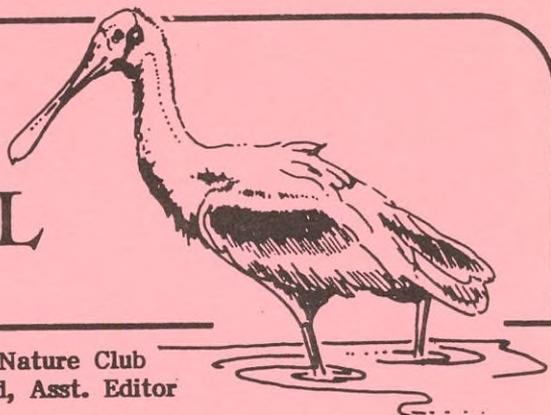


The SPOONBILL



Published by the Ornithology Group, Outdoor Nature Club
Houston, Texas, Libby Price, Editor; Ellen Red, Asst. Editor

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Coming Events

Tuesday, Apr. 3: Ornithology Group meeting at 7:30 p.m. at Bayland Park, off Bissonnet just west of Hillcroft. The program, "Birding in North Central Texas," was announced for February, but a family emergency prevented Dr. Warren Pulich from coming. Dr. Pulich is a member of the board of the Texas Bird Records Committee and teaches ornithology at the University of Dallas. Learning Corner will be led by David Bradford discussing spring migrants, especially those which are likely to be confused. 7:00 p.m., bring field guides.

Deadline for Clearing House reports and for Spoonbill material.

Friday-Sunday, Apr. 6-8: LITTLE THICKET DAY at the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary replaces the April meeting of the Outdoor Nature Club. Springtime at LTNS is a particularly lovely time of year. There will be orientation hikes for first-time visitors as well as botany and birding walks. Following a pot luck luncheon (bring your contribution) Gerry Davis of the U.S. Forest Service will talk on the advantages of a diverse forest, and about the Red-cockaded Woodpecker in the area.

For those who wish to camp the sanctuary will be open after 3:00 p.m. Friday until Sunday afternoon. Bring your own drinking water! Directions to LTNS and other information appears on page 6 of your ONC Yearbook, or call Irene Leslie at 780-2828.

Saturday, Apr. 14: Ornithology Group field trip to High Island and surrounding areas. We will bird the sanctuaries and the other areas will be chosen according to prevailing conditions. Rob Thacker will lead this expedition, which should produce a good selection of migrant landbirds and shorebirds. Meet at the High Island roadside picnic area on Hwy 124 at 7:30 a.m. To reach the meeting place take I-10 east from Houston to Hwy 124 in Winnie, then south on 124 past the Intracoastal Waterway bridge and on into High Island. The picnic area is on the right in a tree grove opposite an old service station at the edge of town.

The trip will last most of the day, so bring lunch, plenty to drink, insect repellent, and hat for sun protection. Because of the large attendance on recent trips, please call John Buckman at 359-4685 if you plan to go. Then we can plan more effectively and add leadership if necessary.

Saturday, Apr. 28: Outdoor Nature Club field trip to Matagorda Island for conchology and birding. OG members are invited. The trip will run all day and will afford a rare opportunity to visit the island. Meet at Port O'Connor to board a chartered boat. Cost is \$20 per person, \$10 of which must be sent in by April 1. A maximum of 22 people can make the trip, so call early if you are interested. Phone Dorothy Parmesan at 622-7139.

Sunday, Apr. 29: The Ornithology Group field trip scheduled this day has been canceled. We will try to schedule it next year.

Saturday, Apr. 28: HAS LONE STAR SHOOT-OUT

Sunday Apr. 29: Choose either day to participate in this competition to find the most bird species in a 24-hour period. (See article)

Friday-Sunday, May 11-13: OG/ONC field trip to Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. Birding on Saturday. IF YOU PLAN TO GO AND CAMP call Irene Leslie at 780-2828 ASAP to be sure of a space.

Saturday May 26: Ornithology Group field trip to Jones State Forest and other piney woods areas. See the April issue for details.

ESKIMO CURLEWS

If we are ever to see an Eskimo Curlew again on West Galveston Island it will be in late March or April. Be sure you know what they look like, anyway. Then if you see something you think must be it, do call an expert to check it out. Biologists are anxious to hear of any confirmed sightings, so don't just keep it to yourself. Tell somebody.

Noel's Niche Looking Back

by Noel Pettingell

10 YEARS AGO/FROM MARCH 1980 SPOONBILL

"Chandler Robbins Awarded Allen Medal...Fall issue of Newsletter of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

"In accepting the Arthur A. Allen Medal, Chandler Robbins presented the following remarks on the future of bird populations and the study of birds: "Let us take a quick look into the future of bird populations on our continent, and the future of the hobby of bird watching and the science of ornithology. We are going to see severe impacts on our environment as we move into the 21st Century. If present population trends continue, we can expect a 50% increase in the human population of the United States within the lifetime of today's college students. We tend to believe that our land is already being used to the utmost. What will happen to our wildlife when we have 50% more human mouths to feed and bodies to clothe and shelter? And will the impact in Latin America, where so many of our birds winter, be any less than in our own country?"

"Consequently, we need to start planning now for where we want to find birds in the future. Can we afford to protect and manage a few large areas in perpetuity somewhere within each state? Maybe even at the county level? By protect, I mean protect from overuse and from our ten million ORV's as well as from more obvious destruction; and by management, I mean maintain the various successional stages to accommodate all species. We are finding that unbroken woodlands of at least 250 to 1,000 acres are necessary to maintain breeding populations of many of the highly migratory birds such as warblers and vireos. Narrow fringes of habitat are useful as corridors, but cannot replace blocks of forest.

"The need for fossil fuels and for transmission lines, highways, sewer lines and so forth will continue to take a toll of lands we once considered protected, so we must not underestimate the future needs of the various species of birds and other wild creatures we wish to perpetuate. Already some agencies and individuals are searching for ways to provide more wildlife habitat through management of reclaimed strip mines, and by suitable planting along power lines, even planting appropriate shrubs under power poles in agricultural areas. Others are replacing nesting sites that had been lost to modern practices, such as by erecting supports for phoebe nests in metal culverts, or monitoring bluebird boxes on golf courses or along interstate highways. Still others are engaged in arranging for scenic easements to increase the effective size of small preserves.

"Unfortunately there is no such thing as maintaining the status quo. It is unproductive to wait until the brushfire has started and then attempt to extinguish it. Rather we should be setting our priorities now on a county-by-county and state-by-state basis. We should map those areas most likely to be preservable, then initiate an aggressive program to have them designated as high priority natural areas in perpetuity, with the provision that

management to create or maintain all normal successional stages be included in the long-range plan.

"What will be the future of the birding hobby when all birds except those of artificial habitats are secluded in the relatively few choice remaining areas of natural habitat? The hobby certainly is important. It is the greatest key for opening the door to appreciation of our natural world. I predict that as opportunities become more limited, more birding will be done in guided tours and less on an individual or family basis. On the other hand, there will be more emphasis on bird study at home or in fragments of parkland within walking distance. And don't underestimate the opportunities for either recreational birding or research in limited areas of suitable habitat. Each year I find 125 to 150 or more species of birds on our three suburban acres, just 17 miles from the nation's Capitol."

GETTING YOUR SPOONBILL ON TIME

Some OG members have been getting their Spoonbills late or not at all. The Spoonbill is mailed in bulk at the Main Post Office in downtown Houston as quickly as the staff can get it pasted up, printed and prepared for mailing, but only after the Clearing House has been compiled. The CH editors have a lot of data to enter, and that takes time. The mailing date is anywhere from the 19th to the 23rd of the month. I get my copy the day after it is mailed. If you have a problem it is in your local post office.

In the past the problem has usually been solved by members complaining directly to the local postmaster, taking a copy along to point out the "Solicited Mail, Time Sensitive" notice printed near the label. If that doesn't work, by all means fill out a complaint form available in post offices and at OG meetings.

Members who move without giving Peggy Milstead a change of address are costing us money! We pay 25¢ per returned copy, and then 25¢ to mail the copy individually. Please, folks, these quarters are mounting up; if you can't tell us by mail before you move, please phone Peggy or me so we can change your label before the mailing date.

Finally, DUES ARE OVERDUE. If you don't get your April issue, it could be you forgot to pay your dues. Make sure your label says 1990.

Libby Price, Editor

FOR OG information, checklists, maps, contact Maxine Davis, 10602 Cedarhurst, Houston 77096, 723-8559.

SEND bird sightings for Clearing House to: Clearing House (OG), P.O. Box 271374, Houston TX 77277.

TEXAS RARE Bird Alert Tape, sponsored by Piney Woods Wildlife Society and Houston Audubon Society: (713) 821-2846.

FOR LOCAL nature societies' meetings and field trips call the Audubon Society's "Voice of the Naturalist" tape: 932-1392.

SEND material for Spoonbill to Editor, Libby Price, 3715 Sunset, Houston 77005, 665-1159.

SEND dues, subscriptions and address changes to Jerry Patrick, 814 St. Francis, Houston 77079. Members' annual dues: \$15 (ONC \$5, OG \$10). Spoonbill subscriptions for non-members: \$13.

PRAIRIE-CHICKEN TROUBLE

Disappearing Prairie

by Richard Uzar

In the beginning, God...Wait, let's not go back quite that far. It was the second week, I believe, when Texas was created--a wondrous expansive place of contrasting beauty. Huge thick forests, high rolling plains that went on and on, farther than the eye could see, rugged mountains with rushing rivers and seemingly barren desert. Along the coast a gently sloping plain, long and low, was crossed frequently by meandering rivers now slowed by tides in the Gulf of Mexico. Along each river rich alluvial soils and increased moisture created corridors of woods, the only break in a tall grass prairie which ran from Galveston Bay to the Rio Grande.

Early settlers arriving in the thriving Texas port city of Indianola were advised to gather enough firewood for the journey to Victoria. They wouldn't find any along the way; there was nothing but grassland. Ahead of the lead wagon hens took flight constantly as the immigrants ventured out into land managed for thousands of years solely by its Maker. These tracks of man cut a trail through unbroken, unfenced prairie, a trail soon followed by other adventurous souls eager to forge a new life in a new land. The Good Lord is reported to have said, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it." And so we have, to a degree beyond the wildest expectations of those daring pioneers.

The once abundant Greater Prairie-Chicken (Tympanuchus cupido) has not fared well with the advance and proliferation of Europeans across North America. In the Eastern United States the Heath Hen (Tympanuchus cupido cupido), the nominative race of the Greater Prairie-Chicken, has been extinct since 1932. The bird of the Central Great Plains (Tympanuchus cupido americanus) is plentiful still in some of its former range, seriously threatened in others.

In Texas the Attwater's Greater Prairie-Chicken (Tympanuchus cupido attwateri), endemic to the Texas coast, is severely endangered, populating only eight counties. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists estimate the current population at less than 500 birds! The prairie-chicken is in such dire straits as a result of a larger, horrendous process of destruction: the prairie itself is disappearing!

In all this greatness which is Texas there is far too little unfenced land to see anymore. The once open expanses are today crisscrossed again and again with fences. And the barbed wire fence represents one of the most destructive forces ever to threaten open prairie. Each run of the wire has created a fence-row incursion into a once continuous habitat. The rancher's cows cannot graze the fence-row as heavily as the pasture, and the farmer's plow can only cut so close to the fence. So each fence presents an opportunity for another habitat with its own will to proliferate and reproduce after its own kind.

With our help, that of birds and other wild creatures who plant seed as they travel, intruders are spreading onto the prairie at an alarming rate. Some natives like running live oak, mesquite, huisache and yaupon, are responding to an advantageous occasion of our creation. Others like Chinese tallow and Macartney rose, have been introduced, and display

a propensity for devouring prairie that is cause for much concern. The labor and cost required to keep these opportunists off the pasture are a tremendous burden to every rancher, and prove overwhelming to many.

Interlopers not only devour habitat to which the Prairie-Chicken is specifically adapted; they have also created conditions further threatening the birds. In open grassland a Great Horned Owl can scarcely be found. New and growing fingers of trees and shrubs provide ample roost and nesting prospects for this predator, against which the chickens have no defense. Many natural predation problems are exacerbated by the steady decrease of open grasslands. The striped skunk, increasing with the spread of brush and woodland, is a voracious egg predator. Wintering buteos of the open plains are forced to soar over smaller and smaller places familiar to them, potentially increasing another threat. These intensified "natural" dangers are the result of our unknowing resculpturing of the Maker's handiwork.

In the hands of the original Owner, the prairie was a flowing, dynamic ecosystem. A place of continual change, representing all stages in the cycle of life at some place over the sea of grass. The prairie-chicken in such an environment freely moved to accommodate its needs. When climax grasses became overgrown or "rank," the birds moved on. Naturally occurring or man-made, fire would eventually return that place to a more hospitable foraging ground. Fire in overgrown grasslands had sufficient fuel, and could burn long enough and hot enough to kill intruders. In the wake of the flames seeds perhaps dormant for years would begin anew the cycle of successional growths.

Fresh broadleaf greens are a staple in the diet of adult prairie-chickens, so a certain openness in grasslands is required for successful foraging. Hatchlings also need openness for mobility. Grazing animals do aid in providing this condition. Prairie-chicken nests are often located adjacent to cattle trails, where chicks have easy foraging and immediate cover. Taller grass is necessary to provide cover for adults and protection from the elements. Clearings are, of course, essential for the booming activities which we have come to love so much.

Research indicates that the birds need areas with grass a maximum of 55 centimeters in height for booming grounds.

Intruders advancing onto the prairie and problems associated with grazing livestock are formidable. These pale to insignificance considering the effect of increased farming. Mile after mile of row crops or rice fields leave no opportunity for prairie specialists. Such land uses, while immediately

beneficial for you and me, are in total conflict with the needs of the prairie-chicken and other prairie specialists. Current agricultural practices threaten to destroy the seed source for many native plants and may be insuring the demise of the prairie and all those dependent for life upon grasslands.

Next month "Prairie-Chicken Trouble" will look at some specific problems associated with severely declining numbers.

1989 H.A.S. BIRDATHON by Noel Pettingell

The 5th Annual Houston Audubon Society Birdathon took place April 22-23, 1989, with 29 participants in 8 teams recording a total of 249 species, compared with 1988's 259 species by 9 teams. (See 5-year summary following this report.)

A new A.B.A. Texas Big Day record was set on April 22 by the "Bird Alerts" team--Mike Austin, Gary Clark, Stephen Gast and Carol Bookout--with a total of 204 species, 97% of which were shared by all observers, thereby exceeding the previous land vehicle A.B.A. single team total of 204 species. The 536-mile route included W. Harris and E. Waller counties, Big Thicket (Hardin County), Jefferson County, Bolivar Peninsula, High Island and Anahuac NWR. This team exceeded all others with 21 warbler species and found the following 10 "exclusives" (i.e. found by no other team on either April 22 or 23): White-fronted and Snow Geese, Black and Virginia Rails, Baird's Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Yellow-throated Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Grasshopper and Swamp Sparrows.

The "Motmots" team--P.D. Hulce, Mark Scheuerman, Steve Schultz and Kent Taylor--listed 180 species on April 22 in Harris, Waller and Austin counties, Attwater and Anahuac NWR's, High Island, Bolivar Peninsula and the Texas City Dike. 15 warblers and the following 18 "exclusives" were recorded: Canada Goose, American Wigeon, White-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Peregrine Falcon, Greater Prairie Chicken, Cliff Swallow, Hermit Thrush, Sprague's Pipit, Nashville, Yellow-rumped and Cerulean Warblers, Vesper, Lark, Song, White-crowned and Harris' Sparrows and Brewer's Blackbird.

On April 23 the "Collins Core Dump" team consisting of Fred Collins, Bob Honig, Randy Pinkston and Peter Vennema identified 167 species, including 16 warblers, along a route extending from the Big Thicket, through Port Arthur and Sabine Woods in Jefferson County and finishing at Bolivar Flats. Species found by no other team were: Mississippi Kite, Cooper's Hawk, Wilson's Warbler and Dark-eyed Junco.

The Ornithology Group was represented by the "O.G. Oglers"--Stennie Meadours, Dottie Praus and the writer. Our April 22 count began in Hardin County north of Beaumont, then into Southeast Liberty County, Lake Charlotte, Anahuac NWR, Port Arthur, Sabine Woods, High Island, Bolivar Peninsula and Galveston Island. Our team total was 160 species including 16 warblers. (Had we not missed 35 species we had expected to find, our total would have been 195 species!) We did, however see three "exclusives": Northern Gannet, American Kestrel and Western Tanager.

The team total of 153 species by Marilyn Crane, John Buckman and Ellen Red included 11 warblers and two exclusives: American Bittern and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The trio's April 22 Big Day route began in Northeast Harris County, followed by Southwest Liberty County (Dayton), thence south and east in Chambers County (Lake Charlotte, Anahuac NWR), and then south to High Island and Bolivar Peninsula, ending at Bolivar Flats.

The "Beaumont Birders"--Bill Graber, Jim Krakowski, Royce Pendergast, Harrison and Roseann Jordan--accumulated a team total of 143, including

9 warblers, on April 23. "Exclusives" were: Ring-necked Pheasant and Bay-breasted Warbler. Their route was the Big Thicket, Beaumont, Port Arthur, Sabine Pass, Sabine Woods and High Island, in Hardin, Jefferson and Galveston counties.

David and Dody Bradford, birding on April 23, found 123 species, including 7 warblers; their "exclusive" was the Magnolia Warbler. Their route of 367 car miles spanned 24 hours (midnight to midnight), traversing Galveston Island, Bolivar Peninsula, High Island, Anahuac NWR and ending at Bear Creek Park in W. Harris County.

Also birding on April 23, Bill Kleh, Steve Carroll, Beth Collins and Carol Relihan recorded 107 species and 7 warblers, one of which, the Chestnut-sided, was an "exclusive." Starting on W. Galveston Island, the foursome then proceeded eastward to Bolivar Peninsula and High Island, thence into Chambers County to Anahuac NWR and White Park, and then back to High Island and Sabine Woods in SE Jefferson County.

SUMMARY OF H.A.S. BIRDATHONS - 1985-1989

| Year | Total Teams | Observers | Total Species | Warblers | Exclusives* | High Team | Total Counties | Dates |
|------|-------------|-----------|---------------|----------|-------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| 1985 | 3 | 13 | --- | -- | -- | 168 | -- | Ap 20 |
| 1986 | 6 | 15** | 218** | 26** | -- | 188 | -- | Ap 26 |
| 1987 | 6 | 21 | 218 | 25 | 26 | 178 | 9 | Ap 25 |
| 1988 | 9 | 30 | 259 | 32 | 37 | 201 | 12 | Ap 23 Ap 24 |
| 1989 | 8 | 29 | 249 | 28 | 41 | 204 | 9 | Ap 22 Ap 23 |

*Species recorded by one team only
**5-team total

FIRE! A BIRDER'S FRIEND by Richard Uzar

A fallow rice field at Katy-Hockley and Jack Roads provided a spectacular show around noon on the 16th of February. Large columns of smoke called attention to this field from miles away, and not only my attention. When I arrived, soaring raptors were everywhere to be seen, and what a display they were to put on for the next hour or so.

Here's an adult White-tailed Hawk...look there, a Krider's dropping onto the ground, as some bewildered rodent scurries for safety, but too late. Overhead every variety of Red-tailed plumage can be observed, including two dark-morph birds and a distinctly marked Harlan's Hawk. Two adult and two immature plumaged White-tailed Hawks are also noted. In all, a total of 48 soaring hawks are counted at one time over this fire!

On the ground many hundreds of sparrows are acting very disoriented and fleeing the relentlessly advancing flames. Most of these are Savannah, some Vesper and a few LeConte's. The last, having no cover to dive into, permit close inspection, some at distances of less than 10 feet.

As if the hawks and sparrows aren't enough to make the day, there are four Short-eared Owls in the field to help with the rodent-fest. They regularly take short flights and return to a scorched-earth perching mound. These bullet-shaped bodies on fluttering wings contrast markedly with the effortlessly soaring hawks.

LET'S GO FOR THE LONE STAR SHOOT-OUT!

by Libby Price

OK, you OG birders, we have been duly challenged to enter the HAS Lone Star Shoot-Out April 28 or 29. We can raise money for ANY GOOD CAUSE WE LIKE! Also we can rack up as many species as most of us have ever seen in one day in our lives. And we can have fun doing it. Surely we all know some people or businesses who will make pledges for us. Even if it is as little as a dime a species we can find several. Of course if we know any big spenders supportive of the environment we can hit them up, but even small pledges add up.

I know all of the excuses for not doing it-- I've used them. But this year I just can't make any of them seem sufficient: It's too exhausting. So, okay, I can sink my pride and just bird the number of hours I can stand. I can't win against top birders. Probably not, but the routes taken by the winners are described in "1989 H.A.S. Birdathon," a report by Noel Pettingell in this issue. And so what if one doesn't win? It's an experience to help a team win next year, or else just an experience to treasure! At the same time it's a way to raise money for a favorite charity.

So form teams! Twist arms! And, of course, enter by sending the team names to HAS Lone Star Shoot-Out, 440 Wilchester, Houston 77079, plus \$10 per team member and return address.

GOOD NEWS FROM USFW

Bald Eagles have increased their populations in the lower 48 states as a result of the ban on DDT and a "concerted, cooperative recovery program... [including] habitat protection and management, research, surveys and monitoring, public education and law enforcement." The USFW is considering reclassifying the Bald Eagle from "endangered" to "threatened," after they review the results of the 1990 breeding season.

Since 1980 the percentage of people surveyed who disapproved of housing developments on marshes used by wildlife increased from 57% to 83% and the survey showed a lot more public concern for wetlands and waterfowl. However, the respondents considered air pollution to be a bigger problem than wetlands.

Phillips Petroleum Company, along with other private and public partners, including USFW will start a program to protect playa lakes in contiguous areas of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado. Phillips will contribute \$125,000 annually plus some manpower and technology. The program is remarkable in combining the efforts of the states, which together will match the Phillips contribution, Ducks Unlimited, National Wildlife Federation, private groups and landowners. The Playa Lakes Joint Venture will protect about 25,000 playas.

A part of the Gulf Coast Joint Venture is Scott Paper Company's 5-year agreement to improve waterfowl habitat on a 27,000-acre tract of timber land on Alabama's Mobile Delta. They use helicopters to transport logs instead of ground vehicles, saving the company money and the wetlands from vehicles dragging logs to pickup points and trucks traveling through the area carrying logs out.

AN INVITATION FROM BRAZORIA NWR

Birders to Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge are seldom disappointed. With the coming of warm weather spring migrants are arriving as the trees begin to bud and the geese and cranes move northward. The refuge continues to be open to the public on the first FULL weekend of each month. The Brazoria staff is appreciative of the Brazosport Birders who volunteer their time to staff the open house.

If you haven't visited Brazoria since the OG outing in September, the time is right! Come enjoy the coastal prairie and marshes, visit with our volunteers and observe spring migrants. We look forward to visiting with you!

MINUTES OF OG MEETING FEB. 8,

Don Richardson led the Learning Corner in duck identification. Richard Uzar opened the business session at 7:30 p.m. Jerry Patrick made available a written treasurer's report. John Buckman announced upcoming field trips. Don and Lee Richardson said the library now has five Audubon videos available. (A \$5.00 late fee is charged if not returned in a month.) Andrew Franks reminded everyone to save aluminum cans for the OG. Ed Rozenburg called for volunteers to lead bird walks on Earth Day in April.

The Lone Star Spring Shoot-Out sponsored by HAS will be held April 28, 29. Richard Uzar would like to have at least one team from the OG. [If the OG can't field four or five teams to support the OG and/or other good causes then we should rename ourselves the "Lazy Birders"..Ed.]

Jim Day, OG member and professional publicist, would like volunteers to help compile a mailing list of important people. He would like to promote a positive awareness of birding.

Richard Uzar announced a raptor census to be held on February 24 or 25.

Nominations for next year's officers were announced as follows: Richard Uzar as Chairperson, John Buckman as Vice-Chairperson, Gretchen Mueller as Secretary and Arch Dillard as Treasurer. Elections will be held at the March meeting.

The OG will spend \$50 to plant a Live Oak at High Island in memory of Marion Taylor. Peggy Milstead had Post Office complaint forms available for those not receiving The Spoonbill. (See article.)

A White-tailed Hawk was seen at Challenger Park; seven immature Trumpeter Swans were seen in Dallas; and a California Gull was spotted on East Beach in Galveston.

Ron Grimes, ONC President, presented a slide show of the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary. Then Mike Noel presented a program on the birds of Kenya with slides. He said that even though Kenya is ten percent smaller than Texas it has documented about 1500 species of birds. It is a biological crossroads, with a variety of habitats including deserts, mountains, coast and some rapidly diminishing rain forest.

GOING TO THE BRITISH ISLES?

If you plan a trip to the British Isles, Irene Leslie (780-2828) has a lot of material on birding there that she would be glad to share with you.

| SPECIES | DATES | TOTAL | BRAZ | CHAM | FBEND | GALV | HARR | JEFF | WALL | SPECIES | DATES | TOTAL | BRAZ | CHAM | FBEND | GALV | HARR | JEFF | WALL | |
|--------------------|--|---------------|--------|------|-------|--------|--------|------|------|--|---|---------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|------|-------|----|
| Turnstone, Ruddy | 1-24 | 8/101 | 2/11 | -- | -- | 4/65 | -- | -- | -- | Pipit, Water | 10-25 | 6/64 | -- | 1/1 | 1/6 | 1/20 | 1/1 | -- | 1/1 | |
| Knot, Red | G-EB(2)1,RU; G-BF(34)3,RU | | | | | | | | | Pipit, Sprague's | B-(3)17,DR; B-(12)24,DR | | | | | | | | | |
| Sanderling | 1-24 | 10/512 | 3/84 | -- | -- | 4/172 | -- | -- | -- | Waxwing, Cedar | 10-24 | 6/42 | -- | -- | -- | 2/11 | 3/26 | -- | 1/5 | |
| Sandprr, Semipalm | G-EB(1)1,AG | | | | | | | | | Shrike, Loggerhed | 1-28 | 17/192 | 2/18 | 2/9 | 1/10 | 4/21 | 4/91 | -- | 1/5 | |
| Sandprr, Western | 1-24 | 9/5985 | 2/8 | -- | -- | 3/5537 | 2/20 | -- | -- | Starling, Euro | 1-25 | 15/1011 | 2/90 | 1/60 | 1/150 | 4/280 | 3/154 | -- | -- | |
| Sandprr, Least | G-EB(2)1,RU; U-(15)17,RU | | | | | | | | | Vireo, Solitary | F-(2)25,RU; H-(1)16,RU | | | | | | | | | |
| Sandprr, Purple | B-FJ(1)17,RU | | | | | | | | | Warb, Orange-crn | 3-24 | 8/19 | 1/2 | 1/2 | -- | 2/2 | 3/11 | -- | -- | |
| Dunlin | 1-24 | 9/4395 | -- | -- | -- | 4/3735 | 2/260 | -- | -- | Warb, Yellow-rump | 1-25 | 18/728 | 2/85 | 2/13 | 1/180 | 5/101 | 5/184 | -- | -- | |
| peep, sp. | H-(10)16,RU | | | | | | | | | Warb, Pine | 1-24 | 6/28 | -- | 2/20 | -- | 1/2 | 3/6 | -- | -- | |
| Dowitcher, S-bill | G-(18)1,RU; G-(40)3,RU; G-(250)24,RU; H-WHC(30)11,GJG; H-WHC(50)19,GJG; U-(250)12,RU; U-(600)17,RU | | | | | | | | | Yellowthroat, Com | C-AW(3)10,PWW; G-(3)3,RU; H-SR(2)8,RU | | | | | | 1/12 | 4/23 | 6/61 | -- |
| Dowitcher, L-bill | H-WHC(50)11,CJ; H-(800)16,RU; U-(400)10,HAS | | | | | | | | | Cardinal, Northrn | 1-25 | 17/198 | 2/30 | 1/6 | 1/12 | 4/23 | 6/61 | -- | -- | |
| dowitcher, sp. | B-BW(15)4,HP; U-(40)10,PWW | | | | | | | | | Pyrrhuloxia | H-(1)10,HAS | | | | | | | | | |
| Snipe, Common | 1-17 | 8/180 | -- | 1/1 | -- | 2/67 | 3/105 | -- | -- | Sparrow, Chipping | 3-25 | 6/127 | -- | 2/60 | 1/5 | -- | 2/22 | -- | 1/40 | |
| Woodcock, Amer | C-AW(3)10,PWW | | | | | | | | | Sparrow, Field | 10-25 | 5/63 | -- | -- | 1/1 | -- | 3/32 | -- | -- | |
| Gull, Laughing | 1-24 | 13/5227 | 3/980 | -- | -- | 5/2581 | 2/66 | -- | -- | Sparrow, Vesper | 8-25 | 9/149 | 1/6 | -- | 1/10 | 1/4 | 5/64 | -- | -- | |
| Gull, Bonaparte's | 1-24 | 8/430 | 1/10 | -- | -- | 5/150 | -- | -- | -- | Sparrow, Lark | H-WHC(1)11,GJG | | | | | | | | | |
| Gull, Ring-billed | 1-24 | 11/123793/195 | -- | -- | -- | 4/3014 | 1/7400 | -- | -- | Sparrow, Savannah | 1-28 | 17/3229 | 2/65 | 2/32 | 1/350 | 3/62 | 5/1205 | -- | 1/250 | |
| GULL, CALIFORNIA | 1-1 | G-EB(1)1,AG | | | | | | | | Sparrow, Grasshop | G-(35)14,RU; H-WHC(1)11,CJ; H-WHC(1)11,GJG; W-(2)10,HAS; W-(1)28,RU | | | | | | | | | |
| Gull, Herring | 1-24 | 13/2561 | 3/28 | -- | -- | 5/1643 | 2/50 | -- | -- | Sparrow, Le Conte | H-WHC(3)11,CJ; H-(6)16,RU | | | | | | | | | |
| GULL, LSR BLK-BCK | G-SLP(1)17,RU; G-SLP(1)17,EM; G-EB(1)17,EM | | | | | | | | | Sparrow, Shp-tail | G-(3)11,RU; G-(3)3,RU | | | | | | | | | |
| Tern, Caspian | 1-24 | 12/58 | 3/8 | -- | -- | 5/27 | 1/5 | -- | 1/6 | Sparrow, Fox | H-SR(1)8,RU; H-WHC(3)11,CJ; U-(12)10,HAS | | | | | | | | | |
| Tern, Royal | 1-24 | 7/100 | 1/6 | -- | -- | 3/65 | -- | -- | -- | Sparrow, Song | 3-28 | 9/47 | -- | 1/1 | -- | 1/3 | 5/33 | -- | 1/5 | |
| Tern, Common | G-EB(1)3,RU; G-(1)8,PF | | | | | | | | | Sparrow, Lincolns | 10-25 | 7/65 | 1/2 | -- | 1/2 | 1/2 | 3/19 | -- | -- | |
| Tern, Forster's | 1-24 | 12/1013 | 3/54 | -- | -- | 5/666 | 1/3 | -- | -- | Sparrow, Swamp | 3-28 | 11/62 | -- | 1/1 | 1/6 | 1/7 | 3/28 | -- | 1/10 | |
| Skimmer, Black | G-EB(180)1,RU; G-(360)3,RU; G-(50)8,PF; G-TCD(2)10,GJG; G-(110)10,PWW; U-(90)17,RU | | | | | | | | | Sparrow, Wht-thrt | 3-25 | 9/240 | -- | 1/4 | 1/20 | -- | 5/116 | -- | -- | |
| Dove, Rock | 1-25 | 13/524 | 2/32 | -- | 1/10 | 4/300 | 3/42 | -- | -- | Sparrow, Wht-crn | H-SR(1)8,RU; H-WHC(5)11,GJG; H-(60)16,RU; U-(75)10,HAS | | | | | | | | | |
| Dove, White-wingd | G-(1)10,PWW; G-(4)12,RU; H-WHC(1)11,GJG | | | | | | | | | Sparrow, Harris' | H-(8)16,RU; U-(3)10,HAS | | | | | | | | | |
| Dove, Mourning | 1-28 | 19/313 | 3/9 | -- | 1/15 | 6/49 | 5/64 | -- | 1/6 | Blackbird, Red-wg | 1-28 | 17/9130 | 2/280 | 1/450 | 1/700 | 4/2340 | 4/1830 | -- | 1/30 | |
| Dove, Inca | 10-17 | 5/19 | -- | -- | -- | 2/3 | 2/14 | -- | -- | Meadowlark, East | 1-28 | 19/570 | 2/60 | 1/35 | 1/60 | 5/53 | 5/263 | -- | 1/12 | |
| Barn-Owl, Common | H-(1)16,RU; U-(1)12,RU | | | | | | | | | Meadowlark, West | W-(1)10,HAS | | | | | | | | | |
| Screech-Owl, East | H-HA(4)11,HP | | | | | | | | | meadowlark, sp. | U-(125)10,HAS | | | | | | | | | |
| Owl, Barred | W-(1)10,HAS | | | | | | | | | Blackbird, Brewer | H-(1)16,RU | | | | | | | | | |
| Owl, Short-eared | H-(4)16,RU | | | | | | | | | Grackle, Gr-tail | 1-25 | 15/1136 | 3/235 | 1/60 | 1/80 | 3/305 | 4/321 | -- | -- | |
| Kingfisher, Beltd | 3-24 | 13/37 | 3/6 | 1/2 | -- | 4/14 | 2/2 | -- | -- | Grackle, Bt-tail | 3-25 | 6/265 | 1/4 | 2/36 | 1/10 | 1/135 | -- | -- | -- | |
| Wdpeckr, Red-head | C-(1)3,RU; C-(3)12,RU; H-(1)8,PF | | | | | | | | | Grackle, Common | 8-25 | 11/1235 | 1/20 | -- | 1/200 | 1/50 | 5/215 | -- | 1/600 | |
| Wdpeckr, Red-bell | 3-25 | 12/41 | 3/8 | 2/10 | 1/10 | 3/8 | 2/3 | -- | -- | Cowbird, Brn-head | 3-25 | 10/6372 | 1/20 | 1/2 | 1/20 | 1/15 | 4/565 | -- | -- | |
| Sapsuck, Yel-bell | 3-25 | 9/17 | 1/2 | 1/2 | 1/2 | 1/2 | 3/4 | -- | 1/3 | blackbird, sp. | B-(500)4,HP; H-HA(400)11,HP | | | | | | | | | |
| Wdpeckr, Downy | 3-25 | 10/21 | 1/1 | 2/8 | 1/3 | 1/2 | 3/5 | -- | 1/1 | <u>Oriole, Northern</u> | H-(1)1,MJ; H-(1)28,MJ (This was a Bullock's which was seen all this month and all last month coming to a feeder, ed.) | | | | | | | | | |
| Flicker, Northern | 3-25 | 10/24 | 2/2 | 2/9 | 1/1 | -- | 4/6 | -- | -- | Finch, Purple | H-SR(9)8,RU | | | | | | | | | |
| Wdpeckr, Pileated | 3-25 | 7/15 | 1/1 | 2/7 | 1/3 | -- | 2/2 | -- | -- | Siskin, Pine | B-(1)4,HP | | | | | | | | | |
| Wood-Pewee, East | G-TCD(2)10,GJG | | | | | | | | | Siskin, Pine | 1-14 | 8/175 | 1/5 | 1/40 | -- | 1/25 | 3/20 | -- | -- | |
| Phoebe, Eastern | 3-25 | 12/40 | 3/11 | 1/1 | 1/5 | 1/1 | 3/8 | -- | -- | Goldfinch, Amer | 1-24 | 12/175 | 2/80 | 1/4 | -- | 3/32 | 4/33 | -- | -- | |
| Lark, Horned | B-(6)17,DR; B-(20)24,DR; G-BF(10)3,RU; U-(15)17,RU | | | | | | | | | Sparrow, House | 1-24 | 12/175 | 2/80 | 1/4 | -- | 3/32 | 4/33 | -- | -- | |
| Swallow, Tree | G-TCD(3)14,RU | | | | | | | | | OBSERVERS | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jay, Blue | 1-25 | 14/97 | 1/3 | 1/5 | 1/2 | 3/18 | 5/36 | -- | -- | AW = Anhuac NWR | | | | | | | | | | |
| Crow, American | 3-25 | 13/399 | 3/65 | 1/10 | 1/25 | 2/8 | 3/25 | -- | -- | AG = Aldritch, Gottschling | | | | | | | | | | |
| Chickadee, Carol | 1-25 | 15/120 | 3/18 | 1/12 | 1/10 | 4/8 | 3/35 | -- | -- | BH = Bob Honig | | | | | | | | | | |
| Titmouse, Tufted | 1-25 | 13/54 | 3/7 | 1/4 | 1/15 | 2/6 | 3/13 | -- | 1/3 | CJ = Charles Jones | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nuthatch, Red-brs | G-HI(1)7,WDF | | | | | | | | | DR = Don Richardson | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wren, Carolina | 3-25 | 9/34 | 2/4 | 1/3 | 1/2 | -- | 2/2 | -- | 1/2 | EM = Eubanks, Morgan | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wren, House | 8-19 | 7/19 | 1/1 | -- | -- | -- | 4/8 | -- | -- | GJG = Gene & Jane Guinn | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wren, Sedge | H-WHC(2)11,CJ; H-WHC(4)11,GJG | | | | | | | | | HAS = Houston Audobon Society, led by J. Morgan | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wren, Marsh | G-HI(1)10,PWW | | | | | | | | | HP = B. Honig, et al | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kinglet, Ruby-crn | 3-25 | 11/42 | -- | 1/3 | 1/1 | 1/4 | 5/11 | -- | -- | MJ = Margaret Jones | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gnatcatch, Blu-gra | H-HA(1)11,HP; H-(2)16,RU | | | | | | | | | NP = Noel Pettingell | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bluebird, Eastern | C-(9)3,RU; F-(18)25,RU; H-SR(1)8,RU; H-(1)8,PF; H-(20)16,RU; U-(20)12,RU; U-(25)17,RU; W-(8)10,HAS | | | | | | | | | PF = Pettingell, Feltner | | | | | | | | | | |
| Thrush, Hermit | C-(1)3,RU; H-SR(1)8,RU; H-WHC(1)11,CJ; H-(2)16,RU | | | | | | | | | PWW = Piney Woods Wildlife, led by Williams, Honig | | | | | | | | | | |
| Robin, American | 3-28 | 17/2917 | 2/1000 | 1/6 | 1/300 | 4/345 | 6/786 | -- | 1/80 | RU = Richard Uzar | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mockingbird, N | 1-28 | 19/180 | 2/17 | 1/1 | 1/20 | 4/17 | 6/70 | -- | 1/4 | WDF = Wilton & Donna French | | | | | | | | | | |
| Thrasher, Brown | 3-17 | 8/22 | -- | 1/3 | -- | -- | 4/9 | -- | -- | | | | | | | | | | | |

LOCATIONS

AW = Anhuac NWR
 BF = Bolivar Flats
 BW = Brazoria NWR
 CP = Challenger 7 Park
 EB = East Beach
 FJ = Freeport Jetties
 HA = Houston Arboretum
 HI = High Island
 SLP = San Louis Pass
 SR = Sheldon Reservoir SP
 TCD = Texas City Dike
 WHC = West Harris County

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES - FEB., 1990

Golden Eagle Houston Audubon Society 2/10/90 submitted by Jim Morgan

Seen in flight with a nearby Red-tailed Hawk. The eagle was at least 50% larger than the hawk, and soared on long, broad, dark wings. I made the conclusion that the bird was sub-adult since it had a ragged white basal tail band, seemingly a mixture of adult and immature tail types. When banking, the golden crown and nape were clearly seen. Most noticeable in flight was the short head extension beyond the front of the wings and tail extension of at least twice the head extension. Seen with 10x binocs for two minutes in excellent light on bright clear day. (Waller County)

Lesser Golden Plover Ted Eubanks, Jim Morgan 2/17/90

Time of day: 1500 hours
 Length of sighting: 5 minutes
 Weather: Cloudy to Partly cloudy
 Light condition: Good
 Distance: 25-60 ft.
 Optical equipment: 10x binocs; 25x scope; photographed
 Habitat: Beachfront
 Voice: Not heard
 Size: Black-bellied Plover size but slimmer and more delicate.
 Behavior: Bathing at water's edge
 Description: Pluvialis plover, differing from Black-bellied in lack of black axillars and rump concolor with brownish tail, and a distinctive golden hue to upperparts. In detail, we noted that in flight, feet extended beyond tip of tail and at rest 2-3 primaries extended beyond the tertials. We raised the possibility of *fulva*, in that the upperparts were richly bronze, golden and brown; yet the bird lacked the black and gold spangling of a breeding plumage Lesser Golden Plover.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL Ted Eubanks, Jim Morgan 2/17/90

Time of day: 1000 - 1030 and 1300 - 1330 hours
 Length of sighting: 60 minutes total
 Weather: Cloudy, cool; wind NE 15-25 knots
 Light condition: Fair o good; then good on 2nd sighting
 Distance: 150 - 30- meters
 Optical equipment: 10x binocs; 25x Kova; Questar
 Habitat: Sand bar in west Galveston Bay (San Luis Pass)
 Voice: Not heard
 Size: Slightly smaller than adjacent Herrings and noticeably larger than adjacent Ring-billed Gulls (i.e. the size of the smallest Herrings).
 Behavior: Roosting on sand bar with about 200 gulls.
 Description: Mantle dark gray, between Laughing Gull and Black Skimmer in color tone; head white with generous smudging around eye and over face plus light streaking on hindneck and nape; bill orange-yellow with distinctive red spot at gonyx. When compared to adjacent Herring Gulls, bill appeared somewhat sligher than Herring. Eye appeared light at some angles; remaining undersides white; primaries black with at least the outer three broadly tipped in white; tertials dark and broadly edged in white, giving dramatic contrast with dark mantle; when standing bird appears long, sleek and generous in wing length. Did not have "pot-bellied" look of average Herring Gull. Also, the bird's forehead was "rakish", that is, not rounded. We believe this bird to be an adult, post 3rd-winter, Lesser Black-backed of the race gracillii. Given the location, this is most likely the same bird discovered in winter 1987-1988 by Ted Eubanks and seen at this site last winter as well. (Note: leg color not seen due to bird standing in water during both observations.)

CALIFORNIA GULL Peter Gottschling, Lynne Aldrich 2/1/90

Number of individuals: One, first winter plumage
 Locality: East Beach Jetty, Galveston County
 Time of day: 8:30 - 9:05 a.m.
 Light conditions: Cloudy, foggy, 200 feet visibility
 Optical equipment: Zeiss 10x40, Bushnell 25x Scope
 Distance to bird: 40-70 feet
 Duration of observation: 35 minutes
 Habitat: Beach and tidal pond at base of East Beach Apfel Park Jetty along the Gulf of Mexico on the Northeast end of Galveston Island on the edge of a mixed flock of about 300 gulls which were mostly Herring and Ring-billed with some Laughing, L. atricilla, and a few Bonaparte's, L. philadelphia
 Description: This bird was intermediate in size between the Herring Gulls, L. argentatus, and the ring-billed Gulls, L. delawarensis.

The bill was longer and heavier than a Ring-billed but not as large or thick as a Herring Gull. It was flesh pink except for a black tip which was sharply demarcated at the gonydial angle. The eye was dark. The legs were pinkish-gray.

The head was evenly sloped to the bill starting just behind the eye but it was not flat on the crown and then sloped like a Herring. There was some dark smudging around and behind the eye. The crown, upper nape, and face were light and mottled by brown tips on the feathers forming streaks. The throat and chin contrasted lighter than the fairly even brown breast and belly. The lower hindneck and back were a warm brown. The scapulars were large with warm brown centers and white edges. The rump was lighter than the back and the upper and under tail coverts were barred dark on lighter gray. The lesser and median coverts had a very barred pattern from very even rows of brown feathers with light tips. The tertials were all dark with a white subterminal band and a narrow dark tip. The primaries were all dark. The tail had a very broad dark band in flight and the rest was a lighter gray-brown.

The first winter Herring Gulls were also brownish underneath but did not fade as evenly into the throat. The Herrings seemed to have a much lighter throat. The Herrings that had a black tip on the bill were not as sharply demarcated and also continued thinly along the cutting edge of the bill to the base.

The first winter Ring-billed Gulls had a much lighter base on the smaller thinner bill and the head was proportionately smaller and had a more rounded even profile. The throat is much lighter and unstreaked. The wings were an even brownish color with only a thin white edge to the feathers. The tertials were dark with only a thin edge of white near the tip and lower side. Their backs were light gray not brown.

Voice: none distinguished
 Previous experience with species: Seen in all plumages on the coast for five years.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL Ted Eubanks, Jim Morgan 2/17/90

(Probable forth-winter individual)
 Dark-backed large gull at tip of Big Reef, East Beach, Galveston Island, Tx. Upperparts charcoal gray, underparts white. Mantle only slightly darker than adjacent Laughing Gull. Head white with brown streaking on crown, hindneck, nape and neck; bill yellow with black circular smudge at gonyx with slight border of red near tip; extreme tip (apex) of bill yellow; eye yellow; area around eye dark smudging, then flaring into fine dark streaking on auriculars; remiges black; outer primaries tipped in white; tertials broadly tipped in white (seen at rest) contrasting with dark mantle; in flight, secondaries appeared tipped in white; tail, seen in flight, completely white; legs yellow. Seen as close as 50-60 ft (20 m) with 10x binocs and 25x scope for 2-3 minutes in fair but adequate light at 1730 hours. Seen well by both observers and photographed (will be small). NOT the same individual seen same day at San Luis Pass. Bill no more massive than nearby Herrings.

MINUTES OF OG MEETING, MAR. 6

Don Richardson concluded the study of ducks continue from last month's Learning Corner.

Richard Uzar call the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. The possibility of mid-week birding field trips organized by Jerry Patrick was discussed. If you are interested in "bird du jour" trips please get in touch with Jerry Patrick. Libby Price advised members about actions to take if they receive Spoonbills late or not at all. (See article) Peggy Milstead reminded members that 1990 dues are now overdue, and members who have not paid will be cut off the mailing list after March. She also asked that members send her their changes of address early, because the OG has to pay 25¢ per returned Spoonbill. Too many people have moved without letting her know.

Bob Honig announced that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife will review the results of the 1990 breeding season for Bald Eagles to see if they can be classified as "threatened" rather than "endangered" in the lower 48 states, because in recent years their populations have increased.

Ed Rozenburg needs bird walk leaders on April 22, Earth Day, and is asking for volunteers.

Officers for the following year were elected by acclamation: Richard Uzar, Chairman; John buckman, Vice-Chairman; Arch Dillard, Treasurer; and Gretchen Mueller, Secretary.

Richard Uzar asked for volunteers to help document hawk migration, and also to census birds at Bolivar Flats. Get in touch with him at 527-0454.

The program was presented by Marilyn Crane, who showed us slides from her latest trip to Alaska and Attu. She advised that May is the best month for spotting Asian migrants and accidentals, but be warned--bring rain gear. And she stressed good rain gear! Two North American records were seen, the Chinese Little Bittern and the Narcissus Flycatcher. Marilyn herself added ten lifers to her list.

Gretchen Mueller, Acting Secretary

BE A HOSPITABLE BIRDER!

The Houston Audubon Society volunteers report receiving occasional calls from out-of-state birders requesting birding companions when they visit Houston. Richard Uzar, indefatigable birder that he is, cannot possibly go with everyone who calls!

If you would be available to guide a visitor to some prime birding areas on the Upper Texas Coast, call the HAS at 932-1639 and leave a message for Gregg Mueller, who will return your call and give you more information.

THE SPOONBILL STAFF

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
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PARROTS IN THE SNOW: A COMEBACK [From The New York Times, Jan. 9, 1990]

Arizona Returns Confiscated Birds to the Wild

In the rugged Chiricahua Mountains, where the winter landscape is shrouded in snowy silence, a handful of thick-billed parrots are on the wing, the survivors of a program to take birds seized from smugglers and reintroduce them to the wild.

Slightly larger than a blue jay, the green and red parrot can speed up to 60 miles per hour in level flight. The species once ranged throughout southeastern and east-central Arizona, but Federal and state officials now list it as threatened, and it mainly inhabits the western Sierra Madre of Mexico.

The birds are valued as pets, and four years ago a Federal wildlife agent, Sam Jojola, noticed an increase in the number being confiscated from smugglers crossing the border from Mexico. The impounded parrots had dark beaks and ate pine cones, indicating that they were probably captured as adults.

...Mr. Jojola's suggestion that the confiscated birds be returned to the wild was quickly accepted, and 29 parrots, some wearing radio collars, were released in the Chiricahua Mountains in September, 1986. Although three pairs have mated, the parrots have suffered setbacks over the years and only 10 or 12 now survive in the wild, said Terry Johnson, the endangered species coordinator for the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

"A parrot in the snow is an image most people cannot conjure up," Mr. Johnson said. But a flock of five birds, the smallest since the reintroduction program started, is again wintering in the Chiricahuas, where overnight temperatures drop below freezing. The others are roaming in several groups elsewhere in the high-mountain pine forests of east-central Arizona. The parrots prefer the forests above an altitude of 7,000 feet, where they eat pine cones and roost in the dense inner boughs of pine trees.

[The flock was reduced to 14 soon after being released.]...The 14 remaining parrots soon began a migratory pattern that is now well established, flying north in June to forage on pine cones in the Tonto Basin region...then returning to winter in the Chiricahuas.

In 1988, two parrots with pale bills turned up, begging food from adult birds, clearly establishing that at least one pair of released thick-billed parrots had bred in the wild.

One fledgling disappeared in midwinter; the other headed north with the flock in spring, disappearing somewhere along the route...Again in 1989 the parrots flew north and two pairs mated [but the young did not survive.]...Despite the setbacks, project workers are optimistic. Noel Snyder, a biologist, says the key is bigger flocks.

"With higher numbers, say around 40 birds, you have more eyes and ears," he said. "They can usually spot a raptor and with any sort of warning are fast enough to escape."

Confiscated birds are now in short supply...So state officials have turned to the Raptor Rehabilitation and Propagation Project, Inc., a nonprofit organization in St. Louis, for parrots reared in captivity by adult birds. Fifteen birds are ready, but officials plan to wait until the food supply in the wild improves to release any significant number.

Pyrrhuloxia

Houston Audubon Society,
submitted by Jim Morgan

2/10/90

Overall quite gray with a burnt orange breast and belly. Stubby, but heavy yellow bill with strongly curved upper mandible; spike-like crest; dark maroon-like red in crest, wings, tail. Seen by 12 observers for 5 minutes in good light with binocs. (West Harris County)

Red-breasted Nuthatch Wilton and Donna French 2/4/90

Boy Scout Woods, High Island, Texas
In tree just north of old barn, with Yellow-rump (myrtle) Warblers. We used 8x42 binoculars, and stood beneath the tree for several minutes. Bird was busy pecking at a broken branch. Beautiful weather. It was unmistakable, with reddish underside and white above black eye stripe. It moved up and down tree trunk, but mostly stayed near top of a broken branch, pecking. We were there the 27th of January, and met Tom and Joyce Bogus, who had seen the nuthatch that day.

NOTES FROM JANUARY, 1990

CALIFORNIA GULL Ted Eubanks, Jim Morgan, 1/27/90
Richard Uzar

First winter plumage; slightly larger than adjacent Ring-billed Gulls and noticeably smaller than adjacent Herring Gulls; overall coloration brown with a noticeably light head; eye dark; bill flesh-pink with yellowish overtones with dramatic dark tip, the dark extending distally slightly more on lower mandible; angle on gonys acute but not as distinct as Herring, more in between Herring and Ring-billed. Crown lightly and finely streaked with darker brown. Face mainly light (towards whitish) with a dark streak behind eye. Mantle similar to first winter Herring but not as contrasting. Head shape a little more rounded than Herring, but not as dove-headed as Thayer's. In flight, upperwing generally brown, outer primaries dark with no window; median coverts dark; greater coverts light; secondaries dark. The wing pattern, thus, on the upperwing, was of a double stripe of both light and dark, noticeably different than Herring with its single dark secondary bar. Tail dark; rump concolor with the back. At rest, appeared very long, with five primary tips extending beyond the tertials. Primaries appeared unmarked and dark. Undertail coverts heavily barred. At rest in water, bird appeared to ride higher in water posteriorly, perhaps due to wing length. Legs a dull fleshy pink, not "bubblegum" pink. Seen for approximately 2 hours, off and on, directly adjacent to Laughing, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls in good and fairly good light with 10x binocs, 22x scope. Extensively photographed. When relocating, the bird was always picked up on size, then the bill.

ERRATA:

Following lines for birds in January, 1990 Clearing House should have read:

Grebe, Least B- BW(2)6, AGD(notes submitted)
Grebe, Eared B-(3)4,RC; B-FJ(1)27,PF; G-(1)21,E; J-PL(2)20,AA;
U-(2)27,EMU
Screech Owl,E. H-HP(1)15,PD; H-(1)27,EMU; H-(1)31,RPF
No Lark Bunting
MJ=Margaret Jones

Lines for Christmas Counts should have read:

Grebe, Red-Necked should be Grebe, Eared (6)HC
Merganser, Common should be Merganser, Red-Br. (142)HC
Dove, Inca (107)HC
Pigeon, Band-Tailed should be Dove, Rock (171)FC
Nutcracker, Clarks incorrectly included

We thank Richard Uzar for his thoughtful and astute input into these corrections. While the editors make every attempt to check and eliminate errors, we hope the general membership will continue to provide both the support and the critical appraisal necessary to maintain the Clearing House at the highest standards possible. (AG)

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