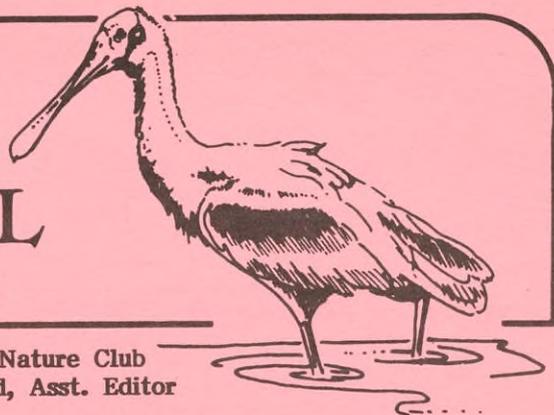


The SPOONBILL



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

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Coming Events

Thursday, Feb. 2: Ornithology Group meeting at Bayou Manor, 4141 S. Braeswood, at 7:30 p.m. Fred Collins will talk about sparrow habitats and where to find various species. (This is a help to finding, not an ID program.)

Friday, Feb. 3: Deadline for Spoonbill material and for Clearing House reports.

Thursday, Feb. 9: Outdoor Nature Club meeting at the Houston Arboretum at 7:30 p.m. Dr. Richard Baldauf will present "Environmental Education in Any Subject for Any Age."

Saturday, Feb. 18: Ornithology Group field trip. Our February field trip will be to Bear Creek Park and nearby areas in West Harris County. The leaders are Ellen Red and Sterling Essenschacher. Meet at the park entrance located at the corner of the park, the golf course and Clay Road. Meeting time is 8:00 a.m. for a half day of birding. Be prepared for some wet walking. Bring your insect repellent. Some of us will bring a lunch and eat in the park, but it's a half day trip, so lunch isn't necessary. The park has plenty of rest rooms. For more information call Don and Lee Richardson at 661-1365.

HOUSTON ARBORETUM BIRDING CLASSES

Doug Williams will teach evening birding classes at the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center in January and February. Beginning Birding will be held January 24, 26 and 31, and Intermediate Birding will be on February 28, March 2 and March 7. All classes are from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., and the fee for each of the two courses is \$20 for members and \$25 for non-members. For information call 681-8433.

A birding trip (\$10 for members, \$15 for non-members) will be to Colorado County, including Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR. The trip date is February 11. This area offers a number of western migrants, especially sparrows and raptors. Call 681-8433 to register.

ANOTHER MIMIC IN HOUSTON by Bob Honig

In the late 1970's I had the good fortune to participate in a conference attended by professors from around the world. One of these professors, a Norwegian who happened to be a birdwatcher, mentioned that he had originally been skeptical about the bad reputation that starlings have in North America: in Europe, he informed me, starlings beautifully mimic the voices of other birds. Dr. Vader quickly became convinced by the raucous squawks, clucks and whistles that the reputation was deserved. I, on the other hand, had remained very skeptical that starlings could be effective imitators (despite statements to the contrary in field guides and texts); and I had never heard anyone make claims similar to Dr. Vader's. However, I have started to realize that starlings indeed have a great capacity for mimicry: at sunrise on Christmas day, the clearly recognizable calls of a robin, Yellow-rumped Warbler, bobwhite and flicker emanated in short order from a group of three starlings perched on a telephone line. I would hardly call the entire performance beautiful, with all the grating notes mixed in with the imitations, but it certainly provided a few enjoyable moments (and it's really something for me to say a kind word about starlings; after all, they are the only species that has ever accurately bombed me). Take notice on occasion and see if you can recognize mimicry in starling calls. As long as we have to live with these pests, we might as well try to get some enjoyment from them.

A DONATION TO OUR LIBRARY

Joe Kennedy has donated An Atlas of the Birds of the Western Palearctic, by Colin Harrison, to the OG library. We still need a volunteer to take charge of the library and bring it to meetings. Our thanks to Joe for this donation. Someone traveling to this area will benefit from this atlas eventually.

Noel's Niche Looking Back

.....10 YEARS AGO/FROM JAN., 1979 SPOONBILL

"PLACES TO GO..As you will see when you read the Clearing House and Field Notes, W. Harris County or habitat similar to that area, will be productive. With W. Harris County harboring Golden and Bald Eagles, Ross' Geese among the thousands of Snows and Blues, it isn't surprising an Oldsquaw popped up on the Cypress Creek Christmas Count.

"Longspurs will be seen in that area until the end of January, if past appearances hold true. Quoting from the January Spoonbill of 1977: '...look for a loose flock that will rise, fly, wheel, and turn with a flash of white bellies, then as they get close to the ground, will drop all at once. Shorebirds, and there are some out there, fly in tight flocks, and never very high as they wheel over a wet field, and blackbirds are much less disciplined in their flocks, and, of course, never flash that white.'

The Varied Thrush hopefully will stay around for awhile (the one seen in 1965 stayed two months). So far, Sun Oil has not objected to birders entering their property in search of this bird, who is staying in a large Hackberry grove. Complete directions may be gotten from David Dauphin or the editor."

THE CLEARING HOUSE: HISTORY & PURPOSE

The Clearing House is a record of birds that occur on the Upper Texas Coast. Most of the sightings are made by OG members, but other local birders and some visitors also contribute. The name "Clearing House" was chosen by Noel Pettingell, the first designated editor of The Spoonbill, in July, 1953. He conceived of it as a section of the newsletter that collected, compiled and dispensed information on bird sightings by members. For some time the birding diaries of Arlie McKay and Clinton and Linda Snyder were published separately, as well as field trip lists and spring censuses. The Clearing House was not a complete list of birds seen, but rather a chronological list of sightings of rare or seasonal or just interesting birds seen, along with the names of observers and locations of sightings.

It was not until 1960 that Ben Feltner, then Spoonbill editor, revised the Clearing House "to include every bird reported on the UTC in phylogenetic order and is forever damned by subsequent editors and typists," as the 30-year anniversary issue of The Spoonbill put it in July, 1982. The Clearing House did become a monster to type, with all those numbers, abbreviations, parentheses and punctuation marks to confuse the typist and make proofreading difficult. The wonder is that there were still dedicated members every year to continue compiling it.

From this year on there was need for a Clearing House Editor, though the husband and wife teams who followed Ben Feltner did not necessarily use the title. As the number of OG members grew the number of sightings also increased.

Ron Braun, who took over as Clearing House Editor in July 1984, was the first to put the data

on computer, with the help of his wife, Marcia. They put in an incredible number of hours, like the people before them.

The Brauns were a hard act to follow, and before our present group of editors took over, Ted Eubanks volunteered to be an interim editor. He too slaved over the hot computer, trying to devise a simpler program that would provide all the information desired and keep the data in a form that could be merged and later retrieved as desired. He also added Waller County to the area covered. If any of you observers have not been paying attention to this addition, please send in Waller reports as well as those from the traditional area.

Our present editors began compiling the Clearing House in May 1988. Andrew and Rene Franks together, Peter Gottschling and Lynne Aldrich together, and Wally Gardner alone, are alternating months and experimenting with the format. They expect to settle on a form that a compiler can live with and the members can profit from.

The usefulness of the Clearing House may not be apparent to new members. However, they have no trouble appreciating the value of a checklist. If they think about it they will realize that there could not be a checklist without the records that have been compiled by the Clearing House over the years. The OG has published six checklists, each one longer than the one before, and will be publishing a new one in 1989. For a checklist to be accurate, there must be validated records of sightings by good observers over a period of time.

Another use for the Clearing House has occurred to many members who are increasing their life lists past the beginner's stage and have not happened on some species they know occur. By looking over past issues of The Spoonbill they find the months when and the places where the species are regularly seen, and then go out and find them. In case of difficulty, the names of observers are printed so that these intermediate birders can call the experienced members for help.

The scientific value of the Clearing House is limited. It is not a census: coverage is not uniform, but rather focuses on hotspots; some people fail to turn in complete lists; there are many more observers than there are reports; there are hot months during which only the die-hards go birding, and at this time the trees are so leafy and brush so thick that it is hard to see the birds that are there. Nevertheless, the Clearing House does reflect great changes in species' numbers--prairie chickens, burrowing owls and swans way down and blackbirds way up--and the difference in the species that inhabit the areas where development has occurred. But Clearing House supporters are not just motivated by scientific interest, they also find it extremely interesting and a challenge to their skills. As new birders increase their skills, we hope that they, too, will contribute their sightings.

FREEPORT CBC RECORDS 208 SPECIES IN AN "OFF" YEAR

by Jim Morgan

On Sunday, December 18, 1988, 170 observers recorded 286,761 individuals of 208 species of birds on the 32nd annual Freeport Christmas Bird Count (CBC). In spite of our best weather in 10 years, and our second highest number of participants, the species total was lower than our 5, 10 and 15-year average totals of 212, 214 and 210 species respectively.

No new species were added to the cumulative count list, but several good sightings were in evidence, such as Fulvous Whistling-Duck (3), Harris' Hawk, White-tailed Hawk, American Oystercatcher, Solitary Sandpiper, Whimbrel (2), Least Flycatcher (2), empidonax sp. (not Least Flycatcher), (Plumbeous) Solitary Vireo, Yellow-throated Warbler, Northern Waterthrush (3), Painted Bunting, Bronzed Cowbird (6), Northern (Baltimore) Oriole (2), Northern (Bullock's) Oriole and an adult-plumaged male Lesser Goldfinch, plus six species of hummingbirds (for the third year in a row). Even in "off" years good birds are to be found! The biggest miss was Groove-billed Ani!

From the early reports of other UTC counts, most were down in their species totals. Why was it an "off" year? It is easy to blame the obvious--the year-long drought. But who knows for sure? From observation we do know that there was no more than the average number of lingering neotropical migrants, and an absence of western rarities. In addition, at Freeport the north wind prior to count day had flattened the sea, making the count day an "off" day on the jetties as well. Keeping our perspective, it is worth noting that three other counts during the last 10 years were lower in total species than the 1988 count. So, while we had an "off" year, it was not that bad!

The Freeport CBC continues to be a very successful count because of the efforts of so many people and organizations. All 170 observers are to be thanked for putting in a long, hard day, which for many is fun! Extra special thanks go out to our ten area leaders, the jetty party and the "hummingbird team," whose efforts provide the impetus for a CBC that is always competitive and fun. Out-of-town participants also receive special thanks, as do the Houston Audubon Society for sponsoring the count, and Dow Chemical Company for hosting the countdown dinner and granting permission to census birds on their many properties within the count circle. The count compilers and area leaders are also grateful to the other property owners who so graciously allowed access to their land for our observers on count day.

If you did not participate in this year's Freeport CBC, please contact one of the compilers or area leaders for participation in next year's count. Freeport CBC is part of Texas birding. It is fun, exciting and a worthwhile endeavor. Come join us in the future and help us keep it that way!

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

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

UTC RARE Bird Alert Tape, sponsored by Piney Woods Wildlife Society: 821-2846.

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

LONE STAR Rare Bird Tape, sponsored by Audubon Society. In 713 area call 747-8826. Out of town call 1-800-TBT-BIRD. When in town do NOT call the 800 number, please - it costs!

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

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

CAMERON PRAIRIE A NEW REFUGE

The 9,600-acre Cameron Prairie in Cameron Parish, Louisiana will become the 447th national wildlife refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced. The service will take possession in March, 1989, and thereby add this prime waterfowl habitat to the Gulf Coast Joint Venture, a cooperative effort to provide more wintering habitat to help disperse wintering flocks and reduce the chance of disease from overcrowding.

The new refuge is located about 15 miles southeast of Lake Charles. Besides the normal marsh and waterbirds Peregrine Falcons and Wood Storks have been seen there.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SOME 1988 CHRISTMAS COUNTS

by Ellen Red

Reports from all the 1988 Christmas counts told of incredible dryness. Former sloughs and marshes were baked and cracked, lakes were dried to little puddles or nonexistent, and everywhere there were fewer birds. However, there were good numbers of birders. Dryness has its advantages. It was downright pleasant not having to slosh through wet fields.

On the Cypress Creek count, the day dawned with a spectacular sunrise. Birders in the fields of Josey Ranch stopped to marvel at the sight of geese on their early morning flights, long ribbons of them, silhouetted against the beautiful pink clouds. In the high grass, the LeConte's Sparrows were hopping up to perch for everyone to see. It was a great beginning to the fourteenth annual Cypress Creek count, always held on New Year's Day.

The December 20th Christmas count at the San Bernard NWR, on the other hand, began with mist and an occasional shower. The wetness ended by mid-morning, and was not enough to have any effect on the birders or the drought. One group, assigned to wetlands on the property adjoining the refuge, walked for miles in an area where darkened tree trunks showed evidence of water two feet high in wetter times. Now, of course, there were only dry leaves to kick through. There were no marsh birds, of course, and only a few woods birds. However this group and the count as a whole saw quite a good number of species before the day ended. The count circle included the huge marshland of the refuge, the beach, a little town nearby and residences along Clear Lake Creek. The rangers at the refuge served all the birders gumbo and rice for supper, a wonderful treat. If they keep that up, future counts there will have more participants than they can handle.

The Galveston Christmas count, held the day after Christmas, was a different kind of outing for some of the participants. The "town group" toured the gardens of residents of Galveston, and picked up a number of warbler species, including Black-and-White, American Redstart and Wilson's. This group also saw a Red-headed Woodpecker, a Blue Jay and a Titmouse, but, no Chickadee. All of these birds are very rare on the island. The group ate lunch at the lovely, historic home of Martha Micks, and then went to the East Beach jetties. The fog was close to shore, and the waves were crashing over the rocks. A Pomerine Jaeger startled everyone by suddenly appearing, flying low over the jetty. Further down the beach a Gannet flew along out near the fog.

The Freeport Christmas count on December 18 is considered the biggest and best of all the counts. It always gets the most birds and the most birders, and attracts a lot of attention from the rest of the country. The dinner given by the Dow Chemical Company is very exciting, because often a good number of rare birds are seen on this count. Everyone listens as birders give details. You can flap your arms to show how the bird flew, as Victor did, but, as with all our counts, the committee wants to be absolutely certain you saw that bird. Susan Drennan, Editor in Chief of American Birds, was a distinguished visitor at the dinner this year. She gave everyone a boost when she stated that

the Freeport count sends in the best documentation of any count in the nation.

In the December Spoonbill Mark Brown drew a diagram of eighteen Christmas counts within seventy-five miles of Houston's center. Did anyone go on all of them? It would be fun to know who went on the most. If you went on six or more, let your editor know.

MINUTES OF OG MEETING JAN. 5, 1989

Mr. David Dauphin of our very own OG presented the January program on the "Owls of North America." Dave has been studying these primarily nocturnal raptors for twenty years. This informative and entertaining talk was accompanied by beautiful slides and tape recorded calls of the 19 species of owl. Dave encourages all of us to practice owl calls; he "talks" to owls regularly, and says if he can call up owls, anyone can.

The largest crowd this writer ever remembers seeing at an OG meeting was present for the owl program; and over heard later in the evening was the comment, "This is the best meeting we've had all year." Thanks, Dave.

In our business portion of the evening, Jerry Patrick gave the Treasurer's report, detailed copies of which are available to any member upon request. Dues are due, Jerry reminds, and Peggy Milstead urges those members who pay dues for two people please to specify with the payment so as not to be confused with single members making a two-year payment.

Ed Rozenburg announced programs on "Birds of South Africa" and "Predators" available at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. Call 526-1763 for information.

Ed also reminded us of the relentless pressure on the natural world, especially in the matters of the proposed West Harris County airport and the proposed road extension through the Armand Bayou Nature Center. We are encouraged to write letters expressing our views to the proper authorities, whose names and addresses can be found in Nature Notes.

Changes in the Checklist Committee were announced. Jim Morgan and Ted Eubanks have resigned, and in their place Dave Dauphin, Steve Gast and Ed Rozenburg will be joining Noel Pettingell. They anticipate the revised checklist will be ready to publish sometime this summer.

Caroline Callery made a motion that the OG express its gratitude for the many, many hours of tireless and dedicated service afforded to the OG by Jim Morgan and Ted Eubanks over the years. The motion was seconded and passed by landslide proportions. Thank you, Jim and Ted.

Margaret Jones was present and brought two beautiful paintings treasured by her late husband, Paul. These paintings were originally acquired by Paul from an OG auction, and are to be "recycled" and auctioned at the March meeting. Thank you, Margaret, for your donation to the OG.

Richard Uzar, Secretary

Clearing House - DECEMBER, 1988

After much discussion, the editors have selected a new format for the Clearing House which they believe will increase the usefulness of the data for the typical OG member. The new format attempts to present the data in a readable way so that trends in locations and dates are easier to see.

The format of the Clearing House is influenced by two principles: maximize the information shown and minimize the space used. In the past, the second principle has resulted in summary reports for the more common birds which have been lacking in any geographical data. Now that the county is being submitted with most sightings, it is possible to break the species into nine columns. The first, DATES, gives the reported early and late dates for the species. The next, TOTALS, gives the total number of reports and the total number of individuals seen. For commonly reported species, the following seven columns, headed with the names of the seven counties in the Upper Texas Coast, contain the number of reports and total number of individuals for each county. For birds with up to three reports, a complete report showing county-location (number) date, observer is possible. It is up to the editor which birds warrant complete reports.

The most important advantage of the new format is that it is much easier to read. A quick glance at the DATES column shows migration date trends. More data on the locations of widely reported birds is available. Although information on specific locations, dates and observers is printed only when complete reports are given, all data submitted are entered into the database.

Due to column width limitations, the bird names have been shortened to 17 characters. If you find the abbreviations incomprehensible and can improve on the ones used, let the editors know.

Reports submitted using U (UTC) for the county are shown only in the TOTALS column of the summary reports, since they cannot be broken out by county. For this reason, we would like to suggest limiting use of the U code to occasions when three or more counties are birded. It is possible to divide the space on the report form for numbers and use the same form for two counties. A revised report form will soon be available with extra room to make this easier. If a bird is seen in only one county, please note the county and improve the quality of the reported data.

The Clearing House database is available to anyone who would like to use the powerful capabilities of computerized searching to find information on specific locations, dates, observers or species. The computer can locate information in seconds that would require hours of shuffling through thick stacks of pink Spoonbills. Enough of this stuff, let's get to the birds!

The 18 reports submitted in December recorded a total of 176 species and two identifiable subspecies. Highlights this month include a Least Grebe at Brazos Bend SP; a Tundra Swan at Brazoria NWR; Harris', Swainson's, Harlan's and Ferruginous Hawks; and a Nashville Warbler. Some other rarities seen this month were recorded on area Christmas counts, which will be reported separately in a later Spoonbill. Thanks to all who took the time to send in their sightings.

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made on the upper Texas Coast. How to interpret the data:

SPECIES	DATES	TOTAL	BRAZ CHAM FBEND GALV HARR JEFF WALL
Bird Name	early/late	reports/individuals	rpts/individuals listed by county
			OR county-location(#) date, observer

Noteworthy sightings will be underlined (very rare on date), capitalized (no previous sighting on date), or underlined and capitalized (no previous sighting on the UTC). Birds with very rare, vagrant, accidental or no status on the checklist at the date of the sighting require notes. However, due to space considerations, only the notes on sightings which affect the checklist will consistently be published. Notes on very rare at date of sighting may be published at the editor's discretion if space allows.

December Editors: Andrew & Rene Franks

SPECIES	DATES	TOTAL	BRAZ	CHAM	FREND	GALV	HARR	JEFF	WALL
Loon, Common	23-23	1/20	G-TCD(20) 23,RT						
Grabe, Least	3-3	2/2	F-BB(1) 3,DR; F-BB(1) 3,OG						
Grabe, Pied-bill	2-23	12/125	1/30 3/18 3/43 1/15 4/19						
Grabe, Horned	23-23	1/1	G-TCD(1) 23,RT						
Grabe, Eared	23-23	1/10	G-TCD(10) 23,RT						
Pelican, Amer Wht	3-29	8/212	1/15 3/17 -- 3/152 1/28						
Pelican, Brown	3-4	2/68	B-(33) 3,MM; G-BF(35) 4,PG						
Cozm, Dbl-crested	2-23	12/517	1/12 2/50 3/61 2/78 3/276						
Cozm, Olivaceous	4-23	5/88	1/1 -- 2/10 2/77						
Anhinga	3-10	3/21	F-BB(3) 3,OG; F-BB(12) 10,HAR; F-BB(6) 3,DR						
Bittern, American	3-3	1/1	B-BW(1) 3,MM						
Heron, Great Blue	3-23	11/153	3/36 2/16 1/48						
Egret, Great	2-29	15/228	1/20 3/31 3/44 3/13 4/80						
Egret, Snowy	2-23	12/319	1/34 3/55 2/12 2/102						
Heron, Little Blu	3-17	6/30	1/1 -- 3/24 -- 2/5						
Heron, Tricolored	3-23	7/28	1/6 1/4 3/5 1/1 1/12						
Egret, Reddish	4-29	3/5	G-TCD(1) 29,EMO; G-BR(2) 4,PG; H-SJ(2) 17,MP						
Egret, Cattle	2-29	7/446	-- 1/15 2/61 1/20 2/250						
Heron, Grn-backed	3-10	2/2	F-BB(1) 3,OG; F-BB(1) 10,HAR						
Nt-Heron, Blk-crn	3-23	6/170	1/40 -- 2/4 1/8 2/118						
Ibis, White	3-23	7/103	1/14 -- 3/25 1/1 1/3						
Ibis, White-faced	3-4	2/340	B-(220) 3,MM; U-(120) 4,EM						
Spoonbill, Rose	3-29	3/12	B-BW(2) 3,MM; G-TCD(4) 29,EMO; H-SJ(6) 17,MP						
Whal-Duck, Blk-Bd	3-10	3/80	F-BB(20) 3,OG; F-BB(20) 10,HAR; F-BB(40) 3,DR						
Swan, Tundra	3-3	1/1	B-BW(1) 3,MM						
Goose, Gr Wht-frn	3-4	4/2140	1/140 -- 2/1200 --						
Goose, Snow	2-17	8/33122	1/5000 -- 3/6000 1/2000 2/122						
Goose, Ross'	4-30	2/7	B-(2) 30,AGF; U-(5) 4,EM						
Goose, Canada	3-10	4/161	1/36 -- 2/25 --						
Duck, Wood	3-3	2/6	F-BB(4) 3,OG; F-BB(2) 3,DR						
Teal, Green-wing	3-23	7/5478	1/2000 -- 3/132 1/6 1/340						
Duck, Mottled	2-17	6/76	1/25 1/10 1/7 -- 3/34 --						
Pintail, Northern	3-23	3/14	F-BB(2) 3,OG; F-BB(10) 10,HAR; G-TCD(2) 23,RT						
Mallard	3-17	6/1033	1/900 -- 3/37 2/96						
Teal, Blue-winged	3-17	7/106	1/22 1/18 3/63 1/2 1/2						
Teal, Cinnamon	3-10	3/3	B-BW(1) 3,MM; F-BB(1) 10,HAR						
Shoveler, Northern	3-23	8/1190	1/600 1/30 3/38 1/40 1/82						
Gadwall	3-23	8/409	1/250 -- 3/70 1/10 2/49						
Wigeon, American	3-23	5/338	1/300 -- 3/36 1/2 --						
Canvasback	3-10	3/8	C-(2) 10,UR; F-(3) 3,HWO; H-(3) 10,UR						
Redhead	3-17	4/451	B-BW(450) 3,MM; H-SJ(1) 17,MP						
Duck, Ring-necked	3-10	4/69	-- 1/15 3/54 --						
Sculp, Lesser	3-23	7/479	1/15 3/355 1/3 1/6 1/100						
Goldeneye, Common	2-23	1/4	G-TCD(4) 23,RT						
Bufflehead	3-23	4/51	1/1 H-SJ(108) 17,MP						
Merganser, Hooded	1-17	1/108	2/7 -- 2/40 1/10 --						
Merganser, Red-br	4-23	4/33	2/7 1/25 1/1						
Duck, Ruddy	3-23	7/161	-- 3/65 2/47 1/40 1/3						
Vulture, Black	3-17	5/109	-- 3/82 -- 1/2						
Vulture, Turkey	3-29	4/452	1/6 2/20 3/340 -- 2/11						
Osprey	4-17	5/6	3/3 -- 3/3 --						
Kite, Blk-shouldr	2-4	3/7	B-(1) 3,MM; H-(3) 2,ER; U-(3) 4,EM						
Harrier, Northern	2-29	13/135	1/20 2/77 5/20 2/2 2/6						
Hawk, Sharp-shin	2-29	3/3	B-(1) 3,MM; H-(1) 23,PH; H-(1) 2,ER						
Hawk, Cooper's	4-17	4/5	B-(1) 3,MM; H-(1) 23,PH; H-(1) 2,ER						
Hawk, Harris'	18-18	1/1	B-(1) 18,OWL						
Hawk, Red-shouldr	2-23	12/39	1/4 C-(1) 3/5,OWL 3/15						
Hawk, Swainson's	4-10	2/2	C-(1) 4,RU; C-(1) 10,UR						
Hawk, Red-tailed	2-29	13/486	1/15 3/73 3/67 1/1 4/30						
Hawk, Ferruginous	4-4	1/1	H-(1) 4,EM						
Hawk, Larkspur	30-30	1/1	B-(1) 30,AGF						
Caracara, Crested	3-4	3/7	B-BW(2) 3,MM; H-(2) 4,EM; W-(3) 4,EM						
Restrel, American	3-30	14/147	1/32 3/22 3/14 1/6 5/43						
Merlin	17-17	1/1	H-SJ(1) 17,MP						

SPECIES	DATES	TOTAL	BRAZ	CHAM	FBEND	GALV	HARR	JEFF	WALL
Wren, House	3-17	7/11	--	3/4	2/2	--	1/4	--	1/1
Wren, Sedge	3-17	3/15	B-BW(12) 3,MM; F-(1) 10,HAR; H-SJ(2) 17,MP						
Wren, Marsh	3-3	1/4	B-BW(4) 3,MM						
Kinglet, Gold-crn	3-17	6/28	1/10	2/7	--	2/8	--	--	1/3
Kinglet, Ruby-crn	3-23	12/238	1/40	3/49	3/51	--	4/58	--	--
Gnatcatch, Blu-gra	3-17	7/47	1/4	2/10	2/23	--	2/10	--	--
Bluebird, Eastern	3-10	4/44	F-BB(10) 3,OG; F-BB(4) 10,HAR; W-(30) 4,EM						
Thrush, Hermit	3-23	5/10	1/2	--	1/1	--	2/5	--	1/2
Robin, American	3-10	4/102	1/60	--	1/1	--	1/1	--	--
Mockingbird, N	2-29	10/95	--	3/14	2/8	1/4	3/54	--	--
Thrasher, Brown	3-17	8/54	--	3/9	3/23	--	1/18	--	1/4
Pipit, Water	3-17	7/289	1/16	--	3/33	1/30	1/10	--	1/200
Shrike, Loggerhead	3-20	16/231	1/12	3/31	3/25	2/5	6/78	--	--
Starling, Euro	2-30	9/1880	--	1/100	2/240	--	4/1110	--	--
Vireo, White-eyed	3-3	1/1	F-BB(1) 3,DR						
Wren, Solitary	3-4	3/5	B-(3) 3,MM; C-(1) 4,RU; F-BB(1) 3,DR				2/27	--	1/8
Warb, Orange-crn	3-23	10/63	1/6	3/4	3/18	--	2/27	--	--
Warb, Nashville	30-30	1/1	F-(1) 30,AV						
Warb, Yellow-rump	3-30	13/358	1/16	3/125	3/84	--	5/103	--	--
(Warb, Audubon's)	10-10	1/1	C-(1) 10,UR				1/5	--	1/1
Warb, Pine	3-17	6/26	1/2	1/1	2/16	--	1/3	--	--
Yellowthroat, Com	3-3	1/2	B-(3) 3,MM				4/28	--	--
Warb, Wilson's	3-3	1/2	H-BR(1) 23,HH						
Cardinal, Northern	2-30	11/161	H-BR(1) 23,HH						
Bunting, Indigo	23-23	1/4	C-(1) 11,BUZ; H-BR(25) 23,HH						
Sparrow, Chipping	11-23	2/26	W-(15) 4,EM						
Sparrow, Field	4-4	1/5	H-BR(6) 23,HH; U-(25) 4,EM						
Sparrow, Vesper	3-23	2/31	1/165 2/11 1/2	1/40	2/25	--	--	--	--
Sparrow, Savannah	3-23	8/248	B-(1) 3,MM						
Sparrow, Grasshop	3-3	1/1	B-BW(8) 5,MM						
Sparrow, Le Conte	3-3	1/1	U-(3) 4,EM						
Sparrow, Fox	4-4	1/3	C-(2) 11,BUZ; H-SJ(6) 17,MP; U-(3) 4,EM						
Sparrow, Song	1-17	3/11	H-SJ(2) 17,MP						
Sparrow, Lincoln	1-17	1/2	1/16 2/5	1/6			1/35	--	--
Sparrow, Swamp	3-17	5/62	1/2 3/36	3/85	--	3/68	--	--	--
Sparrow, Wht-chrt	3-26	11/271	H-SJ(1) 17,MP; W-(4) 4,EM						
Sparrow, Wht-crn	4-17	2/5	H-BR(2) 23,HH						
Sparrow, Harris	23-23	1/2	W-(2) 4,EM						
Longspur, sp.	4-4	1/2	--	3/8450 3/440	--	1/125	--	--	--
Blackbird, Red-wg	3-17	8/9065	1/40 1/3	3/58	1/50	1/12	--	--	--
Meadowlark, East	3-17	8/463	H-BR(2) 23,HH						
Meadowlark, sp.	23-23	1/2	F-(40) 30,GL						
Blackbird, Rusty	30-30	1/40	W-(80) 4,EM						
Blackbird, Brewer	4-4	1/80	--	2/13	1/35	2/60	2/2010	--	--
Grackle, Gt-tail	3-30	8/2128	--	3/9075	--	2/350	--	--	--
Grackle, Common	4-23	6/9925	--	F-(20000) 10,HAR	--	2/405	--	--	--
Cowbird, Brn-head	3-23	7/35595	1/30000 2/150	1/40					
Blackbird, sp.	10-10	1/20000	1/2	1/2	3/38	--	2/90	--	--
Goldfinch, Amer	3-17	8/182	--	--	1/14	2/18	5/191	--	--
Sparrow, House	2-30	8/223	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

COUNTIES:
B = BRAZ = Brazoria
C = CHAM = Chambers
F = FBEND = Fort Bend
G = GALV = Galveston
H = HARR = Harris
J = JEFF = Jefferson
W = WALL = Waller

LOCATIONS:
BB = Brazos Bend State Park
BF = Bolivar Flats
BR = Barker Reservoir
BW = Brazoria NWR
TCD = Texas City Dike
SJ = San Jacinto State Park

OBSERVERS:
BUZ = David Bradford, Richard Uzar, GL = Guy Luneau
J Zagorski, J Greg W. Lasley
DR = Don Richardson HAR = Houston Arboretum Field Trip
AGF = L. Aldritch, P. Gottschling, led by B. Honig, D. Williams
HH = Bob Honig, Sandy Hoover, R. Ozz
AV = Art Vallier HW = B. Honig, R. Williams, R. Ozz
BH = Bob Honig MA = Mike Austin
UR = Richard Uzar, Ed Rozenburg ME = Derek Muschalek, Mark Magruder
EM = Ted Eubanks, Jim Morgan OG = OG Field Trip led by
ER = Ed Rozenburg EMO = Ellen and M. L. Owens B. Honig, D. Williams
GH = George Hove PG = Peter Gottschling
PM = Peggy Milstead
RT = Rob Thacker
RU = Richard Uzar

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES - DEC., 1988

Least Grebe submitted by Don Richardson 12/03/88
At 11:30 AM on Saturday, December 3, 1988, a Least Grebe was sighted in the northwest corner of Elm Lake at Brazos Bend State Park. This Grebe shovled all over dark gray appearance with some white in the rump. Quite noticeable were the thin bill (very different from the heavier bill of the Pied-Billed Grebe), and the golden-yellow to light orange eye. Observations were made for 20 minutes with a variety of binoculars and a telescope set to 30 power. Observers other than myself were Richard Uzar and John Beard. John was able to photograph the Grebe.

Least Grebe submitted by Bob Honig 12/03/88
In NE corner of Elm Lake at Brazos Bend State Park; small grebe, with thin dark bill, short neck, white rear. Because of side to back lighting, body appeared uniformly medium dark. Yellow eye obvious, even in shade. Viewed at leisure by entire field trip with variety of scopes and binoculars at approximately 50 feet.

Tundra Swan submitted by Derek Muschalek 12/03/88
Immature observed standing and feeding in shallow water at Brazoria Refuge in Brazoria County. Field marks: Dusky-gray tinge to head and body; dusky pink dark tipped bill. Larger size and longer neck than Snow Geese on refuge; rounded profile to crown and forehead eliminates Trumpeter Swan, which has a long sloping forehead similar to a Canvasback. Photographed by Tom and Sherry Collins. Used 20x Nikon ED from 35 to 60 yards for 35 minutes in good light.

Swainson's Hawk submitted by Richard Uzar 12/04/88
Houston CBC circle, Chambers county. Large dark sutoe seen at 30 meters to a distant speck with 10x4 binox in good light with sun at back. Observed the bird soaring, circling; clearly saw dark head, white throat and all white belly and undersides except trailing edges and tips of wing. Tail moderate length but broadly spread, showing dark and less dark bands, broader dark band near tips of tail which was edged with narrow white ends. Upperparts uniformly dark with lighter sides behind wing apparent though not pronounced. Wings held flat while soaring. Don't know what the cut-off date is in Dr. Kiehl Arnold's book for accepting Swainson's in Dec. in Texas, but I just don't know what else to call this bird. Notes written from memory 05 Dec. without consulting field guide.

ADDENDUM TO OCT. CLEARING HOUSE

Due to an unexplained computer glitch Derek Muschalek's October Clearing House data got omitted from the October CH. In addition to other birds already accounted for, the October CH should include these additional sightings of Derek's.
Swainson's Hawk, Chuck-will's-widow, Chimmey Swift, Winter Wren, Wood Thrush, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Dickcissel. We have taken steps so it will not happen again. AG

WHAT A B-I-I-I-G HUMMINGBIRD

by Margaret Jones

Last winter a neighbor of several blocks away called to ask Paul and me to come identify a bird which was coming to her hummingbird feeder. Paul couldn't go at that time, but, guessing it would be an oriole, I hastened to her house. I waited less than forty minutes, and when the bird appeared, I was delighted to see a first-year male Bullock's Oriole. Bullock's Orioles don't come my way very often; usually it is Baltimores and Orchards that we see in the mulberry tree in the yard in back of us. We had seen orioles at Santa Ana Refuge feeding from hummingbird feeders a number of years ago.

We had two hummingbird feeders up this summer because we so enjoyed the feisty antics of quite a few Ruby-throats. In fact we put the second one up to try to cut down on the chases, but found it just ran the dominant hummer a little more ragged! We usually put up feeders to try to entice the wintering hummers but rarely get anything other than Rufous. The wonderful exception to that was the Broad-tailed Hummingbird that spent a month and a half in our back yard (see The Spoonbill, May, 1976), and is represented on our current checklist by two connected dots; at that time it was supposed to be the first record of a live Broad-tailed on the Upper Texas Coast.

A week before Christmas I was shocked to see a full adult male Bullock's Oriole clutching the little glass tube of one of our feeders and twisting itself around to drink the juice. He is beautiful, a real textbook bird, and when the female, also a textbook bird, appeared a few days later, my joy was complete. I have such fun watching them and their contortions I have a hard time getting some necessary letter writing done. They come at various times all during the day, though more often during the morning. The male will perch on top of the red tulip on the larger feeder and bend down to drink, while the female sits on the perch in front of the tulip and bends double to get her beak in position. They could drink through the bee guards, but when I removed one they soon concentrated on that opening. They seem to have no trouble drinking through the bee guard on the smaller feeder.

The male sometimes doesn't seem to want the female to eat at the first table, and drives her away from both feeders for just a short while, and then allows her to feed at whichever one he doesn't fancy at the moment. Sometimes they sit on the fence a few inches apart, and what a picture that makes! Recently they had been coming about every 15 minutes, and I called John Barnes to come video-tape them. Wouldn't you know they didn't appear for more than two hours, and only came back an hour after John had left? And so goes the world of the bird photographer.

I haven't had any hummers yet this winter, but for sheer enjoyment these Bullock's Orioles will be hard to beat. And come to think about it, do you think they will consider the hummers intruders and drive them away?

DANGEROUS BIRDING

Readers of Birdwatcher's Digest have surely noticed that the article, "A Cautionary Tale," in the January-February issue, was written by Sherry L. Collins of Lake Jackson. (Sherry and Tom Collins are very kind about letting OG members see their hummingbirds each year.) The article describes some hairy situations Sherry has faced when birding, such as going out on the Freeport jetty during a gale, and warns against a too-avid pursuit of birds, regardless of danger. Congratulations, Sherry, on your fine article!

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