



THE SPOONBILL

Volume XXVIII, No. 10
February, 1980

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

THIS IS YOUR LAST SPOONBILL!!!!

It is your last SPOONBILL if the date on your label is 12-79. Those who find that date on the label have not paid their 1980 dues, and we must regretfully remove those names from our mailing list. If your failure to pay is just an oversight (and we hope it is), get your check in the mail quickly....\$7.00 for members, \$4.00 for subscribers....made payable to Ornithology Group, and send to Mrs. J. M. Gillette, 5027 Longmont, Houston 77056.

COMING EVENTS

- Wednesday
Feb. 20 Birding Research Group meeting at Audubon House, ELMNS, 7:30 p.m. Interested birders are cordially invited.
- Saturday
Feb. 23 Conchology Group field trip to Matagorda Beach. Birders are invited to join the Shellers on this trip. At Matagorda Beach, participants will be ferried across the river but there will be only one truck awaiting us on the other side, which will accommodate approximately 20 persons. Preference will be given to those who have walking problems. The ferry will let us off close to the mouth of the river where it joins the Gulf and we can walk to the beach from there. There is no limit as to the number of persons who can be ferried across the river, but we are asking that everyone who plans to make this trip call Helen Eberspacher (774-3806) so we will know how many to expect. Meet at Bailey's Bait Camp before 8:30 a.m. To get there, go to Matagorda, Texas, then take FM 2031, go about seven miles to the Bait Camp on the right. 2 1/2 hours travel-time from Houston to Matagorda Beach. Important: when you arrive, sign in with Helen, for we will have to know who crosses over the river so we will know when everyone is back. Bring lunch, drinks, etc., and listen to the weather reports so you will know how to dress. OG'ers who went with the OG'ers several years ago to this spot, know how much fun this trip can be.
- Sunday
Feb. 24 OG/ONC Field trip to HL&P-Cooling Ponds, led by David Daughin. Meet at the south side rest area on I-10, east of San Jacinto river at 7:30 a.m. Please note corrected day and date (incorrect info. given in Jan. SPOONBILL)
- Monday, February 25: Deadline for articles, announcements, etc. for March SPOONBILL
Monday, March 3: Deadline for March SPOONBILL of February observations
- Wednesday
March 5 Photography Group regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Bayou Manor auditorium, 4141 So. Braeswood. Bill Mealy will conduct a workshop on framing and matting, so you can learn the right way to display your prize prints.
- Thursday
March 6 OG regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Bayou Manor auditorium. Fred Collins is going to tell us about tropical birds in the UTC. Sounds very interesting, come join us. Bring your aluminum and help swell the OG treasury.
- Saturday
March 8 This is the OG's long awaited Owling Trip, led by Ted Eubanks, Jr. Meet at 5:00 p.m. at the little white church on Hwy 6, just north of I-10. Ted says bring binoculars, no flashlights, and wear your "quiet" clothes! He reminds us that conversation must be at a bare minimum, or none, with as little extra movement as possible. There has been much interest shown in this trip, so plan now to do your part to enhance everyone's enjoyment by following Ted's advice.
- Tuesday
March 11 ONC regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. at the Garden Center in Hermann Park. Mrs. Betty Cawfield will present the program on "Wild Flowers of the Big Thicket".

The weekends of March 22-23, 29-30 and April 19-20, 26-27 have been designated special hawk watch periods in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana. Please choose a site that is convenient to you and man it all day if possible at least one of these days. If you need further instructions or report forms, contact Mrs. Gladys Donohue, Regional Editor, Hawk Migration Association of North America, Rt. 6, Box 616D, Mission, Texas 78572. Send your completed report forms to the same address immediately after the watch. Those wishing to participate in the Rio Grande Close-site Study on March 30 and the coastal accipiter watch may receive information from the same source.

A CORRECTION

On page 11 of the January SPOONBILL, David Dauphin wrote "Despite poorly detailed Eastern warblers on the Freeport Count, this is perhaps the best year in my memory for a virtual fallout of Southern and Western rarities this year". David says that though it was printed exactly as he wrote it, he meant to say "Despite a heavy tally of Eastern warblers on the Freeport Count, with only a few poorly detailed, this is perhaps the best year in my memory for a virtual fallout of Southern and Western rarities this year". He wanted the context to show that Freeport had lots of Eastern warblers but Southern and Western rarities drove all counts up. He says he is going to owe Jim Morgan another case of beer for failing to proofread his writing a little better! He doesn't want anyone to question a great count, Freeport, which he considers this country's most prestigious count.

PAST EVENTS...OG Field Trip to W. Harris County

On January 19, about 50 OG'ers met in W. Harris County for a field trip into this rapidly developing area. The trip began at Bear Creek Park where 5 species of woodpecker were found in addition to Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Purple Finch and a good-sized flock of Rusty Blackbirds.

At our next stop, near S. Mayde Creek, we received permission to bird on the property where Margaret Anderson and Marilyn Crane found a Green-tailed Towhee on the Cypress Creek CC. Just as Margaret was pointing out the bush where the towhee was first seen, up popped the bird! While trying to flush the bird back out for a better view, a real surprise occurred. We were treated to a second rare bird--an Ash-throated Flycatcher! After good looks at this bird we located a second Green-tailed nearby while the first individual was still being watched by some of the group.

Other good birds seen on the day were Cinnamon Teal at Borgstedt's Pond, 2 White-tailed Kites and a Cooper's Hawk near Clay Rd. and Katy-Hockley Cutoff Rd., both a Harlan's and Krider's Red-tail, Ground Doves, and 5 Groove-billed Anis, in addition to the usual birds more common to W. Harris County. In all, 93 species were recorded on the day.

MINUTES OF OG MEETING, February 7, 1980

David Dauphin opened the meeting and asked for announcements, which were made as follows:

- 1) Our bank balance is \$4,813.00. Much of this money will be used for printing the new Checklist.
- 2) Thanks were expressed to Mr. & Mrs. J.G.G. Frost (long-time SPOONBILL subscribers from Sandusky Ohio) who donated \$25.00 for the new tripod for the OG scope.
- 3) Another appeal was made for volunteers for help in typing the CH.
- 4) Our new Upper Texas Coast Checklist will be ready soon, and will sell for 10¢ apiece at the OG meeting, 10¢ plus postage by mail.
- 5) Call David Dauphin (383-3955) for information on rare birds (or unusual birds) before going birding, especially to the Rio Grande Valley.
- 6) There will be a showing of Linda Roach's paintings at The Chickadee, beginning March 11th.

Jack Gillette introduced the evening speaker, Dr. Barry Hinderstein, who gave an informative program on his study of the relation of House Sparrows to encephalitis epidemics. Carol Meyer reported on her work on disabled raptors and showed slides of the common owls around Houston.

Ellen Red. Secretary

A NOTE FROM DEE ROSS

(Dee and Steven Ross were the first resident caretakers-curators at Audubon House, ELMNS, and have been living in Chagrin Falls, Ohio for several years.)

At the end of August I drove (4,000 miles) to Alaska with my parents, then flew back. I saw so many new things and ecosystems, for this was my first close look at the Great Plains and Rockies. New animals to me were American Bison, moose, barren ground caribou, marmot, dall sheep, arctic ground squirrels, grizzly bear.

Birding was difficult because my dad was driving and didn't stop often. But I managed a Yellow-headed Blackbird (at 60 mph) in North Dakota! Other lifers were golden eagle, goshawk, boreal chickadee, willow and rock ptarmigan, northern shrike and sage grouse. I stayed in the Interior between Fairbanks and Anchorage, which is a good birding area earlier in the summer. Being with non-birders hampered me---but what can you do!

Also visited Mt. McKinley...magnificent view of the mountain with no clouds around the peak (lucky Dee...Ed.). Picked wild blueberries, had a flying trip above my dad's hunting area, fished and caught grayling (yummy), saw beginning of sockeye salmon spawning....altogether it was great and I'd love to go back for more hiking, birding, etc. Tell our friends hello for us, we hope to see them when we come for a visit in May.

- - - - -

NOTES ON A "FUNNY" LAUGHING GULL...by Malcolm Hodges

Polly Moore, Ellen Red and I made a trip to the Texas City Dike on the 20th of Jan., looking for Red-throated Loons, Sprague's Pipit, and anything else of interest that might happen upon us. Although all the loons were rather common, we were well-pleased with a sedate Sprague's Pipit, which was a lifer for the three of us. However, we are in agreement that the best bird of the day was of a species more abundant even than the loons....a Laughing Gull.

The bird readily distinguished himself from the riff-raff of winter laughers. We saw him around 11 a.m. at the end of the Dike, flying with many of his species, and kept our eyes on him constantly, fearing that he might fly away. His field marks were as follows: big, red bill, the color of a Caspian Tern's and the size of the surrounding gulls; completely black head, as in a summer adult, with a broken white eye-ring; dusky brown-and-black wings, as in 1st-year laughers; slate-gray back; white underparts, neck, and rump (mantle flecked with grey); white tail with a broad black terminal band extending to the tip; black legs and feet. The bird was identical in size and behavior to the Laughing Gulls nearby.

When, after 15 minutes, it appeared the bird was going to hang around, we decided to try a ploy to get a very close look at him. Ellen pulled out a Granola bar and fed the greater part of it to this gull and his compadres. As a result, we were able to see the bird from as close as 6'. In the process, we studied the many other Laughing Gulls as well, noting that most of his characteristics were observed in the transitional plumages of others, except two we couldn't explain...the very red bill (no color variation from base to tip), and the summer-black head. Many others had begun to get their black heads, but none were more than halfway there, while our bird's head had not a white feather on it (except the eye-ring). At this point, the three of us were still unsure about the bird's I.D. We were sure, though, that we had studied him sufficiently, so that we might, after some research, come to a decision.

After looking through some references and consulting other birders, I feel sure the bird is a Laughing Gull, based on size, plumage, and behavior. Bill color is known to be variable in gulls, and I can only hope that his offspring have bills of similar hue--it was quite handsome! As for the black head, it can be postulated that his "biological clock" has for some reason suffered an imbalance, causing his head to come into spring plumage early. Bent, in Life Histories of North American Gulls and Terns, says he can find no evidence that laughers acquire black heads between 1st and 2nd year plumages. Birders working the coast should be on the lookout for odd gulls of this sort. He has certainly caused me to look twice at a species I usually pass over with a glance!

[About a year ago a bird, very similar in appearance to the one described above, was seen in the Bolivar Ferry area by several Louisiana birders, who raised the question of it possibly being a gull from the Mediterranean area. However, study of slides taken of the bird produced a consensus of opinion that it was a "different" looking Laughing Gull.....Ed.]

VIVA EL NARANJO!....by Jim Morgan

On December 27, 1979, David Matson, Walter Piper and I departed Houston at 5:00 a.m. with the destination of Ciudad Mante in southern Tamaulipas, Mexico. About 14 hours later, including a lunch break and almost 2 hours getting through red tape at the border, we arrived at our motel in Mante where we met fellow OG members Ron and Marcia Braun. After dinner it was off to bed so we could get an early start birding the next day.

In the early morning darkness, we OG'ers headed out to the El Naranjo Christmas Count circle, which was to occupy our entire birding activities for the next four days. The El Naranjo circle is mainly located in the Mexican state of San Luis Potosí and we chose to begin birding on the far western edge of the circle and work our way back to the east. As this was the first day of Mexican birding for all our group but David Matson, lifers were coming "fast and furious" through the day. Spending most of the day in the higher forest after a couple of hours on the drier western slope, the four of us new to Mexico picked up about 25-30 lifers each. Some of the more interesting birds of the day which we all saw were Muscovy Duck, Bat Falcon, Military Macaw, Squirrel Cuckoo, Blue-crowned Motmot, Barred Antshrike, Brown-backed Solitaire, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, 5 "Mexican" warblers, 2 species of Euphonia, and Blue Bunting.

Heading back to Mante after our first day of birding none of us were aware that we were yet to see our best bird of the day. This circumstance was brought about by the fact that a truck/car accident on the return road to Mante completely blocked all traffic and we were left with the choices of trying to wait until the road was cleared, take an alternate route of 180 miles, or go back to the count circle to find a place to stay the night. We opted for the latter, and after locating a spot for the night we decided to go out into the darkness and do some owling. We had not gone a half mile when our light located two orange eyes on top of a pole along the side of the road. These eyes belonged to one of the strangest but most fascinating birds I have ever seen....a Common Potoo! All 5 of us watched this bird for at least 20 minutes while Ron took several pictures, guessing at exposures needed for the odd light situation we had. This bird more than made up for the inconvenience of our blocked return path to Mante.

We spent our second day birding along the river and in the lowlands of the count circle. The most memorable moment of this second day came for me as we rounded a bend in a dirt road and spotted a raptor in a bare-limbed tree across a sugar cane field but in our direct view. This bird was buffy white with a black mask and distinctly barred tail. After only a few seconds of viewing, the bird took flight and correct shouts of the identification were heard....Laughing Falcon! What a gorgeous raptor! It alighted once again to allow careful viewing with our scopes. Shortly after this sighting we were to view a Great Black Hawk just down the road. Other good birds this second day included Collared Forest-Falcon, Ruddy Ground-dove, Green Parakeet and Red-crowned Parrots in full view while perched, and White-collared Swift.

At the end of our second day of birding we met El Naranjo Count co-compilers and fellow OG members, Ben Feltner and Mary Ann Chapman, along with several other birders, back in Mante to swap birding stories of our two delightful days of birding and their exuberant experiences at Tezuitlan. We also made plans to go out together the next day within the count circle once again.

Some of our third day was spent scouting the count circle for marshes, but many good birds were also seen. These included Short-tailed Hawk, Immature Peregrine Falcon (always good to see), Fork-tailed Emerald, and Masked Tityra. During the day we also met up with former UTC birder Holly Hobart, who was down to help out on the Count.

Our fourth and final day of birding was Count Day for the El Naranjo Count. Even after 3 days of birding entirely within the count circle I still picked up ten lifers on Count day, including a Rufescent Tinamou which crossed right in front of our car on a dirt road, Mottled Owl, Yellow-billed Cacique, Dusky-tailed Ant-tanager, Black-headed Saltator and Crimson-collared Grosbeak. How well did the count turn out? Would you believe 245 species with only 14 observers? That's right! And it was done on a day when the higher forest had fog and/or low clouds all day! With 30 or more good observers, and good weather, Ben feels this count can approach 275 species! And this is an inland count, far from saltwater. What potential!

In four days of birding our party of 3 saw 214 species within the El Naranjo count circle, and we could only cover maybe 15% of the circle which is 90% birdable habi-

tat. During count week all 14 observers saw about 260 species within the count circle. Not bad birding only a full day's drive from Houston. On a bird-per-dollar basis, our trip was hard to beat. Sharing travel expenses with David Matson and Walter Piper, my total trip cost me less than \$85! So when I calculate that I personally saw 208 species on the trip, with 60 lifers, I come up with about 2.5 species per dollar and \$1.42 for each lifer! That's cheap birding no matter how you look at it. Then, when you factor in the quality of birding at El Naranjo, it is hard to beat! I hope it becomes an annual event for for me.

- - - - -

OUR QUEST FOR THE EUROPEAN WIGEON.....by Larry and Martha Ballard
(or, "Winter Birding on Cape Cod and Nantucket")

The question was: Where can we go on a Christmas vacation and see the largest number of "life list" birds in North America? Larry checked the American Bird's CBC issues for the last four years, and Eastern Massachusetts seemed to best fit our needs. We decided to spend one week on Cape Cod, three nights on Nantucket, and one at Gloucester.

We then wrote letters to ABA contacts at Plymouth, and Chatham, and to the directors of the Cape Cod and Nantucket CBC's. We received a printed guide from Wallace Bailey on winter birding on Cape Cod. This proved to be an indispensable aid to birding this area. We also received a letter from Blair Nikula, informing us that a European Wigeon had been seen at Gloucester.

Our plane arrived in Boston on Dec. 20, at 4:30 a.m. It was 14° and snowing. We picked up our rental car and headed for Gloucester to find our wigeon. Arriving at Gloucester shortly after daylight, we found our first lifer at the harbor. It was an adult Iceland Gull. We then headed for Niles Pond, the reported stopping place of the wigeon, but found only Brants, Black Ducks, Herring Gulls, etc. No wigeon. We then headed south toward the Cape. We stopped at Plymouth and the nearby Manomet Bird Observatory, and found our first Common Eiders.

According to the booklet, one of the key points to check was Provincetown in northern Cape Cod. We birded at the quaint historical town several times. The first new bird that we sighted was a tiny gull, only slightly larger than a Least Tern, a Little Gull. This bird was a welcome relief from a steady sighting of Greater Black Backs and Herring Gulls. Next we found Great Cormorants, a Razorbill, and a Black-headed Gull.

The next two days were frustrating, for we were primarily looking for Snow Buntings and Gannets (the bird that we had looked for so many times from the Quintana Jetty). The only unusual bird that we found was a Mew Gull, that we located at Crystal Lake, which was not a lifer. Finally on the 24th, after walking the dunes at Marconi Station for the third day, we spied two female Snow Buntings, and Martha observed four males flying away from her.

Two days later at Race's Point we found our Gannets with the help of four birders from Provincetown. We had three in our glasses at one time. We were then told of a Thick-billed Murre in the Provincetown harbor. We immediately went to the wooden pier, and sure enough, Larry found his 600th North American Bird, the Thick-billed Murre.

The morning had been sunny with the wind from the southeast, but suddenly the wind began to shift, first from the northeast, then from the northwest. We felt it might be well to check the Fort Hill area, a marshy area right behind the beach on the east side of the Cape. While walking the trail, Martha noticed a dark hawk-like bird flying in from the beach. It circled above our heads several times while we carefully checked it with our binoculars. We then recalled what we had read in a recent issue of Birding, and identified it as a Great Skua. He circled about the area for about ten minutes. It had been a good day.

The next morning we drove to Hyannis and took the ferry to Nantucket. We observed many Oldsquaw, Scoters and Common Elders on the way. After arriving in Nantucket, we settled in our room, and phoned Edith Andrews, the CBC compiler at Nantucket. She told us she had found "our bird" for us. We had written to her that we hoped to find a Sawwhet Owl at Nantucket. She met us and led us to a small pine forest then straight to the proper tree. There, looking down at us, was a beautiful little owl. We looked at him and he looked at us for ten minutes. Martha felt like hugging Edith, for it was Martha's 600th bird. She also told us of a European Wigeon

that had been seen on a pond five days, earlier, and though we checked every pond on the island, it was to no avail.

The CBC was held on Saturday, Dec. 29, and there are four things that we will never forget about that Count. 1) We found 550 Yellow-rumped warblers; 2) We observed 48 feral mute swans in two hours; 3) We found another lifer, an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull; 4) We saw over 55,000 Oldsquaws flying by the west end of the island from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. This is an event that occurs each afternoon in the winter. At the countdown we learned that some good birds had been seen at the eastern end of the island.

So the next morning we drove out to the beach area at Siasconset and observed Red-throated and Common Loons, Red-necked Grebes, and a very rare bird for the island, a Western Grebe. In addition, there were the usual large gulls, Black Kittiwakes, Bonaparte's and another Little Gull, 2 Razorbills, and another lifer, the Black Guillemot, a bird that is far more white than black in his winter plumage.

We then had to take the ferry back to Hyannis, where ^{we} were joined by six of the young birders that had been on the Christmas Count with us. As we left the harbor, one of them shouted "King Eider". Looking carefully at the bird, we found it looked a great deal like a young or female Common Eider, but its bill was shorter, the front of the head was more verticle than a Common Eider and the head was more chocolate. This was an immature bird and the other birders told us that mature adults were seldom seen on Nantucket.

They also told us that the European Wigeon had re-appeared at Niles Pond. So we went back up to Gloucester and drove around Niles Pond and looked, and looked, and looked. We were joined by five carloads of local birders, but again none of us were able to find him. We did see an Immature Iceland Gull sitting on the rocks of the shore across the pond. This was the end of our trip and we still have yet to see the European Wigeon.

- - - - -

WITH BESSIE CORNELIUS IN SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND, Conclusion

While at Cley-next-the-sea, after an early-morning check of the marshes there was a different place to go each day. We spent one day at the well-wooded Sandringham Estate, summer home of the Queen. Sandringham Park is open to the public but there is an admission charge. It has a high population of warblers, tits, woodpeckers, tree creepers and nuthatches. The Green Woodpecker can be found there although difficult to locate. On our way to Sandringham, while having lunch from the boot, we located some Egyptian Geese, a desired bird. The narrow winding roads to the Queen's Sandringham Estate were appropriately bordered in delicate white Queen Anne's Lace.

Another day was spent near Sparham Pools, another Norfolk Trust sanctuary for the nesting Little Ringed Plover. It was not permitted, nor did we want, to approach the nesting site very closely so here again a good scope came in quite handy. That evening, upon arriving at Flanders and quite ready for dinner, we learned the hot line had been trying to locate us all day to tell of the sighting of a Red-rumped Swallow, a rare migrant to the Norfolk coast, at Holme Nature Reserve. It was some 40 miles but forgetting dinner we immediately started out and arrived at Holme as quickly as the narrow roads would allow. We had been eagerly expecting another lifer all along the journey but even before getting out of the car we knew we had "dipped out". The dejected look on the Warden's face told the story....too late. However, this was a new sanctuary and a lovely coastline and we were glad to see it. The British say if you find the bird you have "dipped in" but if you don't you "dip out". Also they say a birder who jumps from one rare bird to another and sits nervously waiting for a telephone call about one is a "Twitcher".

On our next day's trip we definitely "dipped in". The Eurasian Stone-Curlew is among the rarest breeding birds in Britain but with luck they can be seen at the Weeting Heath National Nature Reserve about 150 miles round trip from Cley. Other birds to be found at or near the Reserve include the Red-legged Partridge, Wheatear, Mistle Thrush, Skylark, Coal Tit and Goldcrest. This country was known as the Broken Land, (or now Breckland), broken by the plow. Before reaching Weeting we explored a poplar forest (where matchwood is made) and there found the rather scarce Golden Orioles, as well as the Marsh Harrier and Kestrel. Another place of interest, not far from Weeting, was Grimes Graves. When man hunted with arrows, one of the Neolithic flint mines was worked here and early man engaged in flint-knapping; they used the antlers from the Roe Deer and made skinny knives and arrow heads from the flint. Flint-knapping has almost become a lost art.

One must have permission from the Warden at the Weeting Reserve, who is not there every day, and a permit must be purchased. We made our way back to the hide, after the formalities of getting in through the warden. The Stone Curlew must have a particular breeding habitat, one that is a barren sandy wasteland with close-cropped turf. In this area I believe this is accomplished by the encouragement of the European hare that spend all their waking hours cropping turf. We were barely settled in the hide when a couple of these strange, thick-kneed ungainly birds came into view. They have huge goggley yellow eyes and a round-headed appearance. They would come up and go back over the rise like little ghosts but soon they came closer and began to display right in front of the hide, as if on queue. We were told this was most unusual and we were most fortunate to be witnessing this sight. They would run furtively with head low and body hunched toward each other and then back off slowly as if they had changed their minds about the whole thing after all. They usually emerge at night to feed and forage. If surprised in the open they will slink quietly away to lie, with outstretched neck, behind some little bush or mound, achieving a miraculous camouflage. We seemed never to tire of watching the antics of these strange creatures and left reluctantly, birding our way slowly back to the warden's caravan and there saw another strange sight. While we were speaking to the Warden, an immature Tawny Owl suddenly and silently dropped down near the caravan and proceeded to stare at us as intently as we did at him. It was a beautiful bird and almost entirely wild, altho it had been raised by the Warden after being found in the woods, either fallen or taken from the nest. It came back for food occasionally but now it flew off as silently as it came....a beautiful creature. Near here the Laburnum was blooming allabout and hung in luscious golden droopy clusters. Here we saw one of the few remaining pairs of Red-backed Shrikes breeding in Britain. At another place not far distant we found the Wood Lark. Several places of historical interest were visited briefly and we arrived in Cley after dark. This was probably our favorite trip.

But the place of never-ending excitement and wonder was the Cley marshes. Across the road from the marshes is Walsey Hill, a small preserve of hillside gorse, or broom, thickets and paths leading down the Hill into another marsh and willows. Here can be found the Willow, Reed and Sedge Warblers. A pair of Bullfinches were found also.

Walsey Hill was a delightful place to sit and survey the surrounding countryside.... the marshes and coastline on one side and Cley in the distance with its quaint Dutch windmill, the ancient cathedral and its flintstone cottages with red pan-tile roofs. But all of this would soon come to an end. Two members of our group left for London on the sixth day. The rest of us were soon to embark on the last of the extensions with Bryan...to North and South Wales and southern England ending at New Forest.....but this will be another sequel to this birding journey to be written another day.

BIRD BEHAVIOR.....A Book Review: "A Guide to the Behavior of Common Birds"

More and more of our readers are voicing interest in this or that instance of a bird's behavior, so the Editor requested help from Linda Walsh of The Chickadee in providing some source material. With apparent sleight-of-hand, she immediately produced a new (1979) book by Donald W. Stokes, "A Guide to the Behavior of Common Birds, with original illustrations by J. F. Lansdowne. Dealing with common birds, some of which we see daily, it is an excellent introduction to the fun of Behavior Watching.

As the author explains in the opening chapter, "I have always enjoyed the continual treasure hunt of bird-watching....going out in the early morning and searching grasses, shrubs and trees for the least movement, quickly spotting the familiar birds, and puzzling over new spring arrivals or fall migrants. But at the same time, just making lists of birds I'd seen left me feeling somewhat unsatisfied...I sensed I wasn't getting to the heart of the matter, was somehow passing up an opportunity or neglecting a resource. What could I do with a bird once I knew its name?" An article on Mallards with illustrations of the birds in strange poses, with labeled captions, led him to a duck pond to see for himself if he had really been missing something all the years of his bird-watching. He found the birds doing the very things illustrated in the article, and to his excitement, found the Mallard had become a new bird to him. "The surprise and treasure hunt had been restored to my birding".

This experience led him to explore ornithological journals, in search of articles on behavior of common birds, and discovered many. But he also discovered that very

few people were aware of social behavior in birds. So...."This lack of public knowledge, my experience with the Mallards, and my discovery of the research all led me to the writing of this field guide. It is the result of my desire to share with others the endless surprise and discovery produced by behavior-watching.

In the second chapter, Mr. Stokes explains the information you need to interpret a bird's behavior: "The general timing of the bird's life stages, knowledge of its displays used to communicate with other birds, and the details of its major behavior patterns." To answer these needs, the information on each bird in this guide is organized into three sections: a behavior calendar, a display guide, and behavior descriptions.

Most of the birds dealt with in this book are species seen daily in the yard, or frequently in the field, and thus are easily accessible for behavior watching. The guide is designed to help you interpret what you see in the field. We predict that with the aid of this book, you too will discover new surprises and treasure hunts.

Bird Behavior....A Question

"Why does the Mockingbird raise its wings?" That was a question put to Anne Elston by one of the third-graders at her recent slide show in a Katy school. She discovered from the Stokes book that this behavior is called Wing-flashing, indulged in by both male and female Mockingbirds, and...."is not known whether it has a communicative function". Drat! So....we went on to Bent: "It is thought by some that these performances are indulged in to startle unseen insects into betraying their whereabouts, but this needs more definite study and proof than are now available". Well, that doesn't seem to pin anything down. How about Oberholser?.."When foraging on the ground the Mockingbird frequently lifts its wings in a "wing-flashing" gesture the significance of which is controversial, but which perhaps has the effect of flushing grasshoppers out of the turf". Humn-n-n, now wouldn't you think that a bird so visible as a Mockingbird would have tons of pages of research written about every little movement with definite answers? If any reader knows of some research and writing on this little habit of our familiar "Mock-bird" (so named by Mark Catesby in the early 1700's) please let us hear from you.

- - - - -

NOT JUST ANOTHER WILD GOOSE CHASE.....by Mary Ann Chapman

It having been a year since the famous "Wild Bahama Duck Chase" that I made to Laguna Atascosa (see THE SPOONBILL, Dec., 1978) with Ben Feltner, and having recovered from Christmas Count season and two weeks in Mexico, I decided to make a run for the Barnacle Geese reported at the Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge on Lake Texoma in January.

Checking with Refuge manager Jim Harman, I learned that the geese were frequenting an area of the Refuge to which access was available only on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, that it was a matter of picking five Barnacles out of 30,000 Canadas, and that since the Canadas were starting to move northward, our chances were less than 50-50. But since my California visitor Bob Behrstock was chafing at the bit, Richard Albert had already arranged to rent a plane in Alice to fly up and meet us, and I had an excuse to concoct a business appointment in Dallas on Thursday afternoon, we decided to go for it.

Thus near midnight on January 17, after solving a maze of unmarked country roads, Bob and I rolled into the tiny Tishomingo airport at the dead end of a dirt road adjacent to the Refuge. We quickly located Richard, already snug in his sleeping bag under the wing of his Beechcraft. Barred and Great Horned Owls called over the nocturnal chattering of the geese.

The next morning, fortified with a mammoth breakfast from Petty's Restaurant (recommended - \$1.95), we arrived at Refuge headquarters to find a contingent of TOS members from Wichita Falls and Fort Worth waiting for us. Upon the recommendation of Refuge personnel, we spent the day examining thousands of Canada Geese along the lake shore and in several feeding areas. We received a thorough self-education on five subspecies of Canada Geese of all sizes and several plumages of Blue Geese, with a sprinkling of Snows, White-fronteds and Ross' for variety. The day's special treats were several adult Bald Eagles and a Prairie Falcon, but no Barnacle Geese.

Hungry and decidedly grubby from our day in the field, we attacked dinner at the Western Inn Motel (all the catfish you can eat for \$2.95, every Friday night). As we debated whether to give it another day's try, we were suddenly accosted by a trio of fresh, dapper birders attracted by Richard's bird-patch-bedecked jacket. "We bet he knows where the Barnacle Geese are!" they exclaimed. "Oh no, he doesn't!"

Bob responded, shaking the cornmeal out of his beard. We soon learned to our amazement that these incredible optimists had flown into Tulsa from New York just to see the birds, and had to leave at noon the next day!

We decided to consult the Refuge manager about our prospects for the next day. Locating him at home by telephone, we learned that he had sometimes seen the birds during their dawn flight across a certain stretch of lake shore. He also suggested an area of the lake shore where they might be observed bathing around 10 a.m. Then if our best efforts failed, he said that he would come out on Saturday afternoon and take us back into the closed area where we had failed to see the B.G.'s on our one try there on Friday.

Dawn found us on the lake shore, squinting through the murky light, haze, and cold wind at thousands of geese flying over us toward the closed Pennington Unit. We then shifted our attention to one of the open feeding areas where we had spent a great deal of time on Friday. My rapidly disintegrating tripod added to our frustrations. The folks from New York looked cheerful but concerned. Suddenly a pick-up appeared, bearing Refuge manager Jim Harmon, half a day early! Because of the worsening weather, he had postponed a hunting trip to take us into the Pennington Unit before it started raining.

Richard, Bob, and I jumped into his vehicle and we headed for Pennington. We thanked him profusely all the way for his southwestern hospitality and incredible courtesy to us birders, and he was obviously pleased that we were enjoying his Refuge.

We eased slowly into Pennington and toward the feeding areas -- acres of geese which would disappear for the day at an untimely sneeze or the lowering of a creaky car window. Jim set up his window-mount telescope while the rest of us jockeyed into viewing positions with our binoculars. Within a couple of minutes, Bob had spotted one Barnacle Goose. With his direction, Richard and I got quick looks at the white face and black eyeline that had been eluding us. After another 20 minutes, they reappeared, and Jim got them in his scope. We all exercised our gymnastics abilities and twisted around Jim to get great looks at the black chest and banded gray backs of an adult and one immature Barnacle Goose. What a reward for our struggle!

By now one carload of birders had arrived from the other part of the Refuge and was waiting for us outside the Pennington Unit gate. I took their car and went back for the New York folks, while Jim took them in for a look. Finally, after much cautious belly crawling, everyone made it into the front seat for a look through the scope.

After a late victory breakfast, we delivered Richard back to the airport. We were very glad that he had called Alice the night before and extended his airplane rental for another day. All nine of us who were treated to a fabulous liver were grateful to Jim Harman for giving up his Saturday morning to give us his invaluable assistance. On the way home I realized that I had left my beloved down coveralls in his car, and within days they arrived in the mail, unsolicited!

Chasing wild and rare birds can often be frustrating and unproductive, but when the attempt ends like this one, it makes all the others worthwhile!

PLACES TO GO

With wintering birds still with us, the familiar routes we've taken for the past several months are still good, W. Harris County (another Green-tailed Towhee was found out there Feb. 3, which makes four seen in the past two months. This one was on Longenbaugh Road, about fifty yards west of Katy-Hockley Road....hedgrows on both sides of the road) has been and still is the place to go. Numerous Grasshopper sparrows were seen on Sharpe road this past weekend, across the road from the glider hanger.

Recently we asked for reports on Sheldon Reservoir, and Bill and Jean Harwell went out there reconnoitering, and had this to say: "Some things are out there, the water is up, and maybe they're coming back. But the condition of the place just makes you sick...its so run-down and beat-up, and looks like NO one is there to supervise it or care for it. That was such a great place in years past! Unfortunately, there is much building activity around the periphery...housing, sports fields, industrial buildings, etc." Check the CH for Sheldon sightings by them and others.

In just a few weeks it will be time to start checking migrant traps for early spring migrants....salt cedars along beaches, High Is., Freeport Mun. Park, Galveston Is. St. Park, are just a few to consider.

CLEARNING HOUSE, January 1980

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made in the six counties comprising the upper Texas coast: Jefferson, Chambers, Galveston, Harris, Ft. Bend, and Brazoria. Sightings made outside this area are not included in the CH. How to read the CH: Species: Location--(how many), observers. Those common species which can be readily identified and are widely distributed in the UTC will also be listed, followed by number of reports, with lowest and highest numbers seen in parenthesis, i.e. (1-42). If any of these species is reported in unusual habitat or numbers that will be noted separately. You will note some dates underlined, this will denote a late date, or possibly an early date. An underlined location denotes unusual location or habitat.

- Loon, Common: Galveston--(1)2, (2)28, JHa, (7)6, (1)23, MAU, (3)15, S, (3)26, S&SCa; Pleasure Is.--(7)6, S&SCa, (2)20, MR; Texas City--(1)6, MAU, (3)20, S, (35)PH, (39)27, R&MBr; Cooling Ponds--(3)12, E.
- LOON, ARCTIC: Texas City--(1)13, E, M. Froelich, Chris Sturm (see note)
- Grebe, Horned: Galveston--(1)6, 23, MAU, (1)28, JHa; Pleasure Is.--(8)6, S&SCa; Cooling Ponds--(1)12, E.
- Grebe, Eared: 11 reports (1-120)
- Grebe, Pied-billed: 17 reports (1-30)
- Pelican, White: 17 reports (1-170)
- Cormorant, Double-crested: 14 reports (2-150)
- Cormorant, Olivaceous: Bolivar--(20)5, S&SCa; Pleasure Is.--(2)6, S&SCa, (25)20, MR; Cooling Ponds--(1)12, E; High Is.--(1)19, S&SCa; Texas City--(1)27, R&, Br
- Anhinga: Sheldon Reservoir--(3)12, E; W.Harris Co.--(8)19, OG; Freeport--(5)27, M.
- Great Blue Heron: 16 reports --(1-40)
- Heron, Green: Chambers Co.--(1)1, S&SCa; Galveston Is.St.Pk.--(1)13, C
- Heron, Little Blue: 14 reports --(1-20)
- Egret, Cattle: 12 reports (1-200)
- Egret, Reddish: High Is.--(1)1, S&SCa; Galveston--(1)6, (3)23, MAU, (1)23, PH
- Egret, Great: 17 reports --(1-35)
- Egret, Snowy: 16 reports (1-150)
- Heron, Louisiana: 12 reports--(1-15)
- Night Heron, Black-crowned: Texas City--(2)6, MAU; W.Harris Co.--(75)19, OG; Galveston--(1)26, PH
- Bittern, American: Brazoria Co.--(1)19, D&RMe
- Ibis, White-faced: High Is.--(75)1, S&SCa; Brazoria Co.--(5)15, S, (10)27, M; Galveston--(1)17, JHa
- Ibis, White: 9 reports (2-35)
- Spoonbill, Roseate: Galveston--(10)2, JHa, (150)13, C, (10)26, PH, (1)26, S&SCa; Cooling Ponds--(6)12, MAU, (2)12, MRo; Brazoria Co.--(5)19, D&RMe, (18)27, M
- Goose, Canada: 7 reports (1-200)
- Goose, White-fronted: 8 reports--(1-1,000)
- Goose, Snow: 17 reports (5-11,000)
- Goose, Ross': W.Harris Co.--(2)5, RP; Anahuac NWR--(1)13, S&SCa
- Mallard: 7 reports (2-40)
- Duck, Mottled: 6 reports (2-10)
- Duck, Gadwall: 12 reports (2-1,750)
- Pintail: 13 reports (5-500)
- Teal, Green-winged: 13 reports (1-5,000)
- Teal, Blue-winged: 7 reports (1-25)
- Teal, Cinnamon: Maner Lake--(3)15, (5)31, S; W.Harris Co.--(1)19, OG
- Wigeon, American: 13 reports (2-125)
- Shoveler, Northern: 12 reports (2-300)
- Duck, Wood: Sheldon Reservoir--(4)12, E
- Redhead: Pleasure Is.--(30)6, S&SCa; W.Harris Co.--(2)19, OG
- Duck, Ring-necked: Pleasure Is.--(7)6, S&SCa; Sheldon Res.--(8)6, J&BH; Mercury Dr.--(20)12, E; W.Harris Co.--(14)19, OG; Galveston--(3)20, S, (1)26, PH; Freeport--(1)27, M
- Canvasback: Pleasure Is.--(200)6, S&SCa; (60)20, MR; Sheldon Res.--(10)6, J&BH; Galveston--(1)11, (2)17, 28, JHa, (1)20, S; Cooling Ponds--(4)12, E; W.Harris Co.--(35)19, OG; Brazoria Co.--(120)7, M, (35)31, S
- Scaup, Greater: Cooling Ponds--(3)12, E; Brazoria Co.--(40)19, D&RMe; Texas City--(2)26, PH
- Scaup, Lesser: 12 reports (2-30,000)
- Goldeneye, Common: Pleasure Is.--(1)6, S&SCa; Texas City--(1)6, MAU; Cooling Ponds--(40)12, E; Galveston--(3)23, MAU.
- Bufflehead: Pleasure Is.--(75)6, S&SCa, (13)20, MR; Cooling Ponds--(300)12, E; W.Harris Co.--(1)19, OG; Texas City--(3)20, S, (1)23, PH; Galveston--(2)23, MAU
- Scoter, White-winged: High Is.--(4)19, 26, S&SCa
- Scoter, Common: High Is.--(1)19, S&SCa (see notes)
- Duck, Ruddy: 7 reports (200-1,000)
- Merganser, Hooded: Mercury Dr.--(3)12, E; Galveston Is.St.Pk.--(1)13, C; Brazoria Co.--(2)19, D&RMe

Merganser, Red-breasted: Galveston--(2)6,(10)23,MAu, (3)23,PH; Pleasure Is.--(14)6,
 S&SCa, (18)20,MR; Texas City--(1)6,MAu, (2)27,R&MBr; Cooling Ponds--(40)12,E;
 Brazoria Co.--(32)19,D&RMe, (4)27,M; High Is.--(60)19,S&SCa; Bolivar--(6)27,R&MBr
 Vulture, Turkey: 8 reports (1-40)
 Vulture, Black: 5 reports (2-21)
 Kite, White-tailed: Winnie--(1)1,2,24, (3)4,(2)13,S&SCa; Brazoria Co.--(1)15,31,S,
 (5)19,D&RMe, (1)19,MRo; High Is.--(1)19,S&SCa, (1)21,WM; W.Harris Co.--(2)19,OG;
 Webster--(1)23,MAu
 Hawk, Sharp-shinned: High Is.--(2)1,S&SCa; League City--(1)11,MAu; Winnie--(2)13,
 S&SCa; W.Harris Co.--(1)19,OG, (1)24,PH; Galveston--(1)26,JHa
 Hawk, Cooper's: Sheldon Res.--(1)6,J&BH; W.Harris Co.--(2)6,(1)24,P&FH; Brazoria
 Co.--(1)27,M, (1)31,S
 Hawk, Red-tailed: W.Harris Co.--(1-harlani + 1 kriderii)6,24,PH, 19,OG; 21 addi-
 tional reports (1-25)
 Hawk, Red-shouldered: 8 reports (1-12)
 Hawk, White-tailed: Brazoria Co.--(1)19,D&RMe (prior reports)
 Hawk, Ferruginous: Ft. Bend Co.--(2)10,RP (see notes); Galveston Is.St.Pk.--(1)12,
 C (see notes); Brazoria Co.--(1)19,D&RMe (see notes)
 Eagle, Bald: W.Harris Co.--(1)6,P&FH, (1)19,OG, (3)26,W
 Hawk, Marsh: 18 reports (1-40)
 Falcon, Peregrine: Galveston--(1)2,13,23,m.obs. (prior reports)
 Merlin: Cooling Ponds--(1)12,E; Galveston Is.St.Pk.--(1)12,RP; Anahuac NWR--(1)18,
 S&SCa; Houston--(1)28,MA(yard)
 Kestrel, American: 15 reports (1-50)
 PHEASANT, RING-NECKED: W. Harris Co.--(1)8,PH (no field notes)
 Bobwhite: 3 reports (12-15)
 Crane, Sandhill: Galveston--(7)17,JHa, (1)23,MAu, (3)26,PH; Brazoria Co.--(3)19,
 D&RMe, (7)27,M, (105)31,S; W.Harris Co.--(36)24,PH
 Rail, King: W.Harris Co.--(1)6,P&FH; Winnie--(1)13,S&SCa
 Sora: Chambers Co.--(3)1,6,S&SCa
 Gallinule, Common: Chambers Co.--(6)1,(8)6,S&SCa; Galveston--(1)2,(4)11,17,28,JHa;
 Brazoria Co.--(40)15,31,S, (6)27,M
 Coot, American: 12 reports (2-3,000)
 Oystercatcher, American: Texas City--(4)6,MAu, (2)2-,H; Galveston--(2)6,(1)23,MAu,
 (2)23,PH
 Plover, Semipalmated: Bolivar--(30)5,S&SCa, (60)27,R&MBr; Texas City--(2)6,MAu;
 Galveston--(3)26,PH
 Plover, Piping: Bolivar--(200)5,S&SCa; Galveston--(2)20,S, (1)26,PH; Texas City--
 (1)23,MAu
 Plover, Snowy: Bolivar--(25)5,S&SCa, (10)13,C
 Plover, Wilson's: Bolivar--(14)5,S&SCa
 Killdeer: 9 reports (1-50)
 Plover, Black-bellied: 11 reports (1-150)
 Turnstone, Ruddy: Bolivar--(4)5,S&SCa; Texas City--(2)6,MAu; Galveston--(6)20,S;
 (4)26,PH; Freeport--(15)27,M
 Woodcock, American: Winnie--(1)4,S&SCa
 Snipe, Common: W.Harris Co.--(3)6,P&FH; Brazoria Co.--(1)19,D&RMe
 Curlew, Long-billed: 14 reports (1-45)
 Whimbrel: Galveston--(1)20,S (see notes)
 Sandpiper, Spotted: 9 reports (1-5)
 Willett: 16 reports (1-25)
 Yellowlegs, Greater: 9 reports (1-13)
 Yellowlegs, Lesser: 6 reports (1-100)
 Knot, Red: High Is.--(20)1,S&SCa; Bolivar--(2)13,C
 Sandpiper, Least: 5 reports (6-55)
 Dunlin: 8 reports (6-700)
 Dowitcher, Long-billed: High Is.--(10)1,S&SCa; Galveston--(10)2,JHa; Anahuac NWR--
 (100)18,S&SCa
 Dowitcher, sp.: 7 reports (6-1,000)
 Sandpiper, Semipalmated: Galveston--(6)15,S
 Sandpiper, Western: 6 reports (15-1,500)
 Godwit, Marbled: Galveston--(9)20,S
 Sanderling: 7 reports (6-230)
 Stilt, Black-necked: High Is.--(2)6,S&SCa; Port Arthur--(7)26,S&SCa, (12)20,MR (see
 notes)
 Avocet, American: 7 reports (8-1,000)
 Gull,Herring: 9 reports (2-40)
 Gull, Ring-billed: 16 reports (2-2,000)
 Gull, Laughing: 14 reports (1-500)
 Gull, Bonaparte's: High Is.--(2)5,(14)9,(130)26,S&SCa; Pleasure Is.--(6)6,S&SCa;
 Texas City--(4)6,MAu; Surfside--(2)15,S; Galveston--(2)28,JHa
 Tern, Gull-billed: High Is.--(1)1,S&SCa, (1)21,WM; Bolivar--(2)13,C

Tern, Forster's: 13 reports (2-500)
 Tern, Common: Galveston--(1)28,JHa
 Tern, Royal: 10 reports (1-50)
 Tern, Caspian: 8 reports (1-24)
 Skimmer, Black: Bolivar--(2)5,S&SCa; Texas City--(8)6,MAu; Galveston--(1,000)20,H,
 (200),20,S
 Dove, Rock: 5 reports (5-100)
 Dove, White-winged: Galveston--(1-3)all month,(1)14,(20)26,JHa, (3)26,PH
 Dove, Mourning: 8 reports (1-25)
 Dove, Ringed Turtle: Bellaire--(3)1,PJ, (2)5,MJ, (30)24,BMI
 Dove, Ground: W.Harris Co.--(5)19,OG, (1)24,PH, (3)26,W; Galveston--(1)23,MAu
 Dove, Inca: 7 reports (1-18)
 Ani, Groove-billed: High Is.--(1)1,S&SCa; Galveston--(7)11,JHa, (6)13,C, (4)20,WM,
 (6)26,S&SCa; Freeport--(6)12,C; W.Harris Co.--(5)19,OG
 Owl, Barn: W.Harris Co.--(3)6,P&FH; Houston--(1)26,TE
 Owl, Screech: Houston--(2 - 1 red, 1 gray)12,E (yard), (2)26,TE, (1)28,MA (yard)
 Owl, Barred: Brazoria Co.--(2)27,M
 Owl, Short-eared: W.Harris Co.--(1)6,(2)8&P&FH; Brazoria Co.--(1)19,D&RMe
 Owl, sp.: E.Harris Co.--(1)12,E
 Hummingbird, Black-chinned: Lake Jackson--(1)27,M (see notes)
 HUMMINGBIRD, ANNA'S: Houston--(1)all month,WR (see notes); Brazoria Co.--(1)1-28,
 D&RMe (prior reports); Spring Branch--(2 female)16-31,(1-male)16-26 Mrs. Don Van
 Sickle, et al (see notes); Bellaire--(1)25-31,BMI (see notes)
 Hummingbird, *Selasphorus* sp.: Houston--(1)all month WR (see notes), (1)25-31,WC
 (yard); Brazoria Co.--(1)3,4,5,26,29,D&RMe; (3)27,M; Spring Branch--(3)16-31,Mrs.
 Don Van Sickle; Bellaire--(1)25,31,BMI.
 HUMMINGBIRD, BUFF-BELLIED: Houston--(1)29,MA (see notes)
 Kingfisher, Belted: 8 reports (1-6)
 Flicker, Common (yel. sh.): 9 reports (1-8)
 Woodpecker, Pileated: 6 reports (1-5)
 Woodpecker, Red-bellied: 10 reports (1-16)
 Woodpecker, Red-headed: White Mem.Pk.--(1)13,S&SCa
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: 11 reports (1-3)
 Woodpecker, Hairy: Houston--(1-heard)11,RP (Sherwood Forest); White Mem.Pk.--(1)13,
 S&SCa
 Woodpecker, Downy: 7 reports (2-5)
 Flycatcher, Ash-throated: W.Harris Co.--(1)19,OG (see notes), (1)26,W
 Phoebe, Eastern: 10 reports (1-6)
 Flycatcher, Vermilion: Sheldon Res.--(3)6,J&BH; Brazoria Co.--(1)12,C, (1)27,M
 Lark, Horned: Bolivar--(50)5,S&SCa; Brazoria Co.--(3)19,D&RMe; Galveston--(2)26,PH,
 (2)28,JHa
 Swallow, Tree: Port Arthur--(20)6,S&SCa
 Jay, Blue: 10 reports (2-16)
 Crow, Common: 6 reports (7-30)
 Chickadee, Carolina: 10 reports (1-20)
 Titmouse, Tufted: 6 reports (1-20)
 Nuthatch, Brown-headed: Houston--(1)5,JMo (yard)
 Creeper, Brown: White Memorial Pk.--(2)13,S&SCa; Houston--(1)20,Betsy Massey (yard);
 Beaumont--(1)20,S&SCa
 Wren, House: Winnie--(4)1,S&SCa; Sheldon Res.--(1)6,J&BH, (6)12,E; W.Harris Co.--
 (1)6,P&FH, (4)19,OG; Galveston--(1)10,JHa, (1)20,S
 Wren, Winter: Sheldon Res.--(1)12,E; W.Harris Co.--(1)27,RH
 Wren, Carolina: 9 reports (1-2)
 Wren, Marsh: Chambers Co.--(2)1,(1)13,S&SCa; Bolivar--(2)5,S&SCa; Maner Lake--(1)15
 (2)31,S
 Mockingbird: 14 reports (1-30)
 Catbird, Gray: Winnie--(1)1,14,S&SCa
 Thrasher, Brown: 9 reports (1-5)
 Robin, American: 18 reports (2-600)
 THRUSH, VARIOUS: Baytown--(1)12,MRO (prior reports)
 Thrush, Hermit: W. Harris Co.--(1)19,OG
 Bluebird, Eastern: Sheldon Res.--(5)6,J&BH; Brazoria Co.--(5)15,(6)31,S, (6)27,M;
 Bear Creek Park--(1)16,PJ, (3)19,OG; Beaumont--(3)20,S&SCa
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: 9 reports (1-12)
 Kinglet, Ruby-crowned: 22 reports (1-25)
 Pipit, Water: 9 reports (1-35)
 Pipit, Sprague's: Bolivar--(1)5,S&SCa; Texas City--(1)6,MAu, (1)20,H; Galveston--
 (1)17,JHa; Brazoria Co.--(1)19,D&RMe
 Waxwing, Cedar: 9 reports (1-200)
 Shrike, Loggerhead: 10 reports (2-25)
 Starling: 9 reports (6-300)
 Vireo, Solitary: Chambers Co.--(1)1,(3)13,S&SCa; High Is.--(3)1,(2)19,S&SCa; Bra-
 zoria Co.--(1)2,D&RMe, (1)15,31,S, (1)27,M; Baytown--(1)12,MRO; Brown Park--(2)12,
 E; W.Harris Co.--(1)19,OG, (1)24,PH

Warbler, Orange-crowned: 12 reports (1-6)
 Warbler, Yellow-rumped: 20 reports (1-100)
 Warbler, Pine: Eisenhower Park--(1)6,J&BH; Brown Park--(3)12,E; White Mem.Pk.--(4)13,S&SCa; Bear Creek Pk.--(1)19,OG; Beaumont--(2)20,S&SCa; Houston--(1)26,JMo (yard)
 Warbler, Prairie: Sheldon Res.--(1)6,J&BH (see notes)
 Warbler, Palm: Galveston--(2)12,RP, (8)13,C, (6-10)20,WM, (2)23,MAU
 Ovenbird: Lake Jackson--(2)1,MRo (prior report)
 Yellowthroat, Common: Winnie--(5)1,S&SCa; Maner Lake--(1)15,S; W.Harris Co.(1)19,OG
 Warbler, Wilson's: Galveston--(1)4,JHa; Brazoria Co.--(1)19,D&RMe, (1)19,MRo, (1)31,S; Houston--(1)20,Betsy Massey (yard), (1)26,WC (White Oak Bayou)
 Sparrow, House: 11 reports (5-50)
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 13 reports (1-100)
 BLACKBIRD, YELLOW-HEADED: Houston--(1)28,MA (see notes)
 Blackbird, Red-winged: 16 reports (10-3,000)
 Blackbird, Rusty: Baytown--(1)12,E; Bear Creek Park--(60)15,MA,PJ, (75)19,OG
 Blackbird, Brewer's: Brazoria Co.--(2)2,D&RMe, (16)15,S, (1)19,MRo, (30)27,M; Chambers Co.--(10)13,S&SCa; W.Harris Co.--(25)19,OG
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: Chambers Co.--(1)5,19,S&SCa; Brazoria Co.--(14)15,(10)31,S, (1)27,M; High Is.--(1)19,S&SCa
 Grackle, Great-tailed: 12 reports (1-500)
 Grackle, Common: 10 reports (1-1,200)
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: 13 reports (16-500)
 Cardinal: 13 reports (1-30)
 Dickcissel: Armand's Bayou--(1)31,S (see notes)
 Finch, Purple: Brazoria Co.--(1)12,MRo; White Mem. Pk.--(1)13,S&SCa; Bear Creek Pd.--(1)19,OG
 Goldfinch, American: 8 reports (1-110)
 TOWHEE, GREEN-TAILED: W.Harris Co.--(2)19,OG (see notes), (1)26,W
 Towhee, Rufous-sided: Houston--(1)5,WC (White Oak Bayou); Brazoria Co.--(2)31,S
 Sparrow, Savannah: 13 reports (2-80)
 Sparrow, Grasshopper: W.Harris Co.--(4)6,(1)24,P&FH; Houston--(1)20,WC (White Oak Bayou)
 Sparrow, LeConte's: Galveston Is.St.Pk.--(5)13,C
 Sparrow, Sharp-tailed: Bolivar--(8)5,S&SCa; Galveston Is.St.Pk.--(n/c)12,RP
 Sparrow, Seaside: Bolivar--(2)5,S&SCa; Freeport--(1)27,M
 Sparrow, Vesper: W.Harris Co.--(25)6,P&FH, (20)19,OG; Brazoria Co.--(1)19,D&RMe
 Junco, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored): White Mem.Pk.--(12)13,S&SCa
 Sparrow, Chipping: Bear Creek Pk.--(25)19,OG; Beaumont--(7)20,S&SCa
 Sparrow, Clay-colored: W.Harris Co.--(1)1,WR; Galveston Is.St.Pk.--(1)12,13,C (see notes)
 Sparrow, Field: W.Harris Co.--(3)19,OG; Houston--(1)20,WC (White Oak Bayou)
 Sparrow, Harris': W.Harris Co.--(1)6,(2)24,P&FH
 Sparrow, White-crowned: 5 reports (1-40)
 Sparrow, White-throated: 10 reports (1-12) (numbers low...CH Ed.)
 Sparrow, Fox: W.Harris Co.--(1)19,OG, (1)24,PH, (2)26,W
 Sparrow, Lincoln's: 5 reports (1-5)
 Sparrow, Swamp: 9 reports (1-6)
 Sparrow, Song: Galveston--(5)17,JHa; Brazoria Co.--(1)19,D&RMe
 Longspur, Lapland: Brazoria Co.--(25)19,D&RMe (see notes)

CH CONTRIBUTORS - January 1980

MA--Margaret Anderson; MAU--Mike Austin; R&MBR--Ron & Marcia Braun; S&SCa--Steve & Sandra Calver; WC--Wes Cureton; TE--Ted L. Eubanks, Jr.; JHa--John & Jane Hamilton; J&BH--Jean & Bill Harwell; P&FH--P.D. & Fran Hulce; P&MJ--T.Paul & Margaret Jones; WM--Bill Meriwether; D&RMe--Don & Ruthie Melton; BMJ--Barbara Milwee; JMo--Jim Morgan; RP--D. Randall Pinkston, et al; MR--Mac Read; WR--Will Risser; MRo--Matt Robinson; C--party of Jane & George Clayton, Jan, Will & Amanda Risser; E--party of TE,JMo; H--party of Malcolm Hodges, Polly Moore, Ellen Red; M--party of Fred Collins, TE,JMo; OG--Ornithology Group field trip (fide JMo); S--party of P&FH, Steve Schultz; W--party of Linda Graetz, Pat Warner

CH NOTES - January 1980

ARCTIC LOON: (Weather...bright overcast, clearing to sunny by 11:00 a.m.; equipment...7 & 9 power binocs & 20 power and 15-60X scopes). As we started out onto the dike we spotted a couple of loons off to the north side. Two of them were common loons but the closest bird was significantly smaller with a smaller bill. Observation through our scopes at 50-100 yards for about ten minutes gave the following details: comparison with the nearest common loon showed it to be about 3/4 the size and the straight bill was shorter and much thinner at the base. The

bird swam lower in the water and the head shape was rounder or smoother with no bumps. The upper parts were dark grey--darker than most of the commons--and extended down below the eye with no white at all around or above the eye. The bird rode so low in the water that you couldn't see the white underparts unless it rolled over. While there was no white dots or stars of any kind it was possible to see paler gray edgings to the feathers on the back at very close range. The bird swam with its head held straight and the neck extended at all times. It seemed to be underwater considerably longer than above water and did not seem to be concerned with us on shore as it moved closer as it dove. --Emery Froelich

Common Scoter: My wife and I both saw this bird. It was shaped differently from White-winged Scoters seen nearby. It had a smaller bill and held its head up high. It also had its tail held up. Through our scope the bird was all black on its head, neck and back. Along the waterline it was greyish-black. We both looked at the bird for a long time and could see no white or light markings on its head or anywhere else. We also saw a small protuberance on the base of the upper mandible. We could see no color to the protuberance. When the bird turned towards us, I thought that I could see that the bill was greyish on the sides. I am not sure about this last point. --Steve Calver

Ferruginous Hawk: Large, long-winged buteo, tawny on back and shoulder with prominent white at base of primaries above; underparts white with rusty leggings, dark smudge at wrist. Seen at 50 ft to 200 yds. in good light. --Will Risser

This large hawk was sitting in a small leafless tree beside a shell road in wide open old rice and range fields near Halls Bayou. Put the scope on him and saw rufous wings and very white belly and chest and a lot of white on his head. Just as he was about to fly he stretched out and we saw rufous leggings and as he flew over the road he turned so we saw his undersides. Saw very white wings with dark wrist areas and light seen thru areas under that. White tail. He then turned away from us and we saw the top side of his tail which was half white and the lower half light rusty. Good light for about 5 minutes at about 30 yards. Seen by all four excited observers. --Ruthie Melton

Whimbrel: Seen on levee leading to East Beach...clear weather...with willets and greater yellowlegs...bill short, stout, black, decurved...distinct dark head stripes...pale grey-brown color overall. 7x35, 8x40, 16x50 binocs...seen for five minutes. --P.D. Hulce

Black-necked Stilt: Rather common winter bird in Port Arthur area, despite UTC checklist data. --Mac Read

Black-chinned Hummingbird: Immature male; upper parts green; underparts grayish white; developing gorget on throat showed both black and blue-violet below it. Seen with binocs at variable distances of 20 to 60 ft. in fair to good light for 10-30 seconds by all 3 observers. --Jim Morgan

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD: These hummers were reported by Mrs. Don Van Sickle as coming to feeders at her home in Spring Branch. MA and PJ went there at her request to verify identification. The male was in full adult plumage with brilliant red on the crown and throat (the throat gorget extended all the way back to the nape of the bird...and perhaps reminded an observer of the way a calliope gorget looks, but it was Anna's color of red). He is a large hummer when compared with the *Selasphorus* sp. also in the area. The back is jewel green. Tail is dark grey or olive grey as are outer primaries of the wings. Chunky body shape. Belly is grey green. He does lots of singing from a perch in some oleander bushes at a fence near "his" feeder over a cascade in the garden. The "rufous" or females are not allowed by him to come to that particular feeder. Both females have dark jewel green backs. No red color on crown, but both have a throat patch of rosy red that is "vee" shaped. Bellies of both females are grey green. Tails are dark with a very fine white terminal band (this was not on the male). One female comes to the feeder at a window, while the other comes to a feeder under the porch eaves. None of the Anna's would tolerate the *Selasphorus* sp at the feeders, chasing them away as soon as they came into the yard. Both females did some singing while we were there. Mrs. Van Sickle says she has observed them making the pendulum flight pattern since they have been in her yard. They did not engage in this while MA & PJ were there. These observations were made on the 15th of January, sky was overcast, temperature in the 60's, virtually no wind. On Jan. 23rd, Mrs. Van Sickle reported that all were still there, but that she had not observed any more instances of the pendulum flight. On Feb. 4th Mrs. Van Sickle reported that the male had not been seen since 26th of Jan, but that both females were still there. One of them was flying from the feeder to a dense spot in some shrubbery and doing much singing. She was asked to report any other activity by these birds that she noticed.

--T. Paul Jones

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD: Large hummer coming to feeder at window. Brilliant green back, grey belly, dark tail, small area of pink red under chin. Chases away "rufous" hummers trying to feed at same feeder. --Barbara Milwee

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD: Large hummer feeding on flowers in yard. Green back... rufous tail...buff belly...red base of bill. --Margaret Anderson

Ash-throated Flycatcher: This bird was located in a dry thorn-scrub area in W.Harris Co. Medium-sized (about 8") flycatcher; olive-brown back, nape and top of head with a noticeable rufous-brown wash on top of head and on forehead (a dull rufous brown); pale yellow belly and undertail coverts; light gray breast, progressively becoming whiter on upper breast until whitish on throat; noticeable rufous in both wings and tail; all black bill, relatively small and petite. This bird was well studied by about 50 observers in fair to good light with binocs at distances as close as 30 ft. Over 5 minutes total observation time. --Jim Morgan

Prairie Warbler: Bird seen in low brush in woods below spillway at Sheldon Dam, at distance of 5-15 ft., 7x50 binocs, for 5-10 minutes. Very friendly little bird! Upper parts dark greenish-yellow. Entire underparts, from bill to under-tail-coverts a fairly bright yellow. Prominent black streaks along sides of breast. Area around eye, and eye-stripe extending to bill buffy-white, but not yellow. No wing-bars. Flicked tail. I believe this was sub-mature female. --Bill Harwell

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: In a large flock of blackbirds that landed in yard in the top of a pecan tree. The bird was a female...brown body...yellow breast band with streaking below. Seen only for a few seconds while the flock was in the tree. --Margaret Anderson

Dickcissel: Overcast day; seen with white-crowned sparrows and cardinals at feeder. Brownish-grey, sparrow-like bird; ear patch and malar stripe. Yellow on face and breast; splotchy black bib; touch of chestnut color on wing. 7x35, 8x40 binocs, 3 minutes. --P. D. Hulce

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE: First bird was in exact location as seen on Cypress Creek by Margaret Anderson and Marilyn Crane (both present during this sighting). Area is same as where Ash-throated Flycatcher seen. Second bird located about 200 yds away while first bird still under observation by several observers. Both birds were bright olive greenish above and on tail; white throat; bright rusty cap; gray breast. About 7-8 inches in size. Well seen by numerous observers in fair to good light as close as 30-40 ft. with binocs for several observation periods of 5-15 seconds each. --Jim Morgan

Clay-colored Sparrow: Slim, small, clear-breasted sparrow with flesh-colored bill; crown brown and black streaked, with central creamy white stripe becoming gray posteriorly; creamy white superciliary and malar stripe; brown ear patch clearly outlined with darker brown or black; dark submalar streak; gray nape and sides of neck; underparts white with buffy at shoulder; back brown with dark streaks; rump brown. On all occasions seen in good light for 5-10 min. at 10'-15' with 7x35 binocs. --Will Risser

Lapland Longspurs: Fairly loose flock of small birds that flew, wheeled around low over ground, flashed white bellies and suddenly dropped into rice stubble out of sight. Good light for 5 or 6 seconds at about 30 yards. --Ruthie Melton

SPECIAL REPORTS TO THE CLEARING HOUSE

CALIFORNIA GULL: (1)20, P. D. Hulce and Steve Schultz.

Location and habitat: East Beach, Galveston Is. in a pond west of the small store, where the dunes start, also on the flats north of the store, sand flats and large tidal pool. Description: Seen in a group of 75 or so mixed gulls, this bird immediately stood out. The entire tip of the beak was black, with a prominent red spot on the lower mandible. The bill was a brighter yellow than the larger, thicker bills of the surrounding Herring Gulls, and yet was slightly thicker, top to bottom, than the bills of the Ring-billed Gulls nearby. None of the Ring-billed Gulls had any trace of a red spot on its beak. This gull was the same size or slightly larger than the Ring-bills and noticeably smaller than the majority of Herring Gulls. This gull's feet were decidedly yellow, with a greenish tint. All Herring Gulls in the area had pink or flesh colored feet. This gull had a slightly darker mantle (wings and back) than the Ring-bills, more the shade of the Herring Gull's mantle. Its legs were slightly thicker than the Ring-bills. Its tail was solid white, with no band, and its head was faintly mottled with greyish-brown feathers, indicating at least a third-winter bird. Behavior: Standing, preening, twice startled into short

flight by passing cars....fairly inactive. Length of observation: approximately 40 minutes. Weather: slightly overcast at times, light was very good. Binocs 2343 used...7x35, 8x40, 16x50. Bird was observed at about 30 to 40 feet, as well as flying 10 to 15 feet in front of car. Conclusion: Red and black spot on bill, the yellow-green legs, and intermediate size indicate a mature California Gull.

--P. D. Hulce

ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD: Lake Jackson--(1)Dec. 18-Feb. 6, Ann Atkins, m.ob.

Observed at feeder outside kitchen window with 7x50 binocs and 20x scope...distance to feeder for binocs 16-18 ft., for scope 20-25 ft. It is a complete male bird.... total throat...with very rufous tail, rump, sides and breast. Its back, back of neck, crown and shoulders irridescent bronzy green. Where the rust of the rump and the green on the back join there is a very distinct line of demarcation in a U shape. There is rust that comes from around the eye on down behind it and fades into the edges of the green at neck. There is a very, very tiny white spot at the upper back of the eye. Between the dark throat and rufous breast is a very white collar that extends way around the neck to the green on back of neck. The tail is very sharp pointed and the tip and edges look darker, or black. His wings are dark and look short...the tail extending way past (about 1/2"-3/4"). The rufous on the breast or belly is all the way across. His legs and bill are black. When he flies from the feeder his wings make a high pitched metallic sound that is different from the Rufous that have been here earlier. When his throat flashes it is a bright copper or orangy red. I have been observing this bird since he arrived Dec. 18, with binocs and scope, and he hasn't changed at all.

--Ann Atkins

On Sunday, January 27, Fred Collins, Ted Eubanks, Jr. and I (Jim Morgan) attempted to net this bird in order to count and measure its tail feathers as well as observe them for any situation or notching. We also were hoping for detailed in-hand photographs of the bird. Unfortunately, our attempts to net the bird failed. The bird did encounter the net but it was not captured. Without measurements and photographs no documentary evidence can be offered on this bird at this time. Bird was observed during cumulative time of at least 10 minutes over 2 1/2 hour period in fair to very good light, with frontal, side and back views obtained. Binocs used...8x, 815x and 10x plus 20x scope...at 15 ft. to 40 ft.

This was a very beautiful, presumably full adult male bird. It had a completely developed red gorget; moderately-to-slightly decurved all black bill; completely bright green crown and back of head extending down to, and including, some of the nape; eye surrounded below and post ocularly by rufous, such rufous extending back onto nape but becoming much less extensive towards mid-nape (i.e., gradually tapering to a fine line which terminated on nape); upper and middle back of bird extensively bright green with only one noticeable rufous "fleck" or spot on the back which was only noticeable from a side view; upper tail coverts and tail entirely rufous; flanks rufous; rufous noticed on body or on wing coverts just above folded wings; upper breast white, becoming whitish to rufous-buff on belly and undertail coverts; back view showed green back terminating on upper tail coverts in a "U" or "horse-shoe" pattern which was well defined and clear cut; back view also showed a thin tail width when folded, with tail tapering noticeably to a point. Size and shape of individual tail feathers impossible to discern.

The most noticeable and "different" characteristic about this bird was its tapering tail. We later viewed that same day what we assumed was an immature male *Selasphorus* sp. which had a much broader tail. Fred Collins spotted this feature first as he had a direct back view when the bird came to the feeder its first time while Ted and I were looking from the side. Fred said that possibly the two outer rectrices could be missing (some stage of molt and replacement) or it could be characteristic of the Allen's. We do not know if the latter is true or not. I talked to Guy McCaskie (a well-known California birder who is often consulted on identification problems of Western birds. Ed.) and he said you can not notice any difference in a folded Allen's or Rufous tail. Also, McCaskie said that an occasional rufous feather in the rump or back of an Allen's would not be unusual. In addition, McCaskie said he has seen Rufous adult males with green on the back, but only confined to the upperback and never extensive. The bird at the Atkins' home has an extensive green back. McCaskie also mentioned that he was aware of an Allen's collected recently in Louisiana (the specimen is at LSU) and he suggested I contact Van Remson, now Curator of Birds at LSU Museum of Natural Science.

I did contact Van Remson and he was very helpful. He agreed with all of Guy McCaskie's comments, and told me that LSU now has 3 specimens, taken in the last three years. Each bird was a wintering bird and one of the birds is somewhat "questionable" based on tail feather measurements. Remson pointed out that 5% of Rufous Hummingbirds have green on the back, and even though the Atkins' bird is "probably"

an Allen's, he said you can not be sure without getting the tail feathers, which is what we already knew from the literature.

Van Remson did say that there is a diagnostic behavioral characteristic when the male begins displaying. He described the Allen's display as follows. The bird starts the display by going back and forth in a low arc about 5 times, making a "Zee...dadada, Zee...dadada" vocalization. Then the bird shoots straight up into the air and comes down with a "pop" at the end of its dive. According to Remson, the Rufous Hummingbird does not swing in the low arc before it begins its display. Again Remson says this is a diagnostic behavioral characteristic.

Conclusion: It is my opinion that the Atkins' bird is not a Rufous Hummingbird. I believe Fred and Ted share this view. Also, the odds of a hybrid being here are probably less than the odds of an Allen's being on the UTC. Thus, I believe we can say that the bird is a "highly probable" Allen's Hummingbird. However, it can not be determined for sure without tail measurements (preferably the feathers are plucked...which does not injure the bird...and saved) or the diagnostic aerial display.

If nothing else, its fun learning more about these two species. ---Jim Morgan

COMMENT FROM THE SPOONBILL EDITOR

We can learn much from the "search for truth" engendered by the UTC appearance of an occasional puzzler such as the Allen's hummer. It sometimes seems very hard to accept the fact there could be doubt about the identity of a "text-book" bird, but there are those who feel that as long as there are well-known, long-and-widely-studied problems in establishing the identity of a particular species, there must remain doubt in their minds. In the instance of the Allen's hummer, Jim's digging for information has shown two ways to remove the doubt as pointed out by Van Remson....net the bird and measure the tail feathers, and/or the aerial display. Hopefully, another attempt to net this bird will be made, and/or the bird will remain long enough to display!

(Jim Vardaman, who made such a valiant run for 700 species last year, removed a Siberian Chickadee (a bird he had made a special trip to Edmonton, Canada to see) from his list when it was later netted, studied, and pronounced a leucistic Black-capped Chickadee. At the time of sighting, the Canadian experts who showed him the bird had no doubt it was a Siberian Chickadee, but in-hand study proved otherwise.)

Then there are those who feel that "text-book" appearance is enough, and it is their privilege if they wish to add a well-seen and well-studied bird to their "list".... life, year's, whatever...for one's list is one's own. And this is their privilege. There are no hard-and-fast, all-encompassing "rules" in birding. There are many ways individuals get their pleasure from birding, and it is the individual's choice as to what makes one comfortable when adding or not adding a species to one's list.

The Editor feels that in a case such as the Atkins' Allen's hummer, we must allow the holder of a differing opinion the same privilege of choice we want for ourselves. Anyway, it is a lot of fun learning more about any of the birds we so enjoy watching, whether we list, don't list, or keep no list at all!

AND AN EXPLANATION FROM THE EDITOR

It is a well-known fact among her friends that the Editor can't abide a vacancy, in conversation or on a page of THE SPOONBILL. So....last month, confronted by the need to fill a space on the last page, and time fading fast, she dug out a stencil of a drawing by Ben Feltner, and, cognizant of the Larry Balch article in the December issue on problems of identification, decided to have a little fun and possibly give the readers a little exercise. Larry Balch said one of the problems is "seeing" what you expect to see, or being swayed by a pronouncement. Did my purposefully misleading caption mislead any of you more than momentarily into expecting anything other than a Long-billed Curlew? From the response, it gave some of you a moment or two of puzzled conjecture as to what, if anything, you might be missing!

ANOTHER BIG YEAR RECORD

You have heard much about Jim Vardaman's attempt at setting a record of 700 birds in 1979, but we now learn from SIGNAL SMOKE that Alma Barrera set out to surpass Ben Feltner's 1973 record of 431 species seen in Texas, and she succeeded, with a total of 452 birds! This included the only Jacana seen (Sept.) at Maner Lake in over a year.

DECEMBER BIG DAYS: 1938/1979--A COMPARISON by Noel Pettingell

On Dec. 26, 1938 Arlie K. McKay found 120 species in NW Chambers County and thereby established a new Texas and Upper Texas coast all-time high record for most species in one day (any month) by a single observer (or party). It was also a new all-time high UTC Christmas Count record (see Bird-Lore's 39th Christmas Bird Census supplement, Jan/Feb. 1939, p.26). It wasn't until 1949 that a group of 21 observers in 4 separate parties were able to exceed Mr. McKay's total when they recorded 123 species in the Houston Christmas Count circle. But no single observer or team surpassed Arlie McKay's remarkable record during the month of December until this year when Ben Feltner and the writer found a total of 138 species along a route extending from NW Harris County to Bolivar Peninsula. Mr. McKay's incredible field ability (and agility!) are readily apparent in the following table of comparisons:

	<u>Arlie K. McKay</u> <u>Dec. 26, 1938</u>	<u>Feltner/Pettingell</u> <u>Dec. 8, 1979</u>
Total Miles by car:	12	279
" " on foot:	19	6 1/2
<u>Total Miles</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>285 1/2</u>
		Plus 6.4 Ferry mi..
Max. area covered/air miles:	10	82
Total species--NW Chambers Co.:	120	
Total species--W.Harris Co./W.Galveston Co.:		138
		(BF-138/NP-129)
Species outside UTC--SW Montgomery County:		4

A significant footnote to the above: the 1979 team covered 230 car miles before the list total exceeded the 1938 record, viz., 121 species at 5 p.m. just prior to reaching Bolivar Flats. The following comparison of species recorded exclusively either in 1938 or 1979 indicates those with significant population fluctuations (P) or generally found in coastal habitat covered in 1979 but not in 1938 (H):

<u>A. K. McKay - Dec. 26, 1938</u> <u>(NW Chambers County)</u>	<u>Feltner/Pettingell - Dec 8, 1979</u> <u>(W.Harris & W. Galveston Counties)</u>
Brown Pelican (P)	Eared Grebe
American Bittern	Anhinga
Ruddy Duck	Reddish Egret (H)
Hooded Merganser	Yellow-crowned Night Heron
Black Vulture	White Ibis
Sandhill Crane	Canada Goose
King Rail	Ross' Goose
Red-cockaded Woodpecker (P)	White-tailed Kite (P)
Tree Swallow	Sharp-shinned Hawk
Winter Wren	Cooper's Hawk
Bewick's Wren (P)	Clapper Rail
Marsh Wren	Sora
Sedge Wren	American Oystercatcher (H)
*Eastern Bluebird	Semipalmated Plover (H)
*Golden-crowned Kinglet	Piping Plover (H)
Palm Warbler	Snowy Plover (H)
Rusty Blackbird	Wilson's Plover (H)
*Purple Finch	Ruddy Turnstone (H)
Pine Siskin	Red Knot (H)
LeConte's Sparrow	Marbled Godwit (H)
Field Sparrow	Sanderling (H)
	Laughing Gull (H)
	Common Tern
*Found 12/8/79 outside UTC	Sandwich Tern (H)
(Plus Brown-headed Nuthatch)	Downy Woodpecker
just inside SW Montgomery Co.	Vermilion Flycatcher
	Barn Swallow
	Gray Catbird
	Cedar Waxwing
	Wilson's Warbler
	Fox Sparrow

OUT OF THE PAST

From THE SPOONBILL, Vol. IV, No. 8, December 1955:

November 19. -Outdoor Nature Club Overnight Trip to Sanctuary: The overnight field trip to the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary proved very popular with club members and friends. About forty persons spent Saturday night at Camp Cove and waked on Sunday morning to find frost glistening on every leaf and twig, even the cars were covered with silvery-white crystals of frost. The weather was ideal - crisp and cool with clear skies - and during the two days, over 150 visitors in a gay holiday mood enjoyed the colorful fall foliage - the stillness of the deep woods - the lovely old Magnolias - the birds - and other wildlife found along the nature trails. The sale of desserts was very successful and a profit of over \$80.00 was realized which will benefit the Sanctuary Fund. Between 15 and 20 visitors who attended this outing were so impressed with the work of the Outdoor Nature Club that they expressed a desire to become members....

[Ed. note: There will be a visitors' Day at the Sanctuary on Feb. 16th. Plan to go see what your Sanctuary is like on a cold winter day, breathe fresh air (what's that), and see what birds are eating the berries.]

From THE SPOONBILL, Vol. I, No. 3, November 1952 we learn that the fledgling OG had 55 members. Following is a list of OG'ers who have been members since their names were listed among those 55:

Jerry Baker	Luta Buchanan	Etta Coffman	Nance C. McDavid
Joe Heiser	Darris Massingill	Noel Pettingell	Alexander Sprunt IV
Leota Stilwell	Katrina T. Ladwig	Josiephine Wilkin	(now subscriber)
Stephen Williams	Ella Wolfer		

From THE SPOONBILL, Vol. XI, No. 18, October 1963

Notes from Clearing House reports: Saw an albino Blue-winged Teal on the 29th. It was a uniform pale buff. In the August Spoonbill mention was made of a flock of giant geese by Admiral Goodall. Old market hunters of this area recognized 3 kinds of the Greater Canada Goose. One they called little goose or bay goose....they usually weigh from 7 to 10 pounds. What they called long-necks or Canada honkers weigh 11 to 14 pounds. There was a rare goose (Western Canada Goose) that weighed as much but they said it was short-necked and darker. --AKM (Arlie McKay)

[In her Barnacle Goose chase article this issue, Mary Ann Chapman mentioned sorting out some five subspecies of Canada Geese. And speaking of Barnacle Geese, Jim Vardaman missed that one in places where he expected to find it, and ended the year without knowing there were five at Tishomingo NWR in December!]

ORNITHOLOGY GROUP
(Outdoor Nature Club)
c/o Mrs. Richard Davis, Mailing Chairman
10602 Cedarhurst
Houston, Texas 77096
(RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED)

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Houston, Texas
Permit No. 1063

.12-80

Chairman: David Dauphin, 7315 Cottonwood Dr., Baytown 77521 (Call David for Rare Bird Alert & Unusual Bird Check)	383-3955
Send dues, subscriptions and changes of address to: Mary Gillette, 5027 Longmont, Houston 77056	626-1755
Send material for THE SPOONBILL by 25th of month to: Margaret Jones, 4902 Fern, Bellaire, Texas 77401	665-4197
Send bird records for Clearing House before 3rd of month to: Paul Jones, 4902 Fern, Bellaire, Texas 77401	665-4197
Send requests for OG information, checklists, maps to: Maxine Davis, 10602 Cedarhurst, Houston 77096	723-8555