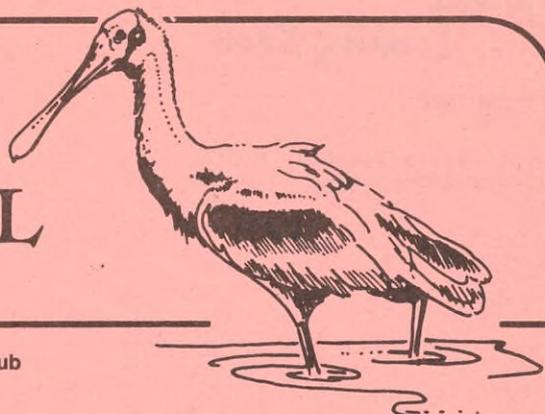


# The SPOONBILL



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## Coming Events

Monday, March 3, 1986: Deadline for Clearing House reports.

Thursday, March 6, 1986: Ornithology Group meeting at Bayou Manor, 4141 S. Braeswood, 7:30 PM. Gene Blacklock of the Welder Wildlife Refuge will present Part II of "The Sane Approach to Bird Identification." Deadline for Spoonbill articles and announcements.

Saturday, March 8, 1986: Ornithology Group Field Trip to Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR. Jim Morgan will be our leader. Expect to hear the dawn "booming" and see the courtship display of the Attwater's form of the Greater Prairie Chicken, one of the most interesting displays in the bird world. Numerous Hawks, including the White-tailed, can be observed in the area. Jim says it may be a little late for some sparrows, but there should be several species. To reach the refuge take Interstate 10 West to Sealy, exit at Hwy. 36 and head south a short distance to FM 3013, turn right on 3013 and proceed to the refuge just beyond the San Bernard River on the right. Meet at 7:00 AM just off 3013 on the entrance road. We meet here so that refuge personnel can direct us to the chicken lek with a minimum of habitat disturbance. Bring lunch for an all-day trip.

Tuesday, March 11, 1986: Outdoor Nature Club meeting, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, Hermann Park. Jennifer Lindgren of Austin will speak on the National Wildflower Research Center.

## ELMNS CHECKLIST

The Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary is updating its bird checklist. If any of you have records of your birding trips to the sanctuary please send copies to Stan Perkins, ELMNS, 440 Wilchester, Houston, TX 77079.

## SPRING CREEK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The fifth Spring Creek C.B.C. was held January 4th. The count had nine more observers than last year. On this cloudless, virtually windless seventy-six degree Saturday participants tallied three fewer species than last year (86), but observed a 750% increase in total number of individuals. This increase was due in large part to an abundant wild food crop and a phenomenal number of American Robins (25,224), including a roost estimated at sixteen thousand birds in the bottomlands along the San Jacinto River in Montgomery County.

Thirteen species were in higher than usual numbers including Red-cockaded Woodpecker (13), Brown-headed Nuthatch (88), Yellow-rumped Warbler and American Goldfinch. Only two species were in lower than expected numbers.

Unusual finds on the count were a Black-and-White Warbler along Kuykendahl Road by Liz McCarty and a Greater Scaup on Lake Woodlands by Gary Clark.

Several parties of intrepid nocturnal birders managed to out-owl even the prestigious Freeport count and, as a result, all four of southeast Texas' common owl species were recorded for the first time.

Many thanks from the Piney Woods Wildlife Society to all those who participated in our count.

# Noel's Niche Looking Back

by Noel Pettingell

.....Twenty Years Ago This Month  
From January 1966 Spoonbill:

.....Ten Years Ago This Month  
from February 1976 Spoonbill:

## "BIRDY PHRASES"

Julia Bradley has been scratching around like a hen in a barnyard and has come up with the following list:

'For years man has compared himself and his actions to certain birds. The following are a few:

Plump as a partridge	An old coot
Naked as a jay bird	Bald as an eagle
Graceful as a swan	Crazy as a cuckoo
Crazy as a loon	Wise as an owl
Sings like a canary	As quick as a duck
Talking cold turkey	on a June bug
Peaceful as a dove	Easy as duck soup
Proud as a peacock	He's chicken (a
Waddles like a duck	coward)
Mad as a wet hen	Know any more???

Julia, how about 'eagle-eyed' or 'that's for the birds'!"

## GUEST EDITORIAL by Mike Austin

"All animals are equal. But some are more equal than others." George Orwell, 1984.

In recent weeks, it has come to my attention that a small number of individuals have crossed fences in east Waller County in the mistaken notion that they could get better looks at a flock of longspurs mentioned on the South Texas Rare Bird Alert tape. It might be added that these folks had no permission from the landowner to do so. These birders are SLOBS. A review of the relevant literature is probably in order at this point. I refer here to James Tucker's editorial in the August 1981 edition of "Birding", the journal of the American Birding Association, which defines a SLOB:

**SELFISH:** The Slob Birder thinks only of himself and of his own wants. He rarely, if ever, gives more than a passing notice to the needs of others in a birding group. He chooses to remain oblivious to the delicate balances which hold our environment together.

**LAZY:** The Slob Birder is usually too lazy to open a gate--and he usually "forgets" to close one. He rarely goes out of his way to help anyone else find a bird that he himself has already seen. And he is too lazy to wait for a bird to appear

on its own from within a nest--whacking on the tree gets much faster results.

**OBNOXIOUS:** The Slob Birder always wants the best seat in the bus. He demands to be shown each bird before anyone else does--and he scares it away. He breaks fences instead of carefully making his way over or through them. He is convinced that "Keep Out" signs apply to other people. On the trail he insists on being first; if he chances to get behind, he pushes and shoves his way past other birders in order to stand in front of them to see a bird--unmindful of the fact that he is blocking their binocular view.

**BIRDER:** The Slob Birder is an embarrassment to most birders, who resent his style of birding. He may exhibit one or all of the aforementioned characteristics--but he really doesn't care how many of his practices upset others. In fact he will probably not read this editorial, but if he does, he will only laugh at what he perceives as the stupid insensitivity of others--not of himself.

It is incomprehensible to me how literally dozens of birders were willing and able to get good (often great) looks at these longspurs from the public roadway with the aid of a telescope, yet a few SLOBS felt obliged to cross the property owner's fence without permission, thereby incurring his wrath. In my humble opinion, such transgression should result in the guilty parties being prosecuted to the full extent of the law or shot.

For those of you new to Texas, fenced property is private and should be respected as such. Recorded messages on our rare bird alert are not to be construed as implied permission to anyone, whether doctor lawyer or Indian chief to violate these rights.

Such violations will, if oft repeated, result in suspicion and harassment for ethical birders, especially in such rural constituencies. It will result in selective censorship of bird sightings on private property on our rare bird tape.

If you are birding and see this nonsense going on, please speak up! If you're a SLOB, please reform! Your actions are selfish and unnecessary. If you lack field skills, there are a number of competent birders in the Houston area who can show you these birds. If you lack a telescope, the Piney Woods Wildlife Society owns a Bausch & Lomb which is available to the membership. A little patience and consideration will go a long way!

Reprinted from "The Pine Warbler", February, 1986

## SECOND ANNUAL AUDUBON BIRDATHON

We are soon to be having our second annual Birdathon and have made some changes in the format which we hope will attract more conservation-oriented groups to field a team this year.

The registration fee will be \$100 per team and will be nonrefundable in order to cover the cost of staging the Birdathon. The pledge money raised by the Birdathon team will, however, go to support the programs of the group who sponsors the team. Any group may sponsor as many teams as it likes. Individuals may also compete, with the understanding that any money they raise will be donated to the conservation group of their choice. The more teams who compete the more fun it will be and the more money raised for the conservation cause.

Don't miss this opportunity to raise money for your pet project and have fun in the process! Hoping to hear from you soon.

Laura Singleton, Vice-President/External Affairs, Houston Audubon Society

### TRAPPED IN A FISHBOWL

by Celeste Newton

First and foremost, my husband, Paul and I are campers; we enjoy living, if only briefly, in the midst of nature and all she affords. Secondly, I'm the birder in the family. Paul claims he doesn't have time. And indeed to pursue it as I do, he doesn't. But he has always supported and encouraged my hobby and doesn't mind camping in birding "hot spots". Thus we embarked on our annual winter vacation--this year to Texas' Rio Grande Valley.

DAY ONE--While Paul was registering at Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park, I was perusing the message/bulletin board. The first thing I noticed was that the Bentsen Christmas Bird Count was to be the next day, December 28, and that "everyone was welcome." I immediately decided to participate. The next thing I noticed was a note from our Houston friends, Marion and Sue Krug. We had missed them by about two hours, but they had left a detailed note about where to find the Northern Jacana and the Blue Bunting! My adrenalin started flowing.

Our friends had said to search the area around the trailer dump station for the Blue Bunting. I did so several times to no avail. Mind you, I wasn't the only one looking for this elusive fellow. Every person I met asked, "Have you seen the Blue Bunting?" "Not yet," I'd answer.

DAY TWO--I arose before day-break in order to arrive at the park entrance by 7:30 AM for the CBC. Surely,

I thought, with multiple eyes looking for the bunting, I'll get to see him.

My partner and I were assigned the area where the Northern Jacana was to be found. Wonderful! I carried my scope and was able to get the jacana and the Green Kingfisher in the same sighting. Exhilarating!! We made numerous other sightings but no Blue Bunting.

When I arrived at camp at noon, Paul had just prepared himself a sandwich. He quickly busied himself making me lunch while I sat in the living room telling him about the jacana and other birds. I had just taken a rather large bite when I glanced out of the picture window at the feeder. I literally choked before I managed to shout, "My God! It's the Blue Bunting!" He was perched on a bare branch above the feeder. A Green Jay jumped to the feeder and the bunting flew, but not before Paul saw him.

Instantly I wanted to share the news. I couldn't help it. I had seen what hundreds had been looking for, for days, and (the best part) I hadn't even been trying! There wasn't a soul around. Honest! There wasn't one person, much less a birder, with whom to share my steal. (One unkind birder later called it "yellow birding.")

Five minutes later the bunting returned. The jays were gone and he jumped from the same branch right into the feeder and enjoyed lunch. When he left the feeder I quietly left the trailer and rejoined my new-found friends on the CBC. Almost everyone followed me back to site number six, where a vigil began. It was to last one and one-half hours. A crowd gathered. At first everyone was tense--scopes and cameras were positioned and binoculars poised. That lasted perhaps 30 minutes. Conversation and laughter began to break out. People were having a good time--Paul and I included.

A few people began to drift away. After an hour I heard someone shout, "I want to talk with the person who saw this bird!" Regretting that I had ever opened my mouth, I walked over and said meekly, "I did."

Thirty minutes later the bunting reappeared. He perched on the same branch before dropping into the feeder. In all, the bird came to our feeder four times that day. I'm not sure if the "doubting Thomas" remained long enough to see him or not.

DAY THREE--With the jacana and the bunting under my belt, I resolved to further feed my list. I decided to be very single-minded. I needed the Hook-billed Kite and the Clay-colored Robin, both of which were reported to be there. Paul gave me his blessing--said he would "keep my spot warm." In other words he wasn't going to get up with me.

When I returned for breakfast I was astonished to see a crowd standing outside our trailer. I knew from their black necklaces that they were birders.

(continued)

Inside I found Paul still in bed. "Put on your pants before getting out of bed. There are twenty people outside waiting to see the bird!" I said.

"Waiting to see what?"

"Never mind," I said, "just put on your pants!"

He did.

After breakfast we positioned our chairs and began the stakeout with everyone else. The bunting didn't put in an appearance until 3:00 PM. In the early afternoon Paul asked, "Why are we sitting here watching for that dumb bird? We've already seen it." I could only say, "I don't know." "I know why," he exclaimed, "We're trapped!"

He was right, of course. If we were inside the trailer we felt we had to stay. Opening the door and leaving might frighten away the bunting. If we were outside we couldn't go in for the same reason. What to do? Take down the feeder? Heaven forbid! We would have been lynched on the spot by a mob of angry birders! Our only choice was to tolerate our fishbowl existence and try to enjoy it.

DAY FOUR--I was up early again, this time to hike the nature trail in search of the Hook-billed Kite, and this time I was successful. I saw a male and a female perched in a dead snag. When I returned to tell Paul of my good fortune, our numerous fans were already enconced for the day.

DAY FIVE, NEW YEAR'S EVE--I drove into McAllen through pea-soup fog to see the Crimson-collared Grosbeak. At 8:00 AM the male grosbeak appeared and thrilled numerous birders, including many who had flown in just for this bird. What a way to see out the year!

DAY SIX, NEW YEAR'S DAY--Earlier in the week someone had told me that the Clay-colored Robin had nested at site six in the spring of '85. He had developed an affinity for white popcorn, unbuttered and unsalted. We had with us a container of popcorn, buttered and salted. Whoever heard of a gourmet robin, I reasoned. I began to scatter the popcorn, and on New Year's Day, he found it. (Not a recommended procedure.. Ed.) The robin was sitting on a low branch back in the brush behind the picnic table. He dropped to the ground and headed for the popcorn under the table. Then he hopped to the table top for a drink of water.

Now I have to ask you! Can you top that for New Year's Day! While my Texas Aggie husband watched his team win the Cotton Bowl I saw my first life bird for '86, the Clay-colored Robin.

## Clearing House January

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 # of individuals seen), e.g. 8 reports(1-20;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

BC=Brazoria Co.	KW=Kingwood
BF=Bolivar Flats	QJ=Quintana Jetty
BNWR=Brazoria NWR	RP=Rollover Pass
CR=Cinco Ranch	SB/SBNWR=Slop Bowl/SBNWR
EG=E. Galveston	SBNWR=San Bernard NWR
EP/DP = Eisenhower/Deussen Pks	
FBC=Ft. Bend Co.	WGI=W. Galveston Is.
Galv=Galveston	WHC=W. Harris Co.
H&H=House & Hahl	WL=Warren Lake
	WP/LC=West Pk(League City)

189 Species reported this month.

Loon, Common: WGI-(1)6,10, (2)28, JHJ;  
Texas City Dike-(3)12, BL  
Grebe, Pied-billed: 20 reports (1-35; 178)  
Grebe, Eared: 9 reports (2-14; 46)  
Pelican, American White: 22 reports  
(1-725; 1366)  
Pelican, Brown: Surfside-(12)25, 27, 28, HRP  
(11)26, RT; Bryan Beach-(12)28, WP  
(See notes - status changing; no notes  
required for future sightings, ed.)  
Cormorant, Double-crested: 19 reports  
(4-112; 384)  
Cormorant, Olivaceous: San Jacinto SP-  
(3)6, GE; (8)20, DM; Bob's Bait Camp Rd-  
(22)12, BL  
Anhinga: WHC-(1)11, JM; KW-(1)25, JB  
Bittern, American: BNWR-(1)24, HC  
Heron, Great Blue: 26 reports (1-20; 207)  
Egret, Great: 25 reports (1-40; 296)  
Egret, Snowy: 19 reports (1-72; 200)  
Heron, Little Blue: 11 reports (1-12; 42)  
Heron, Tricolored: 10 reports (1-12; 32)  
Egret, Reddish: 8 reports (1-2; 11)  
Egret, Cattle: 13 reports (2-38; 180)  
Night-Heron, Black-crowned: 12 reports  
(3-150; 564)  
Night-Heron, Yellow-crowned: BNWR-(60)5  
, RU; (1)24, HC; SB/SBNWR-(1)29, TPRB  
Ibis, White: 14 reports (1-350; 858)  
Ibis, White-faced: 7 reports (3-150; 208)  
Spoonbill, Roseate: 7 reports (1-30; 62)  
Whistling-Duck, Black-bellied: WL-(60)4  
, BE; WHC-(500)6, MM; (300)11, JM;  
FBC-(1)29, TM (Status changing, ed.)  
Goose, Greater White-fronted: 16 reports  
(4-2000; 6835)

Goose, Snow: 16 reports (100-39000, 83299)  
(Goose, Blue): 7 reports (12-1000, 2966)  
Goose, Ross: FBC-(3)14, JC; CR-(1)19, BC  
(See CH Editor's Notes, ed.)  
Goose, Canada: 15 reports (2-7000, 15765)  
Duck, Wood: KW-(2)5, JB; CR-(6)19, BC  
Teal, Green-winged: 22 reports  
(1-5000, 10510)  
Duck, Mottled: 12 reports (1-30, 121)  
Mallard: 15 reports (1-15, 82)  
Pintail, Northern: 16 reports  
(1-2000, 5019)  
Teal, Blue-winged: 8 reports (1-85, 224)  
Teal, Cinnamon: WL-(3)4, BE; (1)6, MM;  
BNWR-(2)5, TT; (1)5, RU; (1)24, HC;  
SBNWR-(15)18, WP+BPB  
Shoveler, Northern: 19 reports  
(2-1000, 5251)  
Gadwall: 11 reports (2-500, 2043)  
Wigeon, American: 11 reports (1-200, 616)  
Canvasback: WL-(1)4, BE; WHC-(25)11  
JM; (25)26, ME; BC-(5)14, TM  
Redhead: BC-(10)14, TM  
Duck, Ring-necked: 4 reports (1-125, 183)  
Scaup, Lesser: 10 reports (2-1000, 1665)  
scaup, sp.: WL-(10)4, BE  
Scoter, Black: San Luis Pass-(25)26, RT  
(See notes - status upgraded to rare)  
Scoter, Surf: San Luis Pass-(4)26, RT  
Bufflehead: 5 reports (1-8, 19)  
Merganser, Hooded: San Jacinto SP-  
(13)6, GE; (6)20, DM; BNWR-(1 male)12, TW  
Merganser, Red-breasted: BF-(200)4, TP;  
WGI-(6)6, JJH  
Duck, Ruddy: 12 reports (2-200, 485)  
Vulture, Black: 15 reports (1-100, 309)  
Vulture, Turkey: 21 reports (2-200, 537)  
Osprey: Armand Bayou-(11)23, DM  
Kite, Black-shouldered: 12 reports  
(1-6, 36)  
Eagle, Bald: WHC-(4 inc 1 imm)6, MM;  
(1)11, JM; (1 imm)26, ME; (1 ad)26, JB;  
(1)29, MCD; BC-(1)14, TM  
Harrier, Northern: 21 reports (1-25, 169)  
Hawk, Sharp-shinned: WHC-(1)6, MM;  
(1)26, ME; Armand Bayou-(1)23, DM;  
CR-(2)25, OG  
Accipiter, sp.: WHC-(1)4, BE  
Hawk, Red-shouldered: 11 reports (1-6, 30)  
Hawk, White-tailed: WP/LC-(1)5, BSH;  
Barker Res-(2)19, BC; BNWR-(2)24, HC;  
WL-(1)25, DW+HA; Dickinson-(2)26, BSH  
(See notes - status changing, ed.)  
Hawk, Red-tailed: 23 reports (1-50, 343)  
(Hawk, Harlan's): WHC-(2)26, ME  
Caracara, Crested: BNWR-(2)2, 5, 6, TT;  
(1)12, TW; (1)24, HC; FBC-(1)29, BJH  
Kestrel, American: 24 reports (1-20, 122)  
Falcon, Peregrine: Galv-(1)1, JJH;  
BF-(1)4, TP; SB/SBNWR-(1)29, TPRB  
(See notes, ed.)  
Rail, Yellow: SBNWR-(3)18, WP+BPB  
Rail, King: WHC-(2)11, JM; (1)26, ME  
Moorhen, Common: 7 reports (2-32, 100)  
Coot, American: 20 reports (5-1000, 4243)  
Crane, Sandhill: 14 reports (2-500, 2238)  
Plover, Black-bellied: 7 reports  
(2-10, 26)  
Plover, Wilson's: BF-(2)4, TP  
Plover, Semipalmated: TC Dike-(1)12, BL  
Plover, Piping: EG-(1)12, BL  
Killdeer: 22 reports (3-1000, 1715)  
Oystercatcher, American: TC Dike-(2)12, BL  
Avocet, American: EG-(1)3, JJH;  
BF-(5)12, BL  
Yellowlegs, Greater: 10 reports  
(2-50, 173)  
Yellowlegs, Lesser: 8 reports (1-85, 181)  
yellowlegs, sp.: WHC-(2)29, MCD  
Sandpiper, Solitary: CR-(1)25, OG (See  
notes, ed.)

Willet: 11 reports (2-7, 39)  
Sandpiper, Spotted: WHC-(1)4, BE;  
Pelican Is-(1)10, JJH; San Jacinto SP-  
(2)20, DM; FBC-(1)29, TM  
Curlew, Long-billed: 9 reports (1-23, 88)  
Godwit, Marbled: WGI-(2)6, JJH;  
EG-(2)12, BL; BF-(2)12, BL  
Knot, Red: BF-(4)4, TP; (1)12, BL  
Sanderling: 5 reports (3-82, 137)  
Sandpiper, Western: BF-(5)12, BL  
Sandpiper, Least: BC-(75)14, TM;  
CR-(7)19, BC  
Dunlin: 8 reports (2-100, 199)  
Sandpiper, Stilt: Mercury Dr-(70)3, WC  
(See notes, ed.)  
Dowitcher, Short-billed: BNWR-(5)2, TT  
Dowitcher, Long-billed: WHC-(1000)6, MM;  
(50)26, ME; BNWR-(5)24, HC  
dowitcher, sp.: BF-(5)12, BL;  
San Jacinto SP-(1500)20, DM  
Snipe, Common: 7 reports (1-10, 33)  
Woodcock, American: Bear Ck Pk-(2)4, BE  
(See CH Editor's Notes for additional  
sighting information, ed.)  
Gull, Laughing: 11 reports (1-1000, 2388)  
Gull, Bonaparte's: BF-(150)4, TP;  
Galveston Co-(4)12, BL; RP-(6)12, BL  
Gull, Ring-billed: 15 reports  
(3-1000, 2657)  
Gull, Herring: 8 reports (2-35, 84)  
Gull, Glaucous: San Luis Pass-(1)19, TT  
(See notes, ed.)  
Tern, Gull-billed: BNWR-(1)24, HC  
Tern, Caspian: 7 reports (1-7, 15)  
Tern, Royal: 4 reports (2-11, 22)  
Tern, Common: EG-(4)21, JJH  
Tern, Forster's: 11 reports (1-30, 78)  
Skimmer, Black: EG-(500)3, (100)21, JJH;  
(10)12, BL  
Dove, Rock: 6 reports (2-50, 102)  
Dove, White-winged: Galv-(8)1-31, JJH  
Dove, Mourning: 21 reports (2-53, 381)  
Dove, Inca: 7 reports (2-50, 120)  
Ground-Dove, Common: CR-(2)25, OG  
Parakeet, Monk: SW Houston-(2)1, PM  
Barn-Owl, Common: FBC-(1)27, TM  
Owl, Great Horned: H&H-(1)4, BE;  
WHC-(2)6, MM; FBC-(1)29, TM  
Owl, Barred: WHC-(1)6, MM; BNWR-(2)12, TW;  
BC-(3)14, TM; FBC-(2)29, TM  
Owl, Short-eared: WGI-(1)6, JJH; SBNWR-  
(1)18, WP+BPB; SB/SBNWR-(1)29, TPRB  
**HUMMINGBIRD, BROAD-TAILED:** Jones Creek-  
(1 imm male)22, HH; Freeport-  
(1 imm male)22, HH (See notes, ed.)  
Hummingbird, Rufous: Freeport-  
(1 imm male)22, HH (See notes, ed.)  
hummingbird, (Selasphorus) sp.: Houston-  
(2-3)1-31, GC; (1)19, WC  
Kingfisher, Belted: 12 reports (1-4, 28)  
Woodpecker, Red-headed: CR-(1)19, BC; (2  
inc. 1 imm)25, OG; EP/DP-(3)21, DM  
Woodpecker, Red-bellied: 11 reports  
(1-50, 92)  
Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: 7 reports  
(1-4, 11)  
Woodpecker, Downy: 9 reports (1-14, 27)  
Flicker, Northern: 12 reports (1-6, 33)  
Woodpecker, Pileated: 9 reports (1-5, 21)  
Phoebe, Eastern: 16 reports (1-20, 65)  
Flycatcher, Vermilion: 7 reports (1-3, 10)  
Kingbird, Western: Chambers Co-(1)4, TP  
(See notes, ed.)  
Lark, Horned: BNWR-(13)6, TT; (23)12, TW;  
SB/SBNWR-(13)29, TPRB  
Swallow, Tree: FBC-(1)29, TM  
Swallow, Northern Rough-winged:  
BC-(10)14, TM  
Jay, Blue: 16 reports (1-20, 72)  
Crow, American: 19 reports (1-40, 228)  
Chickadee, Carolina: 17 reports  
(1-60, 175)

Titmouse, Tufted: 11 reports (1-40; 93)  
 Nuthatch, Red-breasted: KW-(2)5, (1)19, JB;  
 EP/DP-(2)21, DM  
 Nuthatch, Brown-headed: EP/DP-(2)21, DM;  
 KW-(1)25, JB  
 Creeper, Brown: EP/DP-(3)21, DM  
 Wren, Carolina: 10 reports (1-18; 54)  
 Wren, House: 7 reports (1-4; 13)  
 Wren, Winter: White Oak Bayou-(1)18, WC  
 Wren, Sedge: WHC-(2)4, BE; (1)6, MM;  
 SBNWR-(25)18, WP+BPB; CR-(6)25, OG  
 Wren, Marsh: BNWR-(1)12, TW; SBNWR-  
 (10)18, WP+BPB; SB/SBNWR-(1)29, TPRB  
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned: 6 reports  
 (1-12; 27)  
 Kinglet, Ruby-crowned: 19 reports  
 (1-40; 217)  
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: White Oak Bayou-  
 (1-2)1-31, WC; EP/DP-(1)21, DM;  
 FBC-(1)27, TM  
 Bluebird, Eastern: EP/DP-(2)6, GE;  
 (6)21, DM; Bar X Ranch-(3)19, TW;  
 CR-(3)19, BC; KW-(3)25, JB  
 Thrush, Hermit: EP/DP-(5)21, DM;  
 Armand Bayou-(1)23, DM; CR-(1)25, OG  
 Robin, American: 19 reports (1-1500; 3875)  
 Catbird, Gray: CR-(1)19, BC; (3)25, OG;  
 Armand Bayou-(2)23, DM  
 Mockingbird, Northern: 23 reports  
 (1-20; 151)  
 Thrasher, Brown: 12 reports (1-8; 35)  
 Pipit, Water: 11 reports (1-40; 147)  
 Waxwing, Cedar: 15 reports (3-750; 1338)  
 Shrike, Loggerhead: 19 reports (1-30; 135)  
 Starling, European: 16 reports  
 (1-200; 680)  
 Vireo, White-eyed: FBC-(1)27, TM  
 Vireo, Solitary: 6 reports (1-2; 8)  
 Warbler, Orange-crowned: 12 reports  
 (1-10; 43)  
 Warbler, Yellow-rumped: 25 reports  
 (1-75; 317)  
 Warbler, Pine: KW-(6)5, (1)19, 25, JB;  
 Columbia Lks-(1)20-24, BH;  
 EP/DP-(28)21, DM  
 Warbler, Black-and-white: BNWR-(1)12, TW  
 Yellowthroat, Common: SBNWR-(5)18, WP+BPB;  
 Columbia Lks-(4)20-24, BH  
 Warbler, Wilson's: Wh. Oak B-(1-3)1-31, WC  
 Chat, Yellow-breasted: FBC-(1)27, TM  
 (See notes, ed.)  
 Tanager, Western: Sharpstown-(1)25, JT  
 (See notes, ed.)  
 Cardinal, Northern: 24 reports (1-40; 262)  
 Grosbeak, Black-headed: Dickinson-  
 (1)26, BSH (See notes, ed.)  
 Sparrow, Chipping: CR-(30)19, BC;  
 (20)25, OG; EP/DP-(40)21, DM  
 Sparrow, Field: CR-(1)19, BC; (1)25, OG  
 Sparrow, Vesper: WHC-(1)26, ME  
 Sparrow, Savannah: 19 reports (2-130; 719)  
 Sparrow, Le Conte's: WHC-(15)4, BE;  
 CR-(20)25, OG  
 Sparrow, Sharp-tailed:  
 BF-(6 nelsoni)12, BL  
 Sparrow, Seaside: BNWR-(5)6, TT;  
 SBNWR-(10)18, WP+BPB  
 Sparrow, Fox: CR-(1)25, OG  
 Sparrow, Song: 6 reports (1-8; 18)  
 Sparrow, Lincoln's: 6 reports (2-10; 28)  
 Sparrow, Swamp: 10 reports (1-55; 84)  
 Sparrow, White-throated: 9 reports  
 (1-27; 82)  
 Sparrow, White-crowned: H&H-(3)4, BE;  
 WHC-(4)6, MM; CR-(50)19, BC; (15)25, OG  
 Sparrow, Harris': WHC-(1)26, ME  
 Junco, Dark-eyed: EP/DP-(1)21, DM  
 Longspur, Lapland: WHC-(140)6, MM  
 Blackbird, Red-winged: 10 reports  
 (20-5000; 6170)  
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 18 reports  
 (2-119; 461)

Meadowlark, Western: WHC-(1 voice)11, JM  
 Blackbird, Brewer's: WHC-(10)26, ME  
 Grackle, Great-tailed: 9 reports  
 (1-450; 759)  
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: 4 reports  
 (1-60; 161)  
 Grackle, Common: 5 reports (15-430; 615)  
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: 7 reports  
 (3-2000; 2378)  
 blackbird, sp.: 5 reports  
 (215-5500; 13715)  
 Oriole, Northern: Galv-(1)23, JJH  
 (See notes, ed.)  
 Finch, Purple: EP/DP-(1 male)6, GE;  
 White Oak Bayou-(8)11, WC  
 Goldfinch, American: 16 reports  
 (1-200; 461)  
 Sparrow, House: 8 reports (1-50; 163)

#### CONTRIBUTORS - January, 1986

BC=RMB, Fred Collins; BE=RMB, Ted Eubanks, Jr.; BH=Bob Honig; BJH=Bill & Jean Harwell; BL=JB, Charles Lawson; BSH=Barbara & Sam House; DM=Derek Muschalek; DW+HA=Doug Williams & Houston Aboretum Field Trip; GC=Glenn Cureton; GE=Linda Graetz, Beau Emery; HC=BH, Caroline Callery; HH=BH, Faye Humphrey; HRP=Robert & Sherry Harvey, Jim Renfro, WP; JB=John Buckman; JC=Jerry Caraviotis; JJH=Jane & John Hamilton; JM=Jim Morgan; JT=Joann Thompson; MCD=PM, Yetta Chapman, Barbara Darr; ME=JM, Ted Eubanks, Jr.; MLO=M. L. Owens; MM=DM, Tommy Michael; OG=OG Field Trip; PM=Peggy Milstead; RMB=Ron & Marcia Braun; RT=Robert Thacker; RU=Richard Uzar; TM=Tommy Michael; TP=RT, John Parrott; TPRB=TT, WP, Jim Renfro, Tom Borchers; TT=Tom Taroni; TW=TT, Debbie & Billy Wages; WC=Wesley Cureton; WP+BPB=WP+Brazosport Birders; WP=Warren Pruess

#### CLEARING HOUSE NOTES - January, 1986

Brown Pelican: Large dark brown birds sitting on open gulf off beach. Most appeared to be imm. except for 2 which had slightly whitish yellow color to the top of the head. Large "pelican bill" quite obvious.

--Robert Thacker

Brown Pelican: While watching white Pelicans feed in Brazos R. near the mouth & working upstream at low tide, I noticed a group of large birds standing on west river bank close to the mouth. Large dark, dusky colored birds with large, heavy dark bills extending down along front of long neck. Whitish neck & light brown crown could be seen on some individuals. Other individuals did not seem to have contrasting head & neck coloration - possibly imm. Observed with 10X50 binocs at ~250 yds. at noon in clear, cool weather.

-- Warren Pruess

Black Scoter: On males the orange yellow knob at back of bill was quite obvious, rest of bird was dark black, plump, fat appearing shape when birds flew. Often dove under water. Females had white chin and darkish black top of head somewhat similar to a ruddy duck.

--Robert Thacker

White-tailed Hawk: (Jan. 5) Seen in West Park in League City in the same place as Armand Bayou Count. Seen from 150-250 ft. without binoculars at 12 noon & with 7X35 & 8.5X44 at 3pm. This was a white bodied buteo when observed from below. The tail was white with one narrow band near base of tail.

(Jan. 26) Two buteos viewed without binoc. at Gulf Freeway & El Dorado. These birds were slowly circling above us. Their bodies & tails were white & the bottoms or rear edges of their wings were dark. They were observed for about 3 min. & were low enough that we could see a single tail band near the base of the tail. -- Barbara & Sam House

White-tailed Hawk: 1 ad.; the other was in an interesting plumage that appeared to be midway through molt from imm. to ad. plumage: breast clear; belly with fine but dark barring (probably dark because of newly molted, thus unworn, feathers); distal half of tail with narrow, dark bars and a wider, diffuse dark terminal band; tail appeared longer than that of adult; underside of wings with fine, dark barring; chestnut shoulder patches only partially molted in.

--Bob Honig

White-tailed Hawk: Large buteo observed over north end of Warren Lake while we looked for eagles. The bird appeared to be slightly larger than the Red-tailed hawks which we could see to compare with. Upon first glance it was the white tail contrasting against the gray upper wings and body that caught our eye. Viewing through the 15-45x zoom scope showed the black sub-terminal tail band very clearly. As the bird circled we could see it was light underwing and body - the dark sub-terminal tail band still readily visible. 8 observers in Houston Arboretum field trip. 7x-10x binoc; 15x-45x scope. Observed bird from app. 200m-500m for 5 min.

--Doug Williams

Peregrine Falcon: Large falcon 150 ft. from road on Brazoria NWR. White head with black helmet not yet solid black thru top of head. Back & tail gray. Size comparison judged by Marsh Hawks in vicinity; about equal. It was feeding for about 2 min. in the top of a leafless tree, probably Hercules Club. It appeared its dinner was a Mourning Dove. Seen by all 4 obs. in good lighting (back) with binocs.

-- Tom Taroni

Solitary Sandpiper: This bird & several Killdeer flushed from a large watery flat as we approached. As it flew directly toward us & then banked low right over our heads, its uniform appearing back, unstreaked, whitish breast, & stiff down-turned wings gave the initial impression of a Spotted Sandpiper. As it flew directly away from us, the dark rump was apparent, but it lacked the white wing stripes of the Spotted & its larger size was noted. When the bird landed about 30 yds away, the long, olive wader-legs, the

prominent white eye-ring, & light spotted, dark gray-brown back, combined with the the dark rump noted earlier, clearly established Solitary Sandpiper. The bird was particularly calm & allow several people to approach to within about 30 ft. of it as it stood at the edge of a small puddle of water.

-- Ron Braun

Stilt Sandpiper: A little smaller & less chunky than nearby dowitchers, with smaller head & thinner neck. Lighter in color than dowitchers, with a faint eyeline. Beak, when visible, was shorter & slimmer than dowitchers' & slightly down turned. Fed with rapid movements of beak, & beak rarely left water. Dowitchers frequently pulled long, upturned beak completely out of water. Also present were snipe & both yellowlegs. Birds were not present Jan. 31. Seen with binoc. & telescope.

-- Wesley Cureton

Glaucous Gull: Brazosport Birders Rare Bird Alert announced a Glaucous Gull. Found it near San Luis Pass ~1 mile south sitting on beach about 50' away. Very large gull with head & neck slightly streaked, otherwise a pure white bird. When it flew there was no black anywhere. Bill was creamy white with black spot. Watched & photographed bird until I left.

--Tom Taroni

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD: Both had bright green back and crown all the way to the tail. Tail with very small amount of white at tip. Wings black. Belly white; flanks rufous (but appeared rosier than in Rufous Hummingbird described below). Gorget rosy red, only partially filled in. When hovering at feeder, fed with tail held in smooth line with back.

--Faye Humphrey & Bob Honig

Rufous Hummingbird: Bright green back all the way to tail, but had hint of coppery overtones; crown also green. Tail pattern not observed. Belly white, flanks rufous (but rufous extended farther onto belly than in Broad-tailed Hummingbirds described above.) Gorget coppery orange-red, only partially filled in. When hovering at feeder, fed with tail tilted upward.

--Faye Humphrey & Bob Honig

Western Kingbird: Observed on FM 1985 perched on power line by highway just before refuge signs appear beside road. Belly bright yellow, black tail, gray head and throat. I had just observed Couch's Kingbird in the Valley the week before and this bird definitely did not have the dark ear patch I had observed on the Couch's. Also this bird did not vocalize at all and the Couch's were quite vocal with distinctive calls. I have observed Cassin's Kingbird and this bird did not have a white chin. This bird's gray head color gradually blended down into the yellow breast. I looked several times for the white edges on the outer tail feathers but did not see them. The bird flew several times and returned to perch on the same wire. John Parrott stated that he did observe faint white edges on the tail. Observed

about 15 minutes, excellent light, 8x40 Leitz, 10x40 Leitz, and 22x scope from about 50 feet.

--Robert Thacker

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** The bird was seen on 1/27/86 at about 12:30pm. I watched the bird for about 2 to 4 min. The bird was heavy billed & about 7 to 7½ in. long. The back & long tail was olive-green in coloration with NO WING BARS whatsoever. The bird has white spectacles & black lores. The chin & entire breast was a beautiful vibrant yellow. Between the yellow breast & chin the black lores was a thin white cheek stripe. The belly was white. I never did see the undertail coverts. I saw the bird at the edge of a thick deciduous patch of woods with lots of briars, tangles, & dense thickets & underbrush all around. I saw the bird in some small trees near the dense thickets & wood edge. He was 8 to 12 ft. off the ground & hopped from tree to tree nearby. He was about 12 to 20 ft from me - hopping from tree to tree then flew off. The bird was seen on the back side of Hermann Hospital Lake near Dewalt, Texas in Ft. Bend Co. I used 10X50 binocs in good light.

-- Tommy Michael

**Western Tanager:** I first saw a large yellow bird with black wings land in the top of a Chinese Tallow. This was at about 8 am on a beautiful day in full sun. The tree was about 20-25 yds. away and I observed it for about 2 or 3 minutes. The bird seemed to be eating seeds. The yellow was as bright or brighter than an American Goldfinch. The head, breast and belly were yellow. The part of the belly next to the tail feathers was white. What I could see of the back was yellow. The tail was black. Wings were black with: upper wing bar being a large yellow circle, lower wing bar was a thin white line. Beak - seed eating type but not as thick as a Cardinal - very light - almost light pink. Size - a house sparrow was about a foot from it and this bird was about 2 inches longer.

--Joann E. Thompson

**Black-headed Grosbeak:** Orange bird with black head at bird feeder. This bird was close enough to be identified without binoculars, but was also seen from about 35 feet with 7x35 binoc. About same size as cardinal which was in feeder with it. This bird had a similar but thicker beak. He had white wing bars on black wings. White was seen on tail when bird flew. We watched him for about 10 min.

--Barbara & Sam House

**Northern Oriole:** 1st fall bird, rather dull yellow below, gray above with white wing bars. Bird was oriole size & had beak of oriole.

-- Jane Hamilton

CH EDITOR'S NOTES - January, 1986

**CHRISTMAS COUNT SIGHTINGS:** With the extra work of the Christmas Count Summary in last month's CH, I was not able to include notes for those species which would normally require them. So

this month I have published notes for those CC sightings that could affect the Checklist and will be considered by the Checklist Committee. Thanks to the compliers who sent in their summaries and copies of the notes for their "details" birds

**PURPLE GALLINULE:** (No December records) Brazoria CC (12/21/85) - Slightly smaller than coots it was with; overall purplish color with light blue shield; red bill with yellow tip; yellow legs & feet; upperparts, wing, & tail iridescent greenish; underparts iridescent purple/blue; white under tail. Seen flapping across pond to some cattails for 1 min. under clear skies at 40 yds. with 7X50 binocs. Observer: Anne Atkins

(Was also seen on 12/17/85, ed.)

**THAYER'S GULL:** (Vagrant - 3 accepted records) Freeport CC (12/22/85) - Initially attracted to this bird by its soft aspect, small size compared to adjacent 1st winter Herring; head a washed fawn, back of head lighter than crown & back, bill uniformly black, less angular & shorter than Herring, undersides a uniform fawn with no harsh streaking, back feathers white with dark transverse streaking centered along shaft, wing coverts as above yet with lighter transverse barring, outer primaries dark outer vane, light inner vane, inner primaries light gray-fawn, secondaries light gray-fawn; tail dark, upper tail coverts white with fawn transverse barring; legs flesh. Eliminate Ring-billed by larger size, brown back, uniform brown tail; eliminate California by uniformly dark bill; eliminate Herring by slightly smaller size, rounded head, shorter & slighter bill, soft undersides; secondaries uniform with upper wing (seen in flight) & light undersides to primaries (seen when bird raised wing while preening). Preened while sitting on rock next to Herring; eventually flew across Freeport channel. Seen 15 min. at 30-40 yds. with 10X binoc. & 20-45X scope in excellent light. Observers: Ted & Virginia Eubanks

**BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD:** (Vagrant - 10 accepted records) Freeport CC (12/22/85) - Subadult male with green back & head; tail with small amount of rufous; rufous flanks; gorget 50% developed; flashed rose red. Bird appeared broad at shoulders & tail appeared broad. Bill black. Seen for 5 min. in good light at 30 ft. feeding at a feeder at 9:30 a.m. Observers: Margaret Anderson, Faye Humphrey, & Lamar Jackson

**BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER:** (No December records) Brazoria CC (12/21/85) - Two birds seen, one male & one female. Larger than a kinglet near by; light crown; black & white back; white belly & streaking on sides; male had orange throat & bib; female had yellow throat & bib. Male observed for 1 min.; female for 15 min., both in sunny weather with sun behind observers. Seen feeding high up in a pecan tree at 40 ft. Observers: Larry & Martha Ballard, Joyce Morgan

**LAZULI BUNTING:** (Vagrant - 7 accepted records) Freeport CC (12/22/85) - Size of Indigo Bunting; blue head; blue back; blue rather mottled on top & more intense toward tail; light rusty orange band across breast; from lower breast down was white. Beak was conical, seed-eater bill. Two white wing bars. Only other bird with similar color pattern is E. Bluebird which doesn't have wing bars. Seen for 1 min. (30 sec. in full view) in good light at 10-50 feet with 8.5X40 binocs. First observed in rattlebrush, then flew through the brush & up to a tallow tree. Observers: Sherry Collins, Ruth & Arch Dillard, Pam & Sandy Dillard, Nev Isenberg.

**SCOTT'S ORIOLE:** (Accidental - 1 accepted record) Freeport CC (12/22/85) - Mockingbird-sized bird feeding on a Prickly Pear tuna at 50 yds to 50 ft. Oriole bill; head & throat blackish with black throat coming down on breast as a "V"; underparts lemon yellow; two white wing bars. The anterior most 2 or 3 feathers on the upper wing bars were yellow. The back was slightly greenish-charcoal with longitudinal black streaks. The rump was yellow. Audubon's Oriole (rejected because) the back is yellow in this bird & the black lower foreneck is horizontal rather than "V"-shaped. Seen in good light for 5 min. with 9X binocs & a Questar at 50 yds. Observers: Bill & Will Graber

**Wilson's Phalarope:** (One previous record for December; that by R.S. Fleetwood at Brazoria NWR on 12/17/71) Brazoria CC (12/21/85) - About the size of Lesser Yellowlegs; crown, back, & sides of neck pale gray, sides of head white, front of neck white, eye dark, area over eye white, couldn't get close enough to see if it had eye line; very long, very thin bill, dark; couldn't see (legs & feet) because it was swimming; nape gray, back brownish, rump white; throat white, belly white, side had strongly demarcated line between brown & white; tail completely white. Behavior - swimming in circles, moving head forward, jabbing bill into water. Vocalization - 3-4 short notes while flying. Seen at ~250 ft for 5-10 min. with 8X40 binoc. Observers: Kris & Charlene Wilson

#### MAGNIFICENT HUMMINGBIRD DISCUSSION:

Last month I received the following note from Jim Morgan. Regretfully, time & space did not allow its inclusion with the Dec. CH. The importance of the discussion of diagnostic field marks necessitates the note's publication now.

#### SOME COMMENTS ON DETAILS OF THE MAGNIFICENT HUMMINGBIRD ...

The details of the Magnificent Hummingbird by Bessie Cornelius in the Nov. 1985 Clearing House mentions a comment of mine regarding the dark belly as being diagnostic. In my conversation with Margaret Anderson I believe I said that on a large hummingbird with a brilliant metallic green throat, rosy or violet crown, all black bill & lack of rufous in the tail, then the dark belly should be diagnostic. In fact, the

breast just below the green gorget on a Magnificent Hummingbird male is a velvety black & gives such a striking contrast that the identification of the species can be quickly arrived at, especially if one notes the crown, tail, & bill colors. This sighting by Bessie, a veteran observer, is most interesting & will deserve the careful attention of both the UTC & Texas Ornithological Society record committees. Beaumont seems to be attracting good hummers these days. Remember the Broad-billed Hummingbird in the fall of 1984?

-- Jim Morgan

#### ...the wood nymph of crepuscular habits

...A. C. Bent

The American Woodcock of course! The following is Doug Williams' report of woodcock sightings at the Houston Arboretum during January. These numbers are in addition to the reports in the main body of the CH.

Day	No.	Comments
7	3	
8	1	
9	3	
10	12	
13	10	1st night that they called
14	12	still calling
15	15	still calling + G. Horned Owl harassing two woodcock
7	2	not calling
18	2	not calling
19	1	not calling
20	3	not calling
21	5	not calling
22	5	not calling + horned owl harrassing a woodcock
23	3	not calling
24	1	not calling
25	3	not calling
28	2	not calling
29	0	G. Horned Owls obs. mating in nearby transmission tower
30	2	not calling
31	1	not calling

No aerial displays were observed during either Dec. or Jan.

Send requests for OG information, checklists, maps to:  
Maxine Davis, 10602 Cedarhurst  
Houston 77096, 723-8559

Send bird records for Clearing House before 3rd of month to:  
Ron Braun, 1302 Berrywood Ln.  
Houston 77077, 496-3108

Rare Bird Alert Tape, sponsored by The Piney Woods Wildlife Society:  
821-2846

Send announcements, articles, etc. for The Spoonbill to editor:  
Dr. B. C. Robison  
10331 Longmont, Houston 77042  
(h) 974-1894

Send dues, subscriptions and changes of address to:  
Peter Vennema, 2120 Tangley  
Houston 77005, 520-6803  
Annual Dues: \$11.00  
(ONC \$5.00, OG \$6.00)  
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## THE BIRDATHON: FACT SHEET

### WHAT IS IT?

A Birdathon is a birding competition between teams of birders attempting to see as many species of birds as possible, restricted to one geographic arena, and operating under a common set of rules.

### WHERE IS IT?

UPPER TEXAS COAST - one of the premier birding areas in North America.

### WHEN IS IT?

Midnight to midnight, April 26th, 1986.

### WHY A BIRDATHON?

For a number of reasons. Because...

it offers birders a chance to test their birding skills against those of other good birders.

it poses a challenge which will sharpen each year as teams become more familiar with their routes and as strategies become more refined.

it will generate support for the conservation of the U.T.C.'s most important birding habitats, including High Island, which is essential to the survival of many spring and fall migrants.

and it's a lot of fun...if you've never been to the U.T.C. during spring migration, you haven't seen anything yet!

### WHO MAY ENTER?

Teams of birders who meet the following standards. They must...

secure the representation of an established birding or conservation club, Audubon Chapter or birding enterprise from which any number of teams may be

fielded (see "pledging your team" sheet).

be comprised of a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 5 observers.

be willing to comply with ABA and Birdathon rules.

forward the registration fee (see entry application) before April 1, 1986. This fee covers the awards, lunch on Sunday, the packet you are receiving and a jersey establishing the wearer as a Birdathon participant.

### WHO IS RUNNING IT?

The event is organized by the Houston Audubon Society. It is officially endorsed by the ABA.

### WHAT IS THE PRIZE?

The team that records the most species will receive the coveted Oberholser Cup. This cup will remain at Houston Audubon Society's Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary, with your name on it, and replicas will be given to each team participant. Other awards will be made in such categories as--most pledges raised, most warbler species seen.

### WILL TEXAS BIRDERS HAVE THE EDGE?

To some degree an Upper Texas Coast birder will have an advantage. However, materials will be sent to participants that will enable them to be competitive. And remember, although there are good birders on the U.T.C., not all are as experienced as your team might be.

### HOW DO WE ENTER A TEAM?

CALL THE HOUSTON AUDUBON SOCIETY FOR AN APPLICATION FORM. (713) 932-1392

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