



THE SPOONBILL

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VOLUME XXIV, No. 7
November, 1970

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

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL RETURNS TO TEXAS CITY DIKE-by Noel Pettingell

On October 27 Ben Feltner observed what many local birders believe to be the third annual appearance of the same individual Lesser Black-backed Gull at the Texas City dike. When a dark-mantled gull was initially discovered at this site on March 1, 1969, it was at first thought to be a Western Gull. However, by March 28, when the gull was last seen that spring, the possibility that it could have been a Lesser Black-backed had been suggested. The controversy over which species the bird actually was continued until November 28, 1969, when presumably the same gull once again appeared at the dike. By March 21, 1970--the last appearance of the species until October 27--it was generally agreed that the gull was a Lesser Black-backed which most likely had first strayed into our area in the fall of 1968. The bird apparently was a third-year sub-adult when it was first observed and photographed in March of 1969, and it is anticipated that more definitive color photos can be obtained if the gull remains in the Texas City area until next spring. Likewise, birders who have not yet had the opportunity of adding this rare North American visitor to their life lists now have another chance to do so.

To my knowledge there has never been a documented occurrence of the Western Gull in Texas and only these three previous sight records of vagrant dark-backed gulls in the state: Great Black-backed Gull at Rockport February 22-27, 1949, and February 23, 1953. Lesser Black-backed Gull at Port Aransas March 28, 1952.

Previous references to the Texas City dike gull appeared in the following issues of the Spoonbill:

March 1969 (p. 5)	June 1969 (p. 5)	Dec. 1969 (pp. 4-6)
April " (p. 5)	Aug. " (p. 2)	Jan. 1970 (pp. 2-3)
May " (p. 7)	Nov. " (pp. 1-5)	Apr. 1970 (pp. 4-5)

ATTRACTING HUMMINGBIRDS-by Maxine Wenger

My attempts at luring hummers into our yard with commercial feeders have never been successful. I have used two types of feeders as well as open small jars filled with sweetened water. When the hummers started coming again to our neighborhood in August, it was the trumpet vine and turkscap they came to visit. I decided to put a false trumpet "flower" on the trumpet vine and fill it with sugar water.

A couple of plastic peppers, red and yellow in color, were found at a nearby dime store and easily installed on the vine. The hummers fell for it and soon favored the red and yellow plastic "flowers" over the real orange ones. Next I installed an orange-colored plastic squash, as it was easier to clean and required fewer refills.

Later, feeders made from an orange, apple, pomegranate and tomato were hung from our roof overhang by windows. All have been successful, and we've enjoyed watching the birds feed at very close range. The birds seem to favor the feeders with two or three holes cut in the side, and some have perched while feeding.

At times we have seen around 15 birds in the back yard fussing over the feeders. The birds started to diminish in number around mid-October when the first cool fronts came in. As of November 1 we still have two or three birds, perhaps more.

Threeneighbor families have installed fruit feeders and report similar activity in their yards. So far, only five mature male Rubythroats have been sighted, the rest being female and immatures. Twice we've glimpsed rufous colored birds, but they didn't stay long

enough to be identified for sure. Initially, yellow food coloring was added to the sweetened water, but we discontinued the coloring after a few days with no noticeable effects.

I can say for a certainty that there have been 3 individual birds which stayed 10 days or more. The only recognizable "one" left (it has a jagged white stripe down its right side) has been here for weeks. We're still hoping for just one non-ruby-throat!

SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP

The field trip Sunday, Sept. 27, encompassed the east end of Galveston Island, Bolivar Peninsula and the High Island area. The trip was attended by eighteen people and 123 species of birds. Most notable birds on the trip were Hepatic Tanager, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Prairie Warbler, Groove-billed Ani, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Sharp-shinned Hawk. Steve Williams led the trip and took us to several very interesting localities. The most productive locality was a brushy area on Bolivar Peninsula where we witnessed a migration stack-up of warblers, tanagers, orioles, etc. It was here that the Hepatic Tanager, Prairie Warbler, Ani and Sharp-shinned Hawk were observed. The Yellow-headed Blackbird was seen in a marshy area near High Island.

OCTOBER FIELD TRIP

The October 25 field trip, to Camp Strake and Jones Forest, was attended by twenty birders. The species sighted numbered 34, including Connecticut Warbler and Hairy Woodpecker. No Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were spotted. It was foggy early, during the Jones Forest portion of the trip, but both the weather and the birding were better at Camp Strake.

REPORT ON REEVE AND RUFF by Bessie G. Cornelius

September 14 was the day before Tropical Storm Greta rolled over Bolivar Peninsula. Joy Sims and I were cruising through the oil field roads west of High Island thinking the hurricane winds might blow in something "different". We found a wealth of shore birds especially Yellowlegs and Peeps. We stopped to examine three Yellowlegs at some running water on the north side of a battery of tanks. Upon closer examination we knew that one was not a Yellowlegs. It was slightly smaller than the other two, had dark reddish legs, upper body browner and a good deal of buffy on the breast and belly, running well back toward the tail. Could see this very well when it turned to feed. We put a 40x scope on the bird and there was a little yellow at the base of bill, no barring under the wings and the bird had a different posture. We were unable to see the bird in flight because at this point we noticed our car sinking into the sand where we had parked along the road and in busying ourselves with getting unstuck all three birds disappeared. However, we concluded our stranger was a Reeve. We intended to go back the next day.

September 17. Greta came in at Bolivar Peninsula on the 15th and the resultant high water virtually marooned the west oil field at High Island for a couple of days. But as soon as possible Babette Odom of Orange and I plowed through the watery roads to the battery of tanks where I had seen the presumed Reeve. However, this spot was completely inundated so we proceeded to comb all other areas winding in and through water-covered roads and, as before, there was an abundance of shore birds, hundreds of Yellowlegs, Wilson's Phalaropes, etc. but no *Philomachus pugnax*. An hour or so before sundown we returned to the same battery and on a grassy dike south of it were 20 or 30 Yellowlegs preening and sunning. As usual, we ran the scope over this line of birds and suddenly an entirely different species popped into the lens. At first glance, this bird tucked down among the group, appeared very distinct. It was very golden about the head, neck and parts of chest. The rest of the chest was generously splotted with black,--almost like odd black feathers stuck into a golden background. The belly was lighter but unsplotted and unbarred below wings. The outer tail feathers were finely barred and middle of tail white, end dark. It had slight eye stripes that converged at base of bill giving the bird a frowning or squinty appearance. The legs were greenish yellow. It preened and stretched during most of the long period we observed him. Another characteristic that set him out distinctly to me was a hunched attitude and flattish head, which contrasted sharply with the rounded heads and more upright posture of Yellowlegs. We determined it was a Ruff whose original breeding plumage had been predominately black and it had not completely disappeared at the time.

To understand what I mean see page 81 of Fisher & Peterson's The World of Birds. Three of the Ruffs shown have dark breasts.

BRIEFS

On October 22 officials of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge near Rockport reported the sighting of three whooping cranes, the first earlier-than-usual arrivals from their nesting grounds in Canada. Last year a record number of 56 whoopers wintered on the refuge, the only place in the world where they are known to do so.

At an informal ceremony on Saturday, November 7, at Kyle Chapman County Park near Clear Lake City, the name of Middle Bayou was changed to Armand's Bayou. This bayou empties into Forest Lake, commonly known as Mud Lake.

Dr. John Tveten will have two pictures of the "Texas City Dike Gull" in the next issue of "Audubon Field Notes". His pictures of the Prairie Chicken appeared in the July issue of "Texas Parks & Wildlife".

NEW ANTI-POLLUTION STAMPS

Four new 6-cent Anti-Pollution Commemorative postage stamps were issued on October 28, 1970. The four stamps, printed on the same sheet, read: "Save Our Soil", "Save Our Cities", "Save Our Water", and "Save Our Air". Request for specific stamps will be honored by the U.S. Postal Service.

CLEARING HOUSE, OCTOBER, 1970

Grebe, Pied-billed: (1) 24 and 28, Cove, AKM
 Pelican, White: (13-70) 4 days, (1000+) 24, Cove, AKM
 Cormorant, Sp.: (6) 21, Cove, AKM
 Double-crested: (5-10) 12, 24, 28, (16) 31, Cove, AKM
 Olivaceous: (3-7) 9, (6) 24, (1) 28, Cove, AKM
 Heron, Green: (1) 12, Cove, AKM
 Nightheron, Black-crowned: (19) 14, (2) 28, Cove, AKM
 Stork, Wood: (17) 12, Cove, AKM
 Ibis, White-faced: (2) 10, (35) 24, (7) 29, (11) 30, Cove, AKM
 Spoonbill, Roseate: (1) 3, (17) 9, (2) 12, (14) 28, Cove, AKM
 Geese, Snow and Blue: (1) 12, (17) 17, (100+) 20, (3000+) 22, (16-35) 25, 27, 30, Cove, AKM
 Mallard: (2) 29, Cove, AKM
 Duck, Mottled: (4-18) 4 days, (37) 12, Cove, AKM
 Gadwall: (5) 9, (35) 14, (100) 28, Cove, AKM
 Pintail: (NC) 3, (4) 10, Cove, AKM
 Teal, Green-winged: (6) 10, (25) 14, (100) 28, Cove, AKM
 Widgeon, American: (20) 14, Cove, AKM
 Shoveler: (25) 14, (2) 24, Cove, AKM
 Duck, Masked: (5) 17, (2) 25, (1) 31, Anahuac Refuge, DH
 SCOTER, SURF: (1) 19, female or immature, with 2 white spots on face and no white in the wings, Bayshore, LS
 Vulture, Turkey: (1) 12, 14, Cove, AKM
 Black: (2) 9, Cove, AKM
 Hawk, Sharp-shinned: (1) 1, 12, 14, 18, 24, (4) 9, Cove, AKM
 Red-tailed: (1) 5, 13, 19, 21, 31, (2) 24, 30, (5) 28, Cove, AKM
 Red-shouldered: (1) 10, 12, Cove, AKM
 Broad-winged: (3) 9, 14, (1) 28, Cove, AKM
 Marsh: (1) 2, Cove, AKM
 Falcon, Peregrine: (1) 9, Cove, AKM
 Hawk, Sparrow: (1-5) 12 days, (6-9) 5 days, (12) 28, Cove, AKM
 Coot, American: (1) 13, (175) 14, 28, Cove, AKM
 Plover, Black-bellied: (2) 24, (5) 28, Cove, AKM
 Turnstone, Ruddy: (1) 24, Cove, AKM
 Snipe, Common: (1) 19, 23, (50) 20, (30) 24, Cove, AKM
 Curlew, Long-billed: (1) 14, Cove, AKM
 Sandpiper, Spotted: (3) 9, 14, (1) 12, 22, (2) 24, Cove, AKM
 Willet: (11+) 12, (6) 24, (1) 28, Cove, AKM
 Yellowlegs, Greater: (1) 14, Cove, AKM
 Lesser: (4) 12, Cove, AKM

Dowitcher, Sp.: (125) 14, (1) 24, Cove, AKM
 Sanderling: (13) 9, (2) 28, Cove, AKM
 Avocet, American: (1) 12, 14, (6) 24, (2) 27, Cove, AKM
 Gull, Franklin's: (3) 14, Cove, AKM
 Tern, Common: (10+) 28, Cove, AKM
 Sandwich: (2-10) 9, 12, 24, 28, Cove, AKM
 Black: (2) 3, (4) 7, 9, (1) 12, Cove, AKM
Cuckoo, Yellow-billed: (1) 24, Cove, AKM
Ani, Groove-billed: (1) 21, Kempner Park, Galveston, IS
 Chuck-will's-widow: (1) 9, 12, Cove, AKM
 Nighthawk, Common: (1) 11, Cove, AKM; (1) 1, 5, 6, 7, (2) 8, (1) 14, 20, 21, 26,
 (5) 31, downtown Houston; (6) 17, Pecan Park, SE Houston, NP
 Swift, Chimney: (11+) 12, Cove, AKM; (5) 1, (3) 4, (7) 5, (c.100) 13, (c.50) 16,
 (c.25) 19, (c.30) 20, (c.25) 21, (9) 22, (c.25) 26, (4) 28, down-
 town Houston; (6) 3, (4) 4, (1) 6, 10, (10) 11, (2) 17, (10) 18,
 (1) 25, Pecan Park, SE Houston, NP; (1-5) 13 days, (60+) 23,
 Baytown, D&DL
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: (1) 7 days, (2+) 20 days, Cove, AKM
 Rufous: (1) All month, Baytown, D&DL; (1) 23, 25, Bayshore, IS
 Kingfisher, Belted: (1) 3, 5, 17, 28, (2) 6, 14, 24, 27, (8) 12, (3) 13, Cove, AKM
 Flicker, Yellow-shafted: (1-3) 16 days, (7) 12, (6) 14, 24, Cove, AKM
 Woodpecker, Pileated: (1) 14, Cove, AKM
 Red-bellied: (1) 12, 24, (2) 14, Cove, AKM
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: (2) 24, (1) 28, Cove, AKM
 Kingbird, Eastern: (3) 2, 3, 5, 7, Cove, AKM
 Flycatcher, Great Crested: (1) 8, 9, Baytown, D&DL
 Phoebe, Eastern: (3) 24, Cove, AKM
 Flycatcher, Empidonax: (1) 6, 24, (9) 9, (3) 12, Cove, AKM
 Yellow-bellied: (1) 12, Cove, AKM
 Wood Pewee, Eastern: (3) 9, (10+) 12, (1) 14, 17, Cove, AKM
 Flycatcher, Olive-sided: (1) 5, Baytown, D&DL
 Swallow, Bank: (1) 14, (3) 24, Cove, AKM
 Chickadee, Carolina: (1) 9, 12, 14, (2) 24, Cove, AKM
 Titmouse, Tufted: (1) 14, Cove, AKM
 Wren, House: (4) 12, (1) 24, (2) 28, Cove, AKM
 Catbird: (2) 9, 10, (25+) 12, Cove, AKM
 Robin: (1) 29, Baytown, D&DL
Thrush, Gray-cheeked: (1) 12, Cove, AKM
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: (12) 9, 24, (30+) 12, (1) 28, Cove, AKM
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned: (2) 29, 30, Baytown, D&DL
 Ruby-crowned: (2) 12, 28, (8) 24, Cove, AKM
 Vireo, White-eyed: (5) 12, Cove, AKM
 Solitary: (5) 9, 12, Cove, AKM; (1) 5, 22, 24, 29, (4) 30, Baytown, D&DL
 Philadelphia: (1) 12, Cove, AKM
 Warbling: (5) 12, Cove, AKM
 Warbler, Black and White: (3) 9, (15) 12, Cove, AKM
 Tennessee: (1) 12, (1) 24, Cove, AKM
 Nashville: (10+) 9, (25+) 12, (8) 24, Cove, AKM; (1) 22, 26, Baytown, D&DL
 Parula: (1) 9, (5) 12, Cove, AKM
 Magnolia: (2) 9, (30+) 12, (4) 24, Cove, AKM
 Myrtle: (2) 28, Cove, AKM
 Black-throated Green: (15) 12, (1) 24, Cove, AKM
 Ovenbird: (6) 12, (1) 28, Cove, AKM
 Kentucky: (1) 12, Cove, AKM
 Connecticut: (1) 21, Kempner Park, Galveston, IS
 Yellowthroat: (2) 12, (1) 24, Cove, AKM
 Hooded: (1) 6, 7, Baytown, D&DL
 Wilson's: (5) 9, (2) 12, (3) 28, Cove, AKM
 Canada: (8+) 12, Cove, AKM
 Redstart, American: (1) 9, (20+) 12, Cove, AKM; (1-2) 6 days, Baytown, D&DL
 Oriole, Baltimore: (1) 5, (5) 12, Cove, AKM
 Tanager, Summer: (1) 9, 12, Cove, AKM
Grosbeak, Rose-breasted: (8+) 12, (1) 14, Cove, AKM
 Black-headed: (1) 12, Baytown, NB
 Bunting, Indigo: (25) 9, (10) 12, (1) 14, (30+) 24, Cove, AKM; (3) 8, Baytown, D&DL
 Dickcissel: (1) 9, Cove, AKM

Sparrow, Savannah: (3) 31, Cove, AKM
Grasshopper: (1) 24, Cove, AKM
Seaside: (1) 9, Cove, AKM
Junco, Slate-colored: (1) 20, Baytown, D&DL
Sparrow, white-crowned: (3) 17, Cove, AKM
White-throated: (3) 29, Baytown, D&DL
Lincoln's: (1) 24, Cove, AKM

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS:

AKM Arlie K. McKay
NP Noel Pettingell
NB Nettie Busby
DH Dirk Hagemeyer
D&DL Dorothy & David Lefkovits
LS Linda Snyder

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES:

A flock of 50+ White Pelicans circling high over Highway 45 near Spring, Texas, was seen by Alice M. Heiser and Joe M. Heiser, Jr., about 10:00 AM October 12.

On October 2d Fred Abshier reported seeing 2 Masked Duck on Shoveller Pond. The date was the exact anniversary date of the first sighting in 1967. Fred believed these birds to be immature. On October 15, I saw 5 Masked Duck in the same vicinity, all in female plumage. They did all fly a few minutes after I found them. Every one of them came straight off the water like surface feeding ducks (Mallard etc.). They did not patter along the surface. The flight was short, about 200 ft.--Dirk Hagemeyer

The Clearing House was typed without benefit of our reference card concerning the method of listing rarities and accidentals by capitalizing, underlining, etc., so some corrections should be made to the above list. The Mallard, Gadwall, Surf Scoter, Ovenbird, Kentucky Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak and Slate-colored Junco should all be capitalized instead of underlined, as all were either out of season or had less than six records on the 4th Edition Field Check List.

The Surf Scoter seen by Linda Snyder had previously been seen only in 1965, according to the check list. The Black-headed Grosbeak seen by Nettie Busby at her feeder Oct. 12 had an "earliest" date of Nov. 19, 1957, listed in Steve Williams' Check List. The Slate-colored Junco in the Lefkovits yard Oct. 20 had an early date of Nov. 4, 1945 in Steve Williams' Check List.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The annual Christmas Bird Count for the Houston area will be Saturday, January 2, 1971. Wallace C. Mebane, Jr., will be in charge of this year's count.

The Houston Count area is centered at 29° 45' N, 94° 57' W and includes all points within a 15 mile diameter circle centered 3/4 mile west of Cedar Bayou on Bob Smith Road in Baytown. The territory is divided into 10 areas, with a leader for each. The Houston Count is handled by the OG.

Last year's count had 53 observers in 21 parties who logged 130 party hours and 505 party miles. 161 species numbering 109,681 birds were seen.

The 14th annual Freeport, sponsored by the Audubon Society, will be Sunday, December 27, with Victor L. Emanuel as leader. Anyone interested in participating should call either Mrs. Margaret Anderson at 668-6405 or Mrs. Norma Oates at 668-6140.

The Freeport Count area is centered 2.2 miles ENE of the intersection of Highways 288 and 332. Last year's count recorded 188 species numbering 83,376 birds. There were 32 observers in 9 parties, logging 162 party hours and 441 party miles.

There is a \$1.00 fee for all participants to help cover publication cost of the count in Audubon Field Notes.

This will be the 71st annual bird count. The period during which all participating

groups must hold their counts is from Tuesday, December 22, 1970, through Sunday, January 3, 1971. Species seen within the national count period but not seen on the area count day should also be recorded and are published as a separate list at the end of each area count.

Results of all counts with comments on the highlights is published in Audubon Field Notes, published by the National Audubon Society in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

877 counts in the U.S. and Canada were published for last year's count, 24 more than the previous high set in the 1968 count. San Diego broke the national record with 224 species, seven more than the record they set the previous year.

23 counts recorded 150 or more species. California led with 8, Florida had 7 and Texas was third with 5. Those in Texas were Freeport, 188; Corpus Christi, 180; Corpus Christi (Flour Bluff), 167; Houston, 161 and Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, 152.

Of course the more birders we have taking part in these counts, the more area we can cover closely and, naturally, this increases the chances of a good count in both species and individuals.

Other counts made in nearby areas are at Bolivar Peninsula, Galveston and Old River, which is the Anahuac, Hankamer, Moss Bluff vicinity. Birders from Harris County took part in all of these counts last year, and it is probable that these groups could all use some additional help.

COMING EVENTS

- December 3 Regular OG meeting, 7:30 PM, at the Fonde Recreation Center. Dr. Steve Thursday Williams will present a program on sparrows, with 50 slides of different species. The emphasis will be on field study and will be an effort to be of aid in the Christmas count. This will also work in well with the December field trip.
- Dec. 5 & 6 OG field trip to Palmetto State Park near Luling and Gonzales. Those Sat. & Sun. attending will assemble both mornings at 8 AM at the park entrance on US Highway 183 six miles from Luling and 12 miles from Gonzales. Fred Webster of Austin will be leader for the birding. Marilyn Crane has recommended the accommodations at the Lexington Motor Inn in Gonzales or the DeLuxe Motel in Luling. This trip will be a good chance to see a variety of sparrows and will work in well with the OG meeting program.
- December 8 Regular ONC meeting, 8 PM, Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive. The pro- Tuesday gram will be "A Sea Shell Safari--Texas Style," presented by Dorothy C. Sorrells.
- December 14 Audubon Wildlife Film, 8 PM, Greater Houston Builders Association Audi- Monday torium, 2710 W. Alabama. Meet for supper at 6 PM at Suzanne's Cafeteria. The film will be "The Untamed Olympics" presented by Walter H. Berlet of Casper, Wyoming. Mr. Berlet has produced a number of wild- life and educational films and has photographed in Mexico, Canada, Africa and Europe, as well as the United States. In "The Untamed Olympics" he has probed this mountain range on foot, by car, burro, horse- back and boat, and has recorded on film the varied life forms and mag- nificent scenery he found there. Scenes range from the Pacific beaches at low tide to the rain forest and high country. As a climax to the program Mr. Berlet filmed the 16-mile beach march of 159 conservation- ists led by the Honorable Justice William O. Douglas protesting a pro- posed highway which would ruin much of this irreplaceable wilderness.
- December 27 Freeport area Christmas Bird Count. Sunday
- January 2 Houston area Christmas Bird Count. Saturday

DUCK HUNTING LIMITS--From Texas Parks and Wildlife Department News

In the nation's younger days, waterfowl were largely taken for granted. Skies over the flyways often were blacked out by uncounted millions of ducks and geese. But greedy hunters slaughtered the wildfowl for meat and sport, and by the early 1900s a decline had begun in the numbers on the yearly migration flights. Even as hunters were taking their toll, water fowl habitat began shrinking in the face of increased drainage and cultivation of nesting and wintering areas.

Early Federal regulations, too, were lenient and uncomplicated. The annual duck seasons from 1918 through 1929, for example, lasted three and a half months and had bag limits of 25 ducks, eight geese, eight Brant and 25 Coots per day, according to U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife records.

By 1934, however, the danger signals had been heeded, and Texas and other states set their bag limits within tighter federal guidelines. The daily bag limit for Texas gunners in 1934 was 12 ducks. It dropped to 10 by 1937 and remained at that number through 1945. After World War II the situation had worsened to the point that the bag limit was lowered to seven birds in 1946 and to only four in 1947. It fluctuated from four to five birds the next few years, but hit an all-time low in 1962. That year only two birds were allowed each hunter daily.

During the time of scarcity regulations became more stringent and complicated. In addition some species of ducks, such as the Wood Duck, were given full protection of the law.

Since 1962 biologists have noted an increase in most species of ducks, thanks to international efforts at habitat preservation and hunting control.

The daily bag limit in Texas, set annually by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, remained at four ducks from 1963 through the 1969-1970 season.

This year the Commission approved a new point system for duck bag limits. This system, called the most liberal for hunters in 25 years, offers a possible daily bag limit of 10 ducks by placing a low numerical value on common ducks and a high value on species fewer in number. This system already had been adopted in several other states.

Duck season in Texas opened November 4 and continues through January 12.

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Nov 20

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