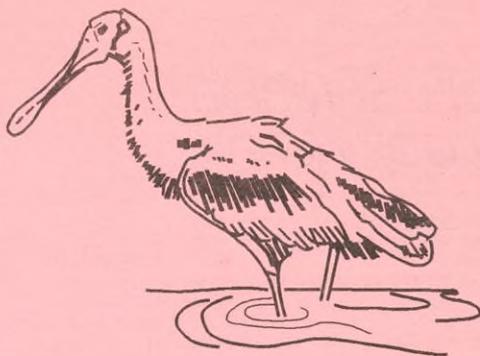


The Spoonbill



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Judith Mueller Boyce, Editor; Don Richardson, Technical Consultant

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COMING EVENTS

Monday, April 1: ORNITHOLOGY GROUP MEETING. 7:30 P.M. Harris County Bayland Community Center (north side of Bissonnet just west of Hillcroft). H. Douglas Pratt, artist, ornithologist and Staff Research Associate of the Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science, will present a program of birds of the South Pacific and Hawaii. He considers his most important work to be A Field Guide to the Birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific. His paintings have appeared in numerous periodicals including Audubon, Natural History, American Birds and The Living Bird. Confusing April migrants will be the subject of Learning Corner at 7:00 P.M.

Saturday, April 13: ONC/OG/CONCHOLOGY FIELD TRIP TO MATAGORDA ISLAND. This year we will participate in the annual Matagorda Adventure to be sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. (TPWD). Reservation forms are available at all OG/ONC/CONCHOLOGY meetings or through Dorothy Parmesan (622-7139). Boat fare (\$15.00 Adults, \$10 Children) must be paid in advance and mailed with your reservation form to TPWD. Recommended motel: Tarpon Inn, Port Aransas (512) 983-2606. Notify Dorothy if you are coming so she can make arrangements for transportation on Matagorda.

Saturday, April 27: OG FIELD TRIP TO HIGH ISLAND to witness spring migration at its best. We will look for shorebirds, cuckoos, swallows, warblers, tanagers and much, much more. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the picnic tables on the west side of Hwy. 124 just north of High Island. Leader to be announced. Direct questions to David Bradford at 855-2615.

Monday, May 6: ORNITHOLOGY GROUP MEETING. 7:30 P.M. Harris County Bayland Community Center. Colonial nesting birds of Galveston Bay will be the subject of the program presented by Mike Lang of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sunday, August 11: OG PELAGIC TRIP OUT OF PORT ARANSAS on the Scat-Cat, an 80 foot catamaran, for birders only. Mike Austin will be our leader as we look for Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Northern Gannet, boobies, shearwaters and more. The boat leaves from Fisherman's Wharf in Port Aransas at 6:00 A.M. and is scheduled to return at approximately 5:00 P.M. A \$20 deposit must be mailed to David Bradford, 18046 Green Hazel Drive, Houston, TX 77084 as soon as possible to hold your place. Deposit checks must be received before June 30, 1991. The \$20 balance must be paid when boarding (5:30 A.M.) on the day of the trip. Rooms are available at the Best Western Seaside Motel (512-729-4105) in Port Aransas,

ten minutes from the boat. A room for four is approximately \$66.00 per night. Contact David Bradford for further details at 713-855-2615.

Saturday, September 21: 1991 SIXTH ANNUAL TEXAS COASTAL CLEANUP from 9:00 A.M. to Noon. Last September, 15,000 Beach buddies removed 233 tons of trash from Texas beaches. Plan on joining your Ornithology Group and Houston Audubon friends at Bolivar Flats and help make the "Flats" safe of birds.

NEWS BRIEFS

AND YARD REPORTS

.....The March 4, 1991 meeting of the Ornithology Group was called to order by Chairman Richard Uzar at 7:35 P.M. The first order of business was an expression of appreciation by the membership to Tony and Phyllis Frank for their superb work on the Christmas Count Supplement to the Spoonbill.

The nominees for the 1991-92 officers of the O.G. were elected by acclamation.

Chairman - Bob Honig
Vice Chairman - David Bradford
Treasurer - Ed LeBeau
Secretary - Christine Bourgeois

Membership Chairman Ed Rozenburg introduced the evening's speaker, David Perry. A native of England, David Perry is currently Program Coordinator at Russ Pittman Park. His topic was British birds and their American counterparts. Gretchen Mueller, Secretary

.....PUBLIC INPUT SOUGHT ON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE PLAN
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is seeking ideas from the public on management of the Service's National Wildlife Refuge System. A series of 31 public meetings will be held across the country beginning in March to allow interested individuals and others an opportunity to offer suggestions on management programs and policies for the next 10-15 years on the more than 450 refuges in the 93 million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System. A draft environmental impact statement will be developed and public hearings will be held to allow additional comment by interested parties. One meeting was held in Austin on March 20, however those interested in attending the public hearings should contact the USFWS regional office in Albuquerque at (505) 766-8041 or 766-3940.

NOEL'S NICHE LOOKING BACK

By Noel Pettingell
30 YEARS AGO/FROM MARCH 1961 SPOONBILL

The Fun of Lists by Roger Barton (Newark, N.J. Sun News, 11-27-60)

Some of the fun in birdwatching consists of keeping lists. There are many kinds. One is the life list, which records all the birds seen in a person's lifetime. Others are lists of all birds seen in a year, or on a trip or all the birds ever seen from one's yard. And, of course, there are the Christmas counts that have been made across the land each year since 1900.

Some birdwatchers scorn lists, but most keep lists of various kinds. The late Ludlow Griscom once told me that his life list included 2,500 birds that he had seen in many lands. Roger Tory Peterson includes 423 species in the life list that he publishes in his Field Guide to the Birds. However, this list counts only species east of the Rockies and excludes accidentals and strays. Two of the correspondents of Outdoors have seen 123 different kinds of birds in their own yards. The Urner Ornithological Club has for the last quarter century kept Big Day lists. These are counts of birds seen by members of the club on a full May day of 20-24 hours afield. Par for the course is 160, although as many as 175 have been tallied.

List keeping can be competitive. A birdwatcher competes against his own record as a golfer competes against his best score. Birdwatchers, including bird clubs, compete against one another. I keep a life list; it now numbers 485, and I should like to bring it up to 500 within a year. But where shall I find the additional 15 birds? On offshore trips, in the Florida Keys, in the Southwest? This is a problem. List keeping can present problems if it gets out of hand!

Notes: (1) Margaret Anderson has recorded a total of 181 species in her yard at 2913 Amherst in West University Place since January 1, 1962. (2) On May 19, 1990, a new all-time-high state Big Day record of 210 species was set by one of 40 teams participating in the N.J. Audubon Society's 7th Annual World Series of Birding. (3) See "The Big Day Primer" by Mike Austin and Houston Audubon Society Spring Migratory Madness in the February 1991 issue of The Spoonbill.

ARTICLES

CONSERVATION PERMITS: AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME by Bob Honig

The days of the free ride may be over. It appears that a bill to create a "Conservation Permit" will be introduced into the Texas Legislature in the near future (Houston Chronicle, 2-24-91 p.238). The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) wants to require that all persons who visit state parks and wildlife management areas purchase a permit (for \$10 maybe). "What nonsense!" you say. "A license to watch birds, canoe or picnic!" Well, a license has been required for the privilege to hunt and fish for many, many years (and not just on state lands). It's time that those of use who are not hunters carry our share of the load.

Hikers, photographers, picnickers, boaters and, yes, even birdwatchers--we all need wide open spaces. Yet, although we don't harvest a resource as do hunters, the lands on which these non-consumptive activities occur require maintenance and management, and that consumes human resources and materiel. In turn, this requires money, and we live in an age when it is tougher and tougher to fund public projects. As a result we should expect to pay our own way to support the programs from which we benefit, and that includes access to public lands. The funds generated by the Conservation Permit program will be crucial to the proper management and protection of TPWD-administered lands and may play a significant role in the acquisition of new properties. TPWD Executive Director, Andy Sansom, also proposes to fund public education programs, in particular for schoolchildren whose values will shape the use of the land in the future!

I'm not certain I agree with all the details of the proposed Conservation Permit program as described in The Chronicle, but I fully support the concept of a fee for all users of public lands. In fact, I'd love to see this concept applied to federal lands such as the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) system (Aransas NWR and several other NWRs already charge admission fees). It may provide the infusion of funds that would permit numerous refuges to implement worthwhile programs; for example, right here on the Upper Texas Coast, extra funds might allow Brazoria NWR to open full-time rather than the current one weekend per month.

(Of course, if you agree with this approach, you can act right now by buying a federal duck stamp, even if you are not a hunter, and/or a Texas non-game wildlife stamp.)

UNCOMMON BIRDS OF THE UPPER TEXAS COAST by P. D. Hulce

Ross' Goose (Chen rossii)

Identification of the diminutive Ross' Goose is primarily concerned with distinguishing it from its larger and much more common relative, the Snow Goose (Chen caerulescens). On the Upper Texas Coast (UTC), Ross' Goose is almost always seen in flocks of snow geese, either flying or on the ground.

Key field marks to look for Ross' Goose pertain to the shape and structure of the bill, the head and neck and the overall body size. The bill is very short and deep, almost stubby and it has a relatively straight culmen. At the base of the bill is a series of often hard to see warty protuberances that often appear as a greyish-green band. The bill also lacks the black grinning lips of the Snow Goose. The bill of the Snow Goose is longer and has a distinct hump at the basal end of the culmen. Immature Ross' Goose has a pink bill while the immature Snow Goose has a blackish bill.

Ross' Goose has a short thick neck and a small rounded head, imparting a more gentle look than that of the Snow Goose. Ross' Goose is also less likely to show rusty stains on the neck and head.

Overall length of Ross' averages about 6 inches less than the Snow, and this can be particularly noticeable in flight. Immature snow geese and some adults may approach the Ross' in size, but the immature Snow Goose is usually much greyer than the immature Ross'. Typical immature Ross' Goose may show grey only on the crown and nape. Ross' Goose is a more agile flyer and has slightly faster wing beats.

Ross' Goose frequents the same habitats as the Snow Goose, primarily grasslands and grainfields, as well as prairie lakes and wetlands.

The best time to look for Ross' Goose on UTC is between November and February, although a few individuals occasionally arrive in October and stay as late as March. Most sightings occur in West Harris County, among the multitudes of snow geese, but this bird is also seen throughout the UTC, especially on the western side, and most sightings are of one or a few birds, but larger concentrations of up to 20 and 30 individuals have occurred. There are only two reported sightings of the rare Blue phase, in November 1984 and in February 1985.

BEACH BIRDING WITH A PURPOSE
by Richard Uzar

A dozen OG'ers gathered themselves at the Bolivar Ferry landing on the 12th of January 1991. It was cold, looked like rain and a steady 25 mph North wind greeted us on arrival. We came to conduct the first-ever statewide census of an endangered shorebird species, the Piping Plover. No one until now knew how many of these birds wintered on Texas' 367 mile coastline. We also intended to tally two other threatened species, Snowy Plover and Reddish Egret.

I was with the group covering Bolivar Flats. We split into three teams and birded all of the area between the Ferry and Rollover Pass. Additional OG members were scouring the beaches from Sabine to the Sargent beach. Volunteers elsewhere were taking similar actions from Florida to Brownsville, Texas and even into northern Mexico. Though the tide here was extremely low, our hopes were high. We scoured our area till midday with little success--only thirteen birds were located!

The Flats group shared a lunch wondering if this would be for naught. We determined to continue birding individually around Bolivar Peninsula till high tide late that afternoon when we would try again. High tide wouldn't be too high if the wind persisted, due North, as it had all morning. After lunch we ran into Charles Jones who was working the areas East of Rollover Pass. Charles reported experiencing a morning similar to ours. It wasn't too encouraging but he was going to continue throughout the day. Everyone was hopeful and committed, real birders happy for opportunity to make constructive contribution through what they normally do for pleasure.

The group gathered again about 16:00 hr. at the Flats. Things were looking better. Arriving at the rapidly deteriorating barricade separating the mudflat as a non-vehicular area, we spotted a group of 25 pipers. They were packed into a close group at the high part of the open beach as piping plovers are wont to do. Another seven were sighted at the beach's edge, including one banded bird not previously noted in Texas.

Much relieved, we set right in to our "work." In two groups this time--one to look at the beach while the other searched the Flats. On this go-round, seventy-one birds were tallied in our count area. All the birds were sighted on the beach. We found none on the mud at the high tide. Piping Plovers will be seen working just ahead of a rising tide but are most active on the mud with the falling tide.

Statewide the result was exciting. On the upper coast, we located 202 Piping Plovers and 76 Snowy Plovers. The coastal bend area groups counted 1079 piping and 566 snowy, and 598 piping and 697 snowy were sighted on the lower coast. The totals then were an impressive 1879 Piping Plovers and 1339 Snowy Plovers. A surprisingly large group of 750 pipers were counted in Louisiana, and Florida reported about 400 birds. The Reddish Egret numbers were not surprisingly low with less than 200 birds seen. Our group at Bolivar Flats recorded only one individual.

The estimated world population of Piping Plovers is only about 3800. This census provides researchers with new information on wintering habits and habitats and will dramatically illustrate the importance of the wintering homes of these birds. "Wintering"--we birders know--is a misnomer because the Piping Plover is found here from early August through mid May. Our gulf beaches and mudflats are clearly a critical habitat and "home" to the Piping Plover. The species is taking a beating on its nesting ground primarily from human encroachment. If their habitat here continues under attack chances for the species survival will be grim. Growing demand for expanded development and recreational access to previously inaccessible beach areas do not bode well for the Piping Plover.

The group on Bolivar Flats had other numerous other sightings of note. Some of these were 2800 Lesser Scaup, 2 scoters, a Peregrine Falcon, 440 Black-bellied Plover, 8000 American Avocet, 390 Willet, 80 Long-billed Curlew, 90 Marbled Godwit, 10,000 Forster's Tern and, of particular delight, 25 Marsh Wren singing to beat the band.

I want to thank the OG members who braved the day with only joy and a lapel button as reward for their efforts. Bill and Jean Harwell and Ann and Ray Booth walked a million miles on the flats. Judy Boyce, Gretchen Mueller, Jim Day and John Zagorski found the Peregrine Falcon. Tony and Phyllis Frank chauffeured and kept Dwight Peake and me in line as we attempted to record a census of the entire population of birds on the Flats at sunset. Ted Eubanks, a member of the USFWS Piping Plover Recovery Team, searched Galveston and Follet's Island beaches. P.D. Hulce ran the area from Sargent to the San Bernard NWR with Don Francis and Mark Scheuerman. Every one of these passed a good time doing this "work" and I'm real proud of the OG for putting forth the effort in producing our portion of the results.

MY BACKYARD WINTER JOY
by Margaret Jones

In the January 1989 issue of The Spoonbill, I wrote about a Bullock's Oriole coming to my hummingbird feeder. He spent several months, from December into March, being joined for a few weeks by a female and a first-year bird. This was a full adult male and I prefer to think that the first-year male I watched at a neighbor's hummingbird feeder the winter before was the same bird.

So it was with delight that I welcome a (the same?) Bullock's Oriole to my hummer feeder in December 1989 until March 1990. And guess what..."my" Bullock's came back in December 1990, and is still here the last week of February 1991.

He is an old friend now. I see him numerous times during the day from my study windows, perched on top of the rod that holds the feeder, sitting on top of the cyclone fence to which the pole holding the rod is attached, hopping around in the photinia on the other side of the fence, and even poking around in the flower bed if there are starlings and sparrows gleaning among the shrubs. Sometimes I know he is out there even though I'm in another part of the house when I hear him scolding about something. His scold is a prolonged rattle, and when I look I find him sitting on the rod, scolding and looking in all directions. What brings it on, I never know...could be a neighbor's cat, but then I've seen him sitting up there with nary a sound when there is a cat lurking nearby.

Even the Pine Warbler who has been gracing the neighborhood since early in January (and pine trees are extremely scarce in my part of Bellaire) can't compare to the delight "my" Bullock's gives me. And I know that sometime in March one day he won't be there, and I'll have to wait until next December to see if he will come again.

In Bent's Life Histories series, the varied foods of the Bullock's make for interesting reading: animal matter such as insects, beetles, ants, moths, caterpillars, etc. and vegetable matter, mostly fruit. Bent reports Bullock's Oriole being seen drinking nectar from bird of paradise flowers, ocotillo and honey from eucalyptus tree blossoms. If you have access to the Bent book dealing with orioles, read about the Bullock's Oriole, it is a truly delightful bird. And I still call it "Bullock's" in spite of what the AOU says!

BIRDING IN VENEZUELA

Not a book review...by Mark Kulstad

Bob Behrstock's book review of Mary Lou Goodwin's Birding in Venezuela (December 1990 The Spoonbill) suggested to me that UTC birders might also be interested in slightly different information on Venezuelan birding, even if it comes from an Ornithology Group member with considerably less than professional skills. Here is a follow-up on Bob's enjoyable and useful review, offering a few thoughts on Venezuelan birding from someone who has traveled there recently and whose experiences might provide an interesting perspective.

Unfortunately, I did not learn of the book Bob reviewed until reaching Venezuela. But since its information was not really essential for the type of trip I had planned, this was not a major disappointment. Rather than renting a vehicle and looking for birds on my own (as a couple I met from Michigan had, apparently using Goodwin's book to good effect), I headed for birdy places like a naturalist ranch in the llanos and a nature station in the coastal mountains where transportation was taken care of and/or birds were close at hand. When I made my third stop, in the Andes around Merida, I hired a guide service with some birding experience for the few days there. They provided transportation and site knowledge at a cost not much different from that of 4-wheel drive rental alone.

On the basis of the trip, I would certainly recommend a visit to Venezuela for those interested in South American birding. Venezuela is spoken of highly in birding literature, and I found nothing to tarnish its reputation. The country is modern and fairly easy to travel in, the airfare to Caracas was less than to many locations in the U.S., and the ecological and scenic variety is extraordinary. Birdlife is diverse, indeed verging on overwhelming, but I was pleasantly surprised to learn that even an individual birding alone could make considerable progress and would be well rewarded for his or her efforts in sorting through the tropical menagerie.

If someone were to ask me which of the three areas visited would provide the best birding for an abbreviated trip, I would probably vote for the llanos, although all were good and the allure of the mountains is hard to resist. The llanos were far more diverse than I had imagined, much different from the image of plains that the typical translation had conjured up in my mind. Certainly grasslands and similar habitats were present, but so were thick tropical woodlands along narrow and very birdy waterways, as well as marshes, broad rivers, and savannas. The Venezuelan ranches specializing in ecotourism are well known, and I would definitely recommend one of them for llanos birding. Hato Piñero is probably the most famous, but I stayed at a newly opened ranch, Doña Barbara along the Arauca River, and found it very exciting. I received far more personal attention and help with specific birds than I ever expected as a solo traveler, and saw many wonderful species. Here is a list of favorites, a bit long but hardly exhaustive: Scarlet Ibis, Hoatzin, Savanna Hawk, Jabirú, Black-collared Hawk, Buff-necked Ibis, Pied Lapwing, Large-billed Tern, Yellow-billed Tern, Rufous-vented

Chachalaca, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Crimson-crested Woodpecker (in the same genus as the Ivory-billed Woodpecker), Troupial, Red-capped Cardinal, Orinocan Saltator, Watted Jacana, Double-striped Thick-knee, Ruby-Topaz Hummingbird, Yellow-knobbed Curassow, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Amazon and Pygmy Kingfishers, Glittering-throated Emerald, Squirrel Cuckoo, Red-billed Scythebill, Great Black Hawk, and Boat-billed Heron.

To add just a few words about the other areas visited, the Andes around Merida are spectacular and offer in a small area an incredible array of habitats, from tropical to icy. White-capped Dipper, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, and Masked Trogon were three of the species seen there. The coastal mountains can be birded in areas other than the well-known Henri Pittier National Park and shelter, among many other species, Military Macaws, manakins, woodcreepers, hermits, flycatchers and tanagers.

Obviously, much more could, and probably should, be said. But perhaps this short report will provide a bit more information of use to potential travelers. A final note: many, but perhaps not all, will know that there is a fine paperback field guide for Venezuela, A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela by Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee and William H. Phelps, Jr. (If anyone would like to discuss Venezuelan birding further, I would be happy to hear from them.)

CLEARING HOUSE

CLEARING HOUSE

February, 1991

Editors: Phyllis and Tony Frank

The wet trend established in January continued into February resulting in approximately twice the normal rainfall in the first two months of this year. Reports were received on 172 species for the month which was lower than January's total. February also included some reports on rarities for the UTC. Interesting sightings for the month include Western Grebe from Lake Texana which is a very good find in this part of the state. The Red-tailed Hawk reports from western Harris and Waller counties included rufous and dark morphs. The overwintering Whimbrel from Yacht Basin Rd. was reported again. Interesting hummingbird sightings included a wintering Broad-tailed Hummingbird at a feeder. A visiting Varied Thrush normally from Alaska and the West Coast was found mixed with American Robins at Smith Point. Finally, Henslow's Sparrow was reported from a second location from this winter after an absence of many years from the UTC. Somewhat surprising was the single report this winter of Horned Grebe.

Thanks to all who submitted reports this month. With the start of migration, just a reminder to jot a least a brief description of any bird that is very rare on the date of observation. Documentation is essential for updating checklists. Finally thanks to Joe Whitehead who graciously allowed birders access to his property to view the Varied Thrush.

The CH format is the same as last month. The listing uses the following format: bird name, early/late dates, reports/total, summary by county of detailed listing. Very rare birds are underlined. Birds with no previous report on date or vagrant appear in bold. A bird with no previous record will be underlined and in bold. Please submit reports for next month by April 3rd. As always early reports are appreciated. And now to the birds!

Loon, Common 16-18 2/60 GA-(50)16,DLR; GA-TCD(10)18,X
Grebe, Pied-bill 2-27 11/41 CH-5/20 GA-4/19 HA-1/1 WA-1/1
Grebe, Eared 10-16 2/2 CH-(1)10,DLR; GA-(1)16,DLR
Grebe, Western 9-9 1/3 JA-LT(3)9,XX
Pelican, Amer Wht 2-26 10/899 CH-1/2 GA-6/885 HA-2/3
JA-1/9
Pelican, Brown 2-18 4/23 GA-(6)2,DLR; GA-(12)10,DLR;
GA-(3)16,DLR; GA-TCD(2)18,X
Corm, Dbl-crested 2-27 11/494 CH-2/35 GA-5/305 HA-3/4
JA-1/150
Corm, Olivaceous 10-26 5/42 CH-1/18 GA-3/15 HA-1/9
Bittern, American 10-10 1/1 CH-(1)10,DLR
Heron, Great Blue 2-27 19/95 U-2/25 CH-5/21 GA-4/18
HA-6/18 JA-1/6 WA-1/7
Egret, Great 2-27 18/270 U-2/45 CH-5/125 GA-4/62
HA-5/19 JA-1/10 WA-1/9
Egret, Snowy 2-27 11/283 U-1/70 CH-5/78 GA-4/128
JA-1/7
Heron, Little Blu 2-26 6/19 U-1/3 CH-4/15 GA-1/1
Heron, Tricolored 2-23 4/6 GA-4/6
Egret, Reddish 10-23 2/5 GA-(2)10,DLR; GA-BF(3)23,OG
Egret, Cattle 10-26 3/125 CH-1/45 GA-2/80
Nt-Heron, Blk-crn 3-26 8/232 CH-2/34 GA-2/18 HA-4/180
Nt-Heron, Yel-crn 10-26 2/3 CH-(2)26,X; GA-(1)10,DLR
Ibis, White 2-27 8/371 U-1/60 CH-5/290 GA-1/20
HA-1/1
Ibis, White-faced 2-27 6/115 U-1/25 CH-5/90
Spoonbill, Roseat 2-27 5/21 CH-1/4 GA-4/17
Goose, Gr Wht-frn 2-27 12/6054 U-2/2900 CH-4/64 HA-5/2810
WA-1/280
Goose, Snow 2-27 14/57615 U-2/7950 CH-5/5420
HA-5/28245 JA-1/2000 WA-1/14000
Goose, Ross' 3-9 3/21 HA-WHC(1)9,HAFT; WA-(18)3,RU;
WA-(2)9,M
Goose, Canada 3-9 6/1720 HA-3/270 JA-1/150 WA-2/1300
Teal, Green-wing 2-27 11/19094 U-1/12500 CH-4/506
GA-2/8 HA-3/6050 WA-1/30
Duck, Mottled 2-26 11/87 CH-4/42 GA-4/27 JA-1/12 WA-2/6
Mallard 9-26 3/23 CH-1/2 HA-2/21
Pintail, Northern 3-27 6/12550 U-1/4500 CH-1/300 HA-3/6650
WA-1/1100
Teal, Blue-winged 2-26 11/93 CH-5/50 GA-4/16 JA-1/25 WA-1/2
Teal, Cinnamon 16-16 1/3 CH-(3)16,DLR
Shoveler, Northrn 2-27 16/10022 U-1/5900 CH-6/715
GA-5/207 HA-3/2800 WA-1/400
Gadwall 2-27 15/767 U-1/40 CH-6/191 GA-4/80
HA-2/306 JA-1/100 WA-1/50
Wigeon, American 2-27 12/328 U-1/50 CH-2/90 GA-4/56
HA-3/29 JA-1/100 WA-1/3
Canvasback 2-26 5/78 CH-(9)2,DLR; CH-(25)26,X;
HA-(12)9,HAS; HA-(20)9,M; HA-WHC(12)9,HAFT
9-9 2/6 HA-(4)9,HAS; HA-(2)9,M
Redhead 2-26 9/124 CH-3/32 GA-4/50 HA-2/42
Duck, Ring-necked 24-24 1/1 HA-HP(1)24,X
Scaup, Greater 2-23 7/394 GA-5/385 HA-1/6 WA-1/3
Scaup, Lesser 18-18 1/3 GA-TCD(3)18,X
Bufflehead 2-23 7/36 GA-5/34 WA-2/2
Merganser, Red-br 10-23 4/108 GA-4/108
Duck, Ruddy 2-18 7/728 U-1/15 GA-4/700 HA-1/10
WA-1/3
Vulture, Black 3-27 9/176 CH-2/15 HA-4/78 JA-1/35
WA-2/48
Vulture, Turkey 2-27 15/635 U-1/120 CH-6/166
GA-1/6 HA-5/173 JA-1/150 WA-1/20
Kite, Blk-shouldr 10-23 3/8 GA-(1)10,DLR; GA-(3)16,DLR;
GA-(4)23,OG
Eagle, Bald 3-9 3/4 HA-WHC(2)9,HAFT; WA-(1)3,RU;
WA-(1)9,M
Harrier, Northern 2-27 17/142 U-2/53 CH-5/23 GA-3/22
HA-5/23 JA-1/1 WA-1/20
Hawk, Sharp-shin 9-23 2/4 CH-(2)23,OG; WA-(2)9,HAS
Hawk, Cooper's 9-26 6/7 CH-1/1 GA-1/1 HA-4/5
Hawk, Red-shouldr 3-26 6/12 CH-1/1 GA-1/1 HA-2/4 JA-1/4
WA-1/2
Hawk, White-tld 3-9 6/8 HA-3/5 WA-3/3
Hawk, Red-tailed 2-27 21/545 U-2/223 CH-5/76 GA-4/21
HA-7/135 JA-1/30 WA-2/60
(Hawk, Krider's) 23-27 2/3 CH-(2)23,OG; CH-(1)27,RU
Hawk, Ferruginous 9-9 3/5 HA-(2)9,HAFT; WA-(1)9,HAS;
WA-(2)9,M
Caracara, Crested 3-9 5/15 JA-1/3 WA-4/12
Kestrel, American 2-27 24/321 U-2/65 CH-5/87 GA-5/73
HA-8/30 JA-1/15 WA-3/51
Merlin 9-23 3/4 GA-TCD(1)18,X; GA-(1)23,OG;
WA-(2)9,HAS
Bobwhite, Northrn 9-9 5/64 HA-2/18 WA-3/46
Rail, Clapper 23-23 1/3 GA-(3)23,OG
Rail, King 2-16 2/9 CH-(6)2,DLR; CH-(3)16,DLR
Sora 26-26 1/1 CH-AW(1)26,X
Moorhen, Common 2-26 5/141 CH-4/140 WA-1/1
Coot, American 2-26 14/1579 CH-4/650 GA-5/765 HA-4/64
JA-1/100
Crane, Sandhill 3-9 4/444 HA-1/2 JA-1/10 WA-2/432
Plover, Blk-belli 2-23 5/309 GA-5/309
Plover, Snowy 23-23 1/3 GA-BF(3)23,OG
Plover, Semipalm 2-23 3/6 GA-(1)2,DLR; GA-(4)16,DLR;
GA-BF(1)23,OG
Plover, Piping 2-23 3/22 GA-(6)2,DLR; GA-(6)10,DLR;
GA-BF(10)23,OG
Killdeer 2-26 17/1456 U-2/700 CH-4/100 GA-4/81
HA-4/440 JA-1/50 WA-2/85
Oystercatcher, Am 16-18 2/6 GA-(2)16,DLR; GA-TCD(4)18,X
Stilt, Black-neck 2-27 3/14 CH-2/11 GA-1/3
Avocet, American 2-23 4/4730 GA-4/4730
Yellowlegs, Great 2-27 6/177 CH-1/150 GA-2/10 HA-3/11
WA-1/6
Yellowlegs, Less 2-27 6/72 CH-1/10 GA-2/14 HA-2/13
WA-1/35
Willet 2-23 6/129 CH-1/2 GA-5/127
Sandprr, Spotted 16-16 1/3 GA-(3)16,DLR
Whimbrel 9-9 1/1 GA-(1)9,PTF
Curlew, Long-bill 2-23 8/305 GA-3/93 HA-3/88 WA-2/124
Godwit, Marbled 2-23 3/41 GA-3/41
Turnstone, Ruddy 2-23 4/19 GA-4/19
Sanderling 2-23 5/690 GA-5/690
Sandprr, Western 2-23 4/1824 GA-4/1824
Sandprr, Least 9-18 2/13 GA-TCD(10)18,X; WA-(3)9,M
Dunlin 2-23 4/1516 GA-2/1505 HA-1/8 WA-1/3
Dowitcher, S-bill 2-23 3/412 GA-3/412
Dowitcher, L-bill 3-27 6/4575 U-1/3000 CH-1/200 HA-2/1300
WA-2/75
Snipe, Common 3-26 2/5 CH-(3)26,X; WA-(2)3,RU
Gull, Laughing 2-26 8/4860 CH-3/210 GA-5/4650
Gull, Bonaparte's 2-23 5/76 GA-5/76
Gull, Ring-billed 1-28 10/1533 CH-2/81 GA-4/1300 HA-2/50
JA-1/100 WA-1/2
Gull, Herring 2-23 4/232 GA-4/232
Tern, Caspian 10-27 5/23 CH-1/2 GA-4/21
Tern, Royal 2-23 5/114 GA-5/114
Tern, Common 18-18 1/1 GA-TCD(1)18,X
Tern, Forster's 2-26 9/2002 CH-4/61 GA-5/1941
Skimmer, Black 2-16 2/56 GA-(50)2,DLR; GA-(6)16,DLR
Dove, Rock 1-28 18/808 U-2/50 CH-2/62 GA-5/322
HA-7/73 JA-1/300 WA-1/1
Turtle-Dove, Ring 2-2 1/1 HA-(1)2,RS
Dove, White-winged 2-24 2/4 CH-SP(1)24,RU; HA-(3)2,RS
Dove, Mourning 1-28 25/1161 U-2/60 CH-5/337
GA-5/123 HA-10/538 JA-1/50 WA-2/53
Dove, Inca 1-26 11/35 CH-1/2 GA-3/9 HA-6/18 JA-1/6
Parakeet, Monk 2-24 2/58 HA-(40)2,RS; HA-(18)24,PM
Owl, Barn 9-9 1/4 HA-(4)9,M
Screech-Owl, East 18-25 3/3 HA-TCD(1)18,X; HA-HP(1)24,X;
HA-(1)25,PM
Owl, Great Horned 3-23 4/9 HA-3/7 WA-1/2
Hummer, Brd-taild 13-13 1/1 CH-(1)13,CC
Hummer, Rufous 3-3 1/1 HA-(1)3,M
Kingfisher, Belted 2-27 13/62 U-1/8 CH-4/23 GA-2/17 HA-5/8
JA-1/6
Wdpeckr, Red-head 23-27 3/3 CH-(1)23,OG; CH-(1)26,X;
CH-(1)27,RU

Wdpecker, Red-bell 1-28 13/34 CH-4/6 HA-7/20 WA-2/8
 Sapsuck, Yel-bell 3-27 8/10 CH-3/4 HA-4/5 WA-1/1
 Wdpecker, Downy 3-26 8/15 CH-2/2 HA-5/11 WA-1/2
 Flicker, Northern 3-27 11/25 CH-4/7 HA-4/10 JA-1/1 WA-2/7
 Wdpecker, Pileated 9-27 3/4 CH-1/2 HA-1/1 WA-1/1
 Phoebe, Eastern 3-27 15/46 CH-4/7 GA-2/2 HA-5/24 JA-1/3
 WA-3/10
 Lark, Horned 2-23 3/27 GA-3/27
 Martin, Purple 23-26 2/12 CH-(10)26,X; GA-BF(2)23,OG
 Jay, Blue 1-27 17/145 U-1/12 CH-3/16 GA-2/10
 HA-9/94 WA-2/13
 Crow, American 2-27 18/463 U-1/40 CH-6/228 GA-1/1
 HA-7/142 JA-1/25 WA-2/27
 Chickadee, Carol 1-26 13/49 CH-2/3 GA-1/3 HA-7/38 WA-3/5
 Titmouse, Tufted 1-9 6/45 HA-4/42 WA-2/3
 Creeper, Brown 3-27 2/3 CH-(2)27,RU; HA-(1)3,DB
 Wren, Carolina 1-27 7/11 CH-3/5 HA-3/3 WA-1/3
 Wren, Bewick's 9-9 1/1 WA-(1)9,M
 Wren, House 3-27 6/11 CH-1/1 HA-4/6 WA-1/4
 Wren, Sedge 2-9 3/4 CH-(1)2,DLR; HA-(2)9,HAS;
 WA-(1)3,RU
 Wren, Marsh 16-26 3/8 CH-2/5 GA-1/3
 Kinglet, Gold-crn 23-23 1/1 GA-HI(1)23,OG
 Kinglet, Ruby-crn 3-27 16/85 U-1/6 CH-4/13 GA-1/2
 HA-7/39 WA-3/25
 Bluebird, Eastern 9-16 6/84 CH-2/27 HA-2/32 JA-1/15 WA-1/10
 Thrush, Hermit 3-27 10/15 CH-4/6 HA-4/5 WA-2/4
 Robin, American 2-27 21/10618 U-2/2920 CH-5/1730
 GA-3/1815 HA-8/3228 JA-1/50 WA-2/875
 Thrush, Varied 22-27 3/1 CH-(1)22,CC; CH-(1)26,X;
 CH-(1)27,RU
 Mockingbird, N 2-27 25/359 U-2/55 CH-5/47 GA-5/40
 Thrasher, Brown 3-27 10/20 CH-3/5 GA-1/1 HA-5/9 WA-1/5
 Pipit, American 3-18 5/156 GA-2/130 HA-1/2 WA-2/24
 Waxwing, Cedar 3-26 5/131 CH-1/22 HA-4/109
 Shrike, Loggerhed 2-27 22/289 U-2/44 CH-5/53 GA-5/74
 HA-7/88 JA-1/8 WA-2/22
 Starling, Euro 1-28 24/3116 U-2/320 CH-4/325
 GA-5/1390 HA-10/451 JA-1/500 WA-2/130
 Vireo, Solitary 3-27 6/8 CH-1/2 GA-1/1 HA-4/5
 Warb, Orange-crn 3-26 13/22 U-1/4 CH-2/2 GA-1/2
 HA-5/8 JA-1/2 WA-3/4
 Warb, Yellow-rump 2-27 23/1461 U-2/260 CH-5/232
 GA-4/140 HA-9/747 JA-1/30 WA-2/52
 Warb, Pine 3-27 5/51 CH-3/25 HA-2/26
 Yellowthroat, Com 2-26 5/13 CH-5/13
 Cardinal, Northern 1-28 22/292 U-2/40 CH-5/89 GA-3/9
 HA-9/94 JA-1/15 WA-2/45
 Towhee, Rfus-side 3-27 2/4 CH-(2)27,RU; HA-(2)3,DB
 Sparrow, Chipping 2-16 8/47 CH-3/18 HA-2/13 WA-3/16
 Sparrow, Field 9-23 3/22 U-1/20 GA-1/1 WA-1/1
 Sparrow, Vesper 2-9 9/393 U-1/57 CH-1/3 HA-4/63
 WA-3/270
 Sparrow, Savannah 2-27 16/2194 U-2/605 CH-5/277
 GA-1/12 HA-4/150 JA-1/100 WA-3/1050
 Sparrow, Henslows 26-27 2/1 CH-(1)26,X; CH-(1)27,RU
 Sparrow, Le Conte 9-9 2/7 HA-(3)9,HAS; HA-(4)9,M
 Sparrow, Seaside 23-23 1/15 GA-BF(15)23,OG
 Sparrow, Fox 3-9 2/6 WA-(2)3,RU; WA-(4)9,M
 Sparrow, Song 3-26 6/18 CH-1/1 HA-3/9 WA-2/8
 Sparrow, Lincoln 3-23 8/37 CH-2/5 HA-3/20 JA-1/8 WA-2/4
 Sparrow, Swamp 2-27 12/60 CH-6/40 HA-4/13 WA-2/7
 Sparrow, Wht-thrt 2-27 13/181 U-1/22 CH-4/38 HA-5/72
 JA-1/20 WA-2/29
 Sparrow, Wht-crn 3-9 6/62 U-1/21 HA-4/37 WA-1/4
 Blackbird, Red-wg 2-27 18/7671 U-2/1300 CH-5/2400
 GA-5/921 HA-4/950 JA-1/1500 WA-1/600
 Meadowlark, East 2-27 19/1416 U-2/230 CH-5/230
 GA-5/116 HA-5/310 JA-1/150 WA-1/380
 Meadowlark, West 9-9 1/1 WA-(1)9,HAFT
 Meadowlark sp. 9-9 1/100 U-(100)9,M
 Blackbird, Rusty 9-9 1/3 HA-BC(3)9,HAFT
 Blackbird, Brewer 3-9 2/9 WA-(3)3,RU; WA-(6)9,HAS
 Grackle, Gr-tail 2-27 16/671 U-1/25 CH-3/174 GA-4/348
 HA-6/64 JA-1/40 WA-1/20

Grackle, Bt-tail 2-27 5/391 U-1/15 CH-4/376
 Grackle, Common 1-27 14/3783 U-1/100 CH-2/1020
 GA-1/1000 HA-8/1303 JA-1/300 WA-1/60
 Cowbird, Brn-head 3-26 8/17615 U-1/5000 CH-1/50
 GA-2/140 HA-2/425 JA-1/2000 WA-1/10000
 Finch, Purple 5-23 2/7 HA-(6)5,X; HA-TCD(1)18,X
 Goldfinch, Amer 1-28 13/117 CH-2/4 GA-2/16 HA-7/83
 WA-2/14
 Sparrow, House 2-27 19/693 CH-5/96 GA-3/160 HA-9/223
 JA-1/200 WA-1/14

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS: 197538

LIST OF OBSERVER CODES:

BS = Billie Strickland
 CC = Caroline Callery
 DB = David Bradford
 DLR = Don and Lee Richardson
 HAFT = Houston Arboretum F.T./Bob Honig, Julia Ricketts
 HAS = HAS F.T./David Bradford
 M = Jim Morgan
 MO = M.L. and Ellen Owens
 OG = OG F.T./ David Dauphin, Richard Uzar
 PB = Patrick Baum
 PM = Peggy Milstead
 PTF = Phyllis and Tony Frank
 RS = RU and Sara Griffin
 RU = Richard Uzar
 X = P. D. Hulce
 XX = P. D. Hulce, Kent Taylor, Mark Scheuerman

LIST OF LOCATION CODES:

BC = Bear Creek Park
 BU = Buffalo Bayou Park
 LT = Lake Texana
 SP = Smith Point

Western Grebe - P.D. Hulce, February 9, 1991

Three very large black and white grebes were observed. The solid black cap that extended down to the eye eliminated Clark's Grebe. The bird had a dagger-like yellow bill, a red eye and a distinctly pointed head. The bird was immaculate white below when seen as close as 50 yards. These birds were observed with 10X40 binoculars and a scope in good light at the dam at the southwest corner of Lake Texana in Jackson county.

Whimbrel - Phyllis and Tony Frank, February 9, 1991

A largish shorebird similar to a Long-billed Curlew. The bill was bicolored and darker at the tip. The bill was slightly decurved and long, but not as long as a Long-billed Curlew. The head had prominent dark lines that contrasted with the lighter supercilium giving a striped appearance. One bird was seen at Yacht Basin Rd. where we have seen this bird previously this winter. The bird was foraging in the mud near the sparse salt grass. It was observed in good light with 10X40 binoculars and 45X scope.

Broad-tailed Hummingbird - Caroline Callery, February 1991

Present in my yard and at my feeder from last week in December until February 13, 1991. Observed from 4 feet away to 20 feet away with 10X binoculars nearly daily during that period. Bird was also observed by Margaret Anderson, Don Alexander and Ellen Red.

When first seen, the throat had one small dark spot. As time passed the spot became a larger patch and was red. The bill and wings were dark. There was a white or pale beige spot behind the eye. The entire back was a true medium green (not golden, nor was there ever any reddish in the feathering). The tail was a more bluish green with white tipped outer feathers. A reddish base to the right outer retrices was observed while the bird preened. Don Alexander also observed a flash of reddish in the tail feathers. The tail however did not appear particularly broad and the bird appeared slightly smaller than broad

tails observed during the summer. The flanks and upper breast were a rich warm buff color with only a narrow white center line and the belly of the bird was white. Because of the white belly, lack of reddish in the back up to departure date, and red at the base of the retrices, this bird was identified as a young male Broad-tailed Hummingbird entering adult plumage.

Varied Thrush - Caroline Callery, February 22, 1991
Seen foraging and flying near Smith Point in Chambers county for about 15 minutes on February 22 at about 3 PM. Other observers were Ellen Red and Sandi Hoover. The landowner had identified the bird that morning among the robins in his yard. The bird was robin sized but had a slightly more upright and streamlined appearance. Adult male plumage with dark back and upper head, marked by bold, curved pale orange superciliary. The bird had two orange wing bars and another bit of orange in the wings. The breast and belly were bright rich orange-russet paling toward the undertail. The breast was had a bold black band across it. Bird was observed through 8X and 10X binoculars in good light. Reporter has observed this species before.

Varied Thrush - Richard Uzar and P.D. Hulce.
These observers also documented this bird. They noted the general size and shape similarity to a robin, the blue-gray back and head with orange eyebrow stripe, dark breast band, and two orange wing bars with additional orange coloration on the primaries.

Henslow's Sparrow - Richard Uzar, February 24, 1991
This bird was observed near Smith Point in Chambers county. Very small sparrow with very greenish head. Flat-headed appearance due to little rounding from the base of bill to top of crown. Central crown stripe green. Large pale bill, fleshy-colored lower mandible and slightly darker upper mandible. Two lateral black crown stripes beginning at base of upper mandible, running over top of head and onto nape. Black became speckled with greenish color on nape.

The greenish color below the black crown stripe and above the auricular patch was uniform in color except for a thin yellowish streak at the front of head adjacent to black crown stripe. This feature was confined to the upper area of the lores. The eye was large with a dingy white orbital ring. A thin black line went from the eye to rear of auricular patch broadening into a small triangular patch, apex pointing downward. Two thin black malar lines, one at front of auricular patch, the second closer in to clear dirty white throat. Breast broadly streaked on pale yellow/green base. Streaking beginning at uniform line across upper breast, continuing downward to white belly. Flanks streaked with some slight buff base color toward the rear of the wings. Belly and undertail coverts were white. Mantle and scapulars were reddish brown and black with fine white edges. Primaries, upper tail coverts and tail were reddish brown. The tail was short and ragged ended.

Flushed from grass tangle and flew to grass close to shrubs. Excellent view for about 20 minutes at 20 meters to 1 meter with naked eye and 10X binoculars.

Henslow's Sparrow - P.D. Hulce, February 26, 1991
This observer also provided documentation. Noted was the jerky flight pattern, rusty wings, large bill, olive green, smooth flat head with some golden yellow at the lores, two black malar stripes, small white eye ring, buffy breast with numerous black streaks on chest and flanks to the undertail coverts. Tail was dark and very neat.

ADDENDUM TO JANUARY CLEARING HOUSE

Summer Tanager - Randy Pinkston, January 1991
The Summer Tanager reported for December was present throughout January in the Memorial area of Houston at a feeder. Details were previously published and will not be repeated. Observer notes that the plumage became more extensively red throughout the month.

LOOKING FORWARD TO APRIL BIRDING

Warblers, vireos and tanagers! April is the month migration madness strikes every birder. Of course the sanctuaries at High Island are deservedly well known migrant traps. Perhaps less well known is the TOS sanctuary at Sabine Woods which is located on Highway 87 east of Sea Rim State Park and 4 miles west of the stop sign in Sabine along Highway 87. The property is newly fenced and will hopefully have a sign present by publication of this article. (Warning: Highway 87 between High Island and Sea Rim State Park is closed and tickets have been issued to drivers attempting the drive along the washed out section.) Any little group of trees or salt cedars along the coast may be productive. Fallouts of birds are associated with rainy frontal systems with winds from northerly direction (see Jim Morgan's article in the June/July 1990 Spoonbill). If you want an additional challenge for the spring season, check the dark plegadis sp. for Glossy Ibis. P.D. Hulce discussed identification of this species in the October 1990 Spoonbill, but remember documentation is required for this species. And lastly if you are in the Hamshire or Taylor Bayou area, watch for the return (hopefully) of the Swallow-tailed Kites. Texas Parks and Wildlife will be monitoring the status of these birds this year. Please report sightings particularly any behavior associated with nesting activity. Good birding everyone.



CONTACTS

- SEND CLEARING HOUSE** bird sightings to: Clearing House, (OG), P.O. Box 271374, Houston 77277.
- TEXAS RARE BIRD ALERT TAPE**, sponsored by Houston Audubon Society, 992-2757.
- SEND SPOONBILL MATERIAL** to Editor, Judy Boyce, 5546 Aspen, Houston 77081, 668-5359.
- OG MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**, dues, subscriptions and address changes. Arch Dillard, 142 Imperial Dr., Friendswood 77546, (713) 996-0107. Annual dues \$15. Non-member Spoonbill subscriptions \$13.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I spent some time at the Attwater's Prairie Chicken Refuge this weekend. Even with restrictions, the area is great for birding. I wasn't able to locate any chickens though--arrived a little late to use the blind overlooking an established booming ground. The whole place was mine; not another birder was sighted.

It came as no surprise that prairie chickens were not seen. Disappearance of the prairie is dramatically apparent on all sides of the refuge at this season. Rice growers uniformly turning thousands of acres of former prairie into bare sod. It looks pretty desolate. Of course in another month we will be scouring these same fields for shorebirds not restricted to coastline environments. This group (I am hoping it includes a Curlew Sandpiper) will find the growing rice shoots ample cover as they resupply for the journey north. Not long after they are gone, we'll enjoy eating rice dishes galore.

When birding along the coast I frequently see birders drive out onto Bolivar Flats at low tide. It is a real convenience to drive up next to a large group of birds. The auto makes an ideal blind, but we must ask ourselves if taking advantage of such opportunities contributes to the birds welfare. Fact is, shorebirds and their habitats are seriously threatened by human activities.

Prairie loss spells near certain doom for the Attwater's chicken and diminishment for many other species. While there seems little we can do about this we must not be deterred from doing what we can. The problem at coastal beaches and mudflats is different. Loss of mudflats may mean doom for many species denied staging and resupply stopovers. We are not a malicious people in the destruction of nature, only mindless of our effect. It is our demand for more burgers and rice that mandates more prairie lost to increasing demand.

While in the field we, especially "we", must show the greatest respect for the environment and the habitats we enjoy so much. We are, as part of a growing number of recreational land users along the seashore, the greatest threat to the birds we love to watch there. Destruction of coastal prairie and mudflats will continue, at ever increasing rates, unless we cry out and unless we act responsibly. We, especially "we", must act in exemplary manner at those public places which we hope to preserve.

There is great opportunity for protective actions along our gulf shore. But time grows short as our numbers intensify at major population centers. Please join me in writing to the Texas General Land Office and Commissioner Garry Mauro. Let us demand that Bolivar Flats be legally defined, protected and preserved as part of a much-needed international shorebird sanctuary program. All of our major shorebird staging/wintering areas are seriously threatened by human activities. And of these, Bolivar Flats, a primary UTC site selected by migrant shorebirds, is in greatest peril.

Please write Garry Mauro, Texas General Land Office, 1700 N. Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701. For additional information call anytime...

Richard Uzar 527-0454

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