



THE SPOONBILL

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

COMING EVENTS

- Jan. There will be no Visitors Day in January at the Little Thicket Sanctuary.
- Thurs. OG regular meeting, 7:30 PM at Fonde Recreation Center, Sabine at Memorial
Feb. 3 Drive. Wayne Shifflett, formerly at Santa Ana NWR, and now at Eagle Lake
Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR, will present "Birds of the Rio Grande Delta
and Where To Find Them". Remember to bring your aluminum for Jerry Baker.
- Sat. Audubon field trip for beginner birders to West Harris Co., led by Margar-
Feb. 5 ret Anderson. Meet at church on Hwy 6, just north of I-10. Bring lunch.
- Tues. ONC regular meeting, 8:00 PM at Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive. The
Feb. 8 Herpetology Group has a number of enthusiastic junior members, who will
present a "Show & Tell". This is a good opportunity for us birders to
find out what is "down under" while we walk around with our eyes "up
yonder".
- Sat. OG regular field trip to Jones Forest. Meet at 8:00 AM on left hand side
Feb. 12 of FM 1488 near headquarters (north on I-45, exit at FM 1488, turn left
and go west about 2 miles). Bring lunch and insect repellent.

PAST EVENTS

** OG field trip to HL&P Cooling Ponds: On Saturday, December 4, approximately 35 birders met at the roadside rest area on I-10 east of San Jacinto River. While waiting for all to arrive and assemble, several birders entertained themselves by checking the 50+ Ruby-crowned Kinglets in the rest area trees, hoping to find a stray species of another sort. Once on our way, our able leader, David Dauphin, led us through the heavy fog to the cooling ponds. Dave had obtained a key to the locked gate which leads out onto a long levee where we consolidated into fewer vehicles. Birding the entrance roads, the ponds, the rocks and marshes along the levee, and the woods at the levee's end, the group turned up 91 species for the trip list. Included were 3 species of Grebes, both area Cormorants, 12 species of ducks, 2 accipiters, and 8 species of sparrows. The most notable observation was the finding of 100+ Bufflehead. Though this trip did not turn up a rarity like the Oldsquaw of the previous year's trip, a good time was had by all. In the early afternoon the group dispersed and many of the birders took the opportunity to scout various OG Christmas Count areas as did Bob Moulton and myself. The trip list is being submitted to the Clearing House for publication. --Jim Morgan

** Christmas Counts:	Place	Species	Observers
	Houston	175	122
	Freeport	195	90
	Eagle Lake	138	15
	Old River	150	31

(Jonelle Buckels says this is the highest count in both species and observers for this count, and thanks all the SPOONBILL readers who assisted in making this possible).

FREEPORT BREAKS 195 ON A RAINY DAY! by Victor Emanuel, Count Director

In many ways the twentieth annual Freeport Christmas bird count was the most remarkable of them all. After a long drouth this summer and early fall, the Freeport area was deluged with twelve inches of rain in the past two weeks. It was mostly clear and mild for the last few days before the count. Counters up at midnight the night before the count (they got a Barn Owl just after midnight!) saw stars and at 6 AM I watched a new moon rise over the gulf, a beautiful orange sliver, but it disappeared quickly into clouds.

Ninety observers were greeted by a gray dawn. Shortly after 10 AM, the rains came. Everyone hoped this was a passing shower, but it rained steadily all day, sometimes slacking up a bit. It was the worst weather in twenty years of Freeport counts. The only saving feature was that the rains came at 10 AM rather than at 6 AM.

Soggy and tired we assembled at the Dow cafeteria for the dinner and tally expecting a very low count. I felt we would be lucky to break 190.

But the final count listed 195 species, a fantastic total considering the conditions and a tribute to the dedication of Freeport Christmas bird counters. Mike Braun left Ithaca, N.Y. at 3 PM on the Friday before the count and drove straight through arriving at the count circle at 8 AM! That's real dedication.

The bad weather caused us to miss a few essential species such as Common Loon, Yellow crowned Night Heron, Cinnamon Teal, Yellow Rail, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Northern Oriole, Fox Sparrow and Bald Eagle. The record cold weather in November and December undoubtedly contributed to almost total absence of lingerers. That rich category was only represented by Still Sandpiper, Empidonax, Wood Thrush, and Grosbeak (sp.). No rare warblers or vireos were seen.

Best birds were two Tropical Kingbirds (Bob and Mary Ann Moore and Bill and Marie Hand) and a White-breasted Nuthatch (Larry and Martha Ballard). Other good birds: Purple Sandpiper (2 by Ben Feltner), and a Ferruginous Hawk (Victor Emanuel).

The hummingbirds deserve special mention. A few years back we often didn't even record "hummingbird sp.". Last year we asked anyone in the Freeport area who had a hummingbird feeder to call Tom and Sherry Collins. A dozen or so called in and we recorded 4 species of hummingbird (Rufous, Ruby-throat, Black-chinned, and Anna's). This year we made the same appeal and twenty-nine people called in with feeders and hummingbirds. In many cases they had two or more hummers visiting their feeder. Margaret Anderson and Margaret and Paul Jones headed up our hummingbird patrol and once again they tallied four species of hummingbirds (the same species as in 1975).

Special thanks should be given to Tom and Sherry Collins for organizing the Lake Jackson area and handling the hummingbird program, to Dow Chemical for hosting the dinner, to the Brazosport Facts for great pre-count publicity, to the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce for presenting awards to the persons who found the best birds, to the Houston Audubon Society for sponsoring the count and to ninety dedicated observers who braved the elements to keep Freeport in the running as one of the nation's top counts.

A NOTE TO EVERYONE ON THE RARE BIRD ALERT from David Dauphin

I have received several complaints recently, from some of you on the Rare Bird Alert who are not receiving Alerts, so the following is and will be the procedure for operating the Alert:

1. Each of the four people I call is responsible for calling at least three people.
2. Each of the three people that my callee contacts is responsible for calling two people.
3. The following example will always apply: If Nimmons cannot contact Campbell, Nimmons will call Smith and Clayton and then will contact Campbell.
4. Many times the person you call will be out of town. It is still your responsibility to call the people that person was to call, and later contact the out-of-towner (by postcard if necessary).
5. All calls should be placed as soon after an alert is received as is possible. Many times this will make a difference in whether or not a bird will be seen. All forty of us on the Rare Bird Alert should be able to complete our calling in fifteen minutes.

The Alert can be effective only if the chain is not broken, and everyone is contacted quickly. If anyone wishes not to be on the alert, please let me know.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HOUSTON AUDUBON SOCIETY FOR BROWN PELICAN PROGRAM

Twenty-four crippled Brown Pelicans have been sent from Florida's Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary to Sea-Arama Marine World in Galveston. These birds will be the breeding stock in a project to re-establish the Brown Pelican, an endangered species, on the Upper Texas Coast. This event is the result of the joint efforts of Houston Audubon Society, Sea-Arama, Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary, and Shell Oil Company, through the donation of the use of their plane. Bruce McCandless and Fred Collins arranged this breeding program with Sea-Arama, which has the food supply, environment, and manpower needed. The Florida Sanctuary has successfully hatched, raised, and released healthy Brown Pelicans from birds injured in various ways, and hopefully, Sea-Arama will duplicate those successes.

WHAT TO DO WITH DEAD BIRD SPECIMENS by Randy Beavers

The Spring Branch I.S.D. Environmental Science Center is organizing an extensive bird collection, and is in dire need of bird specimens. I would like to encourage everyone to donate to the Center any dead birds that are in adequate condition for preservation (museum skins).

When a bird is found (road-kill, window-kill, etc.), it would be of great assistance to comply with the following instructions: First, record the date and locality the bird was found; freeze the bird as soon as possible (delayed freezing may damage the skin); and give me a telephone call at the Science Center - 465-9628, or at home - 463-0267.

Your efforts in forming a worthwhile bird collection for this area are greatly appreciated. Please note that this collection will be open for examination by all OG members.

The Environmental Science Center is an enrichment facility of the Spring Branch Independent School District. The Science Center staff conducts lectures for approximately 16,000 Spring Branch students a year.

Included at the Center are a Hall of Zoology exhibiting Texas mammals, birds and reptiles; the Hall of Geology that houses an enormous display of rocks, minerals and fossils; a Hall of Oceanography with many dioramas depicting marine life, primarily of North American coastlines; and the Jack Roach Hall of Asiatic, African, Alaskan, and Mexican animals. The adjacent 5 acre arboretum offers the true naturalist a chance to see the trees, shrubs and vines native to southeast Texas.

The Science Center also maintains an excellent herbarium collection of approximately 3,000 plants, and the newly organized bird collection. The Center is located on 8856 Westview Drive, and opens from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM weekdays.

MINUTES, REGULAR MEETING, ORNITHOLOGY GROUP, DECEMBER 2, 1976

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Jack Gillette who said that everyone had read his letter in THE SPOONBILL and probably wondered why he was calling the meeting to order if he had resigned the chairmanship, but the answer was that he was arguing with the Board of Directors of the Outdoor Nature Club, not the Ornithology Group. He could not step down until someone had been found to take his place and now that a very good someone, Avis Brister, had been found he would adjourn the meeting he had started and turn the meeting over to Avis. He said that he was not very happy about resigning because he didn't like quitting in midterm and also not being chairman of OG, but this was the only way he felt he could make the protest he felt he had to make. He also thanked all the committee chairmen and members for the good jobs they had done in making it a good group and hoped they would continue for the rest of the year.

Avis Brister expressed the disappointment of the Group in not being able to keep Jack as chairman and said that she knew with the Group's support we could continue as an active and vital organization.

Suzi Campbell, secretary, reported that Dirk Hagemeyer had requested that the minutes of the October 7th. meeting be changed by deleting the paragraph starting with "Dirk Hagemeyer..." and replacing it with the following:

"Dirk Hagemeyer said that he had attended the Fifth Trumpeter Swan Conference held during September in Moose, Wyoming, where he had been asked to inform the manager of the Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge, Martin, South Dakota, of any sightings of Trumpeter Swans in the South. Nesting of the Trumpeter Swans which were introduced in South Dakota in the early nineteen sixties had been very successful, but during the last several years the winter count has remained constant which could mean that some of the Trumpeters migrate South during the winter. If anyone sees a Trumpeter please notify Dirk."

The minutes were then declared approved as corrected.

Treasurer Mary Gillette reported a balance on hand of \$1056.

Vice-Chairman Pat Sullivan announced a total of 43 members and guests.

Committee reports were given as follows:

Spoonbill Editor Margaret Jones reported that with the new mailing permit the Spoonbill was being published and mailed for about 13¢ a copy. She also said

that a list of Christmas counts in different areas and details concerning them would be in the next Spoonbill.

Clearing House Editor T. Paul Jones asked everyone to keep the cards and letters coming.

Rare Bird Alert Chairman David Dauphin listed the rare birds which had been called in, and Field Trip Chairman David Dauphin reported on past field trips and upcoming field trips. He urged members to inform the Dow Chemical Company of their use and enjoyment of the Dow Nature Trail.

Program Chairman Bob Moulton said that he was trying to get someone to talk on nesting Peregrine falcons for our next meeting.

Aluminum Chairman Jerry Baker said that her car was in the usual place for anyone who had brought aluminum for recycling.

Seminar Chairman Marilyn Crane said that Fred Collins would speak on Sparrows at the January 6th. seminar, and at the March seminar Dean Fisher would speak on Birds of Australia.

Nominating Committee Chairman Harry Brister gave the committee's report of the following nominees:

Chairman -- David Dauphin; Vice Chairman -- Dr. Pat Sullivan; Secretary -- Jackie May; Treasurer -- Mrs. Mary Gillette.

Since there were no nominations from the floor, it was moved by Paul Jones and seconded by Wes Cureton that the nominations be accepted. A vote was taken and the officers were elected.

Ted Eubanks, Henslow sparrow census chairman, said that we would be setting up a nesting survey in the spring. He needs volunteers, and also steel tapes and compass.

Noel Pettingell said that he and Ben Feltner are working at gathering statistics from the Clearing House.

Telephone committee chairman Bob Willman needs volunteers.

There has still been no reply from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department even though a second letter has been sent regarding the shorebird survey.

Under New Business Chairman Avis Brister said that library books were available on the table if members wished to borrow them; also free checklists from various state parks and wildlife refuges could be taken.

Louise Rogers urged everyone to attend the Outdoor Nature Club December 14th. meeting when Ernest Marsh from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will present slides of various Texas localities.

Bill Mealy invited us to an exhibition at the Gallery Barbizon (across from Joske's at the Town and Country Shopping Center) next Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 6:30 to 10:00 p.m. showing the work of four wildlife artists. John O'Neill will be there Thursday and Friday. Bill also had some O'Neill prints which were available to OG members at reduced prices.

Ted Eubanks said that he had heard from Bessie Cornelius that the Bolivar Christmas Count would be December 22nd. and they would meet at the Gulfway Motel at High Island between 6:45 and 7:00 a.m.

Holly Hobart said he had gotten an idea from the bird group in New England about collecting used stamps and using the money paid for these to help establish bird sanctuaries and he would give full details to Margaret for the SPOONBILL.

Paul Jones reported on the highly successful TOS meeting in Amarillo. 127 people observed 119 species.

Program Chairman Bob Moulton introduced the first speaker, Paul Nimmons, who informed members on some of the points to consider in identifying various species on the Christmas Count. Bob Moulton then introduced the second speaker, Margaret Anderson, who showed slides of some of the hummingbird species which might be attracted to feeders and also gave a most interesting talk about ways of attracting hummingbirds and identifying the six or seven species which have been seen here.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Suzi Campbell, Secretary

A CLOUD ON THE HORIZON

All of us who bird in West Harris County are familiar with the creeping development now taking place west of Hwy 6 between Clay Road and FM 529, the westward movement of which we have been watching warily and with sinking hearts. We have become familiar with the sale signs popping up with ever-increasing frequency on the edges of the fields which we scan for wintering birds, and hope they won't get sold to the developers...yet. Jim Morgan has called our attention to yet another cloud on the horizon-- a proposed regional airport in the Katy vicinity, an airport that in five years would be second only to Hobby.

He said: "An article appeared in the Houston Post on December 10, 1976 regarding the approval of a funding study as the first step toward construction of a major regional airport to serve commercial and private aircraft in the Houston metropolitan area. The airport is expected to be built on a 709 acre tract about nine miles south of Katy in Fort Bend County (SE of FM 359 and Gaston-Fulshear Road). However, the alternate site is a 408 acre tract near the intersection of the Katy-Hockley Cutoff Road and FM 529 in West Harris County! I am sure that all active birders in this area are familiar with the alternate site. One can just imagine what an airport, plus all the ancillary development and traffic would do to this prime birding and hunting area which supports large amounts of ducks, geese, large waders, shorebirds, wintering sparrows and migrants. So far, no objections have been received about this proposed airport at either site."

While the first thought of some is to write letters of protest, on what grounds can we base such protests? Jim agrees with me that "Don't build your airport here, we like to come watch your birds" wouldn't get much consideration, and, in fact, would very likely bring more ridicule on conservation efforts, which is certainly not needed. An airport in western part of the metropolitan area is inevitable, and no matter where it is built, there will be an adverse effect on birdlife. However, our first alarm about the alternate site is: Warren Lake, with its heavy concentration of waterfowl, including the Bald Eagles, long considered an endangered species. What effect would the airport have on the hundreds of thousands of waterfowl accustomed to wintering near Warren Lake? Would they endanger the aircraft using the airport?

Environmental impact studies are required, and public hearings will be held, but Raymond McDavid, Conservation Chairman of the ONC, and a veteran observer of many environmental hearings, cautions that any objections to the alternate site must have a valid base. If you would like to express your opinions about this alternate site, you may write George R. Eeds, chairman of Katy's aviation advisory committee, Mayor Dan Cox of Katy, local and federal offices of the Federal Aviation Administration, even Southwest Airlines, who would be one of the commercial carriers using the airport.

ABOUT OWLS

** On the December Christmas Count in Austin, a Saw-whet Owl was seen and heard, but we have not heard of any further sightings. Bessie Cornelius sent this interesting note: "I was talking to Tex Wells about the Saw-whet Owl (Mr. Wells is with the Fish and Wildlife Dept. at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and is very familiar with this bird) after I heard of the Austin bird. He said the outstanding thing about this little owl is its tameness. That one can walk right up to it on a perch and it will not move. Two people can easily catch it by one diverting the owl's attention in front and the other standing behind and just grabbing it. Outside of voice this is the best way to distinguish between the Screech and Saw-whet. Of course, it does not have tufts as does the Screech, but the Screech will keep the tufts sometimes close to the head and the head will appear perfectly round like the Saw-whet. No doubt we are overlooking this little owl around here in the winter time. In Ben's, under "Behavior", he says, "The one characteristic most prominent in the behavior of the Saw-whet is its tameness, stupidity or fearlessness; it can be approached most easily, even within a few feet, and has often even been caught in the hand, or under a hat, when carefully approached. Sometimes it shows marked curiosity, or sociability. He quotes from one observer that "their flight is quite unlike that of other owls, partaking more of the nature of the labored undulating flight of the small woodpeckers". Another says their flight is rapid for an owl, giving the bird a sprightly appearance not observed in others. This peculiar flight helps identify individuals encountered in the daytime. Another said the flight resembles that of a woodcock very closely; that it is essentially a woodland bird, oftener found in the dark recesses of coniferous woods than in more open growth of the deciduous forest.

** The owl that has created the most excitement is the Snowy Owl that appeared in Shreveport early in December, and was still there the first week of January. Bessie Cornelius contacted Horace Jeter, a well-known birder, who agreed to show her the owl. However, when they got to the place (this was the day after Christmas, Sunday), the owl could be seen only by scope, having flown from his usual perch. The owner of the property came out and told Jeter and Bessie that a couple from Houston had been there that morning, and, in spite of his request to stay back, had gone close enough to make the bird fly, and it had not returned. This unknown couple's thoughtlessness had angered the property owner, and prevented other birders from getting a close view that afternoon.

The owl has been seen by many, and, according to the Shreveport Times, usually spends its time sitting on piers or boatramps and staring back at a sea of binoculars! Jeter says that every four or five years, the birds fly south to the northern United States. It usually corresponds with the decline of the lemming, which is the primary prey of the snowy owl, though it also eats rabbits, muskrats, meadowlarks and ducks. That doesn't sound impossible when you remember it is 2 feet long, with a 5 foot wingspan. Quoting from the Times: "Besides food, the lemming is also used for courting purposes. Without one, a male owl doesn't stand a second glance. The male carries the lemming in its beak and flies over the female. Then he does a series of impressive aerial maneuvers. He lands in front of her as if modeling the latest plumage. If an area does not have enough lemmings for courtship it usually means the area is also not able to feed a growing family".

Horace Jeter says that if you come to Shreveport and contact him, he will be glad to show you the owl.

PLACES TO GO

** The W.E. Thompkins of Baytown have had, for seven years, Black-headed Grosbeaks coming to their feeder. This year they have four, the first one showing up about Thanksgiving. To me, this is the most fantastic facet of bird migration: that a bird can pinpoint a particular feeder to come back to each winter! The Thompkins live at 701 Scenic Dr. (turn right on Scenic off Garth Road, just past Gulf Coast Hospital), phone 422-9930. Mrs. Thompkins teaches school, please call in the evening and ask permission to walk in on their drive. Mrs. Thompkins says the males are very skittish, even a movement inside the house can make them fly. We walked down the short drive, stood by their camper, did not go into the back yard, and, within a minute, saw a male fly to the feeder!

** All three scoters are still being seen in the vicinity of Shorty's Longest Pier near High Island, plus two Oldsquaw, which were seen on the Bolivar Count and several times since. Also, the Burrowing Owl, first reported by Bessie Cornelius November 27, is still being seen at Gilchrist. Turn south on Johnson Street (one mile west of Rollover Pass), go to the beach, look in yard of 2nd house on right.

** A Harris Hawk was seen December 26 (and a couple times since then) just east of the eastern boundary of Ellington Air Force Base. Look for him between that point and Metro Airlines airport.

** House-and-Hahl Road in West Harris County is excellent right now all the way from Hwy 290 to Katy-Hockley Road, with many species of sparrow being seen, also Red-headed woodpeckers and Groove-billed Anis near the Cypress Creek crossing.

** Flocks of Lapland Longspurs are being seen on Clay Road, mostly just west of Barker-Cypress Road. Some have been seen by going north on Barker-Cypress (between Clay and the first turn) and looking left. A flock has been seen several times on Clay just east of Peek Road on the south side of Clay. This field ends at Peek Road, and if you walk east from this point along the shoulder of the road, you can "spish" up LeConte Sparrows. Tony Gallucci told us about this when we met him there the morning of the 3rd, and it didn't take us but a few minutes to get two up for long periods. Remember, when you look for the Longspurs, to look for a loose flock that will rise, fly, wheel, and when they turn will flash white bellies, then as they get close to the ground, will drop all at once. Shorebirds, and there are some out there, fly in tight flocks, and never very high as they wheel over a wet field, and blackbirds are much less disciplined in their flocks, and, of course, never flash the white.

** Look for Harris Sparrows near a gate on the west side of Katy-Hockley just north of Cypress Creek. Vesper, White-crowned, White-throated, Song and Fox have also been seen in this vicinity. And a short distance from there, on Jack Road, near a small stream, Field Sparrows and Henslow Sparrows have been seen.

(See Page 19 for more suggestions on where to find the birds)

HOUSTON CHRISTMAS COUNT - DECEMBER 18, 1976			175 SPECIES (Incl. 2 forms) - 120, 228 INDIVIDUALS										
TOTALS	SPECIES	Area Leaders:	Moore	Barnette	Gillette	Hargrove	Eubanks	Marrack	Curetton	Gordon	Dauphin	Nimmons	Duryea
		AREAS:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
21	Common Loon												
3	Red-throated Loon												
8	Horned Grebe						1	5				3	
75	Eared Grebe						15	6	4	6	4	19	25
46	Pied-billed Grebe						7	4	3	8	14	4	
600	White Pelican		17	25	6		37	126	147	8	25	40	175
2000	Double-crested Cormorant		49	1	10		175	6	83	156	81	350	1000
52	Olivaceous Cormorant						4	6	36	1	2	3	
79	Cormorant Sp.							79					
14	Anhinga							10		1			
188	Great Blue Heron		3	4	10	1	9	37	48	11	29	11	25
3	Green Heron								1		1		
17	Little Blue Heron								7		2		3
60	Cattle Egret			16	22	6	2	1		10			
6	Reddish Egret							6		13		12	50
329	Great Egret		5	27	17	1	37	110	19	3	38	4	15
125	Snowy Egret		21	25	11	1	6	12	14	3	14	4	11
47	Louisiana Heron			5	2	1	2	7	2	3	5	4	
208	Black-crowned Night Heron				2		40	2	29		127	6	2
25	Yellow-crowned Night Heron						25						
1	American Bittern												
20	White-faced Ibis		20										
3	White Ibis			3									
21	Roseate Spoonbill						7		5		2		7
220	Canada Goose			50		30	55	28	61				
9300	Snow Goose		380	3209	350	1035	350	1000	1650	400	722	400	
420	White-fronted Goose		3	78			250	89	27	91		140	
4150	Snow Goose (Blue Form)		95	1500	125		250	500	1400	30	149	200	
11	Mallard				4		4				1		2
29	Mottled Duck						2	2	3		3	7	15
599	Gadwall						5	434	36	2	3	4	115
243	Pintail						111	36	50	2	3	16	
32	Green-winged Teal							36	3	1	18	4	6
33	Blue-winged Teal							32	3	1	1	1	
28	American Wigeon							10					15
112	Northern Shoveler							19		2	51		
15	Wood Duck							9					
2	Ring-necked Duck							2					
300	Canvasback							300					

TOTALS	SPECIES	AREAS:										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
115	Common Goldeneye	-	-	-	-	9	1	-	-	-	5	11
1875	Lesser Scaup	-	-	-	-	250	1270	5	50	25	75	200
58	Bufflehead	-	-	-	-	2	22	3	13	-	165	6
217	Ruddy Duck	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	30	-	-	2
3	Red-breasted Merganser	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
100	Turkey Vulture	27	11	60	5	-	-	-	1	1	-	1
3	Black Vulture	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Sharp-shinned Hawk	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-
1	Cookper's Hawk	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	Accipiter sp.	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
109	Red-tailed Hawk	3	35	18	14	2	13	8	2	7	5	2
24	Red-shoudered Hawk	7	3	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	3	-
46	Marsh Hawk	4	16	4	5	-	3	4	1	1	7	1
2	Osprey	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	Peregrine Falcon	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
163	American Kestrel	6	40	10	4	4	66	8	5	13	7	-
1	Hawk sp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
45	Bobwhite	6	-	-	1	-	1	22	-	15	-	-
7	Clapper Rail	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	4	-
2	Virginia Rail	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	Common Gallinule	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
455	American Coot	-	1	4	-	1	320	-	38	2	40	-
2	Semipalmated Plover	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	Black-bellied Plover	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	-	2	2	2
716	Killdeer	25	25	130	41	21	58	65	48	216	37	50
17	American Woodcock	5	1	1	7	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
62	Common Snipe	1	-	61	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Long-billed Curlew	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
45	Spotted Sandpiper	-	-	1	-	4	1	3	16	9	9	2
59	Willet	-	-	-	-	6	7	5	1	21	4	15
4	Greater Yellowlegs	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	-
7	Lesser Yellowlegs	-	-	4	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	Yellowlegs sp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-
226	Least Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	100	-	-	19	11	115
21	Dunlin	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	19	-	1
57	Long-billed Dowitcher	-	-	-	-	-	-	57	-	-	-	-
302	Dowitcher sp.	-	-	50	-	48	4	-	-	-	-	200
3	Semipalmated Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
155	Western Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	5	50	100	-	-	-	-
22	Sanderling	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	15	6
16	American Avocet	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	-	-	-

TOTALS	SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
28	Short-billed Marsh Wren	5	-	-	3	-	1	5	2	4	8	-
543	Mockingbird	34	54	52	51	20	54	57	69	44	107	1
7	Gray Catbird	-	-	1	2	-	1	1	2	-	-	-
187	Brown Thrasher	46	13	4	10	30	23	32	7	11	11	-
7500	American Robin	3330	67	2000	251	100	350	512	339	50	520	-
3	Wood Thrush	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
98	Hermit Thrush	18	4	4	15	20	6	4	10	9	8	-
1	Swainson's Thrush	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
172	Eastern Bluebird	90	3	-	12	60	-	7	-	-	-	-
5	Thrush sp.	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
111	Blue-grey Gnatcatcher	11	2	5	13	13	16	12	7	20	12	-
29	Golden-crowned Kinglet	8	4	-	-	-	1	-	11	1	4	-
792	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	170	13	50	80	25	92	88	89	45	140	-
139	Water Pipit	-	-	62	-	5	1	6	2	40	25	-
2	Sprague's Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
960	Cedar Waxwing	125	80	65	30	40	145	95	85	27	270	-
338	Loggerhead Shrike	23	63	42	20	27	75	27	26	19	22	3
3292	Starling	116	977	16	1255	100	550	69	20	31	158	-
14	White-eyed Vireo	-	-	1	9	2	-	-	2	-	-	-
1	Yellow-throated Vireo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
14	Solitary Vireo	-	-	-	5	3	4	-	1	1	-	-
1	Black-and-white Warbler	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
88	Orange-crowned Warbler	19	3	2	-	25	2	2	10	6	19	-
4	Nashville Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
2642	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myr.) ⁴³⁵	131	131	141	105	200	291	265	192	82	800	-
3	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Aud.)	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
1	Black-throated Green Warbler	28	9	-	9	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
57	Pine Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
1	Kentucky Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
19	Common Yellowthroat	-	-	1	1	5	-	2	-	6	4	-
2	Wilson's Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
449	House Sparrow	72	46	50	81	50	6	7	61	50	26	-
122	Eastern Meadowlark	3	-	15	5	25	5	56	5	100	5	-
470	Meadowlark sp.	137	66	29	17	25	21	53	-	100	22	-
18400	Red-winged Blackbird	839	6500	1071	5000	3500	505	-	225	13	375	-
32	Rusty Blackbird	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	32	-
91	Brewer's Blackbird	-	-	1	3	50	27	-	-	-	8	-
233	Great-tailed Grackle	-	67	1	-	50	25	-	10	46	31	-
13800	Common Grackle	2170	40	15	5375	50	250	5765	155	10	25	-
2774	Brown-headed Cowbird	-	101	1	150	200	500	1450	1	206	155	10
32500	Blackbird sp.	2000	10000	2500	10000	-	1610	4000	725	260	1400	30

1976 HOUSTON CHRISTMAS COUNT by Paul W. Nimmons, Jr., Compiler

For the second year in a row, an all-time high number of birders (123) saw the second highest number of species (175, including two forms) ever seen on the Houston Christmas Count. The high number of species is surprising in view of the extra-cold November and December we have had. The high species count is attributable to the high number of observers.

Eight of the 11 areas in the count circle equaled or exceeded their species totals of last year. The other three areas were only off last year's totals by four birds.

Thirty-two species were seen exclusively in one area. Eight of these species had not been seen on any of the six preceding counts (1970-1975): Peregrine falcon, Black-legged kittiwake, Ash-throated flycatcher, Barn swallow, Fish crow, Black-throated green warbler, Kentucky warbler and Clay-colored sparrow. The other exclusives are shown on the above chart. The following five birds had only been seen once in the preceding six years: White-faced ibis (1975), White ibis (1970), Vermilion flycatcher (1975), Swainson's thrush (1971) and Yellow-throated vireo (1974). Other unusual birds for our count included Osprey, Gull-billed tern, Black-and-white warbler, Nashville warbler and Audubon's warbler. We saw every species that can reasonably be expected except Sora, Ruddy turnstone, Great horned owl, Palm warbler, Boat-tailed grackle and Henslow's sparrow (missed for the first time in seven years).

In addition to the unusual birds, 51 species were seen in their highest numbers for the seven Christmas Counts from 1970-1976: Red-throated loon, Horned grebe (previous high was 2), Olivaceous cormorant (previous high was 10), Anhinga (doubled previous high), Reddish egret (previously 2), all four Geese, Mallard, Gadwall, Common goldeneye (previously 46), Turkey vulture, Black vulture, Kestrel, Snipe, Long-billed dowitcher, Herring gull, Common tern, Groove-billed ani, Screech owl, Rufous Hummingbird, Common flicker, Pileated woodpecker, Red-bellied woodpecker, Yellow-bellied sapsucker, Downy woodpecker, House wren, Winter wren, Long-billed marsh wren, Short-billed marsh wren (previously 15), Wood thrush, Hermit thrush, Eastern bluebird (more than doubled the previous high), Ruby-crowned kinglet (almost doubled), Cedar waxwing, Loggerhead shrike, Starling, White-eyed vireo (previously 6), Myrtle warbler, Yellowthroat, Wilson's warbler, Black-headed grosbeak, Purple finch (previously 45), Savannah sparrow, Dark-eyed junco, Field sparrow, White-crowned sparrow, Fox sparrow, Swamp sparrow and song sparrow. Birds seen in unusually high, but not record numbers were Yellow-crowned night heron, Blue-winged teal, Least sandpiper, Western sandpiper, Tree swallow, Seaside sparrow and Vesper sparrow.

Some birds were seen in record low numbers for the seven Christmas Counts from 1970-1976: Northern shoveler (last year we saw 1,020), Ruddy duck (last year we saw 3,260), Cooper's hawk (last year 4), Tufted titmouse (last year 110), Caroline wren (high is 124), Sprague's pipit and Cardinal (high of 712 seen in 1974). It is interesting to note that the meteoric rise of the Cattle egret noted in last year's January Spoonbill has suffered a setback from 280 individuals last year to 60 this year.

The Houston Christmas Count was a rousing success. The count circle was adequately covered because of the large participant turnout and the number of parties into which area groups were subdivided. Hopefully we can do as well next year.

PARTICIPANTS IN HOUSTON CHRISTMAS COUNT: Jerry Baker, L.A.M. & Johnny Fay Barnette, J.C. Beaty, Joyce Brannon, Harry L. & Avis Brister, S.S. Brown, Richard & Rosalie Bruns, Chuck, Scot, & S zi Campbell, Dorothy J. Chandler, Mary Ann Chapman, George & Jane Clayton, Loyce Clemens, Marilyn Crane, Don Cunningham, Glenn, Penny, & Wesley Cureton, David & Jan Dauphin, Frankie Daves, Elizabeth Dear, Debbie Dekeyzer, Cissie Donaldson, Melba Drake, Barbara Duryea, Noel Ellis, Janet & Ted Eubanks, Jr., Mary & Ted Eubanks, Sr., Gladys Galbreath, Chris L. Garvie, Jack & Mary Gillette, Bill & Diane Goloby, Delton Goodin, Sarah Gordon, Johanna Grabbe, Susie Graham, Sharon Hackleman, Carol Hamilton, William G. Hand, Charles, Jim, & Linda Hargrove, Pat Hartigan, David Henderson, Margo & Oscar Hibler, Jr., Holly Hobart, Russell Hoverman, Ola Humphries, Dale Johnson, Margaret & T. Paul Jones, Helena Kimball, Marilyn Krog, Mark Kulstead, Tom Kusar, Kay Lewis, Cynthia Lupe, David Marrack, David Matson, Charlene & Jacqueline May, Joel & Sue McConnell, William Mealy, John Mitchell, Becky Moore, Mary Ann & Robert Moore, James Morgan, Robert Moulton, Fritz K. Neal, Paul & Phyllis Nimmons, Robert L. Norris, Norma Oates, Kathleen Orr, Ruth Owenby, Shawn & Ruby Pascost, Dorothy, Anne, Camille & Danielle Parmesan, Mary Ann Payne, Noel Pettingell, Richard Pratt, Nell Ray, Doris Roberson, Louise Rogers, Louise & Pat Sadler, Richard Sapp, Bob Selman, Gwen Smith, Linda Snyder, Albert Stock, John & Marilyn Stokes, Alfred Swarts, Mary L. Taylor, Mary Tigner, Nathan Veatch, Grey Verner, John & Linn Ward, Rick, Ward, Mary Ware, Alan Wenger, Josephine Wilkin, Bob & Edith Willman, Elfi Zdimal.

CLEARING HOUSE, December, 1976

How to read the C-H: Name of bird: (how many), date, location, observers.
 Abbreviations used: Texas City Dike - Dike; Warren Lake - Lake; Baytown Tunnel - Tunnel; W. Harris Co. - County; HL&P Cooling Ponds - Ponds; Shorty's Longest Pier - Pier.

Loon, Common: (n/c)4,OG; (1)4,Baytown, (15)20,Dike, (1)23,Ponds,D&JD.

Loon, Red-throated: (3)20,Dike,D&JD (see notes).

Grebe, Horned: (1)1,Ponds, (1)26,Lake,D&JD; (1)4,OG; (1)12,Tunnel,T&JE; (1)16,Lake, TBF&ER.

Grebe, Eared: (5)4,OG; (20)12,Tunnel,T&JE; (100+)23,25,Ponds,D&JD.

Gannet: (6)19,Freeport,TBF (see notes).

Cormorant, Olivaceous: (n/c)4,OG; (5)23,Ponds,D&JD; (2)26,Ponds,A.

Bittern, American: (1)13,Freeport Marsh,L&MB.

Ibis, White-faced: (1)4,OG; (4)10, (9)13, (28)31,Freeport Marsh,L&MB; (10)26,Ponds,A.

Ibis, White: (1)4,OG; (40)24,FM 562,D&JD.

Spoonbill, Roseate: (1)4,OG.

Goose, White-fronted: (10+)4,OG; (36,000)16,Lake,TBF&ER.

Goose, Snow: (125,000)31,County,TE&DD.

Goose, Ross': (4)16,Lake,TBF&ER (no details); (1)26,Ponds,A (see notes).

Mallard: (5)4,OG; (1000)24,Lake,TEⅅ (10 pr)yard,B&EW (see notes)

Teal, Cinnamon: (1)4,Mercury Dr.,GP&WC; (2)16,Mercury Dr.,TBF&ER; (4)28,Lake,C&SCa.

Redhead: (4)24,Barrow-White Road,D&JD; (20)29,Columbia Lakes,T&SC.

Duck, Ringed-neck: (10)29,Columbia Lakes,T&SC.

Canvasback: (100+)4,OG; (25+)23, (40+)25,Ponds,D&JD; (10)24,Lake, (10)31,Baytown,TEⅅ (30)26,Ponds,A.

Scaup, Greater: (2)23, (40)25,Ponds,D&JD; (2)24,Pier,G,P&WC; (1)31,Pier,TE&DD (See notes).

Goldeneye, Common: (6)4,Mercury Drive, (2)24,Dike,G,P&WC; (5)4,OG; (2)11,Rice Mill Pond,JM&BM; (1)18,Bryan Beach,TC; (50+)23,Ponds,D&JD; (4)26,Dike,C&SCa; (2)26,Ponds,A.

Bufflehead: (100+)4,OG; (4)16,Mercury Dr.,TBF&ER; (100+)23,Ponds,D&JD; (8 male)26,Ponds,A.

Oldsquaw: (2)31,Pier,TE&DD (see notes).

Scoter, White-winged: (5)22,High Island,D&JD (see notes); (1)26,Pier,P&MJ (see notes); (8)31,Pier,TE&DD (see notes)

Scoter, Surf: (50)17,Pier,C&N (see notes); (100+)22,High Island,D&JD (see notes); (5)24,Pier,G,P&WC (see notes); (4)26,Pier,P&MJ (see notes); (50)31,Pier,TE&DD (see notes).

SCOTER, BLACK: (50)17,Pier,C&N (see notes) (100+)22,Bolivar,D&JD (see notes); (12)24,Pier,G,P&WC (see notes); (9)26,Pier,P&MJ (see notes); (50)31,Pier,TE&DD (see note)

Merganser, Hooded: (6)4, (22)17,Mercury Dr.,G,P&WC; (8)16,Mercury Dr.,TBF&ER.

Merganser, Red-Breasted: (30)31,Bolivar,TE&DD.

Kite, White-tailed: (1)2,Ellington AFB,HH; (3)4,Bastrop Bayou,JM&BM; (1 imm)15,Gessne Road,T&JE; (1)24,yard,B&EW (see notes); (2)28,Katy,Texas, (2)29,Cinco Ranch,C&SCa.

Hawk, Sharp-shinned: (1)4,White Oak Bayou, G,P&WC; (1)4,OG; (1)24, (1)28,County,T&JE; (1)26,County,TEⅅ (2)26,Spring Creek Park,H&AB,EZ.

Hawk, Cooper's: (1)4,OG; (1)30,Orchard,Texas,L&MB (see notes)

Hawk, White-tailed: (1)18,Hoskins Mound,TC (no field notes).

Hawk, Rough-legged: (1)21,Clute,Texas,ME (see notes); (1)30,Wilcrest Road,P&MJ (previously reported).

Hawk, Ferruginous: (1)16,Lake,TBF&ER (previously reported); (1)27,Lake,M (previously reported).

Hawk, Harris: (1)26,Ellington AFB,P&MJ (see notes).

Eagle, Bald: (1)1,County,JMy; (1 adult, 1 imm)County,T&JE; (3)26,County,TEⅅ (1)26,County,T&SC; (2)27,Lake,M; (1)28,Lake,C&SCa.

Osprey: (1)Nov.11,29,NASA,EM; (1)11,Baytown,G,P&WC; (2)13,Freeport Marsh,L&MB (see notes).

Merlin: (1)22,W.Columbia,L&MB (see notes); (1)24,Stubblefield Lake,DMA (see notes).

PHEASANT, RINGED-NECK: (3 male, 1 female)31,E.Chambers Co.,TE&DD (previously reported)

Crane, Sandhill: (100+)20,W.Galveston,D&JD; (10)24,County,T&JE.

Rail, Virginia: (1)22,High Island,D&JD.

Jacana: (3 a, 6 imm)29,Maner Lake,T&SC.

Oystercatcher, American: (5)20,Bolivar,C&N.

Plover, Snowy: (1)20,Bolivar,C&N.

Woodcock, American: (1)2,3,4,White Oak Bayou,G,P&WC; (3)22,High Island,D&JD.

Knot, Red: (5)31,Bolivar,TE&DD.

Sandpiper, Purple: (2)19,Freeport,TBF (see notes); (1)21,Quintana Jetty,ME(see: with turnstones); (1)22,Quintana Jetty,G,P&WC (see notes).

Godwit, Marbled: (1)24,Gilchrist,G,P&WC.

Gull, Bonaparte's: (100+)10,Freeport Marsh,TC.

KITTIWAKE, BLACK-LEGGED: (3)19,Freeport,TBF (see notes); (1)20,Dike,D&JD (see notes).

- Tern, Common: (1)11, Cedar Bayou, G, P&WC.
 Tern, Sandwich: (2)30, Bolivar, TG.
 CUCKOO, YELLOW-BILLED: (1)Nov. 21, Freeport, EM (see notes)
 Ani, Groove-billed: (1)10, Freeport, TC; (6)12, County, C&SCa; (4)20, County, B.
 Owl, Great-horned: (1)12, 28, County, T&JE.
 Owl, Short-eared: (2)23, County, TG.
 Owl, Burrowing: (1)22, Gilchrist, D&JD (see notes)
 HUMMINGBIRD, BLACK-CHINNED: (1)all month, yard, GA (previously reported); (1)11-to date, yard, T&JE (see notes); (1)3, yard, H&AB (see notes).
 Hummingbird, Rufous: (1)11-15, yard, T&JE; (1)25-30, yard, GH; (1)31, yard, H&AB.
 Woodpecker, Red-headed: (2)imm Nov. 26, Cinco Ranch, G, P&WC; (5)26, County, D&JD.
 FLYCATCHER, ASH THROATED: (1)18, Hou. Christmas Count, GC, PC, Ja&CM (see notes)
 Flycatcher, Vermillion: (1)5, County, D&JD; (1)11, Big Slough, JM&BM; (1)24, County, T&JE.
 Swallow, Tree: (5)4, OG; (5)11, Beach City, G, P&WC.
 Swallow, Rough-winged: (10+)4, OG.
 NUTHATCH, WHITE-BREADED: (1)19, Clute, Freeport Christmas Count, L&MB (see notes).
 Nuthatch, Brown-headed: (2)16, Roberts Cem., TBF&ER; (2)24, (1)25, 26, yard, JM.
 Creeper, Brown: (1)4, Wallisville, JM&BM; (2)26, County, TE&DD.
 Wren, Winter: (1)19, Clute, Texas, L&MB; (1)26, (1)31, County, TE&DD.
 Wren, Bewick's: (1)23, Ponds, D&JD (see notes).
 Catbird, Gray: (1)5, Lake Jackson, TC.
 Thrush, Swainson's: (1)28, Cove, Old River Christmas Count, MJ (see notes)
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned: (2)16, Roberts Cem., TBF&ER; (4)24, Bear Creek Park, JM; (1)24, County, TE&JM.
 Pipit, Sprague's: (1)17, Anahuac NWR, C&N.
 Waxwing, Cedar: (10)15, yard, T&JE; (3)23, yard, Mary Bourgeois; (1)27-30, yard, GH.
 Vireo, White-eyed: (1)4, OG; (3)19, Clute, L&MB.
 Vireo, Yellow-throated: (1)26, County, TE&DD (see notes)
 Vireo, Solitary: (1)25, yard, JM.
 Warbler, Nashville: (1)26, yard, JM (see notes).
 WARBLER, BLACKBURNIAN: (1)3, Lake Jackson, SC (see notes).
 Warbler, Yellow-throated: (1)28, Cove, MJ; (1)28, Old River Christmas Count, JM.
 Warbler, Wilson's: (1)4, White Oak Bayou, G, P&WC; (1)4, Wallisville Road, JM&BM.
 Blackbird, Rusty: (10+)24, Bear Creek Park, JM.
 Tanager, Summer: (1)24, Stubblefield Lake, DMA (no field notes).
 Grosbeak, Black-headed: (1)4, Lake Jackson, SC (see notes).
 Bunting, Indigo: (1)4, Lake Jackson, SC.
 Finch, Purple: (13)21 Nov., Freeport, EM; (2)4, Lake Jackson, T&SC; (25)12, (25)31, County, T&JE, DD; (1)16, County, TBF&ER; (12)20, (2)23, White Oak Bayou, G, P&WC; (1-8)22, 27, 29, 30, 31, yard, H&AB; (1)26, Spring Creek Park, H&AB, EZ; (5)26, County, DD&TE.
 Siskin, Pine: (1)27, County, M.
 Towhee, Rufous-sided: (3)3, Lake Jackson, TC; (2)8, 12, 28, County, T&JE; (2)16, S. Mayde Cr., TBF&ER; (5)22, High l., (5+)26, County, D&JD, TE, (1-spotted)29, Cinco Ranch, C&SCa.
 Sparrow, LeConte's: (2)27, County, M.
 Sparrow, Henslow's: (1)26, County, TE&DD (see notes).
 Sparrow, Sharp-tailed: (1)4, OG; (2)22, Bolivar, D&JD.
 Sparrow, Lark: (1)27, County, M.
 Sparrow, Chipping: (50+)26, County, TE&DD.
 Sparrow, Clay-colored: (1)27, Eldridge Road, M (see notes)
 Sparrow, Field: (1)9, White Oak Bayou, G, P&WC; (1)27, County, M.
 Sparrow, Harris': (10)3, Cypress Creek, G, P&WC; (5)24, County, T&JE; (15+)26, County, TEⅅ (12)27, County, M.
 Sparrow, Fox: (1)4, OG; (9)16, S. Mayde Creek, TBF&ER; (1)22, High l., D&JD; (2)24, County, T&JE; (25+)26, County, (1)31, Bolivar, TEⅅ (1)27, County, M.
 Longspur, Lapland: (500)28, (700)31, County, T&JE&DD (see notes); (330)29, County, R (see notes); (100)30, County, P&MJ.

The 103 species listed here occur regularly and are fairly common to abundant in the UTC at this time of the year. They were reported by many observers, but not in unusual numbers or habitat during December: Pied-billed Grebe, White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant; Great Blue and Little Blue Herons, Cattle, Reddish, Great and Snowy Egrets, Louisiana Heron, Black-crowned Night heron, Canada and Snow Geese, Mottled Duck, Gadwall, Pintail, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Turkey and Black Vultures, Red-tailed, Red-shouldered and Marsh Hawks, American Kestrel, Bobwhite, King and Clapper Rails, American Coot, Killdeer, Black-bellied Plover, Common Snipe, Long-billed Curlew, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Dowitcher, sp., Western Sandpiper, Sanderling, American Avocet, Herring, Ring-billed and Laughing Gulls, Forster's, Royal and Caspian Terns, Black Skimmer, Rock Doves, White-winged and Mourning Doves, Inca Dove, Barn and Screech Owls, Belted Kingfisher, Common Flicker-Yel.Sh., Pileated and Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, Common Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, House and Carolina Wrens, Short-bill

ed Marsh Wren, Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, American Robin, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Bluebird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Water Pipit, Loggerheaded Shrike, Starling, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Pine Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, House Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Great-tailed and Common Grackles, Brown-headed Cowbird, Cardinal, American Goldfinch, Savannah, Seaside and Vesper Sparrows, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Juncos, Chipping, White-crowned, White-throated, Lincoln's, Swamp and Song Sparrows.

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS (46 + 1 field trip group): A - David Marrack, Mary Ann Condon of Seattle, Wash.; B - Jim & Betsy Massey & Dee Ross; OG - OG Field Trip to HL&P Cooling Ponds; M - Margaret Anderson and Paul & Margaret Jones; R - Wilmer, Margaret & Robert Anderson and Margaret Jones; L&MB - Larry and Martha Ballard; H&AB - Harry and Avis Brister; C&SCa - Chuck & Suzi Campbell; C&N - Mary Ann Chapman and Fritz Neal of Indianapolis, Ind.; T&SC - Tom & Sherry Collins; G,P&WC - Glenn, Penny and Wesley Cureton; D&JD - David & Jan Dauphin; ME - Mark Elwonger & Bobby Fredericks of Victoria, Texas; T&JE - Ted and Janet Eubanks; TBF - Trevor Ben Feltner; HH - Holly Hobart; GH - George Howe; P&MJ - Paul & Margaret Jones; JMy - Jim Massey; DMa - David Matson; Ja&CM - Jackie & Charlene May; EM - Eric McHenry; JM - Jim Morgan, BM - Bob Mculton; ER - Elaine Robinson; B&EW - Bob & Edith Willman; EZ - Elfi Zdimal.

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES for December, 1976

Red-throated Loon: Three birds seen in good light from 10 to 75 yards with 10x50 binocs and 15-60x teles. Pale gray, finely spotted back, white at front of neck and side of head, light gray at back of neck and top of head. Very thin upturned bill. Smaller than nearby Common Loons. --David Dauphin

Gannet: This bird is regular and is rated too rare on our checklist. --Ben Feltner

Ross' Goose: Small "white" goose in a large flock of Snows and Blues -- only about 2/3 size -- noticeably stubby neck and body with small head. Overhead about 200-300' in good light. 7x50 binoculars. Also, on Dec. 30 saw a similar small goose over yard at my home in Bellaire in a flock of 64 Snow/Blue geese overhead at about 600'. 7x50 binoculars. --David Marrack.

Mallard: 10 pair seen at 50' in our backyard on 12-25-76. Our four domesticated mallards had relatives drop in! They stayed for nearly a full day but left during the night. (An unusual Christmas visit! -C-H Editor) --Bob & Edith Willman

Greater Scaup: Scaup seen on the wing near High Island Pier; black head and neck; white sides; white stripe in wings extending into the primaries; bird easily discernable from the nearby Lesser Scaup by the extent of the wing stripe. --Ted Eubanks

Oldsquaw: 1 male and 1 female in winter plumage seen between High Island and Shorty's Longest Pier; birds located approximately 150 yards off shore, observed for 30 minutes with 20-60x scopes; Oldsquaws observed feeding on the water with Surf and Black Scoters; male - head, neck, scapulars, upper back white; distinct black patch on side of head; black breast; somewhat extended tail feathers; female - whitish head, neck, and sides; dark crown; dark upper back; light brownish breast; slight cheek mark. Although the field marks these two birds exhibited were not as the field guides illustrate (such as length of tail, contrast between colors, etc.), there was enough plumage distinction displayed to ascertain the sexes of these two birds. As to species confirmation: an Oldsquaw in any plumage certainly would stand out from a surrounding entourage of Scoters! --Ted Eubanks

White-winged Scoter: Eight birds seen in flight and feeding in the water between High Island and Shorty-s Pier; large, heavy-set ducks; all black bodies; subtle white eyespot on some birds; immaculate white speculum contrasting with the all black wing; only drakes observed; birds seen for 30 minutes, from 100 to 150 yards in good light with 20-60x scopes. --Ted Eubanks

same: Seen while walking on High Island Pier, five males flushed from below. Black bodies, large white wingpatch, small white spot at the eye. --David Dauphin

same: 1 male seemed all black (saw no white under the eye), large white wingpatch flashed as bird shifted in water. Was in flock of other Scoters (Surf and Black) about 150-200 yards offshore near Gulf Haven Pier. Observed for several minutes with 30x scope. --Margaret Jones

Surf Scoter: Birds were first spotted while we were driving down the beach between High Island and Shorty-s Longest Pier. They were swimming east in a raft with numbered 98 birds on our best count of both Surf and Black Scoters. All birds had typical scoter-

shaped heads. Males were not distinctly marked, but females were easily distinguished by dirty white cheek patch on Blacks and smaller white markings behind and in front of eye on Surfs. Birds seemed to be fairly evenly divided between Surf and Black Scoters. Observed for about 20 minutes with 10x40 binoculars and 20x and 40x scopes at distance of about 70 yards. --Mary Ann Chapman

Same: Large, black ducks with white at back of head and on forehead. No white seen on wings when flying. Bill had red and white on it. Females had lighter dirtier bodies, light face patches in two small spots and no white seen in wings while flying --David Dauphin

Same: All were females. Large dark brown ducks with two buffy spots on face. Heavy beak. No white in wings at rest or in flight. Rode waves. Often dived under water. Up to 30' with 30x telescope. --Wesley, Glenn Cureton, Jackie May

Same: 2 females had 2 white cheek patches, 2 males had head patches on front and back, long scooped nose profile. --Margaret Jones.

Same: 50 Surf Scoters seen at same location as described for White-winged Scoters; dark heavy-bodied ducks; male - all black body; thick, uniquely patterned (orange, black and white) bill, which was easily seen on three birds in the water; white areas on forehead and nape; female - sooty brown body; two white cheek patches; all dark wings; birds observed for thirty minutes with 20-60x scopes in good light from 100 to 150 yards. --Ted Eubanks.

SCOTER, BLACK: Saw hundreds of these all black ducks using 15-60x teles. between High Island and Gulf Haven Piers in the gulf. Mostly hens with large, light, dirty spot at side of head. No white seen on wings of any flushing birds. Hens not as dark as male birds. Fair lights. --David Dauphin

Same: All were females. Large dark brown ducks with buffy neck and face and dark cap. Rode waves in small groups. Often dived under water. Up to 30 yards with 30x telescope --Wesley, Glenn Cureton & Jackie May

Same: 4 males and possibly 5 females. Males all black, rode low in the water, orange-yellow nose occasionally seen in bright sunlight. Bill not so long or as "scooped" as on other nearby scoters. Females lighter, brownish. --Paul Jones

Same: 50 Black Scoters seen at same location as previously described scoters; Male - black, heavy-set duck; no visible face markings, no wing markings, yellow knob at base of bill visible on some birds; female - sooty brown body; dark cap, grayish face, no markings in the wings; birds observed for 30 minutes in good light with 20-60x scopes from 100 to 150 yards. --Ted Eubanks

White-tailed Kite: Seen in Pearland about 1/2 mile from our house at 1/4 to 1/2 mile in the air with 7x50 and 7x35 binoculars on 12/24/76. All white underneath, tail narrow, wings sharply pointed, black spots on front top of wings. --Bob Willman

Cooper's Hawk: Observed at a distance of about 18 yards standing on a telegraph pole; moving about, thrusting head forward and downward. Long yellow legs - long rounded tail - breast heavily streaked with brown and white, brown head, black-tipped beak, white tip on tail. We believe it to be an immature female, because of its size. Observed with 8x50 binoculars in sunny clear weather for about 3 minutes. --Larry Ballard

Rough-legged Hawk: Sitting on a fence post between Clute and Lake Jackson. Flushed the bird so we could see the tail pattern. Long tail was white with about 1" black terminal band, maybe a very narrow white band at bottom of black band. Long dark wings with white "wrist" markings. --Mark Elwonger

Harris Hawk: Small dark hawk seen sitting on limb of tree about 30 yards from the road. Very yellow beak, with dark tip, yellow eye with red inner spot. Breast all dark brown, under tail coverts white. Legs yellow with russet "pantaloon". Since bird was partially silhouetted we moved on past the location a little to get a better look at wings and could see the rich russet "shoulder" very well. --Paul Jones

Osprey: First Osprey at around 20 yards, the second at about 45 yards sitting on posts at west end of Freeport Marsh. Very large birds - white heads with broad dark patch through cheeks, white chest and tarsus. Observed for about 8 minutes in good light with 8x50 and 10x50 binoculars. --Larry Ballard

Merlin: Flying in front of us at a distance of 20'. Looked to be about 12 inches long, long pointed wings, brown with buff linings, barred tail, brown head, brown eye patch, no mustaches. --Larry Ballard

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE: As with the Gannet, this bird is regular and is rated too rare on our checklist. --T. Ben Feltner

Same: White at head, body and tail. Bill was black, black spot behind eye, dark "bridle" at back of head, black outer primaries, gray inner primaries with white tips, white-tipped gray secondaries. No "M" seen on back; white, slightly forked tail lined with black border. Black legs. Body length same as nearby and accompanying Laughing Gulls, but wingspan shorter. Seen about 2 minutes in good light at 10 yards with 10x50 binoculars. --David Dauphin

Sandpiper, Puuple: 2 seen down^{to} 20' with 8x40 binoculars. Slate gray plumage on head, back and tail. Outer tail feathers white. White underparts streaked with slate gray. White pip before the eye. Beak a little longer than head, black with orange-yellow base, somewhat thicker at base. Legs orange-yellow. Size: between sanderling and knot. Chunky bird. Sixth time I've seen it in this area. --T. Ben Feltner

Same: Plump, dusky gray-brown shorebird. Head uniformly colored except for indistinct white spot on front of eye. Throat not whitish as in some books. Wing coverts and back feathers edged in gray, giving a scaly appearance. Whitish breast mottled on edges, flanks faintly streaked. Undertail coverts white, as well as outer edge of the tail feathers. In flight showed white wing stripes and white rump with vertical black stripes. Legs yellow. Beak slightly downturned, dark in color but orange at base. White eye ring. Smaller than nearby turnstones, slightly larger than sanderlings. Probed crevices in surface of granite boulders. Cloudy, windy, 30', 30x telescope. --Wesley Cureton

CUCKOO, YELLOW-BILLED: The cuckoo and the finches were seen by all members of the Audubon field trip on Nov. 21. The cuckoo may be the latest sighting ever here. It perched 20' above the party members and obligingly sat there for 10-15 minutes. All field marks were clearly visible, including the yellow lower mandible and large white spots under the long cuckoo tail. --Elric McHenry

Groove-billed Ani: Yesterday on the roadside just before you turn left to go toward the salt dome near Warren Ranch, Dee Ross, Jim Massey and myself observed 4 Groove-billed Anis for about 15 minutes. The two adults were seen first a few feet apart in the yaupon hedgerow. They finally flew down on the fence behind the hedge where they say side by side. We noted their grooved beaks, long full tails and black eyes and feet. Then we eased our car down the road within ten feet of the two young ones. The young has some brown "hair" about the face and some purple brown primaries. The tails of these two young birds consisted of only two long feathers and sproutings of shorter tail feathers. The wings of one bird were not the same size as we could easily see while he was trying to dry out the wings. After some time the young birds flew low and alighted near the adults. --Betsy Massey

Burrowing Owl: Small, spotty, tuftless, sandy-colored, long-legged bird seen for 5 minutes at 30' in fair light with 10x50 binocs. When bird flushed, Kestrel hit it and owl was lost for a few minutes, then located again on the ground. When first seen it was perched on a fence post. --David Dauphin

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD: Immature male: Gorget was in process of developing, extending from side only about midway of throat. However, when sunlight hit it, purplish iridescence was clearly visible. --Avis Brister

Same: Immature male observed at home feeder first on 12/11; green crown, back and base of tail, although the crown is a much flatter, darker green; white breast and belly; sides a flat mottled green; limited gorget spot in the jugulum region, which displays a deep iridescent purple in the proper light; tail feathers basically black, with outer retrices tipped in white. Black-chin arrives at feeder at approximately 7:10 AM every morning, then visits feeder sporadically throughout the day; often sits at his favorite perch near the feeder and hawks insects (primarily white flies). --Ted Eubanks.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER: Seen on the Houston Christmas Count in knee-high grass broken by low shrubs and thickets. First appeared out of grass perched approximately 2' from ground. Flew from shrub to shrub and came to rest in a dead tree about 10' from the ground. Bird had all black beak; white throat showing definite contrast with brown head; bright rufous tail; yellow belly, sometimes very pale, depending on lighting. This bird was being harassed by an Eastern Phoebe that obligingly hovered beak-to-beak in front of the flycatcher, making size comparison easy. The Myiarchus was only slightly larger than the phoebe. 20' with 10x50 binoculars. Also seen by Penny Cureton, Jackie and Charlene May. --Glenn Cureton

WHITE-BREADED NUTHATCH: Seen for two minutes in wooded area near Brazoswood High School at Clute. About 15' up in a tree. Upside down on bottom of large limb, walk-

ing downward head first. Elongated body, straight bill, black crown, white face and throat, chest white extending upward near the nape. Blackish gray nape and back, touch of white near tip of tail. Light fair, raining. Observed with 8x50 and 10x50 binoculars. Bird appeared to be slightly longer than nearby chickadees. --Larry Ballard.

Swainson's Thrush: Seen in Cove on Old River Christmas Count, distance 10-12', light good. Brown Thrush, lightly spotted on breast, buffy face and distinct buffy eyering. 7x35 binoculars (he was so close, really didn't need them!). --Margaret Jones

Bewick's Wren: White at throat and body, white eye stripe. Brown on unstreamed back and on wings. Tail was long and gray-brown with white on outer tail feathers and at corners. Moved tail from side to side. Saw bird at 5 feet for 5 minutes while it perched on wire at eye level. --David Dauphin

Yellow-throated Vireo: Seen at 15' for 2 minutes in good light. Yellow spectacles, yellow at throat and chest, white below. Olive above. White wingbars. No streaks on breast. Vireo bill. --David Dauphin

Nashville Warbler: Bright yellow throat, chest and belly. Yellow undertail coverts. Gray head with full white eye ring. Olive back and wings. No wingbars. Seen feeding in water oak tree at 30' with 8x40 binoculars for 10 seconds. --Jim Morgan

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER: Dark streak through eye, light streak above, very heavily streaked on side, two white wingbars, white tail spots, buffy breast with suggestion of orange in good light. Observed for three minutes in good light at 50' with 7x35 binocs. --Sherry Collins

Black-headed Grosbeak: Head strongly marked with dark and light stripes. Bold white stripe through eye. One wingbar. Thick heavy grosbeak bill. Breast was warm orange brown. I observed no breast streaking at all but light was not good and faint streaking may not have shown. Was sitting next to a female Cardinal and was slightly smaller. Seen medium and high in tall trees and then low in tall weeds at 5:30 PM from 10-50' for 5 minutes in poor light. --Sherry Collins

Henslow's Sparrow: Trying to find a LeConte's in the fence row on Jack Road Ted and I flushed this sparrow. Saw bird two minutes in excellent light from 10 to 30'. Large-headed, short-tailed, heavy billed. Olive, flat head with stripes. Brown back with faint stripes, rufous wings. Light breast had fine short striping. --David Dauphin

Clay-colored Sparrow: Seen on House-and-Hahl.Road in a grassy field. Flew to a log snag laying on the ground about 10-12 yards from observation point, and perched there for 1 or 2 minutes in plain view in good light. A long slender sparrow, very light colored all over. Back was streaked with fine black lines up into neck. A white "collar" extended around neck and almost encircled nape. Gray triangle on face noted. Tail was longish and dark. Lack of white on sides of tail was noted both while perched and in flight (this would eliminate possibility of it being a Vesper Sparrow). Other sparrows nearby were Vesper, Savannah, White-throated and LeConte's. Seen by Margaret Anderson, Paul and Margaret Jones. --Paul Jones

Lapland Longspur: Bunting sized, brownish birds; white undersides, with black streakings on sides in some individuals; black mottling in the jugulum region; brown, notched tail with white outer retrices; dark underside of tail contrasts with white crissum and belly; "half-moon" wing shape, with much rounded leading edge of wing. Vocalization: birds silent while feeding on the ground, on the wing the flock constantly vocalized a high-pitched, tonal rattle; somewhat like that of a meadowlark, although higher in pitch and more musical; a sequence of rattles would often end with a distinctive "tew", descending in pitch. The longspurs were located on Barker-Cypress Road, approximately .6 miles north of Clay Road, in a rice field covered with 6 to 8 inches of stubble; another flock was located on Clay Road near the intersection with Peek Road. These longspurs often flew in an undulating manner into a strong north wind, only inches above the rice stubble. Birds observed in good light, from as close as 10' with 20x scope and 10x50 binoculars. --Ted Eubanks

(These flocks of longspurs have been observed in the same general vicinity for several days by many observers. --C-H Ed.)

WINTER OBSERVATIONS by David Marrack

Prior to the miserably cold Thanksgiving weekend (Nov. 27) Buteos and Marsh Hawks were relatively few on the open land south of Stafford-Richmond. After it, their numbers had built up. Even so they seemed fewer than on some recent years in this area. They were earlier than usual.

The Yellow-rumped Warblers appeared in large numbers in my Bellaire yard after that 'blue' weekend, fully 2-3 weeks earlier than usual, and they have dispersed elsewhere now.

In contrast with the above species the early cold wet weather seems to have had little effect on the "Blackbird gatherings" in the yard. Presumably the chemistry for the gregarious character of cowbirds, grackles, and redwings is more dependent on another factor such as length of day. My "handouts" brought quite a few stragglers into the yard as usual but no flocks. Food lay around with Jays, cardinals and squirrels! making off with some. Not until 20 Dec., about the usual date, did a real blackbird flock come in some 60 strong. They came late afternoon first, then for breakfast gatherings as well and noon too. I suspect there are multiple flocks or different circuits.

An immature Red-tailed Hawk (female?) has been a regular visitor through the last 2 weeks of December. I'm tolerated behind glass or on the patio if I'm still. Elsewhere I'm incompatible. The smaller dog seems tolerated but not the German Shepherd. My attempts to provoke a response to a mouse have failed. Apparently a white mouse is viewed with disbelief!

SOME "PLACES TO GO" SUGGESTIONS from Tony Gallucci

People are always looking for good places to find some uncommon to common (but local) birds, either to show friends or out-of-state birders, etc., or to add to their life or year lists what I call "frustration birds" (birds which are there in good numbers, but never when you are around). Following are some places in West Harris County for some of these birds:

First of all at Bear Creek Park, everyday I have been there this winter I have found a flock of 30-70 Rusty Blackbirds. They are always on the ground in an open area along the main road paralleling the golf course and usually they are in or near the playground. Also, Jim Morgan told me that the place to find Golden-crowned Kinglets was in the oaks in the play-ground. I went there on Jan. 3 and found 9 Kinglets, 8 of them Golden-crowned. This is also an easy spot to find Pileated Woodpeckers.

Red-headed Woodpeckers can almost almost always be found in the oaks and elms, west of the road and just south of the bridge where House-and-Hahl Road crosses Cypress Creek. I have twice recently seen Cooper's Hawks here as well as twice seeing one on Clay Road in trees behind the house just west of Barker-Cypress Road. Groove-billed Anis are most commonly seen on Cypress Creek where it crosses Katy-Hockley Road or House-and-Hahl. At the corner of Katy-Hockley Cutoff Road and 529 is a small mud-flat pond. You have to stand on your car to see in (forget about permission to go in, I tried, and got a rude reply). I have regularly seen Roseate Spoonbills here, and both Ibis in spring. There is also a roost here of both Night Herons.

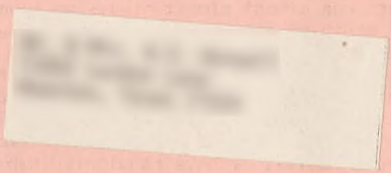
If you go to Warren Lake, Look in the cove on the southwest end of the lake where it comes closest to the fence. The is the spot to see Cinnamon Teal.

GOOD BIRDING!

Jan 77

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