

THE BULLETIN

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# BULLETIN

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## SPONBILL COLONY AN ORNITHOLOGICAL TREASURE

When, on June 8, 1930, an exploring party of the Outdoor Nature Club visited Vingtone Island, in Galveston Bay, they beheld a wondrous sight. A cloud of birds soared aloft as the boat drew near shore, and among them flashed the rose-tinted wings of a great flock of roseate spoonbills, outlined in indescribable beauty against the clear blue of the summer sky. The island was found to be the nesting ground of a host of birds, including Louisiana herons, great blue herons, black-crowned night herons, and snowy egrets, but most important was the teeming colony of roseate spoonbills.

The spoonbill is a tropical bird of richly-colored plumage, a strong and graceful flyer, and marvelously adapted to the conditions under which it lives. Unfortunately, due to its increasing rarity and the remoteness of its usual haunts, this remarkable bird is very difficult to observe. A. C. Bent, noted ornithologist, describes the hardships endured in poling and pushing a boat mile after mile through the torturous streams and swamps of Southern Florida, to reach a breeding colony of spoonbills at the end of the day. Another colony visited, in Texas, was also in the depths of a swamp. Such conditions make extremely difficult the protection of the waning numbers of these birds, as is brought out in the message from Dr. Pearson, President of the National Association of Audubon Societies, written especially for this bulletin.

The Vingtone spoonbill rookery seems almost providentially placed for scientific observation and protection. The Outdoor Nature Club's party landed dry-shod upon the island after a pleasant two hours' voyage from Seabrook. A month later another trip was made by automobile, over roads generally good, to Smith's Point, and thence by rowboat over to the bird metropolis. The spoonbill nests were deserted, and dead birds lay in the bushes and on the ground. But there were still many of them in the vicinity, feeding with countless other birds (various herons, gulls and terns, willets, and both brown and white pelicans were noted) in the shallow water and on the flats left exposed by the receding tide.

Two smaller islands within a stone's throw of Vingtone were overrun by young birds from nests that weighted the bushes. Conclusive evidence was found that the roseate spoonbills had also nested on these two small isles, near the principal colony on Vingtone.

The spoonbills range casually over a considerable area adjacent to their nesting grounds, and if they are protected and permitted to breed undisturbed on these otherwise barren isles they will continue to add life and color to the entire surrounding region, attracting more attention each year as their presence and intriguing attributes become generally known. Should these close-lying islands remain unprotected, they are certain to be visited by numerous parties of careless curiosity seekers, driving the shy old

Vingtone Island, with its wealth of bird-life in summer, is the ornithological gem of the Texas coast. Among the various graceful species that gather here to rear their young there is found one of the few groups of roseate spoonbills seen within the borders of our country. In Florida, where the species once lived by hundreds of thousands, only a very few hundred are left, for the National Association of Audubon Societies has been fighting a losing battle for many years in its efforts to preserve this bird of brilliant plumage.

There is one colony in Louisiana, and only one, so far as is known. In Texas, there may be two or possibly three colonies, but the largest group is found on Vingtone Island, and this area should be preserved as an inviolate sanctuary for wild life for all time to come. The educational and inspirational value of the wild life of this spot to the people of Texas and the Nation cannot be overestimated.

T. Gilbert Pearson.

birds away from their nests and exposing the young to the dangers of starvation and the merciless rays of the sun, and eventually destroying the colony. There is also the hazard of collectors raiding the islands for valuable specimens, and the prejudice of a small group who would exterminate all birds feeding at or near fishing grounds, regardless of proof that no economic harm is done by such birds. During the nesting season, all the marsh- and sea-birds of a vast area

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## BUGLE BLOWS ASSEMBLY FOR TEXAS NATURE LOVERS

A survey of the National Association of Audubon Societies and the Associated Outdoor Clubs of America shows that they have affiliated groups in every section of the country, and in some states there is hardly a large town without an active outdoor club, whether it be called Audubon Society, Mountaineering Club, or some other name indicating the character of the organization. The most successful clubs have been those with the broadest and best balanced programs, making provision for fun and good-fellowship, stimulating recreation, pursuit of outdoor hobbies, and scientific and civic endeavor. In many cases, groups in neighboring cities have formed federations, conducting joint outings, publishing a periodical bulletin, and working together for their common objects.

The practical value of these organizations has been amply demonstrated. Collectively, they have exerted a tremendous constructive influence in determining policies governing National Parks, forests, wild life conservation, and related matters. Individually, their worth as assets to their respective communities has increased each year.

In recent years, clubs of this kind have sprung up in several Texas cities. Most of them have flourished, broadening the scope of their activities and strengthening their membership, both in numbers and diversity of interests represented. Still the movement has not taken hold in Texas as it has, for instance, in California and Colorado. Only lack of initiative on the part of Texans themselves can account for this. Every Texas city has its attractions for lovers of nature; each has its students of natural history and woodcraft, scientists, camera enthusiasts, hikers, and others who follow the trail, for one reason or another. Our State has a year-round outdoor climate, with the delights of all seasons and the extremes of none. It has scenery of unlimited variety and charm, enlivened by a wealth of native species, both plant and animal, that no other state can surpass. Here are glorious opportunities for healthful pleasures afield; here are rare natural and historical treasures to be guarded, and vital resources to be developed and conserved.

All that we lack now that others have is organization—that effective modern instrument of co-operation based upon man's ancient gregarious instinct. An outdoor club, modeled after the most active and successful

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—The—  
**OUTDOOR NATURE CLUB**  
 of Houston, Texas

Organized, 1923  
 Affiliated with  
 National Association of Audubon  
 Societies  
 Associated Outdoor Clubs of America

**Officers for 1931**

R. A. Sell, President.  
 Alston Clapp, Sr., Vice-President.  
 Kenneth Hartley, Vice-President.  
 J. M. Heiser, Jr., Cor. Secretary.  
 Elsie Mae DeLaney, Rec. Secretary.  
 Ruth Beasley, Treasurer.  
 R. L. Padgett, Auditor.  
 Tillie Schmidt, Custodian.  
 Mabel Cassell, Parliamentarian.

**Board of Directors**

All officers, and L. H. Daingerfield,  
 Eud A. Randolph, Rex D. Frazier, J.  
 W. Stiles, Dr. A. J. James, Jack I.  
 Pullen.

Anyone interested in the objects of the Club may become a member upon presentation of signed application card, endorsed by two members and accompanied by membership fee for the current calendar year.

**Membership Fees**

Annual Member . . . . .	\$2.00
Associate Member . . . . .	\$5.00
Life Member . . . . .	\$50.00

Correspondence regarding this bulletin may be addressed to

J. M. Heiser, Jr.,  
 1724 Kipling Street Houston, Texas

Regular meetings of the Club are held in the Public Library at 8 p. m. on the first and third Thursdays of the month. The first meeting is principally for business, committee reports, display of specimens and photographs, and informal discussion. An educational lecture, exhibition of nature films, or some other formal feature is usually planned for the second semi-monthly meeting.

Arrangements for Club outings are announced by the Outing Committee at the meeting preceding the trip, and usually in the newspapers. On special occasions notices are mailed out, but this provision can not always be made. These field trips are open to all members and to visitors who are willing to follow the few simple rules observed on all outings sponsored by the Club.

**Objects of the Club**

To make stronger the bond of friendly understanding that exists among all lovers of Nature.

To study our local flora and fauna and work for the preservation of all useful and interesting forms.

To co-operate with other societies throughout the land in the work of conservation and observation.

To encourage Nature study, tree planting, and appreciation and protection of wild life among children and adults.

To encourage hiking and interest in the outdoors as a source of health and inspiration.

The Club's annual Christmas bird census was taken on December 21, 1930, by L. H. Daingerfield and Joe Heiser, Jr., on an all-day trip from Cedar Bluff along the San Jacinto River, through thicket, open woods, marsh and fields. At dusk, a flock of more than 250 crows were observed at their roosting place. Totals for the day: 1,011 birds, of 43 species. The complete list was published in Houston newspapers and in Bird-Lore of January-February, 1931.

The only other Texas list in the Audubon Societies' census was sent from Fort Worth by four members of the Isely family. They listed 45 species—two more than shown on our list. Good observers, those Iselys, but we're out to beat them next Christmas.

The Outdoor Nature Club will have to hustle to live up to the compliment received in the editor's introduction to Mrs. Bessie Reid's fine bird story in the December number of Nature Magazine. Covering Texas in a single issue was a difficult task gamely tackled by Messrs. Westwood and Hannah and their fellow workers on Nature Magazine's staff. The Club is glad to have had the opportunity to co-operate with them. And our thanks are due Mrs. Reid, Camera Pilot Jack I. Pullen, and other members for their part in the result.

During the four years ended with the nesting season of 1930, 2,038 birds were banded by J. W. Stiles and proper record forwarded to the U. S. Biological Survey. Mr. Stiles has received reports on several of his numbers, one of the most interesting being a Louisiana Heron banded on Bird Island, near Galveston, in June, 1929, and taken at Progreso, Yucatan, in October, 1930.

Texas, with a greater variety of bird life than any other state, is still without a complete, authoritative book to which its citizens and visitors may refer for ornithological knowledge. Meanwhile, Dr. H. C. Oberholzer's splendid manuscript, given to the State to meet this growing need, lies unavailable, awaiting measures for its printing and distribution. It is hoped that means will soon be secured for the publication of this important scientific work.

The cost of printing this bulletin has been contributed by a friend of the Club interested in its work. It is dedicated to our associates, the Nature Club of East Texas, whose tramping grounds center about Beaumont and Port Arthur. From many memorable experiences, we know them to be wholehearted conservationists, lovers of nature, and good scouts. Here's to them!

The Art Committee urges every member of the camera brigade to submit at least one new picture of real merit—several, if possible—to the Houston Museum of Fine Arts for the annual exhibit of amateur photography. This is a form of appreciation and co-operation that the Club has encouraged from the beginning, and is particularly eager to continue. After the Museum's exhibit comes our own nature photography display in the Public Library. So get into action, camera shooters.

Many specimens of unusual interest have been observed, and in several instances captured or photographed, by Club members. Among these were: An albino harlequin, or coral snake (*Elaps fulvius*), which is now preserved in the Smithsonian Institute, at Washington; an albino horn, or hoop snake (*Farancia abacura*), pink-eyed, with the blue-black and vivid red coloration of the normal specimen replaced by waxy white and pink, but having the hard, sharp-tipped tail and otherwise apparently like the typical form; an albino gopher, trapped at its burrow; a melanistic opossum, in a coat of almost sable blue; a two-headed Say's kingsnake, small but very active; amphiumas and sirens, strange amphibians which, according to some recent scientific papers, are supposed not to range as far west as Houston; a red haw tree full of fruit and at the same time in full bloom (November—probably result of long drought followed by heavy rains), and an orchard oriole nest containing four oriole and six cowbird eggs.

The ladies can economize better with group finances than they can with their own, according to some of the married men of the Club, who note the success of our fair Treasurer, and her equally fair predecessor, at husbanding the Club's income. It may seem remarkable that so much can be accomplished with the limited funds received from membership fees, until someone explains that practically all of the entertainment features at our semi-monthly meetings are contributions of members or friends, and all the expenses of hikes and outings are borne by those participating. This leaves the regular receipts of the Club for actual educational and conservation work in which all members, whether active or not, are interested. Still we haven't been able to make a start on that Endowment Fund, the benefits of which have been discussed so many times. Maybe we can stage a gold rush or a pearl-diving contest. That's an idea for the Outing Committee.

## THE "BIG TREES" OF TEXAS

Newspapers throughout the state have recently published a message from that grand old warrior of the Texas Forestry Association, W. Goodrich Jones, of Waco, that should appeal to every Texan worthy of the name.

The great long leaf pine forests of East Texas have almost disappeared. Only a few hundred acres are left, mostly in Newton and neighboring counties. Here are the last surviving specimens of those magnificent trees, the grandeur of which is a sight to be cherished not only in memory and in musty books, but in a fitting sample of the original forest, forever preserved in its primeval state.

Aware of the need and opportunity, the Fortieth Legislature of Texas appropriated \$25,000 for the purchase of such a tract. But there is an important proviso. This sum must be matched by a public donation of the same amount within a specified time. That time is almost up now. The public contribution has not been secured, the appropriation is in danger of being lost, and the last stands of Texas longleaf pines—some of them 200 to 300 years old, and towering seemingly to the sky's blue dome—are falling rapidly. With them are disappearing also the clear, spring-red streams, the varied deciduous growths and wild flowers that flourish along them, and the myriad wild creatures that abound in such a natural wonderland.

Against the relentless swing of axe and saw, the swift passage of time and the slow awakening of public response are pitted the vision and generosity of a few Texans of means who can make this splendid park an everlasting memorial to their names. Through the practical patriotism of its citizens, California has preserved vast groves of redwoods and sequoias, its famed "big trees." Surely Texas can and will save for posterity at least one worthy sample of those great longleaf pine forests that have enriched many of its citizens.

If you can help, write at once to W. Goodrich Jones, Box 1585, Waco, Texas. He will gladly furnish information in regard to the proposed longleaf pine park, its plan, and what it means to the people of Texas.

We need parks, state and county, for the recreation of our people, and to attract visitors here from other states. Texas has natural scenery whose charm compares favorably with that of Colorado, California and Wyoming. It is potentially a great asset, economically as well as otherwise.—Inaugural address of Gov. R. S. Sterling.

## LEGIONS OF NATURE MAKE LAST STAND AT SAN JACINTO

Every expedition of the Outdoor Nature Club into the woods of Harris and adjoining counties confirms the opinion that by far the greatest abundance and variety of wild life and incomparably the most picturesque and primeval scenery remaining within fairly easy reach of Houston are to be found in the San Jacinto River bottoms. Scientific and civic authorities, exploring the luxuriant swamps and wooded, sandy ridges with Club members, have concurred in this viewpoint. Hence, it seems particularly unfortunate that no progress has been made in the plan to establish a great riverside park in those economically useless overflow lands. Even the Club's efforts to secure a small, selected tract (of little possible value except for the uses we have in mind) as a preserve for scientific, historical and aesthetic purposes have so far been unsuccessful.

Forest land, though left undeveloped, does not remain in its natural state unless protected from changing influences. Trees are felled, the rarer and more interesting birds and small wild animals are driven away by indiscriminate shooting, ornamental vegetation and wild flowers are carried away or destroyed by thoughtless picnickers, lakes and streams are polluted, dynamited or sanded, fires kill young growth and burn the rich humus that covers the forest floor, and scattered trash and wreckage complete the "civilizing process." Thus luxuriance, variety and natural beauty are replaced by poverty, monotony and comparative ugliness. Gone are the sources of rare pleasure and inspiration, the opportunities for scientific observation and experiment, the possibilities for economic study that existed in the original estate.

The change from excess to scarcity of wilderness in the last few years has been so rapid that, despite increasing interest in conservation, there has been insufficient understanding of the need for preserving virgin areas of every type for the many present and potential values in them. Sportsmen, first to feel the pinch of modern conditions in the dearth of game, have insured the perpetuation of their sport by acquiring large hunting and fishing reserves in the best territory available. There are many such clubs in the vicinity of Houston. But other classes of people having special interest in nature and natural conditions, (including artists, teachers, scientists, economists, writers, and many others), because of lack of foresight and organ-

ized effort have nothing left except the formal parks of the city and the shorn and shattered woods beyond.

By reason of their inaccessibility, the broken areas within the bends of the San Jacinto have remained as storehouses of nature and treasuries of primeval beauty, while all other territory within the same radius of town has been reduced to the familiar "standardized" condition already described. But recent developments have removed the barriers that formerly safeguarded the San Jacinto's unique wildness. Every day that these areas are left open and unguarded reduces their native charm and damages the only value they possess. Whether any of them are to be saved before gradual change renders them worthless is a matter for the consideration of all the people of Houston, though special responsibility rests upon those familiar with every aspect of the situation through personal knowledge and experience.

## DALLAS MEMORIAL

Dedication of a bird sanctuary comprising 200 acres of water and woodland at Bachman's Lake, eight miles north of here, was held Saturday in honor of the late John W. Stayton, under auspices of his friends and the Camp Fire Girls of Dallas, whose lodge is situated on the site.

Several prominent persons made addresses.

Mr. Stayton, at the time of his death in 1927, had been editor of Holland's Magazine for nine years and had previously served in a like capacity and period as editor of the Corpus Christi Caller.

His major contribution, besides his writing, was his constant and effective effort in behalf of the protection of the wild life of the state. He was a native Texan, having been born in Victoria and reared in San Antonio.—A. P. item in Houston Post-Dispatch, April 27, 1930.

The University of Vermont is establishing a 92-acre bird and game sanctuary on the southeast border of Burlington, as a result of a Nature move sponsored by a group of outdoor lovers who saw a beautiful section covered with primeval timber about to pass into the hands of lumbermen. The refuge will be used as an outdoor laboratory for college students and others interested in forestry, zoology, botany and kindred sciences, and is in charge of Professor H. F. Perkins. The tract is heavily wooded with pine and hemlock, and is said to harbor much bird and animal life.—Nature Magazine, July, 1930.

### SPOONBILL COLONY AN ORNITHOLOGICAL TREASURE

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are gathered in a few concentrated colonies. This concentration is the great danger, for in a few hours a single human being could kill thousands of birds which, at other seasons, are scattered along the entire coast and over the countryside.

There is little likelihood of this natural bird haven being purchased and protected by the Federal Government, as the recent Act authorizing the purchase of territory for preserves was intended to provide feeding and resting places for migratory fowl rather than breeding grounds for species more or less local in distribution. At the farm community of Smith's Point the bayshore is a high bluff commanding a clear view of that whole section of the bay in which these valuable bird colonies are situated. A competent warden posted at this vantage point, and provided with a small motorboat or outboard motor, could give adequate protection to the Vingtune spoonbills and all their interesting neighbors. The cost of such protection would be infinitesimal in comparison with the value of the unique asset to be preserved.

The preservation of the Vingtune roseate spoonbill rookery is, for many reasons, a matter of concern to the people of the whole United States. In recognition of this fact, the National Association of Audubon Societies may be willing to take over the task of guarding the Vingtune group of islands, as was done in the case of Green Island, on the lower Texas coast. If such an arrangement could be made it would be ideal, insuring both the protection of these bird colonies and the fullest utilization of their educational and scientific advantages. Interested people everywhere are urging that provision be made for prompt, adequate and permanent safeguarding of the spoonbill nesting isles. Regardless of the attitude of outsiders, however, final accountability falls upon the people of Texas, for it is within our borders that these rare birds have taken up their abode and title to the islands themselves is vested in the State of Texas.

### PARKS AND SANCTUARIES

Perhaps one of the most accurate and significant indications of the South's growing commercial wealth is the increasing regularity with which men give to their cities and their states great tracts of land for parks. Thus the gift of one hundred and seventy-six acres of high-priced land to the southern city of Dallas recently; donated by E. J. Kiest, a newspaper publisher of that metropolis, as a memorial to his wife. Thus countless other similar gifts to cities all over the territory of Dixie—royal and generous

### BUGLE BLOWS ASSEMBLY FOR TEXAS NATURE LOVERS

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of those already established elsewhere, should be started in every city in Texas where none exists at present. Meanwhile, the foundation for a State federation of such clubs may be built up by sectional conferences and exchanges of correspondence until enough progress has been made to warrant a general meeting. Some preliminary work on this plan has been done. Let us hope our next bulletin may report a substantial advance towards the goal.

grants. To few men and women is given the wealth with which to make such gifts, and to fewer is allotted the vision which incites them.

And as these city parks increase, and bring more and more pleasure to humanity, there is increasing still another sort of park. Just such a one was the gift of a North Carolinian, who some months ago presented to his state several thousand acres of coastal property, to be held in perpetuity as a water- and wild-fowl sanctuary. It becomes one of the largest of such tracts on the Atlantic coast.

The South needs more of such memorials, particularly of the latter caliber. The countless acres lying along our coasts and in our hills, remote and impossible to agriculture, offer opportunities too great to be computed for the preservation of our wild game. And their costs are not the four-figured acre values of city land. Most of them can be purchased for a twentieth of the urban prices of today.

They take up where the metropolitan parks leave off. The city tracts bring to children safe and pleasant places in which to play, but they cannot bring to them the chief joy and asset of the great out-of-doors which is the abounding wild life of field and stream. The city park is a benefit, and a most laudable one, to the city; the wild-life refuge is an asset to the entire Nation.

The problem, as we have said before and as we intend to keep on saying, belongs distinctly to the South. Here the creatures of the wild come for warmth and pleasure; and it is here, during that season, that they must be protected by just such generously provided sanctuaries. If we would preserve to our children that happiness in Nature which is the birthright of childhood.

These gifts, plainly, can be made and should be made. They are, be it said in all justice, being made. In several Southern states, definite programs are under way, looking to the conservation of our wild things. But as yet, we have availed ourselves of no more than an iota of the boundless potentialities that lie ready to hand. —Holland's Magazine, December, 1930.

### NATIONAL PARK POLICY

A positive, unvarying policy in the administration of our National Parks is an essential safeguard. Two of the major features of this policy might be expressed in the slogan: "No additions below standard—No eliminations or exchanges in territory designated as National Parks." Any deviation from this policy establishes dangerous precedent and lays the National Park system open to the attack of unfriendly interests skilled in the use of manipulation, subterfuge and misleading propaganda.

### ELBOW ROOM AND INSPIRATION

The Houston Park Board has voiced the sentiment of the community in declaring that territory adjacent to our bayou banks should be held by the City and its natural beauty preserved. This will leave room for occasional overflows without damage and will maintain the typical character of our local scenery, most of which is concentrated along the bayous.

### CLEVELAND PARK

The erection of an athletic stadium in the picturesque valley surrounding the lake in Cleveland Park would, we feel, be a serious mistake. This is one of the finest natural landscapes in Harris County. An athletic stadium probably is needed in the West End section of the city, but to put the structure in Cleveland Park and develop a landscaped park of equal merit elsewhere would cost twice as much as building the stadium in a suitable location nearby and leaving the present park unspoiled. We have plenty of vacant space, but few real beauty spots. Let us profit from past experience, both in the alteration of parks and the location of public buildings.

Before closing, we want to pay tribute to the Garden Clubs of Houston for their splendid work, and to the Houston Museum and Scientific Society, which has made definite progress towards its aim of a great museum of natural sciences here. Having to some extent unburdened our minds of accumulated problems in this bulletin, we may be able in the next one to talk about some of the good things being done by our contemporaries in Houston, Texas, and the U. S. A. A whole book could well be devoted to the commendable deeds and designs of the Texas Fish and Game Commission and the State Park Board. There are some pending matters, too, both local and national, that involve differences of opinion, giving us a chance to sit judicially on the fence or to hop off on either side and wield our shilalah. Be patient, friends!

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