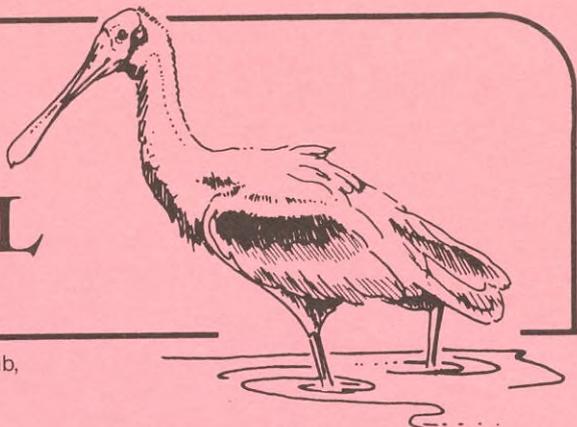


The SPOONBILL



Published by the Ornithology Group, Outdoor Nature Club,
Houston, Texas. B. C. Robison, editor

Volume XXXIII, No. 3
March 1984

Coming Events

- March 25 Sunday Deadline for The Spoonbill announcements, articles, etc.
- April 3 Tuesday Clearing House and Outer Circle deadlines for March
- April 5 Thursday OG Regular Meeting, Bayou Manor Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. "Birds of the Rio Grande Valley" by Father Tom Pincelli
- April 7 Saturday OG Field Trip to the coast to look for spring migrants led by Steve Williams. Meet near High Island. This meeting place is several blocks north of the northern city limits of High Island. We'll be going to the Audubon Sanctuary first in case you're late and the group has left. Reservations have been made for the noon and 1 PM rail buggy rides at Anahuac for our group. Bring lunch and plenty of drinking water (Anahuac has no potable water.) For further information call Bob Honig. Home - 776-8619 Work - 757-5145.
- April 7 Saturday ONC Field Trip to Chappel Hill area for wildflowers, led by Bobby Duryea.
- April 10 ONC Meeting, the Garden Center, 1900 Hermann Drive, 7:30 p.m. Wildflower slides by Joe Liggio.
- April 11 Wednesday Piney Woods Wildlife Society Meeting at 7:30 p.m. Room A-126 the Academic Building, North Harris County College Campus. "Birds of Maine & Nova Scotia" by Linda Feltner.
- April 14-15 Saturday Sunday ONC Open House and Weekend at Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

- April 25 Wednesday Deadline for The Spoonbill announcements, articles, etc.
- May 3 Thursday Clearing House and Outer Circle deadlines for April
- May 3 Thursday OG Regular Meeting. "Birds of Peru" by David Matson
- May 5 Saturday 1984 Spring Round-Up, David Matson coordinator

TEXAS WILDFLOWERS

Learn terminology and techniques necessary to identify and more fully appreciate the plant life that flourishes around Houston.

When: Tuesdays, March 27 - April 24
Field Trip - Saturday, April 28, 1984
Where: Rice University Campus

For more information and a free brochure, call Rice University Offices of Continuing Studies and Special Programs, 520-6022.

WARBLERS AND RAILS

This course will focus on the warblers and rails and will consist of one class and a field trip that will begin at Anahuac Refuge and conclude at High Island.

When: Lecture - Tuesday, April 24th
Field Trip - Saturday, April 28th
Where: Rice University

For more information and a free brochure call Rice University Offices of Continuing Studies and Special Programs, 520-6022.

Noel's Niche Looking Back

. . . Ten Years Ago This Month
from March 1974 Spoonbill:

"Clearing House, February 1974"

"Dove, Ringed Turtle:
(2) 22, Bellaire, PJ" (Paul Jones)
See Spoonbill May 1973 Page 7 and
September, 1973 Page 1 for details of
first UTC sighting and nesting).

"Clearing House Notes"

"Monk Parakeet: Nancy and Jerry Strickling
report two of these birds around their yard
in Houston."

"Black-throated Blue Warbler: Mike Hoke, the
Bander at High Island, says this warbler
has spent all winter at Smith Woods. This
is apparently the first winter record for the
Upper Coast."

(This same individual remained in the Smith
Woods area until at least May 7, 1974. The
latest Upper Texas Coast checklist (1980) shows
this species as very rare or rare from the
last week of Sept. to the second week in May.
The only other known winter occurrence of this
species in the UTC area was also at High Island
where one was seen at the Audubon Sanctuary
on Dec. 9, 1983 and two at the same location
during the Bolivar Peninsula Christmas Bird
Count on Dec. 21. - N.P.)

. . . Twenty Years Ago This Month
from March 1964 Spoonbill:
(More quotes about establishing a refuge
for Attwater Prairie Chickens - N.P.)

"Let's Keep Them Booming - - Nancy Strickling"

"Here is a chance to save an endangered species
that is practically our own bird because of
the type of habitat it requires. "
Very few colonies are left in the coastal
area and each day that passes puts the
birds in more jeopardy, since civilization,
industry and types of development are
crowding out the bird. This is a great
challenge to do something constructive
toward conservation that we should not let
go unheeded."

* * * * *

"Eagle Lake Prairie Chicken Sanctuary
- - Louise Hoffman"

"We may not be "the fustest with the mostest"
but we are the "fustest". Thanks to the
cooperation of the members of the February
OG Field Trip and the excellent salesmanship
of young Paul Marrack, a check for \$13.00
was sent to the Texas Chapter of the Nature
Conservancy as its first donation toward
the Eagle Lake Prairie Chicken Sanctuary.
The money was raised by the sale of candy."

. . . Thirty Years Ago This Month
from March 1954 Spoonbill:

"Clearing House"

Feb. 28 - Holboell's (now red-necked) Grebe
The first for this area - seen at close
range on surf at Galveston Island by
Armand Yramategui."

"Additional Reports During February (Dates
unspecified)"

"4 Long-eared Owls reported by Arlie K.
McKay at Cove in Chambers Courty."
(Although no dates were given, this report
preceded Arlie's Nov. 21, 1954 record
appearing in Stephen G. Williams' Checklist
of the Birds of the Upper Texas Coast (1962)
and is therefore the first know UTC occurrence
N.P.)

"6 Inca Doves seen by Dr. Charles E. Hall
at 3807 Ave. R on Galveston Island (First
seen on Galveston in Kempner Park last
year)."

* * * * * FOR THE RECORD

See detailed report on "A New State and
Upper Texas Coast Big Day Record for
January" plus table of "Regular UTC
species totals vs. Big Day Records by
Month."

Important notice regarding UTC Life List
Totals:

Any lists of 350 or more species recorded
within the 6 county UTC area should
include only those appearing on the Birder's
Checklist (Jan. 1980) or accepted as valid
by the checklist committee (see supplements
published in March 1981, April 1982, Feb/
March, 1983 Spoonbill). Please submit totals
and inclusive dates of UTC personal
observations to

Noel Pettingell
1110 Camino Village Dr. #114
Houston, TX 77058

Southeastern Arizona Trip - June 16-24, 1984

There are still a few places left on Ben
Feltner's PeregrineTours birding trip to
Southeast Arizona. Registration must be
received by April 1. Call PeregrineTours,
520-7747 for more details.

Chairman & Rare Bird Alert (unusual birds -
report or inquire)
Don Richardson, 5475 Grape,
Houston, Texas 77096
Office - 656-6518
Home - 661-1365

Rare Bird Alert Tape sponsored by the Piney
Woods Wildlife Society - 821-2846

THE GREAT FIELD GUIDE RACE AND HOW TO SORT IT OUT

by Ben Feltner

Considering the paucity of field guides in the past, today's market is a cornucopia of portable knowledge. Four major North American guides have been introduced over the past few years. Each claims to be the answer to a birder's prayer. All cite author expertise as the primary reason for their individual superiority. Are you birding under the handicap of using the wrong references? Perhaps a little comparative shopping is in order. To this end, we shall attempt an objective review of the several guides available; however since total objectivity is remarkably akin to apathy, personal preferences are unavoidable.

The following volumes represent what is currently available:

(a) Audubon Bird Guide, Audubon Water Bird Guide, Audubon Western Bird Guide. 3 volumes, Pough, Richard H. illustrated by Don Eckleberry. Doubleday 1946. hereafter: "Pough"

This is without a doubt, one of the finest efforts ever, and despite its age remains a personal favorite. Drawbacks include its size: three volumes, and the fact that it is partially out of print. The Western Bird Guide is only obtainable in used book stores, and the price, when found may be preclusive. A further problem is the arrangement of the books. It is positively nonsensical to have land birds in one guide and water birds in another, and yet a third devoted to Western birds. As a reference its idiosyncrasies must be completely understood before use. Balanced against this, its illustrations, 1225 individual birds in color, are hands down, the best ever done for a North American guide. Their accuracy is astounding and the birds are dynamically posed so that one gets an idea of each bird's "jizz" (there is that marvellous word again), not just their colors. Don Eckleberry remains the "dean of contemporary bird artists", my wife notwithstanding. The text is accurate and the identification section, although written well over thirty years ago, is remarkably relevant in outlook. Ranges are well done, but are in gazeteer fashion without range maps. Voice is described probably as well as can be expected off the record (pun intended). The section on habits is a wonderful way to learn about birds and contains much help to both novice and expert.

(b) The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds, 2 volumes (Eastern Region Bull, John & John Farland Jr. Western Region Udvardy, Miklos D.F.) 1200 + photos Knopf. 1977. hereafter: Audubon

There is very little good to be said for this guide. It is illustrated with photographs a medium totally unsuited for field work. Lacking the versatility of the artists brush, each bird is restricted to a split second in time frequently presenting an aspect that is not repre-

sentative enough to show all that should be revealed. Major field marks may be temporarily obscured, available light can effect color, and film is highly variable. Although the photos selected are generally of high quality, they are inadequate. The arrangement of the text by habitat is awkward because it fails to take into consideration birds with multiple habitats, and the phenomenon of migration, when some birds may appear almost anywhere. Text descriptions are sparse and not commensurate to contemporary standards.

(c) The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding, 3 volumes (Loons to Sandpipers, Gulls to Dippers, Old World Warblers to Sparrows) Farrand, John Jr. ed: hundreds of photos and paintings. Knopf 1983. Hereafter: Master Guide

Right off the bat we have the same problem here as with "Audubon". The use of photos for illustrations leads to inconsistent quality. This book was written by committee, and as with other such ventures, suffers from too much of a good thing. There is no quarrel with the expertise utilized in this production; however, there are serious misgivings about how it was used. The terns, for example, are spread among five authorities, consequently they are not as well compared to similar species as one would expect in a master guide. Rather than area experts, better use would have been made of expertise in families of birds. The range maps look fairly good, but on close scrutiny reveal discrepancies. Varied bunting is probably commoner in the Trans-Pecos of Texas than anywhere else in the U.S., yet its range map is devoid of mention in that area. The only longspur shown reaching the Texas coast is Chestnut-collared, yet the only one that does so with any consistency is Lapland. Despite the fact that Henslow's Sparrow has been known to breed in Texas since the mid-1950's it is not depicted as breeder much south of the Mason-Dixon line. Descriptions are very good and field marks are emphasized in the margins next to the bird's picture. Voice is adequately described but not outstanding. The Master guide follows the newest A.O.U. nomenclature, and pictures many of the newer A.O.U. species. The three volumes are on a slick paper rendering them inordinately heavy, not a desired quality in a field guide.

Birds of North America (expanded and revised edition) Robbins, Chandler S. Bertel Brunn, and Herbert S. Zim. Illustrated by Arthur Singer. Golden Press 1983. Hereafter: Golden Guide.

This is probably the most popular of all the field guides. It was the first major guide to handle all the North American species in one handy pocket-sized book. The illustrations are adequate to good, and fairly uniform in quality. Unfortunately problem species (i.e. terns and empidonax flycatchers) are not handled with a great deal of

NAME		RATING	PRICE	REMARKS
The Geographic	1 vol.	excellent	\$15.95	The best. Covers UTC well
Pough	3 vol.	excellent	11.95 each Western out of print	Almost as good as Geographic. It loses points for arrangement and the inconvenience of 3 volumes. Covers UTC well.
Golden Guide	1 vol.	very good	\$7.95 (s) 10.95	Most portable of the guides, not quite up to par with first two. Covers UTC well.
Texas Guide	1 vol.	Good	11.95 (s) 17.95	Outdated. Too many black and white illustrations. Can be of use on UTC.
Master Guide	3 vol.	Good	3.95 (s)	Not really a masterguide. Poorly illustrated. Some good tips could be useful as a reference. Very heavy.
Peterson Eastern	1 vol.	Fair	10.95 (s) 15.00	Does not cover UTC adequately. Of some use as a reference.
Audubon	2 vol.	Poor	12.50 (s) each vol.	Save your money.

discrimination, and their portraits do not possess the necessary nuances for their identification. The revised edition has several new plates depicting species not found in the original: a plate of introduced parrots, two of immature terns, and a number of individual species, some that are added to those already existing.

For example, a tiny Brown Jay is squeezed onto the jay plate, and the Eurasian Pipits were added to the Sprague's and Water Pipit. In addition there are now more gull plumages depicted. The range maps have been reworked and show some improvement. There is little in the way of plumage descriptions, but most pertinent field marks are noted. Voice is still represented by the infamous sonagrams, a method of voice pattern identification largely ignored by the majority of birders. This single volume is still a good buy at \$7.95 and probably will remain as popular as ever.

A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies. Peterson, Roger T Houghton Mifflin Co. 1980. Hereafter: Peterson Eastern.

No single guide was anticipated more than this one. People were lined up to buy it hot off the stands.. In it's revised form it borrowed shamelessly from the Golden Guide format by placing each species write-up opposite the plate of the bird. The art work is, in most part, very good, better than the Golden guide, not as good as Pough. The Peterson Method, little arrows pointing to field marks, is without question the single greatest innovation in the evolution of the field guide, and responsible for a drop in the amount of verbiage in descriptions. Although this guide purports to be for birds east of the Rockies, it is really a guide to the Northeast, Midwest and Southeast. Since Texas has its own field guide albeit

23 years old and badly out of date, none of its specialties are included and for that reason this volume is not recommended for local use.

A Field Guide to the Birds of Texas. Peterson, Roger T. Houghton and Mifflin Co. 1960. Hereafter: Texas Guide.

I rather prefer the plates in this book to the Peterson Eastern. They seem to be crisper with a better indication of "jizz". Drawbacks include too many black and white plates in the text. No range maps and outdated text. One would hope Dr. Peterson will get around to a revision here.

A Field Guide to the Birds of North America. National Geographic Society 1983. Hereafter: The Geographic.

Of the newer guides this one is probably best of all. Although, it too, was put together by committee, it is not as fragmented as the Masterguide. Four consul-

A NEW STATE AND UPPER TEXAS COAST BIG DAY RECORD FOR JANUARY by Noel Pettingell

The "Big Day Party-Goers" (The Feltners of Peregrine Tours fame plus the writer) had decided the time was ripe for getting together once again to attempt a new high UTC count for yet another month (see previous accounts in 1981 Spoonbills for March and November). The team decided to follow the traditional Sheldon Reservoir/Texas City Dike/Galveston route, with the addition of Tiki Island and Bolivar Peninsula.

We began our January 28th Big Day on Garrett Road west of Sheldon Reservoir. Woodcocks our first bonus

species (underlined to indicate not expected to be found on the route), were numerous here (west of John Ralston Road), frequently being flushed from both sides of the road with much wing-trilling. Also present were such essentials as Anhinga, Wood Duck, Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Wood Thrush, Cedar Waxwing and American Goldfinch. At daybreak the destructive force of Hurricane Alicia last August 18 was in evidence all about us. This heavily wooded area had suffered extensive damage from the storm. All the larger trees had been uprooted or broken off at the top in addition to having considerable loss of limbs. We found similar devastation as we birded south along John Ralston Road. Returning to Garrett Road we then headed east to Sheldon Reservoir where we found both cormorants, all four geese species (including a Ross in a flock of Snows thanks to sharp-eyed Linda), Yellowthroat Wilson's Warbler, Rusty Blackbird, Vesper Chipping, and Fox Sparrows.

Deussen Park, north of Sheldon Reservoir, was still closed to the public as a result of the widespread upheaval brought about by Alicia, but we managed to find a road without a barrier which enabled us to add another essential to our list - Black Vulture. A brief visit to Eisenhower Park produced another Anhinga but no new species for the day's list so we headed south toward the Lynchburg ferry and the Seabrook/Kemah area. We decided to check out Compton's Woods enroute and were shocked when we saw what Alicia had done to this beautiful stand of giant water oaks and lush undergrowth. Only a few isolated oaks remained standing, stripped of their larger limbs and surrounded by huge masses of fallen trees, branches, tangled vines and shrubbery. The Bayou and trails were completely buried beneath impassable walls of vegetation so we continued

On down Baywood Drive to Galveston Bay where we scoped out Least Sandpaper, Dunlin and Western Sandpiper. We missed the Great Black Backed Gull at Seabrook and Kemah (although seen here from November up until Jan. 23), but did find our first red-breasted Merganser and Bonaparte's Gull.

We added Black-shouldered Kite and Lesser Yellowlegs on the way to the Texas City Dike where we found such new additions as Common Loon, Black crowned Night Heron, Greater Scaup, Ruddy Duck, and Sandwich Tern. We checked the marshes adjacent to the Gulf freeway enroute to our last mainland birding locality, Tiki Island, and found the following much needed species: Spoonbill, Greater Yellowlegs, both dowitchers and finally (at 2:25 p.m!) our first Great tailed Grackle!

We left Tiki Island just before 3 p.m. having added an American Oyster Catcher, to give us a total of 116 species for the day as we prepared to bird Galveston Island with some 3 hours of daylight remaining. We were hoping to exceed 126 species, which was erroneously listed as the single party January Big Day record in the July 1982 Spoonbill (page 6) (Actually 108 (not 126) species was the highest Houston Christmas Count Area total on 1/2/66.) Although we already had a bigger list than the previous UTC one-party record of 110 species (Jan 11, 1969), we were nevertheless determined to surpass 126 species and thereby establish an undisputed UTC and Texas one-party January record. Ben's many years of UTC birding experience helped us to determine a route most likely to produce the needed 11 species before nightfall. There wasn't enough time to bird West Galveston and then take the ferry to Bolivar Peninsula before dark so it

REGULAR UTC SPECIES TOTALS VS. BIG DAY RECORDS BY MONTH - Noel Pettingell

	JAN.	FEB.	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
Regular Species (Rank)	218 (8)	218 (8)	262 (2)	290 (1)	247 (4)	156 (12)
Big Day Records (Rank)	<u>133</u> (10)	<u>147</u> (6)	<u>174</u> (3)	<u>194</u> (1)	<u>181</u> (2)	<u>126</u> (11)
Difference	85	71	88	96	66	30
Big Day % Regular Species:	61.0%	67.4%	66.4%	66.9%	73.3%	80.8%
Rank	(11)	(5)	(7)	(6)	(3)	(1)
	JULY	AUGUST	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
Regular Species (Rank)	163 (11)	198 (10)	231 (6)	261 (3)	240 (5)	220 (7)
Big Day Records (Rank)	<u>126</u> (11)	<u>134</u> (9)	<u>153</u> (5)	<u>165</u> (4)	<u>136</u> (8)	<u>138</u> (7)
Difference	37	64	78	96	104	82
Big Day % Regular Species:	77.3%	67.7%	66.2%	63.2%	56.7	62.7
Rank	(2)	(4)	(8)	(9)	(12)	(10)

TOTAL REGULAR UTC SPECIES (Common to Rare Annually): 311

was on to Kempner Park to pick up Inca and White-winged Doves and then to East Beach flats where we added Piping Plover and Royal tern to bring our days total up to 120. Enroute to Bolivar Peninsula Ben picked out a Common Tern from among the many Forster's and around the ferry-No. 121. At the flats we added Snowy Plover, Red Knot, American Avocet, Marbled Godwit and Black Skimmer - but no Horned Lark, Sharp-tailed or Seaside Sparrows. Our list was now at 126 and sunset was only a half-hour away.

Bob's Bait camp Road in Crystal Beach proved to be a good choice to end the day's birding as we found the following species there between 5:45 and shortly after 6: Reddish Egret, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, White Ibis, Redhead, Canvasback King Rail and Short eared owl. Final totals: 133 species by the party 132 by Linda Feltner, 131 by Ben Feltner and 127 by Noel Pettingell. Shared total (identified by all) was 127 species or 95% of 133.

Individual counts for many species were unusually low due to the Christmas cold spell and this was probably why we missed the following expected species: American Bittern, White-faced Ibis, Mottled Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Common Moorhen, (Gallinule) and Seaside Sparrow. Since the Feb. 8, 1981 party total exceeded the Jan. 28, 1984 total by 14 species and the counts were only 11 days apart, the January record is probably a dozen species less than it should be (see table below). Perhaps the 1981 route (NW Harris County/W. Galveston I./Bolivar Peninsula) would have produced a higher total than the route taken in 1984 but the December freeze (110 hours below 32 degrees) probably would have reduced the species count no matter what the route.

Weather on January 28 was clear to partly cloudy with no wind inland, NW 5-10 MPH along Galveston Bay and Gulf beaches; temperature 33-70 at Houston and 44-60 at Galveston. Total car miles 210 (starting at 6 a.m. from 1520 Ridgewood Houston and returning at 8:50 pm CST) Foot miles 2; ferry miles: 7.

For the benefit of those who may want to try for new UTC Big Day records, the table reveals those months with totals that have the best chance of being improved upon, especially November, January and December. Regular species are defined as those which occur annually, i.e. common to rare on the 6th edition (1980) of the UTC checklist. It's interesting to note that April's 290 regular species is over 93% of the 311 common to rare annual UTC species total. A 200 species Big Day in April would mean that 69% of the regular 290 were recorded - a very real possibility since this percentage is less than the May, June and July Big Day percentages.

Clearing House

FEBRUARY, 1984

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made on the Upper Texas Coast. How to read the CH: Species: Location--(how many)date,observers. Those common species which can be easily identified and are widely distributed in the UTC will also be listed, followed by the number of reports, with the lowest and highest number of individuals seen in parentheses, i.e. (1-40). Noteworthy sightings will be underlined, capitalized, or both, according to their status. All observations reported below must be accepted by the Checklist Committee (Ben Feltner, Jim Morgan and Noel Pettingell) before they are considered valid and included in the next checklist. Sightings lacking details, when required, will not be included in the Clearing House. Submitters who forget details should send their notes to a member of the Checklist Committee.

Loon, Common: 5 reports (1-25)
 Grebe, Horned: 3 reports (1-4)
 Grebe, Eared: 5 reports (1-25)
 Grebe, Pied-billed: 6 reports (1-15)
 Pelican, American White: 6 reports (1-100)
 Gannet, Northern: Freeport--(2)20,A.
 Cormorant, Double-crested: 7 reports (1-60)
 Cormorant, Olivaceous: 4 reports (1-10)
 Heron, Great Blue: 8 reports (2-25)
 Heron, Green-backed: 4 reports (1-2)
 Heron, Little Blue: 6 reports (1-17)
 Egret, Cattle: 5 reports (2-25)
 Egret, Reddish: 4 reports (1-8)
 Egret, Great: 9 reports (2-40)
 Egret, Snowy: 11 reports (2-60)
 Heron, Tricolored: 9 reports (1-30)
 Night-Heron, Black-crowned: 6 reports (2-200)
 Bittern, American: Brazoria NWR--(1)25,B
 Ibis, White-faced: 5 reports (1-100)
 Ibis, White: 6 reports (2-40)
 Spoonbill, Roseate: 5 reports (1-100)
 Goose, Canada: 6 reports (10-2000)
 Goose, Greater White-fronted: 6 reports (4-1400)
 Goose, Snow: 5 reports (10-1000)
 Duck, Mottled: 4 reports (2-20)
 Gadwall: 7 reports (2-60)
 Pintail, Northern: 4 reports (3-30)
 Teal, Green-winged: 4 reports (2-45)
 Teal, Blue-winged: 5 reports (1-100)
 Wigeon, American: 5 reports (2-50)
 Shoveler, Northern: 6 reports (4-400)
 Duck, Wood: 4 reports (1-4)
 Redhead: 4 reports (1-4)
 Duck, Ring-necked: 5 reports (1-20)
 Canvasback: 4 reports (1-20)
 Scaup, Lesser: 5 reports (1-1000)
 Goldeneye, Common: 4 reports (1-10)
 Oldsquaw: Texas City Dike--(1)29,C (see notes, ad.)
 Duck, Ruddy: 4 reports (2-75)
 Merganser, Red-breasted: 4 reports (10-50+)
 Vulture, Turkey: 6 reports (1-100)
 Vulture, Black: 8 reports (1-25)
 Kite, Black-shouldered: 7 reports (1-4)
 Hawk, Cooper's: 4 reports (1-2)
 Hawk, Red-tailed: 9 reports (1-30)
 Hawk, Red-shouldered: 3 reports (1-3)
 Eagle, Bald: 5 reports (1-2 W. Harris Co.)
 Harrier, Northern: 6 reports (1-50)
 Osprey: 4 reports (1-2)
 Caracara, Crested: W. Harris Co.--(2)Jan. 29, Jim Morgan
 Kestrel, American: 7 reports (1-48)
 Bobwhite, Northern: 4 reports (1-30)
 Crane, Sandhill: 6 reports (2-1000+)
 Rail, King: 4 reports (1-3)
 Rail, Clapper: 4 reports (1-5)
 Rail, Yellow: Brazoria NWR--(1)25,B (railbuggy)
 Moorhen, Common: 6 reports (1-21)
 Coot, American: 8 reports (2-1000)
 Plover, Semipalmated: Galveston--(6)10,D
 Plover, Piping: 5 reports (1-10)
 Plover, Wilson's: Galveston--(1)10,D
 Killdeer: 10 reports (1-50)
 Plover, Black-bellied: 5 reports (1-12)
 Turnstone, Ruddy: 4 reports (1-11)
 Snipe, Common: 4 reports (2-50)
 Curlew, Long-billed: 8 reports (1-12)
 Sandpiper, Spotted: 4 reports (2-10)
 Willet: 6 reports (1-40)
 Yellowlegs, Greater: 5 reports (1-12)
 Yellowlegs, Lesser: 6 reports (1-15)
 Sandpiper, Pectoral: Brazoria NWR--(1)25,B (see notes, ad.)
 Sandpiper, Least: 4 reports (3-15)
 Dunlin: 4 reports (4-20)
 Dowitcher, Short-billed: Galveston--(70)20,A

Sandpiper, Western: 4 reports (1-6)
 Godwit, Marbled: 4 reports (1-4)
 Sanderling: 5 reports (10-60)
 Avocet, American: 6 reports (12-2000)
 Stilt, Black-necked: Freeport--(9)29,E
Gull, Great Black-backed: Kemah-Seabrook (Clear Creek @ Galveston Bay)--(1)all month, m.ob. (previously reported, ed.).
 Gull, Herring: 8 reports (2-40)
 Gull, Ring-billed: 10 reports (2-1000)
GULL, HEERMAN'S: E. Harris Co.--(1)Jan. 24,F, (see notes, ed.)
 Gull, Laughing: 8 reports (10-2500)
 Gull, Bonaparte's: 5 reports (4-50)
 Tern, Forster's: 7 reports (1-200)
 Tern, Common: Galveston--(5)23,G
 Tern, Royal: 5 reports (1-10)
 Tern, Sandwich: Freeport--(1)26,A
 Tern, Caspian: 4 reports (1-8)
 Skimmer, Black: 8 reports (4-50+)
 Dove, Rock: 3 reports (5-1000+)
 Dove, White-winged: 4 Galveston reports (2-10)
 Dove, Mourning: 7 reports (2-40)
 Turtle-Dove, Ringed: Bellaire--(6)all month,m.ob., W. Chambers Co.--(3)all month, m.ob.
 Dove, Inca: 7 reports (2-60)
 Screech-Owl, Eastern: 3 reports (1 each)
 Hummingbird, Rufous: N.E. Harris Co.--(1)all month,H.
 Kingfisher, Belted: 8 reports (1-7)
 Flicker, Northern: 5 reports (1-12)
 Woodpecker, Pileated: 6 reports 1-6)
 Woodpecker, Red-bellied: 5 reports (1-10)
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: 5 reports (1-8)
 Woodpecker, Downy: 4 reports (1-8)
 Phoebe, Eastern: 7 reports (1-10)
 Lark, Horned: Brazoria NWR--(8)25,B
 Swallow, Tree: 5 reports (2-20)
 Martin, Purple: 6 reports (1-20)
 Jay, Blue: 5 reports (1-20)
 Crow, American: 4 reports (1-150+)
 Chickadee, Carolina: 4 reports (1-6)
 Titmouse, Tufted: 5 reports (1-10)
 Creeper, Brown: 3 reports (1-2)
 Wren, Winter: Friendswood--(1)12,E.
 Wren, Bewick's: Brazoria Co.--(1)29,E (previously reported, ed.)
 Wren, Carolina: 4 reports (1-6)
 Wren, Marsh: 3 reports (1-4)
 Mockingbird, Northern: 9 reports (1-20)
 Catbird, Gray: 4 reports (1-2)
 Thrasher, Brown: 3 reports (1-7)
 Robin, American: 4 reports (2-1000)
 Thrush, Hermit: Friendswood--(1)12,E
 Bluebird, Eastern: 3 reports (2-5)
 Kinglet, Ruby-crowned: 4 reports (1-3).
 Pipit, Water: 3 reports (1-15)
 Pipit, Sprague's: Texas City--(1)4,E.
 Waxwing, Cedar: 5 reports (10-30)
 Shrike, Loggerhead: 7 reports (1-12)
 Starling, European: 9 reports (5-2000)
 Vireo, Solitary: Galveston--(1)10,D.
 Warbler, Black-and-white: Galveston--(1)29,Jane Hamilton
 Warbler, Orange-crowned: 4 reports (1-4)
 Warbler, Yellow-rumped: 5 reports (1-30)
 Warbler, Pine: 4 reports (1-6)
 Warbler, Palm: 3 reports (1-3)
Warbler, Oporonis (not Kentucky) species: Houston--(1)18,I (see notes, ed.)
 Yellowthroat, Common: 3 reports (1-5)
 Sparrow, House: 6 reports (2-500+)
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 7 reports (4-100)
 Blackbird, Red-winged: 8 reports (5-1000)
Oriole, Northern: Galveston--(1)11,Jane Hamilton (see notes, ed.)
 Blackbird, Rusty: 4 reports (5-100)
 Blackbird, Brewer's: Freeport--(15)20,A
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: Freeport--(12)20,B
 Grackle, Great-tailed: 7 reports (10-150)
 Grackle, Common: 3 reports (5-500)
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: 3 reports (10-1000)
 Cardinal, Northern: 7 reports (2-25)
 Finch, Purple: 5 reports (1-15)
 Siskin, Pine: 4 reports (1-10)
 Goldfinch, American: 6 reports (2-200)
 Sparrow, Savannah: 7 reports (2-50)
 Sparrow, Le Conte's: 4 reports (1-10), W. Harris Co.--(25)Jan. 29, Jim Morgan.
 Sparrow, Vesper: 4 reports (1-7)
 Junco, Dark-eyed: 5 reports (1-25)
 Sparrow, Chipping: 3 reports (2-50)
 Sparrow, White-crowned: 3 reports (2-40)
 Sparrow, White-throated: 6 reports (2-50)
 Sparrow, Song: 3 reports (1-6)
 LONGSPUR, CHESTNUT-COLLARED: Bolivar Flats--(1)4,J (see notes, ed.).

CONTRIBUTORS - FEBRUARY, 1984

A(Jim Morgan, Ron & Marcia Braun); B(Robert Thacker); C(Steve Williams); D(Jane Hamilton, Carolyn Killian, Fay Humphrey); E(Mike Austin); F(Paul McKneely); G(Jane Hamilton, Carolyn Killian, Fay Humphrey, Martha Micks); H(Emery Froelich, Mary Ann Chapman); I(Jamie Bourgeois); J(Bret Whitney, Revone Bauwens); John & Jane Hamilton; David & Jan Dauphin; Stennie Meadours; Sam Fruehling; Jack & Jimi Neal; Nick Escott; Jeff Sanders; Jim Morgan; Bob Honig; Doug Williams; Martha Henschen; Peggy Milstead; Diane Cabiness.

NOTES

Oldsquaw--Excellent light; 50 ft; head, back, neck were white; black cheek, chest, wings; pointed tail. Bird was photographed.....Steve Williams

Pectoral Sandpiper: Erect stance; sharp demarcation on breast between the streaks and white underparts; short bill; greenish yellow legs.....Robert Thacker

HEERMAN'S GULL: Jan 24; 7:15 am; in car on Lynchburg Ferry; no optical equipment; 3-5 seconds observation time. Bird was flying in opposite direction of ferry, 60 ft. to right of car; 15 ft. overhead. Overcast. Size of Ring-billed Gulls (there were Laughing and Ring-billed around for comparison); Distinctly red bill; unmarked white head; Uniformly colored medium gray underparts. Strong demarcation between white of head and gray underparts at the upper neck; short black tail; upperparts dark with no noticeable markings.....Paul McKneely (report received 3/3/84, ed.)

Warbler, Oporonis (not Kentucky) species: Olive-green back, wings and uppertail. Yellow undersides and bright yellow undertail. No wingbars. Line running through eye, and only a suggestion of an eyering. Dark spot in front of eye and lore noted. Brownish wash on head, throat and upperchest. Bird was about the size of the Yellow-rumped Warblers (but did not have a yellow rump). Bright yellow horizontal stripe at side of breast following edge of folded wing. Soft, warbler-like call of 2-notes repeated several times heard before and after seeing bird. Seen at six feet. No optics. Mid-day. Weather was cloudy, bright. Bird was feeding on ligustrum outside open window.....Jamie Bourgeois

Northern Oriole: Flew across the street in front of the car. Large white wing patch was distinctive plus orange cheek, breast, and belly.....Jane Hamilton

LONGSPUR, CHESTNUT-COLLARED: At Bolivar Flats heard a chestnut-call. Longspur flying overhead - giving the rather musical double or treble call, unlike the dry "tytick" or "chip" or "tip" series delivered by Lapland, McCown's and Smith's, Bird landed and observed at 100 ft. with 25X scope for 20 secs. Male coming into breeding plumage with chestnut nape, white face with black eye-line; white throat and patchy black breast and belly. Tail pattern not noticed. Bill and whole bird was decidedly smaller than Lapland.....Bret Whitney

The following birds were submitted without sufficient details; and, contributors should submit notes to a member of the checklist committee:

Brant: W. Harris Co.--(20)4,Jack & Jimi Neal
 Black-capped Chickadee: W. Harris Co.--(2)4,Jack & Jimi Neal

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MINUTES OF THE ORNITHOLOGY GROUP MEETING OF MARCH 1, 1984

Don Richardson, OG Chairman, called the meeting to order. He announced that the minutes of the previous meeting were published in the February Spoonbill. The treasurer, Linda Walsh, had forwarded a report and indicated a Feb. 29, 1984 balance of \$5574. Don thanked the Spoonbill staff for their fine work. They were applauded for their efforts.

A discussion about the current UTC checklist was begun. Points of interest were:

- . The checklists have rapidly been made out of date by the AOU's recent separating, grouping and renaming of numerous species.
- . We have a large number of these old checklists - about 10,000 to 12,000. It was moved, seconded and passed to reduce the selling price of the checklist to 5¢. It was moved seconded and passed that the checklist committee prepare a checklist and determine how to publish it in about a year.

The nominating committee (David Dauphin, Gene Heitzman, and Wanda Smith) presented a list of nominees for OG officers for the June 1, 1984 to May 31, 1985 year. The list included:

- . Linda Feltner - Chairwoman
- . Edward Rozenburg - Vice Chairman
- . Bart Tooker - Secretary
- . Peter Vennema - Treasurer

These nominees were elected unanimously. Don thanked the committee for their work and the new officers for accepting these responsibilities.

The evening program was presented by Ed Kutac.

PRAIRIE FIRE ATTRACTS WHITE-TAILED HAWKS

by Jim Morgan

On February 5, 1984, Ron and Marcia Braun and I were birding at Attwater Prairie Chican NWR when we noticed a prairie fire burning out of control in the north part of the refuge. The Eagle Lake Fire Department and refuge personnel were making an effort to control the fire and we offered to help. Since we were not needed in the fire fighting we decided to see what affect the fire might have on the wildlife.

It wasn't long before several American Kestrels and White-tailed Hawks appeared at the edge of the blaze. Large insects, particularly grasshoppers, were fleeing the fire edge and the hawks were snatching the insects out of the air. After about one hour a very large number of hawks were attracted to the fire. At the peak of activity we counted 18 White-tailed Hawks, 4 - 5 Red tailed Hawks, and 3 - 4 American Kestrels.

The White-tailed Hawks were in various plumages, since about one-half the birds were immatures or sub-adults. This variety among the individuals provided a living laboratory for studying the field marks of all ages of this magnificent raptor.

The feeding behavior of the White-tailed Hawks also was interesting. After catching a large insect, the hawk would hold it in its talon while soaring, and it appeared to feed in flight much like a Mississippi Kite does. Prior to this observation, I have never seen any buteo larger than a Broadwinged Hawk take insects from the air and proceed to feed on them before perching.

It is also interesting that the number of White-tailed Hawks we saw represents about 75% of the known population for the area around the refuge. Wayne Shifflett told me that six pair of White-tails fledged 13 young birds during the last breeding season.

ORNITHOLOGY GROUP (Outdoor Nature Club)

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