

THE SPOONBILL

Volume 5 No. 10

February 1957

 * CROW *
 * Perhaps Henry Ward Beecher gave us the best *
 * summation of this sable fellow's intelligence *
 * when he remarked that if men wore feathers *
 * and wings, a very few of them would be clever *
 * enough to be crows." *
 * OUR AMAZING BIRDS by Robt S.Lemmon *
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Published by the Ornithology Group, Outdoor Nature Club, Houston, Texas

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

- February 24th - Ornithology Group field trip to see Sandhill cranes. Meet at 9 A.M. at the corner of Westheimer and Post Oak. The trip will cover much of the area between Post Oak and the Brazos.
- March 9th - Outdoor Nature Club overnight field trip to Welder Refuge (near Sinton) and St. Joseph Island. Leader Miss Dorothy Sorrells
- April 6 - 7 - Texas Ornithological Society Annual Meeting in Austin at the Terrace Motel. Dr.H.C.Oberholser will be principal speaker at the dinner meeting on 6th.
- April 28 - O.G. Spring Roundup - Details will be announced in April SPOONBILL

ORNITHOLOGY GROUP REPORTS

O.G. Meeting, Thursday, February 7th - Thelma Smith, Secy.

Jimmy Murray, Chairman, called the meeting to order at the River Oaks Garden Center and introduced the guests: Mrs. Evans, Mrs. Strong and Mr. Don Bredweiser. Mr. Murray called on Noel Perley, Chairman of the Christmas Count, for a brief resume of that undertaking. Mr. Perley gave the following highlights of the Count: 133 species recorded; one party observed a total of 94 species which set a new record for the Houston counts; unusual species recorded were Black tern, Oregon junco, Parula warbler, Green-tailed towhee.

Carl Aiken presented the idea of a spring migration count to be conducted through April and May in an area yet to be defined, probably Kemah and Galveston Island.

Armand Yramategui reported that the State Game and Fish Commission had rejected the request for an economic study of the golden eagle. If made, the study would underscore the need for putting the eagle back on the protected list.

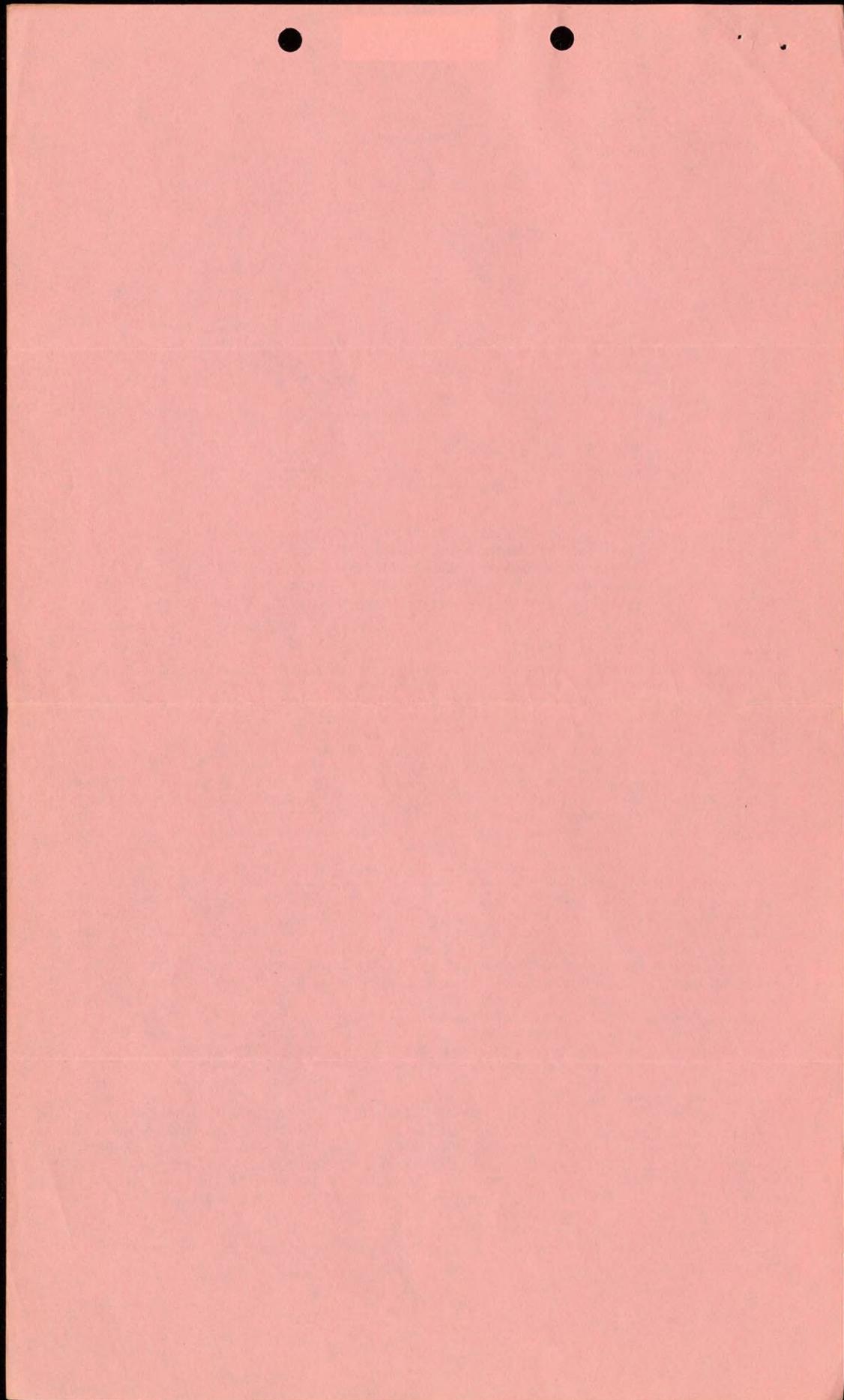
Henry V. Aldrich, ONC Chairman for the flower show in March, described the proposed exhibit and requested the loan of bird houses, feeders and mounted birds to be used in the arrangements. In addition to the exhibit, the ONC program will include two shows of colored slides, one a Sanctuary Show to be presented by L. A. McWhirter and the other, a Flower Show by Mrs. Laurence N. Dexter.

Mr. Murray reported that the land sought by the O.G. as a bird sanctuary within the City, is close to Miss Ima Hogg's home which she is deeding to the city. There is talk of putting a road through there which would make the land more accessible.

Mr. Yramategui's discussion of the "Darwinian Finches" of the Galapagos Islands was most interesting. He explained how the four genera of the Island, composed of fourteen species, are believed to have evolved from one species.

The balance of the program was devoted to 16-millimeter, color movies, taken by Mrs. Charles Aves and shown and narrated by Charles Aves. The O.G.'ers enjoyed a delightful armchair field trip to three of their favorite birding spots - Aransas Wildlife Refuge, Rockport Shore Line and Freeport. Wild turkeys stalked through the tall grasses of the refuge; snow and Canada geese and Sandhill cranes fed in the open fields; deer looked inquisitively at the camera and then scampered off; Shore birds fed and preened in the water edge, with one reddish egret putting on a particularly good show. Many other shots of wildlife appeared in Mrs. Aves' excellent film.

On behalf of the O.G.'s Mr. Murray thanked both Mr. Yramategui and Mr. Aves for their fine programs.



Report on O.G. Field Trip to Freeport - January 20th - (Vic Emanuel)

At 8:10 a.m. we left our meeting place with our primary objective to explore the possibilities of having our next Christmas Count in the Freeport area. A drop in the total species on the last three counts, to this year's total of 133 makes it almost imperative for us to change the count area. The big question is whether to change to the Cove area or the Freeport area.

Driving southward to Angleton we saw the usual common birds including a Caracara. Our first real birding stop was the Angleton Rod and Gun Club, just south of Angleton on the Angleton-Clute Road. This writer was fortunate enough to be in a party which arrived in time to get a good view of a Bald Eagle. This was in the actual proposed count circle - the Gun club is one of the richest birding areas in the circle. Here we added many birds such as Maryland yellowthroats, Ruddy ducks, Pied-billed grebes, 2 Vermillion flycatchers, Swamp sparrows, Blue-gray gnatcatchers, Red-headed woodpeckers and an American bittern, and our first big find of the trip, a male and female Wilson's warbler (GWR). Leaving the Gun Club we proceeded toward Lake Jackson and at a lake along the road we located a flock of White ibis.

Earlier Mrs. Gilman had told us that on the Sunday before (Jan. 13) while she and Mr. Gilman were scouting the area, she had seen a woodpecker with bright yellow on its head. Luckily when we reached the spot she mentioned, we found this unusual woodpecker. After securing permission from the owner to go on his property, we followed the woodpecker from tree to tree until most of the group were able to study the bird quite well. At first we thought it was surely a Golden-fronted woodpecker (7WV), but it was unlike any Golden-fronted we had ever seen. The entire back of the head from crown to nape of neck was a uniform yellowish-gold. The normal Golden-fronted woodpecker has three separate patches of color, yellow on the forehead, red on the crown and orange on the nape of the neck. In view of these differences in coloration on the head, and since this individual had yellowish-gold everywhere the Red-bellied woodpecker normally has red (including the lower belly) we are now of the opinion that this woodpecker was the Zanthochromatic phase of the Red-bellied woodpecker. Zanthochromatism is very rare and is a freak condition occurring in nature when the red portions of a bird's plumage turns yellow. Regardless of whether this bird was a Golden-fronted or a color phase of the Red-bellied, it was the find of the trip.

We continued to Lake Jackson where we stopped to eat lunch. Here on the lake we saw about 500 or more ducks including numerous Ring-necked (SWR), Canvasbacks and a few Mallards. After lunch we drove to the Bryant beach area where we added Dowitchers, Avocets, Long-billed curlews, Royal, Caspian, Forsters and Gull-billed terns, a Seaside sparrow, white pelicans and about 500 more ducks, including Pintails, Green-wing teals and others too distant to identify. On the beach we found Sanderlings, Willets and two Eared grebes in the rough surf. Most of the group ended the day at Surfside beach. Birds seen along this beach included 3 Common loons, a Spotted sandpiper and Brown pelicans. An interesting find was a colony of Black-crowned night herons near the bridge over the intracoastal canal. Ronald Fowler and Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich added a Lesser scaup and a Nighthawk (seen at Arcola). The days total was an impressive 96 species.

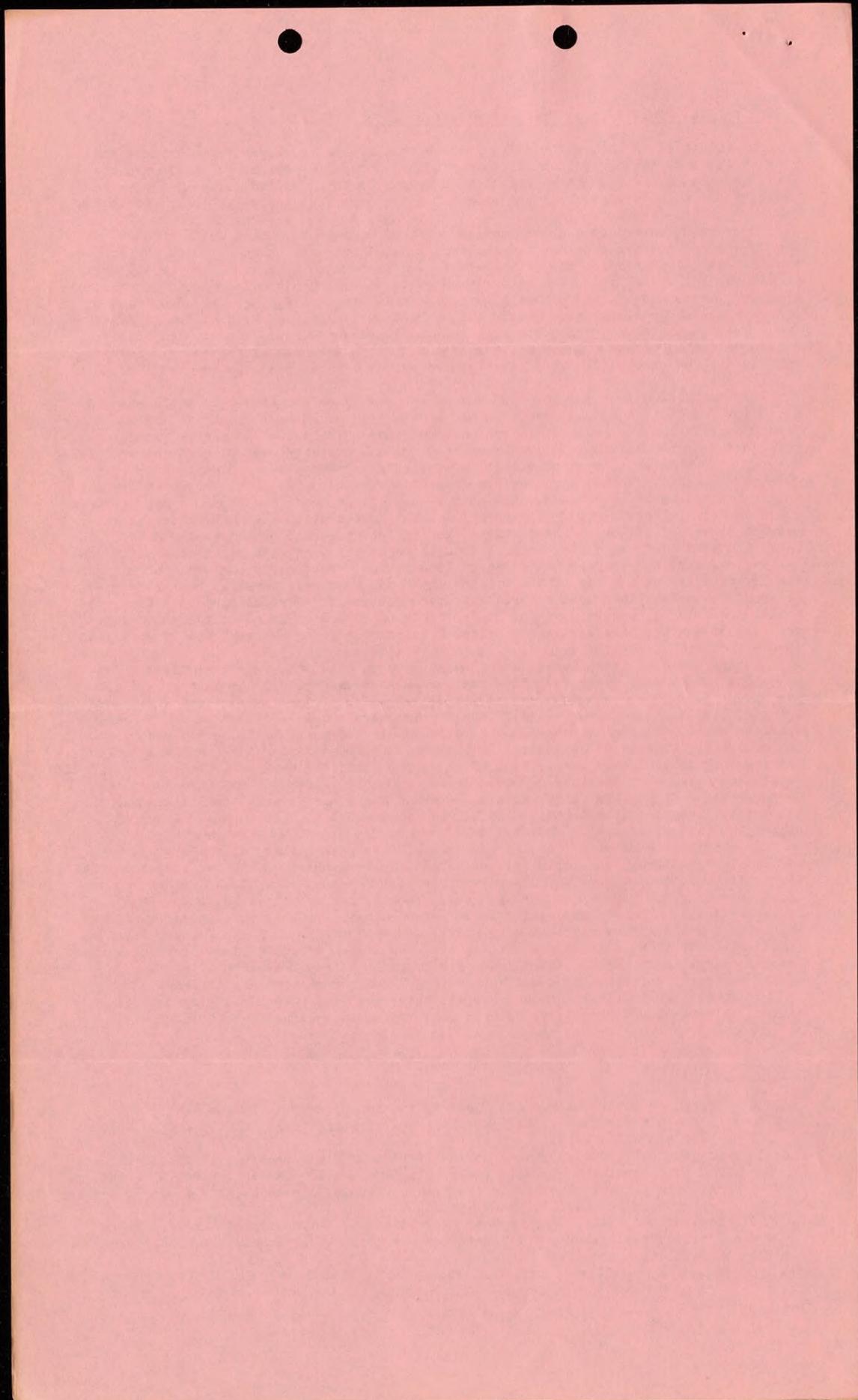
We realize the potential of the Freeport area is much higher but the big question is how high? Although this trip did not definitely tell which of the two proposed areas was superior it showed some definite advantages for this area as well as disadvantages. After more trips to both areas perhaps we can choose the best location for our 1957 Christmas count. Members and visitors who attended this field trip included: Ronald Fowler, Henry and Mickey Aldrich, Mary Clark, Josiephine Wilkin, Helen Wolfer, Charles, Jodie and Cathy Aves, Ella Wolfer, Carl Aiken, Jay Atlas, Virginia Pieratt, Frank Pieratt, Carrie Holcomb, Jerry Baker, Eva Gilman, Vic Emanuel, Nance Cunningham, C.B. Gilman, Louise and Henry Hoffman, Hyrum and Nora Strong, Jimmy Murray and Austin Evans.

We would like to thank Austin Evans who showed us some good birding spots and the Gilmans who staked out many birds to help make this a successful field trip.

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CLEARING HOUSE

- Jan. 18 - Sprague's pipits at Buffalo Speedway and Bellaire - Vic Emanuel
 Jan. 19 - Bald eagle observed on Katy-Hockley Road at Longenbaugh Road by Carrie Holcomb, and Lecta Stilwell.
 Jan. 20 - Screech owl (reddish phase) Robins (few) many field sparrows at Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary - Ronald Fowler, Vic Emanuel, Joe Heiser, Miss Giesecke.
 Jan. 20 - Ferruginous Hawk observed in the Freeport-Angleton area by Ruth Moorman, Lecta Stilwell, Dr. Lucille Robey and NCO
 Jan. 27 - Lapland Longspurs, Gray-headed, Pink-sided and Slate-colored juncos, 2 Vermillion flycatchers, a Yellowthroated warbler - Vic Emanuel, Ronald Fowler, Carl Aiken and Cleta Klash.
 Jan. 27 - Sparrows on Miller-Cutoff Road - Chipping, Clay-colored, Field, White-crowned, White-throated and Swamp - Ruth Moorman, Thelma Smith and NCO



CLEARING HOUSE - Cont.

- Feb. 1 - Flock of Robins at Rice Institute - Vic Emanuel
 Feb. 2 - Western meadowlark on Addicks-Satsuma Road; in Kempner Park Galveston - Empidonax flycatcher, Cedar waxwings (25), and one unidentified hummingbird - VE and NP
 Feb. 7 - Bobwhite along Bray's Bayou near Sampson - Noel Perley

Purple Martins

On February 4th Mrs. Jerry Baker observed one "scout" Purple Martin circling over her home in the eastern section of Houston. On the same day, one lone martin was noted by Armand Yramategui flying about tree-top height, over his home in the Riverside section. This beats by one day the report in the Houston Post of advance-guard martins looking over bird houses in the southern part of the city. Martins are appearing about ten days earlier than in 1956.

Cowbirds Move to City

For many years thousands of English sparrows have roosted in the large live-oak trees surrounding the old Court House on Congress and Fannin. Mr. Joe Heiser reports that from 10,000 to 25,000 or more Brown-headed cowbirds have now joined with the sparrows in their roosting quarters. It is an impressive sight to see these immense flights of cowbirds maneuver in perfect unison over the downtown streets as they swoop down first into one tree, then another, as they select their preferred roosting place for the night. These birds were first noted around January 15th, and have continued to fly in from their feeding grounds each evening around 5:00 p.m.

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COMMENTS ON WEATHER & BIRDS IN THIS AREA - (NCO)

Lack of rain during the summer and fall of 1956 caused the ground to harden, breaking into large cracks that stretched over the barren pastures. The woods became dry and parched and many of our largest pines died from lack of moisture in the sub-soil. Individuals of western species who wandered eastward during the fall probably found the semi-arid conditions prevailing in this area resembled to some extent, their own preferred habitat. In some instances, food and water supplies improved as these wanderers moved eastward. Probably many individuals on reaching the Gulf Coast turned toward the South, but others, who ordinarily winter in Mexico and farther south, found ample food and mild temperatures, and were reluctant to move on.

In the prairies to the west of Houston where hungry cattle and lack of rains left the pastures dry and brown, flocks of longspurs and horned larks found suitable food and cover. Rains, however, during the latter part of December and moderate amounts of moisture through January, plus continued mild temperatures (only one light freeze) are fast turning the fields and pastures back to their normal green. In Houston itself, the lawns are also regaining their bright green color, Azaleas and Yellow jasmines were in bloom by February 1st, and by February 6th redbud trees were in blossom. There is spring-like activity among our resident birds with both Cardinals and Mockingbirds filling the air with their happy songs. And although we still have two more months of possible cold weather --- to all appearances at this time, spring has reached Houston.

A few early martins have arrived, which, to some people, foretell the arrival of spring, but to others, the robin is considered the authentic harbinger of spring, and very few robins as yet have passed through this area. For about three weeks, one lone robin has been coming to my yard and accepting small pieces of suet in lieu of the earth worms and grubs that seem to be scarce since our recent prolonged dry weather. Only a few scattered robins have been reported in the parks and residential areas of Houston.

Last year at this time, robins were abundant in the woods, in the fields, parks and residential areas -- 40,000 were estimated to be in one neighborhood feeding on the fruit of camphor trees. Also in January 1956, we experienced an unusual invasion of Purple finches -- none have been reported in 1957. Our large flights of Cedar waxwings are also late in arriving -- only small scattered flocks have been seen thus far.

During the fall of 1956 and through January 1957, the Houston, Galveston and Cove areas have experienced an unusual invasion of birds from various sections of the country. Some are considered rare winter visitants, some are seen here only in small numbers, or come through only as migrants, others are accidentals and two species are new birds -- not included on the Upper Gulf Coast Checklist. Following is a summation of these uncommon species by location and date for Oct., Nov., Dec. 1956 and January 1957:--

Green-tailed Towhee (6WV)

Mr. A.K. McKay first reported one individual of this species in Cove on October 21, One was seen by him on November 3rd, another on November 24th. In December Mr. McKay recorded one of this species on the 15th and another on the 24th. In the Houston area a Green-tailed towhee was listed on the Christmas Count on December 23rd -- first time this species has appeared on a Houston Christmas Count.



Red-shafted Flicker (6WV)

Recorded in Galveston County Park on Nov. 3rd by VE and CA; recorded west of Houston on Nov. 18th by NCO and LS. Mr. McKay's first record of this species in the Cove area was made in 1956.

Groove-billed Ani (7V) - Oct. 14, 1956 - 3 individuals of this species were observed on Galveston Island by Mr. and Mrs. Chas. W. Hamilton.

Ground Dove (5R)

Three individuals of this species were recorded on western Galveston Island on Nov. 17th and two individuals were observed west of Houston on Nov. 11th. Mr. McKay in Cove reported from 9 to 14 Ground doves on Nov. 24th and 5 were seen there on December 15th.

Red-throated Loon (6WV)

Recorded by Mr. A.K. McKay in the Cove area on November 17th and 21st.

White-crowned Sparrow (4WR)

This species was more abundant than usual in the Houston area & widely distributed. Usually White-crown sparrows are scarce and restricted to very limited areas. First seen in the Memorial Drive area on November 18th many subsequent sightings have been recorded.

In Cove Mr. McKay saw his first white-crown on October 21st. In November he found them very numerous, from 5 to 75 were seen on eight days. More than ever before were observed in December - as high as 40 on eight days. In January he found 20 on Jan. 20th.

Harris Sparrows (6WV)

This species is classified on our checklist as a "Rare Winter Visitant". In the Houston area an unusual number have wintered here. First record in this area was on Oct. 27, they were seen regularly through November, December and January. In the Cove area Mr. McKay reported one Harris' sparrow on November 18th and 15 on November 24th. In December he saw as many as 30 in one day, and in January he observed 7 on January 5th.

Clay-colored Sparrow (6WV)

This species (rare winter visitant) was first seen in the Houston area October 11 1956, near Hockley when O.G. members on a field trip observed 2 individuals. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton observed individuals of this species in the Katy-Hockley area on November 4th. Clay-colored sparrows were seen on Dec. 23rd on the Christmas Bird Count by AMY and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoffman. They were recorded on Jan. 27th on the Miller-Cutoff Road.

In the Cove area Mr. McKay saw three Clay-colored sparrows on November 1st, 5 on November 3rd, 5 on the 24th and 1 on the 30th

Bewick's Wren (6V)

In October 1956 Mr. McKay reported this species more common than usual in the Cove area and in November he recorded more in one day than ever before - 9 on November 3rd and 4 on November 11th. In December from 1 to 3 were seen on 6 days, and in January Mr. McKay saw three on January 5th and 2 on January 19th.

In the Houston area a Bewick's wren was recorded north of Hockley on January 6th by Ronald Fowler and Vic Emanuel.

Spoonbills (5WV)

Spoonbills wintering in the Cove area were reported by Mr. McKay as more abundant than ever before. He recorded 21 individuals on November 2nd, and 22 individuals on November 25th. In December from 5 to 6 birds were seen on 5 days, and in January Mr. McKay recorded 50 on January 19th.

Say's Phoebe (6WV)

Galveston Area - A single Say's Phoebe was reported in Galveston by Mr. John E. Hildebrand. He states it has been seen in the area since Christmas and can be seen almost every day.

Cove Area - The first record of this species in the Cove area was made by Mr. A.K. McKay on November 3rd, 1956. All identifying marks were noted including brownish belly and black tail, while the bird (not as small as a Vermilion) was being driven from perch to perch by a larger shrike. On December 1st, either this bird or another, was seen near a reservoir less than two miles from the November 3rd observation. On January 5, 1957, Mr. McKay again saw the same Say's phoebe he observed in December.

Black-headed Grosbeaks (7WV)

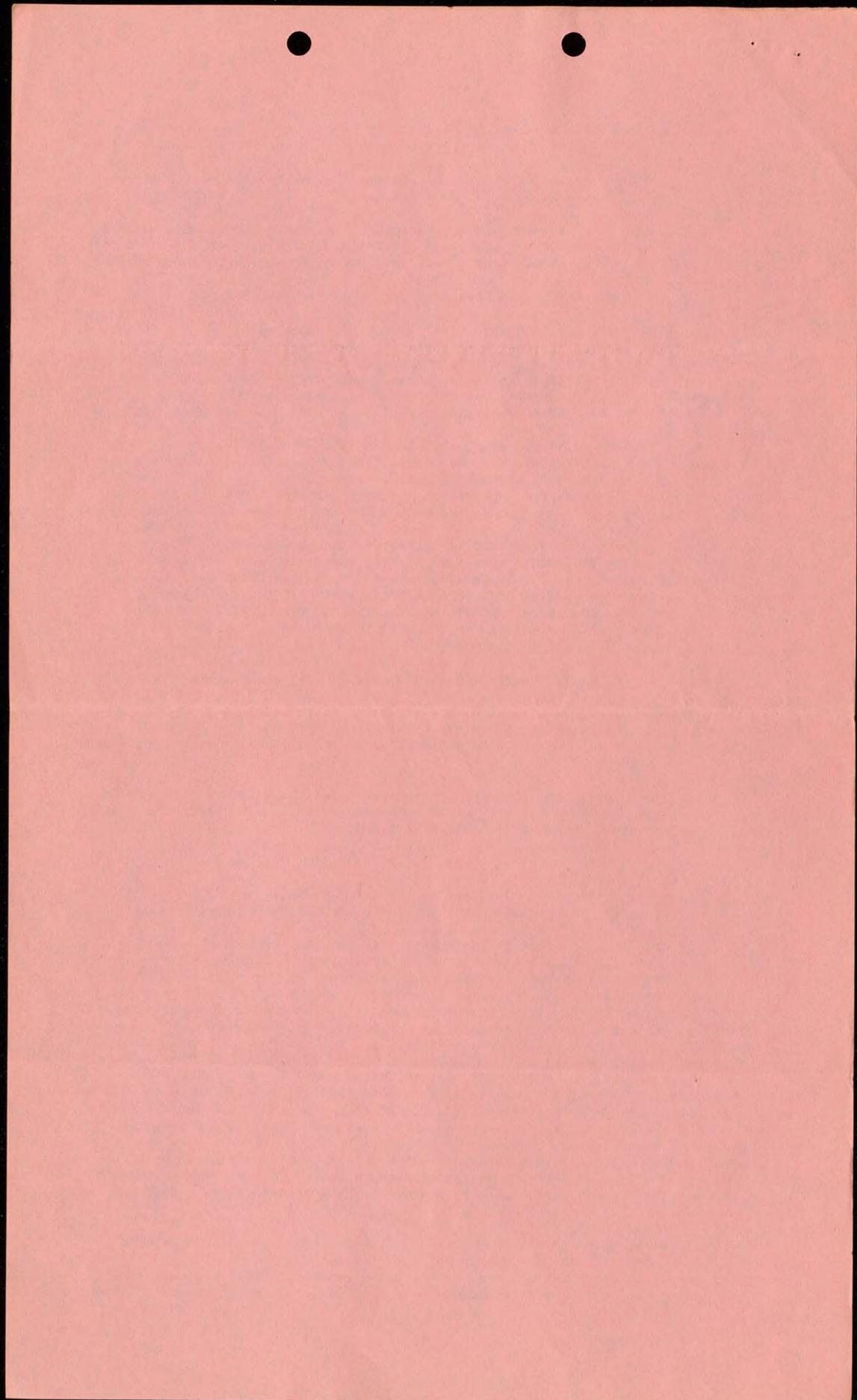
Cove Area - In 1957, on January 5th, Mr. A.K. McKay found a small flock of Black-headed grosbeaks in his area - 1 female and 4 or 5 males. Two males were seen again on January 27, 1957. Mr. McKay's previous records of this species consist of one female seen in the area on December 26, 1948 and another female on January 23 and Feb. 13, 1955 that appeared to be of this species.

Galveston area - Another very recent report of Black-headed grosbeaks came from Galveston where Mr. John Hildebrand has recorded two birds of this species in Kempner Park during the month of January 1957 - he states they can be seen there almost any day.

Bullock's Orioles - (NCO)

The earliest report of a Bullock's oriole in the Galveston area was made by Mr. and Mrs. Chas. W. Hamilton who saw one there on September 2, 1956.

On February 3rd, Jerry Baker, Norma Oates, Helen and Ella Wolfer in Kempner Park Galveston, first saw one and then two female orioles feeding on the bright red blossoms



of a Turk's Cap bush about fifty feet away. The birds were observed for about 30 minutes as they moved about in the bush, sometimes clinging upside down on the outer branches searching for food. Although we immediately recognized these birds as female orioles because of their size, shape of bill, white wing-bars and yellowish coloring, they were the first we had seen with a completely white belly. A check of our bird guides, both Pough and Peterson, revealed that the distinguishing feature of the female Bullock's oriole is a white or grayish-white belly.

Vic Emanuel and Noel Perley who were also birding in Galveston on February 3rd, found three Bullock's orioles in Kempner Park - one male and two females, and another oriole which may have been an Orchard.

Mr. John E. Hildebrand of Galveston stated that eight Bullock's orioles had been seen in Kempner Park during January 1957.

I had heard that orioles in feeding on certain flowers, split the blossoms open to get the food inside. Before leaving the Park I inspected the flowers on the Turk's Cap bushes where the orioles had been feeding and found that many of the bright red blossoms had been split from top to bottom by the sharp bills of the orioles.

Gray-headed Juncos - (Ronald Fowler)

Most people in the Houston area are lucky to see one species of juncos in their yard. Beginning on January 26th, I had not one, but three species at my home, 11921 Knippwood Lane (Memorial Drive area Houston). These were the Slate-colored, Oregon (Pink-sided subspecies), and a new species for the Upper Gulf Coast - the Gray-headed. For several days the juncos came regularly to eat the grain that spilled on the ground from the feeder above. Upon studying the juncos I noticed that one had a reddish back and gray sides - the red being only on the upper portions of the back. I also noted that the junco in question had a light upper mandible, thus making it a Gray-headed Junco. Saturday afternoon (January 26th) several people from Houston came out to see this unusual bird but unfortunately the junco did not return that day.

On the next afternoon (January 27th) Vic Emanuel and Carl Aiken were more successful as two Gray-headed Juncos were seen at close range feeding with six Oregon Juncos, and an equal number of Slate-colored. Again on January 28th and 30th the two Gray-headed Juncos returned with Oregon and Slate-colored juncos to feed on the grain in my yard. On February 3rd the Gray-headed Juncos returned to the feeder and were observed by Vic Emanuel and Noel Perley.

(A letter from Horace Jeter (Shreveport, Louisiana) stated that he recently (January 1957) located three Gray-headed Juncos in the Shreveport area. As this was a new species for the State of Louisiana, Mr. Jeter collected one specimen for verification.)

Oregon Juncos (5WV)

First record for this junco was one seen in a Houston Park on November 9th by Horace Jeter. It was also listed on the Houston Christmas Count on December 23rd, and was recorded on January 26, 27, 28 and 30, 1957 and on February 2, 1957, with Gray-headed and Slate-colored Juncos at the home of Ronald Fowler, 11921 Knippwood Lane (see above).

Lapland Longspurs (5WV) - (N. Oates)

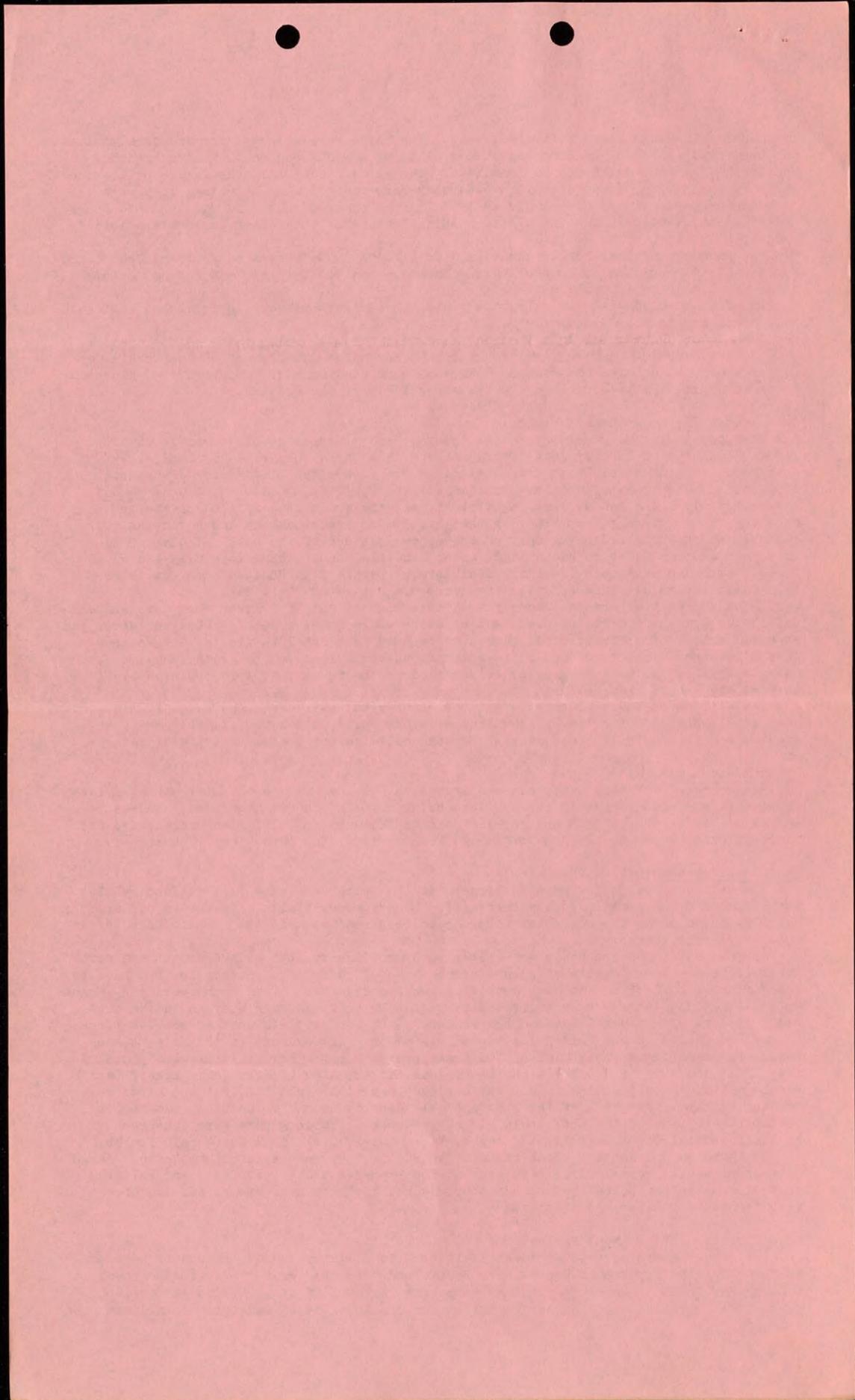
The main attraction for Houston birders on the Addicks-Satsuma Road in January 1957 was a number of Lapland Longspurs feeding in the dry weedy fields with flocks of horned larks. Many birders who had never before seen this species made the 20-mile trip to see these birds for themselves.

Approximately 300 longspurs were first noted on January 12th by NCO and LS and were observed for an hour or more at close range. The following day, January 13, Dr. Lucille Robey found the flock at the same location. On January 19th, after much searching, about 30 or 40 Lapland longspurs were located by Carrie Holcomb and Ruth Moorman in the same field feeding with several hundred horned larks. On January 19th another smaller flock of Lapland Longspurs and horned larks was located in a dry pasture on the Katy-Hockley Road. Again on January 26th, about 300 longspurs with a few horned larks were found feeding at the original location on the Addicks-Satsuma Road by Mrs. Jerry Baker, Darris Massingill and Ronald Fowler. This was a cloudy day with light fog, but the birds were feeding within a few yards of the road and all identifying marks including the reddish collar at the nape of the neck could plainly be seen. The longspurs were next seen in the identical spot the following day by Vic Emanuel, Carl Aiken and Ronald Fowler.

On February 2nd another check was made to see if they were still in the area. Large flights of small grayish birds were seen at the opposite end of the field and believed to be longspurs and horned larks, but they did not approach near enough for the observers to make a positive identification.

Sage Thrasher (7V) - (Noel Perley)

Two more reports of this accidental visitor (it normally spends the winter west or southwest of the Upper Gulf Coast) have been brought to this writer's attention (see January SPOONBILL, Page 4) and both were recorded by Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Hamilton. Their first sighting occurred during the winter of 1953-1954 on Galveston Island near the



Galveston Country Club golf course. On January 6th of this year, they (in the company of James W. Phillips) found the bird again, this time along Memorial Drive near Dairy-Ashford Road (west of Houston). The thrasher was studied for about 5 minutes and all field marks (spotted breast, white outer-tail tips, etc.) were clearly noted while the bird was perched in a bush about 50 feet away. Both Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton have also seen this species at Rockport.

White-winged Dove (7V) - (N. Oates)

It seemed unbelievable, even though the bird was perched on a fence-wire not over forty feet away and without binoculars I could tell it was a white-winged dove! It had a white line along the wing-edge and rounded tail with white corners. In flight the white wing patches and white in the tail showed clearly. The others in the party (Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoffman and Ella Wolfer) also found it hard to believe, though we had seen this dove fly over the road, perch in a nearby tree, then fly back to the fence and perch less than forty feet from us. After a few second on the fence it flew to the ground back of a clump of trees.

About an hour after this first encounter, we returned to the same spot bringing the balance of our birding party (Leota Stilwell, Ruth Moorman and Helen Wolfer). Luckily the dove was still in the area and everyone again had an opportunity to see it in flight and perched.

Because it seemed so improbable that an individual of this species would have wandered into our area in mid-winter, we thought possibly someone in the vicinity might raise white-winged doves and this bird could have escaped from a pen. However, we have no proof of this, and it is interesting to note that a white-winged dove was reported by R. F. McKay in the Cove area on December 30, 1956.

Warblers

Audubon warbler recorded in Kempner Park, Galveston on Sept. 29, 1956

Magnolia warbler observed at feeding tray (J.W.) 302 Sue, Houston, on Jan. 11, 1957

Yellowthroated warbler - first observed in the Memorial Drive area of Houston at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoffman on December 29th; another individual of the same species was seen at the feeding tray of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Aldrich (also in Memorial area) on Jan. 27 by VE CA and RF; the same bird was recorded again on Feb. 3rd by Mrs. Henry Aldrich.

Redstart - one was noted in the Cove area by Mr. A.K. McKay on January 12th.

Parula - reported on December 23, 1956 on Houston Christmas Count by Mr. and Mrs. Gilman

Prethontary - observed by Mr. McKay on January 6th, 1957. This was the first winter record of this species in the Cove area.

Palm warbler - a total of 3 individuals of this species were seen in the Cove area in November 1956; Mr. McKay also reported 1 on December 1st and 2 on December 29th, 1956.

Wilson's warbler - a male in good plumage was seen by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoffman, Ronald Fowler and John O'Neill in the Memorial Drive area of Houston on January 29th. Two individuals of this species were observed on the O.G. Field Trip on January 20 at the Angleton Red and Gun Club.

Hummingbirds - (Western species and unusual winter records)

Houston area

Oct. 28 - Rufous hummingbird reported by Mr. and Mrs. Chas. W. Hamilton

Dec. 30 - Unidentified hummingbird feeding at home of Jimmy Murray

Jan. 6 - For several days a female hummingbird fed on Turk's Cap in the yard of Mrs.

Jerry Baker - was also seen there on February 2nd

Jan. 23 - Armand Yramategui noted a hummingbird (species unknown) feeding on a Shrimp Plant at his home in the Riverside area

Feb. 1 -- Luta Buchanan reported a hummingbird (unidentified) near her home.

Feb. 2 - Leota Stilwell noted a female hummingbird perched on shrub outside her window.

Galveston Records

Jan. 1 - Black-chinned hummingbirds in Kempner Park (Jan. SPOONBILL, page 4)

Jan. 1957- Two Rufous hummingbirds in Kempner Park - John E. Hildebrand of Galveston

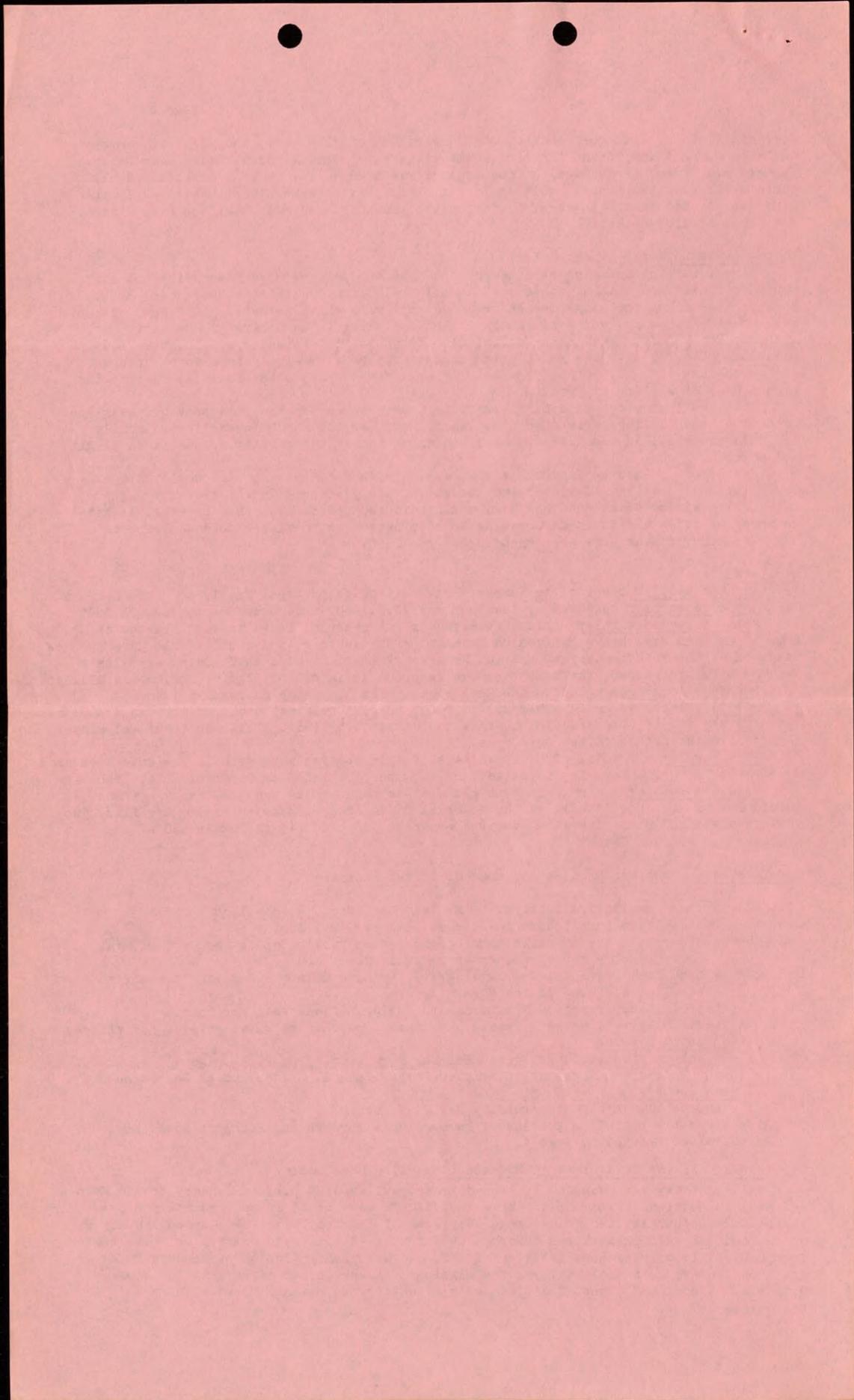
Cove Records

Nov. 1 - Rufous hummingbird recorded by Mr. A. K. McKay

(Also see story of fall migration of hummingbirds through the Rockport area in November SPOONBILL, page 4)

Nighthawks - Winter Stragglers in Houston (Contd.) - Noel Perley

One nighthawk was recorded by Armand Yramategui about 9 p.m. on January 3rd at Main and Binz in Houston. From one to three individuals were noted at approximately 6 p.m. in the Sampson/Burkett and No. MacGregor Way area of Houston by Noel Perley on January 8, 9, 12, and 13. A nighthawk was observed over Arcola (NE Ft. Bend County) en route home from O.G. field trip by Ronald Fowler and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Aldrich on January 20th. Again on January 25th Noel Perley saw a nighthawk on the corner of Burkett and Binz at 5:50 p.m. (Temp. 58°, identification certain, white wing patches noted with 8x 40 binoculars.)



List of Birds observed by A.K.McKay in the Cove area - January 1957 (Total for month was 135) Common species omitted below.

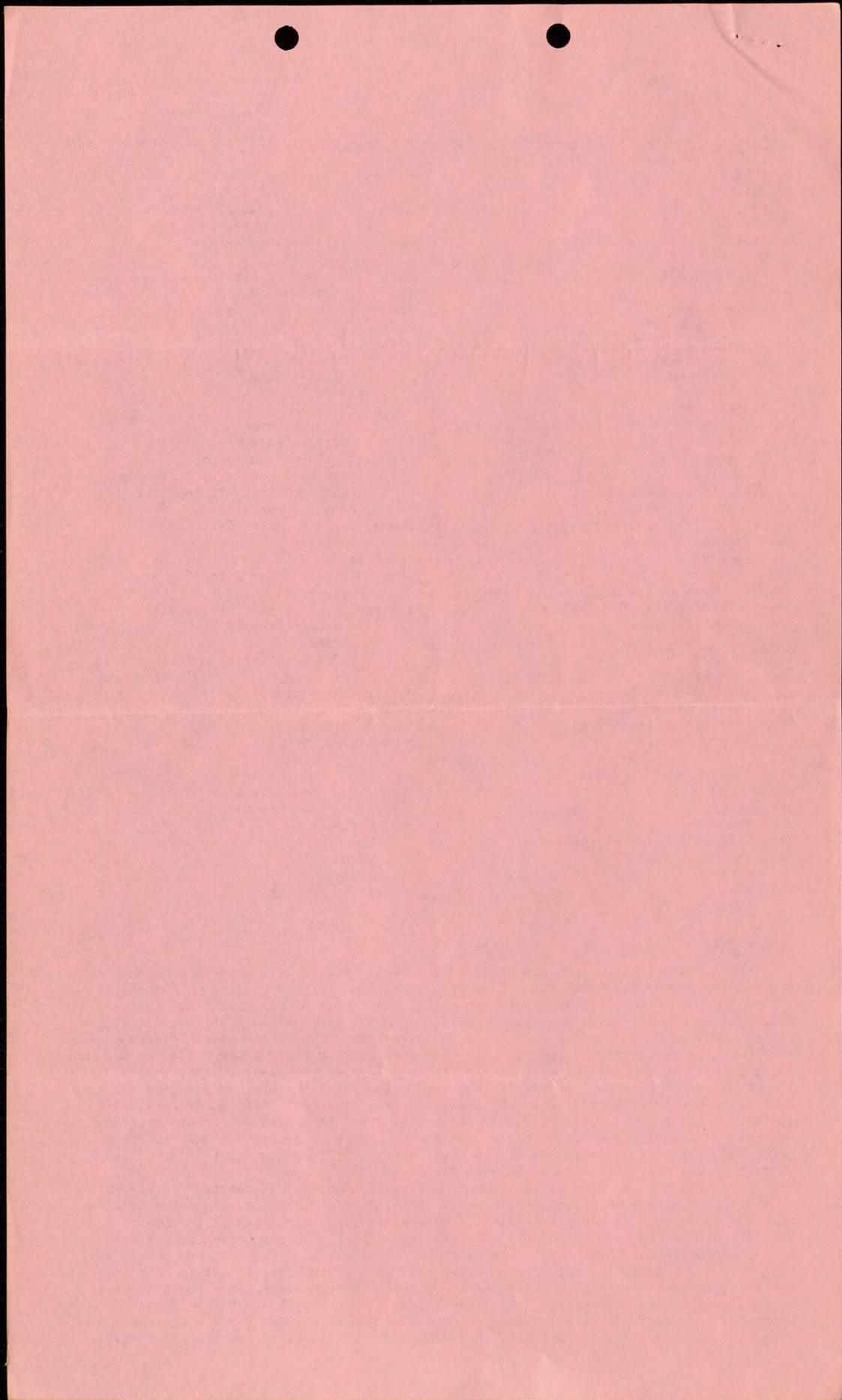
Blackbird, Rusty	Pelican, Brown
Bluebird	White (peak 125)
Caracara	<u>Phoebe, Say's</u> 1 on Jan. 5 (same as reported in December)
Coot (only 1)	Plover, Black-bellied (peak 34)
Sandhill Crane (C. J. Wilburn)	Ringed (8)
Crow, Fish (1 flock of 75)	Robin (1 on January 6th)
Curlew, Long-billed	Sandpiper, Spotted (2)
Dowitcher	Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied
Ducks, Baldpate	Snipe, Wilson's
Canvasback	Sparrow, Chipping
Gadwall	Seaside
Goldeneye	Sharp-tailed
Mallard (very scarce)	Song
Mottled	Lincoln
Ring-necked	White-crowned
Greater Scaup (1 killed by hunter)	Harris (peak 7)
Lesser Scaup	Spoonbill (50 on Jan. 19th)
Shoveler	Teal, Cinnamon (1 killed by A.F.McKay)
Eagle, Bald	Greenwinged (peak 100 on 19th)
Flicker, Yellow-shafted	Thrush, Hermit (peak 9)
Flycatcher, Vermilion	Towhee, Eastern (17 on 5th)
Goldfinch (less than usual)	Spotted
Geese, Blue (common)	Turnstone, Ruddy
Snow "	Vireo, Solitary (2 on 20th)
Canada	White-eyed
Grackle, Bronzed (scarce)	Warblers, Myrtle (peak 300 on 6th)
Grebe, Eared (first for January)	Orange-crowned
Pied-billed	Pine
<u>Grosbeak, Black-headed</u>	Prothonotary (1 on 6th - first winter record)
Gull, Bonaparte	Redstart
Hawk, Cooper's	Yellowthroat
Red-shouldered	Willet (55 on 20th)
Marsh (peak 19)	Woodpeckers, Downy
Red-tailed (peak 9)	Hairy
Sharp-shinned	Pileated
Ibis, White (peak 50)	Red-bellied
White-faced (5 on 5th)	Red-headed
Junco (peak 30)	Wren, Bewick's
Kingfisher	House
Loon, common (3)	Marsh
Merganser, Red-breasted (peak 25)	Sedge
Owl, Barn	Yellowlegs, Greater
Barred	
Horned	
Screech	

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1956 Valley Christmas Count - Carl Aiken

The weather was bright and clear as Vic Emanuel and I left Houston on December 28 for the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. We were in such a hurry to get there (the Valley is the only place in the U.S. where you can get a good sample of Mexican birds) that we didn't do any real birding until we reached a roadside park on the other side of Kingsville. Here we found a White-eyed vireo, a large covey of Bobwhite quail, Orange-crowned warbler and Black-crested titmouse. The area near the Los Olmos Creek bridge on Highway 77 is usually good but there were only a few Shovelers on the creek when we passed. There is a pond to the right of the highway about 10 miles farther where, on our previous trip we found Black-bellied tree ducks and Least grebes. It seemed that the drought had done its work on this pond, however, for it was nearly dry. We walked out on the stiff mud in hopes of flushing some shore birds. No shore birds were found, but just before we left, Vic spotted a Say's phoebe on a nearby fence. This was our first lifer of the trip, we were to see many more during the next two days.

By 5:00 p.m. we were at the home of Milton Chandler in San Benito, Texas. We discussed the count and were assigned an area. He also told us that arrangements had been made for us to camp at Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge the first night and at Laguna Atascosa Wildlife Refuge the next two nights. We went to Luther Goldman's office to get our checklist and then to his house to get a map and re-check our area. It was nearly dark when we reached Santa Ana and after a brief talk with the warden, we set up camp by a beautiful tropical pool in the heart of the refuge. When we woke early the next morning we could really see the beauty of this small pool of water with its Banana Palms, Elephant Ear Plants and green grass. Vic drove around in the car for a while and saw several Pauragues and a few mammals, including the Coyote. We cooked breakfast while



an Audubon's Oriole, Derby flycatcher, and Green jay played in a willow tree above us. After breakfast we started birding again and added such species as the Ruddy duck, White-fronted dove, Golden-fronted woodpecker, Ladder-backed woodpecker, Vermilion flycatcher, Black-cr. Titmouse, Verdin, Long-billed thrasher and Texas Sparrow. We got back to camp just in time to see Edgar Kincaid and John Alderman. We continued to bird and added the Chachalaca, more ducks, Great horned owl, House and Bewick's wrens, Hermit Thrush, Black and White warbler, Alta Mira Oriole, Sharpe's seedeater, and possibly a White-tailed kite.

We reluctantly left Santa Ana and went to San Benito to see Luther Goldman for more details about the count. Mr. Chandler, Vic and I then went to Laguna Atascosa Refuge to explore our area and make certain of the place we were to camp. We later left Mr. Chandler at a friend's house and returned to Harlingen for dinner and by 10:15 were back at our campsite on Laguna Atascosa.

On the morning of December 30, the day of the big Christmas Count, about a dozen Coyotes woke us about 4:45 and we decided to drive around the roads looking for owls and other night birds. We were in our area and started the count by 6:15. The first place we stopped was very appropriate for the occasion - it was a bird farm. This was the best section in our area, for it was here that we found Ruddy and Mallard ducks, Red-shouldered hawk, Avocet, Roadrunner, Green jay, Verdin, Cactus wren, Pyrrhuloxia, Desert sparrow and Green-tailed towhee. Until dark we continued searching out every little road and water hole in our area, which was around the western edge of the refuge, but not on the refuge itself. We found an Empidonax flycatcher near the Arroyo Colorado, flushed a Screech owl from an old deserted building, found Lark bunting, Vermilion flycatchers and Say's Phoebes on the fences beside the roads, and at twilight walked about 5 miles down the intracoastal canal only to find, when we returned to the car, a Great Horned owl. Our party had a total of 90 species.

After the count, the whole group met at the Palmetto Inn in Harlingen for a delicious Mexican dinner and to call out species and individuals. A total of 175 species were seen on the count this year. The highest previous Christmas count in Texas was 172 so this is possibly a new Texas record, and it might be the highest count in the nation this year! This count also had the largest number of people it has ever had, which may account for the large number of species and individuals.

The next morning there was a heavy fog until about 7:00 and after an unsuccessful trip to find the Cinnamon teal and Mountain plover, we filled the car with gas and started home. As we drove out of this tropical valley and into the more arid part of the state we thought of the beautiful birds and good weather we had had on this trip. We were inclined to agree with Roger T. Peterson when he said of Christmas Counts, in "Birds Over America", "To me and my friends it is our way of celebrating the holidays. An ornithological ritual that has come to represent Yuletide more than Santa Claus or the Christmas Tree."

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DID YOU KNOW

Pennsylvania is estimated to have lost \$4,000,000 in less than two years due to the killing of valuable HAWKS and OWLS under unwise bounty laws. (From "This Curious World")

Purple Martin House at Little Thicket Sanctuary

On the weekend of February 2 and 3 a martin house was installed at the Little Thicket Sanctuary by Carl Aiken, Joe Heiser, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Aiken, Jr. and David Safley. It is located near the road to Little Jordan and with luck we should have a new nesting species at the Sanctuary in 1957.

MEMBERS

The following persons are now registered in the Ornithology Group of the Outdoor Nature Club, bringing the membership total to 95:

Mrs. D. L. Martin, 8738 Padfield, Houston, Texas
Myrtle Phillips, 236 West 22nd, Houston, Texas

The following persons have subscribed to the Spoonbill making a total of 29 non-members who receive the Spoonbill:

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Hughes, Dickinson, Texas
Mr. Albert R. Enderle, 2706 Grennoch, Houston 25, Texas

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