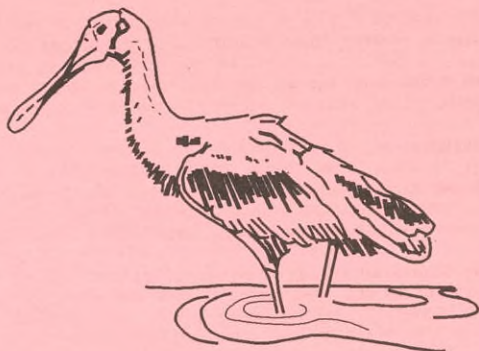


The Spoonbill



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Judith Mueller Boyce, Editor; Don Richardson, Technical Consultant

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COMING EVENTS

Monday, March 2: Ornithology Group Meeting. 7:30 P.M. Harris County Bayland Community Center (north side of Bissonnet just west of Hillcroft). Dr. Keith Arnold, director of the Texas Breeding Bird Atlas Project, will present an update on results of 1991 project and will review which birds are thriving in Texas and which are declining. He may have a few surprises in store for us. Dr. Arnold is Professor of Ornithology in the Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences Department at Texas A & M University and Curator of Birds of the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection. In addition to his involvement with the breeding bird atlas project, Dr. Arnold participates in other activities of the Texas Ornithological Society, of which he is a past president and currently serves as treasurer. As academic advisor to the Texas Bird Records Committee, he participates in decisions affecting the official status of rare birds in Texas. Don Richardson will conclude his two-part series on gulls and terns at Learning Corner at 7:00 P.M.

Saturday, March 14: OG Field Trip to Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR to view prairie chickens booming on their leks. Join our leader, Winnie Burkett, as she looks for lingering ducks, raptors and sparrows as well as prairie chickens. Winnie compiles the Attwater Christmas Bird Count and is involved in bird censusing at the refuge. We will meet at 7:00 A.M. at the refuge headquarters. Take I-10 west to Sealy and go south (1/2 mile) on State Highway 36 to F.M. 3013. Follow F.M. 3013 west about 10 miles to the refuge sign marking the dirt road leading into the refuge. For assistance call David Bradford at 855-2615.

Wednesday, March 25: Special mid-week OG Field Trip to San Jacinto Battleground State Park. We'll look for lingering winter ducks, shorebirds and raptors. Also, by this time some early migrant shorebirds and passerines should be moving through. For those fortunate enough to be able to participate in a mid-week field trip, meet our leader Gail Luckner at the base of the monument at 7:30 A.M. Gail is currently developing a checklist for the state park. Bring insect repellent and water. The trip will end around noon. For directions or to ask questions, call Gail Luckner, 328-6236.

Monday, April 6: Ornithology Group Meeting. 7:30 P.M. Bayland Community Center. OG member, David Dauphin, will present a program on identification of spring warblers and vireos. Co-author of the UTC Checklist, David is a former OG Chairman and currently serves as Vice President of the Texas Ornithological Society. Come out and join David for this special spring migration warm-up.

Friday-Sunday, April 10-12: ONC/ALL GROUPS FIELD TRIP TO MC KINNEY FALLS STATE PARK near Austin. Trip will include birding Saturday morning with a member of Travis Audubon Society, a visit to the Congress Street bridge to view Mexican Free-tailed Bats, and wildflower identification in the park and along roadsides on the trip back to Houston. For camping reservations and motel information, call Cissy Donaldson at 649-6543.

Saturday, April 14: REUNION DAY AT LITTLE THICKET NATURE SANCTUARY. Once a year all ONC members are invited to reunite over a potluck dinner at the LTNS. An early morning bird hike begins at 8:30 A.M. followed by a botany/nature hike, a photography experience and tractor-trailer rides and potluck dinner at noon. After a short meeting, put your knowledge to the test on a nature scavenger hunt. Camping Friday and Saturday nights--bring your own water. OG members note there is a very active Red-cockaded Woodpecker colony on FM 945 between the Sanctuary and FM 2025. Watch for signs. For directions to LTNS, check your ONC year book, or call Aaron Stoley at 781-1371.

Saturday, April 18: OG FIELD TRIP TO BOLIVAR FLATS, HIGH ISLAND and other area "hotspots." Meet our leader at the Flats at 7:30 A.M. We will look for migrant shorebirds and passerines during the full day of birding. Details and directions to follow in the March issue of *The Spoonbill*.

NEWS BRIEFS

.....Minutes of OG February 3, 1992 meeting: Don Richardson discussed identification of the larger gulls and will continue his series next month with the smaller gulls.

Chairman Bob Honig opened the meeting by announcing the nominating committee for next year's officers. The committee members are David Dauphin, Ed Rozenburg and Richard Uzar. Their nominations: Chairman, Bob Honig; Vice Chairman, David Bradford; Secretary, Christine Bourgeois; and Treasurer, Frank Peace.

The ONC needs a Conservation Chairperson to succeed Jack Gillette. There has also been a suggestion that the maps supplied at the meeting need updating and renewing. Volunteers would be appreciated. Also, as of July 1, the Bayland Community Center is designated a "NO SMOKING" facility.

Ed Lebeau, Treasurer, announced that our finances are in good shape, however only 55% of the membership has paid their 1992 dues.

With \$300.00 in the aluminum fund, several members are interested in using these monies to fund a program that

would interest young students in ornithology. Libby Price welcomes any ideas on how this could be accomplished within the HISD school system.

Librarian Julie d'Ablaing noted that the library has a new video, "Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley of Texas," courtesy of Gail Luckner.

Ellen Red encouraged development of teams to participate in the Audubon Society's Spring Birdathon. It is a major fundraising effort for the Society. Ellen requested team names be submitted before March so they could be published and acknowledged for support.

Richard Uzar encouraged participation in this, the last year of the Texas Breeding Bird Atlas Project. Assistance is needed to close the gaps in information and financial assistance is always appreciated.

Closing announcements, Bob asked for notable bird sightings. Those mentioned were: two White-winged Scoters in a tidal pool at Galveston's East Beach, Vermilion Flycatchers at San Bernard and Brazoria National Wildlife Refuges. Also noted were a Black-headed Grosbeak in the Memorial area and the Swainson's Hawk and Golden Eagle at Davis Estate Road area.

Gail Luckner introduced the evening's speaker, Bill Goloby. Bill's program centered around the unique characteristics of the Purple Martin. He entertained us with the history of the French derivation of its name and its place in Greek mythology. While we listened to the very pleasant Purple Martin vocalizations, Bill discussed their behavior, migration and diet. He also provided detailed information on attracting Purple Martins and creating a comfortable environment for them. Christine Bourgeois, Secretary

.....INFORMATION REQUESTED FOR RESEARCH PROJECT. If you have House Finches at your feeders this winter, or if you have had them in the past at any season, please contact Gail Diane Luckner at 713/328-6236.

.....THE GREAT LAKES/NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS PIPING PLOVER RECOVERY TEAM is convening a conference on the issues related to the biology and conservation of the Piping Plover Tuesday, March 10, 1992 in the ballroom of the Galvez Hotel in Galveston, Texas. The meeting will begin promptly at 8:00 A.M. and will conclude by no later than 5:30 P.M. Conference Moderator is Ted L. Eubanks, member of the Great Lakes/Northern Great Plains Piping Plover Recovery Team and President of Fermata, Inc. Among the featured speakers are Curt Zonick, University of Missouri, who will speak on "Observations of the Piping Plover in the Upper Laguna Madre;" Doug Myers, General Land Office, on "Conservation Initiatives on Texas Coastal Lands;" and Rex Wahl, National Audubon Society on "The Piping Plover Dilemma--a Need for a Remedy." Conference attendees will also hear from representatives of the Army Corps of Engineers, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network and the Galveston Bay National Estuary Program.

.....SO YOU SPOTTED AN ESKIMO CURLEW! Who you gonna call? Rescue 911?--America's Most Wanted?--Well, not exactly. Call Fermata, Inc. at 863-0581--the Curlew Busters! Fermata is the new company of our former leader, Ted Eubanks. Ted has been contracted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to search for and verify Eskimo Curlews sighted on the Texas Coast. Part of the project is to attempt to verify any possible sightings of this most rare shorebird. Fermata, Inc. will have one or more persons in the field every day between March 5 and April 25, covering specific routes and checking out possible sightings. If you see what you think is an Eskimo Curlew, call Fermata right away and we will probably check it out the same day. Please take the sighting form and keep it with your field guide. If you would like to volunteer to help cover one of the routes we would gladly accept your participation. Although we will not be able to supply any financial assistance, we will call all volunteers that have donated at least one route trip and

let them in on any verified sighting. Give us a hand and join our network. Fred Collins. [Sighting guides will be available at the March OG meeting. If you are unable to pick one up at the meeting, call Fermata, Inc. 863-0581. Ed.]

.....ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES \$1.7 BILLION BUDGET FOR U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE. America's wildlife conservation programs would receive \$1.7 billion under President Bush's FY 1993 Budget, the highest level ever proposed by the Administration for the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Proposed funding for the President's "America the Beautiful" initiative to protect the nation's natural and cultural resources and enhance recreational opportunities increased to \$330.0 million from \$323.3 million enacted last year. Specifically, America the Beautiful includes \$195.0 million for protecting, enhancing, restoring and acquiring wetland and associated upland habitats. For example, the Service would expand its bay-estuary protection and enhancement program to cover new areas in Texas, Michigan, Alabama and Florida. \$17.2 million is proposed for acquisition of land to protect endangered species, initiate trustee responsibility and increase opportunities for public enjoyment of natural resource areas. Refuges also would benefit from a \$4 million increase in operational funding. Endangered species conservation efforts would receive \$54.7 million under the President's proposal, up \$4.3 million from last year and the largest amount ever for that program. Nearly half this increase would fund activities such as status surveys and conservation activities aimed at keeping species from reaching the point of being threatened. The proposed budget also calls for continued acquisition of new lands for wildlife refuges. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service News Release, January 31, 1992.

.....THE KINGSVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, Dec. 22, 1991: For the first time in several years no one risked pneumonia in order to participate. For some of us it was uncomfortably muggy much of the day. This year the risk was drowning. Over seven inches of rain fell in much of our circle in the 30 hours preceding the count and large areas and key roads were under water. We had 26 birders in the field and eight feeder watchers. The total number of birds seen was 27, 131 individuals. The total species count of 140, five above the 135 average of the last ten years.

One normally present winter species, the Black-shouldered Kite, was totally absent, and disturbingly, it was absent for the second consecutive year. Another normally occurring bird was reported in its lowest numbers ever--the American Coot, with only 11 of the species seen. Our 306 Green Jays should be a CBC record. The only species seen for the first time on the 1991 count was the Black-billed Cuckoo. I quizzed the two people who reported the bird and firmly concluded that they had either seen the bird or were bald-faced liars. Clearly I should have made a serious effort to relocate the bird. I knew it was a seasonal rarity, but did not realize that it might be a first-ever record for the state.

Anse Windham and I flew the count circle again. We found only a few hundred black birds at the huge feed lot west of town rather than the 1000s normally there. We also got a good overall count of the geese in the area and saw the only Wild Turkeys reported. As we flew low over the vast areas of our circle which have been recently converted from brush and pasture into plowed fields for row crops, the sheets of shallow, standing rain water gave a milky appearance in places, suggesting the possibility of massive residues of herbicides, pesticides and chemical fertilizers. The runoff from the area goes directly into the Baffin Bay system. Paul C. Palmer, Compiler, Department of History, Texas A&I University, Kingsville, Texas.

.....U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (FWS) REJECTS PETITION TO LIST NORTHERN GOSHAWK. The FWS has rejected a petition to list the Northern Goshawk in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah as threatened/endangered under the

Endangered Species Act. The Interior Department instead announced a status review, requesting further information on the species throughout the U.S.

"The petition, filed by the Maricopa Audubon Society and several co-sponsors in July 1991, did not provide conclusive information on genetic distinctness or other unique characteristics of goshawk populations in the four-state area," said FWS Regional Director Michael J. Spear. "The petition, however, showed that goshawk populations may be declining in the region and that habitat modification may be occurring." FWS therefore elevated the goshawk to a "Category 2" status under the Endangered Species Act. Category 2 species are species for which listing under the Act may be appropriate but for which conclusive data on biological vulnerability and threat are not currently available to support the proposed rules. Goshawks occur in forested regions throughout the higher latitudes of the northern hemisphere. Eleven subspecies are currently recognized worldwide, with three in North America. Goshawks are known to experience fluctuations in population size, density and nesting success, presumably in response to natural factors such as prey availability. Biologists find the major threat to the species include loss and/or modification of its forest habitat. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service News Release, January 13, 1992.

.....**PROPOSED BIG BEND DRAFT PLAN READY.** The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) will be offering its proposed Public Use and Management Plan for Big Bend Ranch State Natural Area for public review February 17, 1992. Copies of the draft plan will be available by writing to the TPWD Regional Office, P.O. Box 1058, Fort Davis, Texas 797334 or by calling toll-free 1-800-352-4406. Written comments on the plan may be directed to the same address. The document describes current operations and visitor services and outlines plans to increase visitor access while protecting the considerable natural and cultural resources on the area. TPWD News, January 31, 1992.

.....**AGREEMENT LAUNCHED TO HALT DECLINE OF SOME OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE BIRDS.** Seven Federal agencies signed an agreement May 14, 1991 to promote conservation of "neotropical" migratory birds--those that breed in the U.S. and Canada and winter south of the U.S. Signed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Office of Environmental Processes and Effects Research, Environmental Protection Agency and the Agency for International Development's bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, this conservation program will eventually include many states and private conservation groups.

The species that appear to be declining most seriously are those using forested habitats in both their breeding and wintering areas. In winter, neotropical birds often live in small geographic areas, and so are particularly vulnerable to deforestation and other habitat changes in Latin America and the Caribbean islands.

In the north, the birds are also believed to be affected by what biologists call forest "fragmentation," meaning large blocks of mature forest have been replaced with smaller patches of younger forests.

The Blackpoll Warbler prepares for migration by an eating frenzy that turns it into what one ornithologist calls "a little ball of fat." After migrating from Alaska and Canada to New England, the warbler launches itself across the ocean, beginning a nonstop flight to South America that takes 3-4 days. In the spring, they turn around and fly back, a 2,500 mile roundtrip journey by a creature that would fit in the palm of your hand with a brain the size of a pea.

The Bobolink nests in hayfields and makes its way south across the jungles to the pampas of Argentina. Once known as the "rice bird" because millions of them stopped in Louisiana rice fields (where the unwelcome dinner guests were customarily shot), the Boblink has declined as haying became less common in North America and as a trend toward haying earlier in the season resulted in the destruction of

nests and chicks. Now the Bobolink is also experiencing problems in its winter home as the pampas give way to rice farming.

Still, billions of birds make the migrations each year--but whether they can survive when they arrive at their destinations will depend on what people do. Bird experts agree that a coordinated international program is needed to conserve neotropical birds. The program launched with this agreement will include such steps as improving surveys and monitoring of bird populations; conducting research on the habitat needs and causes of decline for various species; identifying essential habitat areas; and developing habitat conservation programs that can succeed in the face of serious human economic and population pressures.

In North America, the government agencies plan on increased efforts to manage and conserve bird habitats in forests, parks and refuges. Many of the species need large tracts of forestland or benefit from corridors that connect one wooded tract to another. We simply are not going to have these birds in the future unless we make a serious effort to conserve their habitats throughout our hemisphere. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service News Release

NOEL'S NICHE LOOKING BACK

By Noel Pettingell
10 YEARS AGO/FROM FEBRUARY 1982 SPOONBILL

PEREGRINES MAKE PROGRESS ALL OVER U.S.

Efforts to save the endangered Peregrine Falcon are making progress from coast to coast. In the East, where the bird had been wiped out as a breeding bird, a start has been made toward establishing a new population, and in the West, the population is beginning to hold its own.

Falcon chicks are being hatched in captivity in breeding lofts of the Cornell University Peregrine Fun project in upstate New York and in Colorado, and then "hacked out" to the wild by falconry techniques allowing the birds to learn to fend for themselves. It is a cooperative venture of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other organizations; National Audubon helped the program get stated.

Cornell reports that 353 captive-bred falcons have been released to the wild in the East since 1975. Last year, two pairs of falcons released a few years earlier, mated, hatched eggs and fledged young on their own. The pairs both nested in the man-made boxes they were released from, on towers in the coastal marshes of New Jersey.

This year, four pairs nested and fledged young. Three pairs used the New Jersey nest boxes, but the fourth picked a natural site on a cliff in New Hampshire. Three other pairs were observed to be acting in a way which indicates they may return and nest in 1982, when they are sexually mature. At least 13 other unpaired subadult or adult falcons were sighted during the summer of 1981.

In the Rocky Mountain area, 50 out of 60 attempted releases were successful. Captive-bred young placed in eyries of wild falcons did not fare so well; six out of 21 were lost, and so were two adults caring for the young.

In California, there were 41 nesting pairs present in 1981. These produced 59 fledglings including 19 captive-reared nestlings placed in wild nest sites through the management efforts of the University of California, Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group. The Little Butte Peregrine Eyrie in Mendocino County produced two young. Also, the only known pair in Oregon at the Crater Lake National Park fledged two captive-reared young.

Five young peregrines were returned to the wild in Southern California--two males in San Luis Obispo County near a site currently occupied by a single female. The

other three birds were released on a building in Westwood, under the sponsorship of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology. Two of these birds have taken up residence near UCLA where they feed on pigeons. The other one has moved south to the Bolsa Chica Wetlands near Huntington Beach.

[This article has been reprinted from the Western Tanager (Vol. 48, No. 5, pg. 9), Jan.-Feb. 1982.]

ARTICLES

HE IS BACK AGAIN!! by Margaret Jones

In the January 1989 and March 1991 issues of The Spoonbill I shared with you my joy in entertaining a Bullock's Oriole at my hummingbird feeder for several months each winter. Let's recap these visits: winter 1987-immature Bullock's O. at a neighbor's hummer feeder; December 1988/March 1989-adult male at my hummer feeder; December 1989/March 1990-back again; December 1990/March 1991-back again; October 29, 1991-back again (earliest time at my feeder). If that is the same bird, that's five years he has wintered here.

You can't imagine the joy I've derived from watching that colorful bird from my study window every winter. His behavior is a delight for he obviously regards that feeder as his territory. Occasionally the sparrows who like to perch in the photinia hedge backing the cyclone fence on which the feeder is attached bother him, so he plunges into the hedge to chase them out; and when the resident mockingbird landed on the feeder holder to check him out he hopped right up beside him, and the mockingbird lost interest. He has on occasion hopped down to the flower bed and poked around but usually only when there are bluejays or sparrows gathered there. My feeder is the usual four-flower hummer feeder with bee guards; though I removed some of the guards to make access easier he feeds with or without the guards. When the bees found the feeder in late December I had to replace all the guards until the bees gave up and went away, then I removed all of them. The Oriole has had to share the feeder with a Broad-tailed Hummingbird since the last part of November, but they seem to co-exist without a problem. And, as of January 16, he has been sharing it with a female Bullock's Oriole; once before a female came to the yard and stayed about three weeks. it will be interesting to see if this one stays longer.

Orioles are members of the Troupial Family, which means they are in the same family as blackbirds, grackles, cowbirds and meadowlarks. The name comes from the habit of gathering in a large flock or troupe. The Bullock's Oriole was named by William Swainson, the British ornithologist, in 1827 from a bird collected near Mexico City by William Bullock, an English traveler and proprietor of Bullock's Museum in London. Since 1973 considered a western subspecies of the Northern Oriole, it is the commonest Oriole over most of the West. The frequency maps in Oberholser's The Bird Life of Texas of the Baltimore and Bullock's are almost reverse images, with the Bullock's heavily represented in the western two-thirds of the state and the Baltimore, much less frequently shown and almost entirely in the eastern third of the state. Oberholser says more than 75% of the Bullock's diet consists of animal matter--largely insects, but also a few spiders, lizards, mollusks and vegetable matter is nearly all fruit. Bent and Audubon's Encyclopedia both mention the bird getting nectar from flowers, also there is the insect element: ants, wasps, scale insects, stink bugs, leaf-hoppers, plant lice, etc. Quite a useful creature for our yards!

Incidentally, the only mention of an Oriole's attained age I found in Audubon's Encyclopedia of North American Birds, and that was an item about a Baltimore Oriole adult banded in Fargo, North Dakota, and retrapped and released at the same place when seven years old. There was also mentioned a Baltimore Oriole fledgling, fallen out

of a nest in June 1956, made a pet (caged?) who was alive and well in June 1970...and that's 14 years! So if this is the same bird who has been coming here since December 1987, I can look forward to a few more years of birding enjoyment from my study window.

(Note: Do any of our bird-banders have any records of retrapping Bullock's Orioles?)

VIVA NARANJO!!

A Visit to the El Naranjo and Gomez Farias Christmas Counts by Jim Day and Rob Thacker

The likelihood of seeing a potoo--surely one of bird-dom's more bizarre creations--had always seemed remote. But the 13 participants in the OG's late December 1991 trip to southern Tamaulipas and northern San Luis Potosi, Mexico, were treated to a lengthy nocturnal gander, by spotlight, at a Common Potoo (*Nyctibius griseus*) perched atop a utility pole.

Peterson tells us that there are only five species of potoo, all in the New World, only one occurring as far north as Mexico. Neither nightjar nor owl, the Common Potoo is described as resembling a "very large whip-poor-will, but when seen by day it will be perched upright, eyes closed, on a stock or stump so as to seem part of it...at night looks large-headed, and round eyes reflect beam of flashlight." Our experience somehow seemed less birdwatching than stalking some exotic, secretive beast. What lingers in the memory are those large yellow eyes and that strange, downward-protruding bill. Killer!

Group members split into two vans--one led by David Bradford and the other by our Harlingen guide Oscar Carmona--and spent their nights in friendly Ciudad Mante and their days birding such spots as the El Naranjo and Gomez Farias count circles, in the Sierra Madre Oriental. The weather was great and so was the birding. In all, 195 species were recorded (including three which were heard only) by one or more participants. Most participants added 50 or more lifers. Even Rob Thacker, who had birded these areas on three prior occasions, got seven lifers (Great Black Hawk, Gray-collared Becard, Common Potoo, Blue-hooded Euphonia, Black-headed Siskin, White-crowned Parrot and Golden-browed Warbler).

Among other highlights was Fan-tailed Warbler found at the base of the mountains near Gomez Farias. Everyone fell in love with these birds observed attending an army ant trail through the thick forest understory. Not only are they beautiful, with their orange breast, slaty back, orange cap and white spot just before the eye, but they are graceful, elegant and fascinating as they exhibit their strange tail-fanning and tail-wagging behavior. they fan their tails to the left and right and occasionally hop up in pursuit of an insect. This behavior mesmerized all of us. Once word spread of the find, determined warbler-philers like Derek Muschalek were in a "life or death" struggle to relocate the birds. They were quickly located and everyone was able to observe these beautiful birds. That night at the zocalo (town square) in Mante, locals were startled to see some in our group performing an improvised "fan-tail" lifer dance, swinging their arms elatedly from side to side.

Another highlight was the White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) seen in the hundreds flying to their nightly roost, which happened to be directly under the imposing El Salto waterfall. Peering over the edge of the steep cataract, we observed the large birds wheel, circle and then fly directly into the falls, not to emerge again until daybreak. Occasionally one would get cold feet at the last second and veer off to start the procedure again.

Other Mexican specialities were observed separately by each van. Indeed, a spirited competition developed as we met for lunch each day and announced our finds. One van boasted of Rufous-capped Brush-Finch (!), Blue Ground-dove, Spotted Wren and White-throated Robin. Not to be outdone, the other van responded with Barred Antshrike, Rufous-browed

Peppershrike, Black-headed Siskin and Blue-hooded Euphonia. Bill Tarbox was lucky enough to see all three euphonia species found in the area: Blue-hooded, Scrub and Yellow-throated. His young son, Bryan, longed to see White-winged Tanager and thought of them constantly. His yearning was rewarded when, high on the road above Gomez Farias, a flock of 30 birds passed right near the road allowing active photographer Charlie Letcher a chance to start snapping.

In the high oak forests above El Naranjo, one van delighted in Pale-billed Woodpecker. Both got to see the greenish Bronze-winged Woodpecker (now a race of the Golden-olive). All witnessed Ivory-billed and Spot-crowned Woodcreepers inching their way up tree trunks, only to fly down to the next tree and repeat the procedure.

We returned after a second stop at Rancho Cielito (Juanita's) near El Encino on Highway 85. This delightful spot has accommodations for birders. Earlier, we had observed Blue-crowned Motmot sitting motionless on a branch and we had scared off a Crane Hawk. At the adjacent Rio Sabinas were bird-rich areas in the Montezuma cypress where we enjoyed Tufted Flycatcher, Gray-collared Becard and Crimson-collared Grosbeak. Great Black Hawk patrolled the open sugar cane fields, while Roadside Hawk allowed for close-up views in our scopes. Gray-crowned Yellowthroats were pished up from the cane and a Scrub Euphonia made a brief appearance.

After Rancho Cielito, we returned to the U.S. through Progreso, which offered no waiting line at the border but an exciting mud bath as one van became momentarily stuck off the road. We spent New Year's Eve in Harlingen, fondly recalling our shared experiences.

We had ventured into the Neotropics and explored a new avifauna. We saw representative species of new bird families such as the potoo of the family Nyctibiidae and the woodcreepers of the family Dendrocolaptidae. We were grateful to be able to drive a relatively short distance to see such exotic birds. We wondered why we had not come earlier and when we would return.

The group is indebted to guide Oscar Carmona and to David Bradford, whose excellent planning made everything go so smoothly.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
ESTACION BIOLÓGICA LA SELVA, COSTA RICA
by Bob Honig

31 DECEMBER 1991, ESTACION BIOLÓGICA LA SELVA, COSTA RICA --
6am: Mist hugs the ground, but after three days of rain Christmas Bird Count (CBC) day has dawned cloudless. This promises more comfortable, if hotter, conditions. We down our breakfast, including the gallo pinto (Costa Rica's national dish, a mixture of rice and black beans) that is available at every meal, and then head for the field.

630am: After crossing the swinging bridge over the Rio Puerto Viejo, Cynthia Peacock and I enter our count area. Light is still very low in the rain forest, so we linger in the clearing near the biological station's laboratories. By 7am we have observed White-collared and Red-capped Manakins, 3 hummingbird species (Red-footed Plumbeateer, Violet-headed, and the widespread Rufous-tailed), Bay Wren, White-breasted Wood-Wren, a flock of White-collared Swifts, 2 perched White-crowned Parrots, and one of the ubiquitous Chestnut-sided Warblers, a North American breeder and possibly the most frequently observed songbird of our entire trip.

7am: As we enter the forest, we are greeted by the drumming of a Pale-billed Woodpecker (a close relative of the Ivory-billed), the haunting, organlike call of a Great Tinamou (Alexander Skutch considers this one of the most moving sounds of the tropical forest), a Rufous Motmot's "hoot-hoot," and the slow, mellow whistles of Black-faced Antthrushes. A Semiplumbeous Hawk, bright white underparts contrasting with the blue sky, shoots across an opening in

the trees. The next two hour's sightings included a pair of White-ruffed Manakins, Red-ored and Brown-headed Parrots, Collared Araçari (a toucan relative, but smaller), Chestnut-backed Antbird, and Ochre-bellied Flycatcher.

9am: At a clearing, an old homestead site near the river. A pair of green backed Amazon Kingfishers zoom past along the near bank. Montezuma Oropendulas gurgle in the trees -- it's a frequently heard sound at La Selva. We set up our camp stools, rest our feet, and watch: a black and gold Silver-throated Tanager glows in the foliage; 2 Scarlet-rumped Tanagers move along the clearing edge; a Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner and Streak-headed Woodcreeper work the trees; and a Chestnut-colored Woodpecker pounds away at a trunk (imagine a small Pileated Woodpecker, but chestnut brown with a bright yellow perm for a crest). Meanwhile, the metallic "bongs" of a Three-wattled Bellbird drift in from out of sight along the river.

11am: We emerge from the forest into a large expanse of experimental plots where native trees of commercial value are grown. By perfecting techniques to propagate these species, conservationists hope to convince Costa Rican landowners to turn to silviculture rather than maintaining cleared land for grazing. This approach has enormous potential for augmenting habitat for forest wildlife because, although Costa Rica has a greater percentage of land protected than any other country in the tropical America, it also has one of the highest rates of deforestation. Over the next 2.5 hours, these plots and the adjacent forested and brushy edges prove to be our single most productive site. The open areas of the plots harbor a great variety of tyrant flycatchers, many -- such as Gray-capped, Social, Great-crested, and Boat-billed Flycatchers, and Great Kiskadee -- from the array of yellow below/brown above species that can be very confusing to newcomers to the neotropics. Also present: Tropical Kingbird, black Long-tailed Tyrants (5" long, not including the central retrices that add 4.5" to males), and the diminutive (3.75") black and yellow Common Tody-Flycatcher. (This is just scratching the surface of the great diversity of neotropical flycatchers!) Iridescent Blue-black Grosbeaks forage in the brush. Two species of toucans move through the forest canopy: Keel-billed, their dry, raspy call recalling a wind-up toy; and Chestnut-mandibled, the long, yellow swath on their beaks prompting Cynthia to describe them in flight as "a bird pushing a banana."

1230pm: After lunch, a sandpiper on a point bar lures us through the brush down to a riverside terrace adjacent to the experimental plots. We never identify the shorebird, but pick up Mangrove Swallow, Broad-billed Motmot, 2 Red-throated Ant-tanagers (this one really is a tanager, not in the antbird family as are other species with "Ant-" in their names, such as Antshrikes and Antwrens), and Slaty Antshrike. We have to tape and replay an unfamiliar song to draw out a mystery bird from the canopy. It is yet another tyrant flycatcher, a Bright-rumped Attila, streaked below and with a rump like that of a Yellow-rumped Warbler.

2pm: Leaving the plots we run head on into Dottie Prais' party, and discover that we're on the wrong trail! Back on course, the afternoon forest is very quiet. A slow pace over the next two hours adds Slaty Spinetail, Golden-hooded Tanager, and Dot-winged Antwren.

4pm: Back to the laboratories -- the end of the loop, with over an hour of daylight remaining. Hindsight: we should have stayed longer at the experimental plots, but they are too far down the trail for a return visit. We call it a day and clean up for dinner. Our total: 83 species.

840pm: Countdown. Noteworthy species seen by other members of our group: Gray-headed Kite, Crowned Woodnymph (a hummingbird with a purple crown and belly, bright green throat and chest), and 2 Bare-necked Umbrellabirds by Julie

d'Ablaing and Julia and Trevor Ricketts; Royal Flycatcher, raising its fanlike orange-red crest, by Mark Elwonger of Victoria, accompanied by a local naturalist trained by the Biological Station as part of a program to create natural-history-related jobs for the rural populace; White-necked and White-whiskered Puffbirds by Dottie Praus, Ruth and Arch Dillard, and Pam and Alan Cully (Julia's parents who joined us from the U.K.); and the rare Sepia-capped Flycatcher seen by Geneva LaVern, and Ohioans Nancy Matheson and Bob Shaper. Total species tallied at the countdown: 321 (with two groups still left to report).

* * *

On our flight from Houston on 26 December, I was one of the unlucky few with a seat in the smoking section (lesson: make your reservations early so you can sit where you wish), so I had offered \$10 for a non-smoking boarding pass. Mark needed some fast film (it's fairly dark in the rain forest even on the sunniest of days), so we negotiated: two rolls of 24-exposure Kodachrome 200 plus my boarding pass for Mark's non-smoking seat. It was a bad trade for him. For the balance of the trip Mark, as well Geneva and Dottie who also were stuck amongst the smokers, suffered from colds no doubt caught from all the coughers with whom they sat. In addition I got back one of my rolls of film from Mark a few days later at La Selva, in trade for 12 decongestant tablets (lest you think I was being mercenary, the swap was made completely at Mark's insistence -- if only the trip had lasted a few days longer, I might also have recovered the second roll).

We awoke in San Jose the next day to a cool sunrise, the cloud-covered peaks of the volcanic mountains ringing Costa Rica's central plateau visible in the distance. After breakfast, it was off to La Selva.

La Selva includes over 3700 acres (1500 hectares) of several habitats: virgin tropical wet forests, secondary forests, plantations, pastures, swamps, streams and rivers. It adjoins Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo -- where en route to and from La Selva we found White Hawk, Bat Falcon, the blue hooded White-necked Jacobin, Red-headed Barbet, Black-crowned Tityra, and several tanagers and honeycreepers -- forming a total protected area of approximately 115,000 acres. (The CBC circle includes a variety of habitat, including some of the Braulio Carrillo highlands with a bird community very different from the lowlands at La Selva, thus the very high species count; final CBC total: 325 species!). Six days at La Selva allowed us to thoroughly familiarize ourselves with the local wildlife at a leisurely pace. Just sitting on the veranda of the dining hall can provide unforgettable birding. We carried campstools to make for more comfortable, extended observation of any exciting finds, in particular mixed flocks of antbirds and other species filling up on army ant swarms and the animals disturbed by the ants. When it rained, up went the umbrellas (I admit that I first thought that birdwatching with an umbrella was one of the silliest ideas I'd ever heard of, but in the rain forest, now I'm a believer). At night we looked for owls, but only heard Crested and Vermiculated Screech. We saw Green Ibis, Crested Guan, Great Curassow, Sungrebe (evidently more closely related to rails than to grebes), Black Hawk-Eagle, Collared Forest-Falcon, Striped Cuckoo (resembling small Roadrunners, the interplay between two duetting pairs was one of my favorite memories), the yellow-bellied Violaceous Trogon, the lance-billed Rufous-tailed Jacamar, White-fronted Nunbird (blackish, with white around the face, of course), and many, many more, especially flycatchers and tanagers. Three-toed Sloths, roaring Howler Monkeys, Spider Monkeys hurling small pieces of branches at us from the trees, a Tayra (a large member of the weasel family), Agouti, a Collared Anteater over which I almost tripped one night, and the red and black Variegated Squirrel were among the mammals observed. And

finally I was able to see a helicopter damselfly, with its 7.5-inch wingspan.

In addition to six nights at La Selva, we spent a few nights in the capital city, San Jose. There, parks and gardens provided habitat for Hoffman's Woodpecker (appearing very much like our Red-bellied), Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbird, Yellow-bellied Elaenia (another tyrant flycatcher), Clay-colored Robin, Blue-gray and Palm Tanagers, and the crested Rufous-collared Sparrow. These kept us diverted briefly each morning before we headed out on our day trips.

At the drier Pacific lowland forest of Reserva Biológica Carara we viewed Ruddy Quail-Dove, several Scarlet Macaws, a tiny (3.5") Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher, a male Blue-crowned Manakin, and the mostly black White-shouldered and White-lined (referring to the wing linings) Tanagers. A fortunate few were able to observe two perched King Vultures, one a striking black-and-white adult, its multicolored (orange, yellow, and blue) head highlighted by the bright sun.

In the highlands at Parque Nacional Volcan Poás, the summit enveloped in clouds, were Fiery-throated and Volcano Hummingbirds, Black-billed Nighthawk-Thrush, Sooty Robin, Yellow-thighed Finch, and Slate Flowerpiercer (this species extracts nectar through a hole it makes in the base of a flower, thus defeating the flower's attempts to be pollinated by the birds which feed from it). On our last day, the cloud forest of Refugio Nacional de Fauna Silvestre Tapanti produced an even more diverse assemblage of highland birds including: stunning Black-bellied Hummingbirds and a Green-fronted Lancebill; Prong-billed Barbet; several Tufted Flycatchers (it probably took some of you longer to drive to Big Bend to see this species than it took us to fly to Costa Rica); Black-faced Solitaire; Black-and-yellow Silky-flycatcher; Slate-throated and Collared Redstarts; a flock of Three-striped Warblers; Spangle-cheeked Tanager; Blue-hooded and Tawny-capped Euphonias; and on our way down the mountain, the bus driver called our attention to one of the most sought-after species of the trip -- 3 Black Guans ambling along the roadside, an exciting species with which to finish our trip list and a life bird for everyone in the group.

Our group observed 304 species (according to the best information I have available) during our 10-day stay in Costa Rica. Among them were 18 species of hummingbirds, with names like Hermit, Fairy, Barbthroat, Woodymph, Plumeteer, and Mountain-gem conjuring up exotic images. Also: 8 woodcreepers, 11 doves, 12 wrens, 13 antbirds, 22 raptors (vultures, hawks, falcons), and 27 thraupids (tanagers, honeycreepers, euphonias). Leading the pack, not surprisingly, were the 39 species of tyrant flycatchers! This diversity of flycatchers and other insectivores, notes David Snow in The Web of Adaptation, results from the high degree of specialization in neotropical insects -- the multitude of defense mechanisms evolved by neotropical insects has led to the evolution of diverse strategies of insectivory (and thus diverse species) in neotropical birds.

Interestingly, about 25% of the species our group observed can be seen regularly in the United States. But be assured that nobody from North America would find anything ordinary about birdwatching in Costa Rica, and that despite the four botfly larvae that were just excised from my ankle, I can't wait to return.

Bob Honig

(Note: Dottie Praus, who deserves many thanks for organizing this adventure, is again putting together a trip to La Selva et al, this year, 26 December 1992 - 3 January 1993. Plans are to include a visit to the homestead of renowned naturalist Alexander Skutch. Call her at 488-8400. Seats are limited; fifteen maximum, so call soon.)

CLEARING HOUSE

CLEARING HOUSE January, 1992

A total of 187 species were reported in January including 6 species of warblers and 2 grosbeak species (Black-headed and Blue). A Prairie Falcon was reported from near Baytown.

Many thanks to everyone who submitted reports. As always early reports will be appreciated, but they are due by March 3rd. The CH format remains the same this month. The listing uses the following format: bird name, early late dates, reports/total and summary by county or detailed listing. The format of the county summary is as follows: county designation - number of reports/number of birds. The detailed listing format is as follows: county-(number of birds) day, observer code. Very rare birds are underlined. **Birds with no previous record on date or vagrant status appear in bold.** Please remember to submit notes on all those good birds. And with all the reminders completed - on to the birds.

Loon, Pacific 4-4 1/1 GA-(1)4,PTF
 Loon, Common 4-30 5/33 CH-1/2 GA-4/31
 Grebe, Pied-bill 3-25 12/62 BR-1/8 CH-3/12 FB-2/22
 GA-4/17 HA-1/2 JE-1/1
 Grebe, Horned 19-19 1/4 GA-(4)19,BBT
 Grebe, Eared 3-30 6/10 BR-2/4 CH-1/1 FB-1/2 GA-1/2
 HA-1/1
 Pelican, Amer Wht 3-30 10/1682 BR-1/4 CH-3/171 GA-5/1472
 HA-1/35
 Pelican, Brown 4-30 6/83 BR-1/3 GA-5/80
 Corm, Dbl-crested 1-30 16/2219 BR-1/11 CH-3/68 FB-1/11
 GA-5/2069 HA-3/53 JE-2/5 WA-1/2
 Corm, Olivaceous 3-30 7/68 CH-2/12 GA-3/34 HA-2/22
 Anhinga 4-16 3/6 CH-1/4 HA-2/2
 Bittern, American 23-23 1/1 CH-AW(1)23,B
 Heron, Great Blue 1-30 20/127 U-2/18 BR-1/7 CH-3/24
 FB-1/2 GA-5/46 HA-5/26 JE-2/3 WA-1/1
 Egret, Great 1-26 18/280 U-2/21 BR-1/6 CH-3/140
 FB-1/1 GA-5/55 HA-2/20 JE-3/36 WA-1/1
 Egret, Snowy 1-25 13/265 U-1/35 BR-1/4 CH-3/38
 GA-4/106 HA-2/14 JE-2/68
 Heron, Little Blu 5-30 10/22 BR-1/1 CH-2/7 FB-1/1
 GA-5/12 HA-1/1
 Heron, Tricolored 1-30 11/28 BR-1/3 CH-1/10 GA-5/9
 HA-2/4 JE-2/2
 Egret, Reddish 5-30 4/6 GA-4/6
 Egret, Cattle 1-25 8/82 U-1/20 CH-1/1 FB-1/13
 GA-3/6 HA-1/40 JE-1/2
 Nt-Heron, Blk-crn 3-30 11/475 BR-2/151 CH-1/1 GA-4/198
 HA-4/125
 Ibis, White 1-30 11/1010 BR-1/80 CH-3/169
 GA-4/211 HA-2/50 JE-1/500
 Ibis, White-faced 1-25 6/1181 BR-1/12 CH-2/574 HA-1/25
 JE-2/570
 Spoonbill, Roseat 1-30 9/92 CH-2/12 GA-5/67 JE-2/13
 Whsl-Duck, Blk-bd 25-25 1/120 U-(120)25,HA
 Swan, Tundra 1-19 3/2 CH-(1)1-14,G; FB-DE(1)12,PFT;
 FB-DE(1)19,BBT;
 Goose, Gr Wht-frn 11-30 13/18373 U-2/15000 BR-1/50
 CH-2/115 FB-2/20 HA-4/3173 JE-2/15
 Goose, Snow 1-30 15/101250 U-2/75000 BR-1/1000
 CH-3/2687 FB-2/6275 HA-5/15238 JE-2/1050
 Goose, Ross' 3-25 5/60 FB-(50)3,CS; HA-(2)11,DB;
 HA-WHC(6)16,JBH; HA-WHC(1)17,JBH;
 HA-(1)25,HA
 Goose, Canada 11-25 6/943 U-1/200 CH-2/530 FB-1/13
 HA-2/200
 Teal, Green-wing 3-30 7/3213 CH-2/500 GA-1/30 HA-4/2683
 Duck, Mottled 1-30 10/60 BR-2/4 CH-2/10 FB-1/2

GA-2/11 HA-1/20 JE-2/13
 Mallard 5-25 3/13 CH-1/2 GA-1/9 HA-1/2
 Pintail, Northern 3-25 10/3349 CH-1/20 FB-2/100 HA-6/3219
 JE-1/10
 Teal, Blue-winged 11-30 5/86 CH-2/16 GA-1/7 HA-2/63
 Shoveler, Northrn 1-25 12/1993 CH-3/236 FB-1/2 GA-2/18
 HA-5/1727 JE-1/10
 Gadwall 3-23 7/160 CH-3/92 FB-1/4 HA-3/64
 Wigeon, American 11-25 7/384 CH-2/45 FB-2/4 HA-3/335
 Canvasback 12-25 5/465 BR-1/200 CH-1/3 FB-2/222
 HA-1/40
 Redhead 14-14 1/1 CH-(1)14,G
 Duck, Ring-necked 12-30 7/88 BR-1/10 FB-1/40 GA-2/10 HA-3/28
 Scaup, Greater 3-14 2/5 CH-(2)14,G; HA-(3)3,G
 Scaup, Lesser 3-25 6/128 BR-1/4 CH-1/27 GA-2/46 HA-2/51
 Scoter, Wht-wingd 25-25 1/2 GA-(2)25,DLR
 Goldeneye, Common 3-30 5/23 CH-2/8 GA-2/13 HA-1/2
 Bufflehead 3-30 5/42 CH-1/4 FB-1/12 GA-1/11 HA-2/15
 Merganser, Hooded 5-5 1/2 HA-SJ(2)5,TW
 Merganser, Red-br 3-30 6/146 CH-2/45 GA-3/98 HA-1/3
 Duck, Ruddy 3-30 7/751 BR-1/250 CH-3/294 GA-1/200
 HA-2/7
 Vulture, Black 1-26 11/53 U-1/7 BR-1/2 CH-2/5 HA-5/35
 JE-2/4
 Vulture, Turkey 1-30 16/266 U-2/70 BR-1/3 CH-3/39
 FB-1/44 GA-1/1 HA-5/57 JE-3/52
 Osprey 3-23 6/11 BR-1/1 CH-2/4 HA-3/6
 Kite, Blk-shouldr 1-30 10/33 BR-2/5 CH-2/7 GA-4/16 JE-2/5
 Eagle, Bald 16-25 2/6 U-(4)25,HA; HA-WHC(2)16,JBH
 Harrier, Northern 1-25 20/145 U-2/55 BR-1/4 CH-3/19
 FB-2/6 GA-3/21 HA-6/34 JE-2/4 WA-1/2
 Hawk, Sharp-shin 11-21 4/4 CH-1/1 HA-3/3
 Hawk, Cooper's 3-30 9/9 CH-2/2 FB-1/1 GA-1/1 HA-5/5
 accipiter, sp. 26-26 1/1 JE-1/1
 Hawk, Red-shouldr 4-30 9/15 U-1/2 BR-2/2 CH-1/2
 GA-1/1 HA-4/8
 Hawk, White-taild 3-14 3/4 HA-2/3 WA-1/1
 Hawk, Red-tailed 3-30 23/357 U-2/120 BR-2/10 CH-3/43
 FB-2/24 GA-4/26 HA-7/111 JE-2/20 WA-1/3
 Hawk, Ferruginous 11-25 4/3 JE-(1)20,JJW; WA-(2)11,DB;
 WA-(1)12,PTF; WA-(2)25,HA
 Eagle, Golden 19-19 1/1 FB-DE(1)19,BBT
 Caracara, Crested 11-25 3/5 WA-3/5
 Kestrel, American 1-30 28/406 U-2/52 BR-2/27 CH-3/38
 FB-2/28 GA-6/164 HA-9/79 JE-3/17 WA-1/1
 Merlin 1-30 3/3 CH-1/1 GA-1/1 HA-1/1
 Falcon, Prairie 3-3 1/1 HA-(1)3,G
 Bobwhite, Northrn 1-25 3/13 HA-2/12 JE-1/1
 Rail, Clapper 20-25 3/4 CH-1/1 GA-2/3
 Rail, King 25-25 2/2 GA-(1)25,DLR; HA-(1)25,HA
 Sora 14-14 1/1 CH-(1)14,G
 Moorhen, Common 20-25 3/56 CH-2/55 GA-1/1
 Coot, American 1-25 11/1308 BR-1/500 CH-3/670
 FB-2/68 GA-2/30 HA-2/20 JE-1/20
 Crane, Sandhill 16-30 6/1580 BR-1/1130 FB-1/244
 GA-3/161 HA-1/45
 Plover, Blk-belli 3-25 5/69 CH-1/4 GA-3/64 HA-1/1
 Plover, Snowy 5-5 1/12 GA-(1)25,RU
 Plover, Semipalm 5-25 2/6 GA-(1)5,RU; GA-(5)25,DLR
 Plover, Piping 5-19 2/13 GA-(5)5,RU; GA-(8)19,BBT
 Killdeer 1-30 16/1589 U-1/400 BR-1/3 CH-3/76
 FB-2/13 GA-3/50 HA-4/11 JE-2/1036
 Oystercatcher, Am 5-30 3/8 GA-3/8
 Stilt, Black-neck 1-30 6/71 GA-1/11 HA-3/6 JE-2/54
 Avocet, American 20-30 2/5380 GA-2/5380
 Yellowlegs, Great 1-25 5/36 CH-1/1 HA-2/14 JE-1/20 WA-1/1
 Yellowlegs, Less 1-30 11/57 CH-2/8 GA-2/4 HA-5/12 JE-2/33
 Willet 5-30 6/321 CH-1/2 GA-5/319
 Sandppr, Spotted 5-30 3/4 GA-3/4
 Curlew, Long-bill 5-30 8/107 CH-2/22 GA-4/55 HA-2/30
 Godwit, Marbled 5-30 2/103 GA-(2)5,RU; GA-(101)30,JBH
 Turnstone, Ruddy 5-25 3/64 GA-3/64
 Knot, Red 20-20 1/1 GA-SL(1)20,BBT
 Sanderling 5-25 4/299 GA-4/299
 Sandppr, Western 1-25 7/535 CH-1/25 GA-3/450 HA-1/30
 JE-2/30

Sandpiper, Least 1-25 6/433 GA-2/22 HA-2/161 JE-2/250
Dunlin 5-25 4/145 GA-3/95 HA-1/50
Dowitcher, S-bill 5-25 4/2275 CH-1/2000 GA-2/272 JE-1/3
Dowitcher, L-bill 1-20 2/35 CH-1/5 JE-1/30
dowitcher, sp. 25-25 1/1000 HA-1/1000
Snipe, Common 12-25 4/307 BR-1/1 CH-1/5 GA-1/1 HA-1/300
Phalarope, Wilson 12-12 1/1 HA-(1)12,PTF
Gull, Laughing 3-25 7/11634 CH-2/10002 GA-4/1531
HA-1/101
Gull, Bonaparte's 3-30 5/544 GA-4/542 HA-1/2
Gull, Ring-billed 1-25 11/2518 CH-2/2005 GA-4/382
HA-3/118 JE-2/13
Gull, Herring 3-25 6/245 CH-1/6 GA-4/229 HA-1/10
gull, sp. 19-19 1/100 GA-1/100
Tern, Gull-billed 19-20 2/7 GA-(3)19,BBT; GA-(4)20,BBT
Tern, Caspian 20-25 3/6 CH-1/1 GA-2/5
Tern, Royal 4-25 5/118 BR-1/1 GA-3/116 JE-1/1
Tern, Forster's 3-25 7/364 BR-1/2 CH-1/35 GA-4/326 HA-1/1
Skimmer, Black 5-25 3/574 GA-3/574
Dove, Rock 1-31 14/380 BR-1/11 CH-1/50 FB-1/6
GA-4/70 HA-5/203 JE-2/40
Dove, White-winged 1-31 2/5 HA-(2)1,LW; HA-CP(3)3,NP
Dove, Mourning 1-28 19/458 U-1/50 CH-3/56 FB-2/30
GA-3/24 HA-7/259 JE-3/39
Dove, Inca 1-30 5/22 HA-3/18 JE-2/4
Ground-Dove, Comm 18-25 4/5 FB-1/2 GA-1/1 HA-1/1 WA-1/1
Parakeet, Monk 14-14 1/3 HA-(3)14,PM
Roadrunner, Great 19-19 1/1 WA-(1)19,HLP
Screech-Owl, East 11-28 4/5 HA-4/5
Owl, Great Horned 30-30 1/1 HA-(1)30,G
Hummer, Blk-chind 1-23 1/1 HA-(1)1-23,X
Kingfisher, Belted 1-30 23/92 U-1/5 BR-2/9 CH-3/12
FB-1/1 GA-6/44 HA-6/15 JE-2/4 WA-2/2
Wedge-tail, Red-head 4-26 2/4 HA-(1)4,LW; JE-BO(3)26,BBT
Wedge-tail, Red-bell 1-26 8/23 U-1/6 BR-1/2 CH-1/5 HA-4/8
JE-1/2
Sapsucker, Yel-bell 1-30 9/11 AU-1/1 CH-1/1 HA-6/8 JE-1/1
Wedge-tail, Downy 1-30 8/11 CH-1/1 HA-6/7 JE-1/3
Flicker, Northern 3-26 7/15 U-2/7 CH-1/1 GA-1/1 HA-2/2
JE-1/4
Wedge-tail, Pileated 11-26 4/7 CH-2/3 HA-1/1 JE-1/3
Phoebe, Eastern 1-30 18/113 U-2/35 BR-1/1 CH-3/36
FB-2/6 GA-2/3 HA-5/13 JE-3/19
Kingbird, Cow/Tro 14-14 1/1 CH-(1)14,G
Swallow, Tree 14-14 1/1 CH-(1)14,G
Jay, Blue 1-31 16/101 U-2/30 BR-1/10 CH-2/15
GA-1/1 HA-7/30 JE-3/15
Crow, American 4-30 13/156 U-2/70 BR-1/15 CH-2/19
FB-2/21 GA-2/8 HA-4/23
Crow, Fish 26-26 1/3 JE-BO(3)26,BBT
Chickadee, Carol 1-30 11/68 U-1/20 BR-1/6 CH-2/14
HA-5/19 JE-2/9
Titmouse, Tufted 1-26 6/32 U-1/10 BR-1/5 CH-1/2
HA-2/10 JE-1/5
Nuthatch, Brn-hed 26-26 1/2 JE-BO(2)26,BBT
Wren, Carolina 1-26 6/16 BR-1/4 CH-2/4 HA-2/7 JE-1/1
Wren, Bewick's 16-16 1/1 HA-WHC(1)16,JBH
Wren, House 4-30 7/19 BR-1/2 CH-1/10 GA-1/1
HA-3/5 WA-1/1
Wren, Winter 3-14 2/2 CH-(1)14,G; HA-CP(1)3,NP
Wren, Sedge 11-25 7/22 BR-1/8 CH-2/3 GA-1/1 HA-3/10
Wren, Marsh 25-25 1/1 GA-(1)25,DLR
Kinglet, Ruby-crn 1-30 13/74 U-1/5 BR-1/5 CH-2/36
GA-1/1 HA-6/23 JE-2/4
Gnatcatcher, Blu-gra 1-23 6/16 BR-1/3 CH-2/8 HA-2/3 WA-1/2
Bluebird, Eastern 3-30 13/41 U-1/4 AU-1/1 BR-1/4
CH-2/5 HA-5/17 JE-2/3 WA-1/7
Thrush, Hermit 4-30 5/9 AU-1/1 BR-1/3 CH-1/2 HA-2/3
Thrush, Wood 14-14 1/4 CH-(4)14,G
Robin, American 3-30 11/831 U-2/500 CH-2/102
GA-1/60 HA-5/165 JE-1/4
Catbird, Gray 14-23 2/2 CH-(1)14,G; CH-(1)23,B
Mockingbird, N 1-30 21/197 U-2/90 BR-2/8 CH-3/26
FB-2/7 GA-3/16 HA-6/38 JE-3/12
Thrasher, Brown 3-30 7/13 AU-1/1 BR-1/2 CH-2/7 HA-3/3
Pipit, American 1-25 6/120 U-2/65 FB-1/2 HA-1/4 JE-2/49

Waxwing, Cedar 11-25 3/60 HA-3/60
Shrike, Loggerhead 1-30 22/223 U-2/60 BR-1/7 CH-3/25
FB-2/32 GA-4/30 HA-6/37 JE-3/30 WA-1/2
Starling, Euro 1-31 17/3006 U-2/2500 CH-2/110
FB-1/3 GA-4/161 HA-5/112 JE-3/120
Vireo, White-eyed 3-3 1/1 HA-CP(1)3,NP
Vireo, Solitary 11-11 1/1 HA-(1)11,DB
Warb, Orange-crn 1-30 14/40 U-1/10 CH-2/7 FB-1/1
GA-2/7 HA-7/12 JE-1/3
Warb, Yellow-rump 1-30 18/549 U-1/100 BR-1/13 CH-3/178
FB-1/6 GA-2/32 HA-7/142 JE-3/78
Warb, Pine 1-26 4/9 AU-1/1 CH-1/4 HA-1/3 JE-1/1
Warb, Palm 3-3 1/12 FB-DE(12)3,CS
Ovenbird 4-4 1/1 BR-(1)4,PTF
Yellowthroat, Com 4-23 4/11 BR-1/2 CH-3/9
Warb, Wilson's 4-4 1/2 BR-(2)4,PTF
Cardinal, Northrn 1-31 15/140 U-2/30 BR-1/6 CH-2/31
GA-1/2 HA-6/52 JE-3/19
Grosbeak, Blk-hed 14-21 1/1 HA-(1)14-21,HC
Grosbeak, Blue 4-4 1/1 HA-(1)4,RU
Towhee, Rufus-side 11-11 1/2 HA-(2)11,DB
Sparrow, Chipping 3-30 5/47 U-1/1 CH-1/15 HA-3/31
Sparrow, Field 11-30 4/14 HA-3/4 WA-1/10
Sparrow, Vesper 11-25 4/138 U-2/125 CH-1/5 HA-1/8
Sparrow, Lark 1-1 1/1 JE-(1)1,JJW
Sparrow, Savannah 1-30 15/1274 U-2/1000 BR-1/12 CH-3/132
FB-2/15 GA-2/20 HA-3/67 JE-2/28
Sparrow, Grasshop 25-25 1/1 HA-(1)25,HA
Sparrow, Le Conte 11-25 2/11 HA-(1)11,DB; HA-(10)25,HA
Sparrow, Seaside 20-20 1/2 GA-(2)20,BBT
Sparrow, Song 11-25 6/66 U-2/40 CH-2/4 HA-1/2 JE-1/20
Sparrow, Lincolns 11-30 9/69 U-2/55 BR-2/2 CH-2/4 HA-3/8
Sparrow, Swamp 11-30 9/38 CH-1/13 FB-1/1 GA-2/12
HA-4/8 JE-1/4
Sparrow, Wht-thrt 3-30 9/120 U-2/60 CH-2/32 HA-3/19 JE-2/9
Sparrow, Wht-crn 3-30 7/102 U-2/75 CH-2/5 HA-3/22
Sparrow, Harris' 3-30 6/56 HA-6/56
Junco, Dark-eyed 11-30 2/38 HA-(6)11,DB; HA-(32)30,G
Blackbird, Red-wg 1-30 14/4703 U-2/3000 CH-3/569
FB-1/151 GA-1/120 HA-5/807 JE-2/56
Meadowlark, East 1-30 15/484 U-2/200 BR-1/54 CH-2/61
FB-1/24 GA-3/96 HA-4/21 JE-1/25 WA-1/3
Blackbird, Rusty 20-20 1/1 CH-AW(1)20,JJW
Blackbird, Brewer 1-30 4/42 U-1/10 HA-1/15 HA-1/5 WA-1/12
Grackle, Gr-tail 1-30 14/901 U-2/150 CH-2/150
FB-1/2 GA-2/289 HA-5/110 JE-2/200
Grackle, Bt-tail 23-23 1/20 CH-(20)23,B
Grackle, Common 1-30 12/1111 U-2/650 CH-2/108
HA-6/327 JE-2/26
Cowbird, Brn-head 1-30 9/753 U-2/600 CH-2/41 GA-1/25
HA-3/86 JE-1/1
blackbird, sp. 25-25 1/80000 U-1/80000
Finch, Purple 14-14 1/1 HA-(1)14,X
Finch, House 1-31 1/7 HA-(7)1-31,G
Goldfinch, Amer 1-30 9/189 U-1/6 CH-2/21 HA-5/159 JE-1/3
Sparrow, House 1-31 12/310 U-1/100 CH-2/6 GA-2/46
HA-5/118 JE-2/40
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS: 270124

LIST OF OBSERVER CODES:

P.D. Hulce, Don Francis(B); Bill & Bryan Tarbox(BBT); Jerry Caravottis, Bob Schwartz(CS); David Bradford/OG FT(DB); Don & Lee Richardson(DLR); Gail D. Luckner(G); Houston Arboretum FT/Julia Ricketts, Bob Honig(HA); Helen Crawford(HC); Bob Honig, Geneva Lavern, Cynthia Peacock(HLP); Jean & Bill Harwell(JBH); Jerry Caravottis(JC); John & Jana Whittle(JJW); Lettalou Whittington(LW); M.L. & Ellen Owen(MO); Noel Pettingell(NP); Peggy Milstead(PM); Phyllis & Tony Frank(PTF); Richard Uzar(RU); Alice Tillett, Lettalou Whittington(TW); Warren Pruess(WP); P. D. Hulce(X)

LIST OF LOCATION CODES:

Anahuac(AW); Bolivar Flats(BF); Bevil Oaks(BO); Challenger 7 Park(CP); Davis Estates Rd(DE); Stephen F. Austin St.

Park(SFA); San Jacinto Monument St. Park(SJ); San Luis Pass(SL); Texas City Dike(TCD); West Harris County(WHC)

LIST OF COUNTY CODES:

Austin(AU); Brazoria(BR); Chambers(CH); Fort Bend (FB); Galveston(GA); Harris (HA); Jefferson(JE); Waller(WA); Upper Texas Coast(U)

Tundra Swan - Gail Luckner January 14, 1992

An immature Tundra Swan was sighted at 11:06 AM in a freshwater marsh on private property in Chambers county. The bird has been present since November 5, 1991 and has been previously documented.

Golden Eagle - Bill Tarbox January 19, 1992

One immature/sub-adult Golden Eagle was viewed for about 20 seconds at about 40 feet. Bird had smallish, tawny-brown head, yellow cere; solid, dark brown breast, back and wings. Shoulders had tawny areas. Tail had dark terminal band with grayish barring and white band to the rump extending to edges. In flight, underwing inner primaries were fairly uniform white at the base. (Viewed for another 10 seconds at close range in flight.) Viewed at 130 yards perched for 15 minutes. Tawny, relatively small head noticeable. Viewed again in flight for 5 minutes at 100 yards. Tawny head and shoulder areas, white upper tail with dark terminal band and white inner primaries on wings. All obvious. Bird hovered with slightly upturned wings. Bird dived sharply, chasing a large Jackrabbit (missed). Observed between 7:45 and 8:15 AM at Davis Estates Rd.

Prairie Falcon - Gail Luckner January 3, 1991

At 9:05 AM a Prairie Falcon was observed in Harris county near Baytown in an area of extensive pasture and farmland. The bird was seen in flight for about two minutes at distances between 50 feet and 400 feet in excellent light with 10X40 binoculars. It was a large pale falcon about the size of a Peregrine. White throat; buffy-white breast and belly, lightly speckled with brown; white undertail coverts. Long, square tail, the under side of which was white and finely barred with pale gray. The side of the face was visible briefly and showed whitish with a thin, dark moustachial stripe. The head appeared proportionately large. Long falcon-shaped wings with whitish flight feathers lightly barred with gray. Trailing edge of secondaries appeared white. Underwing coverts generally streaked with dark brownish-black, very heavily concentrated on greater coverts and axillaries. When the bird banked, it generally showed brown upperparts, lighter on back, and very light of upperside of tail.

Contrasting whitish flight feathers and dark underwing coverts and axillaries separate with species from other North American falcons.

Wilson's Phalarope - Phyllis and Tony Frank January 12, 1992

Observed in a pond at Loganbaugh and Katy Hockley Rd. on an overcast day with fair light conditions from about 25 yards with 10X40 binoculars and a 45X scope. Observed while watching the Dowitchers. This bird was basically light gray on the upperparts and white on the underparts. The upper breast was white with the gray from the back indenting into the breast slightly. The eye was dark with a white supercilium and a grayish line through the eye. The body size was smaller than the Dowitchers, but larger than the Dunlin with a different shape - almost pot-bellied. The bill was about 1.5 times the depth of the head-much shorter and thinner than the Dowitchers. The bill was black, straight and pointed at the tip with no droop. Legs appeared dark when visible. The feeding behavior was very different from Dowitchers and Dunlin. It fed by turning in a circle and picking at the water very quickly. The overall jizz of the bird was slimmer and more upright posture than the dowitchers. Dowitchers were Long-billed (by call).

Couch's/Tropical Kingbird - Gail Luckner January 14, 1992

A Couch's/Tropical Kingbird was sighted at 10:10 AM

on private property in Chambers county. Call tapes of both Couch's and Tropical Kingbirds were played, but the bird did not respond. This bird was first observed on December 30, 1991 and was documented in the December CH.

Black-headed Grosbeak - Helen Crawford January 14, 1992

Bird was observed for one week. The bird was observed with a pair of Cardinals and was about the same size. The breast was rusty orange. The bill was light gray. The head was dark with an orange stripe over the eye. The back appears rusty with some brown. The wings have white wing bars. Another observer reported that the upper mandible was darker than the lower mandible.

Blue Grosbeak - Richard Uzar January 7, 1992

The Blue Grosbeak was female/juvenile male brownish tan bird with a lot of bill. Two strong tan/brown wing bars stand out against much darker flight feathers. Tail very dark displaying "swishing" motion. Upper tail coverts similar to head but lighter as was back and breast. Upper tail coverts edged in light tan. Seen in fair light for 10 minutes at 8-20 meters with 10X binoculars.

House Finch - Gail Diane Luckner January 1-31, 1992

In east Harris county, between one and seven male and female House Finches were seen at sunflower feeders among various seed-eating passerines. Observed daily under varying light conditions. Both male and female were documented in the November and/or December CH.



CONTACTS

- SEND CLEARING HOUSE bird sightings to: Clearing House, (OG), P.O. Box 271374, Houston 77277.
- TEXAS RARE BIRD ALERT TAPE, sponsored by Houston Audubon Society, 992-2757.
- SEND SPOONBILL MATERIAL to Editor, Judy Boyce, 5546 Aspen, Houston 77081, Home: 668-5359, Work: 771-2432 Fax: 713/771-2432 Monday-Friday, business hours.
- OG MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION, dues, subscriptions and address changes. Edward J. Lebeau, Jr., 5459 Beechnut, Houston, Texas 77096 (713) 664-4900. Annual dues \$15. Non-member Spoonbill subscriptions \$13.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF BIRDING ETIQUETTE
by Victor Emanuel

1. Do not approach nesting birds too closely.
2. Obey all posted rules when visiting sanctuaries or preserves.
3. Do not enter private property without permission.
4. Do not use tape recorders in heavily birded areas during the nesting season. In other areas, use tape recorded bird vocalizations or imitations with discretion.
5. Be careful not to obstruct the view of fellow birders by stepping in front of them.
6. When the leader gets a bird in the scope, take a quick look when it is your turn, then come back for a second view after everyone has seen the bird.
7. Don't smoke in vehicles or near your fellow birders.
8. Be careful not to spray on insect repellent while standing near or upwind of other birders or while in vehicles.
9. Alternate positions in vehicles and on trails so that everyone has a chance to have the best position.
10. In general keep conversation to a minimum while on forest trails. Bird vocalizations are the best way to locate forest birds and are difficult to hear above conversation.

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