



THE SPOONBILL

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

COMING EVENTS

- Tuesday August 25 Deadline for THE SPOONBILL announcements, articles, etc.
- Saturday August 29 OG field trip to High Island and Bolivar Peninsula. Meet at the roadside park on Hwy. 124 in High Island at 7:30 a.m. Bring lunches and mosquito repellent.
- Wednesday September 2 The ONC Photography Group will meet at 7:30 p.m. in Bayou Manor auditorium, 4141 South Braeswood Blvd. Thanks to Texas politicians we may never have a chance to see the Big Bend Ranch. Come to this meeting and see Jay Forrest's beautiful slides of Solitario and Fresno canyons in this area.
- Thursday September 3 OG regular meeting, 7:30 p.m., Bayou Manor auditorium. The sparrows are on their way to the UTC. Come join T. Ben Feltner (without disguise) for a seminar on identification of the 23 species of sparrows found in our area in the fall and winter. With the UTC being one of the better birding areas for sparrows in the U.S., this program by Ben will be of interest to everyone. Can you identify Clay-colored or Brewer's Sparrows, or even Lark Buntings? If not, or if you're just beginning and would like to take advantage of Ben's long-time experience, come on down to the meeting this month. A signed and numbered Bald Eagle print by Charles Beckendorf will be auctioned (opening bid \$5).
- Thursday September 3 Clearing House deadline for observations for August. Please send early. See Clearing House Rules, pg. 12.
- Tuesday September 8 ONC regular meeting, 8:00 p.m., Garden Center in Hermann Park. The program speaker will be Gene Blacklock, who will talk about the Welder Wildlife Refuge. Gene's program will be geared toward an ONC field trip to Welder later in the month.
- Thursday September 10 The ONC Botany-Entomology Group will meet in the basement at Bayou Manor. Barbara Ruppert will bring a program on bromeliads. Bring nature specimens to identify and discuss. Call Mary Marrs (668-2725) for additional information.
- Saturday September 12 The Photography Group field trip will be to Sam Houston National Forest on Little Lake Creek Loop. We will see mushrooms, wild flowers, birds, etc. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Bayou Manor. Doug Troegen will lead the group.
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A REVIEW OF THE 1981 SPRING MIGRATION

by Jim Morgan

An analysis of the spring rainfall and a plot of the wind velocity vector as a function of time just about gives one all that he needs to assess what the spring migration on the UTC might have been like.

In-the-field observations this past spring back up the assessment. Rainfall, as recorded at Houston Intercontinental Airport, was as follows:

	<u>1981</u>	<u>Normal</u>
March	1.74 inches	2.68 inches
April	2.69	3.54
May	8.75	5.10

Though rainfall can vary considerably from local region to region on the UTC, the above pattern generally applied for the entire UTC. In addition, throughout March and the first three weeks of April the winds were generally strong and from the southeast with occasional variability only to the east or south. North winds were almost entirely absent as cold fronts were dissipating before reaching the UTC. However, in early May the pattern changed. Several cold fronts made it to the coast with heavy accompanying rainfall and northwest winds. At least two record overnight low temperatures were recorded in Houston in early May. Long time observers of UTC migrations know that it is primarily rain that brings down migrants, and north winds increase the resistance for flight if birds are bucking this force as well.

With the above facts in mind one would arrive at the conclusion that March and April were generally poor months for observing large concentrations of migrants and that May was pretty good for bird watching. Except for the one outstanding fallout on April 23-25, brought about by April's only heavy storm, the above statement is quite true.

March was generally very dull. With no rainfall of consequence and strong SE winds, no fallouts occurred and large concentrations of birds were not to be found anywhere on the UTC. Typically though, there always seems to be some interesting sightings during any migration month, no matter how generally dull it may be. March was no exception. For example, the Red-throated Loon at Offats Bayou, first seen on March 1 (Bryan Bland, T. Ben Feltner, Linda Roach), the Reeve in Galveston on March 29 (TBF, Noel Pettingell, LR), the Say's Phoebe at Hale Ranch on March 14 (Austin birders field trip) and a Black-throated Gray Warbler at White Oak Bayou during the period February 27 to March 16 (Wes Cureton). By far, the bird of the month was the Black Brant, a new UTC species, found by Beaumont birders and subsequently seen by many observers.

The first three weeks of April continued with the dull pace of March. In fact, it may have been the worst early April in decades! With no rain and strong SE winds, birds had a free ride well inland. Most early migrants saw the UTC this spring from an altitude of 700 feet plus! The one good fallout mentioned earlier was well documented by Ben Feltner in the May SPOONBILL and will not be elaborated upon here except to say it was a very good classical fallout. Other notable April bird sightings included relocating the Black Brant at Bolivar Flats on April 17 (Becky Lasley, et.al.; photographed), 1-2 Swallow-tailed Kites near Gilchrist and Crystal Beach from the 11th to the 19th (m.ob.), 1-2 Glaucous Gulls at Bolivar Flats (m.ob.), a Curve-billed Thrasher NE of High Island on April 23 (David and Mimi Wolf), and, if accepted by the UTC Checklist Committee, the Black-whiskered Vireo on W. Galveston Island during the period April 30 to May 3 (P. D. Hulce, Steve Schultz, others). Also seen were two favorites of UTC birders-2 Black-throated Blue Warblers at Bolivar on April 22 (Tony Gallucci) and another Black-throated Gray at White Oak Bayou on April 25 (WC). By the end of April Bobolinks were being seen in flocks ranging up to 75 birds on the west end of Galveston Island.

As was the case in the spring of 1980, the first two weeks of May provided the most consistent good birding of the spring migration. The frontal activity mentioned earlier and abundant rainfall during at least three different 24 hour periods were the contributing factors.

Tremendous rains hit about 30 miles inland on May 3 and again on May 4 with some lighter showers noted right along the coast. Birding for 2-3 days was called "excellent" inland and "very good" along the coast.

On May 5 Tony Gallucci recorded his highest birds per net-hour for any day of the 14 days he banded on the UTC in April and May (though he did miss the brunt of the big April fallout). Again, on May 9 a heavy storm pushed across the UTC late in the day and into the Gulf of Mexico early on May 10. Ted Eubanks, Jr. observed a noteworthy fallout on the morning of the 10th. Ted, working alone in Jefferson County, banded 117 passerines in just 5 hours using only 5 nets. Ted said "birds were pouring in from the Gulf" with Magnolia Warblers in the most abundant numbers. On the same date, in west Harris County, ex-UTC birder John Eyre (now back home in England) recorded 750 Buff-breasted Sandpipers, relatively speaking the best shorebird concentration of the spring.

The last good wave of migrants was recorded by Bob Behrstock and yours truly on May 14. An extensive line of thunderstorms, about 25 miles wide, stretching from Louisiana to Victoria, moved through Houston at 3:30 a.m. and crossed the coast at 6:00 a.m., then continued moving out into the Gulf. Working High Island and other migrant traps along the coast we recorded 100 Eastern Pewees, 175 Magnolia Warblers, 115 Canada Warblers, and 80 American Redstarts. We ended up with 620 individuals of a total of 18 species of warblers, which is a good count for mid-May. The Canada Warbler total that day is believed to be the highest count recorded of this species in recent times (10-20 years), even topping the best fall count for this species (when it is usually much more numerous than spring).

Other noteworthy sightings in May included many species that were recorded quite late in the season. For example, Ruby-crowned Kinglets were found in Houston on May 2 (Jim Morgan) and on May 5 (Randy Pinkston), two more on May 6 at Bolivar (TG), another three at High Island on May 10 (Steve Calver), and the latest at White Oak Bayou on May 11 (WC). Other late species were a Black-headed Grosbeak at Bolivar on May 25 (TG;banded), a late Pine Siskin on May 6 in Houston (RP), and a very late Sharp-tailed Sparrow on May 20 at Bolivar Flats (TG). Also late were White-crowned Sparrows at Anahuac NWR on May 3 (TBF, Jim Morgan, LR) and in Houston on May 6 (RP). Empidonax Flycatchers are known to peak in May but this year the peak seemed very late, evidenced by the highest reported count of 80 individuals on May 25 at Bolivar (TG). Bird banders noted no empidonax except Acadian Flycatchers until well into May.

The most exciting bird of the spring, and probably of the year to date, was the Green Violet-ear Hummingbird first seen in Lake Jackson on May 26 but not reported until June 3 when Fae Humphrey returned from vacation to find it in her neighborhood. The bird was seen by many, many observers and exceptionally detailed notes by TG and yours truly are on file with the Checklist Committee. This species has only been recorded in Texas when north of Mexico and the UTC record was the 8th and the most easterly in North America.

Just a quick word of advice. Don't give up on spring migrations too early. Good late waves can occur up to about May 20 if inclement weather comes to the UTC. Similarly, don't wait too late to begin birding the fall migration. If you can handle the heat and mosquitos, then you can have good shorebird days anytime in August and good passerine migrant days anytime after about August 10-15. Again, watch the weather and try to bird right after the thunderstorms. In fact, while reading this maybe a storm is building nearby. Check the weather, and if it is bad, I will see you on the coast! Good birding!

BIRD SOUNDS

by Randy Pinkston

Part 1: An Alternate Dimension in Field Identification

Avid birders can be pigeon-holed, so to speak, with respect to many things including their compelling drive to bird hard and dirty for a complete list of species in a given area (or at least what they perceive to be a complete list). Few things deliver the kind of satisfaction a birder feels when the sun sets and he can go down the list

placing a check beside every resident species plus an icing of "unexpecteds". It's what we strive for just as a golfer strives for par or below.

As new birders, each of us took great pains to note every movement in the forest for a list of 35 species while our experienced buddy relaxed and reported 50. We couldn't have missed that many! Our buddy must have been calling some of those birds on insufficient grounds. Possibly, but probably not. He probably knew his birds by sight as well as by sound.

Bird vocalizations are usually categorized as either songs or calls. Songs are generally of longer duration and they form a distinct pattern of syllables and notes through time. The Carolina Wren's "tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea" and the Cardinal's "birdy birdy birdy" are good examples. A bird's song, like a man's deep voice, is a secondary sexual characteristic: it is under the control of male sex hormones and its functions are primarily reproductive (the analogy has its limits, of course).

Calls, on the other hand, are generally brief and simple in structure. Examples include the familiar "chip note" of the Myrtle Warbler, the Blue Jay's harsh "jeeah", and the many squeaky utterances of our Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Their functions are primarily non-reproductive, oftentimes non-species-specific. Instead, they take on meaning in behaviors such as flocking, aggression, and predator response.

(Note: the gray area in nature is so broad as to render these definitions practically useless).

Songs and calls are produced from a structure in the bird's throat called a syrinx, but distinctive sounds may be produced in other ways. No doubt most of us have heard the explosive whoom of a male Common Nighthawk in aerial display. The sound reminds me of a quick trumpet blast. It is produced by the sudden rush of air through the wing feathers as he checks his dive. Male hummingbirds of several western species are characterized by strongly attenuated outer wing and/or tail feathers which cut the air to produce distinctive sounds. Consider the woodpeckers. Many species reveal their identity by telltale patterns of drumming on trees. The list of examples could go on and on.

No matter how you categorize and label their sounds, the point is birds can be identified by sound oftentimes more readily than by visual field marks, and usually with equal certainty. The imitations of mimic thrushes (mockingbirds and allies), starlings, and Blue Jays may arouse the curiosity of an experienced listener for a brief time, but they rarely fool anyone completely. Just last month I thought a kestrel was calling from my backyard. I became suspect when suddenly a Killdeer, and then a White-eyed Vireo, called from the same location in rapid succession.

Obviously, the easiest and fastest way to learn birds by sound is to bird with someone who can point them out to you. Even if you are lucky enough to be in that situation though, individual study is necessary. Unlike learning birds by their visual marks, in which you can fall back on a field guide if you forget, to really learn birds by their sounds requires great concentration over a relatively long period of time.

First, make a checklist of the species you expect to encounter. Play recordings of the expected birds at home immediately before you go to the field and try to memorize the sounds. I suggest purchasing one of several album sets of North American bird sounds which are available commercially. Syllabication, or the conversion of sounds into patterns of short syllables or phrases which we can pronounce, is often helpful here. The "voice" descriptions in most popular field guides are done in this way.

Later on in the field, listen carefully and try naming the sounds. Encouragement comes each time you get one right. I remember the excitement of learning the Kentucky Warbler's song: I heard "churry churry churry churry" and "guessed" Kentucky Warbler without seeing the bird. Quietly I approached the sound and began searching

for a source. Before too long I spotted those bright yellow underparts and I watched as he sang that same song.

If the effort is made, the progress will be steady. Repeat the steps I've outlined in a variety of habitats throughout the year. Make notes of unfamiliar sounds. Make your own syllabifications if it helps you to remember. As you go, compare your lists in areas birded before and after your concentration on sounds. The rewards will be obvious.

THE SILENT KILLERS: DISEASES OF BIRDS by B. C. Robison, D.V.M.

Part 7: The Role of Wild Birds as Virus Reservoir in the Epidemiology of Equine Encephalomyelitis

Host-parasite relationships hold a special fascination among the many interdependent forms of animal life that we observe in the natural world. The word "parasite" often denotes an organism living at the expense of and to the ultimate detriment of the host. But this is not always the case.

For a parasite to survive from generation to generation, indeed for it even to evolve in the first place over millenia of geologic time, the host-parasite relation cannot be one of debilitation and destruction of the supporting organism. Otherwise, the flea, or worm, or virus, or whatever, would have nowhere to live and nothing to eat. Equilibrium must prevail, a balance must be achieved.

This metabolic harmony is dramatically manifested in the complex epidemiology of North American equine encephalomyelitis (EE), in which wild birds play a vital role.

This neurologic horse disease is caused by two distinct viruses, Western and Eastern. Although immunologically different, they produce the same symptoms in horses (paralysis, seizures, mental derangement). The two viruses are found -- hold your breath -- in the western and eastern U.S. respectively. EEE is more virulent and fatal than WEE.

Prior to 1972, sporadic outbreaks were fairly common throughout the U.S. That year, Texas was hit very hard by EE, thanks to the bureaucratic constipation of the federal government. For two years, the pinheads of the Food and Drug Administration monitored a relentless advance of EE toward Texas from South and Central America, but they refused to allow the use of a proven vaccine until a case was actually recorded in Texas. By then it was too late. Thousands of valuable animals died, a monument to governmental nitwittery. Now the disease is effectively prevented by vaccination.

Investigators over the years began to notice a correlation between an equine outbreak in a certain area and reports of unexplained bird deaths from commercial producers nearby. Ring-neck pheasants, chukars, turkeys and chickens, were found to be naturally infected with the EE virus. Considerable losses resulted.

Medical research eventually revealed that the virus proliferated in a wide variety of feral birds, with one important difference: native wild birds do not get sick. The host-parasite adaptation has achieved a state of fine-tuning, especially in swamp and marsh birds.

Wetland birds are "sylvatic reservoirs" (Latin sylvus, forest) of EE. This means the disease has a continuing source of virus from free-ranging wild life. (Skunks, as another example, are sylvatic reservoirs of rabies.)

Now the next question is, how does the virus get from the bird to the horse? By something we are all too familiar with -- mosquitos.

Mosquitos are "biological vectors" of EE. The virus replicates in the intestinal tract, and eventually works its way into the saliva. When the mosquito bites the horse, the virus is injected into the animal's tissue. The virus proliferates in the horse's body, spreads throughout the blood, reaches the brain, and clinical EE results.

Because of its physical bulk, the horse becomes a "dead-end" host.

The virus, although causing overt disease, is nevertheless "diluted" because of the great volume of blood. (Figure on 40c.c. of blood per pound body weight; a thousand lb. horse circulates 40 quarts. That's a lotta hoss blood, podnuh.)

The horse may contract the disease, but he cannot be a source of the virus for another host. A mosquito biting the infected horse will not pick up the diluted virus.

Meanwhile, back at the swamp, the opposite principle comes into play. A small bird, when infected, concentrates the virus. So when a mosquito bites the bird, virus will be picked up from the blood and carried ultimately to a horse.

Because of this mosquito vector, endemic areas of EE are swamps and marshes, especially the freshwater swamps of the southeastern U.S. Outbreaks have occurred following a hurricane in this region, due to wind blowing infected mosquitos inland.

Introduced species, such as the house sparrow and rock dove, do suffer from overt symptoms when infected: paralysis, abnormal posturing, incoordination, seizures. Studies done on the white ibis and the great and snowy egrets have shown that these can carry the virus with no ill effects, but because of their larger size, they too are not effective reservoirs of virus due to the dilution factor. Small size is evidently a crucial factor in the transmission of this disease.

The red-winged blackbird, by contrast, is highly susceptible to clinical EE, so much so that it is considered a population control mechanism. But here again, we see the need for host-parasite equilibrium in the epidemiology of EE; the blackbird is not a consistent reservoir of virus, because, when infected, he will die. The virus will not be maintained in the blackbird population.

Small body size, and mutual tolerance of host and micro-organism, are essential to the role of wild birds in the epizootiology of equine encephalomyelitis.

In the strange ways of nature, a prothonotary warbler can mean death to a nine hundred pound Quarter Horse.

If I may put in a personal note, starting August 8th I will have a weekly natural science column appear each Saturday in the Houston Post. It will be a wide-ranging series dealing with regional wildlife, ecology, physiology, and the history of science. You can be assured that the bird life of the Texas Gulf Coast will be high on my list of topics!

AROUND AND ABOUT

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials recently completed the largest single purchase for a state park site by obtaining the deed to 4,709 acres on the north shoreline of Lake Houston in Harris and Montgomery Counties. The total cost of the tract was a record \$13.6 million, paid with funds from the state's penny-per-pack cigarette tax. The cigarette tax monies go into the Local Parks, Recreation and Open Space Fund created by the Texas Legislature to acquire parklands serving urban areas. The land, which is located only about 30 miles north of downtown Houston, includes approximately nine miles of water frontage on Lake Houston, the east fork of the San Jacinto River and Caney and Peach Creeks. The tract was purchased from Champion Realty Corp., which had owned it for more than 30 years. Parks officials said the wooded tract should offer outstanding recreational opportunities for Houston area residents when developed and opened to the public in three to four years. The new site, along with the Hale Ranch State Park site now under development southwest of the city, will eventually provide Houston area residents almost 10,000 acres of new parklands within 30 miles of downtown.

Throughout the year the Rice University Offices of Continuing Studies and Special Programs offer several minicourses on Texas bird watching.

This September we will offer Texas Bird Watching: The Fall Migration. Elaine Robinson Adams will focus this minicourse on migrating warblers, flycatchers, terns, plovers and many other birds of the Gulf Coast. You will have an opportunity to spot these birds during a field trip to Bolivar and High Island, east of Galveston. Course dates: Sept. 8 & 15, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. Field trip: Sept. 19 or 20. Course fee: \$48. For more information call Rice University, Offices of Continuing Studies and Special Programs, 527-4803 or 520-6022.

Houston Audubon Society will offer nature classes this fall featuring seashells, birding, nature photography, etc. Please call Tony Gallucci (932-9630) or HAS (932-1392) for additional information.

The Manomet Bird Observatory is eagerly seeking sightings of Red Knots banded and color-marked in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Florida, and Argentina. Please report all sightings, regardless of whether or not you can spot the location of the bands. However, any identification of the color and location of each band is very important. Please send your name and address, date of sighting, location, total number of knots in flock, total number of yellow and/or banded individuals, location and color of bands for each banded knot to: Bird Banding Laboratory, Office of Migratory Bird Management, Fish & Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland 20811 and Manomet Bird Observatory, Box 936, Manomet, MA 02345. See THE SPOONBILL, April 1981, for additional details.

The Black-capped Gnatcatchers Ben wrote about in THE SPOONBILL, June 1981, were doing great at least until the last week in July. John Coons, a good friend of mine attending graduate school in Flagstaff, wrote on 2 August with news that the pair had nested twice, raising 2 young each time, and they were building a third nest! John saw two immatures with the female at that time.-Ed.

MANITOBA, A BIRDERS BANQUET

by T. Ben Feltner

Upper Texas Coast summers are ornithological disasters. The sudden drop of migrant numbers in mid-May coupled with the disappearance of wintering birds and the onset of summer's heat all combine to create a birding emotional level two points below "the pits". On the other hand, all those good things you have heard about Manitoba are true. It is loaded with breeding birds in June and in addition its location astraddle the Central Flyway insures good numbers of migrants.

Dr. David Mark, one of Canada's premier birders, designed our Peregrine trip that took full advantage of his knowledge and the richness of the birding. Four Houstonians, Bernard Bensen, Marilyn Crane, Linda Roach and I, accompanied by an assortment of miscellaneous Yankees and other ethnic groups, made the trip and were treated to some of the finest birding available.

The first four days we birded a variety of habitats, marsh, prairie, coniferous and deciduous woodlands, in Southern Manitoba, using Winnipeg as a geographical centre. Our first day was spent at Oak Hammock Marsh, very near that city. The array of birds breeding there was astonishing, and included such handsome species as Bobolinks, Chestnut-collared Longspurs and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, all common. Each bird was resplendently plumaged and in full song, a pattern that was repeated throughout our trip. Whistling Swans, Eared and Western Grebes shared the waters with fourteen species of breeding ducks including such beauties as Hooded Mergansers and Ruddy Duck. As we walked along the banks we flushed Mallards, Shovelers and Gadwalls from their nests and the bushes held singing Veeries and Clay-colored Sparrows. Both Sedge and Marsh Wrens were nesting at the marsh. It is, in all, a great area. Our next stop was Riding Mountain Provincial Park for a taste of warblering on the nesting grounds. Ovenbirds, Northern Waterthrushes, Yellow, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Mourning and Connecticut Warblers all were there. The latter being on everyones "most wanted" list, we spent a couple of hours working for

it, but although we succeeded in hearing its loud song and even glimpsing it occasionally, no one saw it satisfactorily. Afternoon high winds precluded our last ditch efforts and Connecticut was relegated to another day.

The next day found us searching the prairies in the extreme southwestern part of the province. Again Chestnut-collared Longspurs and Yellow-headed Blackbirds were much in evidence along with Upland Sandpipers, but here we were seeking Sprague's Pipits, Gray Partridge and Baird's Sparrows. We found all three species. The pipits' ethereal song flights reminded me of that of the European Skylarks. The pattern, however, differed in geometric design. Skylarks usually ascend very slowly in a direct line, Sprague's Pipit, on the other hand, spiralled 'a la bed spring. The Baird's Sparrows sang from weed tops in the same field as the very similar, but much commoner Savannah Sparrow. Baird's is a particularly desired bird by many of the "birding brethren" so we spent a good hour with them. During the process of "Bairding" we came across a Willet's nest with four huge eggs in it and a pair of drowsy Burrowing Owls.

Our last morning around Winnipeg was directed toward Sharp-tailed Grouse and Connecticut Warbler. Linda and I had found the grouse on a booming ground the day before the tour started, but it was late in the season and the consensus was that we would be lucky if we saw them again --- we were lucky! After a half hour drive we found the dirt road leading to the lek and by 6:00 a.m. we were watching one of four remaining males through the scope. A highly prized lifer grouse was ours before breakfast. After our morning meal, we began the search for the Connecticut Warbler in an area where Dr. Mark had found them breeding in 1980. Before long its song was heard and twelve people headed for the forest. Since it had rained heavily the night before, we were all soon drenched. The loud Witchity, Witchity, Witchity, Witch song came from all around us, and at last we pin-pointed a male singing from the top of an aspen, but before everyone could see the bird it flew off to another song post and the whole process had to be repeated. In the meantime I had heard another bird singing off in another direction and so I departed with a small contingent in search of that individual. Before long it was located. It too was singing from an aspen about 12' above the ground, but unlike the first bird this one turned out to be a "ham". By imitating its loud song I kept the bird constantly in view. Indeed at one juncture it became so insensed that it literally sang back at me from no more than seven feet away while in full view. During this astounding performance it paced up and down a branch with tail held high like an Ovenbird. It was an excellent show permitting one and all to see the hyacinthine-gray head and white monocled eye surmounting a primrose abdomen. On the way back to the bus, I glanced at Marilyn Crane who was sporting a mile wide smile. It was obviously a personal triumph for her.

The next morning we flew north to Churchill. Our plane was met by our local leader and resident naturalist, Bonnie Chartier, who knew where virtually everything was. While everyone was converting into arctic clothing at the hotel, I noticed that Bonnie and Dave were in a barely concealed state of excitement. My inquiries divulged that two days before our arrival Ms. Chartier had located seven Ross' Gulls, the first for the year, and they were hanging around the same breeding area made famous in 1980. What a break! By this time the troops were pouring out for our first arctic venture. Did I say that it was snowing, and that Hudson's Bay was frozen solid, and that the wind chill factor was hovering around 0° fahrenheit? Twas true.

Because the bird is so rare, its location was temporarily being withheld from all but a favored few until the nesting season was safely underway. So we were sworn to secrecy before proceeding to the hallowed grounds. Once the van was halted we all trundled out into the snow flurries and along a dike between two solidly frozen lakes. On the way we passed paired Oldsquaws, Arctic Loons, Bonaparte's Gulls and Pintails. Finally the entourage halted and Bonnie quickly found a Ross' Gull. Since there were eight or nine scopes among us, we soon had the bird under close scrutiny.

Now I have been listening to other birders personal experiences with this bird for several years now. Those lucky enough to see the Massachusetts individual in 1975 will go on about it and the event as though it was a sort of birding Woodstock. They drone incessantly about its singular beauty and great rarity ad nauseum. Let them now be fore warned. We saw that day, not one dingy plumaged winter bird, but the quintessence of gulldom, and six of them at that. Now I possess my own Ross' Gull sagas with which to counterattack. The bird is elegantly beautiful. Flushed with deep rosy pink, it flits ternlike over the ice like an arctic spirit. Only the small black bill, eye and necklace act as a counterpoint to its wraithlike appearance. Six Ross' Gulls fed there along with several Bonaparte's and a couple of Sabine's Gulls. What a marvellous selection to behold in a single scope eyepiece. The whole scene was like a fairytale and all of us were abrim with good feelings. Only David and Bonnie had seen the bird before so it was lifer time all the way round. Outside of Siberia, Churchill is the only known nesting site of this bird, and this is its third year there.

Somewhat anticlimatically our next stop was the Churchill Dump where we sorted out half a dozen Thayer's Gulls from the many Herring Gulls present. They were in several assorted plumages and at long last I was able to convince myself that they really do exist. Other denizens of the dump included Greater Scaup, Whistling Swans and a solitary Iceland Gull.

We spent four days at Churchill and saw Ross' Gulls everyday. Birding in the treeline near town turned up a nice assortment of birds. Harris Sparrows sang from the stunted Black Spruce trees, and Bohemian Waxwings popped up onto their spires. Hoary Redpolls were frequently encountered feeding in the newly blooming willows from which Blackpoll and Yellow Warblers sang.

Out on the tundra Short-eared Owls and Rough-legged Hawks patrolled daily for lemmings. We birders, however, sought a different prey, the Smith's Longspur. We found it singing from boulders in several places. The name Golden Longspur would not be remiss for this bird. In breeding garb it is singularly beautiful. Lapland Longspurs were scarce, but Linda managed to locate a pair which gave us a total of three Longspur species for the trip. An hour was spent watching a pair of Merlins at their nest. Marilyn and Linda photographed the "jack" Merlin as it performed sentry duty. Several beautiful slides resulted. We discovered the first known Wandering Tattler for Manitoba as it rested along the Churchill River.

A half day spent among the rocks at Cape Merry probably epitomizes Churchill. Thousands of birds moved through a tapestry of water, sky and ice as we watched. There were great flocks of yodelling Oldsquaws and Common Eiders. Scoters abounded, mostly Black. A magnificent King Eider floated by among the ice packs. Whistling Swans, Red-throated and Arctic Loons, Parasitic Jaegers, Glaucous and Thayer's Gulls all milled about before us. A few yards behind us two Long-tailed Jaegers sat quietly on the tundra oblivious to our presence. More pictures were obtained.

During our ten day trip to Manitoba we recorded 208 species, more than half the total provincial list but more than that we experienced an exquisite birding experience.

A GLIMPSE AT THE BIRDS OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA

by Jim Morgan

On April 17 I departed, with mixed emotions, for Southeast Asia. On the one hand I was going to miss about 10 days of the UTC spring migration, but on the other hand I was going to places I had never been before. Though I knew that there would be very little birding time on this particular business trip, surely some exciting moments were ahead of me. I was not to be disappointed.

This was my second trip to SE Asia, the first coming in the fall of 1979 to Hong Kong and The New Territories bordering mainland China.

So I had some knowledge of SE asian birds but this trip would take me much deeper into the tropics, in fact, right on the equator.

After 26 hours of flying, with only two stops, my plane landed in Singapore late at night. A few hours of sleep and then it was off to my first destination of Rumbai, a company village on the Indonesian island of Sumatra. I reached my living quarters at 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon to find I was to meet some people at 7:00 that night. This gave me about two quick hours to sample some of the local village birdlife.

I first encountered the striking black and white Magpie Robin, an old friend from Hong Kong. My next two sightings did not surprise me -- first several Yellow-vented Bulbuls and then the Olive-winged Bulbul. Previous trips to Hong Kong and The Gambia have taught me that species of this large family are bound to be quickly found in numbers in the Old World tropics. I was not ready for my next sighting, which was made on the edge of a heavily wooded area with large thickets intermingled. Here was this large, foot-long, all black bird with a bushy crest on its forehead. My heart skipped a beat when I saw outer tail shafts reaching another foot longer to a pair of twisted rackets at their tips -- it was the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo! I had only recently marvelled at this bird as a picture in my field guides, and now here it was just sitting there for me to study its every feather. This is one fine bird! Everything else seen that afternoon seemed secondary indeed.

During a full slate of meetings on the following day I learned that it was necessary for me to leave for Singapore the following morning. Fortunately I had the evening of this day to sample a bit more of the local birdlife. Along with a birdwatcher from Canada who was on assignment in Sumatra for our company, I set off on foot in the late afternoon down a wooded ravine. I didn't think I could equal the thrill of the previous afternoon but I actually did on seeing the first new species of the day. Here, sitting high up in a tree across the ravine, was this huge black and white bird, about the size of a Texas Wild Turkey. I knew immediately what it was for it had a huge yellowish bill, with an almost grotesque orangish casque on top of the bill. This was the Rhinoceros Hornbill, all 48 inches of an adult male! And just a branch or two away was an immature bird. Seeing this bird at rest is great but watching it fly gracefully and adeptly through heavy forest is something else again!

Other sightings that afternoon and evening included the Southern Pied Hornbill, the Silver-rumped Swift (which has an unusual glossy plumage), numerous Richard's Pipits, a flock of Scaly-breasted Munias, among others. There was one more thrilling sighting as the evening was waning. I spotted a large reddish mammal up in a tree which I thought was probably a monkey. But just as I got it into binocular view it literally flew through the air to a much lower tree. Here was this large, red flying rectangle -- the Giant Red Flying Squirrel! I mean, who is used to seeing a three foot by three foot flying red carpet that calls itself a squirrel? The evening was topped off by watching a family group of Brown Barbets enter single file into their roosting hole high up in a tree.

With a mid-morning plane to catch, my last chance to bird was very early the next morning. This resulted in excellent looks at the Pink-necked Pigeon and the Ashy Wood-Swallow (or Swallow-Shrike). As the sky was overcast and the hour early, light was not ideal and several species went unidentified. I will not forget my last species seen in Rumbai. Not far from my temporary living quarters I spotted a large, long-tailed bird, almost the size of a Brown Jay. The bird was greenish on the back and wing coverts, with a chestnut lower belly and crissum. Most striking was its bright green bill and red skin around the eye. It's manner was sluggish, but deliberate -- a good tip off as to its family. The bird was the Chestnut-bellied Malkoha, a member of the cuckoo family. This bird will always be remembered as a major milestone achieved on my world list of species seen -- number 1,000. What a neat bird to see for this accomplishment!

The next 2½ days were spent in Singapore working and attending meetings. My last meeting was scheduled for a Saturday morning at 10:30, and with an early Monday morning flight home, birding time was going to be very scarce. I got up that Saturday morning early enough to be at the Singapore Botanical Gardens at daybreak. In two hours I saw several new species -- Peaceful Dove, Blue-throated Bee-eater, the beautiful Black-naped Oriole, Phillipine Glossy Starling, Brown-throated Sunbird, plus some other species previously seen in Sumatra or on previous trips to Hong Kong or the Fiji Islands. The common birds most noticeable were the Asian Tree Sparrow, and the Indian and Jungle Mynas.

The Sunday before my departure was my only non-work day of the entire trip and I chose to rise early and spend most of the day in the Bukit Timah Forest Reserve which borders a large forested and lake area called the Water Catchment Area. The rain forest in the reserve was beautiful, with immense tall trees and much in the way of tropical plants and vines. Early morning was frustrating -- many more birds heard than seen. I chased down one intriguing calling bird and finally got good looks at it. It was the beautiful blue and black Asian Fairy-Bluebird. As some large lakes were nearby in the inaccessible water catchment, and since it was also relatively close to the sea, it was not overly surprising to find a perched White-bellied Sea-Eagle, a member of the same genus as the American Bald Eagle.

Other interesting species seen at Bukit Timah were Crested Treeswift (a new family for me), Red-crowned Barbet, the beautiful Crimson-winged Woodpecker, Striped Tit-Babbler, Crimson Sunbird, Olive-backed Sunbird, plus numerous species previously seen elsewhere. Also in abundance were three species of swifts and the Pacific Swallow. A real treat was the leisurely study of a family group of monkeys cavorting in the treetops.

The entire trip netted only about 50 species, of which 24 were lifers. The limited habitat birded was the primary cause for the low species count, as well as the very limited birding time available in a hectic week. But the quality of the species seen will not be forgotten. Over 1,200 species have been recorded in Southeast Asia so I would look forward to a return trip that would allow more birding time and a large variety of habitats. But savor I will the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, the Rhinoceros Hornbill, the Chestnut-bellied Malkoha and the Asian Fairy-Bluebird. And, as I learned long ago, when you try to birdwatch on a business trip you just take what you can get, and enjoy!

A FRIEND IN BRITAIN TAKES ANGLO BIG DAY CROWN

submitted by T. Ben Feltner

In a recent letter from our friend, Bryan Bland, comes word that he and three cohorts now hold Britain's Big Day Record. Big Daying is an American disease that is apparently reaching epidemic proportions in the United Kingdom. Its nice to see Bryan has the crown. The following excerpt comes from an unidentified British magazine:

The weekend of 16/17 May was a significant one for British birdwatchers. Not only was the cover of Radio Times graced by avocets, shelduck, black-tailed godwits, marsh harrier, sandwich terns, ringed plover, black-headed gulls, and Canada geese and B.B.C. viewers on Sunday treated to a series of live transmissions from the Minsmere bird reserve. But on Sunday a new record for the British day list was set - only a week after last year's record was broken.

The Norfolk team of Bryan Bland, Phil Gregory, Nigel Mears, and Pete Milford tallied over 150 species in one day. Of these, 147 were full category A or C species on the British list seen or heard by all members of the four-man team. (For instance, four barnacle geese at Titchwell were discounted because of the likelihood of escapes and a long-eared owl had to be excluded because only three of the team obtained satisfactory views.)

This successful record-breaking attempt was made only a week after the much-publicised contest between two teams representing the Country Life and the Flora and Fauna Preservation Society. On that day the heavily-sponsored Country Life team established a new British record of 146 species by starting their day twitch at midnight on Bempton Cliffs in Yorkshire (aided by image-intensifier night glasses) and travelling several hundred miles in a specially-loaned Porsche car to embrace the best birding spots in Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk.

What makes the Norfolk team's achievement in bettering this particularly remarkable is that they confined their activities to Norfolk.

(Though, as it happened, four species were inadvertently seen just over the border at one point and a light-hearted debate ensued as to whether observer or observed had to have one foot in the county.) Moreover their successful bid was undertaken on a day which was given the official thumbs down of 'nothing about' by the ornithological cognoscenti, and, unlike previous teams, the new record-holders found all their own birds (with no assistance en route from local guides who had areas staked out). The result was the complete hat-trick of day-list records: for Norfolk, for any county, and for All Britain.

The foursome (all staunch supporters of the Norfolk Naturalists Trust) were not sponsored and undertook their bid purely for fun - and to prove their contention that Norfolk always has been and still is the county for birds and birders and that it is not necessary to visit the much-vaunted Minsmere for the best day's birding. For a really competitive alternative the team recommend the senior county trust's reserve at Cley, though they admit to starting their own day out with woodcock and nightjar in the Brecks at dawn and finishing with barn owl at Hickling by moonlight, encountering en route spoonbill at Snettisham, pied flycatcher at Holme, black tern at Titchwell, Temminck's stint at Cley, and Cetti's warbler at Strumpshaw.

The way seems now set for a Norfolk v Suffolk challenge in 1982.

CLEARING HOUSE RULES

1. Report birds seen in Brazoria, Chambers, Ft. Bend, Galveston, Harris, and Jefferson Counties.
2. Species should be submitted in checklist order (PLEASE!) and should include the location, number of birds seen, date, and observers. A specific location, even a county, is better than "UTC".
3. The Clearing House editor should receive the lists by the 3rd of the next month, which means that it may be necessary to mail them before the month is up. If time escapes you, you may call in noteworthy sightings. The editor is Wesley Cureton, 6623 Grovewood, Houston, Texas 77008, 862-5255.
4. Field notes will be required for:
 - a. Birds that are very rare on that date (as shown on the checklist by a series of small dots). These birds will be underlined in the Clearing House. Occasionally, if space is short, notes on easily identified very rare species might be omitted from the Clearing House but turned over to the records committee.
 - b. Birds that have no frequency on that date (blank space on the checklist) and vagrant species (single large dots). These species will be capitalized in the Clearing House.
 - c. Birds that are accidental (an A after the name and one large dot) and birds that have never been recorded before. These species will be capitalized and underlined and listed in the main body of the Clearing House; there will be no special reports. The notes must still be accepted by the records committee, however, before they are considered valid and included in the next checklist.
 - d. These hard-to-identify species any time they are seen: yellow and black rail (except on buggy trips), jacana, Baird's Sandpiper, all jaegers identified as to species, lesser nighthawk,

empidonax flycatchers identified as to species (except by voice), fish crow (except by voice or near Sabine River), Bewick's Wren, Western Meadowlark (except by voice), western tanager and black-headed grosbeak (except adult males), and Bachman's Sparrow. If notes are not necessary, write "voice" or "adult male" with your record.

5. It is not necessary to keep submitting notes for a bird that stays at the same place for a long time. After it has been described the first month, just write "previously described" after the other facts when submitting it again. Notes may also be submitted describing unusual behavior or habitat.
6. The most valuable field notes are those written during actual observation and before consulting a guide. Paragraphs are better than charts because they take up less space. Please write legibly. The notes should be thorough but also brief, omitting such details as what the observer was doing when he observed the bird. The following facts constitute a good description:
 - a. Specific location and habitat
 - b. Date, time, and length of observation
 - c. Detailed description of what the bird looked like. When describing size it is good to compare the bird to species that may have been nearby. Include such details as eyeline, cap, lore, whisker, wingbars, rump, crissum, color of beak and legs, wing length, and shape of tail. If you failed to see an important mark, don't be embarrassed to say so.
 - d. Voice and behavior, including flight pattern
 - e. Quality of light, distance, and optical equipment
 - f. How you distinguished the bird from similar species
 - g. Your experience with this and similar species
 - h. Other observers with you and any who might have independently identified the bird

MINUTES OF THE OG MEETING, AUGUST 6, 1981

Ron Braun opened the meeting. Linda Walsh reported a balance in the treasury of \$2,549.85. Ron presented Certificates of Appreciation to the many OG members who contributed in special ways to OG functions last year. The art prints donated by Jim Beaty were made available for viewing (see OG Art Print Auction, THE SPOONBILL, July 1981). Jim Morgan brought news that Hale Ranch State Park is almost open. The OG has prepared a checklist of the birds of the park and we may have an opportunity to do the same for the new state park on Lake Houston. More information should be available at a later date.

Bob Behrstock introduced the evening's speaker, Dr. Falco A. "Karl" Eaglet (we usually know him as Tony Gallucci), who delivered a comedy monologue about his successful attempt to break the July Big Day Record in Texas. Tony's guise as a scatter-brained Mexican naturalist with a drinking problem was hilarious.

Following Tony's show, Ron adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by Randy Pinkston

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made on the Upper Texas Coast. How to read the CH: Species: Location--(how many) date, observers. Those common species which can be easily identified and are widely distributed in the UTC will also be listed, followed by the number of reports, with the lowest and highest number of individuals seen in parentheses, i.e. (1-40). Noteworthy sightings will be underlined, capitalized, or both, according to their status. All observations reported below must be accepted by the Checklist Committee before they are considered valid and included in the next checklist.

Grebe, Pied-billed: Freeport--(1)19,RP
 Pelican, White: Chambers Co.--(1)12,R
 Cormorant, Olivaceous: 6,25,10.
 Frigatebird, Magnificent: West Bay--(14)19,MAU; Surfside--(1)19,MAU
 Galv--(1 imm.)25,SW
 Heron, Great Blue: 4,5,3,10,50.
 Heron, Green: 6,1,1,1,5.
 Heron, Little Blue: 5,100,3.
 Egret, Cattle: 100,21,100,50,500.
 Egret, Reddish: 1,1,1.
 Egret, Great: 20,2,5,75,10,60.
 Egret, Snowy: 11,10,15,25,30.
 Heron, Louisiana: 8,2,15,20,10.
 Night Heron, Black-crowned: Galv--(2)25,KW
 Night Heron, Yellow-crowned: 3,1,2,1,1.
 Bittern, Least: Chambers Co.--(1)12,R
 Stork, Wood: Chambers Co.--(1)12,R,RP
 Ibis, White-faced: 40,75,75.
 Ibis, White: Chambers Co.--(2,000)12,RP,R; 2 other reports (2,8)
 Spoonbill, Roseate: 4 reports (10-100)
 Duck, Mottled: 2 reports (2,10)
 Pintail, Common: Galv--(3)25,KW
 Teal, Blue-winged: Chambers Co.--(3)12,R; Freeport--(2)19,RP
 Vulture, Turkey: 3 reports (1-3)
 Vulture, Black: 3 reports (1-3)
 Hawk, Red-tailed: Hockley--(1)4,SW.....see notes
 Hawk, Red-shouldered: 4 reports (1-2)
 Hawk, Broad-winged: Chambers Co.--(1)28,WC.....see notes
 Hawk, Swainson's: Astrodome area--(2)all month,SW; Jacintoport--(1-2)9-22,CB; Alvin--(1)19,RP
 Hawk, Marsh: Harris Co.--(1)4,KW
 Bobwhite: 7 reports (1-30)
 Rail, King: Chambers Co.--(1)12,R
 Rail, Clapper: 2 reports (1,3)
 Gallinule, Purple: Chambers Co.--(10)12,R
 Gallinule, Common: 3 reports (1-5)
 Coot, American: Mercury Dr.--(1)23,WC
 Plover, Semipalmated: Mercury Dr.--(1)23,25,WC; Galv--(2)25,SW
 Plover, Wilson's: Chambers Co.--(4)12,R
 Killdeer: 5 reports (10-30)
 Plover, Black-bellied: Chambers Co.--(4)12,R; San Luis Pass--(2)19,RP.
 Turnstone, Ruddy: Chambers Co.--(1)12,R
 Curlew, Long-billed: Chambers Co.--(7)12,R; Galv--(2)25,SW,KW
 Willet: 4 reports (1-50)
 Yellowlegs, Greater: Freeport--(10)19,RP; Mercury Dr.--(5)23,25,WC
 Yellowlegs, Lesser: Freeport--(1,000)19,RP; 4 other reports (5-100)
 Sandpiper, Pectoral: Freeport--(2)19,RP
 Sandpiper, Baird's: Lake Houston--(1)25,R.....see notes
 Sandpiper, Least: 3 reports (1-50)
 Dowitcher, Long-billed: Freeport--(50)19,RP; Mercury Dr.--(3)23,WC
 Sandpiper, Stilt: Mercury Dr.--(180)23,25,WC; Freeport--(12)19,RP
 Sandpiper, Semipalmated: Freeport--(5)19,RP
 Sandpiper, Western: Freeport--(250)19,RP; 2 other reports (3-75)
 Godwit, Marbled: W. Galv--(14)19,MAU
 Sanderling: Galv--(15)25,KW
 Avocet, American: Mercury Dr.--(1)1,(21)23,25,WC
 Stilt, Black-necked: Brazoria & Galv. Cos.--(2,000)19,RP; 4 other reports (2-40)
 Gull, Laughing: 4 reports (2-200)
 Tern, Gull-billed: Chambers Co.--(2)12,R; Kemah--(1)25,SW
 Tern, Forster's: 4 reports (1-50)
 Tern, Common: Galv--(2)25,SW
 Tern, Least: 4 reports (4-75)
 Tern, Royal: 2 reports (60,100)

Tern, Sandwich: Quintana--(5)19,RP page 15
Tern, Caspian: Quintana--(20)19,RP
Tern, Black: 4 reports (10-200)
Skimmer, Black: 3 reports (5-40)
Dove, Rock: 4 reports (10-100)
Dove, Mourning: 8 reports (1-200)
Dove, Inca: 4 reports (1-4)
Cuckoo, Yellow-billed: 13 reports (1-20)
Owl, Screech: Houston--(1)16,19,WC; (1)21,JM; (1)12,RP; (1)11,HAS;
Manvel--(2)26,KW
Owl, Barred: Armand Bayou--(2)15,KW
Nighthawk, Common: 7 reports (1-20)
NIGHTHAWK, LESSER: Anahuac NWR--(1)12,R.....see notes
Swift, Chimney: 8 reports (1-50)
Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: Houston--(1)26,GC; (1)28,HAS; Lake Hous-
ton--(2)12,RP
Hummingbird, Rufous: Edith Moore Sanctuary--(1)29,HAS
Kingfisher, Belted: Chambers Co--(1)12,R
Woodpecker, Pileated: 4 reports (1-6)
Woodpecker, Red-bellied: 6 reports (2-10)
Woodpecker, Red-headed: Lake Houston--(2)25,R; Harris & Chambers Co-
(5)12,RP; Northshore--(2)all month,CB
Woodpecker, Hairy: Bellaire--(adults with 3 or 4 young)May 29,DM
Woodpecker, Downy: 8 reports (1-8)
Kingbird, Eastern: 5 reports (1-30)
Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed: 7 reports (1-100)
Flycatcher, Great Crested: 3 reports (1-3)
Flycatcher, Acadian: White Park--(2)28,WC; Lake Houston--(3)12,RP
Pewee, Eastern: Lake Houston--(1)12,RP
Lark, Horned: Freeport--(1)19,RP
Swallow, Barn: Chambers Co.--(15)12,R; NE Harris Co--(20)25,R;
W.Galv--(7)25,SW; Houston--(1)26,RP & JC
Swallow, Cliff: Katy--(6)3,SW
Martin, Purple: 8 reports (6-30)
Jay, Blue: 7 reports (1-50)
Crow, Common: 6 reports (3-100)
Chickadee, Carolina: 4 reports (1-30)
Titmouse, Tufted: 2 reports (2-30)
Nuthatch, Brown-headed: Yard--(1)3,21,JM; Lake Houston--(2)12,RP
Wren, Carolina: 6 reports (1-50)
Mockingbird, Northern: 7 reports (1-20)
Thrasher, Brown: Rice U.--(1)17,SW
Robin, American: Houston--(1)5,E; (4)all month, GC
Thrush, Wood: White Oak Bayou--(2)all month, WC
Bluebird, Eastern: Lake Houston--(2)12,RP; Brazoria Co--(2)19,E
Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: Houston--(1)26,RP & JC; White Park--(2)28,WC
Shrike, Loggerhead: 6 reports (1-21)
Starling: 5 reports (5-200)
Vireo, White-eyed: 3 reports (1-15)
Vireo, Red-eyed: Lake Houston--(1)12,RP
Warbler, Black-and-white: Chambers Co--(1)12,R; White Park--(2)12,
RP; Manvel--(1)18,19,KW
Warbler, Pine: White Park--(3)22,WC
Warbler, Kentucky: Lake Houston--(1)12,RP
Yellowthroat, Common: Chambers Co--(3)12,R
Warbler, Hooded: White Park--(1)28,WC
Sparrow, House: 5 reports (1-100)
Meadowlark, Eastern: 6 reports (2-40)
Meadowlark, Western: Galv--(2)25,KW.....how identified?
Blackbird, Red-winged: 5 reports (5-200)
Oriole, Orchard: 7 reports (1-3)
Grackle, Great-tailed: 2 reports (1-300)
Grackle, Common: 4 reports (1-200)
Cowbird, Brown-headed: 5 reports (1-50)
Tanager, Summer: Lake Houston--(2)12,RP
Cardinal: 8 reports (4-100)
Grosbeak, Blue: Lake Houston--(1)25,R
Bunting, Indigo: Lake Houston--(1)25,R
Bunting, Painted: 3 reports (1-5)
Dickcissel: Houston--(1)26,RP
Sparrow, Henslow's: SE Houston--(1)3,4,NP
Sparrow, Seaside: Chambers Co--(30)12,R

Clearing House Contributors, July, 1981: CB-Charles Browning; DM-Da-
vid Marrack; E-Ena Spaulding & John Bargman; GC-Glenn Cureton; HAS-
Houston Audubon Soc.; JC-Jerry Caraviotis; JM-Jim Morgan; KW-Kris
Wilson; MAu-Mike Austin; NP-Noel Pettingell; R-Don & Lee Richardson,
Gil & Linda Douglas; RP-Randy Pinkston; SW-Steve Williams; WC-Wesley
Cureton.

Red-tailed Hawk: It is possible that this species is extending its summer range. On July 3 & 4 I saw one near Hempstead, two at Brenham separately, and one at Columbus. I have never seen them this near the coast in summer before in so many places.

- Steve Williams -

Broad-winged Hawk: Small, chunky buteo with black-and-white banded tail and dark edge to primaries. Seen only a couple of seconds overhead while I was driving.

- Wesley Cureton -

Baird's Sandpiper: Seen at Lake Houston on FM 1960, north side of the road and west side of the lake about 200 meters from the west shore. In flight the bird showed long pointed wings and a darkish back; the rump was dark as well. When the bird landed on the cement shore, black legs were noted and the back had a very scaled appearance. Wing tips seemed long while the bird was at rest, but a comparison was not made with the length of the tail. The color was quite warm and buffy, especially the darker part of the upper breast.

- Don Richardson -

LESSER NIGHTHAWK; Appeared smaller than a common nighthawk and out of proportion. Wings slightly shorter in proportion to common nighthawk and not quite as pointed. I am familiar with the common nighthawk's white mark being about 1/2 the distance from wrist to tip of wing. This bird had the white spot clearly 1/4 of the distance from tip to wrist. The bird was flying in typical nighthawk fashion (with a short glide occasionally). It is my experience that during the short glide the common nighthawk assumes a sharp dihedral, while this bird glided with absolutely flat wings. Flew east over the road to the john at the southwest corner of Anahuac Refuge---low, never more than 25 ft. He appeared to be traveling, not hunting.

- Don Richardson -

TREE SWALLOW: Seen on June 20 at Sun Oil property, Bolivar Peninsula, about noon. Two small swallows were observed hunting insects over a small pond in the marsh area of the property. The swallows showed a pure snow white underside from the bill to the undertail coverts. The tail was notched but not deeply forked.

- Don Richardson -

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Send material for THE SPOONBILL by 25th of month to:
Randy Pinkston, 5447 Kuldell, Houston 77096

667-1334

Send bird records for Clearing House before 3rd of month to:
Wesley Cureton, 6623 Grovewood, Houston 77008

862-5255

Send requests for OG information, checklists, maps to:
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723-8559