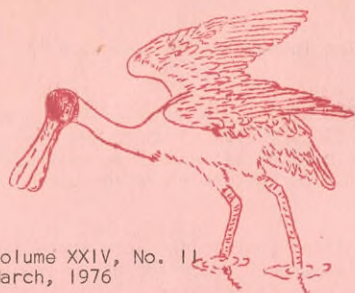


PAY DUES !!



See Form
THE SPOONBILL

Volume XXIV, No. 11
March, 1976

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

COMING EVENTS

- Sat. & Sun. ONC field trip at Little Thicket Sanctuary (map in March Nature Notes).
Mar. 20-21 Open House from 10:00 am until after dark on Saturday and from breakfast to 3 pm on Sunday. Camping will be allowed both Friday and Saturday nights. Bring food, water, and insect repellent.
- Wednesday
March 24 Audubon regular meeting, 8:00 pm, Auditorium, Museum of Natural Science, Hermann Park. Program speaker: Ralph Heath, president of Sunco Seabird Sanctuary, Rehabilitation of Injured Birds.
- Thursday
April 1 OG regular meeting, 7:30 pm, Fonde Recreation Center, Memorial Drive at Sabine. John O'Neill - Doctor of Ornithology, premier bird artist, the new Curator of Higher Vertebrates at the Museum of Zoology, Louisiana State University, and hometown boy - will speak and show his slides about many of his birding experiences in Peru over the last 15 years. Not the least of these include the discovering of four new species of birds and in taking part in the discovery of six others. One new species of Peruvian bird is currently being named for John, an honor few so young ever receive. (Many of John's paintings will be on display at the Astrohall Vacation, Sport, and Travel Show March 16-21, and a few will be shown at our meeting)
- Sunday
April 4 OG field trip to High Island. Meet at 8:00 am, roadside park in High Island on Hwy 124. This will be a field trip concentrated on High Island and early spring migrants. Bring lunch and insect repellent.
- Thursday
April 8 Friends of Rosenberg Library, Galveston, are presenting Dr. Sewell Pettigill, noted figure in the birding world, on "Birds of New Zealand". TOS members, as well as other birding enthusiasts, are cordially invited. The program will be held in the American National Auditorium, Moody Plaza, 20th and Market street, Galveston. Admission is free, 8:00 pm.
- Thur.-Sat.
April 8-10 TOS spring meeting in Galveston, headquarters at Holiday Inn.
- Friday
April 9 ONC Wildlife Adventure film, 8:00 pm, Pershing Jr. High School auditorium, 7000 Braes Blvd.
- Saturday
April 10 Audubon Pelagic boat trip will take birders 70 miles out in the Gulf, and will feature a seminar by noted ornithologist on birds that might be found. Cost is \$25.00, \$15.00 of which holds your place. Send check to Holly Hobart, 1712 Kipling, Houston, Texas 77098. Bring lunch, but no coolers--snack bar on board. Will leave 6:00 or 6:30 am, and return in time for TOS members to attend banquet that night.
- Tuesday
April 13 ONC regular meeting, 8:00, Houston Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive.
- Thur.-Sun.
Apr. 22-25 ABA meeting in Beaumont, Headquarters: Red Carpet Inn, IH 10, Beaumont.

PAST EVENTS

** Ten people drove through fog in order to be at Jones State Forest, Feb. 28, but those ten were well rewarded. The area's specialties--red cockaded woodpecker and brown-headed nuthatch--were seen in good numbers right off the bat. One nuthatch seemed already to be occupying a nesting hole in a dead tree. Painstaking tiptoeing and craning of necks gave one group an excellent view of a pair of wood ducks. Thirty-three species were recorded. The best represented family of birds was the woodpeckers--six species in all. --Wes Cureton

** The introductory OG seminar on birding and birding identification was held on Thursday, March 2, at our regular meeting place.

Fred Collins, Research Director of Houston Audubon Society, and a noted amateur ornithologist, presented a very interesting and timely dissertation on North American warblers, our familiar spring migrants. He had specimens of all genera normally seen in our area, and discussed the likely habitat and time during the migration period the warblers might be seen.

The audience of 53 members and guests enjoyed the initial seminar and were appreciative of the information given by Mr. Collins. Marilyn Crane, education director of OG, is planning other seminars on birding during the rest of the year.

** February 20 marked the beginning of what promised to be a most exciting and eventful 10 to 12 days of birding in the tropics: the OG trip to Eastern Mexico. Our first stop, Saturday afternoon at the Rio Corona, was a pleasant surprise for everyone. After crossing almost 200 miles of dry brushland one descends into a serene setting mountain stream canopied by ageless cypress monarchs to be serenaded by yellow-headed parrots, blue-crowned motmots, and boat-billed flycatchers. Several of the group saw the bare-throated tiger-heron, white-ringed and green kingfishers fed nearby

The next morning found us in the El Naranjo Christmas count area and at El Salto falls. Here we added more parrots (red-lore, red-crowned, white-crowned, and the white-fronted north of its normal range), military macaws, bat falcons, and many others. Although the flow of water over the upper falls has been stopped, there is a spectacular lower falls where we spotted the black hawk, masked tityra, and others. The afternoon was spent birding the high mountain rain forest. The birds were few in this normally productive spot, however, a few roving flocks provided everyone with some additional lifers.

The beautiful resort Hotel Taninul, near Valles, and its even more beautiful grounds provided not only a restful night's sleep, but ferruginous pygmy owls, melodious black-birds, and groove-billed anis before breakfast. The rest of the day went rather routinely, spotting mangrove swallows flitting over hundreds of brightly colored jacanas in the extensive marshes near Tampico, crossing the interesting Tampico ferry, then driving down the coast toward our destination of Teziutlan and the fern forest. In a small town just 25 miles from our forest fate took a turn and caused one of our cars' right wheels to descend deeply into a gaping hole. Accommodations found, and, in the morning, insurance man and garage contacted, off we went, undaunted, to bird in the breathtaking fern forest. The forty foot tree ferns, bromeliads in bloom, and rushing mountain streams and waterfalls, not to mention bush tanagers, and fleeting glimpses of an emerald toucanet, unicolored jay, and black-headed siskins, put a spell on everyone as they vowed to return as soon as possible. We picked up the repaired car and found to our relief, that what sounded like a \$1,000 crash was only a broken tie rod, so off we went merrily on our way to spend the night in a deluxe seaside resort hotel in Vera Cruz.

Early the next morning we headed for the Catemaco region where nearly 300 species are seen on the Christmas counts. The rare combination of mountains with rain forests meeting the shining Gulf beaches, teeming marshes, sparkling lakes and streams, add up to make this one of the birdiest spots in the world. And birds we saw - everywhere! A male violet sabrewing hummingbird darting in and out of a flowering tree filled with three species of orioles including the black-backed, a lovely cotinga sitting in a tree while keel-billed toucans flew behind it, a pheasant cuckoo surrounded by all three species of saltators, a great black hawk, and white-naped swallows flying overhead while the spectacular white hawks perched in green trees below, and a lakeside tree filled with a contingent of band-backed wrens, rose-throated becardas, and a yellow-billed cacique, with birds like the Amazon kingfisher and the huge lined-necked woodpecker perched nearby, these were just a few of the memorable scenes for two days.

Friday morning found us reluctantly leaving the beautiful lakeside hotel at Catemaco and regretfully dividing the group in two, 8 persons taking three days to return to Houston, and 8 persons continuing on to the Mayan ruins of Palenque and two additional days of birding. Palenque has a deserved reputation of being one of the top birding spots in the country. We added laughing and aplomado falcons, crimson-collared, masked, and scarlet-rumped tanagers, white-necked jacobin, blue ground-dove, and royal flycatchers, to name only a few.

The total trip list of birds seen in Mexico by one or more of the group comes to just over 280 species. The number of life birds ranged from my 20 to well over a hundred for some. The participants included: Bill Mealy-leader, Harry and Avis Brister, Jack and Mary Gillette, Jim Beatty, Charles Gerba, Melba Drake and Sarah Gordon, all from Houston, Katy Munroe, Bessie Cornelius, Francis Wier, and Tess Berry, from Beaumont,

Babette Odom-Orange, George Golding-Austin, Gabrielle Brieger-Philadelphia, and Miralvey-Los Angeles. Despite long hours of driving over sometimes rough roads, early morning departures, and an occasional rocky trail, I don't think anyone would rather have stayed at home, in fact I wouldn't be a bit surprised if, on my next trip to Mexico, I shouldn't round a tree in the fern forest to see a familiar face.

--Bill Mealy

AROUND AND ABOUT

Hook-billed Kites, Clay-colored Robin and Masked Ducks were still being seen at Santa Ana the last week in February. If you go down there looking for the Kites, be sure to check with headquarters for the latest information on when and where they are being seen, for they have changed their roosting place several times. Also, they seem to be seen only very early in the morning.

** A White-winged Crossbill has been paying an extended visit to a feeder in Lubbock, first appearing December 28th, and still there as of the March issue of the SCISSOR-TAIL, Llano Estacado Audubon Society newsletter. From the March issue: "George and Pat Jury report that the White-winged Crossbill is still coming daily to their feeder, but has become more excitable and secretive of late. His change in behavior may be an indication of migratory restlessness, or, perhaps, as Pat Jury suggests, a close call with a neighborhood cat".

** According to the faculty newsletter at Rice University, sent to us by Mark Kulstad Dr. Dan Johnson has achieved a good bit of recognition for his research program studying the habits of blackbirds, and evaluation of possible methods of controlling the roosting sites. The most successful method was pruning the large oak trees. He has been asked by the Ecological Society of America to organize and chair a session on winter roosts at a forthcoming national meeting of the Society, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington, D.C. now refers people to Rice University as an example of how to control the roosts, and others have sought advice. However, as the article points out, robins aren't affected by the tree trimming, and may even prefer the trees that way! And Mark adds that they still have more than enough cowbirds on campus. Apropos of that, Laura Greenbaum seems to still be on the cowbird flyway, for she recently had some banded ones in her yard (Westbury), and a conversation with Dr. Johnson revealed they have banded over 2000 the first part of this year. (Laura was one of those reporting having banded ones in yards early last year).

** If cowbirds are a nuisance, and their habit of nest parasitism dangerous to the population welfare of certain other birds, starlings and finches are definitely unloved in the vineyards of California. According to the Sebastiani Vineyards newsletter, these two species annually cause a grape crop loss of \$3 million. Currently, the most damage is caused by the growing resident population, but fortunately, the major migrations from Canada and southern Alaska generally occur just after the harvest is completed. Should the birds' migration schedule be advanced by only a week or ten days, the vintners could be left with but very few grapes. Trapping is being tried for the resident population, but for the huge migrating flocks growers use two non-lethal means: loud explosions and an electronic gadget called "Avalarm." The former, called "cannons," usually frighten the birds enough that they keep away from a vineyard, while the latter device emits bird distress sounds and gives the same result. But both methods are effective only if growers carefully watch the birds, which otherwise simply become accustomed to the noise.

A WORD ABOUT ALUMINUM from Jerry Baker

Please bring your aluminum to the regular meetings of OG and ONC. Coca Cola cans are not acceptable, the machine at Reynolds rejects them. Please do not put glass bottles in the sacks. (Jerry has to dispose of all items not aluminum, so don't impose on her by including glass, such as was recently done.--ED.)

EDITOR'S COMMENT

While we are on the subject of disposable items, remember that can pop-tops, and the plastic holders of "six-packs" are a potential danger to birds. Following is a letter from Harold Mortimer of Beaumont, calling attention to this fact. He had found a bird in distress as he walked along the beach between High Island and Bolivar.

".....It was flopping about in the edge of the surf trying its best to get out of one of those 6-hole plastic can holders that normally fastened to the tops of a group of beer or soft drink cans. The bird's head was wedged in one of the holes and a leg was caught in another one. We see many of these bird booby traps on the beach. The bird was about the size of a willet but my wife thinks it was something else--perhaps a clapper rail. When we released it, it immediately ran off into the surf, rose and shook itself several times, finally disappeared from our view. We didn't see it fly."

PARKING AT HIGH ISLAND

With spring migration almost upon us, and many new members and subscribers in the OG, it is time to review some facts about our favorite birding spot, High Island. There are two places in High Island most birders know about, Smith Woods and Boy Scout Woods. The latter is now a research area for Lamar University, and the public is allowed to go in and bird. However, the area through which you must pass to reach it, is private property, and the owner asks that you walk in, not drive in.

Smith Woods is private property, whose owners do not wish to change the status of the property, and who, so far, are agreeable to the public birding there. Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Brannon, who live on the property, are birders themselves, and it is due to their efforts that we have the privilege of birding this most exciting of areas on the upper Texas coast.

Parking, which has always been a bit of a problem for large groups, is going to be even more so this spring. Amoco, which owns the property immediately to the east of Smith Woods, has been forced to erect a gate, which is kept closed most of the time, because of trash dumping, and equipment theft. As you know, a dozen cars at the end of the lane in front of the Brannon's, makes a crowded situation. Please do not park in front of the Brannon's drive, nor in the area across the lane from the drive, which is to be kept for a turn-around. And please leave Mr. Brannon access to his garage. If the parking area is full, you must park back down the lane (making sure you block no one's drive, and leaving room for cars to pass), and walk in. This lane is not maintained by the county, and last year when a large vehicle broke a culvert under the road, it took three months to get it fixed. Under no circumstances should a bus try to drive in. Large groups should notify Mr. Brannon ahead of time.

The area at the end of the lane, which most of us know as the pig-pen area, has been leased by the estate to someone who keeps ponies, and we can no longer go in there to bird.

SPRING TRIP TO RANCHO DEL CIELO' JUNE 6 - 12, 1976

If Bill Mealy's account of the OG trip to Mexico whetted your appetite for a trip south of the border, the Gorgas Science Society's semi-annual trip to Rancho del Cielo, led by Fred Webster, may be just right for you. Following is an excerpt from a letter Fred recently sent your editor:

"...In regard to last summer's trip, we did have an experience worth reporting, and I hope we can duplicate this during the upcoming June trip. We took an all-day trip from the rancho to the top of the mountain range, not many miles away, where we left the vehicles and walked into a deep valley where a permanent spring creates a small stream even in the dry season (which it wasn't at the time we went, although the rains hadn't set in). Pine trees are the dominant tree species here, although much drier oak-pine habitat rings the valley. There were two major items of interest. We found a breeding (apparently) population of both Russet Nightingale-Thrushes (which we had not known to be resident in this mountain range) and Black-headed Nightingale-Thrushes in the valley, while Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrushes were on the higher points only a few hundred yards away. The second point of interest: we found hummingbirds bathing under tiny "waterfalls" along the stream, which at this time wasn't more than a trickle. The waterfalls were merely dropoffs of maybe 12 inches, under which the hummers would perch and shower. Amethyst-throated Hummingbirds seemed to rule the territory, driving off occasional incursions by Rivoli's or Blue-throated. When not driving off the latter, the A-t's were competing among themselves. The tiny Bumblebee Hummer, of which there were several in the valley, were not seen to engage in the competition!"

The cost of this trip is \$170.00, excluding your transportation to and from Gomez Farias, Mexico, and Fred will be pleased to send all information to you. Call, or write him: Fred S. Webster, Jr., 4926 Strass Drive, Austin, Texas 78731 -- AC 512 451-1669.

SPOONBILL DEADLINE REMINDER

Any Clearing House records must be received by Dan Hardy by the 5th of the month, and any birding information, notices of meetings, programs etc., must be received by the Spoonbill editor by the same date. Only with your cooperation can we get the newsletter to you before the middle of the month. We appreciate the birding information sent in by Bessie Cornelius, last month and this; the map and information sent in by Tom and Sherry Collins in this month's issue; and the information sent in by David Dauphin which will be in next month's issue. Please let us have the location of any of your favorite birding spots, we need to increase our list of places to go. It doesn't have to be an area worthy of a full day's field trip, just someplace you often find birds sometime in the year.

CLEARING HOUSE

(How to read the C-H: Name of bird: (how many) date, location, observers)
 (Abbreviations: Texas City Dike - DiKE; Houston Light & Power Cooling Ponds - HL&P;
 Baytown Civic Center Park - CC Park)

- Loon, Common: (30)21, DiKE, L&MB; (15)16, DiKE, S&TC; (50)22, DiKE, J&BH; (1)16, DiKE D&JD.
 " , Red-throated: (1)16, DiKE, S&TC; (1)21, DiKE, L&MB; (1)22, DiKE, J&BH --see notes.
 Grebe, Eared: (30+)16, DiKE, S&TC; (500+)22, DiKE, J&BH; (2)7, HL&P, (200+)16, DiKE, (5)29,
 Baytown Tunnel, D&JD.
 Pelican, White: (750+)7, (500+)22, HL&P, (6)22, Anahuac R., (6)29, Cedar Bayou, D&JD; (2)8,
 Warren Lake, CC.
 Cormorant, Double-crested: (300+)8, Sheldon, AFT; (500+)all month, East Harris-W. Chambers
 Counties, D&JD.
 Anhinga: (1)16, Anahuac R., DD; (3)8, Buckhorn L., AFT.
 Heron, Green: (5)8, Sheldon, AFT.
 Nightheron, Yellow-crowned: (2)21, DiKE, L&MB.
 Ibis, White: (15)22, Galveston, J&BH.
 Spoonbill, Roseate: (3)22, Galveston, J&BH; (2)15, Anahuac R., L&MB.
 Goose, Canada: (20+)16, Anahuac R., D&JD; (250)16, Fort Bend Co., J&BH.
 " , White-fronted: (100)16, Fort Bend Co., J&BH; (20+)16, (6)22, Anahuac R., D&JD.
 " , Snow: (4,000+)16, Anahuac R. area (about 20% Blues), L&MB; (500+)21, Eagle Nest
 Lake, S&TC; (2,000+)16, Fort Bend Co., J&BH; (5,000+)16, FM 1985 near Anahuac
 R., (50+)16, 22, Anahuac R., D&JD.
 " , Ross': (1)16, FM 1985 near Anahuac R., D&JD; (1)16, Anahuac R., L&MB --see notes.
 Mallard: (2)21, Eagle Nest Lake, (2)21, Lake Jackson Farms, S&TC.
 Gadwall: (2)21, Freeport Marsh, TC; (100+)all month, E. Harris-W. Chambers Cos., D&JD.
 Pintail: (20+)16, E. Galveston, D&JD.
 Teal, Green-winged: (500+)all month, E. Harris-W. Chambers Cos., D&JD.
 " , Blue-winged: (10)21, Maner Lake, S&TC.
 Redhead: (5)21, Columbia Lakes, S&TC; (12)16, W. Columbia, J&BH.
 Duck, Ring-necked: (2)16, W. Columbia, J&BH; (50+)21, Columbia Lakes, S&TC.
 Canvasback: (3)21, Lake Jackson Farms, S&TC; (3)22, DiKE, J&BH; (3)7, HL&P, D&JD; (5)14,
 Lunar Science Institute, RK.
 Scaup, Greater: (3)5, Freeport Marsh, L&MB.
 Goldeneye, Common: (1)29, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD; (2)22, Galveston Island Park, J&BH;
 (2)14, Lunar Science Institute, RK.
 Bufflehead: (5)16, W. Columbia, (6)22, DiKE, J&BH; (10)16, DiKE, S&TC; (16)29, Galveston
 Island State Park, DM.
 Duck, Ruddy: (500+)all month, E. Harris-W. Chambers Cos., D&JD.
 Merganser, Red-breasted: (300+)22, Anahuac R., D&JD, Glen Cureton; (25)22, DiKE, J&BH;
 (7)16, DiKE, S&TC.
 Kite, White-tailed: (1)29, FM 523, GC, S&TC; (1)13, Space Center Blvd., (1)22, Hoskin's
 Mound Rd., (1)22, FM 2004 near FM 523, RK; (1)29, between Texas Highways 359
 and 1093 west of State Prison Farm Unit #1, C&SC.
 Hawk, Sharp-shinned: (1)16, near Anahuac R. on FM 1985, L&MB.
 " , Cooper's: (1)22, Cemetery Rd., Big Slough off FM 523, RK.
 Eagle, Bald: (1 a)28, Hwy 35, near Chocolate Bayou, L&MB; (1)16, Maner Lake, J&BH; (1 a)
 21, Cypress Fairbanks High School, on Hempstead Hwy, Carol Hamilton
 Osprey: (1)8, Buckhorn Lake, AFT.
 Kestrel, American: (50+)all month, E. Harris-W. Chambers Cos., D&JD.
 Prairie Chicken, Greater: (3)28, Spaceland Airport, MB.
 Crane, Sandhill: (13)21, Eagle Nest Lake, S&TC; (100)16, Fort Bend Co., (4)22, Galveston,
 J&BH.
 Rail, King: (1)8, Sheldon, AFT; (2)29, Hoskins Mound, S&TC.
 " , Virginia: (1)27, Meyerland; caught by cat and had broken leg; leg was amputated
 and rail was released at Galveston Island State Park, DM.
 Jacana: (4 imm., 2 sub-adult)16, Maner Lake (bridge), J&BH.
 Oystercatcher, American: (1)22, DiKE, J&BH.
 Woodcock, American: (1)2, CC Park, D&JD.
 Snipe, Common: (3)22, Anahuac R., D&JD.
 Curlew, Long-billed: (10+)22, Anahuac R., D&JD; (8)22, Texas City, J&BH.
 Sandpiper, Least: (100+)16, Sportsman Rd., D&JD.
 Gull, Bonaparte's: (50+)16, Rollover Pass, D&JD; (3)16, DiKE, S&TC.
 Dove, Mourning: (2 a, 1-2 juv. in nest)Jan. 21, (1 a, 1 juv. on nest)Feb. 14, (2 juv.)
 15, yard, SE Houston, Ben Feltner, NP, et.al.
 " , Inca: (4)29, R.G. Dauphin's yard, Baytown, D&JD.
 Owl, Short-eared: (1 dead)18, Freeport Marsh, TC.
HUMMINGBIRD, ANNA'S: (1)Dec. 10, 1975-Jan. 14, 1976, yard, George W. Clayton--see notes.
 " , ALLEN'S: (1)1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 15, yard, Ethel & Noel Pettingell, Margaret Ander-
 son, Norma Oates, Nancy & Jerry Strickling, Glenn & Wesley Cureton, Paul
 & Phyllis Nimmons, Paul & Margaret Jones --see notes.
 Woodpecker, Hairy: (1)2, CC Park, D&JD.

Flycatcher, Vermilion: (2)29, Big Slough, GC, S&TC; (2)8, Sheldon, AFT; (1)22, Cemetery Rd., Big Slough, RK.
Martin, Purple: (3)20, Lake Jackson, S&TC; (4)8, Buckhorn Lake, AFT; (3)22, Hoskin's Mound Rd., RK; (4)15, Ella Blvd., WC; (2)8, Sheldon, DM.
Creeper, Brown: (2)15, Memorial Park, WC.
Wren, Winter: (1)8, Sheldon, AFT.
" , Short-billed Marsh: (1)8, Sheldon, AFT.
Thrasher, Curve-billed: (1)22, Galveston, Nottingham Ranch Rd., (present at this location since 1974) J&BH.
Kinglet, Golden-crowned: (1)15, Memorial Park, WC.
Pipit, Water: (25+)2, 7, 29, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD.
Vireo, Solitary: (1)16, High Island, D&JD; (1)15, Memorial Park, WC.
Warbler, Orange-crowned: (2)8, Eisenhower Park, AFT.
" , Pine: (3)8, Eisenhower Park, AFT.
Yellowthroat, Common: (1)8, Sheldon, AFT; (1)29, Hoskin's Mound, S&TC.
Grackle, Boat-tailed: (50+)16, (20+)22, Anahuac R., D&JD.
Sparrow, Song: (15)15, Anahuac R., L&MB.

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS

LB - Larry Ballard; MB - Martha Ballard; CC - Chuck Campbell; SC - Suzi Campbell; GC - Greg Collins; TC - Tom Collins; SC - Sherry Collins; WC - Wesley Cureton; D&JD - David and Jan Dauphin; J&BH - Jean & Bill Harwell; RK - Randy Korotev; DM - David Markack; NP - Noel Pettingell; AFT - Audubon Field Trip

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES

The following species are common in February and were seen but not included in the C-H: Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Louisiana Heron, Black-crowned Night-heron, American Wigeon, Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, Belted Kingfisher, Common Flicker; Pileated, Red-bellied, Red-headed Woodpeckers; and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Red-throated Loon: Observed 10 minutes on water with 5 Common Loons; size smaller with light-colored, upturned bill; much lighter in color than Common Loon; back gray with white spots; overcast to bright sun; 75 yards; 7x50, 32X Bushnell. --Tom Collins

Red-throated Loon: Range between 25-30 yards in water; neck straight and erect; bill upthrust look; about 2/3 size of nearby Common Loons; observed for 10-12 minutes in good light at about 8:45-8:55; the bird was about 1/3 of the way from the shore end of the Dike, on the south side; 8x50 binoculars. --Larry and Martha Ballard

Red-throated Loon: seen with Common Loons; 30x Balscope, 200 ft., sunlight; smaller, slimmer than Common; small, "upturned" bill. --Jean and Bill Harwell

Ross' Goose: Duck-size goose in adult plumage seen at 40 yds. with 20-60x telescope, excellent light. Bird had a stubby bill compared with Snow's in same area. --David and Jan Dauphin.

Ross' Goose: The wildlife refuge was deserted of cars at about 7:30 am. Drove about 1/2 mile on Cross rd.; found a concentration of about 800 Snow Geese on right, near the road, turned right on side road and stopped, the geese milled and flew. About 500 returned to area in about 5 minutes and resumed feeding. Nearest us at 30 yds. at the edge of the group were 2 adult white plumage Snow Geese, 2 blue phase adults, and one very small adult goose that was only about 60% size of the other four geese. The neck appeared thicker, the beak redder, and the head rounder. We observed this goose for 15 minutes 7:45-8:00 am, observation made with 8x50 binoculars. --Larry and Martha Ballard

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD: On or about December 10, 1975, my wife and I sighted a large hummingbird in our backyard and we installed feeder. The bird almost immediately began to stay within a few feet of the feeder allowing for close observation. For the first several weeks we could observe no color of the gorget and thought it was a female; however, this supposition was corrected by Mrs. Margaret Anderson and Mrs. Margaret Jones who observed the bird in early January and, at close range, pronounced it to be a male. Subsequently, the brilliant rose red of the gorget was seen on numerous occasions and unquestionably the failure to see it constantly was due to lighting conditions during the winter months. The bird was last seen on January 14. Before the bird departed, the rose cap was also clearly seen. Besides Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Jones, Mr. David Deifik observed the bird at close range.--George Clayton

ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD: Plumage of bird was same as description appearing in Feb. 1976 SPOONBILL, P.8, except that rufous base of upper surface of tail was clearly seen on Feb. 15 by PN and NP. Earliest appearance at feeder was 9:50 am (Feb.5) and latest was 4:43 pm (Feb.8). Coldest day of Feb. 1-15 period was on the 7th when temperatures ranged from 32 to 51°. --Noel Pettingell (Ed.---Paul Jones has several acceptable pictures of the bird, showing the line of demarcation between the upper green and lower rufous of the back. These slides were taken Feb. 1.)

No details were submitted on following: BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD: (1)14, Tabony's yard, J&BH (seen by many).

PLACES TO GO

** place to go right now is the Freeport Jetties, both north (Surfside) and south (Quintana), for the Purple Sandpiper is being seen there. Two subscribers from Lake Jackson, Larry Ballard, who saw it on the Quintana Jetty March 7, and Tom Collins, who saw it on the Surfside Jetty March 8, reported it. It doesn't seem to matter which side you are on, for a party of observers who saw it March 9, were on the Surfside Jetty, and found that it and the flock of Sanderlings with which it seems to stay, flew from side to side several times in an hour's time, feeding on the rocks on both sides. All three days that the bird has been reported, he has been all the way out at the end of the jetties, among the rocks beyond the concrete walk. The bird is quite noticeable (when it comes out from behind a rock!), about the size of a Ruddy Turnstone, but "heftier" looking, with the dark purplish cast of the winter plumage (barely moving into summer looks). The two-toned bill and the facial pattern are to be looked for. So, if you see a dark looking bird flying with a flock of Sanderlings and Turnstones, keep him in your glasses until he lands, and check him out.

While you are out on the end of the jetties, remember to look for the unusual birds that may be flying about. Perhaps you'll see a Black-legged Kittiwake, or a jaeger, and remember that a gannet was seen from that point on the Freeport Christmas Count. Also, if you see an immature Herring Gull that is smaller, and a bit "different" looking from nearby other immature Herring Gulls, make careful notes. There is some thought that we are overlooking the possibility of a young Thayer's Gull straying into our territory. Granted, it is extremely difficult for even experts to identify, still, we want to remain aware of the possibility.

A word of caution: be sure and watch your footing, the algae spots can be treacherously slick, but walking on the cracks in the concrete seems to nullify the slickness to some extent.

** Bessie Cornelius sent in directions to the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrow in East Texas woods:

From Houston, get off IH 10 at Beaumont and continue on Eastex Highway (69-96) to Silsbee. Continue on 96 through Silsbee until you reach the last stoplight, which is at the intersection of 96 and 92. Continue north on 92 for exactly 7 miles. At that point, look carefully for Bean's small country store on the right and a deserted Sinclair filling station on the left (which is hardly recognizable as such); also a crude sign on a fencepost pointing to "Camp Walutta". Turn left here and proceed west approximately 2.7 miles. At the first crossroads there is a house on the left, and another Walutta sign; turn left and proceed one-tenth mile and turn right (another Walutta sign). Proceed 1.7 miles, watching along here for woodpeckers flying across the road, or listening for the sparrow. This is a lovely piece of the road; on the left at the top of a slight rise in the road is a pretty pasture, a log barn, and a horse or two grazing peacefully. Look at the fence rows behind the barn and in migration there are indigo buntings, grosbeaks, tanagers, orioles and almost anything that migrates; in the winter there are bluebirds on both sides of the road, winter sparrows, and, if one is luck, a Roadrunner will come around the corner of the barn without any warning. B.D. Orgain owns the property on the left with the barn and horses and he is preserving it just for the birds. Wish there were more people like you, B.D.!

After you have paused and refreshed yourself with this delightful scene, proceed along this road to a sandy road on the left which has a small Atlantic-Richfield sign designating it as private property. Turn here and park a hundred yards or so down along this road, respecting the rights of these property owners and allowing plenty of room for their vehicles to pass. There will be a road to the left down to the oil well. There is a new nest hole in the trees to the right of the oil well. Look for this as the birds usually come back to this hole every 30 minutes or so. They are colony birds, and there are usually 5 males to one female in the family group. The dominant male will also use the nest as a roost hole in the winter. The other males will help to raise the young, brood and feed them. They do not mature for two or

three years. Usually there will be a face around the nest hole. The gum or sap from the tree does not begin to run for several years and therefore the hole cannot always be detected on a new tree. I have seen woodpeckers on this piece of property more often than at any other place. They will fly over to the property on the right of the sandy road, which also contains a good deal of open pine land.

I have never been able to find the woodpeckers very successfully after the noon hour. To a birder, there is nothing more frustrating than failing to show off a promised bird, and much to my humiliation and sorrow this has happened to me when I have tried to find the Red-cockaded woodpecker for some prominent birdwatcher from Timbuctu, who has about two hours between planes on a rainy afternoon. They just aren't moving much after lunch. They may be sitting very quietly in a tree right over you head! So, get there in the morning about 9 o'clock, and try to find the nest or roosthole. Listen for the gentle, soft pecking. This may be a form of communication. If there are crows around the pecking may become louder, and you may hear a lot of raucous yak-yaking. Or, he may decide to give you a good talking to, too. So when hunting for this bird, do not underestimate the so-called "lower forms of life"; you can be sure this little fellow has spotted you long before you do him. He is pretty outstanding, with the solid white cheeks, solid black cap and nape. The red on the bird shows on the male only before the first molt,--on a bright sunny day it can be seen when the birds come to the top of the nest hole to be fed. People often wonder why they can't see the red and mistake the male for the female, but the red cannot be seen in the adult bird unless in hand.

Bachman's, or the Piney Woods Sparrow, is found in this same territory. It is very "skittish", and most likely to be seen when singing. Do not make the mistake of approaching too closely. It is usually in a bush or tree 6 or 8 feet up. Once you start chasing the bird 99% of the time you are lost, as I have found to my chagrin. It will fly to a clump, and drop down to the bottom never to be seen again, or it may get out and immediately drop into another clump. If you can locate the brush pile or clump of grass into which you think the sparrow has flown, you can probably approach within a few feet of it. Then you might try squeaking, or using a tape, and it may come out for a few seconds. One time I was fortunate enough to see the bird drop into a very small clump of grass. Three of us surrounded the hideout, and there we watched this clever little sprite until we were familiar with every feather on its body. It was an immature bird, and probably not quite as worldly-wise as its elders; otherwise it would have been long gone.

Also there are lots of Brown-headed Nuthatches around this area, Pine Warblers, and a few Eastern Bluebirds. Walk or ride up the road ways to a pond on the left, and in the spring with enough water, you may find some interesting waders. It is around this area we have heard the Prairie Warblers singing a number of springs.

A MATTER OF BUSINESS

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

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

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

Members and non-member subscribers who have joined since the first of 1976, are considered paid up through April 1977.

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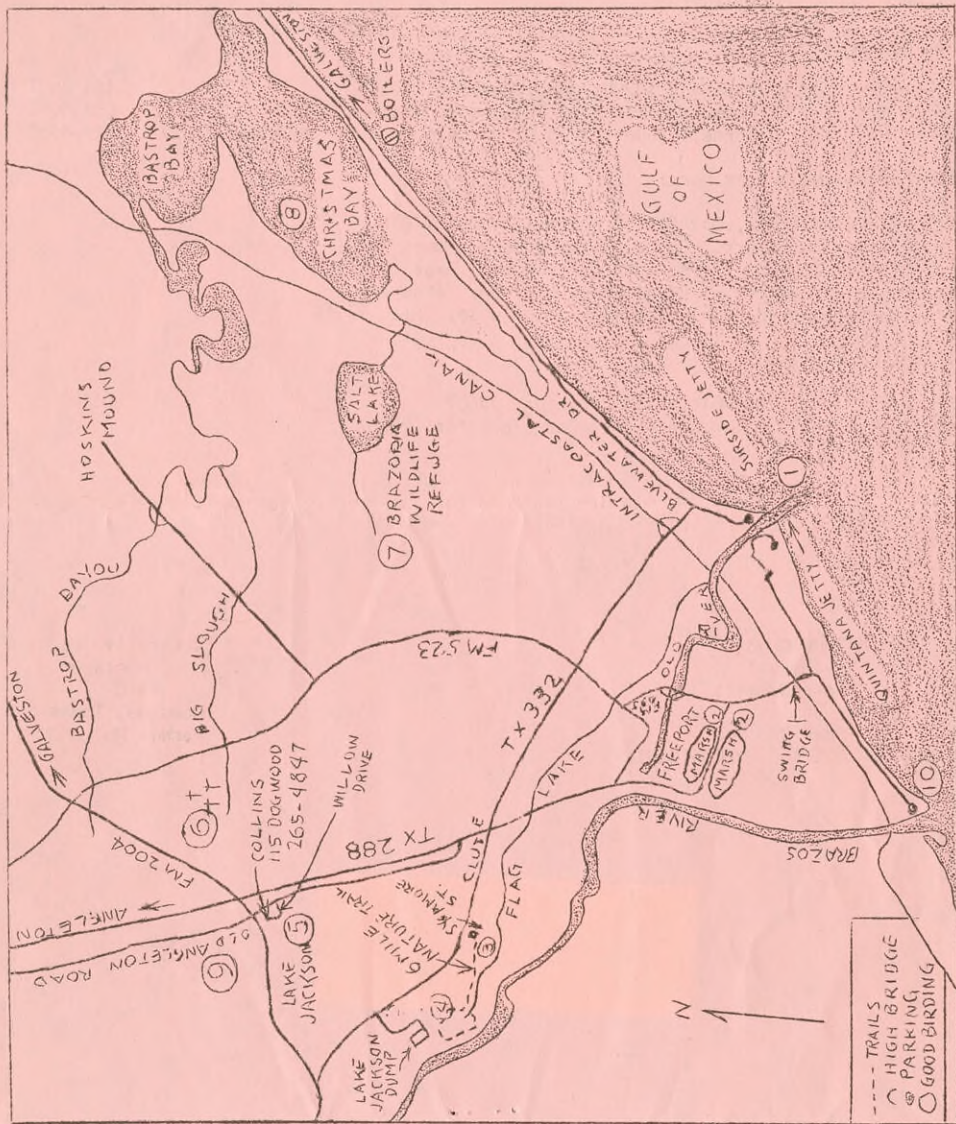
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A CORNER OF BRAZORIA COUNTY

(Map and information furnished by Tom Collins)

- ① Freeport Jetties: loons, scoters, jaegers, kittiwakes, purple sandpiper, frigatebirds, mergansers, terns, gulls.
- ② Freeport Marsh: ducks, ibis, pelicans, phalaropes, rails, sandpipers, pipits.
- ③ Flag Lake Nature Trail: woodcocks, warblers, woodpeckers, kites, hawks, owls, sparrows.
- ④ City dump: kites, gulls, crows.
- ⑤ Lake Jackson: Mississippi kites, hummingbirds (check with Collins for status).
- ⑥ Big Slough cemetery: Vermillion flycatchers, swallows.
- ⑦ Brazoria Wildlife Refuge: white-tailed hawks, kites, waterfowl.
- ⑧ Christmas Bay/Boilers: frigatebirds, brown pelican (reported last year)
- ⑨ Angleton Gun Club: bald eagle in past years, (once this year), cormorants, ducks.
- ⑩ Mouth of Brazos river: ducks, shorebirds, gulls, terns.



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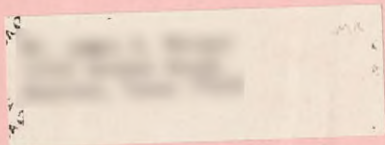
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