



The Spoonbill

A Publication of the Ornithology Group
Of the Houston Outdoor Nature Club

January 2002

February Program

BOOMTIMES: ATTWATER'S PRAIRIE CHICKENS

The February program will feature efforts to preserve the endangered Attwater's prairie chicken. Kevin Mannie, Land Steward at the Texas City Nature Conservancy Reserve, and Bill Moore, Volunteer Coordinator, will talk about programs at the Reserve to restore and manage the coastal tallgrass prairie and wetland habitats.

Kevin Mannie has a BS in Biology/Environmental Management from South Dakota State University and an MS from Indiana University in Environmental Science/Water Resources. Before coming to the Texas City Reserve, he worked at White Sands Missile Range in wildlife management and assessment of habitat for the Aplomado Falcon, and with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish working in upland game management for quail, pheasant, blue grouse, lesser prairie chicken, squirrel and wild turkey.

Bill Moore has a BSChE from Drexel University. He has

worked for 20 years in engineering and management positions in the chemical industry, and for 15 years in engineering and management positions in the construction

and nuclear power industries. His work at the Texas City Prairie Preserve involves coordination of volunteer and community outreach, as well as education, construction and oil/gas activities.

7:00 p.m.

**Monday, February 4,
2002**

**Bayland Community
Center**

6400 Bissonnet

Learning Corner: 6:30 p.m.

SPARROWS

David Bradford will continue his series on sparrow identification. Bring your field guide.

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About the Ornithology Group

The Ornithology Group (OG) is a member of the Outdoor Nature Club (ONC), a non-profit organization dedicated to greater knowledge about the environment and wildlife of the Upper Texas Coast. The OG is a club of individuals interested in all aspects of birding, including bird identification, listing bird sightings, competing in birding events and preserving bird habitat. Some members study bird behavior, biology, distribution and migration, while others just enjoy watching birds. The organization is designed to accommodate these diverse birding interests. Monthly meetings and field trips provide an opportunity to interact with and learn from experts in local and international birding.

Contacts:

Chair	Skip Almoncy	713-524-4285
Treasurer	Patsy Lawrence	713-661-8954
Secretary	Margret Simmons	713-776-2511
Clhouse	David Sarkozi	713-520-5906
SB Editor	M.P. Haddican	281-589-0005

***For membership information,
See the back cover***

Minutes of the December Meeting Margret Simmons

Learning Corner: David Bradford talked about sparrows found in grassy fields.

Chairman Skip Almoncy conducted the meeting.

Bird Sightings: Peregrain Falcon, Golden Eagle, 2 Couch's Kingbirds, Northern Goshawk, Trumpeter Swan, 7 Eurasian Collared Doves, Calliope, Broad-tailed, Black-chinned and Rufous Hummingbirds, Cooper's Hawk, Osprey, Great-horned Owl.

Monthly Field Trips: David Bradford will lead trips to West Harris County on Jan. 12 and 13. The February field trip will be to Huntsville State Park on Feb. 16 or 17. The two trips on Feb. 26 and Mar. 30 to the Texas City Nature Conservancy Preserve are full; another trip has been scheduled for Apr. 9 with a sign-up sheet available.

Quarterly Field Trip: A trip to the Rio

Grande Valley will be Feb. 15-17 led by David Sarkozi. The plan is to bird Bentsen, Anzalduas and Santa Ana on Saturday and the upper Valley including Chapeno, Salineno, Falcon Lake and Zapata on Sunday. Contact the McAllen Microtel Motel at 956-630-2727 for lodging in the block of rooms for Sarkosi.

Summer Field Trips: A trip to Costa Rica will be led by David Sarkozi June 8-15. A trip to the Davis Mountains will be led by David Poteet June 5-9.

Membership: We're having a membership drive to try to recruit more members. Pat Pease gave a clarification of the dues of the ONC and OG, especially for two or more members of one family. Skip requested help from anyone with graphic art capabilities to help develop a tri-fold brochure for the OG.

Programs: If anyone has suggestions for programs for next year, contact Skip. One program will be devoted to showing bird slides taken by members and volunteers are requested.

Library: Bill Saulmon announced that anyone can check books out of the library. He's trying to get a list of the books available listed on the OG web site.

Other topics: Memorial Park Golf Course expansion seems to be in a holding pattern waiting for committee assignments by City Council and we'll try to stay informed. Any contributions to the OG are encouraged and greatly appreciated. The ONC will have a meeting on the Katy Prairie with an associated field trip, and a clean-up day at the Little Thicket Sanctuary. Mavid Marrack announced that there's still time to comment on the Bayport Terminal to the Corps of Engineers. Bill Godley announced upcoming bird-banding and walks at Brazos Bend State Park.

Program: David Bradford presented a very interesting program on the Birds of Southeast Arizona.

Item for the Spoonbill?

Send to Mary Pat Haddican by the 10th of the month

*mphdd@worldnet.att.net
281-589-0005*

Chairman's Message

This month's message will be a collection of various items that are on my mind. First, I want to thank Ken and Louise Martin for a generous contribution to the OG's general operating fund. This form of direct contribution is another way that members can help the OG meet the goals of providing interesting programs, varied field trips and information via the Spoonbill. Thanks again to Ken and Louise.

The OG board is beginning to plan next fall and winter's programs and activities. We welcome any ideas about programs, field trips or activities that you might like to do. Just as important, we would like to know about any things you do not want us to do.

The planning for our summer field trips is complete. The Costa Rica trip still has some openings, but the Davis Mountain trip has filled up. There are still openings for the Rio Grande Valley trip scheduled for February 15-17. Contact Davis Sarkozi (713-520-5906/david@sarkozi.net) or me (713-524-4285/skipalm@aol.com) to sign up for either of these two.

The January meeting with David Bradford speaking about Birding in S.E. Arizona had the largest crowd, 84 people, in the last five years. We had one couple from Conroe and another from College Station at the meeting. David's talk was fascinating as usual and it was very good to see that many people present. My goal is to continue providing interesting programs like David's so that a crowd this size is a regular occurrence. Next month's speaker will be from The Nature Conservancy's Texas City Refuge and will be about the Attwater Prairie Chicken and the attempt to protect this endangered species.

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society are sponsoring the 5th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count on February 15-18, 2002. They have issued a call for volunteers to join the over 100,000 birders in counting birds throughout the country. The counting can be done in backyards, schoolyards, local parks, nature centers, or other favorite birding location. Reports are submitted over the Internet and results are shown almost immediately. If you are interested contact either organization - Cornell (800) 843-2473 or Audubon (212) 979-3083. More information is available at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

Finally, a reminder to send in your dues for 2002 and to recruit a new birder into the OG. -- *Skip Almoney*

Field Trips

Please wear weather-appropriate outdoor clothes and shoes and bring water, insect repellent and lunch. If you have special needs, plan accordingly. For further information, contact Glenn Olsen at 281-345-4151 or hgolsen8@hal-pc.org.

February 15-17 Rio Grande Valley (Quarterly Field Trip)

David Sarkozi will lead this trip to the Rio Grande Valley for the weekend. Details have not been finalized, but we will drive to the Valley on Friday and have a full day of birding on Saturday and Sunday morning before returning to Houston. The preliminary itinerary is to bird Bentsen, Anzulduas and Santa Ana on Saturday and then visit a parrot roost at dusk. On Sunday we will probably bird the upper Valley, including Chapeno, Salineo and Falcon Lake, then try Zapata before heading home through Zapata, Hebbornville, Freer to US 59. A Sunday alternative would be to bird Sabal Palm or Laguna Atascosa and leave for home from there. It may also be possible for some birding on Friday afternoon, if people are able to drive down on Friday morning. If interested, contact Skip Almoney at skipalm@aol.com or 713-524-4285.

February 16 Saturday 8:00am Huntsville State Park

8:00 a.m. until Noon. Meet at the Headquarters of Huntsville State Park.

Oscar Carmona will be our leader to look for wintering woodland species, especially woodpeckers. The park has a diversity of woodland plant species, a creek and a lake, which makes great habitat for many bird species that we do not easily find in the Houston area. There is a \$3.00 per person entrance fee which supports the Park and is money well spent for the trip.

Directions: From the intersection of I-45 and Loop 610, go north on I-45, past Conroe. A few miles past the New Waverly exit look for the Exit Sign to the Huntsville State Park. You will exit to the right and turn left under I-45 to go into the Park. Pay entrance fee if an attendant is present, otherwise it will be collected. Follow signs to the Headquarters. If you miss the exit, the town is a few miles ahead and you need to turn around.

February 26 Tuesday Texas City Nature Conservancy Preserve

This special weekday field trip is limited to 10 people and is already filled. You will be contacted before the trip to confirm your position. The April 9 trip still has openings. Skip Almoney at skipalm@aol.com or 713-524-4285.

March 30 Saturday Texas City Nature Conservancy Preserve

This field trip is limited to 10 people and is full. You will be contacted before the trip to confirm your position. The April 9 trip still has openings. Skip Almoney at skipalm@aol.com or 713-524-4285.

April 9 Tuesday Texas City Nature Conservancy Preserve

If interested, contact Skip Almoney at skipalm@aol.com or 713-524-4285.

Summer 2002 Costa Rica June 8-15

The price for the trip will be \$1400 per person (double occupancy). This price includes round trip airfare on Continental from IAH and lodging. The lodging for the first three nights will be all-inclusive and include meals, drink and alcoholic beverages. Lodging locations will be the Hotel Fiesta on the Pacific Coast (all inclusive, three nights), the Cloud Forest Lodge near the Monteverde Preserve (3 nights), and the Best Western Irazu in San Jose (1 night). Meals will be out of pocket after we leave the Hotel Fiesta.

Our birding locations will be Palo Verde N.P., Carara N.P., the Monteverde Preserve, Santa Elana Preserve and Tipanti N.P. We will cover at least 5 distinct habitats and go from sea level to about 7000 feet. I expect we can find at least 250 species of birds.

Spaces are still available, but deposits will be needed very soon! Contact David Sarkozi, 713-520-5906 / david@sarkozi.net.

Davis Mountains

Below is a tentative itinerary for this summer birding trip. David Poteet will be the leader for this trip and he will assisted by Skip Almoney.

Wednesday June 5, 2002	Depart 6:00 A.M. to Fort Davis. Lodging at Indian Lodge.
Thursday June 6, 2002	Birding in the Balmorhea State Park and around Balmorhea Lake.
Friday June 7, 2002	Bird the Davis Mountain Nature Conservancy Preserve. This will include some hiking.
Saturday June 8, 2002	Travel to Brackettville and bird around the local area.
Sunday June 9, 2002	Birding at Kickapoo State Park. Return to Houston around 5:00 -6:00 P.M.

There is a limit of twelve (12) people and the trip is full. Skip Almoney 713-524-4285 or at ski-palm@aol.com.

Report on December Field Trip to Rockport

The first OG Quarterly Field Trip went to the Rockport/Corpus Christi area on December 1 and 2. Under the very expert leadership of Michael Marsden, we saw a total of 126 species including good looks at three Aplomado Falcons on Matagorda Island.

Most of Saturday was spent on Matagorda Island where Wayne (Doc) and Martha MacAlister were our gracious and informative hosts. We were met at the dock by a Belted Kingfisher (a rarity) and very soon after getting on the tour wagon we saw our first Whooping Cranes, if at a distance. A flock of wild turkeys crossed our path going to the information center. A trip to the beach provided us with good views of a Peregrine Falcon, an American Oystercatcher, a flock of Red Knots, a Lesser Black-Backed Gull and good views of many shorebirds, terns and gulls. The salt marshes provided additional species including a Whimbrel, which is quite rare this time of year. We got additional long distance views of a Whooping Crane family including the slightly rusty immature bird.

Back on the mainland, we visited several locations and found a number of herons and egrets at Fourth Street pond. At Oysterpoint we saw another American Oystercatcher and both Bufflehead and Golden-Eyed Ducks.

On Sunday, we traveled to Corpus Christi and visited Blucher Park, Rosehill Cemetery, Tule Lake, Hazel Bazemore County Park and Pollywog Pond. This day produced 40 species including a Plumbeous Vireo at Rosehill, a coyote (not a bird) at Tule Lake, a nighthawk species and two Paraques st Hazel Bazemore and finally a Black Phoebe near Pollywog Pond.

Clearing House December 2001

David Sarkozi

111 Welch Apt B, Houston, TX 77006

713.520-5906 dsarkozi@flash.net

While December is usually a month of lots of birds and rare birds reported, we usually get pretty slim pickings for the Clearinghouse because so much data is only turned into the Christmas Bird Count compilers. Still we did get some very interesting stuff for December. 179 Forms and Species were reported for December. 245,016 total birds were reported, Green-winged Teal was the most numerous with over 59,000 reported. Notable birds for the month are Masked Booby, Green Heron, Glossy Ibis, Black Rail, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, and Black-throated Blue Warbler.

The format this month is Species, date, County(location) # of birds, Observer. Those birds that are listed at uncommon to abundant in *A Birder's Checklist of the Upper Texas Coast 8th edition* for the whole month are summarized.

Birds in **Bold** are rare by the checklist and those underlined are new to the checklist for that week. Notes are requested for those species listed in **bold**. Not all notes received for November are printed here because of space limitations.

County Key: BR = Brazoria CH = Chambers, FB = Fort Bend, GA = Galveston, HA = Harris, HW = Harris/Waller, JEF = Jefferson, WA=Waller

Location Key: ANWR = Anahuac NWR, BBSP= Brazos Bend SP, EB = East Beach, KP = Katy Prairie, KPC = Katy Prairie Conservancy Preserves, QU = Quintana Island

Observer Key: BH = Bob Honig, BHHAS = Bob Honig & Houston Audubon Society field trip, BCBC = Bolivar CBC (partial), BBCBC = Brazos Bend CBC (partial), DS = David Sarkozi, DM=Debbie MacSorley, JH = Jim Hinson, JS = Julia M. Starr, KR = Kathy Reiser, KH = Ken Hartman, MBH = Maggie & Bob Honig, MA = Mike Austin

Pied-billed Grebe birds=71 reports=8
Horned Grebe birds=1 reports=1
Masked Booby 12/16 BR(QU) 5 DS
Northern Gannet birds=100 reports=1
sulad species birds=150 reports=1
American White Pelican birds=74 reports=4
Brown Pelican birds=31 reports=2
Double-crested Cormorant birds=85 reports=7
Neotropic Cormorant birds=24 reports=4
cormorant species birds=2 reports=1
Anhinga birds=5 reports=4
American Bittern birds=3 reports=2
Great Blue Heron birds=19 reports=9
Great Egret birds=191 reports=11
Snowy Egret birds=56 reports=6
Little Blue Heron birds=11 reports=6
Tricolored Heron birds=8 reports=2
Cattle Egret birds=11 reports=2
Green Heron 12/23 CH(ANWR) 4 BCBC
Black-crowned Night-Heron birds=19 reports=4
White Ibis birds=3,063 reports=8
Glossy Ibis 12/23 CH(ANWR) 1 BCBC
White-faced Ibis birds=254 reports=3
Roseate Spoonbill birds=29 reports=1
Black Vulture birds=17 reports=5
Turkey Vulture birds=162 reports=11
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck birds=46 reports=4
Greater White-fronted Goose birds=1,006 reports=8
Snow Goose birds=46,790 reports=11
Snow Goose (Blue phase) birds=32 reports=2
Ross's Goose birds=17 reports=2

Canada Goose birds=110 reports=1
Wood Duck birds=2 reports=1
Gadwall birds=466 reports=4
American Wigeon birds=184 reports=2
Mallard birds=58 reports=1
Mottled Duck birds=30 reports=1
Blue-winged Teal birds=21 reports=3
Northern Shoveler birds=727 reports=6
Northern Pintail birds=7,156 reports=4
Green-winged Teal birds=59,310 reports=2
Redhead birds=2 reports=1
Ring-necked Duck birds=16 reports=2
Lesser Scaup birds=103 reports=2
Bufflehead birds=27 reports=2
Common Goldeneye birds=3 reports=1
Red-breasted Merganser birds=51 reports=1
Ruddy Duck birds=77 reports=2
Osprey birds=4 reports=2
White-tailed Kite birds=15 reports=4
Bald Eagle birds=2 reports=1
Northern Harrier birds=58 reports=11
Sharp-shinned Hawk birds=2 reports=1
Cooper's Hawk birds=2 reports=2
Accipiter species birds=1 reports=1
Red-shouldered Hawk birds=14 reports=6
White-tailed Hawk birds=2 reports=2
Krieger's Red-tailed Hawk 12/23 CH(ANWR) 1 BCBC
Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk 12/1 HA(KPC) 1 BH
Red-tailed Hawk birds=95 reports=14
Crested Caracara birds=7 reports=5
American Kestrel birds=51 reports=13
Merlin birds=1 reports=1

Peregrine Falcon birds=13 reports=12
 Northern Bobwhite birds=6 reports=2
 Yellow Rail birds=7 reports=1
Black Rail 12/23 CH(ANWR) 1 BCBC
 Clapper Rail birds=2 reports=1
 King Rail birds=1 reports=1
 Virginia Rail birds=5 reports=1
 Common Moorhen birds=133 reports=6
 American Coot birds=3,087 reports=7
 Sandhill Crane birds=42 reports=5
 Black-bellied Plover birds=6 reports=2
Snowy Plover 12/3 JE() 1 BH
Piping Plover 12/3 JE() 10 BH, 12/23 CH(ANWR)
11 BCBC
 Killdeer birds=848 reports=9
 American Oystercatcher birds=1 reports=1
 Black-necked Stilt birds=42 reports=3
 American Avocet birds=6 reports=1
 Greater Yellowlegs birds=52 reports=4
 Lesser Yellowlegs birds=28 reports=1
 Willet birds=32 reports=2
 Spotted Sandpiper birds=3 reports=2
 Long-billed Curlew birds=31 reports=3
 Sanderling birds=80 reports=2
 Western Sandpiper birds=1 reports=1
 peep species birds=25 reports=1
 Least Sandpiper birds=59 reports=1
 Dunlin birds=14 reports=1
Stilt Sandpiper 12/23 CH(ANWR) 3 BCBC
 dowitcher species birds=80 reports=2
 Long-billed Dowitcher birds=6 reports=1
 Common Snipe birds=153 reports=2
 American Woodcock birds=1 reports=1
 Laughing Gull birds=257 reports=3
 Ring-billed Gull birds=185 reports=4
 Herring Gull birds=52 reports=4
Lesser Black-backed Gull 12/7 BR(QU) 1 MA
 Gull-billed Tern birds=24 reports=1
 Caspian Tern birds=10 reports=2
 Royal Tern birds=52 reports=4
 Sandwich Tern 12/7 GA(EB) 10 MA
Common Tern 12/7 GA(EB) 5 MA, 12/7 BR(QU)
3 MA
 Forster's Tern birds=63 reports=4
 Rock Dove birds=95 reports=3
 White-winged Dove birds=2 reports=1
 Mourning Dove birds=157 reports=10
 Inca Dove birds=19 reports=4
 Common Ground-Dove birds=6 reports=2
 Groove-billed Ani birds=1 reports=1
 Barn Owl birds=2 reports=1
 Eastern Screech-Owl birds=7 reports=1
 Great Horned Owl birds=3 reports=2
 Barred Owl birds=1 reports=1
 hummingbird species birds=1 reports=1
 Rufous Hummingbird birds=1 reports=1
 Belted Kingfisher birds=15 reports=4
 Red-bellied Woodpecker birds=25 reports=8
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker birds=1 reports=1
 Downy Woodpecker birds=9 reports=7
 Northern Flicker birds=1 reports=1
 Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted) birds=1 reports=1
 Pileated Woodpecker birds=9 reports=3
 Eastern Phoebe birds=123 reports=15
 Vermilion Flycatcher birds=3 reports=2

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 12/7 BR(QU) 1 MA

Loggerhead Shrike birds=88 reports=11
 White-eyed Vireo birds=1 reports=1
 Blue-headed Vireo birds=2 reports=2
 Blue Jay birds=16 reports=6
 American Crow birds=77 reports=10
Tree Swallow 12/23 CH(ANWR) 11 BCBC
Northern Rough-winged Swallow 12/23
CH(ANWR) 6 BCBC
 Carolina Chickadee birds=23 reports=7
 Tufted Titmouse birds=27 reports=4
 Carolina Wren birds=46 reports=9
 House Wren birds=45 reports=6
 Winter Wren birds=1 reports=1
 Sedge Wren birds=238 reports=6
 Marsh Wren birds=10 reports=3
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet birds=47 reports=9
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher birds=48 reports=4
 Eastern Bluebird birds=7 reports=2
 American Robin birds=20 reports=3
 Gray Catbird birds=11 reports=2
 Northern Mockingbird birds=47 reports=10
 Brown Thrasher birds=2 reports=2
 European Starling birds=175 reports=4
 American Pipit birds=30 reports=6
 Orange-crowned Warbler birds=57 reports=3
Black-throated Blue Warbler 12/7
BR(QU) 1 MA
 Yellow-rumped Warbler birds=104 reports=15
 Yellow-rumped "Myrtle" Warbler birds=35
 reports=1
 Pine Warbler birds=1 reports=1
 Palm Warbler birds=5 reports=1
 Common Yellowthroat birds=38 reports=6
 Chipping Sparrow birds=6 reports=3
 Field Sparrow birds=4 reports=2
 Vesper Sparrow birds=17 reports=3
 Savannah Sparrow birds=379 reports=10
 Le Conte's Sparrow birds=66 reports=3
 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow birds=1 re-
 ports=1
 Seaside Sparrow birds=31 reports=1
 Song Sparrow birds=12 reports=5
 Lincoln's Sparrow birds=18 reports=5
 Swamp Sparrow birds=54 reports=7
 White-throated Sparrow birds=28 reports=3
Harris' Sparrow 12/23 CH(ANWR) 1
BCBC
 White-crowned Sparrow birds=19 reports=3
 Northern Cardinal birds=158 reports=16
 Red-winged Blackbird birds=104,228 re-
 ports=10
 Eastern Meadowlark birds=298 reports=7
 Brewer's Blackbird birds=20 reports=1
 Common Grackle birds=1,025 reports=2
 Boat-tailed Grackle birds=129 reports=4
 Great-tailed Grackle birds=5,659 reports=9
 Brown-headed Cowbird birds=4,634 re-
 ports=4
 American Goldfinch birds=147 reports=13
 House Sparrow birds=42 reports=6

Outdoor Nature Club
Ornithology Group
P.O. Box 270894
Houston TX 77277-0894

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TO START OR RENEW A MEMBERSHIP:

Name: _____

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ONC Annual Dues:

Individual..... \$ 8.00
Family 15.00
OG Dues (each adult) 14.00 (Total dues are \$22.00 for an individual)

Send dues to:

Outdoor Nature Club
PO Box 270894
Houston TX 77277-0894

You can also join at www.ornithologygroup.org