encounter only a fraction of that number on any single trip. August is a super time to sample the variety since fall migration is cranking up and post-nesting dispersal increases the odds of Mexican wanderers, Aztec Thrush, for example. We spent most of our time chasing specialties and recorded 89 species within park boundaries.

We stayed in the Basin at the Chisos Mountain Lodge, elevation 5400 feet. The lodge is overpriced but offers nice accommodations amid awesome mountain scenery. Desert plants such as prickly-pear and sotol are mixed with junipers and pinyon pines. Upon arrival I hung a hummingbird feeder at our room only to attract two male ruby-throateds which dominated it throughout our stay. Though they were a good find for the park I was hoping for something different! Two mornings during breakfast something huge and different, a Blue-throated Hummingbird, fluttered at the restaurant's windowed walls, apparently intimidated by its own image. Barn Swallows were nesting under the eaves of the lodge where we watched one pair fledge four young. Say's Phoebes, Cactus Wrens, Brown Towhees and Rufous-crowned Sparrows were also very common as were the small del Carmen White-tailed Deer. Even the antlered bucks were tolerant of our presence.

Early the next morning Dad and I birded the sewage lagoons where we found a male Varied Bunting. At this late date he had lost the brilliant colors shown in field guides and looked more like a tiny Brown-headed Cowbird. (As it turned out we located Varied Buntings quite easily at several spots including the Window Trail, Old Sam Nail Ranch and Blue Creek Ranch.) Black-chinned Sparrows trilled from the slopes and we flushed two early Green-winged Teals.

Also that first morning we hiked the Window Trail and I heard what sounded like a Black-capped Vireo in shady oaks where the trail makes a right turn at the creekbed. Five seconds of taped Black-capped Vireo song brought this beautiful male right over my head, where he stayed and sang until I walked away. A little farther along Patty located a Black-headed Grosbeak on her nest.

That afternoon Dad and I made the steep hike to Pinnacles Pass and over Toll Mountain to Boot Canyon. There we met resident ornithologist Anne Bellamy and veteran Big Bend birder Greg Lasley. We would all camp there and bird the following morning. We visited as the canyon grew dim in the company of Gray-breasted Jays and Painted Redstarts. An effort for Flammulated Owl below the cabin later that evening

proved fruitless. Not even a Whip-poor-will would answer the tape. From information gathered this summer I would conclude, contrary to what the books say, that Flammulated Owl is quite unlikely in Boot Canyon. By no means is it "fairly common."

Cool mountain air required flannel shirts the next morning when we gathered for breakfast. A pair of pecararies passed by a few feet away and cast us a sniff. Boot Canyon was everything I'd hoped for. Huge Arizona Cypress shade a rocky creekbed along with tall Ponderosa Pines, Douglas firs and oaks in an array not unlike Cave Creek Canyon in the Chiricahuas. Boot Canyon's hallmark, the Colima Warbler, came almost immediately on our walk from the cabin to the South Rim and we tallied no less than twenty. We watched a Blue-throated Hummingbird drinking from the trickle at Boot Spring and the canyon buzzed everywhere with hummers. Like orange bullets the male Rufous chased wimpy Black-chins from precious mountain sage blossoms, and we saw our first male Lucifer. Commonplace but a constant pleasure were the gregarious Acorn Woodpeckers cavorting in the snag-tops. Bulky Band-tailed Pigeons cooed owl-like somewhere up canyon or passed overhead in flocks. Surprising to me was the abundance of Hutton's Vireos. Their loud "zuwee" notes accompanied us along the entire canyon for a rare chance to study this sometimes uncommon species. Here we saw our only Hepatic Tanagers of the trip, quiet in the tree-tops except for an occasional thrush-like "chuck". Migrant passerines on our walk included Olive-sided Flycatchers, Western Wood-pewees, Townsend's and Hermit Warblers and Chipping Sparrows.

Next day we picnicked at Dugout Wells, a cottonwood stand in a sea of Chihuahuan desert. You would think a windmill pipe with a healthy trickle might be a goldmine for migrants here but all we found was a possible Brown-crested Flycatcher. A soapbush clump away from the cottonwoods produced our first Bell's Vireo and Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. The Old Sam Nail Ranch is a similar migrant trap but with more extensive greenery along the edge of a wash. Our most exciting find there was a male Seven-striped Whiptail. Back at the Basin I was able to distinguish a Zone-tailed Hawk from many Turkey Vultures around the Pinnacles. It can be done at a distance of over a mile!

The morning of 22 August we joined Peter Scott and Greg Lasley near Grapevine Hills where Peter is conducting a study of Lucifer Hummingbirds and the flowers on which they feed. Along the dry wash he had located the territories of 38 males! Indeed it was the

most numerous hummer there and we had fun watching them and helping with the netting and marking.

A two-mile hike up Blue Creek Canyon that afternoon took me by majestic red rock spires that smelled of Gray Vireo but all I found was a flock of Phainopeplas. The area was more exciting for its herps. Among our discoveries were W. Diamondback Rattlesnake, two of the coral pink W. Coachships, Rusty-rumped Whiptail and Canyon Lizard.

Later Patty and I returned to the Basin sewage lagoons for perhaps the most exciting birding of the trip. Except for great views of an adult Black-chinned Sparrow it seemed that the area was dead at first. Then Austin-area birders Willie Sekula and Charles Bender walked up. While we chatted a dark immature Peregrine came in low and rushed directly up over our heads, perhaps scoping the lagoons for a Green-winged Teal. Next we spotted a female Lazuli Bunting and almost in the same instant a tiny Myiarchus flycatcher that proved to be Dusky-capped! Sundown was spent at the K-Bar ranch listening to Elf Owls bark from telephone poles and watching them feed from the lines.

Our last morning we visited Rio Grande Village to see the Thick-billed Kingbird located by a Victor Emmanuel Nature Tour on Aug. 6. For over an hour we waited before it appeared on its eucalyptus perch where it preened awhile and then retreated to the river. We all got superb looks at its yellowish fall plumage. There we also saw Black Phoebe and numerous Vermilion Flycatchers.

In conclusion, I believe Big Bend is the kind of place that birders can never grow tired of. Unequaled scenery (in Texas at least) and unique (indeed undiscovered) birdlife make it forever interesting and exciting. To anyone planning a first birding trip there I would highly recommend an in-depth study of Roland Wauer's A Field Guide to Birds of the Big Bend (new ed.).

NOTICE

For security reasons Bayou Manor is now locking its front doors at 8:00 PM sharp, so be sure to arrive prior to that time for our monthly meetings.

NEW FIELD TRIP CO-CHAIRMAN

Many thanks to Derek Muschalek, who has agreed to serve as field trip co-chairman for the remainder of the year along with Sterling Essenmacher. Derek is assuming the position previously held by Stennie Meadours, who had to resign due to her busy work schedule. Thanks to Stennie for her work done so far and, again, thanks to Derek for assuming this position.

BIRDING TIPS - HAWK IDENTIFICATION

by Jim Morgan

As a supplement to the hawk identification program given at the September OG meeting, the following literature is recommended:

GENERAL

Anonymous, "A Field Guide for Hawks Seen in the North East." Pamphlet available through Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA).

Clark, William S. and Pramstaller, Michael E., "Field I.D. Pamphlet for North American Raptors," National Wildlife Federation, 1981, Rev. 1, 1982. Available through HMANA.

TO CONTACT HMANA: Write to Joyce Holt, Rt. 4, Box 205, Salem VA 24153.

ACCIPITERS

Stallcup, Rich, "Accipiters," Focus Newsletter, The Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Summer 1982.

Clark, William S. "Field Identification of Accipiters in North America," Birding, Volume XVI, No. 6, Dec. 1984.

BUTEOS

Clark, William S., "Flight Identification of Common North American Buteos," Continental Bird Life, Vol. 2, No. 5-6, Oct.-Dec. 1981.

Mindell, David P., "Plumage Variation and Winter Range of Harlan's Hawk," American Birds, Vol. 39, No. 2, Summer 1985.

Lish, James W. and Voelker, William G., "Field Identification Aspects of Some Red-tailed Hawk Subspecies," American Birds, Vol. 40, No. 2, Summer 1986.

EAGLES

Clark, William S., "The Field Identification of North American Eagles," American Birds, Vol. 37, No. 5, Sept.-Oct. 1983.

A thorough knowledge of the above literature, plus about 1,000 hours of field work, will make any good birder into an accomplished raptor watcher!

TWO COASTAL BIRDS SEEN NEAR MIDLAND

The September issue of the Midland Naturalists' newsletter, The Phalarope, reported two vagrants from the Texas coast this past August: White Ibis (1 imm.) and Black Skimmer (1). Even though ibis and their allies wander northward after breeding, few wander that far inland. And the appearance of a Black Skimmer was a real surprise to Midland area birders because skimmers rarely wander farther than 100 miles inland, and there was no hurricane to push the bird so far from the coast. Both of these birds were found at Soda Lake in Midland County.

BOOK REVIEW: PENGUIN SUMMER

by Barbara Bartholomew

With winter due on the Upper Texas Coast, we might like to remind ourselves that in the Falkland Islands, it's summer. A nontechnical book about glorious birding in this remote spot is Penguin Summer by Eleanor Rice Pettingill, wife of ornithologist Olin Sewall Pettingill. This book tells the couple's experiences in 1953. A team of two, they were funded by Disney Productions to film in the Falklands, 300 miles east of the Strait of Magellan and 800 miles north of the Palmer Peninsula of Antarctica, "the only place in the world where we can live with people and still be near three kinds of penguins" (gentoo, rockhopper and magellanic).

With the capital and only city of Stanley as their base the Pettingills launched a five-month (October-February) odyssey that circled the islands. Besides the penguins, the Pettingills saw some 49 species of birds. The author calls the birds by their colloquial names. Then in an appendix she lists birds, plants and animals by their scientific names.

The book highlights the constant confrontation with the environment, which took the Pettingills by surprise and which inhabitants regarded as routine. Even in summer, freezing rains and winds paralyzed activities. By killing birds for bounty and by "egging," residents cut a swath through the bird life. One family kept 75 cats to discourage the skuas from eying the chickens. With little collecting of his own, Pettingill amassed a fine group of skins for the University of Michigan.

The Pettingills' adventures could make a Disney movie. At one of their remote camps Pettingill broke his arm trying to protect his Graflex camera in a storm. Stranded again (in the Falklands, one didn't mess with Mother Nature!), a storm forced them to live for a week virtually without food--the author refused to eat a penguin. Though the Pettingills sometimes "set up" shots by manipulating the wildlife, the photographs are one of the best things about Penguin Summer. They look old-fashioned and candid, like photos in a family album where some of the acquaintances happen to be birds. The other "best" thing is Eleanor Pettingill's zestful eye, which fell upon everything--the couple's remarkable field partnership, Stanley's stuffy British protocol and the friendships. Living with a family on remote New Island, she wrote, "Neither of us had had enough" of weather, birds and sea. Finishing the book, we hope that, except for the conservation measures the Pettingills advocated, the Falklands haven't changed.

Penguin Summer, now out of print, is available at the Houston Public Library.

EXPECTATIONS AND EXPEDITIONS

In this area we are very fortunate to have such "hot spots" as High Island, Bolivar Flats, Galveston, etc., but why do we feel we have to go there to have successful birding? There is no use bemoaning the loss of birding spots in our ever-expanding urban sprawl; instead, we should be actively seeking replacements for them. Let's try to think of places where we may possibly see fewer birds, but spend less time getting to them. Gone are the days when we could see Prairie Chickens on Fondren Road not far south of Bissonnet, or when South Mayde Creek bridge at Clay Road was reasonably satisfactory in nearly any season, or when the rice mill discharge pond at Synnot Road and Westheimer for several years had a modest seasonal showing of shorebirds and ducks, even Black-bellied Whistling Ducks.

We all need to share with other readers of the Spoonbill any local or nearby spots which would take an hour or two or no more than a morning to get there and back. Perhaps a few suggestions for fall birding will get the ball rolling. Call the Editor, Wanda Smith, 661-3572, and tell her of your "short hop" birding ideas.

As an example of a short trip we recently checked out the long-abandoned "Rosenberg Rookery" (mentioned in the OG's out-of-print "Good Birding Trips") and found still no rookery. The pipeline right-of-way which used to give a clear view into the area is now overgrown and brushy. But parked near the pipeline marker, we found it a quiet spot, with no traffic on the gravel farm road, bird talk in the woody thicket on the south side of the road and a corn field on the north. An Orchard Oriole pair flitted in the bushes with the female making several trips across the road into the corn field, as did the Blue Jays, probably picking kernels of dried corn. Just down the road we saw four Western Kingbirds on overhead wires over an open field. Not a very birdy spot that morning, but we made a note to return to that area this fall and winter. Directions: proceed to intersection of FM 1952 and 90A, about 10 miles from west end of Rosenberg; continue on 90A 0.6 mile to a farm road on right (unmarked, unpaved); turn right crossing railroad tracks, follow to corner, turn left to reach woods on left. This is in a corner of northwest Ft. Bend Co., bordered by FM 1952 on east and north, 90A on south and San Bernard river on west, though there seems to be no access to the river. It is flat farm land,

crisscrossed by a few gravel roads with few houses. If you follow the rookery road to its end and turn right, you will reach FM 1952 just south of Wallis. We hope to find it to be hawk land in season as well as desirable for sparrows. We shall see.

SUMMER BIRDING IN THE LOWER VALLEY

by Bob Behrstock

Because hardly anyone birds the lower Rio Grande Valley during summer, and because I can already see that I'm going to be in the field during the next four OG meetings, with their obligatory exchanges of birding news, I thought I'd share some information with you by newsletter.

From July 2-6 I had the opportunity to bird the Valley from Boca Chica to San Ygnacio with Dr. Bernard Benson. Those of you who bird the Valley in April or at Christmastime are familiar with full trailer courts and dawn choruses of birdwatchers which rival the Chachalacas at Santa Ana. But what's the Valley like in summer?

Because this was my fifth trip since Thanksgiving I was eager to see the changes wrought by summertime. First let me say that it was quite toasty after 8:30 AM and downright hot after 1:00 PM. Next let me remind any of you who support delusions of taping bird sounds that the din of cicadas precludes normal conversational tones, much less tape-recording high-pitched twitters at 50 feet.

The four winter and spring trips had produced some nice birds. Three had Northern Jacana, Ferruginous Pygmy-owl and Blue Bunting. On two we saw Clay-colored Robins and Hook-billed Kites. Other birds of interest included Elf Owl, Rose-throated Becard and Broad-billed Hummingbird. Bernard's "want-list" ranged from very easy to very unlikely, so it looked as if we would need to cover most of the Valley. Some of the day-to-day highlights, failures and interesting seasonal observations follow.

July 3 An early departure gets us to the Brownsville dump, winter home to hundreds, perhaps thousands of Mexican Crows. We quickly see it is summer home to none, but get Botteri's Sparrow, Black Skimmer, Bobwhite, Osprey and several other species. En route to Santa Ana, Canon Road is nearly devoid of bird life. At a pond east of Relampago on 281 are some Least Grebes; they turn out to be the only ones of the trip. By now we have become aware of large numbers of White-winged Doves. They are virtually absent during winter, since they migrate south in fall. A quick stop at Santa Ana yields our first of eight sightings of Green Kingfisher, but

little else. Continuing to Bentsen State Park west of McAllen, we become aware of two more abundant visitors, both cuckoos: Yellow-billed Cuckoos everywhere in the woods, and of greater interest, many parties of Groove-billed Anis, which, judging from their calls at every park we visited, are now one of the common larger birds in the Valley.

After a quick dinner in McAllen we return to Bentsen for some owling. Entering the park we have the first of many encounters with Parauques, their pic-pic-p'weer calls ringing from the woods around us. Turning off at the first nature trail, we walk a short way into the woods where a few seconds of calling produced a very cooperative Elf Owl, which poses for several pictures. I'm pleased to share one of my favorites with Bernard. In the tent campground we quickly find three Eastern Screech-owls. A long and successful day.

July 4 At Bentsen this morning we fail to get Clay-colored Robin but find a particularly vocal Northern Beardless Tyrannulet. Then we hightail it for Rio Grande City where we check in and then move up the valley to the Santa Margarita Ranch beyond Roma. After walking a couple of hundred yards down the river we encounter a noisy family of Brown Jays which at least temporarily drown out the cicadas. On the way back we have a nice look at a Ringed Kingfisher. After a quick look at White Pelicans at the Falcon Dam spillway we decide to drive the 45 miles to San Ygnacio. It is really hot now, but pressing on seems more fun than sitting around. At San Ygnacio we look for White-collared Seed-eaters which apparently bred there this year although none have been seen for a while. At the foot of Washington St. we meet a friend who has been searching for two hours without success. We move on to the cemetery at the foot of Hidalgo St., the other hot spot for seed-eaters. Bird activity along the river includes two singing Yellow-breasted Chats and several Couch's Kingbirds and Brown-crested Flycatchers, both abundant throughout the Valley. Hearing a Common Yellowthroat singing in some tall river cane, I pish at it. First it pops up and then - wonder of wonders - a White-collared Seedeater, which pops up two more times for all of us to enjoy. After a lengthy celebration which involved a six-pack of Diet Pepsi, we move back to Rio Grande City, adding en route Swainson's Hawk, Caracara, Kestrel and our fourth target bird of the day, Lesser Nighthawk.

July 5 Up early for the 30-mile drive to Falcon Dam. We take the long walk to the "old Ferruginous Pygmy-owl place" to find that it has been extensively bulldozed. A two-hour search fails to yield the owl but produces

Bewick's Wrens, two Ringed Kingfishers, several Wood Storks, Painted Buntings and two more target birds: Red-billed Pigeon and a lovely singing male Audubon's Oriole. We also see a splendid Indigo Snake. Back at Bentsen the snaking is better than the owling.

July 6 Only a half a day is left to find a tenth target bird. We proceed directly to Santa Ana and take up position at 0700 on the dike near the trail entrance. For an hour and twenty minutes we enjoy the antics of young Brown-crested Flycatchers and converse a bit with out-of-state birders, some of the very few other birders we have encountered. At 0820 a lovely male Hook-billed Kite makes a long low pass over the woods in front of us, affording us nice looks at one of Texas' most difficult-to observe breeding birds. With five hours until our departure and 95 species ticked off, we work our way out to the beach at Boca Chica where the usual assortment of terns and plovers puts us comfortably over 100.

If you can tolerate hot hiking, I strongly recommend the Valley in summer. The breeding birds are nearly all South Texas specialties. They're singing, feeding young and are conspicuous. Occasionally you may have an entire park to yourself, and you'll definitely see some species you've missed in winter.

P.S.

The Palenque trip described in last month's article "Birding with Behrstock in Southern Mexico" was arranged by Peregrine, Inc.

MINUTES OF THE ORNITHOLOGY GROUP MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 4, 1986

The Ornithology Group meeting was held at 7:30 PM on Sept. 4, 1986. Chairman Rob Thacker received reports from the following officers: Peter Vennema, Treasurer, reported that the OG presently has a total of \$6,275. He went on to say that the cost for publishing and mailing the Spoonbill is \$250 per month and that we are on target for a balanced budget. Wanda Smith, Spoonbill editor, announced that forms for the Piney Woods Wildlife Society's annual seed sale were available at the treasurer's table and that orders need to be in by Sept. 20.

Clearing House Chairman Ron Braun asked that sighting reports be submitted by the third of the month and that contributors check the yearbook for a guide to which birds require notes. Rob Thacker announced details of the Sept. 20 ONC/OG field trip to Anahuac, High Island and Bolivar; Rob Thacker and David Dauphin are the trip leaders.

Other announcements came from the following: Marion Taylor announced

that the doors at Bayou Manor will be locked at 8:00 PM, so latecomers will not be able to enter; Bob Honig asked for all observers to send in Western Kingbird Survey reports unless they are still observing kingbirds; Ellen Red announced for Jack and Mary Gillette, Conservation Group Chairmen, that a float trip down Buffalo Bayou will be held Oct. 4, fee \$20/person.

Laura Singleton announced the Fifth Annual Audubon Auction to be held from 1-5 PM, Oct. 19 at Edith L. Moore Sanctuary. She asked for donations of goods or services to support the High Island and Edith L. Moore sanctuaries. Ron Braun spoke of the Hawk Watch plans and asked those who were interested to contact him.

Rob Thacker introduced our speaker, Jim Morgan, who gave a most informative lecture, illustrated by slides, on hawk identification. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Caroline Callery, Secretary

MINUTES OF THE ORNITHOLOGY GROUP - ON AUGUST 7, 1986

The group's new chairman, Robert Thacker, opened the meeting at 7:30 PM on August 7, 1986 by introducing the new slate of officers. Afterward he announced that the January meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 6, 1987, because the first Thursday in January falls on New Year's Day and the room at Bayou Manor will not be available on the second Thursday.

Ted Eubanks, Jr. announced that Bolivar Flats Clean Up Day will be held on Saturday, September 20, from 7:00 AM until 7:30 PM. He encouraged everyone to come.

Bob Honig presented an update on his Western Kingbird nesting survey, stating that observers reported 25 sightings within the Houston area.

Then Ted Eubanks, Jr. presented a very informative and timely program on shorebird identification and migration.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 PM.

Wanda Smith, Acting Secretary.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The Buffalo Bayou Christmas Bird Count will be on Friday, Dec. 26. and the Brazos Bend Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, Dec. 28. Compilers for both are Doug Williams, 461-6148, and Bob Honig, 776-8619.

Clearing House August, 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

AB = Armand Bayou	HC = Harris Co.
ANWR = Anahuac NWR	HI = High Island
BBCR = Bob's Bait Camp Rd	King = Kingwood
BC = Brazoria Co.	NWH = NW Houston
BCP = Bear Creek Pk	SBNWR = San Bernard NWR
BF = Bolivar Flats	SJSP = San Jacinto SP
BNWR = Brazoria NWR	SLP = San Luis Pass
Bolv = Bolivar Peninsula	SR = Sheldon Reservoir
BS = Big Slough	SWH = SW Houston
CC = Chambers Co.	WGI = W. Galveston Is.
CH = E. Houston	WH = W. Houston
FBC = Ft. Bend Co.	WHC = W. Harris Co.
FPM = Freeport Marsh	WOB = White Oak Bayou
H = Houston	WU = W. University
HA = Houston Arboretum	

179 Species reported this month

Grebe,Pied-billed: 5 reports (1-2;7)
 Pelican,American White: 8 reports (1-25;44)
 Cormorant,Olivaceous: 9 reports (1-50;168)
 cormorant,sp.: BNWR-(1)16,HAFT
 Anhinga: Freeport-(1)1,SW; SR-(15)31,HWOOCR
 Frigatebird,Magnificent: 9 reports (1-26;72)
 Bittern,Least: ANWR-(1)23,MA; SBNWR-(1)30,RMB
 Heron,Great Blue: 20 reports (1-30;125)
 Egret,Great: 21 reports (1-100;284)
 Egret,Snowy: 19 reports (1-60;138)
 Heron,Little Blue: 11 reports (1-10;43)
 Heron,Tricolored: 16 reports (1-12;76)
 Egret,Reddish: 15 reports (1-20;93)
 Egret,Cattle: 15 reports (1-900;2467)
 Heron,Green-backed: 12 reports (1-15;32)
 Night-Heron,Black-crowned: 4 reports (1-8;19)
 Night-Heron,Yellow-crowned: 9 reports (1-10;39)
 Ibis,White: 14 reports (1-60;179)
 Ibis,White-faced: 5 reports (12-50;115)
 Spoonbill,Roseate: 14 reports (1-75;474)
 Stork,Wood: 8 reports (1-60;163)
 WHC-(2)2,DM; SJSP-(12)5,DM;(6)31,HWOOCR;
 BNWR-(40)16,HAFT;(40)19,HOC;(60)23,OG;
 ANWR-(1)23,MA; King-(2)24,SEG
 Whistling-Duck,Fulvous: WHC-(40)2,DM
 Whistling-Duck,Black-bellied: WHC-(38)2,DM;
 BNWR-(1)16,HAFT
 Duck,Wood: King-(24)24,SEG
 Duck,Mottled: 9 reports (2-50;121)
 Teal,Blue-winged: BNWR-(10)23,OG; King-(2)24,SEG;
 BC-(8)31,RU
 Scaup,Lesser: FPM-(1)2,RT
 Duck,Masked: Hermann Pk-(1 female)4,BG (Notes, ed.)
 Vulture,Black: 7 reports (1-18;33)
 Vulture,Turkey: 7 reports (1-10;23)
 Osprey: SJSP-(1)5,DM (Notes, ed.)
 Kite,Black-shoudered: 6 reports (1-2;7)
 Kite,Mississippi: 32 reports (1-36;155)
 WH-(1)3,31,(2)9,10,(8)18,(3)30,UM;(1)10,13,
 (2)11,MB;(3)16,23,(c)19,RB; NWH-(1-15)4-23,VL;
 SWH-(1)5,7,8,PM;(2)29,RB; WU-(1)16,LP;(1)26,LP;
 H-(36)12-28,CS (See CH Editor's Notes);(12)21,
 (10)22,WC; WHC-(1)16,20,28,(3)15,SW;
 King-(23)21,(6-8)22,(2)23,SEG; BC-(1)23,31,PM;
 SBNWR-(1)30,RMB
 Harrier,Northern: BNWR-(6 juveniles)19,HOC
HAWK, COOPER'S: Webster-(1)2,NP (Notes, ed.)
 Hawk,Red-shouldered: 4 reports (1-3;8)
 Hawk,Broad-winged: 6 reports (1-8;13)
 HI-(1 imm)10,MA (Notes, ed.);(1)23,DM;
 (1 imm)23,PWft;(8)29,DM; ELM Nature C-(1 imm)
 17,JM (Notes, ed.); WH-(1 ad)30,JM
 Hawk,Swainson's: 8 reports (all single;8)
 SWH-(1)1,2,SW;(1)17,SW;(1)21,RB; Mercury Dr.-(1)
 10,MPJ; Deer Park-(1)21,DM; Damon-(1)28,SW;
 HC-(1)31,HWOOCR
 Hawk,White-tailed: LaPorte-(2)7,WC; Challenger 7 Pk
 -(1)19,NP; Needville-(1)28,SW (Notes for all, ed)
 Hawk,Red-tailed: WHC-(1)16,SW

Caracara,Crested: BNWR-(2)16,HAFT; Damon-(2)28,SW
 Kestrel,American: SJSP-(1 female)31,HWOOCR
 Bobwhite,Northern: 6 reports (1-15;34)
 Rail,Clapper: 9 reports (1-6;23)
 Rail,King: 4 reports (1-5;10)
 Gallinule,Purple: ANWR-(100)2,SW;(12)23,MA;
 CC-(1)8,DM; BNWR-(1)19,HOC
 Moorhen,Common: 7 reports (3-300;353)
 Coot,American: FPM-(1)2,RT; ANWR-(2)2,SW;
 SBNWR-(20)30,RMB
 Plover,Black-bellied: 13 reports (1-80;155)
 Plover,Snowy: 6 reports (1-15;31)
 Plover,Wilson's: 11 reports (4-120;327)
 Plover,Semipalmated: 16 reports (1-35;130)
 Plover,Piping: 10 reports (1-80;180)
 Killdeer: 16 reports (1-20;678)
 Oystercatcher,American: BF-(5)8,DM;(1)9,JB;
 (5)23,HWCG; Bolv-(1)10,MA; BC-(2)31,RU
 Stilt,Black-necked: 17 reports (2-80;247)
 Avocet,American: 8 reports 2nd thru 31th (1-3;15)
 Yellowlegs,Greater: 14 reports (1-25;53)
 Yellowlegs,Lesser: 18 reports (1-50;278)
 Sandpiper,Solitary: 5 reports (1-1;5)
 Willet: 16 reports (1-225;457)
 Sandpiper,Spotted: 19 reports (1-7;38)
 Sandpiper,Upland: WHC-(4)2,DM;(1)28,SW
 Curlew,Long-billed: 13 reports (1-8;44)
 Godwit,Marbled: 8 reports (1-55;88)
 Turnstone,Ruddy: 12 reports (1-50;135)
 Knot,Red: Freeport-(3)1,SW; SLP-(1)17,MA
 Sanderling: 9 reports (1-200;636)
 Sandpiper,Semipalmated: Freeport-(50)1,SW;
 ANWR-(50)2,SW; BBCR-(2)8,DM; King-(1)24,SEG;
 FBC-(5)28,SW
 Sandpiper,Western: 15 reports (1-700;1833)
 Sandpiper,Least: 13 reports (1-60;220)
 Sandpiper,Baird's: BF-(1)9,JB (Notes, ed.);
 SLP-(2)10,RT; FBC-(1)28,SW
 peep,sp.: King-(30)24,SEG
 Sandpiper,Pectoral: 11 reports (1-100;172)
 Dunlin: Freeport-(15)1,SW; FBC-(5)28,SW; HI-(1)29,DM
 Sandpiper,Stilt: 10 reports (1-50;272)
 Dowitcher,Short-billed: 8 reports (1-300;567)
 Dowitcher,Long-billed: 7 reports (1-300;524)
 dowitcher,sp.: 7 reports (15-1000;1895)
 Phalarope,Wilson's: BF-(7)8,DM
 Gull,Laughing: 21 reports (7-4000;12265)
 Gull,Ring-billed: 7 reports (1-1;7)
 Gull,Herring: 5 reports (1-6;14)
 Tern,Gull-billed: 7 reports (1-10;20)
 Tern,Caspian: 8 reports (1-15;30)
 Tern,Royal: 14 reports (2-1500;3750)
 Tern,Sandwich: 9 reports (1-75;152)
 Tern,Common: BBCR-(1)23,HWCG
 Tern,Forster's: 15 reports (2-200;465)
 Tern,Least: 14 reports (1-300;955)
 Tern,Black: 21 reports (1-200;853)
 Skimmer,Black: 16 reports (1-300;1276)
 Dove,Rock: 5 reports (1-30;55)
 Turtle-Dove,Ringed: NWH-(2-10)1-31,VL; WU-(1)6,LP
 Dove,White-winged: WGI-(20)10,RT
 Dove,Mourning: 18 reports (1-400;772)
 Dove,Inca: 5 reports (1-25;41)
 Parakeet,Monk: WU-(7)5,LP
 Cuckoo,Yellow-billed: 9 reports (1-4;13)
 Barn-Owl,Common: CC-(2)2,SW; WGI-(1)17,MA
 Screech-Owl,Eastern: Tomball-(1)4,SW;(1)16,SW;
 HA-(1)31,HWOOCR
 Owl,Great Horned: CC-(1)2,SW;(1)23,MA
 Owl,Barred: 7 reports (1-2;9)
 Nighthawk,Common: 12 reports (2-60;214)
 Chuck-will's-widow: WOB-(1)9,(2)29,WC;
 HI-(1)23,DM;(2)23,PWft;(4)29,DM
 Swift,Chimney: 11 reports (1-125;277)
 Hummingbird,Ruby-throated: 32 reports (1-30;122)
HUMMINGBIRD, BROAD-TAILED: Tomball-(1)16-20,SW
 (Notes, ed.)
 hummingbird,sp.: FBC-(2)3,MPJ
 Kingfisher,Belted: 14 reports (1-3;19)
 Woodpecker,Red-headed: NWH-(1-3)1-15,VL; CC-(1)2,SW;
 King-(5 inc 3 imm)23,(6 inc 2 imm)24,SEG;
 EH-(1)31,HWOOCR
 Woodpecker,Red-bellied: 9 reports (1-5;25)
 Woodpecker,Downy: 10 reports (1-7;30)
 Woodpecker,Pileated: 6 reports (1-3;10)
 Flycatcher,Olive-sided: 9 reports (1-3;13)
 Wood-Pewee,Eastern: 12 reports (1-8;31)
 Flycatcher,Yellow-bellied: HI-(3)23,PWft (Notes,
 ed.); BS-(3 banded)30,RMB
 Flycatcher,Acadian: HA-(1)22,WDGS; Tomball-(1)31,SW
 Flycatcher,Trail's-type: HI-(1)10,MA (Notes,
 ed.); Tomball-(2)31,SW
 Empidonax,sp.: 10 reports (1-24;46)
 Flycatcher,Ash-throated: Tomball-(1)31,SW (Notes)
 Flycatcher,Great Crested: 10 reports (1-12;49)
 Kingbird,Western: H-(1)1,WC; FBC-(4)3,MPJ;
 CC-(2)10,MA (Notes, ed.); Belaire-(1)12,RB
 (Status changing)
 Kingbird,Eastern: 16 reports (1-450;701)
 including @ Buena Vista (FBC)-(250 coming into
 an evening roost)24,FC
 Flycatcher,Scissor-tailed: 15 reports (1-115;152)
 Lark,Horned: 5 reports (1-5;11)
 Martin,Purple: NWH-(1-6)1-10,VL; WHC-(25)2,DM;
 H-(160)5,WC; Memorial City Mall-(2000)6,JM;
 HI-(6)8,DM; Bolv-(1)23,HWCG

Swallow, Tree: HI-(1)23, PWft
 Swallow, Northern Rough-winged: BNWR-(2)16, HAFT;
 SLP-(12)19, HOC
 Swallow, Barn: 13 reports (1-50;246)
 Jay, Blue: 8 reports (1-20;57)
 Crow, American: 12 reports (1-40;81)
 Chickadee, Carolina: 16 reports (1-20;94)
 Titmouse, Tufted: 9 reports (2-10;50)
 Nuthatch, Brown-headed: King-(3)24, SEG
 Wren, Carolina: 11 reports (1-15;46)
WREN, BEWICK'S: Spring Woods [Houston]-(1)20, MG
 (Notes, ed.)
 Wren, Marsh: ANWR-(1)2, SW; BNWR-(3)16, HAFT
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: 15 reports (1-35;144)
 Mockingbird, Northern: 19 reports (1-35;118)
 Thrasher, Brown: WOB-(1)3, WC (described in July CH);
 HI-(2)8, 23, DM; (1 voice)10, MA; (1)23, PWft; (3)29, DM
 (A few bird summer at HI, ed.)
 Shrike, Loggerhead: 15 reports (1-25;89)
 Starling, European: 12 reports (1-230;373)
 Vireo, White-eyed: 7 reports (1-10;26)
 Vireo, Yellow-throated: HI-(2)23, DM; (2)29, DM
 Vireo, Red-eyed: 8 reports (1-35;62)
 Warbler, Blue-winged: WOB-(1)8, WC (Notes, ed.);
 AB-(1)22, DM; HI-(1)23, DM; (1)23, PWft; (6)29, DM;
 Bolv-(1)23, PWft
 Warbler, Golden-winged: HI-(1 male)29, DM (Notes, ed.)
 Parula, Northern: HI-(1)8, (4)23, DM; (2)29, DM;
 AB-(1)22, DM; WU-(1)26, LP
 Warbler, Yellow: 9 reports (1-7;20)
 Warbler, Black-throated Green: WG1-(1)4, SW (Notes)
 Warbler, Blackburnian: HI-(1 imm f)23, PWft (Notes,
 ed.); (6)29, DM
 Warbler, Yellow-throated: HI-(1)8, (2)23, DM;
 (1)10, MA; (5)29, DM
 Warbler, Pine: King-(12)24, SEG
 Warbler, Prairie: HI-(1)23, DM (Notes, ed.); (4)29, DM
 Warbler, Black-and-white: 12 reports (1-15;42)
 Redstart, American: HI-(1)8, 23, DM (Notes, ed.);
 (1 m)23, PWft; (7)29, DM
 Warbler, Prothonotary: 6 reports (1-6;17)
 Warbler, Worm-eating: HI-(4)23, DM; (1)23, PWft; (5)29, DM
 Warbler, Swainson's: BCP-(1)2, DM
 Ovenbird: AB-(1)22, DM; HI-(2)29, DM
 Waterthrush, Northern: WOB-(1)18, 29, WC; AB-(1)22, DM;
 HI-(2)23, DM; (1)23, PWft; (14)29, DM; SR-(1)31, HWOCR
 Waterthrush, Louisiana: HI-(2)8 (Notes, ed.); (1)23, DM
 Warbler, Kentucky: 6 reports (1-8;22)
 Warbler, Mourning: WOB-(1)21, WC (Notes, ed.);
 HI-(1)23, DM; (4)29, DM
 Yellowthroat, Common: ANWR-(5)2, SW; (1)23, MA;
 King-(1)24, SEG
 Warbler, Hooded: 6 reports (1-6;19)
 Warbler, Wilson's: HI-(4)29, DM; WOB-(1)29, 30, WC
 Warbler, Canada: AB-(3)22, DM; HI-(1)23, DM;
 (1 m)23, PWft; (56)29, DM; Piney Point-(1)24, RT
 Chat, Yellow-breasted: 6 reports (1-13;20)
 Tanager, Summer: WOB-(1)17, WC; King-(1)23, SEG;
 HI-(3)29, DM
 Cardinal, Northern: 14 reports (1-20;112)
 Grosbeak, Blue: WOB-(3)21, WC; HA-(1)22, WDGs;
 HI-(3)29, DM
 Bunting, Indigo: SBNWR-(2)30, RMB
 Bunting, Painted: Freepert-(1)1, SW; WG1-(1)8, DM
 Dickcissel: WHC-(12)2, DM; CC-(25)2, SW;
 SBNWR-(2)30, RMB
 Sparrow, Seaside: BF-(6)8, DM;
 BNWR-(30 juveniles)16, HAFT
 Blackbird, Red-winged: 4 reports (2-50;107)
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 9 reports (1-50;129)
 Grackle, Great-tailed: 6 reports (3-25;88)
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: BNWR-(10)16, HAFT; (6)19, HOC
 Grackle, Common: NWH-(2-10)1-31, VL;
 BC-(20)30, RMB; (35)31, RU
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: NWH-(5-10)1-31, VL;
 BNWR-(1)19, HOC; SJSPP-(35)31, HWOCR
 Oriole, Orchard: 10 reports (1-25;87)
 Oriole, Northern: HI-(3)29, DM; WOB-(5)29, WC
 Sparrow, House: 6 reports (2-200;325)

The following sightings, requiring details, were submitted without them:
 Gadwall: FBC-(20)28, SW (Very rare status)
 Accipiter, sp.: WU-(1)8, LP (No records for 2nd wk)
 Tern, Common: Lynchburg Ferry-(2)2, SW (Very rare)
 Wren, Sedge: ANWR-(1 voice)23, MA (Early fall date)
 Warbler, Wilson's: SWH-(1)12, SW (Early fall date)

CONTRIBUTORS - August, 1986

BG=Bill Goloby; BH=Bob Honig; CS=Charlie Smith;
 DM=Derek Muschalek; FC=Fred Collins; HAFT=Houston
 Arboretum field trip (reported by); HOC=BH,
 Richard Orr, Theresa Callery; HMC=BG, Doug
 Williams, Theresa Callery, Frank Gregg; HWOCR=BH,
 Doug Williams, Richard Orr, Theresa Callery, Robin
 Rabinowitz; JB=John Buckman; JM=Jim Morgan; LP=Libby
 Price; MA=Mike Austin; MB=Marcia Braun; MG=Maurice
 Gatlin; MPJ=Margaret & Paul Jones; NP=Noel
 Pettingell; OG=OG field trip (rep. by RT); PH=Peggy
 Minstead; PWFt=Piney Woods WS field trip (reported
 by MA); RB=Ron Braun; RMB=Ron & Marcia Braun;
 RT=Robert Thacker; RU=Richard Uzar; SEG=S. E. Gast;
 SW=Steve Williams; VL=Vanessa Luce; WC=Wesley
 Cureton; WDGs=Doug Williams, Janice DeWitz, Frank
 Gregg, Jim Sulentic

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES - August, 1986

Masked Duck: We were identifying the birds on the Lake (while doing the Bird Walk for the Houston Museum of Natural Science through Hermann Park), and had already seen a pied-billed grebe. It was approximately 9:30am in the morning. There were four other people with me, including Jerry Baker. With the unusually hot and dry summer, there was a heavy algae bloom on the lake. I was scanning the algae towards the middle of the lake, when I noticed a brown duck with a spiked tail. The lighting was good and the duck turned so that I could see very plainly the two horizontal stripes on the face, making it no other than a female masked duck. I notified those with me of the extreme rarity that was here in the lake and how fortunate they were. The duck moved along the algae and dove several times while feeding. All the field marks, except the white in the wings were clearly visible in good light. She did not join the domesticated ducks being fed by some park visitors nearby. This was the first time I had ever seen this duck on the park lake, since I have been leading these walks. I am sure that it was a wild duck and that it was a Masked Duck. Bill Goloby

Osprey: Perched in dead trees at 8:06 p.m. at San Jacinto SP. A large dark brown raptor with bright white underparts and whitish crown. Dark eye-stripe also noted. This bird was seen in this same location in July and is almost certainly a non-breeder. Derek Muschalek

COOPER'S HAWK: (Earliest fall date) Seen flying over Gulf Freeway (east to west) just north of El Dorado Blvd. at about 7:15 pm. Skies were clear and the sun was behind me as I was headed toward Galveston so the visibility was excellent. When I first caught sight of the bird a good distance ahead of me and to my left it appeared to be about the size of a night-heron, then as it approached the freeway at a height of about 50 feet, I was able to see the unmistakable accipiter flight characteristics: quick wing-beats between glides, short rounded wings, and a long narrow tail. I wasn't able to see whether the end of the tail was round or squared-off, but the "jizz" of the bird was distinctly Cooper's rather than Sharp-shinned because it seemed to be so large (as my first impression of its general size is clearly indicated above). I wasn't able to relocate the bird in the area either that day or later but feel sure it was a Cooper's even though I only saw it for a few seconds while driving at 55 mph. Both sides of the highway where the hawk was seen are comprised of a mixture of small trees and shrubs with no pastures in the vicinity. There is a July 3d, 1949 record of this species in Chambers County by A.K. McKay, who also saw one (same bird?) on June 5, 1949. Aug. 18, 1979 is the earliest previous record for this month (Spoonbill, Oct. 1979, p.14), within the Upper Texas Coast area. Noel Pettingell

Broad-winged Hawk: Flushed from woodland edge on north side of Audubon Sanctuary. Flew, in full, blazing sun, at treetop level for about 300 yd., then began to circle on updrafts in the sultry, oppressive air. Watched for about 2 minutes through 7x42 binoculars -- ranged from 50 yards to 1/4 mile. Below-- white from chin to vent. Two prominent dark brown moustachial marks. Distinct, tear-drop shaped dark brown spots from lower throat to breast. Above (while circling). Small, chunky brown buteo. Uniformly brown above without white "windows" at base of primaries like Red-shouldered Hawk imm. Pale gray tail with faint, horizontal banding. Seemed small for a Red-shouldered, with no white wing "windows" and with prominent brown moustachial marks. Mike Austin

Broad-winged Hawk: Immature bird; small, compact buteo with whitish underparts and some heavy streaking at sides of breast; dark brown upperparts; blackish malar mark; rather short, banded tail, the subterminal dark band being considerably wider than the others. The tail length, and banding characteristics of the tail eliminate accipiters and Red-shouldered Hawk. The bird was about the size of nearby Common Crows. Seen within the ELMS at 30-50 meters in good light with 10x40 binocs for 20-30 seconds. Jim Morgan

White-tailed Hawk: Two birds seen from car without binocs. Plumbeous buteos with broad wings & shortish tail. White wings with sharply contrasting dark primaries. The only other buteo with this wing pattern - the Swainson's Hawk - has narrow pointed wings. Wesley Cureton

White-tailed Hawk: Adult seen perched on top of 3rd power-line tower inside the park (near the entrance) and then in flight (7:30 pm). Two birds were seen here on July 26, perched on separate towers. Noel Pettingell

White-tailed Hawk: Perfectly gorgeous bird seen leisurely with 25X scope from 50 yds, as it sat on fence post eating a snake. Gray, with rusty shoulders above, pure white beneath, white tail with narrow black terminal band. Steve Williams

Baird's Sandpiper: Noted size - significantly larger than Western Sandpiper in direct comparison; very buffy neck, breast, cheek, with buff ending in an almost sharp line on lower breast; clean, pure white underparts below breast, with no streaking or spotting. The bird had a distinct small white eye-ring, which gave the eye the appearance of being small; fairly short black legs; black, rather long bill with a slight droop to tip only; bill seemed thin in side view; diagonal streaking on crown; wing-tips extended about 1/2" beyond tail; bird had a "horizontal", bull-necked look in side view; body feathers were black, brown & light buff, some almost whitish. When flushed, the bird showed an all-dark rump & tail, with central tail feathers darker than outer ones & a buffy, inconspicuous wing stripe. Viewed bird at close range at leisure through 20X scope & in flight with 7X50 binocs. John Buckman

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD: (VAGRANT) On Angeli Rd. W. of Tomball. A female Selasphorus hummingbird was closely observed most of the afternoon of Aug. 16 as it stayed close to a feeder. It was seen to have a greenish back, buff on the sides, & a coppery-colored tail area intermixed with green. The outer tail feathers were white. On Aug. 20th, this or another individual was less often seen at the feeder, but on 2 occasions was seen with a female Ruby-throated type for size comparison. It was fully a head longer than the other hummer. This size difference is not shared by the Allen's or Rufous Hummingbirds, which are about the same size as Ruby-throats. On the basis of size, as well as appearance, this identification is made. All viewing were from less than 30' away, both with & without binocs, in good light for as long as 5 min on one occasion. This record was made about 15 mi NE of Hebert Rd. where a female Broad-tailed appeared in Sept., 1983. This is the 1st August record & earliest fall record of this species on the UTC. Steve Williams

(There are two records for 1984 & 1985 under review by the Checklist Committee which would be the 11th & 12th records & upgrade the status to very rare if accepted by the Committee, ed.)

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: (Descriptions below written after lengthy consultation with article "The Empidonax Challenge. Looking at Empidonax," by Bret Whitney and Kenn Kaufman in Birding, Vol xviii, No. 6 pp 277-80) Three birds, all observed at Smith Oaks Sanctuary, High Island between 1000 and 1200 on Sat., Aug. 23, 1986. Bird 1 -- observed along sewage ditch on southwest side of property. Watched for about 5", in full shade, from distance of 10-20' with 7x42 binoculars. Seen by entire Piney Woods Wildlife Society field trip (13 people). Feeding from relatively inconspicuous perches on grapevine beneath the understorey of mature oaks. Short sallies to capture insects. Little or no wing-flicking, tail-pumping, no spontaneous vocalizations. Ventral and dorsal views from beneath. Small-headed, very short-tailed Empidonax flycatcher. Bill, particularly when viewed from below, very wide and triangular with lower mandible entirely flesh-colored. Crown, nape and back bright green, particularly when viewed briefly in full sunlight. Chin, belly and vent yellow-green with grayish "vest" of fine vertical streaks across breast and down side. Eye-ring bold and yellowish. Wing-bars white. "Jizz" seemed to rule out all but Least. Entirely orange lower mandible, color of eye-ring and underparts suggested Yellow-bellied. After bird had moved 30 yards away and was no longer visible, I played Yellow-bellied Flycatcher tape (just happened to have one along). It responded with a soft, wheezy call unlike mellow "whit" of Least, Willow, explosive "hic" of Alder or rising note of Acadian. This seemed to seal I.D.) of bird #1 -- a remarkably extended, close observation of an empid (by 13 people).

Bird 2 visited at snack time! Observed for about 90 seconds at the parking lot on the south side of the property. Flycatching from lowest branches of small ornamental trees and weed sticks along edge of oak woodland, about 2-3' off ground. Did not differ in any way from first bird (and, indeed, could have been the same bird, although it was seen ~300 yd. away 45" earlier). Again, no spontaneous vocalizations.

Bird 3 (mystery empid). Flycatching in dense understorey bushes from 2' to 8' off ground under live oaks at center of sanctuary. Seen in full shade and dappled sunlight intermittently for 10", from as close as 15' with 7x42 binoculars. Another small, round headed, short-tailed empid, uniformly grayish-olive above. Wide white eye-ring. Short, broad triangular bill with lower mandible entirely orange. Beneath -- dull grayish-white with faintest

hint of a dark breast-band. This bird showed no interest whatsoever in taped songs (calls of Least or Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and gave only one, brief, non-diagnostic vocalization. Unlike birds 1 & 2, it did a bit of kinglet-like wing flicking and occasionally (every 20 sec) flicked its tail. This bird represents a very thorny I.D. problem, particularly after perusal of the article quoted above. The color of the underparts and eye-ring would suggest a Least flycatcher. Yet, the article suggests some worn female Yellow-bellies may lack yellowish tones below. Indeed, I could detect no difference in bill shape between birds 1, 2, and 3, and the flesh-colored lower mandible was not dark-tipped, as the article suggests Least should be (?? good field mark). The upperparts, however, were at least as bright as birds 1 & 2 and hence it is hard to rationalize it as a "worn fall" Yellow-bellied. Bird 3 does illustrate 2 interesting points, however: 1) No matter how good the look, not all silent empids can be identified, partly because 2) Our knowledge of what field marks are diagnostic in the field is still in its infancy.

'Traill's-type' Flycatcher: Lack of apparent eye-ring; uniform gray-brown upperparts. Mike Austin

Ash-throated Flycatcher: West of Tomball on Angeli Rd. A Myiarchus Flycatcher at first thought to be a Great Crested was observed for about 1.5 min from 30 yds thru 10X50 binocs in good light. It was noticeably smaller than a Great Crested, had a whitish-gray throat, very pale yellow underparts & smaller bill than a Great Crested. No call was heard. This is the 1st UTC record for Aug. ever. Steve Williams

Western Kingbird: 2 separate birds. 1st bird perched on wire on south side of FM 1985 1 mile west of TX 124. Dorsal (perched) and side (flying) views for ~ 1 minute through 20-45x zoom Bushnell scope (dorsal view) and 7x42 binoculars (flying). Observed for about 1". Pale gray head and upper

back with little trace of black face mask. Smallish, all-dark bill (for Tyrannus). Bright lemon yellow flanks. Tail black with white outer feathers, no appreciable fork at end. 2nd bird: Brief fly-over 1 mile west of entrance to Anahuac NWR. Yellow underparts, black tail with white outer tail feathers noted. Mike Austin

BEWICK'S WREN: (No August records, ed.) Viewed for 5 min. with naked eye & binoculars from 10 to 20 ft; identified as wren from size, proportions, & actions. Tail rather long with faint white spotting. Prominent white line over eye, underparts clear white, back rufous or reddish, rest of upperparts, including tail, gray. Bird was calling, & this first drew attention to it. I cannot hear high pitched notes, but parts I could hear did not sound like Carolina Wren. After about 5 min bird flew off & did not return. Seen in oak tree in back yard in clear, bright sun at 10:30 a.m. Maurice Gatlin

Blue-winged Warbler: Yellow warbler with narrow black eye-line. Grayish wings with white patches. Black beak, shortish tail. Fed high in trees among chickadees. Two birds were seen in same spot on Aug 16, 1985. This occurrence ties early record set by Steve Calver in 1981 at High Island. Wesley Cureton

Golden-winged Warbler: (male) Foraging with a group of Canada & Blue-winged Warblers at "Smith Oaks Sanctuary". This strikingly patterned adult male was feeding from 10' to 20' up in deciduous trees next to the large Mulberry. Field marks: brilliant golden crown; neutral gray nape & back; white superciliary; black mask extending from the base of the bill to the cheeks, a white mustache & a jet black throat. The large golden-yellow wing patch contrasted nicely with the grayish wings & the whitish underparts. Observed with 8X40 & 10X50 binocs from 10-40' for 6 min. Derek Muschalek

Black-throated Green Warbler: A female or immature was seen quickly thru 10X50 binocs in good light. Yellowish face, streaky olive back, & especially the white outer tail feathers were observed. No black on the throat. This species is very rare during the 1st week of August, but increased the next week according Checklist. Seen at Spinnaker Dr. water tank area E. of San Luis Pass. Steve Williams

Blackburnian Warbler: (immature female) Seen in woodlot on west side of Audubon Woods at High Island. With two Prothonotary Warblers in dense tangle in understorey of tallow tree woodlot. Watched for 5" at distances of 8-15'. Ventral views only as the bird fed almost directly overhead (since we had to crawl into the thicket on our hands & knees across the floor of a dried up pond through the spiders, etc.). Other observer Gary Clark. Head - wide, conspicuous pinkish-cream superciliary line. Moderately well-defined eye-line & malar line

enclosing a pale brownish cheek patch. Below - pale buffy throat. Creamy from lower breast to undertail coverts. Pale brownish side streaking. Breast & sides an odd deep yellowish-green color (more deep yellow). Tail - did not pump. Underside white. Other observer detected white area on outer rectrices toward tip of tail when bird flitted. Feeding actively with Prothonotary about 7' off ground. Discussion: This bird has generated considerable controversy between the observers since its sighting. At first (indeed, while we were watching the bird) we concurred, based mostly on the facial pattern that it was an imm. male Prairie Warbler. Retrospectively, however, I had reservations about Prairie based upon: 1) The prominent creamy pink superciliary, 2) The odd color of the breast wash (not lemon yellow as in the Prairies I have observed on the UTC in the past), 3) The bird never jerked its tail. Certainly, the

habitat was better for Prairie than Blackburnian, although in the spring I did see Blackburnians in similar situations in the same woods. The wonderful, detailed descriptions in H.C. Oberholser's *Bird Life of Texas* has saved the day. Apparently, we had focused on the wrong end of the bird! Apparently, both juvenile, 1st winter female Blackburnian and Prairie Warblers can show a pale, buffy throat but juvenile Prairies never have a pale vent, being "pale yellow" on the "lower surface" from throat to vent. Oberholser also accurately describes the "superciliary streak ... dull pinkish buff" while the Prairie has a "faint superciliary line of dull buff." Furthermore, the illustration of "Imm Blackburnian" on page 249 of Peterson's 4th edition very accurately depicts the odd coloration of this bird's breast wash (but not the superciliary or pale throat). Why we did not notice the superciliary curving back around the facial patch is a mystery. It is also very unfortunate that we couldn't see the back, which should have easily resolved the issue. Mike Austin

Prairie Warbler: (Female) An easily identifiable species, that nonetheless creates confusion for some birders. A lemon yellow tail-wagging warbler feeding in mid-level of live oaks at "Smith Oaks Sanctuary" with a Northern Parula and a Yellow-throated Vireo. This bird was quite active and never stopped bobbing its tail during the 15 minute observation. Field-marks: Black eye-line and "fainter" black malar stripe; olive green upperparts with no noticeable wing bars; lemon yellow underparts with black streaks confined to the sides. In flight this bird flashed white spots in its tail as it caught insects. Used 10x50 binocs in excellent light from 15' to 30'. Derek Muschalek

American Redstart: Migrants reach the UTC by early August! These first-year males were observed at "Smith Oaks Sanctuary." Field-marks: dull blackish upperparts, including crown; white throat with some black spotting; salmon patches on sides; lower underparts white. Very active, often fanning tails and spreading wings to display yellow patches in these areas. Used 10x50 binocs for at least 2 minutes. --Derek Muschalek

Louisiana Waterthrush: Migrant reach the UTC by mid July! (Not really rare at all during August; few observers are out recording them during this period.) Easily distinguished from Northern Waterthrush by white eyebrow that becomes much broader behind eye. Displays buffy flanks that distinctly contrast with the white-streaked underparts. Legs are a bright pink. Northern's are dull yellow. --Derek Muschalek

Mourning Warbler: Yellow-breasted bird with light gray wings & darker gray head & neck, intensifying to almost black along yellow of breast. Stayed very close to ground. A female was seen in same spot on Aug. 26 last year. Wesley Cureton

CH EDITOR'S NOTES - August, 1986

Stilt Sandpiper: Last month's CH received a report of a Stilt Sandpiper from Randy Pinkston. It was not included in the regular CH because it represented a Checklist change (new early fall date - July 6th). Randy was kind enough to send the required details for Checklist Committee consideration, & they are reproduced below for everyone's perusal. "One individual probe-feeding in leg-deep pool on Pelican Island, so I could not see leg color. Though no other sandpipers were around, the bird was larger than a Dunlin but definitely smaller than a dowitcher. It was longer-necked ("lanky" looking) and more stream-lined overall than a Dunlin. Bill long (1 1/2-2"), and distinctly drooped at tip. Distinct superciliary line, no rusty on cheek. Upperparts mottled gray-brown, underparts white with barring pattern worn but distinct. Once in flight I saw the white rump well. 10x binocs from 30-50 feet, sunny skies, for 2 minutes."

Mississippi Kites: The following is Charlie Smith's annual fall kite observations from the Tanglewood area of Houston.

August	Number	August	Number
1-11	0	23	-
12	2	24	-
13	2	25	2
14	6	26	1
15	7	27	1
16	-	28	1
17	-	29	0
18	2	30	-
19	3	31	-
20	4	September	-
21	3	1	-
22	2	2-3	0

Thanks for the report, Charlie.

More Ringed Turtle-Dove Discussion: I received the following apperceptive note from Margaret Jones concerning the postulated hybridization between Ringed Turtle-Doves & Mourning Doves.

"Regarding possible hybridization between Ringed Turtle Doves & Mourning Doves in the wild, we seem to need some more research to settle the question. After observing Ringed Turtle Doves in Bellaire for the past 13 years the question of "do they or don't they" is still a question to me.

For awhile I had the mistaken idea that crossbreeding between species had to be within the same genus (so did I, ed.), but reading the article "Hybrid" in The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds (thanks again, OG members, for that wonderful present on our retirement as Editor & Clearing House Editor of The Spoonbill, P&M) quickly disabused me of that idea, especially when they mentioned a couple of examples: little blue heron x snowy egret & American coot x common gallinule. One paragraph did provide a clue: Mayr (1963) explains that the individuals of closely related species that live beyond their solid, or main range, or at its borders, often have difficulty finding a mate. In the absence of adequate stimuli (its species-courtship behavior, for example) from one of its own kind, a bird is apt to respond to the "lower" stimuli of a related but different species. For the same reason (because of a lack of a mate of its own species) mismatching of birds is commoner in zoos than in nature. It is interesting to note that the couple of reports of hybrids came from within a block or two of the original releasing area on Linden Street, & seemed to take place within a few years of release, which was 1973.

In the first few years of the Bellaire Ringed Turtle Doves' population expansion, most of the birds we observed were very light colored. Then an occasional bird was seen with darker plumage, more like the Mourning Dove's, but always with Ringed Turtle Dove characteristics in every other way. We have never observed a Mourning Dove with any indication of Ringed Turtle Dove color or markings. The report we submitted to The Spoonbill last year regarding the expansion of the Ringed Turtle Doves mentioned only a couple of reports of possible hybrids, & they were based solely on darker plumaged Ringed Turtle Doves. If there has been hybridization, it must have been on a very, very limited scale, considering the masses of Mourning Doves in this area. So....do they or don't they hybridize? Do any Spoonbill readers have more information on the subject?"

I agree with Margaret that research is needed to perhaps settle the question. If one for the moment hypothetically accepts hybridization between these two species for the Bellaire population, then

several other interesting questions arise. One, as Margaret has pointed out, is why the lack of "strange" Mourning Doves in the immediate area of the dark-plumaged Ringed Turtle-Doves (too many "common" Mourning Doves around for persons to notice "strange" individuals, but then the "strange" Mourning Doves might reasonably be expected to spend some time hanging about with the Ringed Turtle-Dove population, in which "strange" individuals were noted). Second, how did the "hybrid" Ringed Turtle-Dove get to NW Houston (you will recall that the discussion in the column started when Vanessa Luce reported a possible "hybrid" Ringed Turtle-Dove in her yard in NW Houston several months ago). Was this "hybrid" part of the pioneering group of Ringed Turtle-Doves expanding to new territory or was it the result of cross-breeding at the new site because Ringed Turtle-Doves were in low numbers there? As Margaret states, hybridization must be quite infrequent or the marginal population fails to become established.

TOS FALL MEETING APPROACHES

The Texas Ornithological Society will hold its fall meeting in Galveston November 6 through 9. This meeting will feature identification workshops on shorebirds and sparrows and offer field trips to the Brazoria and Anahuac Wildlife Refuges, Bolivar Peninsula, Galveston Island and the Texas City Dike. Banquet speaker will be Bob Odear, founder and operator of the North American Rare Bird Alert. Meeting concurrently with the TOS will be the Texas Colonial Waterbird Society and the Texas Bird Banders Association. For more information about the meeting and registration contact Mrs. John Hamilton, 4620 R¹/₂, Galveston, Texas 77550, (409) 762-7569. For TOS membership the contact is: TOS, c/o Miss Jolene Boyd, Wildlife and Fisheries Science Dept., Texas A & M, College Station, Texas 77843.

Martha Micks, Local Committee

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

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

FROM THE OG ARCHIVES

At the next Ornithology Group meeting, Oct. 2, 1986, we will have available an annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Upper Texas Coast, which was published by the Ornithology Group in 1962. It is an interesting 77-page booklet, well worth the \$1.00 cost. Complimentary past issues of the Spoonbill published during the last ten years will also be available.

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

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

Nonprofit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Houston, Texas
Permit No. 1063

SOLICITED MAIL
TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL
DO NOT DELAY