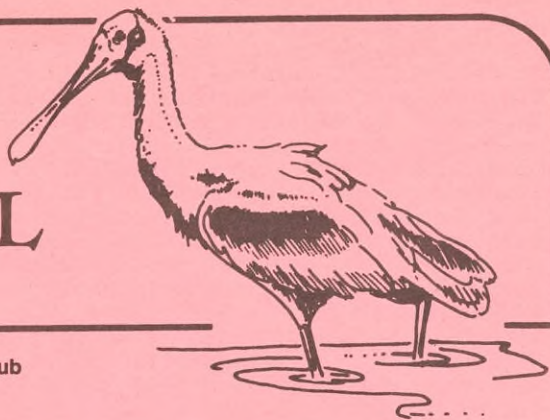


The SPOONBILL



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

Vol. XXXIV, No. 3
March, 1985—

Coming Events

Thursday, April 4, 1985: Deadline for Spoonbill articles, announcements, and Clearing House reports.

Thursday, April 4, 1985: OG Meeting at Bayou Manor Auditorium, 4141 S. Braeswood, 7:30 p.m. Program to be announced.

Tuesday, April 9, 1985: ONC Meeting: "Parks, Their Space and Place in the Urban Environment". The speaker is Mr. Donald Olson, Director of Houston's Parks and Recreation Department. He will speak on natural parks, park improvements and Houston's new Cullen Park. The meeting starts at 7:30 PM at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park.

Saturday, April 13, 1985: OG field trip to Galveston Island, led by Arch Dillard. Meet at Kempner Park at 27th & O streets in Galveston at 7:00 am. Take I-45 south to Galveston; as the freeway ends, continue straight on Broadway; turn right on 27th street, then right again on O street; the parking lot for Kempner Park will be on your right. We will be visiting the Golf Course (shorebirds et al.), the landbird migrant trap at Eckert's Bayou and other migrant traps, Sportsman's Road (shorebirds/waders/waterfowl), Galveston Island State Park, and the beach. Bring lunch, water, and mosquito repellent.

Saturday, May 4, 1985: Texas Spring Roundup. The Spring Roundup is a joint spring field trip of the Houston Ornithology Group and the Houston Audubon Society. Please

note that the Roundup does not conflict with the Birdathon, which has already been announced. Choose your partners for this years Texas Spring Roundup. The goal of the Roundup is to have a fun day birdwatching during the peak of spring migration. The secondary goal is to compile reports from participants to document changes in the occurrence of birds in our area. Form parties with your birding acquaintances and bird anywhere you like. For your reports, keep a separate list of the species and their numbers for each county in which you bird. Report forms and check lists will be handed out at the membership meetings, or they can be picked up at the Edith Moore Sanctuary, or they can be obtained by phoning or writing the compiler, David Matson, 3531 Durhill, Houston, Texas, 77025. (668-3120). Please send completed forms to the same address. All reports will be forwarded to the Spoonbill to be included in the Clearing House.

Friday evening-Sunday afternoon, May 17-19, 1985: Joint ONC/OG field trip to Pedernales Falls State Park in the Hill Country west of Austin. Priscilla Bauer is coordinating the outing; please call her at 923-5139 for campsite reservations and information about activities. Priscilla has reserved a number of campsites for this trip so call her soon to save yourself a spot; reservations can be made for Friday and Saturday nights, or for Saturday only (or you can contact the Park directly to reserve a campsite if you prefer making your

own arrangements). Motels in Johnson City, about 10-15 miles from the park, are another option: Charles Motel (512-868-7171), Krieders Motel (512-868-7163), Eureka Motel (512-868-4490). On Sunday morning, Greg Lasley will lead a birding outing to look for golden-cheeked warblers, black-capped vireos, and other birds of the Edwards Plateau. Greg is an OG member who lives in Austin and is very familiar with the birds of the area. A botany walk is also being planned. Bring hot dogs and fixings for a group campfire Saturday night.

Noel's Niche Looking Back

by Noel Pettingell

.....Ten Years Ago This Month
From March, 1975 Spoonbill:

AND SPEAKING OF A RARE BIRD!!!!

We wish all our rare birds could be as easily identified and as rare as the recent visitor to the East Coast in Massachusetts. Some of you may have seen the story of the Ross' Gull on the TV news last week and wished you were there. According to the San Francisco Chronicle you would have been in distinguished company. "Some of the heaviest bird brain power in the country is here" said one birder. "Anything that flies by is going to be identified". Roger Tory Peterson, "who is to feathers what Julia Child is to egg whites", was there, saying the sighting was "just unbelievable". Another birder said: "This is the birding event of the century". The bird is so rare that Peterson, who described it as "a little known gull of the arctic" in his "Field Guide to Western Birds", had not seen one until now.

"The Ross' Gull, a small, gray-winged seagull distinguished by a rosy chest marking, a wedge-shaped tail, red feet and, in the summer, a black collar, is native to the Arctic. It breeds in northwestern Siberia and can sometimes be spotted in October, off Point Barrow, Alaska. The bird is rarely seen even in its own habitat, and this was the first record of its appearance on the East Coast of America".

According to this newspaper article there had been unconfirmed sightings before, but when, on March 2, a number of bird watchers at the area (near

where the Merrimack River flows into the Atlantic) sent out the word, the birders flocked!

So, look carefully at 'em all, make on-the-spot records of strange ones, no telling what you'll come up with!

* * * *

.....Twenty Years Ago This Month
From March, 1965 Spoonbill

Clearing House - February 1965

Boat-tailed Grackle: 13 days, (20)10, (16)20, total incl. repeats 83.
See Notes Cove AKM
Common Grackle: (NC)6, 1 day only Cove AKM

Notes from Clearing House Reports

Starling - least common in my 30 years of birding. Saw only one on a day when I counted over 80 species of birds. I recorded them 23 days in Jan.; in each of the previous 30 Januarys they were common every day.

Boat-tailed Grackle: For over 25 yrs., I recorded them from 28 to 29 days each February, totaling tens of thousands.

Cowbird: seen daily, but am not sure of over 10,000 on any day. There were 4 to 5 million here in one roost in the late thirties. Since the beginning of Federal sponsored poisoning of rice seed in 1959 I have never seen over 1% of that number. Even last February thousands annoyed me at my feed lots, but now I have from none to about 100 each evening.

Arlie K. McKay

* * * *

AN UN-ANNOUNCEMENT

Last month we reported on a series of monthly bird walks around Hermann Park, led by Houston Museum of Natural Science staff member, Debbie DeKeyser Underwood. That series has been cancelled, due to Debbie and her husband being transferred to Madrid, Spain.

Update On The Bellaire Ringed Turtle Doves

by Margaret Jones

In the May 1973 SPOONBILL, Ringed Turtle Doves were reported in the April 1973 Clearing House by T. Paul Jones as being seen in Bellaire. A followup report was made in the July 1973 SPOONBILL, and in the September 1973 issue. Following are some excerpts from that September article that may refresh our memories:

"We are, by bits and pieces and hook and crook, finding out more about our Bellaire colony of Ringed Turtle Doves. It seems, according to Johnnie Fay Barnette, who did some detective work for me, that a neighbor of hers raised these birds in cages in his back yard. But, when he moved out of the state this spring, he released the birds. How many, we don't know. But, at least twelve birds have been seen recently, including five immatures, also two nests; so they must be in the process of establishing themselves in the wild..... Apparently this is the first nesting here in the wild and it is going to be interesting to see what the next year brings."

It has, indeed been interesting to observe the fluctuations of the "Bellaire" population of the Ringed Turtle Doves. For several years after that initial release, there seemed to be a population explosion in the Bellaire area of the doves. At one site, where a resident had captured and caged some injured birds, there were eventually almost a hundred free-flying doves, enough to make the neighbors complain! A number of residents who maintained feeders reported nesting in the ensuing years, but, again, the population seemed to fluctuate from year to year.

In our area on Fern Street, we have consistently observed each year from that first sighting a number of the doves. Though we have never had them nest in our yard, a close neighbor has observed successful nesting in her yard approximately seven years out of the past eleven years. We have noticed that when a population builds up for a year or two, it then dwindles as the birds seemingly disperse to less crowded areas, and we get reports that the doves are being seen in surrounding areas for the first time. It has seemed to be almost a "ripples in the pond" effect, as the birds multiply and outgrow their feeding area capacity and some move on.

This spring will mark twelve years since this group of birds was released in the 4800 block of Linden, and we felt it time to try to find out if there was really a viable "Bellaire" flock of these birds. A "Letter to the Editor" column of the Bellaire/Southwest TEXAN Newspaper produced the totally unexpected deluge of 45 calls. The reports came in a wide sweep from West University (west of Buffalo Speedway) across Bellaire to Sharpstown, with one report just east of Afton Oaks in the West Main-Wesleyan area as our northermost spot (2 appeared 8-9 years ago and the flock has increased to as many as 28), and another report from the 5100 block of Darnell in Meyerland as our southern report boundry. As few as 1 and as many as 30 birds were reported.

As we expected, the Bellaire quadrant with the most reports encloses the original release area, the 4800 block of Linden, and is bordered by Bellaire Blvd., South Loop, Maple and Chimney Rock. This area produced 17 calls and included 8 nesting reports of varying lengths of time with some going back 10 plus years. It also developed from one call that there had been another release (of 2 birds) back in the seventies in the southern part of this quadrant and those birds had grown to a viable flock in the immediate area. From the 4800 block of Linden came a report of a few hybrids being seen in recent years (Ringed Turtle Doves/Mourning Doves). A friend who lives in that block told us a number of years ago that there were hybrids in her yard, and several years ago we had a hybrid/Ringed Turtle Dove pair in our yard for two days. However, we have had no other reports of any hybridization.

The southeast quadrant (bordered by Bellaire Blvd., South Loop, Mimosa and the railroad tracks) produced only two reports, but one had 7 years of yard observations and known nesting for the past two years.

The northeast quadrant (bordered by Bellaire Blvd., South Loop, Glenmont and the railroad tracks) had 9 reports, 4 of which were on one block. The longest time of yard observation and known nesting was 8-10 years at one site. Most of the other observations were from 2 to 5 years.

The northwest quadrant (bordered by Bellaire Blvd., South Loop, Chimney Rock and Glenmont) had four reports, but one of them had had the birds for 11 years with known nesting for almost that length of time and with the number of birds surpassing 25-30 at times.

There were two reports in the Shenandoah subdivision, west of Bellaire; two reports from Sharpstown between Hillcroft and Bintliff; and two reports from the area bounded by Bissonnet, Chimney Rock, Renwick and Beechnut.

West University produced 8 calls, all west of Buffalo Speedway, including one from a jogger who alerted us to one site he passed every day. Most of the calls included nesting indications.

We have included some of the above respondent information in another letter to the Editor of the TEXAN so that those 45 people who took the time and trouble to let us know about their birds can see how much help they have been. Also we have marked a map with sites of yard observations or known nesting which will be sent to Noel Pettingell for his checklist records.

In conclusion, we believe that a great many of the Ringed Turtle Doves being seen in Bellaire (and surrounding areas) today are the progeny of the 12-13 birds released in 1973 in the 4800 block of Linden. We also believe that with the help of our respondents we have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Ringed Turtle Doves have nested, reproduced and flourished in the wild for more than ten years (through a number of difficult winters) and they should remain viable.

Minutes of the Ornithology Group Meeting

JANUARY 3, 1985

The meeting was brought to order by Don Richardson, Chairman, at 7:33 p.m. Peter Vennema gave the treasurer's report with a balance of \$5,805.

Interesting bird sightings was highlighted by the Fork-tailed Flycatcher near Harlingen seen by Don and Lee Richardson.

General announcements included: Armand Bayou Nature Center will sponsor a "Botanical Tour to Costa Rica", April 13-21, 1985. Leaders will be Eric Lautzenheiser and Dr. Marshall Johnston. For information call Eric at 474-2551; Barbara Levisay, Houston Audubon, stated that HAS is having Thursday night seminars at their Sanctuary and that the Chickadee has the Texas nongame stamps available as well as an ample supply of thistle seed; Don Richardson stated when birding the "Johnson Property" please park cars off the property; Gene Heitzman announced that Dr. Fisher will speak on Birds at the upcoming ONC meeting on January 8; Jim Morgan requested we send a

complimentary copy of the SPOONBILL to Brazos Bend State Park; Ellen Red hoped to see everyone at the tree planting day scheduled at Galveston Island State Park on January 26.

Don Richardson then reviewed the upcoming field trip to Welder Wildlife Refuge, as well as the Lewis Creek trip on February 9, 1985.

A program was then given by Ted Eubanks on Shorebirds. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Clearing House FEBRUARY, 1985

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made on the Upper Texas Coast. How to read the CH: Location--(how many)date,observers. Common, widely distributed species on the UTC during the reported month are listed as follows: number of reports, (lowest - highest ; total number of individuals seen), e.g. 8 reports (1-40;82). Noteworthy sightings will be underlined, capitalized, or both, according to their status. All observations reported below must be accepted by the Checklist Committee before they can be included on the next checklist. Documentation is a must for consideration by the Committee. Birds with very faint, vagrant, accidental, or no status on the Checklist at the date of sighting require details. Sightings needing details but submitted without them will not be included in the regular Clearing House.

ABBREVIATION CODES

AB = Armand Bayou	HI = High Island
ANWR = Anahuac NWR	Kemp = Kemper Park
Bayt = Baytown	L. Char = L. Charlotte
BBCR = Bob's Bait Camp Rd.	NHC = N. Harris Co.
BBSP = Brazos Bend SP	NRR = Nottingham Ranch Rd
Bolv = Bolivar P.	Pasa = Pasadena
CC = Chambers Co.	Pear = Pearland
EG = E. Galveston	Seab = Seabrook
FBC = Ft. Bend Co.	SEH = SE Houston
Fr = Friendswood	SWH = SW Houston
Galv = Galveston	TCO = Texas City Dike
GC = Galveston Co.	WGI = W. Galveston Island
GISP = Galveston Is. SP	WH = W. Houston
H = Houston	WMP = White Memorial Park
HA = Houston Arboretum	WOB = White Oak Bayou

188 Species reported this month.

Loon, Common: 5 reports (1-10;21)
Grebe, Pied-billed: 14 reports (2-30;136)
Grebe, Eared: 7 reports (1-30;64)
Pelican, American White: 11 reports (1-256;1019)
Cormorant, Double-crested: 14 reports (1-250;544)
Cormorant, Olivaceous: 6 reports All but (1) in 2nd half of month (1-20;51)
cormorant, sp.: BBSP-(100)2,H
Anhinga: BBSP-(1)2,H; CC/GC-(30)16,R
Heron, Great Blue: 17 reports (1-15;107)
Egret, Great: 19 reports (1-50;211)
Egret, Snowy: 13 reports (1-50;192)
Heron, Little Blue: 10 reports (1-10;38)
Heron, Tricolored: 10 reports (1-12;32)
Egret, Reddish: 6 reports (1-6;12)
Egret, Cattle: 8 reports (1-100;188)
Night-Heron, Black-crowned: 7 reports (2-80;224)
Night-Heron, Yellow-crowned: SWH-(1 ad)16,PM; BBCR-(1)23,P
Ibis, White: 5 reports (4-300;363)
Ibis, White-faced: CC/GC-(1)16,R; ANWR-(6)17,G; CC-(50)23,P
Spoonbill, Roseate: 7 reports (1-30;83)
Whistling-Duck, Fulvous: BF-(2)23,P (See notes, ed.)
Whistling-Duck, Black-bellied: BBSP-(15)2,H; FBC-(16)5,(27)6,BG (Status changing, ed.)
Goose, Greater White-fronted: 8 reports (20-1000;1790)

Goose, Snow: 8 reports (100-10000; 27065)
 (Goose, Blue): 3 reports (500-2000; 4500)
 Goose, Ross': ANWR-(1)23, P
 (Goose, Ross'-BLUE PHASE): ANWR-(1)7, VMG 2ND UTC REPORT
 (See notes, ed.)
 Goose, Canada: CC-(50)23, P; (4)24, Ob
 goose, sp.: FBC-(500)2, H
 Duck, Wood: BBSP-(4)2, H; CC/GC-(1)16, R
 Teal, Green-winged: 9 reports (2-200; 402)
 Duck, Mottled: 6 reports (2-8; 23)
 Mallard: 6 reports (1-15; 31)
 Pintail, Northern: 6 reports (2-500; 779)
 Teal, Blue-winged: 12 reports (3 reports of 48 indiv. in
 1st half of month) (8-40; 270)
 Teal, Cinnamon: BBSP-(1)23, DM
 Shoveler, Northern: 12 reports (4-250; 670)
 Gadwall: 7 reports (1-30; 78)
 Wigeon, American: 9 reports (2-40; 65)
 Canvasback: 5 reports (1-15; 33)
 Redhead: BBSP-(1)23, DM; ANWR-(1)23, P; TCD-(2)24, DM;
 (2 m)24, MA
 Duck, Ring-necked: 7 reports (2-50; 242)
 Scaup, Greater: TCD-(5 m)24, MA
 Scaup, Lesser: 16 reports (4-80; 585)
 scaup, sp.: CC/GC-(20)16, R; GC-(80)23, P
 Scoter, Black: HI-(30)3, MA (Notes submitted, ed.)
 Scoter, Surf: HI-(1)3, MA (Notes submitted, ed.)
 Scoter, White-winged: HI-(5)3, MA (Notes submitted, ed.)
 Goldeneye, Common: TCD-(1 f)24, MA
 Bufflehead: TCD-(4)24, DM; (5)24, MA
 Merganser, Red-breasted: 5 reports (2-30; 61)
 Duck, Ruddy: 13 reports (1-80; 272)
 Vulture, Black: Pear-(4)15, BEW; NHC-(4)16, WC; AB-(25)17, DM
 Vulture, Turkey: 10 reports (2-25; 84)
 Osprey: WMP-(1)16, DM; (1)23, P; Seab-(1)24, MA
 Kite, Black-shouldered: 10 reports (1-2; 11)
 KITE, MISSISSIPPI: H-(3)25, LG 1ST FEB. REPORT (See notes)
 Eagle, Bald: FBC-(2 ad)5, (2 imm)6, BG
 Harrier, Northern: 18 reports (1-30; 179)
 Hawk, Sharp-shinned: Pear-(1)7, BEW; HA-(2)16, RP; NHC-
 (1)17, MA; WH-(1)17, RB; SEH-(1)23, P
 Hawk, Cooper's: Pasa-(1)21, GS; ANWR-(1)23, P
 Hawk, Red-shouldered: 12 reports (1-4; 24)
 Hawk, White-tailed: FBC-(1)5, 18, BG (See notes, ed.)
 Hawk, Red-tailed: 19 reports (1-42; 239)
 (Hawk, Krieger's): FBC-(1)5, BG
 Hawk, Rough-legged: ANWR-(1)7, VMG; HI-(1)7, VMG (See notes)
 EAGLE, GOLDEN: FBC-(1)6, 18, BG 1ST REPORT OF 3RD WK (See
 notes, ed.)
 Kestrel, American: 21 reports (1-25; 153)
 Chicken, Greater Prairie: Dickinson-(3)24, MA (Houston Gulf
 Airport - remnant Spaceland population, ed.)
 Sora: Port Bolivar-(3)23, P
 Moorhen, Common: 9 reports (1-50; 189)
 Coot, American: 16 reports (8-300; 1643)
 Crane, Sandhill: 7 reports (2-88; 215)
 Plover, Black-bellied: 9 reports (1-80; 140)
 Plover, Snowy: Bolv-(2)3, MA; BF-(1)23, P
 Plover, Wilson's: Bolv-(1)3, MA
 Plover, Semipalmated: BF-(100)23, P
 Plover, Piping: Bolv-(10)3, MA; (6)10, BG; (4)17, G; BF-
 (25)23, P
 Killdeer: 18 reports (1-100; 339)
 Oystercatcher, American: CC/GC-(2)16, R; BF-(1)23, P; TCD-
 (2)24, MA
 Stilt, Black-necked: CC/GC-(3)16, R

Avocet, American: 7 reports (38-1600; 4088)
 Yellowlegs, Greater: 7 reports (1-12; 52)
 Yellowlegs, Lesser: WG1-(10)6, J; ANWR-(5)23, P; CC-(2)24, Ob
 Willet: 8 reports (1-225; 321)
 Sandpiper, Spotted: CC/GC-(1)16, R; Seab-(1)24, MA
 Curlew, Long-billed: 7 reports (1-12; 40)
 Godwit, Marbled: 6 reports (1-50; 136)
 Turnstone, Ruddy: 7 reports (1-150; 198)
 Knot, Red: BF-(20)23, P
 Sanderling: 5 reports (20-430; 550)
 Sandpiper, Western: CC/GC-(15)16, R; ANWR-(300)23, P; BF-
 (1500)23, P; TCD-(10)24, MA
 Sandpiper, Least: FBC-(40)18, BG; BF-(1)23, P; TCD-(25)24, MA
 Dunlin: 6 reports (10-600; 1127)
 Sandpiper, Stilt: ANWR-(1)23, P (See notes, ed.)
 Dowitcher, Short-billed: Bolv-(400)10, BG; CC/GC-(5)16, R;
 BF-(250)23, P; CC-(20)24, Ob
 Dowitcher, Long-billed: 4 reports (3-205; 370)
 dowitcher, sp.: 4 reports (4-150; 224)
 Snipe, Common: 4 reports (1-40; 62)
 Woodcock, American: HA-(2-10)1-21, DW; (6)8, W; CC-(1)23, P;
 SWH-(1)24, PM (Very rare after 1st wk - Editor's Note)
 Gull, Laughing: 12 reports (2-3600; 6210)
 Gull, Bonaparte's: 7 reports (8-1200; 1608)
 Gull, Ring-billed: 14 reports (1-1000; 1928)
 Gull, Herring: 4 reports (7-150; 217)
 gull, sp.: FBC-(1)2, H
 Tern, Gull-billed: Bayt-(4)4, GS; Bolivar Ferry-(1)23, P
 Tern, Caspian: 6 reports (1-10; 23)
 Tern, Royal: CC/GC-(20)16, R; GC-(100)23, P
 Tern, Common: Galv-(1)3, MA; CC/GC-(5)16, R; GC-(200)23, P;
 TCD-(1)24, MA
 Tern, Forster's: 12 reports (1-600; 749)
 Skimmer, Black: 5 reports (3-300; 388)
 Dove, Rock: 13 reports (1-100; 443)
 Dove, White-winged: EG-(8-10)1-28, JJH; WH-(1)17, RMB; Galv-
 (1)23, P
 Dove, Mourning: 13 reports (1-50; 172)
 Dove, Inca: 6 reports (1-50; 63)
 Parakeet, Monk: NHC-(2)17, MA (Nesting behavior noted, ed.)
 parrot, sp.: SWH-(1)25, PM
 Ani, Groove-billed: Pear-(1)5, BEW
 Barn-Owl, Common: BBSP-(1)2, H; FBC-(1)18, BG; CC-(1)23, P
 Screech-Owl, Eastern: HA-(5)8, W; (2)9, BH; SEH-(2)23, P
 Owl, Great Horned: WOB-(1)1-28, WC; BBSP-(1)2, H; SWH-
 (2)25, BH
 Owl, Barred: BBSP-(20)2, H; (1)23, DM; L Char-(2)23, P
 Owl, Short-eared: FBC-(1)2, H
 SWIFT, sp.: Bayt-(2)20, ER NO PREVIOUS FEB REPORTS FOR
 SWIFT (See notes, ed.)
 Kingfisher, Belted: 18 reports (1-5; 41)
 Woodpecker, Red-headed: Kemp-(1)23, P
 Woodpecker, Red-bellied: 9 reports (1-15; 42)
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: 9 reports (1-1; 9)
 Woodpecker, Downy: 12 reports (1-10; 32)
 Woodpecker, Hairy: L. Char-(1)16, DM
 Flicker, Northern: 10 reports (1-12; 31)
 Woodpecker, Pileated: 6 reports (1-3; 8)
 Phoebe, Eastern: 9 reports (1-5; 18)
 Lark, Horned: EG-(1)8, JJH; GISP-(3)9, M; (5)24, DM
 Martin, Purple: NRR-(2)9, M; H-(2)12, GC; WH-(5)16, RB;
 CC/GC-(5)16, R; Fr-(2)20, MA; BCCR-(1)23, P; Galv-
 (2)23, P; TCD-(2)24, DM; (5)24, MA; Bayt-(4)24, GS
 Swallow, Tree: GC-(2)23, P; TCD-(1)24, DM
 Jay, Blue: 14 reports (1-20; 64)
 Crow, American: 16 reports (1-30; 174)
 Chickadee, Carolina: 15 reports (2-25; 166)
 Titmouse, Tufted: 11 reports (1-15; 63)
 Nuthatch, Brown-headed: near WMP-(1)23, P
 Creeper, Brown: 5 reports (1-3; 8)
 Wren, Carolina: 11 reports (1-20; 77)
 Wren, House: 6 reports (1-2; 9)
 Wren, Winter: WOB-(2)1-28, WC
 Wren, Sedge: ANWR-(3)16, DM; Bolv-(3)23, P
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned: 6 reports (1-4; 14)
 Kinglet, Ruby-crowned: 17 reports (1-15; 91)
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: WG1-(1)6, J; HA-(1)16, RP
 Bluebird, Eastern: L. Char-(5)16, DM; CC-(1)16, DM; (2)24, Ob;
 Bay City-(2)23, VM
 Thrush, Hermit: 6 reports (1-4; 13)
 Robin, American: 26 reports (1-10000; 20978)
 Catbird, Gray: EG-(1)6, J; CC-(1)23, P
 Mockingbird, Northern: 17 reports (1-15; 100)
 Thrasher, Brown: 16 reports (1-15; 47)
 Pipit, Water: 9 reports (1-100; 244)
 Pipit, Sprague's: TCD-(3)24, DM
 Waxwing, Cedar: 13 reports (1-500; 1225)
 Shrike, Loggerhead: 18 reports (1-20; 116)
 Starling, European: 18 reports (1-500; 1420)
 Vireo, White-eyed: BBSP-(1)23, DM
 Vireo, Solitary: 6 reports (1-2; 7)

The Spoonbill Staff

Editor	B. C. Robison
Art Editor	Linda Feltner
Layout Artist	Connie Clark
Typists	Barbara Darr Wanda Smith
Labels	Peggy Milstead
Mailing Committee	Beth Hudson Yetta Chapman Connie Schimbor
Checklist Committee	Ben Feltner Noel Pettingell Jim Morgan

Warbler, Orange-crowned: 7 reports (1-4;16)
 Warbler, Yellow-rumped: 19 reports (1-25;122)
WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED GREEN: BBSP-(1)23, DM 1ST REPORT FOR 4TH WK - See notes, ed.)
 Warbler, Yellow-throated: HI-(1)24, WC
 Warbler, Pine: 9 reports (1-24;67)
 Warbler, Palm: WGI-(1)6, J
 Yellowthroat, Common: 4 reports (1-10;22)
 Warbler, Wilson's: WGI-(1)9, J, H; HA-(1 m)16, RP
 Cardinal, Northern: 18 reports (1-50;198)
 Towhee, Rufous-sided: WOB-(2)25, WC
 Sparrow, Field: BBSP-(1)2, H; (1)23, DM; HA-(1)16, RP
 Sparrow, Vesper: TCD-(20)9, BEW
 Sparrow, Savannah: 14 reports (1-180;424)
 Sparrow, Le Conte's: GISP-(1)24, DM
 Sparrow, Sharp-tailed: Bolv-(4)3, MA; TCD-(1)24, DM
 Sparrow, Seaside: ANWR-(4)16, DM; BF-(12)23, P; GISP-(4)24, DM; CC-(15)24, Ob
 Sparrow, Song: BBSP-(2)2, H; NHC-(2)17, MA
 Sparrow, Lincoln's: 4 reports (1-3;8)
 Sparrow, Swamp: 7 reports (1-30;50)
 Sparrow, White-throated: 10 reports (2-40;164)
 Sparrow, White-crowned: WGI-(4)6, J; (4)22, J, H (Still low this month, ed.)
 Junco, Dark-eyed: SWH-(2)2, RP; NHC-(2)17, MA
 Blackbird, Red-winged: 17 reports (1-1000;2979)
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 14 reports (1-70;297)
 Meadowlark, Western: TCD-(1 voice)24, MA
 meadowlark, sp.: FBC-(15)2, H
BLACKBIRD, YELLOW-HEADED: CC-(15)24, Ob 1ST REPORT FOR 4TH WK (See notes, ed.)
 Blackbird, Rusty: Deer Park-(1)17, GS; SWH-(100)25, BH
 Blackbird, Brewer's: FBC-(30)5, (62)6, BG
 Grackle, Great-tailed: 17 reports (8-1100;3883)
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: 5 reports (2-100;160)
 Grackle, Common: 9 reports (2-150;360)
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: 14 reports (1-5000;7005)
 blackbird, sp.: 5 reports (20-100000;104520)
 Goldfinch, American: 13 reports (1-80;250)
 Sparrow, House: 7 reports (2-50;192)

CONTRIBUTORS February, 1985

MA=Mike Austin; RB=Ron Braun; RMB=Ron & Marcia Braun; GC=Glenn Cureton; WC=Wesley Cureton; G=LG, Bob Behrstock, Saul & Esther Graetz; VMG=Virginia & Maurice Gatlin; LG=Linda Graetz; BG=Bernd Gravenstein; H=BH, Doug Williams; JJH=Jane & John Hamilton; BH=Bob Honig; J=JJH, Carolyn Kilian, Faye Humphrey; M=PM, Barbara Darr, George & Debbie Valdez; VM=Virginia McKallip; PM=Peggy Milstead; DM=Derek Muschalek; Ob=Robert Oberfelder, Jane Weisemann; P=RP, Mark Brown; RP=Randy Pinkston; RPP=Randy & Patty Pinkston; R=Don & Lee Richardson, Jerry & Nancy Patrick, Charlie & Silva Lents, Frank & Jo Cleland; ER=Ed Rozenburg; GS=Gwen Smith; W=DW, BH, Caroline Callery, Martha Henschen, Sandra & Richard Hoover + family, Therry Azzarello; DW=Doug Williams; BEW=Bob & Edith Willman

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES February, 1985

Fulvous Whistling-Duck: Two individuals standing out on Bolivar Flats; gray duck bill, long neck and long gray legs; rich tawny plumage with light stripe down sides below folded wing; 20-45x zoom scope from 200m under cloudy skies (light good).

-- Randy Pinkston & Mark Brown

(Ross' Goose - DARK PHASE): 2ND UTC REPORT Anahuac NWR main road just beyond intersection with road to Shoverer's Pond. Viewed for several minutes in field with 10x binoculars and 25x-40x telescope in good light. Resting on ground 100 to 200 yards from the road in a mixed flock of 200-300 Canada, Snow, Blue and White-fronted Geese. The individual was in a group of seven Blue phase Snow Geese. Legs and neck was shorter, body less bulky than associated Blues. Entire neck, top of head and nape were black. Face white. At least two white Ross' Geese were in this same flock, associating with white Snow Geese. -- Virginia and Maurice Gatlin

MISSISSIPPI KITE: 1ST FEB. REPORT I was driving south on Newcastle Just past Bellaire Blvd. when I noticed a large raptor soaring fairly high above. Two others were soaring high and in a loose oval pattern. The characteristic slender and slightly v'd shape of the wings, the relatively long narrow tail, and their appearance of being all dark underneath indicated kites. I notice on the checklist that no sightings are recorded for Miss. kites this time of year, but I don't doubt that that is what I saw. -- Linda Graetz

White-tailed Hawk: Just south of Katy, observed large buteo, long pointed wings, short tail, white breast and belly, white underwing linings with black-tipped primaries, white tail with black band. Noticed white top of tail and black band when bird banked, head darker, hooded. Flew off, circling, northwest toward Waller County. Later I revisited this area and saw a white-tailed hawk perched on a telephone pole just off the Fulshear-Katy Road about two miles southwest of the first sighting. More than likely this was the same bird. Observed white breast and belly, hooded head, white tail with black band, wing tips extended beyond tip of tail. -- Bernd Gravenstein

Rough-legged Hawk: Seen near northeast corner of Shoverer Pond for about five minutes in good light through 10x binoculars and 25x-40x telescope, both perched and flying. Back brown, flecked with white. Head much lighter than back, striped brown. Underparts streaked, legs feathered to toes. In flight hovered almost continuously, interrupted only by short glides. White patches at base of primaries on upper wing, dark wrist patches on underwing. Tail white with dark subterminal band. Dark belly was not apparent on this individual. Probably an immature.

A second individual was seen on this same date on Bolivar Peninsula just west of High Island. It was identical to above, except that the tail band, seen while the bird was perched, was black, becoming brown toward the end. Also hovered in flight, but not as much as the above individual. -- Virginia & Maurice Gatlin

GOLDEN EAGLE: 1ST REPORT FOR 3RD WK Near Fulshear on the Fulshear-Katy Road, I saw a large, dark raptor, alternately flapping and gliding. Much larger than nearby Harriers. Overall dark brown, wing linings somewhat darker than primaries and secondaries. Saw no white in the underwings. Dark tail, somewhat lighter at base. The bird landed on top of a telephone pole. Perched, it looked uniformly dark brown, a little bit lighter around head and nape. Bill dark and large. Observed with 7x50 binocs and 30x scope. Lighting was poor. Five minutes earlier I had observed two immature Bald Eagles take off from the ground and fly after a flock of Sandhill Cranes. The white spotting on these two birds was very much in evidence. On Feb. 18 I found a Golden Eagle, probably the same bird, in almost the exact same spot. This time in much better light I observed a few white feathers at the base of the primaries. A sheriff's deputy, who stopped to check out my window mounted scope, which he at first thought was a rifle, informed me that the eagle had been seen around there for quite some time. -- Bernd Gravenstein

Stilt Sandpiper: One individual feeding with dowitchers in flooded field at Anahuac NWR; noticeably smaller and slimmer than dowitchers; this bird was in winter plumage: light grayish-brown above, white below with distinct light superciliiary stripe; legs dark greenish, proportionately longer than dowitchers but shorter than Lesser Yellowlegs; bill about 2" long with distinct droop at tip; 20-45x zoom scope from 100m under overcast skies. -- Randy Pinkston & Mark Brown

SWIFT, sp.: NO PREVIOUS FEB. REPORTS FOR SWIFT SP. Two birds over woods at Exxon Chemical Technology Center in Baytown. Small birds, dark with very streamlined body. Wings were large, sickle shaped. Birds flew with very fluttery wing beats. I was alerted to the birds by their "twittering" calls. Birds were observed at 40-100 meters with naked eye for about 10 seconds. -- Ed Rozenburg

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER: 1ST REPORT FOR 4TH WK Seen feeding in live oaks at 40 Acre Lake in close association with chickadees and titmice. Bird had bright golden cheeks with greenish ear patches, green crown and back, two white wingbars, black flecked throat; white belly with black streaks on sides. During 10 minute observation, bird made "chip" calls that were distinctly different from nearby yellow-rumps. Saw in good light at 30' with 10x50 binocs. -- Derek Muschalek

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: 1ST REPORT FOR 4TH WK Seen at 20-30 ft. with 8x30 and 7x35 binocs. Yellow head that covered crown and down to shoulders, rest of bird was dark. It was slightly larger than red-winged blackbirds and much bulkier, the bill looked large and conical relative to the red-winged blackbirds. Saw some males with white wing spot and black eye mark, also saw some females or first winter males.

-- Robert Oberfelder & Jane Weisemann

EDITOR'S NOTES February, 1985

WINTER SEASON CHAETURINAE ON THE UTC: Here is the much promised discussion of wintering swifts on the UTC. Last Nov. Noel Pettingell sent to the CH a sighting of what he estimated to be 5000+ chimney swifts present in downtown Houston on Nov. 1st. He checked the site regularly for the next several weeks and 1 bird was present through the evening of Nov. 30th (& thus the Dec. 1 record --see Dec. CH). The latest fall record for chimney swift on the UTC is Dec. 6th. Noel's discussion, sent with the Nov. sightings, is reproduced below:

"All observations were made at a site in downtown Houston which I had never previously checked as a possible roost for lingering swifts during Nov. In prior years swifts were present in the vicinity of the U of H Downtown College (old M&M Bldg.) as late as Dec. 6, 1978 (see Spoonbill, Dec., 1975 & 1978 and Jan., 1979) and at the east end of the main Post Office Bldg. near Franklin & Smith as late as Nov. 9, 1982 (Spoonbill, Dec., 1982). This year's site was the Cotton Exchange Bldg. on Prairie near Austin (NE corner). I didn't check either of the other two sites this year.

On Nov. 1 between 5:45 & 6 pm (dusk) I counted between 5 to 10 birds per second entering a chimney on the SE side of the building, which would be a total of between 4,500 to 9,000 birds. Large numbers had already gone to roost before 5:45 so the actual total might well have exceeded 10,000 birds within that one chimney! George Lowery, Jr. in "Louisiana Birds" (1955, p.336) mentions that as many as 7,000 chimney swifts roosted in a single chimney in Baton Rouge. The chimney on the Cotton Exchange Bldg. is approximately 18 stories high and has an outside diameter of 4.5 ft. Although Lowery believed (1974 ed., p. 398) that any swift seen in Louisiana after the first week of November & before the second week of March was almost certainly Vaux's since there is no unequivocal evidence that the chimney swift is ever present anywhere in the United States in this period, it is nevertheless apparent that small numbers of chimney swifts linger past the first week of Nov. in the downtown Houston area. Temperatures in Houston during Nov. ranged from 87 degrees F on the first to 31 degrees F on the 22nd. Despite temperatures in the low 30's on the 22nd, 23rd, & 28th swifts were still present in downtown Houston at the end of the month. ----- Noel Pettingell"

Noel also included the following note for a Nov., 1982 sighting for which the field notes did not appear in the CH.

"Swift, Chimney: Houston-(1)8,9,NP"

"Seen at dusk (5:25-5:34 CST) in vicinity of Main Post Office with 7X35 binoculars. This individual appeared somewhat smaller with dingier underparts than typical birds seen during the summer so was most likely a sub-adult. It went to roost (at 5:34) in the same chimney as in previous years (see Spoonbill, Nov. & Dec. 1974, 1975, 1979), i.e., east end of building near Franklin and Smith. I returned to this site on Nov. 9 (5:20-5:45pm), Nov. 10 (5:10-5:45), and Nov. 11 (5:20-5:35) but the bird had apparently left the area on the morning of Nov. 9 since it did not return to roost at dusk on any of the three dates subsequent to Nov. 8. I did not hear any call notes from the bird I observed, nor did I see any swifts in the vicinity of the U of H Downtown College (old M&M Bldg.) where large numbers had previously roosted, the latest being Dec. 6/7, 1978 (See Spoonbill, Dec. 1975 & 1978 and Jan. 1979). Last year a pair of swifts were seen by Ben Feltner and myself at Clear Lake City (Camino Village Apts.) on Nov. 8. --Noel Pettingell"

Although I agree with Noel that lingering flocks of swifts in the late fall are more likely Chimney Swifts, and early spring sightings, such as the one reported in this month's CH are probably Chimney, any swift seen on the UTC during the winter months should receive careful attention from the observer. There are sight records of chaetura in Texas during Dec., Jan., & Feb. and these have been considered as Vaux's by Oberholser in The Birdlife of Texas. However, Vaux's Swift remains as hypothetical status in Texas because there are no specimens, photographs, or other documentation for the

state. Thus winter sightings of swift present a difficult problem, a tricky identification on the wing and no documentation of either species in the winter.

American Woodcock: This seems to have been the winter of the woodcock on the UTC. From Nov.-Feb., 63 birds were reported to the CH. Doug Williams reported as many as 10 individuals present at the Houston Arboretum. The last display flight was observed there on 2/18 & none were present after 2/22. Randy Pinkston & Mark Brown heard the "nasal 'eeent' call of (a) displaying male repeatedly 15 mins. before dawn over pines along Hwy. 61 in Chambers Co." on 2/23 & Peggy Milstead still had a single individual present in Westbury on 2/24. Woodcocks are uncommon on the UTC in the winter & very rare in the latter part of February.

Owl Reports: This month there were 5 species of owls reported, with a noteworthy 20 Banded Owls at Brazos Bend SP! Since the CH does not get all that many owl reports, especially for as common as some of the species are, here is a hearty "Keep up the good work!" thank you.

Pine Warblers: These guys sure were common this winter, and not always in pine trees! 610 were reported to the CH Nov.-Feb., of which 226 were from the Houston CC.

"Beware of this gull!" by Randy Pinkston
"Many Bonaparte's Gulls occupied Bolivar flats on 2/23. Among them was a slightly larger gull which was entirely white except for the dark spot behind the eye typical of several small dark-headed gulls in winter. The bill and eyes were black as best we could tell from our viewing distance of 50-150 meters. When it flew we both saw well that the lower wing surface was an unmarked stark white and, as it landed again, we could make out a faint suggestion of a Bonaparte's pattern on the white upper wing surface.

Prior to seeing the bird fly, our excitement escalated over the possibility of its being a Com. Black-headed Gull. It was like a UTC version of that incredible discovery made by Tony Gallucci and Kelly Bryan at the Lake Livingston dam three years ago. Unfortunately, I am now sure our bird was a leucistic Bonaparte's Gull, probably a male which would appear larger in a group of females and immatures.

Remember that leucistic variants are common among gulls. If you see this or some similar gull in the future, consider that first before you let your imagination run wild!" (Good advice, ed.)

Robins, Robins, & More Robins - American that is: A note from Bob Honig on 2/6 "At least 10,000 individuals seen in a semi-continuous flock flying E over the Westwood Mall area. The birds were flying in a stream reminiscent of blackbird flocks returning to their roost; in fact, at first glance I took them for blackbirds until I heard their calls. The flock had apparently been flying past my vantage point for some time before I arrived & continued for a good 10 minutes after I noticed them. Approximately sunset." On the same day, Doug Williams estimated 5,000 individuals at the Houston Arboretum. Robin movement day no doubt!

CONTINUING BIRD STUDIES

Shore and Beach Birds of Texas -

Avocets, herons, rails, sandpipers, terns and plovers are just a few of the many species of birds found on the Texas coast. Elaine Robinson Adams, well-known leader of birding tours, will discuss the habitats, behavior and identifying characteristics of these birds.

When: Tuesdays, April 9 and 16
7:30 - 9:00 PM
Field trips - Saturday, April 13 to Boliver Flats and Saturday, April 20, to Galveston.

Fee: \$65.

For more information and a free flyer call Rice University Offices of Continuing Studies and Special Programs, 520-6022.

Send requests for OG information, checklists, maps, to:
Maxine Davis, 10602 Cedarhurst
Houston 77096, 723-8559

Send bird records for Clearing House before 3rd of month to:
Ron Braun, 1302 Berrywood Ln.
Houston 77077, 496-3108

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

Rare Bird Alert Tape, sponsored by The Piney Woods Wildlife Society:
821-2846

Send announcements, articles, etc. for The Spoonbill to editor:
Dr. B. C. Robison
10331 Longmont, Houston 77042
(h) 974-1894

Send dues, subscriptions and changes of address to:
Peter Vennema, 2120 Tangle
Houston 77005, 520-6803
Annual Dues: \$11.00
(ONC \$5, OG \$6)
Annual Subscriptions: \$9.00

ORNITHOLOGY GROUP (Outdoor Nature Club)

c/o Beth Hudson
623 Hallie
Houston, TX 77024

(RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED)

Non-profit Org U.S. Postage PAID Houston, Texas Permit No. 1063
--