



THE SPOONBILL

VOLUME XIV, No. 5
September, 1965

 * "Do you ne'er think what wondrous beings these? *
 * Do you ne'er think who made them, and who taught*
 * The dialect they speak, where melodies. *
 * Alone are the interpreters of thought? *
 * Whose household words are songs in many keys, *
 * Sweeter than instrument of man e'er caught! *
 * Whose habitations in the tree tops even *
 * Are half way houses on the road to heaven!" *
 * *
 * "The Birds of Killingworth" by Longfellow *

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

COMING EVENTS

- September 18 (Saturday) ONG field trip, led by Mr. L.A. McWhirter. Meet at 9 AM at the Bellville Court House Square. A visit to Miss Ima Hogg's restored stagecoach stop near Roundtop will highlight the trip.
- September 19 (Sunday) OG field trip. A visit to the Freeport area, led by Dr. David Marrack. Meet at 7:45 AM at the Angleton Court House. We hope to look at migratory woodland birds eventually reaching the beach for a study of various terns, as we did last year.
- October 3 (Sunday) OG field trip to the edge of the Big Thicket, led by Mr. and Mrs. Henry S. Hoffman. Meet at 9 AM at U.S. Post Office in Saratoga (between Liberty and Kountze) on Rt. 770. We have permission to bird in the Hardin County Game Preservation and other nearby areas, where we shall look for Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Brown-headed Nuthatches.
- October 7 (Thursday) OG meeting at 7:30 PM at the Downtown Recreation Center. Watch for details later in this issue.
- October 16 (Saturday) ONG field trip to Texas A & M. This is a tour which will satisfy everyone, since the Group will separate into their various interests (Botany Group to greenhouses, Ornithology Group to see collections of skins of birds, etc.) Lee Marster of the Houston Post will lead the trip. Since we have been unable to learn the meeting time and place at the time of this writing, refer to the next issue of Nature Club Notes.

"COLLECTING"

Printed below is the letter read at the last OG meeting. This letter was written in response to the petition on collecting that was recently circulated among the members of the Ornithology Group.

Jerry Baker has furnished with the following information on the author, Carl H. Aiken III:
 "Carl has been a birder since his junior high school days. The summer after his graduation from high school he accompanied Mr. L. Irby Davis on a recording trip to Baja California, Western United States, and Vancouver Island. He attended A. & M. University, majoring in Wildlife Biology. In his sophomore year he received a scholarship in Journalism from the National Wildlife Federation. Upon graduation he received two degrees - B.S. in Wildlife Biology and in Journalism. He has had one year of graduate work in Zoology at the University of Texas. While enrolled at U. of T., Carl spent four months in Mexico and Central America working on Vocalization of Trogons of North America.
 "During his summer vacations Carl worked with the Game and Fish Commission on a Fisheries Project and Nutria Control Project.
 "We will not be seeing much of Carl in the near future as he will soon be Second Lieutenant Aiken of the Army Medical Services."

3767 Georgetown
Houston, Texas 77005
August 21, 1965

Dear Katrina,

"Yesterday, I received the statement of the Ornithology Group concerning the collecting of birds in this area. I assume this statement is the result of collecting the black-whiskered vireo on Galveston Island, April 29.

"I do not feel that I can support either side in this controversy - nor do I intend to straddle the fence. It seems that both factions are basically at fault on the issue.

"It is true that, in my opinion, the collecting of the bird proved absolutely nothing. It was collected in the name of "science" because the so-called professionals won't accept sight records. Their reasoning has a sound basis, but it has often been carried to an extreme. Science and the scientists have been the ones to suffer - not the people who have made the valid sight records. We have series upon series upon series of black-whiskered vireo skins. Every little museum in the world must have at least one to justify its existence, to complete its card catalog, to fill the drawers under the label Vireonidae, and thus get more grants to carry on the same thing all over again. This is science?

"What more can we learn from one additional skin of this species? It certainly wasn't necessary to collect it to prove its identity or its location. We have more than an ample number of skins to carry on a study of morphology, skeletal structure, or whatever. If it had been collected in an organized research project involving the microscopic study of tissues, parasites, feeding habits, or breeding conditions, this would be something else. But it wasn't. The bird was collected to appease the gods of a science in which collecting has become the sacred cow!

"No, we have proven nothing by one more dead black-whiskered vireo. But there is no use crying over spilt milk (or blood as the case may be), especially at the expense of the influence that can be exerted by the Ornithology Group if it remains a united organization.

"There are several endeavors in ornithology that require collecting. Perhaps, in the early development of the science, random collecting for the sole purpose of a museum skin was necessary. I feel that this type of collecting has no great purpose now. There are, however, many forms of research that could produce worthwhile results, and would necessarily require collecting. It would be obvious to all that for a complete understanding of any group of living organisms, some of these organisms must be collected and studied under conditions only available in the laboratory. There is room for this type of research on the Gulf Coast and an organization such as the Ornithology Group could certainly conduct such research. I urge those of the group who insist on denouncing all forms of collecting as inhumane or even subhuman to take a closer look at the study of birds. There is a need for the observer and the collector. If you want to be one and not the other, that is your privilege. But at least take the time to learn the scope and limitations of each.

"The observer could do well to carry his hobby a little further than the sport of identification and listing. Why not some careful behavior studies in this area? There is a lot of literature to provide a good springboard in this relatively new science of ethology.

"The collector could do equally well if he restrained from shooting the 'unusuals' out from under the 'watchers' and carried on a sound project in avian parasitology of feeding habits. What would be more useful now than a study of the effects of insecticides, pesticides, herbicides, etc. on local bird populations? For such a study to be worthwhile, I think collecting would be required.

"The group often claims that it is working for and contributing to the science of ornithology. Yet it denounces some of the basic tools of the science and misuses others. It is time for a reevaluation, an orientation, and a rededication within the group. If it is to be a group dedicated to a scientific study, then let's start making some scientific studies. If it is not, let's quit saying it is. An organization can only bog down trying to live under a double standard such as this."

Respectfully and with best hopes for the future,

(signed) Carl H. Aiken III

A GOOD "TERN" AT FREEPORT by Jerry Strickling

Nancy, John O'Neill, and I were at Bryan Beach on July 17, 1965, an 11:00 AM, when John called our attention to an interesting tern. It was the size of a Sandwich Tern and in company with \pm 100 Black, Least, Sandwich, and a few Royal and Caspian Terns.

The mantle was lighter colored than the Sandwich Tern's. The wings were longer than the tail. It had a dark crest; a white forehead; and a pinkish-yellow, very slender, and relatively long bill. The tail was white and forked.

We saw the tern again on July 24, 1965 in company with Pat Ellis. We were within fifty feet

of it. Harvey Pattsn saw it on July 30, 1965 from one hundred feet. His description was the same as ours. In addition, he discussed the bird flying, calling our attention to the white base of the primaries.

Conclusions: (as certain as sight observations can be)

1. It was most certainly of the Genus Thalasseus.
2. Either (a) Crested, (b) Cayenne, or (c) Elegant.
 - (a) The Crested Tern is of the Indian Ocean?
 - (b) The Cayenne Tern has the back of the legs yellow?
3. It was probably an Elegant Tern.
4. It was most probably one of the three.

Contributor's note: "Our 'best bird' of the season is this Elegant(?) Tern, a rare find. The only other Elegant Tern from Texas was in 1889 at Corpus Christi."

NEW GULF COAST RESORT---FOR THE BIRDS!

Birds sure have it good these days! Another National Wildlife Refuge will soon be established in the southeastern section of Brazoria County! Over 6000 acres will be sold to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which will develop the area to make a sanctuary for both resident and migratory birds. The project, which will probably take a few years, will include planting food for the birds, as well as increasing the marsh area itself.

In addition to providing a refuge for birds, this land will eventually be open to limited hunting--but only when the scientists of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service feel that hunting will be in keeping with their good care of the wildlife there.

What does this new refuge mean to members of the Ornithology Group? A wonderful new opportunity to study waterfowl! And what does it mean to our fine feathered friends? Well, a little bird told me that the new refuge will mean a new source of protection in a secure environment for him.

CORN FRITTER

"Where's Joe?"

"Oh, he's down at the Eagle Laundry."

"I didn't know they washed eagles!"

STRETCHING THE HORIZONS OF OUR HOBBY

Carl Aiken has presented quite a challenge to us "watchers" to carry our hobby further than just identification and listing. Joseph J. Hickey on page 195-6 of his A Guide to Bird Watching presents a table of information still wanted on North American birds. Since this book was first published in 1943, some of this information might have now been obtained; however, as a guide as to where present observations may be directed, here is a partial list of the areas in which data was incomplete:

Weights	Type and size of territories
Significance of calls and songs	Percentage of egg infertility
Factors affecting song	Percentage that die at each age
Relation of substrate to nests	Local densities recorded
Role of sexes in nest building	Sex ratios
Duration of family flock	Parasites and diseases carried
Use of singing perches (if any)	Roosting sites
Relation to water	Average number of young that fly
Place in successions of vegetation or land use	
Size of foraging area according to season	

CLEARING HOUSE - August, 1965

Pied-billed Grebe: (30)29 Anahuac Refuge, JLT.
 White Pelicans: (25)29 Galveston, JLT.
 Cattle Egret: (2000)29 Galveston-Anahuac, JLT.
 Reddish Egrets: (8)29 Bolivar, JLT.
 Black-crowned Night Heron: (15)29 Bolivar, JLT.
 Least Bittern: (7)29 Anahuac Refuge, JLT.
 Wood Ibis: (40)29 Baytown, JLT.
 White-faced Ibis: (400)29 Anahuac Refuge, JLT.
 White Ibis: (300)29 Galveston, Anahuac Ref., JLT.
 Roseate Spoonbill: (30)29 Baytown, JLT.
 Mottled Ducks: (1000)29 Anahuac Ref., JLT.
 Blue-winged Teal: (200)29 Anahuac Ref., JLT.
 Wood Duck: (1)51 CJ, JWR.
 Swainson's Hawk: (2)5 Houston, JWR.
 Caracara: (1)22. CJ, JWR.

King Rail: (3)29 High Island, JLT.
 Clapper Rail: (6)29 Galveston, JLT.
 Purple Gallinule: (2)29 Anahuac Ref., JLT.
 Common Gallinule: (200)29, Anahuac Ref., JLT.
 Upland Plover: (4)29 Gilchrist, JLT.
 Spotted Sandpiper: (1)29 Gilchrist, JLT.
 Buff-breasted Sandpiper: (2)29 Galveston, JLT.
 Marbled Godwit: (1)29, Bolivar, JLT.
 Roadrunner: (1)19, Harlem Road, CJ, JWR.
 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds: (1)29, High Island, JLT.
 Belted Kingfisher: (1)29 Gilchrist, JLT.
 Empidonax Flycatcher: (5)29 High Island, JLT.
 Olive-sided Flycatcher: (1)29 High Island, JLT.
 Brown-Headed Nuthatch: (2)9,10,14,21,29, JWR.
 Eastern Bluebird: (1)10, (1)15, JWR.
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: (3)29 High Island, JLT.
 Yellow-throated Warbler: (2)29 High Island, JLT.
 Canada Warbler: (1)20, CJ, JWR.
 Yellow Warbler: (30)29 High Island, Anahuac, JLT; (14)31, CJ, JWR.
 Baltimore Oriole: (3)29 High Island, JLT.
 Blue Grosbeak: (5)31 CJ, JWR.
 Seaside Sparrow: (8)29 Galveston, (7)29 Anahuac Ref. JLT.

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS

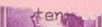
JLT John L. Tveten
 JWR Jane W. Robinson
 CW Charlotte Johnson

LATE NEWS FLASHES!!

The speaker at the next OG meeting (see p. 1 for time and place) will be Dr. Bob Dooley, Curator of the Houston Museum. Dr. Dooley will tell us about plans for the new bird House at the zoo.

A change in the announcement of the Oct. 16 ONC field trip is that Lee Marster of the Houston Post will be unable to lead the trip. Mr. Clayton Gilman, president of the ONC will lead the trip instead.

OFFICERS

Chairman:	Harvey 
Secretary:	Miss K.  son
Treasurer:	Miss E. 
Field Trip Chairman:	Mrs. R.P. (Betty) Williams
Program Chairman:	Dr. Pat Sullivan
Co-editors of <u>The Spoonbills</u> :	Bill and Betty Wright, 6734 Neff, Houston, Texas, 77036



Sept. 1975

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 (Ornithology Group)
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