

EXILE IN ARIZONA
REPORT FROM THE O.G.'S

by Mary Ann Chapman

After months of planning and a full month of working to get my house habitable, I am now a resident volunteer on the new Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge southwest of Tuscon. Manager Wayne Shifflett and his wife Carol send greetings and consternation that no one else from the O.G. has been out to visit and bird yet!

I am finally able to start getting settled into my old adobe house, which is 5½ miles down a dirt road toward nowhere in particular. A perfect location! I haven't had time yet to look for nests, but Say's Phoebes, Bewick's Wrens, Verdin and Lucy's Warblers are all singing all around my house and in the dry wash behind it. Rufous-winged Sparrows are in the next wash down the road, and Montezuma Quail are within a mile. Costa's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds are regular visitors to my feeder, and I have also had Rufous and Broad-billed. And Poorwill and Western Screech-Owl call every night.

We just put together all reports to date and came up with a 227-species checklist for the Refuge. Anyone who would like a copy is welcome to send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope (address below). On May 31, I am leading the first of several Birders' Field Days, designed to acquaint birders with the hot birding sites on the refuge, one of which is my house! All birders are invited including out-of-state visitors. I have also scheduled two beginning birders' bird walks, in an attempt to get immediate local area people involved.

The little community of Arivaca has proved to be very friendly. The refuge secretary is starting a newspaper for the area "Arivaca Trails", and I am the nature columnist. And as soon as I finish this report, I am heading into town with a big pot of Texas-style pinto beans for the community Easter Sunday potluck.

If anyone is heading to Arizona on a birding trip this year, be sure to put the Buenos Aires NWR on your itinerary. I can point you to a number of birds here which will save you beating the bushes all over southeastern Arizona! If my telephone has been installed by then, the number will be (602) 823-4295, or leave a message at the refuge office, (602) 823-4251. Or drop me a line at P.O. Box 323, Sasabe AZ 85633 and if possible I will arrange to be around when you get here. Meanwhile I will busy myself adding migrants and nesting birds to the checklist!

WINTER BIRDING IN THE
PACIFIC NORTHWEST

by Steve Carroll

In the summer, the Pacific Northwest is regularly visited by birders from other parts of North America. Not many birders, however, consider traveling to this beautiful region during the winter. Since I like winter and northern birds, I was excited to learn that Ben Feltner's Peregrine Tours was offering a trip to Washington and British Columbia in February, 1986. Ben Feltner led the trip, which began on February 1 and ended February 9. Linda Feltner was able to join us for the first two days. The other participants were George Harmon from Texas and Richard Murrus from New York.

For the first three days we explored the islands and shores of Puget Sound. On the Skagit Flats, an alluvial plain formed by the Skagit River as it flows from the Cascade Mountains to the Sound, we discovered five Snowy Owls sitting on a fence. Not far away on a bluff high above the Sound Linda picked a pair of Eurasian Wigeon out of a raft of hundreds of American Wigeon. Above the bluff a pair of Bald Eagles called to each other from the top of a Sitka Spruce. In fields along the shores of the Sound we saw Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Shrikes and Golden-crowned Sparrows.

One cool morning with the snow-covered Cascades on the horizon we searched the farmlands of the Skagit Flats for swans. We found several flocks before finding one close enough for an excellent view. Many of this flock were Tundra Swans, but we could clearly distinguish magnificent Trumpeter Swans as well. We noticed a band on one of the Trumpeter Swans, and learned from a man studying the swans that it was banded in Fairbanks, Alaska.

The bays and inlets of the Sound contained a wide variety of ducks and geese. At Useless Bay on Whidbey Island we came upon a flock of Brant, feeding in the shallows. Nearby we spotted two pair of handsome Harlequin Ducks, not more than fifty feet from shore. Other species that we had close views of included Barrow's Goldeneyes, Common Goldeneyes, Hooded Mergansers, Buffleheads and Oldsquaws.

We left the Puget Sound on a ferry through the ruggedly spectacular San Juan Islands. These islands are heavily forested, and in many places rise more than 1,000 feet above the sea. From the ferry we saw Ancient Murrelets, Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots and hundreds of Arctic Loons.

Our next destination was the city of Victoria, the capital of British Columbia, located on Vancouver Island. Victoria is a beautiful city, clean and charming. On our first afternoon in the

city we found American Black Oystercatchers, Marbled Murrelets, Black Turnstones and a Rhinoceros Auklet.

The next day, February 4, was one of those days when everything goes right, or as Richard Murrus would say, it was "extremely reasonable". We rose early and drove for about an hour to Cowichan Bay. There, before breakfast, we found a Yellow-billed Loon. Several Common Loons were nearby, giving us a good comparison. After breakfast, on our way back to Victoria, we found a pair of American Dippers in a swiftly moving stream. Our next stop was a hilly field where we fanned out to search for Eurasian Skylarks. As we walked across the field a Ring-necked Pheasant bolted from the grass, crying loudly. This both (1) made me very happy (lifer), and (2) subjected me to good-natured ridicule (trash bird). Soon thereafter we flushed eight Skylarks and they hovered and circled overhead, serenading us with their flight song.

Back in Victoria we had lunch and then went to Clover Point, a rocky area along the coast. There we spotted a Rock Sandpiper feeding, appropriately enough, among the rocks. Then it was down to the Victoria docks to look for the Kittlitz's Murrelet. We searched for a couple of hours for this rare bird which is typically seen only in Alaska. Several hundred yards out into the harbor at the end of a breakwater we inspected every Marbled Murrelet in sight in the hope of spotting the Kittlitz's. We had no luck and finally decided to give up. Then, just as we were beginning to leave, the Kittlitz's Murrelet appeared in the water right below us, not more than 20 feet off the end of the breakwater!

On February 5, we took a ferry to Vancouver. In Vancouver harbor near Stanley Park we had wonderful views of a female King Eider. We didn't stay in Vancouver, however, but drove on to Manning Provincial Park, which is in the mountains of southern British Columbia. At Manning we got into our first snow of the trip. Several feet of snow was on the ground and it snowed lightly on us while we explored the park. After breakfast in the park restaurant, Ben spotted a flock of White-winged Crossbills in a Douglas Fir not ten feet away from us. They were beautiful. Later in the day we saw Boreal Chickadees, Pine Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls. One of the most enjoyable moments of the trip occurred when we discovered Gray Jays on the shore of frozen Lightning Lake. With cheese and muffins we attracted the jays, and they swooped onto our outstretched hands to grab the food. Common Ravens watched this meal from the fir trees, but they were too wary to get very close.

From Manning we traveled farther east and out of the mountains into the Okanagan Valley. Here we stalked and eventually saw a Long-eared Owl.

Not far from the valley we had a cooperative Cooper's Hawk and got some great views of it. Nearby we found Red Crossbills.

One the day we arrived in the Okanagan we saw several flocks of small birds flying over the vineyards and orchards. One flock perched in a large pine tree, high up the side of the valley. We drove as close as possible, jumped out of the car and excitedly crept closer and closer to the pine, stopping every 50 feet to get the best possible look before they flew. There was no need to worry about missing the birds. We were able to get right under the tree and it contained hundreds of Bohemian Waxwings.

From the Okanagan we returned to Seattle, where Linda joined us again. On the last morning of our trip we birded in Lincoln Park, in West Seattle, and there we found a flock of Varied Thrush. Ben, Linda, George, Richard and I jumped in a simultaneous "high-five!" to celebrate the Varied Thrush, and to celebrate an "extremely reasonable" trip to the beautiful Pacific Northwest.

Clearing House

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made on the Upper Texas Coast. How to read the CH: Location--(how many) date, observers. Common, widely distributed species on the UTC during the reported month are listed as follows: number of reports, (lowest # - highest #; total # of individuals seen), e.g. 8 reports (1-20;82). Noteworthy sightings will be underlined, capitalized, or both, according to their status. Birds with very rare, vagrant, accidental, or no status on the Checklist at the date of sighting require details. Sightings needing details but submitted without them will not be included in the regular Clearing House. All observations affecting the species' status on the current UTC Checklist must be accepted by the Checklist Committee. Documentation is a must for consideration by the Committee.

ABBREVIATION CODES

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| AB = Armand Bayou | HI = High Island |
| ANWR = Anahuac NWR | JC = Jefferson Co. |
| BBSP = Brazos Bend SP | NWH = NW Houston |
| BC = Brazoria Co. | PI = Pelican Island |
| BF = Bolivar Flats | RJP = Rollover Pass |
| BNWR = Brazoria NWR | SJSP = San Jacinto SP |
| Bolv = Bolivar Peninsular | SO = Sun Oil Property |
| BR = Barker Reservoir | TCD = Texas City Dike |
| CC = Chambers Co. | WGI = W. Galveston Is |
| CSP = Challenger VII Memorial | WHC = W. Harris Co. |
| EG = E. Galveston | WL = Warren Lake |
| EP/DP = Elsonhower/Deussen Pks | WOB = White Oak Bayou |
| Galv = Galveston | |
| GC = Galveston Co. | |

209 Species reported this month

Loon, Red-throated: TCD-(1)13,SB (See notes, ed.)
 Loon, Arctic: TCD-(1)4,BC (See notes, ed.)
 Loon, Common: TCD-(16)4,DM;(30)13,SB;(15)14,MA
 Grebe, Pied-billed: 11 reports (1-45;150)
 Grebe, Horned: Galv-(1)4,BC (See notes, ed.)
 Grebe, Eared: TCD-(6)4,DM;(16)13,SB;(1)14,MA;
 WGI-(1)21,MA
 Pelican, American White: 5 reports (2-108;311)
 Cormorant, Double-crested: 16 reports (4-30;481)
 Cormorant, Olivaceous: SJSP-(4)10,DM; Sun Oil-
 (12)22,MK; ANWR-(4)23,DM;(3)25,BCW
 Anhinga: AB-(1)14,MA; BBSP-(14)20,MM; EP/DP-(1)24,DM
 Bittern, American: ANWR-(1)25,BCW
 Heron, Great Blue: 20 reports (1-14;82)
 Egret, Great: 18 reports (1-40;145)
 Egret, Snowy: 16 reports (1-40;127)
 Heron, Little Blue: 5 reports (1-160;199)
 Heron, Tricolored: 8 reports (1-9;24)
 Egret, Reddish: 5 reports (1-3;11)
 Egret, Cattle: 11 reports (1-100;375)
 Heron, Green-backed: ANWR-(2)22,MK; HI-(1)23,DM;
 WGI-(1)29,MM
 Night-Heron, Black-crowned: 5 reports (1-300;323)
 Night-Heron, Yellow-crowned: WOB-(1)4,WC;
 EP/DP-(1)11,DM; Galv-(5)15,JJH; BBSP-(4)20,MM
 Ibis, White: 11 reports (1-70;218)
 Ibis, White-faced: BNWR-(27)1,WP+BPB; BBSP-(12)20,MM;
 ANWR-(3)22,MK;(10)23,DM

Spoonbill, Roseate: BNWR-(70)1, WP+BPB; BBSP-(1)20, MM; RP-(2)122, MK; HI-(3)23, DM; WGI-(5)27, JHH; (1)29, MA; (4)29, HM

Whistling-Duck, Fulvous: ANWR-(14)25, BCW

Goose, Greater White-fronted: BNWR-(52)1, WP+BPB; WL-(2)5, BH; WHC-(25)23, HA

Goose, Snow: BNWR-(250)1, WP+BPB; (6)16, WP; WL-(2)23, BH; WHC-(40)23, HA

(Goose, Blue): 4 reports (1-100; 125)

Goose, Canada: BNWR-(75)1, WP+BPB; WL-(14)5, BH; WHC-(8)23, HA

Duck, Wood: BBSP-(4)20, MM; JC-(4)22, MK; EP/DP-(1)24, DM

Teal, Green-winged: 10 reports (2-200; 2264)

Duck, Mottled: 12 reports (1-27; 80)

Mallard: ANWR-(2)22, MK; Bay Area Pk-(4)23, PMJ

Pintail, Northern: BNWR-(100)1, WP+BPB

Teal, Blue-winged: 13 reports (2-270; 628)

Teal, Cinnamon: BNWR-(4)1, WP+BPB; ANWR-(2)23, DM

Shoveler, Northern: 10 reports (3-850; 1816)

Gadwall: 5 reports (2-200; 348)

Wigeon, American: BNWR-(55)1, WP+BPB; WGI-(10)19, JHH; ANWR-(150)23, DM

Duck, Ring-necked: BBSP-(3)20, MM; ANWR-(3)23, DM

Scaup, Lesser: 5 reports (1-400; 443)

Bufflehead: TCD-(4)4, DM; (1)13, SB

Merganser, Red-breasted: TCD-(12)4, DM; (75)13, SB; (10)14, MA; BF-(5)22, MK

Duck, Ruddy: TCD-(350)4, DM; (100)13, SB; WL-(12)5, BH; WHC-(10)23, HA

Vulture, Turkey: 11 reports (1-100; 196)

Vulture, Turkey: 13 reports (2-50; 181)

Osprey: AB-(5)3, (4)13, DM; (3)18, (2)26, DM; (1)23, PMJ; SJSP-(1)10, DM; Bay Area Pk-(1)23, PMJ

Kite, American Swallow-tailed: AB-(2)26, DM

Kite, Black-shouldered: 7 reports (1-2; 9)

HARRIER, Northern: 13 reports (1-10; 43)

Hawk, Sharp-shinned: AB-(2)23, PMJ

Hawk, Red-shouldered: 11 reports (2-14; 50)

Hawk, Broad-winged: Bellare-(3)21, (No notes, ed.) (5)23, DMA; EP/DP-(1)24, DM; AB-(2)26, DM; S. Houston-(3)28, DMA

Hawk, Swainson's: CC-(1)25, WC (No notes, ed.)

Hawk, Red-tailed: BR-(2)9, H (Previously described)

Hawk, Red-tailed: 15 reports (1-16; 60)

(Hawk, Krider's): BNWR-(1)1, WP+BPB; (See notes, ed.) CC-(2)29, MA (See CH Editor's Notes for details on one of these birds, ed.)

Kestrel, American: 18 reports (1-25; 70)

Merlin: WGI-(1) male 4, BC (See notes, ed.)

Falcon, Peregrine: BNWR-(2)1, 6, WP (See notes, ed.)

Bobwhite, Northern: CSP-(20)18, MA; BBSP-(1)20, MM; WHC-(2)23, HA

Rail, Yellow: BNWR-(1)1, WP+BPB

Rail, Clapper: 5 reports (1-15; 19)

Rail, King: 4 reports (1-4; 8)

Rail, Virginia: BNWR-(1)4, DM; WP+BPB; ANWR-(1)22, MK

Sora: BNWR-(5)1, WP+BPB

Moorhen, Common: 7 reports (1-300; 644)

Coot, American: 11 reports (9-1792; 3246)

Crane, Sandhill: BNWR-(88)1, WP+BPB; BC-(220)5, MDC; WGI-(3)21, MA

Plover, Black-bellied: 8 reports (2-30; 78)

Golden-Plover, Lesser: SJSP-(2)10, DM; WGI-(40)21, MA; GC-(14)22, MK; WHC-(200)23, HA; Bolv-(20)29, MA

Plover, Snowy: BF-(2)22, MK; Bolv-(8)25, BCW; (3)29, MA

Plover, Wilson's: BF-(1)22, MK; Bolv-(8)25, BCW; (5)29, MA; WGI-(1)29, HM

Plover, Semipalmated: SJSP-(2)10, DM; BF-(1)22, MK; Bolv-(3)25, BCW; (12)29, MA

Plover, piping: TCD-(1)4, DM; Bolv-(25)25, BCW

Killdeer: 14 reports (2-35; 195)

Oystercatcher, American: TCD-(1)13, SB

Stilt, Black-necked: 7 reports (3-17; 50)

Avocet, American: ANWR-(2000)22, MK; Bolv-(3000)25, BCW

Yellowlegs, Greater: 10 reports (1-17; 49)

Yellowlegs, Lesser: 7 reports (3-50; 96)

Sandpiper, Solitary: WHC-(1)23, HA

Willet: 7 reports (2-15; 40)

Sandpiper, Spotted: TCD-(2)4, DM; Pelican Is-(2)20, JHH; WHC-(1)23, HA

Sandpiper, Upland: WGI-(17)21, (10)29, MA; GC-(4)22, MK; Crystal Beach-(2)25, BCW

Whimbrel: WGI-(1)19, MA

Curlew, Long-billed: 7 reports (1-26; 43)

Godwit, Marbled: BNWR-(1)1, WP+BPB; BF-(19)22, MK; Bolv-(3)29, MA

Turnstone, Ruddy: TCD-(1)4, DM; (1)13, SB; BF-(3)22, MK

Sanderling: TCD-(10)4, DM; EG-(12)10, JHH; BF-(30)22, MK

Sandpiper, Westrn: BNWR-(15)1, WP+BPB; TCD-(20)13, SB; BF-(12)22, MK; WGI-(30)27, JHH

Sandpiper, Least: 6 reports (2-35; 56)

Sandpiper, Pectoral: Port Bolivar-(6)25, BCW

Dunlin: 6 reports (10-50; 113)

Sandpiper, Stilt: WGI-(4)27, JHH

Dowitcher, Long-billed: ANWR-(15)22, MK; (125)23, DM; WHC-(20)23, HA

dowitcher, sp. 9 reports (15-200; 245)

Snipe, Common: 9 reports (1-10; 36)

PHALAROPE, WILSON'S: Texas City-(1)4, BC (Early spring date - see notes, ed.)

Gull, Laughing: 12 reports (1-800; 2377)

Gull, Franklin's: HI-(1)25, BCW (See notes, ed.)

Gull, Bonaparte: TCD-(3)4, DM; Bolv-(30)25, BCW

Gull, Ring-billed: 10 reports (2-200; 509)

Gull, Herring: 5 reports (1-5; 16)

Tern, Gull-billed: GC-(1)22, MK; Bolv-(2)25, BCW; (2)29, MA

Tern, Caspian: SJSP-(4)10, DM; BBSP-(3)20, MM; BF-(5)22, MK; ANWR-(3)23, DM

Tern, Royal: TCD-(25)4, DM; (12)13, SB; EG-(100)14, JHH; BF-(150)22, MK

Tern, Sandwich: WGI-(2)21, MA; BF-(19)22, MK; Bolv-(10)25, BCW; (10)29, MA

Tern, Common: BF-(16)22, MK; Bolv-(2)25, BCW; (4)29, MA

Tern, Forster's: 8 reports (3-200; 322)

Tern, Least: BF-(10)22, MK; Bolv-(150)25, BCW; (10)29, MA

Skimmer, Black: BF-(19)22, MK; WGI-(30)29, HM

Dove, Rock: BR-(5)9, H; JC-(8)22, MK; WHC-(5)23, HA

Turtle-Dove, Ringed: NW Houston-(2-6)1-31, VL

Dove, White-winged: Galv-(10)1-31, JHH

Dove, Mourning: 20 reports (1-40; 225)

Dove, Inca: 6 reports (1-50; 64)

Barn Owl, Common: 5 reports (1-3; 8)

Screech Owl, Eastern: Algoa-(1)1-31, DW; NWH-(1)21, VL

Owl, Great Horned: BBSP-(2) inc chick 5, MDC

Owl, Barred: 7 reports (1-10; 18)

Owl, Short-eared: BF-(2)22, MK

Swift, Chimney: Houston-(1)31, WC

Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: 12 reports (1-6; 25)

Hummingbird, sp. (Selasphorus): Houston-(2) females (1-31, GC)

Kingfisher, Belted: 12 reports (1-3; 18)

Woodpecker, Red-headed: EP/DP-(5)11, DM; (3) nesting 24, DM

Woodpecker, Red-bellied: 14 reports (1-20; 82)

Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: BC-(1)5, MDC

EP/DP-(2)11, DM; BBSP-(2)20, MM; HI-(1)23, DM

Woodpecker, Downy: 13 reports (1-12; 37)

Woodpecker, Hairy: JC-(1)22, MK

Flicker, Northern: 11 reports (1-4; 24)

Woodpecker, Pileated: 13 reports (1-8; 35)

Phoebe, Eastern: BNWR-(1)1, WP+BPB; BBSP-(2)5, MDC; (4)20, MM; EP/DP-(1)11, DM

Flycatcher, Vermilion: BBSP-(1)5, MDC

Flycatcher, Great Crested: EP/DP-(1)24, DM; WOB-(1)26, WC

Kingbird, Eastern: CC-(1)22, MK; ANWR-(1)23, DM

Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed: P1-(1)20, JHH; WHC-(2)23, HA

Lark, Horned: BNWR-(3)1, WP+BPB; Sun Oil-(5)22, MK; Bolv-(1)25, BCW; (2)29, MA

Marlin, Purple: 2 reports (2-75; 178)

Swallow, Tree: 7 reports (1-120; 141)

Swallow, Northern Rough-winged: TCD-(9)4, DM; BBSP-(10)20, MM; CC-(5)22, MK; WGI-(1)29, MA

Swallow, Barn: BNWR-(1)1, WP+BPB; BBSP-(10)20, MM; WGI-(1)21, MA; EP/DP-(3)24, DM; AB-(1)26, DM

Jay, Blue: 9 reports (1-16; 57)

Crow, American: 16 reports (1-145; 395)

Crow, Fish: JC-(4)22, MK

Chickadee, Carolina: 13 reports (1-80; 216)

Titmouse, Tufted: 12 reports (1-60; 148)

Nuthatch, Red-breasted: EP/DP-(2)11, DM; (2)24, DM

Nuthatch, Brown-headed: EP/DP-(1)11, DM

Creeper, Brown: EP/DP-(2)11, DM; JC-(2)22, MK

Wren, Carolina: 15 reports (1-25; 125)

Wren, House: 3 reports (1-8; 20)

Wren, Winter: WOB-(1)8, WC; EP/DP-(1)24, DM

Wren, Sedge: BNWR-(60)1, WP+BPB; WHC-(1)5, BH; WGI-(6)21, MA; ANWR-(1)23, DM

Wren, Marsh: BNWR-(2)1, WP+BPB; ANWR-(2)25, BCW; WGI-(1)29, MA

Kinglet, Golden-crowned: WOB-(2-3)1-10, WC; BR-(1)9, H; EP/DP-(2)11, DM; BBSP-(1)20, MM; HI-(3)23, DM

Kinglet, Ruby-crowned: 16 reports (1-100; 235)

Gratcatcher, Blue-gray: 19 reports (1-25; 88)

Bluebird, Eastern: 6 reports (1-16; 41)

Thrush, Hermit: 3 reports (1-8; 33)

Robin, American: 16 reports (2-1100; 1660)

Catbird, Gray: 8 reports (1-2; 11)

Mockingbird, Northern: 14 reports (2-21; 99)

Thrasher, Brown: 16 reports (1-20; 78)

Pipit, Water: 6 reports (1-45; 64)

Maxwell, Cedar: 10 reports (2-150; 433)

Shrike, Loggerhead: 11 reports (2-20; 76)

Starling, European: 8 reports (4-75; 277)

Vireo, White-eyed: 14 reports (1-15; 69)

Vireo, Solitary: 7 reports (1-6; 17)

Vireo, Yellow-throated: JC-(1)22, MK; Galv-(1)28, JHH

Vireo, Red-eyed: AB-(1)18, DM; (2)23, PMJ

Warbler, Tennesse: BBSP-(1)20, MM (Early spring date - see notes, ed.); AB-(1)23, PMJ

Warbler, Orange-crowned: 9 reports (1-8; 35)

Parula, Northern: 10 reports (1-7; 22)

Warbler, Yellow-rumped: 25 reports (1-125; 670)

Warbler, Black-throated Green: BBSP-(2)20, MM (See notes, ed.); WOB-(1)22, 23, WC; AB-(1)23, PMJ; HI-(1)23, DM

Warbler, Yellow-throated: EP/DP-(1)11, DM; (1)24, DM; HI-(1)22, MK; (1)23, DM

Warbler, Pine: EP/DP-(8)11, DM; (5)24, DM; JC-(4)22, MK; White Mem. Pk-(1)25, BCW

Warbler, Palm: HI-(1)23, DM; (1 western)29, MA; Galv-(1)28, JHH

Warbler, Black-and-white: Galv-(1)5, JHH; AB-(2)18, DM; CSP-(1)18, MA; BBSP-(8)20, MM; HI-(5)23, DM; WOB-(1)23, WC

Warbler, Worm-eating: HI-(1)23, DM

Ovenbird: BBSP-(1)20, MM (See notes, ed.)

Warbler, Push, Louisiana: BBSP-(1)20, MM; HI-(1)22, MK

Yellowthroat, Common: 6 reports (1-6; 12)

Warbler, Hooded: 7 reports (20-31 (1-8; 14)

Warbler, Wilson's: WOB-(2)1-31, WC; BBSP-(2)20, MM; HI-(1)23, DM; U of H Clear Lake-(2)30, MA

Cardinal, Northern: 20 reports (2-80; 335)

Bunting, Indigo: HI-(1)23, DM

Sparrow, Chipping: EP/DP-(20)11, DM; (15)24, DM; BBSP-(2)20, MM

Sparrow, Field: AB-(2)13, DM

Sparrow, Vesper: WHC-(3)5, BH

Sparrow, Savannah: 14 reports (2-200; 480)

Sparrow, Le Conte's: ANWR-(1)22, MK

Sparrow, Sharp-tailed: Sun Oil-(1)22, MK

Sparrow, Seaside: BNWR-(1)21, WP+BPB; Galv. Is SP-(8)21, MA; ANWR-(2)22, MK

Sparrow, Song: AB-(1)3, DM; EP/DP-(1)11, DM

Sparrow, Lincoln's: 9 reports (1-7; 20)

Sparrow, Swamp: 8 reports (1-12; 30)

Sparrow, White-throated: 11 reports (1-42; 113)

Sparrow, White-crowned: BR-(4)19, H

sparrow, sp.: AB-(2)26, DM

Blackbird, Red-winged: 15 reports (1-1000; 3606)

Meadowlark, Eastern: 13 reports (2-70; 283)

Grackle, Great-tailed: 8 reports (4-170; 335)

Grackle, Boat-tailed: 4 reports (20-300; 495)

Grackle, Common: 6 reports (15-175; 338)

Cowbird, Brown-headed: 7 reports (2-250; 455)

Oriole, Northern: Galv-(1)28, JHH

Goldfinch, American: 10 reports (1-40; 144)

Sparrow, House: 6 reports (5-50; 115)

The following sightings, requiring notes, were submitted without them:
Loon, Arctic: TCO-(2)14, MA
Tern, Black: Bolv-(1)25, BCW (Early spring date, ed.)

CONTRIBUTORS - March, 1986

BC=Bob Behrstock, Caroline Gallery; BCM=BC, DM; BCM=BC, Doris & Townley Wolfe; BH=Bob Honig; DH=Derek Muschalek; DM=David Marrack; DW=Diane Wise; GC=Glenn Cureton; H=H, Doug Williams, Richard Orr, Martha Henschen, Terry Azzarelio, D'anne Luetge; HA=Houston Arboretum Field Trip; HM=JHH, Allen Mueller; JHH=Jane & John Hamilton; MA=Mike Austin; MDC=Peggy Milstead, Barbara Darr, Yetta Chapman; MK=Art Mackinnon, John Kendall; MM=DM, Tommy Michael; PM=Paul & Margaret Jones; SB=Wanda Smith; Barbara Bartholemew; VL=Vanessa Luce; WR=Waslev Cureton; WP=BPB=Warren Pruess + Brazosport Birders; MP=Warren Pruess

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES - March, 1986

Red-throated Loon: This bird was easily distinguished from the ten Common Loons which it was swimming with. The bird was in winter plumage so the white on the face & neck extended farther back on the neck & produced a stronger contrast with the dark gray than on the winter Common Loon. The bird's bill had an upturned appearance which was more evidenced by the lower mandible than the upper. Insofar as size, the bird appeared less massive & slightly smaller than the Common Loon. It was with, viewed for about 10 min. at 200 ft with 45X scope, 10X & 8X binocs, at somewhat farther distances for an additional 20 minutes. Wanda Smith

Arctic Loon: Observed around 1 pm near the base of the Texas City Dike, about 150-300 ft from the S. side of the dike, because Common Loons were in the same scope field of view on several occasions, we quickly compared numerous points. On Arctic Loon, bill was proportionally shorter, perhaps 3/4 length of Common's & much slimmer, the narrower base not appearing continuous with the throat & fore crown which makes the head of a Common Loon look like a long narrow wedge. The Common had more white on the neck, less sharply demarcated from the dark hind neck. Some Commons already exhibited white spotted backs & neck rings of breeding plumage. The head & neck were proportionally smaller on the Arctic. The side of the face on the Arctic was nearly all gray except for a low cone-shaped intrusion of white which projected up below the eye from the throat. This was unlike any loon pictured in the National Geographic Arctic Loon pictured in the Eastern Peterson. There was strong & sharp contrast between the rather narrow white front of the neck & the dark hind neck. The Arctic appeared about 2-3 inches shorter than a Common in side-by-side comparison. There was a thin, dark neckline just below the throat, i.e. at the top of the neck. The bird was also differentiated from Red-throated Loon by: a) lack of bill pointed skyward of horizontal, as I have observed on dozens of Red-throated Loons; b) total lack of white speckling on back as on adult Red-throats; c) strong contrast between fore neck & hind neck/crown which is lacking in immature Red-throated Loon; d) the lower mandible was straight, not gently curved throughout its length as is found on Red-throated Loons. While the head of the Arctic looked gray, the back appeared more chocolate brown than gray. Bird was observed for about 1/2 hr in strong overhead light with two 45X scopes & several powers of binocs. Since the bird is rarely seen in Texas, as I believe, a "lifer" for the other two observers (C. Gallery & D. Muschalek), we spent considerable time diagnosing it in the field & differentiating it from similar species, even though it had been reported by several other competent observers. Bob Behrstock

Horned Grebe: Just W. of 7-mile Rd. on mechanical water ski lake, W. end of City of Galveston. Direct comparison w. Pied-billed Grebe; Horned was longer. Body not spherical like an Eared Grebe's; longer. Front of neck dull rust; throat white; bill black. Narrow black stripe up nape with white edging not yet filled with red. 50 ft away; low angle sun. Bob Behrstock

(Kriger's Hawk): Pale form Red-tailed Hawk with immaculate white throat & leg plumage. Upper breast white with some light streaks through sides of breast. Some streaks & spots formed distinct belly-band against whitish background. Tail had uniformly spaced gray bands alternating with whitish bands - no pink or reddish color in tail. Large whitish crescents observed across upper surface of wings in primaries about midway between wrists & wing tips. Face white; eyes golden-brown; crown lightly streaked. Observed flying low over marsh pond & on ground in & around pond at 50-100 yds with 10x50 binocs & 20X scope. Possibly young Kriger's. Warren Pruess

Merlin: Small falcon; no rufous; steely blue-black above; flying very fast; tail not as long or fan-shaped as kestrel. Adult male, 3.5 mi W of Jamaica Beach, Galveston Island. Bob Behrstock

Peregrine Falcon: Falcon perched in top of small tree, sharply pointed wings crossed above tail. Dark gray back; white throat & upper half of breast. Lower margin of breast & belly brown with dark barring/spotting. Whitish forehead - white extending up to crown. Otherwise well developed. helmet/sideburns pattern. Immature Peregrine, may be the tundrius subspecies. This bird or one like it seen in area of Refuge since Nov. 6, '85 (reported in

Spoonbill, Dec., '85). Observed in clear weather just before sunset at about 100 yds in 30X scope. Warren Pruess

WILSON'S PHALAROPE: (EARLY SPRING DATE) Bird was seen on east side of Rt. 197 between IH 45 & Texas City in small pond just before Gate C of Union Carbide Plant, at 11:45 am. Bird was feeding in very shallow pool & on mud margin of pool. Very pale plumage - gray above & white below made bird stand out from Lesser Yellowlegs already becoming brown & speckled. Unusual feeding posture of head held low to mud, bill held horizontally & being swept from side to side also distinctive. Bird was uniform (unstreaked) pale gray on wings, mantle, hind neck, & crown. A line of same color went through the eye & continued back to upper part of neck. The bill was black, thin, proportionally about the same length as that of a Lesser Yellowlegs. The legs were dark. Sun was high to the right of both bird & observer. Distance 80-100 ft. Optics 8 & 10X binocs; 45X scope. Bob Behrstock

(Current earliest spring date is March 9, 1979, ed.)

Franklin's Gull: Summer plumage, observed loafing on open, dry mud north of oilfield lake just south of High Island, about 1 p.m. Immediately noticed because of bright pink breast, belly, & throat. Bird was surrounded by Laughing Gulls. Franklin's Gull exhibited much wider & whiter eye ring & black hood extending very slightly further down back of head. Bill same color but shorter on Franklin's Gull. The legs were red. Franklin's Gull a bit shorter in length & didn't stand as tall as Laughing Gull. White near wing tips obvious even on resting bird. In flight, black wing tip with white-tipped primaries separated from rest of (gray) wing by narrow white band. Tail white. Minimum distance of observation about 50'. Optics - various. Other observers; Caroline Gallery, Doris & Townley Wolfe. Bob Behrstock

Tennessee Warbler: (EARLY SPRING DATE) - Observed directly overhead in a Live Oak for 25 seconds. Bird had snowy white underparts, including the undertail coverts. The bill appeared long, straight, & very thin. No obvious wing bars. Although the lighting conditions (sun in my face) were less than ideal, the above field marks are enough to eliminate the Orange-crowned Warbler & all vireos. Used 10x50 binocs. Bird also sang briefly. Derek Muschalek

(Current early spring date is March 21, 1976, ed.)

Black-throated Green Warbler: Two birds observed near "40 Acre Lake" at Brazos Bend SP. The "male" displayed brilliant golden cheeks; olive green crown & upperparts; black throat & upper breast. The underparts were white with black streaks on the sides & an indistinct yellowish tinge on the undertail coverts. The "female" was similar to the male, except that the black on the underparts was reduced. The chin & throat appeared mostly yellow. Both birds

were also identified by Tommy Michael. The "male" attracted my attention because he was singing his drowsy, sibilant song, in trees, trees murmuring trees. Used 10x50 binocs for at least 5 minutes. Derek Muschalek

(Early spring date is March 16, 1957, ed.)

Ovenbird: Observed in dense undergrowth at "40 Acre Lake" at Brazos Bend SP. This bird was near the location of the Ovenbird I discovered on December 16, 1985. These birds "winter" in very small numbers along the entire Gulf Coast. The bird was singing his famous "teacher - teacher - teacher" song! This extremely plump warbler displayed the following field marks: unmarked dull brownish upperparts; orange crown bordered by dark stripes; prominent white eye-ring. White underparts with bold dark streaking. Used 10x50 binocs at 20' for 30 secs. Derek Muschalek

CH EDITOR'S NOTES - March, 1986

CONFUSED? CORRECTIONAL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN: If you read last month's CH Notes without noticing something a bit strange, you definitely need to spend more time reviewing your field guide (either at home or in the field). As a regular reader of the CH, you are familiar enough with both Mike Austin & Derek Muschalek to realize that Mike would not think a Rose-breasted Grosbeak had the "jiz" of a Parasitic Jaeger or that Derek would describe a Jaeger in a Chinese tallow tree (although that has a certain familiar ring!) When I left my desk, the last 6 lines of paragraph 3, column 2, page 7 (CH Notes - February, 1986) were the concluding part of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak description by Derek & the 1st paragraph of column 1, page 7 was the conclusion to Mike Austin's Feb. 23 Jaeger description of column 2, paragraph 3, page 7. Phylogenetic order was intact. The rearrangement occurred with the Layout Editor. Please correct your copies appropriately. My apologies to Mike, Derek, & to you, the CH reader. Corrective action should prevent a duplication of this problem.

BEWARE OF THE STRANGE BUTEO: Some of you probably think that I am a real "Doubting Thomas" since I require notes on so many species. Well, to an extent that may be true; after all I have my perceptions, prejudices, and biases just like everyone else. But I also hope that it is more than just that. Writing notes (or the prospect of having to) hopefully causes a more detailed thought process about what you actually observed (as well as what you didn't see),

and maybe, more importantly, it should cause you to look at each species more carefully in the field. Accipitridae is a family that I have been perhaps particularly sensitive to, wanting notes on almost everything. Thanks to Mike Austin, who sent in the following note illustrating just the kind of problems (and their solution) that these birds can present under field conditions:

"While stopped at the corner of TX 61 near Anahuac, we noted a buteo soaring over a nearby rice field. As it soared, it showed a dorsum with conspicuous pale areas at the base of the primaries & a white tail. I immediately identified it as a Ferruginous Hawk. Almost immediately, it dropped out of sight behind a levee."

"We drove about 100 yds so we could see the field behind the embankment. We almost immediately flushed the raptor from a tall tree about 100 yds away & got magnificent dorsal views of the bird in full sunlight. It appeared immense (like an eagle I described it). Again seen were the huge white area at the bases of the primaries, & the white tail, at this range with faint charcoal checkerboard banding. More disturbing, however, was the fact that the bird appeared to have a pale brown crown & nape & a thin white line on the scapulars."

"Still not satisfied, we watched the bird land

about 300 yds away in another tree atop the levee along Hwy 65. We drove around so that we could minimize heat distortion in the telescope & now had marvelous ventral views of (gasp!) a rather typical Red-tailed Hawk. Brown hood, pale chin & upper chest & a lovely band of vertical black stripes."

"The moral: beware brief glimpses & non-direct size comparisons."

"Later in the day, we saw another very similar bird just east of Baytown - apparently the pale Kridler's Red-tails were migrating through that day. I'd only seen one bird that pale before, in Colorado Co. near Atwater NWR"

A MEAN-LOOKING GNATCATCHER: Wesley Cureton shares the following information about Blue-gray Gnatcatcher with us. "An individual I saw at White Oak Bayou on March 15 had a very dark gray, almost black, line above the eye, which broadened in front to form a lore of the same color. This color was quite noticeable. Oberholser's Bird Life of Texas mentions this mark under the nuptial plumage of the adult male. I had never noticed it before however, nor had a couple of other people I asked."

LATE DATE PECTORAL SANDPIPER: Thanks to the efforts of American Birds co-editor Greg Lasley, the CH has received notes for a Pectoral Sandpiper seen November 11, 1985 at ~1500 hrs 1/2 mi N of Stewart Rd on 8-Mile Rd, Galveston Island by George E. Wallace & Beverly Collier of Olympia, Washington. Since this sighting will be considered by the Checklist Committee, the notes are reproduced here for posterity.

"It was overcast with intermittent drizzle, the aftermath of violent rain storms earlier in the day. Generally it was favorable for birds - warm & calming down. There were many actively foraging birds, mostly herons & shorebirds."

"The bird in question was ~150 yd W of 8-Mile Rd along a small tidal channel which ran perpendicular & passed under the road. To the east, the channel was more defined & there were many foraging herons. The west side had more open mud & shorebirds. Beverly Collier first was & identified the bird. We observed it sporadically for ~15 min with 7X20 & 8.5X44 binoculars while it foraged on mud in & around the many small hummocks in the marsh. It appeared just slightly larger than a Dunlin. It was medium brown tinged gray above. The crown was brown contrasting slightly with the rest of the head. The breast was finely but distinctly streaked brown ending sharply at the lower breast. The belly was white. The bill was dark, just slightly longer than the head width, &

roughly straight. The legs & feet were yellow tinged orangy-brown.

At the range from which we observed the bird, it was not clear what age the bird was. The overall color pattern was clear but it was hard to determine individual feather color patterns or the presence of any buff coloration amid the breast streaking. There was a good variety of shorebirds present for comparison. We recorded Dunlin, Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs, Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, Long & Short-billed Dowitcher. We based our identification on overall coloration, leg color, lack of distinct supercilium, & plump, stocky jizz. Beverly Collier & I are both familiar with Pectoral Sandpiper from a variety of locations in coastal California & Lake Erie. Of the similar species, we are both familiar with Baird's, White-rumped, & Upland Sandpiper. I have seen one Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. We are both 100% certain we have correctly & faithfully identified & described the species claimed." George Wallace & Beverly Collier

(The current late fall date is Nov. 10, 1979)

Send requests for OG information, checklists, maps to:
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Houston 77096, 723-8559

Send bird records for Clearing House before 3rd of month to:
Ron Braun, 1302 Berrywood Ln.
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