



# THE SPOONBILL

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

WESTERN KINGBIRDS NEST IN HARRIS COUNTY by Wallace C. Mebane, Jr.

The nest was five and a half feet high in a live oak tree near a barn. It was first discovered in June of 1971 by Mildred Ann Tippet, wife of Giles Tippet, local author of The Bank Robber and The Trojan Cow.

I saw the nest, two miles west of the Houston city limits, on July 4th. It contained four young birds with white, downy feathers. Both adult birds were seen going to and from the nest and feeding the young. On July 11 the feathers on the four young birds had turned to gray.

Only three young were seen on July 15 and 17. The young left the nest July 17. The young had white outer tail feathers. Mrs Tippet reported the adults and young were last seen on July 16. Other observers were Dr. Steve Williams, Maria Williams, Lyvonda Mebane and Wallace C. Mebane III.

## YELLOW RAIL TRIPS

Russel W. Clapper, Manager of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, has informed us that he does not plan to schedule Yellow Rail trips until March and April. Mr. Clapper, in his announcement, said "There are two main reasons for this. Fall and winter trips have not been as successful. Also we are on a tight budget, and the Bureau is faced with a cut in manpower. To keep our cost-benefit ratio up, we will try to show the most people rails with the least number of trips." During the spring migration birders also see several rail species in addition to the Yellow Rail.

DATA ON 1970 FREEPORT AND HOUSTON CHRISTMAS COUNTS compiled by Noel Pettingell  
(Source: American Birds, April, 1971)

The following list indicates just how important it is that all observers record each and every individual of even the most common species at all times and in every area covered within the Christmas Count circle. There were 902 North American reports published for the 1970-71 count period and a total of 561 species recorded by some 15,000 observers--including those in the Freeport and Houston counts, whose efforts resulted in a combined total of 25 species with highest individual counts in North America.

So even though there may be some parties or areas which don't happen to come up with "exclusive" species, every participant in the Freeport/Houston counts can at least have the satisfaction of knowing that he or she has personally contributed to individual totals for species which will be included in the list of the highest for the entire continent. Of course we never know which species recorded on Freeport or Houston counts will wind up "No. 1" until all the reports are published--usually with some surprising results, like when Freeport produced the nation's only Groove-billed Ani (i.e., a single bird) in 1967!

According to the April, 1971, Christmas count issue of American Birds, the highest individual count for the Eastern Phoebe was 153 at Cocoa, Fla., but at least two areas exceeded this total, viz., Freeport, Texas, with 184, and West Palm Beach, Fla., with 162. A further check revealed that the 1963 all-time high North American Eastern Phoebe count of 188 credited to Fort Lauderdale, Fla. in "Audubon Field Notes", April, 1964, was exceeded in the 1961 count by Houston's 192 (A.F.N. listed Gainesville, Florida's 152 as the highest total for 1961).

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>INDIVIDUALS</u>	<u>COUNT AREA(S)</u>
Black-crowned Night Heron	463	Houston
White-faced Ibis	1253	Freeport
Snow Goose	43,000	"
Marsh Hawk	156	"
Solitary Sandpiper	2	"(Tied with Dade County, Florida)
Lesser Yellowlegs	268	"
Franklin's Gull	2	Houston
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	Freeport (Tied with Fort Myers, Florida)
Barred Owl	42*	"
Lesser Nighthawk	2*	"
Pileated Woodpecker	45	"
Eastern Kingbird	1	"(Tied with Kissimmee Valley, Florida)
Eastern Phoebe	184	"
Eastern Wood Pewee	1	Freeport and Houston
Carolina Wren	279	Freeport
Short-billed Marsh Wren	35	"
Brown Thrasher	333	"
Wood Thrush	3	"(Tied with Central Beaufort County, N.C.)
Loggerhead Shrike	219	Houston
Bell's Vireo	2*	Freeport
Solitary Vireo	49*	"
Orange-crowned Warbler	178	"
Hooded Warbler	1	"
Wilson's Warbler	10	"
Henslow's Sparrow	4	Houston

\*Exceeds or equals all-time high North American Christmas count record

MINUTES, REGULAR MEETING, ORNITHOLOGY GROUP, DECEMBER 2, 1971

Chairman Sarah Gordon called the meeting to order at 7:40 P.M.

The minutes of the October 7, 1971, meeting were approved as read.

Accepted as read was the Treasurer's Report for October 1 through November 30, 1971, showing receipts of \$97.97, disbursements of \$124.87, and balance on hand of \$187.08.

Miss Gordon then announced that since the last meeting she had appointed a committee composed of Mr. T. Paul Jones, Mrs. Sue M. Buck, and Mr. E. W. Taylor to make recommendations concerning the financial status of the Group. She explained that we have no expenses to speak of, other than for THE SPOONBILL, which, this year will be met by supplementing our dues with revenues derived from the sale of aluminum and glass, Gwen Frostic stationery and the checklist. She said that we have received a new order of the stationery.

Mr. Jones, chairman, reported that the committee had met with the treasurer, Miss Melba Drake, and recommended that Group dues be raised next year to cover the entire cost of THE SPOONBILL. He explained that the cost had gone up 80% in the last two years. In the discussion that followed, suggestions were made to print fewer issues, to eliminate from the Clearing House mention of normal bird sighting and numbers, and to cut back on the contents in general. In addition, Mr. Hagemeyer agreed to explore the possibility of securing advertising in THE SPOONBILL.

Group members were asked by Miss Gordon to think about these recommendations and suggestions and to come up with other ideas, if possible, at the next meeting, at which time we will decide what to do about the dues.

On behalf of the Nominating Committee composed of Mr. James F. Murray, chairman, Mr. Ewell C. Bradley, and Mrs. Josie Wilkin, the chairman submitted for the Group's consideration the following candidates for office for the year 1972-73:

Chairman	Marilyn Crane
Vice-chairman	Margaret Jones
Secretary	Louise Rogers
Treasurer	Melba Drake

Miss Gordon then called for nominations from the floor. There were none. Margaret Anderson moved that the nominations cease and that the proposed slate be elected by acclamation. Motion was seconded and carried.

Miss Gordon reported that the Fall Meeting of the Texas Ornithological Society hosted by

OG during the Thanksgiving weekend was quite successful, and the comments she had heard were most complimentary. Her thanks and a round of applause were given those who helped out, especially Jerry Baker, Norma Oates and Marilyn Crane. A lot of LeConte's Sparrows were seen at Anahuac and Cinco Ranch. Also seen at Anahuac were Sharp-tailed Sparrows.

Margaret Anderson reported that a Long-tailed Jaeger, possibly immature, had been seen at Rollover Pass, as well as a Brown Pelican.

Miss Gordon reported briefly on a birding trip planned from January 8 through 23 in the southwestern part of the United States, headed by Dr. Chris S. Jordan of Dallas. The cost by bus, excluding meals, would be \$215.00. The trip is sponsored by Dallas Baptist College.

It was announced that a new type checklist was available at the rear of the room. It is published by the American Birding Association and can be used for the whole country by a number of people for a number of trips.

Mrs. Linda Snyder and Lt. O'Brien, of the Coast Guard, announced the formation of a Disaster Corps for the Preservation of Waterfowl and asked OG members to sign up to help out in the event there is a massive oil spill in the Gulf near Houston. The Lieutenant is the new Oil Pollution Control Officer for the Houston Ship Channel. He related his experience in rescuing birds from oil spills, and Mrs. Snyder told of the difficulties in keeping the birds alive.

There being no further business, Dr. John Tveten presented a program of color slides on birds' nests, complete with eggs and young in various stages of their development. His pictures ranged from the Killdeer's simple nest to that of the complex nest of the oriole, from nests that float on the water to those that rock in the treetops. Of particular interest was the protective coloration observed in the eggs and chicks of birds that nest in the open.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 P.M.

#### LETTER FROM FRANK KOKESH

With no dinner obligations on Thanksgiving Day, Mary Belle and I finally got off on a birding trip.

At Galveston County Park we saw a Brown Creeper, which made the day for us. These once common birds have gotten very scarce in recent years in our observation.

Texas City Dike yielded no Lesser Black-backed Gull. So far, it hasn't been seen this season. The only birds of interest were several Marbled Godwits. Oh, yes, the Long-billed Curlews feeding in numbers on the slopes of the new levee were good, too.

we are fascinated by that huge, vertical, power operated gate in the levee at the entrance to Moses Lake. The idea, it seems, is that if a hurricane is headed this way, the gate is dropped to keep the tide out. However, if a 100 year, or a 50 year, or perhaps even a 25 year storm comes in, the tide will slosh over the levee somewhat like if it wasn't there. With heavy rains on the mainland, said mainland gets thoroughly flooded. It is to be hoped that when the storm abates, the gate can be raised to let the flood out. So, finally, the levee and gate serve the purpose of protecting against the all too frequent 10 foot tides which would reach many homes in the low lying, still sinking parts of Texas City.

We had good service on beer and pizza at Shakey's Thanksgiving evening. We were the only ones there.

#### CLEARING HOUSE, NOVEMBER, 1971

Loon, Common: (1)9,21, (4)29, Cove, C&DP.  
Grebe, Horned: (1)8, Cove, C&DP.  
    Bared: (1)4, (2)8, (8)15, (25+)29, C&DP; (13)8, (14)11, (3)19, (2)23, AKM, Cove.  
    Pied-billed: (1-4)8,11,17,19,23,25, Cove, AKM; (6)4, (2)24, Cove, C&DP.  
Pelican, white: (2000-2500 est)4,8, (NC)8 days, Cove, AKM.  
Cormorant, Double-crested: (3-12)8,9,11, (20+)19, Cove, AKM.  
    Olivaceous: (5-15)8,11,17,19, (1)9, Cove, AKM.  
Anhinga: (1)30, Cove, C&DP.  
Heron, Green: (1)21, Cinco Ranch, DHH; (1)21, Brazoria County, WM & RB; (1)28, Brazoria County, WM & SW.

- Heron, Little Blue: (1-5)5,19,23,25,26, Cove, AKM.  
 Egret, Cattle: (7)11, Cove, AKM.  
 Reddish: (1)9, (2, 1 white)29, Cove, C&DP.  
 Nightheron, Black-crowned: (2-15)7,8,28,29, Cove, C&DP; (65-89)3,8,23, (20)11, (2)7, Cove, AKM.  
 Bittern, American: (1)4, (2)5, (8+)25, Cove, C&DP.  
 Ibis, white-faced: (6)4, (3)6, Cove, D&CP; (8)25, Cove, AKM.  
 White: (1 im.)3, Cove, AKM; (4)4, (2)6, (2)8, Cove, C&DP.  
 Spoonbill, Roseate: (225+)3,8, (52+)25, (3)19,26, Cove, AKM; (50 in one flock)28, C&DP.  
 Goose, Canada: (NC, heard)3, C&DP.  
 White-fronted: (35+)3, Cove, DM; (34+ in 3 flocks)7, Cove, C&DP.  
 Snow and Blue: (30+)3, (25+)25, (20+)26,28, Cove, C&DP.  
 ROSS': (3)4, C&DP.  
 Duck, Mallard: (7+)11, Cove, C&DP.  
 Mottled: (4)3,25, (2)8,17,23, Cove, AKM.  
 Gadwall: (NC)3, (5-15)5 days, Cove, AKM.  
 Pintail: (NC)3, (1)8,11, Cove, AKM.  
 Teal, Green-winged: (1-2)9,17, (40-140+)11, 19,23,25,26, Cove, AKM.  
 Blue-winged: (3)11, Cove, AKM; (1)20, Cove, C&DP.  
 Cinnamon: (1)30, Anahuac Refuge, D&DL.  
 Widgeon, American: (NC)3, (1-5)8,23,25, Cove, AKM.  
 Shoveler: (NC)3, (100+)8, Cove, C&DP; (10+)11,23, (100+)25,26, Cove, AKM (These and teal seem to be 3/4 or more of ducks in the marshes).  
 Canvasback: (1)11, Cove, AKM; (15+)28, Cove, C&DP.  
 Scaup, Lesser: (Flock of 40+)3, (Flock of 300+)9,10, Cove, AKM; (1)8,28, (5-13)5, 9,15,29 (many flying in small bunches), Cove, C&DP.  
 BUFFLEHEAD: (1)8, (11)15, Cove, C&DP; (7)23, Cove, AKM; (3)20, Warren Lake, DHH.  
 SCOTER, COMMON: (1)6, Cove, C&DP (a crippled female). AKM reports that he has only one record of Common Scoters, and this was of two dead birds.  
 Ruddy: (29)3, (19)4, (100+)20, (75+)24, Cove, AKM; (9)8, (90+)4, Cove, C&DP.  
 Merganser, Hooded: (1)5,14,20, (2)6,23, (5)24, Cove, C&DP; (5)24, Cove, AKM.  
 RED-BREASTED: (2)8, Cove, C&DP; (1)7, (2)13--may possibly have been Common Mergansers, (12)29, Cove, AKM.  
 Vulture, Turkey: (1-4)7 days, (20+)25, Cove, AKM.  
 Black: (1)15, Cove, C&DP; (8)19, (7)25, Cove, AKM.  
 KITE, WHITE-TAILED: (1)28, Cinco Ranch, JL, DHH, et al.  
 Hawk, Sharp-shinned: (1)19, Cove, AKM.  
 Red-tailed: (1)2, all dark reddish below, (1-9)11 days, (10-25)5 days, (27-32)3 days, (3)11, Cove, AKM.  
 Harlan's: (1)25, Cove, AKM & C&DP (see Clearing House notes), (1)27, Cove, C&DP.  
 Red-shouldered: (1)19, Cove, AKM.  
 Broad-winged: (1)3, Cove, AKM.  
 Eagle, Bald: (7)20, 1 adult & 6 im., (1)28, Katy-Hockley Road, JL, DHH, et al.  
 Hawk, Marsh: (1-4)12 days, (5-10)2 days, (14-15)11,25, (21)17, Cove, AKM.  
 Falcon, Peregrine: (1)20, Cove, C&DP.  
 Hawk, Sparrow: (1-5)10 days, (6-10)6 days, (12-13)4 days, (19)17,18, (26)19, Cove, AKM.  
 Bobwhite: (1 covey of 20+)23, Cove, AKM.  
 Crane, Sandhill: (45+)20, Clay Road, DHH.  
 Rail, King: (2)6, (1)9,20,28, Cove, C&DP.  
 Clapper: (1)9, Cove, C&DP.  
 Virginia: (1)13,24, Cove, C&DP.  
 Sora: (1)24, Cove, C&DP; (1)14, Brazoria County, WM, LM, WMIII, OH; (1)21, Brazoria County, WM, RB.  
 Gallinule, Common: (2)11, Cove, AKM.  
 Coot, American: (1)3,25, (4)8, (7)19, Cove, AKM.  
 JACANA: (5)13, Brazoria County, WM; (6)14, Brazoria County, WM, LM, WMIII, OH; (3)21, Brazoria County, WM, RB; (6)28, Brazoria County, WM, SW.  
 Plover, Black-bellied: (1-3)4 days, (9)8, Cove, AKM; (1-3)3 days, C&DP.  
 Turnstone, Ruddy: (3)3, (2)17, Cove, AKM.  
 Woodcock, American: (1)24, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Snipe, Common: (1-5)5 days, (NC)17, (10)11, Cove, AKM.  
 Curlew, Long-billed: (3)11, (6)17, (5)19, (1)23,25, Cove, AKM.  
 WHIMBREL: (3)17, Cove, C&DP.  
 Sandpiper, Spotted: (2)8,23, (1)11,19,25, Cove, AKM.  
 Willet: (1-10)6 days, (11+)23, Cove, AKM.  
 Yellowlegs, Greater: (3-5)8 days, (10+)11, Cove, AKM; (9)7, Cove, C&DP.  
 Lesser: (1-11)3 days, (8-15)3 days, (60+)26, Cove, AKM; (25+)5, (100+)28, Cove, C&DP.  
 Sandpiper, Least: (NC)7 days, Cove, AKM.

- Dunlin: (1)3, (10)8, (NC)4 days, Cove, AKM.  
 Dowitcher, Short-billed: (NC)3 days, Cove, AKM.  
 Species: (2)4, Cove, C&DP; (60-128)5 days, Cove, AKM.  
 Sandpiper, Stilt: (4)25, Cove, AKM (seen only one other winter).  
Semipalmated: (NC)8 days, Cove, AKM.  
 Western: (NC)6 days, Cove, AKM.  
 Sanderling: (3)3, (1)11,17, Cove, AKM.  
 Avocet, American: (1-55)7 days, (200+)17, Cove, AKM; (40-45)5, (1)24,25, Cove, C&DP.  
JAEGER, LONG-TAILED: (1 juvenile)29, Rollover Pass on Bolivar Peninsula, NP et al. (See Clearing House notes)
- Gull, Franklin's: (1)13, Clay Road, DHH.  
Bonaparte's: (5)9, Cove, AKM.  
 Tern, Royal: (NC)8 days, Cove, AKM.  
 Sandwich: (1)8, Cove, AKM.  
 Caspian: (NC)8 days, Cove, AKM.  
 Dove, Inca: (1-2)all month, (6)7,30, 10215 Chatterton, DHH; also see Clearing House notes.  
 Owl, Screech: (1)3, (2)13, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Barred: (2)30, Cove, C&DP.  
 SHORT-EARED: (1)7, (2)20,28, Cove, C&DP.  
 Nighthawk, Common: (1)2, Downtown Houston, NP; (4)21, near Hermann Park at N. MacGregor Way and Burkett, NP.
- Hummingbird, Species: (1)18, Cove, AKM. See Clearing House notes.  
 Kingfisher, Belted: (1)4 days, (2)19, (3)8,17, Cove, AKM.  
 Flicker, Yellow-shafted: (1)6,23,29, (2)8,19, (3)25, Cove, AKM.  
 Woodpecker, Pileated: (3)3, (1)19, (2)23, Cove, AKM; (1)25, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Red-bellied: (1)17,25, (2)19,23, Cove, AKM.  
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: (2)2, Cove, C&DP; (1)8,19,23, (2)11, Cove, AKM.  
Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed: (3)2, (1)3, Cove, AKM.  
 Phoebe, Eastern: (2)3,10, (1)4 days, (9)19, (4)23,25, Cove, AKM.  
 Flycatcher, Vermilion: (2)19,23, (1)25, Cove, AKM; (1)21,28, Cinco Ranch, JL, DHH, et al.  
 Swallow, Tree: (3)19, (4)23, Cove, AKM. I have seen hundreds and thousands on a Nov. day.  
 Chickadee, Carolina: (1)8, (8+)19, (2+)23,25, Cove, AKM.  
 Titmouse, Tufted: (1)19, Cove, AKM.  
 Creeper, Brown: (2)14, 7702 Westview, Houston, P&PN.  
 Wren, House: (1)3, (3)8,11,21, (2)23, Cove, AKM.  
 Winter: (2)25, Cove, AKM.  
 Long-billed Marsh: (2)4,28, (10-17)5,20, (1)6, (3)24, Cove, C&DP.  
 Short-billed: (1)3, Cove, AKM; (1)4,17,28, (2)5, (6)24, Cove, C&DP.
- Catbird: (1)5,7,11,13, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Thrasher, Brown: (2)28, 7702 Westview, Houston, P&PN.  
 Robin: (1)23, Cove, AKM.  
 Thrush, Hermit: (1)8, Cove, AKM; (1)9,25, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Bluebird, Eastern: (1)19, Cove, AKM.  
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: (3-6)4 days, (1)8, (15+)21, Cove, AKM.  
 Pipit, water: (1)6 days, (100+)25, Cove, AKM.  
 Sprague's: (1)11, Cove, AKM.  
 Vireo, Solitary: (1)19,25, Cove, AKM; (1)7 days, 12th-29th, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Warbler, Orange-crowned: (2)11, (1)25,29, Cove, AKM.  
 Myrtle: (1)10, (10+)19, Cove, AKM.  
 AUDUBON'S: (1)8, 10215 Chatterton, DHH. (Pale yellow throat)  
 Pine: (2+)19, Cove, AKM; (1)20,24,25,26, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Yellowthroat: (1)17, Cove, AKM.  
Warbler, Wilson's: (1)15 days starting 7th, (2)21, male & female, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.
- Finch, Purple: (10+)19, Cove, AKM; (2+)21,23,25, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Goldfinch, American: (40+)19, (2)20, (3+)25, Cove, AKM; (10+)21,26,27,28,30, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.
- Sparrow, Sharp-tailed: (1)3, Cove, AKM.  
 Seaside: (2)3,(3)5, Cove, C&DP; (3)11, Cove, AKM.  
 Vesper: (1)11, Cove, AKM.
- JUNCO, SLATE-COLORED: (3)23, Cove, AKM; (1)12, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Sparrow, Chipping: (1)25, Cove, AKM.  
 Field: (6+)8, (1)11,19, (2+)25, Cove, AKM.  
 White-crowned: (10)3, (2)5, Cove, C&DP; (30+)8, (1)11, (8+)25, Cove, AKM.  
 FOX: (1)20, Bear Creek Park, (heavily marked with rusty streaks; large breast spot; very large), DHH.  
 Lincoln's: (1)3,11,25, (2+)8, Cove, AKM.  
 Swamp: (1)8,11,23, (10+)19, Cove, AKM.  
 Song: (1)19, (3)25, Cove, AKM.

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS

AKM	Arlie K. McKay	DM	Damon McKay
C&DP	Chuck & Dennis Peting	LM	Lyvonda Mebane
P&PN	Phyllis & Paul Nimmons, Jr.	WM	Wallace C. Mebane, Jr.
DHH	Dan H. Hardy	WMIII	Wallace C. Mebane, III
JL	Jim Lane	SW	Steve Williams
RB	Ronald Blair	NP	Noel Pettingell
OH	Mrs. Ollie Hoffman	D&DL	David & Dorothy Lefkovits

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES

Long-tailed Jaeger (notes by Noel Pettingell): Color movies were taken by Norma Oates and Josephine Wilkin of the bird in flight and standing on the beach (bay side) on Nov. 29. A previous record of this species is recorded in the following publications:

T.O.S. Newsletter-Jan. 5, 1962, P. 1: "Pelagic Birds- Ens. Lovett E. Williams, Jr., of the U.S. Coast Guard, reported a juvenile Long-tailed Jaeger on Nov. 15, 1961, 13 miles off High Island, Texas..."

The Auk-Jan. 1965 (Vol. 82, No. 1), Pp. 19 & 22: "Jaegers in the Gulf of Mexico" by Lovett E. Williams, Jr. (pp.19-25)

P. 19: "Long-tailed Jaeger...I saw one off Galveston, Texas, on 15 November, 1961 (Figure 1)..."

P. 22: "Figure 1. Locations of 54 Jaegers seen from the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Gentian in 1961.

Hawks (notes by Arlie K. McKay): The Petings had repeatedly seen a black hawk they suspected to be a Harlan's. I saw what I thought to be the same bird and believed it to be a Harlan's on Nov. 25. The Petings identified the hawk as a Harlan's Nov. 27. There were two in the same area, one a Red-tailed. I am not sure we three have seen more than three dark Buteos, one reddish, one blackish, one a Harlan's. I also saw a migrating flock of 15 unidentified hawks Nov. 22. They were not Red-tailed.

Inca Doves: Mr. and Mrs. Paul W. Nimmons, Jr., have in their yard an Inca Dove on nest, brooding one young bird. This is at 7702 Westview, Houston.

Hummingbird: Arlie McKay's comment on the hummingbird he saw Nov. 18 is worth publication: "surely not a Ruby-throat, not surely a Rufous".

HOUSTON CHRISTMAS COUNT, JANUARY 2, 1972 by Sarah Gordon

For the newcomers we pass along the routine of Chandler S. Robbins, one of the authors of "Birds of North America" as he writes in "Birds in our Lives" of the Christmas count.

"He starts before daylight by dropping off his crew at intervals of two miles or so to listen for owls and then circles back to pick them up; arranges to be near brushy fields at dawn to see or hear woodcocks--then a frantic rush for thrashers and hermit thrushes. Hiking routes are laid out to cover best woodland areas between 7 and 10 o'clock in the morning; combs fields and wood margins for sparrows, meadowlarks, etc. Some of the party is stationed to watch marshes, ponds and mudflats. Sometimes one or more persons are detailed to watch a tract or area previously covered in the hope of seeing additional birds. Double checking of most strategically located concentration spots at different times of day increases chances of sighting rarer species. He has an evening roost watch-pathway of waterfowl, robins, doves, etc. At dusk, checks marshes for evening calls of marsh wrens, snipe, rails; listens for woodcocks again; records sparrows that chip noisily before bedding down for the night; then again listens for owls. Usually, he says, great horned owls are generally the first of their family to hail the approaching darkness.

Sound interesting? Try it--you'll like it!

Below are specific assignments of participants we have at press time. If you can be a part of the group please contact Sarah Gordon, 523-8285, and you will be notified of your leader and area.

Bring lunch and mosquito repellent. Supper will be after the count when we meet at Newby's Restaurant and Oyster Bar at 100 Alexander (corner of Texas Avenue and Highway 146) in Baytown.

All participants will be required to contribute a \$1.00 fee. This is essential to the continued publishing of the count. As Mr. Allan Cruickshank said, "it is a small price to pay for the fun and excitement of the Christmas Bird Count." He called it the largest, most exciting cooperative wildlife survey in the world. Join us and be a part of this project.

1970 count was 160 species--1971 count???

CHRISTMAS COUNT TEAMS

AREA 1

Robert Moore, Leader  
Mary Ann Moore  
Gwen B. Smith  
Claire Wartelle

AREA 5

David Lefkovits, Leader  
Dorothy Lefkovits, Leader  
Charlene Gill  
Paul Edwards  
Tassie Edwards

AREA 8

Steve Williams, Leader  
Maria Williams  
Pat Sullivan  
Nell Ray  
Sarah Gordon

AREA 2

L. A. M. Barnette, Leader  
Johnny Fay Barnette  
Louise Rogers

AREA 6

David Marrack, Leader  
Arlie McKay  
Marilyn Crane  
Melba Drake

AREA 9

Sharon Kay Hackleman, Leader  
Jim Lane  
Frank Hsu  
Grace Hsu

AREA 3

Jerry Baker, Leader  
Margaret Anderson  
Bud Anderson  
Norma Oates  
Josephine Wilkin

AREA 7

Clayton Gilman, Leader  
Eva Gilman  
Harry Brister  
Avis Brister  
E.W. Taylor  
Marian Taylor  
Mark Taylor  
Don Taylor  
Blake Taylor

AREA 10

Linda Snyder, Leader  
Noel Pettingell  
Margaret Jones  
T. Paul Jones

AREA 4

Dan Hardy, Leader  
Alan G. Wenger  
Maxine Wenger

WATER AREA

Stephen Brown, Leader & Captain  
Flossie Brown  
Barbara Duryea  
Jane Dodge

TEXAS RECORD OF LONG-TAILED JAEGER by Norma Oates

A Long-tailed Jaeger was seen on Saturday, November 27, 1971, by Mrs. Hazel Nichols and Mrs. Jenny Huey of Dallas, who were attending the Texas Ornithological Society's fall meeting in Houston. They reported their discovery at the T.O.S. membership meeting later that afternoon, giving a complete description of the bird and the exact location. They had located the Jaeger (an immature) on the bay side at Rollover Pass in the town of Gilchrist. This town is approximately 20 miles from the Bolivar Ferry landing on Highway 87 between Galveston and High Island.

My house-guest for the weekend was Barbara Ribble, and since she had to return to Austin on Sunday afternoon, we decided to make an early Sunday morning trip to Gilchrist to look for the Jaeger. Before five o'clock that morning (Nov. 28) Barbara and I picked up Margaret Anderson and shortly thereafter stopped by the Ramada Inn on the Gulf Freeway to be joined by three other cars of T.O.S. members who also wanted to go to Gilchrist before leaving Houston for their home towns. Taking this early morning run with us were Dr. Byron Griffin and his daughter from Victoria, Bruce Mack from South Carolina and Louise and Henry Hoffman from California.

We were in Gilchrist by 7:00 A.M., and at 8:00, just as we were beginning to become discouraged, the Jaeger flew over a large flock of gulls and terns resting on a nearby sandbar. As the birds flew into the air we located the smaller, dark-winged bird that caused the disturbance. We stayed for another hour watching the Jaeger circle overhead--saw it perch on the sandbar several times but always at a distance from the gulls and terns. Each time the Jaeger took to the air the gulls, terns and skimmers would fly into the air, circle a few times, then settle down again. Occasionally while in the air, one or two gulls would turn on the Jaeger, but the only birds the Jaeger actually harassed were the terns.

Shortly after we had located the Jaeger we were joined by Ben Feltner from Houston, Jim Tucker of Austin and Roland Wauer, Big Bend National Park. Several other cars arrived. We had numerous scopes on the Jaeger, and when it perched on the sandbar--facing us and in bright sunlight--we could see the two-toned bill and the very blue legs. The size seemed to be right for an immature Long-tailed Jaeger; it was smaller than a Laughing

Gull and slightly larger than a Royal Tern. The shape of the tail was also correct for the immature Long-tailed Jaeger, and when it flew overhead we could see the barring on the sides.

John Tveten, one of our expert bird photographers, told me if we located the Jaeger to call him, and he would come to take photographs. He reached Gilcrist shortly after noon and got some excellent pictures of the Jaeger, both perched on the sand and in flight. In one of John's pictures the Jaeger is shown coming up from the sand, with wings spread above, and the upper wing shows distinctly that only the two outer feathers of the primaries are white. This is characteristic of only the Long-tailed Jaeger.

Monday, Nov. 29, was another beautiful, sunny day, and the Jaeger was seen in the same location by numerous birders and was again photographed. The last report of the Jaeger from Gilcrist was on Tuesday, Nov. 30.

I do not have a complete list of the lucky birders who added this Long-tailed Jaeger to their life lists, but some of them were Mrs. Mickie Robinson, Mrs. Haney Oakes, Mrs. Bessie Cornelius, Mrs. Frances Wier, Mrs. Ruth Buskirk, Jim Lane, Noel Pettingell, Mrs. B.H. Wilkin, Mrs. Charles Baker, Miss Melba Drake, Vic Emanuel, Mrs. Jane Robinson, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Brister and Mrs. Sharon Hackleman. Even Hazel Nichols and Jenny Huey came back Sunday to take one more look at the Long-tailed Jaeger before returning to Dallas.

#### NEW MEMBERS

We want to give a very hearty welcome to two new members this month. They are: Miss Elfi Zdimal (from Austria), 847a Wax Myrtle, Houston 77024, Phone 467-3591, and Dorothy L. Cobb, 2238 S. Piney Point Road, Houston 77042, Phone 782-5678.

#### T.O.S. 1971 FALL MEETING by Sarah Gordon

From all the comments heard the T.O.S. Fall Meeting was a great success. This was due to the excellent planning and hard work of Jerry Baker and Norma Oates, who handled the overall planning, and Marilyn Crane, who directed the field trips. The Ornithology Group says thanks and well-done to the above mentioned members and to the following members who contributed their time and talents: Louise Rogers, Josephine Wilkin, Harry Brister, Johanna Grabbe, Gladys Galbreath, Maxine Wenger, Melba Drake, Nell Ray, John Tveten, Linda Snyder, David Marrack, Dan Hardy, Katrina Ladwig and Bob Moore. Ed. note: and Sarah Gordon.

#### LATE FLASH! RARE BIRD ALERT

Birders on the Rare Bird Alert hit the jackpot Friday, December 10. The Manager of the Sheldon Reservoir facilities was kind enough to get word out that there were three unusual bird species visiting the Reservoir. These were two Bald Eagles, a pair of Hooded Mergansers and four Whistling Swans. As these birds might stay for some time we decided to report them in this Spoonbill, rather than waiting until the following month, as is usually done, giving more people a chance to see the rarities. Also the same day a report was made of a Harris' Hawk seen on Highway 288, two miles north of the Angleton city limit sign.

#### COMING EVENTS

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| January 2<br>Sunday    | Houston Christmas count. Details listed above.   |
| January 8<br>Saturday  | OG field trip to Cove area, with Arlie K. McKay as leader. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at roadside park on south side of Interstate 10, between Old River and Trinity River bridges. Objective: Hawks! Incidentals: water birds and winter residents. Bring lunch.   |
| January 11<br>Tuesday  | Regular ONC meeting at 8:00 P.M. in Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive. Program will be on "Endangered Species" by John Werler.   |
| January 27<br>Thursday | Audubon Wildlife Film at 8:00 P.M. at Greater Houston Builders Association Auditorium, 2710 West Alabama. This month's film will be "Queen of the Cascades" produced by Charles T. Hotchkiss and his wife, Julie. Mr. Hotchkiss worked for the National Park Service at Grand Teton, Mt. McKinley and Everglades National Parks. This production is about Mt. Rainier and the North Cascades region. Among the wildlife pictured are Ptarmigan, Blue Grouse, Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Varied Thrush. Climax of the show is a filmed record of the climb of Mr. and Mrs. Hotchkiss to the top |

of Mt. Rainier, 14,410 feet above sea level, over 8,000 feet of snow and ice.

January 29 Saturday ONC field trip, "Shell Safari" with the Conchology Group as leaders. Details will be in January Nature Notes.

February 6 Sunday OG field trip to West Harris County, with Dan Hardy as leader. Meet at Bear Creek Park at 7:30 A.M. and bring lunch. Dan reports many good bird sightings from this area and is well qualified to show us good birding spots and lots of birds. It is quite possible that we'll find Bald Eagles here.

Feb. 19,20,21 Sat.-Mon. ONC charter bus trip to the Rio Grande Valley. Reservations need to be in right away. See trip details in November ONC Nature Notes.

March 25 & 26 Sat. & Sun. OG field trip to Corpus Christi, with Ralph Hunter and Kay McCracken of Corpus Christi as leaders. Details will be announced next month.

NOTES FROM TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

Preliminary counts of Sandhill Cranes in West Texas indicate a drop in population, but TP & WD biologists say these early counts sometimes do not give an accurate picture of things to come. In fact, after biologists counted approximately 112,800 birds, reports came in from game management officers and the public that a great many more were coming into west Texas.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has added 2,798 acres to the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge. This brings the total to 9,403 acres of the approximately 12,000 acres approved for the refuge in 1965 by the commission. The Texas Gulf Coast is the most important wintering area in the central flyway for migratory birds. Millions of waterfowl, representing at least 16 species of ducks and six species of geese, are dependent on this coastal habitat during annual migration.

A domestic Mallard Duck on the Sheldon Wildlife Management Area has prescribed her own quack remedy for egglessness. The duck, unable to lay eggs of her own, built a fine nest of reeds and down for five yellow-green spheroids. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department employees, however, found the little bundles of joy not eggs at all, but gourds.

OFFICERS

- Chairman: Miss Sarah Gordon, 1746 Wroxton Court, Houston 77005
- Vice-chairman: Mrs. Harry L. (Avis) Brister, 2314 Saxon, Houston 77018
- Secretary: Miss Louise Rogers, 2315 Kipling, Apt. #77, Houston 77006
- Treasurer: Miss Melba Drake, 1746 Wroxton Court, Houston 77005
- Co-editors of The Spoonbill: Mr. and Mrs. David (Dorothy) Lefkowitz, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown 77520
- Program Chairman: Mrs. T. Paul (Margaret) Jones, 4902 Fern, Bellaire 77401
- Field Trip Chairman: Miss Marilyn Crane, 3601 Allen Parkway, #214, Houston 77019
- Mailing: Miss Nell Ray, 1750 Wroxton Court, Houston 77005
- Rare Bird Alert: Mrs. Margaret Anderson, 2913 Amherst, Houston 77005, Ph. 668-6405
- Publicity: Miss Johanna Grabbe, 2031 Buffalo Terrace, Houston 77019
- Librarian: Dr. Pat Sullivan, 5353 Institute Lane #23, Houston 77005



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