

You can't make a Sparrow Hawk  
of a Buzzard.  
- English Proverb

# The Spoonbill

February 1999

Volume 48, No. 2

## OG Activities in March

### MEETING PROGRAM

**"Birds of India"**  
presented by  
**Prakash Desai**

Expect to be educated and fascinated by this talk on Indian birds. Prakash's talk is set for **Monday, March 1**, at the Baylands Community Center, 6400 Bissonett (just west of Hillcroft) at 7 PM.

### LEARNING CORNER

**"Warblers"**  
Part I

An *Audubon Video* presentation  
Meet your fellow OG members before the general meeting at 6:30 for a viewing of this fine video.

### FIELD TRIPS

*Sunday*

March 6, 1999

**Anahuac NWR**

Meet at the visitor kiosk at 7:30 AM. Plan to drag for Yellow Rails. Bring rubber boots or hip waders if you have them. Next we'll concentrate on ANWR's sparrows and waterfowl. Contact David Sarkozi (713) 520-5906 or sarkozi@flash.net for more information.

*Wednesday*

March 24, 1999

**Brazos Bend State Park**

Bob Ohmart will meet you at the park entrance at 8 AM. Entry will be by fee or Conservation Passport. Contact Bob Ohmart at 281-579-7403 for more information.

## Count Your Lucky Stars

by Ted Eubanks  
President  
Fermata Inc.

In the recent announcement of a new web page for the Upper Texas Coast (UTC) and the Pineywoods, I noticed the following quote in the introduction of the web page itself: "With 418 identified species, the Southeast Texas region is arguably the greatest birding spot on the North American Continent."

The UTC is where I began my birding activities nearly 30 years ago. I dearly love this part of the world, and could not agree more that the UTC and the southern Pineywoods are among the most fascinating spots in the nation to enjoy wildlife viewing, particularly birding. However, over the past several months I have been involved in two separate projects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV), and one the reports we are compiling involves an environmental profile of the region. Consider the following.

In this case, we are concerned with only four counties: Willacy, Cameron, Hidalgo, and Starr. The birding trail will extend as far up river as Zapata County; so, for the sake of argument, let's consider the total to be five counties. Within this rather small region, the following species have been documented:

**Birds:** 484 species - species highest diversity of any area in North America; 52% of all North American bird; dozens of rare, threatened, and endangered species; crossroads of migration between the Americas.

**Mammals:** 50+ species; 4 species of cats (mountain lion,

*continued on last page*

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Contributions to "The Spoonbill" can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed.

The monthly deadline for timely information is *the 15th of every month*. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse submissions.

All submissions should include contact information for the author and/or person doing the submitting.

Please include as much information as possible about the source when submitting copyrighted material. Contact the editor for assistance.

**Easy Money**

Partners in Flight, headed by Cliff Shackelford of Texas Parks and Wildlife, is conducting a 1999 Swallow-tailed Kite survey through the sponsorship of Temple-Inland Forest.

Surveys have been sent to the OG and are also available at most popular birding spots along the coast of Texas.

A \$500 reward is offered for finding a new, undisturbed, active STKI nest. Details are in the survey.

We would like to know about all STKIs seen, not just nest sites. At the end of the season a booklet showing all the sightings and statistics will be sent to all contributors.

For information contact either of the following: Gael Simons, lsimons@inetport.com and (512) 892-2518 or Cliff Shackelford, clifford.shackelford@tpwd.state.tx.us and (512) 389-4970.

**Try This At Home**

Researchers say ducks are capable of what teachers and bosses have suspected of the rest of us — sleeping with one eye open.

After putting their ducks in a row, and videotaping them, researchers found mallards on the end of each row spent more time asleep with one eye open, apparently looking for predators. The more the ducks felt threatened, the more they slept with one eye open, said lead author Niels C. Rattenborg, a graduate student at Indiana State University, Terre Haute.

"The unique aspect is not that they do it, but that they control it," Rattenborg said. "When they sleep at the edge of a group they tend to perceive greater risk, so they spend more time sleeping with one half of their brain."

Ducks with one eye open were still awake enough to detect predators, said the authors of the study, which appears in the journal *Nature*.

Researchers studied four groups of four ducks held in plastic boxes, which were arranged in a row. Ducks on the end were found to sleep with one eye open 31.8 percent of the time, compared to 12.4 percent of the time for ducks in the central position. Also, ducks in the center did not open one eye more than the other, while ducks on each end kept the eye facing away from the group open 86.2 percent of the time.

Brain wave readings of the ducks showed that the half of the brain receiving signals from the closed eye indicated that half of the brain was sleeping. Signals from the half of the brain receiving signals from the open eye showed a state between fully awake and asleep.

Rattenborg said other animals, such

as dolphins and other aquatic mammals show the ability to sleep with half their brains. Other experts argue that those animals aren't really sleeping at times when their eye is open. Dr. David F. Dinges, director of sleep and chronobiology studies at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, said the findings are important, but should be duplicated.

"If you said to many people, how would you like to sleep one hemisphere at a time while the other half of the brain works, most would jump at it," Dinges said. "But, we don't know the quality of the duck's consciousness. We don't know what the restorative potential of that sleep is."

AP Newswire

February 3, 1999

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**Not So Good News**

This article first appeared in the *Duck's Unlimited* magazine.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is asking waterfowlers and other outdoor enthusiasts to track the spread of a new disease afflicting bald eagles and coots. Coot and Eagle Brain Lesion Syndrome (CEBLS), which has killed at least 58 bald eagles to date, was first discovered in 1994 at DeGray Lake near Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

The disease quickly spread to eagles on Lake Ouachita and Hamilton near Hot Springs, Arkansas, and was discovered in coots at private lakes in Georgia and North Carolina last winter. Afflicted birds display impaired motor function, such as bobbing, weaving, and



erratic walking and swimming movements, caused by a neurotoxin that creates lesions in the brain and spinal cord.

DU has joined the CEBLS research effort, which also involves the Army Corps of Engineers, USFWS, U.S. Geological Survey, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, and numerous other supporters. Studies related to CEBLS have included banding and tracking of eagles and coots, and extensive laboratory analysis of afflicted birds. The origin of the disease remains unknown, and supporters are presently being sought to fund additional research.

Waterfowlers and other outdoor recreationists who see eagles or coots acting in a strange or erratic manner are encouraged to report these sightings to researchers listed on the CEBLS WWW site at [www.mvk.usace.army.mil/ol/odm/cebls.htm](http://www.mvk.usace.army.mil/ol/odm/cebls.htm).

They also are encouraged to report sightings of marked birds involved in the study. Bald eagles are marked with standard aluminum leg bands, green alphanumeric leg bands, and tail-mounted radio transmitters. Coots are marked with standard aluminum leg bands and colored neck collars.

## Say It Ain't So

Cats are now the #1 pet in America. Fascinating behavior and physical beauty endear them to their owners. But within every cat are the genes of an efficient, prolific, and non-native predator, according to American Bird Conservancy (ABC).

Scientists estimate that free-roaming cats kill hundreds of millions of birds, and probably more than a billion other small wildlife, in the U. S. each year. Not only are common birds such as Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow, and Mourning Dove killed by cats, but cats also prey on rare and endangered species such as Piping Plover, California Clapper Rail, California Least Tern, and Western Snowy Plover, and species in decline such as Black-throated Blue Warbler and Wood Thrush.

Particularly at risk are ground nesting and ground feeding birds, as well as nestlings and fledgling birds of many species.

Cats also kill small mammals which are vital food sources for birds such as Great Horned Owl, Red-Tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel. Wildlife populations isolated in island-like habitats, such as parks and refuges surrounded by developed areas, are especially vulnerable to cat predation.

The sheer magnitude of cat predation is staggering. More than 40 million of the nation's 66 million pet cats are outdoors unsupervised



**CATS INDOORS!**

THE CAMPAIGN FOR SAFER BIRDS & CATS

some or all of the time. Combined with the estimated 40 to 60 million stray and feral cats, perhaps 100 million cats are aggravating the impacts of diminishing habitat for America's native wildlife.

Recognizing that cat predation is both a local concern and a national issue, ABC created Cats Indoors! The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats to develop partnerships with conservation, animal welfare, veterinary, wildlife rehabilitation, and public health groups, as well as the pet products industry.

Find out more by contacting ABC! For more information, contact: American Bird Conservancy Cats Indoors! The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats 1250 24th Street, NW, Suite 400 Washington, DC 20037 phone: (202) 778-9666, fax: (202) 778-9778, email: [abc@abcbirds.org](mailto:abc@abcbirds.org).

## Snow Goose Season II

Federal officials have approved a special conservation action to address the snow goose overpopulation crisis, Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW) announced. Effective February 16, hunters may use electronic goose calls and other approved liberal means for taking light geese statewide until April 25. However, the special season, which was originally slated to begin February 1, may face legal challenges and could be terminated before April 25.

"The regular light goose hunting seasons in Texas closed February 14 and some geese have already been seen heading back north," according to Brian Sullivan, TPW waterfowl program coordinator. "We still have birds to hunt. Normally, we have geese through late February and early March, depending on the weather."

There is no bag limit during the special conservation season. Additionally, other approved measures will allow hunters to use electronic goose calls and unplugged shotguns. The regulations also extend shooting hours from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset and eliminate the bag and possession limits for light geese. In order to participate in the special light goose season, hunters still have to meet all other requirements for taking waterfowl in Texas, including purchase of state and federal duck stamps and

acquiring HIP (Harvest Information Program) certification.

In an effort to provide additional public hunting opportunity, on each day of the special conservation season, TPW will offer all-day public hunting by Annual Public Hunting Permit on the following wildlife management areas: J.D. Murphree WMA, Guadalupe River and Hynes Bay Units of Guadalupe Delta WMA, and Bryan Beach Unit of Peach Point WMA. There will be no requirement for participating hunters to check in or check out at the WMA checkstation or perform on-site registration during these hunts.

Also, one day, morning-only light goose hunts will be available by Regular Permit at Mad Island WMA on February 20 and at Peach Point WMA on February 27. Hunters will be required to check in and out at the WMA checkstation.

With the elimination of the bag and possession limits during the special season, TPW, along with waterfowl processors and the Texas Association of Community Action Agencies, is encouraging hunters to share their harvest with needy Texans through a pilot project within the Hunters for the Hungry program.

Hunters may take legally harvested light geese (snow, blue and Ross' geese) to any of the participating waterfowl processors and pay a tax-deductible processing fee of \$1 to \$3 per bird. Processors then prepare the bird and donate the meat to food banks, food pantries and other food assistance providers in their area.

## Good News From The Valley

The McAllen newspaper, "The Monitor," reported in January that the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge (LRGV NWR) submitted a new public use plan to USF&WS headquarters in Albuquerque, NM and Washington, D.C. The plan, written by Brian Winton, assistant manager of the Santa Ana NWR, proposes opening up 7 LRGV tracts of approximately 40,000 acres to wildlife compatible activities. This plan is expected to be approved as early as 6 to 8 months.

Most tracts have water associated with them. One is along the Rio Grande near Salineno; 2 are in the Sal Del Rey area; 1 is near a reservoir in central Hidalgo Co.; and the biggest is the 17,000 acre Boca Chica Tract in southeastern Cameron Co.

Also in the works for the LRGV NWR is the possibility that Congress may provide the refuge system with \$7.4 million for land acquisition. The amount is the third highest amount the LRGV has received. Annual allotments have been averaging about \$900,000.

## Clearinghouse - January '99

Editor: David Sarkozi  
Please send reports to:  
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111 Welch  
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Houston, TX 77006  
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I've got to be short this month as I'm off on the OG trip to Belize. Great job on getting reports to me this month. Keep those reports and notes coming.

The new 8th edition of the *A Birder's Checklist of the Upper Texas Coast* will be available at the next OG meeting. I'm now using that for abundance in the Clearinghouse. Please I do need to start getting documentation on those birds that are Rare to the checklist.

Please keep those reports coming either by mail or e-mail. I hope to be able to distribute a new clearinghouse report from at the next OG meeting. That form will be based on the 8th edition of the checklist. If you send reports by e-mail I prefer to receive them in this format:

species,date,county,location,count,observer

You can turn in several reports at once, even for more than one observer.

The format this month is birds that are common or abundant for the entire month in the 7th edition of the checklist show the number of birds reported and the number of reports. All other species are in this format: species month/day county (location) count observer.

**Birds listed in bold are either listed as very rare for the month or have not yet been documented for that month/week, notes are required for those birds for the checklist committee.**

County Key: Aus - Austin, Bra - Brazoria, Cha - Chambers, Col - Colorado, FB - Fort Bend, Gal - Galveston, Har - Harris, Jef - Jefferson, Org - Orange

Location Key: AnNWR - Anahuac NWR, AtNWR - Attwater NWR, BB - Bryan Beach SRA, BF - Bolivar Flats Birds Sanctuary, HI - High Island, Quin - Quintana, SBNWR - San Bernard NWR, SP - Smith Point, SRSP, Sea Rim State Park, SW - Sabine Woods, TP - Terrel Park, WHA - West Harris County

Observer Key: DSDB - David Sarkozi and Dan Brooks, DS - David Sarkozi, HB - Helen Baines, KH - Ken Hartman, KS - Ken Stzaky, JAW - John Whittle, JM - Jim Morgan, JWH - Jean and William Harwell, LK - Laura Karr, NB - Nicholas Block, PH - Petra Hockey, SH - Sam House, WAM - Warren & Alanna McCall

Pied-billed Grebe birds=70 reports=14  
Homed Grebe 1/16 Cha() 1JAW  
Eared Grebe birds=1 reports=1  
Northern Gannet 1/17Jef() 4NB  
American White Pelican birds=468 reports=7  
Brown Pelican birds=27 reports=4  
Double-crested Cormorant birds=62 reports=12  
Neotropic Cormorant 1/9 Gal() 1 KH, 1/31 Cha() 1JAW, 1/31 Cha() 1JAW, 1/31 Gal() 10JAW, 1/31Jef() 7JAW  
American Bittern birds=1 reports=1  
Great Blue Heron birds=119 reports=23  
Great Egret birds=263 reports=25  
Snowy Egret birds=335 reports=19  
Little Blue Heron birds=8 reports=5  
Tricolored Heron birds=1 reports=1  
Reddish Egret birds=6 reports=2  
Cattle Egret birds=24 reports=5  
Black-crowned Night-Heron birds=31 reports=3  
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron birds=9 reports=3  
White Ibis 1/7 Cha() 150 JWH, 1/9 Gal() 15 KH, 1/9 Gal() 2 KH, 1/9 Wal() 3 JWH, 1/11 Wal() 3 JM, 1/16 FB() 25 JWH, 1/16 Lib() 700 JAW, 1/17Jef() 6JAW, 1/31 Gal() 50JAW  
White-faced Ibis 1/3 Har(WHA) 30JWH, 1/9 Har(WHA) 450 JWH, 1/9 Wal() 135 JWH, 1/17Jef(TP) 10JAW, 1/30 Col() 46 JWH, 1/31 Gal() 5JAW  
Plegadis Ibis species 1/1Jef() 500JAW, 1/11 Wal() 39 JM, 1/17Jef() 153JAW, 1/28Jef() 397JAW, 1/30Jef() 1JAW, 1/31 Cha() 70JAW, 1/31 Gal() 1JAW, 1/31Jef() 53JAW  
Roseate Spoonbill 1/9 Gal() 5 KH, 1/16 Gal() 3 SH, 1/29Jef() 1JAW, 1/31 Gal() 9JAW, 1/31Jef() 8JAW  
Black Vulture birds=52 reports=13  
Turkey Vulture birds=336 reports=20  
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 1/16 FB() 1JWH  
Greater White-fronted Goose birds=962 reports=9  
Snow Goose birds=28,020 reports=15  
Ross's Goose birds=607 reports=4  
Canada Goose birds=45 reports=3  
Wood Duck 1/24 Har() 1 KH, 1/30 Wal() 2JWH  
Gadwall birds=300 reports=12  
American Wigeon birds=40 reports=5  
Mallard birds=71 reports=8  
Mottled Duck birds=25 reports=3  
Blue-winged Teal birds=296 reports=7  
Cinnamon Teal 1/3 Har(WHA) 4JWH, 1/9 Har(WHA) 1JWH, 1/16 FB(BBSP) 2JWH, 1/17Jef(TP) 1JAW, 1/21 Col(AtNWR) 140 PH, 1/30 Col(AtNWR) 8JWH  
Northern Shoveler birds=2,914 reports=13  
Northern Pintail birds=585 reports=8  
Green-winged Teal birds=16,142 reports=11  
Canvasback birds=32 reports=2  
Lesser Scaup birds=127 reports=9  
Bufflehead birds=15 reports=3  
Red-breasted Merganser 1/9 Gal() 4 KH, 1/31 Gal() 79JAW  
Ruddy Duck birds=844 reports=6  
Osprey 1/29 Gal() 2 SH, 1/31Jef() 1JAW  
White-tailed Kite birds=18 reports=13  
Bald Eagle birds=2 reports=2  
Northern Harrier birds=103 reports=17  
Sharp-shinned Hawk 1/9 Wal() 1JWH, 1/10Jef(SW) 1 KS, 1/16 Har() 1JAW  
Cooper's Hawk 1/17Jef() 1JAW  
Red-shouldered Hawk birds=9 reports=5  
White-tailed Hawk 1/9 Cha(AnNWR) 1 DSDB, 1/11 Wal() 1 JM, 1/16 FB() 1JWH, 1/30 Col(AtNWR) 3JWH  
Red-tailed Hawk birds=271 reports=29  
Krieger's Red-tailed Hawk 1/16 Gal() 1 SH  
Ferruginous Hawk 1/3 Har(WHA) 1JWH, 1/9 Har(WHA) 1JWH, 1/16 FB() 1JWH  
Crested Caracara birds=17 reports=9  
American Kestrel birds=219 reports=29  
Merlin 1/3 Har(WHA) 1JWH, 1/8 Har() 1 DS, 1/17Jef() 1JAW, 1/24Jef(SW) 1 KS, 1/31Jef(SW) 1 KS  
Peregrine Falcon 1/9 Cha(SP) 1 DSDB, 1/30Jef() 1JAW  
Northern Bobwhite birds=3 reports=1  
Common Moorhen birds=7 reports=1  
American Coot birds=213 reports=5  
Sandhill Crane 1/9 Gal() 51 KH, 1/11 Har(WHA) 1JM, 1/16 Bra() 93JWH, 1/30 Col(AtNWR) 23JWH  
Black-bellied Plover birds=662 reports=4  
Snowy Plover 1/1Jef(SRSP) 12JAW, 1/31 Gal() 10JAW  
Piping Plover 1/1Jef(SRSP) 7JAW, 1/31 Gal() 1JAW  
Killdeer birds=334 reports=20  
American Oystercatcher 1/31 Gal() 2JAW  
Black-necked Stilt 1/17Jef(TP) 50JAW, 1/29 Gal() 10 SH, 1/31 Gal() 4JAW, 1/31Jef() 11JAW  
American Avocet birds=4,958 reports=2  
Greater Yellowlegs birds=103 reports=7  
Lesser Yellowlegs birds=43 reports=7  
Willet birds=220 reports=5  
Spotted Sandpiper birds=3 reports=2  
Long-billed Curlew birds=68 reports=4  
Marbled Godwit 1/31 Gal() 114JAW  
Red Knot 1/31 Gal() 1JAW  
Sanderling birds=107 reports=4  
Western Sandpiper birds=627 reports=3  
Least Sandpiper birds=200 reports=2  
Peep Species birds=2 reports=1  
Dunlin birds=556 reports=2  
Short-billed Dowitcher 1/11 Har(WHA) 2JM, 1/11 Wal() 4 JM  
Long-billed Dowitcher birds=745 reports=7  
Dowitcher Species 1/3 Har(WHA) 500JWH, 1/9 Har(WHA) 100 JWH, 1/9 Wal() 700 JWH, 1/30Jef() 1JAW, 1/31 Gal() 90JAW  
Common Snipe birds=7 reports=3  
Laughing Gull birds=1,016 reports=6  
Bonaparte's Gull birds=101 reports=2  
Ring-billed Gull birds=635 reports=10  
Herring Gull birds=25 reports=3  
**Lesser Black-backed Gull 1/17 Gal(BF) 1NB, 1/21 Gal(EB) 1NB**  
Glaucous Gull 1/21 Gal(EB) 1NB  
Caspian Tern birds=14 reports=4  
Royal Tern birds=38 reports=2  
Common Tern 1/1Jef(SRSP) 2JAW, 1/9 Gal() 1 KH, 1/31 Gal() 2JAW  
Forster's Tern birds=61 reports=4  
Black Skimmer birds=265 reports=1  
Rock Dove birds=41 reports=6

Mourning Dove birds = 533 reports = 24  
 Inca Dove birds = 16 reports = 6  
 Eastern Screech-Owl birds = 2 reports = 2  
 Great Horned Owl birds = 2 reports = 1  
 Short-eared Owl birds = 1 reports = 1  
 Common Nighthawk 1/14 Har() 1 KH  
 Hummingbird species 1/10 Jef(SW) 1 KS  
 Black-chinned Hummingbird 1/17 FB() 1 HB  
**Broad-tailed Hummingbird 1/11 Har() 1 JM**  
 Rufous Hummingbird 1/11 Har() 1 JM  
 Selasphorus Hummingbird Species 1/31 Gal() 1 JAW  
 Belted Kingfisher birds = 34 reports = 20  
 Red-bellied Woodpecker birds = 28 reports = 15  
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker birds = 15 reports = 9  
 Downy Woodpecker birds = 16 reports = 13  
 Northern Flicker 1/1 Jef(SW) 1 JAW, 1/9 Gal() 2 KH, 1/9  
 Wal() 2 JWH, 1/11 Har(WHA) 1 JM, 1/11 Wal() 5 JM,  
 1/16 Lib() 1 JAW, 1/24 Har() 2 KH, 1/31 Har() 2 KH  
 Pileated Woodpecker birds = 5 reports = 5  
 Eastern Phoebe birds = 128 reports = 24  
 Vermilion Flycatcher birds = 1 reports = 1  
 Ash-throated Flycatcher 1/9 Col(AtNWR) 1 DS, 1/24 Jef(SW)  
 1 KS  
**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 1/13 Bra() 1 WAM, 1/17 Jef() 1  
 JAW**  
 Loggerhead Shrike birds = 279 reports = 25  
 White-eyed Vireo 1/31 Aus() 1 LK, 1/31 Har() 1 KH  
 Blue-headed Vireo birds = 6 reports = 3  
 Blue Jay birds = 55 reports = 14  
 American Crow birds = 150 reports = 16  
 Fish Crow 1/17 Jef() 9 JAW, 1/31 Jef(SW) 1 KS  
 Crow species 1/16 Jef() 2 JAW, 1/17 Jef() 47 JAW  
**Common Raven 1/29 Gal(EB) 1 NB**  
 Homed Lark birds = 8 reports = 1  
 Tree Swallow 1/1 Jef() 156 JAW, 1/10 Jef() 330 KS, 1/17  
 Jef(SW) 5 KS, 1/17 Jef(TP) 100 JAW, 1/17 Jef() 125  
 NB, 1/24 Jef(SW) 3 KS, 1/31 Jef(SW) 8 KS  
 Carolina Chickadee birds = 35 reports = 8  
 Tufted Titmouse birds = 21 reports = 6  
 Brown Creeper birds = 3 reports = 3  
 Carolina Wren birds = 20 reports = 11  
 Bewick's Wren 1/11 Wal() 1 JM  
 House Wren birds = 13 reports = 3  
 Winter Wren 1/10 Jef(SW) 1 KS  
 Sedge Wren birds = 5 reports = 2  
 Marsh Wren birds = 1 reports = 1  
 Golden-crowned Kinglet birds = 10 reports = 3  
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet birds = 81 reports = 17  
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher birds = 31 reports = 7  
 Eastern Bluebird birds = 191 reports = 19  
 Hermit Thrush birds = 13 reports = 9  
 Wood Thrush 1/17 Jef(SW) 1 KS, 1/24 Jef(SW) 1 KS, 1/31  
 Jef(SW) 1 KS  
 American Robin birds = 2,532 reports = 31  
 Gray Catbird 1/10 Jef(SW) 1 KS, 1/16 FB() 3 JWH, 1/24  
 Har() 2 KH, 1/31 Jef(SW) 1 KS  
 Northern Mockingbird birds = 288 reports = 31  
 Brown Thrasher birds = 35 reports = 12  
 European Starling birds = 613 reports = 15  
 American Pipit birds = 104 reports = 8

Cedar Waxwing birds = 92 reports = 7  
 Orange-crowned Warbler birds = 64 reports = 16  
**Magnolia Warbler 1/30 Wal() 1 JWH**  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler birds = 1,162 reports = 28  
 Pine Warbler birds = 6 reports = 4  
**Prairie Warbler 1/10 Har() 1 KH, 1/24 FB(BBSP) 2 PH**  
 Palm Warbler 1/17 Jef(TP) 1 JAW  
 Common Yellowthroat birds = 9 reports = 4  
 Eastern Towhee 1/1 Jef(SW) 2 JAW, 1/11 Wal() 2 JM  
 Chipping Sparrow birds = 117 reports = 7  
 Field Sparrow birds = 21 reports = 3  
 Vesper Sparrow birds = 30 reports = 4  
 Savannah Sparrow birds = 354 reports = 10  
 Grasshopper Sparrow 1/30 Col(AtNWR) 3 JWH

Common Grackle birds = 628 reports = 10  
 Boat-tailed Grackle birds = 12 reports = 2  
 Great-tailed Grackle birds = 349 reports = 10  
 Brown-headed Cowbird birds = 673 reports = 6  
**Orchard Oriole 1/1 Bra(SBNWR) 1 WAM**  
 American Goldfinch birds = 118 reports = 15  
 House Sparrow birds = 74 reports = 6

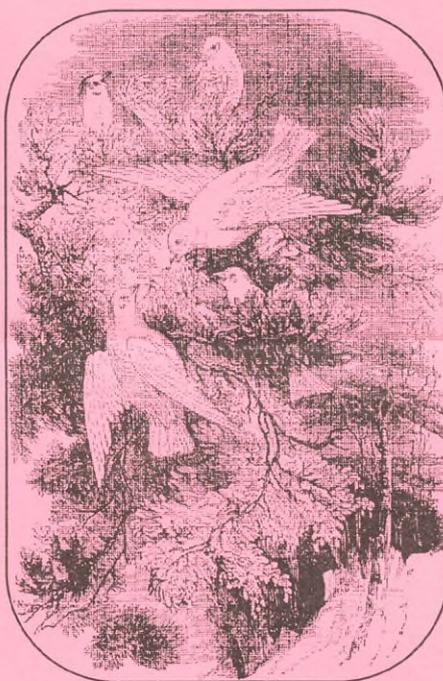
**Henslow's Sparrow, Liberty  
 County, John Whittle January 16, 1999.** Shape/  
 Size: Smallish sparrow, large bill, flat head.  
 Color/markings: Relatively thin cream colored  
 central crown stripe bordered by broken brown  
 markings extending into nape. Nape pale olive,  
 unmarked except for brown extensions of bor-  
 der of crown stripe, which extended into nape  
 but not quite all the way to the back.

Side of face a little less green and a  
 little more brown than nape. Black malar line,  
 fairly narrow, extended to behind eye and then  
 turned 90 degrees up and then another 90  
 degree back toward the beak a short distance.  
 A more diffuse black-brown line from the rear  
 center of the eye terminated above the end of  
 the second leg of the previously described line.  
 (Drawing on original notes.) Throat pale cream,  
 with some faint brown streaks on side of throat.  
 Back dark brown scapulars fringed with pale  
 brown; larger brown patches towards the rump.  
 Pale washed out chestnut in primary wing feath-  
 ers.

Eye-ring pale almost white, narrow,  
 broken at back where black-brown line origi-  
 nated. Underparts pale brown with fairly pale  
 brown streaks on sides of breast, but not all way  
 down flanks. Legs a dull darkish pink. Bill - large  
 at base - upper mandible gray; lower mandible  
 pinkish. Tail medium short, dark down center  
 (reddish brown) lighter edges; slightly forked.  
 Eye - dark.

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher Jefferson  
 County, John Whittle January 17, 1999** Shape/  
 Size: Tyrannus flycatcher with extremely long  
 tail. Color/markings: Pale gray, including  
 crown; light salmon wash along flanks; black  
 wings, long tail black and white; black bill, dark  
 eye.

**Common Raven, Galveston County,  
 William Harwell, December 31, 1999** Large,  
 crow-like bird, but much larger than crow; at  
 least as large as a Red-tailed hawk; all black, with  
 massive black bill, feet and legs; wedge-shaped  
 tail; voice a deep, hoarse "croak"... was not a  
 "caw" of a crow, "uh-oh" of Fish Crow, "burp"  
 of Mexican crow, and was much lower pitched  
 than voice of Chihuahuan Raven.



**Henslow's Sparrow 1/16 Lib() 4 JAW**

Le Conte's Sparrow birds = 5 reports = 2  
 Fox Sparrow 1/11 Har(WHA) 1 JM  
 Song Sparrow birds = 22 reports = 10  
 Lincoln's Sparrow birds = 4 reports = 2  
 Swamp Sparrow birds = 42 reports = 8  
 White-throated Sparrow birds = 132 reports = 9  
 Harris' Sparrow 1/9 Wal() 2 JWH, 1/11 Wal() 22 JM  
 White-crowned Sparrow birds = 46 reports = 2  
 Northern Cardinal birds = 119 reports = 17  
 Red-winged Blackbird birds = 17,388 reports = 12  
 Eastern Meadowlark birds = 239 reports = 10  
 Meadowlark species 1/29 Jef() 5 JAW, 1/31 Cha() 11 JAW, 1/  
 31 Gal() 2 JAW, 1/31 Jef() 1 JAW  
 Brewer's Blackbird birds = 156 reports = 3

bobcat, ocelot, jaguarundi) - more than anywhere in North America; 13 species of bats - more than most states in the U.S.

**Amphibians:** more species than in most of the western United States and Canada.

**Reptiles:** 67 species, including 22 lizards, 10 turtles (including endangered sea turtles), and 34 species of snakes - nearly one-third of all snake species in North America.

**Freshwater Fish:** a diverse assemblage of 112 species, many of which are found no farther north.

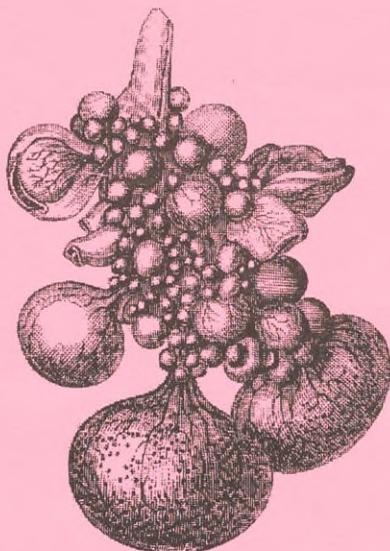
**Butterflies:** 291 species - 41% of all species north of the Mexican border and more species than in all states except two; 69 species are seen nowhere else in the United States or Canada.

**Odonates (Dragonflies and Damselflies):** Seventy-seven species of odonates have

been recorded in the LRGV, including several species that have been seen nowhere else north of the Rio Grande. For example, a few weeks ago Bob Behrstock, myself, and others photographed in Santa Ana NWR the first *Gynacantha Mexicana* in the United States, a Mexican species of dragonfly that, to my knowledge, does not even have a common name yet.

This is only a rough draft of what will be included in the final report. Complete lists of all the above will be included in the appendices. However, I do believe that this gives you a taste for the unparalleled diversity of the LRGV. The Valley is to Texas what the Everglades are to Florida and the Chirichahuas are to Arizona. The LRGV may very well be the most biodiverse region in the contiguous United States, not just our state. I can conceive of no conservation project in this country that is more deserving of our support and efforts.

Tim Brush, Mike Quinn, Bob Behrstock, Brad McKinney, and others have contributed to our efforts, and we thank them all for their generosity.



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