

The *Spoonbill*

May 2000
Volume 49, No. 5

June Meeting Program

Saturday, June 10, 2000 12:00PM
Brazos Bend State Park
40 Acre Lake Picnic Area
8:00AM Birding

The OG will have its annual picnic at Brazos Bend State Park. Saturday June 10, 2000. Meet at the 40 Acre Lake Picnic Area for birding at 8:00 AM. Bring a picnic lunch for the meeting at 12:00 PM.

We will elect officers at this meeting. All of this year's officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer) have agreed to serve again. Nominations will be accepted at the meeting.

Contact Pat Pease at or 713-789-3306 for information.

Clearinghouse Editor needed!

A new Clearing House Editor is needed immediately. Mike Gremillion has resigned as Clearinghouse Editor. We need a new editor as soon as possible for this very important position. Contact David Sarkozi at 713-520-5906 or dsarkozi@flash.net

Many thanks to Mike for his help in the past months!

Learning Corner Coordinator needed!

The ONG needs someone to coordinate the Learning Corner for future meetings. Please call David Sarkozi to volunteer.

Chairman's Message

David Sarkozi

I've seen the future of birding and it looks very bright indeed. While I was scouting for the Great Texas Birding Classic GTBC, I ran into a couple of the "roughwing" teams. These teams are made up of kids, ages 8-13. I was frankly impressed. These kids were good, very good. The winning team found 125 species in eight hours of birding. The third place team had 115.

Think about this achievement. How often have you had a 100 species day in that short a time? Not only did these kids find more than fifteen species per hour, they did it without a driver's license.

I watched and talked to them. They were excited about birding and while they made mistakes, they showed me that they were really learning and had knowledge many birders would envy.

The flame is lit, but we need to be fanning that flame. Birding can't be a once a year event for them. We need to nurture that interest. In short, we need field trips for them.

Are there any OG members up to this challenge? Would any of you be interested in developing a youth program? How about a youth committee? We need field trips and we need to get the word out to them. I think an excellent way would be to form a group that would advise merit badges for the Boy/Girl Scouts. We could reach many youths at once.

We need to do this. We need to form and train our own Roughwing team. Anyone up to getting ready to pass the torch?

Beginning Birding Using the Sounds Birds Make (Part 1)

Don Richardson

Birds are certainly vocal beings; they use sound extensively in their lives. The sounds they use that most readily come to mind are the songs they sing to attract mates and to establish breeding territories. Learning those songs is a great aid to the birder. Experienced birders probably find 80 percent of their birds by hearing them first. That number may not be precise, but it does make an important point, and that is to say that sound is a powerful tool with which to find and identify birds.

In a talk, I heard one of our finest local birders say that tanagers sound like tanagers, warblers sound like warblers, and vireos sound like vireos. At first, one might not place that statement at the top of the ladder of profoundness. It does belong there though, and it fits right into a thread of logic we have developed in the last few articles of this series. It fits into the idea of grouping birds in various ways. As we study the sounds birds make, we can find certain similarities in those sounds, then group the birds that make them much as we have grouped birds by their habitat, their structure, and their season. If we hear a bird and know that it is either a Hooded Warbler or a Swainson's Warbler, we know a lot more about it than if we can only say "yup, it's a bird".

One thing most field guides do for us is to describe the song and sounds of each species in the guide. It can be quite funny to try to pronounce some of the alpha representations of the songs of birds. In reading Peterson's (whom I hold in the highest regard) field guide, I can learn that the Western Meadowlark's "chupp" is lower than the rasping "dzrrt" of the Eastern. Now that ought to help. We can also learn that the Loggerhead Shrike sings "queedle, queedle", over and over, or "tsrup-see, tsrup-see". Pronouncing some of these spellings at the dinner table can provide some hilarious entertainment, to say the least. Seriously though, those field guide descriptions can be helpful sometimes. On a trip to southeast Arizona, we searched for a Five-striped Sparrow. We were handicapped by several factors. First, our guide had suffered a great deal of hearing loss. Second, we were looking southwest at a hillside where the sunlight was streaming down the hill from just over its crest and directly into our faces. I found a guide where song was described as "tsi-gp tsi-gp twsee twsee" all uttered in one second and repeated two or three times. We listened hard and, as terrible as that description looks, we were able to match a sound we heard to the sound and cadence we read about. We found the birds.

If you have access to CDs or tapes of bird songs and calls, I recommend that you play them as you read through this, and

the following article. You will be much more able to mentally hear what I am trying to describe as I comment on the sounds made by the various birds. If you are serious about birding, they will be a valuable resource for learning and reference. With practice, you can train your mind's ear to recognize many species songs and call notes and even other noises such as wing sounds, tapping and pecking, to the way they scratch the ground. A series of tapes were made a number of years ago called "Birding by Ear". There are eastern and western versions. I have found them to be very helpful in learning many of the things discussed right here in this two part article. I checked with the Chickadee Nature Store on Wirt Road and have learned they are still available along with the newer "More Birding by Ear", and they can be obtained on either cassette tape or CDs. Their use is highly recommended.

As you study bird sounds, try to find features about the sound that can "point" at things to remember. The mnemonics here, and those you develop yourself, will help you pull sound information into a set of indispensable birding tools. One thing I have learned to do is to try to read, aloud, those strangely spelled attempts to alphabetically reproduce bird songs. It may seem hopeless and you might not get much of an idea of the tonal content of the song, but it will give you a sense of the rhythm. Having that feel for the rhythm is a wonderful start.

The bird's name itself sometimes tells us something about its call. The Chickadee is named for the "Chickadee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee" song it sings. The Pewee says just that "Peweeeeeeeeee" and the Phoebe softly sings "Phoebeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee". The Whip-poor-will whistles through the night, "Whip'-poor-willll'" and the similar Chuck-will's-widow repeats its "Chuck-will'-will'" over and over.

Sometimes birders remember the songs of birds by verbalizing them with a series of words creating phonetic phrases. The White-throated Sparrow calls "Sam Peabody-peabody-peabody" or "Sweet Canada-canada-canada" while, in the nearby grasslands an Eastern Meadowlark sings "Spring-of-the-earth spring-of-the-earth". We compare the Great-horned Owl's "Who-who-who" with the question from the Barred Owl, "Who cooks for you, Who cooks for you-all". The tiny Inca Dove utters his never ending appliance commercial, "Whirlpool Whirlpool Whirlpool". And finally, the White-eyed Vireo makes his demand with an up-note at the beginning and the end of his order "Quick' bring me a beer Jack' ". Notice that I have used an accent mark on the words "quick" and "Jack" to show their emphasis. If you can listen to these songs, you'll get a better idea of how to use the phrases.

Creating the word phrases gives you another tool that can be just as helpful as the sound, and that's rhythm. We alluded to that before. As you read the word strings above, you can detect a rhythm or cadence. Try it with the example for the Barred Owl. Say the "Who cooks for you, Who cooks for you-al" phrase several times and then listen to a recording of the same to see what I mean.

Mental notes about things birds sound like might help connect sounds to a bird's identification. An excellent description is to say that a Black-and-white Warbler sounds like a squeaky wheel, a Field Sparrow makes the sound of a bouncing ping-pong ball, the Acadian Flycatcher reminds me of a hiccup, and a Wood Thrush sounds like a beautifully trained flautist. Other descriptive words would say that the Acadian Flycatcher is "abrupt", the Common Grackle is "harsh", and the Northern Parula is "ascending" with an ending "drop note".

Grouping sounds with similar characteristics reduces your identification possibilities to a smaller number. One series of sounds that go together are several squawk-like sounds that differ, to me, by their pitch. A Red-bellied Woodpecker utters a medium squawk. The red-headed Woodpecker utters a similar squawk, but higher in pitch. The Great-crested Flycatcher's squawk is also similar, but still higher. Hooded and Swainson's Warblers have songs with a similar catch note at the end. When I hear that, I pay attention to the beginning of the songs which are quite different in both tone and rhythm, and I can then identify the bird.

As you build your abilities to use bird sounds in identifying bird species, look for the kind of relationships discussed above and assemble your own set of mnemonics to work with. Nesting time is a particularly good time to learn sounds, as the birds are singing at the maximum while they attract mates and establish the boundaries of territories.

In the next article, we'll discuss some specific birds and songs. We'll see how we can group them and then how we can isolate the members of the group. Birds in the family *Mimidae* are mimics, and who knows what noise they'll make. This family includes the Gray Catbird, Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, and others. We can listen to the pattern and rhythm of their songs to tell them apart, and we'll see how. We will also discuss the use of sounds to attract and view birds. It's important that we don't interfere with others as they are birding. It is very important that we don't do harm to the birds themselves through our activities. We'll discuss some ethical considerations of the use of sound while birding. *Don is a regular writer and lecturer about birds and teaches a beginning birding field course in conjunction with the*

Houston Audubon Society. Contact him at (281) 997-0485 or cdplace@concentric.net

This is the seventh in a series of articles that he has generously agreed to do for the Spoonbill and for our beginning birders. The first was in the October/November 1999 issue. They have followed monthly after that. With Don's permission, we will be posting these articles on the OG web-site within 30-60 days after each has appeared in our newsletter. Don appreciates your comments on these articles.

Texas Bird Records Committee 1999 Report for the Upper Texas Coast

Mark Lockwood

(This report is a derivative of the full 1999 Report as published by the Texas Bird Records Committee, a standing committee of the Texas Ornithological Society. This report will add four new species to the UTC Checklist; King Eider, Yellow-footed Gull, Black Noddy, Violet-crowned Hummingbird --- David Sarkozi)

The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the AOU Checklist of North American Birds (AOU 1998). A number in parentheses after the species name represents the total number of accepted records in Texas for that species at the end of 1999. The numbers of accepted records are also listed for Lesser Black-backed Gull, Tropical Kingbird, and Clay-colored Robin, three species recently removed from Review List A, though retained on Review List B. All observers who submitted written documentation or photographs of accepted records are acknowledged by initials. If known, the initials of those who discovered a particular bird are in boldface, but only if the discoverers submitted supporting documentation. The TBRC file number of each accepted record will follow the observers' initials. If photographs or video recordings are on file with the TBRC, the Texas Photo Record File (TPRF) (Texas A&M University) number is also given. If an audio recording of the bird is on file with the TBRC, the Texas Bird Sounds Library (TBSL) (Sam Houston State University) number is also given. Specimen records are denoted with an asterisk (*) followed by the institution where the specimen is housed and the catalog number. The information in each account is usually based on the information provided in the original submitted documentation; however, in some cases this information has been supplemented with a full range of dates the bird(s) was present if that information was made available to the TBRC later. All locations in italics are counties.

TBRC Membership -- Members of the TBRC during 1999 who participated in decisions listed in this report were: Mark Lockwood, Chair, Keith Arnold, Academician, Greg Lasley, Secretary, Brush Freeman, Petra Hockey, Terry Maxwell, Martin Reid, Willie Sekula, and Barry Zimmer. During 1999, Terry Maxwell and Barry Zimmer were elected to second terms and the Chair, Academician, and Secretary were re-elected.

Additional Abbreviations. -- AOU = American Ornithologists' Union; NP = National Park; NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; SP = State Park; TCWC = Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection (Texas A&M University).

ACCEPTED RECORDS

- Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*) (14). One at Galveston, Galveston, on 14 December 1996 (1997-6).
- King Eider** (*Somateria spectabilis*) (1). A male at Quintana, Brazoria, from 30 April to 7 May 1998 (1998-59; TPRF 1729). This is the first documented record for Texas.
- Masked Duck** (*Nomonyx dominicus*) (54). Three at Brazoria NWR, Brazoria, from 16 October to 16 November 1968 (1999-51; TPRF 1726).
- Red Phalarope** (*Phalaropus fulicaria*) (27). San Luis Pass, Galveston, on 21 April 1999 (1999-40; TPRF 1725).
- Thayer's Gull** (*Larus thayeri*) (42). One at Galveston, Galveston, from 31 December 1997 to 23 February 1998 (PDH; 1998-27; TPRF 1723).
- Yellow-footed Gull** (*Larus livens*) (1). One near Surfside, Brazoria, on 9 July 1998 (RWe; 1998-141; TPRF 1743). This represents the first record for Texas.
- Great Black-backed Gull** (*Larus marinus*) (26). One at Galveston, Galveston, on 22 November 1996 (JSt; 1996-169). One on Bolivar Flats, Galveston, from 18 April to 1 May 1998 (WRu, MI; 1998-111).
- Black-legged Kittiwake** (*Rissa tridactyla*) (69). One at Quintana, Brazoria, on 7 November 1998 (1998-142). Black-legged Kittiwake was removed from the TBRC Review List on 13 November 1999.
- Black Noddy** (*Anous minutus*) (3). One on Bolivar Peninsula, Galveston, on 15 April and 1 May 1998 (1998-63; TPRF 1692).
- Violet-crowned Hummingbird** (*Amazilia violiceps*) (4). One at Lake Jackson, Brazoria, on 2 March 1998 (1998-40; TPRF 1695). This is the easternmost record for Texas.
- Yellow-green Vireo** (*Vireo flavoviridis*) (22). Up to three at Quintana, Brazoria, from 1-10 June 1998 (1998-79).
- Black-whiskered Vireo** (*Vireo altiloquus*) (13). One on west Galveston Island, Galveston, on 28 May 1998 (1998-95; TPRF 1717).
- Connecticut Warbler** (*Oporornis agilis*) (7). One on Galveston Island, Galveston, on 6 October 1996 (1996-166).

UNACCEPTED RECORDS

A number of factors may contribute to a record being denied acceptance. It is quite uncommon for a record to not be accepted because the bird was obviously misidentified. More commonly, a record is not accepted because the material submitted was incomplete, insufficient, superficial, or just too vague to properly document the reported occurrence while eliminating all other similar species. Also, written documentation or descriptions prepared entirely from memory weeks, months, or years after a sighting are seldom voted on favorably. It is important that the simple act of not accepting a particular record should by no means indicate that the TBRC or any of its members feels the record did not occur as reported. The non-acceptance of any record simply reflects the opinion of the TBRC that the documentation, as submitted, did not meet the rigorous standards appropriate for adding data to the formal historical record. The TBRC makes every effort to be as fair and objective as possible regarding each record. If the committee is unsure about any particular record, it prefers to err on the conservative side and not accept a good record rather than validate a bad one. All records, whether accepted or not, remain on file and can be re-submitted to the committee if additional substantive material is presented.

- Leach's Storm-Petrel** (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*). Two (1998-116) off Freeport, Brazoria, on 20 July 1998.
- White-tailed Tropicbird** (*Phaethon lepturus*). Two (1998-97) at Anahuac NWR, Chambers, on 20 April 1998.
- European Golden-Plover** (*Pluvialis apricaria*). One (1998-84) near Stowell, Chambers, on 26 April 1998.
- Eskimo Curlew** (*Numenius borealis*). One (1998-85) on West Galveston Island, Galveston, on 31 March 1998.
- Curlew Sandpiper** (*Calidris ferruginea*). One (1997-71) on the Bolivar Peninsula, Galveston, on 8 April 1997.
- California Gull** (*Larus californicus*). One (1998-109) at Sea Rim SP, Jefferson, on 4 January 1998. One (1998-113) at Galveston, Galveston, on 17 April 1998.
- Thayer's Gull** (*Larus thayeri*). One (1998-62) at Bolivar Flats, Galveston, from 18 April to 1 May 1998.
- Western Gull** (*Larus occidentalis*). One (1998-110) at Bolivar Flats, Galveston, from 15 January to 28 February 1998.
- Great Black-backed Gull** (*Larus marinus*). One (1997-114) at Bolivar Flats, Galveston, from 25 May to 12 July 1997.
- Arctic Tern** (*Sterna paradisaea*). One (1997-77) at Sea Rim SP, Jefferson, on 14 April 1997.
- Yellow-green Vireo** (*Vireo flavoviridis*). One (1998-80) at Texas Point, Jefferson, on 14 April 1998.
- Bachman's Warbler** (*Vermivora bachmanii*). One (1998-104) at Brazos Bend SP, Fort Bend, on 8 April 1998.

Clearing House Electronic Submissions

David Sarkozi

You may now submit data to the Clearing House directly on-line via the OG web site. Go to and click on "Add Records to the Clearing House"

Now, you no longer need to fill out a sighting sheet and mail it to the Clearing House editor. No stamps, nothing to mail! If you were sending in data via e-mail you don't have to type up the data, just fill in the date, county, location, and your name, then add the counts for each species in the blank by the species and click on submit.

You may also search the database from the web site.

The Clearing House data sheet may also be downloaded now from the web site.

March 2000 CLEARING HOUSE

Thanks to everyone who submitted these records:

CR	Cecelia Riley
DB	Dick Benoit
DLR	Don/Lee Richardson
DS	David Sarkozi
DV	Don Verser
MJA	Mike/Jan Austin
WB	Winnie Burkett
MG	Mike Gremillion
SM	Stuart Marcus
BG	Bob Galloway
DM	David Marrick
JWB	J.W.Buckman
MM	Mark Magruder
BS	Bill Saulmon
DB	Daniel Brooks
JH	Jean Harwell
BH	Bill Harwell
RT	Rob Thacker
JB	John Billard
AS	Anne Shelton
RW	Rick Wilson
DM1	Derek Muschalek
MW	Matthew Whitbeck
SP	Sumita Prasad
PA	Pat Ireland
BG1	Bill Godley
DH	David Hernike
BM	Bill McClure

KR	Kathy Reiser
PA	Pat Ireland
JMH	Jim Henson
PK	Paula Kennedy
MS	Mark Steuer
MD	Mary Dodson
M&RH	Maggie/Bob Honig
RAH	Bob Honig
MDH	Maggie Honig
GO	Georges Olioso
AB	Alison Bishop
ASKM	Al Swarts/Kathy Margaret

Until we get a new Clearinghouse editor please send records to:

David Sarkozi
111 Welch St., Apt. B
Houston, TX 77006
e-mail: dsarkozi@flash.net

Via e-mail in this format: species, date, county, location, count, observer. Clearinghouse submission forms are available at the meeting or for download from the OG web page at <http://texasbird.simplenet.com/hog>

Pied-billed Grebe birds=64 reports=13
American White Pelican birds=2 reports=2
Double-crested Cormorant birds=19 reports=7
Neotropic Cormorant birds=6 reports=2
Anhinga birds=12 reports=5
American Bittern birds=13 reports=5
Great Blue Heron birds=51 reports=15
Great Egret birds=71 reports=20
Snowy Egret birds=41 reports=11
Little Blue Heron birds=26 reports=8
Tricolored Heron birds=5 reports=4
Reddish Egret birds=2 reports=2
Cattle Egret birds=66 reports=3
Green Heron birds=5 reports=4
Black-crowned Night-Heron birds=5 reports=3
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron birds=7 reports=6
White Ibis 3/1 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 BG1
White Ibis 3/26 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 25 KR
White-faced Ibis 3/1 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 BG1
Roseate Spoonbill 3/1 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 BG1
Black Vulture birds=51 reports=9
Turkey Vulture birds=104 reports=12
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 3/1 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 BG1
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 3/4 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 2 RT

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 3/5 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 2 KR
 Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 3/26 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 4 KR
 Greater White-fronted Goose birds=16 reports=2
 Wood Duck 3/1 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 BG1
 Wood Duck 3/6 Harris(Bering Ditch) 1 BM
 Wood Duck 3/7 Harris(Houston Airport) 4 GO
 Wood Duck 3/7 Harris(Houston Airport) 4 KR
 Wood Duck 3/25 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 2 RT
 Gadwall birds=24 reports=5
 American Wigeon birds=16 reports=2
 Mottled Duck birds=16 reports=2
 Blue-winged Teal birds=119 reports=10
 Cinnamon Teal 3/4 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 RT
 Cinnamon Teal 3/5 Colorado(Attwater) 20 GO
 Cinnamon Teal 3/5 Colorado(Attwater) 20 KR
 Northern Shoveler birds=46 reports=5
 Green-winged Teal birds=45 reports=3
 Hooded Merganser 3/7 Harris(Houston Airport) 3 GO
 Hooded Merganser 3/7 Harris(Houston Airport) 3 KR
 Ruddy Duck birds=12 reports=2
 Osprey 3/4 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 RT
 Osprey 3/18 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 1 RAH
 Bald Eagle 3/4 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 RT
 Northern Harrier birds=7 reports=5
 Sharp-shinned Hawk birds=1 reports=1
 Red-shouldered Hawk birds=9 reports=5
 Red-tailed Hawk birds=23 reports=11
 Crested Caracara birds=12 reports=6
 American Kestrel birds=8 reports=7
 Merlin 3/4 Harris(Bear Creek Park) 1 Jim Hinson
 Peregrine Falcon 3/2 Harris(Houston) 1 RAH
 Peregrine Falcon 3/18 Harris(Hou -- Galleria) 1 RAH
 Peregrine Falcon 3/19 Galveston(Anderson Way) 1 MJA
 King Rail 3/4 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 RT
 Virginia Rail 3/17 Chambers(Anahuac) 2 DS
 Common Moorhen birds=163 reports=8
 American Coot birds=169 reports=11
 Sandhill Crane 3/5 Colorado(Attwater) 24 GO
 Sandhill Crane 3/5 Colorado(Attwater) 24 KR
 American Golden-Plover 3/5 Colorado(Attwater) 6 GO
 American Golden-Plover 3/5 Colorado(Attwater) 6 KR
 American Golden-Plover 3/19 Galveston(Homrighaus Rd.) 2 MJA
 Killdeer birds=34 reports=9
 Black-necked Stilt birds=42 reports=5
 Greater Yellowlegs birds=15 reports=6
 Lesser Yellowlegs birds=6 reports=3
 Willet birds=6 reports=1
 Upland Sandpiper birds=3 reports=2
 Western Sandpiper birds=6 reports=3
 Least Sandpiper birds=104 reports=4
 Dunlin birds=15 reports=1

Buff-breasted Sandpiper 3/18 Brazoria(Brazoria NWR) 2 DM
 Long-billed Dowitcher birds=4 reports=2
 Common Snipe 3/4 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 2 RT
 Common Snipe 3/5 Colorado(Attwater) 2 GO
 Common Snipe 3/5 Colorado(Attwater) 2 KR
 Laughing Gull birds=6 reports=1
 Ring-billed Gull birds=96 reports=4
 Herring Gull birds=7 reports=3
 Royal Tern birds=4 reports=1
 Forster's Tern birds=3 reports=1
 Rock Dove birds=77 reports=2
 Eurasian Collared-Dove 3/19 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 1 RAH
 Eurasian Collared-Dove 3/25 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 4 M&RH
 White-winged Dove birds=58 reports=3
 Mourning Dove birds=103 reports=15
 Inca Dove birds=13 reports=3
 Monk Parakeet 3/18 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 2 RAH
 Groove-billed Ani 3/28 Brazoria(Quintana) 1 BG1
 Eastern Screech-Owl birds=4 reports=4
 Barred Owl birds=4 reports=3
 Chuck-will's-widow birds=1 reports=1
 Whip-poor-will 3/25 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 1 M&RH
 Chimney Swift birds=15 reports=4
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird birds=6 reports=1
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird 3/11 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 1 RAH
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird 3/18 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 1 RAH
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird 3/25 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 1 M&RH
 Rufous Hummingbird 3/15 Harris(Houston) 1 BM
 Belted Kingfisher birds=13 reports=10
 Red-bellied Woodpecker birds=43 reports=15
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker birds=4 reports=4
 Downy Woodpecker birds=17 reports=8
 Red-cockaded Woodpecker 3/6 Montgomery(Jones State Forest) 4 GO
 Red-cockaded Woodpecker 3/6 Montgomery(Jones State Forest) 4 KR
 Northern Flicker birds=1 reports=1
 Pileated Woodpecker birds=23 reports=11
 Eastern Wood-Pewee 3/5 Colorado(Attwater) 1 GO
 Eastern Wood-Pewee 3/5 Colorado(Attwater) 1 KR
 Acadian Flycatcher 3/25 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 RT
 Eastern Phoebe birds=13 reports=5
 Scissor-tailed Flycatcher birds=1 reports=1
 Loggerhead Shrike birds=32 reports=10
 White-eyed Vireo birds=16 reports=9
 Blue Jay birds=32 reports=10
 American Crow birds=91 reports=17
 Purple Martin birds=22 reports=7
 Tree Swallow birds=6 reports=2
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow birds=13 reports=2
 Barn Swallow birds=4 reports=4

Carolina Chickadee birds=51 reports=14
 Tufted Titmouse birds=74 reports=12
 Red-breasted Nuthatch 3/18 Chambers(Smith Oaks) 1 JMH
 Brown Creeper birds=2 reports=2
 Carolina Wren birds=59 reports=10
 House Wren birds=21 reports=2
 Golden-crowned Kinglet birds=2 reports=2
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet birds=31 reports=8
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher birds=6 reports=4
 Eastern Bluebird 3/6 Montgomery(Jones State Forest) 1 GO
 Eastern Bluebird 3/6 Montgomery(Jones State Forest) 1 KR
 Hermit Thrush birds=3 reports=3
 Wood Thrush birds=1 reports=1
 American Robin 3/5 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 KR
 Northern Mockingbird birds=140 reports=13
 Brown Thrasher birds=4 reports=4
 European Starling birds=35 reports=8
 American Pipit birds=2 reports=2
 Cedar Waxwing birds=170 reports=8
 Orange-crowned Warbler birds=12 reports=10
 Northern Parula birds=23 reports=10
 Yellow-rumped Warbler birds=68 reports=10
 Yellow-rumped "Myrtle" Warbler Birds=34 reports = 3
 Black-throated Green Warbler 3/18 Galveston(Anderson Way) 1 MJA
 Black-throated Green Warbler 3/19 Harris(Hunter's Creek Village) 2 M&RH
 Black-throated Green Warbler 3/31 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 1 RAH
 Pine Warbler birds=3 reports=3
 Prairie Warbler 3/26 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 BG1
 Black-and-white Warbler birds=3 reports=3
 Prothonotary Warbler 3/26 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 2 BG1
 Prothonotary Warbler 3/26 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 3 KR
 Common Yellowthroat birds=5 reports=4
 Hooded Warbler birds=3 reports=2
 Wilson's Warbler 3/1 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 BG1
 Wilson's Warbler 3/12 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 1 KR
 Chipping Sparrow birds=8 reports=4
 Savannah Sparrow birds=9 reports=5
 Song Sparrow birds=1 reports=1
 Lincoln's Sparrow birds=1 reports=1
 Swamp Sparrow birds=19 reports=8
 White-throated Sparrow birds=5 reports=5
 White-crowned Sparrow birds=2 reports=2
 Northern Cardinal birds=187 reports=16
 Red-winged Blackbird birds=231 reports=12
 Eastern Meadowlark birds=4 reports=3
 Common Grackle birds=55 reports=5
 Boat-tailed Grackle birds=55 reports=6
 Brown-headed Cowbird birds=71 reports=3
 House Finch 3/15 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 2 RAH
 House Finch 3/18 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 1 RAH
 House Finch 3/25 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 3 M&RH
 The Spoonbill

American Goldfinch 3/4 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 15 RT
 American Goldfinch 3/5 Fort Bend(Brazos Bend) 12 KR
 American Goldfinch 3/6 Montgomery(Jones State Forest) 1 GO
 American Goldfinch 3/6 Montgomery(Jones State Forest) 1 KR
 American Goldfinch 3/12 Harris(Hou Arboretum) 20 RAH
 American Goldfinch 3/18 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 4 RAH
 American Goldfinch 3/25 Harris(Hou - W Loop) 1 M&RH
 House Sparrow birds=115 reports=3

Rare Bird Field Notes:

Red-Breasted Nuthatch:

A Red-Breasted Nuthatch was seen at Smith oaks on 3/18/2000 by Jim Hinson. **Description:** The individual was spotted twittering up and down a branch of a large live oak, typical behavior for a Red-breasted Nuthatch at any given time. The white eyebrow and rusty orange underparts made it easy to identify. **How were similar species eliminated?** White eyebrow and large amount of rusty orange underparts eliminated all other Nuthatch species.

Merlin:

A mature, female merlin was seen at Bear Creek park on 3/4/2000 by Jim Hinson. **Description:** The individual was seen devouring a small bird atop an oak. It had full female plumage. Brown streaked breast with brown back and distinctively barred tail. **How were similar species eliminated?** Eliminated from being Kestrel by somewhat larger size, lack of strong facial markings, and distinctively barred tail.

Again, thanks to the people who went to the trouble to send these reports in.

Good Birding! to the people who will send next month's reports in.

Activity Reminder List

(These activities or field trips have been announced in detail in previous issues of the Spoonbill.)

VOLUNTEER PLEASE! The ONG needs a coordinator for week day field trips. Please contact David Sarkozi to volunteer.

Saturday-Saturday June 10-17, 2000 CFD

OG Mexico Field Trip: See July 1999 Spoonbill for details. Contact Michael Delesantro at 956-969-8610 or mdele@worldnet.att.net. Fees.

April 2000 Meeting of the Ornithology Group

Pat Pease, Recording Secretary

David Bradford conducted an informative and interesting learning corner on Spring Migrants and other places to look for them besides the upper Texas coast.

Chairman David Sarkozi conducted the meeting:

Interesting bird sightings reported:

2 Yellow Rails flushed on the Anahuac Yellow Rail Tour Sat. 4/2.

Orchard Orioles at High Island

Osprey still being seen at Braes Bayou at 610 Loop

Buff-breasted Sandpipers and Golden Plovers in

Rice fields at East Bay Bayou section of ANWR

Warblers are being spotted in NE Texas away from the coast.

Yellow Rail Tours at Anahuac:

Apr. 8 - 7:00 am

Apr. 22 - 4:00 pm

Apr. 23 - 7:00 am

Mary Dodson's *Conservation Corner* bulletin was distributed. Its focus this month is on the Conservation Plan for the Texas Chenier Plain. This is a comprehensive plan being developed that will affect the NWR system for many years (10-15 at least) to come. Its important for us to be informed and contribute input at public meetings to protect the future of our refuges and wetlands. Misinformation is being disseminated.

Conservation concerns were expressed regarding the relocating of the Grand Parkway nearer to Brazos Bend State Park (This is the **Route C** designation). Members are urged to contact politicians, DOT and County Commissioners to express their concerns about the very adverse impact this will have on Brazos Bend State Park.

Texas Ornithological Society Spring Meeting will be April 26-29.

Texbirds disappeared from the Internet Mar. 13 due to interference on the server. A new provider has been secured and Texbirds should be back up by Monday, April 10.

A photo by Janet Rathgen of the Gray-crowned Yellowthroat was displayed. She will be submitting it to authenticate the rare sighting of this bird

Program: Bob Moore, a well known photographer of the ONC Photography Group and the OG group showed some of his slides and gave many valuable hints about equipment and film to use, how to develop, and where to find the best shots.

Next month's program will be "The Birds of Belize" presented by David Sarkozi.

2000 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ***TIME TO SEND THEM IN!***

It's that time again. Time to renew your Outdoor Nature Club and Ornithology Group membership. While you are at it, invite a new member. Please note that Ornithology Group dues have increased by \$2.00 this year to \$14.00 to cover the increased costs of mailing the Spoonbill.

Some people have already sent in their 2000 membership dues using the old OG amount of \$12.00. If this means you: To remedy this situation, please either give Pat Pease your remaining \$2.00 at the next meeting or send it into the address below in the Membership Renewal Form.

*Many thanks to this month's contributors.
This newsletter would not have happened
without you!*

Membership Renewal

Mail your check and this completed form to:

Outdoor Nature Club
P.O. Box 270894
Houston, TX 77277-0894

Name

Street Address

City

State

Zip

Phone (please include the area code)

e-mail address

New **Rejoining** **Renewal**

ONC Annual Dues (payable to ONC)

Regular \$8 **Family \$15**
 Supporting \$40 **Life \$100**

Ornithology (\$14 per person in addition to ONC dues)

Total ONC/OG Dues \$ _____

Other Donation \$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

*Botany, Entomology, Conchology and Photography Group dues (\$2.00/year/group) are paid separately to group treasurers at the monthly meetings.

About the Ornithology Group

The Ornithology Group (OG) is a member of the Outdoor Nature Club (ONC), a non-profit organization dedicated to providing greater knowledge about the environment and wildlife on the Upper Texas Coast.

The OG is a club of individuals interested in birds, birding, and bird watching. Some members focus on bird identification and listing, some enjoy studying bird behavior and habitat, and some just enjoy watching birds. The OG is organized to accommodate all of these diverse birding interests. Members also benefit from the synergism of getting together to share knowledge and interests during the club's activities. OG activities make learning about birds fun!

Officers:

Chairman	David Sarkozi	713-520-5906
Vice-Chairman	Skip Almone	713-524-4285
Secretary	Pat Pease	713-789-3306
Treasurer	Bob Simmons	713-776-2511
Clearinghouse	Open	
Spoonbill Editor	DK Smith	713-522-7990

To Start or Renew Membership:

Members receive both the Spoonbill and the ONC Nature Notes. Send us a note containing the following information along with \$22.00 annual dues:

Your name
Your address: street, city, state, zip
Your telephone
Your e-mail

Send this to: Outdoor Nature Club
PO Box 270894
Houston TX 77277-0894

You can also enroll from our web site.

OG Website: <http://texasbirding.simplenet.com/hog/>

To add your name to our e-mail list:
Send a message to listserv@listserv.uh.edu. On the first line of the message put: "subscribe HOUSTON-OG your_firstname your_lastname. You will get a confirmation echoed back in a few minutes.

Clearing House List Submissions:

Temporarily, Birds for the Clearing House list can be sent to:

David Sarkozi
111 Welch Street, Apt. B
Houston, TX 77006
e-mail: dsarkozi@flash.net

Clearinghouse submission forms are available at the meeting or for download from the OG web page at <http://texasbird.simplenet.com/hog>

You can also send in sighting information via e-mail in this format: species, date, county, location, count, observer.

Newsletter Submissions

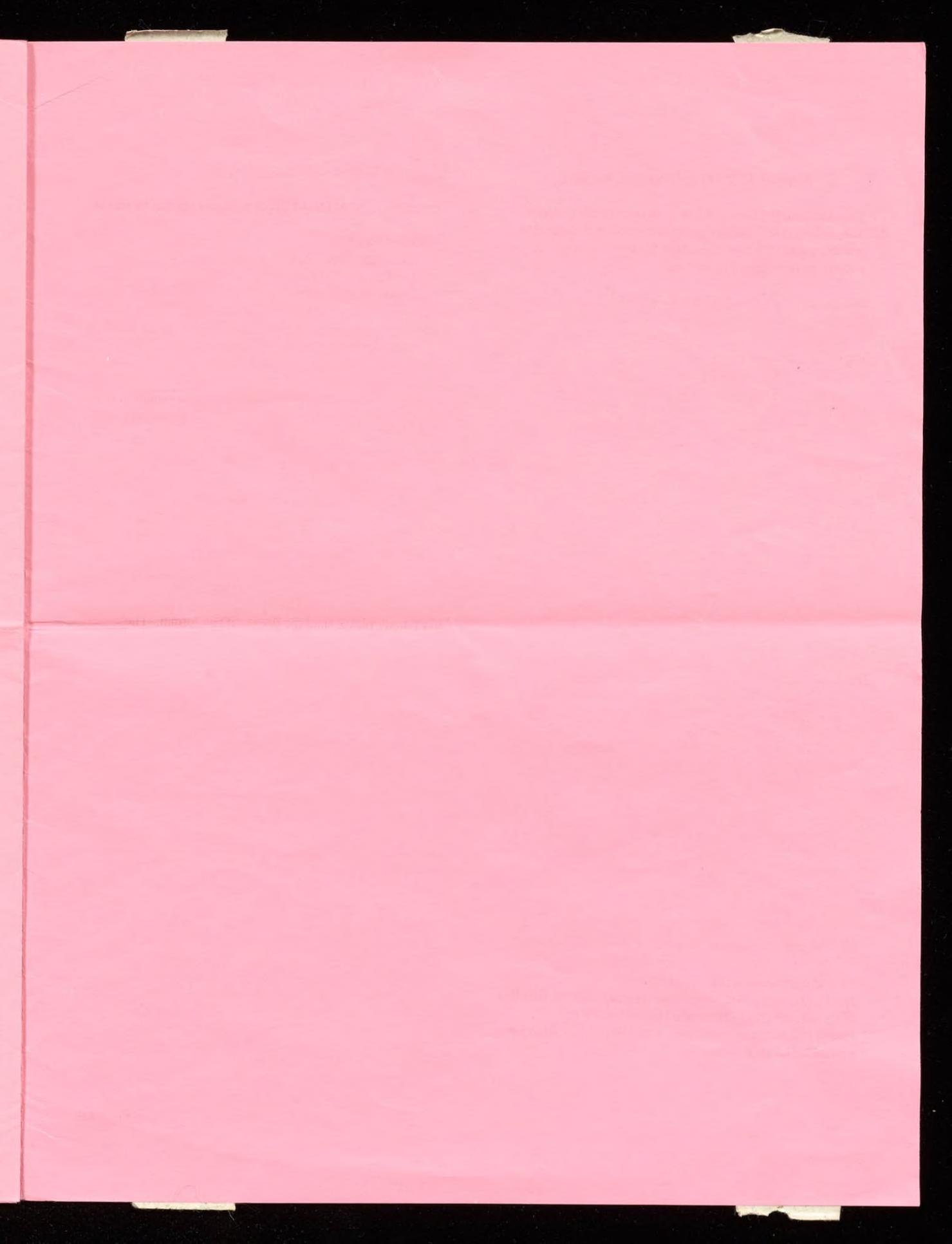
Newsletter submissions can be sent to:

DK Smith
1657 Bonnie Brae #3
Houston, TX 77006
e-mail: smithdk@us.ibm.com

Via e-mail, please send the file in "RTF" format. The Spoonbill uses 10 point Times New Roman font, if you happen to think about it.

Rare Bird Hot Line:

Texas Society Rare Bird Alert: 713-369-9673



**Outdoor Nature Club
Ornithology Group
P.O. Box 270894
Houston, TX 77277-0894**

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