



# The Spoonbill

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

January 2003

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## February Program

# PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS IN YOUR BACK YARD

The February program will feature well-known nature photographer Kathy Adams Clark. Many of you have seen Kathy's work in the Houston Chronicle in the weekly article on nature written by her husband Gary Clark. Kathy also teaches photography through Leisure Learning and has numerous other published picture citations.

Kathy's topic for the evening will be "Photographing Birds in The Backyard". Please join us for what should be an interesting and informative talk. The Learning Corner will begin at 6:30 P.M. and the General Meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M.

<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Inside this issue:</b>
<b>Monday, February 3</b>	About the OG <b>2</b>
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<b>Learning Corner</b>	Field Trips <b>5</b>
<b>6:30 p.m.</b>	Buffalo Bayou Christmas Bird Count <b>6-7</b>
David Bradford will present bird identification tips. Bring your field guide.	Membership Form <b>8</b>

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

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

### Newsletter submissions:

Mary Pat Haddican  
mphdd@worldnet.att.net  
(by the 10th of the month)

### Minutes of the January Meeting Margret Simmons

Learning Corner: Rob Thacker started a study of the warblers of North America, grouping them by migration patterns, i.e., Caribbean-East coast, trans-gulf, circum-gulf, West coast.

Chairman Skip Almony conducted the meeting. There were 67 people present. Tracy Kleinhans provided the refreshments.

Bird Sightings: Summer Tanager; Western Tanager; many good birds on the Buffalo Bayou CBC on Saturday including leucistic Yellow-rumped Warbler, Bullock's Oriole, Roseate Spoonbill, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Vermilion Flycatcher, Winter Wren, Nashville Warbler, Tropical Parula, Henslow's & Fox Sparrows and others; Peregrine Falcon near Galleria; Wilson's Phalarope;

Common Nighthawk.

Monthly Field Trip: David Bradford will lead a trip to study wintering sparrows of West Harris County on January 25, 2003 at 7:30a.m.

Quarterly Field Trip: The trip to the Rio Grande Valley will be Jan 24-26 and will be led by Brad McKinney of the World Birding Center. People who wish to attend need to sign up or let Skip know by Jan 15 to see if there will be enough participants.

Programs: The OG Fiftieth Anniversary party will be in lieu of a meeting in May. If anyone has information on the history of the Ornithology Group, please get it to Skip so that he can assemble an album for the celebration.

Environmental Issues: Mary Dodson provided a hand-out with a summary of several very important environmental concerns that need immediate attention. If anyone provides input on these issues, they are encouraged to also inform the environmental lawyer, Jim Blackburn, at Blackburn & Carter, 3131 Eastside Suite 450, 77098, fax 713-524-5165. A very brief description of the issues follows:

The Houston-Galveston Area Council will vote on a transportation plan (Amendment 190) in February that includes a bridge between Galveston and Bolivar Peninsula to be built by the Harris County Toll Road Authority, the I-10 expansion and the Grand Parkway expansion. The public comment period has been extended to February 5, 2003, and everyone is encouraged to submit written comments about these projects to Pat Waskowiak at [pwaskowiak@hgac.cog.tx.us](mailto:pwaskowiak@hgac.cog.tx.us), or by fax (713) 993-4508, or surface mail to Houston-Galveston Area Council, P.O. Box 22777, Houston, Texas 77227.

Public hearings will be held on Jan 14 & 15 about the San Jacinto Rail Project to build a new rail line through east Houston and Pasadena to the Bayport Terminal. Comments about this project may be faxed to Ms. Dana White at 1-866-293-4979 until February 21, 2003. For more information, contact the Galveston Bay Conservation & Preservation Assn. at 281-326-3343.

Several communities near Bayport have submitted a proposal to Texas Parks and Wildlife to create a large bayfront park (Fonteno Bayshore Park) instead of an expansion of Bayport. This is an ecologically significant tract of coastal prairie that has never been plowed or leveled.

Water resources have been taxed to the limit in Texas and more information on critical projects will be placed on the ONC website, <http://www.OutdoorNatureClub.org/>.

*continued on p. 4*

## Chairman's Message Skip Almoney

This month I am going to make a call for volunteers. We are approaching election time for officers for the upcoming year beginning in June. I want to urge you to consider volunteering to help the OG provide the type of services that you want from our organization. I will be stepping down as President as will all the other officers. In addition, there are a number of committee chairpersons who are not going to continue.

The officers to be elected are:

**Chairperson** – Primary duties are to plan, organize and carryout the activities of the OG with the aid of the other officers and committee chairperson. This individual does not need to be a great birder, but someone who can lead meetings and organize activities.

**Vice Chairperson** - As you know we have not had a Vice Chairperson for the past two years. The Vice Chairperson has recently been responsible for the meeting programs and as a stand-in for the Chairperson when he/she is not available. In the past, the Vice Chairman has become the Chairman after the Chairman's term of office is completed.

**Secretary** – The Secretary keeps the minutes for both the general and board meeting of the OG. These minutes are published in the Spoonbill.

**Treasurer** – handles all the financial aspects for the organization

The committee chairpersons are:

**Spoonbill Editor** – Edits and prepares the Spoonbill for publication monthly.

**Field Trip Coordinator** – Working with the Chairperson, plans where and when the field trips will be and finds a leader for each trip.

**Membership Chairperson** – Keeps membership records and provides name tags for the meetings.

**Librarian** – Keeps the OG's library books and its records. Makes the books available for any member who wishes to borrow a book.

**Environmental Coordinator** – Keeps members informed of environmental issues that affect the habitat and life of birds.

Each of these jobs is important and vital to help the OG be a thriving and growing organization. Please consider taking on one of these jobs for your organization. Contact either myself, or any member of the nominating committee, David Sarkozi, Bob Ohmart, and Mary Dodson for additional information or to let them know of your desire to be an officer or a Chairperson. Remember, it is only through volunteer efforts that our organization succeeds. – *Skip Almoney*

## Program and Field Trip Schedule for 2002-2003

### August

- 5 – Meeting – TBA
- 17 – Field Trip – East Beach/Bolivar Flats

### September

- 9 – Meeting – Kevin Karlson – For The Love of Birds
- Learning Corner: Birding Basics, Part I
- 21 – Field Trip – Hawk Watch

### October

- 7 – Meeting – Bob Fergus - Bird Vision
- Learning Corner: Birding Basics, Part II
- 19 - Field Trip – San Jacinto Monument Park
- 25-26 – Quarterly Field Trip – Avery Island/S. Louisiana

### November

- 4 – Meeting – David Dauphin - Shorebird Identification
- 16 – Field Trip – Bolivar Flats

### December

- 2 – Meeting – Keith Arnold – CBC – Use of Data
- 14 – Field Trip – Houston CBC

### January

- 6 – Meeting – Steve Matherly—Birds of South Africa
- 25 – Field Trip – West Harris County
- 24-26 – Quarterly Field Trip – Rio Grande Valley

### February

- 3 – Meeting – Kathy Adams Clark – Photographing Birds in the Backyard
- 15 – Field Trip – Brazos Bend

### March

- 2 – Meeting – Birding in Seabrook
- 25 – Field Trip – Texas City Preserve
- 29 – Field Trip – Texas City Preserve

### April

- 7 – Meeting – Kelly Bryan – Davis Mountain Birding
- 19 – Field Trip – Anahuac/High Island
- 25-27 – Quarterly Field Trip: Choke Canyon

### May

- 5 – Meeting – OG 50th Birthday Party
- 17 - Field Trip – Quintana/Brazoria Area

*Continued from p. 2*

The Bush Administration eased the rules on December 31, 2002, to allow industries and refineries to expand and make major repairs and modifications to plants without adding pollution control equipment. Nine states are suing contending that the new rules violate the Clean Air Act of 1970 and will cause health problems and make it harder to meet federal air quality standards.

Other Announcements:

Dick Whanger encouraged members to submit photos to the ONC photo contest before the deadline of March 5, 2003. The winning photos get good publicity in libraries throughout Houston. Entrants are required to be members of the Photography Group, but their dues are nominal.

Tracy Kleinhans requested that volunteers sign up to bring refreshments to the OG meetings. If you would like to volunteer for a monthly meeting, please contact Tracy at [birdrckick@aol.com](mailto:birdrckick@aol.com) or 281-496-0668.

Eagle Optics will be at Armand Bayou Nature Center on Sunday, Feb 23, 2003, from 9am to 5pm with a full line of optics and accessories for people to try out. A portion of the proceeds from this event will benefit ABNC. If anyone is having trouble with their Spoonbill being delivered late, they should make a complaint at their local post office. There is still a plan underway to make the Spoonbill available on the OG website at some future date.

Pat Pease reminded everyone that OG dues for 2003 were due on January 1, 2003, and many people have not paid yet. Please pay your dues.

Program: Birds of South Africa by Steve Matherly

The program was a very well-organized presentation by Steve Matherly of slides of birds of South Africa that he made on a trip there in September 2000. The slides were arranged by different habitats from the Cape of Good Hope to the Kalahari Desert. South Africa is bordered by several oceans and has a warm and cold ocean current that meet to produce an upwelling of nutrient-rich water which is the foundation of the food chain of fish that attract many pelagic birds. Some of the birds of South Africa travel as far as to the Arctic areas of Europe, Asia and the Americas and back each year. Steve's varied pictures gave us a glimpse into the birds of another continent with many different habitats. His pictures made us all wish for similar travel and several people encouraged him to enter the photo contest, especially his appealing closing slide of a White-faced Owl. The program was a real treat!

## Non-OG Events

### Eagle Optics/Armand Bayou

On Sunday, February 23, 2003, from 9 am to 5 pm, Ron Windingstad of Eagle Optics will be at Armand Bayou Nature Center (ABNC) with a full line of optics and accessories. Everything from the introductory binocular to the top-of-the line spotting scopes will be available for viewing and purchase. Eagle Optics gift certificates purchased now for the holidays can be applied to purchases at this event.

This will be a full-day event with ABNC allowing special early admission to give everyone time to try the equipment and have questions answered before making purchasing decisions. Normal admission prices (\$3.00 adult, \$1.00 senior citizen, \$1.00 children ages 5-17, free for ABNC Members and children under the age of 5) will be charged but will be refunded with proof of purchase.

A portion of the proceeds from this event will benefit ABNC.

ABNC is located at 8500 Bay Area Boulevard and can be reached from I-45 Gulf Freeway from the Bay Area Boulevard Exit towards Univ. of Houston Clear Lake. For further information, you can contact ABNC at (281) 474-2551.

### Arboretum Bird Watcher's Club

The Houston Arboretum & Nature Center's Bird Watcher's Club meets on the second Monday each month from 7 to 9 p.m. and offers interested individuals an informal atmosphere in which to share and learn about the natural histories of birds. Participants discuss books, films, places to go and other topics of interest. FREE.

### Brazos Bend State Park Birding Hikes

David Heinicke, Park Naturalist, and Bill Godley will lead bird hikes monthly during the winter and spring of 2002-3. Hikes are planned for selected Fridays and Sundays beginning October 4 (Friday) and October 13 (Sunday). All dates are published on the BBSP web page: [www.bbspvo.org](http://www.bbspvo.org). Hikes will start at 8 a.m. at the 40 Acre Lake parking lot. Hikes will conclude before noon or to suit your own needs. In addition, John Billard, Anne Shelton and Rob Thacker will conduct shorter duration "Beginner Bird Hikes" at 9 a.m. every other Saturday at BBSP commencing January 11 thru April 5, 2003. These hikes also begin at 40 Acre Lake. No fee other than entry to the Park.

**Field Trips**  
**Glenn Olsen**  
**281-345-4151**  
**hgolsen8@hal-pc.org**

**January 25, 2003 7:30 a.m. Sparrows of West Harris County**

David Bradford will lead us to look for wintering sparrows in West Harris County. This has been a long standing tradition for us and will continue to be one of the best trips to see and learn to identify sparrows.

**Directions:** Meet at the Peggy Wilson Elementary School at 7:30 a.m. From the intersection of I-10 and Highway 6, go north on Hwy. 6, past Clay Road to Keith Harrow Road. Turn left (west) onto Keith Harrow and continue to Windsong and the Peggy Wilson Elementary School (key map 407B). Park in the parking lot.

**January 24-26 Rio Grand Valley Field Trip**

The winter OG Quarterly Field Trip will again visit the Rio Grande Valley. The following is the probable itinerary, although the exact locations will be at the discretion of the leader.

Friday January 24, 2002 Individual transportation to the Rio Grande Valley with recommended stops along the way.

Saturday January 25, 2002 Meet in lobby of Fairfield Inn ready to bird at 7:30 A.M. Bird at Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park, Anzahlduas State Park, Santa Anna State Park and possibly McAllen city in the evening.

Sunday January 26, 2002 An eastward trip to Sable Palm and Laguna Atascosa NWR before heading home.

**Leader:** Brad McKinney of the World Birding Center will be the guide and Bill Saulmon will be the OG's coordinator for the trip.

**Participants:** There will be a maximum of 20 people on this trip.

**Costs:** Currently estimated at \$200.00/ per person for lodging and meals. A cost of \$35.00/person will be charged for our guide and miscellaneous expenses such as water and ice.

**Transportation:** Each individual will be responsible for providing their own transportation. Car pooling is strongly encouraged. The field trip will officially begin on Saturday morning at the hotel.

**Lodging:** A block of rooms has been reserved at the Fairfield Inn and Suites in Weslaco (Phone number 956/9686700). If you did not sign-up by January 15 and still wish to go call the hotel directly to reserve a room. Individuals may choose to obtain lodging elsewhere.

**Food & Drink:** There will be a cooler in the leaders' vehicle with chilled bottled water. All meals will be at the individual's expense.

**Clothing:** The climate will probably be warm and humid with possibly chilly evenings. It is highly recommended that cool clothing that covers both arms and legs be worn to prevent mosquito bites.

**February 15 BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK**

Meet at 8:00 am. in the Parking Lot of 40 Acre Lake. Our leader will be Glenn Olsen. We will look for wintering warblers, ducks and other marsh species, with possibilities including Bald Eagle and Vermillion flycatcher. In years past they have had masked duck. We should find many species to discuss and enjoy.

**DIRECTIONS:** From the intersection of Beltway 8 and 59 South. Go south on 59, cross over the Brazos River and take the first exit (signs may say Crabb River Rd, FM 2759 south and HWY 99 north). After exiting Hwy 59 turn, left at the light and go over Hwy 59; you are now on FM 2759 also known as Crabb River Rd. Continue about 2 miles to the intersection of FM 762, a stop sign/light. Go straight across through the intersection, cross over the railroad tracks, you are now on FM 762. Continue on 762 several miles to the Park Entrance which will be on your left. Go to the entrance booth pay the Park fee (\$3.00 per person, a great value). Continue on the main road to the first parking lot on your left, only a few hundred yards from the booth.. If you happen to be birdwatching and miss the entrance, 762 dead ends into FM 1462. The physical address is 21901 FM 762 Needville. Phone 979-553-5101.

Website: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/brazos/brazos.htm](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/brazos/brazos.htm)

## BUFFALO BAYOU CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The following is the unofficial list of birds found in the Buffalo Bayou Christmas Bird Count on January 4, 2003. If the 132 species stand, this would represent a new count high (the previous high was 127 in January 1998). For more information, contact TXBFCBC@aol.com.

1. Grebe, Pied-billed
2. Pelican, Amer. White
3. Cormorant, Dbl-crested
4. Cormorant, Neotropic
5. Anhinga
6. Heron, Great Blue
7. Egret, Great
8. Egret, Snowy
9. Heron, Little Blue
10. Heron, Tricolored
11. Egret, Cattle
12. Heron, Green
13. Night-Heron, Black-crowned
14. Ibis, White
15. Ibis, White-faced
16. Spoonbill, Roseate
17. Vulture, Black
18. Vulture, Turkey
19. Whistling-Duck, Blk-bellied
20. Whistling-Duck, Fulvous
21. Goose, Gtr. White-fronted
22. Goose, Snow (Form Unspecified)
23. Goose, Canada
24. Duck, Wood
25. Gadwall
26. Wigeon, American
27. Mallard
28. Duck, Mottled
29. Shoveler, N.
30. Teal, Green-winged
31. GOLDENEYE, COMMON
32. MERGANSER, HOODED
33. Osprey
34. Harrier, N.
35. Hawk, Sharp-shinned
36. Hawk, Cooper's
37. Hawk, Red-shouldered
38. Hawk, Red-tailed
39. Caracara, Crested
40. Kestrel, Amer.
41. Merlin
42. Peregrine Falcon
43. Coot, Amer.
44. Killdeer
45. Yellowlegs, Gtr.
46. Sandpiper, Spotted
47. Sandpiper, Least
48. Snipe, Common
49. Gull, Laughing
50. Gull, Ring-billed
51. Tern, Caspian
52. Dove, Rock
53. Collared-Dove, Eur.  
(Exotic) Turtle-Dove, Ringed
54. Dove, White-winged
55. Dove, Mourning
56. Dove, Inca
57. Parakeet, Monk  
(Exotic) Budgerigar
58. Owl, Barn
59. Screech-Owl, E.
60. Owl, Great Horned
61. Owl, Barred
62. Hummingbird, Ruby-throated
63. Hummingbird, Black-chinned
64. Hummingbird, Rufous
65. Kingfisher, Belted
66. Woodpecker, Red-headed
67. Woodpecker, Red-bellied
68. Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied
69. Woodpecker, Downy
70. Flicker, N. (Yellow-shafted)
71. Woodpecker, Pileated
72. Phoebe, Eastern
73. Flycatcher, Vermilion
74. Shrike, Loggerhead
75. Vireo, White-Eyed
76. Vireo, Blue-Headed
77. Jay, Blue
78. Crow, Amer.
79. Chickadee, Carolina
80. Titmouse, Tufted
81. Creeper, Brown
82. Wren, Carolina
83. Wren, Bewick's
84. Wren, House
85. Wren, Winter
86. Wren, Sedge
87. Kinglet, Golden-crowned
88. Kinglet, Ruby-crowned
89. Gnatcatcher, Blue-Gray
90. Bluebird, Eastern

91. Thrush, Hermit
92. Robin, American
93. Catbird, Gray
94. Mockingbird, N.
95. Thrasher, Brown
96. Starling, European
97. Pipit, American
98. Waxwing, Cedar
99. Warbler, Orange-crowned
100. Warbler, Nashville
101. Parula, Tropical
102. Warbler, Yell-rumped (Myrtle)  
(Form) Warbler, Yell-rumped  
(Audubon's)
103. Warbler, Pine
104. Redstart, American
105. Waterthrush, Louisiana
106. Yellowthroat, Common
107. Warbler, Wilson's  
(count week) Tanager, Western
108. Towhee, Spotted
109. Sparrow, Chipping
110. Sparrow, Field
111. Sparrow, Vesper
112. Sparrow, Savannah
113. SPARROW, HENSLow'S
114. Sparrow, Le Conte's
115. Sparrow, Fox
116. Sparrow, Song
117. Sparrow, Lincoln's
118. Sparrow, Swamp
119. Sparrow, Wh-thrtd.
120. Sparrow, Harris'
121. Sparrow, Wh-crowned
122. Junco, Dark-Eyed (Slate-colored)
123. Cardinal, Northern
124. Blackbird, Red-winged
125. Meadowlark, E.
126. Blackbird, Rusty
127. Grackle, Common
128. Grackle, Grt.-tailed
129. Cowbird, Brown-headed  
(count week) Oriole, Bullock's
130. Finch, House
131. Goldfinch, Amer.
132. Sparrow, House

#### LIBRARY ADDITIONS

The following books have been added to the OG Library:

1. *"Where To Watch Birds In Asia" by Nigel Wheatley (1996), hardback - 463 pages, donated by Carl Aiken.*

2. *"A Guide To The Birds Of Wallacea (Indonesia)" by Brian J. Coates and K. David Bishop (1997), hardback - 535 pages, donated by Carl Aiken.*

3. *"Living On The Wind - Across The Hemisphere With Migratory Birds" by Scott Weidensaul (1999), hardback - 420 pages, donated by Bill Saulmon.*

To check out these or any books in the OG library contact Bill Saulmon at 281-537-6924, or by email at dean1960@aol.com

#### ***In Memory***

*We note the recent passing of Margaret Jones. She and her late husband T. Paul Jones were avid birders and OG supporters.*

Outdoor Nature Club  
Ornithology Group  
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You can also join at [www.ornithologygroup.org](http://www.ornithologygroup.org)