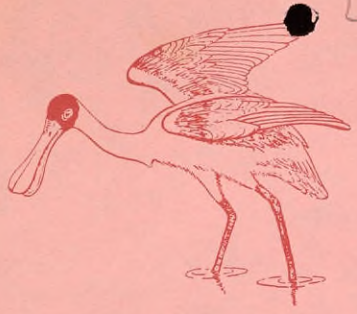
[1955 Houston Xmas Count]



THE SPOONBILL

Volume IV No. 10

February 1956

* *
* KILLDEER *
* A farmer by choice, the Killdeer leaves *
* the sea to follow the plow. His harvest *
* is the grub in the furrow. Loud and swift*
* handsome and watchful, he is easy to know *
* by his two black collars, his long tail, *
* his burnished rump and his boast "Kill- *
* deer". He is no deerslayer despite his *
* remarks, but has bagged many a foul worm *
* in open country. *
* E. B. White - November 1955 FORD TIMES *
* *

Published by the Ornithology Group, Outdoor Nature Club, Houston, Texas

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

February 19 - Sunday - Ornithology Group field trip to the Velasco-Lake Jackson area. Meet - 7:30 a.m. at Sears Parking Lot - 4200 Fannin. Leader - Armand Yramategui.

February 24 - Audubon Screen Tour "Penguin Summer" Mr. Olin Sewell Pettingill,Jr. Lamar Sr. High School, 3325 Westheimer, at 8:00 p.m.

February 25 - Regular Monthly field trip of the Outdoor Nature Club --- "Sandhill Crane Convention." Meet - Post Oak and Westheimer Road at 9:00 a.m. Leader - James F. Murray.

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ORNITHOLOGY GROUP REPORTS

January 22 - Field Trip to Cove Area - (Noel Perley) (Noel Pettingill)

This was the Ornithology Group's third trip to the Cove Area in NW Chambers County (Previous trips: Oct. 25, 1953 and March 13, 1955). Our guide, of course, was Mr. Arlie K. McKay, who is to the Cove Area what Connie Hagar is to Rockport, Irby Davis is to the Valley, and Edgar Kincaid is to Austin. Mr. McKay's life list (1934-1955) for NW Chambers County stood at 334 species at latest count - truly a phenomenal total for so small an area. (See Sept. 1953 "Spoonbill")

We were 16 strong when we left Busch Stadium at 8:20 a.m. heading for the San Jacinto Battlegrounds, which we had decided to work en route to Cove. Here (at the reflection pool by the monument) we saw large numbers of canvasbacks and baldpates. Although the Battlegrounds were in our Christmas Count Area, we missed the canvasback that day, as the hunting season was still open.

We left the San Jacinto area at 10:35 a.m. enroute to the Baytown Tunnel via Miller Cut-off Road. Mr. Henry Aldrich spotted an Eastern Kingbird (white-tipped tail and all) - the second one this month! (Jimmy Murray saw one in the Sheldon area January 2nd). Further along Miller Road (still in the Christmas Count circle) we saw several tree swallows - the first of many seen throughout the day.

Shortly before we moved on to the Baytown Tunnel we were approached by a boy with a tame crow perched on his shoulder! Birds -- and bird-lovers - of a feather flock together!

It was nearly noon by the time we left the Baytown Tunnel (and the Christmas Count area), our list numbering some 60 species - 4 of which we had missed on the Count (viz. canvasback, eastern kingbird, tree swallow and bobwhite).

We reached Mr. McKay's place near Cove at 12:30 p.m. ate a somewhat belated lunch, and then went on a foot-tour of the nearby marshes, woodland, and pasture areas, with sharp-eyed Arlie McKay in the lead. His "staked-out" barn owl wouldn't flush but we were pleasantly surprised when we discovered the owner of a phoebe-like call -- a female purple finch.

We also found field sparrows and, with the aid of an Audubon bird call, a curious ruby-crowned kinglet which actually flew up against Vic Emanuel's leg in

its attempt to locate the source of the squeaky "song" which we were making in order to lure the little bird in.

Mr. McKay then led us to Old River Lake and a pair of Vermilion flycatchers (male and female). We then took to the Highway (Cove Road, thence to Cotton Lake Road) along which we found three species of geese (Canada, Blue and Snow - latter two missed on Christmas Count), several ringed plover (also missed on Count), and a new bird-watcher, Bob McMullen, who saw us watching the geese and who then immediately had us sign him up in the O.G. and Outdoor Nature Club!

From Cotton Lake Road we headed eastward to a marshy area near McCollum Park (formerly Chambers County Park), NW Trinity Bay, where we found another Vermilion flycatcher (male) and the second big "find of the day" (E. Kingbird was No. 1) a Sora Rail, which is an accidental winter visitant in this area - and the 8th species which we had missed on the Christmas Count.

It was 4:30 by the time we left the Point Barrow area, our final destination being a wooded lake 2½ miles north of the Chambers County line in SW Liberty County, where we hoped to see evening flights of wood ducks, woodcocks, and night herons. Enroute, we picked up the ninth and last species missed on our Christmas Count - a rusty blackbird identified by Arlie McKay.

We missed the woodcock and night herons but did add the wood duck to our list, which totaled 89 species for the day. We had tried to break 100 but were hampered by overcast skies and cool temperatures (51-59°) so considered ourselves quite lucky to have done as well as we had.

At 6:00 p.m. (in SW Liberty County) our field trip mileage stood at 86 mi. 4-3/4 of it on foot.

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CLEARING HOUSE

December 10 - A Swainson's hawk was reported on North MacGregor Drive (near University of Houston) by Steve Williams

December 17 - Purple finch observed by Steve Williams in his yard at 2732 University Blvd.

December 30,- Ruby-throated hummingbird also reported by Steve Williams at 2732 University Blvd.

January 2 - Just east of Eagle Lake, Texas, thousands of snow geese - with a few scattered blue's - were seen flying in single file and V-formation by Leota Stilwell, Carrie Holcomb, Ruth Moorman, N.Oates.

January 6 - Charlotte Reindl birding in Hermann Park reported many flickers and water pipits also white-throated sparrows and ruby-crowned kinglets.

January 7 - From 20 to 30 Rusty blackbirds were seen at the lake on Miller Road by Leota Stilwell and N. Oates.

January 8 - An immense concentration of robins and cedar waxwings feeding in the Hyde Park neighborhood, crowded around the birdbath at the home of Carrie Holcomb, 1008 Missouri.

Slate-colored Juncos, many chipping sparrows, Myrtle and pine warblers were seen in the Sam Houston Forest near Coldspring by Leota Stilwell, Carrie Holcomb, Ruth Stamm and Thelma Smith.

A small flock of pine siskins was reported feeding with American goldfinch at the Little Thicket Sanctuary by Edna Miner.

Four eared grebes, belted kingfisher and numerous horned larks and water pipits were seen at Freeport by Mac Ramsey.

January 14 - Lincoln and field sparrows along with hundreds of white-throated sparrows were found in the wooded section along the Barker-Clodine Road by Jerry Baker, Carrie Holcomb and Leota Stilwell.

A flock of fifty or more snow geese were seen flying in a westerly direction over Houston at 8:15 a.m. by Josiephine Wilkin.

January 15 - Vic Emanuel and Carl Aiken birding in the bay area reported 14 tree swallows at Seabrook; 5 Bonaparte gulls at Boliver ferry; 18 spoonbills at Highland Bayou and hundreds of Myrtle warblers at Kemah.

January 21 - About 30 purple finches, with yellow-shafted flickers, blue jays and Cardinals were seen at 6410 Auden by Carl Aiken and David Safley.

January 23 - Vic Emanuel reported finding 8 or more Leconte sparrows in a wooded section near the corner of Bellaire Blvd. and Buffalo Speedway.

January 28 - Carrie Holcomb week-ending in Wimberly reported a flock of about fifty Mountain bluebirds apparently wintering in that area.

Three purple finch (1 male and two females or immatures) were observed by Leota Stilwell in her neighborhood, 3009 Rice Blvd.

January 29 - On the Outdoor Nature Club field trip to George's Lake an immature bald eagle was reported by Vic Emanuel, Armand Yramategui and Josiephine Wilkin.

A Report from Cove area by Arlie K. McKay

Total species observed during month of January - 125.

Jan. 1 - 51 species; 1 purple finch; 2 white-crowned sparrows; 1 fox sparrow; cedar waxwings; 2 blue-headed vireos; 1 yellowthroat; 1 catbird; 2 winter wrens.

Jan. 8 - 94 species; 75 red-breasted mergansers; 3 shovelers; 60 canvasbacks; 6 white-fronted geese; 1 Canada goose; 3 purple gallinules; 15 greater and 1 lesser yellow-legs; 1 ringed plover; 2 coveys of bobwhites; 1 barn owl; 1 horned owl; 1 vermilion flycatcher; 2 purple finches; 1 vesper sparrow; 7 white-crowned sparrows; 1 blue-headed vireo; 1 Sprague's pipit; 1 winter wren; 6 sedge wrens.

Jan. 13 - 1 woodcock dead on highway.

Jan. 14 - 41 species; 1 Cooper's hawk; 1 downy woodpecker; white-crown sparrow.

Jan. 15 - 73 species; 10 mottled ducks, 1 gadwall; 20 baldpates; 125 canvasbacks; 1 clapper rail; 11 greater and 2 lesser yellow-legs; 1 pigeon hawk; 1 vermilion flycatcher (17th of season); 8 towhees; 1 yellow-throat; 300 dowitchers.

Jan. 16 - 27 species; 1 horned owl; 2 white-crowned sparrows.

Jan. 19 - 24 species; 1 flock of Canada geese; 1 long-billed marsh wren and Tree swallows (also seen on other days).

Jan. 21 - 64 species; 1 canvasback; 5 goldeneyes; 1 coot; 30 dowitchers; 50 willets; 1 spotted sandpiper.

Jan. 22 - 61 species; 1 flock Canada geese; 1 pileated woodpecker; 5 vermilion flycatchers; 2 Rusty blackbirds (first of season); 5 purple finches.

Jan. 25 - 2 barn owls; 1 eagle (adult)

Jan. 29 - 64 species; 3 horned grebes; 40 canvasbacks; 1 spoonbill (my first January record); both clapper and king rails; 7 Willets; 2 towhees.

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January Birding Report from Armand Yramategui

January 12 - Inspection of a nesting cavity by a pair of titmice in my backyard. It was a warm day and the male was singing his "Peter, Peter, Peter" song (usually heard during the nesting season). He suddenly darted 50 or 60 feet directly to the cavity entrance and looked inside. I feel certain from this action that it was the same pair or one of a pair that nested here last year. They flew off together and I have not heard or seen them since.

January 15 - On Galveston Bay, near the Houston Yacht Club, there were about 200 canvasbacks and rafts of a thousand or more other diving ducks. The latter were too far away to identify but appeared to be Scaup or canvasbacks. Many hundreds of robins were seen in this area.

January 16 - Outside my window 40 or 50 Myrtle warblers were feeding on Chinese Tallow seeds - others on the concrete driveway were eating parts of the crushed or fallen seeds. Close observation showed they did not swallow the seed - they merely scraped the surface of the seed with their upper mandible. As the amount of waxy covering on the seed is small, it probably just served as an appetizer. A few goldfinches also patronized the Tallow trees.

January 21 - Today about 120 Myrtles came to the Chinese Tallows in my yard, again scraping the waxy covering rather than eating the seeds -- many were also in the grass eating tiny insects. I noticed one belligerent warbler would chase all others around him away. One of his outer tail feathers was entirely white and so he could easily be identified as the bellicose one. After the flock left he remained and has been around for at least two weeks.

January 22 - A robin sang his spring song and 40 purple finches - 4 or 5 mature males, the others females and immatures - were feeding in the Chinese Tallows. The finches seemed to eat the entire seed - not just the waxy covering.

January 23 - About 600 robins came late in the evening to roost in the Pines near my home and every tree as far as the eye could see (from my front yard) was filled with robins. Shortly after midnight I heard very distinctly the "double toot" of a Great Horned owl. Sounded as if he too was in a Pine in my front yard - possibly feeding on robins.

January 24 - The 600 robins and a few cedar waxwings stripped a fully loaded Camphor tree in my back yard of its berries. They came in shifts - at times the limbs would bend with the weight of the robins. Each would gobble about a dozen berries then fly to a tree close by and one by one spit out the seeds. After stripping the Camphor tree in about 45 minutes they stripped a Pyracantha tree in 10 minutes. The Chinese Tallow was hardly touched by the robins.

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THE HOUSTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: I. Party #5 Report - (Noel Perley) (PETTINGILL)

Our party was one of six groups covering the 15-mile diameter Christmas Count Circle on December 31st and consisted of the following "Bird-o-maniacs": - Nance Cunningham (hard-working editor of "Nature Club Notes"), Josiephine Wilkin (Count coordinator and industrious member of "The Spoonbill" staff), Sam Tanner (newly-arrived from New Mexico where his keen observing had resulted in the addition of several species to the State list), and the Writer. Despite the bone-chilling 38-degree weather, we managed to get underway by 5:15 a.m. An early start was imperative since the absence of four of last year's nine party leaders meant a larger

area for us to cover - much of it unfamiliar to all of us.

We reached our count area (2-3/4 mi. due East of Houston) shortly before 6 a.m. so for the next 45 minutes - till daybreak - we listened for owls, but heard only the crowing of a multitude of roosters from near and far! Next we stopped at the home of Mrs. L.L.Bradley (Channelview) where our hostess treated us to some welcome coffee. After warming ourselves and examining a dead and banded purple finch which Mrs. Bradley found in her yard, we headed for the San Jacinto Ordnance Depot. Our guide while in this restricted area (where U.S. Army munitions are stored) was Claude Franklin whose invaluable assistance and patience enabled us to pile up an impressive list of some 67 species by noon. He seemed to know every square foot of the 6,000 acre Ordnance area - including the most productive birding spots. We later found that we had listed no less than 9 species recorded nowhere else in the six-section census circle. These "exclusive species" included the following: Brown-headed nuthatch, woodcock, green-winged teal, mottled duck, redhead, black-and-white warbler, sharp-shinned hawk, Cooper's hawk, and - the find of the day - a Whip-poor-will - recorded on but one other Houston count (1946).

At this point (noon) our guide had to report in, so we decided to eat lunch at the front gate parking area and plan the rest of our day's itinerary. We decided to head east along Market Street Road, then South via Crosby-Lynchburg Road. Once we stopped to watch some egrets - and held our breaths as we closely scrutinized a bird which we all thought bore a close resemblance to the much-awaited Cattle Egret - no such luck, however, so, somewhat chagrined, we continued on our way.

Our next stop was for the purpose of watching an immature red-shouldered hawk feeding in a pasture close to the road. Shortly thereafter, as we were nearing the Lynchburg Ferry and San Jacinto Battlegrounds, we noticed a soaring bird identified as: first, a mourning dove, then an accipiter, next a buteo, and finally a Peregrine falcon. None of us had ever before seen a duck hawk (which it actually was) continuously soaring upward until out of sight (which it actually did). However, a recheck of the map at this point revealed that, unfortunately, we were outside our section and therefore would have to credit the Peregrine (plus 5 additional species) to Section 6 - Steve Williams' party. (And, as it turned out, this actually was the only one of its kind recorded in the Census Circle!)

We barely had time to cover the Diamond Alkali Company area and Jones Ranch (both near Deer Park) before nightfall. Our guide at Diamond Alkali was amiable Dusty Rhodes (not the Dusty Rhodes of baseball fame, however!), who showed us the only two geese recorded on the Houston Count this year - a pair of Canada geese which had taken refuge in the waterfowl sanctuary, with a number of ducks.

There were less than two hours of daylight left by the time we reached Jones Ranch - one of the richest birding areas anywhere within the Census Circle. By 6 p.m. (nightfall) our list had grown to 83 species - including the snipe and red-breasted nuthatch, both of which were missed by all the other parties.

After a hectic hour and a half of frenzied dining at Sanders Cafe (near the Battlegrounds) - while checking our list against other section lists, comparing rarities, and adding up the total species for the day - we were off again to call up the Screech owl. Our method was to play an actual recording of this owl's call on a portable phonograph - just as we had done on last year's count. And once again we were successful, thus making it 84 species in our section (plus 6 more in Steve Williams' area) - and tying Steve for top count honors for the day.

We had covered some 64-3/4 miles (7-1/4 on foot) between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. - certainly a full day's birding, but well worth the effort from the standpoint of rarities recorded and the ever-present "lure of the list."

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THE HOUSTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: II SUMMARY - (Noel Perley) (Pettingell)

Warm, dry weather, less observers (including the loss of four of last year's nine party leaders), no advance scouting of the census area, and increased industrialization of the count site all contributed toward the relatively low species total of 139 - 7 under last year's 146 - and an individual tally of 19,384 - lowest since 1946 (54,403 last year). But the factor which affected this winter's count the most was, without a doubt, the lack of precipitation throughout the fall months preceding the census. This is borne out by the fact that the following "Essential species" were missed completely: Snow and Blue geese, (only 2 Canada geese were recorded), canvasback, Caracara, sanderling, semipalmated sandpiper, bobwhite, horned lark, golden-crowned kinglet, solitary vireo, lark sparrow and seaside sparrow. At the same time, however, a number of species rarely found here at this time of year were seen, viz., Florida gallinule, least tern, whip-poor-will, wood thrush, gray-cheeked thrush, palm warbler, and yellow-breasted chat -- all on the actual count date (December 31st), plus a Magnolia warbler and Eastern kingbird two days later (January 2nd) in the Census area and during the count period.

The following chart compares each of the six parties (sections) in each of the last four counts:

(Note: Additional parties prior to 1955 are included in "Total" column only)

Party No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
OBSERVERS 1955 (Party leader underlined) *Also 1954 Count	*Jimmy Murray Conrad Deats Mac Ramsey Ella Wolfer *Mabel Kaiser	*Werner Gottsch *Jerry Baker *Darris Massingill	*Joe Heiser *Mr.&Mrs. L.A.M. Barnette Sid Barnette Harriet Hunt	*C. E. Buehner *Luta Buchanan Mr.& Mrs. C. B. Gilman Katrina Thompson	*Noel Perley *Nance Cunningham Sam Tanner *Josiephine Wilkin	*Steve Williams *Lawrence Tabony	24
OBSERVERS							
1954	8	5	5	4	4	2	40
1953	5	4	5	5	5	3	47
1952	8	5	4		4	3	36
SPECIES							
1955	57	60	76	54	84	84	139
1954	75	62	56	49	81	79	146
1953	62	61	63	42	83	87	143
1952	73	59	68		78	76	139
INDIVIDUALS							
1955	1,956	7,130	4,971	1,042	1,770	2,515	18,384
1954	1,983	2,470	2,794	6,366	3,629	5,606	54,403
1953	1,089	2,609	114,361	13,998	1,793	5,030	156950
1952	2,757	1,758	12,630		4,277	6,278	44,959
EXCLUSIVE SPECIES 1955 (One party only- except Sharp-tailed sparrow)	*Gray-cheek. thrush (1954) Wood duck (1939) Leconte sparrow Water-turkey Vermilion flycatcher Black-cr. ni.heron Slate-col. Junco	White-eyed vireo Hairy wood pecker Vesper sparrow Sharp-tailed sparrow (1951)	Least tern Western meadow-lark Baird's sparrow (1952) Florida gallinule (1949) Red-shaft. flicker Yellow-cr. ni.heron American widgeon Willet	*Yel-br.chat *Wood thrush (1949) Long-billed curlew (1948) Rough-legged hawk (1947 & 1953) Sprague's pipit	*Whip-poor-will (1946) Mottled duck (1952&1954) Screech owl (1953&1954) Bl. & white warbler Red-br.nut-hatch Woodcock Green-wing teal Can.goose Snipe Cooper's hawk Sharp-shin. hawk Br.headed nuthatch Redhead duck	Spotted towhee Palm warbler yel. (1953) Pigeon hawk Peregrine falcon Avocet Ring-neck duck Dowitcher Bl.skimmer Short billed marsh wren Bl.bellied plover Little blue heron Greater yel.legs Gull-billed tern Forster's tern Western sandpiper Least sandpiper	

*Not on Audubon Count List.
( ) Date of only other time on Houston Count.
Underlined species never before seen on Houston Count.

TOTAL EXCL. SPECIES							
1955	7	3	8	5	13	16	52
1954	5	4	1	1	4	4	36
1953	1	1	2	0	6	6	33
1952	3	5	4		3	6	32
Party No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE

Lt. R. C. Rosche - Stationed in France

* * * birding in this part of France has much to be desired. It does not compare with birding in any part of Texas. This particular area (along the Atlantic Coast 100 miles north of Bordeaux) is very heavily populated and the land is cleared almost completely. Practically the only brushy areas or habitats that even approach woodland are found along the roads and between the plots of farmland. This area is excellent for field birds but as far as typical woodland birds are concerned, there are very few to be seen.

I'm enclosing some notes about summer birding. This should give you an idea as to what I've been seeing. These notes point out, more than anything else, the similarity of European and American birds. The Skylarks and Meadow Pipits are abundant and on the few sunny and warm days the fields and meadows are alive with their beautiful songs. The Chaffinches and Greenfinches travel about the weedy fields in large flocks. But the most interesting phenomena right now are the small flocks of landbirds that roam about the brushy and wooded areas. The long-tailed Tit comprises the bulk of these flocks - it's a chickadee but has an extremely long tail. Unlike all other chickadees it builds a large, round, globular nest with a side entrance.

Notes on Birds Observed - July, August, September 1955 - (Condensed)

Heron - similar to Great Blue heron; Black Kite - buteo-like, very unlike American "kites", prefers marshy areas along rivers and streams; Hen Harrier - same species as Marsh Hawk; Kestrel - the European counterpart of American Sparrow Hawk; Moorhen - same species as American Florida Gallinule; Coot - indistinguishable in field from American Coot; Lapwing - very unplover-like although in family CHARADRIIDAE; Ringed Plover - same species as American Semipalmated or Ringed Plover; Curlew - European counterpart of American Longbilled Curlew; Whimbrel - same species as American Hudsonian Curlew; Common Sandpiper - European counterpart of American Spotted Sandpiper; Herring Gull - same as American Herring Gull; Black-headed Gull - commonest and best known gull along the coast, also feeds in plowed and cut-over hayfields; Black Tern - same as American Black Tern; Wood Pigeon - similar to Rock Dove but with white "shoulder patches"; Turtle Dove - European counterpart of Mourning Dove; Wood Hoopoe - a flicker-sized, salmon-pink bird with an erectile crest and striking black and white wing and tail pattern - feeds in open areas on the ground, flight moth-like; Wryneck - a sparrow-like woodpecker with a whip-poor-will-like pattern; Skylark - abundant in open areas particularly in hay fields and pastures; Swallow - same as Barn Swallow; House Martin - like a Tree Swallow with a white rump; Sand Martin - same as Bank Swallow; Carrion Crow - European counterpart of American Crow; Rook - a crow with a featherless, whitish face, feeds in large flocks in farmland country, circles high in sky with Jackdaws; Jackdaw - smallest member of the family CORVIDAE in Europe, roosts in large flocks in church towers and in wooded sections; Great Tit - a sparrow-sized chickadee with a black patch down middle of yellow underparts; Blue Tit - a small tit with yellowish underparts and a bright blue crown; Marsh Tit - similar to American Blackcapped Chickadee; Blackbird - European counterpart of American Robin; Wheatear - a thrush, common in open farmland, partial to hay and grain stubble, perches on hay piles (as many as seven seen on one hay pile); Stonechat - a thrush, small blackish, reddish breast; Whinchat - small, brownish sparrow-like bird with white eye line and tail patches; Robin - small and brownish with orange breast, forehead and sides of head; Melodius Warbler - same family as Kinglets - not a wood warbler; Pied Wagtail - striking black and white plumage, long-tailed, prefers vicinity of water, wags tail commonly; Starling - scattered throughout the countryside and not as common in towns as in U.S.; Greenfinch - all greenish with yellow wing and tail patches; European Goldfinch - (See Peterson Eastern Guide page 214), common in small flocks in area; House sparrow (Passer domesticus) - common throughout the area; European Tree Sparrow (Passer montanus) (See Peterson's Eastern Guide page 215) - similar in habits and habitat to House sparrow, not as common as latter.

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OFF THE PRESS

HOUSTON POST - January 10, 1956 - (John Moore's Place)

Bessie Reid of Silsbee (O.G. Member) is the only person I know who keeps a coral snake for a pet. For that matter, Mrs (Bruce) Reid is the only individual I know who carries a bluebird around the state in an automobile, but other people do carry pet birds. Mrs. Reid is one of the outstanding naturalists, bird watchers and amateur archaeologists in the state. She and her husband, Bruce Reid, lived at Port Arthur for more than 40 years before transferring their affections to Reid Hill, south of Silsbee.

On a 15-acre tract, the Reids are working to preserve the natural trees, shrubs

and flowers of the locality, which is just west of Highway 69, overlooking Village Creek. Out in the yard, the deadly poisonous coral snake is hibernating in a hole in the ground. Mrs. Reid has put a large bucket above the hole to protect her protege. Later on, when the snake emerges, she plans to capture it for a friend of hers who is interested in obtaining a coral for study.

Around the house, birds fly in from all directions to visit, drink, take a bath and obtain a free meal. Dozens of birds are fed here daily.

Mrs. Reid was one of the first individuals to bring Vingt'un Island, a favorite haunt of the roseate spoonbills to the attention of the Audubon Society. She has had the distinction of having a native violet named after her, and was included in the dedication of a recent Frank Dobie publication, "Tales of Old-Time Texas."

The inside of the Reids' country home is filled with bird cages, pine cones, large gourds, manuscripts, magnifying glasses, shells, rocks and other natural specimens. In the yard are a number of varieties of trees, some preserved as they were found, others transplanted. In almost every tree of any size, there is a birdhouse.

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HOUSTON POST - January 28, 1956 - (The Outdoorsman - by Harv. Boughton)

R. L. Mills of 1913 Huldy watches purple martins and their migration for tips on the weather. The birds' return to Houston, according to his four-year survey, has been during the first two weeks of February. But two of his martins have already made the flight from Brazil, their winter grounds, which he believes, means an early spring for Houston and vicinity. They leave his back-yard nesting spots in late August, Mills says.

(Note:- "Scout" Martins arrived in Houston Feb. 5 in 1955 and Jan. 27 in 1954)

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THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE - February 1956

An Exotic New Oriole Settles in Florida - by Charles M.Brookfield & O.Griswold

This article describes the sudden appearance (in Aug. 1949) of the Spotted-breasted oriole (Icterus P.Pectoralis) in the Miami area - some 1000 miles NE of its normal Mexican range. Although the first few orioles seen were probably (though not certainly) escaped cage birds, the species has definitely established itself as a breeder and, despite an extremely limited range of but 26 miles, is to be included in the forthcoming 5th edition of the A.O.U. Check-list.

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SHORT BIRD TALES

A Hungry Robin - (N. Oates)

December 17, 1955 - All morning a plump robin tried to get berries from a Pyracantha bush in the next yard, but a mockingbird had taken possession of the shrub, and kept chasing him away. I was raking leaves from the flower beds and the robin came down to feast on the exposed insects. He ran quickly over the ground, picking up bugs, occasionally stopping for a few seconds as though listening - then he would dig down in the ground and pull out a grub or worm. He ate 6 or 8 big grubs and when I looked his way again he had found a small, thin snake about eight or nine inches long (probably a Southern Brown). - He swallowed the snake head first in about four BIG gulps - pausing to rest each time before consuming the next few inches of snake. Still hungry, the robin flew toward the Pyracantha bush, found it unguarded and proceeded to finish off his meal with a large helping of ripe red berries!

A short, Short Story - (Arlie K. McKay)

A great blue heron came to my brother's fishing camp to beg food. At first it was lame in one leg. It would come and take shrimp or fish offered to it, often coming within three or four feet of the men. Oscar, as we called him, stayed about two months or more. A boy shot him November 24th.

Pheasantries - (Jerry Baker)

In Colorado last summer we witnessed two excellent camouflage jobs pulled off by male ring-necked pheasants. The first was in a meadow with fairly high grass. When he saw us he put his head close to the ground and went slinking off thru the grass. Although he is a very highly colored bird, he took on all the appearance of a small gray animal, similar to an armadillo. The second bird was in a pasture so closely cropped that it provided no cover at all. This fellow froze in such a position that he looked just like all the other small gray mounds in the pasture. He stayed in this position as long as we were able to see him.

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We extend our deepest sympathies to Mrs. Darris Massingill whose brother Leon Jennings of Silsby, Texas, died on January 27, 1956, and to Miss Nell Anthor whose father, O.T.Anthor of Bastrop, Texas, passed away on January 14, 1956.

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Norma C. Oates - Editor --- February 6, 1956

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