

2 THE SPOONBILL

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

RARE BIRD ALERT by Jack Gillette

About 25 forms from the June Spoonbill have been received. These people will be on the 1976-77 alert system. I was very much surprised that some active birders failed to sign up. David Dauphin is currently making up the call list for publication in the roster. If you want to be included and did not mail the form to me, call David now. His telephone is 422-7536. (David is the new alert chairman, for Sue McConnell had to resign before she got started, as she and her husband will be moving from this area in the next few months. --Ed.)

COMING EVENTS

Thursday Aug. 5 Regular meeting of the OG, 7:30 pm, Fonde Recreation Center, Memorial Dr. at Sabine. Bob Moulton, our program chairman, knowing how so many of us have enjoyed birding at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge (the site of our upcoming September 25th field trip), has asked Russ Clapper, manager at Anahuac, to tell us about activities at the refuge. As Bob says: "We all have special memories of Anahuac, such as Peregrines suddenly stooping on a flock of shorebirds, and just as suddenly disappearing empty taloned--Shoveller Pond alive one time with Purple Gallinules, and another time with Fulvous Tree Ducks--almost a dozen yellow rails on just one buggy ride--and many other memories too numerous to recount". Mr. Clapper will speak particularly on "Involving the Public in the Objectives of Wildlife Sanctuaries", and the subject will lead right into a discussion after his talk. Come prepared with your questions on Anahuac and he will answer them as can be done only by one who knows and loves the sanctuary from years of devoted work there.

Sunday Aug. 29 Regular OG field trip. David Dauphin is planning this as a "beginning" trip, the beginning of the season, the beginning of birding with the OG for many of our new members, and he particularly invites the beginning birders among us to join us. This is being planned as a half-day trip, and details will be in next month's SPOONBILL.

Thursday Sep. 2 OG seminar on "Shorebirds", presented by T. Ben Feltner, 7:30, Fonde Recreation Center, Memorial Drive at Sabine. This is the second of our study seminars that Marilyn Crane has planned, and, with our proximity to the coast, this one should be especially interesting.

AROUND AND ABOUT

** California. Florence Bennett, a new subscriber from Walnut Creek, California, birded in our area in April and "so appreciated the kindness and assistance of Glenn and Les Cureton, Jim Morgan, David Dauphin, Marilyn Crane, Larry and Martha Ballard, all of whom I birded with at various times at High Island. I saw 22 species of warblers there!" She says she will be most happy to assist anyone who is planning a trip to the San Francisco area. Her address is PO Box 4578, Walnut Creek, Ca. 94596, and her telephone number is 415 933-3781.

** Wimberley. A letter from Margaret Dunlap of Wimberley gives the good news that a Green Violet-eared Hummingbird is again being seen, though paying only occasional morning visits to her feeder, and seeming to headquartered at the place next door. He was definitely identified as a Green Violet-ear May 22, though the Dunlaps are doubtful this is last year's bird--mannerisms are different, song similar, but not the same, seems "wilder, more skittish, more wary". This one has been observed in a "magnificent courtship pendulum some 20' deep, high above his favorite oak tree".

The Dunlaps, though not seeing more than 1 Violet-ear at the feeders at anytime, are suspecting there may be two of the hummers, and reminds that "Dr. Albert and his son, of Alice, along with two other visitors, binoculars in hand, were arguing last summer about which tree contained the violet-ear, when each bird flew from the two controversial trees, and whipped off the cliff into the sunset together".

She has had interesting reports from other people in the Wimberley area who report having seen "big, different looking dark hummers in the past several years", and she is "beginning to feel that evidence is building that this species perhaps is not an accidental visitor.....but perhaps a summer visitor who may have been coming to the area since 1969 or even longer."

(Editor's comment: Prior to the Freeport Christmas Count, Tom Collins of Lake Jackson inserted a notice in the newspaper, asking people with hummers at their feeders to call him. The response was such that on Count Day, observers went to addresses given, and an unprecedented 4 species of hummers were added to the Freeport count. If some such thing could be done in Wimberley next summer, who knows what might turn up!)

** Surveys. Josiephine Wilkin is sharing a newspaper clipping sent her from Ellen Greer, an ONC member residing in Massachusetts. The article is about the Annual Breeding Bird Surveys of the Fish & Wildlife Service (these surveys cover the Continental States and several Canadian Provinces). It was interesting to note that a summary of the 1975 surveys showed the 5 most common species to be the Red-wing blackbird, starling, house sparrow, common grackle, and American robin. Of these, the starling and house sparrow are not native species. Some species showed a "highly significant" increase between 1968 and 1975, led by the Rose-breasted Grosbeak at 9% per year, and others showed a "highly significant" decline, led by black-capped chickadee, western tanager and lark bunting, 9%. Brown-headed cowbirds showed a 3% increase, but when we look around us it surely seems more! Some of our warblers, such as the northern Parula, chestnut-sided and pine, showed an increase, while the yellow warbler declined. (The OG is not at this time active in the surveys, though some of our members have joined in the Fish-eating Bird surveys. Perhaps we should investigate this in the future, as a service project of the OG).

PLACES TO GO

** As our checklist shows, shorebird activity starts to pick up in July after the June doldrums, and will show an increase in August. So, perhaps Galveston and Bolivar would be interesting right now to get the early arrivals.

** The checklist also shows that there are 9 warblers that nest in our area: Prothonotary, Swainson's, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated, Pine, Kentucky, Common Yellow-throat, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Hooded, and three suspected nesters: Black & White, Louisiana Waterthrush and American Redstart. Eisenhower Park is said to be a good place to look for warblers in summer, but try any of your favorite woodsy spots. (See C-H notes for a possible future addition, the Worm-eating, to that list of nesting warblers).

** Right now you can have fun checking up on how many young birds (chicks, fledglings, immatures, whatever you want to call them) you can see next time you are out birding. July 5, P&MJ, while scanning the marshes on the southside of the approach to the Surfside bridge, were amused at the antics of some gawky little fuzzy willets, a clapper rail chick almost as fuzzy, and two knee-high (plover's knees!) Wilson's plovers, who darted in swift circles around the parent plover, who seemed to be standing on guard, keeping a wary eye out, while the offspring went a-venturing. A stop at Maner Lake gave us a perfect view of a Least Bittern with a young-un, not more than 30' from the road, with neither bird paying the least attention to a couple of birders, nor the fishermen on the bridge. One immature Jacana was feeding close to three adults, and a young Purple Gallinule was a puzzle until his identy was finally worked out. About a mile from Maner Lake, north, a mother Bobwhite carefully led her four very tiny chicks across the road in front of our van. The chicks were about 1 1/2" long and were miniatures of the adult! Also in that vicinity, the rookery at Eagle Nest Lake (across the road from Maner Lake) was crowded with Cattle Egret nests. Continuing on up to the Smithers Lake area, on the east side of the square made by Rabb's Prairie road, an adult White-tailed Kite and three immatures were perched in several trees, and were joined by a second adult as we drove away. We have seldom failed to see a White-tailed Kite in this area, and were glad to see that our chances of finding them were going to continue good.

(It has been two years since we had a map of the Smithers Lake area, so we are repeating it in this issue)

CLEARING HOUSE, June, 1976

(How to read the C-H: Name of bird: (how many), date, location, observers)

Loon, Common: (1)6, Groves, Texas, DeK--see notes
Grebe, Eared: (15)3, 6, (8)10, (5)13, 20, 24, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD--see notes
Pelican, White: (100+)3, San Jacinto State Park, D&JD
Cormorant, Olivaceous: (50+)3, (10+)6, 13, 20, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD
Nightheron, Yellow-crowned: (1)12, 20, 22, 30, Memorial Park, C's
Stork, Wood: (2)13, (50+)15, (9)20, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD
Ibis, White-faced: (10+)5, W. Galveston, D&JD
Ibis, White: (25+)5, W. Galveston, D&JD
Spoonbill, Roseate: (50+)5, W. Galveston, (4-6)3-20, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD
Mallard: (3)20, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD
Teal, Green-winged: (1)3, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD--see notes
Scaup, Lesser: (4)3, (5)6, (3)10, 24, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD
Duck, Ruddy: (10+)3, 6, (3)10, 24, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD
Kite, White-tailed: (1)5, Rabb's Prairie Road, D&JD; (1)imm, Southwest Houston, DeK
 " , Swallow-tailed: (1)18, Lake Jackson, SC--see notes
 " , Mississippi: (1)all month, Lake Jackson, T&SC; (1)5, Rabb's Prairie Road, D&JD--see notes
 Hawk, Swainson's: (1)3, Lake Jackson, TC, (1)22, Houston, T&SC; (1)14, Houston, TBF; (1)14, 22, Space Center, RK; (1)16, Southwest Houston, DeK; (1)26, Mykawa Road, C's; (1)2, 5, 7, Baytown, D&JD --see notes
 Caracara: (1)1-4, 7, 9, 11, 15, 18, 28, 30, Wilcrest Road, DeK
 Gallinule, Purple: (1)10, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD
 Dunlin: (2)9, Galveston, PJ--see notes
GODWIT, MARBLED: (2)5, Bolivar, (4)5, W. Galveston, D&JD--see notes
 Avocet, American: (50+)5, Bolivar, D&JD
GULL, GLAUCOUS: (1)9, Galveston, PJ--see notes
Gull, Herring: (4)24, Baytown, Tunnel, D&JD
 Dove, White-winged: (1)11, Space Center, RK; (15+)Galveston (one nesting), D&JD; (1)27, yard, J&BH (also heard other days)
DOVE, RINGED TURTLE: (3 adult, 1 imm)3, (1)8, (2)18, (3)26, Bellaire, P&MJ--see notes
 Dove, Inca: (1)26, yard, P&MJ; (1)26, yard, D&JD
 Cuckoo, Yellow-billed: (1)10, Memorial Park, DeK; (2)17, 29, Space Center, RK
NIGHTHAWK, LESSER: (1)19, Memorial Park, DeK--see notes
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: (1)all month, T&SC; (1)2-24, Memorial Park, C's--see notes; (1)25, Spring Creek Park, C's
 Kingfisher, Belted: (1)25, (2)28, Spring Creek Park, C's
 Flicker, Common (yellow-shafted): (2)5, 30, (1)8, Memorial Park, C's
 Woodpecker, Red-headed: (1)17, Space Center, RK; (1)22, 30, Memorial Park, C's; (1)25, 28, Spring Creek Park, C's
 Flycatcher, Great-crested: (1)8, yard, PJ; (1)27, yard, J&BH
Swallow, Cliff: (25+)5, Sugarland, D&JD--see notes
Nuthatch, Brown-headed: (1)17, Memorial Park, DeK--see notes
WREN, BEWICK'S: (1)2, yard, T&SC--see notes
 " , Carolina: (2)18-20, yard, P&MJ
Thrasher, Brown: (1)29, yard, C's--see notes
 Robin, American: (1)all month (nesting)yaFd, TBF
 Thrush, Wood: (2 singing)all month, yard, J&BH
 Vireo, Red-eyed: (1)28, Spring Creek Park, C's
 " , YELLOW-GREEN: (1)2, yard, SC--see notes
 Warbler, Swainson's: (I heard)all month, Memorial Park, (I heard)28, Spring Creek Park
 " , Northern Parula: (1-2)5-13, Memorial Park, (1)25, (2)28, Spring Creek Park, C's
 " , Kentucky: (2 fledglings)25, Spring Creek Park, C's
 " , Hooded: (1)5-22, Memorial Park, (1)28, Spring Creek Park, C's
 Oriole, Orchard: (1)5, Memorial Park, C's
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: (5+)13, Baytown Tunnel, D&JD
 Sparrow, Henslow's: (2)26, Mykawa Road, D&JD, C's; (4)27, Mykawa Road, P&MJ
 " , Lark: (4)28, Addicks, DeK

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS

T&SC - Tom and Sherry Collins; C's - Wesley, Glenn and Penny Cureton; D&JD - David and Jan Dauphin; DeK - Debbie and Cindy DeKeyser; TBF - T. Ben Feltner; J&BH - Jean and Bill Harwell; P&MJ - Paul and Margaret Jones; RK - Randy Korotev.

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES

Common Loon: Seen near the high bridge over the Groves-Bridge City highway. The bird was molting. First observed floating low in the water. Cheeks, throat and belly white. Top of head, back of neck and back dark. White ring around neck. Also, approached the bird while he sat on mudflat; he did not fly until our dogs frightened him. He called twice and pushed on his belly across the mud and dove under water, then surfaced approximately 15 feet away. Light: good. Distance: 150' to as close as 2'. Binoculars: 10x50. --Debbie & Cindy DeKeyser

Grebe, Eared: Males and females seen at 15-150 yards in poor to excellent light with 10x50 binoculars and 15-60x telescope. Males had thin necks, dark grey to black crested head. Neck, back white to light grey below. Most males had bright orange eartuffs. Females were washed out in coloration but had thin necks and slightly upturned bills. These birds have been observed at this location since Nimmons reported them in June, 1975. The nest I reported last month was seen again on June 2nd. It had been destroyed with no signs of broken eggshells. --David Dauphin

Mallard: Two males and one female seen at 30 yards, with 15-60x telescope in excellent light. Males have green heads, light collars, reddish breasts, light backs and black rumps. Female has mottled orange bill, mottled brown coloring, blue speculum bordered front and back with white. --David Dauphin (C-H Ed. note: These are apparently the same birds that Dauphin has been observing for the past several months.)

Teal, Green-winged: One drake seen at 40 yards in good light with 15-60x telescope. Rusty head with green patch. White patch in front of wing. Grey, washed-out looking body. --David Dauphin

Kite, Swallow-tailed: Details given to me by Paula Haddox who also saw the bird with me last year. Has a white head and body. Wings were white on the leading edge, black on the trailing edge. Had a deeply forked, black, swallow-shaped tail. Seen flying low over trees on Narcissus St. in Lake Jackson. --Sherry Collins

Hawk, Swainson's: These hawks were reported by 6 observers (or parties) during June at the various locations indicated. In this case, it is not felt that it is necessary to publish each individual set of details. Apparently, there is an unusual number of this species remaining in the UTC for the summer. --C-H editor

Dunlin: Small birds standing on 1 leg at water's edge. Black bill with slight droop at tip. Dark, wide median stripe through top of head. White eye ring. Back rusty with light and dark mottling. Breast white with streaking. Belly solid black. Photographed in good light at about 30'. --T. Paul Jones (David Deifik sent a note that he had observed a Dunlin at East Beach in Galveston on May 28th. --C-H editor)

GODWIT, MARBELED: All mottled brown birds with upturned bills seen in excellent light with 15-60x telescopes at 50-100 yards. --David Dauphin

GULL, GLAUCOUS: Large white gull floating about 20 yards offshore at South Jetties, Galveston. Very large light colored bill, with reddish spot on lower mandible. Eyes yellow. Tips of wing did not extend beyond end of tail. Tips of wings and tail light sandy colored. Remainder of bird white. Was larger than other gulls on shore, which included some Herring Gulls. The Glaucous Gull swam further offshore while I was observing it. Observed for about 2 minutes in good light and on rather calm sea. --T. Paul Jones

DOVE, RINGED-TURTLE: These doves are part of a colony that was released in our neighborhood in 1972. They have nested each year successfully since then. See SPONIBILL, Sept., 1973, et seq. --T. Paul Jones

NIGHTHAWK, LESSER: Observed the bird on June 9 in Memorial Park. I heard this night hawk a split second before I saw it and knew that it did not sound like a Common Nighthawk. The typical falcon-shaped bird was flying just over the tops of the trees. I could not distinguish the position of white in the wings as being different than on the Common, or that it was smaller in size than the Common. The bird was making a trilling sort of call. I went home and played my record of the call of the Common and the Lesser, and the bird I heard and saw sounded like the Lesser recording. Light: good - early morning. Distance: 35-40 feet. No binoculars. --Debbie DeKeyser

Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: On June 24th, a female, which I had seen in the area since May 23rd, was seen feeding a fledgling that peeped plaintively. No male was ever seen. Checklist gives this species as a rare but regular nester in the UTC. --Wesley Cureton

Swallow, Cliff: All birds seen in poor light as they darted from under bridge and back. Bridge located on US 59 at Oyster Creek. Birds had pale rumps, square tails and dark throats. --David Dauphin

Nuthatch, Brown-headed: Observed in Memorial Park in poor to fair light during a rain shower with 10x50 binoculars at about 30'. In a flock of titmice could be seen a silhouette of a small bird with a long thin bill and "no tail" appearance. In a better light, the bird was light underneath; above, brown head with white patch on hape and bluish-gray back. He was creeping along branches of a pine tree. --Debbie DeKeyser

WREN, BEWICK'S: This wren was seen in our back yard after a strong, wet cool front of the night before. Observed white eye-line, white breast and belly, and white barred outer tail feathers. Saw it sitting on a fence for about 15 seconds at about 20' in good afternoon sunlight with 7x35 and 7x50 binoculars. --Tom and Sherry Collins

Thrasher, Brown: Shape and size (approx.) of Mockingbird. Upper parts reddish brown, breast streaked with dark brown. Because of dingy (not white) breast beneath streaks, dark eyes and incomplete feathering on face appeared to be an immature bird. Distance: 3-20 feet, no binoculars. --Wesley, Glenn and Penny Cureton

VIREO, YELLOW-GREEN: Seen in our front yard on June 2nd after a strong cool front. First observed without binoculars and noted vireo shape and actions. The bird was slowly walking along a horizontal branch gleaning for insects. I went into the house to get binoculars and returned to find bird in approximately same location. Noted a red iris with a black-bordered white eyestripe, but the contrast did not seem as distinct as in the Red-eyed Vireo. Bird had a bluish-gray cap and olive back. The bird dropped down to a dead branch about 15' overhead and I got a clear, unrestricted view of a white throat, breast and belly. Tail from below was white except for a bright yellow crissum. Bird then flew to a position where I could observe the side, and I saw an even brighter lemon yellow on the side. Bird was seen in good afternoon sunlight with 7x35 binoculars. I discussed this sighting with people familiar with the Yellow-green Vireo and was told that the strong yellow tones are indicative of this species and that an immature Red-eyed Vireo would not show such a strong tone but more of a yellow wash. Therefore, on the basis of the strong yellow color and the less distinct eye stripe I ruled out the immature Red-eyed and determined this to be a Yellow-green Vireo. --Sherry Collins.

Worm-eating Warblers: In June, when P&MJ were birding at the Little Thicket Sanctuary, a pair of Worm-eating Warblers were seen, and, by their actions, were obviously nesting nearby. One of them, chirping constantly, hopped all around us, coming at times, almost within arm's length, in his (her?) efforts to distract us. We did not find the nest, and, disliking to disturb the bird any more, went on our way. In reading about the warbler, in Bird Life of Texas, we discovered that of four recognized Texas breeding records, one was made at the Little Thicket by Victor Emanuel and J.L. Rowlett in 1971. Ben Feltner says it is believed the bird nests over a wider area of East Texas than in the past, but Kincaid accepted only records where the nests with young were observed. David Deifick, in his last note to us, mentions seeing and hearing a singing Worm-eating Warbler in Jones State Forest on May 29th, making him wonder if they nested there. Jones Forest is just a few miles outside our checklist area, so it is entirely possible this little warbler will be added to our list of nesters in the next year or so. The first confirmed record for the UTC is eagerly awaited.

WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS AND NON MEMBER *SUBSCRIBERS:

Mr. Charles D. Peterson, 1523 Mere Drive, Pinehurst, Texas 77362	259-0487
Dr. Barry Handerstein, 8739 Link Terrace, Houston, Texas 77025	
Mr. Don Underwood, 11118 Vanderford, Houston, Texas 77099	498-2348
Miss Penny Cureton, 6623 Grovewood, Houston, Texas 77008	864-1807
*Mr. J.G. Gibson, 36 Wingfoot, Panorama, Conroe, Texas 77201	
*Mrs. Florence Bennett, PO Box 4578, Walnut Creek, California 94596	AC415 933-3781
*Mr. Jim Massey, 443 Wilchester, Houston, Texas 77079	

THE SPOONBILL ON A "PRESS TOUR"

In the future, when birding up in East Texas, get acquainted with the new Rusk City Park, a 100 acre recreational campground which surrounds the Rusk Terminal of the Texas State Railroad, a State Historical Park; the railroad is administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. P&MJ took advantage of the invitation of the TP&W Dept. to the Press to attend a "Press Tour" preview of the opening of the Park and the Railroad. This was an unexpected and delightful fringe benefit to being editor of the SPOONBILL.

The City Park, though it had its official dedication the following Friday, June 25th, is not quite complete, but needs only a few finishing touches (they delayed hooking up a dryer in the bathhouse because a wren seemed to be building a nest, but the bird changed her mind!). Camping and some activities are now allowed.

The new State Park, the Railroad, will not be in operation until early fall. This is the longest (25 miles), skinniest (varying from 30' to 175') State Park we have, and the refurbished old engines and cars will take you back in time when you make the three hour round trip through the woodlands.

The Rusk City Park has a 15 acre lake, camping facilities, and will make a delightful place to pause for a day or two when checking on the birds in this beautiful part of East Texas.

Not far away is Mission Tejas State Park, a small, uncrowded park with excellent, marked nature trails. (Joy in the early morning: a yellowthroat singing loud and clear from willows at one end of the small mist-shrouded lake).

This is an area about 3 hours from Houston, with heavily wooded, gently rolling hills, where early Texas history comes alive. Use your county road map book, and discover the quiet byways where scenery, history and birding come together.

REPORTS TO THE CLEARING HOUSE

All birders and observers are encouraged to keep a record of their sightings and to send a report of them to the Clearing House Editor, T. Paul Jones, 4902 Fern St., Bellaire, Texas 77401

Rules and reasons for reporting bird observations were drawn up by Dan Hardy, then Clearing House Editor, and printed in the January, 1975 SPOONBILL. They are still valid. For the benefit of new readers and those who might have misplaced the older SPOONBILL, these rules are reprinted in this issue along with TOPOGRAPHY OF A BIRD from the SPOONBILL of February, 1975.

ATTENTION: UPDATED CLEARING HOUSE RULES - Dan Hardy (January 1975 SPOONBILL)

The publication of the 5th Edition of the Upper Texas Coast Checklist has put record-keeping on a more definitive basis. This is a checklist of amazing detail and scope--merely examine the month of April for the Golden-winged Warbler to appreciate its precision. This accuracy is made possible because we have learned so much more about bird distribution since the old checklist was put out. Ben Feltner and Noel Pettengill deserve everyone's thanks for putting together all this knowledge and single-handedly pushing it through to completion. I thank them because it will make my task with the Clearing House easier. The Clearing House remains the place to send your bird observations. The new checklist had to rely on it for the most part. Therefore it is important that the Clearing House be as comprehensive and accurate as possible so that it will be at hand when the 6th edition of the checklist is ready to be compiled. Scores of unusual birds in the Houston area are never reported to the Clearing House, the natural place of publication, and are consequently lost for all practical purposes. Also, some records of unusual birds could not be used because they were not substantiated. Clarification of the rules of the Clearing House seem in order to facilitate its use.

1. Any birds from the 6-county checklist area may be submitted (Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, and Jefferson). Please note the addition of Jefferson County to the checklist area.
2. All birds seen in one month should be mailed so that the editor will receive it by the 5th of the following month. Records received after the 5th of the month may not be included in the Clearing House for that month.
3. Birds should be submitted in AOU order in the exact manner as you see them in the Clearing House each month.
4. Substantiating details are required on birds in the following categories:
 - a. Species not on checklist. These will be capitalized and underlined.
 - b. Species on Vagrant/Accidental/Extirpated List. These will be capitalized and underlined.
 - c. Species that have no frequency status on the regular list on the date recorded. This is shown by a blank space on the bar graph. These records will be capitalized.
 - d. Species that are "Very Rare" (shown by dots) on date recorded. These will be underlined.
 - e. In addition, details are required on any records of following: Ross' Goose, Swallow-tailed Kite, "Harlan's Hawk", Merlin, Yellow Rail (outside of buggy trips), Black Rail, Jacana (outside Maner Lake), all Jaegers, Lesser Nighthawk, Fish Crow, Bewick's Wren, Prairie Warbler, Western Meadowlark, Bronzed Cowbird, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, non-breeding Henslow's Sparrow, and Backman's Sparrow.
 - f. Details are not required but may be properly submitted on any species that exhibits unusual or remarkable behavior or is found in extraordinary habitat or numbers.
5. Names and taxonomy of the Clearing House will follow the 5th AOU with its recent supplement. This is the one deviation from the new checklist. A summary of these changes is in the August 1973 SPOONBILL. Bullock's Oriole and Harlan's Hawk may be submitted, but they will be treated as subspecies.

(The following list of details to be noted has been re-aligned and explanations of such details expanded since last published in January, 1975. --Ed.)

What are details? Details are a description of the bird and the circumstances of the observation. Details for rarities (as indicated in 4 above) should include the following (from Ben Feltner):

SPECIES: The name of the species and the number of individuals involved.

DESCRIPTION: Describe the bird in your own words with details as to size, color, features (see TOPOGRAPHY OF A BIRD), voice, etc. This should be done before consulting a field guide.

OBSERVERS: Tell other birders about your sightings as soon as possible so more observations can be made. Include names of additional observers and their comments with your report to the Clearing House.

HABITAT: Describe the habitat in which the bird was observed.

LOCALITY: Where, geographically, and nearby landmarks.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: Scope, binoculars, with power included.

TIME: How long was the bird observed.

EXPERIENCE: Familiarity with the bird.

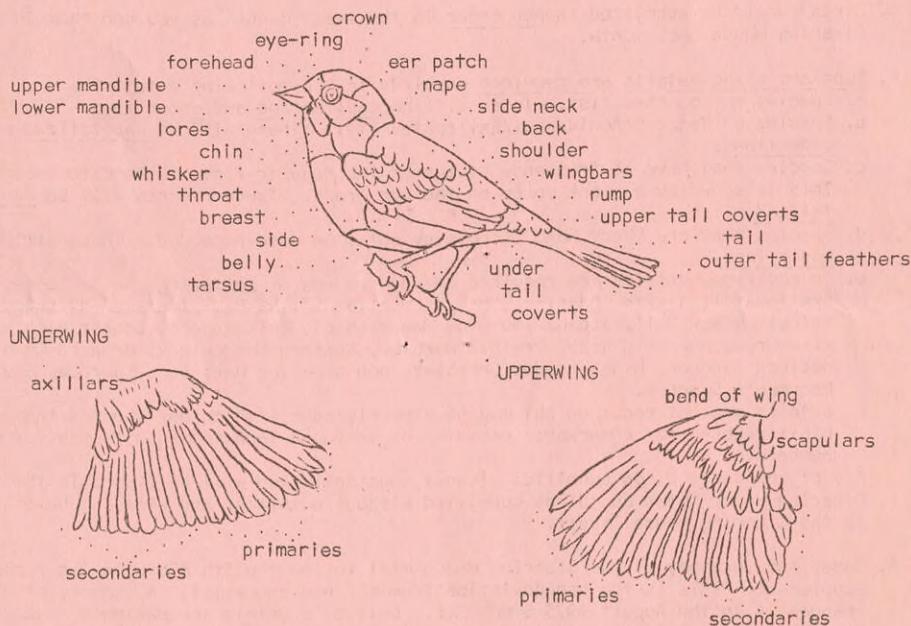
SKETCHES: Done in the field at the time of observation.

CONCLUSION: Your reasons for the identification.

TOPOGRAPHY OF A BIRD (February, 1975 SPOONBILL)

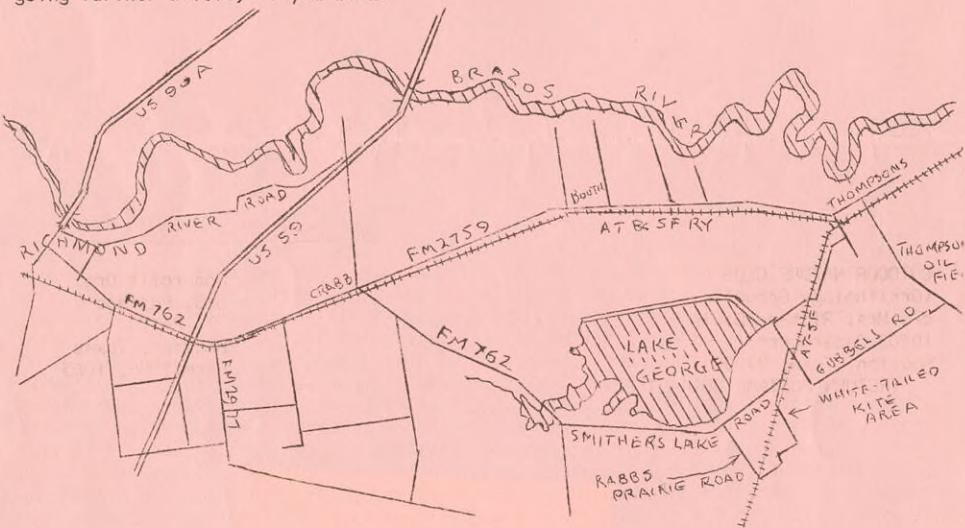
Last month Dan Hardy gave some hints on details to be submitted to the Clearing House, substantiating birds seen. To be able to correctly name the parts of a bird helps immeasurably in making one's notes clear and understandable. "The use of correct terminology will also aid you in making comparisons and in checking variations in color and pattern of local birds. Knowing the terminology helps focus your attention on specific parts of a bird as you observe it. Sometimes such details as an incomplete eye-ring or the color of the undertail coverts will clinch an identification".....
Birds of North America.

This month we have a "refresher" sketch, giving the common nomenclature of the topography of a bird. Two books have been used in making up the sketch and names: Audubon Land Bird Guide, by Pough, and Birds of North America, by Robbins, et al.



SMITHER'S LAKE TO MANER LAKE "RUN"

A birding "run" from Smither's Lake area to the Maner Lake area is always productive at any time of year. Birds mentioned on this page can be seen one or more seasons of the year, so use your checklist to determine your chances of seeing any particular bird at the time you go. Starting at US 59 and FM 762 (or US 90A and 762), follow FM 762 as shown on the map, to Smither's Lake road. (Much of this area is devoted to rice-farming, and the roads shown south of the railroad track between FM 2977 and FM 762, can sometimes provide additional interesting birding in the winter months). After birding the Rabb's Prairie Road area, you can continue south on FM 762, turn left at FM 1462, go to the second gravel road on the right (Cow Creek Road), turn right, follow this road (at the bridge, you cross from Ft. Bend Co. to Brazoria Co., and the road becomes Brazoria County Road #25) to Maner Lake on the left and Eagle Nest Lake on the right. To make a circle, continue south on #25 to Hwy 35, turn left, continue to FM 521, turn left, follow this to intersection with Hwy 288, and then back to Houston. We have mapped only the Smither's Lake area, because it is close to Houston, easily reached, and can give you several hours of "good birding" without going further afield, if you wish.



All year the White-tailed Kite and, from spring to fall, the Mississippi Kite, can nearly always be found in the Rabb's Prairie Road area. Horned and Barred Owls are frequently seen in the early evenings here. Late on a summer day, by walking about a mile on the railroad track in a southwest direction from the southwest corner of Rabb's Prairie Road to Worthington Lake headwaters, a large concentration of herons and egrets can be seen (though a nuisance to carry, a 'scope is helpful here). And, occasionally, the Fulvous and Black-bellied Tree Ducks can be seen flying into the rookery at this spot. In the brush, along the railroad are wrens, buntings, warblers, and orchard orioles. This is not an easy walk, the roadbed gravel makes difficult going, so wear comfortable shoes.

In the fall, when the rice fields are ripe and being harvested, come the geese and other grain eaters, like the Sandhill Cranes and Ducks. All winter you can see large concentrations of them in the fields along the way from Smithers Lake to Maner Lake. When you see a flock of Sandhill Cranes, check for Fulvous Tree Ducks among them, they can often be found in the same field. At the beginning of Brazoria Co. Road 25, just past the bridge, check for towhees, woodpeckers, warblers, sparrows and grosbeaks, some remain through the winter here.

As you approach Eagle Nest Lake on the right, check the rookery in the bushes along the shallow inlets. Egrets, herons, spoonbills and anhingas have been seen here, though Cattle Egrets seem to be gaining on them. Proceed past the Maner Lake entrance (this lake is private property and you may not enter without prior permission), and park on the side of the road near the bridge. Of course, the Jacana, for which Maner Lake is famous among birders, is the bird most eagerly sought, and can quite often be seen from the roadside (your 'scope is handy here), but bitterns, ducks, gallinules, etc., make this a satisfying stop. Overhead are often anhingas and cormorants, with bald eagles making occasional appearances. Walking along the road south from this point, boat-tailed grackles, warblers, wrens, and sometimes groove-billed anis and wood ducks, can be seen in the hedge-rows, woods and marshes on either side for about 1/2 a mile. And "good birding" from the SPOONBILL!

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