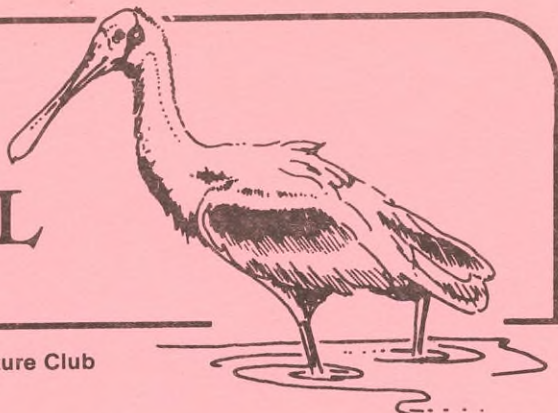


The SPOONBILL



Published by the Ornithology Group, Outdoor Nature Club
Houston, Texas B. C. Robison, *editor*

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Coming Events

Thursday, Aug. 1, 1985: OG meeting at Bayou Manor, 7:30 PM. Gene Blacklock of the Welder Wildlife Refuge will speak. Topic: "The Sane Approach to Bird Identification."

Saturday, Aug. 3: Deadline for Spoonbill material: articles, announcements Clearing House.

Saturday, Aug. 24: OG Field Trip to Freeport marshes, Quintana Beach and Bryan Beach. Led by Elric McHenry and Sam House. Details to be announced at OG meeting.

Report of the 1985 Spring Round-Up by David Matson

The Spring Round-Up was held on May 4. Approximately 75 observers reported. For the purposes of county-by-county totals each party reporting from more than one county is tallied separately for each county. All reports have been compiled and submitted to the Clearing House for publication.

Round-Up day was warm, clear, and calm, with a gentle breeze from the southeast. Like the rest of this spring, weather was too good for large concentrations of birds and migrants had to be "dug" up with persistence.

Birding effort on the Upper Coast was decreased this year from the past several, probably because I did less to drum up participation. The county-by-county efforts are tabulated below.

BIRDING EFFORT BY COUNTY

New counties represented this year were Liberty and Waller. 204 species were reported from UTC counties, and another

27 from "Outer Circle" counties. A remarkable 126 species are listed on the Ornithology Group's 6th Edition Checklist as being regular breeders on the Upper Texas Coast. Of these, the following were not reported by the Round-Up observers:

Canada Goose	Greater Roadrunner
Ruddy Duck	Barn Owl
Bald Eagle	Cliff Swallow
Greater Prairie Chicken	Brown-headed Nuthatch
Black Rail	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
American Oystercatcher	Kentucky Warbler
Ringed Turtle Dove	Henslow's Sparrow
Common Ground Dove	Lark Sparrow

Certainly, it is fair to describe these species as restricted or endangered species in our area. A detailed Breeding Bird Survey directed toward these species would be a fruitful (and publishable) use of birding time in the slow month of June.

SPECIES REPORTED AS MOST COMMON ON THE UTC AND IN THE OUTER CIRCLE ON THE 1985 SPRING ROUND-UP

The twenty species reported in the greatest numbers for the UTC and the "Outer Circle" are presented in the table below. The two lists reflect the greater amount of land-based coverage in the "Outer Circle" counties.

The Round-Up is nothing more than a compilation of reports submitted by people out for fun. It is meant to see if meaningful information can be acquired from putting together data gathered in a very hodge-podge manner. At this time, the most significant result of the several-year effort has been to highlight those species which have restricted or marginal populations. I look forward to next year's Round-Up and your participation.

(continued)

BIRDING EFFORT BY COUNTY ON THE 1985 TEXAS SPRING ROUND-UP

TOS REGION	COUNTY	NUMBER OF		PARTY HOURS			PARTY MILES		NUMBER OF	
		PARTIES	OBSERVERS	FOOT	CAR	OWLING	FOOT	CAR	SPECIES	INDIVIDUALS
UTC	BRAZORIA	4	13	: 7	16		: 6	400	: 135	3589
	CHAMBERS	4	13	:11.75	14		: 7	337	: 138	8318
	FORT BEND	2	4	: 7.5	3.5		: *8	*70	: 75	1470
	GALVESTON	4	21	:13.25	9		: 6	237	: 123	3061
	HARRIS	5	12	: 6	9.5		: 5	257	: 73	946
	JEFFERSON	2	3	:*4.5	*8		: *2	*133	: 118	1474
REGION TOTAL		21	66	:50	60		: 32	1239	: 204	18858
OUTER CIRCLE	LIBERTY	1	4	: 7.25	0.75		: 6	30	: 49	622
	MATAGORDA	9	20	:*16	*25	0.3	: *7	*230.5	: 181	11105
	MONTGOMERY	2	6	: 6	4		: 4	105	: 48	467
	ORANGE	1	2	: 1	6		: 2	44	: 43	436
	WALKER	1	4	: 1.75	0.5		: 1	28	: 21	57
	WALLER	1	2	: 1	1		: 1	25	: 42	598
REGION TOTAL		15	38	:33	31.4	0.3	: 21	462.5	: 192	12687
TOTAL, AREA OF INTEREST		36	104	:83	91.4	0.3	: 53	1701.5	: 231	31545

SPECIES REPORTED AS MOST COMMON ON THE UTC AND THE OUTER CIRCLE ON THE 1985 TEXAS SPRING ROUND-UP

UPPER TEXAS COAST			OUTER CIRCLE		
RANK	SPECIES	TOTAL	RANK	SPECIES	TOTAL
1	Red-winged Blackbird	4915	1	Mourning Dove	1375
2	Laughing Gull	940	2	Cattle Egret	1187
3	Dunlin	779	3	Red-winged Blackbird	870
4	Great-tailed Grackle	575	4	Dickcissel	675
5	Cattle Egret	518	5	Eastern Meadowlark	421
6	Ruddy Turnstone	442	6	Lesser Golden-Plover	400
7	American Coot	436	7	Black-bellied Plover	400
8	Fulvous Whistling-Duck	420	8	Hudsonian Godwit	400
9	European Starling	409	9	Northern Mockingbird	352
10	Sanderling	389	10	Common Grackle	350
11	American White Pelican	384	11	Barn Swallow	349
12	Barn Swallow	285	12	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	273
13	Brown-headed Cowbird	281	13	Northern Cardinal	266
14	Pectoral Sandpiper	275	14	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	260
15	Common Grackle	264	15	Eastern Kingbird	242
16	Royal Tern	258	16	Fulvous Whistling-Duck	215
17	Common Moorhen	254	17	Killdeer	205
18	Mourning Dove	249	18	Great-tailed Grackle	200
19	Least Tern	247	19	House Sparrow	191
20	White Ibis	229	20	Chimney Swift	188

FROM THE EDITOR

Our big double summer issue is a great way to kick off the upcoming birding of OG seasons. All of us look forward to a great year. A terrific slate of programs and field trips is lined up, and we hope all will take advantage of the fine birding opportunities in the coming months.

I hope many of you take the time to let the Spoonbill know about your birding adventures. We're always on the lookout for interesting, fresh articles about birds here and beyond. The Spoonbill is only as good as the people who contribute to it.

GOOD BIRDING TO ALL THIS SEASON!

THE SPOONBILL STAFF

Editor	B. C. Robison
Art Editor	Linda Feltner
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"If You Order Whole Wheat Toast, You Must be a Birdwatcher"

by Bob Gard...from Bayou Banner, May, 1985, publication of Houston Sierra Club

"After a couple of hours of birding at the Audubon Sanctuary in High Island, it was time for another breakfast, so I drove down to the highway to find a cafe. Now, there is a cafe just a block or so from the intersection by the Post Office where you turn to go to the sanctuary, but I had stopped there the day before and decided that I would not make the same mistake twice. A few blocks away, on the north edge of town, I spotted another cafe and pulled in there.

I at first was not sure it was open; there was only one pickup out front, but the small sign in the window said 'open', so I decided to give it a try. I paused at the front door when confronted by a large hand-lettered sign (much larger than the open sign) proclaiming that restrooms were for customers only. Have you ever noticed that the closer you get to the Gulf coast, the more precious a commodity a restroom is? Well, anyhow, I decided to ignore that bit of unfriendliness and go on in since I did want some breakfast and my only alternatives were the cafe in town that I had crossed off my list the day before, and a 20 mile drive.

When I got inside, the mood changed immediately and I was warmly greeted by a fellow who hopped up from a booth and brought coffee to the table almost before I could sit down. I soon found out that my waiter, William, was not a waiter but a regular customer who was protecting his own interests by taking care of me and keeping the waitress/cook in the kitchen where she was preparing his breakfast. William and I exchanged pleasantries about the weather while waiting for the waitress/cook to emerge from the kitchen and I had a chance to look around the place.

In keeping with High Island's location in the heart of a large oil field, the decor made liberal use of petroleum products, namely linoleum, formica and vinyl. It was a little more sparse in terms of wall decorations and interesting shelf items than most country cafes, but I didn't mind because William was good company and the coffee that he had made himself, was good. I was also entertained by the conversation that William and the cook/waitress were carrying on by yelling back and forth from the kitchen. One thing I learned from this conversation was that not all men who wait on tables were necessarily queer. The implication however was that William was the straight exception to a general rule.

I made another interesting discovery when the cook/waitress appeared with William's bacon and eggs -I thought they were yelling because of the distance between them, but the volume of their conversation did not change even at close range. I could only assume that they were used to conversing in noisier environments, or that one or both

had a hearing problem; at any rate their conversation certainly kept my attention.

The cook/waitress(Millie) then came over to take my order. I opted for bacon and eggs, figuring William had an inside track on what was best, but when I asked if she had whole wheat toast, Millie was obviously taken aback. She fixed me with a disbelieving look, and, hands on hips, shouted 'Are you one of those birdwatchers? You are, aren't you!' Well, now it was my turn to be surprised. I had never had quite that strong a reaction to a request for whole wheat toast before, plus I was somewhat startled by Millie's perception, having left my binoculars in the car. Well, I saw no sense denying what was so obvious to her, so I finally mumbled that in fact I was a birdwatcher. 'I knew it', she yelled (more to William than to me but you could have heard her anywhere in High Island), 'The only people who ever order whole wheat toast are birdwatchers and old Burt. Burt ain't no birdwatcher,' she paused and then added with the timing of a natural comedienne, 'he's more of a bird!', much to the amusement and agreement of William.

I quickly assured Millie that even though I was a birdwatcher, I was just a beginner and as such was perfectly willing to accept whatever kind of toast she was able to provide. After I finished my bacon and eggs (real 'yard eggs' I was told) and every crumb of my toast, I extracted a promise from Millie that she would lay in a supply of whole wheat bread before she put up her annual 'Welcome Birdwatchers' sign. We all agreed that if she added a line to the sign to the effect that whole wheat toast was available, the birdwatchers would 'flock' in to the place! (Sorry 'bout that - it seemed funny at the time - guess you had to be there).

There is no real moral to this story, except that if you want to hide anything from Millie, don't get 'finicky' about your food."

A June Visit to Israel

by Bob Behrstock

During June of 1962, accompanying my parents and sister, I visited the State of Israel. At the time, the country and I were both 14 years old and we were both quite a bit smaller than either of us is today. Primarily, the trip entailed what the travel vendors refer to as "sentimental tourism", the white man's "Roots" experience. Indeed there is no comparable country where, at any spot you rest your eyes, some well-known Roman, Greek, Phoenician, Jew, Christian or Moslem hadn't walked, preached, been buried, or performed a miracle. Still today, most visitors to Israel go for the biblical and historical experience, and no one leaves disappointed.

During the last 10-15 years, Israel has become well-known for another totally unrelated miracle. Each spring, according to observers from Europe and North America, Israel hosts the largest migration of birds of prey in the world. Of the more than forty species of raptors which have been recorded in Israel, most are migratory and many pass through in the thousands or hundreds of thousands. Several factors contribute to this spectacular movement: large birds of prey cover much of their migratory route by using a low-energy flight called passive soaring. These birds are reticent to cross stretches of open water because land not water produces the warm updrafts (thermals) upon which these birds ride. In order to avoid crossing the Mediterranean, several million raptors which breed in Central and Eastern Europe and Western Asia fly northward out of Africa and cross over Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria which comprise the only land bridge between Africa and the entire Eurasian land mass. Species which hitch a ride on the thermals of the great Rift Valley soar northward through East Africa, joining along the way other birds which have been moving eastward along the Mediterranean toward the Red Sea. Here all the migrants become concentrated for their final thrust northward along the shores of the Gulf of Agaba. Upon reaching the land bridge, they are concentrated over Elait, southernmost town in Israel and home of a field station which attracts banders and birders from many countries.

Continuing northward over the Arava (Rift) Valley, Dead Sea, Sea of Galilee, and the Golan Heights, these species fan out to nesting sites from the roofs of French castles to the steppes of Russia. Furthermore, along with this flood of raptors come millions of swallows, thrushes, warblers, buntings, storks, cranes, shorebirds, and other groups

which winter in Africa. These other migrants swell Israel's bird list to over 450 species, not bad for a country you can drive across in a couple of hours! Israel's diversity of habitats enhances its attractiveness to birds. Acres of citrus, date palm groves, fish ponds, beaches, salt ponds and ornamental plantings from all over the world water and nourish weary migrants. Additionally a huge network of reserves and field study centers caters to visiting naturalists as well as protecting critical habitats for birds, mammals and plants.

Because I had already begun to set up a Peregrine, Inc. migration tour to Israel for spring 1986, and because my last visit was so long ago, I was particularly fortunate to be invited, by The Israel Ministry of Tourism and El Al Airlines, to participate in a 10 day tour designed to familiarize industry people with Israel's facilities for youth and sport programs. This is part of the Israeli government's attempt to get tourists out of the churches and ruins and into the hills and desert and over, on and under Israel's seas and lakes which are eminently suited for a wide variety of water sports.

Although my time in Israel was tightly scheduled from seven in the morning until eleven or twelve at night, early morning strolls and a birder's eye during group activities allowed me to see about 90 species, mostly breeders. Two-thirds of these were old friends I'd seen in France, Spain, or right here in Texas. Happily, in spite of considerable birding in southern Europe, I was still able to see thirty-two lifers during the little birding time which was available to me. A number of these represented families not represented in the New World.

Our group, part of the American contingent arrived at Ben Gurion Airport in the late afternoon of June third. We joined several other flights from Europe and South Africa, ultimately forming a group of 150 participants. As our bus left the airport, and our guides began to welcome us, a nearby plowed field produced several Hooded Crows, a Turtle Dove, and my first lifer of the trip, a Spur-winged Plover, a large dashing tropical lapwing distinctively patterned in black, white and buff. Passing westward via Ramat Gan toward the Mediterranean coast, I observed a small flock of White Storks, a Stone Curlew and my first Common Bulbul which proved to be one of the most abundant species in Israel. Just as we pulled into the seaside village of Netan-

ya where agriculture and settlements give way to dunes and red sandstone bluffs, a huge gaudy Smyrna Kingfisher flew up to a phone wire to become my third lifer of that short bus ride. After dinner, a reception for participants, and too short a night's sleep, I met with Ramona Heard, also of Houston, for a quick, windy pre-breakfast walk in disturbed habitat adjacent to the hotel. On this and the next couple mornings, we saw amid piles of bricks, thorn scrub, tamarisk trees and dry grassless courtyards, an interesting assortment of birds including dainty black-headed Sardinian Warblers feeding their begging young, the endemic Palestine Sunbird, my first introduction to an Old World family of iridescent feathered jewels, the tiny Graceful Prinia whose grating trill we'd hear during even the hottest afternoons, a flock of Great Tits, one of Israel's three "chickadees" and other common species such as Laughing Dove, Blackbird, and Lesser Kestrel.

And so it continued from the Syrian border in the Golan Heights south to the Red Sea, and from the Mediterranean east to Jordan. A comprehensive tour which had us watching diamond cutters, chasing our leader through the narrow passages of the Old City in Jerusalem, visiting an alligator farm, bathing in hot springs, snorkeling amid colorful reef fishes, and sitting down--whether we wanted to or not--to huge (and delicious) buffets and multicourse meals provided by our most generous hosts.

Nearly everyone's favorite stop was a night and part of the following day at Metzoke Dragot desert tour center affiliated with Kibbutz Mitzpeh Shalem in the dry sculptured foothills just west of the Dead Sea. Here, at the lowest point on Earth, visitors are offered an off-the-beaten-track desert experience which for our group included a Bedouin feast complete with belly dancers, camping in the desert, camel rides, rappelling down a 50-foot cliff, and a breath-taking sunrise accompanied by the mellow calls of Sand Partridges, croaks of Fan-tailed Ravens, three species of twittering Wheatears, and the high whistles of the very local Tristram's Grackle, a huge black and orange starling whose tiny range we were lucky enough to encounter.

While visiting Elait, I managed to steal away from the group for a few hours to bird the salt ponds and date palm groves which are part of the local field studies center. Here, I saw such local specialties as Dead Sea Sparrow, Slender-billed Gull, and Indian House Crow, as well as some late migrants like Ruff, Whiskered Tern and a splendid Little Stint in high breeding plumage. More importantly, I was able

to meet with representatives of the Nature Reserves Authority and the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel who suggested adding a week's extension to our tour next spring for participants who would enjoy spending extra time in Elait as volunteers helping banders and participating in the raptor census with birders from Europe and North America. They thought this might appeal to Texas birders who, as they were aware, were also favorably situated for spring migrations.

Finally, on June eleventh, we were spirited away from our final dinner complete with dixieland music, farewell speeches, and baked Alaska, and at one in the morning, returned to the U.S.

While I enjoy all the countries to which I take birding groups, the historical wealth, unique emotional impact, and unflagging enthusiasm of its residents make Israel an especially attractive place to visit, and moreover to return to.

The Purloined Dinner

by Wesley Cureton

Last deer season, while sitting in a blind in a tree in Leon County, Steve Wood witnessed a wildlife drama. A squirrel entered a hole in the dead top of a nearby tree. Shortly after, two flickers lit on the tree, and one of them descended from above into the same hollow where the squirrel was. A loud thrashing struggle ensued, and presently the squirrel emerged from the hole with jaws clamped around the flicker's neck. The squirrel was just barely able to control his wildly flapping victim. Then suddenly, as if out of nowhere, swooped down a large owl (barred or horned?) which snatched the prey from the squirrel and flew off, the other flicker in useless pursuit. Thus a windfall of a meal was transferred from one opportunist to another, and the stunned squirrel was left with nothing but flicker feathers in his mouth.

Overnight Camping in the Dry Tortugas

by Ellen Red

For me the words "Dry Tortugas" have always meant some inaccessible desert islands off the tip of Florida, where one might see a few pelagic birds flying over. Our OG trip to South Florida this month proved that to be very wrong.

On May 8 our group of twenty-one birders, led by Ben Feltner's Peregrine Tours, left the Florida keys by seaplane and flew over the blue-green water of the Gulf. We soon looked down on the main island of the Dry Tortugas. It was very green. We landed and stepped out on the beach. Huge Fort Jefferson is built around the edges of the island and contains an enormous grassy courtyard with trees and shrubbery. In one area there is land outside the fort with live oak trees which is used for a campground. We put our food and water and gear on shaded picnic tables there. Nearby was a large boat dock with modern restrooms. Other visitors to the island had come by sailboat, and many colorful boats bobbed offshore.

We went immediately a short distance to an old concrete foundation where we could look over to another island. There thousands of birds filled every bit of shrubbery, lined up on the beach and wheeled around overhead. Sooty Terns, Brown Noddy Terns and Magnificent Frigatebirds abounded. After we had looked at this wonderful assortment of birds, someone noticed warblers in a bush near us on a path. Soon we were distracted from the sea birds by Cape Mays, Black-throated Blues, Prairies and Palms. Some Bobolinks were in the grass. We left them all however when Linda Feltner shouted "Tropicbird." We raced to the brick breakwater that surrounds the fort. There we saw two lovely White-tailed Tropicbirds flying gracefully through the air. Their tails were long wispy streamers, and they had black markings on face, back and wings. The Tropicbirds came quite close, and everyone could photograph them. Everyone, that is, but Bob Behrstock, who had volunteered to take the last plane with the baggage, and had not arrived yet.

As the day progressed, we wandered around looking in all the trees for migrants. We discovered we had lucked into a tremendous fallout of warblers and thrushes. Inside the courtyard we found a small fountain, the only fresh water available to the birds. We soon figured out that by watching the fountain, sooner or later we would see every migrant on the island. In the end we totaled twenty warbler species, two vireos, Gray-cheeked, Veery and Swainson Thrushes, Upland and Buff-breasted Sand-

pipers and Cattle Egrets on or near the fountain. The fun part was seeing well some warblers we don't see very often on the Texas coast. Also we were able to study very carefully the females of the Cape May, Blackpoll and Bay-breasted. We had long looks at the Northern Waterthrush, the Prairie and the Palm, and we compared a Tennessee Warbler standing next to a Red-eyed Vireo. Black-throated Blue male and female were the favorites. The photographers had a field day.

We went swimming in the clear water of the Gulf. We borrowed Marilyn Crane's snorkeling gear and looked at the beautiful tropical fish swimming near us. In the evening we had a hotdog roast, watched a beautiful sunset, and then bedded down in sleeping bags on the grass. Some of us were so tired we went right to sleep. Others watched the stars and listened to the boat people coming and going.

The next morning we found some new warblers, and a Brown Booby was sitting on a piling. The two Tropicbirds appeared again for Bob Behrstock to have a turn at photographing them. They flew in and out of the arches of the old fort and came very close to those of us in swimming. Later we took a tour of the fort and learned all the history of the place. It was controlled by the Union during the Civil War. Through the years much money was spent to upgrade it (until World War II), but the guns never shot at an enemy. Now it is used only as a state park.

We hated to leave this interesting place, but soon we were boarding our planes and continuing our birding tour of South Florida. The next day we saw the Audubon Shearwater, Roseate and Bridled Terns on a pelagic boat trip. We visited Everglades National Park where everyone found many life birds, including Snail Kites, Mangrove Cuckoos, and Smooth-billed Anis. In downtown Miami we found many exotic species, such as the Spot-breasted Oriole and Red-whiskered Bulbul. There is no way to describe all we did and saw. The entire trip was very special, but for me our time on the Dry Tortugas was the best.

You Should Subscribe to *American Birds*

by Greg W. Lasley

Are you interested in birds? Do you consider yourself a birdwatcher? Have you progressed to the point where you'll travel outside your city to see birds? Are you interested in easy-to-read articles on bird distribution and identification, rare occurrences, or birding locations? Are you becoming more interested in the birds that travel through Texas each season? Do you enjoy Christmas Bird Counts? If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, American Birds is a publication you'll enjoy.

American Birds, formerly Audubon Field Notes, is in its 39th year of publication. Published by the National Audubon Society five times per year, American Birds contains numerous articles on many ornithological topics plus regional reports from all areas of the United States and Canada. There is an issue for each season, plus the giant Christmas Bird Count issue, which is published each summer or fall. American Birds fills a niche between the purely technical journals and the backyard oriented publications. It is easy and fun to read for anyone with a basic knowledge of birds, yet the articles can be of significant scientific value. Contributors from all over each region send in their own seasonal reports to the regional editors, who put together the regional report. These reports form the only database for seasonal bird distribution covering the entire United States. Such reports are invaluable for researchers in the future as well as the birders of today, for they discuss the significance of rarities, document unusual breeding records, and study seasonal populations in various locations.

Many of us have feared the extinction of this excellent publication. Subscriptions have not increased as fast as we would like, and the National Audubon Society subsidizes a large part of the publication costs. There had been rumors that Audubon was considering canceling American Birds, but the deluge of mail and phone calls that Audubon received in protest has changed their plans. The publication will continue because Audubon realizes that subscribers to American Birds are a very special audience: many of the subscribers contribute to the seasonal reports and feel a part of the magazine. It is a magazine by and for the active field observers of this country.

If you think American Birds is your kind of magazine, then I urge you to subscribe today. Subscriptions are \$18.00 per year. Mail checks, payable to American Birds, to American Birds, 950 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022. If anyone would like further information about the magazine, call me at (512) 454-7453. I consider American Birds to be the most important publication I receive. I think you will, too.

Noel's Niche Looking Back

by Noel Pettingell

.....Ten Years Ago This Month
From June 1975 Spoonbill:

"HOW BIRDS ARE NAMED--from Birds of the World Wall Chart

Taxonomy is a formidable term for the essentially simple concept of arranging (systematizing) all plants and animals in order of their evolution. The starting point in all discussions of taxonomy is the Swedish naturalist Linne's Systema Naturae published in 1758. Like all scholars of his time Linne made use of Latin as an international language and even his name is usually latinised to Linneaus. In brief Linne's system was to give each animal or bird two Latin names, a Latin binomial. Vernacular names vary from locality to locality and there is obvious advantage in having a permanent name that is widely accepted. Though Latin is daunting to the layman it is in fact the only way that biologists can pick out the animal or plant that they want to talk about."

.....Twenty Years Ago This Month
From June 1965 Spoonbill:

"APRIL BIRDING IN CENTRAL TEXAS
by Janet Kepner

Easter weekend I spent on a ranch near Kerrville and, having splendid weather, I thoroughly enjoyed the birding. Outside the cabin in a rock wall were a pair of Rock Wrens who were terrifically busy feeding seven youngsters who were almost grown and constantly venturing about.

In canyons there were many Summer Tanagers, Red-eyed Vireos and Cardinals. Black-chinned Hummingbirds were feeding

on buckeye blossoms. There were at least six Canyon Wrens nesting or feeding in a limestone cliff. In tall sycamores and on rocks were American Goldfinches and in a low, rocky, brushy area were a pair of little Rufous-crowned Sparrows tending their nest. The male beat his tail frantically and chanted in a tiny voice when one approached too close to the nest.

An Osprey sat on treetops near the lake each day. Nearby were a few Blue Grosbeaks, Black-crested Titmice, Ash-throated Flycatchers, Purple Finches, House Finches, Lesser Goldfinches, Chickadees, Eastern Phoebe and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers.

In meadows were wild Turkeys, Inca Doves a large flock of Brown-headed Cowbirds, many Chipping Sparrows, Lark Sparrows, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Mourning Doves."

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 (unusual birds- report or inquire):
Don Richardson, 5475 Grape
Houston 77096, (h) 661-1365
(w) 656-3445

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)
Annual Subscriptions: \$9.00

Clearing House

MAY, 1985

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 number of individuals seen), e.g. 8 reports (1-40;82). Noteworthy sightings will be underlined, capitalized, or both, according to their status. All observations reported below must be accepted by the Checklist Committee before they can be included on the next checklist. Documentation is a must for consideration by the Committee. 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.

ABBREVIATION CODES

ANWR = Anahuac NWR	HSC = Houston Ship Channel
BBSP = Brazos Bend SP	JC = Jefferson Co.
BF = Bolivar Flats	Kemp = Kempner Park
Bolv = Bolivar Peninsula	LC = Lake Charlotte
CC = Chambers Co.	NWH = NW Houston
DH = downtown Houston	RP = Rollover Pass
DP = Deussen Park	SEH = SE Houston
EG = E. Galveston	SO = Sun Oil
FBC = Fort Bend Co.	SWH = SW Houston
Ferry = Bolivar Ferry	TC = Texas City
Fr = Friendswood	WGI = W. Galveston Is.
Galv = Galveston	WH = W. Houston
GC = Galveston Co.	WHC = W. Harris Co.
GISP = Galveston Is. SP	WMP = White Memorial Park
HI = High Island	WOB = White Oak Bayou

221 Species reported this month.

Grebe,Pied-billed: 8 reports all but (2) by 18 th (1-15;42)
Grebe,Eared: WH-(1)1,BG
Pelican,American White: 7 reports thru 18th (1-200;416)
Cormorant,Double-crested: WGI-(12)2,HSS; Ferry-(6)4,DPB;
GC-(4)5,LG; HSC-(5)6,RP; EG-(4)18,D
Cormorant,Olivaceous: 13 reports (1-21;65)
cormorant,sp.: 13 reports (1-21;65)
Anhinga: 5 reports (1-30;41)
Frigatebird,Magnificent: WGI-(1)11,RB (See notes, ed.)
Bittern,Least: ANWR-(2)3,HSWH;(1)11,RSS;(1)18,RPCL; GC-(2)24,AD
Heron,Great Blue: 19 reports (1-20;92)
Egret,Great: 23 reports (1-40;331)
Egret,Snowy: 19 reports (1-40;227)
Heron,Little Blue: 18 reports (1-15;60)
Heron,Tricolored: 16 reports (1-50;104)
Egret,Reddish: 10 reports (1-11;50)
Egret,Cattle: 20 reports (1-200;1053)
Heron,Green-backed: 18 reports (1-20;68)
Night-Heron,Black-crowned: 10 reports (1-15;32)
Night-Heron,Yellow-crowned: 14 reports (1-6;34)
Ibis,White: 18 reports (4-200;628)
Ibis,White-faced: 18 reports (1-68;301)
Spoonbill,Roseate: 13 reports (1-70;212)
Whistling-Duck,Fulvous: ANWR-(100)3,HSWH; Galv-(15)4,DPB;
FBC-(60)5,BG; CC-(16)9,JM
Whistling-Duck,Black-bellied: BBSP-(6)4,HSS;(2)28,BEW;
FBC-(4)5,BG (Status changing, ed.)
Goose,Snow: GC-(2)4,DPB; ANWR-(3)11,RSS;(3)18,RPCL
(Are ANWR birds hunting season casualties? ed.)
(Goose,Blue): ANWR-(1)11,RSS
Duck,Wood: LC-(2)11,RSS; CC-(2)19,JM
Duck,Mottled: 18 reports (1-30;141)
Mallard: ANWR-(1)5,RDL (Migratory? ed.)
Teal,Blue-winged: 12 reports (1-30;131)
Shoveler,Northern: ANWR-(3)3,HSWH
Scaup,Lesser: Galv-(3)4,DPB; FBC-(3)5,BG
Merganser,Red-breasted: Galv-(2)4,DPB
Duck,Ruddy: WH-(1)1,BG
Vulture,Black: 4 reports (1-4;9)
Vulture,Turkey: 9 reports (1-10;28) plus WGI-(1)9,JJH
which is only the 2nd TV Jane Hamilton has seen on
Galv. Is., ed)

Osprey: BBSP-(1)4, HSS; WGI-(1)19, MA (See notes, ed.)
 Kite, Black-shouldered: 8 reports (1-5;18)
 Kite, Mississippi: DP-(1)4, SBW; Bellaire-(1)6, LG
 Harrier, Northern: 5 reports (1-4;9)
 Hawk, Sharp-shinned: Bolv-(1)3, PFW; HI-(1)4, DLR
 Hawk, Red-shouldered: 4 reports (1-6;9)
 Hawk, Broad-winged: WGI-(1)4, DPB; Fr-(1)9, MA; Humble-
 (1)11, SBW
 Hawk, Swainson's: 6 reports (1-6;11)
Hawk, White-tailed: Webster-(1)17, MA (Breeding area, ed.)
 Hawk, Red-tailed: CC-(1)4, DLR; (1)19, JM; WHC-(1)4, SBW
 Buteo, sp.: GC-(1)5, LG
Kestrel, American: Bolv-(1)2, HSS (No notes submitted, ed.)
 Pheasant, Ring-necked: ANWR-(2)11, RSS
 Bobwhite, Northern: 11 reports (1-6;32)
 Rail, Clapper: 9 reports (1-10;32)
 Rail, King: 9 reports (1-6;20)
 Sora: GC-(2)4, DPB
 Gallinule, Purple: 8 reports (1-30;72)
 Moorhen, Common: 12 reports (1-100;323)
 Coot, American: 7 reports (1-50;96)
 Plover, Black-bellied: 12 reports (2-75;204)
 Golden-Plover, Lesser: 6 reports thru 9th (1-4;13)
 Plover, Snowy: BF-(1)4, DPB
 Plover, Wilson's: 3 reports (2-3;7)
 Plover, Semipalmated: 4 reports 4th thru 9th (5-25;49)
 Plover, Piping: 4 reports thru 9th (1-15;20)
 Killdeer: 17 reports (1-30;208)
 Dystercatcher, American: RP-(1)31, JHH (Common? ed.)
 Stilt, Black-necked: 15 reports (1-50;271)
 Avocet, American: 5 reports thru 18th (3-20;45)
 Yellowlegs, Greater: 7 reports thru 9th (2-10;34)
 Yellowlegs, Lesser: 11 reports thru 19th (1-200;466)
 Sandpiper, Solitary: Bolv-(1)2, HSS; (2)4, DPB; ANWR-
 (4)11, RSS
 Willet: 14 reports (1-100;254)
 Sandpiper, Spotted: 7 reports thru 19th (1-2;9)
 Sandpiper, Upland: 5 reports thru 8th (1-10;21)
 Whimbrel: 6 reports thru 9th (1-7;16)
 Curlew, Long-billed: 6 reports thru 19th (1-3;11)

 Godwit, Hudsonian: 8 reports thru 19th (2-130;284)
 Godwit, Marbled: 6 reports (1-10;29)
 Turnstone, Ruddy: 14 reports (1-150;338)
 Knot, Red: 5 reports thru 19th (1-25;55)
 Sanderling: 8 reports (4-300;869)
 Sandpiper, Semipalmated: 5 reports thru 9th (1-20;30)
 Sandpiper, Western: 7 reports thru 18th (1-100;217)
 Sandpiper, Least: 8 reports thru 18th (2-50;105)
 Sandpiper, White-rumped: 7 reports thru 19th (1-900;946)
 Sandpiper, Baird's: Galv-(2)4, DPB; WGI-(3)8, MA
 Sandpiper, Pectoral: 10 reports thru 19th (1-100;187)
 Dunlin: 12 reports thru 19th (3-1700;2839)
 Sandpiper, Stilt: GC-(40)4, DPB; (7)18, D; CC-(40)9, (98)19, JM
 Sandpiper, Buff-breasted: 5 reports thru 9th (3-100;157)
 Dowitcher, Short-billed: GC-(50)2, HSS; CC/GC-(30)3, HSWH;
 ANWR-(3)5, OWK; BF/HI-(6)5, RDL
 Dowitcher, Long-billed: ANWR-(10)5, OWK; HI-(2)5, RDL; WGI-
 (10)9, JHH
 dowitcher, sp.: 8 reports [all but (5) by 20th] (1-300;764)
 Phalarope, Wilson's: 9 reports thru 19th (1-100;249)
PHALAROPE, RED-NECKED: Galv-(1)18, D (See notes, ed.)

 Gull, Laughing: 20 reports (1-1000;4093)
 Gull, Ring-billed: 11 reports (1-24;64)
 Gull, Herring: 6 reports (1-3;11)
 Tern, Gull-billed: 5 reports (1-4;12)
 Tern, Caspian: 6 reports (2-150;214)
 Tern, Royal: 11 reports (1-500;726)
 Tern, Sandwich: 8 reports (2-75;154)
 Tern, Common: 6 reports (1-125;155)
 Tern, Forster's: 13 reports (2-350;753)
 Tern, Least: 12 reports (3-100;350)
 Tern, Black: 4 reports (12-120;181)
 Skimmer, Black: 13 reports (1-80;227)
 Dove, Rock: 10 reports (1-225;411)
 Turtle-Dove, Ringed: SWH-(2)8, SW
 Dove, White-winged: 7 reports (1-20;54)
 Dove, Mourning: 21 reports (2-70;332)
 Dove, Inca: 12 reports (1-30;95)
 Parakeet, Monk: SWH-(3)14, SBW
 Cuckoo, Black-billed: HI-(1)3, HSWH
 Cuckoo, Yellow-billed: 19 reports (1-3;32)
 Screech-Owl, Eastern: Bellaire-(4)17, LG; LC-(1)18, RPCL
 Owl, Barred: WH-(1)1, BG; FBC-(2)5, BG
Nighthawk, Common: 22 reports (1-30;153) [11 birds during
 1st week of May, ed.]
 Chuck-will's-widow: SWH-(1)3, SBW; WOB-(1)8, WC (Common?)
 Swift, Chimney: 21 reports (1-100;326)
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: 13 reports (1-6;23)
 Kingfisher, Belted: 6 reports thru 18th (1-2;7)
 Woodpecker, Red-headed: 8 reports (1-1;8)
 Woodpecker, Red-bellied: 12 reports (1-6;27)

 Woodpecker, Downy: 4 reports (1-6;11)
 Woodpecker, Hairy: WMP-(1)3, HSWH
 Woodpecker, Pileated: 6 reports (1-3;11)
 Flycatcher, Olive-sided: 7 reports (7 singly)
 Wood-Pewee, Eastern: 22 reports (1-6;56)
 Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied: Bellaire-(1)7, LG; WGI-
 (1)9, JHH; (1)18, RMB; Bolv-(1)18, MA; SEH-(1)24, RP (See
 notes, ed.)
 Flycatcher, Acadian: 4 reports (1-10;15) (See notes, ed.)
Flycatcher, Willow: HI-(1 voice)4, DLR; SO-(1)18, MA (See
 notes, ed.)
Flycatcher, Traill's-type: SWH-(1)7, SBW; WGI-(1)18, RMB
 (Bird on 18th captured & banded - see notes, ed.)
 Flycatcher, Least: SO-(1)18, MA (See notes, ed.)
 Empidonax, sp.: 9 reports (1-7;17)
Flycatcher, Ash-throated: Bolv-(1)1, LETP (See notes, ed.)
 Flycatcher, Great Crested: 16 reports (1-6;28)
 Kingbird, Western: WGI-(3)2, 6, (2)9, JHH; FBC-(2)23-30, BG
 Kingbird, Eastern: 25 reports (1-47;327)
 Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed: 20 reports (1-30;140)
 Martin, Purple: 20 reports (1-50;292)
 Swallow, Tree: 7 reports, all by the 6th (1-5;16)
 Swallow, Northern Rough-winged: 5 reports, all by the 7th
 (2-10;27)
 Swallow, Bank: GC-(2)4, DPB; CC/GC/JC-(1)9, JM; SO-(1)18, MA
 Swallow, Cliff: TC-(1)3, PFW; CC-(1)9, JM; ANWR-(10)18, RPCL
 Ferry-(2)18, MA
 Swallow, Barn: 19 reports (1-300;768)
 swallow, sp.: SEH-(20)9, RP
 Jay, Blue: 21 reports (1-25;130)
 Crow, American: 16 reports (1-20;87)
 Chickadee, Carolina: 10 reports (1-15;58)
 Titmouse, Tufted: 14 reports (1-50;80)
 Wren, Carolina: 18 reports (1-15;61)
 Wren, Sedge: GISP-(1)1, MA; ANWR-(1)5, RDL
 Wren, Marsh: WGI-(3)2, HSS; ANWR-(2)3, HSWH; BBSP-(2)4, HSS
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: Bolv-(1)2, HSS; HI-(1)5, RDL
 Bluebird, Eastern: NWH-(2)5, SBW; FBC-(2)5, BG (Common? ed.)
 Veery: 16 reports thru 19th (1-13;54)
 Thrush, Gray-cheeked: 12 reports thru 19th (1-12;48)
 Thrush, Swainson's: 23 reports thru 19th (1-50;246)
 Thrush, Wood: 9 reports (1-2;10)
 Robin, American: SEH-(1-2 nesting)1-31, RP; Kemp-(1)1, JHH
 Catbird, Gray: 20 reports thru 19th (1-35;132)
 Mockingbird, Northern: 23 reports (1-30;244)
Thrasher, Brown: 7 reports thru 6th (1-3;14) plus SO-
 (2)18, MA (See notes, ed.)
Pipit, Water: WGI-(10)2, HSS; (1)8, MA (See notes for 8th)
 Waxwing, Cedar: 17 reports thru 21th (1-40;249)
 Shrike, Loggerhead: 20 reports (1-30;140)
 Starling, European: 21 reports (1-130;851)
 Vireo, White-eyed: 14 reports (1-10;31)
 Vireo, Solitary: GISP-(1)1, MA; WGI-(1)2, JHH (See notes, ed.)
 Vireo, Yellow-throated: 5 reports (1-1;5)
 Vireo, Warbling: Bolv-(1)2, HSS; SEH-(1)3, RP; WGI-(1)4, RMB
Vireo, Philadelphia: 10 reports thru 9th (1-12;34) plus
 SO-(2)18, MA (See notes, ed.); WGI-(3 captured &
 banded)18, RMB (Latest spring date is 5/19/1940, ed.)
 Vireo, Red-eyed: 20 reports (1-150;299)
Warbler, Blue-winged: Kemp-(1)1, JHH; WGI-(1)2, JHH; HI-
 (1)3, PFW; DH-(1 dead)16, GC
Warbler, Golden-winged: WH-(1)1, BG; HI-
 (3)2, HSS; (2)3, PFW; (5)3, HSWH; WOB-(1)3, 18, WC (No notes
 for the 18th, ed.); Bolv-(1)4, DPB
 Warbler, Tennessee: 27 reports thru 19th (1-30;162)
Warbler, Nashville: WH-(2)2, BG; Galv-(1)1, JHH; BBSP-
 (1)4, HSS; SO-(1)18, MA (LATE DATE; see notes, ed.)
 Parula, Northern: 8 reports (1-15;38)
 Warbler, Yellow: 13 reports thru 18th (1-4;18)
 Warbler, Chestnut-sided: 22 reports thru 19th (1-12;89)
 Warbler, Magnolia: 26 reports thru 19th (1-30;200)
Warbler, Black-throated Blue: SO-(1)18, MA (See notes, ed.)
Warbler, Black-throated Green: 17 reports thru 18th (1-
 10;35) plus WOB-(1 female)27, WC (No notes, ed.)
 Warbler, Blackburnian: 23 reports thru 19th (1-20;89)
 Warbler, Yellow-throated: BBSP-(3)4, HSS
 Warbler, Pine: 5 reports (1-3;11)
 Warbler, Bay-breasted: 24 reports thru 19th (1-50;200)
 Warbler, Blackpoll: WGI-(2)2, (1)6, JHH; JC-(2)9, JM; HI-
 (1)12, DM; Bolv-(3)12, DM
 Warbler, Cerulean: HI-(1)3, HSWH; Bolv-(2)4, DPB
 Warbler, Black-and-white: 20 reports thru 19th (1-5;45)
 Redstart, American: 23 reports thru 20th (1-10;89)
 Warbler, Prothonotary: BBSP-(8)4, HSS; LC-(1)18, RPCL
 Warbler, Worm-eating: HI-(1)4, DLR
 Warbler, Swainson's: WOB-(1)8-9, WC
 Ovenbird: 9 reports thru 19th (1-2;14)
 Waterthrush, Northern: 7 reports thru 12th (1-3;10)
 Warbler, Kentucky: Galv-(1)1, JHH; HI-(1)5, DM
 Warbler, Mourning: SO-(1)18, MA
 Yellowthroat, Common: 13 reports (1-10;39)

Warbler, Hooded: WH-(2)1, BG, Galv-(1)1, JJH; HI-(1)3, HSWH
 Warbler, Wilson's: WGI-(1)2, HSS; WOB-(2)3, WC; HI-(1)3, PFW;
 Bolv-(1)18, D (No notes for 18th, ed.)
 Warbler, Canada: 7 reports thru 19th (1-12;28)
 Chat, Yellow-breasted: GC-(1)4, DPB
 Tanager, Summer: 14 reports thru 18th (1-5;29)
 Tanager, Scarlet: 17 reports thru 19th (1-25;82)
 Cardinal, Northern: 27 reports (1-40;316)
 Grosbeak, Rose-breasted: 26 reports thru 19th (1-15;128)
 Grosbeak, Blue: 6 reports thru 8th (1-5;19)
 Bunting, Indigo: 21 reports thru 18th (1-25;159)
 Bunting, Painted: 17 reports (1-8;42)
 Dickcissel: 14 reports thru 19th (1-100;366)
 Sparrow, Lark: WGI-(1)4, DP
 Sparrow, Savannah: 4 reports thru 5th (1-2;6)
 Sparrow, Sharp-tailed: GC-(2)4, DPB
 Sparrow, Seaside: ANWR-(1)5, RDL
 Sparrow, Lincoln's: WOB-(1)17, WC (No notes, ed.)
 Sparrow, White-crowned: HI-(1)5, OWK
 Bobolink: Bolv-(2)5, LG
 Blackbird, Red-winged: 24 reports (1-500;2908)
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 18 reports (1-50;337)
 Grackle, Great-tailed: 20 reports (1-200;964)
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: 10 reports (1-100;272)
 Grackle, Common: 10 reports (1-50;185)
 Cowbird, Bronzed: WGI-(1)6, JJH; Galv-(1)14, AD
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: 19 reports (1-50;322)
 Oriole, Orchard: 15 reports (1-4;31)
 Oriole, Northern: 15 reports thru 15th (1-20;66)
 Sparrow, House: 18 reports (1-60;392)

The following reports, requiring details, were submitted without them. Both could be considered for new late spring dates by the Checklist Committee if details were available. It's not too late!

Warbler, Orange-crowned: HI-(1)3, HSWH
 Waterthrush, Louisiana: WGI-(1)4, DPB

CONTRIBUTORS - May, 1985

AD=Arch Dillard; BEW=Bob & Edith Willman; BG=Bernd Richardson; DM=Derek Muschalek; DP=AD, Dwight Peake; DPB=AD, Dwight Peake, Prince Beach; GC=Glenn Cureton; HSS=Bob Honig, Bryan Swift, Laurie Swift; HSWH=HSS, Doug Williams, Martha Henschen; JHM=Jane & John Hamilton; JM=Jim Morgan; LETP=Greg W. Lasley, Victor Emanuel, Jim Tucker, Roger Peterson; LG=Linda Graetz; MA=Mike Austin; OWK=Robert Oberfelder, Jane Weisemann, Kathryn Louie; PFW=Noel & Ethyl Pettingell, Linda Feltner, Larry White; RB=Ron Braun; RDL=Don Richardson, Gil Douglas, Peggy Livingston; RMB=Ron & Marcia Braun; RP=Randy Pinkston; RPCL=DLR, Nancy & Jerry Patrick, Jo & Frank Cleland, Charlie & Sylvia Lentz; RSS=DLR, Wanda & Charlie Smith, Wener & Sonia Stebner; RU=Richard Uzar; SBW=Steve & Bev Williams; WC=Wesley Cureton

Magnificent Frigatebird: Observed flying ~100 meters above Old House, W. Galveston Island at about 9:45 a.m. on May 11, 1985. An all white head was conspicuous, suggesting immature bird. White extended to about mid-belly; the remainder of the underside of the bird was all dark, appearing black. Overall size & shape combined with a distinct crook in a relatively slender, pointed wing and an easily visible narrow, extended tail made recognition as frigatebird species immediate. In naked eye view for about 30 seconds, and with 10x binocs for about 15 seconds. Low scattered clouds and patches of fog prevented longer viewing. -- Ron Braun

Osprey: Feeding over lagoon at Sportsman's Road & Stewart Rd. Harassed by Laughing Gulls for comparison. Much larger bird- flew with deep, heavy wingbeats. Short, heavy bill. White head with dark mask. Uniformly dirty gray tail above. Attempted to fish from surface of lagoon. Three minute observation from 1/4 mi.; 7X42 binocs. -- Mike Austin

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE: VAGRANT Observed May 18, 1985 at 3 p.m. in a shallow pond in fill area on Fort San Jacinto property on E. end of Galveston Island among ~50 Wilson's Phalaropes. Bill thin & straight. Shorter than nearby Wilson's Phalaropes. Crown or cap dark gray, almost blackish unlike light caps of the Wilson's; neck & back also dark gray except that sides of neck were rufous red; this color extended around to front of upper breast. Same color on shoulders at bend of wing. No vertical neck stripe as in Wilson's Phalarope (or Pintail Duck!); white throat. Underbelly white when seen. Speckled or

spotted sides of belly. When alighting from flight the tail was seen & it was not white as in Wilson's. Legs dark. Distinctly smaller than surrounding Wilson's Phalaropes. Thin, shorter bill.

First noticed by Sandy as a "different" phalarope. Immediately stood out as a smaller, differently patterned phalarope; definitely not one of the Wilson's. We all spotted it quickly and noticed dark cap & dark reddish coloration. Much darker than Wilson's. Full breeding plumage female. Unmistakable. Bird flew to position about 50 ft. from us and we could see all details of reddish neck, dark cap (as opposed to light cap of Wilson's), smaller size, shorter beak, white throat, and slightly spotted edging to breast & sides of belly. Behavior observed: typical rapid picking & turning on water. Also seen flying about & preening. Observed through binoculars & scope for about 30 min. on & off. Seen in clear weather; bright sunlight, from 50 ft. to 100 yds. -- Arch Dillard OK

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Large yellowish eye-ring; yellowish underparts, including chin and throat; heavy olive wash on sides nearly converging across breast; two bold light wing-bars; lower mandible orange; nervous, flicked tail upon landing; always 20+ feet up in canopy of my yard. -- Randy Pinkston

Yellow-bellied & Acadian Flycatchers: Last year the Clearing House editor challenged us to differentiate these two species. Now, having seen both birds in a 1 hour span in spring plumage (when there can be no confusion with yellowish immature Acadians) I believe that, at least under optimal viewing conditions, these birds can be differentiated.

In fact, the Acadian was so unusual that I could not identify it until I had reviewed my field notes which I had dictated into my micro-cassette recorder (which I highly recommend) on the spot.

Acadian: feeding along edge of salt cedar/hackberry lined slough southwest of Johnson house. Seen at 4-6' for perhaps one minute (3 glimpses) with binoculars in full sun (side-lit).

I at first thought the bird was a wood-pewee because of the size and the bill shape except for the light belly/undertail coverts and the fact that the bird rapidly jerked its tail up and down several times when it would alight (this is a very helpful clue in separating Traill's Flycatcher/wood-pewee which are extremely similar in coloration).

Bird had a thin, pale yellow eye-ring. Throat and upper belly dull white. Dull pale gray wash across breast. Lower belly and vent pale yellow. Bill relatively long and thin. Lower mandible orange. "Jizz" of head and neck like wood-pewee. Back dull olive green. Wing bars pale brown.

Yellow-bellied: Feeding from middle of hackberry at southwest corner of Johnson Property. Watched for 2" in full shade with binocs. Margaret Anderson and friend also observed this bird.

In no way could this bird have been confused with a wood-pewee. It was tiny compared with the previous bird. It had a very round head and appeared neckless. It had a very tiny, triangular bill with a pale lower mandible -- the "jizz" fit the illustration in National Geographic's field guide exactly.

This bird had a bright yellow eye-ring, lemon yellow wingbars and was bright yellow from chin to vent except for an extremely dark breastband which extended down the flanks. The back was dark olive.

The overall impression was a tiny dark flycatcher with no pale gray tones, only yellow.

-- Mike Austin

(See additional comments in CH EDITOR'S NOTES, ed.)

Willow Flycatcher: Feeding from exposed perches 15' off the ground in "Thrush Woods" at Smith Oaks Sanctuary. I was attracted to the bird by its loud "puit" call, quite unlike the soft "whit" of Least or the buzzy call I heard a "Traill's" (presumably Alder) Flycatcher give at the same location in August, 1983. Call identical to that on National Geographic bird song record.

Poor, mostly back-lit, transient views of bird. Almost no yellow beneath (grayish throat, belly, vent, dull wash across breast. Faint brownish wingbars. Lack of apparent eye-ring. Rather long bill for emped (not like Least-- see below). -- Mike Austin

Trail's-type Flycatcher: Netted, banded (#1670-18259), and released on W. Galveston Island at 1311 on May 18, 1985. Very pale whitish eyering. Brownish-gray back; dusky breasted. Separated from wood-pewee by much shorter wing chord. Typed "Trail's-type" Flycatcher as best (not perfect) fit of measurements to banding key. Could not be typed as to Willow/Alder as bird did not vocalize.
-- Ron Braun

Least Flycatcher: Seen for 30 sec 15' overhead in huge oak. Fair views against foliage, some poor views against sky. Dark (thundershower in progress). Bold, white eye-ring and wingbars. Short, triangular bill. Gray-green head and back. Pale throat, gray wash on breast, pale yellow undertail coverts. Did not vocalize.
-- Mike Austin

Ash-throated Flycatcher: On May 1, 1985 the above observers [Victor Emanuel, Jim Tucker, Roger Tony Peterson, Greg W. Lasley] were participating on a combination Birdathon/Big Day in south Texas. At ~6:30 p.m. we arrived at Johnson's Woods where we spent about 10 minutes searching for migrants in the oaks and the hedge rows. On the south end of the property, just south of the dirt road that runs directly east from the highway Tucker initially observed an Ash-throated Flycatcher. The additional members of the party quickly located the bird and agreed on the identification. It was a small, slender, Myiarchus. The bird had an off-white throat, pale grayish breast and very pale yellow belly. The bill was all dark, and noticeably short appearing. Tail reddish. Head and nape gray brown, somewhat crested appearing. Wings were gray brown with two whitish wing bars. We observed the bird in direct comparison to Great-crested Flycatcher which was larger overall & less slender appearing. In addition, the Great-crested had a dark gray breast and bright yellow belly & undertail. Our bird did not vocalize. The bird quickly flew back and forth from weed stalk to weed stalk foraging on insects. In flight the wings appeared gray brown; I did not notice any red color.

We had seen about 15 Ash-throated Flycatchers earlier in the day in the Falcon Dam area & near Uvalde & I was amazed at finding one on the UTC since I am aware of its rare status here at any time of year. All observers have considerable experience with the species.
-- Greg Lasley

Brown Thrasher: Larger than Robin. Decurved bill. White breast with vertical dark streaking. Long-tailed; cinnamon above, two white wingbars.
-- Mike Austin

Water Pipit: Feeding on 99th St. Golf Course in Galveston. Walked. Light supercilium. Obscurely streaked gray-green back. Watched for 1 min. at 50 yds with 40x scope. Breast and legs obscured by long grass in which it was feeding.
-- Mike Austin

Solitary Vireo: One bird glimpsed briefly in shrub opposite Clapper Rail Trail. Fair light (late afternoon shade). Blue head with white spectacles contrasting with olive back.
-- Mike Austin

Philadelphia Vireo: 15' up in Thrush Woods. 15 second view in good light. All dark heavy vireo bill. Dirty yellow throat and upper breast. Dark lores.
-- Mike Austin

Nashville Warbler (male): LATE SPRING DATE Feeding in dead tree next to burned-out house in Smith Oaks Sanctuary. Very active warbler. Rear and front views for 15 sec in excellent light with 7x42 binoculars. Above: Olive green tail, back, wing. No wing bars. Gray hood with complete white eye-ring. Below: Bright lemon yellow from chin to belly.
-- Mike Austin

(Latest accepted spring date is May 15th. For those interested, that's based on 1 individual seen in Galv. in 1979 by Margaret Anderson and 2 individuals seen on W. Galveston Is. in 1976 by David & Jan Dauphin, ed.)

Black-throated Blue Warbler (female): Feeding in dense cover along fence line on east side of Smith Oaks Sanctuary. Viewed from 10' in shade with 7x42 binoculars. 10 sec. of bottom and side views. Feeding approx. 2' off the ground. Below: dull white with slight yellowish tinge to belly. Above: Dark bluish gray head, back and wings. No wing bars but small, square white patch on anterior end of folded primaries. Dirty gray-brown spectacles about eye broken fore and aft. Dark warbler bill. A familiar bird from my days at Point Pelee.
--Mike Austin

SPECIAL NOTES TO THE MAY, 1985 CLEARING HOUSE

The following notes were received by the editor during May and after the April CH had been completed. Both represent April, 1985 sightings and are published here because of their significance to the UTC Checklist.

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER: NO PREVIOUSLY ACCEPTED RECORDS Observed for two hours [on April 28, 1985] by Art MacKinnon, Betty Cornelius, Jenny Hevy, Ceil Frost through binoculars and 20x scope. The bird was by himself and was frequently harassed by numerous Pectoral Sandpipers. The bird had a very red crown, and thin supercilium that broadens behind the eye, a white throat and chin. Streak on foreneck, breast, sides and flanks to the undertail coverts. Very red scapulars and tertials. Bright buff foreneck and breast. (Ab)
-- Art MacKinnon

(Where? I assume on the UTC, ed.)

ARCTIC TERN: NO PREVIOUSLY ACCEPTED RECORDS On 26 April, 1985, from 12:15 - 12:50 p.m. I observed a bird at the Bolivar Flats which appeared to be an Arctic Tern. In my company was John Fitzpatrick (Assoc. Curator of Birds, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill.) who is turning in his own notes on the bird... [See below, ed.] ...Observations were made with a 15-45X spotting scope, as well as through our binoculars. Two slides were taken of the suspected bird... ...The tern we observed was in the company of other Sterna terns, as well as Royal Terns and a few Sandwich Terns. The first thing which drew my attention to it was the pearly gray throat and face -making it appear much darker than the surrounding terns. Furthermore, the entire underparts were pearly gray like the wings and mantle. Beneath the black cap, a horizontal white line separated the cap from the gray cheek. The legs of the bird were red and shorter than the legs of the surrounding birds, making the bird easy to relocate each time it flew a few feet, or was joined by other Sterna terns. The bill was red, appearing blotchy black at the very tip. During 35 minutes of continuous observation we saw the bird oriented head-on to us and at right angles. The gray of the underparts remained the same color, convincing us that it was not merely shadow. The wings extended about 1/2" past the tip of the tail. When the bird flew, or raised its wings, the outermost primaries exhibited dark tipping. One of us (RAB) has photographed Arctic Terns and studied them daily for nearly 4 months while working 2 summers in Alaska (not bird work, but the terns were always close at hand). Notes written 26 April, 1985.
-- Robert A. Behrstock No

Apparent ARCTIC TERN: (See above) Resting ca. 12-15 min. with ca. 30 Common Terns, many Royals, Laughing Gull, etc.; viewed through Nikon 10x35 & spotting scope, first from 100 yds., finally from about 30 yds. Several times stood side by side with Common Terns (which were moving - it was not) and was conspicuously shorter, with pearly gray breast & belly matching color of back. (Common Terns in identical light all showed gleaming white breasts). Bill tip definitely had a black tip, otherwise bright red, darker near tip. Wings 1/2 - 3/4" beyond tip of tail. Once flashed wings up, and they showed much white in distal primaries, bordered sharply by black. Vent appeared white, contrasting with grayish belly, when bird flew. Changed position by flight several times, each time could be picked out instantly again by gray breast & white-bordered cap, compared to all the white faced & white-breasted Commons.

Red bill, tipped black; distinct white band bordering black cap; wing tips noticeably longer than tail; white near crissum, undertail coverts (visible as contrasting with gray belly only when bird flew); throat, breast, & belly clearly a pearly gray, about the same color as dorsum, not snow white as on all other (ca. 30+) Common Terns with which it stood. Once, stood next to a Common, and was definitely lower to ground ("shorter") and also, in identical light, definitely gray-breasted, not snow white as the Common showed; postures were identical, birds were ca. 6-8cm apart, facing same direction, and Common was conspicuously higher-headed, also conspicuously snow-white on breast. (This Common had nearly black bill); when wings raised 1x, showed sharp black border along tips of primaries, flashing much white in wing near tip.

Problems: Wings-tips too "long"; bill tip black; otherwise, a "classic" Arctic.

-- John Fitzpatrick No

(The above describes the same bird, seen at the same time and place as Bob Behrstock's sighting. See also the notes for the April, 1985 CH. The 2nd Edition, T.O.S. Checklist of the Birds of Texas lists one documented record for Arctic Tern in Texas: a bird photographed (TP-RF #78) at Bolivar Flats on April 12, 1975. B.L.O.T. lists the bird as hypothetical with two sight records: one at La Porte on Sept. 13, 1961 by Linda Snyder & one in summer plumage at the south jetty in Port Aransas on Aug. 19, 1968 by V. L. Emanuel, E. B. Kincaid, Jr., & J. L. Rowlett, ed.)

CH EDITOR'S NOTES - May, 1985

Some comments (i.e. babble) on this month's sightings:

Black-billed Cuckoo: There were only 3 birds reported for the whole spring (2 in April - maybe the same individual - & 1 this month). That seemed low to me, so I did a little historical tabulation. I'll share the results with you.

1984 - 18	1980 - 50	1976 - 10
1983 - 11	1979 - 55	
1982 - 26	1978 - 22	
1981 - 24	1977 - 14	

Bobolink: A similar situation exists for Bobolink. One bird reported this spring. Other year's numbers are:

1984 - 10	1980 - 4	1976 - 25
1983 - 42	1979 - 73	
1982 - 321	1978 - 7	
1981 - 175	1977 - 9	

One assumes that these low number of sightings for these species is more an indication that it was not a birder's spring as opposed to any real decline in their population. So I hope at least!

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: My challenge last year on identifying Yellow-bellied Flycatchers vs. immature Acadian Flycatchers contained the phrase "in the fall". However, I am pleased that my comments have stimulated more careful observation of this and other Empidonax species at other times also. Empidonax species represent one of the most difficult (if not "the" most difficult) field identification problems faced by UTC birders.

Non-singing, migrating empedos offer precious few consensus diagnostic characteristics, to be sure. In the vein of offering observations which may provide clues (note I said clues, not diagnostic field marks) to aid in the correct identification of unknown Empidonax species, I present the following based on "in the hand" experience with two Acadian & one Yellow-bellied Flycatchers this spring. While both species had greenish backs and yellowish wash across the breast & underparts, the Yellow-bellied had a much richer & bolder yellow which extended into the throat area. More importantly, the Yellow-bellied was much more delicate in overall appearance, had a noticeably more rounded head, & gave the impression of having no neck. I was struck by how

similar my notes were to those of Mike Austin's observations. Perhaps these characteristics could be helpful to someone else.

Be cautious this fall when immature Acadians are around. They can be quite yellow underneath & may be different in "jizz" from adult birds.

Ash-throated Flycatcher: Discovered by some pretty prestigious birders! The latest spring date for Ash-throated on the UTC is a sighting by another prestigious birder, Arlie McKay; seen in Cove, Texas on 5/8/72.

Western Kingbird: Back again at the power station on Westpark where they nested last year. I have also seen an individual along the power lines between Briarpark & Rogerdale. Keep an eye out around the city this summer.

Nashville Warbler: The sighting on May 18th at Sun Oil by Mike Austin can, with Checklist Committee approval, become the new late spring date. A great example of sending in notes when you see a bird during the last week of indicated status on the UTC Checklist.

May 18th: I found the following note from Mike Austin interesting because I noted similar conditions on the evening weather report of the 17th & decided to go banding on the 18th. It produced the best day I had all spring!

"Late May must be like July - does anyone ever bird out there? I know I had a significant fallout at High Island on the 18th but surely not that many of these migrants can be rare!

I believe several climatic conditions contributed to the great fallout on the 18th. First, the wet cold front with almost all day rain on the 17th. Secondly, the northeast wind and the afternoon thundershowers over the Bolivar Peninsula - it literally rained Red-eyed Vireos. And thirdly, a phenomenon which hasn't received much attention - a patch of heavy offshore rain all day on the 18th. The front had stalled offshore & with an attendant low pressure area had created a large area of rain 50-100 miles offshore so that in the early afternoon, even before it started raining on the coast, the migrants were landing exhausted because of the rain & headwinds they had encountered while over the Gulf."

As a member of the Checklist Committee, I feel somewhat compelled to respond to the "surely not that many of these migrants can be rare". I believe the Checklist reflects the predominant situation over a number of years. Any given year can be an exception. Certainly the number of people out birding drops off in May and so does the number of migrants passing through. Appropriate weather conditions can cause significant numbers to appear (which often leads to new late sightings). However, this is not the norm which the Checklist tries to reflect. The "real" message from all of this is that birding can be quite good middle to late May under the right conditions.

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