



THE SPOONBILL

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"THE INCREDIBLE FLIGHT OF THE SNOW GOOSE" - by Dirk Hagemeyer

Those who saw my slide show on the Churchill area in Canada might remember my remarks about the Australian wildlife photographer team, Jen and Des Bartlett, whom I met at Churchill and spent several weeks with on the tundra. They were the ones who had snow geese and a sandhill crane "Fred", all born from wild birds in the North, as company. I just got word from the Bartlett's that "The Incredible Flight of the Snow Goose" is the title of their 1-hour TV-Special to be shown on NEC-TV (Channel 2 in Houston) on January 23rd at 7 P.M. (but you'd best check your TV Guide on the time to be sure and not miss it.)

They themselves are not too well satisfied with the editing done in England (quote: "there are too many Bartlett's in it"). However, having met them and knowing their dedication to everything wild as well as their technical skills, I am certain that this show should be a real treat. Don't miss it.

MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING STAMPS (AND FIRST EDITION PRINTS) ON EXHIBIT

Now, through February 13th, in the Herman Brown Auditorium of the Houston Museum of Natural Science, are the prints and resultant duck stamps: the following is copied from information furnished, entitled "Art For Conservation":

"The creation of the duck stamp, as the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp is popularly known, was a dramatic event in conservation history. For decades preceding the first stamp in 1934, the nation's migratory waterfowl had been declining at an alarming rate, despite efforts of the federal government, conservationists and sportsmen to halt the bird's plummet toward extinction. The mandatory purchase by hunters of federal duck stamps was instrumental in providing funds to buy, develop and maintain refuges across the country.

The finest wildlife artists in the country are selected to illustrate the stamp. For the first 15 years the design of the stamp was commissioned by the committee administering the Duck Stamp Act. In 1949, the selection of art to provide the motif for the stamp shifted from commission to an annual contest, which is now open to all interested artists. Art--in the form of superb illustrations of the birds the Act intended to conserve--has become an effective weapon in the battle to preserve North America's wildlife heritage.

The black and white series of duck stamp prints (1934-69) is among the most sought after and select art collection of migratory birds in the world. This fine collection of first edition prints and stamps is on loan to the Houston Museum of Natural Science from Mrs. Albert B. Fay. It is one of only thirty complete sets in existence and has taken years to assemble."

The Herman Brown Auditorium will be open during regular museum hours.

HOUSTON CHRISTMAS COUNT, DECEMBER 30, 1972--leader and compiler, T. Paul Jones

SPECIES	AREAS										TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Common Loon					1					6	7
Red-throated Loon										1	1
Horned Grebe										2	2
Eared Grebe	4				2				2	180	188
Pied-billed Grebe	4				9	2	19	2	21	2	59
White Pelican			3				42			20	65
Double-crested Cormorant			2		80	159	42	191	389	192	1,055
Anhinga	1		6								7
Great Blue Heron	4	1	8		30	30	28	6	22	204	333
Little Blue Heron					1	2	3		4	2	12
Cattle Egret	30	6	7	18		6	1	7	4	12	91
Common Egret	2	6	18	1	30	87	3	11	22	104	285
Snowy Egret			7		20	20	8	11	89	19	174
Louisiana Heron			15	1	5	2	5	3		60	91
Black-crowned Nightheron			1		15	6	21	12	5	200	260
Canada Goose		29		12							41
White-fronted Goose		7				241					248
Snow Goose	170	129	42		23	637		45	25	2	1,073
Blue Goose	85	80	40		15	309		10		4	543
Mallard				3		3	3				9
Mottled Duck			2								2
Gadwall	6		5					4	20	2	37
Pintail	12		10					2	258	11	317
Green-winger Teal					15		20	4	14		53
Blue-winged Teal						1				7	8
American Widgeon									2		2
Shoveler						15	1	2	12	200	230
Wood Duck	6					70					76
Lesser Scaup	1						2			27	30
Common Goldeneye					7						7
Bufflehead					1						1
Ruddy Duck								69	225	300	594
Red-breasted Merganser					1					6	7
Duck (sp)		20	1	2		56	50				129
Turkey Vulture		3	1								4
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1									1	2
Cooper's Hawk	1		2			1					4
Red-tailed Hawk	12	24	5	4	6	21		1	6	4	83

SPECIES	AREAS										TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Red-shouldered Hawk		3	2	1	2				1		9
Marsh Hawk	8	6	2	4		12		1	2	2	29
Sparrow Hawk	9	12	14	2	9	21	5	6	10	2	90
Hawk (sp)		20	1	2							23
Bobwhite	1	16	8		2	29	1		8		65
Clapper Rail						3					3
Sora								2			2
Common Gallinule											2
American Coot	3		25		3	2		11		3	33
Semipalmated Plover										21	65
Piping Plover						1				2	2
Killdeer	133	17	20	74	49	162	33	25	100	100	713
Black-bellied Plover					2	1	1			1	5
Ruddy Turnstone									1		1
American Woodcock	2	1	1		9	2			2		17
Common Snipe	1						7				8
Spotted Sandpiper					5	1		4	5	3	18
Willet							11		5	3	19
Greater Yellowlegs	1										1
Lesser Yellowlegs	1					2					3
Least Sandpiper							50			5	55
Dunlin						20				12	32
Short-billed Dowitcher										4	4
Long-billed Dowitcher							10				10
Dowitcher (sp)										5	5
Semipalmated Sandpiper					60						60
Western Sandpiper					60						60
Peep (sp)							4				4
Sanderling						1			26	100	127
American Avocet		14	1		4	3			12	15	27
Herring Gull		2	40	29	97	116	6	2	9	78	117
Ring-billed Gull	2						13	5	21	800	1,125
Laughing Gull			20		55	120	1	100	220	1362	1,878
Franklin's Gull						6					6
Bonaparte's Gull						6					6
Forster's Tern			6		26	29	1	3		1	10
Common Tern							14		14	75	165
Royal Tern		1	7		15	16	1	15	9	20	21
Caspian Tern			15		3	6	1	1	2	54	118
Black Skimmer										17	45
										75	75

SPECIES	AREAS										TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Mourning Dove	50	7	18	1	20	165	8	2	57	2	330
Ground Dove	6										6
Grove-billed Ani	1										1
Barn Owl						8				1	9
Screech Owl						2				1	3
Great Horned Owl					1	1					2
Barred Owl		1		1	3			1	1		7
Chuck-wills-widow						1					1
Rufous Hummingbird											1
Belted Kingfisher	3	2	5	4	9	5	2	1	3	1	35
Yellow-shafted Flicker	16	10	11	10	4	23	8	5	16	10	113
Pileated Woodpecker	9	4	1	4		1	1			1	21
Red-bellied Woodpecker	10	3	2	5		5		8	7	8	48
Red-headed Woodpecker		1				1					2
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	6	3	13	2	8	21	4	2	1	3	63
Hairy Woodpecker	1										1
Downy Woodpecker			2	1		1		3			7
Eastern Phoebe	22	15	7	9	9	16	1	5	3		87
Eastern Wood Pewee							1				1
Swallow (sp)							1				1
Blue Jay	18	15	8	18	10	16	2	15	30	32	164
Common Crow	27	28		7	31	2	6		13	2	116
Carolina Chickadee	38	10	35	18	3	47	4	10	3	12	175
Tufted Titmouse	7	3		6	1	15		5	1	5	43
Brown Creeper	1				1	4					5
House Wren	2	1			2	13			1	3	22
Winter Wren	2					1		1			4
Carolina Wren	14	20	7	16	4	16	2	4	2	15	100
Long-billed Marsh Wren						6					6
Short-billed Marsh Wren	9					3					12
Mockingbird	37	31	35	28	100	228	14	60	35	35	593
Catbird				1	5	11		1	1		19
Brown Thrasher	20	11	10	3	11	189	11	9	2	23	289
Robin	125	2636	501	800	350	4363	711	15	126	45	9,672
Wood Thrush	1						1				2
Hermit Thrush	16	7	11	6	4	15		4	2	5	70
Eastern Bluebird	15	17	2	14	14	1	3	5			71
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	8	5	12	12	17	51	5	4		10	124
Golden-crowned Kinglet	4	2	20		2	5	13	3			40
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	63	13	34	28	60	86		15	9	15	323
Water Pipit	13			2	6	12		2	15	75	125

SPECIES	AREAS										TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Sprague's Pipit	1					4					5
Cedar Waxwing				1		29					30
Loggerhead Shrike	46	40	47	16	35	50	15	7	20	20	296
Starling	110	570	29	7	27	1064	24	7	8	62	1,908
Solitary Vireo	1			1		3				1	6
Black-and-white Warbler						1					1
Orange-crowned Warbler	11		11		8	21		12	2	3	68
Myrtle Warbler	65	76	38	19	50	580	4	75	50	220	1,177
Audubon's Warbler								1			1
Pine Warbler	23	5	23	4	1	11		2			69
Palm Warbler	3										3
Yellowthroat	1				2	1				1	5
House Sparrow	15	16	68	52	25	6		3	50	50	285
Eastern Meadowlark	95	25	15	14	10	84	15	1	96	16	371
Red-winged Blackbird	350	4005	303	600	160	2730	6	12	68	250	8,484
Rusty Blackbird	11		20								31
Brewer's Blackbird	1	6500			10					100	6,611
Boat-tailed Grackle						15	5	25		2	47
Common Grackle	2	75	3		47	610	50		50	2	839
Brown-headed Cowbird	100	102	50	100	10	547		3	25	20	957
Blackbird (sp)		10,000	195	1000	345		200	1585			13,325
Cardinal	141	22	12	36	45	119	4	27	10	43	459
Black-headed Grosbeak						1					1
Purple Finch	8			18	2			7	6		41
Pine Siskin	1										1
American Goldfinch	50	38	9	51		30	13	30	12	5	238
Rufous-sided Towhee	5		4	3	14	14	1	1	1		33
Savannah Sparrow	58		2		35	22	4	3			124
Grasshopper Sparrow						1					1
LeConte's Sparrow	1			1		4					6
Henslow's Sparrow	2										2
Seaside Sparrow							2				2
Vesper Sparrow	1	1				1					3
Slate-colored Junco	8	30	8	14	2	9	10		26		107
Chipping Sparrow						2					2
Field Sparrow						4					4
Harris Sparrow	3										3
White-crowned Sparrow	42	6		2	5	11	12		2		80
White-throated Sparrow	97	30	70	77	35	1090	26	100	108	174	1,797
Fox Sparrow	1					6					7

SPECIES	AREAS										TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Lincoln's Sparrow	9		1		1	3			12	4	30
Swamp Sparrow	18			1		3				12	39
Song Sparrow	3		1	3		8		1	3	4	23
TOTAL BY AREA	87	58	69	55	77	107	61	70	73	88	
TOTAL SPECIES	158										
NO. OF OBSERVERS	59										
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	57,456										

The 1972 Christmas Bird Count began in the dark, humid and foggy hours of early morning on Saturday, December 30th, when fifty-nine dedicated birders took to the field. Even the owls seemed to be unwilling to get out and answer "invaders"! By about 8:30 A.M. a gusty norther blew into the area with enough rain to get many of our participants thoroughly wet, but this weather front was a weak one and soon dissipated. Shortly after noon the sun came shining upon us and made bird counting a much more pleasurable pursuit. About dusk most of the weary group that had earlier in the day taken to the field came tramping to the Holly Inn Restaurant for some nourishment for both body and soul. The food helped to ease the weariness of our bodies and learning of the experiences and achievements of our various parties combined to refresh our spirits.

A Final tally reveals that our Christmas Bird Count this year produced 158 species, all of them hard earned. Some observers even had to "face the jury" on their unusual sightings.

The splendid efforts of our Area Leaders and their helpers are greatly appreciated and are saluted for the excellent results. To each and every participant a great bit "Thank you for a job well done!" is due. -- T. Paul Jones

Editor's note: That sure was a lot of work, Paul, and we sure do appreciate your leadership.

RARE BIRD ALERT

Ben Feltner reported Monday morning, January 1, that a large flock of Lapland Longspurs had been seen near the intersection of Highway 529 and Katy-Hockley Road, also near the intersection of 529 and 362. A number of birders rushed out there, in spite of the inclement weather, but only a few succeeded in spying a bird or two. They seemed to be staying down under the stubble, out of the wet weather. Since they come to this area so seldom, and have not been here for some time, it is hoped they will linger for long enough for more birders to see them.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Your editor would appreciate any articles you would like to submit to be put into the SPOONBILL; of course, we cannot promise that all will be used, but we'll try!!

MARKED WHOOPER LOSS REPORTED...FAIL TO RETURN TO ARANSAS

The following is a condensation of an article entitled as above which appeared in the Houston Chronicle On January 1st:

"A number of whooping cranes have failed to return to their wintering grounds in Texas, according to American and Canadian wildlife officials.

Officials of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service say they are unable to account for the decline, which has concerned them.

The missing birds are believed to be dead, although an air search for them continues around their wintering grounds, the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the south coast of Texas, in the hope that they are wintering outside their refuge.

Since the birds approached extinction - only 15 birds were counted in 1941 - wildlife management by the U.S. and Canadian governments by last winter had almost quadrupled their number to 59 wild whoopers. (In addition, there are 21 in captivity.)

Wildlife workers became concerned when a census on Dec. 27 confirmed earlier estimates that only 51 whoopers were at the refuge, a net loss of eight in a year. Only in 1941, when the population fell to 15 from 26 the previous year, has the numerical loss in a single year been greater.

The loss of eight birds does not wholly represent the magnitude of the loss. Since five of the whoopers now foraging Aransas' tide pools are young birds, born last summer, the number of older birds lost in the year is 13. The national attrition rate, Fish and Wildlife Service biologists estimate, should be about three birds a year.

The whoopers' rise in population over the last several decades has been interrupted by temporary losses, but this is the first time in a decade that the census has dropped by more than one bird in a year.

The 1972 loss is especially disappointing to wildlife workers because they had expected an unusually productive year.

On the breeding grounds, at Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada's northwest territories, 2600 miles north of Aransas, Canadian Wildlife Service workers last summer counted 16 active nests -- a record. They estimated that 29 eggs were laid. Late in the summer, they counted only five young.

The death toll among young whoopers is always high, but a return of only one young whooper for every six eggs is unusually low. There is no evidence as yet that pesticides or other forms of human interference limited the birds' reproduction.

Thus far wildlife workers have neither theories nor evidence to explain the cause of the decline this year. This is unusual, since even lone whoopers that are injured or found dead along the migration routes are often reported to wildlife authorities. This year there have been no reports of dead, ill or injured birds.

One expert, Dr. Ray C. Erickson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Wildlife Research Program at Patuxent, Md., said recently that he could find only one clue in the information so far available.

The fact that all five of the whooper families with young that were spotted in August at the breeding grounds have been accounted for at Aransas suggests, he says, that the loss was suffered not by the established breeders, but by immature whoopers, ages one to about five years old, which separate from the breeding age birds on northbound migrations. Where the adolescents spend their summers has never been determined.

Since there is a natural high death rate among these pre-breeding age whooping cranes, Erickson says, the long-term effect may be less severe than if it had been suffered by established breeding birds.

COMING EVENTS

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Sunday
January 28 | OG Field Trip to the Texas City Dike to study Loons. Meet at the Holiday Inn next to the dike at 8:00 A.M. Leader will be Margaret Anderson. Bring lunch. |
| Thursday
February 3 | Regular OG Meeting - 7:30 P.M., Downtown Recreation Center. Mr. C. B. Gilman will give a program on "Plants and Flowers to Attract Birds in Your Yard." |
| Sunday
February 11 | Audubon Field Trip to the Trinity River Bottoms. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Dayton State Bank. Bring lunch. Leader will be T. Paul Jones. |
| Saturday
February 17 | ONC Field Trip to Bear Creek Park. Meet at 9:00 A.M. at the first parking lot inside the park. Bring lunch and sturdy shoes or boots. Leader will be L.A.M. Barnette. |
| Saturday
February 24 | OG Field Trip to Cinco Ranch. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the intersection of Hwy. 6 and Westheimer. Bring lunch. |
| Monday
February 26 | Nature & Wildlife Film - "Coastal California" by Albert J. Wool. He is a fine speaker; we've enjoyed his films twice in the past. 8 P.M. - 2710 W. Alabama. |
| Wednesday
February 28 | Audubon Wildlife Film - "Treasure of East Africa" by Bower E. Rudrud; 8 P.M. - Music Hall |

NAMES TO REMEMBER

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Chairman: | Miss Marilyn Crane, 3601 Allen Eky., #214,
Houston 77019 522-6393 |
| Treasurer: | Miss Melba Drake, 1746 Wroxtton Court, Houston 77005
522-8285 |
| Spoonbill: | Mrs. Irving (Laura) Greenbaum, 5615 Portal Dr.,
Houston 77035 721-1310 |
| Clearing-House: | Mr. Dan H. Hardy, 10215 Chatterton, Houston 77043
468-2748 |
| Rare Bird Alert: | Mrs. L. W. (Margaret) Anderson, 2913 Amherst,
Houston 77005 668-6405 |

FLASH!

King Ranch field trip set for March 24th and 25th! Make reservations at Holiday Inn in Kingsville, where we will assemble at 8:00 AM on Saturday, March 24th. More details in February Spoonbill.

CLEARINGHOUSE NEWS

The December Clearinghouse will be included in the February Spoonbill. Deadlines didn't quite mesh this month, so please excuse us.

BIRD ALERT NEWS

A Black-legged Kittiwake was reported by Eldridge McHenry at the end of the Texas City Dike January 7th. He said it was a rather aggressive bird, chasing others, and coming to bits of bread thrown out. He saw it at the turn-a-round at the end of the dike, but others saw it farther back up the dike later in the day.

This seems to be an excellent year for northern finches, so everyone be on the lookout for some unusual ones. The Red Crossbills were still being seen at Bastrop Park January 8th, this time at the lake area. Purple finches and pine Siskins are being reported, and Evening Grosbeaks were reported earlier at College Station and should be looked for in this area. And the Cedar Waxwings have arrived, two different flocks being seen in the Bellaire area January 6th & 8th..

A ferruginous Hawk can be seen in the Clay Road area. Turn north from Clay Road on Gertie Rice Road, and go one mile. The road makes an abrupt turn, about there, but the hawk is to be seen in this area, before the turn. There is a house on the left and field on the right, and the hawk seems to consider this his territory. He has been observed by Margaret Anderson and Norma Oates, and was seen by T. Paul Jones and Margaret Jones January 8th.

SPOONBILL ITEMS

We ask that you mail any items you want in the Spoonbill as soon after the first of the month as possible, so the editors of the Spoonbill and the Clearinghouse will receive them by the fifth.

