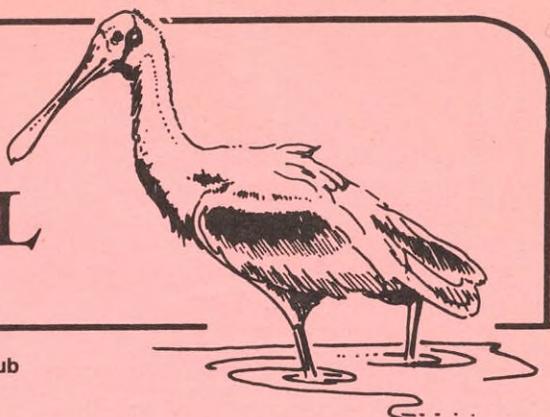


The SPOONBILL



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Coming Events

Thursday, Sept. 5, 1985: Ornithology Group meeting, 7:30 PM, Bayou Manor Auditorium, 4141 South Braeswood. The program will be the showing of two movies from the Chihuahuan Desert Series: "Where Rainbows Wait For Rain" and "Desert Semaphore," also deadline for Spoonbill articles and announcements.

Tuesday, Sept. 10: Outdoor Nature Club meeting, Hermann Park Garden Center, 7:30 PM. Program: "Plants of the Texas Shore" by author Mary Michael Connatella.

Saturday, Sept. 28: Ornithology Group Field Trip: First Annual UTC Close-site Hawk Watch. This event is being organized to coincide with the existing annual hawk watch conducted on the same date on the central Texas coast. A number of potentially fruitful locations will be occupied on the UTC by observers attending this field "trip." Sites along the Brazos River and possibly other key waterways will receive high priority. Data collected will be organized, analyzed and submitted to Chuck Sexton, Regional Editor, South Central, for publication in THE NEWSLETTER of the Hawk Migration Association of North America. This field trip will definitely be different - no hiking, no driving from spot to spot. Observers will stay in the same location and identify and tabulate hawk numbers. If the weather is right, huge numbers of hawks can be seen. For further details, attend the OG meeting or call Ron Braun (496-3108) or Jim Morgan (461-3080).

Breeding Avian Fauna of the Big Thicket by Art MacKinnon

Another breeding season has gone and we had a most satisfactory count. Erin Williams, John Kendall and I covered a five-county area in a two-month period and totaled 91 breeding bird species, 14 of which were warblers.

There were several significant sightings. On the Neches River, American Swallow-tailed Kites were observed in the Tyler County area; a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck with two downy young was spotted on the Neches River near Beaumont. Fourteen Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (5 juveniles) and eight Bachman's Sparrows (4 juveniles) were observed.

We were disappointed with the breeding results of the Prairie Warblers. Fourteen adults were observed in Hardin County near Silsbee. The many Brown-headed Cowbirds possibly contributed to this fact.

This Census was taken to determine the number of summer residents in the Big Thicket Preserve. All birds included in the Census area are not breeders, but they are added to the data.

Spring 1985 - A Fluke or an Ominous Sign? by Jim Morgan

On the Upper Texas Coast (UTC) veteran observers judge spring migrations by some combination of the following criteria:

- 1)The number and size (or "volume") of neotropical migrant "fallouts";
- 2)The number and "quality" of rarities (accidental and/or vagrant species);
- 3)Unusual numbers of "hard-to-see" attractive species (e.g. Western Tanagers, Bobolinks and Yellow-headed Blackbirds).

Shorebird aficionados would add the additional criterion:

4) The variety and "volume" of migrant shorebirds.

Some years a spring migration can be termed "great" based on only one of the above criteria, such as item (1) above. The spring migrations of 1977, 1979 and 1982 immediately come to mind. Over the years, many other springs would have been judged the same way. Even

without a fallout, the spring of 1984 was judged "spectacular" because of the rarities which showed up on the UTC. UTC observers, as well as many others from around the country, will not soon forget the Yucatan Vireo, Greenish Elaenia and Curlew Sandpiper of that memorable spring!

By any measure, the 1985 spring migration on the UTC was a bust. In fact, as one who has intensely monitored every spring migration since 1974 on the UTC, I consider 1985 the worst over this period, even "surpassing" the very dull spring of 1978.

What happened? Clearly the weather had a lot to do with it, but I do not think it is the complete answer. From March 20 through May 20, the lack of rain and cold fronts were particularly apparent. Though Houston had normal (4.3 inches) amounts of rain in April, the city of Galveston had only 1.8 inches. May was especially dry, with 1.5 inches this year versus 4.7 inches for a normal year.

But there were some opportunities! Locally, a few areas along the coast experienced adequate, and occasionally even heavy showers and thunderstorms right during the peak of the migration period. For example, on April 20, I was on West Galveston Island with Ron and Marcia Braun and Ted and Virginia Eubanks when 2.8 inches of rain were measured in the Eubanks' rain gauge at Sea Isle. The rain fell between 1:00 PM and 5:30 PM with light sprinkles lasting up to nightfall. Perfect! Right?... WRONG!! Except for an impressive 130 Green-backed Herons counted that evening coming in off the Gulf of Mexico, and a noticeable increase (but not of fallout proportions) of Indigo Buntings and Orchard Orioles the next day, birds were conspicuously absent. There just were not any numbers of vireos, warblers, tanagers or flycatchers. In other words, the forest-dwelling neotropical migrants were absent, but the edge species (the Indigo Buntings and Orchard Orioles) were grounded by the heavy rain. Keep that in mind for later.

Again, on April 25-26, 0.5 to one inch of rain fell in various showers and thunderstorms along the coast. Again, very few birds!! One veteran UTC observer was at High Island those two days and he called the situation "scary". Other veteran observers expressed equal concern.

Not one to give in yet to the doomsayers, I still cannot help believe that with each passing year, fewer and fewer birds (especially the forest-dwelling species) are aloft during migration. Qualitative and quantitative evidence

is stacking up to make any other conclusion unlikely. One only needs to read the excellent paper by George A. Hall in the Jan.-Feb., 1984 issue of American Birds (Vol. 38, No. 1) to get a feel for the problem. Hall points out that a 35-year study ending in 1983, done in a virgin, undisturbed, large forest tract in the Appalachians, showed a 35% decline in the density of neotropical species. Also, as Steve Runnels, from the Dallas

Museum of Natural History points out, the Smithsonian Institution studies show that numerous North American migrant song birds are declining in numbers at a rate of one to four percent a year. For those of us accustomed to inflation and interest rates that have varied between 10-20% during the late seventies, this 1-4% may not seem like much. But, if these declines continue, say at 4%, for each 1,000,000 individuals now there will only be about 665,000 birds in just 10 more years! Most experts attribute these declines to the destruction of the neotropical forests coupled with continued abuse and fragmentation of the nesting grounds. Very sad, but evidently very true.

So was the spring of 1985 on the UTC a fluke or was it and ominous sign? I think the answer is some of both. The weather in general was not conducive to migrant fallouts but we must accept the fact that fewer birds were aloft. The hard facts are that we have not had a true migrant fallout during spring since the spectacular grounding witnessed on May 7, 1982! Three years without a true fallout on the UTC is unprecedented, as far as the memories of veterans far more experienced than I can recall.

In the future I think we will have other "great" fallouts. Just enough birds aloft hitting just bad enough weather will once again bring us the fabulous spectacle that must be seen and "felt" to appreciate. Yet I would bet a National Geographic Field Guide that we will see fewer and fewer outstanding fallouts with each passing year.

Well, so much for the bad news. The good news was that we did have a few good birds and a few interesting trends that are noteworthy. Even the worst springs on the UTC leave us with something to talk about. Three good rarities were seen. A Red-necked Phalarope was reported by Arch Dillard and others at Galveston on May 18. An Arctic Tern, first reported by John Arvin and later seen by Bob Behrstock was northeast of High Island along the beach during the period April 16-20. Behrstock and others reported another (same bird?) Arctic Tern at Bolivar Flats on April 26. Fortunately, Behrstock supplied written details and he has a few photographs. If accepted by our UTC Checklist Committee, this will be a first UTC record. Please, even those of you who are experts, send us details on your rarities! Another top-notch find was a Sooty Tern seen by Bob and Mary Ann Moore and Bill and Marie Hand on April 17, also along the beach northeast of High Island. Somewhat note-

worthy was the sighting of a plumbeous form of a Solitary Vireo by Ron and Marcia Braun and myself at High Island on March 31. I am not aware of this form being previously reported on the UTC.

Only one noticeable trend was evident during spring. Most likely due to persistently strong ESE, SSE and south winds during the period, we experienced an unusually heavy migration of both Blackpoll and Cape May Warblers during late April. On some days during this period, Blackpolls were the most common warbler along the coast. Unusual to say the least, but also indicative of how lacking we were in numbers of other warbler species.

Hopefully next year I will once again be able to tell you about a great UTC spring migration. And there is always fall migration to look forward to!!

AN INTERESTING OBSERVATION

by Randy Pinkston

On Saturday, 22 June, my wife and I were driving northwestward on Lawndale near our home in southeast Houston. As we crossed the bridge over Braes Bayou, in the vicinity of Forest Park Cemetery, to my bewilderment a Black Skimmer flew swiftly overhead and continued westward down the bayou. Moments later we encountered this same bird again where Old Spanish Trail crossed the bayou. We watched until it passed from view around a bend near U of H. I see no reason to doubt that this skimmer continued on its course all the way to Alief! This was the first time I could remember seeing a skimmer in Houston but I didn't think much more about it.

The next day, my son and I were strolling in Mason Park in the same area. Braes Bayou borders the park on one side and there I noticed a "swarm" of foraging terns. Small numbers of gulls and Forster's Terns are not unusual there during the non-breeding months but this sight deserved closer inspection. We found about a dozen Forster's, including several adults in full breeding plumage, two or three Laughing Gulls, and surprisingly one Least Tern. Still I didn't wonder much about it.

On Monday, 24 June, I again saw a Least Tern along Braes Bayou, this time at the Forest Hill bridge. Late that afternoon, as I sipped a cold beer on my front steps, a Tricolored Heron crossed the cemetery from the bayou and attempted to alight in one of my neighbor's pines. Interestingly, that same evening 80 Wood Storks soared over our neighborhood.

The area I'm writing about is 2-6 miles inland along Braes Bayou from the Houston Ship Channel and 26-30 miles from Galveston Bay. Why the sudden influx of normally coastal species?

I suspected that it was weather-related from the start, remembering the oddities Hurricane "Alicia" brought to our city two years earlier. (Who could forget Margaret Anderson's report

of frigatebird over West University Place?) But there were no storms in the news this week. Just in case, I called National Weather Service in Galveston for barometric pressure readings from 18-24 June. Nothing really. There was a very slight rising trend beginning the morning of the 22nd and holding through the 24th, but birds should move inland in response to pronounced drops.

A more plausible explanation may lie in the Galveston winds that week. They came out of the southeast on the 20th, 15-20 mph at first with stronger gusts that evening, and held steady at 15-20 mph through the evening of the 24th. I have encountered these species and more along the ship channel as far inland as the Lynchburg Ferry. The strong southeast winds may have pushed them the few extra miles to Braes Bayou.

I love tossing about theories as to why birds do what they do, especially in the summer when birding is dull. If anyone has more to add or a better explanation for mine or other observations, please let us know.

(The editor wishes to know how many beers were consumed before seeing the 80 Wood Storks.)

Texas Attwater's Prairie Chicken Continuing to Decline

From Department of the Interior,
Fish and Wildlife Service.

"The endangered Attwater's Prairie Chicken, once abundant along the Gulf Coast prairie lands from Louisiana to Nueces River of Texas, is continuing to decline according to biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The bird's steady decline is due to the loss of the prairie chicken's native grassland habitat to agricultural and urban development. Biologists feel if land use practices are not changed the bird will soon disappear from Ft. Bend County, one of only eight remaining counties the bird still occupies.

The Attwater's Prairie Chicken was listed as an endangered species in March 1967. Historically, over a million Attwater's Prairie Chickens ranged on most of the 7 million acres of Gulf Coast prairie. Today, according to the state-wide cooperative survey conducted by the Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Texas A & M University, there are fewer than 1,430 birds on 129,000 acres. Since 1967 the bird has lost almost 50 percent of its habitat. The approximately 1 million prairie chickens in 1900 had declined to 8,700 by 1940.

In an effort to save the bird from extinction, 3500 acres were purchased in 1972 to establish the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge near Eagle Lake, Texas. The refuge, originally acquired through the Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund, has since been expanded by Federal purchase to about 8,000 acres. Through in-

tensive land management, the Fish and Wildlife Service has been able to produce a population of 206 prairie chickens, up from 25 birds when the refuge was acquired. The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge near Austwell, Texas along the Gulf Coast also supports a small, separate population of about 20 prairie chickens. However, wildlife biologists feel that these refuges should not be solely relied upon for the bird's survival. For example, the service estimates if present land development trends continue, by the year 2,000 there will be fewer than 800 prairie chickens existing in 5 counties, with 300 of them on wildlife refuges. With so few birds left in such a small area, they could easily be eliminated by a hurricane, disease, or some other disaster.

In 1983, a team of wildlife biologists from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., Texas A & M University and the Welder Wildlife Foundation of Sinton, Texas, developed the Attwater's Prairie Chicken Recovery Plan. The plan developed by the Recovery Team gives guidance for the management needed to keep the species from extinction. The plan recommends the following steps for the bird's recovery: protecting and maintaining large blocks of coastal prairie habitat, transplanting birds to suitable habitat, identification of needed management practices through research, monitoring the species populations, and to improve methods of management of the prairie chicken and its habitat.

Copies of the "Attwater's Prairie Chicken Recovery Plan" may be obtained by writing the Office of Endangered Species, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103."

BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK

by Bob Honig

Over 200 species of birds have been observed at Brazos Bend State Park in southeast Fort Bend County. This variety is a result of the diverse habitats that can be found on the park's 4,897 acres, only 40 minutes from southwest Houston. Even if there were no birds, the magnificent live oaks, draped with Spanish moss, are worth repeat visits; but these oak woodlands, plus bottomland hardwood forest, fields, swamps, lakes, sloughs, oxbows, and Brazos River frontage attract an abundance of land and water birds year round.

In all seasons, it would be hard to find a better place on the entire upper Texas coast than Brazos Bend to see anhinga, fresh-water waders, red-shouldered hawk, and common woodland birds such as woodpeckers, Carolina wren, titmouse, chickadee, and cardinal. The place simply can't be beat for barred owl, which just happens to grace the cover of the park bird checklist. Barn, screech, and great horned owls are also present all year. You can even compare field marks of boat-tailed and great-tailed grackles, both of which reside in the park.

In summer, Brazos Bend provides an opportunity to study the breeding birds of the upper Texas coast. On June 8, 1985, Don Richardson, Doug Williams, and I led an OG field trip which observed over 60 bird species at the park. This is a prime location for breeding prothonotary warblers: a dozen were observed on the June 8 trip. Pied-billed grebes, common moorhens, and painted buntings were feeding young, and black-bellied whistling ducks were seen on the lakes. Other highlights of the trip included: purple gallinule; yellow-billed cuckoo (15); acadian (25) and great-crested flycatchers; eastern kingbird; yellow-throated, red-eyed, and white-eyed vireos; northern parula (25); and American redstart. An unexpected bonus was a pair of Mississippi kites, suspected breeders in the park, soaring high overhead (several additional reports of Mississippi kites have been made in the vicinity of the park this July). Wood storks also frequent the area in summer, although none were seen on this field trip. One hint: in the summer go early in the morning, or in the evening - the temperature can be quite comfortable and there will be less of a crowd.

Spring and fall bring an influx of transient species, in particular landbird migrants. The park certainly could stand some added coverage during these periods (if you can tear yourselves away from the coast) as there are a number of migrants whose occurrence in the park is suspected but not yet confirmed (this is also true of several species likely present in other seasons).

For me, winter is the high point of the birding year at Brazos Bend, with the main attraction being the thousands of ducks lured to the lakes and marshes. Blue-winged and green-winged teals, mallard, pintail, gadwall, wigeon, and ring-necked duck are all listed as abundant during winter; and numerous other ducks, including cinnamon teal and occasional hooded mergansers, are present in lesser numbers. Formations of geese and sandhill cranes glide overhead on their way to and from feeding areas in the surrounding agricultural fields. Barred owls become especially vocal at night as the breeding season approaches, and bald eagles are regularly seen. Additionally, winter sightings of black phoebe and Say's phoebe at Brazos Bend are among only a few upper Texas coast records for each of these species.

Park Manager Laird Fowler presented an informative slide show to our June 8 field trip in the park's recently opened Interpretive Center. Laird and his staff have always been extremely cooperative with naturalists of diverse interests. Even before the

park officially opened in 1984, individuals and organized groups (including OG field trips) were granted access to the park for nature study. In return, Laird merely requested a

copy of the day's sightings - a bird checklist, plant inventory, or whatever - so that the staff could add to their knowledge of the park's natural history.

Nature study continues to be emphasized at Brazos Bend, and the new Interpretative Center is but one example of this. Another is the interest Laird has expressed in organizing a Brazos Bend State Park Christmas Bird Count. There are even thoughts of organizing a volunteer group which would include people willing to lead nature walks. OG members can help maintain this interest in natural history by leaving documentation of their activities whenever they visit. Simply, leave a copy of your daily checklist at the park headquarters (eventually there will be a drop box at the Interpretive Center); or, when you send in your records to the Clearing House, send another copy to the park (Route 1, Box 840, Needville, TX 77461). It is important that we let the park staff and the Parks and Wildlife Department in Austin know that we are utilizing this beautiful resource and that we appreciate the protection it has been given.

Clearing House JUNE, 1985

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made on the Upper Texas Coast. How to read the CH: Location--(how many)date,observers. Common, widely distributed species on the UTC during the reported month are listed as follows: number of reports, (lowest - highest; total number of individuals seen), e.g. 8 reports (1-40;82). 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 can be included on the next checklist. Documentation is a must for consideration by the Committee. Birds with very rare, vagrant, accidental, or no status on the Checklist at the date of sighting require details. Sightings needing details but submitted without them will not be included in the regular Clearing House.

ABBREVIATION CODES

BBSP = Brazos Bend SP
 Bolv = Bolivar P.
 EG = E. Galveston
 FBC = Ft. Bend Co.
 Galv = Galveston Is.
 GC = Galveston Co.
 Gulf = shore to 80 mi out
 H = Houston
 HI = High Island

NH = N. Houston
 NWH = NW Houston
 OyCr = Oyster Creek
 SEH = SE Houston
 SWH = SW Houston
 WGI = W. Galveston Is.
 WOB = White Oak Bayou
 WU = W. University

114 Species reported this month.

Grebe,Pied-billed: 6 reports all at BBSP (1-8;18)
 Cormorant,Olivaceous: Galv-(1)8,30,RPP
 Anhinga: 6 reports (8-50;163)
 Bittern,Least: BBSP-(1)15,RLPC
 Heron,Great Blue: 8 reports (1-10;29)
 Egret,Great: 10 reports (2-20;93)
 Egret,Snowy: 7 reports (1-6;22)
 Heron,Little Blue: 8 reports all in FBC (1-30;104)
 Heron,Tricolored: 8 reports (1-25;47)
 Egret,Cattle: 12 reports (1-500;2104)
 Heron,Green-backed: 13 reports (1-25;90)
 Night-Heron,Black-crowned: 8 reports (1-10;32)
 Night-Heron,Yellow-crowned: 13 reports (1-30;136)
 Ibis,White: 8 reports (2-150;337)
 Ibis,White-faced: Galv-(1)8,RPP; FBC-(7)9,BG;
 GC-(30)30,RPP
 Spoonbill,Roseate: BBSP-(6)2,HWHT; (10)8,OG;
 (6)15,RLPC; Galv-(50)8,RPP; Gulf-(6)15,HASP
 Stork,Wood: Jacinto City-(78)20,CB; SEH-(80)24,RP
 Whistling-Duck,Fulvous: Katy-(35)2,SW; Galv-(4)8,RPP;
 FBC-(10)9,BG
 Whistling-Duck,Black-bellied: 6 reports (4-25;58)
 Duck,Wood: FBC-(6)2,(4)9,BG
 Duck,Mottled: 8 reports (1-30;63)

Teal,Blue-winged: Katy-(3)2,SW
 Vulture,Black: 4 reports (1-25;31)
 Vulture,Turkey: 6 reports (2-12;28)
 Kite,Black-shouldered: Katy-(1)2,SW; Cypress-(1)21,SBW;
 WGI-(2 nesting)30,RPP
 Kite,Mississippi: FBC-(3)2,(5)9,BG; BBSP-(2)8,OG;
 SWH-(1)23,24,PM (See notes & CH Editor's Comments)
 Hawk,Red-shouldered: 8 reports (1-8;20)
 Hawk,Broad-winged: H-(1)6,WC (See notes, ed.)
 Hawk,Swainson's: NH-(1)1,PC; Katy-(1)2,SW; SWH-(1)3,6,
 (2)12,SW; (1)7,RB; (2)20,(1)23,26,SBW; NWH-(1)7,SW;
 Spring-(1)30,SBW (See CH Editor's Comments, ed.)
 Hawk,Red-tailed: FBC-(1)2,BG; (1)6,WC; Hockley-(1)7,SW
 Chicken,Greater Prairie: NASA Rd 1 at Kirby-(2)28,EH
 (fide RP) (See CH Editor's Comments, ed.)
 Bobwhite,Northern: 5 reports (2-7;20)
 Rail,King: FBC-(1)2,16,BG
 Gallinule,Purple: 5 reports (1-20;43)
 Moorhen,Common: 8 reports (1-40;153)
 Coot,American: 4 reports (1-5;11)
 Plover,Black-bellied: HI-(8)29,SBW
 Killdeer: 10 reports (1-20;68)
 Stilt,Black-necked: FBC-(5)2,(6)9,BG; Galv-(1)8,RPP;
 GC-(3)30,RPP
 Willet: Galv-(3)8,RPP; Gulf-(5)15,HASP; GC-(40)30,RPP
 Curlew,Long-billed: Crystal Beach-(2)29,SBW
 Sanderling: Gulf-(2)15,HASP (See CH Editor's Comments)
 dowitcher,sp.: Bolv-(4)29,SBW (See notes, ed.)
 Gull,Laughing: 5 reports (1-10000;12332)
 Gull,Herring: GC-(1)30,RPP
 Tern,Gull-billed: GC-(1)30,RPP
 Tern,Caspian: Galv-(10)8,RPP; Gulf-(10)15,HASP;
 GC-(3)30,RPP
 Tern,Royal: Galv-(15)8,RPP; Gulf-(40)15,HASP;
 GC-(40)30,RPP
 Tern,Sandwich: Gulf-(3)15,HASP; EG-(50)29,SBW;
 HI-(35)29,SBW
 Tern,Forster's: Galv-(60)8,RPP; Gulf-(100)15,HASP;
 SEH-(1-12)20-27,RP; GC-(10)30,RPP
 Tern,Least: 6 reports (1-50;74)
 Tern,Black: Gulf-(1)15,HASP; HI-(1)29,SBW
 Skimmer,Black: Galv-(2)8,RPP; Gulf-(2)15,HASP;
 SEH-(1)22,RP; GC-(35)30,RPP
 Dove,Rock: 6 reports (1-50;130)
 Turtle-Dove,Ringed: Bellaire-(2)24,25,SBW
 Dove,White-winged: Galv-(1)8,RPP; (3)29,SBW
 Dove,Mourning: 13 reports (2-125;398)
 Dove,Inca: 6 reports (1-12;20)
 Parakeet,Monk: SWH-(2)7,19,SBW
 Cuckoo,Yellow-billed: 9 reports (1-15;35)
 Barn-Owl,Common: NWH-(1)7,SW; HI-(1)29,SBW
 Screech-Owl,Eastern: NWH-(1)15,SW; NH-(2)27,WC
 Owl,Barred: 6 reports (1-6;15)
 Nighthawk,Common: 6 reports (1-20;44)
 Swift,Chimney: 8 reports (2-150;228)
 Hummingbird,Ruby-throated: NWH-(2)1-15,SW; (1)20,SBW;
 Tomball-(2)1-15,SW; FBC-(2)2,(1)9,BG;
 BBSP-(1)4,DM; (1)8,OG; (1)16,BG
 Kingfisher,Belted: 5 reports (1-6;12)
 Woodpecker,Red-headed: WOB-(1)1-30,WC; BBSP-(1)16,BG
 Woodpecker,Red-bellied: 10 reports (1-15;62)
 Woodpecker,Downy: 10 reports (1-15;45)
 Woodpecker,Pileated: 5 reports all from FBC (1-4;10)
 Wood-Pewee,Eastern: BBSP-(1)8,OG; WOB-(1)29,WC
 Flycatcher,Acadian: BBSP-(20)2,HWHT; (5)4,DM;
 (8)6,WC; (25)8,OG
 PHEBE,EASTERN: NO JUNE RECORDS NWH-(1)11,SW (See notes)
 Flycatcher,Great Crested: 6 reports (1-5;18)
 Kingbird,Western: FBC-(2)2,9,BG; Galv-(1)8,RPP;
 Tomball-(1)9,SW; SWH-(8)24,SBW; WU-(1)24,SBW
 plus 7 reports of 39 adults + 21 young from many
 location in SWH by Bob Honig (some duplication of
 nos.) (See notes and CH Editor's Comments, ed.)
 Kingbird,Eastern: 10 reports (1-15;50)
 Flycatcher,Scissor-tailed: 12 reports (1-30;125)
 Martin,Purple: 10 reports (2-1000;2130)
 Swallow,Cliff: OyCr-(20)2,HWHT; (30)8,OG; (35)15,RLPC
 FBC-(14)2,(10)16,BG (Status changing, ed.)
 Swallow,Barn: 6 reports (1-2;11)
 Jay,Blue: 9 reports (1-15;52)
 Crow,American: 9 reports (3-25;109)
 Chickadee,Carolina: 10 reports (2-60;182)
 Titmouse,Tufted: 8 reports (2-40;106)
 Wren,Carolina: 10 reports (1-35;88)
 Bluebird,Eastern: FBC-(1)2,(4)9,BG
 Thrush,Wood: WOB-(2)1-30,WC
 Robin,American: NH-(2)1-30,GC; SEH-(1-6)1-30,RP;
 Jacinto City-(1)20,CB
 Mockingbird,Northern: 9 reports (1-50;148)
 Shrike,Loggerhead: 9 reports (1-10;27)
 Starling,European: 8 reports (6-200;556)
 Vireo,White-eyed: BBSP-(10)2,HWHT; (15)4,DM;
 (10)6,WC; (15)8,OG; (2)16,BG; FBC-(1)2,BG;
 Tomball-(3)9,SW
 Vireo,Yellow-throated: BBSP-(1)2,HWHT; (10)8,OG;
 (1)6,WC; (2)15,RLPC
 Vireo,Red-eyed: BBSP-(2)2,HWHT; (1)6,WC; (5)8,OG

Parula, Northern: BBSP-(6)2, HWHT; (5)4, DM;
 (4)6, WC; (25)8, OG; (1)15, RLPC; (1)16, BG
 Redstart, American: BBSP-(1)8, OG
 Warbler, Prothonotary: BBSP-(12)2, HWHT; (8)4, DM;
 (6 nesting)6, WC; (12)8, OG; (6)15, RLPC; (3)16, BG
 Warbler, Swainson's: BBSP-(1)6, WC
 Yellowthroat, Common: BBSP-(1)2, HWHT; (2)4, DM; (1)8, OG
 Tanager, Summer: BBSP-(1)6, WC; (1)8, OG; (2)15, RLPC;
 Tomball-(1)9, SW
 Cardinal, Northern: 10 reports (2-100; 253)
 Bunting, Indigo: Tomball-(1)9, SW
 Bunting, Painted: 11 reports (1-15; 58)
 Dickcissel: 5 reports (2-20; 35)
 Sparrow, Lark: Tomball-(2)9, SW
 Blackbird, Red-winged: 10 reports (20-400; 1290)
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 9 reports (1-20; 62)
 Grackle, Great-tailed: 10 reports (1-300; 461)
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: BBSP-(2)4, DM; (15)8, OG
 Grackle, Common: 7 reports (2-500; 804)
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: 9 reports (1-50; 137)
 Oriole, Orchard: H-(1)6, WC; NWH-(1)27, SBW
 Sparrow, House: 7 reports (5-40; 125)

CONTRIBUTORS - June, 1985

BEW=Bob & Edith Willman; BG=Bernd Gravenstein;
 CB=Charles Browning; DM=Derek Muschalek; EH=Ethleen
 Hankins; GC=Glenn Cureton; HASP=HAS pelagic field trip;
 HWHT=Bob Honig, Doug Williams, Martha Henschen, Bob
 Thacker; OG=OG Field Trip; PC=Penny Cureton; PM=Peggy
 Milstead; RB=Ron Braun; RLPC=Don & Lee Richardson,
 Sylvia & Charlie Lents, Nancy & Jerry Patrick, Joanne &
 Frank Cleland; RP=Randy Pinkston; RPP=Randy & Patricia
 Pinkston; SBW=Steve & Bev Williams; SW=Steve Williams;
 WC=Wesley Cureton

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES - June, 1985

Mississippi Kite: (seen after field trip ended, in mid-
 afternoon) Seen by myself (both birds, 8X30 Zeiss) &
 Doug Williams (one bird, 10X40 Zeiss) soaring high
 overhead; in bright sunlight against clouds & blue sky
 alternately; at one point the two birds appeared to be
 playing with each other; long, pointed wings; long tail;
 generally uniform medium gray underparts.
 -- Robert A. Honig

Broad-winged Hawk: Small, plump buteo with broad wings
 outlined in dark or black. Broad black & white bands on
 tail. The same day I saw another one at Mauriceville,
 Orange Co.
 -- Wesley Cureton

dowitcher sp.: Bolivar Peninsula, in the flats by
 the old lighthouse. They were observed in good light
 from about 50 yds. with 10X50 binocs for 2 minutes.
 They were in the rusty reddish breeding plumage, had
 long, straight bills, whitish rumps, and darker backs, &
 were flushed by a dog. I did not hear them call. They
 were obviously dowitchers, but I was unable to tell
 which species.
 -- Steve Williams

EASTERN PHOEBE: NO JUNE RECORDS The bird was first
 heard calling & then observed for 3 minutes at 40'
 without binoculars. It appeared to be an adult, which
 was dark, dingy brown above & grayish-white with a faint
 tinge of yellowish underneath. The "fee-a-bee" call,
 constant tail-wagging, & lack of wing-bars & eye-ring
 eliminate Empidonax flycatchers, wood pewees, & the
 Olive-sided Flycatcher (which is also noticeably
 larger). There are no June records in the UTC field
 checklist for this species. I have not observed it
 again.
 -- Steve Williams

Western Kingbird: Along Nottingham Ranch Rd., around
 turn heading toward the bay. First spotted perched on
 wire: large, chunky flycatcher; olive-grayish back; pale
 gray throat and upper breast; bright yellow belly; tail
 black except for white line of outer rectrices, seen
 both spread and closed. Observed about 5 minutes
 sallying forth from wire to both sides of road. 10X50
 binocs under clear noon skies. We searched briefly for
 a second individual, or some other sign of nesting, but
 found nothing.
 -- Randy & Patty Pinkston

CH EDITOR'S COMMENTS - June, 1985

Mississippi Kites: With 12 Mississippi Kites reported
 this month, I began to wonder if this wasn't an
 unusually large number for June. Checking the June,
 1984 CH showed none reported there. Surely I was on the
 right track. When a check of the June, 1983 CH also
 revealed none reported, I knew I was right. Well, not
 exactly! As a scientist, I am constantly being reminded
 of the dangers of extrapolation (but it's so much fun to

do!). Gathering a little more historical data showed
 just how wrong my hunch had been. Here are the numbers:

Year	May	June	July	August
1985	2	12		
1984	3	0	4	227
1983	2	0	1	59
1982	4	2	3	239
1981	10	7	0	1128*
1980	9	15	9	332
1979	16	11	21	77+
1978	5	8	7	90
1977	54	21	15	196
1976	3	2	2	143
1975	0	10	12	138
ave.	9	8	7	263

* 1000 in one sighting
 + Min. #, actual # undeterminable

To the contrary, the 12 birds reported this year are
 quite typical and the previous 2 Junes were abnormal.
 The fall migration should be underway by the time you
 read this, so keep an eye out for Mississippi Kites in
 August and send in your sightings to the CH.

Swainson's Hawk: Steve Williams sent the following note
 with his Swainson's Hawk reports: "Swainson's Hawks
 occasionally linger in Houston in summer, but I have not
 seen them so regularly as this year. Gary Clark is also
 reporting them in n. Harris Co. near the airport area.
 I have often thought they were occasional breeders but
 Oberholser lists neither any confirmed breeding records
 nor any confirmed records in Harris Co. These birds are
 too late to be migrants, so are either lingerers or
 breeders. If Swainson's Hawks are regularly observed
 near woods or patches of trees during the summer, those
 should be checked for nesting activity." I agree and
 wonder when the last UTC nesting activity was observed.

Greater Prairie Chicken: It always amazes me just how
 persistent this species has been on the UTC in spite of
 the best efforts of several forces to extirpate it
 here. This should be The National Bird of Houston;
 instead we view it as an impediment to development!
 Though our best wishes are with you, GP Chicken; alas, I
 fear you will be but an "e" on the UTC checklist of the
 future.

Sanderling: Incredible as it may seem, the only report
 of this fairly common summering species was from 50
 miles offshore! Where are the sanderlings? Steve
 Williams also echoes the question: "There were ...
 not any Sanderlings at either East Galveston or High
 Island beaches, which in my memory doesn't happen too
 often even in summer." Is this real or summer observer
 doldrums?

Western Kingbirds: First of all, note I got it right
 this year - "kingbirds" instead of "flycatchers"! Bob
 Honig has done a rather extensive check of potential
 nesting locations (i. e., HL&P substations) in the
 southwest Houston area with the suspected results.
 Western Kingbirds are nesting at a good number of HL&P
 substations. Here is a summary:

Substation	W. Kingbirds present	Nesting Activity
Bellaire (on Newcastle)	yes	fledglings
Hillcroft (Westpark near SWFwy)	yes	nestlings
(Gessner & Harwin)	yes	nestling
(Rogerdale & Harwin)	yes	none
Kirby (SWFwy & Wakeforest)	yes	fledglings
White Oak (34th St. near Ella)	yes	none
Brays (S. Braeswood)	yes	none
Sims Bayou (Alameda, s. of Holmes)	yes	fledgling
Hiram Clark Power Plant (S. Main)	yes	fledglings
Missouri City (F.M. 2234)	yes	fledglings
Stafford	no	
Roark (between Bissonet & SWFwy)	no	
Clodine	no	
Garrett (Richmond & Main)	no	
(Fondren bet. Bellfort & Braeswood)	no	
(Beechnut, w. of Gessner)	no	
(Belle Park Dr. w. of Wilcrest)	no	
(S. Kirby, s. of 610)	no	
Blueridge (Hillcroft & S. Main)	no	

In addition to the above, he has found, in July, two
 more substations with nesting activity; in Alief and
 near the intersection of Wilcrest & Briar Park. One
 really begins to wonder, with this many birds around,
 how long Western Kingbirds have been nesting here.

CLEARING HOUSE JULY, 1985

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made on the Upper Texas Coast. How to read the CH: Location--(how many)date,observers. Common, widely distributed species on the UTC during the reported month are listed as follows: number of reports, (lowest # - highest #; total number of individuals seen), e.g. 8 reports (1-40:82). Noteworthy sightings will be underlined, capitalized, or both, according to their status. Birds with very rare, vagrant, accidental, or no status on the Checklist at the date of sighting require details. Sightings needing details but submitted without them will not be included in the regular Clearing House. All observations affecting the species status on the current UTC Checklist must be accepted by the Checklist Committee. Documentation is a must for consideration by the Committee.

ABBREVIATION CODES

AB = Armand Bayou
 ANWR = Anahuac NWR
 BBSP = Brazos Bend SP
 BC = Brazoria Co.
 CC = Chambers Co.
 EG = E. Galveston
 EP = Eisenhower Park
 FBC = Ft. Bend Co.
 GC = Galveston Co.
 GISP = Galveston Is. SP
 H = Houston
 HA = Houston Arboretum
 LC = Lake Charlotte

ML = Manor Lake
 OyCr = Oyster Creek
 Pasa = Pasadena
 PPM = Peach Pt. Marsh, BC
 SEH = SE Houston
 SJSP = San Jacinto SP
 SLP = San Luis Pass
 SWH = SW Houston
 WGI = W. Galveston Island
 WH = W. Houston
 WHC = W. Harris Co.
 WMP = White Memorial Park
 WOB = White Oak Bayou

140 Species reported this month.

Grebe,Pied-billed: ANWR-(15)11,DM; BBSP-(2)19,DM
 Pelican,American White: SJSP-(4)25,(3)31,DM
 Cormorant,Olivaceous: Galv. Bay-(2)6,MA; WGI-(1)21,JB;
 SJSP-(5)25,DM; ANWR-(2)27,AM; GISP-(2)29,DM
 Anhinga: BBSP-(30)6,HT;(10)13,MA;(20)13,HW;(20)19,DM;
 WHC-(1)13,HW
 Frigatebird,Magnificent: WGI-(35)6,MA; Surfside-
 (3)21,JB; GISP-(1)mm29,DM; SLP-(2)mm29,DM
 Bittern,Least: ANWR-(4)11,DM;(1)27,AM; BBSP-(2)13,MA
 Heron,Great Blue: 11 reports (1-20:55)
 Egret,Great: 11 reports (3-40:131)
 Egret,Snowy: 10 reports (1-40:108)
 Heron,Little Blue: 9 reports (1-25:73)
 Heron,Tricolored: 8 reports (2-40:70)
 Egret,Reddish: SJSP-(2)25,DM; GC-(10)29,DM
 Egret,Cattle: 10 reports (6-500:2076)
 Heron,Green-backed: 9 reports (1-10:30)
 Night-Heron,Black-crowned: 8 reports (1-8:19)
 Night-Heron,Yellow-crowned: 11 reports (1-30:56)
 Ibis,White: 8 reports (1-100:275)
 Ibis,White-faced: 9 reports (2-20:100)
 Spoonbill,Roseate: 8 reports (1-40:122)
 Stork,Wood: FBC-(2)20,MPJ; SJSP-(1)25,(6)31,DM;
 PPM-(3)27,HW
 Whistling-Duck,Fulvous: GC-(5)7,RMP
 Whistling-Duck,Black-bellied: BBSP-(3)6,HT;(3)13,MA;
 (7)13,HW;(5)19,DM
 Duck,Wood: BBSP-(3)13,HW
 Duck,Mottled: 6 reports (1-100:185)
 Mallard: FBC-(1)6,HT (Male, ed.)
 Vulture,Black: 6 reports (1-25:36)
 Vulture,Turkey: 12 reports (1-10:47)
 Osprey: Clear Lake-(1)6,MA (See notes, ed.)
 Kite,Mississippi: FBC-(1)6,HT;(1)20,MPJ; Piney Point-
 (1)6,7,9,(2)17,20,21,23,24,(3)22,RT; Dewalt-(1)13,MA;
 BBSP-(1)19,DM; Westbury-(2)21,(1)28,29,30,PM
 (See notes and also Ed. Notes in JUNE CH, ed.)
 Harrier,Northern: Freepert-(1)6,MA
 Hawk,Red-shouldered: 8 reports (1-7:16)
 Hawk,Swainson's: Pasa-(1)3-30,RP; Fannin at 610-(1)light
 phase)18,DM; SWH-(1)21,8H;(1)29,8B (See Ed. Notes)
 Hawk,White-tailed: BC-(1)first-yr)6,MA (Nesting area)
 Hawk,Red-tailed: PPM-(1)27,HW
 Bobwhite,Northern: GC-(1)7,RMP; BBSP-(2)13,MA;
 WHC-(1)13,HW; PPM-(2)27,HW
 Rail,Black: BC-(3)voice)6,MA
 Rail,Clapper: GC-(1)7,RMP; WGI-(10)21,JB;(6)29,DM;
 GISP-(1)29,DM; SLP-(1)29,DM
 Rail,King: WHC-(2)4,HT; ANWR-(2)11,DM;(5)27,AM
 Gallinule,Purple: ANWR-(15)11,DM;(6)27,AM;
 BBSP-(10)inc 4 chicks)13,MA;(4)19,DM
 Moorhen,Common: 6 reports (10-150:260)
 Coot,American: ANWR-(7)27,AM (Common status, ed.)
 Plover,Black-bellied: SLP-(70)6,MA;(2)29,DM;
 GC-(5)7,RMP; EG-(5)29,DM; WGI-(3)29,DM
 Plover,Snowy: SLP-(1)29,DM
 Plover,Willson's: ANWR-(1)27,AM; SLP-(10)29,DM

Plover,Semipalmated: SLP-(3)6,MA; EG-(1)29,DM;
 WGI-(3)29,DM
 Plover,Piping: EG-(5)21,JB;(1)29,DM; SLP-(10)29,DM
 Killdeer: 7 reports (1-25:42)
 Oystercatcher,American: WGI-(2)21,JB;(8)29,DM
 Stilt,Black-necked: 6 reports (3-50:113)
 Avocet,American: GC-(4)7,RMP; EG-(1)29,DM
 Yellowlegs,Greater: GC-(2)7,RMP;(6)29,DM; PPM-(2)27,HW
 Yellowlegs,Lesser: WHC-(4)4,HT; GC-(2)7,RMP;(20)29,DM;
 ANWR-(1)11,DM; PPM-(25)27,HW
 Sandpiper,Solitary: ANWR-(1)27,AM
 Willet: 7 reports (1-60:133)
 Sandpiper,Spotted: LC-(1)18,DM;(1)25,DM; ANWR-(5)27,AM;
 WGI-(3)29,DM; SJSP-(1)31,DM
 Curlew,Long-billed: ANWR-(2)11,DM; WGI-(2)21,JB;(1)29,DM
 Godwit,Marbled: SLP-(9)6,MA;(1)29,DM; WGI-(4)29,DM
 Turnstone,Ruddy: EG-(1)21,JB;(3)29,DM; SLP-(2)29,DM
 Sanderling: ANWR-(7)27,AM; SLP-(130)29,DM; WGI-(2)29,DM
 Sandpiper,Western: WGI-(2)29,DM
 Sandpiper,Least: ANWR-(1)27,AM; EG-(4)29,DM;
 WGI-(6)29,DM
 dowitcher,sp.: SJSP-(5)25,DM; WGI-(20)29,DM
 WOODCOCK,AMERICAN: HA-(1)1,WC (See notes, ed.)
 Gull,Laughing: 6 reports (1-18000:20252)
 Gull,Ring-billed: PPM-(1)27,HW; ML-(1)27,HW
 Gull,Herring: SLP-(1)6,MA
 Tern,Gull-billed: GC-(1)7,RMP; WGI-(6)21,JB;
 ANWR-(1)27,AM
 Tern,Caspian: GC-(15)7,RMP; SJSP-(5)25,(2)31,DM;
 ANWR-(2)27,AM; WGI-(1)29,DM
 Tern,Royal: GC-(3)7,RMP;(300)29,DM; ANWR-(4)27,AM
 Tern,Sandwich: EG-(2)29,DM; SLP-(1)29,DM
 Tern,Forster's: 9 reports (1-20:64)
 Tern,Least: GC-(2)7,RMP; SJSP-(2)25,DM; EG-(60)29,DM;
 SLP-(15)29,DM
 Tern,Black: BC-(1)6,MA; SJSP-(4)25,DM; EG-(50)29,DM;
 SLP-(30)29,DM
 Skimmer,Black: 6 reports (2-60:98)
 Dove,Rock: 4 reports (1-40:84)
 Turtle-Dove,Ringed: Bellaire-(1)14,MA
 Dove,White-winged: WGI-(3)21,JB
 Dove,Mourning: 13 reports (2-30:104)
 Dove,Inca: 9 reports (1-25:48)
 Parakeet,Monk: SWH-(2)21,8H
 Cuckoo,Yellow-billed: 9 reports (1-6:20)
 Barn-Owl,Common: League City-(1)7,RMP; ANWR-(1)27,AM
 Owl,Barred: BBSP-(4)6,HT;(1)13,MA;(5)13,HW;(2)19,DM;
 WMP-(1)18,DM
 Nighthawk,Common: 10 reports (1-12:51)
 Swift,Chimney: 9 reports (1-150:257)
 Hummingbird,Ruby-throated: SWH-(1)7,RP; WH-(1)10,
 (2)13-31,RMB;(1)14,(1-2)21-31,JM; WMP-(2)11,(2)18,DM;
 (1)25,DM; WOB-(1)12,WC; BBSP-(5)19,DM; AB-(3)24,DM;
 HA-(2)26,DM
 Kingfisher,Belted: BBSP-(2)19,DM; ANWR-(1)27,AM
 Woodpecker,Red-headed: Kingwood-(3)7,14,JB; WMP-(2)11,
 (4)18,(2)25,DM; EP-(2)22,DM; Hermann Park-(2)24,RP;
 CC-(1)25,DM (See notes, ed.)
 Woodpecker,Red-bellied: 15 reports (1-20:80)
 Woodpecker,Downy: 11 reports (1-10:44)
 Flicker,Northern: WOB-(1)30,WC
 Woodpecker,Pileated: BBSP-(1)6,HT;(1)13,MA;(1)13,HW;
 (10)19,DM; CC-(8)11,DM;(2)25,DM; WMP-(5)18,DM;
 EP-(2)22,DM; HA-(2)26,DM
 Flycatcher,Acadian: BBSP-(2)6,HT;(14)13,MA;(2)13,HW;
 (25)19,DM; EP-(2)22,DM
 Empidonax,sp.: WOB-(1)31,WC (See notes, ed.)
 Flycatcher,Great Crested: BBSP-(1)19,DM; AB-(1)24,DM;
 LC-(1)25,DM
 Kingbird,Western: 7 reports (1-6:26) (See summary in
 Ed. Notes)
 Kingbird,Eastern: 9 reports (1-25:67)
 Flycatcher,Scissor-tailed: 13 reports (1-15:66)
 Lark,Horned: BC-(1)6,MA (Common status, ed.)
 Martin,Purple: 12 reports (1-219:2812) (See Ed. Notes)
 Swallow,Cliff: OyCr-(1)5)6,HT (Nesting site, ed.)
 Swallow,Barn: ANWR-(15)27,AM; EG-(2)29,DM
 Jay,Blue: 12 reports (1-15:85)
 Crow,American: 9 reports (10-30:155)
 Chickadee,Carolina: 10 reports (2-100:259)
 Titmouse,Tufted: 10 reports (2-100:215)
 Nuthatch,Brown-headed: Kingwood-(1)6,25,JB
 Wren,Carolina: 10 reports (2-50:186)
 Gnatcatcher,Blue-gray: BBSP-(2)19,DM; EP-(2)22,DM;
 HA-(2)26,DM
 Bluebird,Eastern: EP-(1)22,DM
 Thrush,Wood: WOB-(1)1-31,WC; EP-(1)22,DM
 Robin,American: Kingwood-(1)1,JB; H-(1)3,PM
 Mockingbird,Northern: 16 reports (1-30:136)
 Shrike,Loggerhead: 11 reports (1-12:46)
 Starling,European: 8 reports (1-150:404)
 Vireo,White-eyed: 12 reports (1-35:81)
 Vireo,Yellow-throated: WMP-(1)11,DM;(3)25,DM
 Vireo,Red-eyed: 7 reports (1-5:15)

Parula, Northern: BBSP-(2)6, HT; (1)13, MA; LC-(1)11, DM; BBSP-(1)19, DM
 Warbler, Pine: WMP-(1)11, (2)18, DM; EP-(6)22, DM
 Warbler, Black-and-white: LC-(1)11, DM; WMP-(1)11, 18, DM; (3)25, DM; BBSP-(2)19, DM; EP-(1)22, DM; AB-(10)24, DM; HA-(2)26, DM (DM reports, "of 21 birds, no males", ed.)
 Warbler, Prothonotary: BBSP-(1)13, HW; (3)19, DM
 Warbler, Swainson's: Kingwood-(1)7, (2)14, JB; LC-(3)25, DM
 WATERTHRUSH, LOUISIANA: Kingwood-(1)7, JB; WMP-(1)11-24, (2)25, DM; LC-(1)18, DM (See notes, ed.)
 Warbler, Kentucky: LC-(1)18, DM; (1 Imm)25, DM
 Yellowthroat, Common: 5 reports (1-5; 13)
 Warbler, Hooded: HA-(1 male)1, WC; BBSP-(2)19, DM; EP-(1)22, DM
 Tanager, Summer: 8 reports (1-5; 16)
 Cardinal, Northern: 17 reports (2-100; 347)
 Grosbeak, Blue: FBC-(1)20, MPJ
 Bunting, Painted: 12 reports (1-8; 23)
 Dickcissel: WHC-(1)13, HW; FBC-(1)13, HW; ANWR-(8)27, AM; PPM-(20)27, HW
 Sparrow, Seaside: ANWR-(3)11, DM; PPM-(2)27, HW
 Blackbird, Red-winged: 8 reports (4-1000; 1438)
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 13 reports (2-20; 111)
 Grackle, Great-tailed: 7 reports (1-500; 933)
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: 5 reports (2-19; 46)
 Grackle, Common: 5 reports (4-80; 157)
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: 7 reports (1-25; 82)
 blackbird, sp.: BBSP-(2500)13, HW
 Oriole, Orchard: 7 reports (1-3; 14)
 Sparrow, House: 9 reports (8-250; 450)

CONTRIBUTORS - July, 1985

AM=Art MacKinnon; BH=Bob Honig; DM=Derek Muschalek; DN=David Marrack; HT=BH & RT; HW=BH, Doug Williams; JB=John Buckman; JM=Jim Morgan; MA=Mike Austin; MPJ=Margaret & Paul Jones; PM=Peggy Milstead; RB=Ron Braun; RMB=Ron & Marcia Braun; RMP=Randy & Matt Pinkston; RP=Randy Pinkston; RT=Robert Thacker; WC=Wesley Cureton

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES - July, 1985

Osprey: Soaring high in the sky along the north shore of Clear Lake at the exit of Taylor Lake (just below Armand Bayou Nature Center where I have observed the species frequently in the past). Watched for four minutes with 7X35 binoculars from a friend's sailboat.

Relatively large, predominantly white raptor. Long, narrow wings with pronounced bend at the wrist. Dark blotch on underside of wing at carpal angle. Dark mask through eye. -- Mike Austin

Mississippi Kite: Over Crabb River Rd. near US 59. Seen soaring over trees and adjacent field near road. Hawk with long tail & long pointed wings. General medium gray appearance with darker tail, lighter head, & light secondaries when viewed from above; black area around eye. -- Bob Honig

Mississippi Kite: Seen perched with back towards me, 60' up in dead tree on the Brazos River Trail. Bird had dark gray back with a much lighter, almost white head; fairly long, slightly notched all black tail; long pointed black primaries extended slightly past tail. Observed with 10X50 binocs for 5 minutes in excellent light. Bird remained in tree as I walked away. -- Derek Muschalek

AMERICAN WOODCOCK: No Records for 1st Wk - Flew up from ground at a rather sharp angle in damp woods on slope toward bayou. Wings whistled in familiar way. A little bigger than a bobwhite. I saw a brownish-orange breast. I have scared up many woodcock in this way. -- Wesley Cureton

Red-headed Woodpecker: July 24 - There were two Red-headed Woodpeckers in the pine grove behind Miller Outdoor Theatre. Judging from the other calls I heard around them, I would estimate there to be a family group, perhaps even a small population, in that area. This was quite a surprise to me since Red-headed's are so seldom seen in the city even at the Arboretum. The grove was appropriate habitat, however, comprising some large hardwoods and scattered tall pine snags. -- Randy Pinkston

(This bears watching! Ogers in the area should monitor these birds more closely. Due to habitat loss, the Red-headed Woodpecker population has declined significantly in Harris County. -- ed.)

Empidonax sp.: Probably not Acadian or Yellow-bellied; very gray and dusky. -- Wesley Cureton

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH: No Records for First 2 Wks. -

July 7th - Kingwood

General warbler configuration; rather large size for warbler; long-tailed look while standing; longish bill; prominent dead white eye stripe, widening in back of eye & extending well back on head; rather finely striped breast; more boldly striped sides overlaid with buff-yellow on flanks; background color of underparts white; upperparts plain brown; cap darkish; legs pink. Bird was seen on ground near a stream & was rocking like a Spotted Sandpiper. Observed 15-30 seconds there at 20-30 ft with 7X50 binoculars in excellent light. Bird flew & was observed for about 5-10 seconds at 50-70 ft in a tree. I am familiar with this species from New Jersey. Ruled out Northern Waterthrush by eye stripe shape & length, longer bill & buff-yellow flanks. -- John Buckman

July 11th - White Memorial Park

Located initially on July 11, on Turtle Bayou by sharp "chink" call. Bird was walking about near edge of sluggish water about 2" deep. During the 25 min. observation (3:40 PM to 4:05 PM) this bird constantly bobbed its tail. Sometimes it would use its long bill to flip over Magnolia leaves, & occasionally it would even leap into the air to catch flying insects. Looking at the bird with 10X50 binocs from 20-30 ft, I saw the following field marks: solid brown upperparts; white eyebrow that became noticeably broader behind eye; pure white throat; white underparts with dark brown streaking that contrasted with buffy flanks; buffy undertail coverts; long bill & pinkish colored legs. This bird was observed for 20 min each on July 18 & 25 in this general location. On July 25, I decided to explore a remote area south of this location. About 400 yds downstream I found yet another waterthrush walking about that proved to be a Louisiana Waterthrush, having the same field marks as previous bird. Since both these birds were solitary & showed no nesting behavior, I assume they are post-nesting wanderers from either Liberty or Hardin Counties. This bird has never been found nesting on the UTC, but in the future keep an eye out for these birds. -- Derek Muschalek

July 18th - Lake Charlotte

Located by sharp "chink" call. Bird was walking in moist woodland cover near sluggish swamp that drains into Lake Charlotte. During the 5 min observation, this bird constantly bobbed its tail. It displayed waterthrush characteristics by teetering (walking unsteadily) & bobbing (quick jerking movements of the head or body). Bird had solid brown upperparts; white eyebrow that became broader behind eye; long pointed bill; white unstreaked throat; white underparts with brown streaking that contrasted with buffy flanks; pinkish leg color. Used 10X50 binocs at 25' in good light. -- Derek Muschalek

CH EDITOR'S NOTES - July, 1985

Swainson's Hawk: Both Steve Williams & David Marrack have commented on the presence of Swainson's Hawk this summer. There have been a number of sightings reported from the southwest part of town. I too have observed a Swainson's near the corner of Westpark & Briarpark on several occasions this summer. David says "I suspect this bird [the one he reported this month] or a similar one is that which I have seen occasionally since March, '85 at various points in the area of Fondren at Main, Post Oak at Fuqua, Alameda at Alameda-Genoa, & 610 South." The 13 birds reported in June was a bit high; the ave. for the previous 6 years is 3.2 individuals. However, the 4 reported this month is quite in line with the 3.3 six-year average for July. It would be nice to document the nesting site of the birds over the south side of the city. Both BLOT & the TOS Checklist (2nd ed.) give little clue that Swainson's Hawk is a regular summer resident of the UTC.

Acadian/Yellow-bellied Flycatchers: The following from Mike Austin in the continuing saga: "Addendum to last fall's 'Clearing House Editor's Challenge' re: differentiation of Yellow-bellied vs. Acadian Flycatchers.

On July 13th, to cure the 'summer birding doldrums', I visited Brazos Bend State Park. There I was surprised to find large numbers of Acadian Flycatchers still calling on territory. I thus availed myself of the opportunity to study, often close at hand, what I must infer were adult male Acadian Flycatchers. Hence, I do not know if one can extrapolate these comments to fall/immature of the species.

I found the birds to be remarkably like the picture in the new National Geographic North American Field Guide. Of note were the relatively long, heavy bill (for an empidonax) with the entire lower mandible pale, a buffy eyering & wingbars (the former more distinct than on 'Trall's' but not clear lemon yellow like the Yellow-bellied I reported from Johnson property in May). Also of note was the more angular head. Hopefully, these subtle characteristics may help us determine which species we are seeing in autumn if the bird in question can be seen under optimal conditions."

Western Kingbird: The following nesting activity report comes from Bob Honig:

HL&P Substation Location	7/1	7/4	7/14	7/15	7/21	7/28
Newcastle & Westpark			1		2	0
Westpark near US 59			2		0	0
Gessner & Harwin			2+n		2+2N	0
Rogerdale near Harwin	1		0		0	0
SW Fwy & Wakeforest			1		0	
Hiram Clark @ Alt 90						1
Baneway - S. of Bellaire	2+1F			2+3F		
Hayes - W. of Wilcrest	1			0		
FM1093 - W. of FM723		2+n				

adults + n=nest
N=nestling
F=fledgling

Purple Martins: Peggy Milstead has sent a note concerning the staging Purple Martins in the Meyerland area. She has several interesting items which I will summarize here: Meyerland Center has apparently cut all of its trees to 3 ft to avoid the martins congregating there (apparently successfully, with regard to the martins at least). A group of martins that roost in two medium-sized Live Oak trees near 9200 Burdine just north of N. Braeswood have not been deterred by aluminum pie tins hung in the trees. These birds come in to roost about 8:35-8:50 PM, choosing two specific trees over others in the area. Peggy wonders where the former Meyerland Center birds are staging. Anyone seen any other staging areas? If you are wondering about the 2191 individuals reported for the high number, Peggy actually counted the Purple Martins coming out the trees on Burdine one morning from 5:45 to 6:29 AM. Yes, that does say AM!

Swainson's Warbler: To answer a request from Derek Muschalek for historical information about the summer status of Swainson's Warbler, I have put together the following monthly totals. It seems Derek questions the "common" status of this species on the current UTC Checklist.

Year	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
1985	-	12	1	1	6	-	-
1984	-	13+	12+	-	-	-	1
1983	-	16	3	-	-	-	-
1982	1	45	4	-	-	-	-
1981	-	13	3	5	-	-	-
1980	1	17	5	1	1	-	3
1979	-	14	8	3	3	-	2

+ = minimum number; actual number not determinable
- = none reported

Well, one can come to several (and often contradictory) conclusions from the above data. However, consider the following: (1) Swainson's Warbler is not particularly an easy bird to see because of its habits, (2) by late summer the birds have stopped singing and can be rather secretive, & (3) inaccuracies in the CH data due to varying observer numbers, interest (particularly in the summer heat), etc. My own feeling is that the bird is a common nester on the UTC; that if you want to find it as a nesting bird, look in June while the birds are singing; and that the above numbers do not support the "common" status through three weeks of August. However, considering items 1-3 above, I'm only ready to take its status under consideration, not change it now.

Noel's Niche Looking Back

.....Ten Years Ago This Month
From July 1975 Spoonbill:

"NO MORE BIRDING FOR AKM

Arlie McKay, whom everyone knew as THE birder in this area, died June 24, 1975, from injuries received in an automobile accident. He was a contributor to the SPOONBILL from its inception in 1952, and no Clearing House was complete without his observations. We who knew him have been grieving for Arlie because his diminishing eyesight was curtailing his enjoyment in birding, but now we grieve for ourselves for the loss of this wise, warm and witty man.

ARLIE - by T. Ben Feltner

With the death of Arlie McKay the OG has lost one of its greatest and best loved of its members. The man was quite possibly the best field birder in the state, but he was more than that. It is fashionable these days to place great emphasis on listing. To see five hundred or six hundred species of birds remains the goal of many of us. Perhaps we have attached too much of our ego to these aims. It is interesting to note that Arlie never played this game except on a personal basis.

Long ago he realized that he would never travel extensively, so he set about defining his own birding boundaries and from that time on contented himself with those self-imposed perimeters. From Sept. 5, 1934 to Feb. 24, 1975 Arlie birded and recorded every individual bird that he saw or heard each day in northwest Chambers County, from Cedar Bayou east to the Trinity River and north to the Liberty County line. He knew the birds he saw intimately, and his expertise in the field in the checklist area is unsurpassed. In his four decades of daily observations within this 150 sq. mi. area, Arlie compiled an incredible total of 344 species.

The last time I birded with Arlie he showed several of us the Rock Wren. His hearing was poor and cataracts had precluded his seeing even the most common birds that day, and I realized slowly that he had initially identified the bird by its outline only, and the fact that he knew what it wasn't. It is a tribute to his skill that he added a number of birds to the checklist.

He was perhaps the only person whose word was totally reliable. When he reported a rare bird you could depend on it. Black Swift, Barrow's Goldeneye, Smooth-billed Ani, Varied Thrush, Sooty Tern--these were a few of the unusual species that he found, and although there is no irrefutable proof that he saw them, and many experts will not accept them, there is no doubt in my mind. If Arlie had reported a Whiskered Auklet in Old River there would have been one there.

