



# THE SPOONBILL

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

## 1971 CHRISTMAS COUNT by Sarah Gordon

We want this reminder to alert you to the date of our Christmas Count this year. Mark your calendar for Sunday, January 2nd, and make your plans now to participate.

For those who are new members it might be of interest to know that the first annual Christmas Bird Census was in 1900, and only 25 reports were submitted. Only 27 people participated. Last year a record breaking 903 reports were published with over 16,000 observers. Texas alone had 53 counts published, more than any other state. How fortunate we are to live in such a good birding area!

The purpose of the Christmas Count is to keep track of our changing bird populations. It is one of our most exciting and stimulating field trips of the year, and participants derive much fun and excitement year after year. The count makes it possible to accurately follow the frequency and geographical extent of northern birds, the spread of such birds as the Sterling and House Sparrow across the country. Also birds such as Cattle Egrets can be traced. Population trends are followed, and an index to the changes in abundance of birds in wintering areas are obtained. In the future the Christmas Count should become even more valuable as a means of showing trends in bird population as a result of such things as use of insecticides, growth of cities, drainage of marshes and any other means of changing habitat.

The Christmas Count offers not only the excitement of finding a "rarity" or unexpected out-of-range or out-of-season bird and the satisfaction of aiding the cause of conservation, but also fellowship with those who love birds and enjoy our woods, streams and marshlands.

Detailed plans will be published in the December issue of The Spoonbill.

## FIELD TRIP TO ARMAND'S BAYOU by Avis Brister

The name of Armand Iramategui has a special place in the hearts of O.G. members. So on October 23 a field trip to Armand's Bayou and the area surrounding it had a special interest to this group of birders.

The land, which is presently owned by the Friendswood Development Company, has been preserved as a bird sanctuary. In this respect it is very valuable because coastal birds are found right alongside land birds. The bayou the adjoining coastal prairie and the finger of pine forest which filters into the area comprise a unique ecosystem that offers a rare opportunity for nature study.

The field trip was led by Mrs. Hana Ginsburg, a director of the Houston Audubon Society, and a hike through the area produced 43 birds. Notable among them were the uncommon Osprey, the Eastern Bluebird, a Cooper's Hawk and a winter wren. To the delight of all, the Pileated Woodpeckers were very much in evidence. Their drumming and calls were heard frequently, and several times they were observed on the dead trees that rose from the waters of the bayou.

At the conclusion of the trip the 33 people attending gathered for a picnic lunch at the Bay Area Park.

MORE ON THE MYSTERIOUS PARAKEETS by John I. Tveten

In May, 1971, there was a flurry of "parrot" sightings in the Houston area (SPOONBILL, June 1971). Since these were obviously escaped birds my interest soon waned; however, recent developments in other areas of the country would seem to make the subject worthy of some further discussion.

My first sighting was a bird flying over the woods behind my house in Baytown. I was not able to see the coloring, but the general shape plus the loud calls which first caught my attention made me believe it was a large parakeet. I had recently seen many of these birds in Mexico and South America.

Soon after this Norma Gates called to tell me about a nesting pair of parakeets in Swan Lagoon near the Manned Spacecraft Center. I was able to obtain some color pictures of these birds and also photographed the "nest". The birds were definitely large parakeets, and Gloria and I estimated their length at 10-12 inches. The forehead and upper breast were gray with a hint of bluish in some lights. This shaded to pale yellow on the lower breast and then to yellow-green in the remainder of the underside. The rest of the head and the back were a darker green. The green wings were marked with blue in flight, and the long, pointed, green tail had yellow in the outer feathers. The bill was light.

There were two birds, and they were engaged in building a large structure in the top of a palm tree. This "nest" was somewhat larger than a basketball with a large opening on one side near the top. It was constructed of green, leafy twigs about a foot long which the birds neatly snipped from nearby trees and wove into the ball. All of this activity was to the accompaniment of continuous raucous chatter (which, I understand, almost caused them to be shot by their landlord).

After checking the parrot descriptions in all the books I could find, I found that our notes<sup>and</sup> the color photographs corresponded exactly to the description of the Monk Parakeet, *Myiopsitta monachus*, of South America (DeSchaunsee, A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF SOUTH AMERICA). I have since seen the birds for sale in pet stores under the name "Quaker Parrot". At about the same time other people reported sighting parrots in Houston and Galveston, and the same general description applied to these birds.

The recent issue of AMERICAN BIRDS, INCORPORATING AUDUBON FIELD NOTES (August, 1971) renewed my interest in the parakeets by stating that the Monk Parakeet "...now breeding in several East Coast suburban areas, promises to become the next major new introduced species in the Northeast. It establishes communal roosts or nest sites extraordinarily quickly after first appearing in an area." It is evidently established in the wild, and several survived the winter in Pleasantville, New Jersey, where they built "several large structures apparently used for roosting." Several colonies have also been reported in the New York area.

Shortly after photographing the parakeets at Swan Lagoon I went out of town, and I do not know the fate of the birds. They may have nested, or the structure we saw may have been used merely for roosting as described above. It seems, however, that they may still be in the area. If the species can survive and breed in the Northeast, it is not unlikely that a breeding population will be established here. It would be interesting to document any future developments.

NEW MEMBERS

We wish to welcome as new members Mr. and Mrs. Paul W. Nimmons, Jr., 7702 Westview, Houston 77055.

SLIDES PRESENTED

The slides used in our program on hawks at the October meeting have been given to the Ornithology Group Slide Library by Mr. and Mrs. T. Paul Jones. Their gift is most appreciated and adds to our growing slide library. We hope members of the O.G. will use not only the slides but will check out available books.

BALD EAGLE PROTECTION

As reported in the minutes of the October 7 O.G. meeting, a Florida real estate developer set aside some land in a new development to protect a family of Bald Eagles. We had not seen the article which appeared in the September 27 issue of the Houston Post, but Noel Pettingell was kind enough to send it to us, so we can give more information on the ar-

ticle to those who neither read it nor attended the meeting.

Dick Bonds, the developer, was working on an 1,100-acre development near Orlando when company architects reported to him that they had seen a family of Bald Eagles in some woods next to the planned golf course.

Bonds decided that the eagles were there first, and they would keep their home for as long as they wanted to remain there. After consulting with an Audubon Society chapter he set aside 32 acres around the nesting area as a sanctuary, cancelling plans for 100 homes at a potential loss of \$620,000. For additional protection Bonds revised plans for the golf course and dug a moat around the sanctuary.

Quoting the Post, "The Florida developer admits he didn't boot away that \$620,000 without some agony and anguish. But against this, he remembers the first time he went out to see the eagles.

"I saw them from a distance. It was late in the afternoon. The sun was setting and they were wheeling around a lake. They were beautiful, just beautiful."

We wish there were multitudes of people in the world like Mr. Bonds.

#### HUMMINGBIRD TALE

Mrs. Bessie Cornelius sent us an interesting story about hummingbirds given to her, and written by, Mrs. J.A. Saldana, a teacher at Langham Elementary School in Nederland, Texas.

Recently a hummingbird flew in the window of Langham Elementary School in Nederland. The children's delight soon turned to concern when it became obvious that the tiny bird was staying far above the windows in the high-ceilinged room and might not be able to find its way back outside.

Since the bird was still flying in the room the next morning, one of the teachers brought a feeder filled with red sugar water and hung it beneath a window, hoping to lure the bird low enough to escape. The usually timid hummingbird did not even wait for the teacher to move out of the way. He flew to the feeder as it was being hung and vainly tried to find a way to get at the food. After a few seconds he flew through the window without any nourishment. Two days later a second hummingbird flew into the same room, and again the red sugar water lured it out through the window in a matter of seconds. A search outside that particular room revealed nothing more enticing than a row of shrubbery. However, the teacher whose room had attracted the birds does have red hair.

A point to be noted in these two instances and again a week later when a third hummingbird flew into the school, was that none of the birds took time to actually eat from the feeder. Anyone who finds himself in the position of having to free a trapped hummingbird can probably have as much success using plain red water.

#### BIRDING IN ARIZONA by Dorothy and David Lefkovits

In October we spent a few days traveling in Arizona and New Mexico and just happened to manage to get in a little birding while there. Most of our birding was done during parts of five days from October 19-23 in Arizona.

We arrived at Cave Creek Ranch near the Chiricahua Mountains in late afternoon on the 19th and left after making a morning round on the 21st. This is one of our favorite spots, and we saw a pretty good variety of birds at the ranch and in the surrounding area. There were still three species of hummingbirds there: the Blue-throated, Anna's and Rufous. Mrs. Hisks told us that she had 11 species during the summer, including a Beryllium (?), which we understood her to say was a first record for the U.S. It stayed about a month.

On the afternoon of the 21st we arrived in Patagonia, where we birded along Sonoita Creek in the Nature Conservancy Refuge that afternoon and the following morning. The birding was excellent, and the high spots for us were sightings of the white-throated Swift, Gilded Flicker, Black Phoebe and a number of Ground Doves. There was quite a variety of sparrows, many of which were immatures and hard for us to identify. One surprise for us was the appearance of two Common Snipe.

That was the end of the best birding, but we were surprised the next day to see what we first thought to be some sort of blackbird in the middle of the highway near Saf-

ford turn out to be a Lewis' woodpecker.

Another sight wethought was unusual was just a few miles east of Ozona, in normally dry country, where there were several large ponds due to recent rains. In one there were several hundred Coots, plus some Pied-billed Grebes and Ruddy Ducks. These were quite unexpected.

CLEARING HOUSE, OCTOBER, 1971

- Grebe, Horned: (1+)25, CP & DP, Cove.  
Bared: (6)24, (15+)25, (1)27, CP & DP, Cove; (1)31, Warren Ranch Lake, DHH.  
Pied-billed: (3)4, Cove, CP; (1)9, (2)30, Cove, AKM.
- Felican, white: (300)9,20, (4C)21, Cove, AKM.
- Cormorant, Double-crested: (2)9,21, Cove, AKM; (49+)10, (84+)31, Warren Ranch Lake, DHH.  
Olivaceous: (3)4, (8)9, (1)21, Cove, AKM.
- Anhinga: (800+)7 (largest migrating flock I recall having seen) and (30+)7, Cove, AKM; (1)24, Cove, CP.
- Heron, Green: (1)9, Cove, AKM.
- Egret, Reddish: (1)4, (5)9, Cove, AKM.
- Nightheron, Black-crowned: (6-14)4,12,22, (26)7, (29)9, Cove, AKM.
- STORK, WOOD: (2)4, Cedar Bayou, (2)21, Cove, AKM.
- Ibis, white-faced: (150+)4, CP; (8)25, (8)25, CP & DP; (75+)30, AKM, all in Cove area.  
White: (6)4, Cove, CP.
- Spoonbill, Roseate: (63)9, (37+)21, (45)30, Cove, AKM. (The Fetings report many, especially immatures)
- Goose, Canada: (75+)13, flying over Baytown, D&DL.  
WHITE-FRONTED: (30+)4, Cove, DM; (22)5, Cove, CP & DP.  
Snow and Blue: (26)5, CP & DP; (NC, migrating)7, CP, DP & DM; (4 Blues)8, (1 white)9, (7)18, (NC)21, (15)22, (200+)27, AKM, all at Cove.
- Ducks, MALLARD: (6)11, (2)20, (2)21, Cove, CP & DP; (12+)31, Warren Ranch Lake, DHH.  
Nottled: (10)9, (3)20, (75+)30, Cove, AKM.  
GADWALL: (100+)7, (3)9, (50+)18,22 (8+)30, Cove, AKM.  
Pintail: (1)9, (150+)30, Cove, AKM.  
Teal, Green-winged: (15-50)7,9,18,22, (300+)30, Cove, AKM.  
Blue-winged: (3-8)4,9,18,22, (75+)7, Cove, AKM.  
Widgeon, American: (150+)7, (400+)7, CP; (900+)9, (10,000+)12, CP & DP; (up to 75+)18,22,30, AKM, all at Cove.  
Shoveler: (20)7, (40)9, (150+)30, Cove, AKM.  
Redhead: (140+)24, the only diving ducks among about 10,000, Cove, AKM.  
CANVASBACK: (6)31, Warren Lake, DHH.  
BUFFLEHEAD: (1)31, Warren Lake, DHH. (Unmistakable male, small size, white head patch and side)  
Ruddy: (17)31, Warren Lake, DHH; (5)9, Cove, AKM.
- Hawk, Sharp-shinned: (1)1st week, DP & CP; (1)15, CP; (1)21, AKM, all at Cove; (1)31, 10215 Chatterton, DHH; (1)11, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
Red-tailed: (1)10, (8)21, CP; (1)21, AKM, all at Cove.  
Broad-winged: (11)4, CP & DP, (1)7,21, AKM, Cove; (10)10, 10215 Chatterton, DHH.  
Swainson's: (1)4,7, Cove, AKM.  
Marsh: (1)4,6, (1-3)7 other days, (5)18,30, Cove, AKM.
- Osprey: (1)4,20, Cove, DP & CP.
- Hawk, Sparrow: (1-4)15 days, (10)9, (8)20, Cove, AKM.
- Rail, King: (1)31, Katy-Hockley Road, DHH.  
Clapper: (1)4, Cove, AKM.
- Gallinule, Commons: (1)22, Cove, AKM.
- Coot, American: (10-20)9,18,22,30, (100+) , Cove, AKM; (1)8, Sunken garden, Humble Bldg., downtown Houston, IR & MC (Had to be rescued, not enough room to take off).
- Plover, Semipalmated: (3)9, Cove, AKM.  
Black-bellied: (30+)4, Cove, CP; (1-6)9,18,21,22, Cove, AKM.
- Snipe, Common: (1-7)7,9,20,21,22, (20+)30, Cove, AKM.
- Curlew, Long-billed: (1)4, (96)11, (2)12, DP & CP; (2)9, (6)18, (4)21, AKM; (4)20, CP, all at Cove.
- Sandpiper, Spotted: (3)7, (2)2,20, Cove, AKM.
- Willet: (2)4, (62)9, (8)21, Cove, AKM.
- Yellowlegs, Greater: (6)9, (3+)18, (10)22, Cove, AKM.  
Lesser: (16+)12, (15)22, Cove, CP & DP; (NC, but very common)20, CP;(10+)18, (15)22, (3)30, AKM, all at Cove.
- Sandpiper, Least: (NC)5 days, Cove, AKM.

- Dunlin: (3)30, Cove, AKM.  
 Dowitcher, Short-billed: (NC)18, Cove, AKM.  
 Sp.: (1)9, (50+)18, (5)21, (20)22, (15)30, Cove, AKM.  
 Sandpiper, Semipalmated: (NC)9,18,30, Cove, AKM.  
 western: (NC)9,30, Cove, AKM.  
 Avocet, American: (4)9, (1)22, Cove, AKM; (4)10, (19)31, Warren Lake Area, DHH.  
 Stilt, Black-necked: (3)9, Cove, AKM.  
 Tern, Sandwich: (1 or more)4,9,21, Cove, AKM.  
 Dove, Ground: (1)22, Cove, CP.  
 Inca: (1-3)daily, 10215 Chatterton, DHH;(1)16, 1725 Longacre, W. Houston, NP;  
 (3)29, 1725 Longacre, HP.  
 Cuckoo, Sp.: (2)11, CP & DP.  
 Owl, Screech: (1)6, Cove, AKM;(1)13, 10215 Chatterton, DHH; (1)2, 1601 Woodlawn,  
 Baytown, D&DL.  
 Great-horned: (1)15, Cove, AKM.  
 Barred: (1)4, Cove, AKM.  
 Chuck-will's-widow: (2)4, Cove, AKM.  
 Nighthawk, Common: (2)1, (1)5, (1)13, 22,26, Downtown Houston, NP.  
 Swift, Chimney: (25)17, (2)23, 7146 Ilex, SE Houston, NP.  
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: (NC)daily, except 15th, Cove, AKM.  
 Kingfisher, Belted: (2)4, (8)9, Cove, AKM.  
 Flicker, Yellow-shafted: (1)7,10,18,26, Cove, CP; (3)9, (5)21, Cove, AKM.  
 Woodpecker, Pileated: (1)10, (1)13, Cove, CP.  
 Red-bellied: (2)4,9, (1)11,14,15,19,27, Cove, AKM.  
 Red-headed: (1)12, Cove, AKM.  
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: (1)21,Cove, AKM; (1)13, 10215 Chatterton, DHH.  
 Woodpecker, Downy: (1)4, Cove, AKM.  
 Kingbird, Eastern: (3)4, Cove, AKM.  
 Flycatcher, Great Crested: (1+)4, Cove, AKM; (1)1,2,3,5, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Phoebe, Eastern: (2)21, (1)24, Cove, AKM.  
 Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied: (1 or 2)4, Cove, AKM.  
 Empid. Sp. (8+)4, (4)9, (2)21, Cove, AKM.  
 Traill's: (1+)9, Cove, AKM.  
 Wood Pewee, Eastern: (3)4, (1)21, Cove, AKM.  
 Swallow Sp. (NC)21,26, Cove, AKM.  
 Barn: (NC)7,9,19,22,24, Cove, AKM.  
 Chickadee, Carolina: (4+)4,7, (2)9,21, Cove, AKM.  
 Titmouse, Tufted: (2)4,7,9, Cove, AKM.  
 Wren, House: (4)9, (1)21, Cove, AKM; (1)11, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Catbird: (1)5,6, (8)9,19, (2)21, Cove, C&DP.; (1)5, 1601 woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: (60+)4, (1)7, (75+)9,(2)21, Cove, AKM.  
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned: (1)28, 10215 Chatterton, DHH.  
 Ruby-crowned: (1)4, (3)9, Cove, AKM.  
 Vireo, White-eyed: (10)7, (2)9, Cove, AKM.  
 Solitary: (1)11,29, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Red-eyed: (3+)4, Cove, AKM; (1)3,4, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Philadelphia: (1)3, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 warbling: (2)4, Cove, AKM.  
 Warbler, Black & White: (25+)4, (5)9, Cove, AKM; (1)1,3, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Golden-winged: (2)4, Cove, AKM.  
 Orange-crowned: (1)7, Cove, C&DP.  
 Nashville: (20+)4,9, Cove, AKM.  
 Parula: (1)4, (2)9, Cove, AKM.  
 Yellow: (1)4, Cove, AKM.  
 Magnolia: (10+)4, (5)9, Cove, AKM; (1)1, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 TOWNSEND'S: (1)10, High Island, BGC.  
 Black-throated Green: (15+)4, Cove, AKM.  
 Chestnut-sided: (2)9, Cove, AKM; (1)10, 10215 Chatterton, DHH.  
 Pine: (1)28, (4)31, 10215 Chatterton, DHH.  
 Chat, Yellow-breasted: (1)9, Cove, AKM; (2)1,2,3,5, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Warbler, Wilson's: (1)31, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Canada: (1)4, Cove, AKM; (1)3, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Redstart, American: (6+)4, (1)9, Cove, AKM; (1)1, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Oriole, Baltimore: (2)4, (10+)9, Cove, AKM.  
 Tanager, Summer: (2)4, Cove, AKM.  
 Bunting, Indigo: (10+)21, Cove, AKM; (1)1,5, 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Sparrow, Savannah: (1)22, (6)30, Cove, AKM.  
 Seaside: (2)4, Cove, AKM.  
 White-throated: (1)21, Cove, AKM; (1)27,28, 10215 Chatterton, DHH; (1)31,  
 1601 Woodlawn, Baytown, D&DL.  
 Lincoln's: (1)21,22, Cove, AKM.

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS:

AKM	Arlie K. McKay	NP	Noel Pettingell
CP	Charles Peting	HP	Helen Perley
DP	Dennis Peting	D&DL	David & Dorothy Lefkovits
C&DP	Charles & Dennis Peting	DM	Damon McKay
DHH	Dan H. Hardy	BGC	Bessie G. Cornelius
LR&MC	Louise Rogers and Marilyn Crane		

BRAZORIA REFUGE HUNT

In a recent column, Harv Boughton, Houston Post Outdoors Editor, discussed the opening of a portion of the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge for duck hunting this year. A 400 acre section cut off from the mainland portion of the Refuge by the Intracoastal Canal is open to public hunting. Access to this part is only boat. Our first thought was that this type of activity seems foreign to the idea of a Refuge, but there may be some justification for it, so we decided to include this information for thought and discussion by our readers.

COMING EVENTS

- December 2 Regular OG meeting at 7:30 P.M. at the Fonde Recreation Center. The program is described by Program Chairman Margaret Jones as follows: we see the birds hopping from limb to limb, or flying from tree to tree, or soaring above, and that's about all we usually see. But Dr. John Tveten zeroes in on them from where they started and has a collection of pictures of "bird real estate", places most of us have not seen. So be with us when John gives a program on "Nests" (with or without tenants!).  
Thursday
- December 14 Regular ONC meeting at 8:00 P.M. in Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive. The program will be "Care of Animals at the Houston Zoo" presented by Dr. Fred K. Soifer.  
Tuesday
- December 19 Freeport Christmas Count, led by Victor Emanuel. For information on participation, call Mrs. Norma Oates, 668-6140.  
Sunday
- January 2 Houston Christmas Count as announced on Page 1 of Spoonbill. Miss Sarah Gordon is leader. Details will be given in the next Spoonbill.  
Sunday
- January 8 OG field trip to Cove area, led by Arlie K. McKay. The group will meet at 7:30 A.M. at the roadside park between Old River and Trinity River bridges off the right side of Interstate 10 heading east. This, hopefully, will be a "hawk" trip, but with the variety of birds normally in the Cove area and the ability and knowledge of Mr. McKay, it should be good for water bird and winter residents as well. Bring lunches.  
Saturday

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We, as present editors of The Spoonbill, in the interest of improving The Spoonbill and possibly assisting future editors, again would like to urge more widespread participation in contributions of material from our readers.

There especially should be more information for the Clearing House, but we also would like to have articles from more people about their birding trips in this area, birding vacations anywhere, good places to bird, or stories of experiences with birds, such as the one about the hummingbirds in the school room in this issue.

An item we think might be helpful in looking over the Clearing House is the method of listing rarities and accidentals. This was suggested by Noel Pettingell and is based on the 4th Edition Upper Texas Coast Field Check List.

One thing to be remembered is that the check list has not been revised since March, 1966, so that a few species which might be listed as rare or out-of-season may not be in that category at the present time.

- (A) CAPITALIZED AND UNDERLINED: Not on the 4th Edition Field Check List (January 1, 1956-December 31, 1965)

(B) CAPITALIZED ONLY

- (1) 1 to 5 records 1956 through 1965
- (2) Out-of-season (No previous or only 1 or 2 records, as indicated by dot (.) on Field Check List)
- (3) Earlier or later than extreme date appearing in "Check List of the Birds of the Upper Texas Coast" by Stephen G. Williams (1962)

- (C) Lower case and underlined: Rare at any time of year or when observed, according to Field Check List.

NOTES FROM TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT NEWS

Flooding of the Rio Grande River has caused temporary closing of Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park near Mission. TP & WD officials say the troubles started with tropical storm Fern, which dumped huge amounts of water on the area. Heavy rains since then have made it necessary to release large amounts of water from Falcon Reservoir, and the water has backed up behind Anzuldaus Dam south of Mission, inundating the park. All of the camping and picnic facilities have been under several feet of water. December 1 is the earliest possible date projected for the reopening of the park.

Birdseed is a dirty word for 23 Houstonians. The group of men opened the state's South Zone Mourning Dove hunting season in an expensive way by getting caught using grain to attract doves into shotgun range. The men were arrested by TP & WD game management officers near rearland, where they had an elaborate "shooting station" layout marked with colored ribbons and sprinkled liberally with maize. Fines assessed the group in a justice of the peace court totaled more than \$700.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department recently released 300 Afghan white-winged Pheasants in Terry County in West Texas. The release is a part of the long-range program of supplying a new bird for the hunter without interference or competition with native game bird numbers.

Just as surely as fall follows summer, hordes of crows begin to circulate in Texas skies. From as far away as Canada and as near as Oklahoma big Crow roosts disgorge the migrants who find home, sweet home in the grain fields of western Texas from Big Spring to Lubbock, across to the Panhandle and down as far as Colorado City and Sweetwater. Most of the state's counties get a fair share of the birds, but perhaps no other area compares to the western counties, some of them with unofficial estimates of a million birds or more.

NEW RULES FOR FALCONERS from TP & WD News

In an effort to protect increasingly rare Peregrine and Prairie Falcons, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission has closed certain areas to trapping of all hawks and falcons. The trapping of raptors is now illegal in all coastal counties and in Brewster, Terrell and Presidio counties in the Big Bend area of the state, except by special permit. The three-county trapping ban in west Texas was voted to give extra protection to a small group of native Peregrine Falcons in that area.

Peregrine and Prairie falcons and their relatives on other continents are prized by falconers. But their numbers have so diminished in recent years that they have been receiving increasing protection in the United States.

This is particularly the case with the Peregrine, which once ranged over the entire eastern half of the U.S., department officials said. The bird now is considered extinct as a breeding species east of the Mississippi River. Persistent pesticides which hamper the birds' reproductive processes are blamed for the species' decline.

The commission also established a permit system for falconers, approved use of raptors as a means to hunt wild game birds, game animals or furbearers during open seasons, provided the falconer holds a valid permit from the department.

The beginner's permit allows the falconer to possess and use in falconry one of either Red-tailed Hawk, Harris Hawk or American Sparrow Hawk. The general falconry permit goes to falconers with three years or more of experience, and it allows them to possess three raptors of any species except kites, Ospreys, Golden Eagles, Bald Eagles, Caracaras, Aplomado Falcons and all owls except the Great-horned Owl, except by special permit.

A test is required to demonstrate the falconer's knowledge before a permit will be issued. Falconers must also show they are able to care for the birds, and minimum housing requirements were set forth.

The trapping season is September 15 to November 15, but falconers must have a permit before they trap birds. Raptors trapped must be less than one year of age, but no eggs may be taken.

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