



The Spoonbill

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Least Terns and Man: Can We Share the Beach?

BY ROBERT MCFARLANE

Least Terns are conspicuous throughout Galveston Bay and along the Gulf beaches. Easily identified by their diminutive size and yellow bills, and unafraid of humans, these birds delight beachwalkers by flying close overhead, often carrying small fish in their bills. Unfortunately, people and Least Terns are competing for scarce beach space, and the birds are losing.

Figure 1 charts the estimated number of Least Terns nesting at all sites in Galveston Bay and in Texas (including Galveston Bay) since 1973. Peaking at 2,035 breeding pairs in 1974, the Galveston Bay population crashed to just 62 pairs in 1976, dipped to a low of 49 pairs in 1981, and has fluctuated at less than one-fourth of their former number ever since. This mimics the pattern for Texas overall, which peaked at 4,305 pairs in 1973, steadily declined to 432 pairs by 1976, and since has seldom exceeded 1,000 pairs.

On average, 35 percent of all Least Terns in Texas have nested in the Galveston Bay system. With one third of the breeding stock clustered in only one of the seven Texas estuaries, Galveston Bay is important to the Texas population of this species.

In Galveston Bay, since 1976, the average number of breeding pairs at each colony has ranged from 16 to 61 (Figure 2) while the number of colony sites has fluctuated widely from 2 to 13 (Figure 3). The situation has changed from many birds nesting at just a few locations to a few birds attempting to nest at many locations. What has happened here?

Some answers are obvious. Their nesting habitat has disappeared. Tiki Island is a prime example. It hosted 1,600 pairs of Least Terns and 1,200 pairs of Black Skimmers in 1974 but none since 1980. Terns and skimmers do not nest on slant-roofed stilt-houses. Redfish Island was once a major bird colony for as many as 2,800 pairs of 14 different species (including 130 pairs of Least Terns) but subsidence lowered the island two feet while waves eroded its sinking shoreline. Herons and egrets last nested on Redfish Island in 1983; Least Terns and skimmers hung on until 1991; the remnant of the island is now awash. The Big Reef area at

Continued on Page 2



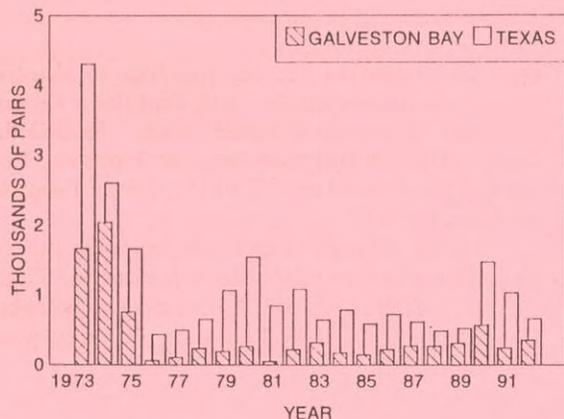


Figure 1. Breeding Pairs of Least Terns in Galveston Bay and Texas

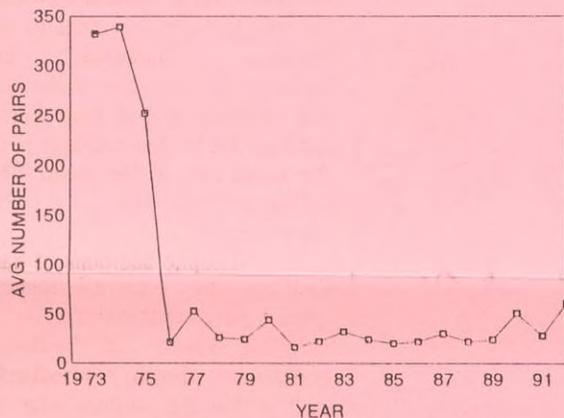


Figure 2. Average Number of Breeding Pairs per Colony in Galveston Bay

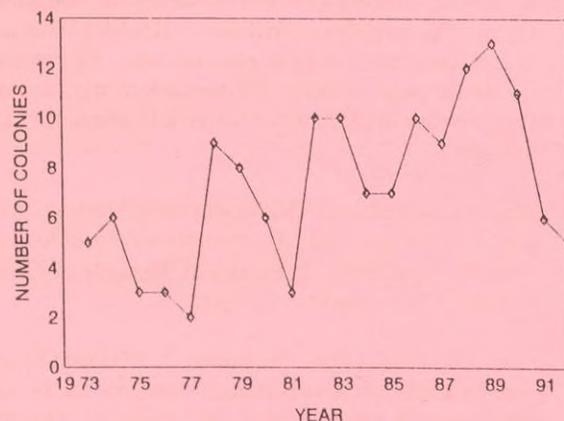


Figure 3. Number of Least Tern Colonies in Galveston Bay

Bolivar Roads hosted 100 pairs of Least Terns and 125 pairs of Black Skimmers in 1974 but little activity since. Human disturbance from adjacent Appfel Park is thought to be the primary disturbance at this popular bathing and fishing spot.

The innate behavior of these terns may also limit their nest sites. Most terns are extremely gregarious nesters. If two birds, each sitting in their nest scrape, are unable to reach one another with their bills, they are far enough apart to co-exist. This strategy of densely packed nests can overwhelm the capacity of predators to consume eggs or chicks, thus increasing the probability that any given pair of birds will successfully raise one or more young.

Least terns appear to use a different strategy. They do nest together in loose colonies, thus retaining the ability of the group to detect, and cooperatively deter, predators. But they like lots of space between nests, and their colonies are less likely to attract predators. They also prefer open beaches with sparse or no vegetation, increasing their ability to detect an approaching predator. Least Terns are particular about the company they keep, preferring to nest alone or with Black Skimmers, but never with Royal or Caspian Terns.

Least Terns continually test their environment. They have nested at 45 different Galveston Bay sites in the past 20 years, but 16 sites were used only once, 9 only twice, and 4 only three times. Since 1988 Least Terns have attempted to nest on flat, gravelled roof tops, indicating their desperation for nest sites. They are persistent nesters if provided with protected nest areas. At Bolivar Flats, the elimination of beach driving has allowed Least Terns to nest on the beach. In 1993, on three occasions high tides completely wiped out their nests within a roped-off area that diverts pedestrians. Each time, the birds laid new eggs and eventually succeeded in raising young late in the summer. At San Luis Pass, roping off the nest area to detour vehicular traffic enabled Least Terns and skimmers to successfully re-nest after high tide losses. Drivers and strollers have demonstrated their willingness to share the beach when signs request their cooperation. Birds and beachgoers can, indeed, share the beach and mutually benefit.

Dr. McFarlane is a consulting ecologist and represents Galveston Bay Foundation as chair of the Scientific/Technical Advisory Committee of the Galveston Bay National Estuary Program. We thank Dr. McFarlane and Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF) for permission to reprint this article, which originally was published in GBF Soundings, Summer 1994.

Calendar

October

Saturday, October 29: OG Field Trip/TPW Conservation Passport Tour to Peach Point WMA. Brent Ortego, an avid birder and TPW biologist will be leading this trip. To reach the Peach Point WMA from Houston, take 288 south to Freeport and go north on 36 to Jones Creek. At the edge of Jones Creek, watch for the brown road sign for the Peach Point WMA and turn left onto a gravel road, go until you reach a sign for the check station, turn right, go through a gate and park at the check station.

This area should produce a wide variety of birds and this will be an all day trip. Pack your lunch and bring drinks--no refreshments are available. Meet Brent at 7:00 A.M. at the check station. Each participant must have a Conservation Passport (not each vehicle). Reservations are required and the trip is limited to 25: (512)576-0022.

November

Monday, November 7: OG Membership Meeting. 7:00 p.m. Harris County Bayland Community Center located on the north side of Bissonnet just west of Hillcroft. Just in time for Christmas Counts and winter sparrows, Don Richardson will review sparrow identification in his presentation at this meeting. Karen Beckman will prepare you for a future pelagic trip in her discussion of pelagic birds at Learning Corner which begins at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, November 12: OG Youth Field Trip to Bear Creek Park. 8:00 a.m. For details of this trip, call David Veselka, 692-1384.

Saturday and Sunday, November 12 and 13: OG Field Trip to the Rockport area. The objective of this trip is to see the wintering Whooping Cranes and the \$28.00 (\$23.00 if we have the 15 people needed to get the group rate) cost of the SKIMMER boat trip is refunded if the Whooping Cranes are not seen.

This trip will be limited to 20. Call Capt. Ted's Whooping Crane tours at (512)729-9589 immediately to reserve your space on the boat. The boat trip lasts 3 hrs. and 15 mins. and we will be able to bird other Rockport area hotspots after the SKIMMER trip on Saturday and

then have Sunday to bird our way back to Houston.

Accommodations close to the Sand Dollar Pavilion where the SKIMMER is docked include: Sand Dollar Resort (512)729-2381, \$40 for 1 or 2 persons; Best Western "Rebel" Motel (512)729-8351, \$39 for 1 and \$44 for 2 persons.

This will not be a physically demanding trip and we should not have any rough water in Aransas Bay. Please tell Capt. Ted that you are with the OG and also please call Dwight Peake (409)740-4621 if you are planning to go on this trip.

December

Saturday, December 3: OG Field Trip to the Barker Reservoir area. Meet at 8:00 a.m. for this half-day trip next to the Diamond Shamrock gas station/convenience store on the west side of Highway 6 at Briar Forest (parking lot for the reservoir is on the north side of the store). Ed LeBeau and Peggy Bailey will be the trip leaders.

Despite additions of park facilities, the reservoir remains largely undeveloped and provides an excellent variety of habitats--grasslands, brush, woodlands,

wetlands and ponds--all within the western edge of Houston.

Over 10 species of sparrows are possible, as well as hawks, woodpeckers and a variety of songbirds. Common Ground Dove, Pyrrhuloxia, Bewick's Wren and Grasshopper Sparrow have been seen here. Be prepared for wet and muddy walking. For more information, contact Peggy Bailey at (713) 975-1378 or Ed LeBeau at (713) 436-9953.

Monday, December 5: OG Membership Meeting. 7:00 p.m. John Tveten will talk about the making of his new birds of Texas book, In Pursuit of the Birds of Texas. Learning Corner begins at 6:30 p.m.

Upcoming Field Trips: On January 7, 1995 the OG will sponsor a field trip to west Harris County and on the next day, January 8, a slower-paced field trip to the same area for beginning birders. Details will be published at a later date.



OG FIELD TRIP TO HIGH ISLAND

September 24, 1994

Cool weather and a beautiful day! About sixteen birders gathered to look for migrants at the Audubon Scout Woods. The leaders, Martha Micks and Ellen Red, warned not to expect the variety of birds seen in the spring. Beginning in July, birds drift slowly south all during the fall and are seen a few at a time. We would find mosquitoes to be plentiful though, and insect repellent was a necessity.

Dozens of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were fighting over the flowers near the gate. Cardinals, Brown Thrashers and Blue Jays were abundant in the woods. Gradually some of the sharp-eyed participants began to spot a few warblers including Yellow-throated, Canada, Ovenbird and American Redstart. We had good looks at Northern and Orchard Orioles and Great Crested Flycatchers at Smith Oaks. One Olive-sided Flycatcher perched in a dead tree near the back pond. Beyond were spoonbills and White Ibises.

We noted that though the road is open to Smith Oaks, birders are encouraged to use the Audubon parking lot beyond Birders Haven. On the back side we found the huge oil storage tanks have been removed. We appreciate all that Houston Audubon Society is doing to care for and enhance these wonderful woods at High Island. *Ellen Red*

NOEL'S NICHE

by Noel Pettingell

30 YEARS AGO/FROM OCTOBER 1964 SPOONBILL

"Birdwatching is not usually listed among the spectator sports but it is nowadays one of the most popular. Once largely a New England specialty, it has spread over the entire United States. On any fine Saturday afternoon there are probably more of us out with binoculars than are congested in all the stadia.

...Birds are everywhere, even in the city. Game birds and water birds may have diminished in numbers but many species of songbirds are certainly more numerous since forests have been thinned and open country is more abundant.

Many a man and woman has begun noticing birds in the course of a walk...and almost before he was aware of what was happening found himself walking to see birds instead of seeing birds while he walked, perhaps even visiting the city dump!" (From introduction to A Treasury of Birdlore edited by Krutch and Eriksson, published in 1962.)

[Perhaps Krutch and Eriksson intended to say that birds were *easier* to see thirty years ago "since forests have been thinned and open country is more abundant." Current thinking is that deforestation is the major factor in the declining numbers of songbirds. "Early settlers in the eastern United States speculated that a squirrel might travel from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River without ever touching the ground, so vast was the forest cover. Today, that squirrel could retrace its steps without ever leaving asphalt....As forests are fragmented--as they become islands of green in a paved or plowed sea--they undergo a number ecological changes that render them increasingly unsuitable, even dangerous, to many birds." Wilcox, David. "Empty Skies." *The Nature Conservancy Magazine*: January/February 1990. Ed.]

The Spoonbill

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Newsbriefs

.....**BRAZORIA REFUGE UPDATE:** The Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge will be open to the public as always 7a.m. to 5p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, the first "full" weekend of each month from November through May. In addition, the refuge will be open 7a.m. to Noon on the third Saturday of each month from November through April.

In November, the refuge will be open Saturday and Sunday the 19th and 20th from 7a.m. to 5p.m. This is in addition to the first "full" weekend opening.

As usual, the gate *may* be open occasionally on weekdays, 8a.m. to 4p.m., when refuge crews are working there. Check with the refuge office (409) 849-6062. \

Changes are starting to appear on the auto route. Parking areas, passing zones, new trails, interpretive signs, observation platforms and possible changes in the tour route itself are underway or planned. New marked trails are planned for San Bernard refuge as well. The Friends of Brazoria will try to keep a supply of their new Auto Tour Rouge Guide and updated bird checklist on hand at the sign-in desk.

The Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges has played a large role in initiating these changes. *Al Clarke, Friends of Brazoria and Brazosport Birders*

..... **SPOONBILL DEADLINE FOR NOVEMBER HAS BEEN CHANGED:** To avoid mailing *The Spoonbill* during Thanksgiving week, I will need your contributions no later than November 12.

.....**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!** Bring your shovels, gloves and strong backs to Houston Audubon's next scheduled Work Day at High Island's Boy Scout Woods on December 3rd. The fun begins at 8a.m. and lunch is provided.

.....**MINUTES OF OCTOBER 3RD OG MEETING:** For the Learning Corner, Karen Beekman presented Part III of her Fall Shorebirds discussion.

Chairman David Bradford opened the meeting and asked for books (or buying suggestions) for the library. He noted that Gail Luckner is moving to New Jersey, and therefore cannot complete her term as Vice-Chairman. Bob Luckner has agreed to assume the position. This change was opened for discussion, and the motion for Bob's approval was made and seconded. We will vote on this at the November OG meeting.

David asked for suggestions for what to do with the old computer. We would like to move it as soon as

possible; please give your suggestions to David Bradford (855-2615). Also, Mary Pat Haddican (ONC Membership) is resigning at the end of this year, and we need a new person to take her place. Preferably, this will be someone who will be available to train with Mary Pat for a month or two, and will be able to give approximately 10 hours/month to this important job. Please give suggestions to David Bradford.

Peggy Boston (528-0259) has a pile of yearbooks for those who never received one and whose dues are current. David Veselka told us about the youth field trips and reminded us that a handout with the schedule is available. Bob Schultz is still collecting aluminum for recycling; please bring your aluminum to the meetings.

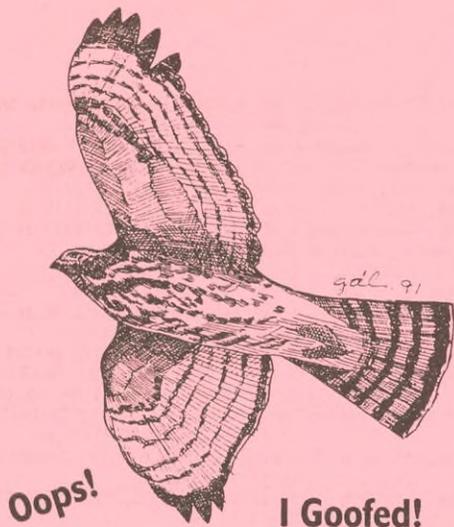
Bob Honig gave a short slide program on the May 1995 OG excursion to Trinidad which he and Maggie Honig are coordinating. There are only a few spaces left, so if you would like to go, please call Dottie Praus ASAP (621-5481, at Meteor Travel). She is taking care of the travel reservations.

Page Williams circulated a petition against a proposed golf course at Bastrop State Park. Also, Sandi Hoover reminded everyone to write to Mayor Bob Lanier about the trails in Memorial Park. Lanier has received lots of letters from the bikers but not very many from those who would like to give the trails a rest!

Steve Bennett introduced Pete Mclaughlin, who, using his own photographs, presented a fine program on the birds of Chilean Patagonia. *Maggie Honig, Secretary*

.....**BEGINNING BIRDING CLASSES** for the late winter, spring and early summer 1995 will be conducted as a joint venture by the Houston Audubon Society and Don Richardson. Classes are limited to 12 participants. They are learning field trips, packed with identification, technique, discussion about birding materials and lots of personal experience to build confidence. The cost is \$125 per person. There are four series (five classes each) scheduled. Call Don Richardson for dates and to sign up. Phone/Fax: (713) 661-1365.

.....**BIRD THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY WITH ARMAND BAYOU NATURE CENTER**, January 10-15, 1995. Join leaders George Regmund and Paula Kennedy at Sabal Palm Grove Sanctuary, Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park and Falcon Dam State Recreation Area where some of the finest bird watching in the U.S. can be enjoyed. Call (713) 474-2551 for more information.



Oops!
I Goofed!

First, let me tell you that I tend to be conservative when I am estimating bird numbers. I tell you this to prepare you for what follows.

September 23 dawned clear and cold on the Hawk Watch platform at Smith Point. The first strong cold front of the season had gone through the evening before and I was psyched. I arrived before the sun was up expecting lots of early hawks. Sharp-shins are usually up at dawn and 20 to 30 fly over the platform before 8:00 a.m. I was dismayed when 8:00 a.m. rolled around and I had only seen 18. I really wanted BIG numbers.

Around 7:30 the first Broad-winged Hawk of the day showed up. This one was a real "early bird" as Broad-wings *never* show up before 8:00 a.m. At 8:15 a.m., eight more Broad-wings soared over and started circling. At 8:45 they were joined by 150 more. "Hey," I thought, "this isn't going to be such a bad day after all." Then a kettle of 800 moved in, then one thousand more. At 9:00 a.m. there were 2000 Broad-winged Hawks swirling in a kettle over our heads. By 9:15, the numbers were up to five thousand in one huge kettle. What a fantastic sight. Fifteen hawk watch participants watched in awe. The kettle gradually moved to the northwest. At 9:30 another huge kettle of 4-5000 formed to the southeast. Kettle One had gotten very high and hard to see and it seemed to disappear. Then there was another huge kettle in the southeast and Kettle Two was swirling over our heads. I figured the large kettle to the southeast was Kettle One and that the hawks had streamed to the southeast when we weren't looking.

Usually kettles of Broad-wings on Smith Point go back and forth for quite a while, gaining altitude trying to decide what to do. Sometimes the hawks go back up the Point and around the north end of Galveston Bay, but if the conditions are just right, they fly across the bay.

All that morning we had 5-10,000 hawks over us. The kettles moved back and forth. They seemed to disappear to the northwest and then suddenly reappear to the southeast. I was amazed that they would waste so much time going back and forth. Sometimes there were other birds in the kettles. A few Anhingas and several Wood Storks were in a kettle later in the morning. We saw very few other species of hawks in the kettles...only two Red-tailed Hawks, one White-tailed Hawk and 40 accipiters. This was definitely a Broad-winged show.

That morning I was supposed to be communicating with Frank Peace, our area's "high tech" hawk watcher. He has been tracking the hawk migration on the new weather radar in League City. Most mornings we compare what he is seeing with what I am seeing, but this day-- of course, it had to be **this** day, I forgot to bring his cellular phone number.

As soon as I got home that evening, I called Frank. "Wow, Frank! All morning we had a couple of huge kettles over us. Could you see them? There were at least 10,000 birds." "You didn't have a couple of huge kettles," he informed me. "You had lots of huge kettles."

On the radar Frank had seen kettles moving down Smith Point and crossing Galveston Bay. When I had seen them disappear to the northwest, they hadn't circled back to the southeast as I assumed. They really had disappeared. It was hard to comprehend that there were so many hawks. When I asked Frank how many hawks he thought crossed Smith Point, he said, "100,000."

That was the number I spread around that evening. I called several people who had been there that morning and explained my mistake and told them how many birds we really saw. They were just as impressed as I was. I even called the Rare Bird Tape and reported that 100,000 hawks had been seen at the Hawk Watch that morning. It wasn't until several days later that I found out that Frank meant 100,000 birds for the whole day. We stopped watching at noon. When we compared Frank's many pictures of the radar screen taken that day with what we had seen at the Hawk Watch, it appeared we had only seen 50,000 Broad-wings that morning. I apologize for spreading erroneous information. Remember, I am the one who said I tend to be conservative about estimating numbers of birds.

Now--it you are impressed with the thought of 100,000 hawks going down Smith Point, come to Frank Peace's talk in March and find out exactly what happened north of Galveston Bay on September 23rd!

Winnie Burkett

Clearing House

September 1994

Editors: Phyllis and Tony Frank

A total of 156 species were reported for the month. Glossy Ibis were reported again from Shoveler Pond. Readers are referred to the discussion of identification of Glossy Ibis included with the documentation. Early Sharp-tailed Sparrows were reported from Bolivar Flats.

The season of Christmas counts is fast approaching. We hope to see you during the counts. If you've never participated in one, you'll be welcome at any of the area counts.

Reports for next month are due by November 3rd, but early reports are welcomed. Readers are reminded that all decisions regarding checklist status are made by the checklist committee. Publication of a rarity does not imply acceptance of the record by the editors or the committee. The CH format remains the same this month. The listing uses the following format: bird name, early late dates, reports/total and summary by county or detailed listing. The format of the county summary is as follows: county designation - number of reports/number of birds. The detailed listing format is as follows: county-(number of birds) day, observer code. Very rare birds are underlined. Birds with no previous record on date or vagrant status appear in bold. Birds new to the checklist are capitalized and underlined. Please remember to submit notes on all those good birds. And with all the reminders completed - on to the birds.

Grebe, Pied-bill 4-26 4/24 CH-1/1 GA-2/21 JE-1/2
 Pelican, Amer Wht 4-26 4/374 CH-1/46 GA-3/328
 Pelican, Brown 4-26 5/169 CH-1/45 GA-4/124
 Corm, Dbl-crested 4-19 3/5 CH-1/2 GA-2/3
 Corm, Dbl-crested 4-19 3/5 CH-(2)18,WWF; GA-BF(2)4,JW;
 GA-BF(1)19,WB
 Corm, Neotropic 4-26 5/195 GA-3/174 JE-2/21
 cormorant, sp. 14-14 1/14 GA-1/14
 Anhinga 11-26 4/31 CH-3/27 JE-1/4
 Frigatebird, Magn 12-26 4/25 CH-SP(14)12,WB; CH-(4)18,WWF;
 GA-(6)14,PM; GA-(1)26,PS
 Heron, Great Blue 4-26 8/38 U-1/12 CH-2/5 GA-3/15 JE-2/6
 Egret, Great 2-26 11/225 U-1/25 CH-2/43 GA-3/51
 HA-1/3 JE-4/103
 Egret, Snowy 2-26 12/365 U-1/50 CH-1/5 GA-3/75
 HA-2/7 JE-5/228
 Heron, Little Blu 2-26 7/24 U-1/6 CH-2/12 GA-1/2
 HA-1/1 JE-2/3
 Heron, Tricolored 4-26 7/35 U-1/12 CH-2/5 GA-1/10 JE-3/8
 Egret, Reddish 4-26 4/77 U-1/2 GA-2/74 JE-1/1
 Egret, Cattle 4-26 9/1632 U-1/350 CH-2/514
 GA-2/41 JE-4/727
 Heron, Green 2-16 6/12 CH-1/3 GA-1/4 HA-1/1 JE-3/4
 Nt-Heron, Blk-crn 4-26 2/2 U-(1)26,PS; JE-(1)4,JW
 Nt-Heron, Yel-crn 4-26 4/6 CH-1/1 GA-1/1 HA-1/1 JE-1/3
 Ibis, White 4-26 6/515 U-1/40 CH-2/180 JE-3/295
 Ibis, Glossy 4-5 2/3 CH-AW(1)4,LL CO-APW(2)5,LL

Ibis, White-faced 4-26 6/704 U-1/20 CH-2/316 GA-1/3 JE-2/365
 Spoonbill, Roseat 4-26 6/38 U-1/8 CH-1/1 GA-2/24 JE-2/5
 Stork, Wood 12-18 2/21 CH-SP(18)12,WB; CH-(3)18,WWF
 Whsl-Duck, Fulvs 4-26 3/22 U-1/12 JE-2/10
 Duck, Mottled 4-26 3/26 U-1/10 CH-1/15 JE-1/1
 Teal, Blue-winged 4-26 3/46 U-1/30 CH-1/11 JE-1/5
 Shoveler, Northrn 19-19 1/5 GA-BF(5)19,WB
 Duck, Masked 5-5 1/8 CO-APW(8)5,LL
 Vulture, Black 4-26 3/9 U-1/6 CH-2/3
 Vulture, Turkey 4-26 6/55 U-1/15 CH-3/32 JE-2/8
 Osprey 26-26 1/4 U-(4)26,PS
 Kite, White-tailed 11-26 3/6 U-1/3 CH-1/2 JE-1/1
 Kite, Mississippi 4-26 5/29 U-(6)26,PS; CH-SP(18)14,PM;
 CH-(3)18,WWF; HA-(1)4,PM; HA-(1)18,PM
 Harrier, Northern 14-26 4/16 U-(6)26,PS; CH-SP(1)14,PM;
 CH-(8)18,WWF; GA-BF(1)19,WB
 Hawk, Sharp-shin 14-26 3/19 U-(3)26,PS; CH-SP(1)14,PM;
 CH-(15)18,WWF
 Hawk, Cooper's 14-26 3/7 U-(3)26,PS; CH-SP(1)14,PM;
 CH-(3)18,WWF
 Hawk, Red-shouldr 14-18 3/4 CH-2/3 JE-1/1
 Hawk, Broad-winged 4-26 5/954 CH-(300)18,WWF;
 CH-SP(650)26,PS;GA-HI(1)4,JW;
 JE-SW(2)11,JW; JE-(1)16,JW
 Hawk, Swainson's 14-14 1/30 CH-SP(30)14,PM
 Caracara, Crested 12-12 1/1 CH-AW(1)12,WB
 Kestrel, American 10-26 6/23 U-(10)26,PS; CH-SP(1)14,PM;
 CH-(6)18,WWF; HA-(2)10,X; HA-(2)15,X;
 JE-(2)15,JW
 Rail, Clapper 4-26 4/13 U-1/2 GA-2/7 JE-1/4
 Gallinule, Purple 4-14 2/43 CH-(3)4,JW; CH-AW(40)14,PM
 Moorhen, Common 4-26 6/255 U-1/25 CH-2/100 JE-3/130
 Coot, American 4-18 2/3 CH-(2)18,WWF; GA-HI(1)4,JW
 Plover, Blk-belli 4-26 5/403 U-1/25 CH-1/5 GA-2/370 JE-1/3
 Plover, Snowy 4-26 3/10 U-(1)26,PS; GA-BF(2)4,JW;
 GA-BF(7)19,WB
 Plover, Wilson's 4-26 4/29 U-1/6 GA-3/23
 Plover, Semipalm 4-26 4/617 U-(350)26,PS;
 GA-BF(200)4,JW;
 GA-BF(65)19,WB; JE-(2)11,JW
 Plover, Piping 4-26 3/176 U-(50)26,PS; GA-BF(100)4,JW;
 GA-BF(26)19,WB
 Killdeer 4-26 9/98 U-1/40 CH-2/9 GA-1/1
 HA-2/3 JE-3/45
 Oystercatcher, Am 4-26 3/92 U-1/15 GA-2/77
 Stilt, Black-neck 4-26 9/313 U-1/12 CH-3/237 GA-2/33 JE-3/31
 Avocet, American 4-26 4/393 U-1/150 CH-1/10 GA-2/233
 Yellowlegs, Great 4-26 7/47 U-1/6 CH-3/31 GA-2/5 JE-2/5
 Yellowlegs, Less 4-26 5/104 U-1/12 CH-2/70 GA-1/19 JE-1/5
 Sandprr, Solitary 11-11 1/1 JE-(1)11,JW
 Willet 4-26 5/238 U-1/35 GA-3/181 JE-1/22
 Whimbrel 4-4 1/1 GA-YBR(1)4,JW
 Curlew, Long-bill 4-26 3/15 U-1/8 GA-2/7
 Godwit, Marbled 4-26 3/207 U-1/30 GA-2/177
 Turnstone, Ruddy 4-11 2/22 GA-BF(20)4,JW; JE-(2)11,JW
 Knot, Red 14-14 1/1 GA-(1)14,PM
 Sanderling 4-26 4/702 U-1/100 GA-2/572 JE-1/30
 Sandprr, Semipalm 26-26 1/12 U-(12)26,PS
 Sandprr, Western 4-26 6/2354 U-(1000)26,PS; CH-(1)4,JW;
 GA-(1000)4,JW; GA-BF(243)19,WB;
 HA-(78)26,PM; JE-(32)11,JW
 Sandprr, Least 4-26 4/70 U-(40)26,PS; CH-AW(5)4,JW;
 GA-BF(20)19,WB; JE-(5)11,JW
 Sandprr, Pectoral 4-19 3/27 CH-AW(5)4,JW; CH-(20)12,WB;
 GA-BF(2)19,WB
 Dunlin 4-4 1/2 GA-BF(2)4,JW
 peep, sp. 19-19 1/6168 GA-BF(6168)19,WB
 Dowitcher, S-bill 4-11 3/251 CH-1/50 GA-1/200 JE-1/1

Dowitcher, L-bill 4-4 1/20 CH-(20)4,JW
dowitcher, sp. 19-26 2/766 CH-(25)26,PS; GA-BF(74)19,WB
Gull, Laughing 4-26 5/8568 U-1/5000 CH-1/75
GA-2/3425 JE-1/68
Gull, Ring-billed 4-26 7/116 U-1/25 CH-1/25 GA-2/30 JE-
3/36
Gull, Herring 4-26 4/5 U-1/1 GA-2/3 JE-1/1
Tern, Gull-billed 4-26 3/9 U-1/3 CH-1/3 GA-1/3
Tern, Caspian 4-26 4/250 U-1/4 GA-2/244 JE-1/2
Tern, Royal 4-26 5/6626 U-1/50 CH-1/45 GA-2/6506
JE-1/25
Tern, Sandwich 4-19 2/7 GA-BF(5)4,JW; GA-BF(2)19,WB
Tern, Common 26-26 1/1 U-(1)26,PS
Tern, Forster's 4-26 4/190 U-1/85 GA-1/50 JE-2/55
Tern, Least 4-19 2/63 GA-(60)4,JW; GA-BF(3)19,WB
Tern, Black 4-26 5/177 U-1/4 CH-1/12 GA-1/157 JE-
Skimmer, Black 4-11 2/210 GA-BF(200)4,JW; JE-(10)11,JW
Dove, Rock 4-15 2/30 GA-(10)4,JW; JE-(20)15,JW
Dove, Mourning 1-26 10/319 U-1/30 CH-2/94 GA-1/1
HA-2/23 JE-4/171
Dove, Inca 1-26 5/44 U-1/14 GA-1/6 HA-2/22 JE-1/2
Parakeet, Monk 18-18 1/7 HA-(7)18,PM
Ani, Groove-billed 16-16 1/1 GA-(1)16,WB
Owl, Barn 11-11 1/1 JE-SW(1)11,JW
Screech-Owl, East 5-5 1/1 HA-(1)5,X
Nighthawk, Common 4-26 6/14 U-1/5 CH-1/1 GA-1/5 JE-3/3
Chuck-wills-widow 1-30 3/4 CH-(1)18,WWF; HA-(2)1-30,X;
JE-SW(1)11,JW
Swift, Chimney 4-26 8/37 U-1/2 CH-1/2 HA-2/10 JE-4/23
Hummer, Ruby-thrt 1-26 8/42 U-1/12 CH-1/2 HA-2/4 JE-4/24
Kingfisher, Beltd 4-26 8/28 U-1/2 CH-2/7 GA-2/10
HA-1/1 JE-2/8
Wdpeckr, Red-head 26-26 2/4 U-(3)26,PS; GA-HI(1)26,PS
Wdpeckr, Red-bell 1-30 3/4 HA-1/1 CH-1/1 HA-1/2
Wdpeckr, Downy 1-30 3/5 HA-2/2 JE-1/3
Wdpeckr, Pileated 12-12 1/1 CH-SP(1)12,WB
Flycatch, Olv-sid 4-18 3/3 CH-AW(1)4,JW; CH-(1)18,WWF;
GA-HI(1)4,JW
Flycatch, Yel-bel 11-11 1/1 JE-SW(1)11,JW
Flycatch, "Trail" 11-11 1/1 JE-SW(1)11,JW
Flycatch, Least 4-26 3/4 U-(1)26,PS; GA-HI(2)4,JW;
JE-SW(1)11,JW
Flycatch, Gr Crst 26-26 1/1 U-(1)26,PS
Kingbird, Eastern 4-18 6/160 CH-3/152 JE-3/8
Flycatch, Ss-tail 4-26 7/128 U-1/45 CH-2/61 GA-1/1 JE-
3/21
Lark, Horned 4-26 3/30 U-1/14 GA-2/16
Swallow, Tree 4-4 1/1 JE-(1)4,JW
Swallow, Bank 4-4 1/25 JE-(25)4,JW
Swallow, Cliff 4-4 1/5 CH-(5)4,JW
Swallow, Barn 4-18 8/235 CH-(1)4,JW; CH-SP(20)14,PM;
CH-(50)18,WWF; GA-(2)4,JW; JE-(3)4,JW;
JE-(25)11,JW; JE-(116)15,JW; JE-(18)16,JW
1-26 10/105 U-1/25 CH-2/43 HA-3/28 JE-
Jay, Blue 1-26 6/25 U-1/8 CH-1/5 HA-1/6 JE-3/6
Crow, American 4-4 1/2 HA-(2)4,PM
Chickadee, Carol 1-26 6/10 U-1/3 CH-1/2 GA-1/2 HA-2/2
JE-1/1
Kinglet, Ruby-crn 26-26 1/5 U-(5)26,PS
Gnatcatch, Blu-gra 4-26 7/95 U-(3)26,PS; CH-(6)4,JW;
CH-SP(45)12,WB; CH-(8)18,WWF;
CH-SP(24)19,WB; GA-HI(4)4,JW;
JE-SW(5)11,JW
Catbird, Gray 26-26 1/1 U-(1)26,PS
Mockingbird, N 1-26 11/115 U-1/15 CH-2/16 GA-2/8
HA-2/12 JE-4/64
Thrasher, Brown 18-26 3/81 U-1/75 CH-2/6
Shrike, Loggerhed 4-26 10/168 U-1/12 CH-2/65 GA-2/3
HA-1/1 JE-4/87
Starling, Euro 4-26 6/549 U-1/400 CH-1/3 HA-1/30 JE-
3/116
Vireo, Yell-thrtd 26-26 1/1 U-(1)26,PS
Vireo, Warbling 26-26 1/1 U-(1)26,PS
Vireo, Red-eyed 11-11 1/1 JE-SW(1)11,JW
Warb, Blue-winged 4-4 1/1 GA-HI(1)4,JW
Parula, Northern 4-4 1/1 GA-HI(1)4,JW
Warb, Chstnt-side 26-26 1/1 U-(1)26,PS
Warb, Magnolia 26-26 1/2 U-(2)26,PS
Warb, Blk-thr Grn 18-18 1/1 CH-(1)18,WWF
Warb, Yel-throat 4-4 1/1 CH-AW(1)4,JW
Warb, Blk-and-wht 4-26 5/13 U-(1)26,PS; CH-AW(1)4,JW;
CH-(2)18,WWF; GA-HI(4)4,JW;
JE-SW(5)11,JW
Redstart, Amer 18-26 2/7 U-(5)26,PS; CH-(2)18,WWF
Warb, Prothonotry 4-4 2/3 CH-AW(1)4,JW; GA-HI(2)4,JW
Ovenbird 26-26 1/1 U-(1)26,PS
Waterthrush, N 11-11 1/1 JE-SW(1)11,JW
Warb, Kentucky 4-4 1/1 GA-HI(1)4,JW
Warb, Mourning 4-18 2/3 CH-(1)18,WWF; GA-HI(2)4,LL
Yellowthroat, Com 26-26 1/6 U-(6)26,PS
Warb, Wilson's 26-26 1/3 U-(3)26,PS
Warb, Canada 4-26 6/39 U-(2)26,PS; CH-AW(3)4,JW;
CH-(1)18,WWF; GA-HI(1)4,JW; JE-SW(30)4,LL;
JE-SW(2)11,JW
Tanager, Summer 11-11 1/1 JE-SW(1)11,JW
Cardinal, Northrn 1-26 5/35 U-1/20 GA-1/7 HA-1/2 JE-2/6
Grosbeak, Blue 19-19 1/4 CH-SP(4)19,WB
Bunting, Indigo 15-15 1/4 JE-(4)15,JW
Bunting, Painted 26-26 2/401 U-(400)26,PS; U-(1)26,PS
Dickcissel 12-26 3/73 U-1/50 CH-1/22 JE-1/1
Sparrow, Shp-tail 6-26 2/4 GA-BF(1)6,WB; GA-BF(3)26,PS
Sparrow, Seaside 4-26 2/7 GA-BF(4)4,JW; GA-BF(3)26,PS
Blackbird, Red-wg 4-26 8/1861 CH-2/1070 GA-2/430 JE-4/361
Meadowlark, East 15-26 2/52 GA-(50)26,PS; JE-(2)15,JW
Grackle, Gr-tail 1-26 6/728 GA-1/35 HA-1/12 JE-4/681
Grackle, Bt-tail 11-26 3/32 CH-1/10 GA-1/12 JE-1/10
Grackle, Common 4-26 6/1059 GA-1/800 HA-2/28 JE-3/231
Cowbird, Brn-head 4-26 4/377 CH-1/50 GA-1/100 JE-2/227
blackbird, sp. 14-14 1/100 GA-1/100
Oriole, Northern 4-26 4/72 CH-SP(62)12,WB; GA-HI(6)4,JW;
GA-(2)26,PS; HA-(2)6,X
Sparrow, House 1-26 9/165 CH-1/20 GA-2/44 HA-3/40 JE-
3/61

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS: 42826 There were two species reported this month with no documentation: Virginia Rail and Savannah Sparrow

LIST OF OBSERVER CODES: John Whittle (JW); Greg & Cheryl Lasley (LL); Peggy Milstead (PM); P. D. Hulce, Steve Schultz (PS); Winnie Burkett (WB); John & Jana Whittle, Ross Foreman (WWF); P. D. Hulce (X)

LIST OF LOCATION CODES: Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR (APW); Anahuac NWR (AW); Bolivar Flats (BF); High Island (HI); Smith Point (SP); Sabine Woods (SW); Yacht Basin Road (YBR)

LIST OF COUNTY CODES: Brazoria (BR); Chambers (CH); Colorado (CO); Fort Bend (FB); Galveston (GA); Harris (HA); Jefferson (JE); Upper Texas Coast (U)

Glossy Ibis - G. Lasley September 4, 1994
Shoveler Pond, Anahuac NWR. The bird was an adult identified as such by its retained chestnut shoulders.

The head was dark with whitish streaks. The facial skin was dark gray with a clean cut pale border that went across the bill and down both sides of the face and stopped at the eye. Border was skin. The eye was brown and was not red. Nearby White-faced Ibis had a red eye and pinkish facial skin. A second bird was observed in similar plumage, but the pale border was light blue.

Field separation of Plegadis ibis in fall and winter can be difficult and they are often inseparable. Both species get gray facial skin in the winter. If references can be trusted, feel the ID is correct. First, both birds are apparently adults. Both birds clearly had brown irises. All adult White-faced Ibis observed had at least some red or pink facial skin and had red eyes.

Documentation also submitted for Glossy Ibis in Colorado County on September 5, 1994.

Masked Duck - G. Lasley September 5, 1994

Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR. Small stiff-tailed ducks similar in size and shape to Ruddy Duck. The males (4) were all in immaculate alternate plumage, bright reddish brown body and back of head. The sides seemed to be black feathers with very broad reddish edges giving a mottled look through binoculars. Face entirely black. Tail was jet black. The eye was dark surrounded by a yellow eye-ring. Bill was electric blue with a tiny black nail at the tip. In flight, showed bright white wing patched in the inner wing in the area of the secondaries. The female birds (4) were paler overall with two distinct dark stripes on the face. Photos taken.

Groove-billed Ani - W. Burkett September 16, 1994

These three black Common Grackle sized birds, with large parrot like bills were observed in a dead tree on the side of the road from 20 ft. for several minutes. The light was good enough to see the grooves on the bills.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow - W. Burkett September 6, 1994

Bird came to "spishing" with Seaside Sparrow. Face and breast were orange gold with a dark patch around the eye. There was no streaking on the breast compared to juv. Seaside Sparrows in the vicinity that has a paler gold breast with dull gray streaking. Belly was white. Wings and back were not seen well. Compared to adjacent Seaside Sparrow the bird was smaller with a rounded head and smaller bill. Bird was observed for 1 minute from 15 ft. Observer very familiar with Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow - P. D. Hulce September 26, 1994

Orange supercilium and face, distinct gray ear

patch with sharp dark eye stripe, gray center crown stripe and gray on the nape and sides of neck. Whitish stripes on dark back. Indistinct streaking on orangish breast. Observed on Bolivar Flats.

1994 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Saturday, December 17

Houston, P.D. Hulce (713) 863-1142 or
Richard Uzar (713) 527-0454

W. Corpus Christi, Gene Blacklock
(512) 882-7232

Victoria, Peter Riesz (512) 575-4600

Armand Bayou, George Regmund
(713) 474-2551

Turkey Creek, David Baker (409) 899-1878

Sunday, December 18

Freeport, Jim Morgan (713) 461-3080 or
Houston Audubon (713) 932-1639

Kingsville, Paul Palmer (512) 592-7558

Flour Bluff, Mel Cooksey (512) 949-8700

Monday, December 19

Port Aransas, Scott Holt (512) 749-5656

Chaparral WMA, Jaime Rutledge
(210) 676-3413

Welder Wildlife Refuge, Terry Blankenship
(512) 364-2643

Mad Island Marsh (near Bay City)

Jim Bergan (512) 972-2559 or
Karen Cornelius (713) 853-5634

Tuesday, December 20

San Bernard NWR, Mike Lange (409) 849-6062

Aransas NWR, Tom Stehn (512) 286-3559

Wednesday, December 21

Attwater NWR, Winnie Burkett (713) 992-5640

Monday, December 26

Bolivar, Bill Graber, home (409) 866-5452

Tuesday, December 27

Old River, Jonelle Buckles (713) 576-2504

Wednesday, December 28

Rio Carizal, Gene Blacklock (512) 882-7232

Saturday, December 31

Brazos Bend S.P., Lynne Aldrich or Peter
Gottschling (713) 996-1109

Beech Creek, David Baker (409) 899-1878

Rio Corona, Gene Blacklock (409) 882-7232

Spring Creek, John Jones (713) 444-8369 or
Calvin Blakely (713) 358-5407

Sunday, January 1

El Naranjo, Nick Jackson (210) 895-4610

Cypress Creek, Ted Eubanks (713) 666-2669

Monday, January 2

Buffalo Bayou, Bob Honig (713) 665-6963

Birdwatching teacher halts mowing of nesting area

BY DAVID BENSON

A fledgling birdwatcher's quick thinking may change the way Pasadena enforces mowing requirements for vacant lots.

Billie Clary's only been "birding," as it's called by enthusiasts, for about 18 months. but it didn't take the Queens Intermediate School teacher long to determine what was happening when dozens of birds took to the sky behind her house.

"It looked like a scene out of the movie *The Birds*," Clary said. "They were just flying around, going crazy...and when the tractor went past they were flying back to what used to be their nests."

The tractor was mowing about 10 acres behind Clary's home in southeast Pasadena to comply with city rules about keeping grass and weeds short enough to discourage rats and other vermin. Unfortunately, the 10 acres had already been homesteaded by scores of birds--egrets, herons, Blue Jays, Cardinals and others...

Her feathers ruffled, Clary...called the city and got Chief Health Inspector John Benson, who called for a stop to the mowing.

Clary is now to get a nest count and list of nesting species together for city officials, and Benson

said the lot behind her house is to remain half-mowed.

Benson said Monday that the city is likely to suspend mowing requirements until July---the nesting season's end--on lots where birds are obvious tenants.

"We recognize Pasadena being a bird sanctuary, so we not only want to respect that, we don't want to hurt any endangered species," the health inspector said.

Clary, meanwhile, was concerned about her image. Confessing that she buys birdseed in 100-lb lots, the junior-high computer instructor worried that her bird-saving efforts may get her marked as a...well, she said it.

"I just don't want people to think I'm a quack."

[Billie Clary has been a member of the OG since 1993. This article appeared in the Pasadena Citizen on May 2, 1994. Billie wrote that "Chief Benson called the paper with the story and said he would try to get the city ordinance changed so that mowing would be done before the end of March and suspended until mid-July. ...John Benson, Chief Health Inspector for the City of Pasadena, should be recognized for his immediate and positive response to saving the nesting sites for the birds."Ed.]

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