



(N.P.)  
(PRONUNCIATIONS)

# THE SPOONBILL

Volume II Number 4  
OCTOBER 1953

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\* Birding cannot be called "an escape \*  
\* from reality" for birds are, perhaps, \*  
\* the most eloquent expression of \*  
\* reality . . . - R. T. Peterson \*  
\* "Birds Over America" (Paraphrased). \*  
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<u>SCHEDULED:</u>	October 16th	Elementary Bird Study Class	7:30 PM
	October 21st	Program	7:30 PM
	October 25th	O. G. Field Trip	7:30 AM
	October 30th	Elementary Bird Study Class	7:30 PM

Of noteworthy significance to all bird watchers and conservationists is the great crusade currently being waged by the Nation's press in behalf of the near-extinct Whooping Crane. Newspaper editors (prompted by the Audubon Society and Fish and Wildlife Service) all along the migration route of these magnificent birds are doing all they can to impress upon the public the importance of allowing the 21 remaining Cranes to return to their wintering grounds at Aransas Refuge unmolested. Last year at least two of the birds died of gunshot wounds. If the flock shows an increase this Fall, we can thank the power of the Press for its contribution to a cause that involves far more than the salvation of one of Nature's life-forms. . . (See Robert P. Allen's reports in Texas Game and Fish, September Issue, and the Audubon Magazine, for September-October.)

O. G. PROGRAM. This month's program will consist chiefly of a display of nests of birds commonly found in Texas. Brief discussions of the nests will be made by members of the Group. Outstanding nests to be displayed will include those of the Verdin, Hummingbird, Vireo, and Oriole. The meeting will be held at the Julia Ideson Library, Wednesday, October 21st. Visitors are cordially invited to this meeting.

O. G. FIELD TRIP FOR OCTOBER. All of you who received the September Supplement to the Spoonbill containing Mr. McKay's life list report can readily see why we have scheduled this trip to the Cove Area in N.W. Chambers County. The wealth of bird life to be found in this relatively small area offers an excellent opportunity to those fortunate enough to go to add new "life birds" to their lists. MEETING PLACE is at the corner of Cullen Blvd. just off the Freeway, adjacent to the Buffalo Stadium Parking lot. Beginners and visitors are especially invited on this full day trip. Bring a picnic lunch.

REPORT OF FIELD TRIP ON SEPT. 13th. This outing was organized primarily for the purpose of counting Spoonbill nests on the recently discovered rookery near Morgan's Point. Two minor "catastrophes" momentarily marred an otherwise highly successful venture. The first of these "incidents" took the form of a flat tire on Pettingell's car at the La Porte ferry landing. (Last year Messrs. Heiser and Pettingell had a flat at the Baytown ferry landing -- maybe the new tunnel will break the jinx!) Four minutes later (many hands, etc..) we were on our way again. On Hog Island at the south end of the Tabbs Bay bridge we stopped to catch brief glimpses of the Seaside Sparrows to be found there all the year round. A few more birding stops and then we set out for the island in two boats. We counted the nests, - thrashing 7-abreast formation thru the marsh elder thicket. Despite the combined assaults of heat, mosquitoes and brambles a successful count was obtained, as follows:

	<u>Large Island</u>	<u>Small Island</u>	
	Actual	Min. Est. Nest	
	Nest Count	Count	<u>Totals</u>
Roseate Spoonbill . . . . .	40	4	44
American Egret/Black-Cr. Night Heron	433	43	476
Snowy Egret/Louisiana Heron	742	74	816
	<u>1215</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>1336</u>



It was on the way back to the boat landing on the island that the second of the aforementioned catastrophes occurred. One of our most Ardent birders and Nest Counters tangled with an angry horde of hornets which almost ruined the END of her trip. . . After a most enjoyable picnic lunch the group decided to take a short birding trip along the Tri-City Beach Road near Cedar Bayou. This produced one big find which was at first thought to be, 1) a Kingfisher; 2) a Downy Woodpecker; 3) a Phoebe. It turned out to be an Olive-sided Flycatcher! (Editor's note: Said Ed. once mistook a Say's Phoebe near Katy for a Shrike!) A second bird was later seen along Evergreen Pelly Road. All in all, the trip was a grand success. Armand Yramategui and your Ed. owe the success of the trip to these willing workers: Betty Crowley, Carrie Holcomb, Mack Ramsey, Josiephine Wilkin, and Ella Wolfer.

#### PROJECT PROGRESS.

Elementary Bird Classes. Two classes have been held to date, one on the 18th of September at the Central Library, attended by 20 persons, the second class was held October 2nd at the Museum of Natural History, with 31 persons attending. Our appreciation goes to Mr. Vines and the Museum for the use of the Museum facilities. Moving pictures as well as slides were presented to the group and we again urge all members to invite any interested individuals to the next class which will be at the Museum on October 16th, at 7:30 PM.

The first Elementary Bird Study field trip held September 25th at Hermann Park was a very successful one. Wood Pewees were abundant, and one in particular seemed to follow the group about, sometimes flycatching within ten feet of the group. It picked up one insect from the ground less than a yard from our feet. Also observed were Gnatcatchers, Black-throated Green Warbler, Crested Flycatcher, Brown Thrasher, and the usual assortment of Woodpeckers, Titmice, and Chickadees. Probably the first Ruby-crowned Kinglet of the Winter season was seen on this trip.

Bird Banding Project. A chimney Swift trap and cage were made and 218 Swifts were banded on October 4th, by permission of the University of Texas Dental College. The trap which was made to Fish and Wildlife specifications excellently performed its function and we hope Club members will look around, about 6 PM every evening, for Swifts so that we may expand our banding project. Please call Mrs. Massingill if you find 200 or more Swifts going into an accessible chimney. . . Appreciation for all the assistance received goes to Frank Watson, J. H. Tabony, Lawrence and Charles Tabony, David Watson, Steve Williams, Billy Green, Armand Yramategui, and C. E. Buehner who furnished the bands.

"Strictly for the Birds". After permission was obtained from American Magazine and John Kieran, author, the article was copied and mimeographed for distribution to all members and persons desiring them. After reading the article, if you have no further need for it, please pass it on to someone who might be interested. Thanks to Josiephine Wilkin and Nance Cunningham.

Slides for Illustrated Lectures. Permission was obtained from the University of Minnesota to reproduce the paintings in their book "Portrait of the Birds" in a Kodachrome slide set to be used in nature and bird study lectures. Already these slides have been put to use in the Elementary Bird Study Classes.

DID YOU KNOW . . . That the area of the highest bird density is <sup>THE</sup> a 17-acre <sup>Three</sup> Arch Rocks Reservation in Oregon with over 22,000 pairs of Murres per acre -- about one bird per square foot! (Peterson's Birds Over America, p. 69-70) . . . That the ears of the Woodcock are located in front of the eyes. . . And, that the Redcockaded Woodpecker excavates its nest cavity in the living pine tree, returning to the same tree year after year? (The last two items, - Texas Game and Fish, March, 1953.)

#### FOR YOUR INFORMATION.

Common names of birds most often mispronounced. Since the word species is so often misunderstood we had better clarify it first. "Species" means a kind or variety (e.g. the Kingbird and Wood Pewee are species of the Flycatcher family) whether singular or plural. However, when used in the singular the correct pronunciation is "spee'-shiz" while in the plural it is "spee'-sheez". Here then are those most commonly mispronounced bird names with the correct, preferred (Merriam Webster) pronunciation:

Ani (Ah'-nee) . . . not "Ann-ee"

Avocet - accent on the first syllable . . . not the second.

Bachman's Sparrow/Warbler (Bock'-man's) . . . not "Batch-man's"

Bewick's Wren (Bew'-icks) . . . not "Bee-wicks".

Egret (Ig'-ret) . . . not "Ee-gret"; - also pronounced (egg'-ret).



Merganser -- accent second syllable, not first.

Pileated Woodpecker (pie'-lee-ate-ed) ... not "pie-lee'-tid";  
also pronounced (pill'-ee-ate-ed).

Plover (pluv'-or) -- like "lover"; also pronounced like "over".

Towhee (Tow'-hee) -- like "tow" in "towel". Alternate (toe'-hee).

Tule Goose/Wren (too'-lay) ... not "tool", or "too-lee". (Note: These are West Coast sub-species of the White-fronted Goose and Marsh Wren, respectively.)

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Birds and Music. We all know of many songs written around birds (e.g., "Listen to the Mockingbird", "Flamingo", "Bye Bye Blackbird", "Sparrow in the Tree-top", etc.) but a refreshingly new approach in the field of recorded music is that in the Frank Chacksfield recording of "Ebb Tide" (London 1358), composed (and also recorded) by the eminent harpist, Robert Maxwell. This record is now one of the Nation's top ten songs. Why? Simply because Chacksfield has skillfully blended the actual sounds of pounding surf and the mewling of gulls with the opening and closing bars of the song so effectively that the listener receives a vivid mental picture of the seashore everytime he hears the recording. A new dimension has been added to the world of music. Let us hope there will be more of these "3-D" musical arrangements in the not-too-distant future.

#### CLEARING HOUSE.

DOUBLE SCOOP!! (Frank Watson, please note!)

1. Exclusive Report from Mrs. Edna Miner on her recent vacation out West. (Editors note: This is copywrited feature appearing in no other publication except by express permission from the Editor of this publication. ... Another Spoonbill first!) "On the Nature Trail Above the Carlsbad Caverns, from the top of a Yucca flower stalk, came the song of the Black-throated Desert Sparrow, with two clear opening notes followed by a fine trill in a different pitch. In Montrose, Colorado, a family of Magpies provided noisy and picturesque entertainment in the orchard on my sister's ranch. One afternoon they were frightened away from a hen's nest where it was found that all the chicken eggs broken and partly devoured, even to the artificial nest egg. ... The Pine Grosbeaks nest on Grand Mesa. So unafraid and slow are they in their movement, as if waiting for all in our party to see them. .... In Denver.... In the park we watched Violet-green Swallows carry nesting material to a louver in a barn. But, I liked the Swallows best as we looked down on them from the rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River while they flitted from one canyon wall to the other. Then the color that gives them their name flashed like a jewel and the white patches that almost meet at the base of the tail glistened in the sun. The only Roadrunner of the trip was seen in Utah. In the Black Mills of Eastern Wyoming, the White-winged Junco, largely restricted to that area, was new to me."

2. Exclusive report from Lawrence Tabony on his recent vacation in Colorado. "August 31st. Howdy! The panhandle is sure barren of any new birds. Went up Capulin Mtn. in New Mexico about noon and walked within reaching distance of a number of Black-capped Chickadees and nondescript Wrens. Left about 4 o'clock -- supertime for Jays. Flocks and flocks of Jays flew about 5 feet over the car; included in these flocks were Piñon Jays, one flock of Arizona Jays, and a couple of Stellar's Jays. Went thru Raton Pass and saw my first Magpie as big as a crow. These shiny blue-black and white birds are beautiful. One flock of Magpies was so large that the tree they flew into appeared to collapse. Wednesday, Sept. 2nd, went thru Rocky Mtn. National Park and found that Mountain Chickadees were plentiful where we ate our lunch. We came within three feet of four Richardson's Grouse (a sub-species of the Dusky Grouse) and captured them on film with the two-power telephoto lens on my new 35mm Argus-3C. I also took a picture of a Clark's Nutcracker from about 6 feet, as they were all very tame. I also saw a tailless rodent called the Pika. The northern Phalaropes that we saw were easily distinguished as Phalaropes by their characteristic of spinning around and around when in the water. ~~It was~~ a total of 94 species on my trip." <sup>SAW</sup>

Vacation Report from Josiephine Wilkin. "I left Aug. 22 for a 13-day camping trip with 13 Senior Scouts and 3 adults to visit the wonder spot of Texas, Big Bend National Park. We hiked the 3 main trails, and did lots of driving, but I have a feeling that I barely touched the wonders to be seen and enjoyed in this rugged and exciting park. This was not a birding trip so I am left with a strong desire to return with some people who share my interest in birds. While on the trip I added 8 "lifera" including Says Phoebe, Ariz. Jay, Broadtailed Humming bird, White-throated Swift, Golden Eagle, Lark Bunting, Canon Towhee, and the Poor-Will (H). Total species: 72.

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Luta Buchanan, still recovering from her Western Tanager sighting (see Sept. Spoonbill), reports that an immature Virginia Rail (confirmed by Frank Watson) flew into the Science Room of the Jefferson Davis High School at 1201 Quitman early in the morning on Sept. 16th. Even in ideal Rail habitat the birds are most difficult to spot, so when one flies into a school near the downtown area of Houston it's almost like seeing a great Blue Heron flying down Fifth Avenue in New York City! (Editor's note: Fantastic as it may seem, Roger Tory Peterson was actually a witness to this oddity, which he describes on page 109 in his "Birds Over America!") /last

ABOUT THE NEXT ISSUE.

We will have further details about our November Treatise of Birds Program. A special Supplement containing specifications for building bird houses will be included with the November Spoonbill. Non-members of the Ornithology Group will be able to obtain copies upon request.

REMINDERS.

All who are interested in making a week-end excursion of the Aransas Refuge trip in November, please contact Carrie Holcomb by phone at Li-4985 or by mail at 1008 Missouri, Houston 6, Texas, for reservations and further information.

Remember to write to your Councilman asking that the Sheldon Reservoir area be restricted against hunting. Restriction of hunting in this area is vital to the safety of bird watchers and the conservation of bird life.

Mrs. Massingill will call members regarding any impromptu field trips or any meeting not published in the Spoonbill.

Please be sure to refer to your Spoonbill for scheduled dates of meetings and programs, as well as field trips.

For your 1953-54 membership in the Ornithology Group, please send \$1.00 to Betty Crowley, Secty. & Treas. - 4809 Fannin, Houston, Texas.

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Noel Pettingell, Editor  
1814 Beary Street  
Houston 4, Texas  
~~Sept~~  
October 9, 1953.

