



# THE SPOONBILL

Volume XVIII, No. 9  
January, 1970

"He clasps the crag with hooked hands:  
Close to the sun, in lonely lands,  
Ringed with the azure world he stands.  
The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls."

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Lines on eagles by Tennyson

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WOODHAM RANCH FIELD TRIP - by Louise Rogers, Sunday, December 14, 1969

Hot coffee and freshly baked cookies, compliments of Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Woodham, welcomed the 16 birders who showed up between 7:00 and 7:30 AM at the Woodham's ranch near Dickinson. The earliest arrivals, the birder-photographers, set up shop in the blind located a few hundred feet from the house while the rest of the group roughed it on the Woodham's enclosed back porch, complete with front row seats lined up at the picture window.

A dozen bobwhites were already feeding in the field a couple of hundred yards from the house and somewhat closer to the blind when the prairie chickens began flying in at 7:50. The chickens joined the quail briefly and then began to move toward the house. During the next 50 minutes approximately 12, mostly females, took up positions in front of the picture window, wandering through the yard, flying up into the trees, perching on stumps and fence posts. A couple of older males displayed and out stomped a few younger ones, but there was no booming. The chickens flew off as they had flown in, a few at a time, until by 8:40 all had departed. The birders in the blind, having been pretty well bypassed by the prairie chickens, rejoined the rest of the group on the porch who had enjoyed first-rate viewing of the birds.

After some more cookies, coffee and conversation with the hospitable Woodhams, several birders headed back for Houston and Christmas festivities while the rest went on to the Texas City and the water on both sides of the dike along its entire length was studied carefully. The weather was fine with no wind and intermittent clouds. A total of 33 species was arrived at following lunch on the dike, but THE GULL was not sighted. Most interesting of the birds along the dike were, of course, the white pelicans plus an estimated 75 eared grebes so tightly bunched on the water that they resembled a school of fish. No one recalled having such a formation of grebes before. Oddly, only one duck was sighted, a lesser scaup.

Following lunch and the countdown, the birders went their separate ways. In addition to Mr. and Mrs. Woodham, the day's list of birders included Wallace C. Mebane, Jr., Louise Rogers, David Marrack and Mary Marrack, Mr. and Mrs. Harry L. Brister, Loyd Nelson and Violet Nelson, Tommy Barnes, Florence Barnes, and James Barnes, Marilyn Crane, F. T. Saadeh, and Alfred Schultz.

THE "600" CLUB by Bessie G. Cornelius

I have never seen anything written about the "600 Club" in the Spoonbill. Perhaps this would be interesting and informative to the new birders.

Of the several million birdwatchers in the United States, a relative few have achieved life lists of 600 or more North American species seen north of the Mexican border. Please note I have said North American species and north of the border. Many people have impressive lists of birds seen from all over the world. The area we are speaking of includes Lower California, the original 48 states, Alaska, Canada, Bermuda and Greenland, being the regions considered by top ornithologists of the country to be North America from an avifaunal viewpoint. The North American species are those appearing on the American Ornithological Union 1957 Checklist.

Those who have achieved the 600 birds or more listed by A.O.U. may qualify for the mythical "600 Club". No dues, no meetings!

I have received the Revised Official Summary as of October 15, 1969, from Earle R. Greene, in charge of the list. He is a notable birder himself, with 646 birds to his credit. This remarkable gentleman of some 80 years, according to his interesting book, "A Lifetime with the Birds" has traveled thousands and thousands of miles over most of North America to see new species or visit with a birding friend. He has been on a first-name basis with all the greats in the birding world from way-back-when to the present. He says, "Have you slept under the stars in the Chiricahua of Arizona? Have you heard the distinctive song of the Song Sparrow along the Nantahala River in the mountains of North Carolina? Have you watched the Water Ouzel in the mountain streams of California? Have you been within a few feet of the lovely Ptarmigan in the Rockies of Colorado? If not, my friend, you have not really lived."

Altho I do not see the names of anyone from Texas on the summary, I am sure there are those who would qualify. There are many people listed, however, who are well known to Texas birders. Ira, N. Gabrielson, whose name leads all the rest, with 673 species, was the principal speaker t the TOS spring meeting held in Galveston a few years ago.

Some people may have birds on their list which, according to the A.O.U., may no longer be considered separate species. Of course, it is a painful operation for a dedicated lister to have to remove a hard-earned bird from his life list. However, the life list is yours and operates on the honor system. How you indentified a bird, how well you did it, or whether a good birder with you said, "there goes a Purple-bellied Snipe" and you put it on your list is all up to you. Of course, I am sure many a lister has had a soul-searching ordeal before placing a bird on his lily-white list. I am sure many have been placed thereon but later removed. I know one birder who has make it a point to see every bird on her list twice. I like that system but naturally it is possible to only a fortunate few.

There are many kinds of lists,--"yard lists", "State lists, etc. There are many fine birders who are no interested in any kind of listing and many an ornithologist who just couldn't care less. To me it is an incentive to see more birds and just the right spark needed to make that extra trip to add a "new one". I hope it won't be long before I can join this Club.

Note from Earle R. Greene:

OUR MOTTO - CO-OPERATION - NOT COMPETITION.

Changes in your Number of Birds recorded in North America will be appreciated if you will advise me. The next Summary will be February 1, 1970.

Earle R. Greene

1600 West Fifth Street, Oxnard, California 93030

#### JULIA BRADLEY RECEIVES A LETTER

Julia Bradley, prompted by the fact that several of our birders had noted a discrepancy in the different printings of RTP's FIELD GUIDE TO WESTERN BIRDS concerning the color of the eye of the Western Gull, wrote a letter to Roger Tory Peterson. The following is the reply to her letter along with data that had been sent to the Petersons by a friend, Mr. R. Dudley Ross on the subject of the Western Gull, Mr. Ross' comment regarding our TCD Gull, etc:

Dear Mrs. Bradley:

Your letter of last March was received here while Roger and I were on lecture tour. Immediately after tour we went to the Galapagos, then Brazil and now RTP is in England. You may recall that you wrote because you had found a discrepancy in the different printings of RTP'S FIELD GUIDE TO WESTERN BIRDS concerning the color of the eye of the Western Gull. Because RTP has been away so much I wrote to the friend who had helped us so much with this particular section of the book, Mr. Dudley Ross, and he has sent me the following information which I now pass along to you. Incidentally, Mr. Ross was in Texas and asked about your bird and he also tells me that his active birding friends in Dallas have come to the conclusion that the bird was a Western Gull.

It is Mr. Ross' opinion that the change from First Printing where eye is dark to the Fifth printing indicating light is a printer's mistake and therefore inadvertent. Much to my chagrin we do not have copies of either printing, and I do not consider myself an ornithological authority so I hesitate to express myself at all.

Page 3.

I don't know whether all this is helpful to you or not, but I did want you to know that we had received your letter and were trying to get an answer to you--even such a tardy one.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely,  
Barbara C. Peterson

Information sent by R. Dudley Ross:

In his "Gulls of the World" Dwight describes the eye color of the Western Gull as follows:

Natal down: - Iris brown.

Juvenal plumage: - Iris "brown, auburn or sepia". Also in first winter and first nuptial plumages.

Second winter plumage: - Iris "Dresden-brown, raw umber and other browns".

Second nuptial plumage: - Iris "Sudan, or buckthorn brown..."

\*Third winter plumage: - Iris (See Pl. XII, fig. 3) "cream-color, Naples-yellow or sulphur-yellow"

Third nuptial plumage: Iris "sulphur-yellow, light ochraceous buff"

Fourth winter plumage: Iris (Pl. XII, fig. 2) "fuscous black, freckled with old gold".  
(adult)

\*In spite of the above description, the plate mentioned gives the impression of a dark eye, due to the pupil's being black, while the iris, being narrow, is scarcely noticeable. In other words, one does not get the impression of a light-colored eye.

WHITE WINGED SCOTERS FOUND ON BAYPORT SHIP CHANNEL by Frank Kokesh

Two White Winged Scoters were found on the morning of November 22 on Bayport ship channel off Galveston Bay between La Porte and Seabrook. Louis McFadin was with me on the occasion.

The Scoters were first seen at a distance of about 150 yards with 8 x 40 binoculars. The white patch on the side of the head was unusually white and bright. The Scoters were wary and rapidly paddled away. When followed, they flew off. The white wing patches were plain to the naked eye.

Only one Scoter was found the next morning (and since). It would dive for long periods, and would also "rare" up in the water, opening its wings whereupon the white patches were like two handkerchiefs waving. Mary Belle Kokesh saw the Scoters on this occasion, as did John Tveten who took telescope pictures.

The Lone Scoter was seen several times in the following month. On one occasion it was at first nowhere to be seen, even from the edge of the wharf. When I turned to leave, it flew up about 75 yards away. It must have been diving.

One wonders what happened to the other Scoter. At first it seemed that it may have succumbed to the yellowish and foul smelling effluent from the Bayport industrial waste water treatment plant which empties into this relatively small channel.

The Scoter was not seen on or about 8:00 am. on Xmas Count day, December 27.

RARE BIRD CALL REVISION by Wallace C. Mebane, Jr.

About once every two years the RARE BIRD CALL is revised, to give new birders a chance to participate, and to remove the names of participants who have left town. The past two revisions are recorded in the November, 1965, SPOONBILL, and the March, 1968, SPOONBILL.

All participants of the RARE BIRD CALL pledge themselves not to collect any bird on the CALL, nor to pass the information on to any probable collector.

Birds are placed on the CALL that are:

- (1.) New to the area.
- (2.) Listed as "ACCIDENTAL" on the 1966 Field Check-List.
- (3.) Listed as "RARE" in all months of the year.

Participants also have the obligation of immediately telephoning their assigned numbers, and the numbers assigned to anyone who does not answer the phone.

A new list is being prepared. All birders wishing to participate may sign up by giving their name and phone number to Wallace C. Mebane Jr., 7106 Mobud, Houston, Texas, 77036, or by phoning 774-9435 in the evenings or week ends or by phoning 224-5541 during office hours.

CLEARING HOUSE, December, 1969

- Grebe, Eared: (3) 3, (72+) 8, (5) 26, (50) 31, Cove, AKM  
 Pied-billed: (1) 3 days, (2) 3 days, (3) 2 days, Cove, AKM  
 Pelican, White: (50+126) 4 days, (less) 5 days, Cove, AKM  
 Cormorant, Double-crested: (1-9) 4 days, (27) 12, (225) 18 (next species included),  
 (110) 31, of which most were of next species.  
 Mexican (Olivaceous): (62, a flock) 8, (60-80) 31, mixed with the others.  
 (See Clearing House Notes - Mexican Cormorant)  
 Nightheron, Black-crowned: (1-7) 4 days, (13) 31, Cove, AKM  
 Ibis, White-faced: (4-22) 4 days, (40-75) 4 days, (250) 18, Cove, AKM  
 Spoonbill, Roseate: (1-14) 4 days, (107) 27, Cove, AKM  
 SWAN, WHISTLING: (1) 29, (3) 26, reported by Douglas Myres. They come in to his  
 goose decoys at mouth of Trinity.  
 Goose, Canada: (Observed near the mouth of the Trinity) 29, Cove, AKM  
 White-fronted: (1) 13, shot from a flock of 100+ by Damon McKay, (3) 25,  
 (1) 27, (4) 30, Cove, AKM  
 Mallard: (9) 29, (10-30) 31, Cove, AKM  
 Duck, Mottled: (1) 1, (6-8) 6, 8, 24, (20-30) 31, Cove, AKM  
 Gadwall: (5-20) 4 days, (25-40) 6 days, (1500) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Pintail: (500) 27, (280) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Teal, Green-winged: (5000) 27, Cove, AKM  
 Widgeon, American: (nc) 3 days, (2-23) 6 days, (100) 27, Cove, AKM  
 Shoveler: (400) 8, Cove, AKM  
 Duck, Wood: (6) 27, (10) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Redhead: (3) 8, Cove, AKM  
 Canvasback: (93) 13, Cove, AKM  
 Scaup, Lesser: (3) 8, (4) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Goldeneye, Common: (2) 3, (40) 8, (7) 26, (24) 31, Cove, AKM  
 Bufflehead: (30) 8, (10+) 26, 31, Cove, AKM  
 Duck, Ruddy: (200) 13, (124) 16, (250) 27, Cove, AKM  
 Merganser, Red-breasted: (1) 8, (30) 26, (8) 31, Cove, AKM  
 Vulture, Turkey: (2-9) 11 days, (5) 12, of which one had albino primaries and upper  
 coverts of same on one wing, Cove, AKM  
 Black: (1) 7, Cove, AKM  
 Hawk, Cooper's: (1) 10, Cove, AKM  
 Red-tailed: (45) 1 dark phase, 3, Cove, AKM  
 Harlan's: (1) 20. This is the 8th or 9th year for this one. I saw it only  
 once one winter, Cove, AKM  
 Red-shouldered: (1) 25, (3) 27, 29, Cove, AKM  
 Marsh: (nc) 21 days, Cove, AKM  
 Rail, King: (1) 11, (3) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Clapper: (1) 26, (2) 31, Cove, AKM  
 Gallinule, Common: (2) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Coot, American: (2) 13, (800-1000) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Plover, Semipalmated: (1) 8, 31, Cove, AKM  
 Black-bellied: (1-4) 3, 8, 26, 31, Cove, AKM  
 Turnstone, Ruddy: (4) 26, Cove, AKM  
 Woodcock, American: (2) 13, (1) 15, 20, 25, Cove, AKM  
 Snipe, Common: (1-15) 6 days, (35) 16, (54) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Curlew, Long-billed: (1) 8, 31, (15) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Sandpiper, Spotted: (1) 8, 17, (2) 27, (4) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Willet: (4) 2, 23, (8) 26, 31, Cove, AKM  
 Yellowlegs, Greater: (1) 4, 25, (4) 6, (12) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Lesser: (1-2) 1, 27, (13) 6, (6) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Sandpiper, Least: (nc) 4 days, (29) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Dunlin: (1-9) 4 days, Cove, AKM  
 Dowitcher (sp): (7-32) 4 days, Cove, AKM  
 Sandpiper, Semipalmated: (nc) 4 days, Cove, AKM  
 Western: (nc) 3 days, Cove, AKM  
 Sanderling: (3) 8, (5) 26, (16) 31, Cove, AKM  
 Avocet, American: (106+) 3, (223+) 8, Cove, AKM  
 Gull, Herring: (1-4) 5 days, (18) 27, Cove, AKM

- Gull, Franklin's: (1) 17, Cove, AKM  
 Bonaparte's: (1) 8, 27, Cove, AKM  
 Tern, Royal: (nc) 5 days, Cove, AKM  
 Caspian: (nc) 10 Days, (11) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Owl, Barn: (2) 27, Cove, AKM  
 Great Horned: (1) 12, 29, Cove, AKM  
 Barred: (1) 25, Cove, AKM  
 Short-eared: (1) 3, Cove, AKM  
 Nighthawk, Common: (3) 21, east of Hermann Park, SE Houston (between Binz and Brays Bayou, Sampson and Burkett); from 5:20 to 5:45 PM (dusk); Houston temp. 69% F. at 4 PM; NP  
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: (1) 3, 6, 7, 8, 28, 29, 30, (2) 31, Baytown, NB  
 Rufous: (1-2) 24 days, Baytown, NB; (1) 8 days, Baytown, D&DL  
 Kingfisher, Belted: (1) 6 days, (3) 26, Cove, AKM  
 Flicker, Yellow-shafted: (1-5) 22 days, (19) 27, (28) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Woodpecker, Pileated: (1) 20, (3) 29, Cove, AKM; (1) 9, (1) 27, Baytown, D&DL  
 Red-bellied: (1) 14, (2) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: (1) 11, 15, (3) 27, (4) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Woodpecker, Downy: (1) 15, Cove, AKM; (1) 4, 19, 27, 29, Baytown, NB  
 Phoebe, Eastern: (1-2) 9 days, (3) 26, (6) 29, Cove, AKM; (1) 1, 22, Baytown, NB  
 Flycatcher, Vermilion: (1) 14, (2) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Swallow, Tree: (28) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Chickadee, Carolina: (1) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Creeper, Brown: (2) 27, Cove, AKM  
 Wren, House: (2) 11, 25, (1) 27, Cove, AKM  
 Winter: (2) 13, Cove, AKM  
 Long-billed Marsh: (1) 27, 29, Cove, AKM  
 Short-billed Marsh: (1) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Catbirds: (2) 27, 29, Cove, AKM  
 Robins: (1-8) 6 days, (45) 17, (38) 27, (580) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Thrush, Hermit: (1) 11, 12, 27, 29, Cove, AKM  
 Bluebird, Eastern: (5) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: (1-3) 9 days, (6) 27, (4) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned: (3) 12, (4) 15, (2) 26, 27, (6) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Pipit, Water: (1-12) 7 days, (40) 27, (4) 29, (75) 31, Cove, AKM  
 Sprague's: (1) 4, 22, 25, (2) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Waxwing, Cedar: (6) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Vireo, White-eyed: (1) 11, Cove, AKM  
 Warbler, Orange-crowned: (1) 8 days, (2) 17, (3) 27, (6) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Myrtle: (1-5) 6 days, (22) 27, Cove, AKM  
 Pine: (1) 26, 29, Cove, AKM  
 Palm: (1) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Yellowthroat: (1-3) 11, 13, 29, Cove, AKM  
 Blackbird, Rusty: (1) 14, (12) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Grackle, Common: (9) 29 (in 35 years, I have recorded only one), Cove, AKM  
 Grosbeak, Black-headed: (1) 3, Baytown, NB  
 Finch, Purple: (1) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Siskin, Pine: (1-3) 2, 12, 31, Baytown, NB  
 Goldfinch, American: (30) 11, (2-18) 5 days, (52) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Towhee, Rufous-sided: (2) 7, 27, (1) 15, (3) 17, Cove, AKM; (1) 1, Baytown, D&DL  
 Sparrow, Le Conte's: (1) 27, Cove, AKM  
 Henslow's: (3) 27, Cove, AKM  
 Sharp-tailed: (2) 22, Cove, AKM  
 Seaside: (3) 8, (2) 26, Cove, AKM  
 Vesper: (14) 27, Cove, AKM  
 Junco, Slate-colored: (5) 20, Cove, AKM  
 Sparrow, Field: (15) 20, 25, (1) 27, Cove, AKM  
 White-crowned: (1) 8, (8) 17, (10-12) 25, 29, Cove, AKM  
 Fox: (2) 17, Cove, AKM  
 Lincoln's: (1) 11, 27, (2) 17, 29, Cove, AKM  
 Swamp: (1-5) 7 days, (21) 27, (36) 29, Cove, AKM  
 Song: (1-2) 4 days, (5) 29, Cove, AKM

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES:

Mexican Cormorant: In the Cove area I had rarely identified this species in winter. On December 8 I saw 62 sitting on and about an old pier with Snowy Egrets close by. The first flock of more than six or seven I ever saw in Cove area. Three of them had white feathers from below the ears over the back of head. The feathers were

barely near enough together to appear as a continuous line, and appeared to stick above other feathers. This is all new to me.

Lesser Scaup: Many are saying, "What happened to the 'bluebills'?" S. L. Griffith told me the club he works for had killed more (5) Hooded Mergansers than Scaup. They killed thousands a year. A few years ago my brother, Arnold, saw the greatest duck migration I ever heard of. All Scaup. Several million flying northeast in winter. He said he saw more ducks in minutes than in the preceding fifty years.

Arlie McKay

CONTRIBUTORS TO CLEARING HOUSE

AKM Arlie K McKay  
NB Nettie Busby  
NP Noel Pettingell  
D&DL Dorothy and David Lefkovits

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The chairman and editors feel that enough time and space have been given to the controversial gull which has been seen at Texas City. Enough of the conflicting opinions has been published in The Spoonbill for anyone seeing the gull to decide for himself, so we have decided not to include any more material on this bird.

Some of the contributions for The Spoonbill have been reaching us late enough so that we have either been late with publication or have to save the article until the following month. For uniformity and because of a tight schedule caused by our other activities, nothing received after the seventh of each month will be included in that month's issue. We will appreciate the cooperation of our contributors.

COMING EVENTS

- Thursday, February 5: Regular OG meeting, Downtown Recreational Center, 7:30 P. M. Harry Brister will show his slides of birds, as we were all confident he would after our efficient program chairman announced at the last meeting that she was trying to persuade him. These wives usually win.
- Saturday, February 7: OG field trip to McClure's Woods and Bear Creek Park. Leaders will be Bill McClure and Harry Brister. Meet at 8:00 A. M. at the McClure residence at 6215 Queenswood in Houston. Bring lunch and a tank full of gas. Depending on the condition of the weather, the time, and our leader the trip may include Spring Creek Park.
- Monday, February 23: Audubon Wildlife Film, presented by ONC and Audubon Society. The film will be "Island Treasure" by Dr. Walter J. Breckenridge at 8:00 P. M., Houston Homebuilders Auditorium, 2710 W. Alabama. Meet and eat with Dr. Breckenridge and other nature lovers at 6:00 P. M. at Suzanne Cafeteria, 2912 S. Shepherd. Dr. Breckenridge is director of the Minnesota Museum of Natural History and is a distinguished scientist and artist. His film is a wildlife study of Minnesota.

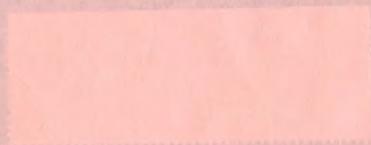
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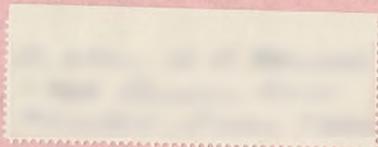
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