



THE SPOONBILL

VOLUME XIII, No. 9

January, 1965

 * I heard a bird sing in the dark of *
 * December *
 * A magical thing and sweet to remember. *
 * "We are nearer to Spring than we were *
 * in September." *
 * I heard a bird sing in the dark of *
 * December. *
 * *
 * Oliver Herford *

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

COMING EVENTS

- February 4 (Thursday) - Regular Ornithology Group meeting at the Downtown Recreation Center, 7:30 PM. The program will be "The Migration of Birds" by George Williams.
- February 9 (Tuesday) - Regular O.N.C. Meeting, Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive at 8:00 PM. "Geology of the East Texas Big Thicket" by Dr. W. G. Hugly.
- February 16 (Tuesday) - Audubon Wildlife Film. "Gone With the Wilderness", Karl H. Maslowski, to be held at 8:00 PM in the auditorium of the Houston Home Builders Association, 2710 West Alabama.
- February 20 (Saturday) - Dr. Hardin Craig will lead the Ornithology Group Field Trip to Cinco Ranch and other points in Western Harris County. Meet at 9:30 AM at the crossroads in Clodine. For those who wish to join the field trip for the afternoon only, meet at the junction of roads 1093 and 1463 at 1:00 PM.
- March 27-28 (Saturday and Sunday) Clayton Gilman will lead the March Ornithology Group trip to George West. This is an excellent area for birding and we hope new members will make every effort to attend this week-end trip and we know old members always want to go back again and again. We will have more information on this trip in the next issue.

NESTING BROWN PELICANS

Charlotte Johnson

On the boat, The Whooping Crane, out of Sea-Gun Marina, I met Reagan Lee, warden for the National Audubon Society at Aransas Wildlife Refuge. He said that in 1963, 12 mature Brown Pelicans appeared on 2nd Chain Islands. 6 fledged. In 1964, 20 adults nested on 2nd Chain Islands and 35 eggs hatched and all 35 fledged. He feels that in a few years we may have a large colony of the Brown Pelicans nesting on 2nd Chain Islands. They start laying about March 16th and leave in August.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN DEADLINE NEAR

February 18 is the deadline for the World Wildlife Fund to exercise its option to purchase 3,400 acres of grassland near Eagle Lake for a Prairie Chicken refuge. This tract of land is ideal Prairie Chicken habitat and there is some resident breeding stock already present. It is not unlikely that failure to preserve this piece of land in perpetuity and in its wild state may result in the extinction of this race of the Greater Prairie Chicken. The price of the land, \$365,000, is approximately one-half of the present market value of the land. If this option is allowed to lapse, acquisition of any suitable area in the future, if even possible, must certainly be much more expensive. The corporate structure of the World Wildlife Fund has been designed to insure that lands acquired by the Fund will remain as refuges in perpetuity. If you have not yet made a donation to the Prairie Chicken Fund, or if you can make another donation, send your contribution to:

Texas Prairie Chicken Committee
World Wildlife Fund
P.O. Box 52341
Houston, Texas

Donations are tax deductible

EARLY CHRISTMAS COUNT RETURNS

Cocoa, Fla. has done it again with an all time high of 204 species. Houston dropped from 193 last year to 165 when fog cut two hours off field time. After a preliminary report of 181 species from Freeport, a late report from Vic Emanuel gives an official Freeport total of 183, second highest count ever in Texas.

WHOOPERS UP

Forty-two Whooping Cranes, an increase of ten individuals over last year, have arrived at the Aransas Wildlife Refuge. There were ten youngsters among the cranes. The same number were counted this last summer by Canadians at the breeding grounds, indicating that all of the Whooping Cranes in the whole wide world made a safe trip from Canada to Texas.

MANGROVE CUCKOO IN GALVESTON

Jim Ellis

The following is the text of an account written for submission with the Galveston Christmas Count report.

"On Wednesday, December 30, 1964, my wife, Pat, and I observed a Mangrove Cuckoo (*Coccyzus minor*) in the city of Galveston, Texas. The bird was first discovered by Pat in a large live oak tree at the front of the Menard house at the corner of 33rd and N $\frac{1}{2}$ Streets. When she first saw the bird it was partially hidden in the foliage, with only the tail clearly visible. She called to me that she had found a cuckoo. As I approached, the bird moved into the open. The buff underparts struck us immediately. As the bird moved from limb to limb we were able to see that there was no rufous in the wings.

"We knew that there is a third species of cuckoo which occurs in the United States other than the Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) and the Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) with which we are familiar. We knew that the bird occurred in Florida but we did not know any of the distinguishing field marks. Unfortunately, we had with us only one field guide, "Field Guide to the Birds of Texas" by Peterson. This book of course does not contain this bird. Pat stayed with the bird while I went to the

nearby house of Mrs. Stewart LeBlanc, Jr. 2911 Avenue O, a Galveston birder, hoping to get from her a copy of "A Field Guide to the Birds", "Audubon Land Bird Guide" or any other book with a description of the Mangrove Cuckoo. Mrs. LeBlanc had no books that could help so we went to the Galveston Public Library and checked out a copy of the Audubon Guide. We returned to the Menard where Pat still had the bird under observation.

"Immediately after we arrived at the house, a mockingbird began harassing the cuckoo and drove it from the grounds of the Menard house. It lighted in a large live oak tree across the street. As we read each field mark from the book, all three of us studied the bird to verify that the bird bore the mark. We did this for each of the marks described in the book. Mrs. LeBlanc then left us to try to find the other two members of our party who were covering another part of our Christmas Count area. Pat and I continued to observe the bird as it moved from tree to tree. We found the bird at approximately 10:00 AM and had it under almost continuous observation until we lost it at about 1:00 PM. Mrs. LeBlanc searched unsuccessfully for the other members of our party until other duties forced her to give up about noon. At 1:30 we went to a pre-arranged meeting with 5 other members of our count group and immediately returned with them to search the area. We were unsuccessful. The following day eight people from Houston, joined by Mrs. LeBlanc again searched futilely. The next day I returned alone with no success."

CLEARING HOUSE December 1964

- Pied-billed Grebe: (1-6)24,25,26 Cove AKM.
- White Pelican: (125)12 Cove AKM.
- Double-crested Cormorant: (1-9),24,29,31 Cove AKM.
- Cattle Egret: (1-5)20,24,28,29,30 Cove AKM.
- Black-crowned Night Heron: (5)25 Cove AKM.
- White-faced Ibis: (8)19 Cove AKM; (80-90)3 Western Harris Cty. CJ.
- Roseate Spoonbill: 6 days, (175)26, (300)31 Cove AKM.
- Canada Goose: (2 flocks, one or both lesser, 8 ,35)25 Cove AKM.
- White-fronted Goose: 5 days, (300)6 Cove AKM.
- Mallard: (8-40)8 days Cove AKM.
- Mottled Duck: (3-8)5 days Cove AKM.
- Gadwall: (150)24, (2)25, (4)30 Cove AKM.
- Pintail: 6 days, (2000)26 Cove AKM.
- Green-winged Teal: 8days, (10,000)26 Cove AKM.
- Blue-winged Teal: (3)26 Cove AKM.
- American Widgeon: (50)25, (2)26, (9)30 Cove AKM.
- Shoveler: (25)20, (1000)26, (20)31 Cove AKM.
- Ring-necked Duck: (50)24 Cove AKM.
- Canvasback: (10)24, (12)25, (2)29 Cove AKM.
- Greater Scaup: (6)5 Galveston NS JBS.
- Lesser Scaup: (2-30) 6 days Cove AKM.
- Common Goldeneye: (9)25,31 Cove AKM.
- Ruddy Duck: (10)24, (100)26, (67)30, (30)31 Cove AKM; (4)1 Western Harris County CJ PE.
- Hooded Merganser: (1)26 Cove AKM.
- Black Vulture: (7)2, (1)6,31, (2)15, (6)24 Cove AKM.
- Sharp-shinned Hawk: (1)20 Cove AKM.
- Cooper's Hawk: (1)7 Cove AKM.
- Red-tailed Hawk: daily, (18-23)23,27,28 Cove AKM.
- Harlan's Hawk: (only 1)20,26,27,29,30 Cove AKM.
- Red-shouldered Hawk: (1) 8 days Cove AKM.
- Rough-legged Hawk: (1)5 Galveston NS JBS.
- Marsh Hawk: (1)20, (2)25, (4)26, (5)27, (7)28 Cove AKM.
- Pigeon Hawk: (1)28 Cove AKM.
- Sparrow Hawk: (11)20, (9)25, (9)26, (18)27, (38)28 Cove AKM.
- Bobwhite: (1 covy)10,12,27,28, (2 covies)29 Cove AKM.
- Sandhill Crane: (20)22 Western Harris Cty. CJ.
- American Coot: (500)20, (15)30 Cove AKM.
- American Oystercatcher: (1)5 Galveston NS JBS.
- Black-bellied Plover: (4)25, (2)30 Cove AKM.
- Common Snipe: (45)5, (3)7, (90)20, (6)27, (1)28 Cove AKM.
- Long-billed Curlew: (1)3,13,20,25, (23)28, (2)30, (13)31 Cove AKM.
- Willet: (1)20, (17)25, (3)31 Cove AKM.
- Greater Yellowlegs: (7)26,31, (2)28 Cove AKM.

Lesser Yellowlegs: (14)20, (25)26, (1)27 Cove AKM.
 Knots: (22)5 Galveston NS JBS.
 Dunlin: (4) 3 days Cove AKM.
 Dowitcher species: 6 days, (8000)26 Cove AKM.
 Semipalmated Sandpiper: (3) 3 days Cove AKM.
 Western Sandpiper: (2) 3 days Cove AKM.
 American Avocet: (10)25,26, (4)31 Cove AKM.
 Bonaparte's Gull: (2)25, (12)31 Cove AKM.
 Ground Dove: (1)29 Cove AKM.
 Groove-billed Ani: (1)3 Western Harris Cty. CJ.
 Screech Owl: (1)24 Cove AKM.
 Barred Owl: (1)21 Cove AKM.
 Whip-Poor-Will: (1)25 Cove AKM.
 Buff-bellied Hummingbird: (1)18 to 25 Baytown NB LS *
 Belted Kingfisher: (1) 8 days Cove AKM.
 Yellow-shafted Flicker: 20 days, (5-7)20,25,29,30,31 Cove AKM.
 Pileated Woodpecker: (3)6 Cove AKM.
 Red-headed Woodpecker: (1)6 Cove AKM.
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 16 days, (5)29,30 Cove AKM.
 Downy Woodpecker: (2)25,6 Cove AKM.
 Vermilion Flycatcher: (1)1 Western Harris Cty. CJ PE; (1)13,24,29 Cove AKM.
 Eastern Phoebe: 12 days, (10)6, (9)25 Cove AKM.
 Tufted Titmouse: (1)20, (4)25 Cove AKM.
 Brown Creeper: (1)20,25, (2)31 Cove AKM.
 House Wren: (1-2)6 days Cove AKM.
 Long-billed MarshWren: (2)25, (1)30 Cove AKM.
 Short-billed Marsh Wren: (1)25 Cove AKM; (2)22 Western Harris Cty. CJ.
 Catbird: (2)25, (1)29,30,31 Cove AKM.
 Sage Thrasher: (1)31 Cove AKM.
 Robin: 11 days, (140)25, (175)31 Cove AKM.
 Hermit Thrush: (1-7) 8 days Cove AKM.
 Eastern Bluebird: (7)6, (9)12, (1)25,29, (15)31 Cove AKM.
 Golden-crowned Kinglet: (1-2)19,26,25, 28, Cove AKM.
 Water Pipit: (2-25) 5 days, (350)27 Cove AKM.
 Sprague's Pipit: (2)12, (1)26,27,31 Cove AKM.
 Cedar Waxwing: (60)25, (1)30, (15)31 Cove AKM.
 Solitary Vireo: (1)25,29,30,31 Cove AKM.
 Black and White Warbler: (1)31 Cove AKM.
 Orange-crowned Warbler: (1-2) 9 days, (7)29 Cove AKM.
 Myrtle Warbler: 11 days, (75)25, (50)30 Cove AKM.
 Pine Warbler: 6 days, (30)31 Cove AKM.
 Palm Warbler: (7)25 Cove AKM.
 Wilson's Warbler: (1)28 Cove AKM.
 Baltimore Oriole: (1)3 in yard CJ.
 Bullock's Oriole: (1)27 Cove AKM.
 Rufous-sided Towhee: (4)25, (1)29,30 Cove AKM.
 LeConte's Sparrow: (1)28,31, (2)29 Cove AKM.
 Henslow's Sparrow: (1)11, my 3rd sure record Cove AKM.
 Seaside Sparrow: (15)25 Cove AKM.
 Vesper Sparrow: (6)30, (2)31 Cove AKM.
 Slate-colored Junco: (1)26, (4)30 Cove AKM.
 Chipping Sparrow: (4)20, (2)31 Cove AKM.
 Field Sparrow: 8 days, (30)29 Cove AKM; (1)1 Western Harris Cty. CJ PE.
 Harris' Sparrow: (5)20 Cove AKM.
 White-crowned Sparrow: (15)20,30, (1)24,29 Cove AKM.
 Lincoln's Sparrow: (1-10) 9 days Cove AKM.
 Swamp Sparrow: (1-10) 9 days Cove AKM.
 Song Sparrow: (1-6) 8 days Cove AKM.

AKM Arlie McKay
 NS Nancy Strickling
 JBS Jerry B. Strickling

CJ Charlotte Johnson
 PE Pat Ellis
 NB Nettie Busby
 LS Linda Snyder

NOTES FROM CLEARING HOUSE REPORTS

On December 18th, Nettie Busby observed a Buff-bellied Hummingbird in her yard in Baytown, Texas. She called Linda Snyder about the exquisite find and the next day, 12-19-64, Linda and Mrs. Busby studied the bird for some

time and heard the squeaky voice from time to time, as it flitted back and forth in the turkscap where it was feeding. This bird was seen on and off by Mrs. Busby up to the 25th of December. The bird was described as being fair size with green throat and back, a definite buff belly and rufous or cinnamon on the tail. The bill was orangish-red or coral with a black tip.

Except for December 20, I did little birding till the 25th then I got 55 to 89, average 69, the last seven days. The first half I got 70, 134 in 1959, total for 30 years, 202; second half 130, 147 in 1952, 30 years total, 222; whole of December, 126; 30 years total 231, this December 134. The least expected birds were Whip-Poor-Will, Bullock's Oriole, Sage Thrasher and the first Black and White Warbler for winter in 27 years.

Arlie McKay

The following members of the the Outdoor Nature Club worked in the Prairie Chicken booth at the Houston Boat Show, helping to collect money for the refuge: Henry and Louise Hoffman; Jerry and Nancy Strickling; Bob and Mabel Deshayes; Bill and Gene Pettit; Marie Feltner; Hardy Fields; Boots Evans; Helen Via; Jack and Peggy Smith; Germaine Gomez; Katrina Thompson and Armand Yramategui.

OG SLATE OF OFFICERS

OG officers for 1965 will be elected at the next meeting. The nominating committee has nominated the following persons: Chairman, Harvey Patten; Secretary, Katrina Thompson; Treasurer, Ella Wolfer; Field Trip Chairman, Betty Williams; Program Chairman, Pat Sullivan; "Spoonbill" editors, Bill and Betty Wright.

Published by the Ornithology Group of the Outdoor Nature Club of Houston

Chairman:	Harvey Patten
Secretary:	Miss Katrina Thompson
Treasurer:	Miss Ella Wolfer
Field Trip Chairman:	Bob Braden
Program Chairman:	Mrs. L.W. Anderson
CO-editors of the SPOONBILL:	Pat and Jim Ellis, 5414 Fairdale, Houston 77027

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(Ornithology Group)
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