



THE SPOONBILL

Volume IV No. 12

April 1956

 * MOURNING DOVE *
 * You see this little dove on telephone wires *
 * and in fields; his voice is the voice that *
 * is heard in the land -- a sweet, melancholy *
 * bird, mourning the passing of days, the *
 * transitoriness of life, the depletion of *
 * requited love. The Mourning Dove would be *
 * smaller than the Passenger Pigeon if there *
 * were any more, but there aren't. *
 * E. B. White - November 1955 Ford Times *

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

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

- April 11 - The next regular meeting of the Ornithology Group will be held at 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 11th at the River Oaks Garden Forum, 2503 Westheimer. An election of club officers will be held at this time. After the business meeting there will be a repeat showing of the picture - "Let's Go Birding."
- April 25 - The Sanctuary Benefit Show this year will be given at Lamar High School, April 25th, at 8:00 p.m. The program will consist of three color films: - "In the Beginning", "Lives of Their Own" and "Your Living Heritage."
- April 28-29 Outdoor Nature Club overnight field trip to "The Devil's Backbone". Meet: Courthouse, Columbus, Texas 9:00 a.m. Leader Mr. I.K. Sheffield.

SPECIAL NOTICE

CHANGE OF SPRING BIRD ROUNDUP DATE

Because of the Outdoor Nature Club field trip scheduled for April 28-29 to "The Devil's Backbone" the 1956 Spring Bird Roundup - Upper Gulf Coast Area of Texas (which was first set up for April 29) will be held on Sunday, May 6, under the leadership of Noel Perley.

UPPER GULF COAST SPRING BIRD ROUNDUP - May 6, 1956 - (Noel Perley)

This year, in an all-out effort to out-list the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club (whose '55 Roundup of 240 species was tops in the Nation), we are urging all party leaders and individuals planning field trips on MAY 6th, within the area outlined below, to send their check-lists to this writer at 2148 W. Alabama, Apt. 4, Houston 6, Texas. Be sure to include full details for all unusual species plus names of all observers, route followed, total miles (by car and by foot), and hours afield.

The Upper Gulf Coast Roundup area this year is semi-circular in shape, running along the coast from Rockport to Port Arthur, some 230 miles, and extending about 110 miles inland as far as Conroe. This is roughly the same amount of territory covered by the D.V.O.C. groups last year.

Here is the area in detail:-- The upper coast of Texas from Port Arthur (Jefferson County) south to Rockport (Aransas County) inland to Refugio, Cuero, (DeWitt County), Yoakum (Lavaca County), LaGrange (Fayette County), Brenham (Wash. County), Navasota (Grimes County), Conroe (Montgomery County), Cleveland (Liberty County), Beaumont and Port Arthur.

Let's Go Birding on May 6th

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1954

SECTION

CHAPTER

HIGHEST SPRING BIRD COUNTS IN U.S. ON RECORD (through 1955) - Noel Perley

A) Roundups						
	Species*	Size of Area	Parties	Observers	Date	
1 Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas	244	50 x 75 mi. (N-S) (E-W)	10	38	Apr. 19, 1933	
2 Delaware Valley Ornithological Club (LVOC)	240	225 x 100 mi. (N-S) (E-W)	21	85	May 15, 1955	
3 Upper Gulf Coast Texas	230	110 x 100 mi. (N-S) (E-W)	21	58	May 2, 1954	
4 Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS)	219	85(?) x 165(?) mi. (N-S) (E-W)	?	?	May 8, 1954	
5 Rockport, Texas	204	50 x 25 mi.	2	6	Apr. 25, 1953	
6 St. Louis, Missouri	187	?	?	?	?	
7 Urner Club, N.J.	176	94 x 20 mi. (N-S) (E-W)	2	13 to 17 ?	May 15, 1948	
8 St. Marks, Fla.	172	?	?	?	?	
9 Greensboro, N.C.	152	15-mi. circle	12	29	Apr. 30, 1955	

B) Parties						
	Species* & Date	Route Followed	Car Miles	Max. ** Extent	Leader	Observers
1 D.V.O.C.	208 (5-11-52)	Phila., Pa. to Ocean City, Md.	498	112	David Cutler	6
2 S. Cal.	187 (4-30-50)	?	?	100	Arnold Small	3
3 Urner Club	174 (5-16-53)	Boonton to Beach Haven, N.J.	250	94	Ed Stearns	16
4 Lower Rio Grande, Tex.	170 (4-25-43)	?	?	?	Ludlow Griscom	5
5 M.O.S.	168 (5-8-48)	Seneca, Md.-Bombay Hook Refuge, Del.-Ocean City, Md.	?	116	Chandler Robbins	?
6 Upper Gulf Coast, Tex.	164 (4-21-50)	Houston-Sheldon Res. LaPorte-Seabrook-Kemah-Galveston, Tex.	195	49	Joe Heiser	5
7 Mass.	161 (5-23-48)	Cambridge-Boxford-Carver-Monmouth Pt. (Cape Cod), Mass.	140	90	Ludlow Griscom	10
8 Colorado	140 (5-19-53)	Mt. Evans-Denver Barr Lake, Colo.	70	52	?	?

C) Personal Lists - with Companions

Observer	Species* & Date	No. Comp.	Route Followed	Car Mi.	Max. Extent	Party List
1 David Cutler (D.V.O.C.)	179 (5-15-55)	3	Phila., Pa. to Ocean City, Md.	485	112	182
2 Ed Stearns (Urner Club)	167 (5-16-53)	15	Boonton to Beach Haven, N.J.	250	94	174
3 Ludlow Griscom (Rio Grande, Tex.)	165 (4-25-43)	4	?	?	?	170
4 Joe Heiser Geo. Williams Steve Williams Mrs. Chas. Hamilton Mr. Chas. Hamilton (U.G.C., Tex.)	150 (4-21-50)	4	Houston-Sheldon Reservoir-La Porte Seabrook-Kemah-Galveston, Texas	195	49	164

D) Personal Lists - Unaided

Observer	Species* & Date	Route Followed	Mileage	Max Extent.
1 Harry Mathews (D.V.O.C.)	160 (5-16-54)	Selbyville, Del. - Ocean City, Md. - Rehoboth-Milford-Bombay Hook, Del.	350	65
2 Connie Hagar Rockport, Tex.	140 (4-20-53)	?	25	?
3 Noel Perley (Upper Gulf Coast, Texas)	166 (5-9-54)	Houston-Sheldon Res.-LaPorte-Seabrook-Kemah Galveston, Texas	Car 212 Foot 9 221	49

*Totals do not include Rock Dove.

**Air mi. between farthest points.

Any readers having additional "Big Day" data (especially 1956 results) are urged to send same to: -- Noel Perley, 2148 W. Alabama, Apt. 4, Houston 6.



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ORNITHOLOGY GROUP REPORTST.O.S. Meeting - March 17-18, 1956 - MO-Ranch, Hunt, Texas - (N. Oates)

A crowd of over 100, and perfect weather (cool and clear) helped to insure a successful annual get-together of the Texas Ornithological Society. A well-rounded program was prepared by the committee which included, on Saturday morning, a meeting of the Executive Board, and in the afternoon, a General Business Meeting, plus an interesting field trip under the leadership of Mr. William S. Jennings, to the Kerr Wildlife Management area.

After a delicious turkey dinner served in the dining hall of the Guest Lodge, the members assembled in the large auditorium for the evening program. Dr. Eula Whitehouse presented an illustrated lecture on "Plant Life of the Edwards Plateau"; Edgar Kincaid then gave a talk on the changes in plant and bird life of the area from early times when it was covered by tall grasses up to the present cover of Cedars and Oaks. Mrs. Richard R. (Jean) Graber, discussed the Black-capped vireo and showed interesting slides taken while she was in Mexico making a study of this vireo in its winter home.

Winners in the Official Bird Essay contest were announced by Mr. Edward C. Fritz. Murray Marshall of Dallas, Texas, was awarded first prize, (pocket-size 6 x 18 binoculars) and second prize (copy of Peterson's Western Field Guide) was awarded to Vic Emanuel for his essay on the White-tailed hawk. Mr. Fritz then announced that the Scissor-tailed flycatcher had been voted the official bird of the T.O.S. The program was concluded with two color movies presented by the Texas Game and Fish Commission.

T.O.S. Meeting - March 17-18 - Birding Highlights - (Vic Emanuel)

Armand Yramategui, Carl Aiken, Larry Semander and I arrived in Kerrville late Friday night. Saturday morning it was very cold with a slight frost on the ground. The first western birds we saw were the Western Meadowlark and the House Finch. After breakfast, we hurried to MO-Ranch where the T.O.S. was holding its annual meeting. On the way, Armand spotted a Scrub Jay but Carl, Larry and I missed it. As we neared the ranch we saw a belted kingfisher, and Shovelers on the river.

We went to our cabin and after Armand hurried to a board meeting, Carl, Larry and I birded in a cedar covered ravine back of our cabin. Here we saw Ruby-crowned kinglets, Slate-colored Juncos, field and chipping sparrows and a spotted towhee. Exploring the beautiful ranch which is located on a bluff overlooking the Guadalupe River, we saw Rufous-crowned sparrows, Rock and Canyon wrens. Near the dining hall we saw two Brown Creepers at close range, a Vermilion flycatcher, common goldfinches and a Nashville warbler. On the river were Baldpates, Pied-billed grebes and a Ruddy duck.

At lunch Edgar Kincaid told of seeing a White-necked raven near the ranch. In the afternoon we attended the T.O.S. business meeting and then left on a field trip to the Kerr Wildlife Management Area. On the way we saw many Mallards on the river and a Red-tailed hawk circling overhead. While at the wildlife area, Carl, Larry and I wandered away from the rest of the group looking for birds in the cedar groves and we later learned that everyone had seen two Scrub Jays right where the cars were parked --- we had missed again!

The next morning I walked outside the cabin just as Edgar Kincaid and Fred Webster drove up. They had found a Townsend's Solitaire a short way up the road. We hurried to the spot and soon saw a small grayish bird resembling a Mockingbird. Its wing-bars and white eye-ring identified it as the Townsend's Solitaire.

After breakfast we birded along the river and saw a wild turkey gobbler and about six hens. We then returned to the gate hoping to show the Townsend's Solitaire to some of the other birders - and discovered that the lead car (we were in the rear car) had seen two Scrub Jays --- another miss!

Returning to our cabin Edgar Kincaid and Fred Webster heard a Golden-cheeked warbler in the cedar breaks. They called it up using a combination of Screech owl imitations and rasping. Suddenly the male and female Golden-cheeked warblers flew into a cedar tree right in front of us.

Later we found a Canyon wren building a nest above a door to one of the buildings and we watched it bringing in the nesting material. We saw the solitaires once more at close range and also White-crowned sparrows and Bewick's wrens.

It was soon time to leave this beautiful ranch where we had all enjoyed seeing the western birds. On the return trip we stopped at Kerrville to look for the Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel. We found two at Schreiner Institute and nearby saw another spotted towhee.

Interesting birds seen on this trip by other members included the Ring-necked duck, Lark bunting, Golden-crowned kinglet, Black-throated sparrow and Wilson's warbler. Total species -- 70 - we missed the Scrub Jay, but that's something to return for!

* * * * *

Let's Go Birding on May 6th

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Early Spring Birding - Bay Area & Galveston - (Carl Aiken)

On April 2, 1956, Vic Emanuel and I left Houston at 5:30 a.m. for an early spring birding trip. We were hoping for a good clear day and plenty of spring migrants. However, when we got to the San Jacinto Battlegrounds it was very cloudy and looked like rain. Despite the weather, several Scissor-tail flycatchers and a Spoonbill (the only one for the day) were seen here. Our next stop was F-Street where the prairie chickens are supposed to be. Although we failed to see the chickens, a pair of Eastern kingbirds brought more hope for a big migration. The usual birds were seen at the Baytown Tunnel and by the time we reached Seabrook the Barn, Tree and Rough-wing swallows were on our list and the clouds were breaking a little. There was nothing unusual at the Seabrook marshes so we went on to Kemah. The mulberrys were ripe and the foliage was thick and green in the jungle. We had walked about halfway through the woods when a beautiful Prothonotary warbler made his appearance. This was the highlight of the day. We ate lunch here and when we left for Galveston we had seen a Yellow-bellied sapsucker, Maryland yellowthroat and Cedar waxwings. On the way to Galveston Snow and Blue geese were seen in a rice field and in Offats Bayou we saw the Common Loon. We headed for the west end of the island but a short stop at the golf course on the way added the Horned lark, Black-bellied and Golden plovers, and an Upland plover. Birding on the west end proved best for shore birds. Least and Semipalmated sandpipers, Thick-billed plover, Black-necked stilt and a Black and White warbler were found in this area. A trip after the Inca dove (which we didn't find) and a trip to the jetties where the Black skimmer was seen ended our Day. The sky was still dark and the waves in the Gulf were the highest I have ever seen. Taking everything into consideration the 87 species we got were pretty good.

CLEARING HOUSE

- March 3 - Leconte's, Field, Savannah, Vesper and White-crowned sparrows seen in the Katy-Hockley area by Ruth Moorman and NCO
- March 4 - Birds reported in Galveston by Dr. Lucille Robey, Leota Stilwell and Thelma Smith -- Avocets, in spring plumage, Pectoral sandpiper, Reddish egret and Black-necked stilt.
- March 11- In the wooded areas around Kirbyville, many Parula warblers were singing, white-eyed vireos were abundant and several Black and White warblers were seen - Darris Massingill, Luta Buchanan, N.Oates. Louisiana Waterthrush was seen at a roadside park near Woodville, Texas, by Vic Emanuel and Carl Aiken.
- On a trip to the Katy-Hockley area Leota Stilwell, Ruth Stamm, Thelma Smith and Carrie Holcomb reported the following species - Golden plover, Upland sandpiper, Snow, Blue and White-fronted geese, Sandhill cranes, Prairie chickens, Blue-wing teal and Black-necked stilt.
- March 18- Leota Stilwell and Ruth Stamm reported two Spoonbills at Eagle Lake and a bald eagle at lake near Arcola, Texas.
- March 19- Nashville warbler found in Bellaire wooded section by Vic Emanuel.
- March 24- A migration of hawks (about 100, probably Broadwings) was seen over southwest Houston by Carl Aiken.
- March 25 Two American bitterns were spotted by Jimmie Murray at Sheldon Reservoir.
- March 26 A large migration of Sycamore and Parula warblers was noted by Mr. Childs at Camp Strake (scout camp near Conroe, Texas). (This migration was about a week later than usual - A.Y.)
- A ruby-throated hummingbird was observed by Darris Massingill feeding on a Shrimp plant at her new home, 1532 Langer, Houston 23, Texas.
- March 30- Maryland Yellowthroat seen at the Public Library by Vic Emanuel.
- March 31- White-tailed hawk observed by Ruth Moorman and NCO on Galveston Freeway between Ellington and Webster turn-offs.
- A female Parula warbler was seen building a nest at Camp Strake (near Conroe) by Armand Yramategui and Carl Aiken.
- April 1 - Two Broad-wing hawks were seen just north of Houston by Leota Stilwell, Ruth Moorman and NCO
- A Cerulean warbler was spotted near Kirbyville, Texas by Nance Cunningham - a whip-poor-will was also heard.
- An Indigo bunting was seen by Vic Emanuel, Joe Heiser and Carl Aiken at the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary.
- April 2 - First Eastern Kingbirds were reported by Vic Emanuel and Carl Aiken near the San Jacinto Battlegrounds.
- April 4 - Vic Emanuel saw the following birds in Bellaire - Blue-winged warbler, Barn swallows and two migrating Swainson's hawks.

Chimney Swifts

Chimney swifts were first reported in the Houston area by Noel Perley on March 22; 14 were seen in the Riverside area on March 26th by Armand Yramategui; and they were seen in West University by Leota Stilwell on March 30th.

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Cattle Egret - Whooping Crane

On March 21, 1956, Connie Hagar (Rockport) reported the cattle egret was still located on Mustang Island, as well as the three Whooping cranes who moved to this island sometime during the winter from the Aransas Wildlife Refuge.

Sandhill Cranes

On March 18, 1956, around 1000 Sandhill cranes were seen flying over Wimberly by Hazel Green; on the same date small flocks were seen near Katy, Texas, by Josiephine Wilkin, Ella Wolfer and NCO (Last Sandhills reported in this area).

Scissor-tail Flycatcher

The first Scissor-tailed flycatcher of the season was reported by Mrs. Edna Haver near Columbus, Texas on March 17; one was seen just west of Houston on March 18th by Josiephine Wilkin, Ella Wolfer and NCO; on the same day four were reported by Leota Stilwell and Ruth Stamm near Richmond, Texas; and on March 24 and 26 Scissor-tails were seen in Bellaire by Vic Emanuel.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers

On March 19 hundreds of Blue-gray gnatcatchers were seen by Vic Emanuel in a wooded section on the corner of Bellaire Blvd. and Buffalo Speedway and on March 26th on a visit to the same spot he found the number of gnatcatchers greatly reduced. Carl Aiken reported about 30 in southwest Houston on March 24th.

Nesting Report (Continued from March SPOONBILL) - Armand Yramategui

March 21, 1956 - The Titmice nestlings hatched.

March 24, 1956 - Cardinal nestlings hatched and on March 27, they first opened their eyes. Three days later on March 30th, when they were still hardly able to get around, they impatiently left the nest, and only by their incessant call notes were the parents able to keep track of the young.

Report from Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary - J. M. Heiser, Jr.

The very late freeze in March last year hit most of the plants at the Little Thicket just as tiny fruits were beginning to form. Result - practically no yupon, holly, haw or other native berries for wild life food this winter.

I think the enormous flocks of robins seen in some sections of Houston this winter resulted from search for ligustrum, pyracantha, and similar fruits as a substitute for the normal diet of wild species.

For the first time in six years no Fish Crows were noted at the Little Thicket during the winter months. No supply of Greenbriar berries (a favorite food of the species), so no Fish Crow. All fruit eating birds have been less abundant at the Sanctuary than in prior years.

Some spring observations at the Little Thicket:-

February 25 - Sycamore warbler
 March 4 - White-eyed vireo
 March 10-11 - Many blue-gray gnatcatchers
 March 10 - Ruby-crowned kinglet in full song
 March 11 - Parula warbler
 March 25 - Hooded and Kentucky warblers
 Chuck-will's widow and
 Slate-colored Junco in song

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE

Lt. R.C. Rosche, 555th Med. Center, A.P.O. 219, N.Y.

Feb. 23, 1956 - My latest birding trip of any length was at the beginning of this month. Unfortunately I picked about the coldest and stormiest week that Europe has had in a century. However, the trip was very worthwhile, not from a species standpoint but from some of the things we saw. The Camarque which lies between the Rhone River and the Petit Rhone is the only semi-tropical area left in southern France in its natural state. It's semi-tropical nature can best be appreciated when one knows that thousands of flamingos nest in the area each spring. It is also called the Everglades of southern France because of the nature of the habitat - large expanses of shallow water. But this particular week, all the fresh water was frozen almost solidly!!! It is not an exaggeration to say that we could sit under palm trees with the sun shining and watch icebergs float by in the Mediterranean Sea while a fifty mile an hour wind reared past from the northeast! Fifty-two species were seen in all - the highlights were the Cory's Shearwater and the Red-crested Pochard. Surprisingly enough, the shearwaters were only about 200 feet from shore - about 350 in all, circling over the waves. We had excellent views of them both in flight and on the water. Several gannets were also in this flock. * * * The Little Egret (2 individuals) was quite amusing. They look just like the Snowy Egret - yellow feet and all,

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

REPORT OF THE
COMMISSIONERS OF THE
LAND OFFICE
STATE OF ILLINOIS
FOR THE YEAR 1898

ALBION B. HARRIS, COMMISSIONER
JAMES W. HARRIS, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

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They were standing on the edge of a tiny pond which was completely frozen. Obviously they were trying to feed by poking their bills up and down on the ice in woodpecker-like fashion. They were unsuccessful, though, for they couldn't even chip the ice. The Reed Buntings were feeding in a vineyard that had been irrigated before the "big freeze." They were trying very hard to get at weed seeds that were frozen in the ice - all to no avail."

Mr. & Mrs. W. James Greer

On March 5, 1956, Mrs. Mary Cravens of the Outdoor Nature Club found a banded pigeon in her yard unable to fly. She called Mrs. L. N. Dexter who referred her to us. We cheered the bird with food and water and the bird seemed to revive.

Contact with Mr. C. E. Buehner of the Better Business Bureau, brought out the information that the number on the band AU55HLC476 indicated that it was a racing pigeon. We obtained the name of the secretary of the American Racing Pigeon Union, Mr. Breaux. We called him on March 7, and he said it belonged to Jack McCoy, was probably a young bird being trained for a race in April and was probably lost.

This bird could easily be mistaken for a common Rock Dove.

CHECK-LIST ADDITION - (Noel Perley)

Scarlet Ibis - Shot by Forrest McNeir at Smith Point, So. Chambers County, after the Aug. 17-20, 1915 hurricane. This brings the total number of accidental species not included on our Upper Gulf Coast Check-list to 35 and the total U.G.C. List to 384.

"WIDE WIDE WORLD" Features Florida Bird of Prey Farn - (N.P.)

On Easter Sunday (April 1st) TV's popular Sunday show MC'd by Dave Garroway (3-4:30 p.m. CST-KPRC-TV; NBC) Devoted 10 exciting minutes to John Hamlet's unique "Bird of Prey Farn." Shown in action were the following (in order of their appearance): Red-tailed hawk, Golden eagle, Peregrine falcon (Duck hawk), African Solitary vulture (9 ft. 3 in. wingspan), Cormorant, Shrike, Pygmy owl, and the world's fastest mammal, the Cheetah. "Wide Wide World" was first telecast in October, 1955, and was an instantaneous success, since it features nothing but live scenes from all over the country, including Canada, Mexico, Cuba and the Bahamas.

The April 1st program revolved around the theme "Awakening of Spring." Perhaps the May 6th telecast will cover one of the highlights of the sport of bird-watching in America - the "Big Day" spring count.

OFF THE PRESS

CORPUS CHRISTI CALLER-TILES - Ray Bynum

March 18, 1956 - *** the whooping crane is down to a colony of 27 which winter on Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and breeds in summers in Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada. Hopes for the whooper were raised this winter, when 20 adult birds returned to the refuge with eight young. The previous year there had been no young. One adult was killed on the flyway in migration, and another of the 20 who arrived has disappeared. Because they require a broad feeding range and strict privacy, and because the marshlands are being drained and grasslands plowed, the odds against the whooping crane go up steadily.

HOUSTON PRESS - April 4, 1956

This is travel time for Whooping Cranes

Early spring is a worrisome thing in the ornithological world. Any day now, the 27 remaining whooping cranes will begin their annual flight to their summer breeding grounds. And bird lovers will be on pins-and-needles until it is over.

Their anxiety stems from the possibility that some trigger-happy hunter may bag one of the precious birds or that some other mishap may befall them on the 5000-mile flight from Texas to northern Canada.

Let's Go Birding on May 6th

Send list of birds observed with full details for all unusual species, plus names of all observers, route followed, total miles and hours afield to: Noel Perley, 2148 W. Alabama, Apt. 4, Houston 6, Texas

Welcome to New Members - - - Austin Evans, Box 222, Freeport, Texas
Charles A. Aves, RFD 372A, Spring, Texas

Mrs. Norma C. Oates, Editor, 5908 Charlotte, Houston 5, Texas.

4-4-56



Outdoor Nature Club
(Ornithology Group)
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